



EPIC

21-30

TEST OF FIRE

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“You call yourselves heroes? You claim greatness? Prove it to those who survived the Dawn Wars of gods and primordial. Prove it before the lords of fire and chaos. Prove in this Crucible Court of the City of Brass that you are worthy of the allegiance of the efreet!”



In “Test of Fire,” the heroes are tasked by the reborn Bahamut with infiltrating Tiamat’s last stronghold in the planes—the legendary City of Brass. There, the heroes must engage a formidable efreet noble in a risky alliance, then square off against the Lord of the Efreets and the blue exarch of Tiamat in a city under siege.

“Test of Fire” is an adventure for five characters midway through 27th level. By the end of the adventure, the characters should have attained 29th level. This adventure is the penultimate chapter of the Scales of War adventure path, following the events of “Those Once Loyal.” This assault on the City of Brass can be adapted for use in other epic tier campaigns with a bit of effort.

BACKGROUND

For untold centuries, the Dragon Queen Tiamat has labored on a deadly mission—the permanent destruction of her soul-sibling and nemesis Bahamut, the Platinum Dragon. Tiamat’s plans came to light in the mortal realm by virtue of her alliances with the githyanki. In the end, even the greatest of the heroes who turned the tide of the githyanki invasion of the world were unable to prevent Tiamat’s foul plots from claiming the Platinum Dragon’s life.

All was not lost, however, for Bahamut is wise and farseeing. To prevent Tiamat’s ultimate revenge, he installed a fragment of his own essence into the deva Amyria. Through this fragment and the bravery of the heroes, Bahamut has been reborn at the Bridge of al-Sihal on Celestia. Tiamat’s forces, emboldened by the Platinum Dragon’s apparent demise, are reeling from this sudden reversal of fortune. Tiamat’s plans for cosmic dominion have been shattered, but the Dragon Queen is far from helpless.

In a last-ditch effort to win its campaign against the forces of good, half of Tiamat’s remaining army has been sent to hold her final redoubt in the planes—the legendary City of Brass. By virtue of foul rituals and dark pacts undertaken with Bashumgarda, the Lord of the Efreets, the Dragon Queen has bolstered her draconic servants with elemental power that may yet turn the tide of war in her favor.

Bahamut’s forces have already surrounded the city, but the combined defenses of Tiamat and the efreets will not be easily broken. The Platinum Dragon’s servants, however, have made contact with efreet factions within the city that might be turned against Bashumgarda. Even now, the other half of

Tiamat’s army attempts to enter the Elemental Chaos in order to attack Bahamut’s force. Bahamut’s magic has sealed off the City of Brass, but it cannot do so for long. Against this dark deadline, it is up to the characters to infiltrate the besieged city and negotiate an alliance with the efreet noble Estumishu. The heroes must then make their way across a city preparing for all-out war to find and kill Bashumgarda in order to win the allegiance of the efreets. Unknown to the characters is the fact that Tiamat’s blue exarch Namissi, not Bashumgarda, is the true power in the besieged City of Brass. The adventurers’ mission in the fabled city will push them to their limits.

THE QUESTS

In “Test of Fire,” the heroes must infiltrate the besieged City of Brass by way of the deadly warren of ruins known as the Keening Delve. Once inside the city, their mission from Bahamut is to negotiate an alliance with the capricious efreet noble Estumishu. In order to obtain Estumishu’s favor and open the City of Brass to Bahamut’s forces, the characters must slay Bashumgarda, the renegade Lord of Efreets. The real power in the city, however, is Tiamat’s blue exarch Namissi, who emerges for a final showdown as Bahamut’s forces attack.

Major Quest—Infiltrate the City of Brass

The City of Brass is sealed behind powerful magical wards laid down by Tiamat’s ritualists. Bahamut’s forces cannot attack until the seals are opened to them. The adventurers must follow the deadly paths of the Keening Delve in order to gain secret access to the city.
Reward: 55,000 XP.

Major Quest—Open the Gates to Bahamut’s Forces

After treating with Estumishu, the party must chart a dangerous path through the City of Brass to where Bashumgarda, Lord of Efreets, holds court. Only after Bashumgarda is put down can the characters seize control of the magical wards protecting the city as a prelude to Bahamut’s assault.

Reward: 65,000 XP.

Major Quest—See Tiamat’s Armies Routed

As Bahamut’s forces crash against Tiamat’s defenders in the City of Brass, the heroes must do battle against the Dragon Queen’s blue exarch. Only when their leader is destroyed can Tiamat’s forces be broken and their threat ended.

Reward: 65,000 XP.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

“Test of Fire” begins in the aftermath of the events of “Those Once Loyal.” Bahamut has been restored to life by the sacrifice of Amyria, and Tiamat’s plans to break the power of the fallen god have been dealt a crippling blow.

As the adventure opens, the characters have returned to Sayre to rest, recuperate, and mourn Amyria’s sacrifice. From there, they are summoned to Bahamut’s side in the Crystal Tear, an astral dominion from which Bahamut directs his reenergized forces. The Platinum Dragon lays out the scope of Tiamat’s failure and her dark hope to turn this near-defeat into victory.

The City of Brass is Tiamat’s last stronghold in the planes. It is held by arrangement with Bashumgarda, Lord of Efreets. Bahamut’s force has the city surrounded but cannot break in. Tiamat’s remaining legions are attempting to return to the Elemental Chaos to attack Bahamut’s force. The full brunt of Tiamat’s armies, energized with elemental power, will be too much for Bahamut’s army to withstand.

Bahamut enlists the characters to infiltrate the City of Brass by way of a secret portal hidden deep in the Keening Delve. This legendary and deadly warren of caverns and ruined chambers is set within the basalt plate on which the City of Brass is built. After entering the city, the heroes meet with Estumishu, an efrete noble who represents factions seeking to overthrow Bashumgarda because of his foul alliance with the Dragon Queen. Estumishu offers his allegiance only if the characters find and kill Bashumgarda—a deadly quest that requires the heroes to undertake a dangerous pilgrimage across a city under siege.

After slaying Bashumgarda, the adventurers must drop the magical wards which protect the city and prevent Bahamut’s forces from attacking. At the Eternal Flame Pavilion, the heroes face off against the protectors of the shrine of the Fire Lord Imix, which has been corrupted by Tiamat’s foul rituals so as to grant power to the Dragon Queen’s servants.

Then the unthinkable happens. The reborn Bahamut, fighting Tiamat’s blue exarch Namissi, is struck down in a titanic battle that shatters the great Charcoal Palace. Only the heroes can stand against the blue exarch in the end.

WHAT IS AN ADVENTURE PATH?

An adventure path is a connected series of adventures that comprises an entire D&D campaign, from the heroes’ humble beginnings at 1st level to their epic triumphs at the pinnacle of level 30. These adventures cover all three tiers of play: heroic, paragon, and epic. Each tier is covered by roughly six adventures, meaning that the entire adventure path consists of eighteen adventures. Each adventure covers between one and three levels, but the adventurers can undertake side quests to supplement their XP. This assures that the heroes are the correct level to tackle each adventure.

“Test of Fire” is the penultimate adventure in the Scales of War. It brings the characters into Bahamut’s confidence and sets up the climactic confrontation between the heroes and Tiamat which will conclude the final chapter.

ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE

“Test of Fire” is designed for five adventurers but can be easily adapted for larger or smaller groups. Simply add or subtract treasure parcels and monsters using the guidelines presented in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*. The Keening Delve is a chaotic warren haunted by ancient magic and foul creatures, and any type of elemental-themed monster or hazard can be placed there. The City of Brass is a thriving metropolis within the Elemental Chaos. The adventure is already set up with encounter groups that play a part in the characters’ attempts to move within the city (see Encounter B2, page 43). These can be used to add additional creatures to existing encounters.

This adventure is designed for characters partway through 27th level. Be wary of sending lower-level parties against the challenges of the Keening Delve and the City of Brass. The Keening Delve contains plenty of space for expansion, and you are encouraged to add encounters to the delve if you need to bring a lower-level group up to speed. The heroes should be 28th level (or close to it) when they meet with Estumishu in Encounter B1.

PREPARING FOR ADVENTURE

This adventure begins in the downtime immediately after the characters’ previous adventure, “Those Once Loyal.” Go to Part One: The Summons of Bahamut (page 20) when you are ready to begin.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

This adventure contains everything you need to play, including background information, setup, encounters, and maps. You might wish to review any appropriate DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® 4th Edition rules before play begins.

You need only read the opening sections of the adventure—the introduction and the encounters in the Keening Delve—to begin play. The encounters within the delve make up a good single session’s play, or they can be expanded into a larger adventure. You can then read up on the City of Brass and prepare for the two complex skill challenges that are the centerpiece of the heroes’ mission. Background information about the City of Brass from *Manual of the Planes* may be useful but is not required to run this adventure.

OFF THE ADVENTURE PATH

Even if you are not running “Test of Fire” as part of the Scales of War adventure path, a stealthy infiltration and assault on a besieged City of Brass is about as epic as adventures get. If you don’t favor a draconic connection, the dark forces that Bashumgarda has allied with can be any other long-term villain or evil organization in your campaign. In such a scenario, Bashumgarda and Namissi could be reworked as creatures of other types—perhaps a pair of powerful demon lords that have claimed the City of Brass as their domain.

Use one of the following hooks to bring the heroes into such an adventure.

TREASURE

As with previous installments of the Scales of War campaign, “Test of Fire” makes use of the parcel system of treasure rewards as described in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*. The characters should accumulate fifteen treasure parcels by the end of the adventure. You can supply these treasures in whatever way you wish, but the accompanying list presents the most likely encounters to bear treasure.

During your preparation, assign parcels from those that follow to the encounters in the spaces provided. Use the players’ wish lists to come up with magic items for the first six parcels. Consider saving at least one or two of the highest-level magic items for the end of the adventure, representing gear the adventurers can claim from their victories over Bashumgarda and Namissi or a reward granted by Estumishu or Bahamut for the heroes’ service to the City of Brass and the cause of good.

TREASURE PARCELS

- Parcel A:** _____, K1
(carried by the black slaad overlord).
- Parcel B:** _____, K3
(scattered within the rubble).
- Parcel C:** _____, B1 (a gift from Estumishu as a sign of trust if the heroes succeed at the skill challenge; if the adventurers fail the challenge, add to parcels L–O).
- Parcel D:** _____, B1 (as above).
- Parcel E:** _____, B2 (carried by the leader of a patrol encountered in the course of the skill challenge; if none, add to parcels L–O).
- Parcel F:** _____, B2 (as above).
- Parcel G:** _____, B3
(carried by the greenspawn defender).

- Parcel H:** _____, B4
(carried by the redspawn magmastomper).
- Parcel I:** _____, B5
(carried by the pyremasters).
- Parcel J:** _____, B5
(carried by Bashumgarda; see the tactical encounter).
- Parcel K:** _____, B5 (as above)
- Parcel L:** _____, after F2
(reward from Estumishu).
- Parcel M:** _____, after F2 (as above).
- Parcel N:** _____, after F2
(reward from Bahamut).
- Parcel O:** _____, after F2 (as above).

Based on the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, the following parcels can be placed in the areas above.

- Parcel 1:** Magic item, level 30
- Parcel 2:** Magic item, level 30
- Parcel 3:** Magic item, level 30
- Parcel 4:** Magic item, level 30
- Parcel 5:** Magic item, level 30
- Parcel 6:** Magic item, level 29
- Parcel 7:** 75 ad + two *potions of recovery*
- Parcel 8:** 50 ad + 500 pp
- Parcel 9:** 50 ad + three ceremonial holy symbols of Tiamat (15,000 gp each) + 500 pp
- Parcel 10:** two *potions of life* + eight elemental onyx rings (50,000 gp each)
- Parcel 11:** 100 ad
- Parcel 12:** 70 ad + 200 pp
- Parcel 13:** 60 ad + one *potion of life* + 200 pp
- Parcel 14:** six astral diamond signets (50,000 gp each) + two *potions of recovery* + 100 pp
- Parcel 15:** 25 ad

A FRIEND IN NEED

A powerful patron or ally of the characters has strong business or family connections to the City of Brass. He comes to the heroes in a panic, having heard that the great planar metropolis has been besieged. He knows of the secret portal in the Keening Delve and offers the adventurers a powerful incentive to restore the city to normalcy.

THE CURSE OF NAMISSI

The heroes are on their way to the City of Brass by *planar dromond* or some other form of planar travel when their journey is abruptly halted. The city is sealed behind magical wards unleashed by a cursed artifact, its leaders and people driven to madness. An impromptu skill challenge allows the characters to gain information regarding the portal in the Keening Delve. The heroes' infiltration of the city allows them to parley with its efreet leaders who've been driven underground to save their lives. The adventurers must then fight their way across the city in order to face the efreet sorcerer whose mind the artifact has claimed and the monstrous guardian that protects it.

PART ONE: THE SUMMONS OF BAHAMUT

In the immediate aftermath of the events of "Those Once Loyal," Bahamut's thoughts flash through the characters' minds, bidding them return to Sayre; then the Platinum Dragon vanishes without another word. As the adventure begins, the heroes have returned to Sayre to rest. Bahamut's return and the sacrifice of Amyria are events of world-shaking importance. Word of the Platinum Dragon's rebirth spreads quickly through the lands and people of the Coalition.

At the same time, word is received that Bahamut's forces have rallied around the deity's return and that the armies of Tiamat have lost the advantage they gained from the Platinum Dragon's death.

The adventurers have ample time to attend to personal business in Sayre and to be briefed on any information they might have failed to glean in previous adventures. This adventure begins with the arrival of an emissary from Bahamut.

AN UNEXPECTED ENVOY

The characters awake to the clamor of warning bells sounding out across Sayre.

Throngs of city folk are running in panic through the streets even as militia guards and coalition warriors race in the opposite direction toward the March. A din of voices shouts about some disaster striking at that shabby monument site, but details are lost in the panic. As you race along the rapidly emptying streets, the source of the chaos becomes obvious. In the middle of the March, a gargantuan silver dragon paces within a field of shattered arches and statuary. Its claws rend the ground as it idly scratches, and even as you push through the field of uncertain guards surrounding it at a safe distance, the dragon's head swings slowly toward you. "You've come," it growls. "Prepare for thy journey. My lord Bahamut desires to speak with thee."

The great silver dragon Xerefri is an exarch of Bahamut. It is the master of powerful planar magic and is charged with bringing the heroes to the Platinum Dragon at his temporary command center in the Astral Sea. If characters ask, witnesses describe how the creature appeared suddenly within the open ground of the March in a blast of white light and storm-force winds, with panic quickly following.

Xerefri poses no threat but the dragon is entirely indifferent to the destruction his arrival has caused.

He will not apologize if asked to by the characters; the exarch has no patience for such trivial concerns. Only his mission is important.

When you are ready to depart, Xerefri orders you to stand close by. The dragon creates a Planar Portal that rises from the ground to swirl around you. A blast of arcane power shatters the last of Lord Limbic's statuary as you and the exarch disappear.

THE CRYSTAL TEAR

The reborn Bahamut has temporarily abandoned his castle domain in Celestia as he focuses on leading his forces against Tiamat. The Platinum Dragon's new command center is a specially created astral realm known as the Crystal Tear.

The familiar vista of Sayre melts and vanishes to be replaced with a field of shimmering, silver light. You find yourselves soaring like disembodied spirits in a bright nonspace surrounding a crystal teardrop that grows in size as you plunge toward it. With a shudder, you pass within. Suddenly you are standing on a white dais in a great translucent chamber. Crystal walls reflect the dozen great dragons surrounding you. Xerefri murmurs a greeting as he takes his place among them. "My lord, the heroes are here."

Bahamut awaited the arrival of the adventurers with his exarch war council comprised of a dozen metallic dragons of great size and age.

Silver and gold, copper and iron, and all the other hues of the metallic dragon races are here, but there is no mistaking the monumental figure that all give fealty to. Bahamut towers before you once more, proud and mighty. But then the great Platinum Dragon dips his head, slightly but significantly. One by one, the other dragons follow, lowering their heads nearly to the level of yours in a majestic salute.

"Friends," Bahamut rumbles. "Champions. Welcome."

FORTUNES OF WAR

The heroes are made welcome to the Crystal Tear, a bounded astral dominion of sweeping crystal chambers set with pillars of platinum and other precious metals. This is the war room and council chamber from which Bahamut and his exarchs direct the battle against the armies of Tiamat.

After a drawn-out process of introduction between the characters and the council, Bahamut directs the characters to private chambers, saying he will meet them shortly for further conversation. The adventurers' quarters are in an opulent wing of marble halls whose shape and contents are divinely mutable according to the characters' own will.

Bahamut comes to the characters a few hours later, but the characters might be shocked to see the form he has taken—a venerable human male with a fringe of white hair and a snow-white beard. Though his platinum robes are a far cry from the peasant's garb he once wore, the same seven yellow canaries perch on Bahamut's shoulders as when the heroes met him in the lost mines of Karak (*Dungeon*® #159).

The adventurers no doubt have countless questions, and Bahamut is happy to provide answers as he explains the purpose of his summons.

Was the bird man in the Karak Lode really you?

"Yes and no. That was not I in the way you see me now—the whole of my physical presence and consciousness. Rather, think of that figure as an avatar of sorts, unaware of me as I was unaware of it, but roaming the mortal realm as a fragment of my mind and will. Even then, it seems that the fates already knew our paths were intertwined."

What happened to Amyria? Is she truly gone?

"Amyria was possessed of a splinter of my consciousness and life force, not unlike that which manifested to aid you in the Karak Lode. The creation of that fragment was a gamble against fate which would have failed countless times if not for Amyria's bravery, and yours. Though I have not yet regained my full strength, by her sacrifice I live again. As to her ultimate fate, that is no more known to me than is the fate of any of us."

What is this place?

"The Crystal Tear is an astral dominion forged by my will and the power of my exarchs. It is home and council chamber, a site whose edges touch all other planes and from which we can observe the war against Tiamat as it rages across those planes."

How goes the war? Haven't Tiamat's plans been broken by your return?

"The war has turned under the pressure of a tide that the Dragon Queen could never have predicted, but it is not won. The forces of good and law hold their own, but Tiamat's power is carved out by treachery. With each failure, the Dragon Queen need simply seek the next betrayal that will fuel her ambition."

"The word of my return shattered the resolve of Tiamat's forces and gave our own armies a much-needed chance to regroup. In the weeks since my return, we have taken the fight to them, and we are near the endgame now."

What is that endgame? What are Tiamat's plans?

"The Dragon Queen has sent nearly half her remaining force to her last redoubt in the planes—the City of Brass in the Elemental Chaos. Already, our forces lay siege against her blue exarch who stands in command there, but his power is formidable. He is an ancient wyrm named Namissi whose thirst for blood is unequalled. We must break his defense, and time is short."

What is Tiamat doing in the City of Brass?

"The Dragon Queen has entered into dark bargains with the Lord of the Efreet, the powerful and power-hungry Bashumgarda. He believes that this alliance will grant him control of the Elemental Chaos, but Tiamat's treachery runs deep. Her ritualists have used the great knowledge of the efreet to channel the raw energy of the elements. She intends to claim the efreet's power as her own and to infuse her armies with elemental might that could tip the tide of battle."

How long will the siege continue?

"We might break the magical wards that protect the city and Tiamat's army within a week ... if we had that much time. We do not. Just as the arcane wards of efreet and dragon hold us at bay, our ritualists have sealed the basalt plain of the city and the Sea of Fire against Tiamat's remaining armies which are amassing to break our siege. Using the power of the Well of Worlds, dragon ritualists have effectively blocked the Elemental Chaos to planar travel by Tiamat's forces, but we cannot maintain those wards for long. Within a day, Tiamat's forces will batter through our barrier and we will be caught between two armies. We must take the city, and quickly."

What do you need us to do?

"The City of Brass is sealed against physical incursion, the power of teleportation, and all forms of planar travel. Bashumgarda holds the city in an iron grip, and his allegiance to Tiamat will not waver. Our spies have determined, however, that there are cracks in both of these defenses."

Although Bashumgarda promised his people power, Tiamat's forces have taken over in all but name. Many of the efreet nobles now chafe under Bashumgarda's reign. One of those, the lord Estumishu, has sway over the nobility

and a claim to the throne of the Charcoal Palace as strong as Bashumgarda's. By magical communication, we have treated with him, but he will not commit to joining us. A direct appeal—a meeting within the city itself—must change his mind.”

How will an envoy get into the City of Brass?

“One of Estumishu's followers has aided us there, with rumors of an ancient portal set within a shrine inside the city. Its power is primordial in origin, so it is not hindered by Tiamat's magic. This Portal of Forgotten Fire connects to another primordial shrine lost in the legendary Keening Delve. That warren of timeless tunnels and cursed ruins sits not far from the City of Brass, but its narrow passages cannot be trod by dragons. A group of mortals must find their way through the delve and enter the city.

“Estumishu negotiates from a position of both power and pride. Those who treat with him must be able to do so as his equals and to speak with Bahamut's voice. This mission cannot fail, my friends. I trust it to no one but you.”

PREPARATIONS

Once the characters agree to undertake Bahamut's mission to the City of Brass, they are given a few hours to prepare. The party's goals as set out by Bahamut are:

- ◆ Enter the Keening Delve and locate the shrine containing the Portal of Forgotten Fire.
- ◆ Gate across to the City of Brass and meet with Estumishu's contact.
- ◆ Attend a summit with the efreet noble and convince him and his followers to aid Bahamut's cause.

Bahamut does not know the specifics of what the heroes will face in the Keening Delve, but he can provide the information outlined under “The Keening

Delve,” below. He also briefs the characters regarding their contact in the City of Brass.

“Estumishu's agent is an efreet named Selerin. It is she who has been our go-between and who will take you to a secret council where you will speak. We know little of Estumishu except his hatred for Bashumgarda. He is a noteworthy noble of the efreets, but wickedness runs deep in even the best of their kind. It is said that his followers call him ‘The Smiling King,’ but I fear your reception may not be a friendly one.”

