

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER SOCIETY



The Year of **Battle's Spark**

Scenario #7-05
Levels 9-12

Battle of the Thorns

By Christopher Wasko



AUTHOR
Christopher Wasko

DEVELOPMENT LEAD
Shay Snow

EDITING LEAD
Solomon St. John

EDITORS
Felix Dritz and Solomon St. John

COVER ARTISTS
Josef Kučera and Rodrigo Gonzalez Toledo

INTERIOR ARTISTS
Bruno Cesar, Chris L. Kimball, Josef Kučera, and Mikhail Palamarchuk

CARTOGRAPHERS
Jason Engle and Rob McCaleb

ART DIRECTION
Sonja Morris

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Emily Crowell

NARRATIVE MANAGER
Ron Lundeen

ORGANIZED PLAY COORDINATOR
Alex Speidel

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
James Jacobs

DIRECTOR OF GAME DEVELOPMENT
Adam Daigle

PUBLISHER
Erik Mona

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GM Resources

Campaign Home Page: pathfindersociety.club

Books: *Pathfinder Player Core*, *Pathfinder Player Core 2*, *Pathfinder Monster Core*, *Pathfinder GM Core*, and *Pathfinder NPC Core*

Maps: *Pathfinder Flip-Mat: Basic Environments Multi-Pack*, *Pathfinder Flip-Mat: Enormous Basic*, *Pathfinder Flip-Mat: Village Assault*, *Pathfinder Flip-Tiles: Campsite*, *Pathfinder Flip-Tiles: Wilderness Perils Expansion*

Online Resource: Pathfinder Reference Document at paizo.com/prd

Scenario Tags

Scenario tags provide additional information about an adventure's contents. For more information on scenario tags, see the *Guide to Organized Play: Pathfinder Society* at <https://lorespire.paizo.com/>.



Summary

Having made common cause with two Nidalese agents, the PCs must traverse the mountains to reach a hidden Chelaxian war camp. Throughout the journey, they can learn more about their uncertain allies. Once they arrive, the PCs must infiltrate the camp to find Chelax's plans to annex parts of Nidal. Doing so puts them in conflict with the fiendish commander, requiring the PCs to overcome them and their Hellknight cavalry.

Content Warning

This scenario contains themes of self-harm and ritualistic abuse. Before you begin, understand that player consent (including that of the Game Master) is vital to a safe and fun play experience for everyone. You should talk with your players before beginning the adventure and modify descriptions of the narrative as appropriate.

HOW TO PLAY



PLAY TIME: 2-3 HOURS



LEVEL: 9-12



PLAYERS: 3-6



Paizo Inc.
15902 Woodinville-Redmond Rd NE,
Unit B
Woodinville, WA 98072-4572
paizo.com



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Adventure Background

The Pathfinder Society has decided to take a stand against Cheliox's aggressive movements across Avistan. Although Cheliox's direct actions against the Society—including the burning of Greensteeples, the only lodge within Cheliox's borders—are enough to compel a response, the diabolic nation's covert sabotage is what has Society leadership truly alarmed. **Zarta Dralneen** (wry female human archivist) has found evidence pointing to a spy ring operating within Absalom, but not enough to warrant an invasive investigation. To move Absalom's law enforcement, Zarta needs to decipher the codes used in intercepted Chelaxian communications. Zarta knows one contact versed in breaking such codes who might wish to unravel Cheliox's machinations. Unfortunately, that contact is **Takhina** (furtive female human medium), the current truth maker of Nidal's Guild of Lies. Having no better options, Zarta reached out to the known liar hoping to make a deal.

Luckily for Zarta, Takhina's protected status is winding down as her term expires, meaning she needs allies to either extend her term or otherwise ensure safety from the Umbral Court. While Zarta has little power in this arena, an unusual set of twins recently arrived at Takhina's Guild, offering a promise of leverage in return for assistance with a dangerous task in Holden, a virtually unknown border town between Cheliox and Nidal. **Mara** (zealous female human shamed inquisitor of Zon-Kuthon) and **Vali Cairne** (eager female human cleric of Shelyn) have each encountered rumors of Cheliox's intent to launch a secret attack on Nidal, disguising it as Andoran aggression to justify further annexing Nidalese territory to establish a military presence. Neither sister wants to see this happen, though they have disparate motivations to prevent the invasion. If Takhina provides the sisters with backup, they can unveil the Chelaxian plans and help her appease the Umbral Court. So, a shaky, distrustful alliance was formed: Takhina would offer her code breaking services to Zarta in exchange for a promise of support, including a team of Pathfinder reinforcements for the twins' mission.

In Holden, General **Kizrech** (ambitious agender vordine devil general) has been organizing the Chelaxian pawns under their control for weeks and has grown tired of waiting. They're ready to bring some fire and order to the lands of the Midnight Lord, even as other forces implore them to stay their hand until the opportune moment.

Getting Started

Give the PCs **Handout #1: Letter from Zarta** and **Handout #2: Mounted Combat** from page 20 and allow them to make purchases before they depart. Then, read or paraphrase the following to get the adventure underway.

A dilapidated ranch house stands between the dried plains and the looming Menador Mountains, their peaks shrouded by lumpy gray clouds that blanket the sky. Although the house lies in ruins, the stable shelters several lithe horses with hides dappled black and gray. Two similarly pale, dark-haired women quietly brush the horses' flanks, conspicuously avoiding eye contact.

WHERE ON GOLARION?

This adventure takes place in the Menador Mountains, the natural border between Cheliox and Nidal. Most of the events occur in and around Holden, a tiny border town in the foothills that has been taken over by Chelaxian military forces. To learn more about Nidal, see *Pathfinder Lost Omens World Guide*, pages 102–103.



One of the women speaks assertively over the wind. "You must be our backup. I'm Vali Cairne, and this... is my sister, Mara." Mara looks away. "We suspect that a Chelaxian army plans to commit a false flag attack on Nidalese soil to justify annexing part of our country. We want to stop the attack, but without intelligence to bring to our people, we won't be able to assemble the forces we'd need to deter the operation."

Mara interjects. "The Chelaxian forces are hiding in a border village called Holden. If we can infiltrate the camp, steal their commander's attack plans, and cause enough disruption to buy time to stage a counteroffensive, we can scuttle the annexation."

Vali continues. "We understand that you have experience overcoming difficult odds, and that you also work against the devil queen. I hope that you can aid us on this mission. Any questions?"

The twins provide one warhorse per PC, each with a winter coat and a saddle with saddlebags containing two weeks' worth of food and water for its rider. Vali dedicates her divine magic to feeding, watering, healing, and protecting the horses throughout the mission, restricting her from casting spells to benefit the PCs during the scenario. If a PC provides their own mount, Vali will cast one 5th-rank *creation* spell per day on that PC's behalf.

What kind of resistance should we expect? Mara responds, "We'll know more once we have eyes on Holden, but I suspect cavalry and siege engines with ample diabolic support. Their commander is a vordine named Kizrech, supposedly an ambitious warrior spoiling for battle. Prepare for mobile enemies who fight with lances and fire."

How dangerous are the mountains? Mara raises her cowl. "The path that avoids border patrols is high and narrow. We traversed it

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once to get here unseen, but the weather is getting cold. I pray the Midnight Lord torments the invaders more than us.”

Are these horses for us? Vali grins. “Dark nidarrmars. We used to rear them in our youth. Swift, silent, and disciplined under pressure. They’ll get us through the mountains before the army moves out.”

Are you two alright? Vali scoffs. “This isn’t summer camp. We have a job to do. I’m sure we’ll all wind up great friends if we come back alive.” Mara lowers her head and turns away.

Unless specifically noted, increase any skill or save DC listed throughout this scenario by two for levels 11–12. Remember that each PC begins the adventure with 1 Hero Point.



Warhorse

Nature, Survival, or Mountain Lore (Recall Knowledge)

A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Nature check, a DC 28 Survival check (expert), or a DC 24 Mountain Lore check to Recall Knowledge might know more about the Menador Mountains. No information is gained from a failure.

Critical Success The wind and cloud formations suggest inclement weather ahead. The PC gains a +2 bonus on all Intelligence- and Wisdom-based checks during the blizzard.

Success The Menador Mountains have snow year-round and are known for cold weather and treacherous terrain.

Critical Failure The PC is notably unprepared for mountain travel. The first time the PC suffers a condition with a value due to events in the mountain pass, that condition’s value increases by 1.

Perception or Lore (Recall Knowledge)

A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check or a DC 21 Lore check might discern information about the twins. Each twin requires her own Perception check; Shelyn and Theater Lore apply for Vali, while Surgery and Zon-Kuthon Lore apply for Mara. No information is gained from a failure.

Critical Success Vali doesn’t carry any religious texts, but she does have a collection of fliers advertising performances at the House of Lies and other Nidalese theater venues, each heavily featuring pictures. Mara carries a copy of *The Umbral Leaves*, but the pages detailing the punishments for failure have been ripped out. The PC gains a +2 bonus on all Charisma- and Wisdom-based checks to interact with the twin they analyzed.

Success Vali has a bracelet tattoo of chains in a spiderweb pattern, and her symbol of Zon-Kuthon is etched with subtle feather stylizations. Mara’s arms are ridged with parallel scars, hallmarks of a practice of controlled harm Kuthite priests use to harden acolytes they deem too soft.

Critical Failure Each twin wears a jagged bone brooch, the maker’s mark of the Kuthite smithy in Whitemound where field inquisitors are trained. Bringing this up resurfaces painful memories of their separation and conditioning, dampening conversation and destabilizing Mara (see her backstory, page 5).

