



SANCTUM OF THE BURNING SOULS
FOR ROBERT E HOWARD'S
CONAN ADVENTURES IN
AN AGE UNDREAMED OF

ADAPTED FROM THE AGE OF CONAN
ONLINE GAME
AND THE AGE OF CONAN SOURCEBOOK
BY MODIPHIUS
BY
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This scenario is purely meant for recreational use, just like whatever you crazies do with that llama, emu and four pounds of hemp in your basements.

Any events, names or faces used may very well be representative of past, current, future, factual or fictional events, but I'll never tell... BWAHAHAHA!

A big thanks to Modiphius for such a phenomenal RPG, Robert E. Howard, my wife and children, Cthulu (Remember, as long as he may eternally lie, he is not dead!) and Basil Poledouris (for the incredible music that is played at every Conan game I run!).

If you enjoyed this content, please check out my website <https://www.martinparece.com/> to see the huge amount of fan-made content for Free League's incredible Alien RPG. While you're there maybe you'd consider checking out my fiction writing available on Amazon.com! Any support is greatly appreciated.

KNOW O PRINCE, that there was an

age undreamed of, when great shining kingdoms spread across the world. These great cities and their thrones were paid for through even greater bloodshed, mountains of gold and jewels and, sometimes, sorcery most foul. It is in the lost age that we find this tale, at a time when all of the aforementioned have come together in a grand conjunction to oust King Conan the Usurper from his rightfully earned throne of Aquilonia. Felled in his tent by an invisible stalker before two great hosts clashed in western Aquilonia, the king disappeared, and his great armies routed before the legionnaires of Nemedra. They took Tarantia and Conan's palace, the dragon standards of Nemedra flying from its spires. It was truly the Hour of the Dragon.

But King Conan's story was to continue for decades yet, and he defeated the risen Acheronian sorcerer Xaltotun. With much to do to again free his nation, he came home to his people. The return of King Conan was heralded in nations around Hyboria, and, whether driven by promise of coin, blood or glory, mercenaries from across the continent rallied to the Aquilonians' cause. They pushed the invading legions back to Nemedra.

The armies are defeated, but pockets of Nemedian soldiers still hold positions throughout Aquilonia. In the village of Tesso in eastern Aquilonia, our tale finds a motley crew finding respite from the fighting as they await word of the king's next campaign. Tesso, a small village of only two hundred or so, has swollen with refugees from nearby villages put to the axe and torch by Nemedian raiders. The inn and tavern, usually empty except for a few village drunks, is now full. The heroes of this tale sit at a table, enjoying good company, casks of wine and flagons of ale.

Meanwhile, another ancient evil has begun to stir nearby, having been roused from a deep, dreamless sleep.

OVERVIEW

This adventure is adapted from the epic dungeon featured in the *Age of Conan* MMO by Funcom. It was also featured briefly in the new [Age of Conan](#) sourcebook by Modiphius. The player characters, either using the pre-gens provided or your players' own characters, will journey through the rural, wild areas around Tesso to find the ancient Acheronian temple city now known as Sanctum of the Burning Souls. There they will face undead men, monstrous spiders, lost Nemedian soldiers, sorcerers of the Black Ring and, finally, the Blood Defiler demon.

THE HOOK

There are two ways to hook the PCs into the story. The first is through the PC Zarkosa (see below in the Characters section). Zarkosa had been sent by his patron to aid the Aquilonians in their fight against the Acheronian sorcerer Xaltotun (an ancient enemy of his master). Of course, King Conan handled the evil reborn wizard, and Zarkosa simply stayed out of the way of the fighting armies. His master visited him in a dream, this time to offer him a challenge. With Xaltotun defeated, his remaining Black Ring devotees are raising another great evil nearby. He is to find a group of champions and destroy the beast.

Option two has to do with a hooded man named Melkar. If Zarkosa is not in play, Melkar will approach the PCs in the tavern to retain their services. He will tell the PCs that there is an ancient ruin nearby and retain their services to find it. There is a stone statue that bears his resemblance in the ruin's temple, and he wants them to destroy it.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

This adventure offers six pre-generated characters to allow your players to select from a wide variety of character types. While you do not need to use the characters (the players may certainly bring their own), the character Zarkosa offers one of the adventure hooks. Also, you may need to scale the encounters up or down based on the number of players you have. If you have four or less players, it is highly recommended that you bring the Ulric character for heavy melee damage potential!

One last note – all of these characters are male, since my players were male, and I wasn't sure about their willingness to play female characters. Please feel free to amend this!

SIR DECIOUS OF POITAIN

AGILITY 10			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Acrobatics	0	0	10
Melee	3	3	13
Stealth	0	0	10

AWARENESS 6			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Insight	0	0	6
Observation	0	0	6
Survival	0	0	6
Thievery	0	0	6

BRAWN 11			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Athletics	0	0	11
Resistance	3	3	14

COORDINATION 10			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Parry	3	3	13
Ranged Weapons	1	1	11
Sailing	0	0	10

INTELLIGENCE 7			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Alchemy	0	0	7
Craft	0	0	7
Healing	0	0	7
Linguistics	0	0	7
Lore	0	0	7
Warfare	2	2	9

PERSONALITY 12			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Animal Handling	3	3	15
Command	3	3	15
Counsel	0	0	12
Persuade	3	3	15
Society	3	3	15

WILLPOWER 7			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Discipline	0	0	7
Sorcery	0	0	7

BACKGROUND			
Age	18	Gender	Male
Homeland	Aquilonia – Poitain	Caste	Petty Nobility
Trait	Chosen	Archetype	Knight
Nature	Egotistical	Education	Professional Soldiering
War Story	Gained Favor of a Local Noble	Languages	Aquilonian Argossean

SOAK	
Armor	4 (very heavy, noisy)
Courage	2

FORTUNE POINTS	

STRESS													
Vigor													
Resolve													

HARMS					
Wounds					
Trauma					

ATTACKS	
Sword (M): Reach 2, 6D, Parry	
Shortsword (M): Reach 1, 6D, Parry	
Shortsword (M): Reach 1, 6D, Parry	
Lance (Qty 3, M): Reach 3, 6D, Cav 2, Frag	
Steely Glare (T): Range C, 5D	

