

Ten Thousand Swords in Zan-Xadar

A Campaign for Dungeons and Dragons

Background

Zan-Xadar, the Jewel of the South! The Great Port, the Shining City! Known also as the Sewer of the South and City of the Wicked.

Here may be found scholars, nobles, priests and mystics, philosophers from a thousand traditions; and in even greater number may be found cutthroats, sellswords, vagabonds and beggars, slavers and cultists. From the shining palace walls of the First Ward, to the dark and twisting maze of the Switchbacks, Zan-Xadar is a city of great highs and great lows.

It is to Zan-Xadar you sail, whether returning home from war, journeying from the frontier to seek your fortune, or to consult the Great Library of the Alabaster Tower. Aboard the Blessed Dragon, you set sail three weeks ago from Alcairam and have had a mostly-uneventful journey over the Opal Sea, with clear skies and fair winds until two days ago, when the way ahead turned to overcast and the skies grew progressively darker. Then yesterday, wind and rain would come in waves, each one slightly more intense and longer than the last.

This morning, awakened by a teeth-shaking thunderclap from somewhere very close by, you discovered the ship to be pitching about, tossed on the waves by a vicious storm while on deck, the crew seem to be running mad, their incoherent screaming barely audible over the howl of the wind.

...or is it the wind? Never did the wind keen with such a voice! Surely it is the singing of angels, guiding you to safe port through the storm. You may still be days out from Zan-Xadar, but with such a welcome place as this island you can now make out through the sheets of rain and crashing waves, to carry on in such a typhoon would be madness.

If only there was someone at the helm, turning the Blessed Dragon towards safety...

Concept

This will be a semi-episodic sword-and-sorcery/heroic fantasy campaign with a dash of mythic Greece / *Arabian Nights* flavor. The campaign centers around the magnificent and ancient city of Zan-Xadar, which mixes in equal parts the might of Babylon, the glory of Athens, the mystery of Thebes, and the wickedness of Gomorrah. While the characters may or

may not spend much time there depending on their desires and the whims of fate, it is still the star around which their adventures orbit. The heroes may be sellswords, treasure-seekers, crusaders, or simply adventuring soldiers-of-fortune. You do not need to know each other – the first scenario will take care of that for you – but during the character creation session the players should at least think about how you will work together as a team.

Character Creation

The game will use *Dungeons and Dragons 4E*, with characters built using the WotC character-generation tool. Ability scores are determined via 22-point buy.

