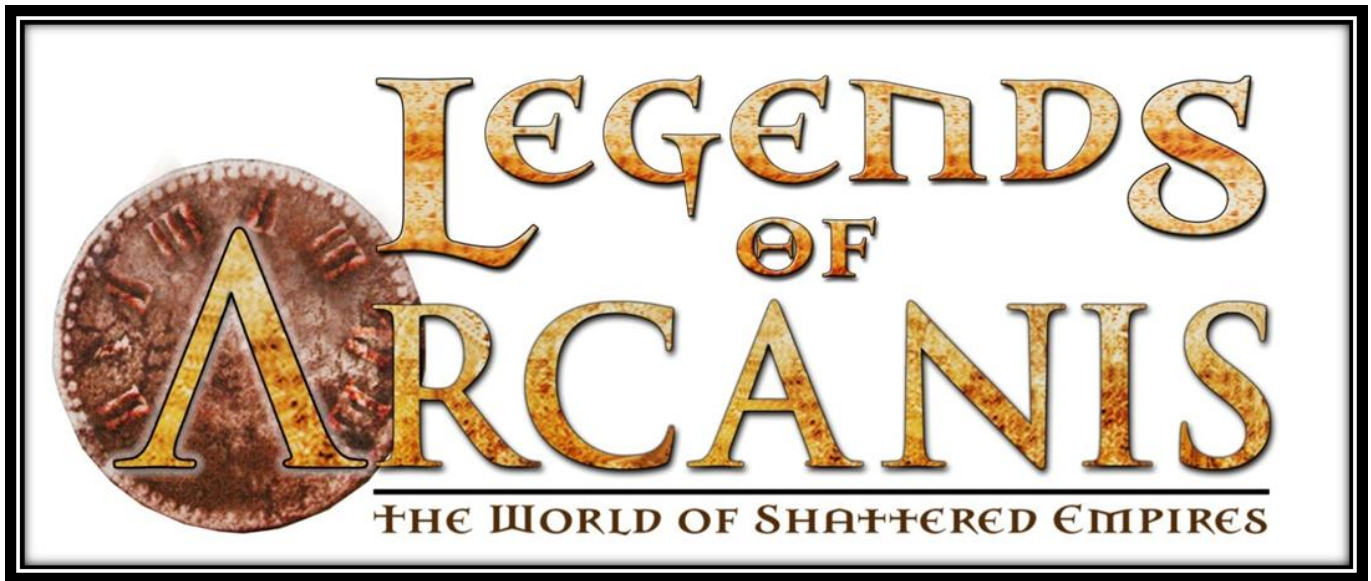


Paradigm Concepts
Presents



S T R A N G E B E D F E L L O W S

A 4-HOUR LEGENDS OF ARCANIS ADVENTURE
HARD POINT ADVENTURE 3, CRUSADE YEAR 1

IT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THAT THIS HARD POINT BE PLAYED BEFORE HARD
POINT ADVENTURE 4

LAMPYRIS, 1070 I.C.

b y H e n r y L o p e z

Dark rumors tell of the sacking of Joppa far to the east of the Hinterlands. If the Infernal army has indeed broken through the nascent Wall being built by the Tir Betoqi, then there may be little hope for a victorious Crusade or for the future of Humanity itself. In desperation, you and your fellow heroes are called upon to secure urgently needed allies for the coming battle. But can generations of mistrust be set aside, especially when accusations of treachery roar throughout Nier's Crucible itself!

"Politics makes strange bedfellows" – Charles Dudley Warner
This LEGENDS OF ARCANIS STANDARD adventure is designed for Tier 1.

Credits

Author: Henry Lopez

Editor: James Zwiers

Playtesters: Team Paradigm

Version: 2.0

Campaign-Related Information

The adventure begins in the city of Mil Takara, where King Osric IV has established a temporary Command and Control center for the 6th Crusade of Light until proper quarters can be finished in Censure.

Once the Heroes are given their orders, the action shifts to the city of Erduk and the dwarven Enclave of Nol Dappa.

Temples and Shrines

In Erduk/Nol Dappa: There are predominately only temples and shrines to Nier, many showcasing a specific aspect of the God, although the largest temple to Nier is dedicated to Nier as the God of Flaming Destruction, the embodiment of all of His most notable aspects.

Additionally, the City-State of Erduk holds within its walled enclosure one of the Holy Pillars of Nier, said to be gouts of blood from the God's own body that dripped across the continent during His titanic battle with the Elorii Elemental Lord, Keleos.

Organizations

The most prominent group, obviously, are the Crusaders themselves.

No other organizations of note are in play in this adventure.

Portals of Anshar

No Portals of Anshar are available to the Heroes in this adventure.

Adventure Background

With more and more word of incursions of marauding Infernals spreading throughout the peoples of the Hinterlands, the leaders of the Crusade are spread thin as they try and deal with the demons that have broken through and trying to plug those routes that traverse the 'Wall'.

It has become obvious that more allies are needed to battle the incursion or else the nascent Crusade will be over before it gets a chance to truly engage the enemy.

While enlisting the aid of the Coryani would certainly bolster the Milandisian knights, Emperor Scipio would surly extract painful concessions from Osric; concessions that would further undermine the King's position.

Instead, the leaders of the Crusade have cast their eyes to the west and to the sequestered forces of the Nierites of Erduk and their stalwart allies, the dwarves of Nol Dappa. Should they be convinced that their best interests are served by joining with the Crusade against the Infernals, then perhaps that would be enough to turn the tide in the war.

But the Erdukeen have never been friends of the Milandisians and may still be smarting over their disastrous defeat at the Battle of the Four Armies, but Osric hopes that the Erdukeens follow that ancient adage, 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'.

Introduction

Key Concepts: Once again, the Heroes run into the young crusader, Rohan Stetz, as they make their way to the temporary command quarters of the Milandisian Crusade.

As they make their way through Mil Takara, they may see certain things, people, and/or places that may not be important to the current adventure, but may give them clues to future events in the story arc.

When ready to begin, please read or paraphrase the following:

Following your harrowing encounter uncovering the conspiracy within the Crusade, you have been rewarded for your resourcefulness and ability to think for yourselves by being assigned to Count Felix val'Ossan's Irregulars. The men and women chosen for this assignment work on particularly difficult problems or investigations for the leadership of the Crusade that ordinary crusaders would be ill equipped to do.

Your orders thus far have resulted in testifying against the slavers and those Templars that survived their confrontation with you. The Knight-Commander assures you that this is necessary to prove to the Yhing hir that Milandir is a kingdom of law. With

your testimony, those responsible for the heinous acts committed in the name of the Crusade have been brought to justice. Their executions were carried out in the quickly constructed gallows just outside and downwind of the burgeoning city.

Since then you have had much time to yourselves, ‘a reward for your honorable actions’, says the Knight-Commander and you soon find yourself in the growing marketplace, killing a bit of time before your scheduled meeting with your commanding officer, Count Felix val’Ossan.

Amidst the swirling parade of people and the cacophony of merchants hawking their wares, a voice cuts through the noise and calls out to you. Rohan Stetz, the young crusader whom you first met when you first arrived in Mil Takara, is winding his way to you. His face breaks into a toothy smile and he waves at you as he bumps and stumbles through the crowd. With half mumbled, ‘sorry’ and ‘excuse me, please’, the youthful warrior finally makes his way to where you are congregating.

This assumes that the Heroes wish to wait for Rohan. If they so choose, they can easily lose him in the crowd and make their own way to the command quarters. If they choose to do so, skip ahead to **Scene One**. If they do the polite thing and wait for him, continue:

With a final push through the wall of people, Rohan stumbles into your group. “Thank the Gods,” he says, “I am so glad to see all of you! I was looking at this merchant’s rugs, my mother you see always wanted an exotic rug for the home and I figured that there’s nothing more exotic than a Khitani rug, since, you know, no one in our town has ever seen a Khitani, so I figured Ma would like it. Anyway, so there I was, about to pay for the rug when I notice that my pouch is missing. The whole thing is missing. Some cutpurse nicked me when I wasn’t looking. And to make matters worse, now I’m running late for my briefing and I’m not making much headway through this crowd. So...” (finally taking a breath!) “Would you mind if I tagged along with you? I figured you’re heading for the same briefing and all and the crowd will move out of the way for all of you.”

The Heroes can befriend Rohan by allowing him to accompany them to the briefing with Count Felix. They may also help the poor boy out by giving him a few coins or perhaps even buying that rug for his mother. Allow the players to roleplay as they wish, but once things start to slow down, move onto **Scene One**.

Chronicler’s Note: If the Heroes wish to purchase the rug Rohan had picked out, the merchant will ask for a gold crown, but can be haggled down to 50 silver.

If the Heroes wish to try and find Rohan’s money purse, they can try to succeed in a **Challenging (TN 20) Persuasion or Routine (TN 15) Streetwise Action Skill Roll** but doing so will make them late for their briefing (and you should tell them that). After the briefing, they’ll have plenty of time to search for the thief.

If the Heroes ask Rohan what he’s doing back in Mil Takara, as he was last reported to be heading off to the front, he’ll explain that his squad was sent four days ride to meet with a group of Tir Betqui dwarves. They were given command of these enormous wagons, for lack of a better word, and told to bring them back here. He’ll be glad to show them to the Heroes after the briefing is over.

NOTE: If the players don’t inquire as to Rohan’s whereabouts (as they may not have played the last adventure, make sure that Rohan mentions this as they walk towards the Knight-Commander’s keep.

Development: The Heroes may either ignore the urgings of Crusader Stetz and be late for their briefing or go promptly to the Crusader’s temporary Command Quarters.

Scene One

Meeting with the Bosses

Key Concepts: The Heroes get to meet their commanding officer, Count Felix val’Ossan and some of the other leaders of the Crusade. Additionally, they’ll get their orders – without which this adventure would be pretty short!

While in Mil Takara, there are plenty of things to see and do, but hopefully the Heroes will stay on task and head for their briefing. If they insist on taking in the local color, you can inform them (through Rohan) that there will be time for that afterwards.

When ready to begin, please read or paraphrase the following:

It is a quick walk to the Knight-Commander’s Keep and you arrive with plenty of time to make your meeting. You have been informed that for the time

being, the Crusade Commanders will be using Mil Takara as a Command and Control center. Once more permanent quarters are finished in the city of Censure, the Crusade command center will move there – closer to the Wall but still relatively safe.

