

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER®



CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING



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**CROWN OF THE
KOBOLD KING**

PATHFINDER

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CROWN OF THE

Introduction

5

Chapter 1

11

Part 1: Welcome to the Hollow

12

Part 2: Darkmoon Vale

22

Part 3: The Ruined Monastery

30

Chapter 2

39

Part 1: Droskar's Crucible

40

Part 2: The Kobold Warrens

56



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KOBOLD KING

Chapter 3

65

Part 1: The Restless Cemetery

66

Part 2: Into the Vault

72

Part 3: Grave of the Third Seal

84

Chapter 4

95

Part 1: A Bloodstained Crown

96

Adventure Toolbox

113





INTRODUCTION

"Only the Desperate and the Brave." So reads the proud motto of the town of Falcon's Hollow, for here on the fringes of Andoran, in the shadow of the looming volcano known as Droskar's Crag, the dim, mist-laden forests are prowled by feral beasts, ravenous monsters, and the restless souls of the dead. Once, a great dwarven kingdom brought safety and stability to the region, but that all ended with the wakening of Droskar's Crag during the apocalypse known today as the Rending. For too long did sibilant whispers ride the vale winds after nightfall in the aftermath of this disaster, and during those desperate years, evil took root in the hidden places deep below. Today, the land has recovered from the volcanic eruption, and as is humanity's wont, settlers have returned to the region. "Only the Desperate and the Brave" came to build Falcon's Hollow, and time has appeared to reward that desperation and bravery, for now their home feels relatively safe and secure.

This is all a lie, for what awaits the people of Falcon's Hollow deep below might well be doom adorned with a bloodstained crown.

RETURN TO FALCON'S HOLLOW

Crown of the Kobold King is a revision and return to some of the earliest adventures set in the world of Golarion. This book revises and reprints the classic adventures *Hollow's Last Hope* (by Jason Bulmahn and F. Wesley Schneider), *Crown of the Kobold King* (by Nicolas Logue), and *Hungry are the Dead* (by Tim Hitchcock), gathered together with a brand new, never-before-published dungeon level created by Nicolas Logue. The rules are updated, and the story has been revised to present a cohesive whole, but the desperate need for brave heroes in Falcon's Hollow remains the same as ever.

Readers of the originals might note significant changes have been made to the individual adventures.

As originally presented, these three adventures were published separately, and the option to run them all as one larger mini-campaign was always just that—an option. Now that all of Droskar's Crucible has been gathered in one book, the individual adventure plots for the previous adventures have been significantly revised or outright replaced.

In addition, some NPCs have been reworked or even removed entirely from the plot. For example, readers of *Hungry are the Dead* will note that Lucimar, the strange undead warg, has been removed entirely from this version of the adventure. This was done in part to streamline the plot and allow for a stronger focus on its central villain, the Kobold King himself, but also because when we shifted to the Pathfinder RPG soon after the publication of *Hungry are the Dead*, Lucimar's larger role in the world of Golarion required a revision to his statistics, powers, and history that made him inappropriate for use in a low-level adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

With the defeat of the undead Whispering Tyrant at the end of the Shining Crusade in 3827 AR, the victorious crusaders worked quickly to imprison the lich in his own domain to prevent his return. They sealed him under the tower Gallowspire with a powerful ward, the *Great Seal*, then linked that seal to three *lesser seals* that would prevent its destruction as long as they remained intact. The *First* and *Second Seal* were entrusted to the Knights of Ozem and the nation of Taldor respectively, while the protection of the *Third Seal* fell to the dwarves of the Kingdom of Kraggodan.

While the Knights of Ozem hid the *First Seal* within their capital city of Lastwall and the armies of Taldor brought the *Second Seal* far from their borders to hide it in distant Varisia, the dwarves of Kraggodan entrusted their charge,

the *Third Seal*, to a remote monastery devoted to Torag in the southern foothills of the Five Kings Mountains. It would've remained under watchful protection therein for generations to come, were it not for the Rending.

DROSKAR'S CRUCIBLE

The Rending occurred with the eruption of the volcano known at the time as Torag's Crag—a disaster that threw the Kingdom of Kraggodan into a chaos from which it never fully recovered. It also shattered the faith of the keepers of the *Third Seal*. The faithful of Torag trapped within the dungeons on the volcano's lower slopes abandoned their faith and, over the course of the traumatic years to follow, began worshipping the evil dwarven god of toil instead, renaming the volcano Droskar's Crag to reflect their new allegiance.

In the decades that followed, the keepers of the *Third Seal* fell fully into the teachings of Droskar and renamed their home Droskar's Crucible. Some worked tirelessly to build, bury, and rebuild the underground chambers, never quite satisfied with their work. Others toiled at forges spread throughout the complex, crafting magic items to honor Droskar—items they never quite saw to completion. In the cult's final days, the man destined to be its last leader, a dwarf named Gristogar, set out to construct something he hoped would save his faltering cult: a magical crown. Gristogar felt that this powerful magic item would serve as a symbol of a “new king,” one who would rise from the Rending's ashes to found a new dwarven kingdom devoted to Droskar instead of Torag.

But even as Gristogar toiled, the cult of Droskar continued to dwindle. With no infusion of fresh blood from outside and no new births within, each death put the cult one step closer to the grave. Eventually, the last remaining cultists were forced to admit that they were doomed, and instead of abandoning their home, they instead collapsed key tunnels to bury the chambers and seal themselves within, stubbornly refusing to share the incomplete fruit of their endless toil.

Gristogar was the last of the cultists, and after his lonely death, Droskar's Crucible lay forgotten for centuries, along with the treasures kept within—ranging from Gristogar's nearly complete *Crown of Toil* to the *Third Seal*.

A KING IS CROWNED

The reign of Merlokrep, first of his name, all-mighty King of the Truescale Kobolds, suffered misfortune from the day of his coronation. When his consort Vreggma slipped on the dais steps and poked out the king's eye with one of the bristly points of the traditional Truescale Crown, breaking it in the process, he should've known his rule would be ill-starred. However, the sturdy resolve

that saw him through the murder of his 18 siblings and cleared his path to the throne didn't allow Merlokrep to heed inauspicious omens. Instead, he led his people into the chambers below Droskar's Crucible to claim a new domain.

Many of his “bravest” warriors met grisly deaths during their campaign to scare off the creepy-crawlies and monstrous denizens of the caverns, but the Kobold King saw only glory in his future. Even when a third of his subjects perished in a haphazard mining excavation to retrieve more “shiny good-good” treasures, Merlokrep remained undaunted. All he needed to verify the wisdom of his push to claim the Crucible as his own was the discovery of an amazing, extra spiky crown in one of the dungeon's forgotten corners—a crown that seemed to fit his head perfectly. Merlokrep adorned the crown with the skull of the previous king, as long-standing Truescale tradition required, and proclaimed his new headgear as the *Crown of the Kobold King*. Finally, he settled his people into their new home to lead them to what he hoped would be a new age of Truescale prosperity.

But when the necromancer Drazmorg came to the Crucible, all of that changed.

DRAZMORG'S DISCOVERY

Drazmorg was an unremarkable wizard, a man never brilliant enough to make a name as an outstanding student but always competent enough to avoid failure. At Absalom's Arcanamirium, he acquired the moniker Drazmorg the Drudger, but drudgery, it seemed to Drazmorg, was found in death, not in studies. While other students sought education, Drazmorg fell to that oldest of wizardly obsessions—the pursuit of immortality. His research eventually resulted in the discovery of an incomplete text called *In the Shadows of Toil*, a book riddled with missing passages, errors, and inaccuracies. Despite this, mention of a “seal that guards the way back from death” fascinated Drazmorg. When he investigated the text's origin, he discovered that the book had come to Absalom years before when a dwarven adventurer named Druingar the Glintaxe visited the city, whereupon a copy of the text was made for the city's library, and Drazmorg had discovered this hastily created copy.

Frustrated by the incomplete text, Drazmorg abandoned his studies and began retracing Druingar's footsteps. It took years of research and exploration across the Isle of Kortos, Taldor, and Andoran, for Druingar was hardly a well-known figure, but in time, Drazmorg discovered the mysterious site mentioned in Druingar's text—and learned that Druingar vanished after entering the location not long after his last visit to Absalom. Drazmorg hired a team of professional adventurers as guards, then set out to excavate and explore the lost

dungeon in search of the fabled seal he theorized would aid him in securing immortality.

This location was none other than Droskar's Crucible.

THE SEAL IS SUNDERED

When Drazmorg finally arrived at Droskar's Crucible, accompanied by a small band of mercenaries he'd hired for protection, he found the place claimed by the Truescale Kobolds. The necromancer and his mercenaries hacked and blasted their way past the scaly inhabitants, scattering the Truescales into the surrounding woods of Darkmoon Vale, and soon cleared the cultist-collapsed tunnels that once led to the deeper vaults. With a combination of physical exertion and magic, Drazmorg led his group ever deeper, becoming the first living creatures to explore these chambers in centuries.

Drazmorg eventually reached the goal of his quest, only to discover that the so-called "seal that guards the way back from death" was, in fact, the *Third Seal*. Undaunted, Drazmorg adjusted and adapted his investigation and research, quickly learning that the *Third Seal* had been critically damaged long ago by the Rending. Its energies, initially meant to contain a great necromantic danger, had twisted and warped back in on themselves. Rather than keep the *Great Seal* in place, the *Third Seal* had become a metaphysical crack in the dam that allowed a tiny trickle of necromantic power to seep out from under Gallowspire and build up within itself.

Over the next few months, Drazmorg uncovered some of the occult secrets of the *Third Seal*, but the final result of his research was entirely unexpected. In its Rending-weakened state, the *Third Seal* couldn't withstand Drazmorg's tampering and triggered a massive explosion of negative energy. Drazmorg took the worst of the backlash. So potent were these forces that they destroyed his lower half and blasted his mind and soul alike, transforming him into an undead abomination who now believes himself to be the herald of Tar-Baphon himself.

THE KOBOLD KING RETURNS

The Truescale Kobolds only remained scattered for a few weeks after Drazmorg's attack before King Merlokrep gathered his people and returned to their lair. Fully ready to confront Drazmorg and fight for their home, the kobolds were delighted to find that the intruders had left their warrens largely untouched except for a brand-new

tunnel that led to deeper chambers below. Strange noises and spooky shadows plagued this new tunnel, but King Merlokrep convinced his kobolds that the adventurers were long gone, no doubt eaten by monsters in the dark.

Life returned to normal for the Truescales, at least at first. While the kobolds avoided exploration of the spooky hole in the soon-to-be-called "Forsaken Passageway," King Merlokrep began to have strange visions and exciting dreams in which he saw himself gaining power over not just the region's kobolds, but over all the people of Darkmoon Vale. The king kept these dreams largely



THE UNFOLDING PLOT

You could run *Crown of the Kobold King* as a multi-level dungeon crawl, but the expectation is that events unfolding in the dungeon as the PCs explore it create an evolving story line. The chapters lay out when new changes occur, often keying them to points when the PCs leave the dungeon to return to Falcon's Hollow to rest and resupply, but feel free to adjust the timing and nature of these events as makes sense for the specifics of your table's experiences in the adventure.

to himself, or tried to, but over the following weeks, his personality grew darker and more sadistic. Of course, this change only resulted in greater (if more fearful) loyalty from his followers, so Merlokrep eventually grew to embrace his new, increasingly violent urges.

What Merlokrep didn't realize was that the source of these dreams and visions creeping into his mind was the *Crown of the Kobold King*—a crown originally created to adorn the brow of a new dwarven tyrant. Filled with potential, yet long denied, the crown lingers on the verge of sentience. The dreams, visions, and urges it sends Merlokrep will soon compel the Kobold King down a path of violence and sacrifice that, if not curtailed in time, will see the rise of a Kobold King the likes of which the Inner Sea region has never endured.

CHARACTER CREATION

Crown of the Kobold King provides enough adventure for a brand-new 1st-level party to reach 6th level by its conclusion. As the adventure begins, there are hints of a sinister darkness in the region, but the people of Falcon's Hollow have no awareness of the true scale of the danger that looms under Droskar's Crucible. Likewise, the PCs' initial journey to the Crucible is meant to be a minor quest at first, but what they discover within the ruins places them on center stage of events that will, in time, see nations fall and Tar-Baphon rise again.

It's best if all of the PCs are from Falcon's Hollow. Whether or not they begin the adventure already knowing each other is up to the individual players, but having a shared stake in defending their hometown helps to give the events of this adventure a more immediate urgency. Characters built from the *Core Rulebook* options are the most logical choices for locals, although goblin PCs might

not fit in well. If a player wants to play a goblin, you should work with them to find a place in the town for them to feel at home. Dwarf PCs will likely be particularly intrigued by some elements of the adventure, as they have a chance to uncover some forgotten fragments of local dwarven history below the old monastery.

Falcon's Hollow isn't the friendliest of towns, but as a place founded by desperate outcasts, the people are relatively accepting of most ancestries, even those who have no established representation in the town. Characters of Uncommon or Rare ancestries might find themselves the object of local speculation or even prejudice, but not to the extent that they'll be shunned or automatically treated as monsters. One choice in particular, though, brings an unusual complication to the plot—kobold PCs.

If you have a player who wants to play a kobold, take the time to build a backstory so that the player's history won't clash against the plot of the adventure. Kobold-on-kobold conflict is nothing new, of course, especially in the case of non-evil kobolds who face more traditional kobold villains like those in this adventure. While the locals of Falcon's Hollow know kobolds live in the area, the sight of an individual kobold traveling with an adventuring group isn't likely to cause undue alarm, although such characters should expect to be greeted with wary and nervous glances at the very least.

Of course, you and your group could lean in to this theme, and rather than playing characters with links to Falcon's Hollow, the entire group could play kobolds of a competing clan who seek to oust the Truescales and claim the Truescales' much fancier home for their own. Consider relocating the adventure's start from Falcon's Hollow to a minor kobold encampment or settlement of your own design located elsewhere in Darkmoon Vale in this case. In the end, since the necromantic dangers that build deep below threaten all forms of life, much of this adventure's encounters should play out the same way—even if your entire table consists of kobolds!

CHARACTER BACKGROUNDS

When your players choose their character's backgrounds, you should consider adjusting the flavor text a little bit to directly tie them into Falcon's Hollow's history and plots. On page 12, four initial quests are given to get the adventure started—these quests can be tied, thematically, to many of the common backgrounds from the *Core Rulebook*, as follows.

A Missing Person: A PC who's a friend or relative to local hunter Barlus Chortun (a man destined to go missing as this adventure begins) might have one of the following backgrounds: Animal Whisperer, Bounty Hunter, Hunter, Nomad, or Scout.

An Elusive Antidote: A PC who has an ailing relation or friend, or who might be contacted to gather important medicinal supplies from the wild, might have one of the following backgrounds: Acolyte, Field Medic, Herbalist, or Scholar.

The Darkmoon Beast: A PC who might have ties to local woodcutters or otherwise be invested in helping to hunt down the Darkmoon Beast might have one of the following backgrounds: Bounty Hunter, Detective, Guard, Hunter, Laborer, Martial Disciple, Scout, or Warrior.

Following Footsteps: A PC who has links to the dwarven hero who went missing in Droskar's Crucible might have one of the following backgrounds: Artisan, Gladiator, Miner, Street Urchin, or Warrior.

Kobold PCs: As mentioned above, kobold PCs face a specific challenge in this adventure, in that a large majority of the foes they'll face during *Crown of the Kobold King* are kobolds. If your group elects to all make kobold PCs, then it's best to shift focus from Falcon's Hollow to the PCs being members of an opposing kobold society, but if only one or two PCs in the group are kobolds, consider allowing them to take the following Rare background.

FRIENDLY DARKMOON KOBOLD BACKGROUND

RARE

It has taken time, but over the years, you've managed to find a place among the citizens of Falcon's Hollow. While many still distrust kobolds, they at least see you as a fellow villager, if not a friend, and you've got quite the talent for quickly convincing larger groups of people that you mean them no harm.

Choose any two ability boosts. One must be to Wisdom or Charisma, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Diplomacy skill and Kobold Lore skill. You gain the Group Impression skill feat.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The initial lure that draws the PCs from home to Droskar's Crucible can vary—several potential adventure hooks are presented at the start of Chapter One. Choose the hook (or hooks) that you feel works best for your group of players. Once they start exploring the ruined monastery and Darkmoon Vale, the PCs soon discover hints of the true threat that faces the region, and whether or not they find success in their initial quest, the greater goal to prevent a sadistic kobold king from stumbling



THIRD SEAL

into a source of great necromantic power will decide the future of Falcon's Hollow.

One final note to consider is that the events of this adventure predate the standard starting point for most Pathfinder Second Edition adventures. Based on some of Paizo's earliest adventures, *Crown of the Kobold King* is assumed to begin in the year 4707 AR, over a decade before the "current year" as presented in the *Pathfinder Lost Omens: World Guide*. Some of the developments in this adventure set into motion greater events that echo into Adventure Paths like *Return of the Runelords* or *Tyrant's Grasp*, and you might find that some of your players are already familiar with these events or have even experienced these adventures in their original format. In such a case, work with your players to remind them of the boundaries between player knowledge and character knowledge.

You can also set this adventure during the current year, but if you do so, keep in mind that you'll need to adjust the timing of Tar-Baphon's recent escape and attack on Absalom. If you wish, you can present those events as a coda to this adventure—but if you do so, take care not to minimize or gloss over the PCs' accomplishments. Instead of implying that nothing they did in this adventure matters, suggest that, through their heroics within Droskar's Crucible, they helped to minimize what could have been an even more devastating doom for Absalom once Tar-Baphon finally escaped his prison.

Note that Falcon's Hollow has limits as to who can make the richer purchases in its High Market, but during character creation, don't place unusual limits on the PCs' purchases. Allow them to spend their initial 15 gp normally.



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CHAPTER 1

HOLLOW'S LAST HOPE

**BY JASON BULMAHN, NICOLAS LOGUE,
AND F. WESLEY SCHNEIDER**

PART 1: WELCOME TO THE HOLLOW

Falcon's Hollow is the end of the line for many of its residents—a final destination in a flight from the law, a haven from crushing debts, a sanctuary from abuse, or a new start free from religious persecution. Yet those who dwell in the town know that it has more than its fair share of problems, and many who come to live here soon realize they simply traded one set of worries for another.

Crown of the Kobold King starts as the PCs gather to head into the depths of Darkmoon Vale on a quest. Exactly which quest they set out to pursue is up to you, as long as it eventually leads them to the ruined monastery known as Droskar's Crucible. Four potential quests are detailed below; pick the one you feel would appeal the most to your players, or construct one of your own design if you wish.

When you're ready to begin, present your chosen quest to the PCs, then begin play at the town location indicated in the quest. Note also that each quest includes a "personal hook"—something that ties that quest directly to one of the

PCs to give them a built-in reason to head into Darkmoon Vale. You could even give each PC their own quest, so that rather than traveling into the vale for one reason, each character can pursue their own personal goal.

A MISSING PERSON

A local hunter named Barlus Chortun has gone missing, and a worried priest asks the PCs to investigate and track the missing hunter down.

Personal Hook Barlus is a friend, family member, or associate of the PC in question.

Starting Location Temple of Iomedae (area A4, page 16)

AN ELUSIVE ANTIDOTE

As the season turns and hints of a yearly recurrence of illness rise, the PCs are asked to gather important ingredients from Darkmoon Vale to help bolster the townsfolk's health.

Personal Hook A friend, family member, or associate of the PC in question has symptoms that require medicine made from these ingredients.

Starting Location Roots and Remedies (area A8, page 18)

THE DARKMOON BEAST

Loggers have grown timid and nervous about working in the Vale after rumors of an unusually intelligent wolf circulate; the PCs are hired to track the wolf down and deal with it.

Personal Hook A friend, family member, or associate of the PC in question was attacked by the wolf.

Starting Location The Cutyard (area A5, page 16)

FOLLOWING FOOTSTEPS

Several years back, a dwarven adventurer went missing in Droskar's Crucible, and the PCs have been asked to follow in his footsteps to determine his fate. If he's still alive, rescue him—if he isn't, find out what happened to him.

Personal Hook The missing adventurer is a relation, family friend, or childhood hero of the PC in question.

Starting Location Sheriff's Office (area A6, page 17)

REWARDING ROLEPLAY

Note that it's possible for the party to finish Chapter 1 and gain access to the dungeons of Droskar's Crucible without completing every single encounter in Darkmoon Vale along the way. While a group can earn extra experience from wandering monsters, much of what takes place during this chapter will consist of roleplay encounters with the inhabitants of Falcon's Hollow. In order to encourage the PCs to engage with the town's NPCs and to help offset the potential shortage of combat encounters along the way, you should absolutely reward the party XP for time spent roleplaying in town. Consider granting an award of 40 XP for a standard roleplaying encounter, or up to 60 for a more involved scene. If you hand out around 300 XP for roleplaying over the course of this chapter, you should be on track, and you can always inflate the reward for finally defeating Graypelt and gaining access to the lower levels if you need to. In the end, PCs should earn enough XP to reach 2nd level before delving into the dungeons below the ruined monastery at the start of Chapter 2.



Reward: Whenever the PCs complete one of these quests, grant them 120 XP for the accomplishment.



FALCON'S HOLLOW

Falcon's Hollow has had numerous tragedies and violent conflicts with monstrous neighbors during its century and a half of history. Tales of these events are passed on from one generation to the next, cobbled together from gossip sessions known alternately as “cutting dust” (chatting in the cutyards) or “blowing cinders” (telling tales around a hearth fire at one of the town's taverns).

Founded in 4573 AR, Falcon's Hollow was hastily erected by one of Taldor's oldest companies, the Lumber Consortium. Over those first desperate years, Falcon's Hollow successfully clung to its existence in the face of wild beasts, monstrous threats from deep within Darkmoon Vale, and other horrific trials made all the more desperate by self-absorbed leadership from the Lumber Consortium itself.

The survival of Falcon's Hollow is a testament to the steely resolve of its three founding families: the taciturn Larko clan, the brave Samkils, and the brutal KreeDs. These families weathered the Harpy-Hag Massacre of 4603, finally ending that conflict by marrying a Larko son

off to one of the hag Ulizmila's seemingly innumerable daughters. They endured the decade-long period known as the Misery (4631–4641), which claimed many of the children of Falcon's Hollow until the attic whisperer responsible was defeated by the eldest of the Kreed daughters, Balkri.

Eventually, the three founding families began to die off. The Hobgoblin Strife of 4679 claimed the last living scion of the Samkil family, though more than a few old-timers insist that the crossbow bolt buried in young Jebrika Samkil's back bore a suspicious resemblance to those used by Kreed's patriarch. Then in 4701, the Falcon's Feud culminated in the eradication (by mass burning) of the Larko clan by a panicked mob who had come to believe the Larkos had become “unnatural folk”—changelings and stranger kin (thanks in no small part to rumormongering from Kreed lips). Today, Thuldrin Kreed and his son Jurin are the only surviving descendants of the original founding families, and the sole owners of the whole region's Lumber Consortium chopping rights.

DAILY LIFE

Far from the cares and demands of civilization, the dense forest and crystalline river near Falcon's Hollow might seem to promise freedom, but in truth, those who dwell here do so under the oppressive auspices of the Lumber Consortium and Thuldrin Kreed's harsh vigilance.

REGIONAL TIMELINE

Significant events in Falcon's Hollow's history are presented on the following timeline, along with other hidden events drawn from this adventure's background.

DARKMOON VALE TIMELINE

3827 AR	The Shining Crusade ends, and Tar-Baphon is defeated. The <i>Great Seal</i> and the <i>lesser seals</i> are created to imprison him within Gallowspire. The <i>Third Seal</i> is hidden by worshippers of Torag below a newly constructed monastery in the southern foothills of the Five Kings Mountains.
3980 AR	The Rending: Droskar's Crag erupts and devastates the surrounding region. The keepers of the <i>Third Seal</i> lose their faith and turn to the worship of Droskar.
4088 AR	The final leader of the Droskar cult, Gristogar, nearly completes the creation of the <i>Crown of Toil</i> , only to fall to despair over the dwindling numbers of the faithful in the Crucible and abandon the project.
4100 AR	Gristogar, the last of the Droskar cultists, dies, leaving Droskar's Crucible abandoned and forgotten.
4573 AR	Falcon's Hollow is founded by three families (the Larkos, the Samkils, and the Kreedes) as a Lumber Consortium settlement.
4603 AR	Harpy-Hag Massacre: A cabal of harpies led by legendary hag Ulizmila brings despair and pain to Falcon's Hollow until the Larko family negotiates a truce at great personal cost.
4631 AR	The Misery begins, starting a 10-year period in which an attic whisperer preyed ruthlessly upon the infants of Falcon's Hollow.
4641 AR	The Misery ends with the destruction of the attic whisperer.
4679 AR	The Hobgoblin Strife: The citizens of Falcon's Hollow war against a band of hobgoblins over lumber resources in Darkmoon Vale; Samkil family is eradicated.
4690 AR	A dwarven explorer named Druingar the Glintaxe discovers rumors that his ancestors once guarded some sort of powerful magical artifact said to serve as a "seal that guards the way back from death" and begins years of research that would lead him all the way to Absalom before finally learning about Droskar's Crucible. He chronicles his investigation in a book he calls <i>In the Shadows of Toil</i> .
4701 AR	Falcon's Feud: The Larko family is eradicated by a frightened town mob.
4698 AR	Druingar the Glintaxe arrives in Falcon's Hollow, only to be met with skepticism by the locals when he makes clear his plan to explore Droskar's Crucible. He vanishes in the dungeon and is never heard from again.
4703 AR	Drazmorg discovers an incomplete copy of <i>In the Shadows of Toil</i> and becomes obsessed with Druingar's theory about a "seal that guards the way back from death."
4705 AR	Merlokrep is crowned King of the Truescales and leads his people into the ruins of Droskar's Crucible to make the place their lair; Merlokrep discovers the incomplete <i>Crown of Toil</i> left behind hundreds of years ago and claims it as his own <i>Crown of the Kobold King</i> .
4706 AR	Drazmorg finally tracks Druingar to Droskar's Crucible; he and his hired mercenaries drive out the Truescale Kobolds and discover the hidden vaults where the <i>Third Seal</i> lies.
4707 AR	The current year. Drazmorg accidentally destroys the <i>Third Seal</i> , and the <i>Crown</i> begins to fully awaken and influence King Merlokrep.

Nevertheless, the resilient folk of Falcon's Hollow find a grim pride in their work. The cutyards are a pumping, bleeding heart of the town, with shifts around the clock cutting and shipping darkwood and other lumber down the River Foam. Laborers break their backs and lose limbs to saw and axe in the yards, seemingly aging several years for each one they spend toiling under these grueling conditions. They're a rough and honest (for the most part) folk who generally don't turn to heroes—their problems are their own. Though they're usually too proud to look to strangers for deliverance, recent events (and the quests mentioned on page 12) have forced some of the townsfolk to ask for help.

This cutyard culture dates back over a century, with rituals persisting from the earliest years of Falcon's

Hollow. Disputes between loggers are settled on the river in a bout referred to as a "loggerheads." Every so often, a shout rings through the yard with one logger challenging another to go loggerheads on their dispute. The combatants balance on logs in the water with a length of knobby timber in hand. The first battered into the water is pulled out by the rest of the crew and acknowledges the truth of the other's claims. Some superstitious loggers believe that water sprites judge the contests and take delight in ensuring that the wronged party gets vengeance, even in defiance of the competitors' comparative strengths and skills. From that moment on, the dispute is "given to the river," and no one speaks of it again. This phrase is also common parlance for a slight judged unworthy of actual

dispute, with grumblers urged to give their complaints to the river and move on. Old Kreed approves of this logger justice, citing the old maxim, “People are soft and bend to lies. Timber is hard; let it decide.”

FALCON'S HOLLOW

SETTLEMENT 4

N TOWN

Remote lumber town ruled by a self-interested consortium

Government council (Lumber Consortium)

Population 1,400 (95% humans, 3% halflings, 1% elves, 1% other)

Languages Common, Halfling

Religions lip service to various faiths

Threats kobolds, uncaring leadership, undead, violent wildlife

Lumber Town Those who come to Falcon's Hollow can always find work in the cutyards or lumber mills. A character can Earn Income in Falcon's Hollow by attempting Athletics or Labor Lore, and if they do, they can attempt up to a 6th-level task. Characters who attempt to Earn Income with Crafting or Performance are limited to tasks at 4th level or lower.

Deldrin Baleson (LN male half-elf fighter 5) Sheriff of Darkmoon Vale

Payden “Payday” Teedum (LE male human monk 4) Lumber Consortium overboss

Vamros Harg (NE male halfling sorcerer 5) town magistrate

Thuldrin Kreed (LE male human rogue 10) Gavel of the Lumber Consortium



EXPLORING FALCON'S HOLLOW



Falcon's Hollow is a logging town through and through. Most buildings have log walls or are finished with wooden siding, their roofs covered in wooden shingles. The town is rough-looking, but some homes feature lovingly wrought ornamentation that shows their owners' pride: decorative molding, carved cornices, window mullions, and delicate inlays on furniture. Sawmills and lumberyards are the main evidence of industry. Sawdust invades nearly every home, bed, and meal in the community, like sand in a beach town—but locals claim one gets used to it and mock those who can't stand the dust. Around Falcon's Hollow, the forest flourishes, dark and impenetrable, seemingly eager to claim the lives of those who endlessly assault its borders.

The most important locations in Falcon's Hollow are detailed on the following pages.



THULDRIN KREED

A1. THE ROUGE LADY

The silk-veiled parlors of this burlesque and gambling hall are owned by **Kabran Bloodeye** (CE male half-orc rogue 6), leader of the Redrock Guild—a criminal syndicate that controls the town's shadier activities for Thuldrin Kreed. Aside from his bloodred eyes, Kabran's most striking feature is his missing nose, cut from his face long ago as punishment for crimes committed in a far-off city. He wears a bronze nosepiece over the crater in his face; the nosepiece whistles disturbingly as he sucks air through it and periodically dribbles blood and mucus, which he wipes away with a crimson handkerchief.

The Rouge Lady offers games of chance unique to Falcon's Hollow, such as “huckle-chuck” (played with scrimshawed sheep's knuckles or wooden dice), Rouge Lady/Grim Lady (a card game with a Succubus Queen and a Corpse Queen as jokers), and Spin the Saw (using a circular saw blade on a nail that spins to indicate odds, victory, or defeat).

The basement of the Rouge Lady serves as Bloodeye's personal torture chamber, hosting the only pleasure in which the half-orc permits himself to indulge. Here, he extracts “truth” from any unfortunates Thuldrin Kreed suspects of crossing the Consortium.

A2. KREED MANOR

Thuldrin Kreed's domicile is more of a stronghold than a mansion—it's surrounded by 10-foot-high darkwood walls, guarded by some of the deadliest rogues in the Redrock Guild, and patrolled by the most vigilant sellswords that Lumber Consortium gold can buy. In the past, angry mobs have tried to burn the Krees out, prompting the Krees to add four interior water towers within the stronghold's walls. When harpies infiltrated the upper floors on moonless nights, the Krees placed a clutch of crossbow-wielding guards on the roof, and in response

CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: HOLLOW'S LAST HOPE

CHAPTER 2: CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

CHAPTER 3: HUNGRY ARE THE DEAD

CHAPTER 4: DROSKAR'S DOOM

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

to a green hag who shape-changed and walked through the front gates, they instigated the rigorous use of passwords. The Kreed family hasn't survived the perils of Darkmoon Vale for over a century by accident.

A3. WOODWIL

The workshop of outspoken artist **Deveera Gadsel** (CN female half-orc artist 4) also serves as a haven for a clique of semi-artistic locals, those interested in doing more with their lives than simply hacking and sawing all day. Deveera has had more than a few run-ins with **Ayda Vorshin** of the High Market (area **A14**), who sees the growing popularity of Deveera's crafts as cutting into the profits of her own import business; Ayda has used similar intimidation tactics on other local artisans, attempting to frighten them into restricting their business to Low Market. The trader and her cronies have broken into workshops, including Woodwil, where they've smashed goods and injured artisans. Deveera is currently trying to organize a guild to provide mutual protection from Ayda. Thus far, Thuldrin finds the situation amusing and hasn't intervened, although he promises to crush both sides with equal relish if they pose a threat to public order. Meanwhile, he's allowing Deveera to form her guild provided she pays a hefty share of her profits to the Consortium as an "administrative fee."

A4. TEMPLE OF IOMEDAE

Falcon's Hollow has few clerics. Despite anemic competition from other faiths and a demonstrated record of care for the town's residents, Lady **Cirthana Gensar** (LG female human cleric of Iomedae 6) continues to struggle to win converts in the beleaguered town. Few locals trust Cirthana, and most lay their medical concerns at Laurel's feet instead at Roots and Remedies (area **A8**). The Lumber Consortium made itself clear in denouncing the Inheritor's meddling in the town's affairs, and the locals oblige by avoiding the temple as much as possible.

Cirthana regularly requests assistance from others of her faith in her quest to aid the endangered souls of Falcon's Hollow, but the corrupting nature of this wild frontier post is far too tempting for the devotion of most initiates to survive. Cloistered would-be paladins and clerics find themselves woefully unprepared for the challenges of Falcon's Hollow, and most end up pawns of the Consortium, lured from their ideals by bribes from Thuldrin's agents, whether in the form of gold or free passes to the Rouge Lady.

Thuldrin enjoys flaunting his power by condescendingly offering donations to her cause, praising her efforts to "look after the hardworking souls of Falcon's Hollow" while secretly crippling her efforts to reform the town. Cirthana recognizes such acts for the mockery they are, but she has done nothing to act directly against Thuldrin, instead stubbornly playing a long waiting game, ready to

provide what small bits of aid she can to the townsfolk and hoping to slowly lure them away from Thuldrin's rule.

Cirthana is the only cleric posted here, but she does her best. She asks for standard donations for her spellcasting services, but if the PCs prove themselves to be altruistic or otherwise seem to her to be potential foils against Thuldrin, she provides her healing services to them for free whenever they visit the temple—regardless of their faiths.

Starting a Quest: Falcon's Hollow is a rough-and-tumble town, and it isn't unusual for locals to simply vanish. Many of these disappearances are simply citizens who left town to seek their fortunes elsewhere, but some are victims of criminals or dangerous creatures from the nearby woods. Since these disappearances aren't noteworthy, no one took much of an interest when a local hunter named Barlus Chortun went missing—except Cirthana. That Barlus, a worshipper of Erastil, came to the Temple of Iomedae to seek blessings for his upcoming hunt (Cirthana being the closest he had in town to a like-minded soul) before vanishing into Darkmoon Vale certainly impacts Cirthana's hope for his quick rescue and recovery, as she feels a bit guilty about perhaps giving him false comfort in a pursuit that isn't a core part of her faith.

Cirthana has approached Lumber Consortium agents in the lumber camp at the edge of the woods for aid in tracking Barlus down, but they've been unhelpful. She doesn't suspect they're responsible for Barlus vanishing, only that they don't see it as their problem. She knows Barlus was going to use one of the lumber camps as a staging ground for his hunt, so she suggests the PCs begin their search for him there, hoping that the workers will be more open to speaking to someone they don't recognize as one of their employer's more vocal critics.

Cirthana offers a low-grade silver longsword as a reward if the PCs can provide closure on the mystery or, even better, find him and bring him back home alive.

A5. THE CUTYARD

Spewing sawdust into the Foam around the clock, the Cutyard is the ever-pumping heart of Falcon's Hollow. Lumber crews work the yard under horrific conditions. Night shifts operate waterwheel-powered saws and grinding lathes with only a single dim lantern to light their dangerous toil. Maiming and accidental deaths frequently occur. If questioned, Thuldrin merely answers that lantern oil is hard to come by up in Falcon's Hollow, but there are always plenty of fingers.

Far more insidious than the threat of physical injury is the crushing effect of unending labor and monotony on the workers' psyches. Most of the lumber crew live in cramped shacks surrounding the Cutyard, plagued by the sounds of saws and axes even when they aren't working. More than a few workers have snapped after years in the yard, taking

axes to their coworkers before Thuldrin's guards mow them down with crossbow fire. The loggers call this "going axe-happy," a term that has come to indicate losing one's temper in an explosive manner.

The Cutyard is overseen by **Payden "Payday" Teedum** (LE male human monk 4), one of the town's more notorious figures. A pug-faced, mash-nosed man, "Payday" Teedum earned his nickname from the way he doles out violent "dues" to anyone who fails to follow his commands fast enough. He has long squabbled with Deldrin Baleson, the town's sheriff. The only reason that he hasn't taken more violent steps against his nemesis is a fear of turning the sheriff into a martyr.

The Cutyard keeps a well-stocked company store, where its employees can spend their scrip on food, supplies, and tools needed for their work. The exchange rate for this scrip is awful—yet one more way Boss Teedum keeps his "employees" under strict control.

Starting a Quest: The loggers of Falcon's Hollow are no strangers to forest beasts and monsters, and their tall tales of dangerous woodland denizens are a popular form of entertainment after work around campfires or at bars. Lately, a new rumor about a particularly large, vicious, and cunning gray wolf has been making the rounds, with loggers claiming the wolf has been laying traps for them. Several claim to have been wounded in these traps, and a few imply that several (or perhaps all) of the loggers who have supposedly left the job and moved south were in fact captured and eaten by this wolf.

Normally, Boss Teedum ignores these rumors, but this latest one is gathering steam quickly, and he suspects there's truth behind the tales. He's concerned that some of his workers will soon start using these rumors as an excuse to avoid work or demand more security. He asks the PCs to hunt for this gray-pelted "smart wolf" in Darkmoon Vale, kill it, and bring it back to Falcon's Hollow for him to stuff as a trophy—less to put his workers' minds at ease and more to show them that he's the one they should really be wary of crossing.

Payden suggests interviewing workers at the lumber camps to learn where the gray wolf has been spotted most frequently. He's prepared to reward the PCs with a +1 *greataxe* if they succeed.

A6. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Falcon's Hollow might be a Lumber Consortium town under Thuldrin Kreed's authority, but the law itself isn't subject entirely to his whims—much to his annoyance and frustration. Indeed, as part of the Consortium's agreement with the Andoren government, a non-affiliated arbiter of the law must be employed in the town at all times.

For the past several years, this role has fallen to a towering half-elf man named **Deldrin Baleson** (LN male half-elf fighter

AN UNPLEASANT PLACE

Falcon's Hollow isn't the nicest place to live. Many of the buildings are run-down, and just as many of its citizens are foul-tempered at best or downright cruel at worst. There are holdouts of kindness and patience in the town (such as at the Temple of Iomedae), but for the most part, the PCs shouldn't expect automatic friendship with the locals.

Depending on your play style, this might cause your players to have little interest in helping to save Falcon's Hollow from the dangers it faces; or worse, might compel them to simply abandon the region (and the adventure) entirely. You know your players best, and if you feel that they'd react better to a friendlier locale, feel free to "file off" the rougher edges of Falcon's Hollow to help the players become more invested in the town's fate.

Of course, Falcon's Hollow gives rougher, less reputable PCs a place to call home, so *Crown of the Kobold King* works quite well for a self-interested group of antiheroes.

5), a man who used to be a poor woodcutter toiling in the cutyards under Boss Teedum. One day, Deldrin refused to pay an "axe tax" on a lumber axe he had already bought and paid for from the company store. When Payden tried to take Deldrin's axe, the half-elf smashed Payden's face with the flat of it. As one of the only locals to stand up to Payden and Thuldrin, he was elected sheriff the following week. Now, Deldrin carries the same axe around on his shoulder to remind Thuldrin and Payden alike that he doesn't fear them. Of course, the real thing keeping Deldrin from violent reprisal is the fact that his presence prevents the Lumber Consortium from paying more frequent (and annoying) visits to town. After all, if Falcon's Hollow were to become more lawless than it already is, the attention it would garner from the Andoren government would put a significant crimp on Thuldrin's lifestyle.

Deldrin himself feels immense civic pride for Falcon's Hollow and remembers a time not so long past when the Krees weren't the only movers and shakers in town. He hopes to someday see more honor and pride return to Falcon's Hollow, but in the meantime, he has spent his energy keeping the town as safe as possible. To this end, he maintains a small group of deputies who patrol and resolve petty conflicts on the streets. When larger dangers threaten the region, he's typically forced to resort to mercenaries or adventurers for solutions.

Starting a Quest: Sheriff Deldrin might be frustrated with Falcon's Hollow's current leadership, but he has immense pride in the town's history, particularly in how it has endured hardship over the years. Recently, while

researching a collection of old records and ledgers he found forgotten among town records, he learned that the dwarven adventurer Druingar the Glintaxe was more than just a visitor using Falcon's Hollow as a staging ground to explore Droskar's Crucible—he was born here! The fact that records of Druingar's childhood in town were forgotten doesn't surprise Deldrin, considering the records date back decades and the town's leadership for the past 10 years has only been interested in its own legacy, but he hopes to use Druingar's story to inspire the people of Falcon's Hollow and to build up civic pride.

He can't do that without an ending to the explorer's story, though, and so Sheriff Deldrin asks the PCs to investigate what might have happened to the dwarf. By all accounts, Druingar went north to explore Droskar's Crucible nine years ago and never returned. Few visit the ruined monastery these days as its remote location tends to attract dangerous predators, but if the PCs are up for the challenge of investigating the site and looking for clues to Druingar's fate, the sheriff is willing to reward them with an *onyx dog wondrous figurine* that he confiscated from a troublesome woodcutter several years ago.

A7. THE SITTING DUCK

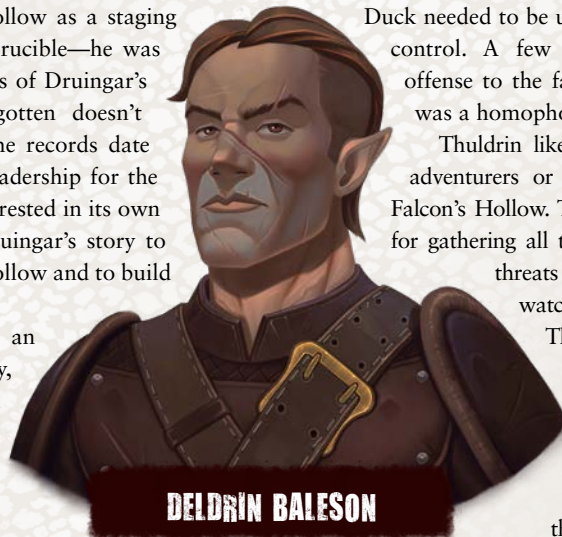
The Duck is the local hot spot for adventurers, explorers, and other rascals looking for excitement. The tavern serves a potent brew of fermented darkwood leaf that's said to be able to "floor an ogre" in a few tankards. Raucous games of "knivesies" and "lefty-loosey" (two quite dangerous recreational activities with a high rate of maiming) rage late into the night among adventurers sharing tales of the dangers of Darkmoon Vale, Droskar's Crag, and other nearby landmarks. The noise emanating from the town's most dangerous drinking den attracts the attention of the occasional predator outside the palisade, and these creatures often hop the wall and attack. Luckily, the clientele is nothing if not well armed, and such events only fuel the night's revelry.

Originally built by a retired adventurer named Larden "Ferret" Kried, the Duck was taken over by the brawny mercenary **Ergin Tock** (CN female human fighter 2) after the tavern became a beacon to dangerous adventurers and the Ferret disappeared. Ergin produced a dubious deed to the Duck with Larden Kried's signature (though most claim it was forged), along with a letter explaining that Ferret had returned to her carefree life as an adventurer. Ergin's former job as hired muscle for Thuldrin Kreed

was suspicious enough, but when Vamros Harg certified the deed as genuine, it was all the evidence the townsfolk needed to confirm that Thuldrin had decided the Duck needed to be under the Consortium's direct control. A few claim Thuldrin took deep offense to the fact that the Ferret's surname was a homophone for his own.

Thuldrin likes to keep close tabs on any adventurers or mercenaries passing through Falcon's Hollow. The Duck is the perfect venue for gathering all these potential employees and threats in one place. Ergin closely watches the clientele, but she isn't Thuldrin's only pair of eyes in the place. The bartender, **Jalene Artem** (CE female human rogue 4), is one of Thuldrin's most trusted agents, as skilled in slitting throats as she is at prying secrets from even the most stalwart paladin.

Ergin and Jalene deliver reports to Thuldrin every morning on the past night's activities at the Duck.



DELDRIN BALESON

A8. ROOTS AND REMEDIES

Creeping ivy and flowering window boxes cover the facade of this two-story log building. The small, mud-tracked shop's interior smells of burned earth and spicy incense. Bunches of dried herbs hang from the ceiling, along with dangling pots, presses, alchemical equipment, and arcane glassware. Pouches of rare plants, jars of colored powders, and a collection of dried, preserved, and jellied animal parts fill high shelves and tables that serve as both displays and workspace. The owner, **Laurel Gebre** (NG female human herbalist 3), is a rail-thin Garundi woman with glasses, her hair arranged in dreadlocks loosely pulled back from her face. The tough but good-hearted woman serves as the local herbalist and healer, though her income stems as much from her sale of snake oils and aphrodisiacs as from her cure-alls and medicinal teas. Although well versed in the healing properties of various concoctions, she's quick to remind angry patrons that she isn't, in fact, a physician. For many who can't afford more expensive healing magic, Laurel is the best hope for health and even a thimbleful of sympathy in Falcon's Hollow.

Alchemical items and supplies of up to level 3 can be purchased here.

Starting a Quest: As Falcon's Hollow's most trusted caretaker for many years, Laurel has become something of an expert at spotting health trends among the locals, even through the "tough frontier dweller" tradition of only seeking medical aid as a last resort. Lately, she has noticed a concerning increase in the amount of illness among

the loggers, which has her worried that an outbreak of sickness looms in the near future. The threat of an outbreak couldn't come at a worse time, for the herbs she often relies upon to concoct antiplague and other medicines have grown scarce.

Laurel asks the PCs for help in gathering supplies of a particular core ingredient to her medicine—ironbloom mushrooms. Normally these mushrooms can be found throughout Darkmoon Vale at this time of year, but this season she has seen very few. She suspects that more can be harvested deeper in the forest, but she lacks the skill to deal with the forest's dangers. If the PCs agree, she suggests that they check a particularly notorious spot in the northern woods known as the Hag-Haunted Hollow where the mushrooms are supposedly prolific. It was here, years ago, that the hag Ulizmila kept one of her many lairs; Laurel assures the PCs that Ulizmila is long dead but warns them that the site might still be dangerous. She knows the approximate location of the Hollow and gives the PCs detailed directions. When they later attempt to locate the site in Part 2, these directions give them a +2 circumstance bonus on their Survival check to find the location.

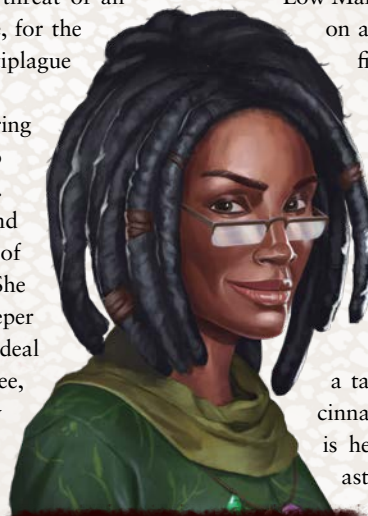
In return for gathering at least a dozen large ironbloom mushrooms, Laurel promises the PCs each a Common level 3 non-poison alchemical consumable of their choice in thanks.

A9. LOW MARKET

Open to all, the Low Market sells High Market's leftovers, including produce no longer fresh enough for High Market's favored customers, heavily salted meats, and other questionable foodstuffs, most of which barely survive their trip to the market. Weapons, armor, and adventuring gear can be found for sale here, provided the items aren't too pricey—only weapons and adventuring gear worth 1 gp or less or armor worth 4 gp or less can be purchased at the Low Market. Those who seek more expensive wares must earn the right to visit High Market (area A14).

