



## XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS

### **Choir of Angels** **Covenant of Light Faction Scenario #9** **An Adventure for 9<sup>th</sup> Level Characters** **(Scaled for 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Levels of Play)**

**Written by: August Hahn**  
**Factionmaster: August Hahn**

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

Sources: Eberron Campaign Setting (Keith Baker, Bill Slavicsek, James Wyatt), Secrets of Xen'drik (Keith Baker, Jason Bulmahn, Amber Scott), Book of Vile Darkness (Monte Cook, Bruce Cordell), Book of Exalted Deeds (James Wyatt, Darrin Drader, Christopher Perkins)

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# Adventure Background

During the founding of the Covenant of Light, there were many long days and nights spent creating the infrastructure for the organizations and gathering its forces. During this time, Lady Lirashana spent a great deal of time as an incarnated celestial on Eberron, managing the burgeoning effort directly. During this time, her divine spirit began to wane as she became increasingly mortal. When it became apparent that she was in danger of losing her exalted existence, she regretfully relinquished command of the Covenant to her inner circle of trusted lieutenants and re-ascended.

She did not leave them empty handed. In addition to her wisdom and continued leadership from afar, each of her five chosen ones was given a small reliquary with a single feather from the lady's wing down. These platinum capsules, strung on cords made from Lirashana's braided hair, provided encouragement and moral support during the first few months of the Covenant's campaigning.

Now, three difficult years later, only one of the chosen five remain. The others have been lost to the struggles of their calling or the machinations of those in Eberron who would rather plot in the darkness than live in the Light. The Fallen Four have been interred with honor in different places, their graves either well tended and remembered fondly or sadly abandoned due to the pressures of the real world (One such grave is detailed in CVN 4 – Brave Soldiers).

Their reliquaries, stored in a special chamber at Radiant Hold, the military stronghold of the Covenant of Light, have been archived and largely forgotten about because of the stresses recent months. Unfortunately for the faction, there are those who remember the Fallen Four and the gleaming amulets of celestial light they once wore.

Using an infiltrator of considerable skill, the Voice of the Storm (one of the leaders of the Cabal of Shadows) has managed to steal the relics from Radiant Hold and leave befouled fakes in their place. With these exalted items, the villain seeks to move ahead with a terrible plan to discredit the Covenant of Light among the people of Stormreach.

Through its agents, the Voice of the Storm has created a quartet of false "angels", demons disguised through the use of a powerful obscuring magic to appear as celestial beings. By setting them loose to cause misery and havoc, all with visible Covenant symbols and minions dressed as Scions of the Light, the Cabal lord intends to cause enough death and damage to permanently cripple the reputation of the Covenant. After all, without public support, there is little lasting good the Covenant of Light can do in Xen'drik.

Prior to the PCs getting involved, the attempt has been a mixed success. The fiends used in the project have had unexpected reactions to the glamor magic worked upon them. Three have scattered to various parts of the city while a fourth went on a mad killing spree through the House Deneith enclave before being brought down by city guards and private security.

For now, the incident has been contained and while the representatives of House Deneith are maintaining tight rumor control, they are none-too-pleased with the Covenant and have demanded that damages be paid and an explanation for the attack given at once. The body of the "angel" has been sent to the city's necrology expert for independent analysis as well.

This is where the PCs come in. Ordered by Lord Corvalis to meet with Grave, the necromancer in charge of the divine autopsy, they are to determine where this creature came from and why a creature of the Light would turn so murderous.

# Adventure Synopsis

The adventure begins with the PCs meeting on their way to consult Grave, a necromancer many of them probably know well. After coming together as a group, they travel the short distance outside the city walls to Grave's abode and come across a scene of disturbing carnage – Grave, scythe in hand, standing in his front yard with several bodies slashed apart and smoldering around him.

Once they convince Grave that they are not more enemies (a task that will be vastly easier if any of them have met him before in previous adventures), he will cautiously allow them to come inside. The corpses in his yard all clad in Covenant tabards, explaining his apprehension when they arrived. While the tabards are legitimate in shape and appearance, none of the fallen are recognizable by the PCs. They are dressed like Radiant Hold guards but none of the PCs have ever seen them before.

No sooner do they get inside than they all have a fight on their hands. Grave is petrified by a powerful blast of magical force, leaving the PCs to deal with a strange creature trying to steal the body of the slain "angel". The creature, a retriever demon already injured by the house's wards, must be put down before the PCs can examine the body.

After the battle, Grave's undead servant Domo comes out from hiding with a flask of ointment on a silver tea tray. This oil will restore Grave by breaking the *flesh to stone* spell, allowing the PCs to save him if they cannot already do so themselves. Once restored, Grave can guide them through his autopsy, work he had

not yet been able to start because of the attack outside. After setting up for what appears to be a very gruesome endeavor, Grave negates the need for any of it by stripping the body before he begins.

As soon as the “angel’s” belt comes off, the corded reliquary comes with it and breaks the *aura of glory* spell affecting the corpse. It is revealed to be a hezrou, a terrible and brutal demonic creature. The PCs will have to negotiate with Grave if they want to take the reliquary back to Radiant Hold with them but in any case, they have a very disturbing report to deliver.

Back at Radiant Hold, Lord Corvalis accepts the news grimly, not at all surprised that a deception like this has occurred. The sight of the relic necklace will shock him, however, and he immediately takes the PCs with him to the chapel’s vault to check on the other reliquaries. They are all missing but this revelation comes at a cost; as soon as one of the holding crypts is opened (which Xandrin will do unless stopped), a vile trap is sprung. The *greater glyph of warding* inside unleashes a *slay living* spell at him, leaving him staggered and pale but alive. Realizing now what has occurred, he asks the PCs to seek out the other reliquaries before whatever foul creatures might have them can hurt anyone else.

Using the ability of the reliquary they possess to locate the others (a property the Voice of the Storm was not aware it possessed), the PCs find each of the other hidden fiends in different parts of the city. Each one is despicably evil, using its newfound celestial appearance to cause its own special form of misery.

One is Shilara, a succubus with the look of a radiant angel. She has duped an entire shrine of Boldrei worshippers and has them serving her every whim. Shilara is found in the now-corrupt shrine, wielding the influence of her flock to bring new vices to the community they once served. Fighting her is an exercise in restraint since her minions are either misguided or *charmed*.

The second of the false angels is Kree’zash, a vrock interested only in the spreading of pestilence and disease. He has gone underground into the sewer-catacombs beneath Stormreach, seeking out the city’s wells with the intention of shaking his now-brilliant white wings over them and releasing the dire spores contained in his feathers. His is a straight-forward battle; any allies he might have are equally vicious or purely unnatural.

The last is the most insidious and powerful of the hidden demons - Lortakael the Vile, a glabrezu. Now visually the pinnacle of divine grace and strength, he has the appearance of a throne archon and has used this celestial seeming to dupe several innocent but prideful townsfolk into traveling with him and hunting down what it calls “traitors to the cause”. These, of course, are the PCs themselves. While searching for the last amulet, they may be surprised to discover it is coming towards them instead.

Confronted in the streets of Stormreach’s marketplace, the PCs have the chance to either redeem the Covenant by making sure the dozens of spectators around them know what has really happened or make the situation worse by engaging in open battle with what appears to be a group of their own. If they choose to fight, the PCs will be at a severe disadvantage against the potent demon and its unwitting allies.

The resolution of this battle may determine not only the fate of the PCs but also the future of the Covenant of Light in Xen’drik. The Choir of Angels might sing for them either a grand song of victory or a bitter dirge of defeat...

## Troubleshooting

More so than in most Covenant adventures, the PCs are under a lot of pressure and scrutiny from their faction during CVN-9 Choir of Angels. The Cabal of Shadows has been planning this strike against the Covenant for months, meticulously planning every detail. They have been slowly gathering resources, recruiting manpower and preparing for the summoning rituals needed to gather their fallen “celestials”. The success of this operation will be a major boon to the Darkness; its failure will be an unexpected coup for the Light. As such, all forces involved will be watching very closely as these events unfold.

The primary story object for this adventure is a potent one, an extremely valuable benefit for the PCs that earn it. The key word there is *earn*. As the GM for this adventure, it is your responsibility to ensure that if the PCs receive Faith of the Four, the story object in question, it is because every step of the way through this scenario they acted like paragons of virtue. PCs do not have to be shining examples of all that is Good to serve the Covenant of Light, but they do have to be such if they are going to reap the rewards of such exemplary behavior.

Lastly, remain flexible throughout this adventure. If the PCs are wildly off track for any reason and take a long time between hunts for the false angels, make sure you take this into account and have the three disguised fiends advance their agendas. A text box for each one will instruct you on how to do this should it prove necessary.

## Adventure Start

This adventure starts with the PCs already gathered and traveling to Grave’s abode outside the walls of Stormreach. They each have been informed that the necromancer is conducting an investigation of great

import to the Covenant and that they are to render any aid he might need and report back on his findings. They have no other information at hand; their rank in the Covenant is such that simply being given a task should be enough. They are trusted to work out details for themselves.

Though Grave's choice in house locations might not be in the safest of places, Grave rarely has to worry about trouble; his reputation and considerable personal power usually dissuade threats before they ever occur.

Today, unfortunately, trouble has come calling and arrived before the PCs could show up on Grave's doorstep. When you are ready to begin the scenario, read or paraphrase the following:

*A wrought iron fence surrounds the house in the distance, black bars stretching between fence posts carved to resemble graveyard obelisks. The gate is open and it would seem the owner of the two story domicile is already outside as you arrive.*

*His reason for being out of doors does not appear to be a pleasant one. The tall, white haired man is carrying a black wood and metal scythe, its slender blade dripping crimson into the ground at his feet. Clad in dark leather and silver buckles, Grave's appearance shows a battle hard fought, tears in his clothing and bleeding wounds beneath. Beside him, shrouded by heavy plates of armor that appear to be salvaged from powerfully built warforged, a looming muscular figure stands protectively at his shoulder.*

*"Don't come any closer!" he shouts as he sees you for the first time. "I've had quite enough of you Lighters already for one day!" As he gasps for breath, he sweeps his scythe over several bodies at his feet. Each of them is garbed in polished armor and tabards bearing the symbol of the Covenant.*

Grave and his flesh golem bodyguard Tatters have just slain a contingent of men sent by the Voice of the Storm, a powerful leader in the Cabal of Shadows. Using forged tabards and holy symbols looted from dead devotees over the course of months, this group of thugs was assigned to both frame the Covenant of Light once Grave killed them (with his abilities, their deaths were a foregone conclusion) and distract the necromancer from the Voice of the Storm's true objective – retrieval of the slain 'Vandarail' before its true identity could be discovered.

At this point, neither the PCs nor Grave know this. Before the PCs will be able to discuss anything with Grave or continue with their mission, they will have to convince him they are not going to attack if he lets them get close.

The easiest way for the PCs to accomplish this will be Diplomacy (either through the skill of the same name or simple roleplaying). He has had very beneficial dealings with the Covenant in the past and so is receptive to conversation despite his injuries and the 'betrayal' that just occurred. He initially begins at Hostile but several factors can mitigate this.

- **Attack:** If any PC attacks Grave in any way he can perceive, he will defend himself to the best of his abilities. Even if the PCs manage to defeat him, the retriever will have accomplished its mission by the time the battle ends and the scenario is effectively over.
- **Past Experience:** Grave may know some of the PCs. If even one PC has encountered Grave in a past scenario, this familiarity is enough to bring his initial attitude to Unfriendly.
- **Healing or Aid:** Offering to help Grave deal with his injuries is a big step forward and will improve his attitude one step automatically. If this aid comes in the form of magical healing that brings him to full health, his attitude improves an additional step.
- **Roleplaying:** Just discussing things rationally and acting peacefully will provide a +5 circumstance bonus to all Diplomacy checks during this scene. Conversely, acting belligerent or haughty will invoke a -5 penalty instead.
- **Retrying:** As long as the PCs wish to converse, they can retry the Diplomacy check as many times as they wish. Failure will not worsen Grave's attitude, though it will test his patience.

