**Battle Interactive 2015**

***Death Lies Sleeping***

**Narrative**

**Introduction and Encounter One**

Welcome to the Origins 2015 Legends of Arcanis exclusive event: ***Death Lies Sleeping.***

The last day of the High Holy Days is a festive time rivalled only by the Saturnalia in Sweet Savona. Not only does it mark the end of the five day religious holiday, celebrated by the Southern and Khitani empires, but it also marks the end of the year. With the coming of the dawn, a new year begins with all the hopes and dreams of a renewed people. Many are looking forward to putting the past behind them and have a prosperous year.

1074, however, is not yet over.

Among the numerous parties and religious observations, the most sought after invitation is to an exhibition by the Emerald Society. A few weeks ago, an expedition into a newly discovered passage just beneath the sewer level uncovered a great find. Now everyone in the Pens-Mar district is vying to be the first to see the Jade Sarcophagus on display in the Collection.

You however, find yourselves neck deep in a new problem.

Over the last few nights, reports of missing persons have been coming to the attention of the Blue Cloaks. Captain Souliad, who’ve you’ve met previously, has asked for your assistance. With every available able bodied person engaged in keeping the rich and powerful-ly drunk from getting robbed or killed, he’s asked for your help in finding those who’ve been reported missing.

Just as he’s about to escort you to the location of the last reported missing persons, a couple of scholars from the Followers of the Azure Way, a runner approaches the captain quickly. Out of breath, she says, “Sir, Sgt. Millias asks for you to come to the Barricade at once. Two cloaks have deserted their post.”

Scowling, the captain demands, “Who?”

“Cloaks Lonid and Ityx.”

Signaling you to follow as he breaks into a run, he yells over his shoulder, “Those are good men. They wouldn’t leave their posts on the Barricade – not during the High Holy Days.”

The short run to the makeshift wall that separates the settled portion of the city with the “uncleansed” area finds a number of Blue Cloaks congregating on the landing. Sgt. Millias salutes the captain and raises his voice to be heard over the loud music and revelers nearby. “There’s no sign of them, sir. But they’re good lads – they wouldn’t leave their post.”

Lowering his voice, the sergeant says, “If this is a raid by the Nightrunners…”

“Stow that talk until we know for sure, Sargent”. Turning to your group, he asks, “Do any of you have bows?”

Lighting the torches, he touches them to the arrows and says, “Fire high and in a fanning formation.”

Your flaming arrows fly high, shining a faint light on the area below. At first everything is shrouded in shifting shadows, as the arrows traverse their arc. As they reach their zenith, the ground below appear like surface of the ocean, undulating strangely.

It is Sgt. Millias who realizes in horror, “Sir – those aren’t shadows playing on the ground. Those are ‘runners….hundreds of them!”

“Defend the wall,” commands Captain Souliad! “We can’t let them into the City!”

**Encounter Two – Death’s Angels**

Like waves crashing against the rocks, so too have the Nightrunners smashed onto your impenetrable shield. You’ve stood your ground and defended the unsuspecting revelers from being overrun by these foul denizens of the Undercity. During your time here, some have asked why the inhabitants of the First City haven’t reclaimed the rest of the plateau. Now you know. They are not the only ones to call this ancient city home.

Having beaten back the attackers, you take quick stock of the situation. Up and down the wall, many of your fellows joined the call and beat the Nightrunners back. But not every knot in your cordon held fast.

Up and down the Barricade, fallen Blue Cloaks mark openings in your defenses. As you look, groups of Nightrunners are carrying away screaming and unconscious bystanders over the wall in a mad dash across the ruined and rubble strewn streets.

Souliad orders his men to attend to the wounded. Cradling the pulped head of Sgt. Millias, he looks at you and says, “Bring those people back and make those bastards pay!”

Scaling down the wall, you just about to begin the chase, when you notice, almost at the edge of your vision, a group of hulking, cloaked figures raising their arms up to the sky imploringly. Suddenly, the cool breeze of evening becomes a bitterly, cold wind, growing in intensity. The clear night skies from moments ago becomes enshrouded in thick black clouds. Lightning silently crashes down, illuminating winged figures emerging from within them.

But these are not beautiful Valinor. The flashing lightning shows them to have an elongated reptilian skull crowned by a mane of long white tendrils. Its lower body tapers down to long, molted tail and the large wings holding them aloft are nothing more than leathery bat-like wings.

Swiveling their skulls in your general direction, they begin their attack.

