

Paragon
13

THE LOREMASTER'S CURSE

7 Difficulty
5 Complexity

A standalone encounter for five adventurers

By Corwin Riddle

The Loremaster's Curse is a standalone encounter designed for five 12th to 14th-level adventurers. The soul of an ancient dragon has cursed a scholar, forcing him to release monsters contained within the books of a long lost library. The players must fight back several waves of legendary creatures before taking on the dragon in an attempt to release the loremaster from the library's grasp.

BACKGROUND

The winding canyons of Jemas hold many secrets, but even more dangers. Built long before history could remember, the canyon walls give way to intricate sculptures and ornately-crafted temples, carved into the canyons and leading deep into the surrounding mountains. Those brave—or foolish—enough to enter these ancient buildings will tread through the tunnels and hallways left by a forgotten culture; there are few answers as to why the temples are now vacant, or why they were ever there at all. Each room holds antiquities, history, and treasure for the taking, though local tribes warn against such thievery—those who do remove items often disappear without a trace.

Many scholars are drawn to the temple to learn from its history and artifacts, hoping to gain more knowledge and understanding of the past. One such visitor is a scholar known as Mathas, a prominent mind in the world of ancient lore and history. Using his keen mind and experience, it wasn't long before Mathas discovered a secret chamber within the canyons—an expansive library known as the *Halls of Knowledge*. Within these annals are seemingly endless scrolls of history, chronicles of ancient battles, and archives about Jemas, years ago, under the rule of a cruel group of dragonkin known as the Pantheon of Urlux.

Entranced by his magnificent find, Mathas began to digest the knowledge within the books and scrolls, eventually stumbling upon an ancient book adorned with draconic emblems. The book, somehow free of dust and the decay of time, seemed to speak to Mathas, intimately guiding him through the history of Jemas and the Pantheon of Urlux and lead-

ing the unsuspecting loremaster through a series of magical phrases and rituals that released a soul fragment of one of the pantheon's malicious leaders—General Xaldraxis.

Freed from the book, Xaldraxis possessed the body of Mathas, using his magical prowess and knowledge to release the legendary monsters contained within the pages of the library. Now, beset upon by the mythical creatures of the cursed loremaster, the people of Jemas look to others for help. Each day, Mathas discovers more powerful entities within the annals; the canyons won't be able to hold them back for long. It's only a matter of time before the future of Jemas becomes lost to its own history.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

The Loremaster's Curse is a standalone encounter, but can easily be turned into a full adventure. The PCs can stumble on the canyons of Jemas, be sent there to investigate strange happenings within the Halls of Knowledge, or merely follow a band of travelers as they stop in town. Once in Jemas, you can send your players to the Halls of Knowledge with one or more of the following hooks:

HOOK 1: O BROTHER, HOW ART THOU?

The players will encounter another loremaster while in Jemas, a man named Barian who claims to be Mathas's brother. He tells the players that he knew of his brother's trek to the canyons of Jemas, but hadn't heard from him in several months and decided to come investigate out of worry. For years, Barian has been working for a group of wizards on the western coast of the continent, translating and documenting strange monsters, happenings, and other historical lore. Mathas and Barian used to work together, but one day uncovered a scroll detailing the Halls of Knowledge, and left for Jemas.

Barian has since translated the rest of the scrolls of Jemas and believes there is a malicious force at work within the canyons, referred to only as "the pantheon". Those in town

have not seen Mathas in quite a while and Barian fears the worst has happened to him. He asks the players to enter the Halls of Knowledge, if they exist, and find his brother, offering them his modest savings if he is returned alive.

He urges the players not to harm Mathas, as, through his reading, it is possible that a stronger force might have taken hold of the loremaster; a force like this can be coerced into showing itself, but will try to trick the players into killing his brother—under no circumstance should they harm Mathas.

Quest XP: 1600 XP and 5,000 gp to save Mathas.

