

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER[®]



RUSTHENGE

VANESSA HOSKINS

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



PATHFINDER

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The village of Osprey Cove has led a quiet, peaceful existence for decades. Though they rarely interact with their sibling village of Iron Harbor, things change forever the night a storm brings a dying messenger with an eerie warning. The PCs accompany an envoy from Osprey Cove to see what has become of Iron Harbor. Once there, an investigation soon reveals that the local temple of Gorum has been invaded by a sinister cult.

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After exposing the cult's atrocities in the temple of Gorum, the PCs explore the strange subterranean complex under the ancient, rusted monoliths known as Rusthenge. Within these hidden chambers, the adventurers learn about the sinister cult's primary aim: resurrecting a dead demon lord!

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As the PCs close in on the cultist leader, they learn of a complicated ritual he's performing to resurrect Xar-Azmak, demon lord of rust and decay. The PCs must work against the building magic of this ritual, then finally confront the cultist at the edge of the Darklands before he can set into motion a series of events that could bring the demon lord back to life.

ADDRESSING DISCOMFORT

Rusthenge involves elements that focus on a supernatural disease called rust creep that weakens the body and brings decay to objects carried and worn, but this affliction being a disease isn't a load-bearing part of the plot. Your group may be uncomfortable including themes of disease at your table—in such an event, you can recontextualize rust creep as a curse, a slowly-moving poison, or simply as a sinister transmutation effect born from a region of the Abyss.

RUSTHENGE FLIP-MAT

This adventure makes use of a custom Flip-Mat, available now everywhere you buy your games. Each side depicts an important location found in this adventure, and each map is also available in this book. There's no need to draw out these locations when you can pick up this Flip-Mat and have the work done for you!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

- 1** The PCs begin the adventure at level 1.
- 2** The PCs should reach level 2 before investigating Rusthenge and the first dungeon floor below.
- 3** The PCs should be level 3 before descending to the Temple of Xar-Azmak on the second level of Rusthenge. They should reach level 4 by the adventure's completion.





CHAPTER 1: MESSAGE IN THE NIGHT

Rusthenge is set in western New Thassilon, on Chakikoth Isle. In particular, the adventure focuses on a stretch along the isle's southern shores—a region known as the Kindred Coast. This area is about a 20-hour trek south of the dangerous ruins of Old Xin-Edasseril, the one-time capital of Runelord Belimarius's nation. For ages, Chakikoth Isle was one of several unclaimed islands in the Ironbound Archipelago, a region sandwiched between the Lands of the Linnorm Kings and the frontier of Varisia. The archipelago's position beyond the borders of any nation's rule made it an appealing destination for pioneers and settlers to set out for and establish new homes. Life in the Ironbound Archipelago was not easy, but to those who welcomed the challenge, the freedom to live as they wished was too great a draw to resist.

In the year 4606 AR, at the dawn of the Age of Lost Omens, a series of frightening storms scoured many parts of the world, and the pirate city of Riddleport in Varisia was no exception. Weeks after the storms cleared, two siblings, Dartanious and Santwi, took advantage of the chaos and disarray to flee their servitude at the hands of Riddleport's crime lords. The military-minded Dartanious had been working on a plan to escape and was waiting for an appropriate diversion to put his plan into action. Meanwhile, Santwi had inspired their fellow captives, helping them to feel brave enough to attempt an escape in the chaos the storms left in their wake.

Sailing in two ships they stole from the harbor, the siblings and their combined crews of nearly a hundred followers made their way north across the Shining

Sea, eventually making landfall on the southern shore of Chakikoth Isle. Here, far from the cruelties of their hometown, the siblings and their crews started new lives. They founded a village called Osprey Cove, named after the birds that populated the shoreline. For nearly a year, things went well, but by the end of that time, the siblings' bickering had resulted in a schism. Santwi, a worshipper of Cayden Cailean, wanted to continue developing Osprey Cove into a gentle, commune-style society of fishers and farmers, but Dartanious was a worshipper of Gorum. He increasingly focused on plans to train a navy so that, one day, he could return to Riddleport to strike back at its crime lords. Before the two siblings and their followers came to blows, Dartanious gathered his followers and abandoned Osprey Cove. They traveled up the coast to establish a second village and named it Iron Harbor.

For years, the two villages grew and prospered, slowly augmenting their populations with a trickle of newcomers searching for a place to start new lives. Each town's leaders were gifted and charismatic, and their villagers were hardworking and loyal, but they rarely mixed. They established their own trade with villages on other islands in the archipelago, secured their own defenses and stores, and when they did think of each other, those thoughts were tainted with bitterness and suspicion. A sort of cold war escalated between the two settlements, a long-lasting feud that would outlive both siblings. Today, Dartanious and Santwi are long dead, but the villages of Osprey Cove and Iron Harbor live on. In honor of their founders, the locals refer to this stretch of Chakikoth's shoreline as the Kindred Coast, yet their cooperation ends there.

But with the rise of New Thassilon, life has changed for the people of the Kindred Coast. Thankfully, the new ruler of this region, Runelord Belimarius, is more concerned with her disputes with rival Queen Sorshen, power grabs against the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, and opposition from Varisia to the south. So far, she and her armies have not paid much mind to the smaller settlements that already existed in the Ironbound Archipelago when she returned to power in the region. The villagers realize this is mostly because Runelord Belimarius considers these villages to already be part of her domain. And this is how the people of Osprey Cove like it. When Runelord Belimarius and her agents turn their attention to Chakikoth Isle, it is invariably to the notorious ruins of Old Xin-Edasseril at the isle's heart—a place the citizens of the Kindred Coast have long avoided.

But once a year, a tax collector visits the Kindred Coast to gather dues for the capital of New Xin-Edasseril, located four islands to the northeast. The tithes they demand are light, and while the villagers

still rankle at having to pay taxes to anyone, they also realize that the less attention they draw from Runelord Belimarius, the better. To their relief, the tax collectors always seem eager to conduct their business quickly and never even stay the night in town, and so far they have left Osprey Cove and Iron Harbor alone to conduct business as usual.

Still, the leaders of Osprey Cove fear that they're living on borrowed time, and talk about abandoning the Kindred Coast to seek a new home further abroad has been circulating in town. Until the town can reach a decision, though, the villagers do their best to lie low and not cause a scene, so that they will continue to be beneath the notice of their land's ancient overlord. Unfortunately, something that has festered for a long time in the hinterlands of the Kindred Coast is about to threaten that status quo.

A Deeper History

Today, the site referred to as Rusthenge is known to the people of the Kindred Coast as an eerie place best avoided, yet until now, no one suspected deeper chambers below the strange circle of rusty metallic spires. The villagers are right to avoid the place, for its history is sinister indeed.

Many years before Earthfall, the demon lord of rust, Xar-Azmak, was slain during his devastating attack on the infernal city of Dis, but not before he and his demonic armies left many buildings in rusted ruins. One of the demon lord's most devoted cultists, a man named Theiltemar, fled the battlefield in Hell with a relic snatched from Xar-Azmak's dying body—an artifact that would become known as the *Horn of Rust*. Theiltemar returned to the Material Plane and to his homeland of Thassilon, where he went into hiding for several years, but when it became apparent that Dispat's armies weren't looking for him, Theiltemar set into motion a plot to resurrect Xar-Azmak. He convinced Runelord Belimarius to fund the construction of an underground research facility where he proposed he would study the properties of various skymetals to aid in her own research. Belimarius fell for it, and within a few years, a series of metal towers Theiltemar called the Vloric Spires shone on the southern shores of the nation of Edasseril. Theiltemar set his minions and apprentices to work studying skymetals, but he focused his own research on methods by which he could use Xar-Azmak's horn to resurrect the demon lord.

But then disaster struck. Earthfall took Thassilon apart at the seams, and much of the nation of Edasseril sunk below the waves. While the region surrounding the Vloric Spires remained above the waters, the spires

THE DEAD MAN'S TALE

The dead man was a Gorumite priest named Blanton. He did indeed hail from Iron Harbor, but he fled after escaping from the cultists who took over the village's temple of Gorum. Blanton perished from a combination of exposure, two poisoned crossbow bolt wounds delivered from a dero, and the advanced stages of an otherworldly affliction known as rust creep. As the PCs progress in this adventure, they may encounter NPCs who might be willing to tell them some or all of Blanton's sorry final days.

themselves crumbled, leaving behind nothing but a ring of jagged metal spikes. Theiltemar and his favored minions remained in the underground levels below, where they survived for several years until finally succumbing to internal strife and self-destruction.

For many thousands of years, the aboveground ruins of the Vloric Spires lay forgotten. Like most Thassilonian ruins, the Vloric Spires and the chambers below had been protected by preservative magic intended to combat the passage of time, but the damage done to the upper reaches of the spires left them less protected. Over the ages, they grew rusted and pitted. The spires were visible from ships that sailed close to the southern reaches of Chakikoth Isle, and sailors took to calling the place Rusthenge. Even after settlers came and established two villages on the Kindred Coast, the site was avoided, for the place shed an uncanny aura that made animals violent, flora unpleasant, and sent periodic strange humming sounds up from below.

When the time-locked city of Xin-Edasseril was restored to the modern timeline and New Thassilon became one of Avistan's newest nations, many of its citizens struggled with reintegrating into the new world. One such person is Meitremar, grandson of Theiltemar. To him, memories of his grandfather remained fresh in his mind after spending so long trapped in time. Eager to track down his grandfather's legacy and finish what he started, Meitremar chartered a ship and sailed to the Kindred Coast. Delighted to find a settlement not far from Rusthenge, he and his followers infiltrated Iron Harbor and, using a mix of bribery, threats, and magic, took control. For the past few days, Meitremar has been establishing a new cult to Xar-Azmak in the chambers below Rusthenge in hopes of discovering his grandfather's remains, reclaiming the *Horn of Rust*, and picking up where his grandfather's plans to resurrect the Sin of Steel left off.

Starting Rusthenge

The night before this adventure begins, a storm lashes the Kindred Coast, and the citizens of Osprey Cove spend the evening sheltering indoors with hot drinks, cozy companionship, and tale-telling, as has been the tradition for years during such events. The next morning, one of the village elders makes a startling discovery—a man, near death, lies collapsed in the middle of the one road leading into town. Just before he perishes, he gasps out an unsettling warning—something dreadful has happened in Iron Harbor, Osprey Cove's sibling settlement.

When your players create characters for Rusthenge, each should consider choosing a background from those presented in the Adventure Toolbox (page 61). A player can choose a background from those presented in the *Core Rulebook* if they wish, but if they do so, work with the player to adjust the background's flavor to mesh well with that of Osprey Cove. The players should also be familiar with the background of the two villages (Osprey Cove and Iron Harbor), their shared history, and the current silent animosity between the two, as detailed at the start of this adventure.

The following read-aloud text is meant to quickly summarize the situation that leads the PCs to being on the road to Iron Harbor; once you read this text to the PCs, you can proceed immediately to them approaching area A1 of Kindred's Crossing (page 8). Alternatively, you can use this text as a guideline to present these events in play as an extended roleplaying encounter with the PCs, as detailed on the next page.

An unusual surprise came to Osprey Cove the morning after the storm. On an early dawn walk to appraise the storm damage, Elder Johedia found a dying man sprawled at the edge of town. Suffering from exposure, two infected crossbow bolt wounds, and a strange sickness that left rust-red splotches all over his body, the man gasped out an unsettling warning before he died: "Iron Harbor... rust... ship... all dead... before... too late..."

The man was dressed in rusted armor and clutched an equally rusted religious symbol of Gorum in one hand. This, and his final words, suggested something dreadful had happened in the nearby village of Iron Harbor. Osprey Cove's youngest leader, Elder Ordwi, quickly organized an expedition to travel the daylong trip east to Iron Harbor, both to offer help as needed, but also to extend overtures of peace, to bring an end to the yearslong feud that has kept the only two villages of the Kindred Coast at odds. Whether you volunteered or were recruited, your group is now well on their way along the Old Coast Road as Elder Ordwi's escorts. What might await your arrival at Iron Harbor this evening?

OPTIONAL: STARTING EARLIER

Rusthenge assumes that the game begins as the PCs approach their first combat at area A1, but if you prefer, you can start the night before. Give the PCs time to introduce themselves. They could even be present when Blanton is discovered and could hear his dying words. A PC who examines his body can attempt a DC 15 Medicine check, confirming on a success that his crossbow bolt wounds were poisoned by giant centipede venom. A critical success confirms that the strange disease he suffered from was causing his skin and muscles to atrophy.

Osprey Cove is a small village, but there's enough there for the PCs to purchase most low-level supplies they might wish. Consider having Elder Ordwi pay them each 10 gp from the village treasury for their service as her guards on the trip.

OSPREY COVE

SETTLEMENT 2

CG VILLAGE

Isolated fishing commune

Government Elders (communal)

Population 120 (85% humans, 15% other)

Languages Common, Varisian

Religions Desna, Cayden Cailean

Threats feuds with Iron Harbor, meddling from New Thassilon, seasonal storms

Friendly Commune While Osprey Harbor's citizens look to a council of elders for advice, the citizens govern themselves in a cooperative communal style. The villagers are eager to help out each other, as success for one is success for all. While Earn Income checks are limited to 2nd-level or lower tasks, any attempt to Earn Income in Osprey Harbor gains a +1 circumstance bonus as a result of this neighborly help.

Elder Anlorgog (NG nonbinary undine ranger 2) helps direct village fishing efforts

Elder Bo-Mel (CG female dwarf farmer 3) helps direct village farming and construction efforts

Elder Johedia (CG female half-elf oracle 3) serves as the primary healer of Osprey Cove

Elder Ordwi (CG female human cleric 2) is the youngest elder, still settling into her new role

Elder Vandous (CN male human fisher 3) is the oldest of the village elders, a record keeper and historian



ELDER ORDWI

As a devout follower and priest of Cayden Cailean, Elder Ordwi believes that the freedoms of the village of Osprey Cove will be stifled if Xin-Edasseril ever decides to rule them directly instead of simply taxing them in the almost absent-minded way they have for the past few years. She runs the only pub in town, which has a single guest room in case of travelers or patrons who are too inebriated to find their way home. While she's on this journey with the PCs, she leaves the pub open for the villagers to use as they wish, trusting in the honor system—a system that works quite well among the trustworthy citizens of Osprey Cove.

As the journey continues, Ordwi asks the PCs to dispense with her title and requests they use just her name. Not only has she not yet fully settled into her role as an elder, but she sees the PCs as equals and wants to empower their choices and roles in this journey. As a 2nd-level cleric, she's a bit more resilient than the 1st-level PCs. She takes an active role in combat encounters during the coastal trip but generally focuses on healing and otherwise supporting the PCs rather than attacking foes.

You should allow Ordwi to use the same rules PCs use for dying in the unlikely event she's reduced to 0 Hit Points.

ORDWI

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE CG MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Female human cleric of Cayden Cailean

Perception +8

Languages Common, Thassilonian, Varisian

Skills Athletics +4, Crafting +5, Diplomacy +7, Religion +8, Society +5

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

Items explorer's clothing, minor healing potions (3), rapier, iron religious symbol, rations (5 days)

AC 12; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +10

HP 30

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ rapier +4 (deadly d8, disarm, finesse), **Damage** 1d6 piercing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 18; **1st** *bleed*, *heal* (×4), *spirit link*; **Cantrips (1st)** *daze*, *forbidding ward*, *light*, *shield*, *stabilize*

Cleric Domain Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 18; **1st** *unimpeded stride* (Core Rulebook 398)

Divine Font *heal*

Healing Hands When Ordwi casts *heal*, she rolls 1d10s instead of d8s.

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KINDRED CROSSING

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Kindred Crossing

At about the midpoint of the journey, approximately 9 miles from Osprey Cove, the faint traces of road the PCs have been following east along the coast become more obvious. The PCs are approaching Kindred Crossing—the site where citizens from both villages originally started working together to create a bridge over a cleft in the shoreline near the tip of a short peninsula. While the journey to Kindred Crossing, as well as the remainder of the trek after, are relatively safe and uneventful, several complications and dangers await the PCs as they navigate this portion of the Old Coast Road.

As the PCs approach this area, make sure to determine what exploration activities they are taking, as these may adjust how the encounter at area A3 begins.

A1. A CRY FOR HELP

LOW 1

After following only faint traces of the Old Coast Road, the approach to Kindred's Crossing becomes apparent. Here, the road grows more obvious, with portions even retaining old paving stones as it turns south toward a

short, rocky peninsula. To the north, a steep, weather-worn ridge of stone rises thirty feet high into the air, featuring an occasional ledge that appears to provide nesting spots for ospreys. To the east, the road rises up from the shoreline to follow a wide ledge that winds around the peninsula. Ahead, near the peninsula's tip, the road reaches a cleft in the steep shoreline, over which the remains of an old and incomplete wooden bridge stand. Nearby, what appears to be a freshly wrecked rowboat sits upside down among the tide pools.

This short ridge is difficult to clamber over, requiring DC 20 Athletics checks to Climb up and over the ridge, which reaches a height of 30 feet above the roadway along its midpoint.

Creatures: As with the aftermath of any coastal storm, the surging waves left debris along the shoreline of the Kindred Coast. The wrecked rowboat is one such remnant, but so are the creatures that have been uprooted from their homes a bit further out to sea. A reefclaw has been sheltering in the tide pools under the upended boat since being pummeled by the waves. It's since recovered but has found that it enjoys its

new home and has no intention of leaving. This has bothered the haniver gremlin who thinks of the wreck as rightfully their own, as they spent days stalking the ship from which the rowboat was lost during the storm. The haniver's last two attempts to run off the reefclaw resulted in frightening near pinches, and they're not eager for a third confrontation with the snippy creature.

As the PCs approach this area, the haniver sees a fun new opportunity. They lurk in the tide pools 20 feet south of the wrecked boat and cast *ventriloquism* to cause high-pitched cries for help to issue from under the overturned, wrecked rowboat. Any PC who investigates quickly annoys the territorial reefclaw, which slithers out to attack, much to the haniver's delight. The gremlin begins cackling and splashing about in their tide pool as a fight begins between the PCs and the reefclaw.

The reefclaw flees back to open waters if reduced to fewer than 6 Hit Points. The haniver then moves in to attack the PCs, hoping to steal shiny things from them and scare them off from "their" boat now that they've been softened up by reefclaw pinches. The haniver shrieks in pain and tries to swim away as well if reduced to fewer than 3 Hit Points.

HANIVER GREMLIN

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 120

Initiative Perception +5

REEFCLAW

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 279

Initiative Perception +8

Treasure: The rowboat, once a lifeboat for a pirate ship that sunk during the storm, has a small stash of treasure tucked into a waterproof leather bag that was stuffed into a cabinet under a seat. Within are 20 sp, 1 gp, and a *potion of water breathing* in an airtight bottle.

A2. THE OLD BRIDGE

Two weatherworn stone statues stand on either side of a fifteen-foot-wide rift in the shore, extending their arms toward one another. A partially completed, partially eroded old stone bridge doesn't quite cross the gulf. In the water fifteen feet below, the surf crashes on a worn wedge of stone that might have at one time been part of the bridge.

When Santwi and Dartanious agreed to work together and build the Coast Road (now the Old Coast Road), they began work on a stone bridge over

a gap in the natural stone of the peninsula. This bridge originally featured four stone pillars, two which were carved to resemble Santwi and Dartanious holding the top of the bridge's railing and facing out towards the water. Over the last century, erosion has marred the faces of these statues clean.

For many years, Osprey Cove attempted to keep the bridge in good repair, but the town has generally ignored it for the past decade. A wooden bridge replacement was scavenged long ago by Iron Harbor for use in building roofs and ships. When Blanton reached this location on his desperate journey to Osprey Cove, he was pursued by a pair of deros sent by the cult to prevent him from reaching his destination, and in a desperate gambit he leapt into the sea on the southern side and swam through the surf to the northern gap. This conflict took place at sunrise, so the dero had no choice but to retreat to area A3. Exhausted from his sickness, the two poisoned bolt strikes he suffered, and the harrowing swim, it took Blanton the rest of the day to stagger his way to Osprey Cove.

This area acts as a skill challenge to test the PCs' creativity and ingenuity to find a way across. The most likely solutions are summarized below—each skill check made to cross the gap should be a DC 15 check (unless the attempt is particularly dangerous, such as tightrope walking).

Climbing and Swimming: A PC can Climb 15 feet down to the water, then Swim across the 5-foot-wide, 10-foot-deep tide pool, then Climb 15 feet back up on the opposite side. A PC could also Climb around the northeastern edge of the gap, avoiding the water entirely, but doing so takes longer. The water is deep enough that a 15-foot-fall inflicts no damage; a character can halt a fall by Grabbing an Edge with a DC 15 Reflex save.

Jumping: A PC can attempt a Long Jump to cross the ravine at its narrowest point near the steep northern ridge. Doing so requires the PC to cover the 15-foot gap with a DC 15 Athletics check (and at least 10 feet of distance covered before the Long Jump is attempted). A PC whose Speed is at least 30 feet can cover the gap automatically with a single Leap.

Using a Rope: The PCs can throw a lasso or a grappling hook over the far statue, pull the rope tight, and then anchor the near side of the rope to the adjacent statue. Anchoring the rope is a secret ranged attack roll using the PC's highest proficiency against AC 20 (on a critical failure, the grappling hook or lasso appears to be anchored, but pulls free once a PC is halfway across). Using a rope tied in this way allows a PC to cross the gap by clambering and clinging to the rope with a DC 15 Climb check or a DC 30 Acrobatics check to Balance as they tightrope walk across the gap.

Treasure: On the eastern side of the bridge, a single bolt from a hand crossbow is embedded in a wooden post near the bridgeworks. An examination of the bolt confirms it to be the same size capable of inflicting the wound found on Blanton's body, and if it's extracted from the pole and examined, tiny traces of giant centipede venom that remained on the bolt (and avoided being washed away by the rain as a result of being lodged in the wood) can be identified with a successful DC 15 Crafting check to Identify Alchemy.

Reward: Grant the PCs 40 XP for getting past the broken bridge.

A3. SHELTERED LEDGE

MODERATE 1

As the PCs move along this length of road, there's a chance they might notice the hard-to-spot ledge above. A PC who is Scouting or Searching can attempt a secret DC 15 Perception check or DC 13 Scouting Lore check to notice the ledge from below. If the PCs do notice the ledge, the slope leading up to it can be clambered up by treating it as greater difficult terrain, but it doesn't require an Athletics check to Climb. Should they do so, they'll face the ledge's occupants on even footing.

If the PCs don't notice the ledge and walk on by, then the dero keeping watch from above takes a shot at the last PC in the line with her hand crossbow, hoping to catch that target flat-footed and deal sneak attack damage. Each time she misses, give the PCs a DC 5 Perception check to hear the sound of the crossbow bolt striking something nearby. A critical success on this check allows a PC to realize the shot came from the ledge above.

If every character in the party is using the Avoid Notice exploration activity, allow each PC (and Ordwi) to attempt secret DC 16 Stealth checks (these checks are against the giant centipedes' Perception DC). If all the PCs succeed, they avoid the encounter entirely.

The ledge itself is shaded by an overhanging lip of stone, which keeps the area in deep shadow except for a few hours during the morning.

Creatures: When Blanton fled Iron Harbor on his desperate attempt to seek help from Osprey Cove, he left in the dead of night, hoping to avoid being observed. He wasn't so lucky, and a pair of deros who work for the cult of Xar-Azmak were sent in pursuit of him. The deros and their trained giant centipedes caught up to Blanton just before sunrise as he was taking stock of the bridge at area A2. The deros opened fire on him, and he got off a few shots from his shortbow, wounding both of them before his bowstring broke. Desperate, Blanton leapt into the sea. With the sun rising in minutes and not eager to follow Blanton's plunge, the two deros

retreated to this ledge, but even pressed against the far wall they were forced to endure six hours of painful burns from exposure to sunlight. One of the two dero perished before the storm rolled in and blocked the sunlight enough to save the surviving dero, who had fallen unconscious from her wounds.

This dero, Sydri, woke from unconsciousness in the dead of night at the height of the storm. Astounded by the wrath of the surface world's weather and unsure of how many hours she had until the next sunrise, she left the safety of her ledge long enough to gather up several boughs and clumps of shrubbery. By the time the sun rose again, she was able to retreat into near darkness under a shelter made of the shrubbery, with her dead companion's clothing draped over the framework. Her plan is to wait for nightfall before making her way back to Iron Harbor, but when the PCs pass by on the road below that afternoon, she can't resist the urge to attack them, reasoning that even if they aren't going to investigate Iron Harbor, at least they might have food and supplies to help her recover from her near-death experience.

Once the fight begins, Sydri remains up on her ledge, unwilling to climb down into the direct sunlight (although unless the battle takes an hour, she won't take further damage from exposure to the sun). She commands her pet giant centipedes to clamber down to attack the PCs while she continues firing on them with her hand crossbow. She switches to her aklys if a PC attempts to scramble up to her ledge, attempting to trip them. Sydri fights to the death, but if captured alive and the PCs can establish communication with her (note she only speaks Aklo and Undercommon), she's willing to trade information for her release, but even then she's misleading as she doesn't wish to reveal much about her cult allies. She attempts to Lie to the PCs, fabricating a story about how she and her companion (nodding her head to the badly sunlight-burned, naked, dead dero slumped against the back wall of the overhung ledge) emerged into the surface world from a narrow fissure up higher in the ridge, then attacked a man who passed by on the road, intending to capture him alive and drag him back down to the dark for experimentation on to how he could withstand the sun's light. If confronted with her lies, she grows quiet and sullen and speaks no more—taking her first chance to escape, even if it means fleeing through the sunlight. It's likely only through magic, like *charm*, that the PCs will be able to make Sydri helpful, at which point what she might have to reveal to the PCs is up to you.

Note that Sydri's weak condition is the result of her wounds and exposure to too much sunlight. If she escapes back to Iron Harbor and has a chance to rest

for a full 24 hours while underground, she loses the weak creature adjustments.

SYDRI

CREATURE 1

Weak female dero stalker (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 84)
Initiative Perception +3

GIANT CENTIPEDES (2)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 61
Initiative Perception +6

Reward: If that party avoids this ambush completely, grant the party XP as if they defeated the monsters in battle in this event.

