



LIFE'S BAZAAR

BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

ARTWORK BY CHUCK LUKACS AND VAL MAYERICK •
CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

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"Life's Bazaar" is the first module in an Adventure Path series spanning several issues of *DUNGEON Magazine*. This *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*® adventure is designed for four player characters (PCs) of 1st level. PCs who survive the entire adventure should advance to 3rd level.

The adventure easily accommodates larger groups of PCs, and it can handle parties of 2nd or 3rd level. Larger or more powerful groups require less time to recover between encounters and receive fewer experience points per encounter than a party of 1st-level adventurers would gain. See the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar for details on altering the adventure for larger groups or parties of higher level.

When the PCs obtain sufficient experience points to advance to their next level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure.

PREPARATION

You, the DM, should have a copy of the core rulebooks (the *Player's Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*). This adventure also features creatures from the *Monster Manual II* and *Fiend Folio*; pertinent statistical information for *Monster Manual II* monsters is provided in the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement (available at www.paizopublishing.com), although it's strongly recommended that you reference the *Monster Manual II* for complete descriptions of these monsters. Statistics for creatures from the *Fiend Folio* are provided in the adventure. You should review the statistics for the monsters and unique villains before attempting to run the adventure. You should also note that the page numbers provided referencing the three core books will change once the revised versions are released in July.

Scattered throughout the adventure are Campaign Seed sidebars. These sidebars contain slivers of information about the campaign that might surface in future installments of the series, but which aren't necessarily pertinent to this first adventure. More Campaign Seeds are provided in the Web enhancement. These sidebars are meant to introduce future allies and adversaries and help you keep track of the campaign's "movers and shakers."

BACKGROUND

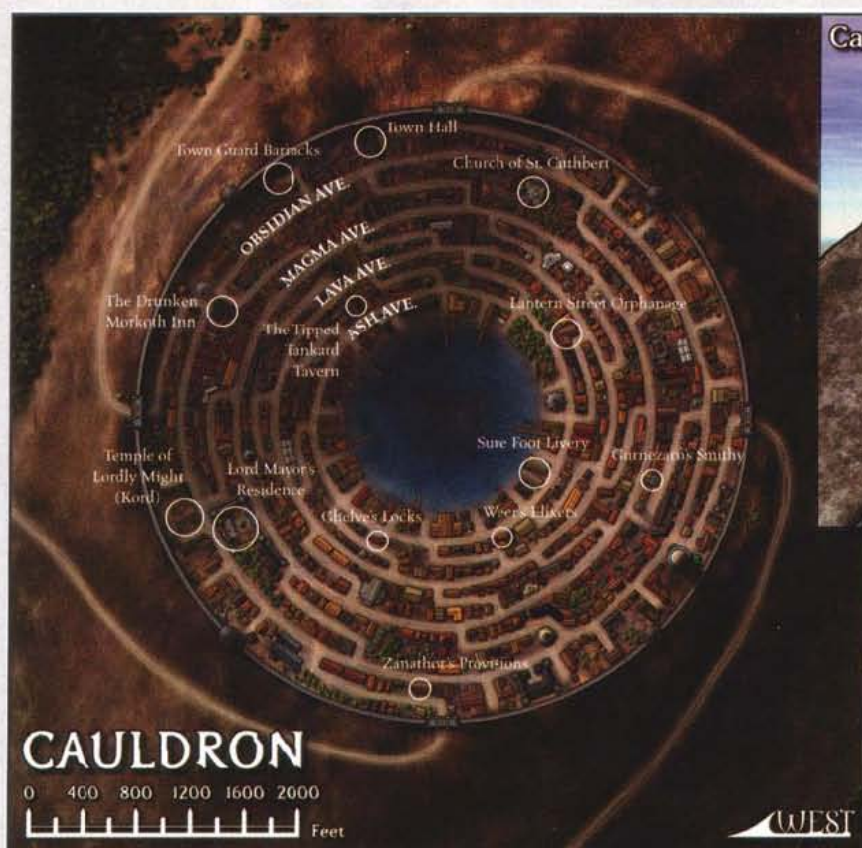
Built inside the mouth of a dormant volcano, the town of Cauldron is aptly named. Although nominally ruled by a Lord Mayor, the town secretly serves as the demesne of a greedy beholder named Vhalantru. Disguised as an influential noble, "Lord Orbis Vhalantru" is the secret power behind the Lord Mayor. He charms various nobles, merchants, and members of the town guard. He pokes his eyestalks into various legitimate and illegal ventures within Cauldron's walls, and no one—not even the Lord Mayor or the captain of the town guard—is the wiser.

In general, life in Cauldron is good. The town guard deals with local troublemakers but leaves the bigger problems (like marauding monsters) to the Lord Mayor or the Church of St. Cuthbert. Both the Lord Mayor and the clerics of St. Cuthbert periodically hire adventurers to deal with such problems directly.

Townfolk are generally pleased with the Lord Mayor, although a recent string of disappearances and robberies worries them. People have been taken from their homes during the night, and the town guard has been unable to identify the culprits or locate the vanished citizens. Moreover, the victims' homes were stripped of portable valuables. No place is secure.

Cauldron's beholder overlord knows the secret behind the abductions. Vhalantru has met the half-dwarf/half-troll slave trader who dwells below the town in an old stronghold carved from lava rock called the Malachite Fortress. This unscrupulous slave trader, named Kazmojen, runs a slave bazaar where he sells his latest acquisitions to creatures of the Underdark. Kazmojen is a recent arrival who is still carving out a business niche for himself. Vhalantru has accommodated him thus far, allowing Kazmojen to form a pact with some skulks and dark creepers who lair in the abandoned, subterranean gnome enclave of Jzadirune. The skulks and dark creepers are directly responsible for the abductions: The people they capture are taken to Kazmojen. The skulks and dark creepers get to keep whatever they take from the homes of the abductees, plus a percentage of Kazmojen's profits from the sales of the slaves.

The recent disappearance of four children from the Lantern Street Orphanage has outraged many locals and prompted a distraught cleric of St. Cuthbert to use a minor artifact in her



Cauldron Cross-Section



enclave below Cauldron, and a gnome locksmith named Keygan Ghelvé. The heroes' investigation quickly leads them to the locksmith's shop, beneath which lies the not-quite-abandoned gnome community of Jzadirune.

The creatures responsible for the recent rash of kidnappings include a coterie of skulks and a small band of dark creepers led by a dark stalker. The skulks have

pressed the locksmith into service by snatching and imprisoning his familiar. Since Keygan Ghelvé created most of the town's locks, he has "skeleton keys" for nearly every building in Cauldron. The skulks and dark creepers have used these skeleton keys to break into houses and make off with their contents.

Inside Keygan's shop, the heroes find a secret staircase leading down into Jzadirune, which Cauldron's gnome community abandoned years ago after a strange magical disease ravaged the enclave. Heroes who survive the perils of Jzadirune discover a crude elevator that leads down to Kazmojen's stronghold, called the Malachite Fortress. There, they find the half-troll busily selling slaves to a durzagon (half-fiend duergar) client. The sudden appearance of Lord Vhalantru interrupts the bazaar. The beholder wants one of the four abducted children—a dour and sadistic boy named Terrem—returned safely to Cauldron. The boy, who bears a strange invisible birthmark, is important to Lord Vhalantru's future designs for Cauldron. Terrem's abduc-

church to cast a *divination* spell. The spell has revealed several important clues, which the cleric has been unable to piece together. Enter the player characters.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Jenya Urikas, a cleric of the Church of St. Cuthbert, hires the untested PCs to find four children kidnapped from the Lantern Street Orphanage and learn what they can about the abductors. The party's clerical benefactor offers one *potion of cure moderate wounds* per PC up front and promises a monetary reward once the heroes complete the mission. Further, if the heroes succeed, Jenya promises to arrange a meeting with the Lord Mayor, for it seems the Lord Mayor enjoys meeting local heroes and offering them future work.

The *divination* spell cast by Jenya suggests a connection between the unknown abductors, an abandoned gnome

CAMPAIGN SEED: LORD VHALANTRU

Unbeknownst to Cauldron's Lord Mayor and other townsfolk, Vhalantru the beholder keeps eleven watchful eyes on local adventuring bands. Once adventurers reach a level where Vhalantru perceives them as a threat to his hold over the city, the beholder invites them to his manor and "cashes them out." Many heroes who have served the Lord Mayor in the past now adorn Lord Vhalantru's estate as statuary. Vhalantru claims to know a sculptor who carves these wondrous effigies in honor of Cauldron's greatest heroes—not so. The Lord Mayor has seen many heroes come

and go and constantly grooms new ones to replace those who have seemingly departed in search of greater adventures elsewhere.

Lord Vhalantru is secretly in league with an evil organization called the Cagewrights (see the Campaign Seed: The Shackleborn sidebar for details). This sinister society seeks to transform Cauldron into a gate-town—a permanent gateway between the Material Plane and Carceri. In exchange for his help, Vhalantru has been promised lordship of the new gate-town, as well as support from several newly freed Carcerian fiends in his bid to conquer and enslave neighboring realms.

tion was a mistake, and Lord Vhalantru has decided to correct the error personally. Although the heroes view the beholder briefly, they are not encouraged to fight it. Before they can worry about the greater threats that lie ahead, they must free the captive townsfolk from the half-troll slaver and his hobgoblin henchmen.

CAULDRON

Cauldron forms the hub of the campaign and has seen many adventures over the years. The town's buildings, tightly packed and built from volcanic rock and wood, line the inner bowl of a nameless, dormant volcano. Cobblestone roads form concentric circles around a small lake of cold water, which fills the volcano's basin. Although the town's sewage seeps into the lake, local clerics routinely purify the water for the citizens in exchange for charitable donations to their temples.

A 50-foot-tall fortified wall of black malachite encircles the city, tracing the outer rim of the volcano. Four roads descend the outer walls of the volcano, becoming major thoroughfares that lead to other towns and distant realms. The districts nearer the rim of the city tend to be occupied by upper class families and elite merchants. The closer one gets to the center of town (and the closer to the pungent odors of the central lake), the shoddier the construction and the more dangerous the dark alleys.

Most people get around Cauldron on foot, although the town

has its share of wagons and carriages, most of them owned by merchants and nobles.

The map of Cauldron shows the locations of The Church of St. Cuthbert, the Lantern Street Orphanage, and Ghelve's Locks, all of which figure in this adventure. Future modules in this series will introduce and describe other locations within the town. Feel free to add new places to the map as dictated by the needs of your campaign. For instance, if one of the PCs worships the goddess Yondalla, feel free to place a small temple or shrine dedicated to Yondalla somewhere within the town.

Cauldron (large town): Conventional; AL NG; Population 4,500 adults; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 600,000 gp; Mixed (79% human, 9% halfling, 5% gnome, 3% dwarf, 2% elf, 1% half-elf, 1% half-orc).

Authority Figures: Lord Mayor Severen Navalant, male human Ari10; Terseon Skellerang, male human Ftr8 (Captain of the Town Guard).

Important Characters: Lord Orbius Vhalantru, beholder (true overlord of Cauldron); Jenya Urikas, female human Clr5 (cleric at the Church of St. Cuthbert); Meerthan Eliothlorn, male half-elf Wiz12 (merchant staying at The Drowning Morkoth Inn); Keygan Ghelve, male gnome Exp3/Wiz(III)1 (owner of Ghelve's Locks); Gretchyn Tashykk, female halfling Com1 (Lantern Street Orphanage headmistress); Patch, male half-orc Com1/Rog1 (spy for The Last Laugh guild); Vortimax Weer, male human Wiz10 (alchemist and potion brewer at

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Life's Bazaar" is designed to challenge 1st- and 2nd-level characters. However, the adventure can be modified for higher-level characters as follows.

- If the PCs begin the adventure at 2nd level, double the amount of damage dealt by all traps, thereby increasing the traps' CR by 1. For instance, a CR 1 corrosive gas trap that deals 2d6 points of damage would deal 4d6 points of damage instead and be treated as a CR 2 encounter. Increase the save DC of the Vanishing disease to 18. Give each skulk one level of rogue (1d6 extra hp, +2 to Reflex saves, 8 extra skill points, one extra feat, sneak attack +1d6). Add another choker in area J22, double the number of monstrous centipedes in area J29, add another dark creeper in area J40, and double the number of hobgoblins encountered in area J63 and the Malachite Fortress. Give Yuathyb (area J44) a pair of dark creeper bodyguards. Make Prickles a fully grown howler instead of a juvenile specimen. If the characters reach the final encounter without any significant drain to their resources, give Kazmojen another fighter level as well.

- If the PCs begin the adventure at 3rd level, make the following modifications in addition to the changes above. Increase the save DC of the Vanishing to 19, and increase the Search and Disable Device DCs of all traps by +2. Give each skulk another rogue level, and double the number of dark creepers encountered. Give Yuathyb one level of rogue (1d6+1 extra hit points, +2 to Reflex saves, 9 extra skill points, sneak attack increases by +1d6). Add another grell to area J36 and another pulverizer to area J44, increase the sizes of the spiders in area J58 by one size category

each, replace the animate chains in area M6 with a chain golem (see *Monster Manual II*, page 44), and place an imp in area M25 (with the lemures). Use the statistics for Zarkad (area M21) for all hobgoblins, and give Zarkad himself another level of warrior. Give Xukasuk (area M4) a pet carrion crawler, and give the hammerers (area M14) standard hit points. If the characters reach the final encounter without any significant drain to their resources, give Pyllrak one monk level.

- If the PCs begin the adventure at 4th level, make the following modifications in addition to the changes above. Increase the save DC of the Vanishing to 20, and increase the disease's damage to 1d8 Cha. Increase the Search and Disable Device DCs of all traps by another +2, and add 20 feet of depth to each pit trap (+2d6 points of falling damage, +1 CR). Increase the number of skulks and dark creepers by one per encounter area. Add another stone spike to area M3, give Xukasuk (area M4) a pair of carrion crawler pets and a masterwork falchion, give Zarkad (area M21) another level of warrior, and give Kazmojen and Pyllrak another level of fighter and monk, respectively. Make Kazmojen's urgrosh a +1 weapon. If the characters reach the final encounter without any significant drain to their resources, apply the fiendish template to Kazmojen's howler.

You can also make the adventure tougher by adding random encounters. Suggestions include a trap that summons a Medium-size earth or fire elemental (EL 3), a roving phantom fungus (EL 3), a gray ooze (EL 4), a minor (EL 3) or average xorn (EL 5) demanding tribute, or a pair of stealthy meenlocks (EL 5).

Weer's Elixers); Phalian Gunezarn, male human Exp6 (blacksmith and proprietor of Gunezarn's Smithy); Bjellkir Zanathor (proprietor of Zanathor's Provisions, a general store); Rivek Mol (proprietor of The Tipped Tankard); Halpeen Welvihk (proprietor of The Drunken Morkoth Inn); Tippys Surefoot, female halfling Exp4 (proprietor of Sure Foot Livery); Asfelkir Hranleurt, male half-orc Clr6 (high priest of the Temple of Lordly Might dedicated to Kord).

Typical Guard Patrol: Members of the town guard are especially vigilant in the wake of recent abductions. A typical patrol consists of a sergeant (War4) and 1d4+2 privates (War2). Guards typically wear breastplates emblazoned with the town emblem (a watchful eye wreathed in flames) and carry halberds, short swords, and shortbows.

RUMORS IN CAULDRON

The PCs might be residents of Cauldron or visitors in search of adventure. Although the recent string of abductions has fueled countless rumors, not all of the town's gossip centers on the kidnappings. Some rumors allude to other threats that have yet to surface.

PCs who are residents of Cauldron know various rumors tied to current happenings in town. Assume that local PCs know 1d4+2 of the rumors given below. Visiting PCs, on the other hand, know only what they overhear in local taverns and inns; a successful Gather Information check yields one rumor (DC 15), two rumors (DC 20), or three rumors (DC 25). Roll randomly or select appropriate rumors from the table below.

WEATHER IN CAULDRON

You can set this adventure during any time of the year, although descriptive text assumes that the adventure takes place during late autumn. Overcast days allow brief flashes of sunshine before unleashing drizzling rain, and the night's wind carries an unpleasant chill.

See Weather Hazards in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* for rules governing combat in inclement weather.

THE KIDNAPPINGS

A band of skulks and dark creepers are responsible for the recent abductions and burglaries. They creep out of Ghelve's Locks at night and scour the town for easy marks. At some point, the PCs might question local guards about the abductions and crime scenes, hoping to find clues to the kidnappers' identities. Each successful Gather Information check (DC 12) reveals one of the following pieces of information:

- People have been kidnapped from every district in the town. The crimes are not particularly localized.
- Most of the victims are low- to middle-class citizens, but otherwise nothing seems to connect them.
- All of the recent kidnappings have occurred at night. The kidnappers prefer to strike on overcast nights or when the moon is new.

d12 Roll Rumor

- 1 One of the children kidnapped from the orphanage is the bastard son of the Lord Mayor. (False)
- 2 A cloaked figure collided with me in the street and knocked me down. She uttered some horrible curse, glared at me with her ghostly face and haunting blue eyes, then strode off. (True; the "woman" was a skulk.)
- 3 A secret guild of halfling rogues is responsible for the kidnappings and robberies. (False, although dark creepers could be mistaken for halflings at a distance.)
- 4 Someone in Cauldron trades in strange currency: coins stamped with a jester instead of the sovereign. The authorities are trying to find the source. (True; The Last Laugh guild in town mints its own coins.)
- 5 A tentacled beast lurks in the cold depths of the lake. (True; a powerful morkoth makes its home there.)
- 6 Coryston Pike, one of the kidnapped victims, feared for her life days before she vanished. (False)
- 7 Evil cultists are kidnapping people and sacrificing them to an evil god who has two heads and tentacles for arms. (False)
- 8 A magical disease is causing people in the city to vanish. The same thing nearly wiped out the gnomes of Jzadirune 75 years ago! (False; the disease, though real, is not to blame for the missing townsfolk.)
- 9 One of the stolen orphans is the offspring of Dwern and Imogen Stormshield, two adventurers who perished a few years back. (Partially true; Vhalantru the beholder turned Deakon's parents to stone and added them to his statue collection, then had their son placed in the local orphanage.)
- 10 Keygan Ghelve is one of the finest locksmiths in the world. Only a skilled rogue or spellcaster could bypass one of his locks without the proper key! (True)
- 11 Jeneer Everdawn, one of the missing townsfolk, did volunteer work at the local orphanage. Coincidence? I don't think so! (False)
- 12 Gryffon Malek and Krylscar Endercott knew each other. They would meet each other after hours at The Tipped Tankard and drink until the wee hours of the morning. Now they're both gone! (True; they were friends who both caught the attention of the skulks.)

- The town guard has been watching suspected members of various local thieves' guilds, but their vigilance has not yet paid off.
- The perpetrators pick the locks of the victims' dwellings. Once inside, they grab their prey, steal any loot they find, and vacate the premises.
- No witnesses have come forward to report screams, loud scuffles, or sinister figures creeping about on the nights of the kidnappings.
- The local constabulary suspects between two and six culprits, based on the number of footprints found at various crime scenes. The footprints suggest that the abductors include both Small and Medium-size humanoid.

RECENT ABDUCTEES

During their investigation into the kidnappings, the players might ask for a list of missing townsfolk. Although investigating these past victims only yields more dead ends, you can either come up with a list on your own or download the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement for a Player Handout that gives a brief description of each of the kidnap victims.

The victims were chosen more or less randomly. In general, the skulks and dark creepers selected victims who might be worth something as slaves. They like to pick a victim in the evening, follow their mark home, and survey the victim's residence until nightfall. Then, in the dead of night, they slip inside, quickly subdue the victim, and loot the place.

The attack on the orphanage is a new twist: One of Kazmojen's recurring clients—a durzagon (half-fiend duergar) named Pyllrak Shyraat—wants younger slaves who are more tractable and less likely to revolt. Thus, Kazmojen has given the skulks and dark creepers instructions to gather children from the city above. See "The Church of St. Cuthbert" for the names of the four missing children.

CHAPTER ONE: GONE IN THE NIGHT

The adventure opens with an encounter in the streets of Cauldron. The heroes rescue a cleric of St. Cuthbert from some thugs and escort him safely to his temple. There they meet Jenya Urikas, a cleric who thinks she has unlocked the mystery of the recent kidnappings.

Following their meeting with Jenya, the heroes can search for clues at the Lantern Street Orphanage, site of the most recent disappearances, or they can investigate a local locksmith with suspected ties to the kidnappers. The latter course takes them into the next chapter of the adventure.

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE SHACKLEBORN

The campaign's major story arc involves an evil faction called the Cagewrights. These servants of evil seek to open a permanent two-way portal between the Material Plane and the outer plane of Carceri, transforming the town of Cauldron into a gate-town. If the Cagewrights are successful, an incarcerated horde of fiends trapped on Carceri's first layer will escape their prison-plane and ravage the town, visibly transforming its buildings and condemning its citizens to a life of slavery under Vhalantru's subtle tyranny. From Cauldron, they will strike out across the realms, enslaving or crushing all they encounter.

To accomplish their ultimate goal, the Cagewrights need to fashion seven artifacts called soulcages throughout the town, each one designed to trap the life essences of The Shackleborn—evil persons or creatures born with the Carcerian Sign. The Carcerian Sign is a naturally invisible birthmark loosely resembling an eyeball pierced by an upward-pointing arrow (as shown in The Carcerian Sign diagram).

THE ACCOSTED CLERIC (EL 3)

The adventure begins with the PCs walking the streets of Cauldron before nightfall. Read or paraphrase the following:

Steady drizzle falls from the ash-gray sky. The crowded, rain-slicked buildings seem especially bleak and frightful this evening, hunched together beneath the tireless rain. A few lights burn in their eyes, but mostly their shutters have been closed for the night. The scent of chimney smoke fills the air, and you hear the din of water trundling from the rooftops, splashing into dark alleys, and turning street gutters into rivulets.

A sudden, plaintive cry for help splits the evening air. It seems to come from somewhere behind you.

Characters who stop and listen can hear some cursing and sounds of a scuffle, slightly muffled by the rainfall. Read or paraphrase the following if they investigate:

You follow the noises to the mouth of a mist-shrouded alley, wherein you see three figures assaulting a fourth, who lies face down on the wet cobblestones. One of attackers lifts the victim by the hood of his cloak and thrusts him against a wall as another growls, "Stay away from the orphanage, you got that?"

The alley is 10 feet wide and 60 feet long, opening into a street at either end. Like many alleys in Cauldron, it slopes toward the center of town at an angle of 15 degrees. Two-story buildings loom on both sides of the alleyway.

The three attackers are off-duty town guards working for a member of The Last Laugh, a local guild of thieves. (A successful Knowledge—local or bardic knowledge check, DC 20 reveals that the painted faces of Ruphus's attackers indicate they are in some way affiliated with this guild.) Their faces are painted in a

A local orphan named Terrem bears the Carcerian Sign on his face and is one of The Shackleborn. Agents of the Cagewrights who operate secretly within the town placed Terrem in the Lantern Street Orphanage shortly after his birth—once they'd dispatched the boy's parents. Unfortunately for them, Terrem was stolen from the orphanage (along with three other children) by some skulks and dark creepers working for a half-dwarf/half-troll slaver named Kazmojen. The sinister society has turned to the beholder Vhalantru to find the boy and return him to safety. Meanwhile, the Cagewrights have begun constructing their soulcages in various buildings throughout Cauldron. They are also keeping the remaining Shackleborn under close observation, particularly in light of Terrem's mistaken abduction.





manner similar to that of *The Last Laugh* in a poor attempt to conceal their identities (their faces are painted half white and half black). Two of the three brutes are accosting a 19-year-old cleric of St. Cuthbert named Ruphus Laro. The third guard is watching the street in case a guard patrol shows up. Have the wary thug make a Spot check (opposed by the heroes' Hide checks) to notice the PCs; if the Spot check fails, the PCs each get a free partial action during the surprise round.

Jenya Urikas, the acting high priest of the Church of St. Cuthbert, sent Ruphus to console distraught children and staff members at the orphanage. He was heading back to the temple when the thugs ambushed him and dragged him into the alley.

The Last Laugh thieves' guild doesn't want the Church of St. Cuthbert snooping around the orphanage for clues about the recent abductions. The guild provides intelligence and security for the Cagewrights, and they don't want the clerics of St. Cuthbert uncovering the truth about Terrem, one of the missing children. For more on the Last Laugh, see the Campaign Seed in the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement.

Creatures: The thugs want to scare Ruphus, not kill him. However, they draw swords when the PCs show up. One of them tells the heroes to "Bugger off!" If that doesn't work, they begin slowly backing away while readying actions to swing at PCs who rush toward them. As they back away, the battered cleric makes his way toward the characters.

The thugs work for a rogue named Jil. Using a *spider climb* spell, she clings to the wall of one building, just below the

second-story eaves (where the wall is dry). She cloaks herself in shadows, hoping to remain unseen. PCs who take a standard action to study the alley can make a Spot check (opposed by Jil's Hide check result) to notice her clinging to a section of wall 15 feet overhead.

Jil stands 5 feet, 3 inches tall and has short black hair and dark brown eyes. She wears a hooded black cloak, black boots, and black leather gloves. Like all members of her guild, she paints her face white and black, transforming it into a grinning harlequin's visage. Intrigued by the brazen PCs, she does not attack them. She might fare quite well, but she never jumps blindly into combat against the unknown. If she is spotted or attacked, Jil calls out, "Well done! But the cleric lives because we wish it so, not because of your misplaced bravado." She then points a baleful finger at Ruphus

and says, "Take these words back to your temple, priest! The children are lost and no longer St. Cuthbert's concern." She then takes a full-round action to crawl to the rooftop and flee the scene, activating her *wand of silence* to quiet her footfalls.

Jil has no concern for the welfare of the guards. She hired them specifically to accost the cleric, and they know nothing of the guild's plans and associations.

Jil, Female Human Rog5/Asn1: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 5d6+5 plus 1d6+1; hp 27; Init +6; Spd 30 ft. (15 ft. while *spider climbing*); AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 15; BAB +3; Grap +3; Atk +6 melee (1d6/19–20 plus poison, masterwork short sword) or +6 melee (1d3+1 subdual and trip attack, +1 whip) or +6 ranged (1d6/×3, masterwork shortbow); SA sneak attack +4d6, death attack; SQ trapfinding, evasion, trap sense, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked), poison use; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +4, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +11, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +11, Forgery +11, Hide +11, Intimidate +3, Jump +2, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +10, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +4, Spot +7, Tumble +11, Use Magic Device +11. **Feats:** Improved Initiative, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Weapon Finesse (short sword), Weapon Finesse (whip).

Spells Prepared (1; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 1st—*spider climb* (already cast).

Spellbook: 1st—*change self*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound*, *obscuring mist*, *spider climb*.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Gnome.

Possessions: +1 whip, wand of silence (15 charges), potion of cure moderate wounds, arcane scroll of undetectable alignment, masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork short sword, sword sheath with poison reservoir (coats blade with blue whinnis poison when the weapon is drawn; holds 3 applications), masterwork shortbow with 20 arrows, spellbook, black cloak and clothing, leather gloves, pouch containing 30 gp (minted with the jester emblem of The Last Laugh guild).

◆ **Nilas Varkazi, Hylum Ferant, and Kerlen Ree, Male Human War2:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 2d8+2 plus 3 (Toughness feat); hp 17, 14, 13; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; BAB +1; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d6/19–20, short sword) or +2 melee (1d3+1 subdual, unarmed) or +1 ranged; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will –1; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +3, Intimidate +2, Ride +3, Swim +3. Feats: Quick Draw, Toughness.

Language: Common.

Possessions: Short sword, rain cloak, dark clothing, pouch containing 1d6 sp and 2d6 cp.

◆ **Ruphus Laro, Male Human Clr2 (St. Cuthbert):** CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 2d8; hp 12 (has taken 10 points of subdual damage); Init –1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; BAB +1; Grap +1; Atk +1 melee (1d8, heavy mace) or +0 ranged; SA turn undead 3/day; AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref –1, Will +4; Str 11, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Concentration +4, Diplomacy +3, Heal +8, Knowledge (religion) +4. Feats: Combat Casting, Skill Focus (Heal).

Spells Prepared (4/4; base save DC = 11 + spell level): 0—detect magic, guidance, light, resistance; 1st—bless, endure elements*, magic weapon, sanctuary.

*Domain spell. Domains: Law (cast law spells at +1 caster level), Strength (feat of strength 1/day).

Language: Common.

Possessions: Chain shirt, heavy mace, cloak, clerical vestments, amulet (holy symbol of St. Cuthbert).

Tactics: Jil likes to sneak attack her prey using her poisoned short sword. Her death attack makes her especially dangerous if she can study her target for 3 rounds before striking. Jil uses her +1 whip to trip or disarm opponents from a safe distance.

The three hired guards stick around long enough to get paid (Jil owes them 10 gp apiece for “roughing up” the cleric). They draw their short swords as a free action (using the Quick Draw feat) and prefer to gang up on a single target, but otherwise their tactics are straightforward.

When battle erupts, Ruphus casts *bless* (on himself and the PCs) and *magic weapon* (on his mace) before joining the fray. He also heals wounded characters after the fight.

Development: If the heroes rescue Ruphus, he asks them to escort him to his temple. He tells the PCs that he was heading back to the temple when he was mugged. He thought the thugs planned to rob him until it became clear they were trying to intimidate him. Ruphus knows only that someone does not want

PLAYER HANDOUT #1: DIVINATION RIDDLE

*The locks are key to finding them.
Look beyond the curtain, below the cauldron,
But beware the doors with teeth.
Descend into the malachite 'hold,
Where precious life is bought with gold.
Half a dwarf binds them, but not for long.*

the Church of St. Cuthbert involved in an investigation to find four missing children from the local orphanage, but he can't fathom why.

If she survives the encounter, Jil might become a recurring villain in the campaign. She is quite capable of vanquishing a band of 1st-level adventurers by herself, but that is not her intent in this encounter. However, if the heroes perform well against the three town guards, Jil might pay closer attention to them in the future.

If a PC casts *charm person* on Jil and succeeds, she treats that character with uncharacteristic kindness but does not divulge guild secrets or stick around long enough to be captured. If she escapes, she might take a special interest in her new “friend” (even after the *charm person* spell wears off), partly because she's intrigued and partly because she likes to live dangerously. How this relationship develops is left for you to decide.

Captured or *charmed* thugs can be goaded or coerced (Intimidate, DC 17) into revealing the following: A member of The Last Laugh named Jil hired them to “send a clear message” to the Church of St. Cuthbert not to investigate the disappearance of the four children from the Lantern Street Orphanage. The guards needed the money, and the arrangement didn't involve killing the cleric, so they agreed. PCs can surrender these goons to the town guard, who take them into custody and charge them with assault. The guards are held for three days and released after an anonymous source pays each of their 50 gp fines.

If the heroes get into trouble fighting the three off-duty guards, a patrol arrives to break up the fight. Ruphus's three attackers attempt to flee before their fellow guardsmen identify them. PCs who allow one or more of them to escape might encounter these guards again, possibly while they are on duty.

THE CHURCH OF ST. CUTHBERT

This encounter assumes the PCs escort Ruphus Laro back to the Church of St. Cuthbert on Obsidian Avenue. He seems grateful for their company, and the short trip can be spent sharing local rumors (see “Rumors in Cauldron”).

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs reach the temple:

The two-story Church of St. Cuthbert, its white marble walls suffused with veins of vivid blue, stands in stark contrast to the buildings of bare black stone that flank it on the north end of Obsidian Avenue. A pair of white marble statues depicting armored warriors stand on either side of the

temple's heavy oaken door. Each of the statues raises a great mace to the darkening sky. Above the door's marble architrave are boldly inscribed the following words in Common: WITHIN LAW LIVES HOPE.

Ruphus invites the characters inside, if only to escape the rainy drizzle. He also encourages them to meet with his superior, Jenya Urikas, to whom he must report his recent harrowing encounter. Upon entering the temple, Ruphus is greeted by another acolyte and taken to Jenya's chambers. Meanwhile, the heroes are given warm blankets and invited to dry off and enjoy some hot tea.

The church's high priest, Sarcem Delasharn, is attending ceremonies at the High Temple of St. Cuthbert in the distant capital city. Jenya runs things in her master's absence. Jenya is a 5th-level cleric. Her subordinates include two 3rd-level clerics, two 2nd-level clerics (including Ruphus), and four 1st-level clerics. All of the clerics are lawful neutral and wear amulets displayed the symbol of their deity. A righteous 4th-level paladin of St. Cuthbert named Alek Tercival guards the temple and occasionally patrols the city astride his black warhorse, Avenger.

After leaving the PCs to speak with Jenya, Ruphus does not return that evening. Instead, Jenya approaches the PCs. Read or paraphrase the following at this time:

As you wait for Ruphus to return, two figures approach from somewhere deeper in the structure. A young woman with premature streaks of gray in her rich brown hair steps forward with her hand outstretched in friendship. She wears a brown robe with golden trim and the symbol of St. Cuthbert around her neck.

"Good evening," says the woman. "I have spoken to Ruphus and learned of his harrowing ordeal, as well as your remarkable heroism. I'm Jenya, the acting high priest. I am in your debt."

Jenya leads the PCs to a room where they can sit down and enjoy a warm fire. If the PCs seem eager to leave, she invites them to stay long enough to entertain a proposal. She has not given up on helping the Lantern Street Orphanage, despite the recent attack on Ruphus Laro. If the PCs are willing to hear her proposal, she relates the following information:

- Four children were kidnapped from the local orphanage three nights ago. Their names were Deakon, Evelyn, Lucinda, and Terrem. The children are the most recent victims in a series of strange disappearance and robberies.

- The orphanage has two common bedchambers on the second floor—one for girls, the other for boys. Two children were taken from each room. None of the other children and none of the resident staff heard or saw anything.

- The orphanage has barred windows and excellent locks protecting its doors. The children are locked into their rooms at night to prevent any midnight mischief.

- In the wake of the kidnappings, the Church of St. Cuthbert has publicly vowed to locate the missing children and bring the kidnappers to justice.

- To locate the children, Jenya borrowed an item from the church's vault. The +1 *holy heavy mace*, called the Star of Justice, has the power to cast *divination* once per week. Only the church's high priest is supposed to wield this power; in his absence, Jenya felt justified calling on the mace's great power.

- Jenya used the mace to ask the question, "Where are the children who were abducted from the Lantern Street Orphanage?" The response she received was cryptic—show **Player Handout #1: Divination Riddle** to the players at this time.

St. Cuthbert's cryptic riddle holds many clues. The first line refers to the locks on the doors of the Lantern Street Orphanage; Keygan Ghelve, the locksmith who wrought them, owns a shop in town. The second line refers to the curtain in Keygan's shop, behind which is hidden a secret door that leads to an abandoned gnome enclave under Cauldron. The third line refers to the gear-shaped doors in the gnome enclave, many of

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE CHURCH OF ST. CUTHBERT

If the PCs rescue the cleric Ruphus Laro and see him safely to his temple, they gain a potent ally in the Church of St. Cuthbert. Jenya Urikas, who leads the church's congregation during the absence of the high priest, feels indebted to them for their selfless deed.

The heroes may return to the Church of St. Cuthbert for healing as they wish; the clerics in attendance use their magic to mend injured PCs as best they can. Alek Tercival, the temple's paladin protector, might also offer his services if the heroes need further healing, advice concerning matters of law, or the strength of a paladin's sword.

In addition to providing healing, the temple can sell equipment, potions, and scrolls to the PCs. The PCs get a 20% discount as long as they remain in the temple's good graces. Discounted costs are listed parenthetically.

<i>Potion of cure light wounds*</i>	50 gp (40 gp)
<i>Potion of cure moderate wounds*</i>	300 gp (240 gp)
<i>Potion of cure serious wounds*</i>	750 gp (600 gp)
<i>Scroll of cure light wounds*</i>	25 gp (20 gp)
<i>Scroll of cure moderate wounds*</i>	150 gp (120 gp)
<i>Scroll of cure serious wounds*</i>	375 gp (300 gp)

*Or any other divine spell of similar level.

