

The Stars Don't Lie

A One-round AD&D Living City Adventure

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An Old Oeridians Game Club Production

"The death of many follow the fall of one." Is this vague message from the stars something worth worrying about or is it just someone's attempt to ruin our celebration? Let's find out... An adventure for characters levels 1-6.

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This is a RPGA Network adventure game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing the game (or this round of the game), but the actual playing time will be about three hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

Scoring the game for RPGA points: The RPGA has three ways to score this game. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use:

1. *No-vote scoring:* The players write their names and numbers on the scoring packet grid, you fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
2. *Partial scoring:* The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the convention coordinator wants information as to how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
3. *Voting:* Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the best amongst them, or when the adventure is run in adventure format with winners and prizes. Multi-round adventures usually required advancing a smaller number of players than played the first round, so voting is required for multi-round adventures.

When using Voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in ***bold italics***. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

Tier Structure

To determine the tier, add the character levels of all the characters. In addition, add the levels of any henchmen or animals according to the values on their certificates. Compare the total to the chart below to find the tier.

	<u>4 players</u>	<u>5 players</u>	<u>6 players</u>	<u>7 players</u>	<u>Lvl Cap</u>
T1:	4-12	5-13	6-14	7-15	4 nd
T2:	13-22	14-24	15-26	16-28	6 th
T3:	23-32	25-35	27-38	29-41	8 th

The level cap indicated the highest level of character allowed to play this adventure. Characters of levels higher than the highest level shown for the highest tier cannot be played.

GM Introduction

In this adventure, the citizens of the city of Ravens Bluff are being warned of danger by an unlikely source. The PCs are recruited by the City Watch to obtain independent verification of the dread prophecy touted by some outcast members of the Astrologers' Section of the Sages Guild. If the PCs are not successful, they fail to obtain valuable intelligence necessary to thwart the evil plans of a sect of Talona from the west.

The event begins with the party witnessing citizens scoffing at the latest dispute in the Astrologers' Section of the Sages Guild. The party is summoned by the Senior Constable Martin Ferrand and asked to journey several days out of the city to obtain the assistance of a former leader of the Astrologers' Guild. The former leader, who has retired outside the city, has not been a member of the guild in over a generation. He is known only by reputation to the eldest members of the guild. The former leader, a minotaur named Abrithiasis, also known as "Honest Abe," was last known to live in the swamps several days' journey to the north of the city. The PCs are asked to deliver what is thought to be an adequate reward for his cooperation, and request his aid in the matter, although that is not expected to be easy.

The PCs can be afforded the opportunity to conduct divination activity of their own. All such activity should receive a bonus of 20% to effectiveness and/or duration, outside the city of Ravens Bluff, and a 20% penalty, when conducted within the city, where efforts to obscure the truth are in full swing. Should the PCs independently confirm that the prophecy is not a hoax, they will still have to go on the mission to obtain Abrithiasis's assistance in further clarifying the reported prophecies. During their travel, PCs using divination

magic or similar skills will continue to enjoy this bonus as the gods attempt to warn the city of the impending danger. PLEASE NOTE: It is not necessary for someone to have the skill of astrology to complete the scenario.

The forces arrayed against the party are well organized. The PCs will have at least three hostile contacts with the minions of Talona, who is behind the threat to the city. Talona resents her lack of influence in Ravens Bluff and seeks to bring about the destruction of the city by plague. If the party is able to secure proof of her hand in the current situation without accidentally cursing themselves or contracting the plague, they can receive either a temple Fame point or a chivalry point.

The NPCs in the first of the three encounters seek to take advantage of the party in the midst of a good deed. In higher tiers, the ambush will be preceded by a rockslide. A carefully laid ambush in the middle of a muddy trail assaults the stalwart band. Brigands with magical assistance were sent at the direction of Talona to prevent the PCs from reaching their goal on time. PLEASE NOTE: THIS ENCOUNTER TAKES PLACE ON THE FIFTH DAY OF TRAVEL.

The PCs enter the swamp area on the sixth day and must figure out how to find Abrithiasis, as detailed directions were not known. Should the PCs successfully attempt a well-reasoned plan, they'll have the advantage of surprise in the second encounter and combat may even be avoided. Wholesale destruction of the swamp will anger the minotaurs and consequently inhibit the party's negotiation with them. None of the swamp's denizens are keen on company and will require some sacrifice on the part of the party for safe passage and/or assistance in locating Abrithiasis. To obtain assistance, the PCs will have to give at least one magic item to one of the local war leaders. If the PCs were particularly stupid in their advance into the swamp, the DM should feel free to give them every disadvantage in the rescue scene as the minions of Talona would have more than ample warning of their imminent arrival.

A number of random roleplaying encounters are included below, to help fill time, if the combats are quick or are avoided. If the combats have been short, select an encounter based on party composition and time constraints. These encounters, while providing a unique roleplaying opportunity, will not substantively affect the completion of the scenario, or deprive the players of opportunities to obtain experience points for their PCs.

The rescue scene reveals the extensive effort that Talona has expended to recruit assistance in the destruction of Ravens Bluff. Powerful cursed items will be found and a variety of powerful minions will be arrayed against the party. The party is fighting an unseen clock to save the minotaur family. If the party is

successful, they will meet Abrithiasis and his family. At that point, it is up to the party to initiate negotiations. Make the PCs roleplay obtaining Abrithiasis's cooperation.

The PCs will then escort the family back to Ravens Bluff, if successful, or return empty-handed. They will be rewarded, according to their success, so this stresses teamwork. If the PCs allow someone to tamper with one of the cursed items, the Chivalry point and/or Fame Point temple is replaced by an Infamy point. Anyone obtaining the mark of Talona will receive a random, permanent curse, as provided on the certificate.

This scenario is designed to be played by itself, or it can be followed by the second of the series, *Death Rides Brown Wings*. We hope that you enjoy these scenarios.

Lee and Michelle Sharp

Prologue

After a respite from the protracted search for the Orb of Protection that ensnared many of Ravens Bluff's adventurers, the city has spent an extended time celebrating the end of the search. Wiser heads among the city folk knew that the gaiety would not last forever, and they were recently proven correct. Cries of fear and despair arose from none other than the Astrologer Section of the Sage's Guild.

The Astrologer's Section of the Guild has not, of late, been afforded much respect. The average citizen of Ravens Bluff views a member of this section of the Guild as one would the Juggler's Guild or the local circus; they are seen as professional entertainers.

Montanguiner, one of the elders of the Astrologer's Section of the Sages Guild, started the recent outcry. The guild suffered a severe schism, with a vocal minority crying the alarm. The unusual observation that many in the city have made is that the astrologers, most often viewed as fawning lapdogs to the superstitious aristocracy, are not in the vocal minority. Rather, those astrologers most often accorded respect for their apparent wisdom and wit, and least perceived as worthless charlatans, are those making the outcry.

Their warnings are simple: "Death rides brown wings from the West" and "The death of many follow the fall of one." These statements have caused considerable unrest in the huddled masses populating Ravens Bluff, leading to busy nights lately for the City Watch. The majority of the Astrologer's Guild members have assured the city government that the warnings are the pent-up worries of worn, strained minds, unable to cope with the war's passage. Lady Havaratha Delmaer, current guild master, asked that

the revolting minority be removed from the city for inciting riots.