Iron Harbor

The village of Iron Harbor stretches across a wide but shallow harbor running east to west, boxed in by stony peninsulas. Portions of the larger eastern peninsula are above water during low tide, leaving the western opening as the only reliable way in and out of the harbor. The western shore of this passage into the harbor features a small ruined pier known as Fisher's Point (area B6), while the opposite side is dominated by Thunderhead Isle—a rocky islet that connects to the mainland only during low tide, and atop which brood the ruins of Rusthenge (area B7) itself.

The Old Coast Road passes by several tide pools while heading north from Fisher's Point, then curves east with the shoreline, passes by Gold's Ruin (three manor houses built by a group of nobles from Magnimar, area B5), and finally it arrives at the village of Iron Harbor proper. The sight of a large trireme painted in green and yellow and flying the flag of Xineuthra, Runelord Belimarius's capital city, should give the PCs immediate pause, as no one from Osprey Cove suspected that Iron Harbor had any additional affiliation with New Thassilon.

The village sports a single slip shipyard and drydock with supporting workshops. Most of the buildings are plain-looking, single-story stone structures with wood-shingled roofs, and are a mix of simple homes, workshops, general stores, smoking houses for fish (the village's primary food source), and the like. In the town itself, the two most unusual-looking buildings are a large red-roofed building on the west side (Elsie's, area B1) and the massive drydock building (area B3)—both of these structures should be called out to the PCs as standing out from the other structures in town.

IRON HARBOR

SETTLEMENT 2

CN VILLAGE

Remote Gorumite settlement

Government High priest (religious leadership)

Population 80 (90% humans, 10% other)

Languages Common, Varisian

Religions Gorum

Threats cult of Xar-Azmak, seasonal storms

Gorumite Village As one would expect from a village led by worshippers of Gorum, weapons and armor are easier to come by here. Treat Iron Harbor as a 3rd-level settlement for the purposes of purchasing weapons, armor, ammunition, and associated items.

Knurr Ragnulf (CN male dwarf ex-cleric of Gorum 2) leader of Iron Harbor, currently corrupted by the cult of Xar-Azmak

Elsie (CN female halfling alchemist 3) local alchemist, baker, and potential ally

APPROACHING THE VILLAGE

As the PCs and Elder Ordwi approach the edge of the village proper, they're greeted by a muscular woman armed with a greatsword and wearing full plate armor emblazoned with the religious symbol of Gorum. She holds up her hand to indicate the party should stop, then introduces herself as Sister Vanda before asking the group what their purpose is. Sister Vanda is, in fact, a fallen Gorumite. Placed here to keep an eye out for Blanton, should he return, she's initially caught off guard by the PCs' approach.

Unless the PCs speak up, Elder Ordwi introduces herself, then replies that they're from Osprey Cove and have come to Iron Harbor after an unknown man from here showed up and died. This causes Vanda's expression to shift from wariness to surprise for a moment, and she decides to take the woman she considers an enemy leader as a prisoner, leaving the PCs (whom she foolishly assumes are mere servants) to fend for themselves. As she recovers her composure, she says the following.

"That would have been Brother Blanton. He'd grown quite ill and we were trying our best to care for him, but a few nights ago he became violent and fled our care. We've been looking for him but had no idea he'd made it all the way to Osprey Cove.

"Elder Ordwi, is it? Good. I'll need you to come with me to Stonehome—Lord Ragnulf would wish to speak to one of the leaders of Osprey Cove about Brother Blanton, but also about the future of the Kindred Coast. There is much to discuss, and we can accommodate you alone at Stonehome for the night, but the rest of you must wait here in town."

Elder Ordwi nods in understanding, then explains she needs a moment to speak privately to the PCs first. Sister Vanda huffs a little impatiently, but then

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nods in understanding and steps away, allowing the PCs a chance to speak to their friend. Any PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Gorum Lore check or a DC 20 Perception check to Sense Motive on Sister Vanda can tell something's up—a critical success suggests that the news about Blanton in particular caught her off-guard. Elder Ordwi picked up on this as well, and confides the following quietly to the PCs.

"Something's going on here. Did you notice how she seemed surprised to find out about our visitor? And that Thassilonian ship in the harbor—that has to mean something as well. Parting ways here for the evening gives you a golden opportunity to learn more. I'll accompany this Sister Vanda up to meet with Lord Ragnulf, but you all should look around the village a bit. Keep an eye out. Ask questions. Find somewhere to stay the night. Figure out what that Thassilonian ship is here for. But above all, be discreet!"

Once she's had her say, Ordwi smiles and calls Sister Vanda over again, and with a final nod to the PCs, the pair head off toward Stonehome, leaving the party to

themselves. After Elder Ordwi leaves the PCs, it's up to them what to do next. Iron Harbor is not a large village, but there are several areas of interest they could investigate. The PCs have a few hours to explore before they're too tired and need to rest for the night.

ASKING AROUND

While exploring Iron Harbor, the PCs might want to Gather Information. Each time the PCs succeed at a DC 15 Diplomacy check to Gather Information (or alternatively, after you decide that an NPC they've been talking to trusts them enough to share some scuttlebutt), either pick or randomly determine what rumor they hear from the following table.

IRON HARBOR RUMORS

d8	Rumor
1	Those jagged spires you see just to the south, sticking up from Thunderhead Isle? That's Rusthenge, but we don't go there. Some folks say that they've seen some weird lights flashing up there over the past few nights—haven't seen them myself, though, so I can't confirm.

- 2 That Thassilonian trireme is a merchant's personal craft; some important-looking man followed by an entire entourage got off when it landed a week ago. Word is he's a merchant from the east and is working out some sort of complicated trade agreement with Lord Ragnulf.
- 3 Stonehome is the temple of Gorum here, just down the road to the east. The priests there govern our village. They've shut the place up there since they've taken in the Thassilonian visitors and haven't let anyone in for worship since then.
- 4 Elsie's, the building over on the west side with the red roof, is the closest thing we have in town to an inn. Although it's not the most comfortable place to sleep, it'll at least keep you dry if it rains.
- 5 Those three abandoned manor houses to the west? We call 'em "Gold's Ruin," on account that ten years ago, a bunch of southern nobles decided to build mansions there, then I guess they left because they weren't strong enough to endure life here. Some say they're haunted.
- 6 I've seen a few crew on board that Thassilonian ship in the harbor there. They don't leave much, but sometimes they fish off the deck. Seems like they're waitin' for somethin', I think.
- 7 You been to Fisher's Point? It's a little old shack out west on the road. Decent fishing from there, if you don't mind the waves soaking you. A hermit named Derrol Finnick lives there. I think. Maybe he's been shacking up at Gold's Ruin, though.
- 8 Are you from Osprey Cove? Really?! You don't look nearly as spineless as they say! Why do they call it Osprey Cove? My mum says you talk to birds there. I'd rather talk to rams; they're strong! Sometimes I follow them up to the hills and watch the warriors fight on the roof of Stonehome.



Elsie

The main room of this building smells of baked goods and strange, bitter odors one might expect in an apothecary's shop. The room's decor seems undecided about whether it wants to be a tavern, a curio shop, or an alchemist's laboratory. The low shelves that line the walls display a staggering mix of elixirs, unguents, jars of glue, fresh-baked goods, cutlery, mugs, and the occasional smokestick or bundle of tindertwigs.

Moments later, a skinny halfling emerges from the back room to greet the PCs—Elsie (CN female halfling alchemist 3) herself. "Oh! You're new, ain'tcha? Where you come from them? You here from that fancy ship, or did another weird ship come floatin' in when I wasn't lookin'?" Below are some of the PCs' likely inquiries and Elsie's responses.

We're from Osprey Cove. "Nah, can't be. They haven't talked to us in ages. Too busy being stuck up and being part of a cooperative commune and talking to birds or whatever."

No, really, we're from Osprey Cove. "Well, nobody's perfect. Did you get yourself run out of town for being bad bird farmers or somethin'?"

Do you know Blanton? "Not really. One of them Gorumites. I've seen him about town, but less so since them Thassilonians showed up." (If the PCs reveal what became of Blanton, Elsie is startled and might even think the PCs are trying to trick her.)

Do you know Vanda? "Name doesn't ring a bell." (If the PCs reveal she's the guard they met at the edge of town, Elsie shrugs, noting, "It's hard to get to know—much less learn the names of—most of the Gorumites. They do love their armor, after all!")

What do you sell? "Lots'a things alchemical, but mostly glues for ship making and dyes for just about anything. I have a healthy stock of medicine too. And baked goods too, of course, although those are best in the morning when they're fresh out of the oven."

What do you know about Rusthenge? "Bunch of twisted, rusty metal spires left here a millennia or four ago. Basically useless, although works well I hear as a landmark when you're headin' home from a day at sea. If you're thinking of heading up there, fair warning—place kinda makes some folks sick. I've got a few doses of my special brew on hand for you if you're thinking of going up there, provided you'll pay for it, of course!" (This "special brew" is Elsie's Excellent Bottled Vim, a concoction that will be quite helpful once the PCs begin to explore Rusthenge; see page 59 for more details.)

B1. ELSIE'S

When folks in town need anything from a healing salve to baked goods to a sturdy glue, they go to Elsie's. She's open during daylight hours, usually while she's working on one project or another, and closes an hour past sundown in the evenings. When she's closed, she's often away from her shop, speaking with the locals or one of her many cousins that live in town. Regardless, the first time the PCs approach the building, Elsie is within. When the PCs enter, read the following.

Are there any troubles in town? Any sicknesses spreading? “Nope. Apart from those Thassilonians that came in a week ago and then shacked up in Stonehome, things have been fine hereabouts lately. No strange sickness spreading that I know about. Wait. *Should* I know about something?” (If the PCs describe Blanton’s symptoms, she sighs in relief and reports that no one in town’s had anything close to that—not even those who get sick from visiting the spires in the first place.)

Can you tell us about Stonehome? “Place is run by the Gorumites. Not my deal, but I appreciate the stability they bring. They like to fight and think the best person at fighting is the best person to be in charge. Seems weird to me, but it’s not my religion. Place has been quiet for the last week, though, ever since them Thassilonians showed up. Fine with me. Fewer Gorumites on the street means less clanking armor and, more importantly, less noisy praying. But still—it’s not normal for them to be shut in this long.”

What’s with the ship in the harbor? “That Thassilonian thing? Belongs to a merchant, I hear. He and his entourage have been spending the last week in talks up at Stonehome. Who knows what they’re up to, but I’ve seen that there’s still some crew on the ship itself. None of ’em have come in to buy anything yet, which is just rude!”

Could we stay the night here? “Figured we’d get here sooner or later. One of these days, someone’ll have to build a proper inn here in town, but in the meantime... Inn the meantime... get it? Ummm... Yeah. I can help you out.” Elsie ushers the PCs to the largest table, telling them she’ll bring out dinner momentarily before bustling into the back room. She returns a few moments later with a tray of individual and delicious (but cold) grouse pies. During this time, she’ll continue to answer questions. She doesn’t charge for the meal, but asks for a payment of 5 sp per night the PCs wish to sleep on her floor.

Elsie’s Concerns

Elsie’s kept a brave face up over the past week, but she’s worried about what’s really going on in Iron Harbor. As she speaks to the PCs, and as long as the PCs give her no cause to believe otherwise, she’ll admit to them that things have been a bit off in town, ever since the Thassilonians arrived. If the PCs tell her about Blanton’s fate, or reveal that they fought a dero on the Old Coast Road, her conviction that something is up only grows stronger.

Elsie suggests the PCs seek out local hermit Derrol Finnick, who’s been squatting in one of the abandoned manors at Gold’s Ruin. “He’s a strange one, and not

actually a citizen of the village,” she explains, “but the Thassilonians might not even know he’s living out there—means he might have had a chance to notice something more.”

The two primary locations the PCs should investigate to learn more, Elsie notes, is the *Swordfish*—the Thassilonian ship that’s moored just south in the harbor—and Stonehome itself. If the PCs indicate that they’re interested in investigating Stonehome, she pauses a moment, then says, “If you’re looking for a way to get in there on the quiet... I might be able to help.” See *Entering Stonehome* on page 19 for more details if the PCs take Elsie up on this offer.

Reward: Grant the PCs 40 XP for speaking to Elsie and earning her assistance in entering Stonehome.

B2. THE SWORDFISH

The *Swordfish* came to Iron Harbor a week before this adventure began. Upon arrival, High Priest Knurr Ragnulf led a group of his acolytes down to meet the unexpected visitors, then escorted Meitremar and his followers back to Stonehome, leaving the *Swordfish*’s crew behind. A few days later, frustrated with the delay, Captain Perrios took two of his crew up to Stonehome to inform Meitremar that it was time to return home, but after they were invited into the temple, they vanished as well. Now, the remaining crew, led by first mate and navigator Janis, are trapped between loyalty to their missing captain and a growing conviction that they should abandon him and return home.

Note that while the crew of the *Swordfish* aren’t members of the cult of Xar-Azmak, they’re still unpleasant and cruel sailors who view the citizens of Iron Harbor as rubes barely worth their interest. They’re eager to return home to Xin-Edasseril, but for now they aren’t willing to abandon their captain, who they believe is still somewhere in Stonehome.

Sneaking Onboard

The *Swordfish* is a 75-foot-long ship with a small crew of humans. To attempt an infiltration of the ship, a PC must spend 10 minutes to perform the Search Ship exploration activity, detailed on page 15. Characters who aren’t skilled in Stealth can instead attempt the Distract Crew exploration activity to provide additional aid for those sneaking onboard—resolve all Distract Crew attempts before making any Search Ship attempts.

DISTRACT CREW

CONCENTRATE | EXPLORATION | MENTAL

Whether it’s an attempt to engage the crew of the *Swordfish* from the pier in a confusing conversation, staging a distracting event, asking them about their reasons for being

here, or simply attempting to chat up the crew, a creature does their best for 10 minutes to distract the guards on deck to give those sneaking onboard a better chance at success. Have the PC describe what they are doing to be distracting, and determine if they need to attempt a DC 15 Deception check, a DC 17 Diplomacy check, or a DC 13 Performance check or Xin-Edasseril Lore check. Only one attempt to Distract the Crew can be attempted at a time, but other PCs can attempt to Aid the Distract Crew attempt.

Critical Success The crew becomes distracted. Grant all attempts to Search the Ship during this 10 minutes a +1 circumstance bonus.

Success The crew becomes distracted.

Failure The crew does not become distracted.

Critical Failure The crew becomes suspicious, and all attempts to Search the Ship during this 10 minutes take a -1 circumstance penalty.

SEARCH SHIP

CONCENTRATE EXPLORATION

The PC sneaks onto the *Swordfish* and skulks around the ship looking for clues for 10 minutes. If the crew is not distracted, have them attempt a DC 15 Stealth check or a DC 13 Sailing Lore check. If the crew is distracted, the DC is reduced by 5. If the crew is suspicious, the DC is increased by 5.

Critical Success The PC makes multiple discoveries. Roll three times on the *Swordfish Discoveries* table.

Success The PC makes a discovery! Roll once the *Swordfish Discoveries* table.

Failure The PC fails to make any discoveries but is not caught by the crew.

Critical Failure Not only does the PC fail to make any discoveries, but they are spotted by a deckhand! At this point, the PC can call for parley (in which case, proceed with *Speaking to the Crew*), attack (in which case, proceed with *Getting in a Fight*), or try to flee by attempting a second Stealth check against the same DC. On a success, they escape capture, but the *Swordfish's* crew remains suspicious from this point onward and can no longer be distracted. On a failure, they're cornered and must either fight, talk, or surrender.

Swordfish Discoveries

Each of the following discoveries can be found only once. If a PC rolls a discovery that's already been found, shift the result down to the next lowest numbered result, or up to the next highest

numbered result if all the lower number results have been found already.

SWORDFISH DISCOVERIES

d20 Result	Discovery
1-6	A pouch of 3d6 sp.
7-10	A bottle of "Carpender"—a mid-quality Taldan bubble wine worth 10 gp.
11-14	The ship's payroll—a wooden coffer containing 230 sp and 100 gp.
15-17	Navigational logs and notes that reveal the <i>Swordfish</i> to be a mercenary ship that traditionally hires out to Thassilonian nobility, not a merchant's ship.
18-19	A small coffer containing four <i>potency crystal talismans</i> .
20	The <i>Swordfish's</i> log (see Handout #1; note that this log is written in Thassilonian).



Getting in a Fight

This adventure assumes the PCs don't attack the crew of the *Swordfish*, but if they do, they'll face a dangerous fight.

The crew consists of first mate and navigator Janis and six deck hands. For statistics, you can represent Janis with a navigator stat block (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide* 242) and each of the six deck hands with dockhand stat blocks (*Gamemastery Guide* 222) with Sailing Lore replacing Labor Lore.

In all, a clash with these seven is beyond an Extreme 1 encounter, but Janis orders the crew to capture the PCs alive rather than kill them. If the PCs are defeated, Janis offers them freedom in exchange for rescuing her captain from Stonehome. In the unlikely event the PCs emerge victorious from this deadly battle, news of the fight spreads quickly through town and reaches Stonehome within an hour, putting the temple on alert against the party, but they'll be able to recover all 6 of the *Swordfish Discoveries* detailed above in 10 minutes.

Speaking to the Crew

If the PCs hail the crew and ask for parley, First Mate Janis emerges within a few minutes onto the deck to ask what the PCs want. She initially believes the PCs to be curious locals, but upon learning that they're more (including if she discovers they're from Osprey Cove), she grows intrigued and invites them on board to speak more civilly. She asks the PCs to explain why they're in town, and becomes very interested quickly once the PCs reveal any of the suspicious events they've witnessed.

Excerpts from The Swordfish's Log

- Winds brisk, skies clear. Lord Meitremar paid passage for himself, his entourage (including a quiet but unnerving sinspawn), and a large wooden case he declared as containing an "exotic pet" for a colleague stationed at an outpost on Thoska Isle.
- Winds brisk, overcast skies. Lord Meitremar approached me with an adjustment and promised a bonus upon return to Xin-Eclasseril. We are no longer bound for Thoska, but the south coast of Chakikoth, to the squatter village of Iron Harbor.
- Winds brisk, rain. Lord Meitremar's entourage has been disrupting morale. Elitist attitudes, disrespect for the ship and crew. Looking forward to being rid of him.
- Winds calm, overcast skies. Put crew to work on ears, but made good progress.
- Winds brisk, rain.
- Winds brisk, rain. Deckhand Telsen reported seeing Lord Meitremar's sinspawn minion opening and closing a slat on the crate in the hold an hour before sunrise. Suspecting smuggling, I entered the hold to investigate. Movable slat in side of crate could be used to stash goods, but upon opening it I spied within a strange beast, some sort of lanky, six-legged wolf with a plantlike stalk growing from its body. The beast was sleeping, and there were no signs within the crate of smuggled goods. Disciplined Telsen for rumormongering.
- Winds brisk, rain. Arrived at sunset. Still strange to see the old spires in such a rusted state. Lord Meitremar met with Iron Harbor's commander, then left with his entourage to the large stone structure at the edge of the village. Commanded the crew to remain on board and not to mix with local rabble.
- Another day at harbor. A few hours before dawn, several of Lord Meitremar's people returned without him and loaded the "exotic pet" crate onto a cart and hauled it off around the peninsula toward Thunderhead Isle. Final straw. This mystery needs to end, and we need to head home. Tomorrow morning I shall debark and pay a visit to Stonehome and demand a swift leave.

HANDOUT #1

During the conversation, allow each PC to attempt their choice of a DC 15 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check. Each success earns the party 1 Respect Point with Janis (2 Respect Points on a critical success, or loses 1 Respect Point on a critical failure); the total number of points accumulated determines how she finally reacts.

0 or Fewer Respect Points: Janis regards the PCs as fools and demands they leave at once before they bring more trouble. She may entertain future parleys on later days, but if so, the PCs take a -1 circumstance penalty on all skill checks to earn Respect Points.

1 to 3 Respect Points: Janis realizes the PCs are more than just backwater locals, and once the conversation is over she makes her request.

4 or more Respect Points: Janis respects the PCs enough to make her request, but she also shares the information found in the *Swordfish's* log with them (see Handout #1).

Janis's Request: Once the conversation is over, Janis asks the PCs if they'd be willing to do her a favor—head up to Stonehome and find out what happened to her captain. She can offer additional assistance getting into the building—see Entering Stonehome on page 19. If the PCs can return with news, she'll reward them with four *potency crystal talismans* and 30 gp.

Captured PCs: If any of the PCs are captured while Searching the Ship, Janis is particularly annoyed with the group, and all skill checks made while speaking to her take a -3 circumstance penalty. She'll agree to release a captured PC only if the party returns all stolen loot and intel, if the PCs successfully Coerce her with a DC 22 Intimidation check, or if the PCs promise to try to save her captain (in this case, the PCs' continued freedom is their reward rather than the *potency crystal talismans* and gold).

Final Reward

Grant the PCs 40 XP for successfully Searching the *Swordfish* or speaking to the crew without resorting to combat. If they gain access to the *Swordfish's* log, grant them an additional 20 XP.

B3. DRYDOCK

This massive enclosed drydock is currently empty, as no ships require serious repair and shipmaster **Birger Frodeson** (CN male human shipwright 4) is still waiting on a shipment of lumber to start work on a new vessel. Though the shipmaster is rather terse, he'll let the PCs use the drydock as a place to sleep if they can make him helpful, or if they pay him 1 gp per night. His initial attitude is indifferent—or unfriendly if he knows the PCs have been meddling in Gorumite affairs, or have been asking around about the Thassilonians.

B4. STONEHOME

Full details on this stone temple of Gorum appear starting on page 19.

B5. GOLD'S RUIN

A decade ago, three aristocrats from Magnimar arrived in Iron Harbor and paid Stonehome a small fortune for three plots of land adjacent to the high cliffs just west of the village. Each of these aristocrats represented a different affluent family from Magnimar: the Mindurians, the Valdemars, and the Vanderales; they hoped to develop a new settlement far north of Varisia's Lost Coast. Construction of the three manors began at once, but the buildings weren't quite complete before disaster struck Magnimar in the form of a devastating tsunami. Suddenly, protecting and repairing assets closer to home became a more important way to spend money and resources for these three aristocrats, and they abandoned their so-called "Chakikoth Project," never to return. The three partially completed manors have been left ever since to slowly fall into ruin. The locals have since taken to calling the small compound of ruined mansions "Gold's Ruin."

Within the three manors, there's little to find other than musty and ruined furniture, seabird nests in the rafters, vermin nests below the floorboards, and half-finished houses direly in need of repair. The western manor (once a Mindurian project) is little more than a foundation, while the eastern manor (funded by the Vanderales) is partially collapsed.

The central and smallest manor is the soundest of the trio, and while it includes a mostly leak-free roof, its interior walls are nothing more than a framework. This was the project of the Valdemars, and as the soundest remaining structure in Gold's Ruin, has also been the home of a man named **Derrol Finnick** (CN male human architect 3) ever since the aristocrats abandoned the site. A 58-year-old man and a former architect from Magnimar, Derrol came to Iron Harbor with the Valdemars, but after a dispute about his pay, he abandoned his patron and attempted to move into Iron Harbor. By the time he realized how ill a fit he was among a town of Gorum worshippers, his patron had left. He took up residence in the half-built manor, and after an ill-fated attempt to travel to Osprey Cove met with a close call when attempting to cross the fallen bridge at Kindred Crossing, he's settled into a life in the ruins. Here, he's managed a somewhat happy existence fishing and foraging for his food while living in the abandoned Valdemar estate. Derrol remains friendly and is eager for conversation, and if the PCs enter the manor, he quickly greets them.

"Derrol's the name! Derrol Finnick. Used to be—well, used to be a lot of things, but most recently an underpaid architect and now just Derrol. These are my houses! The rest of the town doesn't like them because they think they're haunted, but I don't mind. Ghosts never bothered me much, and there's plenty of space. Not many visit Iron Harbor, but here you are! What can ol' Derrol do for you?"

As an outsider to the village, but one who still considers himself part of Iron Harbor on some level, Derrol can give the PCs a fair bit of additional information. Below are some of the PCs' likely inquiries and Derrol's responses.

We're from Osprey Cove. "I've always wanted to visit! Probably more to my liking than this place, from what I've heard. Iron Harbor's got a tough name and tougher people, and it's not really for me. I tried being tough and failed; I'd rather just fish and make art."

How'd you end up here? "I came in some years back with the Valdemars, but I got fed up with not getting paid my due. By the time I realized that the locals nearby are even less pleasant, the Valdemars had left me behind. Just been spending my time here since then—I guess they kind of forgot me. Now I just fish and explore and sometimes make little sculptures and carvings."

Do you know Blanton? "Nope. Name's familiar, but... it's been a while since I've been welcome in the village, and a lot of names have sorta run together in my head over the years."

What can you tell us about Stonehome? "Place is old, that's for sure. Well, the lower portion is, at least. Upper works are pretty new, and not nearly so well made. Gorum's not a god of architecture, but I suppose it works well enough for them. Interesting place though! I've long wondered about the interior..." (If he learns the PCs intend to infiltrate Stonehome, Derrol has some advice on how they can get into the structure if they promise to map out the interior for him; see *Entering Stonehome* on page 19.)

Do you know anything about a sickness or curse in the area? "They've always said Rusthenge is cursed, but I think it's just old and useless. No one needs an old metal monument of twisted rusty metal. Instead of saying 'there's a bunch of junk on that island,' they say it's cursed."

What do you know about the ship in the harbor? "Showed up about a week ago, and a delegation of Gorumites met them at the pier. I watched it from the cliff until they all headed up to Stonehome, and for the most part they haven't come back out yet. Although I've been keeping an eye on them after dark on the nights when it's not too stormy. Saw them unload a big

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crate from the ship in the middle of the night, but they carted it up to Thunderhead Isle instead of bringing it onto the mainland. And I've seen some weird lights up there too a few nights."

Tell us more about Thunderhead Isle/Rusthenge. "I stay away from the place—went there once years back and felt like I was being watched; that was enough for me! But lately, I've been seeing weird lights up there late at night. Nothing bright. Thought I was imagining it the first time. And I doubt you can see them at all from down in the village. But up here, on this cliff, you've got a better view of Rusthenge, and yeah. Weird lights. My take is that them Thassilonians are up to something there, and makes sense since Rusthenge is one of their old buildings anyway, yeah?"

