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ESCAPE INTO DARKNESS

JAMIE CHAMBERS

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d20 system

SOVEREIGN STONE

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SOVEREIGN PRESS

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beautiful wife, who makes **all** of this and so much more possible.

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INTRODUCTION

The drums of war have begun to beat in Loerem. Unbeknownst to most of the populace, armies of fierce humanoids have appeared in the west and have begun a savage conquest in the name of their dark god. The undead vrykyl have been sent ahead to prepare the way for their master. During this time, a traitor redeems herself and sends a warning to her people, one that may arrive far too late...

Escape Into Darkness is a Sovereign Stone d20 System adventure designed for a party of 4-6 2nd level characters (though it can be modified to work with a 1st level party with minimal effort). This adventure is an excellent starting point for a new Sovereign Stone campaign, though it can be worked into an existing campaign with little effort.

If this is the group's first adventure in the world of Sovereign Stone, be sure to spend some time going over the differences between adventuring in Loerem and other d20 System campaign worlds. The magic system is the biggest difference, so make sure that mage players understand how to cast spells in Sovereign Stone.

BACKGROUND

Azael is a vrykyl, a dark and undead servant of Dagnarus—Lord of the Void. As the dark prince begins his invasion of Loerem far to the west, Azael is gathering information and sewing the seeds of dissention in the east.

The vrykyl is using his powers and dark charms to convert dissatisfied men and women over to the worship of the Void (dark, destructive, necromantic magic). They become his agents, working for him and (without realizing it) the dark prince Dagnarus. The best of these servants are falsely promised immortality and personally trained in magic, deception, and murder by the vrykyl himself.



Azael gives these servants magical armor and weapons that make them both incredibly dangerous and highly effective.

Azael's current plans include the assassination of Gaelin, Lord of Courage, a human Dominion Lord (a knight of great power, courage, and skill) who resides in a town close to the city of New Vinnengael. The Vrykyl has also dispatched a group of Void worshippers to locate and recover an ancient and powerful artifact of Void Magic—the knowledge of which resides in New Vinnengael itself.

Azael is furious to realize that one of his own spies has betrayed him. Someone has communicated with an elven *Mawrhy* ("Head of House" in Elder Speak) warning of the impending invasion and of the vrykyl Azael's plans. The spy dared to compose a magical message intended for the Lord of Courage. The elven leader contacted the Shield of the Divine, the second most powerful individual in the elven forests, who assured the *Mawrhy* that preparations would be made for such an event. Not quite reassured, the *Mawrhy* decided that the message must be delivered to the human Dominion Lord, to warn him of the grave danger both to himself and his people.

While elves generally do not make use of magic, the message was in the form of an amulet enchanted so that the message could only be activated in the presence of Lord Gaelin, and only by deciphering the meaning of the runes on the amulet. The *Mawrhy* dispatched a trusted agent named Gwion, a warrior and member of his own family, to deliver the amulet and the message contained within.

The fastest way for Gwion to reach New Vinnengael was through the portal located in the human nation of Karnu. Unfortunately, the Karnuans were engaging in their own conflict with the orks. Gwion was arrested at the portal under suspicion of being a spy and sent to the labor camps to work indefinitely in a rock quarry.

As if Gwion's situation was not grim enough, the vrykyl Azael has dispatched a deadly servant—a woman named Gavara—to follow Gwion and stay close to him. Azael does not want the elf dead yet, because he needs to know who the traitor is in his own ranks. His servant's orders are to stay close to Gwion, assist in his escape if necessary, and be present when the message is delivered to the Vinnengaelean Dominion Lord.

Once the identity of the traitor is known, Gwion and all of his companions are to be killed. Time is running out. Gavara prepares to infiltrate the Karnuan prison camp while the undead lord himself prepares to murder the human Lord of Courage.

REFEREE INFORMATION

Gavara is a highly dangerous servant of her master, one who will murder, lie, and manipulate to fulfill her mission. She has been promised immortality for her service, and so fulfills her missions even at risk to her life. The elf Gwion knows that agents of the enemy might be after him, and is currently only concerned with escaping the Karnuan prison camp. He knows he will need to make allies if he hopes to escape and complete his quest.

SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins with the party as prisoners in a Karnuan prison labor camp, performing meaningless labor in a worthless rock quarry. There they encounter an elf named Gwion and a Nimorean named Jafari. The elf attempts to ally himself with the party, telling them of his mission and proposing they work together to escape the Karnuans. By this time Gavara has already murdered one of the guards with the *dagger of the doppelganger* and assumed his form, leaving his skeletal remains hidden inside the quarry.

Within the next day, Gavara secretly assumes Jafari's identity in order to get closer to Gwion. She encourages the escape attempt and will even help, since her mission requires that the elf's message be delivered. Eventually she summons a large group of undead to distract the guards for a potential escape—all the while pretending to be the Nimorean, Jafari.

Once free of the camp, the party journeys to the portal that leads from Karnuan lands into the annexed portion of Vinnengael. They can either bluff their way through the portal or force their way through (which leads to a potentially lethal battle).

The road on the other side of the portal leads them to the township of Kalian, home to Gaelin Stewick, Dominion Lord of Courage. On the way they have a chance to learn Jafari's true identity and mission—leading to a battle with a most dangerous enemy. At the home of the Dominion Lord, they barely have a chance to warn him before they are forced into combat with the undead servants of Azael, while the vrykyl and the Dominion Lord face each other in mortal combat.

The party may or may not be able to prevent Lord Gaelin's death, but if both he and Gwion live the message can be delivered. There they learn even more of the vrykyl's plans, which might lead them to further adventure.

ADVENTURE **START**

The simplest way to begin this adventure is part of a new Sovereign Stone campaign, with the party already prisoners of the Karnuans. The referee is free to provide whatever background is appropriate, but this is an excellent way to explain why characters of different races and backgrounds meet and begin working together.

Alternate Adventure Hooks

If you are continuing this adventure immediately after *Flesh & Bone* (the adventure provided in the *Sovereign Stone Campaign Sourcebook),* the easiest method is to have the portal at the end of the adventure lead to the eastern portion of Karnu and have the group encounter a regiment of Karnuan soldiers (use statistics found later in the adventure). When the party fails to produce proper documentation for their presence, they are arrested—with those who resist subdued rather than killed. Once captured, their equipment is confiscated and the group is sent to the prison camp.

An encounter with a rogue portal can lead to a situation very similar to that outlined above, or if the group is already in the Caliphate of Karnu the referee can contrive a situation to get the group in trouble with the law. (This is not usually a challenge for many adventuring groups!) If the party is not in Karnu and not likely to travel there, the referee will have to contrive some method for getting the group into Karnuan custody. Possibilities include:

If the group travels through Orken lands or are passengers on an Ork vessel, they might be captured by the Karnuans and sent to the prison camps from there.

An enemy might shift the blame from one of his own crimes to the party. The group is arrested wherever they are and extradited to Karnu in exchange for favors traded (or bribes provided).

The group may make camp one night wherever they are, not realizing that a rogue portal is nearby. A Karnuan press gang comes through the portal and rounds up the party, subduing anyone who resists.

EVENTS & LOCATIONS

Escape Into Darkness is a largely event-driven adventure. While the locations are important, it is the events that move the story forward, and the party's reaction to these events that determines its outcome. For this reason, events are listed first for each major section of the adventure, while location descriptions are listed after. Some events assume the party is going to be in a particular location when they occur. Be ready to modify the descriptions if an event happens somewhere else.

THE KARNUAN PRISON CAMP

The heroes are going to find it very difficult, initially, to find an escape from the prison camp. The Karnuan guards are part of the military; they are well trained and highly disciplined. Both work and sleep areas always have 3-5 guards keeping watch at one time, with twice as many in close enough range to arrive in 2d4 rounds. The interior camp guards are armed with short swords and whips. Swords are only drawn in response to a serious threat. The perimeter guards are armed with short swords and light crossbows.

> **Guard:** CR 1; Size M; HD Id8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (Chain Shirt); Atk +3 melee (ld6+l crit 19-20/x2, short sword), +0 ranged (Id2 subdual, whip), or +0 ranged (Id8 crit 19-20/x2, light crossbow); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Stx 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8. Feats: Close-order fighting, exotic weapon proficiency (whip), weapon focus (short sword). Skills: Intimidate +4, Search +4, Spot +3, Swim +4.

The prisoners themselves are only given a coarse tunic to wear and a light bedroll to sleep in. They are given broth and bread at meals with enough water to keep them from becoming dehydrated. Prisoners are expected to work to the best of their ability during the daylight hours and sleep at night. The Karnuans aren't brutal captors, but they are demanding. Injured prisoners are given light work—such as serving in the food line—until they have healed sufficiently to join the hard laborers once again.

Escaping the camp is an important part of this adventure. In the beginning, the camp is too organized and the guards too numerous for any escape plan to have much chance for success. But they may not realize until much later that a deadly enemy is aiding them.

Begin by allowing the players to introduce their characters (if this is the beginning of a new campaign) and give the group some of the location descriptions below before beginning the first event. Reinforce the idea that the group has already been here for days (possibly weeks) and no obvious attempts to escape have presented themselves. Also make sure the group understands the discipline and the danger presented by the Karnuan soldiers. If they simply rush the guards, they could easily be killed.

EVENT ONE: THE BRAWL (DAY ONE)

Possible Locations: Any of the work sites in the prison camp.

> **The** *sun is only halfway through* ***its*** *morning ascent, and already it takes most of your effort to continue to move. Only the site of the Kannian guards and their ever-present whips keeps you from collapsing onto the dusty ground.*
>
> *You have been assigned to a remote corner of the quarry, along with a small group of black-skinned humans who might be Nirnrans or Nimoreans. An elven prisoner works apart from everyone. There are only three guards in sight, who look somewhat dazed by the late spring heat. You are able to make brief conversation while you are out of earshot of the guards.*

Have the players describe what their characters are currently doing. A Nimorean prisoner, Jafari, decides to pick a fight with the elf. The heroes might become involved whether they like it or not.

> *As you go about your work, you see one of the black skinned humans shove* ***the*** *elf to the ground. The elf simply dusts himself off and does not speak. The large human becomes even more angered at being ignored. "No one ignores me, Tromek!" He screams and kicks the elf in the side, knocking him back to the ground.*
>
> *"There is no need for this," the elf says quietly.* "They *are the ones holding us here." He nods toward the guards.*
>
> *"Is there a need for this?" the human shouts, delivering another painful kick to the elf's side.*

This Nimorean's name is Jafari. He is in a foul mood and is determined to start a fight while the guards seem bored. Some of Jafari's buddies begin shouting encouragement, and drop their work to back their friend up in case the brawl grows larger than the original two people involved.

If the heroes go to the elfs aid, Jafari's Nimorean friends will immediately leap into melee with them. The guards allow the brawl to continue for three rounds before breaking it up. Two will move



to break it up while another calls for reinforcements. After a two round delay, guards begin arriving each round in groups of three. More guards will continue to arrive until all of the prisoners have been subdued.

Each prisoner **will** be questioned about the incident and punished with a lashing, suffering ld6 points of subdual damage. They will be warned not to make trouble again or suffer a far worse punishment. Any prisoner who has resisted a guard will be given twice the lashing (2d6 subdual) and spend one hill day in the stocks without food. A prisoner in the stocks will be given water and sent back to work on the following day. Breaking out of the stocks is nearly impossible, requiring a Strength check at DC 25. The locks on the stocks are of average quality (DC 25 to open).

If the heroes do nothing, the elf gets angry and begins fighting back—quite effectively, using elven hand-to-hand combat techniques. [He possesses the unproved Unarmed Strike and Two Weapon Fighting feats.) The Nimorean gang rushes to aid Jafari in beating the elf senseless. At this point the guards will intervene. The guards summon four additional guards to take over while the Nimoreans are escorted away.

The elf thanks the group, either for helping him or at least not joining in with the Nimoreans. The elf is Gwion, the elf charged with the task of delivering the message to Lord Gaelin. He needs to escape the Karnuan prison, and he is coming to realize that he cannot hope to do so without making allies.

The elf introduces himself and asks if the heroes wish to escape from the prison camp. He tells them he was on a vital mission before he was captured by the Karnuans, and he suggests that he could prove useful in the heroes' escape, while they could aid in the completion of his mission as well. (Gwion will not be more specific regarding his mission at this time.)

Jafari (Level 1 Stalker): CR **1;** Size M; HD Id8; hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (ld2+l subdual, crit x2, fist); SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 11. Feats: Endurance. Skills: Climb +5, Gather Information +4, Intimidate +4, Search +3, Spot +4, Use Rope +5, Wilderness Lore +4.

Nimorean Prisoners (4): CR 1/2; Size M; HD Id4; hp 2; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (ld3 subdual, crit x2, fist); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0. Skills: Craft or Profession +2, Listen +2, Search +1, Spot +1.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

Until the party is able to arm themselves, there are a number of instances in which they try to make due with whatever is available. Characters with the Improvised Weapon feat can use fist-sized rocks (ld4 bludgeoning), pick (Id6 piercing, crit x3), or shovel (ld6 bludgeoning) with the normal benefits of the feat. Other characters can attempt this, but they will suffer a -4 non-proficiency penalty when using these as weapons. If someone using a pick strikes with a critical hit, it requires a partial action and a Strength check (DC 10) to pull it out.

EVENT TWO: DISCOVERY (DAY TWO)

During the night, Gavara (servant of the vrykyl) infiltrated the camp. She murdered one of the guards with the *dagger of the doppelganger* (see description), assuming his identity. Because the guard was on duty, she was not able to spend much time to hide the body.

The next day one of the players makes a discovery while working. Pick one of the characters and describe the following:

> *The day is another hot and long one. The heat and the hard labor has dazed you. You lift what must be the hundredth rock of the day and then something catches your eye that snaps your attention back to the moment.*
>
> *Lying in the quarry, partially hidden behind some rocks, is a grinning skull. A moment later you see other bones hidden among the rocks. It appears to be a full skeleton.*

If the player asks, this is in the same work area as yesterday. It is very unlikely that the body could have been in the area without discovery.

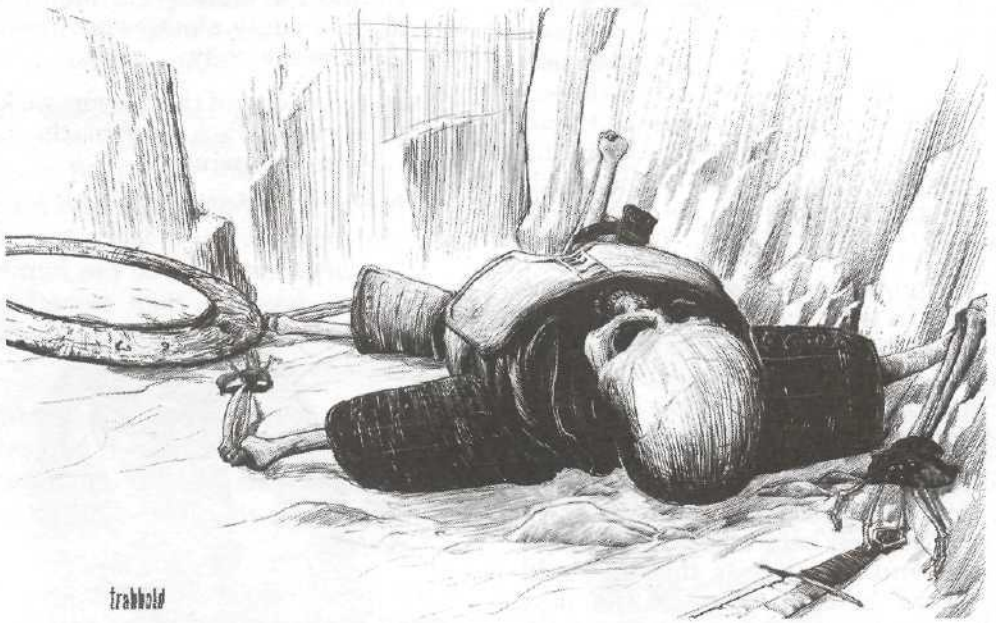
The skeleton is dirty with ash, which is scattered around its frame. The bones are dry. The skeleton wears a chain mail shirt and a tabard identical to the Karnuan soldiers who serve as guards. Examination of the corpse requires a Search check (DC 15) to discover a wicked cut on one of the ribs—revealing that the man was stabbed in the back by something incredibly sharp. Any character with the Magical Attunement feat in Void magic will feel the residual aura of the Void on the body.

If the group decides to discuss the body with Gwion, he is intrigued but can offer no explanation as to what happened to the man. He does, however, suggest that the armor and uniform could be helpful in a possible escape attempt.

If the player chooses to inform the guards of the discovery, the hero will be held while they investigate. There is no way of knowing when the guard was killed, and none of the guards in the prison camp are missing or unaccounted for. (This is because Gavara has used the powers of the *dagger of the doppelganger* to assume the identity of the murdered guard.)

If the group chooses not to announce the discovery but take no action to hide the body, it will be found a few hours later. The guards talk among themselves and question a few prisoners but no answers come to light.

It might occur to the party to hide the body, or at least stash the uniform (which consists of the armor and a baldric with the Karnuan military standard and a rank insignia). If the heroes come up with a sensible plan, let the body or uniform remain hidden. If the body is undiscovered, the guards will not become suspicious of trouble.



EVENT THREE: FORGOTTEN NIGHTMARE (DAY THREE)

The following event happens to one character, either one who possesses the Alertness feat or is determined randomly.