HOOK 2: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

As the players pass through town, a small halfling calls them into a dark alley. He apologizes for the theatrics and introduces himself as Orgal Lorefoot, a prominent scholar of the area. He tells the players that there are countless books of important history found within the Halls of Knowledge, but the peasants of Jemas refuse to allow any of the visitors to remove any artifacts or scrolls from the temple without paying a hefty price.

Orgal scoffs at the selfishness of the townspeople, trying to profit off what should be free knowledge to the whole world. He would just pay their fee if he could afford it, but he has traveled a long way from home and didn't bring such a large amount of gold with him. Instead, he asks the players to enter the Halls of Knowledge and steal a handful of important and rare scrolls, offering what little money he has for their service.

Quest XP: 800 XP and 2,500 gp if the players bring an acceptable number of books and scrolls to Orgal.

SPECIAL FEATURES

MAGICAL SCROLLS

Magical scrolls float around the room, allowing both creatures and players to interact with them:

- Creatures use *moving through history* to teleport between the scrolls. This does not end the creature's move action.
- A player that enters or starts its turn in a square adjacent to a magical scroll (that has not been disabled) takes **2d8** psychic damage and is pushed 1 square.
- A player within 5 squares can use a minor action for a **DC 20 Arcana** check to cause one of these effects:
 - Creatures cannot use the scroll until the start of that player's next turn.
 - Allow allies to use the scroll to teleport to another scroll (only the origin scroll has to be affected).

WAVES OF ENEMIES

The enemies are summoned in waves from the bookshelves in the hallways (location is indicated on the maps). The next wave is summoned when two of the enemies of the previous wave are killed, or if there are three left and they are all bloodied. *The enemies in these waves are very fragile and should go down quickly, so it's okay to bring on waves at whatever pace your players can seem to handle.*

Waves:

1. Fireboars of Olissia
2. Plagued Bats of Libril
3. Wyrmblood Skewers of Bastruppe and Xaldraxis

GETTING STARTED

Read this as the players approach the canyons of Jemas:

Descending down a winding path, the craggy rocks seem to slowly change shape, turning into towering statues of dragons, demons, angels, and other fantastical creatures. A ominous wind blows through the canyon, sending dust and pebbles scattering as a path seems to clear for you.

Ahead, a series of stone temple are carved into the sides of the canyon walls, their open entrances leading into total darkness. One of the buildings stands out from the others, extending hundreds of feet up the wall; the pillars are carved into intricate sculptures of humanoid beings holding up towering dragonkin.

AREA: THE HALLS OF KNOWLEDGE

Read this when the PCs reach the Halls of Knowledge:

As you enter the library, a group of flying books zip past the entrance, circling a man in the center of the room. With his back to you, he waves and gestures to several floating scrolls, which glow and unravel at his command. Suddenly, the man's head perks up, and he slowly turns, the books dropping to the ground as he faces you. With a worried face, he pleads: "I can't control it! Get back! Save yourselves!"

Suddenly, his body shakes, and he waves his hand toward one of the bookshelves, which starts to rustle and shake. A high-pitched squeal fills the room. Looking back to Mathas, his demeanor has changed, his eyes a glowing red. "It amuses me," he says in a strange and raspy voice, "that mortals are so interested in their history; when their future is so rapidly coming to an end."

Perception (DC 14): Several of the bookshelves are glowing and shaking violently. You hear muffled screams from within the books.

Arcana (DC 18): The floating scrolls give off a magical aura, and you feel that those skilled in the arcane arts could possibly control and use the magic contained within.

When Wave 1 begins, read:

The bookshelf falls apart, each book bursting open in a flash of light. Climbing out of the books are reddish boars, which burst into flames. Mathas jerks and returns to his normal self for a moment, warning the players: “My gods! The fireboars of Olissia, butchers of the elder city, beasts of the nine hells!”

When Wave 2 begins, read:

Mathas shakes and appears possessed once again. He reaches out toward another bookshelf, which breaks apart as giant bats emerge, foaming as they take flight. The raspy voice screams: “Behold, mortals: the plagued bats of Libril—scourge of the 100-year sickness, one bite is enough to fell a kingdom!”