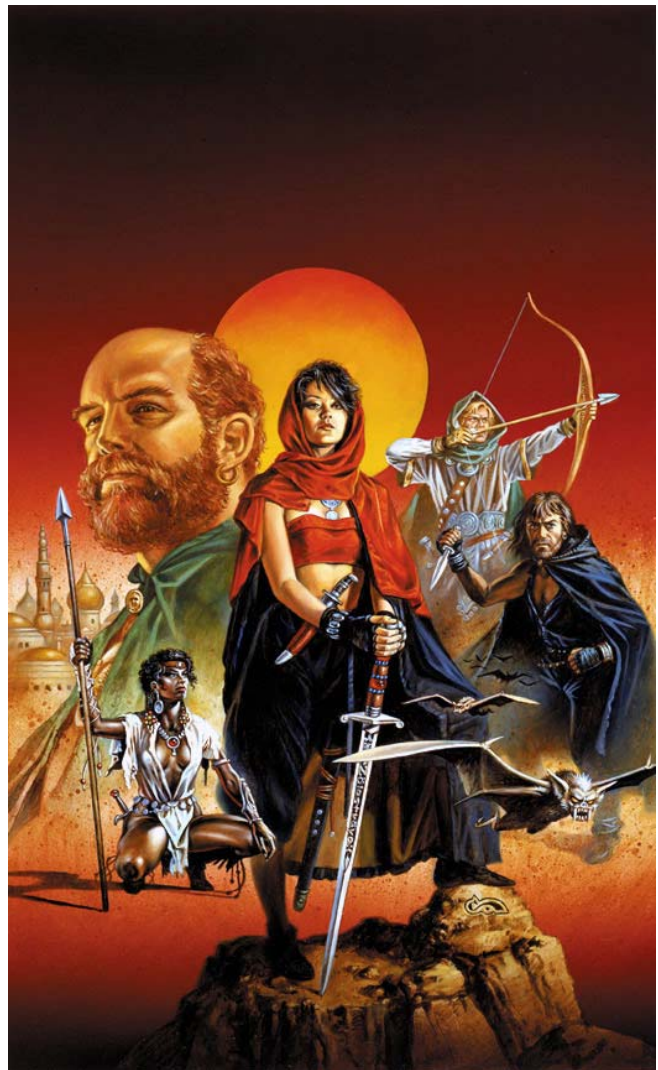
Race

99% of the people you will encounter are human. Non-human characters of any variety are likely to be looked upon with wariness or tolerance at best, and outright hatred at worst. The more alien your race, the more likely you are to be seen as a monster, rather than “a proper person.” That said, the available non-human races are eladrin, half-elf, djereti (halfling), djinnblood (tiefling), deva, nephilim (goliath), shifter (longtooth or razorclaw), minotaur, and jackalwere (gnoll).

Eladrin The eladrin are much as described in the *Players Handbook*, except that there was never any “elf/eladrin” split. The echo-world referred to in the *PHB* as “the feywild” is generally known as the dreamlands, the blessed realm, or the shadowlands in Zan-Xadar.

Half-Elf Strictly speaking, half-elves are actually a product of human-eladrin heritage. Half-elves are also sometimes referred to by the same umbrella term that tieflings fall under, “djinnblood.”

Djereti (singular: “djeret”) The desert halflings are nomadic wanderers organized into clans of extended families. Most of the clans travel a fairly regular route, stopping at cities once or twice a year to buy, sell, and socialize with outsiders. Traveling with a djereti caravan is often the safest way to make journeys across deserts or other perilous passages; it is also a common way for spies or criminals to cross political borders undetected.



Djinnblood The term “djinn” refers to a specific type of desert spirit, but in the language of Zan-Xadar also refers more broadly to any kind of spirit creature, including angels or demons. Thus, anyone with a touch of nonhuman blood may be referred to as “djinnblood.” However, djinnblood also specifically refers to a person whose (usually fairly recent) ancestry includes a djinn proper. The exact circumstances of this unusual situation are up to the player, but it is not uncommon for djinni to lust after mortals, and to make a night of mating part of the price of some pact.



Deva A deva is an immortal spirit made flesh, essentially an incarnate angel. They are not born, nor do they go through childhood – they simply appear, fully realized (but without possessions) at a shrine or other holy place, carrying vague memories of their many previous lives. Each incarnation has a specific destiny, but other than fighting against evil in the broad sense, they don't know what that destiny is. When their life is over, if that destiny is fulfilled, they will appear again somewhere new. There are very few devas in the world, so few that in spite of eternal reincarnations, they almost never meet. If a deva ever falls to evil, then their next life will be as a rakshasa.

Nephilim The nephilim are a race of giants who claim to be descended from the marriages of gods

to mortals in prehistoric times. Their culture is one largely based on bullying and dominance, and most civilized folk consider nephilim to be arrogant, mean, and wicked. The nephilim, for their part, laugh at this, claiming it to be nothing more than the jealous grumblings of inferior races. The quickest way to insult a nephilim and make it sting is to call them djinnblood – for are gods not mightier than mere puffs of smoke?

Shifters Shifters are humans with a blend of animalistic characteristics that become more pronounced when shifters are moved by strong or primal emotions; it has been speculated that they are descended from true lycanthropes. They are organized mostly in small tribes that skirt the borders between civilization and the wilderness, but rare individuals have been known to take to a more civilized life.

Minotaurs Minotaurs are fairly rare, but can be found in seaside or island cliffs and cave complexes all around the Opal Sea. Most are little more than dumb brutes; some are slightly smarter brutes. A few rare specimens are capable of learning and wisdom.