Bahamut will send the adventurers to within striking distance of their destination—a particular warren of the Keening Delve where the shrine concealing the Gate of Forgotten Fire is said to be found. Bahamut does not yet know, however, that persuading Estumishu and his followers to rise up against Tiamat will require that the heroes kill Bashumgarda. The characters will discover this only in the course of their negotiations.

Likewise, Bahamut is only partly correct in his assessment of Tiamat's reasons for holding the City of Brass. The Dragon Queen's plots to augment her forces with elemental power are already well underway (the characters will discover this in the course of the adventure—see page 32 for details).

A strict 24-hour time frame for the mission is not an absolute requirement. The adventurers should, however, have a clear sense that time is of the essence. The events in the City of Brass happen at a fast pace, and the characters can take only two extended rests during this adventure—one in the aftermath of the Keening Delve, the other while in the city (see the “Through the City of Brass” skill challenge, page 43, for more information).

When the heroes are ready, Bahamut leads them to the council chamber where Xerefri waits to take them to the Elemental Chaos.

TEST OF FIRE

As befits the home of the Efreet, the City of Brass is a settlement whose strength is built on the power of elemental fire. Hundreds of thousands of non-efreets also dwell here. Members of the mortal races find the environment within the city searingly hot but ultimately manageable. The adventurers' mission to the City of Brass will see them exposed to the realm's most potent hazards.

If none of the characters have any way to reduce at least some damage from exposure to fire (through powers or magic items), consider having Bahamut offer each hero a *potion of resistance* as part of the treasure given out for this adventure. Likewise, *potions of resistance* can find their way into the treasure found during the adventure (including gifts bestowed by Estumishu).

On the other hand, if the characters have somehow all picked up full-time fire immunity by this point in their adventuring careers, their excursion into the City of Brass might prove less challenging than you'd like. In such a case, feel free to chip away at the heroes' immunity from time to time. The elite defenders of the City of Brass might be specially trained to overcome immunity to fire, expecting that creatures intent on attacking the city would depend on such a defense. This training could take the form of the following power which can be added to any creature:

Defender of the Flame (minor; recharge)

This creature makes a basic attack that deals fire damage against a creature with immunity to fire. On a hit, the target takes no damage but loses its immunity to fire until the end of this creature's next turn.

PART TWO: FORGOTTEN FIRE

In order to breach the nigh-impenetrable defenses of the City of Brass, the adventurers must seek out an ancient primordial shrine in the heart of the Keening Delve—a legendary labyrinth twisting deep into the elemental rock on which the City of Brass is built.

ARRIVING IN THE ELEMENTAL CHAOS

A planar portal summoned by Xerefri brings the heroes to a rocky plateau above the City of Brass. Characters who have played “Beyond the Mottled Tower” (Dungeon #163) have seen the great Sea of Fire before, but the view from the vast basalt plate on which the City of Brass stands is more impressive by far.

With a shudder, the council chamber and Bahamut melt away to a field of shimmering silver, then a haze of red firelight and seething smoke. The heat hits like a hammer as you find yourselves standing atop a high bluff of black stone. To one side, a field of basalt stretches as far as the eye can see. To the other, perhaps three miles away if distance is reckoned here as it is in the world, the roiling Sea of Fire blazes with an unholy light.

At the sea’s edge, the walls of the great City of Brass burn with the brightness of molten gold. The light of the city is dimmed by a seething dome of magical force that surrounds it on all sides. Pressed up against this barrier, an army stands ready. Smaller figures and their camps spread around the walls of the city, but it is the dragons that dominate the field—a force perhaps five thousand strong.

Even at this distance, their battle cries ring loud over the roar of the sea and over a distant shrieking that seems to rise from the empty basalt plain behind you. Xerefri growls as he cranes his long neck toward that shrieking, away from the city. “There,” he says, indicating a great red-black rift that splits the ground a mile away. “May fate and goodness guide thee.” Then with a crack of thunder and a blast of wind, the silver exarch is gone.

THE KEENING DELVE

The vast basalt plate on which the City of Brass stands is threaded by an ageless and endless series of tunnels cut through a great mass of blood-red rock, as introduced in *Manual of the Planes*. The Keening Delve is a labyrinthine warren of ruined tunnels and caverns threaded by an endless shrieking wind—according to

A LASTING COALITION

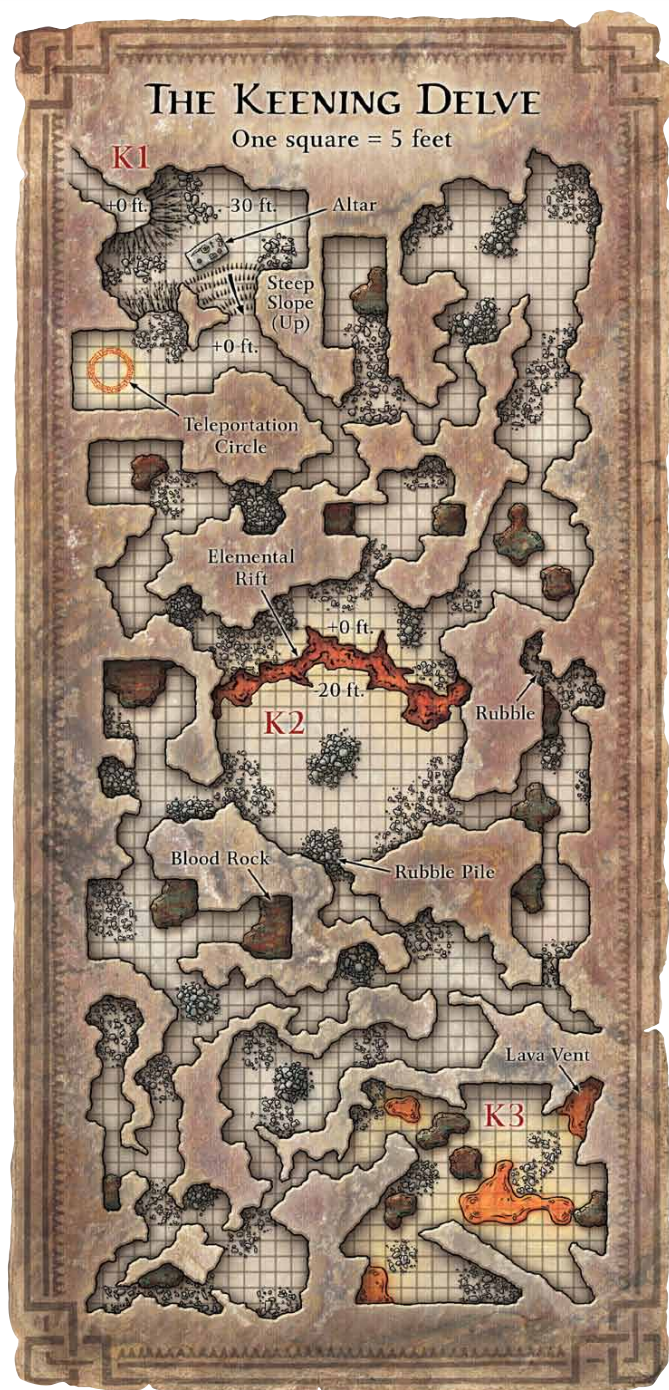
This penultimate episode of the Scales of War adventure path provides a good opportunity to pull together the threads and events of previous adventures, showing how Bahamut’s forces are drawn from a wide range of races and planes. If the adventurers liberated Nefelus in “Alliance at Nefelus” (Dungeon #165), that city-state’s deva mages should be front and center in Bahamut’s forces. If the heroes negotiated an alliance with Gith in “A Tyranny of Souls” (Dungeon #168), flying githyanki warships share the skies over the City of Brass with Bahamut’s dragons. Here and in the final battle (Encounters F1 and F2), the characters should see that their earlier efforts have paid off as the adventure path pushes toward Tiamat’s endgame.

legend, the echoing scream of a primordial slain in the Dawn War. In the heart of the Elemental Chaos, Haemnathuun fought against Bahamut, Bane, and Ioun, and was slain. Countless centuries later, the wind that is his dying breath has scoured his former citadel into ruin.

The Keening Delve is a place of madness and mystery now inhabited by slaads, demons, elementals, and other foul creatures. Great treasures are said to be lost there, including artifacts and magic from the Dawn War. Some say that Haemnathuun’s living heart still beats at the center of this labyrinth, patiently awaiting the chance to be reborn.

DAYS OF FUTURE PASSED

The portion of the Keening Delve presented in this adventure is one small fragment of this site’s endless maze of tunnels and caverns. The full extent of the ruins is outside the scope of the adventure—and, most likely, outside the interest of the heroes at this late stage of their adventuring careers. If you like continuity in your campaigns, a new generation of heroes might return to this spot in the long aftermath of the Scales of War, and hear legends or see signs of the adventurers’ presence here as they undertake their own expedition into the Keening Delve.



FEATURES OF THE KEENING DELVE

The caverns and chambers of the Keening Delve share the following common features.

Illumination: Except as indicated in the encounter descriptions, there is no light in any of the caverns of the Keening Delve.

Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: Passageways in the delve run from 6 to 10 feet high; caverns and chambers are typically 20 to 30 feet high. Walls, floors, and ceilings are all rough stone, even in areas that were clearly once finished chambers. There are numerous areas on the map where passageways are so narrow that Medium creatures must squeeze to gain access.

Blood Rock: Areas of mottled red-black stone across the cavern floor are blood rock, infused with the energy of ancient battles fought here. These patches of stone do not stand out unless the characters make specific attempts to discern them (a DC 28 Perception or Arcana check). A creature standing in an area of blood rock scores a critical hit on a natural die roll of 19 or 20.

Keening Wail: The Keening Delve rings out constantly with the shriek of a wailing wind. The ever-present din of this keening wail bestows a -10 penalty to Perception checks made in the Keening Delve and makes it impossible for creatures to communicate using speech at a distance of more than 10 squares.

APPROACH AND ENTRANCE

The heroes can easily make their way across the basalt flats to the fissure that marks this entrance to the Keening Delve.

The shrieking wind grows louder as you approach, to the point where speech becomes impossible at anything less than a shout. The red-black scar plunges deep into the basalt plain, forming a rough passageway leading down into darkness.

Unless you wish to develop further sections of the Keening Delve as a preamble to the characters' adventures in the City of Brass, the passageway runs approximately one-quarter mile before emerging in area K1 (see below).

ADDITIONAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE KEENING DELVE

Although much of this section of the Keening Delve is uninhabited, it should inspire caution and careful exploration on the part of the adventurers. The heroes should not automatically know that these areas are empty, so as to keep them on their toes when the encounters come. You can fill some of these empty spaces with additional encounters if you desire.

In particular, if the heroes are not already at least halfway through 27th level, add enough level-appropriate encounters to the Keening Delve to bring them close to 28th level by the time they reach the City of Brass.

Set up additional encounters in the Keening Delve by choosing encounter groups from those listed below, or use these groups as inspiration for creating your own encounters.

DENIZENS OF THE DELVE

Creatures of all sorts, from demons to elementals to mortal explorers, are drawn to the mysteries of the Keening Delve.

Level 25 Encounter (XP 35,400)

- ◆ 1 eladrin lich (level 24 elite controller, MM 176)
- ◆ 2 mariliths (level 24 elite skirmisher, MM 57)
- ◆ 2 soulspike devourers (level 20 elite soldier, MM 69)

Level 26 Encounter (XP 54,000)

- ◆ 1 balor (level 27 elite brute, MM 53)
- ◆ 1 beholder eye of chaos (level 25 elite artillery, MM2 25)
- ◆ 1 thunderblast cyclone (level 26 elite artillery, MM 105 or encounter K2)

Level 27 Encounter (XP 60,300)

- ◆ 2 abyssal rotfiends (level 26 controller, MM 52 or Encounter K3)
- ◆ 1 efreet karadjin (level 28 soldier, MM 100)
- ◆ 1 efreet pyresinger (level 25 controller, MM 99)
- ◆ 1 glabrezu (level 23 elite brute, MM 54)
- ◆ 2 great flameskulls (level 24 artillery, MM 109)

TRAPS AND HAZARDS

In addition to creature-based encounters, an expanded Keening Delve can feature a range of traps and hazards.

Entropic Collapse: Upgrade this hazard from level 23 to level 27 with a +4 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls (DMG 92).

Haemmathuun's Heart: A fragment of the fallen primordial's crystalline heart creates a deadly trap at the center of an ancient shrine. Modify a soul gem (DMG 93) to deal psychic damage instead of radiant damage.

Symbol of Suffering: Upgrade this hazard from level 24 to level 26 with a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +1 bonus to damage rolls (DMG 93).

Voice of Chaos: The walls of a ruined cavern echo and amplify the keening wail of the delve to a deadly hazard. Modify a far realm star trap (DMG2 74) to incorporate shimmering fields of sonic energy instead of motes (Perception DC 26 to notice). The hazard deals psychic damage instead of radiant damage.



KEENING DELVE ENCOUNTERS

As they seek the Portal of Forgotten Fire, the characters must contend with some of the mad denizens of the Keening Delve.

K1: SLAAD OUTPOST

A slaad war party makes use of an ancient portal to come and go from this ruined shrine.

As the adventurers move in from the entrance to the Keening Delve, read:

The narrow passage twists sharply as it descends, requiring a combination of squeezing and careful climbing to navigate. The keening wail of wind never lets up, even as the passage begins to straighten and level after perhaps a quarter-mile of slow movement.

From ahead, the pitch-black darkness shows a sudden flare of light. The passage appears to end at a narrow stone shelf some hundred strides ahead, a dimly lit cavern beyond.

Tactical Encounter: K1. Slaad Outpost (page 34).

K2: ELEMENTAL RIFT

Raw elemental energy pours forth from a great rift in the heart of this section of the Keening Delve.

When the characters are within 50 feet of either entrance, read:

From ahead, a distant din rises—a sound like an approaching storm, thunder echoing over the shrieking wind.

The rift is a hazard that the heroes must cross, but deadlier still are the elemental creatures drawn to its power.

Tactical Encounter: K2. Planar Rift (page 36).

K3: PRIMORDIAL SHRINE

This ancient shrine is home to a group of demons that make use of its latent planar power. Even over the noise of the wind, the adventurers can gain an advance warning of what awaits them.

When the characters are within 30 feet of the entrance to the shrine, read:

Faintly over the shriek of the keening wail that threads the caverns, a voice can be heard, shouting.

Perception Check, for a hero who understands Abyssal

DC 33: *The shrill tones of a demon howl in Abyssal, berating a servant from the sounds of it.*

The lava vent in the upper right arm of the chamber is the Portal of Forgotten Fire, which connects to an abandoned primordial temple in the City of Brass.

Tactical Encounter: K3. Primordial Shrine (page 38).

TO THE CITY OF BRASS

Once the portal has been activated, the characters can step through it to be taken to the City of Brass (see below). The portal sits on the surface of the lava pool and does not confer any protection against fire to those who plunge into it. A creature using the portal takes 2d6 + 8 fire damage.

PART THREE: THE CITY OF BRASS

The adventurers' mission for Bahamut takes them into the City of Brass—the great home of efreet and the heart of trade and commerce in the Elemental Chaos. The City of Brass is introduced in *Manual of the Planes*, and the information presented here is taken from that supplement. Efrete culture and society is explored in more detail in *The Plane Below*.

CITY OF BRASS TRAITS

Type: Elemental realm.

Size and Shape: Walled metropolis surrounded by a sea of fire; bounded.

Gravity: Elemental buoyancy.

Mutability: Normal.

Fire Affinity: Attacks with the fire keyword gain a +1 bonus to the attack roll, and attacks with the cold keyword deal half damage (ongoing cold damage is not affected).

ARRIVING IN THE CITY OF BRASS

The Portal of Forgotten Fire takes the heroes to a secret primordial shrine in the Ashlarks ward. (See the “Through the City of Brass” skill challenge on page 43 for general information on this ward and all areas of the city.)

A sudden lurch spills you to the stone floor of a chamber brightly lit by stone braziers. Ancient Primordial runes which match those seen in the Keening Delve line the walls, marking this place as another shrine. As you look around, you are distracted by movement. A young efreet female leaps to her feet where she appears to have been dozing in the corner. She nods deferentially. “I am Selerin, servant of my lord Estumishu. Please, follow me.”

Though not overly friendly, Selerin is deferential to the characters. She answers any questions put to her but knows little of the party’s mission other than that they are to meet with Estumishu and that the efreet noble is waiting.

THE CITY OF BRASS

The City of Brass is the grand home of the efreets, the greatest settlement in the Elemental Chaos, and the most significant center of trade and commerce in all the planes. The city is detailed in *Manual of the Planes*, but much of the information in that book has been summarized and reworked for this adventure in Encounter B2 (starting on page 43).

THE CITY OF BRASS

The capital city of the efreets, the City of Brass is the marketplace of the universe, where virtually anything can be bought or sold.

Population: Approximately 500,000. Efreets form the upper class of the city, with only a handful of disgraced members standing outside the noble caste. Other residents include salamanders, archons, azers, genasi, fire giants and titans, demons, and other intelligent elemental creatures, as well as a smaller number of visitors and immigrants from the natural world. Roughly two-thirds of the city’s residents are slaves.

Government: Bashumgarda is the Lord of the Efreets, ruling the city from his Charcoal Palace.

Defense: An entire caste of slaves are born and raised as soldiers to defend the City of Brass against incursion from the wider Elemental Chaos and the Abyss. These include archons, azers, and salamanders. A corps of fanatical efreet warriors called the Unquenchable patrol the Charcoal Palace. The city guard, housed in the Ashlarks district, consists primarily of archon and salamander soldiers.

Inns and Taverns: The best place for visitors to find food or lodging is the district of Iskalat, near the city’s harbor. The inns and taverns ringing the harbor

cater to travelers from across the Elemental Chaos and other planes beyond. Guests are advised to keep a close eye on their valuables and be wary of con artists, but little risk of death or enslavement exists.

Supplies: Commoner’s Market; Street of Steel in the Keffinspires; Marlgate warehouses; Pyraculum bazaar. Anything can be bought in the City of Brass. The Commoner’s Market in the district of Avencina is an ideal place to secure both ordinary and exotic goods of a nonmagical nature. The Keffinspires district is home to most of the city’s smiths, who make and sell magical and mundane items including weapons and armor. The warehouses of the Marlgate district hold goods brought from across the planes for trade in the city, and the bazaars of Pyraculum offer the greatest diversity of high-quality goods.

Temples: The City of Brass is hostile to worshipers of the deities. It houses no public temples to any gods. The primordial known as the Fire Lord, Imix, has an opulent temple in the Furnace called the Eternal Flame Pavilion. Residents of the city are strongly encouraged to offer praise and gratitude to the lord of the Charcoal Palace in large shrines located in each district.

FEATURES OF THE CITY OF BRASS

The streets and public spaces of the City of Brass share the following common features.

Illumination: The City of Brass is brightly lit at all times. The Sea of Fire, its canals, and hanging lamp-pots of unquenchable elemental fire all add to the fiery illumination cast off by the city's efreet residents and the countless other fire creatures that dwell here.

THE SECRET SHRINE

The secret shrine is set within the enclave of a lesser noble (an ally beholden to Estumishu). A false door leads out to an elevated courtyard. This residential area is empty at present on Estumishu's orders. From the courtyard, the adventurers can catch sight of the street below and get their first glimpse of the City of Brass preparing for war.

The City of Brass is well known as a center of commerce and interplanar trade, but the city you see as you follow Selerin across the courtyard bears no resemblance to the tales you've heard. The streets throng not with merchants and planar travelers but with armed troops. Elite efreet guard squads march along the main roads or soar above them. Packs of azers and archons, genasi and salamanders stand guard at every intersection, their slave status marked by the bracelets at their wrists.

Everywhere, the servants of Tiamat show their control over the city. Dragonspawn lead squads of slave warriors or bark orders to scowling efreets. Dragons of every size perch atop buildings or soar overhead. The largest of these is a gargantuan blue beast whose terrible cry echoes across the city as he wings his way along the underside of the shimmering force dome. On the other side of that barrier, Bahamut's forces circle in response, watching and waiting for their chance to attack.

CITY OF BRASS ENCOUNTERS

The characters have come to the City of Brass expecting only to have to broker an alliance with the noble Estumishu. Winning the support of the efreets for an insurrection against Bashumgarda and Tiamat will prove to be a complicated task.