May we stay here with you? "Sure! There's plenty of room. I recommend switching rooms every night, or the ghosts get angry and howl loudly." (This is, of course, Derrol's sense of humor, but the way the wind howls through the ruined buildings does tend to get creepy after dark.)

Treasure: At some point during the visit, likely after Derrol's gotten to know the PCs a bit more and knows they're from Osprey Cove, he sheepishly asks if he can come with them when they go back home. He's tired of living alone and wants to get back to village life "where the people are more friendly." In an attempt to sweeten the deal, he offers the PCs a "bit o' treasure I may have nicked from boss Valdemar once it became apparent he wasn't gonna pay me what I was worth." This is a tiny brass key set with small gemstones. The key doesn't open any locks on the isle but is worth 20 gp. At your discretion, this key could play an important role in a future adventure—in particular, if you decide to continue this group's adventures into *Seven Dooks for Sandpoint*, this could be the key to the mysterious clockwork songbird that the PCs will slowly reconstruct in that adventure.

Reward: Grant the PCs 40 XP if the PCs gain Derrol's assistance in entering Stonehome.

B6. FISHER'S POINT

Treasure: This fishing hut and small dock is abandoned, but it does contain sterling artisan's tools suitable for an Earn Income check with Fishing Lore or Nature, and a large rowboat that can hold up to 4 passengers. The PCs might use the rowboat to visit Thunderhead Isle or sneak onto the *Swordfish*.

B7. THUNDERHEAD ISLE

Named for the way the surf striking the isle's lower cliffs can sound like thunder on rough days to those who approach, Thunderhead Isle is more infamous for being the seat upon which the ruins of Rusthenge loom. The seven rusted spires of metal are easily visible from the sea, or from the clifftop vantage point at Gold's Ruin, but from the village of Iron Harbor itself, low hills block the view of all but the uppermost reaches of the spires.

See Chapter 2 for more details on this location, should the PCs come out here to investigate the ruins.



B8. STREAM OUTLET

A 3-foot-wide underground stream empties into Iron Harbor here, but the outlet is hard to spot from afar. A PC who Searches this area can discover it with a DC 15 Scouting Lore check or a DC 20 Perception check (or they can learn about it from Elsie—see Entering Stonehome on page 19). While the tunnel it flows through is cramped, a Medium or smaller creature could make their way up the tunnel to a small reservoir below the well in area C1 of Stonehome.

Stonehome

The climax of the investigation in Iron Harbor is an infiltration of Stonehome. The PCs are free to head up to the temple immediately but if they take their time asking around the village, they'll not only learn a bit more about the situation, but also gain assistance from one of three potential allies—Derrol, Elsie, or Janis, each of whom can help the PCs gain access to the temple.

When the *Swordfish* arrived, High Priest Knurr Ragnulf met with Meitremar, who claimed to be an official from Xin-Edasseril with an offer to build up Iron Harbor and make it the seat of power on Chakikoth Isle, with Osprey Cove under its command. Ragnulf eagerly accepted these terms, but when he and Meitremar were in private chambers, the cultist leader had Ragnulf restrained and then, over the course of the day, used an *inveigle* ritual to take control of him. Meitremar convinced Ragnulf that much of the metal on Chakikoth Isle was contaminated and pointed to Rusthenge as proof. Meitremar showed Ragnulf a ceramic flask that he explained was an old Thassilonian method to expose such contamination. He had Ragnulf gather the entire temple into the worship hall (area C4), then had him open the flask—and in doing so, exposed the Gorumites to his awful discovery: rust creep.

Roughly half of the Gorumites succumbed to the disease, and at Meitremar's urging, Ragnulf called them out as harboring sin and ordered them to be taken into custody. Some of them fought back (resulting in some of the carnage that still remains on the ground floor), but as the days wore on, the cultists gained more control. Eventually, Meitremar and his cultist allies were finally ready to relocate to Rusthenge, where they've remained ever since.

It was after Meitremar left that one of the Gorumites who'd initially succumbed to rust creep, a brash and desperate Blanton, managed to escape and fled toward Osprey Cove to seek help. Meitremar's sinspawn ally, Azomi, left in charge of Stonehome for the time, sent a pair of deros after Blanton and has grown more and more nervous that they're about to lose control of Stonehome. But Azomi remains hopeful that Meitremar will complete his task in Rusthenge before that happens!

RUST CREEP

One of Meitremar's first discoveries once he started looking into his grandfather's legacy was a virulent affliction from the abyssal realm of Vlorus, once the domain of Xar-Azmak himself. There, certain cythnigots grown to larger-than-normal size spread a fungal infection that caused a swift decay in flesh and metal alike. He captured one of the cythnigots and then harvested several doses of the affliction into specially-prepared ceramic flasks—once a flask is opened, it exposes everything around it to the supernatural disease. While Meitremar used the last of these flasks to seize control of Stonehome, there remains several other ways the PCs can be exposed to this foul affliction in this adventure.

RUST CREEP

DISEASE 2

RARE DISEASE DIVINE TRANSMUTATION

Those afflicted by rust creep develop uncomfortable rust-colored bruises on their flesh and endure full-body aches like those one might experience after a long workout. As the affliction progresses, their bodies—as well as the clothing and items they wear or carry—increasingly break down until a painful death occurs. If a character successfully resists contracting rust creep, or recovers from a case of rust creep, they are temporarily immune to future rust creep infections for 24 hours.

Saving Throw DC 15 Fortitude; **Stage 1** –1 status penalty to Athletics checks (1 day); **Stage 2** as stage 1 (1 day); **Stage 3** enfeebled 1 (1 day); **Stage 4** enfeebled 1 and stupefied 1, plus any armor, clothing and items you carry and that are of a level equal to or less than the disease become broken as the decay spreads to them (1 day; broken items remain broken); **Stage 5** unconscious (1 day); **Stage 6** unconscious (1 day); **Stage 7** death

DYNAMIC ENCOUNTERS

The occupants of Stonehome don't necessarily stay in their rooms once the PCs start to explore, especially if the fortress goes on High Alert. While the total number of guards in Stonehome doesn't change, it's certainly possible for the PCs to encounter them in larger or smaller groups than those presented here. During play, make sure to keep an eye on encounters' changing threat as guards move about and join fights, using the guidelines on page 489 of the *Core Rulebook* as an aid.

TEMPLE FEATURES

Unless otherwise noted, the ceilings at Stonehome are 15 feet high with hewn stone walls on the first floor and masonry walls on the second floor. The doors are reinforced wood and kept closed, but they aren't locked unless otherwise indicated. The interior is lit via strategically placed *continual flames*, giving most of the rooms bright illumination.

The encounter areas assume that the temple isn't on high alert, but if the PCs retreat to regroup (or if their actions in Iron Harbor raise Stonehome's alarm beforehand), the temple's occupants are more alert and are more ready to shift locations to join combats in progress as you see fit. While on high alert, some foes are located in different areas, as indicated in the "High Alert" sections. The temple leaves high alert if 24 hours pass without the PCs being active in town or in Stonehome.

ENTERING STONEHOME

The Gorumite temple of Stonehome is difficult to approach from the ground as the front gate is locked tight and sharp iron spikes deter folks from climbing the fence. No less than five DC 25 Thievery checks are required to Pick the Lock at the front gate. A DC 30 Athletics check is required to Force Open the sturdy gate. The spiked wall is 20 feet high, and while it's only a DC 20 Athletics check to Climb it, the spikes are both difficult terrain and hazardous terrain that inflicts 4d6 piercing damage (DC 20 basic Reflex save) each time a creature attempts to climb through them.

However, there are three safer routes into the compound, each of which can be revealed to the PCs by one of three potential sources in Iron Harbor—each of whom also asks the PCs for a specific favor once they get inside Stonehome.

Derrol: As an architect, Derrol has insight into the structure. He shares that it's well defended from the ground but neglects defense from above. Stonehome's

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SECOND FLOOR



STONEHOME

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

position nestled within a steep nook in the cliffside leaves it open to infiltration from above. Derrol can point out the safest route up the cliffs to a narrow ledge that sits 20 feet over the rooftop (area C19). Without his aid, a PC who spends 4 hours Investigating the area surrounding Stonehome can spot this route with a DC 15 Architecture Lore or a DC 20 Perception check. The route can be made without any Athletics checks to climb until that last 20 feet, when a DC 15 Climb check is required to scale the cliff down to a point where a character can safely step off onto the rooftop. Note that if the PCs make this approach without being stealthy, the occupants of the roof and possibly the dueling balcony (areas C19 and C14, respectively) are likely to notice them.

Elsie: Before Stonehome locked down, Elsie had been paying daily visits to the stables (area C2) to nurse one of the temple's rosethorn rams back to health. She tells the PCs she's concerned that the animal has been suffering this past week without medication—if the poor thing is even still alive. She gives the PCs a biscuit-shaped dose of medicine to feed to Ida the rosethorn, but she also indicates that if the PCs can rescue her and

bring her back to Elsie, that would be even better. She's never been in the structure itself, but on her many trips through the courtyard, she noticed the small well on the opposite side of the yard from the stables. She suspects that the well connects to an underground stream that empties into Iron Harbor just east of town, and can direct the PCs to this location (area B8).

Janis: Worried for her captain, Janis asks the PCs to infiltrate Stonehome and rescue him—or at least bring word of his fate (with his distinctive hat as evidence) if he's beyond rescue. She's spent some time studying Stonehome from afar through a spyglass and warns the PCs against attempts to climb the spiked walls, but she gives them a possible alternate way to enter the well-defended structure. Every sunrise and sunset, the guard posted at the edge of town changes. Two nights ago, Janis crept up to the guard who stood watch at the edge of town and pickpocketed their key. She stole away, made a quick impression of it in wax, and then managed to return the key to the guard's belt without them noticing. While she hasn't yet had the chance to put the mold to use (in part because she worries about leaving the *Swordfish* for

the amount of time an infiltration would require), she'll entrust the mold to the PCs if they agree to help find her captain. With the mold and a set of artisan's tools (which can be purchased in town for 4 gp), an hour's work and a DC 15 Crafting check can create a new key capable of unlocking the front gate.

C1. COURTYARD

This courtyard is covered in dirt and weeds. Stonehome, a two-story keep, looms to the north, while a robust twenty-foot-tall outer wall, capped with numerous spikes, protects the keep to the south. A wooden archer's walkway stands against the inside of the wall, allowing a view of anyone foolish enough to besiege the keep. The eastern portion of the courtyard holds a large roof-covered well, while a small stable stands against the west wall of the valley.

The covered well drops 15 feet into a small reservoir of water that connects to area **B8** via a navigable underground stream. A DC 15 Athletics check is required to scale the well's walls.

High Alert: The two fallen acolytes from area **C4** patrol here. Another pair watch from area **C17**.

C2. STABLES

TRIVIAL 1

These modest stables are in good repair and have two large pens. The smell of hay and animal refuse permeate the air. A large double door exits to the east.

A successful DC 17 Perception check reveals the secret door in the north wall, although there's little of interest at this point in the area beyond providing a way for PCs who tumble from the roof into the back area.

Creatures: So far, the Gorumites' attempt to domesticate rosethorn rams has gone slowly, with their most successful attempt yet suffering from a chronic illness the priests (with their focus on war rather than healing) have had a hard time combating. In the weeks before the cult took over the temple, the acolytes had recruited Elsie's aid in caring for the ram, and during this time she gave it the name "Ida."

Ida remains here to this day, but she's severely weakened and malnourished, both from her illness and neglect from the cult that now runs the temple. As the ram is currently unable to walk, a PC can coax her back to temporary mobility by feeding and caring for her for 10 minutes with a successful DC 15 Medicine check. If the PCs have the little biscuit medicine provided by Elsie, they can automatically restore Ida's mobility simply by feeding her the medicine.

IDA

CREATURE 1

Weak rosethorn ram (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 6, 212)

Initiative Perception +6

Reward: If the PCs deliver Ida her medicine, Elsie is relieved. Even more so if the PCs manage to bring the ram back to her. If they give Ida the medicine, grant them 20 XP. Grant the PCs an additional 20 XP if they escort Ida safely back to Elsie.

C3. MAIN ENTRANCE

TRIVIAL 1

This hallway is covered in dried, spattered blood. A pair of corpses, each fully clad in rusted Gorumite armor, lie rotting, each with wounds as if pierced by a dozen spears. A rusty ceiling grate gives a limited view into the room above.

If the PCs inspect the two bodies, they'll find each bears the same rusty-looking blotches that Blanton's body had—but in these cases, the causes of death appear to be deep wounds inflicted by a greatsword. All of the weapons and armor carried by the bodies have rusted or decayed to uselessness.

Hazard: Several long iron spikes lie concealed beneath the floor, running the entire length and breadth of the hallway. The pressure plate to activate the trap lies on the northern half of the hallway, in order to skewer the maximum number of invaders who force their way into the keep. Normally, the Gorumites kept this trap deactivated so as not to harm visiting worshippers, but the cultists have re-armed the trap. Fortunately for the PCs, the trap has been affected somewhat due to the proximity of the rust creep victims above, which lessens its strength—but unfortunately, the trap now carries the potential to inflict tetanus.

RUSTY FLOOR SPIKES

HAZARD 2

UNCOMMON MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 18 (trained)

Description Pressure plates on the floor near the north door cause rusty spikes to lance up out of the floor in area **C3**.

Disable DC 18 Thievery (trained) to disable the pressure plates.

Spring Up ⤴ (attack) **Trigger** A creature steps on the pressure plate; **Effect** The spikes spring up, Striking all creatures in the hallway. The floor becomes greater difficult terrain.

Melee rusty spike +11, **Damage** 1d10+4 piercing plus tetanus (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide* 118)

Reset Turn the resetting wheel in the eastern Inner Guard Station (area **C8b**).

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C4. WORSHIP HALL

LOW 1

This room holds long benches and tables. A double door leads to the south. Single doors lead to the north, east, and west.

Creatures: A pair of ex-Gorumite acolytes guard this room. Unless they've heard a commotion nearby (such as combat in an adjoining room or the sound of the trap in area C3 going off), they're not paying attention as they argue about the best ways to earn the favor of their new leader. As long as they're arguing, both guards take a -2 penalty on Perception checks to initiative rolls.

The guards call out an alarm and attack on sight, fighting to the death in hopes of securing favor from their new faith. If captured, the fallen acolytes remain hostile to the PCs, but this is partially out of fear. If the PCs can defeat the actual cultists still stationed in Stonehome, the surviving fallen acolytes grow despondent, apologetic, and could, in time, find redemption.

High Alert: Both fallen acolytes are patrolling area C1 instead.

FALLEN ACOLYTES (2)

CREATURE 0

UNCOMMON CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human ex-clerics

Perception +5

Languages Common, Dwarven

Skills Acrobatics +2, Athletics +6, Crafting +2, Intimidation +2, Religion +4, Warfare Lore +4

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

Items rusted (broken) full plate, sickle

AC 15; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

HP 15

Speed 20 feet

Melee ➤ sickle +6 (agile, finesse, trip), **Damage** 1d4+4 piercing

C5. CLINIC

The smell of vinegar is strong in this modest clinic. With only two beds, a small work desk, and small array of mostly empty shelves, this area is not prepared to handle challenging medical needs.

The spiral stairs in the southwest corner of this room lead down to area C20.

Treasure: The shelves contain expanded healer's tools, 2 minor elixirs of life, and 4 lesser antiplagues. All of the bottles are unlabeled.

C6. SMITHY

LOW 1

A large forge and anvil mark this room as the keep's smithy. Several weapons line the walls and fill a nearby

weapon rack. Against the northern wall, a cot and pile of grimy clothes mark makeshift quarters. Doors exit to the north and south.

When the fight for Stonehome erupted, Smith Trygve initially sided with his fellow Gorumites. Though his side lost and most of the faithful were slain, he was spared for his talent at working metal. Now he is forced to toil for the efforts of the cultists, promised rest and reprieve if he pledges himself to Meitremar's service.

Creatures: Smith Trygve eats, sleeps, and toils in this room, having been threatened with a dishonorable death by torture if he attempts to escape. He has been biding his time, hoping for his siblings in arms to retake Stonehome and free him from his tormentors, but he is starting to lose hope and is on the verge of breaking. His daily toils are further exacerbated by a constant worry that he might soon come down with rust creep (he's avoided the affliction so far).

At night, he can be found in fitful sleep on a small cot, though he wakes quickly if anyone enters. Because he doesn't recognize the PCs, he assumes they are a kill squad here to end him and chooses to defend himself, hoping to die a warrior's death in the eyes of Gorum. The PCs have a single chance to talk him down with a successful DC 15 Diplomacy, Gorum Lore, or Religion check; otherwise, he wields his hammer against them in hopes of dying in battle, fighting to the death (although consider allowing him to gain the dying condition rather than just perishing at 0 Hit Points, to give the PCs a chance to save him and speak to him).

TRYGVE

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human smith

Perception +6

Languages Common, Dwarven, Skald

Skills Athletics +8, Crafting +9, Smithing Lore +9, Society +7

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

Items breastplate, light hammer, secure storage key

AC 18; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6

HP 30

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ light hammer +10 (agile), **Damage** 1d6+4 bludgeoning plus smith's fury

Ranged ➤ light hammer +6 (agile, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 1d6+2 bludgeoning plus smith's fury

Smith's Fury Trygve deals an additional 1d6 bludgeoning damage on a critical hit when he Strikes with his light hammer.

Treasure: Trygve keeps his precious cold iron greatsword, a symbol of his mastery of weapon

smithing, untouched on the wall to prevent it from decaying from the rust creep.

Speaking with Trygve

If the PCs convince Trygve to listen to them instead of fight, he tells them his story. Read the following.

"A week ago, a Thassilonian man named Meitremar arrived, claiming to be a merchant from Xin-Edasseril. He spoke with Lord Ragnulf for an entire night. When they emerged at dawn, they gathered us all in the worship hall and spoke of bringing war to Osprey Cove, subjugating all other settlements on Chakikoth Isle, and forging an alliance with Xin-Edasseril.

"At the end, Lord Ragnulf spoke of a sickness among our ranks, and claimed that his new friend Meitremar had brought him a way to expose that sickness. He opened a bottle, and it filled the hall with foul-smelling air. Several of my kin doubled over in pain—it looked as if their skin was rusting—and Lord Ragnulf ordered the rest of us to 'put down the blasphemers'. I'm glad to say I did not mindlessly obey, but many others did, and the fighting that followed was awful.

"I alone survived. They keep me alive because they value my skill at working metal, but they no longer worship the Lord in Iron. They see glory in the rust instead. Meitremar and Lord Ragnulf have gone beyond the rusted door below now, and closed it tight in their wake, but they left behind that awful, split-faced monster to keep those who have betrayed my kin in line. You must save Lord Ragnulf! He knows not what he's done!"

Trygve doesn't know much more, and he has no idea what Meitremar's true intentions are, but he does recognize that those who follow him have renounced Gorum and his ways. He's also concerned that he's diseased (he is not), and he fears that most of his fellow Gorumites are either dead or have turned away to this new "cult of rust" (he's right).

After talking with the PCs, he's happy to leave Stonehome as long as the PCs have secured a safe way out, mentioning he'll seek shelter at Elsie's. Before he goes, he can sketch out a floor plan of Stonehome, but he isn't sure what dangers the PCs might face. Further description of the "split-

faced monster" gives the PCs a chance to recognize it as a sinspawn if they make a successful DC 16 Occultism check to Recall Knowledge. Trygve also gifts the PCs his cold iron greatsword as he leaves (asking them only to use it to slay Meitremar if they can), along with the key to the secure storage room (area C21).

Reward: If the PCs learn of Trygve's story, grant them 30 XP. Grant a further 30 XP if they save him.

C7. OUTER GUARD STATIONS

Two arrow slits open in this room's southern wall, and a barrel of ranged weapons and ammo stands nearby. A short but steep set of stairs leads up to a hatch.

The hatch in the ceiling opens into area C18 above.

Treasure: Each barrel, one at each of the two stations, contains three shortbows and 50 arrows. The barrel in area C7a also contains a single *beacon shot* mixed in with the other arrows.

C8. INNER GUARD STATIONS

These empty rooms feature an arrow-slit studded wall facing into the main entryway. Area C8b also has a large wheel for resetting or deactivating the hidden spikes trap in area C3.

Treasure: Each room contains 4 longswords leaning against the north wall. One of the longswords in area C8a has a *potency crystal talisman* affixed to it.

C9. KITCHEN

Dirty pots, pans, and knives litter this grimy kitchen. The pantry stands open with a cloud of flies surrounding the spoiled food stored within.

Meitremar ordered one of his cultists to prepare for an invasion of Osprey Cove once the resurrection ritual is completed. The priest came here to take stock of their supplies and was so frustrated with the lack of anything useful, they left their notes behind.

If a PC Searches this room, they find a grime-covered piece of parchment on one of the crusty countertops. It has lists of food needed, distances, travel times, and supplies needed for a two-



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day march over the mountains, as well as a sketch of a journey to the hills north of Osprey Cove.

Reward: For discovering the threat to their home town, grant the PCs 20 XP.

C10. STAIRWELL

This flight of stairs leads up to area C13.

C11. DUEL PREPARATION

This small room contains a mannequin, weapon rack, and stool. A single door exits to the south.

Treasure: In area C11a, a rusty (broken) set of scale mail still clings to the mannequin. The weapons on the rack are all ruined.

In area C11b, the suit of armor must have once been a magnificent suit of full plate, but most of the armor now sits in piles of rust on the ground. The breastplate remains attached to the mannequin, but it's marred with streaks of rust; it has the broken condition. However, the *bronze bull pendant talisman* affixed to it is fully functional. Most of the weapons on this rack have been destroyed, but a single rusty greatpick remains; it has the broken condition.

C12. STORAGE

This storage room contains foodstuffs, tools, and supplies for the daily operation of Stonehome, but it's all starting to decay.

Nothing of value is stored here.

C13. UPSTAIRS HALL

Dried blood and hardened mud adorn this stone hall's walls and doors.

A door exists to the southeast, north, west, and a double door to the southwest. In the northeast, stone stairs descend to area C10.

C14. DUELING BALCONY

This large balcony features a narrow sand pit thirty-five feet long with small rope partitions marking the last five feet on each end. A rusty iron ladder on the southwest portion of the balcony leads up to the roof, while a door to the south leads inside the keep.

This area was often used for duels and single combat trials; clumps of dried blood can be found within the sand. The balcony is deserted at night, but during the

day, the three fallen Gorumites from area C15 can be found here, alternately dueling, eating food, or discussing what comes next for Stonehome.

Treasure: The sand holds a treasure in addition to dried blood, and a PC who succeeds on a DC 14 Perception check to Search this area discover a *potency crystal talisman* buried in the sand.

High Alert: The three fallen Gorumites are not present here during the day.

C15. SENIOR BARRACKS

SEVERE 1

Five sets of double bunk beds mark this room as a barracks. On the northern wall is a small set of cabinets and a simple standing rack for scrolls. Footlockers sit between the beds.

Creatures: Though this had been the senior barracks for the past hundred years, the destruction of the junior barracks has forced all the survivors, now loyal to Meitremar, to quarter here. During the night, a trio of fallen worshipers of Gorum sleep here, including Sister Vanda, whom the PCs met earlier as they came into Iron Harbor. During the day, these three relocate to area C14.

Upon spotting the PCs, the three fallen Gorumites cry out in surprise—with Sister Vanda's shock being the loudest. As the higher ranking acolyte, she orders the other two to engage the PCs in combat while she hangs back to observe. Unlike the fallen acolytes, Sister Vanda still has a shred of remorse clinging in her mind. She still wears unrusted full plate and fights with a greatsword, not yet ready to set aside these items for the rusted armor and sickle favored by the cult. Still, she snarls and joins the fight if any PC attacks her. She surrenders if the PCs defeat both of the fallen acolytes or if she's reduced to fewer than 10 Hit Points.

High Alert: Sister Vanda patrols the building, and could be encountered anywhere, while the two fallen acolytes move to area C17.

VANDA

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

CN female human ex-cleric

Perception +8

Languages Common, Dwarven

Skills Athletics +4, Crafting +4, Intimidation +7, Religion +8, Warfare Lore +4

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

Items full plate, +1 greatsword

AC 16; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +10

HP 30

Speed 20 feet

Melee ◆ greatsword +10 (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 1d12+3 slashing

FALLEN ACOLYTES (2)

CREATURE 0

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Initiative Perception +5

Treasure: Among the five footlockers are ordinary and winter clothes, 87 silver pieces, and a *wolf fang talisman*. A pair of scrolls sit on the rack—a *scroll of restoration* and a *scroll of remove disease*.

Speaking to Vanda

If Vanda is captured, she can relate much the same information that Trygve did (page 23), but she also warns the PCs about the fate of Captain Perrios and his crew. On the topic of Elder Ordwi, Vanda blushes in shame and reveals what happened. Upon arriving at Stonehome, she and the other fallen acolytes took Ordwi prisoner, then handed her over to Meitremar's most dangerous agent within the building—the sinspawn Azomi. Vanda knows that Azomi took Ordwi down into the basement, but she isn't sure what became of her after the fact.

In return for mercy, Vanda will accompany and assist the PCs in their remaining endeavors in Stonehome, particularly if that involves killing Azomi, but her bravery falters when it comes to exploring Rusthenge itself. Instead, she gives her +1 *greatsword* to the party to aid them in their adventures.

Reward: If the PCs speak to Vanda and grant her mercy, grant them 40 XP, in addition to any XP they would have earned for defeating her in combat.

C16. JUNIOR BARRACKS

LOW 1

Four sets of triple bunk beds mark this room as a barracks, but they've been heavily damaged, with mattress feathers tossed everywhere. Footlockers sit on the floor between the beds, bashed or broken open.

Creature: After the cultists took over Stonehome, loyal Gorumites who survived were turned over to Azomi, a sinspawn ally of Meitremar. Until this point, the sinspawn kept his true nature obscured through a disguise including a hooded cloak and a mask, but once the truth came out, Azomi enjoyed the slaughter here—a just reward for his service to Meitremar.

Now that Meitremar and his cultists have moved on to Rusthenge itself, he's left Azomi here in charge as an implied threat, should any of the remaining fallen acolytes have a change of heart. At the sight of the PCs, Azomi shrieks in delight at "fresh meat" to torment and feed upon, and attacks on sight.

