

Scavengers of Istar

by Cam Banks • illustrated by Peter Bergting • cartography by Sean Macdonald

War and disaster provide a stark backdrop to many of the heroic stories that play out in the world of Krynn. While knights, dragons, and mysterious wizards are arguably the setting's iconic elements, it is the courage, faith, and hope of its heroes in the face of tremendous adversity that characterize *DRAGONLANCE*. The events of the Legends trilogy by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, and the Kingpriest trilogy by Chris Pierson, tell the stories of the time-traveling twins Raistlin and Caramon, the Kingpriest Beldinas Pilofiro, and the fall of mighty Istar. But theirs are not the only storylines woven into this time of doom and divine providence.

In the typical *DRAGONLANCE* campaign, the Cataclysm is a distant memory, an event that signified the end of the Age of Might and marked the beginning of the Age of Despair. It is a reminder of the dangers of hubris and narrow-minded righteousness. Perhaps because of its pivotal and cosmological importance, it is the only time and place the World Serpent Inn opens to the world of Krynn, as normally no amount of magic allows travel to or from the world. It is a time of impending disaster, offering numerous opportunities for courage, faith, hope—but, more importantly, it offers the opportunity for a mad scramble for Istar's wealth before the city is destroyed forever.

ISTAR: DOOMED CITY OF THE KINGPRIEST

The Lordcity of Istar, center of the world and Imperial seat of the Kingpriest, is a magnificent spectacle with its alabaster towers, marble courtyards, golden domes, and crystal minarets. Its reputation is one of purity, although this is clearly superficial; beneath the surface of Istar lies a sea of decadence and moral squalor thinly veiled from the eyes of the pilgrims thronging the streets.

ISTAR AND THE WORLD SERPENT INN

The World Serpent Inn opens upon Istar via a single portal. Deep in the maze of the Inn's back halls, this portal lies behind a rather unassuming wooden door, next to which is a kiosk run by a shifty-eyed kender. The kender is Ferret Snitchwhistle, organizer of Ferret Snitchwhistle's Worlds-Famous Scavenger Hunt. On Krynn, the wooden doorway opens onto Six Sword Square, a plaza with a fountain close to the center of the city. The portal has specific opening and closing times, linked to Ferret's "curse," so any visitors to the world of Krynn from the World Serpent Inn find it to be a one-way trip unless they gather the items Ferret recruits them to find.

FERRET SNITCHWHISTLE'S WORLDS-FAMOUS SCAVENGER HUNT

Three days before the Cataclysm when, in his hubris, the Kingpriest foolishly dares to command the gods and is punished for it, mysterious forces transpire to create an opening from Istar to unknown reaches that lie beyond the Gate of Souls. At the other end of that portal is the World Serpent Inn, a place unknown to Krynn's scholars and only touching their world for the course of three days.

Meeting Ferret Snitchwhistle

Ferret Snitchwhistle (N male afflicted kender rogue 10) is a member of Krynn's halflinglike race known for



Istar



Istar (metropolis): Magical; AL LG; 100,000 gp limit; Assets 24,750,000,000 gp; Population 495,000; Isolated (96% human, 2% elf, 1% dwarf, 1% other races).

Authority Figures: **Beldinas Pilofiro**, LG male human cleric 20 (Kingpriest of Istar); **Lord Tithian**, LG male human fighter 9/paladin 6 (Grand Marshal of the Knights of the Divine Hammer, currently absent).

Important Characters: **Quarath**, LN male Silvanesti elf aristocrat 4/cleric 12 (emissary of Silvanesti; unable to cast spells); **Fistandantilus**, CE male human wizard 7/Wizard of High Sorcery 10/archmage 5 (mage of the Black Robes); **Highbulp Gorge III**, N male gully dwarf aristocrat 8 (supreme ruler of the Aghar of Istar).

Knights of the Divine Hammer: Led by Grand Marshal Tithian, these elite knights serve at the pleasure of the Kingpriest and deliver his justice and theocratic law upon the Empire's population.

Imperial Scatas: The common footmen and soldiers of the Imperial army. Every legion is led by at least one Knight of the Divine Hammer.

Notes: Istar is presently beset by storms and inclement weather. Wind, hail, and rain have lashed at the city and the surrounding region for ten days and continues to do so until day three of the scavenger hunt (see Ferret Snitchwhistle's Worlds-Famous Scavenger Hunt for more information). It is also winter, although Istar has a fairly moderate climate; evening temperatures drop to as low as 30 degrees, while daytime temperatures reach a high of 60 degrees.



its curiosity and fearlessness. Ferret has lost the almost supernatural connection to his home that bolsters the courage and attitude of other kender. Trapped in an endlessly repeating loop and forced to bear witness to the Cataclysm time and time again, Ferret is no longer immune to fear nor filled with wonder and childlike innocence. Ferret escaped Krynn by stumbling through the portal to the World Serpent Inn. Now, he brings others into his curse, hoping they can achieve what he has so far failed to do: make amends for a crime he unwittingly committed.

