



SORCERER-KINGMAKER

ADVENTURE PATH CONVERSION

BOOK FIVE:

THE WAR OF THE SILT PRINCES

Beginning Book 5 of the ongoing Sorcerer-Kingmaker conversion, this book will be changing substantially to fit better into Athas, and to expand on the actual 'war'. The overall synopsis is the same, but some events will need to be altered.

At this stage of the adventure path, the PCs should be around 13th level, and their nascent city-state should be well-developed—perhaps even enough that they should need to consider the Dragon's tithe of 1,000 slaves, should the Dragon still be alive (depending on the timing and development of your campaign world). "War of the Silt Kings" can begin at any time, but ideally before they begin to seriously explore the Gelebon Highlands. High Praetor Irovetus has the patience and power to wait and watch, and is wise enough not to rush his plans. You might consider a time jump of six months or even a few years from the last adventure.

Part One: The Rushlight Games of Balic

This adventure begins when High Praetor Irovetus sends a messenger, inviting the PCs to attend and participate in the Rushlight Games. The messenger, Velemandus, is a clean-shaven elven slave who delivers the memorized invitation perfectly by voice, even if distracted:

"Greetings from his supreme and inimitable magnificence, Castor Irovetus, by the grace of the almighty Andropinis the High Praetor of the city-state of Balic, Marvel of Numeria, Master of Mormouth, and Prince-Regent of the Sellen. It is with greatest honour that I greet you, my fellow Princes of the Silt. I would wish you the honour of accepting my invitation to attend the fifth Rushlight Games as my guests, before the glorious presence of Dictator Andropinis Himself. I know you to be discerning lords of your domain, and trust you would not want to miss such extravagance

and an attempt to win the approval of the Dictator personally. And to sweeten the pot, as it were, I have secured a mighty magical item, a gold and gemstone rod which confers lordly might, which I am willing to bestow upon the lord who proves themselves by fielding the true Rushlight Games champion! Could this champion even be among your own august personages?

Please confirm your attendance by this invitation's most discretionary courier. I look forward to your attendance!

Delivered from the voice of Castor Irovetus, High Praetor of Balic."

Velemandus is willing to wait a day overnight for the PCs' response. It is the expected thing to offer food and shelter for him, and to fill his waterskins- doing otherwise would be quite rude. Velemandus himself is unfailingly polite, although if the PCs show open friendliness to him, he might accidentally let slip some details about the Games' challenges, especially the surprising presence of the renowned Mul gladiator Villamor Koth in the Midnight Melee, formerly of House Jarko. Koth had retired last year after earning his freedom, but was apparently offered a "princely sum" by Irovetus himself to compete. His skill with the carrikal is somewhat legendary, and he once fought a three-hour tournament against a trio of giants under the blazing sun.

Travel to Balic should be relatively uneventful- the army has driven out any bandits or beasts in the area in preparation. By the time they arrive, the city-state of Balic has swelled by nearly half of its usual population- a veritable shanty-town of market-sellers and travellers has set up outside its white marble walls, although the uniformed guards keep the roadways clear with judicious application of lance shaft blows and snapping crodlu mounts. The Elven Market, as well as the

agoras, are bustling with visitors hawking wares great and small. Thieves are having a field day, but keeping a low profile. Once they are recognized, the PCs are delivered a message by a trio of Praetors and a squad of armed guards that High Praetor Irovetus wishes to speak with them on their arrival. He can be found overseeing the Games' preparation, and the guards will keep them safe and escort them to him, while they are in the city.

Irovetus is a handsome and well-toned man in deep red velvet robe. He is eager to meet and observe the PCs face-to-face, but has already had one of Balic's court Defilers cast *mind blank* on him, making him immune to thought-detection abilities. In any case, he is a welcoming but cautious host, and gifts them each with an oilskin filled with water from Andropinis' own fountain. There is a barrel set aside filled with similar oilskins for the other guests. Each of the oilskins contains cool, clean water for refreshment, and is simply a gift. Expressing rudeness towards their host or towards Sorcerer-King Andropinis will see Irovetus' demeanour shift to icy disdain instantly, although their invitation is still valid.

The competitors are other powerful players from other areas along Balic's region of the Silt Sea.

Ledopolus: The dwarves of Ledopolus send some of their number along each time the Rushlight Games are held, usually a team of dour professionals. Each wears a copper band on their upper arm bearing the emblem of a bridge.

Samarah: Samarah's competitors from the eastern end of the Estuary of the Forked Tongue are well-mannered and friendly, but eager to win - the town has experienced troubles in its last few years, and could do with the stability and glory.

Altaruk: The competitors of Altaruk are

mercenaries hired by the trading-town. They wear scarves printed with a white square, representing the fortress walls. They are eager for the experience and the travel, but have no overall loyalty to Altaruk.