SOCIAL	
Standing	2
Renown	0
Gold	15
Upkeep	5

TALENTS	
Cosmopolitan	Force of Presence
Sheltered	Born in the Saddle
Subject	No Mercy
Deflection	

POSSESSIONS	
Full suit plate armor	Shield
Warhorse	Riding horse
Glass eye of a forebear	Plumed Cap

Born to a minor family in the sweeping rich vineyards of Poitain, Decius could have never been anything but a knight. Chosen, raised properly and professionally trained by the best soldiers in Aquilonia, he is absolutely certain of both his superiority and that of his race. He has become known at court and among the better families of his country. When war with Nemedia came, he welcomed it as his chance to show his countrymen his worth. When Conan appeared to fall in battle, he, like many others, despaired and retreated with General Prospero away from Tarantia to the estates of Poitain. The return of the king was joyous for Decius, and he road with the other knights to break the Nemedian host. Now he awaits in the village of Tesso for his next orders.

5'11, 200 pounds, light brown hair blue eyes, fit, handsome, likeable but arrogant

GALEN THE BOSSONIAN

AGILITY 10			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Acrobatics	1	1	11
Melee	3	3	13
Stealth	1	1	11

AWARENESS 13			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Insight	3	3	16
Observation	3	3	16
Survival	2	2	15
Thievery	0	0	13

BRAWN 7			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Athletics	0	0	7
Resistance	0	0	7

COORDINATION 12			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Parry	0	0	12
Ranged Weapons	4	4	16
Sailing	0	0	12

INTELLIGENCE 9			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Alchemy	0	0	9
Craft	1	1	10
Healing	1	1	10
Linguistics	0	0	9
Lore	0	0	9
Warfare	1	1	10

PERSONALITY 6			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Animal Handling	2	2	8
Command	0	0	6
Counsel	0	0	6
Persuade	0	0	6
Society	0	0	6

WILLPOWER 6			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Discipline	2	2	8
Sorcery	0	0	7

BACKGROUND			
Age	19	Gender	Male
Homeland	Aquilonia – Bossonian	Caste	Pioneer
Trait	Orphaned	Archetype	Archer
Nature	Practical	Education	Born to Kill
War Story	Survived a Raid by Barbarians	Languages	Aquilonian Cimmerian

SOAK	
Armor	1
Courage	2

FORTUNE POINTS	

STRESS	
Vigor	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Resolve	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

HARMS	
Wounds	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Trauma	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ATTACKS	
Bossonian Longbow (R): Range M, 8D, Piercing 1, Volley	
Dagger (M): Reach 1, 3D, Parry, Hidden 1, Thrown, Unforgiving 1	
Steely Glare (T): Range C, 5D	

SOCIAL	
Standing	1
Renown	0
Gold	6
Upkeep	4

TALENTS	
Hunter	Enterprising
Accurate	Blood of Bori
Bossonian Archer	Marksman
Courageous	

POSSESSIONS	
Padded gambeson, trousers, helm	Trophies from the dead
Land deed	Riding horse
Fine Bakhariot leather belt	2 loads for bow

Galen is from Aquilonia's Bossonian Marches, where he learned how to live and survive off of the land starting as a child. By his teen years, he had already become a fair shot (excellent by most standards) in the eyes of his fellow Bossonians. Three years ago, he returned from a hunting trip in the wilderness to find that his village had been raided by Pictish barbarians, every single person either dead or missing. He tracked the Picts but lost the trail at the Black River. He spent the next years working out of Velitrium, turning in Pict scalps for bounty money. He was on one such mission when war with Nemedia came, and he returned to here of the death of King Conan. He was all to ready to answer the call to arms upon the king's return!

5'7, 150 pounds, fair hair, green eyes, quiet, stoic and practical, speaks only when necessary

MARAPHIS

AGILITY 11			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Acrobatics	1	1	12
Melee	2	2	13
Stealth	2	2	13

AWARENESS 13			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Insight	0	0	13
Observation	2	2	15
Survival	0	0	13
Thievery	2	2	15

BRAWN 8			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Athletics	2	2	10
Resistance	0	0	8

COORDINATION 7			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Parry	0	0	7
Ranged Weapons	0	0	7
Sailing	0	0	7

INTELLIGENCE 9			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Alchemy	0	0	9
Craft	3	3	12
Healing	1	1	10
Linguistics	1	1	10
Lore	3	3	12
Warfare	0	0	9

PERSONALITY 9			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Animal Handling	1	1	10
Command	1	1	10
Counsel	1	1	10
Persuade	0	0	9
Society	2	2	11

WILLPOWER 6			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Discipline	0	0	6
Sorcery	0	0	6

BACKGROUND			
Age	19	Gender	Male
Hometown	Zamora	Caste	Petty Nobility
Trait	Adventurous	Archetype	Relic Hunter
Nature	Learned	Education	Burglar
War Story	Sold Forged Goods in the Market	Languages	Zamoran, Aquilonian Corinthian

SOAK	
Armor	0
Courage	0

FORTUNE POINTS	

STRESS	
Vigor	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Resolve	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

HARMS	
Wounds	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Trauma	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ATTACKS	
Sword (M): Reach 2, 4D, Parry	
Dagger (M): Reach 1, 3D, Parry, Hidden 1, Thrown, Unforgiving 1	
Steely Glare (T): Range C, 3D	

SOCIAL	
Standing	2
Renown	0
Gold	11
Upkeep	5

TALENTS	
Honest Corruption	Sheltered
Subject	Blood of Bori
Living Shadow	Journeyman
Scribe	It's a Trap!