Jackalwre Jackalweres are mostly desert raiders, merciless bandits, and slavers. They have holdouts in the foothills and low-lying valleys along the desert's edge, some of which could almost be called towns or even small cities – but these are not centers of learning or civilization, simply places where the jackalweres trade their plundered gains. Most jackalweres will not prey on each other, seeing even rival bands as more like an extended family preying on the “soft ones” (i.e., everyone else). Individual jackalweres who have made their way to civilization are rare and generally not popular, regardless of how good-natured they may be.

Class

All of the classes in the *Players Handbook* are allowed, as are artificer, barbarian, bard, monk, psion, shaman, sorcerer, and swordmage. You may use the hybrid rules with any campaign-legal class. As additional classes become available, they will be added on a case-by-case basis.

Zan-Xadar and the World

Zan-Xadar sits at the southern tip of a broad continent, jutting out into the Opal Sea. This puts it in a remarkably advantageous position, as nearly all international trade must either pass through or very close to it. Obviously, this makes Zan-Xadar extremely wealthy. It also makes Zan-Xadar extremely unpopular with its neighbors, and at any given time war has either just started, just ended, or is looming on the horizon.

More details about Zan-Xadar itself will come later as you actually get there. For now, here are some of the other major powers of the region:

Alcairam This is a good-sized island-nation to the southwest, an important port city and stalwart ally of Zan-Xadar. It consists of one major city (Alcairam itself) on a large volcanic isle, with several smaller outlying townships on surrounding islands.

Beltharain The nearest overland city friendly to Zan-Xadar, Beltharain is on the far side of the Desert of Xadar. Djereti caravans or occasionally groups of pilgrims make the long journey from Zan-Xadar to Beltharain and back every few months, but many fall prey to hostile djinni, jackalwere or nephilim raiders, or other hazards of the desert.

Khaldun A large city-state to the northeast, Khaldun is an aggressive and expansionist power. Interestingly enough, Khaldun's faith centers around the "Goddess of the Black Flame," presumably a variation or perhaps an inversion of the Church of the Silver Flame, and its priesthood and aristocracy are tightly-knit, maintaining a dictatorial control over the city's



populace. Khaldun is also Zan-Xadar's major rival as a seaport for the northern continent.

Kithria A small city-state known primarily as a center of learning, Kithria is dedicated to the worship of Ioun. They remain largely unattached from power struggles in the area, having little in the way of valuable resources beyond the somewhat esoteric benefits of study.

Nellevar A city-state of wild-eyed, dissolute pirates and rogues on the southern continent, Nellevar is the only settlement that could even vaguely be called “civilized” in a long stretch of hostile coastline to the south.

Setranophis A major and wealthy kingdom on the southern continent, ruled by a god-king and his sister-queen in the city of Hamunsekhre, Setranophis frequently comes into conflict with Zan-Xadar over both economic and religious differences. (i.e., Zan-Xadar refuses to acknowledge the god-king as the true divine leader of mankind, and also has the gall to demand tribute from Setran ships that pass through Zandari territory.) The hostility is rarely enough to lead to out-and-out war, particularly since the two nations are at somewhat of a distance from each other, but both would certainly prefer that the other one was removed from the Opal Sea.



Religion

Zan-Xadar has cults (if small ones) to just about any religion that exists, and several that their proponents just made up. The Church of the Silver Flame is the official religion of the state, which teaches that there is a single true “god” (referred to as the Silver Flame as mortals are not worthy to speak the god's name), and that all other creatures referred to as gods are either nonexistent, or if they do exist are simply powerful spirits whose nature has been misunderstood by mortals. There are those who identify the Silver Flame with Bahamut, but the official position of the church is that this is a heresy.

