



The Hidden City

Act I

A Message Arrives

A messenger arrives from Caspia wearing the King's livery; it is clear he has ridden hard to reach you and is still out of breath when he passes over the letter.

At this point you should provide the players with Handout 1 - *Messenger's Summons*. The messenger himself knows very little other than he was woken in the dead of night and told to travel to Corvis as fast as was humanly possible.

Ternon Crag

The party should be urged to move to Ternon Crag as quickly as possible. Get a friend or mentor to lend them horses if they cannot buy their own!

Ternon Crag has changed quite a lot in the last few years: the stockade is heavily pitted and bears the scars of many a siege. The buildings look battered but repaired. Many soldiers keep watch and long rifles can be seen jutting from watchtowers. As you arrive you see the (familiar?) sight of Gunnar Waddock and his train of wagons. Gunnar greets you heartily and offers you a cigar; times have been good to him it seems.

"I hate to say it, me old muckers, but war is good for business. Things didn't work out in Five Fingers so I came here. I've some business to conduct but we should meet for dinner tonight and reminisce."

An Old Acquaintance

Sketchley Funt is a fence, thief, scoundrel and layabout. He was also the highest-ranking member of the Cygnaran Intelligence Service in Corvis. Now he is back in the field and he has a letter for the party. He is currently serving as one of Gunnar Waddock's caravan guards.

That night in the Broken Tusk tavern you share a few flagons and a side of wild boar with Gunnar who is in a particularly good mood.

"Heh, you'll never guess who's signed on with me? Only that rogue from the Corvis waterfront Sketchley Funt. It seems he couldn't make ends meet with his crooked deals and so he's taken up a more honest life. There he is now."

Sketchley Funt:

"Aright Squire? Fancy meeting you lot in a place like this! So, er, buy a reformed thief a drink would ya, the boss won't pay me till I get back to Corvis."

As soon as Gunnar's back is turned Sketch summons you over to the bar where he fishes a letter out of an inside pocket. He winks at you and saunters off.

Sketchley has a letter from Scout General Rebald himself asking them to locate a spy called Harven Dordra. The characters are asked to fulfill the following orders:

- Extract Harven Dordra if alive or retrieve his body if dead.
- Free as many enslaved citizens of Cygnar as possible.
- Report back with the size and disposition of the enemy forces.

At this point you should provide the players with Handout 2 - *Rebald's Mission*.





Sketchley Funt -



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Motivation

If the characters aren't the most loyal citizens in the Kingdom they may need some motivation. Sketch will grudgingly admit they can earn 1000 gp each if they return the spy and get salvage rights on any equipment that isn't owned by the Crown.

Information

If the party asks around they will find out that a group of adventurers much like themselves passed this way about a two weeks ago. They stayed at the Broken Tusk tavern. Most town folk will point the party in the direction of Big Dirk the Ogrun barkeep.

Big Dirk's Information

"Hmmm, now you mention it, dere woz dis group ov adventurerz. Dey bought a lot ov stuff: coal for dere warjack and supplies for a long journey. Dey had a big cart. Dere was a wizard 'oo complained about da beds, a wealthy lookin' priest, a noble lookin' bloke: good at cards 'e woz. Oh, and dey had dis girl who sang a lot. She woz good. They hired a scout, a friend of mine called Jack Raines. Said they needed a guide down to the Rotterhorn. If you find out where they are could you send word to me? Jackie is a good bloke."

If the party try and question the locals many will report seeing a formation of troops and a Warjack travelling south. The troops were undoubtedly Khadoran and looked like they had been on the road a long time. Jessica Stern, a Scout of some experience can tell the party more:

Jessica Stern eyes you warily as you approach. Given her demeanour you guess she isn't the type to suffer fools gladly.

"Yeah, I saw them. They had a heavy Warjack under a tarpulin on a wagon and there was more gear besides. Must have been about twenty troops and a handful of specialists.

Perhaps they're heading south to give the Menites a kicking?"

Elsewhere in the Broken Tusk Alten Ashley can be overheard telling what sounds like a tall tale. He is telling a group of fellow Scouts that he saw a column of humans being led across the desert by tall-white skinned creatures with harsh angular features.

Alten Ashley chomps on a cigar and looks uncharacteristically irritated. He clears his throat with a growl and says:

"It was awful. There must have been about fifty people all shackled together. There were about ten of those creatures herding them onwards. Some had spears but a few bore two swords. I dread to think what will happen to those poor souls."

Travelling The Wastes

If the party makes to leave Ternon Crag with inadequate gear (i.e. trail rations, a map, food for horses, etc) have Sketchley have a stern word with them.