POSSESSIONS	
Set of expensive clothes	Set of common digging garments
Mapmaking tools	Excavation tools
Prybar & lockpicks	Traveler's survival kit
Riding horse	Simple black trousers & tunic
Piece of polished crystal that make	Letters seem larger

Maraphis was bored of his family life as a child, always visiting other minor nobles' estates for dinners and parties, always putting forth an appearance as a dutiful son and being educated by ancient crones in basic reading, language and history. He wanted to go see the world, investigate ancient ruins and plunder tombs of bygone eras. As he approached manhood, he fell in with petty thugs and learned the ways of burglary and fencing goods. He had to leave Shadizar when it was discovered that he had sold forged Acheronian coins to a collector, his own father being willing to turn him in! Fortunately, this simply afford Maraphis the adventures he wanted. He arrived at Aquilonia during its time of war in the hopes of both earning coin and finding these ancient sites he'd so often read about!

5'8" and thin, curly almost black hair, goatee, friendly and outgoing, acts intellectual

QUINTUS

AGILITY 10			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Acrobatics	0	0	10
Melee	3	3	13
Stealth	2	2	12

AWARENESS 10			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Insight	1	1	11
Observation	2	2	12
Survival	2	2	12
Thievery	0	0	10

BRAWN 10			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Athletics	1	1	11
Resistance	1	1	11

COORDINATION 10			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Parry	2	2	12
Ranged Weapons	2	2	12
Sailing	0	0	10

INTELLIGENCE 7			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Alchemy	0	0	7
Craft	0	0	7
Healing	0	0	7
Linguistics	0	0	7
Lore	0	0	7
Warfare	2	2	9

PERSONALITY 9			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Animal Handling	1	1	10
Command	2	2	11
Counsel	1	1	10
Persuade	1	1	10
Society	1	1	10

WILLPOWER 7			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Discipline	0	0	7
Sorcery	0	0	7

BACKGROUND			
Age	25	Gender	Male
Homeland	Nemedia	Caste	Warrior
Trait	Veteran	Archetype	Scout
Nature	Proud	Education	Professional Soldiering
War Story	Defeated a Company Champion	Languages	Nemedian, Aquilonian

SOAK	
Armor	1
Courage	0

FORTUNE POINTS	

STRESS									
Vigor									
Resolve									

HARMS				
Wounds				
Trauma				

ATTACKS	
Sword (M): Reach 2, 6D, Parry	
Knife (M): Reach 1, 5D, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1	
Hunting Bow (R): Range C, 5D, Volley	
Steely Glare (T): Range C, 3D	

SOCIAL	
Standing	1
Renown	0
Gold	10
Upkeep	4

TALENTS	
Cosmopolitan	Sentry
Subject	No Mercy
Captain	Born Wild
Sharp Senses	

POSSESSIONS	
Quiver w/ 3 reloads	Hardtack for a few days
Rough hammered jewelry	Buckskins
Deerskin leggings and heavy cloak	

Quintus was born on the frontier of Nemedia near the border kingdoms. A warrior by birth, he quickly learned the ways of the hunter and tracker. Proud of his heritage, and certain of the superiority of Nemedian blood and culture, he joined the ranks of the legionnaires to add to his impressive list of growing skills. One day his arrogance got the better of him, and he was challenged by his company's champion, a hulking beast named Bragaros. But great strength is not enough to win every battle, and Quintus emerged from the duel victorious. This earned him immense praise from his fellow legionnaires, and he was made a captain within weeks, even commanding his former foe. He proved himself, and his command, in battle against Corinthians and Brythunians, earning a reputation for being in the thick of battle, always leading his men forward, and even scouting enemy positions himself. Quintus relished the opportunity to fight the great Aquilonia, but it was over all too soon, too easy. He heard rumors of vile sorcery aiding his countrymen, and it was one night after the fall of Tarantia that he chose to scout his own King's tents. Then he discovered his own king's treachery of having joined with the Black Ring and raising the ancient Acheronian wizard Xaltotun. Quintus, loyal as ever to his people, could not abide such, and he crossed the lines under cover of darkness, presenting himself to General Prospero. When Conan returned, Quintus again led troops, but this time against his own people, imploring Nemedians to retain their honor and lay down their weapons.

5'11" and fit, straight dark brown hair, unshaven, penetrating brown eyes, proud and confident

ULRIC THE GUNDERMAN

AGILITY 10			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Acrobatics	3	3	13
Melee	4	4	14
Stealth	3	3	13

AWARENESS 7			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Insight	0	0	7
Observation	0	0	7
Survival	3	3	10
Thievery	0	0	7

BRAWN 13			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Athletics	3	3	16
Resistance	1	1	14

COORDINATION 7			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Parry	0	0	7
Ranged Weapons	1	1	8
Sailing	0	0	7

INTELLIGENCE 9			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Alchemy	0	0	9
Craft	1	1	10
Healing	1	1	10
Linguistics	0	0	9
Lore	0	0	9
Warfare	0	0	9

PERSONALITY 8			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Animal Handling	2	2	10
Command	0	0	8
Counsel	0	0	8
Persuade	0	0	8
Society	0	0	8

WILLPOWER 9			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Discipline	2	2	11
Sorcery	0	0	9

BACKGROUND			
Age	22	Gender	Male
Homeland	Aquilonia –Gunderland	Caste	Farmer
Trait	Lost Love	Archetype	Barbarian
Nature	Wrathful	Education	On Your Own Terms
War Story	Survived a Massacre	Languages	Aquilonian, Cimmerian

SOAK	
Armor	2
Courage	2

FORTUNE POINTS	

Vigor	
Resolve	

HARMS	
Wounds	
Trauma	

ATTACKS	
Two-Handed Sword (M): Reach 3, 8D, Vic 1	
Battle Axe (M): Reach 2, 7D, Intense, Vicious 1	
Hatchet (M): Reach 2, 7D, Vicious 1	
Steely Glare (T): Range C, 2D	

SOCIAL	
Standing	1
Renown	0
Gold	8
Upkeep	4

TALENTS	
Hunter	No Mercy
Homesteader	Born Wild
Blood on Steel	Subject
Courageous	Ancient Bloodline: Hyboria