Adventure Seeds: Adventurers might run into Ferret at any time in the World Serpent Inn. He might be in the common room, trying to recruit other patrons, or sitting at his kiosk in the back halls of the inn, waiting for a band of scavenger hunters to return. Ferret's pitch is quite simple. "Through the door," he says, "there is a city of great riches. In three days time, it will be destroyed forever by the hammer of the gods, but in the meantime those brave souls who venture through can win treasures beyond imagining."

Oddly enough, it is always three days before the end. Once Istar is destroyed, the portal resets itself to the morning three days before the end. Ferret, of course, doesn't tell the adventurers that, nor does he tell them that, when they pass through the door, they won't be coming back until they've found everything they need to.

If a band of hunters agrees to Ferret's terms (bring back "a couple of things" he wants; they keep the rest), Ferret hands them a list of items and a map. This list is always the same, because they are the five *Icons of Symeon* Ferret "borrowed" shortly before the Cataclysm from the Great Temple and the source of his curse. The map is one of Tasslehoff Burrfoot's original maps of the city, apparently drawn by the famous kender hero years after he returned from his time traveling. When they are ready, Ferret opens the door with a key and ushers the adventurers into the rain-swept streets of Istar.

Trapped in Istar

Once the door from the World Serpent Inn closes on the Krynn side, it

does not open again until the scavenger hunters succeed. Success in this case is determined by acquiring all five of Ferret's listed items, the *Icons of Symeon*, which are scattered across the city of Istar. Bringing all five icons together enables the wooden door in Six Sword Square to open once again, while proving moderately useful in the meantime as magic items in their own right.

Adventure Seeds: The scavenger hunt itself is a freeform, limited-duration adventure you can handle any way you like. Given a city on the brink of destruction and a list of five items to locate that could be anywhere at all, you have a very broad canvas upon which to paint the specifics of the hunt. The most basic approach is to assign locations to all five icons and have the PCs find their way around over the course of three days, until the earthquakes that start during the evening of the second day and the strike of the Fiery Mountain at midday on the third day. The PCs must find their way back to Six Sword Square, dodging panicked citizens, aggressive knights, and falling buildings. Ideally, the portal to the World Serpent Inn is there, but unless they have all five icons it doesn't open. If they don't get the icons in time, or they wander too far from Istar for some reason, they stand a good chance of being trapped on Krynn during the most pivotal and catastrophic event of its history.

A Return to the World Serpent

Assuming the PCs recover all of the icons and pass back through the door in Six Sword Square to the Inn, Ferret wants what he asked for. With the icons, Ferret can at last go through the portal himself when it resets, return the icons to the Great Temple, and free himself from his curse. Whether this means the portal closes forever or remains open to Krynn (perhaps at a different time and place) is up to you. It's also possible that Ferret doesn't want to part with the icons and attempts to flee



Beyond the Age of Might

Best known as a world of war, the heroes and villains of Krynn have become legends in numerous realms and eras.

For more information on the world of DRAGONLANCE—throughout its various ages—the campaign setting lives on at dragonlance.com and in print through the works of Sovereign Press. Besides the hardcover *DRAGONLANCE Campaign Setting* and *Bestiary of Krynn*, Sovereign Press has also recently compiled, updated, and released the classic TSR adventures that launched the campaign setting in *Dragons of Autumn: War of the Lance Chronicles, Volume I*. You can also find recent rules for playing bozak dragons as PCs in *DRAGON* #315 and take an in-depth look at the lives of these foul dragon-spawn in *DRAGON* #339's "The Ecology of the Draconian."



the World Serpent Inn via portals to other worlds. If this happens, the icons disappear again, Ferret wakes up to find himself back in the inn, and the curse continues.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN ISTAR

The following locations represent just a few of the landmarks and places of interest to visitors and make ideal destinations for scavengers. Istar is enormous and covers a much larger area than Tasslehoff's map would indicate, so this list is by no means exhaustive.

Arena of Games

Together with the Great Temple and the Tower of High Sorcery, the Arena of Games is numbered among the most famous and oft-visited sites in the Lordcity of Istar. It is an arena for gladiatorial combat, seating 80,000 people on the busiest days. The gladiators themselves, and their trainers, live adjacent to the Arena in dedicated housing.

Adventure Seeds: Despite ten days of constant storms and rain, the crowds continue to attend the daily games. If one of the *Icons of Symeon* is here, it could be hidden in the rows of seats, stowed in a noble's private box, or even worn by one of the gladiators.