> *You awaken in the middle of the night, bolting upright as if you heard something. Everything is quiet and normal, though you sense that something is wrong. The shadows around you seem to move...and you feel cold.*

Have the character make Spot check. Regardless of the results, describe the following:

> *You do not find anything physically wrong, hut your instincts scream foryou to run! A cold chill runs up your spine and your legs won't move. Darkness encloses you. You try to scream,* ***but*** *suddenly you can't even breathe.*

Allow the player to become alarmed by this news and try to come up with an action. It will probably involve grabbing a makeshift weapon, running for cover, attempting to hide, or something similar. Simply roll a few dice, then read or paraphrase the following. (This section describes the awful feeling associated with Void magic and the character's subsequent amnesia.)

> *Again, you* ***bolt*** *upright in your bedroll with cold sweat rolling down your back. You're not sure if you've awakened from a dream or if something horrible happened to you. You feel sick to your stomach. Looking up, you see the gray light of pre-dawn and realize that soon the guards will wake you up anyway.*

The character surprised Gavara as she was murdering Jafari. Not wanting to leave too many unexplained corpses behind her, Gavara stunned the character and cast *steal memory* to take away all knowledge of what happened.

There is nothing the hero can do to recover the lost memory. The event can be dismissed as a dream, or somehow connected with the next encounter.

EVENT **FOUR: GWION (DAY THREE)**

The morning continues as usual, with the heroes performing their normal work duties. The guards whisper to themselves, acting both nervous and alert.

The guards are responding to one of their own going missing (named "Kafad," if anyone inquires). This is caused by Gavara assuming Jafari's shape and abandoning that of the murdered guard. She took the time, however, to hide Jafari's body so that it will likely never be discovered. She needed to become one of the prisoners so she could get close to Gwion and aid in his escape.

Later in the day, an event captures the attention of most of the camp.

> *Not far from where you toil among the rocks, you hear a guard cry out in surprise and call for his commander. You see him standing next to a prisoner—**the** elf, Gwion—holding something in his hand and shouting. The elf voices a protest, only to receive a backhand from the guard that sends him reeling backward. The elf glares at the guard with silent but undisguised fury.*

If the heroes look on, they see the following:

> *A guard holds what looks to be a rune-inscribed amulet, shaking it accusingly at the elf. "I found this Tromek hiding this, sir" The guard spits at Gwion's feet, who if anything seems even more furious.*
>
> *The commander looks uncertain. "Flog him for hiding it. **I'll** take it to my tent and summon a magus to find out if it's enchanted. You—elf. You watch yourself. Any more tricks and you'll end up with your throat slit." The commander walks away leaving the guard to whip the elf brutally, though not a single cry of pain escapes the prisoner's lips.*

Any character with the Magical Attunement feat in Air magic will realize that enchantments have been placed on the amulet—but without further examination there is no way to learn anything more.

If the heroes pay further attention to Gwion, they see that he is viewed with distrust and suspicion by both guards and prisoners alike. He ignores this treatment and remains aloof to everyone except for the party.

EVENT FIVE: NEW FRIENDS (DAY FOUR)

Gavara has been biding her time, anxiously, but waiting for the moment when she can gain Gwion's trust. The opportunity arrives when the elf finds himself taking a brutal beating at the hands of fellow prisoners.

> *You have just finished your morning meal. Your bodies ache for more sleep, but you know that the guards and their whips will force you up soon. While you attempt to gain a few extra moments of rest, you see a commotion only a few yards away.*
>
> *A group of Karnuan prisoners have formed a ring around the elven prisoner and are prodding him from all directions. A short but extremely stocky man taunts him. "So you been sneakin' around with a magic amulet, eh? You cousin' more trouble for us? As if we don't have enough...whattya think boys?"*
>
> *The "boys" cry out in agreement. One of the prison gang throws a punch at the elf, who catches the man's arm and sends him crashing to the ground with blinding speed. The elf's almond eyes narrow. "1 suggest that you leave me alone."*
>
> *More prisoners have migrated nearby hoping to catch a good fight. The guards are present as always, but they look just as interested to see the outcome as your fellow prisoners. You even note that a few are making wagers.*
>
> *The **stocky Kamuan** screams "Rush him!" and you lose sight of the elf as his attackers close in on him.*

If the heroes rush to help the elf, combat ensues. Gwion's stats are available at the end of the adventure—but he takes 5 points of subdual damage before the heroes help him. After two rounds, the heroes might be surprised to see Jafari (actually Gavara in his guise) and his fellow Nimoreans rush in to their aid. Outnumbered, the Karnuan bullies back down.

> **Karnuan Prisoners** (5): CR 1/2; Size M; HD Id4+1; hp 3; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d3 subdual, crit x2, fist); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0. Con 12. Skills: Craft or Profession +2, Listen +2, Search +1, Spot +1.

Nimorean Prisoners (6): CR 1/2; Size M; HD Id4; hp 2; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (ld3 subdual, crit x2, fist); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0. Skills: Craft or Profession +2, Listen +2, Search +1, Spot +1.

Guards (3): CR 1; Size M; HD Id8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (Chain Shirt); Atk +3 melee (ld6+1 crit 19-20/x2, short sword), +0 ranged (ld2 subdual, whip); SV Fort +3, Ref+0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8. Feats: Close-order fighting, exotic weapon proficiency (whip), weapon focus (short sword). Skills: Intimidate +4, Search +4, Spot +3, Swim +4. Note: Twice this many guards will arrive in two rounds if called for.

If the heroes aid Gwion: He is grateful to them and to Jafari and is quick to express it. He hopes that these new friends can help him fulfill his mission.

"I thank you. We are all different, but this place has made us brothers. Perhaps we can continue to aid each other. I, for one, would be honored to fight side-by-side with each of you."

He will graciously accept any healing the heroes might offer him, though he warns them to use magic only when the guards cannot see them.

Jafari acts concerned for the elf and states his own desire to fight for freedom at the elf's side. If any heroes ask why he was so quick to come to the elf's aid, he states: "His people and mine are allies, brothers-in-arms. It was the honorable thing to do." If questioned further about this, Gwion will relate the history of the Nimorean people (as detailed in the *Sovereign Stone Campaign Sourcebook).* Of course this is actually a lie. Gavara specifically chose to take Jafari's place because he was Nimorean, an identity she could use to gain the elf's trust. Jafari's comrades were easily fooled and will continue to obey his orders without question.

After a few minutes, or if the conversation drifts toward a plan for escape, the guards come to force everyone to work. The elf reassures them, however, by saying: "We will speak again, soon."

If the players ignore the elf's troubles: Gwion is badly beaten, but the Nimoreans still come to his aid.

The elf is mercilessly pummeled, although he seems to be returning the occasional well-placed blow. Suddenly, a group of Nimoreans—the same Nimoreans who caused trouble a few days ago, in fact—charge into the melee. At first you assume they want a piece of the action, but then you realize that they come to the elf's aid.

The Karnuans were not expecting a large fight, so they quickly back down. The elf is left spitting blood on the ground. He looks badly injured.

Gwion has taken 12 points of subdual damage. Jafari comes to the party, asking them to help the elf. He tells them: "My friends can block sight of the guards for a few moments so that you may aid him. Please help him." (The players may or may not recognize the change in his behavior since they first arrived. If they do, Jafari/Gavara shrugs off the question and indicates that the important issue is to aid the elf.) If the heroes aid Gwion, he thanks them and all proceeds as above. If the group refuses, Jafari helps Gwion to his feet and walks away.

EVENT SIX: NIGHT ATTACK (DAY FOUR)

Gavara has succeeded in gaining the elf's trust. She now wishes to weaken the guards and present a possible opportunity for escape. She has cast an empowered *summon Void's creatures* to attract a group of glyblin to attack the camp.

Night has come and you have sunk into the deep, dreamless sleep of the exhausted. You are all jolted out of sleep, however, by a bloodcurdling scream in the distance. Before you can even sit up, you hear shouting and unnatural, high-pierced shrieking sounds. You see guards running toward the noithwest section of the camp.

Give the players a moment to state what their characters are doing, then describe the following.

A wide-eyed guard carrying a bundle wrapped in sackcloth comes up to you. "Can you lot wield blades? A group of evil Void creatures have invaded the camp. It's for everyone's lives now!" The guard shakes the bundle and drops it at your feet. In the torchlight you see the gleam of steel weapons.

There are four short swords and four daggers on the ground. Gwion and Jafari group with the party. Gwion merely states: "I am competent with a sword." Jafari defers to the group's decision, though he admits he's swung a sword and dagger in his day.

Only give the group a few moments to decide what their course of action is. If they delay, begin the following encounter in the middle of their discussion.

An eerie, high-pitched shriek grabs your attention. Turning north, you catch sight of ***the*** *attackers. They are tall and gaunt, with greenish skin and large, white eyes. The eager, intense expression on their twisted features is as frightening as their squealing battle cry. Several of the creatures wear the clothing of Karnuan peasants, while others possess the armor and weapons of the prison guards.*

Any character who can make an Intelligence check (DC 15) recognizes these creatures from stories—they are glyblin, foul creatures created by Void magic, who crave battle and use the living to create more of their kind!

Glyblin, Unarmed (3): CR 3; Size M; HD 2d8+4; hp 10 each; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atk +4 melee (ld4+3, 2 claws); SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int *7,* Wis 11, Cha 6. Feats: Multiattack, Improved Initiative. Skills: Appraise +3.

Glyblin, Armed (3): CR 3; Size M; HD 2d8+4; hp 13 each; Init +*7* (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 Chain Shirt); Atk +4 melee (ld8+3, longsword); SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 7, Wis 11, Cha 6. Feats: Multiattack, Improved Initiative. Skills: Appraise +3.

Nimorean Prisoners (4): CR 1/2; Size M; HD Id4; hp 2; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (ld3 subdual, crit x2, fist); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0. Skills: Craft or Profession +2, Listen +2, Search +1, Spot +1.

If the heroes were facing this alone, the glyblin would be far above the group's combat ability. However, these glyblin are answering the call of Gavara's spell and are not fighting with their typical cunning. They will randomly attack, often as not choosing a prisoner as their victim. Even still, this is a potentially deadly fight for the heroes. But depending on luck of dice, strategy, and use of magic, the fight could go either way. If it begins to look like the group might be killed, you can reduce the number of opponents by having some of the glyblin *embrace [Sovereign Stone Campaign Sourcebook,* page 173) one or more of the prisoners. If a glyblin takes a prisoner into its embrace, describe the following:

A fellow prisoner has been overpowered by one of the creatures. It reaches out and enfolds him into a horrifying embrace. The



creature's skin merges with the poor man's wherever they touch, until after a moment they have become one hideous combination with no front but two hacks. The greenish ***tint*** *of the creature's skin begins growing on the helpless victim.*

The embrace takes one minute (10 rounds) to complete, during which time the glyblin divides itself while feeding off of the victim. The group can destroy the glyblin easily (though doing so will result in the victim's death as well). Killing a glyblin in an embrace creates a horrifying sight of mangled flesh and organs, as well as a black and foul-smelling ichor which oozes out of the wounds; the heroes must make a Constitution check (DC 10) to keep from becoming sick. (The nausea will pass once away from the sight.)

If the heroes are easily beating the glyblin, the Void creatures can use another power to increase their numbers. Glyblin are capable of dividing themselves after they have been wounded in combat. Division takes three rounds, and in the end two glyblin return to combat with half of the hit dice and hit points of the original. If a glyblin divides, describe the following:

One *of the creatures backs away from the battle, a look of ecstatic frenzy on its face. It cries out—you are not sure if from pain or pleasure—and it staggers. As it turns, you see that the back of its head is growing another face—***in** *fact, the entire back of its body is changing to mirror the front. You watch in horrified amazement as it begins to slowly peel itself in half—creating two creatures from one!*

Use the *embrace* and *division* to balance the combat. The heroes should be left badly wounded but not defeated. During the battle Jafari (actually Gavara) will stay close to Gwion and make sure he is not too badly injured.

The prisoners try to escape but fight if cornered. Some might try to hide behind armed heroes (if left with no other choice).

You have defeated the foul Void creatures, hut more are obviously somewhere in the camp. The sounds of battle and screams of the wounded ring around you, though the fighting seems to be concentrated on the northern end of camp.

The heroes can attempt to escape the camp during the confusion or wait until a better opportunity comes along. Gwion is willing to go along with the group decision, but says: "I will go, but we risk facing more of these creatures tonight—and I must recover my amulet! I am on an urgent mission and I cannot leave without it." Jafari/Gavara is willing to leave anytime, as long as everyone thinks it's the right time; he also supports his "friend's" goal of recovering the amulet and wishes to hear more about the elf's mission.

If the heroes wish to recover the amulet, they can easily reach the tent of the commander in the guard area. While searching for it, however, they encounter two more armed glyblin (use the above statistics). The tent itself is as described in Location 8, except that there is no guard posted.

If the heroes choose to make their escape by night during the confusion of battle, they will encounter six more glyblin at the perimeter of camp. Three of the undead are unarmed, while three more have scavenged armor and weapons from the guards. There will also be four prisoners who are trying to follow the heroes out of the camps. Once again, use the powers of *embrace* and *division* to keep the encounter from being either too deadly or too easy.

Once again, Jafari/Gavara will ensure the elf's safety without making it look to obvious. Gavara has decided that the heroes will make useful tools for aiding in Gwion's escape and will undoubtedly be of use on the road to Vinnengael.

If the heroes survive the battle with the last of the glyblin, then they have successfully escaped the camp. Proceed to **The Karnuan Road** below.

The heroes might, however, decide to wait for a better opportunity to escape. If so, Gwion tells them to hide their weapons before the guards return—they can be used later for an escape attempt. Gwion puts words to action by burying his own weapon in a shallow hole. After a short while, the fighting dies down and a few guards return to the prison area to restore order. If any heroes are openly carrying weapons, the guards attempt to take them away from the heroes.

The next morning the heroes can learn (either by talking with fellow prisoners or listening to the guards) that nearly half of the guards were slain during the night and a full third of the prison population was either killed or managed to escape.

EVENT SEVEN: **THE PLAN (DAY FIVE)**

Jafari/Gavara and Gwion have been discussing the best opportunity for escape. They share their ideas with the heroes during the midday break. Jafari tells them that his Nimorean friends are willing to set up a diversion at the southern end of camp by instigating a small riot. Gwion adds that a distraction at night will allow them to retrieve any hidden weapons and make their escape. He tells them,

however, that they must retrieve his amulet first—that he will not leave without it.

Someone with great stealth might be able to steal it away without anyone realizing it, he suggests. If no one else volunteers, he asks that they wait for him in the night while he tries to recover it himself. (Gwion, however, will only manage to recover the amulet—nothing else from the tent.)

Once the amulet is recovered, Gwion suggests that Jafari has his Nimorean friends begin their distraction. With the guards already reduced in number, and more drawn to the southern area of camp, the heroes should be able to escape to the north.

EVENT **EIGHT: THE** ESCAPE **(DAY SIX)**

This event occurs when the plan is put into action.

> ***Night*** *has come, but none of you are asleep. Exhausted as you aw from the day's work, you are too anxious. The time has come for you to put your escape plan into action. You can do* ***little*** *more than sit up in your bedrolls, exchanging knowing glances with each other, Gwion, and Jafari—****who*** *restnearby.*
>
> *Suddenly high-pitched shrieks echo from the southern end of camp. The sound causes the hair to rise on the back ofyour neck, and at first you think it might be another attack—****but*** *you realize quickly that the sound is made by a living, human throat.* ***It's*** *your Nimorean allies, providing the distraction you need to make your escape. It seems to have worked. Several guards begin sprinting south—calling for more to join them.*

There are no guards in the immediate area after a few moments, freeing the heroes to recover hidden weapons or making whatever other preparations they wish.

There are eight guards on the north end of camp, blocking the most obvious route out of the quarry. Three of them are armed with crossbows and swords, while the rest only have hand-to-hand weapons. They will fight valiantly but not foolishly. The last few will surrender if the rest have been defeated.

This combat should be extremely challenging. Introduce more guards if things are going too easy for the heroes.

Guards, swordsmen (2): CR 1; Size M; HD Id8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 [Chain Shirt); Atk +3 melee (1d6+l crit 19-207x2, short sword); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8. Feats: Close-order fighting, exotic weapon proficiency (whip), weapon focus (short sword). Skills: Intimidate +4, Search +4, Spot +3, Swim +4.

Guards, crossbowmen (3): CR 1; Size M; HD Id8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (Chain Shirt); Atk +0 ranged (Id8 crit 19-20/x2, light crossbow) or +3 melee (1d4+l crit 19-20/x2, dagger); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8. Feats: Close-order fighting, exotic weapon proficiency (whip), weapon focus (short sword). Skills: Intimidate +4, Search +4, Spot +3, Swim +4.

If the heroes defeat the guards at the north entrance, prisoners begin shouting and running to the north. The remaining guards are left with the nearly impossible task of rounding up the escaped prisoners. The heroes can hide in the wilderness and travel alongside the north road without running into any further trouble.

Congratulate the group for their daring escape.