For Grave to trust them and allow them inside, he needs to become Friendly. Once this is achieved:

*Grave moves his thumb over a hidden switch on the haft of his scythe and its blade retracts, folding down into the darkwood shaft with a soft whisper of gears and metal. "Okay, I believe. Still doesn't explain my gatecrashers but I'm willing to take you fishes at your word."*

*He gestures to the hulking metal-garbed man beside him and it lurches slowly into the house. "Let's go inside," Grave says with a quick look down the path you were just on. "Before I get more visitors."*

Once inside, the PCs can ask any questions they wish. They can also linger outside and investigate the corpses if they wish. It does not take any skill use to determine that the eight men were all slain by either blunt trauma (Tatter's huge fists) or a wickedly sharp blade (Grave's adamantite scythe). They are unshaven and, aside from their uniforms and armor, look far more like ruffians than members of the

Covenant of Light. In addition, any PC can make an Intelligence check (DC 15) to be certain they have never seen any of these human thugs at Radiant Hold.

Grave is receptive to questions, though he will answer them on the move as he heads back to his workroom. He can tell the PCs that he is currently working on commission for House Deneith as part of their investigation regarding a recent savage attack on their compound in Stormreach.

*"Damnedest thing, no pun intended. Apparently a celestial went amok in their open square, tearing through people and property left and right. It was insanity to hear them tell it. A beautiful winged woman in white enameled armor stained red with innocent blood, there's a story you Covenant people probably don't want getting out, eh fishes?"*

*"Oh, and I know about the beautiful woman part because she's laying on my slab in here." And with that, he slides open a wooden door panel to reveal a room unlike any other – his own, personal abattoir.*

### **What did He Just Say?**

Yes, you read that correctly. Grave called the PCs fish.

The reason for his colorful language is discussed in the *Secrets of Xen'drik* sourcebook. The presence of sahuagin in and around the city of Stormreach has caused a number of their phrases to proliferate through the languages of the port's citizenry. Since few humanoids other than sahuagin can pronounce their native tongue, the phrases get worked into common speech in whatever language the speaker is comfortable using.

To a sahuagin, a "fish" is a name used to describe someone who is similar to the person talking but inferior in every important way. Calling someone a "fish" is considered a mild insult, not really intended as a cutting remark but rather as an off-handed way of declaring one's dominance over the company he or she is currently keeping.

### **Dissection of an Angel**

*The room is covered in slate grey tiles, the floor slanted slightly towards the middle where a silver drain descends into darkness. There are racks of tools on each wall, every set replete with knives, saws, long handled hooks and butcher's implements galore. Three hanging lights, each one consisting of a glowing glass orb clutched in a carefully wired skeletal hand attached to an iron chain in the ceiling, illuminate various parts of the chamber.*

*The light in the center of the macabre laboratory is shining down over a partially clad woman with a white sheet pulled up to her shoulders. Two smaller tables have been moved the sides of the dissection slab, each one bearing the weight of a feathered wing that has been stretched out and pinned by iron spikes.*

*Grave points to the occupant of the room and chuckles under his breath. "Dead angel on my cutting board. That's got to be the creepiest thing I've ever had in here."*

Ponce the shock of what they are seeing wears off, the PCs will doubtless wish to take actions regarding the 'angel'. Allow them to state their intentions, noting that Grave is heading over to the back wall of the room to select a new tool for his continued examination. Before any PC can actually touch the corpse, continue the scene as follows:

*The back wall of the room suddenly explodes inwards, scattering the chamber with debris. In the billowing cloud of dust surrounding the hole in the sundered wall, a bizarre insectoid shape can be seen. Its raised arms end in vicious looking blades and its many glowing eyes flicker as it moves inside.*

*"Oh no you don't!" Grave unleashes a bolt of hissing shadow, a dark beam that strikes the shape and staggers it momentarily. Its response is to focus several of its blazing eyes into a beam of its own.*

*The ray strikes Grave and, even as he tries to turn away, his pale skin turns the color and consistency of solid stone!*

**Foe:** This is a retriever, a demonic construct summoned by the Voice of the Storm to remove the body of the disguised hezrou on Grave's table. It has also been ordered to slaughter all witnesses. That being the PCs, this scene is an inevitable combat.

**The Gathering Minion (1):** retriever demon: hp 120: *Monster Manual* 46

**Tactics:** The retriever is not subtle. With its powers and abilities, it does not really have to be. It will wade into combat with the closest PC, focusing all its attacks on him or her, moving on only when it has defeated its current foe. This particular retriever has been maintained by the Voice of the Storm's summons

for a long time and had developed a bit of a quirk; it is totally myopic. Once it picks a target, it will not change victims for any reason until its prey is dead or dying.

### Scaling the Encounter

A retriever is a CL 11 demon. Even at this module's highest acceptable level, it will likely have to be scaled down to provide an appropriate threat to the PCs. This encounter is **not** intended to be a fatal one for the PCs. It is supposed to be very tough, in keeping with the power behind the plot the PCs face, but it should not kill any of them either.

If the PCs initially fare very poorly against the retriever, be sure to have Tatters join the fray as an ally to them at the start of the second round.

**Tatters, Brutal Bodyguard:** flesh golem: hp 80: *Monster Manual* 135. Tatter's armor improves its Armor Class to 26 but lowers its base speed to 20 feet per round.

**7<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Grave's initial attack was a powerful one, hammering the retriever with a negative energy blast that severely impedes it against the PCs. It has 85 hit points instead of 120 and it suffers a -2 to all attack, damage and saving throw rolls. Tatters is present with its master and is the retriever's primary target when combat starts.

**8<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Grave's attack only reduces the retriever to 95 hit points and applies a -2 penalty to the retriever's actions. Tatters automatically enters the combat on the second round and will be the retriever's second target after it deals with its first.

**9<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** As above for 8<sup>th</sup> level characters but the retriever is only at a -1 penalty.

**10<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** The retriever was unaffected by Grave's attack. Tatters, if he is needed, shows up in the second round but is not automatically a target for the retriever when it arrives.

**11<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** No change unless the creature is too tough for the PCs to handle. In this case, Tatters arrives in the second round to help.

Once the battle is done, let the PCs take stock of themselves and determine if they can offer any aid to the petrified Grave. If they can not, Grave's other undead servant will enter the laboratory within a few minutes:

*A slender figure in a full body stocking of black suede and a long, bone white tunic of extremely high quality silk steps into the chamber. The mask of the stocking has no opening of any kind and the man does not appear to be breathing.*

*Held up by the fingers of one hand, the figure is carrying a silver tray. The tray bears a green, wide-bottomed flask of oil with an odd lead seal over the stopper.*

This is Domo, a greatly enhanced zombie Grave has been working on for months. Domo has a rudimentary intelligence and is quite capable of following orders. In this case, Domo is obeying a previous command, namely "if I am ever turned to stone, fetch the green flask."

Examining the stopper reveals that the lead seal is actually just lead-coated wax and there is an embossment of a medusa's head stamped onto it. Common sense might suggest to the PCs that this is an oil capable of reversing petrification but, if the PCs wish to verify this, a Craft (alchemy) check (DC 15) will confirm the oil's properties.

Using the oil will undo the *flesh to stone* effect on Grave, a balm for which he will be most grateful. Though some extremely hide-bound or 'righteous' members of the Covenant might wish to shatter the necromancer or otherwise do away with him while he is in this state, it should be pointed out to them that doing so in an evil act. Grave is a helpful NPC, he is not evilly aligned and while he may be a bit creepy, he is in no way a threat to the PCs or their goals.

Once Grave is restored (which Domo will actually think to do if the PCs leave its master petrified for more than five minutes), his dialog continues below:

*"Well, isn't that grand! Do you have any idea what good building stone costs in this city?" He looks out the ragged hole in his wall, sighing in dismay. "Oh well, one thing at a time."*

*Turning to the dead celestial, he rests his fingertips on the woman's collarbone and draws a sharp scalpel. "Someone really doesn't want me to examine this delectable lady. Let's get to work before that someone sends more help, eh?"*

*Laying the scalpel by the angelic woman's placid face, he strips the corpse of its attire, starting with the heavy gold-link belt at her waist.*

This scene has the potential to get extremely gory but fortunately for the PCs, it is about to be derailed. The moment the belt comes off, the following occurs. Be sure to let the PCs step into the action at any time. If any of them seem inclined to be helpful, let them be the ones to remove the belt. PCs who wish to examine

the body before Grave even starts speaking (perhaps while he is petrified), it only takes a Search check (DC 10) to discover the reliquary tied to her belt.

Also, if any PC uses a *detect good* spell or similar effect, the body is radiating a powerful aura of good. Three rounds of examination or more will reveal that the aura is actually coming from the reliquary (no Search check needed in this regard).

*As the belt comes away from the body, there is a sudden flash of light from a small jeweled object dangling from it. The glow building into a pulse and, when it fades, the body on the slab is considerably less celestial in appearance.*

*It is now a powerfully built, grotesque humanoid, with incredibly thick limbs, a fanged maw and ridges across its mottled grey skin. At the base of its throat, there is a strange red mark or brand of some sort.*

The hezrou is now revealed for what it truly is, something the PCs may be able to recognize with the right skills (Knowledge (the planes), for instance). While the exact identity of the demon is not known, Grave is familiar enough with anatomy and forms of life to have a good idea as to its origins. He is also far more convinced that there was some kind of conspiracy going on now.

*"Okay, fishes, I don't know about you but this is actually starting to make more sense. The damage done to the Deneith compound fits this kind of beast a lot more than it would some celestial type I've never seen. This is a hezrou, a potent warrior demon known for their bloodlust and wild tempers.*

*"As to why it looked like something heavenly, well... I'm at a loss there. To be thorough, I should probably slice this stinking thing open and examine its innards for a while. You're welcome to stay."*

It is quite likely the PCs will wish to leave now; Grave was just toying with them a bit and fully expects them to go. His contract did not say anything about returning the corpse or its belongings but, as a professional, he was intending to do so. If the PCs have been cordial and polite, he will offer them the reliquary. If not, they will have to offer amends or in some way apologize for their rudeness.

It is important for the rest of the scenario that the PCs get the reliquary back to Radiant Hold. If the PCs have been rude to Grave, do not be afraid to have a little fun at their expense but be sure he relents and lets them have it eventually. (This is all assuming they do not already have it. If they took it from the body of the demon themselves, just paraphrase.)

*"Oh, one thing, fishes. I suspect you'll be wanting this." Grave holds up the jeweled object from the demon's belt. "It's a reliquary, and a nice one by the look of it." He hands it over with a sly smile. "Your superiors will no doubt want to see it."*

Examination of the reliquary will reveal why Grave said this. The small cylindrical shaped platinum object is capped in gold and engraved with the symbol of the Covenant of Light on both ends. Inside it, a lock of hair floats in a glowing vial of amber-colored liquid. (Player's Handout 1)

Grave sees the PCs to the door, assuring them that he will take a while a while on the dissection. He notes offhandedly that this means he will not be giving his full report to House Deneith for some time yet, more than long enough for motivated hero-types to 'scurry home and let folks know what's happened'. His wink should be enough to let even the dimmest PC figure out he is giving them a head start.

Once the PCs are ready to proceed, continue to the second half of the Adventure Start, Home Again, Home Again below.

## Home Again, Home Again

Back at Radiant Hold, the PCs are immediately shown up to see Lord Corvalis in his office. Their rank with the Covenant is such that they are not often asked to wait and if they say they have a matter of great importance to discuss, they are generally taken at their word.

Because the pacing in this adventure is quite a bit quicker than in many Covenant of Light scenarios, try not to spend too much time on this part of the introduction. The PCs should transition quickly between the two scenes described below. That said, do not cut the PCs' roleplaying short if you can help it. The interaction between the PCs and their superiors in the Covenant is one of the bidding factors of the group; the faction would not be as strong as it is without such amiable relations.

### The Lord's Office

*You are shown in quickly, the warforged guard at the door offering you a quiet nod of respect as you are let in on your own recognizance. Once past the door, you are greeted warmly by the lord of the fortress, Sir Xandrin Corvalis.*

*His usual black hair is starting to show a bit of grey at the temples and his strong features are slightly subdued by the pressures of his post. Still, he offers you all seats and whatever hospitality he can. "Please, relax and tell me what you discovered during your interview with Grave. I trust he was not too appalling in his personal behavior? He and I have had a talk about that."*

The PCs are free to discuss what they wish with their commander here, likely describing the attack and what they discovered (the reliquary). He is most dismayed to hear about the demon but is at least relieved that a corrupted celestial was not behind the attack. The pressure of that worrisome circumstance is a burden he is happy to be out from under.

He is less pleased to hear about the reliquary and immediately asks to see it. As soon as the PCs show it to him, read or paraphrase the following. It is important to note that this is a fairly long section of descriptive text. Do not feel obligated to read it verbatim. As with all descriptive passages, the PCs should be able to interject at any time.

