Tomb of the War King

Tomb of the War King is an adventure scenario for 3rd or 4th level 5e characters set in the outer caverns of the Lower Reaches in the City of Arches. This scenario is intended to work with any 5e-based system including D&D 2014, D&D 2024, *Level Up Advanced 5e*, *Tales of the Valiant*, or others. It can be easily modified to support other fantasy RPGs as well.

This scenario is part of the Key of Worlds campaign arc in the City of Arches sourcebook. This scenario takes place after the *Scroll of Akrave* and the *Dungeon of the Hooded Inquisitor* scenarios. Characters may have also completed the *Lake of Monoliths* scenario. If desired, you can modify this scenario to run as a stand-alone adventure in any campaign or setting.

This Isn't a Typical Adventure

This scenario isn't laid out like a traditional adventure. Instead, it presents ingredients to use and a scaffold around which to build your own adventure for your own group, campaign, and story. This scenario gives you adventure hooks, histories, secrets and clues, notable NPCs, potential encounters, locations, and potential treasure.

Use these components to build your own adventure and customize them to best suit your campaign, the situation in the adventure, the interests of your players, and the pacing of your game.

Each section in this scenario suggests how to use these components.

Adventure Summary

In Tomb of the War King, the characters travel to the tomb of a powerful dragonborn warlord who died over seven hundred years ago. The characters seek to recover an artifact known as the *Blade of Irixthius* also known as the *Blackfire Blade*. This sword is one of two items able to ignite the three Blackfire Braziers hidden around the City of Arches – braziers which unlock a doorway to a demiplane in which rests a powerful artifact called the Key of Worlds.

During the scenario, the characters navigate the tomb of the War King, face its traps and challenges, and learn the tragic tale of the war king and the fall of his dynasty through murals on the walls, inscriptions on coffins, and the whispers of the dead who still roam the halls. The characters succeed when they recover the Blade of Irixthius and escape the tomb.

If the characters already have the *Staff of Servlin* from the Tower of Therex scenario, the *Blade of Irixthius* has already been acquired by the characters' rivals – likely either the Children of Ibraxus or the Knights of the Nameless King. See the "State of the Blade" section for details.

The Fall of the War King

King Alithon Scalebright, a gold dragonborn, ruled the City of Arches roughly three hundred years after the fall of the Nameless King and before the rise of the Golden Order. As his kingdom reached Briarheart Forest, King Alithon accepted an alliance with the elves of the forest by marrying the briar king's elven daughter, Justicia Firewind. The couple had two sons whose dragonborn traits dominated their physical features – Rivius the Dreadbringer and Krasus Titanbane. King Alithon had a third human-appearing son with a longtime lover named Serena Thricewept who died during the boy's childbirth. The boy's name was Thervius.

Rivius and Krasus took to their father's love of war, each becoming powerful knights in his service. But Thervius had neither the physical stamina nor inclination for war – instead focusing his attention on poetry, art, and storytelling. Many believed he disappointed his father, but Alithon loved Thervius the most of anyone in his life. As did Justicia – who loved Thervius more so than her own two sons.

During the War King's reign, a small order of knights known as the Knights of the Black Flame gifted Alithon a longsword wreathed in black fire that burnt as hot as the hottest flames. Knowing it would be near impossible for anyone to recover the sword from the war king's hand, the Knights of the Black Flame thought Alithon the best guardian for the powerful artifact. Alithon named the sword the *Blade of Irixthius* after his father.

On Thervius's seventeenth birthday, Alithon came to a terrible decision. With his empire as strong as ever and his two dragonborn sons ruling in his name across the countryside, the war king had only one weakness – his love of Thervius. Evil overtook the warlord. He entered his son's chamber and, before Thervius's smile left his face at his father's arrival, the war king plunged his sword through his own son, killing him instantly.

The boy's death did not strengthen Alithon's reign – it tore it apart. Horrified by his act, Queen Justicia called upon a sect of elven priest-assassins known as the Priests of the Curved Blade. Stealing into Alithon's keep, the priests murdered the king, his two sons, and the queen herself on her own order so the line of the War King would end.

Loyal servants entombed the destroyed family in the Tomb of the War King where it sat for seven hundred years – it's tragic story untold.

Within the sarcophagus of his favored son, Thervius, rests the *Blade of Irixthius*, the flame that ignites the path to the Key of Worlds.