As part of the arrangement between King Osric and Emperor Scipio, the Commander-Magistrate, one General Aphineas Tensen-Balin, was granted admittance into the command structure of the Crusade. Though the Empire and the Mother Church have offered little more than lip service to aid the Crusade, General Aphineas' legionnaires from the Legion of Avenging Thunder have fought with courage and distinction at several key battles against the Infernal Horde.

Entering the Keep, you are met by a series of knights guarding the structure. After having your orders checked three times at three separate checkpoints, you finally reach a small, innocuous door. Barring the pair of guards flanking the door, there aren't any markings or ostentatious decorations that give any indication as to the assembly of powerful personages residing within.

After checking your papers one last time, one of the knights opens the door and ushers you in.

The Heroes are escorted into a room that is dominated by a large table with large cloth maps strewn across it.

Arrayed around the table are the following people (for roleplaying notes on each of these individuals, see **Appendix One**):

Crown Prince Gerhardt: Eldest son of King Osric, the Crown Prince has a reputation for being quite the tactical prodigy, though others attribute this to the fact that he is ruthless and is willing to gamble the lives of soldiers remorselessly.

Until the King arrives in Censure, Prince Gerhardt is the *de facto* leader of the Crusade. He has an uneasy truce with Tensen-Balin, whom he suffers because of political expediency.

Duke Konrad val'Holryn: Eldest son of the late Duke Victor val'Holryn, Konrad enjoys a special place of honor at the King's table as he and the young Osric spent many summers together. Just as the late Duke Victor was a valued confidant of Osric's, so too is Konrad.

Konrad's first loyalty is to his childhood friend, Osric and as such, he and Gerhardt have a strained, if cordial relationship. Konrad is well aware of Gerhardt's desire to supplant his father on the throne by any means short of direct assassination. Konrad

therefore keeps close to the Crown Prince, the better to protect Osric.

Count Felix val'Ossan: Count Felix is a distant cousin of the King on his father's side. Standing a few inches over 5 feet in height and slender in physique, the young Felix has had to rely on his sharp wit rather than his strength to carry him through his youth.

That's not to say that the Count can't defend himself. In fact, he has the reputation of being the deadliest duelist in the King's Court for more than just his swordplay. Felix has a penchant of not only wounding with his flashing blade; he has the most infuriating (or entertaining, depending on your point of view) habit of making biting comments or double entendre insults of his opponent as he duels.

The Count has a tiny moustache that looks more like little black smudges on either side of his upper lip and is never without his riding crop, which he tucks under his right arm. Many people make the mistake of assuming that this means that Felix is right-handed; in fact, he is ambidextrous.

The Count formed the Irregulars in the hopes of leading elite forces into unusual missions. While the King granted his request for such a team, the plan backfired on poor Felix as Osric made it quite clear that he was to stay safely with the Command Structure of the Crusade and not lead the teams himself. This frustrates Felix to no end.

General Aphineas Tensen-Balin: Coryani born and seeming to embody the best of that Empire's strengths without any of its weaknesses, Aphineas is every bit his father, the late Senator Tensen-Balin's son.

With the death of his father, many believed that the young Aphineas would take up that hereditary title and continue to serve the Empire as his family has for generations. Even though he had been warned by his father of Emperor Scipio's mastery of the political arena, even he was stunned when the Emperor 'rewarded' his father's many years of service by promoting his son, a Centurion at the time, to the exalted rank of general. He then promptly proceeded to further reward his loyalty by placing him at the head of the Legion of Avenging Thunder, stationed in Sicaris.

"Who better to ensure that the interests of the Empire in the Hinterlands than the eldest son of the late and lamented Senator Tensen-Balin," announced the Emperor at the Senator's funeral.

Assuring all that a Tensen-Balin would continue to serve in the Senate, Scipio elevated the younger (as well as hedonistic and weak willed) brother of Aphineas as the new senator.

Aphineas recognizes the threat that the Infernal Hordes pose and is willing to work with the Crusade in beating them back as long as it doesn't compromise the Empire's position within Sicaris and the Hinterlands.

Aphineas has a good relationship with the King of the Tir Betoqui dwarves after having personally saved his daughter from an Infernal raiding party that broke through early on in the Crusade. As such, Osric needs to tread carefully as the wily Dwarven king is crucial to the Crusades eventual success and alienating Aphineas would jeopardize that.

When ready to begin, please read or paraphrase the following:

The doors open into a large room dominated by an immense inlaid wood table; every square inch of it covered by cloth maps. Arrayed around the table are four men in military dress.

Their heads turning as you enter Count Felix snaps a riding crop against his leg and fixes young Rohan Stetz with a glare. "You're late, Crusader Stetz. Your team's briefing is already underway. Run – do not walk – through that door and pray that the Black Talon Warlord doesn't bite your head off, literally, as an example to the rest of the squad!"

Mumbling his apologies, Rohan speeds through to the adjoining room.

Turning towards your group, Count Felix smiles and says, "Ah ladies and gentlemen, you're right on time. I'm sure you have either met or know of these illustrious gentlemen?"

Take a moment and introduce each of the notables to the party and allow each of them to re-introduce themselves if this is not their regular group (as may be the case if this adventure is being run at a Convention or a Game Day).

Once the formalities have been dispensed with, continue to read or paraphrase the following:

After the introductions, Crown Prince Gerhardt waves you over to the main table and stabs a finger at the northeastern portion of the Hinterlands.

"This is Joppa, the northern most port city in the Hinterlands region and the most tempting target Uxbrachricht has near the Wall."

Reaching over to the western mountain range, the Prince continues. "Over here is the fortified city of Erduk and the Nol Dappan dwarven enclave beneath it.

"Both of these locals are of great importance to us. There've been rumors that an Infernal column has slipped past over the Wall and are intending to

assault Joppa. The Count's other squad will be dealing with scouting out that area.

"As I'm sure you know, Uxbrachricht has us greatly outnumbered. Though our Imperial friend," Gerhardt says nodding to Aphineas, "has been exemplary in his assistance against the Infernals, his homeland has been less than generous with either men or supplies. As such, we are in need of allies anywhere we can find them – even if they're barbaric dogs like the Erdukeen.

"If we ever plan to take the battle to the Arch Devil King then we'll need the aid of the Nierites to do so.

"Your squad's assignment may seem fairly mundane as compared to the other, but don't be deceived – yours is by far the most difficult. The memories of the Battle of the Four Armies may still be fresh in the Autocrat's mind.

"We have sent a previous diplomatic entourage to the Autocrat's court. We have not heard from them to date. Your mission is to succeed where the others have failed; gather for us the allies we need to win this crusade! Get the Autocrat to pledge his aid and if possible, that of King Leoducis of the Nol Dappans as well.

"You have total discretion as to what to entice the Nierites with for their assistance – up to a limit. Frankly I would first appeal to their self-interests - make the Infernal threat crystal clear to them and how their interests and ours are perfectly aligned. However, and against my better judgment, if you feel it necessary, you are hereby granted the authority to negotiate in the King's name to offer anything up to and including a Duchy under the Milandisian banner, the territory to be determined at a later date."*

"Just a moment," barks Aphineas. "The territory of the Hinterlands has long been under the control of the Empire..."

With a barely controlled snarl, Gerhardt interrupts the Commander-Magistrate in mid-sentence. "Control that your Emperor has chosen not to defend, with the exception of your little hidey-hole in Sicaris. But as to matters of territory between my Kingdom and those claimed by the Empire, they would be best served by talks between the head's of state – not with a deposed caretaker!"

Ever the voice of reason, Duke Konrad interposes himself between the two men. "Gentlemen – Peace! Let us resolve the issue of the true dagger at our throats before we extend any more to our backs."

Turning to the Heroes, the Duke continues, "Supplies and horses shall be made available to you. You leave tomorrow at dawn. Questions?"

The Heroes may have some questions for the noblemen. The information below may be related to the Heroes by any of the Grandees assembled here. If any information is particular to a certain person, it is listed as such.

Additional Information:

1. **The Battle of the Four Armies** – took place approximately 45 years ago. At the time, the Erdukeens messiah-like personage, Leonydes val'Viridan also known as the Sword of the Heavens had miraculously returned and led a coup that conquered Canceri.

His aim however was to once again secure his previous position of power, the First City, capitol of the First Imperium of Man.

He led his massive army of Nierites through Milandir and the Coryani province of Nevanne, leaving nothing in his wake but ashes and death.

He stopped his army at the then Lost Citadel Nier, now known as the Citadel of Silence (due to the reports of the survivors of a blanket of silence that fell over the area), Leonydes vanished along with over 2/3rds of his army.

The remainder of the army retreated back to Canceri, but before arriving was met by the forces of Milandir, the Coryani Empire and rebel elements from Canceri.

It is a testament to their prowess that although the Erdukeens were outnumbered 4:1, they were able to break through the enemy lines and retreat back to the safety of the walls of Nishanpur.

2. **The Autocrat of Erduk** – Janek val'Viridan succeeded the previous Autocrat approximately 40 years ago and has controlled the rapacious Erdukeens with an iron fist.

Those who have treated with him say that while his people love him for his fairness and benevolence, most outsiders would consider him to be a ruthless and cruel man, who can be calm and collected one moment and then fly into a rage that would make a tempest take note.

However, those same outsiders have also noted his reputation for fairness. As long as he is treated with the same respect one would accord any King or

Emperor one should be able to survive a meeting with him intact.

3. **King Leoducis of Nol Dappa** – King Leoducis is the oldest and longest reigning king of all the known Dwarven Enclaves. At the venerable age of 353, Leoducis rules Nol Dappa with an iron fist and a shrewd and cunning mind.

It's been said that the King's mind sometimes lapses and it appears as if he's on the verge of senility. This is a ruse! The king uses this tactic in negotiations, letting others underestimate him.

Rumored to have been strong enough to hurl small boulders in his youth, Leoducis' legendary strength has waned over the intervening centuries and while still fairly healthy and hale, he is a fraction of what he once was.