*Xandrin's eyes darken the moment he sees the small glowing vial. "No! It's can't be!"*

*He is up in the next breath, grabbing his long, leather coat and pulling it on as he walks to the office door. "Follow me! There is something I have to see!" His pace only quickens the farther he gets down the hallway. The look in his eyes is so focused and distressed that as you pass guards on your journey through the fortress, they fall into step behind you out of alarm.*

*By the time you reach Lord Corvalis' destination, there are more than a dozen guardians with you, including two warforged and a black-fledged raptoran standing beside Xandrin.*

*He has brought you to a little-known part of the fortress, a small sealed shrine built into the solid stone of the giant walls that make up Radiant Hold's outer bulwark. Guarded every hour of the day and locked with both physical barriers and warding magic, this peaceful shrine is one of the most secure places the Covenant maintains.*

*"Open it," he commands the two kalashtar guards at the shrine's only door. They dutifully remove keys from hallowed cords around their necks and open the twin locks keeping the small chamber closed. One opens the door while the other stands, halberd ready, to face whatever might be amiss inside.*

### The Violated Shrine

One of the Voice of the Storm's longest running plots against the Covenant of Light has been to infiltrate and desecrate from within. His greatest achievement in that respect is about to be revealed. Be certain to keep the PCs involved in this scene. What is described below is what will happen around them but is certainly not a given; let the PCs make the scene their own. This passage (indeed, this entire adventure) is just a framework from which you can craft your own story.

*Inside, a perfectly square chamber awaits. In the center, a circular bench surrounds a beautiful white and pale green tree growing without sunlight. The long, sweeping branches of the tree are dotted with small glimmering berries, illuminating the room with a pale, celestine aura.*

*The open door dominates one wall. The other three bear four doors of their own, each one roughly a foot wide and crafted in the same fashion as the coffin facings of a mausoleum.*

*"This is the Shrine of the Fallen. Until now, only the highest echelon of the Covenant has been allowed inside. Follow me and be welcome, but do not touch anything." Xandrin still looks very determined, heading to the back wall of the shrine even as he speaks.*



The tree, identifiable to any PCs with Knowledge (the planes) at a check DC of 15, is a star willow, a rare tree normally found only in the celestial realms. Knowledge (nature) will reveal its extra-dimensional origin but not identify it as a higher planar plant (though its appearance is something of a clue).

Xandrin goes to the back wall of the shrine with the PCs likely in pursuit. None of the other guards, including the kalashtar at the door, enter; this place is a private sanctum accessible only by invitation. In fact, the room is covered by a *forbiddance* spell (DC 19) and an *antipathy* spell (DC 22). Neither of these effects interacts with the PCs in any way; Xandrin has granted them access and as the acting commander of the fortress, that permission makes them immune to both spells.

Once he reaches the wall, he will open one of the shrine doors to see if the reliquary he is holding (or alternately, the PCs are holding) has truly been stolen from its rightful resting place. The moment he does, read or paraphrase the following:

*As the small stone door opens, there is a blast of shadows that surge outwards, slamming Xandrin to the ground as foul magic racks his body with terrible pain!*

Xandrin has, in his haste, just set off a *greater glyph of warding*, making himself the target of a *slay living* spell. Though he survives the necromantic attempt on his life, he is certainly the worse for it (suffering 30 points of damage as the spell tries to end his life). The PCs will have the chance to be heroes in this scene, reacting to the attack as they see fit and/or healing Xandrin from what he would freely admit was his own incautious folly.

The spell's dark energy has managed to claim a victim, however. The star willow is a sensitive form of plant life, unable to survive exposure to necromantic death magic. As Xandrin is convulsing from the pain of the spell, its starry motes fall from the branches and wink out, its leaves withering and dying. By the time he recovers a few moments later, the beautiful tree is an ashen grey husk.

If the PCs check the other doors, they will discover similar glyphs inside each of the four plundered crypts. Investigation of the area will show no forced entrance to the shrine or to the individual crypts. A Track check (DC 28) will show that someone has been in the shrine recently by means of smudged tracks but beyond that there is no information to be learned.

Xandrin is furious upon learning of this and while he can think of little besides righteous revenge against whoever did something this cunning and vile, there is a far more important matter at hand – the other three missing reliquaries.

*Once he recovers enough to be coherent, Xandrin orders the door to the shrine closed again. "Please stay," he tells you all. "What I must tell you is not for others to hear."*

*The two kalashtar obey their master's command, closing the heavy door and locking it again. As soon as there is privacy, Xandrin stares at the ruined tree and takes a deep breath. "My friends deserve better than this. Damn whoever wrought this darkness. Damn them straight to the lowest pits of Khyber."*

*Then he sighs and composes himself. "Forgive me. I should explain what this room is for and why the loss means so much to me."*

*"This shrine was built as a resting place for those who have given their lives in the service of the Light. The first four interred here were given a great honor by Lady Lirashana herself. A lock of their hair was placed in a reliquary vial with a drop of her own blood, creating a very sacred bond between the fallen and the reason for their sacrifice.*

*"These reliquaries were kept here along with their remains. Now it seems someone has stolen those objects and in so doing desecrated their final rest. I will not stand for this!"*

*Once more, he takes a second to regain his composure. "We may yet have the last word in this matter. Whoever stole the relics could not have known that each one has the ability to seek the others. I only know this because I possess one of my own."*

*Xandrin unbuttons the top of this shirt and reveals a familiar looking capped vial around his neck. "When I someday join my fellows in rest here, this is to be entombed with my body. But until then it can be of use to us." As he removes it from his neck, he continues. "Take this, please, and use your devotion to the light to seek out the other three."*

*"I suspect that whoever did this is using the others for much the same purpose as the first one. If they are being perverted to disguise foul creatures and servants of the Light, dispatch those beasts and recover what they have stolen."*

*Xandrin sits down on the bench, his fingers sadly straying through small piles of ash, the remains of the glowing berries that once hung from the tree branches overhead. "I urge you to be vigilant as well. This is likely another attempt to attack our public character. Though it will make your task no easier, please be mindful of your purpose and reputations and Scions. If you can find out who is behind this, all the better.*

*"No fighting in public if you can avoid it. Do not harm innocents. And most importantly, do whatever you can to minimize the terrible harm this could do to the Covenant. Be careful and Light be with you all."*

With that, he hands over his personal reliquary and instructs the PCs in its use. Once they have it and understand how to find the others, he gives them his personal blessing and sends them on their task. This is not just an empty well-wish. The PCs all gain the bonus noted in the text box below, with the holder of the reliquary receiving an even stronger blessing as shown.

Proceed to the first part of the adventure, The Den of Delights, when ready.

### **New Relic – Lira's Bond**

These small reliquaries are crafted from platinum and gold. They contain a cut amber amphora-shaped vial with a lock of hair, holy water and drop of archon's blood inside. Permanently sealed, they become powerless if smashed or opened. Doing so is a daunting task however; a *Lira's bond* relic has 30 hit points, a hardness of 10 and a Break DC of 30.

The power of these relics is somewhat conditional. They channel positive energy in a number of ways, mostly doing so as the celestial power that infuses them seems fit. Their powers vary but one remains constant. By holding the relic and expending one use of Blessing of the Light, the bearer can sense the nearest other *Lira's bond* regardless of physical distance so long as the it is on the same plane of existence as the bearer. This power lasts one hour per expenditure of a Blessing and ends when the bearer comes within 10 feet of the relic being sensed. *Lira's bonds* within 10 feet of the bearer cannot be sensed with this spell-like ability.

By using one of his own Blessings of the Light, Xandrin Corvalis has cast a *bless* spell over the PCs with a duration of 24 hours. This spell is even more potent for the relic holder; whichever PCs is carrying the *Lira's Bond* attuned to Xandrin receives a +2 bonus instead of the usual +1.

## **Part One: The Den of Delights**

This section of the adventure deals with Shilara the succubus, one of the Voice's three remaining disguised demons. As is common with her kind, she has retained a great deal of her sentience and willpower despite the magical 'static' of the *aura of glory*. Accordingly, she is only partially following her summoner's commands. She is complying with his wishes to spread evil and darkness in the city of Stormreach but she is not particularly focused on blaming it on the Covenant of Light.

Even so, she carries one of the reliquaries and so trouble (in the form of the PCs) is going to come looking for her. Trouble will find her in a corrupted shrine with several fallen worshippers of Boldrei acting as her personal servants and playthings.

### **Getting There**

As GM, you have options in how you get the PCs to the fallen shrine. One is to simply use the descriptive text below and then begin the Empire of the Senses scene directly. If you suspect you will be running short on time, this might be the best option. It is also the most limiting on roleplaying freedom and will make the players feel as if they have been "railroaded" to the scene unless you handle it carefully.

A better option, if you have the time for it and if your PCs would prefer to have more of an active role in the "getting there" aspect of the game, is to let them track the sensations of the reliquary across the city. There is a map in the Appendix that notes where each one can be found. Feel free to use the suggestions below as a guide for events and images that can happen along the way. By doing this, you breathe more life into the game and let the Players feel the scenario is happening with them rather than around them.

In any case, Part One should not take longer than an hour. Budget your time accordingly.

### **The Short Route**

*The magical draw between the reliquaries leads you through the very heart of Stormreach. Here, some of its oldest buildings rest in tangled street rows, some having never been repaired yet all in desperate need of it. Sagging timbers, crumbling stone and cragged street cobbles provide a physical analogue for the broken hopes and worn souls of the unfortunates who live here.*

*Traveling past dozens of tenements, bunched together and barely intact, your path takes you to the northern edge of this squalor. There, a small stone structure maintained only slightly better than the places around it, glows like a beacon to the one of you holding the reliquary. Whatever calls to it is here, somewhere in this battered old shrine to the goddess Boldrei, Mistress of Families.*

Proceed to Empire of the Senses when the PCs are ready.

### The Long Route

Start the PCs as they leave Xandrin's office and let them use the reliquary to try and find the next closest one as per the mission they have just been given. When a PCs tries to use the reliquary, read or paraphrase the following text.

*The small vial glows like a tiny sun, burning brightly but with only a warm, reassuring heat. Your eyes flare, blinded for a moment. As vision returns, all is as it was but with one small change. In the distance, towards Stormreach, there is a glimmering point of light.*

*You can sense this light is the next reliquary and that nothing can hide it from your sight. As long as it remains pure and consecrated, you will be able to see the holy radiance that emanates from within it.*

This "point of light" will constantly remain in the PC's field of vision while he retains possession of the reliquary. The closer he or she gets to the target vial, the brighter the light will become. By the time the area of the shrine of Boldrei is reached, the light will actually be a column of golden light shining down from the sky, illuminating the shrine.

Once the PCs have a path, let them follow it however they wish. It is a short ride to Stormreach and, once inside the gates, a tangled route (barring *fly* spells and the like) leads them to the shrine of Boldrei. The ride can be as eventual or as quiet as you wish, but here are some story elements you can use to make the journey seem more interesting.

- Guards just inside the gate bow to the PCs, acknowledging them as the heroes they are. This emphasizes the impact the PCs have been having on the city of Stormreach and the growing reputation they are cultivating accordingly.
  - Alternately, a pair of guards might scoff and act dismissively to the PCs. If the PCs investigate, they discover small parchment packets of illegal herbs on one of the man. These two are part of a smuggling ring the Coin Lords have been trying to break and their capture will be greatly appreciated.
    - The drugs, should you use this hook, might even have an identifying mark – the symbol of Boldrei stamped in the parchment.
- A child falls and skins his knee in front of one of the PCs, followed quickly by his distraught mother. This is a perfect opportunity for roleplaying and, if the PC acts accordingly, to behave in a heroic and compassionate fashion.
- A small turf war has broken out at the edge of the "bad" area of town. A handful of youths on either side (use Goblin warrior statistics from page 133 of the Monster Manual, five per side) are brawling in an alley when the PCs arrive. No one is seriously hurt yet but knives have been drawn and the fight is turning ugly. The PCs can easily end this battle but *how* they do it is very important.
  - As a touch of tragedy, one of the boys can be knifed and killed by a rival gang member as they are running from the PCs. The harsh truth of sometimes not being able to save someone is a lesson every hero must face someday.
  - You might also use this hook to introduce a continuing story element if the PCs have been playing previous Covenant modules. One of the gang toughs is actually Brigitte, a girl in disguise. She took it upon herself to infiltrate the city gangs and try to end the street violence herself. She's in over her head but she needs to do this to "prove to her Master (Corvalis) that she's worthy". Brigitte is a little misguided but she's a good person and her heart is in the right place.
- The PCs come across a destitute half-orc getting beaten down for the food in his hands. The assailant (a human man) gobbles down the small bit of meat as he runs away from the PCs' sudden arrival. How the PCs handle this can prove the true measure of a hero.