Society or Asmodeus Lore (Recall Knowledge)

A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Society check or a DC 24 Asmodeus Lore check to Recall Knowledge might know more about the Chelaxian machinations.

Critical Success Chelaxian military policy dictates that officers keep all sensitive communications on their person, typically in a cross-shoulder slat built into their armor that marks their station. This information provides a +2 circumstance bonus on all checks to Decipher Writing on the lieutenant’s codex and to Steal Kizrech’s war plans.

Success After years of complacency, Chelax has been making geopolitical moves, including military operations along its borders and nationalist posturing in Absalom and other high courts.

Failure Chelax is a regional superpower infamous for devil worship.

Critical Failure Chelax has suffered a falling out with the Hellknight Orders, causing many officers to consider abandoning rank.

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Society or Zon-Kuthon Lore (Recall Knowledge)

A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Society check or a DC 24 Zon-Kuthon Lore check to Recall Knowledge might know more about the Chelaxian machinations.

Critical Success Mara's teardrop face tattoos of chain links indicate she is an inquisitor of the Umbral Court, but their lack of a third link infer that she has not yet completed her final qualifying assignment. The PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Charisma-based checks to interact with Mara.

Success Nidal's ruling council, the Umbral Court, is adept at brainwashing and terrorizing its people, but individual Nidalese citizens sometimes buck their oppression by finding meaning outside Kuthite worship.

Failure Nidal is a country infamous for its theocratic worship of Zon-Kuthon.

Critical Failure All Nidalese souls are bound to Zon-Kuthon, making all Nidalese people fundamentally profane and suspicious. The PC suffers a -2 penalty on all checks to interact with the twins until they succeed at a check to do so.

The Cairne Twins

The twins grew up together on the Atteran Ranches. Like many on the ranches, they were raised training and handling horses and paying sober but insincere lip service to Zon-Kuthon. Although twins, Vali naturally fit the role of the elder sister. This stemmed from Vali's struggles learning to read, resulting in her developing an overconfident demeanor to convey swagger in lieu of smarts. Mara, being smarter and more sensitive, worshipped her gallant sister and did the more academic jobs that vexed Vali.

Vali's bravado caught the eye of visiting Kuthite dream hunters—the Umbral Court's inquisitors charged with rooting out Desnan agitators and heretics. Seeing promise in her bluster if she could graduate to true sadism, the Kuthites conscripted her, whisking her away for proper training. This devastated both sisters, leading them to seek support in different places.

Vali

Her abduction left Vali cynical of Zon-Kuthon's faith. She was already practiced in performing overconfidence and insincere worship of the Midnight Lord, so she survived her training but subtly rebelled against her tutors through weaponized incompetence. Her priorities changed when she was sent to intimidate a group of locals who were "sowing malcontent." In reality they were an amateur theater troupe who found joy in playing comedic, improvised performance games. Knowing she wasn't a serious inquisitor, the players invited Vali to join them. She fell in love with the art form, relishing that she didn't need to read or memorize to create something beautiful. She invented reasons to keep

investigating the improvisers so she could continue playing and honing her performance skills.

Little did Vali know that her troupe leader **Ensik** (compassionate male aiuvarin improviser) actually *was* a dissident—not a Desnan, but a Shelynite. Over years he built trust with Vali and softly converted her to the faith of the Eternal Rose and the underground advocacy of the insurgency group called the Whispered Song. Vali embraced her new faith, serving as a double agent within the dream hunters.

Her playful sabotage became a crushing reality, however, when the dream hunters discovered Ensik's heresy. Vali interfered in the raid and rescued several players, but Ensik was abducted. When she later learned that her long-separated sister orchestrated the attack, she felt doubly betrayed and transferred south to the only other known venue for her beloved performance medium: the House of Lies. There she built a tentative partnership with Takhina, alerting her when her dream hunter contacts warned of potential Chelaxian activity near Holden. Takhina tested that partnership when she maneuvered Vali into partnering with Mara to connect with the Pathfinder Society and steal Chelax's battle plans for her, but Vali's commitment to the only other improviser she knows has kept her in line.

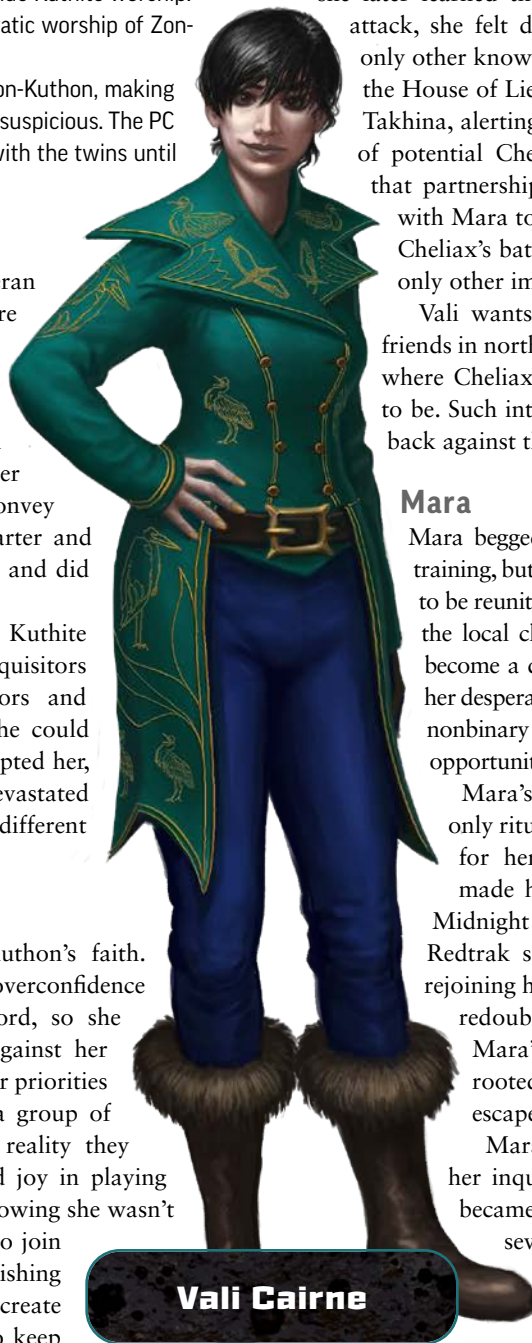
Vali wants to relay Kizrech's battle plans to her rebel friends in northern Nidal, where they can analyze them to see where Chelax determined the Umbral Court's weak points to be. Such intelligence would offer insight on how to strike back against the Kuthite regime.

Mara

Mara begged the dream hunters to take her with Vali for training, but the inquisitors cast the softer sister aside. Frantic to be reunited, Mara rode to Whitemound and enlisted with the local church of Zon-Kuthon, professing her desire to become a dream hunter. Although her words rang hollow, her desperation intrigued High Priest **Redtrak** (manipulative nonbinary human cleric of Zon-Kuthon), who saw an opportunity to forge a true believer.

Mara's Kuthite training was grueling. Redtrak not only ritually wounded her, but posed as a safe audience for her sorrows, suggesting that her vulnerability made her more susceptible to pain—a virtue to the Midnight Lord. Whenever Mara's commitment faltered, Redtrak suggested that perhaps she wasn't worthy of rejoining her sister among the inquisitors, spurring her to redouble her efforts. The torment eventually twisted Mara's performative zeal into genuine devotion rooted in a grim acceptance that no Nidalese can escape their bond to Zon-Kuthon.

Mara's training revealed a knack for subterfuge, so her inquisitor work eventually began in earnest. She became a skilled codebreaker and helped unravel several sects of Desnan revolutionaries. As a final test of her commitment, Redtrak assigned her to find and expose any heretic she could locate in her home region, acting as



Vali Cairne

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an informant for her sister's team of dream hunters. She quickly discovered evidence of a Shelynite rabble-rouser and coordinated a raid to capture him and their followers.

During the raid, Mara saw her estranged sister use her Kuthite trappings to secretly lead dissidents to shelter. When presented the opportunity to set their shelter alight and burn the heretics in their hiding place, Mara suffered a crisis of faith and allowed them to escape. Her subordinates witnessed her treachery, castigating her until she fled the scene.

Listless and alone, Mara wrestled with her competing loyalties. She kept a low profile, hiding from Kuthites and agitators alike. Her wanderings led her to the House of Lies, where she decoded a secret message of an impending Chelaxian invasion intercepted by a boastful mercenary. She brought her suspicions to Takhina, the closest authority without direct ties to the Umbral Court and asked for resources to undergo a redemption mission. Seeing a chance to offer the Court both valuable intel and a deserter as leverage to maintain her position, Takhina agreed. Furthermore, Takhina reunited Mara with her beloved but traitorous sister for the job, throwing Mara's crisis of faith into stark relief.

Mara wants to take the plans back to Pangolais and present them to the Umbral Court. She believes this will not only redeem her and her sister but also show that Nidal's borders should be tightened even further, fueling her conditioned xenophobia. She maintains this delusional plan by repressing her many lessons about Zon-Kuthon's judgment for failures and betrayers. The crisis of faith she's suffering leaves Mara in a rather delicate mental state; keep track of how many times she's destabilized over the course of the journey, as it will come into play during the infiltration of the Chelaxian camp (see page 8).

