

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ADVENTURE PATH

INTRODUCTION	5	CHAPTER SEVEN:	
Preparation	5	SECRETS OF THE SOUL PILLARS	198
Campaign Background	5	<i>Wherein the local clergy makes the terrible mistake of not hiring enough assassins for the job.</i>	
Cast of Characters	9	CHAPTER EIGHT:	
Cauldron	11	LORDS OF OBLIVION	222
Cauldron's History	11	<i>Wherein a charming local noble woman's party comes to a sudden and gruesome end.</i>	
Regional Timeline	12	CHAPTER NINE:	
Life in Cauldron	13	FOUNDATION OF FLAME	248
Rumors in Cauldron	14	<i>Wherein the weather takes a turn for the worse.</i>	
Exploring Cauldron	16	CHAPTER TEN:	
Exploring the Cauldron Region	27	THIRTEEN CAGES	268
CHAPTER ONE:		<i>Wherein a group of diverse and talented allies learns the folly of not working together against a common foe.</i>	
LIFE'S BAZAAR	32	CHAPTER ELEVEN:	
<i>Wherein an overzealous merchant from deep below harvests too aggressively from a local orphanage, and overstays his welcome in the foundations below.</i>		STRIKE ON SHATTERHORN	288
CHAPTER TWO:		<i>Wherein the last fragments of a once-powerful organization are finally reduced to ruin.</i>	
DRAKTHAR'S WAY	76	CHAPTER TWELVE:	
<i>Wherein a tribe of goblins attracts too much attention and brings unwelcome guests to its master's den.</i>		ASYLUM	304
CHAPTER THREE:		<i>Wherein a trip to the other side results in an unforeseen adjustment to a prisoner's cage.</i>	
FLOOD SEASON	94	APPENDIX I:	
<i>Wherein a solid plan to ransom captured wands turns sour for three friends and their employees, and a local luminary loses his tongue.</i>		MONSTERS	322
CHAPTER FOUR:		APPENDIX II:	
ZENITH TRAJECTORY	124	FEATS, SPELLS, AND MAGIC	334
<i>Wherein a tribe of the Sea Mother's children suffer for sparing the life of a mad prisoner they probably should have eaten.</i>		APPENDIX III:	
CHAPTER FIVE:		PRESTIGE CLASSES	340
THE DEMONSKAR LEGACY	148	APPENDIX IV:	
<i>Wherein three sisters, an exiled demon, a twelve-foot-tall smith, and a man made of mirrors meet grisly ends.</i>		CREATURE STATISTICS	346
CHAPTER SIX:		APPENDIX V:	
TEST OF THE SMOKING EYE	174	CHARACTER CREATION	400
<i>Wherein a sorcerer's attempt to claim a land for his own ends in sudden betrayal at the hands of his allies.</i>		APPENDIX VI:	
		HANDOUTS	404

INTRODUCTION

3
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who really runs the world? When I was working on *DUNGEON*, the other magazine staffers and I spent hours on this and other nonsensical topics when we probably should have been working on the magazines. Some editors think the yuan-ti run the show. But me—I think mind flayers have the edge. Just as impressive mentally, their being lawful makes them perfect secret world despots. Mind flayers also have the mental domination shtick on their side. All ideas, new or recycled, must stem from their tentacled clutches. It was reassuring to know that I wouldn't have to think for myself in a world run by mind flayers. They come up with all the schemes and ideas—we would just be their pawns.

These sorts of conversations contributed to making each day working on *DUNGEON* an adventure, no pun intended. But when I became editor of *DUNGEON* in April, 2001, things changed. No matter what anyone says, the power goes to your head. When you step into that role, you want to leave an imprint, a legacy—something greater than the sum of the blood, sweat, and tears that goes into every issue. But as my favorite super-hero, the Tick, says, “Absolute power is a sticky wicket.” When you add the extra complication of following in the footsteps of Chris Perkins, one of *DUNGEON*'s most illustrious editors and contributors, you're facing a tall order.

