

RUINS OF CATAclySM

AN ADVENTURE FOR 5TH TO 7TH LEVEL CHARACTERS



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RUINS OF CATACLYSM IS A FIFTH EDITION adventure for characters of **5th to 7th level**, optimized for **4 characters with an average party level of 6**. A concerned friend seeks word on a powerful sage who ventured into the Wasteland and has not yet returned. Can the adventurers brave the bizarre and abnormal horrors of the magically devastated area to help those in need? This adventure is located in the northern reaches of the Middle States in the Siothas campaign setting, but can be placed into any long-running campaign that may feature an area torn asunder by a magically destructive cataclysm.

BACKGROUND

The northern shores of the Middle States, home to the former seat of the fabled Zarustrian Empire, have been an inhospitable region of horrors for as long as anyone can remember. After a magically cataclysmic event that remains inscrutable to this day, the area has remained twisted and poisoned by arcane aftereffects, and is now known only as the Wasteland. Few know what the fog of the Wasteland conceals, though rumors of the area's horrors abound. Many who have ventured into the Wasteland have never returned. This fact is precisely what concerns Kilbis Regwin, a good friend of the powerful sage Eras Highworn. Weeks ago, Eras told Kilbis that he was venturing to the perimeter of the Wasteland to conduct arcane research on the area. He has not communicated with Kilbis since. Occupied in his own work but concerned for the safety of his friend, Kilbis is looking for a capable group of adventurers to conduct a wellness check for him.

GETTING THE QUEST

The characters can be contacted by Kilbis Regwin while staying in town, or while travelling, where Kilbis may reach them by using a sending spell or similar magic to tell them to meet him at his home to discuss an important matter. Kilbis may already be familiar with the party or may simply have heard of their previous exploits and thought they would be a good choice. Kilbis explains that Eras Highworn, a powerful sage and good friend of his, had ventured just inside the Wasteland, offering little explanation other than that he wanted to "conduct some research". Kilbis certainly believes that Eras can handle himself, but the arcane oddities and lurking undead within the Wasteland can prove a match for just about anyone if they get caught on the wrong day. Given that he has not heard from Kilbis now for a few weeks, he thinks it best that he conduct a wellness check, and has decided to send a party of adventurers on his behalf. Kilbis tells the party that Eras had planned to start his expedition at the ruins of the old watchtower on the outskirts of

Blastridge, the colloquial name for the cluster of surviving ruins at the southern edge of the Wasteland. Kilbis offers the party 250 gp for confirmation of Eras' whereabouts.

INTO THE RUINS

The further north the party travels within the Middle States towards the Wasteland, the sparser the vegetation and the thicker the air becomes. It is unmistakable when the party arrives; the key features of the Wasteland send a clear warning signal to any wayward travellers. They are described here:

Sounds of Suffering. Distant and echoing screams and cries are carried with the breeze within the Wasteland. These ghostly voices have no source; they are magical memories from a historical terror.

Smells of Sulphur. The thick smell of sulphur hangs in the air within the Wasteland.

Rolling Fog. A permanent rolling fog reduces visibility within the Wasteland to less than one kilometer on the clearest of days. On other days, the fog can become so thick that visibility is reduced to a few feet.

As the party enters the fog of the Wasteland, read aloud the following:

The ruined remains of a stone watch tower and guard wall that gives way to a small courtyard can be seen amidst the fog in the distance. In the middle of the courtyard, a fist-sized orb of bright light is suspended 5 feet in the air.

Eras has set up camp within the ruins of the watchtower. The orb of light is a driftglobe placed by Eras to ensure that if he ventured beyond the watchtower it would be easier to find his way back to camp.

The following locations are keyed to the map of the watchtower provided.

WI. COURTYARD

The driftglobe is suspended in the middle of this courtyard. A red and white striped tent that looks to be in pristine condition has been set up in the west end of the courtyard. In front of it are the scorched corpses of two humanoid figures. To the north, a ruined doorway opens into the floor of the tower.