When Wave 3 begins, read:

Mathas contorts and flinches, before floating into the air. Suddenly, his body falls to the ground, knocking the loremaster unconscious. Rising from the body is a large ghostly dragon, which rears back on two legs and roars. Another bookshelf explodes, and several kobold arches emerge. “None shall stand to General Xaldraxis and his skewers of Bastruppe! You will be merely another chapter in the forgotten history of a weaker race!”

SETUP

- 1 Aspect of Xaldraxis (X)
- 4 Wyrmblood Skewers of Bastruppe (W)
- 4 Fireboars of Olissia (F)
- 4 Plagued Bat of Libril (P)

The color of each monster corresponds to the wave it belongs to. The monsters are only present in the encounter when that wave begins: (1 = Yellow, 2 = Orange, 3 = Red).

FEATURES OF THE AREA

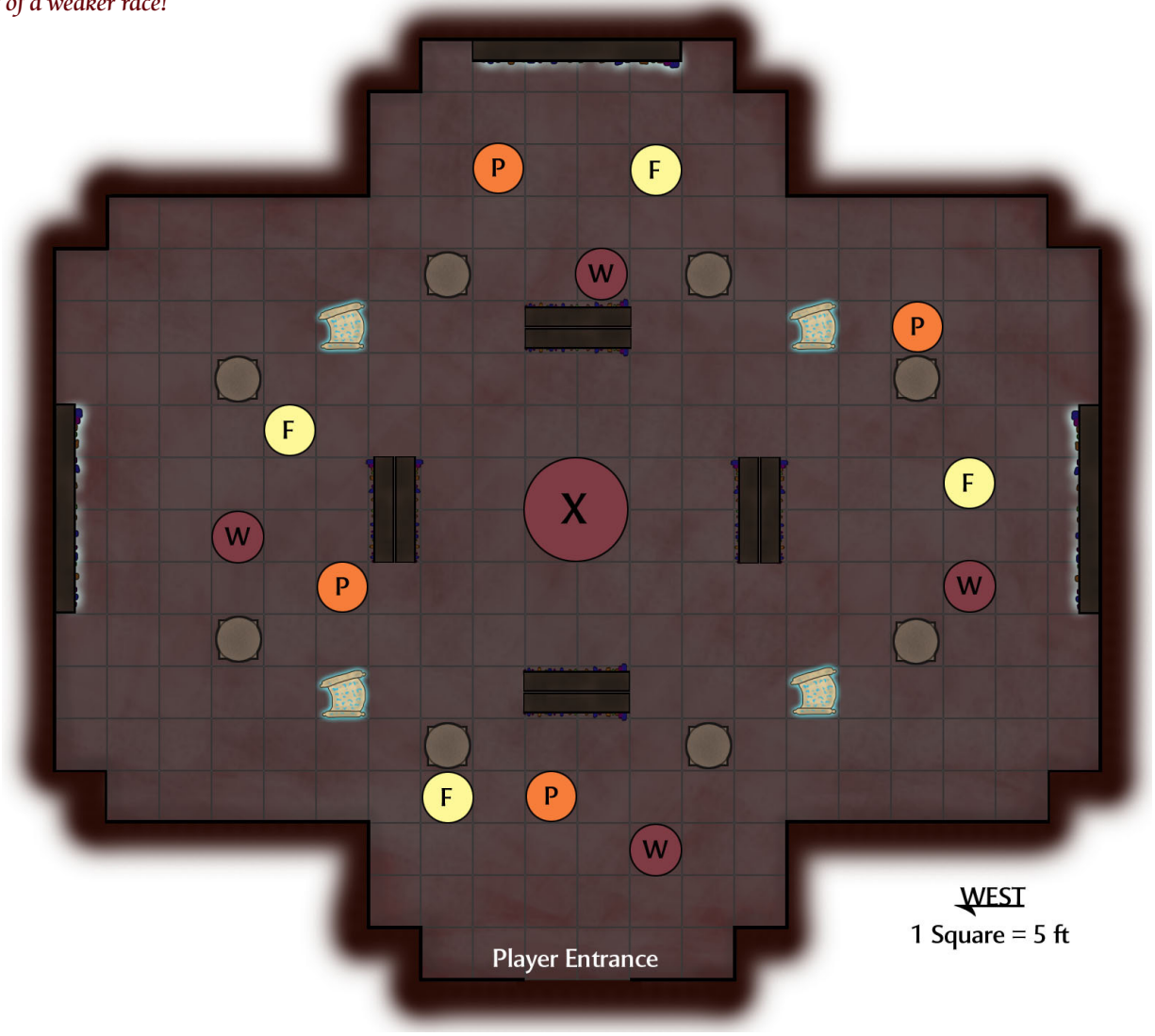
Height: The ceiling is 35’ high.