The church keeps a ready supply of healing potions and scrolls. If the PCs request a potion or scroll that confers a different effect (such as a potion of delay poison or a scroll of lesser restoration), the church has a 100% chance –10% per spell level of having the requested item in inventory. If the PCs request more than one of the same available item (such as four potions of bull's strength), roll 1d4 to determine how many the church keeps in stock.

In general, the Church of St. Cuthbert replenishes its supply of potions and scrolls every other week.

which are trapped and none of which need be opened to reach the children. The fourth and fifth lines refer to a stronghold carved from black malachite, where the children are being held until they can be sold as slaves. The last line refers to the half-dwarf slaver Kazmojen and his plans to sell the children to an eager buyer.

Jenya believes (correctly) that the first line of the riddle holds an important clue. She is uncertain which "locks" the riddle refers to, but she suspects the riddle might be referring to the locks at the Lantern Street Orphanage. Jenya isn't a lock expert, nor does she know that most of the town's locks come from a single source.

Creatures: Jenya is 30 years old, has brown eyes, and likes to wear her hair in various elaborate styles. Although she stands only 5 feet 4 inches tall, she walks tall and confronts evil with merciless resolve. Her good nature belies her fierce convictions, and she freely supports capital punishment for despicable crimes, including the kidnapping of orphaned children.

☛ **Jenya Urikas, Female Human Clr5 (St. Cuthbert):** CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 5d8+5; hp 31; Init -1; Spd 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor); AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9, or AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17 with armor with *magic vestment* spell; BAB +3; Grap +3; Atk +4 melee (1d8, masterwork heavy mace) or +2 ranged; SA turn undead 5/day; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +6, Diplomacy +9, Heal +12, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +3, Spellcraft +6, Spot +3. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Heal).

Spells Prepared (5/5/4/3; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, guidance, light, mending, purify food and drink*; 1st—*bless water, command, divine favor, magic weapon, sanctuary**; 2nd—*bull's strength*, hold person, lesser restoration, shield other*; 3rd—*create food and water, magic vestment*, searing light*.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Protection (protective ward 1/day), Strength (feat of strength 1/day).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Possessions: Masterwork chain mail¹ (+1 with *magic vestment* spell), large steel shield¹, masterwork heavy mace¹, 2 scrolls of *cure serious wounds*, brown robe, 2 vials of *holy water*, keys to temple, holy symbol of St. Cuthbert.

¹Jenya does not wear her armor or carry her mace during her initial meeting with the PCs.

Development: Jenya wants to hire the PCs to find the missing townsfolk (the children, in particular) and punish the kidnappers from their crimes. She offers each PC a *potion of cure moderate wounds* as a token of good faith and promises an additional reward of 2,500 gp (total, not per PC) upon successful completion of the quest. The potion bottles are labeled with the symbol of St. Cuthbert.

PCs can inquire about locks around town. A successful Gather Information check (DC 11) reveals that a gnome locksmith named Keygan Ghelve fashions most of the town's locks. Most people can point heroes toward Keygan's shop on Lava Street without too much trouble.

If the PCs don't think to ask around, Jenya suggests that they investigate the Lantern Street Orphanage and ask about the locks there. In the meantime, Jenya can compile a list of recent kidnap victims (see "Recent Abductees") and have it ready for the PCs by morning.

THE LANTERN STREET ORPHANAGE (EL 1)

If the PCs accept Jenya's quest, they might want to investigate the local orphanage for clues. Anyone at the Church of St. Cuthbert can point the heroes in the right direction. Read the following when they reach the orphanage:

The orphanage rests on the corner of Lantern Street and Lava Avenue, its charcoal-colored stones held together with mold-encrusted mortar. The windows on both stories are tightly shuttered, but a few slivers of light manage to escape from within. Lanterns hang on either side of the oaken front door, mounted to which is a green copper knocker shaped like a smiling gargoyle's visage, its nostrils pierced by a copper ring.

If the PCs knock, an elderly halfling woman opens the door a crack and peers out. Not recognizing the heroes, her eyes flicker with suspicion. "Who sent you?" she asks curtly.

The woman is Gretchyn Tashykk (72-year-old female halfling Com1), the orphanage's headmistress. If the heroes claim they are working for the Church of St. Cuthbert, Gretchyn demands proof. The heroes must either succeed at a Diplomacy check (DC 15) or show her the potion bottles bearing the St. Cuthbert label given to them by Jenya Urikas.

Once she's convinced that the heroes do not pose a threat to her or her children, Gretchyn lets them inside and apologizes for her gruff demeanor.

The ground floor of the orphanage is dimly lit and contains a main hall (with a staircase leading to the second floor), a kitchen with stairs leading down to a cellar pantry, a dining hall, a playroom for the children, a schoolroom, a small bathroom, and staff quarters. The second floor is divided into three rooms: a spacious bathroom with two large tubs and two large bedrooms filled with cots. One of the bedrooms currently holds 19 girls; the other room holds 31 boys.

Gretchyn tells the PCs that the orphanage has five staff members besides herself:

- Jaromir Copperbeard, the gardener (99-year-old male dwarf Com1);
- Neva Fanister, the nurse (31-year-old female human Exp2; Heal +6).
- Temar Flagonstern, the cook (48-year-old male human Com1);
- Willow Atherfell, the schoolteacher (54-year-old female half-elf Com1);
- Patch, the janitor (23-year-old male half-orc Com1/Rog1; see **Creature** below).

The staff members all worked at the orphanage for several years, and Gretchyn trusts them implicitly, but the headmistress holds a special affection for Patch, the half-orc janitor. He was brought to the orphanage twenty years ago, and the abuse he suffered as a child left him without his left eye. He wears an eye patch to hide the empty socket, and the children seem especially fond of him.

On the night they disappeared, no one saw or heard anything, although one of the young boys remembered having a nightmare about an evil gnome with crooked teeth and a tattered cloak trying to snatch his breath; PCs can question the lad, but his nightmare is unrelated. If you want Gretchyn to provide more information about the four missing children, you can refer to the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement and the **Player Handout: Kidnap Victims**).

Gretchyn also points out that the PCs aren't the only ones investigating the children's disappearance. The morning after the disappearances, members of the town guard took statements from each staff member and questioned many of the children. One day later, a pair of half-elf investigators working for the Lord Mayor returned and questioned her again, but didn't speak to the children or other staff members. Gretchyn took their names, naturally: Fario Ellegoth and Fellian Shard. Although they exchanged some peculiar glances and asked many of the same questions as the guards, they seemed genuinely concerned for the children.

The orphanage has good locks (Open Lock, DC 30) built into the front and back doors, and only Gretchyn has the key to open them. Gretchyn insists that she always locks the doors before she retires for the night. A PC rogue who inspects the locks and succeeds at a Search check (DC 15) can determine that the locks were fashioned by the same locksmith and are in perfect working condition. If asked, Gretchyn tells the heroes that Keygan Ghelve, a local locksmith, fashioned the locks for her many years ago, "and charged a pretty coin, let me tell you!"

Creature: Unknown to anyone at the orphanage, Patch works for The Last Laugh. A low-ranking guild member named Revus Twindaggers contacted the half-orc last year and gave him 50 gp to "keep his eye" on Terrem Kharatys, one of the children, until the service was no longer required. Since then, Patch has honed his skills as a rogue and learned a few tricks from his new friend, indulging in petty acts of larceny.

If the PCs succeed at a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 11) or otherwise persuade Patch to divulge what he knows "for his sake and that of the children," he reveals his association to The Last Laugh and begs the PCs not to share this information with Headmistress Tashykk.

Patch doesn't know who took the four children, although he suspects The Last Laugh might be involved because Terrem was among those taken. He did not step forward with this information because of his involvement with the guild.

❖ **Patch, Male Half-orc Com1/Rogr:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (half-orc); HD 1d4 plus 1d6; hp 7; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; BAB +0; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee

(1d4+3/19–20, dagger) or +2 ranged; SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., trapfinding; AL N; Fort +0, Ref +4, Will –1; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +5, Hide +4, Jump +5, Listen +0, Move Silently +4, Open Lock +4, Profession (janitor) +1, Spot +0, Tumble +4.
Feats: Dodge.

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: Dagger, small leather sack* (containing 45 gp, 72 sp, 90 cp, and a set of masterwork thieves' tools given to him by Revus Twindaggers).

*This item is hidden in Patch's room and requires a successful Search check (DC 15) to find.

Development: Patch has enjoyed more than a few drinks with Revus Twindaggers but has not seen the halfling in a month; he doesn't know where Revus lives, where he might be, or why The Last Laugh wanted him to watch over Terrem specifically. However, the half-orc dimly recalls a conversation he had with Revus several months ago, shortly after their first meeting. When Patch asked why The Last Laugh was interested in Terrem, the tipsy halfling shrugged his shoulders and replied, "All I know is that it has something to do with his dead parents."

If the PCs visit the Office of the Lord Mayor, they are denied an audience with the Lord Mayor himself but can obtain a list of recent kidnap victims (see "Recent Abductees") with a successful Gather Information check (DC 15, –1 for each 2-gp bribe). If the heroes ask to meet with the half-elf investigators assigned to the case of the missing orphans, they are told that the Lord Mayor does not employ any half-elf investigators. The names Fario Ellegoth and Fellian Shard are met with raised eyebrows and blank stares.

With no way to track The Last Laugh or the mysterious half-elf investigators, the only remaining avenue of exploration should lead the PCs to the local locksmith, Keygan Ghelve.

Ad-hoc XP Award: If the heroes pry information from Patch, award them experience as if they'd defeated the half-orc in combat.

THE STRIDERS OF FHARLANGHN (EL 3)

At some point during the heroes' investigation, they catch the attention of a pair of half-elves named Fario Ellegoth and Fellian Shard.

The half-elves work for Meerthan Eliothlorn, a high-ranking member of a neutrally aligned organization called the Striders of Fharlanghn. Although many of the Striders worship Fharlanghn (the god of roads and horizons), Meerthan does not. Still, he shares the organization's hatred of the Cagewrights, seeing them as a threat to the balance of power in the realm. A half-elf wizard himself, Meerthan is in town posing as a dwarven merchant named Tyro Amberhelm; he currently stays at The Drowning Morkoth Inn. Meerthan has sent Fario and Fellian to uncover evidence of the Cagewrights' involvement in the recent string of abductions. See the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement for more information on Meerthan Eliothlorn and the Striders of Fharlanghn.

Fario and Fellian have learned that the Church of St. Cuthbert plans to investigate the abductions, in particular the disappearance of four children from the local orphanage. Since the high priest of St. Cuthbert is out of town, Meerthan suspects the church will turn to private investigators for help. He has cast *Rary's telepathic bond* on himself, Fario, and Fellian, and made it permanent using a *permanency* spell. The three remain in constant telepathic contact, speaking in Draconic or Elven whenever possible. Fario and Fellian watch the temple and orphanage (respectively) from distant rooftops, using spyglasses to get a better view. Once they've identified the PCs, the half-elves attempt to follow them without being detected. Meerthan has provided them with *potions of invisibility*, but each dose lasts only 10 minutes, so the half-elves use the potions sparingly.

Creatures: Fario Ellegoth and Fellian Shard are relatively young and inexperienced Striders of Fharlanghn. They hope to learn more from Meerthan, as well as gain some prestige within the organization. Despite their friendship, the half-elves' ambitions and competitiveness sometimes get the better of them, and they constantly strive to one-up each other.

Fario is 20 years old with a pale complexion, crisp blue eyes, silky blonde hair pulled back in three braids, and a pinky finger missing from his left hand. Fellian is 19 years old with a tanned complexion, bright green eyes, a small scar across his right eyebrow, curly black hair, and a cackling laugh.

♣ **Fario Ellegoth, Male Half-elf Rog1/Ftr1:** CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (half-elf); HD 1d6+1 plus 1d10+1; hp 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 12, flat-footed 12); BAB +1; Grap +3; Atk +4 melee (1d8+2/19–20, longsword) or +0 melee (1d8+2/19–20, longsword), –1 melee (1d6+2/19–20, short sword) or +3 ranged (1d6+2/×3, mighty composite shortbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ half-elf traits, trapfinding, *Rary's telepathic bond* (with Fellian and Meerthan); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will –1; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +6, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +2, Hide +6, Listen +1, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +6, Search +3, Sense Motive +3, Spot +1, Swim +5, Tumble +6. **Feats:** Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven.

Possessions: Leather armor, longsword, short sword, mighty composite shortbow [+2 Str] with 20 arrows, 2 *potions of invisibility*, gray cloak, spyglass, leather pouch containing 8 gp and 25 sp.

♣ **Fellian Shard, Male Half-elf Rog1/Clr1 (Fharlanghn):** CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (half-elf); HD 1d6+1 plus 1d8+1; hp 12; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; BAB +0; Grap –1; Atk –1 melee (1d8–1/19–20, longsword) or +2 ranged (1d6/×3, shortbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ half-elf traits, trapfinding, *Rary's telepathic bond* (with Fario and Meerthan); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +4, Concentration +2, Diplomacy +2, Disable Device +5, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +4, Forgery +3, Gather Information +4, Heal +4, Hide +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +6,

Search +5, Sense Motive +6, Spot +4, Tumble +6. **Feats:** Lightning Reflexes.

Spells Prepared (3/3; base save DC 12 + spell level): 0—*detect magic*, *light*, *read magic*, *resistance*; 1st—*divine favor*, *entropic shield**, *shield of faith*.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Luck (re-roll 1/day), Travel (freedom of movement for 1 round 1/day).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven.

Possessions: Leather armor, longsword, shortbow with 20 arrows, 2 *potions of invisibility*, 2 scrolls of *cure light wounds*, gray cloak, spyglass, holy symbol of Fharlanghn, leather pouch containing 13 gp and 15 sp.

Tactics: The half-elves stay out of sight as long as possible. Their plan is to follow the PCs wherever they go, hoping to discover a connection between the recent abductions and the Cagewrights. If the PCs actively try to spot pursuers, have them make Spot checks opposed by the half-elves' Hide checks. Apply a –1 penalty to the Spot check for every 10 feet of distance between the spotter and the nearest half-elf pursuer. Apply an additional –2 penalty if it is raining or foggy.

If the PCs attack them with ranged weapons, the half-elves duck into a nearby alley or scamper over a nearby wall. Fellian might cast *entropic shield* on himself, hoping to dodge some missile attacks. If the PCs pursue them relentlessly, Fario and Fellian quaff their *potions of invisibility*.

If the PCs face imminent demise fighting the forces of evil, the half-elves come to their aid. Fario waits until Fellian casts *divine favor* (+1 luck bonus to weapon attack rolls and damage for 1 minute) and *shield of faith* (+2 deflection bonus to AC) on himself, allowing them to enter the fray during the same round. Fario wields two weapons—a longsword and short sword. The two half-elves try to flank their quarry, tumbling to avoid attacks of opportunity and hoping to deal sneak attack damage. After the fight, if he is positively disposed toward the PCs, Fellian might offer to heal them using his *cure* spells or scrolls.

If they are at risk of being captured or killed—either by the PCs or by evil creatures—Fario or Fellian use the *permanent Rary's telepathic bond* to alert Meerthan (as a free action). Meerthan can roll initiative; on his turn, he whisks away the half-elves using his *bracelet of friends*.

Development: Once they are discovered, Fario and Fellian try to avoid a conflict with the PCs. Instead, they offer to accompany the heroes on the remainder of their mission. They say they're good friends with Elethor Ashstaff, a half-elf wizard abducted from his home more than three weeks ago. They feign interest in finding Elethor and mention nothing of Meerthan or the Cagewrights.

The half-elves don't stick around when the adventure is over; they have other tasks to complete on their master's behalf. Fario and Fellian could become mysterious recurring NPCs in the campaign, occasionally partaking in their own adventures and, like the PCs, gaining experience as they go.

If the PCs complete their quest and deal no real harm to either half-elf, Meerthan might employ their expertise in the

future, perhaps even offering them a place among the Striders of Fharlanghn once they've proven their mettle and demonstrated a willingness to fight the Cagewrights and their allies.

CHAPTER TWO: GHELVE'S LOCKS

Armed with St. Cuthbert's riddle and suspicions concerning the local locksmith, the PCs investigate Ghelve's Locks, a modest shop and dwelling on Lava Avenue.

Keygan Ghelve, the locksmith, gave the skulks and dark creepers skeleton keys fitting most of the town's locks. Using these keys, the kidnappers were able to enter their victims' homes without too much fuss. However, Keygan is an unwilling accomplice eager to make amends—if only the evil skulks would release his familiar from captivity.

The PCs' ultimate goal is to find the secret door under the staircase (see area G3). Beyond the secret door lies the abandoned gnome enclave of Jzadirune, the current lair of the skulks and dark creepers. Jzadirune also holds Keygan's captive familiar and the way to the kidnapped townsfolk.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs arrive at Ghelve's Locks:

A small turret dominates the façade of this two-story black stone building. Iron bars are embedded in the thick window frames. Beyond the turret's ground-floor windows, you can see a lovely display of locks, from large to small, simple to complex. To the left of the turret, above a heavy oak door, swings a simple sign that reads GHELVE'S LOCKS.

Ghelve's Locks opens at sunrise and closes at sunset. The shop also closes for an hour around lunchtime, when Keygan runs most of his errands.

Keygan charges fair prices for his locks (see **Chapter 7: Equipment** in the *Player's Handbook* for prices). Although he has plenty of locks in inventory, he can make an average lock in 3 days and a good lock in 5 days; he lacks the skill to make amazingly good locks but has a few for sale. (He occasionally makes trips to the capital city to buy such high-quality merchandise.)

The front door has three good locking mechanisms, each requiring a separate key or Open Locks check (DC 30) to open. The door is unlocked during work hours. If the PCs knock on the door at night when the shop is closed, Keygan goes to the kitchen on the second floor (area G4), opens one of the shuttered windows facing the street, and says, "Shop's closed, friend. Come back after sunrise." If the PCs ask to speak with him about recent events in the city, he replies, "It's late, and I'm not ready to talk business—yours or mine. Come back tomorrow!" Only a compelling argument—and a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 14)—will persuade him to let the PCs inside. If a PC threatens him and fails the Intimidate check, Keygan rushes downstairs to cast *hold portal* on the front door, adding +5 to its break DC.

PCs can force their way inside, but the front door is sturdy and the windows have bars hidden behind locked wooden shutters (Open Lock, DC 30). An iron grill embedded in the chimney mortar keeps Small intruders from crawling down the chimney.

PCs might attempt to sneak inside while Keygan is running errands during lunch hour. Before setting out, the gnome casts an *alarm* spell on the front door (the spell lasts 2 hours). The spell activates whenever someone other than Keygan crosses the door's threshold, and the noise is loud enough to alert Keygan's closest neighbors (who are kind enough to summon the town guard).

❖ **Front Door (strong, iron-bound wood):** 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 30; break DC 25; three good locks (Open Lock, DC 30).

❖ **Interior Door (good wood):** 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; break DC 18; good lock (Open Lock, DC 30).

❖ **Window Shutters (simple wood):** 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; break DC 15; good lock (Open Lock, DC 30).

❖ **Window and Chimney Bars (iron):** 1 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 30; break DC 24.

❖ **Typical Lock:** Hardness 15; hp 30; Open Lock (very simple: DC 20, average: DC 25, good: DC 30).

MEETING KEYGAN (EL 3)

Unless the PCs break into his shop while Keygan's running errands in town, they likely encounter the locksmith here.

Creature: Keygan Ghelve is 110 years old, with salt-and-pepper hair and a neatly trimmed mustache and goatee. His bushy eyebrows, creased face, and graven frown make him look frumpy and dour, but he possesses a sly wit and a disarming manner.

Keygan doesn't like clients looking down on him while they're haggling over price. During business hours, he wears a pair of wood-and-iron stilts that clamp to his calves and wears extra-long pants to hide them. The stilts make him appear nearly 6 feet tall. He is accustomed to walking on the stilts and suffers no penalty to his speed. He does not wear the stilts at night or while running errands, and he leans them in a corner by the stairs when they're not in use.

Although he never lived in Jzadirune, Keygan visited the gnome enclave several times in his youth and spent the rest of his free time learning the locksmith trade and helping his father run Ghelve's Locks. He stopped visiting the enclave when a magic plague called the Vanishing caused many of Jzadirune's denizens to fade into nothingness. His shop hides the only known entrance into Jzadirune, although only a handful of gnomes living in Cauldron know this. After 75 years, Jzadirune had faded from most people's memories.

Somewhat bored with his business, Keygan began studying magic about one year ago. A little over three months ago, a gang of skulks and dark creepers found their way into Jzadirune from below. They followed the staircase up to the locksmith's shop, crept inside, and surprised both Keygan and his rat famil-

iar, Starbrow. Taking the familiar hostage, they blackmailed Keygan into telling them everything he knew about Cauldron. When the skulks learned that the gnome had crafted many of the town's locks, they made him create a single key that could open all of them. Fearing they would kill him and his familiar, Keygan created special "skeleton keys" that would open any of his own locks. He then gave them a meticulous list of everyone in town to whom he'd sold locks in the past ten years.

Keygan is not proud of his complicity, but he will not act against the skulks so long as they're watching him and holding his familiar hostage.

☛ **Keygan Ghelve, Male Gnome Exp3/III1:** CR 3; Small Humanoid (gnome); HD 3d6+3 plus 1d4+1; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11; BAB +2; Grap -3; Atk +2 melee (1d3-1/19-20, dagger) or +4 ranged (1d6/19-20, light crossbow); SA spells; SQ gnome traits; AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Appraise +4, Craft (alchemy) +3, Craft (locksmithing) +10, Diplomacy +3, Disable Device +7, Knowledge (local) +4, Listen +5, Open Lock +10, Profession (locksmith) +6, Search +4, Spot +3. **Feats:** Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Craft [locksmithing]), Skill Focus (Open Lock).

Spells Prepared (4/3; base save DC = 11 + spell level): 0—*detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *open/close*, *mage hand*; 1st—*alarm*, *color spray*, *hold portal*.

Forbidden Schools: Conjuration, Necromancy.

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Gnome.

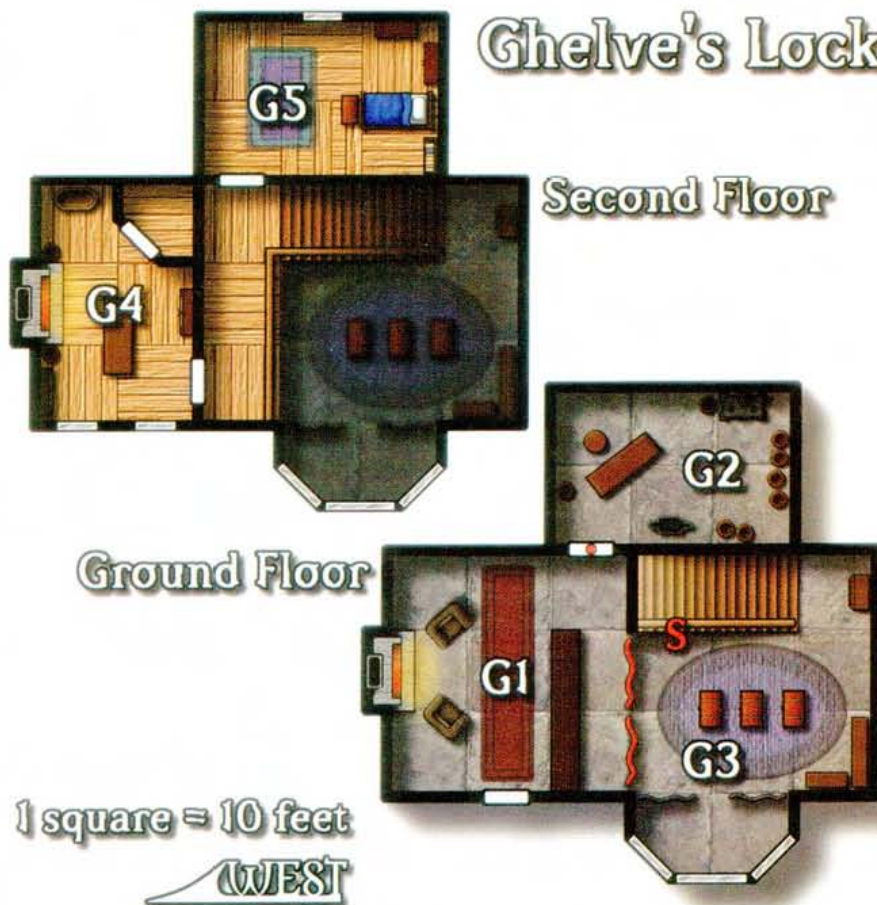
Possessions: Gnome-sized dagger, gnome-sized light crossbow with 10 bolts (stored in area G3), magnifying glass, 3-foot stilts with extra-long pants, vest sewn with pockets holding 12 keys (these open all locked doors, windows, and containers in Ghelve's Locks).

Tactics: If the heroes accuse Keygan of criminal wrongdoing or collusion, he denies their accusations. However, if they try to stir up pity for the kidnap victims, Keygan grows increasingly nervous and belligerent as he struggles to deal with his complicity.

Persuading Keygan to reveal the truth requires good role-playing coupled with a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 14). The PCs can also gain his trust with a *charm person* spell. Even then, the cagey gnome doesn't blurt out the

Ghelve's Locks

Second Floor



truth where one or more skulks might hear him (see area G3). Instead, he tries to warn the heroes that he is not alone, using subtle gestures (arching eyebrows, a nod toward the back of his shop, and so forth) to tip them off. A successful Sense Motive (or Wisdom) check (DC 10) is required to correctly interpret Keygan's strange behavior.

If attacked, Keygan tries to incapacitate as many PCs as possible using his *color spray* spell. If all of the PCs are knocked unconscious by the spell, Keygan binds them with rope found in his workshop. It takes him 2 rounds to fetch the rope and return with it, and 2 rounds to bind a single character. The skulk assigned to watch Keygan (see **Development**, below, and area G3) helps Keygan tie up the characters, then heads down to Jzadirune to fetch reinforcements. PCs can free themselves with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 10 + the binder's Use Rope check result).

If his *color spray* fails horribly, or if he takes 9 or more points of damage, Keygan surrenders and promises to reveal everything he knows (see **Development**, below).

Development: One skulk guards the shop at all times. The skulk hides on the second-floor balcony overlooking area G3, within view of the secret door under the staircase. Hidden from plain sight, the skulk can overhear conversations in the shop and jump on anyone who detects the secret door under the staircase. The skulk does not come to Keygan's rescue if the gnome is attacked in his shop.

If he can be coaxed into helping the PCs find the missing townsfolk, Keygan reveals the following information about Jzadirune and its current denizens:

- His rat familiar is located in a dark place within one mile, and through his empathic link, he can sense both the rat's hunger and fright.

- The kidnappers include two types of creatures: "tall ones" and "short ones." The "tall ones" resemble naked, hairless, genderless humans with blue pupilless eyes and gray skin that changes color, allowing them to blend perfectly with their surroundings. They are usually encountered in pairs or threes and usually leave the shop wearing cloaks. The "short ones" are sinister gnomelike creatures with pallid skin, large noses, and soft black hooves for feet. They wear black cloaks and cowls that help them hide in shadows.

- The kidnappers share a common language that Keygan doesn't recognize (Undercommon).

- If the kidnappers have a leader, Keygan hasn't seen it. The "tall ones" and "short ones" seem to get along just fine without one.

- Keygan gave the kidnappers three different-sized skeleton keys that can open most of the town's locks (any lock with an Open Lock DC of 30 or lower). One of the "tall ones" carries the keys on a silver ring (see area J15).

- The "tall ones" wield rapiers and light crossbows. The "short ones" wield sharp daggers.

- The "tall ones" have imprisoned Keygan's rat familiar, Starbrow, somewhere in Jzadirune.

- Jzadirune was a small enclave inhabited by gnome spellcasters. The enclave was abandoned 75 years ago after a magical plague called the Vanishing swept through it. The disease caused several of Jzadirune's residents to slowly fade away into nothingness. Keygan doesn't know whether the plague still poses a threat.

- Jzadirune's doors are gear-shaped and designed to roll to one side or the other. Many of them bore traps that only the gnomes could safely bypass.

Keygan can provide a worn map of Jzadirune (see area G5), but he will not accompany the PCs into the gnome enclave unless charmed or forced at swordpoint. Although Keygan remembers his father telling him about secret passages in Jzadirune, Keygan doesn't know where any of them are, and they are not shown on his map. Keygan's memory of the various chambers and their contents is sketchy, at best.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award full experience for Keygan if the PCs befriend him or persuade him to make amends. Award half experience for Keygan if the PCs kill him without provocation.

KEY TO GHELVE'S LOCKS (AREAS G1–G5)

The following encounters are keyed to the map of Ghelve's Locks.

G1. STORE FRONT

This store front smells of wood and pipe smoke. Two padded chairs flank a hearth containing a small yet lively fire. The fireplace's carved mantle bears a tinderbox, a small vase of dried smoking leaves, and a finely wrought collection of pipes.

A burgundy strip of carpet leads from the entrance to the wall across from it, where you can see dozens—perhaps hundreds—of keys hanging from tiny hooks. The keys come in all shapes and sizes.

A handsomely engraved mahogany counter stretches along one wall. Behind it hangs a red curtain that neatly hides the rest of the store.

Keygan likes his customers to feel comfortable. The padded chairs, hearth, smoking pipes, and other accoutrements are intended to put visitors at ease.

The keys hanging on the wall open various locks. When Keygan sells a lock, he points to the key that opens it and allows the customer to remove it from the wall—a bit of ceremony goes a long way.

Treasure: PCs searching the counter find a book containing a complete list of sales made in the past several years and a locked iron strongbox (Open Lock, DC 30). The strongbox holds three removable shelves; the top shelf holds 233 cp, the middle shelf holds 150 sp, and the bottom shelf holds 126 gp and 4 pp.

G2. WORKROOM

The door to this room is locked with a good quality lock (Open Lock, DC 30).

Unlike the front of the store, the contents of this room are not neatly arranged. A stout-legged wooden table and matching stool stand at odd angles in the room, and tiny mechanisms and tools litter the tabletop. The floor is cluttered with upright kegs holding tiny gears, screws, metal lock casings, tumblers, springs, and keys. A bucket of coal, a short-handled spade, and a small iron oven equipped with a miniature bellows occupy the far corner of the work room. A lantern rests on another stool near the door.

Keygan stores the raw materials for his locks and where he works his craft in this room. It takes him several nights of tireless work to finish a single lock, and he can make locks of varying quality and complexity.

The tools and lock components found here aren't valuable, except to a skilled locksmith.

G3. LOCK DISPLAY AND STORAGE (EL 2)

A red curtain separates this area from the front of the store. If the characters part the red curtain or peer through the store's display windows, read or paraphrase the following:

Black curtains partially obscure a window niche that faces the street. Ornate locks and complex locking mechanisms are neatly displayed in the niche.

The room itself looks tidy, but lived in. Carpets cover the stone floor, and a broom leans against the railing of a wooden staircase leading up to a second floor balcony. Three wooden chests rest in the middle of the floor, their lids bound shut with sturdy iron padlocks. Small tables, shelves, and benches hold various knick-knacks, and a framed portrait of a silver-haired gnome hangs next to a tall wooden box at the base of the stairs. The wooden box contains an intricate array of ticking gears, counterweights, and cylindrical chimes, surmounted by a circular face that bears the numerals 1 through 12 on its circumference.

The construct at the base of the stairs is a grandfather clock built by Keygan's father, who is expertly depicted in the framed portrait. The clock weighs 300 pounds.

A secret door is hidden in the wall of the staircase, right next to the red curtain. The secret door is well hidden and locked. With a loud squeal, it pushes open to reveal a 10-foot-square landing at the top of a stone staircase that descends into darkness.

❖ **Secret Door (wood):** 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 15; Search (DC 20); Open Lock (DC 20).

Creature: A skulk hides on the balcony overlooking this room. It sheds its dark cloak when it detects intruders, improving its chance to hide.

➤ **Skulk:** CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (skulk); HD 2d8; hp 12; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; BAB +1; Grap +1; Atk +3 melee (1d6/18–20, rapier) or +3 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SQ innate nondetection, peerless camouflage, trackless path; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will –1; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +22 (+7 when clothed), Move Silently +12 (+4 when clothed). **Feats:** Weapon Finesse (rapier).

Innate Nondetection (Su): Skulks are difficult to detect using Divination spells such as *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*, *locate creature*, detection spells, and items such as *crystal balls*. If a Divination is attempted upon a skulk, the caster of the Divination must succeed at a caster level check (1d20 + caster level) against DC 20.

Peerless Camouflage (Ex): Skulks can move at full speed (and can even run) while hiding, suffering no penalties on Hide checks due to movement.

Trackless Path (Ex): The DCs of all Wilderness Lore checks to follow the trail of a skulk are increased by 10.

Languages: Undercommon.

Possessions: Rapier, light crossbow with 20 bolts, dark cloak.

Tactics: The skulk leaps down when PCs find the secret door or motion toward the staircase, landing on its feet in a square adjacent to its intended target. The skulk must succeed at a Tumble check (DC 15) to avoid taking 1d6 points of damage from the 10-foot drop. The skulk loses the advantage of higher ground but gets a free attack during the surprise round if the PCs fail a Listen check and Spot check (opposed by the skulk's

Move Silently and Hide checks, respectively).

The skulk fights until captured or slain.

Treasure: The locks and mechanisms in the windows are nonfunctional display models and worth only a few copper pieces each. Keygan's valuable merchandise is kept in the three locked chests (Open Lock, DC 30). The first chest holds Keygan's light crossbow and 10 crossbow bolts (all sized for a Small character). The second chest twenty-five very simple locks (20 gp each) and sixteen average locks (40 gp each). The third chest holds eight good locks (80 gp each) and three amazing locks (150 gp each). The total value of the locks is 2,230 gp.

The grandfather clock, as an heirloom and oddity, might be worth as much as 2,500 gp to an interested buyer. The portrait of Keygan's father (illustrated by an unknown artist) is worth 5 gp.

Development: PCs who step through the secret door find themselves on a dark landing. A stone staircase (see area J1) descends into Jzadirune and the next chapter of the adventure.

G4. KITCHEN AND PANTRY

This kitchen contains all the basic amenities, including a table with an hourglass resting atop it. A fireplace dominates one wall, with pots hanging from hooks on either side. Two cabinets with frosted-glass doors hold dishware and utensils. A half-barrel washbasin stands in the far corner next to a locked pantry.

All of the furniture seems sized perfectly for a gnome or halfling.

Nothing in kitchen appears out of place. The lock on the pantry is very simple (Open Lock, DC 20). Apart from the expected supply of preserved foodstuffs, spices, and soap, the pantry contains little of interest.

Treasure: The hourglass is worth 25 gp intact.

G5. KEYGAN'S BEDROOM (EL 1)

Keygan locks the door to this room at night before he goes to sleep. The door comes with a good lock (Open Lock, DC 30).

This richly appointed bedroom holds furniture sized for a person of small stature. You spot a coat rack by the door, a cozy bed with a hand-sewn comforter, a clean bedpan, a chest of drawers at the foot of the bed, a wooden screen with birds painted on its panels, a wardrobe, and a small bookcase with some books and trinkets on it. A lantern sits atop a small end table by the bed.

The wardrobe holds Keygan's clothes, including several small vests and three pairs of boots.

The chest at the foot of the bed holds three drawers, all held shut by a single good lock (Open Lock, DC 30). The drawers hold the following:

Top Drawer: This drawer holds a varnished wooden comb, a sewing needle and spools of thread, blank pieces of parchment, a jar of sepia ink, and some quills.

Several gnomes succumbed to the Vanishing, fading away into nothingness. Unable to eradicate the disease, the gnomes destroyed nearly all the contaminated magic items and abandoned Jzadirune. Many continued plying their trade on the surface, without further misfortune.