He seems to have a weakness for human females – the prettier the better as it appears that the old king is a bit of a leach. Some less diplomatic observers believe that this penchant for human woman is the underlying reason for his hatred for those of the gnome race.

4. **Differences between Erdukeen and other Nierites** – There are three main schisms in the worship of Nier amongst the val'Viridan family.

The Doctrine of the Cancerese Nierites

The first of these is dictated by the tenants of Becherek and practiced primarily in the northern reaches of Canceri, the ancestral lands of the val'Viridan. These tenants state that while Fire has been permanently attached to the concept of Nier, he was first and foremost a warrior and a soldier.

This aspect is the primary one revered by the Cancerese Nierites as it fulfills Nier's sacred duty: that of ensuring that civilization does not stagnate and degenerate.

The element of fire is a useful tool in this endeavor and is thought of as many as the "Holy Cleanser" of the weak, the unworthy and the unwise.

When asked what possible benefit such a clerisy has in a society, priests of Nier respond that they are like the forest fire – at the moment seeming to bring only destruction and devastation and in its wake nothing but black ashes. But, he goes on to remind the listener, these fires are a

necessary process that burns away the detrious and culls the sick and weak. Within the year, new and stronger saplings emerge, while the animal survivors of these forest fires bear fitter offspring.

Thus is Nier a necessary cog in the wheel of life.

The Doctrine of the Mother Church Nierites

The tenets of Nier taught by the Mother Church of Coryan has a similar view except that it views the “forest fire” analogy to be too indiscriminate.

Instead, the Church marries the destructive powers of Nier to its original duty within the Pantheon: that of Defender of the Faith and Excisor of the Heretical.

The Mother Church thus harnesses the Temple of Nier and uses it as a scalpel to root out heretics and other threats to the faithful.

Secularly, Nierites within the Empire are in demand as judges as well as soldiers to augment the legions.

Both the Cancerese and the Erdukeens balk at such treatment, likening it to being a dog on a leash – licking his master’s boots until instructed to attack.

The Doctrine of the Edukeen Nierites

Lastly, the Erdukeens revel in the glory and destruction that is the birthright of every Sword of Nier.

The Erdukeens follow the teachings of Leonydes val’Virdan, which were written thousands of years ago, during the dying days of the First Imperium. Erdukeens point to this and claim that their understanding and teachings are the oldest and purest, given their august pedigree.

The philosophy of the Erdukeens, as laid out by Leonydes is simple in its statement – *“We are the crucible in which all of mankind must burn so that it may one day become pure of essence as ordained by the Gods.”*

Using the overthrow of the First Imperium and the subsequent establishment of the Theocracy of the Cleansing Flames, the Swords of Nier point to Nier’s infusing Leonydes with a portion of His holy power and unleashing him and his followers to overthrow a corrupt and rotten empire and replacing it with one that follows the orthodox strictures of *Illir’s Illuminated Text*.

Many outsiders point to Erdukeen society now and claim that it has degenerated over the centuries, reveling in war for war’s sake and indulging in brutal practices, such as torture, rape, enslavement and human sacrifice.

5. **Prior Emissary to Erduk** – The Lady Calinda val’Dellenov and a small entourage consisting of her personal bodyguards and her three attendants.

The Lady Calinda is a cousin of the Duchess of Sylvania and by all accounts an accomplished diplomat.

Note: If a Hero asks for any unusual reactions while discussing this topic, Duke Konrad will admit, should he be pressed, that he strongly advised the King against sending the Lady Calinda. From what he knows of the Erdukeen and their martial society, sending a person who was not a warrior to the Autocrat was an insult and may have resulted in her death.

***Note:** If a Hero picks up on Crown-Prince Gerhardt’s under-his-breath mention of *“against my better judgment”* above and asks the Prince what he meant, Gerhardt will say, *“Vladimir val’Ossan, the Earl of the Eastmarch has been a loyal vassal of my family as was his father before him. If anyone should be given territory to create a new duchy it should be him and not some rabid dog like the Nierites. I can’t imagine having to treat with them at Court!”*

Development: Once the Heroes have asked all the questions they desire, they are free to do as they wish around the city. When finished, continue with Scene Two.

Scene Two

Wagon-Ho

Key Concepts: The Heroes meet another member of the Irregulars and are shown a wagon of epic proportions. A battle of bread begins to broil.

When the Heroes exit the Keep, they are met by Rohan Stetz and another individual.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Exiting the Knight-Commander's Keep, you are met by Rohan Stetz, whose briefing was apparently shorter than yours, and another individual.

Waving at you, Rohan smiles and makes introductions. "Allow me to introduce Gibbets a fellow Crusader and a member of my squad."

Gibbets is broad shouldered, with a shaggy crop of brown hair, dark eyes and walks with a rolling gait due his being bowlegged. A fairly young man who might have been handsome once, but for the mashed nose and torn right ear, which he wears as badges of courage. Best guess marks him as a native of the Eastmarch; a Milandisian with some Yhing hir blood in him.

Gibbets shakes each of your hands as you are introduced with a meaty handshake. With a lopsided grin he says, "That was great work uncovering that conspiracy. A stain upon the King's honor is a stain upon us all."

If asked if his name is actually Gibbets, Rohan says, *"No, the Count gave him that name. Says that if he didn't recruit him into the Irregulars, he'd be swinging from a gibbet and the name stuck. Gibbets sometimes has a problem with authority. If he wasn't such a good axe man, they'd have hung him after the last time he broke some nobleman's jaw."*

If the Heroes are curious as to the wagon that Rohan mentioned, continue with this Scene. If not, then go to Scene Four.

Rohan and Gibbets lead you to the outskirts of the Mil Takara. Though still being rebuilt, portions of the town are beginning to take form. A wooden stockade has been built; its seven feet high walls hiding from sight whatever is within.

Saluting the two cantons on duty, Rohan opens the gate to the wooden enclosure. Within are two large objects, covered with a thick, black tarp.

With a flourish, Rohan tosses back one corner of the tarp and says, "Have you ever seen anything like this?"

Beneath the tarp is a contraption that looks very similar to a flatbed wagon, but of such proportions that one wonders what it could possibly be used for.

The wagon is built of wood, thick logs of ironwood to be exact, which grows in the hills that were once the Gods Wall. The wagon is over forty feet long and ten feet wide and is carried by six mammoth wooden wheels.

If asked how they moved it to here, Gibbets says that the wagon was attached to a group of twelve harnessed draft horses. These horses were so big and thick that they had to have been bred in the Balantican plains. Though not a very fast horse, these draft horses could pull multiple times their own weight.

If asked what the wagon is for, neither Gibbets nor Rohan have any idea. "When we asked Templar Tillman what the wagon was for, he just told us that it was our duty to make sure it arrived safely at Mil Takara, not waste time asking useless questions.

The mention that Templar Tillman was with the dwarves that met their squad may take the Heroes by surprise. (The majority of the tables that played Hard Points One and Two resulted in the uncovering of the conspiracy and the sending of Templar Tillman to the Wall. Apparently that trip was a short one, indeed.

If the Heroes peer under the other tarp, an identical wagon can be found.

If one of the Heroes is a dwarf, he or she can easily confirm that the wagon is of Tir Betoqui manufacture as he or she can easily find the sigil of the craftsman who created it.

If the Heroes ask the guards outside about the wagons, they know as much as Rohan and Gibbets. They can confirm that the first wagon arrived about a week or so ago.

Development: Allow the Heroes to gather any equipment or other perishables that they wish for their trip.

If they are ready to leave for their trip, continue with Scene Four.

If they wish to ask someone in authority (this would be Count Felix val'Ossan), then continue with Scene Three.

Either way, before they leave this scene for either of the two options, read or paraphrases the following:

As you leave the wooden stockade and head back to the town proper, the sweet smell of baking bread wafts in your direction.

"Hmm...smell that?," says Rohan, "the Knight-Commander has brought his personal baker to Mil Takara. I can't wait to eat good ol' Milandisian bread!"

Shaking his head, Gibbets remarks, "I've had my fill of crusty and dried out Milandisian bread. An old Khur Gi woman has started selling this dark bread that is as moist and tender as a Larissan Priestess' embrace. I'll eat that dark bread over Milandisian crusty bread, anytime."

A good-hearted argument ensues. If anyone wishes to try the Khur Gi woman's dark bread, they'll find that she has sold out and won't have more until the mid-morning.

Scene Three

An Unexpected Return

Key Concepts: The Heroes question the unexpected return of Templar Tillman.

When ready to begin, please read or paraphrase the following:

Heading back to the Knight-Commander's Keep, the only one of any authority available to see you is your commanding officer, Count Felix val'Ossan.

Allow the Heroes to ask the Count about Tillman's return from the Wall. Take special note of how the Heroes ask the Count about this touchy subject. While the Count is a fair man, the Heroes are his subordinates and if they come across as accusatory or belligerent, he will not react very well. For example, the Count might respond to this tact by saying, "*How dare you speak to me in this way. The 'Whys' and 'Ifs' of Templar Tillman's comings and goings are hardly your concern. Obviously, the Knight-Commander's original orders have been countermanded. Now, I suggest you watch your tone and get ready for your mission or the next time you address me as such, I'll have you sweeping floors and peeling potatoes! Is that clear!?*"

If the Heroes are respectful of the Count, then he will be more forthcoming with information.

"I'm as surprised as you are, lads (and ladies), but someone countermanded the Knight-Commander's orders...someone very high-up, although I have no idea who.

"All I know is that Templar Tillman is in charge of some specific mission of the greatest importance and somehow those wagons are involved.

"I'm keeping a close eye on our good Templar of the Storm Lord and if anything untoward is in the

offing, I'll sic the lot of you on his trail. Fair enough?"

Development: Although they didn't uncover much, the Heroes now know that Tillman has a powerful and high-ranking person watching out for him.

Once the Heroes have gathered whatever goods they wish and are ready to head off to Erduk, continue with Scene Four.

Scene Four

The Three Demon Brides

Key Concepts: The Heroes begin their five-day trek across the Hinterlands towards the city-state of Erduk and encounter a trio of women suffering from the worst case of Post-Partum "Aggression" known to Man.

When ready to continue, please read or paraphrase the following:

At dawn the next morning Count Felix and a group of servants await your arrival with fresh horses and last minute instructions. Heading north is Rohan, Gibbets and the rest of their Irregular squad heading northeastward towards Joppa.