Once the ride is done and the PCs have reached the shrine, continue with Empire of the Senses below.

### Empire of the Senses

The Hearth and Home was once a popular shrine in Stormreach, visited often when the port city was new and people were desperate for the simple comforts of home. As the city grew and people expanded outward, their focus shifted to other pursuits and the shrine fell into disuse. For many months, it has existed as little more than a charity house for the homeless.

It was in this condition that Shilara found the building and saw in its moldering walls a chance for wickedness. Insinuating herself into the faithful, she charmed the shrine's only real priest and has been using him for days to spread her special brand of corruption – vice.

## 1. Humbling Threshold (EL n/a)

*The frame around the doorway is patterned in a dozen different colors of mold and there is no actual door barring entry. A thin scrap of discarded sail cloth covered the entrance. Beyond, there are the sounds of suffering, of people cold and lonely, of lives spent in empty solitude.*

This room is a front, a scene of squalor left out by “Lady” Shilara to discourage investigation. In the narrow 5’ by 15’ chamber, ten people (mixed genders and races, populate as you desire) huddle under threadbare blankets, desperate for warmth and shuddering from a terrible illness the PCs are not likely to be able to cure – withdrawl.

These are addicts hooked by what Shilara has been slowly distributing out of the shrine, a drug perversely called Bliss. Bliss is described in detail in Area 3 below. None of these people have any of the drug, nor have they been able to take it in a couple of days. Their Wisdom scores have plummeted to barely sentient levels (1-2 points) and they are incapable of meaningful communication. While the PCs can certainly perform acts of kindness here, they are not likely to get anything immediately useful in exchange.

If the PCs do find a way to communicate with one of the addicted people here (perhaps through *restoration* magic), they can learn about the “Bliss Touched” faithful and the drug itself. No one here has seen the Lady but they all know her name.

## 2. Gluttony Hall (EL 8)

*Past the door leading into the shrine proper, everything changes. Instead of squalor, there is opulence. Instead of pain, there is only pleasure. The floor is carpeted, the walls are sealed and covered in tapestry and the furnishings show only the most expensive of craftsmanship.*

*The most immediate piece of furniture is a large banquet table covered in all manner of fine food. Fruits, cheeses, meats of a dozen different varieties and desserts sumptuous enough for a palace grace the table to such a degree it is almost bowing under the weight of it all. Seated around the table, squabbling with each other over who can stuff their mouths first, are many people dressed in rags. Though the feast is within reach, they are too busy coming to blows with each other to enjoy any of it.*

*“Sad, is it not?”*

The speaker is Johm Agarvath, a good hearted man with the misfortune to be charmed by Shilara into offering all that he is and has to her whims. He is under the *suggestion* that everything occurring now is a holy test and that by serving Shilara despite any actions he might have to take, he will please the goddess and win everlasting salvation for the wretched of this city. The *suggestion* is also clouding his senses and judgment, making the horrific seem merely troubling.

Johm is honestly lamenting the violent behavior of his “flock”, unable to realize that they are acting under the effects of the drug he personally gave to them only a few minutes ago. They are unwilling to harm him as he is the source of their addiction and the PCs are being completely ignored even if the PCs interact with them in some way (touching, speaking directly to them, harming them, etc.). Only once Shilara sets things in motion will the fight below commence.

Until then, they can talk with Father Johm. He is a kind soul and a generous priest, going so far as to cast *heroes’ feast* for his congregation in an attempt to calm their troubled minds. He offers the PCs no resistance and will happily converse with them on any topic they wish *unless* they try to interfere with the stove in Area 3 or enter Area 4. Even then, he will stay polite and try to resolve things peacefully, requesting that they refrain from their activities. If the PCs continue to mess with the stove or touch the door to Area 4, he will attack without mercy or quarter.

The only combat possible in this room is with the addicts. Even if Johm does attack the PCs, he will not do so here, even if they assault the faithful. In his troubled mind, this is all a test, a struggle between the dark forces of the world trying to lead him astray from the path of the goddess. He will be saddened by the loss of his flock but he will not aid either side if a battle occurs.

**Foes:** The wretched faithful are firmly caught in the grip of addiction to a substance they call Bliss. They have been told by the Lady of the shrine that each day, only the strongest of them will earn a new dose of it. Minutes before the PCs entered the shrine, she explained to them privately that for today’s “test”, only the person who first gets a meal at Johm’s table will receive their Bliss. This is what provoked the argument the PCs are witnessing, a display staged purely for Shilara’s *clairvoyance* amusement.

Now that the PCs have arrived, the game has gotten even more amusing. While she packs her things and prepares to leave, she sends her thoughts to her wretched playmates, explaining that the rules have changed. Anyone who kills a PC gets their Bliss directly from her lips. This is all they need to instantly launch into the fray as follows.

*The squabbling at the table suddenly stops. Every vicious-eyed figure at the table turned at the same time, staring at you. Without a word, without warning, they leap from the table, screaming for blood!*

**Wailing Addicts, corrupted humans (6);** mix male and female human barbarian 2; hp 27 each; See Combat Statistics.

**Tactics:** These were just normal homeless wretches before Shilara got hold of them, turning them into her personal amusements by addicting them to her drug of choice and messing with their perceptions and psyches to the point of psychotic collapse. Each one has succumbed to their own inner demons, amusing the outer one a great deal in the process. All they want is to claw and feed but all they truly wish for is death. They will show no mercy and expect nothing more from the PCs.

**Development:** This encounter does not get tiered and is not likely a real challenge for the PCs. Its purpose is show how far gone Shilara's targets for corruption truly are and to get them bloodied in the process. If you desire and if the Players enjoy drama, have the wretched addicts (or most of them) die when their rage wears off. This should be especially wrenching to the PCs if they subdued the addicts and wanted to find a way to save them.

Once the battle is over, the forlorn but accepting Father John (who will spend the whole fight praying and looking saddened at the fray) will bless the PCs for surviving "this part of the test" and offer them the feast instead. This is a *heroes' feast* with all the bonuses inherent in such a magic but if they eat it, Shilara will have ample time to escape via *teleportation*.

If this occurs, she will flee to Lortakael and seek his protection. The location of the next closest reliquary will change and the PC holding Lira's Bond will see the pinpoint of light shift to the vrock's location in Part Two, Foul Deeds in the Dark. Adjudicate accordingly.

### Combat Statistics

WRETCHED ADDICTS (RAGING) CR 2

Human barbarian 2

CE Medium humanoid (human), corrupted creature template

Init +0; Senses Listen +4, Spot -1

Languages Common

AC 10, touch 8, flat-footed 10; uncanny dodge

hp 27 (2 HD)

Fort +10, Ref +0, Will +1

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee claw +8 (1d6+6+1 vile)

Base Atk +2; Grp +8,

Atk Options Clawed Hands

Special Actions rage 1/day (lasts 8 rounds then fatigued), uncanny  
dodge

Combat Gear none

Abilities Str 22, Dex 10, Con 24, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12

SQ illiterate, fast movement +10 ft, rage 1/day

Feats Willing Deformity, Clawed Hands

Skills Bluff +2, Climb +6, Intimidate +8, Jump +11,

Listen +4, Survival +4

### 3. Wicked Kitchen (EL n/a, possibly 9)

*A strange, slightly cinnamon odor emanates from this room, a warm kitchen with a large stove in the far corner and a round table for food preparation just to the right of the door you've entered. A standing pantry by the stove is open and several bunches of dried herbs can be seen on its shelves along with oils and other colored liquids in heavy glass jars.*

This is where Shilara personally brews her special blend of mordayn, the drug she is distributing as Bliss among the homeless and "worthless" of Stormreach's slums. Food is no longer made here and the many destitute that used to come here for a warm meal have now become hooked to the poison currently cooking on the stove.

Shilara's brand of Mordayn, a drug so potent it can normally only be taken by breathing in vapors while the herb boils, involves steeping bay leaves in a greatly diluted mixture of the deadly plant and a blend of alchemical oils. The result is a thoroughly imbued bay leaf covered in soft white crystals. Ingesting involves either putting the leaf in one's mouth or crushing the leaf and placing its tiny pieces under the tongue. In either case, the result is the same.

**Shilara's Mordayn Leaf ("Bliss"):** Made of roughly ground leaves of a rare herb found in deep forests, mordayn is so potent that it is taken by steeping a small amount in hot water, and then inhaling the vapors of the resultant tea. Raw mordayn powder and mordayn-tainted water are deadly poisons; taking the powder directly or drinking the water produces an immediate overdose. Dreammist is renowned for the beautiful visions it induces and the deadly peril of its sinister embrace. This variant, Bliss, is taken by solid ingestion and contains a small amount of demon's blood in the mix.

*Initial Effect:* Exotic visions of incredible beauty enthrall the user for the next 1d20+10 minutes. During this time the user has a 50% chance to lose any action he attempts, as described in the *bestow curse* spell.

*Secondary Effect:* 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage and 1d4 points of temporary Wisdom damage.

*Side Effects:* The visions of a Bliss user are incredibly beautiful and poignant. His normal life seems drab and futile in comparison, and he aches to experience the transcendent beauty of his drug-induced dreams again. When the dose wears off, the user must succeed at a Will save (DC 17) or fall under the compulsion to do whatever is necessary to repeat the Bliss dose (treat this as a compulsion similar to that of a *suggestion* spell). This compulsion lasts for 1d4 hours before fading.

While under the compulsion effect of Bliss, users can not make saving throws against charm or compulsion effects and can be contacted by the donor of the drug's blood component over any distance as if by a *Rary's telepathic bond* spell.

*Overdose:* If two doses are taken within the space of an hour, or if the leaf is swallowed, the drug is a deadly poison (ingested DC 17, 1d10 Con/1d10 Con). Bliss addicts often spit out the leaf immediately after putting it in their mouths in order to make sure they cannot overdose on the deadly drug.

If the PCs investigate the room, they may make a Craft (alchemy) check, DC 15, to determine that the substance on the stove is a harmful chemical. A similar check will identify most of the components in the larder as being ingredients used in narcotics manufacture.

A Search check (DC 10) will find fourteen parchment bags of Bliss leaves, already crushed, on a hidden bottom shelf of the pantry. The Search check would be higher but Shilara has gotten so sloppy in her joy at being so free to cause pain and misery that she keeps forgetting to put the false front on properly. As such, the PCs can find it easily. If any PC has the Investigate feat, the shelf is located automatically.

The PCs are free to move about the room without interference but Father John has a strange mental quirk where the stove is concerned. He knows that whatever Shilara is making there brings her great pleasure. In his poor, *charm*-wrecked brain, he associates anyone touching the stove or the boiling mordayn mixture with the idea of Shilara being unhappy. Since she is his radiant angel, his loving link to the goddess herself, Shilara's happiness is worth any price and those who endanger it must die.

He is still himself enough that he asks the PCs to refrain from their investigation of the stove twice before doing anything violent. PCs can make DC 15 Sense Motive checks to determine that he is becoming agitated by their search of the stove. He does not care at all if they investigate the pantry and he only reacts with slight concern if they find the Bliss packages. "Gifts from above", he calls them, and refuses to believe that they could be harmful. His mind cannot accept such a concept.

His violent reaction only extends to one other thing – the bedroom door. He has been told to attack anyone who might seek to "extinguish Shilara's holy light". As such, anyone touching the door in his presence is attacked without warning.

**Foe:** Father Johm Agarvath is a man of great kindness and deep faith. Freed from the grip of Shilara's mind control, he would be a powerful ally to the Covenant. Still in its dark clutches, he is a terrible enemy and will be a difficult challenge for them to overcome.

**Father Johm Agarvath, Hearthkeeper of Boldrei**, hp 61, See Combat Statistics

**Tactics:** Johm is no fool and if he has to face an entire party of dangerous PCs, he will do what he can to even the odds. His primary target will be "soft" PCs like casters and other lightly-armored individuals with a low chance of dodging his opening attack – *searing light*. Once he is forced into melee, he will use his *inflict* spells in conjunction with his mace, doing as much damage as he can as fast as possible. In his mind, giving his life for Shilara's happiness is the ultimate sacrifice to his goddess.