"Oi. What you up to? That's the Bloodstone Marches out there, you ought to know better than that. For the love of Morrow, get some gear. I can't afford to throw good adventurers away looking for spies!"

If the party does not have a Scout in their midst they will have a very difficult time ahead of them. Fortune smiles however and Sketchley happens to know an accomplished Scout who is looking for employment. The statistics for Jessica Stern can be found in the appendix with the other NPCs.





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The party must first cross the inhospitable wastes of the Bloodstone Marches. This should prove taxing enough. Run as many random monster encounters as you dare. Survival checks should be made at DC 20 during the day to avoid heat stroke and DC 20 at night to avoid the cold. Don't forget to make checks for the players mounts as well.

As the ramshackle outpost of Ternon Crag recedes from view you are left only with the view ahead: the vast expanse of the Bloodstone Marches. Your horses seem skittish and advance warily over the barren terrain. As if in response to your anxiety the sky turns a lead grey and spots of rain fall sporadically.

Wreckage and Ruin

Three days' journey out from the Rotterhorn the party will see some wreckage and a large group of birds feeding off an equally large corpse. The Intelligence Liasons party ran into a Skorne Warpack here and the light Warjack was destroyed. During the combat a Cyclops was killed along with ten Praetorians. There are signs that someone camped here for a while, perhaps a few days. Wagon tracks lead off toward the Rotterhorn indicating that the Skorne captured the wagon and took it away or the Warcaster kept it. Note: The Cortex is shot, however the 'jack is worth a small fortune in scrap.

Feeding Time

In the distance the intimidating form of Rotterhorn Mountain looms. The mountain does indeed look like it is rotting; huge sections of it seem to be decaying.

Half a mile ahead of you, a large pack of jackals fight over the corpses of something you can't quite see. Even at this distance you can smell the stink of blood carried to you on the dry desert breeze. Your horses stamp their feet nervously as the jackals look up from their meal.

A pack of twelve jackals are feeding on four human corpses, bodies of Corvis' citizens enslaved by the Skorne. They are chained together with cruel manacles. The jackals will attack the party as they approach the mountain. The jackals will only attack until half their number are dead. The half-eaten bodies have little of value except an antique silver ring worth 20 gp.

That Sinking Feeling

Part way through the journey you may like to throw the following encounter at your party. Have the party travel on foot for some reason (perhaps a sand storm has blown up and the horses are skittish).

Patches of quicksand present a deceptively solid appearance (appearing as undergrowth or open land) that may trap careless characters. A character approaching a patch of quicksand at a normal pace is entitled to a DC 8 Survival check to spot the danger before stepping in, but charging or running characters don't have a chance to detect a hidden bog before blundering in. A typical patch of quicksand is 20 feet in diameter; the momentum of a charging or running character carries him or her 1d10 feet into the quicksand.

Effects of Quicksand

When a character blunders into quicksand roll D4+3: this is the number of turns the player has before they are swallowed up. If a player makes a DC 15 Will save or Survival check they may stay perfectly still, delaying the quicksands effect by one round. If a trapped character fails this check he will begin to sink below the surface and then begin to drown.

Characters who attempt to drag themselves out will sink no matter what they do (unless they think of something drastic like teleportation) Victims of quicksand are at the mercy of their rescuers.





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Rescue

Pulling out a character trapped in quicksand can be difficult. A rescuer needs a branch, spear haft, rope, or similar tool that enables him to reach the victim with one end of it. Then he must make a DC 15 Strength check to successfully pull the victim, and the victim must make a DC 10 Strength check to hold onto the branch, pole or rope. If both checks succeed, the victim is pulled 5 feet closer to safety.

With these dangers successfully navigated the party finally draws closer to the Rotterhorn. The tracks lead to the entrance of the City.



The Black Gate

Finally after many days (perhaps weeks) of travel the party make it to the base of the Rotterhorn mountain. At the top of a broad flight of steps carved into the rock are two giant doors. Twisted sculptures stare from either side of the doors. Outside of the doors is a dead Shirehorse, killed by the lightning bolt trap.

After days of trekking across the barren wastes of the Bloodstones Marches you have reached your destination. Covered in sand and dust you long to get back to civilisation but realise your work is just beginning. Ahead of you are two huge curved doors. To get to them you must first climb an impressive set of stone steps. After a moment or two of looking around you notice crude gargoyle-like figures carved out of boulders nearby. At the top of the steps you can see the charred corpse of a four-legged creature.

