

GUIDEBOOK : THE BURNING HEART

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THE BURNING HEART

A Shaintar: Immortal Legends mega-event was run during GenCon in 2008 and we're presenting a version of that scenario to the public for the first time, so you can enjoy it and run one of the most important historical events that shaped Shaintar into what it is today. The following adventure came from Sean's story notes and the original presentation material. We combined that with the story telling ability of Darren Pearce. What follows is not the original event/story/adventure but something slightly different with updated stats from *Legends Arise* and *Legends Unleashed*.

THE SET-UP

The year: 3121. The Gates of Hell have been opened after a century of peace. The Kal-a-Nar Empire is engaged in one of the largest invasions of the Southern Kingdoms ever attempted. Galea, Olara and the rest of the Southern lands, along with Grayson's Grey Rangers are stretched to their limits.

Landra'Feya remains a vital barrier against the forces coming from the west – including the demon-worshipping army of mercenaries called the Maelstrom, along with the raiders of the Malakar Dominion. Breaches in the defensive line have occurred everywhere, and bands of demonic Childer and their acolyte masters are wreaking havoc everywhere.

In addition, it seems there are forces of both Darkness and Flame involved and no one knows if they are working together toward the same goal or if they are competing over something. Given how they feel about each other, it would have to be something big for the two forces to join together...

Heroes from all over are called on to halt the onrush of evil and stem the tide of destruction. These are the days of fire and blood. The **War of Flame** (<http://shaintar.com/?q=calendar-of-events> or see page 137 of *Legends Arise*) is upon us.

Amidst all of this, a secret plot is unfolding. If it succeeds, there will be no hope for Landra'Feya. The very heart of the Kingdoms will burn, and Light and Life will be thrown on Ceynara's pyre of war! Will the heroes discover the truth in time? Will they be able to stop what is coming?

Liner Notes: Appropriate Level

This adventure is designed for a party of 4-6 characters of Veteran to Heroic level with a scaled difficulty that increases throughout the plot. GMs are encouraged to adjust the number of enemies encountered to best fit their own group. All enemy stats are provided at the end of the adventure. If you find your players are not well challenged, feel free to check out the referenced pages in *Legends Arise* for enhanced versions of each enemy type.

HOW IT'S ALL BROKEN DOWN

The Burning Heart's broken into several key components. These are as follows:

Skirmishes: These take place all along the main plotline; they're designed to be little battles that represent the larger overall picture. They feature low-level bad guys, with conflicts that should last about 30-45 minutes and are a snap-shot of the action of the day during the greater conflict. Feel free to run as many of these as you like to lead into or out of other components.

Missions: These are larger-scale, more dramatic actions taking part during the war. They're objective based scenarios. They'll take longer, usually between 1-2 hours and there's always a specific small to medium sized task or objective that needs to be completed.

Scenarios: These are the big set-piece special missions that tie directly into the overall plot. The scenarios will build up to a culmination in the finale.

The Finale: This is the final confrontation with a hugely powerful enemy. From start to finish, the whole finale is packed with hidden villains, major bad guys, and lots and lots of cannon-fodder extras for the PCs to blow through. Ceynara has a plan – she wants to use the heroes to her own ends – and she's found something that will do it.

The single rarest enemy in Shaintar history is here as well. **A Dragon!** That's right, in this case a colossal red-hued creature. Not all is as it seems though, there's a deeper story underneath, one of star-crossed lovers, an ancient Faelakar and the dragon.

It's a distraction to turn the hero's eyes away from Ceynara's true plan, she ultimately hopes to use the heroes to kill the dragon and open a portal for her return to Shaintar and escape her demonic prison!

SKIRMISHES

These are small, quick fights. Feel free to throw in Kal-A-Nar forces such as swarms of Childer (5-10), squads of Kal troops (5-10), or even raiding parties of Maelstrom mercenaries (5-10). You could also use Shaya'Nor forces such as squads of Shayakar Soldiers or Nightguard (5-10), hordes of Undead creatures (varied), or even hunting packs of Vampires and Werewolves (1-3)! Use any of the weaker foes found at the end of this book against the heroes over time...

