

Eight We Are, Eight We Shall Be.

United, Indivisible,

Eternally.

In Fear Shall The Foes of

Fahd Be Kept.

The Step of Eight Feet In

One Footstep.

To One Another, Our Fates

Are Threaded.

To Legendry, Our Tales Be Headed.



So reads the first clue to the mysterious past of the Blades of Cara Fahd, a set of near-identical daggers forged in the time before the Scourge. A quest to learn the history of the Blades and unlock thier magical power takes the daggers' new owners across Barsaive, from the ancient kingdom of Cara Fahd to the dark heart of the Tylon Mountains. But the Blades also hold a terrible secret, long lost to time and memory, that threatens to wreak havoc throughout all of Barsaive!

Blades is a campaign storyline for ***Earthdawn***. The five linked adventures in this book lead the characters on a search for the Key Knowledges of the Blades of Cara Fahd. ***Blades*** is intended for Fifth to Ninth Circle characters of any Discipline.

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BLADES

A COLLECTION OF EARTHDOWN ADVENTURES



FASA CORPORATION



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FINAL BATTLE	4	Defeating Creatures/Opponents	37
INTRODUCTION	6	Treasure	37
Gamemastering Notes	6	Total Legend Award	37
Making Tests	7	Cast of Characters	37
How to Use This Book	7	Gnanagh the Querulous	38
Awarding Legend Points	8	Moschtug, "King of Cara Fahd"	39
Total Legend Point Award	8	Orguk	40
Preparing Adventures	8	Tirag	41
THE BLADES OF CARA FAHD	9	Uvtug	41
History of the Blades	9	Miners	41
The Blades and Their Wielders	9	Scorchers	41
The Arrival of Betrayer	9	A MATTER OF HONOR	42
Horror Marked!	9	GRAVE WISDOM	43
The Seven Spokes	9	Plot Synopsis	43
Betrayer and the Liferock	10	Betrayer's Influence	43
The Battle	10	Search for the Hold	44
Betrayal from Beyond	10	Into the Hold of Courage	47
The Blades Since the Scourge	11	Spirits from the Past	49
Using the Blades	11	Loose Ends	52
Physical Description	11	After the Adventure	52
Betrayer's Powers	12	Awarding Legend Points	52
Running Blades	13	Creative Roleplaying and Heroics	52
Getting the Blades	13	Defeating Creatures	52
The Blades' Curse	14	Treasure	52
How Many Characters?	14	Total Legend Award	52
Adventure Style	14	Cast of Characters	53
Researching the Blades	14	Vanyk Auldsinger	53
Can't We Get Rid of These Things?	15	PRISONER	54
Blades and Your Campaign	16	A TRAITOR'S FATE	55
INTERLUDES	17	Plot Synopsis	55
Secret of the Runes	17	Into the Woods	56
In Search of Knowledge	18	Tamer Touch	58
Lighting the Way	20	A Rude Awakening	61
With a Tale to Tell	22	Dark Fetch	64
Last Words	24	Loose Ends	66
SACRED UNION	26	After the Adventure	66
BOND BREAKER	27	Awarding Legend Points	66
Plot Synopsis	27	Creative Roleplaying and Heroics	66
Betrayer's Influence	27	Defeating Creatures	66
Copper Cauldron	28	Treasure	66
Poisoned Rites	32	Total Legend Award	66
Fort in the Foothills	34	Cast of Characters	66
Loose Ends	36	Kragen Overfall (Dark Fetch)	67
After the Adventure	36	NIGHTMARES	68
Awarding Legend Points	37	WITH AN AXE IN HAND	69
Creative Roleplaying and Heroics	37	Plot Synopsis	69

