

Down: An Adventure in Two and a Half Minutes

A Beyonder Adventure

From Flying NightBear Games

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Prologue

*“For I am the daemon Annassa, come from the heavens to wreak my vengeance!”
Those are the last words the Evoker – you never found out his real name – driven mad by the sorcery he turned to, screamed at you as he went up in a brilliant white flame, followers watching in terrified awe. The wings he had grown on himself years ago flared brighter than the sun, feathers soaring and bursting as if they had minds of their own. And then it was darkness.*

And now it is... silent? You can't hear anything, but it's a strange sort of silence. Coming out of your daze you focus on it and see that no, it's not silence at all. In fact... yes! It's an immense noise, a kind of constant rushing so static that your brain had just shut it out. You struggle through the effort to open your eyes and... oh dear.

You look through your barely slitted eyelids to see the rest of your party and a good handful of “Annassa's” followers right at your side, and the surface of the Tamarran continent a distant patchwork below you. The rushing noise, you now realize, is the air whistling past your head as you plummet towards the earth.

This can't be good.

The Story so Far

About fifty years ago a Guild-trained human Evoker named Stel hit on what he thought was a jackpot: he had been studying sorcery and so-called “dark magic” for about a decade, and found a ritual he believed would bring him power by calling on Annassa, a sun god.

The ritual did indeed bring him power, but not quite in the way he expected: Annassa was far from a distant higher power, deigning to touch the mortal realm every now and then. Rather, it was a Fekxtah-child, a sort of primordial fey spirit born from the sun thousands of years ago. It inhabited the Physic plane, but wanted passageway into the material one to be reunited with its parent, with the sun.

When Stel made just such a passageway with his ritual, Annassa jumped on it and tried to completely consume Stel's spirit. But while the would-be sorcerer might have been unwise, he was no novice – he battled long and hard with the sun spirit, barely forcing it back into the Physic plane. In the process of such prolonged contact with it, he took some of its power, which manifested as a tremendous connection with Physic, an unnaturally long lifespan, and an unfortunate collapse into insanity.

In his dying breath, Stel released the seed of Annassa that had until then taken over his personality, and the Energy that decades of sorcery had infused into his body. The Annassa side of him wanted nothing more than to soar back to the sun and be free. It wove its way up through the material plane and brought the PCs and many of its followers with it before it truly died.

Unfortunately for the PCs and those followers, this left them about 20,000 feet above the surface of Tamarra.

This adventure is intended as a stand-alone module that begins in media res after Stel's death – it is implied that he died “off-screen” before the adventure begins. You can, of course, run a campaign with Stel and Annassa that leads up to this, but you don't need to run that campaign to run this module.

An important point about the backstory above is that the players did not defeat Stel. Rather, Stel burned out; he hit a tipping point where his internal struggles against Annassa resulted in the two destroying each other. The players may think they vanquished this mighty foe (ah, the lies we tell ourselves), but it's more that they happened to be there when Stel blew himself up.

The Fall

Starting from when they wake, the PCs have approximately two and a half in-game minutes until they hit the ground. You can use the Game Speeds option listed below, or you can track this yourself as much as you enjoy; during combat it's fairly easy to track moments and measure them exactly, but there may be times when it would be a pain to tick off each second individually. Use your judgment and have fun.

If one of your players is a dwaheely, or is able to fly for some other reason, don't deny them that ability – what fun is it to be in a falling adventure and not finally pull out those wings you've never really used? Remember that even if they can survive the fall, the rest of their party can't. It can be a lot of fun for that person to rush around as the only one who can really function at full capacity while everyone else tumbles through the air.

As for the fall itself: clearly, your players have to do something soon, as their characters have approximately no chance of surviving a 20,000 foot fall. If they can think of an ingenious solution, good for them! You should be proud. However, there are some outside factors that can both help and hinder them, described below.

The Speed of Down

Game Speeds

The PCs in Down may have many good things in their lives. An abundance of time is not one of them.