POSSESSIONS	
Full suit of brigandine	Fine set of cutlery, silver with
Pair of fur-lined boots	Obsidian inlay

Ulric represents the savagery that permeated the kingdom of Gunderrland before it integrated into Aquilonia years ago. Raised from birth to survive and slay anything that threatens him, he eschews the fancy fighting styles and fencing of trained warriors, instead preferring pure power and bloodshed. If he hits a foe with enough force, his enemy's training in swordsmanship means nothing. Three years ago, he met a woman, and she convinced him to build them a home. He loved Leeta, an emotion that was unfamiliar to him even toward his parents, and he loved their newborn son in a way he never believed possible. Last year, they were taken from him when a party of Cimmerians crossed into Gunderrland to raid, pillage and slay. His home and crops were burned, his son murdered, and Leeta... The raiders left him for dead, their mistake, for when he awoke, Ulric raged over what they had taken from him. When his wounds healed, he followed the raiders to their village and wreaked horrible vengeance upon them, even their women and children. He set fire to their thatched rooves at night and slayed them mercilessly as they stumbled from burning homes. After, Ulric wandered as he looked for purpose, and he found it in the war against Nemedia. Even after King Conan fell in battle, Ulric continued to slay Nemeditans on the left and right, until he was dragged physically from the battlefield by his countrymen. The return of King Conan to Aquilonia, the myth of his death, meant battle was to be joined again, and Ulric reveled in it. For now, the war is paused, and he drinks to forget.

6'4" and hugely muscled, long almost black hair, matted dark beard, hard gray eyes, relishes battle, angry and bitter

ZARKOSA

AGILITY 8			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Acrobatics	0	0	8
Melee	1	1	9
Stealth	0	0	8

AWARENESS 9			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Insight	3	3	12
Observation	0	0	9
Survival	1	1	10
Thievery	0	0	9

BRAWN 7			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Athletics	0	0	7
Resistance	1	1	8

COORDINATION 7			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Parry	0	0	7
Ranged Weapons	0	0	7
Sailing	0	0	7

INTELLIGENCE 12			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Alchemy	1	1	13
Craft	0	0	12
Healing	1	1	13
Linguistics	3	3	15
Lore	3	3	15
Warfare	0	0	12

PERSONALITY 10			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Animal Handling	0	0	10
Command	1	1	11
Counsel	2	2	12
Persuade	0	0	10
Society	0	0	10

WILLPOWER 10			
Skill	Exp	Foc	TN
Discipline	3	3	13
Sorcery	4	4	14

BACKGROUND			
Age	17	Gender	Male
Homeland	Zamora	Caste	Priesthood
Trait	Paranoia	Archetype	Demonologist
Nature	Unholy Birth	Education	A Demon's Bargain
War Story	Survived a Failed Summoning	Languages	Zamorian, Aquilonian, Kothic, Shemitish

SOAK	
Armor	0
Courage	0

FORTUNE POINTS	

Vigor	
Resolve	

HARMS	
Wounds	
Trauma	

ATTACKS	
Sword (M): Reach 2, 4D, Parry	
Sling (R): Range C, 4D, Volley	
Blast of the Elements (S): Range C, 3D, Ignores Armor, Resolve Cost 1	
Steely Glare (T): Range C, 4D	

SOCIAL	
Standing	2
Renown	0
Gold	10
Upkeep	5

TALENTS	
Honest Corruption	Priest
Subject	Scribe
Sorcerer	Patron
True Understanding	

POSSESSIONS	
Sorcerous garb	Personal Library
Sturdy travel garb	Portable alchemical laboratory
Hooded ceremonial robe	Silk supposedly touched by a god

It's unknown who Zarkosa's father was, but his mother swears it was the most beautiful man she'd ever met. According to her story, he immediately grew horns, sprouted wings and flew away as soon as they finished making love. Terrified, she gave him to the Priesthood of Bori in the city of Zamora. They were to teach him their ways and shield him from the truth of his birth, but Zarkosa never felt at home with the priests. Finally, he stole away in the night to seek his mother, seek the truth, and after she told him, he knew why he was looked over his shoulder. He knew why he always felt like a shadow watched him and yet was never there when he turned to look. He never returned to the Priests of Bori, seeking darker paths, seeking his father. One night in a darkened, forgotten library, Zarkosa found a description of a demon that matched his mother's story along with a name. He drew a circle of power and called upon the demon to show itself. The demon was not pleased. Zarkosa had failed in the pronunciation of the alien name, and the demon made him pay. However after the torture, the demon, his father, agreed to teach Zarkosa ancient secrets of arcane power so that he may make his mark upon the world, for good or ill. After teaching his son some control over the elements, he sent Zarkosa to the village of Tesso in Aquilonia, recently the site of a great war between Aquilonia and Nemedra. An Acheronian ruin is somewhere nearby, and within it, another demon has awakened – a demon that Zarkosa's father would see dead. But Zarkosa will need help, and surely there are other riches to find in the ancient ruin.

5'8" and narrow framed, curly jet-black hair, clean shaven (or perhaps cannot grow a beard), dark eyes with a far-off look

THE VILLAGE OF TESSO

Tesso is a small village in eastern Aquilonia near the mountains marking the natural border between Aquilonia and Nemedia. Located directly on the Khorotas River, it is often a waypoint for traders heading to or from Tarantia. The village's population usually numbers perhaps two hundred total inhabitants, though it is currently swollen to over triple that between refugees from other nearby villages and homesteads and Aquilonian soldiers and mercenaries who recently defeated the Nemedian Legions but have not yet dispersed.

The village's main buildings consist of an inn and tavern, a blacksmith, a temple to Mitra and a small jail. A large fenced in area on the western side of the main village is used for village meetings but is currently full of refugees living a squalid existence. The northern edge of the village borders the river, and docks here allow moorings for up to four vessels of various sizes. Lastly, a large island sits in the river's widest part, and on it sits a tall, wide building which serves as both lighthouse and storage for both the village and visiting merchants alike.