...If your group feels the combat is too easy, you can combine forces, adding a Thratchen (or two) for example with the raiding party of Maelstrom mercenaries for a more intense fight. Be creative!

MISSIONS

These are orders from High Command, the top generals and leaders of the allied Southern Kingdoms; these missions help the war effort, reduce enemy strength and protect vital shipments. Feel free to invent your own, they can be single stage, or have multiple parts that require different skills. Use as many, or as few, missions during the main adventure to really capture the scope and size of the War. In some cases, a mission could be given by The Raven or one of the other scions.

Start with a mission category, then select a specific mission from the list. Or create one of your own!

Ambush Mission

- Wipe out an enemy patrol
- Destroy a supply caravan
- Free prisoners
- Eliminate a group of demons

Infiltration Mission

- Burn enemy supply cache
- Steal valuable intel
- Capture a high value target
- Sabotage a war machine

Magical Support Mission

- Protect Druid allies during an key Ritual
- Sabotage enemy War Ritual

- Defend sacred Grove from enemy raid
- Destroy an Acolyte

Protection Detail Mission

- Protect an important building
- Escort a VIP to a meeting
- Protect a "special" item (person or magic item)
- Protect a cache of supplies from raiders

Rescue Mission

- Rescue an important person
- Rescue a high ranked officer stranded behind enemy lines
- Rescue someone important to the war effort
- Rescue a group of refugees/prisoners

SCENARIOS

This is it! The scenarios are the beginning of Feyara's plan to change Shaintar forever! There's lots of opportunity to give out clues and false information during the scenes of Act I.

ACT I

THE BURNING HEART: REVELATION

As the Battle for Landra'Feya rages in chaos all around, the group of heroes have been guided to an ancient tomb where something of great value lies, untouched for millennia. What is the Burning Heart? How does it figure into the desperate battle being fought for the elvish homelands? Will the heroes discover the truth in time?

This scenario kicks off with the heroes in the thick of it. Right out of the gate; they're in the forest and up against the wall. This scenario can flow directly from a larger battle as the missions are winding up. They're facing off against a tough group of foes - feel free to make things difficult for them. It's during this fight that the most 'spiritually' connected or aware will catch a glimpse of the Raven as it flits onto a shadowed path and seems to wait for the heroes to follow it.

THE BATTLE

Before they see the Raven, the group is set upon by the following combatants, which should be adjusted based on the number of heroes and their power level during this scenario. Part way through the fight, or if the heroes are winning with no chance of failure, they'll get a glimpse of a raven appears to the most spiritually aware character in the group upon a Notice roll with a raise.

Encounter Forces (Kal-A-Nar):

- **2-3 Minotaur:** pg. 14 or *Legends Arise* pg. 154-155
- **3-4 Ratzin swarms** (under command of Minotaur leader): pg. 14 or *Legends Arise* pg. 155-156
- **5-10 Kal Warriors:** pg. 15 or *Legends Arise* pg. 170

THE PATH

Once they follow the path, which is strangely calm and quiet after all the chaos, war, fire, and death raging around them, none of the previous combatants care to come after them.

The Raven acts as their guide, leading them through a path, flitting ahead from tree to tree for them to follow. As the heroes move further along this path, they'll begin to hear snatches of music, lyrics in the Fae tongue, and get mental images of a beautiful grove of trees with a large white marble tomb at the center.

Suddenly the path shimmers and shifts as something breaks through the undergrowth nearby. The air grows cold, the light dims and the heroes feel the Darkness seep in as a group of Shayakar, and other Darkness based foes set upon them.

Unknown to the heroes, these combatants are part of a force opposed to the Kal and their allies, competing to get to the Tomb of Jannus Telvinian, the legendary bard of the Fae folk.

They won't take kindly to anyone else being there, and they'll attack the heroes the moment they're spotted.

