

FOR THE TEAR OF A DRAGON

*Dragons don't shed tears, just blood.
Mostly that of others.*

• CRIMSONSCALE •

The group seeks to retrieve a vial of dragon's blood from a seemingly abandoned kaer for the magical research of their patron. The blood is actually a crucial component in a blood magic ritual that keeps a powerful Horror trapped within the kaer. Stealing the blood releases the Horror and draws the attention of protectors of the blood vial.

SETUP

Prior to the Scourge, a young dragon Named Crimonscale built Kaer Wyrmscale in the Dragon Mountains to shelter a village of Namegivers. Shortly before the kaer was to be sealed, however, Crimonscale discovered that a bloatform Horror Named Oorx Tor N'kal had infiltrated the kaer. Crimonscale used a blood ritual to seal the Horror inside, and then she constructed a new kaer, Wyrmscale, which protected the villagers during the Scourge.

An adventurer's journal, dated from the early days after the opening of Throal, has found its way into the Great Library. The journal describes its author, an ork Scout adept Named Gran'aldiz, discovering a kaer in the Dragon Mountains. (This is Kaer Wyrmscale.) The kaer appeared to be abandoned, and showed no signs of ever having been inhabited. The journal describes the centerpiece of the kaer as an altar, upon which a large flask of living crystal holds what Gran'aldiz calls "a dragon's tear." The journal also contains a fairly detailed map for finding the kaer. However, the journal makes no mention of the trapped Horror.

The player characters may simply find the journal on their own, perhaps while researching in the Library. If they have a regular patron, such as the Eye of Throal, or His Majesty's Exploratory Force, they are assigned by their regular handler to investigate the kaer and retrieve the dragon's tear. If none of these are appropriate to the group of characters, they are hired by the Wizard Yirn Rinal (see below) to accompany him in acquiring the tear.

Yirn Rinal is a seasoned, but not elderly, human Wizard. While graying at the temples, he appears fit and eschews many of the stereotypes of wizards—he is disarmingly forthright in both speech and dress, forgoing ornate robes and verbal embellishments for simple traveler's garb and straight talk. He hires the adventurers

in Bartertown (or wherever their home base may be), for a reasonable fee based on their Legendary Status (*Player's Guide*, p. 244). Rinal explains that he wishes the tear for his own magical research, but should it turn out to belong to a living great dragon, he would also happily return it to its owner for a reward. Rinal also has no knowledge of the trapped Horror.

EVENT ONE: TO THE DRAGON MOUNTAINS

The easiest route, and the one suggested by Rinal if he is along, is to travel overland to the Coil River, and then by riverboat to Travar. The trip from Bartertown to Travar via riverboat is rather uneventful—though gamemasters wishing for more action may have the group attacked by pirates on the Serpent River, or by creatures of the Servos Jungle as they sail through it. Once they depart overland from Travar toward the Dragon Mountains, ork scorcher or any creatures from the nearby Badlands might harass them.

In any case, as soon as the group approaches the foothills of the Dragon Mountains, they notice a wyvern (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 255) flying at a distance from their group. As they get closer to the kaer, the wyvern sightings get closer and more frequent—and it is unclear whether they are seeing multiple wyverns, or simply the same one multiple times. The wyverns do not attack, unless the characters attack first.

EVENT TWO: WYRMSCALE

The characters enter the abandoned Kaer Wyrmscale. Most of the kaer is empty, but for one large chamber in the back of the great hall leading to an ornate room with an altar. A large tear-shaped living crystal flask, the size of a Namegiver's head, rests in a carved recess on the top of the altar. Close inspection reveals that the flask is encircled with rune-covered orichalcum bands. Further, the liquid inside the flask appears to be blood red. The altar is also heavily trapped. Once the traps are disarmed or sprung, the characters can easily lift the flask off the altar.

EVENT THREE: CRIMSONSCALE'S BROOD

As soon as the player characters leave the kaer with the flask, they are attacked by a number of wyverns. These wyverns are all descendants of Crimonscale, whose blood this is, and are bound by old ritual magic to prevent the blood from leaving the kaer. The wyverns fight to the death to prevent anyone from taking the blood flask. They try to drive whoever is carrying the blood flask back into the kaer. If the characters retreat back inside, the wyverns do not pursue the characters, but wait near the entrance for them to emerge.

