

Team battle (The Eye of Winter's Fury)

The following battle is optional and replaces entry 584 in the printed edition of *The Eye of Winter's Fury*. The rules for team battles can be found on the 'Downloads' page of the official DestinyQuest website.

1 (Entry 584)

A sudden lurch. You feel yourself being lifted, legs kicking through empty space. Above you, powerful wings beat against the air.

'Stop struggling,' hisses a voice, barely audible over the cracking, booming crescendo of splintering earth. From below, great plates of rock are thrown up into your path, whilst spinning stone and masonry whip past at speed. Somehow, your winged rescuer is able to weave their way through the confusion, as if possessing some innate sixth sense.

An archway looms ahead, cut into a high wall of stone. For a moment you are headed straight for it, then an abrupt turn takes you hurtling away - just in time, as a cart-sized boulder smashes into the wall, obliterating everything in a cloud of dust.

A series of rocky ledges stream past, blurring into a dark streak.

'Let me go!' You grab the wrists of the creature – its claws having hold of your jerkin. Cold fire races from your fingertips, searing into its flesh. You hear a snarl of anger.

'Let me go,' you intone again.

Black stone rushes up to meet you. The impact is sudden and hard; one that would surely have broken every bone in your body. Instead, you feel the shudder of the impact, then the disorientating sensation that you are sliding backwards. The ground is tilting, rising up like the prow of a ship meeting the surge of a wave. Once again, you try and grapple for a hand-hold, but the stone is smooth as glass. From below you, a terrible heat hammers against your body. It fills you with pain.

Wings sweep across you again. A clawed hand settles around your arm. 'Do you want to be saved, fool?' booms the voice.

Without waiting for an answer, you are lifted up, as the stone crumbles and drops away beneath you, falling into a fiery void. You are rising, wings beating either side of you, filling your head with thunder. Then you are travelling at speed along a widening crevasse, its dark walls dropping away with a menacing, grinding din. Another sickening lurch, and you are ascending still further, towards a wide shelf – where you are finally released, left to roll and tumble across the rock.

You come to rest on your back, dizzy and disorientated. On a nearby boulder, the demon has alighted, his silver-flecked wings folding back to reveal black-scales and runed armour.

You start to draw your weapons, then hesitate. The demon has made no move to attack you. He simply watches you, as if waiting for something.

Recognition to dawn.

'You! You're the one who saved me from the Wiccans.'

The demon shrugs his broad shoulders, spiked with bone. 'A means to an end. Come.' He flexes his wings, then kicks off from the stone, gliding across a slope of rubble to another plane of rock above. As you follow him, you realise you can no longer see the sky or the ruined city; you are underground. It must be utterly dark, but your eyes can see as perfectly as day.

You scabble after the demon, scaling the rubble to find yourself at the mouth of a tunnel. Black tree-like roots drip from its ceiling, seeping across the walls and floor.

The demon looks back, a smile twisting his lips, then he ducks beneath the tunnel opening.

'What is this place?' You hurry to catch up, your eyes drawn to the knife-sharp thorns growing out from the vines.

'A corruption,' replies the demon, pushing back the dark creepers. 'And we are its salvation.'

The tunnel twists like a serpent, its coils winding tighter and tighter until you almost convinced you are moving in a never-ending circle, making no progress in any direction.

Then all of a sudden the tunnel ends, the walls pulling back to reveal a vast cavern, illuminated by violet-glowing crystals. The demon ducks under a black root and steps forward into the light.

At the centre of the cavern, the roots converge to form a gnarled old tree, its misshapen form twisting its way towards the high ceiling. There, beneath the dome-like rock, leafless branches fan into dark claws, scratching against the rock as if seeking escape.

‘Nordrassil,’ hisses the demon.

With a creaking snap the tree starts to move, its plates of blackened bark loosening and sliding apart. The chill of the cavern quickly becomes an oppressive cold, sending frost crackling across stone and root. It glistens off the tree, forming rows of crystalline leaves along each of its dark limbs.

You draw your weapons, feeling the answering chill of the Norr rushing through your body, coating you in sparkling rime frost.

Around the demon, similar magics have started to coalesce. His wings snap back from his shoulders, his clawed hands pooling balls of black flame. ‘This is an ancient guardian,’ he snarls. ‘Born of a corrupted seed from the great tree of life, Yggdrasil.’

Life. The word rumbles back from the cavern walls. *Life. Life. Life.*

The tree begins to rise, lifting upwards on a mound of rock and soil. Something is clearly ripping itself free from below, tearing through the stone as if it is nothing more than a film of mud.

With a pained moan, the tree’s branches stretch forward, splaying into gnarled fingers. They dig deep into the ground, raking great furrows as they seek for purchase, dragging some living aberration from out of the earth.

A cold shadow washes over you.

The withered old tree has vanished. In its place stands an immense giant of rock, its broad shoulders mantled in the tree’s bark.

Boulders have become limbs, thorny roots the veins that snake about the infernal beast, pulsing with malign life.