High Alert: Azomi relocates to area C20, joining the esipils there to protect the approach to area C22.

AZOMI

CREATURE 2

Male envyspawn (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 296)

Initiative Perception +10

Treasure: While most of this room is destroyed, a few useful items or valuables remain. A total of seven javelins and two dozen arrows (including a single *sleep arrow*) have survived the chaos. They await use in a wooden barrel in the southwest corner of the room. Azomi's porcelain mask sits on a shelf—this work of art is worth 5 gp.



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C17. DEFENSIVE BATTERY

This room features two ballistae, although each siege engine appears to be in poor condition, with rust crusting its fittings. A large rusty iron grate with a view of a wide hallway below fills a ten-foot-square section of floor, while weapon racks on the wall hold several armaments.

This was the primary defensive battery of the fortress, with the heaviest weapons and ability to attack intruders who made it through the main gate, but the initial release of rust creep into the area saw these ballistae fall into disrepair.

High Alert: The two fallen acolytes from area C15 stand guard here—while the ballistae don't work, the acolytes gather the hammers from the walls and can hurl them through the openings in the southern walls at foes in the courtyard below.



Azomi

Treasure: The weapon racks on the east and west walls hold a dozen light hammers each.

C18. RAMPARTS

This outdoor space is constructed entirely of stone with a crenelated wall facing outward. A single door leads north and a hatch on the floor leads inside the keep.

The hatch (marked with an F on the map) leads to a stairway down into the appropriate Outer Guard Station (area C7).

Treasure: Several discarded arrows litter the rampart. An *antler arrow* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 256) lies among the arrows in area C18b.

C19. ROOFTOP RANGE

LOW 1

The stone roof of this building is constructed from masonry with a layer of dried clay for weatherproofing. Grooves run along the nearly flat roof to channel water off the sides. A sixty-foot-long archery range runs west to east with two targets comfortably spread on the thirty-foot-wide range.

A single rusty iron ladder leads down to a second floor balcony on the northwest side of the building.

Creatures: Three severed heads have been mounted on wooden poles affixed to the northern edge of the roof, well out of view from below but affording the undead heads a full view of the rooftop. All three are beheaded, and all that remains of Captain Perrios of the Swordfish and the two deckhands he brought with him on his ill-fated trip to Stonehome. After Meitremar executed all three, he transformed them into beheaded to serve as rooftop guardians—and as implied threats to any ex-Gorumite who might consider plans to betray their new leader.

SEVERED HEADS (3)

CREATURE -1

Variant severed head (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 30)

Initiative Perception +6

Rust Creep These undead inflict rust creep with their jaws. Strikes. A creature damaged by a jaws Strike or a Gnash from one of these severed heads must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract rust creep (page 19).

Treasure: Each barrel can be opened with a single action to discover a composite longbow and 50 arrows inside. Captain Perrios's head still wears his fine captain's hat—a well made tricorne adorned with a *fan feather token* (Janis allows the PCs to keep the feather token if they return this hat as proof of the captain's fate).

Reward: Janis hopes that Captain Perrios can be saved and is devastated at the news of his death. As long as the PCs put an end to his existence as an undead monster, though, she thanks them and gives them the four *potency crystal talismans* and 30 gp she promised. In addition, grant the PCs 40 XP for delivering the bad news.

C20. BASEMENT

MODERATE 1

A dark stairwell leads into this stony basement. Columns throughout the room support the keep's structure overhead. Casks and wooden crates line the north and south walls, and a single iron door exits to the east. A large hole has been recently broken in the western wall, leading to a naturally occurring cave. Sticky smears of blood lead into this tunnel.

The stairs lead up to area C5. The Gorumites used this basement to store bulk goods and other food supplies. Wine, mead, and higher quality ale is stored in the secure storage room (area C21) behind the iron door, secured with an average quality lock (which can be opened with four successful DC 25 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock, or with the use of the key found in area C6).

The hole in the west wall is a recent addition—Meitremar suspected a link between this ancient basement and Rusthenge, and he had his minions smash the wall down here. The blood smears were left as cultists dragged bodies of slain Gorumites from here all the way to Rusthenge, where they were animated as undead or used as bribes for hungry monsters.

Creatures: Two esipil sahkil agents of Meitremar dwell in the basement, acting as sentries for anyone approaching the rusted door (area D1) leading into Rusthenge's dungeon. They have taken the forms of calico cats and skulk around the basement to keep an eye on anyone who enters. If any visitor who doesn't bear the symbol of Xar-Azmak attempts to travel down the tunnel to area C22, they attack.

ESIPILS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 218

Initiative Perception +7

High Alert: Azomi comes here to defend the tunnel.

C21. SECURE STORAGE

SEVERE 1

This long storage room runs north to south with smaller firkins and kegs lining the walls, as well as small padded crates with delicate glass bottles. Some of the packing straw has been repurposed as improvised bedding, though

most of it has now been soiled. The stench of filth and waste fill this chamber. A single iron door exits to the west.

Creatures: After the battle for Stonehome, four Gorumite acolytes were imprisoned in this storage room. The cultists refuse to feed them, insisting that one must slay the others and devote themselves to helping revive their dead god. One took the bait and turned on the other three; this traitor died for it. The prisoners have been surviving on what little food they could find, and the strong drink available to them.

The three surviving prisoners are malnourished, dehydrated, infected with rust creep (all at stage 4), and desperate for rescue, but still refuse to give in to the cultist's demands. None of the acolytes have any gear, religious symbols, or prepared spells. If the PCs are able to rescue the prisoners, they gladly return to Iron Harbor. They can relay the story of Stonehome's fall, and that the cultists worship a demon named Xar-Azmak. If a PC succeeds on a DC 25 Religion check to Recall Knowledge, they recognize Xar-Azmak as a long-dead demon lord of rust, decay, and death. The prisoners can also tell the PCs that they overheard Meitremar discussing his plans to "explore and reclaim my grandfather's works below Rusthenge," but they have no further insight beyond that.

GORUMITE ACOLYTES (3)

CREATURE 1

Variant acolyte of Nethys (*Gamemastery Guide* 212)

Initiative Perception +7

Treasure: Among the empty barrels and debris in the room, the PCs can find an unopened pony keg of akvavit, an herb-seasoned vodka, worth 10 gp. A case of *minor healing potions* was broken into and used by the prisoners, but they didn't satisfy their hunger. Only five *minor healing potions* remain.

Reward: If the PCs rescue these three acolytes, grant them XP as if they defeated them in combat. The acolytes won't accompany the PCs into Rusthenge but provide their magical healing services free of charge for the rest of this adventure in thanks for the rescue.

C22. TUNNEL TO RUSTHENGE

This long tunnel slopes down and heads southwest, traveling under Iron Harbor to area D1 under Rusthenge. The bloody trail fades from easy view after a few hundred feet from the basement, but a successful DC 15 Survival check to Track confirms the path continues. At the path's lowest point, where it passes under the harbor, the walls drip with salt water and form pools on the floor—up to a foot deep in places—but the tunnel itself is sound and in no danger of flooding.



CHAPTER 2: THE RUSTED RUIN

By now, the PCs should have discovered that cultists of a demon lord traveled from Xin-Edasseril aboard the *Swordfish*, murdered and converted the Gorumites in Stonehome (including High Priest Ragnulf), and have moved on to the previously unknown chambers below the mysterious local landmark known as Rusthenge. The citizens of Iron Harbor are shocked by the revelation, and their unfriendly attitude toward the visitors from Osprey Cove shifts to a desperate need for aid. Some of the villagers are openly sorry and ashamed for how they may have treated the PCs earlier, while others remain gruff, offering only grudging respect. The PCs have also perhaps learned that the cult has dire plans for the village of Osprey Cove as well, and certainly realize that Elder Ordwi has been taken by the cult to the chambers below Rusthenge.

Starting this Chapter

Once the PCs discover the awful events that took place in Stonehome, and after any survivors are rescued from the fallen temple, word of the atrocities spreads quickly. Janis leaves town quickly once she learns of her captain's fate but promises the PCs that they need not fear immediate reprisal from Xin-Edasseril—she and her crew have no intention of returning to that port for fear of suffering legal consequences for “losing” their passengers. She warns the PCs that, in time, any allies who might remain in that port and knew of Meitremar's plans to detour to Iron Harbor may come looking for him. Additionally, given how Meitremar hid the actual destination from the crew until they were at sea, it's likely that he kept his plans secret even from allies at home (she's correct in this assumption,

although the PCs have no way of knowing for sure). She and her crew head for Riddleport in hopes of starting new lives there.

The citizens of Iron Harbor are distressed at the news of what befell Stonehome but quickly welcome the PCs as heroes. While this is a significant first step toward healing the feud between Iron Harbor and Osprey Cove, in the short term, the people of Iron Harbor—now without leadership—ask the PCs to seek out their missing leader, Lord Knurr Ragnulf, and to ensure that Meitremar's cult is defeated before it can cause more harm. None in town are brave enough to directly help the PCs below Rusthenge (the revelation of the existence of chambers below the local landmark are an unnerving surprise to the locals), but they'll eagerly provide supplies as best they can. This allows the PCs to stock up on as much common level 1 or lower non-magical and non-alchemical gear as they wish, free of charge (and within reason)—Elsie still asks for payment for her wares but generously gives the PCs a 50% discount as long as her supplies last (as you decide).

Reward: For exposing the cult of Xar-Azmak and gaining the support of Iron Harbor's frightened villagers, grant the PCs 80 XP.

If the PCs fully explore Stonehome, they can prepare a serviceable map of the interior for Derrol with a DC 15 Crafting check and 2 hours of work. Grant the PCs 40 XP once they deliver the map to the former architect.

Rusthenge

Rusthenge sits atop Thunderhead Isle on the southern edge of the village's harbor. During the day's low tides (a one-hour window that starts at 6:00 AM and then again at 6:00 PM), one can walk along the southern peninsula through tide pools and exposed rocks, but at all other times the only way to reach the isle is to swim or sail. The PCs can use the rowboat found at Fisher's Point to reach the isle. Once the villagers know what's at stake, the PCs can ask one of the local fishers to transport them out on one of their boats, but in that case the rowboat won't be available for a quick getaway—the PCs will need to arrange a schedule or signal to let the fishers know they need to be picked up.

Most of the isle's shoreline is made up of sheer, 50-foot-high cliffs, but the eastern shore slopes more gently down to the ocean. It's a short hike up through dry grass and stunted trees to the isle's center where the ruins of Rusthenge itself await. Once a place of harnessing sinful soul energy by sacrificing envious creatures in the center pit, Rusthenge has lain dormant for thousands of years. Originally, the spires themselves

rose hundreds of feet into the air, and the place was known as the Vloric Spires.

As the PCs approach, read the following.

At the isle's crown is a broad, flat field, its southern edge dropping away to the waves below, affording a magnificent view of the sea, while to the north, a craggy ridge of barren rock blocks the view of Iron Harbor. In a circle just north of the cliff's edge rise seven jagged spires of rusted metal, each reaching over fifty feet into the sky. Within this circle of ancient iron stand seven rock formations that may have at one time been sculptures but now are little more than weathered chunks of stone and piles of rubble. At the center, a seven-sided pit drops a few feet into a heap of boulders, stones, and other scree, among which stubborn shoots of grass or small shrubs grow fitfully.

A fifteen-foot-by-twenty-foot canvas tent has been erected between two of the metal spires on the western side. Nearby is a sizable wooden crate, its east side open to reveal an interior strewn with red-stained straw. Freshly dug channels through the thin soil connect two of the smaller stone sculptures and the pit at the center—these channels appear to have been soaked in blood.

The seven ruined rock formations within the ring of iron spires were once sculptures of the seven runes of sin used by Thassilonian wizards—a PC who spends a few minutes examining the site can recognize these shapes with a successful DC 20 Arcana or an appropriate Lore check, like Xin-Edasseril Lore.

Ever since the cultists of Xar-Azmak returned to the site, they've been conducting experiments in attempts to restart the old magic once capable of harvesting soul energies, hopeful this will help in the ritual Meitremar has been working on to resurrect the dead demon lord. Evidence of their attempts exists in a freshly dug channel between the central pit and two of the old rune sculptures, but also in the strange lights some folks have witnessed.

A stairway down into the chambers below has remained hidden here for thousands of years, covered by a thick layer of soil and debris over the entrance and unguessed at by the locals. The first night the cultists visited the site (several days before the PCs' arrival in Iron Harbor), they uncovered this hidden stairwell and erected a tent over it, but before the PCs can explore this flight of spiral stairs, they'll need to contend with the "sacrifice keepers" who stand vigil here.

Finally, the Vloric Spires themselves exude a subtle, unsettling aura that tends to make those who step into the circle of spires feel unpleasant. As soon as a PC sets foot within the ring, they must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save to avoid becoming sickened

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RUSTHENGE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

1 (or enfeebled 1 for 24 hours on a critical failure). After attempting this save, the PC is immune to the effect regardless of the result.

SACRIFICE KEEPERS

Four Rustsworn initiates hold vigil here, conducting a nightly ritual to reawaken the site's dormant magic.

Creatures: The strange creature the cultists transported in that large crate aboard the *Swordfish* is both a beloved pet and an important element of their plans—an oversized cythnigot that uses a wolf as its host. With its six legs, lean but diseased-looking frame, and the long fungal stalk that grows from its back, it originally dwelled in the blighted Abyssal realm of Vlorus, once ruled by Xar-Azmak himself. The monster spends its days slumbering in its crate, but at night, the initiates bring the cythnigot out and use it as a focus for their ritual, slowly leading it around the outer circle and allowing it to scrape and rub itself on the spires. The spires' lingering magic siphons the rusting effect from the spores infesting the cythnigot.

SEVERE 2

For the first few days, this process left the creature overwhelmed and almost drunk (hence its weakened state should the PCs come here too early as 1st-level PCs), but now the creature has grown addicted to the procedure, each night affording it the equivalent of a drug-like rush of euphoria.

The Rustsworn initiates shriek in indignation once they notice the PCs, demanding they lay down their weapons and accept the jagged caress of the Sin of Steel. A PC who foolishly does so sets themselves up for sacrifice. While the Rustsworn initiates fight to the death, the Vlorian cythnigot attempts to flee if it's brought below 10 Hit Points, although if it's not low tide, it won't be able to escape the isle (as unlike smaller cythnigots, it can't fly, and it doesn't attempt to swim the churning surf).

VLORIAN CYTHNIGOT

CREATURE 3

RARE CE MEDIUM FIEND QLIPPOTH

Variant cythnigot (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 212)

Perception +9; darkvision

Languages Abyssal; telepathy (touch only)

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +9, Occultism +9, Stealth +9
Str +2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

AC 19; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9

HP 45; **Immunities** controlled, fear; **Weaknesses** lawful 3;
Resistances mental 3, physical 3 (except cold iron)

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ bite +11 (agile, chaotic, magical), **Damage** 1d8+4
piercing plus 1d4 chaotic and rust creep

Occult Innate Spells DC 20; **4th** *read omens*; **2nd** *detect alignment* (at will, lawful only), *paranoia*; **1st** *phantom pain*; **Cantrips (2nd)** *daze*, *detect magic*

Sickening Display ♦ (concentrate, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental, occult, visual) As cythnigot, but DC 20.

Rust Creep (disease) A creature bitten by the Vlorian cythnigot becomes afflicted by rust creep (page 19), but with a DC 20 Fortitude save.

RUSTSWORN INITIATES (4)

CREATURE -1

RARE CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human cultists

Perception +2

Languages Common, Thassilonian

Skills Acrobatics +5, Deception +3, Intimidation +3,
Religion +2, Stealth +5, Thievery +5

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

Items daggers (5), leather armor

AC 14; **Fort** +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

HP 8

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +6 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage**
1d4 piercing

Ranged ♦ dagger +6 (agile, finesse, thrown 10 feet,
versatile S), **Damage** 1d4 piercing

Gang Up An enemy is flat-footed against the Rustsworn initiate's melee attacks due to flanking as long as that enemy is within both their reach and their ally's reach.

Reward: If the Vlorian cythnigot is slain (or at least made impossible for the cult to access), the PCs earn 1 Disruption Point.

Encounter Adjustments

This encounter is meant to be a harrowing fight, but it's possible that it could become too harrowing, particularly if the PCs decide to pay a visit to Rusthenge before reaching level 2. If the PCs come here early, then reduce the number of Rustsworn initiates encountered to 2, and give the Vlorian cythnigot the weak template and describe it as appearing strangely lethargic and slow to act. This is a result of the creature not yet having time to fully recover from the previous ritual performed by the Rustsworn initiates and reduces this to a Severe 1 encounter instead. If 1st-level characters

DISRUPTION POINTS

Even with access to his grandfather's legacies, Meitremar won't be able to resurrect Xar-Azmak at this time, but if the PCs don't stop him, he'll still be able to call in overwhelming Abyssal reinforcements and use the ritual as the first of several stepping stones to achieve his goal. In order to stop him, the PCs must take actions in the dungeons that allow them to accumulate Disruption Points. The total number of points they gain by the time they confront Meitremar at the end of the adventure will adjust the danger of that final encounter, potentially shifting it from an impossible fight to something a 3rd-level party can triumph over.

then push on to explore the chambers below, they should hopefully realize it's wiser to retreat and gather resources (and explore Stonehome) before pressing on.

The Skymetal Workshop

Ten thousand years ago, Meitremar's grandfather, Theiltemar, built an underground workshop and laboratory with the stated purpose of discovering interactions between sin magic and skymetals—a stretching of the truth he initially used to ensure Runelord Belimarius's financial support for the project. He needn't have worried, for when Belimarius discovered the truth, she increased her support, reasoning that it could only help her cause to have a grateful demon lord as an ally.

When Theiltemar built the Vloric Spires, the above-ground structures were largely intended as a sort of magical “amplifier” for the potent magic he intended to harness to resurrect his patron, Xar-Azmak. It was in the underground levels of the Vloric Spires that he housed his laboratories, chambers for his agents to live in, and places of worship like this shrine to the Sin of Steel.

Central to Theiltemar's theories and plots was the incorporation of rare and expensive skymetals then subjected to decay and entropy—a sacrifice of “rust” to the demon lord produced from much more precious metals than were normally unaffected by such decay. While Earthfall brought a sudden halt to Theiltemar's plot, his grandson Meitremar is well on his way to completing the work.

The walls here are constructed from hewn stone, the ceilings are 10 feet high, and areas are blanketed in darkness. The doors are made of stone. While the preservative magic present in Thassilonian ruins has

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helped keep these chambers intact over the many centuries, the decaying presence of Xar-Azmak's influence—even after the demon lord's death—has kept the complex in a state of partial decay and rust, as detailed in the individual rooms. The map for this level is on the inside front cover of this book.

D1. THE RUSTED DOOR

TRIVIAL 2

A rusted iron door stands in the northern wall of this chamber. A series of symbols are embossed on the door, arrayed around a much larger shape that's been gouged into the rust: a spiked horseshoe. The door emits a strange brownish-red glow and has no visible handles, latches, or hinges.

The stairs to the west lead 200 feet up to the tent located aboveground at Rusthenge. The tunnel to the east leads all the way back to the hole broken in the wall of Stonehome's basement (area C22).

The immense rusted door blocks the entrance into the skymetal workshop. While the door appears to be

decayed and barely functional, the rust is a source of strength rather than weakness. The symbols on the door read "Skymetal Workshop" in Thassilonian. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Religion check to Recall Knowledge identifies the spiked horseshoe as the symbol of Xar-Azmak.

Despite its appearance, the rusted door opens easily at a touch, but any non-worshipper of Xar-Azmak who approaches the door feels a sudden unnerving sensation: a deep ache in their bones alongside a strange, unbidden thought that their blood has caused their bones to rust inside of their body. Any such character who attempts to open the door triggers the trap.

RUSTED DOOR

HAZARD 2

UNCOMMON MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 18 (trained)

Description Shards of rust extend from the door and crumble away to cling to the flesh and clothes of anyone who attempts to open or damage the door.

Disable DC 18 Thievery to deface the hidden runes that allow the trap to activate, or DC 21 Religion to offer prayers to a non-evil deity to override the ancient influence of Xar-Azmak

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

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

Inflict Rust Creep ☞ **Trigger** A non-worshipper of Xar-Azmak attempts to open the door or causes damage to it with a melee Strike; **Effect** The triggering creature is exposed to rust creep as tendrils of rust-red energy seem to slither out of the rusty patches on the door to rasp strangely gently against exposed skin.

Reset The rusted door resets automatically after 1 round.

D2. GRAND ENTRANCE

LOW 2

This wide hallway features a black marble floor and large murals on the east and west walls. Massive doors flank this hallway to the north and south.

This hall was built to impress Runelord Belimarius. On the western wall, the mural shows her standing victorious and invincible, with fallen enemies all around her. The eastern mural depicts Belimarius triumphant over the other Runelords, who bow before her, groveling and begging for mercy.

Creatures: When Meitremar first entered this hall, he took control over the dormant guardians here by



uttering the command words found in his grandfather's journal. He commanded the two constructs—suits of rusty animated armor—to attack anyone who didn't bear the symbol of Xar-Azmak. Each of these suits of armor have feet that look like hooves and helms that look like bull heads with too many horns—features meant to evoke the appearance of Xar-Azmak himself. The rusted metal has left both suits of animated armor somewhat damaged, and as a result the constructs have the weak creature adjustment.

RUSTED ANIMATED ARMOR (2) CREATURE 1

Weak animated armor (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 20)

Initiative Perception +4

D3. GRAND ALTAR

MODERATE 2

A soaring domed ceiling, thirty feet tall in the center, gives this massive chamber a sense of majesty. Marble floors and stairs leading up to a centralized dais, drawing attention to the bloody stone altar at the center of the room. A twisted apparatus of strange metals stands atop the altar. Motifs of a seven-pointed star appear on most doorways, and on all sides of the altar, as do images of spiky horseshoes of rusted iron. The room is brightly lit by over a dozen torches.

The strange apparatus atop the altar is composed of plates of iron that have been alchemically treated to appear to be different types of skymetals. It resonates with divine energy, harnessing the faith of the cultists to aid in preparing for Meitremar's ritual in the chambers below. See Hazard (page 34) for more details.

Creatures: Lord Knurr Ragnulf has been placed "in charge" of this chamber, a "great responsibility and honor" according to Meitremar. In fact, Meitremar doesn't yet trust his magically controlled puppet to remain loyal if he were to be fully exposed to the glory of Xar-Azmak, and instead has positioned him here in a glorified guard's position along with three of his more trustworthy Thassilonian cultists.

Knurr has spent most of his waking hours since his arrival praying and offering blood sacrifices and devotions to the altar—mostly in the form of fish and seagulls, but periodically offering his own blood as well. He has lost his clerical powers as a worshipper of Gorum and won't be receiving new powers from Xar-Azmak any time soon (at the very least, not until the demon lord is resurrected), so he's less powerful than he was when he stood fully in Gorum's favor. His growing obsession with what he calls "the truth in all iron" or "iron's blood" (poetic names and concepts for rust) is quickly reaching a tipping point as far as his fall from Gorum's faith is concerned.

Upon seeing the PCs, Knurr holds his warhammer high in a salute, recognizing them as intruders by saying, "Behold our first supplicants to grace the rusted works of Xar-Azmak!" He then charges to attack, focusing on PCs who appear more heavily armed or armored. As he fights, he proselytizes, lauding the power of Xar-Azmak with phrases like "My lord needs only to touch the iron god to turn his armor to dust and leave him weak as a babe," and "Iron will always be weak, fighting against the corrosion of rust," and "Decay is an inevitability; give in to entropy!" If one of the PCs is obviously a worshipper of Gorum, he chooses that target in preference to others, promising to deliver them into a new world beyond the limits of iron.

While the three Rustsworn initiates fanatically fight to the death, Knurr falters if he's either brought below 5 Hit Points, or if he succumbs to his guilt. In this case, he abandons his weapons, casts aside his helm, and asks for "honorable execution." If the PCs refuse, he growls, "Who are you to deny me this right?" before snatching his weapon up and resuming combat ferociously, this time fighting without quarter or surrender.

While dismissing the *inveigle* effect that's commanding his loyalty to Meitremar is likely beyond the PCs at this time, taking Knurr alive and binding him is not. If he's delivered alive back to Iron Harbor, the locals take him in and do their best to keep him safe from himself. In time (and with Meitremar's defeat), Knurr will recover from his trial, but whether or not he'll recover his faith will depend on how the locals—and the PCs—treat him once he's taken alive.

KNURR RAGNULF CREATURE 2

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM DWARF HUMANOID

Male dwarf ex-cleric of Gorum

Perception +8; darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven, Skald

Skills Athletics +7, Crafting +4, Deception +7, Intimidation +9, Religion +6

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

Items rusty (broken) full plate, +1 warhammer

AC 17; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

HP 35

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ warhammer +10 (magical, shove), **Damage** 1d8+5 bludgeoning

Intimidating Strike ♦♦ (emotion, fear, mental) Knurr makes a melee Strike while roaring Xar-Azmak's name. If he hits and deals damage, the target is frightened 1, or frightened 2 on a critical hit.

RUSTSWORN INITIATES (3)

CREATURE -1

Page 31

Initiative Perception +2

Hazard: The ancient apparatus on the altar is part of the process by which Meitremar gathers and stores energy for his ritual. Destroying the unusual device will hamper his rite, but meddling with the ancient machinery is dangerous.

ANCIENT APPARATUS

HAZARD 2

UNIQUE **COMPLEX** **MAGICAL** **TRAP**


Stealth +8 (trained)

Description A complex device made of multicolored metal that resembles a combination of grinding gears, spider-like legs, and twitching blades, from which emits a constant soft ticking sound. All of the metal in the device appears to be rusted or corroded.

Disable DC 18 Thievery to adjust the device's workings so they seize up and no longer function, or DC 21 Religion to focus prayers to a non-evil deity into the device to disrupt its ability to channel ambient faith

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

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

Spin Up  **Trigger** The ancient apparatus takes damage or an attempt to disable it fails; **Effect** The ancient apparatus begins to grind and churn faster. Its soft ticking whirs up to a discordant buzzing sound, and the entire thing begins to glow with an unsettling rust-colored light. All living creatures in area **D3** experience the unsettling taste of rust in their mouths and must succeed on a DC 18 Fortitude save to avoid becoming sickened 1. The ancient apparatus then rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) The ancient apparatus emits beams of rust-colored light, spending an action to make ranged Strikes against three targets in area **D3**. The apparatus can target creatures as if it possessed darkvision, but has no ability to discern between friend or foe. It can't target a creature more than once, and if there are more than three targets, it selects its targets from those it can see in the room randomly. The ancient apparatus has only 1 action as long as its Hit Points are below its BT.

