

# Black Hand

# Rising



**Dave B Stevens**



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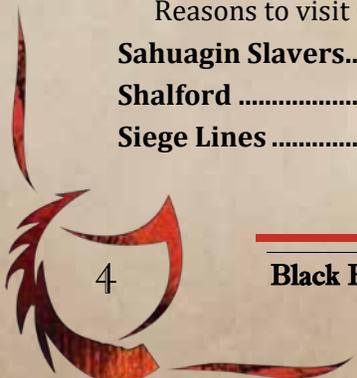
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# Introduction

## Welcome

Thank you for purchasing this campaign. I hope you enjoy it. You can provide feedback or ask questions via my website or Facebook page:

- [www.DaveBStevens.com](http://www.DaveBStevens.com)
- Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/DaveBStevens.Author](http://www.facebook.com/DaveBStevens.Author)

## Plot Summary

Without warning, after forty years of peace, the Edrassan Kingdom invaded the Temple Empire. Hilt Island provides the Templites with the majority of their diamonds. Not only is this critical to their economy, but diamonds form the core of the Templite religion. The Edrassan army is driving on the Hilt Island diamond mines, and the Templites must buy time for reinforcements to arrive.

The party is recruited by agents of the Temple Empire to harass the Edrassan's rear areas, disrupting their supply lines. They must travel to Hilt Island and assume the identity of a mercenary company called the Black Hand. On their journey, they must avoid assassins and deal with a giant squid.

Once they arrive on Hilt Island, they will meet their resistance contact, Jensa. She will ask them to conduct raids, forcing the Edrassans to divert troops from the front line to secure their rear areas. The Edrassans initially send ordinary soldiers after the party. However, as the party causes more and more damage, they come to the attention of Captain Thurn, the butcher of Wolfow, who sets out to catch or kill them. Should Captain Thurn fail, the Edrassan secret police, the ECSD, dispatch Agent Stretch to eliminate them.

Between raids, the party will have a number of exciting adventures in the forests, marsh and plains, in and around the south of the island.

### Adventure Start

For characters of Level 1

The party travels to Hilt Island, explores Carlin Town, meets Jensa their resistance contact, and begins attacking the Edrassan supply lines.

### Exploring (Part 1)

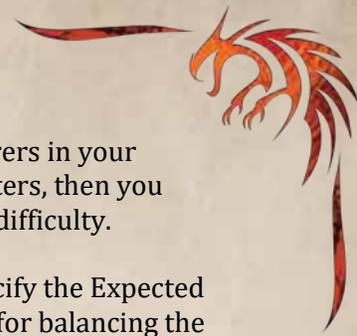
For characters of Levels 2-3

- The Edrassans respond to the party's continuing attacks by dispatching Captain Thurn with a powerful pursuit force.
- As they explore the Dark Forest the party encounters Edrin who asks for their help in defeating Nisha. She is stirring trouble between the beasts and fey creatures.
- They may discover a prisoner of war camp and might attempt a daring rescue.
- They will find the Aldritch Research Centre & Zoo and be asked to assist with a crisis. If they accept they will learn more of Wizard Aldritch.
- They will discover the atrocities that Captain Thurn carried out at Wolfow Village and will be asked for help by the Mayor. This will lead them to meet Relanore in Part 2.

### Exploring (Part 2)

For characters of Levels 3-5

- The Edrassans escalate their response to the party's attacks by dispatching Agent Stretch of the ECSD.
- They meet Relanore in Sheridan Village and he may ask them to escort his stepson, Soren, to Chronlan (the capital).
- The party must infiltrate the Siege Lines around Chronlan.
- In Chronlan the characters are hailed as heroes and tasked to locate the Alchemist (Efflam Striker).
- After many adventures the party reaches Westhill and must rescue the Alchemist's family from the ECSD.
- After locating the Alchemist in his underground lab, the party must escort him safely to the Templite lines. All the while fighting off Wizard Aldritch's attempts to capture him.
- At the Wizard's Tower the party must face Aldritch and bring him to justice, or die trying!



During this time they will come across clues that the Wizard Aldritch may not be as loyal as the Templites assume, and in fact actively assisted the enemy invasion.

As soon as enough Edrassan troops are diverted to protect their supply lines, the party will receive new orders to rescue an alchemist, Efflam Striker, who is vital to the war effort. They will make their way north and should meet Relanore, a mysterious cleric who asks them to escort his stepson to the capital Chronlan. Unfortunately, Chronlan is under siege by the Edrassans. The party must find a way through the siege lines.

