Monastery of Astaria

For a thousand years, the celestial Astaria secluded themself in a hidden monastery on the edge of the vast falls of Mount Celestia. Many presumed the celestial in deep meditation, their life maintaining the curse of the Nameless King for a thousand years. None suspected the truth, that Astara spent these years working on a vast, intricate, and secret plan.

Now assassins of the Nameless King infiltrate the monastery with a band of heroes on their trail as Astaria completes the final step in their plan to destroy the Nameless King forever.

"Monastery of Astaria" is a scenario designed to help you build your own adventure in which high-level characters chase assassins of the Nameless King into the monastery of Astaria – who cursed the Nameless King into non-existence. This scenario is designed to run after Dread Necropolis with characters of roughly 12th to 15th level, and is one part of the "Return of the Nameless King" campaign arc in the *City of Arches* sourcebook.

Many elements of this scenario are left open to let the actions of the characters and your own path through the "Return of the Nameless King" campaign determine how it plays out.

This Isn't a Typical Adventure

This framework isn't written like a traditional adventure. Instead, it presents locations, secrets, histories, potential inhabitants, and story seeds you can use to build your own adventure.

The Celestial Monastery

For a thousand years the Nameless King and his forces dominated the City of Arches, the lands beyond, and entire worlds out in the cosmos. A thousand years ago, an army of mortals and celestials called the Army of the Blue Star battled and repelled the Nameless King's forces. But the Nameless King himself could not be destroyed. Instead, the celestial Astaria cursed the Nameless King into non-existence. All images, texts, and memories of the Nameless King vanished.

But the void of his existence remained, and the cult of the Nameless King sought to bring this hidden ruler back to his throne. All they had to do was kill the one who cursed him.

For a thousand years the celestial Astaria secluded themself in a hidden monastery on the edge of a vast waterfall in the realm of Mount Celestia. Now, high-ranking agents of the cult of the Nameless King sent assassins to kill Astaria without realizing that doing so is part of the celestial's plan. Release him so he might be destroyed once and for all.

Adventure Seeds

Several situations can bring the characters to the Monastery of Astaria. Choose one of the following seeds to bring them into its halls or use them as a model to generate your own seed.

Garland's Prophecy. Garland Willowmane, leader of the Archkeepers, had a vision from the celestial Astaria showing their silvery lifeblood flowing out from the piercing wound of a black sword while a nameless horror returned. On awaking, she found a golden ring in her hand – a key to an archway to enter the Monastery of Astaria and stop the assassins attempting to kill the celestial Astaria and return the Nameless King.

Arch of the Dread Necropolis. While navigating the Dread Necropolis (see the scenario *Dread Necropolis*), the characters find out that the Necropolis's commander, Karavon the Gray Blade, sent assassins through a newly constructed archway leading to the Monastery of Astaria. The characters enter the portal hoping to stop the assassins and uncover Astaria's secret.

Ancient Prophecy Revealed. In an ancient text found in a forgotten tomb, the characters find images of themselves drawn centuries ago. While decoding the text and images, they learn that they are part of a centuries-old prophecy to enter the fabled Monastery of Astaria and face the villains who threaten the celestial within. The book shows the location of a long-lost archway – the Arch of Astaria. A golden ring lies among the remnants where the characters found the book that serves as the key to the arch.

Should the Nameless King Return?

This scenario assumes the characters enter the monastery of Astaria but are unsuccessful in saving Astaria. Instead, after defeating Astaria's assailants, they learn from the mortally-wounded celestial that their death was foretold – required even – so that the Nameless King could return and be defeated once and for all.

You can run this scenario two other ways instead. In one, the characters defeat Astaria's assailants before the Nameless King can return. In the second, Astaria's fate isn't pre-determined. If the characters save them, the Nameless King doesn't return. If the characters fail to save Astaria, the Nameless King returns.