"Here is a map showing the way to Erduk. Although there isn't an actual road, the way is fairly straightforward. Just head North and skirt around the eastern shore of the Lake of Milk. Keep the Feldspar Hills to your right and travel up the main pass, known as the Pass of Mists. The reason for its name should be self-evident by the time you arrive there. You should see the plumes from the Mouth of Nier a day or so out of the city.

"May the Lady smile upon you!"

The trek to Erduk should be fairly uneventful, at least until the fourth evening. Ask the Heroes what type of formation they use to ride as well as how they make camp in the evening. For the first three days they will be on open plains, entering the Pass of Mists, the pass between the Feldspar Hills and the Shaulk Mountains and on up to Erduk on day four.

Chronicler's Note: The EitP Problem – Some Chronicler's may have an EitP (Erdukeen in the Party) Problem. Relax; it's not really a problem at all. Notes will be given where necessary of special information such a player would have.

For example: In this Scene, the Erdukeen may know of a quicker way to get to Erduk, but it still doesn't avoid the issue of the Demon Brides. Play it by ear and use your common sense about what the Erdukeen Hero would know or not know.

If you (as the Chronicler) are feeling particularly mischievous and want to crank the paranoia of the players, grab a few dice and roll behind your screen, then announce that the first day, second day, etc pass uneventful. Do the same for the camp in the evening.

This way, when they encounter the Demon Brides of the Sorcerer-King they may be unsure if it is some random encounter or something integral to the adventure. Obviously it is the latter.

Chronicler's Note: If you are running this adventure for your Home Campaign, feel free to actually introduce random encounters as you see fit. The wilds of the Hinterlands are not a safe place and it is only the restrictions of time that precludes their inclusion in the adventure.

At the end of Day Four, after the Heroes have camped for the evening, please read or paraphrase the following:

Just as darkness falls, you arrive at the mouth of the path known as the Pass of Mists. The reason for this is obvious: the entirety of the passage is obscured by clouds of fine mists.

The Heroes have time to investigate the entry way if they are quick about it. If so, read or paraphrase the following:

The passage way, made of densely packed earth, slopes upward slightly. On either side of the walkway, are deep furrows at least a score of feet deep. Sloughing its way at the bottom of these furrows is a slow-moving lava flow, which dips back down below ground at the entry way of the pass.

Normally, the heat from such a lava flow would be uncomfortable at best and searing at worst. However, the architects of the pass have found a way to cleverly deal with this situation. On either side of the pass are ancient stone statues, their features long since eroded by the passage of time and the flow of water. These ancient architects appear to have tapped into some underground aquafir, which pours out elegantly through the statues mouth and onto the lava flow below.

As the water cools the ever flowing molten rock, clouds of steam emit from them giving the pass its perennial name.

One can also make out human sized sculptures of warriors intermittantly on either side of the pass. These statues were obviously sculpted much more recently as hardly any erosion appears to mar their image.

If asked, the images are easily recognized as Nierite warriors of some sort. What a Hero will not know unless they themselves are from Erduk is that these are past Autocrats that have ruled Erduk since their coming to these area.

Since walking on a pass bordered by flowing lava is a bad idea to do at night, it is assumed that the Heroes will male camp and await dawn to navigate the periolous pass.

The following encounter takes place during the hours just prior to dawn (this should correspond to the last watch).

It is said that it's always darkest before the dawn. The Yhing hir of the Hinterlands also say that it is the time when the veil between our world and the Abyss is at its weakest.

Have the Heroes on watch make Perception rolls. Please read the following to whomever has the highest result:

You hear a soft wailing and moaning coming from the north; from the direction that leads to Erduk.

Assuming the Hero(es) investigate with some modicum of stealth, they see the following:

Coming down the trail are what appear to be three women dressed in billowing white dresses that were once in style a few hundred years ago. Each of them has their heads down with their long, dark scraggly hair obscuring their faces. Their hands and arms are wrapped around their midsection and they are hunched over as if they are in horrible pain. A dark stain seems to glisten on their robes around their midsection.

Have the Heroes observing attempt a **Daunting (TN 25) Knowledge (Myth & Legends) Action skill Roll** which Sarishan Heroes automatically succeed in.

If unsuccessful, the Heroes have no idea who these women are.

If successful, then relate to them the following story:

The Demon Brides of the Sorcerer-King

Legend has it that during the Shadowed Age, that benighted time after the fall of the First Imperium and the Time of Terror, before the betrayal of the Necromancer Lords of Lost Myrantis, the Sorcerer-King of Mandragore (as it was known at that time) roamed the Known Lands in search of attaining true divinity.

During his travels, he was invited and treated as an honored guest of the King of Trelavin, a small city-state in what is now Eastmarch. So delighted and impressed by his guest, that the King invited two other monarchs from nearby city-states. These worthies brought their wives who were immediately entranced by the tales told of the Sorcerer-King's wanderings across the Known Lands, given that these "nobles" hadn't stirred further than twenty miles from their royal domains.

While the kings struggled to show the Sorcerer-King that they were his equal in wisdom and worldliness, their wives' idle chatter turned dark as they compared their husbands to the powerful and handsome man who was their guest.

Though well past their prime, they were vain women and each night, one would attempt to seduce the mysterious stranger to no avail. They reasoned that they were rebuffed only because a man of such regal bearing adhered religiously to the custom of hospitality extended to him by their husbands.

The following evening, the wives made a show of their love for their husbands by catering to them and their guest at dinner that evening. Unbeknownst to the oblivious kings, their doting wives poisoned their cups and by dessert, they lay dead, bile and foam caking their cracked lips.

"What is the meaning of this?" growled the Sorcerer-King.

"We mean only to free you from the bonds of hospitality, O King. We know how your heart must beat as fiercely for us as ours does for you. A man of your power and import should be blessed by no less than three queens to begat many strong sons and daughters to bask in your glory. As our dowry, we give you our kingdoms to do with as you wish!"

"My heart, if heart I have wicked witch, beats at my command. Am I some beast to be controlled by my baser nature to rut with creatures such as the three of you?"

As his rage grew, so too did it seem that the Sorcerer-King grew, until his hooded head seemed to scrape the vaulted ceiling above. The light in the room, once bright and cheery, dimmed as the very flames shrank from his fury!

"While droll and pedestrian, your husbands accorded me with honor and graciousness that I find lacking in their slovenly wives.

"But I graciously accept your dowry, my loves, and indeed shall do with it as I please."

While but a gesture, a doom descended upon the three cities; flame and eldritch bolts fell from the sky, striking every edifice so that nothing but the foundation remained as testament of its existence; a madness filled the minds of the people so that they fell upon one another like beasts, ripping and clawing until the streets were awash with their gore.

"Vernal and putrescent women that would slay their husbands for something as petty as advancement of your social status: I LAY MY CURSE UPON YOU!"

"Brides you shall be, but you shall never know my seed; instead I give you those that rule in the Abyss – worry not; they are of noble birth and their realms dwarf those ruled by your late husbands.

"Begot upon them the brood you so generously offered to me, for days without end. Let your limbs and womb ache with the 'blessings' of childbirth unending and let your mouth be every filled with ash!"

Many ancient texts relate that these women, whose names have been lost along with the names of their peoples, are the cause of every monstrous abomination that bedevils mankind.

Unbeknownst to the Heroes, the Demon Brides have just returned from laying their brood deep within the lava pits and are now returning to the other side of the Gods Wall.

The Heroes now have two options: lay low and let the Demon Brides pass or engage them in battle.

If they allow them to pass, the weeping women travel down the road and will not even notice them.

If they assume that the women are hurt or need aid, the Heroes may stop them and ask them if they are in need of assistance.

The three women stop, their heads never rising from looking at their feet. While they do not respond, they do stop moaning.

If the Heroes ask again, one will respond:

"Do you see, sisters? They offer succor. As if they could ever truly lift our curse.

"Begone, fools. Trifle not with His brides. Let us by!"

Allow the Heroes hearing this to make another **Daunting (TN 25) Knowledge (Myth & Legends)**

Action skill Roll (which again any Sarishan Heroes automatically succeed in)

If they let them pass, the Brides will not trouble them.

If they persist or wish to engage them, roll Initiative. Remember that some of the Heroes may still be asleep, unless awakened by the Heroes on watch.

Chonicler's Note: Due to their Curse, the Brides may never be truly killed. At best, their bodies will dissolve into a black, formless ichor, only to reform back in the Hells, awaiting further torment.

Development: Once the Heroes have defeated the Demon Brides, continue on to Erduk and Scene Five.

See Appendix 1 for Combat Stats

Scene Five

The Walls of Erduk

Key Concepts: The Heroes approach the city of Erduk and find evidence of a strange plague that has decimated the Erdukeen.

Assuming the Heroes evaded or defeated the Demon Brides, they will (wisely) await the dawn before traversing the Pass of Mists.

When they are ready to continue, read or paraphrase the following:

With the coming of the dawn, begins the last leg of the journey to Erduk. According to the directions given, the gleaming walls of Erduk should be within sight in mere hours.

Once they enter the Pass, continue:

The elevated pass of packed earth leads you safely through the surrounding lava flows. The passage through is not uncomfortable and feels like a light suana bath with the occasional cool sprinkling of water due to an errant breeze.

At midday, the pass glides upward and you emerge from the mists; before you lies the ancient city of Erduk.

The first thing that catches most visitors' attention is the cyclopean black basalt stone that make up the walls of Erduk. Seemingly hewn and crafted from one block, the stones that comprise the walls are rumored to fit so perfectly, that not even the

point of a Savonan rapier can find purchase between them.

Spread out adjacent and across the moat from the city are terraced cultivation tracts and what can be assumed to be living barracks for those that urge life from the hard packed earth in this region. While Erduk has been known to known for foodstuffs, merchants complaining of the difficulty in trading with the Erdukeens make the trip less frequently each year. These farm terraces appear to be Erduk's response to the steady decline in trade.

What looks like a natural crevasse has been adapted by the Erdukeens into a defensive moat. It is said that flood gates allow the moat to fill with the molten lava in times of attack.

Beyond the black walls, the city itself is built on a fairly flat plateau at the base of the Mouth of Nier, with additional buildings erected on several levels of terraces that ring the mountain.