> *You are exhausted, beaten, and worn down. You bear the scars of the lash on your back and fresh wounds from recent battles. But for all of this, you feel exhilaration at having escaped from the Karnuan prison camps. You did not truly realize how oppressive prison life was until you tasted free air again.*
>
> *The road ahead* is *long and filled with dangers. You are wounded, tired, and underequipped. You have enemies both ahead and behind you. You welcome it all, however. You are free.*

PRISON CAMP LOCATIONS

1. Old Quarry

The walls of the quarry vary from 30 to 45 feet in height. On the quarry floor lie a few boulders of mixed rock and low-quality granite that have yet to be hauled away, while gravel has been shoveled and raked into large piles. Working tools, including iron picks, shovels, and rakes lie on the ground.

This was the first granite quarry started at the prison camp. Initial digging was accomplished by a group of Earth mages, with imprisoned labor used for further digging, cutting the slabs of granite, and transporting them out of the quarry. The digging in this quarry is complete, with only clean-up required by the prisoners. This is also the quarry where the party is assigned to work throughout this portion of the adventure.

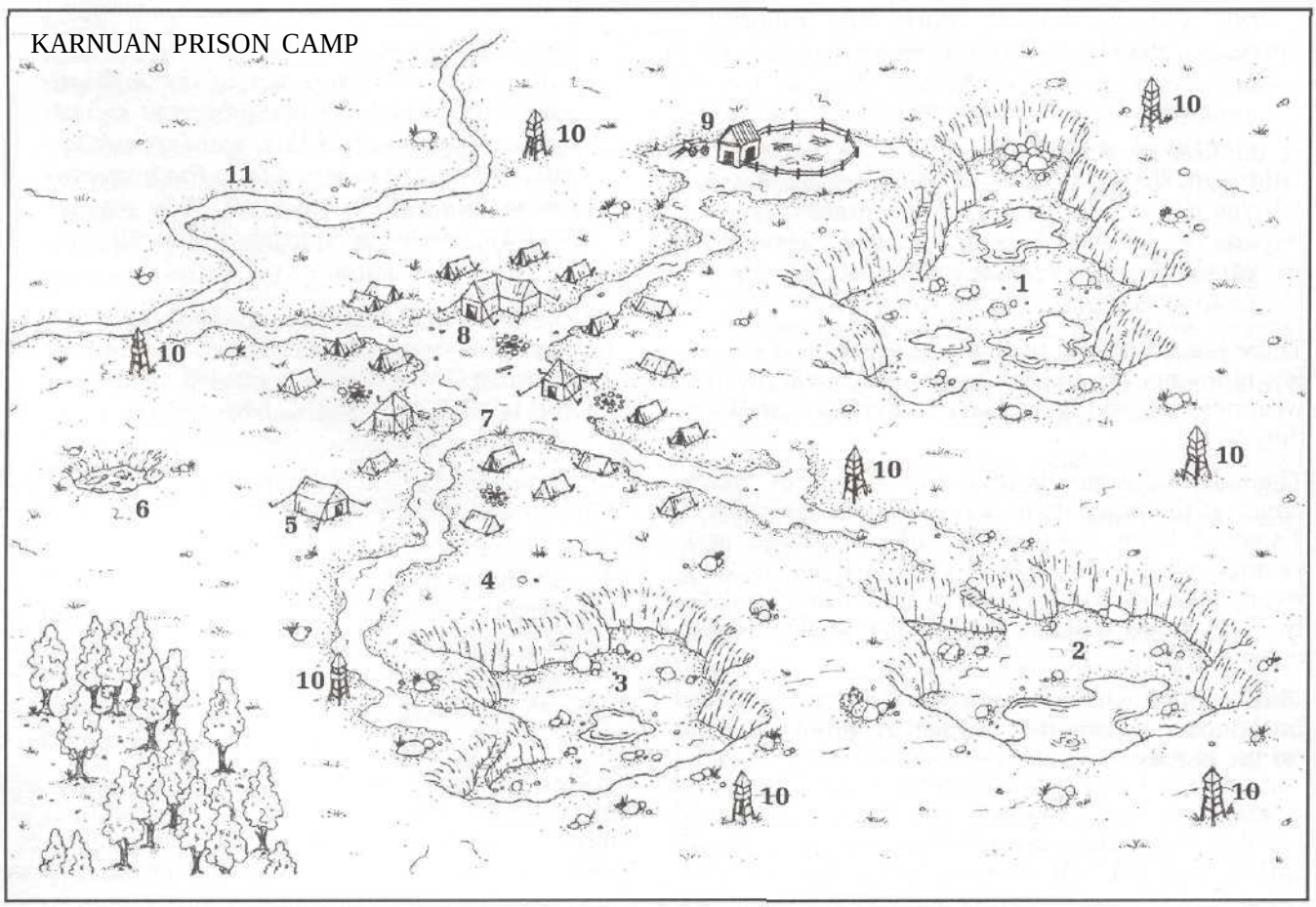
During the day there are always three guards posted at the path entrance to the quarry, with others patrolling and in the nearby watchtowers. One guard acts as overseer, keeping the prisoners working efficiently. At night the area is patrolled and watched by the watchtower guards.

Guards: CR **1;** Size M; HD Id8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (Chain Shirt); Atk +3 melee (Id6+1 crit 19-20/x2, short sword), +0 ranged (Id2 subdual, whip), or +0 ranged [Id8 crit 19-20/x2, light crossbow); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8. Feats: Close-order fighting, exotic weapon proficiency (whip), weapon focus (short sword). Skills: Intimidate +4, Search +4, Spot +3, Swim +4.

2. New Quarry

The walls of the quarry vary from 30 to 45 feet in height. The quarry is covered with gravel and dust, as well as jagged edged boulders and huge, unworked slabs of granite. Working tools, including iron picks, stonecutting saws, shovels, and rakes lie on the ground. Huge wooden carts are brought in when granite slabs are hewn into the proper dimensions and are ready to be removed from the quarry.

This quarry was only recently dug out by the Earth mages, and the real work of carving out and removing the granite slabs has just begun.



The quarry always has 4d4 prisoners working here during daylight hours, with six guards posted at the path-entrance and frequent patrols around the walls. One of the six guards acts as overseer, making sure the work is being completed.

> Prisoners: CR 1/2; Size M; HD Id4; hp 2; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (Id3 subdual, crit x2, fist); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0. Skills: Craft or Profession +2, Listen +2, Search +1, Spot +1.
>
> **Guards:** CR 1; Size M; HD Id8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (Chain Shirt); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1 crit 19-20/x2, short sword), +0 ranged (Id2 subdual, whip), or +0 ranged (1d8 crit 19-20/x2, light crossbow); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8. Feats: Close-order fighting, exotic weapon proficiency (whip), weapon focus (short sword). Skills: Intimidate +4, Search +4, Spot +3, Swim +4.

3. Digging Quarry

This quarry was excavated just before the New Quarry. It is otherwise identical in description to Location 2, above.

4. Rest Area

The grassy rest area is covered with Karnuan military-issue bedrolls—which are rolled and tied up during the work day and contain the exhausted bodies of the prison workers at night. Prisoners are also allowed to return here between work shifts for short rests. This area is patrolled at night (three guards per patrol) while the prisoners are sleeping. The commander warns every prisoner that if anyone is caught attempting to sneak out of the sleeping area, everyone will be chained and manacled at night from that point on. Each prisoner is expected to keep and maintain his own bedroll, which are large enough to completely cover a prisoner (even an ork) in the event of rain.

5. Mess Tent

This large, open tent serves as the camp's mess area. Prisoners overseen by guards cook and distribute food to the workers. Working in the mess is considered the easiest and most desireable job a prisoner can be assigned—often given to older prisoners or anyone who's been injured. (The Karnuans are not kind to those who fake injury just for an easy work assignment.)

Cabbage soup is the ordinary fare, along with flat bread baked over the fire pit. Once or twice a week an animal will be brought in and slaughtered to give the prisoners a small serving of meat, with the choicest cuts going to the Karnuan officers. The guards have their own meal shifts, with food prepared by their own cooks.

When not in use, this area always has at least one guard during the day, two at night.

6. Latrine Pit

The latrine pit is the dumping ground for garbage, uneaten food, ruined equipment, and raw sewage. The wind generally blows to the west, causing the foul smell to be carried away from the camp. In those occasions the wind shifts, the foul odor taints the entire camp and can even be detected in the quarries.

Prisoners are given wooden buckets and very little privacy to handle bodily functions. Prisoners are then ordered to cast the waste into the pit, rinse their bucket out, and return to work.

If the latrine pit is searched, a small rusty dagger can be found (-1 penalty to hit and damage) as well as any number of useless (and potentially disgusting) items. At night a swarm of displaced cessrats forage in the rubbish, and will attack if surprised or cornered.

> Cessrats (5): CR 1/2; Size S; HD 1d8+2; hp 5 each; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 16 (+1 size, 3 Dex, +1 natural); Atk -1 melee (1d6-2 bite); SA: Swarming, disease. SQ: Scent. SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 6, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 2. Skills: Climb +11, Hide +11, Move Silently +8. Sovereign Stone *Campaign Sourcebook,* pg. 170.

7. Karnuan Tent City

These functional, military tents have become home to a number of Karnuan soldiers and officers. This and the mess tent are the two places off-duty guards spend their time—incidentally making it the most dangerous place a disobedient prisoner can try to go. The tents of the low-ranking, enlisted troops are closer to the prisoner rest area, while the officers' tents are closer to the stables.

In fact, no prisoners are allowed inside the boundaries of the tent city at any time. Any who are caught are brutally flogged, spend an unfed day in the stocks, and not given a second chance. (Those who violate the tent city a second time are executed on the spot.) During the day it is difficult to Hide (DC 20) and Move Silently (DC 15). At night there are fewer guards, making it easier (Hide DC 15, Move Silently DC 10), plus a character receives a +2 circumstance bonus to his skill rolls for favorable conditions.

Guard Tents

If a character enters a random tent, there is a 50% chance it is occupied by 1d4 guards. They will be surprised but will react swiftly (with typical Karnuan discipline). A normal guard tent has a 50% chance of having a short sword and 1-2 daggers as well as 2d6 silver argents. The looters will be all too aware of the silhouettes of guards walking outside the tent.

Officer Tents

There are four officer tents, the four nearest the stables (the closest being the officer in command of the prison camp). Before Event 6 (above). they will have a 50% chance to be occupied during the day or night; after the Event there is a only a 25% chance that a tent will be occupied. The camp commander's tent is easily identified by the Karnuan flag flying in front and the guard posted at the entrance. The command tent is pegged down very tight to prevent anyone from slipping in under the back. However, the tent can be cut open from the back (opposed Move Silently/Listen skill roll to avoid the guard hearing) or one of the back tent stakes can be pulled up.

8. Commander's Tent

The commander's tent (with a single soldier standing on guard duty) contains a small writing desk with an oil lamp, two goose quills, ink, and 5 sheets of parchment. There is also a sleeping cot with the commander's armor and uniform laying on it, as well as a matching elven hirglaif and birglaif (Gwion's) and a strongbox underneath.

The strongbox is locked, but with a very crude mechanism. (The lock is DC 10, though a character suffers a –2 penalty if using an improvised lockpick, -5 if forced to use the point of a dagger or knife.) The strongbox contains 32 silver argents. a masterwork dagger, Gwion's amulet (see Magical Items), and a scroll. Anyone who can read Karna sees this is a bearer-scroll stating the commander's rank and his right to escort prisoners both to and from the portal to Karnuan-held lands in Vinnengael.

9. Stables

The stables house the horses for the officers, several mules, and carts used to haul rocks and supplies. Military-style saddles, blankets, bridles, and other equipment is also stored here. The stable is always watched carefully by three guards that stand rotating shifts, who also feed and groom the horses.

There are generally 3d4 horses in the stable and 1d6 mules. Any prisoner found near the stables will be punished as if they had entered the tent city (above).

10. Watchtowers

These wooden watchtowers are of simple construction, essentially waist-high wooden boxes propped up by four posts. The towers stand 20 feet high, with the ladders secured to the side. In addition, a simple brass bell is found in every tower. There is always a guard in each tower, ready to ring the warning bell and fire upon any prisoner trying to escape.

11. Reka na Pekat (River of Fish)

This medium-sized river is fed by frigid underwater springs, making the water icy-cold even in the summertime. During the spring fish swim upstream from the ocean to spawn, making it excellent for fishing during those months. The river ranges from 8-10 feet deep in the center with a fairly strong current.

The Karnuan Road

If the group manages to escape the camp, they will find themselves hunted fugitives. Depending on the timing of their escape, pursuit will not be mounted for either a half day (if they escaped at night) or a full day (if they escaped during the glyblin attack). In either case, the number of prisoners (and soldiers) who were killed during the glyblin attack has thinned the manpower at the prison camp for any kind of heavy pursuit. The current war between the Karnuans and the orks has made it difficult for the camp's commander to request additional troops.

Assuming the group is traveling from the camp to the Karnuan portal (a distance of approximately 200 miles), the journey will take some time. Use the movement and distance rules from *Core Rulebook I* to determine the party's speed, whether they are on horse or if they managed to escape the prison camp with mounts. The terrain is mostly dry grasslands, with a dirt road running northeast toward the portal.

Possible Encounters

While there are no random encounters, the following creatures might be met on the road, if the referee needs them to challenge the party during their journey:

A small swarm (1d4+1) of chompflies attacks the party, hungry for flesh.

A small swarm (2d4) of pinktails begin stalking the party, attacking anyone who lags behind or is isolated from the group.

A young ogre (only 30 hp) attacks the group, so hungry that it cannot be reasoned with. (Note that Sovereign Stone ogres differ from those found in other d20 System settings.)

Events

The following events occur in order unless the group's choices require a change. These events assume that the party is making its way toward the Karnuan portal so they may return to Vinnengaelean lands.

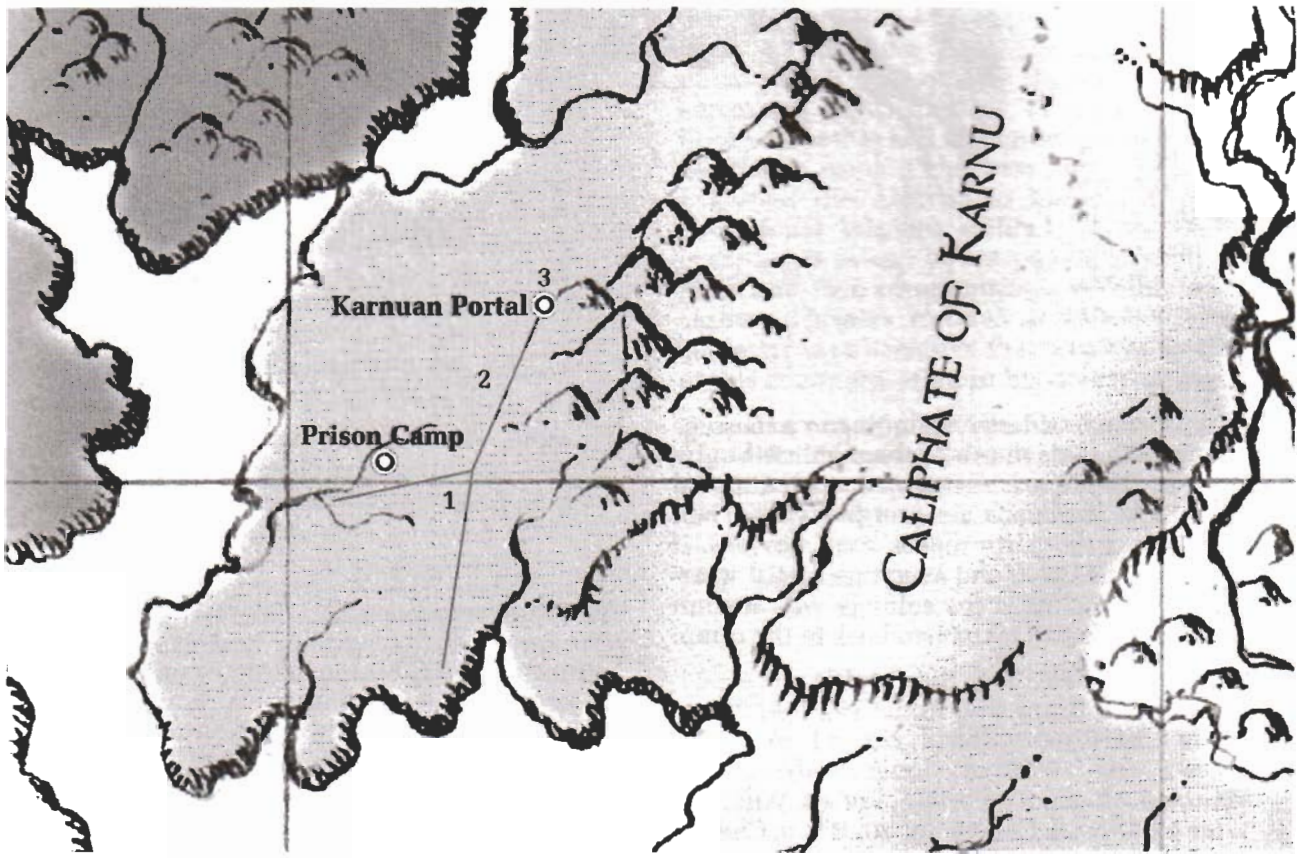
Event One: Gwion's Request

This event occurs the first time the party stops to rest or camp after escaping from the Karnuan prison camp. Gwion wishes to both express his gratitude to the group and ask their further assistance to help him complete his mission.