To drive home the urgency of this module – the PCs are constantly plummeting towards earth – you can measure it in real time. We recommend one of three speeds at which to play Down:

1. Drifting

Set your timer for five hours: each in-game moment (approximately one second) equals two real minutes. This is for players who don't like feeling pressured in their games; five hours gives enough time in this adventure that it should never have a real effect on players' decision-making other than as a flavorful backdrop for your story. Players who aren't familiar with Beyonder will have plenty of time to look up rules and Powers without feeling rushed.

2. Dropping

Set your timer for two and a half hours: each in-game moment equals one real minute. This is the speed we recommend for most players; it will give your game a sense of urgency without stressing out your players.

3. Hurling

Set your timer for one hour, fifteen minutes: each in-game moment equals half a real minute. We recommend this speed for experienced and focused players who want that sweet, sweet adrenaline rush you can only get from tabletop gaming.

Timing Your Game

When you begin your game, set a timer for the speed you picked. This way you can keep track of how long the PCs have been falling in-game without worrying about every detail of their interactions (“well, you said about three in-game sentences, and that would take maybe eight or nine seconds...”). Just remember: Drifting PCs fall for one moment per two minutes on your timer. Falling PCs fall for one moment per minute on your timer. Hurling PCs fall for two moments per minute on your timer.

This system will give a general sense of urgency to your game, but is not meant to track moment-by-moment actions exactly. When you go into moment-by-moment combat tracking, don't worry about this matching up exactly with the timer you have running. As with everything in this module (and this game), the device is here to add to your enjoyment rather than to constrain you. Let your imagination fly free as a butterfly.

The Rules of Falling

For this adventure assume the players are all falling at approximately the same rate (see the entry for Annassa's Feathers, below), meaning that by default you can treat them all as if they were on level ground. We recommend creating a simple map so that everyone knows where they are in relation to one another.

Some extra rules apply to the players while they're in freefall:

Moving

Players can move by using effects with physical force and by obtaining Feathers, both detailed below. Other than this, players must make an appropriate check v10 as a 1-m action to move 1/2/3/4 yards. “Appropriate” check in this context will often mean Athletics, but let your players be creative with this! If someone has Scholarship(Aerospace Engineering) or Luck(Right Place at the Right Time), they could certainly use those.

Using an effect

Powers that produce physical force of any variety knock the Power user back in the opposite direction they aimed it. A rough guideline for distance traveled is minimum 1 yard, plus 1 per either 1 magnitude or 2 levels (e.g. 6 yards total for a +5 magnitude Power, or 3 yards total for a level 4 Power).

Being hit by an effect

Characters hit with a tangible damaging attack, Power, or other effect are knocked back 1 yard per damage dealt. If they are dealt a moderate wound, they have to make a Survival check or spin out and lose consciousness for 2d6 moments.

Communication

Communication is difficult when you’re hurtling through the air, it turns out. When a character wants to talk to someone else, they should roll an Athletics(Yelling)v10 check or the listener should roll a Perception(Listen)v10 check. The person not rolling the check can Assist using the corresponding Talent. This allows communication at Touch/Close/Middle/Far distance. Characters get +1 to their roll to listen or yell, as well as to checks to assist, per feather they’ve collected.

As an example: Ordon has 3 feathers and an Athletics bonus of +7. Sympriono has 2 feathers and a Perception bonus of +5. Ordon is Close to Sympriono, and wants to yell to him that he thinks pie is better than cake, as a general rule. Sympriono rolls a 10 and adds 7 (+5 from Perception, +2 from two feathers) for a total of 17. Ordon adds +4 to Sympriono’s roll (+1 per +5 of Talent, as per Aiding rules, and then an additional +3 from three feathers). The total roll is then 21, which is a moderate success! Sympriono can hear Ordon, although he disagrees strongly because cake is clearly the superior dessert.