It's important players feel like they have agency in the outcome of this scenario and there are no wrong paths. Still, if the intention for the campaign is that the Nameless King returns, you want to find a way to make that happen without taking away the characters' agency.

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Secrets and Clues

Reveal the following secrets and clues as the characters learn about or explore the Monastery of Astaria. You need not reveal every secret and you choose how the characters learn these secrets as you run your game. Secrets in this scenario could be revealed from Astaria themself, frescoes on the walls, ancient scrolls, or divine prophecies.

- A thousand years ago, the deva Astaria cursed the Nameless King – removing his name, visage, and memory from the world.
- Astaria secluded themself in a monastery in Mount Celestia. Many believed they spent the centuries meditating.
- Astaria secretly spent the centuries seeking out the soul vessels of the Nameless King intending to be ready when the King returned.
- The soul vessels could not be found – even known about – as long as the curse of the Nameless King stands. Astaria must die for the soul vessels to be found.
- Three celestials served on the front lines of the war of the Blue Star – the war in which mortals and celestials battled the twisted forces of the Nameless King. The three celestials were Rae, Vrys, and Astaria.
- Astaria expected to one day be slain and thus break the curse of the Nameless King. Astaria hopes to prepare powerful mortals to seek the three soul vessels of the Nameless King and destroy him upon his return.
- The Monastery of Astaria contains powerful weapons blessed by the gods to help heroes defeat the forces of darkness.
- Though the power of the Nameless King raged across the world and in others – the gods did not involve themselves until Astaria convinced Io – leader of the gods of Mount Celestia – to intervine.
- Astaria and Rae felt a kinship with the mortals but Vrys never did – believing the war was below the need for Io's intervention. Vrys attempted to wrest control of Mount Celestia from Io and was banished through an archway to the city of Sunken Revvia with no memory of their past.

NPCs

The characters may run into one or more of the following NPCs while exploring the Dread Necropolis.

Astaria. A celestial **deva** and servant of the god Io. Astaria was the celestial who brought the plight of the mortals to Io.

Nomios Lightcowl. A tattooed elf celestial servant of Astaria who leads Astaria's guardians against intruders. Nomios is aware that Astaria foresaw the coming assault as well as the arrival of the characters.

The Assault

This scenario assumes an outside force attacks the Monastery of Astaria seeking to end the curse of the Nameless King. The assault force likely entered through area L1 but might have entered through M3.

The scenario assumes this force has been here long enough to cut down most of Astaria's defenses. You can also decide which chambers contain members of this force. Some of them may be overseeing the central chamber from the guardian positions in area U3, U4, and U5. Others may just have finished cutting down Astaria's guardians in area M3.

Place members of this assault force in the chambers of your choosing, based on the story you're sharing and the fun of your group.

By the time the characters get to area M4, the scenario assumes Astaria has already been mortally wounded by the leader of the assaulting force. See "Astaria's Demise" below for details.

Assault Force

Depending on how your campaign plays out, the assault force attacking the monastery of Astaria may come from several different groups. Select one of the following groups to represent the assault force.

Skrathe's Burning Blades

The **efreeti** Skrathe, known as the Lord of Below or the Burning Ember, once served the Nameless King a thousand years ago and seeks his return. He could be working on his own, summoned by the Cult of the Nameless King, or summoned by Karavon the Gray Blade in the Dread Necropolis. Skrathe's assault force could include:

1. Efreeti
2. Fire elementals
3. Young red dragons
4. Hell hounds
5. Salamanders
6. A balor

Karavon's Shadows

The **death knight** Karavon, lord of the Dread Necropolis served as a general for the Nameless King and connected the Dread Necropolis to the Monastery of Astaria with the help of corrupt mages of Kartan. Karavon may send his own undead troops to invade the Monastery of Astaria including:

1. Undead fire giants
2. Wraiths
3. Wights
4. A lich
5. Undead assassins
6. Corrupt mages or archmages of Kartan

Children of Ibraxus

The followers of the demon prince Ibraxus of Choul might have infiltrated the Monastery of Astaria hoping to gain control over the Nameless King for their foul lord. They might have found a hidden key to the monastery or used the Key of Worlds to enter it. The forces of Ibraxus could include:

1. Hezrous
2. Mariliths
3. Mages or archmages
4. Shambling mounds
5. Cult fanatics
6. A corrupted adult or ancient abyssal green dragon

Locations

The monastery of Astaria is split into three separate levels – lower (L), middle (M), and upper (U).