**Development:** Johm has suffered from his *suggestion* delirium but he is still the same man he was. If the PCs try to negotiate or speak with him, he will talk and even relent in his attacks if the PCs stop whatever activity set him off. He is frightfully embarrassed about his violent behavior but will immediately attack again if given reason.

### Combat Statistics

Johm Agarvath, Church of the Sovereign Host (Boldrei)

CR 9

Human cleric 9

NG Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4

**Languages** Common, Celestial, Draconic

**AC** 19 (*shield of faith*, *bracers of armor* +5), touch 13, flat-footed 18

**hp** 61 (9 HD)

**Resist** none

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +10

**Speed** 30 ft. (6 squares)

**Melee** +9 mace (1d6+3, 20 x2)

**Range** +7

**Base Atk** +4; **Grp** +4

**Special Actions** turn undead (11/day; +4; 2d6+11), spontaneous healing

**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 6<sup>th</sup>):

5<sup>th</sup> (1+1 per day): *break enchantment*, *heroes' feast*\*

4<sup>th</sup> (3+1 per day): *inflict critical wounds*, *sending*, *spell immunity*

3<sup>rd</sup> (4+1 per day): *create food and drink* x 3, *dispel magic*, *searing light*, *prayer*

2<sup>nd</sup> (5+1 per day): *inflict moderate wounds*, *shatter*, *sound burst*, *spiritual weapon* x 2, *status*

1<sup>st</sup> (5+1 per day): *bane*, *bless* x 2, *doom* x 2, *shield of faith*

0<sup>th</sup> (5 per day): *cure minor wounds*, *guidance*, *light*, *resistance*, *virtue*

**Domains:** Community (*calm emotions* as a spell-like ability once a day), Protection (protective ward, once per day).

**Abilities** Str 10, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 14

**SQ** aura (lawful, good), \*hearthkeeper (while in a shrine or temple of his goddess, Johm can memorize Community domain spells as if they were one level lower)

**Feats** Ecclesiarch, Endurance, Extra Turning, Skill Focus (Knowledge [religion]), Skill Focus (Diplomacy).

**Skills** Concentration +10, Decipher Script +4, Diplomacy +15, Gather Information +7, Heal +10, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (religion) +11, Profession (cook) +8, Spellcraft +8.

**Possessions** holy symbol, well-worn clerical robes, light mace +3

## Scaling the Encounter

While potent, Johm is not likely to do the PCs lasting harm. He is a good man gone astray and as such deserves compassion, not carnage. Even so, he should be an encounter the PCs take seriously. Improve him in the following ways to ensure that.

**7<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Johm fights his compulsions for a few moments, giving the PCs ample warning of his intentions and a surprise round if they choose to take it.

**8<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** No change.

**10<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Add a wretched addict to the room, idly stirring the pot until Johm calls for her aid in the first round of combat.

**11<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Add two wretched addicts, one at the stove and one sweeping up quietly.

## 3. Den of Sin (EL 7)

*A small room with several expensive furnishings arranged haphazardly because of the limited space, this bedchamber is dominated by a soft, four poster bed with sheets of whisper-thin silk the color of blood. Mahogany and cherry wood are everywhere, making this a very expensive boudoir indeed.*

*A beautiful woman of unearthly grace and golden skin glances up in surprise, her left hand dropping a silver candlestick into a large sack on the floor. Her feathered wings flex and fold as she turns to face you. "I don't suppose we could work out a trade? Surely I have something you all... desire?"*

Shilara does not expect this tactic to work but she is desperate. She knows she is no great combatant and that the PCs will likely overpower her but she also does not want to risk a *teleport* out of a holy shrine, desecrated or not. She will do it if she has to but she would rather talk her way out of this mess if she can.

### What Shilara Knows

If the PCs actually decide to parlay with Shilara, they will be able to get some very valuable information out of her. She is willing to go all the way to the bottom of this list but these items are listed in order of reluctance. For her to offer the last two items, her life will have to be in some terrible danger and the PCs unwilling to spare her any other way.

- **"There are four of us. Four demons called forth to try and frame some do-going cult."** She does not know what the other three demons are (aside from Lortakael) nor is she aware of the hezrou's death.
- **"We are hidden by some spell. All I know is that I can't take this vial thing off or I'll change back."** She is referring to the reliquary she was given and the fact that if it leaves her person, the *aura of glory* spell ends and her summoning will end.
- **"I got dropped off here out of a coach. I don't know where I was summoned but it was in a stone room with no windows. I think I heard the ocean nearby."** Shilara is speaking of one of the Voice of the Storm's underground ritual chambers on the coast near Stormreach. She does not know enough to ever make her way back there.
- **"One of the others went into the sewers."** She does not know Kree'zash by name, what his orders were or that he is a vrock.
- **"One was supposed to sneak into a keep or something, destroy it from within."** Shilara is speaking of the hezrou, who was trying to follow those orders when the *aura of glory* spell drove him mad and he went on a killing frenzy.
- **"The last one I know, Lortakael. He and I are old... friends. Whatever he's up to, you can bet your bright little souls it's bad."** Shilara and Lortakael have a long and complicated history. They are not really friends or allies but they would be happy to use each other for pleasure or profit whenever the chance came up.
- **"There's a counter drug to Bliss."** She does **not** want to part with this information. If she gives it out, a Craft (alchemy) check with a DC 15 can manufacture a red powder capable of half its wisdom damage and breaking any current addiction.
- **"The one who summoned us was impossible to look at but I heard a servant call him something. Voice of the Storm, I think it was. Odd title but you know, I've heard worse."** She guards this last bit of information because she does not want the PCs doing something that might upset anyone powerful enough to summon her.

Of special note, examining Shilara will reveal the same brand found on the hezrou at Grave's house.



PCs with Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (the planes) will be able to identify the woman as a radiant angel by appearance (DC 20 for the check either way). Success on this check also shows that she is in no way acting the part of one. If directly asked, she will proudly identify herself as a succubus but she will not do so otherwise.

If she has to, she will surrender the reliquary even though she knows it means going back from whence she came. It is better than being dead. Only marginally, but it is better. She is a reasonable creature for an ineffably evil fiend and she can be very rational when she has to be.

Once battle is joined, it is a completely different story. Shilara is a creature of sensation and the adrenaline of battle, the pain of mortal combat, is like a drug to her. Once the fight starts, she won't stop until the PCs are all dead at her feet. Be certain to describe her in this way, manic and blood lusting, moaning every time she is injured or wounds another.

**Foe:** Shilara is a succubus and a very old one at that. She has played with mortals for hundreds of years and she is very good at sizing people up and determining what buttons will make them do exactly what she says. Be sure to play this aspect of her character to the hilt if you get the chance.

**Shilara, Lady of Bliss;** succubus, hp 35, *Monster Manual* 47

**Tactics:** Shilara will try to immediately compel some aid from the PCs, targeting "weak minded" PCs like fighters and barbarians with her charming abilities. If she can, she will stay out of actual combat but if she does have to fight, she will go berserk as noted above. She will still use *charm monster* and *suggestion* but only on targets other than her current victim in combat.

### Scaling the Encounter

By herself, this is only a challenge meant for 7<sup>th</sup> level characters. This is acceptable though as the difficulty of the other two scenes will more than make up for it. Only use the following scaling suggestions if the PCs are clearly too powerful for Shilara to be another more than an annoyance.

**7<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** No change.

**8<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** No change.

**10<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Shilara is carrying Shila's Caress, a *dagger of venom*.

**11<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Shilara's dagger is very potent, striking as a +2, *keen* weapon with a +2 to the DC for any saves its *poison* effect may require.

Once the combat or negotiation is over, the PCs will be in possession of two reliquaries. They can wither take one back immediately or keep hold of them for now to aid their search for the remaining pair of celestial vials and their fiendish keepers. Any PC holding the new reliquary will gain the same effect as the current holder of the one given to them by Xandrin Corvalis (i.e. the improved bless effect).

When the PCs are ready to continue the hunt, move on to the next part, Foul Deeds in the Dark.

## Part Two: Foul Deeds in the Dark

This section regards the craven evil of Kree'zash, the vrock in the Voice of the Storm's service. He is a particularly contemptible creature and has determined that his best course of action with regards to his orders is to poison the entire city using the pestilent spores that grow from its own body. By doing this underground in the sewer tunnels beneath Stormreach, he also does not expose himself to any threat.

His plan to frame the Covenant of Light is a simple one. He intends to make the poisoning look like a blessing gone horribly wrong, thus blaming the faction for terrible incompetence and reckless disregard for the safety of the city's people. By making this accusation to the first Covenant member he sees in the streets above once the poison is starting to take effect, directly showing off his angelic form, he hopes to incite a riot of rage and panic.

The screams of the murderous populace turned against the Covenant by his own virulent ruse will be music to his twisted, carrion crow ears.

### Getting There

As with the previous scene, you can get the PCs to the action either way you choose. Both routes are described for you below. Simply use whichever one best suits your play style.

### The Short Route

*The new glow that surrounds your eyes and dominates some small part of your vision is now leading you downward. It takes some time to find a usable entrance to the tangle of old basements and sewers that riddle the shore beneath Stormreach. Once you do, you enter a subterranean world of twisted angles, aging construction and moss-slick stone tunnels.*

*It takes quite some time to trek through this cavernous mire, moving through fluids best left to the imagination and enduring stench impossible to imagine in the first place. There are shapes that move at the edge of vision, always melting away or revealed as something mundane when investigated.*

*Finally, past a hellish journey through the very bowels of the city, you come to a wide chamber where several tunnels intersect. In the center of this dimly lit room, a glowing figure with dove-white feathers for hair and beautiful alabaster skin stands in front of a wide stone well. Water is moving upwards out of the well into a similar pipe in the ceiling.*

*All around him, motes of starlight seem to fall from the air, collecting around his feet in mounds of twinkling splendor. Even as you approach the room, he is kneeling, collecting up handfuls of this strange, glowing dust in his perfect hands.*

Proceed to The Sundered Well when the PCs are ready.

### The Long Route

The journey through the sewers can be a much more in-depth, interesting journey if you decide to take the time to expand this scene. Start by reading or paraphrasing the following:

*With one reliquary secured, the glow in your eyes shifts to focus on the next. The lights around your field of vision settle into a single point that, strangely, seems to indicate downward. Wherever the next holy vial is, it must somehow be beneath the city.*

This “point of light” will constantly remain in the PC’s field of vision while he retains possession of the reliquary. The closer he or she gets to the target vial, the brighter the light will become. By the time the well room in the sewers is reached, the light will actually be a column of golden light bathing the entire chamber, surrounding the “angel” vrock in radiance.

Once the PCs have a path, let them follow it however they wish. It is a long walk to the middle of the city on the surface and an even longer one through the labyrinthine tangles below. The foot journey can be as eventual or as quiet as you wish, but here are some story elements you can use to make the travel seem more interesting.

- Before the PCs get to the sewer grate, they come across a pair of homeless citizens on the edge of the city slums. These two are coughing severely and sound terribly ill. If the PCs stop to help them, they can learn of the nature of the next demon by helping these unfortunate people with their spore sickness.
  - If your campaign blends well with tragedy, you can have one of the citizens already dead with the other weeping over his or her body. Use this cautiously, especially if you have already used death and loss in the scenario.
- A passing child tries to get the PCs attention. If they stop, the child asks innocently if they are here to kill the angel. This child can lead the PCs to a battered body thrown into the shadows of a nearby inn. The body was once an adventuring warrior with the misfortune of having a *true seeing* effect active when he saw the vrock. Kree'zash killed him and disposed of his body in the abandoned building, not noticing the child watching nearby.
  - The body can, at your option, be just a critically injured man (or woman) who has been nursed back to some semblance of health by the child and could desperately use the PCs aid if he or she is to recover. This is a good way to let the PCs act like heroes, possibly recruit for the Covenant through their good deeds and get insight into the opponent they are about to face.
- The entrance to the sewers could require some exploration to reach, requiring the PCs to use seldom touched skills like Knowledge (local), Knowledge (geography) or Gather Information.
  - The closest sewer entrance might be under the control of a city thieves' guild. If there are any rogues or bards in the PC group, this is an excellent opportunity to let them shine by negotiating passage.
- Once in the sewers, a brief combat with creatures typically found in such a place would be a nice way to extend the scene. Be careful not to let the fight go on too long or be too challenging. An otyugh, a few sahuagin, a crocodile or other such city sewer terror might be appropriate.

Once the journey is done and the PCs have reached the well room, continue with The Sundered Well below.