Ranged rusty light beam +11 (divine, necromancy), **Damage** 2d6+5 negative plus rust creep (page 19)

Reset The ancient apparatus reverts to its non-active mode and resets automatically at the end of any round in which there are no obvious targets to attack.

Reward: If the PCs capture Knurr alive and have him returned to the villagers' care, grant the party 20 XP. If the PCs deactivate or destroy the ancient apparatus, the party gains 1 Disruption Point.

D4. STOREROOM

This chamber is covered with shelves on nearly every wall. Several crates and some barrels sit on the floor

Treasure: The crates and barrels contain food and drink supplies for the cultists. A PC who Searches the shelves finds a decaying leather pouch that contains 45 cp and a single platinum coin, dozens of empty potion and elixir bottles (and many more that have shattered into fragments), a single *lesser healing potion* bearing a label written in Thassilonian that identifies it as poison, a *pendant of the occult* entirely caked in grime, and a dust-covered *crying angel pendant talisman*.

D5. PRIEST'S QUARTERS

These modest chambers contain a small dusty mattress, a chest of drawers, and a writing desk. Standing upon the desk is a rusted iron sculpture depicting a mountain with a dagger buried in its side.

Knurr Ragnulf took these ancient high priest's quarters for himself when he followed Meitremar into this ancient workshop.

Treasure: The keys to Stonehome's secure storage room (area **C21**) and the training-room-turned-prison (**D7**) lie here on the desk. The dagger can be removed from the sculpture; while rust has ruined the blade, the weapon's +1 *weapon potency* rune still functions and can be transferred normally to another weapon.

D6. CULTIST QUARTERS

These chambers contain a few bedrolls laid out atop a flimsy mattress of dry grass.

These rooms are used by the Rustsworn initiates, the Thassilonian cultists who accompanied Meitremar to Iron Harbor—but the first time the PCs enter the complex, the initiates are spread between Rusthenge's surface area above, area **D3**, and area **D13**.

Treasure: A Search of all four of these rooms turns up 17 gp worth of ancient coins and curiosities—minor treasures the initiates have looted from the eastern portion of this complex.

D7. PRISON

LOW 2

This door is locked with an average padlock. The key is on Knurr's desk in his quarters (area **D5**).

The stench from over-full chamber pots is overpowering in this vast, dusty chamber. The remains of archery targets,

practice dummies, and wooden training posts lie sprawled around the room—it appears that components taken from these old furnishings have been used to build a few rickety-looking beds to the north. A feeble oil lamp glows from the center of the room, perched on an old sawhorse. The only exit is a door to the south.

Knurr Ragnulf repurposed this training room into a makeshift prison for any captives brought to the dungeon. While the chamber is currently empty, a PC who attempts to Search the room and succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check finds a note hidden in one of the beds. This note, left by Elder Ordwi, is written in her own blood and reads, “Knurr has fallen to cult; warn Osprey Cove! I fear they’ll soon take me below.” Her signature was scrawled with a shaky hand.

Any other prisoners taken by the cult can be found here, although as she feared, Ordwi is now held much deeper in the complex.

Creature: The cult keeps a guardian in this room. When there are prisoners, this yeth hound is kept chained to the south wall so that it can’t quite reach them, but it will certainly attack anyone it doesn’t recognize who enters the room. The ill-tempered creature fights to the death and will pursue foes throughout the complex if freed. If it’s allowed to bay, the occupants of the entire level are alerted to trouble but are temporarily immune to its effects.

YETH HOUND

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 302

Initiative Perception +9

D8. DINING HALL

LOW 2

The southern door to this room is barricaded with a stone bench. It can be Forced Open with a DC 20 Athletics check.

Stone tables fill this vast hall, many of them covered with cutlery, dishware, goblets, or tools. Rusty iron chandeliers hang from the ceiling, but instead of large candles providing light, huge glowing mushrooms spring out of each holder, bathing the room in a dim bluish-green radiance.

Creatures: When Meitremar arrived in Rusthenge, he was startled to find the complex wasn’t as abandoned as he expected. Connections to the Darklands below have allowed numerous creatures to filter up into the complex, including two factions whose temperaments made alliances easy—a small group of deros and a larger group of albino boggards. While Meitremar managed to secure something akin to an alliance with the deros, the boggards have been

a bit more standoffish. Rather than waste resources trying to fight them, though, Meitremar’s ordered the cultists to simply ignore the boggards for now—once Xar-Azmak is raised, they’ll have plenty of time to “clean house.”

These boggards, who refer to themselves as the Children of the Black Lake, are natives to the Darklands and have the pale countenances to match. Known to some as “deep boggards,” these creatures’ slightly phosphorescent pale green flesh gives them an almost ghostly look, but apart from this they’re quite similar to their surface-dwelling kin—though the Black Lake boggards have no idea that others like them dwell in the world above. The boggards have been idly looting the ruins below Rusthenge for weeks, bringing their choicest treasures to Gurga in the “dripping room” (area D10). When Meitremar and his cultists arrived, the boggards chose to barricade themselves and their treasures into this part of the complex. They’ve sent scouts out to search for a safe path back to the Black Lake (area F10) but have yet to hear word back. Now the boggards are waiting for the humans to leave so they can return home.

Only two boggards remain in this room. These two scouts, Bolgus and Durgon, spend their time sorting the items they’ve salvaged from the workshop and cleaning the grime from them. They’re paranoid



about the invading humans them and act unfriendly toward any non-boggards who enter the room. A PC can convince the boggards they mean no harm with a successful DC 18 Diplomacy check to Make an Impression. If the boggards are made indifferent, they call their boss, Gurga, to pass judgment. Once Gurga arrives from the dripping room (area D10), a PC must Make an Impression on her with a successful DC 20 Diplomacy check to earn her trust. Failure to impress Gurga results in her ordering Bolgus and Durgon to attack the PCs, accusing them of being “lying liars who lie.”

If the PCs do successfully impress the boggards and convince them not to attack, the boggards craft “friend badges” for each of the PCs. These badges are

constructed from a chip of stone, glowing mushrooms, rodent teeth, and a sticky brown substance that might be mud. Visibly wearing the resulting “badge” can help prevent other Black Lake boggards from attacking them. They’ll also tell the PCs about the secret door in the storage room (area D12) that leads to a weird room (area D21) and the stairs that lead further down to the boggards’ home.

If the PCs can’t reach an accord, the boggards attack, but as they battle they make a fighting retreat toward area D10 to gain Gurga’s assistance. If she’s slain, Bolgus and Durgon attempt to surrender, volunteering advice as detailed above (although they won’t hand out friend badges to bullies—whether the PCs can earn this prize later is up to your discretion).

BOGGARD SCOUTS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 44

Initiative Perception +7

Treasure: If the boggards are slain, then the PCs may go through their “vast piles of treasure” looking for valuables. By spending an hour Searching the collected items, PCs discover a dose of blue dragonfly poison (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 45), enough materials to create three caltrop snares, a *shrinking potion*, a dose of violet venom (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 286), and a *wand of heal*. The Black Lake boggards are happy to sell these items to friendly PCs at a 50% discount—or for free, to purchase mercy.

D9. KITCHEN

Several nests of mud, rusted metal, and splinters have been spread through this chamber, leaving any indication of the room’s original purpose unclear.

Once used as a kitchen for the cultists, the boggards have not only ransacked this chamber, but have been using it as a bedroom.

D10. DRIPPING ROOM

LOW 2

The sound of falling water and the pungent smell of mold fills the air of this moist chamber. Dripping rills of what seems like an endless supply of water trickle like rain into a large mud-filled basin dug into the broken stone foundation of the floor, yet the artificial rain never seems to flood the room. A series of glowing runes are clustered together on the eastern wall.

The Black Lake boggards discovered this magical shower weeks ago, long before the cultists arrived.



When their priestess Gurga accidentally activated the shower, she managed to set it to a lukewarm temperature but hasn't been able to turn it off—not that she minds. She ordered the other boggards to break the stone below until they found dirt, and they have been enjoying their rainy mud hole ever since.

A PC who examines the shower and makes a successful DC 20 check to Identify Magic can discern the “shower” is controlled by the runes on the wall, and can activate, deactivate, or adjust the water temperature. The water itself is magically created, as if via *create water*, but it evaporates quickly before flooding the room.

Creatures: The boggard priestess Gurga lounges in the mud pit, relaxing. Her equipment is sitting on the ground against the eastern wall. If the PCs encounter her before Bolgus and Durgon, she doesn't attack immediately. Instead, she demands in a loud and imperious voice that they explain themselves as she tries to regain her power and dignity in the situation. Otherwise, the method for befriending the boggards is similar to the events of the Dining Hall (area D8).

GURGA

CREATURE 3

Female boggard swampseer (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 45)

Initiative Perception +11

D11. TOILETS

Each of these rooms contains one or more stone toilets, but the ancient magic that once kept them clean and fresh has long ago failed.

D12. MAGICAL STORAGE

The stone shelves of this storage room are largely empty, with only a few empty bottles, rusted metal tools, and blank stone tablets now sitting on the musty shelves. Muddy footprints trail from the eastern door to the shelves on the western wall.

While this room once held a vast treasure of wealth in magical items and components, it's now little more than a barren storage chamber. The muddy footprints belong to the boggards who used a secret door on the western wall to enter this place, and who tried to return through the secret lab (area D21) but perished. The muddy prints help suggest where to look for the secret door, so any PC who Searches this room and succeeds on a DC 15 Perception check can locate it.

Treasure: One of the “empty” bottles is an *invisibility potion* that only appears empty at first glance, but a PC who Searches the shelves realizes that the apparently empty bottle sloshes like it's full.

D13. RITUAL ROOM

LOW 2

A glowing Sihedron rune is engraved on the ground to the north. In the southern end of the room, a vast copper cauldron, green with age, stands on thick iron legs over a blackened fire pit. Crumbling books line the shelves in the southeast corner, while worktables are covered with potions, oils, and salves that surely expired several centuries ago.

In this room, Theiltemar and his assistants conducted powerful magical experiments and rituals, and crafted unique devices for his research on skymetals. The library could have unlocked new knowledge for the Age of Lost Omens, if it had only survived. Now the books on the shelves are crumbling and unreadable. The only magical tool that still functions in the room is the ritual circle itself, which is a warding diagram for casting *planar binding* rituals.

Creatures: Two Rustsworn initiates have been tasked with maintaining regular concentration on the ritual circle in this room; they must focus on the circle for 10 minutes every hour in order to preserve its mystical connection to the rest of the ritual elements in the complex. A single bloated maggot with a human face—an Abyssal petitioner known as a larva—writhes within the ritual circle as long as an initiate maintains it. Agents swap with each other as needed when they have to rest.

Upon spotting the PCs, though, the Rustsworn initiates break their focus and order the human-sized larva to attack. The initiates join the fight as well, and the cultists and larva petitioner all fight to the death.

LARVA

CREATURE 1

CE Abyssal petitioner (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 198)

Initiative Perception +7

RUSTSWORN INITIATES (2)

CREATURE -1

Page 31

Initiative Perception +2

Reward: Ten minutes after the initiates and larva are slain, the ritual circle here goes inert, and the party gains 1 Disruption Point.

D14. REFUSE PILE

LOW 2

Heaps of ruined furniture and skeletal remains cover most of the floor. A single door exits to the north.

When the cultists arrived, some of the areas they needed to use, such as the workshops under Rusthenge, were filled with trash and the rotted remains of the

original cultists who died and were buried here. They chose a room they didn't need and disposed of all the remains here, along with their own garbage.

Creatures: Meitremar's first experiments with the summoning chamber (area F14) met with success in the form of a pair of Abyssal vermin—ostovites. He caught them and then transported them to this chamber, where the creatures have thrived among the filth. The Rustsworn initiates know better than to enter the room, simply tossing their waste into the chamber from the entrance. The two ostovites slither out of the refuse to attack anyone who enters.

OSTOVITES (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 193

Initiative Perception +4

D15. WORKSHOP

LOW 2

A thin layer of dust coats the workbenches, grinding wheels, and cabinets in this well-equipped workshop. The smell of earth and sweat fill the room.

When the Black Lake boggards explored the workshop, they took many of the half-finished trinkets and supplies found here but left the tools behind in case they wanted to come back and make something. The cultists have been making good use of this area, keeping their equipment functional without fully removing the sacred rust that cakes their belongings. A wheel and locking mechanism on the north wall controls the cage trap in area D16. A PC who examines the device can figure out its use with 1 minute of study and a successful DC 15 Perception check.

Creatures: A pair of higher-ranking cultists can be found here, in the process of sharpening their blades and maintaining equipment in anticipation of the invasion of Osprey Cove. When they see the PCs, they fight to the death.

RUSTSWORN CULTISTS (2)

CREATURE 1

CE cultists (*Gamemastery Guide* 228)

Initiative Perception +4

Treasure: If a PC Searches the room, they find a set of sterling artisan's tools designed specifically for the delicate work involved in creating talismans. If the Searching PC also succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check, they discover a half-finished *crafter's eyepiece* under the southern cabinets; its construction is nearly complete and requires 4 days of work and 30 gp worth of components to finish. It's far enough along that it's possible to finish construction without the formula.

D16. METAL ROD STORAGE

TRIVIAL 2

A pair of wide racks stand against the eastern and southern walls in this chamber, each with three segments: left, right, and center. Small divots in the racks hold clusters of ten-foot-long iron rods coated with large splotches of rust. Flaked-off pieces of rust litter the floor.

Hazard: Theiltemar's crafters stored long iron rods here, useful in creating a variety of items. Due to theft, they installed a large iron cage that would fall on any who attempted to steal their supplies. The cage still works, and some of the Xar-Azmak cultists have been using it to prank one another. If a PC triggers the trap, the clamor caused by its fall quickly draws the cultists from area D15 to investigate.

RUSTED CAGE TRAP

HAZARD 1

UNCOMMON MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 17

Description A rusty cage embedded in the ceiling drops down with a clang to try to entrap a creature that steps onto the pressure plate in the middle of the room.

Disable DC 13 Thievery to harmlessly trigger the trap by nudging the pressure plate, DC 20 Thievery to stabilize the pressure plate so it doesn't trigger, or DC 20 Athletics to Escape from the cage or Force Open the cage once it falls

Cage AC 16; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +4

Cage Hardness 5; **HP** 24 (BT 12); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Slam Down ➤ **Trigger** A creature walks under the cage and steps on the pressure plate; **Effect** The cage drops from the ceiling to trap the triggering creature, who must attempt a DC 17 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature avoids the trap, and returns to the space it just left rather than entering the trap's space.

Success As Critical Success, but the falling trap delivers a glancing blow and 1d6+3 bludgeoning damage to the creature as it stumbles back.

Failure The falling trap lands on the triggering creature. A Medium or smaller creature becomes trapped inside the cage (Escape DC 20). A Large or larger creature takes 2d6+5 bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone as the cage bounces off the creature's body, becoming destroyed in the process.

Critical Failure As Failure, but a Medium or smaller creature is also struck by the cage, knocked prone, and then takes 2d6+5 bludgeoning damage and is immobilized by the cage as it lands on a limb.

Reset The mechanism to manually reset this trap is located in area D15.

D17. AKATA HUSBANDRY

LOW 2

The door to this room has been forced open, leaving it to hang uselessly open on damaged hinges. The chamber beyond has a dozen large, cracked-open geodes leaning against the walls. Each one features hundreds of tiny, pale green crystals, some of which have been broken off and scattered across the floor. Two cages built into the south wall of the room have similar large geodes, and the bars have been bent apart a few feet from the ground.

Creatures: Among the various skymetals Theiltemar and his crafters used here was noqual, a skymetal valued for its magic-resistant qualities. He kept a few akatas here as sources for small amounts of the metal, but since Earthfall, the two akatas went into hibernation. When the Black Lake boggards arrived in the complex several weeks ago, a group of them began to loot the shiny (but worthless) shards of noqual here, only to be attacked soon thereafter when the akatas emerged from their cocoons. The boggards managed to kill one of the akatas before they fled—leaving behind one of their own in the process as they slammed the door shut. The surviving akata made short work of the unfortunate boggard, and just recently the boggard's remains rose from death as a void zombie. At your discretion, if the PCs take more than 2 days to reach this room, the akata (who finished eating the last dead boggard body left here the day before the PCs entered the room) goes back into hibernation, but the boggard void zombie remains active and attacks at once.

AKATA

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 13

Initiative Perception +6

VOID ZOMBIE

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 288

Initiative Perception +3

Treasure: If the PCs spend 8 hours of labor (which can be divided among multiple people), they can collect all the viable noqual crystals, which are worth a total of 36 gp as trinkets (but not as raw materials for crafting noqual objects).

D18. INGOT STORAGE

The door to this room is locked with an average lock.

Two piles of rusted iron ingots sit in alcoves to the east and west of this closet, although one of the ingots appears to be untouched by rust.

Once used to store skymetal ingots, this room has remained largely empty since Earthfall, as the disaster struck days before a new shipment of rare supplies was scheduled to arrive.

Treasure: The iron ingots here are worthless, long ago succumbing to Xar-Azmak's lingering influence. The one rust-free ingot is in fact a silver ingot worth 100 gp. A character who Searches the rusted ingots for at least 1 minute discovers a cold iron light hammer under a stack of rusty ingots.

D19. SMITHY

MODERATE 2

A different forge stands in the east, west, and southern wings of this room, each accompanied by an anvil of a different size. A hammer sits atop the largest anvil. All three forges burn hot, filling the room with a dry heat. Large, shaped plates of iron litter the room, leaning against various walls.



Dretch

Chapter 1:
Message in
the Night

Chapter 2:
The Rusted
Ruin

Chapter 3:
Resurrection
of Rust

Adventure
Toolbox

One of Theiltemar's early plans to resurrect Xar-Azmak was to build the demon lord an entirely new body of iron for his soul to return to, but he abandoned this plan soon after creating these three forges when he realized no mortal iron could contain a demon lord.

Creatures: Two dretches, also known as sloth demons, play with the furnaces, heating and pounding metal for fun while wearing large protective gloves. The two demons have spent the last several thousand years here, and are still enjoying the liberating freedom of not being forced to work. Meitremar knows the two dretches are here but doesn't see them as particularly worthy additions to his forces and has left them to play.

When the dretches spot the PCs, they wield mace-like lengths of twisted, red-hot iron against them, shrieking out in Abyssal, "Theiltemar is dead! You can't make us work!" As long as the dretches wear their protective gloves, they cannot make claw Strikes.

DRETCHES (2)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 60

Initiative Perception +6

Melee ♦ heated light mace
+9 (agile, finesse, shove),
Damage 1d4+5 bludgeoning
plus 1d4 fire

Treasure: The hammer on the anvil is a cold iron warhammer.

D20. RESEARCH LAB

SEVERE 2

Torches illuminate this fifteen-foot-high chamber. A pair of massive columns of rusted metal loom in large alcoves to the east and south, each fitted with complex hinged armatures and drooping lengths of wire that connect them to one of two large metallic worktables. Gears grind slowly and glowing crystals periodically pulse from these worktables. A stone well ten feet in diameter stands in the center of the room between the two strange worktables, capped with a stone slab engraved with a singular broad rune with three downward spikes. Bookshelves line the northern wall, though most of their contents have fallen to ruin—save for one faded red tome near the center of the northern wall.

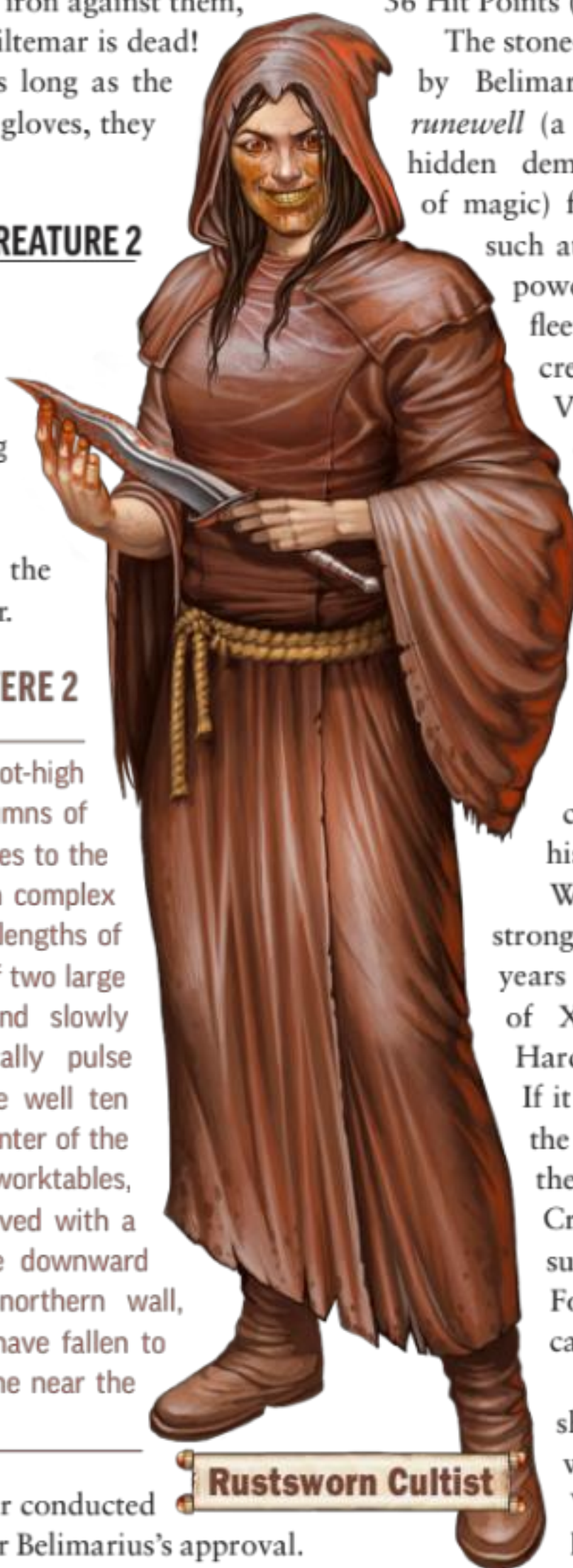
In this laboratory, Theiltemar conducted his experiments on skymetal for Belimarius's approval.

A PC who's visited the aboveground ruins of Rusthenge immediately recognizes the two rusted metal columns as being identical in shape—indeed, these long spires of rust are the roots of the surface ruin's southeastern spires. The loops of wires and armatures connect the spires to the magical worktables, allowing spellcasters to adjust and direct the energies gathered by the spires for various purposes. A PC who examines the apparatuses here and succeeds at a DC 20 Arcana check to Identify Magic can tell that the spires are a sort of magical "battery," and the workbenches are meant to help focus the energies; this success also allows the PC to deactivate a workbench as an Interact action. The workbenches have AC 18, Hardness 9, and 36 Hit Points (BT 18).

The stone-capped well is one of several attempts by Belimarius's agents to create a working *runewell* (a magical artifact capable of creating hidden demiplanes and storing vast amounts of magic) for the envious runelord, yet like all such attempts it never achieved this level of power. What the well does do is capture fleeting amounts of soul energy from creatures sacrificed at the center of the Vloric Spires above, then converts that energy into distilled envy. Theiltemar had many uses for this glowing liquid in his experiments, but when Earthfall struck, Theiltemar and his followers capped off the envy basin with a large stone slab, hoping to preserve the power within for later use and drastically underestimating the world-changing nature of the cataclysm. Of course, Theiltemar and his cultists never returned to this lab.

While the stone slab was once much stronger, it has weakened after thousands of years of exposure to the lingering energies of Xar-Azmak's faith. It has AC 15, Hardness 7, and 28 Hit Points (BT 14). If it gains the broken condition, cracks in the stone become large enough to release the primordial envy sealed within (see Creatures). Alternatively, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Athletics check can Force Open the well by sliding the stone cap to the side.

The faded red tome on the northern shelves is made of wood and bound with leather, as a real book might be. When this library was full, it was well hidden, but it's now quite conspicuous.



Rustsworn Cultist

Pulling on the book activates a hidden lever that opens the secret door behind the bookcase. A Searching PC can also discover the secret door by succeeding at a DC 20 Perception check.

Creatures: Each time the Vlorian cythnigot up above is led in its circuit, ripples of decay echo down through the Vloric Spires to gather here below. A group of three Rustsworn agents (a cultist and two initiates) maintain watch here, periodically adjusting the crystals and gears on the worktables to ensure that the tiny little flickers of decay are gathered and stored properly to aid Meitremar's rite. The three agents attack the PCs on sight, but as soon as one is slain, one of the others panics and races over to a table to jerk aside one of the crystals as an Interact action. This causes a surge of magic to lash back into the well, cracking the capstone and releasing the primordial envy. This is a desperate gambit indeed, for the cultists know that the ooze won't distinguish between targets. Faced with defeat by the PCs, the cultists figure this is their best chance at stopping them.

PRIMORDIAL ENVY

CREATURE 3

Page 63

Initiative Perception +6

RUSTSWORN CULTIST

CREATURE 1

CE cultist (*Gamemastery Guide* 228)

Initiative Perception +4

RUSTSWORN INITIATES (2)

CREATURE -1

Page 31

Initiative Perception +2

Treasure: There's a lot to look through in this laboratory, but if the PCs spend a half hour Searching the chamber, they'll be able to gather together enough tools to constitute two full sets of sterling artisan's tools for metalworking, three vials of *anticorrosion oil* (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault* 86), a vial of *oil of potency*, a vial of *oil of weightlessness*, a +1 *cold iron light hammer*, and a *dragonbone arrowhead* (*Pathfinder Secrets of Magic* 173).

The biggest treasure in this room is the access to the Vloric Spires and the powerful magic they allow a spellcaster to channel, though this is hardly portable wealth. An arcane spellcasting PC can make use of this energy to gain a +1 status bonus to Arcana or Crafting checks made in this laboratory to examine or create magic items, and to all rolls made to cast rituals.