Portly **Jalin Greatoak** (N male human merchant 2), called "Great Oaf" by unkind children, organizes the market's various stalls and cart-bound booths. Though good-natured, he isn't particularly clever, and he rarely has a sober thought run through his head. Hordes of poor woodcutters, struggling farmers, and outcasts frequent the Low Market. A few ramshackle stalls serve ale and blindness-inducing moonshine to carousing loggers, fueling their revels and making picking pockets an easy prospect.

Criminal-minded PCs can attempt to Earn Income at the Low Market with Thievery checks if they wish, but on a critical failure to do so, they might face fines or other punishments.



LAUREL GEBRE

A10. JAK A' NAPES

A ramshackle inn offers food and lodging to travelers passing through Falcon's Hollow. The rotund and ruddy **Jak Crimmy** (CG female human bard 6) is a retired troubadour who sports an easy smile and always has a warm welcome, a solid meal, and a tale or two ready for weary visitors. Her cinnamon-crusted flapjacks are legendary, as is her skill at juggling frying pans and her astonishing marksmanship with a crossbow.

Jak makes her cinnamon pancakes once per week, and the line to taste a sugared forkful runs all the way around the building and halfway down

the thoroughfare. For some reason, Thuldrin never sets foot in the inn, a peculiarity that's the source of many wild rumors. Some claim Jak is related to the old Samkil family, and some strange magic pact or fey curse bars Thuldrin from taking action against this last scion of the Kreed family's old counterparts. Others whisper that Jak was once a member of the Talons, one of the most notorious adventuring parties in Darkmoon Vale, which would make her a very dangerous woman. Whatever the truth, Jak won't give credence to any of the tales, saying only that she's a retired entertainer from far-off Riddleport. When asked about Thuldrin, she merely shrugs and laughs that "cinnamon isn't for everyone."

A11. HOLLOW TRIBUNAL

Magistrate **Vamros Harg** (NE male halfling sorcerer 5) dispenses merchant licenses, stamps mining and lumber claims, and passes judgment on criminal and civil cases from this sturdy log building. Most residents appreciate the irony of the Hollow Tribunal's name since the justice meted out is rarely equitable.

The charismatic young magistrate, a failed barrister with a fondness for finery, is known to be firmly in Thuldrin's pocket. Thuldrin put Vamros in power with the understanding that he could remove the halfling just as easily at the first sign of disobedience. Vamros doesn't dare oppose Thuldrin directly, but his shame at his own cowardice leads him to try to nudge cases away from Thuldrin's greedy eye and give people a fair shake when he can. If he were ever to get enough support from folks not yet broken by Thuldrin's regime, Vamros might step up to the challenge and start doling out true justice.



A stormy romantic relationship with one of Sheriff Deldrin Baleson's deputies, the cantankerous yet dashing **Tabrik Splint** (LG male dwarf ranger 3), takes up most of Vamros's time away from work. Tabrik is unabashedly outspoken about Thuldrin's corruption and the need for a change in leadership, and Vamros finds it increasingly difficult to protect his lover from his patron's wrath. Strangely, their almost diametrically opposed ideologies about what's good for society only adds further passion and fuel to their romance, but it's likely just a matter of time before one or the other oversteps their bounds and does something their partner can't abide.

A12. GOOSE 'N' GANDER

Brickasnurd Hildrinsocks (CN male gnome wizard 3), the only gnome in Falcon's Hollow, runs this cavernous general store. Goose 'n' Gander is a labyrinthine muddle of winding aisles and precariously balanced shelves stocked with everything someone living on the frontier might require, and a fair amount of clutter that almost no one requires. There's no apparent method to the store's organization, and one might find a variety of unusual items stocked among the usual domestic

staples, dried foods, and mining supplies. Some of the more noteworthy items include a gourd of alchemist's fire shaped like a baby, a petrified house drake hollowed out into a bull's-eye lantern, and an unnaturally cold and stubbornly blood-stained chisel. Brickasnurd claims to find some of his most curious inventory during long walks in the woods, but some say the gnome keeps counsel with several of the cryptic fey who still lurk amid the groves of Darkmoon Vale.

A small number of magic items are for sale at the Goose 'n' Gander, but to find one of them on the shelves, a character must spend 1d4 hours Searching and attempt a DC 20 Perception check. On a success, the PC comes across one of the following hidden treasures. On a critical failure, their attempts cause a minor "landslide" of clutter to topple down on them. The PC takes 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage (DC 15 basic Reflex save) and earns a temporary one-week ban from the store from a highly annoyed gnome.

At the time this adventure begins, the following items can be found for sale. Roll to determine randomly which item a character discovers (on a success, roll 1d6, and on a critical success roll 1d10). If you roll an item that

has already been found, the PC instead discovers the next lowest-value undiscovered item. Once the PCs learn about an item, they can find it again on a subsequent visit with only 10 minutes of looking. As time passes, feel free to add new items to the list. Even though these items can be tricky for the PCs to find, Brickasnurd knows where everything is and keeps a watchful eye on the store. If the PCs are tempted to rob him or, worse, get in a fight, use the stats for a mage for hire (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide* 226) adjusted to “gnome” to resolve the unfortunate situation. A PC who gets caught stealing or picks a fight is banned from the Goose 'n' Gander for life, and they might (at your discretion) face other fines or punishment handed down from the Lumber Consortium.

d10	Item	Price
1	Four minor healing potions	15 gp
2	Potency crystal	4 gp
3	Vial of silversheen	6 gp
4	+1 weapon potency rune	35 gp
5	Cold iron light pick	40 gp
6	Moderate acid flasks (3)	10 gp each
7	Scroll of restoration	12 gp
8	Wand of cure light wounds	60 gp
9	Coyote cloak	60 gp
10	Striking weapon rune	65 gp

A13. SHARVAROS VADE'S TOWER

The necromancer **Sharvaros Vade** (LE male human wizard 4) occupies a stone tower overlooking the dreary souls of Falcon's Hollow from its place of prominence on the Perch, the hill at the east edge of town. Within, Sharvaros conducts gruesome experiments on corpses discarded by the town. Occasionally, the recluse requires a live subject for his research, generally an out-of-towner supplied by Kabran Bloodeye. Sharvaros's only living companion is his frail daughter **Savram** (LN young female dhampir adept 1), a pale girl whose mother's identity remains a mystery. Many locals claim the child was born from a dead consort, thus explaining her spindly frame and ivory complexion.

The tower itself is a sturdy, ugly edifice without much in the way of adornment. A handful of gargoyles stand sentinel atop its upper parapet, and observers swear they change location and posture over time, speculating that Sharvaros uses these stony thralls to collect the victims of accidents and violence to fuel his research.

A14. HIGH MARKET

High Market's greatest draw is the rot-free meats and vegetables for sale. The ex-mercenary **Ayda Vorshin** (NE female human merchant 4) runs weekly caravans to and from the town of Olfden, stocking the market with silk

clothing, shoes, spices, and jewelry. Local artists such as **Deveera Gadsel** (area A3), known for her woodcarvings and jewelry, offer wares among the imports. High Market is one of the few reliable places in Falcon's Hollow where weapons, armor, and more can be purchased.

One of Thuldrin's most insufferable lickspittles, **Kilarin Salk** (NE female halfling rogue 4), personally inspects all groceries sold in High Market. Kilarin is a notoriously corrupt former farmer who left the profession when it became clear she can't have an aptitude for keeping plants alive. Although plenty of high-quality produce and meats are brought to her for daily inspections, a third of the stock never makes it to the market. Farmers in the region know that quality is only one of the qualifications needed to pass the inspection—a hefty bribe is required as well. Kilarin's jumped-up position has made her prickly, and any real or imagined insult to her pride results in a lifetime ban from selling goods in Falcon's Hollow, a sentence that generally equates to a choice between exile or poverty for most farmers.

Even then, High Market's wares aren't available to all. Boss Teedum's loyal thugs restrict access, admitting only those Thuldrin deems influential. Thuldrin holds a lottery once per month to grant nine lucky “common” residents permission to shop in the market for up to three days. Normally, this drawing would exclude the PCs, but depending on the quest they start with, they might be granted access. Otherwise, the PCs must earn Thuldrin's permission to shop here by successfully completing their starting quest. At your option, the PCs could earn access to High Market in other ways.

A15. LUMBER CONSORTIUM HEADQUARTERS

Once the most impressive building in town, this office has fallen into disrepair. Thuldrin uses this building only to host important Consortium guests and conduct other official business he wishes to keep out of his private estate. Otherwise, the building remains empty, alone with the ghosts of its former grandeur. The only object in the building not left to the ravages of time is a statue of Thuldrin's father, Thalsin. The stern visage and proud frame of one of the greatest leaders in the town's history is always freshly polished by Thuldrin's cowed servants, who live in terror of his ire should the statue not be properly respected and maintained. The host of clerks who once toiled here have been released from employ as Thuldrin gradually reduced the amount of paperwork concerning the lumber trade in Falcon's Hollow. He has grown bold in his corruption, and now the few clerks keeping track of his affairs work out of his manor house. Any real dealings the Consortium conducts with outside forces occur there, and the message is clear: in Falcon's Hollow, Thuldrin Kreed is the Lumber Consortium.

PART 2: DARKMOON VALE

While the PCs' initial quests in Part 1 might seem disparate, they all share the same sinister root cause—trouble brewing deep under the ruined monastery known today as Droskar's Crucible. The sickness Laurel Gebre has noticed growing among the loggers is a reaction to the low-grade but growing necromantic energy leaking into the environment. The missing hunter Barlus Chortun is the latest victim abducted by the Truescale Kobolds as they start stockpiling sacrifices for the ritual to empower the *Crown of the Kobold King*. The sinister gray wolf that has been hunting loggers is a warg named Graypelt who's helping the kobolds in these abduction plots and has taken residence in the aboveground ruins of Droskar's Crucible. Of course, PCs who track down the dwarven adventurer Druingar will find themselves approaching the selfsame ruins in time, for it's here that Druingar met his ignominious end.

These quests are meant to expose the PCs to the danger growing below Droskar's Crucible, and by the time they fully explore the aboveground ruins, they'll know that the true peril they're destined to face lies below their feet.



EXPLORING DARKMOON VALE



Regardless of their initial quest (or quests), the PCs' first step into adventure takes them into Darkmoon Vale. The region is dominated by a sprawling, trackless forest that has long been the source of rumors, tall tales, and whispers—stories the woods have had no problem justifying with monsters and cults and things that go bump in the night. But the forest is an astounding natural resource—particularly for darkwood trees—to the extent that living and working along the vale's woodland fringes has long been worth the risk.

While the PCs should plot their own course through Darkmoon Vale, there are only a few locations of note in and around the vale that play directly into this

adventure's plot: the four lumber camps located along the forest's southern reaches, the Hag-Haunted Hollow, and the ruins of Droskar's Crucible. These areas are detailed below, along with two additional optional encounter areas you can use to liven up a journey through the forest as you wish.

Since the focus of *Crown of the Kobold King* is on exploring the dungeons below Droskar's Crucible, it's best not to spend too much time forcing the PCs to wander aimlessly through the wilderness. The trip between Falcon's Hollow and the lumber camps is a brisk 10- to 16-mile journey for the western three and an additional 10 miles to the easternmost one. Travel through the dense woodland is more difficult and time consuming, as there are no maintained trails within.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

If you wish to liven up the PCs' journey through the forest, you can use one of the two optional encounters presented at the end of this section. Alternately, you can check for random encounters. Do so once during the PCs' travel time during the day, and once during the night at their camp, by attempting a DC 14 flat check. On a success, an encounter occurs; roll on the table on page 23 to determine what takes place.

Note that these encounters are meant to challenge a level 1 group, and it's expected that the PCs will run afoul of at least a few (and earn XP as appropriate) during their first few trips through Darkmoon Vale. As the PCs grow more powerful, the focus of their adventures should increasingly be within the dungeon itself, so the role random encounters play later should diminish as well.

Strange Tracks: The PCs come across a swath of muddy ground through which a strange set of tracks passes. The tracks appear to be the slithering trail of an immense serpent but also feature deep claw prints, as if made by taloned feet, at odd intervals. If this encounter takes place while the PCs sleep, they discover this trail to have passed by at some point during the night a few hundred feet from their campsite. A character who succeeds at a DC 16 Nature check confirms that the tracks are made from a single creature that slithers like a snake and has two limbs



that periodically dig into the ground, while a character who succeeds at a DC 18 Arcana check correctly identifies the tracks as belonging to a tatzlwyr. With a successful DC 20 Survival check, a PC can Track the tatzlwyr to its lair (see optional encounter **B4** on page 29). This encounter doesn't occur once the tatzlwyr is killed, unless you wish to have a second tatzlwyr move in on the first's territory.

Dead Fey: The PCs happen upon a dead tree streaked with blood to a height of 3 feet above the ground. The first PC to step around the tree automatically notices the bodies of three dead sprites that have been pinned to the tree trunk a foot off the ground by thin metal spikes. With a successful DC 15 Medicine check to Recall Knowledge, a character notes that while the tree trunk has been smeared with blood, the otherwise bloodless nature of the dead sprites suggests that whatever killed them didn't use all of that blood on the tree—about half of it is missing. A character who Searches the area and succeeds at a DC 16 Perception check finds a number of tiny reptilian footprints around the tree; a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Society check identifies these prints as kobold prints. The PCs can track these prints with a successful DC 20 Survival check, which leads the PCs to Droskar's Crucible, where the kobold perpetrators dwell. These pixies are victims of "trial runs" for the rituals

DARKMOON VALE RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Roll	Encounter
1	Strange Tracks (Trivial 1)
2	Dead Fey (Trivial 1)
3	Glowmold (Trivial 1)
4	Wyvern Sighting (Trivial 1)
5	Kobold Zombie (Trivial 1)
6	Grung's Trap (Trivial 1)
7	Hunters (Low 1)
8	Bloodseekers (Low 1)
9	Giant Moorsnake (Low 1)
10	Wolves (Moderate 1)

the kobolds intend to perform to empower their king's crown. If this encounter takes place while the PCs camp, they discover the grisly scene soon after breaking camp and setting out on the day's travels.

Glowmold: Strange, glowing mold covers the undersides of several large rocks deep in the forest. A character who succeeds at a DC 16 Survival check can harvest enough of the mold without destroying it to serve as a light source. Once removed from the rock, the mold continues to glow with the brightness of a torch for 3 days. If this encounter occurs at camp, the glowing of the mold isn't apparent until after nightfall; its soft yellow-green glow can be seen

through the undergrowth a dozen yards from camp, which might initially worry the PCs that a will-o'-wisp or some similar monster has noticed them.

Wyvern Sighting: Have all the PCs attempt Perception checks. Whoever rolls the highest happens to glance up while passing under a break in the canopy at just the right time to spot a dark blue wyvern soaring through the sky above. The wyvern doesn't notice the PCs and continues toward its nest on the lower slopes of Droskar's Crag, unless the PCs are higher level and an attack from a level 6 creature would liven things up. If this encounter takes place during camp, the PC might hear the creature's wings or rumbling roar as it passes through the night sky above instead.

WYVERN

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 133

Initiative Perception +13

Kobold Zombie: Kolmokmurk was once a priest among the Truescale Kobolds, but when Drazmorg swept through the place and forced the Truescales out into the wild, Kolmokmurk was fatally injured. The Truescales abandoned Kolmokmurk to his fate, leaving his body

behind in the undergrowth when they fled their home. That wasn't what caused Kolmokmurk to rise from the dead, though—this final affront took place when Drazmorg fractured the *Third Seal*. Kolmokmurk's decayed remains, positioned almost directly above the deep underground location, absorbed a potent blast of necromantic energy. Had Kolmokmurk's soul still been lingering, the resulting undead could have been much more dangerous, but with only the mortal remains to animate, Kolmokmurk's body instead became a zombie. For the past several weeks, the kobold zombie has been wandering the woods aimlessly, driven by a mindless fury that, so far, it has only been able to vent upon helpless forest creatures. The PCs give Kolmokmurk's zombie its first real chance at inflicting pain, and it won't waste this chance. If this encounter happens during camp, then Kolmokmurk shambles into the camp at some point to attack the PCs. The negative energy that animated the kobold's remains has resulted in a particularly hardy undead horror; it has the unkillable variant ability. In addition, the zombie is Small, although this size change doesn't otherwise affect its statistics. More unusual, though, is the way Kolmokmurk's glazed, dead eyes glow from within with an unsettling yellow light. This side effect comes from the *Third Seal*'s unstable necromantic energy; it doesn't grant the zombie any additional abilities, but it will soon become a recurring theme among the undead the PCs face in the future.

Once he's defeated, a PC who searches his tattered outfit and who succeeds at a DC 20 Society check recognizes him as a one-time member of the Truescales. While his weapon is long gone, the PCs can recover the unused (and rather filthy) *wolf fang talisman* still affixed to his mostly-ruined leather armor.

KOLMOKMURK

CREATURE 0

Ungillable zombie kobold (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 340)

Initiative Perception +0

Grung's Trap: Not all of the Vale's hunters are after animals. Hobgoblin **Grung Knifetongue** (area B3) has placed a number of dangerous traps designed to capture his favorite meal—logger—throughout the woods. If the PCs encounter this while camping, the trap goes initially undetected on the fringe of their campsite and is potentially triggered by one of the PCs during guard duty. Grung favors hidden pit traps, but he also sometimes uses spear launcher traps hidden in the underbrush. Both of these traps are Trivial encounters for 1st-level PCs, but the spear launcher is quite a bit more deadly, so consider saving it for the 2nd or 3rd time this encounter is rolled.

HIDDEN PIT

HAZARD 0

Pathfinder Core Rulebook 522



KOLMOKMURK

SPEAR LAUNCHER

Pathfinder Core Rulebook 523

HAZARD 2

Hunters: Three inexperienced and slightly drunk human hunters travel the forest, trapping rabbits and tracking larger game. They aren't having the best of luck, as their loud arguments over whether the legendary gray wolf is real or a spirit give them away. The PCs will likely hear the hunters well before they meet them. If confronted, the hunters drunkenly ask the PCs for directions to "the gray wolf's cave" and quickly lapse into mockery and taunts if they detect any sort of disdain from any party members. The hunters aren't citizens of Falcon's Hollow and haven't yet realized they're lost. They have little help to offer the PCs, although if this encounter occurs while the PCs camp, the sheepish hunters ask if they can share the campsite. If the PCs guide the three hunters out of the forest, grant them 20 XP—otherwise, the next time this encounter occurs, they'll find the three hunters dead and partially eaten—whether by the tatzlwurm at area B4, Graypelt the warg (area C16 in Part 3), or another creature entirely is up to you.

FOOLISH HUNTERS (3)

CREATURE -1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +9

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +5, Deception +4, Hunting Lore +4, Survival +3

Str +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

Items dagger, leather armor, shortbow (20 arrows), hip flasks of cheap ale and wine, not enough food to last long in the woods

AC 16; **Fort** +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

HP 10

Slightly Drunk When first encountered, the hunters are slightly drunk and take a -1 penalty to all checks until they sober up.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +3 (agile, versatile S); **Damage** 1d4+1 piercing

Ranged ♦ shortbow +5 (deadly d10, range 60 feet); **Damage** 1d6 piercing

Bloodseekers: bloodseekers can be found roosting in nests throughout the forest. This encounter is with a group of three bloodseekers (a Low 1 encounter); you can increase the number of bloodseekers in the encounter to give higher-level PCs a greater challenge if you wish, but once the PCs are 4th level or above, encounters with bloodseekers should be resolved with a description on how the characters quickly defeat the pests rather than putting the group through the fight.

BLOODSEEKERS (3)

Pathfinder Bestiary 42

Initiative Stealth +6

Giant Moorsnake: The Vale's giant moorsnakes are large, dangerous constrictors that can reach lengths of up to 8 feet. Nocturnal hunters, they tend to be more lethargic during the day, and any encounters with them during this time causes a giant moorsnake to suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to its Initiative check. These dark gray and brown pythons prefer prey that doesn't fight back and attack slumbering prey when possible. If reduced to fewer than 10 Hit Points, the snake attempts to flee.

GIANT MOORSNAKE

CREATURE 2

Elite ball python (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 302)

Initiative Perception +8

Wolves: A pair of wolves in the service of Graypelt (area C16 in Part 3) patrol the far reaches of their master's claimed territory. They viciously attack the PCs on sight, but both flee if either one is reduced to fewer than 10 Hit Points, returning to the ruined monastery to inform their warg master. In this case, the two wolves can be encountered again at area C1 of the monastery.

WOLVES (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 334

Initiative Perception +7

ADDITIONAL FAUNA

Beyond the curious (and sometimes dangerous) random encounters and set encounters in this part, a number of unusual creatures dwell in the region around Falcon's Hollow and in Darkmoon Vale. Listed here are a few PCs might encounter along their travels. Feel free to include chance encounters or sightings of these creatures if you wish. Note that some of these creatures might pose threats to the PCs if confronted, but for the most part, these animals avoid conflict if possible.

Dunlied (Brush Colt): A particularly stout breed of small-antlered deer, notable for their bounding method of fleeing through the undergrowth. (Use stats for a ringhorn ram; *Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 212.)

Firefoot Fennec: Small foxes with large ears and wispy patches of flame-colored fur around their paws, firefoot fennecs are popular pets among many locals, who regard them as both adorable and lucky. (*Bestiary* 3 102)

Moorsnake: The non-giant versions of the earth-colored moorsnakes are skilled at hiding amid debris and floating foliage at the edges of rivers and lakes, but they aren't above slithering for long distances through underbrush. (Use stats for a ball python; *Bestiary* 302.)

DROSKAR'S CRAG

DROSKAR'S CRUCIBLE

B2

B1

B1

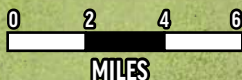
B1

B1

RIVER FOAM

FALCON'S HOLLOW

DARKMOON VALE



Razorcrow: Overly large rooks with distinctive, jagged beaks and unkempt, oily black feathers. (Use stats for an elite raven; *Bestiary* 2 6, 221.)

Saingrist's Crawler: A breed of angry red and black centipede capable of growing to monstrous size. (Use stats for an elite giant centipede; *Bestiary* 6, 61.)

Slurk: Disgusting, pale-tusked amphibians that secrete powerful adhesives. (*Bestiary* 301)



DARKMOON VALE ENCOUNTER AREAS



Darkmoon Vale's defining feature is its sprawling woodland. Encounters **B1** and **B2** are located in specific areas, and in order to experience these encounters, the PCs must seek them out. Encounters **B3** and **B4** are optional encounters that have dynamic locations—you can place these two anywhere you wish if you're looking to spice up travel through the Vale, but neither encounter directly links to Droskar's Crucible.

B1. LUMBER CONSORTIUM CAMPS

The four Lumber Consortium camps located along the southern edge of the Darkmoon Vale woods cut an ugly scar of stumps into the dense stands of the forest's darkwood trees. At each site, five sturdy log buildings stand out—a bunkhouse, a meal hall, an office, a stable, and a tool shop—with numerous outhouses, wide carts, sleds, and stacks of unprocessed lumber amid the sawdust-speckled clearings.

Entirely owned and operated by the local Lumber Consortium, each camp appears as callous and unrelenting as the folk who work them. Visitors without direct business with a camp supervisor are typically sent packing by the first band of surly woodcutters (CN human logger 0) they encounter. These workers meet the PCs with derision, insults, and veiled threats, but quick-talking PCs can Lie about their purpose here (DC 15 Deception), Make an Impression to earn the woodcutters' temporary trust and respect (DC 17 Diplomacy), or fight fire with fire and Coerce them into compliance (DC 13 Intimidation). Any success here convinces most of the loggers to step aside, while a few step forward to lead the PCs to the camp supervisor. While the workers are foul-mouthed and quick to sling

insults, they know better than to throw the proverbial “first punch” and won’t initiate violence against the PCs. If the workers are attacked, they raise an alarm and fight back ferociously, fleeing only if they’re reduced to 6 Hit Points or fewer.

Each lumber camp has a different supervisor, but for sake of ease, you can assume that the first one the PCs visit is overseen by **Jarlben Trookshavits** (NE male human logger 3, Perception DC 23, Will DC 19), a surly, grizzled slab of a man with an unruly, red beard. Jarlben has little time or patience for distractions and does his best to deal with the PCs before sending them packing.

Seeking the Missing Hunter: If the PCs ask Jarlben about the missing hunter Barlus, Jarlben scoffs and admits he remembers the man’s visit and request to use the camp as a flophouse. Jarlben sent Barlus on his way, letting him know in no uncertain terms that the only people allowed to spend the night in the camp had to earn their stay with a dawn-to-dusk session of “bracing outdoor exercise”—in other words, the camp is for employees only. An argument ensued, and Jarlben suggested Barlus head into the woods to camp at “old Ulizmila’s place,” implying that the hunter would be safer sleeping in the ruins of a notorious local legend’s home than anywhere here, where “axes were always tipping over for no reason and landing on things they shouldn’t.” Jarlben isn’t sure if Barlus took his advice but does know the hunter headed into the woods in that direction.

Wolf Hunting: If the PCs ask Jarlben about the strange “smart wolf,” his demeanor changes from gruff and cantankerous to drop-dead serious in a heartbeat. A PC who succeeds at a DC 19 Perception check to Sense Motive catches a brief flash of fear on Jarlben’s bearded face before he masks his expression. His first reaction is a somewhat surprised, “So Payday’s finally sending someone to help? Better late than never, I guess.” He confirms that the rumors are true and that several workers over the past few months have been wounded by traps in the woods or even gone missing; just four days ago, he personally saw one of his workers in the woods step into a hidden trench and impale his foot on a wooden spike, only for the “biggest, meanest-looking wolf” he has ever seen to burst from the bushes, grab the worker by the back of the neck, and race off to the north with its still-shrieking prize. Jarlben is close to calling for a work stoppage as a result, and knowing that someone is on the job sets his mind at ease—even if the PCs only distract the wolf with new victims, at least his workers will be safe for a while. He tracked that wolf for a bit, but when it became obvious the creature was heading in the direction of Droskar’s Crucible, he lost his nerve. He suspects the wolf has been living in the ruins and suggests the PCs start their hunt there.

Looking for Mushrooms: If the PCs are on the hunt for ironbloom mushrooms, Jarlben just shrugs if they ask about them. “I’m more interested in the trees, not stuff I barely notice that I might have stepped on.”

Reward: Grant the PCs 80 XP if they visit a lumber camp and learn more information about any of their active quests.

B2. THE HAG-HAUNTED HOLLOW **LOW 1**

The location of Ulizmila’s old shack is known to the locals, even if no one visits the place out of fear and superstition. Anyone in Falcon’s Hollow (including any PC who can succeed at a DC 15 Society check to Recall Knowledge) knows the approximate location of the “Hag-Haunted Hollow” in the woods. Once this location is known, a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Survival check during Exploration of the woods can guide their party to the location. On a failed check, the PCs end up needing to camp overnight in the woods and can attempt a new Survival check to locate area **B2** the next day.

When the PCs approach the location, read or paraphrase the following.

The sounds of the forest become suddenly distant as the trees part, opening into a small, almost perfectly circular glade. The nearest stands of pine, fir, and darkwood twist away from the clearing, as if bent by some impossibly strong wind or perhaps in an attempt to turn away from the clearing. At the glade’s center squats an ugly cottage, little more than a pile of twigs, shoots, and ivy stacked upon mud walls. From the thatched roof dangle bundles of gnarled roots, old animal bones, and knucklebone bangles, all clattering together like gruesome wind chimes. A dozen small thatched fetishes—each shaped like a tiny person, imp, or rearing serpent—stand propped in the yard, keeping guard before a rickety plank door. What appears to be the remains of a recent campsite sit near the northern portion of the clearing.

Years ago, this cottage was home to the witch Ulizmila, a wise woman, practitioner of the old ways, and local bugaboo. While some said she was a monstrous hag or even one of Baba Yaga’s great-great-granddaughters, others knew her as a harsh but wise sage willing to share her wisdom for strange and often morbid prices. Although her works still spoil in this glen, Ulizmila is long since gone.

This clearing is roughly 120 feet in diameter, with a dilapidated, circular cottage 15 feet in diameter at its center. Fourteen unnerving but harmless 3-foot-tall scarecrow-like effigies are propped up throughout the glade. The remains of the campsite are detailed on page 28 under “Seeking the Missing Hunter.” Anyone who approaches the cottage can see that its moldering door

has rotted off its hinges and now leans precariously against its frame, blocking the way within. Any character who succeeds at a DC 10 Athletics check to Force Open the door can easily heft the barrier aside.

Inside, the cottage is dank, reeking, and filled with shadows. Haphazardly hung shelves line the walls, covered in all manner of clay jugs, clouded bottles, strangely cut rocks, rotted bunches of herbs, and a museum of other crude curios and remnants of a bone grinder's artifice. A rusted iron cauldron, with a hinged lid built to resemble a frog's jaws and a depth of almost 3 feet, occupies the center of the hut's single room, its ash-covered surface shaped with a relief of capering fiends and leering devils. A high-back chair stands against the far walls across the door, made of wicker, the gigantic curved tusks of some monstrous beast, and thousands of humanoid teeth. In the chair sits what looks like a corpse wrapped in filthy burial linens, its form padded with pungent herbs and sprouting patches of thick white mold. This ominous shape is actually only a bundle of branches, mud, and linen, left by Ulizmila to distract trespassers from her home's actual defense, her cauldron.

Creature: While Ulizmila is long gone, her animated cauldron remains a dangerous guardian of the hut. The mindless construct lurches to life and attacks anyone

who dares to enter, pursuing intruders all the way to the clearing's edge before returning to its place inside the hut. When the cauldron attacks, it "bites" at enemies by snapping at them with its hinged lid while its inner surfaces swiftly heat up to cook anything Small it can "gulp" down.

ULIZMILA'S CAULDRON

HAZARD 2

N **SMALL** **CONSTRUCT** **MINDLESS**

Variant animated object (*Bestiary* 20)

Perception +4; darkvision

Skills Athletics +8

Str +2, **Dex** -2, **Con** +4, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -5

AC 17 (13 when broken); construct armor; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +4,

Will +6

HP 20; **Hardness** 9; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious

Construct Armor As animated object, but reduced to AC 13 when broken.

Speed 15 feet

Melee ♦ lid +8; **Damage** 1d10+2 bludgeoning plus Grab

Swallow Whole ♦ (attack) Small, 2d6 fire, Rupture 3

Treasure: Due to the volume and disorganization of the cottage's contents, it takes 10 minutes to Search the place, after which the PCs discover a combination of unique wood-carvings and semi-precious stones worth a total of 3 gp in all. The real treasure to be found here is a disgusting trinket resembling a shrunken head called a *soulspeaker* (page 117; this one currently doesn't contain a message).

Seeking the Missing Hunter: The campfire at the north side of the clearing was built by the hunter Barlus, who the kobolds abducted in the middle of the night and dragged back to Droskar's Crucible as a future sacrifice. If the PCs Search the campsite, it's obvious that a struggle took place, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Perception check notices the numerous small reptilian prints and a larger swath that indicates a human-sized object was dragged away from the camp recently. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Society check identifies the footprints as kobold prints.

Searching for Mushrooms: If the PCs came here under Laurel Gebre's advice to seek ironbloom mushrooms, they'll find about half the number she needs growing along the shack's southern edge. With a successful DC 15 Perception check, a PC can tell that many more of these mushrooms had grown here recently, but they appear to have been harvested. This same check reveals a number of small reptilian tracks; a PC can confirm these tracks are kobold prints with a successful DC 20 Society,



ULIZMILA'S CAULDRON

suggesting a likely perpetrator for the mushrooms' recent harvest.

Tracking the Kobolds: If the PCs wish to track the kobold prints from this clearing, they can do so with a successful DC 10 Survival check (dragging Barlus back left a very clear trail) that eventually leads them to Droskar's Crucible.

B3. BAIT

LOW 1

This optional encounter can take place whenever you wish. When it occurs, allow each PC to attempt a DC 15 Perception check—those who succeed hear an animal's whimpering a short distance away through the undergrowth. If the PCs investigate, they find a firefoot fennec near an old tree, its hindquarters caught fully in the jaws of a crude iron trap.

Although the fox here has obviously been snared by a hunter's cruel trap, the beast's cries are part of a ploy meant to lure greater prey. The hobgoblin poacher Grung Knifetongue lies in wait, hoping the fox's cries attract a wolf, one of the giant moorsnakes, or best of all, a delicious humanoid.

Creatures: If a PC approaches the trapped fox, the pitiful animal puts up no resistance other than to whine a bit more loudly, unsure if the PCs represent danger or potential salvation from its situation. A PC can free the fox from the trap with a successful DC 13 Thievery check to disarm the trap or a successful DC 15 Athletics check to Force Open the trap. The fox is badly injured and, if left alone, will die within a day. A PC who administers any healing to the creature might find the fox becomes a loyal pet at your option.

Of course, before much can be done to rescue the trapped fennec, the PCs must deal with Grung. The cruel hobgoblin uses Stealth for initiative and focuses his attacks on elves if possible. He's waiting in a crude, hidden tree stand 20 feet from the fox and 10 feet off the ground, and he prefers to use his bow against the PCs. He attempts to flee once reduced to 10 Hit Points or below; if captured alive, he begs for mercy. At your option, his advice could lead the PCs to Droskar's Crucible.

GRUNG KNIFETONGUE

CREATURE 2

Elite hobgoblin soldier (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 206)

Initiative Stealth +8

B4. THE FOREST ELDER

LOW 1

This optional encounter can take place whenever you wish, perhaps after the PCs spend time following a set of strange tracks they found in the woods, or simply as an encounter meant to liven up a session of play that has otherwise fallen into a lull. As the PCs approach the area, read or paraphrase the following.

The dense trees and thick brush of the forest give way, parting seemingly in respect for the titanic darkwood tree that dominates this clearing. Its towering trunk reaches over a hundred feet toward the sky, its broad branches fanning over the surrounding glade while thick tangles of roots spread out at the tree's base.

This elder darkwood tree is the most ancient of its kind in Darkmoon Vale. A PC who gazes upon it and who succeeds at a DC 20 Nature check to Recall Knowledge remembers an old legend passed down by the druids who long ago dwelled in the region. Those stories say this tree was carried as a sapling from the First World and planted here in the distant past by Deirzir, the Eagle of The First Way. The story goes on to claim that all of Darkmoon Vale grew from this tree.

The clearing is roughly oval, 180 feet from north to south and 110 feet from west to east. The elder darkwood has a 5-foot-diameter trunk with low, easy to climb branches (DC 10 Athletics to Climb) that extend 35 feet from the trunk in every direction. A persistent character could eventually scale the tree's full 120 feet, gaining a commanding view of the entire forest. A PC on the ground who succeeds at a DC 17 Perception check notices three bodies hanging in the high limbs, while a character who climbs notices the bodies automatically upon reaching a height of 50 feet.

Creature: Despite its serene nature, the glade isn't without danger, for it has served as the den of a tatzlwyrms for years. When the PCs enter the glade, the tatzlwyrms is hiding amid the tree's leaves and branches near its trunk. It rolls Stealth for initiative and attacks as soon as the PCs approach within 30 feet of its hiding space. It flees into the forest if reduced to fewer than 10 Hit Points.

TATZLWYRM

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 256

Initiative Stealth +7

Treasure: Those who investigate the bodies in the elder darkwood find the corpses of three hunters who went missing from Falcon's Hollow many months ago, killed by the tatzlwyrms when they happened upon the grove. Although the bodies have been stripped of nearly all flesh, their equipment still dangles from their half-devoured carcasses. A PC who Searches the bodies finds the following items remain in useful condition: two crossbows, two shortswords, a suit of hide armor, a shortbow with 7 arrows, a signet ring with the image of a flaming hawk (worth 5 gp), 5 gp, 12 cp, eight days' worth of rations, a rusty iron scroll tube that contains three *scrolls of heal* and an old map that shows the way to Droskar's Crucible.

PART 3: THE RUINED MONASTERY

When Droskar's Crag erupted hundreds of years ago, it devastated the surrounding terrain, yet the stout dwarven monastery located on its lowest eastern slopes honored its people's architectural talents by surviving the disaster. While the structure weathered the eruption, the dwarven kingdom of Kraggodan—and the faith of those who dwelt within this very structure—didn't.

Cut off for years, these dwarves lost their faith and turned to the worship of Droskar, coming to see ceaseless toil as the way to absolution. In a heartbreakingly short span of time, they became prisoners of their own industry, producing weapons, armor, and more to appease their new god, only to destroy and remake their creations in a never-to-be-realized quest for perfection. Gristogar, the last of the cultists of Droskar, perished in 4100 AR, and the monastery was left to fall into decay.

Known today as Droskar's Crucible, the location of the ruins is no mystery, yet the locals of Falcon's Hollow avoid the site. Now and then, an eager adventurer dares to explore the ruins, but few emerge again—the most recent (and tragic) example being Druingar the Glintaxe back in 4698.

If the PCs take the time to ask around Falcon's Hollow for information about Droskar's Crucible, a PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Diplomacy check to Gather Information learns that “hosts of monsters plague the Crucible's halls, including the ghosts of the dwarves who built the place hundreds of years ago.” At the mention of Druingar's ill-fated attempt to explore the ruins, some people claim his ghost has joined the site's eternal guardians. With a critical success on this Gather Information attempt, a PC learns less common (but more accurate) rumors that a group of kobolds, the Truescales, moved into the dungeon chambers below the ruined monastery several years ago and that recently someone, or something, caused the Truescales to temporarily abandon their home before returning to dwell within once again. The nature of this intruder varies, with some (correctly) claiming it to have been a cruel wizard in search of an ancient magical relic, while others speak of cultists or vampires or even demons claiming the deeper dungeon levels.

DROSKAR'S CRUCIBLE

The aboveground ruins are far from abandoned. While the Truescale Kobolds once again dwell in the chambers below, an ally of the clan, a warg named Graypelt, has taken over a large portion of the surface ruins. As the Truescales gather the sacrifices needed for their crown-infusing ritual, they increasingly rely on Graypelt's aid in securing new sacrifices for them. The hunter Barlus is but one of these victims; he has already been delivered below, and in the days since, Graypelt's been taking time to relax and wait for the next mission to come his way.

Unless otherwise noted, none of the chambers inside the ruined monastery are lit. All of the rooms have 10-foot-tall ceilings at a minimum, but since most open up to the sloped roof above, many reach a height of up to 20 feet. The walls are all stone, with the interior walls being 1 foot thick and the exterior walls measuring at least 3 feet thick. All of the doors are strong wooden doors, and while many are swollen stuck, few are locked.

Reward: The first time the PCs reach the ruined monastery, grant them 120 XP for the accomplishment and to celebrate their arrival at the adventure's primary site.

C1. APPROACHING THE RUINS MODERATE 1

A ruined monastery sits squat at the foot of Droskar's Crag, surrounded by stands of ancient, gnarled trees. Made of simple stone blocks worn smooth with the passage of time, the stout building appears to be slowly falling apart. Sections of the slanted shale roof have collapsed, and portions of the outer wall have crumbled. Weeds and wild thorny plants run rampant across the field leading up to the place, leaving only the slightest indication of a path that ends at the ruined front doors. Beyond, an overgrown yard sits in shadow.



The old path that leads from the main entrance to the ruins fades into undergrowth about 50 feet to the south of the monastery. Before entering the yard, the path passes between a pair of old stone statues. While one of them has been reduced to little more than rubble, the other is relatively intact. This 5-foot-tall statue is incredibly worn, but it can still be identified as a dwarf holding aloft a great stone hammer. Moss and creeper vines cover most of its surface. Removing the vines around the base uncovers an old inscription in Dwarven that reads, “All praise...” although the name of whoever was intended to be praised has been smashed into illegibility long ago.

Creatures: If the PCs approach the ruins during the day, they find the surrounding area free of danger. A few lone razorcrows roost atop the tower and caw at any who enter their domain. At night, however, a pair of Graypelt’s wolf minions wander the area in search of an easy snack, provided the PCs didn’t fight and defeat these wolves in a random encounter earlier. If the wolves still live, they don’t sleep in the ruins during the day as the other wolves do and are only encountered outside at night.

WOLVES (2)

Pathfinder Bestiary 334

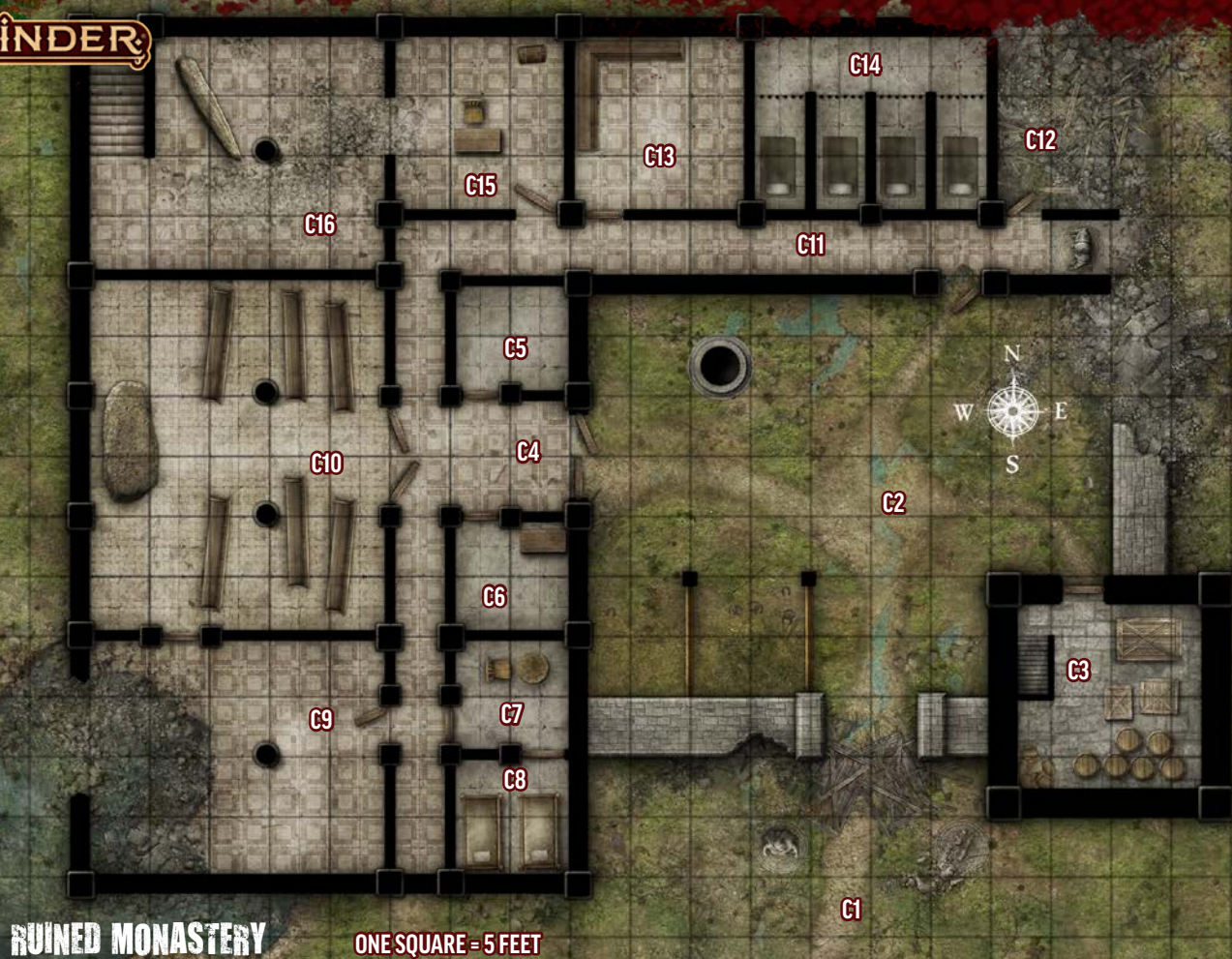
Initiative Perception +7

CREATURE 1

C2. THE YARD

Tall grasses and chunks of stone debris have all but overtaken this small yard. Off to one side, a wooden stable has collapsed into a mound of rotting timbers and moldy straw. The outer wall on the east side has also collapsed, leaving a ragged hole. Three doors also exit into this yard: a set of double doors to the east, a smaller door to the north, and a lone door leading into the squat tower in the southeast corner. Narrow footpaths in the grass run between these doors.

The dwarves once used this yard for physical training, but now it lies in ruin. If the PCs take 10 minutes to Search the tall grasses, they’ll automatically discover a few interesting clues. A low stone well, almost entirely overgrown with foliage, sits in the northwest corner of the yard with 10 feet of rope dangling into it. The water is more than 30 feet down and is brackish but potable—the kobolds get their water here, and if the



RUINED MONASTERY

ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET

PCs stake out the yard, they might eventually spot a few of the Truescales making a run to resupply their stores at your discretion.

The ruined stable hides a few ancient pony bones but little of actual value.

The trails through the grass that lead to the various doors resulted from kobold foot traffic through the area, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notes the prints here and there, mixed with the paw prints of wolves. If the PCs are tracking the trail left by the kobolds dragging Barlus, that trail leads from area C1 to area C4 before fading away inside the ruin.

Note that if the PCs arrive here at night, the kobold Gurtlekep might notice their arrival from his hideout in area C11. If the PCs carry any visible sources of light, he automatically notices their approach and does his best to prepare for them.

Treasure: A PC who Searches the stable discovers ancient pony bones scattered all over the ground. With a successful DC 20 Perception, a PC finds a rotting backpack tucked into a corner. Much of its contents have rotted away, but it also contains a set of thieves' tools, 50 feet of rope, a small coin purse with 42 sp, and a small blue vial containing a *minor healing potion*.

C3. WATCHTOWER

TRIVIAL 1

The door that leads into this tower is stuck, but a character can Force the door Open with a successful DC 15 Athletics check. Atop the 30-foot-tall tower, a trapdoor leads into the interior, connecting to a narrow flight of stairs.

Thick webs cover the ancient crates and barrels stored inside the tower's base. A rickety wooden staircase ascends along one wall to reach an open trapdoor above.

Creatures: A rather aggressive hunting spider dwells in this room, making it one of the chambers that Grappelt avoids. The moment the door opens, the spider drops down to attack. Its webs allow it to move throughout the tower without using the stairs. The spider fights to the death and will pursue prey into area C2 if needed but not beyond.

HUNTING SPIDER

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 306

Initiative Stealth +7

Hazard: The stairs leading up to the open trapdoor above are on the verge of collapse.

UNSAFE STAIRS

HAZARD 0

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 16

Description The rickety stairs groan and strain alarmingly if a Small or larger creature ascends them.

Disable DC 16 Crafting to quickly jury-rig some supports to prevent the stairs from collapsing

Collapse ➤ **Trigger** A Small or larger creature attempts to climb the stairs; **Effect** The stairs attempt a DC 8 flat check (if a Small creature triggered the hazard) or a DC 16 flat check (if a Medium or multiple Small creatures triggered it). On a failure, the stairs collapse. All creatures on the stairs fall and take 2d6+3 bludgeoning damage from the collapsing rubble (DC 16 basic Reflex save).

Treasure: While the supplies in most of the crates and barrels in this room have long since rotted, one small crate contains a low-quality cold iron shortsword wrapped in oilcloth.

C4. ENTRY HALL

Beyond the double doors is a small dark hall littered with mounds of debris and a year's worth of dead leaves. A narrow path winds inside.

Both wolves and kobolds occasionally use this chamber to enter or exit the monastery. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Survival check to Track discerns that most of the traffic through this area heads north.

C5. WAITING ROOM

The door to this room is wedged shut from the inside with a chair, and a PC can Force it Open with a successful DC 15 Athletics check.

A long-dead dwarf lies slumped on the floor in the middle of this dark, dusty room.