There are several lesser gods that are commonly worshiped by the populace – much to the annoyance of the Church of the Silver Flame, but to stop the practice is all but impossible. While any *Players Handbook* deities are open to players, they are not necessarily the most common. In fact, the most popular gods in Zan-Xadar, after the Silver Flame, are:

Bahamut (a.k.a. The Platinum Dragon) The god of justice, nobility, and honor, is a popular god. Before the ascendancy of the Church of the Silver Flame, the worship of Bahamut was the *de facto* religion of the aristocracy of Zan-Xadar, and dragon motifs, especially in platinum, silver, or white gold, are very common in heraldry and decoration.

Erathis (a.k.a. Titania or The Muse) Popular among the builders and craftsmen, the goddess of invention is often honored, if subtly, by symbolism in architectural structures.

Garagos (a.k.a. Lord of War) A fearsome god of war and berserk rage, often invoked by war-leaders to whip their soldiers into a frenzy.

Ioun (a.k.a. Lady Wisdom) The goddess of knowledge and skill is the patron of the Alabaster



Tower, and statues in her honor are common throughout the Temple District.

Olladra (a.k.a. Lady Luck) A goddess of luck and plenty, commonly revered among the djereti, and popular to name at toasts or ceremonies for important occasions.

Umberlee (a.k.a. Mother Hydra or Mistress of the Deeps) Umberlee is a harsh goddess of death and the sea. Seafarers don't so much ask her for favor, as to try to please her enough that she doesn't kill them. As Zan-Xadar is a major port city with a strong seafarers' quarter, shrines and offerings to Umberlee are common.

Pregenerated Characters

Feel free to use these characters as your own, modify them, or draw inspiration from them. All have been made using the Character Generator software and are saved as complete characters on my computer.

Almakar (Human Cleric of Bahamut I)

Alignment good; **Background** Society – Noble

Languages Common, Draconic

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +2

AC 16; **Defenses** Fort 14, Ref 12, Will 15

hp 26, bloodied 13; **Surges** 9/day, recover 6

Speed 5 sq.

Basic Attacks

Melee Morningstar +5 vs. AC, 1d10+3

Ranged Crossbow +2 vs. AC, 1d8

At-Will Powers Priest's Shield, Sacred Flame, Lance of Faith

Encounter Powers Divine Fortune, Turn Undead, Healing Word (x2), Exacting Utterance

Daily Powers Weapon of Astral Flame

Class Features Channel Divinity, Healer's Lore, Healing Word

Rituals Known Gentle Repose, Purify Water

Feats Alchemist, Battle Healer, Ritual Caster

Skills History +6, Religion +6, Insight +7, Diplomacy +8, Heal +7

Abilities Str 16, Con 14, Dex 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 12

Possessions Adventurer's Kit, Chainmail, Crossbow, Holy Symbol, Morningstar, Ritual Book

Background and Personality Almakar is the second son of a noble house of Zan-Xadar and a devout battle-priest of Bahamut, although he at least pays lip-service to the idea that the Silver Flame is the true god and that Bahamut is merely one of the

Silver Flame's servants. Recently Almakar led two hundred soldiers under his family's banner in battle against a wave of Khaldunish privateers that had been harassing Zandari and allied ships and ports, and is returning home in victory, having turned over command to a younger cousin. Almakar is cheerful and generous to his friends, but fierce in battle and devastating to his enemies. His reasoning is that Bahamut would not lead him to fight with those who don't deserve a good thrashing.



Cruz (Human Fighter 1)

Alignment unaligned; **Background** Occupation – Mariner

Languages Common, Djereti

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +0

AC 15; **Defenses** Fort 18, Ref 14, Will 11

hp 25, bloodied 12; **Surges** 9/day, recover 6

Speed 6 sq.