And between the cracks and fissures a wicked darkness shines. *Death.* The beast rumbles. *Death. Death. Death.*

The demon shares a glance with you. ‘Sounds like an invitation, shall we?’

You must now fight the following team battle alongside a hero from *The Heart of Fire*:

	Speed	Magic	Armour	Health
Nodrassil	14/16*	10/12*	15/17*	200
Shade	14	9	6	30
Shade	14	9	6	30
Shade	14	9	6	30

Special abilities

- ✧ Shades of the Asynjur (*): At the start of the third round of combat, four tortured shades will be summoned. They immediately raise Nordrassil’s *speed*, *magic* and *armour* by 2 until they are defeated.
- ✧ Spiteful spirits: At the end of each combat round, heroes must take 1 damage from every surviving shade, ignoring *armour*.
- ✧ Spirit of vengeance: When each shade is defeated, they immediately inflict 3 damage to each hero, ignoring *armour*, and heal Nordrassil for 10 *health*. (Once Nordrassil is reduced to zero *health*, he cannot be healed.)
- ✧ Sapping your will: Once Nordrassil is reduced to 50 *health* or less, it starts to ooze poisonous sap. At the end of each combat round, each surviving hero must take a *speed* challenge. If the result is 20 or less, the hero is hit and must take 1 dice of damage, ignoring *armour*. If the result is 21 or more, you dodge the sap.
- ✧ Tank the boss!: Any round that a hero is not attacking Nordrassil, then Nordrassil will automatically hit a random hero (roll a die: 1-3, 4-6 to decide which hero), inflicting 4 dice of damage ignoring *armour*. This

damage cannot be avoided.

Once Nordrassil is defeated, any remaining shades are also defeated (and heroes do not take damage from 'spirit of vengeance'). If you manage to defeat this corrupted nightmare, restore any lowered attributes, then turn to 4.

2

With the Tree of Corruption defeated, you may now help yourself to one of the following special rewards:

Loki's promise (talisman) +1 speed +5 health Ability: trickster, charm	Desolation span (left hand: shield) +2 speed +4 armour Ability: overpower	The Fell (main hand: axe) +2 speed +6 brawn Ability: heavy blow
--	---	---

Once you have updated your hero sheet, turn to 5. If you still need to choose a reward for another hero, turn to 4.

3

With the Tree of Corruption defeated, you may now help yourself to one of the following special rewards:

Ender's game (ring) +2 magic +2 health Ability: blizzard	Codex of Syn (main hand: spell book) +2 speed +5 magic Ability: freeze, frostbite	Sorrow wood (necklace) +1 speed +2 magic Ability: curse, heal
--	---	---

Once you have updated your hero sheet, turn to 5. If you still need to choose a reward for another hero, turn to 4.

4

Your blows smash through the giant's defences, ripping through its enchanted roots and sending black sap spraying across the cavern. The demon fights with a similar frenzy, his movements blurring with uncanny speed as he dodges and weaves about his opponent, displaying some innate sixth sense.

The giant stumbles, what is left of its body struggling to right itself. You pour the magic of the Norr into your weapons and strike, the giant's body freezing into glistening blocks of ice. The demon draws back his fists and then snaps them forward, driving a barrage of magic into the downed creature, shattering the ice into a thousand dazzling shards.

Congratulations! You have defeated this monstrous guardian. If you are a warrior, turn to 2. If you are a mage, turn to 3. If you are a rogue, turn to 6.

5

Inside the hollow depression created by the creature, there is another tunnel winding away to darkness. The demon nods to himself.

'My visions are true. This is what the tree was guarding.'

You follow the demon into the passageway, which snakes deep into the rock before widening into another large cavern. The walls are perfectly smooth, rising up to form an immense multi-faceted dome. Green light dances across the dark stone, illuminating the eight giant statues that stand silent at the centre, facing inward where a pool of emerald radiance shimmers and dances.

You approach the circle, passing the skeletal remains of sorcerers, their black robes curled in tatters around half-melted bone. Crystal fragments crunch underfoot, giving voice to the only sound in the silent chamber.

'What is this place?' You step over another body, moving to inspect the nearest statue. Each one stands over six metres tall – humanoid in shape, save for the narrow sweep of their heads, curving back into immense pronged ridges. The stone is black and smooth, like obsidian, veined with mineral hues of iron and copper. A silvery runic band spirals down from their broad shoulders, winding around their torso and limbs like a cobwebbed cloak.

Tentatively you put a hand to the surface of the stone. It is deathly cold to the touch. And yet, just like the witch's statues, you sense a life beating deep within – weak like a dying flame.

The statues form a circle, arms raised, palms held outwards, bodies leaning in as if pushing against an immense weight. Your eyes follow the line of their blank, staring eyes, to the whirling pool of green light.

'The Well of Urd,' you gasp, remembering what Skoll had told you. 'These are titans – they sacrificed themselves to hold back the demons, to stop them from using the well to enter our world.' You glance back at the burnt remains of the mages.

'A scholar then,' growls the demon, sounding impressed.

'What happened here?' You kick at one of the bones.