This chamber was once used as a waiting room for the monastery's guests. When the dwarven cultists realized that their time was about to end, one of them headed into this room, barricaded himself in, and imbibed a great deal of poison. His mummified remains rest at the center of the chamber. Wearing the garb of a blacksmith, the dwarf has the shattered shards of a glass vial in one hand and a scrap of ancient parchment in the other. Written in Dwarven, the parchment reads, "Forgive me, true father of the forge, for my toils were not enough."

Treasure: Tucked into the dead dwarf's belt is a low-quality silver clan dagger with a religious symbol carved

into the head. With a successful DC 15 Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a PC can identify the symbol as that of Droskar. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check while investigating the body finds 2 pp stashed away in a hidden pouch on the inside of the belt.

C6. CLOAK ROOM

This small chamber was used to store the traveling cloaks, coats, and hats of visitors to the monastery. Now only a few moth-eaten rags hang on the pegs while a single soiled hat rests on the table.

Treasure: Growing in the southeast corner of the room is a single ironbloom mushroom. While not enough to save the entire town, the lone mushroom is a promising start. A PC can find the mushroom with a successful DC 15 Perception check.

C7. GUEST QUARTERS

TRIVIAL 1

The door leading into this chamber from the hallway is locked. The device is quite ancient and easy to pick, though—a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Thievery check can Pick the Lock. Barring that, a PC can Force the door Open with a successful DC 17 Athletics check.

This small chamber appears to be some sort of sitting room, complete with a single table and a pair of chairs, both in relatively good condition. Resting atop the table is a half-eaten crow next to a crude knife and a cracked mug.

This room is used by Gurtlekep, a Truescale kobold stationed on the surface, as a place to rest and take meals. Gurtlekep has prepared a relatively simple trap to greet anyone entering his room, as he is quite paranoid about the warg and his minions. The crow was the kobold's most recent meal, and he becomes quite distressed if anyone disturbs his leftovers.

Hazard: A net strung up near the ceiling holds a number of stones and a small metal anvil, rigged to fall on anyone walking through the door without noticing the trip rope (the door opens out). Each character entering the room must succeed at a DC 10 Reflex save or set off the trap. Those who make it don't necessarily notice the trap. If set off, the noise also warns Gurtlekep (area C8) of their presence.

FALLING DEBRIS

HAZARD 1

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 20

Description A net filled with stones and a small anvil crashes down on someone who steps into the room.

Disable DC 17 Thievery to disarm the trap through a

cracked-open door, or **Interact** to open the door slowly without triggering the trap

Drop Debris **Trigger** A creature opens the door without taking care to avoid triggering the trap; **Effect** The net drops a dozen hefty stones and a small but quite hard anvil onto the creature, inflicting 3d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 17 basic Reflex save). The sound of this trap going off alerts Gurtlekep in area C8.

C8. GURTLEKEP'S ROOM

LOW 1

This cramped chamber features two beds (one of which is covered in bird bones), a small sack, and an array of old tools. The other bed looks recently slept in.

Creature: This chamber is the home of Gurtlekep, a kobold sent up from the dungeon below to keep a lookout on the surface. Gurtlekep sleeps here during the day and usually roams the halls of the monastery at night. If the PCs arrive during the day, Gurtlekep is unprepared for them unless they set off the trap in area C7. If it's night, Gurtlekep can be found in area C11, keeping watch on the courtyard.

If Gurtlekep is alerted to the PCs' proximity, he hides under his bed to try to ambush them, scurrying out and using Stealth to roll initiative once the PCs enter the

room. He focuses his attacks on targets who wear less armor, but if dropped to 10 Hit Points or fewer, he attempts to flee to area C16 to warn Graypelt before retreating into the dungeon below. If the PCs capture him alive, Gurtlekep stubbornly remains silent and takes every opportunity to escape; his initial attitude is Hostile, but if the PCs can get him to talk, see the "Speaking With Kobolds" sidebar on page 44 for advice on what he might have to say to them.

GURTLEKEP

CREATURE 2

LE SMALL HUMANOID KOBOLD

Male kobold lookout (*Bestiary* 212)

Perception +7; darkvision

Languages Draconic

Skills Acrobatics +8, Craft +6 (+8 traps), Stealth +10, Thievery +8

Str +1, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

Items daggers (4), leather armor, *minor healing potions* (2), shortsword, thieves' tools

AC 18; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5

HP 30

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** shortsword +10 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 1d6+3 slashing

Ranged **◆** dagger +10 (agile, finesse, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+3

Knife 'n Run **◆** **Requirements** Gurtlekep is adjacent to at least one enemy and holds a dagger in a hand; **Effect** Gurtlekep Strides up to his Speed plus 5 feet and then attempts a ranged Strike with his held dagger. He must end this movement in a space that isn't adjacent to any enemy.

Sneak Attack Gurtlekep deals an additional 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Treasure: On the spare bed is a complete set of sterling artisan's tools useful for stonemasonry or stone carving work. In addition, a small sack containing 62 sp and a single garnet worth 30 gp sits amid the tools. Although not magical itself, the hexagonal gemstone radiates faint conjuration magic if checked and is one of the missing stones from the altar in area C10.

C9. RUINED LIBRARY

TRIVIAL 1

The double door leading into this chamber is shattered and broken, one of them lying on the floor. The room beyond lies in an equal state of disrepair. What was once a library is now a shattered mess with one corner being completely collapsed and soaked in a wide pool of stagnant water. Thick fungus grows on most of the remaining books on the shelves lining the walls.



This room was once the monastery's library, filled with books on dwarven lore and history. It has long since been plundered of nearly anything of value, and fungus has claimed nearly all the books that remain.

Hazard: The fungus that lines the shelves in this room is hazardous if disturbed.

PHANTOM MOLD

HAZARD 2

ENVIRONMENTAL FUNGUS


Stealth DC 18 (expert)

Description A burst of pale gray spores sprays into the air.

Disable Survival DC 18 to remove the mold without triggering the spores

AC 15; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +5

HP 30; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Spore Burst  **Trigger** The moldy books are moved or the mold takes any damage; **Effect** All creatures within 10 feet of the mold patch are exposed to phantom mold spores.

Phantom Mold Spores (inhaled, poison) Any penalties to Perception from this poison persist for 1 hour after the poison's duration ends (this effect can be removed before then by any effect that neutralizes poison); **Saving Throw** DC 18 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 4 rounds; **Stage 1** 1d6 poison damage; **Stage 2** 1d6 poison damage, and the victim takes a -1 status penalty on visual Perception checks as strange shadows and fluttering movement appear in their peripheral vision; **Stage 3** as stage 2, but a -2 status penalty.

Treasure: A single tome has managed to avoid the destructive fungus atop one of the bookshelves. This beautifully illustrated book is written in Dwarven and contains hymns to Torag; it's worth 10 gp. Folded into the last page of the book is a *scroll of spiritual weapon*.

C10. DESECRATED SHRINE

MODERATE 1

Darkwood pews lie tipped over and covered in dust on either side of this ancient shrine. At the far end sits a large ceremonial anvil, but its surface is defaced and ruined.

This shrine was once dedicated to Torag, but when the monastery turned to Droskar's worship, this chamber was defaced and left to rot. The anvil can be identified as an object devoted to Torag by a PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Religion check to Recall Knowledge. Of particular note is a space atop the altar containing five small hexagonal depressions. These depressions once held five gemstones. While most of these stones are long gone, one still remains and can be found among the other relics in Gurtlekep's room (area C8). If the garnet is placed in one of the depressions, a wave of positive

energy washes out from the altar, hitting everyone in the room and causing an unearthly dwarven choir to spring up from the darkness before fading away. All creatures in the room are healed for 3d6 points and gain a +1 status bonus on attack rolls for 1 hour. While this drains the garnet of its magic, it still retains its intrinsic value.

Creatures: A pair of darkmantles have taken up residence in this chamber and roost on the ceiling above. The strange aberrations use Stealth to roll initiative but hold back their attacks until all the PCs are in the room if possible. They shed darkness into the room on the first round of combat, after which one of the creatures pursues an aggressive attack against the PCs while the other lies in wait near the doors leading to area C4, ready to attack anyone who tries to flee in that direction. The creatures fight to the death.

DARKMANTLES (2)

CREATURE 1

Page 118

Initiative Stealth +7

C11. HALLWAY

LOW 1

This long hallway ends with a ruined dwarven statue. Smashed long ago, the statue is barely recognizable as a dwarven monk. Their stone hammer sits on the ground next to the shattered remains of their head.

Creature: If the PCs enter the ruins at night, Gurtlekep can be found here instead of area C8. From this hallway, he watches the courtyard for any sign of intruders. If he spots the PCs entering the monastery, he rushes to warn Graypelt and his kobold brethren who live below. After raising the alarm, he silently stalks the PCs and waits to strike until they engage another foe. Unlike if he's encountered elsewhere, Gurtlekep fights to the death here.

GURTLEKEP

CREATURE 2

Page 34

Initiative Perception +7

C12. INFESTED RUINS

TRIVIAL 1

This chamber is entirely shattered, with much of the outer wall and ceiling completely crumbled.

This room once served as a study for the monks of the monastery. Today, it's home to a swarm of vampire bats that roost in the remnants of the ceiling above. Note that most of this room is difficult terrain due to the large chunks of stone and debris littering the floor.

Creature: During the day, the vampire bat swarm that lives in this room remains calm and quiet; during most

of the night, the swarm is out in the surrounding wilds hunting. If the PCs make any loud noise in the chamber (such as disturbing the rubble), or if they enter the chamber during the hours of sunset or sunrise, the swarm descends to attack.

VAMPIRE BAT SWARM

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 39

Initiative Perception +10

C13. ARMORY

Old cobweb-covered racks and armor stands fill much of this small chamber. What must have once been a well-tended armory is now devoid of arms and armor.

This chamber was pillaged long ago by a group of adventurers. The secret door located in the northeast corner of the room can be discovered by a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check.

Treasure: In their haste, the adventurers who looted this chamber knocked over one of the bolt cases, spilling its contents across the floor. They gathered up most of the bolts, but two freezing crossbow bolts (*Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide* 257) ended up underneath one of the racks, which a PC can discover with a successful DC 15 Perception check.

C14. SECRET PRISON

LOW 1

One side of this short corridor is a wall of bars. Four rusted doors in this wall open into four cramped cells.

This chamber was built after the monastery's conversion to the worship of Droskar. It housed the members who didn't convert—a trio of unfortunate dwarves who were left here to die. The locks on the cell doors have rusted away, making them easy to open.

Creatures: While all the cells contain the bones of long-dead dwarves, three of them were recently animated as skeletons when the pulse of necromantic energy from the *Third Seal* was released. These three skeletons rise to attack the characters as soon as any of the cell doors open, the strange yellow flickering in their empty eye sockets adding to their unnerving appearance. These skeletons are unarmed and can only make claw Strikes.

SKELETON GUARDS (3)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 298

Initiative Perception +2

Treasure: The only skeleton here that doesn't animate is from a dwarf who remained pious to Torag during her

imprisonment. Her skeleton lies in a peaceful posture on the simple straw cot. On one of her hands is a *ring of Torag*, an ancient magic item (page 116). A pair of ironbloom mushrooms grows inside her rib cage.

C15. WOLF DEN

MODERATE 1

The southern door to this room hangs half-open on damaged hinges.

This small study looks like it has been lived in recently. Gnawed bones litter the floor, and tufts of gray fur lie scattered here and there. An old stone desk sits in the center of the chamber, scratched and cracked in many places. The stench of wet fur hangs heavy in the air.

The monastery's high priest once used this room as a study, where he wrote his upcoming sermons and met with foreign visitors. Today, it functions as the den of a pair of wolves allied with Graypelt.

Creatures: If the PCs arrive in this room during the day and haven't put the ruins on alert, they find both wolves asleep in this room. At sundown, the wolves wake and head out to hunt, so if the PCs explore the ruins at this time, you could have them encounter the wolves anywhere between this room, areas C1–C2, area C4, or areas C11–C12.

If Graypelt has been alerted to the PCs' presence (either because the PCs have been exceptionally noisy or after he's been warned by one of the other creatures in the ruins), he sends both of these wolves out to scour the ruins to confront the PCs. Where and how the PCs encounter them then is left to you to determine.

WOLVES (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 334

Initiative Perception +7

Treasure: The desk is completely empty save for a few scraps of ancient parchment and an old quill. One of the drawers has a secret compartment that a PC can find with a successful DC 15 Perception check. It contains a +1 *handaxe*, a small pouch containing 10 gp, and a prayer book. The book is written in Dwarven and describes the worship of Droskar. A small note on the inside cover reads, "Torag is no longer worthy of our devotion. Only Droskar can deliver us from the failings of the king." The book is worth 15 gp to a scholar interested in dwarven history.

C16. GRAYPELT'S CHAMBER

MODERATE 1

Faint light enters this ruined chamber from gaping holes in the roof. One of the stone columns that once supported the ceiling

has toppled, its broken pieces littering the floor. A thick patch of black mushrooms hides in a nearby corner, giving the room an earthy scent that's barely noticeable above the stench of wet fur.

A flight of stairs at the western end of this room leads down to the dungeon, which is now the domain of the Truescale Kobolds. The stairs lead to area **D1** (see page 41 in Chapter 2).

Creatures: Graypelt is a cunning foe and recognizes the PCs as a serious threat the moment they enter. He understands that if the PCs made it this far through the dangers in the ruins, he needs to be cautious in dealing with them. His first act is to spring out of his hiding spot atop the ruined column to attempt to Demoralize the closest PC. If the PCs move to attack, he speaks, demanding to know why they've disturbed his rest, knowing that many humanoids can be distracted and thrown off by a talking animal.

Graypelt's main goal is to determine if the PCs know anything about his allies, the Truescale Kobolds. If the PCs make it apparent they intend to head downstairs, he howls in rage, then says, "The only way you'll be heading belowground is in your graves!" before he attacks.

Until then, or until the PCs attack him first, Graypelt does his best to make it seem like he's the toughest foe in the area. If the PCs claim that all they want are the mushrooms in the corner, the warg is puzzled, but then nods to them and says, "Take your weeds and begone with you!" He'll allow the PCs to harvest the mushrooms, but if they don't leave soon thereafter, he attacks.

If the PCs ask him about the rumors of the "Darkmoon Beast," he cackles in delight. "Is that what they're calling me? Good! This isn't your fight. Leave those unpleasant loggers to their fates." As above, if the PCs don't leave soon thereafter, Graypelt attacks.

Finally, if the PCs ask about the missing hunter Barlus, Graypelt snickers and says, "Too late for him—he's been taken below," only to gasp in shock that he admitted something he shouldn't have, after which he attacks at once, hoping to correct his admission.

If the PCs leave, only to return later, they find Graypelt much less prone to talking and more eager to fight. Once combat begins, Graypelt fights to the death.

GRAYPELT

CREATURE 3

Male elite warg (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 322)

Initiative Perception +10

Treasure: Graypelt hid a few things of value behind the pillar, including a bag with 354 sp, a finely crafted light crossbow worth 30 gp, a moderate juggernaut mutagen, and a *wand of burning hands*. In the dark corner of the room grows a small patch of six ironbloom mushrooms.

CONCLUDING THE CHAPTER

Depending on the quest that sent the PCs into Darkmoon Vale, they might be able to complete their quest without venturing below the ruined monastery (as in the case for "An Elusive Antidote" or "The Darkmoon Beast"), or they might need to press on downward into the first level below Droskar's Crucible (if they were pursuing "A Missing Person" or "Following Footsteps"). In any case, once the PCs defeat Graypelt, they can begin exploring the dungeon below their feet—but eventually they'll need to return to Falcon's Hollow. When they do, they'll learn that the need to explore Droskar's Crucible has only grown in their absence.



GRAYPELT



PATHFINDER

CHAPTER 2

CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

BY NICOLAS LOGUE

PART 1: DROSKAR'S CRUCIBLE

When the necromancer Drazmorg tore through the upper levels of Droskar's Crucible and temporarily displaced the Truescales, King Merlokrep wasn't pleased. The kobold king's resulting display of cowardice threatened to upend his rule far more quickly than anything that had come before. To combat this dissension, the kobold king has fully accepted his strange visions and dreams, interpreting them as his own thoughts and inspiration to grow ever more merciless and sadistic. In fact, these inspirations come from the crown he wears. It aches to complete its latent magic, and its continued close proximity to the king's brain lets it influence his actions.

These visions share key steps to a ritual the king calls the *rite of the blood crown*. King Merlokrep hopes the ritual will give him incredible powers of leadership and supernatural protection against harm. His first attempt to satiate the crown's blood lust was a gory, sloppy, and confusing ordeal. He sacrificed a captured adventurer named Tyran Moonsliver in a ritual that succeeded but almost cost the king his life when Tyran nearly broke free of his restraints and tried to turn the tables on his captors. The kobold king hopes to refine the *rite of the blood crown* and to recruit the aid of several of his kobold allies for the next time he performs the ritual. In preparation for these upcoming sacrifices, he continues to capture new victims.

The hunter Barlus was the latest to be abducted. While the PCs explore Darkmoon Vale during Chapter 1 of this adventure, the kobolds mount a daring raid on a home at the edge of Falcon's Hollow, snatching away the town's butcher. Whether more victims are actually sacrificed or taken from town depends on how long it takes the PCs to mount an expedition into the dungeon. Once word reaches King Merlokrep that adventurers have invaded his home, he bravely retreats deeper into the dungeons to shore up his defenses. While this retreat curtails the Truescales' plans to snatch victims from Falcon's Hollow, it also changes the kobold king's goals. By delving deeper into the dungeons, King Merlokrep follows his crown's urgings to return to the forge upon which it was created and unknowingly steps ever closer to undreamed-of power!

FALCON'S HOLLOW

Eventually, the PCs will need to return to Falcon's Hollow to recover, sell their loot, shop for upgrades, and claim rewards.

The first time they return to town, the PCs find Falcon's Hollow abuzz with unsettling news: someone was snatched from their home last night. Feel free to choose an NPC with whom the PCs have formed a relationship for this role, but the adventure assumes the abduction victim is the town butcher, Colbrin Jabbs. If the PCs look for rumors or news, they should learn with minimal effort that it appears Colbrin was overwhelmed in his backyard, and then dragged off to the north in the dead of night.

The nature of the perpetrators varies wildly—evil forest spirits, a cartel of bandits, vengeful dead, or even (some take care to whisper carefully) agents of Creed himself. Numerous investigators have trampled the site of the abduction. Worse, the town's leadership seems more interested in squabbling over who should really be protecting the town, jurisdictions, and responsibility than in organizing a rescue effort for Colbrin.

Choose a local NPC you feel the PCs trust (perhaps one who gave them a quest in the first chapter of this adventure), and have that NPC confide in them that tiny reptilian footprints were found in the vicinity of Colbrin's home before the evidence was obliterated. If the PCs don't conclude kobolds were involved, this NPC suggests that Droskar's Crucible seems to have more going on than anyone expected. It's well-known that kobolds dwell in the dungeons there, but this abduction marks the first time they've dared anything so blatant.

If the PCs don't rise to the occasion on their own, have their NPC ally promise a reward, pointing out (rightly so) that if the PCs take care of this situation on their own, the town's leaders will surely owe them a favor.



DROSKAR'S CRUCIBLE

The first dungeon level below the ruined monastery is the region that bears the title the entire complex now uses: Droskar's Crucible. In the aftermath of the Rending, the cult of Droskar significantly expanded this monastery's original basement, as cultists toiled relentlessly to carve out ever-growing glory to their impossible-to-please god.

CRUCIBLE FEATURES

The crucible presents a hallmark of a decline in imagination and spirit, its spartan interior serving as a testament to the joyless final days of the dwarven cultists. Smooth halls stretch between cold-stoned chambers. Crudely hewn tunnels connect the underground monastery directly to dreary mines and thundering forges that long ago hammered steel, day and night. The only area of artisanship in which Droskar

demanded continued ingenuity was trapmaking, and the crucible showcases a few dangerous examples of the craft.

The stairs from area C16 descend more than 20 feet before widening to a 10-foot-square landing. A staircase descends to the north of this landing, down another 20 feet into area D1 of the crucible. The dungeon's walls are masonry, and there's no source of light anywhere except at the Crucible of Offering and Foundry of Souls (areas D2 and D19). The halls of the crucible were constructed to warp sound in strange ways, which has enabled the special qualities of the Listening Chamber (area D11). Elsewhere, the complex features strange echoing noises of dripping, scurrying, whispering, and skittering, ensuring it's never truly silent herein.

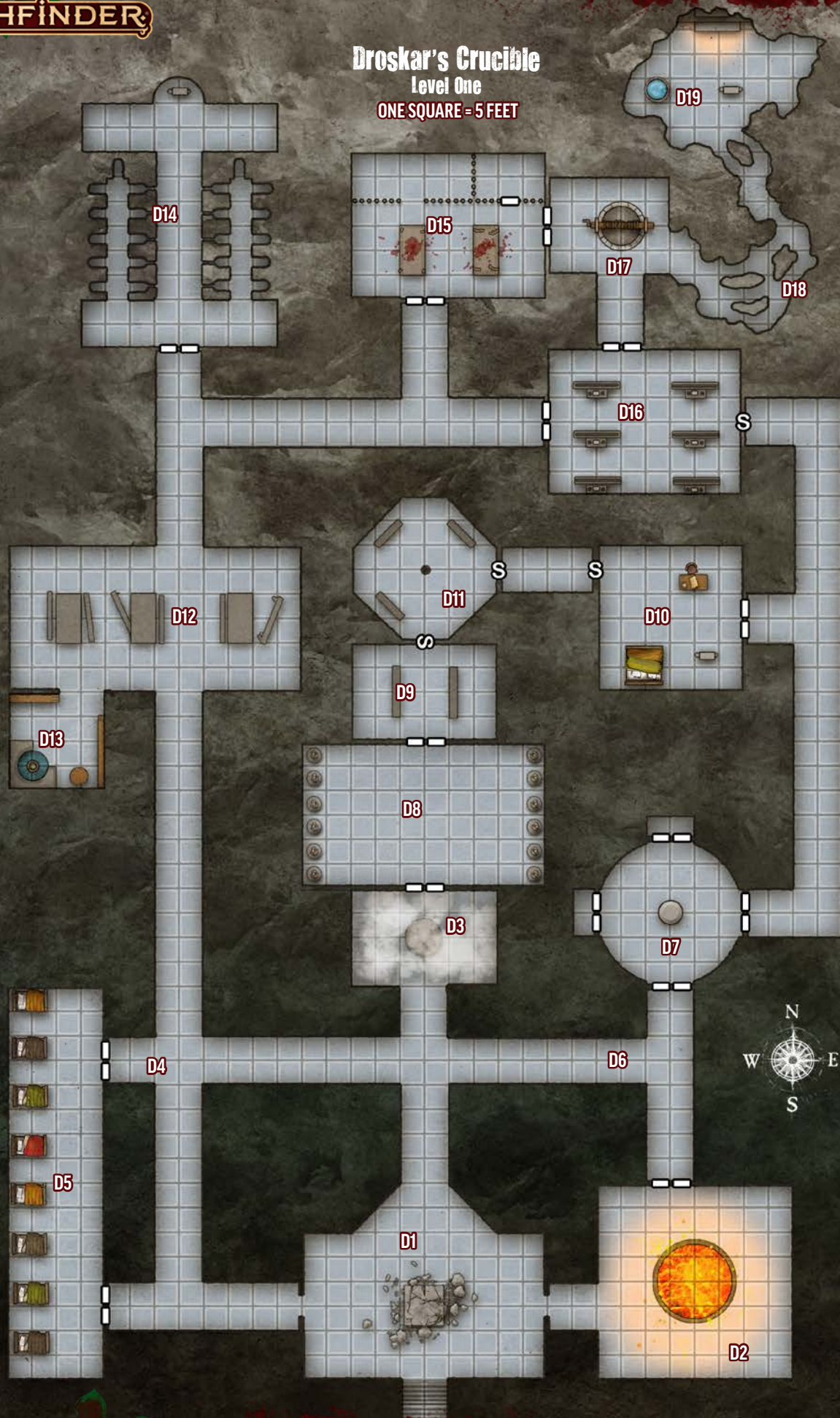
Where present, doors are strong and wooden. Unless otherwise noted, they're unlocked.

D1. MONUMENT CHAMBER

LOW 2

The stairway opens into a large, rectangular chamber, its stone walls covered with intricate carvings of dwarves toiling in mines or over forges. In the center of the chamber stands the bottom half of a broken obsidian obelisk. Crude picks, hammers, and other tools lie scattered around the broken obelisk.

Droskar's Crucible Level One ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET



A monolith of polished obsidian dedicated to Droskar once stood in this atrium. Carved with devotions to the Dark Smith and bearing a dismal mural of dwarven supplicants bowing at the Dark Furnace, the monolith has been harvested recently by kobolds who create obsidian shards by chipping at the obelisk. Despite the reflective quality of these shards, the low quality of the stone renders these fragments worthless beyond serving as baubles.

A character who can read Dwarven and takes 10 minutes to study the carvings on the walls can piece together some of the ancient cult's prayers to Droskar:

"...Toil is the only true path to Salvation. Those who will not work shall have their blood boiled in the Dark Furnace for all time... There is no decadent paradise awaiting us after death, as our corrupt ancestors claimed, only industrious labor in Droskar's Forge awaits the faithful. This great work is its own reward... The unfaithful, they will serve in the end, their blood and bones shall stoke the fires of our industry... The world will burn to the glory of Droskar."

Creatures: Vreggma, Merlokrep's favored consort, loves to gaze at her reflection, particularly in obsidian. She enjoys posing before large pieces of polished obsidian and periodically sends her servants here to chip off new sections of the stone from the dwindling obelisk. She's slowly assembling these harvested chips into a full-size mirror.

The first time the PCs enter this room, four kobold warriors are struggling to drag a 60-pound chunk of the fallen monument behind them toward the hallway to the west. Upon spotting the PCs, the four kobolds hiss and sputter, and then quickly move to attack. Once two are slain, the other two kobolds attempt to flee.

KOBOLD WARRIORS (4)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 212

Initiative Perception +3

D2. CRUCIBLE OF OFFERING

LOW 2

At the center of this large, stone chamber is a deep pit filled with molten slag and sizzling blood that casts a hellish red gleam on the walls. Three narrow chutes open in the ceiling directly above the pit. The air is oppressively hot and thick with ash.

Droskar's cultists and devotees offered their blood and steel to the dark god in this large stone chamber. Old vent shafts once breached the surface 20 feet up but are now choked with centuries of soot.

A character who investigates the forge and vents and who succeeds at a DC 20 check to Identify Magic can tell the forge is sustained by ancient divine magic that

RITE OF THE BLOOD CROWN

While the *rite of the blood crown* is a key part of this adventure's plot, the exact mechanics of how it plays out are largely irrelevant since they take place "off-screen" before the PCs encounter the kobold king and his magic crown.

If you want to include the *rite of the blood crown* in your game, perhaps allowing the PCs to learn it somewhere along the way and use it against the kobold king, you can use the ritual described at the end of this sidebar for those purposes.

RITE OF THE BLOOD CROWN

RITUAL 3

RARE **CONSECRATION** **EVOCATION**

Cast 1 day; **Cost** blood sacrifice (see below);

Secondary Casters 2, must regard you as their king

Primary Check Arcana; **Secondary Checks** Crafting

Range 40 feet; **Target** the *Crown of the Kobold King*

Using resources left behind by the cult of Droskar, King Merlokrep hopes to use this ritual to complete the *Crown of the Kobold King*, allowing it to reach its true intended potential as the *Crown of Toil*. (Of course, Merlokrep has no intention of changing how he refers to the crown should he succeed at this ritual—it will always be the *Crown of the Kobold King* to him and his subjects!)

At one point during the casting of this ritual, an enemy of the primary caster must be sacrificed. Initially, Merlokrep intended to use the abducted victims as these sacrifices, but the blood of a PC will do just as well!

If you wish to include this ritual as something the PCs must instead use to potentially undo the *Crown of the Kobold King*'s magic, the ritual instead requires rare incense and offerings worth a total value of 60 gp instead of a blood sacrifice.

Critical Success The rite is a complete success, and the *Crown of the Kobold King* is bolstered to its true potential. What these powers might be are left to the GM to devise as they see fit. If this rite is being performed to neutralize the *Crown of the Kobold King*'s potential, you instead render the magic item forever unsuitable for ascension to the *Crown of Toil*.

Success The rite is a partial success, but the crown isn't yet complete. If you attempt this ritual again the next day, primary and secondary checks made to determine its success gain a +2 circumstance bonus.

Failure The ritual fails but can be attempted again without additional penalties.

Critical Failure The ritual fails, and the primary caster becomes stupefied 2. The *rite of the blood crown* can't be attempted again for 1 month.

SPEAKING WITH KOBOLDS

The Truescale kobolds are cruel, sadistic, and quick to violence. They fear and respect their king in equal measure. If the PCs capture a kobold alive, the Hostile captive spits and hurls insults and is generally uncooperative. To learn anything of value from a captured kobold, they must be made Helpful.

How much help a cooperative kobold can give is up to you, but unless magically controlled, most will constantly look for a chance to escape or to lure the PCs into a trap. Other kobolds encountered react to captured kobolds with squeals of “traitor!” and do their best to execute these kobolds to prevent the traitors from giving the PCs more information.

A helpful kobold might be able to sketch a partial map of this level or the one below, although they generally don’t know what lies in the areas where true monsters dwell, as indicated in the text. They also might warn the PCs about traps and hazards, reveal locations where any abducted captives are kept, or warn the PCs about the more dangerous named kobolds encountered later on.

Most importantly, you can use captured kobolds to drive home the point to the PCs that their king, “Mighty Merlokrep,” intends to infuse his crown with great magic power by sacrificing “smoothskins plucked from their homes.”

also prevents the smoke from billowing far from this room. That magic needs constant upkeep—something, somewhere, keeps this forge going.

A PC can deactivate the forge by succeeding at a DC 21 Thievery check, a DC 28 Religion check to offer prayers in opposition to Droskar, or by destroying it (Hardness 10, HP 60).

Creatures: The warmth of the crucible attracted a grick, a wormlike creature that now roosts in the vents. The grick prowls the ruins for prey but is delighted when a party of delicious humanoids delivers themselves right to its home. It attacks from the vents above.

GRICK

CR 3

Page 120

Initiative Stealth +10

D3. FOUNTAIN CHAMBER

MODERATE 2

This small chamber features a large fountain. Steam rolls off water pouring from a stone obelisk at the fountain’s center, filling the entire chamber with its haze and damp.

The dwarven cultists created this fountain by tapping into an existing hot spring. The water is thick with minerals and tastes of stone, and the mist created by the hot spring fills this chamber enough to impose a –1 circumstance penalty to vision-based Perception checks.



TRUESCALE KOBOLD

Creatures: A mated pair of shocker lizards resides in the shallow fountain. The kobolds avoid this room, but a captured kobold might try to trick the PCs into entering this room by promising that the steam is “shockingly restorative,” only to perhaps ruin this trick by giggling at their own pun.

The shocker lizards don't pursue foes from this room but otherwise fight to the death.

SHOCKER LIZARDS (2)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 240

Initiative Stealth +8

D4. CRUCIBLE HALLS

LOW 2

Creatures: The 10-foot-wide halls that wind through this level are plain, but a small flock of bloodseekers nests in cracks and niches near the roofs. These pests are trained not to attack kobolds, but other creatures have no such protection. A flight of four bloodseekers attacks the PCs the first time they move into these halls, after which, the remaining bloodseekers avoid the party.

BLOODSEEKERS (4)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 42

Initiative Stealth +8

D5. MONKS' QUARTERS

LOW 2

This long barracks is completely unadorned save for a row of uncomfortable stone beds.

Creature: This room is occupied by something the kobolds refer to as the “Dwarf Ghost,” an entity they've learned to distract by throwing juicy pieces of meat at it whenever they encounter it in the halls. The dwarf ghost is actually a gelatinous cube that contains the undigested armor of none other than Druingar the Glintaxe—the dwarven adventurer the PCs might be seeking within these halls.

When the cube approaches from the south, describe it first as an evil-sounding hiss. A moment later, what appears to be a floating dwarf in full plate floats toward the PCs, its boots gliding a full foot above the floor as it clutches a gleaming axe in one hand.

When Glintaxe arrived at the monastery years ago, he hoped to probe its secrets and retrieve the *Grasp of Droskar*, an axe created by one of his ancestors a thousand years ago. His wild carousing the night before his arrival left the usually steady warrior a little under the weather. Addled by drink and exhausted from the long hike to the crucible, he decided to nap here before continuing deeper into the ruined monastery. As he slumbered, a gelatinous cube engulfed him and quickly digested the dwarven hero.

His armor and magical axe proved indigestible and remain suspended inside the cube. The magical glow shed by his enchanted axe refracts through the cube, creating an eerie ghostly shimmer, but a PC who isn't deceived by the gelatinous cube's transparency can discern the truth.

GELATINOUS CUBE

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 254

Initiative Perception +5

Treasure: Druingar's suit of full-plate armor needs a good wash to rinse off the bitter stink of the cube's enzymes but is otherwise functional. His +1 *battle axe* bears the inscription “Glintaxe” and a long-ago cast *continual flame* spell.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check finds a slender bone scroll tube behind the southernmost bed. The tube contains a *scroll of remove curse*.

D6. HALL OF THE HEADLESS CORPSE

LOW 2

A headless corpse wearing patchwork leather armor lies sprawled at this corridor junction.

This poor adventurer stumbled into the dungeon a few months ago and fell victim to the vargouilles in area D7.

Creatures: Four giant rats feed noisily on the rotting carcass, attacking anyone who interrupts their just-discovered meal.

GIANT RATS (4)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 276

Initiative Perception +5

Treasure: The kobolds had picked the body clean of its belongings, but its *boots of elvenkind* didn't fit any of them, so they left the footwear behind. In addition, a blood-soaked journal lies here, a few gory pages still legible (see Handout 1 on page 47).

D7. LODESTONE TRAP

SEVERE 2

This large, circular chamber has four massive iron doors to the north, south, east, and west. The south and east doors stand open, while the north and west doors remain closed. At the center of the room, a strange stone obelisk rises from floor to ceiling, its surface covered with metal bands and encrusted with deposits of a strange greenish mineral. The floor is strewn with headless skeletons and scattered bones. A dented steel shield and bits of metal armor lie at the foot of the obelisk.

This large, circular stone chamber contains a complex trap. The heavy iron doors on swinging hinges on the

south and east walls open away from the chamber. They brace against the masonry doorframe and jam shut if pulled or pushed toward the chamber's interior. The north and west doors are reversed to be pulled open inward (although they're very heavy). Behind these doors are small alcoves where the creatures wait.

Hazard: The obelisk is a giant magical lodestone whose magnetic properties are activated when more than 30 pounds of pressure are applied to the chamber floor.



LODESTONE TRAP

LODESTONE TRAP

HAZARD 2

UNIQUE COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +8

Description The magical lodestone discharges bolts of electricity that also magnetize metal in the room.

Disable DC 18 Thievery to unhook the pressure plates from the trap, or *dispel magic* (2nd level, counteract DC 18) to counteract the trap

AC 18; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +5

Hardness 8; **HP** 30 (BT 15); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Magneto-Electric Pulse **Trigger** A single Medium or two or more Small creatures end their turn inside the room. **Effect** A pulse of electricity discharges from the lodestone to strike all four doors, with smaller arcs of electricity lancing out to strike all creatures in the room. The south and east doors slam shut, while the north and west doors fly open, releasing two *vargouilles* into the room. All creatures in the room take 2d6 electricity damage (DC 18 basic Reflex save). The trap then rolls initiative.

Routine On its initiative, the trap exerts a strong magnetic pull on the doors, causing the north and west doors to open if they're closed, or causing the south and east doors to close if they're open. A character can open or close a door against this pull with a successful DC 18 Athletics check to Force Open the door. At the same time, any character in the room who wears primarily metal armor must attempt a DC 18 Reflex save (characters in medium metal armor suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to this save, and characters in heavy metal armor suffer a -2 circumstance penalty).

Critical Success The PC is unaffected.

Success The PC resists the pull but treats the room as difficult terrain.

Failure The PC treats the room as difficult terrain and is knocked prone. A PC who's already prone suffers a critical failure instead.

Critical Failure As failure, but the PC is also pulled 5 feet toward the lodestone. A PC who is adjacent to the lodestone instead becomes stuck to it and is restrained as long as the trap continues its routine (escape DC 18).

Reset At the end of a round in which there are no creatures standing on the floor or stuck to the lodestone, the trap deactivates. The *vargouilles* return to their alcoves, and the doors close. The trap resets automatically after 1 minute.

VARGOUILLES (2)

CREATURE 2

Page 124

Initiative Perception +8

...I warned Kemmrick the secrets of the dwarves should remain beneath the ground, but he would not be placated. We've already lost Martren, and without his divine guidance, we are truly lost in the dark. Monsters lurk in every shadow, but something worse jangles in the deep. I feel its evil from afar, like a blistering heat threatening to melt away my soul. The dark smith might be forgotten, but I fear one of his vile servants still prowls these halls, keeping the fires of Droskar burning for hundreds of years..."

...Their shrieks tore my courage from me and left my heart cold. I don't know what they did to me when their rancid-tasting lips locked on mine, but my thoughts jumble now, and my hair falls away in bloody clumps... If only Martren were here, he would know what sickness ails me and pray for my salvation. The only prayer I can muster is that this plague takes me before that hellish shackled servant of Droskar returns to drag me off in chains as he did Kemmrick. I still hear his screams in my mind.

...ears wet... thirst so thirst... lost in the dark... tongue gone now... itchy... Face rot rot... blood tastes good... fly soon fly...

HANDOUT 1

D8. WAR MONUMENT

TRIVIAL 2

This arched chamber features rows of statues lining the east and west walls. The statues to the east depict fearsome dwarven warriors clad in simple plate armor as they heft their warhammers high. The statues to the west depict grotesque caricatures of dwarves as overly obese, pig-nosed brutes with huge, grinning mouths and beady eyes. These western statues are arranged in two lines with the front row kneeling, and both rows hold sharp, jutting spears leveled at the warriors opposite them. The corpse of a kobold remains impaled upon the stone spear of one of the western statues. The limp body unceremoniously sags on the haft, eye to eye with its statuesque killer.

The eastern statues depict Droskar's smiths, dwarven warriors who gave their lives in a brutal battle with the forces of the old empire that had fallen into decadence. They laid low the elite armies of the king (depicted to the west) and paved the way for a joyless theocracy dedicated to Droskar, but they perished to the last in the bloody battle. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Religion check to Recall Knowledge knows this information.

Hazard: The kobold fell prey to a deadly trap meant to prevent anyone from reaching area D9.

CHARGE OF THE SPEAR LEGION

HAZARD 3

UNIQUE MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 20 (expert)

Description When triggered, the room lurches suddenly on its side, causing those in the room to slide down toward the double line of spears on the west wall while the statues on the east slide down on a pulley-and-roller system to smash into the victims.

Disable Thievery DC 20 to deactivate the triggering pressure plate near the northern door

Shift Sideways ➤ **Trigger** A Small or larger creature approaches within 15 feet of the double door to area D9.

Effect The entire room rotates, its west half descending as its right half rises, forming a 45° slope down to the west. All creatures in the room fall prone and slide toward the west wall (a creature adjacent to the north or south wall can attempt to arrest this fall with a DC 20 check to Grab an Edge) and take 2d6+5 piercing damage (DC 20 basic Reflex save) as they land among the spears. At the same time, the warhammer-wielding

statues to the east slide downward on chains to smash into the lower wall; each person in the trap is subjected to a sliding statue Strike.

Melee sliding statue +12, **Damage** 2d6+5 bludgeoning

Reset After 1 minute, the chamber rights itself and resets the trap.

D9. CHRONICLE OF THE FAITHFUL

This simple room has polished obsidian walls that bear long lists of Dwarven names.

The inscriptions here give the names of several generations of dwarven cultists. A trigger at the bottom corner of the east wall (under the name “Grindbolt Stoneslider”) opens a secret sliding door to area **D11**. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check locates the door and the trigger.

D10. ABBOT'S QUARTERS

LOW 2

This large chamber once functioned as the living quarters of an important dwarf. In one corner stands a simple stone bed near a large stone table. A large anvil on the other side looks somewhat out of place with a massive maul attached to it by a crude mechanical arm. Atop the anvil rests a dwarf skeleton, its skull crushed.

The abbot of Droskar's Crucible lived here. The last abbot was a gnarled old dwarven monk named Gristogar Ashbreath, who served Droskar unwaveringly even as the cult crumbled around him. When the last disciple tried to abandon the crucible, Gristogar shattered the traitor's spine with a well-placed punch and retired to his quarters to meditate. To aid in his focus, he began tinkering with one of his latest creations: a metal machine meant to automate the process of hammering metal. Gristogar's attention waned, and his machine activated unexpectedly, smashing his skull against the anvil as he leaned in to make some adjustments.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check can find the secret doors in this room's walls.

Creature: Ages ago, Gristogar crafted a homunculus to serve him. The pathetic little creature's spirit broke with its master's death, and it languishes here, interpreting anyone who enters this room as enemies who have come to cart away the master's bones. The homunculus attacks at once, fighting until destroyed.

If the PCs destroy the homunculus, a strange transformation occurs: the spirt that animated the homunculus rises from its remains, swirls through the air, and then merges with the hammer contraption (unless the PCs already destroyed the device). An instant later, the

device lurches to life, powered by the lingering grief and confusion and rage that filled the homunculus. It attacks immediately, this time using a much more dangerous body. It functions as an animated statue, but it lacks a Grab ability.

If the PCs flee, the animated anvil pounder doesn't pursue. After 1 minute of seeing no obvious foes, the animating spirit permanently leaves, and the device becomes inert once again.

HOMUNCULUS

CREATURE 0

Pathfinder Bestiary 208

Initiative Perception +3

ANIMATED ANVIL POUNDER

CREATURE 3

Variant animated statue (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 20)

Initiative Perception +9

Treasure: A half-finished obsidian statuette of an owlbear worth 5 gp rests on the table. An obsidian tablet nearby has a face carved into it with a last message to Droskar (see Handout 2 on page 49). This relic of the old dwarven theocracy is worth 30 gp. Gristogar's robe has rotted almost to nothing, but his *bracers of missile deflection* have not yet succumbed to time's rot. The skeleton's left hand still bears a fire-blackened cold iron gauntlet—a *grasp of Droskar* (page 115).

D11. LISTENING CHAMBER

MODERATE 2

Simple stone benches line the walls of this octagonal room. These benches are positioned near small openings along the west, northwest, and northeast walls. An unusual device that resembles a stone trumpet is attached to the northeast wall near the opening. A faint whispering sound permeates the chamber.

In this secret room, Gristogar Ashbreath spied upon his disciples to ensure their faithful devotion to Droskar. This entire level was constructed to channel sound into this room from several places. Gristogar spent many hours here each day listening to his monks at their vespers in the Chamber of Penance (area **D16**), to conversations over meals in the Mess Hall (area **D12**), and to secrets whispered to the dead in the Ossuary (area **D14**). Three stone benches sit next to strange, conical openings along the wall. A pedestal in the room's center shows a rough map of this level, demonstrating the connections of each opening to their dedicated areas of reconnaissance.

With a successful DC 16 Architecture Lore or Engineering Lore check, or a successful DC 21 Crafting check to Recall Knowledge, a PC understands the purpose of this chamber and also ascertains that the stone trumpet channels a speaker's voice into area **D16**, where it echoes

and booms powerfully. If the PCs arrive here before exploring the rest of this level, they can get an idea of what awaits them by listening at the listening posts.

Western Listening Post: The western opening monitors the Mess Hall (area **D12**). Listeners can discern the squeaking yaps of kobolds hurling curses and threats, followed by the crack of a stone striking one in the head and a squeal of pain. A moment later, what sounds like a male voice starts laughing before crying out in Common, "There's more of that where that came from, you scaly little toads!" The kobold voices redouble in rage, hurling back insults. A PC who speaks Draconic can deduce the kobolds have cornered a halfling who escaped imprisonment, but they're struggling to recapture him.

Northwest Listening Post: The northwest opening allows anyone next to it to hear what transpires in the Ossuary (area **D14**). A male voice nervously prays. This voice belongs to the missing hunter Barlus, who escaped his captors only to end up stuck in this room, cornered by silently watchful, undead guardians. With a successful DC 11 Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a PC can identify the prayers as ones traditionally offered to Erastil for protection against supernatural danger.

Northeast Listening Post: The northeast opening ties into the Chamber of Penance (area **D16**), where the young kobold mystic Kerrdremak argues with a handful of warriors. Kerrdremak, the priest-in-training under Jekkajak, complains to the warriors about the troubles befalling their people as of late. Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs listen and can understand Draconic.

"...but we all know the pop-pop to our king's eye was just the start! So many of us died when the bald, dead-speaker wizard man came and ran us off. Our king did not fight. He led us in flight to the sun, and it took so long to come back here. Now that we're back, the bald, dead-speaker wizard man is still downstairs, and our king's plan to magic up his crown is going to get us in even more trouble if we keep snatching people from the human town. That's how you get do-gooders in your home! Now, join me in prayer, my acolytes, so that we might make peace with the bones and the shadows, and save ourselves from our king's crown!"

The chamber fills with soft, hard-to-understand prayers that persist for quite some time. With a successful DC 16 Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a PC can tell that the prayers seem to focus on something sinister associated with devils and undeath. With a critical success on this check, the PC identifies the prayers as being offered to Lorcan, the infernal duke of blood, rebirth, and undeath.

Speaking Trumpet: By using the speaking trumpet, the PCs can attempt to Lie to, Make an Impression on, Demoralize, or Coerce the kobolds in area **D16**.

Our people have lost their way.
They flee the shelter of your
great forges. Our fires dim,
my master. We have failed
you. No use to you here, I now
come to you. I shall join you
in the Grim Forge, whether
to serve at your anvil or stoke
its flames with my soul.

HANDOUT 2

The check gains a +1 item bonus; if the PCs choose to Demoralize the kobolds, they can't reduce the resulting frightened condition below 1 for 1 hour. See area **D16** for information the PCs can learn from speaking with Kerrdremak and his nervous acolytes.

Creature: Before the PCs can use this chamber's unique features, a swirling, vaguely dwarf-shaped shadow confronts them. This undead shadow is all that remains of Gristogar's spirit. The shadow's memories of life are hopelessly tangled, and the creature has been drifting from listening post to listening post for centuries without understanding what's going on at each location. The PCs represent its first chance to interact with the world of the living, and it does so violently. It won't pursue the PCs from this room, but otherwise, it fights until destroyed. Once destroyed, a shriek echoes from area **D10**, and Gristogar's skeleton in the room to the south crumbles to dust as he's finally sent to his punishment in the afterlife.

GRISTOGAR

CREATURE 4

Male shadow (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 289)

Initiative Perception +10

D12. MESS HALL

MODERATE 2

The first time the PCs approach this area, they hear kobolds shouting insults and yelping in pain.

Three large, stone tables stand in the middle of this room. The long benches that once stood next to them have been knocked askew and overturned. To the southwest, several wooden stools

and shelves stacked in a makeshift barricade block access to a room beyond.

Creatures: Once where the cultists took their grim meals of tasteless gruel in silence, this chamber has become the site of a heated battle between Merlokrep's kobold warriors and an escaped prisoner named Edgrin Galesong. Edgrin escaped his holding pen on the lower level and made it as far as this room before Merlokrep's guards caught up and cornered him in the kitchen to the south (area **D13**). He barricaded himself in the kitchen and has endured a miniature siege from the north for the past hour or so; Edgrin is fully detailed in area **D13**.

The kobolds are led by a proud and stubborn jailer named Ygrik, who fears King Merlokrep will learn that his favorite singing halfling escaped. Ygrik hopes to catch Edgrin alive and return him to his cage before word spreads to the king's ears, but his cowardly and inept guards make for an increasingly frustrating siege. Every time the kobolds try to enter the kitchen, Edgrin uses magic to hurl something heavy or sharp

at them. Ygrik has been trying to exhaust Edgrin's supplies of ammunition by sending kobolds in one at a time, but the kitchen has an ample stock of forks, knives, and cups.