The Great Temple

For almost three centuries, Istar has been ruled by the Kingpriests, the Chosen of the Gods. Some scholars claim that Paladine, greatest of the Gods of Light, personally chose every one of them. Others scoff at this and

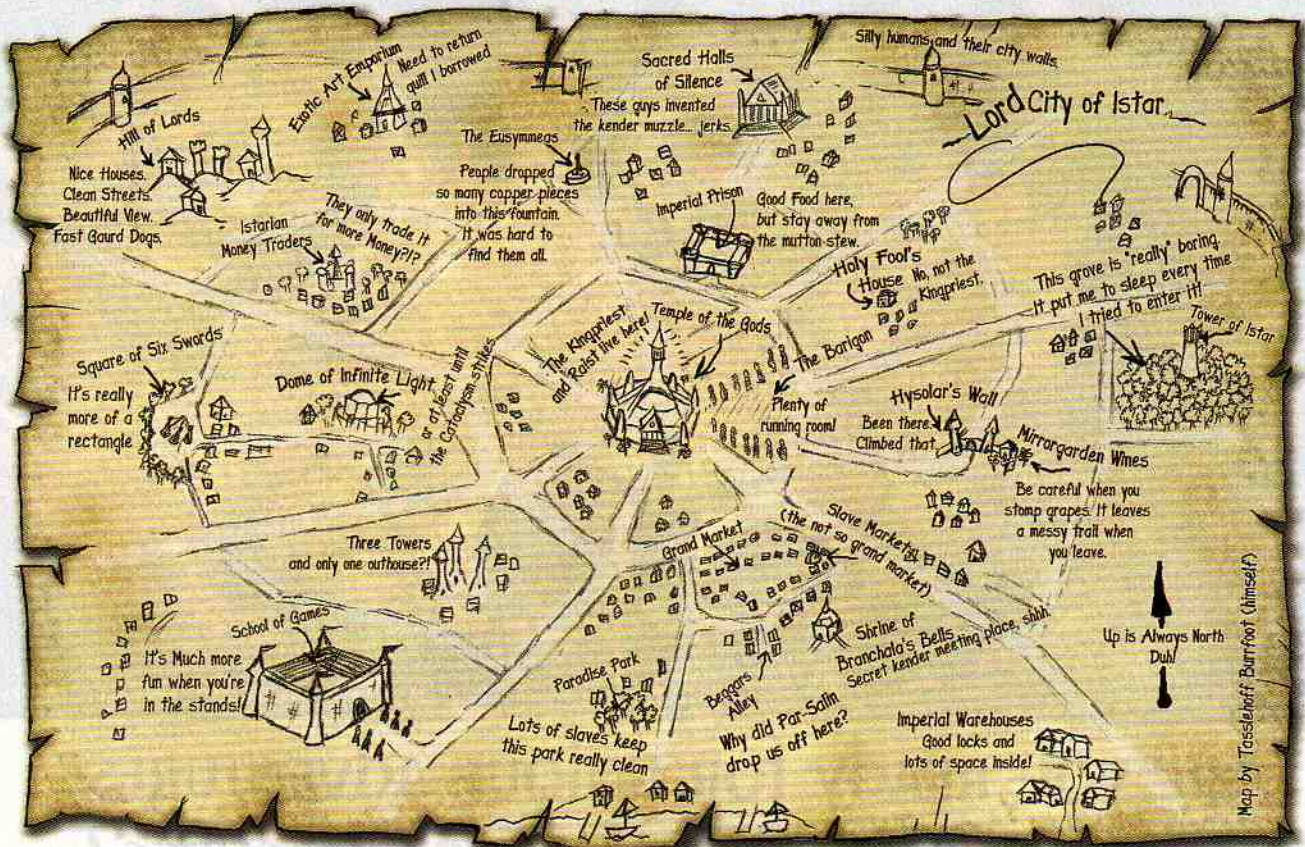
compare the Kingpriests to every other emperor or king, as vulnerable to the lures of power and greed as any man. In the case of Beldinas the Lightbringer, greatest of his office, it is the determination to rid the world of all evils that leads him to ruin. With the holy crown *Miceram* upon his brow, Beldinas appears a radiant beacon of goodness to all who see him, but in truth he is a frail and frightened man.

The Great Temple itself boasts a 600-foot spire above the famous basilica and a maze of marble and alabaster hallways that lead off into reliquaries, minor chapels, meditation chambers, and cloisters. Knights of the Divine Hammer serve as temple guards, and priests and religious officials are always in sight. Decorative gold, crystal, and platinum fixtures make this a temple-robber's dream, though no resident of the city would ever think to abscond with anything from here.

Adventure Seeds: A visit to the Great Temple during the last three days of Istar can be both a sobering experience and a confusing one. There are no more clerics in the city—at least, none the player characters encounter—and therefore all remaining Revered Sons and Daughters of Paladine have no capacity for using magic or channeling positive energy.