Lower Level

The lower levels of the monastery house the celestial servants of Astaria and contain the crypts of former followers interred here for more than a thousand years. Rooms on this level have 20-foot ceilings. Hallways have 15-foot ceilings. Squares are 10-foot squares. The halls are well-lit with magical glowing stones in the walls.

L1. Hall containing a mostly dormant archway recently connected to the Dread Necropolis.

L2. Crumbling staircase winding up to a secret door leading to U1. Servants of the invading force may have already traveled up here to attack foes in area M4 from above.

L3. Large fresco of the battle of the armies of the Blue Star against the forces of the Nameless King. This area has been walled off from area L4 but the wall can be broken through.

L4. Statue of Astaria on the southern wall. Stairs lead to area M1.

L5. Armory of the celestial protectors. Arms and armor may already be ransacked by invaders.

L6. Library of Astaria. Tomes and scrolls describe the celestial pantheon and accounts of the war and cursing of the Nameless King.

L7. Feasting hall of the celestial guardians.

L8. Crypts of fallen guardians and high priests of Astaria.

L9. Altars to the gods of Mount Celestia.

L10. Crypts of the monks and scholars of Astaria and the monastery.

Middle Level

The middle level of the monastery contains the central chamber of Astaria and several defensible areas. Chambers here have 25-foot ceilings unless otherwise defined. Halls have 15-foot ceilings and squares are 10 feet square. Magical crystals illuminate the halls and chambers in a bright amber light.

M1. Celestial guard post and observation chamber. Bows and arrows lie at the ready if not disturbed by invaders.

M2. Preparation chamber where celestial guardians, scholars, and monks prepared themselves for an audience with Astaria. Holy water lies in a vessel in the south-east corner.

M3. Entry hall. Huge doors lead outside to reveal the massive earthmote upon which the monastery floats above huge waterfalls cascading over the edge of Mount Celestia.

M4. Central chamber of the monastery. Here a towering statue of Io, the god Astaria serves, stands on the eastern side of the chamber. Astaria typically meditates in this chamber or speaks to their followers. During the invasion, likely a great battle takes place here.

M5-M6. Shrines to several gods of light and celestial followers of Io.

M7. Astaria's private meditation chambers. Massive paintings, large marble writing desk, a series of massive scroll cases containing Astaria's writings.

Upper Level

Upper chambers contain observatories and living chambers of the sages and monks who once served Astaria. These chambers have decayed over the centuries as the mortal monks died off. Halls here have 10-foot ceilings. Chambers have 20-foot ceilings. Squares are 10-foot square. Dying lights dimly light these halls.

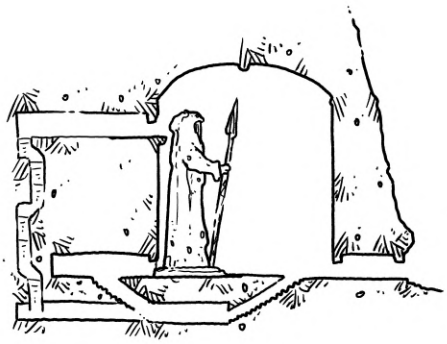
U1. Decayed living quarters of the monks who once served Astaria.