'A lot of bad things,' he replies darkly.

'Enlighten me.' You shoot him a cold glare.

'Very well. Melusine used her magic – and that of her coven – to weaken the titans. They were able to pull demons through. One in particular – Cerebris. He is the demon who is destroying the seals of Jormungdar's prison.' The dark angel raises his molten eyes towards the domed ceiling. 'For six hundred years he has been growing, spreading, digging deep into the earth. His magic weakens the seals: powerful wards that the titans and dwarves crafted an age before.'

'Why did you bring me here?' You step warily towards the glowing pool.

'Are we talking in the grand sense – or for my own selfish whim?' The demon's lips curl back, revealing a crescent of white fangs. 'I needed

you to do one thing for me. Something I couldn't do myself.'

In the distance you hear another tremor, tearing through the innards of the underworld. Your thoughts turn to your companions, and what may have become of them.

Anise...

'You will see her again.' The demon catches your eye.

You snarl, hands moving to your weapons. 'Enough games! Why am I here? Answer me, demon.'

'Demon?' The creature snorts. 'Not so long ago, I was just like you, Arran. Not a prince, no – but I had my humanity. What you see is through no choosing of my own.'

'You sound like the witch! Blaming others for your misfortunes.'

The demon bristles. 'I saved your life. Have you forgotten?'

'I died. Did you forget that, too?'

'I put you on the path – ensured your destiny would come to pass.'

'Riddles!' You tug your weapons free. 'Tell me why I'm here!'

The demon gives a rumbling growl. 'Because you're special. Does that please you? No-one else could have made the sacrifice. To give up everything – to pass through the eye of the storm. Without you, I would never have been able to reach this well.'

You shake your head, bewildered. 'That's it? You used me... just to kill the sentinel... and... and that thing back there?'

There is another distant echo, of crashing rock and earth being rent asunder.

'Your fate shines bright, Arran. You have a greater purpose to serve.' The demon edges closer to the green pool, its shimmering radiance picking out the silver veins of his wings. 'I'm simply here for vengeance. That same cold desire as you, Arran. Someone took something from me – an artefact of great power. His name is Lorcan. And this will lead me straight to him.'

'How?' You gesture to the stone titans. 'You would try and break their magic?'

The demon scoops his hand into the pool. He holds it out before him, letting the green light spill between his fingers. 'No. The titans' magic is a barrier. It stops the creatures of the shroud from travelling into our world. But the magic will not deny someone achieving its opposite.'

Your mind fumbles for his meaning. 'Wait, you mean this is a gateway – you intend to *enter* the shroud?'

The demon stretches its wings. 'To find Lorcan, yes.'

You peer down into the swirling depths, feeling the familiar cold of the Norr rising up from its vaporous currents. It is almost enticing... an escape... freedom.

For a moment you feel your spirit being tugged towards it, joining with the chill waters, submitting to their undertow, letting them drag you down and down, back to the Norr... 'No!' You stagger back, fighting the compulsion. 'You can't. You'll die.'

'Ah, such touching concern.' The demon forms a mockery of a smile. 'Yes, I will die, eventually – that fate is written. And you're going to save the world.' His eyes fix on you with a steady gaze, so bright that the rest of his face is cast in shadow.

'No, stay! Help me. We must stop this demon – Cerebris. The witch. I cannot face them alone!' You resent the note of fear in your voice, but the loss of your companions and the pressing isolation of this underground realm has left you feeling suddenly vulnerable.

'Alone.' The demon holds your stare. 'That is the future I have seen. If I interfere, that weave will come undone – and she will win. I cannot allow that.'

You feel your anger rise again. 'Then go. Run – chase this Lorcan. I hope he's worth it!'

The demon watches you for some moments, holding back an unspoken thought. Then he releases a sigh. 'When this is done, do not pursue vengeance. Seeking to win back the throne of Valeron... it will not bring you peace, Arran. I am sorry.'

Rock crumbles beneath the beast's claws as he kicks off into the air, wings beating for a brief instant – then he drops, passing from sight

beneath the pool's shimmering surface. There is no disturbance, not even a ripple to hint at his passage. For some minutes you stare at the whirling currents of light, the demon's last words replaying in your mind.

It will not bring you peace, Arran. I am sorry.

The earth shifts and rumbles; dislodging a shower of dust from the domed ceiling. The tremor passes quickly, but it is enough to remind you of your purpose.

Turning away from the pool, you look around for the nearest exit. A jagged fissure in the nearby wall leads through into a rubble-strewn passageway. You make for it immediately, your thoughts now turned to the fate of your companions. Turn to 564 of the printed edition.

6

With the Tree of Corruption defeated, you may now help yourself to one of the following special rewards:

Dark divide	Night flight	Black vice
(main hand: sword)	(cloak)	(chest)
+2 speed +5 brawn	+2 speed +3 brawn	+2 speed +4 brawn
Ability: ice edge, piercing	Ability: haste, evade	Ability: deep wound

Once you have updated your hero sheet, turn to 5. If you still need to choose a reward for another hero, turn to 4.

☆☆☆