

SPELUNKJAMMER™

Official Game Adventure

A module for character levels 10-14

Under The Dark Fist

by Grant Boucher



NIGHTWOLF

(Vodoni Scout)

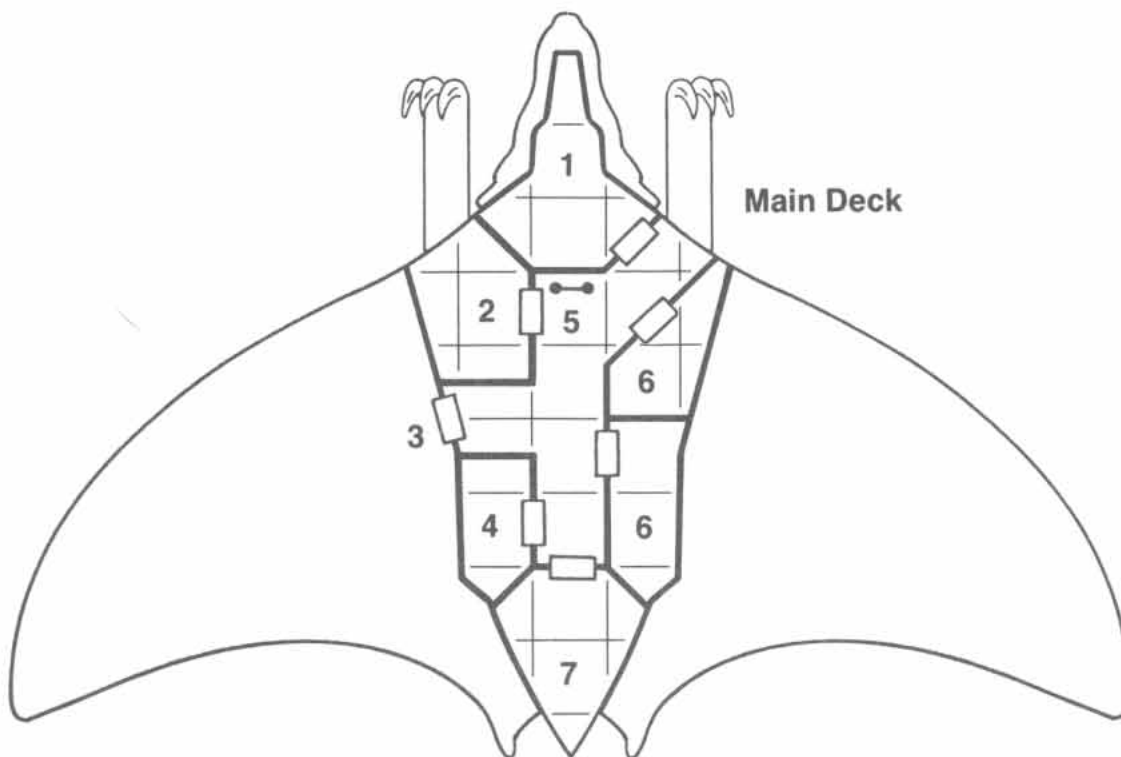
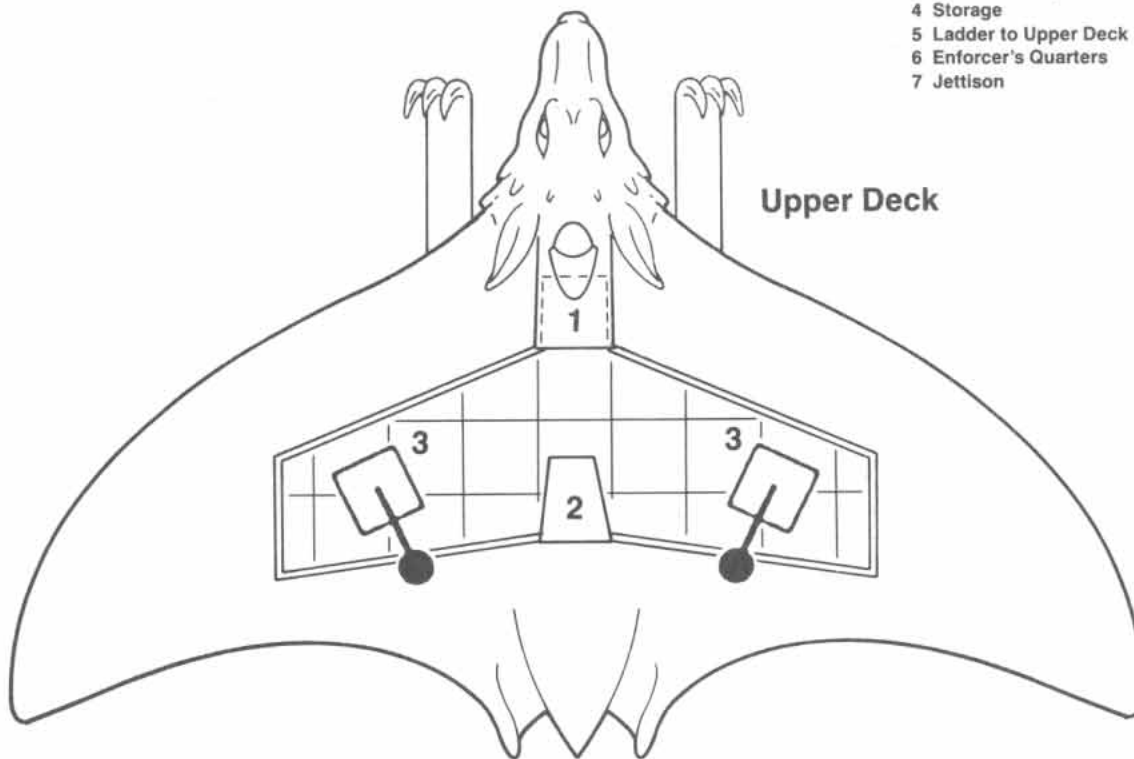
One Square = 5 Feet

Upper Deck

- 1 Ladder to Main Deck
- 2 Ammunition Storage
- 3 Catapult

Main Deck

- 1 Spelljamming Helm
- 2 Breeder's Quarters
- 3 Access Door (under wing)
- 4 Storage
- 5 Ladder to Upper Deck
- 6 Enforcer's Quarters
- 7 Jettison



HUNTER-KILLER

(Vodoni Assassin)

One Square = 5 Feet

Battle Deck

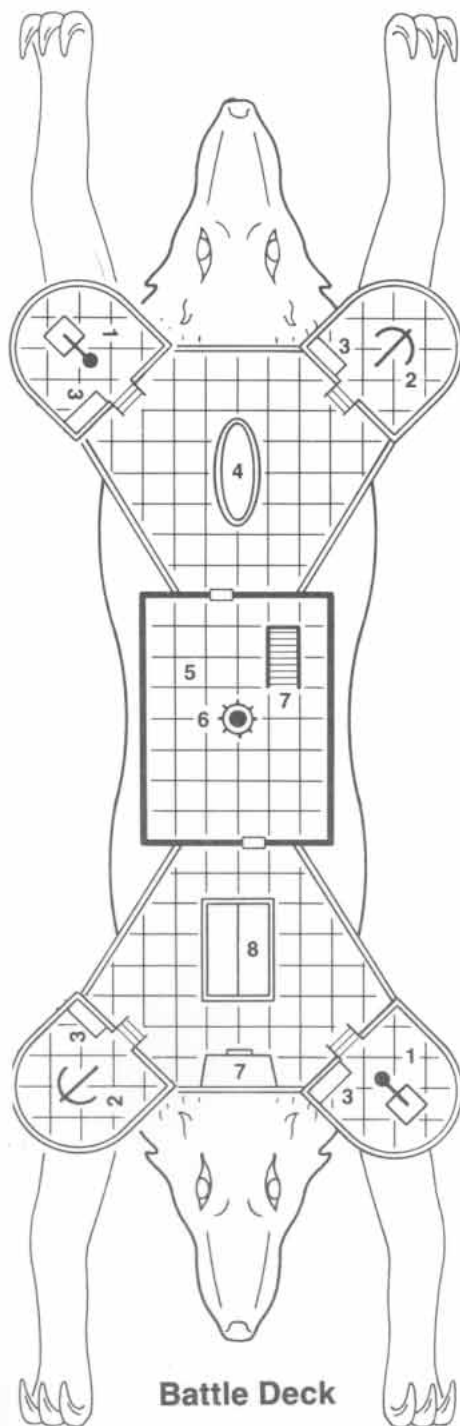
- 1 Catapult
- 2 Ballista
- 3 Ammunition Storage
- 4 Skylight
- 5 Sail House
- 6 Sail Control
- 7 Access to Main Deck
- 8 Cargo Doors

Main Deck

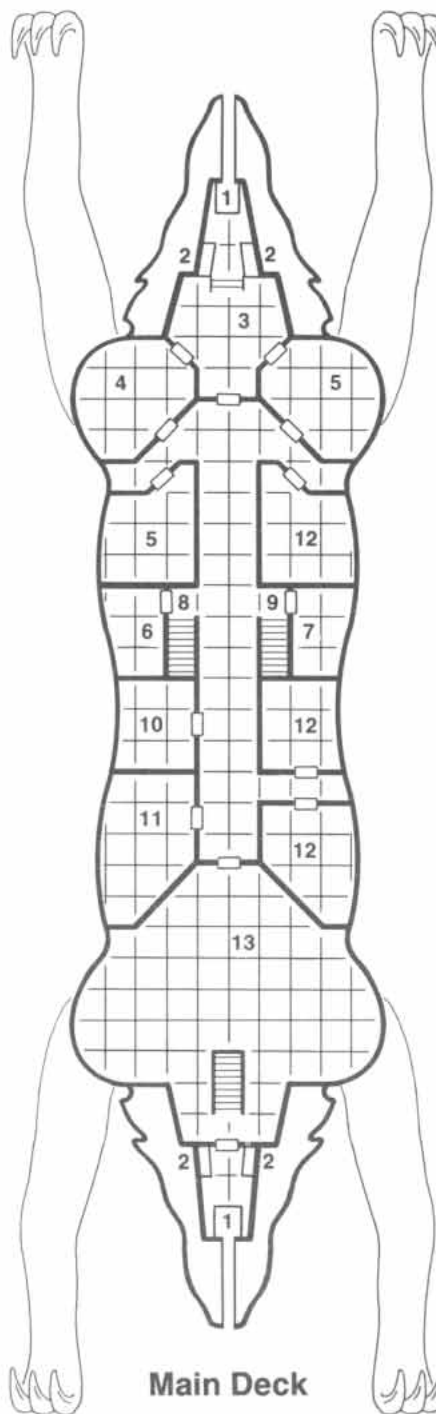
- 1 Bombard
- 2 Ammunition Storage
- 3 Bridge/Helm
- 4 Chartroom
- 5 Breeders' Quarters
- 6 Storage
- 7 Head/Storage
- 8 Access to Lower Deck
- 9 Access to Battle Deck
- 10 Pantry
- 11 Galley
- 12 Enforcers' Quarters
- 13 Cargo Hold

Lower Deck

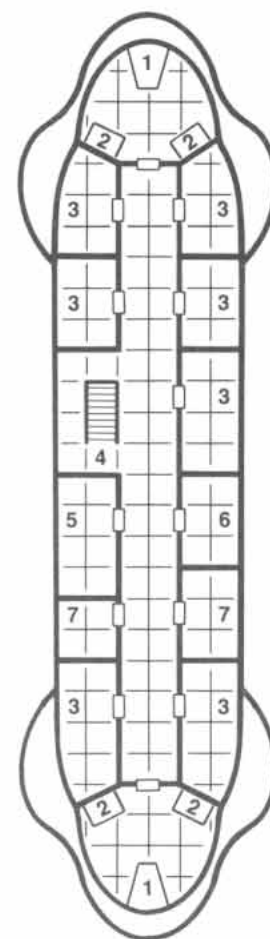
- 1 Jettison
- 2 Ammunition Storage
- 3 Enforcers' Quarters
- 4 Access to Main Deck
- 5 Stateroom
- 6 Brig
- 7 Storage/Armory



Battle Deck



Main Deck



Lower Deck

WEREWOLF

(Vodoni Butcher)

One Square = 5 Feet

Stern Castle

- 1 Ballista
- 2 Ballista Shot Storage
- 3 Observation Deck
- 4 Access to Main Deck

Main Deck

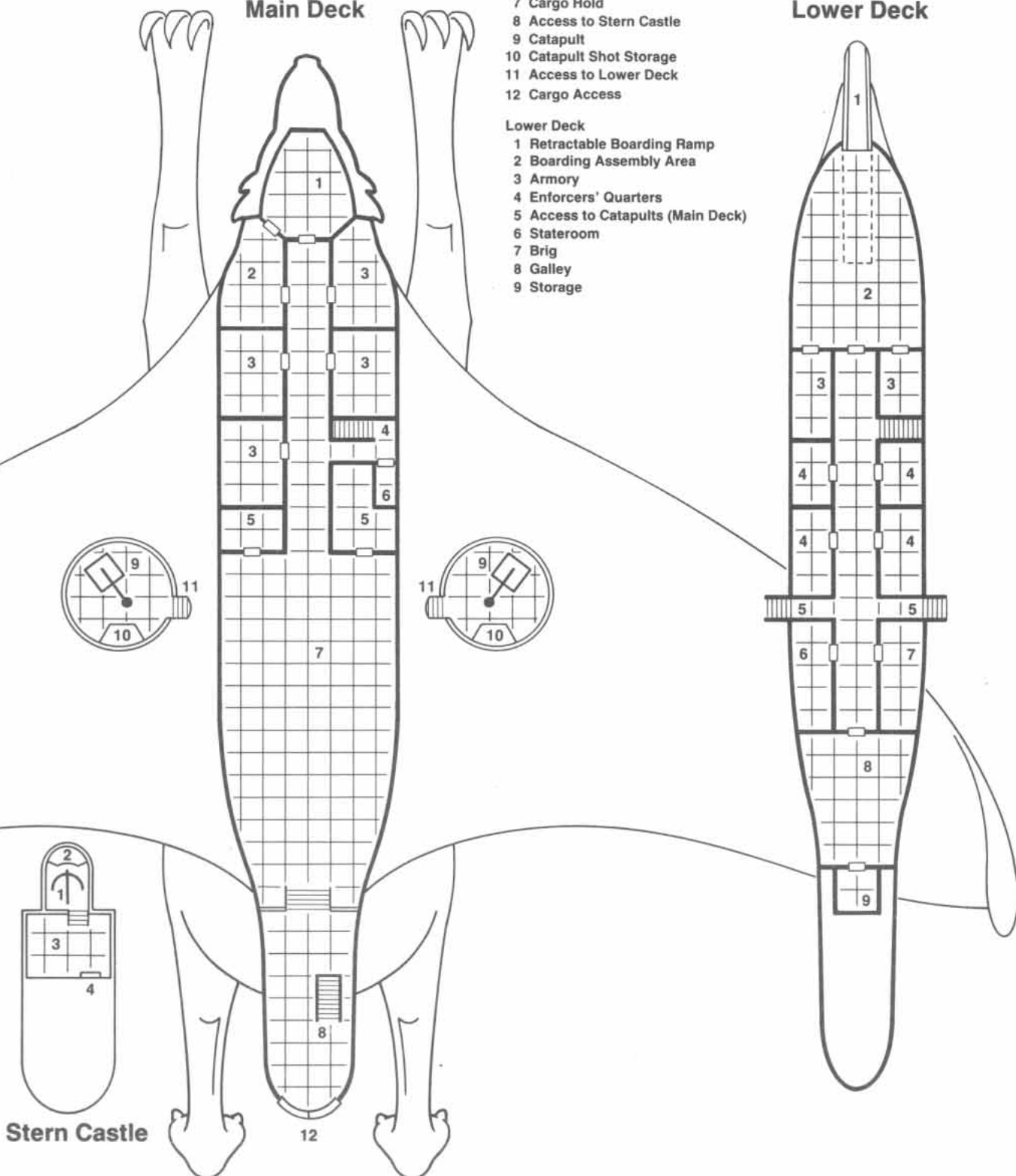
- 1 Bridge/Helm
- 2 Breeders' Quarters
- 3 Enforcers' Quarters
- 4 Access to Lower Deck
- 5 Storage
- 6 Head/Storage
- 7 Cargo Hold
- 8 Access to Stern Castle
- 9 Catapult
- 10 Catapult Shot Storage
- 11 Access to Lower Deck
- 12 Cargo Access

Lower Deck

- 1 Retractable Boarding Ramp
- 2 Boarding Assembly Area
- 3 Armory
- 4 Enforcers' Quarters
- 5 Access to Catapults (Main Deck)
- 6 Stateroom
- 7 Brig
- 8 Galley
- 9 Storage

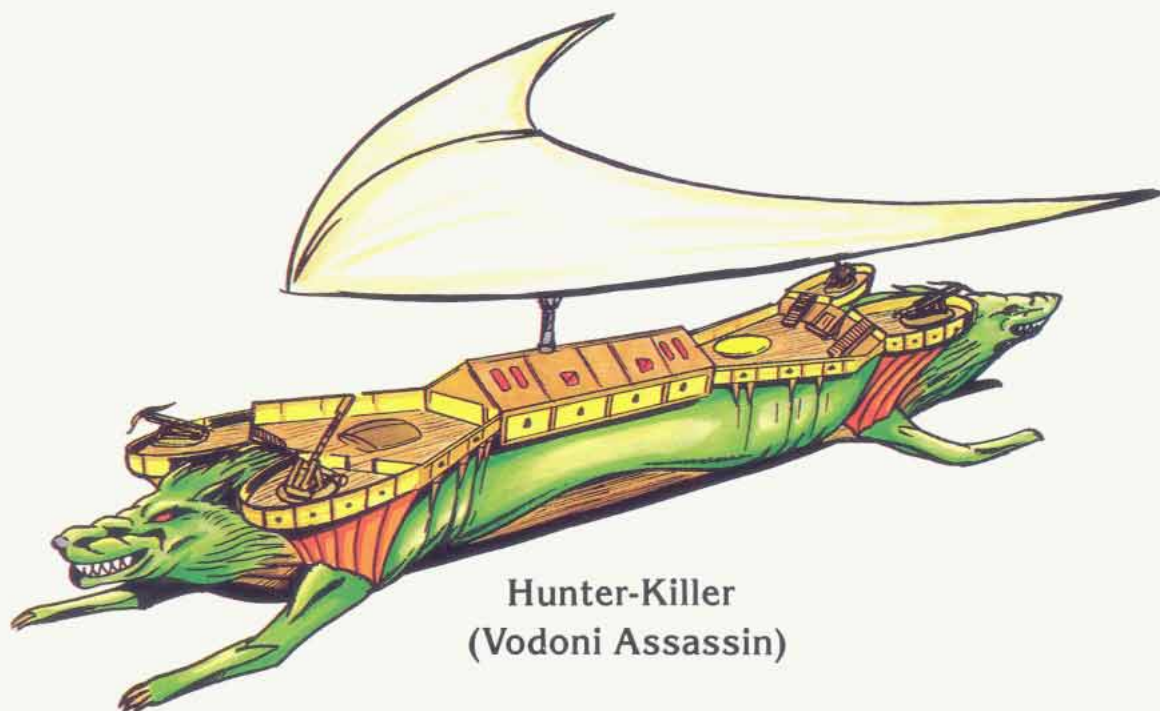
Main Deck

Lower Deck

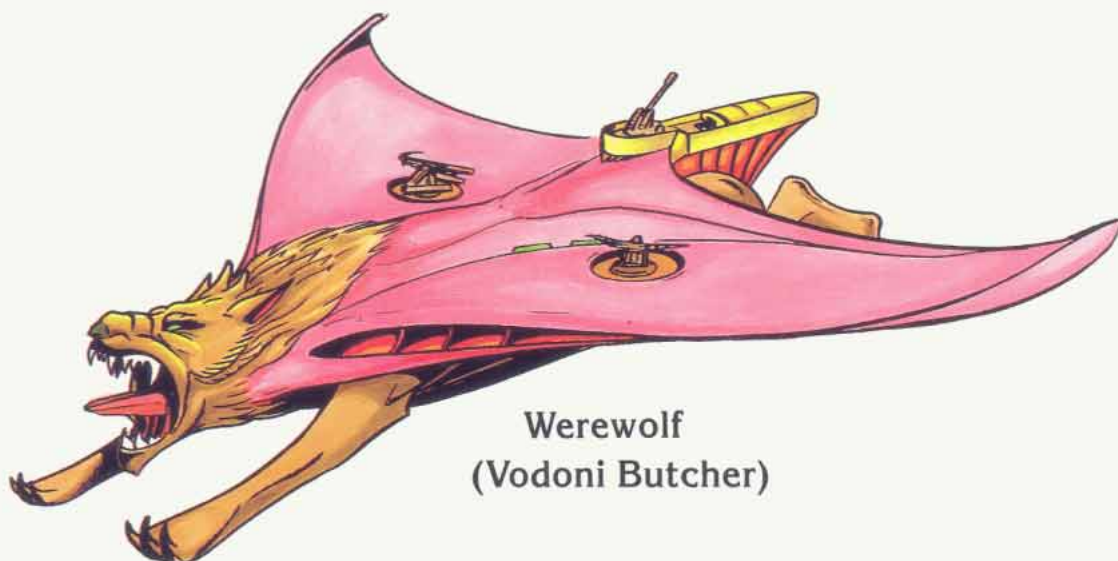




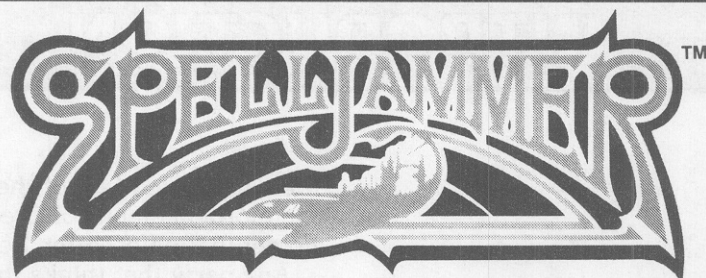
Nightwolf
(Vodoni Scout)



Hunter-Killer
(Vodoni Assassin)



Werewolf
(Vodoni Butcher)



UNDER THE DARK FIST

by Grant Boucher

A 64-page Campaign Adventure for the
ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS® 2nd Edition SPELLJAMMER™ Role-Playing Game

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Chapter 1: Small Universe	4
Chapter 2: Strange Bedfellows	10
Chapter 3: Reconnoitering	18
Chapter 4: The Siege of Calandia	29
Chapter 5: The Great Assault	35
Chapter 6: Crescendo	46

Appendices:

Appendix A: The Vodoni Spheres	51
Appendix B: Non-Player Characters	54
Appendix C: Pregenerated Player Characters ..	56

Appendix D: New Spelljamming Ships	58
Appendix E: New Magic	60
Appendix F: New Monsters	61

Maps	
Vodoni Ship Deck Plans	cover
Palace of Power	mapsheet
Diamond-class Ship	mapsheet
Imperial City/Undercity	mapsheet
Calandia One Slave Camp	21
The Mines of Calandia	33

CREDITS

Author: Grant S. Boucher
Editor: Jon Pickens
Cover Artist: Gerald Brom
Cartography: David S. LaForce

Internal Art: Tom Baxa
Ship Design: Jim Holloway
Typography: Gaye O'Keefe
Keylining: Paul Hanchette

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, AD&D, DRAGONLANCE, FORGOTTEN REALMS,
and WORLD OF GREYHAWK are registered trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.

SPELLJAMMER and the TSR logo are trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.

Distributed to the book trade in the United States by Random House, Inc. and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distributed to the book and hobby trade in the United Kingdom by TSR Ltd. Distributed to the toy and hobby trade by regional distributors.

This module is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or other unauthorized use of the material or artwork herein is prohibited without the express written permission of TSR Inc.

©1991 TSR Inc. All Rights Reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

TSR, Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva,
WI 53147 USA

ISBN 0-56076-131-8
9325XXX1501



TSR Ltd.
120 Church End, Cherry Hinton
Cambridge CB1 3LB
United Kingdom

\$10.95 U.S. £6.99 U.K.

INTRODUCTION

*"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above our world so high,
Like an emerald in the sky."*

—strangely familiar Vodoni rhyme

DM Notes

Bobbing majestically amidst the endless rainbow rivers of the phlogiston is a trio of crystal spheres, inexorably bound together by the strangest happenstances of fate. While few creatures that inhabit the fabled realms of Grey-space, Krynnspace, and Realmspace know or even dream of each others' existence, even fewer understand the celestial bonds they secretly share.

Only a handful of brazen explorers, fearless scouts, and mystic travelers know with certainty that there are other realms beyond this cosmic triad. And as the worlds of men and elves, dwarves and dragons are about to discover, not all of "out there" is friendly. In fact, many of the spheres, twelve to be precise, are poised for war . . . a war the other side doesn't even know is coming.

Twelve spheres against three—hardly fair odds for an intergalactic war. But then again, Emperor Vulkaran the Dark, Master of the Twelve Spheres and Ruler of All Known Space, doesn't like a fair fight. He's never fought one yet.

And amidst the vast emptiness of Wildspace, who have the Fates chosen to carry the banner of resistance? Why, 4 to 8 heroes and heroines of from 10th to 14th level, of course. That is, if they're up to it . . .

No Novices Please

DMs, one thing right from the top. This is NOT an adventure for novice players! While the recommended levels and numbers of player characters should scare off newcomers to role-playing, it is important to realize that raw character power is not enough to defeat Vulkaran the Dark and his dread breeders, enforcers, and conquerors. There will be times during the course of the campaign when discretion is the better part of valor (read: they might have to run away once in a while). This campaign is pitting a handful of mid- to high-level characters against

the equivalent of all of the dragons of Krynn PLUS all of the Mordenkainens of Greyhawk PLUS every blessed beholder in the Forgotten Realms . . . TIMES FOUR!!!

Any party that thinks they can handle that straight on should not even be brought into such a conflict. It would be wasting both your time and theirs.

Only experienced players (and Dungeon Masters!) should proceed with the events in Chapter One, "Small Universe." Otherwise, lift what you want from this tome of knowledge or save the whole thing for a later day. Don't say we didn't warn you.

Stand-Alone vs. Campaign Adventuring

Still here?

Good, you obviously have what it takes to run an epic intergalactic war.

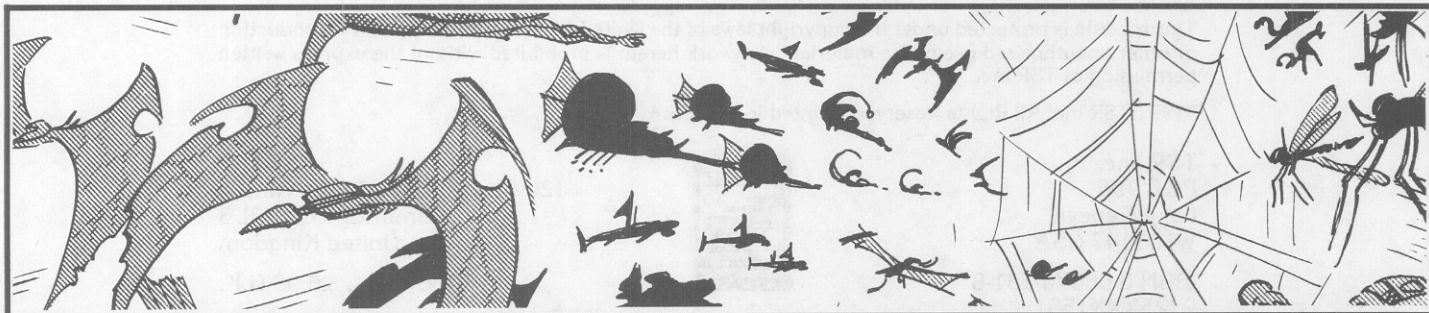
Now, it is certainly impossible to scrunch the equivalent of the entire DRAGONLANCE® Saga into one 64-page SPELLJAMMER™ adventure. However, we've done our best to try just that.

More than enough information has been provided to take this adventure and expand it into years of epic campaigning. For example, we've provided useful information on all of Vulkaran's twelve crystal spheres. Just imagine that every one of these is as fascinating and fantastic as Greyhawk or Krynn alone, and you can see that your horizons are truly endless.

This is the first campaign adventure for the SPELLJAMMER setting, and as such, gives you just enough campaign material to get you rolling, but doesn't weigh you down with our vision of how your own SPELLJAMMER campaign is run. By virtue of this philosophy, this product can also be used as a stand-alone adventure, similar to the usual offerings from TSR.

If you don't want to interfere too much with your own campaign, but like the epic quality of this humble tale, just ignore the many campaign tie-in notes and adventure leads we've scattered throughout the journey to come.

As always, do whatever it takes to create an exciting adventure for you and your players. Hopefully, you have many memorable gaming nights ahead of you.



INTRODUCTION

Story Background

Without further ado, the adventure begins.

For hundreds of years, unbeknownst to the gods and mortals of Untouched Space, a tyrant has slowly worked his way across the infinite vastness. The few hearty travelers who braved the unseen boundary of the Vodoni Empire in search of legends or lost artifacts never returned, giving rise to new legends still.

The might of the Vodoni Empire is unmatched in the universe, of this there is no doubt. But as with most great war machines, one critical part stands between efficient operation and crippled inactivity. For the Vodoni, that focus is Emperor Vulkaran the Dark.

Vulkaran rules Twelve Spheres of Known Space the old-fashioned way: kill your enemies before they kill you; crush all resistance before it grows; mercy is for the weak and gutless; and the end always justifies the means.

Needless to say, the Vodoni people aren't the happiest in the universe, and neither are the inhabitants of eleven other spheres.

Vulkaran rules with the proverbial iron fist, but in his case it's mithril. Yes, when you have total and utter control over the resources of over five dozen planets, you develop a taste for the rare, the exotic, and the infinitely valuable.

But Vulkaran's mithril armor is just a device, a black knight's standard so to speak. Vulkaran's power rests not in his hands, but at his side. The merciless Vodoni enforcers are the scourge of the universe—horrible lycanthropic werewolves with a taste for blood and a respect for no living thing. And as will be seen later on in the tale, even the vicious and powerful Vodoni enforcers, whose numbers run into the tens of millions, are nothing compared to "this year's model."

Vulkaran is scouting his latest prey very carefully these days. For him, this represents a first—three spheres for the price of one. Three weak and unsuspecting realms, which hardly know of each other's existence, let alone have knowledge of greater forces at work around them.

Some unprecedented things are going to have to take place if Vulkaran is to be stopped. Can a handful of adventurers turn the tables?

We shall see.

Adventure Summary

The PCs happen upon a Vodoni scout in their own home space. One way or another, they become one of the few to actually see and combat the strange were-warriors. Searching the captured ship, the *Black Dog*, the characters discover some very interesting clues about the strange invaders. Their second encounter with the Vodoni enforcers involves a disabled gnomish sidewheeler, and this time elven forces mistakenly apprehend the PCs.