The PCs see three kobolds dead on the floor, each body impaled with kitchen implements hurled via Edgrin's *telekinetic projectile* cantrip. Ygrik and three of his guards stand throughout the room with their attention focused toward area **D13**; the kobolds suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to Perception checks and initiative until they notice the PCs. Once they do, Ygrik shrieks in rage (and maybe a little fear) and urges the guards to attack. Excited by the arrival of newcomers, the kobolds surge to obey. Their morale is such that any kobold who takes any damage attempts to flee—if any escape, the PCs might encounter them wherever you choose elsewhere in the dungeon. Ygrik sees no option other than to fight to the death. If he's slain, any surviving kobolds flee. Edgrin watches quietly from area **D13** but doesn't join the battle, as he's already close to exhaustion.

If the PCs trigger this encounter but flee before they save Edgrin (or if they first hear this battle in progress but take too long to investigate), the kobolds finally manage to recapture Edgrin. In such a case, the PCs can instead meet (and perhaps rescue) Edgrin from his cage in area **E26**.



YGRIK

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE LE SMALL HUMANOID KOBOLD

Male kobold jailer (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 212)

Perception +7; darkvision

Languages Common, Draconic

Skills Acrobatics +7, Crafting +6 (+8 traps), Intimidation +8, Stealth +7, Survival +5

Str +1, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +0,

Wis +1, **Cha** +2

Items +1 flying talon (page 115), leather armor, keys to prisoner cages

AC 17; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +5

HP 30

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *flying talon* +11 (finesse, trip); **Damage** 1d4+3 piercing

Ranged ♦ *flying talon* +11 (ranged trip, tethered, thrown 10 feet); **Damage** 1d4+3 piercing

Intimidating Retreat ♦ **Requirements** Ygrik is adjacent to at least one enemy and at least one ally; **Effect** Ygrik commands an adjacent ally to fight harder and threatens dire punishment if the ally fails to obey; that

ally gains a +1 circumstance bonus to its next melee Strike attack roll, as long as that attack is made before the start of Ygrik's next turn. Ygrik then Strides up to his Speed and gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against reactions triggered by this movement.

He must end this movement in a space that isn't adjacent to any enemy.

Sneak Attack Ygrik deals an additional 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

KOBOLD WARRIORS (3) CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 212

Initiative Perception +3

D13. KITCHEN

This once well-appointed kitchen has long suffered from neglect. Shelves covered in broken stone and other refuse line the walls. Across the room, an old, rusty cauldron rests in the ashes of an ancient fire.



EDGRIN GALESONG

Creature: Edgrin Galesong, a halfling and bard extraordinaire, was a member of the Gray Eagles, an adventuring troupe based in the town of Olfden, south of Falcon's Hollow. Knowing that Falcon's Hollow had a reputation for being unpleasant, the Gray Eagles bypassed the town on their latest expedition north to the mountains to seek fame and treasure, only to get attacked by a group of Truescale kobolds fighting alongside a scary gray warg (Graypelt). Most of Edgrin's companions were killed, but he and a half-elf wizard named Tyran Moonsliver were captured alive and dragged to Droskar's Crucible to be eaten or sacrificed.

Dejected by the death of his friends, Edgrin consigned himself to his fate, but when King Merlokrep sacrificed Tyran to empower his crown, Edgrin redoubled his efforts to survive. Drawing upon all his skills as an entertainer, he managed to situate himself as a delightful distraction for the kobolds and earned a stay of execution. Since the *rite of the blood crown* requires the sacrifice of enemies of the Truescales, the Kobold King couldn't justify sacrificing his new pet bard.

Over the next few weeks, Edgrin managed to stay alive by trading performances for stays of execution, even after new prisoners joined him in the cages—first the hunter Barlus and, more recently, the butcher Colbrin.

Edgrin took his chance to escape about the same time the PCs started exploring this dungeon level. The three prisoners managed a daring escape during a changing of the guard, though they got separated in their panicked race through the dungeon. Edgrin doesn't know if Barlus and Colbrin still live. Since he was transported

unconscious when he was first captured, Edgrin doesn't know a route to safety.

Edgrin is a sweaty, moon-faced halfling whose heart is as big as his stomach. His once debonair, brocaded, green velvet doublet and silk leggings are torn and grimy. His lute still hangs on a strap at his side, but he splintered it on a kobold's skull during his escape. His time in the dungeon has traumatized him, and he wants nothing more than to escape. If the PCs escort him from the dungeons, he's confident he can return to civilization safely, but he has nothing to reward them with other than knowledge and healing. He offers to use all his remaining spell slots to cast *soothe* on the PCs and points out a hidden cache of treasure in the kitchen if the PCs haven't noticed it already. (Edgrin hasn't had a chance to study the contents of the cache and has no idea what

the bottles within do.)

Edgrin's flight through the dungeons was disorienting, so he can't really give the PCs accurate directions other than to tell them the level below consists of winding caves. He tells the PCs the kobold king intends to sacrifice prisoners to empower his crown with magic, and he also overheard his captors complain that teaching the ritual to other priests has been unexpectedly difficult. Once they learn it, though, Edgrin knows the prisoners' days are numbered. He confirms the other two prisoners are Barlus and Colbrin. He isn't sure what happened to Colbrin and fears the butcher might not have made it out of the cage at all. Barlus almost made it to the kitchen before they were forced to split up. The last Edgrin knows, Barlus fled through the doors to the north of the kitchen.

If you think the PCs need help, you can allow Edgrin to join the party. He'll ask for weapons and armor so he can protect himself—how he fares if he joins the PCs is up to them and fate.

EDGRIN GALESONG

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE CG SMALL HALFLING HUMANOID

Male halfling bard

Perception +7

Languages Common, Draconic, Halfling

Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +8, Diplomacy +8, Performance +8, Society +7, Stealth +7

Str -1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +4

Items broken lute, dirty clothes

Bardic Lore Edgrin can Recall Knowledge on any subject with a +7 modifier.

AC 17; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5
HP 32

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +7 (agile, finesse, nonlethal, unarmed), **Damage** 1d4+1 bludgeoning

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 18, attack +10;

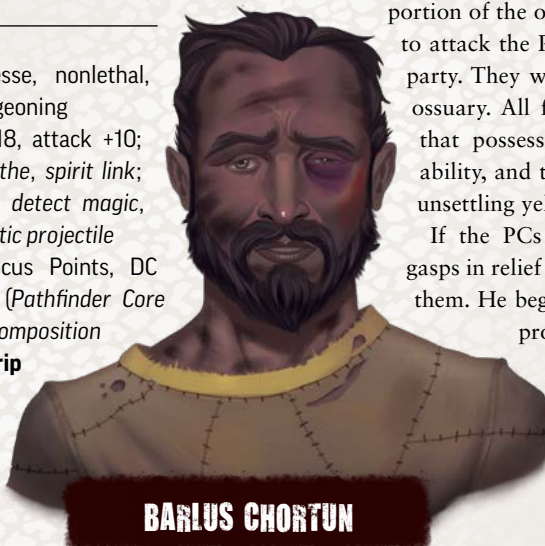
1st (3 slots) *alarm, bless, soothe, spirit link*;

Cantrips (1st) *dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand, read aura, telekinetic projectile*

Bard Composition Spells 2 Focus Points, DC 18; **1st** *counter performance* (Pathfinder Core Rulebook 386), *lingering composition*

(Core Rulebook 387); **Cantrip**

(1st) *inspire courage*, (Core Rulebook 386)



BARLUS CHORTUN

Treasure: The refuse on the eastern shelf conceals a hidden cache that a PC

can discover with a successful DC 18

Perception check; alternately, Edgrin can point it out to the PCs if he's rescued. The cache contains a moderate eagle-eye elixir, a moderate serene mutagen, and a moderate silvertongue mutagen.

XP Award: If the PCs rescue Edgrin and escort him from the dungeon, grant them 40 XP.

D14. OSSUARY

MODERATE 2

This dark ossuary is cold and full of the sound of dripping water. A dark corridor runs north down the center of the room. On either side, two large bays open into small niches that contain ancient dwarven skeletons. At the far end of the corridor rests a large, iron anvil.

This grim mini-catacomb of alcoves contains the bones of several dwarven cultists. Locked iron gates once barred all the niches. Now, the grates are rusted and broken along the far east and west walls. The ones that seal the alcoves directly adjacent to the corridor, however, remain solid.

Creatures: Several of these alcoves contain skeletons of long-dead dwarven cultists, and some of them were recently animated when the pulse of eerie, yellow necromantic energy from the *Third Seal* flowed through the region.

When Edgrin and Barlus separated during their escape, Barlus fled into this room, only to be confronted by the undead as they rose from their crypts. Without his gear and no remaining spells, Barlus fell to desperate prayer in the northernmost portion of the ossuary. As long as he continues to pray for Erastil's salvation, the four undead skeletons continue to leave him alone.

These undead skeletons now patrol the southern portion of the ossuary, and they quickly move to attack the PCs as soon as they notice the party. They won't pursue the PCs from the ossuary. All four are elite skeleton guards that possess the screaming skull variant ability, and their bones flicker faintly with unsettling yellow light.

If the PCs defeat the skeletons, Barlus gasps in relief and staggers forward to thank them. He begs to be escorted to safety and promises to reward the PCs with a family heirloom—his father's +1 *composite longbow* that hung over his hearth for decades—if the party escorts him back to Falcon's Hollow.

In addition, once he recovers, he agrees to provide free healing services

to the PCs whenever they're in town. He can share the same information as Edgrin about the kobold king's ritual plans if asked.

HEAD-HURLING ELITE SKELETONS (4) CREATURE 0

Pathfinder Bestiary 6, 298

Initiative Perception +4

BARLUS CHORTUN

CREATURE 1

LG male human hunter (variant acolyte of Nethys, *Gamemastery Guide* 212)

Initiative Perception +7

XP Award: If the PCs rescue Barlus and escort him to Falcon's Hollow, grant them 40 XP.

D15. ABATTOIR

MODERATE 2

Two large stone blocks rest in the center of this room. To either side hang large rusty hooks over small channels in the stone floor, leading to old drains choked with refuse. A dead kobold lies on one of the blocks. The little creature's chest is ripped open, and its entrails hang obscenely off the sides of the block.

Centuries ago, this yawning stone chamber served as a slaughterhouse where livestock were bled and their meat stripped from bone.

Creatures: Four dwarven ghouls, sad and rotting holdovers from their collapsed kingdom, skulk in this bloody hall. Perhaps their shredded souls still cling to the memories of bloody slaughter they saw transpire here in life. Now, they partake of their grisly meals in the abattoir. The ghouls have little interest in moving from

this room, but if foolish kobolds sneak in to look for treasures (that don't exist) or on a dare, the ghouls aren't above snatching up a meal.

When the PCs enter, the ghouls are at the butcher's block. One gnaws on the kobold's leg, another slurps up strips of entrails like sausages, while the third sits back and pontificates on the flavor of kobold meat through its various stages of decay. All three ghouls attack as soon as they detect the party.

GHOULS (3)

Pathfinder Bestiary 169

Initiative Perception +7

CREATURE 1

D16. CHAMBER OF PENANCE MODERATE 2

Six stone prayer platforms with well-worn knee rests are spread through this large chamber.

Long ago, disciples of the crucible came here to pray to Droskar and beg his leniency for being too lax in their toil or for committing crimes against his creed.

Creatures: A malcontent mystic of the Truescales named Kerddremak holds court over five kobold warriors. Technically charged with scouting the upper halls and reporting obvious threats to King Merlokrep and his elite minions below, Kerddremak has grown frustrated with his position and what he believes to be Merlokrep's obsession with empowering his crown. Instead, Kerddremak has grown impressed and fascinated with the upswing of undeath in the region, and he has turned to a somewhat obscure patron for mystical inspiration: an infernal duke named Lorcan, who teaches of the glories of rebirth into undeath.

Rather than patrol, Kerddremak has been preaching the wisdom of Lorcan to his followers, and the kobolds are eating it up. The idea of being reborn as vampires or ghosts—or vampire ghosts—appeals particularly in the ways Kerddremak describes the transition as granting them all great power. Much of what Kerddremak knows about Lorcan has been whispered to him in dreams from his familiar, an albino rat named Taily.

If a PC listens at the door before entering this room, they can hear Kerddremak preaching with a successful DC 11 Perception check. On a critical success, a character who speaks Draconic hears his speech clearly (see the read-aloud text for the Northeast Listening Post in area D11).

Kerddremak and his four followers react with surprise at the sight of the PCs, but the kobold witch holds back the command to attack. He calls to the PCs

in Draconic, then attempts the same in Infernal. If the PCs can't communicate, he rolls his eyes and orders the attack.

If the PCs establish communication, Kerddremak offers to step aside and let the PCs pass to the north, telling them his superiors dwell below and the PCs can reach the lower level by taking the elevator in area D17. Kerddremak warns the PCs about the trap on the elevator and instructs them to have only one "of you big'uns" ride at a time, but he justifies his treason by not providing any more assistance. His initial attitude toward the PCs is Indifferent, but if he can be made Helpful, Kerddremak relents and gives the PCs directions to the king's throne room: "Down the elevator, then north, left, right, left, and left. You can't miss it!" If the PCs return to this area later, Kerddremak and his followers are nowhere to be found—the



KERDDREMAK

devil-worshipping traitors have abandoned Droskar's Crucible for now but will meet the PCs again in Chapter 3.

If a fight breaks out, Kerrdremak flees if reduced to fewer than 5 Hit Points, choosing to abandon Droskar's Crucible rather than stick around. If he flees, or is killed, the remaining kobold warriors flee as well.

KERRDREMAK

CR 1

UNIQUE LE SMALL HUMANOID KOBOLD

Male kobold witch 1 (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 212)

Perception +5, darkvision

Languages Draconic, Infernal

Skills Deception +6, Intimidation +6, Occultism +7, Religion +5, Stealth +7

Str -1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +3

Items dagger

AC 15; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

HP 20

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +7 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4-1 piercing

Divine Spells Prepared DC 17, attack +9; **1st command**, *fear*, *ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips (1st)** *divine lance*, *guidance*, *message*, *shield*, *sigil*

Hex Cantrips DC 17; **1st stoke the heart** (*Advanced Player's Guide* 239)

Whispering Retreat ♦♦ (divine, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental) **Requirements** Kerrdremak is adjacent to at least one enemy; **Effect** Kerrdremak whispers under his breath, and one adjacent enemy must attempt a DC 17 Will save or become frightened 1 as they hear a whispering voice just behind them that claims to know when the target will die; the target is then temporarily immune to Whispering Retreat for 1 hour. Kerrdremak then Strides, and this movement doesn't trigger reactions from frightened creatures. He must end this movement in a space that isn't adjacent to any enemy.

KOBOLD WARRIORS (4)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 212

Initiative Perception +3

XP Award: If the PCs manage to get Kerrdremak's assistance, grant them 90 XP as if they defeated all five kobolds in combat.

D17. ELEVATOR

MODERATE 2

A ten-foot-diameter pit occupies the center of this chamber. Directly over the pit, a long chain feeds through a complex pulley system before disappearing into the depths.

This area once functioned as a refuse pit for the monastery's dwarves. When the kobolds claimed the region, they repurposed this one-time trash chute into the primary entrance to the warrens below. They rigged a large cauldron, several lengths of chain, and pulleys harvested from area D20 to construct a rudimentary pulley-operated elevator.

Creatures: Four kobold warriors commanded by a kobold scout guard the elevator. They fight more bravely than most, but if the scout is slain, the remaining warriors try to flee by clambering into the cauldron to escape. In their panic, they don't think to disable the trap.

KOBOLD SCOUT

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 213

Initiative Perception +8

KOBOLD WARRIORS (4)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 212

Initiative Perception +3

Hazard: The kobolds rigged the elevator to malfunction if too much weight is placed inside. While the oversized cauldron could hold four Medium creatures at a time, it's only safe to operate with no more than one Medium or two Small creatures per trip. Those who make the trip safely can reach area E1 below after cranking the cauldron downward for 6 rounds. Alternately, using the dangling chains (either before or after the cauldron is dropped), a character can Climb up or down the 30-foot shaft with a successful DC 15 Athletics check.

TRAPPED ELEVATOR

HAZARD 2

UNCOMMON MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 18 (expert)

Description An oversized cauldron rigged as an elevator suddenly drops 30 feet if it's overloaded.

Disable Thievery DC 18 (trained) to lock the releasing mechanisms in place, or Crafting DC 20 to rig additional supports for the cauldron (this activity requires 10 minutes of work)

Release the Cauldron ⤿ **Trigger** More than one Medium or more than two Small creatures are inside the cauldron when it is activated to lower; **Effect** The cauldron releases from its anchor points on the chains and drops 30 feet to area E1; any creatures within take 15 points of bludgeoning damage in the fall. A creature can attempt to Grab an Edge to avoid falling by clinging to a chain.

Reset Creatures can still fall down the shaft even after the cauldron is released, but the cauldron must be reset manually.

D18. SMOKING TUNNELS **MODERATE 2**

Unlike the rest of this level, this area features rough stone and undressed rock reminiscent of a mine shaft. The tunnels divide and rejoin several times, marring one's ability to maintain a sense of direction. Thick, acrid smoke in these tunnels makes it difficult to see and breathe.

These rough-hewn tunnels lead to a great forge-filled hall where cultists ceaselessly toiled at their craft. Smoke from these magical forges traveled through cunning flues to vent periodically from numerous locations along the lower slopes of Droskar's Crag. Over the years, the chimneys clogged with soot, and a great deal of this smoke ended up drifting into these tunnels. The thick smoke imposes a –2 circumstance penalty to visual Perception checks, and creatures are concealed at a distance of more than 10 feet. Any creature that breathes in the smoke becomes sickened 1 and can't reduce this condition's value below 1 until they can get a breath of fresh air.

Creature: A hellhound guards the approach to area **D19**. It outlived the cultists who conjured it and remains bound to the site. It considers the creature in area **D19** its current master, but it's supernaturally patient and content to patrol these tunnels. With no need to eat or drink as a result of the ancient conjuration magic, and perfectly at home breathing smoky air, the hellhound howls in excitement and then attacks as soon as it notices intruders. The kobolds long ago learned to avoid traveling too far into these tunnels.

HELLHOUND **CR 3**

Pathfinder Bestiary 205

Initiative Perception +9

D19. FOUNDRY OF SOULS **SEVERE 2**

A loud crackling fills the room. Blistering hot smoke pours forth, lit with a strange orange light. A massive forge responsible for the hellish atmosphere takes up the entire far wall of the cavern. Between the forge and the entrance stands a massive anvil, and nearby rest hammers, tongs, and other blacksmithing tools. The roar of the forge almost drowns out a faint whimpering sound.

The smoke in this chamber is even worse than in area **D18**—visual Perception checks take a –4 circumstance penalty, and creatures are concealed at a distance of more than 5 feet. Any creature who breathes the smoke becomes sickened 1 and must attempt a DC 16 Fortitude save; on a failure, they become sickened 2, and on a critical failure, they begin to suffocate. A creature can't reduce this condition's value below 1 until they get a breath of fresh air.

The forge is fully functional and haunted by the presence of the nearby forge-spurned. As long as the

undead dwarf exists, the forge burns hot without needing to be refueled.

A fissure in the back of the cave, opened long ago during the Rending, drops 30 feet into area **E4**. A character can scale this fissure with a successful DC 20 Athletics check.

Creatures: The dwarven cultists of Droskar died centuries ago, but one didn't quite complete their journey into the afterlife. This cultist ceaselessly toils in this room, tearing down their creations upon completion only to forge them anew. The cultist exists now as an undead monster known as a forge-spurned, and it reacts to any interruption with furious wrath, attacking at once and fighting until destroyed. The forge-spurned won't pursue intruders beyond areas **D18** and **D19**.

FORGE-SPURNED **CREATURE 5**

Page 119

Initiative Perception +11

Treasure: The forge-spurned has a non-magical warhammer, but the creature still wears the *lifting belt* it wore in life.

DREAMS FROM THE KOBOLD KING

When the PCs first enter the dungeons, the kobold king seeks shelter in the deepest reaches of Droskar's Crucible. Since there are no quest-giving NPCs to spur the PCs onward or to warn them of this danger, use any chance you have to impart to the PCs that leaving Merlokrep alone is not a great option. Captured kobolds or rescued prisoners provide ways to impress upon the PCs that the kobold king has big plans, but the best way to propel this plot point forward is through nightmares sent by Merlokrep himself.

Once the PCs make themselves known to him, Merlokrep can use the *Crown of the Kobold King*'s ability to cast *nightmare* to taunt and torment the PCs—and he does so often. Choose a new PC as his target each time. These nightmares need not come every night, but they should occur often enough to compel the plot forward. Don't overwhelm lower-level PCs with them since a critical failure can result in drained conditions that can become an ordeal. Use taunting dreams only when the PCs need a reminder of the adventure's focus.

In these nightmares, the PCs meet Merlokrep on an immense throne. The kobold king is three times the size of the PC, and in the *nightmare*, he forces the PC to perform a series of grueling, exhausting, and dangerous tasks. During a nightmare, the kobold king makes it plain that once he completes his crown in the "deep and deadly dwarf dungeons," he'll bring all of those in the land above under his boot as his prisoners, starting with the PCs!

PART 2: THE KOBOLD WARRENS

The Truescale kobolds aren't as numerous as they were at the height of their power. They lost some of their number during Drazmorg's invasion and several more during the grim weeks they spent in the wild before returning home. While King Merlokrep promises to lead his people into a new area of glory once his crown is fully infused with magic, the Truescales are perhaps only a few violent clashes away from collapse. While such a development could remove the kobold clan as a threat, it also creates a much more desperate and dangerous kobold king in the process.

When the PCs entered Droskar's Crucible, Merlokrep retreated to the dungeons below, and a false king now sits on the throne.



THE KOBOLD WARRENS



Droskar's cultists never expanded this part of the dungeon beyond transforming two areas to the south into space for refuse. The entrance to even deeper dungeon levels created by the original dwarven constructors remained buried by volcanic activity for the duration of the cult's stay in the chambers above. They were reopened recently by the necromancer Drazmorg.

The tunnels on this level are a bit low for Medium creatures, with an average ceiling height of 5 feet. In the tunnels, Medium creatures function as if in difficult terrain since they must stoop and crouch. Ceiling height rises to an average of 7 feet in the larger caverns, allowing Medium creatures to move about normally. None of the chambers on this level are lit unless otherwise indicated.

E1. REFUSE PIT

MODERATE 3

The shaft drops into a large, mostly square chamber. An archway opens in one wall, while two other walls have been broken through from the outside. Cramped, narrow tunnels beckon from beyond the breached walls.

Creatures: Three kobold scouts stand guard here with a slurk. The kobolds have been entertaining themselves by seeing how long they can each stay mounted on the slurk while they goad it into a bucking frenzy. If they hear the elevator from area **D17** start moving, they stop. They attack the PCs on sight. While the slurk fights to the death, a kobold reduced to 5 or fewer Hit Points flees.

KOBOLD SCOUTS (3)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 213

Initiative Perception +8

SLURK

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 301

Initiative Perception +6

E2. STORAGE

TRIVIAL 3

Empty crates and splintered barrels fill this dour stone chamber. Stone rafters crisscross the ceiling.

Creature: A choker named Skirrsh lives here. He hides in the rafters and watches the PCs explore the chamber before he summons the courage to call to them in Undercommon, and then Aklo. If he can establish communication, he asks the PCs who they are. If he realizes they're here to fight kobolds, he awkwardly offers to help. If the PCs accept his aid, Skirrsh fights at their side for a few encounters. With each passing hour, the choker's cruelty eventually spurs him to move against the PCs. At some point after a fight, when he thinks the PCs are wounded, Skirrsh cackles gleefully and attacks. He flees Droskar's Crucible for good if reduced to 8 Hit Points or less.

SKIRRS

CREATURE 3

Elite choker (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 6, 51)

Initiative Stealth +11

E3. MINES

MODERATE 3

Cramped passageways open to a large cavern filled with rocky overhangs and jutting boulders.



CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: HOLLOW'S LAST HOPE

CHAPTER 2: CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

CHAPTER 3: HUNGRY ARE THE DEAD

CHAPTER 4: DROSKAR'S DOOM

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

The large boulders offer a lot of cover for anyone who wants to take advantage of them.

Creatures: King Merlokrep's cruel mining supervisor, Lekmek, works a gaggle of hapless kobold warriors in search of more "shiny good good." Gold isn't available in these glum mines, causing Lekmek to vent his mounting aggravation through harsh hourly beatings.

Lekmek is short, even for a kobold, with spindly legs that contrast bizarrely with his tremendously muscled upper body. His face is squashed and mean. He has a stunted snout, as if pushed in by a shovel. He turns his frustration on the PCs if they venture here and orders the workers to attack as he wades into melee alongside them. Lekmek fights to the death, but once he's slain, the other kobolds squeal and run away.

LEKMEK

CREATURE 3

UNIQUE LE SMALL HUMANOID KOBOLD

Male kobold bully

Perception +8; darkvision

Languages Common, Draconic

Skills Athletics +11, Crafting +7 (+9 traps), Intimidation +9, Mining Lore +7, Survival +8

Str +4, **Dex** +0, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

Items greatpick, studded leather armor

AC 16; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +7, **Will** +8

HP 56

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ greatpick +11 (fatal d12); **Damage** 1d10+6 piercing

Bark Command ♦ (auditory, mental) **Requirements**

Lekmek hasn't attempted a Strike on this turn yet; **Effect** Lekmek barks a command to a lower-level kobold within 30 feet. That kobold can immediately take a Stride or Strike action.

False Retreat ♦ **Requirements** Lekmek is adjacent to at least one enemy; **Effect** Lekmek Strides, as if he were attempting to run away but is actually attempting to open a foe up for an attack. If Lekmek's Stride triggers a reaction, he can attempt a greatpick Strike (using his highest attack modifier) on the creature that takes this reaction. If he does so, Lekmek gains a +1 circumstance bonus on his attack roll.

KOBOLD WARRIORS (4)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 212

Initiative Perception +3

E4. STALAGMITE CAVE

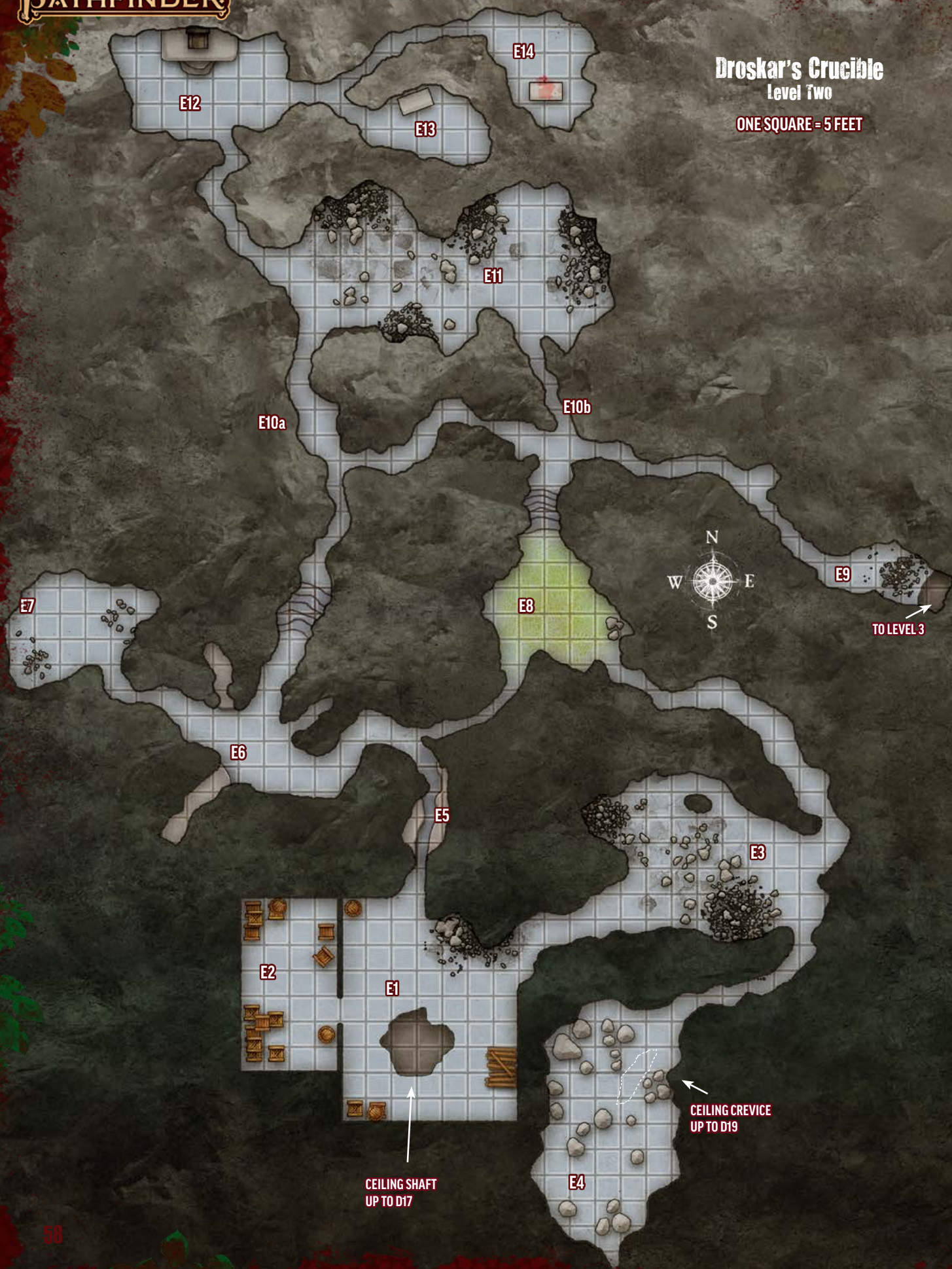
MODERATE 3

Gigantic stalagmites fill the floor of this twelve-foot-high yawning cavern; they nearly touch tips with stalactites that descend almost an equal length from the ceiling. In the cave's northern portion, a

Droskar's Crucible

Level Two

ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET



crack in the ceiling leads to a distant fiery glow next to stalactites and stalagmites that have grown together to form columns.

The crack in the room above leads to area **D19**. A character can clamber up the stone columns and through the narrow fissure with a successful DC 20 Athletics check to Climb.

Creatures: Different creatures have laired in this cavern over the years. Its latest occupant is a gargoyle named Reglos. The gargoyle shrouds himself with his stony wings, appearing to be a particularly broad and rough stalagmite near the southern reach of the cavern. Reglos spends much of his time in an almost hibernation-like state, slumbering for months before waking, dusting itself off, and then moving into the surrounding warrens to hunt for a meal. The kobolds tell stories of the “rock devil”—they’re used to Reglos’s hunting patterns, and when “rock devil season” begins, the Truescales leave a freshly killed wild animal at the entrance to the tunnel leading to this cave from area **E3**. As a result, there has been a dramatic downturn in rock devil–related deaths among the Truescales.

Reglos ignores the PCs unless they make a lot of noise, approach within 10 feet of his position near the southern wall, or attack him. Roused from his slumber, the gargoyle attacks at once, fighting to the death. He’ll pursue the PCs throughout this level, although if this chase results in an encounter with kobolds, the gargoyle gleefully changes targets to attack the kobolds instead (although he switches back to the PCs if they start fighting him again).

REGLOS THE “ROCK DEVIL” CREATURE 5

Male elite gargoyle (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 161)

Initiative Perception +12

E5. CHOKEPOINT AMBUSH LOW 3

This ten-foot-high, very narrow corridor is flanked by ledges, each six feet above the corridor’s rocky ground.

The lower portion of this corridor isn’t quite 3 feet wide, and while the ceiling height is roomy for Medium creatures, they still treat this portion of the tunnels as difficult terrain.

Creatures: The most feared (and certainly the bravest) of the Truescale kobolds are the Dark Talons. These kobolds excel at ambush tactics and fighting with flying talons. A pair of these kobolds perch in hiding on the ridges here—one on each side of the corridor. As the party navigates the tight passage, the kobolds attack using their flying talons at range. They fight to the death.

DARK TALON KOBOLDS (2) CREATURE 2

RARE LE SMALL HUMANOID KOBOLD

Kobold rogue 2 (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 212)

Perception +8; darkvision

Languages Common, Draconic

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +7, Crafting +6 (+8 traps), Stealth +8, Survival +8

Str +1, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items flying talon, studded leather

AC 19; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

HP 26

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ flying talon +10 (finesse, trip), **Damage** 1d4+3 piercing

Ranged ♦ flying talon +10 (ranged trip, tethered, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d4+3 piercing

No Retreat ♦ (necromancy, primal) **Frequency** once per day; **Requirement** The Dark Talon kobold is adjacent to at least one enemy, and the Dark Talon has fewer than 12 Hit Points; **Effect** The Dark Talon shrieks in fury and regains 2d6 Hit Points.

Sneak Attack A Dark Talon kobold deals an additional 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

E6. INTERSECTION AMBUSH MODERATE 3

This long cave has numerous openings in its walls: three at ground level and three about five feet off the ground.

Creatures: One of the Truescale Dark Talons, Grugakurg, organized this chamber’s guards into an ambush. Grugakurg trusts rank-and-file Truescales will cravenly tell the PCs the route to the prison if the kobolds are captured, and he eagerly anticipates springing his ambush on the PCs. He stationed a kobold just inside each of the three alcoves while he waits around the corner leading to area **E7**, mounted atop his slurk.

The three kobold warriors attack with their crossbows as soon as the PCs reach the middle of the cave. Grugakurg charges on the second round of combat, hoping to catch the PCs off-guard. He fights to the death, but if he’s slain while his slurk still lives, the slurk spends the next several rounds eating the body of his brutal oppressor. The sight is enough to send any other kobolds running for their lives.

GRUGAKURG CREATURE 2

Dark Talon kobold (page 59)

Initiative Perception +8

SLURK CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 301

Initiative Perception +6

KOBOLD WARRIORS (3) CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 212

Initiative Perception +3

Treasure: Grugakurg carries a large iron key that can open the cages in area E7.

E7. PRISON

A half-dozen small depressions look like empty nests in this cave's sandy floor. Three wooden cages press against the northwestern wall, each containing a scattering of dry, moldy grass and uprooted weeds.

This hatchery now serves as a prison, with the Truescales focusing on defense and preparation. The kobold king has promised a new era of glory, during which the "hatchery will overflow with fresh Truescale eggs."

The cages are solidly constructed; a PC must succeed at a DC 20 Athletics check to Force Open a cage or a DC 20 Thievery check to Pick the Lock. Two of the three cages are empty, their doors hanging open. Until recently, these cages held Edgrin (area D13) and Barlus (area D14), who recently escaped.

The third prisoner, the butcher Colbrin Jabbs, also escaped but was swiftly recaptured and returned to his cage. Guarded by the kobolds in area E6, he has been left to despair in the dark while tightly bound. He moans for aid through a rag-and-rope gag once he notices the PCs. Of the three prisoners, Colbrin is the least capable on his own, and his poor condition is increased by the fact that he suffers from malnutrition. He's currently enfeebled 2. He begs the PCs to escort him to Falcon's Hollow. If the PCs get him to the surface and send him on his way, he has little chance of making it out of the woods alive.

COLBRIN JABBS

CREATURE -1

N variant human merchant (*Gamemastery Guide* 244)

Initiative Perception +6

XP Award: If the PCs rescue Colbrin and get him home alive, grant them 40 XP.

E8. SLURK KENNEL

MODERATE 3

A semitransparent, slippery gray slime covers the walls and floor of this chamber. Two narrow tunnels lead south from this cave, and a flight of steps leads up to the north.

This cavern's walls are covered in the foul-smelling slime secreted by slurks, and the floor is slick with their belly grease. While the height of the cave is 7 feet, the floor is still treated as difficult terrain by non-slurks.

Creatures: Kapmek, honored slurk-wrangler of the Truescale kobolds, spends most of his time here with his goo-slick charges. The green-scaled kobold, with an overly long snout and swathed in black leather armor,

was training a fellow Truescale in the finer art of slurk riding. When the slurk hopped a little too high while returning to this chamber, it brained its rider against the roof. That kobold's corpse remains affixed to the slurk's sticky back, and Kapmek spent the last hour consoling and codling the slurk to make sure the creature doesn't feel guilty about killing its rider. The slurk doesn't, but it still enjoys the attention.

Once the two spot the PCs, Kapmek howls in excitement and quickly clambers onto his slurk to ride into battle. The slurk fights to the death, but if it's killed while Kapmek yet lives, the kobold panics and attempts to flee.

KAPMEK

CR 4

UNIQUE LE SMALL HUMANOID KOBOLD

Male kobold slurk-trainer (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 212)

Perception +11; darkvision

Languages Draconic

Skills Acrobatics +10, Nature +11, Stealth +10, Survival +11

Str +1, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +1

Items black adder venom (3 doses), crossbow (10 bolts), hatchet, studded leather

AC 21; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +12, **Will** +9

HP 60

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ hatchet +9 (agile, sweep); **Damage** 1d6+3 slashing

Ranged ♦ crossbow +12; **Damage** 1d8+3 piercing

Ranged ♦ hatchet +9 (agile, thrown 10 feet); **Damage** 1d6+3 slashing

Hurried Retreat ♦ As kobold warrior.

Quick Poison Dip ⤵ **Trigger** Kapmek loads his crossbow while he carries a dose of poison; **Effect** As he loads his crossbow, Kapmek can dip the crossbow bolt into a dose of carried poison as part of the action taken to load his crossbow.

Sneak Attack Kapmek deals an additional 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

SLURK

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 301

Initiative Perception +6

E9. FORSAKEN TUNNEL

A cave-in partially blocks this tunnel, but recent excavation has cleared much of the rubble to allow access to a yawning pit just beyond the ancient rockfall. Near the edge of the pit sits what appears to be bits and pieces of discarded climbing gear.

The cult of Droskar sealed this stretch of corridor in an attempt to hide the lower levels, but when Drazmorg arrived, he restored access to the dungeon level below. The entrance consists of a 40-foot-deep pit, the walls of

which quickly change to worked stone after a drop of 10 feet. This circular shaft drops into the center of area **F1** of the Upper Vault. An iron flight of circular stairs once descended this shaft, but those stairs collapsed into area **F1** during the Rending. Drazmorg and his allies navigated the shaft when they first uncovered it by rigging a rope-and-pulley system, but the kobolds smashed the setup when they returned to the caves, hoping to strand Drazmorg and his minions below.

King Merlokrep and a small group of minions fled down this shaft when the PCs entered their domain.

If the PCs have at least 100 feet of rope, they can rebuild Drazmorg's one-seat elevator with an hour of work and a successful DC 15 Crafting check. A seat attached to these pulleys can transport a single Medium creature from this area to area **F1** below with a minute of work. A PC can also Climb down the shaft by succeeding at a DC 15 Athletics check for the first 10 feet and a DC 20 Athletics check for the next 20 feet of flagstone afterward. The shaft opens through the ceiling in the middle of area **F1**, 10 feet above the surface of the water in that room. A climbing character must either turn back or drop into the water below. (The DC 40 Athletics check to Climb along the ceiling of area **F1** is beyond the reach of low-level characters.)

E10. SHRIEKER TUNNEL TRIVIAL 3

Both of these tunnels are guarded by a patch of shriekers. If the PCs trigger the shriekers, the kobolds in area **E11** prepare. In addition, if the PCs trigger the shriekers at area **E10a** and haven't yet dealt with Grugakurg's crew in area **E6**, they come north quickly to investigate. Likewise, if the PCs trigger the shriekers at area **E10b** but haven't dealt with Kapmek and his slurk in area **E8**, they come north to investigate.

SHRIEKERS HAZARD -1

Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide 77

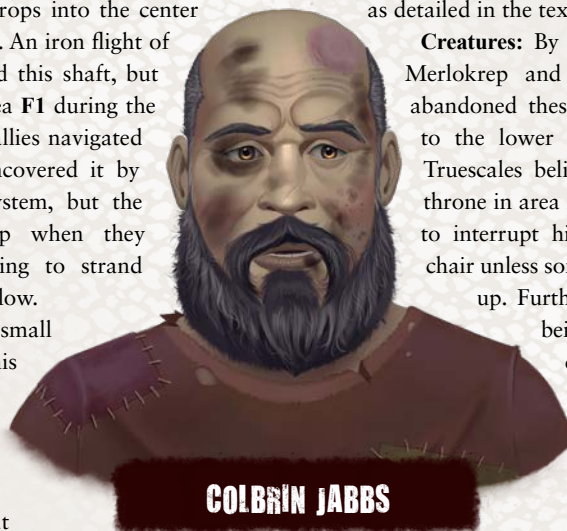
E11. KOBOLD DEN MODERATE 3

This cavern is filled with dirty straw nests, scraps of weapons, armor, and the discarded remains of the kobold tribe's meals.

Most of the Truescale kobolds live here, sleeping among the rocky boulders and fighting over comfortable niches against the walls. The majority of them are

typically spread out through this level and the level above as detailed in the text.

Creatures: By the time the PCs arrive, King Merlokrep and his handpicked group have abandoned these kobolds, making their flight to the lower levels in secret. Most of the Truescales believe their king remains on his throne in area **E12**, but they know better than to interrupt him when he's relaxing on his chair unless something really important comes up. Furthermore, the potential glory of being the Truescale to strike a death blow to an adventurer is enough to keep the half-dozen kobolds here eager to fight. A kobold who's reduced to 5 or fewer Hit Points panics and flees to area **E12** to beg for help.



COLBRIN JABBS

KOBOLD SCOUTS (2) CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 213

Initiative Perception +8

KOBOLD WARRIORS (4) CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 212

Initiative Perception +3

E12. THRONE OF THE KOBOLD KING SEVERE 3

All the rubble and fungus have been cleared from this room, leaving only a single object to decorate the chamber: a throne made from the corpse of an enormous centipede. The creature's bright-red, chitinous plates and legs have been repurposed into an unsettling design for the throne. The centipede's head looms above the seat, which has been fitted with a ratty-looking curtain that hides whoever might be seated within.

Creatures: Here stands the Crawling Throne of King Merlokrep, yet it isn't the kobold king who sits upon the throne when the PCs arrive. Merlokrep fled into the deeper levels, in part hoping to find more magic to empower his crown, but also to avoid a conflict with the PCs.

Merlokrep's retreat has been kept secret from all the Truescales save those who accompanied him into the deeper levels, his consort Vreggma, and the Truescales' religious leader, Jekkajak. Jekkajak now sits on the Crawling Throne, hidden behind a recently erected curtain of rags. She's flanked by a pair of Dark Talon kobolds, neither of whom know the one they guard isn't the true king. However, both have started to wonder why the voice they hear inside the curtain sometimes sounds strange.

When the PCs arrive, the Dark Talons take up a defensive position before the throne and demand the intruders' immediate surrender. Jekkajak takes advantage of this opportunity to activate her *greater hat of disguise*. She assumes King Merlokrep's appearance, disguising her hat as the *Crown of the Kobold King*, and imperiously sweeps aside the curtain with a scaly hand before rising from the throne to demand the PCs kneel before the glory of the kobold king. As Jekkajak continues the charade, the Dark Talon kobolds shift in discomfort and glance side to side. A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Perception Check to Sense Motive can tell something the king is doing is distracting or worrying them. On a critical success, the PC deduces that the Dark Talons look surprised by or even disbelieve the kobold king.

Jekkajak does her best to get the PCs to toss aside their weapons and kneel. If they do so, she orders her Dark Talons to bind and imprison the PCs while she stashes their gear in a heap next to the Crawling Throne. If the PCs can't engineer an escape, they're likely doomed to be sacrificed in a few days when word of their capture reaches King Merlokrep. You decide how long this takes.

Any disrespect or defiance posed by the PCs results in the kobold king ordering the PCs' immediate execution. The Dark Talons leap to the order, glad for the distraction. Jekkajak issues commands and enters the fight only once a Dark Talon is defeated. At this point, she hisses, "Guess I gotta do it for the king myself!" in Draconic, and then attacks with her spells.

Jekkajak is loyal to Merlokrep but not willing to lay down her life. If she's reduced to fewer than 10 Hit Points, she rips off her *greater hat of disguise* and begs for her life, promising to tell the PCs where the real king went if they just let her go. Any surviving Dark Talon kobolds shriek "traitor!" at this point and attack her, mistakenly assuming she killed Merlokrep. If the PCs can secure the opportunity to speak to Jekkajak, she can tell them word of their rampage scared Merlokrep, and he took his favorites with him down deeper, "following dreams and visions of where to go to make his crown even more powerful." She agrees to anything the PCs demand, even promising to lead the Truescales from the region, in return for being spared.

JEKKAJAK

CREATURE 4

UNIQUE LE SMALL HUMANOID KOBOLD

Female kobold sorcerer (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 212)

Perception +9; darkvision

Languages Common, Draconic

Skills Arcana +7, Deception +12, Intimidation +12, Religion +9, Stealth +11

Str +0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +4

Items *greater hat of disguise*, *heartripper blade* (page 115)

AC 21; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +13, **Will** +9

HP 60

Speed 25 feet

Melee *heartripper blade* +10 (agile, finesse, versatile S),
Damage 2d4 piercing

Divine Spontaneous Spells DC 21, attack +13; **2nd** (4 slots) *death knell*, *dispel magic*, *heal*, *sound burst*; **1st** (4 slots) *command*, *fear*, *heal*, *ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips** (2nd) *detect magic*, *divine lance*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *shield*

Sorcerer Bloodline Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 21; **1st** *diabolic edict* (*Core Rulebook* 403)

Smoky Retreat ◆◆◆ (divine, evocation, move) **Frequency** once per hour; **Requirements** Jekkajak is adjacent to at least one enemy; **Effect** Jekkajak squeals in fright as she exhales a noxious cloud of stinking smoke. This smoke fills a 10-foot emanation around her and grants concealment to all creatures within the smoke. In addition, any non-kobold starting their turn in the smoke must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or become sickened 1 by the foul smoke (or sickened 2 on a critical failure). Once created, the cloud of smoke is immobile and persists for 3 rounds. Jekkajak can move up to her Speed, but she must end her movement in a space that isn't adjacent to any enemies. This is a 2nd-level spell that requires a somatic component.

DARK TALON KOBOLDS (2)

CREATURE 2

Page 59

Initiative Perception +8

XP Award: Grant the PCs 80 XP for discovering the kobold king abandoned the Truescales.

E13. KING'S QUARTERS

TRIVIAL 3

Bricks of old, mold-ridden incense keep this cozy chamber heated. In one corner of the room lies a tousled wolfskin bed. A stone table is piled high with knocked over and empty jewelry boxes and displays. Several chunks of polished obsidian are stacked haphazardly against one wall, forming a bizarre half mirror.

Creature: When King Merlokrep fled the tunnels, he left his people and his home—and his consort, Vreggma. His betrayal infuriated the blue-scaled kobold dragon mage. She has spent the past few days here, concocting methods by which to exact her revenge on him, starting with "stabbing him with his own silly spiky hat."

When confronted by the PCs, Vreggma holds up her little scaly hands and says she "was just leaving and won't be a bother." If the PCs seem hesitant about letting her go, she offers them all the treasures in this room, noting that "the real troublemaker you're after is that fool, Merlokrep." She can tell the PCs how the king fled their advance, but

she also warns them his magic crown has made him braver (she adds with a snort, “and more stupid”) every day. Vreggma implies that if he isn’t put down soon, Merlokrep will surely cause trouble far beyond Darkmoon Vale. She hopes to send the PCs deeper into the dungeon, affording her a chance to escape while also getting vengeance on Merlokrep for abandoning her in the first place!

