

CORRUPTED WATERS


AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 7TH TO 9TH LEVEL



TAVERN
TALES

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ORRUPTED WATERS IS A FIFTH EDITION adventure for three to six characters of 7th to 9th-level, optimized for a party of eighth-level characters. When a prominent water temple is overtaken and corrupted by a powerful demon-worshipping sorcerer, the adventurers are contacted by one of the temple's clerics who has fled in search of aid. If the sorcerer's plan comes to fruition, the corrupted magic of the temple will be used to raise disastrous flood waters that threaten the entire region. Can the party help cleanse the waters of their corruption? This adventure takes place in the Cartosia campaign setting, but is designed to be easily placed in another campaign setting with minimal adjustments. The only requirement for this adventure and the temple is that they be placed in close proximity to an ocean or large lake.

BACKGROUND

Recently, the temple of Ocean's Breath was attacked and overtaken by a powerful sorcerer named Vresia and her cult of loyal followers known as the Cult of the Toad. Vresia and her followers are worshippers of Nctoua — a gargantuan, toad-like demon lord who would seek to claim all mortal waters as his domain, drowning souls beneath his waves and binding them to his will. Almost all of the Ocean's Breath clergy were slain in the initial assault, as the Cult of the Toad sought to use the temple's magic for their demonic ends.

With the clergy dealt with, the Cult of the Toad set about corrupting the various pools within Ocean's Breath. With each drop of water corrupted, the potential summoning power of Vresia grows. Vresia, in the temple's lower chambers, is engaged in a long summoning ritual that aims to invoke disastrous flood waters and summon Nctoua himself, so that he may gorge himself on the souls of the drowned.

But the Cult of the Toad made at least one mistake. Dilnarsa, a cleric of Ocean's Breath, was wounded but not killed during the assault. She played dead for a time, sneaking glances at her surroundings and listening in on the cult's activities until she saw her window to escape. When it presented itself to her she took it, and fled from the temple as fast as she could in search of help.

Left unmolested, Vresia and the Cult of the Toad will call forth flood waters from the ocean (or lake, depending on your game) that could kill thousands, their souls becoming fodder for Nctoua, the Putrid Prince.

PLACING THIS ADVENTURE

The location of Ocean's Breath temple and the exact timing of the assault by the Cult of the Toad is undefined in this adventure to allow it to be placed easily in a location of the

GM's choosing. It may be placed in the heart of a busy city, and the party must play the role of a highly skilled emergency response team that is summoned only minutes after the assault to respond. Or, it may be placed further out into the wilderness, making other help such as a local guard much less able to intervene, and the party's expertise all the more important after word reaches them several days after the attack. Place the temple and adjust the timelines in whatever way works best for your game.

GETTING THE QUEST

This adventure assumes that within the 7th to 9th level range, the party members have some regional notoriety, and that the escaped cleric Dilnarsa would know to reach out to them for aid. Dilnarsa may be a mutual acquaintance, a friend, or may have been referred to the party by local authorities. Or, the party may have responded to Dilnarsa's public call for help. The adventure begins when the party meets with the cleric. The location of this meeting is left unspecified for flexibility. Dilnarsa is a young woman in her early twenties, with flaxen hair, a sharp, prominent nose, and grey eyes. Dilnarsa can explain the following information to the party:

- The temple of Ocean's Breath was attacked and overtaken by a group led by a powerful sorcerer.
- As far as she can tell, the other clergy members of the temple were slain. Dilnarsa was only able to escape by playing dead for some time.
- While eavesdropping on the attackers, Dilnarsa has learned that they worship a demon called Nctoua, and that they have perverted the temple's magical pools with corruption.
- Some grand summoning ritual is being conducted in the temple's lower chambers, which draws power from each corrupted pool within the temple.
- Dilnarsa can perform rituals to cleanse the pools of corruption, but she'll need reinforcements to beat back the cult members and protect her while she completes the cleansing rituals.
- Dilnarsa believes that the cult's leader draws power from each corrupted pool within the temple. She advises that she and the party would be wise to cleanse the corrupted pools before confronting Vresia in order to lessen the demonic influence within the temple.

Dilnarsa can offer the party a sum of 400 gp for their help in retaking the temple from the invaders, as well as promise them the temple's blessing.

ROLEPLAYING DILNARSA

As Dilnarsa will be accompanying the party, you can refer to this section for a quick overview of her summary details as



well as some notes for roleplaying her interactions with the party and her environment.

Name: Dilnarsa

Race: Human (she/her)

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Motivation: Rescue Ocean's Breath and slaughter the vile cultists who killed her fellow clergy.

Occupation: Cleric, previously second-in-command at Ocean's Breath temple. Now its de-facto leader.