Although Jzadirune remained mostly abandoned in the intervening years, a few monsters have managed to find their way into the enclave from the Underdark. A gang of dark creepers moved into the complex over a year ago and found many of its doors protected by magical traps. To circumvent the traps, the dark creepers used a pair of pulverizer automatons to drill narrow passages between various rooms, allowing them to navigate the complex without needing to open trapped doors. A few months after the dark creepers settled in, a coterie of skulks arrived. The skulks were spies for the half-troll slaver Kazmojen, sent to find a way to the surface. After a few fatal skirmishes with the dark creepers, the skulks negotiated a peace, helped the dark creepers kill a few other monsters that had claimed parts of the enclave, and found a route to the surface.

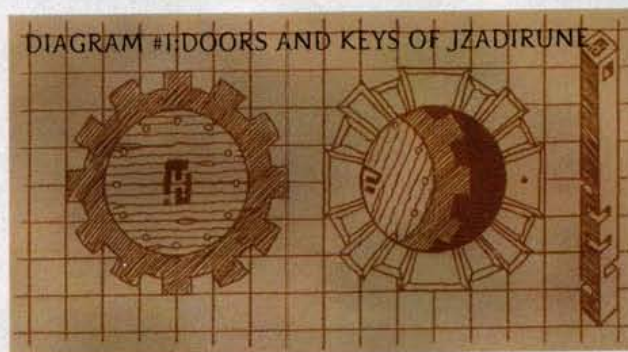
Jzadirune remains home to the skulks, the dark creepers (and their dark stalker leader), and an assortment of other nasty critters. The enclave also plays host to several lingering magical effects, left in play by the previous gnome tenants.

GEAR DOORS (EL 1 PER DOOR)

Most of the doors in Jzadirune are gear-shaped. Each door is designed to roll into a nearby wall cavity when properly opened. The 4-foot-diameter door is carved from 6-inch-thick wood and encircled with a ring of molded iron teeth. The entire door is encased within a double-frame of beveled stone.

Burned into the center of each door is a glyph representing one of nine letters (in the Gnome language): J, Z, A, D, I, R, U, N, and E. The various glyphs are depicted in **Player Handout #3: Jzadirune Glyphs**. PCs who speak Gnome recognize the glyphs instantly. A successful Decipher Script check (DC 15) also reveals what each symbol means, as does a *comprehend languages* spell.

The gear doors are normally locked. Opening or closing a gear door requires a slim, rectangular, rod-shaped key to open. The key fits neatly into a tiny, diamond-shaped slot carved into the doorframe, and each key bears a tiny symbol at one end. For the key to work, the symbol on the key must match the glyph on the door. See **Diagram #1: Gear Door and Key** for a diagram showing a "J" door and matching "J" key. If the wrong key is placed in



a door, nothing happens. Inserting the proper key causes a locked door to open or causes an open door to roll shut and lock.

A *knock* spell successfully opens a locked door. However, opening a gear door without the proper key activates a trap.

❖ **Gear Door (strong, iron-bound wood):** 4 in. thick, 4 ft. diameter; Hardness 5; hp 60; break DC 26; good lock (Open Lock, DC 30).

Trap: Most of the gear doors in Jzadirune are trapped. The nature of the trap depends on the glyph inscribed on the door, as shown below. The trap continues to function until the door is opened or destroyed.

Any of the following traps can be *dispelled* by casting a successful *dispel magic* (DC 22). The nature of the trap depends on the glyph inscribed on the door; see **Player Handout #3: Jzadirune Glyphs** for illustrations of the nine different glyphs.

"J" Door: A door inscribed with the "J" glyph releases clouds of corrosive gas when improperly opened. The gas fills a 10-foot-by-10-foot-by-10-foot volume on each side of the portal. Anyone standing in range is engulfed and takes 2d6 points of damage; a successful Reflex save (DC 12) halves the damage.

⚡ **Corrosive Gas Trap:** CR 1; 2d6 points of damage; Reflex save (DC 12) for half; Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 20); automatic reset.

"Z" Door: A door inscribed with the "Z" glyph has no real trap, but a *Leomund's trap* spell makes one think that opening the door improperly will trigger a deadly magic effect. Any attempt to disarm the trap fails, and nothing happens when the trap is "sprung."

"A" Door: A fan of magical flames, similar to a *burning hands* spell, fills the two 5-foot-squares directly in front of the door when it is opened improperly. Anyone standing in the area is engulfed, taking 3d4 points of fire damage; a successful Reflex save (DC 12) halves the damage.

PLAYERS' HANDOUT #3: JZADIRUNE GLYPHS

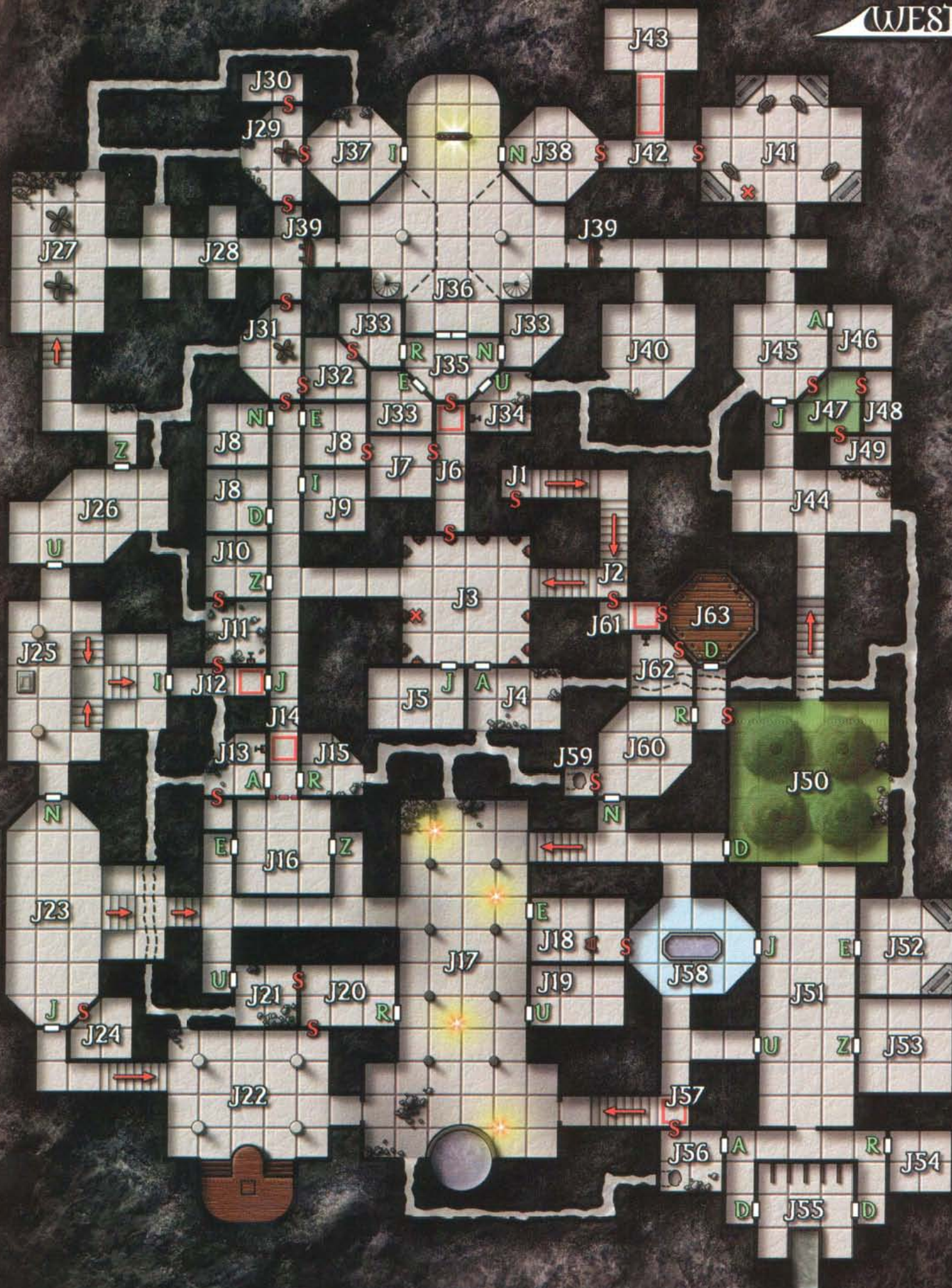


Jzadirune

1 square = 10 feet

Arrows = down

WEST



↗ **Burning Hands Trap:** CR 1; 3d4 points of fire damage; Reflex save (DC 12) for half; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 19); automatic reset.

"D" Door: Crackling electricity fills the open doorway. The first creature that passes through the doorway takes 1d8+5 points of electricity damage. The electricity field dissipates after dealing damage.

↗ **Shocking Grasp Trap:** CR 1; 1d8+5 points of electricity damage each; no save allowed; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 19); automatic reset.

"I" Door: Six rays of frost spring from the doorway when it is opened improperly, striking random targets within 10 feet. Each ray deals 1d3 points of cold damage with a successful hit.

↗ **Rays of Frost Trap:** CR 1; 6 rays; +5 ranged touch (1d3 points of cold damage); no save allowed; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 18); no reset.

"R" Door: Opening this door improperly instantly summons 1d3 fiendish dire rats. The summoned creatures attack any non-gnome they encounter, disappearing after 5 rounds or when "slain."

↗ **Summon Monster I Trap:** CR 1; see below for summoned monster statistics; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 19); automatic reset.

➤ **Fiendish Dire Rats (1d3):** CR 1/3; Small magical beast; HD 1d8+1; hp 5 each; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 11; BAB +0; Grap -4; Atk +4 melee (1d4, bite); SA disease; SQ darkvision 60 ft., cold and fire resistance 5, scent, SR 2; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills: Climb +14, Hide +11, Move Silently +6, Swim +11.
Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite).

"U" Door: Improperly opening this door triggers an alarm spell. Anyone within 60 feet of the door can hear the ringing alarm clearly. Reduce this distance by 10 feet for each interposing closed door and by 20 feet for each substantial intervening wall. In quiet conditions, the alarm can be heard faintly up to 180 feet away. The ringing lasts for 1 round.

In addition, two spectral sickles appear in the air and swing at the nearest non-gnome creature, after which they disappear. The sickles pass right through armor as though they were ghost touch weapons, dealing 1d6 points of damage with each successful hit.

The alarm and spectral sickles are considered one trap for searching, disarming, and dispelling purposes.

↗ **Alarm and Spectral Sickles Trap:** CR 1; audible alarm plus +4 melee touch (1d6 points of slashing damage, 2 sickles); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 19); automatic reset.

"N" Door: A door inscribed with the "N" glyph releases clouds of twilight mist when improperly opened. The mist fills a 10-foot-by-10-foot-by-10-foot volume on each side of the portal. Anyone standing in range is engulfed and must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 13) or take 1d6 points of temporary Dexterity damage. One minute later, a second save must be made to avoid taking another 1d6 points of temporary Dexterity damage.

↗ **Twilight Mist Trap:** CR 1; initial 1d6 Dex, secondary 1d6 Dex; Fortitude save (DC 13) negates; Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 20); automatic reset.

"E" Door: Three jets of flame fill the doorway whenever a non-gnome passes through the portal, dealing 3d4 points of fire damage. A successful Reflex save (DC 15) halves the damage. This trap activates each time a creature other than a gnome crosses the portal.

↗ **Flame Jet Trap:** CR 1; 3d4 points of damage; Reflex save (DC 15) halves damage; Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 19); automatic reset.

Ad-hoc XP Award: The PCs should not receive experience points for every door trap in Jzadirune, since they can navigate the dungeon without disturbing many of the gear doors. Feel free to award XP the first time the PCs disable or survive a particular door trap; if they encounter the same trap again, they should gain no XP for surviving or "defeating" it.

SECRET DOORS

The secret doors in Jzadirune blend perfectly with the surrounding stonework. Except where noted otherwise, any secret door in Jzadirune can be found with a successful Search check (DC 20).

Secret doors resemble 4-foot-square sections of stone that pivot on a central vertical axis. A cleverly hidden knob, panel, or pedal opens the door when depressed.

THE VANISHING (EL 2)

The Vanishing exists because of a botched magical experiment that happened 75 years ago in Jzadirune. The exact conditions of the experiment are forgotten, and the disease spread quickly throughout the enclave before its origin could be ascertained.

The Vanishing clings to Jzadirune's magic items, infecting creatures that use their power. Although the gnomes tried to destroy all items infected with the contagion, they were not entirely successful. A few contaminated items still linger in forgotten corners of the enclave, waiting to be found.

A living creature that uses a contaminated magic item isn't immediately aware of the danger. One of the disease's most insidious qualities is that it uses the item's magic aura to mask its own faint Transmutation aura. Thus, a *detect magic* spell does not reveal the disease's presence (although a *true seeing* spell reveals a faint Transmutation aura in addition to the item's own aura).

A creature infected with the Vanishing must succeed at an immediate Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer 1d6 points of Charisma damage after a 1-day incubation period. Once a creature takes Charisma damage, it turns translucent, becoming increasingly transparent (and taking damage) with each passing day. Although the disease presents the illusion that the victim is fading away, the creature remains solid and does not actually turn incorporeal. Equipment is not rendered transparent by the disease.

The transparency affords one advantage: Any creature reduced to half its Charisma or less by the disease is so trans-

parent that it gains a +4 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Successful saves do not allow an afflicted creature to recover. Only magical treatment can save a victim of the Vanishing. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 21), *remove disease*, or *remove curse* spell cast upon the afflicted creature cures the malady. Unlike normal diseases, the Vanishing cannot be treated using the Heal skill.

A creature reduced to 0 Charisma by the Vanishing fades away, leaving behind any items worn or held. The creature is slain, its body is lost, and it cannot be restored to life using a *raise dead* spell (although *reincarnate*, *resurrection*, and *true resurrection* work).

The effects of handling multiple infected items are not cumulative. The Vanishing cannot be passed from one creature to another by touch. Paladins are immune to the Vanishing.

➤ **The Vanishing:** CR 2; Contact; incubation 1 day; 1d6 Cha (temporary damage); Fortitude save (DC 17) negates damage.

OTHER DUNGEON FEATURES

Unless stated otherwise, all rooms and corridors in Jzadirune are unlit. Most corridors have empty sconces along the walls (for torches), while most rooms have small hooks dangling from ceiling chains (for hanging lanterns).

All 10-foot-wide corridors have flat, 10-foot-high ceilings. The dark creepers' roughly hewn tunnels are tubular and 5 feet in diameter.

Ceiling heights in rooms vary widely. Assume a room has a 10-foot-high ceiling unless stated otherwise.

KEY TO JZADIRUNE (AREAS J1–J63)

The following encounters are keyed to the map of Jzadirune—the gnome enclave.

J1. DESCENDING STAIRS

A stone staircase, its steps shrouded with cobwebs and dust, descends twenty feet to a 10-foot-square landing, then bends to the right and plunges into darkness.

Characters with the Track feat can make a Search check (DC 12) to notice small hoof prints (left by the dark creepers) in the dust. On a roll of 22 or higher, they also notice human-sized bare footprints (left by the skulks, who are more difficult to track). The tracks suggest the ascent and descent of multiple creatures, perhaps as many as a half dozen.

The staircase is unlit, although an iron torch sconce is mounted to one wall on each landing.

J2. WELL-HIDDEN SECRET DOOR (EL 1)

When the characters reach this landing, read or paraphrase the following text:

The staircase descends another 20 feet before opening into a room. From this landing, you can hear strange sounds emanating from the chamber below, specifically chirping

birds, rustling leaves, and cheery giggles. The landing itself is bare save for an empty iron torch sconce mounted on the south wall.

The strange noises emanate from area J3. A secret door in the south wall is expertly hidden and requires a successful Search check (DC 25) to locate. Turning the nearby torch sconce a quarter-turn clockwise opens the secret door; otherwise, the door can be opened with a successful Open Lock check (DC 20) or *knock* spell. Turning the sconce counter-clockwise triggers a **Trap**.

Characters with the Track feat can make a Search check (DC 12) to notice small hoof prints (left by the dark creepers) on the dusty steps. On a roll of 22 or higher, they also notice human-sized bare footprints (left by the skulks, who are more difficult to track). The tracks lead both upstairs and downstairs.

Trap: Turning the torch sconce counterclockwise causes the eastern end of the 10-foot landing to tilt upward. Anyone on the landing tumbles down the 20-foot staircase to the west, taking damage and landing prone in area J3. A successful Reflex save halves the damage. The trap and sconce reset after the trap has been triggered.

➤ **Tilting Floor:** CR 1; 2d6 points of damage; Reflex save (DC 12) for half damage; Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 20); automatic reset.

J3. GIGGLING MASKS

The staircase ends at a 40-foot-square room with a 10-foot-high ceiling. A slight draft blows into the room from a 10-foot-wide open passage in the far wall, directly across from the stairs.

Two 4-foot-diameter circular doors are set into the middle of the south wall. Each door is made of wood and framed with a ring of mortared stones. The westernmost door is closed and inscribed with a strange glyph. The easternmost door bears a different glyph but rests half-open. The half-open door reveals an iron rim of gearlike teeth, and dim light spills from the chamber beyond.

Mounted to the walls of the room are twelve tarnished copper masks. The masks are 2 feet tall and cling 4 feet above the floor. Each one depicts a smiling gnome's visage. The soft giggling, chirping, and rustling noises seem to pour from the very walls.

The sounds of giggling gnomes, rustling leaves, and chirping birds are the result of *permanent ghost sound* spells cast within the chamber. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 23) cast on the room removes the effect.

The twelve copper masks are held to the walls with *sovereign glue*; attempting to pry off a mask without the aid of *universal solvent* requires a Strength check (DC 24) and results in the mask's destruction.

The mask located to the left of the west tunnel (marked with an X) has a *permanent magic mouth* spell cast on it. When a living creature enters the 10-foot-square directly in front of the mask, its mouth moves and says the following in Common:

Welcome to Jzadirune—behold the wonder!
But beware, ye who seek to plunder.
Traps abound and guardians peer
Beyond every portal, behind every gear.

Treasure: Intact or melted down, the tarnished copper masks are worth 1,000 cp (10 gp) each.

Development: If the characters make any noise or bring a light into the room, the skulks in area J4 detect them and cannot be surprised.

J4. LURKING IN SHADOWS (EL 4)

The gear door to this room is partially open, creating a roughly crescent-shaped gap just wide enough for a Medium-size character to squeeze through. The door has been wedged open with a chunk of stone; removing the stone causes the door to close and lock, as well as reactivates the door's trap (see Gear Doors for details). The room beyond is unlit.

A dozen small cots and chests line the walls of this 10-foot-high dusty room. Cobwebs blanket many of the cots and chests, and tiny spiders scurry about. Two rough-hewn tunnels, each 5 feet in diameter and tubular, breach the eastern and southern walls. Stony rubble covers the floor near each tunnel.

A 1-foot-long iron rod lies in the middle of the floor, its golden tip shedding enough light to cast lurid shadows on the walls.

The skulks and dark creepers usually meet here before embarking on a surface raid. The skulks also rest here from time to time. The glowing rod lying on the floor is a sunrod with 1 hour of light remaining.

The twelve chests strewn about the room have been picked clean by the skulks, and any valuables were taken to area J56.

Creatures: Two naked skulks feast on the spiders in this room. When they detect intruders, the skulks flank the northern doorway and attempt to hide.

➔ **Skulks (2):** hp 9, 8; see area G3 for complete statistics and possessions.

Tactics: When an intruder enters the room, each skulk attempts a surprise attack (gaining a +2 bonus on its attack roll for flanking). On the following round, one skulk flees through the southern tunnel and heads to area J15 to alert the skulk there. The second skulk flees down the eastern tunnel and heads to area J44 to alert the dark creepers. The skulks use their peerless camouflage ability to remain hidden while fleeing.

The skulks are cowardly and do not engage multiple foes for more than a single round before fleeing.

Development: If one or both skulks escape, all other skulks and all dark creepers within Jzadirune are alerted to the PCs' presence. Sounds of battle here have a 50% chance of alerting the skulks in area J15 and J59, neither of whom come to their comrades' aid.

J5. DUSTY BARRACKS

The room holds fifteen cots and fifteen small chests, covered in cobwebs and dust. None of the chests is locked.

Each chest contains a dusty wool blanket, some worthless personal effects, and an off-white tabard emblazoned with the symbol of Jzadirune—an insignia depicting a wooden gear with a yellow, eight-pointed star in its hollow center.

J6. SECRET HALL WITH SPIKED PIT (EL 2)

This dusty, cobweb-filled hall has a 10-foot-high ceiling and walls carved with frescoes depicting dour gnomes clad in chain shirts and helms, and brandishing hooked hammers. There are no obvious doors leading from this hall.

Three secret doors open into this hall: one at the south end of the hall (leading to area J3), one along the west wall (leading to area J7), and one at the north end (leading to area J35). The western secret door is concealed behind a gnome fresco and is especially difficult to detect (Search, DC 22).

Trap: The northernmost 10-foot-square section of floor conceals a 20-foot-deep pit (Search check, DC 17, to detect). The pit's hinged lid opens when at least 150 pounds of weight is applied, although a successful Disable Device check (DC 17) jams the lid shut. Pulling down the lever in area J34 locks the lid and deactivates the trap.

Anyone standing on the lid when it opens must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 15) or fall into the pit, taking 2d6 points of damage from the fall, damage from the spikes lining the pit, and landing prone.

For a far more inventive and deadly version of this trap, see the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement. The tilt-a-pit trap found there can be substituted for this trap, as well as the pit traps in areas J12 and J14.

➔ **Spiked Pit Trap (20 feet deep):** CR 2; 2d6 points of damage (fall) plus +3 melee (1d4 points of piercing damage, 1d4 spikes); Reflex save (DC 15) prevents fall; Search (DC 17); Disable Device (DC 17).

J7. SECRET ARMORY

Bare, dusty shelves line the north wall of this 20-foot-square room. Freestanding weapon racks fill the southern half of the room, but most of the weapons have been removed. Three small steel shields and a suit of cobweb-choked half-plate armor hang from hooks along the south wall. Several more hooks remain bare. Below them rests a large wooden chest secured with a dusty padlock.

The gnomes took most of the weapons and armor when they abandoned Jzadirune. However, a few items were left behind in their haste to vacate the complex.

Treasure: The chest is bound with an average padlock (Open Locks, DC 25). It contains the following items:

- 16 crossbow bolts
- 2 smokesticks

- A thunderstone
- A tanglefoot bag.

A hidden compartment in the lid of the chest can be found with a successful Search check (DC 22); tucked inside this compartment is a *wand of burning hands* (25 charges; command word "Sizzle") infected with the Vanishing (see The Vanishing for details).

A thorough search of the room also reveals the following weapons and armor:

- 3 gnome hooked hammers
- 2 light picks
- 1 heavy pick
- 1 Small suit of half-plate armor
- 3 small steel shields emblazoned with the symbol of Jzadirune (see area J5).

J8. SLEEPING QUARTERS

Nothing remains in this room except four decrepit cots, four small wooden chests, and a wooden dresser with four drawers. Everything is draped in cobwebs.

The gnomes removed all items of value from this room before abandoning Jzadirune 75 years ago.

J9. NURSERY

Eight small cradles line the outer walls of this dark, 10-foot-high room. A wooden playpen, a rocking unicorn, and a lovingly crafted wooden toybox rest in the middle of the room. Everything is shrouded with dust and cobwebs.

The outside of the toybox has frescoes of dancing gnomes and small, burrowing animals; a few toys and painted letter blocks can be found within. Nothing of value remains in this abandoned nursery.

J10. WRECKED QUARTERS

This chamber's furnishings—three small cots, a small table, and a dresser—have been smashed to flinders, the wreckage strewn across the floor. A lonely chain hangs from the center of the 10-foot-high ceiling, and a lantern lies smashed in one corner.

The skulks entered this room through a secret door in the south wall (leading to area J11) and thoroughly searched it for treasure. A brief skirmish erupted when one of the skulks found a potion tucked in the dresser; after quaffing the potion, the skulk succumbed to the Vanishing and now lurks in area J21.

Characters who explore the room and succeed at a Search check (DC 15) find the jagged shards of a shattered potion bottle on the floor.

J11. SECRET TREASURY AND PIT LEVER

Small mounds of rubble fill this 10-foot-high, 20-foot-square chamber. Most of the detritus is piled near a roughly hewn, 5-foot-diameter tunnel bored into the west wall. Three wooden

chests sit in the middle of the floor. The chests' lids are carved and painted with anthropomorphic figures resembling a badger, a fox, and a rabbit respectively. The smashed remains of three padlocks lie strewn around the chests.

A wooden lever juts from an iron plate set into the south wall. The lever looks like it can slide up or down, and is currently in the "down" position.

The wooden lever controls the pit trap in area J12 (or a tilt-a-pit trap if you're using the Web enhancement). Pulling the lever up locks the pit's lid and deactivates the trap, allowing creatures to cross the pit safely.

The three chests were once locked and trapped with *summon monster I* spells, but the skulks smashed the locks, triggered the traps, and defeated the summoned monsters. They also removed most of the valuable items from the chests; however, a few items escaped their notice (see **Treasure**, below).

Treasure: The badger chest is completely empty. The fox chest appears empty as well but contains a false bottom that can be found with a successful Search check (DC 24). Inside the secret cavity is a finely wrought silver bracelet (worth 25 gp), small pouch containing three citrines (worth 50 gp each), and a tiny glass vial containing *dust of illusion*.

The rabbit chest contains an unremarkable-looking gray bag with a *Nystul's undeetectable aura* spell cast on it. A *detect magic* spell reveals the bag's magical nature but masks its aura. The bag is actually a *gray bag of tricks*.

The *dust of illusion* and the *bag of tricks* are infected with the Vanishing (see The Vanishing for details).

J12. SPIKED PIT (EL 2)

A featureless, 30-foot-long hall connects two round doors. A narrow, 5-foot-diameter tunnel breaches the middle of the south wall and heads off into darkness. Stone debris litters the floor near the tunnel's mouth.

A secret door in the north wall leads to area J11. Directly across from the secret door, a rough-hewn tunnel leads to area J13.

Trap: The easternmost 10-foot section of floor is a pit trap. The trap is identical to the one in area J6.

↗ **Spiked Pit Trap (20 feet deep):** See area J6.

J13. CAPTAIN'S ROOM AND PIT LEVER

Rubble and splintered furniture fills this dark, 10-foot-high room. Most of the detritus lies heaped between a pair of 5-foot-diameter tunnels crudely carved into the west and northwest walls.

A wooden lever juts from an iron plate set into the east wall, near the door. The lever looks like it can slide up or down; it is currently in the "down" position.

This room formerly belonged to Jzadirune's captain of the guard. A secret door in the south wall opens to reveal a dust-choked, 10-foot-square room. Hooks and shelves on the walls

suggest that the chamber once served as a secret closet, but the last captain of the guard emptied it of valuables before leaving Jzadirune forever. The secret room no longer contains anything of value.

The wooden lever in the east wall controls the pit trap in area J14. Pulling the lever up locks the pit's lid and deactivates the trap, allowing creatures to cross the pit safely.

J14. SPIKED PIT (EL 2)

The corridor ends with a pair of circular doors in the west and east walls. Dust and debris covers the floor.

Trap: A pit trap (or a tilt-a-pit, if you're using the Web enhancement) lies in wait 10 feet from the south end of the hall. The trap is identical to the one in area J6. A dead, naked skulk hangs impaled on four of the pit's wooden spikes. A rapier, a light crossbow, and six crossbow bolts lie scattered on the pit's floor.

Pulling down the lever in area J13 locks the pit's lid and deactivates the trap.

↗ **Spiked Pit Trap (20 feet deep):** See area J6.

J15. SKULK DEN (EL 2)

Dead rats, burnt tindertwigs, and bits of broken stone litter the floor of this room whose only furnishings include a cot against the northeast wall and a wooden chest bearing a dented lantern. The lantern is lit, but barely enough light escaped through its shutters to illuminate the room. Across from the round door in the west wall, a 5-foot-diameter tunnel carves its way east into darkness.

A cloaked skulk sleeps in the cot (see **Creature** below). The wooden chest is unlocked and contains the **Treasure**.

Creature: The sleeping skulk gets a Listen check to detect intruders; if its check is equal to or greater than its opponents' worst Move Silently check, it awakens and reaches for its gear (which is stowed under the cot). If awakened by sounds of combat in area J4, the sleeping skulk casts off its cloak, grabs its equipment, and attempts to hide near the eastern tunnel. If one of the skulks from area J4 flees here, it also tries to hide after waking its sleeping companion.

↗ **Skulk:** hp 6; see area G3 for complete statistics.

Possessions: Rapier, light crossbow with 20 bolts, dark cloak, thunderstone, three skeleton keys on a silver ring (the keys open any town lock with an Open Lock DC of 30 or lower).

Tactics: If it hides successfully, the skulk waits until all of its enemies enter the room before attacking the rearmost foe with its rapier. After the surprise round, it hurls a thunderstone into the back room as it flees to area J17. The exploding thunderstone alerts the skulks in areas J4, J17, J58, and J59.

Treasure: The chest contains several items the skulks have found in the complex:

- 2 dark robes (bundled and tattered)
- 3 sunrods

- 2 flasks of oil
- 2 tindertwigs
- 1 thunderstone
- Ceramic stage mask portraying the sad visage of an anguished gnome with rabbit ears (worth 5 gp)
- Silver ring shaped like a serpent with tiny azurite gems for eyes (worth 25 gp)
- A silver ewer adorned with dancing dryads and set with moss agates (worth 75 gp).

J16. MAP ROOM

An *illusory wall* conceals the north entrance of this room. Although it looks like an unremarkable stone wall when viewed, physical objects and creatures can pass through it without difficulty. Touch or probing searches reveal the true nature of the surface, but do not cause the illusion to disappear.

Carved into the south wall is a large map showing various interconnected rooms and corridors. The lines of the map glow faintly but do not shed enough light to illuminate the chamber.

The map on the south wall shows Jzadirune's rooms and corridors, but none of its secret chambers or hidden hallways. Show the players **Player Handout #2: Players' Map of Jzadirune** at this time, and allow them to view it only as long as their characters remain in the room.

J17. HALL OF DANCING LIGHTS (EL 4)

Flickering light spills from this great hall, and PCs who succeed at a Listen check (DC 10) also hear the sound of trickling water from within.

Eight black marble pillars support the 30-foot-high ceiling of this majestic hall. The pillars are carved to resemble gnome artisans and warriors standing on each other's shoulders, bracing the vaulted roof with their collective strength. The walls are adorned with faded murals depicting gnomes in reverie—playing pipes, dancing, performing acrobatic stunts, drinking wine, and so forth.

The 40-foot-wide hall widens to 60 feet at the south end, where you see a large circular pool enclosed by a semicircular, 1-foot-high veined marble wall. Carved into the wall above the pool is a gnome visage with water spilling from its wide grin.

Four bright lights illuminate the hall from end to end, corner to corner. They flicker and dance like torchlight and drift aimlessly about the hall, changing altitude and direction on a whim.

Two piles of rubble, one in the northwest corner and another in the southwest corner, add elements of imperfection to this grand hall.

Jzadirune has many lingering magical effects, one of which is the *permanent dancing lights* spell cast in this hall. The lights

create many shifting shadows, allowing the skulks in this hall to hide (see **Creatures**, below). A successful *dispel magic* (DC 23) cast on the *dancing lights* dismisses them.

The 20-foot-diameter pool provided most of Jzadirune's fresh water supply. *Purification* spells rid the water of contaminants; although the spells are long gone, the water remains drinkable. The gnomes used to cast coins into the pool for good luck; the dark creepers swept up the tarnished coins shortly after they arrived.

The dark creepers created the two piles of rubble digging the 5-foot-diameter passages that lead to areas J4, J15, J56, and J59. The skulks have hidden some **Treasure** in the southernmost pile of rubble.

Creatures: Two naked skulks lurk behind the southern pillars. They attack anyone who dares to explore the south end of the hall.

➤ **Skulks** (2): hp 10, 9; see area G3 for complete statistics. *Possessions:* Rapier, light crossbow with 20 bolts, thunderstone.

Tactics: If possible, the skulks try to flank a single opponent and attack with their rapiers. They hurl their thunderstones at enemy spellcasters who remain out of melee range and gain one-half cover (+4 bonus to AC, +2 bonus on Reflex saves) when firing their crossbows from behind the pillars. The skulks flee through the south tunnel if either takes 5 or more points of damage. They hole up in area J56.

Treasure: Characters searching through the southern pile of rubble can make a Search check (DC 20). A successful check unearths a small, engraved wooden box adorned with prancing sylvan creatures and set with shards of lapis lazuli. Inside, the box is filled with gears and other mechanical components. A tiny silver crank also rests inside the box. When the crank is inserted into a hole in the front of the box and turned, the interior mechanisms produce soft, cheery music. The music box is worth 200 gp intact.

Development: Loud noises in this hall will alert the creatures in areas J4, J15, J21, J58, and J59.

J18. STORAGE

This 20-foot-high room has two levels: a 20-foot-square lower level to the west and a 10-foot-by-20-foot loft to the east. A wooden ladder connects them.

Stacked crates and casks fill the lower level. A cabinet stands against the north wall of the loft, which also contains a heavy wooden trunk. Everything is draped with cobwebs.

A secret door at the back of the loft opens into area J58. Neither the skulks nor the dark creepers have found the secret door—or found their way into this room.

The crates are empty—their contents removed years ago by the former gnome occupants. The casks hold ale, but time has rendered the entire supply undrinkable and worthless.

The cabinet holds dusty towels, two empty clay jugs, an iron kettle, and some crumbling bars of soap.

The wooden trunk holds miscellaneous items: 12 candles

wrapped in a square yard of canvas, two 50-foot-long hemp ropes, nine torches, an empty map case, and a small box containing flint and steel.

J19. GUEST QUARTERS

The gnomes of Jzadirune set aside this room for honored guests. Three human-sized beds stand against the south wall. Other furnishings include a table and four chairs, and a carved dresser. The three dresser drawers are empty, and the room holds nothing of value.

J20. COSTUME AND PROP STORAGE

This room contains six bulky wooden trunks, their lids thrown open and their contents disgorged. Strewn about the dusty floor are dozens of ornate masks, gaudy robes, fancy costumes, mock weapons carved from wood, gnarled staffs, and similar stage props. A few costumes dangle from coat racks, wooden mannequins, and wall hooks between some heavier props, including a wooden folding screen painted with stars, a stuffed wolf, and a wooden sun carved with a grinning face.

The gnomes staged elaborate plays in their small theater (area J22) and stored all of their costumes and props here. The skulks entered the room through the secret door in the south wall and searched the trunks for valuables, but found little of worth.

The secret door in the west wall (leading to area J21) is slightly ajar and therefore easier to detect than normal. Anyone searching the room spots it with a successful Search check (DC 20). PCs peering through the crack in the door can see that the room beyond is torchlit, but little else. The slightly ajar secret door also allows the skulk in area J21 to hear PCs who noisily explore this room and its contents.

Characters can find all sorts of costumes, masks, and props here—none of them magical or valuable.

J21. VANISHING SKULK (EL 2)

If the PCs approach this room without attempting to dim their light sources or soften their footsteps, the room's denizen (a skulk afflicted with the Vanishing) hears them automatically and hides near one of the exits—whichever one is farthest from the PCs.

Dead rats, broken bits of furniture, and debris litter the floor of this dusty chamber. A torch burns in a sconce between a round door and crudely burrowed tunnel in the west wall.

A skulk lairs here. It spends most of its time gnawing on dead rats and listening for other skulks.

Creature: This skulk found a potion in area J10, imbibed it, and succumbed to the Vanishing. (The effects of the potion have long since expired.) The other skulks shun it, fearing they might catch the disease as well. This skulk has been left to its own devices.

The skulk has nearly faded away and almost appears ghost-like. However, it brandishes a normal rapier and wears a black ceramic wolf mask taken from area J20. It also wears a thick wolfskin cloak, which it uses to keep warm. It sheds the cloak if it needs to hide.

➤ **Skulk:** hp 8; Cha 3; see area G3 for statistics and possessions.

Skills: Hide +26 (+11 when clothed), Move Silently +12 (+8 when clothed).