I immediately felt pressure to produce something cool that would blow the readers away. I'd seen letters to *DUNGEON* for some time requesting more serialized adventures following the successful “Mere of Dead Men” series, which wrapped in issue #72. I always believed that the magazine was at its best when it did as much of a DM's work as possible. I've also always believed that bigger is better. What could I do, I thought, with a huge adventure series that made a DM's life as easy as possible? The answer: an entire campaign, all within the pages of *DUNGEON*. It would take characters from 1st to 20th level, and each adventure would be written by one of the best adventure designers in the business.

The adventures would have to stand on their own, and they would have to be unconnected with an existing campaign setting, both to better mesh with the existing campaigns of our readers and so the adventures wouldn't be cluttered with the weight of dozens of campaign setting sourcebooks. A series of adventures from Wizards of the Coast had just wrapped up as well, making the timing perfect. And of course, it hadn't been done in *DUNGEON* before.

I spent a long lunch one afternoon speaking with my predecessor, Chris Perkins, hashing out a global campaign arc based on my original concepts: the Tarterian Depths of Carceri, demodands, a cult of their worshippers—all intent on turning the world into one big prison camp. The more we talked, the more excited we became. The magnitude of the project was intimidating, but absolutely exhilarating at the same time. Think of it this

way: How often do you get to brainstorm a campaign outline, then hire people to actually write it for you?

I quickly coerced Chris into writing the first adventure. With his intimate familiarity with the core ideas, I wanted him to lay the groundwork for the authors to come. What followed is one of my favorite *DUNGEON* adventures of all time: “Life's Bazaar.”

Each adventure that followed carefully built up the plans of our sinister villains, a group dubbed the Cagewrights. They were to be utterly vile, and the adventures would take groups across the Multiverse. I wanted each adventure to be something the author would be excited about, so I worked up a campaign packet that detailed all the recurring NPCs and plots at work and sent it out to authors as they were assigned individual adventures. I also kept rigorous control over which prominent characters could be killed (and when), where the Adventure Path would take the PCs, and when key plot elements could be revealed to PCs playing through the adventures.

We also drew on the best artists available to us in an industry full of great artists. We wanted the adventures to be as much about a visual immersion in the campaign as they were about great story and fantastic adventure. Folks like Chuck Lukacs, Tom Baxa, and Jeff Carlisle consistently delivered inspiring art that pushed the boundaries of anything the magazine had printed before.

One of the guys who really made the city of Cauldron come to life for me, though, was Christopher West. I'd wanted Chris, one of the industry's nicest and most talented guys, to draw every map for the entire campaign, and I never regretted that decision. With each adventure, he continued to blow us away with amazing map after amazing map.

Experiences like these made this project one of the best I've ever worked on. Professionally, I don't think I've ever felt more proud of a finished piece of work than I do of this one. Although I wasn't able to stick around and see it through as *DUNGEON*'s editor, being able to contribute to the story toward the end and seeing my terrible Cagewrights wreak their twisted havoc on the printed page was just as great a thrill. I hope you put this campaign up on your shelf right next to other classic D&D adventures. That's the second best place for it, right after your gaming table, of course—at least in my mind.

Or maybe that's just the mind flayers.

Chris

Chris Thomasson
Editor Emeritus, *DUNGEON* magazine

INTRODUCTION

4

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

ADVENTURE PATH

The Shackled City Adventure Path is an entire campaign for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, designed to bring new, 1st-level characters all the way up to 20th-level over the course of its run. This campaign originally appeared as 11 separate adventures in *DUNGEON* magazine, starting with “Life’s Bazaar” in issue #97 and ending with “Asylum” in issue #116. For this book, we’ve reorganized and updated the original eleven adventures in the campaign so they’ll work together better as a unified whole.