> *"I wish to thank you, again, my friends, for helping me recover this amulet and aiding in my escape. My mission is one of great importance, and I hope that you might assist me further. If you do, then my House will owe you a great debt.*
>
> *"This amulet contains a message that was magically recorded by the Wyred, the wizards among my people. The message is given by one who has risked everything in order to discover an enemy who threatens both your people and ours.*
>
> *"The message in the amulet can only be activated in the presence of Lord Gaelin, a human dominion lord who lives near the city of New Vinnengael. I do not know exactly what is in the message, only that it concerns a great enemy and a plot that endangers us all.*
>
> *"The Karnuan portal leads to the Vinnengaelean lands. I was traveling there when I was captured by the army and accused of spying. I have lost too much time already. I need your help to finish this mission and learn the identity of our common enemy."*

Any characters familiar with elven culture will realize that this mission must be very important for the elf to ask for outside help. A Sense Motive skill check (DC 10) reveals that Gwion is being earnest and sincere, though he's obviously not telling everything.

The Karnuan Road



Jafari (the disguised Gavara) will allow the heroes to discuss the elf's request. Once everyone else has stated their opinion, Jafari/Gavara will argue in favor of aiding the elf—even going as far as stating that he will help Gwion regardless of what the rest of the group plans to do.

Event Two: Riders

This event happens sometime in the first day outside of the prison camp. Have everyone in the group, including Gwion and Jafari/Gavara, to make a Spot check (DC 15). Those who are successful can see a dust cloud in the distance, coming from the north but moving south along the road. Those who can succeed a Listen check (DC 20) are able to detect the sound of galloping horses in the distance.



trabbold

As the riders get closer, describe the following:

> *The sound of galloping horses catches your attention. You can hear them from a distance, and to the north you can see a cloud of dust traveling south. Even from this distance you can see the gleam of steel armor and weapons. The riders are headed in your direction.*

These are Karnuan riders responding to a message sent out from the prison camps the night of the glyblin attack. There are six armed and armored horsemen. The Karnuans are in a hurry, and will not stop unless the party makes itself obvious. If the group reveals itself, and everyone is still wearing prison camp clothes the soldiers will attempt to arrest everyone and take them back to the camp.

> **Karnuan Riders:** CR 1; Size M; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (Chain Shirt); Atk +3 melee (1d8+1 crit 19-20/x2, longsword); SA Mounted Attack; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8. Feats: Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Weapon focus (longsword). Skills: Intimidate +4, Ride +4, Search +3, Spot +3.

The riders are on light horses carrying the bare minimum load. These horses were bred and trained for speed, not combat. If their rider is dismounted and the horse is not subdued, it will run north as fast as it can.

Event Three: Refugees

This event takes place two to three days after the group's escape from the prison camp, or sooner at the referee's discretion if the group has been badly damaged by other encounters. As the group travels on or near the road, a Spot check (DC 10 by day, 20 by night) reveals several covered wagons, a number of horses and mules, and a fairly large group of people. They are slowly traveling north along the road.

Describe the following once the group gets close enough to study these strangers:

> *You see a group of humans—probably Dunkargan from the stocky builds and full beards of the men—following three covered wagons drawn by oxen. They easily number thirty or more, including women and children. The group doesn't look injured or hungry, but many look glum or just plain miserable—except the children, who seem delighted at this chance to explore new places.*

The Dunkargans are both merchants and refugees, the very first fleeing their homeland as the dark prince Dagnarus begins his attack on the kingdoms of Loerem. These Dunkargans, however, have no direct knowledge of the fighting or the nature of the enemy. All of them, however, learned enough that they decided it was safer to leave their homes before a terrifying enemy overran them.

If the heroes greet the Dunkargans, they will respond and be quite friendly. They continually speak about the army of demons that have appeared in their homeland. They describe these demons as black-eyed fiends with sharp teeth and vicious talons; none have ever seen them personally, so their descriptions are vague and overly dramatic. They do know that some force is waging war in western Dunkarga, and this group wasted no time in leaving.

The Dunkargan group includes the following:

Mammutt el'Sanid, Male Dunkargan Fighter 1; CR 1; Size M; HD 1d10+1; hp 9; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (Dex, Chain Shirt); Atk +1 melee (1d6 crit 19-20/x2, short sword); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 9. Feats: Dodge, Improvised Weapon. Skills: Climb +2, Handle Animal +1, Heal +1, Ride +3, Search +2, Spot +1. Mammutt is the only member of the caravan with any significant fighting ability. He is personable and reasonably slow to anger, though he is also slightly arrogant and overestimates his own abilities.

Khalid Jehzzin Zeif, Male Dunkargan Commoner 3; hp 7; Wis 13. Khalid is a stout man in his late middle years, and is related by blood or marriage to over half the Dunkargans in the caravan. He is a man who learned the foolishness of unecessary pride, and often gives good advice to those who will listen.

Zhora al'Zeif, Female Dunkargan Commoner 1; hp 3; Cha 14. Zhora is the eldest granddaughter of Khalid by the old man's favorite daughter. She is more open and curious than most Dunkargans, and might develop a romantic interest in a male member of the party (though her grandfather will frown on such a relationship).

Malik el'Baquel, Male Dunkargan Commoner 1; hp 1. Malik has been sent with his cousins by parents who wished to stay in the family home and maintain their business. Malik is both insatiably curious and incurably annoying. He will pester the party endlessly with questions about their weapons, magic, or anything else that catches his interest.

If the heroes ask, the Dunkargans are planning to use silver and goods to barter their way through the Karnuan portal to reach Vinnengaelean lands (which are far to the east). There they hope to live in safety and attempt to warn the Vinnengaelean people of the danger approaching from the west.

The Dunkargans have goods available in their wagon. Most anything that could be acquired in a village (see Chapter Five of the *Sovereign Stone Campaign Sourcebook*) can be purchased or traded for with the Dunkargans. The refugees will welcome the company of the heroes and will exchange food and provision for protection against dangerous animals and bandits. The heroes may also rest and recover in the wagons while still moving along the road.

It might occur to the group to attempt to blend in with the refugees in order to get through the Karnuan portal. (They also might have the option of disguising one of their group as a Karnuan officer if they recovered a uniform and scroll from the commander's tent in the prison camp.)

Jafari/Gavara knows the truth about the invasion in Dunkarga and intends to inform her dark master about this development at the next opportunity. She is smart enough to realize, though, that these refugees might be useful in gaining access to the Karnuan portal. For now, she (in her male disguise) feigns sympathy for the plight of the fleeing Dunkargans and encourages them to seek safe haven in Vinnengael.

Event Four: The Dream

One night near the end of the journey to the Karnuan portal, one of the characters experiences something highly unusual. (This character should be the same that had memories stolen by Gavara in the prison camp. Otherwise pick a character that possesses the Attuned to Magic feat or has an exceptional Wisdom ability.) Gavara waits until everyone is asleep or not paying any attention to Jafari and then communicates with her master by casting *whispers through shadows*. The chosen character is so sensitive that he picks up elements of this communication in his dreams.

Give the chosen player the handout "The Dream" found at the end of this adventure. It is up to the player to choose whether or not to share this with the rest of the group.

Locations

The road to the Karnuan portal is dry grasslands to the south, thinning into desert as it nears the portal. Hunters are only going to find small game, while foragers will have better luck in the southern regions harvesting edible plants. Water is easy enough to locate on the southern half of the road, but as grasslands give way to desert, it becomes increasingly harder to come by.

1. Healer's Hut

Approximately one-quarter of the way between the prison camp and the Karnuan portal, the group will see a small hut sitting off to itself on the side of the road.

> *Sitting only twenty yards or so off the side of the road, surrounded by high-growing grasses and weeds, is a small ramshackle hut. Though it seems out of place, a small path winds from the road to the door. A small wooden sign is posted next to the hut, weathered and faded, painted with the image of two folded hands and something written below.*

A successful Knowledge (History) or Knowledge (Religion) check at DC 15 will reveal that this hut is part of a small order of Earth mages that operate in Dunkarga, Karnu, Nimorea, and Vinnengael. Known as the Healing Hands, they are not sanctioned by any government, religious, or magical order—but tolerated because of their small numbers and the fact that they have never caused anyone trouble. The order believes that the power to heal is a gift from the gods and should be shared freely with those in need.

The sign is written in both Karna and Elder Speak. It reads:

> *May the weary find rest. May the wounded find comfort. Welcome all, children of the Earth.*

The hut is occupied by Marta, a middle-aged Vinnengaelean woman who has clung to the noble ideals of the Healing Hands since the death of her husband ten years ago. She helps anyone who comes to her to the best of her ability. She shows courage in the face of danger but will not fight back, believing that the gods will protect her soul (if not her body). She asks for donations after her services are performed, but does not demand them.

> **Marta**, Female Vinnengaelean Earth Mage 2; CR 2; Size M; HD 2d6+4; hp 9; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (Dex); Atk -2 melee (1d2-2 subdual, fist); SV Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +4; Str 7, Dex 9, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 11. Feats: Great Fortitude, Second Wind. Skills: Alchemy +3, Diplomacy +4, Heal +6, Knowledge (Arcana) +5, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Spellcraft +5. Languages: Elder Speak (native, literate), Karna (literate).
>
> **Earth Spells, Intimate Knowledge**: *Pillar of earth (11), gentle touch (12), healer's touch (17).* **Quick Reference**: *Cushion (12), sense earth magic (24), chirurgeon's touch (34).* **Full Reference**: *Detoxify poison (53), Touch of the divine (70).*

There is very little of value in the hut, save for a small bag of coins hidden under Marta's bed. The bag contains 17 conents and 12 argents.

2. Bridge Ambush

A pair of trolls have taken up residence near a bridge over a dry gorge. They never reveal their presence to Karnuan soldiers who cross (instead taking great pains to hide themselves) but will attack small or undefended groups. The bridge is located roughly three-quarters of the way between the prison camp and the Karnuan portal.

> *Looking ahead on the road, you see that you must cross a bridge that stretches over a dry gorge. The bridge is stone, large and well constructed. It was designed by the Karnuans to carry troops and equipment with ease, shaped and strengthened by powerful Earth mages. Even wagons could cross, provided they went single file.*

The stone bridge is 75 feet long. Characters who Listen might be able to hear the trolls under the bridge (DC 20). Anyone who looks under the bridge must make an opposed Search check against the trolls' Hide rolls (see below). Once the party (or the caravan, if the group is traveling with the Dunkargan refugees) is halfway across the bridge, the two trolls crawl out from underneath the bridge. One blocks each end of the bridge, one wielding a large club while the other sports a battleaxe.

> *Ahead of you, something large crawls out from underneath the bridge and stands up, revealing two ugly heads sitting atop a bloated body covered with brown, mottled flesh. It is holding a crude but large battleaxe easily in one hand, both heads grinning wickedly.*

Characters who have never encountered trolls before can identify them with a Knowledge (Arcana) skill check (DC 10). As the troll speaks (in crude Karna), its two heads take turns in speaking,

sometimes one head stopping in the middle of a sentence and the other begins where it left off.

The troll's heads begin talking in Karna, sometimes at the same time, sometime switching between them. "Little men, all your life are belong to us. You not survive unless you give Gorok silver and food. If you not, Gorok kill you all!" He raises his axe with one hand and holds out an open palm with the other.

Even if the group agrees and turns over food and treasure to the troll, he will then demand two slaves (preferably women). Only with food, money, and slaves will Gorok be appeased. If at any time negotiations begin to falter, both Gorok and his brother attack.

Trolls (2): CR 1; Size M; HD 2d8+6; hp 13, 20; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +5 melee (1d8+3 battleaxe or 1d6+3 club); SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 7, Cha 10. Feats: Multiattack. Skills: Hide +6, Intimidate +4, Listen +2, Spot +3. Detailed in *Sovereign Stone Campaign Sourcebook*, page 187.

If defeated, someone may be able to climb under the bridge to find the trolls' hiding spot (DC 15). The trolls have several burlap sacks. One contains rotting meat, another has 42 argents, while another has several ordinary weapons (a longsword, a scimitar, and two daggers).

3. The Portal

Signposts begin to indicate to the group that they are nearing the end of their journey. They can also easily note treads of many wagon wheels and the hoof prints of many horses in the road. Any character with the Track feat can make a Wilderness Lore check (DC 10) to determine that there was a large movement of troops and supply wagons traveling north along the road. The tracks were made within the last two days. (These were reinforcements to be sent through the portal to fight in the land campaign against the orks in southern Vinnengael. A disastrous battle was fought recently near the site of the Portal itself.)

As you approach the site of the Karnuan portal, you note a sign written in all the languages of the realm. It reads: "By order of the Caliph Krana 'Dhur, all peaceful business may travel under the protection of Karnu. All travelers must pay a toll. All merchants must pay a tax." Beyond the sign, you cannot make out the magical gateway itself for all of the defensive structures that have been built nearby.

Two gatehouses stand to either side, under an archway that extends over the portal nearly 25 feet. You see the watchtowers have arrow slits in them and some sort of mechanism has been constructed to collapse the archway and block the entrance to the portal under a half-ton of rubble. A barracks stands only 150 yards away, possibly filled with Karnuan soldiers ready to defend their prized magical gate.

The entrance to the portal itself, however, looks somehow understaffed. Two soldiers, assisted by a scribe, are arguing with a group of merchants who apparently wish to bring their wagon of goods through to New Vinnengael. Six guards stand at attention, three standing on each side of the walkway that leads to the inspection point. Ahead of you is a half-dozen other groups, each ready to give their own reason to enter the Portal and magically travel countless miles to Vinnengael.

Individual passage through the portal only costs 2 argents per person, plus 1 argent for each mount or pack animal that is to go through the portal. Merchant caravans are charged one-tenth of whatever goods and coins they are taking with them, plus the individual fee for each person and mount traveling in their caravan.

The Karnuans at the portal are understaffed, and nervous. Normally there are 200 troops garrisoned near the portal, but recent events have thinned their ranks. The commanding officer of this post left two days ago with a large number of troops to fight a battle with a rogue group of orks who managed to enter Karnuan-controlled Vinnengael and threaten the portal itself. Sergeant Karim Huzzad at the gate has been left in command without clear orders. He knows to allow those with proper papers or those with legitimate business on the other side of the Portal should be let through. The sergeant himself is unimaginative—preferring to follow orders rather than give them—and dislikes having to creatively interpret such definitions. Clever players can use good role-playing to take advantage of the sergeant's nature.

It is possible that the heroes gained a uniform and the proper paperwork from the commander's tent in the prison camp. If the character wearing the uniform appears to be Karnuan and acts appropri-

ately, he will be accepted. Unless the character concocts a completely outrageous lie, Sergeant Karim accepts the scroll and allows the group through the portal. If the heroes try to blend in with the refugees, the sergeant will interview everyone. (Dunkargan merchants are allowed through the portal, but are not well treated by the Karnuans.) Clever and convincing role-playing will be most persuasive. Karim is an unimaginative soldier, but possesses both bravery and integrity. He will respond to either threats or bribes by placing the heroes under arrest. In this case, or if the group decides to fight its way through the gate, run the battle as detailed below.

Karim will pull a rope, ringing a bell to alert the off-duty soldiers in the barracks. He will then draw his sword and attack. At the same time, two of the soldiers will run for the watchtowers and seal themselves inside. They will take up light crossbows inside and fire through the arrow slits (receiving a +10 AC bonus and +4 to Reflex saves for 9/10th cover). It will require a Strength check (DC 23) to bash down the watchtower doors. (Multiple heroes using a ram can combine their Strength bonuses, with the lead character making the roll.) After four rounds, six more soldiers arrive from the barracks, then ten more will arrive three rounds after that. These groups will pursue the party into the portal.

Karim: CR 2; Size M; HD 2d8+2; hp 13; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (Chainmail); Atk +5 melee (1d8+2 crit 19-20/x2, short sword); SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10. Feats: Close-order fighting, dodge, weapon focus (longsword). Skills: Intimidate +4, Search +5, Spot +3, Swim +4.

Soldiers (4): CR 1; Size M; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (Chain Shirt); Atk +3 melee (1d8+1 crit 19-20/x2, longsword); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8. Feats: Close-order fighting, power attack, weapon focus (longsword). Skills: Intimidate +4, Search +4, Spot +3, Swim +4.

Crossbowmen (2): CR 1; Size M; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (Chain Shirt); Atk +2 melee (1d6+1 crit 19-20/x2, short sword) or +1 ranged (1d8 crit 19-20/x2, light crossbow); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8. Feats: Close-order fighting, point blank shot, weapon focus (light crossbow). Skills: Intimidate +4, Search +4, Spot +3, Swim +4.

The magical portal does not appear too remarkable, though its surface has a shimmering, liquid quality. Once inside, you see only a vast tunnel of perfectly smooth, grey rock that stretches into the distance. The temperature is neither cold nor hot. You expect your voices to echo inside, but they do not.

The journey through the portal is an easy one (provided they are not pursued by Karnuan soldiers). It only takes three hours to travel to reach the end, though by land the journey is over 2,000 miles. They are now in Vinnengaelean lands controlled by the Karnuans.

VINNENGAEL

Though the party has traveled thousands of miles in a matter of hours, they are still in Karnuan-controlled territory. If their identity as escaped prisoners is discovered they will be subdued and placed back into custody.

POSSIBLE ENCOUNTERS

While there are no random encounters, the following creatures might be met on the road, if the referee needs them to challenge the party during their journey:

A small pack of wolves (2d4) might stalk the party in the open wilderness—though they will retreat if they lose several members.