The Mountain Pass

Once the PCs complete their awkward briefing, Vali acquaints each PC lacking a mount with one of the dark nidarmars and organizes the first ride. The sparse undergrowth subtly conceals the trail into the mountains, but the twins navigate it easily. The horses keep a brisk pace, covering an impressive distance over the first slopes into the inner valleys. It takes several days to reach Holden, with most of each day devoted to riding, but the PCs have some opportunities to connect to the twins along the way.

The temperature throughout the adventure is severe cold. Unprotected PCs suffer 1d6 cold damage every hour and become fatigued after 4 hours of travel; this damage caps at 8d6 cold damage per regular day of travel due to warmth from the campfire during rest. The twins have enough gear and magic to keep the horses and themselves protected from the elements.

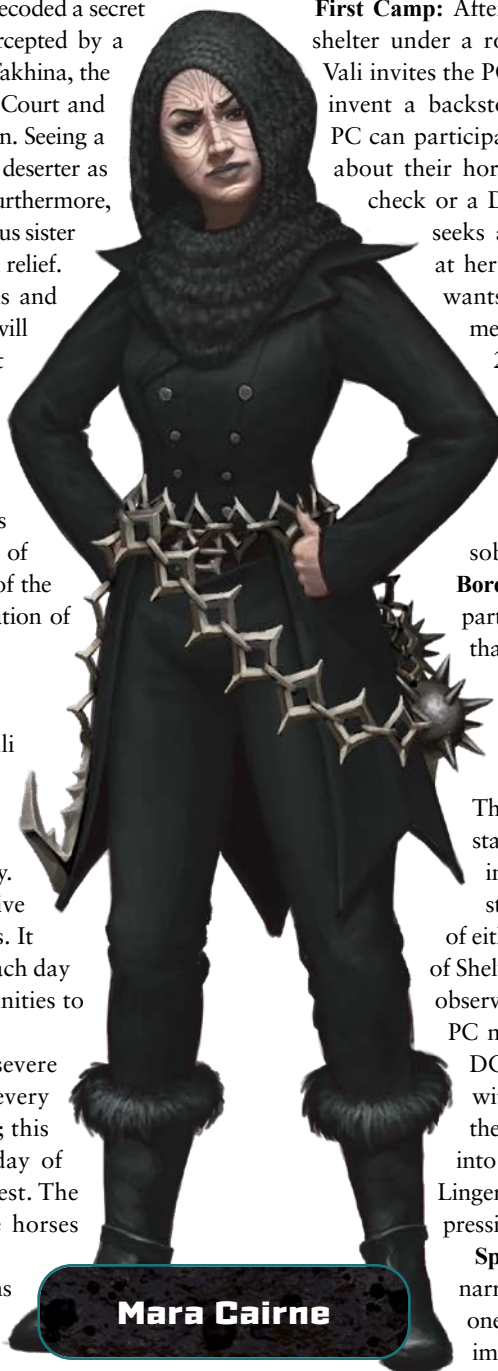
The journey through the mountains functions as an extended roleplaying encounter designed to introduce the Cairne sisters and their conflict.

GMs are encouraged to use the twins' backstories to roleplay their interactions with the PCs and each other, gradually parsing out the information as the initially xenophobic Nidalese grow to trust the Pathfinders. Skill DCs are available for GMs running the scenario for players who prefer not to roleplay, but GMs should reward players who roleplay with automatic successes when their words or actions support the burgeoning relationship as noted in each event, including critical successes for notably inspired roleplay. For levels 11–12, increase all skill DCs by 2. GMs should remember that the scenario also includes at least two combat encounters, so they should not linger in the roleplaying for more than 90 minutes.

First Camp: After a day of steady progress, the group takes shelter under a rocky overhang. As she prepares a campfire, Vali invites the PCs to play an improvisation game where they invent a backstory and drama between their horses. Each PC can participate in the game by telling a convincing story about their horse or by succeeding at a DC 26 Deception check or a DC 24 Performance check. Meanwhile Mara seeks a dark, starlit area to sit alone and scratch at her scars. She doesn't want to talk but secretly wants company; PCs can sit quietly with her, offer meditations on the darkness, or succeed at a DC 26 Perception check or a DC 24 Will save. Each PC can only interact with one twin. Success improves that PC's standing with that twin and makes her open up slightly, with Vali improvising a betrayal arc among her and her sister's horses while Mara silently sobs and wraps her wounds.

Border Crossing: At dusk the following day, the party crosses the border into Nidal. Mara insists that they pause to observe a rite pleading for welcome from the Midnight Lord in the shadow of a crooked mountain. Vali balks at this imposition, wanting to make the most of their remaining daylight by pressing forward. The PCs must decide the group's action. Their standing with the twin they support automatically improves, and they can further improve their standings with each twin by making the most of either decision, such as by offering a separate rite of Shelyn for Vali if they delay or organizing a way to observe the Kuthite rite while riding for Mara. Each PC may attempt one DC 28 Diplomacy check or DC 26 Religion check to improve their standing with one twin, and performing any rite offers the chance to insert meditations on forgiveness into each twin's prayers, further opening them up. Lingering for the Kuthite rite causes a delay, while pressing ahead destabilizes Mara.

Split Path: One of the horses stumbles on a narrow ridge, causing a minor rock slide. No one is injured, but the planned path is rendered impassable, and the party is randomly divided in



Mara Cairne

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half, one group with Vali and one with Mara. Each group must succeed at a combination of two different DC 28 skill checks to reroute and regroup: Acrobatics, Athletics, Crafting, Nature, Survival, or a relevant Lore. Each PC may only attempt one check, and more than one failure in either group causes a delay. A PC may automatically succeed at one check by making a selfless act such as scouting a path at an altitude with thin air or digging away undergrowth to open an alternate route. Doing so renders the PC both fatigued and their choice of clumsy or enfeebled 1 until they rest for 8 hours, but improves their standing with the twin in their group. If a PC has resources that allow them to sustain efforts against the environment to navigate mountainous terrain over several hours, the GM may rule that using such resources eliminates one of the two conditions imposed by their sacrifice. Such resources should be obviously applicable or still constitute a noteworthy sacrifice, such as casting *wall of stone* at least twice to form bridges or using the Influence Nature skill feat to follow local fauna.

During the separated time, each sister presents her goal for the Chelaxian plans to the PCs. If a PC in her group improved their standing with that twin at least twice, she opens up about their contentious history. She remains opaque, not yet giving the full story, but tells enough for the PCs to understand why she wants the plans and either Vali's sense of betrayal or Mara's crisis of faith. In response, the PCs may suggest a compelling way to reconcile or succeed at a DC 31 Diplomacy check to soothe Mara's hurt. PCs can use Intimidation, Religion, or a relevant Lore to Aid this check, and the DC decreases by 1 for each time that twin opened up to the PCs up to that point. Success improves the PC's standing with that twin.

Eventually the two groups reunite beneath an outcrop at dusk. Although the party is still high in the mountains, they can see a column of black smoke on the horizon, suggesting that they are close. Whichever twin has the higher standing with a PC takes first watch for the night.

Dark Omen: The twin taking second watch rouses the party at midnight pointing to the sky, where a waning gibbous moon hangs in the middle of a foreboding cloud formation. The clouds frame the moon as the glowing eye of a snarling wolf, while the column of black smoke reaches the wolf's eye like a dangling chain. Both twins respond to the visage: Mara hyperventilates repeating the words "No escape, he always knows," while Vali screams wild challenges into the sky, bellowing "You won't take any more from me!" Each PC may interact with one twin once, intuiting how to soothe her by succeeding at a DC 28 Diplomacy, Religion, or relevant Lore check. PCs can calm Mara with assurances of safety and stories of defying the gods while suggesting that perhaps there's no path to redemption with Zon-Kuthon. Vali's fury can be redirected toward reconciling with her sister, who is not gone but here and in need, while reminding her that punishment is Zon-Kuthon's domain, but forgiveness is his weakness.

Succeeding improves the PC's standing with their respective twin, while a critical success convinces her to share her entire backstory to explain her outburst. If fewer than 2 PCs soothe Mara, she becomes destabilized; if fewer than 2 PCs soothe Vali, her shouting prevents anyone from resting for 8 hours that night, preventing healing and daily preparations. Any PC who critically fails their check to soothe a twin feels the omen's threat, becoming doomed 1 the following morning.

The Blizzard

Just before dawn, the ominous clouds morph into a blizzard. Howling winds blow out the campfire, driving snow blocks all visibility, and the temperature plunges. The party must find shelter before the horses, or their riders, perish.

The blizzard lasts for 6 hours. During this time, the severe cold increases to extreme cold, inflicting 6d6 cold damage every hour (or 2d6 for creatures protected against severe cold). Any creature exposed to the cold for more than an hour becomes fatigued and suffers an additional 2d6 cold damage per hour (1d6 if protected) as snow soaks and freezes their clothing.

Each subsequent hour of exposure yields further penalties as frostbite and hypothermia set in: the second hour inflicts clumsy 1, the third inflicts enfeebled 1, the fourth inflicts drained 1, the fifth increases the clumsy and enfeebled values to 2, and the sixth inflicts drained 2. These condition values stack with values from earlier events. Small creatures suffer a -1 penalty on all Strength- and Dexterity-based checks (Tiny creatures double this penalty). Flying is impossible.

The PCs may take the following exploration activities to navigate the blizzard. Each activity takes 1 hour to perform, during which the PC is exposed to the cold. Mara finds 1 Path each hour using Find Shelter, while Vali protects the party once an hour using Treat Exposure with an automatic success. The path is constricted enough to make 3-action *heal* spells only affect two adjacent riders and their mounts.