Possessions: Rapier, wolf mask, wolfskin cloak.

Tactics: The skulk prefers to attack solitary foes. If it detects multiple enemies, it flees and hides in area J13 or J20, where it makes its final stand (if necessary).

J22. THEATER (EL 2)

Four ornate pillars support the 20-foot-high vaulted ceiling of this room, which is illuminated by lanterns hanging in the corners. Tattered red curtains dangle from iron rods mounted to the walls and pillars. Four rows of ornately carved benches stand in the rectangular area defined by the pillars.

Partially set into the south wall is a raised wooden stage with two short staircases leading up to it. Black curtains partially conceal the back wall of the stage, which is painted with an elaborate woodland mural.

If the PCs seat themselves in the theater or approach the stage, read or paraphrase the following:

One of the black stage curtains flutters, and a small figure steps out from behind it. A baby black bear—or rather, a gnome wearing a bear costume—takes center stage, raises a paw to his lips, and begins speaking softly.

"Night hath fallen in the Magic Woods, and while myriad woodland creatures dream, Willowbough and her faerie friends frolic beneath the sorcerous moon!"

The small bear curls up into a ball on the stage and feigns sleep. Moments later, a female gnome with briars for hair materializes on stage, as though she were standing invisibly a moment ago, and begins dancing. Solemn music fills the theater as butterfly-winged faeries appear from back-stage and join in the ballet.

Lanterns lit by *continual flame* spells illuminate this theater. The gnomes, faeries, and music are programmed illusions. If the PCs let the scene play out, they bear witness to the drama of Willowbough and Silverarrow, a somber tale of a dryad who falls in love with a ranger, and Moontusk, the ranger's bitter wereboar nemesis who strives to ruin their love by destroying the dryad's sacred tree.

A trapdoor in the middle of the stage floor opens to reveal a 3-foot-tall, cobweb-filled storage area under the stage. It contains both a **Creature** and the **Treasure**.

Creature: A choker lurks under the stage and tries to grab any PC who descends through the trapdoor.

➤ **Choker:** hp 15; *Monster Manual* 36.

Tactics: The choker uses its 10-foot reach to grab its prey without getting too close to the trapdoor. If it succeeds in grabbing a character on the surprise round or the round following, the choker uses its extraordinary quickness to hold the trapdoor shut with one tentacle while choking its prey with the other. PCs trying to open the trapdoor must succeed at an opposed Strength check to pull open the trapdoor, or they can smash through it (hardness 5; hp 20).

Medium-size and larger characters suffer a –2 penalty on attack rolls while fighting in the cramped understage area.

Treasure: The understage area contains two items: a masterwork mandolin (100 gp) and an unlocked wooden chest. The chest contains a fine cloak with a Nystul's magical aura spell cast on it, a small locked spellbook (Open Lock, DC 25), a wand of detect secret doors (15 charges) infected with the Vanishing, and a 5-inch-long steel rod with an engraved rune at one end and notches carved into the other (a key that unlocks all of the "J" gear doors in Jzadirune).

The spellbook contains the following spells: *change self*, *color spray*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *invisibility*, *Leomund's trap*, *mage hand*, *minor image*, *misdirection*, *Nystul's magical aura*, *Nystul's undetectable aura*, *read magic*, and *silent image*. The book can be sold for 325 gp.

Development: If the skulk in area J21 hears the play unfold, it peers into the theater through a hole in the northwest curtain and observes the PCs. Meanwhile, the skulks in area J17 move to flank the archway east of the theater, attacking the first PC who steps through.

J23. EMPTY GALLERY

Two short flights of stairs lead up to a 70-foot-long, 30-foot-wide octagonal gallery with a 15-foot-high vaulted ceiling. Twenty web-shrouded pedestals stand about the room, and the walls show signs of having once borne tapestries and other fixtures. However, the items once displayed here have long since been removed.

The gnomes of Jzadirune displayed many of their finest constructs here but removed the precious displays when they abandoned the complex. A secret door opens into area J24.

J24. SECRET ART VAULT

A *mirage arcana* spell makes this dusty room appear empty. However, tactile exploration of the room reveals several items leaning against the east wall (see **Treasure**, below). The paintings become visible if they are taken from the room.

Treasure: Hidden by the *mirage arcana* spell are six framed paintings covered in gray dust cloths. Each painting measures 4 feet long and 3 feet tall and depicts a natural or mystical landscape. The paintings can be sold to an interested art dealer for 100 gp each.

J25. KING'S HALL (EL 2)

Marble staircases split this room into three levels: a rubble-strewn foyer to the east, a 10-foot-square marble landing, and an upper hall supported by two pillars sculpted to resemble petrified trees. Between the pillars rests a graven throne. An elderly gnome wearing a silver crown is slumped in the throne, his soft snores echoing throughout the room. The 30-foot expanse of wall behind the throne is carved with frescoes depicting a complex array of gears.

Another noteworthy feature is a cherubic gnome's face carved in bas-relief on the west wall of the landing.

The cherubic bas-relief visage is part of a magical trap that triggers whenever a living creature sets foot on the 10-foot-square landing (see **Trap**, below).

The "sleeping gnome king" is a *permanent image* cast upon the throne. In his lap rests an illusory scepter that fades away when touched.

The throne's right armrest contains a secret compartment that can be found with a successful Search check (DC 20). When the secret compartment is opened, the gnome king mumbles the following words in his sleep, which can only be heard by characters standing within 10 feet:

*"Betrayed we are by our own magic,
One by one, we fade away—
Jzadirune's lost! Oh, how tragic!
We curse the vanishing day."*

Trap: When a living creature sets foot on the 1-foot-square marble landing, a *magic mouth* spell cast on the gnome's visage says in Common, "If you wish an audience with the king, place your finest coin in my mouth."

Any gold or platinum coin placed in the bas-relief's mouth is instantly teleported to the secret compartment in the throne's armrest. Nothing more happens. If a PC drops a coin of lesser value in the mouth, the coin is not teleported away and the *magic mouth* says "Miser! What a paltry tribute! I curse you with clumsiness!" The PC must succeed at a Will save (DC 17) or suffer a -6 penalty to Dexterity (as per the *bestow curse* spell); the PC's Dexterity score cannot drop below 1. The curse is permanent until removed with a *break enchantment*, *remove curse*, or similar spell. Rogues cannot disable this trap, which resets after 3 rounds.

➤ **Bestow Curse Trap:** CR 2; target suffers a -6 penalty to Dexterity (permanent); Will save (DC 17) negates; Search (DC 24); Disable Device (n/a); automatic reset after 3 rounds.

Treasure: The secret compartment in the throne's armrest contains a bed of 75 gp (plus any additional coins teleported from the bas-relief visage's mouth) and two 5-inch-long steel rods, each with an engraved rune at one end and notches carved into the other. The rods are keys for the "N" and "E" gear doors, respectively.

J26. AUTOMATON FACTORY (EL 4)

Metal wreckage and broken gears lie strewn about this 10-foot-high, oddly shaped chamber. Standing in the middle of the room is the half-built metal framework of a four-legged, 5-foot-tall construct with one arm ending in a spiked wedge. Its other arm is nowhere to be seen.

Gear doors are set into the north and south walls. Near them, two roughly hewn tunnels lead into darkness. Webs fill the corners of the room.

A half-finished, nonfunctional pulverizer automaton stands in the middle of the room; see pages 27–28 of the *Monster Manual II* for a picture and description of this construct. Lurking behind the construct is the chamber's lone occupant—see **Creature**, below.

PCs sifting through the debris can find the smashed remains of two work tables, several metal springs and gears, a metal pincer claw (similar to the one attached to the hammerer automaton in area J16), and bits of armor plating. The room holds little of value, however.

Creature: While scouring the dungeon for food and valuables, one of the skulks ran afoul of a raggamoffyn in area J31. The raggamoffyn wrapped itself around the skulk and took control of its mind. The captured skulk seeks to lure another humanoid creature (skulk or otherwise) into area J31, where a second raggamoffyn waits to gain a host. Other skulks have encountered the captured one, but they fled to avoid a similar fate and have shied away from this part of the dungeon ever since.

➤ **Captured Skulk/Common Raggamoffyn:** CR 4; Medium-size Construct; HD 3d10 (raggamoffyn) and 2d8 (skulk); hp 16 (raggamoffyn) and 10 (skulk); Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; BAB +1; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d6+2/18–20, rapier) or +3 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft., construct traits, shared damage (see below), innate nondetection, peerless camouflage, trackless path (see area J4 for details); AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +7, Move Silently +4. **Feats:** Weapon Finesse (rapier).

Shared Damage (Ex): An attack on a captured one deals half damage to the raggamoffyn and half damage to the dominated skulk.

Languages: Undercommon.

Possessions: Rapier.

Tactics: As the PCs enter the room from the south, the captured skulk bolts through the north tunnel and heads to area J31.

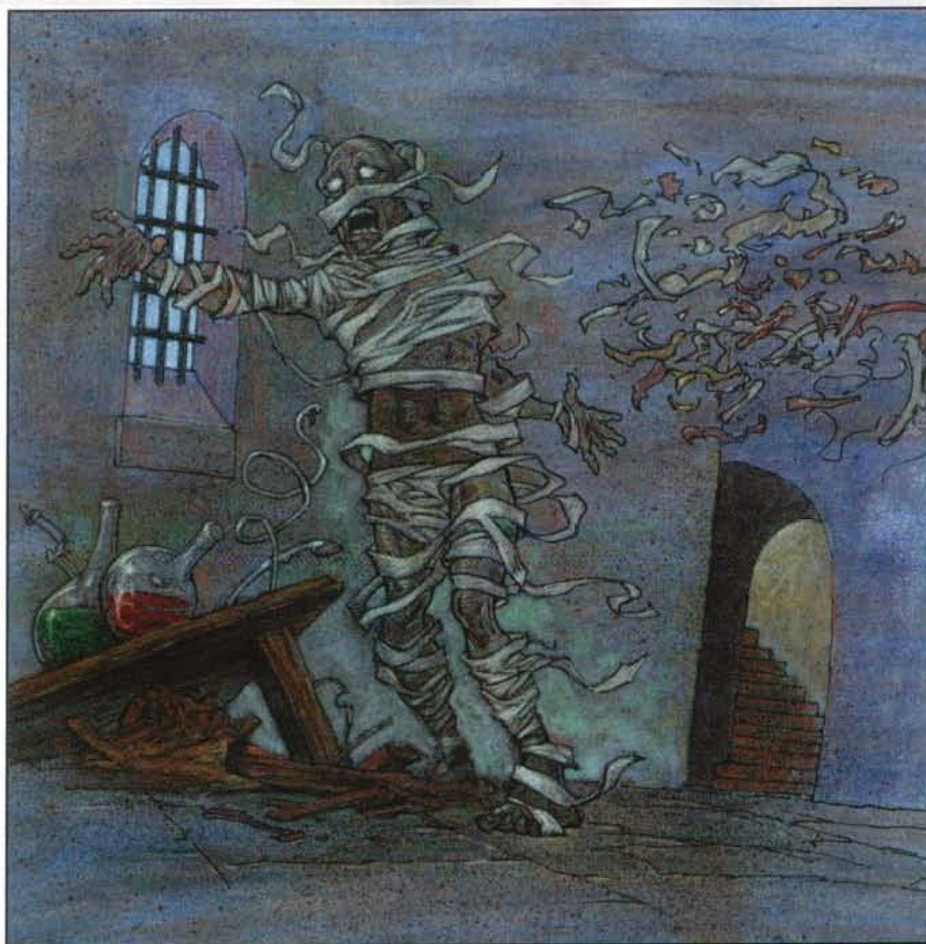
If the PCs approach from the north and the captured skulk has no way to reach area J31, it attacks with its rapier. If the skulk drops to 0 or fewer hit points, the raggamoffyn tries to claim a new host.

J27. GEARWORKS (EL 3)

Smashed tables and chairs litter the floor of this room. Hundreds of tiny wooden and metal gear mechanisms spill from

sundered crates, and a 4-foot-high mound of stone rubble fills the northwest corner. Mounted to the 20-foot-high ceiling are two large wooden fans strung with cobwebs. The fans are connected to some gears and rope belts that cross the ceiling and disappear into the wall on either side of the eastern exit.

In the middle of the room stands something draped in a large gray sheet. The shrouded object is roughly 5 feet tall, 5 feet wide, and irregular in shape.



The gnomes of Jzadirune used to make gears and other mechanisms here. The ceiling fans helped circulate the air. The fan belts connect to a pair of nonfunctional gearwork generators in area J28.

Creature: The thing concealed beneath the sheet in the middle of the room is a pulverizer automaton. If the sheet is removed or the automaton disturbed, roll 1d20: On a roll of 11 or higher, it grinds to life and attacks anyone who is not a gnome or dark one within 40 feet (the range of its blindsight ability). Otherwise, it remains inactive until further disturbed.

Embossed on the surface of the construct (in Gnome) are the command words for activating and deactivating the automaton ("thrymbryl" and "myglym," respectively). Characters who cannot read Gnome cannot speak the command words correctly.

When activated, the pulverizer will follow simple commands in Gnome ("kill all humans," "halt," "turn left," "turn right," and so on). It can climb stairs, but it is too wide to fit through gear doors or secret doors. If given conflicting commands in the round before it acts, it shuts down for 1 round.

The dark stalker used this automaton to burrow tunnels through the rock.

➤ **Pulverizer Automaton:** hp 18; *Monster Manual II* 27 or see the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement.

Treasure: The "heart" of the automaton is actually a deep blue spinel (worth 500 gp). Finding it requires a successful Search check (DC 24).

J28. GENERATORS

Set into the north and south walls of this corridor are six 10-foot-deep niches filled with dust and cobwebs. Some of the niches contain elaborate, gear-addled contraptions. A makeshift wall composed of wooden planks and braces blocks the eastern end of the hall.

Four of the niches contain magically powered, gear-driven generators for the ceiling fans in areas J27, J29, and J31. Rope belts connected to each generator disappear through holes in the ceiling of each niche. Pulling a lever activates or shuts down each of the eastern generators, although finding the lever requires a successful Search check (DC 12). The western generators have had several gears removed from them and are no longer functional.

Each of the easternmost niches has a secret door at the back of it (leading to areas J29 and J31, respectively). The two middle niches contain nothing but dust and cobwebs.

The makeshift wall is described in area J39.

J29. SECRET LIBRARY (EL 1)

A permanent obscuring mist spell fills this chamber, obscuring all sight (including darkvision) beyond 5 feet. A *dispel magic* does not remove the mist, although a gust of wind disperses the mist after 4 rounds.

If the characters explore the mist-shrouded room, read or paraphrase the following text:

Although you can't see anything beyond 5 feet, your preliminary exploration of the room reveals a thin carpet of stone rubble covering the floor, with mounds of shattered rock piled in nearby corners. Built into the walls are rows of stone shelves—perhaps bookshelves, although you see no books

on them. The shelves might very well rise to the ceiling, which you cannot see.

A ladder leans against the northwest wall. An ominous silhouette in the middle of the room turns out to be a harmless wooden lectern. Before you can investigate further, you feel something crawl across your foot.

This room was once a library, but the gnomes of Jzadirune removed their precious books before abandoning the complex. Mounted to the ceiling is a fan connected to a magical generator in area J28. Activating the ceiling fan clears the room of mist after 4 rounds.

The ladder allows one to reach the topmost shelves, just below the 15-foot-high ceiling. Both the shelves and the lectern are bare.

All of the secret doors here are hidden behind movable sections of shelving that require a successful Strength check (DC 20) to open. The *obscuring mist* makes the secret doors harder to detect than normal (Search, DC 22).

Creatures: Four 4-foot-long monstrous centipedes attack PCs who explore this room. They scuttle out of cavities under the shelves and rubble. Roll for surprise normally, but apply a -4 penalty to the PCs' Spot checks because of the *obscuring mist*.

Attacks made against a centipede in an adjacent square suffer a 20% miss chance (for one-half concealment). The centipedes likewise have a 20% chance of missing with each of their attacks, since they don't have blindsight. Foes farther than 5 feet away have total concealment (50% miss chance).

➤ **Small Monstrous Centipedes (4):** hp 2 each; *Monster Manual* 207.

Tactics: The centipedes pursue prey out of the room. They attack mindlessly until slain.

J30. SCROLL STORAGE

Arcane scrolls were once stored here, but the gnomes removed and destroyed all of them, fearing they might spread the Vanishing.

Entering the empty, dust-covered room sends a number of small, harmless spiders scurrying and triggers a *programmed illusion*. A elderly, translucent gnome wizard with a faintly glowing ruby in her left eye socket appears in the room and recites the following words in Common before fading away:

"I am Emirystul, librarian of Jzadirune. The scrolls you seek have been destroyed to keep you and others from fading into nothingness. The curse of the Vanishing began here, in these mystic halls, and here it will remain. Be careful what you find, and mind whatever magic was wrought here."

If the secret door to the room is closed and reopened, the *programmed illusion* resets.

J31. ALCHEMY LAB (EL 3)

An acrid stench fills this 10-foot-high chamber, which contains two large tables draped in cobwebs. Alchemical appara-

tus clutters one tabletop, while the other table has been flipped on its side, spilling its contents into the middle of the room. Amid the fragments of shattered glass lie some broken candles, some spent tindertwigs, various sundry utensils, and a pile of rags.

A 5-foot-wide tunnel in the west wall leads into darkness. Against the opposite wall stands a cabinet, its doors set with jagged shards of frosted glass. It looks like someone smashed through the glass to reach the contents within. Mounted to the ceiling is a web-shrouded wooden fan connected to some gears and a rope belt that crosses the ceiling and disappears into the north wall.

The pile of rags is actually the **Creature**. It waits until someone enters the room before attacking. The room's other contents are detailed under **Treasure**, below. The wooden ceiling fan connects to a magically powered generator in area J28, but it is currently "off."

Creature: A common raggamoffyn disguises itself as a pile of rags in the middle of the room.

➤ **Common Raggamoffyn:** hp 16; *Monster Manual* II 175 or see the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement.

Tactics: The raggamoffyn flies at the first character (or other humanoid creature) that enters the room. If it hits with its slam attack, it attempts to grapple its foe. If the grapple check succeeds, it can attempt to wrap itself around the victim next round and control the host on the following round.

Treasure: The upright table bears an alchemist's lab (worth 500 gp) as well as the following items:

- 5 empty glass flasks
- 6 flasks of harmless (nonmagical) powder
- 3 flasks of hardened sludge (harmless)
- 2 flasks of acid (worth 10 gp each)
- 20 tindertwigs (worth 1 gp each)
- A 5-inch-long steel rod with an engraved rune at one end and notches carved into the other. This key opens all "U" gear doors in Jzadirune.

On the floor near the "pile of rags" rests a tanglefoot bag (worth 50 gp).

The broken cabinet holds a few alchemical items of interest:

- 3 flasks of alchemist's fire (worth 20 gp each)
- 4 vials of antitoxin (worth 50 gp each)
- 2 smokesticks (worth 20 gp each)
- 8 sunrods (worth 2 gp each)
- A thunderstone (worth 30 gp)
- A vial containing 2 applications of *universal solvent* (worth 2,000 gp).

Development: If the captured skulk from area J26 retreats to this room, it hides behind the overturned table and grabs the tanglefoot bag lying on the floor nearby. It hurls the bag at the first PC to enter the room before leaping into combat.

J32. SECRET POTION STORAGE

Three cabinets stand against the walls of this 10-foot-high room. The cabinet doors hang open, and a shroud of dust covers the floor.

The cabinets hold scores of flasks and vials containing liquids of various colors and consistencies. However, the gnomes *dispelled* all of the potions, believing they were contaminated with the Vanishing. None of the liquid stored here radiate magic, although many of the flasks bear labels with spell names on them (written in Gnome).

J33. SLEEPING QUARTERS

This room is identical to area J8.

J34. PIT LEVER AND RUBBLE

Chunks of broken stone and smaller debris fill this room. A wooden lever juts from an iron plate set into the west wall. A 5-foot-diameter tunnel delves east into darkness.

The wooden lever controls the pit trap (or tilt-a-pit trap, if you're using the Web enhancement) in area J6. Pulling the lever up locks the pit's lid and deactivates the trap, allowing creatures to cross the pit safely.

Characters searching through the rubble find some smashed furniture and, with a successful Search check (DC 22), a 5-inch-long metal rod with a rune engraved on one end and notches carved into the other. This key opens all "Z" gear doors in Jzadirune.

J35. FOYER AND IRON DOORS

Four circular doors—each one bearing a different rune—lead from this dusty 15-foot-high room. However, your attention is quickly drawn to a semicircular mosaic of engraved floor tiles that fans out from an arching set of double doors set in the north wall. Unlike the other portals, the northern doors are made of iron, embossed with gearlike patterns, and held to a stone doorframe by great iron hinges.

The iron double doors are locked from the south side, although they can be pushed open with ease from area J36. The key to unlock them has been lost. Engraved on the semicircular floor mosaic in front of the doors are nine glyphs—the same ones that appear on Jzadirune's gear doors (see Gear Doors for details). These are purely decorative and do not trigger any traps, magical or mundane.

❖ **Locked Iron Doors:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; break DC 28; good lock (Open Lock, DC 30).

J36. GREAT FACTORY (EL 3)

This enormous chamber has a ceiling that soars to a height of 45 feet at its peak. Two great marble pillars support wooden balconies 15 feet above the chamber's west and east wings. Two iron-wrought spiral staircases—located in the

southwest and southeast corners—connect the balconies to the ground floor.

The furnishings on the ground level suggest some sort of assembly area. Desks occupy much of the area, although a few boxes and crates fill various corners and nooks.

An 8-foot-diameter wooden gear hangs from the ceiling at the north end of the chamber, suspended by a pair of great iron chains. A bright light burns in the hollow center of the great gear, illuminating a great mosaic of interconnected gears painstakingly painted on the ceiling and walls of the room. The singular light casts many shadows throughout the chamber, and the faint sound of clattering gears resonates from somewhere not too far away.

Diagram #2: Area J36 provides a cross-sectional view of this room, as viewed from the south.

A *permanent ghost sound* cast upon the room years ago invokes the sound of clattering gears, which doesn't travel far from this room. The great gear hanging from the ceiling is part of the chamber's décor, and the bright light burning in its center is a *continual flame* spell.

The gnomes of Jzadirune constructed most of their wondrous magic items here. Characters who search the desks and boxes find some of the raw materials needed to create such items, although the gnomes took the most valuable components with them when they left.

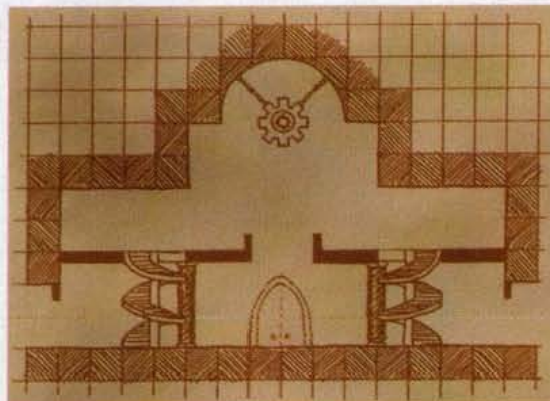
The dark creepers received an unpleasant surprise when they first discovered their room, leading them to seal off the area with makeshift walls (see area J39).

Creature: Not long after the gnomes left, a grell took residence here. For years it fed on tiny rats and vermin. When the dark creepers arrived, the grell captured and devoured one of them. It currently lurks in the shadows above the eastern balcony, waiting for other succulent morsels to blunder into its lair.

➤ **Grell:** hp 32; *Monster Manual II* 121 or see the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement.

Tactics: The grell drops down on prey from above or tries to grab a creature ascending the eastern spiral staircase. It uses its Flyby Attack feat to move both before and after taking an attack action. Thus, it can swoop down on an unsuspecting character, make a single tentacle attack, and hoist its grappled prey into the air. Any ranged attack made against the grell

DIAGRAM #2: AREA J36



after it grapples a character has a 50% chance of hitting the character instead.

Treasure: The bones and shredded black robe of the grell's dark creeper victim lie atop the eastern mezzanine amid the dusty desks. Amid the remains, PCs can find the following items:

- A masterwork dagger (sized for a Small character) with a poison compartment holding one application of monstrous spider venom (Fortitude save DC 14; initial and secondary 1d4 Str).

- A *potion of cure light wounds*
- A *potion of invisibility*
- A black pouch containing 80 cp and 32 sp.

Since the potions were not created in Jzadirune, they are not afflicted with the Vanishing.

J37. CLASSROOM

Small desks have been arranged in three concentric semicircles facing the south wall of this 15-foot-high octagonal room. Chalkboards set in stone frames along the three southernmost walls bear faded equations and formulas. A web-shrouded lectern stands in front of them, facing the desks.

A pile of stony rubble spills from the mouth of a 5-foot-diameter tunnel that breaches the north wall.

Jzadirune's scholars used this classroom to teach young gnomes various subjects, including mathematics and the magical arts. The dark creepers searched this room and found no valuables; PCs who search the chamber also find nothing of value, although a successful Search check (DC 20) reveals a secret door in the west wall that leads to the library (area J29).

J38. WEAVER'S WORKSHOP

A large wooden loom, its skeletal frame draped with cobwebs, stands in the middle of this 15-foot-high octagonal room. Three smaller spinning wheels surround it, also covered with cobweb sheets. An iron coat rack stands next to one of them.

The gnomes of Jzadirune wove clothing here. The three spinning wheels radiate moderate Transmutation magic when a *detect magic* spell is cast.

Programmed *mage hand* spells cause the spinning wheels to spin and clatter whenever someone enters the room. The effect is harmless, but it may discourage interlopers from investigating the east wall, which conceals a secret door (leading to area J42).

J39. MAKESHIFT WALL

To confine the grell in area J36, the dark creepers erected these makeshift walls using wooden planks (taken from smashed benches in area J51). Iron spikes hammered into the walls and iron braces bolted to the floor keep the wall from tipping over. There is no easy way past the makeshift wall except to smash through. Fortunately for the dark creepers, the grell's tentacles don't deal enough damage to overcome the wall's hardness, and

the creature isn't quite strong enough to simply knock it down.

❖ **Makeshift Wooden Wall:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 30; break DC 22.

J40. WOODSHOP (EL 3)

If the PCs approach this room quietly in darkness, without raising alarms in area J44 or J45, allow them to make a Move Silently check to surprise the dark creeper located here. The check is opposed by the dark creeper's Listen check.

Half-made kegs, tables, bookshelves, and chests clutter this dark, 10-foot-high room. Most of these unfinished works have been pushed against the outer walls, making room for four cots in the middle of the floor. Two workbenches covered with carpenter's tools flank the north exit. A few rat bones litter the floor.

A dark creeper lairs here. If the PCs use silence and darkness to conceal their approach, they might catch the dark creeper napping in its cot. Otherwise, the dark creeper is hiding among the half-finished furnishings.

Characters searching the room for treasure can, with a successful Search check (DC 12), find a small trove stashed in a lidless chest (see **Treasure**, below)

Creatures: Dark creepers despise light and attack PCs carrying torches or lanterns above all others. Some even spend a move action extinguishing torches and lanterns dropped in the heat of battle.

➤ **Dark Creeper:** CR 3; Small Humanoid (dark one); HD 1d8+3; hp 7; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14; BAB +0; Grap -3; Atk +2 melee (1d3+1/19-20, dagger) or +3 ranged (1d3+1/19-20, dagger); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ blindsight 60 ft., light vulnerability, evasion, shadow cloak; AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +15, Listen +3, Move Silently +8, Pick Pocket (Sleight of Hand) +4, Spot +3, Tumble +4. **Feats:** Lightning Reflexes.

Light Vulnerability (Ex): When exposed to sunlight or its magical equivalent, dark creepers suffer a -2 morale penalty on attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks.

Shadow Cloak (Su): Three times per day, a dark creeper can wrap itself in a cloak of shadows that grants it concealment from its foes. In shadows or darkness, the dark creeper gains nine-tenths concealment (a 40% miss chance from attackers). In bright light, it gains one-half concealment (20% miss chance). Darkvision does not reduce the amount of concealment. Creatures that can see in magical darkness suffer no miss chance.

Languages: Undercommon.

Possessions: Black cloak, 4 dark creeper-sized daggers, pouch containing 1d6 × 10 cp and 1d6 × 5 sp.

Tactics: If alerted to the PCs' approach, the dark creeper tries to gain a sneak attack, using its shadow cloak ability to gain par-

tial concealment as it strikes.

Treasure: The dark creepers keep some miscellaneous valuables in a lidless chest in this room. In addition to some worthless trinkets, PCs find the following:

- 4 engraved copper cups (worth 2 gp each)
- A silver cloak pin set with a bloodstone (worth 45 gp)
- 3 zircons (worth 50 gp each)
- A gold comb set with citrines (worth 160 gp)
- 26 sp and 130 cp (loose).

J41. FORGE

Four soot-blackened hearths are set into the corners of the room. In front of each rests an anvil and bellows, and implements of the smithing trade hang from nearby hooks. Two barrels of scummy water, once used to cool searing hot iron weapons and implements, stand against the north wall. Two more flank the south exit, and two empty weapon racks stand in the middle of the room. Characters who sift the bottom of the barrel marked "X" on the map and succeed at a Search check (DC 20) find a 5-inch-long steel rod with a rune engraved on one end and notches carved into the other. This key unlocks all of the "I" gear doors in Jzadirune.

A secret door in the west wall leads to area J42.

J42. SECRET HALLWAY (EL 2)

This dust-choked T-shaped corridor leads to area J43; it contains a **Trap**.

Trap: The 20-foot stretch of corridor north of the T-shaped intersection is trapped. The entire 20-foot-by-10-foot section of

floor is one pressure plate. When 250 pounds of weight (or more) is applied to the pressure plate, spring-loaded spears extend and retract quickly from holes in the walls (at varying heights). The spears continue to extend and retract as long as the pressure plate remains depressed.

Any creature in the 20-foot-long section of hall when the trap activates is attacked by 1d4 spears. The holes in the walls are concealed by *illusory wall* spells, but they can be detected by touch.

The trap was designed so that gnomes (who are typically lighter than 250 pounds) could navigate the hallway without triggering the trap.

↗ **Spear Trap:** CR 2; +3 melee (1d6, 1d4 spears); Search (DC 15); Disable Device (DC 18); automatic reset.

J43. SECRET VAULT

The gnomes stored many of their most precious magic items and weapons in this musty, 10-foot-high chamber. However, these items were either sold or destroyed before the gnomes vacated Jzadirune. The room is, in fact, empty.

J44. HIDDEN FOES (EL 4)

A 5-foot-wide, rough-hewn circular tunnel breaches the west wall of this chamber. Another punches through the east wall. The rubble left by the excavation of these tunnels has been pushed into the northeast part of the room, leaving the rest of this 10-foot-high chamber clear. A few rat bones and other refuse litter the floor, but otherwise the room appears empty.

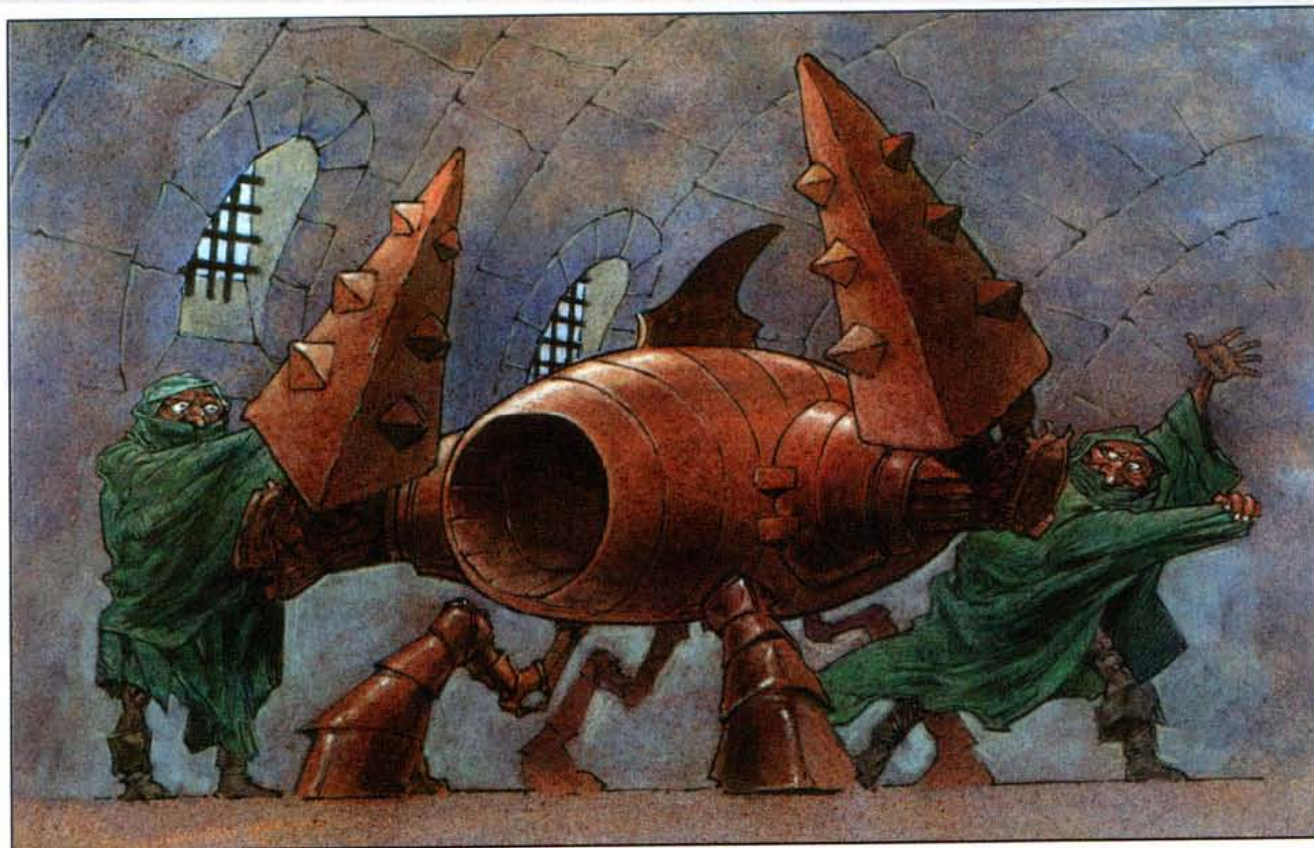
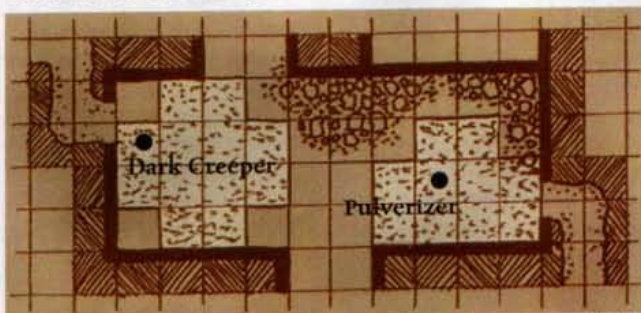


DIAGRAM #3: AREA J44



Two permanent 10-foot-radius invisibility spheres conceal this chamber's occupants. The areas of invisibility are fixed and encompass the 5-foot squares shown in **Diagram #3: Area J44**. The invisibility spheres, created by some miscast magic years ago, mask only living creatures and items in their possession.

Creatures: A pulverizer automaton stands in the southeast corner of the room, hidden by an invisibility sphere. It is not alone; a dark creeper stands guard near the northwest corner, inside the other invisibility sphere.

➤ **Pulverizer Automaton:** hp 18; *Monster Manual* II 27 or see the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement.

➤ **Dark Creeper:** hp 9; see area J40 for complete statistics and possessions.

Tactics: If it sees intruders approaching from the south passage or southeast tunnel, the dark creeper barks a command to the pulverizer in Gnome ("Taral yan zygeek!" or "Attack all intruders!") and withdraws to area J45 to warn its master. Although it cannot speak Gnome fluently, the dark creeper knows the command words from hearing the dark stalker speak them.