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Secrets of the War King

Deliver the following secrets and clues as the characters explore the Tomb of the War King. Characters might discover clues from mosaics on the walls, carvings on sarcophagi, scenes woven into rotted tapestries, or the whispering of the dead.

- King Alithon Scalebright, a gold dragonborn, once ruled over the City of Arches and its outskirts about 700 years ago. He was known as the War King.
- The War King had three sons, two dragonborn-presenting sons known as Rivius and Krasus and one son from a human mother known as Thervius.
- The elven princess Justicia Firewind became wife and queen of Alithon, giving birth to his two dragonborn sons.
- The king's lover and consort, Serena Thrisewept, died giving birth to his third son, Thervius.
- Rivious and Krasus followed their father's path to war, each becoming powerful warlords.
- Thervius, a gentle soul, followed a path of art, music, and poetry.
- Though many believed Thervius disappointed his father, Alithon adored the boy as did Justicia. Both kept their love for Thervius secret.
- During Alithon's reign, an order known as the Knights of the Black Flame gifted the *Blackfire Blade* to King Alithon who renamed it the *Blade of Irixthius*, after his father.
- Believing Thervius to be his greatest weakness, Alithon murdered Thervius.
- After learning pf Thervius's murder, Justicia called upon an order of priest-assassins known as the Priests of the Curved Blade to kill the king, his sons, and the queen herself.
- Servants of the destroyed dynasty entombed them in these halls, filling it with deadly traps. The twisted spirits of the dead still linger.
- The *Blade of Irixthius* rests in the sarcophagus of young Thervius, not in his king's coffin.

The State of the Blade

If the characters already recovered the *Staff of Servlin* from the *Tower of Therex* scenario, their rivals have already been to the Tomb of the War King and recovered the *Blade of Irixthius*. Make this clear to the players so they don't feel like they wasted their time exploring the tomb. If they choose to continue, you can fill chambers with dead cultists and vengeful undead angry at all intruders for the sword's theft.

Key NPC Names

The following is a list of key NPCs for this adventure.

- **King Alithon Scalebright** – warlord of the City of Arches from 700 years ago.
- **Queen Justicia Firewind** – former princess of the Briarheart Forest. Mother to Rivious and Krasus.
- **Prince Rivious Scalebright** – Axe-wielding dragonborn-presenting son of King Alithon and Queen Justicia.
- **Prince Krasus Scalebright** – Bow-wielding dragonborn-presenting son of King Alithon and Queen Justicia.
- **Prince Thervius** – Human-presenting son of King Alithon and his consort, Serena Thricewept. Practicioner of the arts.

Adventure Hooks

Use one of the following adventure hooks to draw characters into this scenario:

- While exploring the Dungeon of the Hooded Inquisitor, the characters learn the location of the Blackfire Blade from the doomed Knight of the Black Flame, Sir Gelfred Longshadow. The Archkeeper Garland Willowmane asks the characters to travel to the Tomb of the War King and recover the blade before the Cult of Ibraxus recovers it first.
- Danvon of Duskwater, safe of the Tower of Kartan, hires the characters to travel to the Tomb of the War King and return with the Blackfire Blade.
- One of the characters dreams of a young human man who asks the characters to travel to the Tomb of the War King and recover the Blackfire Blade from their tomb so it might not fall into the wrong hands.

Traveling to the Tomb

The characters can reach the tomb by traveling deep into caverns outside the Lower Reaches of the Cliffs of the Dead. When they arrive, the characters enter a huge underground chamber with a massive, cracked statue of the War King carved into a central pillar. Behind the War King's statue lie three tomb entrances – two trapped and one a true entrance.

At the base of the statue, in draconic, is the riddle "follow the steps of my favored son". Each tomb entrance shows one of the king's three sons – Rivius, Krasus, and Thervius. Characters might know the story of the king's three sons if they recall the king's history. Otherwise, they must choose one of the three entrances.

Inhabitants of the Tomb

The following is a list of potential inhabitants the characters might run into while exploring the Tomb of the War King. Choose the number of creatures to best fit the story and the pacing of your game.