Those who are already familiar with The Shackled City’s earlier incarnation will find much of this book familiar, yet you will also find much that is new. The constraints of publishing an adventure in a serialized format meant that we often had to cut out portions of these adventures in order to make them fit in the magazine. We have re-integrated this “lost” material into the adventures in this book—each of the adventures thus has something new lurking within its pages (some more than others), even for those readers who followed the entire arc in *DUNGEON*. In addition, we’ve added an entirely new adventure into the campaign—Chapter Two’s “Drakthar’s Way,” designed to smooth the transition between “Life’s Bazaar” and “Flood Season.”

PREPARATION

You’ll need a copy of the *Player’s Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide*, and *Monster Manual* to use this adventure. The Shackled City Adventure Path also features many creatures, magic items, spells, feats, and other rules that have appeared in other DUNGEONS & DRAGONS supplements, but in these cases we’ve provided enough information for you in this book that you won’t necessarily need these additional books to play. Nevertheless, access to *Monster Manual II*, *Monster Manual III*, *Fiend Folio*, *Draconomicon*, and *Libris Mortis* should be of use when you’re running this campaign.

The Shackled City Adventure Path is not set in any particular campaign world. It uses deities from the core D&D pantheon, and some proper names from the GREYHAWK campaign setting, but the campaign itself has been specifically designed for easy integration into any DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign.

CAMPAIGN BACKGROUND

The city of Cauldron is aptly named. Nestled in the throat of a dormant volcano, this frontier city has

thrived in a hostile environment. Unfortunately, things are about to grow even more hostile for the citizens of this remote city, as two ancient forces converge upon the region in a dreadful confluence of cruelty and madness. One of these is an imprisoned demon prince of madness by the name of Adimarchus, and the other is an ancient organization of demodand-venerating cultists called the Cagewrights.

Adimarchus

To understand the source of the doom that comes to Cauldron, one must cast back in time several hundred years, to a realm far removed from the Material Plane and a time when a fallen celestial named Adimarchus led a demonic invasion of the Seven Mounting Heavens of Celestia. The heavenly host repulsed Adimarchus’s demonic army, but at great cost, for the angels of Celestia were forced to cast the part of Celestia occupied by the demons into the Abyss, tearing apart the fabric of their own plane in the process. This massive chunk of planar matter came to rest on a layer of the Abyss called Occipitus.

Adimarchus survived this event, and acted quickly to incorporate the wreckage of Celestia into Occipitus. In doing so, he became the ruler of the Abyssal layer, gaining almost limitless power there and becoming a demon prince in the process. Even in defeat, he knew success. For many years, Adimarchus ruled Occipitus, crafting from the ruins a great demonic empire and often leading wars against his most powerful demonic rival, the demon prince Graz’zt.

And then, only fifty years ago, Adimarchus vanished from his realm.

The truth behind Adimarchus’s disappearance centers on his love for Athux, a resolute aasimar paladin with six fingers on each hand. Five decades ago, Athux embarked on a quest to redeem Adimarchus’s soul. The aasimar cut a swath across the tumorous plains of Occipitus and confronted the demon prince in his own throne room. Adimarchus and Athux fought until, exhausted, the demon prince sundered the aasimar’s sword with his own dark blade. Clutching Athux by the throat, Adimarchus saw something in the aasimar’s eyes that sparked his compassion. He could not kill Athux, nor could he subject the paladin to the torments of Occipitus. He tried to lure Athux over to the side of evil, but his attempts were half-hearted at best. Athux remained a prisoner on Occi-



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

pitus and stood by Adimarchus's side as the demon prince plotted against Graz'zt, all the while fuelling Adimarchus's rage against demonkind. A strange friendship bloomed, puzzling Adimarchus's minions and spurring some to betray him. Graz'zt learned of the planned assault against him and the alliance of Adimarchus and Athux and, in true demonic fashion, he conspired with Adimarchus's treacherous minions to overthrow his rival.