Personality Traits: Dilnarsa is iron-willed, and speaks often, bluntly, and freely. She doesn't worry about what other people think of her, which sometimes gets her into trouble. She doesn't hesitate to take the lead when the situation calls for it.

Statistics: Dilnarsa uses priest statistics, with the following modifications:

- She has 50 hit points
- She can cast the following spells in addition to the spells already listed in her stat block:
 - *Create or destroy water*
 - *Water walk*

THE TEMPLE OF OCEAN'S BREATH

The temple of Ocean's Breath does not devote itself to any particular god, but instead to the life-bringing, cleansing, and healing qualities of water. It houses a free hospice to those who need it, lush tropical gardens, and public baths. The temple also provides magical healing services to those who are allies of the temple or are able to pay for the services, which are not provided lightly. The clerics and clergy who staff the temple come mostly from Samarahd and its surrounding environs, and worship a collection of deities. They use the temple's many pools for meditation and divination practices. Unless otherwise stated, the temple's features are described as follows:

Ceilings, Walls, and Floors. The temple is constructed of hewn blocks of polished sandstone. In the temple's central chambers, the ceilings are twenty feet high. Ceilings are nine feet high in the other rooms throughout the temple. Exterior walls are two feet thick.

Doors. Doors throughout the temple are made of acacia wood and banded with iron. They are unlocked, and have AC 15 and 18 (4d8) hit points.

Light. During the day, the temple is flooded with sunlight through its many windows. At night, torches in wall-mounted sconces illuminate it throughout.

Corrupted Pools. Pools of water within the temple (areas 22 and 23) have been corrupted by demonic energies by the Cult of the Toad. To cleanse the pools of corruption, Dilnarsa must conduct a ritual that takes thirty-six seconds to complete (six rounds of combat). If Dilnarsa takes any damage during her ritual, she must make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw or else the ritual takes an additional round to complete. Dilnarsa must be within 15 feet of a pool to conduct a ritual. Once her ritual has begun, Dilnarsa cannot move or take any actions in combat unless the ritual is stopped or has been completed. Beginning a ritual causes demonic creatures to spawn from the pools in an attempt to defend them. Any creatures spawned during the ritual do so on initiative count 20, and take their turns at initiative count 12.

Corrupted Water Elementals. Water elementals that have been corrupted by demonic energies feature throughout this adventure. Corrupted water elementals appear blood-red, and use **water elemental** statistics, with the following modifications:

- They have 130 hit points
- Creatures take an additional 4 (1d8) necrotic damage from their Whelm action.

THE CULT OF THE TOAD

Led by the sorcerer Vresia, the Cult of the Toad have dedicated themselves to the demon lord Nctoua, and believe that they will be rewarded for delivering Nctoua's will of death, destruction, and suffering to the Material Plane. Cultists of the Toad all have shaved heads, wear robes of black and dark green, and have their palms, lips, and eyelids tattooed with spotted patterns that resemble a toad's skin.

The Cult In Combat. Mage and priest stat blocks are used throughout this adventure to represent Cult of the Toad members. Consider replacing spells in the default stat blocks with spells from this list below to make the cultists a little more thematically appropriate in combat:

- Cantrips: *eldritch blast*, *toll the dead*
- 1st level: *hex*, *charm person*
- 2nd level: *darkness*, *hold person*

UPPER CHAMBERS



- 3rd level: *fear, vampiric touch*
- 4th level: *blight*

What The Cultists Know. The cultists are mad fanatics that have dedicated their lives to Nctoua, and are unwilling to provide any truly helpful information to the party. If the party attempts to question or interrogate any of the cultists on their way to cleanse the corrupted pools and confront Vresia, the cultists may share any or all of the following information with the party:

- They are led by Vresia, a sorcerer so capable she was chosen by Nctoua to be his vessel on the Material Plane. She will destroy the party with little effort.
- The magic of the temple has already been corrupted by the Cult of the Toad. Demons infest its waters. The party is too late.
- Vresia completes a summoning ritual in the temple's lower chamber. Soon, waters will overwhelm this land and Nctoua will drink the souls of the damned.

MAP KEY

The following areas are keyed to the provided map of the temple of Ocean's Breath.

1. CENTRAL GARDEN

Read aloud the following:

A riot of greenery fills the temple's central garden; lush ferns and ivy tangling together to create a verdant jungle. Palm trees tower toward the sky. Orchids of various

colors and varieties bloom in profusion, their small petals contrasting with the larger flowers of hibiscus and bird of paradise. A pile of several bodies lies in the middle of the patio, their pooled blood running into several channels and pools of water in the stone floor, turning them red.