The PCs begin the adventure on the ground floor of the inn, the tavern area. The upper two levels make up about a dozen rooms for patrons to stay in, and a house attached to the rear of the inn is the home of the owner, Gavin, and his three daughters who work as servers and general labor. The tavern has a bar with a half dozen stools, as well as three round tables, each capable of seating five or six people. The inn is set up on a hilly rise.

The smithy is relatively small and is run by a Kothic smith named Florian and his apprentice. They will have little to no interest in speaking with the PCs as they are overrun with business from Aquilonian soldiers and mercenaries. Although, coin always gets attention.

The Temple of Mitra is by far the largest building in the village, reaching taller even than the inn, despite the hill the inn is situated upon. All white with a single golden spire, the temple is not made of marble like it would be in a larger town or city, but instead seems to be painted. Inside is one well-lit chamber and a single priest named Acetius. His sleeping chamber is at the rear of the temple's nave, and a wooden ladder allows access to the spire and its bronze bell.

The jail is tiny and usually empty as Tesso's captain, Varro, and his men are busy attending to the needs of refugees.

If the Zarkosa character is being used, have the PCs (excluding Zarkosa) begin at a table in the tavern during a daylight thunderstorm. Besides Gavin behind the bar and one of his daughters, no one else is there at this time. Allow them to introduce their characters and whatever they make of the scene to play out. Zarkosa will enter the tavern, a robed and hooded figure soaked from the rain.

If Zarkosa is not in the party, instead introduce the hood character named Melkar. He is an average height man, wearing a dark green wool hood and common traveling clothes, late

middle aged with a pockmarked face. He will applaud the PCs for their victory over the Nemedian invaders and ask if he may join them, offering to buy a round of drinks. He will listen to their stories, and eventually gain a far-off gaze as he outwardly reminisces of how invaders have come to this land before.

Once long ago, men rose from barbarism, and they too invaded these lands and all the lands of the world. Except at that time, those invaders won, and they tore down the purple towers and stone cities of Acheron. So much was lost.

Melkar will grow silent for a short time, and if no one says anything to him, a crash of thunder will break him from his reverie.

“You await orders from your King Conan, yes? I think Conan will not invade Nemedia soon, as he still seeks to wrestle his palace and parts of his kingdom from the legions. Perhaps you seek adventure? I have a task I need done, and I can pay. Somewhere east of here is a ruin of that ancient empire, a temple city that was built into the mountains and later swallowed by them. Somewhere within that place is a statue that bears my likeness, a curse upon my being. Destroy it.”

Melkar will offer few details. A D1 Insight test will determine that he is not telling the PCs everything, but he is not lying either. If the PCs press him for more information, a D2 Persuade test will have him explain that he is tethered to life, has been for a thousand years, and he wishes it no longer. Destroying the statue, the object of his curse, will release him. However, he does not remember the location of the ruin. If asked about pay, he will reach into his robe and withdraw a small sack. Shaking it onto the table will reveal a strange green stone, one for each PC and each glows with an inner fire, producing weak light. A D2 Lore test will determine them to be from the (mostly believed) mythical city of Xuchotl deep in the Black Kingdoms. These are easily worth up to 5 gold each to a scholar or collector (determined by a D1 Craft or Lore test). He also says that anything they find of value in the ruin is theirs. Of course, Melkar is no fool, and he will not allow the PCs to leave with their payment, perhaps offering them but one stone until they return.

Finding the ruin will not be easy. Most of the villagers are too busy to talk, while others will know nothing but rumors often told to scare children into staying in bed at night. The PCs may think to speak to Acetius in the Mitran temple. Acetius will act appalled at the mention of such a place or that he would do anything of such evil. In the end, a D1 Persuade test will convince him to speak, but only if the PCs donate 1 gold to the temple. He will tell them to find Dorina the Huntress, as she may know something of it.

As a side note – the lighthouse and mercantile storage is run by a Zingaran man named Silvio. While he knows nothing of the ruins, he is able to supply the PCs with most basic goods and easy to find weapons for their journey. A D1 Society test on any villager will reveal this information.

Dorina the Huntress was in Tesso just this morning, and it is Captain Varro that can provide the PCs that information. A D1 Persuade test on any villager will tell the PCs to check with him. Varro is tending to wounded refugees while two of his guards fetch food and water. He has little time to speak and will act increasingly perturbed the more the PCs interrupt him. They can attempt to Persuade (D1), but in the end, he will eventually stop what he's doing with an exasperated, "WHAT?!", to tell them Dorina arrived early this morning, dropped off a large supply of meat and went southeast.

The storm should end when the PCs set out after Dorina, the skies lightening, and eventually the sun pokes through the clouds. The day is pleasant with a cool breeze. There is nothing to fear in the lands around Tesso, as most of the beasts that live here, as well as any brigands or such, have moved on in the wake of armies moving through. The area is made of rolling grasslands and vibrant woods. Tracking Dorina requires a series of Survival or Observation tests every hour, starting at a D0 difficulty. They will increase one step in difficulty until the PCs achieve no successes. They've lost the trail.

Just then, an arrow will whistle through the air and thud into a tree just inches from a PC's head (dealer choice who). A voice will call from somewhere in a copse of trees, "Why do you follow me?" Dorina will require some persuading (D2 test) to show herself. She generally distrusts people, especially any non-Aquilonians in the party. Dorina eventually appears, a woman with long brown hair and covered in pelts and hides. Her skins leave her thighs and arms revealed, and they appear wiry and lithe. A Bossonian bow is in her hands, a quiver on her back.

Dorina knows of the ruin, but does not know its exact location, as she avoids anything that stinks of evil. However, she can tell the PCs how to find the witch Zelata; if anyone knows the location of this place, it will be her. A D2 Persuade test could have Dorina take the PCs to Zelata's cave entrance. Otherwise, she will tell the PCs to follow the river from Tesso until it meets the mountains. A tributary will split away from the river, paralleling the mountains for nearly a mile. Her cave is set into mountainside some twenty feet or so up.