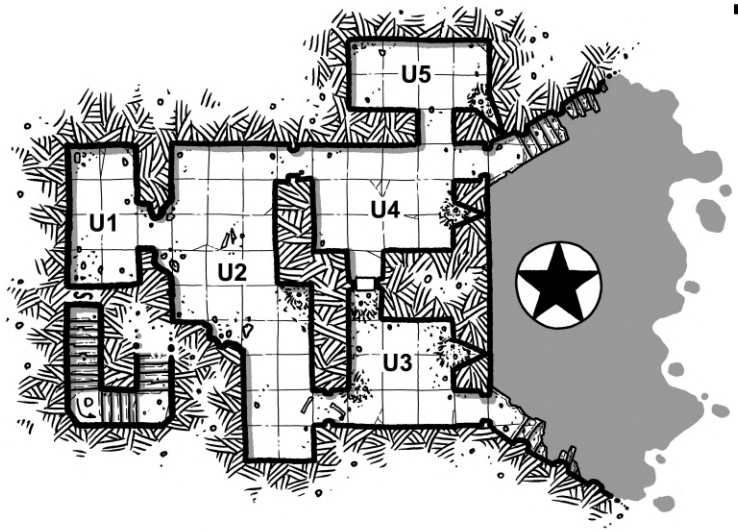
U2. Scribes' halls where decaying parchments and papers written by the monks and sages depict philosophies and their discussions with Astaria.

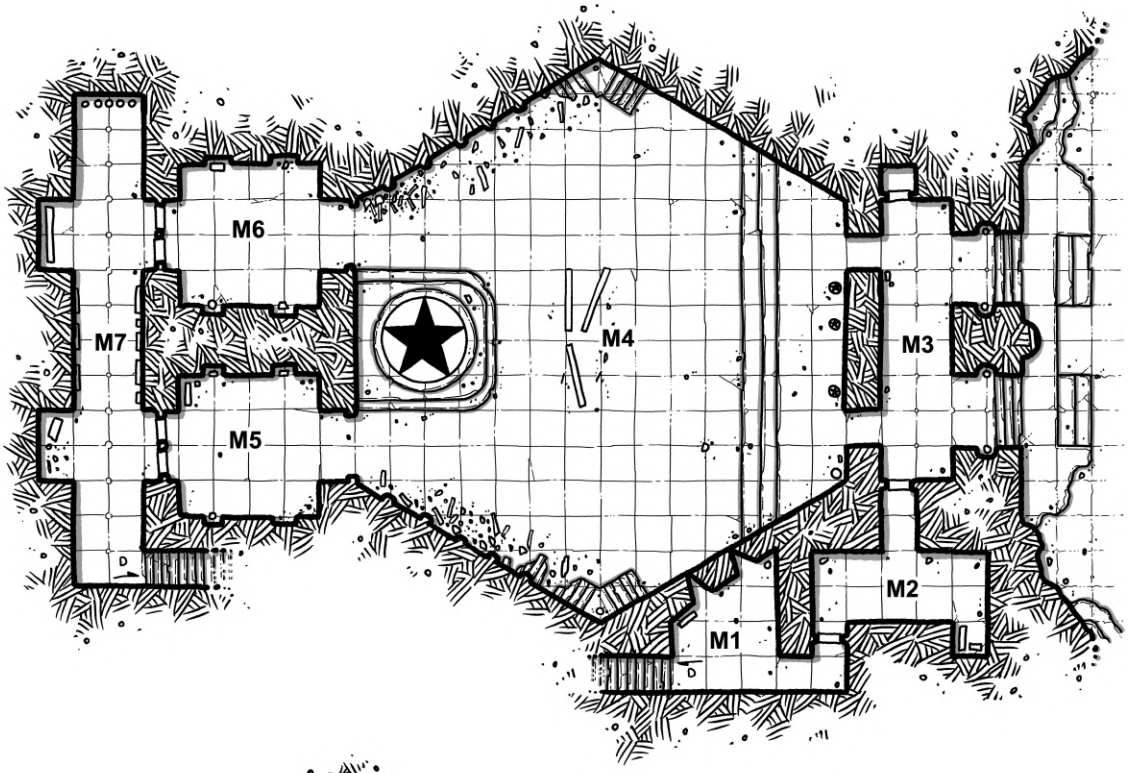
U3. Southern observation chamber with a crumbling staircase leading down to area M4.