If any of the players think to ask if the Erdukeen practice slavery, have that Hero preform a **Routine (TN 15) Etiquette Action Skill Roll**. If successful, they will remember having learned that the Erdukeen do use slaves for those tasks deemed unworthy of a warrior. An Erdukeen Hero would know this automatically.

Chronicler's Note: EitP – An Erdukeen Hero would know that this settlement beyond the walls of the city is primarily for workers of the lower castes. Normally, there would be a couple of hundred people at any one time, coming and going from the city and the settlement, known as Jol.

As the Heroes exit the passage into the expanse upon which sits the mighty city of Erduk, they may note and investigate a few places of interest: the barracks, the fields, the pyre, the moat and the gate/wall.

Barracks: These are, for all intents and purposes, slave barracks, made of plain wooden slates. Within are six bunk beds (three beds a piece) each equipped with an iron ring, presumably to chain the slaves to their beds while they sleep.

A cauldron of cold, dried stew or porridge like substance can be found in the corner and dishes with some of this "food" can be found on them. The obvious conclusion is that the slaves within were taken in a hurry.

If the Heroes peek their heads into more than one barracks, (it doesn't matter which two), they will find a body left on a bed.

Chronicler's Note: Feel free to make this discovery as creepy as you like, although no Horror Checks are necessary.

Suggestion: Place the body on the top bunk, lying on its side away from the Heroes. Perhaps place a blanket covering him/her from feet to neck. Then when they turn the body to face them, a look of anguish will be frozen (literally) upon the face.

The Corpse: The corpse is that of a male/female human (gender is immaterial, choose which ever would stir your players more) and is quite dead. The body is cold to the touch...very cold to the touch (although there is no evidence of ice, frost, etc anywhere on the body or bed).

If any Hero makes a successful **Easy (10) Heal Action Skill Roll**, they can say only that the person seemed to freeze to death; at which point the players will ask what the temperature is, to which you'll respond – “a fairly warm day. (If they ask for an exact temperature, say about 80 degrees F).

Possible Action Skill Roll, see Chronicler's Notes below

The Fields: The fields appear to be well tended, but there is evidence of farming implements having been hastily discarded.

If asked what type of crops they are growing, the slave farmers grow things like potatoes, squash, etc.

There doesn't appear to be anything more of note in this area.

The Pyre: Off to one side, still well outside the walls of Erduk, and downwind as well, are a half-dozen or so mass funeral pyres.

While the blaze has dwindled to nothing, the embers are still hot to the touch.

As people began dying of this “cold”, the Autocrat of Erduk declared that this was some sort of plague and had the sick, dying and dead rounded up and their bodies purified by Nier's Flame.

It was hoped that this would stop the plague and protect those not yet afflicted by the disease. Unfortunately, this was a hollow dream.

Possible Action Skill Roll, see Chronicler's Notes below

The Moat: The flume gates built directly into the volcano allow the lava flow to be easily controlled. In times of need, the moat can be filled with the molten rock, making the taking of the city an arduous task even for the most determined invader.

Normally the lava is kept to a trickle, worming its way at the bottom of the moat. Even so, the heat should be palpable and even scorching, should an errant gust of wind cause an updraft of superheated air.

What the Heroes Discover: Oddly enough, there is very little heat coming from the lava flow, although the molten rock can be seen to sluggishly meander through the moat.

Possible Action Skill Roll, see Chronicler's Notes below

The Gate/Walls: The gate into the city has been drawn up and appears sealed.

Chronicler's Notes

Action Skill Rolls for Scene 5

You will notice that there are three (3) separate areas where an Action Skill Roll is available for the Heroes to make.

- The first instance, the body is frozen rigid, as if it had been put in a deep freeze.
- The second instance is the Funeral Pyre's low heat.
- Lastly, the third is the sluggish flow of lava far below.

What all of these areas have in common is the absence of (or highly reduced) heat that should normally be associated with the objects in question.

What is occurring is that a Demonic Infestation is being used to siphon off body heat and any other type of heat and it is being channeled to the breeding pits below in the lava flow.

This Demonic Infestation is not a spell, per se' (although they were conjured through a ritual known by the Demon Brides of the Sorcerer-King, but are thousands of tiny, almost invisible gnat-like Infernals.

When they find a heat source (and people are some of the best as they can feed off their life force as well), one either latches on (as in the case of a person, usually at the back of the neck, but can be anywhere).

In the case of a large heat source, like the Funeral Pyre or the lava flow, they will swarm over it. Obviously, in these cases, they are easier to spot than when they are attached to a person.

Once detected, they can be easily destroyed - just as one would any gnat.

When the Heroes come across any of these three spots, have them perform Perception Action Skill rolls against a difficulty rating as reflected on the table below.

The Perception roll is much harder to discover on the body, as it is a lone Heat Gnat and dead.

While The Perception rolls in the other two areas are easier as there is a swarm and they are moving. While they are nigh invisible, they do reflect light and flicker like stars.

Second Check – Once the tiny Infernal is noticed, then the Heroes will need to try and figure out what they are.

Should one of the Heroes be a Sarishan Sorcerer-Priest, Sarishan Binder or a Sarishan Holy Champion, such as being a member of the Order of the Inner Demon, then there is no need to roll, they will be able to identify the Infernal Infestation immediately.

Any other type of Hero will need to attempt a **Daunting (TN 25) Knowledge (The Planes) Action Skill Roll**. If Successful, the Hero will know that these creatures, called *Heat Gnats*, are Infernal in nature and kill by siphoning off heat and the life force off its victim. However, the use of so many is unprecedented and the Hero is unsure what the Infernal Infestation is being used for, other than, perhaps, as a means of conquering Erduk without any bloodshed.

The Hero will also know that once a Heat Gnat kills its host (or the heat source is gone), it will eventually die as well, unless it can find another host or heat source.

Should the Heroes discover the Infestation swarming about the Pyre or the Lava Flow, they can go back to the body and easily discover the one attached to the dead body.

Perception Action Skill Roll	Location	Difficulty (TN)
	Body	Amazing (30)
	Pyre	Daunting (25)
	Lava Flow	Challenging (20)
Knowledge Action Skill Roll		
Sarishan	N/A	Auto Success
Any Other	N/A	Daunting (25)

Paranoia – If they Heroes take the time to inspect their own bodies, they will discover that each has a Heat Gnat attached as well.

They can take it off, but another will soon take its place. Any Hero who succeeded in the **Knowledge (The Planes) Action Skill Roll** can tell them to relax. It takes at least 48 hours before the gnat's siphoning will manifest into actual symptoms.

Discern Residue – Once identified, a Sorcerer may wish to cast the spell, Discern Residue. Doing so will afford the caster a strange vista. Describe it as a shimmering haze, as one would see on a very hot day, but this one appears to be pulling the heat from the three areas and leads over the walls of the city proper.

Once the Heroes have done all they can in the area and are ready to continue, go to Scene Six.

Troubleshooting: What if the Heroes **DON'T** discover the Infernal Infestation?

It doesn't matter to the flow of the story. They can still venture forth, but the interactions they face in Scene Seven and Eight will be very different from the outcome if they had discovered it.

Again, don't worry. As long as the story is not completely derailed, you should allow the Heroes to rise and fall due to their actions and party composition.

Scene Six

Breaching the Wall

Key Concepts: The Heroes gain entry into the city proper and are met with a grisly sight.

Once the Heroes have completed their investigation of the village outside the walls of Erduk, they will most likely seek a way inside.

When they are ready to continue, read or paraphrase the following:

Standing before the cyclopean walls, it is little wonder that there is no record of the city of Erduk ever falling.

Though pitted and scarred by the ages the black basalt stones gleam as if recently polished. The Erdukeen say that it is the tears of those who must breach these walls that keep them so clean. Faced with the same conundrum, one can empathize with the would-be invaders.

Only the large carrion birds that circle high overhead may cross over the walls to the interior effortlessly.

By way of a quick inspection, it is obvious that the walls are unmanned by sentinels and that the massive gate of Erduk is shut tight.

The only movements they are able to discern are the large carrion birds that land on the other side of the wall.

With the objective being to enter the city, the Heroes may try the following stratagems. Obviously this it is impossible to anticipate every one of the Heroes plans and the Chronicler should adjudicate their actions based upon the situation within the city.

WHAT'S GOING ON WITHIN THE CITY

The Erdukeens have been badly hurt by what they believe is a plague and what the Hierophant of Erduk proclaims is a punishment directly from Nier.

For the Erdukeens, heat and light are considered blessing from their God, Nier. This inexplicable loss of heat and the fact that their people are literally freezing to death for no apparent reason has them quite spooked, with many, most notably the priests, calling this a Doom laid upon them by Nier to show His displeasure. What actions (or inactions) could have caused said displeasure is unknown.

The first struck down by the plague were the merchants that traded with the Nol Dappans for arms and armor. This later spread to the village outside the walls and eventually to within the fortress itself.

Messengers sent to Nol Dappa have not returned and fearing the worst, the Autocrat has sealed the main gate that connects Erduk to the dwarven Enclave.

But even sealing of the gates and the mass cremation of the dead has done little to stem the tide of the Freezing Plague.

Fearing the worst, the people began to clamor for the safety of the walls of Erduk. The Autocrat relented and allowed those who should no signs of the illness to enter, but eventually all began to develop symptoms of the plague – violent shaking, cold perspiration and a breath mist when exhaling.

The Hierophant became panicked when it was discovered that even the sacred Pillar of Nier, a towering inferno that is said to be the very drops of the God's blood that ignited upon hitting the ground, had dwindled to half its diameter and was giving off the heat of a large funeral pyre.

Calling attention to the fact that neither he nor his inner circle of priests have fallen victim to the disease, demanded that the 'old ways' that had fallen

to the wayside, be reinstated, in force; the old ways being human sacrifice by being tossed bodily into the Pillar of Nier.

At first the Autocrat resisted such a drastic measure, but when first his family and then he began to feel the chill of the plague, he relented.

It was at this unfortunate juncture that the Diplomatic Emissaries from the Crusade. While the Autocrat treated them with what courtesy and hospitality he could muster under the circumstances, he made it quite clear that they could not allow them to leave for fear of spreading the plague to those outside the walls.