Illumination: The library is well lit.

Magical Scroll: Marked as glowing white scrolls. See **Special Features** for details.

Pillars: Marked as brown pillars, these extend to the ceiling and block line of sight.

Bookshelves: Marked as brown shelves, these are 15 feet tall and block line of sight.



XALDRAXIS IN COMBAT

Xaldraxis appears in the final phase along with the kobold archers (wyrmblood skewers), and though powerful, the dragon is aware that it is only an illusion and also quite fragile. Because of this, Xaldraxis will prefer to keep distance from a group of players, engaging one at a time in melee while using *mind lash* to attack from range and using *misplaced knowledge* and *moving through history* to keep a tactical advantage through position.

Xaldraxis is proud and uncaring, he will not attempt to save the kobolds unless they are posing an adequate threat to the players and keeping them away. He won't hesitate to use his *breath weapon* with kobolds in the blast, provided it will also damage several of the players.

OTHER ENEMIES IN COMBAT

The fireboars will charge whenever possible, making use of *fiery trail* and using *moving through history* to jump between the magical scrolls (while maintaining the charge bonus). When close to death, they will attempt to stay near a player to make use of *death strike* before dying.

The bats will try to end their turns at a distance so that they can use *flyby attack* without ending their movement next to several players and becoming vulnerable. Its attacks have Reach 2, so it will attempt to stay out of flanked position so it can easily fly to safety if cornered.

The wyrmblood skewers will do their best to protect Xaldraxis, regardless of his behavior toward them. They are clever and will try to use *dragon arrow* and *shifty feet* to get the players in position to be damaged by the floating scrolls or allow another enemy to move into flanking position.

COMBAT FLAVOR

If you dislike reading powers and effects to your players, give them hints with the following flavor text.

When an enemy uses *moving through history*, read:

The creature dives into one of the glowing scrolls, disappearing for a moment and leaping out of another scroll.

When a player takes damage from a scroll, read:

As the floating scroll nears you, something lashes out from within, damaging you as it knocks you back.

If a player controls a scroll with an *Arcana* check, read:

You focus on the scroll's magical essence, taking control of it for a short time and allowing you and your allies to use its power.

When any of the enemies die, read:

The monster fades away, and you hear the familiar sound of a crackling fire as a book bursts into flames.

CONCLUSION

The skewers fight until Xaldraxis is defeated, and will immediately die if he is killed. When the encounter ends, read:

Xaldraxis begins to fade away, and a seemingly random assortment of books and scrolls burst into flames and turn to ash. "You cannot defeat the Pantheon of Urlux," Xaldraxis rasps, "we shall rise once more, and the mortal races shall know their true place!"

As the dragon disappears, Mathas sits up, holding his head and looking around. "My thanks to you, heroes," he says, reaching into a pile of ash and sifting it through his fingers. "It looks like the curse has been lifted from these halls, at least for now. Perhaps I will enjoy the present for a change—history is proving to be too dangerous."