You, individually, are summoned by members of the City Watch, to attend to a request of Senior Constable Martin Ferrand. You are not given any further information, beyond a time and place to meet with the senior constable. When you arrive, you enter a waiting room occupied by several other individuals.

The characters may introduce themselves at this time, as they await their meeting with the Senior Constable.

Encounter One: The Sendoff

The PCs meet with the Senior Constable, who lays out the city's problem and the proposed solution. The party engages in negotiations for compensation and duties. Potential dangers are assessed and discussed. If interest in the prophecy is expressed by a party member, or someone is capable of independent verification via use of the Knowledge (Astrology) skill, the Senior Constable will offer, in addition to the money noted above, a Book of the Stars (see appendix). Regardless of verification (or lack of verification) by the party itself, the city will want the outside expert to resolve the situation.

Senior Constable Martin Ferrand, known by repute to all of you, storms into the waiting room yelling at an aide. "By all of the gods, I've had about enough of their nonsense! Get a runner to run over to Lady Havaratha Delmaer's shop, and tell her that if she doesn't shut her trap, the Watch will shut her shop down." The aide responds, "You don't mind if I add some diplomatic flourishes to that, do you?" Martin barks back, "You can take her a bunch of flowers for all I care! I just want an hour's peace, to get these people on the road. Gentlemen, won't you come in? Please excuse the mess. It's been a trying last few days."

Give the PCs a chance to introduce themselves to you. Let them spout off a bit about their specialties. Read their character sheets, in advance, and try to talk about at least one strength of each that Constable Ferrand has heard of, to explain why they have been called. You might mention one of the adventures they were on previously, to say that you heard of their heroic exploits.

The Senior Constable asks for silence now. "You might have heard about the recent conflict in the Astrologer's Guild. Normally, we don't pay them much mind, because more often than not, they are all

hot air, if you know what I mean. Well, the flatulence that they have blown out this time has stunk up the whole city. Any time you've got more than one person crying that the sky is falling, someone will be convinced that it is. The trouble is that, if I am a good judge of character, which I should be after this many years in my post, the lot making the hue and cry aren't the shifty, spooky sort that I would expect to cause problems needlessly. In fact, I've talked to Montanguiner himself, and I am convinced that he is seriously frightened for the city."

If there are any clerics, he will address them now. Otherwise, he will just make this a general statement of fact. Personalize this if you can.

"The funny thing is that some of the temples are a little skittish right now, as well. Something, well, BIG, is blocking efforts of the temples to obtain divine guidance within the city. There are some folk capable of penetrating that resistance, but they are dedicated to more important tasks. That something is trying to hide itself in the city tells me to be worried. Accurate information is worth a premium right now, I assure you. Due to the severe conflict within the Astrologer's Guild, I can't take Montanguiner's word on the prophecy, even if I am convinced of his sincerity. But he did give me a way out of the problem.

"You see, he offered an alternative during a spirited debate with Lady Delmaer. Abrithiasis, also known as "Honest Abe," a hermit minotaur witch doctor, is a renowned diviner, who was also a respected astrologer, when he plied his trade near the city some 30 years ago. He left the city when he made a sufficient bankroll to retire comfortably to the swamps several days to the north of the city. He could not only clear up the dispute, but perhaps offer insight into the warnings as well. Will you fetch him here for me?"

Gamemaster notes:

- He does not have an exact location for Abrithiasis. The minotaur was last known to live several days' travel to the north, in a swampy area, to which the Constable has a map. The swamp area is over a day's travel, in each direction, and is known to be inhabited by other, unfriendly humanoids, including goblins and kobolds.
- He will tell the PCs that it is up to them to convince the minotaur to return with them. He will provide both a suitable reward for the minotaur and a fake (complete with a double trap), in case the PCs encounter bandits. Abrithiasis would not value money, but he might chomp at some particularly rare spell components provided by the Senior

Constable (see appendix for description of items).

- The PCs must negotiate for their services. The Senior Constable will initially offer 100 gp in gems, per party member. He is authorized to go up to 200 gp per person, half up front and half upon completion of the mission, but he is a good steward of city resources, and will try not to give that much.

He has in his possession a book that one of the party members can take, to aid in the mission (see appendix: Book of Stars).

- The PCs are responsible for their own means of transportation. He does urge them to hurry, as the dispute is affecting commerce and peace within the city. However, he will not provide transportation, magical or mundane.

Allow the PCs time to discuss how they would like to travel. Further information will not be available in this scenario on the source of the problem the city faces. Given that the meeting takes place in the early afternoon, they should be able to leave first thing in the morning. If the party speaks of taking longer, the Senior Constable can grouse about that, and think out loud about seeking a party of adventurers that might not take so long. **"Maybe I should contact the Knights of the Hawk to send me a group of professional scouts for this?"**

The PCs should be allowed to travel unmolested from the city for the first four days. There are a variety of skills that can be employed while traveling, from Tracking and Herbalism to Astrology. Again, as a reminder, astrology efforts outside of the city should receive a 20% bonus, and divination spells used to try to obtain further information towards the end of completing this mission should all receive a 20% bonus in effectiveness and duration.

Feel free to reward the characters in a non-monetary fashion for using their skills. For instance, an herbalist might be allowed to gather enough herbs appropriate to making a non-magical poultice, which could heal 1d4 hit points of bleeding damage or bring a dying character to 0 hp, which will only be effective for a period of four days or so (until end of adventure). Successful hunting will produce ample provisions for the party. Tracking will not show any unusual activity on the road, nor will it reveal anyone, beyond a pair of year-old black bears who want to share the PCs' campsite on the second night. The bears, attracted by the unusual smells of the PCs, will not pose a threat to the party, although they will keep entering the campsite on the second night, interrupting any watch, sleep, or meditative activity. The bears will flee if attacked and return after 1 hour, to continue annoying the party, as they scavenge for food.

Weather: day one on the road is sunny and warm, day two is cloudy and windy, day three has severe wind and thunderstorms, day four has light rain and wind, and day five has clouds and strong wind.

Encounter Two: Biting the hand that feeds you...

Rangers and druids will be aware that recent rough weather in the area has made travel more dangerous than usual. There is sign of some rock and mudslides in other areas adjoining the one in which they are traveling.

As the PCs approach the landslide area, have everyone make Listen checks DC 20 to hear the beginnings of the slide. Spot checks DC 30 or Search checks DC 20 reveal the unstable rock formations. If both types of check are successful, the PCs may be allowed to move a distance from the trail and avoid the rockslide.

The 1d6 represents the number of rounds that they are in the area of the rockslide. If the PCs lack the ability to detect the rockslide in advance, they are caught in it. Make a surprise check; success means they each take 2d6 points in damage. Failure (they are surprised) means that each PC suffers 3d8 points in damage.

To be read to those who notice the unstable rocks:

While you are walking past the stone walls of this valley area, you notice some changes in the stone composition. The stone you walk past now is completely different, reminding you of some unstable areas. You can see signs of previous stone falls, from rockslides that seem to have taken place in the last couple of years. You can also see that some of the falls have swept through this trail down the slope you are walking up, covering the trail until it was cleared.