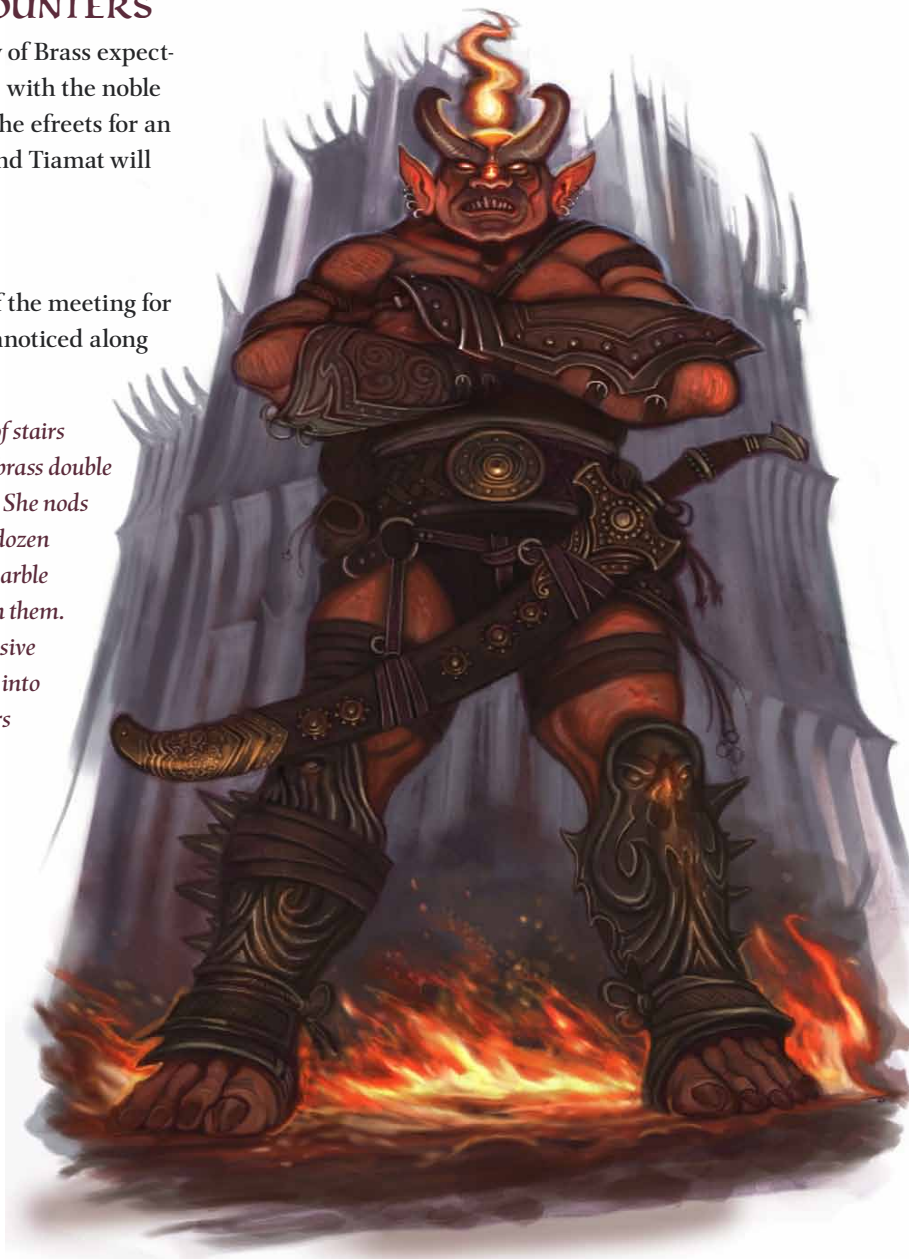
BI: EFREET ALLIANCE

Estumishu has chosen the location of the meeting for maximum security. The heroes go unnoticed along the short journey from the shrine.

At the end of the courtyard, a wide flight of stairs leads down into darkness. At the bottom, brass double doors open at a coded knock from Selerin. She nods as she falls back to let you enter. Inside, a dozen efreet guards lining both sides of a wide marble corridor watch darkly as you pass between them.

Beyond the end of the corridor, a massive vaulted chamber opens up, its roof rising into shadow a hundred feet overhead. Braziers and torches along all the walls shed light against a shroud of smoke and heat haze and show that the floor rises in six great tiers around a central open court twenty paces on a side.

This place is one of the many Crucible Courts of the City of Brass—great meeting halls where efreet nobles work out disputes with a combination of subtle diplomacy and brutal martial skill.



The tiers of the room might hold three-hundred efreet packed shoulder to shoulder, but only a dozen are here now, alone at the far end of the chamber. At their center stands a hulking figure in fine jewelry and with a gem-studded scimitar at his belt to demonstrate his rank. As you approach, the figure seems to offer you an awkward smile, but that grin is overshadowed by the burning anger of his eyes.

“Welcome,” the efreet noble says, but there is no hint of welcome in his voice. His great protruding teeth flash the false smile again as he appraises you, one by one. “You stand before Estumishu. Speak the will of your masters, and quickly.”

Persuading Estumishu to support Bahamut’s cause and lead the angry efreet nobility in an uprising against Tiamat will be an arduous process for the adventurers. A complex skill challenge provides the framework for these unique negotiations.

Skill Challenge: B1. Efreet Alliance (page 41).

BASHUMGARDA MUST DIE

The characters’ success or failure sets the groundwork for their subsequent adventures in the City of Brass. Finding and killing Bashumgarda is the only way to win Estumishu’s allegiance. This new mission can be pressed upon the party in one of two ways.

SUCCESS

If the heroes succeed at the skill challenge, they win Estumishu’s favor. The Smiling King’s smirk is real as he lays out his terms.

“You have carried yourselves favorably. Honor to your masters and to you. Estumishu, true Lord of the Efreet and challenger to the traitor Bashumgarda, will ally as agreed with Bahamut and the forces of the Platinum Dragon on the following three conditions: all dragons and dragonkin are to quit the City of Brass, which shall be returned to the rule of the efreet; the wealth of the Dragon Queen’s armies shall

remain in the city to offset debts incurred by Bashumgarda’s treachery; and the gates of the city shall be opened to Bahamut’s forces only once Bashumgarda is slain.”

Whether or not the players saw this development coming, the characters are likely to want to argue their sudden involvement in an assassination. Estumishu will not back down from this demand, because an assassination attempt by outsiders leads to a guaranteed win for him regardless of whether it succeeds or fails. If the adventurers kill Bashumgarda, Estumishu takes the throne with nothing connecting him to the killing, making it easier for him to bring Bashumgarda loyalists under his control. If the heroes fail to kill Bashumgarda, the attempt will drive Bashumgarda into a rage and draconian countermeasures that alienate even more of his followers and shift the balance of power further in Estumishu’s favor.

Estumishu has no interest in further discussion. He and his entourage leave the Crucible Court immediately once his demands have been declared.

FAILURE

If the characters fail the skill challenge, Estumishu makes no effort to hide his disdain.

“You are mortal children playing at the tasks of heroes. Go back to your Bahamut with this message: Your war means nothing and your forces will fall, as will Tiamat’s armies, in one year, or ten, or one hundred. For as long as we must, the efreet shall endure, and we will not forget the treachery of dragonkind.”

The efreet lord and his entourage leave the Crucible Court, taking to the air once outside. As soon as the adventurers leave, however, a voice calls to them.

“My lord Estumishu is great, but his wrath is easily kindled. Forgive him, please.” From the smoke and shadow of the stairs, Selerin steps forth and bows to you. “I am not worthy

of rank to enter the Crucible Court, but I have heard its outcome. My loyalty is to my lord Estumishu but also to my city and its people. I sense you are loyal to your masters. If they would see the City of Brass join with them against the Dragon Queen, there is still a way.”

THE PRICE OF FAILURE

The adventurers’ mission to kill Bashumgarda is challenging enough in and of itself. However, failure in this skill challenge makes the task even more daunting.

Success in this challenge means that Estumishu provides the characters with enough information to guide them relatively safely on their journey across the city. In addition to the heroes receiving a general overview of the City of Brass and its wards (see “Movement Through the City” on page 43), the efreet noble’s assistance establishes the baseline DCs and the strength of encounters in the “Through the City of Brass” skill challenge (see below).

A failure in this challenge means that the characters must set out with only the minimal knowledge of the city given to them by Selerin. This covers the overview of the city and its wards. The adventurers’ lack of specific knowledge forces them to start the “Through the City of Brass” skill challenge with two failures and all the penalties those failures impose. See that challenge (and specifically the “Success and Failure” section) on page 46 for more information.

Estumishu will not allow any of his servants to accompany the heroes on their quest, because he cannot afford to be connected to their actions. Likewise, the young Selerin is a mid-paragon level combatant at best and cannot travel with the characters.

Instead of Estumishu, it is Selerin who tasks the characters with killing Bashumgarda—but as a plea, not an order.

“Lord Bashumgarda has lost the favor of more noble houses than he knows. My lord Estumishu is strongest of those, but there are others. If Bashumgarda falls, they will rally against the blue exarch, whether or not Estumishu leads them. The scepter of the city controls the gates and

the magical wards that hold Bahamut’s forces at bay, and Bashumgarda controls the scepter. With Bashumgarda dead, those wards can be broken.”

Before undertaking their mission into the city, the heroes can return to the secret shrine to take an extended rest. They have only one other opportunity to take an extended rest while in the city.

B2: THROUGH THE CITY OF BRASS

The adventurers learn Bashumgarda’s location from Estumishu or Selerin (depending on the outcome of the previous skill challenge).

“The false Lord of the Efreets is rarely seen outside the barracks of the Ring of Fire. He claims to hold court there with his military advisors, but it is fear that keeps him within. Gain the barracks and you find him.”

The heroes must make their way to the Furnace—the political heart of the City of Brass and site of the Charcoal Palace. Meeting the Lord of the Efreets in combat comes only at the end of an arduous journey.

The characters begin the challenge alone in the courtyard adjoining the now-deserted Crucible Court. From there, they gain a more detailed view of the city and can strategize.

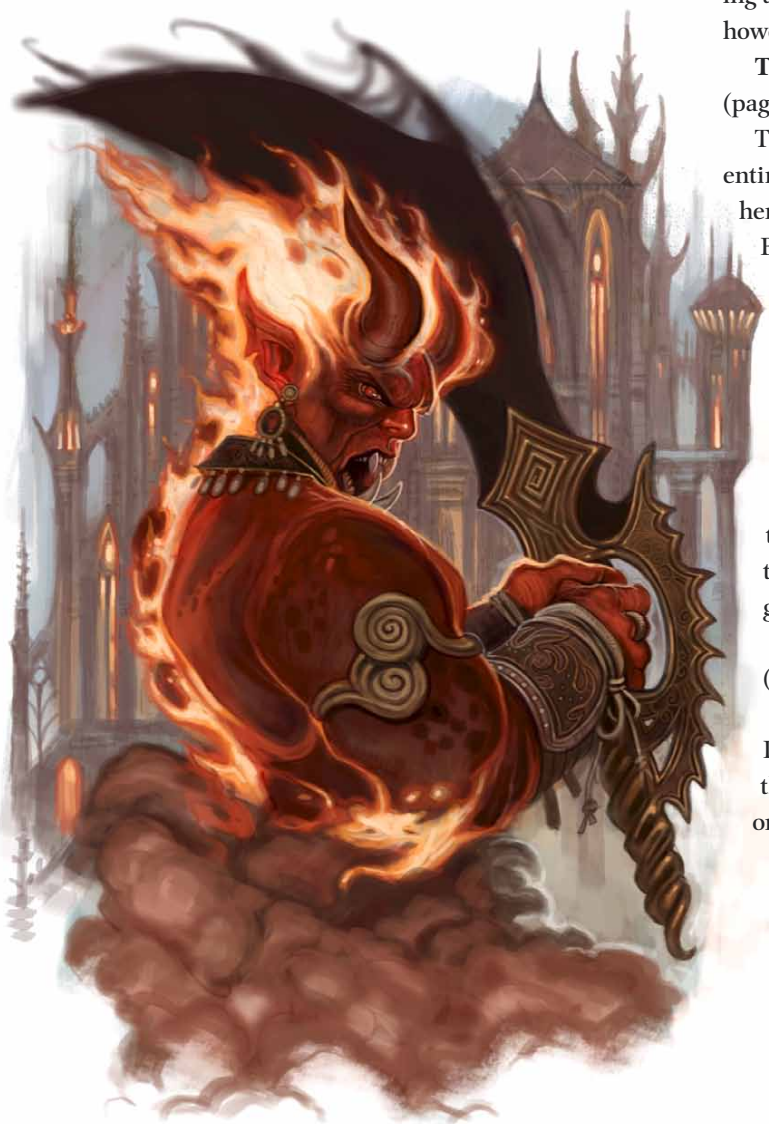
Preparations for battle seem to hold the city in an iron grip. In addition to the movements of guards and troops noted earlier, wagons heaped high with arms and armor are in constant motion along the streets, which are packed with throngs of efreets and lesser city folk. Moving within the city and under the watchful eye of Tiamat’s forces will be a challenge of the highest order.

The heroes’ journey from Ashlarks to the Furnace takes the form of a complex skill challenge that triggers the following three tactical encounters as well as additional encounters with wandering patrols. This travel must be undertaken on foot; teleportation has been shut down by the powerful magical wards protecting the city, and flying would drastically increase the number of encounters the adventurers will face. (Point this out if the players seem inclined to flying.) See the skill challenge for more information.

Skill Challenge: B2. Through the City of Brass (page 43).



The characters have a chance to take one extended rest at some point in their journey across the City of Brass. Their choice of when to do so should depend on how well they avoid patrols and how they fare in the encounters.



B3: CANAL CROSSING

Fiery canals flow in from the Sea of Fire to crisscross the city. Crossing most canals is simply a matter of avoiding guards while moving over bridges, hopping across the decks of moored barges, or simply jumping at a narrow crossing. One well-watched crossing, however, requires a full assault against the guards.

Tactical Encounter: B3. Canal Crossing (page 50).

The choice of where to place encounter B3 is entirely up to you. It works best as the final canal the heroes must cross on their way toward the Furnace.

Be aware that characters moving from Marlgate or Keffinspires to Avencina, or from Marlgate to the Char, have only one canal to cross.

B4: GATE CRASHERS

As the adventurers approach the Furnace, they must deal with the increased defenses of that most important ward. The walls in the interior of the city have been sealed, making it necessary for the heroes to fight their way through one of two great gates.

Tactical Encounter: B4. Gate Crashers (page 52).

This encounter takes place either at the Phoenix Gate (accessible only from Avencina or the Char) or at the Gate of the Fallen (accessible only from the Arches or the Foundry).

B5: LORD OF THE EFREETES

The heroes make it to the Furnace as the “Through the City of Brass” skill challenge comes to an end. Bashumgarda is at the barracks of the Ring of Fire. The characters must deal with those fanatical guards before facing off against the Lord of the Efreetes.

Tactical Encounter: B5. Lord of the Efreetes (page 54).

THE CALL TO BATTLE

With Bashumgarda dead or captured, any other efreetes within sight of his battle with the adventurers quickly flee. Word of the fight spreads, but the heroes’ immediate concerns will override any threat of retaliation.

The ceremonial scepter Bashumgarda carries is a magic item that controls the gates and the magical wards locking down the City of Brass. If the characters have not learned this from Selerin (see page 30), any Arcana check reveals the scepter’s powers. It then takes a DC 33 Arcana check to activate the scepter, allowing the wielder to will the gates open and the city’s magical defenses to fall.

The blurred haze above the city shatters like glass. A crack of thunder shakes the ground as the dome of force shreds to gray smoke and ash which is torn away quickly by the wind. In the fading echo, a moment of stunned silence hangs. Then with the collective roar of ten-thousand dragons, the battle for the City of Brass begins.

PART FOUR: BAHAMUT'S FALL

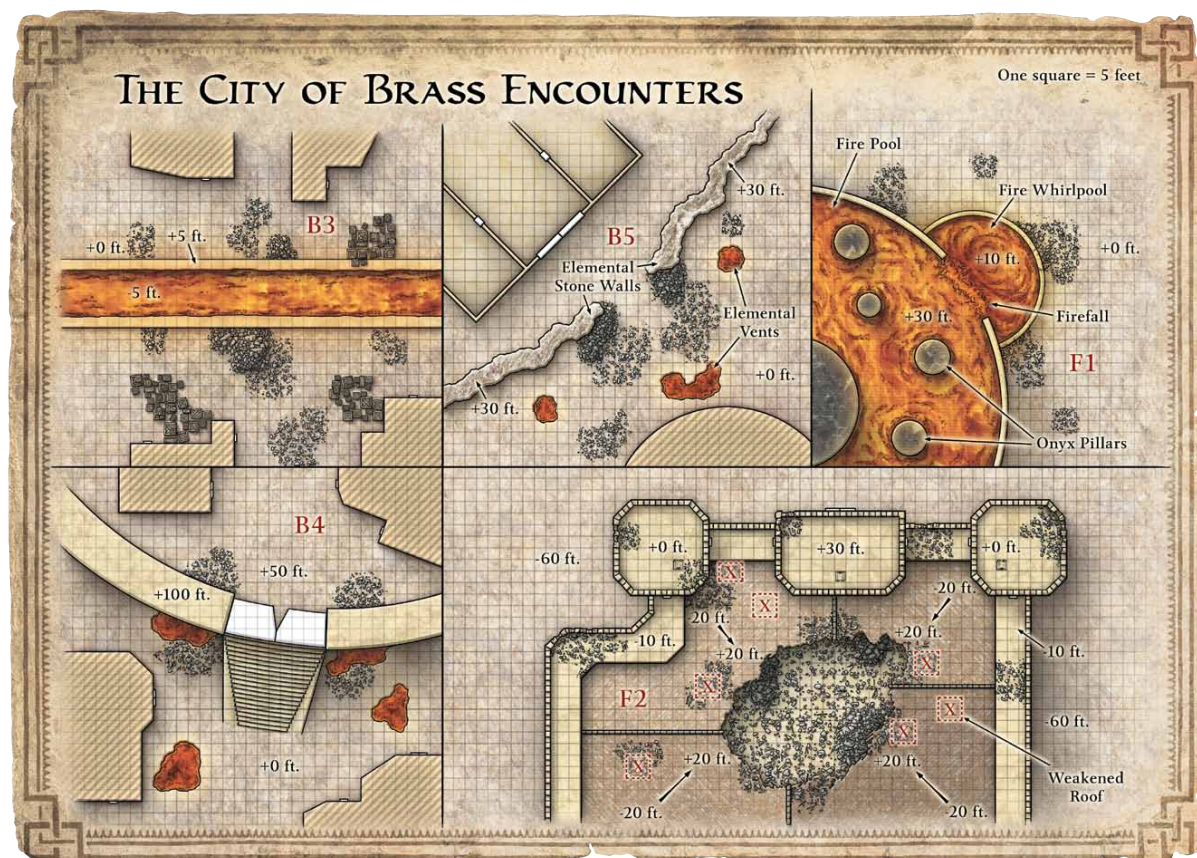
The Eternal Flame Pavilion is a shrine to the primordial Fire Lord Imix, but its power has been corrupted by Tiamat. The Dragon Queen had hoped to use the City of Brass as the center of her campaign against the reborn Bahamut, with the power of the shrine fueling dark rituals that will imbue her forces with the raw energy of the Elemental Chaos. Now, only the characters can stop her.

If they have not already done so, the heroes can take a short rest in the aftermath of the previous encounter. They have no chance to take an extended rest before the final two encounters.

BATTLEGROUND

The battle raging around the characters is epic in both scale and scope, but their focus is on the Eternal Flame Pavilion on the far side of the Furnace. While it is certainly possible to expand this final section of the adventure, doing so is not recommended. The adventurers have no chance to take an extended rest in the heat of battle, and it's likely they'll have already expended resources in the battle with Bashumgarda. Taking on the guardians of Imix's shrine and Tiamat's blue exarch might well be an impossible challenge.

Once the magical wards that protect the city have been dropped, teleportation is no longer shut down within the city. Likewise, with the city's efreet and dragons locked in combat, the heroes can fly without repercussion.



The heroes are likely to need a short rest after dispatching Bashumgarda, and they have plenty of time to do so. Even as Bahamut's forces pour into the city, however, the scepter bestows information on the adventurer who used it to drop the defensive wards.

The view from the slopes of the Furnace shows that as many efreet are fighting against Tiamat's forces as are standing with them. Estumishu has his insurrection, whether he controls it or not. Just as the powers of the scepter became known to you, so does the corruption that infests it. Like a dark shadow, the knowledge of the pacts Bashumgarda

wrought with Tiamat twists through your mind. Those pacts involved more than just fealty and false promise.

The shrine of the Fire Lord Imix at the Eternal Flame Pavilion is a site of great power revered by the efreet. That power has been corrupted by Tiamat, whose foul rituals now siphon off primordial, elemental energy from the shrine to the war dragons leading the battle against Bahamut's forces. With the breaking of the magical wards around the city, similar wards governing the flow of energy through the shrine have also been shattered. If the corruption of the shrine is not ended, the Dragon Queen's armies will drink fully of its power, becoming unstoppable before the end.

BAHAMUT'S FALL ENCOUNTERS

As the battle for the City of Brass rages around them, the characters must break Tiamat's control of the shrine of the Fire Lord Imix, then undertake a final battle against Tiamat's blue exarch for the fate of a wounded god.

F1: ETERNAL FLAME

As the adventurers prepare to assault the Eternal Flame Pavilion, Bahamut enters the fray above them.

The battle above and across the city is a maelstrom of draconic fury. Storms of fire and lightning tear the sky, louder than the shrieks of the dying and the roar of the victorious. At the center of the carnage, the great blue exarch Namissi fights with the speed of a creature half his size. Bahamut's forces fall as fast as they can throw themselves at him. The exarch and the war dragons closest to him are surrounded by a shroud of fire, the product of Tiamat's foul magic and the energy of the shrine.

Then, a white light flares to scour the city's shroud of black smoke. Bahamut leads the charge of his exarchs through the sky, smashing into Namissi's forces like a living wave. As Bahamut and Namissi fight, you see and hear the pain in the Platinum Dragon's roar. The aura of primordial fire that Namissi wields can burn even a god! Smoke and flame wrap around both dragons like a shroud.

This is a good place to remind players that Bahamut is still weak from his rebirth. If Bahamut and his forces are to triumph, Tiamat's control over the shrine of Imix must be broken.

Tactical Encounter: F1. Eternal Flame (page 57).

F2: NAMISSI'S REVENGE

Still weakened from his rebirth, Bahamut has fallen in battle with the blue exarch Namissi. Only the characters can save him.

Tactical Encounter: F2. Namissi's Revenge (page 60).

CONCLUSION

With the death of Namissi and the breaking of Tiamat's control over the shrine of Imix, the Dragon Queen's forces are quickly routed by the remainder of Bahamut's army and the forces of the City of Brass.



While the battle winds down, the heroes can descend to the rubble pile where Bahamut is half-buried. Thankfully, their worst fears are soon allayed.

