



ABANDONING THE SKY

Chapter One: Escape from Viram-Tes



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Reaching Ever Skyward

Starting this Storyline

In ancient times, the land of **Syrenta** was rife with conflict. Great clans of orcs, giants, goblins, and ogres ravaged the countryside. Nations rose and fall, sending great armies marching to war with others, intent on conquering each other for glory and territory. Magical, fantastical beasts roamed the fields and hills of the land, posing threats to traders, explorers, and even the common folk in their towns. It was a dangerous land, and a dangerous time. So dangerous, that the leader of a city of magic decided it was in the best interest of his people to depart. For three thousand years, the city of Viram-Tes (Pronounced Vee-Ram-Tess) lived detached from the world below, safe from the ravages of time and conquest.

Escape from Viram-Tes is the first chapter in a long campaign that places the party in a land from a time beyond their own. It is friendly for newer players, and offers a way to grow into more complex challenges and abilities. This chapter focuses on getting the players started on the overarching storyline of the campaign, dropping them in the floating sky city of Viram-Tes. They'll begin their journey in the middle of a festival with a deep historical meaning for their people, which reveals the origin of their city. However, an unfortunate mix-up and deeply rooted plot will leave the party condemned to death, setting off the series of events that launches them on their great quest. Will they become the saviors of the floating city of their birth? Or will their journeys show them a world worth living in below?

The Floating Paradise: Viram-Tes

Viram-Tes is a great city of magic. For thousands of years, it has lived floating amongst the clouds, shielded by powerful magics from the world below, and aggressors above. It is protected and ruled by five powerful, immortal magi: Akraila the Towering, Viceryn the Emberstorm, Nysandra, Whisperer in the Forest, Drakkis of the Radiant Sky, and Zirala-Tal, Eye of the Stars. Magic provides for Viram-Tes' people, and the five council members find new ways to improve life for their followers once every few mortal lifetimes.

As a result, life in Viram-Tes is a luxury. The buildings are magically constructed and never require physical maintenance. Flowing water and waste disposal allows for seemingly "modern" devices such as showers, toilets and bathing chambers. It also allows for fantastical creations like magical brooms, mops, gardens that water themselves, and plants that are always blooming and beautiful. When introducing players to their lives in the city, it's safe to assume Viram-Tes has a magical answer for most modern conveniences and appliances. Disease is a distant dream, illness has no place amongst the perfect city. Crime is at an all time low, as such, guards, while they do exist, are seldom seen around the city and the garrison goes widely unused. Life in Viram-Tes is a pursuit of hobby and capability, where people seek knowledge and hope to create great things over the course of their lifetimes. Culture is a focus for the people as a whole – those who can create art and poetry are encouraged to do so, their great accomplishments then placed on display in many museums, preserved for all time.

Death, however, is not something that the council can prevent. Lifespans in the city are slightly longer than expected for short-lived humanoids, but shorter for long-lived humanoids. As such, most races tend to live to an age of around one hundred and fifty years at maximum. Great amounts of study have

been placed into trying to determine what affects the longer-lived races in this manner. The only constant over the last few thousand years, then, has been the Council itself.

Living Life in Viram-Tes

The players of our story should choose an age range of around 20 years, to 60 years of age. Most traditional backgrounds are applicable, but the players will have mostly experienced a life of luxury, and the ability to seek out their abilities and desires, and hone them at their whims. Viram-Tes uses traditional currency (Gold Coins, Silver, and Copper coins) to reward work done and pay for goods and services. The players can have earned their money from helping in the magical farms, tending the magical forests, helping maintain spells and enchantments, or producing artisanal items. Everyone is expected to contribute in some manner to the society's advancement and maintenance.

The players likely own property of their own inside the city. The story also sets them up as friends who have known each other for years. It's possible that some of the players share homes, have wives, husbands, children, or other family they care deeply about in that city. Hardship is not something most people in Viram-Tes have ever experienced, outside of the unfortunate eventuality of death.

Food is always fresh and of the highest quality. Water and alcohol flow in equal amounts. Fashion is a high pursuit, and the arts are highly respected. There isn't much in the way of a class divide, as even the more well-off people of Viram-Tes know that their luxuries rely on novice workers learning their trade upon farms, inside enchantment chambers, or working behind the counter at one of their favorite shops.

Viram-Tes is also a mixing pot of many different races. The city was once a trade hub when it still sat upon the world's surface, calling people of all races and births. When the city tore itself from the earth and soared skyward, it took those myriad peoples with it. As such, the city has a diverse collection of peoples of different racial origins, and also gives room for half-breed races, which are commonly accepted amongst the people of the city.