FIND SHELTER

CONCENTRATE | EXPLORATION

You push through the storm in search of cover from the elements. Attempt a DC 28 Perception check, DC 26 Survival check, or DC 21 Mountain Lore check. Each result contributes to the cumulative number of Paths. The party must stick together in either settling for a found shelter or continuing to search.

Critical Success You find 2 Paths.

Success You find 1 Path.

Critical Failure You lose 1 Path.

3 Paths You find a cliff face that offers some cover against the wind. The entire party gains the benefit of a successful Provide Cover activity for this hour.

7 Paths You find an overhang that keeps some of the snow at bay, providing partial shelter. Taking an 8-hour rest causes a delay, only heals half the Hit Points of a normal rest, reduces condition values caused by events in the mountains by 1, and does not remove fatigue.

12 Paths You find a crevasse the horses can traverse, providing significant albeit cramped shelter. The party suffers no additional damage or penalties from the weather and may spend remaining hours Treating Exposure. Taking an 8-hour rest causes a delay and reduces condition values caused by the blizzard by 1.

18 Paths You find a deep, warm cave that can comfortably shelter everyone. The party suffers no additional damage or penalties from the weather, and each PC benefits from a successful Treat Exposure. Taking an 8-hour rest does not delay the party and removes all conditions caused by the blizzard.

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PROVIDE COVER

EXPLORATION

You maneuver between boulders and alcoves to find relief from the weather. Attempt a DC 28 Athletics check, DC 21 Scouting Lore check, or DC 26 Stealth check. The DC increases by 1 each time you attempt this activity.

Critical Success As success, but you extend the benefit to another creature and its mount.

Success You and your mount avoid the effects of extreme cold for this hour.

Critical Failure You get stuck in snow and cannot attempt an exploration activity in the next hour.

TREAT EXPOSURE

EXPLORATION

HEALING

MANIPULATE

You triage one living creature's damage from the cold and snow. Attempt a DC 28 Crafting check, DC 26 Medicine check, or DC 21 Herbalism Lore check. This check suffers a -5 penalty if attempted without wearing or holding a healer's toolkit, and a -2 penalty if you have no shelter. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus if you're completely sheltered.

Critical Success The target regains 4d8 Hit Points and reduces two conditions' values by 1 (does not affect fatigue).

Success The target regains 2d8 Hit Points and reduces a condition's value by 1.

Critical Failure The target takes 1d8 damage and its clumsy value does not decrease due to rest or Treat Exposure until the end of the scenario.

Rewards: The storm eventually recedes, but the path is blocked by snow, requiring the party to wait until the following morning to resume travel. If the party never found shelter, the following night is too uncomfortable to afford an 8-hour rest. The twins survive the storm due to their cold weather preparations, and the daunting experience affords them a chance to bond with the Pathfinders and each other. The PCs can coax them into a tepid reconciliation during their downtime, which does not change either of their ultimate goals for the battle plans. During this downtime, PCs who improved their standing with Mara 3 or more times receives a *moderate potion of retaliation (cold)* as thanks for their friendship; PCs who improved their standing with Mara 5 times receive a *murderer's knot* talisman instead. Conversely, PCs who improved their standing with Vali 3 or more times receives a *moderate healing potion*, or a *lesser energy breath potion* if they improved their standing with Vali 5 or more times.

A. Chelaxian Camp

The following day, the party reaches the valley where Holden is hidden. The blizzard devastated the Chelaxians too, with many of them now deployed clearing snow, rounding up escaped horses,

INFILTRATION ACTIVITIES

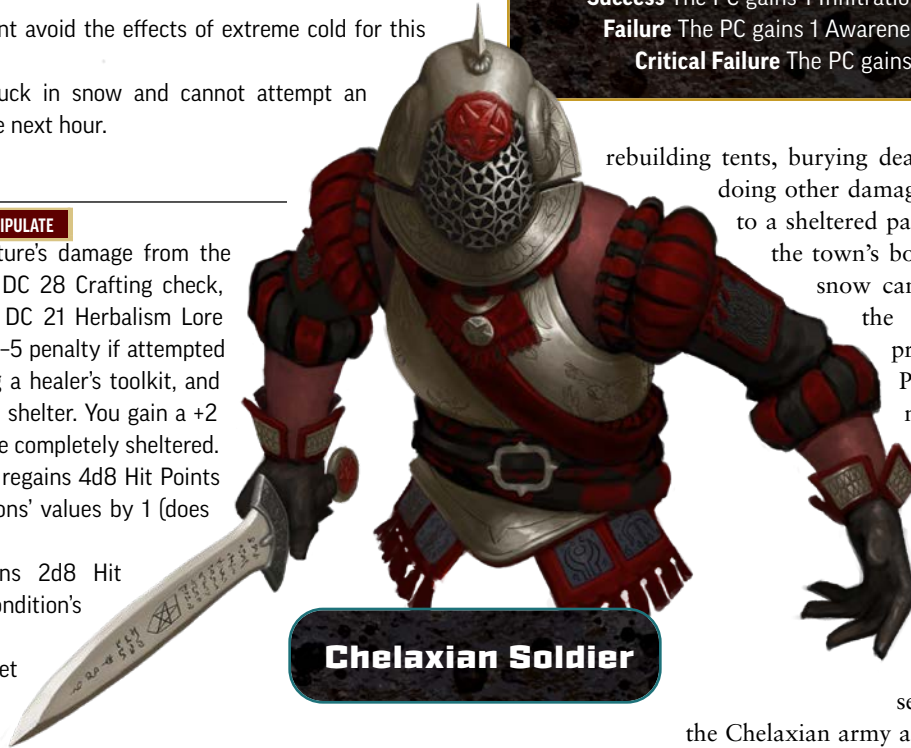
Each attempt to overcome an obstacle takes 10 minutes. Each obstacle's statistics define how it works in play. Obstacles may be overcome in any order or partially overcome to obtain enough Infiltration Points to advance.

Critical Success The PC gains 2 Infiltration Points.

Success The PC gains 1 Infiltration Point.

Failure The PC gains 1 Awareness Point.

Critical Failure The PC gains 2 Awareness Points.



Chelaxian Soldier

rebuilding tents, burying dead soldiers and animals, and doing other damage control. Vali leads the PCs to a sheltered pass a few hundred yards from the town's border, where the accumulated snow can help the Pathfinders reach the camp unnoticed. Mara prepares to accompany the PCs on their infiltration mission while Vali hides the horses and waits for Mara's signal to rendezvous—an explosion far from the church of Zon-Kuthon, where Mara believes the command center is located.

The PCs' infiltration demands they overcome several obstacles to hamstring

the Chelaxian army and prepare to confront camp leadership without leaving evidence of Pathfinder interference. This uses a simplified version of the Infiltration subsystem (*Pathfinder GM Core* 196). The party needs 7 Infiltration Points plus 1 per PC to comfortably attack the command center; this must include completing all Infiltration Points from Avoid Detection and Rig to Burn, so PCs should attempt these obstacles first before proceeding to others. PCs who successfully Avoid Detection may use subsequent infiltration activities to give allies the benefit of Following the Expert. Each delay they encountered traversing the mountains counts as 1 Awareness Point since the delay afforded the soldiers time to repair the camp after the blizzard, making them more likely to notice sabotage. Once the PCs earn enough Infiltration Points, they immediately proceed to encounter **A2**.

PCs using appropriate resources, such as casting *invisibility* to Avoid Detection or using bomb snares with alchemist's fire to Rig to Burn, earn automatic successes. Mara also assists the PCs: every 10 minutes she can improve 1 PC's failure or critical failure into a success. Improving a critical failure counts as 2 assists. Mara can assist up to 3 times during the infiltration, -1 per time she was destabilized prior to reaching camp. Once she exceeds this amount, she encounters a dead Kuthite chained to a post, triggering a crisis of faith as she faces a physical reminder of her past sins and likely fate. This breakdown accrues 2 AP and Mara can no longer assist with obstacles.

Battle of the Thorns

5 Awareness Points: Increase the DCs for obstacles by 1. The Hypothermia Ward complication occurs.

10 Awareness Points: The Suspicious Soldiers complication occurs.

15 Awareness Points: Increase the DCs for obstacles by 2. The Warriors Return complication occurs.

20 Awareness Points: The PCs immediately enter encounter A2 with a -4 penalty to initiative.

AVOID DETECTION

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (individual); **Overcome** Deception DC 26, Perception DC 28, or Stealth DC 24

Soldiers and devils move throughout the camp making repairs.

CONCEAL TRACKS

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** Hunting Lore DC 24, Stealth DC 28, or Survival DC 26

The snow requires concealing stray footprints.

RAID QUARTERMASTER

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** Athletics DC 28, Thievery DC 26, or Warfare Lore DC 24

Damaging weapons impairs the soldiers' ability to respond to threats.

RIG TO BURN

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 3 (group); **Overcome** Acrobatics DC 31, Arcana DC 28, Crafting DC 24, or Thievery DC 26

Preparing time-delay conflagrations will panic the soldiers and cue Vali's rendezvous.

SABOTAGE ENGINES

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** Crafting DC 26, Engineering Lore DC 24, or Thievery DC 28

The army's wagons and siege weapons are undamaged, posing a threat if left intact.

SCARE HORSES

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** Herding Lore DC 24, Intimidation DC 28, or Nature DC 26

The surviving horses were gathered into the stables; chasing them off would cripple the cavalry.