Gulg: Although their relationship with Balic is sometimes rocky, competitors from the forest city-state have been welcomed to the Fifth Rushlight Games. They are arrogant, confident in their own ability.

Balic: The competitors from Balic are specially-selected and highly-trained citizens, defending the honour of their city and ruler personally. If they are successful, each will be well-rewarded.

The Games

Regular gladiatorial matches and displays of entertainment will be occurring over the next five days, but these are well below the PCs' pay grade. The big games will occur one per day, culminating in the Midnight Melee to close out the grand spectacle. There are three core rules to the games: Harm no spectators, kill no competitors, and don't get caught cheating. For each of the main events, competitors will be announced by Andropinis' chief herald, Mnerion Arpaia.

Event One: Javelin Toss

On the second day, one competitor from each city is provided with a basket of finely-made and polished javelins, and provided with three targets, one at 30 feet worth one point, one at 60 feet worth three points, and one at 90 feet worth 5 points (targets beyond 30 feet have disadvantage). Each competitor gets six throws at their choice of targets. The prize for victory in this round is a Javelin of Lightning with a point polished from a fulgurite.

Event Two: Test of the Flame

On the third day, Balic's laws on spellcasting are temporarily lifted for this test, and

competitors are challenged to come up with the most impressive display of magic or Will in five casts each. This will be the first time many citizens of the city-state have openly seen spellcasting, and draw incredible amounts of attention, not to mention fearful crowds. Irovetus has deliberately arranged this to reveal powerful spellcasters so as to learn of their powers, and watches with scribes taking notes. The most impressive feat in any round wins 5 points, and the second prize wins 3 points. The prize for victory in this test is a simple golden diadem (a Circlet of Blasting).

Event Three: Test of Wordfame

On the fourth day, one competitor from each city is invited to take a podium in the centre of the stadium and boast to the audience of their greatest achievement. The story requires four checks, which can include Deception, Intimidation, Performance, and Persuasion, with disadvantage for a second check of the same kind. The highest skill check in any round wins 5 points, and the second prize wins 3 points. The prize for victory in this test is a Helm of Telepathy made from a Gaj's exoskeleton. Andropinis himself watches this event, and can be seen to chuckle if someone scores a 30 or more on one of their checks. This earns an additional two points.

Event Four: The Midnight Melee

The evening of the fifth day culminates in the 'big-ticket' event (which starts a little after sundown, rather than truly midnight). The stands are full to bursting, and the entire arena is lit by torches placed around the outside and on tall stands. Each city is invited to bring a team of up to five warriors to battle one another. Each has instructions to surrender when they are badly wounded (at half hit points or less), although some choose to push the envelope a little. Forcing a member of a team to surrender is worth five

points. Victory in the Midnight Melee earns hearty congratulations from the crowd, and a Mace of Smiting as the prize.

At the end of the night, no matter how early in the morning it is, all competitors from each team are called together for the award ceremony, where High Praetor Irovetus awards his grand prize- a Rod of Lordly Might. Attendance at celebrations and post-Games drinks is expected, but someone from the PCs' city is likely to find them before dawn to deliver urgent news.

Part Two: Behind Enemy Lines

Although the PCs may have had a chance at victory in the Rushlight Games in the last chapter, someone from their home territory comes rushing to find them after the closing ceremony, letting them know that their territory came under attack, only a few days after they left. You should make this an NPC they're fond of, someone trusted and unlikely to be lying. They tell of an attack by a flight of trained pterax riders, supported by a regiment of soldiers and some kind of giant in a great bronze helmet. Tearfully, they tell of the sack of their town, and the deaths and enslavement of dozens of their people.

The original adventure is a little short on plotted detail for this chapter, and leaves the PCs in the same city as the guy who has apparently just attacked them. I'm not sure about your players, but I feel like mine would go for the throat and try to kill (or maybe just confront) King Irovetti as soon as they find out. I feel like an urgent need for the PCs to return home can offer some drive to save their people rather than just gank Irovetus. The other puzzling part is that despite being titled "War of the River Kings", there's only really one King who takes part (pending whatever title the PCs call themselves), and

given Irovetti's demonstrated preference for forcing confrontations through cats' paws (Baron Drelev, in the previous adventure), it seems odd for him to jump to immediately confronting the PCs himself. Therefore, this chapter will introduce an additional complication- Irovetus has launched an attack on Altaruk at the same time he has attacked the PCs' settlement, and made the attacks appear to be from one another.