The Council of Viram-Tes

The Council is the ruling body of the city. It's composed of the five immortal archmagi:

- **Akraila the Towering**, a powerful sorceress who controls Earth magic and has the ability to change her size at will.
- **Viceryn the Emberstorm**, a man who has flame coursing through his veins. He's quick witted, and quick to burn his foes to ashes.
- **Nysandra, Whisperer in the Forests**, an ascended Archdruid who has become one with nature itself.
- **Drakkis of the Radiant Sky**, a winged fury who rains holy fire down upon anyone foolish enough to oppose him in the skies themselves.
- **Zirala-Tal, Eye of the Stars**, who plays the strings of fate like a harp, and can hear their song, granting her great power of divination.

The Council are regarded as the kind immortal guardians of Viram-Tes. For three thousand years, they have watched over the people, providing wisdom, guidance, and improving quality of life for their

followers. They appear at festivals and events, but otherwise often retreat to their grand towers at the center of the city for months on end, disappearing into their own research and curiosities. When they do emerge, it's to perform some service for the city – participate in festivals, assist in construction of new buildings, or even to select specific individuals who are then allowed to study with them in their towers.

They are beings of immense power, and should not be taken lightly, regardless of their forward kindness.

Starting the Game

New Beginnings

This story is best undertaken by fresh, level 1 characters. As such, the game should begin with the players creating their characters within the world. Keep in mind the setting information included above. Encourage the players to do a little backstory planning – how did they all meet, how did they become friends? As the characters are close to being finalized and this talk of previous relationships begins, introduce our first NPC character.

Vidram Faerring: Friend to all, Sacrificial Lamb to others

Vidram is a male Half Elf in his early thirties. He's a fan of bright colored clothes, and works as a tailor at one of the better clothing stores in Viram-Tes: **Threaded Stars Finery**. He is a trusted friend of the players, so while they are spawning their own friendships, introduce this man and encourage the players to work him into their backstory. How do they know him? How do they feel about him? Vidram tends to be a friendly, encouraging sort, though the DM can choose to vary up his personality as fits the party's temperament.

Equipment and Wealth

The characters, at the start of the game, are not adventurers. Their class skills amount to little more than hobby-level curiosities, at this point. While players can opt to take the standard set of gear for their class and background, it may be wiser to roll wealth as dictated by the Player's Handbook instead. By the time any actual combat or exploration will occur, opportunities will arise for the players to acquire equipment for combat and adventure, so ensure the players that they will not have to worry about such things early on. Remember – they've been living an ideal life in a floating paradise!

Some things are more likely to be commonplace here, however, such as magical trinkets, casting focuses, fine robes and clothing, and other decorative items. If the players wish to have such things, feel free to allow them to describe their manner of dress and other trinkets. Anything that doesn't have a true mechanical benefit can be allowed, at the DM's discretion. At the same point where players will be equipped for adventure, they will also likely lose all their specialized belongings for a great deal of time.

The Festival of Remembrance

Back when the city of Viram-Tes was still grounded, it was ruled by a powerful Mage-Lord known as **Vental Aurum-Ke**. Vental kept the council of five as his guides, but most wide-reaching decisions about the city's welfare fell to the Mage-Lord. And so it was, when the threats of the world grew too grate, that Mage-Lord Aurum-Ke decided to forge a power source so great, that it would rip his city from the ground itself, and propel it into the sky, where it would be safe from most threats until the world found lasting peace, at which point, it would retake its place among the denizens of Syrenta. However, the many warring cultures of the world heard word of this plan, and sought to take the power source, in the form of a large crystal, for themselves. As armies marched upon the great city, the Mage-Lord left its walls to meet them head on, and the resulting magical clash destroyed the armies, the Mage-Lord, and his closest allies, while buying enough time for the city to tear itself free from Syrenta's clutches and float ever skyward. The Council honors the Mage-Lord once every 10 years, on the day the city ascended, by holding a great festival, known as the **Festival of Remembrance**.

(DM's Note: This story is a fabrication by the council, with the truth of the event at the heart of the storyline, revealed in a later chapter. The Council Members are playing to their own egos, and have altered the "Truth" of what happened that day to suit their needs. The citizens take their word as truth, and have done so for 3000 years.)

The Festival is well known to all inhabitants of Viram-Tes. It's a day of celebration, of games and tests of skill, displays of great artisanal craftsmanship, and it all begins with a story, told by the five council members, about the day the city ascended.