To those who hear the start of the rockslide:

As you attempt to work your way through this rough terrain, _____ (the party ranger or thief) jerks his head up at an unexpected noise, and notices some movement up, and to the right side of the trail.

To the party, if both sets of checks are successful:

You all are grateful for the warning given to you by _____ and _____. You saw the signs of previous rockslides, and heard the start of another, over the wind, which is howling through the area right now. You are able to get off of the trail, and into cover, in order to avoid the worst of the slide. You

realize that it would have been a lot worse up on the trail.

Read the following after resolving the results of the rockslide and allowing the party to reestablish a marching order.

As you pass the crest of the hill, and begin the downward slope towards the swamps, which you know are your objective, you see that today's blustery weather has caused others beside you to wish they were on some other trail than this one. It appears that a farmer or trader got his tarp-covered wagon stuck in a particularly muddy part of the trail. As you continue in his direction down the trail, he appears to hear you, looks at you for a moment, and then calls for your assistance.

Allow the PCs to decide what to do. The following spells will have the effects described below. If your crew tries something not discussed below, try to rule in accordance with what appears below, as much as possible. If the "farmer" observes obvious spellcasting, an appropriate response will be made. Successful Spot checks DC 25 will allow PCs to detect the upcoming ambush.

- *Detect evil*: Yes, the "farmer" has evil intent. Furthermore, if someone also concentrates on the light trees to the left, they also sense evil intent from there.
- *Detect magic*: Depends on the tier
- *Detect thoughts*: There are other people about, waiting to ambush the PCs when they approach the wagon.
- *Find traps*: No traps. An ambush, but no traps.
- *Clairaudience*: Yep, you hear other people, off to the left, in the bushes about 20 ft. from the trail.
- *Clairvoyance* or *wizard eye*: No, the ambushers are too well hidden.

NOTE: After combat, if a party member searches the bodies they will find what appears to be a scrap of paper on the charlatan with apparent gibberish on it. A successful Read Languages check by a thief will reveal this to be a coded entry, which describes how to counter the poison. (This message is coded; it is not magical).

Tier One (EL 5):

"Farmer," human male Ftr3: CR 3; Medium Humanoid; HD 3d10+6; hp 28; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, + 4 scale mail); Atks +7 melee (1d8+5, trident); AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2.

Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +3, Jump +5, Spot +1, Search +2, Knowledge (Religion) +2. *Feats*: Weapon

Focus (Trident), Power Attack, Cleave, Iron Will, Dodge.

Equipment: *trident of backbiting*. The trident appears to be a normal trident of exceptional quality. It is a +2 *trident* that carries a special curse. The wielder is convinced that this is an exceptional weapon, which it is. The wielder gains the Improved Critical Feat when wielding this weapon (i.e. this weapon's critical range is 19-20), but on a 19 or a 20 the weapon strikes the wielder instead of the intended target. Thus, all criticals damage the wielder. For 2nd ed., the weapon strikes the wielder on a 19 or 20, for full-damage.

"Charlatan," human Rog1/Sor2: CR 3; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d6+2d4+3; hp 16; Init +7 (+3 dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, + 4 *mage armor* spell); Atks +1 melee (1d4 [crit 19-20], dagger); SA Sneak Attack +1d6, Poison, Spells; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +2.

Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +4, Spellcraft +3, Hide +8, Move Silent +6, Bluff +5, Climb +2, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +7 (dex, 2 ranks, 2 synergy), Gather Information +5, Listen +3, Open Lock +5, Pick Pocket +5, Tumble +7, Use Rope +8. *Feats*: Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Spells Known (6/4 per day): 0 lvl—*ray of frost, mage hand, detect magic, daze, detect poison*; 1st lvl—*magic missile; mage armor*.

Poison: Fort Save DC 15, failures lose 1d6 dexterity for 1d8 hours. Secondary effect is the same result a minute later (also DC 15). If dexterity = 0, then the individual is paralyzed. He has poison on his dagger for 2 attacks.

Goblin Bandits (2): CR ¼; Small Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 5; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +3 studded leather); Atks +3 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow), +1 melee (1d4-1 [crit 19-20], dagger); SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3. *Feats*: Alertness.

Poison: Fort Save DC 15, failures lose 1d6 dexterity for 1d8 hours. Secondary effect is the same result a minute later (also DC 15). If dexterity = 0, then the individual is paralyzed. He has poison on his dagger for 2 attacks.

The poison has all been used up.

Tier Two (EL 7):

"Farmer," human male Ftr5: CR 5; Medium

Humanoid; HD 5d10+10; hp 40; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 scale mail); Atks +9 melee (1d8+7, trident); AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2.

Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +3, Jump +5, Spot +2, Search +3, Knowledge: Religion +2. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (Trident), Power Attack, Cleave, Iron Will, Dodge, Weapon Specialization (trident).

Equipment: *trident of backbiting*

“Charlatan,” human male Rog2/Sor3: CR 5; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d6+3d4+5; hp 23; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft. AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 *mage armor* spell); Atks +2 melee (1d4 [crit 19-20], dagger); SA Sneak Attack +1d6, Poison, Spells; SQ Evasion; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +3.

Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +4, Spellcraft +3, Hide +8, Move Silent +8, Bluff +7, Climb +3, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +7 (Dex, 2 ranks, 2 synergy), Gather Information +5, Listen +4, Open Lock +5, Pick Pocket +5, Tumble +8, Use Rope +8, Scry +3. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Spells (6/5) per day: 0 lvl—*ray of frost, mage hand, detect magic, daze, detect poison*; 1st lvl—*magic missile, mage armor, expeditious retreat*.

Poison: Fort Save DC 15, failures lose 1d6 dexterity for 1d8 hours. Secondary effect is the same result a minute later (also DC 15). If dexterity = 0, then the individual is paralyzed. He has poison on his dagger for 2 attacks.

Goblin Bandits (4): CR ¼; Small Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 5; Init +1 (dex); Speed 30; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +3 studded leather); Atks +3 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow), +1 melee (1d4-1 [crit 19-20], dagger); SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3. *Feats:* Alertness.

Poison: Fort Save DC 15, failures lose 1d6 dexterity for 1d8 hours. Secondary effect is the same result a minute later (also DC 15). If dexterity = 0, then the individual is paralyzed. He has poison on his dagger for 2 attacks.

The poison has all been used up.

Tier Three:

“Farmer,” human male Ftr7: CR 7; Medium Humanoid; HD 7d10+7; hp 54; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 scale mail); Atks +10/+3 melee (1d8+7, trident); AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3.

Str 20, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Jump +5, Spot +2, Search +3, Knowledge: Religion +2, Profession: Teamster +4. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (Trident), Power Attack, Cleave, Iron Will, Dodge, Weapon Specialization (trident), Improved Bull Rush, Sunder.

Equipment: *trident of backbiting*

“Charlatan,” human male Rog2/Sor5: CR 7; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d6+5d4+7; hp 29; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 *mage armor* spell); Atks +3 melee (1d4 [crit 19-20], dagger); SA Sneak Attack +1d6, Poison, Spells; SQ Evasion, active *endure elements* spell (fire); AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +4.

Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +4, Spellcraft +3, Hide +8, Move Silent +8, Bluff +7, Climb +3, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +7 (dex, 2 ranks, 2 synergy), Gather Information +5, Listen +4, Open Lock +5, Pick Pocket +5, Tumble +8, Use Rope +8, Scry +3, Knowledge (Arcana) +4, Alchemy +2. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Toughness, Combat Casting.

Spells (cast 7/5/1 spells today): 0 lvl—*ray of frost, mage hand, detect magic, daze, detect poison, ghost sound*; 1st lvl—*magic missile, mage armor, expeditious retreat, endure elements*; 2nd lvl—*bull’s strength, flaming sphere*

Poison: Fort Save DC 15, failures lose 1d6 dexterity for 1d8 hours. Secondary effect is the same result a minute later (also DC 15). If dexterity = 0, then the individual is paralyzed. He has poison on his dagger for 2 attacks.

Goblin Bandits (6): CR ¼; Small Humanoid; HD 2d8+2; hp 17; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +3 studded leather); Atks +5 melee (1d6-1, sickle), +5 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +0.

Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Finesse (sickle), Toughness.

Poison: Fort Save DC 15, failures lose 1d6 dexterity for 1d8 hours. Secondary effect is the same result a minute later (also DC 15). If dexterity = 0, then the individual is paralyzed. He has poison on his dagger for 2 attacks.

Goblin Witch Doctor, Adp4: CR 2; Small Humanoid; HD 4d6; hp 17; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+1 Dex, +1 size); Atks +2 melee (1d4 [crit 19-20], dagger); SA Poison, Spells; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., active *endure*

elements (fire) spell, AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +7.

Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3, Spellcraft +3, Concentration +2. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting.

Poison: Fort Save DC 15, failures lose 1d6 dexterity for 1d8 hours. Secondary effect is the same result a minute later (also DC 15). If dexterity = 0, then the individual is paralyzed. He has poison on his dagger for 2 attacks.

Spells. *cure minor wounds* x2, *light*, *purify food and drink*, *burning hands*, *obscuring mist*, *mirror image*.

Should the PCs fall, they will be left alive (unless they bleed to death); however, all items of obvious value will be taken. (This does not include Abrithiasis' spell components). It DOES include any well-made weapons, armor, money, or other certified items, at DM discretion of what would look valuable. If the goblins make off with the items, the PCs will encounter the surviving members of the ambush party later during the final combat with the kobolds. Please be certain that the NPCs USE the items that they obtain from the PCs, when allowed (by class, etc).

The poison was used up in the fight.

Encounter Three: The search

At the beginning of the sixth day, the PCs have reached the swamp. If they seek to rest beyond 1/2 day, and any party members use any means of divination, give them a sense of urgency. Try to prod the PCs not to rest beyond the remainder of the fifth day.

You have managed to avoid further trouble, and have arrived at the edge of the swamp in which Abrithiasis reportedly dwells.

Pause here to give the PCs an opportunity to scout for signs of passage, hear noise, etc. if they wish to do so. If they do so, continue reading the following:

"You have also found signs which indicate Abrithiasis is not the only denizen of the swamp."

The swamp is larger than you had previously pictured mentally, and you expect it will take considerable time to locate him. What do you do??

Gamemaster Notes:

- Loud noise will attract unfavorable attention before favorable.

- Leaving signs of passage will also attract unfavorable attention.
- Swamp guides are available via the kobolds or the following role-playing encounters, but all will require a gift.
- Plants will only describe Abrithiasis' most recent path past them. Animals, depending on intelligence, can indicate general direction and distance to Abrithiasis' home. If benevolent, i.e. the party has offered food or favorable attention, the animals will give warning of the presence of evil humanoids in the swamp.
- Destructive actions will alienate the PCs from possible help. This includes Abrithiasis, as well as all other swamp dwellers.
- Swamp conditions prohibit mounted travel. If the PCs have intelligent mounts, these mounts will refuse to enter the swamp.

Optional Role-Playing Encounters:

1) Towards evening, the party can encounter a sinister, who will consent to be questioned by a druid or ranger via telepathy. Initially it will hover about the edge of the party, and if not molested, it will initiate conversation with a ranger, druid, or nature priest. If fed or otherwise rewarded, it will assist the party by scouting for them.

Sinister (1): Large Magical Beast; HD 4d10+12; hp 34; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., fly 50 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, -1 size, +4 deflection, +3 natural); Atks +7 melee (1d6+6, bite), SA *Hold monster*; SQ Missile Deflection, SR 13; AL LN; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +3.

Str 19, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Hide +2, Listen +11, Move Silently +8, Spot +11. *Feats:* Alertness, Flyby Attack.

SA: *Hold Monster* (Sp)—Sinisters can cast *hold monster* once per day. They usually save this ability for escaping from creatures more powerful than they are, but may use it when hunting if they are ravenous.

SQ: *Missile Deflection* (Su)—Sinisters are surrounded by a 5 foot radius field of force that helps deflect melee attacks (represented by the +4 deflection bonus to AC). In addition, this field stops missile attacks, turning away normal missiles and absorbing spells such as *Melf's acid arrow* and *magic missile*.

2) About a half-hour after entering the swamp, the party will see a boobrie (a giant relative of the stork, which stands about 12 ft. tall). It makes no move towards the party, but will speak with them if addressed via Speak with Animals, or some such method. If asked politely, it will warn the party of water moccasins and giant

spiders.

3) About a half-hour after entering the swamp, the party will see 6 eblis (giant relatives of the stork, which stand about 6 ft. tall). They make no move towards the party. One of them is able to speak Common, though with difficulty. If asked information about Abrithiasis' location, they will demand payment in the form of gems or a shiny magic item. They will then give the party directions to the kobolds' lair. A paladin detecting evil at this point will determine their evil intent. If confronted they will flee to the kobolds and will ally with them to ambush the party. They will be able to give the kobolds obvious information about the party (size, description, etc).

4) If the party has been respectful of the swamp area and appear lost (no one makes a successful Intuit Direction check), a nymph will speak to the human, half-elven or elven male with the highest charisma (minimum of 15; if there is no appropriate PC, this encounter should not be added). She will ask what they are looking for and attempt to aid them as best she can. Under no circumstances will she show herself to the PCs and PCs who attempt to view her through stealth should suffer the effects of her Blinding Beauty power. She will warn them of her nature if they attempt to see her, to save them this fate, but if they don't trust her, let them bear the cost. The nymph is acquainted with Abrithiasis' location and is quite fond of him and his family. If the party appears friendly, she can tell them his present location, the nature of his family as well as some of his habits. If asked, she can also tell the party of the existence of the kobolds and other denizens of the swamp. She does not volunteer this information but will wait to be asked.

Nymph (1): Medium Fey; HD 3d6; hp 10; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Attacks: +1 melee (1d4 [crit 10-20], dagger); SA Blinding beauty, Unearthly beauty; SQ Spell-like abilities; AL CG; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +8.

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 19.

Skills: Animal Empathy +10, Knowledge – Nature +7, Escape Artist +7, Heal +9, Hide +7, Listen +11, Move Silently +7, Sense Motive +9, Spot +11. *Feats:* Alertness, Ability focus: Unearthly beauty, Dodge, Iron Will.