The Hierophant demanded that the diplomats be made as an offering to Nier, but the Autocrat fought against this. His power to command eroding with each day that the plague ran rampant, he finally relented, but was able to win the safety of the Lady Calinda, the head of the diplomats, as a concession from the Hierophant.

After ordering a contingent of men to man the walls and seal the gate, the Autocrat and his court huddle within his audience chamber, awaiting the final judgment of Nier, while the Hierophant gleefully conducts bloody rituals that have not been seen in centuries.

As for the men guarding the walls, many of them are dead, while the remaining few appear to be more like ice warriors than the Fire Lord's elite soldiers.

Should the Heroes call out for passage to the city, they will not get a response.

Unless they have some sort of magic to get them across the walls, the most obvious way is to climb over them.

Though ancient and bearing the pits, marks and scars of countless attacks, the stone is remarkably smooth. Climbing the wall without any assistance is a feat worthy of song. Should any Hero attempt this feat, have them attempt an **Amazing (TN 30) Athletics Action Skill Roll**, Seeing the walls are sixty feet in height, the hero will very well have to succeed in several such rolls (each roll successfully allows the Hero to climb half their full pace)

Those that planned ahead and have at least forty feet of rope and some sort of grappling hook, (or an improvised one – a rope tied to a bent sword will do) will need to make a check to climb the wall.

No Check is needed to see if the grappling hook actually catches as they have no time pressure and can try as many times as they like. – So why make them roll?

Once the rope and hook is attached, have them perform **Routine (TN 15) Athletics Action Skill Rolls**. If unsuccessful, even by a margin greater than 5, they do not fall (unless they make a critical failure by rolling double 1's on their Action Die), but they of course make no progress and slam against the wall making quite a ruckus.

Why make the check? Because on the second failure, the Harpies that are eating the carcass of an unfortunate Erdukeen, will hear the noise and fly over to investigate. Should they find a dangling Hero, they will try to dislodge him and make him fall.

The Harpies are about 50' away from the heroes so they arrive to harry the heroes **4 ticks** later.

Remember every time a hero who is climbing takes damage they must perform an Athletics (Vi) Action Skill Roll against a TN equal to any damage suffered to avoid falling.

Heroes may attack while holding onto the rope but of course may only use one hand and may not progress further up the rope.

For Harpy Stats Refer to Appendix 2

Once a Hero has mounted the rampart, he/she will see the following:

Standing on the ramparts of Erduk, you have a clear view of the magnificent courtyard below. Built to suit its original giant inhabitants, the courtyard could easily accommodate a Milandisian Keep and still have enough space for a full parade ground. The Erdukeen have built a few buildings over the years, but the area is still quite spacious.

Off to one side is one of the many towers that segment the massive walls of the city. This particular tower flanks the main gate.

On the opposite side, on the rampart itself, are a few strange looking avian creatures, presumably some sort of carrion birds like vultures, feasting on an obscured meal.

Across the courtyard one of the larger buildings appears to have a line of people being corralled into it. They are too far to yell to or to make out who is being herded and by whom.

Chronicler's Note: EitP – Should the Erdukeen Hero be the one seeing this, he will know that the large building is the entryway into the Erdukeen Temple of Nier, known as the Temple of the Eternal Flame. Within the temple, one of the Pillars of Nier is enshrined.

The Erdukeen will also note that it is very odd that the walls are not manned.

At this point, there are a variety of things that could occur.

- The other Heroes climb up the rope (use the same rules as before)
- Enter the tower so that the gate may be lowered for the others to enter.
- Investigate the “strange bird creatures” feasting on an Erdukeen corpse.

Entering the Gate Tower

Should a Hero enter the Gate Tower to lower the gate, read or paraphrase the following:

As you enter the gate tower, you note that it is spacious enough to accommodate up to six guards comfortably. In the very center is a winch and chain mechanism that presumably lowers the massive city gate.

Unfortunately, the chamber is not unoccupied. Within are four Erdukeen warriors that, at first appear to be statues - that is until their heads slowly turns in your direction.

As they begin to draw their weapons, you note that their skin has a slight bluish hue, as if they were frostbitten and their breath comes out in small clouds of chilly mist.

These warriors are reaching the last stages of the Heat Gnats' siphoning cycle. Without some sort of medical attention, they will be dead within days. However, before that time, they plan on executing their orders to the best of their ability – those orders being to defend the city from invaders/intruders, such as the Heroes.

Note that the Erdukeen here are Minion status due to their impaired condition, so even a single Hero shouldn't have too much trouble incapacitating them.

The trick comes on **Tick 10** of the combat – that's when the Harpies feasting outside come to investigate the ruckus. The Harpies are about 50' away from the

gate house so they arrive to harry the heroes **4 ticks** later.

For Stats Refer to Appendix 3

Opening the Gate

There is a lever that releases the winch when pulled. Unfortunately, it only lowers one side of the gate (there's an exact duplicate of the winch system in the opposite tower (did I mention that this gate was *MASSIVE*?

If the Heroes don't wish (or can't) climb the rope, they can attempt to scramble through the opening left by the now slightly ajar gate. To squeeze through the aperture, will require 5 Ticks, regardless of their Pace/Movement.

Investigating the "Strange Avian Creatures

Should a Hero investigate the "strange avian creatures", read or paraphrase the following:

As you get closer to the "birds", you note that they are the largest buzzards you've ever seen. With their thrashing about and unmistakable sound of flesh tearing, these beasts appear in the middle of a grisly meal.

If they get within twenty feet of the "birds", continue with:

As you get closer, one of the dark feathered birds stops hopping and thrashing about with its wings and turns its neck to face you.

Horribly, the creature is not an ordinary carrion bird – it looks at you with very human-like eyes and indeed has female features. Its cruel smile reveals rows of serrated teeth thick with fresh bits of raw meat. Smacking its blood stained lips it screeches out for its kin.

These creatures are Harpies – a bizarre amalgamation of carrion birds and humanoid females. They have come down from their aeries in the surrounding mountains and have begun to fest on the dying Erdukeen warriors, which are quickly over powered in their weakened state.

As in the case of investigating the Gate Tower, should battle ensue, the Erdukeen warriors within the tower room will come out to investigate in **Tick 10**, they are about 50' away so they arrive **4 ticks** later.

For Dwarf & Harpy Stats Refer to Appendix 3

Chronicler's Note: EitP – An Erdukeen Hero seeing the Harpies will be slightly surprised as they usually never venture down from their aeries in the mountains. Perhaps the smell of burning flesh from the funeral pyres brought them down.

The Hero will also note that for an Erdukeen, it is an honor to die in battle than of an illness. Best to kill the Erdukeen warriors than to let them live. This information can also be ascertained if a Hero asks and successfully makes an **Etiquette Check TN 15**.

Chronicler's Note: Make sure to take notice of the way the Heroes left the Gate (whether open or closed) and whether they looted the bodies of the Erdukeen warriors. These will factor into the negotiations with the Autocrat in Scene Eight.

Once the Heroes are done in this area and are ready to continue, ask then where they wish to go.

If they want to investigate the line of people, continue with Scene Seven.

If they wish to skip this and go straight to the main entry into the city proper, go to Scene Eight.

Troubleshooting: Should the Heroes try to attract the attention of the Hierophant's priests that are escorting the sacrifices into the temple, they will be too far away and focused on their duties to notice.

Scene Seven

The Pillar of Nier

Key Concepts: The Heroes find the Swords of Nier sliding back to their ancient ways and a possibility of scoring points with the Autocrat.

Once the Heroes have gained entry into Erduk's Courtyard, they will most likely investigate the strange line of people being herded into a large building.

Chronicler's Note: What's going on? – The Hierophant of Nier believes that a plague has been cast down upon Erduk due to Nier's displeasure and so has begun mass sacrifices (mainly the commoner/slave population) to Nier. These sacrifices take the form of people being tossed into the Pillar of Nier. Obviously, this is not having the desired effect and the plague is not abating.

When the Heroes approach the line of people being herded into the building, read or paraphrase the following:

As you approach the line of building entering the large building before you, you note that they all have a bluish hue to the skin and a palpable chill is in the air. They all appear to be moving sluggishly, as if drugged or in a befuddled state.

The man corralling them through the entryway though, appears to be quite alert and yells out to you – “You there - Halt!”

The above assumes that the Heroes approach the people openly. Frankly, there is little cover for them to do otherwise, however if they come up with some ingenious method to do so, modify the above as needed.

Assuming the Erdukeen priest sees and approaches them, continue with the following:

After the Erdukeen yells out for others to assist him, he demands that you state your business and intentions.

Allow the Heroes to state their reasons for penetrating the city. By the time they finish, four other Nierite priests show up and are forming a small skirmish line, in case the Heroes attack.

While the players are free to do as they wish, attacking the Erdukeen priests would be a mistake in their overall goals. The priests have not made any hostile moves against them and negotiating a treaty of alliance with the Crusade would best be served without killing those whose aid you require.

If the Heroes Attack: This is a worst-case scenario and could well spell defeat for the mission. If this occurs, the Hierophant will rush outside with other high level priests and defend against the attack. Unless the Heroes immediately surrender, go directly to Conclusion B. If they surrender, their weapons will be taken from them and they will be led directly to the Hierophant.

If the Heroes Don't Attack: Assuming the Heroes keep their heads and explain why they are here, the priests will not attack and instead escort them to speak with the Hierophant.

<p>Chronicler's Note: EitP – An Erdukeen Hero will easily identify the man as wearing the emblematic cloak of a priest of Nier. The Hero can also explain that the priesthood has always been subject to the commands of the Autocrat. A man known as the Hierophant leads the priesthood.</p>

Meeting the Hierophant

When the Heroes are escorted in, read or paraphrase the following:

You are escorted into the building and through a winding corridor. The line of people is immense and must number in the hundreds. The priests of Nier eventually lead you into an immense chamber dominated by a circular pit from which a pillar of flame rises up to the vaulted ceiling high above you.

Before the pillar, on the uppermost landing is a tall and imposing figure. Resplendent in rich red robes, accentuated with stylized flames sown with golden thread, the Erdukeen appears to be in his forties yet has the bearing and radiant strength of a youth half his age. Beside him is a woman looking dazed and trembling – though whether from fear or cold, is unknown.