Beneath the fall of rubble, Bahamut still lives. His great sides heave as he draws ragged breaths and his bright eyes slowly open. Rubble spills like water from his scorched scales as, with labored strength, the Platinum Dragon rises.

Though badly wounded, Bahamut is in no danger of dying again. His weakness endures, however, and sets up the events of the final episode in the adventure path.

CHAMPIONS OF BAHAMUT

The City of Brass has been devastated by the battle, but the efreet will rebuild. With Bashamgurda and Namissi gone, Estumishu quickly establishes consensus among the efreet for his claim to the throne even as he offers his unwavering loyalty to Bahamut. (If the heroes failed the earlier skill challenge, they can take an active role in new negotiations to secure Estumishu's fealty. Having demonstrated their full power, they should have no trouble persuading the new Lord of the Efreet to parley.)

When the battle is done and the characters have taken a well-deserved rest, Bahamut summons them to the ruined courtyard of the Charcoal Palace.

Amid the rubble and ruin, an honor guard of efreet and dragons flanks you on both sides. "Champions," the Platinum Dragon says again, "your bravery has won the battle for the City of Brass. The Dragon Queen's forces are routed, her blue exarch slain. This is a great day ... but I fear it will end again in darkness before the dawn can finally be won."

The adventurers have won the day and saved Bahamut, but their battle against Tiamat is not over yet.

ENCOUNTER K1: SLAAD OUTPOST

Encounter Level 27 (64,000 XP)

SETUP

1 black slaad overlord (B)

1 red slaad reaver (R)

4 black slaad void nexus (E)

If the black slaad void nexus successfully summons reinforcements, one additional red slaad reaver and four more void nexuses show up as described in Tactics.

The level of ambient noise in the Keening Delve allows the heroes to move along the upper passage unnoticed. The slaads automatically see any characters who draw attention to themselves (including approaching with bright light).

When the adventurers can see into the cavern below, read:

The passageway ends in a steep cliff dropping 30 feet to the rubble-strewn floor of a rough cavern. Four slaads stand to either side of a slab of glowing blood-red stone. Their erratic movements and howling voices suggest that some kind of ritual is in progress.

Perception Check

DC 17: Another cliff and a steep rubble slope mark a second cavern beyond, faintly lit by a pulsing blue light.

DC 26: Two more slaads linger in the distant shadows.

A dark ritual is in progress as the party approaches. Unless they are noticed, the characters can attack with surprise.

TACTICS

In its first round of combat, the black slaad void-howler closest to the teleportation circle makes a *ray of entropy* attack, then steps into the circle and disappears. In the third round, that entropic returns with four other entropics and a red slaad reaver, which step out of the teleportation circle to attack at once.

The overlord stays in constant motion, making *chaos strikes* against lightly armored foes. It uses *black wrath* the first time it can target two or more foes.

The reavers use *reaving leap* as often as possible, making *bite* or *claw* attacks in other rounds.

2 Red Slaad Reavers (R)	Level 27 Soldier
Large elemental humanoid	XP 11,000 each
Initiative +22	Senses Perception +21; low-light vision
HP 249; Bloodied 124	
AC 43; Fortitude 40, Reflex 38, Will 37	
Immune chaos phage (MM 239)	
Speed 8, teleport 4	
⊕ Bite (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +33 vs. AC; 3d10 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the reaver's next turn.	
⊕ Claw (standard; at-will) ◆ Disease	
Reach 2; +33 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the slaad makes a secondary attack against the same target.	
Secondary Attack: +32 vs. Fortitude; on a hit, the target contracts chaos phage (MM 239).	
⊕ Reaving Leap (standard; recharge ☞ ☞)	
The slaad shifts 4 squares and makes two <i>claw</i> attacks at any point during that movement. If either <i>claw</i> attack hits, the target is slowed until the end of the slaad's next turn.	
⚡ Horrid Croak (standard; encounter) ◆ Fear	
Close blast 5; +32 vs. Fortitude; the target is immobilized until the end of the slaad's next turn.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Primordial
Skills Athletics +27, Stealth +25	
Str 29 (+22)	Dex 25 (+20)
	Wis 26 (+21)
Con 25 (+20)	Int 13 (+14)
	Cha 18 (+17)

The entropics spread out to avoid area attacks. They use *ray of entropy* whenever possible, falling back on *claw* attacks only when pressed into melee.

DEVELOPMENT

If the heroes attempt to flee, they are pursued by any surviving entropics. The overlord and the reavers pursue only if they are not bloodied.

Black Slaad Overlord (B)	Level 29 Skirmisher
Large elemental humanoid	XP 15,000
Initiative +26	Senses Perception +22; low-light vision
HP 267; Bloodied 133; see also <i>zone of oblivion</i>	
AC 43; Fortitude 40, Reflex 42, Will 40	
Immune disease; Resist insubstantial	
Speed 6, teleport 3	
⊕ Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +36 vs. AC; 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.	
⊕ Chaos Strike (standard; at-will)	
The black slaad overlord shifts 3 squares and makes two <i>claw</i> attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target loses a healing surge.	
✈ Eye of the Overlord (standard; at-will) ◆ Teleport	
Ranged 20; +34 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 6 damage, and the overlord teleports to within 5 squares of the target.	
✖ Black Wrath (standard; encounter) ◆ Necrotic	
Area burst 2 within 10; +34 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 10 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends both).	
⚡ Zone of Oblivion (when the overlord drops to 0 hit points) ◆ Zone	
Close burst 2; +34 vs. Reflex; 4d10 damage. The burst becomes a black void until the end of the encounter. The zone blocks line of sight. Any creature that enters the zone or starts its turn there takes 3d10 + 6 damage.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Primordial
Skills Athletics +26, Stealth +29	
Str 25 (+21)	Dex 30 (+24)
	Wis 26 (+22)
Con 27 (+22)	Int 15 (+16)
	Cha 19 (+18)

8 Black Slaad Voidhowlers (E) Level 26 Minion Brute

Large elemental humanoid XP 2,250 each

Initiative +21 **Senses** Perception +15; low-light vision

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion; see also *entropic void*.

AC 38; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 37

Immune disease

Speed 6, teleport 3

⚔ **Claws** (standard; at-will)

Reach 2; +29 vs. AC; 12 damage, and until the start of the black slaad voidhowler's next turn, the target takes 5 extra damage whenever the target is hit by an attack.

☯ **Ray of Entropy** (standard; at-will)

Ranged 20; +27 vs. Reflex; 10 damage, and ongoing 7 damage (save ends).

⚡ **Nexus Void** (immediate interrupt; when reduced to 0 hit points)

Close burst 2; +27 vs. Fortitude; 10 damage, and the target is pulled 1 square. The voidhowler (see below) gains a +1 bonus to its next attack roll.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills Stealth +26

Str 29 (+22) **Dex** 26 (+21) **Wis** 15 (+15)

Con 25 (+20) **Int** 12 (+14) **Cha** 25 (+20)

Entropic Nexus

Hazard

Level 26 Lurker

XP 9,000

A cloud of shimmering black energy suddenly flares above the blood-red altar, a shrieking roar rising as it advances.

Hazard: The entropic nexus is a magically created gate to the Far Realm. It devours creatures, then spits them back out as horrid abominations. The entropic nexus fills an area 3 squares on a side.

Perception

◆ Perception cannot be used to notice this hazard before it appears. Once the entropic nexus appears above the altar, no check is necessary to notice it.

Additional Skill: Arcana

◆ DC 24: A character can identify the entropic nexus once it appears.

Initiative +23

Trigger

The entropic nexus appears and rolls initiative when any creature except a slaad moves adjacent to the altar.

Attack

Move Action Personal

The entropic nexus slides 6 squares toward the nearest nonslaad each round.

Standard Action

Melee reach 3

Target: A living creature

Primary Attack: +29 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d10 + 5 damage, and the target is grabbed and pulled into a square adjacent to the entropic nexus. On each of its subsequent turns, the entropic nexus deals 3d10 + 5 damage to targets that it has grabbed. The nexus can grab up to eight targets at a time. Make a secondary attack against each grabbed and bloodied target.

Secondary Attack: +29 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is pulled into the Far Realm and removed from play. At the end of the nexus's next turn, the target appears in an unoccupied space adjacent to the nexus. The target returns from the Far Realm as a misshapen and horrid version of its former self. It is helpless until a Remove Affliction ritual can be performed, at which point the target is no longer helpless and reverts to its former form.

Countermeasures

◆ A character who is trained in Arcana can engage in a skill challenge to banish the nexus: Arcana DC 31; complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures); each check is a standard action. Success in the challenge banishes the nexus. Failure in the challenge causes it to split into two unstable nexuses that occupy adjacent spaces. Each round, each unstable nexus rolls a saving throw at the end of its turn. On a failed saving throw, an unstable nexus winks out of existence.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Ceiling: 40 feet above the cavern floor; the entrance passageway is 10 feet high.

Illumination: The altar stone and the teleportation circle glow to shed dim light throughout the area.

Rubble: These areas of loose scree are difficult terrain. A creature that runs, charges, or makes a double move through rubble must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Altar: A 2-foot-high slab of bloodstained rock serves as an altar to some unnamed Far Realm entity. The altar provides cover and is difficult terrain. If

any nonslaad moves adjacent to the altar, an entropic nexus erupts around it. See the hazard statistics block.

Steep Slope: The chamber slopes steeply upward away from the entrance. A creature ascending the slope treats it as difficult terrain. A creature descending the slope or making a melee attack while on the slope must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Teleportation Circle: A teleportation circle is set into the adjoining chamber. It is imbued with a permanent Planar Portal ritual that functions only for the slaads. Any nonslaad that moves adjacent to the circle takes 2d8 psychic damage. Any nonslaad that enters or starts its turn within the circle takes 4d8 psychic damage and is stunned (save ends).



ENCOUNTER K2: PLANAR RIFT

Encounter Level 28 (69,500 XP)

SETUP

1 thunderblast cyclone (T)

Whichever path the adventurers take to approach this cavern, the view is the same.

When the characters can see into this area, read:

An enormous ovoid chamber opens up ahead, its uneven floor split from side to side. This great rift surges with the power of an elemental storm. Fierce winds swirl as gouts of fire and lightning touch the ceiling.

Arcana Check

DC 28: Pure elemental energy surges dangerously within the rift, but its full power waits to be unleashed.

6 Shardstorm Icewinds Level 27 Minion Skirmisher

Medium elemental magical beast (air, cold, earth) XP 2,750 each

Initiative +24 **Senses** Perception +20

Iceblast aura 1; each enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to all defenses. The area of the aura is difficult terrain for creatures without ice walk.

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 41; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 38

Immune cold, disease, poison

Speed 0, fly 8 (hover)

⊕ **Ice-Shard Slam** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Cold**
+30 vs. Fortitude; 15 cold damage.

Vortex Step (move; at-will)

The shardstorm icewind shifts 4 squares.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Str 13 (+14) **Dex** 29 (+22) **Wis** 24 (+20)

Con 26 (+21) **Int** 7 (+11) **Cha** 9 (+12)

Perception Check

DC 33: *The swirling wind is more than just a product of the elemental rift. A thunderblast cyclone lurks at the center of the chamber.*

The heroes have ample time to strategize their approach. The elemental rift, however, is a more potent threat than the waiting cyclone. See the hazard statistics block and “Features of the Area” for details.

When the rift activates, read:

A sudden surge of elemental energy shakes the floor and walls of the cavern as the rift flares with a blinding white light. An unearthly shriek heralds the appearance of more elementals. Their swirling forms phase into view within the storm.

Thunderblast Cyclone (T) Level 26 Elite Artillery

Huge elemental magical beast (air, water) XP 18,000

Initiative +24 **Senses** Perception +16

HP 382; **Bloodied** 191

AC 42; **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 35

Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 30 lightning, 30 thunder

Saving Throws +2

Speed fly 10 (hover)

Action Points 1

⊕ **Lightning Arc** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Lightning**
Reach 3; +29 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 11 lightning damage.

⊕ **Lightning Bolt** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Lightning**
Ranged 10; +29 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 11 lightning damage.

⚡ **Thunderclap** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Thunder**
Close burst 2; +28 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 9 thunder damage.

⚡ **Charged Mist** (standard; recharge ☒ ☒) ♦ **Lightning**
Close burst 3; automatic hit; 1d10 + 9 lightning damage, and the thunderblast cyclone becomes insubstantial until the end of its next turn.

⚡ **Lightning Storm** (standard; begins uncharged; recharges when the thunderblast cyclone uses *charged mist*) ♦ **Lightning, Thunder**

Area burst 3 within 20; +29 vs. Reflex; 6d8 + 9 lightning and thunder damage. *Miss:* Half damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Str 25 (+20) **Dex** 32 (+24) **Wis** 17 (+16)

Con 29 (+22) **Int** 8 (+12) **Cha** 15 (+15)

Three shardstorm icewinds appear each round on the elemental rift’s initiative count. When all six icewinds have appeared (after two rounds), the caustic slayer appears (in the third round).

Caustic Slayer Level 27 Elite Lurker

Huge elemental magical beast (earth) XP 22,000

Initiative +27 **Senses** Perception +21

HP 388; **Bloodied** 194

AC 41; **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 38

Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 30 acid

Saving Throws +2

Speed 7 (earth walk), climb 7; see also *malleable form*

Action Points 1

⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Acid**

Reach 3; +30 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 8 damage, and ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends). If the target cannot see the caustic slayer, it instead takes 2d10 + 8 damage, and ongoing 15 acid damage (save ends).

⊕ **Eyeburn** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Acid**

Ranged 20; +30 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 10 acid damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the caustic slayer’s next turn.

⚡ **Slayer’s Fury** (standard; at-will)

The caustic slayer makes two basic attacks.

⚡ **Caustic Breath** (standard; recharge ☒ ☒) ♦ **Acid**

Close blast 5; +30 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 8 acid damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 acid damage and is slowed (save ends both).

⚡ **Sight-Burning Cloud** (standard; recharge ☒ ☒) ♦ **Acid, Zone**

Close burst 2; the burst creates a zone of corrosive grit centered on the caustic slayer that lasts until the end of its next turn. When the slayer moves, the zone moves with it, remaining centered on it. Any creature that ends its turn within the zone takes 20 acid damage and is blinded until the end of its next turn. The zone’s area is heavily obscured for all creatures except the caustic slayer, which treats it as lightly obscured. *Sustain Minor:* The zone persists.

Malleable Form

A caustic slayer can squeeze through spaces as though it were a Large creature.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Skills Stealth +28

Str 24 (+20) **Dex** 30 (+23) **Wis** 26 (+21)

Con 26 (+21) **Int** 10 (+13) **Cha** 9 (+12)

Elemental Rift
Hazard**Level 28 Blaster**
XP 13,000

The cavern is split in two by a great rift surging with pure elemental energy.

Hazard: The rift surges with raw elemental power, making it dangerous to creatures that get too close (see “Features of the Area”). In addition, the presence of creatures other than elementals causes the rift to flare up, creating a deadly hazard.

Initiative +24

Trigger

The elemental rift is triggered and rolls initiative when any creature that does not have the elemental origin approaches within 2 squares of it.

Attack

Standard Action **Ranged 10**

Target: 1d4 random creatures that do not have the elemental origin in range.

Attack: +31 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8 + 10 cold, fire, and lightning damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Special: Once triggered, the elemental rift floods the cavern with unnaturally bright light. Any creature with darkvision must make a DC 26 Endurance check at the start of each of its turns or be dazed. Once a creature makes a successful check, it is immune to this effect. Elemental creatures are immune to this effect.

Countermeasures

- ◆ With a DC 28 Arcana check (a minor action), a character gains a +2 bonus to Reflex against the elemental rift’s next attack.

TACTICS

The thunderblast cyclone enters combat only if attacked or when the first creature crosses the rift. It uses *charged mist* and *lightning storm* as often as possible, falling back to prevent creatures from fleeing the chamber.

The shardstorm icewinds spread out against individual targets, avoiding area attacks and maximizing the difficult terrain created by their *iceblast aura*.

The caustic slayer stays at the edge of the fray, making *caustic breath* and *sight-burning cloud* attacks as often as possible. While those powers recharge, it makes double *eyeburn* attacks with *slayer’s fury*, falling back into melee only if pressed.

DEVELOPMENT

If the characters attempt to flee, the elementals pursue.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Ceiling: The cavern toward the top of the tactical map is 20 feet high. The cavern toward the bottom of the map is 40 feet high at its center and 20 feet high along the walls.

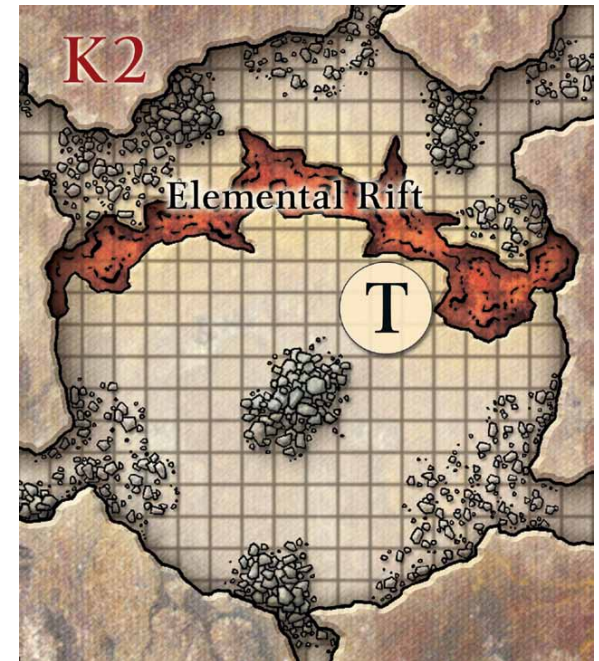
Illumination: When the adventurers first approach, the elemental rift fills the area with dim light. Once the rift is triggered, it fills the area with unnaturally bright light. See the hazard statistics block for more information.

Rubble: These areas of loose scree are difficult terrain. A creature that runs, charges, or makes a double move through rubble must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

The rubble in this cavern is attuned to the elemental energy surging within the rift. If any creature that does not have the elemental origin ends its turn in a square of rubble, the rocky floor thrusts up beneath it. The creature’s space and all adjacent squares become a rubble pile (see below). Any creature in the area of the newly formed rubble pile is thrown into the air and comes down in a random square adjacent to the new rubble pile. The creature must make a DC 31 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Rubble Pile: Fallen rock and debris are piled to a height of 10 feet. A rubble pile must be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

Elemental Rift: The cavern is split by a rift surging with pure elemental energy. Any creature that starts its turn adjacent to the rift takes 3d8 + 10 cold, fire, and lightning damage. Any creature that flies or jumps over the rift takes 2d8 + 10 cold, fire, and lightning damage. Any creature that enters or falls into the rift is held



suspended by fierce winds, takes 4d8 + 10 cold, fire, and lightning damage, and is immobilized (save ends). Elemental creatures are immune to these effects.

The rift is 10 feet across at its narrowest point. A creature that jumps the rift must take into account the 20-foot drop from the top of the tactical map to the bottom. A creature cannot jump the rift from the bottom of the map to the top.

The rift is a hazard that activates when any creature that does not have the elemental origin approaches within 2 squares of it. See the statistics block for more information. A hero who flies over the rift does not trigger it only if he or she states an intent to fly as close to the ceiling as possible. If all characters cross the rift in this way, or if all adventurers teleport across the rift, it triggers in the third round of combat.

ENCOUNTER K3: PRIMORDIAL SHRINE

Encounter Level 29 (91,000 XP)

SETUP

- 1 abyssal rotlord (R)
- 2 nycademon warmasters (N)
- 3 kazrith flametongues

Planar energy threads through this ancient shrine, allowing the demons that lair here to create temporary portals across the planes. The characters will make use of a forgotten permanent portal hidden here, which leads to the City of Brass.

When the heroes can see into this area, read:

A nycademon falls back before a foul rotfiend threatening it. Another nycademon lurks close by. The fractured walls of this chamber are etched in endless runes lit by the flaring firelight of a number of lava pits across the floor.

Intelligence Check, for an adventurer who reads Primordial

DC 28: *The runes are an ancient Primordial script. The detail of their meaning is obscured, but this place is clearly a shrine to primordial power.*

Arcana Check

DC 28: *Planar power surges within the stones and the lava vents, the lingering essence of a great portal that once stood here. A disruption to that essence indicates that creatures frequently make use of it, most likely creating their own temporary portals to and from this site.*

Like all their kind, the demons here engage in a constant struggle for power and status, and the present argument has no relevance to the characters' quest. The demons are distracted, however, and gain

only passive Perception checks to notice anyone approaching unless the heroes have a bright light source in hand or otherwise announce their presence.

The abyssal rotlord and the nycademon warmasters attack as soon as the characters engage them. Starting in the third round of combat, the kazrith flametongues that lair beneath the shrine are attracted by the sound of combat. One kazrith appears per round at a location of your choice, either erupting from a lava vent or burrowing up through the floor.

Each time a kazrith burrows up from or into the floor of the shrine, that square becomes a lava vent. See "Features of the Area" for more information.