VREGGMA

CREATURE 2

Female kobold dragon mage (*Bestiary* 213)

Initiative Perception +5

Treasure: With a successful DC 10 Perception check, a PC can tell someone went through the room’s contents quickly and made off with several objects. When Merlokrep fled, he had time to grab only a few belongings. With a critical success, the PC finds a few missed items scattered about: eight bracelets worth 1 sp each, three necklaces worth 2 gp each, and a bent tiara worth 8 gp.

E14. SACRIFICE CHAMBER

A gruesome, bloodstained altar sits at the center of this otherwise unadorned chamber.

Jekkajak held her diabolic rituals and worship rites to Hell in this room. The kobold king also performed the first *rite of the blood crown* here. He planned to perform the ritual several more times before the PCs caused him to flee.

A character who examines this room’s altar and who succeeds at a DC 16 Religion check to Recall Knowledge can deduce the chamber was a place of worship for the archdevils of Hell, but no single archdevil seems more important than the next. With a successful DC 18 Arcana or Occult check to Recall Knowledge, a PC can tell the chamber was used recently to perform some sort of blood ritual meant to awaken latent or lingering magical power. With a critical success, that PC also knows the ritual was meant to awaken power within an ancient magical item.

CONCLUDING THE CHAPTER

While the PCs are free to delve deeper into the dungeon once they discover the forsaken tunnel at area E9, they’ll likely need to return to Falcon’s Hollow at some point to rest, recover, or escort rescued prisoners home. Whether or not the PCs discovered the kobold king fled, the first time the PCs reach 4th level and return to Falcon’s Hollow, they find the dead are rising!



JEKKAJAK



PATHFINDER

CHAPTER 3

HUNGRY ARE THE DEAD

BY TIM HITCHCOCK

PART 1: THE RESTLESS CEMETERY

The PCs can continue exploring the dungeons of Droskar's Crucible at their own pace, but events within the dungeon aren't static. In particular, Drazmorg's experiments with the *Third Seal* finally bear necromantic fruit, and he discovers a method to replicate the blast of negative energy released when he first began his work. Drazmorg is fascinated that this seal has been absorbing tiny bits of necromantic leakage from the *Great Seal* under Gallowspire, but his work triggered events he didn't anticipate: the eventual erosion of the *First* and *Second Seals*, and the inevitable release of the Whispering Tyrant. While these events aren't a part of *Crown of the Kobold King* and play out much later (see the Return of the Runelords Adventure Path and the Tyrant's Grasp Adventure Path for more details), the immediate effects of Drazmorg's access to this spring of necromantic energy have immediate impact on Darkmoon Vale.

Living creatures don't notice when Drazmorg begins his latest round of experiments, wherein he directs necromantic energy into the surrounding environments in hopes of causing an undead uprising. His initial work is partially successful, but not what he had hoped for; particularly vexing is that some of the magic keeps getting shunted deeper underground (unbeknownst to him, to the *Crown of the Kobold King*). If the PCs don't confront him in time and stop him, he'll not only animate all the dead of Darkmoon Vale, but also infect all the living with the curse of undeath.

GETTING STARTED

The timing of when Drazmorg runs this latest experiment is variable, but it should begin before the PCs venture into the Upper Vault (detailed in Part 2 of this chapter). The best point to begin is when the PCs return to Falcon's Hollow with the final rescued prisoner from the dungeon's upper levels, preferably at a point when the PCs have

reached 4th level. (Feel free to adjust the encounters in this part down a bit if the PCs aren't 4th level yet.)

Drazmorg's first attempt to animate the dead focuses on the cemetery on the outskirts of Falcon's Hollow. The sight of zombies and skeletons crawling from graves sends the cemetery's caretaker, **Verrin Tieruk** (N male human grave keeper 3), into a panic. Verrin reports the supernatural event and attempts to gather help, but Creed's or Teedum's cronies consider Verrin's ravings desperate attempts for attention and don't bother reporting the event to their bosses. Verrin is about to take to the streets to raise the alarm when the PCs return to Falcon's Hollow and catch his eye.

VERRIN'S WARNING

The PCs have probably started to build a reputation as heroes or champions in town since they've likely rescued at least one of the locals abducted by the Truescales by now. As such, Verrin recognizes them. The sight of their fortuitous return gives the grave keeper hope. If he can convince the PCs to investigate the cemetery and put down the restless dead, a town-wide panic can be avoided!

When Verrin first approaches the PCs, his wild-eyed countenance and mannerisms make it immediately apparent something is wrong. The PCs recognize Verrin, if only by reputation, with a successful DC 15 Society check to Recall Knowledge—the local grave keeper is prone to strange outbursts, often at important meetings, and the townsfolk accept him as a harmless annoyance. Normally, his outbursts result in the town leadership drawing straws to determine who gets to escort him home. This time, his fear seems more primal. Several locals watch with a mix of concern and amusement as he approaches the PCs.

Verrin is short and slender, with narrow shoulders and poor posture, but his muscles are wiry from digging graves. His sloppily shaved face bears a few razor nicks. Dark circles rim his dull, gray eyes, which linger uncomfortably on whomever he encounters, as often as not staring at some part of the person's face rather than the eyes.

Though he isn't inept, Verrin often forgets the names of everyday objects, and many townsfolk consider



CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: HOLLOW'S LAST HOPE

CHAPTER 2: CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

CHAPTER 3: HUNGRY ARE THE DEAD

CHAPTER 4: DROSKAR'S DOOM

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

him scatterbrained. His reputation as an overly eager scavenger has spread through the town. None have accused him of being a grave robber, but they know better than to leave valuables on bodies he has to bury.

Verrin inherited the role of grave keeper from his great-grandfather. He lives alone in a shack at the edge of the cemetery and purchases meager supplies on monthly trips to town in a mule-drawn wagon—the same conveyance he uses to cart the dead to the cemetery. Verrin tends to interrupt others mid-sentence, interjecting creepy comments such as “I like your sword. Is it sharp enough to cut bone?” or “Why do so many people think dead bodies smell bad?” or “I saw a dead sorcerer once.” Feel free to swap “sorcerer” for whatever class the PC in the conversation is. His voice is raspy, like that of a man much older than his 35 years.

For all his eccentricities, the news Verrin carries to the PCs is a true threat. A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Perception check to Sense Motive confirms his fear is real. He tells the PCs that just a few hours ago, he saw bodies in the cemetery pull themselves from their graves and start walking around without so much as a “how do you do?” Before anybody might suggest he does, he points out he had nothing to do with it. Verrin describes

what they look like—he doesn’t know the names but he’s good with details about corpses. His descriptions match those of zombies and skeletons. A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Religion check to Recall knowledge realizes other elements Verrin mentions suggest more dangerous undead (a critical success identifies his descriptions of “crawling bodies” as likely referring to festrogs). He proudly notes he locked the cemetery gate before fleeing, then begs the PCs to return with him to the cemetery and put down the dead before they break out.

CEMETERY FEATURES

The cemetery is a brisk 15-minute walk north of town, secluded in a small depression between hills and surrounded by a wrought iron fence that has seen better days. When the town funded the cemetery’s construction decades ago, it spared no expense. Since then, it has left upkeep to Verrin’s family. With Verrin as the last of his line, upkeep has been spotty at best. As a result, the wilderness has encroached on the path in many places.

As the PCs approach the cemetery, raspy groans, clattering bones, and unnerving growls confirm Verrin’s stories before they round the final bend in the narrow road leading to the cemetery.

THE COLOR OF UNDEATH

The magical energy that spilled from the *Third Seal* carries a distinctive hue: an upsetting and unpleasant yellow tinge. As the PCs encounter the undead here, as well as deeper in the dungeon levels later in this chapter, describe the eerie yellow glow that issues from gaping maws, empty eye sockets, or even flickering within the mortal wounds carried by these unliving foes. When the PCs finally reach the grave of the *Third Seal* at the end of this chapter, they'll have visual clues for what caused the dead to rise.



VERRIN TIERUK

The cemetery's rusting fence is missing a few bars. It's enough to hold back mindless undead for a while, but not the determined efforts of thinking undead or the PCs. A Medium character can Squeeze through one of the gaps in the fence with a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check (a Small character gains a +4 circumstance bonus to this check). Alternately, a character can clamber over the fence with a successful DC 15 Athletics check to Climb; on a critical failure, a character slips onto the sharp spikes on the top of the fence for 2d4 piercing damage.

The easiest way into the cemetery is to unlock the gate with Verrin's key. Without the key, a character can Force Open the gate DC 20 Athletics check or Pick the Lock with a successful DC 18 Thievery check.

The paths winding through the gravestones are the only non-difficult terrain in the fenced-in area. Elsewhere, tall grass, brambles, and overgrowth create difficult terrain.

A character who moves through a square containing an open grave can treat that square as difficult terrain to navigate it safely; otherwise, anyone who moves through a square containing an open grave must succeed at a DC 15 Acrobatics check to avoid tumbling into the grave. On a failure, a character falls into the grave, taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage and becoming prone. A character must succeed at a DC 10 Athletics check to clamber from the hole.

Use the map of the Falcon's Hollow Cemetery on page 70 for the next encounters. Time each wave as you like, but give the PCs time to recover from the previous wave and reposition themselves. Each wave after the first provides ways attentive PCs can prepare before new undead rise.

Any undead that escape the cemetery unscathed head to Droskar's Crucible, drawn by the call of the *Third Seal*. At your option, the PCs might encounter such escaped undead later, milling about aimlessly in the monastery ruins. Canny PCs might even deliberately release some undead and then observe them, giving the heroes a chance to confirm something at the crucible has drawn the attention of the undead.

WAVE 1

TRIVIAL 4

When the PCs first arrive, they find a shambling, scuttling pack of skeletons and zombies clumped against the cemetery fence. The undead are clustered on the northern side of the fence, opposite the locked gates and the shorter path to town. This mass of undead consists of a mixture of animated skeletons and fleshy corpses. Individually, these undead are a minor threat to a 4th-level party, but the undead are treated as a shambler troop—a much more dangerous threat.

Wise PCs might take advantage of the fence preventing the undead from escaping and attack from afar. The troop

treats the fence as lesser cover, but as soon as it notices the PCs, the mass of undead begins pushing harder against the fence. Unless a PC lures the troop from the fence by approaching from the inside of the cemetery, the troop uses all of its actions each round in a single, focused attempt to smash through the fence—which it can do with a successful DC 15 flat check. If no fence blocks the route to living targets, the shambler troop lurches forward to attack, pursuing until no more targets are available. At this point, the shambler troop heads north toward Droskar's Crucible.

SHAMBLER TROOP

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 302

Initiative Perception +7

WAVE 2

MODERATE 4

Once the shambler troop is defeated, give the PCs about 10 minutes to recover and explore the cemetery before starting the second wave of undead. If the PCs seem ready to return to town before this time passes, the second wave should alert them that the dangers at the cemetery are far from over—and indeed, might just be getting started!

This second wave begins as more intelligent undead—creatures that took longer to necromantically quicken than mindless undead—claw their way from relatively recent graves that contained the bodies of a half-dozen loggers who perished at a work site accident a few weeks before this adventure began. Unlike the older bodies that rose as a shambler troop, these bodies have transformed into festrogs. Six festrogs clamber from their graves at a rate of 1d4 per round on their initiative count until all six have risen. They fight until destroyed, but like the shambler troop, any festrogs who lose focus on living foes head north to Droskar's Crucible.

FESTROGS (6)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 98

Initiative Perception +6

WAVE 3

SEVERE 4

Soon after the defeat of the six festrogs, an unsettling tremor shakes the entire cemetery. Choose a square within the cemetery to serve as the epicenter of this strange tremor. Any PCs within a 20-foot-emanation of this square feel the ground shift and bulk below their feet and must succeed at a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid falling prone. A character standing in the epicenter square suffers a –4 penalty to this saving throw. The cause of this eerie tremor soon becomes apparent, as necromantic energy has built to a point where all of the dead clamber to the surface at once. The ground shakes as these dead stir to unlife in the grave dirt below.

Have the PCs roll Perception checks to determine initiative. The area within the emanation continues to shake softly and turns into difficult terrain when a shambler troop scrambles from the ground on its initiative. These bodies animated from a mass grave dug during the hobgoblin strife of 4679 AR. Place the shambler troop anywhere within the emanation you wish.

A second shambler troop rises from this location on the second round, and a third and final troop clambers up on the third round. These shambler troops behave like the troop from Wave 1. The PCs are likely inside the cemetery now and won't have a fence to slow the undead down—the troops immediately lurch forward to attack the PCs at once and pursue them relentlessly, even outside of the cemetery if the PCs flee the area.

SHAMBLER TROOPS (3)

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 302

Initiative Perception +7

Treasure: If the PCs Search the churned up ground that constituted the mass grave and succeed at a DC 19 Perception check, they'll make a fortunate discovery. While most of the bodies were buried without their gear, a +1 *striking dagger* was overlooked; it's filthy with dirt but remains fully functional.

UPRISING AFTERMATH

When the last of the undead are destroyed, the cemetery once again goes quiet. Verrin is traumatized by the event, and without significant support from the PCs, he abandons his home and post by sundown, leaving Falcon's Hollow without a grave keeper. Thuldrin Kreed and the other town leaders bicker over what to do until Kreed eventually appoints a replacement.

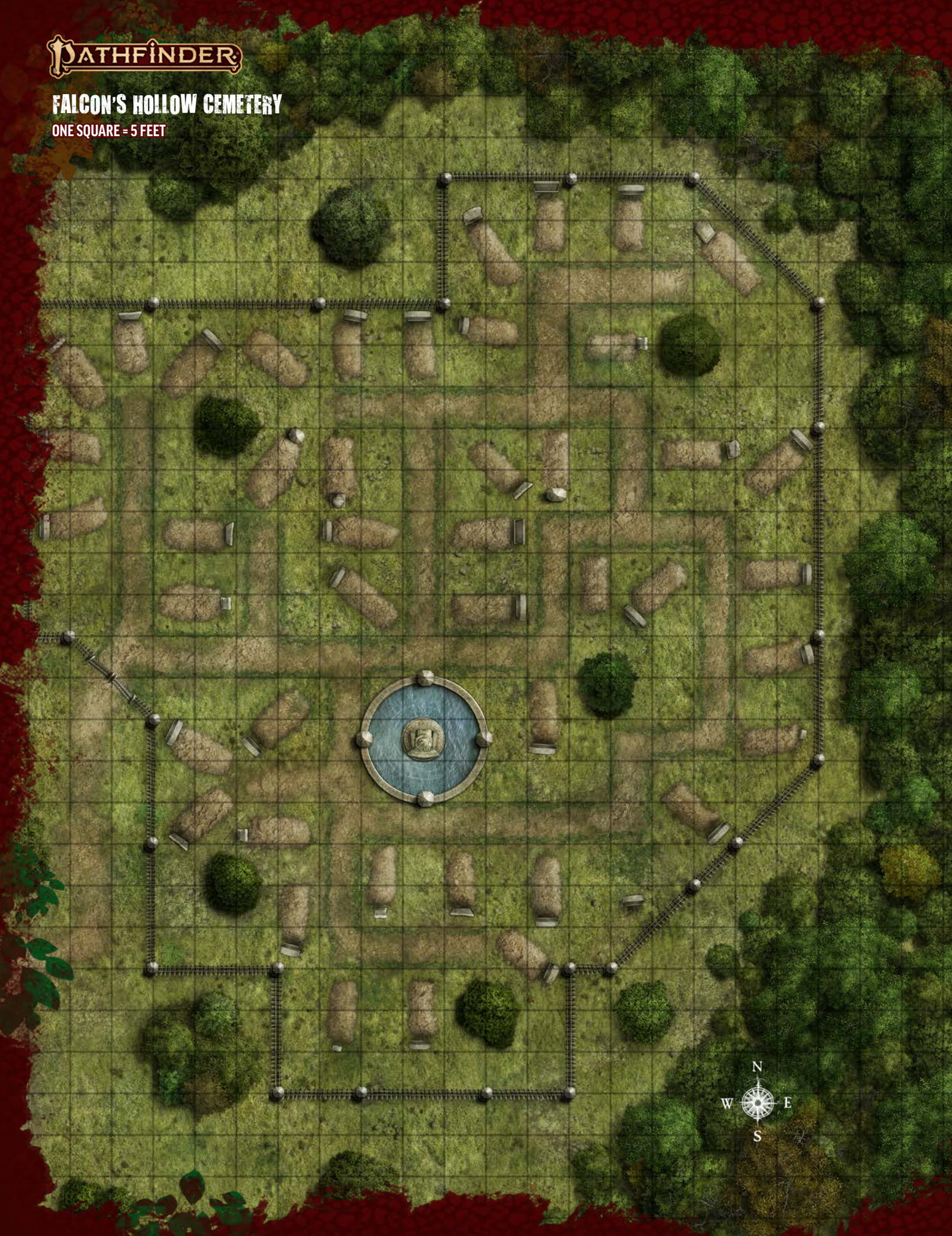
If the PCs spend an hour investigating the cemetery, they can discover a pair of significant clues.

The Cause: Any PC who's trained in Arcana, Occultism, or Religion who Investigates the cemetery after the undead are defeated can attempt a DC 21 Arcana or Occultism check, or a DC 19 Religion check. On a success, that PC confirms a wave of necromantic energy recently washed through the cemetery, as if attracted by the presence of so many dead bodies, but offers no obvious explanation for the event.

The Trail: A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Perception check while Investigating or Searching notes some undead escaped—shambling tracks lead north from the cemetery. This trail can be Tracked by a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Survival check. Fewer than a dozen skeletons and zombies shamled away and spread out. If the PCs pursue them, a 4th-level party can easily dispatch the creatures. Otherwise, the undead head to Droskar's Crucible.

FALCON'S HOLLOW CEMETERY

ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET



ADDITIONAL HOOKS

While the PCs don't have hard evidence that the necromantic uprising originates somewhere deep below Droskar's Crucible, they might suspect this is the case. The recent upwelling of undead at the cemetery, if nothing else, should be cause for concern to the PCs that some sort of necromantic blight is brewing in the region. If none of the PCs come to this conclusion, an allied NPC from Falcon's Hollow should suggest this possibility to the party.

If the PCs don't go to the cemetery with Verrin, you can use the following potential hooks to get them to investigate the cemetery. Alternately, you can use these additional encounters to give the PCs a few more opportunities to gain experience, or to keep journeys to and from Droskar's Crucible interesting and uncertain.

UNDEAD SIGHTINGS LOW 4

If the PCs wait too long, they might be ambushed by zombies or skeletons on the road outside town, or witness an attack in town by a small band of festrogs. The point of this encounter isn't to particularly challenge the PCs, but instead to spur them toward investigation. These festrogs are in addition to those that rise from their graves in Wave 3. As they're more intelligent undead, they manage to leap or climb over the cemetery fence. At your option, since the PCs took longer to investigate the cemetery, the initial mass of undead they face in Wave 1 can automatically break down the cemetery fence to attack.

FESTROGS (4) CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 98

Initiative Perception +6

KERRDREMAK'S RETURN LOW 4

If the kobold Kerrdremak fled a previous confrontation with the PCs, they can encounter the diabolic little cultist after he gathers a group of four particularly dangerous skeletons under his command. In fact, he's doing little more than leading the undead toward town, trusting them to do what comes unnaturally once they find living victims. As above, it's easy to track the undead to the cemetery, but this time, Kerrdremak let a few of them out.

If the PCs capture him, he can tell them "something glorious is waking deep below the Truescale home," and when it's fully awake, the dead will rule the world. Being

captured and spared a second time convinces the kobold to give serious thought to his faith and his loyalty to King Merlokrep, and he can confide in the PCs that he suspects the heroes who invaded his home a few months ago are behind recent events. The "heroes" he mentions—Drazmorg and his hired mercenaries—are anything but, yet to the Truescales, one group of violent adventurers invading their home is much the same as the next.

KERRDREMAK CREATURE 1

Page 54

Initiative Perception +5

ELITE SKELETON GUARDS (4) CREATURE 0

Pathfinder Bestiary 6, 298

Initiative Perception +4

VENGEFUL ARE THE DEAD MODERATE 4

Not all of the undead that rise from the soil are merely hungry for life—in this optional encounter, an undead foe is specifically hungry for the PCs! In this encounter, the PCs face a revenant risen from the remains of a foe they defeated earlier in the adventure. While the nature and appearance of this undead foe can vary, its statistics (even if it's Small or Large) remain the same.

This encounter works best if you select a foe the PCs defeated unfairly, or perhaps one a PC might even have slain without cause, for revenants rise from those who are filled with a righteous need for vengeance—not out of any sort of intrinsic evil. The necromantic energies infusing the region certainly play a role, and this revenant's glowing eyes flicker with that same shade of unpleasant yellow, but the core of this creature's return to life isn't the necromantic energy leaching into the surrounding environment, but the creature's need for vengeance from beyond the grave.

An excellent choice for this revenant is the warg Graypelt, whom the PCs likely slew at the climax of Chapter 1 of this adventure, but keep in mind a revenant needs a body to come back to! If the PCs hauled Graypelt's remains back to Falcon's Hollow as proof, though, his partially taxidermy-prepared remains could make for a particularly unsettling foe to face!

While this creature doesn't present any new clues as to the nature of the necromantic energy in the region, it should serve to make the PCs nervous that, until they solve this supernatural problem, any foe that they defeat might come back to try one more time to bring them into death's embrace as well!

REVENANT CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 227

Initiative Perception +14

PART 2: INTO THE VAULT

After the events of Part 1, the PCs should be ready to continue exploring Droskar's Crucible. Once the Truescales learn their king fled deeper into the dungeons, the remaining kobolds flee the complex and scatter into the surrounding wilderness. With the exception of King Merlokrep's coterie in the dungeon's deepest level (see Chapter 4), the Truescales are no longer a thematic danger to the PCs.

A much greater danger faces them in the form of undead—some of which rose from the remains of the dwarves who were trapped in these dungeons after the Rending, but most manifested in the wave of necromantic energy released by the *Third Seal*. While the PCs face more significant foes in the vault's two levels, you can add mindless zombies formed from the bodies of slain foes on levels one and two of the crucible as the PCs make their way through the dungeon. These foes should be little challenge for a 4th-level party, but if the PCs are still 3rd level, they're an excellent way to create a few extra encounters to prepare the group for the dangers that await in the vault.

THE UPPER VAULT

The entrance to the Upper Vault is through area E9, and the PCs might need a bit of ingenuity to access it, especially if they want to ensure they have a way back out! If they simply drop into the room below, they could end up trapped within the vault. The PCs can find items in the lower dungeons to help them return to the surface.

All of the rooms of the Upper Vault are unlit unless otherwise indicated. Ceiling height in tunnels is 10 feet, rising to an average of 15 feet in larger rooms unless otherwise noted. Doors are made of stone, and while they're massive, ancient counterweights and cunning dwarven hinges make them no more difficult to open than normal-sized doors.

THE KING'S PASSAGE

When King Merlokrep and his advisors fled into the deeper dungeons, they weren't completely without guidance. The visions granted by the slowly awakening powers of the *Crown of the Kobold King* grow stronger the closer Merlokrep comes to the site of the crown's original creation deep below, helping to lead him through the Upper and Lower Vaults safely to Droskar's Doom (see Chapter 4). The deeper guardians of the dungeon interpret the power exuding from the crown as an indication of Droskar's favor.

A character who examines the area for magical auras with spells such as *detect magic* or *read aura* and who succeeds at a DC 15 check to Identify Magic notes the entire complex has been infused with necromantic energy that periodically manifests as faint ripples of unpleasant yellow energy; the cause of this infusion is unclear. On a critical success, that character discerns the aura is a sort of magical echo left by power that likely concentrated in dangerous ways throughout the complex, suggesting undead-themed monsters and hazards ahead. In some areas of the Upper and Lower Vault, this energy manifests as eerie sights and sounds, as detailed in the individual encounters.

THE SKULKING SHADOWS MODERATE 4

Once the PCs enter this level, they intrude upon a domain that has been claimed by the necromancer Drazmorg. He remains distracted by his research into the nature of the *Third Seal* in the Lower Vault, though, and largely leaves the defense of these two dungeon levels to their denizens.

Notable exceptions are the two shadows Drazmorg sends into the dungeon to keep incorporeal eyes on intruders. Ever since King Merlokrep made his way through the dungeon, Drazmorg has been on heightened alert. The shadows patrol the Upper Vault in search of potential distractions. These shadows should spot the PCs relatively soon after the party begins exploring



CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: HOLLOW'S LAST HOPE

CHAPTER 2: CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

CHAPTER 3: HUNGRY ARE THE DEAD

CHAPTER 4: DROSKAR'S DOOM

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

the vault, likely just after they finish dealing with the dangers of the Archives (area F3).

Once they detect the PCs, the shadows avoid conflict. Instead, they creep along the walls and keep to the shadows as the PCs advance. If a PC has a Perception DC of 25 or higher, they notice the strangely moving shadows at some point soon after the shadows begin stalking them; otherwise, the PCs have a nagging sense of being watched.

SHADOWS (2)

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 289

Initiative Stealth +14

F1. THE STAGNANT POOL

LOW 4

This large, circular room smells strongly of old earth and faintly of rot. Slime coats the walls, and old pieces of wood and patches of congealed muck float on the surface of the still, dark water that covers all sight of the floor below, making it difficult to determine the water's depth. A large hallway leads south, its floor a foot above the surface of the water. In the middle of the ceiling ten feet above, a ten-foot-diameter hole opens to a shaft.

Creatures who jump or fall from the upper level land in the middle of this room. The water level is a foot deeper

than the floor of the southern hallway and is 10 feet deep throughout the chamber. A PC who investigates the waters below discovers a tangle of rusted, fallen stairs in the middle of the pool—all that remains of the stairs that once connected to the level above.

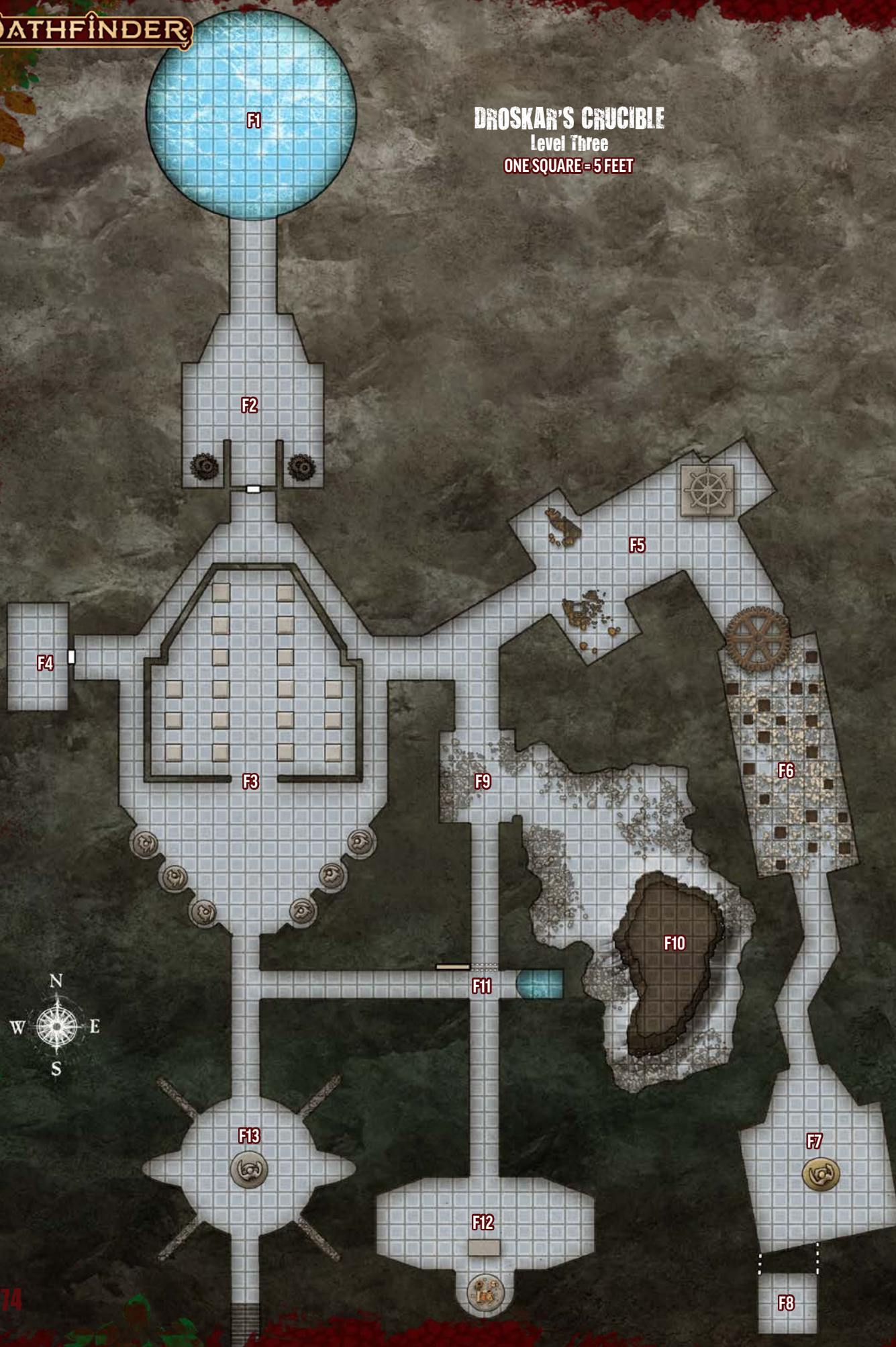
A few moments after living creatures enter this room, the slime clinging to the walls slithers and congeals, running together along the cracks in the stonework to solidify into the shapes of dozens of disembodied human eyes that peer and watch from the walls. This manifestation of the *Third Seal's* necromantic wave isn't just unsettling, but is also psychically linked to Drazmorg, allowing him to observe events through the eyes in this chamber as long as they remain formed. These eyes melt away as soon as the room contains no more living creatures, or can be destroyed at once by the application of any area effect that causes damage, including from positive energy.

Creatures: After King Merlokrep passed through this area, Drazmorg placed some undead minions within this chamber—a clot of several horrific undead creatures that manifested spontaneously from the walls and floors of the vault during the *Third Seal's* wave of power. These are squirming swills—shapeless undead normally associated with residues found within the cauldrons and cooking

DROSKAR'S CRUCIBLE

Level Three

ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET



pots utilized by covens. In this case, they were dredged directly from the walls of the place, manifested from the latent trauma baked into the dungeon by the Rending so long ago.

Three squirming swills float in the water and attack any living creature who enters the room. They pursue foes throughout the complex but abandon pursuit once line of sight is broken for more than a few rounds. While the swills are unintelligent, their link to the eerie necromancy of this room channels some of Drazmorg's idle thoughts, causing vague, mouthlike orifices to open in the swills during battle. These mouths can't attack, but their eerie, raspy whispers are certainly unnerving since they describe in Necril the many ways the PCs' flesh and bones will be used to create new undead minions.

SQUIRMING SWILLS (3)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 256

Initiative Perception +6

Treasure: A PC who Searches the stagnant waters and ruined stairs below, and who succeeds at a DC 19 Perception check, finds a rotting leather pouch of gems. There are 12 small gems in the satchel—mostly quartz, jasper, and agate—11 of these gems are worth 5 gp, but the 12th gemstone is obviously more valuable, as it's a *fear gem talisman* that flickers with an eerie green glow.

F2. CHAMBER OF GEARS

MODERATE 4

The tunnel opens into a large, cone-shaped room. The air reeks of decay, and an immense stone door looms in a wide alcove to the south. To either side of these doors are stacked several immense stone gears, each interlocking with the surrounding walls and visibly straining for release.

This chamber once served as a trap-filled corridor, but Drazmorg's trap expert, Grimbal Slipstone, handily disabled the traps when the necromancer arrived. When King Merlokrep and his kobolds recently moved through the area with ease, Drazmorg placed some guardians to watch the chamber. With Grimbal no longer able to rebuild and repair the traps (area F3), these traps must be manually triggered by the guards.

Creatures: This chamber is guarded by a pair of ghastrs and a pair of festrogs. The festrogs lurk in the 15-foot-wide alcove to the south, just before the stone door, while a ghastr hides near each of the stacks of gears to either side of the door. When the PCs enter, the festrogs howl and gibber in an attempt to lure them forward. The ghastrs wait until at least a few PCs enter the main body of the chamber before releasing

levers from the gears to trigger two traps (see Hazards, below). Once the traps activate, the undead lurch into the room to attack.

GHASTRS (2)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 169

Initiative Perception +8

FESTROGS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 98

Initiative Perception +6

Hazards: These two traps were once more complex and fully automated, but now they're simple traps that must be triggered manually. If the PCs defeat the undead in this room quickly, then they'll have little to fear from both of these traps.

PENDULUM BLADES

HAZARD 3

UNCOMMON MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 20 (expert)

Description Several swinging pendulums mounted with razor-sharp blades extend from the ceiling and slice into the room below.

Disable DC 20 Thievery to jam the gears and prevent the trap from being activated

Swinging Blades ♦♦ (attack) **Trigger** This trap must be manually activated by a creature adjacent to the southwest gear stack; **Effect** Blades swing down to strike at all creatures in area F2 before wrenching to a frozen halt against the opposite walls. All creatures in the central part of this room take 6d6+3 slashing damage (DC 20 basic Reflex save).

SPIKE THROWER

HAZARD 2

UNCOMMON MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 18 (expert)

Description Slats in the ceiling open and pepper the chamber below with long, metal spikes fired from spring-loaded tubes.

Disable DC 18 Thievery to jam the gears and prevent the trap from being activated

Throw Spikes ♦♦ (attack) **Trigger** This trap must be manually activated by a creature adjacent to the southwest gear stack; **Effect** The spike thrower makes a ranged attack against each creature in the central part of area F2.

Ranged spike +14, **Damage** 4d6+3 piercing

F3. THE ARCHIVES

MODERATE 4

Square pillars, each carved with words large enough to be read from arm's length, stand in orderly rows in the middle of this

immense chamber. The pillars rise from floor to ceiling and are almost entirely surrounded by a three-foot-high stone wall. Further south, six looming stone statues of dwarves stand in circular alcoves to either side of an open hallway.

The Dwarven words carved onto these pillars date back more than 800 years. Each pillar recounts a specific dwarven commander's recollections of their experiences leading troops during the Shining Crusade and include numerous accounts of the horrific actions taken by the Whispering Tyrant and agents of the Whispering Way. Many of these firsthand accounts have otherwise been lost to time, but there are no revelations in these writings that would significantly alter established historical facts, with one exception—a character who spends at least an hour studying these accounts learns the 18 dwarven commanders who recorded their stories here were chosen by the dwarven kingdom to safeguard one of the *lesser seals* meant to keep the *Great Seal* in Gallowspire in place.



GRIMBAL

Creatures: An unsettling sight draws the attention of the PCs from the stone archives: in the southern half of the room, the decapitated body of a dwarf thrashes and twitches. Occasionally, the animated remains stand up, take a few staggering steps in a random direction, and then tumble onto the ground in a fresh set of shuddering fits. Where the body's head should be is a faint, spectral shape of yellow smoke in which burn two tiny pinpoints of light where the eyes should be.

This unfortunate form is the decapitated corpse of a dwarf, Grimbal, who was one of the mercenaries Drazmorg hired to aid in his exploration of the vault. The neck wound is ragged, as if the head were torn from the body rather than severed by a blade. Suffused with necromantic energy from the breaking of the *Third Seal*, Grimbal's corpse flops about in an unnerving but ultimately harmless manifestation of undeath. Treat the corpse as a zombie shambler if statistics are needed, except it can't make any attacks; if destroyed, it drops to the ground, finally still.

Much more dangerous than Grimbal's thrashing headless body is his undead spirit. The necromantic energy unleashed by the *Third Seal* corrupted his lingering soul, twisting and transforming it into a ghost. While Grimbal's body won't react to intruders, his ghost most certainly will—the "head" that seems to extend from the body's neck is in fact the ghost. As it vacates its body to attack on its own, the headless undead corpse continues to stagger and stumble about aimlessly. This ghost attacked King Merlokrep's band when they scuttled through this room to the south, and it attacks the PCs, although it won't pursue foes from this chamber.

If the PCs reunite Grimbal's head (from area F4) with his body, the head seems to sigh before head and body both crumble into dust. This also causes his ghost, if it still exists, to fade as well, put to rest by the restoration of his mortal remains.

Grimbal's ghost is similar in appearance to his body, but a roiling mass of shadows replaces its head, and two furious, glowing pinpoints of yellow light peer from the mass. The ghost flits from one archive pillar to the next, using *Stealth* to roll initiative when it attacks.

GRIMBAL

CREATURE 6

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM GHOST INCORPOREAL SPIRIT UNDEAD

Male dwarf ghost

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven

Skills *Stealth* +14

Str -5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +0, **Int** +2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +2

Site Bound

AC 22; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +16, **Will** +13

HP 75, negative healing, rejuvenation; **Immunities** death

effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious;
Resistances all damage 5 (except force, ghost touch, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Rejuvenation (divine, necromancy) Restoring Grimbal's head from area **F4** to his remains in this room allows him to move on to the afterlife.

Speed fly 25 feet

Melee ♦ ghostly hand +16 (agile, finesse, magical), **Damage** 2d8+6 negative plus drain mind

Drain Mind (divine, necromancy) When Grimbal damages a living creature with his ghostly hand Strike, the ghost gains 5 temporary Hit Points, and the creature must succeed at a DC 24 Will save or become stupefied 1. Further damage dealt by the ghost increases this stupefied value by 1 on a failed save to a maximum of stupefied 4. Each time a creature affected by drain mind gets a full night's rest, decrease its stupefied value caused by drain mind by 1.

Treasure: Grimbal's possessions include a chain shirt, +1 *striking rapier*, magnifying glass, some drafting papers, a set of infiltrator thieves' tools, a *skeleton key*, and 47 gp (Drazmorg's last payment for his services, minus a few expenses).

F4. THE PRIEST AND THE HEAD MODERATE 4

The door to this room is locked. It can be Forced Open by a character who succeeds at a DC 21 Athletics check, or a character can Pick the Lock with a successful DC 19 Thievery check.

Creature: Within this room stands the disfigured corpse of a cleric of Nethys, his eyes and mouth stitched shut with coarse cord. He clutches a weird metal cage locked around a rotting dwarf's head in one of his desiccated hands. The room is otherwise empty, as if the creature were imprisoned.

This undead priest was once a man named Cilios, part of Drazmorg's group of mercenaries. Weakened by the backlash of negative energy released by opening the seal, he was easily overcome by the transformed Drazmorg, who killed him and turned his corpse into yet another undead creature. In an additional flourish of cruelty, Drazmorg stitched Cilios's eyes and lips shut—while this prevents him from speaking, Cilios can still sense the world around him as if he could see normally.

The head in the cage is Grimbal's. Drazmorg tore off Grimbal's head to prevent him from revealing the dungeon's secrets to anyone but wanted to keep the dwarf nearby in case he needed the trapfinder's expertise. Drazmorg put the head into a *cresset of grisly interrogation*, an eldritch container that turned Grimbal's head into a macabre consultant. To prevent anyone from learning the architect's secrets, Drazmorg tasked Cilios

with protecting the head and locked him in this room. The undead priest no longer has magical abilities and exists as a mummy, albeit one whose disease affects the living in a different way than that of a typical mummy.

CILIOS

CREATURE 6

Variant male mummy guardian (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 240)

Initiative Perception +16

Blinding Rot (curse, disease, divine, necromancy, negative) Cilios's fist Strikes expose those they damage to blinding rot. This disease and any damage from it can't be healed until this curse is removed. A creature killed by blinding rot turns to dust and can't be resurrected except by a 7th-level *resurrect* ritual or similar magic.



CILIOS

Saving Throw DC 22 Fortitude; **Stage 1** carrier with no ill effect (1 minute); **Stage 2** 4d6 negative damage and dazzled (1 day); **Stage 3** 4d6 negative damage and blinded (1 day)

Treasure: In addition to the *cresset of grisly interrogation*, Cilius wears a *choker of elocution* that grants the ability to understand Necril. Grimal's head can aid the PCs in navigating the dungeon or warn them of traps, but it can't warn them of any undead guardians placed by Drazmorg, as these developments took place after Grimal's death. The head can also advise the PCs on Drazmorg himself. While Grimal has seen the *Third Seal* and knows the magic it unleashed caused a wave of necromantic energy that (among other things) transformed Drazmorg into an undead monstrosity, he isn't sure what the *Third Seal* is, nor does he know its significance.

F5. CRYPT OF THE STARVED MODERATE 4

The crumbled remains of furniture lie scattered over the floor, hinting that this chamber once served as a lounge or perhaps

a dormitory. The only feature that survived the passage of time relatively intact is a large, iron gear-like wheel fitted to a stone pillar in the northwest of the room. The larger alcove to the south of this pillar has a curved stone wall. Bones and fragments of metal armor lie scattered among the debris.

This room was once a dormitory for the bulk of the dwarves who remained here to guard the *Third Seal*. After the Rending trapped them within, they eventually succumbed to starvation.

The wheel mounted on the pillar can be turned, but doing so requires strength and patience. A PC can rotate the pillar one full revolution over 1 minute and with a successful DC 20 Athletics check; once complete, the larger pillar to the south that blocks access to area F6 grinds into the ground. Originally, doing so released six creatures that were trapped within long ago, but those monsters are now free to lurk about the chamber (see *Creatures*, below). Once lowered, the pillar can be rotated again with another minute of work to seal area F6 again.

Creatures: Ages ago, six desperate dwarves allowed themselves to be sealed within the hollow chambers of the southern barrier, hoping their spirits would infuse the rooms beyond with protection. They succumbed to starvation just like the rest, but these six rose from death as festrogs. When Drazmorg originally lowered this pillar, he released the festrogs. He quickly recruited their aid by offering them some of his traveling companions as food. The festrogs remain in this chamber, but their hunger remains. They attack the PCs on sight and pursue them throughout the level.

FESTROGS (6) **CREATURE 1**
Pathfinder Bestiary 3 98
Initiative Perception +6

F6. THE TROUGH MODERATE 4

The floor of this long, rectangular chamber is completely obscured by a foamy, glistening layer of thousands of slimy, mottled, fist-sized spheres. While these spheres vary in size from a marble to a foot across, they all share one disturbing feature: they all look like shiny eyes freshly plucked from a socket. The layer of eyes covers the floor so completely that it's impossible to tell just how deep the grisly carpet of eyes actually is.

The decaying magical wards on this chamber interacted in a particularly gruesome way with the *Third Seal's* necromantic energy, resulting in this unnerving layer of eyes. As the PCs step into the room, many of these eyes shift and twist to follow their



MYRIAD EYES

movements filling the chamber with a horrible concert of sliding, squishing sounds.

The burst of energy from the broken *Third Seal* converted the eyeballs, which were once baked clay and part of a strange magical trap, to animated flesh. The eyeballs are alive but can't attack. They rotate to watch PCs near them but have no offensive or defensive abilities. Any damaging area effect that inflicts at least 5 points of damage clears the eyes from the floor in that area.

While the carpet of eyes is only a few inches thick, walking through the room is particularly unsettling as eyes burst under every footstep. A character can shuffle through the mess to push the eyes in their path out of the way to avoid stepping on them, but doing so causes the character to treat the room as if it were difficult terrain.

Further complicating navigation through the room are a dozen large pits and nine smaller depressions in the ground (see Hazard, below).

Creature: The leaking energy from the *Third Seal* did more than manifest thousands of disembodied eyes—it also spontaneously created a living amalgamation of eyes that now lurches around this room as an impromptu guardian. This creature's body is made entirely of eyes, and when it attacks, the larger eyes transform into fanged mouths. This hideous monstrosity is otherwise identical to an elite gibbering mouter. It slithers through the room without a care for any eyes it might pop, and the nature of its body allows it to slide over the smaller depressions in the room and avoid the larger pits with ease. It fights to the death but doesn't pursue the PCs from this chamber.

THE MYRIAD EYES

CREATURE 6

Elite gibbering mouter (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 176)

Initiative Perception +17

Hazard: A number of pits—some large enough to engulf a human, and some only big enough to wrench an ankle—lie hidden under the room's unsettling carpet of eyes.

OBSCURED PITFALLS

HAZARD 2

UNCOMMON ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 18 (or 0 if the eyes covering an area that obscures a pitfall are destroyed)

Description A layer of disembodied eyes obscures a pitfall in the floor that's either deep enough for a human to fall into, or narrow enough to cause a painful fall.

Disable This hazard can't be disabled, merely avoided.

Pitfall **Trigger** A creature walks into a large pit's square; **Effect** The triggering creature falls into the pit but can attempt a DC 18 Reflex save to Grab an Edge to avoid falling. On a failure, a creature falls 20 feet

into an eye-filled pit. The eyes cushion the fall so the 20-foot fall inflicts only 5 bludgeoning damage, but they also completely obscure vision; a character is effectively blind as long as they remain in the pit. The walls of the pit are slick, though a character can Climb them with a successful DC 25 Athletics check.

Trip **Trigger** A creature walks into a small pit's square; **Effect** The triggering creature must succeed at a DC 18 Reflex save or fall prone (on a critical failure, the creature also twists its ankle and becomes clumsy 1 until it receives any amount of healing).

F7. THE COPPER PALADIN

TRIVIAL 4

A life-sized, copper-plated statue of a dwarven paladin stands in the middle of this otherwise empty room. The statue's armor bears a distinctive design. It holds an unlit wax candle in each outstretched hand. A message is inscribed on the low, circular stone platform at the statue's feet. Beyond the statue, a large, metal double door stands in the southern wall.

The inscription at the statue's feet reads "By Your Light, We Follow" in Dwarven. With a successful DC 19 Religion or Society check, or a successful DC 17 Iomedae Lore (or other appropriate Lore) check to Recall Knowledge, a character confirms the paladin's armor and design represent the dwarven armies that fought in the Shining Crusade. On a critical success, a PC recalls stories of certain dwarven paladins who used candles as a way to denote locations of safety behind enemy lines during the Shining Crusade, suggesting there might be more to this room than initially appears.

Drazmorg gave this apparent dead end only a cursory glance, but if the PCs Search the statue and succeed at a DC 19 Perception check, they find a pair of small, circular depressions in the floor just behind the statue's feet. On a critical success at this check, a PC discovers faint smears of wax on these holes.

If the candles are removed, placed in the depressions, and then lit, the entire statue, base included, slides east to reveal a 7-foot-wide shaft leading downward. The iron rungs of a ladder allow for easy navigation of the 20-foot-deep passageway, which leads to area F8.

The entire mechanism is magical, so a character who examines the statue and succeeds at a DC 19 check to Identify Magic on the statue can tell it's a magical doorway of some sort, and that candles have something to do with its activation. On a critical success, a PC discovers the exact method of opening the way to area F8. If the PCs achieved a critical success at Recalling Knowledge about the paladin statue (see above), they adjust the result of this attempt to Identify Magic up by one degree of success.

The statue returns to its position if the candles are snuffed out or if it's closed from below. As soon as the copper paladin slides into place, the candles teleport into its hands, their lengths fully restored as if they'd never been lit.

Hazard: The double door to the south is a trap meant to distract and harm intruders, and the thunderous sound of the trap triggering alerts anyone hiding in the safe room below (area **F8**) that enemies have drawn near.

AVALANCHE DOORS

HAZARD 4

UNCOMMON MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 22 (expert)

Description The double door is a false door; when triggered, the door slams downward like a drawbridge to crush anyone standing before it.

Disable DC 22 Thievery (trained) to detach the trigger from the doors and lock them in place

AC 21; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +8

Hardness 11, **HP** 50 (BT 25); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Topple Forward **Trigger** Someone attempts to open the doors, or the doors take enough damage to become broken; **Effect** The heavy metal doors are spring-loaded to slam downward, dropping like a drawbridge to smash all creatures in a 10-foot-square before the doors. All creatures in this area must attempt a DC 21 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature lurches to the side and takes no damage—move the creature to a square of the creature's choice adjacent to the trap's area of effect.