## The Sundered Well

The vrock Kree'zash has been a busy demon, searching the sewers for a long time before coming across this magical cistern. The well is a main source of water for most of the city above, making it the perfect place for him to do the most damage in the least amount of time. He has already tasted blood a few times down here and he is eager to see what his wing motes will do to the poor, unsuspecting mortals of this squalid little port town.

Kree'zash is not at all like Shilara. While both may be evil and focused in their malevolence, the succubus was at least reasonable and willing to bargain for her life. The vrock, on the other hand, wants only to kill and sicken. He exists only for his chosen form of corruption – suffering.

### 1. Dangerous Doorway (EL 8)

*There are chunks of old iron embedded in this ragged doorway, the remains of what was once skilled stonework now gone to seed in the damp darkness of this fetid sewer. The floor past the archway appears to be in better shape than the rough flagstones in the rest of these tunnels.*

This room, because of its significance to the city, is considered a no trespassing area by those members of the Stormreach elite who even know of its existence. Long ago, when rival power groups vied for control over the city, this chamber was a common battleground. Its importance as a fresh water source led to it being guarded by several agencies, all of whom eventually reached a tense truce after losing dozens of lives over a single underground room.

The legacy of that truce lives on in the trap places at each of the room's four entrances. For the PCs to enter the well chamber and deal with Kree'zash, they will have to somehow circumvent this obstacle.

**Deathblade Wall Scythe:** CR 8; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +16 melee (2d4+8 plus poison, scythe); poison (deathblade, DC 20 Fortitude save resists, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 19.

*One step into the doorway causes the sections of iron to grind out of the arch with a horrific scream of shearing metal. From within the skeleton of rusted girders, dark steel blades lash out with lethal precision, slicing through anything in their path!*

In addition to the deadly effect of this trap, its activation will immediately alert the vrock at area 2 unless the PCs have taken precautions to prevent that from happening. If he is warned of the PCs' approach, he moves to the far side of the pillar and tries to finish his terrible task before engaging the PCs in combat.

### 2. Kree'zash (EL 9)

*Even kneeling, hands scooping up hundreds of tiny motes of light, the figure in the stone well room is majestic. Polished white skin and downy feathers for hair make this man as breathtaking as he is celestial. Clad only in a pleated kilt of snow-white leather, his chest a ripple of finely etched muscle and his face is a statuesque work of utter perfection. Around his neck, a golden cord of pure light holds an amber vial enclosed in a filigree of worked platinum and gold.*

The PCs no doubt know this appearance is a lie; they are looking at Kree'zash, not a celestial. Even so, the spell disguising the demon is a very powerful one and they may be momentarily taken aback by his grace and beauty. PCs who wish to roleplay this reaction should be allowed, even encouraged to do so.

*"Such ill timing! No matter. You'll all die before you can stop me. The city will writhe in delicious torment once I taint this wellspring!"*

Kree'zash is here to poison this well using his own wing spores. These spores are being concealed by the *aura of glory*, giving them the appearance of starry motes instead. Regardless of what they look like, they are no less deadly. Be sure to describe this vrock in combat with his current visage in mind. It will make for an interesting scene for the Players to imagine they are being choked by beautiful twinkling lights or for the vrock's stunning screech to sound like a heavenly chorus even as it blasts them senseless.

If captured and/or questioned, Kree'zash has no problem betraying the identity of his summoner. He can tell the PCs little else. He was brought to the edge of the city by blind carriage and set free to wreak whatever mayhem suited him best.

**Foe:** Kree'zash is a coward and a fraud, a conniving killer who would rather poison and slay at a distance than get his talons dirty. That said, he is hell-bent on poisoning this well and if the PCs choose to stop him, so much the better. He can use their Covenant corpses later when he frames their faction for the spreading disease. As with the other demons, Kree'zash bears the crimson brand at the base of his throat.

**Kree'zash, Feathered Assassin;** vrock, hp 105, *Monster Manual* 48

**Tactics:** This is a fairly straightforward battle. Vrocks are not subtle creatures and Kree'zash is no exception. He will screech whenever possible, use his spores if he gets surrounded and will imbue himself with *heroism* the first chance he gets. Beyond that, his combat finesse consists of trying to overwhelm opponents with his five natural attacks a round, clawing biting and talon raking until things die.

### Scaling the Encounter

By herself, this is only a challenge meant for 7<sup>th</sup> level characters. This is acceptable though as the difficulty of the other two scenes will more than make up for it. Only use the following scaling suggestions if the PCs are clearly too powerful for Shilara to be another more than an annoyance.

**7<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Kree'zash did not get past the scythe trap unscathed. He is currently at 60 hp and, though the illusion hides it, missing a hand. He can only take one claw attack instead of two during a full attack action.

**8<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Same as 7<sup>th</sup>, but he has 85 hp.

**10<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Kree'zash has managed to secure the aid of the elemental in the well. Each round, it takes one ranged attack as noted in area 3 against one PC currently in melee with the vrock.

**11<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** As 10<sup>th</sup> but the elemental takes a second attack each round at a PC not in melee with the vrock. If all PCs are in melee, it will target a random PC (which might be the same target as the first ranged attack) instead.

### 3. The Pillar Azure (EL n/a, see Area 2)

*This well looks older than the chamber around it, ancient stones engraved with magical runes around its base and edge. The pipe opening in the ceiling above is identical. Between them, a constant rush of deep blue water soars toward the city itself. It makes surprisingly little noise as it passes, just a whisper of a rushing tide before disappearing into the depths of the room's vaulted roof.*

The well is a feat of elemental binding done many years ago by a Zilargo artificer in exchange for badly needed repairs to his ship. The artificer was lost at sea soon after when his vessel ran afoul of a Shargon storm but his legacy lives on in this magical fountain and the life-giving water it brings the people of Stormreach every day.

The key component to the well is Hsshkalisshurush, an elder water elemental bound into the fountain's intricate enchantment. While not discontent, the elemental is old enough and powerful enough that it is not entirely bound any longer. Quietly idle for months at a time, denied visitors because of the trapped entrances to its chamber, 'Hsshk' is terribly bored.

It is not likely that the PCs will even discover the elemental's sentience and it will not contact them if they do not try and communicate with it first. If any PC does speak Aquan, let them make a Listen check (DC 15) to notice the well 'singing to itself'.

Any conversation with Hsshk is an exercise in frustration; it does not really know how to communicate with mortals from this plane of existence and it does not have much to talk about. This creature is mostly just an interesting diversion and set piece for the scene with one exception – Kree'zash. If the vrock has engaged its aid, the elemental will be fighting for it purely out of boredom.

The elemental attacks with a slam (+25 to hit, 15 ft reach, 2d10+9 damage). Because it is bound, it cannot engulf or use any of its other attack forms. Once Kree'zash is defeated, it will stop attacking. While the PCs could conceivably slay the elemental (*Monster Manual* 100, hp 250), they should be reminded that doing this will ruin the city's primary water supply.

If the PCs can communicate with it and think to try, it can easily be convinced to cease fighting. It begins at Unfriendly if Kree'zash has secured its help. If it can be brought to Indifferent, it will stop attacking the PCs and become idle again. If Hsshk is made friendly or better, it will turn its watery strikes against Kree'zash on their behalf. (If the PCs inform the elemental that the vrock is going to poison its water, they gain a +5 circumstance bonus on the Diplomacy check.)

Once the PCs are done with this scene and have Kree'zash's reliquary, they will be able to move on to the final part of the scenario, Light's False March.

# Part Three: Light's False March

The last section of this scenario deals with the most dangerous of the impostor angels – Lortakael the Vile. A powerful glabrezu with enough physical might to slaughter armies, he prefers to do his darkest evil in ways that last much longer and leave lasting damage in the hearts of minds of anyone unfortunate enough to survive his foul schemes.

Being brought to Eberron and given this handsome, noble appearance has been a wonderful gift for Lortakael. Now, instead of acting behind the scenes, he can further his passion for fostering the cause of evil for evil's sake in person. With all the bearing and demeanor of the grandest paladin, there is no limit to the damage he might do. Only his own arrogance and the recklessness brought on by his disguise offer the PCs a window to unmake him and end his plot.

## Getting There

As with the previous scene, you can get the PCs to the action either way you choose. Both routes are described for you below. Simply use whichever one best suits your play style.

### The Short Route

*The last glow, the final beacon that points the way to the third of the captured vials, leads you on a moving path through the city streets. This one is at ground level and is not stationary as were the last two. This one is moving, albeit slowly, and does not seem to linger in the same place for very long before moving on at a decent pace.*

*In a way, this journey is as tangled as the tunnels below. Many of Stormreach's inner streets are narrow, turning off at blind angles or ending in dead ends of wood or stone. This trek makes painfully apparent the difficulty of finding something when you only know a straight line direction and the path before you is anything but straight. Factoring in the movement of your quarry and the many pedestrian obstacles in the way, the hunt has been a difficult one to say the least.*

*When the glimmer of light becomes the bright radiance of discovery, you see a group of armored men walking through the city marketplace. Their leader, a tall man in ornate silver armor, is surrounded by a hallowed glow that makes even the light column of the reliquary he carries pale in comparison.*

The PCs have located Lortakael. Proceed to Pride's Stand when the PCs are ready.

### The Long Route

The journey through the city can be a much more in-depth, interesting journey if you decide to take the time to expand this scene. Start by reading or paraphrasing the following:

*With two reliquaries secured, your magical sense is drawn to the last – the final stolen vial of holy power. The glow indicating its position is up, back toward the city streets. To chase it you will have to extricate yourselves from the sewers and return to Stormreach proper.*

*And chasing it may be exactly what you have to do. The glow is moving at a quick pace, moving away from you even now!*

This "point of light" will constantly remain in the PC's field of vision while he retains possession of the reliquary. The closer he or she gets to the target vial, the brighter the light will become. By the time the city market is reached, the light will actually be a column of golden light bathing the last reliquary's carrier, surrounding the Paladin demon in its unstoppable glow.

Once the PCs have a path, let them follow it however they wish. It is a long walk to reach the last relic and the PCs will have to cover a lot of Stormreach to keep up. The foot journey can be as eventual or as quiet as you wish, but here are some story elements you can use to make the travel seem more interesting.

- Before the PCs get to the surface, they can be attacked by something they previously defeated and thought was dead. This time, it has returned as a zombie (apply the template, using a zombie from *Monster Manual* 266 if you prefer).
  - This encounter should be very easy and very quick as it is merely intended to reinforce a recurring campaign point. Things in Stormreach are spontaneously returning to unlife; the reasons behind it remain a mystery.
- A whimpering shape in the shadows can draw the PCs' attention away from their hunt. Investigating, they find a bleeding gnoll youth, fur matted red, clutching a deep wound in his side. He instantly reacts with terror if the PCs are visibly Covenant of Light. Talking with him, as long as

- the PCs are kind, reveals that he was cut down by a “big bright human on a horse” for the crime of not bowing with respect when his entourage went by.
- The townsfolk the PCs encounter on their way to find the last reliquary respond differently than they have in the past. Instead of regarding them as heroes, passerby hide their eyes and try not to be noticed or glare from the safety of their own homes.
    - This works best if you have already played up the positive reputation the PCs have garnered by means of their actions in previous adventures. Seeing their honor questioned so easily may give the PCs a great deal to think about on their hunt.
    - As an adjunct to this, you may wish to have a known NPC from previous games such as Rennis the Courier (or, if you do not know of any, the same friendly guard from the beginning of Part One) approach the PCs and tell them that one of their order is acting like a pompous cad. “You should go reveal that blackguard for what he is!” (This is a very important scene to run if you want to give your Players a hint as to the best way to solve the social problem of dealing with Lortakael in public without making the Covenant’s reputation worse.)
  - Because the scenario has likely already run long, it would be best not to throw any serious encounters at the PCs before they confront Lortakael. The fight with him, assuming there is one, is probably going to be a complex one, easily taking more than thirty minutes by itself.

Once the hunt is complete and the PCs have reached Lortakael, continue with Pride’s Stand below.

## Pride’s Stand

As a glabrezu demon, Lortakael is used to being in command and has not changed his ways simply because of a magical disguise. His chosen form of corruption – pride – is easiest done in large groups, especially when he can wield some sort of authority. The *aura of glory* is a perfectly diabolical weapon for him and he is wielding it to the fullest.

His plan is simple but effective. By playing the part of a hidebound paladin embodying every dark aspect of zealotry and arrogance, he intends to make the name of the Covenant of Light synonymous with those failings. He has gathered a group of misguided men with more pride than sense and falsely “sworn them in” to the Covenant, telling them that he has a holy mission only they are capable of helping him fulfill. His heaven-sent appearance and deceptiveness and forged them into a band willing to do anything at his slightest whim. Unlike Shilara, no magic was needed.