The players will find books to return to Orgal if they choose, and Mathas will take a select number of books with him as well. The players will also find several items left behind by previous adventurers, including a level 14 magical weapon and 2,000 gp. Once they return to Jemas with Mathas, Barian will gladly pay the players for their trouble.

ADJUSTMENTS

If you like this encounter but aren't sure how to fit it into your campaign, here is some advice:

We have too few or too many players:

For 4 players, subtract 1 of the monster from each wave. For 6 players, add 2 monsters to the second and third waves.

We aren't the right level:

*Xaldraxis is based off one of the many dragons found in the **Monster Builder**. The other creatures are there as well, found as boars, bats, and kobolds.*

It's too easy or hard:

If the fight is too easy, consider raising Xaldraxis's hit points, as the final wave ends with his death. If the waves are wearing down the players and it doesn't look like they'll stand a chance in the end, make each successive wave weaker or contain fewer monsters.

The players are trying to destroy the books to end it:

You can allow the players to locate the particular book they need to destroy by forcing them to make a DC 20 Perception or History check as a minor action during combat to identify the correct books.

The players want to kill the loremaster:

If they attack Mathas, have Xaldraxis come out then with more hit points, or have him protected from damage until the third wave.

Loremaster, eh? Sounds familiar...

This adventure is based on and dedicated to Matt James for his contributions to the D&D community: www.loremaster.org



MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

WAVE ONE

WAVE THREE

Fireboar of Olissia		Level 11 Brute	
Medium magical beast (boar, illusion)		XP 700	
HP 46; Bloodied 23		Initiative +8	
AC 23, Fortitude 25, Reflex 17, Will 17		Perception +6	
Speed 8			
Resist 10 fire, Vulnerable 10 cold			
TRAITS			
Fiery Trail			
When charging, each square that the fireboar moved through that turn, including the ones it started and ended on, become difficult terrain until the end of its next turn. Any enemy that enters or starts its turn in one of these squares takes 10 fire damage.			
STANDARD ACTIONS			
⬇ Flaming Gore (fire) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: +14 vs. AC Hit: 2d8 + 8 fire damage.			
⬅ Magma Blast (fire) ♦ Recharge ☞☞☞☞			
Attack: Close blast 2; +13 vs. Fortitude Hit: 2d8 + 12 fire damage and the target is knocked prone. Miss: Half damage and the target is not knocked prone.			
TRIGGERED ACTIONS			
⬇ Death Strike (fire) ♦ At-Will			
Trigger: The fireboar is reduced to 0 hit points or fewer. Effect: The fireboar makes a <i>flaming gore</i> attack.			
MOVE ACTIONS			
Moving through History ♦ At-Will			
Effect: The fireboar enters the square of an adjacent Magical Scroll, teleporting adjacent to the square of any other Magical Scroll. This does not end the fireboar's move action.			
Str 12 (+5)		Dex 20 (+9)	
Con 16 (+7)		Int 14 (+6)	
		Wis 18 (+8)	
		Cha 16 (+7)	
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –	

WAVE TWO

Plagued Bat of Libril		Level 11 Lurker	
Medium magical beast (bat, illusion)		XP 600	
HP 42; Bloodied 21		Initiative +15	
AC 24, Fortitude 22, Reflex 24, Will 20		Perception +15	
Speed 2 (clumsy), fly 8		Low-light vision	
STANDARD ACTIONS			
⬇ Bite ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Reach 2; +16 vs. AC Hit: 1d8 + 12 damage.			
⬇ Flyby Attack ♦ At-Will			
Effect: The bat flies up to 8 squares and makes one <i>bite</i> or <i>diseased slash</i> attack at any point during that movement. The bat doesn't provoke opportunity attacks with this movement.			
⬇ Diseased Slash (poison) ♦ Recharge ☞☞☞☞			
Attack: Reach 2; +17 vs. AC Hit: 1d8 + 10 damage and the bat makes a secondary attack against the same target: Secondary Attack: +14 vs. Fortitude Hit: Ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends). Any player adjacent to the attacked player gains 5 ongoing poison damage (save ends).			
MOVE ACTIONS			
Moving through History ♦ At-Will			
Effect: The bat enters the square of an adjacent Magical Scroll, teleporting adjacent to the square of any other Magical Scroll. This does not end the creature's move action.			
Str 17 (+8)		Dex 22 (+11)	
Con 18 (+9)		Int 6 (+3)	
		Wis 17 (+8)	
		Cha 15 (+7)	
Alignment unaligned		Languages –	