Basic Attacks

Melee Scimitar +5 vs. AC, 1d8+7

Melee Light War Pick (off-hand) +8 vs. AC, 1d6+8

Ranged Shortbow +4 vs. AC, 1d8+2

At-Will Powers Combat Challenge, Cleave, Crushing Surge, Dual Strike

Encounter Powers Funneling Fury

Daily Powers Tempest Dance

Class Features Combat Superiority, Tempest Technique

Feats Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Threat

Skills Acrobatics +4, Athletics +10, Endurance +5, Intimidate +4, Streetwise +4

Abilities Str 20, Con 10, Dex 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8

Possessions Adventurer's Kit, Leather Armor, Light War Pick, Scimitar, Shortbow, 15 gp



Background and Personality Cruz is a sellsword, taking whatever jobs may come his way, primarily as a midshipman or marine, but he has traveled as a bodyguard on more than one djereti caravan. He specializes in a devastating two-weapon technique that makes use of whatever is handy; he is currently wielding a scimitar and a boat-hook (bought as a light war pick). When the adventure begins, he is working for passage on board the *Blessed Dragon*.

Basheba (Human Warlock I)

Alignment unaligned; **Background** Birth – Cursed

Languages Common, Primordial

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +0

AC 15; **Defenses** Fort 12, Ref 15, Will 16

hp 24, bloodied 12; **Surges** 7/day, recover 6

Speed 6 sq.

Basic Attacks

Ranged Crossbow +2 vs. AC, 1d8

Melee Sickle +2 vs. AC, 1d6

At-Will Powers Dire Radiance, Eldritch Blast,
Eldritch Strike, Fate of the Void, Warlock's Curse

Encounter Powers Arms of Hadar, Blood Drain

Daily Powers Curse of the Dark Dream

Class Features Prime Shot, Shadow Walk, Star Pact

Rituals Known Comprehend Language, Unseen
Servant

Feats Vampiric Heritage, Ritual Caster

Skills Arcana +8, Bluff +9, History +8, Insight +5,
Religion +10

Abilities Str 10, Con 12, Dex 10, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha
18

Possessions Adventurer's Kit, Crossbow, Leather
Armor, Sickle, 33 gp

Background and Personality Basheba's past is a dark and sad one; while Basheba was still in the womb, her mother was attacked and dominated by a vampire, who fed on Basheba's mother for several days. On the day Basheba was born, the vampire slew her mother, who then rose as a vampire herself. Basheba's mother was destroyed by a paladin shortly thereafter, who took the tainted orphan to a temple of the Silver Flame in the hopes of redeeming her. Basheba was raised as an acolyte, but discovered to her own and the priests' dismay that in times of high emotion, the vampiric taint she developed in the womb became more pronounced. When in a moment of desperation she drained the blood of a

schoolmate, nearly slaying them, without realizing what she was doing, Basheba was cast out from the church. She has spent the intervening years looking for a way to free herself of her curse, seeking strange and arcane lore of the most esoteric kind in the forlorn hope that someday she might find the answer she seeks.



Marmot (Nephilim Barbarian I)

Alignment good; **Background** none

Languages Common, Giant

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +4

AC 14; **Defenses** Fort 17, Ref 11, Will 11

hp 31, bloodied 15; **Surges** 11/day, recover 7

Speed 6 sq.

Basic Attacks

Melee Greataxe +7 vs. AC, 1d12+5

Ranged Javelin +7 vs. AC, 1d6+5

At-Will Powers Devastating Strike, Pressing Strike

Encounter Powers Great Cleave, Stone's Endurance, Swift Charge

Daily Powers Macetail's Rage

Class Features Barbarian Agility, Rageblood Vigor, Rage Strike, Rampage

Racial Features Powerful Athlete

Feats Powerful Charge

Skills Acrobatics +4, Athletics +6, Intimidate +5, Nature +1, Perception +4

Abilities Str 20, Con 16, Dex 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 11

Possessions Adventurer's Kit, Greataxe, Hide Armor, Javelins (3), 10 gp

Background and Personality Marmot's early life was like that of most nephilim – boasting, fighting, taking what he wanted and smashing the face of anyone who objected, never once thinking that this might not be the way it should be. It wasn't until his first raid beyond the lands of his clan that things changed: his brothers took him along as they fell upon and obliterated a djeret caravan on the edges of the Xadar Desert, smashing, burning, delighting in the terrified screams of the little folk. They didn't even really have that much worth plundering ... it had merely been an excuse for a massacre. It made Marmot sick to his stomach. In a furious rage at his realization of what they'd done – and what he'd

taken part in – Marmot singlehandedly beat his brothers senseless and left, never to return. He gathered the bodies of the slain and gave them a respectful burial, took what documents and valuables he could, and burned the rest so his brothers would have no profit from the venture, then followed the return trail of the caravan to Zan-Xadar. There he turned over the valuables to the families of the slain as well as he could find them, and donated the rest to a temple. Since then he has wandered the world, trying to find a place in it and defending the weak whenever the opportunity presented itself.