THE WITCH ZELATA

With Dorina's directions, Zelata's cave should be easy to find. Following the river is simple and should not even require a test but locating the cave mouth requires a D1 Observation test. If

Dorina has taken the PCs there, she will point it out to them and then take her leave, disappearing into the nearby woods. The entrance is about twenty feet above the river and set into a rockface, requiring a D1 test of either Athletics or Acrobatics to reach. If one person climbs up and lowers a rope or other aid, the test drops to D0.

There is a trap just inside the entrance – a tripwire that will yank a tiny support holding a large stone and substantial debris. It can be spotted with a D2 Observation test; of course, if Maraphis is with the party, he will spot it with his “It’s a Trap Talent”. Removing the trap requires a D2 Craft test, or the PCs can avoid it if they each make a D0 Acrobatics test. If triggered, the trap causes 5D damage to the lead two PCs. Doom may be spent to increase the damage at a rate of 1 per Doom, and 2 Doom can cause the tunnel to be blocked completely, causing the lead PC to be separated from the rest of the group. The cave does loop around and come out further to the east, allowing the PCs to eventually regroup. If the cave is not blocked entirely, a D2 Athletics test will allow the PCs to clear the way enough to move through, or a D1 Acrobatics test can be made by each PC attempting to squeeze or wriggle by.

The cave is cool and dry, though dripping water does echo off in the distance. The way stays level, but it does begin to curve off to the right. Some fifty feet in, there’s a break in the cave wall on the left, almost making an archway of sorts. From here the tunnel continues arching right until it exits into the open wildlands again. If the PCs look inside the cave, they see the following.

A large cave, perhaps forty feet deep and twenty feet wide meets your eyes. It is lit – a large cookfire sits in the middle of the cave, providing light and just enough heat to keep the underground chill away, but no smoke rises from it to the cave’s ceiling that is concealed by darkness. A rabbit roasts over the fire, and furs, a bed, lay nearby. A set of three rickety wooden steps lead up to a wooden platform upon which are two free standing torches that offer light but, again, no smoke, and there is a two-foot-wide steel bowl upon a stand between them.

Anyone making an D2 Observation test will also see a giant black spider, almost impossible to see except for the torchlight reflecting off its ebon carapace, as it hangs from a thread of silk some twenty feet above the platform. It does not move, but there is no doubt it is alive, and the PCs have a sense that it stares at them with black eyes. A D1 Sorcery test will determine that the spider is real but is certainly magical in nature.

The spider is of course the witch Zelata having used the spell *Form of the Beast*. Momentum spends on the Sorcery test may reveal that information if you choose. She will watch the PCs to see what they do, deciding whether or not to reveal herself to them. If they determine somehow that she is the witch or if they attack her (via ranged weapons or spells), she will lower herself to the platform. Read the following.

The monstrous spider releases silk from its bulbous abdomen and lowers itself to the wooden platform, giving you a view of a red hourglass as it does so. A sudden wind buffets you, increasing in force as the seconds pass, threatening to knock you from your feet. Eventually, you can no longer keep your eyes open and facing the spider. You blink away tears as you turn your face away, and the gale stops as suddenly as it began. An old crone stands in the spider’s place.

If the PCs attacked Zelata, she'll likely make a snide comment about expecting more from civilized people, as she would not come into their homes so belligerently. Zelata is difficult, at first offering no assistance and then pretending not to know of the ruins. Eventually, she will open up, or you could allow the players to make a Persuade test (dealer's choice on difficulty) to convince her to cut to the chase.

"The dark wizard is not the only ancient horror that has been revived of late. I know the ruins of which you speak, and the invaders and their Black Ring allies have awakened something vile in that temple city." The witch begins to look past you and to the southeast with a far-off gaze. "I cannot see it, but I see blood. So much blood. It must be destroyed. While this is Conan's kingdom, he is rather indisposed. If you seek this ruin and swear to me you will slay whatever rises there, I will tell you how to find it."

A QUICK NOTE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LORE

It is possible the PCs could avoid almost all of this. In the beginning, a player will likely ask you, "Do I know of this ruin?" Allow anyone other than Zarkosa (since we know he does not know where it is) to make a D5 Lore test, D4 for Aquilonians. While it is highly unlikely any of them will succeed at this without burning Momentum or Fortune Points, a player that falls two successes short will know that a witch is reputed to roam these wildlands. One more success (meaning 4 or 3 for Aquilonians) means the PC thinks they know how to find her!

ENCOUNTERS IN THE WILDLANDS

There are no specific encounters to occur within the Wildlands as the PCs journey to Zelata. However, thanks to the wonderful Doom mechanic introduced by the wise ones at Modiphius, the GM can certainly spend Doom to create some minor enemies barring the way! An example of such encounters would be a pack of hungry wolves, a lost party of Nemedians attempting to find their way home or even just a group of bandits looking to profit on the chaos of war. The number and strength of the enemies should vary with the amount of Doom spent, but be careful not to spend too much too soon! You may want it in Sanctum! On the other hand, you could just claim that the encounters were written into the scenario and were not a Doom spend. It'll be our little secret...

SANCTUM RUINS

The approach is several miles southeast of Zelata's cave. She will direct the PCs to exit via the back way and then follow the stream. They will eventually find a set of ancient stone steps that rise right out of the water and into a narrow cut between rockfaces. It is a mere three feet wide, allowing only single file, and easily missed (D1 Observation test if they're directed by Zelata, D2 if they somehow skipped her). The storm will have moved back in when the PCs find the steps, gray clouds darkening by the minute with the rumbles of far-off thunder moving closer.

There are no enemies to fight here, but the GM has a number of Doom spends available! Perhaps the first steps are slippery with much, causing a PC to fall back into the river (no damage except to their pride). The steps are ancient and narrow – a block could easily come loose, causing a PC to fall taking 5D damage, decreased by one die per Acrobatics success. A rockslide from above threatens to bury the PCs, causing 5D damage and forcing an Athletics or Acrobatics test to pass (what caused that???).