If the PCs enter the room through the northwest tunnel, the dark creeper stealthily moves across the room and uses the southeast passage to reach area J52. It prefers not to fight the PCs without the presence of other creepers.

Anyone who speaks Gnome can command the pulverizer to cease its attacks. The automaton can also be commanded to perform other simple tasks. If it is given conflicting instructions in the same round, it takes no actions on its next turn.

Treasure: If the pulverizer is destroyed, PCs can search the sundered remains. A successful Search check (DC 24) reveals a deep blue spinel "heart" (worth 500 gp) and a 5-inch-long steel rod with a rune engraved on one end and notches carved into the other. The rod is a key that unlocks all "A" gear doors in Jzadirune.

J45. GLASSBLOWING WORKSHOP (EL 4)

This dark, 10-foot-high room has exits in the north and southwest walls, plus gear doors set into the south and east walls.

A stone oven fills the northwest corner. Iron tongs hang from a hook nearby. Bottles, flasks, and pottery clutter shelves and tables haphazardly pushed against the bare walls. Shards of broken glass and ceramic cover the floor such that you think it would be difficult to cross the room without stepping on them.

Little evidence suggests that something lives here, but the leader of the dark ones calls this room his lair. The dark stalker, Yuathyb, requires very little sleep, and he suspects that his dark creeper followers secretly conspire to betray him. For this reason, he prefers to remain alone until the skulks have need of his minions' services.

Yuathyb has pushed a heavily laden table in front of the secret door to area J47. Moving the table takes a move action, as does opening the secret door.

Creature: Yuathyb recently contracted the Vanishing and has acquired a ghostlike translucence. His current state gives him a +4 circumstance bonus on Hide checks, which he uses to full advantage.

➤ **Yuathyb, Dark Stalker:** CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (dark one); HD 3d8+3; hp 16; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; BAB +2; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d6+2/19–20 and poison, short sword) or +5 ranged (1d6+2 and poison, javelin); SA sneak attack +3d6, poison use; SQ blindsight 60 ft., light vulnerability, shadow cloak (see area J40), fog cloud 2/day; AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 8 (16 at full).

Skills: Hide +15, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Pick Pocket (Sleight of Hand) +4, Spot +3, Tumble +3. **Feats:** Lightning Reflexes.

Poison Use (Ex): Yuathyb has coated his sword and javelins with Medium-size monstrous spider venom (Fortitude save DC 14; initial and secondary 1d4 Str). He never risks accidentally poisoning himself when applying poison to his weapons.

Fog Cloud (Sp): Twice per day, Yuathyb can cast fog cloud as a 5th-level sorcerer.

Languages: Gnome, Undercommon.

Possessions: Black cloak, short sword, 4 javelins, *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of remove paralysis*, key to all "D" gear doors (hanging around neck), vial of monstrous spider venom (5 applications; Fortitude save DC 14; initial and secondary 1d4 Str), pouch containing 60 sp.

Tactics: The dark stalker prefers not to fight if outnumbered. Yuathyb tries to hide, attacking only if the PCs find the secret door to area J47. In that case, he tries to deal sneak attack damage with a poisoned weapon and holds his ground until reinforcements arrive from area J40 or J44 (at which point he can deal sneak attack damage to flanked opponents). If reduced to 8 hit points or fewer, he uses fog cloud to escape, tumbling past foes if necessary to reach an exit.

Development: If the PCs can speak Gnome or Undercommon, they can negotiate with the wily dark stalker. This requires some deft roleplaying and a successful Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check (depending on the nature of the exchange).

Yuathyb does not know how he contracted the Vanishing but is anxious to find a cure. If the heroes can offer one, the dark stalker will listen to reason. He can also be persuaded not to interfere in the PCs' plans, provided they deal no (further) harm to him or his dark creeper followers.

Yuathyb has no loyalty to the skulks, although they have helped him in the past. He will not actively oppose the skulks but can provide information on their approximate numbers and whereabouts. He also knows where they're keeping Keygan's rat familiar (in area J60) and how to get there without opening any of the gear doors.

If the PCs have nothing to offer, Yuathyb might agree to leave them alone or reveal the way to Kazmojen's fortress (the elevator in area J63) if they promise to kill the grell in area J36 and return with proof of the creature's death (a severed tentacle, for instance).

Ad-hoc XP Award: If the PCs successfully negotiate with Yuathyb, award them experience as if they'd defeated the dark stalker in combat.

J46. JEWELER'S WORKSHOP

This 20-foot-square chamber contains a stout desk and matching chair. The table bears a set of copper scales and a jar of dried-up ink with a feather quill sticking out of it. Shelves line the far wall. Everything is caked in dust.

Jzadirune's resident jeweler used to work in this small office. Everything of value was removed except for a 5-inch-long steel rod tucked in the back of a small drawer built into the tabletop. A successful Search check (DC 15) locates the rod, which has a small rune engraved on one end and notches worked into the other. The rod is a key that opens all "R" gear doors in Jzadirune.

J47. SECRET TREASURY

A table laden with glass vessels and pottery blocks the secret door leading to this vault (see area J45 for details).

Unlike the other rooms you've found, this chamber is completely free of dust and cobwebs. Green marble tiles cover the floor, and the walls are painted with bright murals depicting a forest of enormous fungi.

A gnome-sized suit of full-plate armor, complete with visor and helm, stands in the middle of the room. Next to it sits a 2-foot-tall clay urn filled with treasure.

Magic spells keep this chamber clean. The "fungi forest" mural cleverly conceals the secret doors in the east and south walls, making them harder to locate (Search, DC 22).

The clay urn contains all of the treasure the dark creepers have amassed since coming to Jzadirune, including items pilfered from the city above (see **Treasure**, below).

The suit of armor is inanimate, harmless, and detailed under **Treasure** below.

Treasure: The suit of armor is filled head-to-toe with coins—4,500 sp, to be exact. If moved, the armor falls apart, causing the coins to spill onto the floor. The armor is ordinary gnome-sized full plate, which can be sold in the city for 700 gp.

The clay urn has handles so that it can be carried easily. It holds the following items:

- 622 cp, 958 sp, and 75 gp (loose)
- 3 silver rings (worth 5 gp each)
- A tiny silver locket (worth 10 gp) containing ashes (a pinch of someone's cremated remains)
- 2 plain gold rings (worth 25 gp each)
- A platinum bracelet (worth 175 gp) engraved with the following words in Dwarven: "To Sondor, my deepest love. Lorthan."
- A set of masterwork thieves' tools (worth 100 gp)
- A *potion of delay poison*
- A *wand of sleep* (8 charges; command word "Slumber").

J48. SECRET VAULT (EL 2 AND 1)

The dark stalker and dark creepers did not locate this vault during their search of the dungeon.

Beyond another secret door lies a 10-foot-by-20-foot room with a 10-foot-high ceiling. Standing against the south wall is a gnome-sized suit of banded mail clutching a finely forged gnome hooked hammer. At its feet rests an iron chest secured with an iron padlock.

The iron chest is held to the floor with *sovereign glue*. (The *universal solvent* in area J31 can be used to dissolve the glue.) The chest is locked (Open Lock, DC 25) and holds the **Treasure**. The suit of armor is the **Creature**.

Creature: The armor is actually a dread guard that animates and attacks if it or the chest is disturbed.

➤ **Dread Guard:** hp 27; *Monster Manual* II 87 or see the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement, except Atk +6 melee (1d6+4, masterwork hammer) or +4 melee (1d6+3/×3, masterwork hammer) and +0 melee (1d4+1/×4, masterwork hook).

Possessions: Masterwork gnome hooked hammer.

Treasure: A *permanent illusion* (cast at 12th level) makes the chest appear empty. However, tactile exploration of the chest reveals contents within. Items removed from the chest become visible instantly. They include the following:

- 3 shrew statuettes carved from smoky quartz (worth 75 gp each)
- A mother-of-pearl-inlaid board with matching wooden game pieces (gnome kings, queens, knights, and other figures), worth 250 gp for the set
- A tiny silk pouch containing 3 white pearls (worth 100 gp each).

J49. SECRET VAULT

The dark stalker and dark creepers did not locate this vault during their search of the dungeon.

All three chests in the 10-foot by 20-foot room are unlocked but have *Leomund's trap* spells cast on them to make them appear trapped. The chests are all empty—looted by the gnomes before they left Jzadirune. Strange glyphs on their lids might once have warded them, but any magic was long since discharged.

J50. FALSE FOREST

Magic has transformed this section of the dungeon into a small forest. Four great trees sprout from the grassy floor, their leafy crowns fanning out 20 feet overhead to form a roof of deciduous leaves through which rays of sunshine filter. Brambles and thickets form impassible walls, although you can see bramble archways set into the north and south walls leading to dark passages and chambers beyond.

Two mounds of stony rubble flank a hole in the middle of the east wall that appears to be a natural tunnel through the underbrush.

A gentle zephyr causes leaves to rustle, and you can hear birds chirping merrily.

An effect similar to a *permanent hallucinatory terrain* spell has transformed pillars into trees, walls into brambles, and floor tiles into patches of grass. The room looks, smells, sounds, and feels like a forest. The two piles of rubble against the east wall (left behind from the dark creepers' excavations) appeared later and were not incorporated into the illusion.

The secret door in the northwest corner is well hidden by the illusion; locating it from this side requires a Search check (DC 25).

The dark creepers despise this area and generally avoid it whenever possible.

J51. DINING HALL

Once a dining hall, this chamber contains only the wreckage of once fine furniture. Two iron chandeliers dangle from the ceiling, while a third—its rope severed—lies amid the debris on the floor.

Characters can hear the sounds of chirping birds and rustling leaves through the northern archway (see area J50 for details). Nothing of value remains here.

J52. KITCHEN (EL 5 AND 1)

Two stone hearths fill the east corners of this 10-foot-high, 30-foot-square kitchen. Stone shelves, barren and dusty, fill the wall space between the blackened fireplaces. In the middle of the room stand two stout tables covered in old webs, while against the south wall rests a dilapidated wooden cabinet on the verge of collapsing under its own weight.

Debris from a roughly hewn, 5-foot-diameter tunnel in the north wall spills into the room. Near the opening, you see the shriveled husks of three enormous spiders.

The dark creepers fought and killed three Medium-size monstrous spiders in this room. They then drained the arachnids of their virulent venom.

Searching the cabinet might have dire consequences, as detailed under **Trap**, below. Hidden amid the clay dishware in the cabinet is a 5-inch-long steel rod with a rune engraved on one end and notches carved into the other. This key unlocks all "Z" gear doors in Jzadirune.

Creatures: Two dark creepers lurk here. If the dark creeper from area J44 fled to this room, it is also hiding in the room (behind a dead spider or under a table). Encountered in pairs or threes, dark creepers are extremely dangerous due to their sneak attack and shadow cloak abilities.

➤ **Dark Creepers (2):** hp 7, 6; see area J40 for complete statistics and possessions.

Tactics: The dark creepers hide in the fireplaces until an enemy approaches; then they move to flank, hoping to deal sneak attack damage. They rely on their shadow cloak ability to avoid taking damage and use their Tumble skill to avoid taking attacks of opportunity while maneuvering in tight spaces.

Trap: The large cabinet holds varnished clay dishware left behind by the gnomes of Jzadirune. A Search check (DC 13) reveals that the cabinet might collapse if disturbed, and a successful Disable Device check (DC 15) allows a rogue to stabilize the cabinet.

Opening or otherwise tampering with the cabinet causes it to topple. Anyone standing in front of the cabinet can make a Reflex save to take half damage.

➤ **Collapsing Cabinet:** CR 1; 2d6 points of damage; Reflex save (DC 10) for half damage; Search (DC 13); Disable Device (DC 16); no reset.

J53. PANTRY

The gnomes removed most of the edibles from the pantry before vacating the complex. However, a few scattered jars and baskets of dried herbs remain amid some casks of vinegar, loaves dry bread, and mold.

J54. SLEEPING QUARTERS

This room is identical to area J8.

J55. LATRINE

Thin wooden walls separate six curtained stalls that stretch across the northern wall, although none of the dividers prevent the stench of this chamber from reaching you.

A fish-shaped fresco carved into the back wall once served as a waterspout to a rectangular pool of now-brackish water, although water no longer pours from its gaping mouth.

Waste from the latrine stalls drops into a 30-foot-square cistern located 20 feet below this chamber. The foul stench rises from this cistern. The southern basin contains fouled water and nothing more.

J56. SKULKS' TREASURE ROOM

Bits of rubble and debris cover the floor of this cold room. Patches of green mold grow on the damp walls and cling to the 10-foot-high ceiling. Lying in a heap in the southeast corner are the gutted, putrefied remains of an 8-foot-long, green worm with multiple legs and eight slimy tentacles sprouting from its bulbous head. A heap of armor and shields lies nearby.

Several months ago, the skulks and dark creepers killed a carrion crawler that had found its way into the complex. The skulks gutted it and stashed their treasure (including plunder from the city above) inside its moldering remains (see **Treasure** below).

Treasure: The skulks have hidden two unlocked wooden coffers inside the dead carrion crawler. Only by searching the remains can the characters spot the coffers within.

Coffer #1 contains 140 cp, 225 sp, and 178 gp.

Coffer #2 contains the following items:

- A small silver-framed mirror (worth 15 gp)
- A healer's kit (worth 50 gp)
- A silver dragon pendant with moonstone eyes (worth 125 gp)
- A plugged copper scroll tube (worth 1 gp) containing a scroll of *mirror image* and a scroll of *mage armor*, both infected with the Vanishing.

The armor consists of ten gnome-sized chain shirts (worth 50 gp each) and ten bucklers (worth 7 gp each).

Development: If the skulks from area J17 withdrew to this chamber, they hide in the shadows on either side of the hole in the floor. They try to flank and kill a single foe, fleeing via the secret door if faced with equal or superior numbers (but avoiding area J58).

If one of the skulks is captured or cornered here, it pleads for its life in Undercommon. If the PCs can communicate with it, a successful Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check convinces the skulk to reveal where Keygan's familiar is kept (in area J60) and the safest way to get there (via area J59).

J57. FLOOR TRAP (EL 1)

The secret door leading to area J56 is locked from this side. The door can be opened with a successful Open Lock check (DC 20) or by turning a nearby torch sconce a quarter-turn counterclockwise; finding the correct mechanism to open the door requires a successful Search check (DC 22).

Turning the torch sconce clockwise or unlocking the secret door without properly turning the sconce triggers the **Trap**.

Trap: If the secret door is opened improperly, the 10-foot-square section of floor in front of the door tilts up toward the west. Anyone standing on the floor must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 15) or tumble down the western staircase (toward area J17), landing prone. A successful Tumble check (DC 15) halves the damage and allows the PC to land on his or her feet.

↗ **Tilt-and-Tumble Trap:** CR 1; 2d6 points of damage; Reflex save (DC 15) negates; Tumble check (DC 15) for half damage; Search (DC 23); Disable Device (DC 25); automatic reset.

J58. BATHROOM (EL 2)

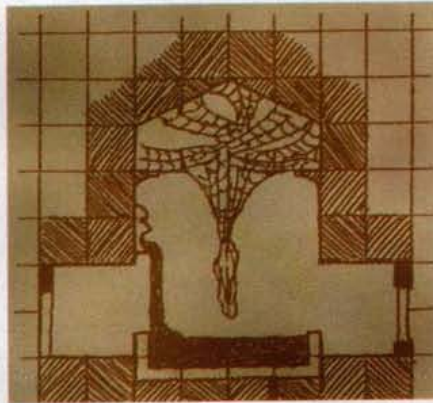
Characters can hear pouring water as they approach this room.

Turquoise ceramic tiles adorn the walls and floor of this room, in the middle of which rests a large octagonal bathing pool with a 2-foot-tall raised lip. Pristine water pours into the pool from a smiling stone face carved into an overhanging wall. The water exits through a small circular drain at the east end of the pool.

A narrow stone ledge encircles the ceiling, which is hidden behind a tangled mass of thick webs. Suspended from the webs by ropy filaments is a cocooned humanoid corpse that dangles 5 feet above the pool's glassy surface.

See **Diagram #4: Area J58** for a cross-sectional view of this room. The skulks avoid this area.

DIAGRAM #4:
AREA J58



The water pouring from the stone face and filling the pool is a *permanent* illusion that looks, sounds, and feels real. PCs can fill their waterskins with the water, but the water mysteriously disappears once it leaves the room. Disbelieving the illusion requires a successful Will save (DC 15); the DM can reduce the DC of the save if the PCs have good cause to suspect the water is illusory.

The creature suspended in the cocoon is a dead skulk. Its bodily fluids have been completely drained by the monsters that lurk in the webs and in the pool (see **Creatures**, below). The webs suspending the dead skulk have 6 hit points or require a Strength check (DC 26) to break. The skulk still carries some **Treasure**.

Creatures: A Medium-size monstrous spider lurks in the empty pool, hidden by the watery illusion. It lacks the intelligence to perceive the illusory water and leaps out of the empty pool to attack the first creature that comes within 5 feet.

Two "baby" spiders (actually Small monstrous spiders) prowl among the webs that stretch across the ceiling. They descend to attack only if the skulk's husk or the webs are disturbed. They use fine web filaments to drop on prey from above, gaining a +1 bonus on their melee attacks for higher ground.

➤ **Medium-size Monstrous Spider:** hp 11; *Monster Manual* 210.

➤ **Small Monstrous Spiders (2):** hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 210.

Treasure: Characters searching the shriveled skulk corpse find a pouch containing two tourmalines (100 gp each) and a dull gray *ioun stone* infected with the Vanishing.

J59. SECRET CLOSET

This hidden closet connects to area J60 by a secret door. A 5-foot-diameter hole in the floor drops about 7 feet and turns sharply west.

Creature: A lone skulk lurks here, waiting to strike anyone who comes up through the hole in the floor.

➤ **Skulk:** hp 11; see area J4 for complete statistics and possessions. The skulk also wears a tiny silver key around its neck that opens the cage in area J60.

Tactics: The skulk gains a +1 bonus on its attack roll when attacking a foe coming up from below, since it has the higher ground advantage. It fights until reduced to 4 hit points or fewer, at which point it drops its rapier and pleads for its life in Undercommon.

Development: If the skulk surrenders, it offers to trade its life for the safe return of Keygan's rat familiar (from area J60). It will even show PCs the way to Kazmojen's stronghold (using the secret door in area J2 to reach area J63).

J60. THE CAGED RAT (EL 4)

Empty weapon racks line the walls of this dusty, 10-foot-high room. In the middle of the floor rests a large wooden chest with a flat lid and iron hinges. Atop the chest sits a small silver cage holding a rat with a white star-shaped splotch of fur on its tiny forehead. It grips the bars and squeaks excitedly.

The gnomes cleared all the weapons from this room before vacating Jzadirune. Starbrow, Keygan's anxious rat familiar, is locked in the silver cage; unlocking it requires the proper key (found in area J59), a *knock* spell, or a successful Open Lock check (DC 20).

The chest under the cage is actually a friendly mimic lulled into helping the skulks. Characters who succeed at a Spot check (DC 22 if the mimic takes 10 on its Disguise check) notice some slight imperfections in the "chest." See **Creatures**, below, for the rat's and mimic's statistics.

Creatures: The mimic reveals itself if anyone approaches within 5 feet of it or the silver cage. A toothy mouth splits the front of the chest as it speaks to them in Undercommon (see **Development**, below).

➤ **Mimic:** hp 45; *Monster Manual* 135.

➤ **Starbrow, Keygan's Rat Familiar:** CR —; Tiny Magical Beast; HD Special; hp 8; Init +2; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 13; BAB +2; Grap -10; Atk +4 melee (1d3-4, bite); SQ low-light vision, minor scent, improved evasion, share spells, empathic link; AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Appraise +1, Balance +10, Climb +12, Hide +18, Knowledge (local) +1, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Search +1, Spot +1, Swim +10. **Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite).

Languages: Undercommon.

Tactics: The skulks keep the mimic fed on a diet of rats and spiders. It loathes to combat creatures of Medium-size or larger, although it defends itself without hesitation if attacked.

Unlike most mimics, this creature does not speak Common. Nevertheless, it tries to negotiate with the PCs, allowing them to take the rat familiar in exchange for 6 days' worth of tasty rations or 200 gp worth of treasure. PCs can bargain with it; a successful Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check (opposed by

the mimic's untrained Sense Motive check) can convince that mimic to reduce its demands by half.

Development: The PCs can pry some useful information from the mimic at no cost. It knows the following:

- The skulks raid the surface for slaves and hand them off to some hobgoblins, who then take the slaves to a place called the Malachite Fortress.

- The skulks work with a gang of "dark ones" led by a dark stalker named Yuathyb. They all work for an Underdark slaver named Kazmojen. Kazmojen pays them a share of the proceeds from his sales, and the skulks and dark ones keep whatever they pilfer from the city above.

- Another mimic used to lair here as well, but a pair of hobgoblins working for Kazmojen "offered it a job" guarding treasure in Kazmojen's stronghold. The hobgoblins showed up several weeks ago and haven't returned since. The other mimic is a particularly mean and greedy specimen.

Ad-hoc XP Award: If the PCs successfully negotiate with the mimic, award them experience as if they'd defeated it in combat.

J61. SECRET ROOM WITH SLIME (EL 2)

This dusty 10-foot-by-20-foot hall has secret doors set in the north and east walls (leading to areas J2 and J63, respectively).

Trap: Opening the secret door in the east wall triggers a 10-foot-square, 10-foot-deep pit trap that fills the eastern half of the hall. The floor of the pit contains a 2-inch thick layer of black, acidic slime that deals 1d6 points of acid damage per round of contact. Raising the secret lever in area J62 closes the pit doors and locks them; pulling the lever down again resets the trap.

The skulks safely bypass the trap by knocking three times on the secret door; this alerts the hobgoblins in area J63, one of whom raises the lever in area J62.

➤ **Slime Pit (10 feet deep):** CR 2; 1d6 points of falling damage plus 1d6 acid (slime); Reflex save (DC 15) negates; Search (DC 19); Disable Device (DC 19); manual reset.

Development: Opening the secret door alerts the hobgoblin guards in area J63, who hurl their javelins at PCs in the pit or on the other side of the pit, gaining one-half cover from the secret door.

J62. HIDDEN SLIME PIT LEVER

A trail of boot prints through the dust lead from the secret door to a wooden level jutting from an iron plate bolted to the north wall. When the lever is in the "up" position, the doors to the pit trap in area J62 are locked shut. When the lever is in the "down" position, the pit trap is active. The room is otherwise empty.

J63. ELEVATOR SHAFT (EL 1)

The floor of this octagonal room is actually a large wooden platform supported by taut iron chains looped over eight enormous pulleys bolted to the 15-foot-high ceiling. One end of each chain is fastened to a corner of the platform, while the other end drops through a hole in the platform, connected to something far below.

Set into the northeast wall is an iron panel with an iron lever jutting from it.

The wooden floor of this room is actually an elevator that descends 200 feet to area **M1** of Kazmojen's fortress (see **Chapter Four**, below). When the iron lever is pulled down, the chains and pulleys lower the floor at a speed of 20 feet per round. Thus, it takes the elevator 10 rounds (1 minute) to reach area **M1**.

Creatures: Standing guard on the elevator are two hobgoblins dressed in banded mail and carrying longswords, javelins, and small steel shields.

➤ **Hobgoblins (2):** hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 119 except AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17.

Possessions: Banded mail, small steel shield, longsword, 4 javelins, pouch containing 1d10 × 10 sp and 1d10 × 5 gp.

Tactics: The hobgoblins fight to the death. However, a charmed hobgoblin can be persuaded to escort the PCs to Kazmojen; this requires a successful Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check (DC 15).

CHAPTER FOUR: KAZMOJEN'S BAZAAR

Two hundred feet below the gnomish enclave of Jzadirune lies the Malachite Fortress, a stronghold built by dwarves and gnomes to guard against incursions from the Underdark. When the gnomes abandoned Jzadirune, they left the dwarves to maintain the Malachite Fortress. Their leader, a righteous dwarven defender named Zenith Splintershield, foolishly decided to wage a campaign against the Underdark. He took his best fighting dwarves into the bowels of the world and was never seen again.

The half-dwarf Kazmojen came to the Malachite Fortress one year ago with a small force of hobgoblins, convinced the few remaining defenders to surrender, and incarcerated them. He has spent the past year building his slave trade business, fortifying his hold on the fortress, and cultivating a loyal clientele.

Not long after he began plundering Cauldron for worthy slaves, Kazmojen received a visit from Lord Vhalantru. The beholder agreed to let Kazmojen continue his raids in exchange for information on various "movers and shakers" in the Underdark. Kazmojen receives this information from many of his clients, among them a vile durzagon (half-fiend duergar) named Pyllrak Shyraat.

PCs who come to the Malachite Fortress must deal with Kazmojen, his hobgoblin allies, and the durzagon Pyllrak (who is interested in buying the four children plucked from the Lantern Street Orphanage). They also appear at an auspicious time, as Lord Vhalantru himself appears to claim the young boy Terrem, whose destiny lies elsewhere. . . .

THE MALACHITE FORTRESS

The walls, floors, and ceilings inside the Malachite Fortress are carved from black stone and smoothly polished. The vertical surfaces cannot be climbed without the aid of climbing gear or magic (such as a *spider climb* spell).

Unless stated otherwise, all rooms and corridors in the Malachite Fortress are unlit. Most corridors have empty sconces along the walls (for torches), while most rooms have iron-wrought cages dangling from ceiling chains (for trapping fire beetles).

Unless stated otherwise, the ceilings in most areas are 20 feet high and vaulted.

Doors: The Malachite Fortress features three kinds of doors: strong wooden single doors with iron hinges and reinforcements, heavy iron doors with iron hinges, and stone secret doors. Assume doors are unlocked unless specified otherwise.

Secret doors blend almost seamlessly with the surrounding stonework, are soundproof, and require a successful Search check (DC 20) to locate. Secret doors have hidden hinges on one side or the other and are spring-loaded so that they close automatically unless held or wedged open.

Because the secret doors are soundproof, any Listen checks made to hear things on the other side of a closed secret door automatically fail.

❖ **Strong Wooden Door:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 25; good lock (Open Lock, DC 30).

❖ **Iron Doors:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; break DC 28; can be sealed shut with sliding iron bar (Disable Device, DC 26).

❖ **Stone Secret Door:** 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; break DC 28.

CAPTURED!

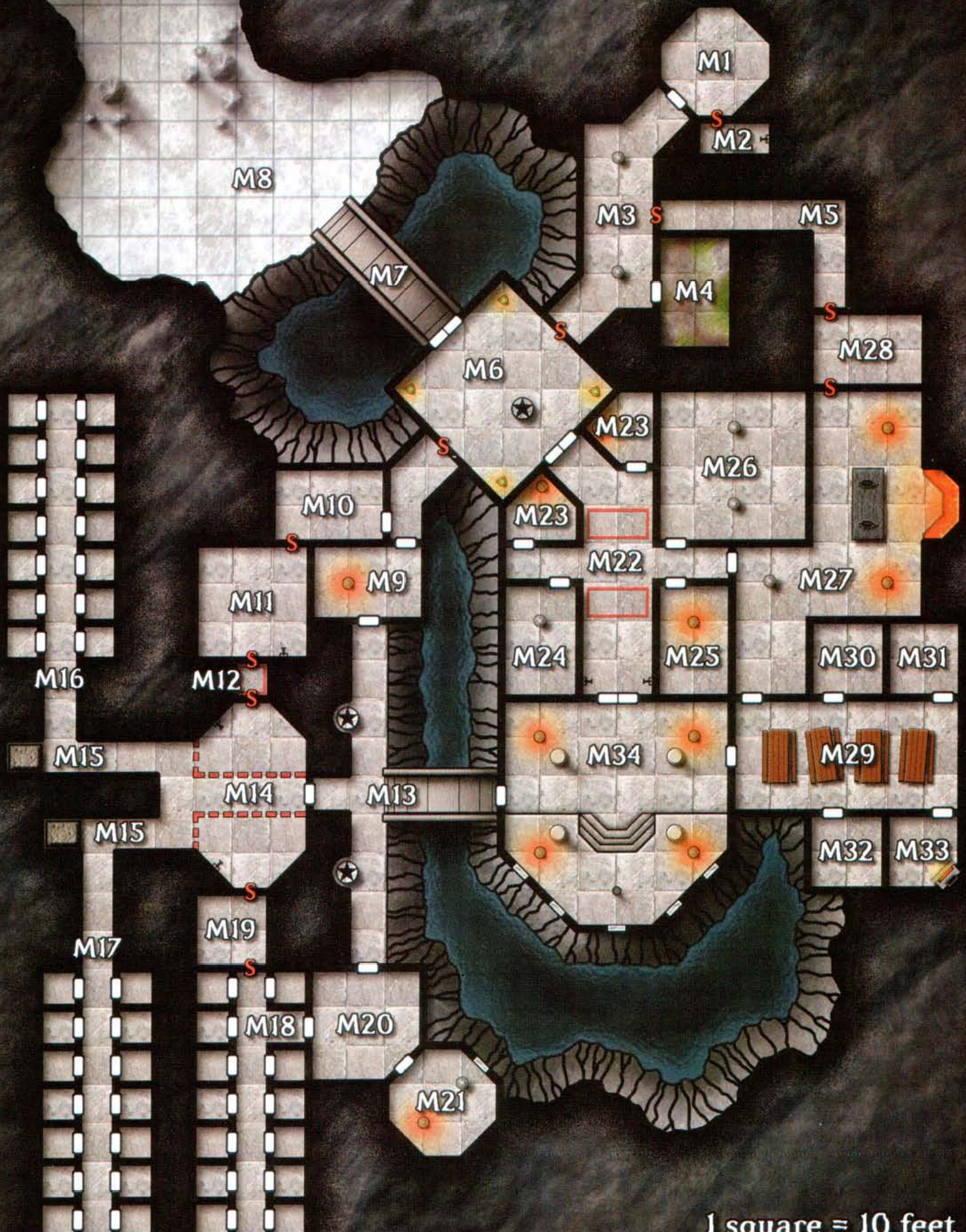
The PCs face many perils as they explore the Malachite Fortress, particularly if they raise a general alarm and bring all of the fortress's defenses down on them at once. At some point during the adventure, the PCs might be captured or knocked unconscious. In either case, the adventure doesn't end.

Once Kazmojen learns of the PCs, he views them more as commodities than threats. He would rather incarcerate them and sell them as slaves than simply kill and loot them. Captured PCs are dragged to area **M18** and imprisoned in individual cells, where they are held for days or weeks before an interested Underdark client arrives in search of new slaves. The PCs' mundane gear is stashed in area **M19**, while their more valuable treasures are added to Kazmojen's trove in area **M11**.

Food and water is passed to the PCs through the barred windows in their cell doors, but occasionally their jailers might haul one of them to the torture chamber (area **M22**) for an hour of pointless interrogation. If the PCs are unable to mount their own escape, days or weeks might drift by before fortune smiles on them. The half-elves Fario and Fellian might come to their rescue (see **Chapter One** for details), or the PCs might be sold in chains to Pyllrak Shyraat, a derro wizard, a barghest, or some other visiting flunky of a greater Underdark power. Once free of the Malachite Fortress, they might find freedom easier to achieve.

Malachite Fortress

←
To Underdark



1 square = 10 feet

WEST

KEY TO THE FORTRESS (AREAS M1–M34)

The following encounters are keyed to the map of the Malachite Fortress—Kazmojen's stronghold.

M1. ELEVATOR SHAFT

If the PCs use the elevator to descend this shaft, read or paraphrase the following text:

The walls turn from bare gray stone to polished black malachite. After a minute-long descent down the dark shaft, the wooden floor shudders as it comes to rest, and the chains stop rattling.

Above you, the shaft rises into darkness. The only exit from this room appears to be an iron-reinforced wooden door set into one wall.

A secret door in the south wall leads to area M2. PCs can ascend the shaft using the elevator (by pulling the lever in area M2). They can also clamber up the chains and use the nearby walls to brace their ascent (Climb check, DC 5) or ascend using magic.

M2. SECRET LEVER

The secret door opens into a cold, dark room. An iron lever juts from an iron plate bolted to the eastern wall.

When the elevator is down, so is the lever. Shifting the lever into the "up" position causes loud grinding noises as iron winches hidden deep behind the walls prepare to hoist the wooden elevator floor in area M1 back to the top of the shaft.

Two rounds after the lever is pulled up, the wooden floor in area M1 begins ascending the elevator shaft, reaching area J63 in 10 rounds. If the lever is pulled down, the floor starts to descend again.

M3. STONY GREETINGS (EL 2)

The ceiling of this 20-foot-wide hall rises to an apex 20 feet overhead. The floor, walls, and vaulted ceiling are composed of smooth black stone that almost seems to absorb light. Two cylindrical iron cages, each one 5 feet tall and 2 feet wide, dangle from the ceiling by iron chains. The base of each cage hangs 5 feet above the floor.

A strange sculpture stands in the middle of the hall between the two cages: a 5-foot tall column of roughly hewn gray stone covered with sharp protrusions. Four crystal-tipped appendages jut from the stony mass, each one pointing in a different direction.

The "strange sculpture" is the **Creature**. The empty iron cages were designed to hold giant fire beetles, which in turn provided the hall with illumination. Both cages are currently empty.

Creature: A stone spike guards this hall. One of the stranger creatures brought to the fortress by Kazmojen, it usually waits

until intruders pass beyond the first iron cage before attacking. It does not attack if one or both hobgoblins from area J63 accompany the party, instead passing itself off as an inanimate piece of décor.

➤ **Stone Spike:** hp 25; *Monster Manual* II 191 or see the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement.

Tactics: The stone spike uses straightforward tactics, attacking with two of its crystal-tipped appendages and using Power Attack to bolster its damage against poorly armored foes.

Development: Sounds of combat in this area attract the attention of the fortress's major-domo, Xukasuk (see area M4 for details). Xukasuk enters the hall 1 round after battle erupts.

M4. MAJOR-DOMO'S QUARTERS (EL 3)

A putrid stench fills your nostrils. The rectangular chamber beyond is splattered wall-to-wall with filth, bile, bones, and other disgusting remains. Although the room contains no furnishings per se, some of the older refuse has hardened into a crude chair, and an iron chest rests half-buried in a small mound of dung in the southeast corner.

Among Kazmojen's loyal servitors is the repulsive Xukasuk, an otyugh *polymorphed* into a gangly ogre by a magical trap. Xukasuk lairs here, devouring his garbage, gathering waste from other areas of the fortress to replenish his supply, and haphazardly guarding the locked iron chest at the back of the room (see **Treasure** below).

Characters who explore the room or wade through the filth to reach the chest must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 12) or contract filth fever (see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, page 75, for details).

Creature: The vile Xukasuk enjoys his new form. In combat, he wields an enormous filth-encrusted falchion (with which he has recently gained proficiency). Like all otyughs, Xukasuk speaks Common, greeting intruders with the cheery catchphrase, "More carrion for my larder! Very nice."

Xukasuk retains his otyugh statistics (including ability scores), his darkvision, and his scent special quality, but loses his improved grab, constrict, and disease special attacks. He wears mangy hide armor that stacks with his natural armor.

Xukasuk retains his ogre form if slain. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 20) returns Xukasuk to his true form.

➤ **Xukasuk, Ogre (polymorphed otyugh):** CR 3; Large giant (formerly Large aberration); HD 6d8+6; hp 33; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21; BAB +4; Grap +8; Atk +3 melee (2d6/18–20, ogre-sized falchion) or +3 ranged; Face/Reach 5 ft. across/10 ft.; SQ darkvision 60 ft., scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +5, Listen +6, Spot +9. **Feats:** Alertness, Martial Weapon Proficiency (two-handed melee weapons).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Hide armor, great falchion, iron key to locked iron chest (see **Treasure** below), iron key to all of the giant fire beetle cages in the fortress.

Treasure: The iron chest is locked (Open Lock, DC 30) and contains the following treasure:

- 5,990 cp and 2,248 sp (loose)
- 2 deep green spinels (worth 100 gp each)
- A fungi flask containing a *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

Ad-hoc XP Award: An otyugh is usually a CR 4 monster. However, Xukusus lost his otyugh special attacks. In his ogre form, he is considered a CR 3 encounter.