The competitors from Altaruk hear of the attack on the same evening, and as the PCs are staggering from hearing of the attack, they swiftly desert, heading out the city gates. Their encampment is abandoned, and partygoers are still milling about confusedly. They tell that a messenger came, and the mercenaries grabbed their gear and headed off out the city gates without a word, and had Balic's gladiator champion Villamor Koth with them (unless he died earlier). This lends a sense of urgency and requires response.

The PCs should fence back and forth with Altaruk's forces across the region, seeing Balic's soldiers and Templars watch cautiously and keep the peace against both sides, preventing water sources being fouled and villages being burned. Villamor Koth serves as general of Altaruk's forces, and his personal might can overcome almost any defences arrayed against him, although the PCs' personal involvement can blunt his advances. His military strategy is passable, but his combats have generally been small-scale, rather than organizing troop logistics and movement, so the PCs will have opportunities to outflank and defeat his strategies. The troops of Altaruk are generally mercenaries, with some citizen levies. If questioned, they maintain that the PCs' settlement attacked first, though they are confused about exact timing.

Specific battle sites:

1. Defense of the Rhana valley: The PCs' first action against the forces of Altaruk come in a defence action in the Rhana Valley, a narrow pass with a small watchtower. A regiment of two hundred soldiers, backed by a dozen half-giant juggernauts and a trio of mercenary Defilers, expect to march through this valley to reach the PCs' region. Reaching the valley in time will be difficult, and may involve taking a level of exhaustion to take up fortified positions before the troops arrive.

2. The storming of Heliosta village: Heliosta, a small village on the shore of the Sea of Silt, is being used as a staging-point by Altaruk's troops. A regiment has taken up positions at the village's drinking-holes and several silt-skimmers monitor traffic along the coast and protect the swift troop movements. Holding this point means having a point to ferry soldiers up and down the Sea of Silt. Taking this town will mean slowing the progress of Altaruk's army, and being able to insert the PCs' troops (and perhaps the PCs themselves) closer to Altaruk.

3. Battle of the Anamesh defile: A seemingly-easy victory at the oasis town of Anamesh lures overextension of resources, which Villamor Koth is only too happy to exploit. His infantry fall back along the side of the Defile, an ashy ravine outside town, as his hidden cavalry, riding heavy crodlus, sweep around the flank to launch a surprise attack.

4. Strike on Mardahal: A garrison the PCs are supervising comes under attack moments before a Tyr-storm hits. The attackers swarm out of the dust and lightning, protected by a pair of conscripted druids, overwhelming the defences as the weather crashes in.

5. Ambush at Tarat: A spy brings word of a slow and heavy wagon train on a secret route,

bringing paychests for Altaruk's mercenary troops draws close to the small town of Tarat, allowing an opportunity to seize their resources and reduce their army's morale. However, it is in an armoured Mekillot wagon, and defended by mercenary sharpshooters in cover.

6. Last Stand at Altaruk: Villamor Koth stages a desperate last stand behind the walls of Altaruk, as Balican soldiers prepare to reinforce them, bringing a heavy cavalry unit up behind the PCs' troops, enough to completely overwhelm. As they prepare to strike, an attack horn blows among Balic's troops, signaling their betrayal. Several Templars among their ranks bolster their forces in a devastating attack leaving no doubt as to the identity of their ultimate attacker. This will be a very hard fight, with the PCs pressed from both sides.

If the PCs survive, this leaves the next step as launching an attack on Balic itself. However, their victory in the field gives them an edge which Andropinis recognizes as a true danger to his city. He decides to cut his losses and takes to the city walls himself, appearing unshielded before the PCs. The mighty sorcerer-king gazes at them impassively, then sends a messenger (perhaps Velemandus, who brought them word to begin this adventure) who approaches them fearfully. The messenger bears a golden laurel wreath on a pillow, and a map, and provides a memorized speech:

"Greetings from the undisputed and indomitable Dictator of Balic. This wreath is a gift from Mighty Andropinis for the victor of the War of the Silt Princes, and is His apology for His servant's eagerness. The map contains directions to Whiterose in the Branthlend Mountains foothills, where he currently plans a trap for you. The Dictator of Balic wishes to

convey that His servant has taken his household guard with him, as well as his loyal servant Mnoedon, a giant. The Dictator hopes that this settles any lingering ill will, and wishes to convey that no tribute is due for [the PCs' settlement] for the next decade as a further expression of His benevolence."

This leads the PCs to the next chapter, where they can close on Irovetus and hope to bring the War of the Silt Princes to its end.