The PCs are taken to the Rock of Bral, where they are privileged guests of an unprecedented gathering. Unbeknownst to the rest of Free Space, a top-secret meeting of all of the space-faring races is under way. And by virtue of the party's recent encounters with the Vodoni, they are required to attend. At the meeting, it is decided that someone, hopefully the PCs, should scout the Vodoni home sphere. The PCs can use their own ship, the captured mind-flayer vessel (if its capture remains a secret from the illithids), or the captured Vodoni scout for the mission.

During their visit to the Vodoni sphere, the PCs learn much about Vodoni and its people. It is obvious that Vulkaran is a despot and even his own people are against him. Rumors that the sphere's gods have been imprisoned by Vulkaran add to the intrigue.

After the PCs report, the newly-formed Free Space Alliance decides to establish a beach head on the prison planet of Calandia in the Vodoni system. From there, the major assault on Vulkaran is planned and set into motion.

The PCs get to spearhead the critical space-based assault of the Imperial City, as well as lead a "decapitation" mission into the Crystal Palace of Vulkaran itself! More than a few plot twists and nasty surprises await the party . . . and the Free Space Alliance as well. The PCs' actions could very well determine the ultimate fate of the entire known universe!

Final Note to the DM: Because of the scale of the adventure, much of the detailed background information is contained within body of the text proper, in order to save repeating information here at the beginning. It is therefore recommended that the entire adventure be read thoroughly at least once before play, and if used as the basis for an epic campaign, many more times as well.

About the Appendices

Some DMs, who just can't wait for some more background information, might want to skip back to the Appendices where many wondrous things are

revealed. You'll be skipping to them many times during the course of the adventure anyway, so if you really must, go ahead.

CHAPTER 1: SMALL UNIVERSE

"Mother! Mother! Look!", the young child exclaimed. "Look at all the new stars out tonight!"

"Those are not stars, my son," his mother answered sadly, "they're ships, floating high above the Great City."

"Oh, but they sparkle just like the stars. Are they going to stay?" he asked anxiously.

A nearly invisible tear began a slow course down the mother's flushed cheek. "I'm afraid so, my young dreamer. I'm afraid so."

In the distance, the fiery bombardment was just beginning, and another race of beings watched helplessly as their precious freedom was annihilated before their very eyes.

In this chapter, the party is presented with a couple of unusual situations. No matter which way they turn, not everything is always as it appears. Introducing . . . the enemy.

Event 1: The Enemy of My Enemy . . .

The adventure begins as the party members are sailing through space, preferably on their own personal ship. They might be on the way to the Rock of Bral (which was designed to be put anywhere you want), or they might be randomly wandering deep space in search of pirates, abandoned vessels, or both. Why the party is out here is up to the players and the DM. Either way, it shouldn't be something too important, as whatever the PCs are doing is about to be rudely interrupted.

Read the following introduction aloud:

After finally clearing the last gravity well in the vicinity, your vessel is only beginning to warm up again when another, as yet unseen, disturbance ends your spelljamming ambitions.

Directly ahead of you is a strange black ship, designed to look like a small, winged obsidian wolf. Its mouth closed, and eyes blazing red, the vessel hardly seems to notice you as it wings towards you. It does not appear to be on a collision course, and doesn't seem to making any hostile moves towards you.

At this time, the characters cannot see the crew of the *Black Dog* (a Vodoni scout-class vessel), nor can they see the illithid nautiloid, *Brain Eater*, closing fast.

The DM should see what the players want to do now. If they decide to attack the *Black Dog* for some reason, have the illithid ship arrive just moments after close combat begins (see Event 3 below). If the party decides to follow or hail the *Black Dog*, or just waits until the alien vessel comes closer, read the following description aloud:

The wolf ship is bearing down fast. It seems to be both quick and camouflaged well for travelling through space. The crew appears to be humanoid, but the heavy black cloaks they are wearing make it difficult to determine anything more.

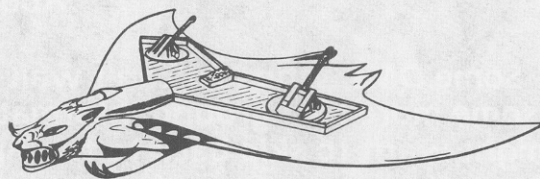
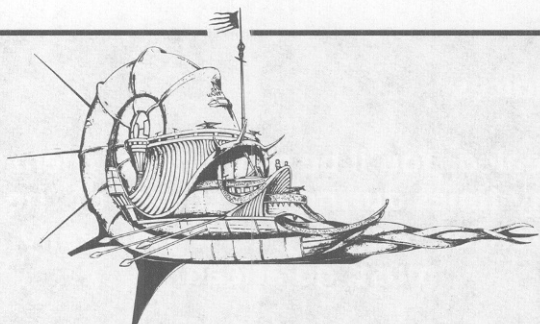
Suddenly, from behind the wolf ship appears an illithid nautiloid! Much of the crew is standing near the prow of the vessel, preparing to board its prey. The illithids are closing.

A handful of mind flayers are standing on the starboard side of the ship and are looking straight at you. Strangely, all of them are making the universal gesture for help!

Decision time. If the PCs decide to help the illithids and attack the *Black Dog*, proceed to Event 3. If instead the PCs decide to tackle the mind flayers, proceed to Event 2.

If the PCs just stand by and watch, the nautiloid successfully rams the scout, but the Vodoni enforcers aboard the *Black Dog* rip the illithids apart, taking only minimal casualties. The party does learn about the wolf-like appearance and ruthless fighting tactics (see Appendix F: New Monsters for details) of the Vodoni, while watching from afar. However, the Vodoni take the party's lack of involvement as a sign of fear, and immediately attack. If the party is caught (the DM should see that they are facing the wrong way for an effective escape), proceed to Event 3, but reduce all of the Vodoni enforcers' hit points by 25%. Note that all of the were-beasts are already in their blood rage (see Appendix F: New Monsters for details on this condition).

If the PCs successfully flee, without engaging the Vodoni personally, doubts about their courage and worthiness for the tasks ahead are voiced by the elves and



CHAPTER 1: SMALL UNIVERSE

dwarves in particular in Chapter 2. The party had better do some slick talking if they wish to avoid being branded as cowards before the war has even begun.

The vessel statistics for the *Black Dog* are typical for a Vodoni scout (see Appendix D: New Spelljamming Ships), while those for the illithid nautiloid, *Brain Eater*, are identical to those presented in the SPELLJAMMER™ rules). The *Black Dog* is manned by 40 Vodoni enforcers with one Vodoni breeder at the helm (average stats, see Appendix F: New Monsters). The *Brain Eater* is manned by 30 illithids (average stats per Monstrous Compendium entry, two have +2 magical protection and the rest have +1 magical protection) but only 25 of these are visible during the first rounds of combat, as the other five are below decks, controlling the nautiloid via an illithid series helm.

Event 2: . . . Is My Enemy

This event assumes that the party is attacking the illithid nautiloid. As soon as the party moves in that direction, the illithids, with a look of shock and disbelief, turn to ram the PCs' ship. Their success depends on the skill of the party and the geometry of the encounter as dictated by the DM.

In any case, the two ships meet in space, but the illithids refuse to board the party ship to attack. Instead, they attempt to warn the party about the dangerous "wolf men" now rounding to attack. The DM should play the illithids as both desperate and annoyed. At this point, they see the party as grossly stupid and incompetent and aren't quite sure they want any help from "dolts such as these." If the party continues to blindly attack, for whatever reason, the illithids won't hesitate to return fire.

Whether the party reaches a hasty truce or not, the *Black Dog* is most certainly rounding for an attack. Since the ship is not equipped with a ram, the enforcers attempt to board the nautiloid from the side opposite the PCs. The Vodoni head straight for the illithids, all but ignoring the PCs. For now, the Vodoni won't attack the characters unless they themselves are attacked. After that, it's open season on everybody, as the battle with the illithids most certainly puts the werewolves into a blood rage.

If the PCs were already attacking the mind flayers, then

the battle is a foregone conclusion. The illithids should be decimated in a few rounds, and the werewolves, who made every indication that they were allies of the PCs up until now, now direct their uncontrollable aggressions on the party!

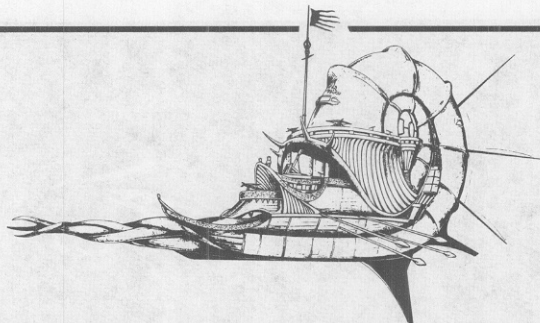
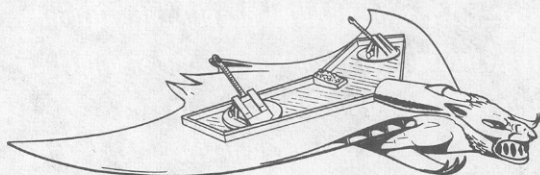
If the PCs win, proceed to Event 4. Otherwise, the Vodoni enforcers are renowned for continuing to feed on victims long after they are dead. Unless a party member has a *ring of regeneration* or successfully abandoned ship, there isn't a lot of hope for fallen comrades. Importantly, the werebeasts are not very intelligent, even when not in a blood rage, and when so maddened they could be called downright dense. Therefore, fleeing into the depths of the ship and hiding is also a viable option for defeated PCs. The Vodoni won't even think to search the ship until long after they've regained their senses, and only then, after they've begun to stow treasure away aboard their ship. The adventure and espionage possibilities are extensive, depending on the intelligence and skill of the hidden character.

On a final note, captured, killed, or hidden PCs can be given another chance to save themselves if the DM adds a random encounter with the elven armada cruising this area (for stats and information, see Event 8).

Event 3: . . . Is My Friend

If party members follow their gut instincts and attack the *Black Dog*, the mind flayers chose to aid the characters in return, in their own way of course. Keeping out of close combat, if possible, the illithids pummel the Vodoni enforcers with spells and "finish the kill" for any Vodoni enforcers that fall. At the DM's option (read: if the PCs need it), the mind flayers can use their three *potions of extra-healing* (see below) to benefit any fallen characters. They always provide assistance in such a way that they are not noticed, either by their comrades, or by the PCs.

Note that if the PCs appear exceptionally weak at the end of the combat, or the PCs only joined forces with the mind flayers after having attacked them by mistake (i.e. a hasty truce was called only after mind flayer blood was spilled), the mind flayers most certainly betray the party and attack the PCs later.



CHAPTER 1: SMALL UNIVERSE

If the party loses, then the mind flayers are killed off by the enforcers, and the DM should refer to Event 2 for suggestions on continuing play. If the party wins, and some mind flayers survive the combat, the illithids show their gratitude in the only face-saving way they can—they promise not to attack the PCs. While the illithids do not claim any of the Vodoni treasure (see Event 4), they do ask for the return of the stolen bodies of their dead comrades. If the party refuses to turn over the illithid corpses, the mind flayers leave, but then round and attack five rounds later. Note that the mind flayers attacked the Vodoni vessel for revenge reasons only, see Chapter 2 for more details.

Event 4: Strange Booty

The treasure on board the nautiloid, if available to the party, is meager in the extreme. The vessel was mustered immediately after the attack on the illithid colony and as such has amassed no booty. The treasure, therefore, consists of only the personal magic and possessions of the slain illithid crew, and a standard cache of gold and gems used for bribes and purchases (read: petty cash). The treasure of the illithids is as follows: 50,000 gp in gems and platinum in a locked chest (trapped with *explosive runes* at 16th level of ability); three *potions of extra-healing* (if not used during the battle). The illithids wear: two *rings of protection* +2, 16 *rings of protection* +1, and a dozen *cloaks of protection* +1.

A search of the *Black Dog* proves to be much more interesting, if not more profitable. Besides the aforementioned six illithid corpses, there are also six humans, six elves, and six dwarves on board the ship—all dead of course. Strangely, on the lower deck of the vessel is a collection of twelve metal cages, filled with living animal specimens. The animals are not extraordinary, but their condition is. The cages are fur-lined and an impressive supply of fresh water and top-quality food stuffs is on hand for each creature. Any druid or ranger in the party notices immediately that each cage contains a pair of like animals, one male and one female. Other character classes require a successful Intelligence check to determine this information from afar.

Even though the animals are well-treated, they still remain unhappy about being caged. A druid or ranger should refuse to abandon the animals here, and unless the PCs happened to bring along a hefty supply of portable animal cages, they might have to switch ships, or spread their crew dangerously thin.

The animals on board include two of each of the following species: lions; bears; boring beetles; giant eagles; dolphins (in a glass tank half-filled with water); and, bugbears (stupid enough to be caught, but smart enough to keep their mouths shut when they saw what happened to sentient creatures).

The DM can role-play these creatures any way desired, but keep in mind the very limited intelligence of the creatures and their current surroundings.

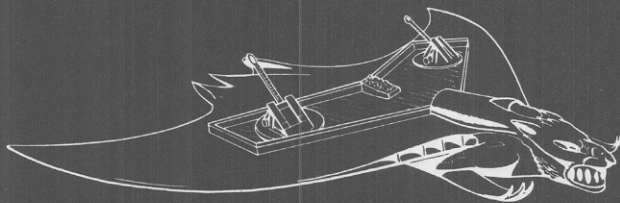
The party members can also assess the basic strengths and weaknesses of the nightwolf ship design, and a copy of the gatefold deck maps can be provided to the party at this time.

Strangely, there is no monetary or magical treasure aboard the vessel. The only other items of value are a collection of maps and charts found in the Vodoni breeder's cabin (aft of the helm, see maps).

The charts show a previously unknown route through the phlogiston that seems to indicate another crystal sphere far, far away. While there is no way for the party to know this at this time, this route leads right into the heart of the Vodoni Empire itself, and has been only recently pursued according to Emperor Vulkaran's recent expansionist decrees.

The only other map on board is a new, hand-drawn one, prepared by the Vodoni breeder during the ship's recent incursions into the PCs' home sphere. Importantly, the map reveals that the ship has managed to reach the very core of the system, steal citizens as well as animals, and escape both unseen and unchallenged.

If the party members keep the *Black Dog*, they should find it to be of superior construction and amazingly easy to handle. If they let it drift, it's recovered by the elven armada from Event 8 later on in the adventure (but before the events in Chapter 2).



"The wolflike raiders penetrated deeply into illithid space: raiding, looting, destroying. . . but strangely, taking no large number of prisoners."

*Chronicles of the Dark Fist
Vol. XII, Scroll VII*

CHAPTER 1: SMALL UNIVERSE

Event 5: Caught Red-Handed

How soon the next encounter occurs is up to the DM. If this adventure is being slowly woven into an ongoing campaign, it might be better to leave the last battle with the strange werewolves in the background for a while. In any case, the following encounter can take place anywhere the DM prefers. All that is required is a gnomish sidewheeler, a Vodoni werewolf, and an elven armada not quite nearby.

Read the following aloud:

A huge smoky sphere up ahead is surely a sign that a space-faring ship of some kind is on fire! After a few moments, it is obvious that there are two vessels in the smoke-filled bubble of air. The smaller of the two is a odd conglomeration of metal and wood, with strange wheels and rigging everywhere along its surface. This gnomish vessel is the one that is burning.

The other ship, roughly twice as large as the burning hull, is of a completely unfamiliar design. Like a great red wolf, the winged vessel has huge terrifying jaws at the prow, capable of both ramming and rending its prey. In fact, the port side of the gnomish vessel is buried deep within the hideous jaws of the red wolf ship.

Besides the flames licking to and fro, there appears to be little movement within the battle scene.

If the PCs leave the scene or just sit there waiting around for a few hours, the elven armada from Event 8 apprehends them, on the assumption that the PCs are "fleeing the scene of their crime." As with events described earlier in the adventure, the characters better do some fancy explaining in Chapter 2 if they want to continue with the mission, let alone avoid reputations as both cowardly and craven.

Assuming the party is a brave and adventurous lot, as they move in on the two ships, the vessel maintains its eerie, abandoned quality. Read:

As your ship moves in closer to the battle scene, an eerie silence prevails. The air around your vessel becomes contaminated by the smoke, and the once dying flames aboard the gnomish ship gain new life, if only for a moment or two.

The air is thick with smoke and visibility is poor. However, you can already make out a dozen small bodies lying about the deck of the gnome ship. On the red wolf ship, there are no such bodies anywhere to be seen.

Certainly things look suspicious to the party. Allow the characters to prepare themselves to board, even dropping an additional hint or two if adequate precautions aren't being taken. The DM should remember that no matter how



CHAPTER 1: SMALL UNIVERSE

the party members approach this scenario, they are very likely to be surrounded by five dozen of the most vicious warriors in the galaxy!

For this encounter, a map of the gnomish sidewheeler isn't necessary, but some information for the DM certainly is.

The gnomish sidewheeler is called the *Whizzz-Pi'Tang-Pi'Tang* after a semi-competent gnomish inventor (read: the name doesn't end with a *Boom*). The only living gnomes on board the ship are a half dozen older children hiding on the lowest deck (see Event 6 for details). The illustration and stats for gnomish sidewheelers can be found on page 27 of the *Lorebook of the Void*, SPELLJAMMER™ boxed game set. There were two dozen adult gnomes aboard the ship, all with stats typical for the campaign. All of them were murdered by Vodoni enforcers.

The red wolf ship is a major Vodoni warship, known as a 'werewolf' (known to the Alliance as a 'butcher'). The ship's proper name is *Blood Feast*. Half of its Vodoni enforcer crew are hiding below decks aboard the *Blood Feast*, while the other half is hiding on the lower deck of the sidewheeler, just below the main deck where the party must board. One Vodoni breeder is hiding near the helm of the *Blood Feast*, just in case the vessel needs to make a quick getaway.

When the PCs reach the lower deck, down one flight of stairs either fore or aft, the Vodoni attack. After combat breaks out on either ship, the rest of the Vodoni forces arrive three rounds later.

Since the Vodoni have not yet stripped the sidewheeler of its cargo, the invaders have no treasure to speak of yet. For a summary of the gnomes' treasure, see Event 7.

Event 6: Small Wonders

Refer to Event 3 for suggestions on continuing the adventure if the party loses the fight with the enforcers. Otherwise, assuming the characters search the gnome's ship after their victory, read the following:

A soft scratching sound can be heard coming from below. The only obvious accessway to the lowest deck of the gnome's ship is a cloth-covered hatchway, tied tightly to some rather rusty metal piping.

The hatch was jerry-rigged by the gnomes during the initial assault on their vessel (see below). Stowed away beneath the makeshift hatch is the gnomes' most precious cargo, their children.

Six young gnomes, four boys and two girls, are hiding near the very bow of the ship. The scratching sound is actually coming from a new-fangled steering mechanism that has seemingly just fallen away from its foundations and is swaying gently back and forth with the rocking of the ship. Any gnome PC traveling with the party will certainly be at a loss to explain how such an obviously sturdy and revolutionary device broke so easily.

The children, if comforted and befriended (Note: they only speak gnome), can piece together a pretty accurate picture of what happened to their vessel. The DM can paraphrase the following, or read it aloud, as desired:

"The green hunter showed up first. It just sat there waiting while we were fixing the ship . . . again."

"We tried to say hello, but it just sat there, far away."

"We never saw anything like it before, and it was scary, just sitting there like that."

"And then it attacked. It threw spears and burning rocks at us. It hurt a lot of us, and started a lot of fires."

"The smoke made it hard to see, and we didn't have any weapons to fight back with."

"When we tried to give up, nothing happened. It just kept throwing stuff at us."

"All of a sudden, it just sailed away."

"That's when the red dog-boat attacked. We couldn't fight it, and we couldn't move . . . and the big teeth came and chewed us all up."

"That's when our parents closed the door on us. We heard cries and screams and growling, like big dogs."

"Where's mommy and daddy?"

The green ship is a Vodoni 'hunter-killer', which the Alliance calls an 'assassin'. This is the same vessel the neogi will claim they destroyed months ago in Chapter 2. Whether the PCs use this information wisely or not is left up to them. The DM shouldn't help on this one.

The rest of the gnomes' treasure consists primarily of things only a gnome would love: a large and sundry collec-

Vodoni enforcers: Int Ave; AL CE; AC 4; MV 9; HD 7; hp 32 each; #AT 2 or 3; THACO 14; Dmg By weapon or 1-8/1-8/1-6; SA Blood rage; SD +1 or better weapons to hit; SZ M; ML 14 (elite).

Blood rage: Attacks at +2; damage at +4; AC penalized by 4.

CHAPTER 1: SMALL UNIVERSE

tion of gears, sprockets, and widgets of little or no practical value, but worth 25,000 gp to gnomish merchants; 5,000 gp worth of miscellaneous personal affects and jewelry; and six unusual potions to be determined by the DM.

Note that the elves, who are fast approaching the battle scene, are going to like the PCs even less if it appears as though they've robbed two dozen murdered gnomes. As far as the elves know when they arrive, the party members are pirates!

Event 7: Captain Thud

Should the party venture into the upper reaches of the *Whizzz-Pi'Tang-Pi'Tang*, they find a strange machine still piloting the dead vessel. Read:

The gnomish helm is at the very top of the ship, in a small round chamber only ten feet in diameter. Standing at the wheel is a short, stocky metal man only five feet tall, but four feet wide. To the gnomes, he must of seemed quite impressive.

The metallic captain cocks its head strangely and turns to look at you. As a small wisp of smoke begins to drift lazily upwards from its neck, the creation takes on a decidedly hostile air.

The creature is for all intents and purposes an iron golem. While its hit points, armor, and physical attacks are all typical for such a creature (but no breath weapon, otherwise, see *Monstrous Compendium 1*), it does have one special gnomish quirk of interest to the PCs. Any roll of a natural 20 to hit against it strikes the broken neck area. This causes the creature to whirl around feverishly as it begins to short-circuit. For the next three rounds, the creature gets twice as many attacks per round, but rolls at -2 to hit. No matter how much damage the players do during this period of time, the machine does not fall until the three rounds have elapsed. At the end of the three rounds, the creation explodes for 10d6 points of damage, with effect and area identical to a *fireball* spell. If the party doesn't roll a natural 20 to hit during the combat, the creature only falls when its hit points reach 0, but explodes, nonetheless.

There is no treasure in the room.

Event 8: Enter the Cavalry

As if the characters haven't had enough abuse already in this adventure, the cavalry is about to ride in, and the party's holding the bag!

If the PCs are loading cargo from the gnomish sidewheeler onto their ship, especially if they are now piloting the *Black Dog*, the elven armada, *Arrow of Justice*, attacks without warning.

The party should surrender quickly, for their safety as well as to protest their innocence. If they persist in fighting an entire complement of elven mage-manned flitters, then the DM should attack to incapacitate rather than to kill.

The elves are not a bloodthirsty lot usually, but the *Arrow of Justice* has seen more than its fair share of Vodoni massacres the past few months. On this patrol, they've arrived too late too many times to be happy about their performance. Therefore, the elves feel (incorrectly) that for once they've caught someone red-handed, and the PCs may suffer for it a little while before things calm down. The elven commander, especially, should be played with militant integrity.

Hopefully, few lives are lost and the PCs manage to surrender or call a truce before too much mayhem is done. If there is an elf (especially a warrior or mage) in the party, things should go much smoother from here on in.

The elves surely take into account the party's previous reputation in this neck of space, current deeds during this adventure, and the testimony of the gnomish children before rendering its decision. Hopefully, the party doesn't spend the long trip to Bral in the slammer.

In any case, the elves are very interested in what the party knows about "strange were-beast invaders" in the area, and as the elves know almost nothing, the PCs can gain a fair measure of respect by telling what they know.

The DM is free to role-play the stay aboard the *Arrow of Justice* any way desired. Supplies can be purchased, minor magic bought and sold, and training completed in the interim. The journey to Bral should take no more than a week.

Campaign Expansion Notes

This chapter has been left wide open deliberately, in order to give the DM maximum flexibility when incorporating this adventure into the campaign. The DM can intersperse entire sub-adventures within this framework, or just write in some encounters as necessary. The DM should remember that there must remain a lot of

mystery and unknowns involving the Vodoni Empire, or else there remains no reason to send the party in as spies or ambassadors in Chapters 2 and 3 (thereby rendering obsolete one-third of the entire adventure!). Just don't give too much away . . . the fun is just getting started. Ω

CHAPTER 2: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Ambassador: "I refuse to go if the fill in the blanks attend!"

Ruler: "You will go, or you will die! It's your choice."

—overheard on a dozen spelljamming vessels,
representing as many space-faring races

This chapter opens with the party attending a most unprecedented meeting. One way or another, our heroes are nominated for the job of infiltrating the very heart of the Vodoni Empire itself. A role-playing extravaganza and a chance to see the inner machinations of the espionage business conclude their introduction to the adventure.

Event 1: Not Quite the Round Table

After travelling with the *Arrow of Justice* for many days, the vessel finally docks at the Rock of Bral. Read aloud:

As the armada approaches the huge Rock of Bral, it is strange to note just how many different types of spelljamming ships are hovering nearby. Both the dry and space docks are jammed with small landing craft, personal skiffs, and noble shuttles, so the majority of the vessels nearby are large and impressive. These are the type of ships that command race wars, and there's enough firepower surrounding the space city to annihilate half of Free Space.

The elves request firmly that you join them on the next man-o-war departing for the Rock. The elven commander himself offers to escort you personally.

If for some reason, any party member refuses to go along, the elven commander takes this as a personal insult to his integrity. It is impossible to quick-talk one's way out of the consequences. Either the offending PC apologizes and goes down willingly, or they must fight the elven commander (Fighter/Wizard 12th/13th) in a test of chivalry. If it comes to blows, the PCs should lose much more than they can possibly gain—the players have failed this encounter.

Prince Andru, the ruler of Bral, has given the man-o-war special permission to land within the courtyard of his palace. Naturally, all of the special ambassadors and dignitaries have been accorded equal status, to avoid any hint of favoritism. Andru has made extraordinary preparations

to keep conflict to a minimum. Even so, rumors abound that the neogi ambassador has abused his privileges to the point of dining on a few local residents. The families of the victims are currently under lock and key in the Donjon (only until after the conference is over, of course).

When the party reaches the council chamber, read the following aloud:

The proud and luxurious throne room of Prince Andru of Bral has been haphazardly rearranged as a political council chamber. Eight long oaken tables are arranged as an octagon in the middle of the room. Eight richly appointed dining chairs grace each table. Behind the octagon and against the north wall, is seated Prince Andru, who seems to have the dubious task of hosting the conference. The worry etched upon his graying brow says much about the past few days.

The eight delegations and their seating arrangements are as follows:

Eight mind flayers dominate the southeastern table. One of the evil illithids is wearing robes of mithril and gold, and bears a symbol on his forehead that could only signify nobility.

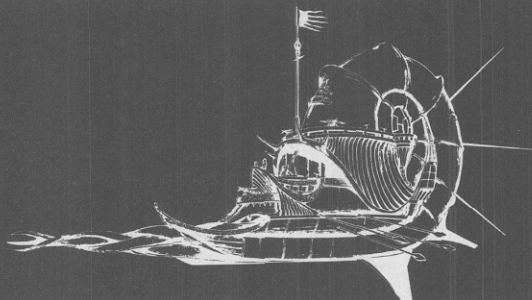
At the southernmost table, a lone neogi wearing black is flanked by three rather unsavory looking men and a large contingent of Prince Andru's city guard. Whether the neogi is being protected or imprisoned is a matter of viewpoint. Resting comfortably beneath the neogi ambassador's table is a huge umber hulk, its magical eyes covered by a large black sack.

Glaring angrily at the neogi ambassador from the southwestern table are eight dwarven warriors, outfitted in the finest of weapons and armor. While all are obviously great and respected kings, every one of them looks like they've been in a very bad fight recently. None of them appears seriously injured, but one of the dwarves, the one wearing a blue-green breast plate, is the only dwarven attendee who is smiling.

A loud ruckus to the west attracts attention to the gnomish contingent at the great table. A strange metallic tower comprised of hundreds of tiny rusty metal plates is in the process of collapsing all over the fine oak table. Rather than getting embarrassed about the noisy failure, the eight wealthy gnomes begin discussing why the tower

"The taking of the Whizzz-Pi'Tang-Pi'Tang galvanized the ambassadors gathered at the Rock of Bral and led to the formation of an unprecedented alliance of free spheres.

*—The Darkfist Chronicles
Vol. XX, Scroll IV*



CHAPTER 2: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

fell, and what manner of invention can prevent this disaster from occurring again.

Obviously not impressed with the gnomes' inattentiveness, an elven king and his six grey elven councilors at the northeastern table begin motioning to Prince Andru behind them, as if to say 'Well, we're waiting . . .'

Beside the elves, six human men and women of impressive bearing are sitting at the northern table. Their looks combine both bewilderment and consternation, as they don't seem to have an idea what is going on here.

Also looking around with crossed eyes are three completely different-looking beholders. One is black, while the others are red and white in color. They are sitting as far apart from each other as possible at the northeastern table.

The table to the east is empty, but a wizard wearing black robes and possessing the fiery symbol of Bral's legendary Fireball Alliance is motioning towards you.

Assuming the PCs take their rightful place amidst the delegates, the DM now has the option of role-playing out the meeting (proceed to Event 2), or skipping to the chase (proceed to Event 3).

Event 2: Q & A

If there are any non-human players in the group, their opinions and knowledge about the Vodoni are taken as gospel by their respective delegations. No matter what information the PCs provide, however, each delegation twists it around to justify a decision they've already made (see below).

During the debate, the PCs are certainly asked the following questions by the delegates:

Prince Villithandra—illithid royal heir

"What do you suppose the wolf-beasts wanted with dead bodies?"

The illithids have their own suppositions on this matter, and are just testing the intelligence of the party. The mind flayers have already read the minds of most of the delegates and have a good idea what the final outcome will be. To them, the debate is just another mind game.

See Appendix A for an answer to the illithid's question.

Griktha—neogi merchant

"Is it possible that the wolf-creatures did not initiate this aggression. Gnomes and illithids especially are known for their aggressive and violent ways. Perhaps the wolf-creatures were only defending themselves, hmmm?"

At that insinuation, the gnomes nearly leap out of their seats, and the mind flayers start rubbing their temples as if to warm up. Prince Andru's guards move in quickly to protect the neogi ambassador. He seems to be awaiting a reply.

The neogi are trying to turn some of the delegates over to the side of patience and reason, in order to satisfy their own evil plan (see below). The question should help prepare the PCs for their own moment of decision, later on.

King Druin—dwarven ambassador

"Oh for the love of Mjolnir! The monsters ripped up women and children, didn't they?"



CHAPTER 2: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

While not really the type of question the other ambassadors are looking for, the dwarves are making it plain that they've already made up their minds. Again, the PCs response and reactions here should prove instructive. The DM should reward PCs who play within their chosen alignment with bonus experience at the end of play.

All Eight Gnomes (together)

"Huh, what? Oh a question . . . hmmm."
The gnomes pause for a quick conference.
"Okay, what kind of stuff did they have? Anything neat or new, fancy or shmancy?"

The PCs aren't likely to have much of an answer for the gnomes at this time, but the gnomes have already made up their minds after hearing from the neogi and the dwarves, and just the thought of their dead cousins gets them very hot under their little red collars.