1. **Skeleton** conscripts of the War King.
2. Dead explorers reanimated as **zombies.**
3. **Shadow** priests of the Curved Blade.
4. A ghostly image of King Alithon happily chasing his laughing son, Thervius.
5. **Specter** handmaidens of Queen Justicia.
6. A nest of **giant centipedes** in a bloated body.
7. Former knights, now **wights**, of the War King.
8. **Animated armor** tomb guardians.
9. A confused spirit conscript of the King.
10. **Cultists** and a **cult fanatic** of Ibraxus.
11. A soul-screaming skull embedded in the wall.
12. A **gelatinous cube** surrounding a skeleton.
13. **Bandit** tomb robbers.
14. Sword-wielding **gargoyles.**
15. Dead explorer with healing potions.
16. A **mimic** chest, statue, or painting.
17. A **cloaker** pretending to be a distorted tapestry.
18. A shattered urn full of **crawling claws**.
19. **Clockwork sentinels** guarding the tomb.
20. A wailing **banshee** handmaiden of the queen.

DCs, Damage, and Traps

The architects of the tomb set up traps to dissuade tomb robbers and others who might further defile the cursed family. Huge counterweights, waterflows behind the walls, and undead servants reset many of these traps.

The following list offers potential traps the characters might run into while exploring the dungeon. Roll on this list or choose traps based on the pacing of the game.

The characters might discover dead tomb robbers who succumbed to these deadly traps.

DCs for detecting and disabling these traps are all 10. These traps and hazards typically inflict 9 (2d8) for single-targets and 5 (2d4) for multiple targets.

1. Spectral blades slicing out of the walls.
2. Screaming skulls causing psychic damage.
3. Necrotic life-draining glyphs.
4. Barbed spears.
5. Acidic fungus.
6. Poison gas flowing out of fissures in the walls.
7. Urns filled with **swarms of insects.**
8. Statues swinging huge halberds.
9. Crossbow bolts firing out of murder holes.
10. False floors leading to small chambers with crushing walls.

The Blade of Irixthius

The blade of Irixthius is a +1 longsword. Change it to a shortsword or greatsword if it better fits the characters. The sword has the following ability:

Ignite. A creature attuned to the Blade of Irixthius can spend a bonus action to ignite the blade for one minute. While ignited, the blade inflicts 2d6 extra fire damage. This ability resets at the next dawn.

If the character ignites one of the Blackfire Braziers, the blade becomes a +2 weapon and the sword can be ignited at any time. When the attuned character ignites a second brazier, it becomes a +3 weapon and the wielder can spend an action to cast the spell *fire shield* (fire version only). This ability resets at the next dawn.

Moving the Blade

Feel free to move the *Sword of Irixthius* to another location in the crypt to speed up your game. It might be held by dead cultists or treasure hunters killed elsewhere in the tomb. You can move the blade to another tomb as well, ensuring you change the secrets accordingly. Don't make the characters go on a wild goose chase if it's not fun for your game.

Treasures

Several areas in the tomb might contain treasure beyond the Blade of Irixthius. Add treasure as you like to this dungeon, using the treasure below for inspiration. Split monetary treasure into separate locations if desired.

Monetary Treasure

- 90 cp, 82 sp, 184 gp, 2 × 10 gp amber gemstones, 100 gp silver elven tiara set with a moonstone.

Consumable Magic Items

You can also include the following consumable magic items somewhere in the dungeon.

- *Potion of Greater Healing*
- *Dust of Disappearance*
- *Potion of Growth*

Permanent Magic Items

If desired, place one of the following permanent magic items somewhere in the dungeon in addition to the *Blade of Irixthius*.