During the epic battle between Adimarchus's army and Graz'zt's hordes, demons swayed by Graz'zt captured Athux with surprising ease, imprisoning him on Carceri in an asylum called Skullrot. Adimarchus could not bear the loss of Athux, and the treachery of fiends rekindled the fallen angel's burning hatred. Adimarchus abandoned his hordes, his realm, and his evil ways and fled to Carceri to rescue Athux and find redemption. Alas, the tale of Adimarchus and Athux would not end well.

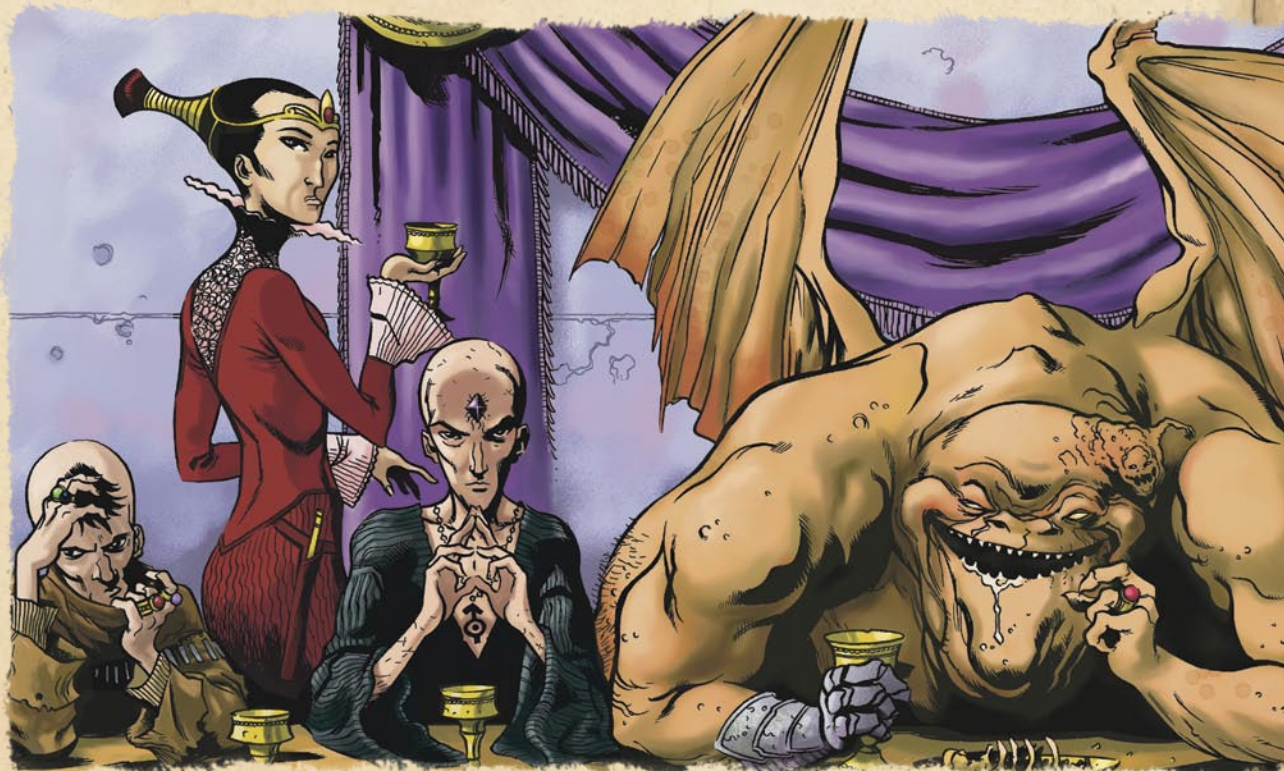
As Graz'zt's army crushed Adimarchus's abandoned demon horde, Adimarchus arrived at Skullrot to find Athux overcome with dementia, the prisoner of one of Graz'zt's most powerful allies—a powerful undead priest named Dark Myrakul. Unable to wrest the aasimar from Dark Myrakul's clutches, Adimarchus traded his own freedom for the paladin's restored mind and safe return to Celestia. Dark Myrakul readily agreed. The imprisoned Adimarchus watched as Athux shook off his "lunacy," only to transform into a black-skinned fiend with six fingers on each hand. Athux had misled Adimarchus from the start. He was, in fact,