High King Thilandriel—elven ambassador

"Did you attempt to communicate with the wolf-beings, using spells or devices?"

The elves are expecting a response of "no" from the party, but if the PCs inform them that they did attempt contact, and received an unsatisfactory reply, King Thilandriel and his councils knot their graying brows and continue their contemplation of the debate.

Unnamed Young Woman from Greyspace

"Do you think they threaten our lands, or are they just out to command your space realm?"

The PCs can answer whatever their gut instincts tell them too. For many of the humans, this is their first time in outer space, so they are understandably overwhelmed by the entire proceeding.

The Three Beholders

The three beholders seem unable to arrive at a question.

They obviously prefer to bicker amongst themselves. The PCs shouldn't worry about this bickering, just yet.

Event 3: Decision Time

The debate should last for many hours, even though much of it is centered within each individual entourage. The players should be encouraged to discuss what they'd like to see happen, just on the off chance somebody asks them for their opinion. Which, of course, somebody will.

When all is said and done, Prince Andru calls the meeting to order. Read:

A flaming jet of fire lurches out from the north, and a halo of searing flame hovers dangerously about the octagonal table and its many delegates. For a shocked moment, no one moves. As suddenly as it appeared, the flame disappears, and Prince Andru's fiery-tempered proconsul is smiling a little too broadly. Prince Andru steps forward.

"Now that we, ahem, have your attention. It is time for the delegates to render their decision. I shall start with the first of the delegations to suffer casualties from the invaders.

"Prince Villithandra of the illithids, what is your verdict?"

Prince Andru poses this final question to all of the delegates in the following order. Here are their responses and some enlightening background information for the DM.

The Illithids

"We call for revenge! We shall eat of their skulls and scourge both their bodies and their minds. They shall pay as all those who have trespassed against us have in the past and will in the future . . . with their lycanthropic lives!"

As Prince Andru mentioned, the mind flayers were the first to suffer casualties at the hands of the Vodoni enforcers. However, no one really knows just how much suffering the illithids have endured. Since the illithids prefer to inhabit the outer reaches of space, far from the teeming

The Grand Alliance

Note that the potential monetary, territorial, and technological gains to be had by defeating the Vodoni forces

have not been overlooked by the participants of this historic council. However, the public discussion focusses

CHAPTER 2: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

masses of other “lesser” races, the mind players have been attacked repeatedly by the merciless forces of Vulkaran’s many scout vessels who have breached the new realms.

Even worse, the illithids, depending on the actual outcome of events in Chapter 1, may actually feel indebted to the PCs (how insufferable!). As a matter of revenge and egotistical pride, the mind players are out for brains and blood.

The Neogi

“We neogi, who have been so heinously slandered in the past by the very races present at this convention, know what it is like to be misunderstood and then slaughtered by the uncaring and the ignorant. We call for peace. Send ambassadors to the new spheres. Perhaps this is just another unfortunate misunderstanding. I ask the delegates who plead for war these humble questions: What harm can come from exerting prudent patience? And what harm might come from rash decisions? We ourselves destroyed a green wolf ship many months ago, and now wonder whether we acted hastily, against a race perhaps as afraid of us as we seem to be of them.”

Certainly something is fishy in Bral, tonight. The neogi, famous for spinning webs within webs, are playing off both sides in this conflict. They happen to know a lot about the new invaders that they aren’t telling. They claim to have battled and destroyed an assassin-class vessel, the very same vessel that launched the unprovoked attack on the gnomish sidewheeler months after the neogi claim to have destroyed it.

Actually, the neogi mindspider lost the battle and used their magical powers and forked tongues to negotiate a hasty truce with the Vodoni forces.

The neogi goal at this stage of the game is to stall the local forces long enough to establish a full-fledged alliance with Vulkaran himself! Naturally, no matter how the war turns out, the neogi intend to conquer the weakened remains of the victor, thereby establishing a new neogi-run order!

Don’t worry, the PCs get their chance to spoil the neogi plans in Chapter 5.

The Dwarves

“We didn’t come all this way, and I didn’t defeat all of these fine warriors, for nothing, did I?”

The dwarven ambassador slams his mighty axe into the table, splitting it asunder with a mighty crash.

“The dwarven race does not take orders from anyone, or anything. Space is free—for the taking only in small amounts. Anyone who thinks he’s man enough to take more, had better be prepared to meet my *Thunder Strike* here! We’ll fight the mutts alone if we have to.”

Dwarves are always looking for an excuse for a good fight, and new markets to hawk their wares, and this scenario has plenty of both. And when they find out in Chapter 3 that the Vodoni crystal sphere is literally encrusted with precious metals and gems, there’ll be no stopping them.

The Gnomes (all together)

“Those dog-heads butchered our people. And they surely have lots of neat gadgets and gizmos over there. What other reasons for war are there? We’ll hack off their toes, and put glue in their underclothes. And maybe, even worse!”

The gnomes want revenge a little less than they desire access to the new Vodoni technology, of course, but the destruction of their sidewheeling comrades has certainly brought out the darker side of the gnomish personality.

Note that these gnomes were just the first eight clan leaders to arrive at the convention. They have yet to, and never will, determine who speaks for all of them.

The Elves

“The talk of blood and death is strong and I fear hasty. Much as we hate to admit it, the neogi have a valid point. We cannot in good conscience attack these strangers without exploring all of our options. We owe it to our lost comrades, to the Vodoni people, and mostly to ourselves.

“We vote to send ambassadors, but prepare for war in their absence.”

more on moral and high sounding reasons for the decision whether to attack. No one is talking imperialism at this time, at least not unless they’re behind closed doors.

CHAPTER 2: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

As the self-appointed defenders of Wildspace, the elves often take it upon themselves to administer justice. In this debate, they take the side of reason and patience.

The DM should note that should things get ugly in the council chambers, Thilandriel's grey elven barons are actually three ancient gold dragons and three ancient silver dragons in disguise.

The Humans

"We have debated this long and hard, and we cannot in good conscience speak for our people. We vote for patience and peace, and will do our best to convince our land kingdoms to prepare for an invasion from a realm they never even suspected existed."

While the human lands have always stood for the rights of self-determination, they worry that the majority of the Vodoni race may actually be human, as are most known spheres in the universe.

The eight human delegates include two haphazardly gathered representatives each from Krynnspace, Grey-space, and Realm-space, as well as Prince Andru and his proconsul (Master of the Fireball Alliance).

At the beginning of play, the DM may choose to have these characters replaced by the PCs, if beginning a new space-based campaign. While this is not recommended, due to the level and complexity of the war, it also happens to be one heck of a epic way to start a SPELLJAMMER™ campaign.

Also, the DM can develop the land-based options to this adventure, which have been heretofore left unexplored for space and plot reasons. The process of convincing your home sphere that there is a realm beyond the clouds, and that it just happens to be hostile and coming your way, can lead to fascinating role-playing situations and adventure possibilities. Imagine training an entire world for a spell-jamming war from scratch!

The Beholders

The beholders pause in their bickering just long enough to be asked for their decision. After a few tense moments of staring back and forth at each other, the

black beholder opens wide and starts chewing off the eye stalks of the white beholder!

While the beholders do not possess any extraordinary talents (they possess typical stats for beholders as presented in the SPELLJAMMER rules), they have chosen a very nasty place to continue with their little civil war.

The PCs have been placed strategically right next to the beholders, so that they have the most to gain by stopping the fight. Prince Andru's men can't possibly get around all of the fleeing delegates for at least five rounds, and considering the fact that these grumpy globes are throwing around over thirty spells a round (!), the PCs might want to step in just to save their own skins. After all, those eye beams that miss (i.e. the target made its saving throw) have to go somewhere . . .

Capturing, charming, and *imprisonment* spells work best in the both the short and long run here. But then there are those pesky anti-magic eye beams to contend with, aren't there? Oh well, who ever said diplomacy was easy?

Note that this entire scenario occurs because the beholders are very uninterested in anything but their own civil war, but the perceived "honor" of being ambassador for the entire beholder race must certainly be worth disintegrating half of the conferees. It is important to realize that beholders take all failed saving throws to be a sign of weakness.

Event 4: Let There Be . . .

After the fight is over, read the following aloud:

The battle has ended, and the remaining delegates have returned to their seats. There are calls for Prince Andru to render a decision, any decision, and from the look on his face, the Prince is obviously loath to do so.

Then a gleam appears in his eye as the din of protest gets louder. Prince Andru steps forward, but the crowd refuses to come to order.

As his proconsul raises his hands in a circle, the conferees finally quiet down. The arch-mage retreats with another broad smirk across his wrinkle features.

"Since the beholder delegation does not seem to be

Running the Beholder Incident

The DM should emphasize the diplomatic problems as well as the logistical ones, as the party should avoid hack-

ing the ambassadors to bits in full view of the other delegates. Now, few would blame the PCs privately, but

CHAPTER 2: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

able to come to any sort of consensus, someone else must help us choose. I have already spoken with the voice of the humans, and so has my proconsul.

"But there is a table we have not heard from," asserts Andru. "A table with more knowledge on this matter than all of us combined. And, therefore, surely the most appropriate to break such a tie."

He turns towards your table.

"How vote you, brave travellers all. Do we have peace or do we have war?"

This is truly the party's decision now. There's no way the characters can hedge their way out of this one. DMs should observe PC alignment behavior and past experiences with these races for future reference.

If the party renders a decision of "Peace" proceed to Event 5. If it is "War" they will have, proceed to Event 6.

Event 5: . . . Peace

The party has chosen to sit back and wait, to give the enemy a chance to prove their intentions. Therefore, the following NPCs are chosen to travel with the party:

A) Griktha, the neogi merchant as well as his umber hulk sidekick, Spinesnapper. For stats on these two wolves-in-sheep's-clothing refer to Appendix B. Note that Griktha has his own agenda during this adventure.

B) One ancient gold or silver dragon from Thilandriel's council (DM's choice based on which breath weapons the party might need most). It does not reveal its true nature until much later in the adventure and claims to be only a "mage." For stats, assign maximum hit points for a huge, spell-using, ancient dragon of the appropriate type (see the *Monstrous Compendium* entry).

Remember that these creatures travel as diplomats, not warriors. They will, however, fight to the death in self-defense, or against a common enemy.

The characters must take either their own ship, or an elven man-o-war (typical stats) provided by Thilandriel. If the PCs captured the illithid nautiloid *Brain Eater* earlier in the adventure, they must return it now or risk an intergalactic incident. Also, any captured Vodoni vessels are docked at Bral and put under heavy guard, just in case they must be returned as a condition of truce or used in time of war.

Event 6: . . . War

The party feels the Vodoni have made their position crystal clear on this matter and are sent to the Vodoni sphere as spies. Therefore, the following NPCs are chosen to travel with the party:

A) Prince Villithandra, the illithid ambassador. For stats on the prince, refer to Appendix B.

B) King Druin of the dwarves. For stats on the ready warrior, again refer to Appendix B.

In this situation, Prince Villithandra also demands return of the *Brain Eater* if it's in the party's possession. However, as long as he is allowed to "captain" her, the party can use it for this mission only, if they desire.

The council recommends, however, that the PCs take their own ship, or the *Black Dog* (if available), into Vodoni space. The Vodoni scout in particular seems to be a god-send for the alliance as it logically has the best chance of infiltrating deep into the Vodoni Empire. Even the *Blood Feast* is available to the spies if they desire. In any case, the choice should be theirs.

The party can equip their vessel as desired. Proceed to Event 7.

Event 7: Gate 8, Please

Note that no matter what, one "good guy" and one "bad guy" have been added to the party during this adventure. Just to spice the inter-personal conflict up even more, all of the remaining beholders (see above for stats), if any, are healed to full hit points and forced to go along on the journey. If none exist after the battle in the throne room, substitute the eight gnomish clan leaders instead (see Appendix B for stats).

No matter which mission the PCs have chosen, the delegates assign enough veteran sailors to fill whichever ship the PCs have chosen two-thirds full. This gives the party the advantage of extra air and rations, should the party find it difficult to make landfall safely within the Vodoni sphere.

The PCs are given as many normal provisions as they want. If this is their first voyage outside of their home sphere, the DM (through some knowledgeable NPC) should give them plenty of tips and pointers on navigating the phlogiston and the dangers of Wildspace. While on the Rock, the

such a public display could not be ignored or covered up. The beholders would hear about it, and rightly or

wrongly, blame the party personally. They might also start disintegrating the Rock of Bral piece by piece.

CHAPTER 2: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

PCs can purchase spells, scrolls, potions, and even minor magical items (if the DM permits). Every effort is made to procure whatever the party desires, within reason.

All the while, the PCs are reminded that they are not to start a war with the Vodoni yet, or reveal the precise location of their own home spheres. After all is said and done, one last night of rest is provided by Prince Andru, and the party should set sail the following morning.

Meanwhile, all of the representative races are making plans and discussing many things, and some are already massing forces. Whether for good or for evil, so beginneth the birth of the first-ever Free Space Alliance.

Event 8: Outward and Onward

The journey through the local crystal sphere and the long journey on out into the phlogiston should be a long, but uneventful journey. Following the maps recovered from the *Black Dog*, the only problems the party must face include finding a portal out of the sphere, and learning the mysterious ways of the phlogiston. If this is the PCs first trip out of their home sphere, the DM should make a big production of the experience. Their first sight of the shimmering rainbow rivers cascading throughout an infinite swirl of spheres and space should be one to remember, not glossed over.

If the DM has been saving any pet encounters for a rainy day, this would be a good time to use them. The phlogiston should be a place of mystery and wonder. If the PCs lost some crew, maybe some new ones just happen to float by. Maybe some spare provisions are waiting for anyone brave enough to venture forth into that haunted wreck.

Just remember to give the PCs some action here. It's hard to role-play sailing . . .

Event 9: Give Us This Day . . .

One of the main reasons Vulkaran has not pursued this recent line of exploration before is due to the presence of a strange inky black region of space known as the Weird. Not to be confused with the magical vortex of legend, the Void, the Weird is the Vodoni name for what the PCs might know only as a Dark Region. These mysterious clouds of

negative energy are found rarely in the universe, and as such, little is known about their nature or their origin.

The Weird is a particularly nasty Dark Region, in that legends claim it turns the living into the dead and the dead into the undead. Unfortunately, this legend isn't told to children in the PCs' home spheres, only within the Vodoni Empire.

The DM should roll randomly to see who's on watch for this encounter. Then read:

The phlogiston is slow, but steady at this part of the flow. Up ahead there seems to be a place where another rainbow river, far off in the distance, disappears suddenly and then reappears much farther away.

After a few moments, it is obvious that this phenomenon is an optical illusion and that in reality there is a large, black cloud between you and the distant river.

The blackness is utter and complete, and seems to have no concrete shape of its own. Even in the short time you've been watching it, the cloud has shifted ever so slightly.

Now, a long promontory is visible jutting straight out of the main cloud. At the head of the blackened arm is a shape . . . the shape of a ship.

At this point in time, the party has only three rounds to react. If they do not accelerate and dive deep into the river they are currently sailing, they are forced into an encounter with the *Lady Lenore* (proceed with Event 10). Otherwise, they avoid the ghost ship and can proceed with Event 11).

Naturally, if the party moves in to attack the ship, or just meet and board her, then the encounter proceeds normally (see Event 10).

Event 10: . . .Our Daily Dead

The ship is only harmful if the party does nothing to avoid being rammed. If the party moves in closer, or just sits there waiting to be hit, read the following:

The vessel appears to be shaped like a huge black winged gargoyle, with eyes blazing red with magical

*"Beware the Dark Wind Which Is Not,
Beware the Dark Waves Which Are Not,
When That Which Was Lost, Strikes;
Ye Shall Be Not"*

—An Augury

CHAPTER 2: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

light. Aboard her are at least a hundred swirling black beasts, armed with two-handed swords as long as a man. The beasts shimmer with an almost mystical energy.

The ship is bearing down quickly on your vessel, riding a strange crest of black energy from the nearby cloud. It shows no sign of stopping and the black gar-goy's maw looks sturdy and sharp.

If the party doesn't move their ship, they are rammed by a 40 ton vessel with an SR of 7—yielding blunt ramming damage of 28 points. Even worse, both vessels are now caught up in the black cloud together!

If the PCs avoid the ship and then manage to catch up with her again, or are caught up in the black cloud as above, they soon notice the following things:

A) The black ship is called the *Lady Lenore* and it is most certainly real.

B) The "monsters" on board the *Lady Lenore* are harmless, yet horrifying, spirits of some type that cannot be turned.

C) The horrifying beings seem to be in great agony or pain for some reason. Their waving seems to be a cry for help rather than a warning or form of attack.

D) The cloud is comprised of pure negative energy and does 5 hit points of damage (no saving throw or magic resistance allowed) per round to anyone caught in it. It is harmless to inorganic materials.

E) Healing spells do not work within the black cloud.

PCs who have enough brass and hit points to explore the ship find no treasure whatsoever, just piles of headless, ebony bodies in the lower hold. The number of bodies matches the number of ghosts on deck precisely, and the creatures were beheaded before the ship was set adrift.

If the PCs possess divination spells and use them wisely, they might be able to ascertain at least some of the *Lady Lenore's* sad story. The DM should know that these creatures were not in the least bit evil, despite their fearsome appearance. They are all that remains of a Zalani ambassador's vessel, which travelled from the twelfth Vodoni sphere to search for help during Vulkaran's initial conquest of their home worlds.

The brave souls were discovered by a pair of hunter-killer ships as they were leaving the Vodoni sphere through a portal they had just discovered. The ship's crew, desperate to

escape the Vodoni enforcers closing behind them, foolishly flung their vessel into the Weird. As can be seen from their current state, they might have been better off dead. They now sail the phlogiston in search of someone, anyone, who can help their long-since subjugated people. For more on the Zalani empire, see to Appendix A.

Event 11: Stir Crazy

Many more hopefully uneventful days pass as the party follows their rivulet map through the phlogiston. Just moments before the prize is in sight, some problems erupt below decks. Read:

You've all been cooped up far too long in this tiny wood-
en bucket. Finally, something snaps with some of the
crew . . .

Below decks, in the crew's cabin, a fight is breaking out between the men and some of the ambassadors. The fight is just one of those simple misunderstandings that come between man and monster.

If King Druin is aboard the ship, he is currently instigating a brawl with some crew members who had the audacity to tell 'short' jokes in his presence. While the crewmen are simply no match for the seasoned warrior, there are a lot of them to deal with and the king isn't wearing any of his trusty adamantite armor.

If the neogi ambassador is aboard, he is delighting in some "recreation" involving his trusty bodyguard, Spinesnapper. The umber hulk is currently lumbering about looking crew members square in the eyes. Naturally, the confused sailors are battling one another, standing around stupidly, or wandering about the lower deck aimlessly.

How the party handles this is part of the fun. No matter what the brawl evolves into, five rounds into the combat a call from the upper deck is heard . . .

"Sphere Ho!"

Everyone in control of their own faculties heads for the upper deck and spies the huge black sphere of the Vodoni home world.

Spinesnapper's Confusion Table

1	Wander away (unless prevented) for 11 rounds	7-9	Attack nearest creature for one round (then roll again)
2-6	Stand confused for one round (then roll again)	10	Act normally for one round (then roll again)

CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

"Needed him?" The old sage looked amazed at the question from the young boy. "Well, maybe we needed the son of a plasmoid and maybe we didn't."

But I'll tell you one thing, sonny, I never thought I'd see the day when I privately wished our sun would have blown up without giving us warning those many centuries ago. Maybe sacrificing one crystal sphere to save a dozen wouldn't have been such a bad trade after all."

The PCs are about to go behind enemy lines in a classic pre-invasion scouting mission. Their goals are: A) locate enemy positions; B) assess enemy strengths and weaknesses; and, C) above all, don't get caught.

A test of brains over brawn highlights the final movement before things get ugly on a truly grand scale.

DM Notes

By the time they return to their own worlds, the PCs should feel that their enemy is weak compared with the full Free Space Alliance contingents. Considering only this sphere, this is true. However, as will be seen in Chapter 5, the odds will even up considerably before Vulkaran breathes his last breath.

Also, remember to read Appendix A thoroughly before beginning play in the Vodoni sphere. There are a number of spell modifications that the PCs may find either fantastic (like the bonus to fire spells) or disastrous (like the ban on *teleport* spells), and all of these have been carefully chosen to add to the challenge of adventuring in this strange sphere.

Event 1: Friend or Foe

As soon as the PCs breach the Vodoni sphere, whether it is by spell or luck, they meet their greatest challenge to date, a vessel known in the home spheres only as the Vodoni 'assassin'. Read:

Passing through the dark shell of the Vodoni home sphere, many things immediately vie for your attention. The stars in this sphere appear to be gems, blasted deep into the strange black shell material by forces

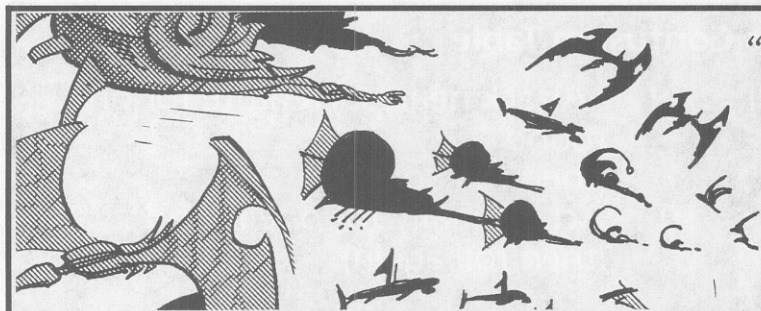
impossible to imagine. They flicker and sparkle with the strange blue light cast from the system's only star, a small blue-white beacon unlike any in your home spheres.

Judging from the crescents among the backdrop, there are at least four planet-sized bodies in the Vodoni system. Oddly, it is difficult to make out many details of the inner system, because some type of haze is obstructing the normally crystal clear view from deep space.

The nearest planet is swinging very close to your vessel at this time, perhaps only a few days journey forward. Silhouetted before the crystal white surface is a winged ship. It appears to be too far away to attack, but is neither attacking nor closing.

The hunter-killer vessel *Plight of Cirria* is studying the new ship. If the PCs are using either the *Black Dog* or the *Blood Feast* (from Chapter 1), then the *Plight of Cirria*'s crew is awaiting some type of hailing signal. Since the hunter-killer prefers not to close with its enemies, any obvious wave or greeting from the PCs has a 75% chance of satisfying the *Plight of Cirria*'s crew (proceed to Event 2). If the PCs wait too long to signal, begins closing without waiting for permission, or are not travelling in a captured Vodoni vessel, the *Plight of Cirria* attacks immediately. The Vodoni are not interested in making friends, so the mission of the PCs is irrelevant to them.

The *Plight of Cirria* is one of Vulkaran's many outer patrol vessels scattered throughout Vodoni wildspace. This hunter-killer warship has many advantages over whatever vessel the PCs have chosen to use (refer to Appendix D for stats), including its long-range weaponry, speed, and tight maneuverability. Unfortunately, to accomplish this the designers had to weaken the vessel's armor and lower the number of crew on board. The vessel has only a crew of 20 Vodoni enforcers, who are crack sailors trained in manning the Vodoni catapults and ballistae, and one Vodoni breeder (see Appendix F for stats on these beings). Therefore, the vessel, if caught, is not much of a challenge in hand-to-hand combat. Naturally, the Vodoni breeder is of the highest level, and as this is the only Vodoni vessel to carry a major helm as standard equipment, the Vodoni



"Confident in his power, Vulkaran allowed his fleets to range in the outer reaches of his Empire. He never dreamed that a single ship would be bold enough to approach the Imperial City."

—*Chronicles of the Dark Fist*
Vol. XXII, Scroll IV

CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

hunter-killer is especially adept at not being caught.

The PCs big advantage comes from the intelligent use of spells. While the Vodoni medium ballista has a range of 8 (twice normal), and this makes it impossible to hit with normal shipboard weaponry, spell casters at this level should possess some spells that are capable of evening up the odds. Whether it be a PC mage coming out of the Ethereal Plane into the middle of a rather amazed Vodoni crew, or a *wall of force* strategically thrown up in between the two ships, the PCs have a lot more options open to them than have the Vodoni. Their only spell caster is locked away at the helm and is rather loath to leave his position for any reason whatsoever.

If the PCs create a "Mexican stand-off" or make it pretty obvious they can beat the *Plight of Cirria* at will, then the enemy vessel veers off and heads towards the only moon of the planet nearby. This has ramifications later on in this chapter.

If the party makes short work of the *Plight of Cirria*, they find no treasure worth mentioning aboard the vessel, but do find landing maps for the enemy base on a planet named "Calandia." This information would prove vital to the Free Space Alliance in Chapter 4.

If the PCs leave the vessel drifting in space, it is discovered by another Vodoni ship, a werewolf, very soon afterwards. The Vodoni breeder on board magically notifies the base on Calandia that there are invaders in the area. Because the breeder used a spell, he must rest before re-taking the helm. Therefore, this vessel, *The Nightstalker*, arrives at the Calandia moon base two days after the PCs arrive. If the PCs are still lying about, instead of moving on by now, then they might be in for a rude surprise . . .

Note that the same result occurs via the Vodoni breeder's magical alert if the PCs successfully flee the *Plight of Cirria* without permanently disabling her. This time the breeder aboard the *Plight of Cirria* calls both the *Nightstalker* and the moon base on Calandia, and after the *Nightstalker* has helped effect repairs on the *Plight of Cirria*, BOTH ships arrive two days after the party arrives there.



CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

Event 2: Land Ho!

On to Calandia, the fourth planet of the Vodoni sphere.

The small icy blue planet ahead looks cold and barren. On the far side of the chilly sphere, a small crescent moon appears.

Suddenly, just as your vessel was reaching full speed, you encounter another object in your way.

You're in luck this time, as the vessel ahead of you is a slow-moving ship, facing towards the planet. The crew aboard the werewolf vessel couldn't possibly have noticed you yet. Even from this great distance, the banks of oars jutting from the sides suggest that this might be a Vodoni slave galley.

The galley is just a modified werewolf warship as a form of training vessel for Vodoni citizens. It's unlucky enough to be captured. Note that the penalty for all crimes in the Vodoni Empire is death.

These poor souls, out of sight below deck, are on their way to the mines of Calandia (see Chapter 4 for details). The ship is only out here in space for "exercise." The citizen-slaves are attempting to escape the planet, travelling from the moon and back to the planet.

The PCs can attack the ship (see Event 4) or leave the whole thing alone (proceed with Event 4). If the PCs decide to head down to the Calandia's surface, they'll need maps and information from Chapter 4 to do so for now.

The goal of this encounter is to give the PCs a chance to do some good, and get some information about the captured slaves in Event 3) in return. If the PCs refuse to do anything that the DM can work with, some knowledgeable slaves, or the ex-Vodoni, can help. Event 4, then the PCs just have to go through the adventure the hard way.

Either way, even this information is sure to be useful. Calandia and its moon as a distant staging area for Space Alliance forces in Chapter 4.

"Calandia
food stores,
advanced

Event 3: Crack of the Whip

Unless the PCs really blow it by announcing their presence to the slave ship, *Dominator*, the enemy is so unaware of the party's presence that the party could even attempt to ram the enemy before boarding. However, the DM should remember that the lower deck is crammed full of human slaves (Note: the party might not realize that real Vodoni are human yet) and any hull breach is bound to harm or even kill a few of them. Even this might be forgiven by the survivors if a rescue seems imminent.

Note that there are no maps or stats in this adventure for the *Dominator*. This is because the vessel is just a werewolf vessel without the minor helm, and with the lower deck hollowed out and converted into a slave galley. There are only 10 Vodoni enforcers aboard, and no Vodoni breeder (since there is no helm to man). There are also 40 slaves on board, 20 per bank of oars, all chained to hard wooden seats in the lower deck. Ten oars jut out of each side of the ship, so there are two slaves manning each oar. The oars are spaced 8' apart.

If for some reason the party decides to make peace, say for instance they still think the Vodoni might respect ambassadors from another sphere, the obviously outnumbered and out-powered Vodoni enforcers agree to escort the PCs to their "leader to help clear up this little intergalactic misunderstanding." Of course, it is the party that doesn't understand what's going on here, as the PCs are escorted to the base on Calandia One (see Event 4) for an ambush of epic proportions. Once they arrive, they are asked to wait in the slave chambers (area B) until the "leader" arrives. Actually, the Vodoni breeder is present, but just waiting for the other werewolf vessel to return from duty. As soon as it arrives . . . socko! For more on events in the mining colony, see Event 4.

If the slaves are rescued, the first problem the PCs are going to have is one of language. The slaves, having been normal citizens until recently, are for the most part educated and bright, albeit very tired and hungry. Once the language barrier is broken, the PCs learn the following information:

moon, with their isolated position,
erated slaves, would be the perfect
area for the forces of the Free

CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

The Legend of Vulkaran: Part I

Here is the first of a collection of quotes from various Vodoni residents, which the PCs can eventually piece together to form a rough idea of the events leading to Vulkaran's rise to power. More will become apparent the deeper the PCs venture into his tyrannical realm. The DM can read these quotes from the rescued slaves aloud, or role-play the information in a "Question and Answer" type of format:

"Our sun, which you see far off in the distance, exploded once already many centuries ago, and has been dwindling ever since. But the nova showered our entire sphere with gold and gems. We fled the sphere in time to avoid our race's destruction, but had to rebuild our society upon our return. That's when the Dark Lord took over. He saved us from devastation to be sure, but now he holds twelve spheres in his iron fist."

"The ancient Vodoni leader, a mysterious armored warrior named Vulkaran, led the society back from the brink of ruin, but used his influence to establish an iron grip on the people."

"We mine the gems and metals for Vulkaran's war machine, and fill his unimaginably huge coffers with the nat-

ural treasures of our sphere. No one knows just how much treasure Vulkaran possesses."

Besides the information above, these slaves can only answer simple questions about the number of planets in the system (i.e. four) and general information about each of them (i.e. the third planet, Grog, is primarily an agricultural center).

The slaves certainly mention the fact that their comrades on the Calandia moon base can be of even more help than they were, and won't like it at all if the PCs skip rescuing the other slaves (read: their morale is reduced by 4 in any subsequent battles). If the PCs go to the moon, see Event 4. Otherwise, continue the adventure with Episode 5.