Sample file





Prosperous to a Degree	71
The Liferock	76
Lingering Troubles	79
Loose Ends	82
After the Adventure	82
Awarding Legend Points	83
Creative Roleplaying and Heroics	83
Defeating Creatures/Opponents	83
Treasure	83
Total Legend Award	83
Cast of Characters	83
Grandma	83
Trawet	84
Dolrettea	84
Asmersious	85
AS WET AS BLOOD	86
PURE LIQUIDS	87
Plot Synopsis	87
Betrayal's Influence	87
Getting Soaked	88
Rain of Betrayal	93
Dread Rebirth	96
Loose Ends	99
After the Adventure	99
Awarding Legend Points	99
Creative Roleplaying and Heroics	99
Defeating Creatures	99
Treasure	99
Total Legend Award	99
Cast of Characters	100
Betrayal	100
Ch'elasma	101
T'skrang Guards	102
Vodanicus Family Members	103

BLADES

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FINAL BATTLE



he smell told them they were close. Sickly-sweet, the smell of fresh blood grew stronger with every step the little band of orks took down the stony path by the river. The sound of rushing water echoed off the walls and roof of the tunnel, taking on the tones of mocking laughter. Ahead, the orks saw a faint greenish glow.

The Seven Spokes walked in single file, each with one hand on a comrade's shoulder and the other clutching the hilt of a dagger. Grim and determined, they walked toward the place where the Horror waited. Their eyes showed no sign of fear. They were orks; they had grabbed life by the throat in their time, and they knew how to die well.

A few paces shy of the dreadful light, Pobov Gaarz halted the line. He turned to face his comrades, smiling the smile he always wore in battle. Green sparks glinted off the tips of his tusks. "It is a good day to avenge a friend," he said. His six companions rumbled their assent.

Gaarz held out his blade at arm's length. "Let us pledge to each other once more before we die!"

Silently, with grim smiles, the other six orks came around and touched the tips of their daggers to Gaarz's. The joined daggers made up the spokes of a wheel, with a gap where an eighth blade should have been. Together, they chanted, "Eight we are, eight we shall be—united, indivisible, eternally."

"To the memory of Kragen Overtall," said Nhag Katurn, who had been Kragen's closest friend. All the orks bowed their heads, paying one last tribute to the comrade whom the Horror had led to betray them.

Pobov Gaarz was the first to raise his head. "We strike to avenge Kragen, and all the other Name-givers that this Horror's poison has touched. By the Blades of Cara Fahd, we shall have victory!"

As one, they raised their dagger blades. The light glinted off the metal, turning the wheel to green fire.

R'ashani paced back and forth across her tent, her tail switching violently from side to side. Vainly, she strove to shut her ears to the distant echoes of horrible laughter drifting up from the caverns. Surely the thing below could not triumph over seven such bold heroes, armed as they were with the rite she had made for them. The best fruits of her sorcery she had given to these strangers, that they

might destroy the Horror whose touch had brought so many of her own folk to ruin. She could not do it on her own—but they could slay the entity. They must. If the orks failed, House Ch'elann would fall to the Horror.

R'ashani stopped pacing abruptly and clenched her fists. She was shivalahala—she refused to admit the possibility of defeat.

The green glow came from the small lake at the grotto's heart. Dark patterns turned and twisted in the water, signs of the Horror's power. The Horror itself was a nightmare shape, black and glistening, its narrow snakelike body held up by eight limbs that the creature could transform from hard-shelled insect legs to flailing tentacles. On three sides of its massive head—crested like a t'skrang's—huge eyes glowed the same sickly green as the water the thing sat in. As the Seven Spokes watched, greenish ichor shot through with red blood welled up and dripped from the Horror's left-side eye. It splashed on a jutting edge of rock, sending bubbles of the stuff flying through the grotto. One of them struck Nhag, who screamed and clutched at her neck. The ichor bubble dropped off, leaving a patch of burned flesh behind.

"Buunda!" shouted Pobov Gaarz, darting toward the Horror. Lazily, it hurled a tentacle at him. He sidestepped the blow, striking at the glistening flesh as he moved. Then he darted away, drawing the Horror's attention just long enough to let Mogrok the Proud rush up for the second blow. Six of the Seven Spokes danced around the Horror, stabbing at its flailing limbs and dodging its blows. Several feet behind them, Nhag Katurn untied her waist pouch and pulled from it a small copper bowl and a medallion of soft wood. Forcing herself to ignore her comrades' battle shouts and cries of pain, Nhag placed the cool point of her dagger against the back of her hand and cut a shallow triangle—the shape of two-eighths of a wheel. She turned her hand over the bowl, palm-up, and clenched a fist. "For both of us, Kragen," she whispered as her blood dripped into the bowl. When the blood flow slowed, she blotted the wound on her sleeve and charged shrieking toward the battle.