Encounter Forces (Shaya'Nor):

- **5-10 Shayakar Nightguard:** pg. 19 or *Legends Arise* pg. 177
- **5-10 Greater Skeletons:** pg. 20 or *Legends Arise* pg. 179
- **Lord Zane, Seeker:** pg. 21 or *Legends Arise* pg. 173
- **Lady Korryn, Vampire:** pg. 21 or *Legends Arise* pg. 164-165

THE TOMB OF JANUS TELVINIAN

During the battle with the forces of Darkness, the necromancer and vampire will taunt the heroes. They will let slip the importance of this location to these interlopers, and make no bones about telling them they'll not ever reach the tomb alive. They may even let slip about the legendary book written by the bard that they plan to recover. Since we're not holding the heroes hands, it's important to give them a reason to venture further into the area, beat back the Darkness, and find the tomb.

Once they've managed to drive them off or send their foes off to oblivion, they can enter the tomb. The raven is waiting for them, perched on a beautiful white marble mausoleum.

Inside the tomb, it's as if time stood still it's so serene, calm, and peaceful. They will be led to the most important feature of the tomb, the penultimate work of Jannus Telvinian, a book which includes much knowledge including the tale of Aradius and Vandara, otherwise known as the Faelakar and the Dragon. There's enough time that the book could be read here at the tomb – though if the group decides there is too much going on right now with the battles going on, they can read it back at the base camp as they are fixing armor and weapons and meeting with their commanders.



The Raven perches by the book, and taps it as he tries to make the heroes understand it's vitally important for them to take the book and find a way to read it. If they do, then they'll reach a passage in the book which reads:

The Tale of Aradius and Vandara

There are many passages, songs, poems and other notes detailing the love affair between two Faelakar - Aradius and Vandara. Warriors, lovers, guides and counselors to kings and their people. As the book is translated, the following passage will come to light.

"A day came, however, when the ages-old tale of these two-who-were-one came to a tragic and shocking end. For when the Dragonlords were summoned from their distant realm, and their children poured through the Cauldrons and made war upon our world, Vandara's blood did churn.

It churned not for fear for Shaintar alone (though it must be true that she did love this land with all she had); it churned in her due to the calling... the calling of her people.

For Vandara was not as she had seemed for so many long centuries. Nay! Using the greatness of her own magics, Vandara had long been able to show purely the Fae essence of herself, forever hiding the Daemonic aspects that, combined with Fae, made her what she truly was -

A Dragon!

It is thanks to the story of Aradius and Vandara that we know something more of the true nature of the Dragons; that they are the long-ago spawned offspring of the first meeting between Fae and Demons within the Aether.

When Vandara could not hide her nature any longer, she presented the truth to her mate, begging his forgiveness. She pledged to use all her great and terrible powers to fight the Dragonlords, standing at his side to lead the way against her own people.

After almost 2000 years, bonded at their very souls, Aradius' shattered heart could not reconcile with the horrible sense of betrayal. He denied her, and cast her from his sight and his life. Instead of their combined skills and greatness serving Shaintar in this devastating war, the two of them disappeared, going their separate ways.

Nothing is known of what happened to Aradius, so complete was his descent into obscurity. It may be that he simply died afterwards. Vandara's tale only goes on to say that she did refuse her people, and found her way beyond the Veil, never to be seen in Shaintar again."

CEYNARA'S WARLIKE HAND

They're unsure as to why they were led to this place, but feel they've just completed something important. Just when the heroes think it's over and they're ready to leave the tomb to return to High Command for help and new orders, they'll find more forces looking for the tomb. As they leave, they'll begin to walk down the path to return to the forest only to chance on a group of Ceynara's acolytes setting fire to another section of the beleaguered woodland!

The Kal forces were looking for the tomb, trying to find a way in, failing to do this they decided to burn their way to the ancient grove.

If the acolytes spot the heroes have the book, or sense it, then they'll come after them with everything they've got. The book contains clues, and much more, clues that could stop the Queen of Hell's plans in their tracks.

Encounter Forces (Kal-A-Nar):

- 3-6 Thratchen: pg. 14 or *Legends Arise* pg. 157
- Master Orzai: pg. 17
- Captain Shaiir, pg. 18

BACK TO BASE

Once this fight's over, the heroes can take stock of their options, they might be wounded, and they might have exhausted some of their supplies. They can return to one of the many temporary war camps to rest, resupply, and restock. They might have enough experience to rank up, and in that case they should be given a little bit of downtime to do this; regardless they'll need to rest and recover. Feel free to check the Shaintar: *Legends Arise* core book for suitable rewards, don't give the heroes too much in the way of loot or gear at this stage. They may need a weapon capable of causing more damage to demons.