Event 4: Siege in the Snow

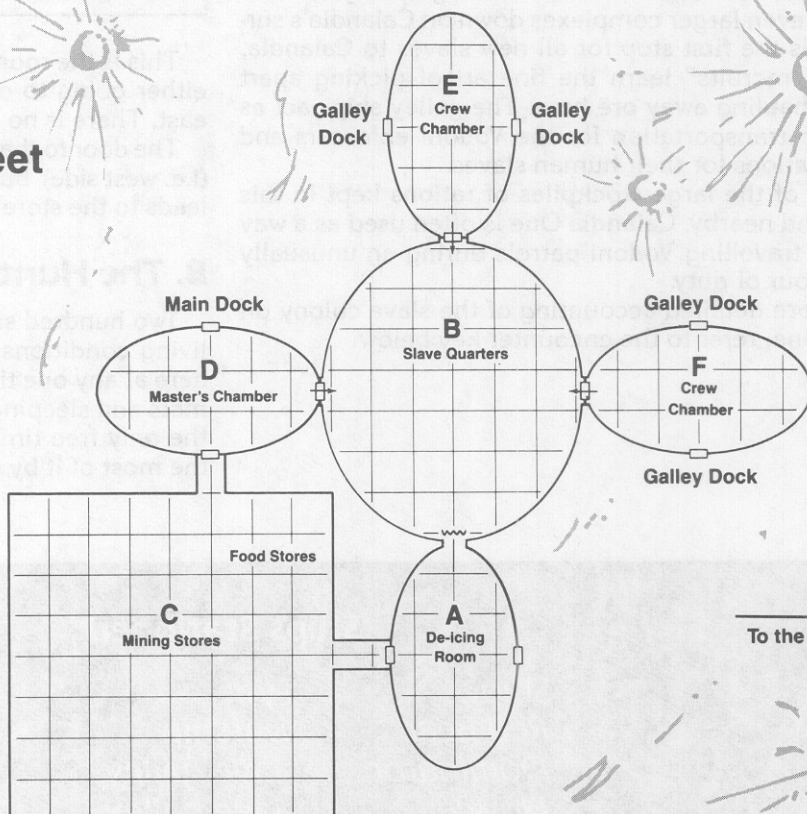
It is almost impossible to miss the Vodoni slave colony on Calandia's lone moon (a.k.a. Calandia One). The structure has been painted bright orange for easy location and identification from space, as Vulkaran doesn't believe anyone would challenge him, let alone attack an installation within his own sphere! From space, the structure looks like a single large hemisphere, circled by four smaller domes

Calandia One Slave Colony

Scale: 1 square = 10 feet

Key

-  Door
-  One-way door
-  Skin hanging



CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

and one large square enclosure. There are currently three Vodoni ships docked at the installation, four if the party followed the *Nightstalker* to this moon instead of fighting it in space. Note that the ships are all docked by the bow, as each vessel is nearly as large as the entire complex.

The round structures are magically heated constructions of the Vodoni breeders, Vulkaran's personal sorcerers, and were brought here from the Imperial City on Vulkarus (second planet in the Vodoni system) using the same vessels now in use as slave galleys. They are constructed of wood that has been coated with several layers of insulation, and the floors are usually incorporated right into the main structure. The doors are being constantly opened and closed, so the air is refreshed often. The domes heat the icy air to comfortable levels within three rounds.

The base serves many purposes for Vulkaran, and he has many like it scattered throughout the Vodoni Empire, on moons, asteroids, and in orbit around the planets.

Similar complexes have been used as bases for mining operations, as emergency storehouses for food and necessary supplies, as minor military barracks while better accommodations are being "commandeered", and as freely orbiting spy stations used to watch enemy troop movements during any planetary assault. There are round versions as well as hemispherical ones, and the units are modular.

This particular base is a minor mining colony, an outpost of the even larger complexes down on Calandia's surface. This is the first stop for all new slaves to Calandia, and these "recruits" learn the fine art of picking apart rocks and hauling away ore here. The galley ships act as both cheap transportation for the Vodoni enforcers and workout stations for their human slaves.

Because of the large stockpiles of rations kept in this complex and nearby, Calandia One is often used as a way station for travelling Vodoni patrols during an unusually extended tour of duty.

For a more detailed accounting of the slave colony on Calandia One, refer to the encounter key below.

Calandia One Base Encounter Key

A. De-Icing Room

The main doors are locked from within, and opened by a Vodoni enforcer from area D whenever a knock is heard on the outer walls. Since the enforcer on watch is usually well out of earshot, the slaves in area B are usually the ones who hear the knock and inform the watchman. More than a few slaves have frozen outside in the cold during an unusually wild night of drinking by the masters of the mines. Opening the doors without permission gets one locked out of the building without furs. In the sub-zero temperatures, the pleading and pounding usually lasts no more than a few minutes, but more than a few enforcers have won money on heartier victims.

When the PCs enter this room, read:

The walls of this room are covered in cheap fur clothing. Ice is melting in the muggy heat and the smell of unwashed animals is in the air.

An animal skin door hangs in an archway to the north, while a stout iron door is to the west. There is no handle or keyhole on the iron door. A heavy wooden door layered in slick ice is to the east.

This is the room where the slaves change when they are either going to or returning from the gem mines to the east. There is no treasure here.

The door to the west is locked and barred from the inside (i.e. west side), but is not magically or physically trapped. It leads to the store room, see the area C description.

B. The Hunter and the Hunted

Two hundred slaves share the same cramped and filthy living conditions in this large chamber, but only 80 are here at any one time. The floor is littered with filthy straw mats and sleeping (and dying) human forms. Since this is the only free time these poor wretches have, they make the most of it by sleeping, resting, and eating.

Ships Stationed

Ship	Type	Crew
<i>Red Bear</i>	warship	60
<i>Dominator</i>	slave galley	10
<i>Howler</i>	slave galley	10

CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

There are 40 slaves assigned per galley ship (160 in all), and two ships are always out in space (see area E and F). Forty more slaves work the mines in 24-hour shifts. Since the galleys usually take about a day to finish their duties, some slaves must work for 48 hours straight before they get 24 hours rest. Naturally, these tend to be the newcomers and the weak. This is known as pulling "Dead Man's Duty."

The doors to the west, north, and east are all locked with keys carried by one out of ten Vodoni enforcers. These keys also open all of the outer docking doors and the door to the mines (area A). The doorway to the south of this chamber is just an animal hide nailed to the top of the arch and leads to area A.

If the party has managed to sneak their way in here (not very hard if they are careful), they must be extremely careful not to awaken the slaves. These startle easily, and enforcers have excellent hearing. Make even one grunt, and expect an enforcer in moments.

If a fight breaks out with the enforcers in here, the slaves flee to the corners. Good PCs should take care when casting area-of-effect damage spells, as these quarters are cramped and the slaves are vulnerable (treat all slaves as 0-level humans: AC 10, hp 2-4). After a few rounds of combat, the enforcers are likely to be in a blood rage anyway, so fighting in here is probably a bad thing all the way around.

If fighting has started elsewhere in the complex, all of the remaining Vodoni enforcers proceed quickly to the site of the disturbance (within three rounds). While there are a lot of enforcers here, the cramped quarters afforded by some of the chambers can be used to the party's advantage if they're smart. Otherwise, they might be buried in berserk werewolves!

If the party loses here, the Vodoni strip them of their possessions and send them to work in the mines. Normally, they would kill invaders first and ask questions later, but "such important prisoners," they feel, "might be worth a reward." Any possible escape scenario needs to be handled by the DM, but one way or another, the PCs need to escape to continue their mission . . . unless they take their tour of the Vodoni system behind the oars of a slave galley, that is.

If the party has already dealt with the enforcers in the complex, then the slaves know they're free and have taken

it upon themselves to administer a little bit of "justice." Read:

A teeming, angry mob is encircling a figure you cannot discern from outside. There are shouts of "Kill the traitor!" and "He's responsible!" coming from the crowd. It has all the appearances of a lynch mob. A sharp wooden stake is making its way over the heads of the rioting slaves.

Enormous strength, powerful magic, or one heck of a great reaction roll are all good ways of getting past the mob and to the heart of the vengeful conflict. If the PCs don't act in two rounds, the victim is stabbed to death by the mob and the PCs gain none of the following information.

However, if the PCs do act to save the man, they better be good negotiators, as there are a lot of angry slaves in this room.

Rescuing the man is probably worth the risk, as this is the former warden of this prison before the Vodoni breeder arrived here with Vulkaran's orders to "clean the place up."

When a PC enters the fray, the scoundrel is half-wishing the newcomers are Vodoni soldiers, as he once was, but certainly plays the innocent when he realizes his mistake.

The slaves, however, go to great lengths to explain the atrocities this man is responsible for . . . and they are many. Even worse, a *know alignment* spell reveals the man is chaotic evil! If things start going against him, the warden offers information in trade for his life, both here and during the journey. Naturally, the warden is hoping for the opportunity to double-cross the party in the hopes of regaining favor from Vulkaran himself (and even earn an admiralty, perhaps?).

The DM should play this man as very shrewd and intelligent. While only a fair warrior (Fighter 5th level), the warden, whose real name is Captain Thosta Ji, is a very capable seaman on a variety of vessels. He is very familiar with both the tactics and operation of all Vodoni vessels and claims to have top secret information about Vulkaran's forces. Actually, the knowledge is commonly known throughout the Vodoni armed forces, but the PCs won't know that, and to them even his pitiful contributions

at Calendia One

Ship	Type	Crew
<i>Nightlash</i>	slave galley	10
<i>Scourge</i>	slave galley	10
<i>Vanquisher</i>	slave galley	10

CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

might prove priceless. Here are just a few of the tidbits Captain Ji can provide the party. The DM can use them now or later, as necessary.

The Legend of Vulkaran: Part II

"The warnings about the impending nova were heeded by our civilization in time to save most of our people, but not our technology. We had to take some of our neighboring spheres to survive! However, after conquering a few of them, I fear the ancient Vodoni became more warlike over time."

"When our home sphere was safe again, we returned to find the sphere rich in the precious metals and gemstone by-products of the nova's super-heated destruction."

"The entire fourth planet was destroyed, but at the time, the price seemed reasonable for our rewards."

"His werewolf enforcers have helped Vulkaran subjugate an entire system of spheres. And now there are tales of Vodoni Imperial conquerors, creatures so unimaginably horrible, no citizen or officer has seen them and lived out the day."

The captain can help the party prepare maps of the system, give estimates of the forces (only after visiting the locale in question, of course) and should prove to be the perfect double-agent. If Griktha, the neogi ambassador is travelling with the mission, he and the captain should become fast friends . . .

C. Ye Olde Store Room

This is the only building of the complex that is not heated. In the northeastern corner, a large supply of rations are stored. Importantly, there is another huge cache of frozen rations buried in the ice pack some 250 yards west of this chamber.

The rest of the building is filled with rough, uncut gemstones and mineral ores. There is no processing facility here, and once a month a large werewolf ship, hollowed out for cargo purposes lands nearby and takes the raw valuables to Vulkarus for finishing and smelting.

Depending on when the last ship departed, the raw materials are worth from 20-210,000 gp (1d20+1 × 10,000) when processed. The door to the northeast can only be opened from area B and is used exclusively for removing

rations. The door to the east can only be opened from within and is open only when the miners are bringing in valuable materials from the mines through area A. The door to the north leads to the Master's Chambers (area D) and can only be opened from that side, and only using a special silver key in the possession of the Vodoni breeder (area D) himself.

D. In The Master's Chambers

These richly appointed chambers are home to the Vodoni breeder (with maximum hit points) who now runs this little labor camp, and his 20 favorite enforcers (also with maximum hit points). His vessel, a Vodoni werewolf called the *Red Bear*, is docked to the north and just happens to be ready for immediate departure. The breeder and his men were planning to depart for Vulkarus the next day and the slaves have only just finished de-icing it. The rest of the *Red Bear's* crew (40 normal enforcers in all) are resting in areas E and F (see below).

The Vodoni breeder is wearing all the traditional magical items accorded his high status (see Appendix F for details), as well as the following additional devices: a *ring of regeneration* (which he has had *sovereign* glued to his finger) and a *potion of gaseous form*. If this guy gets away, by hook or by crook, he attempts to warn Vulkaran of the intrusion. See Chapters 5 and 6 for possible ramifications of his success.

E-F. Galley Crew Chambers

These rooms are neither posh nor scummy, just drab and typical. Two galley ship crews share each of these domes, but two of the ships are always on patrol, so only 10 galley crew members are here at any one time. However, the *Red Bear* has a full complement of crew to her credit, and there just isn't enough space for all of them in area D, so . . . the remaining 40 enforcers are split evenly (leaving each dome with a grand total of 30 enforcers at any given time).

All but one of the enforcers have no treasure, as these magically altered lycanthropes prefer to be "paid in blood." However, one of the enforcers in area E stole a pretty ring from one of his victims many months ago and

"The conditions at the Calendia mining camps were primitive in the extreme. Depending on the charac-

ter of the camp commander, camp life could vary between the merely harsh and the equivalent of a death

CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

has been wearing it ever since. To his amazingly good fortune, he just happens to be wearing a *ring of teleport*, no error (usable 3 times per day)! Unfortunately, since teleportation does not work in the Vodoni sphere (see Appendix A) and this particular enforcer has never ventured outside of his home sphere, he has no idea of the true nature or value of his prize. The item doesn't even radiate magic in this sphere! It only appears to be worth 50 gp and the enforcer, if not in an uncontrollable blood rage, certainly offers to trade the bauble for mercy if his life is ever in jeopardy.

Event 5: The Riddle of the Web

After too many days in and around Calandia, it's time to head for the inner planets!

There's only one problem, though. When the sun erupted centuries ago, it broke up the former fourth planet of the system. Thus, the second most habitable planet in the system (after Vulkarus) instantly became a massive asteroid field, the likes of which the universe has not seen before nor since.

Normally, planets break up slowly or after a collision cracks them open. During such times, the resulting rubble vibrates along the gravity plane of the system until eventually coming to rest in something of a ring about the sphere. These asteroid fields are usually only dangerous to the people who choose to mine them for their exotic and therefore profitable ores. Other travellers just sail up and over the debris ring when necessary.

However, in this case the nova so utterly fragmented the huge planet that pieces of it were scattered everywhere about the system. While much of it crashed into the infinitely strong dark crystal shell surrounding the system, or was buried beneath the icy surface of Calandia, most of it has created a wide asteroid shell around the entire inner ring of planets. The energy imparted to the asteroids remains so great, even to this day, that the asteroids remain very, very active and therefore extremely dangerous. There is no "safe way" through the asteroid field, although there are a number of "old sailor's" tricks that might come in handy here (see below).

This dangerous "asteroid web" is the primary reason why most of Vulkarus's forces remain stationed in the twelve other spheres and why Vulkarus considers himself nearly invulnerable to any large fleet-based assault against his throne. Certainly, unless the PCs can think of something before the invasion becomes necessary, the risk of losing half the fleet before it even reaches Vulkarus may make the odds of winning truly impossible. More on this dilemma later. For now, what's the party going to do?

As the PCs stand there aboard their ship, scratching their heads at the edge of this monstrously dangerous three-dimensional avalanche, Captain Ji, to save his own neck, does tell the party what little he can. He knows the breeders have a spell they use to navigate their ships through the Web, but he doesn't know what it is called or what it does. He does know that they don't study the spell like they do their other ones, but instead seem to be able to do it at will. While that may put the party on the right track (i.e. use magic), it most surely doesn't solve even one of their problems.

The DM should note that the breeders have been given the power of *eagle vision* at will by Mongrelle when they are initiated into the High Circle (see Appendix F). The combination of the far-reaching sight to provide adequate warning and the high IQ necessary to determine potentially dangerous trajectories (i.e. Intelligence ability check or Navigation skill roll, whichever is better) gives breeder-equipped ships a nearly perfect record of traversing the Web. The party might get a hint or two about the spell version of this power (i.e. *eagle vision*, see Appendix E) later on in the adventure if they play their cards right.

For now, however, the PCs have to use their own limited faculties to pass through the Web safely. The journey through the Web takes from 2-5 days (1d4 + 1). The ship cannot travel any faster due to all those little gravity wells mucking things up. Here are some likely avenues, and their summary results:

A) Avoid the asteroids: Through skillful navigation, the ship can avoid most of the asteroids, but a roll to hit based on random probability must be made every two hours. Asteroids hit with a THAC0 of 11, with a bonus of +1 for every point of speed (see 1d6 roll below). If even one asteroid hits the ship it could be disastrous. They inflict 1 to 48 points of hull damage upon any ship they hit. That's 1d8

sentence. The base on Calandia One seems to have been fairly benign, and those who were sent there ultimately considered themselves fortunate. . .

*—Chronicles of the Dark Fist
Vol. XXXIV, Scroll I*

CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

for their size TIMES 1d6 for their speed. The odds of making it through unscathed are a million to one.

B) Deflect the asteroids: Stout-hearted warriors with lots of hit points throw themselves into the path of oncoming asteroids to save their ship! After all, there's always a healing spell just around the corner. While at first it seems crazy, this idea starts to make a little bit of sense, until the first asteroid hits the living target. Multiply hull point damage as rolled above by a factor of TEN to determine the number of hit points of damage sustained by the unlucky PC. Yep, that's 10-480 points of damage per asteroid. Also, whoever is hit by the asteroid doesn't weigh enough to stop such mass from still ramming into the ship. Even if such deflection is allowed, the PC must still make a saving throw vs. death magic or be carried away into the Web by the careening hunk of rock.

C) Attack the asteroids: This seems to be a good idea, but it takes 50-400 (1d8 from A above times 50) points of blunt weapon damage to destroy the offending asteroid. Disintegrate spells count for 100 points, if a saving throw as rock is failed.

D) Use the *find the path* spell: No divine patron capable of granting this spell currently operates in this sphere (see Appendix A), but a magical item or scroll of the spell might indeed show the most direct route through the asteroid field. But is that the safest? Not at all likely. The PCs should realize very quickly that the most direct path changes every round, if not every few seconds. The strain on the caster will be extreme, concentration on the Web must be continuous, and Wisdom and Constitution checks may be required at the DM's option.

E) Use the *wall of force* spell: This is also good, as even the nastiest of planetoids bounces off the invincible sphere/wall. However, the limited area covered and short duration pose a problem, considering the length of the journey.

There are plenty of other ideas too wild and imaginative to mention here, but the information above should give the DM a pretty good idea of just what the hazards of the Web really are. If the PCs come up with a great idea, make sure to check the above list for possible stumbling blocks, as well as Appendix A for a list of Vodoni dos and don'ts (i.e. *teleport* doesn't work either) before even letting them get started. Keep in mind that the PCs don't know some-

thing isn't going to work until after it has already failed. Don't stop them from doing something dangerous, when it might lead to some action, adventure, and heroic quick thinking.

If, perchance, the party does lose the ship, having been pummeled once too often, they'd do best to stick close together and avoid any more asteroids! In a day or two, depending on how bad off they are (watch that air!), they might be picked up by a slaver ship or war patrol vessel. By the time they're conscious, they're probably looted and gagged, but at least they're alive and have a chance at freedom. They might even get a free trip to Vulkarus, on the emperor's tab.

On a final note, all of this information applies to the Free Space Alliance forces as well, so if the PCs don't think of something the whole gang can use to navigate the Web, then the whole darn mission might as well be scrapped. The war might have to wait for Vulkaran to come to them, and the "good guys" can be sure that the "bad guys" won't be bringing just one system's armada to the party.

Event 6: Meat is Murder

The third planet of the Vodoni sphere is Grog, devoted exclusively to agricultural development (the Vodoni people are, ironically, a vegetarian race). The planet has no military bases, or even a militia to defend itself. The "lucky" slaves who wind up here have the greatest freedom accorded any being in the Vodoni Empire. They are assigned a plot of land to tend, and may even marry and raise a family with little or no interference from Vulkaran or his minions.

The planet is run in the manner of a huge, feudal estate with castle-like structures scattered about the land at key locations. While duty on Grog is considered boring by enforcers and breeders alike, it is certainly much safer than actively patrolling the Vodoni Empire. Also, the fringe benefits (i.e. free reign of the populace and no enforcement of laws) appeal greatly to many Vodoni warriors.

If the PCs chose to land here, the DM can prepare a standard small keep from the usual fantasy campaign world and add a dozen Vodoni enforcers for color. Nothing

Vodoni Prime

Sala

Vodon

The Web

CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

on this planet should be much of a challenge for the party, but just making friends with the populace (very easy to do) can have certain small rewards.

Remember to check Appendix A for more interesting information on this and the other stellar bodies in the sphere.

The Legend of Vulkaran: Part III

The following quotes can come from any shaman on the planet. Note that since such religious talk is punishable by death, the slaves take great pains to assure that the PCs are not Vodoni spies. If the PCs gain their trust, read the following:

"Before the nova came, we had the Crystal King and his divine court to show us guidance. But they had to flee the sphere as well as us, and could not do so of their own power. The gods themselves feared the force of the convulsing sun. Where they are now, no one but Vulkaran and the gods themselves know."

"Feeling himself to be the only god of the Vodoni now, Vulkaran has forbidden worship of the old gods. Punishment is death by fire."

"One day, my brother, the stars themselves will rain down on us, the chosen few, and the suffering of these past centuries will be paid in full. So sayeth the Crystal King. So believeth his children."

"Beware the breeders, for they see with the eyes of Windreaper, friend of the Crystal King and seer of all things. While the breeders may claim the power of the eagle's vision for themselves, Windreaper and the children of the Crystal King know the gift was not given freely, it was taken. Without the gift, the Web would catch many flies."

The last quote deals with the *eagle vision* spell the breeders possess innately. No one but Mongrelle actually possesses a written version of the spell (see Appendix B), and the PCs aren't likely to see that until after the adventure is over. Therefore, the trick of the puzzle is that this is one of the rare times when researching a new spell is the answer to the party's problem. If the PCs are completely helpless on this one at the beginning of Chapter 4, the DM

may have to lead them to it. Otherwise, the Web remains virtually impassable.

DM note: The party should have an NPC guide at this point, either Captain Ji or a shaman or knowledgeable slave from the camp.

Event 7: Vulkarus, the Heart of Evil

Making it this far into the heart of the Vodoni Empire is probably not as difficult as one would first believe. The Web effectively screens all non-Vodoni-authorized ships from breaching the inner ring of planets. While there are certainly Vodoni vessels flitting everywhere about the second planet of the system, Vulkarus, none of them have any reason to challenge their sister vessels. That logic would no longer apply should the party still not be traveling in a Vodoni vessel, or if Vulkaran has been notified of their presence (see previous events in this chapter). In such an unfortunate situation, the PCs may be forced to crash rather than land at their next destination. Read:

The second planet of the Vodoni sphere is huge, green and lush with life. While the third planet was flat and covered with fields of grain, this planet is swamped in jungle and thick vegetation. There are three oceans visible and six continents. Only the polar caps seem to lack abundant vegetation.

There appear to be no cities visible on the planet, and no safe places to land. No place, that is, until the planet rotates a few more degrees below you. Rising high above the horizon, touching the very edge of space is a magnificent crystalline tower. The blue light of the sun gives the dagger-like tower an icy appearance.

All around the base of the tower are hundreds of streets and buildings, shops and docks. The city is huge and intricate in its design, like a monstrous two-dimensional spider's web. The Imperial City must be miles in diameter.

Thousands of vessels, both large and small, ply their trade in the vicinity.



CHAPTER 3: RECONNOITERING

The city is truly a wonder of the universe (see Chapter 5 for details on the city). If the neogi ambassador accompanied the voyage, then he is greatly moved by the web-like complex. If the dwarven ambassador sees the city, he'll begin mumbling something about "glass houses" and "rocks." Anyone should realize immediately that this is not a place the PCs want to adventure in alone. The fire-power hovering above the citadel alone is enough to obliterate the PCs a thousand times over.

Instead, the PCs should just take some aerial notes about the place in order to better describe the city to the Free Space Alliance commanders. If the PCs insist on going down for a closer look, refer to Chapter 5 for details. The NPC guide has the following information about the Imperial City:

The Legend of Vulkaran: Part IV

This is knowledge any citizen/resident of the Imperial City would know. It can be given to the PCs in space by any one of their new-found comrades, or from a resident member of the Crystal Order (see Chapter 5) down on the planet's surface.

"Below the Imperial City of Vulkarus is the Undercity, a terrible place where the enforcers are bred and fought in order to weed out the weak and increase the viciousness of the strain. Somehow, normal citizens like you and me are turned into the most horrible warriors in the universe."

"During the full moon, Vulkaran opens up the huge metal grates that lead to the Undercity and the enforcers pour forth into the streets. Those of us not in hiding who are not killed are taken back to the Undercity and never heard from again."

"That doesn't even consider the disappearances, and the murders. Entire families have been inexplicably butchered by their husbands or wives, children or parents. No doubt, the offenders flee to the Undercity in shame."

For more on both the Imperial City and the Undercity, refer to the text boxes located on the large fold-out map included with this adventure. A map of the Imperial City can also be found with the text, in case the DM desires to run the epic battle in its entirety, or the PCs decide to do some City/Undercity adventuring later on in this chapter.

Event 8: Infernal Realms

Sala, the last planet in the Vodoni sphere, is an amazing site but apparently of little interest to the party or the Free Space Alliance. The planet is little more than a huge ball of molten lava in space. While its proximity to the system sun accounts for much of this phenomenon, Vodoni scholars are in agreement that there is more to Sala than meets the eye.

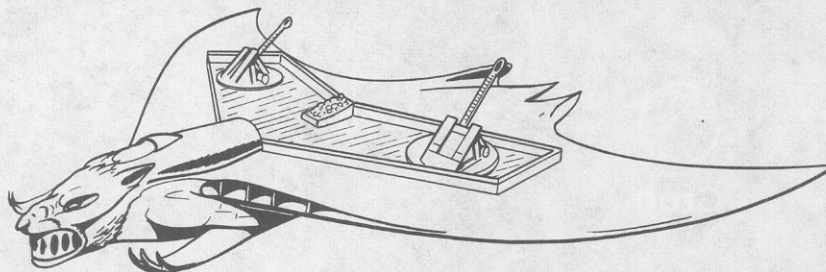
The planet was always hot and volcanic, but after the nova, its body was no longer even solid. In effect, the nova created a monstrous vortex to the Elemental Plane of Fire. The bulk of the nova blast was channelled through this vortex, much like water running down a drain. The vortex works both ways, allowing entrance to and egress from the elemental plane in this sphere. However, until the Crystal King and his divine assembly are released from their eternal prison (see Appendix E, New Magic), the creatures of the elemental planes will be both dangerous and unpredictable. After four centuries of lawless self-rule, the elemental planes are a chaotic place, to be sure.

Travelling to this planet, let alone diving into the lava pools, is a journey better left to another day.

Event 9: Homeward Bound

The PCs have scouted and learned all they really need to know about Vulkaran and the Vodoni home sphere before the great invasion. Whether their journey took a few months or a few years is up to the DM. Vulkaran is in no hurry to invade their universe, so the heroes can afford to adventure a little. Again, the decision is up to the DM, as to whether or not this expedition mushrooms into bigger and better things.

The journey back should be a relatively safe and uneventful one, as the PCs have a story to tell and a war to coordinate. The PCs are going to be up to their necks in all manner of combat from here on in. The subtle part of the campaign is over.



CHAPTER 4: THE SIEGE OF CALANDIA

"My boy, in space the first step is always a doozy."

—Admiral Highforge
Commander of the Dwarven Fleet

The chapter begins with a war council on the Rock of Bral, which quickly leads to preparations for an all-out invasion of the Vodoni home sphere. The PCs are chosen to spearhead the siege and capture of the mining colony on Calandia, which the Alliance intends to use as its command and staging area. After some final preparations, the fleet sets sail for the Web.

Event 1: The War Council

Role-playing out the party's report is probably unnecessary, as is the council's deliberations on the Rock of Bral. No one doubts the need for a first strike, and even the neogi reluctantly agree to the council's decisions. Since the PCs are neither generals nor politicians, it is probably best if the battle plan is formulated by professionals in the art (i.e. NPCs). This also eliminates the necessity of preparing six or seven different adventure scenarios for the rest of the campaign. The party's input is welcome, of course, and if the prepared plan below matches their own ideas, so much the better. There's no need to let them know that at this point in time regrettably the needs of the story must dictate their actions.

Prince Andru announces the decision behind closed doors, to the party and the other delegates. Read:

Prince Andru has a look of both sadness and determination on his face as he rises to address the war council.

"So, war it is. We must strike while our iron is hot, and his iron remains cold. His forces at home are weak and complacent, but should he be permitted to coordinate his monstrous war machine, comprised of vessels from nearly a dozen spheres, there is no doubt that our worlds, too, would succumb to Vulkaran's barbarous tyranny.

The plan as presented to me is this:

We shall gather all spelljamming vessels in the Known Spheres. They will be commandeered if necessary, although this is a time of great danger and I hope

that all lands, kings, and races will band together in the hour of our greatest need. The finest forces shall man these vessels, as all trivial wars and conflicts must now be set aside. We cannot afford to spare even one valiant warrior, or sorceress, if their talents can be used.

Meanwhile, the heroes of the hour, our brave venturers into the unknown, must turn their attention to another, more urgent task. If we cannot safely navigate the asteroid field known as the Web, we cannot hope to carry the day when we reach Vulkaran's city of evil. I challenge you with that assignment. Without your success, our efforts are all in vain."

Naturally, the prince is referring to the PCs in the above paragraph. If the PCs have an answer already, then the dilemma is solved. Otherwise, they need to break out their thinking caps for a challenge of another type.

Note that researching the spell *eagle vision* (Appendix E) is likely to be the only way to continue the mission. Since the spell is only third level, any wizard of 5th level or higher should be able to cast it. There should be plenty of wizards at least that level on board each war ship, as the Vodoni have proven themselves especially susceptible to spells. Well-phrased divination spells can provide the PCs with the clues they need to the riddle of the Web.

When the party finally figures it out (they must to continue the adventure), proceed to Event 2.

Event 2: Logistical Nightmares

After solving the mystery, the party members should concentrate on preparing themselves and their ship to venture back to the Vodoni sphere. After having been there and back again, they should have a better idea of what they'll need and how much. Refer for Chapter 2 for some suggestions.

Smart PCs should ask about their intended missions during the war at this time, so they can better prepare to meet future challenges. Only Prince Andru knows everything, and for secrecy's sake, he is keeping his lips sealed in most instances. If the PCs role-play their sincerity convincingly, Prince Andru lets them in on the following information. Read:

DM Note

Urge the party to be creative as they outfit their ship and crew for the invasion. You might even jot down some of the tactics they plan, so you can work them into the storyline later.

CHAPTER 4: THE SIEGE OF CALANDIA

"We originally discussed many battle plans before we finally came to our decision.

At first, we thought about laying siege to the food planet, Grog, and waiting for the armadas. But we would be projecting ourselves far from home, and this would give Vulkaran time to prepare, search for weaknesses, and develop his most effective attack formations.

We also thought about dealing with each planet, one after the other, in a long-term campaign. But this would allow reinforcements to arrive from Vulkaran's other spheres.

We have finally settled on a surprise attack, driving straight to Vulkaran's Imperial City in the hopes that we can send a shockwave through his forces, as Vulkaran is the keystone holding the Vodoni forces together. This plan is also the riskiest, as we must succeed early in the war, lest we be surrounded by Vulkaran's reinforcements from the other spheres. By the time they arrive, we must already be in power.

A quick and decisive victory is of paramount importance, and this is why we've entrusted to your band the very lifeblood of the mission. Our surprise attack plan also incorporates a classic 'decapitation' maneuver. While the battle rages in space and on land, you must breach the Imperial Palace and deal with Vulkaran in whatever way is necessary. He must be taken out of the picture, permanently. Only with the Dark Lord gone, can we hope to sway the tides of battle.

We have all agreed that your reward, commensurate with the difficulty and danger of the mission, shall be the evil emperor's personal treasure hoard, no matter how great the storehouse might be. Hopefully, four centuries of pillaging twelve entire spheres has produced a treasure worthy of great deeds."