Complications: As the PCs accrue failures, they face additional challenges during their infiltration. A random PC must deal with each emerging complication except Warriors Return, which affects 2 random PCs.

HYPOTHERMIA WARD

COMPLICATION

Overcome Deception DC 31, Diplomacy DC 28, Medicine DC 26, or 1-action Strike against AC 24 that deals at least 35 damage

Chelaxian soldiers being treated for low temperatures emerge from their tents seeking aid, stumbling upon the intruders. You must ease their suffering or otherwise convince them not to raise an alarm.

Success The patient quietly exits.

Failure The patient's alarm accrues 1 AP.

Critical Failure As failure but 2 AP.

SUSPICIOUS SOLDIERS

COMPLICATION

Overcome Deception DC 28, Diplomacy DC 31, or Stealth DC 26; only PCs disguised as Chelaxian soldiers may attempt Charisma-based skills

You run afoul of some devils investigating the camp. Proceed to encounter **A1** unless fewer than 2 hours of play time remain, in which case resolve the event as noted in this complication. If proceeding to encounter **A1**, do not resolve this complication as written.

Success The devils leave without incident.

Failure The devils *translocate* away to alert others, accruing 1 AP.

Critical Failure As failure, but a fleeing hell hound bites the PC for 2d8+9 piercing damage plus 2d6 fire damage.

WARRIORS RETURN

COMPLICATION

Overcome Deception DC 26, Reflex DC 28, or Stealth DC 26

Several Hellknights return from their repair work and move throughout the camp. You must evade or distract them to continue your work.

Success The soldiers leave without incident.

Failure The soldiers sound the alarm, accruing 1 AP.

Critical Failure As failure, but the alerted soldiers attack the PC with swords for 2d6+10 slashing damage.

A1. Intruders!

Low

As the PCs move throughout the camp, they stumble upon a small group of hell hounds and warriors serving Kizrech. All PCs may use Stealth for their initiative. The PCs begin among the tents while the Chelaxians approach from the other side of the ridge. All earthworks are difficult terrain and provide cover.

This is an optional encounter. If fewer than 2 hours of play time remain, resolve the complication as noted above instead.

Levels 9-10

GREATER HELL HOUND

CREATURE 9

Pathfinder Monster Core 194

Initiative +19

Page 16

VORDINES (2)

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Monster Core 87

Initiative +12

Page 16



Kizrech's Lieutenant

Battle of the Thorns



Levels 11-12

GREATER HELL HOUNDS (2)

Pathfinder Monster Core 194

Initiative +19

Page 18

KNIGHTS (2)

Pathfinder NPC Core 16

Initiative +13

Page 18

A2. Devil's Right Hand

Once the PCs have sufficiently sabotaged the camp (or created too great a ruckus to avoid notice), Mara points them to the fallen church of Zon-Kuthon where the command center is set up. She sneaks away to activate the signal for Vali, leaving the PCs to confront the army leadership.

The PCs begin outside the church, while Kizrech's lieutenant and her entourage begin inside it. If the PCs successfully infiltrated

CREATURE 9

CREATURE 7

Moderate

the camp, they may arrange themselves and begin combat on their terms. This includes deciding whether to attack before or after Mara's signal, affecting the map layout. If the fight begins pre-signal, use the map on page 11 for this encounter. If it starts post-signal, use the map on page 12. If the PCs accrued 20 Awareness Points, they begin gathered on the main road and must attack after Mara's signal.

If the PCs attack after Mara's signal, the fires spread to the surrounding buildings. Burning buildings inflict 1d6 fire damage per round to adjacent creatures and 2d6 fire damage to creatures inside; all squares in and adjacent to burning buildings provide concealment from smoke.

Levels 9-10

DRILL SERGEANT

Pathfinder NPC Core 93

Initiative +16

Page 16

CREATURE 8

Battle of the Thorns

A2. Devil's Right Hand - Pre Signal



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

PATHFINDER FLIP-MAT: VILLAGE ASSAULT

Battle of the Thorns

A2. Devil's Right Hand - Post Signal



ENEMIES
START
HERE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

PATHFINDER FLIP-MAT: VILLAGE ASSAULT

Battle of the Thorns

VORDINES (5)

Pathfinder Monster Core 87

Initiative +12

Page 16

Levels 11-12

COARTIS (5)

Pathfinder Monster Core 87

Initiative +17

Page 18

CREATURE 5

INFERNAL REGISTRAR

Pathfinder NPC Core 119

Initiative +19

Page 18

CREATURE 10

CREATURE 7

Development: Upon defeating the lieutenant, the PCs have 10 minutes to grab anything valuable and recuperate before their rendezvous with Vali. The church is packed with assorted documents, but none detailing imminent war plans—the PCs' quarry. Any PC who spends 10 minutes Searching the church and succeeds at a DC 24 Perception check can find records relaying that the general, Kizrech's, war plans are stored in a fireproof sleeve fastened to the inside of their shield, and that they are due to return from a coordination assignment at any minute. A PC with at least expert rank in Society may spend 10 minutes Deciphering Writing on the codex atop the lieutenant's lectern. If the PC succeeds at a DC 30 Society check, they recognize the codex as a spymaster's cipher, a true prize for Zarta's ongoing counterintelligence efforts.

Rewards: The equipment stashed in the command center includes a +2 *striking composite shortbow* with 20 arrows. For levels 11–12, it also includes a +2 *striking lance*.

B. Midnight Fields

As the PCs emerge from the church, the camp has descended into chaos, with multiple structures aflame and panic tearing through the lower ranks. The PCs glimpse the Hellknight cavalry mounting their horses and coordinating a counteroffensive, but Vali arrives with the dark nidarrmars before the Hellknights can fully organize. Mara takes her horse west to draw away some of the experienced soldiers while Vali presses the PCs to flee east back into the mountains.

The PCs' mission is not complete without Kizrech's war plans, and Vali is distraught to learn they weren't at the command center. Fortunately, they don't need to wait long for the plans to arrive, as Kizrech careens over the eastern mountains astride their nightmare like a flaming comet against the overcast sky. They close toward the burning camp at full gallop, setting the plains between Holden and the mountains as the final battlefield for the PCs to make their stand.

The final confrontation with Kizrech showcases mounted combat (*Pathfinder Player Core* 437). Vali is not an active participant in battle, but her presence grants each PC the Ride general feat (*Pathfinder Player Core* 261) throughout the encounter. The combination of Vali's supportive spellcasting and the Chelaxians' strategic choice to deliberately avoid harming the horses—dark nidarrmars are rare resources, and many of their horses perished in the blizzard—manifests as each horse critically succeeding on all saves against enemy attacks and effects for long as a PC rides it, taking damage only in extremely specific and severe circumstances as the GM sees fit.

B. Kizrech's Fury

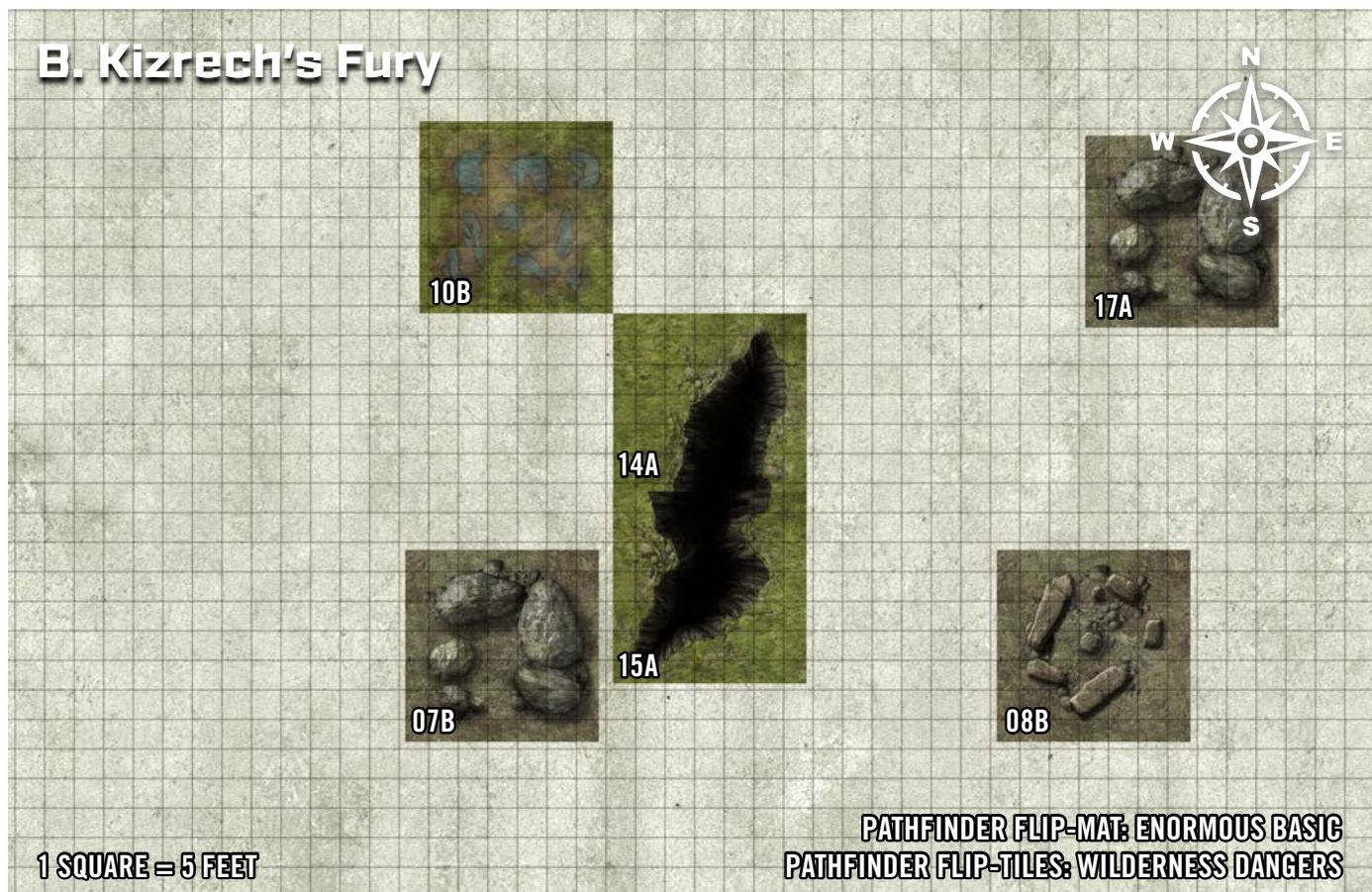
Severe

Use the map on page 14 for this encounter. The PCs begin grouped together on the west side of the crevasse unless they found the records relaying where Kizrech's war plans were stored, in which case the PCs can position themselves wherever they please on the