SA: *Blinding Beauty* (Su)—This ability operates continuously, affecting all humanoids within 60 feet of the nymph. Those who look directly at the nymph must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be blinded permanently as though by the *blindness* spell. The nymph can suppress or resume this ability as a free

action. *Unearthly beauty* (Su)—The nymph can evoke this ability once every 10 minutes. Those within 30 feet of nymph must succeed at a will save (DC 17) or die.

5) The party sees a human male dressed in simple clothing (a trapper) carrying some traps through the swamp. Strangely, the light seems to shine through him. Suddenly, he looks up in fright and pulls out a small skinning knife. The PCs hear a guttural chanting (if any in Draconic and hear mention of Talona. The man then is beset by hundreds of yellow jackets. He swings his knife wildly but ineffectively as he is stung to unconsciousness. The yellow jackets then seem to dissipate and a kobold wearing a carved symbol of Talona around his neck approaches the man and "sacrifices" the man. (The "man" is actually a phantom who was killed by the local kobold shaman as a sacrifice to Talona.) When this scene begins, the party must make a Will save DC 15 or run away as per the *fear* spell.

6) A water cat begins stalking the PCs. Anyone making a Listen check DC 20 can hear a cat meowing very softly. If no one hears this, the cat will stalk the party for a period of time. Spot checks DC 20 will allow the PCs to notice this. Otherwise, the cat will become impatient and will climb a tree from which it will jump and deliberately splash the party. It will do so for 3 rounds unless the party reacts. If the party has not attempted to communicate with it before then (it does understand common) OR if someone curses or insults the cat, the cat will climb the trees and throw carrion (dead rats) down on the miscreants. If someone makes a fuss or makes positive overtures to the cat, it will play awhile with them. It will stay with that person and will guide the party where they want to go if some means is established to speak with the cat (e.g. speak with animals). See water cat (pg. 72 Dragon issue #238). This cat will leave the party at the edge of the swamp when they leave.

Water Cat (1): Tiny Beast; HD 2d8; hp 10; Init +2 (dex); Speed 30; AC 16 (+2 dex, +2 size, +2 natural); Attacks: +2 melee (1d4 + poison, bite), or +1 melee (1d2 [x2], claws); SA poison; SQ Darkvision 30 ft., pounce, rake; AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +2.

Str 6, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +10.

Feats: Alertness.

SA: *Poison*—Fort save DC 15 or lose 1d6 Str, with secondary effect DC 12 or lose 1d4 Str. Duration: 6 minutes.

SQ: *Pounce* (Ex)—If the cat leaps onto a foe at the beginning of combat, it can make a full attack even if it

has all ready taken a move action. *Rake* (Ex)—A water cat that hits with both front paws will be able to make two melee attacks with its hind legs at +2 for 1d2 damage.

Water cats are descended from familiars of wizards and sorcerers and still maintain an affinity for magic and man.

Encounter Four: Surprise! Theierrrr Herrreeee!

Upon resolution of the optional encounters, read the box text below. Following the box text, allow rolls for surprise as appropriate. Modify rolls for any assistance they have received.

You have struggled through the swamp for a good portion of the day. Several times, you have seen water moccasins and deadly plants but managed to deftly avoid them. It is getting late in the afternoon and shadows have begun to fall through the swamp. You have found a well-used trail upon which there was some minotaur sign. However, your travel to the minotaur lair is interrupted.

Roll for surprise, both the party AND the kobolds. A kobold raiding party is on its way through the swamp and encounters the party. They are attempting to stop the party from reaching Abrithiasis's lair.

Tier One (EL 6):

The party encounters the kobold scouting party, as they are looking for signs of the minotaur residence. The kobolds will automatically attack the party ONLY if gnome characters are present. The kobolds will negotiate if they can profit from the situation, but it would cost something significant (1 permanent magic or 4 charged items).

Kobold War Party Leader, War3: CR 2; Small Humanoid; HD 3d8; hp 17; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural, +2 leather); Atks +5 melee (1d6 [crit 19-20], short sword); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Light Sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +3.

Str 12, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Search +2, Sense Motive +4, Bluff +4. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Focus (short sword), Iron Will.

SQ: Light Sensitivity (Ex)—Kobolds suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *sunlight* spell.

Equipment: *ring of chameleon power*, 3 *darts of the gnat* (see Treasure summary for description). He will use the darts if he can.

Kobold Guards (5), War1: CR 1; Small Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 7; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural, +2 leather); Atks +2 melee (1d6 [crit x3], half-spear); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Light Sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +2, Search +2. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Focus (half-spear).

SQ: Light Sensitivity (Ex)—Kobolds suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *sunlight* spell.

Tier Two (EL 8):

The kobold scouting party heard the parties' approach, as the party looked for signs of the minotaur residence, and were able to lay a rough ambush. The kobolds will automatically attack the party ONLY if gnome characters are present. The kobolds will negotiate if they can profit from the situation, but it would cost something significant (1 permanent magic or 4 charged items). The kobolds will not negotiate with the party if the party contains any gnomes.

Kobold War Party Leader, War5: CR 4; Small Humanoid; HD 5d8, hp 21; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural, +2 leather); Atks +7 melee (1d6 [crit 19-20], short sword); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Light Sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +3.

Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +5, Search +2, Sense Motive +4, Bluff +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Focus (short sword), Iron Will.

SQ: Light Sensitivity (Ex)—Kobolds suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *sunlight* spell.

Equipment: *ring of chameleon power*, 3 *darts of the gnat* (see Treasure summary for description). He will use the darts if he can.

Kobold Guards (5), War3: CR 2; Small Humanoid; HD 3d8+3; hp 17; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural, +2 leather); Atks +2 melee (1d6 [crit x3], half-spear); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Light Sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1.

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +9, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +3, Search +2. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Focus (half-spear), Toughness.

SQ: *Light Sensitivity* (Ex)—Kobolds suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *sunlight* spell.

Guard Animals, dire weasels (4): CR 2; Medium Animal; HD 3d8; hp 13; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural); Atks +6 melee (1d6+3, bite); SA Attach, Blood Drain; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +4.

Str 14, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills: Hide +9, Spot +5, Move Silently +10. *Feats:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

SA: *Attach* (Ex)—A dire weasel that hits with its bite attack latches onto the opponent's body with its powerful jaws. An attached dire weasel loses its Dex bonus to AC and thus has an AC of 12. *Blood Drain* (Ex)—A dire weasel drains blood for 2d4 points of temporary Constitution damage each round it remains attached.

SQ: *Scent* (Ex)—This ability allows the creature to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes and track by sense of smell. See p. 10 in the *Monster Manual*.

Tier Three (EL 10):

The kobold scouting party heard the parties' approach, as the party looked for signs of the minotaur residence, and were able to lay a rough ambush. The kobolds will automatically attack the party ONLY if gnome characters are present. The kobolds will negotiate if they can profit from the situation, but it would cost something significant (1 permanent magic or 4 charged items). The kobolds will not negotiate with the party if the party contains any gnomes.

Kobold War Party Leader, War5: CR 4; Small Humanoid; HD 5d8, hp 21; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural, +2 leather); Atks +7 melee (1d6 [crit 19-20], short sword); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Light Sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +3.

Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +5, Search +2, Sense Motive +4, Bluff +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Focus (short sword), Iron Will.

SQ: *Light Sensitivity* (Ex)—Kobolds suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *sunlight* spell.

Equipment: *ring of chameleon power*, 3 *darts of the gnat* (see Treasure summary for description). He will use the darts if he can.

Kobold Guards (5), War3: CR 2; Small Humanoid; HD 3d8+3; hp 17; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1

Dex, +1 size, +1 natural, +2 leather); Atks +2 melee (1d6 [crit x3], half-spear); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Light Sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1.

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +9, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +3, Search +2. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Focus (half-spear), Toughness.

SQ: *Light Sensitivity* (Ex)—Kobolds suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *sunlight* spell.

Mounts, dire boars (6): CR 4; Large Animal; HD 7d8+21; hp 52; Init +0 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (-1 size, +6 natural); Atks +12 melee (1d8+12, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. x 10 ft./5 ft.; SA ferocity; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +6.

Str 27, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +9, Spot +8.

SA: *Ferocity* (Ex)—A dire boar is such a tenacious combatant that it continues to fight without penalty even when disabled and dying (see p. 129 in PHB)

SQ: *Scent* (Ex)—This ability allows the creature to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes and track by sense of smell. See p. 10 in the *Monster Manual*.

Guard Animals, dire weasels (4): CR 2; Medium Animal; HD 3d8; hp 13; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural); Atks +6 melee (1d6+3, bite); SA Attach, Blood Drain; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +4.

Str 14, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills: Hide +9, Spot +5, Move Silently +10. *Feats:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

SA: *Attach* (Ex)—A dire weasel that hits with its bite attack latches onto the opponent's body with its powerful jaws. An attached dire weasel loses its Dex bonus to AC and thus has an AC of 12. *Blood Drain* (Ex)—A dire weasel drains blood for 2d4 points of temporary Constitution damage each round it remains attached.

SQ: *Scent* (Ex)—This ability allows the creature to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes and track by sense of smell. See p. 10 in the *Monster Manual*.

Encounter Five: A Difference of Opinion

After the party finishes the encounter with the kobolds, they can continue down the trail. If they are not paying attention and they are following captive kobolds, the kobolds will try to signal their approach to the minotaur

lair area. They will take the party through the most inconvenient terrain possible, and if steps have not been taken to prevent their escape, they will try to do so, so they can warn of the party's approach. If the minions made good their escape, they will have warned their comrades of the party's approach.

In either case, a rear guard will have been established to ambush the party, while the main force attacks the lair itself.

If the party was successful in destroying the kobold ambush in that they allowed no one to escape, then the party will be able to attack with surprise, as there is a pitched battle in progress when the party arrives at the minotaur lair.

After composing yourselves for further travel, you make surprisingly good time, as the swamp appears to have given way to dense forest.

Pause here to allow the party to take actions if they wish, with the results noted below

- successful tracking will reveal trail sign, after about an hour, of a SIGNIFICANT war party of mixed races and animals. Look at your tier for the next combat for the appropriate description. Add whatever description of the trail you feel to be appropriate.
- give those who want to make Listen checks (DC 15, 10 as they get close, 5 as they are almost there) the chance to hear the sounds of the battle they are approaching.
- if PCs make a successful attempt to hide in the bushes, they can uncover the rearguard of the war party in the midst of setting an ambush (assuming any kobolds escaped the last encounter to warn them).

The path becomes less boggy and less clear as you travel further into the trees. Just as you begin to think you have left the nastiness of the muck and mosquitoes behind you, from ahead you hear the shouting of guttural voices.

When you rush up the trail, you come upon a clearing. At the far side of the clearing stands a small and modest building built of logs. Surrounding the house is the source of the noise. Even from this distance, you can see several humanoid figures attacking the house. You can just make out the horns on the head of a figure fighting valiantly within the building. As you move closer, you hear one voice rise above the rest, and then see figures move forward to set the house on fire!

Refer to tiered notes to give the PCs more complete

information on their opponents, *once they have entered the clearing*

The war party is actually a brute squad, hired to kill Abrithiasis. Abrithiasis is not alone; he is accompanied by his family: an old female minotaur (his wife) and his children: one younger male minotaur and one younger female minotaur. His wife is a ranger, his son a fighter and his daughter is a relatively inexperienced witch doctor. As the party arrives and find Abrithiasis and his family in the midst of a pitched battle, they note the main mass of troops cannot engage in combat with the family because the only two entrances to the house are blocked.

From this point, the house will take four rounds to start burning in earnest and will be completely consumed if there is no intervention within a turn. Should this occur, the current occupants will have died. Feel free to describe this as necessary once the party realizes how badly they messed up.

Tier One (EL 5):

The party will only face a portion of the main force in this tier. The minotaurs will survive the attack, and will come to the parties' aid, should they fall, or will finish off the main force one or two rounds after the party finishes off their share. Enemies have a pre-cast *bless* spell in effect. It will have three rounds left when the party joins the battle.

The total force consists of 12 goblin fighters, 12 orc fighters, 1 goblin leader, 1 orc leader, 1 orc cleric, and one goblin witch doctor. Most of the force is preoccupied with the threat posed by those within the minotaur's home.

The orc leader notices and points towards you, while shouting out commands. Several figures break off from their current tasks and race towards you.

Orc Clr1: CR 1; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d8+3; hp 9; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 chain); Atks +2 melee (1d12 [crit x3], greataxe); SA Spells, SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Evil and Death domains; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +5.

Str 15, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Spellcraft +0, Concentration +3, Knowledge (Religion) +1. **Feats:** Martial Weapon Proficiency (Greataxe).

SA: *Death domain power*—death touch (see PH). *Evil domain power*—cast evil spells at +1 caster level.

Spells (3/2+1): 0 lvl—*virtue, detect poison, resistance*; 1st lvl—*endure elements, doom, cause fear*.

Magic Items: *spectral glove* (see certificate description)

Goblins (4): CR ¼; Small Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 5; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +3 studded leather); Atks +3 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow), +1 melee (1d4-1 [crit 19-20], dagger); SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3. *Feats:* Alertness.

Orc barbarians (2), Bbn1: CR 1; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d12+1; hp 9; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 chain); Atks +5 melee (1d12 [crit x3], greataxe); SA Rage 1/day; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Light Sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0.

Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (Greataxe).

SA: *Rage*+2 Str, +4 Con, +4 morale bonus vs fear effects, -2 AC. Lasts 6 rounds.

Tier Two (EL 7):

The party will only face a portion of the main force in this tier. The minotaurs will survive the attack, if the PCs are able to defeat the attacking force in 10 rounds or if the PCs somehow slow or extinguish the fire or otherwise make certain the minotaurs are able to escape the burning building. The minion of Talona will attempt to remain hidden from the party.

The total force consists of 12 goblin fighters, 12 orc fighters, 1 goblin leader, 1 orc leader, 1 orc cleric, one goblin witch doctor, one minion of Talona and their mounts. Most of the force is preoccupied with the threat posed by those within the minotaur's home.