The heroes are likely to want to find out more, but the NPCs are unable to shed light on the journal or any of the information within it. Yet each hero will have a dream the next time they sleep. It's a fragmented, disjointed dream. A raven caws, a broken house appears, and fire engulfs everything whilst a woman's voice rings out with chilling laughter.

In the morning they receive marching orders, they're to rendezvous with a scouting force at a key location in the forest.

ACT II

THE BURNING HEART: RELEASE

The action begins early morning with the heroes arriving at the location in the forest, all is silent, and the scouts they had come to meet lie in a tangled mess of broken bones, blood, and gore. Before the heroes can investigate further they are set upon by a determined force of Childer and their Kal-a-Nar allies.

Encounter Forces (Kal-A-Nar):

- **4-6 Ratzin swarms:** pg. 14 or *Legends Arise* pg. 155-157
- **10-15 Kal Warriors:** pg. 15 or *Legends Arise* pg. 170

THE TRAIL OF THE RAVEN

As the heroes view the aftermath of the battle, the air grows cooler, the atmosphere becomes more serene and a gentle wind plays over them. Then they hear the caw of a raven, and this time, all of them will see the bird as it manifests in a flurry of light and wings. It insists they follow it down yet another path and swoops off, returning several times to implore them to follow.

After a short while on the path, have the players pick up a few clues that they're not the only ones following this particular route. Perhaps they spot signs of a skirmish, perhaps they find a key item or two belonging to a Tor Mastak agent or the Shayakar Night Guard.

Encounter Forces (Kal-A-Nar):

- **5-10 Tor Mastak:** pg. 15 or *Legends Arise* pg. 170
- **Forla Havalin:** pg. 18

or

Liner Notes: 3-Way Contest

It's possible, even likely, that in this three way battle between the heroes, the Empire and Shaya'Nor's forces that the heroes may find themselves in a free-for-all with agents of both factions. GMs are encouraged to use these skirmishes to better illustrate the chaos of war.

- **2-3 Tor Mastak Adepts:** pg. 16 or *Legends Arise* pg. 170

Encounter Forces (Shaya'Nor):

- **5-10 Shayakar Nightguard:** pg. 19 or *Legends Arise* pg. 177
- **10-15 Shayakar Soldiers:** pg. 19 or *Legends Arise* pg. 177
- **1 Shayakar Commander:** pg. xx or *Legends Unleashed* pg. 134

If the heroes are wily they'll choose to travel stealthily, especially once they realize the Kal-A-Nar and Shaya'Nor forces are hunting in the woods. If they fail in their stealth, then the Tor Mastak will dispatch some Kal Warriors to slow them down, with Forla Haverlain, a Tor Mastak Adept. Or, the party may be ambushed by a Shayakar Commander with an elite team of Shayakar Nightguard. In fact, both factions are there and they'll fight the heroes and each other indiscriminately since they're all there for the same thing...

It's all a ruse, part of Ceynara's master plan. She's already beaten the group to the ruined home deep in the forest and gotten what she wanted, all of her troops are there to buy her time to get away and complete a very important ritual. Should the heroes make it as far as the ruined building, they will encounter the Tor Mastak and a handful of Kal Warriors lying in wait.

RUINED HOME

The remains of a simple home lie here. It is well built and ancient, burned out in places, and the heroes will detect signs of a struggle with a successful notice check if they take the time to explore. They'll also discover clues as to the owner of this home, someone they may well have read about earlier on in Act I. It belonged to Aradius; though don't give them the name just yet - the trappings of the home are the important part right now. Simply hint at the Fae's former life. Read the following description:

- *On the ground just inside the doorway a bit of faded color stands out against the carpet of dead leaves; perhaps at one time a painting, it is little more than rags now. In one corner leans an Everwood stand upon which a suit of armor once stood. Now it lies forlorn, covered in dust and cobwebs. Further in, baubles lie*