Kizrech

Battle of the Thorns



map before enemy placement. Kizrech approaches from the eastern edge of the map starting at a 60-foot altitude, while the troops approach from Holden to the west. The infantry and cavalry troops are standard Chelaxian soldiers, and are not particularly dedicated to Kizrech's crusade. Once they lose half their health, or if Kizrech is defeated, the heavy cavalry and weak line infantry disband and flee into the mountains. Kizrech, their nightmare, and their cavalry are committed to their mission and fight until slain.

The three stone formations stand 20 feet tall, providing total cover to creatures on opposite sides. Each formation has Hardness 14, 56 Hit Points, and Broken Threshold 26; if broken, it becomes greater difficult terrain and only provides standard cover. The patch of snow melt to the north is difficult terrain, and the crevasse in the center is 30 feet deep. If the PCs found the records detailing where Kizrech stores their war plans, they may attempt to Steal the plans from them by succeeding at a DC 31 Thievery check. If the PCs can flee 120 feet east of the map's edge, they can escape the battle without defeating Kizrech or the Hellknights.

Levels 9-10

HELLKNIGHT CAVALRY BRIGADE

Pathfinder NPC Core 93

Page 17

Initiative +16

CREATURE 8

KIZRECH

Page 17, art on page 22

Initiative +18

CREATURE 9

THOROUGHbred NIGHTMARE

Page 17, art on page 22

Initiative +18

CREATURE 9

WEAK LINE INFANTRY

Pathfinder NPC Core 5, 90

Page 17

Initiative +11

CREATURE 5

Levels 11-12

GREATER NIGHTMARE

Pathfinder Monster Core 238

Page 19

Initiative +22

CREATURE 11

HELLKNIGHT CAVALRY BRIGADES (2)

Pathfinder NPC Core 93

Page 19

Initiative +16

CREATURE 8

Battle of the Thorns

KIZRECH

Page 19, art on page 22

Initiative +21

CREATURE 11

HEAVY CAVALRY

Pathfinder NPC Core 92

Page 19

Initiative +14

Development: If Kizrech is defeated, they drop all their gear and use their final moments of consciousness to cast a 5th-rank *translocate* to escape the battlefield. A PC can then retrieve their plans with an Interact action. Defeating Kizrech's nightmare and cavalry is helpful, but optional. Without Kizrech's leadership, the rest of the Chelaxian army descends into disarray, ultimately abandoning their operation and retreating to Cheliax. If the PCs escape with Kizrech's plans but do not defeat them, such as by stealing the plans, their compromised position forces them to grudgingly order a similar withdrawal.

Rewards: Kizrech drops their +1 *striking returning unholy trident* before vanishing from the plane.

Conclusion

The PCs reunite with both Cairne twins a short distance into the mountains. The sisters voice their appreciation for the PCs' company and assistance disrupting the Chelaxian attack on their country. If the PCs recovered Kizrech's war plans, they must decide which twin receives the documents. The twins respect their decision, although the one the PCs don't choose is visibly distraught by her loss of leverage for her goal.

Mara immediately rides north to advance her own agenda, but Vali guides the PCs on their return trip through the mountains. She offers a more formal farewell once they cross back into Cheliax, leading the horses to safety while the PCs journey by foot back to the coast to debrief with Zarta's forces. Thankfully, the return trip is uneventful.

Reporting Notes

If the PCs gave the war plans to Vali, check box **A** on the reporting sheet. If the PCs gave the war plans to Mara, check box **B**. If the PCs did not recover the war plans, check box **C**. If Kizrech was not defeated or if the PCs accrued more than 10 Awareness Points in the Chelaxian camp, check box **D**.

Primary Objectives

The PCs complete their primary objective if they recover Kizrech's war plans. Doing so earns each PC 2 Reputation with their chosen faction.

Secondary Objectives

The PCs complete their secondary objective if they accomplish three of the following goals: 1) improved their standing with each twin three or more times (or with one twin five times); 2) accrued no more

than 10 Awareness Points while infiltrating the Chelaxian camp; 3) successfully deciphered the lieutenant's codex; 4) defeated Kizrech. Doing so earns each PC 2 Reputation with their chosen faction.



Nightmare

Battle of the Thorns

Appendix 1: Level 9-10 Encounters

The statistics presented in this appendix include stat blocks for creatures and hazards appearing in this scenario. These encounters are written for four 9th-level PCs. If your group has a different composition or size, refer to the Organized Play section on page 23 for instructions on how to use the scaling sidebars to adjust the encounters for your group. Some scaling sidebars reference the elite or weak adjustments. Rules for these adjustments appear on page 6 of *Pathfinder Monster Core*. If a creature is marked “(0),” don’t include it in the encounter unless otherwise specified (likely from the scaling sidebars).

Encounter A1 (Levels 9-10)

GREATER HELL HOUND **CREATURE 9**

Pathfinder Monster Core 194

Initiative +19

VORDINES (2) **CREATURE 5**

Pathfinder Monster Core 87

Initiative +12

WARDEN (0) **CREATURE 6**

Pathfinder NPC Core 117

Initiative +17

GENDARME (0) **CREATURE 8**

Pathfinder NPC Core 117

Initiative +19

Encounter A2 (Levels 9-10)

DRILL SERGEANT **CREATURE 8**

Pathfinder NPC Core 93

Initiative +16

VORDINES (5) **CREATURE 5**

Pathfinder Monster Core 87

Initiative +12

COARTI (0) **CREATURE 7**

Pathfinder Monster Core 87

Initiative +17

SCALING ENCOUNTER A1

To adjust for the PCs’ overall strength, use the following Challenge Point adjustments. These adjustments are not cumulative.

10-11 Challenge Points: Add one warden to the encounter.

12-13 Challenge Points: Add one gendarme to the encounter.

14-15 Challenge Points: Add one gendarme and one warden to the encounter.

16-18 Challenge Points (5+ players): Add two gendarmes to the encounter.

SCALING ENCOUNTER A2

To adjust for the PCs’ overall strength, use the following Challenge Point adjustments.

10-11 Challenge Points: Add one coarti to the encounter.

12-13 Challenge Points: Add two coartis to the encounter.

14-15 Challenge Points: Add three coartis to the encounter.

16-18 Challenge Points (5+ players): Add two drill sergeants and one coarti to the encounter.

Battle of the Thorns

Encounter B (Levels 9–10)

HELLKNIGHT CAVALRY BRIGADE

CREATURE 8

Pathfinder NPC Core 93

Initiative +16

KIZRECH

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE MEDIUM DEVIL FIEND UNHOLY

Agender vordine general

Perception +18; greater darkvision

Languages Common, Diabolic; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +21, Intimidation +19, Religion +18, Warfare Lore +19

Str +5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** +2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +4

Items +1 resilient breastplate, charm of cold resistance, lesser reinforcing steel shield, +1 striking returning unholy trident

AC 28 (30 with shield raised); **Fort** +20, **Reflex** +19, **Will** +16; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 150; **Immunities** fire; **Resistances** cold 5, physical (except silver) 10, poison 10; **Weaknesses** holy 10

Mounted Force While mounted on a fiend, Kizrech's *trident* gains the jousting 1d8 and thrown 60 feet traits, and Kizrech and their mount each increase their level by 1 when resolving incapacitation effects.

Infernal Command **Trigger** An enemy within 30 feet of Kizrech damages them or their mount; **Effect** Kizrech commands their enemy to kneel before them. The triggering enemy must choose to either drop prone as a free action or take 3d6 mental damage.

Reactive Strike **Trigger**

Shield Block **Trigger** Kizrech may use this reaction to prevent their mount from taking damage instead of themselves, following the normal rules for Shield Block.