Success The creature takes 3d8 bludgeoning damage and is pushed into an adjacent square just outside the trap's area.

Failure The creature takes 6d8 bludgeoning damage, is pushed into an adjacent square just outside the trap's area, and falls prone in that square.

Critical Failure The creature takes 12d8 bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone. The heavy doors pin the creature to the ground, immobilizing it (Escape DC 22). A non-immobilized character can lift the doors by Forcing them open with a successful DC 22 Athletics check so that an immobilized character can crawl to safety.

F8. SAFE ROOM

A ladder on the north wall leads to a hole in the ceiling. Various items line shelves built into the walls, including several rolls of vellum, some stone decanters, a few books, and a wooden staff, but the majority of the other items have long decayed. The floor is engraved with a sprawling map of central Avistan. A single candle sits in a holder mounted on the wall opposite the ladder.

This room was designed to give the original architects a place to retreat if something went wrong with the *Third Seal*. The dwarves maintained several long-lasting protective wards here, but none of these preparations mattered when the Rending threw it all into chaos. The cultists of Droskar had little use for this room, which has been ignored since that time.

The map on the floor is eight centuries out of date, and some of the locations are forgotten or no longer exist. At your discretion, some of these lost locations can turn into future adventures if the PCs reference this map for additional exploration around the Lake Encarthan region.

If the candle on the opposite wall is lit, the statue above resets, hiding the entrance to this room. This candle burns bright but without heat, and it constantly refreshes, rather than diminishes, the oxygen in the room—snuffing the candle out (an Interact action) or removing it from its holder causes the statue above to move aside and allow exit from the safe room. If the candle is removed, it vanishes after 1 minute and reappears, unharmed, in its wall setting.

Treasure: A few magic items remain in this room, including three *moderate healing potions*, two *scrolls of remove disease*, two *scrolls of remove curse*, a *wand of restoration*, and a *greater staff of healing*.

F9. BROKEN ROOM

Extensive structural damage collapsed the east wall, transforming it into a pile of rubble that partially blocks the entrance to a natural cavern beyond. Recent human remains poke from beneath the rubble. The walls to the west survive and depict images of dwarves engaged in funerary practices—although the carvings appear to have been altered by less talented sculptors at some point.

Wails, cries of pain, and gasping sobs issue from beyond the rubble leading to area **F10**.

This room was once the entrance to the cultists' crypt beyond. Droskar's worshippers left a surprise to punish anyone who dared to despoil their remains. When Drazmorg's minions unwittingly triggered this explosive magical trap, it caused this room and the crypts beyond to collapse into the large cavern beyond.

Droskar cultists attempted to improve the carvings of their predecessors in the western walls. With a successful DC 19 Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a character knows the original carvings depicted burial practices that followed Torag's teachings. The adjustments are a much less artistic interpretation of these same practices according to Droskar's faith.

Treasure: If the PCs Search the rubble, they uncover the crushed corpses of a half-dozen of Drazmorg's mercenaries who perished in the explosion. Most of their

gear was destroyed, but the PCs can recover a *wand of burning hands* from one of the bodies with a successful DC 20 Perception check.

F10. THE PIT OF ETERNAL TOIL SEVERE 4

Hints of a worked-stone crypt are visible along the edges of this immense cavern, but the majority of the chamber has collapsed into rubble. The floor slopes gently down to the southeast before plummeting into a large sinkhole surrounded by a wide, rubble-strewn ledge.

Creatures: To Droskar's faithful, death is but a doorway one steps through between the toils performed during life and those performed during death. Unfortunately for the dwarven cultists who were buried here centuries ago, this faith was so deep-seated that their spirits remained to haunt the crypt. When Drazmorg's mercenaries triggered the trap that destroyed this crypt, it transformed the burial chamber into a scene from Hell. Tormented spirits of the dead cultists toil in the pit below, forging or carving a new object to carry to Droskar for approval. When these spirits haul their creations up the sides of the pit to offer them, they're tormented, berated, and forced back into the pit by haunting reflections of themselves. In death, as in life, the cultists of Droskar remain their own most intolerant critics.

The haunting shapes are semi-real, formed from glistening ectoplasm drawn from the spiritual turmoil that infuses the chamber and enhanced by the *Third Seal's* necromantic energy. While they remain largely harmless in this semisolid state, other creatures in the room enjoy a role in the judgment at the pit's edge. These creatures include several undead Drazmorg created from fallen mercenaries that cavort here until he needs them. The tormenting undead include a ghastr, two festrogs, and five bloody skeletons. These undead gleefully shift their attention to the PCs and fight until destroyed. If a PC engages one of the undead while adjacent to the pit's edge, the undead can attempt to Shove a PC into the pit or attempt to Trip a PC; a PC who falls prone from a trip must succeed at a Reflex save against the undead's Athletics DC to avoid falling into the pit. A PC who tumbles down the steep slope into the 15-foot-deep pit takes 1d8 bludgeoning damage (DC 13 basic Reflex save).

GHASTR

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 169

Initiative Perception +8

FESTROGS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 98

Initiative Perception +6

BLOODY SKELETONS (5)

CREATURE 0

Elite bloody skeleton guards (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 298)

Initiative Perception +4

Hazard: While the ectoplasmic manifestations of the toiling dwarven cultists are harmless, the necromantic energies that seethe in the pit are anything but. The pit is 15 feet deep, and its sides, while steep, can be scaled by a character who succeeds at a DC 10 Athletics check to Climb. A living creature inside the pit is subject to necromantic danger.

PIT OF TOIL

HAZARD 2

UNIQUE COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +0

Description As ghostly, ectoplasm-dripping figures of dwarves work all around, the body of a living creature within the pit begins to ache with the pains of countless hours of back-breaking toil.

Disable DC 21 Crafting (expert) to shame the pit by miming skilled artistry, or DC 18 Religion (trained) to exorcise the haunt

Invite Toil **Trigger** A living creature enters the pit; **Effect** The surrounding dwarven shapes begin to chant in Dwarven, encouraging newcomers to join them as they grasp for them with their cold, incorporeal hands. The pit of toil rolls initiative.

Routine (1 action; divine, necromancy) As the dwarves continue to chant and grasp at the living, the pit infuses all living creatures inside it with the ache and pain a body endures after hours of constant toil. Each living creature in the pit must attempt a DC 18 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The creature suffers no ill effect and is thereafter immune to the pit of toil's routine.

Success The creature suffers no ill effect.

Failure The creature takes 2d6 negative damage and becomes enfeebled 1 for 1 round.

Critical Failure The creature takes 4d6 negative damage and becomes fatigued.

Treasure: Disabling the pit of toil releases the trapped spirits to the afterlife. Normally, the trapped spirits of Droskar cultists would transition into similar torments in his domain, but the PCs' act of mercy, combined with the 800 years of time served, allows the released souls to be judged worthy of redemption and to move on to Torag's realm instead. All PCs involved in this encounter feel a sense of relief and thanks from the spirits, and they all receive a minor boon from Torag: the next time any item wielded by one of these PCs becomes destroyed, it's instead restored to full HP. This boon triggers automatically, but only once per character.

F11. CORRIDOR CROSSROAD

TRIVIAL 4

Two corridors here intersect to form a crossroads. To the east, the corridor ends shortly at a small waterfall spilling from the open mouths of four carved human faces. The water collects in a small stone pool beneath. To the north, a ten-foot-square slab of solid granite rests in a wheeled track, permitting it to slide left or right to allow or deny access to the northern hallway; it's currently slightly ajar.

A successful DC 20 Arcana, Occultism, Religion, or Nature check to Identify Magic on the fountain reveals the water constantly recycles and replenishes, and serves as a source of potable drinking water.

Hazard: At one point, the slab to the north could slide open or closed, but time has dangerously decayed the track on which the slab rolls.

LOOSE SLAB

HAZARD 3

UNCOMMON MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 23 (trained)

Description The stone slab tears free from its track with the ear-piercing sound of failing metal.

Disable DC 20 Crafting (expert) to shore up the track so that it functions as intended, or DC 18 Thievery (trained) to wedge the slab in place to immobilize it

Falling Slab **Trigger** A creature attempts to move the slab; **Effect** The slab rips free from its track and falls, slamming down in one direction while it kicks up twisted metal debris in the other. All creatures adjacent to the slab take 3d6 bludgeoning and 3d6 piercing damage (DC 20 basic Reflex save).

Treasure: If the PCs approach this fountain after disabling the pit of toil in area **F10**, the ghostly form of a thankful dwarf manifests next to the fountain and holds out one hand toward the water as if to invite the PCs to partake. The water in the fountain takes on a faint golden radiance, and with a successful DC 10 Crafting or Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a character confirms the water has been transformed into *holy water*. The PCs can harvest up to 10 vials of *holy water* from the fountain before the remaining water returns to normal.

F12. LABORATORY

LOW 4

Thick iron chains line the interior walls of this T-shaped room, linked and welded into a single, massive chandelier that hangs from the central ceiling. Upon twisted branches of symmetrically-positioned, blackened chains rest scores of half-burnt candles. Within, the air chokes with greasy soot and the scent of rotting flesh. An oversized granite altar serves as the room's centerpiece.

At the far end of the room, a slightly raised dais holds several long knives, a glass alembic, and six bisected skulls filled with strange, putrescent powders.

This chamber was first built as a shrine to Torag, then rebuilt by the cultists to be devoted to Droskar. Drazmorg further adjusted and converted the chamber into a necromancy work room. He and his mercenaries used this chamber as a base camp, but now that his mercenaries are all dead (or worse) and he has been transformed, Drazmorg uses the chamber less frequently.

Creatures: Drazmorg hired mostly mercenaries to accompany him into Droskar's Crucible, but he has an undead companion, Hymmir, who has accompanied Drazmorg for years.

Not long before Drazmorg first encountered him, Hymmir stumbled upon the cairn of an ancient mystic dedicated to the Whispering Way after becoming lost in the wilds. The mystic had attempted the transition to lichdom, but after perishing from the failed attempt, his disciples buried him in the remote hills. His body remained perfectly preserved as a side effect of his failed bid at lichdom, and when Hymmir stumbled across the remains in a starvation induced delirium, he fed. The necromantically infused flesh killed Hymmir, but he rose from that death a ghoul. Now, strange and terrible whispers echo in his skull like sour winds. His search for answers to these whispers led him to meet Drazmorg. Hymmir has served Drazmorg loyally, hoping that one day he'll discover a way to interpret and quell the whispers.

Drazmorg has little immediate use for Hymmir and told the ghoulish barbarian to wait in this room, both to protect its contents and to meditate on the whispers in his mind. Hymmir is now starting to wonder if Drazmorg really plans to help him, but he sees the arrival of the PCs as justification for his role and leaps to attack at once. If reduced to fewer than 20 Hit Points, he attempts to flee to area **F13** and to the Lower Vault to warn Drazmorg; if cornered, he fights until destroyed—a fate that sets him free from the whispers more surely than anything Drazmorg could ever do.

HYMMIR URATH

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM GHOUL UNDEAD

Male human barbarian ghoul (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 168)

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Common, Hallit, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +13, Athletics +14, Intimidation +11, Stealth +11, Survival +13

Str +5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

AC 21; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +15, **Will** +13

HP 80, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Speed 30 feet, burrow 5 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +14 (finesse), **Damage** 2d6+7 plus ghoulish fever and paralysis

Melee ♦ claw +14 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d4+7 plus paralysis

Consume Flesh ♦ (manipulate) As ghoul, but Hymmir regains 3d6 Hit Points.

Ghoul Fever (disease) As ghoul, but DC 22.

Hungry Rage ⤵ (concentrate, emotion, mental) **Trigger** Hymmir damages a living creature with his jaws Strike; **Effect** The taste of flesh and blood throws Hymmir into a violent rage. He gains 9 temporary Hit Points, deals an additional 2 damage with melee Strikes, and takes a -1 penalty to AC for 1 minute.

Gnaw and Chew ♦♦♦ **Requirements** Hymmir is in a hungry rage; **Effect** Hymmir attempts a jaws Strike. If he hits, he chews at his target and inflicts an additional 1d6 slashing damage. Hymmir regains 3d6 Hit Points.

Paralysis (incapacitation, necromancy, occult) As ghoul, but DC 22.

Swift Leap ♦ (move) As ghoul.

Treasure: The liquid in the alembic contains 5 doses of *necrobinding serum* (page 116), a potent blend of Drazmorg's creation with which he has been experimenting. He hopes to develop a version of the serum with permanent effects. Among the other tools

in the laboratory, a character can gather a full set of expanded alchemist's tools.

F13. CHAMBER OF BONES MODERATE 4

Vaulted crawl spaces sealed with iron bars extend from the northwest, northeast, southwest, and southeast corners of this octagonal chamber. In the center of the room stands a statue of a dwarven priest dressed in formal robes with his head bowed. A flight of stairs leads downward from a southern hall.

The smaller crawl spaces serve as ossuaries for the bones of workers who perished during the vault's construction.

The flight of stairs to the south lead to the Lower Vault, narrowing in width from 10 feet to 5 feet after descending 30 feet, and then continuing a further 30 feet to area G1.

Creatures: The two skulking shadows (page 72) that have been stalking the PCs through this dungeon are normally found here, guarding the entrance to the Lower Vault ever since King Merlokrep and his kobolds made Drazmorg realize the need for guards. If the two shadows haven't yet attacked the PCs, they do so here, fighting until destroyed.

SHADOWS (2) CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 289

Initiative Stealth +14



PART 3: GRAVE OF THE THIRD SEAL

The leaking energy of the broken *Third Seal* is much stronger on the fourth level of Droskar's Crucible. The stale air feels thicker and carries a noticeable scent of decaying flesh. While these sensations don't have actual game effects, the PCs still feel a strange metaphysical resistance whenever they attempt to utilize any effect with the positive trait. Eyes seem to randomly open and close on the walls, and PCs have the constant sensation of being watched. These effects are largely just cosmetic, but should serve to keep the PCs on edge as they explore the Grave of the Third Seal.



THE LOWER VAULT

The rooms of the Lower Vault are unlit. Ceiling height here is twice as high on average; tunnels reach heights of 20 feet, rising to 30 feet in most larger rooms. Doors are made of stone and open easily.

G1. THE TOXIC FURNACE

LOW 5

A flight of stairs ends in a bell-shaped foyer that opens into a broad, rectangular chamber with spiked walls. Ten-foot-wide archways to the west and south lead deeper into the complex. In the center of the room, a three-foot-tall iron furnace stands atop a marble dais, its vents belching out goutts of toxic-looking smoke. A moat filled with a curious bubbling liquid surrounds the smoky brazier.

Hazard: The bubbling liquid surrounding the furnace is a 1-foot-deep layer of a foul-smelling caustic agent that causes 1d6 acid damage per round of exposure to living organic material (such as flesh), residue that condenses from the furnace's hazardous fumes.

TOXIC FURNACE

HAZARD 6

COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +15 (expert)

Description The smoking furnace begins to hiss and click, and its vents swivel and adjust to spew toxic fumes in the direction of intruders.

Disable DC 25 Thievery (trained) to render one of the vents useless, or DC 25 Athletics to wrench and bend a vent until it no longer functions

AC 24; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +11

Vent Hardness 10, **Vent HP** 18 (BT 9); **Furnace Hardness** 15, **Furnace HP** 56 (BT 28); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage



CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

INTRODUCTION


CHAPTER 1: HOLLOW'S LAST HOPE

CHAPTER 2: CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

CHAPTER 3: HUNGRY ARE THE DEAD

CHAPTER 4: DROSKAR'S DOOM

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

Spew Toxins  **Trigger** A visible living creature enters the room, or a Stealthy creature fails to remain hidden from the toxic furnace with a DC 25 Stealth check (the trap's sensors have darkvision and lifesense); **Effect** One of the toxic furnace's vents swivels to aim at the triggering creature and then spews a gout of boiling toxin at the target. The toxic furnace then rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) The trap loses 1 action for each disabled vent. On each of the trap's actions, a vent spews a gout of boiling toxin at a living creature in sight of it. It can't target a single creature more than once per round, so if there aren't enough viable targets for all 3 actions, the trap loses those unspent actions.

Ranged boiling toxin +17 (range 30 feet), **Damage** 1d6 acid, 2d6 fire, and 2d6 poison

Reset The trap resets after 1 minute, during which it sees no creatures to target.

G2. FLOODED INTERSECTION

A still pool of what appears to be dark water floods this intersection. Tunnels extend into the dark to the east, west, and south. To the north, they end at what appears to be a tangled wall of bones and skulls.

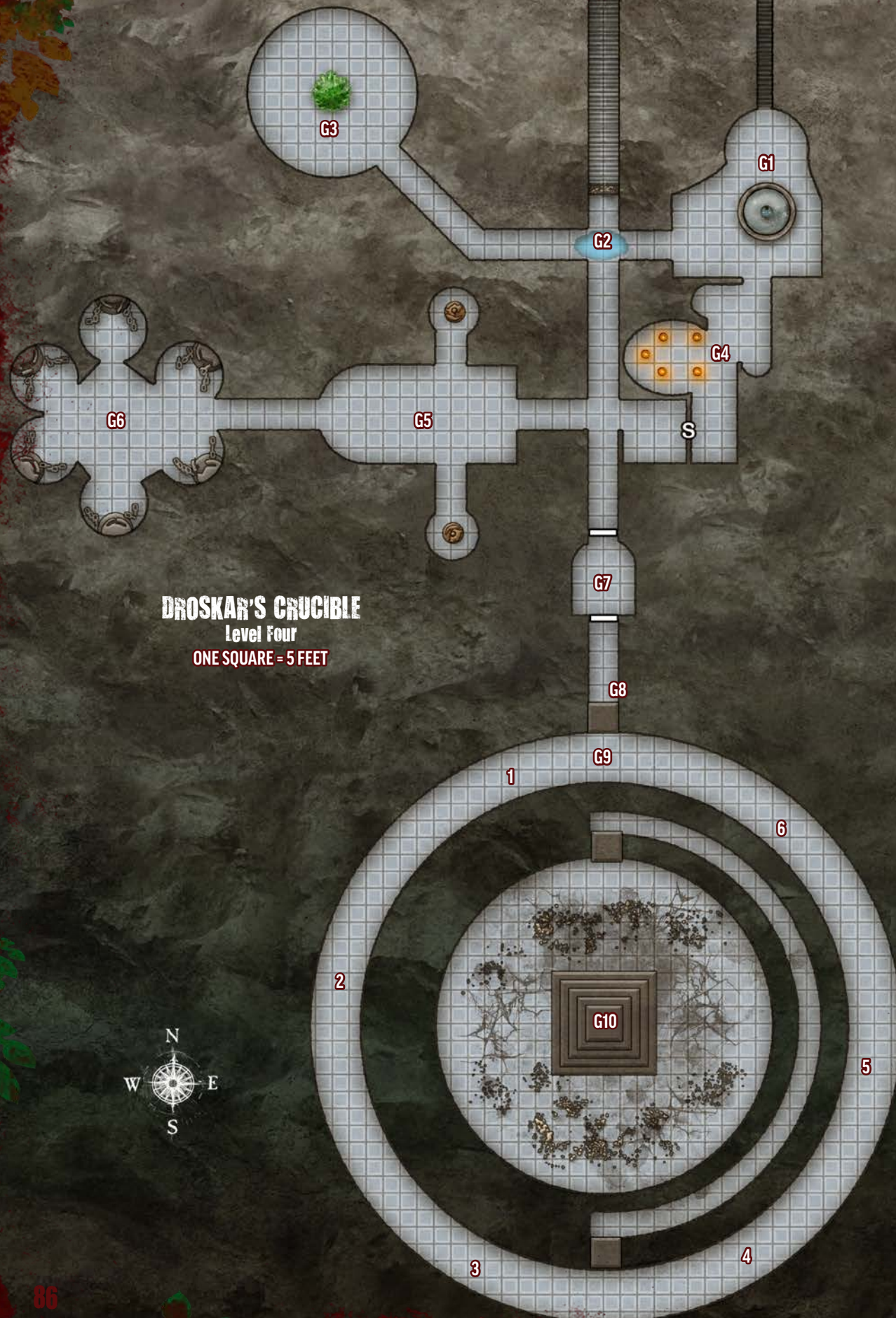
The pool of water is 30 feet deep. The wall of bones is a 5-foot-thick barrier Drazmorg created to completely block the passageway. Each 5-foot-by-5-foot section of the wall has AC 10, Hardness 10, and 25 Hit Points. It's immune to critical hits and precision damage, and it heals damage to itself at a rate of 2d6 Hit Points at the end of a round. A destroyed section of the wall of bones can be moved through, and it no longer heals damage, allowing access to the stairs beyond (which lead to area E1).

G3. THE HANGING SEER

LOW 5

In the center of this thirty-foot-diameter chamber is a large green crystal. Iron chains extend from it and connect to the ceiling, suspending the crystal a few feet above the floor. The crystal has the corpse of a man dressed in a hooded robe of archaic style entombed within it. A piece of the crystal is broken off, exposing the man's hand, and tiny fragments of the broken crystal lie scattered about the floor.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Religion check to Recall Knowledge confirms the garb worn by the corpse is associated with an obscure and archaic sect that venerated Pharama, though it hasn't been active for over a century.



Creature: The man in the crystal was a priest of Pharasma named Tazimir, a member of a minor sect called the Spiral Seers who focused on Pharasma's role as a goddess of fate. He volunteered to accompany the dwarves when they set off to find a hiding place for the *Third Seal*. Tazimir became concerned once he realized how slowly and deliberately the dwarves were building the complex. After much soul-searching and prayer, he decided extending his life and becoming a longer-lived guardian for the good of the future was the right choice. He intended his servitude as the Hanging Seer to last for only a century beyond his normal lifespan, as it would be plenty of time for the dwarves to finalize the *Third Seal's* defenses. Then, the dwarves would smash his crystal and allow his 100-year-delayed death to take him to the Boneyard.

His transformation into a preserved guardian was flawless, but this worshipper of fate failed to anticipate the Rending. When the time came for his release, the now-cultists of Droskar believed the man's endless toil was sacred. They left him to continue to defy death, even after the cult died out.

Drazmorg was the next to encounter the Hanging Seer after centuries of isolation. Even at a fraction of his original strength, the Hanging Seer proved to be a dangerous threat. Instead of spending more time investigating, Drazmorg abandoned the imprisoned priest after managing to smash only a corner of the crystal, which exposed one of the Hanging Seer's hands to the air and caused it to decay instantly.

The Hanging Seer can't move or speak, but he can observe his surroundings and communicate telepathically. As soon as he notices the PCs, he warns them that a reckless necromancer broke the ancient seal entombing the Whispering Tyrant. In addition to understanding the history of the dungeon and the atrociousness of Tar-Baphon, Tazimir can confirm there are two other seals that keep the Whispering Tyrant imprisoned (but he doesn't know where they are). He can tell them how to enter the safe room (area F8) and that there are several potent healing tools stored therein, but his information about Drazmorg is outdated—he isn't aware the man has become undead.

Once the PCs learn enough or are about to leave, the Hanging Seer's grip on reality ends. Combined with the creeping decay that has worked its way from his now exposed hand, death finally comes for the long-imprisoned priest—or it would, in a less awful situation.

Instead, the decay that began on his hand accelerates, spreading into his body and causing his remains to swiftly crumble to dust. This is just the beginning. In place of the formerly imprisoned body looms a shadowy duplicate.



TAZIMIR

Tazimir's anguish and the influence of the broken *Third Seal* has transformed him into a wraith that immediately escapes his crystal prison to attack the PCs with a howl; this allows the wraith to roll initiative with an Intimidation check. Once he's destroyed, the sound of Tazimir's sigh of relief echoes through the room as his soul finally moves on to meet its maker.

TAZIMIR, THE HANGING SEER

CREATURE 6

Wraith (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 335)

Initiative Intimidation +15

Reward: For freeing Tazimir the Hanging Seer from his fate, the PCs earn a tiny boon from Pharasma. Once, each PC can gain a +2 status bonus to a single check; the PCs' player can apply this bonus after determining the result, and it can potentially change the degree of success.

XP Award: Grant the PCs an additional 80 XP for accomplishing this merciful act.

G4. TALLOW WORKSHOP

MODERATE 5

The air in this room is befouled by a haze of smoke that reeks of burnt animal fat. Drizzling from corner alcoves, streams of pallid wax pool across the floor from the two-foot-diameter stubs of once massive candles, their sputtering wicks now moments from winking out. Beyond the alcoves is a semi-attached room filled with oversized metal and stone cogs.

The dwarves once made significant use of tallow in the creation of molds, and they built this workshop for easier access to the materials needed. The magical furnaces and generators of raw tallow continue to function, but they've been recycling the same materials for centuries.

The secret door in the wall can be found by a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check.

Five vats of bubbling tallow in the western wing of this room are minor magical items that constantly keep their contents at a scalding temperature. A creature splashed with bubbling tallow takes 1d4 fire damage. A creature who's fully immersed in a vat takes 6d6 fire damage (DC 20 basic Reflex save) upon being dunked, and then again each round they end a turn inside the vat. The vats are low enough that climbing out merely takes a Move action. Each vat is AC 15, has Hardness 10, and 50 HP (BT 25); a broken vat loses its ability to maintain its temperature and causes the tallow within to harden into solid wax.

Drazmorg was intrigued and tinkered a bit with the room's contents, but he quickly determined there was little of interest here, especially given its dangerous guardian.

Creature: When Droskar's cultists took over this chamber, they used the materials here to build a guardian, just because they could. This creature is known as a tallow guardian: a construct whose body is formed from the tallow of ancient funerary candles but whose animating force is powered by the imprisoned soul of a sacrificed victim—in this case, one of the last dwarven faithful of Torag to resist the decay that allowed Droskar into their hearts.

The tallow guardian stands motionless in the southern alcove. It doesn't react as long as the PCs don't attack it or attempt to touch anything in the room. If either of these triggering events occurs, the guardian lurches to life and fights until destroyed although it won't pursue foes from the room.

TALLOW GUARDIAN

CREATURE 7

Page 122

Initiative Perception +13

Treasure: The tools scattered about this room are relatively mundane, but over the centuries, the magic of

this area has interacted with the tallow in the westernmost vat to form a strange magical object: a *tallowheart mass*. This item (page 117) bobs on the surface of that vat's bubbling contents; if it isn't allowed to cool for a minute, it deals 1d4 fire damage per round to a creature handling it.

G5. UNDEAD STORAGE

LOW 5

The hall widens into a larger chamber with a vaulted ceiling rising nearly forty feet. Alcoves to the north and south lead to cylindrical chambers nearly filled with copper-plated statues of dwarven crusaders, now caked with dust.

Creatures: Drazmorg has gathered a large number of undead minions to his cause—some animated from remains gathered here, while others stumbled into the area after being drawn from the surrounding terrain. He placed the more powerful undead minions elsewhere throughout this level and the one above. He has little use for the bulk of the skeletons and zombies at the moment. These undead stand motionless in this chamber in case they're needed in the future. While the mix of undead were culled from humans, kobolds, dwarves, and even a few wargs or other monstrous bodies, the mass of undead as a whole functions as a pair of shambler troops. The undead remain mostly still unless they spot living intruders, at which point both troops lurch to attack. Their orders prevent them from pursuing foes from this chamber, but characters who attack them from afar discover these orders aren't strong enough in the face of such tactics, and doing so draws the troops from the room to carry on the fight elsewhere.

SHAMBLER TROOPS (2)

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 302

Initiative Perception +7

G6. THE DISCIPLES

MODERATE 5

This strangely shaped chamber is an oblong room with six oval alcoves branching off it at regular intervals. The domed ceiling in the center rises to thirty feet; in each of the side alcoves, the ceiling height drops to fifteen feet. Every alcove has a pair of steps that lead up to a semicircular platform. These platforms each support an intricately carved, upright sarcophagus and large, broken iron chains that, at one point, probably held the sarcophagi shut—the stone coffins' lids now hang slightly ajar.

Creatures: In the early years, the dwarves discovered six of their own were, in fact, double agents—disciples of Tar-Baphon who hoped to hamper or sabotage the

efforts to hide the *Third Seal*. Shocked that these agents made it so far before being discovered, and worried that if they were released or executed, the Whispering Way would be able to contact them or their souls to learn what they knew, the dwarves made a difficult decision—one that might well have planted the seed that, after the Rending, bloomed into Droskar's faith. They imprisoned the six spies in magical sarcophagi so they and their souls would remain bound until they could no longer aid the Whispering Tyrant. The Rending happened much sooner than that, but once the dwarves began to worship Droskar, they opted to keep the six imprisoned here out of cruelty.

When Drazmorg broke the *Third Seal* and infused the region with necromantic energy, these six imprisoned dwarves underwent a horrific new transformation—each was wrenched out of stasis and slain. Their remains then broke free from their sarcophagi and shambled into the middle of the room, where they fused into an awful mass of undead hatred, their minds as conjoined as their bodies into a blasphemy that refers to itself only as “The Disciples.” What, exactly, the semi-sapient tangle of undeath considers itself the disciples of, not even they seem to agree on. They offer prayers variously to Droskar, Tar-Baphon, Urgathoa, and even blasphemous prayers to Torag. Drazmorg is fascinated by the Disciples. Once he completes his current tasks, he intends to study this unique undead monstrosity to find a way to duplicate its creation, but for now, he has left the Disciples to their prayers here.

The Disciples lurch forward with howls and gibbering, fighting until destroyed. They pursue foes as far as the crossroads to the east of area G5 before returning here to take up their prayers once again.

This horrid creature's limbs are composed of parallel bones and flesh from the bodies of the six original dwarves, yet compacted down and fused into the size of a single broad human. Their head is a broken-and-fused amalgam of three skulls. Their rib cage numbers nearly 20 overlapping pairs of ribs, some of which jut at odd angles. Their limbs are large and tangled like the roots of a great tree, made up of at least three hands or feet each. Withered intestines and dry sinews writhe at their core or trail behind like twitching tails.

In time, and once their discordant blasphemies congeal around a single source to venerate, the Disciples could well grow into a fully formed undead monstrosity known as an *unrisen* (a level 11 creature fully detailed on page 153 of *Pathfinder Book of the Dead*). At the moment,

they're a less powerful but still quite dangerous variant of this unsettling monster.

THE DISCIPLES

CREATURE 7

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM UNDEAD

Variant *unrisen* (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 153)

Perception +15; darkvision, lifesense 30 feet

Languages Dwarven (can't speak any language)

Skills Athletics +17, Stealth +14

Str +6, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** -2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

AC 22; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +14, **Will** +15

HP 130, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Rise Again (necromancy, occult) If the Disciples are reduced to 0 Hit Points by means other than fire or positive damage, they return to unlife at the start of their next turn. They have 45 Hit Points and are prone in the space



THE DISCIPLES

in which they were destroyed. The Disciples can't be returned by this ability again for 1 hour, and if destroyed before this time passes, they remain truly dead.

Speed 30 feet

Melee jaws +17 (deadly d10, magical), **Damage** 2d8+9 piercing

Melee claw +17 (agile, magical), **Damage** 2d6+9

Agonized Howl ♦♦ (auditory, enchantment, mental, occult)

The Disciples howl in pain at their cursed existence. Creatures within a 30-foot emanation take 6d8 mental damage (DC 25 basic Will save). The Disciples can't use Agonized Howl again for 1d4 rounds.

Awful Approach ♦ The Disciples reshape their grotesque form to move swiftly. They Stride twice. Any living creature that can see the Disciples during this movement must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or be sickened 1 (sickened 2 on a critical failure). This is a mental and visual effect. The Disciples can't use Awful Approach again for 1d4 rounds.

G7. VESTIBULE

MODERATE 5

This room has curved walls to the north and square corners to the south. On either side sit two copper braziers partially filled with a sour-scented oil that does little to mask the nauseating scent of rotting flesh that seeps from the shale stone walls.

Creature: A single wretched figure stands in the center of the room, a desiccated human form with new-looking armor and weapons. Maggots churn and burrow through this creature's exposed flesh, filling the air around him with a faint but awful rustling sound. This creature was once Raksmi, Drazmorg's hired bodyguard, but is now yet another of his vile undead minions, commanded to stand watch and let no one pass into the inner hall. Raksmi fights until destroyed and pursues foes relentlessly if they flee south, but he won't pursue those who flee north. Those who suffer from mummy rot inflicted by Raksmi must endure the awful sight and sensation of maggots churning in their afflicted flesh, but this unpleasant side effect has no additional game effect.

RAKSMI

CREATURE 7

Elite mummy (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 240)

Initiative Perception +16

G8. PLUGGED PASSAGEWAY

Iron sconces line the walls of this twenty-five-foot-long hall. The black candles in the sconces are unlit, though wax droplets beneath indicate they were recently extinguished. Two crossed iron bars on a metal rod protrude from the western wall near the hall's southern end, the stone face of which is adorned with carvings in different languages.

The runes carved on the southern wall read "death" in several languages, including Dwarven and Common. A character who examines the southern wall with a successful DC 15 Perception check realizes the hall continues south—the smooth stone surface appears to be a massive slab of rock filling further progress.

While it's possible to mine one's way through the 10-foot-thick slab of stone blocking access to area **G9**, a far easier and swifter method is to use the crossed bars on the wall; even with a cursory examination of the contraption, a character notes the bars can be turned like a wheel. Doing so causes the stone plug blocking the southern hallway to slowly grind into the wall to the west. The process is noisy and slow, with the plug grinding into the wall at a rate that opens 1 foot after 1 minute of work (after 5 minutes of turning the wheel, a 5-foot-wide passage to area **G9** is revealed, and after 10 minutes, the stone plug is fully retracted into the wall and the wheel no longer turns).

Treasure: The candles on the wall are non-magical, but the sconces have minor magical elements that keep a candle placed in them preserved and viable as a source of illumination despite the passage of time. The candles still burn normally and extinguish naturally when their wicks run out, but a candle can sit in a sconce for centuries without degrading.

A character who examines the candles and succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices something that Drazmorg missed: the candle on the east wall closest to the room's northern entrance is a *candle of revealing* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 257).

G9. THE OUTER RING

LOW 5

This gently curving, fifteen-foot-wide hallway extends out of sight to the left and right. Its walls are plain and smooth.

This outer hallway is one of the greatest achievements of the complex's original dwarven creators. It's the primary force that has kept the presence of the *Third Seal* hidden within area **G10** for so long. After their fall into the worship of Droskar, the dwarves never came close to accomplishing something as glorious as this hallway. Out of jealousy and shame, the cultists regarded this part of the complex and the chamber beyond as forbidden, acts that made the resting place of the *Third Seal* even more secure.

A creature who steps into this hallway immediately notices its power, for there's no gravity within the outer ring. Anyone in the ring immediately begins to float, slowly drifting clockwise around the ring, borne on faint magical currents that transport creatures 5 feet per round. Loose objects of up to 2 Bulk also float at a rate of 5 feet

in a clockwise direction, but bulkier objects drop to the ground if not carried by a creature.

By spending an action to activate the Outer Ring via envisioning, a character in area **G9** can fly at a speed of 25 feet in this ring (although moving against the ring's mysterious motive force means a character treats the ring as difficult terrain when traveling counterclockwise). With a successful DC 20 check to Identify Magic, a character discerns this function of the Outer Ring; on a critical success, the character knows that deeper, subtler, and more powerful magic in the ring serves as a focus to hide something at the center of the ring from divination magic. The PCs must travel to area **G10** to discover exactly what's being hidden.

Two additional stone plugs block further access into the central area of the ring: one at the southern end of the ring and one north at the end of an inner half-ring. Gravity within this inner half-ring functions normally, and the spheres manifested by the hazard don't enter here. Unlike the plug at area **G9**, these stone plugs sink into the ground at a touch, opening fully at the end of the round they're activated in this manner. A sunken stone plug remains flush with the ground as long as a creature or object is located above it in the opening. It rises into place automatically after 1 minute passes with nothing in the way.

Hazard: The creators of the Outer Ring also set a deadly trap to destroy intruders. Centuries of neglect have resulted in this trap losing much of its power, but it was still enough to kill a few of Drazmorg's minions before he disabled the trap with a successful Arcana check. Drazmorg reactivated the trap so he can continue to study the *Third Seal* in area **G10**. The repetitive Dwarven chant the original builders used to render the trap inert when they moved through this chamber has long been lost to time.

EXPLOSIVE CRYSTAL SPHERES

HAZARD 6

COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +15 (expert)

Description Shimmering, glyph-graven, two-foot-diameter crystalline spheres shimmer and condense in the air, launching with explosive force at intruders.

Disable DC 25 Thievery (expert) to locate and deface tiny activation runes located at one of the six locations that spawn crystal spheres, or DC 28 Arcana (expert) or DC 28 Occultism (expert) to manipulate the magical energy at one of those locations to render the spheres inert, or *dispel magic* (3rd level; counteract DC 22) to counteract one of the crystal sphere spawn points

Sphere AC 24; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +17

Sphere Hardness 13, **Sphere HP** 54 (BT 27); **Immunities** critical hits, fire damage, object immunities, precision damage

Manifest Crystal Sphere ➤ **Trigger** Three or more

creatures remain in the Outer Ring for 6 seconds or longer; **Effect** Six spheres of crystal, each measuring 2 feet in diameter, manifest from thin air and begin quickly floating toward intruders. A sphere manifests at each of the points on the map indicated with a small numeral (labeled 1 through 6); the trap then rolls initiative.

Routine (6 actions) On each of the trap's actions, a crystal sphere that hasn't yet taken an action during the turn either flies 25 feet toward the closest creature in the Outer Ring (if no creature is within 25 feet), or it attacks a visible creature within 25 feet (the crystal spheres can sense targets via darkvision). If a crystal sphere attacks a target, that target takes 1d6 force damage (DC 24 basic Reflex save) as the sphere hits them and bursts. A creature can be attacked by multiple spheres in a turn, but a sphere always targets the closest target. Once a sphere attacks and bursts, it vanishes but respawns at its spawn point at the start of the next turn and continues its routine. A sphere that has been destroyed or had its spawn point disabled vanishes and doesn't continue to respawn and attack, and the trap loses 1 action for each sphere destroyed or disabled in this way.

G10. VAULT OF THE THIRD SEAL SEVERE 5

The walls, floor, and ceiling of this vast rotunda are formed from tremendous limestone blocks that sporadically bear ancient cracks and bits of fallen masonry. At the center of the room, a ten-foot-tall dais is surrounded by a concentric mini-ziggurat of layered, rune-covered stone steps. The rest of the room's floor holds an unsettling combination of half-scorched bodies and bones, mixed with shards of stone and wood and ash and rubble in a blast pattern that suggests some sort of explosion took place in the center. That some of these blasted mortal remains still twitch, writhe, or even groan in pain only makes this chamber more surreal.

As grisly and distracting as the sights in the rest of the chamber are, the sight above the dais commands all attention. Here a shattered disk of glowing yellow stone floats 5 feet above the dais. The broken fragments of the disk, which looks to have once measured nearly 5 feet in diameter, all float close together, as if frozen in the instant after a catastrophic explosion caused the stone slab to shatter in all directions. Here and there, fragments of the disk are obviously missing. Between the glowing yellow shards of stone, tendrils of sickly yellow energy writhe and twist, appearing like some sort of invasive fungal infection or a diseased network of decaying arteries that seems to be growing from the ruined remains. Now and then, tendrils of this diseased energy flicker downward to the north, as if being drawn deeper underground by an unseen attractor.

This chamber was built centuries ago for one purpose: to hide and protect the *Third Seal* from agents of the Whispering Tyrant. While the Rending damaged the room and set into motion a slow decay in the *Third Seal*, Drazmorg's increasingly invasive experiments finished what the Rending started hundreds of years ago. When his tampering caused the *Third Seal* to explode, he took the bulk of the unholy energy's force and was immediately slain and animated as a powerful wight. Those of his followers who were assisting him were merely slain, but the residue of necromantic energy caused their scattered body parts to twitch and writhe.

See "Concluding the Chapter" on page 93 for information about the shattered *Third Seal* and what the PCs can learn by examining it.

Creatures: Drazmorg's exposure to the necromantic energy unleashed by the *Third Seal* did more than transform his body; it warped his mind and corrupted his soul. The blast spread downward over the ground like roiling, heavier-than-air gas, obliterating the lower half of Drazmorg's body and replacing it with shards of stone blown into him from the exploding seal. What remains below his waist are jagged shards of stone tangled among entrails, veins, and strips of bloody flesh. His upper torso remains humanoid, although his flesh is blackened and cracked, revealing raw red meat beneath. His eyes burned away, leaving tiny pinpoints of yellow light within his empty sockets.

Drazmorg moves via flight, the unholy energies of his infusion allowing him to move through air as easily as he used to walk across the ground. He hasn't yet taken full advantage of his new mobility, instead spending most of his time in this chamber offering prayers to the shattered seal, whispering promises of loyalty to Tar-Baphon and proselytizing his predictions for a global undead future to the otherwise empty room. Where once this chamber served as a vault for the *Third Seal*, it now serves as its grave, and from the shattered seal, Drazmorg preaches the wisdom of the Whispering Way. In time, the last of the *Third Seal's* leaking energies will fade, and Drazmorg will be released from its grip to emerge into the world above to spread the word that the first of the three seals has fallen.

Drazmorg greets the PCs as they arrive with an unpleasant whispering voice that still carries through the chamber. He offers them the chance to lay down their arms and lives and join the Whispering Way. PCs who comply are turned into undead minions. Any sense of disobedience against this offer drives the necromancer into a fury. He attacks, attempting to maintain range via flight so he can cast spells at the PCs below. If some of the PCs remain in the outer hall as the fight begins, he'll attempt to split the party by filling the entrance to the

room with a bone wall; otherwise, he uses this ability to give himself cover from ranged combatants after dropping to ground level. He fights until destroyed and doesn't pursue foes from this chamber.

DRAZMORG THE DAMNED

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE LE MEDIUM UNDEAD WIGHT

Male variant wight necromancer (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 332)

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven, Necril

Skills Academia Lore +17, Arcana +17, Crafting +15, Deception +13, Intimidation +15, Medicine +15, Occultism +17, Religion +13, Society +15, Stealth +15

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +6, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Items Drazmorg's Staff of All-Sight (page 115), *In the Shadows of Toil* (page 116)

AC 23; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +15, **Will** +17

HP 115, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyze, poison, unconscious

Final Spite ☞ As wight.

Speed fly 25 feet

Melee ✦ claw +15, **Damage** 2d6+4 plus drain life

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 25, attack +17; **4th** *clairvoyance*, *dispel magic*, *grim tendrils*; **3rd** *lightning bolt*, *mind reading*, *vampiric touch*; **2nd** *false life*, *mirror image*, *spectral hand*; **1st** *command*, *fear*, *ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips (4th)** *chill touch*, *light*, *mage hand*, *read aura*, *shield*

Drain Life (divine, necromancy) As wight, but DC 25.

Raise Bone Wall ✦✦ (divine, necromancy) **Frequency** once per day; **Requirements** Drazmorg is in the Lower Vault of Droskar's Crucible; **Effect** Drazmorg draws upon the necromantic energy that infuses the area and causes a tangled wall of bones to rise from the ground. The wall is 5 feet thick, 10 feet wide, and 10 feet tall; once created, it's permanent until Drazmorg uses this ability again, whereupon a previously created bone wall (such as the one at area G2) crumbles. The bone wall has AC 10, Hardness 10, and 25 Hit Points. It's immune to critical hits and precision damage, and it heals damage to itself at a rate of 2d6 Hit Points at the end of a round. Everything on each side of the wall has greater cover from creatures on the opposite side, and the wall can't be moved through. A destroyed section of the wall of bones can be moved through freely and no longer heals damage. A creature caught in a space when a bone wall is created must attempt a DC 25 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected, and the bone wall fails to form in any square occupied by that creature.

Success The creature is forced into an adjacent square of its choice as the bone wall forms in its previous space.

Failure As success, but the creature is also knocked prone.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature also takes 4d6 piercing and 4d6 bludgeoning damage from the force of being struck by the bone wall.

Wight Spawn (divine, necromancy) As wight.

Treasure: In addition to the unusual staff Drazmorg carries and (of course) his spellbook, once he's destroyed, the remaining power that dwelt in the shattered shards of the *Third Seal* concentrates in one small, knife-shaped fragment, transforming it into a glowing magical item: a *shard of the Third Seal* (page 117) that, among other things, could aid the PCs in escaping up the shaft to the Forsaken Tunnel on the second level of Droskar's Crucible.



CONCLUDING THE CHAPTER



Once the PCs destroy Drazmorg, a foul wind blows from his corpse and then dissipates; the lingering necromantic energy suffusing this area is gone. The glowing shards of the *Third Seal* clatter to the ground, and the necromantic energy that appeared to be draining into the floor seems to burrow out of sight (this energy was being siphoned into the *Crown of the Kobold King* in Droskar's Doom below; see Chapter 4 for details). A character who witnesses this phenomenon can attempt a DC 21 Arcana, Occultism, or Religion check to theorize something deeper underground is siphoning some of this necromantic energy away. All the undead created by Drazmorg's abuse of the *Third Seal* that wandered Darkmoon Vale above collapse. Those still undefeated in this dungeon remain active until individually defeated by the PCs, but without Drazmorg to direct them, they don't pose a threat beyond their immediate domains.

With Drazmorg's defeat, the PCs stop a radical threat to the region, but news of the broken *Third Seal* is ominous. The remainder of this adventure doesn't cover a journey to find and protect the *First* and *Second Seals*. If you want to develop an adventure based on this potential plot, consider consulting "Runeplague" (the third adventure of the Return of the Runelords Adventure Path) and the Tyrant's Grasp Adventure Path, where the fates of these two seals are revealed.

As word of the *Third Seal's* destruction spreads, representatives from the Five Kings Mountains arrive in the region to reclaim the site. These dwarves likely won't arrive until after the PCs have already finished *Crown*



DRAZMORG THE DAMNED

of the *Kobold King*, but once they do, they contact the PCs to interview them about their explorations in the crucible. These dwarves are less interested in seeking the *First* and *Second Seals* than they are in recovering a lost fragment of their history. Regardless of their goals, they express their gratitude for the aid the PCs provided in helping to recover this legacy. Once you complete *Crown of the Kobold King*, these dwarven archaeologists and pilgrims present the PCs with additional rewards for their work. Use this opportunity to give each PC a magic item of about 6th level in power that fits their themes, or gold and gemstones worth a total of 350 gp per PC. The dwarves might also serve as triggers for a series of new adventures of your design now that the PCs have attracted their attention.



PATHFINDER

CHAPTER 4

DROSKAR'S DOOM

BY NICOLAS LOGUE

PART 1: A BLOODSTAINED CROWN

While the upper levels of Droskar's Crucible once housed the Truescales, and the middle levels recently served as the redoubt of a sinister necromancer, the deepest level of the ancient dungeon has largely remained unclaimed. This level isn't as ancient as those crafted by the original dwarves, instead built by the cult of Droskar to serve as a sort of proving ground for prospective leaders. Any member of the cult of Droskar could make a bid for its rule, but they had to first earn Droskar's favor by navigating a gauntlet of chambers known as "Droskar's Doom." Of course, the original architect of this level and then-current leader of the cultists, Gristogar, did everything he could to build a gauntlet that none of his followers could ever best, thereby attempting to keep his position as ruler for his entire life.

No dwarf of Droskar ever completed Droskar's Doom, but recently, an unlikely visitor became the first to succeed: King Merlokrep, following the influence of his slowly awakening crown, has made it to Gristogar's forge where the crown was first created. Here, the Kobold King has begun the final steps of fully awakening his crown, and if he completes these rites, he'll rule more than just a single group of kobolds. He'll rule all of Darkmoon Vale!



DROSKAR'S DOOM



This deepest level of Droskar's Crucible can be reached by a lengthy flight of stairs leading down from area G2. These stairs descend nearly 300 feet to the chambers below, which were carved into stone near volcanic vents and underground lakes of magma.