There is a broad semi-circle that extends outwards (marking off a 15 foot safety zone). Along this line, inscribed in Skorne (Decipher Script DC 32) are the words 'Speak the word of Sanctuary in the mother tongue if you are truly one of the master race.' The front doors to the Rotterhorn Fortress are trapped, unless the command word is spoken ("Sanctuary" in Skorne) from 15 feet away the trap will strike anyone approaching within five feet of the door. The doors themselves are unlocked but made of stone and require a Str check DC 15 to pull open. They have a hardness of 10 and 60 hp.

Lightning Bolt Trap: CR 4; magic device; proximity trigger (alarm); automatic reset; spell effect (lightning bolt, 5th-level wizard, 5d6 electricity, DC 14 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28. Cost: 7,500 gp, 600 XP.

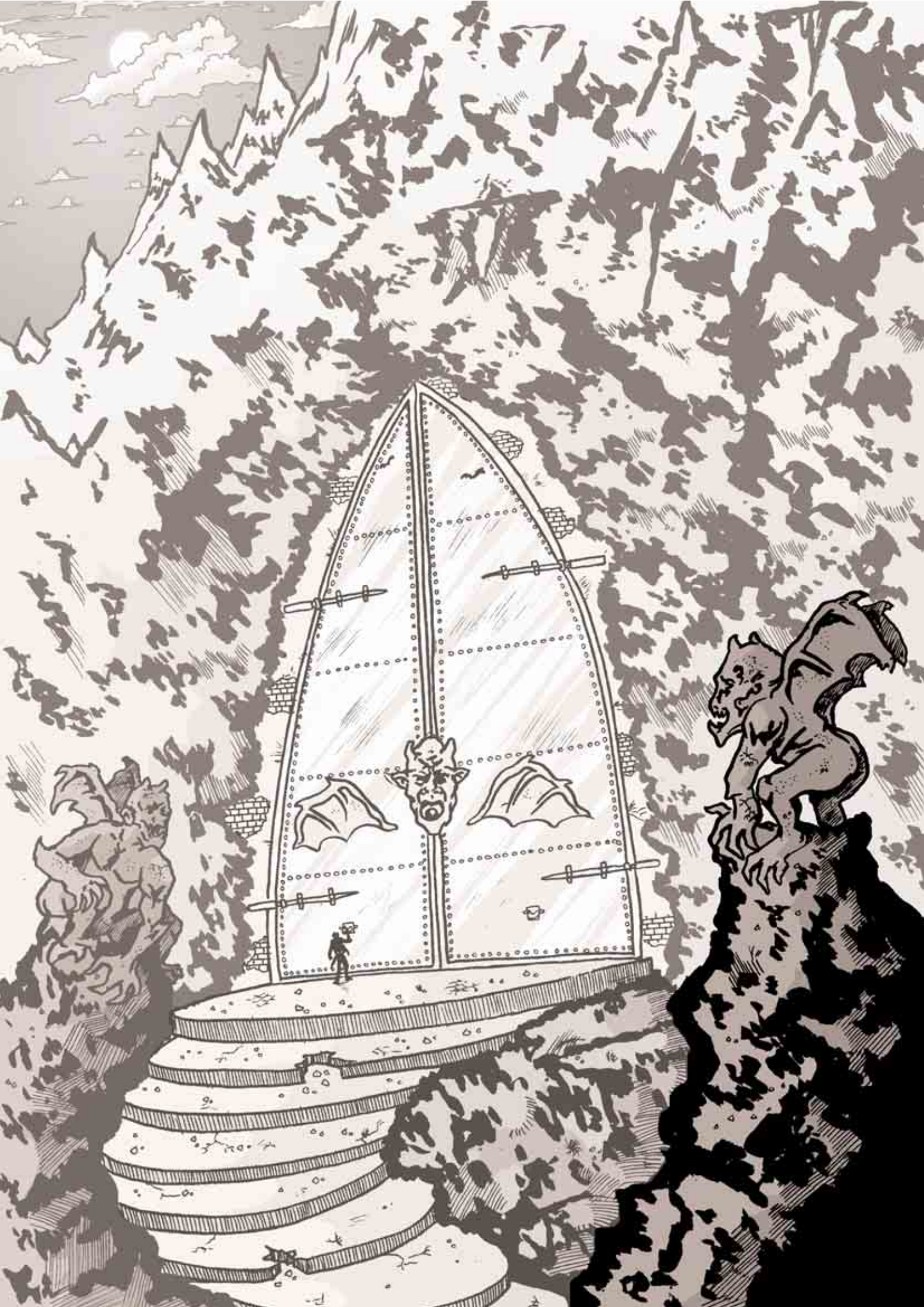
The Entrance Hall

The entrance hall beyond the doors is empty except for a huge Shirehorse. The hall is lined with four, fifteen-foot tall stone statues. They all have jewelled headdresses worth 600 Gp per set of stones. Removing the stones requires a Dex check (DC 10, bonuses for thieves tools apply). They are in fact Ancestral Guardians but only one has been awakened. The Ancestral Guardian begins the encounter with two souls stored up.