M5. SECRET CORRIDOR

This unlit, L-shaped corridor connects areas M3 and M28. The hall enables fortress guards to move quickly between different areas of the stronghold.

M6. ZENITH'S HALL (EL 2 AND 3)

The ceiling in this square chamber rises to an apex 30 feet overhead. Great pairs of iron doors are set into opposite-facing walls, although only the northwest doors are sealed with a heavy iron bar.

Each corner of the room holds a 2-foot-tall stone brazier carved in the likeness of an ovoid creature with three stubby legs, three eyes, and three spindly arms spaced equidistantly around its pebbly body. Smoke issues from a gaping mouth atop the creature's "head." A dark, pungent haze fills the room.

A 9-foot-tall gray stone statue of a dwarven warrior stands before the southeast set of iron doors, facing northeast. The dwarf stares blankly forward, two glistening black gems embedded in his eyes, a spiked helmet resting atop his formidable brow. His armor bears graven glyphs, and a shield is slung over his back. His stony gauntlets rest on the handle of a stone greataxe etched with fiery patterns. The head of the weapon is planted firmly on the floor.

Draped over the statue is a mass of iron chains ending in nasty barbs, spikes, hooks, and blades. Some of them are coiled around the statue's arms and legs to keep them from sliding off.

Four hobgoblins stand guard here: two flanking each set of iron doors. Eyeholes in the northwest set of doors allow them and other creatures to peer into area M7. The iron bar that binds the northwest set of doors can be slid to one side with ease. The double doors are not otherwise locked.

The mass of chains coiled around the statue is another guardian placed here by Kazmojen, but it attacks only when specific conditions are met (see **Creatures**, below, for details).

The stone braziers look like xorns. The coals that burn in them are sprinkled with dried subterranean plants that exude a horrible stench when burned.

The statue depicts Zenith Splintershield, the noble dwarven defender who once commanded the fortress garrison. The gems embedded in its eye sockets are held in place with *sovereign glue* and can be easily removed with *universal solvent* is applied; prying them loose without applying magical solvent

damages them and reduces their value to one-tenth normal. The gems represent the only **Treasure** to be found here.

Creatures: The four hobgoblins keep their eyes and ears open for Underdark visitors, escorting Kazmojen's clients from area M7 to prearranged quarters (areas M23–M24) or their master's slave bazaar (area M34). The hobgoblins here attack any intruders who are not accompanied by a hobgoblin escort.

The mass of chains draped over the statue is an animated construct given to Kazmojen by a powerful Underdark wizard. The animated mass of chains stirs only if it or the statue is disturbed, or if Kazmojen himself commands it to attack. It moves by shambling across the floor.

➤ **Hobgoblins (4):** hp 5 each; see area J63 for statistics and possessions.

➤ **Animated Mass of Chains:** CR 3; Large Construct; HD 4d10+15; hp 37; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (can't run), climb 10 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; BAB +3; Grap +10; Atk +5 melee (1d8+3, 3 chain rakes); Face/Reach 5 ft. across/10 ft.; SA constrict 1d8+4; SQ hardness 10, construct traits; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will –4; Str 16, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Constrict (Ex): The mass of chains can attempt to grapple with one or more of its three chain attacks during any given round. It can only attempt to grapple Large creatures or smaller, and a grappled opponent takes 1d8+4 points of constriction damage each round the grapple is maintained.

Treasure: The two black sapphires set into the statue's eye sockets are worth 1,000 gp apiece intact.

Development: The southeast doors are designed to allow sound to pass through them; the guards in area M21 hear sounds of combat emanating from this room and alert Kazmojen in area M34, but otherwise remain at their posts.

M7. ARCHED STONE BRIDGE

A stone bridge arches across a chasm. Thirty feet below lies a pool of still black water.

The stone bridge is secure and enclosed on each side by a 2-foot-high stone railing. Anyone who falls from the bridge lands in a 70-foot-deep pool of icy water. Mineral deposits have turned the water black, but the real danger comes from the water's cold temperature; see "Water Dangers" in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, page 85, for drowning and hypothermia rules, if they become necessary.

The "stony black fangs" are harmless stalactites.

M8. TO THE UNDERDARK (EL VARIES)

A wide tunnel at the back of this dark, cold cavern slopes down into darkness. A small forest of stalagmites sprouts from the uneven floor, but the cavern otherwise appears empty.

The tunnel leads to a vast network of caverns called the Underdark. Underdark denizens such as Pyllrak Shyraat (see M34) travel this tunnel whenever they visit the Malachite Fortress to secure new slaves. What the PCs might find as they explore the Underdark is beyond the scope of this adventure. You can either indulge the PCs' curiosity or gently persuade

them to return to the Malachite Fortress.

Development: The way to discourage PCs from exploring too much of the Underdark is to make the perils great and the treasure sparse. Here are some possible threats the PCs might encounter during their initial explorations:

- A phantom fungus (EL 3)
- A stone "toll bridge" guarded by a stubborn and greedy earth mephit (EL 3)
- A roving group of four darkmantles, derro, grimlocks, or troglodytes (EL 4)
- A swarm of twelve giant fire beetles that crawl up from a natural pit (EL 4)
- A pair of hungry gricks (EL 5)
- Six goblins and their barghest leader (EL 5)
- A pair of roving carrion crawlers (EL 6)
- A cluster of three hungry minor xorns demanding tribute in the form of precious metals or gems (EL 6).

M9. GUARD BARRACKS (EL 2)

A hellish glow fills this room, emanating from a 2-foot-long beetle imprisoned in an iron-wrought cage suspended from the ceiling. Glands above the beetle's eyes shed the light, illuminating the sparse furnishings of this rectangular chamber. Four malachite slabs, each one covered with a pallet of greenish-black moss, jut from the walls. A wooden table stands in the middle of the room, surrounded by four chairs. The table bears four empty clay flagons and an iron cask.

This simply furnished chamber is occupied. The moss-covered slabs serve as beds for the guards stationed here.

Creatures: Four hobgoblins lair here. Two are awake and seated at the table, drinking mead from the iron cask. The other two are asleep on their beds, snoring loudly. The caged fire beetle presents no threat unless it is released, in which case it attacks a random target.

➤ **Hobgoblins (4):** hp 5 each; see area J63 for complete statistics and possessions.

➤ **Giant Fire Beetle:** hp 4; *Monster Manual* 206.

Tactics: At the first sign of trouble, the alert guards grab their weapons and wake their sleeping comrades. The awakened guards spend another round gathering their gear and "shaking out the cobwebs" from having imbibed too much bad mead. The hobgoblins flank foes where appropriate.

M10. KAZMOJEN'S QUARTERS

This room is horribly appointed. The walls are carved with tall, narrow niches piled high with skulls, and the skinned hides of various monsters hang on the bare walls between them. A large chair made of monster skins stretched over a framework of bones stands in the middle of the room. A draconic skull surmounts the chair, empty eye sockets staring at you menacingly. Behind the chair, near the far wall, a bed of soft moss and fungi sprouts from a large heap of carrion. A few bones lie scattered around the bed.

Kazmojen sleeps on the bed of moss, fungi, and carrion and sits in the chair during private meetings with Lord Vhalantru and various sordid Underdark clients.

Kazmojen collects and displays the skulls and hides of past victims. The walls are adorned with the skinned hides of a basilisk, digester, displacer beast, ettercap, medusa, and salamander. The skulls are mostly goblinoid but also include a few gnome, dwarf, duergar, dark elf, grimlock, and troglodyte skulls. A hydra skull rests atop his "throne of skins and bones."

Characters searching the room find scattered bones, animal droppings, and long quills on the floor—all left by Kazmojen's pet howler.

Kazmojen keeps no valuables here. A secret door in the south wall leads to his hidden treasury (area M11).

M11. SECRET VAULT (EL 4 AND 2)

This 30-foot-square room has no other visible exits. In the middle of the chamber rest three padlocked chests, three casks brimming with coins, a small stone bowl filled with gems, a heap of armor, and two large shields used as trays to hold more coins. Various other trinkets and trophies add to the trove, including a gem-encrusted horn, an ornate walking cane, and an engraved golden gong hanging from an intricately sculpted wooden frame.

An iron lever juts from an iron plate in the south wall. The lever is current in the "down" position.

A mimic protects Kazmojen's trove, although its presence is not obvious (see **Creature**).

The three chests are locked (Open Lock, DC 25), and Kazmojen carries the keys. Closer inspection of the chests reveals that one is iron-bound and has handles on its sides for easy transport. Another is blackened by fire and has a toothy, crescent-shaped grin painted on its front in dried blood. The third has copper fittings, a dagger-shaped symbol carved into its lid, and a hidden **Trap**.

See **Treasure** for a full accounting of the room's precious contents.

The iron lever in the south wall controls the pit trap in area J12. When the lever is raised, the pit locks shut and is safe to cross.

Creature: A mimic has assumed the form of the gold gong and its wooden frame. Kazmojen's allies brought the mimic from Jzadirune (see area J60). It attacks anyone other than Kazmojen who approaches within 5 feet of the hoard.

➤ **Mimic:** hp 52; *Monster Manual* 135.

Tactics: The mimic does not communicate or negotiate with the PCs. It fights until slain.

Trap: The chest with the dagger carved into its lid radiates moderate Evocation magic under the scrutiny of a *detect magic* spell. Anyone who opens the lid releases a spectral dagger that attacks the opener for 7 rounds before disappearing. The dagger cannot switch targets and otherwise behaves exactly as a *spiritual weapon* cast by a 7th-level cleric with 14 Wisdom.

✦ **Spiritual Dagger Trap:** CR 2; +5 melee (1d4+2, spiritual dagger); lasts 7 rounds; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20).

Treasure: The iron-bound chest contains four large iron keys shaped like black demons resting on a bed of 4,225 sp. The keys do not open any doors in the Malachite Fortress but might prove useful elsewhere in the Underdark.

The scorched chest with the bloody smile contains 450 gp, a silver crescent moon pendant on a silver chain (worth 30 gp), and two *potions of darkvision*, all buried under a layer of worthless black iron coins.

The trapped chest contains hundreds of worthless glass beads. However, the beads can be poured over a 20-foot-square area, requiring any creature that moves across them at normal speed or faster to succeed at a Reflex save (DC 12) or fall prone.

Other treasures found here include the following:

- An oak cask containing 2,219 cp
- A fungal cask containing 696 sp and 1,451 cp
- An iron cask containing 522 gp and 900 sp
- A masterwork chain shirt (worth 250 gp)
- A Medium-size suit of masterwork studded leather armor (worth 175 gp)
- A mighty composite shortbow [+2] (worth 225 gp)
- A silvered two-bladed sword (worth 110 gp)
- A darkwood shield (worth 257 gp) holding 180 sp
- A large steel shield holding 362 cp
- An engraved stone bowl containing 19 gems: six chunks of blue quartz (worth 10 gp each), four carnelians (worth 50 gp each), four peridots (worth 75 gp each), two white pearls (worth 100 gp each), a pink pearl (worth 250 gp), and two aquamarines (worth 500 gp each). The gems' total value is 2,010 gp.
- An ivory horn set with bloodstones (worth 450 gp)
- An ash walking cane with a silver, angel-shaped handle (worth 55 gp), which unscrews to reveal a tiny compartment containing a *potion of cure moderate wounds* in a vial. The cane belongs to Coryston Pike (see area M21).

M12. TRAPPED ROOM (EL 2)

Located between two secret doors, this 10-foot square room contains a **Trap**.

Trap: The floor of this room is actually the lid of a 20-foot-deep spiked pit. It opens when the first character sets foot in the room. The pit's lid can be locked shut by raising the lever in area M11. The pit trap can be closed and the trap reset by raising and lowering the lever.

The character who trips the trap can avoid falling in the pit by succeeding at a Reflex save (DC 15).

✦ **Spiked Pit (20 feet deep):** CR 2; 2d6 points of damage (fall) plus +3 melee (1d4 points of piercing damage, 1d4 spikes); Reflex save (DC 15) prevents fall; Search (DC 17); Disable Device (DC 17).

M13. ARCHED BRIDGE AND STATUES

An arched stone bridge connects to a 10-foot-wide causeway that spans one wall of a great cavern. Fused with the rough-

hewn cavern walls are smooth walls of dull black stone, some with doors and windows set into them. A pair of 9-foot tall statues carved from white marble stand in alcoves on each side of a reinforced wooden door set deep into the west wall. The statues depict a male and female dwarf clad in armor, each of which brandishes an urgrosh.

The cavern plunges 30 feet below the level of the causeway, ending in a pool of still, black water.

The arched bridge leads to a door that opens into area M34. Opposite this door is another portal opening into area M14. The dwarf statues, though fearsome in stature and well crafted, are unremarkable.

Anyone who falls from the bridge or causeway lands in a 40-foot-deep pool of icy water. See "Water Dangers" in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* for drowning and hypothermia rules, if they become necessary.

Development: Loud noises in this cavern can be heard by the hobgoblin guards in areas M9, M21, and M34, who investigate the following round.

M14. AUTOMATON GUARDS (EL 5)

Illusory wall spells separate this room into a 10-foot-wide corridor with two chambers to the north and south. The *illusory walls* are represented as dotted lines on the map. Although the walls appear solid and real, touching them reveals their truly insubstantial nature.

Characters who enter this room from the north or south find themselves in a 20-foot-by-30-foot room bound by the *illusory walls*. They also see one of two automatons standing guard here (see **Creatures**, below).

The room contains no furnishings. Wooden levers protrude from iron panels bolted to the northwest and southwest walls. The levers are currently in the "up" position; pulling them down causes the stone blocks in area M15 to sealing off the western cellblocks (areas M16 and M17).

Creatures: Two hammerer automatons guard this chamber. One stands by the north lever, while the other stands beside the south lever. A rust monster damaged both constructs several years ago, and no one has bothered to repair them.

✦ **Hammerer Automatons (2):** hp 25, 22; *Monster Manual* II 27 or see the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement.

Tactics: If someone other than Kazmojen, a hobgoblin, or an ogre enters this room, the automatons have instructions to pull down the levers, sealing off the western cellblocks. Once the levers have been pulled, the automatons attack intruders, striking from behind the *illusory walls*.

A hammerer attempts to grapple the nearest foe with its pincer. If it succeeds, it smashes the trapped victim with its hammer on subsequent rounds (no attack roll required) until the victim is dead or goes limp, at which point it releases its prey and seeks out its next target. A grappled character can trick the automaton into releasing its hold by using a full-round action to "play dead." A successful Bluff check (opposed by the

hammerer's Wisdom check) fools the hammerer into releasing its hold on its next action and choosing a new target. Presumably, the character playing dead falls prone at the start of the hammerer's turn.

Treasure: The "heart" of each automaton is actually a violet garnet (worth 500 gp). Finding it requires a successful Search check (DC 24).

Development: As long as all doors to this chamber remain closed, sounds of combat emanating from within the room cannot be heard in other areas.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Hammerer automatons are normally CR 4 monsters. However, these ones are already damaged and should be treated as CR 3 creatures.

M15. SLIDING BLOCKS

The corridors leading to the cellblocks (areas M16 and M17) are 10 feet high. Recessed into the walls are two great blocks of malachite on stone rollers. The blocks fit the corridor perfectly, allowing only the slightest gap between it and the surrounding floor, walls, and ceiling.

When the levers in area M14 are pulled, the blocks roll 10 feet to the east, effectively sealing off the cellblocks and trapping the prisoners within. Keeping a block from rolling into place requires a successful Strength check (DC 25); if the check fails, any creature in the space to be occupied by the block is pushed back 10 feet automatically.

A rolled block must be physically pushed back into its niche; this requires a successful Strength check (DC 25). Moving the block is a lot harder from inside the sealed-off cellblock, requiring a DC 30 Strength check.

Development: The stone blocks are a safety measure to prevent prison breaks.

M16. EMPTY CELLBLOCK

This corridor stretches for nearly a 100 feet, ending at a blank wall. In the east and west walls are several 6-foot-tall, 2-foot-wide iron doors with small barred windows at dwarven eye level and kept locked by iron bars. The iron doors are typical except for the 6-inch-wide, 3-inch-high barred windows set into them.

Each 10-foot-square cell contains an uncomfortable stone slab (actually a protrusion of the far wall), an iron chamber pot, a clay jug for holding water, and the occasional gnawed bone, chunk of dried bread, or piece of moldy cheese.

None of the cells is currently occupied.

M17. EMPTY CELLBLOCK

This cellblock is similar in configuration to area M16. No prisoners are currently kept here.

M18. CELLBLOCK

The layout of this corridor is identical to that in area M16. The difference here is that the PCs can hear faint whimpers from down the hall.

The cells are furnished similarly to the ones found in area M16. Attempting to unbar and open a cell door without attracting the attention of the guards in area M20 requires a successful Move Silently check opposed by the guards' Listen checks.

Creatures: Four prisoners, all kidnapped townsfolk, are incarcerated in separate cells. They wear tattered and stained clothes, but any other possessions of possible value or use have been stored in area M19.

Krylskar Endercott (see below for statistics), a 24-year-old male human, remains impertinent and contentious despite a terrific beating given to him by his jailers. Not surprisingly, the scruffy, ornery, and obnoxious loudmouth remains an unsold commodity.

Deven Myrzal (Com1; hp 3), an 18-year-old male human, has lost all hope of being rescued and has endured special torment at the hands of his jailers, who have vowed to eat him if no one buys him as a slave.

Irruth Mercadi (Com1; hp 4), a 36-year-old female human, trembles quietly in a dark corner of her cell, imagining the various horrors that await her.

Jasper Drundlesput (Exp2; hp 6), a 74-year-old gnome, mumbles quietly to himself most of the time. He has used a sharp stone to carve mathematical formulas into the walls of his cell, mostly to pass the idle time.

☛ **Krylskar Endercott, Male Human War1:** CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 1d8+3; hp 10 (currently 5); Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; BAB +1; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d3+1 subdual, unarmed strike) or +1 ranged; AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +3, Intimidate +4, Swim +3. **Feats:** Weapon Focus (longsword), Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Tactics: Deven, Irruth, and Jasper are not much good in a fight, but Krylskar will swing a sword, a chair, or whatever else he can find to win his freedom. He rebukes authority and doesn't take orders well, however.

Development: These prisoners know they are not the only ones being held in the fortress. Four children were recently removed from their cells and taken to the auction chamber (area M34), and six other slaves have been put to work in the forge (area M27). The prisoners know how to get to both rooms from this cellblock.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award the party 100 XP for each prisoner returned to Cauldron alive and 50 XP for each slain prisoner they return to the town for proper burial.

M19. PRISONER GEAR

Beyond the secret door lies a 20-foot-square chamber with a 10-foot-high ceiling. Two stone slabs jutting from the west wall bear a number of common items, from articles of clothing to daggers.

Prisoners detained in the cellblocks are stripped of all belongings; unnecessary clothing and other mundane equipment is stored here. PCs searching the tables find several bundled outfits, as well as vests, cloaks, belts, slippers, and boots. The room also contains some equipment taken from captured Underdark denizens, who are more likely to carry weapons and armor than city-dwelling folk; see **Treasure**, below, for details.

Treasure: Among the worthless clothing and personal effects, PCs find the following gear:

- A Small suit of studded leather armor
- A Medium-size bloodstained chain shirt
- A blood-encrusted short sword
- 2 longswords
- A leather bag of caltrops
- A 30-foot length of hemp rope
- 3 torches
- An empty backpack
- Any items worth 100 gp or less taken from captured PCs.

M20. JAILERS' QUARTERS (EL 1)

Moss pallets cover five malachite slabs that protrude from the walls of this rank chamber. A somewhat mistreated wooden table and four chairs stand in the middle of the room. A rack of javelins occupies the northeast corner.

The moss-covered slabs serve as beds for the chief jailer and his four subordinates—all hobgoblins. Only two hobgoblins are in the room at present, but the others are close by in area M21.

The weapon rack in the northeast corner holds 16 normal javelins.

Creatures: Two hobgoblins rest here. Although they are lying down, they are kept awake by the sounds of torture in area M21.

➤ **Hobgoblins (2):** hp 5 each; see area J63 for complete statistics and possessions.

Tactics: If anyone enters the room or if they hear loud noises in area M13 or M18, the two hobgoblins grab their swords and shout for reinforcements. They like to flank foes in combat.

Development: Any disturbance in this room attracts the monsters in area M21, who appear 1 round later.

M21. TORTURE CHAMBER (EL 2)

Ghastly furnishings decorate this hellishly lit chamber. Glowing-hot coals fill the black belly of a 6-foot-diameter iron oven that dominates the room. Three branding irons lie half-immersed in the coals. Two iron cages hang from the ceiling on either side of the oven: One holds an enormous beetle with red-glowing glands, and the other holds a pile of bones and skulls. The latter cage hangs by a narrow window that looks out into a dark cavern. Against the south wall, a haggard woman sits in a tall, iron-wrought chair, metal clamps around her wrists, ankles, and neck.

Unless a disturbance lures them elsewhere, Kazmojen's chief jailer and two other hobgoblins lurk here. They are killing time by torturing one of their master's prisoners—an attractive middle-aged woman named Coryston Pike. Her shackles are held shut with iron pins, which can be easily removed to set her free.

The caged giant fire beetle poses no threat as long as it remains confined. The other cage contains bones from many different creatures, placed here to add to the décor.

Creatures: The chief jailer is an ebon-skinned hobgoblin with one arm named Zarkad; he impressed Kazmojen in battle despite his apparent infirmity. The other two hobgoblins are typical of their kind.

Coryston Pike gave up adventuring 13 years ago after a marauding troll tore her comrades to pieces and nearly did the same to her. She walks with a limp—a painful reminder of her encounter with the troll. If the PCs set her free, she assists them any way she can.

➤ **Giant Fire Beetle:** hp 4; *Monster Manual* 206.

➤ **Hobgoblins (2):** hp 5 each; see area J63 for complete statistics and possessions.

➤ **Zarkad, Male Hobgoblin War2:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (hobgoblin); HD 2d8+2; hp 15; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; BAB +2; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d8/19–20, longsword) or +3 ranged (1d6, javelin); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Hide –3, Intimidate +3, Listen +3, Move Silently –1, Spot +3. **Feats:** Alertness.

Languages: Goblin.

Possessions: Banded mail, longsword, 2 javelins, two *potions of cure light wounds*, pouch containing 15 gp and 88 sp.

➤ **Coryston Pike, Female Human Rog1/Sor2:** CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 1d6+1 plus 2d4+2; hp 17 (currently 5); Init +2; Spd 20 ft. (limp); AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; BAB +1; Grap +0; Atk +0 melee (1d3–1 subdual, unarmed strike) or +3 ranged; SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ trapfinding; AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +6, Concentration +5, Disable Device +6, Disguise +6, Gather Information +6, Hide +6, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (local) +5, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +6, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +3, Tumble +6. **Feats:** Great Fortitude, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

Spells Known (6/5; base save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*daze*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*; 1st—*change self*, *magic missile*.

Languages: Common, Elven.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award the party 150 XP if Coryston is returned to Cauldron alive or 75 XP if the PCs return her dead body to the town for proper burial.

M22. MAIN HALL (EL 2+)

The following boxed text assumes the PCs enter the hall from area M6:

This dark hall widens to 20 feet and ends at a large set of iron doors. Two wooden levers are set into opposite walls on either side of the double doors. Ten-foot-wide passages branch to the east and west.

This hall is guarded and trapped. If the PCs enter the hall with a *charmed* hobgoblin escort, they are allowed to traverse the hall and knock on the doors leading to Kazmojen's auction chamber (area M34). If the PCs enter the hall unescorted, they are attacked.

Creatures: Two hobgoblin guards stand at the south end of the hall, on either side of the iron double doors leading to area M34. Their darkvision allows them to see the length of the hall.

➤ **Hobgoblins (2):** hp 5 each; see area J63 for complete statistics.

Possessions: Banded mail, longsword, longbow with 20 arrows, 4 javelins, pouch containing 1d10 × 10 sp and 1d10 × 5 gp.

Tactics: If they spot the PCs, the hobgoblins bang on the double doors and shout "Croleks!" ("Intruders!"), alerting the occupants of areas M26 and M34. They then begin shooting arrows at the intruders.

On the second round, four hobgoblins from area M26 enter the hall, stopping just short of the pit traps (see **Trap**, below). The two archers ready actions to pull down the levers, opening the pit traps when they think they can catch the most intruders.

The hobgoblins try to catch as many PCs as possible in the pit traps, then begin hurling javelins down at them. Once the levers are pulled, the two archers resume shooting arrows at PCs still in the hall proper.

Trap: The hall contains two 10-foot-by-20-foot pit traps. The pits open when the levers by the southern doors are pulled; the west lever opens the northernmost pit, and the east lever opens the southernmost pit.

Each pit is 10 feet deep and lined with spikes. Any PC standing on a pit when it opens must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 15) or fall in, taking damage from the fall and the spikes.

The inside walls of the pit are polished smooth and cannot be climbed without climbing gear.

The pit lids can be closed and locked by pulling up the levers, although the lids are heavy and take a round to close.

➤ **Spiked Pits (10 feet deep):** CR 1; 1d6 points of damage (fall) plus +3 melee (1d4 points of piercing damage, 1d4 spikes); Reflex save (DC 15) prevents fall; Search (DC 17); Disable Device (DC 17).

Development: When they hear the call to arms, the two hobgoblins in area M34 watch the battle unfold through tiny eyeholes in the southern set of double doors. If the hall guards are overwhelmed, the hobgoblins in area M34 bar the double doors leading to that area and use a circuitous route (through areas M29 and M27) to reach the interlopers. Kazmojen remains in area M34.

M23. GUEST QUARTERS

An iron cage dangles from the ceiling in one corner of this room. Trapped inside the cage, a large beetle with glowing glands bathes the room in an infernal light. The room contains a pair of simple beds and a table with two chairs.

These two rooms are set aside for Kazmojen's clients. Neither room is currently in use.

Creature: If released, the caged beetle attacks the nearest creature.

➤ **Giant Fire Beetle:** hp 4; *Monster Manual* 206.

Ad-hoc XP Award: PCs do not receive experience for releasing and killing the giant fire beetle.

M24. GUEST QUARTERS

Kazmojen reserves this room for special clients, but it is currently not in use. An empty iron cage dangles from the ceiling in one corner. The room's furnishings include a large bed, its corner posts shaped like dwarven sentinels. Three cots, a table, and four chairs fill out the décor.

M25. PYLLRAK'S QUARTERS (EL 2)

An iron cage dangles from the ceiling in one corner of this rectangular chamber. Trapped inside are two enormous beetles that shed a hellish light. The room's furnishings include a large bed covered with animal hides, its corner posts shaped like dwarven sentinels. Next to the bed sits an iron trunk with claw-shaped feet and four chains bolted to its sides. Two horrid blobs of flesh assume vaguely humanoid forms nearby and begin shambling toward you.

Pyllrak Shyraat, one of Kazmojen's best clients, claims this room as his own.

The iron chest is locked (Open Lock, DC 25) and contains Pyllrak's supplies and personal effects (see **Treasure**, below). The four chains attached to the chest end in shackles; Pyllrak has keys for the shackles, which he uses to bind his slaves during long treks through the Underdark.

Creatures: The two "horrid blobs of flesh" are Pyllrak's lemure thralls. They have orders to attack anyone other than Pyllrak who enters the room.

➤ **Lemures (2):** hp 11, 8; *Monster Manual* 48.

Treasure: Pyllrak's locked trunk contains the following items:

- An explorer's outfit
- A bedroll
- A jug of wine
- A full waterskin
- 4 spare sets of manacles (worth 15 gp each)
- 4 small empty sacks
- 2 potions of cure light wounds.

M26. MAIN BARRACKS (EL 2)

The door to this room is slightly ajar, allowing the guards within to hear cries of alarm in area M22.

These barracks, which hold four rows of iron-wrought bunkbeds, can accommodate 32 guards, although only half that many hobgoblins sleep here. The bunks are sized for dwarves, much to the hobgoblins' chagrin. Two empty iron cages hang from the ceiling.

Creatures: Four hobgoblins rest here, their weapons leaning against their bunks or lying on the floor nearby. They respond quickly to cries of alarm or sounds of battle in area M22.

➤ **Hobgoblins (4):** hp 5 each; see area J63 for complete statistics and possessions.

M27. FORGE (EL 3)

PCs who listen at the west or south door can hear the sounds of a roaring fire and hammers striking metal. The north secret door is soundproof.

This smithy is unpleasantly warm and filled with the stench of hot metal and ash. A blazing forge dominates the east wall, flanked by malachite caryatids depicting dwarven metalsmiths. In front of the hearth rests a 10-foot-wide, 20-foot-long slab of gray stone surmounted by two black anvils. Barrels of water and metalsmithing tools rest nearby.

Two cylindrical iron cages, each one 5 feet tall and 2 feet wide, dangle from the ceiling by iron chains. The bottoms of the cages hang 5 feet above the floor, and the giant fire beetles locked within them shed a lurid orange glow.

Atop the slab, a female dwarf and three goblins hammer away at pair of newly forged javelins while two halflings sit on the floor nearby, linking together tiny chains for what will ultimately become a suit of armor. The dwarf and halflings have manacles binding their ankles. Supervising them are four armored hobgoblins.

Dwarves used the forge to craft armor and weapons, and Kazmojen has just begun using the room for a similar purpose. His slaves are not well trained in the art of metalsmithing, however, and progress has been slow.

One of the hobgoblins carries the key that unlocks the slaves' manacles. Otherwise, the manacles must be picked, smashed, or magically opened.

➤ **Iron Manacles:** Hardness 10; hp 10; break DC 26; Escape Artist (DC 30); Open Lock (DC 25).

Creatures: The four hobgoblins are tired of watching the slaves work. The loud hammering and roaring fire prevent them from hearing cries of alarm elsewhere in the fortress.

The three goblins fight alongside the hobgoblins. If all of the hobgoblins are slain, the goblins surrender. They can be goaded into helping the PCs, but they remain untrustworthy and turn against the PCs to save their skins.

The dwarf and halflings are Cauldron townsfolk. They wear tattered clothes, but any other possessions of possible value or use have been stored in area M19.

Sondor Ironfold (Com1; hp 4), a 127-year-old female dwarf, she came here with her husband, who was sold away four weeks ago. She has felt alone ever since.

Jeneer Everdawn (Com1; hp 2; Appraise +4), a 42-year-old male halfling, is delirious with fear. Red rings around his eyes attest to the nightmares that consume his sleep.

Maple (see below for statistics), a 32-year-old female halfling, constantly looks for a way to escape captivity. Escape and self-preservation are always foremost in her mind. She also speaks Goblin, so she secretly knows what her captors are saying.

If released from their cages, the giant fire beetles attack nearby targets indiscriminately.

➤ **Hobgoblins (4):** hp 5 each; see area J63 for complete statistics and possessions.

➤ **Goblins (3):** hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 107.

➤ **Maple, Female Halfling Rogr:** CR 1; Small Humanoid (halfling); HD 1d6+1; hp 5; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 11; BAB +0; Grap -5; Atk +0 melee (1d2-1 subdual, unarmed strike) or +4 ranged; SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ trapfinding; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +0; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +3, Climb +1, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +7, Hide +11, Jump +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +7, Pick Pocket (Sleight of Hand) +7, Search +5, Tumble +7. **Feats:** Improved Initiative.

Languages: Common, Goblin, Halfling.

➤ **Giant Fire Beetles (3):** hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 206.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award the party 100 XP for each townsfolk returned to Cauldron alive, or 50 XP for each dead NPC returned to the town for proper burial.

M28. SECRET ARMORY

Dozens of forged weapons are neatly arrayed on four wrought-iron weapon racks standing in the middle of this floor. Pushed against the east wall are two tables covered with suits of armor.

Treasure: Characters who search this room find the following equipment:

- 2 Medium-size chain shirts (worth 100 gp)
- 2 Medium-size suits of banded mail (worth 250 gp each)
- A Medium-size suit of half-plate (worth 600 gp)
- 2 spiked gauntlets (worth 5 gp)
- A masterwork greataxe (worth 320 gp)
- 15 shortspears (worth 1 gp each)
- 10 throwing axes (worth 8 gp each)
- 10 handaxes (worth 6 gp each)
- 5 battleaxes (worth 10 gp each)
- 5 heavy picks (worth 8 gp each)
- 4 warhammers (worth 12 gp each)

M29. DINING HALL

The dining hall is currently unoccupied, although the hobgoblin garrison gathers here every 24 hours to partake in a feast served

by their enslaved cooks (see area M33). They seat themselves on benches around the four long tables, which are littered with empty tankards, smashed pottery, and moldering scraps of food.

M30. COOKS' QUARTERS

The cooks (see area M33) sleep here and have neither valuables nor a place to hide them. The room holds only three cots atop a gray, stained rug.

M31. LARDER

Four slabs of meat hanging from hooked chains are the skinned, dried corpses of four Medium-size monsters: a giant lizard, a krenshar, a hunting bat, and a snake. These dead remains will eventually be cooked and served up to Kazmojen and his garrison.

M32. PANTRY

Characters who search the jugs, flasks, pots, casks, and sacks on the stone shelves find various edible foodstuffs purchased from Underdark traders. Most of the food consists of edible fungi, mold, small vermin, and ale.

Treasure: Exotic Underdark spices and seasonings fill bottles along the shelves. Characters can collect 15 bottles of exotic spices (worth 2 gp each).

M33. KITCHEN (EL 1)

This sparsely appointed kitchen has a stone hearth set into the southeast corner, a worktable in the middle of the room, and some shelves carved into the west wall. The table bears many pots and utensils, and clay dishware clutters the shelves.

The kitchen contains little of value but is usually occupied.

Creatures: Gryffon Malek (Com1; hp 4), a 33-year-old human barkeeper from Cauldron, serves as Kazmojen's head cook. He wormed his way into the position to avoid Kazmojen's slave auction. In exchange for his loyal service, he gets to sleep in a cot instead of a cell, and he gets to eat warm leftovers instead of cold ones. On the downside, he must work with two goblin assistants who can't tell the difference between a fork and a spoon.

➤ **Goblins** (2): hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 107.

Tactics: The hobgoblins have instructed the two goblins to watch Gryffon and test the food he cooks to make sure it's not poisoned. The goblins are bullies who yield when injured or faced with certain death.

If presented with a no-fail plan of escape, Gryffon agrees to accompany the PCs. However, if his so-called "saviors" fail to present a viable plan of escape, Gryffon would rather stay here than risk Kazmojen's ire. Convincing him to accompany the PCs requires a successful Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check,



with a +2 circumstance bonus if his friend Krylskar (see area M18) is present.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award the party 100 XP if Gryffon is returned to Cauldron alive or 50 XP if the PCs return his dead body to the town for proper burial.

M34. SLAVE BAZAAR (EL 6+)

The northern double doors leading to this room have small eye-holes set into them, allowing Kazmojen's hobgoblin guards to keep abreast of events in area M22. The shutters for the eye-holes can be closed and locked from the south side.

If the guards in area M22 raise a general alarm, Kazmojen orders the two hobgoblin guards in this room to slide an iron bar across the northern double doors, sealing them. He then sends the guards through areas M29 and M27 to deal with the intruders (see area M22 for details).

If the PCs reach this chamber with the aid of a *charmed* hobgoblin escort (and without raising a general alarm), they are allowed inside.

Four malachite pillars support the 20-foot-high ceiling of this grand chamber. Hanging from an iron brace mounted near the top of each pillar is a cylindrical iron cage containing a giant beetle that sheds an infernal orange light.

The southern half of the chamber rises 5 feet, and a wide black staircase leads up to the raised floor. Just past the top of the stairs, an 8-foot-tall iron post erupts from the floor. Iron shackles hang from the top of the post, secured to which are three children—a dwarf boy and two human girls. Five narrow windows carved into the south wall stand open to the darkness beyond.