ENTRANCE

You emerge from the staircase onto a landing, black stones underfoot as they lead to a wide opening. You see now why this place has stayed hidden for so long, its once terrible black and purple stones walls now hidden by mountains and rockfaces. The entrance to this place was once a stone archway with a set of fifteen-foot stone double doors, but these now lay on the ground, broken and crumbling from age, the archway having collapsed.

Inside the ruins are a number of Doom spends for the evil-minded GM. These are best used in combat when the damage will actually make a difference to the PCs, but consider employing them outside of combat as tools to set the mood in the ancient city.

- Masonry falls from somewhere up above to suddenly crash down upon an unwary PC for 3D damage per Doom spent. D1 Observation test to spot and, if successful, D2 Acrobatics test to avoid.
- A piece of the road could suddenly give way, dropping a PC down into the ancient sewers that once served this evil temple city. A D3 Acrobatics test can avoid the fall, otherwise the PC takes 3D damage. A D2 Athletics test is required to climb out of the hole.
- A Minion version of any foe found within the scenario appears and attacks.
- There are many narrow staircases in Sanctum, any of which could have loose blocks such as the stairs that lead to the entrance!

1 THE OVERGROWN GARDEN

Beyond the yawning portal is what may have once been a garden in ages past. The raindrops begin to fall on several small brick retaining walls, barely visible for the tall grasses and weeds that have overgrown the area, separate off areas that may have once been flower gardens but are now nothing but brown brambles and weeds. Two large trees stand here, oaks that are still green and lively despite the dark aura that hangs around the place. On the northern end of this area is a stairway going down to the east and a passageway that leads north. All growth ends some twenty feet from these exits, giving way to dark earth, growing muddier by the moment.

There is a single Drowned One (minion, stats in the Bestiary) here, hidden amongst the overgrowth, requiring a D2 Observation test to spot. If it is not spotted, it will receive a free attack with its sword at the PC that first comes within range.

2 LAIR OF THE DROWNED ONES

The wide avenue passes under black stone that crosses overhead, connecting the walls and causing you a general sense of unease. The last twenty feet or so turns into an enclosed hallway, your boots making soft sounds against the ancient stone road. It opens again into a sixty-foot-wide plaza, and the buildings set into the stone walls look as if they may have once been homes. Now they are destroyed – their facades nothing but crumbling edifices, their doorways blocked by rubble. Several trees grow here, or once grew here, but now they are dark and twisted remains, long dead and brown. Figures stand here, some milling about as their bloated flesh hangs from their bodies, ancient clothing long since rotted away. As you emerge, they turn to attack.

These are more Drowned Ones of course. There should be two minions OR one toughened per Player Character. The PCs may find some ancient coins or baubles amongst the dead, but they are all too ancient, damaged and decayed to be of any value, mostly crumbling to dust when touched. The creatures' weapons are likewise valueless.

3 DESOLATE MARKET

In any city, the main market square is easily identifiable, but this one is crumbling from the assault of time. The rain falls more steadily now, creating wide puddles across the stone blocks that cover this wide avenue. Any tables, awnings or tents of vendors have long since crumbled to dust.

If the PCs traverse up the stairs to the east, they'll find another small market gallery. A D1 Observation test will have a PC spot the glint of metal half buried under some crumbling stone blocks. It is an armlet, covered in dirt and mud. Cleaning it off will reveal the pinkish metal of aurichalcum, undiminished by time. It is worth 3 gold to a collector of such artifacts or 2 gold to any random merchant or craftsman.

4 THE RUINED CITY

As you start up the steep, narrow staircase to the north, your eyes narrow as webs begin to fill corners between the stone. The further you go, the larger the webs become, sometimes crossing or blocking the entire staircase, forcing you to cut them down to continue. When you emerge, you find yourself in a wide street. The monstrous webs fill the space in front of you and to the west where you can see the shadow of a tiny pyramid. To the east, the webs give way to the black Acheronian stone and a staircase that leads downward.

The area is full of giant spiders (*Core*, p.331), one per PC, and they will wait to see what the PCs do before attacking. If the PCs move further into their zone or investigate the pyramid, they will attack. If the PCs leave the zone by either retreating or heading to the stairs to the east, they'll let them go.

The pyramid is a mere five feet tall, made of Acheronian black stone with bands of copper that have long since oxidized away and will crumble when touched. A D1 Craft test will determine that the pyramid is hollow, and a D2 Lore test will tell a PC that the Acheronians often buried important persons or artifacts in their pyramids. A D3 Craft or Athletics test is required to open the pyramid, though a prybar can decrease the Athletics test by two steps.

Inside is an item of great power – a silver necklace inlaid with a large moonstone that once belonged to an Acheronian sorcerer. Its overall value is 2 gold, perhaps 4 or 5 to someone who knows its real purpose. The wearer of this necklace will gain +1 to their Willpower but will add 1 Doom to the GM's pool every time they make a Willpower based roll.

5 TEMPLE APPROACH

The air grows noticeably colder as the storm deepens, and the dark steps lead downward some forty feet to a wide, open landing, from which you see the glint of firelight in the now heavy rain. As you traverse these, you begin to see the glint of the fire reflecting off of steel, and as you approach, there is no mistaking the Nemedian Legionnaire plate armor adorning a number of sodden figures as they huddle around a bonfire to keep the chill wet at bay.

There are Nemedian soldiers here (*Age of Conan*, p.39), either two Legionnaires (minion) or one Centurion (minion) per PC. While combat may ensue, there is an opportunity here to avoid it. These Nemedians came with the Black Ring on their quest to raise the Blood Defiler demon (#7 below), and they quickly realized that they wanted no part of it. They are miserable, almost out of food and water, and feel trapped between the spiders and the Black Ring. They don't really want to fight. Anyone who speaks Aquilonian or has the Cosmopolitan talent can communicate with their Centurions. The PCs can avoid a fight by assuring the Nemedians that their way out is clear. A D2 Persuade test is necessary for this, D1 for Quintus if he is with the group.