Encounter: Cult Members. There are four cult members in this area (two **mag**es and two **pri**ests) that are keeping watch of the temple's entrance, moving the temple's bodies into a single pile, and searching the corpses for any valuables. The cult members immediately attack any intruders and fight to the death.

2. HYDRAULIC PLATFORM

Steps in the temple's garden rise to a large hole in the floor — the platform in the center of this chamber has currently been lowered to area 17 by Vresia. It can be raised by speaking its command word.

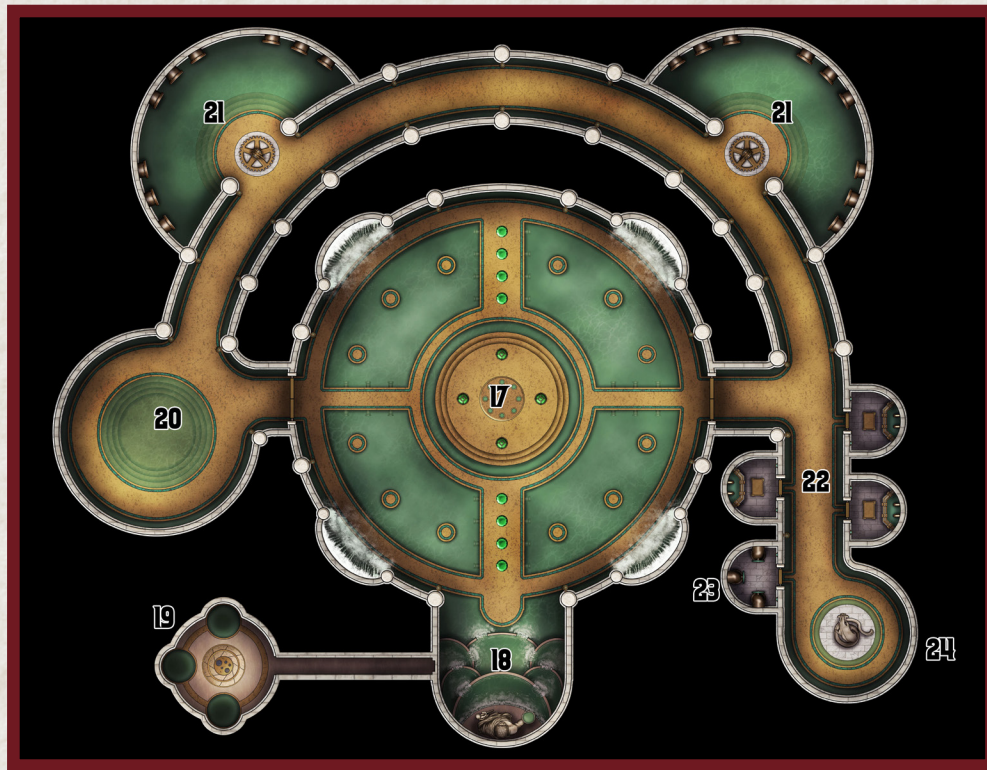
3. HERB GARDENS

These smaller, isolated gardens are used to grow restorative and medicinal herbs.

4. DAY ROOM

Visiting patients of the hospice have free use of this space. It is furnished with sofas, tables, chairs, and is stocked with light reading material.

LOWER CHAMBERS



5. KITCHEN

Temple staff prepare food for themselves and any patients or visitors here.

6. WARD

This semi-private space is where patients who need to stay at the temple for a short period are housed.

Treasure: Potions. Seven healing potions are stored in a cupboard within this room.

7. PRIVATE ROOMS

Patients who require longer stays at the temple are provided private rooms, simply furnished.

8. RECEPTION

The temple's hospice is open to all, but check-ins are required and regular demand means appointments usually have to be made in advance. This is the first point of contact for any prospective patients.

9. HEALER'S OFFICE

Healing of both magical and non-magical means occurs at the temple. The healer on site uses this office to produce and store records or have private meetings with patients.

10. COUNSELLING CHAMBERS

The temple also helps those whose issues are better solved through conversation and reflection. These rooms are used to hold therapeutic conversations.

11. SURGICAL THEATRES

Operations are carried out in these rooms.

12. RECOVERY ROOM

Patients are monitored here post-operation for a time before being moved to the ward.

13. POOL LOBBY

The temple's pools and baths are open to the public, but any public users must check in and out with temple staff.

14. EAST BATH

The pool of water in this room is blood-red. It bubbles and churns, and the sickly-sweet scent of rot fills the air. The corpse of a clergy member, their back torn upon, lies face down in the water.