Speed 25 feet

Melee **Return** *returning unholy trident* +21 (magical, unholy), **Damage** 2d8+12 piercing

Melee **Hoof** +21 (agile, magical, unholy), **Damage** 1d8+9 bludgeoning plus 1d8 fire

Ranged **Return** *returning unholy trident* +19 (magical, thrown 20 feet, unholy), **Damage** 2d8+12 piercing

Divine Innate Spells DC 25; **5th** *translocate*; **4th** *translocate* (at will)

Focus Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 25, attack +20; **5th** *touch of the void* (*Player Core 2 256*)

Rituals DC 25; **1st** *diabolic pact*

Burning Hoofprints **Trigger** (divine, fire, unholy) Kizrech Strides, trailing hoofprints in each square they exit. The hoofprints burn for 1 minute. A creature on the ground that enters a square with burning hoofprints or begins its turn in one takes 1d6 fire damage. Kizrech can use this ability while mounted, affecting up to 30 feet of contiguous hoofprints from their mount's Stride; this trail is 10 feet wide for a Large mount, or 15 feet wide for a Huge mount.

Trident of Dis **Trigger** Kizrech makes a trident Strike, increasing their reach to 10 feet for that Strike. If there is an unholy ally between Kizrech and their target, or if Kizrech is mounted on an unholy creature, that creature's energy causes the Strike to deal an additional 1d8 spirit damage.

SCALING ENCOUNTER B

To adjust for the PCs' overall strength, use the following Challenge Point adjustments.

10–11 Challenge Points: Add one gendarme to the encounter.

12–13 Challenge Points: Add two gendarmes to the encounter.

14–15 Challenge Points: Add three gendarmes to the encounter.

16–18 Challenge Points (5+ players): Add two phistophilus devils to the encounter.

THOROUGHbred NIGHTMARE

CREATURE 9

UNCOMMON LARGE BEAST FIEND UNHOLY

Perception +18; darkvision

Languages Chthonian, Daemonic, Diabolic

Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +21, Intimidation +18, Survival +17

Str +6, **Dex** +4, **Con** +4, **Int** +1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

Smoke (aura) 15 feet. The nightmare continually exhales black smoke. Creatures within the aura are concealed to those outside it, and creatures outside the aura are concealed to creatures within it. Nightmares and their riders can see through this smoke. A creature that begins its turn in the area must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude save or be sickened 2. It's then temporarily immune to being sickened by the smoke for 1 minute. This is an inhaled poison, and the nightmare and its rider are immune to it.

AC 28; **Fort** +21, **Reflex** +21, **Will** +19

HP 160; **Resistances** fire 13

Speed 50 feet, fly 100 feet

Melee **Jaws** +21 (magical, reach 10 feet, unholy), **Damage** 2d10+13 piercing

Melee **Hoof** +21 (agile, fire, magical, unholy), **Damage** 1d8+13 bludgeoning plus 1d8 fire

Divine Innate Spells DC 28; **7th** *interplanar teleport* (self and rider only)

Flaming Gallop **Trigger** (divine, fire, unholy) The nightmare Strides or Flies up to triple its Speed. Its hooves burst with intense flame, dealing 5d6 fire damage with a DC 28 basic Reflex save to each creature other than the nightmare's rider that the nightmare moves adjacent to during its gallop. Each creature can be affected only once during a single use of Flaming Gallop.

WEAK LINE INFANTRY

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder NPC Core 5, 90

Initiative +11

GENDARME (0)

CREATURE 8

Pathfinder NPC Core 117

Initiative +19

PHISTOPHILUS (0)

CREATURE 10

Pathfinder Monster Core 90

Initiative +21

Battle of the Thorns

Appendix 2: Level 11-12 Encounters

The statistics presented in this appendix include stat blocks for creatures and hazards appearing in this scenario. These encounters are written for four 11th-level PCs. If your group has a different composition or size, refer to the Organized Play section on page 23 for instructions on how to use the scaling sidebars to adjust the encounters for your group. Some scaling sidebars reference the elite or weak adjustments. Rules for these adjustments appear on page 6 of *Pathfinder Monster Core*. If a creature is marked “(0),” don’t include it in the encounter unless otherwise specified (likely from the scaling sidebars).

Encounter A1 (Levels 11-12)

GREATER HELL HOUNDS (2) **CREATURE 9**

Pathfinder Monster Core 194

Initiative +19

KNIGHTS (2) **CREATURE 7**

Pathfinder NPC Core 16

Initiative +13

GENDARME (0) **CREATURE 8**

Pathfinder NPC Core 117

Initiative +19

PHISTOPHILUS (0) **CREATURE 10**

Pathfinder Monster Core 90

Initiative +21

Encounter A2 (Levels 11-12)

COARTIS (5) **CREATURE 7**

Pathfinder Monster Core 87

Initiative +17

INFERNAL REGISTRAR **CREATURE 10**

Pathfinder NPC Core 119

Initiative +19

GREATER HELL HOUND (0) **CREATURE 9**

Pathfinder Monster Core 194

Initiative +19

SCALING ENCOUNTER A1

To adjust for the PCs’ overall strength, use the following Challenge Point adjustments. These adjustments are not cumulative.

19-22 Challenge Points: Add one gendarme to the encounter.

23-27 Challenge Points: Add one phistophilus devil to the encounter.

28-32 Challenge Points: Add one gendarme and one phistophilus devil to the encounter.

33+ Challenge Points (5+ players): Add two phistophilus devils to the encounter.

SCALING ENCOUNTER A2

To adjust for the PCs’ overall strength, use the following Challenge Point adjustments.

19-22 Challenge Points: Add one greater hell hound to the encounter.

23-27 Challenge Points: Add two greater hell hounds to the encounter.

28-32 Challenge Points: Add three greater hell hounds to the encounter.

33+ Challenge Points (5+ players): Add two infernal registrars and one greater hell hound to the encounter.

Battle of the Thorns

Encounter B (Levels 11–12)

GREATER NIGHTMARE

CREATURE 11

Pathfinder Monster Core 238

Initiative +22

HELLKNIGHT CAVALRY BRIGADES (2)

CREATURE 8

Pathfinder NPC Core 93

Initiative +16

KIZRECH

CREATURE 11

UNIQUE MEDIUM DEVIL FIEND UNHOLY

Agender vordine general

Perception +21; greater darkvision

Languages Common, Diabolic; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Acrobatics +22, Athletics +24, Intimidation +22, Religion +21, Warfare Lore +22

Str +5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** +2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +4

Items +1 resilient breastplate, charm of cold resistance, lesser reinforcing steel shield, +1 striking returning unholy trident

AC 31 (33 with shield raised); **Fort** +23, **Reflex** +22, **Will** +19; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 190; **Immunities** fire; **Resistances** cold 5, physical (except silver) 12, poison 12; **Weaknesses** holy 12

Mounted Force While mounted on a fiend, Kizrech's trident gains the jousting 1d8 and thrown 60 feet traits, and Kizrech and their mount each increase their level by 1 when resolving incapacitation effects.

Infernal Command **Trigger** An enemy within 30 feet of Kizrech damages them or their mount; **Effect** Kizrech commands their enemy to kneel before them. The triggering enemy must choose to either drop prone as a free action or take 3d6 mental damage.

Reactive Strike

Shield Block Kizrech may use this reaction to prevent their mount from taking damage instead of themselves, following the normal rules for Shield Block.

Speed 25 feet

Melee **returning unholy trident** +24 (magical, unholy), **Damage** 2d8+15 piercing

Melee **hoof** +24 (agile, magical, unholy), **Damage** 1d8+12 bludgeoning plus 1d8 fire

Ranged **returning unholy trident** +22 (magical, thrown 20 feet, unholy), **Damage** 2d8+15 piercing

Divine Innate Spells DC 27; **5th** translocate; **4th** translocate (at will)

Focus Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 27, attack +22; **6th** touch of the void (*Player Core 2 256*)

Rituals DC 27; **1st** diabolic pact

Burning Hoofprints (divine, fire, unholy) Kizrech Strides, trailing hoofprints in each square they exit. The hoofprints burn for 1 minute. A creature on the ground that enters a square with burning hoofprints or begins its turn in one takes 1d8 fire damage. Kizrech can use this ability while mounted, affecting up to 30 feet of contiguous hoofprints from their mount's Stride; this trail is 10 feet wide for a Large mount, or 15 feet wide for a Huge mount.

SCALING ENCOUNTER B

To adjust for the PCs' overall strength, use the following Challenge Point adjustments.

19–22 Challenge Points: Add one phistophilus devil to the encounter.

23–27 Challenge Points: Add two phistophilus devils to the encounter.

28–32 Challenge Points: Add three phistophilus devils to the encounter.

33+ Challenge Points (5+ players): Add four phistophilus devils to the encounter.

Trident of Dis Kizrech makes a trident Strike, increasing their reach to 10 feet for that Strike. If there is an unholy ally between Kizrech and their target, or if Kizrech is mounted on an unholy creature, that creature's energy causes the Strike to deal an additional 1d8 spirit damage.

HEAVY CAVALRY

CREATURE 7

Pathfinder NPC Core 92

Initiative +14

PHISTOPHILUS (0)

CREATURE 10

Pathfinder Monster Core 90

Initiative +21

Battle of the Thorns

Appendix 3: Game Aids

HANDOUT #1: LETTER FROM ZARTA

Veteran Pathfinders,

I apologize for the informal briefing, but this opportunity emerged suddenly. My contact in Nidal offered her codebreaking services to decipher spy messages in exchange for a team of agents that could help her benefactors with a mission behind enemy lines. She gave me little other intel, but I need her help if I'm to expose these saboteurs inside Absalom, so I requested some of our most experienced agents.

Enter Cheliox's northern wilderness by way of Ravounel, then travel east. Keep to the foothills and avoid notice. You'll find a lone ranch house south of the Nidalese border where you'll meet these new contacts with mission details. Prepare to traverse cold mountains and survive contact with agents of both Asmodeus and Zon-Kuthon. Stay safe and look for ways to knock the devils back on their heels.