Rescuing Efflam Striker and returning him to Chronlan, as well as other vital quests, helps turn the tide of the war. Along the way, the party should identify Wizard Aldritch as the traitor who made it so easy for the Edrassans to invade Hilt Island. They lead a force to his mountain tower and must break in to face this very powerful mage.

## Races

The campaign setting is my fantasy world of Centris.

The Temple Empire and Edrassan Kingdom are both approximately 70% human, with the balance made up primarily by dwarves, elves and gnomes.

Centris is a large and varied world, so any playable race may be used. However, you should let your players know that blending in with the locals may be difficult for the more exotic playable races.

## Season

It is early autumn after a long hot summer. The days remain pleasantly warm. Dawn is about 6.00am and sunset is about 7.30pm.

## Adapting Encounters

The adventure is optimised for a party of four adventurers which start at Level 1 and gain levels as stated in the adventure text.

If you have more, or less, adventurers in your party, or different levels of characters, then you may wish to adjust the encounter difficulty.

The more difficult encounters specify the Expected Party Level and provide guidance for balancing the encounter to the party's current abilities.

### Process to Adapt Encounters

1. Calculate the Average Party Level (APL) by:
  - a. Add up the total levels of all characters.
  - b. Divide the total by the number of characters.
  - c. Round fractions of 0.5 or greater up, and round fractions of less than 0.5 down.
2. Note the encounter's Expected Party Level (EPL). This is stated in the encounter text.
3. Determine the party strength using the following table:

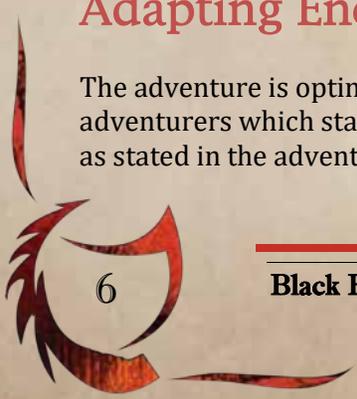
#### Party Strength Table

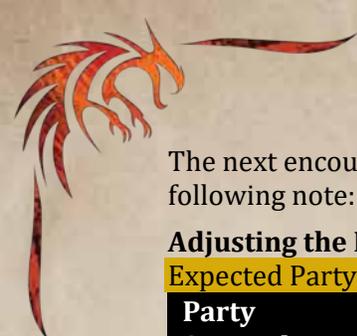
Party Composition	Average Party Level (APL) vs Expected Party Level (EPL)	Party Strength
2-3 characters	Less than	Very Weak
2-3 characters	Equal to	Weak
2-3 characters	Greater than	Average
4 characters	Less than	Weak
4 characters	Equal to	Average
4 characters	Greater than	Strong
5-6 characters	Less than	Average
5-6 characters	Equal to	Strong
5-6 characters	Greater than	Very Strong

4. Now that you know the Party Strength you may use the Adjustment Table, provided in the encounter text, to increase or decrease the encounter difficulty.

#### Example

Say that the party consists of two level 1 and one level 2 characters. Using the APL calculation (step 1 above) you add up the total levels as  $1 + 1 + 2 = 4$  divided by 3 characters = 1.33 rounded down = 1 (the APL).





The next encounter the party comes across has the following note:

### Adjusting the Encounter

Expected Party Level (EPL): 1

Party Strength	Adjustment (select one)
Very Weak	Use 2 less Guards
Weak	Use 1 less Guard
Average	No adjustment
Strong	Use 1 more Guard
Very Strong	Use 2 more Guards

Step 2 is to identify the EPL, which is stated as level 1 in this example.

Consulting the Party Strength Table (step 3) you look in the Party Composition column for the rows for 3 characters. The next column compares the APL which is 1, compared with the EPL which is also 1 so look for the row “Equal to”. Reading across that row shows “Weak” in the Party Strength column (because the party only has 3 characters instead of 4). Therefore, it is recommended that you follow the adjustment for “Weak” in the Adjusting the Encounter box above which states to “Use 1 less Guard”.

## Flanking

The encounter difficulty assumes that you are using the optional Flanking Rule (on page 251 of the DMG).