Abyssal Rotlord (R)		Level 29 Controller	
Large elemental humanoid (demon, undead)		XP 15,000	
Initiative +22	Senses Perception +22; truesight 20		
Abyssal Fields aura 5; each enemy within the aura cannot teleport.			
HP 270; Bloodied 135			
AC 43; Fortitude 41, Reflex 39, Will 43			
Immune fear; Resist 20 fire, 10 necrotic, 20 variable (3/encounter)			
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover)			
⊕ Skullsplitter (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic			
Reach 2; +31 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 9 psychic damage, or 2d8 + 9 psychic damage against a bloodied target.			
✧ Conjure Abscess (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic			
Ranged 10; +32 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 9 psychic damage, and if the target moves more than 2 squares on its turn, it takes 2d8 extra damage (save ends). If the abyssal rotlord is bloodied, the target takes the damage for moving 1 or more squares.			
✧ Floating Despair (standard; encounter) ♦ Psychic, Zone			
Area burst 2 within 10; the burst creates a zone of dark miasma that lasts until the end of the abyssal rotlord's next turn. Any enemy that starts its turn within the zone takes 10 psychic damage and grants combat advantage to the rotfiend until the end of its next turn. <i>Sustain Minor:</i> The zone persists, and the rotfiend can move it 5 squares.			
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal, Common		
Str 27 (+22)	Dex 26 (+22)	Wis 26 (+22)	
Con 30 (+24)	Int 21 (+19)	Cha 33 (+25)	

2 Nycademon Warmasters (N)		Level 28 Skirmisher	
Large elemental humanoid		XP 13,000 each	
Initiative +25	Senses Perception +22		
HP 261; Bloodied 130			
AC 41; Fortitude 41, Reflex 41, Will 38			
Resist 20 variable (2/encounter)*			
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover)			
⊕ War Flail (at-will; standard)			
Reach 2; +33 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).			
⊕ Merciless Flail (at-will; standard)			
The nycademon makes two war flail attacks.			
⊕ Snatch (at-will; standard)			
Before or after the attack, the nycademon flies 6 squares. Reach 2; +31 vs. Fortitude; the target is grabbed.			
Strong Flyer			
When a nycademon moves a grabbed target, it does not need to make a Strength attack. While bloodied, a nycademon can fly at full speed instead of half speed when moving a grabbed target.			
Alignment Chaotic Evil	Languages Abyssal, Common		
Skills Intimidate +26			
Str 28 (+23)	Dex 29 (+23)	Wis 16 (+17)	
Con 29 (+23)	Int 11 (+14)	Cha 24 (+21)	
Equipment war flail			

* The warmasters have used their variable resistance to give themselves resist 20 fire before the start of the encounter.

3 Kazrith Flametongues		Level 28 Lurker
Medium elemental magical beast (demon, water)		XP 13,000 each
Initiative +28 Senses Perception +21; tremorsense 20		
HP 196; Bloodied 98; see also <i>magma skin</i>		
AC 42; Fortitude 40, Reflex 42, Will 38		
Immune fire; Resist 20 variable (2/encounter)		
Speed 6, burrow 6 (tunneling), swim 8		
⊕ Bite (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire		
+33 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).		
← Molten Flow (standard; recharge ☒ ☒) ♦ Fire		
Close burst 2; +31 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 4 damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). <i>Effect</i> : The kazrith burrows its speed.		
Magma Skin (usable only while bloodied) ♦ Fire		
The kazrith gains a +4 bonus to its burrow speed, and at the start of its turn, creatures adjacent to it take 15 fire damage.		
Slippery		
A kazrith makes saving throws against immobilized, restrained, and slowed conditions at the start of its turn as well as at the end of its turn.		
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal, Primordial
Skills Stealth +29		
Str 27 (+22)	Dex 30 (+24)	Wis 25 (+21)
Con 22 (+20)	Int 16 (+17)	Cha 15 (+16)

TACTICS

The abyssal rotlord opens with *floating despair*, then falls back to *conjure abscess* on the strongest-looking melee combatants. It stays close to eladrin characters and other teleporters to take advantage of its *abyssal fields* aura.

The nycademon warmasters throw themselves against the closest heroes, doubling up with *merciless flail* attacks. If pressed, a warmaster uses *warmaster strike* to escape and reposition itself to attack a softer target.

As each kazrith flametongue appears, it moves toward the closest group of characters, then uses *molten flow* to attack and burrow to safety beneath the floor. It repeats that tactic as often as possible, making bite attacks while *molten flow* recharges.

DEVELOPMENT

The adventurers can attempt to slay this area's demonic guardians before undertaking the skill challenge to activate the lava vent portal, or they can attempt the skill challenge during combat. If the heroes flee through the activated portal before the fight is over, the demons do not pursue. In addition to awarding XP for monsters killed and the skill challenge, award full XP for any monster bloodied before the characters make their exit.

THE PORTAL OF FORGOTTEN FIRE

The lava vent in the upper right arm of the shrine is a portal connecting to a secret primordial temple in the City of Brass. The adventurers must activate the portal before it can be used.

Level: 27 (XP 11,000).

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Arcana, Religion, Thievery.

Arcana (DC 26, *standard action*): The hero taps into and summons up the ancient magic of the portal. A character must be within 2 squares of the appropriate lava vent to attempt this check. This skill can provide a maximum of 2 successes.

Religion (DC 31, *standard action*): The character recognizes the primordial energy powering this ancient portal, and can bend it to his or her will.

This skill can provide a maximum of 1 success in this challenge. No character can attempt this check more than once, and this check cannot be retried if the adventurers fail to complete the skill challenge on their first try.

Thievery (DC 17, *standard action*): By carefully clearing centuries of carbon ash from the etched stones on the wall above the vent, the character strengthens the magical energy feeding the portal. A character must be adjacent to the appropriate lava vent to attempt this check and takes damage as normal (see "Features of the Area"). This skill can provide a maximum of 2 successes.

Success: If the heroes earn 4 successes, the portal activates for 1 hour.

Failure: If the characters accumulate 3 failures, six shardstorm firewind elementals erupt from the lava vent and attack the closest creatures (including any surviving demons). Use the statistics block for the shardstorm icewinds (page 36), but their basic attack deals fire damage instead of cold damage and ignore the ice walk exemption to the creature's aura.

The adventurers must attempt the skill challenge again. Each additional failed challenge summons three more firewinds than the previous failure.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Ceiling: 30 feet high.

Illumination: The lava pools shed dim light throughout the area.

Rubble: These areas of loose scree are difficult terrain. A creature that runs, charges, or makes a double move through rubble must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Blood Rock: Areas of mottled red-black stone across the cavern floor are blood rock infused with the energy of ancient battles fought here. These patches of stone do not stand out unless the adventurers make specific attempts to discern them (a DC 28 Perception or Arcana check). A creature standing in an area of blood rock scores a critical hit on a natural die roll of 19 or 20.

Lava Vent: The floor of the shrine has been shattered to reveal pools of blazing lava vented from the Sea of Fire. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to a lava vent takes $2d6 + 8$ fire damage. A creature that enters a lava vent or starts its turn there takes $3d8 + 10$ fire damage and is slowed as long as it remains in the area of the vent.

The lava vent in the upper right arm of the chamber is the one that connects to the City of Brass. It takes a DC 31 Arcana check to determine that the lava vent contains the portal, after which the characters must engage in a skill challenge to activate it. See “The Portal of Forgotten Fire,” above.

Once the portal has been activated, the heroes can step through it to be taken to the City of Brass (see page 27). The portal sits on the surface of the lava pool, however, and does not confer any protection against fire to those who plunge into it. A creature using the portal takes $2d6 + 8$ fire damage.



ENCOUNTER B1: EFREET ALLIANCE

Encounter Level 29 (75,000 XP)

SETUP

The adventurers make a plea for Estumishu's support of Bahamut's fight against Tiamat. Winning the efreet noble's favor requires more than mere diplomacy.

ESTUMISHU'S FAVOR

In the ritual combat of an efreet Crucible Court, the characters attempt to win Estumishu's favor and to enlist the efreet noble's aid in Bahamut's attempt to rout Tiamat's forces in the City of Brass.

Level: 29 (75,000 XP).

Complexity: 5 (requires 12 successes before 3 failures).

Special: When efreet nobles negotiate, they do so face to face and with scimitars bared in one of the Crucible Courts of the City of Brass. The skill checks in this challenge are meant to be made during ritual combat. See the "Crucible Court" sidebar for more information.

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, History, Intimidate, Perception.

Diplomacy (DC 28): An adventurer undertakes the most direct course of action by attempting to convince Estumishu of Bahamut's respect for his power and the Platinum Dragon's backing of his claim to the throne.

This check covers direct appeals to the efreet noble as well as more subtle flattery of his advisors. A Diplomacy check made directly to Estumishu earns two successes or two failures in the skill challenge. Other Diplomacy checks earn one success or failure in the challenge. This skill can provide any number of successes in the challenge.

History (DC 19): A hero can gain Estumishu's favor by demonstrating an accurate understanding of Bashumgarda's betrayal of efreet history and culture. Each History check made in the challenge (regardless of success or a failure) increases the DC for subsequent History checks by 5. This skill can provide any number of successes in the challenge.

Intimidate (DC 33): The efreets are a warrior culture, and they respect a show of confidence and strength. However, attempting to cow Estumishu into supporting Bahamut is risky. A successful check earns the characters 4 successes in the skill challenge. A failed check earns 2 failures and imposes a -2 penalty on all further Diplomacy or Perception checks made in the challenge. The adventurers can attempt only one Intimidate check in the skill challenge.

Perception (DC 28): The nobles and advisors around Estumishu uniformly despise Bashumgarda, but they have vastly different opinions on how to deal with the efreet lord. With a successful Perception check, a character manages to pick out distinct threads of conversation from the din of the Crucible Court, gaining information and helping shape the course of the negotiations for maximum effect.

On a failed check, the hero's efforts to eavesdrop are noted. This earns a failure in the skill challenge and imposes a -2 penalty on the next primary skill check made in the challenge. Once a failure has been made with Perception, no further checks can be made in the challenge using this skill. This skill can provide a maximum of 4 successes.

Secondary Skills: Arcana, Bluff, Endurance, Insight.

Arcana or Insight (DC 28): A successful Arcana or Insight check represents an adventurers' knowledge of the ways of efreet culture or his or her ability to read specific efreets in the heat of negotiation. A

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

The characters need to keep aware of the delicate nature of their mission to the City of Brass, but the ritual combat of the Crucible Court should keep things moving for those players with more interest in the crash of battle than the language of diplomacy. If the players decide to force Estumishu's loyalty at sword point, they have their work cut out for them. The noble's advisors and followers are two dozen advanced efreets (see the "Crucible Court" sidebar), all of which swarm any heroes attempting violence against their master. If Estumishu is forced into combat, treat him as an elite advanced efreet karadjin (MM 100) with a +4 bonus to initiative, attack rolls, and defenses, a +2 bonus to damage rolls, a double attack with *scimitar of horrendous flame*, and 586 hit points.

character can make an Arcana or Insight check as part of each primary check made in the challenge. With a successful check, the primary check gains a +2 bonus. On a failed check, the primary check takes a -2 penalty.

A character who fails two Arcana or Insight checks made alongside checks with a single primary skill can no longer make checks with that primary skill.

Bluff (DC 33): Dissent and open conflict is an essential part of efreet diplomacy. Whenever a hero fails a primary skill check in the challenge, another character can step in to berate and belittle the failure. With a successful Bluff check, the primary failure is not counted as a failure in the skill challenge. However, the adventurer who failed the primary check takes a -2 penalty to his or her next primary skill check made in the challenge.

Endurance (DC 19): The efreet have lowered the normally blistering temperature of the Crucible Court for the heroes' benefit, but the chamber remains uncomfortably hot. A character must make an Endurance check after making a primary skill check in the challenge. On a successful check, the efreet are impressed with the character's stamina, granting a +2 bonus to his or next skill check made in

the challenge. On a failed check, the adventurer earns the contempt of the gathered efreet and takes a -2 penalty to his or her next check in the skill challenge.

Success: If the characters earn 12 successes in the challenge, Estumishu accepts their fealty and pledges the support of himself and his allies to Bahamut's cause. The heroes' mission is still complicated by the

efreet noble's demands. See "Bashumgarda Must Die" on page 29.

Failure: If the adventurers earn 3 failures in the skill challenge, Estumishu rejects their overtures. The characters still have a chance to win the support of the efreet of the City of Brass. See "Bashumgarda Must Die" on page 29.

THE CRUCIBLE COURT

The advanced culture of the efreet is built around a core of savagery, with the elemental essence of these creatures manifesting in a violent and intrinsically amoral nature. However, the City of Brass has not become the mercantile capital of the planes without a certain amount of statecraft. The efreet are as open to negotiation and parley as any race. Their warlike nature lends a very specific flavor to their diplomacy.

On the streets of the City of Brass, conflicts between efreet are typically settled by a fight to the death. In order to avoid constant bloodshed between their houses, efreet nobles agree to settle trade disputes, personal conflicts, and open challenges in one of the city's many Crucible Courts—a combination bargaining session and combat grudge match. The summit at which Estumishu meets the heroes is a modified version of a traditional Crucible Court, but the principles remain the same. In order to win the loyalty of the efreet noble to Bahamut's cause, the characters must demonstrate not only their skills at diplomacy but their strength in combat.

The adventurers make checks in the skill challenge while undertaking ritual combat against Estumishu's followers on the floor of the Crucible Court (a 20-square-by-20-square open space). These bouts are

boisterous affairs, with spectators shouting advice to favored combatants, disparaging enemies, or arguing loudly among themselves.

A Crucible Court bout is run in the same manner as a normal combat encounter, with four restrictions:

- ◆ One hero faces off against one efreet in a bout. Combatants cannot request or receive the assistance of allies in any way during a bout.
- ◆ Combatants are limited to at-will and recharge powers only, whether from class abilities or magic items.
- ◆ Combatants cannot make use of any fire resistance or fire immunity not bestowed by a racial ability.
- ◆ A bout is lost by the first combatant to become bloodied or to break one of the above rules. Both combatants are given magical healing to return them to full hit points at the end of a bout. (One exception: If a character in combat makes the failed check that ends the skill challenge, he or she will not be healed by the efreet.)

For each 50 points of damage an adventurer deals in a bout, he or she can make one primary skill check in the challenge. For each 50 points of damage a character takes, he or she takes a -2 cumulative penalty to his or her next primary skill check in the challenge.

Each hero must accept or decline the challenge of ritual combat, stepping up in whatever order the players decide. An adventurer cannot fight twice until all other characters have accepted or rejected a bout. A hero takes a -2 cumulative penalty to all checks made in the skill challenge for each bout he or she rejects.

In each bout, a character faces off against an advanced efreet from the *Monster Manual* (pages 98-100), determined randomly. Adjust each efreet's combat statistics as indicated.

d4	Combatant	Init/Def/Atk	Dmg	Bloodied
1	Fireblade	+6	+3	129
2	Cinderlord	+5	+2	100
3	Flamestrider	+5	+2	129
4	Pyresinger	+3	+1	129

As befits his rank, Estumishu does not face off against the adventurers himself.

The heroes, being outsiders to the City of Brass, have some leeway as regards their appearance in the Crucible Court. A character can make primary checks without undertaking ritual combat, either while another character is fighting or after rejecting a bout. However, each primary check made outside combat takes a -2 penalty.

ENCOUNTER B2: THROUGH THE CITY OF BRASS

Encounter Level 30 (100,000 XP)

SETUP

In order to face off against Bashumgarda and grant Bahamut's forces access to Tiamat's army in the City of Brass, the characters must make a dangerous journey across a city preparing for war.

THROUGH THE CITY OF BRASS

This complex skill challenge provides a framework for combat encounters B3, B4, and B5 and charts the heroes' progress as they make their way across the City of Brass.

Level: 30 (100,000 XP).

Complexity: Special.

MOVEMENT THROUGH THE CITY

The City of Brass is divided into fourteen sectors (see "The City of Brass," below). The adventurers begin this skill challenge in Ashlarks ward, having just left the Crucible Court of Estumishu. Bashumgarda is in the Furnace, holed up with his personal guard in the barracks of the Ring of Fire.

Provide the characters with a copy of the map of the City of Brass and read or paraphrase the information on each city ward detailed below. This represents the intelligence they were given by either Estumishu or Selerin. The players should not be given the different skill DCs for each sector of the city until they begin making checks in that sector. However, expand the general information given for each sector as appropriate to



allow players to consider the advantages and disadvantages of different routes through the city. For example, Marlgate and Iskalat (the wards with low-DC Athletics checks) might be described as having relatively open streets or contiguous roofs perfect for climbing across.

THE SKILL CHALLENGE

This skill challenge is built on three different types of activity the heroes can undertake: movement within a specific ward, crossing from one ward to another, or avoiding pursuit and confrontation with city guards and the forces of Tiamat.

The skill challenge is built around group checks. At each stage of the challenge, all characters make a primary check using one of the skills noted for that part of the challenge. All characters make checks using the same skill, decided on by the group. In addition to making his or her primary check, a character can also choose to make a secondary skill check using a skill of his or her choice. Characters cannot aid another on any checks.

If at least half the characters succeed on their primary checks, the adventurers earn a success in the challenge. If fewer than half the heroes succeed, the party earns a failure in the challenge. However, this open-ended challenge does not end with 3 failures. See “Success and Failure,” below.

TRAVELING THROUGH A CITY WARD

The City of Brass is a major cosmopolitan center with a population a half-million strong. Aside from the canals and the wall now sealed around the Furnace (see below), there are no predominantly physical impediments to the party’s movement through the city. Rather, this skill challenge represents the characters’ attempts to avoid trouble as they seek Bashumgarda.

The adventurers attempt to pass unharried through a ward with a group skill check. All characters make the same check. The ward they are moving through determines the skill check DC, as noted on the “Through the City of Brass” table. A successful group check allows the party to move within the ward. A failed group check means that the characters attract the attention of a passing patrol. See “Evading Pursuit” and “Patrols in the City of Brass,” below.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Bluff, Intimidate.

Secondary Skills: Insight, Streetwise.

CROSSING TO A NEW WARD

The boundaries between wards are not always clearly defined in the City of Brass. The preparations for war mean that the major thoroughfares, gates, and plazas that mark off such boundaries are under the most intense scrutiny by the city’s defenders.

The heroes attempt to cross between one ward and the next with a group skill check. All characters make the same check. Use the higher of the DCs for the two wards the characters are moving between, as noted on the “Through the City of Brass” table. A successful group check allows the party to move into the new ward. A failed group check means that the adventurers are unable to progress past patrols in the area. Characters who fail a check remain in the initial ward and must make subsequent checks to move through the ward again, then to cross to a new ward. Having failed to cross to a particular ward, the heroes do not need to attempt to cross to that same ward on subsequent checks.

Failure to cross into a new ward does not mean that the characters are arbitrarily forced back to their original starting point. Rather, it implies that they must backtrack away from too-numerous patrols,

THE HIGH ROAD

The party is likely to have access to flying magic at this stage of the epic tier, but they should be very wary of using it in the City of Brass. Dragons and efreet are in constant flight across the city at all times, and although there are fewer enemies in the air than on the ground, those enemies are doubly wary and the characters would be doubly exposed. Almost without exception, the humanoid slaves and residents of the city do not fly, and a party taking to the air attracts immediate attention.

If all the adventurers are able to fly for 5 minutes or more, they can do so to gain an automatic success at a group skill check to travel through a ward or cross to a new ward (including automatically crossing any canals). Doing so, however, incurs an automatic encounter with two patrols. One attacks immediately; the other attacks after 6 rounds. (The first patrol will attack while the characters are in the air if possible, so select an appropriate encounter group.) The heroes cannot elect to make a group skill check to avoid either of these patrols.

Characters who can manage both long-term flight and invisibility catch no breaks in this regard. The haze of smoke that fills the air of the City of Brass immediately gives away the position of invisible creatures flying within it.

move along the ward boundary to a less well-guarded location, and so on.

Crossing Canals: Crossing the city’s fiery canals uses the same group check as crossing to a new ward. If the adventurers’ route from one ward to the next crosses one or more canals, crossing between those

wards requires two group checks instead of one. (This check represents the heroes' total efforts at getting across all canals; don't worry about the specific number of canals between wards.) The two group checks can be made with two different skills, at the characters' option. If either check is failed, the adventurers must remain in the initial ward.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Bluff, Streetwise.

If the characters are making Athletics checks to move across canals between wards, a hero who fails a check takes 3d8 fire damage in addition to adding to the group's chance of failure.

Secondary Skills: Insight, Perception.

EVADING PURSUIT

Adventurers who find themselves attracting the attention of city guards or the servants of Tiamat with a failed group check to move through a ward have the option of fighting or fleeing. If the heroes choose to fight their way out of a confrontation, set up the encounter normally. *D&D Dungeon Tiles set DU2: Streets of Shadow* is a great resource for running city encounters. See "Patrols in the City of Brass" for possible encounter groups.

If the characters decide to avoid trouble, they can do so with a group skill check. All characters make the same check. The ward they are in determines the skill check DC, as noted on the "Through the City of Brass" table. If the adventurers succeed on the group check, they successfully avoid the encounter. If the characters fail the check, they cannot escape pursuit and must fight. Regardless of the outcome of the combat encounter, this group check counts as a success or failure in the skill challenge.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Bluff, Stealth, Streetwise.

Secondary Skills: Intimidate, Perception.

SKILLS

Use the following general descriptions as a guideline for the types of activities the heroes can attempt with each of this challenge's primary and secondary skills.

All checks in the challenge are made using an adventurer's normal skill check bonuses, as each check represents the sum of the character's actions over an extended period. Powers or magic items that grant a temporary bonus to a skill check or affect how a skill is used (including effects such as invisibility) cannot be used in the challenge.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Bluff, Intimidate, Streetwise.

Athletics: The heroes attempt to avoid trouble by moving quickly, by scaling walls or buildings to bypass patrols and guarded intersections, or by jumping roof to roof to avoid the chaos on the city's streets. Athletics also allows characters to cross the city's canals by hopping from barge to barge or jumping the entire breadth of a canal at a narrow point.

Bluff: The adventurers try to keep a low profile amid the chaos by pretending that they are travelers to the city, conscripted to military service during the current crisis and on some errand by order of the city guard.

Intimidate: Fear of the harsh laws of the efreet keeps the folk of the city in line. By making use of this universal attitude of "might makes right," the heroes can bully their way through potential altercations with slave troops and guards.

Stealth: The characters blend in with the movement of the slaves and other non-efreets in the city.

Secondary Skills: Insight, Perception, Streetwise.