One by one, the Seven Spokes cut their hands and squeezed blood into the bowl. While each of them performed the rite, the others kept the Horror busy. A tentacle caught Mogrok across the face—he screamed as it burned his right eye but stood his ground and slashed at the Horror. Nhag drew her hunting knife, fighting two-fisted with the Blade of Cara Fahd in one hand and the iron knife





in the other. The knife struck, bit deep—and crumbled into nothing, melted away by the Horror's blood.

Pobov Gaarz, the last to give blood, ducked away from a flying gob of ichor. It struck a stalactite behind him and turned its gleaming crystal surface ash-grey. Nhag threw herself at the Horror with a blood-curdling yell; Gaarz took advantage of the distraction to dash toward the bowl. Breathing hard from exertion, he rested the tip of his dagger against his hand—and stopped. Suddenly, the thought of cutting himself seemed fantastic to him. Why was he doing this? What kind of warrior deliberately wounded himself in battle? And on his knife hand, yet? It was all right for the others, they fought left-handed more often than not. But he fought right-handed, so this magical ritual required him to risk himself in a way not asked of his fellows. Gaarz flushed with sudden, furious resentment, throwing down his dagger with a growl. "Harm myself—cripple my fighting hand—for Kragen Overtall? To avenge a traitor who tried to kill me?! No!" He slammed his hand into the side of the burnt stalactite. "No!"

The pain of the blow made him gasp and cleared his head a little. He saw the Blade of Cara Fahd wink up at him from the cavern floor. Its light seemed to pierce through to his soul. For a single, blinding moment he recognized his anger as the Horror's creation and threw it aside like a mange-eaten cloak. He picked up the dagger and cut a triangle in the back of his hand, then clenched his fist over the bowl with a howl of defiance. After a few moments, he sat down and pulled the bowl of blood and the wooden medallion next to him. He gave the Horror a long, steady look, as if memorizing it—then dipped two fingers in the blood and began to trace the thing's outline on the wood. When he finished, he took up the Blade of Cara Fahd and slashed it across

the painted medallion. The Horror howled with pain and rage. Laughing, Gaarz charged back into the fray.

One by one, the Seven Spokes drew the Horror's shape in blood and slashed at the medallion. With every stroke of steel across wood, the Horror shrieked and a part of its body crumbled to dust. As Nhag made the last stroke with a shout of triumph, the Horror's terrible head melted into nothing. The greenish glow died away, leaving nothing but the light of a few sputtering torches.

Nhag held up her Blade; the metal had turned a dark slate-blue. "Victory!" she crowed. "The blood of Betrayer darkens our blades—destroyed by the heroes of Cara Fahd!" Battered but defiantly alive, the Seven Spokes raised their daggers and shouted their joy.

R'ashani drifted off to sleep feeling more hopeful than she had in many a long night. The Horror was dead. The Seven Spokes had saved enough of her people from the thing's taint to rebuild House Ch'elann. After so long a darkness, all was finally well. R'ashani fell asleep smiling and soon began to dream.

She stood in the grotto where the Horror had laired. It was quiet and dark, except for a single point of light by the far side of the lake. Curious, R'ashani walked around for a closer look.

The light shone from a dagger, one of the Blades of Cara Fahd. It gleamed as white as crystal, so captivating that R'ashani had to pick it up. As she took the blade in her hand, the light began to change, darkening to the pale green of swamp-fire.

The sudden, overpowering smell of blood made R'ashani double over. The dagger fell from her hand, stabbing into the rock floor. As she watched, horrified, the rock began to bleed. R'ashani screamed, but the sound was lost in a rising tide of mocking laughter.