While walking through an open field, someone in the party may stumble into a kitepsider's web.

In the hills, a stray krikner may decide to play pranks on members of the party.

EVENTS

The party is nearing the end of the adventure once they have reached Vinnengael. Gavara (still disguised as the Nimorean, Jafari) has been attempting to communicate with her master, who has already infliltrated the home of Lord Gaelin, and awaits the arrival of Gwion in order to discover the identity of the spy in his own ranks.

Event One: The Dreamer Awakens

This event occurs for the character that experienced the dream. Once again his sleep is troubled. Describe the following:

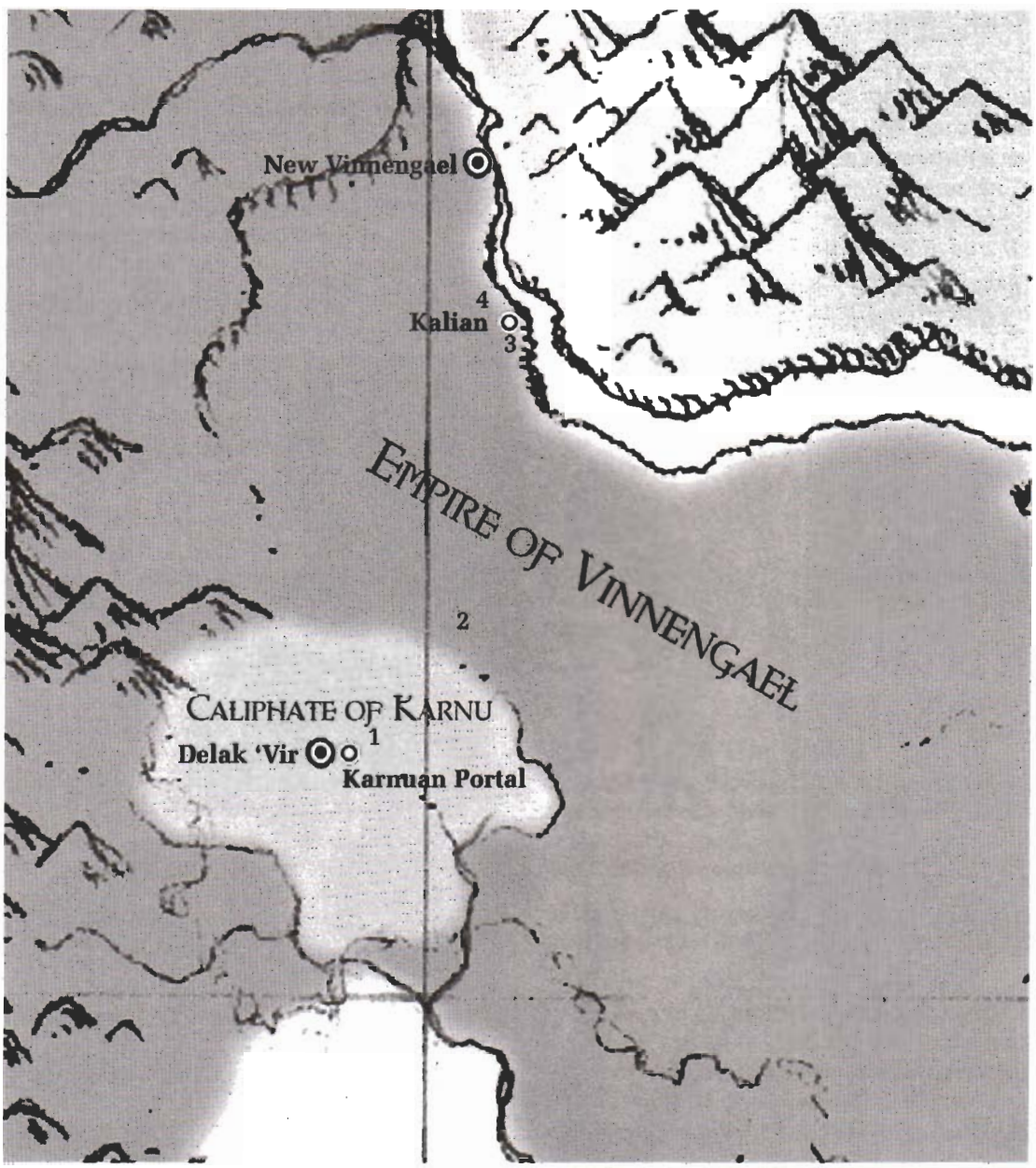
You wake with a start as an unnatural feeling of cold runs up and down your spine. It is as if some icy breeze is blowing toward you from across camp. As you become more wakeful, you hear a voice speaking

softly. You can't yet make out the words, but each sound causes the hairs to stand up on your neck.

If the hero chooses to investigate, describe the following (allow players to act):

As you approach the speaker, you can hear that it is your Nimorean friend, Jafari. You see him kneeling with his head bowed as he is speaking. He does not seem to hear you. "Master," he softly intones. "When shall I kill these wretched refugees? I need only spare the elf." He seems to be addressing a patch of deep shadow next to a small tree. If his words did not amaze you enough, as he continues speaking his voice changes pitch to something more feminine. It sounds like a woman's voice... speaking the elder tongue with a distinctly Dunkargan accent. As you observe, Jafari's appearance fades like a pale reflection in a window. Beneath the Nimorean's image is a woman with dark hair and delicate features—but wearing armor of black iron

EMPIRE OF VINNENGAEL



bearing runes of death and pain. The woman continues to speak into the shadows.

"Lord Azael, you have received my report. I await your command."

Somehow the darkness seems to shift and fold in on itself and then begins to speak in a soft, echoing whisper. "You have done well, Gavara, and your reward waits for you. A group of my followers, trained in dark magic, will meet outside of New Vinnengael in four days time. They are instructed to enter the city. Somewhere within is the key, the answer to location of the Black Gem—which is vital to our plans."

"In the meantime, I await the message. The amulet the elf holds contains the identity of the traitor in our ranks—but we must wait for him to unlock it for us. I await you in Lord Gaelin's manor. As long as the dark light burns none will see things as they truly are. When the message is delivered, everyone present must die."

The Dunkargan woman bows her head even more deeply. "Thank you, Lord Azael. I serve only you."

The darkness roils and snaps back. "We serve a greater master, Gavara, Prince Dag—" Suddenly the words are cut off and an even greater blast of cold washes over you in your hiding spot. You feel eyes watching you.

The darkness explodes with anger. "Fool! You have been observed!" Whatever dark presence was there suddenly winks out of existence.

The woman shrieks in outrage and spins in your direction.

Gwion has been watching this exchange, and acts to defend his comrade. Gavara, meanwhile, casts *death touch* and holds it—intending to strike the character.

"No!" The elf-warrior Gwion springs from out of nowhere and throws himself between you and the Void sorceress. The magical energy strikes his upraised sword arm. The blade falls to the ground as



Gwion's arm withers and blackens. Within moments the only thing left of his arm are ashes blowing in the night breeze and a gruesome stump near the warrior's shoulder.

Sleeping characters wake automatically by the screams. Gavara attempts to battle the party single-handedly, though if she takes more than half of her hit points in damage she will attempt to cast *shadow walk*. Gwion is at 0 hit points and disabled. (He can only take partial actions. If he attempts anything strenuous he will collapse and be at –1 hit points.) Gavara's statistics are found at the end of the adventure.

Gavara will try to escape. If she succeeds, they will encounter her again. If defeat is certain, she will use her last action to kill herself with the *dagger of the doppelganger*. If the party keeps track of her corpse, they will find it missing the next night. The suicide with the Void dagger has turned her into a dark and undead creature, a Voidwight (see New Creatures.) Gavara has little in the way of possessions: she wears the blacksteel armor, the *dagger of the doppelganger*, an ordinary short sword, and 45 argents in a belt pouch.

Gwion will recover but is permanently weakened. His Constitution ability is reduced by 2 points by the loss of his arm. He is grateful for any healing but now insists that the group make haste to warn Lord Gaelin of the assassination plot and deliver the message. Gwion speculates that he never even met the true Jafari, who was murdered simply so that Gavara could gain the elf's trust.

The refugees, if they are with the party, wake and scatter into the night at the sound of combat and magic, but return once things get back to normal.

If the character does not investigate, then Gwion is the only one who hears the information. The heroes are wakened by an angry scream, and may arrive in time to see Gwion take the full brunt of Gavara's Void magic—which disintegrates him. The Void witch then turns upon the heroes, battling them as above. Gwion is only a pile of ashes; his amulet (and all of his other equipment) remains intact.

Event Two: Lord of Courage

Lord Gaelin Stewick has been a bit lonely and rather bored, with his wife and children away from home as guests of cousins in New Vinnengael. He is rather excited to receive visitors, and decides to have them dine with him.

Once the party reaches the Dominion Lord's manor, they are escorted to the sitting room and offered wine by the wizened old butler. The group is left to its own devices for some time. The butler returns to escort them to the dining hall (described in Locations, below) where they will meet the baron.

Like his home, the Dominion Lord of Courage is not quite what you expected. He appears to be approaching middle age, with his soft brown hair and beard being flecked with grey. He is bald and appears somewhat overweight; he wears a simple house robe and his only adornment is an amulet that hangs around his neck.

The baron stands and smiles warmly. The dining hall has six guards standing at attention and is well-lit by torches hanging by sconces on the wall. The butler sees to his master's needs, but is waved away by the Dominion Lord. "Welcome, friends. I understand that the road has been unkind to you. I'm truly sorry for that, but in my home you have nothing to fear." His words wash over you like warm water and somehow you feel better for hearing them. "Please, tell me your story."

If Gwion is still with the group, he smiles weakly and gestures for the group to go first. Have the group roleplay this out to the fullest, giving as much or as little detail about their imprisonment, escape, and subsequent adventures as they wish. When they are done, Gwion (if present) bows before the Dominion Lord and speaks: "My lord, this amulet contains a message that I was instructed to give you by the Shield himself. My mission would have failed if it were not for those in my company, who have risked much for little reward to aid me. I will activate the amulet's magic at your request."

Lord Gaelin nods gravely and gestures for Gwion to begin. The next event begins immediately.

Event Three: The Vrykyl

Whether the heroes wish to warn Lord Gaelin of the possible assassination plot or allow Gwion to activate the magic of the amulet, one of the heroes may notice something crucial.

Whichever character had the dream sequence notices the following.

Even during important matters such as this, your attention is drawn away. Something does not feel right in this room. You look first to the wrinkled old servant then to the armored guards who stand at attention. A slight chill works its way up your spine. You look again, unable to listen to

the conversation at hand and as your eye wanders it fixes upon one of the torches hanging on the wall. Among the normal yellow and orange flames you see black and purple: a bizarre aura hangs about this light—staring at it only makes your head hurt. You shudder as if suddenly chilled.

The *black flame* torch (see New Spells) is what is keeping the illusion active in this room. The guards have been murdered and animated as zombies—only illusion gives them the appearance of life. The old butler is actually the disguised vrykyl Azael (who murdered the old man himself). If the torch is put out (which can be done normally), the illusion is instantly shattered. The vrykyl can change his appearance by the power of his own magic, but will not care at this point.

If Gavara escaped in an earlier scene, she will be found here alive. If she was killed but her body not destroyed, she will be here in the form of a Voidwight (see New Monsters). In either case, she is disguised as one of the guards.

If the torch is extinguished, describe the following:

When the torch goes dark, you all feel as if ice-cold water was thrown over you. The dining hall and your host remain unchanged, but suddenly you see that the armed guards standing in attendance are not loyal men-at-arms, but rotting corpses standing in armor. They stare ahead sightlessly, the stench of death about them.

Lord Gaelin leaps out of seat. "Tamaros! *What is going on here?" He gestures to his butler. "Jarvis, get back."*

"You fool..." the old man hisses. As you watch, inky blackness pours from the old man's skin and covers him—within seconds taking shape as dark and frightening armor.

The dark figure speaks a single, harsh word and a wave of dark energy engulfs the room. Your bowels seem like icy water and you feel a debilitating, paralyzing fear emanating from the figure in black armor. You've heard tales of these beings in the darkest legends of Vinnengael; armored, dark servants of the Void—vampiric creatures known only as "vrykyl."

Everyone in the party might be affected by the vrykyl's frightful presence. They must all roll a Will saving throw (DC 17) or become shaken. (See Lord Azael's description in **Non-Player Characters**.) Allow the group to declare their actions.

Lord Gaelin stands and holds the amulet around his neck. "You have nothing to fear from this creature of darkness!" As he speaks, his skin takes on a silvery sheen, molding to form the gleaming armor of a Dominion Lord. "Face me, fiend!" he shouts to the vrykyl.

Lord Gaelin uses his spell-like ability, *the earth's resolve*, which allows the party to again make their saving throw against the vrykyl's presence—this time with a +6 modifier.

"Kill them!" the vrykyl shrieks as it draws a black sword and dives toward Lord Gaelin, who parries with a silver blade. The undead guards take a step toward you in unison, and draw their swords.

Lord Gaelin and the vrykyl Azael immediately battle each other. (For dramatic purposes, you may allow the players to make initiative and attack rolls for the Dominion Lord.) They are both detailed in **Non-Player Characters**. The zombie guards attack the party relentlessly. Gavara will do everything in her power to kill the party, focusing first on spellcasters then dispatching warriors. After the first round of combat, a shadeling (see New Monsters) Azael had summoned earlier emerges from the shadows and attempts to flank a dangerous character (either a spellcaster or a warrior).

Shadeling: CR 2; Medium Elemental (Void); HD 3d8+9 (25); Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15; Atk 2 claws +4; Dmg 1d4+1 and 1d4 cold; SQ Elemental, damaged by direct sunlight; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 5. Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning. Not subject to critical hits and cannot be flanked. Darkvision 80 ft. A shadeling suffers 1d4 points of burn damage every round it is exposed to direct sunlight (or a magically generated equivalent).

Gavara, Voidwight: CR 3; Medium Undead; HD 4d12+4; hp 32; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18* (+8 *Blacksteel Half-Plate*); Atk Slam +2 melee, 1d6+1 damage; SA Spells; SB +4* Void; SQ undead; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 6; Feat-Toughness. **Void Spells, Intimate Knowledge**: *Despair (14), shadow walk (16), death touch (26).* **Quick Reference**: *Wilt (8), I am as you are (10), repel the living (18), summon's Void's*

creatures (54). Note: These statistics assume Gavara still has both the *blacksteel armor* and the *dagger of the doppelganger.*

Zombies (5): CR 1/2; Medium Undead; HD 2d12+3; hp 13, 21; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (-1 Dex, +2 natural, +4 chain shirt); Atk Slam +2 melee, 1d6+1 damage; SQ undead, partial actions only ; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1; Feat-Toughness. Zombies may only perform partial actions during a round.

Azael will continue to battle Gaelin while the party is occupied, hoping to defeat the Dominion Lord in combat. Note the party gains the benefit of Lord Gaelin's ability to inspire courage. Azael does not plan to risk himself in this battle. If Gaelin is slain, Azael will depart—furious that his plans have been foiled but wanting to deal with the party later, on his own terms. If the party defeats his minions before he can dispatch the Lord of Courage, he will flee the scene (probably making use of a *shadow walk* spell). In either case, Azael will abandon Gavara to her fate.

Locations

The southern half of the Vinnengaelean Empire is an expanse of rolling hills, fertile farmland, and scattered forests. Survival in this region is far easier, and (once outside of the annexed lands) the Vinnengaelean people are generally more open and tolerant than the Karnuans.

1. The Karnuan Portal

This is the first thing the group sees upon stepping through the other side of the portal.

> *Stepping out of the portal is disorienting for a moment, but you quickly compose yourselves and see that the Karnuans built a structure on this side nearly identical to the one you encountered in Karnu. Next to the gate, six Karnuan soldiers stand at attention—but none can hide the deep shadows under their eyes or the look of worry on their faces. None of them speak as you emerge.*

The guards on this end are worried about the recent skirmish with the orks near the portal and hope to receive reinforcements soon. They do not engage the heroes in conversation unless they are spoken to first, following standard procedure to accept the orders and judgement of their colleagues on the other side of the portal. If the group does ask the guards what is going on, they will explain that a suicide squad of orks managed to sneak through Vinnengael-controlled territory and sneak into the annexed Karnuan lands from the north. Their goal was an attack on the Karnuan portal itself. The Karnuans were victorious and the orks all slain or taken prisoner, but now some are worried that this was only a diversionary tactic.

If for any reason the heroes decide to engage this group in combat, run it almost exactly like the previous group—using the same statistics.

The party has left the deserts of Karnu for the more lush lands of the Empire of Vinnengael. If the refugees are with the group, they will begin cheering up. Reaching Vinnengael was their most important goal and they are truly grateful to the heroes for their help.

2. Battlefield

Have everyone in the party make a Spot check (DC 15). Any who are successful can see carrion birds in the distance circling and diving. As they get closer, the stench of rot and decay becomes more apparent. In any case, describe the following as the heroes continue north.

> *Following the road, you have walked into the sight of a recent battle—possibly a day or so old. Orks fought Karnuans and the corpses of both litter the ground. The stench of death is overpowering and the raucous calls of carrion-birds continually wears on your nerves. Looters have apparently come and gone, for the corpses appear to have little in the way of money or useful equipment.*
>
> *The only unusual discovery you make is that some corpses have white, pulsating, mucous-covered pods growing from the bodies, spilling out of their death-wounds and quivering. The smell of these corpses is somehow even worse than the rest of the battlefield.*

Any character who makes a Knowledge (Arcana) check (DC 12) will realize that these growths are the spawning pods of hobgoblins—larvae that will soon create a disgusting creature that must consume living flesh in order to replenish itself. This is the group's only warning of the danger lurking around the battlefield.