This is his first day out with his would-be holy war band. He has not caused any lasting damage to the Covenant’s reputation yet but, if the PCs cannot stop him, Lortakael could drive a terrible wedge between the faction and the people of Stormreach.

This scene is presented as a large, open area – Stormreach’s marketplace. There are carts, stands and hundreds of people crowding these streets every day and through most of the night. The area where Lortakael and his duped soldiers can be found is near the heart of this bizarre, exactly where the demon believes he can do the most social harm.

When you are ready for the PCs to encounter the glabrezu, read or paraphrase the following:

*Near the glowing paragon astride his steed, there are several men clad in the garb of soldiers and bearing the symbol of the Covenant on their tabards and shields. Though they look like guards from Radiant Hold, their uniforms are not quite right. Their clothing is identical to the frauds that attacked Grave’s home.*

*Near one of them, a woman cries out as she falls to her knees. Her cheek red, she is kneeling at the foot of a grinning soldier holding a half loaf of bread. “You should be kinder to us, woman!” he scoffs as the gleaming knight watches on in approval. “We keep you safe and fight off evil that would kill you in your sleep. You should be giving this food away to the likes of us.”*

*A street vendor standing near the fallen woman rushes to her aid and is kicked down by another of the false guards. “Think you’re a hero, old man? We’ll see about that.” As he sneers, the soldier draws his sword and points it at the innocent baker’s throat.*

And with that, the PCs should easily be compelled to act. The battle is described below and starting positions for the enemies are noted on the Pride’s Stand map in the appendix.

## Pride’s Stand (EL See Below)

This is a two step battle. The PCs get the first action, effectively gaining an automatic surprise round because Lortakael does not expect the Covenant to react so quickly to his efforts against them. Let the PCs take their surprise round in anyway they wish, noting that these men are acting violent and callous but none

of them are actively evil. Even the one drawing his sword on an innocent old man is really just trying to “act tough”. He has no intention of actually hurting the fool.

Once the surprise round is over, move to Stage One: Human Shields unless the actions of the PCs make it impossible to do so. If this occurs, adjudicate as needed.

### Stage One: Human Shields

*The glowing man with eyes of light turns to regard you. His brow furrows and he raises one hand to point your direction. “Men, those are the false agents I spoke of! They are here to end our crusade before it can begin. They may seem like brethren but show them no mercy!”*

*The soldiers nod, eyes wide and fanatical as they throw themselves into battle against you!*

**Foes:** These local toughs are more misled than malicious but Lortakael has won them over with talk of glory and promises of rewards for their service. They believe his lies and have been convinced that the PCs are (ironically) demons in disguise trying to kill them and stop their holy cause. As such they begin the battle with hostile attitudes and no desire to parley. Because they are not magically compelled, persistent and skilled PCs might still be able to reason with them.

**False Champions of the Light (7);** mix male and female humans; hp 38; See Combat Statistics.

### Combat Statistics

FALSE CHAMPION OF THE LIGHT	CR 4
Human fighter 4	
N Medium humanoid (human)	
Init +5; Senses Listen +1, Spot +1	
Languages Common	
AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 18	
hp 38 (4 HD)	
Fort +4, Ref +11, Will +3; evasion, trap sense +1	
Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)	
Melee masterwork longsword +9 (1d8+5/19–20)	
Range masterwork heavy crossbow +6 (1d10/19–20)	
Base Atk +4; Grp +7	
Atk Options Power Attack, Cleave	
Special Actions	
Abilities Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 11	
SQ Inspired Leadership (+1 morale bonus to attack if Lortakael is in line of sight and not defeated)	
Feats Weapon Focus (longsword), Toughness, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Cleave, Weapon Specialization (longsword)	
Skills Climb +7, Intimidate +5, Jump +7 Ride +5	
Equipment: Plate mail, masterwork longsword, heavy steel shield, masterwork heavy crossbow, 20 bolts	

**Tactics:** The champions have been training with Lortakael and all have soldiering or mercenary experience. They can and will use cover, fight at range if they have to, and flank whenever possible. They consider themselves an elite group and will watch out for each other as well, trying (if only passingly) to be heroes. After all, that's what Lortakael has told them they are and an angel can't be wrong, can it?

**Development:** This stage of the battle is just between the PCs and Lortakael's seven soldiers. They will do everything they can to shield their lord and master from the PCs, going so far as to stand in the path of obviously superior opponents to keep him out of harm's way. Of course the glabrezu does not need this kind of sacrificial protection but it amuses him nonetheless.

If the PCs still insist on fighting Lortakael without dealing with the soldiers, move to Stage Two: Brightest Dark while keeping the false champions in the fight. This will make the fight considerably harder for the PCs unless they have a plan (such as revealing Lortakael for the demon he is, by far one of the smartest things they can do).

### Scaling the Encounter

This battle does not scale. The number of opponents might make this battle tough for groups of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> level PCs but the champions are actually under-geared for their level and they can be parleyed with if the PCs attempt to speak to them.

### Stage Two: Brightest Dark

*The brilliantly glowing heavenly warlord leaps down off his stallion, gleaming silver gauntlets clenched in tight fists as he stands defiantly before you. "You can rail against the light all you wish but in the end, the righteous will always be victorious, villains."*

This is exactly what Lortakael wants. The PCs attacking him in front of all these witnesses will forever plant the seeds of fear in the city's citizenry. The fear he will instill when he slaughters them, all the while smiling and radiating his blinding aura of holiness, will only sweeten his victory.

Unfortunately for Lortakael, he has forgotten an important element in his plan – the *Lira's Bond* reliquaries. Not only is he vulnerable to exposure if his is taken from him, something the PCs should have figured out by now, but the vials themselves have an unspoken power between them when brought into such close proximity.

When the first PC with a reliquary gets within 10 feet of Lortakael, the following occurs:

*A blinding flashy suddenly emanates from the depths of the relic you carry, a flash of heat and holy rage. The light races in arcs of power between all of the reliquaries present, including the one hanging by thin mithril chains from the grand crusader's wrist.*

*The light is harmless to you but burns over the noble features of the 'celestial' paladin like a ravening white flame. Though he is in obvious agony, the man forces himself past the pain and charges you, fists glowing with a crimson blaze of power all their own.*

This backlash of holy energy was not in Lortakael's plans at all. The pulse has left him weakened but far from defeated. If the PCs want to end the threat he poses to their faction, they will have to take him down in battle themselves.

Of course, disarming him of the reliquary will go a long way toward mending the reputation damage Lortakael has already done. This can be done with a disarm action against the reliquary as if it were a tiny weapon Lortakael was holding. In addition, the disarm attempt must roll damage as it were a real attack; it takes 11 points of damage to break the mithril chain binding the reliquary to the demon's wrist.

Allow other plans to get the reliquary away from Lortakael to succeed if the PCs make a serious and determined attempt. Clever plans should be rewarded but do not hesitate to punish obviously flawed ones. As long as the PCs are honestly trying, give them a fair chance.

If the PCs do succeed on taking the reliquary off the demon:

*The blessed image of the crusader instantly changes. Instead of a tall man with golden blonde hair and a fair visage, he is now a towering beast of russet hue and fiendish form. Four arms extend from his horrifically powerful chest, two of which end in wickedly razor-sharp pincers. Rows of gleaming teeth line his canine maw, open as he roars in defiance.*

*"This is no victory!" he snarls like a dire wolf. "Those I cannot command, I consume!"*

At that point, the battle is joined. There will be no mercy or retreat; Lortakael will kill or be killed.

**Foe:** Lortakael is a skilled leader and general, a paragon in his own dark right. Regardless of his plans, he is arrogant enough that when and if it seems like the PCs might actually succeed, he is more than willing to use any evil power at his disposal to kill them all. He will not jeopardize his plots and schemes if he can help it but in the end, his survival is all important.

At the base of his throat, Lortakael has the crimson brand. He, like the others, has no idea what it means or where it came from.



**Lortakael the Vile;** glabrezu, hp 174 (see Scaling the Encounter), *Monster Manual* 43

## Scaling the Encounter

A glabrezu is a CR 13 creature, far too powerful on its own for the PCs to fight with any decent chance of success even at the scenario's top tier. It is imperative that you use the scaling information below to make this a fair encounter. It should be a very hard fight, one the PCs (and Players) will remember long after the scenario ends.

**7<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** The backlash of the relics has deeply wounded Lortakael, leaving him with a fraction of his former power. His hit points have been reduced to 100, he cannot use any supernatural or spell-like abilities for five full rounds and his damage reduction is negated for the duration of the fight. He also suffers a -5 divine penalty to all attacks and saving throws.

**8<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Same as 7<sup>th</sup>, but the loss of power only lasts four rounds and his divine penalty to attacks and saves is -4.

**9<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Same as 7<sup>th</sup>, but the loss of power only lasts three rounds and his divine penalty to attacks and saves is -3.

**10<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Same as 7<sup>th</sup>, but the loss of power only lasts two rounds and his divine penalty to attacks and saves is -2.

**11<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Same as 7<sup>th</sup>, but the loss of power only lasts one round and his divine penalty to attacks and saves is -1.

Once the glabrezu is slain, the last of the reliquaries can be harvested from him (if it is not already off his corpse). If there are any living "champions", they are suitably humbled by their foolishness and, if the PCs will have them, they would all like to go to Radiant Hold and join the Covenant of Light legitimately.

The PCs have been through a long ordeal and done a great service for the Covenant of Light. When the PCs are ready to return to Radiant Hold, proceed to Ending the Adventure.

## Ending the Adventure

If there is enough time remaining in the scenario, feel free to let the PCs roleplay their return to Radiant Hold in triumph. They may have enough details to piece together what happened with these demons (i.e. that there was a plot against the reputation of the Covenant of Light) but without further information, there is little that can be done to follow up. It is time for richly deserved rest.

Once the PCs are once again in Xandrin's presence, read or paraphrase the following text to wrap up the scenario and bring this adventure to a close. Note that the text assumes the PCs acted heroically and did their best to prevent and mitigate any damage done to the faction's reputation.

Of special note is the story object, Faith of the Four. This should be given out **only** if the PCs have truly worked diligently on behalf of the faction *and* respected the traditions and meaning behind the Light itself.

*You stand once more in the private shrine at the heart of the Covenant's citadel. Where the huge star willow once stood, a tiny sapling with only a few glimmering berries near its tip rests in its place. The small spirit tree has a long way to go before it can ever hope to measure up to the one that was lost, but at least the shrine is no longer barren.*

*Standing at the mausoleum wall, Xandrin quietly places each reliquary back into its rightful tomb, saying a silent prayer before closing and locking the small crypt doors. After a thoughtful pause, he turns to face you all, his face a measured mask of calm and concern.*

*"You have once again proven to me the truest purpose of our brotherhood. We have suffered much this day, you more than others, but we persevere in the face of our enemies' dire plots. Again.*

*"I am in your debt, my friends. The Covenant is in your debt. What you have done for us, for the memory of the fallen, will never be forgotten. Please go to the temple and accept any healing we might provide. Fiends are legendary for their ability to corrupt and infect. After all you have been through, let us not risk losing you to something so base."*

*He leads you out of the shrine, smiling as much as the pressures of his office will allow. "And once you've had some rest, I recommend a good dinner at my favorite restaurant." Then, with a more honest expression of friendship, he adds, "...and I'm buying."*

**Here ends A Choir of Angels.**

# Adventure Questions

1. Did the PCs take the time to roleplay through the introduction, especially the scene with Xandrin in the hidden shrine?
  - a) Yes; they set a good, cordial example for members of the Covenant of Light.
  - b) Somewhat; they were either flippant or disinterested, acting like it did not matter.
2. Which best describes the apparent attitude of the PCs toward their mission during the scenario?
  - a) Very professional and concerned, acting as if lives were at stake.
  - b) Mixed reactions; some PCs were focused and controlled while others were less so.
  - c) Poor reactions; the PCs did not seem to care about the mission or their objective.
  - d) Appalling. There was no apparent personal motivation aside from their membership in the Covenant of Light for them to even go on this mission.
3. How did the PCs handle their interactions with the people of Stormreach during this scenario?
  - a) They acted like heroes, spread compassion and Light wherever they could.
  - b) Some tried, others did not. In the end, it basically evened out.
  - c) The PCs were poor role models, acting greedy, violent or dispassionate when in public. If the Voice of the Storm was looking to discredit the Covenant, they should just recruit the PCs and be done with it.
4. Did the PCs defeat Shilara?
  - a) Completely, the succubus was put down without significantly harming the PCs.
  - b) The temptress was defeated but not before taking down one or more of the PCs.
  - c) The PCs were defeated or had to flee in some way from the seductive terror.
5. How did the PCs fare against the sewer dwelling Kree'zash?
  - a) They were able to overcome the poisoner without losing anyone.
  - b) The party defeated the vrock but took serious damage in the process.
  - c) The PCs were defeated in this encounter; the vrock took them all down.
6. In the battle with Lortakael, were the PCs triumphant?
  - a) The glabrezu is no longer a threat to the Covenant or anyone else; he was handled without significant losses on the PCs' side.
  - b) It was a hard fought battle and no everyone made it out unscathed but the towering schemer is no more.
  - c) They fought the good fight but in the end, the power of evil eclipsed their holy radiance. The PCs were completely defeated.
7. What best describes the reputation of the Covenant of Light after this adventure?
  - a) The PCs were not only able to negate any real damage the demons might have inflicted, they actually put forth such a bright face to the city that the Covenant can only benefit from their efforts.
  - b) The PCs manage to control any damage but they did not contribute much by way of positive examples.
  - c) The populace of Stormreach is likely to think a little less of the faction because of the demons and their actions. The PCs were not able to salve all the social wounds.
  - d) The PCs failed in this regard. The Covenant of Light was not be welcome in many homes or hearts in Stormreach for some time to come.
8. How would you rate the group's roleplaying?
  - a) Fantastic. Everyone had interesting and engaging characters that interacted with the adventure in very fun ways.
  - b) Good. Most everyone had interesting and engaging characters that interacted with the adventure in very fun ways.
  - c) Okay. There was some roleplaying.
  - d) None. They treated the adventure as a set of objectives. There was no roleplaying.