Cleansing Corruption. Once Dilnarsa begins her ritual, demonic creatures begin to spawn from the pool in an attempt to defend it. These creatures fight until they are

destroyed, and many of them attempt to attack Dilnarsa. The following creatures spawn during the ritual:

- Two **corrupted water elementals** during the first round
- Three **quasits** during the second round
- One **hezrou** during the fifth round

15. WEST BATH

The pool of water in this room is blood-red. It bubbles and churns, and the sickly-sweet scent of rot fills the air. The corpse of a clergy member, their eyes removed from their sockets, lies at the edge of the pool, their lower body submerged in its water.

Cleansing Corruption. Once Dilnarsa begins her ritual, demonic creatures begin to spawn from the pool in an attempt to defend it. These creatures fight until they are destroyed, and many of them attempt to attack Dilnarsa. The following creatures spawn during the ritual:

- Two **corrupted water elementals** during the first round
- One **vrock** during the third round
- One **glabrezu** during the sixth round

16. STEAM BATHS

Baths of heated water and small wooden steam rooms occupy these chambers.

17. CENTRAL CHAMBER

A central hydraulic platform floats on top of a pool of water fed by waterfalls cascading from the room above. The platform ascends to area 10 with the use of a command word.

When the party enters this chamber, read aloud:

The shallow water that floods this chamber bubbles and churns. A sorceress stands in the water, faced toward a towering statue in an alcove, muttering an incantation. Long black hair cascades down her back, and she is dressed in long robes adorned with intricate patterns and symbols that seem to shimmer and shift in the dim light. In her hands, she holds a stone bowl filled with a swirling, dark substance that seems to pulsate with a life of its own. The air feels heavy and charged with energy. The sorceress's eyes fix upon you, and her face twists into an expression of frenzied glee. "You will not stop what has begun," she shouts at you.

The sorceress is Vresia, who is engaged in a ritual to summon flood waters and the demon lord Nctoua. She immediately attacks the party. She uses archmage statistics, though she has no 9th-level spell slots. When Vresia is reduced to 0 hit points, read aloud the following:

Vresia lets out a wail of anguish, and then falls silent. Suddenly, a booming voice echoes throughout the chamber. "Your service is not finished, Vresia," it says. Her

body convulses wildly, then begins to tear itself in half as a hulking figure of fur, wings, and flesh emerges from her corpse. "As you will, master.." the demonic spawn replies.

Vresia's soul has been captured by Nctoua and remade into new demonic form. Vresia is now a nalfeshnee. She engages the party again in combat, fighting with renewed strength and ferocity.

Powered by Corruption. Vresia's strength in combat is bolstered by the amount of corruption within the temple. For each site of corruption within the temple (areas 22 and 23) that remains uncleansed, Vresia is able to summon a **corrupted water elemental** using a bonus action on the first round of combat. She can summon up to two of these elementals with a single bonus action, but can only use this ability once. If both pools have been cleansed, Vresia cannot summon any elementals in this manner.

18. FOUNTAINS

A towering statue of the temple's founder, Osiamias the Purified, overlooks several layered pools.

19. PORTAL ROOM

A secret door in area 2 leads to this room, which contains three shallow pools of water. A secret incantation known only to the most senior members of the temple causes the pools to form a portal to the Elemental Plane of Water.



20. SHALLOW POOL

The water in this chamber is knee-deep. It is used for partial submersion during meditation sessions.

21. SUBMERSION CHAMBERS

These pools are several feet deep, allowing for full submersion during meditation. Water is drained and refilled each morning via a mechanical system of levers and pipes to prevent it from becoming stagnant.

22. PRIVATE MEDITATION CHAMBERS

These small rooms provide a quiet enclosed space for private meditation. Running water flows into basins, creating a pleasant white noise.

23. CONTROL ROOM

Several valves here control the pressure and flow of water throughout the temple.

24. STATUE CHAMBER

A marble statue of a water sprite occupies the middle of this circular chamber. The statue is of expert craftsmanship, though non-magical.

AFTERMATH

If the party has defeated the Cult of the Toad with Dilnarsa, Dilnarsa delivers the party the agreed reward and can begin the long and difficult process of rebuilding the temple's clergy and returning it to operation. The temple may remain closed for many months or even years as this process takes its time. If the cult was defeated but Dilnarsa was slain in the process, the temple's future is much more precarious, and it may be decades before the temple is reestablished, if ever. If the party were not able to defeat the Cult of the Toad and Vresia was able to complete her ritual, the consequences are left to GM discretion. The ritual might have been successful, leaving whatever remains of the party to have to deal with disastrous flood waters and the might of a minor demon lord and his forces. Or, the ritual may have failed, and Vresia and the other cult members remain the primary threat to be dealt with.

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