A group of hobgoblins has already matured. They roam the battlefield searching for living flesh so that they may feast and sustain themselves for one more day.

A few dozen yards ahead, a group of feasting carrion-birds suddenly take wing. You can see a number of humanoid shapes approaching. At first you think these might be looters, but as they shamble closer you realize that these black-eyed, ambulating corpses could only be hobgoblins. They stumble forward, intent on eating your living flesh!

Hobgoblins (6): CR 1/2; Size M; HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, 2 claws) and -3 melee (1d4+1, bite); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 15, Int 4, Wis 8, Cha 3. Skills: Hide +4, Spot +3. Hobgoblins will focus their attacks on anyone who is tainted by Void or carries a Void magical item.

If the heroes are traveling with the Dunkargan refugees, add three more hobgoblins to the encounter who will attack the refugees at random. Gwion and Jafari fight alongside the heroes, although the group may notice that the hobgoblins seem to be focusing their attacks on Jafari. (This is due to Gavara's strong Void-taint, which makes her flesh more appealing.)

The hobgoblins aren't the only danger of remaining on the battlefield. The bloated corpses can spread disease. If the heroes physically touch any of the corpses (searching for treasure), have each hero make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 12) to avoid contracting corpse fever, a disease with an incubation of 1d4 days and causes 1d4 points of Strength damage.

3. Kalian

Kalian is a small town (around 850 people) that pre-dates the founding of New Vinnengael. Though it sees many more visitors in modern times than it ever did in the past, it has remained a small town that seems to have no interest in growing. Everyone interested in pursuing such opportunities generally moves to New Vinnengael.

The town is under the protection of the Stewick Barony. The baron appoints a town mayor (currently Rolf Smithson, Noble 2), who in turn oversees a town council that represents the interests of various groups and businesses.

Kalian has all of the typical features of a town its size. Characters may purchase any equipment available in a town (*Sovereign Stone Campaign Sourcebook*, Chapter Five). All merchants and craftsmen are 1st level Commoners or Experts (unless otherwise listed). It is protected by the town Watch (10 1st level Commoners, 6 1st level Soldiers) under the leadership of Bael (Noble



1/Soldier 1). Their numbers can be supplemented by the retainers of the Stewick Barony (12 1st level Soldiers). The laws here are the same as all of Vinnengael. Minor crimes are dealt with by the town magistrate (Haydn, 2nd level Expert), with serious crimes administered by a representative from New Vinnengael.

Feel free to develop Kalian if the party decides to explore the town. While the most important features are mentioned below, there are many local family homes and several other businesses. The most important location in the adventure is Stewick Manor (Area 4, below), which is located just outside of town.

A. The Brick



The only inn and tavern in Kalin is a large, rectangular, and singularly unattractive building that looks like its name. It is run by a rotund widow named Marge (Commoner 1, hp 3) who inherited the business from her late husband Trevor ("the gods keep 'is soul"). She tells the heroes that she's booked up on private rooms due to the trading season, but she has space in the Common Room for only five copper conents a night!

Marge is a huge woman with a pinched and lemony face; her stringy brown hair is usually worn in a pony tail. She alternates between insulting her dead husband and praising his memory—but never goes more than a few sentences without mentioning his name. Marge keeps a club under the bar, which she is not afraid to use on those who get unruly in "My poor dead 'usband's inn."

If asked about Baron Stewick, she'll stiffen up and mutter something about "not havin' anything to say if it's not nice." (Apparently she is jealous of Lady Stewick, who thinks the baroness puts on airs about town.)

The Inn is quiet and virtually empty during the day, but comes alive at night when most of the local men come to sample The Brick's ale, which is rather mediocre. While the locals get lively, fights rarely break out and Marge bans any instigators for a week after shaking them down for money to pay for any damages.

If the group comes into the tavern area during the evening, then the local drunk and bully—a huge brute named Kennith, will start a verbal argument with one of the heroes. Unless the character acquiesces and admits some imaginary wrongdoing to everyone in the inn, the situation will continue to escalate with Kennith getting red-faced, wide-eyed, and angry. The moment the abused character so much as raises his fists or reaches for a weapon, Kennith will grab a piece of furniture and hurl it at the character!

Kennith (Commoner 2): CR 1; Size M; HD 2d4+4; hp 10; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +4 melee (1d3+2 subdual, crit x2, unarmed strike); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -2; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 7, Cha 9. Feats: Improvised Weapon. Skills: Craft (Carpentry) +0, Intimidate +0, Search +0, Spot -1, Swim +4.

Though constantly teased, Kennith is actually well liked by most of the townsfolk. The townsfolk won't take kindly to a character that does more than give Kennith a well-deserved thrashing.

B. Mikael's Goods

A dark haired, dark-eyed man of possibly Dunkargan or Karnuan descent runs a dry goods shop. (He'll admit to no such thing, however, claiming his family moved from Old Vinnengael during the reign of King Tamaros.) Mikael, owner and operator of the shop, is both friendly and helpful to shoppers. Any Standard Goods available in Villages and Towns are available here at normal prices.

Mikael (Rogue 1, Dex 13, hp 5) will make several gestures while speaking and put a few leading phrases into his conversation. Any rogue in the party can make an Innuendo check (DC 12) to realize that he is telling them that he is actually a local fence and that other merchandise can be gained

privately. Another character can make an Innuendo or Sense Motive check (DC 20) to realize that Mikael is acting strange, otherwise he will be oblivious.

Both standard thieves tools and masterwork thieves tools can be discretely purchased here for the prices listed in the Sovereign Stone Campaign Sourcebook. Mikael will also purchase "hot" items off of a rogue character for 50% of their street value. Referees are free to use Mikael's illegal goods to give the party a chance to collect equipment or items helpful to their success.

C. Town Watch

A two-story, square building houses the Kalian town watch. This building rarely has anyone inside except the Armsman, Bael (Noble 1/Soldier 1, hp 7). While the Watchmen are allowed to pursue their normal lives and jobs, Bael keeps them trained with regular drills and can be quickly called by ringing the iron bell which stands in front of the Watch barracks.

If the group decides to speak with Bael, they will find themselves constantly diverted from their intended subject by stories of Bael's old army days. The old gentleman just loves a new audience that hasn't heard his material, and will sternly rebuff anyone who interrupts him. Seeded within these stories are references to a battle with dwarves in which Baron Stewick's older brother was killed, and the future Lord of Courage tried to run away.

D. Clothier

A middle-aged, married couple, Lawrence (Commoner 1, hp 4) and Valice (Expert 1, hp 3) run a shop to see to the town's clothing needs. Valice is a talented seamstress while Lawrence is an adequate cobbler and salesman. Their children moved long ago to the village of Tethyst, to the west, and they are always eager of news from that part of Vinnengael. Any clothing item available in a Village or Town can be purchased here for normal prices—though anyone who spends time speaking and befriending the couple will but cut a 10% discount.

Lawrence and his wife are very fond of the Stewicks, who put in special orders for their family's clothes and shoe needs. ("The young Stewick, Master Gavin, is often in need of new shoes.") They are friends with the family butler, an old man named Jarvis.

E. Smithy

The blacksmith's shop is small, and the forge-fire sometimes goes for a week without being lit. Evar (Expert 2, hp 6) came to town convinced he could make a good living here—but now realizes why the old blacksmith left. Evar's passion is manufacturing weapons and precision tools, but he does light repair work and makes mostly horseshoes and nails. He wants to leave town, but realizes if he goes to New Vinnengael he will be forced to apprentice under another Guild blacksmith before being allowed to set up his own shop—a demeaning role he does not plan to take if he can help it!

Evar's shop contains all Simple and Martial weapons that are normally available in a Village or Town. His prices are currently 25% cheaper than normal, out of sheer desperation. If asked about the local Dominion Lord, he is told that Baron Stewick has "a beauty of a sword." The baron had Evar sharpen and repair it recently—and the Lord of Courage's sword was the most beautiful thing that Evar had ever laid eyes upon.

F. Butcher's Shop

A man named Gregor (Expert 2, hp 5) runs the local butcher's shop, which will always have smoked, dried, and salted meat—and will also occasionally have fresh cuts. Mutton is the primary fare here, although rarely Gregor will have cuts of beef, strings of sausages, or something else. Depending on the size and amount of meat purchased, prices range from 3 to 15 copper conents.

Gregor is a strange man—very lean and wiry with overly-large hands and eyes that seem too big for his head. His mannerisms are also very off-putting; he is quiet, but will interrupt those speaking with his own short thoughts. He begins almost every sentence with the word "Well..." He doesn't much care for the Baron or his family, but doesn't have much to say about them (or any other subject).

G. Mageware Shop

The temple priests and educated scholars consider "hedge wizard" to be a derogatory term, but Winston (Earth Mage 2, hp 8) somehow wears it with pride. His small shop is a chaotic jumble of the useless and the unusual. Among the many non-magical (and completely worthless) potions and amulets, he does possess a few truly enchanted objects. One is a lucky rabbit's foot which functions exactly like a Pecwae Turquoise Pendant (see *Codex Mysterium*, Chapter Seven)—granting a +1 luck bonus to AC and Fortitude saving throws. He also has several potions of gentle touch. Winston has a poor understanding of the market value of his items, and can be manipulated by a skilled negotiator. Winston is highly interested in acquiring magical objects or elemental essences of quality. He will pay up to 50 silver argents for a Fine Essence or 250 argents for an Exceptional Essence.

Winston is a collector and a pack-rat. He is always looking for a new and interesting item to add to his collection of mostly worthless junk. He is a middle-aged man with a large gut and a chest-length salt-and-pepper beard. Winston has a habit of motioning dramatically with his hands when he is talking; the more excited he is about the subject, the more animated his motions become. Any questions about Lord Gaelin or Dominion Lords in general will launch a discussion on the possible magical powers possessed by the Sovereign Stone, theories as to its current location, and more.

4. Stewick Manor

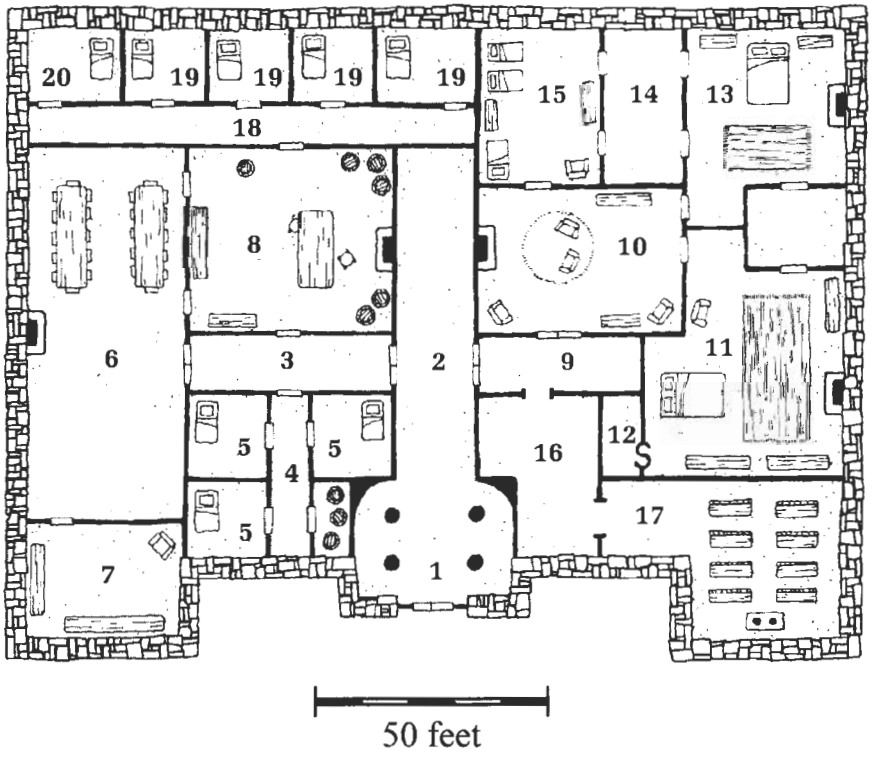
Stewick Manor is the official seat of the barony and was originally built during the reign of King Angmar (father of Tamaros). The Stewicks have protected the small town of Kalian and has only had to call upon the crown's protection twice in the last three centuries. (Both of the incidents involved a tribe of dwarves who crossed over from Grak.)

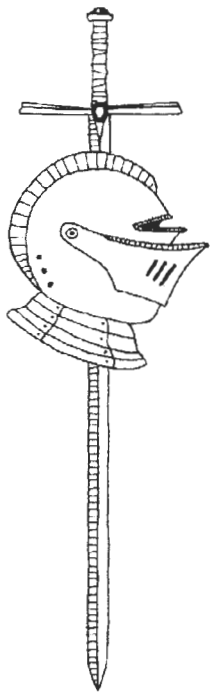
When the party comes to the manor, describe the following.

The manor house of Lord Gaelin, Dominion Lord of Courage, is neither as large nor as opulent as you might have imagined. It is stately and elegant, obviously passed along through a wealthy family for generations, but does not suggest the grandeur you always pictured for a Dominion Lord. The main house is only one story, with a small chapel built into the structure on the southeast corner. Two sentries stand at the wrought-iron gate, which stands between you and the walkway leading up to the manor. Both stand motionless, staring straight ahead as you approach. As you draw near, one turns and looks at you blankly. "Who are you and what is your business with Lord Gaelin?"

The sentries will permit them in, regardless of their explanation. A wizened butler will greet them at the door to the manor and ask them inside and politely inquire if they wish for refreshment. They may retire to the sitting room if they so wish,

STEWICK MANOR





but if they insist that their business is urgent, the butler leaves to inform his master.

The sentries, like all of the other servants in the household, are actually zombies granted the illusion of life by the vrykyl's magic. Azael has murdered the butler and assumed his form.

> **Zombies (2):** CR 1/2; Medium Undead; HD 2d12+3; hp 15 each; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (-1 Dex, +2 natural, +4 chain shirt); Atk Slam +2 melee, 1d6+1 damage; SQ undead, partial actions only ; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1; Feat-Toughness. Zombies may only perform partial actions during a round.

Refer to **Event Two: Lord of Courage** for the party's initial encounter with the Dominion Lord of Courage. If the group wishes to explore the manor, refer to the map and descriptions below.

1. Foyer

The entrance to the baron's home is marked by four pillars, the two on the left ornately sculpted to resemble dragons and the two on the right resemble griffons. During the day two men-at-arms stand at attention (actually disguised zombies during the events of this adventure).

> **Zombies (2):** CR 1/2; Medium Undead; HD 2d12+3; hp 13, 18; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (-1 Dex, +2 natural, +4 chain shirt); Atk Slam +2 melee, 1d6+1 damage; SQ undead, partial actions only ; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1; Feat-Toughness. Zombies may only perform partial actions during a round.

2. Main Hall

The hallway runs north and south along Stewick manor. It has a stone floor with faded blue carpet that runs down the center. In addition to the double doors leading to the east and west hallways, there are a number of hanging tapestries, each depicting great events in the Stewick family. The newest, hanging on the northeast section of the hall, pictures Lord Gaelin's transfiguration ceremony in which he was dubbed "Lord of Courage."

3. West Hall

This hall is noted only by the portraits of Lord Gaelin's parents and grandparents. Though respected for their courage and combat prowess, none of the previous barons of Stewick ever became Dominion Lords.

4. Guest Hall

This small hallway leads to the manor's guest quarters. The storage closet to the southwest contains barrels of ale, bottled wine, and cobwebs. Lord Gaelin's young daughter lost a bracelet while playing in the storage closet over six months ago. The interwoven silver can easily fetch 30 argents or more in a town or city.

5. Guest Rooms

These rooms are designated for guests of the barony. They are tastefully decorated and marked by large and comfortable beds.

6. Dining Hall

The dining hall is the largest single room in Stewick Manor, where barons of generations past would throw fantastic feasts. Now there are only two long oak tables in the northern half of the room (though still large enough to seat dozens of people). A large fireplace sits on the west wall and the servants keep a fire going here constantly in the fall and winter.

7. Kitchen

The kitchen is unremarkable, containing the usual pots and pans. There is a sunken firepit in the northeast corner of the room, with a swinging chain that can be used to hang a large cauldron over the fire.

During most of the day the cook is found here. He is one of the few original inhabitants of Stewick manor still alive. Azael realized that the cook was necessary to keep up pretenses if Lord Gaelin was to be caught by surprise. Like Gaelin, the *black flame* keeps him totally unaware of what has happened.

8. Informal Sitting Room

This is a place traditionally reserved for the family and close friends. They come in after dinner for games, conversation, and a few drinks. The atmosphere is warm and inviting, and the fireplace keeps the room quite cosy even during the coldest winter. There is a wooden table large enough to seat ten people and a number of bearskin rugs. This room also stores extra barrels of ale and wine.

9. East Hall

This hall is noted only by the portraits of Lord Gaelin, his wife, and two children. The children's paintings were finished two years ago, when Gavin was eight and Eliza was six. There is no door leading south, but rather an archway carved out of the stone wall itself (shaped by Earth mages). A pair of double doors on the north wall leads to the formal sitting room.