## Party Composition

There are a number of encounters with larger groups of soldiers and a party without area of effect spells/weapons may find it harder to deal with those situations. You may wish to encourage one or more of the party to equip themselves appropriately.

## Character Backgrounds

The campaign takes place predominantly on Hilt Island. You may wish to offer one of the player characters a background where they grew up on the island. Perhaps in the village of Woflow, with one or more brothers and sisters. Later, when they learn that many of the villagers were taken as slaves for giving aid to the rebels, this will make it

personal for them.

Woflow is a village on the southeast coast of Hilt Island in the Temple Empire. Although predominantly a human village, there is a mix of other races.

Other characters may come from the Temple Empire mainland or some other country. The Edrassan Kingdom is an evil empire, but of course, there are good people in any setting. However, the party will be fighting the Edrassans throughout this adventure so if a character grew up in the Edrassan Kingdom, the Game Master needs to discuss this carefully with the player to prevent conflict within the party.

You can find more background information on the Temple Empire and Edrassan Kingdom in Appendix D: People & Place Names on page 123.

## Background Story

A background story describing the invasion of Hilt Island is in Appendix J: Background Story on page 147. This includes a link to the story online which you can provide to your players. The story has no spoilers for the campaign but sets the stage nicely.

## Large Battles

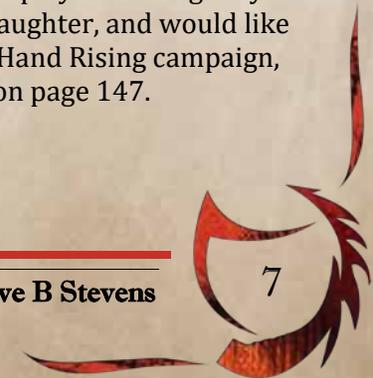
Some of the battles in this campaign involve many human soldiers. If you don’t have sufficient miniatures to represent these battles, you can use dice, counters or any other suitable markers.

## Printable PDF & JPG Maps

Printable maps in PDF format are provided for your convenience for all important locations. Maps are also provided as JPG images for use in your favourite virtual tabletop software. Refer to Appendix I: Maps on page 131.

## Beastmaster’s Daughter

If you have already run your players through my adventure Beastmaster’s Daughter, and would like to link them into the Black Hand Rising campaign, then refer to the appendix on page 147.





## Game Master Map



Hilt Island is approximately 250 miles across at its widest point. It is part of the Temple Empire.

The Temple Empire mainland is to the west of the island and the Edrassan Kingdom is to the east.

The campaign takes place in the southeast of the island.

The map below is designed to be printed and then folded in half along the dotted line.

When folded in half, locations below the fold are described in Exploring (Part 1) on page 23, and above the fold locations are described in Exploring (Part 2) on page 58.





# Adventure Start

## Player Introduction

You may wish to advise the players:

- The objective is to have fun and create a memorable and enjoyable adventure together.
- The life of an adventurer is a dangerous one, and there is a genuine risk of your character dying, particularly if poor decisions are made.
- The adventure text assumes that the party knows each other and will start the adventure together. However, if you would prefer you could have the characters meet for the first time and roleplay the encounter, perhaps at The Snappy Puppy tavern.
- Go around the table and have the players introduce themselves and their character.
- At the beginning of each session after the first, it's often helpful and fun to have the players recall what happened during the last session with the Game Master filling in any important details that they miss.

## Getting to Hilt Island

Sections of text with **this coloured background** should be read aloud to the players:

You are in the coastal town of Shale, in the Edrassan Kingdom. Over the past few evenings, drinking in the local tavern, you got to know a man named Shaw. He has taken you into his confidence and given you a letter of introduction which you believe is your ticket to adventure and riches.

You are on your way to a covert meeting at a warehouse. It is late evening, and you are on the main street heading north. The letter tells you to follow the main street and take the last road on the left before leaving town. Proceed to the warehouse at the end of the street. You're meeting a man named Eamon, and the meeting is in 20 minutes time. The walk will take about 10 minutes. The letter says to make sure that you're not followed.

It is dark and cold with a chill wind. There are a few townspeople around, but all are going about their business quickly in order to spend as little time outside as possible.

They aren't being followed.

Ask the party what they would like to do.

They met Shaw in the local tavern (The Snappy Puppy).