The PCs can accomplish their mission any way they want, within the boundaries of the campaign, of course (see Chapters 5 and 6), so they might want to start making plans now.

The other races amass their spelljamming ships near the outer reaches of the sphere, awaiting their orders. The command ship is the elven armada, *Arrow of Justice*, from Chapter 1, and all of the ambassadors and generals are found here, as well as a magical message network of wiz-

ards who send and receive emergency instructions when necessary. The PCs are given a device that will allow them to contact the network up to three times every day and are given a contact aboard the armada for dispatches.

Besides the command ship, the elves are bringing along every spelljamming warship they have at their disposal, and are easily the best trained and most capable of the Alliance forces. Everyone only wishes there were more of them. The dwarves are bringing along their huge floating arsenals, known as citadels, while the beholders and illithids have gathered an impressive array of strange and exotic vessels powered by devices better off not investigated.

The gnomes invariably arrive late due to "technical difficulties." Prince Andru is remarkably at ease about the whole situation, claiming "all was anticipated" and "they have a special mission all their own."

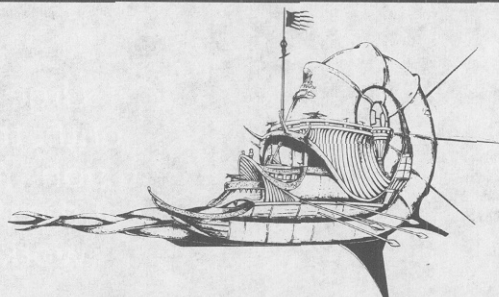
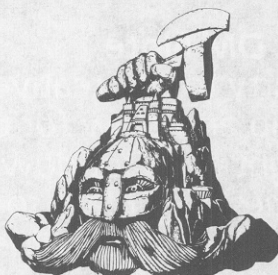
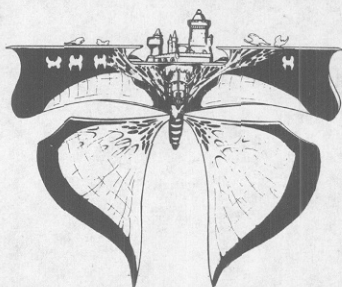
The humans, ill-trained but full of heart and courage, have diversity and sheer numbers on their side. While no two ships are alike, there each have their own peculiarities and specialties, making it unlikely that Vulkaran's forces will find battling them predictable. The humans also bring an unexpected surprise to the war . . . lizard man ships, ogre ships, and many more strange contraptions too numerous to detail. All in all, the Vodoni are in for quite a surprise.

The neogi arrive last of all, but with a force of terrifying power. No one in their wildest dreams realized just how many neogi were really "out there" and all are just as sure that the neogi have not left their secret dens unguarded. Few will underestimate the magnitude of their presence ever again.

When all is said and done, a swarm of vessels armed to the teeth and undulating with raw magical power begins the slow, arduous process of breaching the crystal sphere a few ships at a time.

Event 3: Brother Helping Brother

Luck is with the freedom fighters this day, as only 5% of the Alliance forces are lost travelling the phlogiston. If the DM wants to throw in some encounters in which the PCs can show off their heroism, feel free. The journey then takes on the proportions of an epic exodus, ironically rivaling the original Vodoni flight to safety so many centu-



CHAPTER 4: THE SIEGE OF CALANDIA

ries ago. Otherwise, the journey should only be detailed enough to reaffirm just how small the universe really is . . .

Event 4: The First Hurdle

When the Alliance forces reach the Vodoni sphere, their first challenge of the war is upon them. Read:

As the sea of ships reaches the end of your journey, you are summoned aboard the *Arrow of Justice* for a war conference.

There, Prince Andru and the other generals prepare to set the first stage of the campaign into motion.

"Based on your information, we expect Vodoni resistance immediately upon entering the system. We are therefore sending in some of our most advanced ships first in order to clear the area of enemy vessels. Once that is accomplished, that team is to head for the mines on Calandia and take the main complex by force. By the time the rest of our fleet has entered the sphere, Calandia will be ours.

We'd like your team to spear-head the mission. You're experienced with the icy terrain and know what to look for. Are you game?"

If the PCs refuse the honor they have been accorded, everyone in the war room grumbles a little under their breath. If they offer an alternate plan, the DM should do his best to return the PCs to the original course of events by having the generals explain the pros and cons of the PCs suggestions. If, by some stroke of genius, the PCs actually do come up with a better plan, the DM must take it upon himself to adjust the next few events accordingly. Not every contingency can be anticipated in advance.

Assuming the mission proceeds as planned, the PCs lead a fleet of no less than 20 elven man-o-wars, chosen for their speed, maneuverability, and firepower. They bear spell casters carrying spells useful in battling Vodoni butcher and assassin ships.

When the next portal opens up nearby, the strike team heads through. As soon as they enter Vodoni space, Vodoni war ships begin closing in. The PCs have accomplished the first part of the mission already, by leading the strike force in. They can chose to head to Calandia ahead

of the main force (proceed to Event 5), or they might want to stay awhile.

Now that the PCs are prepared for their enemies, they may want to try out some of their own strategies, perhaps developed during earlier gaming sessions. The DM should allow the PCs to indulge themselves now that they have had experience with the Vodoni crews and tactics, if they so desire. This is likely to be the last time they actually see this particular type of combat during the war.

Event 5: The Mines of Calandia

While there are dozens of abandoned mine complexes on the planet of Calandia, only one is currently in operation (as evidenced by the bright orange domes that are characteristic of Vodoni encampments). When the PCs finally locate this ice-bound mountainous plateau, show them a hand-drawn sketch of the Mines of Calandia map. Do not include any references to particular locations, especially area D (see below).

If the PCs arrive here before the main strike force, they



*"When Winds of War Blow Hot
And the Wolf is Cornered in His Den
"Beware the Winds of Death Blow Cold
When Wyrms of Fortune Turn Again."*

—An Augary

CHAPTER 4: THE SIEGE OF CALANDIA

must decide whether or not to attack based on their own interpretation of the map. Since there are six werewolf ships docked on the plateau, it is reasonable to assume that there are almost 250 Vodoni enforcers in the area as well. What the PCs don't know, is that things are even more dangerous than that, and the main strike force is at least a turn (10 rounds) behind them. If they proceed anyway, go to the encounter key below for details.

If, by chance, the PCs do wait for the main strike force, the decisions should be much easier. The man-o-wars and their crews attempt to bombard the werewolf vessels and their associated towers, only landing after the ships are destroyed and the enforcers are hiding inside. The PCs are free to attack the main complex on land or from the air. There are advantages and drawbacks to both (see below).

Mines of Calandia Encounter Key

C. Chambers of the Slaves

This is the largest structure in the mining complex and is home to over 2400 slaves. They work in the mines (area M) in 8-hour shifts, 800 miners at a time. While it is heated in the same manner as the similar Vodoni constructions on Calandia One, the place is rank with death and disease. Miners who die in the mines are dumped down a chasm, while slaves who die in here are thrown over the cliff edge or fed to the dragons in area D. Since the mines are heated also, the slaves are not given any heavy clothing to wear. They must suffer the frigid cold when running from area C to area M and back again.

These poor wretches are just 0-level humans and have no treasure or valuables. If armed, however, they do offer to join any rebellion against Vulkaran, or even the breeders who run this colony. They also know of the dragons at area D and warn rescuers about them immediately upon their liberation. They surely refuse to go outside the complex until the dragons are dealt with.

D. The Dragons' Lair

Many, many centuries ago, a pair of dragons met, fell in love, and set up light housekeeping on an isolated, desert-

ed little ball of ice called Calandia. However, just a few hundred years later, that bright and distant object in the sky they watched rise and fall every day started glowing very strangely. As the two dragons watched in utter amazement at the strange happenings in the sky, the light suddenly got terribly bright indeed. So bright, in fact, that the dragons were blinded almost instantly. In fear and horror, the two once majestic beasts instinctively retreated to the very depths of their mountainous retreat, to nurse their wounds and wait for the sun to return to normal.

Only moments later, the entire lair shook and convulsed with an unimaginable lurch. Wave after wave of violent energy shook the planet like no earthquake ever had. The dragons were buried and burned terribly, even hundreds of feet beneath the surface of the planet.

Now, four centuries later, the two white dragons, Lukio and Babia are doing much better. Although they are still blind, they have worked a deal with some "local merchants." In exchange for the dragons' permission, the merchants mine gems for them. Sure, the merchants take a lot of the gems, but the dragons honestly believe they are getting the dragons' share of the mining efforts, instead of the scraps.

Dragons are notorious for not enjoying surprises, and when a pair of great wyrms aren't happy, somebody has to pay the price.

Lukio and Babia have maximum hit points for huge, great wyrm white dragons. However, they possess no spell powers and they are totally blind. Even their eyes are completely white now.

Even though they cannot see, their other senses have compensated significantly over four centuries, and therefore, the two dragons are only at half-penalties for blindness (i.e. their to-hit penalty is -2, not -4, etc.).

If any major combat erupts on the plateau, even indoors, Lukio and Babia hear it through the vibrations in the ground. Within 2-5 rounds (depending on how deep within their lair they just happen to be), the two dragons join the fray.

If the PCs are fighting alone, the dragons have easy pickings on their hands. Whether the PCs are in the air, or on the ground, the dragons do everything in their power to get to the enemy . . . even if it means freezing a few friendly merchants!

If the PCs waited for the main force, then the dragons

Dragon, White:

Int Low; AL CE; AC -7;
MV 12, FI 40 (C), Br 6; HD 11
(base); THACO 9 (base); #AT 3 +

special; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-16; SA Blind
(-2), breath 12d6 + 12; SD
Variable; MR 40%; SZ G; ML 16

CHAPTER 4: THE SIEGE OF CALANDIA

start blasting randomly. With the combination of breath weapons, claws, bites, tail lashes, and wing buffets, each of these dragons should be able to effectively disarm and/or disable one vessel every round. The dragons prefer to attack air targets to ground targets, but anyone or anything their local merchant friends (i.e. the Vodoni breeders of area Q) direct them towards becomes the enemy of the hour . . . and the breeders know this fact well.

The dragons' only treasure is ton after ton of rough uncut stones, of little value per rock, but worth a million gp if hauled away and finished. The party might do well to remember this monstrous stash after the events of Chapter 6 have unfolded, as they probably wind up watching their anticipated rewards fall like rain from the clouds . . .

M. The Mines

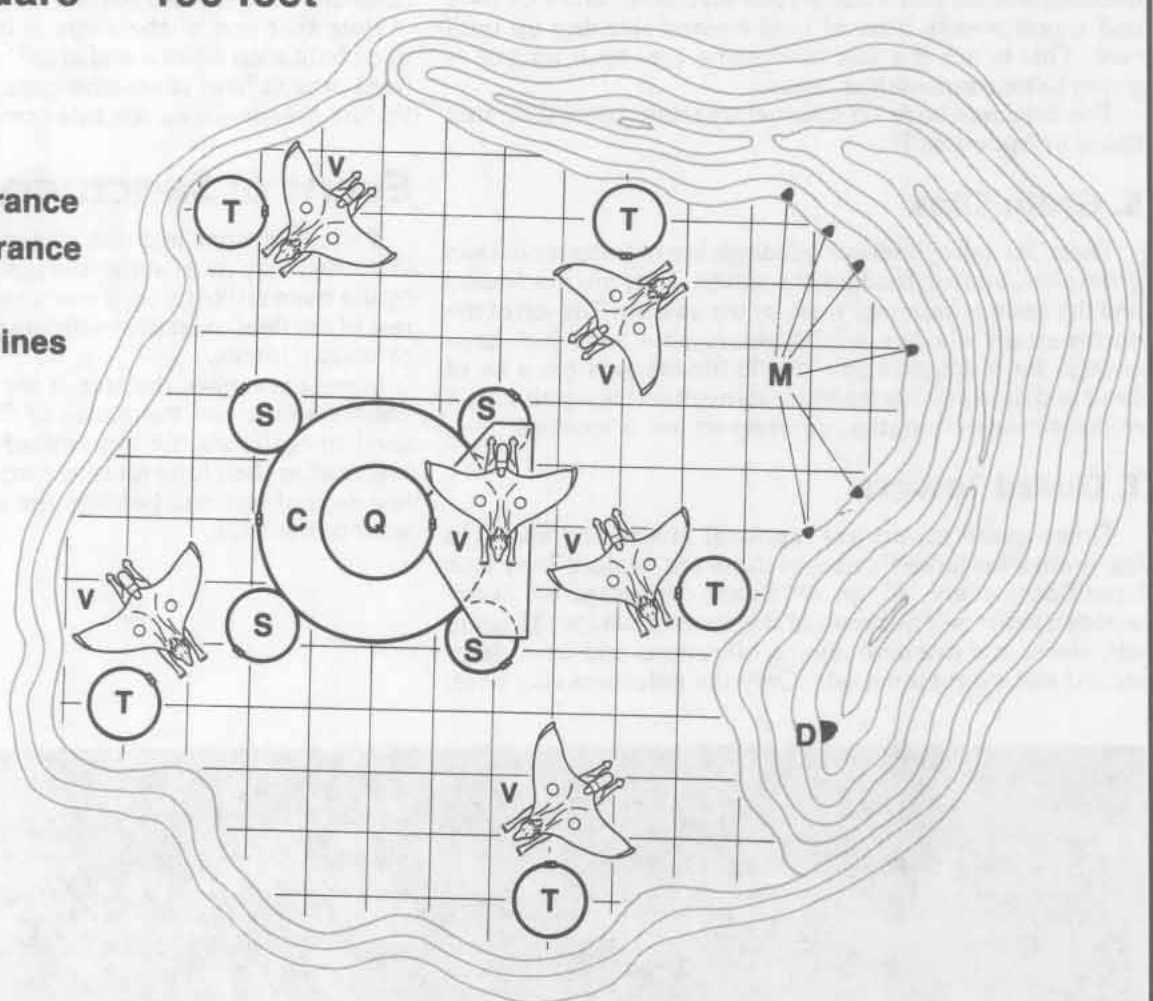
A deep complex of poorly shorn and badly lighted tunnels weaves its way far below the surface of Calandia. As mentioned in area C, 800 miners are usually digging away in here, under the watchful eyes of only 40 Vodoni enforcers. The slaves are not chained, and there is a 25% chance that they will be unguarded when the PCs find them. These slaves know about the dragons in area D and gladly warn rescuers about them.

The Mines of Calandia

Scale: 1 square = 100 feet

Key

-  Mine entrance
-  Cave entrance
-  Doors
-  Contour lines



CHAPTER 4: THE SIEGE OF CALANDIA

Q. Breeders' Quarters

The party is likely to have one heck of a fight on its hands if they walk into this room unprepared. Six Vodoni breeders share these richly appointed chambers and they are very fond of their cushy jobs.

The breeders are not a brave lot in hand-to-hand combat, and likely flee to their ship (area V through the eastern doors). They aren't running away from the fight, they just prefer more room to work in. They also know they have some friends at area D who need to be called in before things get too out of hand.

Once backed into a corner, however, these breeders toss spells with the best of them, and take no prisoners with the PCs. They even blow up their own comrades rather than lose a fight to the "invaders." Also, these magic-users know *teleport* doesn't work in this sphere and will have few classic escape options open (DM's choice: secret doors, *potions of diminution*, etc.).

This should be the real challenge to this encounter, as the dragons are just a dangerous diversion. The PCs have had a pretty easy time of hacking-and-slashing up until now. This is not the last time some real spell muscle is going to be used against them.

The breeders have no unusual treasure, other than that listed in Appendix F.

S. Grain Silos

These 30' tall cylindrical buildings are nothing more than grain silos, storing food for the slaves. They are not heated and the grain is kept very fresh by the cold air. The top of the northwestern silo has a 5' diameter hole in it, just large enough for a dragon's paw. While the dragons get a lot of dead and dying slaves for food, sometimes they grab a little midnight snack from the silo when no one is looking.

T. Guard Towers

These guard towers are identical in size and shape to the grain silos (area S), except these are heated. They also have floors every 10' up, which are connected by sturdy wooden ladders. The crews of the werewolf ships (40 each) eat, sleep, and live here, dining off rations and "real" food stored aboard their vessels. Only the enforcers stay here,

however, as the breeders share posh chambers in area Q.

These five enforcer crews work 8-hour guard shifts in the mines, though they tend to be unreliable (see area M). There is a 25% chance that the slaves in area M are unguarded. The DM should roll for this possibility first, when the PCs arrive. If the slaves are guarded, randomly determine which tower's crew is on duty.

There is no treasure in the towers.

V. Vodoni Vessels

There are always six werewolf ships converted for cargo purposes stationed here at any one time. Each ship is manned by 40 typical Vodoni enforcers and one Vodoni breeder. One ship doesn't leave until a previously departed vessel returns. This happens about once a month.

Each ship is from 10-100% (1d10×10%) full with rough uncut gems. The cargo is worth 1,000 gp for every 1% carried (i.e. from 10,000-100,000 gp). There is no other treasure on board the ships, but a large supply of rations and food fills each lower deck.

Note that one of the ships is docked at a special dry dock built atop areas S and area C. It can only be accessed from area Q, and is an emergency escape vessel for the Vodoni breeders who run this complex.

Event 6: Sanctuary

If the PCs went into the mines of Calandia alone and lost, then they must suffer the ignominy of being rescued by the main strike force. If everybody was beaten, then the rest of the fleet must deal with the remaining dragons and/or Vodoni forces.

In any case, once the area is secured, the food stores of Calandia One and the Mines of Calandia are raided and used to replenish the diminished stocks of the Alliance forces after their long journey through deep space. After a few days of rest and healing, the war must continue. Onward to the Web!

"The most difficult relationship in any massive military undertaking is the balance between the goals of

the political leadership and the methods of the professional military. Judging when sound military

CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

"The enemy of my enemy is my enemy."

—Neogi Proverb

The Free Space Alliance moves onward through the Vodoni sphere, facing the ominous Web before finally reaching the Imperial City on Vulkarus. The wolves-in-sheep's clothing are revealed, and the PCs are challenged by the best protected citadel in the known universe. Death from above and below strikes suddenly as the "War of the Spheres" builds towards an astounding climax.

Event 1: The Web Revisited

The fear gripping the hearts of men going to war is nothing compared to the sheer terror of men confronting the awesome power of Nature herself. Poised on the edge of death itself is a comparatively small collection of the Alliance's finest warships, paling in comparison to the moon-sized chunks of planetary rubble careening ahead of them. The Alliance forces have reached the verge of the Web.

If the PCs did not discover a way safely through the asteroid shell, the Alliance forces are sure to be decimated by the time they reach the other side. If the fleet takes no precautions whatsoever and tries to run their way through, they lose fully 75% of their number. If they take even some of the precautions mentioned earlier in the adventure, only 50% of the force is lost. If the *eagle vision* option is used, or something the DM rules just as ingenious and effective, only 10% (or less) of the force never reaches Vulkarus.

Of course, the PCs must still spend the next 2-5 days navigating the asteroids as well. This time, however, they should have little trouble compared to the rest of the novices travelling with them. If by chance the party does run into some bad luck, like the one asteroid that hits happens to destroy the entire ship, the other vessels around them quickly come to the heroes' aid and another ship and crew are made available to them.

Naturally, the success of the entire war hinges critically on the fleet's success at breaching the Web.

Event 2: Assault on Vulkarus!

Whatever remains of the fleet heads towards Vulkarus, with the hope of catching Vulkaran off guard enough to win a quick and decisive victory. Even if only half of the

fleet remains, the Alliance generals still believe they outnumber the Vodoni forces. If most of the force (75% or more) were lost to the Web, then the fleet is now on a suicide run, hoping that surprise alone will carry the day. They feel that even if the Imperial City is taken, and Vulkaran is dealt with forever, perhaps those who follow can finish the job.

The battle formation is as follows:

A) The elven squadron is the backbone of the force, having the only ships equipped to deal with the enemy hunter-killer vessels. Without them, the Alliance forces would be picked off like so many ducks in a pond. The elven armada vessels will protect the command ship and act as bases of operations for medical and rescue teams.

B) The dwarves fully intend to crash their citadels into anything that gets in their way, but that is not their mission. They prefer hand-to-hand combat and have requested the honor of battling the enemy werewolf vessels. Glorious.

C) The largest force, the humans, is going to take the Imperial City on the ground. The sheer numbers of Vodoni enforcers below, and the fact that the Vodoni citizens are human also, makes it much more likely the oppressed people will welcome the new invaders, rather than fear them. The humans have asked the miscellaneous beastships (i.e. lizard men, ogres, etc.) to join them.

D) Curiously, the gnomes have been ordered to land in the Imperial City and begin tinkering with anything they can get their grubby little hands on. The Alliance generals fully expect the Vodoni command structure and public facilities to break down after only a few short hours.

E) The smallest forces, the illithids and the beholders, are using their spell powers to locate and annihilate the enemy nightwolf vessels, wherever they may be hiding. They also are supposed to provide magical support for the heavily outnumbered dwarven forces.

F) If the Alliance forces are reasonably intact, the neogi are expected to act as the rear guard for the fleet. The Alliance generals are expecting Vulkaran to have something up his sleeve, and believe it will come from either Grog or Tala. If nothing unexpected arrives after an hour, or the Alliance forces are weak to begin with, the neogi are expected to join in the space battle any way they can.

G) The PCs are supposed to use the cover of battle to slip into the Imperial Palace. It is well known throughout

strategy must be sacrificed to the pursuit of political objectives is the art of the war leader. When the military force is a coalition of allied spheres, as it was in the attack on Vulkaran, the complexity of the problem is magnified ten-thousandfold."

—*Memoirs of Admiral Highforge*
Vol. II

CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

the system that the main gates are the only way into Vulkaran's supposedly invulnerable fortress, but the PCs are trusted to accomplish their mission any way they wish.

And now, let the war commence . . .

Event 3: Octal-Cross

Read the following aloud to the players when the Alliance forces reach Vulkarus, ready for battle:

The fleet is poised and ready for battle. The ships are arranged in their fighting formations, and the crews are mentally and physically prepared for war. Only one thing is sure today: Death will reign over all.

As the final defensive spells are cast, the Imperial City comes slowly into view. Now, only a few minutes

away, the enemy forces seem to be taking notice of your intrusion. Ships that were drifting lazily to and fro, begin massing in rushed formations. It is amazing, however, to see how quickly Vulkaran's military machine is placed in working order. Surely, this a well-trained and dangerous adversary.

The battle is about to commence as the first ships are only moments apart. But something strange is hovering near the palace. Could it be? A neogi mindspider and a jet-black neogi deathspider, a rare black widow ship, are docked high about the palace. Not only are the Vodoni not attacking the neogi vessels, it is now obvious to all that they are indeed protecting them!



CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

Cries of treachery and dismay resound throughout your ship and hundreds like it all around you. As the two neogi vessels turn to face you, the fighting has already begun at your rear. The neogi vessels of the Alliance are attacking! In an ambush that will be remembered in infamy for generations to come, the fleet is surrounded by both of the deadliest forces of evil the universe has ever seen.

Even worse for you, the neogi mindspider and black widow are leaving no doubt what their intended target is. They are heading straight for you.

The PCs have two options now. They can engage the neogi ships alone (there can be no help from anyone else for now), or they can try and outrun the ambush by diving down towards the Imperial City, where they can begin going after Vulkaran personally.

No matter what course they chose, if Griktha, the neogi ambassador is still travelling with the party, he has no intention of taking on the whole crew himself. While he lets Spinesnapper cause a diversion (i.e. "Spinesnapper, kill!!!!"), Griktha jumps off the PCs' ship and uses a *fly* spell to head towards the approaching black widow. The PCs can deal with the slow-moving villain any way they want, but they probably have more important things on their minds at the moment.

If the PCs flee, the DM must take into account the fact the neogi are closer to the palace than the PCs are. So the PCs have distance as well as odds against them. All the neogi need do is tilt their ships downward and start firing. There is no way the PCs can avoid taking at least a few rounds of shots against them while they head to the planet's surface. However, the PCs should have little trouble actually reaching the main gates and, even better for them, the huge entranceway is open today. (This was done especially for them. Vulkaran's been expecting guests . . . muhahahaha.) Proceed to Event 5.

If the PCs are feeling especially bold and powerful today, or they just really hate neogi (especially now!), they might decide to take on both ships themselves. This is a crack crew of neogi, however, and they've been training for the past few weeks with only one thing in mind . . . kill the PCs!

The neogi battle plan is to send the mindspider in first, in the hopes it can grapple or pierce the PCs' ship. The black widow then moves into medium range and begins

loosing its impressive arsenal of greek fire projectors, bombards, catapults, and ballistae on the PCs. It's sure to be an ugly sight and a quick end to the PCs if they don't have some rabbits left in their magical hats.

If the PCs win, they need to head down to the planet fast. No time to search for treasure, as there's a war going on! Proceed to Event 5 pronto.

The mindspider's stats are typical for its type and it carries a crew of 40 normal neogi. The black widow is a specially modified version of the dread neogi deathspider, and has been specially recruited by Vulkaran just to handle the PCs upon their return to Vulkarus. The ship is manned by 100 neogi, who are manning the large number of missile weapons aboard this warship. See the SPELL-JAMMER™ boxed rules for details on the neogi mindspider, deathspider, and black widow ships.

If the PCs get in too much of a pinch (i.e. the neogi are about to eat them), the DM can bring in a few elven mano-wars, or perhaps a couple of ships the PCs saved earlier on in the adventure, to rescue them. The rescuers gladly trade ships, or what's left of them, with the PCs in order to begin the attack of Vulkaran's palace. If the PCs dawdle too much longer, the war will be lost! Proceed to Event 5.

Event 4: Meanwhile, Back in Space

This event assumes the PCs are already on their way through the main gates of Vulkaran's palace (see Event 5). It is presented here first, in order to give the DM an idea of what's happening in near space while the PCs are off searching for Vulkaran.

The elven armadas that were supposed to be protecting the command vessel and healing the wounded, have instead taken it upon themselves to deal with the huge neogi deathspiders now ambushing the Alliance forces. This leaves the command vessel open for later events in the story. How convenient . . .

The illithids, who were supposed to be helping the dwarves, decided the logical choice was to take out the neogi mindspiders. Unfortunately, they are heavily outnumbered. This leaves both the dwarves and the illithids in very bad shape indeed.

The Nightwolves are worst when they come in packs. They fire the forward catapults as they dive in, then let you have it with the rear jettisons as they pass. When you're crippled, they swarm and board you. It still gives me nightmares.

—Anonymous spelljammer

CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

The beholders also go after the mindspiders, but this only lasts for a few hours. Once one beholder vessel accidentally damages another beholder ship, all of the other tyrant ships start attacking each other. Civil war breaks out among the beholders yet again! This time, it's right in the middle of a full scale conflagration. The only cheery note about the whole disheartening escapade is the fact that the tyrant ships are going through the neogi vessels to get at one another, doing more damage to the enemy by accident than they ever could have hoped to accomplish on purpose. Naturally, the illithids are keeping a prudent distance from the whole affair and are wisely attacking neogi stragglers as they flee the wholesale carnage.

The human forces have only just begun to fight, but already have been joined by a secret resistance movement known as the Crystal Order. They are just low-level fighters who have been waiting for the right time to strike, but the Crystal Order should help turn the tide of the ground battle decisively in the Alliance's favor.

The elves are holding their own against the hunter-killers and the gnomes are still landing on . . . uh, crashing into . . . the city, so it's going to be awhile before there are any significant results on the ground.

That's the state of affairs until Chapter 6. More to come later.

Event 5: The Imperial Palace

The tower of Vulkaran rises well above Vulkarus's cloud level. This amazing structure is neither natural nor man-made. In exchange for his freedom from the artifact, *Eye of the Gods* (see Appendix E), the elemental lord of earth for this sphere made a bargain with Vulkaran. The immense quartz palace is considered to be one of the true wonders of the Known Universe.

The entire palace, inside and out, is protected by a permanent *walls of force*, powered by the *Eye of the Gods* in area V. The quartz-like material as well as the magical protections above extend to both the Astral and Ethereal planes, so there is absolutely no easy way to reach the top. The PCs have to go about this mission the hard way, one step at a time.

For more on what lurks within Vulkaran's crystal citadel of power, refer to the encounter key below.

Imperial Palace Encounter Key

A. Charon's Gate

The only entrance to the Imperial Palace is through a huge crystal gate that is located at the base of the tower. Like the rest of the palace (see below), the gate is supposedly impervious to all forms of attack, either physical or magical, and is beyond the scale of mortal construction. There are live earth elementals bound into the door mechanism, which permits its operation.

The entrance is large enough for a ship to sail into, as the maze beyond would be unmanageable without some form of quick transportation.

Fortunately for the PCs, someone's left the door open today. Vulkaran knows better than anybody that no ship ever entered the maze uninvited and lived out the day.

B. A Maze of Glass

When the PCs finally brave the palace gate, read:

Sailing through the gaping maw of the palace gate, you are startled to see a hundred reflections of your vessel all around you. After a moment of disorientation, it is now obvious that you are sailing into a huge reflective spherical chamber.

There are three round exits to this room, and all of them are large enough to sail through.

In the center of the room is a gargantuan statue of Vulkaran the Dark. Fully five times the size of your ship, it looms ominously before you.

The emperor is wearing a set of full body plate mail, polished to a finish rivalling the finest mithril mirrors of elven royalty. His armor is angular and sharp, not smooth. His helmet seems more like a mask than a full warrior's helm.

A full-length black cloak is draped over the statue's shoulders and down his back, and the breeze behind you reveals that the rippling cloak is made of cloth, not stone.

*Wise men shun the Gate of Charon
in the palace of the King
And the shining caves' reflection
where the crystal spiders sing...*
— "The Lay of Vulkaran"
Anon.

CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

The statue stands cold, emotionless. Its only expression is the gesture of a tightly clenched fist at the end of a stiff, outstretched arm.

The statue of Vulkaran is only lightly layered in mithril and is non-magical. It is a time-waster.

The glass-like spherical chamber the PCs have entered is a chamber in a maze unlike any other. In fact, its very presence was unknown before now. Never has a maze been designed for spelljamming vessels, and the PCs are about to test this devious device's construction.

The maze itself was designed and built by the strange race of crystal spiders found in areas C and S. Unlike most of Vulkaran's associates, the spiders have created the huge maze of their own free will, in exchange for a place to live and Vulkaran's guarantee of freedom.

The spherical chambers have been eaten out of the quartz material of the palace tower, and subsequently polished and smoothed over many decades. The maze aspect of the construction is a natural defense mechanism of the spiders and not Vulkaran's doing. Naturally, the Dark Lord has adapted the spiders' natural maze to his own ends.

The chambers are protected from spells and physical force like the rest of the palace and cannot be bypassed. Fortunately for the PCs, the maze is neither large nor complex, just littered with Vulkaran's traps and crystal spiders sworn to defend their home until death.

The only random encounters within the maze are with the spiders. There is a 1-in-4 chance that from 2-5 spiders are tending a sphere when the party enters it. The DM may roll for the location and number of the spiders before play begins, as the party arrives in each sphere, or just decide as necessary. Stats for the crystal spiders are found in Appendix F. These wandering spiders have no treasure.

