



CAMPAIGN WORKBOOK: THE BLASPHEMER

By James Wyatt

illustration by Patrick McEnvoy

*Dragons fly before the Blasphemer's legions,
scouring the earth of his righteous foes.
Carnage rises in the wake of his passing,
purging all life from those who oppose him.
Vultures wheel where dragons flew,
picking the bones of the numberless dead.
But the Blasphemer's end lies in the void,
in the maelstrom that pulls him down
to darkness.
On his lips are words of blasphemy,
the words of creation unspoken.
In his ears are the screams of his foes,
bringing delight to his heart.
When he speaks all doors are opened
and all chains are broken,
all law is repealed and chaos is unbound.*

The earth groaned in protest and pain as the dragonfire coursed over it. Kathrik Mel crouched down and placed his palm on the ground. The grass died at his touch, and the earth's outcry grew louder in his ears. He lifted his hand, looked at his fingers, and rubbed away flecks of gray ash from the tips. He drew a slow breath, and the mingled aromas of autumn and smoke turned to rot in his nostrils. He stood, stretched his arms wide, and shouted.

"Forward! Trample their bones into the ground! For Kathrik Mel!"

His warriors took up the cry: "Kathrik Mel! Kathrik Mel!"

He felt the heat of the dragonfire at his back and smiled. The warriors before him were too slow. He spoke a word, and fire leaped around him to lash at their backs, impelling them forward. For a moment he was bathed in fire, and he cackled.

As he strode behind his onrushing horde, he listened to the cries of the earth, searching for the painful harmonies of the Gatekeepers' seal and the stifled chorus behind it. Softly, he began to hum his part of that entropic chorus, a song of madness that would unmake the seal—the song that would soon unmake the world.

The bulk of the Aundairian forces had closed the gap while Gaven faced the dragon, and bodies in Aundairian blue lay alongside those in the leather and fur of the Carrion Tribes, their blood flowing together on the gore-slick ground. As the wind whipped around him, he was a still point in the center of a raging tempest, the noise of battle swept away in the whirlwind. He was seized with the sudden sense that he'd been there before—witnessed this exact scene before. A crush of thunder shook the earth, and the wind fell.

An alien, incomprehensible sound replaced all the noise of battle and the howl of the wind—a string of syllables with no meaning, sounds that signified the unmaking of the world. They tore at his ears and ripped at his mind, defying him to form sense or reason.

All around him, soldiers and barbarians fell to the earth, hands pressed to their ears, mouths wide in silent howls of agony. They parted like a subsiding flood, leaving only two figures standing in their wake.

One was Rienne—so close, no more than ten yards away—her face wrenched in pain, both hands clutching Maelstrom's hilt. Her mouth moved, forming words Gaven couldn't understand, as though their structure and meaning were her only defense against the sound of the Blasphemy.

The other figure was a tall man in bloodstained plate armor, twisting ivory horns rising from the brick-red skin of his brow. Blasphemy streamed from his mouth as he raised a flaming sword to the sky. His burning eyes fell on Rienne and anger twisted his face, and he strode toward her to cut her down.

THE BLASPHEMER

The Blasphemer and his barbarian horde are an epic threat facing the world of Eberron. In *Dragon War*, Gaven and Rienne defeat the Blasphemer and halt his horde's advance across the Aundair River. In your campaign, though, it might fall to your player characters to stop Kathrik Mel before he breaks the Gatekeepers' seals and destroys the city of Fairhaven.

THE BLASPHEMER LORE

History or Nature DC 20: From time to time, warlords arise in the Demon Wastes who manage to unite a handful of the normally warring Carrion Tribes under a single banner. Such alliances rarely last long, and never long enough to actually cross the Labyrinth and the Icehorn or Shadowcrag Mountains to threaten the Eldeen Reaches. They might pose a threat to the Ghaash'kala orcs of the Labyrinth, but present no danger to the civilized lands to the east.

Arcana DC 25: The Draconic Prophecy hints of a mighty war leader who could lead a terrible army of warriors, supported by dragons, to scour the earth. The Prophecy calls this leader the Blasphemer, suggesting that he is capable of unspeaking the words of creation that are said to have formed the world—or the words of the Prophecy itself.

Arcana or Nature DC 30: The elders of the Eldeen Reaches have legends of a fiendish creature who will come to break the seals of the Gatekeepers and unleash the madness of the Far Realm of Xoriat upon their land once again.