10. Formal Sitting Room

This room is used for most guests and others who are not personally intimate with the baron and his family. It has a warm fireplace, a circular, dingy white fur rug (said to be from a massive white bear killed in the north by one of Gaelin's ancestors). There are several couches and tables here.

When guests are here, there are usually 1-2 servants on hand to see to their needs—always keeping a fresh bottle of wine or brandy available.

11. Lord Gaelin's Bedroom

The door to this room is always kept locked (DC 15 to pick, DC 21 to bash open). This is the largest bedroom in the manor. The most amazing feature is the massive black-and-white striped rug, stitched together from the hides of Nimran plains horses. The bed is huge and comfortable, with fresh linens.

The secret door on the southwest corner of the room is difficult to find (DC 20 to Spot, DC 15 for Search). It is opened by pressing on one of the stones inset in the wall. If pushed in far enough, the door will be released.

12. Treasury

This secret stash holds only some of the wealth of the Stewick barony. A small, unlocked iron box contains 100 gold orgents, but is protected by a poison needle trap: CR 2; +8 ranged; dmg 1 plus greenblood oil poison; Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 20. (The poison is DC 13, inflicting 1 point of Constitution damage intially and 1d2 points of Constitution damage secondary.)

This room also contains a suit of masterwork chain mail armor, worn by the Stewick barons for many generations. Lord Gaelin does not need this armor (having the magical protection of a Dominion Lord) but he is saving this armor for his own son, Gavin.

13. Milady's Bedroom

This is where the lady of the house sleeps. This room is tastefully decorated with a distinctly feminine touch. Most remarkable are the dozens of small statuettes of dolphins, creatures that apparently fascinate lady Stewick. Carved of rare wood, ivory, and every other possible medium—these trinkets are worth over 150 argents if sold to a collector in a city.

This room has been empty for several weeks, as Lady Stewick and the children are currently attending court in New Vinnengael.

14. School and Play Room

This room is used by Lady Stewick and the tutor to instruct the young Stewicks. The northwall has a large slate board and a small box full of chalk. There are two desks and a table (which has parchment, ink wells, and several goosefeather writing quills).

15. Children's Bedroom

This room is shared by Gavin and Eliza, the children of Lord Gaelin and his wife. Kept neat only through the efforts of the servants, there are many wooden and stuffed toys to be found. Young Gavin has many small wooden swords, shields, and miniature soldiers carved from soft wood, while Eliza has a most remarkably detailed dollhouse (worth 75 argents to a collector in a city).

16. Study

The walls of this room are lined with bookshelves, completely filled with books both old and new. Some of the books detail the history of the Stewick family—even before they were granted title and lands. Many of the books are military history from different parts of Loerem. (Lord Gaelin studies these as a hobby.) There are two large desks and one medium-sized table here. A large open arch leads into the family chapel.

A Spot check (DC 12) will reveal one book that was laid on top of a row of books. It is a history of the Stewick family before and during the fall of old Vinnengael. Anyone reading it (something that would take hours) might learn that a past Baron Stewick was once unkind to a young prince named Dagnarus.

17. Chapel

The family chapel has eight rows of benches and an altar to the gods—marked with the symbols of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. (They are shown side-by-side, as is often done to de-emphasize the absence of Void.) The eastern wall has a large stained-glass window, with a symbolical representation of the elements as part of nature.

18. Northwest Hall

This hall does not have a particular theme, though it does have several pieces of art selected by Lady Stewick. One depicts a bahk grappling with a dragon, while another shows several knights of Old Vinnengael.

19. Servant Quarters

These small rooms house the family servants. Each bedroom is decorated and arranged to the taste of its resident, though all are impeccably clean at Lady Stewick's insistence. Greed-driven characters can find 2d4 argents hidden in each room.

20. Vrykyl's Den

The northwest servant's bedroom used to be occupied by the family butler. He was recently murdered and replaced by Azael—who keeps the old man's room the same as it was to avoid suspicion.

The vrykyl has a few items hidden under the bed, however. Anyone searching will find three unused torches enchanted with *black flame* (see New Spells), 80 argents in a small leather bag, and an old volume written in Elder Speak—*The Fall of Baron Malingas*. It appears to be a history of another Vinnengaelean barony, one that eventually housed a Void cult and was destroyed by the king of Vinnengael. There are several vague margin notes about a "Black Gem."

If the group explores this room before the vrykyl reveals himself, the shadeling from Event Three will be guarding this room, hiding in a shadowy corner. It will attack anyone who attempts to search under the bed.

Shadeling: CR 2; Medium Elemental (Void); HD 3d8+9 (25); Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15; Atk 2 claws +4; Dmg 1d4+1 and 1d4 cold; SQ Elemental, damaged by direct sunlight; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 5. Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning. Not subject to critical hits and cannot be flanked. Darkvision 80 ft. A shadeling suffers 1d4 points of burn damage every round it is exposed to direct sunlight (or a magically generated equivalent).

Conclusion

If Gwion or Lord Gaelin is killed at any point in the adventure, his mission to deliver the message has failed; no amount of study will reveal how to activate the amulet. A Knowledge (Arcana) check (DC 20) will reveal the nature of the item—although foiling the assassination attempt and learning of the plot to recover the void artifact known as the Black Gem accomplishes nearly the same thing.

If Gwion is alive and can deliver the message, describe the following:



Gwion speaks a few soft words in elvish and asks Lord Gaelin to speak his own name and title. The baron obliges. "I am Gaelin, Baron of Stewick Manor, Lord of Courage."

The phantom figure of a beautiful elven woman appears. "My lord Gaelin, I am an outcast among my people—one who was banished by the Wyred for misusing the magic I have been taught. I have done terrible things, and perhaps I should not be trusted. But I am still loyal to my people, and have no hatred of the human kingdoms. I cannot keep what I have learned to myself.

"Agents of evil are roaming the land, penetrating important places and sewing deception and discord. They are working for some dark master who will soon return to this land.

"For you, my lord, I've learned that a foul undead creature named Azael plans to infiltrate the city of New Vinnengael with a group of his foul worshippers and discover the location of an evil artifact—a magical gem powered by the Void and years of human sacrifice. I've also learned that this Azael wishes you to be the first of the human Domnion Lords to die in the name of his master.

"I am playing a dangerous game, my lord, working with the enemy of our people so that I may learn how to defeat him. If I am discovered, death would be preferable to what awaits me. But someone had to act."

The image winks out. Looking at Gwion, you see that his eyes shimmer with unshed tears. He looks shaken, but somehow remains composed.

If anyone asks Gwion what's wrong, he simply says, "That is my mother" and steps away quietly. His mission fulfilled, he thanks the heroes for their aid and says that "new and urgent business" calls him away immediately.

If for any reason the vrykyl and undead are not discovered until after Gwion's message is delivered—or it is revealed that Gwion is dead and the message can never be delivered—the vrykyl will sneak attack Lord Gaelin immediately after the message is delivered, having learned the identity of the spy.

Rewards

If the group is successful in warning Lord Gaelin and delivering Gwion's message, then he will reward the group with silver and treasure. He gives the party a note of credit with his signature and personal seal, worth 500 argents. This can be exchanged for goods and hard currency both in the town of Kalian or the city of New Vinnengael. He also rewards the group with a matching masterwork longsword and dagger, each inlaid with the crest of the Stewick barony, as thanks for saving his life. Anyone badly injured will be taken to the local chapel and healed by the Earth mages there, with Lord Gaelin covering all costs.

Future Adventure Hooks

Escape Into Darkness has been designed to fit into an ongoing series of adventures. If you would like to build further adventures based on these events, there are a number of possibilities:

The group could offer to travel with Gwion to find his mother, who is one of small number of exiled elves who have begun working for Dagnarus and his vrykyl.

The group could also learn of friends or relatives who have been imprisoned in Karnu and put to work in labor camps (perhaps even the same camp they escaped from). They could plan a way to sneak back into Karnu and rescue those who have been wrongfully imprisoned.

The group could learn more about the vrykyl Azael's plans, including the location of the black gem. If the group becomes more of a thorn in the vrykyl's side, he would make a dangerous villain indeed!

If Lord Gaelin was killed during the events of *Escape Into Darkness*, the heroes may find themselves having to answer to his grieving widow and orphaned children. The late baron's wife may ask the group to finish some unfulfilled quest that her husband (or their family) required.

Non-Player Characters

Azael

Dunkargan Male Vrykyl Rogue 5, Void Mage 8: CR 15; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 13d12+13; hp 105; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 33 (+3 Dex, +20 Vrykyl Armor); Atk: +18/+13/+8 melee (1d4+8 crit 19-20/x2, *bloodknife*); SA Sneak Attack +3d6, Feeding, Void Spellcasting; SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge, Undead, Damage Reduction 25/+2, Rebuke and Command Undead, Spell Resistance 15, Sense Magic, Tainted by Void, Shadow Disguise, Frightful Presence; SV Fort —, Ref +13, Will +15; Str 23, Dex 14, Con —, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 13. Height 5' 10".

Void Spells, Intimate Knowledge: *Wilt (6), Despair (14), Shadow Walk (16), Repel the Living (18), Dispel Void Magic (20+), Shatter (21), Death Touch (26), Steal Memory (78).* **Quick Reference:** *Dissipate Life (16), Whispers Through Shadows (33), Darts of Decay (34), Wither (75).* **Full Reference:** *Summon Void's Creatures (54), Zombie Servants (84), Summon Shadeling (99), Raise Dead (114), Shadow Steed (152).*

Special Qualities:

Undead (Ex): Undead are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects, and they ignore mind-influencing effects (charm, illusion, and mentalism aspect spells). Undead are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage. ability drain, or energy drain. They have no Constitution scores and are therefore immune to anything requiring a Fortitude saving throw (unless it affects objects). Undead spellcasters use their Charisma modifier when making Concentration checks.

Vrykyl are not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less they are immediately destroyed.

Rebuke and Command Undead (Su): Vrykyl have the ability to frighten or control undead. Azael can perform this as an evil cleric (see *Core Rulebook I*), with an effective level equivalent to his Void Spellcasting Bonus (13).

Sense Magic (Su): Vrykyl have the ability to *sense magic* in a 50-foot radius and determine the general type of magic (i.e. the magical element and the spell's aspect). This ability is always active—even when the Vrykyl isn't actively trying to make use of it.

Tainted by Void (Ex): Vrykyl are considered permanently tainted by Void. They are considered advantaged in Void magic and disadvantaged in all other magical elements. The only way they can heal damage is through the use of the Void magic and feeding.

Illusory Disguise (Su): Vrykyl may cloak themselves in illusion. They may appear in the form they once held while alive, or anyone they have killed with the blood knife. This illusion has a Will disbelieve of DC 30. Only Dominion Lords may automatically save against a Vrykyl's illusion—all other creatures must have a reason to suspect a trick.

Frightful Presence (Ex): If Azael is not wearing an illusory disguise, or if the disguise is penetrated, the sight of the Azael in full armor is very unsettling. If the Vrykyl performs a dramatic action (such as using Void magic or slaying someone in combat) all creatures viewing the action with fewer hit dice than Azael must succeed at a Will save (DC 17), and become immune to his presence for 24 hours. Failure means that the witnesses to his actions become *shaken* (-2 morale penalty to attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws). If *shaken* creatures witness a second dramatic action, they become *frightened* (same as *shaken*, except the affected must flee if at all possible). Duration for both effects is 5d6 rounds.

Void Spellcasting (Su): Azael has the ability to cast Void spells with a +13 spellcasting bonus. He knows the following spells, all at intimate knowledge: *despair (CT 14), necrotic grasp (CT 46), pass as shadow (CT 33).* A botch during spellcasting does not precipitate a Constitution check, since Azael, as a Vrykyl, is able to channel Void magic much more readily than living creatures. Azael can voluntarily sacrifice life essence as normal, essentially using his own Void-life to cast the spell. This damages him in the same manner that it would drain other Void spellcasters.

Feeding (Su): Azael must feed to maintain his existence and to heal damage. This is accomplished through use of the blood knife (see below). If the blood knife is used to perform a successful *coup de grace* on an opponent (indicating that the knife has stabbed into the victim's heart), Azael has fed and gains 1d10 points of healing that may not exceed his maximum hit points. Ever full week Azael does not feed, he suffers 1d10 points of damage. Any Vrykyl who has not fed in over 1 month is considered fatigued. A Vrykyl that has not fed in six months is considered exhausted.

Skills: Alchemy +12, Balance +11, Bluff +10, Climb +14, Concentration +10, Craft (Armorsmithing) +9, Craft (Blacksmithing) +8, Craft (Weaponsmithing) +8, Decipher Script +13, Disable Device +13, Disguise +7, Hide +11, Listen +8, Move Silently +11, Open Locks +11, Pick Pockets +11, Read Lips +13, Search +13, Spot +8

Languages: Elder Speak (Literate), Karna (Native, Literate), Sign Language, Tomagai (Literate)

Feats: Cooperative Spellcasting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Shared Spellcasting, Spell Focus (Void)

Possessions: Blood knife, spellbook.

Appearance: Azael's natural appearance is that of a horribly decayed corpse, his natural western features completely destroyed by the Void. Azael is capable of assuming hundreds of illusory disguises, for his blood knife has tasted the blood of many. When dealing with his underlings, however, he prefers to use the intimidating presence of his vrykyl armor.

Background: Only Dagnarus and Azael knew the vrykyl's original, human name, and it is likely the Void Lord has forgotten it. Dunkargan by birth, Azael had a career as a thief and assassin—later learning some forbidden Void magic to enhance his already considerable skills. The vrykyl Shakur learned of Azael's activities and lured him into a meeting with Dagnarus. With bribes of power and immortality, Azael was completely seduced by the Void and made into a vrykyl. Azael has often served to train assassins and Void mages who are pledged in the service of Dagnarus, securing their loyalties with many of the same lies that seduced him into the Void Lord's service.

Characteristics: Azael is a planner, someone who prefers to feel in control of situations. He attempts to stack the deck is in his own favor, then stand back and watch his plans unfold properly. If things do not go as expected, the vrykyl will be angered or frightened. The only chaos Azael relishes is that of his own making. He will often retreat from enemies he could easily defeat if the circumstances are not what he anticipated.

Lord Gaelin Stewick, Lord of Courage

Vinnengaelean Male Fighter 6, Noble 3: CR 11; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d6+3 plus 6d10+6; hp 65; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 36 (+1 Dex, +25 Dominion Lord Armor); Atk: +11/+6 melee (1d8+7 crit 19-20/×2, *Fury, longsword +2*); SA Deceptive melee; SQ Sense Magic, Mental Strength, Fear Immunity, Paralysis Immunity, Technique, Inspire Courage, Spell-like abilities (see below); SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 18. Height 6 ft.

Special Qualities:

Fear Immunity (Ex): Immune to all natural and supernatural fear effects. Cannot become *shaken* or *frightened.*

Inspire Courage (Su): Allies fighting at Gaelin's side gain a +2 morale bonus to saving throws versus charm and fear effects. They also gain a +1 morale bonus to melee attacks and damage.

Mental Strength (Ex): Gaelin may automatically save against mind-affecting magic, including illusion, charm, and mentalism spells—even if he is not aware that this magic is in use. He receives a +10 circumstance bonus to saving throws against these types of spells.

Paralysis Immunity (Su): Immune to natural and supernatural paralysis effects.

Sense Magic (Su): Gaelin has the ability to sense magic in a 50-foot radius and determine the general type of magic (i.e. magical element and spell aspect). This ability is always active—even when he isn't actively trying to make use of it.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): Gaelin may create any of the following spell effects, as if cast by a 5th level Earth mage. Each effect can be generated using a partial action: *The Earth's Resolve, Healer's Touch.*

Technique (Ex): Granted one extra general feat (included above).

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +6, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +10, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +8, Listen +5, Ride +5, Spot +5, Swim +7

Languages: Elder Speak (Literate), Naru (Literate), Tomagai

Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Leadership, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Longsword), Weapon Specialization (Longsword).

Possessions: The Lord of Courage owns many things, most of which can be found in Stewick manor. He always carries *Fury* (despite its name, it is only a *longsword +2*) and, of course, his amulet from which he can summon the armor of a Dominion Lord.

Appearance: Lord Gaelin appears to be a bald middle-aged man with a short beard who is slightly overweight; he is dressed in white robes and wears an amulet around his neck that bears the symbol of two griffins facing each other, holding a golden disk. His Dominion Lord armor gleams with its own power, creating a most inspiring figure to those around him.

Background: Gaelin Stewick was born the second son of a minor baron whose lands barely encompass the small town of Kalian, once far away from the hub of the Empire, now one of the closest towns outside of New Vinnengael. Gaelin allowed his older brother to pursue his family's ancestral

role, while he pursued his own interests. When his brother was killed by dwarven raiders, Gaelin found responsibility thrust upon him as a teenager. He decided not to run away from these duties but to face them with courage. His loyalty, personality, and bravery earned him a nomination to become a Dominion Lord. He passed the trials (though with some difficulty) and was dubbed "Lord of Courage." Since his transfiguration, however, he has become disillusioned with the highly political nature of the Council of Dominion Lords and has distanced himself from them, preferring to spend more time on the ancestral estate.

Characteristics: Most people would not suspect the Lord of Courage to be a genial man, quick to tell or laugh at a joke—even at his own expense. He does not seem very serious, except when conflict arises and he exhibits the qualities of a natural leader. He is brave, but still exhibits common sense and is willing to retreat if necessary.