C. Mothers' Wrath

If the PCs enter this chamber, not only are they heading the wrong way through the maze, they're about to make the worst kind of enemy . . . an angry mother! Read:

The chamber you have just entered is unlike any you have visited before. The three openings ahead of you seem to be entirely filled with glass beads, no more

than ten feet in diameter each. There must be thousands upon thousand of them.

There is no other obvious way out of the chamber, except the way you came in.

Okay, so the PCs aren't necessarily up the proverbial creek, yet. If they turn around now, and make a bee-line for the rest of the maze, the guardians of this sacred place won't have time to react to the intrusion. If they don't leave immediately, or worse yet, move forward to examine the little crystal spheres, it's combat time.

Six mother crystal spiders leap out of the three egg nests (not disturbing a single blessed egg mind you) at the PCs. These particular spiders happen to be of the "diamond spinner" variation described in Appendix F, so the PCs have more than just poisoned bites on their hands.

The crystal spiders only have one form of treasure the PCs would be interested in . . . gems. Each of the 5,000 little crystal spider eggs in each of the three nest chambers contains a cut diamond worth from 10-100 gp. That means the total haul, given months to shell the "crystal oysters," would be from 150,000-1,500,000 gp. Note that if the Alliance wins the day, the High Council does not consider this treasure to be part of Vulkaran's hoard, which means the PCs might have to share it with about ten thousand other valiant warriors.

D. Crossroads to Nowhere

If any ship enters this chamber, the area is suddenly filled with arcs of lightning. While this will not hurt inorganic materials, like the ship or clothing, any exposed living creature takes 10d6 of damage (save vs. spell for half damage).

Since the crystal spiders are immune to electrical attacks (see Appendix F), there are normal chances for encountering spiders in here as well as taking damage from the trap.

This particular trap was prepared by Mongrelle (see Appendix B, as well as areas N and U).

Spider, diamond spinner: Int
Exceptional; AL LN; AC 0; MV 15;
HD 10; hp 60; THACO 11; #AT 3;
Dmg 1-10/1-10/1-12; SA Poison,
jump 150'; SZ L; ML 14

CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

E. Who's Chicken Little?

Read this when the PCs' ship enters this area:

You have entered this chamber from the northwest. The only visible exit is to the northeast . . .

This room contains one of Vulkaran's personal favorites—traps that is. A variation on the old falling ceiling trap found in dungeons across the multiverse, this one was designed for ships. Even worse, there's another trap waiting in the next chamber designed to work in tandem with this one! Read the following to the players:

A creaking sound is heard above you, and it now appears that the glassy ceiling is coming loose! Any second now and you, your vessel, and your crew will be ripped to shreds!

Use the first response to pop out of the mouth of whoever is responsible for steering/powering the ship. This is a split-second decision being role-played here.

The logical answer is to lurch the ship forward as fast as possible, in order to slip under the falling sheets of glass. Fortunately, there's an opening straight ahead. A ship moving half or more of its maximum speed can avoid the falling glass.

Further, spells with a casting time of 3 or less can be gotten off before the ship is showered in slivers, so quick thinking here might also save the day.

Finally, note that the PCs cannot turn the ship around or reverse direction fast enough to avoid the falling glass. If they attempt it, they fail.

If the PCs do not make it out of harm's way, the sails (if any) of their ship are ruined, everyone on the upper decks takes 6d6 of damage (no save), and is permanently blinded if a saving throw vs. petrification is failed. (Only a *cure blindness*, *cure critical wounds*, or higher level healing spell can restore blinded characters. Non-magical healing will not return lost sight.

F. Dead End?

PCs traveling faster than two-thirds of their maximum speed avoid the falling glass in area E, but will crash

against the far wall of this chamber (see the *SPELLJAMMER™* rules booklet *Concordance of Arcane Space*, p. 65).

PCs moving slower have a chance to avoid this fate. Just to their right (i.e. southeast) is another opening. If someone thinks fast enough to veer the ship over hard to starboard, they might be able to make that opening.

At the instant they start the turn, they will see another opening, this one directly to the south. What happens depends on ship speed and their reactions.

Go Southeast: This apparent exit from area F is blocked off by a *wall of force* (utterly invisible). Ships that strike the *wall of force* take blunt ramming damage as if rammed by a vessel of their tonnage and speed.

Go South: A ship with maneuverability class D or worse that turns hard to starboard still hits the *wall of force*. A ship of class B or C can make a save against crashing to make the turn (failure means they hit the chamber wall sideways and take half the damage they would have taken if they hit the *wall of force*). A ship with A class maneuverability can make the tight turn if the helmsman doesn't hesitate.

Brake Hard (only): If the PCs are travelling up to two-thirds speed, they can brake in time to avoid hitting the far wall. They can then take all the maneuvering time they need, but will take any consequences if they try to go through the *wall of force*.

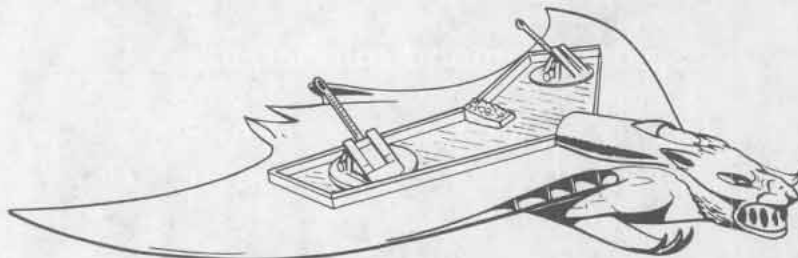
Of course, the presence of crystal spiders in here or area E may complicate things even further for the party during this trying time.

G. An Even Chance

Waiting in the chamber to the southeast of area G is an over-manned werewolf vessel (i.e. 120 maximum hit point enforcers), just waiting for the party's ship to pass by. As there is plenty of air in the maze, they have no worries about waiting a good, long time for the enemy to arrive.

If the PCs just happen to take a right as they enter area G, they get a fair fight on their hands as both ships see each other at the same time.

However, if the PCs take a left, the werewolf comes in from behind with complete surprise. Or do they? Whoever set up this ambush (certainly not Vulkaran) forgot one little thing—the reflective nature of the chambers themselves.



CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

Each PC gets an Intelligence check to notice the other ship appearing in the spherical reflections. If the PCs coordinate quietly, it is they, not the enforcers, who have the best chance of surprising the enemy.

There should be no spiders in area G when the party arrives.

H. Up, Up, and Away

The PCs have finally reached the end of their journey. A huge shaft going virtually straight up is directly above them. It is easily large enough for the entire ship to sail up it. It appears to go for many, many miles.

The shaft finally ends at area I, well above the crystal spiders' maze.

I. A Universe of Treasure

As the PCs reach the opening at the top of the long shaft, area H, read them this fantasy come true:

The light is streaming down from above you as your ship reaches the top of the huge tunnel. The universe seems to a much more wonderful place as the reality of your new surroundings sinks in.

You are now sailing above a veritable sea of precious gems and stones. The huge ovoid chamber is at least half-filled with cut stones of immense weight and value.

Surely this is Vulkaran's legendary treasure hoard, extorted from a dozen crystal spheres over four centuries of ruthless tyranny. There aren't enough kings in the universe to ransom for a hoard of this magnitude.

Anything and everything the PCs do verifies that these gems are real and all are worth at least 1,000 gp each. Naturally, such a monstrous amount of treasure is too much for even a hundred trips, and time is of the essence due to the battle raging outside. So, it is wise for the PCs to move on, with dreams of buying entire planets dancing in their heads.

Ironically, this is one of those places where acting ignobly actually pays off. Since this treasure is very likely to find itself in many other hands by the end of the adventure (see Chapter 6), greedy PCs who just can't keep their hands off the luxurious pile of stones are the only ones who profit from this particular find. The other PCs might demand they share the wealth with their illustrious comrades, however.

Directly above the "field of dreams come true" is a dock for flying ships. Read the following aloud:

Just above the sea of gems is a low, flat ship dock. There are poles for docking your ship. A glowing beam shines down through a hole in the ceiling onto the dock. Since there are no exits from this room large enough for your vessel, it is highly probable that the rest of the palace is accessible only by foot.

Any character stepping into the glow and desiring to go up will be levitated to the next area.

J. Doors of Decision

This circular room has four doors along the edge, at each of the four cardinal directions. The doorways are colored gold to the north, silver to the east, bronze to the south, and mithril to the west.

In the ceiling above you is a solid golden circle some ten feet in diameter. The circle is glowing brightly with magical power.

The four doors and golden circle form a magical set of keys to the upper level. Only Vulkaran and Mongrelle know the answer to their riddle, and they're waiting above for the PCs to figure it out themselves.

Behind each of the doors is a clue to the nature of its magical key. The magical keys themselves are actually just spells, but very specific spells that will negate the magical wards of the palace.

Figuring out specific spells and the order in which they are used should not be that difficult. However, learning what to do in the first place is!

The answer to the riddle is as follows:

The north room, behind the golden door, provides clues that imply the *neutralize poison* spell is the first key to the magical ceiling. After *neutralize poison* is cast on the golden ceiling circle, it disappears and a silver one appears just slightly above it. Determining the order of rooms, keys, and doors from here on in is a simple task, as the sequence is just N (gold), E (silver), S (bronze), and W (mithril). When the PCs have cast all four spells in order of the doors as they appear, the last door disappears and a

The typical tactic of the Werewolf ship captain was to rush upon the enemy, firing his forward weapons as he closed, and ramming the target ship at full speed. The boarding ramp would strike home as the enforcers, mad with blood rage, charged onto the

deck. Once the mighty jaws of the ship closed on its prey, few non-dwarven vessels of its size or smaller ever escaped.

*—Memoirs of Admiral Highforge
Volume II*

CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

levitation spell activates, leading the PCs up to area T, where the grand finale starts (proceed to Chapter 6).

The idea of using specific spells as the keys is a product of Mongrelle's inspired genius. Note that the PCs are given the opportunity to acquire missing spells in area P, although it is dangerous in the extreme to do so. But desperate times often require desperate measures . . .

If the PCs are having trouble figuring out this puzzle, the DM has the option to use the Spirit of the Crystal King in area P as a source of information. Refer to area P for more details.

DM note: Vulkaran saw to it that each spell begins with the letter of the direction in which its clue can be found (i.e. North = *neutralize poison*, East = *extension I-III*, South = *stone to flesh or flesh to stone*, and West = *web*). This was as much a private little joke between him and Mongrelle as a mnemonic device to help remember his own security code.

K. The Cardinal's Stairs

These four staircases are identical and lie behind each of the four metal doors at area J. The doors are not locked and need not be opened in any particular order (although the keys suggest one). The stairs are not trapped and lead high into the heart of each giant crystal.

Note that at this stage of the adventure, the PCs should have no idea whatsoever that they are now in the very heart of a new Vodoni ship, the Imperial Diamond-class warship! They won't find out either, until they unlock the secrets of this level and begin the slow ascent to area T.

L. The Gates of Hell

When the PCs reach the top of the northern stairs, read the following aloud:

The top of the stairs end in a large circular room, unlike anything else you have seen in the palace.

The rounded walls appear to be a huge blackboard, as they are covered in rough notes and sketches. Most appear to be alchemical in origin, discussing the mixture of this dreadful compound and that, but some are surely biological and suggest some mad wizard's horrifying magical experiments.

A pair of double doors are in the northern wall.

References to dogs, wolves, poison and insanity dominate the unending morbid treatise.

There is no treasure in this room, but the information on the walls happens to be the experimental history of how Mongrelle and her horrid breeders created the dread Vodoni enforcers from otherwise normal human beings. Anyone with Alchemist skill should be able to understand the basic process behind the creation of the Vodoni enforcers, and possibly develop a cure.

The DM should know that the process is a simple one, given the current formula. The victims are first infected with lycanthropy (during the full moon feasts of the Imperial City, for example) and then "recruited" into the Undercity. It is there that the creatures feed and breed, fight and grow stronger. At this point Vodoni lycanthropes are nearly mindless, and vicious in the extreme. The strongest are selected for "testing" and recruitment as enforcers. The stronger the subject when he takes "the test" the better, for "the test" involves swallowing a virulent poison. A successful saving throw vs. poison creates a loyal new Vodoni enforcer. A failed saving throw means more dead meat in the Undercity.

To return an enforcer to human status, the creature must first have a *neutralize poison* cast on it, as the substance remains in the blood as long as the victim is alive. Then a *remove curse* must be cast at the appropriate time to have a chance to cure the victim of the Vodoni form of lycanthropy. Afterwards, a *heal* spell must be performed to restore the victim to full sanity.

Notice that Vulkaran's ban on religion in this sphere served both his own ends as Divine Emperor and prevented the general populace from discovering the secret of the dread enforcers. Hopefully, the Vodoni Empire will "see the light" before the end of this adventure.

The curing procedure may or may not work in the other twelve Vodoni spheres as desired by the DM. Perhaps this is one weapon of the "resistance" in the other spheres, or maybe the Vodoni enforcers can only be cured in their own home sphere. Use whatever works best in your campaign.

The doors to the north are not locked, but the PCs' presence in this area has already been noticed by the residents of area M.

The most notorious breeder pits in the Imperial City were, not surprisingly, hidden under the palace tower itself. Here, those unfortunate enough to cross Vulkaran and survive were subjected to procedures to horrific to describe here.

—Chronicles of the Dark Fist
Vol XXXIX, Scroll III

CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

M. Tormented Souls

When the PCs pass through the doors in the antechamber, area L, read them the following description of a laboratory gone terribly awry:

At the end of a short corridor is a macabre scene out of one of your darkest nightmares. The huge semi-circular chamber is filled with laboratory dissection tables and tall glass containers filled with water.

The tables contain all manner of human and enforcer corpses, while the huge glass specimen jars carry the remains of experiments both failed and successful.

All of a sudden, spells are flying everywhere. If this encounter is not challenging enough, assume the breeders here memorized their spells in area P, giving them maximum range, duration, and effect.

The spells are coming from eight Vodoni breeders, four of which are in the corners of the chamber as the PCs enter. They are out to kill, as their life's work is on the line now. They concentrate on area-of-effect and containment spells like *fireball* and *force cage* at first, as the party enters the room close together. Then, as the party scatters, things get personal.

The laboratory is where all of the Vodoni experiments took place. After this battle with the breeders is over, alert PCs who state they are actively comparing the various remains, learn that the breeders have been working on a new breed of enforcer for the past few months. They cannot tell how close they were to success (see area T for that answer).

There is a door in the southwestern and southeastern corners of the room. Both are unlocked and lead to areas N and O, respectively.

N. The Devil Takes a Wife

The description of this chamber should be the first inclination the PCs have that Vulkaran has a female acquaintance. Some PCs may incorrectly assume that Vulkaran is a woman in disguise. Encourage all such speculation, as it makes the many surprises of the final encounter (areas T-V) all the more exciting. Upon entering the room, read:

Vodoni breeder: Int Genius; AL LE; AC 5 to -4; MV 12; F7-9/IX/14-17; #AT 3/2 or spells; THAC0 14, 13 or 12; Dmg By weapon; SA Spells; SD special; SZ L; ML 16 (champion).

These luxurious accommodations are certainly those of a woman of great stature and importance. However, the collection of skulls mounted into the far wall leaves no doubt as to her disposition.

A huge circular bed dominates the large chamber and, except for a few richly appointed closets left open and some of the universe's finest furnishings, the chamber remains unremarkable.

There is a beautiful lavatory hidden behind a secret door in the closet, and a set of 20th level mage's spells books hidden underneath the bed, but other than that, there's no treasure in the room.

By the way, the spell books are trapped with a *disintegrate* spell on each of them (there are 12 total, levels 1-9!). Not only does the trap disintegrate the book (save vs. disintegrate for magical leather applies), it disintegrates the one who touched it as well (save vs. death magic or POOF!).

O. Hall of the Breeders

This room contains nothing but spare robes, empty spell books, and tons of supplies. The breeders actually stay in royal houses in the city, and only come here when an promising experiment is being performed, or an imminent invasion from another corner of the universe is expected any moment.

There is no treasure here.

P. Speak No Evil

This huge energy chamber is both the most dangerous and most helpful place in the palace for our intrepid adventuring band. When they reach the top of the eastern stairs, read:

Ahead of you is a huge, black chamber filled with swirling waves of energy and matter. Like a nebula in space, there seems to be no floor or means of transport through the inky void. Nevertheless, blobs of matter float effortlessly about the chamber, seemingly of their own free will.

Anyone who detects magic and/or evil here finds plenty of both. This chamber taps into the *Eye of the Gods* in area

Magic: staff of power, longsword +2 - +4 defender, bracers AC 4-AC 2, cloak of protection +1 - +4

CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

V above, but Mongrelle has perverted the energies within to serve only her and her leader's dark purposes.

Any evil creature who studies new spells within the chamber, can cast those spells at maximum duration, range, and effect for the next 24 hours. Also, after four rounds in the chamber the character receives the benefits of the *extension I* spell. After five rounds, this becomes *extension II*. And after the sixth round, the character has all the benefits of the *extension III* spell, including new spells. Note that there's no need to sit down and study for these bonus spells, the character can just pick and receive them from the character's standard repertoire. Note that the *extension* spells are NOT cumulative. Both Mongrelle and Vulkaran have fully prepared in this chamber for the battle to come.

Any non-evil creature who steps into the chamber floats about normally, but must save vs. death every round or die. However bad that may be, Mongrelle could not completely twist the divine energy to do her bidding. Non-evil characters who remain within the chamber, while continually making saving throws round after round, receive a message from a spirit who calls himself the "Crystal King". The spirit has no image, just a firm, powerful voice. The messages he passes on to the PC in question are listed round by round below.

The Legend of Vulkaran: Part V

Words of wisdom from the Crystal King himself, to be read only to characters who brave the deadly risks of the chamber.

Round 1:

"Brave mortals, beware the power of the forces awaiting your arrival. Gaze not too brightly into the eyes of the devil."

Round 2:

"The Deceiver tricked us into hiding within a crystal vessel called the *Eye of the Gods* by the holy ones amongst you."

Round 3:

"Foolishly, we entrusted the secret of our release to only one being, Vulkaran, and now we are lost in a prison of our own device."

Round 4:

"The power of the palace comes from the *Eye of the Gods*, and only great power can set us free. Sacrifice thyself at the time of greatest fear and be rewarded a thousand times by heaven."

Round 5 and On:

"Leave here quickly, for time is running short and mortal luck ends faster than tears upon a regretful cheek."

DM note: If the PCs are having trouble with the riddle of the portal in area J, the Crystal King offers the following advice to get things going again.

"Spells the key. Spell the spells. The cardinal points to the letter and the key."

As an added bonus, the PCs receive the same extension spell benefits listed above that the evil characters get. This should allow the PCs to add the spells necessary to solve the riddle of the portal at area J if they didn't happen to bring along one or more of those particular spells today, or ran out of the more useful ones earlier.

Q. Garden of Stone

This chamber is simply a private zoo of Vulkaran's. The animals are allowed to freely roam the chamber, drink from the pond (area R), etc. There's only one problem, however. Except for eight large basilisks, every creature in the zoo has been turned to stone.

Vulkaran, as can be seen in Appendix B and area V, has a passion for turning things to stone. He is always bringing in new creatures to his private zoo. Often times, Mongrelle turns a particularly unusual specimen to stone and presents it to her lord as a gift.

The basilisks each have maximum hit points (see *Monstrous Compendium* entry) and no treasure. They are accustomed to ambushing their intended victims from all sides as they don't like chasing fleeing animals about the zoo.

Note that Vulkaran is immune to the petrifying effects of the basilisks, but Mongrelle is not. She only enters this chamber in emergency situations, and then, only with her eyes closed.

Basilisk, Lesser: Int Animal; AL N; AC 4; MV 6; HD 6 + 1; hp 49; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA Gaze turns to stone; SZ M; ML 12

CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ASSAULT

R. Watery Eyes

The pool of water has been magically enchanted to provide anyone looking within with Vulkaran's armored reflection. The reflection is harmless, but the water is not. One drink from the magical water turns the victim to stone unless a saving throw vs. poison is made. Since Vulkaran is constantly rearranging the statues in here, there are no creatures frozen near the lake; however, a large number of the statues scattered about the chamber are frozen in a drinking position.

There is no treasure in the pool. The liquid has no harmful effects if splashed on a creature, and loses its potency shortly after being removed from the pool.

If the PCs are not carrying the *stone to flesh* spell or its reverse, the DM may allow this liquid to open the bronze ward in area J.

S. The Theory of Relativity

This is the only room where the stairs (area K) continue on into the middle of chamber. As the PCs climb up the last few stairs, read:

This chamber is certainly what passes for Vulkaran's war room. A huge, web-like net is stretched about the middle of the huge spherical chamber, far below the end of the staircase, which does not end at the entrance.

Spaced about the webbing are 15 glowing spheres about 20' in diameter. Eleven of the spheres, to the west and northwest, glow gray in color, while the one in the center of the net is jet black. Far to the southeast rest three lone glowing white spheres, bound together in a single triad.

The spheres cause the webbing to dimple, and they appear to be slowly moving about one another unaided. However, after a few moments you notice that there is a large, black shape moving slowly beneath the net.

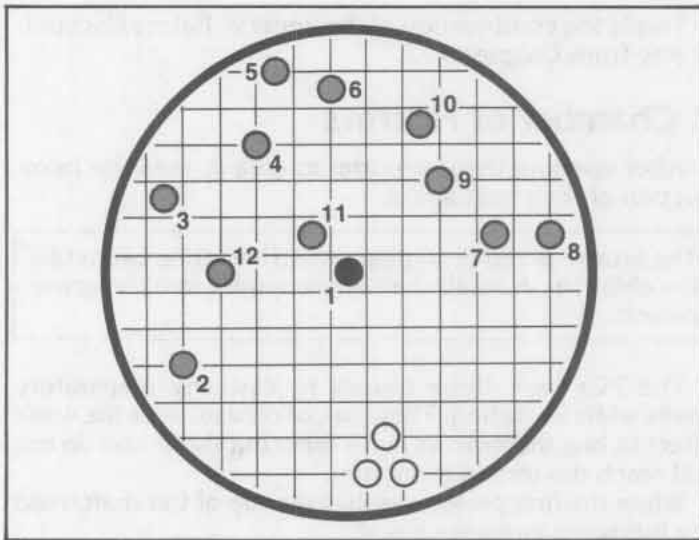
The spheres represent the Vodoni sphere (black), of course, as well as the other eleven conquered Vodoni territories (gray, see Appendix A). The white spheres show the locations of the PCs' home spheres, of which little is known so far.

The tender of the spheres is the Master Spider of the Crystal Maze (area B). Unlike the crystal spiders in the maze, this being is highly intelligent but regrettably senile. It is quite happy just moving the spheres about one another one inch at a time, and does not attack the PCs unless it itself is harmed in any way. Then, of course, it unleashes its full fury. For stats on the master spider, see Appendix F.

If any PC attempts to communicate with the monster, the creature is senile four rounds out of every five, and babbles incoherently about the maze and its many children. During that fifth round, the PCs can gather much information about the twelve Vodoni spheres, as Vulkaran talks to himself here about his empire and his master plans for it, all the while unsuspecting that he has a eavesdropper in his midst. The DM can use this device to drop in clues or adventure leads to the other Vodoni systems. They need to be rescued too, after all.

Final DM Note

Proceed to Chapter 6 only after all four portals in area J have been opened with the appropriate spells in the correct order: North (*neutralize poison*), East (any one of the *extension* spells), South (*stone to flesh* or *flesh to stone*), and West (*web*).



Vodoni Spheres

1. Vodonispace
2. Golotspace
3. Gorthspace
4. Kofuspace

5. Kra'akenspace
6. Lostspace
7. Passarspace
8. Salzarspace

9. Vergonspace
10. Thasiaspace
11. Vodonikaspace
12. Zalanispace

CHAPTER 6: CRESCENDO

"...and the Crystal King warned the True Believers that one day, if the Way was not kept, an Age of Darkness would come, unlike anything ever dreamed of in the nightmares of man..."

"...the Crystal King promised the True Believers that when the Day of Reckoning finally comes, the heavenly stars themselves shall rain down upon the chosen few, and the faithful suffering of centuries shall be paid in full..."

—The Prophecies of the Crystal King
(as revealed to His holy receiver,
Anthia of Calandia, 45 A.V.)

Climax time! A war to end all wars is continuing in deep space, as Vulkaran's forces have the advantage. On the ground, the Alliance forces are taking the day. Everything is evened up as the PCs reach the throne room for the battle with Vulkaran, Mongrelle, and this year's model of the Vodoni enforcers. As an earthquake rocks the palace, the PCs discover, much to their dismay, that they are in the heart of the previously unknown Vodoni Imperial vessel—in a battle with a deadline as Vulkaran takes to the skies. Ahead is the Alliance command ship, the *Arrow of Justice*. Ramming speed!

Event 1: We Now Continue...

This is the continuation of the Imperial Palace Encounter Key from Chapter 5...

T. Chamber of Horrors

After opening the last portal in area J, read the introduction of their host aloud:

The bronze portal disappears and a levitation beam fills the chamber. A small shaft leads upward into the upper palace.

The PCs have three rounds to cast any preparatory spells while levitating. They can, of course, fight the weak effect to buy themselves more time, but those who do not will reach the throne room first.

When the first person reaches the top of the shaft, read the following passages aloud:

The narrow shaft ends in a magnificent throne room at the top of the palace. Seated before you is the Emperor Vulkaran the Dark, himself, bedecked in his legendary mithril armor and resting his hand upon his chin.

Between him and you are thirty ogre-sized wolf-creatures similar to the enforcers, but certainly much larger and much more powerful.

Vulkaran motions towards you and speaks in a deep and commanding voice:

"It is time we ended both the game and the war. My forces win above us, while yours control my city. The outcome of our little meeting here should decide the fate of the Known Universe for centuries to come."

Vulkaran stands, obviously angered by the current turn of events.

"This is MY universe," he yells, "and I will to keep it!" Vulkaran sits in his throne again and quickly regains his composure.

"Mongrelle," he calls out behind him, "the city is lost. It is time we killed both heads of this alliance. Now."

With that, Vulkaran's throne begins to glow as it rotates away from you. As the back of the throne comes into view, you can see a beautiful woman standing next to a silver ship's wheel. She's wearing robes of black and red, with a gnarled wooden staff at her side. A sweet smile crosses her lips as her wrist twists slightly.

Suddenly, the entire tower lurches violently, as if the woman summoned an earthquake on demand. No spell was cast, yet the entire place seems ready to explode.

As you and all of the other creatures in the chamber struggle to maintain your balance, huge chunks of quartz fall away from about the chamber. The opaque crystalline walls suddenly become transparent, and the majestic vision of the Imperial City from five miles up comes fully into view about you.

In the flash of an eye, the top of the palace begins rising into the sky. You are now in the command helm of a majestic crystalline spelljammer, perhaps as large as 100 tons.

You can see that the top of the ship is a huge diamond point ram, and you quickly realize to your horror that the full force of this vessel is heading straight for the *Arrow of Justice* above you!

Vulkaran: Int Genius; AL LE; AC -9; MV 12; F20; hp 180; THAC0 2 (longsword); #AT 2 + gaze; Dmg 1-8+21 (longsword); SA Gaze turns to stone; SZ M. See page 55.

Mongrelle: Int Supra-Genius; AL NE; AC -9; MV 12; F11/W18; hp 120; THAC0 8 (staff); #AT 2 (staff); Dmg 1-6+3; SA Spells; SZ M. See page 55.

CHAPTER 6: CRESCENDO

The shaking subsides, and you and the huge wolf-men regain your balance. There is only invisible laughter coming from the throne, as Vulkaran's queen steps out from the wheel.

Let the final battle commence!

For details on what Vulkaran is up to during the first stages of the battle refer to area V.

Otherwise, it's a battle to reach Vulkaran and take over the spelljamming helm or the wheel of the Imperial vessel!

Mongrelle is relying on the Vodoni conquerors (see Appendix F) to buy enough time to ram the *Arrow of Justice*. Note that the Alliance command ship has already taken a number of heavy hits from Vodoni suicide attacks, and is in no shape to be rammed by another 100 ton vessel! If the emperor is successful, either in killing off the PCs, or in ramming the *Arrow of Justice*, proceed to Event 3.

The conquerors, of course, are looking to make a good impression with their boss their first day on the job. This is their first real fight, so they're both eager and hungry for some real combat. Unfortunately for the PCs, these beasties are up to the task at hand.

The conquerors can go into a blood rage at will, and had orders to do so as soon as Vulkaran said "I am ready." Therefore, the monsters are already primed for battle as soon as the shaking subsides, so the PCs are going to have to jump right into the thick of things immediately.

The conquerors have explicit instructions not to let the PCs reach Mongrelle or Vulkaran (in that order), and do everything from grapple to group-maul the PCs in order to fulfill their mission. The conquerors feel pretty confident in hand-to-hand combat, so they focus on grabbing the arms and/or wrestling to the ground any spell-caster in the party. Note that Vulkaran briefed them before the battle as to who was to get what special treatment.

Meanwhile, Mongrelle uses the cover of the conquerors to lob spells at the PCs. Until the conquerors begin to fall by the wayside, however, she refrains from casting area-of-affect damage spells into the melee.

All Mongrelle is attempting to do is see to it that the ETI (estimated time of impact) of 10 rounds is secured. She attempts to restrain and delay the PCs as much as possible, using her impressive array of powers, spells, and de-

vices as best fits the current situation.

If a PC sorcerer attempts to fly over the heads of the conquerors, and is missed by the beasts below, Mongrelle may decide to protect herself and the helm with a *wall of force*. She knows that even if Vulkaran is attacked while spelljamming, the vessel won't slow down fast enough to avoid a collision. However, if the password is discovered, or the wheel is taken, then the ship might conceivably be diverted before the ramming takes place.

If and when Mongrelle falls, Vulkaran (if currently on the middle of combat, see area V) goes into a blind rage and begins attacking whoever is personally responsible for her demise. In the end, it seems he did care about something after all.

If Vulkaran falls (see area V), and Mongrelle is still alive to witness this, she screams wildly, looks about her with horror (at the ship, not the PCs), and throws up a *wall of force* around herself (if it is still available). If not, she uses her *staff of the magi* (see Appendix B) to whisk her away to another plane or the nearest convenient parallel dimension (roll randomly as per an *amulet of the planes*). No matter what course she takes for her escape, her quick departure should be taken as not-so-subtle hint to the PCs that something is definitely wrong (see area V).

U. The Hunted Becomes The Hunter

This wheel is locked with a password known only by Mongrelle and Vulkaran ("Banzai!"). If time is running out (see above), the DM may allow a thief's hear noise percentage just after the ship takes off to hear the password being mumbled by Mongrelle. Since Mongrelle is protected by a *mind blank* spell, spells like *ESP* will do no good in this situation.

Physically or magically damaging the wheel does nothing to alter the course, but if the password is discovered, the condition of the wheel is critical if the heroes want to change the course of the vessel.

If the ship's course is successfully altered before the ten round time limit is up, then Vulkaran, if he has not already joined the battle, is going to be extremely angry. He certainly joins the battle now, in the hopes that he can defeat the PCs once and for all, and then round the ship about and go after the *Arrow of Justice* again.