All secondary skills in the challenge are made alongside a primary check. With a successful check, an adventurer gains a +2 bonus to the primary check. With a failed check, a character takes a -2 penalty to the primary check.

Insight: By careful assessment of guards and other officials, a character can lessen the chance for confrontation.

Perception: Looking for patterns in the movements of city patrols gives the heroes a chance to avoid those patrols.

Streetwise: By picking up snippets of information overheard in the chaos around them, the adventurers can adjust their route to avoid trouble.

MOVEMENT IN THE CITY

The City of Brass is far too large to worry about the characters' exact location on a street-by-street basis. Instead, plot the heroes' movement through the city along imaginary lines connecting the legends that mark the rough center of each ward.

Assume that the characters start out at the "Ashlarks" legend on the map. Moving to the "Marlgate" legend requires a successful group check to move through Ashlarks, then a successful group check to cross from Ashlarks to Marlgate. If the first check is failed, the adventurers will need to fight their way out of an encounter or make an additional group check to avoid it. If the second check is failed, the heroes cannot advance but find themselves stuck in Ashlarks.

The characters can attempt to reenter Marlgate by making two more checks—one to move within Ashlarks again, the other to cross into a new ward. Alternatively, they can try another route, for example from Ashlarks to Keffinspires (two checks) or from Ashlarks to Iskalat (three checks, including crossing the canals between those wards).

Adventurers can move between any two ward legends that do not have another legend between them. For example, the characters can move directly from Marlgate to Avencina, but they cannot move from Ashlarks to Avencina without passing through Keffinspires first.

Because of the augmented wall around the Furnace, that ward can only be entered by way of the Phoenix Gate (accessible only from Avencina or the Char) or at the Gate of the Fallen (accessible only from the Arches or the Foundry).

TRIGGERING TACTICAL ENCOUNTERS

At three points in the skill challenge, the heroes' movement through the city triggers tactical encounters B3, B4, and B5.

CANAL CROSSING

The adventurers will cross the city's canals at various points as they head toward the Furnace, depending on their chosen route. At one of those crossings of your choice, go to Encounter B3 on page 50. Other canal crossings are incorporated into the check to move from ward to the next, as described above.

The choice of where to place encounter B3 is entirely up to you, but it works best as the final canal the characters must cross on their way toward the Furnace. Be aware that heroes moving from Marlgate or Keffinspires to Avencina, or from Marlgate to the Char, have only one canal to cross.

When you use Encounter B3, the characters need to cross the canal individually, either during or after the encounter. Do not require or allow the adventurers to make a group check to cross the canal.

GATE CRASHERS

As the heroes move toward the Furnace, they must pass through the now-sealed ward walls at either the Phoenix Gate (accessible only from Avencina or the Char) or the Gate of the Fallen (accessible only from the Arches or the Foundry). Before they can reach the gates, the characters must first make a group check

to move into the Furnace from one of the adjacent wards. A failed check means that they cannot successfully approach the gate but are pushed back into the ward. A successful check made to cross into the Furnace triggers Encounter B4 on page 52.

LORD OF THE EFREETTS

In the immediate aftermath of Encounter B4, the adventurers must make a check to move through the Foundry ward. A successful check grants access to the barracks of the Ring of Fire and triggers Encounter B5. On a failed check, the characters meet an efreet patrol that they must either avoid or fight before they reach the barracks and trigger the encounter.

Any penalties the heroes have accrued for failures in the challenge remain in effect for Encounter B5. When Encounter B5 is done, the skill challenge ends, along with all penalties accrued during the challenge.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

The route the adventurers take through the City of Brass and how well they manage to avoid the notice of the city guard and Tiamat's forces determines the overall number of checks in the skill challenge. The challenge ends at the end of Encounter B5, which is triggered when the characters complete the journey to the Furnace.

This open-ended challenge does not end with 3 failures. Cumulative successes move the heroes across the City of Brass and accrued failures en route make the journey increasingly hazardous. Each time the characters incur a failure on a group check in the challenge, consult the "Failures in the Challenge" table. The penalties on the table are cumulative.

FAILURES IN THE CHALLENGE

Failures	Penalty
1	The attention the adventurers draw to themselves by having to face off against patrols or retrace their route makes it increasingly difficult to move openly. The DC of any Athletics check made in the challenge increases by 2.
2	Rumors begin circulating about agents of Bahamut in the city. The DC of all Bluff checks in the challenge increases by 2. All creatures in patrols and tactical encounters gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +1 bonus to all defenses.
3	Word spreads that city guard units are maintaining an active watch for the party. The DC of any Stealth check in the challenge increases by 2.
4	The city guard are ordered to stop and question all non-efreets at large in the city. The DC of any Intimidate check in the challenge increases by 2. All creatures in patrols and tactical encounters gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to all defenses instead of a +1 bonus.
5	Tiamat's agents go on heightened alert in the city. Replace one non-minion from any multiple-creature patrol with an elite dragonspawn (use the statistics blocks from Encounters B3 and B4).
6 +	The heroes are actively hunted by all guard and slave units at large in the city. The DC of any check made in the skill challenge increases by 3. All creatures in patrols and tactical encounters gain a +3 bonus to attack rolls and a +3 bonus to all defenses instead of a +2 bonus.

THE CITY OF BRASS

As detailed in *Manual of the Planes*, the City of Brass is divided into fourteen districts, each with its own specific function and local character. The skill check DCs for this challenge vary according to which ward the party is in. While the characters are unlikely to visit every sector of the city as they make their way from Ashlarks to the Furnace, there are advantages to not simply making the trip in a straight line.

The city is carved up into tiers, many of which are walled. For the purpose of the adventurers' movement across the city, however, there are enough open gates and places to cross that the locations of specific walls and gates are not important. The one exception is the entrance into the Furnace, as noted under "Gate Crashers," above.

THROUGH THE CITY OF BRASS

	Athletics	Bluff	Intimidate	Stealth
Arches	28	28	28	28
Ashlarks	28	33	28	28
Avencina	33	28	33	28
Castings	28	28	19	28
The Char	28	33	33	28
Cindersweeps	28	19	28	28
The Foundry	28	28	33	28
The Furnace	33	33	33	33
Iskalat	19	19	28	28
Keffinspires	28	33	33	19
Marlgate	19	33	33	28
The Plume	33	28	19	28
Pyraculum	28	28	28	19
Rookery	28	33	33	28

Arches: The teeming slave markets of the City of Brass are centered here. The present siege has seen the markets all but emptied, their slaves conscripted to the city's defense. Tiamat's dragonspawn and dragonborn forces have turned the empty markets into ramshackle camps, and most such troops lair here when not on duty.

Ashlarks: The residential sector of Ashlarks is home to minor efreet houses, powerful non-efreet residents, and Long Castle—the base for the city guard. While the guards are scattered across the city at present, private security and watch-dragons accost all nonresidents.

Avencina: This lawless lower-class district is home to the Commoner's Market, the city's largest (and mostly black-market) bazaar. The interior of the ward remains open in the prelude to the attack by Bahamut's forces, but its boundaries with Keffinspires and the Plume are locked down tight by the city guard and private security forces. Dragons perch along the perimeters of the ward but relatively few lurk within it.

Castings: This densely populated barracks ward holds the slave army of the City of Brass. Most of that army now patrols the city, but new squads are being trained here day and night by teams of efreet and dragonspawn.

The Char: Most of the numerous foundries and forges of the city are located in this smoke-shrouded industrial ward. Those forges are presently working overtime in the manufacture of weapons and armor, watched over by dragons and efreet guards.

Cindersweeps: The lower-class free folk of the city congregate here, alongside the harbor garrison's headquarters at the Keep of Fire Striking Steel. Slave troops are currently on watch against possible insur-

LOCKDOWN

As the City of Brass awaits the arrival of the rest of Tiamat's forces, the city guard spends much of its time locking down the lower-class residential districts. While all the city's folk are subject to emergency conscription to defend it, the efreets are worried about the lower classes taking Bahamut's side if the Platinum Dragon's forces break through.

These lockdowns can be used to provide flavor as the characters make their way across the city, but they also have an important tactical consideration. The area between Avencina and Keffinspires on the left side of the City of Brass Map could allow the heroes to bypass the city's canals (and Encounter B3) as they advance toward the Furnace. If the adventurers approach this area, describe open rioting in Avencina and tell the players that the route around the canal is protected by too many dragons and elite efreet guards to get past. The characters' route through the city must involve crossing at least one canal.

rection, but they are less than focused on the task. Draconic patrols pick up the slack.

The Foundry: The mansions of non-efreets and those efreet merchants and nobles not wealthy enough to dwell in the Plume or the Furnace line the streets of this exclusive residential ward. The Foundry's streets are presently all but empty, but dragons patrol by air and its boundaries crawl with private security forces.

The Furnace: The slopes of the Furnace rise as the heart of the City of Brass. The Charcoal Palace at the center of the ward is the seat of power for Bashumgarda, Lord of the Efreets. The barracks of the

Ring of Fire house his personal guard; government offices fill the Red Pillar Halls. The Eternal Flame Pavilion is an open temple to the primordial Fire Lord Imix, its walls sheathed in beaten gold.

With Bahamut's forces massing outside the city gates, the Furnace has been sealed off. The only way to gain access to that ward is by way of the Phoenix Gate (accessible only from Avencina or the Char) or the Gate of the Fallen (accessible only from the Arches or the Foundry).

Iskalat: This harbor ward contains the city's public docks, serving *planar dromonds*, elemental vessels that ply the Sea of Fire, and the countless captains and sailors who come to the city with cargo and trade. Also here is the great prison known as the Octagon. The harbor is well guarded by red dragons and dragonspawn-led patrols, but much of the rest of the ward is deserted.

Keffinspires: This merchant district is home to many of the city's smiths and metalworkers. All have been conscripted in the production of armor and weapons, and slave troops and city guards move through the ward constantly.

Marlgate: The warehouses of this industrial ward hold the bulk of the goods that move through the City of Brass and across the planes. Bahamut's siege has seen this ward's warehouses stripped for the defensive effort, and the city guard patrols heavily to ward off looters.

The Plume: This exclusive residential district houses the manors and courtyards of the city's most powerful efreet nobles. The Castle of the Sun and Moon is the training ground of the city's elite guard units, and the ward is presently locked down by guards whose loyalty has been purchased by the nobles. Scores of dragons perch atop the district's

spires, sending the nobility a subtle signal regarding order.

Pyraculum: The City Market in this commercial sector is larger and more controlled than the Commoner's Market in Avencina. Many of the city's artisans make their homes here. Of all the lower-class wards, only Pyraculum has managed to stay free of lockdown. The air above the ward is thick with patrolling dragons.

Rookery: This residential quarter has a reputation for lawlessness that extends beyond the city and across the planes. Gambling halls, brothels, and gladiator pits are among the least dangerous of the Rookery's charms, and it is said that even the city guards avoid this ward if they can. At present, the city's slave troops are supposed to have the ward locked down, but their watch is tenuous at best. Though dragons and dragonspawn patrol here, they do so less frequently than in most other wards.

PATROLS IN THE CITY OF BRASS

As the heroes make their way through the City of Brass, each failed group skill check to move through a ward incurs a possible encounter with a patrol. If the characters try to avoid the patrol, see "Evading Pursuit," above. If they decide to fight (or if they fail in their attempt to avoid a confrontation), choose an encounter group from those listed below or use these groups as inspiration for creating your own encounters. The adventurers earn full experience for any patrols they defeat in the City of Brass.

Open conflict is the norm here, and the brutal reputations of the city's efreet guards and slave troops are well earned. Although any confrontation between the heroes and a patrol will be noted by

other residents, those residents will quickly scatter so as to not become involved. Moreover, the chaos that has consumed the City of Brass under Bahamut's siege means that battles between the characters and wandering patrols do not attract the kind of attention they normally would. Unless the adventurers linger at the site of a skirmish, they can safely slip away without attracting further patrols and continue the skill challenge.

RESTING UP

The characters can take a short rest after each encounter with a patrol and after each triggered tactical encounter. However, they can take only one extended rest during the skill challenge. Just as the location and condition of specific streets plays no part in the skill challenge, you needn't worry about the specifics of where the heroes decide to hole up for an extended rest. The city's preparations for war mean that many shops and apartments are closed and empty, providing plenty of hiding spots.

Even after reaching the Furnace, the adventurers can take an extended rest before facing Bashumgarda if they have not yet done so. Though the city guards are constantly on the move, many of the Red Pillar Halls are empty; the city's nobles are holed up at their estates in the Foundry or the Plume.

SLAVE PATROLS

The city's slave warrior patrols fight to the death in the name of their efreet masters.

Level 25 Encounter (35,500 XP)

- ◆ 2 azer maulers (level 27 controller; page 50)
- ◆ 6 genasi blackhearts (level 26 minion brute, page 51)

Level 26 Encounter (49,000 XP)

- ◆ 1 salamander thrallmaster (level 28 controller, page 52)
- ◆ 8 salamander fireshields (level 26 minion brute, page 53)
- ◆ 8 fire archon flamebows (level 26 minion artillery, page 51)

ELITE PATROLS

Well-trained efreet guards patrol the City of Brass with unceasing vigilance.

Level 25 Encounter (43,500 XP)

- ◆ 1 efreet pyremaster (level 27 controller, page 55)
- ◆ 1 efreet karadjin (level 28 soldier, MM 100)
- ◆ 6 efreet magmacasters (level 28 minion artillery, page 55)

Level 27 Encounter (53,500 XP)

- ◆ 1 advanced efreet pyresinger (level 27 controller, MM 99; +2 initiative, attacks, and defenses; +1 damage; 248 hit points)
- ◆ 3 efreet karadjins (level 28 soldier, MM 100)
- ◆ 9 efreet flamerunners (level 27 minion skirmisher, page 55)

DRACONIC DISCIPLES

Tiamat's servants patrol alongside efreet and slave forces, intent on ensuring that the City of Brass remains under their control.

Level 26 Encounter (53,000 XP)

- ◆ 1 greenspawn defender (level 28 elite soldier, page 50)
- ◆ 3 dragonborn champions (level 26 soldier, MM 87)

Level 27 Encounter (64,000 XP)

- ◆ 1 redspawn magmastomper (level 27 elite brute, page 52)
- ◆ 3 dragonborn death knights (level 25 elite soldier, MM 51)

DRAGON LORDS

Veteran war dragons patrol the City of Brass by air and ground in the name of the Dragon Queen.

Level 26 Encounter (45,000 XP)

- ◆ 1 ancient black dragon (level 26 solo lurker, MM 76)

Level 26 Encounter (45,000 XP)

- ◆ 1 ancient iron dragon (level 26 solo lurker, MM2 85)

Level 27 Encounter (55,000 XP)

- ◆ 1 ancient copper dragon (level 27 solo skirmisher, MM2 79)

Level 27 Encounter (55,000 XP)

- ◆ 1 ancient green dragon (level 27 solo controller, MM 81)

ENCOUNTER B3: CANAL CROSSING

Encounter Level 28 (70,500 XP)

SETUP

- 1 greenspawn defender (D)
- 2 azer maulers (M)
- 5 fire archon flamebows (F)
- 5 genasi blackhearts (B)

As the heroes approach this stretch of canal, read:

While most of the canals you've seen so far have been guarded no better or worse than the streets around them, the stretch of wide channel ahead is a frustrating exception. Dragonspawn-led troops are on constant patrol to both sides of you, leaving only one access point relatively unguarded.

The characters can approach the crossing behind the cover of buildings. Place their miniatures anywhere outside the tactical map.

When the adventurers have moved closer, read:

A hulking greenspawn paces along the near side of the canal, shouting orders at a dozen sullen defenders. Two azers lead separate squads of fire archons and genasi on either side of the canal, watching from cover for any sign of trouble.

The creatures here are all on high alert. They spot the heroes as soon as they enter the area of the tactical map.

Greenspawn Defender (G)		Level 28 Elite Soldier	
Huge natural humanoid (reptile)		XP 26,000	
Initiative +24	Senses Perception +21; low-light vision		
HP 514; Bloodied 257			
AC 44; Fortitude 42, Reflex 40, Will 39			
Resist 30 acid; see also <i>defender</i>			
Saving Throws +2			
Speed 8			
Action Points 1			
⊕ Greataxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison, Weapon			
Reach 3; +35 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage plus 2d8 poison damage.			
⊖ Blastback Strike (standard; at-will)			
The defender makes a <i>greataxe</i> attack. If the attack hits, the defender makes a secondary attack against the same target. <i>Secondary Attack</i> : +33 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 3 squares and knocked prone.			
⚡ Poison Bolt (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Poison			
Ranged 5; +33 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 8 damage plus 2d8 poison damage.			
⊖ Shield Crush (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent ally is hit by a melee attack; at-will)			
Reach 3; +33 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn.			
Defender			
A greenspawn defender has resist 10 all against damage from dragons, dragonborn, and immortals.			
Alignment Evil		Languages Draconic	
Skills Athletics +29			
Str 30 (+24)	Dex 26 (+22)	Wis 25 (+21)	
Con 25 (+21)	Int 13 (+15)	Cha 20 (+19)	
Equipment heavy shield, greataxe			

TACTICS

The greenspawn defender fights front and center, laying into lightly armored characters with *blastback strike* while it targets a nearby foe with *acid bolt*. It uses its action point the first time it bloodies a foe to make a followup *blastback strike* against the target.

The azer maulers stay in the thick of combat, maximizing the effect of their *clinging flames* and *azer's wrath* aura.

2 Azer Maulers (M)		Level 27 Controller (Leader)	
Medium elemental humanoid (fire)		XP 11,000 each	
Initiative +20	Senses Perception +21		
Azer's Wrath (Fire) aura 2; any enemy that enters or ends its turn within the aura takes 10 fire damage.			
HP 247; Bloodied 123			
AC 41; Fortitude 40, Reflex 38, Will 39			
Resist 30 fire			
Speed 5			
⊕ Maul (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon			
+32 vs. AC; 2d8 damage plus 2d6 fire damage.			
⚡ Hurled Maul (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon			
Ranged 20; +31 vs. Reflex; 2d8 damage plus 2d6 fire damage. The azer's maul reforms in its hand at the end of its turn.			
Clinging Flames (immediate reaction, when an enemy within 5 squares of the azer mauler takes fire damage; at-will) ♦ Fire			
The triggering enemy takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).			
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Giant	
Str 29 (+22)	Dex 25 (+20)	Wis 27 (+21)	
Con 23 (+19)	Int 20 (+18)	Cha 18 (+17)	
Equipment scale armor, maul			

The fire archon flamebows make ranged attacks from behind cover, reserving their *firestorm* until two or more adventurers can be targeted.

The genasi blackhearts throw themselves into the fray, trusting their *heart of fire* to take out foes that drop them.

The fire creatures here are resentful of the greenspawn's command, and they do not fight alongside it except to flank if possible. The flamebows don't worry about catching the greenspawn in the area of their *firestorm*.

The archons, flamebows, and blackhearts stay on their own sides of the canal. If the characters cross to the top of the encounter map during the fight, however, then the greenspawn tries to jump the canal in pursuit (Athletics +29). The heroes cannot make a group skill check to evade this pursuit.

5 Fire Archon	Level 26 Minion Artillery
Flamebows (A)	
Medium elemental humanoid (fire)	XP 2,250 each
Initiative +22	Senses Perception +21
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 38; Fortitude 39, Reflex 37, Will 38	
Immune disease, poison	
Speed 8; see also <i>flame step</i>	
⊕ Flamebow (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire	
+31 vs. Reflex; 7 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
✱ Firestorm (standard; encounter) ♦ Fire	
Area burst 1 within 10; +31 vs. Reflex; ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). A target already taking ongoing fire damage instead increases that ongoing damage by 5.	
⚡ Deathstorm (when the flamebow drops to 0 hit points) ♦ Fire	
The flamebow explodes and is destroyed: close burst 5; targets enemies taking ongoing fire damage; +31 vs. Fortitude; the target and all allies adjacent to the target take 14 fire damage. Miss: The target takes 7 fire damage.	
Flame Step (move; at-will) ♦ Teleportation	
The flamebow can teleport to within 3 squares of any fire creature within 20 squares of it.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Primordial
Str 25 (+20)	Dex 29 (+22)
Con 23 (+19)	Int 20 (+18)
	Wis 27 (+21)
	Cha 18 (+17)
Equipment chainmail, flamebow	

DEVELOPMENT

If the adventurers attempt to flee the encounter after crossing the canal, the greenspaw defender and any surviving fire creatures from the top side of the map pursue.

5 Genasi Blackhearts (G)	Level 26 Minion Brute
Medium elemental humanoid (fire)	XP 2,250 each
Initiative +21	Senses Perception +19
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 38; Fortitude 39, Reflex 38, Will 36	
Immune fire	
Speed 6	
⊕ Falchion (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon	
+29 vs. AC; 10 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
⬇ Heart of Fire (when missed by a melee attack) ♦ Fire	
If the target is taking ongoing fire damage, that ongoing damage increases by 5.	
⚡ Fiery Vengeance (when the blackheart drops to 0 hit points) ♦ Fire	
Close burst 5; +27 vs. Reflex; 17 fire damage. Additionally, if the target is taking ongoing fire damage, that ongoing damage increases by 5.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Primordial
Str 29 (+22)	Dex 27 (+21)
Con 25 (+20)	Int 14 (+15)
	Wis 23 (+19)
	Cha 14 (+15)
Equipment chainmail, falchion	

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The City of Brass is brightly lit day and night.

Building: Buildings adjacent to the area are of stone construction and from 30 to 50 feet high. Place doors and other openings as you desire. However, unless you wish to develop their interiors, assume that buildings have been magically sealed as part of the siege preparations and cannot be entered.