Encounter: Wights. Two **wights**, remnants of the cataclysm, linger in the floor of the tower and will notice the characters when they enter the courtyard. The wights have been transformed by the magical influence of the area, allowing



them to cast *magic missile* at 1st level twice per day, requiring no components. When they notice the characters, the wights immediately attack the characters and fight until they are destroyed.

W2. RUINED TOWER

The second story of this tower has mostly collapsed, littering the floor with rubble. A cracked stone staircase rises to a splintered wooden floor that has completely given away on its southern end.

Eras has already searched this area. Characters who search through the rubble find a few pieces of rusted armor and abandoned weaponry, but nothing of value.

W3. ERAS' TENT

The humanoid corpses in front of the tent are the remnants of two zombies that succumbed to the *glyph of warding* that Eras uses to protect the tent's entrance. The glyph has been recast by Eras, emblazoning the entrance flap of the tent with a glyph of glowing red light. If triggered, the glyph deals 5d8 fire damage in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the glyph. Eras has made no effort to hide the glyph; the undead that lurk in the area do not have the mind to interpret it. If the characters call out a greeting from behind the tent, the glyph disappears after a few moments and a gruff voice calls out from inside:

"Come in!"

When the party enters the tent it is immediately apparent that its interior is much larger than its exterior. Read aloud:

The flap of the tent opens into what appears to be the interior of a luxurious, aristocratic mansion. Oil paintings hang on the walls, a lush carpet covers the floor, and a crackling hearth burns in the corner of an ornately furnished living room.

They are promptly greeted by Eras Highworn (CN male human **archmage**), a stout, incredibly muscular man in his mid-forties with shoulder-length brown hair and

a clean-shaven face. Eras invites the characters to make themselves comfortable and freely shares with them the following information:

- The tent was a magical gift from an old friend of his. He carries it with him whenever he travels, which is often.
- He got caught up in a breakthrough with his research and forgot to send word to Kilbis.
- He came to the Wasteland to find and research what he calls "negative stones" - green, magical mineral remnants from the cataclysm that nullify healing magics.
- He learned the negative stones actually absorb (rather than simply nullify) any healing magics cast in their vicinity and believes they can be repurposed into instruments of great regenerative power.

Kilbis promises the party that he will immediately send word to Kilbis that all is well. After introductions have been made, Eras makes the party a proposition: if they can venture into the nearby ruins of Blastridge, Eras will compensate them 150 gp for each piece of negative stone they can bring back to him. Eras has the means to gather the negative stones himself, but is absorbed by his current research. If the party asks Eras if he can provide the party with anything to prepare them for their expedition, he offers them two *potions of greater healing*.