**Encounter Three – Remember that scene in Aliens?**

Though the Death’s Angels proved no match for your skill and mettle, they did delay you long enough for the Nightrunners to reach one of the many dried cisterns that dot this part of the city. During the battle, you did see them take their struggling prizes down into the wells. Seeing no alternative other than following them, you enter the sewer system which runs just below the street level.

While this part of the city may not be inhabited, the area is filled with noxious fumes strong enough to make eyes water and one’s gorge to rise. Making a quick light source, you see that one of the Nightrunner’s advantages has worked against them – their talons have scored the walls and small stone walkways making tracking them quite simple – well as simple as following deadly, intelligent predators in a cramped, stifling tunnel filled with stygian darkness can be.

What could possibly go wrong?

 **Encounter Four – The Lair of the Nightrunners**

Tested but unbent and unbroken, you have followed the trail of the Nightrunners and beaten back the scouts sent to stop you. A turn in the sewer system leads to a staircase off to one side. A fresh mark is etched into the wall here. Many such symbols are used as markers by “Scarabs”, a derogatory title used by the higher class to reference those who seek their fortune digging about the remains of the dead, as breadcrumbs to follow back to the surface.

Using it as a guide, you head down the stairs for a distance until it opens up on a landing. The smell of things long dead are embedded in every nook and cranny of this passageway. You take heart that you are on the right track as fresh scoring on the walls and floor lend credence to the fact that this was the way the Nightrunners went.

The passage slopes downward again and open ups into a large chamber. Ornate images of ssanu and other Ssethric creatures are carved into every inch of room.

One of your companions, a scholar of some sort, notices that the images show other Ssethric deities in addition to Kassegore and Yig. The most prominent of these, at least in these images, is some sort of Death God, similar in nature to the winged creatures you fought above. Someone breaks out chalk and paper in the hopes of making a rubbing of this priceless find when a loud click is heard distinctly.

One of your comrades has just enough time to say, “Oh, oh” when the entire floor beneath your feet snaps open and you find yourselves falling. Luckily the fall is a relatively short one and you are unharmed.

The chamber in which you find yourselves in is similar to the one above, but so much larger. Like the other space, every square inch of the walls are covered in bas-relief carvings. However your scholarly companion doesn’t have the time to study them at the moment, because unlike the room above, this one is quite occupied as the harsh hissing from all about alerts you.

**Encounter Five – The Sacred Servitors**

**(45 minutes into Encounter Four)**

From the far side of the room, the stone double doors crash open. Rushing out are the hooded figures who called down the Angels of Death. From within the inner chamber very human screams can be heard – some in pain, while others cry out for help! Far off in the back, an empty dais sits in front of a large hole in the far wall.

**Encounter Six – Release the Hounds**

With the help of the Blue Cloaks, who appeared just in time, you defeated the last of the Nightrunners and undead ss’ressen and begin to round up the few survivors to take them up to the surface. Quite a few of the prisoners have this odd wire contraption wrapped around their heads. Unfortunately, each and every one of these captives, while alive, are complete mental vegetables. Though they can follow simple instructions, such as “follow me”, forming a cogent thought is beyond their abilities.

One of the captives, who identifies himself as Sir Marcus Tullen, a Milandisian and member of the Followers of the Azure Way, says, “They used that coil on quite a few of the captives, as you can see. They then put an identical one on their own heads and appeared to be questioning these poor souls.

“My friend there,” he says pointing to a drooling man, “tried to decipher these petroglyphs while we awaited our fate. He pieced together that during the Yahssremoran Empire, when the Ssethric ruled the known world, an apostate follower of the Ssethric god of the dead, overthrew their emperor and took the crown for himself. He then elevated It above even Kassegore and ruled until the priests of Kassegore and Yig toppled him. But they feared that even death could not hold him, so they sealed him in some sort of…”

Snapping his fingers, he says…”That must be what was here.” He points at the empty dais and the hole in the wall. “Someone must have broken through this far wall and just grabbed the first thing they found. These creatures have been down here for millennia worshipping that thing, tucked away in this hidden cubby hole, until some idiots broke through the wall and stole…

“I presume that’s what they were questioning us about. They’re looking for their leader. And those fools from the Emerald Society claimed to have found a large Jade Sarcophagus a few weeks ago. Such an artifact would fit perfectly right here.”

Horror falls upon his face. “That sarcophagus is being unveiled tonight at their Collection. If I’m right, and I’m rarely wrong, everybody in that museum is in deadly danger! You must get there and stop them from opening it.”