Part Three: Shores of the Silt Sea

Exploring the Gelebon Highlands

A. Mekillot Graveyard: Along the northern slopes of the Branthlend Mountains, the sandy hills of Gelebon stretch out to the north and the east, becoming progressively drier and craggier as one travels. All manner of strange creatures dwell in these regions, but here along the northeastern edge of the Gelebon Highlands, the primary denizens are vast, roaming herds of Mekillots. At this specific point is an immense box canyon which creates a strange gathering place for the wandering Mekillots who sense that their time is coming. This has been a graveyard for their kind for thousands of years, and the floor of the canyon is littered with crushed remnants of their shells. This particular graveyard, however, is watched over by an incredibly old mekillot that was *Awakened* by a druid decades ago. It calls itself Hillstomper, and is a weathered and ancient creature with fresh scars. If the PCs give it the chance, it communicates telepathically with them, explaining that it guards this graveyard, and has been driven out by a big creature from beneath the sand (a Sand Vortex), which is devouring the remains of his kind. In the gullet of the Sand Vortex can be found a

variety of treasure, including some magical and psionic gear.

B. Steam Grotto: This area contains several dozen sulphurous-smelling holes and unwholesome springs dot the hills in this area, most containing active geysers that spurt boiling water and steam hundreds of feet in the air, mostly evaporating before any of it lands. This is a dangerous region that can strip the skin from an unlucky or unwary creature in moments.

C. Mount Branthlend: This mountain, just short of a mile high, is the tallest peak in all of the Stolen Lands, and is a knob-like pinnacle of white stone. Local legend tells that the peak was scoured of life and vegetation by a powerful defiler atop its crown, hundreds of years ago.

D. Whiterose: This area is detailed in Part 4.

E. Ilthuliak's Lair: The Whisper River plummets over a 900-foot cliff into the side of a 150-foot deep tarn, surrounded by a 2-mile radius of tangled vines and densely vegetated swamp. The skull of a gigantic Silt Wurm can be found impaled upon a shattered log overlooking the cliff, a bizarre warning from the previous inhabitant- Ilthuliak, a water drake. Having been won over by the mad Pyreen Nyrissa, Ilthuliak has retreated into the First World with his treasures, and no longer haunts this region.

F. Hungerdark: At the dark edge of Thousand Voices, a dark cleft cuts up the face of the mountains, almost as if a titanic axe struck the 500-foot tall cliff here. A brackish pool of water collects in the deepest recesses of this cavern, but few animals approach within

miles of this region, for Hunderdark is far from abandoned. An immense wyvern, a matriarch of her kind, has laired in Hungerdark for over two centuries. Known by the regional tribes as *Minognos-Ushad* ("Eater of armies"), the wyvern has survived countless attempts to slay her and has more than earned her name from the countless warlords she has consumed.

G. Tower of Thorns (Hidden): One of the most notorious ruins in Thousand Voices looms among the tangled underbrush and twisted trees here- the infamous Tower of Thorns. This strange structure phases in and out of the Elemental Planes, and is currently out of phase with the Material world.

H. Ilora's Camp: A former gladiator by the name of Ilora and a band of bandits who call themselves the Dust Blades make their home on the shores of the Silt Sea here. There are some parallels to the Sun King, of Stolen Land, but Ilora and her people are exiled natives of Altaruk, making them potential allies in the war, if the PCs can win her over by staged combat or promises of revenge or power.

I. Shell Riders: A large tribe of Desert Giants has dwelt in the southern Gelebon Highlands for decades. A constant thorn in the sides of both Balic and the regional tribes' sides, these giants are notable for their bond with a large herd of mekillots they've trained as mounts. They are currently led by a psionically-powerful chief named Kob Moleg, from whom High Praetor Irovetus recently managed to secure the Shell Riders' allegiance with a combination of gold, silver-tongued promises, and magic. He's ordered them to wait until he gives the command to ride into the PCs' home area, but the giants are growing impatient and unruly with the wait.

J. The Balic Horde: The barbarian tribes of the Gelebon Highlands have been welded into a unified fighting force under High Praetor Irovetus' manipulation and bribery. If Armag was slain in the previous adventure, these tribes are fractious and only allied by the threat of Balic's might being focused on them, however if he survived, they are united under his leadership and a truly terrifying force.

K. Littletown: This town of farmers and vintners was used as 'currency' by Irovetus to pay off the wyvern riders. They were allowed to devour the entire town's population, leaving this region deserted and ruined, the lair of a few stragglers. Should evidence of Irovetus' crimes come to light through investigation, unrest in Balic swells, and Andropinis, as part of his retraction, removes some of Irovetus' powers.

L. Hemlock Island: This island in the Silt Sea has a reputation for being 'haunted' by mysterious lights. However, the only denizens of the island are rainbow-coloured egrets which scream like human women when slain. A large spring of fresh water can be found on the island.