**Story Objects:**

"Faith of the Four"

**Story Object Code: EXCL26**

*You have honored the sacrifices of the Fallen Four and saved the Covenant of Light from what could have been a terrible disaster. Your efforts will never be forgotten and you have earned a place in the annals of your faction.*

*What's more, you have earned the attention of the powers of Light itself. Once per adventure, you may spend two uses of the Blessing of the Light when using an action point to affect a d20 roll. If you do this, you automatically succeed at whatever check you were going to modify with the action point.*

*When you do this, your entire body glows with the radiance of a daylight spell for 1 round plus one round per Blessing of the Host story object you have. This illumination cannot be suppressed or cancelled prematurely by you and if it begins in an area affected by magical darkness of any kind with a caster level lower than your character level, the darkness is dispelled.*

"The Crimson Brand"

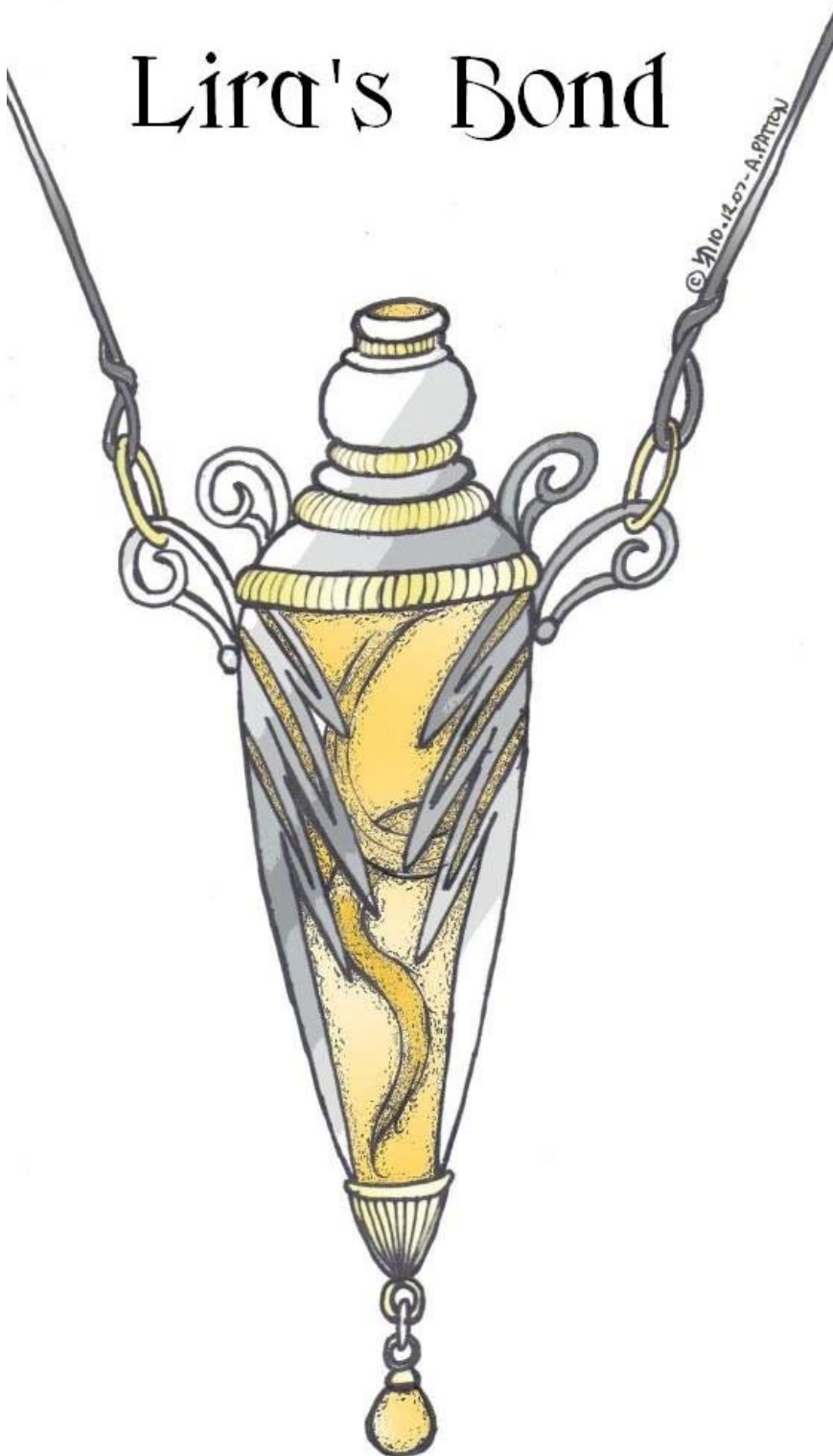
**Story Object Code: EXCL27**

*On each of the false angel, you discovered a strange tattoo. Found on the flesh of each fiend at the base of the throat, it has no meaning in any known living language. According to a reliable source, however, the symbol looks like part of a failed attempt several years ago to codify something called the Dark Speech into a written form.*

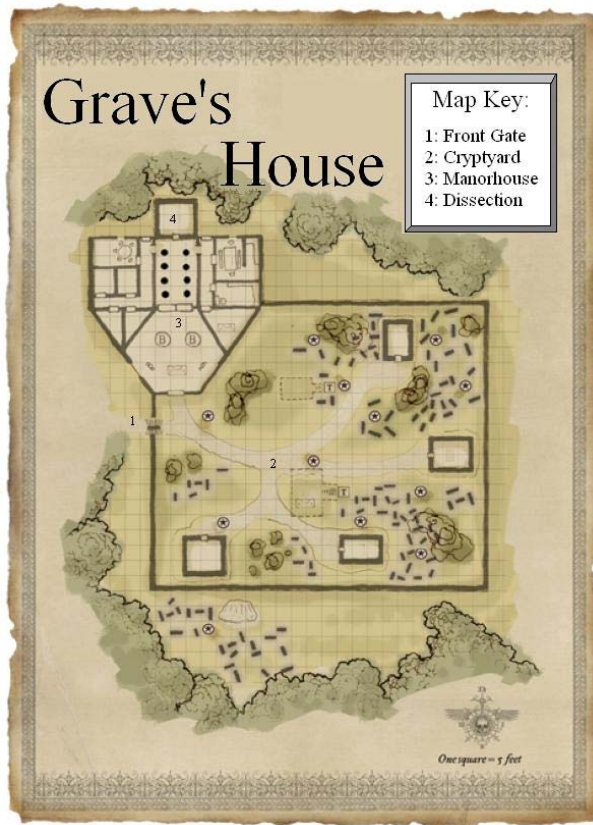
*If this source is correct, the sigil means "Beckon".*

## Appendix One: Player Handout

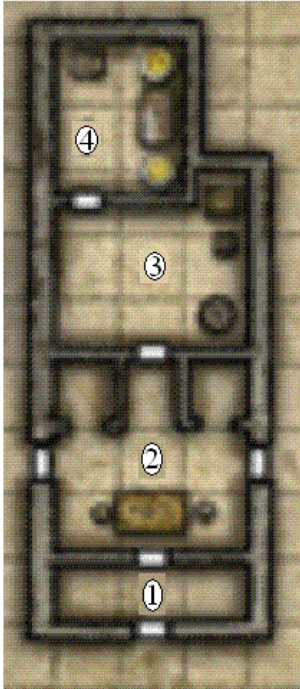
# Lira's Bond



## Appendix Two: Maps



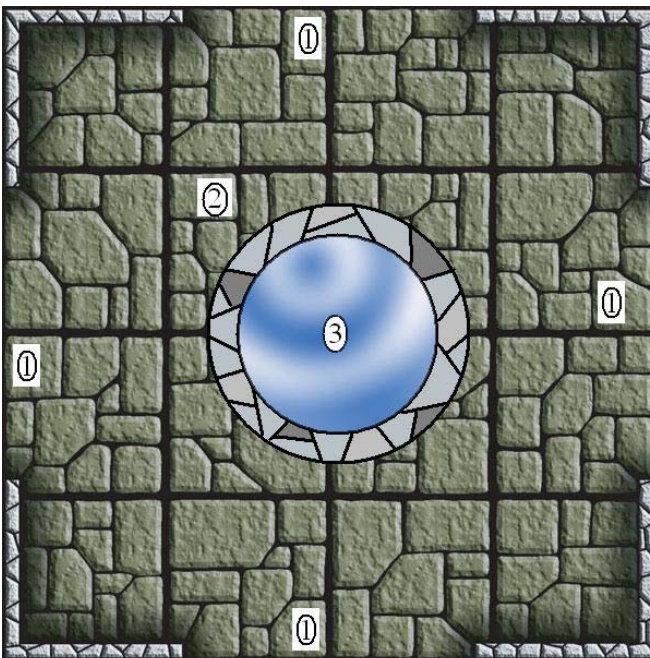




# The Shrine of the Senses

## Map Key

- 1: Humbling Threshold
- 2: Gluttony Hall
- 3: Wicked Kitchen
- 4: Den of Sin



# The Sundered Well

## Map Key:

- 1: Dangerous Doorway
- 2: Kree'zash
- 3: The Pillar Azure



# Pride's Stand

## Map Key:

L: Lortikael  
CH: "Champion"  
W: Witness

# Appendix Three: New Spell

## Aura of Glory

### Illusion (glamer) [Evil]

**Level:** Clr 5  
**Components:** V, S, F  
**Casting Time:** 10 minutes  
**Range:** Touch/Self  
**Targets:** One creature  
**Duration:** Permanent (D)  
**Saving Throw:** None (see text)  
**Spell Resistance:** Yes (harmless)

A powerful form of concealment magic, this spell is a bane to holy warriors and priests in that it confuses their divine senses and obscures the darkness in its target's soul. Once Aura of Glory is completed, the subject of the spell appears to all magical and psionic forms of detection as a good alignment of the caster's choice (lawful good, neutral good or chaotic good). In addition, summoned creatures under the effect of this spell remain summoned for the length of its duration.

In addition, any effect based on alignment will regard the subject as if it was the chosen alignment instead of its own. For example, paladins cannot use Smite Evil against a subject of this spell and *detect good* can locate the subject.

Unfortunately for the targets of this spell, *aura of glory* prevents them from using any ability based on alignment. Spells and abilities with the Good or Evil descriptors cannot be used by the subject while this glamer is active. The subject can dispel *aura of glory* as a standard action but once dismissed, the spell ends immediately.

**Focus:** A tiny reliquary containing some sacred relic. The reliquary costs at least 500 gp. As long as the reliquary remains on the target after the spell is cast, *aura of glory* continues regardless of the target's condition. If the reliquary is removed from the target's possession, the spell ends instantly.