Reward: If the PCs deactivate or destroy both worktables, they further inhibit Meitremar's goals and gain 1 Disruption Point.

D21. SECRET LAB

MODERATE 2

A sluggish clicking sound fills the air in this vast chamber. A wide, rusted metal cylinder stands in the northeast corner of the room. Long cables and articulated armatures attach from the cylinder to cube-shaped devices with ticking gears and monotonously clicking weights that swing in lazy circles. Just west of the metal cylinder, a copper cauldron stands on a rusted iron stand; one of the legs has bent, growing weak from the encroaching rust. The fire under the cauldron has burned down to mere embers.

In the southeast corner sits a stone basin holding a broad, sloped bowl with runes carved along the outside rim. Across from the basin in the southwest corner is a wooden cage built into the stone floor. Chalk-drawn runes surround a circle of chalk drawn around the cage. In the northwest corner, an empty bookcase stands against the wall behind a staircase that descends into darkness.

Similar to the research lab (area D20), this laboratory contains the base of a Vloric Spire. The desk-like device it's attached to is larger and more intricate than the ones found in the main lab, as if they were merely prototypes to test a theory, with this device being several iterations more advanced. Unlike the devices in area D20, this spire doesn't gather energy—instead, it refocuses the energies from this level down into the complex below. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 check to Identify Magic confirms that the magic is being directed deeper.

The flight of stairs leads down to area E1 (see Chapter 3).

Creatures: Two sinspawn have patiently stood guard here for many centuries, spending much of that time in a sort of hibernation. They woke when Meitremar arrived, recognized in him his grandfather's bloodline, and pledged their service to him. Now they guard the flight of stairs and attack intruders on sight. They fight to the death.

ENVYSPAWN (2)

CREATURE 2

Sinspawn (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 296)

Initiative Perception +10

Treasure: Lying on the desk is a *scroll of mud pit* (*Pathfinder Secrets of Magic* 117), a *scroll of dispel magic*, a *scroll of resist energy*, and a *wand of grease*. A more in-depth investigation of the secret lab (at least 10 minutes of Searching) uncovers another wand that's fallen behind one of the workbenches—a *wand of burning hands*.

Reward: If the PCs deactivate or destroy the worktable, they earn 1 Disruption Point.



CHAPTER 3: RESURRECTION OF RUST

As the PCs delve deeper into the ruins under Rusthenge, they'll gain more understanding about Meitremar's plans to resurrect Xar-Azmak, and the urgency with which they need to stop the cultists' plan. Before heading down into the Temple of Xar-Azmak and the Darklands below, they should have reached level 3.

The Temple of Xar-Azmak

During the time of ancient Thassilon, when the runelords ruled, cultists of a demon lord built this temple deep below the surface, out of the range of prying eyes. Here, they hoped to carve out a place to dwell, pursue their nefarious plans, and worship their sinister god in privacy. Despite their grand schemes, though, they only got so far as to magically

tunnel out a worship chamber, a grand gallery, and two private quarters for the head cleric and their assistant. Before they could finish the barracks for the rest of the cultists, Earthfall struck and left the temple half-finished. Now Meitremar has come to finish what his grandfather started.

Unless otherwise stated, the ceilings are all 10 feet tall and the rooms are dark. The walls and doors are made from hewn stone. The map for this level appears on page 44.

E1. GRAND GALLERY

LOW 3

The stairway down to this level extends a total of a hundred feet both down and to the west, with few landings. It emerges into the top half of this room and continues downward.

This forty-foot-high chamber is brightly lit by flickering flames inset into small silver-lined nooks. The carefully controlled light artfully illuminates several painted frescos on the opposite wall. This tall gallery hosts finely crafted depictions of a horned and hooved giant in rusted full plate accomplishing great tasks of utter destruction, with the last in the series showing some sort of ritual. Part of the wall in the southeast corner has caved in somewhat, but the hallways exiting the chamber to the north and south are still intact. To the west, a massive fifteen-foot-wide iron door seals the passage beyond; sharp spikes and blades of rusted metal cover the entire surface of the door.

Theiltemar commissioned a famous Thassilonian artist from Cyrusian to create these works of art, then sacrificed her to Xar-Azmak. He consecrated the massive iron door with his own blood and a prayer to his master, which corrupted the door and warped it, drawing spikes and blades forth from the iron. Theiltemar's dried blood is still spattered across the door, the catalyst for the oxidation process.

From left to right, the first fresco shows a figure covered in full plate donning a rusted helm that seems to spread its rusted decay to the rest of his armor. The second fresco shows the figure underwater, walking among crumbling coral and battling a three-eyed fish-like creature with several long tentacles, his rusty armor forming an orange cloud in the water. The third fresco depicts the figure standing in a wheat field, decay and rot spreading from his rusty form as he battles an antler-headed man and a leaf-crowned woman, both covered in boils. The fourth fresco shows the rusted warrior standing on a violet stone mesa with islands of multi-colored stone floating in the background; angels and devils work together to fight him, but his mighty, rusted mace shatters their bodies and withers their flesh. In the fifth fresco, he marches through an infernal city, toppling jagged towers by rusting their foundations and turning all he touches to ruin; a quad-horned devil cries out in anguish in the background.

Finally, in the sixth fresco, a beam of red-brown light falls on a raised stone dais, surrounded by black robed figures in supplication. A single black-robed figure stands in the foreground, arms raised in praise, as the souls of the supplicants swirl out of their bodies and around a single rusted horn, seemingly broken from the rusted warrior's helm. A shadow seems to grow from the horn, forming the silhouette of a warrior clad in full plate armor.

The immense door to the west may look too heavy or too rusted to move, yet it swings open with unnatural silence at a touch. However, it's still dangerous—see the Hazard entry for area E5 for details.

Creatures: Two envyspawn lurk in this room, ordered to guard the rusted door but preferring to skulk in the shadows of the stairway.

ENVYSPAWN (2)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 296

Initiative Perception +10

E2. MEITREMAR'S QUARTERS

LOW 3

An ancient bed stands against the north wall with a new mattress and blankets upon it. Next to the bed stands an ancient writing desk and chair, both appearing withered and rickety. Near the southern doorway sits an iron-banded wooden chest with a steel padlock keeping it secure. A single flickering torch sitting absently on its side on the desk lights the room, and a rapier leans against the side of the desk.

This small bedroom was originally intended for Theiltemar, head of the Xar-Azmak cultists of ancient Thassilon. When Meitremar arrived, he took up residence in this room, feeling the reverence and power of the place, but he doesn't spend much time here.

Creatures: Meitremar took three clockwork spies from his grandfather's workshop and brought them here to tinker with, but as his work began in earnest in the summon chamber below, these creatures have been left here as guardians. Unlike the typical clockwork spy, these creatures appear as mechanical snakes made of bronze, brass, and polished wood—and are



Clockwork Serpent Spy

Chapter 1:
Message in
the Night

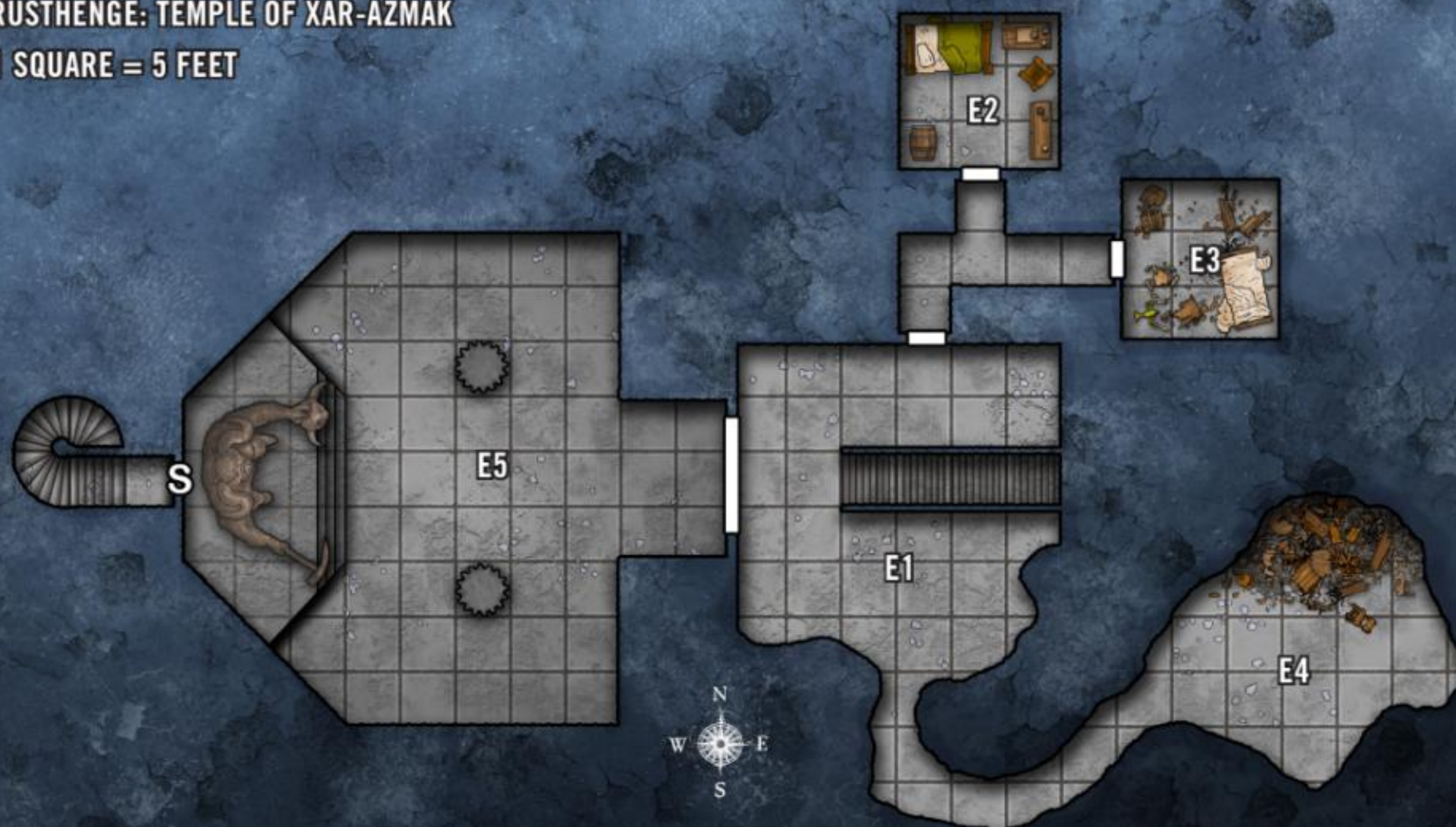
Chapter 2:
The Rusted
Ruin

Chapter 3:
Resurrection
of Rust

Adventure
Toolbox

RUSTHENGE: TEMPLE OF XAR-AZMAK

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



among the only objects Meitremar values that aren't crusted with rust or decay. Each has a seven-pointed star (the Sihedron) engraved on their heads, and their "mouths" clamp around a spinning gear with razor-sharp edges. All of the clockwork serpents are on standby—one coiled atop the mattress, one under the desk, and one atop the wooden chest. As soon as they notice the PCs, they come out of standby and attack. Their small size allows them to slither through spaces occupied by furniture with ease; when they share a space with a chair or desk or heap of blankets, they have lesser cover.

CLOCKWORK SERPENT SPIES (3) CREATURE 1

RARE N TINY CLOCKWORK CONSTRUCT MINDLESS

Variant clockwork spies (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 48)

Perception +10, low-light vision

Skills Acrobatics +7

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

Record Audio ♦ As clockwork spy.

Wind Up 24 hours, DC 17, standby

AC 19; **Fort** +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

HP 15; **Immunities** death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Weaknesses** electricity 3, orichalcum 3

Self-Destruct ⤿ As clockwork spy, but 1d12 piercing damage (DC 17 basic Reflex save), and with a DC 17 Thievery check to Disable a Device.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ sharpened gear +7 (finesse), **Damage** 1d6-1 slashing plus bleeding gash

Bleeding Gash On a critical hit with a sharpened gear Strike, the clockwork serpent spy also inflicts 1d4 persistent bleed damage (DC 17 Fortitude save negates the additional bleed damage).

Treasure: The torch lying casually on its side on the desk is an *everburning torch*. Nearby on the desk, Meitremar's journal (written in Thassilonian) lies open to the most recent entry, which has no date. It's an ancient journal, once owned by his grandfather, and earlier entries discuss the history of the skymetal workshop, the Vloric Spires, and Theiltemar's plan

to resurrect Xar-Azmak. Only brief mention is made of Theiltemar's presence in Dis during Xar-Azmak's ill-fated attack on the city, other than noting that he managed to bring back one of the demon lord's broken-off horns upon fleeing back to the Vloric Spires. Several pages in the middle of the journal contains two rituals: *create undead* and *inveigle*.

Meitremar has continued journaling, starting with an entry that discusses his discovery of the journal soon after returning to his grandfather's home a year after Xin-Edasseril returned to the modern era, becoming intrigued by the idea that the *Horn of Rust* was hidden somewhere deep under Rusthenge, and his plans to travel here with several of his followers. His entries since arriving in Iron Harbor are short and brief. One mentions his elation at recovering the *Horn of Rust* in the "grand temple." This entry also mentions his discovery of a secret door behind the temple's looming statue of Xar-Azmak. The final entry is longer, and is reproduced here as Handout #2.

The key to the bedroom prison (area E3) sits on the desk under the journal.

The iron-bound chest belongs to Meitremar. It's locked with an average lock (four successful DC 25 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock); Meitremar carries the key to the chest on his person. Inside, Meitremar keeps several leather pouches containing a total of 14 gp and 66 sp. In addition, the chest contains a *lesser healing potion*, a *lesser comprehension elixir*, three *lesser antiplagues*, and six *ration tonics* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 259).

E3. BEDROOM PRISON

The door to this room is locked with an average lock. The key to this door can be found in area E2, or a PC can Pick the Lock with four successful DC 25 Thievery checks. Alternatively, the door can be Forced Open with a successful DC 25 Athletics check. Any character who approaches the door can attempt a secret DC 20 Perception check to hear the soft sounds of praying on the far side of the door—on a critical success, the PC recognizes the voice as that of Elder Ordwi.

This cramped room is littered with debris, with the broken remains of ancient furniture scattered throughout. A nest of smaller splinters covered with a heavy traveling cloak forms a makeshift bed near the east wall.

Creature: Soon after Ordwi arrived at Stonehome, she was questioned, beaten unconscious, and brought here by a pair of Rustsworn cultists eager to earn praise from Meitremar. Meitremar was just about to begin the long rite to resurrect Xar-Azmak at the time, and

Soon a whole, new world will begin. I'm so close to being able to finally complete my grandfather's work. I've double-checked the preparations in the summoning chamber, and we should have enough food and water for the week-long ritual. As much as I would like to have had my fellow believers with me, I need them to ensure all aspects of the ritual go as planned. Without the added power siphoned from the Vloric Spires or the chaotic divine energy gathered by Rasmul's bumbling hands, this ritual might not work. But I must have faith, with the fresh blood of decay and the Horn of Rust finally in hand, Xar-Azmak, Son of Steel, shall rise again, and He shall reward me for being the agent of His resurrection.

HANDOUT #2

didn't have much time to spare to deal with another prisoner. He chose to lock Ordwi in here, keeping her alive in case the rite went poorly and he needed an additional sacrifice.

Ordwi's condition depends on how long it took the PCs to reach this room; when she was placed here originally, she was unconscious at 1 Hit Point. She still wears her explorer's clothing, but her other possessions were either fed to the Vlorian cythnigot (including her rapier and her metal religious symbol) or taken by Meitremar (any *minor healing potions* she still had when she was taken captive). Having little else to do now but recover via long-term rest, Ordwi heals 8 Hit Points per day. Without her religious symbol, though, she can't cast any spells. Meitremar left her with a bucket of water and a few days' worth of rations, but at your option, if the PCs take longer than a week to reach this room, she might have died of thirst—or at the very least be suffering from dehydration or starvation.

Assuming she still lives, she's overjoyed to see the PCs while simultaneously warning them about the people here, and that the leader of the cultists has been performing some awful ritual intended to bring

a great evil into the world. The PCs likely know as much or more than Ordwi at this point, but feel free to have her fill in a few gaps in their knowledge as you see fit. In particular, she currently suspects all of Iron Harbor to be in league with the cult—if the PCs can explain the situation to her, she's much relieved (while still being worried about what Meitremar is up to).

If the PCs can supply her with healing, gear, and a religious symbol of Cayden Cailean, she can join them on their adventures if you wish, but she would prefer to be escorted back out of the dungeon to the relative safety of Iron Harbor, where she can work with Elsie to further spread the word about what's going on here. If the PCs weren't able to supply her with a religious symbol, she'll be able to make a serviceable one herself after a few hours in the village, at which point she offers her spellcasting support to the PCs for free.

ORDWI

CREATURE 2

Page 7

Initiative Perception +8

Reward: If the PCs rescue Ordwi and get her to safety, they earn 80 XP.

E4. WRECKAGE ROOM

LOW 3

A short and winding tunnel, ancient and artificial, leads to a natural pocket in the stone. A large number of what appear to be ruined pieces of furniture lie in heaps along the northern side of the cave, and what appears to be a nest has been built in the middle of the mess.

Creatures: After his initial success at conjuring some less dangerous creatures from the Abyss, Meitremar's most recent success with the summoning chamber (area F14) now dwells here. This is an abrikandilu demon named Droxur, an unpleasant and often giggling creature who agreed to serve the cult for a month after they supplied him with a nice amount of fine furniture (scavenged from elsewhere in the complex) for him to smash. Unfortunately for Droxur, the thrill of wrecking the furniture passed after a single glorious hour of destruction, and for the past few days he's been bitterly rethinking his agreement.

When the PCs arrive, he eyes them hungrily, then demands they hand over their "pretty belongings" for him to wreck. In return, he promises to tell them about the cult they're no doubt here to fight. Droxur quickly smashes any items given to him, then giggles

and does his best to lie to the PCs, giving them misleading information. The fact that Droxur doesn't speak Common might save the party from being tricked into this dangerous offer—if they refuse or don't understand, Droxur shrieks impatiently and attacks, figuring he'll just take their things from their bodies. If reduced to fewer than 15 Hit Points, Droxur begs for mercy, offering the same intelligence, but if it's granted, he still feeds the PCs lies and misinformation and takes his first chance to flee back downstairs, hoping to join Meitremar. Whether or not the escaping demon makes it that far, and what destructive shenanigans he might get up to, is left to you to decide.

DROXUR

CREATURE 4

Male abrikandilu demon (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 61)

Initiative Perception +10

E5. WORSHIP CHAMBER

SEVERE 3

Note that the door to this room is trapped—see Hazard below.

This vast chamber is bathed in a flickering blood-red light cast by four torches burning on the northern, southern, and eastern walls. The light illuminates two intricately carved columns depicting snarling demons that rise to the ceiling thirty feet above. To the west, stone stairs lead up to a dais covered in the brown stains of dried blood. A twenty-foot-tall rusted iron statue of a demonic horned creature looms on the dais, holding an oversized pickaxe in one hand and the head of a horned fiend in the other. One horn on the statue's head appears to be missing, with only a jagged stump remaining. Glowing red gemstones sit in the eye sockets of the looming statue.

Theiltemar built this room as a symbol of his promise to help his lord slay Dispat in vengeance once Xar-Azmak has returned to life. The immense statue depicts Xar-Azmak holding Dispat's severed head. The PCs can automatically recognize the statue as the same rust-clad demon in the murals in the grand gallery (area E1) and can identify the head as being Dispat's with a successful DC 20 Religion check to Recall Knowledge. The columns depict several types of well-known demons, but each also includes a depiction of a single vlork demon (page 62). A DC 20 Religion check to Recall Knowledge is enough to recognize the images of abrikandilu demons, babau demons, vrock demons, and marilith demons, but only on a critical success can a PC identify the vlork and recognize its significance to Xar-Azmak—otherwise the insectile, six-armed demon will, for now, remain a mystery.

The jagged stump on the statue's head is where the *Horn of Rust* sat for thousands of years before Meitremar arrived and claimed it.

The secret door behind the Xar-Azmak statue can be discovered with a successful DC 25 Perception check by a Searching PC, but a character who knows about the door after reading Meitremar's journal can find the secret door automatically after Searching for 1 minute. The stairwell beyond descends 50 feet to area F1 of Despoiler's Deep.

Creatures: Theiltemar built a powerful clockwork mage in Runelord Belimarius's image to stand guard in this chamber, ostensibly as a gift to honor the runelord—yet Theiltemar found amusement by leaving the clockwork in a position of prostrated worship before Xar-Azmak. Over the thousands of years of exposure to the lingering influence of the demon lord, the construct fell into disrepair. Upon arriving here, and after he claimed the *Horn of Rust* as his own, Meitremar did what he could to repair and reactivate the clockwork mage, but fully restoring the guardian was well beyond his skill.

Meitremar wound the clockwork but left it on standby in its position of worship. Not trusting it to the duty of guardianship alone, he also posted three cultists here to stand guard; the clockwork Belimarius follows their orders. If the cultists hear combat or the sound of PCs attempting to handle the door trap, they'll move into the northeast and southeast corners of the room, preparing to ambush the PCs as they enter.

The clockwork Belimarius follows a pattern when attacking: it casts *mage armor* on the first round, then *magnetic repulsion* the second. It then uses *color spray* and *fear* the following rounds, taking its third action to Stride or Strike as it has the chance. If it takes electricity damage in a round, it casts *resist energy* the next round to protect itself from electricity. Once it's exhausted its spells, it relies on Strikes with its halberd, or *daze* against ranged targets. The clockwork Belimarius will not exit this room, but otherwise fights until it is destroyed.

If captured, the cultists proudly tell the PCs of the plan to resurrect Xar-Azmak, feeling that they've already won and their lord will reward their loyalty in this life or the next. They know about the secret door, but do their best to obscure that fact from the PCs, even going so far as to tell them of a "hidden subbasement" below Stonehome where their leader is working, in hopes that any time the PCs spend looking for a hidden level that doesn't exist will give Meitremar the time he needs to complete his rite.

CLOCKWORK BELIMARIUS

CREATURE 4

UNIQUE N MEDIUM CLOCKWORK CONSTRUCT MINDLESS

Variant clockwork mage (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 50)

Perception +10; darkvision

Skills Acrobatics +12

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

Items clockwork wand, +1 striking halberd

Wind-Up 24 hours, DC 21, standby

AC 20; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8

HP 45; **Immunities** death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Weaknesses** electricity 5, orichalcum 5; **Resistances** physical 5 (except adamantite, bludgeoning, or orichalcum)

Clockwork Wand As clockwork mage, but DC 25 Thievery check to Disable, and when removed, it is a magic wand containing the last 1st-level spell the clockwork mage



Clockwork Belimarius

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cast (fear, if the clockwork Belimarius hasn't yet cast a 1st-level spell in this adventure).

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ halberd +16 (magical, reach, versatile S), **Damage** 2d10+4 piercing plus dispelling critical

Arcane Innate Spells DC 21, attack +13; **2nd** *magnetic repulsion* (*Secrets of Magic* 115), *resist energy*; **1st** *color spray*, *fear*, *mage armor*; **Cantrips (2nd)** *daze*, *shield*, *tanglefoot*

Dispelling Critical On a critical hit with a halberd Strike, shards of noqual built into the clockwork Belimarius glow green for a moment. Instead of inflicting additional damage with the critical hit, the clockwork Belimarius instead attempts a counteract check with a +18 bonus against one magical effect active on the target.

RUSTSWORN CULTISTS (3)

CREATURE 1

CE cultists (*Gamemastery Guide* 229)

Initiative Perception +4

Hazard: The immense rusty door into this room opens easily enough with a gentle push despite the rusted appearance of its massive hinges, but as it opens, a dangerous trap activates.

RUSTY SPIKE LAUNCHER

HAZARD 3

UNCOMMON MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 20 (trained)

Description As the large rusty door swings open, a mass of rusty spikes appear out of nowhere in the open doorway and launch violently into the room.

Disable DC 20 Thievery to decouple the triggering rods that cause the spikes to extend, or *dispel magic* (2nd level; counteract DC 18) to counteract the trap

Launch Spikes ↻ **Trigger** a creature opens the door without uttering a prayer to Xar-Azmak first; **Effect** A mass of rusty spikes appears in the open doorway and then fire into area **E1**. The rusty spikes curve through the air to seek targets—all creatures in area **E1** must attempt a DC 20 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature avoids the spikes and takes no damage.

Success A spike grazes the creature, inflicting 2d10 piercing damage.

Failure A spike impales the creature, inflicting 2d10+13 piercing damage.

Critical Failure As failure, but the spike also exposes the creature to tetanus (*Gamemastery Guide* 118).

Reset The trap automatically resets once the door is closed.

Treasure: A PC can Climb up the front of the statue to pry out its glowing gemstone eyes with a successful DC 15 Athletics check. Once removed, the

gems stop glowing, and the flickering red torches in the room snuff out, potentially plunging the chamber into darkness. Up close, the quality of the two gems becomes apparent—they're relatively unremarkable garnets worth 50 gp each. More importantly, removing them from the statue causes centuries of slowly built-up divine energy to dissipate harmlessly, hampering the success of Meitremar's ritual.

Reward: For removing the gems, grant the party 1 Disruption Point.

Despoiler's Deep

While not part of the Darklands proper, this series of natural and constructed tunnels connects to routes in the upper reaches of the Darklands known as Nar-Voth. Over ten thousand years ago, Theiltemar constructed this resurrection chamber on the ley line that traveled through old Edasseril, hoping to harness some of its power for his efforts. This also made it a naturally good spot for his skymetal research. Only through the power of the ley line supporting the structure did the resurrection chamber survive Earthfall and the ten thousand years since.

When the cultists returned, they found all manner of creatures using the caves for their own purposes. The cultists slaughtered some and allied with others, leaving a few of the locals eager for vengeance. These survivors likely see the PCs as extensions of the cultists, worthy of their revenge.

The areas in this region are unlit unless otherwise mentioned in the text. The map for this level appears on the inside back cover of this book.

F1. DARKLANDS LANDING

TRIVIAL 3

The spiral staircase from area **E5** travels down a vertical shaft of ancient masonry before opening into this area.