M. The Weeping Grove: Although very few of them remain today in Thousand Voices, the legendary Trees That Weep are one of the more frequently whispered rumours about this dense forest. Said to possess twisted, humanoid faces and the ability to weep tears of pure fear, these creatures are in fact even more terrifying and dangerous.

N. Rushlight Festival Grounds: This area is detailed in Part 1, adjacent to the city of Balic.

O. Razorwing Camp: The Razorwing Marauders consist of the displaced Thieves' Guild of Balic, forced out of the city some years ago. They eventually became a mercenary band of warriors and assassins, and were paid a not-insignificant sum from Balic's treasury to work against the PCs' city. They maintain a semi-permanent camp amid a small oasis here.

Part Four: The Spirit of Whiterose

In this chapter, the PCs delve into the old Whiterose psionic monastery, revealing the trap laid for them by Praetor Irovetus and his master Andropinis, discovering the secret buried far beneath the monastery, and finally being able to free the ancient weapon *Briar* from its hiding-place.

The History of Whiterose Monastery

The spear known as *Briar* is more than just a weapon to the mad Pyreen, Nyrrisa- it contains a spark of her being, and without it, she is not quite whole. Yet the nature in which it was taken makes it impossible for her to find it, as long as it remains quiescent in the Material Plane. High Praetor Irovetus is just the latest in a long line of champions she has chosen to find the spear, though he is the first to have succeeded in locating it. Irovetus has sensed his powers from Andropinis have been withdrawn, and he has now sworn loyalty to Nyrrisa in body and soul, taking *Briar* in an attempt to reach her.

In the Green Age, the bygone enemies who imprisoned Nyrrisa chose a low, nameless mound in the foothills of the Branthlend mountains to serve as *Briar*'s hidden vault, hiding the spear in a subterranean vault and entrusting it to a fey spirit of water named Evindra. For thousands of years, she stood

warden of the weapon, until an order of psionicists, taken by the beauty of the white desert roses that grew on the hill, founded a monastery here. They erected a vast and polished stone tower to serve them as a place of reflection and safety, naming it Whiterose. Over the decades that followed, the curiosity and need for companionship drove Evindra to contact the psionicists, and they eventually welcomed her presence, seeing her as a benevolent spirit after she taught them to purify and filter water.

One of the order's members, a deformed and horrid specimen who titled himself The Master, fell in desperate lust with Evindra, and stole away some of her essence, enslaving her to him and imprisoning her within a detailed water-clock which he built. He discovered *Briar* and used it to slay the other inhabitants of the monastery in a murderous rampage, finally retreating to the subterranean vault to whisper to Evindra for years on end, sustaining himself with moss and clean water.

Irovetus' agents finally tracked the presence of *Briar* to Whiterose, and made their way inside. They slaughtered the maddened psionicist, and stole away the spear, giving it to Irovetus. They left the nereid trapped in her water clock, unaware of her enslavement. The Gardener, angered beyond death and driven by pure rage, returned as a Racked Spirit and now haunts the place.

This latest development is unknown to High Praetor Irovetus - he chose this place to launch an ambush on the PCs due to its remote location. To ensure such a fate, the Prince-Regent of the Sellen has sent some of his most dangerous minions - a Thri-Kreen assassin by the name of K'chk'tane, and a small group of elite soldiers. However, The Master's interference has resulted in some

difficulty for the assassins in preparing their deadly reception for the PCs. Irovetus has taken *Briar* and taken his troops to fortify the Tower of Thorns for a showdown.

On to the Whiterose Monastery

Patches of white desert roses still grow around the hill, but in the absence of *Briar*'s influence, the hill has grown wild in recent years. A low stone wall surrounds the monastery at the distance of perhaps a quarter-mile. Few signs remain of the once-exact gardens remain, although here and there, overgrown tangles of wild brambles hint at the building's past. The monastery itself is a glossy black monolith with three narrow levels, surrounded by arched rock outcroppings.

D1. Plaza: At the end of a dusty track lies a wide area where the scale of the monastery is finally revealed- a truncated and glossy black stone monolith, reflecting back the surrounding landscape with mirror-like sheen.

D2. Whistletower: One of Balic's spies stands guard atop this tall tower which was once adorned with great reed whistles for alarm, waiting to see if the PCs pass and readying themselves to descend and alarm their colleagues. The first time the PCs pass this area, they can hear a ghostly sound as if the fallen pipes, clearly in the sand, are whistling distantly. This ceases abruptly if they are touched.

D3. Entryway: This area has sandy stairways stretching upwards and downwards to either side. The walls and ceiling are decorated with ceramic tiles in painted vine patterns, and a door directly opposite the entry seems to lead into the monastery further, although the wooden door looks a little warped. It squeaks loudly on the tiles when disturbed.