Wake Up!

Our story begins when the party, in their individual or shared homes, awake for the morning. Encourage them to take the time to get ready, explaining that today is a great festival day, with many games, contests, food and stories to be told. The players can be informed that the festival will begin with a story told by the council members, which is mandatory for all citizens to attend. If any players choose NOT to attend, they will suffer a magical compulsion to do so, with a DC 25 Charisma saving throw. Should they succeed, they're free to do as they wish – if they fail, they feel magically compelled to leave and make their way towards the main plaza district. As they get close, they are joined by their friends, and Vidram Faerring.

The Rise of Viram-Tes

When the party arrives in the main plaza, they'll see crowds gathered around a stone stage, where the council members are all standing, watching over the gathered people. The Council Members are larger than life figures – they seem imposing, their magical auras can be felt by everyone there, and they are dressed in outlandish, exquisite manners, with many magical artifacts adorning their person. As soon as they enter the plaza, they'll find themselves in a field of silence, where nobody is able to speak. After the party arrives, the Council Members begin to tell their story.

The council members all speak in distinct manners. The story is split up, each of them telling a part of the tale in their own distinct style. When acting out or describing their portions of the story, keep these things in mind:

Zirala-Tal:

Zirala's voice seems almost ethereal, otherworldly, and enchanting. It has a musical quality, a sense of harmony to it, almost as if her words are plucking upon the threads of fate to tell their tale. She often speaks in rhymes or riddles.

Drakkis:

Drakkis' voice is harsh, possibly reptilian, and even a little raspy. He tends to speak firmly and purposefully, as if from a position of strength, and age-afforded wisdom and peace.

Viceryn:

Viceryn tends to speak much more quickly than the others. He is also much more dramatic and passionate than the other speakers, and is the one that is most likely to embellish or over-dramatize his points and words.

Nysandra:

Nysandra doesn't actually speak when interacting with large groups. Only the Council has ever heard her speak. Instead, she mentally projects her words into the minds of all around her, speaking in a kind, yet firm voice. Nysandra often appears more shy or reserved than the others.

Akraila:

Akraila is boastful, and does everything large. When she speaks, she tends to emphasize the glory, and puts extra focus on combat, even to the point of acting out clashes and battles with her arms. She often loses herself when telling tales of battle, and is immensely passionate.

The story begins with Zirala-Tal steps forward, and the crowd's attention falls upon her. She takes a moment to look over all those assembled, before beginning:

"We stand before you, one and all, to tell the tale of a great man's fall. The once great master of our beautiful home, whose wisdom and knowledge filled many a tome, saw a land wracked by devastation, and sought a path towards our own salvation. But the jealous creatures of the world below, amassed to strike and turn his hope to woe. Surrounded by enemies, his valor steeled our hearts, for this is where our heroic tale starts..."

Zirala-Tal will then step back, and allow Drakkis to take the center stage. Drakkis clears his throat before continuing.

"Mage-Lord Aurum-Ke was a great and wise man. In times well past, he set his gaze upon the world around us, and saw only threats around every corner. The Kingdom to the west sought to claim more land with its vast armies. The Giants, Goblins, Orcs and Ogres of the north grew more brazen in their invasions and raids. The desert sands of the east parted to reveal vast mercenary warlords seeking their fortune at our gates, and even the south became unsafe when the Dwarven King declared he wished to

march upon the northlands. We were beset by enemies upon every side, and so, Mage-Lord Aurum-Ke, in his greatness and his wisdom, sought to forge a way to protect his people for all eternity."

Drakkis will then step back, allowing Nysandra to glide into the front speaking area. She looks across the crowd. The player characters would feel overcome by a sense of serenity, before her calming voice entered their minds.

"The Mage-Lord summoned our council with a plan. Using his vast magical skill and energy, he would craft a crystal of ultimate power. This crystal would then be installed at the depths of our city, and when activated, would initiate our ascent to the skies above. With Syrenta, the world below, granting her blessing, the Mage-Lord began to empower his magical crystal in the heart of our fair city. Weeks passed, and soon, the crystal was charged, and ready for ascension."

Nysandra would then bow, gliding backwards, and Akraila would stomp her way towards the speaking center, standing ten feet tall and grinning down at those gathered. She would clear her throat, before shouting passionately her part of the story. At the last line, she will grow more somber.