A 5-foot-tall muscular figure clad in black plate armor stands on the staircase, his face hidden behind a visor. In one gauntlet, he clutches a wicked dwarven urgrosh. In the other, he grasps a chain ending in an iron ring clamped around a human boy's neck. Behind him, crouched at the top of the stairs, looms a slaving, bestial hound bristling with quills.

The black-clad knight is haggling with a creature that looks like an ash-skinned dwarf with sharply pointed ears and yellow eyes. He wears robes encrusted with mold, holds out a bone box filled with coins, and looks at you with utter disgust.

Deakon Stormshield, Evelyn Radavec, and Lucinda Aldreen (hp 3, 3, 2) are shackled to the slave post. Kazmojen (the figure in black armor) carries the keys to their shackles. He holds the shackles of the fourth prisoner—Terrem Kharatys (hp 4)—so that his client can inspect the boy more closely.

Terrem Kharatys bears a hidden mark on his left cheek: a Carcerian Sign. The birthmark is naturally (not magically) invisible and can be seen using a *see invisibility* or *true seeing* spell. Terrem is one of the Shackleborn (see **Campaign Seed: The Shackleborn** for details).

Kazmojen's client is a durzagon (a half-duergar/half-barbazu devil) named Pyllrak Shyraat. Pyllrak (the ash-skinned figure)

specifically requested child slaves because they are easier to subjugate and less likely to revolt. However, something about Terrem unnerves Pyllrak, although the durzagon can't put his finger on it. He has already negotiated a fair price for the other three children; the bone box he carries contains his offer.

❖ **Iron Shackles:** Hardness 10; hp 10; break DC 26; Escape Artist (DC 30); Open Lock (DC 25).

Creatures: Kazmojen was the product of a mad wizard's experiment at crossbreeding a male dwarf with a female troll. See the *Fiend Folio* for more information on the half-troll template.

Lacking strong parental guidance as an ugly youth, Kazmojen quickly learned the three rules of survival in the Underdark: Never buy food from a stranger, never take your eyes off your traveling companions, and never let anyone see you cry. His troll heritage also reinforced a general loathing of acid and fire.

Kazmojen found Prickles, his juvenile howler companion, on an Underdark expedition. He treats Prickles better than all of his other servants combined and becomes positively enraged if Prickles is slain.

The other occupants of the room include a pair of hobgoblin sentries (who stand guard just inside the northern double doors), Pyllrak, and the four kidnapped children.

➤ **Kazmojen, Male Half-dwarf/Half-troll Ftr4:** CR 5; Medium-size Giant; HD 4d10+24; hp 50; Init +1; Spd 15 ft.; AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22; BAB +4; Grap +9; Atk +10 melee (1d8+7/×3, masterwork dwarven urgrosh axe), or +6 melee (1d8+7/×3, masterwork dwarven urgrosh axe) and +2 melee (1d6+4/×3, masterwork dwarven urgrosh spear), or +9 melee (1d6+5, bite) and +4 melee (1d4+2, 2 clawed gauntlets), or +5 ranged (1d6, throwing axe); Face/Reach 5 ft. across/10 ft.; SA rend 2d4+7, improved reach (10 ft.), +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against goblinoids and orcs; SQ see below; AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 20, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Intimidate +5. **Feats:** Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (dwarven urgrosh), Weapon Specialization (dwarven urgrosh).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Giant.

Possessions: Full plate, great helm with visor, masterwork dwarven urgrosh, 4 throwing axes, pouch containing 180 gp and three keys (to the chests in area M11).

Special Qualities: To simplify Kazmojen's stat block, his special qualities are summarized below:

- Darkvision (60 feet)
- Regeneration 2 (cannot regenerate damage from acid or fire attacks)
- Scent (see the *Monster Manual*, page 10, for details)
- +2 racial bonus on Search checks to notice unusual stonework
- +4 bonus on saves to resist bull rushes and trip attacks when standing on ground
- +2 racial bonus on saves against poison, spells, and spell-like effects
- +4 dodge bonus to AC against giants

➤ **Prickles, Juvenile Howler:** CR 3; Large Outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar); HD 4d8+8; hp 33; Init +7; Spd 60 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 14; BAB +4; Grap +13; Atk +8 melee (2d8+4, bite), +3 melee (1d4+2, 1d4 quills); Face/Reach 10 ft. across/5 ft.; SA quills, howl; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +8, Hide +6, Listen +9, Move Silently +6, Search -1, Spot +9. **Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative.

➤ **Pyllrak Shyraat, Male Durzagon:** hp 32; *Monster Manual* II 124 or see the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement.

Possessions: Small bone box containing 180 gp, bag of holding (Type 1) containing 4 torches, 4 tindertwigs, a 50-foot length of hemp rope, a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, and a *potion of alter self*.

➤ **Hobgoblins (2):** hp 5 each; see area J63 for complete statistics and possessions.

➤ **Giant Fire Beetles (4):** hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 206.

Tactics: Kazmojen is busy pushing the sale of the fourth child, Terrem, and becomes quite annoyed if the PCs interrupt his "negotiations." Still, he's curious to know why the PCs have come to his stronghold and allows them to speak before deciding whether to kill them, capture them, or trade with them.

Although he inherited his evil ways from his troll mother, Kazmojen also inherited his father's lawful nature. He has agreed in principle to give Pyllrak three of the children (Deakon, Evelyn, and Lucinda) for 50 gp each and is currently offering to sell Terrem "at a discount" (30 gp). The PCs are free to "bid" on Terrem, but the other children are off limits as long as Pyllrak Shyraat is alive.

If the PCs threaten Kazmojen or attempt to take the children by force, Kazmojen orders Prickles to attack and hurls one of his throwing axes at the insolent PCs. He then wades into melee with his urgrosh, leaving Terrem unguarded by the stairs. Kazmojen's long, troll-like arms give him a 10-foot reach. If disarmed, he uses his sharp teeth and clawed gauntlets to rend foes. Prickles' desperate howls are loud enough to be heard by every living hobgoblin in the fortress (but not Xukasuk in area M4), and they quickly converge on the auction chamber.

The round after combat erupts, Pyllrak turns invisible and tries to stay out of harm's way. If either Kazmojen or Prickles falls in battle, Pyllrak flees the room (using *darkness* to mask his exit, if necessary) and returns to his quarters (area M25) to gather his belongings. He then vacates the fortress with his lemur minions.

Unlike Kazmojen, Pyllrak has no taste for blood. If the PCs challenge him for ownership of the children, Pyllrak backs down, agreeing to their demands provided he receives "compensation" in the form of 450 gp worth of coins or magic items (which he expects the PCs—not Kazmojen—to pay). A successful Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check (DC 14) persuades him to reduce the amount, although he won't go lower than 150 gp.

PCs can negotiate for Terrem. Pyllrak does not protest when Kazmojen offers to sell the boy for 100 gp. PCs can haggle over the price, although Kazmojen is already mad at them for "arriv-

ing unannounced." A successful Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check (DC 18) persuades Kazmojen to drop his price by as much as half (50 gp).

Development: Three rounds after the PCs enter the chamber, Lord Vhalantru of Cauldron appears to take Terrem into his custody. If Kazmojen lives, the beholder makes him "a fair offer." If the half-dwarf slave trader is slain or otherwise unable to negotiate, Vhalantru makes a similar offer to the PCs. Proceed to "Vhalantru's Offer," below.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award the party 50 XP per child returned safely to the Lantern Street Orphanage in Cauldron, or half that amount for each dead child brought back to the town for proper burial.

Do not award experience for Pyllrak Shyraat unless the PCs defeat him in combat.

VHALANTRU'S OFFER (EL 18)

Three rounds after the PCs enter area M34, the beholder Vhalantru appears in the middle of the chamber, courtesy of a *teleport* spell cast by an invisible wizard with him. You may shorten or delay their arrival, provided they appear before the PCs leave the chamber.

Read or paraphrase the following text when Lord Vhalantru appears:

Suddenly, an enormous spherical creature appears in the middle of the room. It has a stony hide, a large central eye, a toothy maw, and a crown of writhing eyestalks. It fixes its many eyes upon you and begins to speak in Common.

If one or more PCs can see invisible creatures, they also see a lithe figure standing next to the beholder: a flying human woman wearing black robes and a tall black headdress, her face concealed behind a dark veil. In one hand she clutches a slender crystal wand, and around her neck she wears a pendant shaped like a tiny silver cage.

If Kazmojen lives, Vhalantru addresses him directly. Otherwise, the beholder speaks to whoever seems to be in charge.

"I have come for Terrem Kharatys. That boy should not have been taken from Cauldron. I intend to see that he is safely returned to his orphanage. You can keep the others. They are of no consequence. Come, Terrem—you will be safe with me."

Creature: Vhalantru can annihilate a low-level group of adventurers, but he has no interest in harming the PCs. Once Terrem is handed over, Thifirane *teleports* all three of them away using a scroll.

➤ **Vhalantru, Beholder:** hp 66; *Monster Manual* 24. He currently has the benefits of a *stoneskin* spell.

➤ **Thifirane, Female Human Traro:** CR 10; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 10d4+10; hp 37 (57 with *bear's endurance* spell); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 plus *shield* spell; Atk +5 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger) or +7

ranged; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +14, Decipher Script +16, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (the planes) +16, Spellcraft +16. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation, Transmutation), Spell Penetration.

Spells Prepared (4/5/5/4/3/2; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—detect magic, flare*, light, read magic; 1st—burning hands*, cause fear, magic missile, shield*; 2nd—bear's endurance*, invisibility*, knock, mirror image, see invisibility*; 3rd—displacement, fly*, lightning bolt*, slow*; 4th—Otiluke's resilient sphere*, shout*, stoneskin (cast on Vhalantru); 5th—teleport, wall of force.

*This spell has already been cast; it is in effect when Thifirane appears.

Evocation or Transmutation spells. The base save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

Forbidden Schools: Conjunction, Enchantment.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal.

Possessions: +2 ring of protection, crystal wand of magic missile (7th-level caster; 32 charges), arcane scroll of dispel magic, scroll of teleport (cast at 10th level), dagger, silver cage pendant (worth 15 gp), pouch containing 50 pp.

Tactics: Vhalantru does not divulge his name, and does not feel compelled to answer any of the PCs' questions. If they do not surrender Terrem into his custody, the beholder takes the child by force. He can tell that the PCs are relative weaklings and abstains from using his lethal rays, instead using his *charm person*, *fear*, and *sleep* rays.

Although she thinks it's a mistake to let the PCs live, Thifirane follows Vhalantru's lead and refrains from killing anyone. She uses *Otiluke's resilient sphere* and *wall of force* spells to trap aggressive PCs and *shout* to deafen enemy spellcasters. Otherwise, she prefers to use her wand, which fires four *magic missiles* per round.

Vhalantru offers to pay Kazmojen 50 pp for his trouble, at which point the veiled woman yields a pouch filled with coins. The beholder offers the same amount to the PCs if they're in control.

If Terrem dies before Vhalantru can claim him, the beholder tries to claim Terrem's body so that the boy can be raised.

Development: The PCs have little hope of "saving" Terrem from the beholder. The best they can hope for is to return Deakon, Evelyn, and Lucinda safely to the orphanage. Assuming they make it to the orphanage, they discover that Terrem has been returned unharmed. The orphanage headmistress knows only that a mysterious woman wearing a dark veil escorted Terrem to the doorstep, then quickly departed. Terrem did not recognize the woman, nor did he think to ask her name.

If Kazmojen is still alive after Vhalantru departs, he refuses to impart any information about the beholder. Even if a PC successfully *charms* him, he declines to speak of the beholder, believing that Vhalantru would find out and kill him. If Vhalantru arrived in the middle of a battle, Kazmojen is no friendlier toward the heroes after the beholder departs. He raises his *urgrosh*, and says, "The deal is done! Now, you die."

THE END IS THE BEGINNING

To complete the adventure successfully, the heroes must survive the perils of the Malachite Fortress and return Deakon, Evelyn, and Lucinda to the Lantern Street Orphanage alive. Getting back to the surface might be difficult, but the PCs can count on aid from one or more NPCs, including Fario Ellegoth, Fellian Shard, and any of the townsfolk they rescued from Kazmojen's stronghold.

The church of St. Cuthbert pays the characters the promised 2,500 gp if all four orphans are returned unharmed. In addition, Jenya puts in a word with the office of the Lord Mayor, recommending that the PCs be granted an audience at some time in the near future to be commended for their deeds and offered future employment. The church reduces the amount by 500 gp per child slain or sold and not safely brought back to the orphanage. Jenya still recommends the PCs to the Lord Mayor, but not with the same feeling or commendations. She has no hard feelings toward the PCs; she just feels that an incomplete job is not what she promised to compensate.

Although the adventure is over, the campaign is just beginning. If your PCs haven't quite reached 3rd level by the end of "Life's Bazaar," run them through a short module, like issue #92's "Hollow Threats" or a scaled-down version of this issue's "Blind Man's Bluff" to prepare them for the second installment of the Adventure Path series, which will appear in issue #98. The PCs have now met some key players in the unfolding drama. The question becomes whether they can survive even greater perils awaiting them in the Shackled City! Of course, this remains to be seen. . . . Ω

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LIFE'S BAZAAR

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THIS WEB ENHANCEMENT PROVIDES YOU WITH A number of extra NPCs, an additional player handout, a new trap, the statistics of the monsters from *Monster Manual II* that appear in "Life's Bazaar", and some extra campaign tidbits to use when running "Life's Bazaar" from issue #97. Enjoy!

CAULDRON NPCs

☛ **Meerthan Eliothlorn, Male Half-elf Wiz12:** CR 12; Medium-size Humanoid (half-elf); HD 12d4-12; hp 24; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; BAB +6/+1; Grap +6; Atk +7/+2 melee (1d4/19-20, masterwork dagger) or +8/+3 ranged (effect varies, ranged touch); SA spells; SQ half-elf traits, *permanent Rary's telepathic bond* (with various henchmen), familiar; AL NG; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 20, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +14, Decipher Script +15, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +3, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (history) +12, Listen +4, Profession (merchant) +5, Search +7, Spellcraft +20, Spot +4. **Feats:** Alertness (granted by familiar), Brew Potion, Craft Wand, Empower Spell, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration.

Spells Prepared (4/6/5/5/4/4/2; base save DC = 15 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, mage hand, message, read magic*; 1st—*expeditious retreat, feather fall, mage armor, magic missile* ×2, *shield*; 2nd—*cat's grace, invisibility, Melf's acid arrow, mirror*

image, see invisibility; 3rd—*displacement, fireball, haste, lightning bolt, slow*; 4th—*dimension door, empowered summon monster II, stonewood, summon monster IV*; 5th—*dominate person, summon monster V, teleport*; 6th—*empowered enervation, true seeing*.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven.

Possessions: +2 headband of intellect, +1 cloak of resistance, brooch of shielding (absorbs 80 points of magic missile damage), amulet of proof against detection and location, bracelet of friends (attuned to Fario Ellegoth, Fellian Shard, and five others), wand of confusion (15 charges), wand of haste (4 charges), *potion of cure serious wounds*, scroll of dimensional anchor, scroll of empowered fireball, masterwork dagger, spellbook (contents determined by DM), diamond dust for stonewood (1,000 gp worth), ointment for true seeing (750 gp worth), pouch containing 32 pp and 110 gp.

☛ **Razzik, Weasel Familiar:** CR —; Tiny Magical Beast; HD Special; hp 12; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 18; BAB +6/+1; Grap -6; Atk +8/+3 melee (1d3-4, bite); Face/Reach 2 1/2 ft. across/0 ft.; SA attach, touch; SQ scent, improved evasion, share spells, empathic link, speak with master, speak with animals of the same type, SR 17; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +9; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 5.

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +11, Concentration +15, Decipher Script +15, Hide +13, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (history) +9, Move Silently +9, Spellcraft +15, Spot +4. **Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite).

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE LAST LAUGH

Cauldron has more than one small guild of thieves, but perhaps the most influential guild is called The Last Laugh. The guild's symbol is the silhouette of a laughing jester, shown in profile. The guild oversees various rackets and specializes in security, blackmail, extortion, and assassination.

The guild's leaders, called Jesters, form an inner circle that oversees all guild activities. Speculation abounds that at least one of the guild's Jesters is a high-ranking town official or noble.

Three months ago, the inner circle learned of the arrival of an evil society called the Cagewrights. Rather than oppose the Cagewrights, the Jesters formed a pact with them. The Last Laugh provides security, masks the Cagewrights' activities, diverts the attention of the local authorities and rival guilds, and eliminates meddlesome spies and adventurers who threaten to derail the Cagewrights' plans for Cauldron. In exchange, the Cagewrights have promised the Last Laugh

control of the town's "underworld" once it has been transformed into a Carcerian gate-town.

The Jesters, few in number, rely on an intricate network of spies, agents, and informants. Their immediate subordinates are called harlequins—skilled rogues and assassins who paint their faces and handle much of the guild's "dirty work." The guild also uses spies—called mimes—to infiltrate rival organizations, verify rumors, and gather information on troublesome bands of adventurers.

The Last Laugh mints its own currency by melting down sovereign coins and recasting them with the guild's jester insignia. The coins have infiltrated the local economy, and most people consider them no worse than the sovereign's gold or silver. Some see the "jester coins" as a joke, while others view them as a threat to the economic stability of the town. Although the Lord Mayor has vowed to catch the criminals responsible, the local authorities have had no success tracking down the source of the coins, leading some to suspect corruption in the local militia or the Lord Mayor's office.

PLAYER HANDOUT: KIDNAP VICTIMS

*Kidnap Victims**Who**Tiervan Wispwort (male gnome, age 91)**Details**A local alchemist, Tiervan lived with two cats and ran a marginally successful business. He disappeared 88 nights ago.**Jozl Seerkin (male gnome, age 72)**A law clerk who worked for a local gnome barrister named Aeryk Gylbar, he disappeared from his home 83 nights ago.**Azmi Dresker (female human, age 19)**She worked at a local brothel and disappeared from her residence 81 nights ago. She and a coworker, Shellen Rycab, rented the house from an old woman named Sharliza Hathaway, who was asleep in the house that night and didn't hear or see anything.**Shellen Rycab (female human, age 20)**She worked at a local brothel and shared a house with coworker Azmi Dresker and their landlord. Shellen vanished 81 nights ago.**Krzyszczak Endercott (male human, age 24)**Kicked out of the local militia for drunk and disorderly conduct, Krzyszczak vanished from his parents' home 74 nights ago. Neither parent heard or saw anything suspicious, but they believe Krzyszczak may have robbed them and fled town in disgrace.**Callum Sunnyrush (male halfling, age 37)**He groomed horses and ponies for the Thantari noble family. He vanished from his room at a cozy local inn 69 nights ago.**Gryffon Malek (male human, age 33)**He worked as a barkeep at The Tipped Tankard tavern. He disappeared 66 days ago, three days before his planned wedding to a tavern barmaid.**Ezodra Callagher (female human, age 35)**A self-proclaimed sage, she ran her own small bookstore. She was last seen 60 nights ago by her 18-year-old son Leagan, a mason's apprentice.*

Who

Temboz Kalavan (male human, age 25)

Details

A local minstrel of some repute, he vanished 32 nights ago from his room in *The Laughing Horse Inn*.

Izzulth Mercadi (female human, age 36)

A local chandler who disappeared from the apartment above her shop 47 nights ago.

Deven Myrzal (male human, age 18)

A lamplighter who vanished 45 nights ago. Guards found the pole Deven used to unhook hanging lanterns in the street a few blocks from his home (which was not robbed).

Jeneez Everdawn (female halfling, age 42)

A jeweler's apprentice who did volunteer work at local schools, she disappeared 40 nights ago.

Lorlban Ironfold (male dwarf, age 125)

A skilled cartwright. He and his wife, Sondor, vanished from their home 35 nights ago.

Sondor Ironfold (female dwarf, age 127)

Wife of Lorlban Ironfold, she and her husband disappeared 35 nights ago.

Rikaldo Veskaz (male human, age 34)

His ransacked home contained blood droplets and blood-encrusted knives—not surprising, since Rikaldo worked as a skinner. He disappeared 31 nights ago.

Lestor Coldwater (male human, age 22)

A trained scribe and struggling poet. He and his girlfriend, Jelluth, vanished from her home 26 nights ago.

Jelluth Sizlana (female half-elf, age 33)

A struggling shoemaker who inherited her father's failing business, she vanished (along with her boyfriend, Lestor) 26 nights ago.

Elethor Ashstaf (male half-elf, age 38)

A wizard and trickster who occasionally performed minor feats of prestidigitation at birthday parties for upper-class children. A dead rat—possibly Elethor's familiar—was found in his home. He vanished 22 nights ago.

leaf 2 of 3

Who

Shaple (female halfling, age 32)

Details

Last name unknown, Shaple was rumored to be associated with one or more of the local thieves' guilds. She disappeared 18 nights ago.

Corystan Pike (female human, age 35)

A retired adventurer who was living on stolen loot, she walked with a cane. She disappeared from her modest abode 16 days ago.

Jasper Drundlesput (male gnome, age 74)

A reclusive and eccentric mathematician, he is believed to have vanished nine days ago. Pieces of parchment covered with numbers and symbols littered the floor of his ransacked house.

Deakon Stormshield (male dwarf, age 12)

A bright dwarf, Deakon was taken from the Lantern Street Orphanage three nights ago. The orphanage took him in when he was six years old, after his parents failed to return from an adventure.

Evelyn Radavac (female human, age 9)

A quiet, sullen girl, she was taken from the Lantern Street Orphanage three nights ago. Her father and mother succumbed to filth fever, which spread through Cauldron seven years ago.

Lucinda Aldreen (female human, age 8)

A gregarious but superstitious child given to the Lantern Street Orphanage at age four by her poverty-stricken mother, Lucinda was abducted from the orphanage three nights ago.

Terzem Kharatys (male human, age 9)

This orphan, taken from the Lantern Street Orphanage three nights ago, is a dour and temperamental lad. His parents died shortly after his birth (circumstances unknown).

leaf 3 of 3

TILT-A-PIT TRAP

Substitute this wicked trap for any or all of the three pit traps in areas J6, J12, or J14. Swap the text below (this text was written for area J6 specifically, but it also applies to the other two areas) for the **Trap** text provided in these areas. See below for information on deactivating the traps.

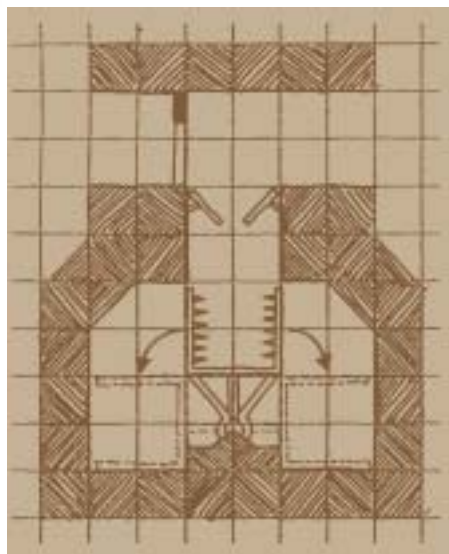
Trap: The 10-foot-square section of floor conceals a 20-foot-deep pit (Search check, DC 17, to detect). The pit's hinged lid opens when at least 150 pounds of weight is applied, although a successful Disable Device check (DC 17) jams the lid shut. Pulling down the lever in area J34 locks the lid and deactivates the trap.

Anyone standing on the lid when it opens must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 15) or fall into the pit, taking 2d6

points of damage and landing prone. Once the trap has sprung, have the characters roll initiative. The pit has Dexterity 15 for purposes of determining its initiative.

The bottom half of the pit is made of wood with rows of wooden spikes embedded in two opposite-facing walls. On the first round, the lid of the pit springs shut, and the bottom half of the pit tilts 90 degrees to the south,

throwing anyone within onto 1d4 wall spikes (each dealing 1d4 points of piercing damage with a successful hit).



On the second round, the pit tilts back to its original upright position. Anyone in the tilting half of the pit drops to the wooden floor of the pit and is knocked prone, but suffers no damage.

On the third round, the pit tilts 90 degrees to the north, throwing anyone within onto the other wall of spikes.

On the fourth round, the pit tilts back to its original upright position. Anyone trapped inside the tilting half falls to the bare wooden floor and is knocked prone, but suffers no damage. The pit stops tilting at this point until the trap is sprung again. If the pit's lid is held or wedged closed, the tilting continues. The lid can be pushed open with a successful Strength check (DC 10) and wedged open with a successful Disable Device or Intelligence check (DC 17).

The gear mechanisms that cause the wooden half of the pit to tilt back and forth lie 30 feet below the lip of the pit. When the pit is tilted to the north or south, these gears are clearly visible from the top of the pit. Dropping a dagger, rope, rock, or similar item into the gears requires a successful ranged attack (against AC 15) and has a 20% chance of jamming the tilting mechanisms. Conversely, a rogue lowered down to the gear mechanisms can jam them with a successful Disable Device check (DC 17). Once the gears are jammed, the pit stops tilting.

Trapped characters can smash through the wooden walls or floor of the pit to escape. They can also attempt to clamber out of the tilt-a-pit while it is upright. Getting out of the tilting half of the pit requires a Climb check (DC 10 if one uses a rope or the wooden spikes as handholds and footholds). If a knotted rope is used, the DC drops to 5.

Climbing the stone walls in the top half of the pit requires a harder Climb check (DC 20). Conversely, a character outside the pit can ready an action to reach down and pull another character out of the top half of the pit with a successful Strength check (DC 5, +1 per 20 pounds of weight).

Anyone in the unlikely position of being crushed by the

CAMPAIGN SEED: MEERTHAN ELIOTHLORN AND THE STRIDERS OF FHARLANGHN

With the help of Lord Vhalantru, the Cagewrights' dark agenda has gone unnoticed by most of the townsfolk. However, their appearance in Cauldron has caught the eye of the Striders of Fharlanghn—a loosely run organization of adventurers who watch the horizons for signs of great evil and strive to preserve the balance of power in the realm. The Striders have tracked several Cagewrights to Cauldron and seek to uncover their plans.

The Striders of Fharlanghn know that the Cagewrights worship powerful extraplanar fiends living in Carceri. Years ago, with the help of some good-aligned adventurers, the Striders attacked a cabal of Cagewrights in the realm's capital city, but not before the Cagewrights called forth one of their vile masters

from the prison plane. Several Striders perished in the battle, but the fiend was eventually banished back to Carceri, and the surviving Cagewrights were routed.

The Striders of Fharlanghn have sent one of their own, a neutral good half-elf named Meerthan Eliothlorn (Wiz12), to undercover the Cagewrights' machinations in Cauldron. Meerthan, posing as a dwarven merchant named Tyro Amberhelm, has a room at The Drowning Morkoth Inn. He suspects that the Cagewrights are behind the recent string of kidnappings. When the Church of St. Cuthbert hires the heroes to investigate the matter, Meerthan takes interest in their activities and sends invisible agents to follow them as they make their way underground. If the heroes get in a bind, these agents might come to their rescue at some opportune moment.

tilt-a-pit takes 4d6 points of damage, or half damage if a Reflex save (DC 15) succeeds.

➤ **Tilt-a-Pit (20 feet deep):** CR 3; 2d6 points of damage (fall) plus +3 melee (1d4 points of piercing damage, 1d4 spikes per wall); Reflex save (DC 15) prevents fall; Search (DC 17); Disable Device (DC 17).

♣ **Tilt-a-Pit Walls and Floor (sturdy wood):** 3 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 45 per 5-foot-by-5-foot section; Break DC 21.

♣ **Tilt-a-Pit Gearworks (sturdy wood):** 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 30; Break DC 21; Disable Device (DC 17).

Area J11: Pulling down on the lever deactivates the trap in area J12.

Area J12: This trap is identical to the one in area J6, except the pit tilts to the east and west (instead of north and south).

Area J13: Pulling down on the lever deactivates the trap in area J14.

Area J14: The trap is identical to the one in area J6, except the pit tilts to the east and west (instead of north and south).

Area J34: Pulling down on the lever deactivates the trap in area J6.

MONSTER MANUAL II CREATURES

"Life's Bazaar" uses several monsters from *Monster Manual II*. To conserve space, their complete statistics were omitted from the adventure text, but that information has been provided as a service here to accommodate our readers who do not own *Monster Manual II*. We highly encourage those readers who have not yet picked up a copy of this supplement to do so, as the information provided here is skeletal, at best—intended only to provide you with the minimal information necessary to run the adventure.

➤ **Pulverizer Automaton:** CR 3; Medium-size Construct; HD 3d10; hp 28; Init +0; Spd 40 ft., burrow 5 ft.; AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 21; BAB +2; Grap +7; Atk +7 melee (1d6+5, slam); SA sonic shriek; SQ blindsight 40 ft., con-

struct traits, unreliable; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 21, Dex 11, Con —, Int —, Wis 9, Cha 4.

Sonic Shriek (Ex): Once per round as a standard action, a pulverizer can loose a cone of sonic energy 30 feet long. Everything within the cone takes 1d8 points of sonic damage. In addition, every creature within the cone that fails a Fortitude save (DC 13) is stunned for 1 round. (This value incorporates a +5 racial bonus to the save DC.)

Unreliable (Ex): At the beginning of each round in which the automaton attempts to act, roll 1d20. On a result of 11 or better, the pulverizer acts normally; otherwise, it takes no action.

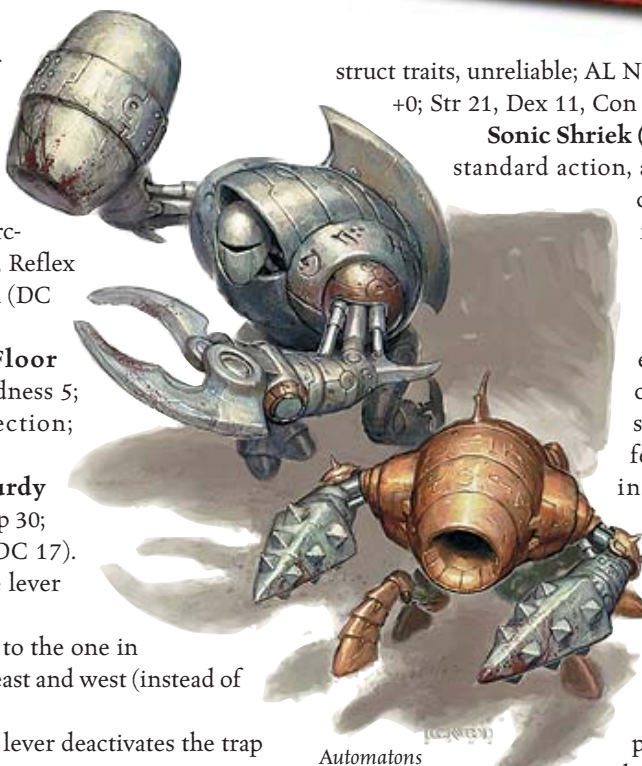
➤ Hammerer Automatons

(2); CR 3; Medium-size Construct; HD 5d10; hp 25, 22; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 21; BAB +3; Grap +10; Atk +10 melee (2d8+10, slam) or +10 melee (special, pincer); SQ construct traits, unreliable; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 25, Dex 11, Con —, Int —, Wis 9, Cha 4.

Unreliable (Ex): At the beginning of each round in which the automaton attempts to act, roll 1d20. On a result of 11 or better, the hammerer acts normally; otherwise, it takes no action (although its pincer can maintain its hold on grappled prey).

➤ **Common Raggamoffyn:** CR 3; Medium-size Construct; HD 3d10; hp 16; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (clumsy); AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; BAB +2; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d6+3, slam); SA improved grab, wrap, control host, suffocate; SQ darkvision 60 ft., construct traits; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 15, Con —, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a raggamoffyn hits a Small or Medium-size opponent with its slam attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it



Automatons

CAMPAIGN SEED: ZENITH SPLINTERSHIELD

A dwarven defender named Zenith Splintershield once commanded the Malachite Fortress's dwarven garrison. Ten years ago, this paragon among dwarvenkind left the fortress to wage war against the monsters of the Underdark and never

returned. Although his campaign undoubtedly failed, he may still dwell in some deep dungeon, a half-crazed zealot bent on purging evil from the subterranean realm or an imprisoned foe of the mind flayers, derro, or another Underdark menace.

can attempt to wrap (see below) in the next round. Alternatively, it has the option to conduct the grapple normally, dealing slam damage with each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds.

Wrap (Ex): With a successful grapple check, the raggamoffyn can wrap itself around a foe it has already grappled successfully. It forms a skintight layer around the wrapped creature, leaving just enough space for the creature to breathe through its nose and mouth. Attacks on such a target deal half their damage to the raggamoffyn and half to the wrapped creature. A wrapped creature can extract itself with a successful grapple check. Once it has wrapped a creature, the raggamoffyn attempts to control it on its next action.

Control Host (Su): A raggamoffyn can attempt to take control of a creature it has wrapped (as the *dominate monster* spell). Resisting the raggamoffyn's control requires a successful Will save (DC 14). The monster can relinquish its control over the host by physically and mentally disengaging itself from the latter's body.

Suffocate (Ex): The raggamoffyn can asphyxiate a wrapped creature by drawing air from its lungs. This attack automatically deals 1d4 points of damage per round.

➤ **Grell:** CR 3; Medium-size Aberration; HD 5d8+10; hp 32; Init +2; Spd 5 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; BAB +3; Grap +20; Atk +4 melee (1d4+1, 10 tentacles), -1 melee (2d4, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. across/5 ft. (10 ft. with tentacles); SA improved grab, paralysis; SQ blindness 60 ft., immune to electricity and paralysis, tentacle regeneration; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Skills: Hide +12, Listen +4, Move Silently +12, Spot +8.
Feats: Flyby Attack.

Improved Grab (Ex): If the grell hits a Medium-size or smaller opponent with a tentacle attack, it deals normal tentacle damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. Each successful grapple check during successive rounds automatically deals tentacle damage.

Paralysis (Ex): Any creature hit by a grell's tentacle must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be paralyzed for 4 rounds.

Tentacle Regeneration (Ex): Foes can attack the grell's tentacles, but only when those appendages are actually holding an opponent. A tentacle has AC 19 (touch 12) and 10 hit points. A lost tentacle grows back in 1 day.

➤ **Dread Guard:** CR 2; Small Construct; HD 4d10+5; hp 27; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (can't run); AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; BAB +3; Grap +2; Atk +4 melee (1d4+3/×4, masterwork hook), +0 melee (1d6+1/×3, masterwork hammer); SQ cold and fire resistance 10, construct traits; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 11, Con —, Int 6, Wis 13, Cha 2.

Possessions: Masterwork gnome hooked hammer.

➤ **Pyllrak Shyraat, Male Durzagon:** CR 4; Medium-size Outsider (evil, lawful); HD 5d8+10; hp 32; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; BAB +5; Grap +7; Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, 2 claws), +2 melee (1d6+1, bite), +2 melee (1d3+1 plus poison, beard); SA beard, poison, spell-like abilities; SQ acid, cold, electricity, and fire resistance 20; immune to paralysis, phantasms, and poison; darkvision 120 ft.; DR 10/+1; duergar traits; light sensitivity; SR 15; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Appraise +10, Diplomacy +3, Listen +11, Move Silently +14, Search +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +11. **Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Infernal, Undercommon.

Possessions: Small bone box containing 180 gp, bag of holding (Type 1) containing 4 torches, 4 tindertwigs, a 50-foot length of hemp rope, a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, and a *potion of alter self*.

Beard (Ex): If Pyllrak hits a single opponent with both claw attacks, he automatically hits with his beard attack as well.

Poison (Ex): A successful beard attack injects the victim with a sulfuric poison (Fortitude save DC 14; initial 1d4 Str damage; secondary 1d2 Str drain).

Spell-like Abilities: 3/day—*darkness*; 1/day—*deseccate*, *enlarge* (self only), *invisibility*, *unholy blight*. Caster level 10th; save DC 9 + spell level.

Duergar Traits: Pyllrak gains a +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against goblinoids and orcs, a +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities, and a +4 dodge bonus to AC against giants.