D5. Washroom: Based on the shattered remains of the basins here, this must have once been a washroom and lavatory. The first time the PCs enter, one of the basins appears to be whole and brimming with crystal-clear water. As soon as it is touched, this vanishes with a splashing noise.

D6. Sanctuary: This wide, colonnaded hall is marked by rounded bays that run to either side, each containing dusty old barrels. Above, wooden rafters form a complex network of supports for the roof, and below, a number of bedrolls of recent make litter the floor. Here, K'chk'tane and her band of assassins make their move. If they've been alarmed by the spy atop the whistletower, they have prepared an ambush, otherwise they are lurking here and might be surprised. K'chk'tane is coolly ready and waiting in the rafters at any point, but the eight Veterans and four Spies included are all *frightened* for the first round of any combat, clearly unsettled by something before their instincts take over. Among their belongings are sketches of each of the PCs and brief details written about them ("warrior who favours the trident"; "elf defiler with command of fire magics", for example). It should be clear that this is a trap set for them.

D7. Vine Tangle: The graveyard of the monastery has been overgrown by a gigantic tangle of brambles. If anyone approaches, the ground heaves and the gravestones seem to tumble as a pair of gigantic Shambling Mounds emerge, rampaging forth to slay any living creature nearby.

D9. Library, above the monastery: The first floor of the monastery contains a shelf of books and racks of scrolls that contain the

collected psionic knowledge of the order, as well as focusing-crystal orbs and a variety of ritual components. There are also several comfortable-looking shallow bowls carved into the floor for sitting to meditate within. A psionicist who has access to these has advantage on relevant Arcana checks, and you can use this to introduce some new powers or options for your characters, if you like.

D10. Abbott's room: The highest floor contains the former abbott's quarters, with a large desk and more shelves. A large bloodstain mars the wooden floor. On entry, the PCs feel a sudden sharp pain in their chest, as if they have been stabbed in the heart with a spear. A Wisdom save (DC 16) prevents the PC from being *stunned* for one round, and anyone affected will bear a white circular scar over their heart until they receive any magical healing.

D12. Psionics' cells, below the monastery: The eight slain psions who were murdered by the Master have become Will-o'-wisps, manifesting their latent rage in the only way that they can communicate.

D14. Ruined water shed: The shed, a few hundred feet from the monastery, leads to the ancient cistern where Evindra once lived. The pools used for the water distillation and purification here have fallen into disarray. However, the now-polluted waters host a trio of angry and muddy water elementals that emerge from the pools. Once dealt with, the way to the cistern is clear- a tunnel leading nearly nine hundred feet downwards into a rock face.

D16. The Cistern: The tunnel leading downwards is in complete darkness, ending at a large, vaulted cavern filled with a crescent-

shaped pool of luminous and softly-rippling clear water. The arc of the pool cuts across the end of the passage, separating the tunnel from an island covered with moss and softly-writhing green fungus, although a rickety-looking wooden bridge spans the gap. On the island itself, a brass contraption whirs as the water clicks through it, while above, a set of winking lights slowly wriggle and move, slowly forming and reforming strange constellations in a false night sky.

Here, The Master and another half-dozen Will-o'-wisps lurk, biding their time until they are disturbed again. The Master, as a powerful psionicist, has retained many of his abilities as a Racked Spirit.

Evindra the Water Weird is still imprisoned within the mechanical clock, and anyone drinking (or being immersed in) the water can feel a buzzing in their jaw and throat, and a faint voice, begging for freedom from the "device of metal". If freed, the water cascades back into the pool and a flare of brightness shines forth from the water before a humanoid shape arises the next round, resembling a vaguely female form. If The Master is still around, she takes action to aid those fighting him, and bring about his final destruction, before telling her saviours that she brings hope to those who need healing, and served as the guardian of *Briar* before it was stolen away from her. She tells that she can feel that its essence has travelled through the ancient forest known as Thousand Voices, and has reached the Tower of Thorns.

There, its new wielder entreats his mistress, Nyriisa the Pyreen, and attempts to restore her essence to her.

Part Five: The Tower of Thorns

This chapter will deal with the siege of the Tower of Thorns, the confrontation with Praetor Irovetus, and the reveal of Nyrrissa's identity, leading into book Six: The Sound of a Thousand Screams.

The most recent chapter ended with the PCs going in pursuit of Praetor Irovetus and discovering something that he had taken instead- *Briar*, an ancient spear made from the spirit of a Pyreen. They also have a lead on his location, and can take their armies to the Tower of Thorns for a showdown.