Annassa’s (ex) Followers

Ten followers were flown up with the PCs and are now falling with them. Their immediate action will be one of two things: either try to kill the PCs as vengeance for murdering Annassa, or collect feathers for themselves (see below). The followers are

attuned to Annassa's energy through repeated exposure to him, and so are much more likely to notice the feathers right off the bat.

While these followers will often turn into a combat challenge, remember that everyone's in the same boat: if they don't do something fast, they all hit the ground very soon. As such, it's very possible for at least some of the followers to ally with the PCs to try and create a solution that will let them all live.

Playing the followers

Each of the followers will have some general objectives in this scenario. Not all of them will be actively interested in attacking the PCs, nor in involving themselves at all.

Beyond Character Sheets for each NPC mentioned below accompany this adventure. The Character Sheets have the detailed stats you need for each NPC for this adventure.

In addition to the Character Sheets, we thought it would be useful to have some general tips for each NPC. This gives you a starting point on how you might run them during the adventure and give you an idea of their personalities. Feel free to modify this however you would like or even generate new NPCs. You can do that easily using the Beyond Builder, which is our [online Character Creation Tool](#).

Introductions to Annassa's Followers

Scholu

- **Character Type(s):**
 - Energetic Fighter
- **Race and role:**
 - Evoker, Barrier 2
 - Male ushen
- **What he's like:**
 - Generally he is kind.
 - He is distrustful of anyone outside of the cult of Annassa.
 - He is waking up from his devotion to Annassa, and is amenable to bargaining with the PCs.
- **What actions will he take:**
 - He is an expert at using the *Power Shove* and is very creative about how to use it.
 - He is stubborn and has a tendency to do the same thing over and over until he "gets it right."
- **Backstory**

- An experienced fighter, who had served in Tarnath's City Police Force for seven years before joining the cult of Annassa. Lots of experience in hand-to-hand combat.
- **Miscellaneous:**
 - Is still enamored of Voth, with whom he had a brief affair.
 - Dabbles with the vegetation of the area trying to make medicines and condiments.

Arzil

- **Character Type(s):**
 - Energetic Fighter
 - Fighter (Melee Combat)
- **Race and role:**
 - Evoker, Barrier 2
 - Female crown
- **What she's like:**
 - Aggressive and angry.
 - Arzil is waking up from her devotion, but is a generally power-hungry warrior.
 - She seems to have a very large chip on her very large shoulder.
- **What actions will she take:**
 - She will realize almost immediately that the feathers are the key to survival here.
 - She will split her time between collecting them and trying to murder the PCs in her rage at Annassa's death.
 - Her preferred Power is *Enhanced Armor*, though she can also use *Shove*.
 - She has expertise in Melee Combat talent and will often use this in combination with her Powers. For example, she may use *Shove* or *Dazzling Light* to distract her foes, and then attack them with a dagger or long knife using her quickness and precision.
- **Backstory**
 - She grew up in the Szreeszrick Town neighborhood of Tarnath where she grew up rough and always ready for a fight.
- **Miscellaneous:**
 - A close friend with Zzat. Their families are both from the same small town in the Northern Kingdom of the Szaskar Crown.

Silap and Lapsi

- **Character Type(s):**
 - Fighter (Melee Combat)
- **Race and role:**
 - They are brother (Lapsi) and sister (Silap), ishiri twins.
 - They are both trained fighters who Stel hired as his personal bodyguards.