Isfodel of Kithria (Human Psion I)

Alignment unaligned; **Background** Occupation – Scholar

Languages Common, Kithrian

Init +5; **Senses** Perception +5

AC 14; **Defenses** Fort 12, Ref 15, Will 15

hp 24, bloodied 12; **Surges** 7/day, recover 6

Speed 6 sq.

Basic Attacks

Melee Quarterstaff +0 vs. AC, 1d8 *or*

Melee Mind Thrust (Quarterstaff) +4 vs. Will, 1d10+4

Power Points 2

At-Will Powers Dishearten, Memory Hole, Mind Thrust

Encounter Powers Distract, Send Thoughts

Daily Powers Ravening Thought

Class Features Psionic Augmentation, Ritual Casting, Telepathy Focus

Rituals Known Fastidiousness, Tenser's Floating Disk

Feats Improved Initiative, Precise Mind, Ritual Caster

Skills Arcana +11, Dungeoneering +5, History +9, Insight +5, Perception +5

Abilities Str 11, Con 12, Dex 13, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 14

Possessions Fine Clothing, Quarterstaff, 15 gp

Background and Personality Isfodel was born of a minor noble house in Kithria; when at an early age she manifested telepathic flashes and other hints of magical aptitude, she was sent to a school of magic, where it was eventually determined that she was not actually a sorcerer but a psion, wielder of a very rare form of mental power. She learned all that she could there, and is now on her way to Zan-Xadar in hopes of finding a mentor at the Alabaster Tower. She is bright, fun-loving, and a bit spoiled, but takes her arcane studies very seriously.



Shade (Razorclaw Shifter Rogue 1)

Alignment unaligned; **Background** Shifter – City Shifter

Languages Common, Khaldunish

Init +4; **Senses** Perception +1

AC 16; **Defenses** Fort 10, Ref 16, Will 12

hp 23, bloodied 11; **Surges** 6/day, recover 5

Speed 6 sq.

Basic Attacks

Melee Short Sword +3 vs. AC, 1d6

Ranged Hand Crossbow +6 vs. AC, 1d6+4

At-Will Powers Clever Strike, Piercing Strike

Encounter Powers Positioning Strike, Razorclaw Shifting

Daily Powers Confounding Attack

Class Features Artful Dodger, First Strike, Rogue Weapon Talent, Sneak Attack

Feats Escape Artist

Skills Acrobatics +13, Athletics +5, Bluff +7, Stealth +2, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9

Abilities Str 10, Con 11, Dex 19, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14

Possessions Adventurer's Kit, Climber's Kit, Hand Crossbow, Leather Armor, Short Sword, Thieves' Tools, 3 gp

Background and Personality Shade was part of a family caught by Khaldunish slavers when he was very young. (Shade is not his born name, it was given to him later, and he's stuck with it from habit more than anything else.) When Shade's rebellious

nature nearly sentenced him to death by beating, his mother leaped to his defense in a feral rage and was struck down on the spot, but Shade and his sister managed to escape with the distraction. The pair of them grew up on the unforgiving streets of Khaldun; Shade's sister used her exotic looks to advantage as a courtesan and eventually became a prominent, if underground, figure in Khaldun's never-ending world of intrigues. Shade, who had neither the temperament nor the aptitude for such subtle things, became a thief. But in time, he came to loathe the dark city of Khaldun and all it represented to him, and took steerage on the next ship headed to Alcairam. He is headed to Zan-Xadar with the vague idea of perhaps finding other members of his long-lost family.