The orc leader notices and points towards you, while shouting out commands. Several figures break off from their current tasks and race towards you.

Enemies have a pre-cast *bless* spell in effect. It will have three rounds left when the party joins the battle.

Orc Clr2: CR 2; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d8+6; hp 18; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 chain); Atks +3 melee (1d12 [crit x3], greataxe); SA Spells, SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Evil and Death domains; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +5.

Str 15, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Spellcraft +1, Concentration +4, Knowledge (Religion) +1. *Feats:* Martial Weapon Proficiency (Greataxe).

SA: *Death domain power*—death touch (see PH). *Evil domain power*—cast evil spells at +1 caster level.

Spells (4/3+1): 0 lvl—*virtue*, *detect poison*, *resistance* x2; 1st lvl—*endure elements*, *inflict light wounds*, *doom*, *cause fear*.

Magic Items: *spectral glove* (see certificate description)

Goblins (4): CR ¼; Small Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 5; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +3 studded leather); Atks +3 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow), +1 melee (1d4-1 [crit 19-20], dagger); SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3. *Feats:* Alertness.

Orc barbarians (5), Bbn1: CR 1; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d12+1; hp 9; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 chain); Atks +5 melee (1d12 [crit x3], greataxe); SA Rage 1/day; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Light Sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0.

Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (Greataxe).

SA: *Rage*+2 Str, +4 Con, +4 morale bonus vs fear effects, -2 AC. Lasts 6 rounds.

Minion of Talona, half-orc Clr2: CR 2; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d8+6; hp 18; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 chain); Atks +2 melee (1d4+2 [crit 19-20], dagger); SA Poison, Spells, SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Evil and Death domains; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +5.

Str 15, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Spellcraft +1, Concentration +4, Knowledge (Religion) +1. *Feats:* Dodge.

SA: *Death domain power*—death touch (see PH). *Evil domain power*—cast evil spells at +1 caster level.

Spells (4/3+1): 0 lvl—*virtue* x2, *detect poison*, *resistance*; 1st lvl—*endure elements*, *random action*, *doom*, *cause fear*.

Equipment: The minion of Talona has a *potion of gaseous form* that he will use to escape when the battle turns against him.

The minion of Talona has 3 doses of type D poison in his ceremonial dagger. Type D poison does 30 hp damage, save for 2d6, onset of 1d2 rounds

Tier Three (EL 9):

The party will only face a portion of the main force in this tier. The minotaurs will survive the attack, if the PCs are able to defeat the attacking force in 10 rounds or if the PCs somehow slow or extinguish the fire or otherwise make certain the minotaurs are able to escape the burning building. The minion of Talona will attempt

to remain hidden from the party.

The total force consists of 12 goblin fighters, 12 orc fighters, 6 servants of Talona, 1 goblin leader, 1 orc leader, 1 orc cleric, one goblin witch doctor, one minion of Talona and their mounts. Most of the force is preoccupied with the threat posed by those within the minotaur's home.

A human-like figure wearing black plate mail bearing a triangle with three teardrops embossed in silver notices your approach. He points towards you, shouting out commands. Several figures break off from their current tasks and race towards you.

Enemies have pre-cast *bless* and *prayer* spells. The *Bless* spell will have four rounds left when the party joins the battle, and the *prayer* spell will have five rounds left.

The orc cleric possesses 12 darts with improved Type O poison (save or be paralyzed 3d4 turns, onset 1d6 rounds).

Orc Clr5: CR 5; Medium Humanoid; HD 5d8+12; hp 42; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 chain); Atks +5 melee (1d12 [crit x3], greataxe); SA Spells, SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Evil and Death domains; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +7.

Str 15, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Spellcraft +3, Concentration +6, Knowledge (Religion) +3. *Feats:* Martial Weapon Proficiency (Greataxe), Dodge.

SA: *Death domain power*—death touch (see PH). *Evil domain power*—cast evil spells at +1 caster level.

Spells (5/4+1/3+1/2+1): 0 lvl—*virtue* x2, *detect poison*, *resistance* x2; 1st lvl—*endure elements*, *inflict light wounds*, *doom*, *entropic shield*, *cause fear*; 2nd lvl—*bull's strength*, *hold person*, *sound burst*, *death knell*; 3rd lvl—*dispel magic*, *inflict serious wounds*, *animate dead*.

Magic Items: *spectral glove* (see certificate description)

Goblins (4): CR ¼; Small Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 5; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +3 studded leather); Atks +3 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow), +1 melee (1d4-1 [crit 19-20], dagger); SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3. *Feats:* Alertness.

Orc barbarians (5), Bbn2: CR 2; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d12+2; hp 18; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17

(+2 Dex, +5 chain); Atks +6 melee (1d12 [crit x3], greataxe); SA Rage 1/day; SQ Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Darkvision 60 ft., Light Sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0.

Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +3. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (Greataxe).

SA: *Rage*—+2 Str, +4 Con, +4 morale bonus vs fear effects, -2 AC. Lasts 6 rounds.

Minion of Talona, half-orc Clr3/Rog2: CR 5; Medium Humanoid; HD 3d8+2d6+10; hp 31; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 chain); Atks +6 melee (1d4+2 [crit 19-20], dagger); SA Sneak Attack +1d6, Poison, Spells, SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Evil and Death domains, Evasion; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6.

Str 15, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Spellcraft +2, Concentration +4, Knowledge (Religion) +2, Move Silently +4, Hide +4, Spot +7, Listen +7. *Feats:* Dodge, Silent Spell.

SA: *Death domain power*—death touch (see PH). *Evil domain power*—cast evil spells at +1 caster level.

Spells (4/3+1/2+1): 0 lvl—*virtue* x2, *detect poison*, *resistance*; 1st lvl—*endure elements*, *random action*, *doom*, *cause fear*; 2nd lvl—*hold person*, *inflict moderate wounds*, *death knell*.

Equipment: The minion of Talona has a *potion of gaseous form* that he will use to escape when the battle turns against him.

The minion of Talona has 3 doses of type D poison in his ceremonial dagger. Type D poison does 30 hp damage, save for 2d6, onset of 1d2 rounds

Encounter Six: What have you done for me lately?

After the combat, the minotaurs (if still alive) will use healing poultices to heal themselves first, followed by one injured party members. Give each party member a poultice, which is the equivalent of one *potion of cure light wounds*, to be used immediately. The minotaurs can also treat unconscious party members, if no one in the party has the ability to do so. If the minotaurs treat them, treat as though they were bandaged, given a *goodberry*, and the poultice as above.

Upon searching the two bodies of the orc and goblin leaders, the party can find upon each corpse a letter written in those respective languages. The messages say: "*Greetings war leaders. You do not know me or my people, but we share a common enemy. The city of Ravens Bluff is an affront to the sight of Talona and it must be purged. Soon the wrath of Talona will be*

felt throughout the region in which you live. If you cooperate with us, your people will be spared.

At this point, the party may attempt to convince Abrithiasis to accompany them to the city. Unknown to the city, he lives here with his family, and is not the hermit the city believes him to be. He has a wife, a son and a daughter. All speak Common. The wife is not interested in going to Ravens Bluff and will freely state this to the PCs when the party makes their purpose known. See the attached descriptions of the family below for role-playing purposes.