Unless otherwise noted, the chambers of Droskar's Doom are unlit. Their plain, functional design lacks the elegance and style of the monastery's original architects. Ceilings average 8 feet high in passageways, rising to 12 feet in larger rooms unless otherwise specified in the text.

Note that while this chapter's encounters assume the PCs are 6th level, it's likely they haven't quite reached this level when they first enter Droskar's Doom unless you've continued to hand out experience points for roleplaying encounters. If the PCs have only just reached 5th level by this time, consider delaying their entrance to this dungeon level—perhaps by including a classic hindrance like a locked door whose key might be hidden on an upper level that the party skipped? Of course, you can also let the PCs press on into this level. The first few encounters they'll face will be more dangerous than expected, but if they're careful and take ample opportunities to rest and recover, they should make it to 6th level soon enough!

DROSKAR'S GLOOM

The influence of Droskar still pervades this dungeon, more so than anywhere else in Droskar's Crucible, and affects visitors to the dungeon if they aren't careful, manifesting in the form of a curse called Droskar's gloom. While Droskar's gloom can afflict anyone, dwarves run an additional risk. Each time a dwarf sleeps anywhere on this level, they're exposed to Droskar's gloom—only dwarves who already worship Droskar are exempt from this effect.

DROSKAR'S GLOOM

CURSE 6

CURSE ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL MENTAL

You grow increasingly glum and stoic, viewing frivolity with disdain and eventually forgetting how to smile or take joy in anything. Over time, you become obsessive about work, toiling away at menial tasks (especially crafting, masonry, or smithing).

Saving Throw DC 22; **Effect** Whenever you attempt to Earn Income or a Crafting check for any reason, you become obsessed with perfection to the point you hamper your chances of success. Roll the Earn Income or Crafting check twice and take the worst result. If you ever critically fail at a Crafting check or a check to Earn Income, you become fatigued. In addition, you suffer a -1 status penalty on all Charisma-based checks as your personality suffers under the effects of this curse. A dwarf who dies while under the effects of



Droskar's gloom must attempt a DC 5 flat check; on a failure, the dwarf rises as a forge spurned 1d4 rounds after death occurs.

H1. COWARD'S CORNER

TRIVIAL 6

The long, winding descent along the seemingly endless flight of stairs finally ends. The crumpled corpse of a small, withered kobold lies on the floor in the middle of the room, which features oddly-shaped alcoves at both sides.

Creatures: Of the kobolds King Merlokrep selected to accompany him into the deepest corners of Droskar's Crucible, not all were ultimately up to the task. One of the Dark Talons who survived the journey through the Upper and Lower Vault and the first few rooms of this level, Yurkyurk, abandoned the Kobold King and attempted to flee back upstairs, only to find that a "creepy wall of bones" had sealed the exit above. For the past several days, Yurkyurk has been cowering here, subsisting on what nourishment and moisture he can derive from bugs and creepy-crawlies on the walls. The kobold is fatigued from malnutrition, and if he doesn't find a source of food and water soon, he'll perish.

As soon as he notices the PCs, the desperate kobold tries to stay hidden in the shadows, but it's likely he'll be noticed nonetheless (if he isn't, he creeps along behind the PCs and attempts to steal food and water from them the first chance he gets). Once the PCs notice him, Yurkyurk drops to his knees and begs for water, food, and mercy from the "brave smooth-skin, smashy-killer heroes." He wants nothing more than to flee Droskar's Crucible entirely, and if the PCs agree to let him go after revealing that the bone wall is gone, the kobold flees at once.

Before letting him go, though, the PCs can ask him for information. Yurkyurk can confirm that King Merlokrep led a group of kobolds down here to avoid a confrontation with the PCs. The king claimed that his new magic crown was leading the way toward a source of power he could use to defeat the PCs and all their friends, and while it seemed like the magic advice from his crown (advice Yurkyurk never actually heard himself) gave good hints for navigating the dungeon chambers safely, the increasingly frightening foes and traps finally broke his resolve.

Yurkyurk warns the PCs that the "smoky nightmares" that lurk not far to the north like to jump out of the walls to scare you, that the "funny tasting orange water" in the room beyond can heal wounds but the "angry clear

DROSKAR'S CRUCIBLE

Level Five
ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET



water” is best left alone, and that he finally fled when the king led them into a maze of “hot lava and hotter worms” beyond that room. He also warns the PCs that if they confront the king, they’d better make sure they kill him dead, because if they don’t, he’ll for sure know Yurkyurk sold him out and hunt down the Dark Talon. If the PCs attack Yurkyurk, he fights to the death.

YURKYURK

CREATURE 2

Dark Talon kobold (page 59)

Initiative Perception +8

Reward: If the PCs spare the Dark Talon kobold and learn something about what lies ahead from him, grant them 80 XP.

H2. THE LAST CORRIDOR

MODERATE 6

The walls of this corridor are paved with rectangular stones that don't always fit together as flush as they would had a slightly more competent mason carved and placed them, yet they certainly appear to have done the job of keeping the roof up over the ages. Four alcoves are recessed in the walls, their edges ragged as the surrounding stonework doesn't quite line up. A single pile of ash tapered into a pyramid sits in each alcove. Further to the north, the hall ends at a large stone door with an inscription carved into its face.

The inscription on the massive stone door to area **H3** is written in Dwarven and reads as follows.

“The Ending comes as Droskar deems it—with a torrent of cleansing fire, burning bright enough to consume even our Lord himself. The Ending is the ultimate purpose of the Grim Father’s Dark Forge. He burns by his own hand, in a device of his own design. His smoking beard shall ring his gloomy face in Hell, his grim mouth set forever against oblivion. So shall he share our fate. Walk ye this Last Corridor and step into the Grim Father’s Doom, that those who endure to the end might lead us all!”

The Last Corridor is aptly named, a passageway to the Doom both literal and metaphorical. The worshippers of Droskar stepped beyond this place into Droskar’s Doom, seeking to prove themselves and return as kings. None ever did.

Creatures: The four dwarven zealots who constructed the walls of the Last Corridor were granted a fell boon by their abbot Gristogar: they were led into the alcoves along the wall and immolated by divine fire cast by their leader himself. The piles of ashes in each alcove are their mortal remains, and any attempt by a PC to disturb the ashes (by Searching them, for example) results in the

VISIONS FROM THE CROWN

Visions of the past from the *Crown of the Kobold King* have guided King Merlokrep’s passage through this dungeon level to the southeast wing in areas **H11–H18**, helping him to avoid traps and dangers and to pass the monstrous guardians uncontested. If the PCs look for evidence of the Kobold King, hints of the Truescale troupe’s journey through the area can be given out as rewards if they succeed at DC 25 Perception checks at your option.

ashes eerily reforming into their pyramid pile, as if by some unearthly wind.

While the mounds of ash are strange but harmless, the undead spirits of the dwarven architects are anything but. These four dwarves exist now as ashen guardians, and they step out of the wall at the backs of their alcoves to attack the PCs from behind as soon as anyone comes within 5 feet of the northern door. These shadowy undead appear in the shape of eyeless, bearded dwarves



YURKYURK

clad in ornate plated armor but are composed entirely of darkness and incorporeal ash. They function as shadows, but the damage they inflict with their shadow hands causes fire damage rather than negative damage.

ASHEN GUARDIANS (4)

CREATURE 4

Variant shadows (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 289)

Initiative Stealth +14

Melee ♦ shadow hand +15 (finesse, magical), **Damage** 2d6+3 fire

H3. THE LAST DRINK

LOW 6

The air in this obsidian chamber is surprisingly cool and refreshing. A dais at the center of the chamber contains two rectangular pools of water. The water in the eastern pool is crystal clear, but the pool to the west has a strange orange tint. A short, carved phrase adorns the wall to the north of the pools.

The words on the north wall are in Dwarven: “Let Droskar’s sheen guide your Last Drink, for beyond lies only toil.” These words provide a hint that the orange waters are the right waters to drink from—a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Religion check to Recall Knowledge knows that Droskar is often associated with the color orange (along with gray, meant to symbolize the glow and smoke from his forges).

A character who drinks from the orange pool finds that the waters taste faintly of smoke but are unexpectedly refreshing. A drink from this water restores 3d8 Hit Points, reduces the value of the drinker’s clumsy, enfeebled, or stupefied conditions by 1 each, and removes the fatigued condition. A character can only benefit from this drink once, for drinking a second time renders the symbolism of the “last drink” meaningless; each drink beyond the first instead exposes the drinker to Droskar’s gloom (page 96). If a PC examines the orange pool and succeeds a DC 22 check to Identify Magic, they understand the effects of the water fully.

Creature: The crystal-clear waters of the eastern pool might look more appetizing, but they’re stagnant and bitter. Worse, they’re the home of a dangerous subterranean predator—an id ooze. This mostly transparent creature prefers to float lazily atop the water, slowly soaking in the area’s ambient emotional energy in much the same way a plant derives sustenance from sunlight (a process that has kept it nourished for centuries), but it quickly rouses from its torpor to attack any creature that attempts to drink from the clear water. If no one does so, the id ooze finally takes notice of the PCs as they move into area **H4**, and it

slithers out of its pool to attack from behind. The id ooze fights to the death.

ID OOZE

CREATURE 7

Page 121

Initiative Stealth +17

H4. THE LAST CRUCIBLE

MODERATE 6

Stinging white-hot cinders and choking sulfurous fumes fill the air of this hellish passageway. Somewhere nearby, the slow grind of ancient and massive gears begins, a low thunder that slowly builds and sends ominous vibrations through the stone floor.

This relatively simple but dangerous maze and its accompanying trap were crafted to hasten the faithful to their scorching end—the first true test of the prospective new cult leader. A character makes their way through the maze to the cave entrance to area **H5** is greeted with a phrase carved into the floor in Dwarven: “And thus hast thou prepared within the Last Crucible, ready to step into the Last Forge.”

Every round that a creature starts its turn in this area while not holding its breath, it must attempt a DC 20 Fortitude saving throw. On a failure, the stinking, cinder-laced air of this maze causes the creature to become sickened 1 (or sickened 2 on a critical failure). Taking precautions, such as by placing a wet strip of cloth over the mouth and nose, affords a character a +4 circumstance bonus to this saving throw.

Hazard: This entire maze is one complex trap designed to ensnare and cook those who attempt to navigate its halls. Four elemental creatures complicate the situation: wormlike beasts called thoqqas that have spent the last several hundred years in hibernation. Note that the thoqqas don’t treat the room as difficult terrain since they slither like snakes, and being elemental creatures of fire, they aren’t impacted by the smoke in the air.

THE LAST CRUCIBLE

HAZARD 6

COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +15 (expert)

Description Magically hardened sheets of obsidian drop down over the room’s exits while the machinery within taps into wells of magma to begin spewing lava—and monsters—into the maze.

Disable Thievery DC 28 (expert) to disable the main pressure plate at area **H4a** and deactivate the trap entirely (this causes the obsidian walls to retract up into the ceiling as well), Thievery DC 25 (trained) to disable one of the three lava spouts, or Athletics DC 28 (trained) to Force Open a fallen obsidian wall

AC 22; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +11

Obsidian Wall Hardness 15; **Obsidian Wall HP** 58 (BT 29) to smash a 5-foot-square hole in the wall; **Spout Hardness** 13; **Spout HP** 20 (BT 10); **Immunities** critical hits, fire, object immunities, precision damage

Drop the Wall ➤ **Trigger** Four or more Small or larger creatures walk onto the pressure plate at area **H4a**; **Effect** A magically hardened sheet of obsidian drops down like a portcullis in the western and northern entrances to this room that lead to areas **H3** and **H5**, respectively. Any creatures standing in one of these squares takes 4d6+4 bludgeoning damage from the falling wall (DC 24 basic Reflex save) and then decides what side of the wall they want to be on. At the same moment, four thoqqas that have spent centuries in hibernation awaken and emerge from vents into area **H4b**. The trap then rolls initiative, as do the thoqqas.

Routine ➤➤➤ The trap loses 1 action per disabled spout each turn. On each action, a different spout located at one of the three areas marked **H4c** spews a gout of lava at the closest non-thoqqua target in its line of sight; these spouts use magical sensors that have darkvision and a Perception DC of 25. Originally, agents of the abbot would come through here after the trap was triggered, deactivate it, and clean out the hardened blobs of lava and dead bodies that remained, but the amount of time it would take for this trap to clog tunnels with cooled lava makes tracking that slow accretion over the course of this adventure unnecessary.

Ranged ➤ lava gout +17 (fire), **Damage** 4d8 fire; no multiple attack penalty

Reset The Last Crucible deactivates and resets 10 minutes after it has no target creatures (because the creatures either left area **H4** or died). Any thoqqas that still live sense the magma river at area **H6** and eventually make their way north to that area to swim away.

THOQQUAS (4)

CREATURE 2

Page 123

Initiative Perception +7

H5. THE LAST FORGE

MODERATE 6

This long, sprawling cavern curves sharply to the east at its northern end into a tunnel lit by an ominous orange glow. Curtains and braids of hundreds of black metal chains decorate the cavern walls between this curve and the southernmost entrance, while more chains, broken links, scraps of metal, and unprocessed chunks of ore lie scattered over the floor. A large forge and anvil stand in the northwestern portion of the cavern.

This dismal cave is the final official challenge to those who walk Droskar's Doom. The majority of the dwarves who attempted it during the height of the cult's activity ultimately met their fates here, for in those days, the bodies of dwarves who fell to the previous several rooms were eventually dragged to this chamber, where their souls were bound into chains by the creature that toils here to this day.

The forge and anvil at the north end of this room are similar in build to the one located in area **D19** (and like that forge, a nearby forge-spurned haunts this one), yet unlike that room, airflow in this chamber leaves the cave hot and stifling but breathable.

Creature: The sound of a hammer clanging against an anvil fills this area as long as the undead smiths who forever



SOUL SMITH

toil within remain active. The smiths are forge-spurned, and while they haven't had a fresh soul to bind into a *soul chain* for hundreds of years, they've still spent those centuries mindlessly forging, destroying, and rebuilding other chains, waiting for another chance to serve Droskar. If the PCs encountered the forge-spurned in area **D19**, a PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Crafting check can identify the almost mechanical precision of these chains as a sign of forge-spurned in the cavern head.

The forge-spurned still works tirelessly here, as he has for hundreds of years. Known in the days of the cult's power as the Soul Smith, this powerful forge-spurned is assisted by a clot of four dullard demons bound into his service by abbot Gristogar ages ago. These four dretches, as demons of sloth, hated when they were called upon by the Soul Smith to drag bodies back here for him to forge into *soul chains*, but the past several centuries have given the demons plenty of time to wallow in their favorite sin. When the PCs first attract the attention of the Soul Smith, he roars in outrage and orders the dretches to rise up, attack, and bring the bodies of the intruders to him for soul forging.

The Soul Smith continues to toil at his anvil near the northern portion of the cavern while the dretches fight—he only abandons his pointless drudgery to join the battle if a PC damages him or once two of the dretches are killed. At this point, he sighs and joins the battle. He and the dretches pursue PCs throughout this entire level if necessary and fight until destroyed.

SOUL SMITH

CREATURE 6

Elite forge-spurned (page 119, *Pathfinder Bestiary* 6)

Initiative Perception +13

DRETCHES (4)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 60

Initiative +0 flat check

Treasure: Not all those who attempted to traverse Droskar's Doom in the days of the cult hoped to win rulership of the Crucible. One of these dwarves was a woman named Azarim who heard rumors of the cult and infiltrated it in the hopes of taking it apart from within, only to fall victim to the cult in her final attempt. In her death, her soul fled into her rapier to avoid being imprisoned in the Soul Smith's *soul chain*, and over the centuries, she has bonded with the weapon. The result is an intelligent magic weapon named *Azarim*.

Azarim lies near the cavern's exit toward area **H6**, out of sight of the Soul Smith and kept safe for hundreds of years by her soul's presence within the blade. One of the Truescales attempted to pick up the blade when she passed through the area, only to gasp in shock and pain

as she touched the weapon and felt the strength sapped from her limbs.

Azarim longs to be free of this den of misery so that she can fight evil once more, but more than anything she hopes to complete the journey she began through Droskar's Crucible. She makes contact with a PC who picks her up using telepathy, begging to be carried through the dungeon and to be used to liberate the ancient dwarven site from Droskar's hold. News that hundreds of years have passed and that the cult is long gone surprises *Azarim*, but she adjusts quickly to the new reality. You can use *Azarim* to provide additional advice to the PCs or to fill in elements of the ancient history of Droskar's Crucible to the limits of her knowledge. *Azarim* prefers to be wielded by chaotic, free-spirited characters.

Azarim is detailed further on page 113.

H6. THE RIVER OF FIRE

The air in this cavern is hot and dry, both heated and lit by the same source: a slowly roiling river of magma that winds from north to south at the bottom of a thirty-foot-deep rift bisecting the middle of the cave. Crumbling pillars carved with the faces of stoic dwarven elders lay strewn about the area, of which only three on the west side of the chasm remain standing and supporting the roof twenty feet above.

The cult of Droskar chose this region to build the level due to its proximity to a fresh new underground river of magma, one they tapped into to empower the Final Crucible (area **H4**). When their digging broke through into the natural caves in areas **H5–H6**, the architects chose to leave the area as it was, incorporating the slowly flowing river of magma as an additional defense. In those earlier days, a magical drawbridge of stone extended from the edge of the rift to allow passage, but erosion and time have destroyed this device, leaving the cave even more treacherous to cross.

The river of fire presents a dangerous obstacle to the party but also symbolizes the transition from the proving grounds of the dungeon level to the eastern wing, which was originally built to serve as an inner sanctum for the cult's rulers. King Merlokrep, who becomes more a pawn of Droskar with every day spent wearing the magical crown, has now claimed the area.

Merlokrep and his minions navigated this obstacle with the use of *levitate* and *spider climb* spells to ferry individuals and supplies back and forth while clambering along the southern wall. This method will certainly work for the PCs, but you should let them come up with their own solutions. Characters can Climb the walls to the north and south of the chasm, as well as those of the chasm itself, with a DC 20 Athletics check. The rift itself

is 20 feet across, so it's also a DC 20 Athletics check to make a Long Jump over it.

The actual magma river below is only 10 feet across, but without any room to Stride, a Long Jump over the river from down below isn't possible. Complicating this is the astounding heat within the chasm—a character who ends their turn in this area takes 2d6 fire damage (DC 20 basic Fortitude save).

A character who falls into the rift can attempt a DC 20 Reflex save to land on the closest shore below, taking normal falling damage for the 30-foot drop, but on a critical failure, that creature lands in the magma. While this allows the falling character to treat the fall as if they were falling 20 feet shorter when determining falling damage, they also take 20d6 fire damage (DC 25 basic Reflex save) upon landing in the magma, and then again on every round they start their turn in the river.

The pillars on the west side of the chasm are crumbling at the base, and with a bit of work, they can be forced over, either by doing enough damage to them to cause them to topple (Hardness 7, HP 28 [BT 14]), or by pushing them over with a successful DC 25 Athletics check (this is an Interact action). Once a pillar topples, attempt a DC 11 flat check—on a success, it lands across the chasm and forms a bridge that the PCs can cross by succeeding at a DC 10 Athletics check, but on a failure, it topples into the chasm below. Characters can use the crumbled chunks of pillar to hop across the magma by clambering down into the pit but will still take fire damage from the heat.

Other solutions can work as well—use the above as guidelines for determining the chance of success for the PCs in navigating this treacherous chamber.

Reward: Grant the PCs 40 XP the first time they successfully navigate this room.

H7. SHRINE OF DROSKAR

LOW 6

This austere obsidian chamber contains a large, raised altar that resembles an immense obsidian anvil. At the center of the anvil, a single flame flickers unnaturally as if a wind teases it, though the air here is deathly still.

This simple shrine at the entrance to the cult's inner sanctum was intended as the first place of worship for any dwarf who made it through Droskar's Doom—not that any of them ever actually survived to reach this place.

Creature: The flickering flame on the anvil quickly grows into a whirling torrent of fire as soon as any character approaches within 20 feet of it, quickly disgorging a salamander armed with a massive hammer. This creature, conjured from Droskar's realm, swiftly slithers into position before the entrance to area H8 to the south, demanding in Common that the intruders bow in submission to Droskar's judgment. The salamander Strikes anyone it suspects of not being a worshipper of Droskar but won't attack those it believes are his agents—including any character who can trick the salamander with Lies or a disguise. The salamander can sense those who truly worship Droskar but also those who will likely soon convert to his cause—it won't attack anyone who's currently cursed by a *soul chain* or suffering from Droskar's Gloom except in self-defense.

SALAMANDER

CREATURE 7

Pathfinder Bestiary 148

Initiative Perception +15

Items +1 maul

Melee ♦ maul +18 (shove), **Damage** 2d12+7 bludgeoning

H8. CHARNEL WORKSHOP

LOW 6

This chamber holds two stone tables, their dark-stained slabs fitted with leather straps and jagged blades mounted on articulated arms.

Those who attempted to run the Doom in a bid to seize rulership of the cult weren't the only worshippers



DISMEMBERMENT TABLE

of Droskar who came to this dungeon. Ironically, those cultists who were found lacking or who volunteered to be sacrificed were escorted deeper into this dungeon than any prospective new leader would ever see. Of course, none ever made it back out, as the sadistic cult leaders brought them here to prepare them for sacrifice. The tables in this room were used to dismember cultists, removing their ability to toil by removing hands or arms and their ability to flee by removing feet or legs, all while preserving their lives for eventual sacrifice to Droskar.

Creatures: The dwarven suffering experienced in this room festered tangibly after the cult met its end. The agonized spiritual echoes infused the very objects of their torment, transforming the two dismembering tables into animated objects. The tables fear the presence of the chosen of Droskar and remained quiet when King Merlokrep passed through after sensing the power exuded from his crown. A character who suffers from Droskar's gloom doesn't exude quite so much power but does gain a +2 circumstance bonus to their AC against attacks made by the animated tables. Otherwise, the haunted tables attack intruders immediately, but they don't pursue them from this chamber. When they animate, the tables move with an eerie flexibility, and now and then, the faint images of screaming dwarven faces seem almost to push up from inside the tables' surfaces, as if they were thin strips of cloth with a trapped dwarf pressing against it from the other side.

DISMEMBERMENT TABLE

CREATURE 5

N **MEDIUM** **CONSTRUCT** **MINDLESS**

Variant animated object (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 20)

Perception +11; darkvision

Skills Athletics +13

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -5

AC 22 (18 when broken); construct armor; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +11, **Will** +9

HP 56; **Hardness** 8; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Weakness** positive 8

Construct Armor As animated object, but reduced to AC 18 when broken.

Haunted The dismemberment table is powered by unquiet spirits, and it takes damage from positive energy as if it were undead. Positive energy bypasses the table's hardness.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ blade +14 (magical), **Damage** 2d8+7 slashing

Melee ♦ strap +14, **Damage** 2d4+7 bludgeoning plus Grab

Disabling Strike ♦ The dismemberment table attempts a blade Strike on a single target that it has grabbed or restrained. If this Strike hits, the blade cuts deep into

one of the target's limbs. The target must attempt a DC 22 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The creature suffers no additional effect.

Success The creature takes 1d6 persistent bleed damage.

Failure The creature takes 2d6 persistent bleed damage and is clumsy 1. This clumsy condition ends once the creature is restored to full Hit Points.

Critical Failure As failure, but clumsy 2.

H9. PIT OF THE SINNERS

LOW 6

This rough-hewn stone chamber features a large, oval pit against the western wall, although the pit's depth is difficult to discern with the layer of dwarven skeletons that fill it to within three feet of its edge. What appear to be two dead kobolds lie near the northern wall.

The pit contains dozens of skeletal dwarves, each dismembered and then sacrificed to Droskar via a crushing blow to the front of the skull. The cult disposed of the bodies here to deny them the honor of proper entombment.

Creatures: This chamber is haunted by a pair of poltergeists formed from an amalgamation of shattered spirits and lingering souls denied an honorable burial. The two poltergeists attack all intruders, including Merlokrep and his contingent of kobolds (who made it through the room with minimal losses, apart from the two Dark Talons who "distracted" the poltergeists long enough for the rest of the kobolds to flee to area H10). The poltergeists use bones drawn from the pit for ranged attacks and telekinetic storms, but they don't pursue foes from this room.

POLTERGEISTS (2)

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Bestiary 264

Initiative Stealth +14

H10. DEMESNE OF THE FAITHLESS MODERATE 6

This putrid chamber reeks of decay and filth. Against the far wall, an obsidian altar is strewn with mangled offerings in the form of three broken but relatively fresh kobold corpses.

Creatures: Once a shrine devoted to Droskar, this room is now the horrific lair of Kieragan Skross, an unfaithful heretic who spurned Droskar's favor in the cult's final days. Once a tall, handsome dwarf, Kieragan is now a twisted, wretched thing animated after death as a herexen—an ex-cleric whose final reward for blasphemy is undeath. Today, the undead blasphemer regards himself as the true heir of Droskar's Crucible, and he takes great satisfaction in the schadenfreude

of continuing an existence, even if that “life” is one of undeath, when the rest of the cult perished long ago.

Kieragan's memories of the cult and his previous life are warped and twisted, as much fabrication as truth. Most of his time over the past several centuries has been spent in motionless contemplation and self-congratulatory imaginings as the true heir of the Crucible, indulging in plans for a new era to such an extent that the dwarf lost track of time for ages.

King Merlokrep's arrival roused the herexen from his torpor, but by the time he fully returned to the present, the wary kobolds had fled deeper into the complex, leaving Kieragan unsure why he's awake. In the span of a few more years without disturbance, he'll likely return to his eerie hibernation, but the PCs' arrival provides ample distraction. Kieragan greets them as if he were the temple's high priest, in his blasphemy now believing himself to be Droskar in the flesh. He demands the PCs report on the state of the world above, then attempts to convince them to carry word of his return to any who would listen, and to slaughter those who would resist. It should be only a matter of time before Kieragan interprets a word or reaction from a PC as insubordination and flies into a furious frenzy, but until then, canny PCs can use him to learn more about the site's history at your discretion.

Once enraged, Kieragan fights until destroyed, pursuing the PCs relentlessly until either he or they are no more.

commanding lash (Core Rulebook 390), *touch of obedience* (Core Rulebook 398)

Heretic's Smite (divine, necromancy) As herexen, but 2d6 evil damage.

H11. MERLOKREP'S DOMAIN MODERATE 6

The western wall of this room presents a carving of a massive, glowering dwarf toiling away at an immense forge. Closer inspection shows the dwarven smith is smashing a screaming smaller figure with his hammer, as if either forging or destroying a dwarven king instead of a metal tool. The artistry of the carving appears almost amateurish in its quality, yet the depiction is unsettling. Several slabs of stone shaped like beds line the eastern wall of this room.

This room once served as a barracks for Gristogar's chosen bodyguards. The slabs to the east are indeed

KIERAGAN SKROSS

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM UNDEAD

Greater herexen (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 134)

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven, Necril

Skills Athletics +18, Deception +16, Intimidation +18, Religion +16

Str +6, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

Items +1 *striking returning light hammer*, defiled religious symbol of Droskar

AC 26; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +14, **Will** +16

HP 135, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Final Blasphemy (divine, necromancy, negative) As herexen, but explodes with the effects of a 3-action 4th-level *harm* spell (DC 26).

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *light hammer* +19 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+9 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ *light hammer* +15 (agile, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 2d6+9 bludgeoning

Divine Prepared Spells DC 26, attack +18; **4th** *harm* (×4)

Cleric Domain Spells 2 Focus Points, DC 20; **4th**



KIERAGAN SKROSS

ancient dwarven beds, built to last rather than to provide comfort.

With a successful DC 20 Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a character recognizes the carving on the west wall as a depiction of Droskar forging Torag himself, taken from one of several blasphemous parables among the faithful of Droskar that present an alternate version of the foundation of the pantheon of dwarven deities.

Creatures: When Merlokrep fled to this depth, he abandoned most of his allies, including his advisor Jekkajak and his consort Vreggma, trusting the whispers of his crown that he needed only “fodder” to aid him in his journey below to gain more power. Beyond a steadily dwindling number of Dark Talons, the only kobold of note Merlokrep brought with him was his “slurk catcher” Narlynark.

As a druid, Narlynark’s skills go well beyond serving as the Truescales’ primary catcher and tamer of slurks, but it was the kobold’s slavish, almost embarrassing devotion to Merlokrep that convinced the king to bring the druid along. In Narlynark, there was no hint of Jekkajak’s split devotion between her king and her faith, or any indication of Vreggma’s disinterest in accepting his offers of becoming a queen. Quite the opposite: Narlynark has always

had nothing but fawning praise for Merlokrep—a defense mechanism he developed over the course of serving several different kobold kings in his long life and learning that obedience to the fickle person in power is the safest way to stay alive.

Of course, after seeing the dangers King Merlokrep exposed him and the other Dark Talons to on their fraught journey below, Narlynark has grown to doubt the wisdom of fawning over the Kobold King. He knows that he would never survive a return trip up to the surface alone and has been plotting an escape on bat back down into the Darklands, theorizing that riding a giant bat will keep him away from the monsters. All he needs to put his escape plan in motion is to build up the bravery—and to finish training the giant bats as mounts.

The first time the PCs arrive here, they interrupt a conversation between Narlynark and four Dark Talon guards. If the PCs are sneaky and understand Draconic, eavesdropping reveals that Narlynark is attempting to convince at least one of the Dark Talons to “test ride” one of the giant bats, promising an exciting and life-changing experience. The Dark Talons, of course, worry that the “life-changing” promised is in fact death, since the last few times Narlynark convinced a Dark Talon to try riding a giant bat, things didn’t end well for that kobold.

Once the group notices the PCs, all chatter about bat riding turns to shrieks of indignant rage at the “clumsy big heads” invading their territory. The Dark Talons engage the PCs in melee while Narlynark hangs back to blast them with his magic. While the Dark Talons fight to the death, Narlynark doesn’t—if two of the Dark Talons are slain, or if he’s reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points himself, Narlynark flees to area H13 to mount a giant bat and then moves on to area H15 to warn the Kobold King... and to watch for a chance to flee south into the Darklands if the opportunity presents itself.



NARLYNARK

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE NE SMALL HUMANOID KOBOLD

Male kobold druid (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 212)

Perception +13, darkvision

Languages Common, Draconic, Undercommon

Skills Acrobatics +12, Deception +11, Nature +13, Stealth +12, Survival +13

Str +0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Items sickle, leather armor, primal focus (wand of spider climb made from a giant spider’s foot)

AC 22; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +10, **Wis** +13

HP 75; **Resistances** electricity 5, poison 5

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ sickle +12 (agile, finesse, trip), **Damage** 1d4+2 slashing

Primal Prepared Spells DC 22, attack +14; **3rd** *fireball*, *lightning bolt*; **2nd** *burning hands*, *create food*, *heal*; **1st** *create water*, *heal*, *spider sting*; **Cantrips (3rd)** *acid splash*, *electric arc*, *produce flame*, *ray of frost*

Wild Retreat ♦♦♦ (move, primal, transmutation)

Frequency once per hour; **Requirements** Narlynark is adjacent to at least one enemy; **Effect** Narlynark shrieks in terror, a sound that quickly transitions from a kobold cry to the shrill cry of a bird. A pair of feathery wings grows from his back and his feet turn into bird talons. As he leaps into the air to flee, his talons lash out—one adjacent enemy of Narlynark's choice takes 3d6+6 slashing damage (DC 22 basic Reflex save). Narlynark can then fly up to 35 feet away. He must end his movement in a space that isn't adjacent to any enemies, and if he doesn't end the movement on the ground, he falls to the ground as his wings vanish and his feet return to normal.

DARK TALON KOBOLDS (4)

CREATURE 2

Page 59

Initiative Perception +8

H12. HAUNTED PRISON

LOW 6

This cramped passageway reeks of decay. Along either side of the tunnel are crudely hewn cells with sturdy iron-barred doors, but the foul smell obviously comes from the two dead kobolds on the floor near the westernmost cell door. Further beyond, an ancient dwarven skeleton lies slumped against the far wall of the westernmost cell, its bony hands still clutching something shiny to its chest.

The iron-barred doors are all unlocked, but their ancient hinges mean that opening them to enter one of the cells beyond requires a character to succeed at a DC 15 Athletics check to Force Open a door.

Creatures: Cultists who found themselves judged as heretics or failures ended up in these cells, but as the numbers of cultists dwindled, one final insubordinate cultist named Klavniir was left imprisoned here and forgotten. This doomed soul died of thirst in the westernmost cell not long before Gristogar himself met his end in his quarters several levels above (area **D10**). Klavniir rose from death as a specter, only to find undeath held more starvation for the next several centuries. Bound to the site of its death much in the same way as a ghost, this specter spent most of its undead existence in the throes of painful starvation, finally escaping from that condition when a pair of Dark Talon kobolds wandered in here in search of treasure. The specter slaughtered them quickly in desperation before realizing it should have kept at least one of them alive to feed off of. As the days

pass, it grows increasingly worried that its next 800 years of unlifeline will be a return to starvation, as its haunting howls meant to lure more prey into the chamber have had largely the opposite effect on the kobolds, who now avoid this prison entirely.

Upon noticing the PCs, the specter of Klavniir begs them to approach, spectral arms reaching through the bars in supplication. Of course, Klavniir attacks any PC foolish enough to do. It hopes to transform at least one PC into a spectral thrall; if successful, it orders that PC to remain here and protect it. Eventually, as is the fate of all spectral thralls, this unfortunate will be slain.

Once combat begins, the specter can emerge from its cell to continue to fight, but it remains bound to the site of its death and can't pursue foes out of this area.

KLAVNIIR

CREATURE 7

Specter (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 248)

Initiative Perception +15

Treasure: The shiny object clutched to Klavniir's bony chest is a mithral chunk worth 500 gp—a bit of wealth Gristogar allowed Klavniir to keep in his cell, knowing full well that no amount of wealth would save him.

H13. HALL OF THE TRUESCALES

LOW 6

This long, arched hall is filled with short-legged stone tables sized to host a dwarven feast. The entire area appears in disarray. One of the tables is strewn with half-eaten and unpleasantly large cave insects and other vermin, and another is broken in half. The floor is littered with tankards and iron platters splattered with raw meat and sweaty-looking fungi. The ceiling rises to a lofty thirty feet and is crisscrossed with stone support arches.

Creatures: Cult leadership took their meals and socialized here, and this hall has served King Merlokrep and his kobolds in the same way. While they generally rely upon Narlynark's ability to create food and water, the kobolds have taken to augmenting those bland meals with creepy-crawlies and fungi harvested from the Darklands shaft (area **H17**), leaving behind uneaten portions in a growing display of filth.

There are no kobolds present in this room when the PCs arrive (unless some fled here from a previous fight), but the room is hardly vacant. When the Truescales first got here, they encountered a pair of unusually large and frightening albino bats—creatures that Narlynark placated enough so that the bats now tentatively regard the kobolds as allies. Now and then, a bat might lash out at a Dark Talon, but so far, no kobold has been killed and eaten by one, a metric that, to the Truescales, indicates a solid friendship in the making.

The two albino giant bats originally used area **H16** as a roost, but since the kobolds arrived, Narlynark has lured them in here with food and soothing words. Ever since, he's been working at training the giant bats to serve as kobold mounts. That work has gone slowly, but at least the bats no longer snap at kobolds as frequently. The giant bats aren't nearly so patient with the PCs when they arrive, and the bats attack at once, dropping down from the stone arches above. Cornered as they are at this point, the giant bats fight to the death unless the PCs think to open doors, in which case a giant bat reduced to 15 or fewer Hit Points flees as best it can.

ALBINO GIANT BATS (2)

CREATURE 5

N **LARGE** **ANIMAL**

Variant giant bat (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 39)

Perception +15; echolocation (precise) 40 feet, low-light vision

Skills Acrobatics +12, Athletics +12, Stealth +12

Str +5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** -4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** -2

Echolocation As giant bat.

AC 22; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +12, **Wis** +11

HP 72

Wing Thrash As giant bat.

Speed 15 feet, fly 30 feet

Melee fangs +14, **Damage** 2d8+7 slashing

Melee wing +14 (agile), **Damage** 2d4+7 piercing

H14. STATUARY OF THE OLD KINGS

Eight bulky dwarven statues loom along this chamber's walls, lit by pulsing magical flames of white and blue that dance hypnotically in brass braziers. A short stone plinth sits at the base of each statue. Objects sit on seven of the eight plinths.

The statues adorning these walls were carved by the past abbots of Droskar who ruled in the decades after the Rending. Each time a previous abbot died, the new abbot would personally craft a memorial for their predecessor. The combination of lack of talent and artistry and traditions of disdain for those who came before infuses the stonework of these statues, leaving them looking crude, amateurish, unfinished, or all three. As more abbots passed away, the older statues here were reworked to replace even older abbots, further degrading the stonework's ancestry.

The plinths each displayed that abbot's greatest work, although in most cases, these worshippers of Droskar excelled at the faith's tendency to never quite finish what they started, and to go about the work with drudgery and toil.

The pulsing flames that light this room are *continual flames* cast ages ago.

Treasure: Most of the objects sitting on plinths are incomplete, but they're still worth a small amount of coin. "Unfinished" objects here function as if they're broken but can be completed by the proper resources and time needed to Repair them. Among the objects are two unfinished low-grade cold iron light hammers, an unfinished low-grade silver light hammer, an unfinished standard-grade cold iron shield, an unfinished low-grade cold iron breastplate, and an unfinished gold and silver circlet worth 85 gp. Only two of the plinths contain items that are actually complete: a *+1 striking ghost touch cold iron light hammer* and a *lesser sturdy shield*.

H15. GRISTOGAR'S FORGE

SEVERE 6

The southern portion of this immense chamber features twin rows of stone pews, all facing toward a wide northern extension of the room where a stone lectern sits before a massive forge, as if this hall was devoted to the very idea of toil as faith. Carvings on the walls depict dwarves working under back-breaking labor of all types. The faint scent of burnt flesh lingers in the room, likely coming from the scorched body parts that are barely visible within the northern forge's flames, which flicker and glow with a strange, unnatural yellow light. All these aspects combine to fill the very air of this room with an oppressive feeling.

The lingering sensation of oppression in this room is a faint echo of the magic that once worked here. This magic instilled real feelings of exhaustion and fatigue in the minds and bodies of the faithful for them to struggle against while paying attention to the cult's leader. Unaffected by this malaise, the leader preached from the pulpit for hours at a time, always ready to break their lecture to punish any dwarf nodding off or otherwise faltering in their concentration.

Creatures: The *Crown of the Kobold King* compelled King Merlokrep to travel to this chamber, for the magic item was first constructed in this forge. Here, the rituals King Merlokrep needs to fully awaken the crown's power can be completed with ease, although he realized that he has come up short on a key ingredient—the sacrifices. The burned body parts in the forge are the remains of animals and beasts harvested from the nearby Darklands, but without a sapient enemy of his people to sacrifice, King Merlokrep can't finish awakening the *Crown*.

In addition to any kobolds who fled earlier encounters and might have ended up here, King Merlokrep is attended by two of his current favorite Dark Talon guards as well as an inky black deep-dwelling giant stag beetle the group found on their first exploratory trip down the shaft in area **H17**. The giant beetle, whom Merlokrep has

named Vreggma after the consort he suspects he'll never see again, has remained a loyal pet of the Kobold King ever since he fed the beetle an insubordinate Dark Talon.

King Merlokrep is a physical paragon of kobolds, and his imposing powerhouse frame belies the usual assumptions about his people. Yet in his heart, there will always remain a shard of cowardice. His one good eye peers from his skull with a fierce aspect, smoldering with rage at the party's intrusion. Merlokrep's skill at arms is unparalleled among the Truescales, and he wields his magic axe *Man-Feller* in an impressive display. A gold nose ring pierces his regal snout, and carvings and jewels adorn his horns. He wears a bejeweled skull-themed eye patch over his ruined eye, but none of his gear compares to the *Crown* itself. This magnificent headgear features blood-dripping metal spikes arrayed around a gold band, but Merlokrep's addition of a smaller kobold's skull strapped to the top of the crown itself transforms the look into a seamless fusion of menace and unintentional comedy. The crown glows with a hideous yellow light; a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Arcana, Occult, or Religion check to Recall Knowledge realizes it has absorbed additional energy from the *Third Seal* above.

The arrival of the PCs—the very intruders who forced him to begin his flight down into these depths—gives him the final chance to finish his ritual, though even now King Merlokrep cringes inwardly at the prospect of clashing against the heroes. Before a fight begins, he imperiously gives the PCs one

final chance to bend the knee and lay down their arms, and if the PCs do so Merlokrep seems surprised only for a moment before ordering his Dark Talons to confiscate their gear and bind them for imminent sacrifice. If you feel like the PCs need any final closure to the adventure, or have missed out on a key plot element (such as the fact that Merlokrep has been following the crown's whispered advice, or that he plans to rule Darkmoon Vale once he fully awakens his crown), feel free to have the Kobold King reveal these secrets with the classic “taunting villain speech” trope. However, the Kobold King won't delay the inevitable too long and soon enough orders the attack.

King Merlokrep fights to the death, but if the PCs capture him alive and take the crown from his head, he quickly reveals his pathetic true colors and begs for mercy. Whether or not the Kobold King can truly atone for his cruelties is left to you and your players to decide!

KING MERLOKREP

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE LE SMALL HUMANOID KOBOLD

Male kobold king (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 212)

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages Common, Draconic

Skills Acrobatics +18, Arcana +16, Athletics +16, Craft +14 (+16 traps), Intimidation +20, Mining Lore +14, Stealth +18

Str +4, **Dex** +6, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +6

Items *Crown of the Kobold King*, *Man-Feller* (page 116), gold horn bangles worth 12 gp, 2 gold lip rings (worth 5 gp each) oversized red and gold satin



KING MERLOKREP

cloak with a crude painting of a gold dragon on the back (worth 10 gp)

AC 26; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +18, **Will** +16
HP 140

Rise from Death (aura, divine, necromancy) If King Merlokrep is slain, the *Crown of the Kobold King* glows brighter with an awful yellow radiance; this light slithers down inside the dead kobold's flesh, emanating from within as his body begins to twitch and writhe. If the *Crown* is allowed to remain on his head for 3 rounds, King Merlokrep rises from death as an undead Kobold King—this restores him to full hit points and grants him the Undead trait (along with negative healing and susceptibility to positive energy). Once the undead king is defeated, he remains destroyed—the absorbed energy of the *Third Seal* allows him to Rise from Death only once. If the *Crown* is removed before 3 rounds pass, the light winks out, and the energy absorbed by the *Third Seal* dissipates harmlessly.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *battle axe* +19 (sweep), **Damage** 2d8+7 slashing
Arcane Spontaneous Spells DC 26 (DC 27 with emotion spells), **attack** +18; **4th** *confusion*^E, *phantasmal killer*^E, *weapon storm*; **3rd** *fireball*^S, *levitate*, *paralyze*; **2nd** *dispel magic*^S, *hideous laughter*^E, *mirror image*; **1st** *fear*^E, *feather fall*, *magic missile*^S; **Cantrips (4th)** *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *electric arc*, *shield*

^SSignature spell; ^Eemotion spell

Imperious Retreat ♦♦ (manipulate, move) **Requirements** King Merlokrep is adjacent to at least one enemy; **Effect** King Merlokrep whips his fabulous satin cloak into the face of an adjacent creature and attempts an Intimidation check against that creature's Will DC. On a success, the creature is humiliated and distracted by the act and is flat-footed until the end of King Merlokrep's next turn. King Merlokrep then Strides up to his Speed and gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against reactions triggered by this movement. He must end this movement in a space that isn't adjacent to any enemy.

Signature Spells King Merlokrep can cast any of his signature spells (indicated on his list of spontaneous spells above with an ^S) as heightened versions freely.

Sneak Attack King Merlokrep deals an additional 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

DARK TALONS (2)

Page 59

Initiative Perception +8

"VREGGMA"

Giant stag beetle (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 41)

Initiative Perception +10

CREATURE 2

CREATURE 4

H16. MERLOKREP'S TREASURY

Whatever purpose this chamber might have once served, today it seems to be an impromptu treasury of sorts. A scattered heap of bones, coins, baubles, and jewels sits in a pile near the eastern wall.

Treasure: This chamber contains the sum total of the Kobold King's wealth and dearest treasures: 35 gp, 84 sp, 194 cp, a bulldog's skull, three rat skulls dipped in gold (worth 25 gp each), three fire opals worth 10 gp each, a small agate worth 20 gp, a garnet worth 50 gp, a lovely statuette of a red dragon eating a horse worth 100 gp, a filthy food-stained *greater dancing scarf* that appears to have been used many times as a napkin, a pointy darkwood *wand of wall of thorns* Merlokrep uses as a tooth pick, and a *greater rope of climbing* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 262) that has proved invaluable to the kobolds in recent days.

H17. DARKLANDS DESCENT

The hallway ends at what looks to be a bottomless pit, its inky blackness plunging away into the gulf of the world below. Narrow steps and handholds have been carved into the walls leading up to the ceiling, where recent work appears to have been undertaken to extend the pit upward toward the surface.

This shaft isn't truly bottomless, but it does drop away nearly 300 feet into a network of Darklands tunnels below. The kobolds have been using this access to the Darklands to augment their food and recruit bestial allies, but King Merlokrep's eventual goal was to dig a tunnel upward to create a "secret entrance" for his kobold armies to more easily raid the surface world. So far, his minions have only made it about 5 feet upward.

The Darklands shaft's walls can be Climbed by a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Athletics check, but the true extent of what lies deep below goes beyond the scope of this adventure.

CONCLUDING THE CHAPTER

With the defeat of King Merlokrep, the looming threat posed by the Kobold King comes to an end. Furthermore, no additional chambers await exploration in Droskar's Crucible; it's only a matter of time before dwarven archaeologists from the Five Kings Mountains learn of the PCs' adventures and come to investigate the possibility of

reopening the site and reconsecrating it to Torag's faith. See the end of Chapter 3 for more details on how these dwarves might reward the PCs for their work.

The leaders of Falcon's Hollow aren't quite as likely to see a need to reward the PCs, but the fame of the region's most successful recent adventurers quickly earns the party a grudging respect from the town's insular and foul-tempered government. Given time, the PCs could work toward better living conditions in Falcon's Hollow, but attempts to do so will likely be resisted by the status quo, particularly the old guard of the Lumber Consortium. It might be best at this point for the party to seek further fame elsewhere in the world, but if PCs in the group count Falcon's Hollow as their home, the goal to redeem and rebuild the settlement into something to be proud of could take many more months or years of work that might prove as deadly and fraught with peril as any dungeon delve.

The *Crown of the Kobold King* also represents a potential continuation of the plot, for if the PCs do anything other than destroy it, the item's latent need to adorn the brow of a tyrant could compel a new owner to take up the mantle. Alternately, word could reach surviving cultists of Droskar who could infiltrate Falcon's Hollow under the guise of merchants or travelers when, in fact, they seek to liberate and rebuild the *Crown of Toil* and use it in a bid to stage a deadly coup in the Five Kings Mountains. Be it a scramble to track down the stolen crown and its cultist protectors

or a political mission to the dwarven kingdom to warn them of upcoming peril, the legacy of the *Crown of the Kobold King* need not die with Merlokrep, first—and likely last—of his name.

Speaking of Merlokrep, simply because he has been slain doesn't mean his time as a villain must end. At your option, Merlokrep can return to seek revenge against the PCs, rising as an undead monstrosity with a ghostly crown atop his head! Whether the undead kobold king returns to Droskar's Crucible to attempt to retake his home or sets up a domain in an entirely new ruin of your design is up to you. Exactly how powerful the new undead Merlokrep is should depend on your PCs' levels, of course, but he should be created as a creature that's at least 1 or 2 levels higher than the party's level. If his body remains intact, he can come back as a powerful wight—perhaps a cairn wight (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 292) who has advanced in power that he now wields a brand new weapon in place of *Manfeller*. If the PCs destroyed Merlokrep's remains, he can still come back as a dread wraith (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 298) or even a ghost.