The Tower of Thorns is a jagged spur of stone amid the violent forest tangle known as Thousand Breaths, and reaching it with an army will be difficult. Examination can show that a sizeable force made its way through in the recent past (perhaps weeks, perhaps days- there won't be many trackers in Athas who will know the difference in a dense forest context). Finally, after following trails for miles and battling with venomous flora and fauna, the Tower of Thorns can be reached. The walls are overgrown with foot-thick vines and roots, but sentries stand guard, defending it from attack. There are hundreds of troops, clearly prepared, and yet another battle seems to be the only way to overcome its defences and come to grips with the traitorous Irovetus.

As this part in the original book dealt with the PCs besieging King Irovetti's castle, I've had to rewrite this section substantially. The Tower of Thorns is itself more of a fortress complex, rather than a large castle, and the siege should have a valuable and narrative role in the campaign's story. Currently, the tower is defended by all of Irovetus' household guards and conscripted soldiers, as well as several half-giant and elven mercenaries and Mnoedon, his loyal Giant warrior and general.

He has also prepare surprises for attackers, with several druids at his disposal. This means that the dense vegetation and roots will be yet another enemy for the PCs to overcome. His household guards, well-equipped soldiers, have prepared fortifications and siege weapons, and are able to hold them against superior attackers. Inside the Tower, Irovetus prepares himself, making offerings and bonding with *Briar*. As his warrant of service from Andropinis was revoked, he has instead sought service at Nyrrissa's feet, and become a Warlock, replacing his Templar powers.

Locations of the Tower of Thorns

T1-4 cover the ground floor of the tower. T5 is the second floor upwards, T6-7 are the third floor, and T8-9 are the fourth floor. T10 covers the rooftop with the portal to Nyrrissa's realm.

T1. Grand Plaza: The plaza outside the Tower was once lined with shaped cobblestones, and a series of towering, hooked inhuman statues. A quartet of *charmed* Half-Giant Juggernauts guard the plaza against intrusion.

T2. Guard rooms: A pair of Irovetus' elite Knights guard each of these guard rooms, clad in armour of braxat shell and bronze trimmings. Each fights with a carrikal with polished obsidian blades.

T3. Great Hall: A trio of Spies hide behind the pillars of this room, trying to flank and eliminate any intruders.

T4. Staircase Colonnade: If the Tower is breached, Irovetus' general and friend Mnoedon waits here with a pair of Gladiators at the top of the stairs. Mnoedon is a desert

giant with jet-black skin and a helmet forged of bronze and steel. He carries a tremendous trikal and has no concern for any collateral damage he inflicts in battle. If he survived the War of Silt Princes, Villamor Koth, the veteran gladiator, joins the fight here to prevent intruders proceeding upwards.

T5. First Floor: This floor is an open-plan floor, with a pair of Half-Giant Juggernauts standing guard with Datchi clubs, while a trio of Spies wait on landings heading further upwards, with javelins ready to take advantage of a lull in combat.

T6. Second Floor: Alasen, leader of the Razorwing Marauders, waits here with her Spy lieutenants. She is an Assassin, who fights with Cahulaks and gives orders to focus attention on one intruder at once, trying to permanently eliminate them.

T7. Second Floor Barracks: Another pair of Irovetus' knights stand guard here, and will rush to assist in combat in the next room, if they hear it.

T8. Third Floor Observatory: This tower floor is open to the elements, enclosing a smaller room and heavily overgrown. A trio of Air Elementals have been conjured to defend against intruders, reinforced by a pair of Druids within the Greenhouse.

T9. Greenhouse: Irovetus has coerced or persuaded a half-dozen druids into his service. At any point, two are kept here to guard him.

T10. Portal to the First Realm: Irovetus awaits confrontation with his two pet Tembos and his last two Knights atop the Tower of Thorns, adorned with all his former trappings and wielding *Briar* against his foes. Despite all his entreaties, the portal has waned shut again,

and Nyrisa's true emergence into Athas is delayed once more. His new allegiance is revealed by the bizarre life-shaped creation now obscuring half of his face, and the thorny spear in his right hand glows with magic. His fragile ego, torn asunder by Andropinis' casting him aside, has crossed the line into megalomania. He starts into a villainous speech, and then unleashes his Tembos and attacks.

If Irovetus is defeated, the danger has passed—*Briar* finds a new master, the Tower of Thorns begins to phase away from the Material Plane again, and Nyrisa's scheme comes to naught, for now. The vegetation of Thousand Breaths eases its relentless growth and mutation. It seems like the Stolen Lands can find peace for the first time in many years.