- **What he's like:**
 - They are both quite cagey, a product of years spent as mercenaries.
 - Each has no interest in anything but surviving.
- **What actions will they take:**
 - They will be passive unless engaged.
 - They will do nothing but try to gather feathers (see below) for this module unless either is provoked by an attack, which means you can have them as passive background actors instead of deciding on every move they each make.
- **Backstory**
 - Silap: She and her brother were born in the ishiri city of Odo, in the Bedlam Prairie. She served in the Odo Guards, an ishiri army that served the Emperor Odo the Great. The twins have always fought side-by-side, back-to-back.
 - Lapsi: He and his sister were born in the ishiri city of Odo, in the Bedlam Prairie. She served in the Odo Guards, an ishiri army that served the Emperor Odo the Great. The twins have always fought side-by-side, back-to-back.
- **Miscellaneous:**
 - Lapsi and Silap care deeply and fiercely about each other.
 - Each would gladly sacrifice their life for their sibling.
 - Each had a deep devotion to Stel, and believe that collecting his feathers is a way to honor their (former) employer.

Grinnjo

- **Character Type(s):**
 - Priestess
 - Cook
- **Race and role:**
 - A female wellyn who was one of Annassa's priestesses.
- **What she's like:**
 - Still very zealous.
 - Essentially impossible to turn her to the PCs' side.
- **What actions will she take:**
 - She will try to grab feathers, but also attack.
 - She is quite athletic. She is very quick and has great dexterity with her wellyn tail.
 - She's had no formal training in combat. This combined with her energy and enthusiasm means that she will flail about unpredictably and, occasionally, very effectively.
- **Backstory:**

- She grew up in Tarnath, and loved food and cooking since she could carry a frying pan. While working as the top chef in one of Tarnath's most prominent inns, she fell in love with Stell. The rest is history.
- **Miscellaneous:**
 - She was one of Stel's most devoted wives, and she loved him deeply.
 - She can use her great passion for Stel, and her new grief for him, to fuel surprising physical actions, though they will not always be under her control.

Zzat

- **Character Type(s):**
 - Fighter
- **Race and role:**
 - A gender-fluid crown priest.
- **What they are like:**
 - Waking up from the devotion, but still quite zealous.
 - Possible, but difficult, to convince them to turn to the PCs' side.
- **What actions will they take:**
 - Zzat likes hand-to-hand combat using nothing but claws and teeth.
- **Backstory:**
 - When Zzat reached the teens years, they were drawn to anything spiritual. An afternoon trip to the Tarnath country-side to seek wisdom in the wilderness, ended as a permanent stay with the cult of Annassa.
- **Miscellaneous:**
 - A close friend with Arzil. They both grew up in the same small town in the Northern Kingdom of the Szaskar Crown.

Voth

- **Character Type(s):**
 - Craftsman (Stonemason)
- **Race and role:**
 - A male dwarf stonemason.
 - He sculpted statues for Annassa.
- **What he's like:**
 - Voth is actually quite a kind person.
 - He was pulled in by Annassa's power, but is rapidly awakening from that.
- **What actions will he take:**
 - It may take him a while to realize that feathers are up for the taking, but once he does he'll simply go for them and try to survive.
- **Backstory:**
 - Voth has indomitable energy and great natural toughness. He fights for goodness and justice. For several years now he has seen Stel as the embodiment of that quest for higher good, but now is not so sure.

- **Miscellaneous:**
 - Voth is quite enamoured of Scholu, with whom he had a brief relationship recently.

Annassa's feathers

Some of Annassa's energy still surrounds the players. It's not buoying them up, per se, but some of his feathers flew up with everyone else. Small, golden, and glowing brightly, these feathers fall unnaturally quickly, at the same rate as the PCs and followers. Some even dart around, flying amongst the larger beings.

The feathers are the most accessible key to a safe landing: gathering six, and thus activating their Annassa's Wing ability (see below), can cushion the fall.

The feathers are also the explanation for anything that your players might point out as impossible. Why is everyone falling at the same rate when drag should affect them differently depending on, for example, armor? How can they open your eyes to see while traveling at terminal velocity? It's those crazy feathers.

Powers of the Feathers

Players gain abilities based on the number of feathers they have in their possession:

Num	Ability
1	Holder gains a Move speed of 1
2	No additional effects
3	Holder's Move score is now 2
4	No additional effects
5	Holder's Move Score is now 3
6	Holder has the abilities conferred by Annassa's Wing (see below)

Players also gain +1 per feather to their checks to communicate and hear information over the rush of air, as detailed above.