Kathrik Mel, the Blasphemer		Level 22 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling		XP 4,150
Initiative +18	Senses Perception +16; low-light vision	
Inspire Furor aura 1; when a minion ally adjacent to Kathrik Mel is reduced to 0 hit points, it can make a saving throw. If it saves, it takes no damage from the attack.		
HP 205; Bloodied 102		
AC 38; Fortitude 35; Reflex 33; Will 34		
Resist fire 15		
Speed 6		
⚔ Bloodclaw (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon		
+29 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 fire damage. Effect: The target is marked until the end of Kathrik Mel's next turn.		
⚔ Bloodclaw Strike (opportunity action, when an adjacent marked target leaves a square or makes an attack that does not include Kathrik Mel; at-will) ♦ Fire, Fear, Weapon		
+29 vs. AC; targets the triggering enemy; 2d10 + 6 fire damage and the target is immobilized and takes a -5 penalty on attack rolls until the end of its turn.		
🗨 Unspeak Creation (standard; recharge ☐ ☐ ☐) ♦ Psychic		
Ranged 5; Kathrik Mel speaks blasphemy that begins to erase the target from existence; +27 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 8 psychic damage and ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends).		
🔊 Song of Blasphemy (standard; encounter) ♦ Psychic, Zone		
Close burst 10; +27 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 8 psychic damage. The burst creates a zone of reality-rendering words that lasts until the end of Kathrik Mel's next turn. A creature that enters or starts its turn in the zone takes 15 psychic damage. Sustain minor: The zone persists.		
The Song Goes On (free, when Kathrik Mel saves against the stunned or dazed condition; at-will)		
Kathrik Mel sustains his song of blasphemy.		
Alignment Chaotic Evil	Languages Supernal, Common, Draconic	
Str 27 (+19)	Dex 21 (+16)	Wis 21 (+16)
Con 21 (+16)	Int 23 (+17)	Cha 25 (+18)
Equipment plate armor, Bloodclaw (longsword)		

THE BLASPHEMER'S TACTICS

Kathrik Mel is a warlord who leads his forces from behind, driving them forward with whips of flame if they advance too slowly against his foes. He uses his curved longsword, Bloodclaw, to cut down foes that draw too close to him—or minions that fail him. Only if he is seriously threatened by a worthy foe does he use *song of blasphemy*, since the horrid syllables spilling from his mouth harm his allies as much as his enemies.

The Blasphemer uses *unspeak creation* as a punishment for insubordination off the battlefield, but uses it in battle as he strides toward a significant enemy, starting the battle with an unfair advantage from range.

DEFEATING THE BLASPHEMER

In *Dragon War*, Kathrik Mel was a virtually unstoppable opponent. When he faced Gaven, who wielded the prophesied power of the Storm Dragon, the nearly godlike power of the two epic opponents canceled out, actually tearing a rift in the fabric of creation. When Rienne faced the Blasphemer, her sword, Maelstrom, and the Blasphemer's own blade seemed content to fight each other without letting a single blow past to the ones who wielded them, conspiring together to contribute to the unmaking of the world. If you want, you can recreate the sense that the Blasphemer's death is a subject of the Prophecy just as his life is, making him impossible to kill except in a specific way.

The key is to ensure that the players have some way of knowing that the enemy they face is no ordinary foe and they'll need extraordinary means to defeat him. That might be as simple as a verse of Prophecy, though it took Rienne a long time to

understand what the Prophecy meant in saying, "his end lies in the void, in the maelstrom that pulls him down to darkness."

However, the characters shouldn't feel like they're bound to the Prophecy. *The Draconic Prophecies*, ultimately, is about the characters writing their own destinies. Both Gaven and Rienne become playwright as well as player in the drama unfolding around them, and both achieve power by relinquishing the power they have learned to rely on. A confrontation with the Blasphemer can be a similarly dramatic moment for at least one player character, if that works with the story you and your player envision for that character. It might be a part of the character's epic destiny, or just a climactic moment in the character's long story in the campaign.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE BLASPHEMER

Kathrik Mel marches with an innumerable horde of Carrion Tribe warriors. You might build an encounter similar to the ones described in *Dragon War*, where the player characters stand alongside defenders of the Eldeen Reaches and, later, Aundairian soldiers trying to prevent the Blasphemer's horde from crossing the river into Aundair. Thousands of Carrion Tribe barbarians clash with the defending armies in battles that take place "off-stage" from the actions of the characters, while the heroes mow down large numbers of Carrion Tribe degenerates (*EBERRON Campaign Guide*, page 120) and face off against more significant threats before finally confronting the Blasphemer.

In *Dragon War*, Kathrik Mel sings his *song of blasphemy* in the thick of battle, slowly weakening the Gatekeepers' seals beneath the battlefield. However,

you might want to build an adventure that takes him away from the press of battle, making it easier for the characters to confront him face to face. Perhaps he has to descend into an underground shrine and place his hands on the Gatekeepers' seal to unweave its magic, and the characters are charged with stopping him there. He would naturally bring a bodyguard of Carrion Tribe blessed champions (*ECG* page 120) with him into the shrine, or his retinue could include a rakshasa noble (*Monster Manual*, page 217), black slaad (*MM* 239), nothic mindblight (*Monster Manual* 2, page 168), or other appropriate creatures.

About the Author

James Wyatt is the D&D® Design Manager for Wizards of the Coast Roleplaying R&D. He was one of the lead designers for 4th Edition D&D and the primary author of the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*®. He was one of the designers of the *Eberron*® Campaign Setting, and is the author of several Eberron novels.