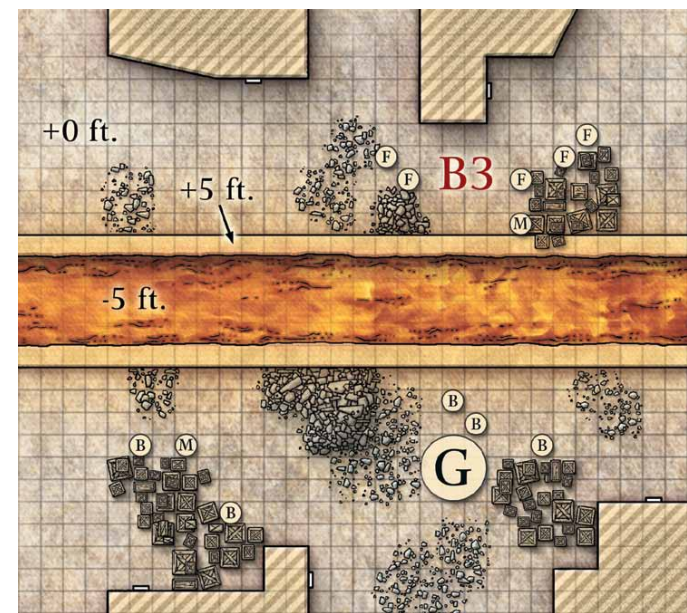
Rubble: These areas of loose scree are difficult terrain. A creature that runs, charges, or makes a double move through rubble must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Rubble Pile: Fallen rock and debris are piled to a height of 10 feet. A rubble pile must be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

Crates: Stacks of crates stand 10 feet high and must be climbed with a DC 20 Athletics check.

Basalt Wall: A protective wall of magically strengthened basalt lines the fiery canals of the City of Brass. A basalt wall rises 5 feet above the adjacent ground, while the surface of the canal is 10 feet below the top of the wall.

Canal: The fiery canals that crisscross the City of Brass are a deadly hazard. The canal in this area flows normally, generating intense heat that can be felt from 50 feet away. Any creature that ends its turn on the top of the basalt wall takes 2d6 + 8 fire damage. Any creature that enters the canal takes 3d8 + 10 fire damage and is slowed for as long as it remains in the canal.



ENCOUNTER B4: GATE CRASHERS

Encounter Level 28 (70,500 XP)

SETUP

1 redspawn magmastomper (R)

2 salamander thrallmasters (T)

10 salamander fireshields (F)

This encounter takes place at one of the two gates providing the only access to the Furnace. The characters can approach the gate unnoticed behind the cover of adjacent buildings.

When the heroes can see the gate, read:

The wall protecting the inner tier of the Furnace stands some hundred feet tall, a great barrier of basalt and slate whose surface roils with heat and smoke. A huge flight of steps rises from an open courtyard to the gate itself—twin brass valves 50 feet high, their surface flaring with a molten glow. An enormous red dragonspawn slouches by the stairs, its black eyes watching for any sign of trouble. A half-dozen salamanders pace around it, with more walking the wall high above.

Beyond the wall, the dark lines of the Charcoal Palace of the efreet is suddenly lit by a storm of lightning heralding the arrival of the gargantuan blue dragon you saw before. This must be the exarch that Bahamut named as Namissi, descending now to the roof of the palace. Millennia-old elemental stone shudders beneath him as he perches atop a parapet like a bloated crow. His long neck whips side to side, scanning the city as he roars in rage.

The creatures here are all on high alert. They spot the characters as soon as they enter the area of the tactical map.

Redspawn Magmastomper (R) Level 27 Elite Brute

Huge natural beast (reptile) XP 22,000

Initiative +19 Senses Perception +20; darkvision

HP 612; Bloodied 306; see also *fiery wrath*

AC 39; Fortitude 41, Reflex 38, Will 39

Resist 20 fire

Saving Throws +2

Speed 8, fly 8 (clumsy)

Action Points 1

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)

Reach 3; +30 vs. AC; 3d10 + 10 damage.

⊕ **Explosive Charge** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Fire**

The redspawn magmastomper charges an enemy; +28 vs. Reflex; 3d12 + 10 fire damage, and the target is pushed 4 squares and takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

⊕ **Fling** (standard; at-will)

+30 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage and the redspawn magmastomper makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +28 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 6 squares and knocked prone.

⊕ **Fiery Wrath** (only while bloodied) ♦ **Fire**

The magmastomper's bite attack deals 10 extra fire damage, and on a hit the target takes also ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). The target takes a -4 penalty to saves against this effect at the end of his or her turn if the target attacked during that turn.

Threatening Reach

The redspawn magmastomper can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 3 squares.

Alignment Evil

Languages Draconic

Str 29 (+22)

Dex 23 (+19)

Wis 25 (+20)

Con 26 (+21)

Int 15 (+15)

Cha 13 (+14)

TACTICS

The redspawn magmastomper enters the fray with *explosive charge*, then makes *fling* attacks each round. It focuses on the most powerful melee combatants initially, hoping to become bloodied quickly. Once bloodied, it lays into lightly armored foes with *bite* attacks, hoping that its *fiery wrath* yields a quick kill.

The salamander thrallmasters fight at range with their *molten lash*, then close with stunned foes for *scourge* or *tail lash* attacks.

2 Salamander Thrallmasters (T) Level 28 Controller

Large elemental humanoid (fire, reptile) XP 13,000 each

Initiative +22 Senses Perception +22

HP 262; Bloodied 131

AC 42; Fortitude 41, Reflex 41, Will 39

Resist 30 fire

Speed 6

⊕ **Tail Lash** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire**

Reach 2; +33 vs. AC; 3d10 + 6 fire damage, and the target is knocked prone.

⊕ **Scourge** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire, Weapon**

Reach 3; +33 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 fire damage and is slowed (save ends both).

⌘ **Molten Lash** (standard; recharge ☹ ☹ ☹) ♦ **Fire**

Ranged 20; +32 vs. Reflex; 3d10 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage and is stunned (save ends both).

Threatening Reach

The salamander thrallmaster can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 2 squares.

Alignment Evil

Languages Primordial

Skills Intimidate +23

Str 25 (+21)

Dex 27 (+22)

Wis 27 (+22)

Con 30 (+24)

Int 20 (+19)

Cha 19 (+18)

Equipment scourge

The salamander fireshields on the wall attack with *flaming javelins* from behind cover. Those on the ground spread out to avoid area attacks, laying into lightly armored foes with *fireshield bash*.

The salamanders are resentful of the redspawn's command. They do not fight alongside it, even to flank.

DEVELOPMENT

If the adventurers flee the encounter (either before or after getting over the wall), the defenders on the same side of the wall pursue. The other defenders take 2 rounds to open the gate before following. The characters cannot make a group skill check to evade this pursuit.

10 Salamander		Level 26 Minion Brute	
Fireshields (F)			
Large elemental humanoid (fire, reptile)		XP 2,250 each	
Initiative +20	Senses Perception +19		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.			
AC 38; Fortitude 40, Reflex 38, Will 37			
Immune fire			
Speed 6			
Ⓢ Fireshield Bash (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon			
Reach 3; +29 vs. AC; 12 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).			
↘ Flaming Javelin (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon			
Ranged 20; +27 vs. Reflex; 10 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage.			
↖ Fireshield Burst (when the salamander fireshield is reduced to 0 hit points) ♦ Fire			
Close burst 3; +27 vs. Reflex; ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).			
Alignment Evil	Languages Primordial		
Str 29 (+22)	Dex 25 (+20)	Wis 23 (+19)	
Con 25 (+20)	Int 18 (+17)	Cha 14 (+15)	
Equipment fireshield, 10 javelins			

STANDING DOWN

Not all the natives of the City of Brass are as keen to serve Tiamat as Bashumgarda. During the fight, stress that the salamanders seem indifferent to the redspawn's commands. An Insight check made during combat (as a free action) tells the adventurers that these guards openly loathe the dragonspawn and are fighting alongside it only under duress.

If the redspawn is killed, savvy heroes can attempt to establish a temporary truce with one or both salamander thrallmasters. (The salamander fireshields cannot be parleyed with if both thrallmasters are dead.) Set up an impromptu skill challenge for the attempt: complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures), level 28 (XP 13,000); primary skills Diplomacy and Insight (DC 28); the characters must earn at least 1 success with Diplomacy.

If the adventurers succeed in the skill challenge, the salamanders immediately stand down. If they are told that the characters' goal is the overthrow of Bashumgarda and Tiamat's forces, the salamanders open the gates.

If the heroes successfully parley with the salamanders, award full XP for the encounter in addition to the bonus XP for the skill challenge.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The City of Brass is brightly lit day and night.

Wall: The walls of the City of Brass are burning hot. Any creature that comes into contact with a wall or starts its turn adjacent to a wall takes 3d8 + 10 damage. A wall's sheer surface can be scaled with a DC 33 Athletics check, but a creature climbing the wall takes the above damage at the start and end of each of its turns.

A creature at the top of the wall has concealment against foes on the ground.

The heroes are free to fly over the wall, but they draw ranged attacks and will be pursued by the ground forces here.

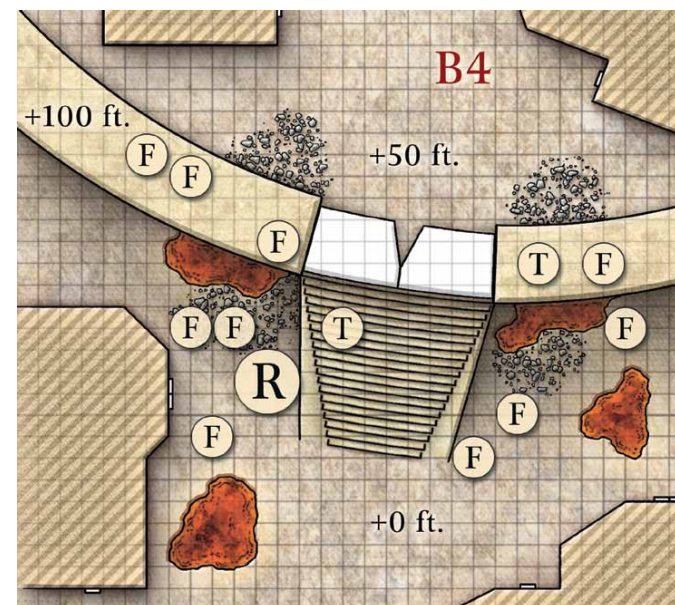
Gates: Glowing brass gates 50 feet high and 15 feet thick block access from the outer city to the inner wards. The gates are molten hot, and any creature that comes into contact with a gate or starts its turn adjacent to a gate takes 4d8 + 10 damage. The locked gates can be forced open by two simultaneous DC 33 Athletics checks. Up to four Medium creatures can attempt Athletics checks to open the gates, but each creature must make its own check (taking damage for contacting the gate, as above). Creatures cannot use the aid another action to assist on this check.

Stairs: A great flight of stone stairs rises 50 feet to the gates set into the great wall. The steps and risers are 3 feet on a side, and are difficult terrain for Medium or smaller creatures.

Elemental Vent: Vents jetting pure elemental energy dot the plaza before the gate. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to an elemental vent takes 3d6 + 6 cold, fire, and lightning damage. A creature that enters an elemental vent or starts its turn there takes 3d10 + 10 cold, fire, and lightning damage, and is stunned (save ends).

Rubble: These areas of loose scree are difficult terrain. A creature that runs, charges, or makes a double move through rubble must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Building: Buildings adjacent to the area are of stone construction and from 30 to 50 feet high. Unless you wish to develop their interiors, assume that buildings are locked and cannot be entered.



ENCOUNTER B5: LORD OF THE EFREET'S

Encounter Level 29 (92,250 XP)

SETUP

Bashumgarda, Lord of the Efreet's (B)

2 Ring of Fire pyremasters (P)

9 Ring of Fire flamerunners (F)

6 Ring of Fire magmacasters (M)

Within the barracks of the Ring of Fire, Bashumgarda prepares for the upcoming assault on the City of Brass. The barracks are surrounded by a wall of elemental stone and guarded by a dozen members of the efreet lord's elite personal guard. Nearby buildings offer enough cover for the characters to get a glimpse of their destination.

When the adventurers can see this area, read:

The barracks of the elite Ring of Fire are likely well defended at the best of times, but the efreet's have redoubled their efforts in preparation for siege. A wall of elemental stone has been raised around the barracks complex. Its single entrance is guarded by a dozen efreet's.

The guards of the Ring of Fire are on high alert. Any heroes moving in the open are spotted as soon as they move onto the tactical map.

The magmacasters and one pyremaster are hovering just behind the wall. They maintain clear line of sight to approaching foes but have superior cover against attacks from the front of the wall.

The guards at the wall call out an alarm as soon as combat begins. Bashumgarda and five flamerunners are inside the closest barracks building. They emerge on their initiative count 2 rounds later.

When Bashumgarda emerges, read:

The great doors of the closest barracks building are suddenly flung wide and five more Ring of Fire flamerunners rush forward to join their comrades. Behind them strides the menacing figure of Bashumgarda, Lord of the Efreet's. The ceremonial scepter of his reign hangs at his belt and the scimitar in his hands pulses with black flame as he shouts out, "Defilers and infidels! You will pay for treachery with your lives!"

TACTICS

Bashumgarda wastes no time plunging into battle to hit as many characters as possible with *burning wrath* as he advances. He focuses on the strongest-looking defender or leader, moving to another target each time he successfully hits with a *blackflame scimitar* attack.

The pyremasters each open with *wall of fire*, setting up a hazardous gauntlet around the adventurers that they sustain each round. They use their *pyremaster's lash* against strikers and defenders, switching to *spiked scimitar* attacks while *pyremaster's lash* recharges. If surrounded, they use *fire burst* before moving to a more advantageous position.

The flamerunners spread out to avoid area attacks, staying in motion with *blazing charge* and *fiery escape*.

The magmacasters unleash their magma bolts against ranged attackers and spellcasters, targeting characters demonstrating resistance to fire with *molten wave*.

Bashumgarda, Lord of the Efreet's (B)		Level 28 Elite Soldier (Leader)
Large elemental humanoid (fire), efreet		XP 26,000
Initiative +24	Senses Perception +26	
Efreet Lord's Aura aura 2; while within the aura, allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls with fire attacks, and enemies gain vulnerable 5 fire.		
HP 520; Bloodied 260		
AC 44; Fortitude 40, Reflex 39, Will 41		
Immune fire		
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover)		
⊕ Blackflame Scimitar (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Necrotic, Weapon		
Reach 2; +35 vs. AC; 2d10 + 9 damage (crit 6d10 + 29) plus 1d10 fire and necrotic damage, and the target takes ongoing 15 fire and necrotic damage and is immobilized (save ends both). <i>Aftereffect:</i> Ongoing 15 fire and necrotic damage (save ends). Saving throws against this power take a -2 penalty.		
‡ Double Attack (standard; at-will)		
Bashumgarda makes two <i>blackflame scimitar</i> attacks.		
✱ Burning Wrath (standard; recharge ⓂⓂ) ♦ Fire		
Area burst 2 within 10; targets enemies; +33 vs. Will; 3d10 + 5 fire damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).		
Fiery Vendetta (immediate reaction, when an enemy within 2 squares of Bashumgarda attacks one of Bashumgarda's allies; at-will)		
Bashumgarda makes a melee basic attack against the triggering enemy.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Primordial	
Skills Diplomacy +29, Intimidate +29		
Str 26 (+22)	Dex 26 (+22)	Wis 25 (+21)
Con 28 (+23)	Int 25 (+21)	Cha 31 (+24)
Equipment scimitar		

NO QUARTER

Bashumgarda and his elite guards fight to the death, but the heroes might not be so quick to want to see the efreet lord fall. Depending on the outcome of the “Efreet Alliance” skill challenge (Encounter B1) and the party’s moral bent, Bashumgarda might be kept alive for questioning or to be delivered up to Bahamut. If subdued with any amount of care, the efreet lord rages and rails against his captors but poses no further threat.

9 Ring of Fire Flamerunners (F)		Level 27 Minion Skirmisher	
Large elemental humanoid (fire), efreet		XP 2,750 each	
Initiative +24	Senses Perception +20		
Ring of Fire aura 2; enemies within the aura takes a -5 penalty to saving throws to end ongoing fire damage.			
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.			
AC 41 (43 against opportunity attacks); Fortitude 39, Reflex 41, Will 38			
Immune fire			
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover)			
⚡ Scimitar (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon			
Reach 2; +32 vs. AC; 10 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). If used as part of a charge, increase the ongoing damage to ongoing 10 fire damage.			
Fiery Escape (move; encounter) ♦ Teleportation			
The flamerunner teleports 20 squares adjacent to another efreet, reappearing in a flash of fire and smoke.			
Alignment Evil	Languages Primordial		
Str 26 (+21)	Dex 29 (+22)	Wis 24 (+20)	
Con 22 (+19)	Int 17 (+16)	Cha 20 (+18)	
Equipment scimitar			

DEVELOPMENT

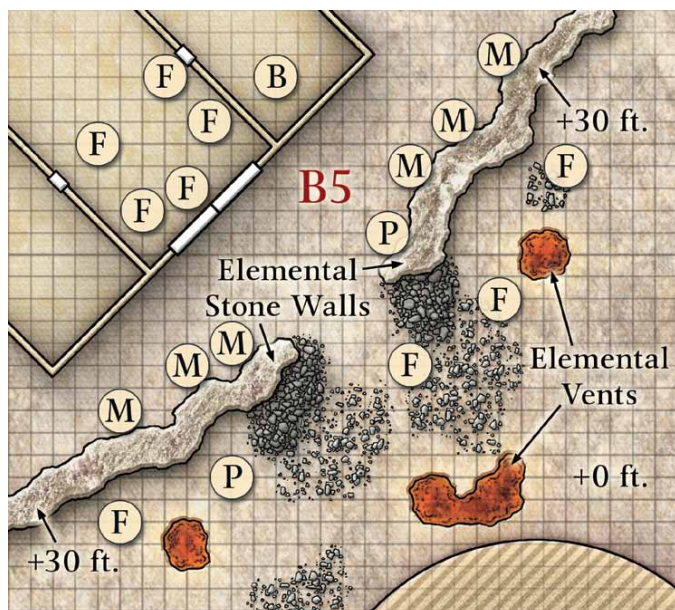
The characters’ victory over Bashumgarda allows them to use his scepter to open the City of Brass to Bahamut’s forces. See “The Call to Battle” on page 31.

2 Ring of Fire Pyremasters (P)		Level 27 Controller	
Large elemental humanoid (fire), efreet		XP 11,000 each	
Initiative +21	Senses Perception +17		
Ring of Fire aura 2; any enemy that enters or ends its turn in the aura takes 10 fire damage.			
HP 250; Bloodied 125			
AC 41; Fortitude 40, Reflex 38, Will 38			
Immune fire			
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover)			
⚡ Spiked Scimitar (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon			
Reach 2; +32 vs. AC; 2d10 + 9 damage (crit 6d10 + 29), and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.			
⚡ Pyremaster’s Lash (standard; recharge Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ) ♦ Fire			
Ranged 10; +31 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 fire damage, and the target slides 3 squares, takes ongoing 10 fire damage, and is immobilized (save ends both).			
⚡ Fire Burst (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire			
Area burst 1 within 10; +32 vs. AC; 3d6 + 7 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).			
⚡ Wall of Fire (standard; recharges when bloodied) ♦ Fire			
Area wall 10 within 20; the pyremaster conjures a wall of searing flame that lasts until the end of the pyremaster’s next turn. The wall is 6 squares high and blocks line of sight. The wall’s space is heavily obscured and is difficult terrain. A creature that starts its turn adjacent to the wall takes 10 fire damage. A creature that enters a square of the wall or starts its turn there takes 20 fire damage. <i>Sustain Minor</i> : The wall persists.			
Alignment Evil	Languages Primordial		
Skills Arcana +25, Insight +24, Intimidate +27			
Str 29 (+22)	Dex 26 (+21)	Wis 19 (+17)	
Con 26 (+21)	Int 21 (+18)	Cha 26 (+21)	
Equipment scimitar			

TREASURE

With Bashumgarda defeated, the adventurers can seize both the ceremonial scepter of his reign and his *blackflame scimitar*. If you choose to place this unique weapon as treasure, treat it as a +6 *flaming scimitar* that can deal fire damage, necrotic damage, or both. If you do not wish to use it as treasure, the *blackflame scimitar* is usable only by another efreet.

6 Ring of Fire Magmacasters (M)		Level 28 Minion Artillery	
Large elemental humanoid (fire), efreet		XP 3,250 each	
Initiative +24	Senses Perception +19		
Ring of Fire aura 2; any enemy that ends its turn within the aura takes 5 fire damage.			
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.			
AC 40; Fortitude 39, Reflex 42, Will 40			
Immune fire			
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover)			
⚡ Magma Bolt (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire			
Ranged 10; +33 vs. AC; 10 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).			
⚡ Molten Wave (standard; encounter) ♦ Fire			
Ranged 10; +33 vs. Reflex; the target gains vulnerable 15 fire damage (save ends).			
Magma Spray (when reduced to 0 hp; encounter) ♦ Fire			
The magmacaster’s space and all adjacent squares become difficult terrain until the end of the encounter. A creature that enters these squares takes 5 fire damage.			
Alignment Evil	Languages Primordial		
Str 25 (+21)	Dex 31 (+24)	Wis 20 (+19)	
Con 22 (+20)	Int 20 (+19)	Cha 26 (+22)	



FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The City of Brass is brightly lit day and night.

Wall of Elemental Stone: The barracks complex of the Ring of Fire has been surrounded by a cordon of elemental stone for protection. This rough stone wall is 60 feet high, 10 feet thick, and can be climbed with a DC 19 Athletics check. Any creature that comes into contact with the wall or starts its turn there is pummeled by the wall and subject to an attack: +33 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 10 damage, and the target falls from the wall and is knocked prone. A creature that falls from the wall takes additional falling damage as normal.