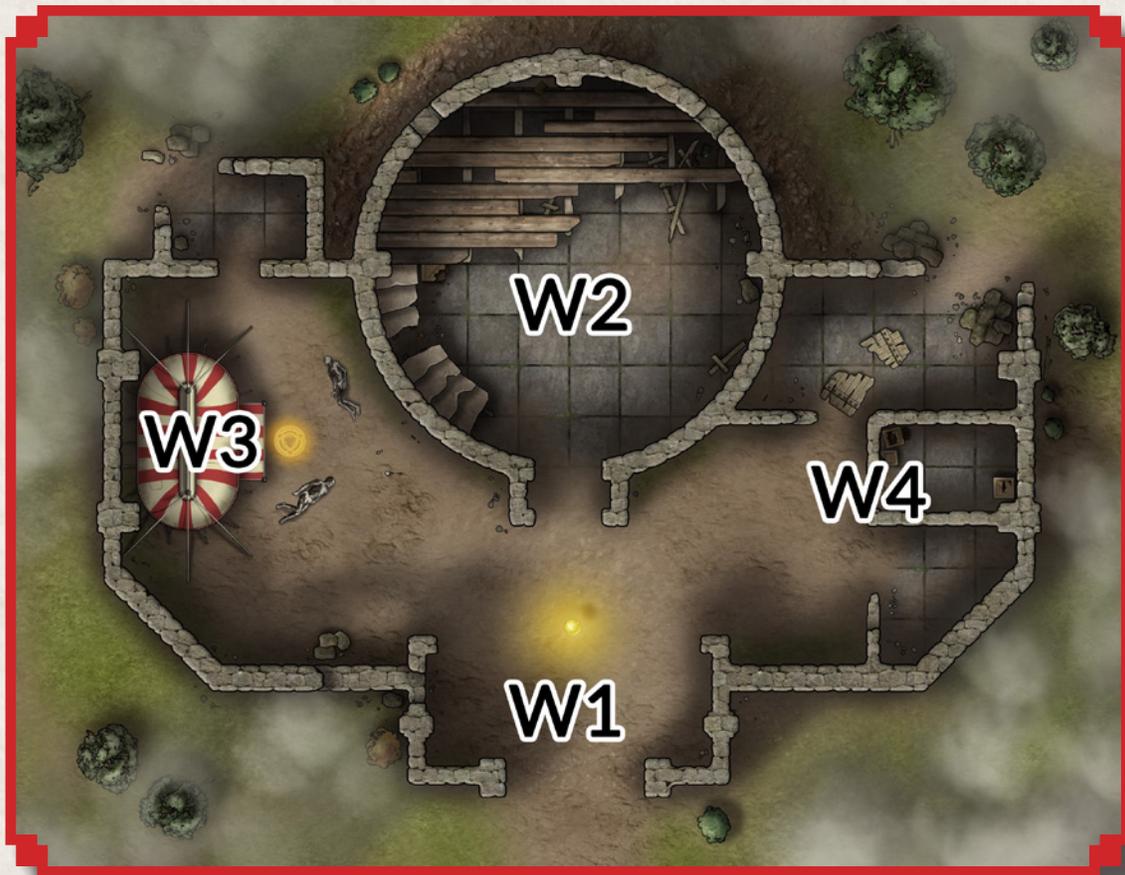
W4. EAST COURTYARD

All that remains of the east courtyard are a few crumbling walls and a thick layer of debris. There is nothing of value to be found here; Eras has already combed the area for anything of interest.

BLASTRIDGE

The ruins of Blastridge are just a half mile further north from the watchtower. A half-dozen remaining blown out structures are all that remain of the nameless former village. The following locations are keyed to the provided map of Blastridge:

RUINED WATCHTOWER



B1. SOUTHWEST COTTAGE

A pool of still, grey water lies beside this ruined building. Inside, broken barrels, fallen shelves, and empty sacks are littered amongst the debris. A staircase in the east room rises to nowhere, as the second story has collapsed entirely.

The interior of this building holds nothing of value.

Hazard: Visions of Death. The pool of water has been affected by the magic of the cataclysm. Any creature who gazes into the must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw as they are overwhelmed by a violent vision of their own death. Creatures who fail this saving throw take 12 (3d8) psychic damage. Creatures who gaze into the pool multiple times see a different vision of their death each time.

B2. WEST COTTAGE

This building looks to have been a blacksmith's shop in its better days. An anvil lies toppled in the dirt and a forge rests cold and empty. Weeds and debris cover the ground.

A rusty sword, its blade engraved with the words of an old, dead language, is the only item of mild interest to be found here.

B3. NORTHWEST COTTAGE

As the party approaches this cottage, they can hear a rhythmic thumping coming from within, as if something or someone was hitting one of the walls repeatedly. If the characters enter the cottage, read aloud:

A whirlwind of rotted humanoid body parts flies about inside this ruined structure, smacking against the walls repeatedly. After a few moments, it surges towards you.

Encounter: Gore Whirlwind. The whirlwind of body parts is an **air elemental**, another peculiar remnant of the magical cataclysm. It is driven to collect more body parts and grow in size. It fights until it is destroyed.