Imperial Prison

A large building, the prison was constructed of mighty granite blocks carried from the mountains to the west and erected 118 years ago as a response to the Kingpriest Vasari II's



The Araifas



The most insidious and dangerous threat to the hunt are the Araifas, or Thought-Readers. The Araifas are the Kingpriest's secret police, former clerics and monks of Majere who make use of items such as *medallions of thoughts* and *candles of truth* to uncover potential plots against the Kingpriest. Unfortunately, many of the Araifas are themselves corrupt and power-hungry, so hundreds of innocents have been captured or killed.

Adventure Seeds: Use the Araifas to really emphasize just how rigid and theocratic the city is, even during these final days. If the PCs are captured, they are taken to the Imperial Prison for interrogation and “processing,” which should be all the impetus the PCs need to make their escape attempts.



It might also be appropriate to have a number of the Araifas blocking the PCs' escape to the World Serpent Inn, having uncovered the PCs' plan and gathering in Six Sword Square minutes before the Fiery Mountain hits the city.



Proclamation of Manifest Virtue. Most of its inmates are nonhumans—elves, dwarves, minotaurs, the occasional ogre, and hundreds of kender—awaiting trials that never come. Like every other building in the city, the Imperial Prison is majestic and radiant on the outside, but on the inside it is filthy, brutal, and dangerous.

Adventure Seeds: The prison makes a good site for a quick

adventure, either as the destination for the scavenger hunt or as the location of a player character-inspired prison break. Breaking in is easier than breaking out, although neither is pleasant.

Six Sword Square

Unlike the Plaza of the *Eusymmeas* or the Barigon (the courtyard before the Great Temple), Six Sword Square

is surrounded by buildings made of red brick and tile, with windows looking down upon the fountain in the square's center, and numerous alleyways leading away from it. Rising out of the fountain are six stone arms, each holding aloft a slender blade. As the confluence of a number of streets in this residential quarter of the city, Six Sword Square is well-known, if a little out of the way.

Adventure Seeds: Six Sword Square's best worst-kept secret is that it is a nexus of hidden passages, underground entrances, secret doors, and more. If one of the *Icons of Symeon* is hidden away in Six Sword Square, it could be behind any number of concealed doors or with a resident of the square, perhaps even without his knowledge.

Tower of High Sorcery

Once, the mighty Tower of High Sorcery in Istar housed hundreds of robed wizards who served the city. As time went on and the reign of the Kingpriests became characterized by suspicion of magic, the wizards

The Icons of Symeon (Minor Artifacts)

Each icon is a half-inch-thick plate of a precious metal, around 5 inches square, with a true dragon of matching type emblazoned on one side. The icons have a hardness of 10 and 30 hit points. Each has a small hole at the center of one edge, suitable for threading a chain through in order to wear the icon around the neck. If this is done, the icon takes up an amulet slot, although more than one icon may be worn on a single chain; their effects stack.

Brass: This icon has a brass dragon depicted on it. When worn the icon provides a +2 enhancement bonus to Dexterity.

Bronze: This icon bears the image of a bronze dragon on the front. When worn, the icon provides a +2 enhancement bonus to Wisdom.

Copper: This icon's image is that of a copper dragon. When worn, the icon provides a +2 enhancement bonus to Charisma.

Gold: A gold dragon is engraved on the front of this icon. When worn, the icon provides a +2 luck bonus on all saving throws.

Silver: This icon is engraved with the regal image of a silver dragon. When worn, the icon allows the use of the *disguise self* spell.

When all five icons are brought together, they can be worn on a single chain to gain all the listed effects, or fitted together to form a kind of cube or box. This box may be filled with water, which the box makes holy (as the *bless water* spell); this may be done three times a day. The primary use for the assembled *Icons of Symeon* is redemption, however. The icons may be used to cast *atonement* on a single individual once per day, who must place a hand within the box and confess his or her guilt.

Strong abjuration, transmutation; CL 16th.

grew less active within the city and kept to themselves for fear of persecution. After the Last Battles, when Istar unleashed its paranoia upon the Wizards of High Sorcery, the Kingpriest has renamed the Tower *Solio Febelas*, or Hall of Sacrilege. No wizards remain inside today. Instead, the tower now houses all of the magic items and artifacts the Divine Hammers have seized for the Kingpriest, safe behind magically strengthened walls and a grove of olive trees that causes all who enter it to lose their memories.

Adventure Seeds: Because it contains hundreds of relics and artifacts, the Tower is extremely well guarded. The Balakan Grove, which brings about a magical memory loss (DC 25 Will save or take 1 point of Intelligence and Charisma damage each round, as well as lose all memory of the last 10 minutes) is the best defense the tower possesses, although greater stone golems are also reported to wander the halls within. If one of the *Icons of Symeon* is located here, it might be easier for the icon to be buried in the Grove. ▣

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