A vertical shaft of rectangular stone rises to the ceiling of this cavern, and is the second most impressive sight in this natural-looking cave. The most impressive is the remnant of an ancient bridge that once crossed a vast chasm to the north. The chasm fluctuates between thirty and forty feet across, growing larger to the west and narrower to the east. Three passages exit this chamber to the east, west, and south. A curious ring of stones has been placed at the entrance to the southern passage.

A PC who examines the floor here and succeeds at a DC 20 Survival check to Track notes that the ground bears evidence of high traffic through the area, with the southern passage leading toward area **F7** appearing to be the least used.

Hazard: Of the local creatures that dwelled here in a tenuous balance of power, it was a family of werebats that suffered the greatest when the cultists threw things into chaos. As part of the bargain with the deros (areas F3–F6), the cultists helped them capture and murder the leader of the werebats. The three survivors fled down this tunnel, which once led to their leader's personal quarters, and the trap that remains in this tunnel is their only remaining bit of security.

The ring of stones (area F1a) functions solely as a marker for where the rushing waters trap appears; the trigger area is slightly further down the slope. If a creature other than a werebat enters the area, the spherical deluge triggers and rolls them to the bottom of the slope where a spiky pit trap awaits (area F1b).

If either of the traps trigger, the werebats in area F7 quickly come to investigate.

RUSHING WATERS

HAZARD 3

UNCOMMON MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 20 (trained)

Description Rivulets of water begin to run from the circle of stones to gather in a growing puddle at the center.

Disable DC 20 Thievery (expert) to rub out the hidden runes on the ceiling, or *dispel magic* (2nd level, counteract DC 18) to counteract the trap

Spherical Deluge ⤵ (arcane, conjuration, water) **Trigger** A creature enters the area south of the ring of stones marked on the map; **Effect** A deluge of water rises up from the ring of stones, then flows forcefully down the passageway to drain into the pit at area F1b. Large and smaller creatures in the water's path must attempt a DC 20 Fortitude save. The rushing waters vanish instantly upon striking the pit floor, but do leave everything down there sopping wet.

Critical Success The creature withstands the force of the rushing waters and is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 1d10 bludgeoning damage as the rushing waters slam them into a cave wall.

Failure The creature is knocked prone by the rushing waters, takes 1d10+6 bludgeoning damage, and is pushed by the water to the spiky pit trap and triggers the trap.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature can't attempt to Grab an Edge if they fall into the spiky pit trap.

Reset The magic rejuvenates over 10 minutes, after which it is recharged and ready to activate again.

SPIKY PIT TRAP

HAZARD 4

UNCOMMON MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 18 (trained)

Description A piece of hide covered with a layer of dirt and gravel is suspended over a 20-foot pit filled with spikes.

Disable DC 18 Thievery (trained) to manually trigger the trap without falling in, or DC 25 Thievery (trained) to secure the hide so the trap doesn't activate

Pitfall ⤵ **Trigger** A creature or other large weight (such as the rushing waters of the previous trap) moves onto the gravel-covered hide; **Effect** The triggering creature or object falls in and takes falling damage (10 bludgeoning damage) and is targeted by a spike's Strike. A falling creature can attempt to Grab an Edge with a DC 20 Reflex save (this becomes a DC 22 Reflex save if rushing waters are pouring into the pit).

Melee ⬥ spike +14, **Damage** 4d8 piercing

Reset Creatures can still fall into the trap, but the hide that covers it must be reset manually (a 10-minute activity) for the trap to become hidden again.

Treasure: A pair of dead dero stalkers lie at the bottom of the pit trap, their bodies rotting and waterlogged. In addition to their gear (2 aklyses, 2 hand crossbows with 40 bolts, and 8 doses of giant centipede poison), one of the deros wears a *hand of the mage* on their belt.

F2. THE DESPOILED RIFT

Ledges beckon from both sides of this deep rift. What appears to be a skeleton clad in chain mail and clutching a rapier lies slumped on a remote ledge to the northwest, while directly to the north, a worked stone tunnel ends at a massive rusting door. To the east, hints of a smaller, still-intact bridge made of strange gray wood crosses the rift, but the one that once crossed the span here is now only a crumbling ruin.

Originally built by Theiltemar, this bridge collapsed thousands of years ago. Recently, the Black Lake boggards built a replacement bridge made from slabs of dried fungus harvested from the trunks of massive mushrooms, but the cultists destroyed this bridge several days ago to ensure privacy while they perform their rituals to the north.

This vast chasm extends for hundreds of feet to the east and west, and drops away into Nar-Voth's depths. A PC who falls into the rift can Grab an Edge with a DC 18 Reflex save. On a failure, a PC falls for 1d6×10 feet before striking a narrow ledge and taking falling damage as appropriate. The chasm walls are very rough and have plenty of handholds, so it's just a DC 15 Athletics check to Climb them. A PC who persists in climbing lower puts themselves in great peril, for beyond 60 feet, the chasm's walls grow smoother (becoming a DC 25 Athletics check to climb) and drop another 200 feet into a larger cavern below. What lies

below is beyond the scope of this adventure, but is ripe terrain for you to expand into a series of higher-level dungeon-delving adventures if you wish.

Treasure: Area **F2a** is a remote ledge that is particularly difficult and dangerous to reach (the easiest route being a nerve-racking climb from area **F12**), but a PC who does so is rewarded. The skeletal remains of this long-dead creature lie under a suit of cold iron chain mail and clutch a +1 *fiend bane rapier* (*Secrets of Magic* 180).

F3. WATCHPOST

LOW 3

A flat-topped rock covered in fungus sits almost like a table in this cave. Two flat boulders sit to either side, functioning as chairs.

Creatures: A pair of deros waits in this chamber, acting as lookouts for their main encampment (area **F4**). If they hear anyone coming, they Hide in the alcove and attempt to ambush the creatures. Their cries of alarm and the sounds of combat here are likely to alert the occupants of area **F4**, who then move to prepare an ambush in area **F5**.

If the PCs successfully Sneak up to the alcove, the deros can be found chatting in Undercommon about trying to “kill the rest of those bats” as they sip a foul-smelling beverage made from fermented mushrooms.

DERO STALKERS (2)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 84

Initiative Stealth +8

F4. DERO ENCAMPMENT

MODERATE 3

A large fire pit stands in the middle of this cavern with a roaring fire casting flickering shadows about the chamber. A cooking spit over the fire holds a humanoid-looking body, charred and motionless, while several portable frames for cooking and boiling alchemical concoctions allow for other work to be done over the fire. A crude iron cage is built into an alcove to the east, within which lies a gray-skinned dead gnome.

The deros have been having a cold war with a group of svirfneblin werebats who already inhabited these tunnels when they arrived. One werebat is currently roasting over the fire, while the former leader of the werebats lies dead inside the makeshift cage.

The tunnel to the south winds ever deeper into the Darklands—it’s from this direction that the deros first came to these tunnels. There are no significant caverns along this route for nearly ten miles, so if the

PCs persist down this slowly descending tunnel, allow them a DC 15 Survival check to realize the route likely leads beyond the immediate area.

Creatures: The deros in this small clan aren’t numerous, with the main force of their group dwelling in deeper caverns over a dozen miles deeper into the Darklands to the southwest. A single dero strangler and his leschy ally idly stand guard here, slow-roasting a werebat on the spit while arguing (in Undercommon) whether or not eating a werecreature might turn you into one yourself. If they hear combat in a nearby cave, the two slip into area **F5** to hide and attempt to ambush intruders here, but if they’re caught off guard, they howl out an alarm as they begin to fight. If the other deros from areas **F3** and **F6** are still alive, they come to offer their aid.

DERO STRANGLER

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 84

Initiative Perception +6

DEADLY FUNGUS LESHY

CREATURE 3

Elite fungus leschy (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 219)

Initiative Perception +8

F5. DERO BARRACKS

A ring of bedrolls surrounds a small cluster of glowing blue mushrooms in this large alcove.

There are far more bedrolls here than there are active deros in the caves at this moment. Two of them belonged to the pair who were sent after Blanton, while three other bedrolls were once used by a trio who just recently headed back home to the southwest to report to the larger gathering about developments here in Despoiler’s Deep.

Treasure: The deros have been cultivating a patch of cytillesh mushrooms here, hoping to grow enough of the dangerous fungus to fully replenish their supplies of the uncommon drug they use to aid in their abductions of surface dwellers. A successful DC 20 Nature check to Recall Knowledge identifies the mushrooms. A PC who eats the mushrooms must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or become stupefied 1 (stupefied 2 on a critical failure) for 1 hour. The mushrooms can be harvested safely with a DC 20 Medicine or Survival check. On a success, a character gathers 35 gp in raw materials for crafting cytillesh drug doses (*Gamemastery Guide* 121) or cytillesh oil, while on a critical success, the character gathers 70 gp in raw materials. A critical failure indicates the character is exposed to the toxin as if they’d ingested the mushrooms.

F6. ZAIOX'S NOOK

LOW 3

In the wide bend of this winding passage, a flat bit of rock has been cleared of dust and debris. Lying atop it is a crude bedroll stitched from several patches of leather. A small pile of rocks sits next to the bedroll.

Creatures: A dero named Zaiox, tasked with identifying the viability of building a more permanent encampment here near the surface, was about to leave when the cultists arrived and started causing trouble. Zaiox managed to engineer a tentative alliance with the cultists, but now that two of his stalkers have gone missing, his interest in maintaining the alliance has grown thin. Zaiox has spent a fair amount of time lately standing near the ravine to the north, contemplating the mysteries of life, cytillesh, and the Darklands. If he hears combat to the south, he'll make his way there to investigate, likely interpreting the PCs as cultists who have decided to abandon the alliance. He joins any combat in progress, but attempts to flee back home to the southwest if reduced to fewer than 15 Hit Points.

ZAIOX

CREATURE 4

UNIQUE CE SMALL DERO HUMANOID

Variant male dero magister (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 85)

Perception +7; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Undercommon

Skills Crafting +9, Intimidation +12, Occultism +11, Stealth +11

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

Items aklys, cytillesh oil (4 doses)

AC 21; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

HP 50; **Immunities** confusion; **Weaknesses** vulnerable to sunlight

Vulnerable to Sunlight As dero.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ✦ aklys +9 (trip), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Ranged ✦ aklys +11 (ranged trip, tethered, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Occult Innate Spells DC 21; **2nd** darkness (at will), sound burst; **Cantrips (2nd)** daze, ghost sound

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 21; **2nd** (4 slots) blur, hideous laughter, sound burst, telekinetic maneuver; **1st** (4 slots) fear, grim tendrils, phantom pain, soothe; **Cantrips (2nd)** chill touch, dancing lights, detect magic, forbidding ward, message

Cytillesh Glare ✦ (concentrate, incapacitation, mental, visual) **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** Zaiox glares at a creature he can see within 30 feet. The target is dazzled for 1 round and must succeed at a DC 21 Will save or be stupefied 1 for 1 round.

F7. WEREBAT CAMP

LOW 3

This dead-end cavern smells faintly of refuse and wet fur. A crude fire pit sits in the center, and three bedrolls surround the fire. The only exit to the cavern is northwest, up a muddy slope.

Creatures: Three svirfneblin werebats, weak from starvation, hide in this small camp. The alliance between the deros and the cultists wreaked havoc on their numbers, and with their failed attempts to form a truce with the Black Lake boggards, the three werebats have grown desperate. If either trap in area F1a or F1b goes off, the werebats wait in silence for a few minutes before creeping over to investigate, but upon spotting the PCs they snarl and spit and assume their hybrid form, ready to fight.

The werebats attack at the slightest provocation, but if the PCs are calm and attempt to communicate, the werebats are willing to talk. They demand the PCs kill the deros to the west, and promise to give them a special reward if they do. If the PCs agree, one of the



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werebats flies across the chasm to area **F2a** to retrieve the treasure there as a reward. With the deros slain, the werebats feel safer and immediately set out into the rift to hunt for food. At your option, friendly werebats might help the PCs fight the cultists—but they just as equally might turn on the PCs and attack in order to secure their regained territory.

STARVING WEREBATs (3)

CREATURE 1

NE SMALL BEAST GNOME HUMANOID WERECREATURE

Weak svirfneblin werebat (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 6, 292)

Initiative Perception +6; low-light vision, scent (imprecise)
30 feet

Reward: If the PCs forge an alliance, grant them XP as if they defeated the werebats in combat.

F8. MOLD FARM

MODERATE 3

The gently sloping floor leads to a shallow pool of water at the southern end of this chamber. On a small island, and all around the pool, a multitude of mushrooms grow like fungal bushes. Two exits lead to the north.

The Black Lake boggards grow crops of mushrooms, plus other fungi and molds, around this underground pond. The fungus here is mundane, but edible.

Creatures: Four deep boggards crawl on their knees, sorting through the mushrooms to pick out the fully grown ones and make room for new growth. Each carries a satchel of freshly picked mushrooms. They've been paranoid about surface dwellers ever since the cultists arrived and forced them out of the upper levels. As a result, they're hostile to the PCs unless they see any of the PCs openly wearing a Black Lake boggard friend badge, in which case they're indifferent, but offer to escort the PCs to their leader at area **F10**. If a fight breaks out, any boggard who drops below 10 HP flees to the north.

BOGGARD SCOUTS (4)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 44

Initiative Perception +7

F9. BOGGARD BRIDGE

A twenty-five-foot-long bridge made of strange gray timbers spans the narrowing ravine. To the south, the cavern passage continues on a gentle descent. To the north, an enormous cavern opens to reveal a still, black lake.

The Black Lake boggards built this bridge from massive mushrooms grown on the far side of the Black

Lake. It groans and sags alarmingly as the PCs cross it, but the bridge is stable and won't collapse.

F10. THE BLACK LAKE

MODERATE 3

A vast lake stretches out in this enormous cavern. The water is glass-like, dark, and still. On the closest shore of the lake, a mud hut stands on a foundation of gray, wood-like supports, just over the surface of the water. A pier of the same material allows travel from the hut to the stony cavern shore. Narrow pathways travel around the lake to the east and northwest. A narrow cave opening exits the chamber to the southwest, and a bridge leads to the south.

The secret door connecting these caves to area **F13** hasn't yet been discovered by the cultists, but the boggards know about it and can inform the PCs if they become allies. Otherwise, a Searching PC can discover this secret door with a DC 25 Perception check.

Creatures: The Black Lake boggards, a clan of pallid-looking deep boggards, live on this lake's shores. This hut is one of several surrounding the lake. Lately, they've been plagued by the presence of the cultists, who have forced them to abandon the upper works of Rusthenge. In the wake of these events, the clan's leader, Queen Bolargus, has fled with many of her people to deeper caverns accessible via a maze of underwater tunnels, leaving one of her most trusted allies, Glutu, to defend their territory until the cultists can be run off.

Glutu often sits on the pier near the hut, staring into the water while contemplating what to do about the cultists or wondering if his sometimes-friendly (sometimes not) competitor Gurga still lives. His bodyguard, Gnork, is always nearby. Glutu is still trying to decide how to get the cultists out of the temple when the PCs arrive. As long as they're not brandishing weapons, Glutu doesn't attack. If any of the PCs are outwardly displaying a boggard friend badge, he leaps to his feat in amazement and demands to know how Gurga and the others "upstairs" are doing. Any hostile actions, including bragging about killing the boggards in the skymetal laboratory, incite Glutu and Gnork to attack, in which case they fight to the death. If captured alive, Glutu bitterly tries to trick the PCs into wasting time searching for treasure in area **F11** and attempts to escape as soon as possible.

The PCs don't need to make Glutu friendly or helpful to secure his aid in defeating the cultists; they only need to convince him that they're interested in doing so. Glutu reasons that since the PCs aren't boggards, the cultists won't assume the boggards helped if the PCs attack them and fail, and this lack

of potential reprisal makes Glutu a bit more chatty. As long as the PCs can impress Glutu with their convictions and plans, a successful DC 18 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check (depending on the tone of the character's presentation) is all that's needed to get him to reveal the secret door in the western wall. If the PCs have a boggard friend badge, they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to this check, and on a critical success, Glutu is inspired enough to volunteer his bodyguard Gnork to help the PCs in the fight.

GLUTU

CREATURE 3

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM AMPHIBIOUS BOGGARD HUMANOID

Male variant boggard swampseer (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 45)

Initiative Perception +11; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Boggard, Common, Undercommon

Skills Athletics +8, Intimidation +8, Nature +11, Religion +9, Survival +9

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

Items studded leather armor, +1 whip

AC 19; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11

HP 44

Speed 20 feet, swim 25 feet; swamp stride

Melee ♦ whip +11 (disarm, finesse, magical, nonlethal, reach, trip), **Damage** 1d4+6 slashing

Melee ♦ tongue +10 (reach 10 feet), **Effect** tongue grab

Divine Prepared Spells DC 21, attack +11; **2nd** *heal*, *sound burst*; **1st** *bane*, *fear*, *harm*; **Cantrips (2nd)** *chill touch*, *divine lance*, *read aura*, *shield*

Swamp Stride As boggard.

Terrifying Croak ♦ (auditory, emotion, fear, mental) As boggard scout, except DC 19.

Tongue Grab As boggard scout, except AC 15 and 4 HP.

GNORK

CREATURE 2

Boggard warrior (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 44)

Initiative Perception +8

Reward: Grant the PCs XP as if they defeated Glutu and Gnork in combat if they secure the boggards' aid.

F11. BOGGARD COMPOST

A foul-smelling heap of rotting fungal matter and dead fish fills this small cave with a horrific stink.

The deep boggards use the north end of this cave for compost, creating soil for their various mushroom farms. They dump non-compostable waste into the ravine to the south. There's nothing of value in the compost, but anyone who Searches or Investigates this area is exposed to filth fever. (Use the otyugh's filth fever statistics on page 258 of the *Pathfinder Bestiary*.)

F12. RUSTED DOOR

TRIVIAL 3

Hazard: The large rusted door in this wall looks identical to the one barring the entrance to area E5 in the temple above, save that this door is locked (requiring three DC 20 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock) in addition to being protected by a rusty spike launcher.

RUSTY SPIKE LAUNCHER

HAZARD 3

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F13. RITUAL PREPARATION CHAMBER MODERATE 3

Fibrous, vine-like coils of fungus grow on the walls of this chamber, their tendrils clinging to the numerous cracks in the ancient stonework. A carpet of pungent, rust-colored mold coats the ground. Three skeletal remains, petrified from the mineral-rich water dripping from the ceiling above, lie slumped against the walls of the chamber. A shimmering, mostly transparent field of reddish-brown light blocks access to a larger room to the west.

The shimmering wall of reddish-brown light is a *wall of force* evoked by Meitremar in the room beyond to ensure no one disturbs him during the multiday rite he must perform to resurrect Xar-Azmak. The *wall of force* is unlikely to be something a group of 3rd-level characters can get through, but since the wall is linked to the chamber's guardian, destroying it will bring the wall down.

As the PCs explore this room, they'll be able to watch the occupants of areas F14 go about their ritual—see that room's description on page 54 for details.

Creature: Meitremar's grandfather Theiltemar and his most loyal followers met their end eons ago in this room. When Earthfall disrupted Theiltemar's plans to raise Xar-Azmak, he and his followers fled here to avoid the devastation above, only to succumb to vicious infighting. Theiltemar lost the fight, and while his treacherous apprentices thought they'd won after looting his body, they soon realized they had only doomed themselves as well, for as they fled, a tremor caused by Earthfall tore open the rift to the south and they fell to their doom.

As Meitremar started the ritual to resurrect Xar-Azmak several days ago and raised the *wall of force* for his own protection, it tapped into ancient magic that had captured the souls of Theiltemar and his two most faithful allies who had perished at his side. Their souls did not go on to the afterlife, but instead returned to their mortal remains in this room, animating them as undead.

As the PCs enter the room, Theiltemar and his faithful rise up to protect his grandson and the last

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chance to resurrect Xar-Azmak. As he rises, he calls out to the PCs in Thassilonian, “I have waited for time without memory for this moment. My grandson will prevail where I failed. You will not interfere!”

Once they roll initiative, the PCs have exactly 1 minute before the ritual in the summoning chamber (area F14) is completed. This means that the quicker the PCs can dispatch Theiltemar and his minions, the more time they’ll have to disrupt the ritual itself. Fortunately for the PCs, this undead version of the

once-powerful divine sorcerer of Xar-Azmak has but a fraction of his original might.

THEILTEMAR

CREATURE 4

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM SKELETON UNDEAD

Male variant skeleton (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 298)

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Infernal, Jotun, Thassilonian, Varisian

Skills Athletics +10, Crafting +9, Intimidation +11, Occultism +11, Religion +13, Stealth +10

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

Items rusted (broken) chain mail

AC 20; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +13

HP 50, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5, piercing 5, slashing 5

Rusting Death When Theiltemar is destroyed, his bones explode as the necromantic energy holding him together is released. This shreds his rusted chain mail as well, flinging rusty shards of jagged metal in all directions. Adjacent creatures take 2d6 piercing damage (DC 21 basic Reflex save) and are exposed to rust creep. As his remains settled to the floor, the wall of force blocking area F14 flickers and fades.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claw +12 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d6+4 slashing

Divine Spontaneous Spells DC 21, attack +13; **2nd** (4 slots) *blood vendetta* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 216), *darkness*, *harm*, *sudden blight* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 226); **1st** (4 slots) *bane*, *command*, *fear*, *harm*; **Cantrips** (2nd) *daze*, *divine lance*, *prestidigitation*, *read aura*, *shield*

SKELETON GUARDS (2)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 298

Initiative Perception +2

F14. SUMMONING CHAMBER

VARIES 3

The entrance to this room from area F13 is blocked by a *wall of force*. While it’s unlikely the PCs have the means to bypass it, the wall dissipates after Theiltemar is destroyed. Note that the second paragraph of the read-aloud text below describes Meitremar’s rite in progress—you should adjust this text as needed.

In the center of this fifty-five-foot-wide, cross-shaped room stands a five-foot-tall stone dais. Lines of runes cover the dais in seemingly random patterns. Standing before the dais, to the east, is a stone altar covered in fresh blood. A man’s discarded corpse lies sprawled nearby.



A figure in rust-colored robes stands before the altar, chanting from a tome bound in mottled leather and periodically blowing into a rusted horn. Three more robed figures kneel around the dais. A wispy rust-red vapor extends from their mouths and eyes, swirling around the silhouette of a massive horned figure who stands upon the dais in a chaotically undulating pool of red light.

Meitremar and his followers have been performing a very complicated ritual for several days, and when the PCs reach this area, the cultists are very close to completing it. The ritual is intended to resurrect the demon lord Xar-Azmak, but despite Meitremar's zealous attention to detail, he simply lacks the power his grandfather possessed at the height of his life. As a result, this attempt is doomed to partial failure at best, but even though he won't be able to resurrect Xar-Azmak at this time, if the PCs don't stop him, the results of this ritual could well set into motion a series of events that all but guarantee the demon lord's eventual return to life.

To help empower this ritual, Meitremar draws upon six sources of external energy: the interaction of the Vloric Spires as the Vlorian cythnigot on the surface constantly attempts to feed from the spires (page 30); the demonic energy gathered and stored by the ancient apparatus at the grand altar (area D3); the torment of an Abyssal petitioner within the ritual room (area D13); the sinister energies gathered and processed in the research lab (area D20) and the secret lab (area D21); and the focusing gems found in the eyes of the statue of Xar-Azmak in the worship chamber (area E5). The PCs can gain up to 6 Disruption Points from these locations, but even if all are disrupted, Meitremar's progress on the ritual continues.

Once the *wall of force* comes down, the sound of the ritual becomes apparent as the four cultists chant prayers of adulation to Xar-Azmak. Each time Meitremar blows the *Horn of Rust*, a low rumbling sound, like old metal grinding against stone, fills the room. Motes of dust on the floor dance and shudder from the vibrations, and teeth ache in their sockets. The horn's sound is more than unpleasant; it feels almost diseased.

The dead body on the floor was one of Meitremar's cultists—a man he arbitrarily selected as a sacrifice at the start of the rite to get things started.

Creatures: Meitremar and his three cultists continue their ritual even once the *wall of force* comes down, but as soon as the PCs try to interfere, they fight back. When combat begins, the ritual itself influences the battle—see Stages of Disruption for the ramifications facing the PCs when they get the cultists' attention.

STAGES OF DISRUPTION

The severity of this climactic encounter depends on how successful the PCs were at disrupting the ritual earlier in the adventure.

Stable (0 Disruption Points): The PCs have not made any significant disruptions to the ritual. When a fight begins, Meitremar speaks a command word as a free action to open the portal to the Abyss early, hoping against hope that Xar-Azmak rises from death. He doesn't, but this gambit pays off nonetheless as a hideous insectile monster steps through into this world—a vloriak demon. Still loyal to the legacy of the long-dead demon lord, the vloriak assists Meitremar in combat. Worse, the pulsing energies emanating from the portal animate the dead cultist as a variant plague zombie whose attacks inflict rust creep rather than zombie rot. This fight—against a vloriak, Meitremar, three Rustsworn cultists, and a plague zombie—is beyond an Extreme 3 encounter. Wise PCs flee this overwhelming battle and try again later after they've made additional progress in disrupting the rite.

Weakened (1–2 Disruption Points): The rusty light and vapor swirling around the statue look less potent, and periodically flicker. When the PCs attack, Meitremar speaks his command word. The vloriak steps through to join the battle, but the weakened ritual backfires, immediately killing the three Rustsworn cultists. They and the previously sacrificed cultist then rise as zombie shamblers. This fight—against a vloriak, Meitremar, and four zombie shamblers—is an Extreme 3 encounter; still likely a fight the PCs should retreat from.

Unstable (3–5 Disruption Points): The rusty light and vapor are faint, and the glow they create is barely brighter than a few candles. When the PCs attack, Meitremar speaks his command word and calls in the vloriak, but with the portal being unstable, it saps some of the demon's power and it gains the weak creature adjustment (see *Pathfinder Bestiary* page 6). The living cultists perish, but only the previously sacrificed one rises as undead (as a variant plague zombie who inflicts rust creep). This fight—against a weakened vloriak, Meitremar, and a plague zombie—is a Severe 3 encounter.