About the lower most tiers are Erdukeen prostrating themselves before the roaring flames. Many of them appear to have the tell tale bluish skin hue, while others shiver uncontrollably, as if in the middle of a snowstorm.

With a stentorian voice he announces to the assembly and to his deity, “Lord Nier, please accept this meager offering in the hopes of appeasing your righteous anger. We beg forgiveness and ask for mercy in the lifting of this plague from our people and this, Your city of the Faithful!”

With the end of his impassioned supplication, he gently nudges the woman off the step and directly into the Pillar of Nier. In an instant she is consumed, becoming ash and little more in the blink of an eye.

It is at this point that the Heroes will probably wish to intercede in some manner. If not, the scene will be repeated over and over again, until they do. The Hierophant has many logs to stoke the fires of Nier.

It is impossible to anticipate what the Heroes plan to do at this stage, the crux of the matter will depend on whether they have discovered the Infernal Infestation or not.

The Heroes Have NOT discovered the Infernal Infestation

If the Heroes have failed to discover the Infernal Infestation, then when they confront the Hierophant they will not be able to convince him that the sacrifices are useless as the Hierophant is quite fanatical and convinced that his actions are correct.

The best result that can occur here is that they accentuate the fact that they are on a diplomatic mission from the Crusade and ostensibly, the King of Milandir. The Hierophant will say that he concerned only with abating the plague by appeasing Nier and order a pair of priests to deliver them to the Autocrat. However, the sacrifices will continue.

If the Heroes decide to attack, remind them first that, even sick, there are over a hundred Erdukeen warriors in the room, besides the fact that the Hierophant himself is a powerful priest of Nier.

If they still persist, go directly to Conclusion B.

The Heroes HAVE discovered the Infernal Infestation

If the Heroes have discovered the Infernal Infestation and try to convince the Hierophant that this is the cause of the plague, have the Hero attempting to convince him make their case. If the argument is clear and convincing, using the evidence of the Heat Gnat, etc. to support their point, award them a bonus to their Persuasion Action Skill Roll, ranging from +1 to +5... of course a particularly well-crafted augment coupled with some impressive roleplaying can always result in an automatic success (as long as the player's Hero is capable of such a feat, a dark-kin savage is not going to get much respect either way)

The Heroes may attempt a **Persuasion action skill roll** against the Hierophant's passive Empathy value (TN: 20), the **Hierophant disposition to the Heroes is currently Dislike and thus they suffer a -3 to this action skill roll.**

Any hero who also preforms an **Empathy action skill roll** against the Hierophant's **Discipline defense (26)** to determine his Disposition gains a **+10 bonus to this roll, as the Hierophant is doing little to show his apparent dislike.**

If successful, the Hierophant will remain unconvinced, but will agree to halt any further sacrifices until the Autocrat hears from the Heroes.

If unsuccessful, then the Hierophant will remain unconvinced and continue with the sacrifices.

However, he will have the Heroes delivered to the Autocrat, nevertheless.

Using Discern Residue: If one of the Heroes uses Discern Residue, they will "see" that haze as a blinding ball of light as the Infestation has not only infected the people, but has also been leeching heat from the Holy Pillar of Nier itself. If there is a Erdukeen Hero, he will note that the Pillar appears "diminished" in size and heat, if not power.

Strangely, none of the priests here or the Hierophant himself is infected with the Infestation. This may lead to the Heroes jumping to the conclusion that the Hierophant is behind this, or at least in cahoots with the perpetrators of the Infestation.

Once the Scene has played itself out, continue to Scene Eight.

Scene Eight

The Autocrat

Key Concepts: The Heroes meet with the Autocrat and hopefully have gained his trust or at least his respect through their actions.

When ready, read or paraphrase the following:

The trek through the fortress, that is the inner portion of the city of Erduk, is like a walk over the snowy caps of the Corlathian Mountains. It seems as if every bit of warmth stored in the stones have been bleed dry. A thin coating of condensation can be seen dripping down the walls. At times this droplets pool in the recesses left by beautiful bas-relief artwork depicting various victories by the Swords of Nier throughout their history.

After many twists and turns, you arrive at a pair of copper banded doors. With a flourish, one of the escorting priests opens the pair of doors with a flourish and announces you to the Autocrat and his court as "Emissaries of the Crusade".

Seated on a large stone throne at the opposite end of the chamber is a large man almost obscured by thick and numerous furs that are draped upon him.

Strewn about him, as if seeking warmth from their stricken leader, a few score members of the Autocrat's Court, mostly warriors, lie shivering, covered in as many furs. Some are no longer drawing breath.

Numerous fires are being constantly stoked and the room is brightly lit by the many torches fitted around the chamber, but they do little to counter the icy chill that permeates the Autocrat's throne room.

Amazing frescos adorn the walls of the Autocrat's Hall. What appears to be a much older version of the masterpiece, the End of Mercy, wherein the dead Valinor, the Mercy of Nier, is being carried by her weeping brother, Vengeance of Nier across a battlefield, takes up the entirety of the back wall of the chamber.

Obviously, the Autocrat and his personal bodyguards, not to mention his royal court, have all been stricken with the Infestation.

Let the Heroes approach and make their pitch to the Autocrat as to why they are here and what they want.

The following is what the Autocrat knows and will part with freely:

- The plague has devastated his city and decimated the ranks of his warriors.
- Even if he wanted to assist Osric in his Crusade, he would be unable to field more than a handful of warriors.
- Some of the first stricken with the plague were merchants who were trading the Nol Dappan dwarves – food stuffs and other luxury items for their high quality weapons and armor.
- His Seneschal and a unit of warriors were sent to investigate the matter, but never returned.
- He ordered the doors that connect Erduk with the dwarven Enclave sealed, but it did not stop the spread of the plague. They have not heard from the dwarves since.
- The Hierophant believes that the plague is a manifestation of Nier's anger for some slight and has begun to sacrifice commoners to the Holy Pillar of Nier in the hopes of gaining His mercy.
- The original emissaries from Osric were sacrificed as well, except for the Lady Calinda, who he managed to spare.
- She has also come down with the plague and is in a guest quarter being attended to as best they can.

The interaction with the Autocrat is governed by the actions taken by the Heroes. These actions

have points assigned to them and a certain total is necessary for him to agree to assist the Crusade. See the table below:

Action	Yes	No
Identified Demon Brides	3	0
Left Demon Brides Alone	1	* See Next Entry
Defeated Demon Brides	5	0
Burned Corpse outside Erduk	5	0
Discovered Infernal Infestation	5	0
Used Discern Residue to Track	3	0
Left Gate to City open	-5	3
Killed Erdukeen Warriors	5	-3
Killed Harpies	5	-3
Looted Erdukeen Bodies	-10	0
Attacked Priests/Hierophant	-5	0

Add up the points the Heroes accumulated and see the response below.

-25 to 0: The Autocrat is offended by your actions. However, if you should investigate what is occurring below in Nol Dappa, he will release the Lady Calinda unharmed into your custody.

1 to 9: The Autocrat feels sorry for Osric, if you are the best he can muster. Assuming the Heroes will investigate what occurred in Nol Dappa, he will assign 100 Elite warriors to fight in the Crusade.

10 to 28: The Autocrat finds you to be worthy warriors and would give 1000 of his elite warriors the chance at an honorable death fighting against the Infernals; assuming the Heroes will investigate what occurred in Nol Dappa

29 to 34: The Autocrat finds you to be worthy warriors and ones that respect their ways and traditions. Assuming the Heroes are able to lift the plague from the city and discover what has occurred in Nol Dappa, he will pledge the full support of Erduk to the Crusade.

Chronicler's Note: The Heroes can't hide any items looted from the Erdukeen warriors. They are fairly bog and bulky and not easily hidden. It will be obvious if they did so – even if the Autocrat has to send warriors to investigate the bodies and note that they've been stripped.

Whatever the outcome, unless they attacked the Hierophant, the Heroes should be pointed at entering the dwarven Enclave of Nol Dappa.

Continue to Conclusion

Conclusions & Endings

Conclusion A

The Autocrat weakly points to a pair of guards that have not yet been stricken with the plague. "Show them to the entry way to Nol Dappa and give them passage. Once they have entered reseal the

doors. Should they be successful, in lifting the plague, then we will rejoice their return.

"Should they fail, then let the City of the Thousand Laments be their tomb!"

Conclusion B

Congratulations!

You've attacked a warrior-priest and have kicked a hornet's nest that has gotten you run out of the city or possibly dead.

Unfortunately, this means that you are ineligible to play Hard Point 4 of this series.

Better luck in Hard Point 5.

The End

Experience Point Summary

Awarding experience points is easy. Sum up the experience listed on the table below for each objective that the heroes accomplished. Additionally, you can grant the Role-Playing Bonus, or any fraction therein, individually to each hero. In fact, we urge you to carefully consider this bonus; granting values in the middle of the range, with higher amounts for players who acted in character, even in challenging situations. Similarly, players who consistently act out of character should receive values at the low end of the range, even 0 if that would be appropriate.

Objective	XP value
Inquired about Tilman Respectfully	30
Successfully Identified the Demon Brides of the Sorcerer-King	25
Defeated the Demon Brides of the Sorcerer-King	40
Discovered Infernal Infestation	30
Convinced Hierophant to Postpone Sacrifices	30
Achieved a Result of 10-28 on Autocrat Table	35
Achieved a Result of 29-34 on Autocrat Table	50
Role-Playing Award	0-10
Total Experience Possible	250

Treasure Summary

Any item listed in the summary below is available for a character to keep; alternatively, the party may elect to sell the item for half-value. Items of unusual quality or that possess magical properties will have an entry listed on the *Chronicle Page* associated with this adventure (under Items Found); if the party did not find that item, strike that from the list. Any entry on the *Chronicle Page* is available to all characters who completed the adventure, unless it specifically states otherwise on the *Chronicle Page* or in the Treasure Summary.

On rare occasions, an item may have a certificate issued for it. In such situations, the item may only be kept by whichever character receives the certificate.

Living creatures, be they animals, dominated monsters, minions and so forth, may not be kept from a scenario unless specifically allowed for on the *Chronicle Page* or a stand-alone certificate.