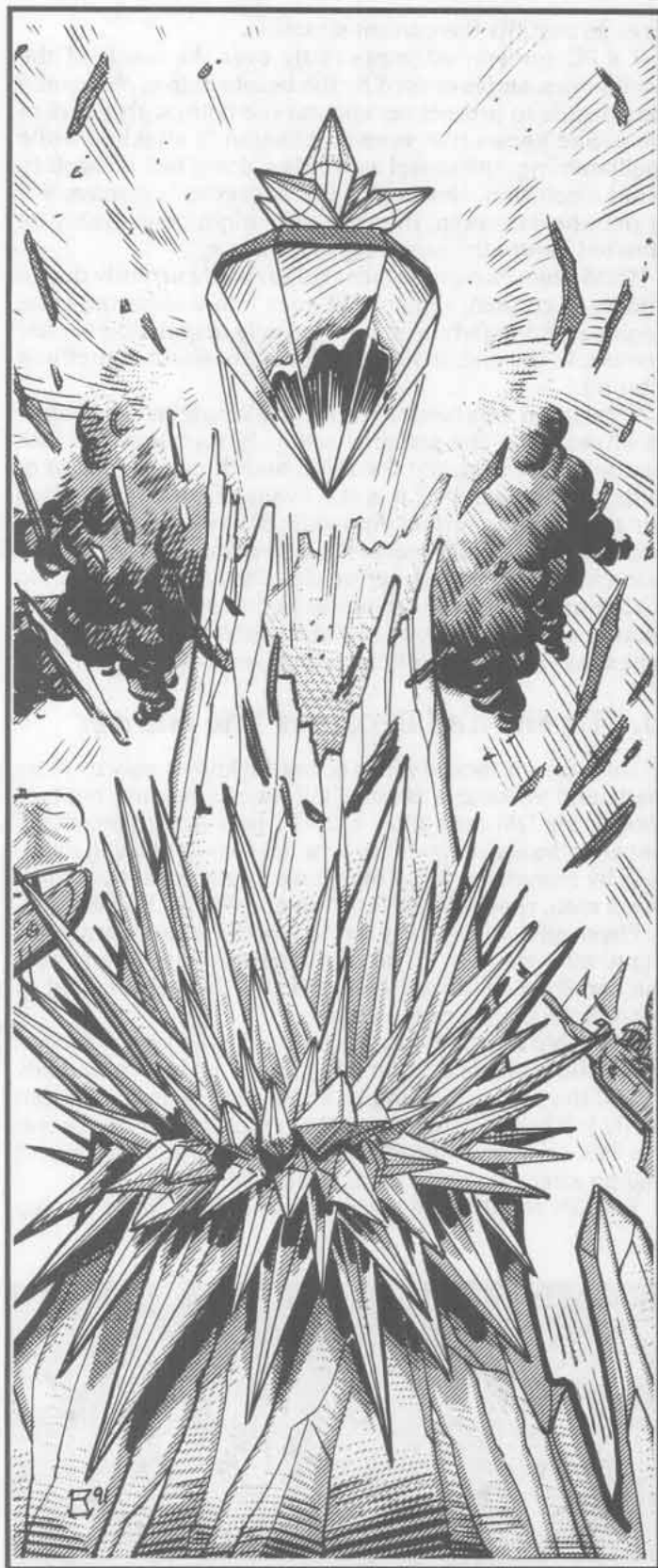
The DM should note that every round the Imperial ship

Vodoni conqueror: Int Very; AL NE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 10; hp 60 each; #AT 2 or 3; THACO 14; Dmg By weapon +2 or 1-10/1-10/1-8; SA Blood rage at

will; SD +1 or better weapons to hit; SZ L; ML 18 (fanatic).

Blood rage: Attacks at +2; damage at +4; AC penalized by 4.

CHAPTER 6: CRESCENDO



is headed away from the Alliance command armada, is another round Vulkaran would have to come back. This does not include the time necessary for the ship to round completely about (see the SPELLJAMMER™ shipboard movement rules for details).

If the ship's course is not altered before the ten round limit has expired, then the *Arrow of Justice* and all aboard her are lost, and unless the PCs can take over as commanders of the Alliance fleet quickly, the battle in space is most certainly won by the Vodoni. The Vodoni ships, of course, begin strafing the near-helpless ground forces in the city as well, going after the docked vessels first. If the Alliance loses the day, proceed to Event 3.

V. The Throne of the Gods

Whenever a PC breaches the line of conquerors and goes around Vulkaran's throne, they have a number of surprises in store for them. Read:

Vulkaran is spelljamming in a throne carved from the finest marble in the universe. Pulsing with seemingly endless energy is a hand-sized *crystal ball* mounted into the top of the throne.

The emperor's mithril mask is resting on the arm of his throne beside him. As his gray stone-like, yet handsome, face looks over and notices your intrusion, you see with horror the red glare of a medusa's gaze in his eyes.

As detailed in Appendix B, Vulkaran isn't human, he's a maeder—a male medusa. However, Vodoni-born maeder possess both the petrifying gaze (i.e. *flesh to stone*) of their female counterparts as well as the un-petrifying touch (i.e. *stone to flesh*) afforded their kin in other spheres (see the *Monstrous Compendium* entries for maeder and medusa for full details). This makes Vulkaran both immortal and even more deadly to the unwary PCs.

While Vulkaran possesses many spell-like powers, he prefers to deal with his enemies in a more "up close and personal" way (i.e. slice and dice them). Since Vulkaran is a master swordsman, it is very likely that more than one PC is going to be needed to take him down.

If the ramming of the *Arrow of Justice* fails, there's still a form of "self-destruct" in effect upon Vulkaran's death. The elemental lord of earth who built both this ship and the Imperial Palace does not consider his deal with Vulkaran to extend past either one of their deaths. Since Vulkaran has just died, all bets are off. In area U, it was discussed what Mongrelle would do in such a situation if still alive (and Vulkaran's dead, so there's no need to worry about him). But what happens to the ship and the victorious PCs aboard her? Read the following aloud to the PCs:

CHAPTER 6: CRESCENDO

As Vulkaran falls to the ground, his life's blood draining out onto the floor, the Imperial vessel begins shaking again. This time, however, it is obvious that the ship is neither landing, nor taking off, but disintegrating around you!

The PCs have two rounds to act and/or escape. If the ship is still three rounds or more away from the *Arrow of Justice*, it disintegrates before ramming the ship, and the Alliance command ship is saved (see Event 2). If not, then the PCs have a very short time to successfully change its course. Even if the *Arrow of Justice* is destroyed, the PCs (if they escaped safely) can take over command of the Alliance forces and continue with Event 2. The demoralizing effect of watching Vulkaran and his Imperial ship go up in smoke, in addition to the other goodies landing about (see Event 2), should send a clear message to the remaining Vodoni forces (i.e. "you lose!").

The PCs have only a few escape options open to them. Since *teleport* and related spells still do not function within this system, extra-dimensional travel is a very good option (*oil of etherealness* works . . .).

Protecting themselves with *Otiluke's resilient sphere* is a quick and safe option. Or if the PCs happen to have a *cube of force* lying around; that, too, should suffice.

Since the crystal ball, the ship's power source, is no longer under Vulkaran's control (see notes on *The Eye of the Gods*, below), the levitation spell is no longer in effect in area J. Characters who leap down the hole can land aboard their ship (though if they tied it down to the dock, they're probably still out of luck). A merciful DM might allow truly desperate characters to emergency spelljam their way down area H and out into open space. Time their actions down to the second, and assign a Dexterity check to whoever steers the ship. No time to grab any of that treasure at area I, so say "Goodbye!" to those pleasure planets.

When time runs out, any PC (alive or dead) within the palace when it disintegrates takes 200 points of damage (save throw vs. death magic for half damage).

During the course of the battle, the PCs might attempt to sabotage the ship's power supply in order to thwart Vulkaran's plans. Removing *The Eye of the Gods*

doesn't stop the ship, or change its course, but it does put an end to any of the ship's inherent defenses, like the *wall of force* protections, etc. They have also put their hands on a major artifact of power. Refer to Appendix E for details on the item's use and effect on PCs attempting to use it.

Note that Vulkaran's death, besides being the catalyst for the end of his vessel and his empire, also frees the gods of this sphere from their eternal imprisonment. See Event 2 for more on the ramifications of this joyous event.

Event 2: Return of the Crystal King

This event assumes the PCs have killed Vulkaran, and escaped the Imperial vessel just seconds before it is destroyed. If Vulkaran won, proceed to Event 3 instead.

If the PCs are within the ship, have these events described to them after their eventual return.

In any case, read the following aloud:

Vulkaran's Imperial war vessel disintegrates in a jeweled rain over the Imperial City. Millions of precious emeralds, diamonds, and rubies shower the deserving populace: payment in full for four centuries of brutal hardship.

Strange, almost ghostly figures escape from the wreckage as well. The creatures are neither ghosts nor the spectres of evil intent, but seem to be a mixture of beings both good and evil, lawful and chaotic. The three largest ones, amorphous in shape, disappear in puffs of smoke, steam, and fog.

The others, more human in appearance, fade out to take their rightful places amidst the heavens. An overwhelming sense of peace fills the air.

The prophecies of the Crystal King have come true, as both the true believers and the truly doubtful are showered with wealth beyond imagination.

The three remaining elemental lords return to their planes and begin the difficult process of getting their long-neglected houses in order. The gods have returned to their outer planes, and the heavens are alive and listening

Continuing the Adventure

If you wish, the gods may decide that the *Eye of the Gods* must be unmade. The elements of the unmaking ceremony must come from each of the worlds of the Vodoni

Empire. This quest can be made into a huge scavenger hunt that will take the party to every world of the Vodoni Empire.

CHAPTER 6: CRESCENDO

to the people again. Fortunately for both the Alliance forces and the Vodoni populace, many prayers are being answered.

Each member of the party is granted a *wish* by the freed gods. This can be for anything up to divine ascension as a demi-power (if the PC decides to retire his character, of course). The DM should choose this moment to help focus the PCs on their future aims, now that they have reached a turning point in their adventuring careers. They might desire a new spelljamming ship, or clues about the location of the legendary *Spelljammer* itself. A special trademark power can be assigned as well, like *invisibility at will*. For campaign balance, try to avoid giving anything more powerful than a demi-power ability to any PC at this time. And above all, do not permit the PCs to change any aspect of the previous adventure's events. The gods themselves fear for the ramifications of such an action.

If any party members died, either in the explosion at the end or earlier in the palace, the Crystal King and his Ruby Court use their wish to resurrect the fallen hero.

Each PC should receive from 100,000 to 250,000 experience points (based on specific PC performance), just for completing the missions detailed herein. If the DM has incorporated this war into an ongoing campaign, of course, this award may not be appropriate. Successfully completing the events just in Chapters 5 and 6 should be worth no less than half the experience points listed above, in any case.

What's next? There are eleven other spheres that might need a little help as well. And who's to say the knowledge of how to create the Vodoni conquerors died with this particular band of breeders. There are Vodoni breeders everywhere there are Vodoni enforcers, and there are Vodoni enforcers elsewhere in the known universe . . . yes, even lurking in the depths of the PCs' home spheres, just waiting for the next full moon.

Event 3: The Emperor's New Spheres

What do you do if the PCs lose? They tried their best, but failed the test. Here are some suggestions on how to keep things from becoming a total loss.

As mentioned above, as long as Vulkaran is dead, the PCs have the chance to rescue the day, even if the Alliance command ship has been destroyed.

Since Vulkaran won't flee from a fight, either in person or with his armies, this can only mean the PCs lost the epic battle in the throne room.

In such a situation, all PCs are stripped of their possessions, bound and gagged, and given to Mongrelle (or her replacement) for "testing." Dead PCs are raised for these experiments, if necessary. The breeders are interested in creating a new "super-race" of Vodoni conquerors, which they tentatively refer to as Vodoni dreadnoughts. Beings of the PCs' level and power, with the possibility of spell use and complete control of the rages? It boggles the mind. Needless to say, PCs don't give up their free will as easily as NPCs do. Smart PCs fight the urge to lose their minds, but fake submission for the breeders. This might give them some opportunity to flee and/or seek their own cure (significantly more involved than the typical enforcer cure detailed previously in the adventure). They might even use their new found powers against their former masters. Who knows, maybe they'll learn to like it.

This is fantasy, after all. There's always a way . . .

"...And thus it passed, that the evil Vulkaran— Dark Lord, Silver King, Master of Twelves Spheres—was defeated, his power broken; and the scourge that was his Enforcers driven into the darkest reaches of exile."

*—Chronicles of the Dark Fist
finis*

APPENDIX A: THE VODONI SPHERES

The following is a brief summary of the twelve Vodoni spheres. Only the first sphere, the home sphere of the Vodoni master race, is detailed fully. The rest of the spheres are provided for campaign development by ambitious DMs.

Vodonispace

Note that the Vodoni do not assign individual names to the major moons of the planets in their conquered spheres. Significant satellites are referred to only by number, such as Calandia One, Grog Two, etc.

Time in the Vodoni Empire is measured in years Anno Vulkarus (Year of Vulkaran) or Promo Nova (Before the Nova). The year of the events depicted in this adventure is 463 AV.

Primary Star (*Vodon Prime*): This unstable, flickering, blue-gray star went nova four centuries ago and has yet to fully recover from the ordeal. The star, which never possessed magical or supernatural powers before the nova, now seems to have gained quite a reputation amongst the Vodoni true believers as just that.

Since the gods of the sphere are now imprisoned, and worship is banned by the Emperor's decree, the religious underground has chosen Vodon Prime as its beacon in this age of darkness. The pulsing nature of the blue light seems to be primarily responsible for Vodon Prime's new-found mystique.

The massive amounts of unstable energy pouring from Vodon Prime does seem to have adversely affected interdimensional travel within the sphere. All spells and magical devices that use or require access to other dimensions fail to work in the Vodoni sphere. That includes all summoning spells and magic involving *teleport*, *dimension door*, etc. Further, devices that involve only such magics do not detect as magical. *Plane shifting* is normal, except in the citadel of the Imperial City, where the *Eye of the Gods* has sealed extra-dimensional access to Vulkaran's palace.

Normally, this energy flux could be corrected and channelled by divine powers quite easily. But since all of the gods and supernatural beings (save the Lord of Elemental Earth) of the sphere have been imprisoned in the *Eye of the Gods*, there is nothing that can be done about the interference until these beings are released.

Note also, that no priest spells greater than second level can be prayed for or granted once within the Vodoni sphere.

Sala: The molten planet is described in Chapter 3, Event 8. The uncontrolled vortex to the Elemental Plane of Fire has the effect of *doubling* the damage caused by all fire magic cast in this region. It has no effect on duration, range, or caster's effective level, but does effectively raise the maximum damage of the *fireball* spell to 20d6 (i.e. 10d6 doubled). The Vodoni breeders are well aware of this and prepare offensively and defensively with this local law of nature in mind. When the Elemental Lord of Fire is released, (see Chapter 6), this vortex is closed immediately, and Sala becomes a normal molten world. The damage bonus to fire magic ends.

Vodon: The second planet of the system is the only body still teeming with life after the nova blast. This is no accident, or quirk of nature, but a deliberate repopulation attempt of Vulkaran's, begun upon the Vodoni race's return to their sphere.

Because of the hasty preparations in the last few days before the nova exodus, the Vodoni took only a few native creatures from their doomed worlds. These were primarily food animals, and so much of the lush organic diversity of the sphere was burned away forever.

Vulkaran set about to repopulate the system with creatures and plants stolen from his many conquered worlds. It is therefore ironic that while Vulkaran is notorious for his lack of respect for sentient life, he is also known as one of the most charitable zookeepers in space! Male and females of a species are pampered, well-fed, and given free reign of the Vodoni worlds, while native citizens are herded like cattle and forced to do manual labor like bipedal beasts of burden.

However, given only four hundred years of integration and experimentation, the Vodoni sphere has yet to develop its own class of native organisms, even notable hybrids, and so the Vodoni biospheres look more like an intergalactic "zoo without cages" than a cohesive world of creatures. For example, due to the greater difficulty in obtaining and preserving water-based life forms during deep space hunting expeditions, the vast oceans of Vodon are home to only a few species, while the lush jungle continents are brimming over with far more species than the food chain can support.

If managed and tended correctly, Vodon could become either a massive intergalactic hunting ground or a planetary wildlife refuge, depending on who does the managing.

Grog: Grog is described more fully in Chapter 3, but it should be noted here that Grog is the only other planet (besides Vodon) to support indigenous life.

Without exception, Grog is smooth and featureless, layered in miles of volcanic ash, which makes its soil one of the richest in the galaxy. Grog is essentially, one large food planet, covered in seas of amber grain and huge freshwater pools. There are no saltwater oceans on Grog, and the seasons are always mild. Harvest time is year-round.

Except for the fact that you have to give up your freedom to come here, it's probably the nicest planet in the Vodoni sphere on which to live.

Grog has two moons, both of which are uninhabitable.

The Web: Formerly the massive Vodoni home world of Kathyk, named for the first great Vodoni emperor, the fourth planet of the system is now a huge shell of asteroids surrounding the inner three planets of the Vodoni sphere.

The asteroid shell is littered with asteroids, in which precious metals and the remains of the former Vodoni culture can still be found scattered amidst the debris. Few space-going vessels remain, as all were commandeered for the great exodus, but entire buildings, mines, and sections of cities can be found within the Web by the persistent. The DM should keep Pompeii in mind when developing adventures in this setting.

For more on the Web, refer to Chapter 3.

APPENDIX A: THE VODONI SPHERES

Calandia: Little more than a huge ball of ice, Calandia survived the nova by coincidentally being directly behind Kathyk at the time of the explosion. Kathyk was utterly destroyed, but Calandia was just heated a little and pelted with mountains of debris.

Even in the old days of the Vodoni Empire, Calandia was never fully explored or exploited. Much remains undiscovered to this day.

For more on Calandia and its one moon, refer to Chapters 3 and 4.

Golotspace

The Golotians are humans with a culture not unlike that of Greyspace a few thousand years ago. The people are mystical and superstitious. Dragons and similar magical beasts rule the skies.

Vulkaran has established an uneasy truce with the dragons of the planet, granting them freedom from his absolute rule over the system. The dragons administer the day-to-day operations of the society, like regional barons, while Vulkaran remains as overlord.

Quite simply, he has a "reputation" among the dragons that keeps them at bay.

Years ago, Vulkaran challenged the dragons to bring forth their greatest warrior if they wanted to end the deadly sky battles characteristic of Vulkaran's invasion once and for all. Vulkaran defeated the red wyrm in single combat, right in front of the rest of the beasts.

Ever since then, the dragons agree no one beast can take the Emperor, and no single dragon shows the leadership potential to gather the selfish dragon barons together. All the while, the people are made to suffer.

Freeing this sphere from the clutch of evil involves more than just dealing with Vulkaran.

Gorthspace

The planet Gorth is the only habitable planet in the sphere and is covered with lush and ancient forests. This is a favorite hunting ground and shore leave location for Vodoni enforcers, and the system's central location within the Vodoni Empire makes it ideal for just that.

There is no known sentient life on Gorth, just animals.

Kofuspace

The Kofu sphere is an anomaly among the known spheres. This system is completely solid, filled with the black crystal shell material straight through to the core. The "planets" of the system are actually just huge air-bubbles within the medium, and each of the three major bubbles has a small star at its center.

The peaceful Kofu race look just like drow elves, although they have none of the drow abilities or penalties in light. They are primarily farmers who tend monstrous farms all year round. They have no idea what "night" is.

The only way to reach a Kofu bubble planet is to acciden-

tally discover a portal tunnel and sail down it . . . fast! Interdimensional travel is also very helpful here. Portals between them open seemingly at random, though it is possible that some of the more powerful denizens can manipulate them.

The Vodoni maintain only a few garrisons in each bubble.

Kra'akenspace

Kra'akenspace has no large gravitational bodies. The whole crystal sphere seems filled with large green floating asteroids comprised of a porous organic material, huge floating masses of plant life. In fact, the entire crystal sphere is filled with breathable air, and has often been mistaken for as a huge node of elemental air.

The beneficent Kra'aken (often called "the Kra'" to avoid confusion with the giant squid-like monster of similar name) are creatures not unlike those found upon some of the upper planes in most spheres. The Kra'aken, who appear as slender, semi-transparent, winged humanoids of unearthly beauty, live in huge floating biospheres.

Because of their innate telepathic abilities, the Kra'aken possess a truly impressive knowledge of the other spheres in the Vodoni Empire. Rarely a day goes by when a traveller neither sets forth for nor returns from the reaches of the Vodoni Empire.

Strangely, the Kra'aken possess no spelljamming technology, and are not even particularly fond of magic. They prefer instead to make friends, hitch a ride, or pay for their passage.

The Kra'aken dislike Vulkaran's restrictions on free travel throughout the empire, but their racial pacifism outweighs their displeasure.

Lostspace

Little remains of this burned-out husk of a sphere, but it is obvious that no natural catastrophe is responsible for the wholesale destruction seen herein. Arcane weapons of war and the remnants of vessels and cities can be found everywhere. Whatever happened to the former inhabitants of this sphere is unknown, but Vulkaran is currently trying very hard to find out. Vodoni breeder research teams are scouring the entire sphere for knowledge and advanced weaponry.

The sphere is a treasure trove of unusual artifacts, new spells, and new spelljamming technology.

Passarspace

This sphere has no indigenous life, but is prized by Vulkaran for its vast natural resources. The system is filled with asteroids and planetoids and has no central star to provide light or heat. Whether the system has planets or not depends on what size of body the traveler defines as planetary.

The system is filled with Vodoni mining colonies and battle stations.

APPENDIX A: THE VODONI SPHERES

Salzarspace

One of the strangest spheres in known space, the Salzarian sphere is comprised of one small water planet at the center of the system, surrounded by eight fiery stars that roll around the inside of the crystal shell. When two stars meet, they pass through each other with a fiery explosion.

Besides the obvious dangers in entering or leaving the sphere, (including portals in the crystal shell that open and close at odd intervals), nothing magical operates within this sphere, even spelljamming devices! Travel is by oar, sail, or physical flight only.

The Salzarians are a race not to be taken lightly, though there are only a few hundred known in existence. They look like gigantic balls of water, each averaging 500 feet in diameter. Their hit points number in the thousands, and finding them within the watery planet is almost as difficult as defeating one in combat. In fact, these huge, watery creatures are immune to all forms of magic.

Although this is one of the first spheres Vulkaran attacked, the Salzarians have only lost one member of their race. However, to them this is an incalculable loss, as Salzarians are essentially immortal. For this reason, they have agreed to abide by the decrees of Vulkaran, even though Vulkaran can't find anything of value within the sphere!

No Vodoni outposts will be found within this sphere.

Thasiaspace

The Thasians are a race of shambling mound-like plant men. They conform to all of the statistics and abilities of the shambling mounds except they possess human levels of intelligence and only average about 2 HD each.

Since the Thasian system comprises only one planet, Thasia, and one large normal star, known as Lifegiver to the Thasians, Vulkaran assumed his conquest of this seemingly primitive race would be the easiest yet. The situation turned out to be quite the opposite.

First, the planet Thasia is gargantuan, a veritable minisphere of concentrated life-force. It most resembles the planet Vodon in that it is covered in dense jungle vegetation. While there are great oceans on Thasia, these, too, are thick with life at the surface, so more than a few travellers have landed on what they assumed to be solid ground, only to find their ship mysteriously missing upon their return.

Second, the Thasians are not affected by the special diseases and attack forms of the Vodoni enforcers, and possess immensely superior regeneration and camouflage abilities.

Therefore, the Thasian sphere is counted among Vulkaran's conquests only by Vulkaran, as the Vodoni presence in this sphere is nothing more than a few hundred satellite stations hovering above the surface of Thasia. No land-based Vodoni citadel has survived more than a few days before disappearing utterly into the mossy darkness.

In a few hundred years, the Thasian organic technology should reach the point where space travel becomes possible, and Vulkaran's weak hold on the Thasians will be sorely tested.

Vergonspace

The six inhabitable planets of the Vergon system are at war with one another, and have been for centuries. Vulkaran is supplying intelligence and weapons to all sides, in order to keep their collective strength to a minimum. The human Vergon are powerful, warlike, and fully capable of retaking their system from Vulkaran; if they join forces, of course. As long as Vulkaran maintains the status quo, however, no Vergon warlord will ever become overlord.

If the PCs defeat Vulkaran, within 100 years the Vergon wars will end, and a race even more deadly and powerful than the Vodoni will be let loose upon Free Space.

Vodonikaspace

This is the nearest sphere to the Vodoni sphere and is where the Vodoni exodus finally arrived. The former race was totally erased and this sphere is now a mirror of the original Vodoni sphere. The largest contingent of Vodoni enforcers is found here, and most of the ship and enforcer weapons used by Vodoni are built and forged on Vodonika (which means: "New Vodoni").

Five planets orbit here, all habitable, and all as diverse and populated as either Oerth or Krynn.

Zalanispace

The black, gargoyle-like Zalani appear to be among the most fearsome of humanoids in the Known Universe. However, despite their horrifying appearance, the Zalani are basically a peaceful race, who just happen to have a different sense of art and beauty than human beings do. To them, great gaping maws and huge black wings are lovely.

The Zalani are primarily travelers and ambassadors, preferring to trade and negotiate for others. They have no idea that one of the reasons no one "kills the messenger" is because the messenger looks so imposing.

Vulkaran initially forged a truce with the Zalani for just that reason, but as Vulkaran's spies gathered more and more information, Vulkaran massed his forces. The Zalani empire fell in a matter of days, and now the Zalani serve as ship builders for the Vodoni Empire. All of the Vodoni vessels carry the distinctive winged appearance of Zalani craftsmen, and the vessels themselves are masterpieces of workmanship. Importantly, the Zalani are the most autonomous race in the Vodoni Empire, simply because they are so indispensable to Vulkaran's ambitions.

APPENDIX B: NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

King Druin of the Adamantite Circle

Dwarven Ambassador (LG)

Class: Fighter 12	Str 19
AC: -5	Dex 17
hp: 120	Con 19
Attacks: 2 with axe	Int 11
THACO: 2 with axe	Wis 12
Damage: 1d10 + 12 with axe	Cha 10

Magic of Note: *Gauntlets of hill giant strength*, *plate mail* +5 (prized armor of his lineage), *two-handed dwarven axe* +3 (specialized), and a *potion of full healing* (acts as a *heal* spell).

Spells: none.

Personality: King Druin is a beast of a dwarf. Because of his great strength and skill with an axe, Druin always prefers to settle any dispute physically, no matter how trivial the disagreement. Not coincidentally, King Druin is renowned for always getting his way. If King Druin sees any sign of cowardice in battle, he finishes the battle normally, and then proceeds to "punish the traitor" with his bare fists. Most beings fail to "learn their lesson" until they wake up the next day.

Griktha

Neogi Ambassador (NE)

Class: Enchanter 8	Str 12
AC: 0	Dex 15
hp: 40	Con 10
Attacks: 2 (staff, bite)	Int 19
THACO: 12 (staff) 15 (bite)	Wis 14
Damage: 1d6 + 3 (staff) 1d6 (bite)	Cha 16

Magic of Note: *Wand of paralyzation* (45), *staff* +3, *wand of fire* (60), *bracers of defense* AC 6, *cloak of protection* +3, *ring of protection* +2, *potion of gaseous form*, and a *brooch of shielding* (46).

Spells: Griktha prefers charm, domination, and personal protection spells to area-of-effect damage spells. Always calls on Spinesnapper (below) when force is needed. His bite has the effect of a *slow* spell for 1-8 rounds unless a saving throw vs. poison is made.

Personality: Griktha is one of those beings who comes off as so slick, one knows he's lying through his teeth whenever he says anything, but one can never figure out just which part of his speech is false, and which is true. He is a consummate manipulator, specializing in forked-tongue diplomacy. He cannot be trusted, nor can one avoid hearing him out.

Spinesnapper:

An umber hulk of maximum hit points is Griktha's personal sidekick and bodyguard, delicately named Spinesnapper. Spinesnapper is not very bright, but he is very strong and very loyal. Unknown to Griktha, Spinesnapper has trouble discerning one neogi from another, meaning Griktha has come very close a few times to being the victim rather than the victor of a neogi disagreement (AC 2; HD 8+8; hp 72; THACO 11; Dmg 3-12/3-12/1-10).

Hoogley, Doogley, Loogley, Linkyn, B'linkyn, Knod, Horatio, and Pip-Snodgras D'Algernon

Gnomish Ambassadors (CN)

Class: F8, T10, F7/T8, or F7/I7	Str 15
AC: -2 or 1	Dex 18
hp: 70 (F8) 40 (others)	Con 16
Attacks: 3/2 or 1	Int 12
THACO: 13 (F8) 14 (F7) 16 (T10)	Wis 13
Damage: by weapon	Cha 12

Magic of Note (pick 4 each): *Leather armor* +3, *short sword* +2, *thieves' pick* and *tools*, 24 *marbles*, *wand of wonder* (99), *cloak of elvenkind*, *boots of elvenkind*; *chain mail* +3, *smoke bombs* (obscures vision in a 20' x 20' area

for 1d6 rounds), *oil of slipperiness*, *dust of disappearance* (4), *boots of spider climbing*.

Spells: Gnomish illusionists usually use their spells for mischief, misleading enemies, and entertainment. They feel it is much better to send your enemy down the hall after a large juicy rabbit, than to fight him fairly. Besides, the best treasure is always back at the lair.

Personality: The gnomes are trouble. They cannot even agree amongst themselves about anything, let alone obey orders or aid in group decision. These trouble-makers, if used, represent the "random factor" during the adventure. If the PCs are about to be hacked to death, have the enemy suddenly begin falling about uncontrollably. The marbles might be snagged before the PCs realize what happened, or they might start backfiring on the heroes, at the DM's option.

APPENDIX B: NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Prince Villithandra

Illithid Ambassador (LE)

Class: Evoker 12	Str 11
AC: 0	Dex 16
hp: 45	Con 13
Attacks: 1 with staff	Int 20
THACO: 11 with staff	Wis 12
Damage: 1d6 + 4 with staff	Cha 16

Magic of Note: *Staff of fire* (staff version of *wand of fire*, with 20 charges), *cloak of displacement*, *bracers AC 4*, *ring of fire resistance*, four *potions of extra-healing*.

Spells: Prefers to blast large numbers of enemies at a distance. Has been known to "accidentally" catch comrades in *fireballs*. In the Vodoni home sphere, he's going to be one quick-to-light-up wizard when he discovers that he has bonuses to fire spells (see Appendix A).

Personality: Villithandra might actually be a rather nice guy, if it wasn't for the fact that he's an illithid with an itchy trigger finger and something of a physical coward. The prince is out for blood in the Vodoni Empire, no matter how peaceful he may appear to outsiders. Illithids who seem at peace are usually brooding and plotting something "special."