Graz'zt's devoted son. At that moment, Adimarchus realized his foolishness. Graz'zt had found a weakness in his rival—a long-buried desire for redemption that Adimarchus assumed he'd lost long ago—and used that weakness to dethrone his enemy. The very thought drove Adimarchus to madness, a madness powerful enough to leak out of Skullrot, across Carceri, and eventually into other planes.

Adimarchus's madness touched countless minds over those years, yet they were not powerful enough to cause much more than momentary lapses of sanity in those they found. Only when these insane thoughts came across ancient altars, statues, or sites once sacred to his cult could they linger. One such item was an ancient statue of the demon prince, carved from Abyssal stone mined from Occipitus by Adimarchus himself and, of late, in the private collection of a particularly cruel man by the name of Fetor Abradius. Over the next several years, Adimarchus's mad dreams worked their ways on Fetor, sharpening his cruelty to a razor's edge and driving him to seek out terrible secrets wherever they might be hidden. Fetor did not know that these dreams were, in fact, guiding him to a way to release the demon prince from his Carcerian prison.

The Cagewrights

This secret society of cruel-minded arcanists, priests, and scholars was founded over 300 years ago by a massive and deformed shator demodand named Dyr'ryd. His goal: to foster a group of like-minded spellcasters and scholars dedicated to discovering a



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

way to create a permanent portal between the prison plane of Carceri and the Material Plane that would allow the demodands to harvest inmates and slaves for the massive prisons and asylums of that realm. Dyr'ryd's not-so-secret desires to use such an accomplishment to ascend to new levels of power remained unspoken. Development of such a powerful portal would be the Cagewright's primary goal. They took to calling this event the planar junction.

Dyr'ryd had already developed several theories on how such a portal could be constructed. Most of his theories were based on the belief that by merging the bloodlines of the natives of these two planes, one could create a spiritual bridge between Carceri and the Material Plane that could then be used as a focus for greater works. Thus, as he began to recruit promising individuals into his secret society, Dyr'ryd also called upon his most fecund demodand minions and unleashed them upon the Material Plane. For a month, these thirteen demodands ravaged anything they could find in the world. Eventually, they were all slain, but

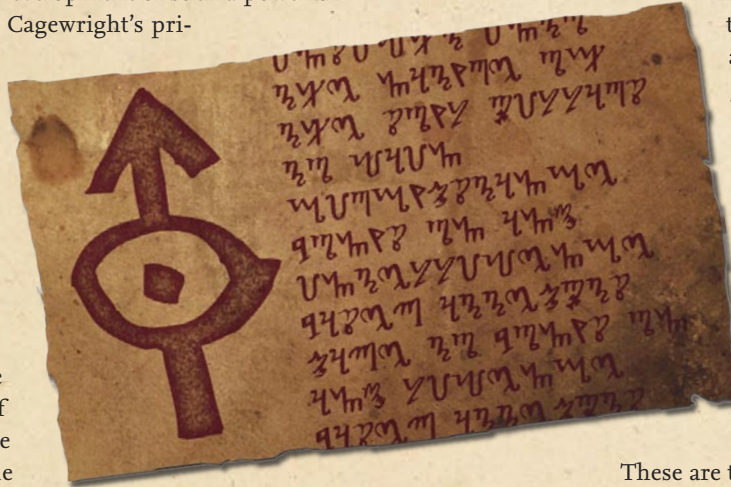
they left in their wake a horrifying number of unnatural pregnancies.

The resulting spawn were mostly stillborn, but a few twisted unfortunates survived. As the generations passed, the fiendish corruption grew ever more diluted. Eventually, all visual traces of demodand ancestry faded entirely. But the taint in the blood and soul remained, just as Dyr'ryd had envisioned. Every few generations, an indication of this taint surfaces in the form of an invisible birthmark in the shape of an unholy sigil known as the Carcerian Sign.