Graciously,
Zarta Dralneen

HANDOUT #2: MOUNTED COMBAT RULES

You can ride some creatures into combat. As noted in the Mount specialty basic action, your mount needs to be willing and at least one size larger than you. Your mount acts on your initiative. You must use the Command an Animal action to get your mount to spend its actions. If you don't, the animal wastes its actions. If you have the Ride general feat, you succeed automatically when you Command an Animal that's your mount.

For example, if you are mounted on a horse and you make three attacks, your horse would remain stationary since you didn't command it. If you instead spent your first action to Command an Animal and succeeded, you could have your mount Stride. You could spend your next action to attack or to command the horse to attack, but not both.

Mounted Attacks

You and your mount fight as a unit. Consequently, you share a multiple attack penalty. For example, if you Strike and then Command an Animal to have your mount Strike, your mount's attack takes a -5 multiple attack penalty.

You occupy every square of your mount's space for the purpose of making attacks. If you were a Medium creature on a Large mount, you could attack a creature on one side of your mount, then attack on the opposite side. On a Medium or smaller mount, use the normal reach of an attack. On a Large or Huge mount, you can attack any square adjacent to the mount if you have 5- or 10-foot reach, or any square within 10 feet of the mount (including diagonally) if you have 15-foot reach. Use the adjusted reach for determining flanking and other rules that depend on reach.

Mounted Defenses

Attackers can target either you or your mount. An area effect affects both of you as long as you're both in the area. You are in an attacker's reach or range if any square of your mount is within reach or range. Because your mount is larger than you and you share its space, you have lesser cover against attacks targeting you when you're mounted if the mount would be in the way (as determined by the GM).

Because you can't move your body as freely while you're riding a mount, you take a -2 circumstance penalty to Reflex saves while mounted. Additionally, the only move action you can use is the Mount action to dismount.

Battle of the Thorns

Appendix 3: Game Aids



Warhorse



Vali Cairne

Mara Cairne



Chelaxian Soldier



Battle of the Thorns

Appendix 3: Game Aids



Kizrech's Lieutenant



Kizrech

Nightmare



Battle of the Thorns

Organized Play

Treasure Table

LEVEL	TREASURE BUNDLE
9	44 gp
10	60 gp
11	86 gp
12	124 gp

Treasure Bundles

- □ □ The Blizzard, page 7: 1 Treasure Bundle for increasing their standing with Vali, up to 3 Treasure Bundles.
- □ □ The Blizzard, page 7: 1 Treasure Bundle for increasing their standing with Mara, up to 3 Treasure Bundles.
- □ **A. Chelaxian Camp**, page 8: 2 Treasure Bundles for infiltrating the Chelaxian military camp.
- **A2**, page 10: 1 Treasure Bundle for defeating the lieutenant and looting the church.
- **B**, page 13: 1 Treasure Bundle for defeating Kizrech, looting their equipment, and stealing their war plans.

CP Total	Level Range
8-15	9-10
16-18 (5+ players)	9-10
16-18 (4 players)	11-12
19+	11-12

Challenge Points

Challenge Points are a system for scaling the difficulty of encounters appropriately for groups of mixed size and level. Total up the number of Challenge Points your group has.

- 9th-level PCs = 2 points each
- 10th-level PCs = 3 points each
- 11th-level PCs = 4 points each
- 12th-level PCs = 6 points each

Now use the table above to determine which level range is appropriate for your PCs. Level 9–10 encounters appear in Appendix 1, and level 11–12 encounters appear in Appendix 2.

Elite Adjustment

To apply the elite adjustment, make the following changes to a creature's statistics:

- Increase the creature's AC, attack modifiers, DCs, saving throws, and skill modifiers by 2.
- Increase the damage of its Strikes and other offensive abilities by 2. If the creature has limits on how many times or how often it can use an ability (such as a spellcaster's spells or a dragon's breath), increase the damage by 4 instead.
- Increase the creature's Hit Points based on its starting level (see the table below).

Starting Level	HP Increase
1 or lower	10
2-4	15
5-19	20
20+	30

Weak Adjustment

To apply the weak adjustment, make the following changes to a creature's statistics:

- Decrease the creature's AC, attack modifiers, DCs, saving throws, and skill modifiers by 2.
- Decrease the damage of its Strikes and other offensive abilities by 2. If the creature has limits on how many times or how often it can use an ability (such as a spellcaster's spells or a dragon's breath), decrease the damage by 4 instead.
- Decrease the creature's Hit Points based on its starting level (see the table below).

Starting Level	HP Decrease
1-2	-10
3-5	-15
6-20	-20
21+	-30

Battle of the Thorns



Event Reporting Form

Date _____ Event Code: _____

Location _____

GM Org Play #:	-2	GM Name:	GM Faction:
Adventure:			
Reporting Codes: (check when instructed, line through all if no conditions to report)			Reputation Earned:
<input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D			
Bonus Faction Goal Achieved: <input type="checkbox"/> Envoy's Alliance <input type="checkbox"/> Grand Archive <input type="checkbox"/> Horizon Hunters <input type="checkbox"/> Radiant Oath <input type="checkbox"/> Verdant Wheel <input type="checkbox"/> Vigilant Seal			

Faction:				
Character Name:		<input type="checkbox"/> Envoy's Alliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Radiant Oath	Dead? <input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/> Grand Archive	<input type="checkbox"/> Verdant Wheel	Infamy <input type="checkbox"/>
Org Play #:	-2	Level	<input type="checkbox"/> Horizon Hunters	<input type="checkbox"/> Vigilant Seal
				Replay Used <input type="checkbox"/>

Faction:				
Character Name:		<input type="checkbox"/> Envoy's Alliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Radiant Oath	Dead? <input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/> Grand Archive	<input type="checkbox"/> Verdant Wheel	Infamy <input type="checkbox"/>
Org Play #:	-2	Level	<input type="checkbox"/> Horizon Hunters	<input type="checkbox"/> Vigilant Seal
				Replay Used <input type="checkbox"/>

Faction:				
Character Name:		<input type="checkbox"/> Envoy's Alliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Radiant Oath	Dead? <input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/> Grand Archive	<input type="checkbox"/> Verdant Wheel	Infamy <input type="checkbox"/>
Org Play #:	-2	Level	<input type="checkbox"/> Horizon Hunters	<input type="checkbox"/> Vigilant Seal
				Replay Used <input type="checkbox"/>

Faction:				
Character Name:		<input type="checkbox"/> Envoy's Alliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Radiant Oath	Dead? <input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/> Grand Archive	<input type="checkbox"/> Verdant Wheel	Infamy <input type="checkbox"/>
Org Play #:	-2	Level	<input type="checkbox"/> Horizon Hunters	<input type="checkbox"/> Vigilant Seal
				Replay Used <input type="checkbox"/>

Faction:				
Character Name:		<input type="checkbox"/> Envoy's Alliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Radiant Oath	Dead? <input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/> Grand Archive	<input type="checkbox"/> Verdant Wheel	Infamy <input type="checkbox"/>
Org Play #:	-2	Level	<input type="checkbox"/> Horizon Hunters	<input type="checkbox"/> Vigilant Seal
				Replay Used <input type="checkbox"/>

Faction:				
Character Name:		<input type="checkbox"/> Envoy's Alliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Radiant Oath	Dead? <input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/> Grand Archive	<input type="checkbox"/> Verdant Wheel	Infamy <input type="checkbox"/>
Org Play #:	-2	Level	<input type="checkbox"/> Horizon Hunters	<input type="checkbox"/> Vigilant Seal
				Replay Used <input type="checkbox"/>

Battle of the Thorns

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Pathfinder Society Scenario #7-05: Battle of the Thorns

Character Chronicle #

		2
Character Name	Organized Play #	Character #

Adventure Summary

The PCs connected with a pair of mysterious twins from Nidal to disrupt a Chelaxian military operation. The party traversed the dangerous Menador Mountains and sabotaged the enemy camp while getting to know their shady cooperators. They ultimately failed or managed to steal critical war plans from the army commander, a vordine general named Kizrech. Before parting ways, the PCs gave the war plans to the Shelynite dissident Vali or the Kuthite zealot Mara to bring back to her agents in Nidal.

Boons

Congratulations on completing the adventure! You've earned Pathfinder Society (second edition) Achievement Points, a currency that be redeemed on our website at paizo.com for special character boons, such as access to rare or uncommon ancestries, feats, and more! To redeem your Achievement Points, go to paizo.com/organizedPlay/myAccount and click on the Boons tab. Note that you must have created a paizo.com account and registered a character before you can begin making Achievement Point transactions.

Rewards

Starting XP

XP Gained

Total XP

Experience

Items

Notes

moderate potion of retaliation (cold) (level 6, 12 gp;
Pathfinder Player Core 2 304)
murderer's knot (level 7, 66 gp)
moderate healing potion (level 6, 12 gp)
lesser energy breath potion (level 7, 70 gp)
+2 striking composite shortbow (level 10, 1,000 gp)
+2 striking lance (level 10, 1,000 gp)
+1 striking returning unholy trident (level 11, 1,500 gp)

Starting GP

GP Gained

GP Spent

Total GP

Gold

Reputation/Infamy

FOR GM ONLY

EVENT

EVENT CODE

DATE

GM Organized Play #

Chronicle Code: F7QA

For more information about the Pathfinder Society Organized Play program, including how to use this Chronicle Sheet, visit pathfindersociety.club