Abrithiasis left the Ravens Bluff area as a result of increasing prejudice. He is quite devoted to his wife and any arrangements would need to consider his family. He really doesn't care about the spell components, because he has what he needs. The PCs will need to convince him of the need for his help. Simply saying "Here's some stuff, come help us" will not cut it.

Interpersonally, he is rather gruff and taciturn but he has a good heart. See below for bases that must be covered to convince him to help.

Abrithiasis, male minotaur Adp6, GC

Abrithiasis is not interested in any money the party may offer. However, the pouch of rare spell components will prompt his interest. To convince him to accompany them, the party must convince him: 1) the need is great; 2) he is the only one that can fulfill the need; 3) he will be rewarded appropriately AND 4) his family will be protected. This, of course, assumes that the PCs have been cautious in their approach and there has not been wholesale destruction during the time in the swamp. If the PCs have been destructive, they will find it much more difficult to convince the minotaurs to assist them.

Tanisha: minotaur Rgr6, CN

Abrithiasis's loving wife. She wants nothing to do with Ravens Bluff and will state this right out when the PCs first mention their mission. She will be quite nervous about her husband going to the city because she will be concerned about his welfare. This will be especially true if her daughter has expressed interest in going. Personally, she is blustery and something of a worrywart. The PCs will need to assuage her fears in order to convince her husband to help them. If the PCs have destroyed considerable amount of the swamp, she will be quite adamant that the make amends for this in addition to the notes above.

Bocephus: minotaur Ftr3, NG

Abrithiasis' son. Bocephus is the strong silent type and has never been particularly bright. His sister received most of the brains from the family. He is shy and will say as little as possible. He is not interested in

traveling to Ravens Bluff, but will happily stay with his mother to protect her. (Note that this will not be sufficient for Tanisha; she will require a greater amount of assurance of her safety).

Latwanda, minotaur Adp1, N

Latwanda is young and inexperienced. She is anxious to see the world (see note below). She cares deeply about her family but is itching to be out on her own. She has become more independent of late, resulting in some conflict with her parents. (Think moody teenager).

At this point, the party can safely travel back to Ravens Bluff.

Encounter Seven: The returning heroes

Find out what the party is doing with the cursed trident(s) (if they took it/them after the battle). If they've used it, the wielder is already cursed. If the party had attempted to remove the curse on their own prior to this point, an individual who made such an attempt is also cursed in the same fashion. If so cursed, the city temples will not make an attempt to aid the cursed individuals without first learning more about this curse. The cure for the curse will appear in a later scenario.

If the party has not used the item or activated the curse by attempting to remove it, and they take the trident(s) to one of the city temples, the item can be destroyed.

The party should accompany Abrithiasis to introduce him to Senior Constable Martin Ferrand. If the party returns with the minotaur, he will congratulate them, and give them any appropriate reward. If they recover the letter, he will ask them to take it to the temple of Deneir for further review.

If they return without Abrithiasis, he takes their report and gives them their reward. He will comment on the city's need to find more experienced adventurers for the next such mission. He will send word to the temples of any information the party has gathered about the involvement of Talona.

The End

Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, consult the column for the tier at which the players played the adventure. Add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Divide the total by 6, and award that to each PC for objectives.

Then assign the discretionary roleplaying experience award. The roleplaying award should be given for consistent character portrayal and contribution to the fun of the game. You can award different roleplaying amounts to different characters.

Note that the maximum any PC can get for objectives cannot exceed the value shown for each tier, which is calculated for a table of six PCs. Thus, if you have four PCs, you divide by four on the values for what the PCs earned, but the maximum cannot go above the value shown per PC in the column.

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Encounter Two:			
Avoiding rockslide with no damage	100	100	100
Defeating Thugs	1,500	2,100	2,700
Encounter Three:			
Not attracting attention to themselves	50	50	50
Encounter Four:			
Defeating kobold party	2,250	3,150	4,050
Encounter Five:			
Defeating foes	1,500	2,100	2,700
Recovering letter	25	25	25
Encounter Six:			
Convincing minotaur to return to Ravens Bluff	50	50	50
Total possible experience	5,475	7,525	9,675
Divide by the number of PCs and round down			
Total possible experience per PC	912	1,254	1,612
Then add:			
Discretionary roleplaying award	0-50	0-50	0-50

Treasure Summary

Player characters may keep items from the scenario that are listed on the treasure list below or which meet the following conditions:

1. The item must be non-magical and specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the characters cannot keep it. Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a log sheet.

2. Animals, followers, monsters, henchmen, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay for the player characters to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.
3. Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some player characters. Items which are worth more than 500 gp that are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), and all magical items, will be discovered in the possession of the character by one means or another. The character must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. In addition, the PC caught receives campaign-decided penalties for being known as a thief, such as Infamy. For other stolen items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment and the circumstances within the game to determine whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

Any item retained according to these rules, which does not have a certificate, will not ever have a certificate issued for it.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or gold acquired for things it later finds unreasonable but which were allowed at the time.

Encounter One: The Send Off

- *Book of stars* (Small, Value 320 gp, Unusual): This book gives the possessor a +4 Competence bonus to Knowledge—Astrology skill checks. In order to gain any benefit from the book, the PC must study it EACH TIME they use it. Studying the book takes three hours and must be done at night, when they can compare the star charts to the evening sky. After study, the PC gains the benefit of the book for a 24-hour period, as the star charts change evening by evening. Use of more than one of these books does not grant stacking bonuses.

Encounter Two: Biting the hand that feeds you...

- 20 gems worth 100 gp each
- +2 *backbiter trident* (Value 2,000 gp): The trident appears to be a normal trident of exceptional quality. It is a +2 *trident* that carries a special curse. The wielder is convinced that this is an exceptional weapon, which it is. The wielder gains the Improved Critical Feat when wielding this weapon (i.e. this weapon's critical range is 19-20), but on a 19 or a 20 the weapon strikes the wielder

instead of the intended target. Thus, all criticals damage the wielder.

Encounter Four: Surprise! Theirrrr Herrreeee!

- *Darts of the gnat* +2 (3) (Tiny, Value 360 gp each): These darts, upon the successful strike upon their intended target, activate to cast a *summon swarm* spell at 4th level of effect upon the target. The darts only summon vast quantities of gnats and similar insects, hence the name. Each dart is usable only once; the dart is consumed by the spell.
- *Ring of chameleon power* (Value 12,000 gp)

Encounter Five: A Difference of Opinion

- *Spectral glove* (Value 7,200 gp): This allows the wearer to cast divine and arcane spells with the benefit of the effect of a *spectral hand* spell. This item can be used once per adventure, for up to 3 consecutive rounds.
- 2 sets of finely made, non-magical full plate mail armor (enchantment quality)

Encounter Seven: The returning heroes

- 0-200 gp in gems for successful completion of mission (as negotiated individually)

Chivalry point/ Knightly Honor

A PC may only receive one. If more than one applies, the player should be allowed to choose.

- Blue Scarf (general honor): For bringing back the trident to be destroyed without contracting the curse
- Bronze Hawk Ring (hawk specific) Recovering the letter and capturing the minion carrying; then reporting the letter to the authorities