

Nexus 2 - Quest for the Staff of the Nexus

Summary

This adventure is a quest for a powerful magic item, starting in the city of Vivine but leading the PCs to the dread Sargusa. This adventure is designed for 4 characters of level 9. Material that is essential is:

- Worldbook 1 - Vivine
- Sargusa Gazetteer
- Nexus 2 Handouts
- Scholar's Townhouse Map

Adventure Hook

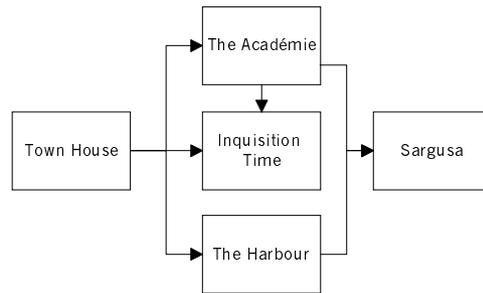
While travelling in the Nexus, the PCs encounter a cherub-like creature (the mephit Alexandrus) that is lost and promises them to tell them a secret, if they help it return to its own world. Alexandrus knows about a powerful sage that lives in Vivine and knows a lot about the Nexus. The PCs embark to the city of Vivine, to meet the sage at his town house. If the PCs offend the little creature, he will try to trick them in some way in order to make them run into the inquisition.

Adventure Outline

The players will quickly find the house of Auguste Pableu, a renown sage but a thorne in the side of the inquisition. After finding out that he is missing on an expedition, they can go to the Académie or to the harbour to find out more.

During their search, they might run afoul of an inquisitor and his men. After finally getting all information, they can

embark towards the Sargusa.



Town House

If the PCs were friendly towards Alexandrus, he will lead them to the town house of Pableu, which lies on the edge of the poorer quarters. Pableu is not very rich and spends most of his money on books anyway. Otherwise they will have to ask people for his

Summertime Weather in Vivine

Use the following table to determine the weather each day. It applies for summer and the city of Vivine (although you can also use it for the Sargusa). Use a d10!

1	Storm from the sea (strong winds and rain)
2-4	Sunny with light shower in the afternoon
5	Sunny all day
6	Cloudy with 30% chance of light shower
7-9	Cloudy but no rain
10	Storm from the Living Forest with blood-like rain (1d2 acid damage per minute)

Inquisition Alert

The following table describes events that can attract the attention of the inquisition. Each day of laying low reduces the value by one. Each day, check against the value, the PCs have accumulated with their actions with a d20. If you roll less than their alert value, the inquisition has gotten wind of them and will try to get hold of them.

Asking for Pableu	1
Breaking minor church laws (e.g. going to the Académie)	1
Casting a spell in public	4
Committing a crime	1
Insulting people who suspect the PCs of being heretics.	4
Killing somebody	2
Showing allegiance to other gods in public	4

townhouse which might attract the attention of the inquisition.

The town house is abandoned and locked. Inside, the players will find a few documents which seem to indicate that Pableu has gone on a journey (see handout 1). They also point to the Académie. Note that the missing book, called "Nexus", contains the notes Pableu made on that subject and that he took with him on his journey.

The neighbours know nothing about his whereabouts but can tell the PCs that he is quite often on trips to other shores, frequently bringing exotic things with him.

The Académie

Few boatmen are willing to go out to the island of the mages, especially during bad weather. Only Jean, the old

and sarcastic smuggler (exp 4, CN) will take them there for the stiff fee of 100 gp per person. Haggling or annoying the smuggler is likely to make him talk to the inquisition.

In the Académie, Pableu is a well-known sage who is also honorary member. As soon as the mages are sure of the PCs intentions, they will tell them that Pableu went to the colonies, to prove a theory of his. He is long overdue and scrying has revealed that he is stuck in the Sargusa, a place where the mages cannot go (see the *gazetteer* for details). If the PCs are willing to go there, they will gladly support them with up to 10 potions of *water breathing* and 4 *wings of swimming* (if worn on arms, they give a +2 circumstance bonus on swim checks).

The PCs are also likely to run into Callista who has orders to observe everybody who has an interest in matters of the Nexus (and therefore in Pableu, whom she knows intimately). She will try to attach herself to the PCs in order to find out things.

The Harbour

Asking for Pableu, will require some checks on *gather information* (DC 18) and *diplomacy* or *intimidate* (DC 14, several times), leading to encounters with the following people:

1. Marcuse, the one-eyed sailor with the friendly talking parrot who knows Sidna
2. Sidna el Arba, a Al Exdrina expatriate and supplier of travelling equipment with some djinni blood and a flowery style of talking who thinks the foreman of the dockworker might know something.
3. Grodak, a superstitious orge dockworker who has seen how knows that a powerful mage has had his equipment put onto the *Fleur de Lise*.