Emperor Vulkaran the Dark (Maeder)

The Silver King, Master of the Twelve Spheres, Ruler of Known Space (LE)

Class: Fighter 20	Str 24
AC: -9 w/o defender	Dex 18
hp: 180	Con 19
Attacks: 2 with long sword + gaze	Int 18
THACO: 2 with long sword	Wis 14
Damage: 1d8 + 21 with long sword	Cha 16

Magic of Note: Mithril-plated *full plate armor* +4, black full-length *cloak of displacement*, *girdle of storm giant strength*, *long sword* +5 *defender*, named *Violator* (does double damage to lawful good opponents).

Spells: Vulkaran does not possess any spell-casting capability, however, he does possess all the abilities of a maeder (male medusa), plus the medusa's *flesh to stone* gaze attack. Vulkaran can

activate this power at will, without the need to remove his mask. His eyes glow blood-red when his gaze weapon is active.

Personality: Vulkaran is megalomania incarnate. Heady with his own accomplishments, he should never have been given the sacred task of protecting the gods during the first Vodoni exodus. Now, his absolute power has indeed corrupted him absolutely, and twelve spheres have suffered horribly in the interim.

Vulkaran is a ruthless warrior in combat. Rarely does he engage in personal combat. However, Vulkaran has been known to leap forth into battle on rare occasions, most notably whenever the commander of the opposing forces comes into view.

Vulkaran rose to power in the Vodoni army, concealing his nonhumanity by never using his gaze weapon, and through personal isolation. With no friends, came no risks, and Vulkaran's tremendous combat capabilities assured him of a quick rise to power within the Vodoni military machine.

"The rest," the Vodoni people say, "is legend, history, and nightmare."

Mongrelle

Master Breeder, Court Sorceress, High Councilor to Emperor Vulkaran (NE)

Class: Fighter/Transmuter 11/18	Str 17
AC: -9	Dex 18
hp: 120	Con 16
Attacks: 2 with staff	Int 21
THACO: 8 with staff	Wis 17
Damage: 1d6 + 3 with staff	Cha 18

Magic of Note: *Staff of the magi* (15 charges), *bracers of defense AC 2*, *cloak of protection* +4, *ring of protection* +3, *rod of absorption* (unused), *potion of flying*, *potion of invisibility*, three *potions of extra healing*.

Spells: Mongrelle has the spells Villiam D'Corson wishes he had, including *polymorph any object* and *shapechange*. Naturally, Mongrelle uses these spells more cruelly and deceptively. Mongrelle has been known to eat her enemies in public, often taking the form of a great red dragon.

Personality: Mongrelle is as lovely as she is cruel. Despite rumors to the contrary, Mongrelle is not Vulkaran's mistress. Rather she is his companion and confidant (see stats on Vulkaran for details). Together, the couple rule twelve spheres. While Vulkaran concentrates on defeating his enemies by force, Mongrelle is especially adept at politics (read: espionage and spying). For this reason, the Crystal Order now fears Mongrelle and her relatively small number of Vodoni breeders more than all of Vulkaran's forces combined.

APPENDIX C: PREGENERATED CHARACTERS

The following can be used as PCs for this adventure. If the players are using their own characters, these can be used as the human ambassadors.

Denys of Shiningburg

Dragon Lord (LG)

Class: Paladin 11	Str 18/00
AC: -6	Dex 16
hp: 90	Con 17
Attacks: 2 with sword	Int 15
THAC0: 2	Wis 16
Damage: 1d8 + 11	Cha 18

Magic of Note: *Full plate +1, shield +3, holy avenger (long sword) named Wyrmsbane (does double damage to dragons), and a ring of warmth.*

Spells: Healing or non-combat spells only, and never used on himself.

Personality: Denys is one of those too-good-to-be-true paladins that makes most heroes go green with envy. Having played not a minor part in the Wars of the Lance, Denys is not about to spend the rest of his life claiming the credit he is rightfully due. While other heroes are celebrated in song and treasure for slaying dragons he is known to have dealt with personally, Denys continues to hunt down evil dragons wherever they may be found. He never takes the credit for any kill, always claiming "I couldn't have done it without my friends." He is absolutely fearless in combat.

Dav the Butcher

Half-Ogre Lord (LN)

Class: Fighter 12	Str 20
AC: 2	Dex 12
hp: 120	Con 19
Attacks: 2 with axe	Int 8
THAC0: 2	Wis 11
Damage: 3d6 + 12 with axe	Cha 6

Magic of Note: *Great axe +4 (nicknamed Grog), chain +3 (very tight fitting), six skulls of flaming death (humanoid skulls converted to molotov cocktails), ring of shooting stars ("duh, look at them bright lights"), and white wolf cloak +2 (provides protection as a ring of cold resistance).*

Spells: None.

Personality: Dav is the great-great grandson of a famous innkeeper half-ogre in Taladas. He sold his share in the now-franchised eatery and set out in search of adventure. One evening, when Dav was rifling through the cargo hold of a wealthy merchant's ship, the ship lifted off! Thus began a legend, for Dav is known throughout Krynnspace as an honest and capable mercenary for hire, who sometimes even does good deeds for free.

Villiam D'Corson

Master Transmuter (CG)

Class: Transmuter 14	Str 9
AC: -1	Dex 18
hp: 35	Con 14
Attacks: 1 with staff	Int 18
THAC0: 13 with staff	Wis 11
Damage: 1d6 + 3 with staff	Cha 15

Magic of Note: *Wand of polymorph (80), robes of the arch-magi (white), ring of protection +2, potion of gaseous form, staff +3, and a ring of teleportation, no error (1/day).*

Spells: Polymorphing spells and anything that doesn't require touching in close combat. His favorite combat saying is, "You're a gazelle!"

Personality: When not turning dangerous monsters into potted plants and enemies into harmless animals, Villiam is found teaching the fine art of "magical gardening" in Calimport. He is revered the world wide for his miraculous accomplishments in the field of transmutation. Enemies have an uncanny knack for failing their saving throws against his polymorphing spells. If asked, Villiam claims modestly that, "it's all in the wrist."

APPENDIX C: PREGENERATED CHARACTERS

The following can be used as PCs for this adventure. If the players are using their own characters, these can be used as the human ambassadors.

Ande D'Vis

Founder of the Wildfire League (CN)

Class: Evoker 13	Str 14
AC: -5	Dex 18
hp: 40	Con 13
Attacks: 1 with dagger	Int 17
THACO: 12 with dagger	Wis 15
Damage: 1d4 + 4 with dagger	Cha 10

Magic of Note: *Silver cloak of fire resistance* (acts as per ring), *ring of protection* +4, *robe of protection* +2, *bracers of defense* AC 5, *wand of fire* (100), *wand of frost* (100), *wand of lightning* (100), and a *fire shield ring* (resist fire version), usable for one turn per day.

Spells: "If it moves, blow it up," is Ande's motto. There are no subtle spells in his spell book. Ande has been known to let himself be surrounded by his enemies, just so he can target himself with his own *fireball* spell. Ande has been researching the *meteor swarm* spell ever since he was four years old. When he finally does get it right, the universe had better watch out!

Personality: A volatile personality if ever there was one, Ande attracts followers of a likewise temperament. His Wildfire League is the arson menace of Realmspace. While they only burn up evil things in the name of the forces of good, most of the time the nearby forces of good go up in flames with them. Law enforcement communities refer to these pyrotechnic vigilantes as "mixed blessings."

Jewely Carseah

Mistress of Death (CN)

Class: Priest of Hel 13	Str 11
AC: -4	Dex 17
hp: 75	Con 16
Attacks: 1 with sword	Int 15
THACO: 7 with sword	Wis 18
Damage: 1d6 + 5 with sword	Cha 18

Magic of Note: *Robe of stars*, *short sword* +5 (*nine-lives stealer*), *ring of regeneration*, *wand of animate dead* (67), and *plate mail* +4.

Spells: Prefers necromantic, life-draining, and reversed versions of various healing spells. Commands undead instead of turning/dispeeling them.

Personality: Jewely is a subtle, seductive woman, who wears make-up to make herself look like her patron goddess, the Norse goddess, Hel. She has been both advisor and enemy to the Tiger Clans of Oerth. Jewely walks a fine line between good and evil. She prefers to kill helpless, charmed, or magically held foes if keeping them alive requires any effort. Despite some evil inclinations, she has been reliable and trustworthy, and hasn't done anything to endanger her comrades. However, once they have died in combat, she feels their bodies are up for grabs . . .

Marcus of the Waters

Shadowwalker (N)

Class: Cleric 10, Thief 11	Str 18
AC: -1	Dex 16
hp: 60	Con 14
Attacks: 1 with sword	Int 11
THACO: 11 with sword	Wis 15
Damage: 2d4 + 6 with sword	Cha 17

Magic of Note: *Cloak and boots of elvenkind*, *ring of invisibility*, *leather* +3, *shield* +3, *broad sword* +4, and a *potion of etherealness*.

Spells: Good mix of clerical spells, but prefers healing and water-based spells.

Personality: Marcus couldn't make up his mind which deity he wanted to worship, spending eight levels of adventuring switching to and fro about the pantheons. He also learned some bad lessons about dipping from the collection plate. Eventually, he did more dipping than collecting and quickly found himself on the Wild Coast, hanging around with shadier and shadier characters. Now, Marcus uses his cleric robes only as a disguise for a real passion in life, stealing. However, Marcus tries to only steal from the undeserving and give to the poor. Needless to say, this giving-stealing/stealing-giving problem has confused more than just Marcus's friends. The local authorities don't know what to make of him, and Marcus often finds himself arrested or praised for no reason whatsoever.

APPENDIX D: NEW SPELLJAMMING SHIPS

Note: The primary name is what the Vodoni call these ships. The secondary name is what the Alliance calls them.

NIGHTWOLF

Vodoni Scout

Built By:	Zalani	Ship's Rating:	As per spelljammer
Used Primarily By:	Vodoni	Standard Armament:	
Tonnage:	40 tons	2 medium catapults	
Hull Points:	40	Crew: 3	
Crew:	3/40	1 medium jettison	
Maneuver Class:	B	Crew: 3	
Landing—Land:	Yes	Cargo:	20 tons
Landing—Water:	Yes	Keel Length:	50'
Armor Rating:	4	Beam Length:	20'
Save As:	Ceramic	Wingspan:	80'
Power Type:	Major helm		

Appearance: The nightwolf looks like a long, sleek, winged black wolf. It is not equipped with any form of ram, therefore, the wolf's head at the prow is purely decorative. The ship has a narrow profile when viewed from the side.

Use: This is a scout/spy ship. It is small, black and fast, but not as well armored as the other Vodoni ships, and does not have as many crew.

HUNTER-KILLER

Vodoni Assassin

Built By:	Zalani	Standard Armament:	
Used Primarily By:	Vodoni	2 medium ballistae*	
Tonnage:	60 tons	Crew: 4	
Hull Points:	60	2 medium catapults*	
Crew:	10/60	Crew: 6	
Maneuver Class:	C	2 medium bombards*	
Landing—Land:	Yes	Crew: 4	
Landing—Water:	No	2 medium jettisons*	
Armor Rating:	5	Crew: 6	
Save As:	Ceramic	Cargo:	30 tons
Power Type:	Major helm	Keel Length:	260'
Ship's Rating:	As per spelljammer	Beam Length:	40'
		Wingspan:	400'

* Increased (doubled) range

Appearance: The ship is designed as a twin-headed, winged, smiling she-wolf. It looks the same from ahead and behind. The ship is wide, not very well-armored, but fast. It is equipped with a swiveling mast which allows the ship to change course very quickly.

Use: This is the Vodoni ranged-combat war ship. Using specially designed ballistae, catapults, and bombards, the vessel remains out of range of its opponents while attacking. They roam the 12 Vodoni spheres virtually unchallenged.

APPENDIX D: NEW SPELLJAMMING SHIPS

Note: The primary name is what the Vodoni call these ships. The secondary name is what the Alliance calls them.

WEREWOLF

Vodoni Butcher

Built By: Zalani
 Used Primarily By: Vodoni
 Tonnage: 60 tons
 Hull Points: 60
 Crew: 24/60
 Maneuver Class: D
 Landing—Land: Yes
 Landing—Water: Yes
 Armor Rating: 8
 Save As: Ceramic
 Power Type: Minor helm

Ship's Rating: As per spelljammer
 Standard Armament:
 2 heavy catapults
 Crew: 5
 1 heavy ballista
 Crew: 4
 1 piercing/grappling ram
 Cargo: 30 tons
 Keel Length: 230'
 Beam Length: 50'

Appearance: This vessel is a slow, heavily armored, ramming behemoth. It looks like a huge red-winged wolf with open jaws that can rip, tear, and grab a hull when ramming.

Use: This is a close-combat war ship designed ram and board an enemy. The basic ship design is also the work-horse of the Vodoni fleet, as modified versions of this vessel serve both cargo and galley purposes.

THE VULKARUS

(Imperial War Galley)

Vodoni Diamond

Built By: Zalani
 Used Primarily By: Vodoni
 Tonnage: 100 tons
 Hull Points: 100
 Crew: 1/100
 Maneuver Class: C
 Landing—Land: No
 Landing—Water: No
 Armor Rating: 5

Save As: Stone
 Power Type: Major helm
 Ship's Rating: As per Vulkaran (usually)
 Standard Armament:
 1 piercing ram
 Cargo: 50 tons
 Keel Length: Special
 Beam Length: Special

Appearance: Opaque gemlike structure comprised of huge hollowed crystals. The bridge is in the uppermost crystal, the cardinal point crystals serve other functions, and the large base crystal is the storehouse for Vulkaran's treasure.

Use: This is the one-and-only Imperial war galley of the Vodoni fleet. It was not designed for combat, but rather is a huge luxury transport: very fast, well-armored, but with little or no weaponry. It does possess an upper crystal that serves as a very dangerous ram, in emergency situations.

APPENDIX E: NEW MAGIC

The Eye of the Gods

The gods and all other great supernatural beings in the Vodoni sphere had only two choices when the supernova became inevitable. Their first choice was to stay and risk destruction. The fact that no power could divine the future past the time of the nova frightened the great beings terribly. The second was to leave the sphere with the rest of the exodus. Unfortunately, the gods were incapable of leaving their own sphere while retaining their power. The future seemed hopeless.

Under the guidance of the Crystal King, however, a vessel was created capable of carrying all of the gods, if they agreed to be so bound. As the deadline approached, more and more powers joined the crystal ark called *The Eye of the Gods*.

To prevent any one force from gaining control of all, the key to releasing the gods again was entrusted to a neutral mortal. The Crystal King had faith in Vulkaran, as the young emperor had shown strength and resolve in dealing with the epic crisis before his people. The elemental lords, however, had equal faith in the adage that "absolute power corrupts absolutely" and that the forces of the inner planes would triumph in the end.

What neither side counted on was Vulkaran's determination to keep both sides imprisoned. "Surely," they felt, "a mortal would call on the powers of the gods to increase his own power." But Vulkaran never did. The emperor used his own cunning and will to shape his people and forge his war machine, and the longer the immortals remained imprisoned, the greater Vulkaran's own deification seemed to be assured.

Vulkaran doesn't need the gods a fraction as much as they need him.

The *Eye of the Gods* has no direct powers of its own, it is merely a vessel, a prison. Its power lies in the fact that the owner of the artifact can free any divine imprisoned within if he knows the key words. Naturally, the shadiest of gods will promise anything to gain their freedom, tempting the possessor with great wealth and power. A powerful mage can use its residual energy to power specially-created spells, wards, and magical devices (which is what Vulkarus has done).

Only Vulkaran knows the key words and this is how it should be during the entire adventure. If the PCs start summoning up gods to do their bidding, campaign balance is going to be thrown right out the window, along with a lot of excitement during Chapter 6.

The only way the PCs can release the gods is to kill Vulkaran. See the conclusion of Chapter 6 for ramifications of freeing the gods.

The *Eye of the Gods* looks like a normal crystal ball.



Eagle Vision

(Alteration)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 8 hours

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Creature touched

Saving Throw: None

This third level mage spell gives the recipient the ability to see as if he was wearing *eyes of the eagle*. This gives vision 100 times greater than normal at distances of 1' or more (i.e., the wizard can see at 2000' what a person could normally see at 20').

Vodoni, Breeder

SJA4

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (17-18) or higher
TREASURE:	See below
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	5 to -4 w/o sword
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	Variable (F7-9/W14-17)
THACO:	14, 13, or 12
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3/2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	By weapon (1-8)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Champion (16)
XP VALUE:	Variable

Vodoni breeders appear much as normal human beings, except they keep their heads shaved. They wear great flowing silver robes with deep purple satin rivulets stitched throughout. The general populace knows to keep their distance from these powerful warrior-magicians.

Breeders are usually 7th-9th level warriors and 14th-16th level transmuters. They are all familiar with spelljamming technology, and are the brightest and most educated beings in the Vodoni universe.

Combat: All Vodoni breeders carry a *staff of power* with a gnarled wolf's head; wield a *longsword* +2, +3, or +4, *defender*; and wear *bracers of defense*, AC 2 to AC 4 and a *cloak of protection* +1 to +4.

Their spells are typical for high level transmuters, but no breeder carries spells that won't work in space or in the Vodoni home sphere.

All breeders have *eagle vision* as an innate ability, usable at will, which aids them immensely in guiding their ships through the broad asteroid field (called "the Web") that surrounds the inner worlds of the Vodoni home sphere.

Habitat/Society: Along with their mistress, Mongrelle, Vulkaran's high councilor, the breeders are the twisted nobility of Vulkaran's totalitarian regime. In fact, the nobility has their own hierarchy, which Vulkaran has also carefully manipulated to his own advantage. Twelve of the most powerful Vodoni breeders are designated as "high breeders" for the subjugated spheres, and have been accorded ambassador status within the Vodoni Imperial City.

Vulkaran has made sure that all of these high breeders have estates that face away from the Imperial Palace, and that each ambassador's residence is flanked by two devoutly loyal breeders. Vulkaran is always watching for signs of treachery, weakness, or betrayal.



Ecology: Vodoni citizens powerful and intelligent enough to challenge the least of Vulkaran's policies and survive are "recruited," and their memories magically erased by Mongrelle, Vulkaran's high councilor. They then enter training as warriors until they reach at least 7th level. Mongrelle then makes the adepts immune to Vodoni lycanthropy with a powerful potion, and begins their schooling in the twisted Vodoni dark arts.

After many years, the survivors emerge to serve as the masters of the Vodoni enforcers and conquerors throughout the Vodini Empire, and are responsible for their creation as well (hence the term "breeders").

Vodoni breeders are themselves constantly tampering, either magically or genetically, with their were-warriors. In most cases, horrible mutations or unreplicable results occur, and there has been no real progress in the evolution of the strain as a whole.

However, just as the enforcers were created long ago, the experimentation has finally produced the new Vodoni conquerors (see *Vodoni enforcers* entry for details).

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Enforcer Any land	Conqueror Any land
FREQUENCY:	Common	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Military	Military
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Carnivorous	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8-10)	Very (11-12)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil	Neutral evil
NO. APPEARING:	2-20	1-10
ARMOR CLASS:	4, chain/shield	5, hide only
MOVEMENT:	9	12
HIT DICE:	7	10
THACO:	14	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2 or 3	2 or 3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	By weapon or 1-8/1-8/1-6	By weapon +2 or 1-10/1-10/1-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Blood rage	Blood rage
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+1 weapon to hit	+1 weapon to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M (7' tall)	L (10' tall)
MORALE:	Elite (14)	Fanatic (18)
XP VALUE:	1400	3000

Magically-created creations of Vulkaran's breeders, Vodoni enforcers are the half-man, half-wolf beast-warriors who have been infected with a special Vodoni form of lycanthropy. Normally, the enforcers appear as wolf-like humanoids, but whenever they go into a *blood rage* (i.e. berserk) the enforcers take on a decidedly rabid appearance.

Combat: Enforcers are tremendous fighting machines, honed to battle for glorious honor and their very existence. In their calmer moments, they attack twice each round; and are usually armed with *longswords* +1.

However, at the beginning of any battle, there is a 75% chance that the enforcers will choose to take the more violent and horrible road to victory. By attacking with both claws and their vicious bite, enforcers quickly turn even more wolf-like in appearance and manner and go utterly berserk in combat. This dread phenomena is known throughout the empire as the *Vodoni blood rage*.

Any enforcer whose bite hits will go into a *blood rage* if he fails a Wisdom check (the success roll is usually 8 or less!). This is called "tasting blood". An enforcer that goes berserk doubles its normal number of attacks per round, gains a +2 to hit, and inflicts +4 damage. As the warrior is now completely out of control, its weapons aren't used; leaving only enhanced hand-to-hand attacks. Also, the armor class of a berserk enforcer drops by four places, due to the complete lack of even basic defensive precautions.

The *blood rage* lasts 1 turn after the last blood has been tasted. By instinct, enforcers do not attack other enforcers, but do gnaw on vanquished foes if there are no more living enemies to battle.

The Vodoni form of lycanthropy is more virulent than the common strain, in that the victims are nearly mindless and vicious unless further treated. The chances of contracting lycanthropy are the same as for the more common form. Demihumans and nonhumans must make a special save vs. poison to survive contracting it, and suffer its full effects if they do. *Cure disease* is ineffective against this strain of lycanthropy.



Habitat/Society: During every cosmic moon cycle (i.e. 30 standard days), the enforcers lose complete control at the height of the full moon. At this time, they are often let loose upon uncooperative worlds. This natural *blood rage* lasts until dawn breaks, and during this time only, enforcer will attack enforcer. The enforcers themselves refer to this period as "shore leave."

Ecology: Enforcers are made, not born, in the horrid pits of the Undercity. The victims are first infected with lycanthropy (during the full moon feasts of the Imperial City, for example) and then taken to the Undercity. At this point Vodoni lycanthropes are nearly mindless, and extremely vicious. The strongest are selected for "testing", which involves swallowing a virulent poison. A successful saving throw vs. poison creates a loyal new Vodoni enforcer; failure means death. To return an enforcer to human status, the creature must the following spells cast on it at the appropriate time: *neutralize poison*, *remove curse*, and *heal*.

Vodoni Conquerors

Big, bad, and wolf-like, these monsters are the next stage in enforcer evolution. They are much like the enforcers except that they are even larger and more powerful. When using weapons they inflict an additional +2 points of damage. They have the ability go into *blood rage* at will. They still suffer the same armor class penalties as their smaller cousins.

These creatures are currently the secret elite bodyguards for Vulkaran himself, but a few can be found on special missions. Naturally, Vulkaran has decided to devote more of his funds and time to producing even more of these ultra-powerful warriors for his legions. Eventually, the emperor intends to replace the enforcers with the conquerors as the former warriors die over the normal course of events.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Space	Spinner
FREQUENCY:	Space	Space
ORGANIZATION:	Very rare	Very rare
	Cell, or colony	Nest
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Minerals	Minerals
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional (15-16)	Exceptional (15-16)
TREASURE:	See below	See below
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful neutral	Lawful neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-10, or 30+	2-20
ARMOR CLASS:	0	0
MOVEMENT:	15	15
HIT DICE:	8	10
THACO:	13	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-8/1-8/1-10	1-10/1-10/1-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Poison	Poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	L (10' diameter body)	L (10' diameter body)
MORALE:	Elite (13-14)	Elite (13-14)
XP VALUE:	2000	4000

These large crystal spiders are very rare throughout the universe, as they are known to be both intelligent and shy. They most resemble large glass spiders, with strange, multi-colored internal organs. They appear to be more mineral than organic. How they communicate is a mystery, but they occasionally produce a high-pitched tinkling sound.

Combat: The crystal pincers and razor bite of the typical space spider is enough to chew through even a metal hull, given time. Anyone bitten by the spider must save vs. poison or die in 2-5 rounds (1d4 + 1). They do take damage from the second level mage spell, *shatter*.

Habitat/Society: These creatures are not evil, but are generally so secretive about their lairs that anyone or anything that wanders into their lair, even accidentally, is immediately killed to protect the secret location of the nest. A typical nest will 30-180 spiders, 3-18 diamond spinners, and one master spinner.

Vulkaran has a nest of these creatures guarding the entrance to his palace, but only a few Vodoni citizens outside the palace know what lies just within the great gate. The rest of the populace knows only legends and rumors.

Ecology: Space spiders are a combination of organic and mineral life. Their origin, whether on the Elemental Plane of Earth or as the result of some ancient magical experiment, is unclear, but most scholars believe the spiders are distant relatives of the xorn, xaren, and most probably crysmals. In fact, the resemblance of the space spiders to the latter has led many to suppose that space spiders are actually a more advanced space-based form of the crysmal.

The eggs of the space spiders are known to have diamonds in them worth 10-100 gp each. It is not known wheth-



er the gems are produced naturally within the mother spider and then laid with the egg, or whether the egg-laying process requires the location of a suitable supply of diamonds. Sages tend to believe the latter is true, due the immense rarity of the creatures, and of the diamond-laden asteroids they are known to inhabit. It is known for certain, however, that the young hatchlings devour the diamond enclosed in their crystalline shell as they grow, much as a young chicken feeds off the yolk of an egg before it is ready to hatch. The young mature fully within twenty days.

Diamond Spinners

These are the mother spiders of the race, and are the most able to defend the precious eggs of their young so treasured by adventurers the universe over.

In addition to the powers of the common space spider, the spinner can jump a full 150 feet horizontally or vertically. This is usually used to ambush intruders to the lair or pursue those lucky enough to have evaded the spinners on the way in.

Master Spider

This is simply the oldest, wisest diamond spinner of the lair. As such, it has maximum hit points and the ability to communicate telepathically with all its offspring. The master spider guides the construction of the lair, a bubble-like maze, through mental commands.

NOTES ON THE IMPERIAL CITY

The Imperial City

The Imperial City of Vulkaran is easily one of the largest and most carefully planned works in the Vodoni Empire. Conceived and designed to resemble a monstrous spider web, one of the emperor's special obsessions, the "web strands" of the city are actually the huge streets and avenues of the Imperial City. The main streets and thoroughfares are layered with a glossy, gypsum-like material that gives the city's entire appearance a shimmering, morning-dew quality.

In between the streets are the "cells" of the city. Here are the buildings, shops, homes, ship docks, arenas, and dungeons of the Imperial City. By Imperial decree, everything within a cell must be dark in color. Buildings must be brown or black, while outdoors trees are preferred to flowers. There are no major restrictions on how people may decorate inside their own shops and dwellings.

In the center of the huge city is the awesome Imperial Palace of Emperor Vulkaran the Dark. It rises miles into the sky and glistens like the major streets radiating out below it. (For more on the interior of the palace, itself, refer to the encounter keys in Chapters 5 and 6 of the adventure.)

The entire city complex has an ordered appearance from afar, but grows seemingly more and more chaotic as visitors come closer and closer. There is little or no order within any given cell, and even the major class and area distinctions within the city are more guidelines than strict delineations.

Otherwise, the city is simply a teeming planetary metropolis, and larger than most. The ruler is a despot, the lesser officials are Vodoni breeders, and most areas are well-patrolled by Vodoni enforcers. The people themselves are human, and more slaves than citizens. As residents of the Imperial City, they always have work to do and lots of goods and services to produce. If life is not particularly pleasant, it is at least stable; if you don't mind the disappearance of certain whiners and the occasional young adult of military age.

The nobility are the high breeders, who are responsible for the creation of large numbers of enforcers. Their villas surround the Imperial Palace, though Vulkaran is careful to separate the dozen most powerful households (his "ambassadors" to the subjugated spheres) with weaker (and thus more loyal) minions. All villas face away from the palace by Imperial decree.

Ironically, the Imperial City is the least troublesome region in Vulkaran's empire, yet hidden intrigue looms right beneath the nose of the emperor's silver mask.

The Crystal Order is a secret cult of warriors and priests who believe in the ancient prophecies about the return of the Crystal King and his court, and have dedicated their very lives to seeing the prophecies come true. The Crystal King is the leader of the deities of the Vodoni sphere, who

were betrayed and trapped by Vulkaran before he started over four hundred years of aggressive conquest. The Order is most known for rescuing helpless victims from the berserking enforcers during a full moon "shore leave." Vulkaran, for all of his power and might, has been unable to suppress them fully, as he has a very weak intelligence-gathering force. He prefers to kill enemies, rather than play mind games with them. Although his rather heavy-handed tactics are brutally effective, the resistance has slowly and subtly managed to use Vulkaran's predictability to their own advantage over the past few decades.

If the PCs adventure in the city itself, the encounter tables from any standard campaign city can be adapted easily here. Just keep in mind that neither Vulkaran nor his elite enforcers ever give anyone a second chance, and are used to having ALL of their orders obeyed without question.

The Undercity

Buried beneath mountains of slagged rubble and the foundations of the Imperial City lies the remains of the former capital of the Vodoni Empire, Hithandia. Abandoned hastily by the fleeing Vodoni people when the sun went nova, many treasures and wondrous, lost technological items are buried beneath the smelted remains.

A few exits to the surface have been grated over and officially serve as sewers now, but unofficially everybody knows many legends about the dread Undercity.

Surely, the Undercity is a vile, dangerous place, both because of its crumbling foundations and tunnels as well as the infinite variety of monsters dwelling therein. Entire legions of Vodoni enforcer candidates battle and feed off one another, slowly gaining the size and experience necessary to eventually be recruited into Vulkaran's army.

In some regions of the Undercity, the process is a chaotic and mysterious one, while in others, actual gladiatorial events staged by the noble houses pit one warrior against another. Vulkaran's breeders often steal from the former and buy from the latter when their stock needs replenishing.

The Undercity is a world all its own. The ambitious DM can adapt a large city from another campaign, and then completely decimate it to get the desired effect. Burying it in a few millions tons of dirt turns the place into a living Pompeii, rich with undiscovered treasures and a veritable biosphere of defenders.

This is a good place to hide artifacts and clues about races like the arcane, mindflayers, and beholders; or to hide those special "anti-enforcer" weapons your party has been looking for. Lower-level parties who need some extra experience and magic before moving on to the final climactic confrontation detailed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, might adventure here first, before venturing onward.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
2nd Edition



Under The Dark Fist

by Grant Boucher

Few creatures inhabiting the realms of Greyspace, Krynnspace, and Realmspace know (or even dream) of each others' existence. Fewer still understand the celestial bonds they secretly share.

As the worlds of men and elves, dwarves and dragons are about to discover, no less than **TWELVE** unknown spheres stand poised for war...a war as unexpected as it will be devastating!

Twelve spheres against three — hardly fair odds. But then again, Emperor Vulkaran the Dark, Master of the Twelve Spheres and Ruler of All Known Space,

doesn't like a fair fight. He's never fought one yet!

Under the Dark Fist, a 64-page adventure for the SPELLJAMMER™ setting, provides enough material to wage an intergalactic war across 15 spheres! It can be used as an epic stand-alone adventure or easily incorporated into an existing campaign. This challenging adventure is recommended for experienced players and referees.

This adventure is designed for a party of four to eight characters, levels 10 to 14.

TSR, Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva
WI 53147
U.S.A.



TSR Ltd.
120 Church End,
Cherry Hinton
Cambridge CB1 3LB
United Kingdom

ISBN 1-56076-131-8



\$9.95 U.S.

£6.50

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, is a registered trademark owned by TSR Inc.

SPELLJAMMER and the TSR logo are trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.

©1991 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.