EVENT FOUR: THE GUARDIANS

Once the characters either defeat the wyverns or retreat into the kaer, they are met by two dozen or more armed and armored Namegivers. This group includes several adepts of Circles high enough to give the player characters a tough fight. These are descendants of the original kaer-dwellers, who were relocated into the nearby Kaer Wyrmsield. They explain that the flask is sacred to them, as their protector, the dragon Crimonscale, left it. It must not be moved—though, if asked, the villagers do not know why. The villagers all have very subtle hints of the dragonkin about them (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 251), but many generations removed, and only noticeable on careful observation.

Social interactions are very important here, as the villagers do not attack immediately, but give the characters a chance to surrender the blood flask peacefully. If asked, the villagers explain that their ancestors once lived in this kaer, but were moved out of it shortly before the Scourge and into a different kaer in the next valley over. However, they were charged by their elders to protect the first, empty kaer and the blood flask, and to always watch the sky for the wyverns, a sign of trouble.

If Yirn Rinal is present, he attempts to negotiate with the villagers, offering to buy the flask. These negotiations likely fail unless the player characters step in with some impressive social interaction. If the villagers refuse to sell the flask, Rinal orders the characters to fight their way through the villagers. If the player characters refuse, Rinal prudently does not try to fight through the villagers himself, hoping to come back later for the blood tear with a more compliant group of adventurers. He moves to replace the blood tear, triggering the climax, below. Whether the characters choose to fight the villagers or not determines whether the villagers are the characters' allies or adversaries in the **Climax** below.

CLIMAX

The flask of dragon's blood was a key component in a blood magic ritual that kept Oorx Tor N'kal, a powerful bloatform Horror, imprisoned in a hidden chamber beneath the altar (for bloatforms, see the *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 286). Removing the flask from the altar has freed the Horror, which has been observing the characters' conflict with the villagers. It would normally be content to Horror-mark the characters or villagers from afar. However, it is afraid that should the blood flask be replaced it will be trapped again by the blood magic spell.

The Horror breaks out from under the altar and attacks anyone attempting to replace the blood flask. It takes the first

opportunity to try to smash open the flask and spill the dragon's blood on the floor, though the living crystal flask is almost impossible to break. Should the Horror defeat the characters and villagers, it is content to leave weaker ones alive and Horror-marked, as long as it feels there is no chance of it being imprisoned again.

If a fight breaks out between the characters and the villagers, the Horror waits to see what happens. If Rinal and the characters defeat the villagers and are going to leave with the flask, Oorx Tor N'kal lets them leave, though it attempts to Horror-mark one or more of them before they do.

Should the characters destroy the Horror, there is no longer any reason not to take the blood flask with them, though they have to persuade any remaining villagers of this. If Rinal survives, he takes the flask, and once back to Travar, pays the player characters their fee.

SEQUELS

The dragon's blood itself is a very potent alchemical ingredient—Rinal wishes to use it to create an elixir that he believes will grant Namegivers the longevity of a dragon. Simply drinking the blood with no other preparation, at the game-master's discretion, may give the drinker some of the benefits of a dragonkin (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 251). It may also create a magical bond between the Namegiver and certain dragons, including Crimonscale and her sire—who could be any one of the great dragons the gamemaster wishes.

Speaking of Crimonscale, she appears to be a forgotten dragon—she has not been seen since the Scourge, and little knowledge of her exists. What happened to her during the Scourge? She could reappear, looking for her blood, or the ones who took it. Additionally, any of the great dragons will have an interest in retrieving the blood, as they fear it could be used against them in magical rituals. Mountainshadow, who would be a good choice for being Crimonscale's sire, could take a personal interest in these events, as could any of his enemies. Any interested dragons may send a drake or other servants to retrieve the flask—indeed, Yirn Rinal could be just such a drake—working for Mountainshadow or one of his rivals.

If word gets out about the existence of the blood flask, many political players and secret societies in Barsaive that wish an advantage against the dragons (such as the Therans, the Denairastas, the Hand of Corruption, the Keys of Death, etc) would want to acquire the blood. The Cult of the Great Hunter would have a particularly keen interest. The player characters may wish to sell the flask to any of these groups, or turn it over to the dragons in hopes for a reward, but they may also be pursued and attacked by any of these factions looking to take it by force. Yirn Rinal could secretly be an agent of any of these powers. Depending on how things were left with him, the group could have earned the unwitting patronage, or enmity, of whichever group Rinal works for.

CREDITS

Writing: Delano Lopez

Editing: Carsten Damm, Steven J. Black, Benjamin Plaga

Artwork: Kathy Schad

Earthdawn Line Developer: Carsten Damm

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