The heroes are free to fly over the wall, but they draw ranged attacks and will be pursued by the ground forces here. The total flying distance from one side of the wall to the other is 130 feet (26 squares).

Rubble: These areas of loose scree are difficult terrain. A creature that runs, charges, or makes a double move through rubble must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Rubble Pile: Fallen rock and debris are piled to a height of 20 feet. A rubble pile must be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

Elemental Vent: Vents jetting pure elemental energy dot the area before the wall. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to an elemental vent takes 3d6 + 6 cold, fire, and lightning damage. A creature that enters an elemental vent or starts its turn there takes 3d10 + 10 cold, fire, and lightning damage, and is stunned (save ends).

Each round on initiative count 0, roll a d10 for each elemental vent. On a roll of 10, the vent flares up unpredictably. Any creature adjacent to the vent takes 3d8 + 8 fire damage.

Building: Buildings adjacent to the area are of stone construction and from 30 to 50 feet high. Bashumgarda and his Ring of Fire guards do not retreat into the barracks complex, but the characters are welcome to. If they do, expand the tactical map with efreet-sized stone furnishings as appropriate.

ENCOUNTER F1: ETERNAL FLAME

Encounter Level 29 (92,500 XP)

SETUP

1 white dragon firelord (W)
6 efreet scalespaw (S)

Tiamat's forces are drawing power from the shrine of the Eternal Flame Pavilion. This area is protected by powerful wards and guarded by a white dragon firelord and a half-dozen scalespaw—efreets bestowed with draconic qualities by Tiamat's foul rituals.

As the adventurers approach this area, read:

Pools of elemental fire surround the Eternal Flame Pavilion, the beaten gold of its walls glowing daylight-bright.

However, that light is shrouded by the haze of a protective dome of magical force that surrounds the shrine on all sides.

Elemental fire pours forth from the pavilion's main pool, hissing like a waterfall into a smaller constrained whirlpool. Pillars of black onyx jut up from the larger pool of roiling fire, the largest of these the perch of a huge dragon. The creature is an elder white by its appearance. However, its scales and eyes pulse with a blood-red glow and clouds of steam surround it as it paces. A half-dozen efreets stand before the shrine, but these are no ordinary guards. Tiamat's rituals have reshaped them into foul draconic forms. Smoke and fire shroud them as they flex deadly scaled ridges along their backs and limbs.

These creatures are on high alert and are ready to meet any attackers attempting to break Tiamat's control over Imix's shrine. The scalespaw hold their positions until the heroes are close enough to attack. The white dragon firelord does not leave the large pillar until the first character enters the area of the larger pool.

White Dragon Firelord (W) Level 28 Solo Brute Huge natural magical beast (dragon) XP 65,000

Initiative +19 Senses Perception +19; darkvision
Fire and Ice aura 5; while within the aura, enemies gain
vulnerable 15 cold and vulnerable 15 fire.

HP 1,048; Bloodied 524; see also *bloodied breath*

AC 42; Fortitude 43, Reflex 40, Will 40

Resist 30 cold, fire

Saving Throws +5

Speed 8 (ice walk), fly 8 (hover), overland flight 12

Action Points 2

⊕ Bite (standard; at-will) ♦ Cold

Reach 3; +33 vs. AC; 2d12 + 6 plus 2d12 cold damage (plus an extra 2d12 cold damage on a successful opportunity attack).

⊕ Claw (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire

Reach 3; +33 vs. AC; 1d12 + 6 damage plus 1d12 fire damage.

↓ Dragon's Fury (standard; at-will)

The dragon makes two *claw* attacks. If the dragon hits a single target with both claws, it makes a *bite* attack against the same target.

↘ Scouring Bolt (standard; recharge ☹☹) ♦ Cold, Fire

Ranged 10; +31 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 10 cold and fire damage, and the firelord slides the target 2 squares.

↩ Breath Weapon (standard; recharge ☹☹) ♦ Cold, Fire

Close blast 5; +31 vs. Reflex; 5d10 + 10 cold and fire damage, and the target is knocked prone and blinded (save ends both).

↩ Bloodied Breath (free, when first bloodied; encounter)

The dragon's breath weapon recharges, and the dragon uses it.

↩ Frightful Presence (standard; encounter) ♦ Fear

Close burst 10; targets enemies; +31 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of the dragon's next turn. *Aftereffect:* The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

Steam Shroud (immediate interrupt, when hit by a melee attack; at-will) ♦ Zone

The dragon's space and all adjacent squares become a zone of roiling steam that grants total concealment until the end of the dragon's next turn.

Elemental Affinity

The white dragon firelord's elemental power overcomes the fire affinity of the City of Brass. The dragon's attacks with the cold keyword deal full damage.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Draconic

Skills Athletics +28, Intimidate +27

Str 28 (+23)

Dex 21 (+19)

Wis 20 (+19)

Con 30 (+24)

Int 26 (+22)

Cha 26 (+22)

TACTICS

The efreet scalespawns race shrieking into battle, spreading out to avoid area attacks. They use their *breath weapon* against mobile combatants, focusing scimitar attacks on more stationary, lightly armored foes.

The white dragon firelord stays in the thick of combat to make maximum use of its *fire and ice* aura. It focuses its *dragon's fury* attacks on lightly armored foes and uses its *breath weapon* and *scouring bolt* as often as possible. Against a bloodied target, it spends an action point to make two *dragon's fury* attacks, hoping for a quick kill.

6 Efreet Scalespawn (S) Level 27 Minion Soldier
Large elemental humanoid (fire) XP 2,750 each**Initiative** +22 **Senses** Perception +20**Scaled Wrath** aura 1; any creature that attacks a scalespawn while adjacent to it takes 10 damage.**HP** 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.**AC** 43; **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 38**Immune** fire**Speed** 6, fly 8 (hover)⊕ **Scimitar** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Reach 2; +34 vs. AC; 14 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the efreet scalespawn's next turn.

◀ **Breath Weapon** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Fire**

Close burst 2; +32 vs. Reflex; 14 fire damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

◀ **Vengeful Immolation** (when the scalespawn drops to 0 hit points) ♦ **Fire**

Close burst 5; +32 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 1 square and takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). The scalespawn is destroyed, and its space and all adjacent squares become difficult terrain until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil**Languages** Primordial**Str** 29 (+22)**Dex** 25 (+20)**Wis** 24 (+20)**Con** 27 (+21)**Int** 18 (+17)**Cha** 21 (+18)**Equipment** scimitar

CORRUPTED SHRINE

The Dragon Queen's ritualists have corrupted the shrine of Imix in the Eternal Flame Pavilion, drawing off primordial power that gives strength to Tiamat's blue exarch and his war dragons. The adventurers must break the control of the shrine in order to tip the odds to Bahamut's side.

Level: 27 (XP 11,000).**Complexity:** 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).**Primary Skills:** Arcana, Athletics, Religion.

Arcana (DC 26, standard action): By sensing the disruption in the primordial magic of the shrine, the character can attempt to correct it. A character must be within the area of the fire pool or the fire whirl-

pool to attempt this check. This skill can provide a maximum of 2 successes.

Athletics (DC 17, standard action): The primordial power of the shrine responds to displays of sheer force. By striking one of the onyx altars hard enough, the hero weakens the control of Tiamat's rituals. A character must be on or adjacent to an onyx pillar to attempt this check. This skill can provide a maximum of 2 successes.

Religion (DC 31, standard action): The adventurer can make an offering of fealty to Imix in an attempt to overcome the corruption of Tiamat. This check can be made from outside the area of the fire pool and the fire whirlpool. This skill can provide a maximum of 2 successes.

Any divine character who is successful in this check disrupts the connection to the power of his or her own faith. Such a character takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and any subsequent skill checks in this challenge (save ends).

Secondary Skill: Endurance.

Endurance (DC 26, free action or minor action): The searing heat of the pools hinders the characters in their attempts to undo the corruption of the shrine. With a successful Endurance check, a hero gains a +2 bonus to his or her next primary skill check made in the challenge. On a failed Endurance check, the character takes a -2 penalty to his or her next primary check.

Any adventurer undertaking the skill challenge must attempt an Endurance check as a free action before making a primary skill check. Alternatively, a character can instead make the Endurance check as a minor action before the primary check. An Endurance check made as a minor action grants the hero a +2 bonus on the check.

Success: If the characters earn 4 successes, Tiamat's corruption of the shrine is broken. Any surviving creatures in this encounter take a -2 penalty to all defenses, as does the blue exarch in encounter F2.

Failure: If the characters accumulate 3 failures, they succeed only in accelerating the rate at which power is drained from the shrine. The white dragon firelord regains 262 hit points (or returns to life with that many hit points if it has been slain). The firelord and any other surviving creatures in this encounter gain a +2 bonus to all defenses and a +2 bonus to attack rolls until the end of the encounter.

DEVELOPMENT

Partway through the adventurers' fight here, bring the player's attention back to the overall battle, where Bahamut and Namissi continue their bloody melee.

When the white dragon firelord is first bloodied, read the following:

Beyond the Eternal Flame Pavilion, the great Charcoal Palace is suddenly lit by a storm of blue-white lightning. The blue exarch Namissi is still locked in combat with Bahamut, and the Platinum Dragon's form is burning like a reflection of the city below. Both are badly wounded as they slam into each other in midair, crashing into one of the palace's high spires as they twist in a deadly embrace.

Continue to describe the battle between Bahamut and Namissi as this encounter plays out. Stress the proximity of both combatants to the Charcoal Palace, and describe the palace taking the brunt of their attacks as they skirmish around it. Also describe Namissi appearing suddenly weakened if the characters are successful in the skill challenge.

AFTERMATH

As soon as this encounter ends, the heroes see Bahamut fall under the onslaught of Tiamat's blue exarch.

From the Charcoal Palace comes a sudden shuddering roar. In a blast of lightning from Namissi, the peaked roof of one great wing of the complex collapses where the blue exarch and Bahamut coil around each other. A cloud of dust and black smoke rises, eclipsing the view before being suddenly shredded by the beating of great wings. Bahamut is gone. Namissi perches at the uppermost parapet of the shattered palace, his victorious roar echoing across the City of Brass.

Still weakened from his rebirth, Bahamut has fallen and the adventurers are the only ones who can save him. Go to encounter F2 on the next page.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The City of Brass is brightly lit day and night.

Rubble: These areas of loose scree are difficult terrain. A creature that runs, charges, or makes a double move through rubble must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Fire Pool: The shrine of Imix at the heart of the Eternal Flame Pavilion is surrounded by onyx-walled pools of pure elemental fire. The largest of these pools is the center of Tiamat's corrupt rituals and is protected by a dome of magical force. The only entrance into the fire pool is by way of the firefall that descends into the fire whirlpool (see below).

The roiling elemental fire of the pool is interrupted by a series of onyx pillars (see below). Any creature that starts its turn in the air above the fire pool must make a DC 28 Endurance check (a free action) or

take $3d8 + 10$ fire damage. Any creature that enters or starts its turn within the fire pool takes $4d8 + 10$ fire damage.

The protective dome of magical force that surrounds the fire pool blocks movement, line of effect, and magic (including teleportation effects). Creatures can enter the fire pool only by way of the smaller whirlpool and the firefall; see below.

Onyx Pillar: Rough-topped pillars of magical onyx thrust up 5 feet above the roiling surface of the fire pool, including one large pillar that is the centerpiece of Tiamat's rituals. A creature standing on an onyx pillar is partially protected from the crippling heat of the fire pool. Any creature that starts its turn on or above an onyx pillar must make a DC 28 Endurance check (a free action) or take $2d8 + 5$ fire damage.

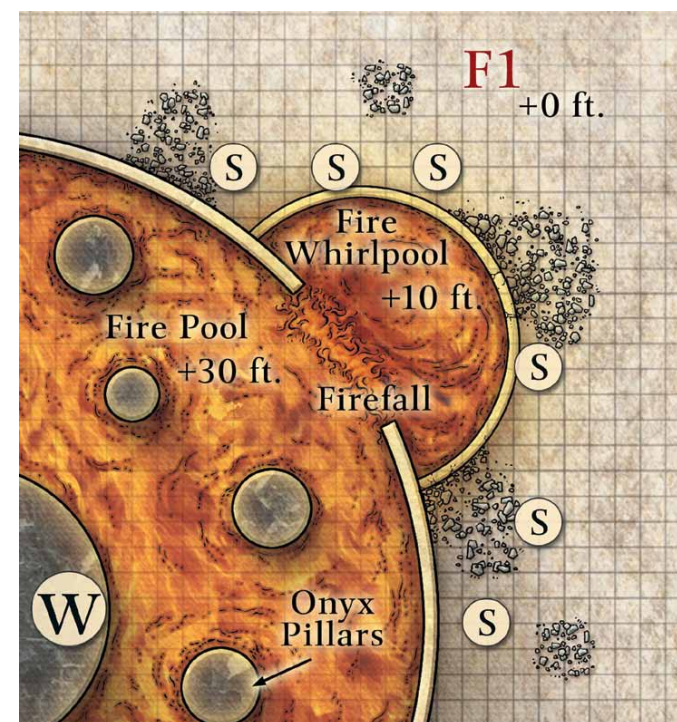
Firefall: Raw elemental fire surges like a waterfall down from the fire pool. The firefall is the only access from the open whirlpool to the warded fire pool. The 20-foot-high firefall can be ascended by flying or with a DC 33 Athletics check. A creature that flies up the firefall takes $3d8 + 10$ fire damage. A creature that ascends the firefall with an Athletics check takes $4d8 + 10$ fire damage.

Fire Whirlpool: Where the flow of fire courses down from the larger fire pool, it creates an elemental vortex. The smooth onyx walls of the whirlpool are 10 feet high and can be climbed with a DC 20 Athletics check. A creature that ends its turn on the onyx wall takes $2d6 + 8$ fire damage.

Any creature that enters or starts its turn in the whirlpool takes $3d8 + 10$ fire damage and is dazed until the start of its next turn. A creature that moves 1 square into the whirlpool must make a DC 19 Acrobatics or Athletics check (a standard action) to grab

the edge and clamber onto the wall. A creature that fails its check or that moves more than 1 square into the whirlpool is caught up in the vortex.

A creature must make a DC 28 Acrobatics or Athletics check (a standard action) to escape the vortex. One creature on the wall can aid this check. On a creature's third failed check to escape the vortex, it is pulled down within the elemental maelstrom and irrevocably destroyed.



ENCOUNTER F2: NAMISSI'S REVENGE

Encounter Level 32 (135,000 XP)

SETUP

Namissi, blue exarch of Tiamat (N)

Bahamut, the Platinum Dragon (B)

Immediately after their victory at the Eternal Flame Pavilion, the characters must rush to the Charcoal Palace to face off against Namissi, the blue exarch of Tiamat. Bahamut has been gravely wounded and lies in the ruins of the palace. Namissi stands triumphant, his forces about to overwhelm Bahamut's shattered army.

LAST STAND

The focus of this battle is Namissi facing off against the adventurers. Bahamut's fall threatens to tip the balance of power in favor of the blue exarch's forces. However, Namissi knows better than to risk Tiamat's wrath by slaying the weakened Platinum Dragon outright, expecting that the Dragon Queen will want to reserve that honor for herself.

However, if you want to increase the tension of this encounter beyond the combat, you can add a skill challenge by which the characters help to keep Bahamut alive. The Platinum Dragon should not die again, but failure can mean that Bahamut's waning life-force is channeled to Namissi to make him even more formidable in combat.

Namissi, Blue Exarch of Tiamat, Ancient Blue Dragon (N)

Level 32 Solo Artillery

Gargantuan natural magical beast (dragon) XP 135,000

Initiative +23 **Senses** Perception +30; darkvision
Exarch's Presence (Fear) aura 5; enemies within the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and saving throws
HP 1,184; **Bloodied** 592; see also *bloodied breath*
AC 46; **Fortitude** 46, **Reflex** 44, **Will** 43; if the heroes were successful in the "Corrupted Shrine" skill challenge in Encounter F1, the PCs have a +2 bonus on attacks in this encounter.

Immune lightning; **Resist** cold 20, fire 20

Saving Throws +5

Speed 10, fly 12 (hover), overland flight 15

Action Points 2

⊕ **Gore** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Lightning**

Reach 4; +37 vs. AC; 2d8 + 12 damage plus 2d6 lightning damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares and knocked prone.

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)

Reach 4; +37 vs. AC; 2d6 + 12 damage.

⊕ **Draconic Fury** (standard; at-will)

Namissi makes a *gore* attack and two *claw* attacks. If all three attacks hit, Namissi recharges *wingclap*.

⊕ **Wingclap** (move; encounter) ♦ **Thunder**

Namissi flies up to 12 squares and attacks with his wings at the end of his move: reach 4, two targets; +36 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 10 thunder damage. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

⌘ **Bloodied Breath** (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ♦ **Lightning**

Namissi's breath weapon recharges, and he uses it.

As the heroes make their way from the Eternal Flame Pavilion to the Charcoal Palace, read:

Dragons and efreet darken the skies above the city, but Bahamut's forces are on the defensive now. None of the slaves or city guards scattered across the Furnace show any inclination toward approaching Namissi atop the ruins of the palace, but smoke and chaos provide cover for your approach.

⌘ **Breath Weapon** (standard; recharge ☼ ☼) ♦ **Lightning**

Close burst 10; The dragon targets up to four creatures; the first target must be within 20 squares of the dragon, and each additional target must be within 10 squares of the previous target; +36 vs. Reflex; 4d12 + 22 lightning damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). **Miss:** Half damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

⌘ **Thunderclap** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Thunder**

Close burst 3; +36 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 10 thunder damage, and the target is stunned until the end of the blue dragon's next turn. **Critical Hit:** As above, except that the target is stunned (save ends).

⌘ **Tiamat's Wrath** (when Namissi drops to 0 hit points) ♦ **Lightning**

Close burst 5; +36 vs. Reflex; 5d6 + 10 lightning damage. **Miss:** Half damage.

⌘ **Exarch's Shield** (immediate reaction, when hit by a ranged or area attack; encounter) ♦ **Lightning**

Area burst 4 within 20; must target the triggering attacker; +36 vs. Reflex; 4d6 lightning damage, and ongoing 10 lightning damage (save ends). **Miss:** Half damage.

Faith of Tiamat (minor; usable only while bloodied; at-will)

Namissi's next successful attack that deals lightning damage instead deals acid, cold, fire, or poison damage (his choice).

Alignment Evil

Languages Common, Draconic

Skills Athletics +32, Insight +30, Intimidate +25

Str 35 (+28)

Dex 25 (+23)

Wis 29 (+25)

Con 32 (+27)

Int 31 (+26)

Cha 18 (+20)

The characters must ascend to the top of the ruined palace in order to see the wounded Bahamut, unconscious within a massive fall of rubble.

As Tiamat's exarch, Namissi knows the adventurers by reputation and has no intention of allowing them to thwart his victory. He attacks when the first hero reaches the upper levels of the palace as shown on the tactical map.

With the city's magical wards shut down and Tiamat's efreet and dragons locked in combat with Bahamut's forces, the characters are free to use teleportation or flying to ascend to the top of the palace.

TACTICS

Namissi is an unrelenting opponent, blessed with the foul power of Tiamat. He stays in motion as he alternates *breath weapon* with *wingclap* and *draconic fury* attacks against single targets. He reserves his *thunderclap* and *exarch's shield* until he can target three or more adventurers, combining *faith of Tiamat* with *breath weapon* attacks against characters demonstrating a resistance to lightning.

DEVELOPMENT

The power that Namissi channels from Tiamat is shattered when the blue exarch dies.

Even as Namissi falls, a keening wail rises across the City of Brass. The dragons of Tiamat's army appear to be in sudden disarray. Bahamut's scattered forces are regrouping as the Dragon Queen's servants break ranks and scatter.

Whatever power the blue exarch held over the City of Brass, it has been broken with his death.

More importantly, the efreet of the city have also sensed the blue exarch's fall. Like a ripple spreading out from the Charcoal Palace, the elite guards of the City of Brass are taking to the air, working with Bahamut's dragons to crush Tiamat's faltering resistance.

Return to page 33 for the conclusion of the adventure.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The City of Brass is brightly lit day and night.

Rubble: These areas of loose scree are difficult terrain. A creature that runs, charges, or makes a double move through rubble must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Large or smaller creatures moving through areas of rubble on the sloping roof (see below) are slowed.

Rubble Pile: Fallen rock and debris are piled to a height of 20 feet. A rubble pile must be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

Sloping Roof: The roof of this section of the Charcoal Palace inside the parapets and the curtain wall slopes steeply up toward the center and the area of collapse. These areas are difficult terrain.

Weakened Roof: The shattered roof has been weakened in the areas indicated on the tactical map. A creature that walks on one of these areas triggers a collapse, and must make a DC 33 Acrobatics check or plunge down in a fall of rubble. A creature that falls is buried. A buried creature can clamber out of the area of collapse with two DC 33 Athletics checks. Up to three characters adjacent to the collapse on the roof can assist this check.

Namissi is too large to fall if an area of weakened roof collapses beneath him. If the blue exarch triggers a collapse, he is slowed until the start of his next turn.

Collapse: The roof of this section of the Charcoal Palace has been shattered and collapsed where Namissi and Bahamut fought. The Platinum Dragon lies wounded and half-buried within the rubble. The bottom of the collapse is 50 feet below the peak of the shattered roof. A creature that cannot fly or teleport down into the rubble must climb down with a DC 28 Athletics check.

About the Author

Scott Fitzgerald Gray (9th-level layabout, vindictive neutral) started gaming in high school and has worked as a writer and editor much of the time since then. After belatedly realizing he could combine both vocations in 2004, he's been making up for lost time as a freelance RPG editor and designer, primarily for Wizards of the Coast. He lives in the Canadian hinterland with a schoolteacher, two daughters, and a large number of animal companions.