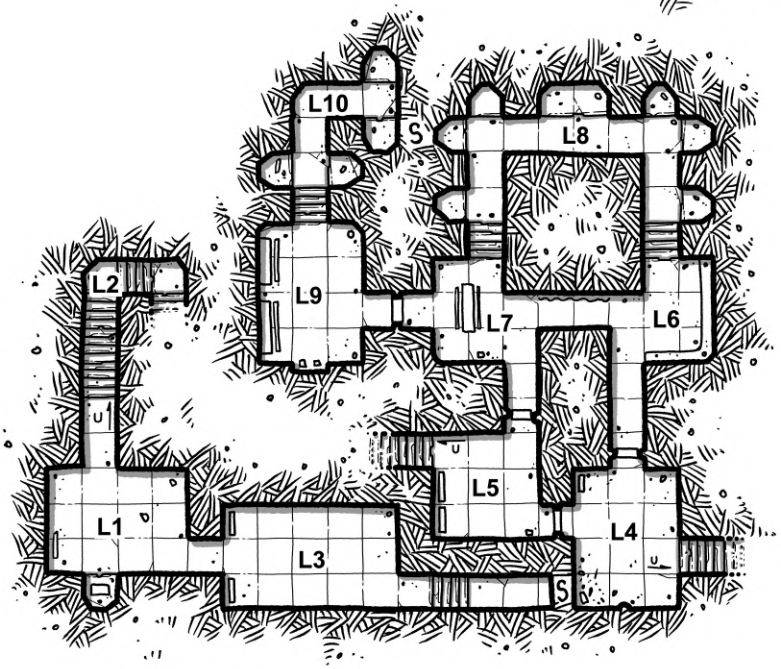
U4. Northern observation chamber.

U5. Grand archer's post where a celestial archer stood silently for a thousand years to protect Astaria.




U5
U1
U4
U2
U3


M6
M7
M4
M3
M5
M2
M1


L10
S
L8
L2
L9
L7
L6
L5
L1
L4
L3
S

Astaria's Demise

The characters can find the main villain of this scenario, whoever it might be, in the chamber with Astaria in area M4. How you run this situation is up to you and the arc of your campaign. It's possible Astaria is already mortally wounded but not yet dead when the characters arrive and face their final foe of the scenario. The villain might be:

- Skrathe the Efreeti loyal to the Nameless King (use a **balor** stat block).
- A **lich** loyal to Karavon of the Dread Necropolis.
- An **archmage** of Ibraxus who might turn into an **ancient green dragon** when defeated.

Once this foe has been defeated, Astaria explains that their defeat was critical to bait the Nameless King back into existence so he might be defeated once and for all by the characters.

With Astaria's defeat, the characters hear the following voice booming in their minds:

My name Ozymandias, King of Kings! Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!

Ozymandias, arch lich of the City of Arches, has returned.

Treasure

Throughout their exploration of the Monastery of Astaria, the characters might find the following treasure:

- 25,476 GP, 248 PP
- 6 x 250 GP pearl gemstones
- 5,000 GP prehistoric moontouched mithral band

The characters can also find the following consumable magic items:

- 2x Potions of Superior Healing
- Potion of Diminution
- Dreamscape pendant that casts Prismatic Wall once (9th level, DC 19, +11 Spell Attack)

Characters may also find one of the following permanent magic items:

- Ring of Resistance (Necrotic)
- Deck of Illusions
- Wings of Flying

The armory of Astaria can contain high-power custom magic weapons for each of the characters as they embark on the final arc of their journey against the Nameless King.