Wyrmblood Skewer of Bastruppe		Level 10 Artillery	
Medium magical humanoid (kobold, illusion)		XP 600	
HP 40; Bloodied 20		Initiative +15	
AC 22, Fortitude 20, Reflex 23, Will 21		Perception +15	
Speed 6		Low-light vision	
STANDARD ACTIONS			
⬇ Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: +17 vs. AC Hit: 2d4 + 6 damage.			
⊕ Dragon Arrow (weapon) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Ranged 20; +15 vs. Reflex Hit: 2d6 + 8 damage and slide the target 1 square.			
⚡ Dragon Burst (poison) ♦ Recharge ☞☞☞☞			
Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (enemies only); +13 vs. Fortitude Hit: 3d6 + 8 poison damage.			
MINOR ACTIONS			
Shifty Feet ♦ At-Will			
Effect: The kobold shifts 1 square.			
MOVE ACTIONS			
Moving through History ♦ At-Will			
Effect: The kobold enters the square of an adjacent Magical Scroll, teleporting adjacent to the square of any other Magical Scroll. This does not end the creature's move action.			
Str 11 (+5)		Dex 21 (+10)	
Con 16 (+8)		Int 13 (+6)	
		Wis 18 (+9)	
		Cha 16 (+8)	
Alignment unaligned		Languages Common, draconic	

Aspect of Xaldraxis		Level 13 Elite Brute	
Large magical beast (dragon, illusion)		XP 800	
HP 160; Bloodied 80		Initiative +8	
AC 27, Fortitude 25, Reflex 24, Will 26		Perception +17	
Speed 6			
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1			
TRAITS			
Double Actions			
Xaldraxis acts twice in a round, on initiative counts 30 and 15. It has a full set of actions on each turn and cannot delay or ready actions. It can use one immediate action between each turn.			
STANDARD ACTIONS			
⬇ Bite ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Reach 2; +19 vs. AC Hit: 3d8 + 16 damage.			
↘ Mind Lash (psychic) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Ranged 10, +17 vs. Will Hit: 1d10 + 10 psychic damage Effect: The target is slowed until the end of its next turn, at which point it makes a melee or ranged basic attack against the nearest ally.			
⬅ Breath Weapon (psychic) ♦ Recharge (when bloodied)			
Attack: Close blast 5; +16 vs. Reflex Hit: 4d8 + 8 psychic damage. Effect: The area of the blast becomes a zone that lasts until the end of Xaldraxis's next turn. Any enemy that ends its turn in the zone takes 15 psychic damage.			
MINOR ACTIONS			
Misplaced Knowledge ♦ At-Will			
Effect: An ally within 5 squares of Xaldraxis can move up to 5 squares, as long as that ally uses a Magical Scroll to teleport that turn.			
MOVE ACTIONS			
Moving through History ♦ At-Will			
Effect: Xaldraxis enters the square of an adjacent Magical Scroll, teleporting adjacent to the square of any other Magical Scroll. This does not end Xaldraxis's move action.			
Skills Arcana +15, Diplomacy +16, History +15, Insight +17, Intimidate +16			
Str 23 (+12)		Dex 14 (+8)	
Con 20 (+11)		Int 19 (+10)	
		Wis 23 (+12)	
		Cha 20 (+11)	
Alignment evil		Languages Common, draconic, giant, goblin	

Cut the map out and place the pieces so that all the arrows face the same way:



1 **2** **3**
4 **5** **6** →









→ 5