These are the Shackleborn.

Carcerian Sign

The Cagewrights know about the Shackleborn, and they believe that their sacrifice during the ritual of planar junction could serve as the necessary bridge between the two planes to force the portal open. The problem, though, was how to tap an energy source powerful enough to not only tear this portal open in the first place, but to fortify it once created so it would become permanent. As the years rolled on, the Cagewrights began to fear that progress on the ritual of



planar junction was too slow. With each passing year, the Shackleborn grew fewer in number, and some of the Cagewrights began to fear that they would die off completely before they had perfected the ritual.

The Soul Pillars

Although few of the Cagewrights realize it, Fetor Abradius's recruitment into their ranks gave them the key they so desperately needed. Fetor first came to the attention of the Cagewrights when one of the organization's leaders, a vile man named Nulin "Fish" Wiejeron, was hired to assassinate him. During several days of following Fetor, Nulin came to realize that the wizard seemed to have an almost supernatural knowledge of things relating to magic and the planes. He knew then that Fetor would make an excellent recruit, and offered him a choice. If Fetor would join the Cagewrights, Nulin would reverse the terms of his assassination and kill the jealous sorcerer who had put the contract out on his life. If Fetor refused, Nulin would finish the job and collect his pay. Fetor knew a good offer when he heard it and joined the Cagewrights without a moment's hesitation.

It took less than a year for Fetor Abradius to prove his worth, by making a terrific discovery in an ancient ruined complex near Cauldron. There, via several ancient repositories of magical lore known as the Soul Pillars, he learned of a ritual that would allow the harnessing of an erupting volcano's vast power, a ritual that was strangely similar to the ritual of planar junction.

Fetor reported to his masters, and several of the Cagewright leaders came to investigate. Not only were they able to confirm Fetor's discovery, but they also discovered that Cauldron counted a fortuitous number of Shackleborn among its citizenry. The convergence of these two elements were all the Cagewrights needed to be convinced that Cauldron would be the site of their ritual. They relocated their base of operations into the region, choosing the nearby ruins of an ancient yuan-

ti city called Shatterhorn as their new lair. Over the next three decades, the Cagewrights worked feverishly at refining the ritual of planar junction and constructing a more permanent lair deep under Cauldron, near the slumbering volcano's core.

Trees and Cages

The site for the ritual of planar junction chosen, the Cagewrights were finally able to begin the arduous task of preparation for the great event. In order to open the portal, the Cagewrights needed a matrix in which to arrange the Shackleborn and to focus their life forces in precisely the right way. They also needed a way to trigger the volcano's eruption.

Dyr'ryd and his Cagewrights focused their energies upon creating an artifact to serve just these purposes—the *Tree of Shackled Souls*. Construction of this potent artifact would take the Cagewrights nearly thirty years, and even then, they would need to build thirteen *soulcages* to house the Shackleborn on the Tree's branches. Construction of these thirteen cages would take, by Dyr'ryd's estimate, another thirty years. To speed along the process, Dyr'ryd convinced another cult, the Ebon Triad, to build these thirteen artifacts for them. He also found Cauldron's leadership to be decadent, foolish, or greedy, and quickly

established a comfortable arrangement between his organization and the town's governors ensuring that no one would disrupt their activities.

The only troubling elements were Cauldron's churches. The citizens were unusually devout in their faith, but the Cagewrights were only minimally concerned. If all went according to plan, these temples would never become suspicious enough to notice the Cagewrights and their machinations, especially once they were able to gain the support of the city's most powerful church—the Cathedral of Wee Jas.

All that remains now is the collection of thirteen Shackleborn and final construction of the last few *soulcages*. The Cagewrights are poised to begin the ritual of planar junction in the shadows deep below Cauldron within the next year, and only the intervention of the PCs can stop them.



Soulcage