GAVARA

Dunkargan Female Rogue 2, Void Mage 2: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 4d6+4; hp 24; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (+6 *Blacksteel platemail*, Dex +3); Atk: +5 melee (1d4+3 crit 19-20/×2, *dagger of the doppelganger*); SA Spells: SB +4* (Void); SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 10. Height 5 ft. 9 in.

Void Spells, Intimate Knowledge: *Despair (14), shadow walk (16), death touch (26).* **Quick Reference**: *Wilt (8), I am as you are (10), repel the living (18), summon's Void's creatures (54).* **Full Reference**: *dissipate life* (16), *shatter (21), black cloud (45).*

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +6, Concentration +7, Gather Information +4, Hide +9**, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (Arcana) +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +7**, Pick Pocket +7, Search +6, Spellcraft +6, Spot +3.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (Medium), Combat Casting

Possessions: Blacksteel armor, dagger of the doppelganger, short sword.

Appearance: Gavara is an attractive Dunkargan woman, with deceptively delicate features. Her skin is far more pale than most Dunkargans, from lack of good nutrition and time spent away from the sun. She has shoulder-length hair that falls down in waves and frames her heart-shaped face. Though often hidden under armor, she has a shapely athletic frame. Anyone able to examine her back might note faint, numerous scars—apparently lash marks.



Background: Gavara does not use her real name—which she cast aside long ago. Her past was a painful one in which she betrayed those she loved for the sake of a man who abandoned her. She lived a harsh life in her homeland, until she unwittingly attempted to rob a vrykyl. Instead of killing her, the vrykyl saw how she might be of great use to him. He brought to his followers and trained her in the arts of Void magic. Advancing among the ranks, she became one of his preferred spies and assassins. She has been falsely promised immortality for her efforts, not realizing he is dooming her to a temporary, tortured existence as a Voidwight.

Characteristics: Gavara has experienced so much pain in this life that she has given herself over fully to the Void and service to the vrykyl. She is convinced she can become a creature of power like he is, and welcomes an end to this life. Her true nature is distant and cold, but she has become a talented actress, capable of faking any emotion required or imitating those she has murdered.

* The *dagger of the doppleganger* grants Gavara a +2 Void spellcasting bonus, which is included.

** The *blacksteel* armor grants Gavara a +10 circumstance bonus whenever she attempts her Hide or Move Silently skill checks (though her armor penalty still applies).

Gwion of House Cirythn

Elven Male Fighter 2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10+2; hp 18; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atk: +5 melee (1d3+3 subdual, crit ×2, unarmed); SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 12. Height 5 ft. 11 in.

Skills: Diplomacy +3, Ride +5, Search +4, Spot +2, Swim +5

Feats: Ambidexterity, Improved Unarmed Strike, Two-Weapon Fighting

Languages: Elder Speak (Literate), Karna, Tomagai (Native, Literate)

Possessions: As acquired.

Appearance: Gwion is tall and lean, with long jet-black hair. His hazel, almond-shaped eyes are surrounded by the facial tattoo that marks him as a warrior in the service of House Cirythn. He rarely smiles (or shows any strong emotion), though his eyes will sometimes give away intense feelings (anger or fear) that he might feel inside.

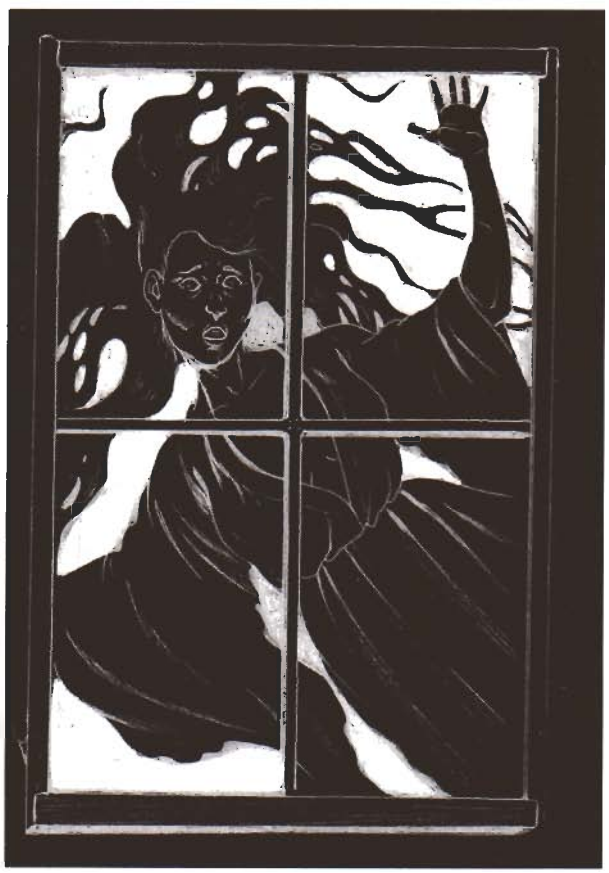
Background: Gwion is a son of minor elven nobility. A recent dishonor in his family caused great reduction in his family's land and wealth, also leaving the young warrior to wonder what crime caused his mother's banishment from the lands of Tromek. Gwion's bloodline does permit him to fight in the service of his family, and he has trained in the elven ways of battle. His mastery of human tongues and his tolerance for other races caused the leaders of his House to select him to deliver the message talisman into human lands.

Characteristics: Gwion is stoic, believing that it is a weakness to reveal pain to his enemies and hides feelings from his companions as a matter of personal pride. He believes in the traditional elven values of honor and duty, but is remarkably open-minded when it comes to other races. He feels a strong bond with anyone who has fought by his side, and his friendship is truly loyal once earned.

New Monsters

Shadeling

Medium-size Elemental (Void)
Hit Dice: 3d8+9 (23 hp)
Initiative: 0
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural)
Attacks: Two claws +4 melee
Damage: Claws 1d4+1 and 1d4 cold
Face/Reach: 5 ft. × 5 ft./ 5 ft.
Special Qualities: Elemental, Shadow Walk, Sunlight Damage
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 5
Skills: Hide +9, Move Silently +9, Search +1, Spot +1
Feats: Combat Reflexes
Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Advancement: 4-6 HD (Medium-size); 7-9 HD (Large)



Description

Shadelings are shadows that have been infused with the power of Void magic, most often from the *summon shadeling* spell, though some shadelings have emerged from dark places in which the Void is already strong. These "wild" shadelings are unpredictable and dangerous, as they have no master directing their actions, instead acting only out of their own malicious cravings. The appearance of shadelings can vary widely, depending completely on what shadow is enchanted. Those created from the shadow of a humanoid are often mistaken for some type of undead.

Shadelings are not natural creatures and do not require food, water, or rest. They dwell in caves, crypts, and cellars—anywhere that sunlight never reaches.

Combat

Shadelings attack people and animals out of pure malice, almost always picking on those alone or weak. Free-willed shadelings will always flee when their existence is threatened. Their bodies are ice-cold to the touch, so much so that their claws inflict cold damage as well as normal.

Shadow Walk (Sp): Shadelings can *shadow walk* as per the spell, but with no duration. They can use this ability to remain hidden (+15 circumstance bonus to their Hide check while merged with a shadow). This also allows them to travel great distances at night, often to deliver messages for the Void mages that summoned them.

Sunlight Damage (Su): As shadow creatures of the Void, shadelings suffer 1d4 points of burn damage for every round exposed to direct sunlight (or a magically generated equivalent).

Note: This description of shadelings expands upon and supercedes the description provided in the *summon shadeling* spell (*Sovereign Stone Campaign Sourcebook*, pg. 140).

Voidwight

Medium-size Undead
Hit Dice: 4d12+4 (30 hp)
Initiative: 0
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks: Two claws +6 melee or weapon +6
Damage: Claws 1d4+4 or weapon +4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. × 5 ft./ 5 ft.
Special Attacks: Spellcasting
Special Qualities: Undead
Saves: Fort –, Ref +3, Will +4
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con —, Int *, Wis *, Cha 6
Skills: As in life
Feats: Toughness
Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2 (plus Void Mage levels)
Treasure: None
Advancement: —

Description

Voidwights are the unique invention of the vrykyl Azael, who has only recently shared the secret of their creation with others. The vrykyl wished to create undead servants who would be lesser versions of itself, but was only partly successful.



Voidwights appear as pale, emaciated versions of their living form. Their undead flesh stretches tight over remaining muscle and bone, drawing the lips back to reveal yellowing teeth. A Voidwight's eyes are completely black, like a shark's. and their hands sport black talons. They generally wear whatever clothes and equipment they had in life.

Any humanoid can be made into a Voidwight, but must be Tainted by Void, either as a Void spellcaster or someone who swears an oath giving their soul to the Void. Most often these victims are lured into the bargain with false promises of immortality. The spell may be cast directly, or may be enchanted into an item.

The most terrible aspect of the Voidwight is its temporary existence. It must consume at least five pounds of living (or recently killed) flesh every two days to sustain it. Each two day period in which it does not feed on flesh it will lose 1 hit die (with total hit points re-rolled). Even if this condition is met, it will lose 1 hit die each month—eventually ending the Voidwight's tortured existence.

Combat

Voidwights will enter combat either using a weapon they were skilled with in life or simply slashing with their claws. They use whatever tactics they may have used in life.

A Voidwight that was a Void spellcaster retains any levels it possessed in life (increasing its Challenge Rating accordingly). It retains only the spells it could cast at Intimate Knowledge and Quick Reference, using its previous spellcasting bonus. Fortitude saving throws during casting are not required, nor does a botch during spellcasting does not precipitate a Fortitude save, since Voidwights are able to channel Void magic much more readily than living creatures. Voidwights can voluntarily sacrifice life essence as normal, essentially using their own Void-life to cast the spell. This damages them in the same manner that it would drain other Void spellcasters.

Undead (Ex): Undead are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects, and they ignore mind-influencing effects (charm, illusion, and mentalism aspect spells). Undead are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. They have no Constitution scores and are therefore immune to anything requiring a Fortitude saving throw or Constitution check (unless it affects objects). Undead spellcasters use their Charisma modifier when making Concentration checks. Undead are not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less they are immediately destroyed.

New Spells

Black Flame

(Shadow)
Element: Void
Casting Threshold: 188
Range: Touch
Area: 20 ft. radius, centered on touched object
Duration: Discharge
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

Black Flame was created long ago by the Void mage Gareth to help disguise vrykyl even in the presence of Dominion Lords. The spell can be cast on an unlit candle, torch, lantern, or similar light source that utilizes flame. Black flame remains dormant for one year until the light source is ignited, then will last for one day—magically extending the burn time for the enchanted object.

The spell strengthens the power of any Void-based illusions, including the Shadow Disguise power of a vrykyl. Anyone viewing an illusion within 20 feet of the enchanted light source will receive a –10 circumstance penalty to Will saving throw to disbelieve. This penalty is applied even if the creature viewing the illusion is outside the spell's area.

If the light source is extinguished, the spell ends immediately. The slight disruption of magic also grants everyone affected by the spell an immediate saving throw against any Void illusions that were strengthened by the spell.

If the object is not ignited within one year, the enchantment fades with no effect on the object.

Bodiless Messenger

(Illusion)
Element: Air
Casting Threshold: 70
Range: Touch
Effect: Recorded illusion
Duration: Discharge
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell was created by the Wyred to send important messages that cannot be delivered in person. Bodiless messenger is cast upon a specially prepared vessel (usually an amulet or talisman) that is worth at least 100 argents. Once the spell is cast upon the vessel, either the caster or someone the caster designates may speak a message (up to one minute in length) while touching the vessel. Once the message has been recorded into the vessel, the caster speaks the name of the person or creature for whom the message is intended.

The message will remain safely stored for up to one year. Once it is given to the person or creature it is intended, that individual must hold the vessel and state his name. The original message is projected from the vessel, and can be both seen and heard. The illusion is easily disbelieved (and is slightly transparent in any case), but the purpose is to convey information, not to deceive. Once the message is delivered, the spell ends and the vessel is empty of magic and cannot be used again.

Dark Visage

(Shadow)
Element: Void
Casting Threshold: 119
Range: Personal
Target: Caster
Duration: 1 month (D)
Saving Throw: Will disbelief (DC 20 + caster's level)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell was created to mimic the vrykyl ability to assume the illusory guise of a slain victim. The spell creates a sight, sound, and touch illusion of any humanoid the caster has had previous physical contact. The spell does not grant special knowledge of the victim, nor does it provide knowledge of the imitated creature's language. This spell will only work for living Void casters, and cannot disguise the undead.

The Earth's Resolve

(Protection)
Element: Earth
Casting Threshold: 30
Range: Personal
Target: All chosen creatures within 20 ft. radius
Duration: 1 minute
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The Earth's Resolve targets any number of creatures within the spell's area, granting them a +6 morale bonus to Will-based saving throws against any natural or magical effect that causes fear or paralysis. Any creature affected by this spell who is already shaken, afraid, or paralyzed is immediately allowed another saving throw to remove the effect.

Summon Void's Creatures

(Necromancy)
Element: Void
Casting Threshold: 54
Range: Touch
Area: 5 mile radius, centered on touched object
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates (DC 20 + caster level)
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell sends out a call to up to 20 hit dice undead creatures (maximum of 4 individual hit dice) within the spell's area, creating an overriding urge to reach to the touched object if they fail their saving throw. The caster has no ability to select the undead affected, which will always be the creatures in closest proximity to the object.

Intelligent undead can overcome the compulsion within moments, even if they fail their saving throw, if it interferes with their current plans. Non-intelligent undead will follow the compulsion (unless they are given conflicting instructions) until they reach the touched area, attacking anything that gets in their way, then revert to their previous instructions.

Whispers Through Shadows

(Shadow)
Element: Void
Casting Threshold: 33
Range: Unlimited
Target: See text
Duration: 10 minutes
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell allows the caster to initiate verbal communication with a willing target in a soft, whispering voice. The caster must have had physical contact with the target in the previous 30 days. The caster may speak to the target from any deep shadow of Small size or larger, though it must be close enough to the target so he may be heard. Because the spell requires darkness, it is most often cast at night or when the target will most likely be indoors. The voice can be heard by anyone within hearing range of the shadow, though the caster can only hear the target.

New Magical Items

Blacksteel Armor

Blacksteel is special alloy that is enchanted with Void magic and granted to spies and assassins in the service of Dagnarus. The armor itself carries only a +1 enhancement bonus, but the magical black metal also provides a +10 circumstance bonus to Hide and Move Silently skill checks in conditions of darkness. (The armor's armor check penalty still applies normally.) The armor's Void magic enchantment is strong, causing 1d4 points of damage per round to anyone wearing or holding it who is not Tainted by Void. A quick touch will cause discomfort but no damage. Anyone wearing this armor openly will immediately be identified as a Void mage and dealt with accordingly.

> ***Blacksteel Breastplate*** – **Caster Level:** 15th-level Void mage; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *shadow'd visage* or *shadow walk*; **Market Price:** 13,900 argents; **Item Creation Threshold:** 150.

Dagger of the Doppelganger

Lord Azael did not create the dagger, but acquired it through treachery and assassination. Not directly useful to him, he knew it would be of great use to one of his agents. It allows its wielder to assume the form of anyone killed with the dagger (once per day) and hold that form for up to one month (like the *dark visage* spell). The dagger has a +1 enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage and grants a +2 enhancement bonus to the wielder's Void spellcasting bonus (but grants no additional knowledge of Void spells). Anyone who possesses the dagger (by holding or wearing it for ten minutes or more) is considered Tainted by Void, and the condition is not removed until both the dagger leaves the character's possession and he is fully healed.

The vrykyl Azael prizes this dagger, and anyone who takes it from one of his servants can be sure the vrykyl will make a point to re-acquire the *dagger.*

> ***Dagger of the Doppelganger*** – **Caster Level:** 25th-level Void mage; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *dark visage*; **Market Price:** 28,159 argents; **Item Creation Threshold:** 247.

The Dream

You are walking through the darkness, listening to the sound of a woman's voice. You hear the voice but cannot quite make out the words. The darkness parts until you see the fine manor house of a noble lord. The doors open for you and the servants welcome you inside. There you see a noble figure in armor seated at the head of a great table, surrounded by his most trusted guards and henchmen. Torchlight keeps this room well lit and warm. Food is served, wine is poured, men play games of dice at the table. Everyone is laughing.

Suddenly a chill washes over you and you notice that one of the torches on the wall burns black. The men at the table do not appear to be men, but skeletons animated with the hideous mockery of life. The room is covered in cobwebs and dust, the wine glasses are empty, and everyone accept the lord is dead but still in motion. Standing behind the great lord is a terrifying figure in black armor. Yet still he laughs and sways to unheard music, drinking wine that isn't there. He doesn't even see the hand holding the dagger that stabs him the back.

You awake with a start in a cold sweat.









SOVEREIGN STONE

d20 system

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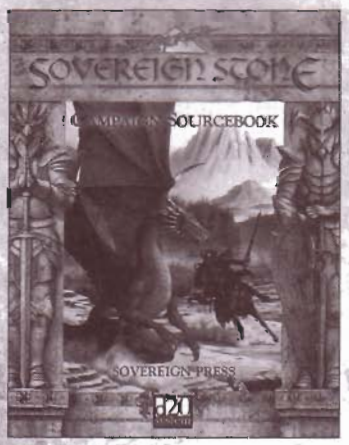
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