THE MASTER (using [A Classic Psionic System](#) for 5e rules)

Medium undead (human), chaotic evil

Armour Class 15 (natural armour)

Hit Points 117 (18d8+36)

Speed 0ft., fly 30ft. (hover)

Str 7 (-2); **Dex** 17 (+3); **Con** 15 (+2); **Int** 12 (+1); **Wis** 18 (+4); **Cha** 22 (+6)

Damage Resistances Acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from attacks that aren't made with steel weapons

Damage Immunities Necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, exhausted, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 14

Languages telepathy with beings within 60 feet

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Corrupting Gaze. When a creature that can see the Master's eyes starts its turn within 30 feet of the Master, the Master can force it to make a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or become Poisoned and take one level of exhaustion.

Unless surprised, a creature can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it can't see the Master again until the start of its next turn, when it can choose whether to avert its eyes again. If the creature looks at the Master again in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

Incorporeal Movement. The Master can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. He takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Innate Psionics. The Master is an 18th-level psionicist. His manifesting ability is Charisma (power save DC 21, +11 to hit with power attacks).

PSPs: 114 (PSP limit: 13); **MAC** 11

Disciplines known: Telepathy (primary), clairsentience, psychokinesis, psychometabolism, psychoportation

Devotions known: *All-around vision, empathy, incarnation awareness, insect mind, slipstream of initiative*

1st-level sciences (2 PSP): *Inflict pain, psychic impersonation, sensory link, telepathic disguise*

2nd-level sciences (3 PSP): *Aura alteration, conceal thoughts, daydream, hallucination*

3rd-level sciences (5 PSP): *Acceptance, awe, suppress fear, telepathic projection*

4th-level sciences (6 PSP): *Impossible task, mind blast*

5th-level sciences (7 PSP): *Mind bar, temporal shunt*

6th-level sciences (9 PSP): *Domination, mental prison*

7th-level sciences (10 PSP): *Cascade contact*

8th-level sciences (11 PSP): *Psionic vampirism*

9th-level sciences (13 PSP): *Mass domination, unearthly visions*

Attack/Defense modes known: All / all

Actions

Corrupting Touch. *Melee weapon attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion.

FORMER PRAETOR CASTOR IROVETUS, Warlock of the Pyreen Nyrrisa

Medium humanoid (human), Neutral Evil

Armour Class 16 (drake leather armour)

Hit Points 176 (27d8 + 54)

Speed 30ft., fly 30ft. (hover)

Str 14 (+2); **Dex** 18 (+4); **Con** 14 (+2); **Int** 17 (+3); **Wis** 13 (+1); **Cha** 21 (+5)

Saving Throws Wisdom +7, Charisma +11

Skills Arcana +9, Deception +11, History +9, Nature +9, Perception +7, Persuasion +11, Religion +9

Condition Immunities Charmed, frightened

Damage Resistance Poison damage

Senses Darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Beguiling Defenses. Irovetus is immune to being charmed, and when a creature tries to charm him, they take 10 (3d6) psychic damage instead.

Legendary Resistance (1/day). If Irovetus fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Life-Shaped Mantle. Irovetus' life-shaped creations grant him darkvision with a range of 60ft., resistance to poison damage, and immunity to the poisoned condition, as well as several increases to his ability scores (already included in the statistics shown).

Magic Resistance. Irovetus has advantage on saving throws against spells.

Spellcasting. Irovetus is a 20th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 21, +11 to hit with spell attacks). Irovetus has 4 spell slots, which can be used to activate the following spells, all at slot level 5.

Warlock spells: *Blight* (9d8 damage), *Counterspell*, *Dominate person*, *Greater invisibility*, *Hellish rebuke* (6d10 damage), *Hold monster*, *Plant growth*.

Mystic Arcanum. Irovetus can cast each of the following spells once per day.

6th level: *Conjure fey* (one Shambling mound)

7th level: *Finger of death*

8th level: *Power word stun*

9th level: *Power word kill*

Actions

Multiattack. Irovetus makes one attack with *Briar* and two *Quickblade* attacks.

Briar. *Melee or ranged weapon attack:* +8 melee or +10 ranged, range 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6+5) piercing damage or 9 (1d8+5) piercing damage if used two-handed, plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Quickblade. *Melee weapon attack:* +10 to hit, range 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6+5) piercing damage.

Eldritch Blast. *Ranged spell attack:* +12 to hit, ranged 300ft., four targets. *Hit:* 11 (1d10+6) force damage and the target is pushed 10 feet away.

Legendary Actions

Former Praetor Irovetus has 1 legendary action per turn, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Irovetus regains a spent legendary action at the start of his turn.

Briar root. Irovetus throws *Briar*, and after inflicting damage, it triggers *Spike growth* on the target, before returning to Irovetus' hand.

Cast spell. Irovetus casts a spell from his warlock spells.

Eldritch Blast. Irovetus fires an *eldritch blast* at 1 - 4 targets.

Mystic arcanum. Irovetus casts one of his Mystic Arcanum spells.