The PCs likely won't leave the *Crown of Toil* in reach of an undead Merlokrep to claim, so one of the kobold king's new goals might be an attempt to reclaim his crown. Until then, the force of his stubborn will results in a ghostly image of his crown appearing on his head—regardless of whether he comes back as a corporeal or incorporeal monster. This ghost crown could even be the source of his undead power and can possess eerie abilities of its own!



UNDEAD KOBOLD KING



ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

Numerous unusual and memorable magical treasures await discovery in *Crown of the Kobold King*.

AZARIM

UNIQUE CG DIVINE EVOCATION INTELLIGENT

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

Perception +12; darkvision 30 feet, hearing 30 feet (imprecise)

Communication telepathy (Celestial, Common, Dwarven, Undercommon)

Skills Alcohol Lore +13, Deception +15, Diplomacy +13, Religion +13, Society +15

Int +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Will +15

In life, the dwarven rogue Azarim was always something of an outsider among her people for her fast and loose relationship with dwarven tradition. However, she still harbored in her heart a fierce pride in what dwarves had accomplished. She had long fought against the cult of Droskar, seeing it as emblematic of all the worst parts of dwarven culture.

By the time she infiltrated Droskar's Crucible in 4065 AR, the cult was already in decline. She knew portions of Droskar's Crucible were built by the worshippers of Torag who preceded the cult and that something of great power had been locked away in the Lower Vault, but not what that object was. If she could gain control over the cult, she could simultaneously use them to open the Lower Vault and convince them to set aside their worship of Droskar—if not for her own patron, Cayden Cailean, then any other faith with a more positive leaning.

Unfortunately, her attempt to seize control of the cult using their own traditions against them backfired when she succumbed to the Soul Smith. Unlike the others who were slain by the Soul Smith, Azarim's soul managed to somewhat escape being bound into the Soul Smith's *soul chain* by instead seeking shelter in her own magic rapier. Frustrated at the fact her soul slipped away but ignorant of where that soul fled to, the Soul Smith returned to his tasks and soon forgot about Azarim—she was, to the undead dwarf, just another in a long line of failures.

Today, Azarim is an intelligent +1 *striking shifting rapier*. The rapier has been waiting patiently for centuries for a new, like-minded ally to take her up in arms against her foes.

ITEM 7

While she prefers to exist in the form of a rapier, she can use one of her actions to activate her shifting rune to take the shape of another weapon as needed.

While Azarim prefers to be wielded by chaotic good characters, particularly those who worship Cayden Cailean, she's open-minded and eager to work with any wielder who seeks to oppose corrupting or toxic traditions in society, particularly those who work against the influence of the cult of Droskar. To wielders she doesn't approve of, she works to convince them to either change their ways or to hand her over to someone who she can work with, resorting to her ability to induce weakness in her carrier as needed when simply having them discard her is the only option left.

Azarim deals an additional 1d6 chaotic damage to worshippers of Droskar, to creatures allied with Droskar's faith, and to those who are under the influence of Droskar's faith—which includes the Kobold King Merlokrep for as long as he continues to wear his crown as well as most of the intelligent inhabitants of the deeper levels of Droskar's Crucible.

Full rules for intelligent items appear on pages 88–89 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*.

Activate ⤵ **Trigger** A creature picks up Azarim or begins its turn carrying Azarim; **Effect** The creature who carries Azarim becomes enfeebled 2. This condition persists as long as the creature carries Azarim. A non-lawful creature can attempt to resist this effect with a DC 23 Fortitude save, but lawful creatures don't gain a save to resist.

Activate ⬢⬢ (command, Interact) Azarim casts 2nd-level *illusory*

disguise on her wielder. This effect ends immediately as soon as the wielder no longer carries Azarim.

Activate ⤵ (command, Interact) **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Azarim bolsters her user's ability to lie. She can either attempt her own Deception check to resolve her wielder's Lie, or she can assist with her wielder's

AZARIM

attempt to Lie and grant a +2 circumstance bonus to the Deception check.

Activate ◆◆◆ (command, Interact) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Azarim gains the effects of an *anarchic weapon* rune for 1 minute. When wielded by a character who's at least 11th level, Azarim becomes a +2 *striking anarchic shifting rapier*, and instead this activation can be applied to another weapon that's in physical contact with Azarim.

CRESSET OF GRISLY INTERROGATION ITEM 9

RARE **MAGICAL** **NECROMANCY**

Price 700 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

This iron cresset appears as a cage-like basket with a metal bowl fitted into its base—a bowl sized perfectly to hold the severed head of a Medium or Small humanoid.

Activate ◆◆◆ Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You open the cresset by detaching the top and folding it back on a hinge so that a decapitated head can be placed inside the bowl. Once the cage lid is folded back over the head and latched in place, and as long as the decapitated head has been dead for no longer than 10 minutes before being placed inside the cresset, the head is no longer subject to decay, and bugs and pests (such as maggots) are prevented from consuming the remains. This doesn't prevent the rest of the corpse or its soul from becoming undead, nor does it prevent effects that restore life to the dead (but note that some spells, such as *raise dead*, can't be used to restore life to a decapitated corpse in the first place). If the head is later removed from within the cresset, the head's delayed decay immediately catches up with it in a few seconds, rendering it useless for further use inside of a *cresset of grisly interrogation*.

Activate 1 minute (command, Interact); **Requirements** A severed head is within the *cresset of grisly interrogation*; **Frequency** three times per day; **Effect** You pose a question to the head contained within the cresset, and it animates briefly to reply with a short answer over the course of a minute. The cresset empowers the severed head with the ability to reply even without breath, granting the head a semblance of life, calling upon the physical remains' latent memories rather than summoning

back the deceased's spirit. The head must be forcefully commanded to answer with a secret Intimidation check—other attempts to query the head without attempting an Intimidation check for a result automatically fail. Once activated in this way, this activation of a *cresset of grisly interrogation* can't be performed again for 1 hour. The head answers the question based on the result of the secret Intimidation check against the Will DC the creature had when it was alive or DC 25, whichever is higher.

Critical Success The head answers the question truthfully, to the best of its ability.

Success The head answers the question truthfully, but the answer is brief, cryptic, or repetitive.

Failure The head's answer provides false information, attempting to Lie to you with a +15 Deception modifier, or the creature's original Deception, whichever is higher.

Critical Failure As failure, but the head gains a +4 circumstance bonus to its Deception check, and the next time you use this activation of the *cresset of grisly interrogation* during the next 24 hours, the result of your Intimidation check is one degree of success worse than the result you rolled.

CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING ITEM 9

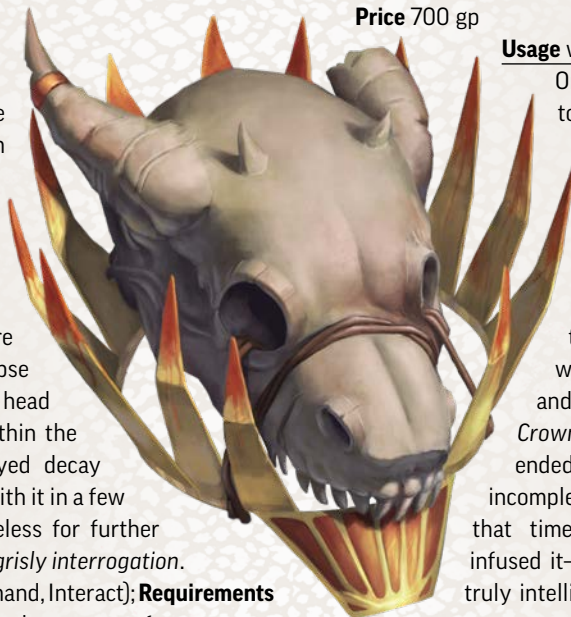
UNIQUE **ENCHANTMENT** **INVESTED** **MAGICAL**

Price 700 gp

Usage worn headwear; **Bulk** —

Originally, this magical crown was to be known as the *Crown of Toil*—a magic item crafted by the dwarven priest named Gristogar. He intended for the crown to bolster his ability to rule and herald in a new era of a dwarven kingdom that followed the teachings of Droskar. Yet Gristogar wasn't equal to his own ambitions, and before he could complete the *Crown of Toil*, his cult died out and he ended his own life. For centuries, the incomplete crown lay dormant, but over that time, fragments of Gristogar's soul infused it—not enough to transform it into a truly intelligent item, but enough to give it a rudimentary need and desire to be completed.

When the Kobold King Merlokrep discovered the discarded crown and placed it upon his head, the crown at last had agency—if not in a hale and hearty dwarf, at least in the frame of a powerful and ambitious kobold. Just as the crown began influencing Merlokrep, so too did the Kobold King's personality influence the crown. Today, the device is



CROWN OF THE KOBOLD KING

known as the *Crown of the Kobold King*, and while it still urges the one who wears it to build a kingdom of endlessly toiling workers, it no longer does so in honor of Droskar. Instead, it seeks the rise of a brutal kobold kingdom.

The crown appears as a golden band surrounded by iron spikes that glisten with fresh blood—the addition of a kobold skull to the top is largely decorative, but one the crown has grown to “enjoy.” Even in its incomplete state, a few rituals away from its true potential, the *Crown of the Kobold King* is a potent item. Wearing the crown grants you a +2 item bonus to Intimidation checks and a +1 item bonus to saving throws against fear effects.

Activate ♦♦ (command, envision) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The crown infuses you with the glorious conviction that you're meant to rule, granting you a +1 status bonus to attack rolls, saving throws, and Charisma-based skill checks for 1 minute.

Activate 10 minutes (envision, Interact); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You cast a *nightmare* spell.

DRAZMORG'S STAFF OF ALL-SIGHT ITEM 10

UNIQUE DIVINATION MAGICAL STAFF

Price 475 gp

Usage held in 1 hand, **Bulk** 1

This long, gnarled staff looks like several bones fused together, then wrapped tightly with strips of desiccated, gray skin. At the top of the staff, a clump of sinew clasps a small stone orb resembling a large human eye. When the staff is activated, this eye twitches and glances around randomly. When wielding this staff, you gain a +1 item bonus to visual Perception checks.

Activate Cast a Spell; **Effect** You expend a number of charges from the staff to cast a spell from its list.

- **Cantrip** *read aura*
- **1st** *true strike*
- **2nd** *darkvision*, *flaming sphere* (creates what appears to be a large eye made of fire), see *invisibility*
- **3rd** *organsight* (*Pathfinder Secrets of Magic* 120), *web of eyes* (*Secrets of Magic* 140)
- **4th** *clairvoyance*, *countless eyes* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 217), *detect scrying*

Craft Requirements Supply one casting of all listed levels of all listed spells.

FLYING TALON ITEM 1

UNCOMMON

This weapon consists of a three-pronged barbed hook attached to a length of chain. It can be used as a melee weapon to stab at foes or hurled as a ranged weapon.

Some kobolds are particularly fond of using flying talons, especially as a sort of badge of office above those who serve them. The ranged trip and tethered weapon traits are detailed on page 85 of the *Pathfinder Bestiary*.

Weapon	Price	Damage	Bulk	Hands	Group
Flying talon	6 gp	1d4 P	1	1	Flail

Weapon Traits

agile, finesse, kobold, ranged trip, tethered, thrown 10 ft., trip

GRASP OF DROSKAR ITEM 5

RARE CURSED DIVINATION INVESTED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Price 155 gp

Usage worn glove; **Bulk** –

This +1 *striking gauntlet* appears little more than a dull, soot-stained, metal-plated glove at first glance, but in truth it is an invasive boon granted by Droskar to his most faithful subjects. Placing the glove on your hand causes excruciating pain as your appendage curls into a tight fist and then slowly transforms to a supernaturally hard ball of black stone, fusing to you and preventing you from using this hand for anything other than gauntlet Strikes or the *grasp of Droskar's* activated abilities (a grasp of Droskar does not have the free-hand weapon trait). The gauntlet can't be removed without a successful casting of *remove curse* or a similar spell. The gauntlet reverts to normal (and can be removed with ease) if the curse is removed, the hand is removed from the body, or the wearer dies.

Activate ♦ envision; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** You gain a +1 item bonus on all Athletics checks for 1 minute.

Activate ♦♦ envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You cast *ray of enfeeblement* with a spell attack modifier of +10 and a DC of 20.

HEARTTRIPPER BLADE ITEM 5

RARE MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Price 160 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

This wicked-looking curved weapon is a +1 *striking dagger* that draws power from defeating foes, either to bolster itself or its wielder. A *heartripper blade* is well suited for use in any ritual that

involves divination, and incorporating it into any ritual with the divination trait grants the wielder a +1 item bonus on any check made to resolve the effects of the ritual's casting.

Activate ⤵ command; **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** You reduce a foe to 0 Hit Points with a Strike from the *heartripper blade*; **Effect** The *heartripper blade* draws power from the devastating strike, causing its blade to erupt in black flames. For 1 minute, Strikes with

DRAZMORG'S STAFF

the *heartripper blade* inflict an additional 1d6 negative damage to living creatures.

Activate ⤴ command; **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** You reduce a foe to 0 Hit Points with a Strike from the *heartripper blade*; **Effect** The *heartripper blade* draws life from the victim's body and siphons it into you. Choose one of the following effects: restore 2d8 Hit Points; reduce the value of your clumsy, enfeebled, or stupefied conditions by 1; or reduce the stage of one toxin or disease you're suffering by one stage (this can't reduce the stage below stage 1 or cure the affliction).

IN THE SHADOWS OF TOIL ITEM 8

UNIQUE GRIMOIRE MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Price 500 gp

Bulk L

In the Shadows of Toil was originally an incomplete copy of a journal kept by the dwarven adventurer Druingar the Glintaxe. Drazmorg made extensive use of the book's wide margins and several dozen blank pages left in the back to serve as a spellbook. Over the years, he further enhanced his copy to transform it into a grimoire (see page 162 of *Secrets of Magic* for full rules on grimoires). A character who reads *Necril* can learn about Drazmorg's history, his discovery of the *Third Seal*, and his hopes to absorb all of its power before seeking out the Whispering Way to lead them on a new crusade to hunt down the next two seals, destroy them, and bring back the Whispering Tyrant. Beyond these frightening notes, the grimoire also contains copies of all the spells Drazmorg has prepared and those needed to recharge his staff; feel free to add more spells to this list if you wish.

Activate ⤴ envision (metamagic); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** If your next action is to cast a necromancy spell that you prepared from this grimoire and that allows a saving throw, you infuse the magic with sensations of endless toil. If the target fails its saving throw against the spell, it becomes fatigued for 1 minute by the sense of exhaustion imbued in the magic.

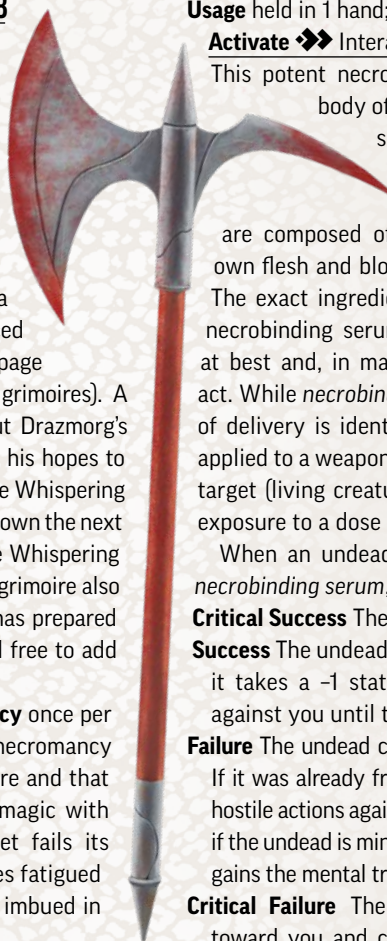
MAN-FELLER ITEM 7

UNIQUE DIVINATION MAGICAL

Price 360 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

This impressive-looking weapon is forged from a single piece of cold iron. *Man-Feller* is a +1 striking cold iron battle axe that strikes particularly painful wounds into the flesh of humans it hews. The battle axe deals an additional 1d6 slashing damage to any human it wounds. This benefit doesn't apply against humans disguised as



MAN-FELLER

other creatures. It's up to GM discretion whether this effect applies against such a disguised human.

Those who might find it amusing to point out the awkward and almost comedic duplication in the weapon's name would do well to consider that those who previously mocked the name of King Merlokrep's favorite axe to the kobold's face didn't live long enough to finish their self-congratulatory chuckles.

NECROBINDING SERUM ITEM 5

RARE CONSUMABLE INCAPACITATION INJURY MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Price 30 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ⤴ Interact

This potent necromantic serum is distilled from the body of an intelligent corporeal undead who seeks to establish absolute control over their undead minions. The raw materials of a *necrobinding serum*

are composed of a slurry made from the creator's own flesh and blood mixed with pulped fungal toxins. The exact ingredients vary, but the act of brewing a *necrobinding serum* is typically viewed with distaste at best and, in many societies, is regarded as an evil act. While *necrobinding serum* isn't a poison, its method of delivery is identical to that of an injury poison—it's applied to a weapon that's then used to Strike an undead target (living creatures suffer no additional effect from exposure to a dose of *necrobinding serum*).

When an undead creature is targeted by a dose of *necrobinding serum*, it must attempt a DC 19 Will save.

Critical Success The undead creature is unaffected.

Success The undead creature is momentarily disoriented; it takes a -1 status penalty to all attack rolls made against you until the start of your next turn.

Failure The undead creature becomes friendly toward you. If it was already friendly, it becomes helpful. It can't use hostile actions against you. This effect persists for 8 hours if the undead is mindless. Against other undead, the effect gains the mental trait and persists for 10 minutes.

Critical Failure The undead creature becomes helpful toward you and can't use hostile actions against you.

This effect persists for 24 hours if the undead is mindless. Against other undead, the effect gains the mental trait and persists for 1 hour.

Craft Requirements You must be a corporeal undead, and the serum must include some of your flesh and blood.

RING OF TORAG ITEM 3

RARE ABJURATION INVESTED MAGICAL

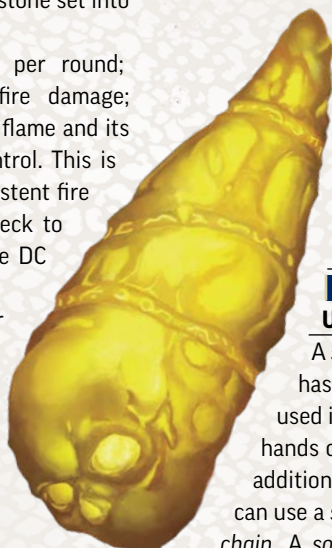
Price 60 gp

Usage worn; **Bulk** —

This simple golden ring has a large, red gemstone set into it that sparkles with an inner fire.

Activate ♦ Interact; **Frequency** once per round; **Requirements** You're taking persistent fire damage; **Effect** You call upon the ring to put out the flame and its magic attempts to bring the fire under control. This is especially effective assistance against persistent fire damage, so you gain an immediate flat check to remove the persistent fire damage, and the DC typically decreases from 15 to 10.

Activate ⤵ envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** You're targeted by a fire effect; **Effect** The ring's red gemstone flashes with light, granting you resistance 5 against fire and a +1 status bonus on your AC or saving throw against the fire effect targeting you; these benefits end as soon as the fire effect is resolved.



SHARD OF THE THIRD SEAL ITEM 9

UNIQUE ABJURATION MAGICAL

Price 600 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

This stone fragment from the *Third Seal* retains a tiny sliver of that legendary item's power. The shard sheds light constantly, with the effects of a torch requiring no oxygen and generating no heat. The flame can be covered or hidden, but it can't be smothered or quenched.

Activate ♦♦ envision, Interact; **Effect** You generate the effects of a *disrupt undead* cantrip, heightened to 3rd level.

Activate ♦♦ envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** By passing the shard over a creature or object, you can produce the effects of a *nondetection* spell on that target.

Activate ♦♦ envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** By gripping the shard tightly and waving it before you, you can produce the effects of a *levitate* spell on yourself.

SOULSPEAKER ITEM 2

RARE ILLUSION INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 25 gp

Usage worn; **Bulk** —

This grotesque, amulet-like shrunken head is said to hold a shard of its owner's psyche. The head is often that of a humanoid, but any creature capable of speaking in life can provide the grisly component needed for this magic item's creation. The head can contain a short message whispered to it and can then be commanded to repeat the message later. While a *soulspeaker* carries a message, the eyes of the shrunken head open, and they close as soon as its message is delivered.

Activate ♦♦ command; **Effect** You cast *message*, but instead of your message being transferred directly to a

target's ears, the message is stored in the *soulspeaker*. The *soulspeaker*'s eyes open, and the next time it's activated, the *soulspeaker* repeats the message you spoke to it with a rasping whisper before its eyes close again, the message expended.

SOUL CHAIN ITEM 6

RARE CURSED EVOCATION MAGICAL

Usage held in 2 hands; **Bulk** 1

A *soul chain* is a +1 striking spiked chain that has become cursed after a forge-spurned used it to kill a creature and trap its soul. In the hands of a forge-spurned, a *soul chain* inflicts an additional 1d6 fire damage on a hit. Other creatures can use a *soul chain* as a standard +1 striking spiked chain. A *soul chain* fuses with its wielder the first time the wielder damages a living creature with the weapon. A character who dies while carrying a *soul chain* must attempt a DC 20 Will save; on

a failure, they're immediately transformed into a forge-spurned. Carrying multiple *soul chains* doesn't increase the DC of the save, but the carrier must attempt the save once for each chain they carry.

TALLOWHEART MASS ITEM 8

RARE ABJURATION DIVINE HEALING NECROMANCY TRANSMUTATION

Price 425 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

This disgusting mass of magically-infused hardened tallow is often found divided into three portions, each attached to the other by a thin tangle of fibers and hair. While some create *tallowheart masses* that are connected via lengths of scented cord or even fine chain, the mass of tallow is always off-putting in texture, scent, and appearance. Despite the mass's unpleasant look, this magical item can be quite helpful. Each of the three portions can be activated in one of three ways, but once a portion is activated, it's consumed. Once you've consumed all three portions, you fully expend the *tallowheart mass*.

Activate ♦ Interact; **Effect** If you rub a portion between your hands, the mass melts into your flesh and you gain the quickened condition for 1 minute. You can use the extra action each round only for Strike actions made with weapons you wield in your hands.

Activate ♦ Interact; **Effect** If you consume a portion, you regain 4d8+12 Hit Points.

Activate ♦ Interact; **Effect** If you rub a portion on your body, it melts into your worn gear and flesh and grants you resistance 10 to fire damage for 1 minute.



FRUSTRATING SHEDDINGS

The liquid darkness shed by darkmantles has long fascinated alchemists, who have tried countless methods of extracting and preserving the fluid to generate dark-spewing bombs of their own design. While some alchemists have succeeded in their attempts, the cost and trouble of doing so tend to make the process a great way for an aspiring alchemist to lose a lot of money and waste a lot of time.

DARKMANTLE

These dark blue or black mollusk-like creatures have a similar appearance to an octopus, save that they have only six tentacles, all of which are connected by a thick leathery shroud. While darkmantle aren't a particularly good climber, they excel at clinging and can clutch onto a cave roof for days, patiently waiting to ambush any prey that walks below them with a disorienting blob of darkness. When clinging to a cave roof, and with their bulbous red eyes closed down to squints, darkmantles in ambush look similar to stalactites. Their preferred hunting method works best on creatures without darkvision, so they frequent ruins aboveground or shallow caves not far from the outside world. When darkmantles sense prey, they shed darkness down onto their prey before dropping away from the ceiling to flap quickly down to their victim, whereupon these beasts clutch and squeeze with their thick, muscular tentacles. Despite the shape of darkmantles, their bodies's texture is more like thick leather or even rubber—they can't cause damage with their spike-shaped bodies by dropping down onto other creatures.

Darkmantles have a swift life cycle—their young grow to maturity in a matter of months, and most of these creatures die of old age after living for only a few years. As a result, generations of darkmantles quickly accrue, and over the years, they've developed a similarly rapid propensity to adapt to new locations. Aquatic caverns, for example, might be infested with darkmantles that can swim instead of fly; on the other hand, icy caverns would've led to darkmantles that developed white or pale blue colorations, and these specimens might produce blasts of obscuring fog instead of darkness. The deepest, darkest reaches of the Darklands are rumored to host darkmantles of incredible size, capable of smothering multiple human-sized victims simultaneously. These deep-dwelling darkmantles have the capacity to shed more powerful darkness that can plunge even creatures with darkvision into inky blackness—darkness in which these deep-dwelling creatures can, of course, still see well within.

DARKMANTLE

CREATURE 1

UNCOMMON N SMALL BEAST

Perception +6, darkvision, tremorsense (precise) 60 feet

Skills Stealth +7

Str +1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

AC 15; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

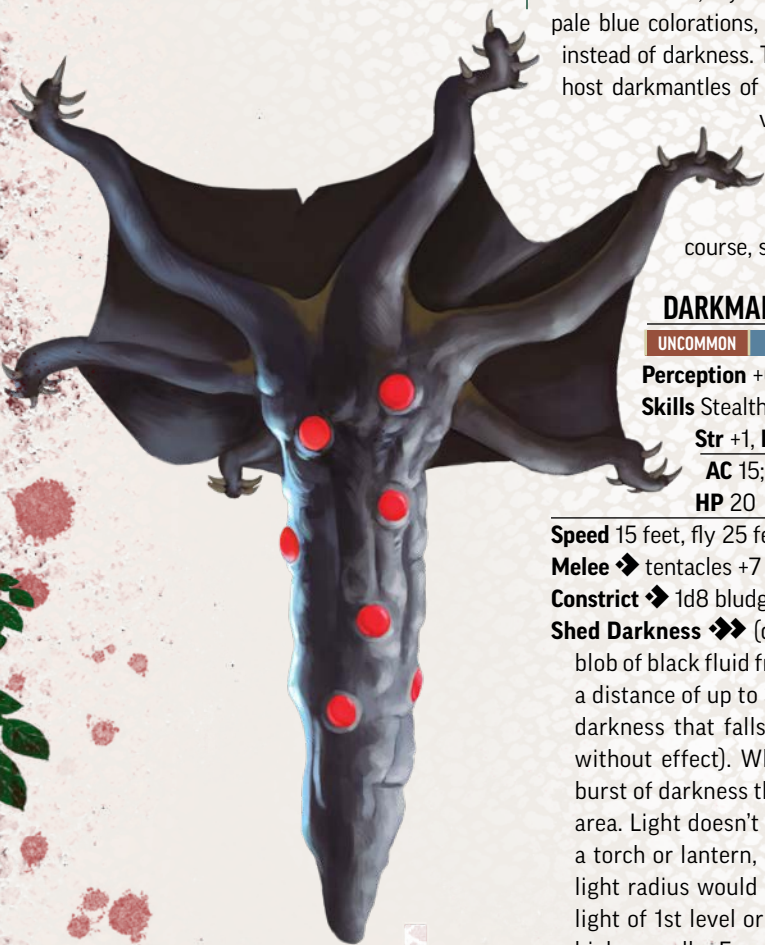
HP 20

Speed 15 feet, fly 25 feet

Melee ♦ tentacles +7 (agile, finesse); **Damage** 1d8+1 bludgeoning plus Grab

Constrict ♦ 1d8 bludgeoning, DC 17

Shed Darkness ♦♦ (darkness, evocation, primal) The darkmantle sheds an inky blob of black fluid from the folds of its body. It can shed this blob horizontally to a distance of up to 30 feet, or simply let it fall up to 120 feet below itself (shed darkness that falls more than 120 feet before striking a surface evaporates without effect). When the blob of darkness lands, it explodes into a 10-foot burst of darkness that prevents light from penetrating or emanating within the area. Light doesn't enter this area, and any non-magical light sources, such as a torch or lantern, don't emanate any light while inside the area, even if their light radius would extend beyond the darkness. This also suppresses magical light of 1st level or lower but has no effect on magical light from 2nd-level or higher spells. From the outside, it appears as a globe of pure darkness. The darkmantle can't shed darkness again for 24 hours.



FORGE-SPURNED

Evil dwarves who die having failed to live up to the exacting standards of the duergar god Droskar are sometimes forced to return to the material world as undead abominations known as forge-spurned. Forge-spurned look like dwarves with pupilless eyes and leathery flesh, and with their hair and beard made of smoke and fire—newly formed forge-spurned can almost be mistaken for living creatures as a result. The longer forge-spurned exist, the more skeletal and fiery their visage becomes; those who have existed for centuries or more often look as if they have skulls for faces and fire for hair.

FORGE-SPURNED

CREATURE 5

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM FIRE UNDEAD

Perception +11; darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven, Undercommon

Skills Athletics +14, Crafting +14, Droskar Lore +12

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items *soul chain* (page 117), warhammer

AC 22; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11

HP 75, eternal damnation, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, fire, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** cold 5

Eternal Damnation (divine, necromancy) As long as their *soul chain* remains intact, a forge-spurned can't be truly destroyed. They rise again fully healed at the next sundown, even if their physical body was destroyed.

Searing Heat (fire) A creature who touches a forge-spurned (including by Grappling them or hitting them with an unarmed attack) takes 2d6 fire damage with a DC 21 basic Reflex save.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ *soul chain* +15 (disarm, trip), **Damage** 2d8+5 slashing plus 1d6 fire

Melee ♦ warhammer +14 (shove), **Damage** 1d8+7 bludgeoning

Inflate Bellows ♦♦ **Requirements** The forge-spurned has used Forge Breath; **Effect** The forge-spurned draws a massive breath to refill their emptied lungs, enabling them to use Forge Breath again.

Forge Breath ♦♦ (divine, evocation, fire) The forge-spurned breathes a cloud of stinging soot, ash, and glowing embers. This can affect either a 30-foot cone or a 20-foot burst centered on the forge-spurned and persists for 1d4 rounds. Each creature that moves into or starts their turn in the area takes 6d6 fire damage, with a DC 21 basic Reflex save. A creature who fails its save is also blinded for 1 minute. Creatures within the cloud are concealed, though not from the forge-spurned. The forge-spurned can't use Forge Breath again until they've used Inflate Bellows.

Soul Chain (divine, fire, necromancy) If a creature is slain by an attack from the *soul chain* and the forge-spurned is able to retain the creature's corpse, they can bind the creature's soul into a *soul chain* (as *bind soul*) with a day of work at a forge and a successful DC 20 Crafting check. An individual whose soul is bound in this way can't be resurrected unless the *soul chain* is destroyed (Hardness 5, HP 20, BT 10).



HAUNTED FORGES

Forge-spurned are often encountered near abandoned forges, and the presence of these undead dwarves can infest that forge with an ever-burning fire. Such "haunted" forges burn without the need for fuel, though they extinguish automatically when their forge-spurned source is destroyed.





JUNGLE GRICKS

These surface-adapted varieties of the underground grick appear in shades of green. They lurk in the undergrowth of jungles or climb low-hanging branches to drop on unsuspecting prey.

Their greater skill at Stealth checks applies in forested terrain instead of rocky terrain. Jungle gricks are heartier creatures than their underground-dwelling kin; all jungle gricks have the elite creature adjustments as a result.

GRICK

The wormlike gricks terrorize the caverns and tunnels in which it dwells, lying in wait near heavily traveled underground passages or subterranean cities for the chance to reach forth from the darkness and take its prey. Those laid low by a grick are rarely consumed on the spot. Instead, gricks haul back fresh food back to their lair in a tight burrow or high on a cavern ledge, where they consume their spoils in small bites at the gricks' leisure.

The origin of gricks is unknown. Even though these creatures have a rudimentary intelligence, they don't have any social structure to speak of. Most gricks are encountered alone. Even on those occasions when unfortunate travelers meet multiple gricks in small groups, those gricks don't appear to communicate or work together; each instead attacks an individual target and retreats with its prize as soon as it manages to bring down an opponent. Capable predators, gricks also have a strangely weapon-resistant hide that makes them especially dangerous to the unprepared. Many novice adventurers have fallen to grick attacks merely because they couldn't damage these creatures with their non-magical weapons. Those familiar with gricks (especially dwarves, morlocks, and xulgaths) know the best strategy for dealing with them when one lacks access to magic weapons is to fall back and wait for more powerful or magical reinforcements.

Gricks rely on their dark coloration and ability to climb walls to keep them out of sight until they're ready to spring an ambush. On occasions, when food becomes scarce in a particular area, gricks have been known to travel to the surface and roam the wilderness in search of prey, but they make these sojourns almost always out of necessity, lasting only as long as it takes them to find entrances to new subterranean lairs. These creatures prefer darkness and the comfort of a ceiling overhead; they avoid the open sky and go to great lengths to keep the cover of trees, low clouds, or buildings between them and the empty gulf overhead.

Some Darklands societies have tried to recruit gricks as guardians or even beasts of burden, but their intelligence—while middling at best—is more than enough for them to stubbornly resist and even resent attempts at “training.” The best most societies can manage is to keep a grick guardian happy by making sure it remains well-fed and comfortable.



GRICK

CREATURE 3

UNCOMMON N MEDIUM ABERRATION

Perception +8; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Languages Aklo (can't speak any language)

Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +8 (+10 in rocky terrain)

Str +4, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** -3, **Wis** +3, **Cha** -2

AC 20; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10

HP 35; **Resistances** physical 5 (except magic)

Gripping Tentacle **Trigger** A creature in the grick's reach uses a move action or leaves a square during a move action it's using;

Effect The grick makes a tentacle Strike against the target. If the attack is a critical hit and the trigger was a move action, the grick disrupts that action.

Speed 25 feet, climb 20 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +11, **Damage** 1d12+6 slashing

Melee ♦ tentacle +11 (agile), **Damage** 1d8+6 bludgeoning

ID OOZE

Not all oozes are mindless predators capable of little more than ambushing and consuming prey. The id ooze is a thinking, calculating creature with the capacity to carry out complex plots and plans—not always to secure a meal. Left to its own devices, an id ooze is just as content to spend decades or even centuries in introspective philosophical pursuits as it is to crawl through the underground rivers and moist caverns it prefers to call home.

An id ooze can derive sustenance from the consumption of organic material, but without easy access to plants or animals to eat, they can subsist in a state of semi-hibernation for centuries while slowly absorbing residual psychic energies in locations that have been host to powerful emotions, such as long-standing temples that once hosted generations of worshippers, settlements that endured horrific wars or devastating disasters, or even just the home of a powerful occult spellcaster whose thoughts left marks upon the walls long after they moved on.

An id ooze prefers water but is equally at home on land. The slimy creature appears as a patch of water until it attacks, when its gelatinous body piles up on itself to form a single pseudopod that strikes like an angry snake.

ID OOZE

CREATURE 7

RARE N MEDIUM AMPHIBIOUS OOZE


Perception +15; motion sense 60 feet, no vision

Languages Common, Undercommon (can't speak any language); telepathy 60 feet

Skills Athletics +16, Deception +15, Occultism +15, Stealth +15 (+17 in moist areas)

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

Motion Sense An id ooze can sense nearby creatures through vibration and air or water movement.


Puddled Ambush  **Trigger** A creature enters or interacts with a space occupied by an id ooze; **Requirements** Initiative hasn't yet been rolled; **Effect** The id ooze automatically notices the creature, then makes a pseudopod Strike against one creature adjacent to itself before rolling initiative.

AC 21; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +13, **Will** +17


HP 105; **Immunities** acid, critical hits, precision, unconscious, visual;

Resistances slashing 5, piercing 5


Speed 10 feet, climb 10 feet, swim 20 feet

Melee  pseudopod +18 (agile); **Damage** 2d4+8 bludgeoning plus 1d6 acid and Grab

Occult Innate Spells DC 25; **4th** *confusion*, *phantom pain*; **3rd** *fear*, *hypnotic pattern*; **Cantrips (4th)** *daze*

Constrict  1d4+8 bludgeoning plus 1d6 acid, DC 25

Id Ooze Acid An id ooze's acid damages only metal and organic materials, not stone.

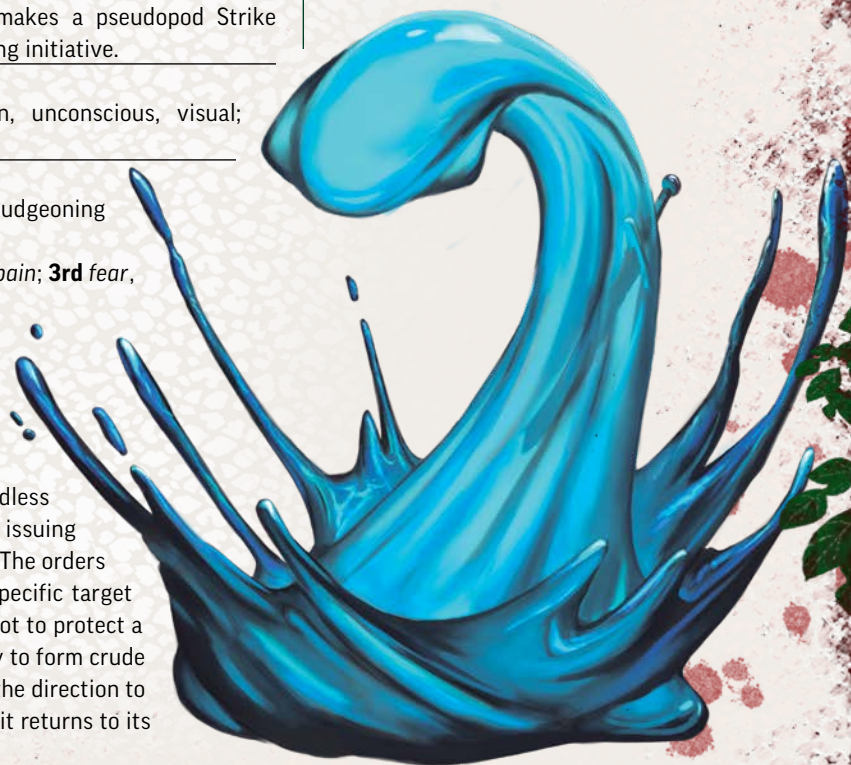
Manipulate Ooze  (enchantment, occult)

Frequency once per turn; **Effect** The id ooze manipulates the senses and impulses within a mindless ooze of the id ooze's level or lower within 30 feet, issuing it telepathic orders to undertake a specific action. The orders must be simple, such as a directive to attack a specific target in preference to another, or to hold ground in a spot to protect a location, or even to adjust its positioning and body to form crude shapes or symbols. A manipulated ooze performs the direction to the best of its ability on its next turn, after which it returns to its normal behavior.



BRAIN OOZES

Just as id oozes are an evolution of the lesser gray ooze, so do there exist evolutions of id oozes known as brain oozes. While brain oozes aren't much more powerful than an id ooze, they tend to be much crueler and more sadistic in their behavior. Brain oozes appear as disembodied brains that lash out with slimy tentacles. Where the id ooze possesses occult magic that allows them to confuse and hinder thought, brain oozes specialize in controlling thoughts and revels in the resulting feelings of superiority before, inevitably, they consume their mind-controlled victims.





FROM EVIL INTENT

While a tallow guardian itself isn't intrinsically evil, the traditional methods of creating it involve rendering humanoid corpses to generate the tallow needed to construct its frame. The guardian is then animated by siphoning fragments of souls that linger in the area into a rudimentary but mindless animating force. Other methods of infusing tallow guardians with raw positive energy or voluntary donations could work, but the traditional method persists, giving these constructs an unsettling legacy.

TALLOW GUARDIAN

TALLOW GUARDIAN

CREATURE 7

RARE N MEDIUM CONSTRUCT MINDLESS

Perception +13; darkvision

Skills Athletics +17

Str +5, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -5

AC 23; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +11, **Will** +13

HP 145; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Weaknesses** cold 10; **Resistances** fire 5, physical 5 (except bludgeoning)

Melt If a tallow guardian takes any fire damage, its body melts somewhat and becomes even more difficult to damage. Until the end of its next turn, its resistance to slashing and piercing damage increases to 10, and its resistance to bludgeoning damage increases to 5.

Slowed by Cold If a tallow guardian takes any cold damage, it loses the benefits granted by melt and becomes slowed 1.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ fist +18 (magical), **Damage** 2d8+8 bludgeoning plus 1d6 persistent fire and Grab

Encase ♦ (attack) The tallow guardian attempts to pull a Medium or smaller creature it has grabbed into its body. The tallow guardian attempts an Athletics check opposed by the grabbed creature's Reflex DC. If it succeeds, it encases the creature with its body. An encased creature is grabbed, is slowed 1, and must hold its breath or start suffocating. It takes 2d6 fire damage from the tallow guardian's molten hot wax when it's first encased, and at the end of each of its turns while it's encased.

A tallow guardian can only have one encased creature at a time; if a tallow guardian encases a new creature, a previously encased creature is forced out of its body into an adjacent square of the creature's choice.

An encased creature can break free with a successful DC 22 check to Escape. An encased creature can attack the tallow guardian, but only with unarmed attacks or with weapons of light Bulk or less. The tallow guardian is flat-footed against the attack. If the tallow guardian takes 7 or more bludgeoning or slashing damage from an encased creature, the creature wrenches itself free. A creature that gets free by either method can immediately breathe and exits the tallow guardian's space, but it continues to take 1d6 persistent fire damage from the molten wax that clings to its body.

If a tallow guardian is destroyed, any creature it has encased is automatically released as the guardian's body collapses into a shapeless mound of tallow.

Molten Wax All persistent fire damage caused by a tallow guardian comes from globs of molten hot tallow that cling to its foes. This tallow cools automatically after 4 rounds, or immediately if the creature takes any cold damage; once the tallow cools, the persistent fire damage ends.



THOQQUA

Thoqqas are cantankerous creatures of fire and slag. Their bodies generate incredible heat that allows them to burrow or melt through most surfaces, even solid rock. Thoqqas are native to the vast ash deserts and lava fields of the Plane of Fire. There, they consume ore and minerals, which their furnace-like bodies then smelt into armor plates that grant the creatures their armored forms.

These creatures' foremost body segment tapers into a straight, hornlike beak that glows with a blistering heat. Steam and smoke constantly hiss from their joints, and from a distance, thoqqas can be mistaken for strange metallic constructs. Adult thoqqas are 5 feet long and weigh 200 pounds.

Thoqqas are dangerous to approach—they attack without thinking when startled or frustrated. If they don't immediately chase away intruders within their territory, then they might gradually come to view that area as property and even guard it. Mephits seem to understand this curious thoqqua thought process, occasionally brokering deals with the magma worms. The mephits claim that the mountain-sized ancestors of modern thoqqas were servants of the elemental lords and dug the first volcanoes in the young worlds of the Material Plane. These "progenitor worms" then retired to the worlds' cores, where their heat warms the planets even today. Thoqqas on the Material Plane do congregate around volcanoes—though whether this tendency is to protect a mineral-rich food site or sacred place, or simply out of comfort, depends on the thoqqua in question.

THOQQUA

CREATURE 2

UNCOMMON N MEDIUM EARTH ELEMENTAL FIRE

Perception +7; darkvision, tremorsense (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Ignan (can't speak any language)


Skills Acrobatics +7, Stealth +5 (+7 in lava)

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** -2, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

AC 17; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

HP 45; **Immunities** bleed, fire, paralyzed, poison, sleep; **Weaknesses** cold 5

Molten Body (evocation, fire, primal) A thoqqua's body is hot enough to melt stone. A creature who grabs a thoqqua, is grabbed by a thoqqua, or critically fails a melee Strike with an unarmed attack or agile weapon takes 1d4 fire damage (DC 15 basic Reflex save).

Reactive Thrash  **Trigger** A creature within the thoqqua's reach hits the thoqqua with a melee Strike; **Effect** The thoqqua instinctively thrashes into the attack, pressing its molten hot scales forward. The attacker must attempt a DC 15 Reflex save.

Critical Success The attacker is unaffected.

Success The attacker takes 1d4 fire damage.

Failure The attacker takes 2d4 fire damage.

Critical Failure As failure, but the weapon used to Strike the thoqqua becomes broken unless the weapon is made of metal, has more than 10 Hardness, or is resistant to or immune to fire.

Speed 25 feet, burrow 15 feet

Melee beak +9, **Damage** 1d8+3 piercing plus 1d6 fire and critical ignition

Critical Ignition On a critical hit with a body Strike, a thoqqua inflicts an additional 1d6 persistent fire damage.



STARVING THOQQUAS

A thoqqua feeds on a combination of raw stone, ore, and heat. When denied these nourishments, a thoqqua won't perish from starvation, but it does grow less armored as it's forced to absorb and weaken its armored body plates. A starved thoqqua's Armor Class is reduced by 2, but it gains a +1 circumstance bonus on all attack rolls.





INFESTATIONS OF EVIL

While an evil spellcaster can certainly conjure vargouilles and seed them through a region to spread their kind, these minor fiends have an even more insidious method of crossing the planar boundary. In graveyards that have become corrupted by daemonic influences or cults devoted to the Horsemen of the Apocalypse, fresh corpses can spontaneously serve as portals from Abaddon, allowing brand new vargouilles to be “born” from the heads of the dead.

VARGOUILLE

Vargouilles are scavengers from the swamps of Abaddon, where they flop and flap through strange and haunted skies in constant search of fresh souls to torment. In this daemonic nightmare realm, vargouilles play a role similar to that of a raven or vulture, although they augment these roles with a malevolent delight in causing pain and anguish that no scavenger bird could ever hope to match. A vargouille is larger than a human head, typically between 12 and 20 inches high with a 15- to 35-inch wingspan. While vargouilles aren't natives of the Material Plane, they can be found there nevertheless, occupying graveyards, ancient battlefields, or anywhere one can find remnants of death and decay.

VARGOUILLE

CREATURE 2

RARE NE SMALL ABERRATION FIEND

Perception +8; darkvision

Languages Daemonic

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +4, Intimidation +6, Stealth +8

Str +0, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** -3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

AC 18; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

HP 28

Speed fly 25 feet

Melee bite +10 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 1d8 piercing plus 1d6 poison

Vargouille's Kiss ◆◆◆ (disease, occult, transmutation) **Requirements**

The vargouille is adjacent to a paralyzed, unconscious, or willing humanoid creature; **Effect** The vargouille nuzzles up against a helpless or willing humanoid creature in a parody of a lover's kiss—the creature must then attempt a saving throw or begin an unsettling transformation into a vargouille. The sickened, stupefied, and unconscious conditions from Vargouille's Kiss don't improve on their own until the disease is cured. This disease can't progress in stage as long as the victim is in sunlight or in the area of a 3rd-level or higher light effect. **Saving Throw** DC 18 Fortitude; **Stage 1** no ill effect (2 hours); **Stage 2** victim's hair falls out, sickened 1 (2 hours); **Stage 3** victim's ears elongate into winglike shapes and their teeth grow tangled and sharp, stupefied 1 (2 hours); **Stage 4** as Stage 3, but the victim falls unconscious (2 hours); **Stage 5** death, and the victim's head transforms into a new vargouille that detaches from the body and flies off to spread evil on its own.

Vargouille's Shriek ◆◆ (auditory, evocation, incapacitation, occult, visual) The vargouille distends its jaw awfully and emits an unnerving shriek. All creatures within 60 feet who can see and hear the vargouille must attempt a DC 15 Fortitude save.

Success The creature is unaffected and is temporarily immune to Vargouille's Shriek for 24 hours.

Failure The creature is paralyzed until the end of its next turn.

Critical Failure The creature is paralyzed. It can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns, and the DC cumulatively decreases by 1 on each such save.

Tenacious Wounds (curse, necromancy, occult) A creature who takes poison damage from a vargouille must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or be cursed. The cursed creature can't regain HP except via magic, and anyone Casting a Spell to heal the creature must succeed at a DC 18 counteract check or the healing has no effect. The vargouille's counteract level is equal to its creature level. A creature can attempt a new DC 18 Fortitude save once per day (typically when it makes its daily preparations) to end this curse. The curse ends automatically if the creature is healed to maximum HP.



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