6 TEMPLE HALL

Wide steps lead down into an enclosed hall from which emanates the flickering warmth of torchlight. Three giant statues, each forty feet tall at least, flank the staircase, their image that of an antediluvian demon. From open mouths pour a red liquid that falls into cupped hands and then further rains downward into troughs on either side of the stair. The liquid has the color and consistency of blood as it runs downward and disappears into channels set into the solid rock ahead. You have a sense of motion within that hall.

Inside the hall are two Black Ring Furies (toughened) and four Black Ring Soldiers (minion, all stats *Age of Conan*, p.38). Their leader, a Black Ring sorcerer lies dead in a circle of power in the middle of the hall, his soul having been consumed by the Blood Defiler he sought to summon. These foes will attack anyone on sight, as they will accept no interference in the rise of the demon.

The adjoining hallways and stairs go upward at a steep angle to deposit the PCs above the Temple of Blood.

7 TEMPLE OF BLOOD

You emerge from the staircase back into the open air. The sky above you is almost black with clouds that blow past quickly. While the rain has slackened, bolts of lightning and crashes of thunder from the heavens above threaten that the storm is not yet over. You stand atop an enormous platform made of huge black granite blocks, each of them with carved reliefs faded and weathered away by time. Two fifty-foot statues representing demons of unspeakable horror, their finer details also lost to time flank a staircase that descends sixty or more feet. Below you can see only what appears to be a distant red lake, a lake of blood.

As the PCs reach the bottom, read the following:

The stone steps give way to hard-packed earth. There is very little of it to stand upon, for you are in fact surrounded by what appears to truly be a massive pool of blood. The coppery scent assaults your nostrils as you marvel at this abomination, and channels set into the rock to your left and right feed more blood to the pool. A sandstone statue of a hooded man stands on an island of dirt on the far side of the sanguine reservoir, one hand extended slightly to be wrapped around a shortsword made of smoky steel with a vicious serrated edge.

The sword is an Acheronian Shortsword (*Age of Conan*, p.23), and it is easily freed from the statue's hand. Anyone attempting to smash it free can do so with a D1 Athletics test (Craft would work as well, or any Test you deem appropriate). And yes, this is the statue of Melkar, assuming you used that hook instead of Zarkosa.

The hard part isn't freeing the sword, but rather reaching it. The statue is surrounded by at least twenty feet of blood on all sides, and it is five feet at the deepest point. A D2 Athletics test is required of swim through the blood, with complications being that it has coagulated at points, causing the character to be come trapped, requiring another D2 Athletics test to break free.

And then there's the Blood Defiler Demon (*Age of Conan*, p.51-52). He is waiting in those sanguine depths, having been recently summoned by the Black Ring and now up to his full strength (fully congealed?). He will wait for one or more PCs to cross over to the statue before he starts to emerge from the pool, rising straight out of it with his arms crossed. Neither the Blood Defiler nor its minions (see below) need to make tests to move freely through the blood (it is their natural domain).

This is of course THE fight of the scenario, and the GM should spend Doom and Momentum quickly to take Initiative and use the demon's wide array of attacks. This will seem devastating at first but will fizzle as your Doom pool is expended (hopefully, you didn't save it all for just this moment!).

The demon has an additional Doom spend. With its link to the Outer Dark still intact due to his recent summoning, the horror can spend up to 3 Doom to summon minion demons (stats in the Bestiary) that rise out of the blood to attack at the cost of 1 Doom per demon.

The storm will rage while the PCs fight this horror, thunder and lightning cracking across the heavens as the battle rages. The rain will fall in thick, greasy glops, allowing an additional Doom spend, forcing a character to make an Athletics (or perhaps Acrobatics) test at the beginning of their turn to avoid losing their main action.

As the demon runs out of steam, the storm will begin to subside, and the rain will begin to slacken into a soft drizzle, coming to a stop when the creature finally falls dead. As the characters take stock of this great, ancient evil that they have defeated, the sun just begins to break through the lightening clouds overhead.



BESTIARY

DROWNED ONES (MINION OR TOUGHENED, UNDEAD)

These unfortunate souls are some of the original denizens of this ancient Acheronian ruin before its destruction. As the cataclysm that took this place poured the sea into the city, the evil priests and wizards that ruled here endeavored to channel the power of Set to protect themselves. They were only partially successful, damning some of the city's dwellers to un-life eternal, forced to forever roam the streets after the waters receded.

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
6/8	6/8	6/8	6/8
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
9		9	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	2	Movement	-
Fortitude	2	Senses	-
Knowledge	-	Social	-

STRESS AND SOAK	
Stress: Vigor 5 / 9, Resolve 3 / 8	
Soak: Armor 2, Courage -	

ATTACKS	
Pitted Sword (M): Reach 2, 5D, Parrying	
Battered Shield (M): Reach 2, 3D, Knockdown, Shield 2	
Creaking Bow (R): Range L, 4D, Piercing 1, Volley	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Fear 1	
Inured to Pain	
Night Vision	
Undead	
Unflinching	
Unliving	



BLOOD DEMONS (MINION, HORROR)

From whatever fell dimension of the Outer Dark hails the Blood Defiler, so too do these horrific creatures. It is unknown, even to the Black Ring, if these lesser horrors will one day grow into Blood Defilers or if they are somehow created by the demon by sheer will when it needs servants or protectors. Regardless, their very appearance is enough to make most men run screaming.

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
6	4	4	4
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
10		12	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	3	Movement	-
Fortitude	-	Senses	-
Knowledge	-	Social	-

STRESS AND SOAK	
Stress: Vigor 5, Resolve 5	
Soak: Armor 2, Courage 2	

ATTACKS	
Talons (M): Reach 2, 4D, Piercing 1	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Fear 1	
Incorporeal 1	
Inured to Cold, Disease, Poison	
Night Vision	