"The day of our salvation arrived! A horde of monsters and beastmen arrived from the north. An army marshalled itself in the west. Mercenaries and beasts assailed us from the east, and Dwarven Legions marched upon our southern walls. They had all heard of this plan to leave the world, and of the crystal of power. In their arrogance, they all sought to claim it for themselves! Our enemies were too quick, and beset our city walls before we were able to lift ourselves from the rock and soil below. With great courage, Mage-Lord Aurum-Ke gathered his closest allies, and quit our walls to fight our enemies head-on. The battle was glorious and bloody, with swaths of enemies slaughtered at our gates. But even the Mage-Lord could not stand up to the endless foes that sought our doom. As the city finally wrested itself from the grasp of Syrenta, the Mage-Lord used the last of his strength to create a magical detonation of power, sending our city blazing into the sky, and laying waste to all who had dared to oppose our retreat to paradise! When the dust settled, the Mage-Lord was gone, never to be seen again."

She hangs her head, stepping back off the podium, as Viceryn steps up to that central speaking area, and stared out at those gathered there. With a wide grin, he continues:

"Our master... went out in a BLAZE of glory. But this... this was NOT his final act. The last of his spirit, the final drops of his energy, sought out a way to ensure the safety of his people against any who might chase us beyond the world itself. He appeared before the council as a spectre, and with his last breath, imbued each council member with the remainder of his power. He asked us then, to protect and GUIDE this city, in his absence, and to ensure that it remained safe from ANYTHING that dared to raise arms against the city in the sky. And so it was, that our great master ensured that, even in his death, he would continue watching over the people he cared so dearly about."

Viceryn then steps down, making way for Zirala-Tal to speak once more.

"And so the threads of fate were severed, but his death secures our own fates forever. Skyward bound we did ascend, as our master met his fated end. So today, we remember his noble deed, against odds so dire he did succeed! A sacrifice its equal could never be met... and so, in remembrance, his name, we shall never forget."

At this point, all five council members step forward, and speak the following words:

“Mage-Lord Aurum-Ke, We thank you, on this day, for the life you have given us, and the safety you provide. We thank you for the Council’s protection, and guidance. May your memory never silent upon the winds of time.”

The veil of silence is then lifted, and the council then states, along with the crowd around the players:

“Mage-Lord Aurum-Ke, we celebrate not your loss, but thank you for the life you have given us. May you always be remembered.”

Games and Contests

After the story is complete, the council then encourage people to celebrate, and enjoy the festival. They will then retreat and seemingly vanish from the festivities, allowing people to enjoy the sights, food, shopping, and tests of ability and skill. This is an excellent opportunity to get new players familiar with the mechanics of the game, but also a chance for players to earn a few special items should they be lucky enough to win.

As the council members depart, Vidram encourages everyone to go check out the games. He says he has to go shopping, there was a vendor he really likes. He suggests the party partake in some of the games available inside the coliseum. He’ll even offer to escort the characters there, but will leave shortly after to go shopping, suggesting the party meet him at the refreshment section up north when they’re all ready.

If the party ventures inside the coliseum floor, they’ll find all manners of games and events set up. Below are the listed games and their rewards:

Sword-Fighting Tournament

This is an elimination style tournament where characters will be given a longsword and are then encouraged to face off against each other in one on one combat, until one character emerges victorious. The tournament starts with 8 entrants, with player characters replacing those entrants should they wish to attend. Before each match, the players are given a magical longsword, which grants them proficiency even if they don’t have it, leather training armor that sets their AC to 12 + Dexterity and grants proficiency, and a potion that sets their hit points to 20 HP.

Assign names to any remaining NPC combatants. Randomly roll the bonuses to dexterity and strength the opponents have using 4D6 (Keep 3). Dexterity will affect their AC, and strength will affect their hit rolls, and damage. Once the opponents are generated, randomize the ladder, draw it out for the players to see, and begin the tournament.

Characters lose when reduced to 0HP. No other powers or abilities are allowed to be used during the fight – this is a battle of pure swordplay. Feel free to play a dramatic announcer, or encourage the other players to get involved in such capacities. All defeated characters are immediately treated and brought back to full health.

The winner of the tournament receives the following magic item: **Akraila’s Sharpened Longsword**, which is a magical longsword forged by Akraila, and allows for players to receive critical strikes when rolling a 19 or a 20.

Boulder Lifting Competition

Players face off against 4 randomized competitors in a contest of strength. Roll 4D6 (Keep 3). This is the strength level of each competitor. The players will perform a strength ability check each round, starting with a DC of 10. Anyone who fails the check is removed from the contest. The following rounds, the DC increases by two, until all parties are eliminated but one. If a tie occurs at the end, the round is replayed until only one player remains.