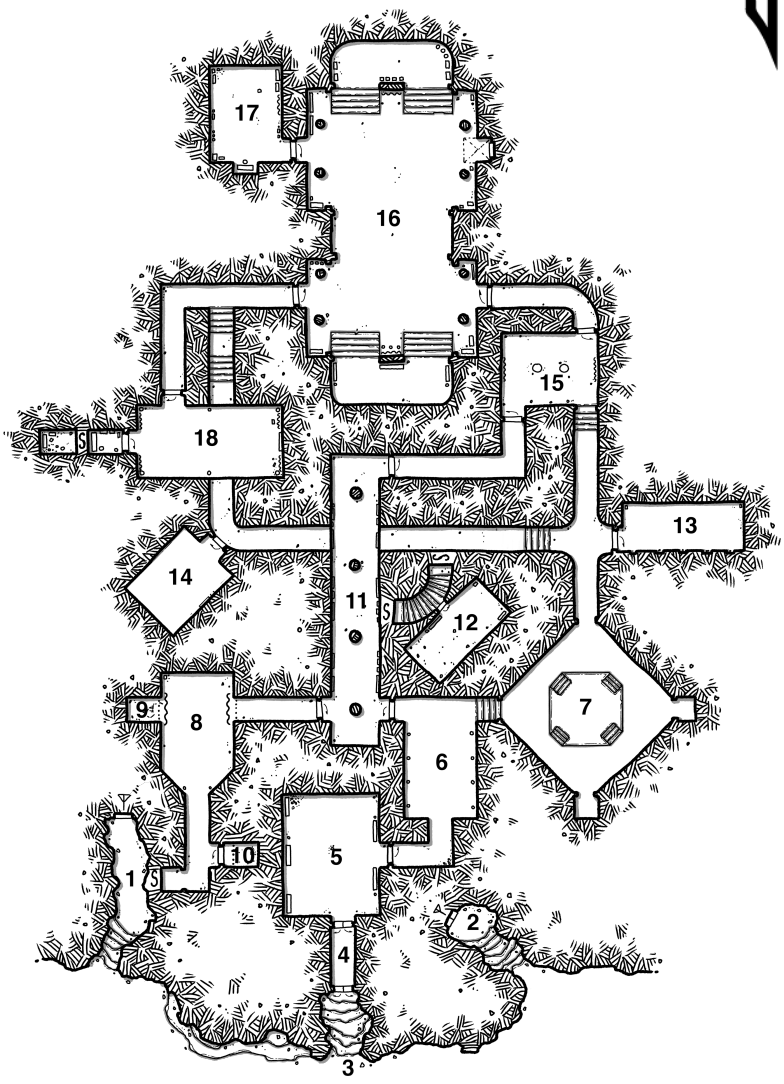
- *Helm of Comprehending Languages*
- *Boots of Striding and Springing*

Tomb Locations

The Tomb of the War King features decorated worked stone often carved with reliefs or painted with mosaics. The ceilings are 15 feet high in the chambers and 10 feet high in the hallways. The tomb is unlit. Doors are made from stone.

The following key describes locations portrayed on the map. Add details, secrets, and inhabitants to these chambers as desired.

1. False trapped entrance decorated with the visage of the axe-wielding dragonborn Rivious. Triggering the trap fills the hall with scything axe blades from cracks in the walls. A crumbling wall on the east leads to area 10 and 8.
2. False trapped door adorned with a mosaic depicting the bow-wielding dragonborn Krasus. Triggering the trap fills the hall with ethereal arrows.
3. Main tomb entrance decorated with a mosaic of the harp-playing Thervius.
4. A fresco-adorned hallway depicting King Alithon's rise to power, defeating several other warlords in and around the City of Arches.
5. Hall containing a statue of a young King Alithon.
6. Halls with mosaics and engravings describing the priests and followers who entombed the king, queen, and their sons – preserving their cursed hubris for all time.
7. The pool of woe where spirits of the queen's handmaidens flow in cursed waters.
8. Hall of the vanquished. Tattered tapestries depict the king's strongest defeated foes.
9. Cell containing the remains and tormented spirit of the lizard king Kashrak – defeated warlord and enemy of King Alithon.
10. Cell containing the remains of Emperor Viserys, a dwarven warlord overthrown by King Alithon.
11. Hallway with carved pillars of King Alithon and his three sons.
12. Secret stair and collapsed ceiling leading to natural tunnels above – another entry point into the tomb used by grave robbers and cultists.
13. Tomb of Prince Krasus containing a mural of the mighty prince.
14. Tomb of Prince Rivious containing painted mosaics of the ruthless prince.
15. Skull-adorned hall with urns containing the remains of the Priests of the Curved Blade.
16. Tomb of King Alithon Scalebright containing his sarcophagus in the center of the chamber.
17. Tomb of Prince Thervius with mosaics of him playing music. The *Blade of Irixthius* resides in his sarcophagus.
18. Tomb of Queen Justicia Firewind with secret shrine to the Lady of the Curved Blade, goddess of assassins.



Further Adventures

Once the characters acquire the *Blade of Irixthius* or the *Staff of Servlin*, they have several potential options for their next journey.

- If they have not yet uncovered the locations of the Blackfire Braziers, they can travel to the Lake of Monoloths to discover their location etched on the base of the monoliths in the *Lake of Monoliths* scenario.
- If they already know the location of the Blackfire Braziers, the characters should reach 5th level and can choose which one of the three braziers to investigate including the Brazier of the Nameless King, the Brazier of the Betrothed, or the Brazier of Grayon.