4. Gustave St. Michel, the harbour master who knows that the *Fleur* left for the colonies two month ago and is long overdue.

Inquisition Time

Should the inquisition become aware of the PCs, they are likely to investigate. Subtlety is not their strength, so the PCs have a good chance to run and avoid combat altogether, even though that will make them wanted people. Their antagonists consist of Celestus and 5 henchmen (EL 12, even though the fact that they take a brute force approach and that the warriors are not maxed out, makes it more EL 11 or 10).

Sargusa

See the Sargusa Gazetteer for details. The PCs are likely to run into the various gangs, which you should play according to the situation that develops. At worst, it becomes a series of dungeon crawls, at best a grand challenge to the players.

NPCs

Alexandrus

Male Dust Mephit

Hit Dice: (3d8)+3
 Hit Points: 23
 Initiative: +4
 Speed: Walk 30', Fly 50'
 (perfect)
 AC: 18
 Attacks: Claw +7/+7;
 Scythe +7;
 Damage: Claw 1d3+3;
 Scythe 1d6+2;
 Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5
 Special Qualities: Blur(Sp) 1/hr, Cone
 of irritating
 particles(Su), Fast

Healing 2(Ex) in arid
 dust, Summon
 Mephit(Sp) 1/day,
 Wind Wall 1/day

Saves: Fortitude: +4, Reflex:
 +7, Will: +5

Abilities: Str 14 (+2), Dex 18
 (+4), Con 13 (+1), Int
 11 (+0), Wis 12 (+1),
 Cha 13 (+1)

Skills: Bluff 7; Knowledge
 (Religion) 6; Listen 7;

Feats: Improved Initiative
 Challenge Rating: 3

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Possessions: black robes, miniature
 scythe, Dieunne holy scripture

Alexandrus is a small gaunt creature, with a grave facial expression, black robes and black feathery wings. He wears a chain with the symbol of Dieunne and the holy scripture on a chain.

When asked to introduce himself, Alexandrus proclaims to be "Alexandrus, the Angel of Death, Reaperman, and Lord of the Grave". He continues in this tone of self-importance and **self-righteousness**, ignoring even the most obvious taunts.

While not an evil creature, the mephit is extremely lazy and has made a living by pretending to be a supernatural creature and ripping off the natives of Vivine. He belongs to a subcaste of minor outsiders who make a living on the fringes of Vivine's society.

Callista

Callista is a doppelganger who serves the beholder Grugan in return for money and because she enjoys locating obscure pieces of lore. She is stationed in Vivine and frequents the Académie quite often,

looking for information on the Nexus and those who also look for it.

Callista the Sage

Medium-size Female Doppelganger
Shapechanger4 Expert4

Hit Dice: (4d8)+(4d6)
Hit Points: 38
Initiative: +2
Speed: Walk 30'
AC: 16
Attacks: Dagger (Thrown)
+8/+3;
Slam+6/+6;
Dagger1d4;
Damage: Dagger (Thrown)1d4;
Slam1d6;
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5
+10 Circumstance to Disguise when using Alter Self, +4 to Bluff & Disguise when
Special Qualities:using Detect Thoughts, Alter Self(Su), Detect Thoughts(Su), Immunity to Sleep & Charm effects(Ex)
Saves: Fortitude: +5, Reflex: +7, Will: +6
Abilities: Str 11 (+0), Dex 14 (+2), Con 11 (+0), Int 16 (+3), Wis 17 (+3), Cha 14 (+2)
Skills: Craft (Bookbinding) 6; Diplomacy 4; Forgery 6; Gather Information 15; Knowledge (Arcana) 12; Listen 7; Alertness, Armour Proficiency (Light), Simple Weapon Proficiency, Skill Focus (Gather Information)
Challenge Rating:6

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Possessions: Dagger; Slam; Cloak of Charisma +2; Potion (Blur); Potion (Hiding); Potion (Levitate); Potion (Prot. from Elements/Fire); Potion (Expeditious Retreat); Potion (Cure Moderate Wounds); Garnet (Red); Lapis Lazuli;

Callista usually takes the form of a petite dark-haired woman in her early thirties wearing dresses with a daring neckline (for Vivine standards) and the typical tight waistline. She also wears a (magical) short black cloak, even when it does not match her other outfit. As is befitting for a woman, she covers her head with a matching bonnet. Her hairstyle is usually two short pig tails.