The winner receives **100 gold pieces**.

Obstacle Course Race

This event is a touch more complicated. A large track is laid out in front of the players, and up to 6 entrants can participate. For any NPC entrants, roll a D6 for each Athletics and Acrobatics. These are the skills used by this challenge.

Players start at the beginning of a 30 square track. Each turn, every entrant does a Athletics check. This determines how many squares they move this turn, based on this chart:

10 or below: 1 square	11-15: 2 squares
16-20: 3 squares	21 or higher: 4 squares

On squares 5, 15, and 25, there are low obstacles. The players have to perform a DC 10 Acrobatics check to vault over the obstacle as they encounter them, or they will be stuck spending their next round at 1 speed (passing the obstacle). At squares 10 and 20, there are large obstacles, which require a DC 15 Acrobatics check to pass. If the player does not pass, then next turn, they must attempt the acrobatics check once more. If they succeed, then they move one speed that turn, passing the obstacle. Otherwise, they are stuck.

The first person to reach the finish line is marked as the winner. If there is a tie, both characters are placed on a 10 square sprint with no obstacles, and have to repeat the sprint until one character wins.

The winner receives **Boots of the Trailblazer**, made by Viceryn, which is a magical item that grant +5ft speed.

Endurance Competition

Players can enter an endurance competition for up to 8 characters. Roll 4D6 to determine each NPC's Constitution score. Players are then forced to endure "delicacies from around ancient Syrenta", which are horrible, disgusting foods. Have some fun with the descriptions! Characters start each turn having to eat one of the gross, disgusting foods. The characters roll a DC 10 constitution check for each meal. If they fail, then they throw up or can't finish the item, (Encourage roleplay!) and are disqualified. Add another gross dish, increase the DC by 2, and repeat until all players but one are eliminated. If there is a tie, repeat the same challenge (describe a different food, but same DC) until one player emerges victorious.

The winner receives a **Draught of Wellbeing**, made by Drakkis, which is a potion that restores all HP to the drinker, as well as all Hit Dice. It can only be used once.

Talent Show

Players can enter a talent show, where they use their performance skill to sell the crowd on their particular talent. Each player does three performance checks, totaling their score over the three rolls. After each roll, they must describe their actions according to the roll they did. (Add an extra point or two for good descriptions). No matter the number of players that enter, three NPCs enter: Jocanne, the terrible human juggler (performance -1), Evrys, the Elven Fire Dancer (Performance +2) and Xetras, the Tiefling Actor giving an improv monologue (Performance + 3).

Whoever gets the highest total points wins a **Hat of Many Forms**, created by Zirala-Tal, which allows the user to change the appearance of the hat at any time. (Does not affect its defensive capabilities, which are negligible).

Dagger Toss

Characters take turns tossing daggers at a target. Their goal is to accumulate 100 points to win. They play against 3 other opponents: A halfling named Olfert (+1), a human named Tira (0), and a half-orc named Zureg (+2). The scores are as follows:

5 or below: Miss	5-10: 5 Points
11-15: 10 Points	15-20: 20 Points
21-25: 30 Points	25+: 50 Points

The winner receives 200 gold pieces.

Tracking Competition

The players use their nature or investigation skills to track the paths of some “fugitives” that have escaped into the city. Their goal is to gather 10 clues – 5 in the forest and 5 in the city, to track down their target. They are competing against 2 other trackers: Normas, a Woof-Elf (+2 nature/Inves), and Sarah, a human (+2 Nature/Inves).

10 or below: Miss	11-15: 1 Clue
15-20: 2 Clues	21-25: 3 Clues
25+: 5 Clues	

The first person to return with all ten clues wins 200 gold coins.

Animal Corralling Competition

The players compete against other animal handlers to see who can get the most points in a certain amount of time. The players have 30 seconds (5 rounds) to corral animals. Each animal has a certain level of difficulty, but is worth a different number of points. These are all rare animals captured and bred from the lands below.

Western Flopmouse: DC 10, 1 pt

Mountain Sheen: DC 15, 2 pts

Dwarven Shaleback: DC 20, 3 pts

Tundra Crawler: DC 25, 5 pts

The person who gathers the most points in 5 rounds is the winner, and wins a **Whisper Kiss** from Nysandra, a necklace that permanently causes animals to tend to become friendly towards the wearer. When a character dons this item, they feel something press against their lips momentarily.