Disrupted (6 Disruption Points): If the PCs manage to fully disrupt the ritual, Meitremar is forced to start over. He sacrifices all three of the remaining cultists, which is enough to get the ritual started again, but there's simply not enough power. When the PCs attack, Meitremar panics and attempts to summon the vloriak. The vloriak appears in its weakened state, but is not particularly happy about the situation. It shrieks in rage, then turns to Meitremar and says, "Who are you to think yourself worthy of a dead demon's notice? Nothing but a stain, mortal!" At the same time, all four dead cultists rise as

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zombie shamblers. While the zombies move to attack the PCs, the vlorki Spews Rusted Shards at Meitremar (in such a way that it doesn't catch any PCs) and then attempts a claw Strike against Meitremar.

If Meitremar's turn takes place before the demon, he spends his turn first in an attempt to Demoralize the demon (requiring a DC 23 Intimidation check), and then activates the *Horn of Rust*.

If his turn takes place after the demon attacks him, Meitremar realizes his error and shrieks in terror—he becomes frightened 1 and spends his first action to Stride as far from the demon as he can before activating the *Horn of Rust*. All of this strains the magic enough that, at the end of the round, the vlorki is forced back to the

Abyss, screaming in frustration as it goes. The remainder of the combat consists of the PCs facing the zombies and the likely wounded Meitremar, whose fury at their meddling compels him to fight to the death. This fight against Meitremar and four zombies is a Moderate 3 encounter. If you wish to have an extra layer of drama, you can have Meitremar immediately rise as a plague zombie capable of inflicting rust creep once he's slain, as the lingering Abyssal energies infuse his remains with sinister power.



Meitremar

MEITREMAR

CREATURE 3

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male human cultist of Xar-Azmak

Perception +7

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Thassilonian, Varisian

Skills Arcana +7, Crafting +7, Deception +9, Diplomacy +9, Intimidation +9, Occultism +7, Religion +8

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

Items *Horn of Rust* (page 60), rusted (broken) breastplate, tarnished silver religious symbol (Xar-Azmak), +1 striking pick, wand of create food, wand of restoration, key to chest in area E2

AC 18; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

HP 42

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ pick +8 (fatal d10), **Damage** 2d6+2 piercing

Divine Spontaneous Spells DC 20, attack +12; **2nd (3 slots)** enlarge, ghoulish cravings, harm, sudden blight (*Advanced Player's Guide* 226); **1st (4 slots)** bane, command, fear, heal (×2); **Cantrips (2nd)** acid splash, divine lance, guidance, light, shield, sigil

Demonic Bloodline Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 20; **2nd** glutton's jaws (*Core Rulebook* 404)

Rituals create undead, inveigle

Reach Spell ♦ (metamagic) If Meitremar's next action this turn is to Cast a Spell that has a range, he increases that spell's range by 30 feet (or increases the range of a touch spell to 30 feet).

Signature Spell Meitremar can heighten *heal* spells freely.

VLORIAK

CREATURE 5

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Initiative Perception +13

RUSTSWORN CULTIST

CREATURE 1

CE cultists (*Gamemastery Guide* 229)

Initiative Perception +4

RUST ZOMBIE

CREATURE 1

Variant plague zombie (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 340)

Initiative Perception +3

ZOMBIE SHAMBLER

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 340

Initiative Perception +0

Tactical Retreat: If the PCs realize they're in over their heads in this fight and flee, the foes they faced do not pursue them, but instead get back to the task of completing the ritual. If the vlork demon is still present, it returns to the Abyss soon after the PCs flee. The amount of time Meitremar needs to complete the ritual is flexible, but at the very least you should give the PCs a day to head back into the upper works to disrupt things a bit more before they try again. If you determine that the PCs have taken too long (perhaps after a third failed attempt), see Concluding the Adventure below for the ramifications of Meitremar's completed ritual.

Treasure: In addition to the gear carried by the cultists and Meitremar himself, the fate of the *Horn of Rust* now falls to the PCs. This is a powerful demonic artifact. Leaving it here might allow it to fall into the wrong hands, but claiming it could cause a whole new set of problems. See page 60 for more information on this artifact.

Reward: With the ritual over and the participants slain, the immediate threat to Chakikoth Isle is over. Grant the PCs 160 XP for defeating Meitremar's plans rather than awarding them XP for individual creatures slain.

Concluding the Adventure

With Theiltremar destroyed and Meitremar defeated, the looming threat of Xar-Azmak's resurrection has been avoided... for now. But as long as the *Horn of Rust* continues to exist, the potential for other cultists of the Sin of Steel to begin the ritual themselves remains. Even in its dormant state, the *Horn of Rust* is still an artifact, and destroying it is no easy task. The PCs may decide to keep the *Horn of Rust* for themselves to protect it from falling into enemy hands, although the horn does bring suffering to those who carry it. If the PCs seek the advice of the elders of Osprey Cove, they suggest traveling south to the city of Magnimar to seek advice from the city's scholars. They'll agree to hide the *Horn of Rust* and watch over it if the PCs wish. In any event, you can use the artifact and the quest for its destruction to further expand upon the party's next set of adventures!

The questions of what to do about the *Swordfish* and Xin-Edasseril remain as well. Fortunately for the Kindred Coast, Meitremar's secrecy about his mission and the fact that he was a very low-ranking member

of New Thassilon's elite means that there will be no investigations into his disappearance anytime soon. But it's still only a matter of time before Runelord Belimarius becomes more interested in the Kindred Coast. Having the PCs aid the local community in building up the area's defenses and perhaps exploring further inland on Chakikoth Isle to prepare for this inevitable development can also serve as the foundation of an exciting campaign.

Iron Harbor—and more to the point, the temple of Stonehome—are greatly weakened by the events of this adventure, but it's likely that the PCs' actions left a favorable impression on the citizens. This is just the series of events the two villages of the Kindred Coast needed to take their first steps toward reconciliation. As for Osprey Cove, this incident has left quite a few worried about Xin-Edasseril's future involvement in their affairs. Some locals think it's best to move, while others don't want to abandon their homes and wish to stay behind. The PCs themselves are in a perfect position to guide both villages' futures.

Of course, the troubles and toils of mortals do not worry the Sin of Steel, whose remains yet linger in the Rift of Repose. As long as the *Horn of Rust* exists, so does the possibility of Xar-Azmak's resurrection. For now, the faint consciousness of the demon lord waits. Years and decades are important to mortals, but a dead demon lord can wait an eternity.

WHAT IF THE PCS FAIL?

If the PCs are defeated or otherwise fail to prevent Meitremar from completing his ritual, not all is lost—but they'll do well to flee Rusthenge before they face a growing number of demonic minions drawn in from the Abyss. From his first quasi-success, Meitremar kindles the spark of consciousness that lingers in Xar-Azmak's remains, and in the months and years to come, his cult spreads through New Thassilon. Oracles, witches, and divine-casting sorcerers make up a significant part of this cult, but until the demon lord rises, no clerics join these ranks.

If the PCs survive, they can attempt additional forays into the dungeon to defeat Meitremar, this time facing challenges appropriate for 4th-level characters. If the situation isn't handled soon, though, Meitremar's demon-enhanced forces take control over the whole Kindred Coast. This in turn swiftly draws the attention of Runelord Belimarius, who encourages the growth of the cult in return for their allegiance to her cause. Such a development would surely mean the end of the Kindred Coast as it has existed for decades—unless a new group of heroes can save the day!

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Shopping in Iron Harbor

The following items can be bought in Iron Harbor.

ARMOR POLISHING KIT

ITEM 1

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE

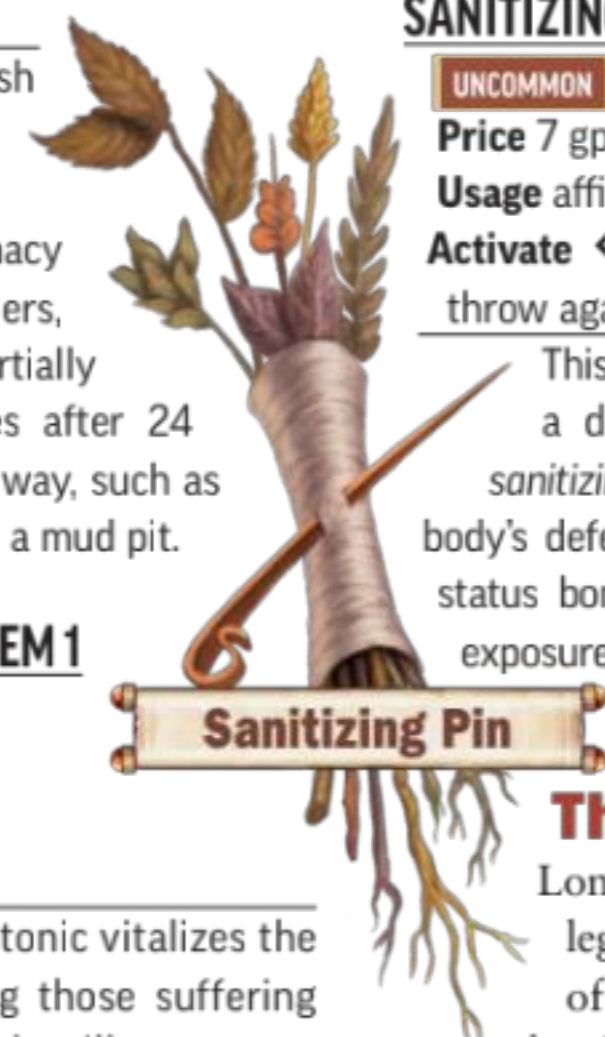
Price 4 gp

Usage held in one hand; Bulk L

Activate 10 minutes (Interact)

This kit can be used to clean and polish armor. Creatures wearing armor that has been maintained by this kit gain a +1 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks to Make an Impression on soldiers, guards, Gorumites, and other martially minded characters. This bonus expires after 24 hours, or if the armor is soiled in some way, such as by walking through a sewer or falling in a mud pit.

ELSIE'S EXCELLENT BOTTLED VIM



Sanitizing Pin

RARE ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE ELIXIR

Price 3 gp

Usage held in one hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Interact

A dose of this slightly fizzy, pale-pink tonic vitalizes the body and bolsters the spirit, bringing those suffering from aches and pains brought on by illness some temporary respite. For 8 hours after drinking this elixir, reduce the value of one of the following conditions you're suffering by 1: clumsy, drained, enfeebled, or sickened. A condition whose value is reduced to 0 is not removed; after 8 hours, the condition returns to its original value, unless its duration expired or it was removed by another means.

RUST SCRUB

ITEM 1

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE

Price 2 gp

Usage held in one hand; Bulk L

Activate 10 minutes (Interact)

The PCs should be level 3 before descending to Temple of Xar-Azmak on the second level of Rusthenge. They should reach level 4 by the adventure's completion.

This salt scrub is infused with citron juice and alchemical ingredients that allow it to fight rust on metallic equipment. One application can be used to restore 2d4 Hit Points to an item that has been damaged by rust. The GM determines what portion of damage to an item was caused by rust if that value isn't known.

SANITIZING PIN

ITEM 2

UNCOMMON CONSUMABLE MAGICAL TALISMAN TRANSMUTATION

Price 7 gp

Usage affixed to armor; Bulk –

Activate ♦ command; Trigger You attempt a saving throw against a disease or poison.

This pin includes a piece of gauze wrapped around a dried herbal poultice. When you activate the sanitizing pin, the poultice dissolves and bolsters your body's defense against poison or disease. You gain a +2 status bonus on your Fortitude save against the initial exposure to the affliction. If you roll a critical failure on the triggering attempt, you get a failure instead.

The Horn of Rust

Long ago, the demon lord Xar-Azmak led his legions into Hell and waged war on the city of Dis. They laid waste to an entire district, leaving it to languish in irrecoverable rusted decay. The archdevil Dispater was hard pressed against this assault on his home, and during the battle, one powerful swing of his mace snapped off one of the horns from Xar-Azmak's skull. As the fiendish lords continued to battle, Xar-Azmak's horn tumbled onto the battlefield, where it was left to absorb the fury and carnage that resulted from two fiendish demigods battling to the death in Hell.

When Dispater dealt the killing blow to Xar-Azmak, crushing the Sin of Steel's rusted armor into scrap, one of the lesser generals in Xar-Azmak's army—a powerful Vloriak demon—escaped with the horn, hoping to find a way to use it to resurrect his leader. He entrusted it to a

mortal named Theiltemar, one of Xar-Azmak's few high priests who, being a divine sorcerer rather than a cleric, retained their mastery of magic after the demon lord's death. Theiltemar spent the last half of his life increasingly obsessed with finding a way to use the *Horn of Rust* to bring back his patron, but soon after he completed the towering Vloric Spires—an immense structure meant to focus the faith of the demon's remaining cult into magic capable of resurrecting him—Earthfall brought a sudden end to those plans. Ever since, the *Horn of Rust* has languished, forgotten, in a chamber deep below those spires, which in time became known as Rusthenge.

HORN OF RUST

ITEM 5

UNIQUE **ARTIFACT** **CHAOTIC** **EVIL** **INVESTED** **MAGICAL** **TRANSMUTATION**

Usage held in 2 hands; **Bulk** 2

This rusted, coiled iron horn is sizable, appearing similar in shape to a ram's horn but measuring nearly 2 feet in diameter. Flakes of rust constantly fall from this item, and it leaves hands with a rusty red stain that lingers. While the *Horn of Rust*'s power has diminished over the ages since Xar-Azmak's death, those who carry it are still subject to its palpable chaotic influences. If you aren't chaotic evil, you are enfeebled 1 while carrying or using the *Horn of Rust*, and if you're lawful or good, you are instead enfeebled 2 and stupefied 1. The longer a non-worshipper of Xar-Azmak carries the *Horn of Rust*, the greater the chances a vloriak or other demon (or group of demons) will seek them out to slay them and reclaim the artifact. The frequency of these attacks is left to the GM to determine, but they should occur no less frequently than once a month. These attacks should always be at least moderate encounters; if the PCs don't take them seriously, the attacks could eventually escalate into severe encounters.

Some of the *Horn of Rust*'s activated powers consume charges, similar to how a magic staff functions. When its charges are reduced to zero, its activations that require charges can still be used normally. It can be prepared with charges in the same method as a staff, and it counts as a staff for the limit of how many staves you can prepare in a day.

Activate Cast a Spell; **Effect** You expend a number of charges from the *Horn of Rust* to cast a spell from the following list.

- **Cantrip** *divine lance* (chaotic or evil damage only)
- **1st** *noxious vapors* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 222)
- **2nd** *shatter*
- **3rd** *stinking cloud*

The following activations do not consume charges from the *Horn of Rust*, and they can be utilized even when the artifact has no charges available.

Activate **◆◆** envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per hour;

Effect You blow on the horn to unleash a swirling aura of jagged, rusty metal shards that orbit you in a 5-foot emanation for 1 minute. The shards grant you a +1 item bonus to AC. Creatures and objects that begin their turn in this area take 6d6 slashing damage from the shards (DC 19 basic Reflex save). A creature damaged by this aura is exposed to a potent form of tetanus (*Gamemastery Guide* 118) that has a level equal to the *Horn of Rust*'s level and has a DC 19 Fortitude save. Worshippers of Xar-Azmak are immune to this effect.

Activate **◆◆** envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per day;

Effect You place the horn's bell against a diseased creature and then inhale into the mouthpiece rather than blow into it. The horn attempts to draw out the disease, casting a *remove disease* spell to your specification with a counteract modifier of +11. If the *Horn of Rust* succeeds at countering a disease, it gains a number of charges equal to half the disease's level (rounded down, minimum 1). If it critically fails, not only is the disease not countered, but you are exposed to the disease and must attempt a saving throw against it to resist contracting the affliction.

Xar-Azmak Resurrected If the demon lord Xar-Azmak is resurrected, the *Horn of Rust* becomes a 20th-level item. Its swirling aura of rusty metal shards grants a +3 item bonus to AC, deals 20d6 slashing damage (DC 43 basic Reflex save), and the tetanus has a DC 43 Fortitude save. It has a +31 counteract modifier against diseases. You can cast the

following additional spells using the artifact's charges.

- **4th** *rusting grasp* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 223)
- **5th** *cloudkill*
- **6th** *disintegrate*
- **7th** *divine decree* (chaotic or evil only)
- **8th** *horrid wilting*
- **9th** *disjunction*
- **10th** *cataclysm*

Destruction The *Horn of Rust* must be washed with the juice of a fresh peach plucked from an immortal arboreal, then dipped into a pool of molten mithral, and finally cooled with the tears of a remorseful demon. Alternatively, GMs can devise a series of their own quests for the PCs and send them to destroy this ancient artifact. Once the horn is destroyed, Xar-Azmak can never be resurrected.



Horn of Rust

Rusthenge Backgrounds

The following backgrounds include a built-in reason why the character is among those chosen by the village elders to accompany Elder Ordwi on her trip to Iron Harbor.

OSPREY BARNRAISER

BACKGROUND

RARE

A person cannot live on fish alone, which is why you work with Elder Bo'Mel on her farm. Elder Ordwi asked you to accompany her to Iron Harbor because she values your input in evaluating how the village might be making use of their natural resources.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Strength or Constitution, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Nature skill and the Architecture Lore skill. You gain the Natural Medicine skill feat.

OSPREY FISHER

BACKGROUND

RARE

Fishing is Osprey Cove's number one profession, and you've apprenticed under the best of them: Elder Anlorgog. You're also a keen study of boats and ships, so Elder Ordwi wants you along on her trip to Iron Harbor to help her evaluate the strength and purpose of the village's fleet—particularly if they're building ships meant for war.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Strength or Dexterity, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Crafting skill and the Sailing Lore skill. You gain the Quick Repair skill feat.

OSPREY SCION

BACKGROUND

RARE

You are the birth or adopted child of one of the five elders of Osprey Cove, and your parent or guardian volunteers you to accompany Elder Ordwi on her trip to Iron Harbor, hoping to get an unbiased account of events. If your parent or guardian is Ordwi, then she values your companionship and insight and wants you along on this important mission.

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

You're trained in the Diplomacy skill and the Xin-Edasseril Lore skill. You gain the Hobnobber skill feat.

OSPREY SCOUT

BACKGROUND

RARE

Though Osprey Cove is a quiet village, you've scouted the wilderness inland, watching for any dangerous wildlife or creatures in order to keep it that way. Elder Ordwi wants you along on this trip because she knows

your knowledge about the Kindred Coast will help ensure the safety of the group on the day-long trip.

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

You're trained in the Survival skill and the Scouting Lore skill. You gain the Experienced Tracker skill feat.

OSPREY SCRIBE

BACKGROUND

RARE

Either as a punishment or because of political ambition, you work for Elder Vandous. On her trip to Iron Harbor, Elder Ordwi needs someone at her side who is a skilled observer and adept at keeping journals; she hopes to provide the other elders with accurate information about their sibling village upon her return.

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

You're trained in the Society skill and the Demon Lore skill. You gain the Streetwise skill feat.

OSPREY SPELLCASTER

BACKGROUND

RARE

Whether by instinct or study, magic is one of your most notable talents. Your understanding of the traditions of ancient Thassilon has helped you learn languages associated with that nation. Elder Ordwi fears there may be some form of magical affliction spreading in Iron Harbor, and she needs your knowledge to help her determine the threat.

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

You're trained in your choice of the Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion skill, and gain Thassilonian as a bonus language. You also gain the Quick Identification skill feat.

OSPREY WARRIOR

BACKGROUND

RARE

You'd always been the most athletic child of your play group, leading the other children in games of skill and strategy. As an adult, there are few opportunities for you to employ these skills in the village. Osprey Cove is a quiet community, with hardly any dangers or foes to fight. You occasionally break up pub brawls, or perhaps start them out of boredom. Elder Ordwi asks you to come with her simply because of your endurance and athleticism—the Old Coast Road is poorly maintained, and the physical aid you'll bring on the trip will likely be invaluable.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Strength or Constitution, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Athletics skill and the Gorum Lore skill. You gain the Hefty Hauler skill feat.

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VLORIAN INFLUENCE

Vloriaks hail from the otherworldly realm of Vlorus, and as such carry within themselves the potential for decay and rusting ruin. Other creatures that dwell in Vlorus—particularly fiends who rise to power there—can gain similar powers over rust as well. The Vlorian cythnigot encountered earlier in this adventure is an example, but fiends of any type can become infested with unique rust-themed abilities if they hail from this otherworldly realm.

Demon, Vloriak

Vloriaks rise from the sinful souls of those whose acts of sabotage resulted in despair and terror, and they delight in the destruction of mortal artifice. Often called despoiler demons, vloriaks were the followers of Xar-Azmak. Their numbers have dwindled over the eons since the Lord of Rust's death; those that exist now are scattered throughout the Abyss. Their chitinous bodies and faceted eyes give them an insectile appearance.

VLORIAK

CREATURE 5

UNCOMMON CE MEDIUM DEMON FIEND

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Common; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Athletics +13, Intimidation +12

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

AC 21; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +11, **Will** +13; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 90; **Weaknesses** cold iron 5, good 5; **Resistances** acid 5

Restoration Vulnerability A vloriak suffers agonizing pain when a creature or object recovers from a debilitating effect in its proximity. The first time in a round in which a creature who is affected by a negative condition and is within sight of the demon reduces that condition's value, the demon takes 3d6 mental damage and cannot Lick Rust on its next turn.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claw +15, **Damage** 2d6+6 slashing plus 1d6 evil

Melee ♦ tongue +15 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d6 acid plus 1d6 evil and rust

Divine Innate Spells DC 22, attack +14; **3rd** *paralyze*; **2nd** *acid arrow* (×3), *shatter*; **Cantrip (3rd)** *acid splash*

Lick Rust ♦ (attack) **Requirements** The vloriak rusted a metal item with its tongue this turn; **Effect** The vloriak attempts a tongue Strike on the same target it just attacked. If it hits, it deals no damage as it licks away the rust and heals

2d6 Hit Points (or 4d6 Hit Points if the Strike was a critical hit). It can't Lick Rust on its next turn.

Rust A vloriak's saliva causes metal to rust rapidly. If it succeeds at a tongue Strike or Disarm attempt, the vloriak deals 2d6 damage (doubled on a critical hit) to a metal item the target is wearing or holding, ignoring its Hardness. If the vloriak hits an unattended metal item, the item takes this damage automatically. If a creature uses the Shield Block reaction with a metal shield against a tongue attack, the shield is automatically broken, but no other item is rusted on that attack.

Spew Rusted Shards ♦♦ (divine, evocation) The vloriak spews a 15-foot cone of acid and rusted metal. Creatures in the area take 3d6 acid and 3d6 piercing damage (DC 22 basic Reflex save). A creature that takes any piercing damage is exposed to tetanus (*Gamemastery Guide* 118). The vloriak can't Spew Rusted Shards for 1d4 rounds.



Sinludge

Thassilon's ruins contain numerous sources of raw magical power that have been lost or forgotten. As many of these sources are steeped in sinful soul energy used by the runelords to enhance their power, some of these sources go "sour," forming into a sinludge—a mucky effluvium that develops into a barely rudimentary consciousness based on the emotion behind the sin.

PRIMORDIAL ENVY

The primordial envy is most often found in underground ruins within Edasseril. It hungers for magic, leaching it from any source it can come into contact with. This hunger can be exploited by clever adventurers who bait it with powerful destructive magics. A primordial envy is one of the most defensive sin oozes, and it tends to layer abjuration spells over itself to both increase its resilience and empower its attacks.

PRIMORDIAL ENVY

CREATURE 3

RARE N LARGE OOZE

Perception +6; darkvision, magic sense (precise) 30 feet

Skills Athletics +9

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

Magic Sense A primordial envy can detect magical auras, items, and spellcasters within 30 feet.

AC 12; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8; -2 status vs. evocation and necromancy

HP 60; **Immunities** critical hits, mental, precision, unconscious, visual; **Resistances** piercing 5, slashing 5

Confiscate Spell ⚡ (abjuration, arcane) **Trigger** A creature within 30 feet that the primordial envy can sense Casts a Spell; **Effect** The primordial envy's surface shimmers with a kaleidoscope of color that shines out to illuminate the triggering creature. The primordial envy attempts to counter the spell, with a counteract modifier of +12. On a success, the spell is countered and the primordial envy gains 2d6 temporary Hit Points.

Speed 15 feet

Melee ⚡ pseudopod +9 (reach 10 feet, magical), **Damage** 1d10+4 bludgeoning plus 1d6 mental and Grab

Spell Drain ⚡ (abjuration, arcane) The primordial envy attempts to drain magic from a spellcasting creature that it has grabbed or restrained. The spellcasting creature must attempt a DC 20 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected and is temporarily immune to Spell Drain for 24 hours.

Success The creature takes 1d6 mental damage.

Failure The creature takes 2d6 mental damage and becomes stupefied 1 for 1 hour.

Critical Failure As failure, but one of the creature's uncast spells or unused spell slots is lost, as if they had cast it. The spell or slot lost is one of the highest-level spells the creature can cast, determined randomly if multiple prepared spells are available. If a cantrip is drained, the spellcaster loses access to that cantrip for 10 minutes. The primordial envy becomes quickened 1 for 1 round, and can use the extra action to Stride or Strike.



OTHER SINSLUDGES

The primordial envy is the least dangerous sinludge. The glistening pride's shimmering visage lures victims, then curses them with an inflated and competitive ego that tends to get them killed. The crusted sloth leaves victims wallowing in lethargy until they starve, while the shimmering greed imprisons would-be treasure seekers within shells of precious metal. The slithering lust's sweet scents enthrall victims with their deepest desires, distracting them as it feeds. But the most terrible of the sinludges are the ravenous wrath, which uses blasts of devastating energy to feed, and the rancid gluttony, which consumes souls and leaves bodies behind as lethal undead.



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LEVEL 3: DESPOILER'S DEEP
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

FEAR IN A HANDFUL OF RUST

The ruins of Rusthenge have stood silent and mysterious for eons, dating back to the era of the runelords of ancient Thassilon. Now that New Thassilon has risen from the depths of the past, something below the strange metallic ruin has begun to stir, and that bodes ill for the nearby village of Iron Harbor. What deadly legacy lies hidden within the unknown ruins below Rusthenge, and can it be stopped before a new evil is unleashed upon the land? *Pathfinder Adventure: Rusthenge* is a standalone adventure for 1st- to 3rd-level characters that also includes a selection of new magic items, character backgrounds, and monsters for any Pathfinder campaign.



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