Annassa's Wing

Six or more feathers in the possession of one character bond together, forming a soft halo of light around the PC. Anyone in possession of a Wing takes no falling damage from any height. In addition, the Wing's holder can expend three feathers (dissolving the wing unless it has at least nine feathers in it) as a 1-m action to extend this power

to one other person. This extension lasts 10-m, and the two characters must be in physical contact at time of impact for it to work.

When a player forms Annassa's Wing, they automatically gain knowledge of its abilities.

Stats of the Feathers

Move Score: fly 5

Difficulty to detect: *Perception*12

Defense Ratings

Outer	5
Inner	3
Ethereal	4
Combat	6

Special Abilities

Push: the feathers can lightly push floating/falling objects, either moving them horizontally with a speed of one or increasing/decreasing their vertical speed by a small amount (moderator's call).

Collecting the feathers

As noted in the feather stats, characters in the game require a *Perception*12 check to notice the feathers when they are actively looking for them. But how are you expected to keep track of where those 40 feathers are throughout the course of this adventure?

The answer is: don't.

Annassa's feathers are flying about, dancing and wheeling in the sunlight far above the earth. They won't stay in one place for long, and they can move fast. Catching a feather requires two checks: *spot*, then *catch*.

Spot (1-m)

The player makes a *Perception*12 check to spot any feathers within 5 yards of them. The players find 1/2/3/4 feathers.

Catch (2-m)

The player makes a suitable check against *Difficulty* 12 to catch a feather within their reach. Usually this will be a *Melee Combat* or *Athletics* check, but there are any number of talents or Powers that could work. Maybe your Evoker wants to use *Shove* to move a feather towards themselves. Great! Maybe your Mystic wants to freeform a Power that allows them to sense the Energies of all feathers

near them. If they make their roll, reward their creativity. If the user is successful, at any level, they catch and hold the feather.

The Personality of Annassa's Feathers

Emotional splinters: each of Annassa's feathers has its own personality, stemming from the emotions Annassa felt as he died.

Wrathful

These feathers hold the rage Annassa felt at being killed. They are malicious, and will do everything they can to hurt the PCs. This includes pushing them downwards and pushing them apart from each other.

Joyful

The part of Stel's mind that survived was, on some level, elated to finally be released from the insanity it had been trapped in. These are happy feathers! They will sometimes help the PCs by, for instance, pushing them towards each other or pushing up to slow their fall (although it would take a good fifteen or twenty to make the fall anywhere close to survivable), or simply dancing throughout the air with joy.

Serene

These feathers are the part of Stel that long ago made peace with his madness, the part that saw the ancient power that had irrevocably shattered his mind. They are inert as they fall, neither helping nor hindering anyone falling.

One of Annassa's Wings can be formed from any combination of these moods, as their desire to be together overrides differences in emotion, but the wing reflects its makeup.

Running This Adventure

Much of this adventure is going to depend on your players; you have the rules for the situation they're in and the people and objects around them. It's up to them to take control of the situation to get Annassa's feathers and stop themselves from falling. Below are some benchmark events for certain times within the adventure.

Five Moments (seconds)

- Arzil freeforms a simple Power that points an arrow to Annassa's feathers, indicating to their allies (and the PCs, if they notice with a Perception^{v12} check) that the feathers are important.

Six Moments (seconds)

- Arzil declares Shove to push herself towards Annassa's feathers.

- Scholu declares Shove to push Voth towards Annassa's feathers.
- Lapsi and Silap push off of each other to propel themselves at nearby feathers.

Two minutes (120 Moments/seconds)

- PCs hit lower cloud cover; they don't have much longer

Two and a half Minutes (150 Moments)

- Unless they've slowed themselves down somehow, they hit ground