## The Warehouse

The last warehouse at the end of the street is in disrepair. Ill-fitting double wooden doors face the street. There is no gap to the adjacent building on the left side, but on the right of the warehouse is an alley with a dim light. Without this light, you'd think the derelict warehouse was abandoned.

If the party investigates the light:

Looking down the alley, you see that the light is coming from a window about halfway along the warehouse's ground floor. There is a wooden door next to the window.

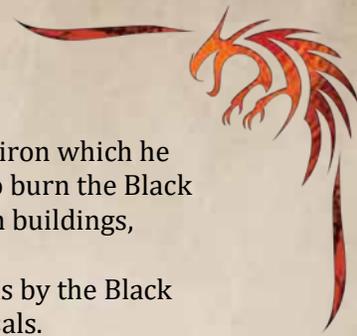
If the party knocks, the door is opened by Eamon. The door is not locked, so if they simply open the door, they see Eamon sitting at the table.

The door opens into a workers break room. At one end is a bench facing an unlit fireplace. A large wooden table fills the rest of the space with a dozen wooden stools. There is a lantern on the table.

Eamon is a human **commoner** wearing a purple velvet suit with a silk cravat.

**Game Master Tip:** Names in **bold** have stats and descriptions in Appendix A or B depending on whether they are Monsters or Non-Player Characters (NPCs).





Eamon looks entirely out of place in this dingy room. He asks the party for the letter of introduction that Shaw gave them and offers them a seat at the wooden table. Eamon removes a handkerchief from his pocket and places it on the stool before he sits down.

Eamon has the following information for the party:

- The Edrassan Kingdom attacked the Temple Empire. You’ve heard rumours of this, but Eamon has detailed information.
- The party knows that the Temple Empire and the Edrassan Kingdom are the major powers in the region and have been at peace for more than 40 years.
- King Torrent took over rule of the Edrassan Kingdom about six months ago when his father passed away. The party are currently in the Edrassan Kingdom in the coastal town of Shale.
- The Edrassans attacked the Empire on a broad front about a month ago, both on the mainland and on the vital island of Hilt which is where Eamon would like the party to go. The journey will take ten days by ship.
- The Temple Empire has been trying to set up organised resistance behind the lines, but the Edrassans have undertaken ruthless reprisals against the civilian population.
- The Temple authorities want an outside group of adventurers to pose as mercenaries and attack Edrassan’ supply wagons and communications. They hope that this deception will prevent more innocent bloodshed.
- You will be paid 100 gp for every attack you make. You may also keep all the booty that you capture.

Eamon asks the party for a commitment before giving more details, “What say you?” Assuming the party agree, Eamon continues:

- The party will be called the “Black Hand”, a fictitious company of mercenaries.
- Eamon provides:
  - cloaks and shield covers emblazoned with a black hand;
  - parchment sheets covered with a black hand motif; and

- a black hand branding iron which he explains can be used to burn the Black Hand logo into wooden buildings, wagons, etc.
- All attacks should be marked as by the Black Hand to prevent civilian reprisals.
- Merchant ships from Shale regularly leave for Carlin Town, the beachhead of the Edrassan invasion of Hilt Island. Take the first available ship. The fare will be about 4 gp each but Eamon provides 5 gp each to be safe.
- Eamon stresses that the party should arrive openly in port with the Black Hand motif shown widely. If you make yourself known to the local garrison so much the better.
- Then go to Jensa, a local merchant, at her shop which is called “Non-Magical Tricks”. She will be your local resistance contact. You say, “The Black Hand is rising,” and she will reply, “None too soon.”
- Then you will commence your attacks on the Edrassans.
- Eamon’s motivation: Eamon was born on Hilt Island and moved to Shale 10 years ago to start his import/export business. His loyalty lies with his homeland (Hilt Island, Temple Empire).

Eamon says, “Good luck. We should leave separately. I’ll go first. Wait 5 minutes, then follow.”

## Alley Assassination

When Eamon leaves, assassins drop from the rooftops and kill him. If the party didn’t hear Eamon’s dying gurgle (DC12 Perception), then as they leave, they see two dark figures bending over Eamon’s body. These are **Junior Agents** of the Edrassan Criminal & Security Directorate (ECSD). All ECSD NPC’s have their own sub-section of Appendix B on page 115 (All NPCs with bold names can be found in Appendix B).

### Adjusting the Encounter

For instructions on how to use the following table to adjust this encounter, refer to Adapting Encounters on page 6.