The horse requires a Handle Animal check (DC 16) to change its reaction. It is very nervous as it can sense the Ancestral Guardian. If the party approaches it will rear up and possibly trample them.

The door in the far wall will not open unless the main doors are closed. The inner door is also made of stone and has a hardness of 10 and 45 hp.







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You enter in to the vast entrance chamber and are glad to find that it is empty. You guess the chamber is 40 feet deep and 50 feet wide. Inside, four huge bestial looking statues carved out of black stone and edged in gold hold immense pole arms.

In the centre of the hall is a wagon, nearby a large shire horse has taken refuge in the corner. The horse whickers at you and shivers. There is a very wide double door on the far side.

The Tunnel Cave In . . .

The corridor leading away from the Entrance hall is fifteen feet wide. A recent seismic disturbance (read Warcaster) has caused a cave-in. The PC's must climb the rubble (DC 12) to get over the cave-in. Partially buried in the rubble is the corpse of a stocky man in studded leather armour. This is Jack Raines from Ternon Crag and friend of Big Dirk.

The corridor ahead of you is very wide but pitch black. As you pass into the gloom, your lantern light picks up a huge amount of rock and debris in the corridor. It seems you have a short climb ahead of you. In the darkness the sound of slipping rocks seems awfully loud.

Treasure: Jack Raines carries a Masterwork *Accurate* Military Carbine and has two bandoliers containing 20 rounds. In his rucksack is a further 30 rounds. He has other mundane items including three days' trail rations, flint and steel and a bedroll and blanket.

. . . and The Ghouls!

As the PCs finishing looting the body one of them will feel a wet sensation on his hand/ arm/ neck. When he looks up there are six drooling Ghouls in the rafters of the corridor who jump down to feast on the living flesh!

Banner Gallery

The corridor sweeps up gently, almost undetectably and is around 60 feet long. The flagstones are well laid and fit snugly together. Skorne banners adorn the walls every 20 feet. Half way up the passage is a trap set in the exact middle.

After you have negotiated the cave in and made it across to the other side you see the corridor continues off into the darkness. Held in sconces on the walls are banners with large alien symbols sewn onto them, symbols that are becoming more familiar to you now. At the far end you can see a sliver of light.

Fusillade of Darts: CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +18 ranged (1d4+1, dart); multiple targets (1d8 darts per target in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area); Search DC 19; Disable Device DC 25. Market Price: 18,000 gp.





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The Guard Chamber

The door to this room is ajar and some light spills forth. The heavy door grates on the ground as you open it and four startled Skorne Hestatians spin around and brandish their spears.

This is where the Intelligence Liaison's party met a Skorne patrol. In the combat two Skorne died and rest retreated. The room is 20 feet square and has three ten by ten cells that adjoin the room off to the left hand side.

The room is lit by four smoky torches in sconces. The Skorne casualties have been removed since Harven Dordra's team passed this way.

The party Cleric, Mack Sorrel, was killed during the fighting. The body has started to bloat and has been here few days at least. The body has been hidden under a bed in the last cell.

The body has divine scrolls of *Cure Moderate Wounds*, *Bless* and *Lesser Restoration* all at caster level 5 in a fine scroll case. There is also a platinum symbol of Morrow (worth 1300 gp) and Light Club that detects as magical, it has the name Avenger carved into it (It has a +1 enhancement). The Masterwork full plate armour will need to be repaired (Armour smith DC 20 in a forge) before it can be used again. In a locked chest (DC 25 to Open Lock) in the first cell there is a Healer's kit, a water skin and 7 rubies worth 4D4 x 100 gp.

Treasure: There are four Skorne Hestatians standing guard here, they are trying to stop any prisoners escaping from the city. One wears a platinum ring (worth 37 gc) and has a full waterskin. Another has a potion of *Cure Moderate Wounds* and a broken pocket watch (DC 19 Craft: Clockwork and 6 gp worth of parts to repair).

Corridor

This corridor is 50 feet long, 10 feet wide and has a 90-degree turn in it. There is no illumination. There are three falling block traps along the left hand side.

Falling Block Trap: CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +15 melee (6d6); multiple targets (can strike all characters in two adjacent specified squares); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 25. Market Price: 15,000 gp.

This corridor leads to the city proper: the party has now reached Act II.