It is okay for the heroes to form relationships with NPCs, but these cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts and influence must also be specifically listed as Story Achievements on a *Chronicle Page*.

Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some heroes. A hero may steal, and keep the proceeds, up to 5% of the listed obtainable Gc from the adventure. If the hero attempts to steal an item that is worth more than 100 Gc that is of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), or is a magical item; the character will be

caught. Being caught stealing in this fashion, imposes a fine equal to five times the value of the item that was stolen; if the hero does not have sufficient coin, then items will be taken from the hero to cover the remainder that is owing.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or gold acquired for things it later finds unreasonable but that were allowed at the time; although, the circumstances under which such an action will be taken are unusual at best.

The heroes should generally be awarded all items for encounters they defeat unless stated otherwise in the adventure. This includes guards giving the heroes items if they subdue or keep alive minions with those items.

The listed value beside items in the treasure summary is the sale price and represents one tenth of the item's normal market value in Gc.

F o u n d I t e m s

There are no real chances for the players to acquire any items or find any treasure in this adventure. Any equipment they may have then off the Dwarves is quickly confiscated, the Harpies are in essence naked, and the Daemon Brides, once *Vanquished*, simply turn into black ash blown away by the wind.

Appendix 1

The Demon Brides of the Sorcerer King

Luckily for our heroes the daemon brides are in a much weakened state, having just conducted a rigorous ritual and given birth to... something.

These were once simple human women, but centuries of exposure to the hells and being the subject of countless rituals and mothering countless infernal horrors have “gifted” all three terrible powers.

Bride #1		d10, Med, Humanoid (Infernal)	
Elite [Demon Touched] (Tier 1.5)			
Avoidance	Fortitude	Discipline	
19	18	19	
St (Wo)	45 (3)	Pace	30'
AR	2	Initiative	4d10
Fate	1	Fate Score	4
Attacks	<i>Claw: +5 (a)</i>		d4 (d10)
	Speed: 3, Range: Melee		
	<i>Bite: +4 (a)</i>		d8 (1d10)
	Speed: 4, Range: Melee		
Special	<i>Gout of Ash: +4 (a)</i>		2d4 (d10)
	Speed (Recovery): 3 (+12)		
	Range: 25' Cone		
	<i>Special: If this attack also bypasses the target's Fortitude they are also Blind for d4 ticks.</i>		
Talents	Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Mastery: Unarmed		
Traits	Fel Sight, Special Attack, Natural Armor, Ravenous, Regeneration (Speed (Strain): +0 (10), Heal 10 stamina)		
Flaws	Atmospheric Disturbance: Area becomes bitterly cold, Vulnerability: Sarishan Steel, Vulnerability: Silver (Liked to Regeneration)		
Skills	(+4, 20, 16) Acrobatics, Arcanum (Sorcery), Athletics, Melee (Unarmed), Perception, Empathy		
Gear	Brides Grown (Dissipates with her when vanquished)		
Encounter Tier Value: 2.5			

Bride #2		d10, Med, Humanoid (Infernal)	
Elite [Demon Touched] (Tier 1.5)			
Avoidance	Fortitude	Discipline	
18	19	18	
St (Wo)	45 (3)	Pace	35' (Fly: Perfect)
AR	2	Initiative	4d10
Fate	1	Fate Score	4
Attacks	<i>Claw: +4 (a)</i>		d4 (d10) +5
	Speed: 4, Range: Melee		
	<i>Bite: +4 (a)</i>		d8 (1d10)
	Speed: 4, Range: Melee		
Special	<i>Cry of Anguish: +4 (f)</i>		No Damage
	Speed (Recovery): 3 (+6)		
	Range: 20' Radius		
	Effect: Push d4		
Maneuvers	Passing Strike		
Talents	Speed of the Damned		
Traits	Fel Sight, Special Attack, Natural Armor, Regeneration (Speed (Strain): +0 (10), Heal 10 stamina)		
Flaws	Atmospheric Disturbance: Area becomes bitterly cold, Vulnerability: Sarishan Steel, Vulnerability: Silver (Liked to Regeneration)		
Skills	(+4, 20, 16) Acrobatics, Arcanum (Sorcery), Athletics, Melee (Unarmed), Perception, Empathy		
Gear	Brides Grown (Dissipates with her when vanquished)		
Encounter Tier Value: 2.5			

Bride #3		d10, Med, Humanoid (Infernal)	
Elite [Demon Touched] (Tier 1.5)			
Avoidance	Fortitude	Discipline	
18	20	18	
St (Wo)	45 (3)	Pace	30'
AR	2	Initiative	4d10
Fate	1	Fate Score	4
Attacks	<i>Claw: +4 (a)</i>		d4 (d10) +5
	Speed: 4, Range: Melee		
	<i>Bite: +4 (a)</i>		d8 (1d10)
	Speed: 4, Range: Melee		
Maneuvers	Stunning Strike		
Talents	Leadership T1, Weapon Training: Unarmed.		
Traits	Fel Sight, Special Ability: Possession (Limited to Statues), Regeneration (Speed (Strain): +0 (10), Heal 10 stamina)		
Flaws	<i>Atmospheric Disturbance:</i> Area becomes bitterly cold, <i>Vulnerability:</i> Sarishan Steel, <i>Vulnerability:</i> Silver (Liked to Regeneration)		
Skills	(+4, 20, 16) Acrobatics, Arcanum (Sorcery), Athletics, Melee (Balanced, Unarmed), Perception, Empathy		
Gear	Brides Grown (Dissipates with her when vanquished)		
Encounter Tier Value: 2.5			

Unlike the standard possession power this creature may possess statues and only statues, which do not possess a discipline defense. The statistics for a *possessed statue* have been presented below.

Possessed Statue		d8, Med, Construct (Infernal)	
Common (Tier 1.0)			
Avoidance	Fortitude	Discipline	
18	20	18	
St (Wo)	20 (1)	Pace	20'
AR	5	Initiative	3d10
Attacks	<i>Stone Sword: +4 (a)</i>		d8 (d10) +5
	Speed: 6, Range: Melee		
Maneuvers	Stunning Strike		
Traits	Mighty Foe, Natural Armor x2, Powerful Attack		
Flaws	None		
Skills	(+4, 20, 16) Acrobatics, Arcanum (Sorcery), Athletics, Melee (Balanced, Unarmed), Perception, Empathy		
Gear	None		
Encounter Tier Value: 1.0			

Passing Strike

As you pass an opponent, you strike home

Requirements: Quickness 6, Melee (any) +6

Category: Base

Attack: Avoidance

Speed (Recovery): +3 (2)

Range: Melee (See Below)

Effect: *Weapon*, you may move, perform a melee attack, and move again, up to your full Pace.

Weapons: Any Melee Weapon

Special, Advanced Maneuvers: When this technique is combined with another to create a new maneuver, it allows you to move, perform a maneuver, and move again.

Possession

Requirements: Infernal (Demon, Fiend), Spirit, Shade

Benefit: Some creatures have the ability to possess Humanoids, Ssanu, or Beasts by taking over their bodies for their own purposes. (1/Day, Speed: 5, Duration: Instant, Range: Melee) a creature may "leap into" the body of a target and attempt to possess the target. The possessing creature must attempt a *trained* skill roll against the targets Discipline; if successful the creature has successfully possessed the body and *may* stay in the body indefinitely unless pushed out by the possessed creature or subject to select spells/abilities. When possessing a creature the possessing creature is subject to the following rules.

- **Physical Attributes:** The possessing creature utilizes all the physical attributes of their target, or in the case of none-player character simply utilizes that creature's base die for all its physical attributes.
- **Special Attacks:** Although the possessing creature may not use any of its own special attacks (if any) it may use special attacks of the possessed creature.
- **Talents:** The possessing creature may not utilize any of the possessed creature's talents, but may utilize its own including, if the creature is capable of speaking, spell casting talents.

As mentioned above, the Spirit of the creature possessed may attempt to force control over its own body. Once per scene, the Possessed may attempt a Metal or Arcanum (Meditation) Action Skill Roll against the possessing creature's *Discipline* defense. If successful the creature regains control of their own body for the remainder of the scene, unless the possessing spirit succeeds in an attempt to repossess the target. If the possessed creature surpasses the possessing creature's *Discipline* defense by more than 5 the possessing creature is forced out of the target's body, Regardless of the effect, the possessing spirit suffers *Push* 4.

Appendix 2

In this encounter they face **3 Harpies**, a **Mob of Guards**.. or both at the same time.

Harpy		d8, Med, Monstrosity	
Common (Tier 1.0)			
	Avoidance	Fortitude	Discipline
	18	16	17
St (Wo)	26 (1)	Pace	10' & Fly 40' (Agile)
AR	3	Initiative	3d10
Attacks	<i>Talon</i> : +3 (a) Speed: 3, Range: Melee		d4 (d10) +2
	<i>Bite</i> : +3 (a) Speed: 4, Range: Melee		d8 (1d10)
Special	<i>Piercing Screech</i> : +3 (f) Speed (Recovery): 4 (+9) Range: 30' (All targets within range) Effect : If this attack also bypasses the target's Discipline they are also Pushed for d4 ticks. <i>Special</i> : Harpies are immune to this effect		2d6 (d8)
Maneuvers	Passing Strike		
Flaws	Bestial Intellect		
Skills	(+3, 18, 15) Acrobatics, Athletics, Melee (Unarmed), Perception		
Gear	None		
Encounter Tier Value: 1.0			

Erdukeen Guards		Pack of 4	
Minions (Tier 1.0)		d8, Med, Humanoid (Dwarf)	
	Avoidance	Fortitude	Discipline
	14	18	17
St (Wo)	1 (1)	Pace	20'
AR	5	Initiative	3d10
Attacks	<i>Flamberge</i> : +3 (a) Speed: 6, Range: Melee		d10 (d8)
	<i>Light Crossbow</i> : +3 (a) Speed (Reload): 2 (8), Range: 40' (750')		2d6 (d8)
Maneuvers	Mighty Swing		
Talents	Advanced Armor Training		
Skills	(+3, 18, 15) Athletics, Melee (Balanced, Unarmed), Empathy, Perception, Ranged (Marksman)		
Gear	Flamberge, Brigandine		
Encounter Tier Value: 1.0			