Leaving the survivors in the hands of the Blue Cloaks, you retrace the Emerald Society member’s steps through the large hole and race up and out of the Undercity.

As you near the Barricade you hear a wail that would chill the blood of any hardened warrior. That one is soon met by others, the baying cascading across the city before you. Scaling up and over the Barricade, you see what appear to be hounds, scores of them running down Blue Cloaks and revelers alike.

The way to the Emerald Society’s Collection and to the Jade Sarcophagus lies right through them. Girding yourself for battle once more, you charge your foes.

**Encounter Seven – The Blood Guards**

The building housing the Collection looms before you. The steps leading up into the entrance is brightly lit and your keen ears can detect no screams or cries for mercy from within. Perhaps you are in time to stop the opening of the Jade Sarcophagus.

As you enter through the large doors, your tension eases for there before you are members of the Blood Guard, the Tomal Khan’s elite personal guards. If there was the slightest hint of danger, these fearsome followers of Sarish’s aspect as the Blood God, would not be lingering in the entry hall.

However, as they turn, you note that their eyes glow an unnatural, sickly yellow and they shift their grips on their weapons to ready their attack!

“Iahkovah shall not be denied! Death to the Infidels,” they scream!

**Encounter Eight – Iahkovah, the Hand of Death!**

Racing up the stairway you run down a hall and see a pair of doors wide open. The chamber ahead is deathly silent. A sibilant voice from within addresses you.

“Come mammals. Come closer. Extraordinary how you creatures have somehow risen and toppled my people; founding your own empire on their bones. No matter – my long sleep is over. As was prophesied Kassegore and Yig are dust. Only Wantir, the embodiment of death, is eternal! The rule of Iahkovah, the Hand of Death shall begin anew!”

As you come closer, slithering out of the Jade Sarcophagus is the largest Ssanu you’ve ever seen; it’s black leathery skin hanging like slough off a molting serpent. An aura of decay ripples out in waves from it.

Surrounding the exhibit, standing about it looking stupefied are a large number of the most important and influential citizens of the First City; the Tomal Khan and his wife, Nasha, Prelate Leola val’Assante’ and many others, including, for some of you, your own wives and husbands. They stand motionless, intermingled with wealthy pilgrims from across the continent, a pulsating yellow glow emanating from their eyes.

“But you won’t bow as easily as these mongrels. I can feel the hate and anger pulsing from you. In times past guardians, such as the ones you see broken and decayed here,” it gestures with its arms, taking in the ancient mummified remains of the ssanu placed in exhibition about the hall,” would deal with interlopers like you.

“But such is the gift of Wantir that even death cannot keep my servants from me!”

In a flash, Iahkovas’ eyes brighten; four of the enthralled guests shiver and are ripped apart from within like a wet paper bag. Glistening from their larval emergence, four large Ssanu coil before you, hissing threateningly.

“Deal with them!”

**Conclusion**

Throughout the shattered remains of the Emerald Society’s central hall, the people of the First City and visiting pilgrims awaken as if from a nightmare. Many break down into tears, realizing how their minds were violated by the inhuman creature, while others rush to the lifeless bodies of their loved ones. One such soul is the Tomal Khan, kneeling on the floor, cradling the body of his wife.

Silent tears roll down his face, writing a litany of heart wrenching pain that is mirrored in the face of others. But even with such loss, many more are alive because of your actions – not just those within this hall, but the many thousands in the City and possibly millions of other innocents about the continent that would have felt the yoke of the deathless serpent’s tyranny.

“It is done,” a voice rings out.

Standing in the center of the hall, one foot triumphant planted upon the quickly decaying corpse of the undead Ssanu, is the renowned Altherian scholar, Nobotu val’Abebi. “The prophecy has unraveled before our eyes! The Destroyer has risen and just as quickly slain by these Heroes!”

The Tomal Khan rises and his words cut through the resulting cacophony. “I cannot say whether this creature was the Destroyer prophesied, but I agree with the wise Nobotu – we all owe our lives, the very city’s existence to the bravery and unswerving dedication to facing down evil whenever and wherever it rises.

“Too few times has it been said and certainly not by enough of us.” Turning to face you the Tomal Khan of the First City bows deeply to you and your comrades. Others in the gathering do so as well.

“Though this night’s victory has been paid for with our dearest blood, we still stand, thanks to you!”

And with thunderous applause, the embodiment of the First City honors you.

**THE END**