Treasure: Negative Stone. Characters who search through the debris of this building and succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check find a fist-sized green crystal sprouting from the ground: a negative stone. It can be chipped loose from the surrounding earth.

B4. NORTHEAST COTTAGE

This building looks to have originally been an inn. A broken signboard shows the worn, barely distinguishable image of two crossed swords in front a human skull. Bar stools and broken glass mingle with the weeds and rubble.

RUINS OF BLASTRIDGE



Encounter: Aberrant Ghouls. Five ghouls lie within the rubble of this building, emerging and attacking any who enter, fighting until they are destroyed. They use **ghoul** statistics, though their exposure to the magic of the wasteland has mutated their forms. When struck by attacks, they release an arcane discharge. Characters within 5 feet of a zombie when it is hit by an attack must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4 (1d8) lightning damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one.

B5. SOUTHEAST COTTAGE

This ruined building is littered with debris and overgrown with weeds. Inside, broken barrels, fallen shelves, and empty sacks are littered amongst the debris. A crow is perched at the top of the staircase.

Avian Apparition. When the characters enter this cottage, the crow perched at the top of the staircase eyes them intently, turning its head if necessary to follow their movement. The crow is an illusory apparition; a magical anomaly from the cataclysm. A few moments after the party notices the crow, it abruptly explodes in an illusory mess of gore and viscera.

Treasure: Negative Stone. Characters who search through the debris of this building and succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check find a fist-sized green crystal sprouting from the ground: a negative stone. It can be chipped loose from the surrounding earth.

B6. TEMPLE

When the characters approach the temple, read aloud:

This ruined temple is the most impressive building left standing among the ruins. Stone steps rise to an empty doorframe flanked by carvings of faceless angels. Inside, fractured pillars precariously support a cracked ceiling above a floor choked with grass and weeds. Growing from the ground in the middle of the temple is a disfigured and discolored tree that appears to be rotting.

Encounter: Cursed Treant. The tree in the middle of the temple is actually a distressed **treant** that has been tortured by the magic of the cataclysm for centuries. If a character comes within 15 feet of the treant, it opens its eyes, stares directly at the party, and moans creakingly: "...kill me...set me alight...". The treant can share the following information with the party, but is otherwise delirious:

- Its entire existence is pain; the magic of the cataclysm warps its body and poisons its soul.
- It seeks the cleansing of flame to purge its own existence; it wants the party to set it on fire so that it can burn to death.
- It is haunted by the screams and whisperings of the damned.

The magic of the cataclysm prevents the treant from being destroyed using conventional means. If the party is hesitant about alighting the treant, it grows increasingly distressed. If the party does not commit to help the treant in this way, it eventually attacks and fights until reduced to 0 hit points, after which it regrows and regenerates to full hit points after a period of 1d4 weeks.

Encounter: Burning the Treant. If the party agrees to burn the treant, it expresses a tortured gratitude. A few moments after being engulfed in flame, the treant begins to scream and wail as a **wraith** and two **specters** that had possessed the treant for centuries are banished from its body by the flame. The spirits attack the characters in anger and fight until they are destroyed. The treant continues to scream, wail, and burn for a period of 3 minutes before it falls silent and dies.

Treasure: Negative Stone. Sprouting from the stone of an altar at the far end of the temple is a fist-sized green crystal: a negative stone. It can be chipped loose from the altar.

AFTERMATH

When the characters have decided that they are finished with exploring Blastringe, they can return to Eras at the watchtower, who remains true to his word and compensates them the agreed upon sum of 150 gp for each negative stone they acquired. Eras also confirms that he sent word to Kilbis, and even rewards the characters with the 250 gp sum promised to them on Kilbis' behalf. At GM discretion, Eras may present the party with further opportunities to explore the Wasteland. Either way, the party has made a useful acquaintance and business partner, and possibly even a friend.



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