Callista is evil but it does not show in her behaviour. She is **friendly**, if a **bit tactless** sometimes, and seems like a harmless **conversationalist**. In reality however, she pries secrets from all - nobility, church, and wizards' academy. Callista is deathly afraid of vampires. She **causes a dislike in animal companions and familiars**.

Celestus de Coeur-Saint

Fighter 10

Hit Dice: (10d10)+20
Hit Points: 91
Initiative: +4
Speed: Walk 20'
AC: 19
Attacks: +2 Halberd +17/+12;
Damage: Halberd 1d10+8
(19-20/x3)
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5
Special Qualities:
Saves: Fortitude: +9, Reflex: +5, Will: +5
Abilities: Str 19 (+4), Dex 11

(+0), Con 14 (+2), Int 13 (+1), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 15 (+2)

Skills: Climb 4; Handle Animal 7; Jump 4; Knowledge (Religion) 7; Listen 2; Ride 12;

Feats: Expertise, Improved Critical (Halberd), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Halberd), Weapon Specialization (Halberd), Devout Faith¹, Vow of Fidelity¹

Challenge Rating: 10

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Possessions: +2 Halberd; +1 Full Plate; Belt of Stalwart Attack; 3 Potions (Cure Moderate Wounds); Potion (Cure Serious Wounds); Masterwork Dagger 1: feats from the *Book of Hallowed Might*. Effectively, the inquisitor gains a *bless* effect on himself as a free action when things turn against him. Also, as long as none of his allies are down, he gains +4 on all saving throws against enchantments.



Celestus is an inquisitor of Dieunne, reknown for his **hatred for non-believers** as well as his **devotion towards his allies**. His underlings love

Belt of Stalwart Attack

This magic belt is made of bull's leather and has the face of the Red Cardinal as a buckle. It is given out to the most fanatical inquisitors with a 'physical' orientation and is a warning sign to those who would defy them.

Those wearing the belt are filled with righteous hatred towards heretics and apostates. They gain a +2 enhancement bonus to strength but a -2 holy penalty to wisdom as their minds are clouded with holy thoughts.

Caster Level: 5

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, Bull's Strength (Divine)

Market Price: 3000 gp

his sense of humour and fatherly care for them.

The inquisitor is a relatively young man (ca. 25 years old), with red robes under a white hooded cape covered with red scales. Under this clothing he wears a golden plate mail engraved with the hammer and shield symbols of his church and the personal crest of his noble house, the two-headed griffon. His halberd is made of wood stolen from an unholy grove in the living forest and tipped with a metal blade tempered in the blood of the Binarus Apostates which he helped defeat 4 years ago.

In combat, Celestus will stay close to his allies, in order to help them against stronger opponents. he will use trip attacks (on the second attack) to bring down well-armoured enemies to make them accessible to his weaker henchmen. In return they will usually *aid* him by raising his AC against enemies which all to easily hit him.

Soldier of the Inquisition

Human Warrior 6

Hit Dice: (6d8)+6

Hit Points: 37, 33, 21, 37, 30
Initiative: +0
Speed: Walk 20'
AC: 16
 Musket +8; Ranseur
Attacks: +11/+6; Handaxe
 +10/+5;
 Musket 1d12;
 Ranseur 2d4+3
Damage: (20/x3);
 Handaxe 1d6+3;
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 10 feet
Special Qualities:
Saves: Fortitude: +6, Reflex:
 +2, Will: +4
 Str 17 (+3), Dex 11
Abilities: (+0), Con 13 (+1), Int
 10 (+0), Wis 10 (+0),
 Cha 10 (+0)
Skills: Climb 9; Intimidate 9;
 Jump 5; Ride 2;
 Exotic Weapon
 Proficiency (Musket),
Feats: Iron Will, Weapon
 Focus (Musket,
 Ranseur)
Challenge Rating: 5
Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Possessions: +1 Breastplate; Musket
 (Masterwork) or Ranseur (Masterwork);
 Handaxe (Masterwork); Potion (Cure
 Serious Wounds);

The *soldiers of the inquisition* are the elite non-ordained force of the church. While they are mercenaries, they feel a great degree of loyalty to the church and many of them are very religious. The soldiers of the Cardinal have a feud with the mercenaries of the king and illegal duells in the back alleys are common.

These particular soldiers described here are members of the *Regiment of Holy Balance*, recognisable by their bright red tunics, black kilts and tight crimson pants. They also wear red capes with the scale symbol in black and metal hats.

Celestus the inquisitor had 5 warriors assigned to him by his superiors, 2 with muskets for fire support and 3 with pole arms to help him with the close-in fighting.