CAMPAIGN SEED: CORYSTON PIKE

Coryston Pike's adventuring career may have been cut short, but if she survives her experience in the Malachite Fortress, the PCs will have gained a useful ally. Her father, Dovin Pike, leads a powerful merchant cartel in the realm's capital city, and she has access to contacts and resources not usually available to a character of her level. Her father has little respect for adventurers in general, but Coryston knows many ways to creep into his heart. She also enjoys manipulating her

father's sycophantic underlings to secure expensive items (including single-use or charged magic items) at a reduced price. Provided the heroes don't need an item immediately, she can get it for them in 1d4+3 days at a discount (25% for potions and scrolls, 10% for everything else).

When she is not locked away in some subterranean prison, Coryston keeps abreast of events around her. PCs can tap her knowledge of local rumors, as well as her knowledge of people and places in Cauldron.

CAULDRON NAME GENERATOR

If the characters explore Cauldron, you might need to generate names for innkeepers, town guards, nobles, and other NPCs. The following tables provide first and last names for Cauldronites of each of the *Player's Handbook* races.

HUMAN NAMES

First Name	Last Name
<input type="checkbox"/> Azathan	<input type="checkbox"/> Arktaros
<input type="checkbox"/> Drand	<input type="checkbox"/> Belios
<input type="checkbox"/> Essuth	<input type="checkbox"/> Dalskar
<input type="checkbox"/> Isaal	<input type="checkbox"/> Deveron
<input type="checkbox"/> Jax	<input type="checkbox"/> Gorgoran
<input type="checkbox"/> Kellen	<input type="checkbox"/> Jarovar
<input type="checkbox"/> Ouryn	<input type="checkbox"/> Malifost
<input type="checkbox"/> Pellir	<input type="checkbox"/> Rhomus
<input type="checkbox"/> Skylar	<input type="checkbox"/> Scirulant
<input type="checkbox"/> Svaal	<input type="checkbox"/> Skilori
<input type="checkbox"/> Thavalar	<input type="checkbox"/> Thetrec
<input type="checkbox"/> Xaligor	<input type="checkbox"/> Vaine
<input type="checkbox"/> Zharys	<input type="checkbox"/> Veermont

DWARF NAMES

First Name	Last Name
<input type="checkbox"/> Azryn	<input type="checkbox"/> Arduun
<input type="checkbox"/> Bolgrim	<input type="checkbox"/> Crystalmantle
<input type="checkbox"/> Daradem	<input type="checkbox"/> Eskan
<input type="checkbox"/> Dweragal	<input type="checkbox"/> Grymlorn
<input type="checkbox"/> Fulgar	<input type="checkbox"/> Ioskar
<input type="checkbox"/> Gardrid	<input type="checkbox"/> Kraghammer
<input type="checkbox"/> Jarwyn	<input type="checkbox"/> Lhorakas
<input type="checkbox"/> Kielmorn	<input type="checkbox"/> Morilag
<input type="checkbox"/> Nazwyg	<input type="checkbox"/> Opalshale
<input type="checkbox"/> Reivark	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruthar
<input type="checkbox"/> Thervain	<input type="checkbox"/> Splintershield
<input type="checkbox"/> Thracken	<input type="checkbox"/> Urjak
<input type="checkbox"/> Valkyth	<input type="checkbox"/> Zyn

ELF AND HALF-ELF NAMES

First Name	Last Name
<input type="checkbox"/> Aelbrar	<input type="checkbox"/> Amazanth
<input type="checkbox"/> Coriolar	<input type="checkbox"/> Casimil
<input type="checkbox"/> Dalfien	<input type="checkbox"/> Devarien
<input type="checkbox"/> Faragel	<input type="checkbox"/> Duskhaven
<input type="checkbox"/> Garthael	<input type="checkbox"/> Farethel
<input type="checkbox"/> Kethevar	<input type="checkbox"/> Kyantas
<input type="checkbox"/> Naelan	<input type="checkbox"/> Melryth
<input type="checkbox"/> Raerthan	<input type="checkbox"/> Moonwhisper
<input type="checkbox"/> Ruafevar	<input type="checkbox"/> Ryorlyth
<input type="checkbox"/> Sylfer	<input type="checkbox"/> Solruil
<input type="checkbox"/> Thariel	<input type="checkbox"/> Tesseraith
<input type="checkbox"/> Vilqueril	<input type="checkbox"/> Uthquel
<input type="checkbox"/> Yaervan	<input type="checkbox"/> Zyrrlas

GNOME NAMES

First Name	Last Name
<input type="checkbox"/> Berendal	<input type="checkbox"/> Ardol
<input type="checkbox"/> Callab	<input type="checkbox"/> Deldor
<input type="checkbox"/> Erf	<input type="checkbox"/> Farlander
<input type="checkbox"/> Gargin	<input type="checkbox"/> Hellen
<input type="checkbox"/> Jarran	<input type="checkbox"/> Kaerwyd
<input type="checkbox"/> Killikin	<input type="checkbox"/> Lembic
<input type="checkbox"/> Milgee	<input type="checkbox"/> Lund
<input type="checkbox"/> Nebron	<input type="checkbox"/> Myddion
<input type="checkbox"/> Ophedes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruperyl
<input type="checkbox"/> Paulpin	<input type="checkbox"/> Rallascant
<input type="checkbox"/> Querban	<input type="checkbox"/> Tamolak
<input type="checkbox"/> Razjem	<input type="checkbox"/> Wandwaver
<input type="checkbox"/> Urbran	<input type="checkbox"/> Yhoyas

HALFLING NAMES

First Name	Last Name
<input type="checkbox"/> Arvador	<input type="checkbox"/> Berryput
<input type="checkbox"/> Barris	<input type="checkbox"/> Brambleshade
<input type="checkbox"/> Cal	<input type="checkbox"/> Cozyburrow
<input type="checkbox"/> Cyrlan	<input type="checkbox"/> Goodfellow
<input type="checkbox"/> Daravel	<input type="checkbox"/> Hillwort
<input type="checkbox"/> Eremor	<input type="checkbox"/> Meadowpatch
<input type="checkbox"/> Glyn	<input type="checkbox"/> Merryfield
<input type="checkbox"/> Liale	<input type="checkbox"/> Pathstrider
<input type="checkbox"/> Lilypad	<input type="checkbox"/> Rootroof
<input type="checkbox"/> Melreen	<input type="checkbox"/> Summerglen
<input type="checkbox"/> Perylor	<input type="checkbox"/> Tricklebrook
<input type="checkbox"/> Revel	<input type="checkbox"/> Wanderfar
<input type="checkbox"/> Tillian	<input type="checkbox"/> Winterfoot

HALF-ORC NAMES

First Name	Last Name
<input type="checkbox"/> Cressyk	<input type="checkbox"/> Axeface
<input type="checkbox"/> Darnath	<input type="checkbox"/> the Crooked
<input type="checkbox"/> Evelkor	<input type="checkbox"/> Darkborn
<input type="checkbox"/> Felldrak	<input type="checkbox"/> the Furious
<input type="checkbox"/> Hralyk	<input type="checkbox"/> the Halfwrought
<input type="checkbox"/> Krewen	<input type="checkbox"/> the Impudent
<input type="checkbox"/> Llarduen	<input type="checkbox"/> Longjaw
<input type="checkbox"/> Orloth	<input type="checkbox"/> Mudmane
<input type="checkbox"/> Rath	<input type="checkbox"/> the Rotten
<input type="checkbox"/> Rulkriiss	<input type="checkbox"/> Shadowscar
<input type="checkbox"/> Sharvakas	<input type="checkbox"/> Wormblade
<input type="checkbox"/> Surjon	<input type="checkbox"/> the Wretched
<input type="checkbox"/> Ulskorn	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellowtusk

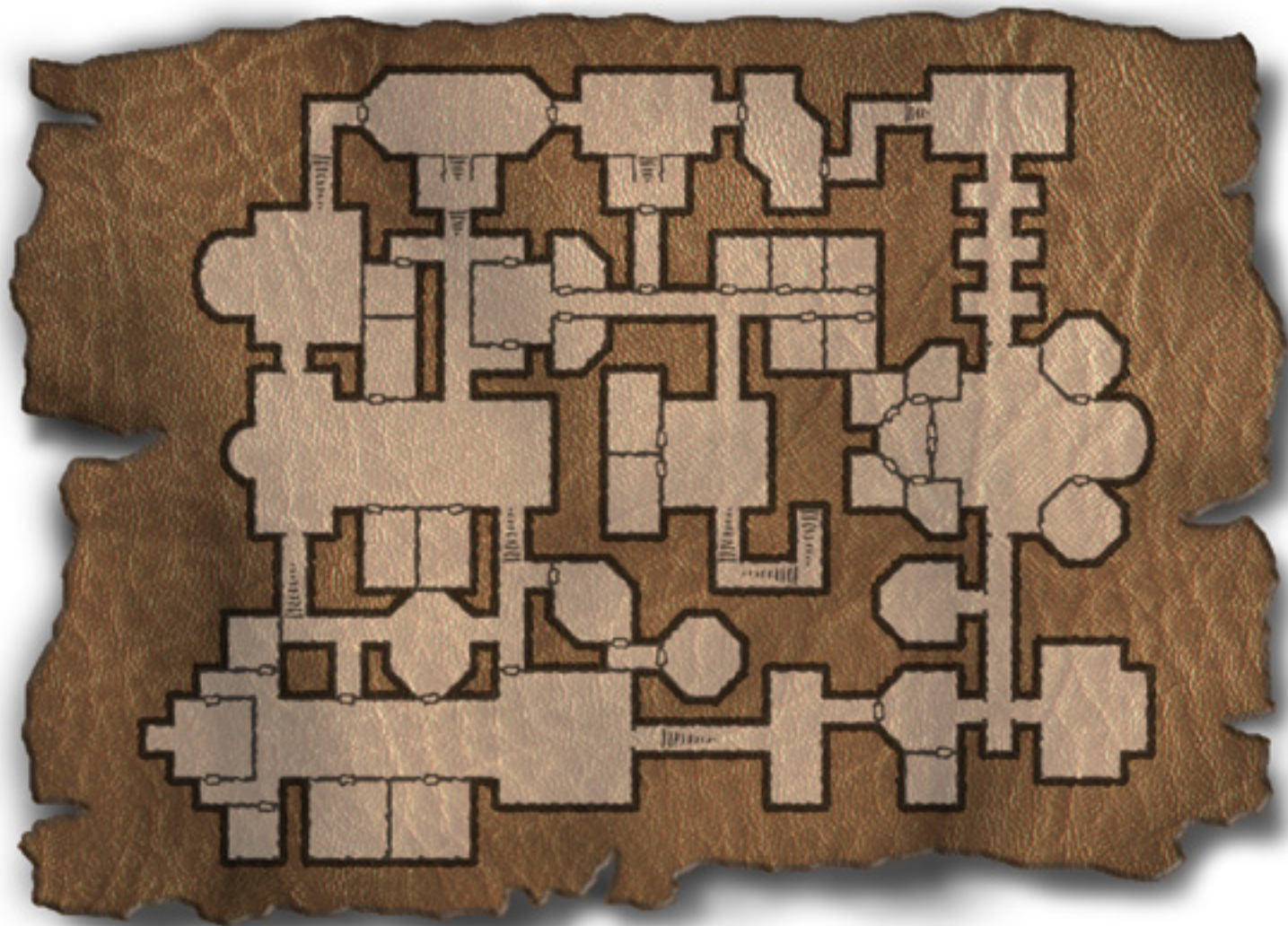
Use the check boxes to keep track of names you have already used.

Malachite Fortress



1 square = 10 feet

WEST

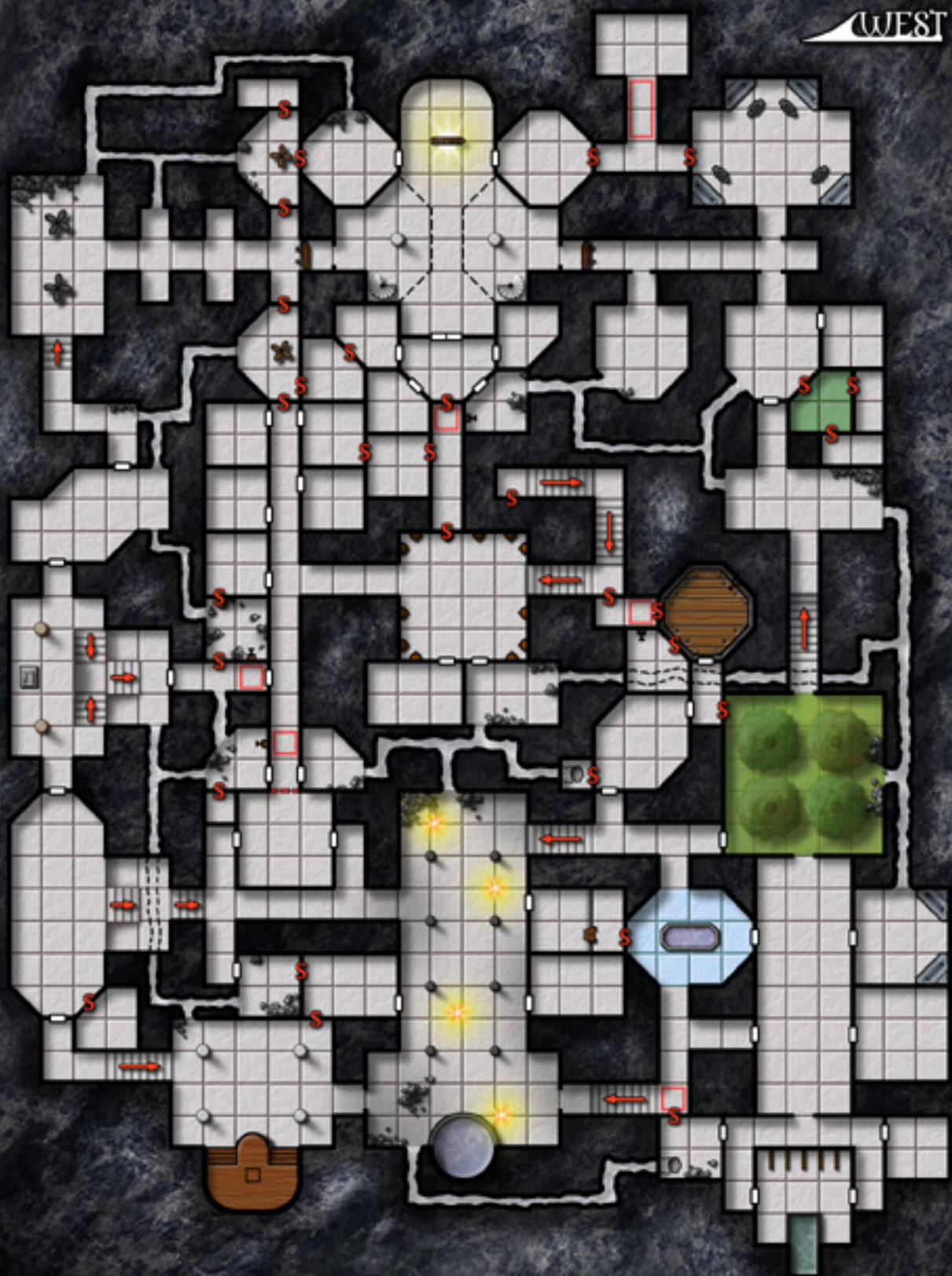


Jzadirune

1 square = 10 feet

Arrows = down

WEST



Ghelve's Locks

Second Floor



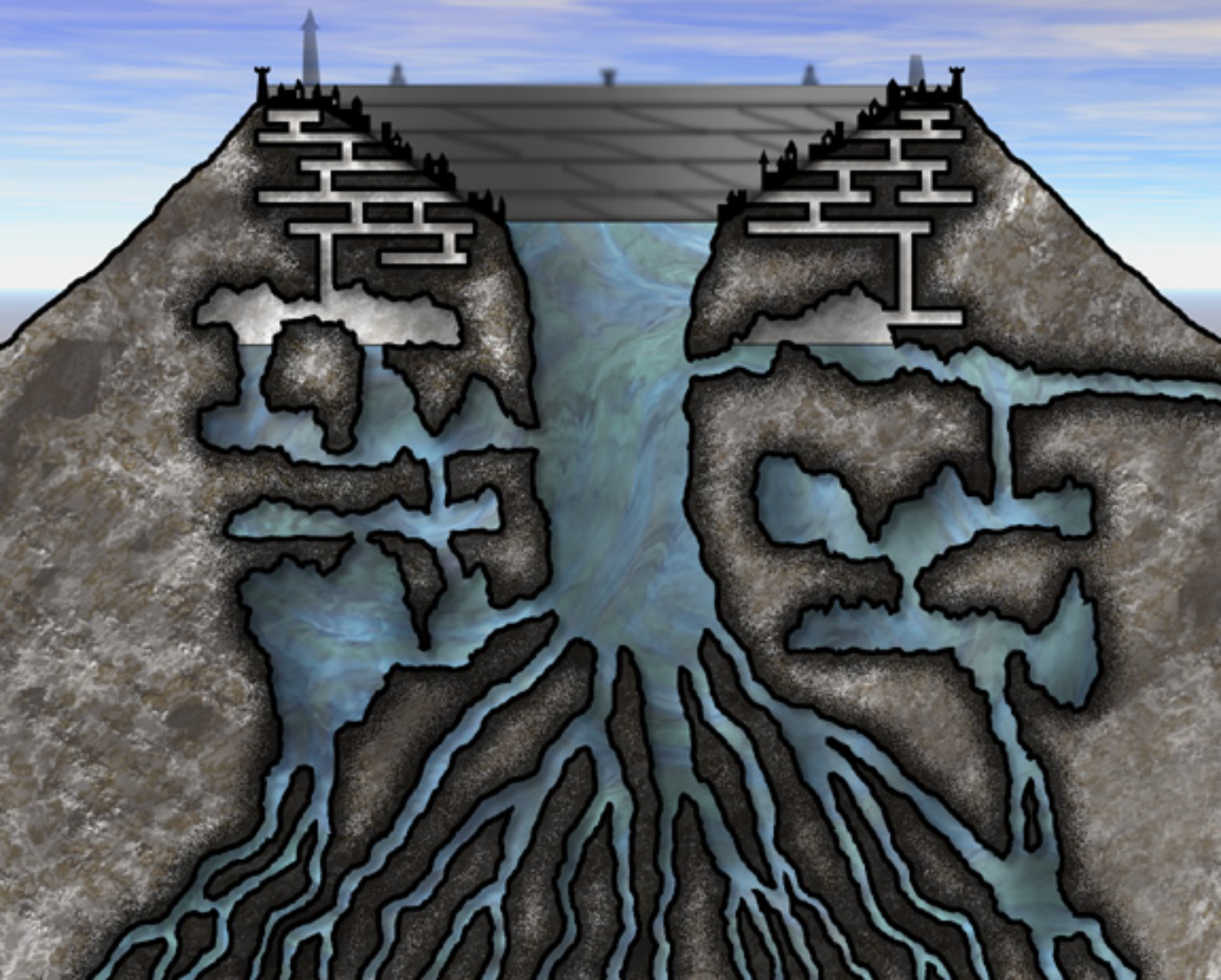
Ground Floor



1 square = 10 feet



Cauldron Cross-Section





CAULDRON

0 400 800 1200 1600 2000



WEST





FLOOD SEASON

BY JAMES JACOBS

ARTWORK BY STEPHEN DANIELE, PETER BERGTING, AND
SCOTT FISCHER • CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

| Magic Items | Monsters | NPCs | Objects | Settlements | Traps

"Flood Season" is the second module in the *DUNGEON Magazine* **Adventure Path: Shackled City** series. This *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* adventure is designed for four player characters (PCs) of 4th level. PCs who survive the entire adventure should advance to or near 6th level, depending on how many encounters they overcome, and how many they manage to circumvent.

This adventure can easily accommodate larger groups of PCs, and it can handle parties of 1st through 3rd level, or even up to 7th level once a few adjustments are made (see the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar).

When the PCs obtain sufficient experience points to advance to their next level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure; some of the challenges that await them toward the end of this adventure are fairly dangerous.

The events in "Flood Season" should take place after those detailed in the previous adventure in this series, "Life's Bazaar," from issue #97. The text of the adventure assumes this, but if you run "Flood Season" as a standalone adventure, it should be relatively simple to alter descriptions to compensate. If your group has played through the previous adventure, they should be of sufficient level to start this one. If they are still mostly 3rd level, you might wish to run a shorter adventure first so that they can stand up to the challenges presented in this module.

PREPARATION

Before you run "Flood Season," you should have a copy of the three core rulebooks (the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*). This adventure also features creatures from *Monster Manual II* and the *Fiend Folio*; pertinent statistical information for these monsters is presented in the text where appropriate or included in the "Flood Season" Web enhancement, although it is strongly recommended that you reference the appropriate books for more details on the creatures in question.

Scattered throughout the adventure are Campaign Seed sidebars. These sidebars contain hints and plots about the campaign that might surface in future installments of the series, but which aren't necessarily pertinent to this adventure. These sidebars are meant to introduce future allies and adversaries and help you keep track of the campaign's "movers and shakers."

BACKGROUND

The large town of Cauldron is unlike any other. Built inside the mouth of a dormant volcano, Cauldron is secretly ruled by a beholder named Vhalantru who hides behind the guise of an influential noble named Orbius Vhalantru. Vhalantru controls various members of the town guard, nobility, and merchants with his magic, all while keeping a presence in the various illegal ventures that take place inside the city walls. No one is the wiser, at this point.

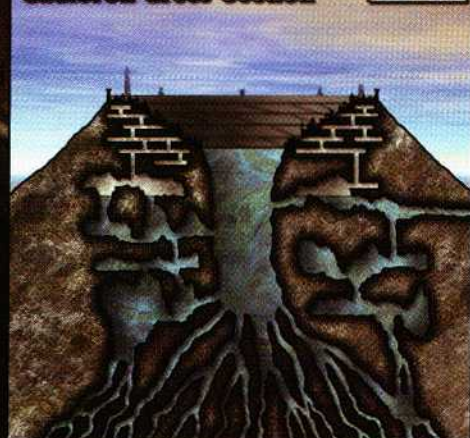
Recently, the city was hit by a sudden string of kidnappings. The victims ranged across the board in appearance: men, women, humans, halflings, elves, dwarves, seniors, children, merchants, rogues. Nothing seemed to tie the crimes together, aside from the fact that they all occurred over a relatively short period. The kidnappings were in fact orchestrated by a slave trader from the Underdark. Named Kazmojen, this slaver used his minions to snatch victims from the streets of Cauldron, until his plans were finally thwarted by adventurers working at the behest of the Church of St. Cuthbert. This adventure, "Life's Bazaar," is detailed in *DUNGEON Magazine* issue #97.

Since these events transpired, life has returned to normal in the city. As winter draws closer, the citizens of Cauldron are busy shoring up their homes and businesses in preparation for the flood season. Since the city is essentially built inside a large bowl, the rainy seasons of winter are dangerous. The mouth of the dormant volcano catches the falling rain with great efficiency, and the gutters of Cauldron quickly become filled with turbulent rivers that more often than not overflow into the streets as they drain down the inner surface of the volcano and into the central lake. Most years, the rainfall quickly overcomes the lake's natural drainage into the Underdark, and the water level slowly creeps up, flooding the lower buildings and forcing the inhabitants to flee for higher ground. Since the buildings along the lakeshore tend to be poorly constructed and their inhabitants poor, sick, and destitute, the damage done by these yearly floods can be devastating.

After a particularly wet winter several decades ago, when the central lake's waters reached Ash Avenue and completely submerged many of the lower buildings, the city decided to do something about the problem. Representatives of the churches



Cauldron Cross-Section



Last year, a drought caused a late and exceptionally mild winter, so no one really noticed or complained that dangerously few *wands of control water* were built. In fact, the wands weren't even used except at the start and end of the flood season as part of festival ceremonies. As a result, the long-standing alliance between the four temples has faded. The church of Kord has long balked at the cost of building the

of Pelor, Wee Jas, and Kord got together under the urging of the then high priestess of the church of St. Cuthbert, pooled their resources, and created several *wands of control water* to combat the next flood season. That winter, priests from these four temples patrolled the lower streets of Cauldron and fought back the flood using their wands. The citizens were grateful for the aid, and assisted with sandbagging and shoring of buildings where they could; even with the magic wands, the flood waters could still do significant damage.

So successful were these measures that, after that flood season ended, the city of Cauldron erupted into a massive festival. In the years to follow, this grew into a tradition. The Flood Festival, as it came to be known, began earlier each year until it started before the first rains fell. Each year, the priests of the city created *wands of control water* to fight the floods, and each year the floods were controlled and blunted. For a few years, they even dabbled with scrolls of *control weather*, but this option was abandoned before long because too many mishaps cropped up when lower-level clerics miscast these powerful spells.

But time breeds contentment, and the Flood Festival ended up too successful for its own good. As the years went by, the churches began to refine their uses of the wands and found that they could build fewer wands and still make it through the season. At the same time, the festivals grew more gaudy and extravagant. Over the past decade, the winters have been fairly mild, and it is doubtful that the lake would have flooded even if its waters weren't held back. As the apparent need for protection faded, so did the city's memories of the floods of decades past, and the need for the *wands of control water* began to slip.

wands, and this year its priesthood has turned its focus to the Flood Festival itself, organizing numerous sporting events to entertain the city. The church of Wee Jas would rather spend their efforts creating "more constructive magic items," and they too have dropped from the wand-creating program (this temple has been the least supportive of the program overall). The church of Pelor, although still supportive of the program, has relatively small presence in Cauldron, and last spring it lost its two most powerful priests to a tragic accident. No current member of the clergy has the expertise to build *wands of control water*.

That leaves the church of St. Cuthbert. Sarcem Delasharn, the current high priest of the temple, grew worried. He couldn't make enough wands himself for the festival, and certainly didn't think that the calm winters Cauldron had witnessed over the past decade would last much longer. He collected what funds he could (mostly from his own church, but some gathered from the other churches) and kept the wand shortage as low key and secret as he could; he didn't want to distress the populace any more than necessary. He then set out from Cauldron on a long trek to the distant capital city (using the approach of important annual St. Cuthbert rituals as a public excuse to make the trip) to purchase or commission as many *wands of control water* as he could afford. It was a long task, requiring him to be absent from Cauldron for many weeks. In his absence he named Jenya Urikas as the acting high priestess of St. Cuthbert in Cauldron.

Unfortunately, something far more sinister and dangerous than floods is brewing in the shadows of Cauldron.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The party, after spending some time recovering from their latest adventures, is contacted by a distraught Jenya Urikas, the acting high priestess of the Church of St. Cuthbert. She has just received a disturbing *sending* spell from Sarcem Delasharn. He'd been ambushed at the Lucky Monkey, and he and a few survivors had managed to hole up in the tavern's basement. It was apparent that the aggressors would soon get in and finish the job. The Lucky Monkey is an inn just a day's travel outside Cauldron, and Jenya begs the party to ride to the roadhouse to try to save Sarcem and any other survivors.

The party hurries out to the roadhouse at the base of the volcano, only to find the site terribly quiet. After they begin to explore, they quickly learn that the ambushers are still looting the inn. They must drive off the bandits, who are led by a werebaboon named Tongueater. If they're quick, they can rescue the one survivor of the attack on the Lucky Monkey: a female half-drow named Shensen. She is a member of the Striders of Fharlanghn, a neutrally aligned organization with several agents in the area. The Striders are detailed in the Web enhancement for "Life's Bazaar," available at www.paizo.com/dungeon.

Unfortunately, they are too late for the inn patrons, including Sarcem Delasharn. They can recover his body and return with Shensen to Cauldron, whereupon they can piece together the events at the inn and find out what might have happened to the *wands of control water*, which are desperately needed as the rains begin to fall in earnest. After a bit of investigation, the

group learns that Tongueater was merely the cohort of a more powerful villain named Triel Eldurast, an ex-member of the Cauldron city guard who fled into the catacombs below the city many years ago after she murdered several of her fellow guards. Triel led the attack on the Lucky Monkey and left her cohort Tongueater behind to finish the job as she fled back to Cauldron with the stolen *wands of control water*. After more investigation (set against the backdrop of increasing rain and rapidly rising floodwaters), the group finds clues that her base of operation seems to be in a large hidden cavern below town.

Access to this cavern is possible via a lengthy underwater swim (a lake in the cavern is connected underwater to the central lake of Cauldron), or via a lava tube that connects the cavern with a secret opening on the northern slope of the volcano. Arriving at the hidden cave, the party finds that it contains the crumbling ruins of several stone buildings . . . the last few remnants of an ancient city of a sinister race of creatures known as the kopru. Worse, it seems that Triel Eldurast has become a cleric of Hextor and allied herself with two other religious zealots. One is a halfling Vecna cultist named Skaven Umbermead, and the other is an undead gnomish cultist of Erythnul. They intend to ransom off the stolen wands to the city above, and even intended to use some of them to worsen the flooding as necessary to provoke a more urgent need for them. The party must retrieve the wands and put a stop to the cultists (who work for even more powerful and mysterious masters) before Cauldron suffers extensive flood damage.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Flood Season" is designed for a group of four 4th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 1st–3rd, or even 5th–7th-level characters.

- For lower-level characters, the easiest way to scale the adventure is to simply reduce the number of thugs and Alleybashers the party must encounter. In the Lucky Monkey, several of the bandits might have passed out from too much drink, and in the Kopru Ruins they might be even more inattentive or sleepy than usual. You should reduce the character levels of the major NPCs by one or two levels to compensate as well, and if the PCs still need help, perhaps Shensen or a friendly NPC from "Life's Bazaar" agrees to temporarily join up with the group. Certain creatures should be replaced with less powerful creatures as indicated below:

Skulvyn: Replace with a fiendish crocodile.

Kopru: Eliminate the kopru encounter altogether.

Mud Slaad: Replace it with a few dretches.

Spiders: Reduce the size categories of all monstrous spiders encountered by one.

Ettercaps: Replace with goblins or kobolds.

Harpoon Spider: Replace with a Medium half-dragon monstrous spider.

T-Rex Skeleton: Replace with a Huge T-rex skeleton.

Spawn of Kyuss: Replace with ghouls or ghosts.

Traps: Remove all traps of CR 4 or higher.

- For higher-level characters, the simplest way to increase the challenge level is to add NPC levels to the monsters for each level above 4th that the PCs are when they start the adventure. You can also add creatures to the encounter areas to make things more difficult, or perhaps many of the miscellaneous creatures in the Kopru Ruins are fiendish or half-fiends provided by the cultists' benefactors. Some specific examples might include:

Hill Baboons: Have some or all of these baboons replaced by 1st-level fighters with the werebaboon template.

Skulvyn: Advance the skulvyn's Hit Dice by a few levels.

Kopru: Give the kopru a few levels of rogue, cleric, or sorcerer.

Mud Slaad: Add a second or even a third mud slaad.

Spiders: Apply the half-dragon template to the spiders, ettercaps, and harpoon spider.

T-Rex Skeleton: Replace with an equal-sized zombie.

Spawn of Kyuss: Replace with mummies or mohrgs.

Remember that changing the Encounter Levels should raise or lower the amount of treasure in the adventure. Consult page 170 in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* (Tables 7–2, 7–3, and 7–4) to determine the treasure appropriate to the new encounters.



CAULDRON

The city of Cauldron is detailed more fully in "Life's Bazaar" from issue #97. The information presented here should allow you to run "Flood Season."

The town's buildings, tightly packed and built from volcanic rock and wood, line the inner bowl of a nameless, dormant volcano. Cobblestone roads form concentric circles around a small lake of cold water, which fills the volcano's basin. Although the town's sewage seeps into the lake, local clerics

provide purified water to citizens in exchange for charitable donations to their temples.

A 50-foot-tall fortified wall of black malachite encircles the city, tracing the outer rim of the volcano. Four roads descend the outer walls of the volcano, becoming major thoroughfares that lead to other towns and distant realms.

Most people get around Cauldron on foot, although the town has its share of wagons and carriages, most of them owned by merchants and nobles.

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE EBON TRIAD

Although it might not become clear to the PCs, the cultists who lurk in the Kopru Ruins belong to a secret cult known as the Ebon Triad. This cult has small cells operating throughout the region and was founded recently by a small group of heretics from the churches of Erythnul, Vecna, and Hextor. They believe that through cooperation, they can merge the power of their three deities into one overdeity of extreme and unimaginable power. The Ebon Triad has allied itself with the Cagewrights, a faction of sinister villains with dire plans for the Cauldron region (detailed further in both "Life's Bazaar" and the "Flood Season" Web enhancement), and many Ebon Triad cells are hard at work building magic devices called *Soulcages* for them.

The official churches of Erythnul, Vecna, and Hextor are

less than pleased with the foundation of the Ebon Triad. Tradition and belief have always kept these three churches at odds with one another, and the majority of these faithful have no wish to see the glory and power of their patron deity "diluted" through mixing with "lesser" religions. The fact that their deities continue to grant spells to the cultists of the Ebon Triad is vexing and disturbing to the traditionalists, and before long these three evil churches might launch programs to put down the upstart cultists before their radical ideas gain too many more followers. The PCs might even find themselves working for clerics of Erythnul, Vecna, or Hextor in a quest to eradicate some of the Ebon Triad cults. One thing is certain, though: with the support of the Cagewrights, the Ebon Triad represents a very serious threat to the Cauldron region.

Cauldron Rumors

d12 Rumor

1 The Flood Festival is a front, founded years ago by a cult of Hextor to fund a secret army of bloodthirsty mercenaries hidden in caverns below the city. (False.)

2 More giant snakes have been sighted near the village of Hollowsky to the east. I bet the yuan-ti of Shatterhorn are back! (This rumor could be true or false, but its implications are beyond the scope of this adventure.)

3 A pesky tribe of kobolds used to infest some of the catacombs below the southern section of the city, but they've been taken care of now. (True; the kobolds were wiped out several months ago by an adventuring group called "The Stormblades." More information about this group can be found in the "Flood Season" Web enhancement.)

4 Someone in Cauldron trades in strange currency: coins stamped with a jester instead of the sovereign. The authorities are trying to find the source. (True; The Last Laugh guild in town mints its own coins.)

5 A tentacled beast lurks in the cold depths of the lake (True; a powerful morkoth makes its home there.)

6 Something's been riling up wild animals in the area for the last several months; in particular, the lowland baboons seem to have become particularly hostile lately. (True; a large number of lycanthropes have started to appear in the area, one of which the PCs encounter at the Lucky Monkey.)

7 Alek Tercival, a paladin who serves St. Cuthbert, has been out of town for several days; I hear he traveled to the village of Redgorge to take care of a woman who was possessed by a demon! (False; there are no demonic possessions in Redgorge, but Alek Tercival has indeed been out of town for nearly a week.)

8 Hookface the dragon was spotted flying over the hills to the north by some adventurers—hope they don't go rile him up! (False; Hookface has not emerged from his lair to the north in nearly a hundred years.)

9 A friend saw a mysterious woman down by the lakeshore a few days ago. She had fiery red hair and wore some sort of bulky armor under a black tabard. She was talking to some shady looking individuals and handing them some money and weapons. (True; This was Triel Eldurast hiring more thugs and Alleybashers to help with her plans.)

10 Some sort of evil aquatic druid from the Underdark has taken up residence in the lake, and it's planning on casting a spell to lure people into the water to transform them into its monstrous minions! (False.)

11 Cauldron's not the first city to be built on this site. Adventurers tell stories of a ruined city in the caverns below, a city built by a strange race of aquatic monsters. (True; this was once the site of a kopru city.)

12 The churches have lost the *wands of control water*. There's nothing to hold back the flood waters if the rains don't stop! (True; this rumor can only appear once Chapter Three starts; otherwise substitute a different rumor for this result.)

The map of Cauldron shows the locations of The Church of St. Cuthbert, the Cathedral of Wee Jas, the Tipped Tankard, and all other locations that figure in this adventure. Other modules in this series introduce and describe other locations within the town. Feel free to add new places to the map as dictated by the needs of your campaign. For instance, if one of the PCs worships the goddess Yondalla, feel free to place a small temple or shrine dedicated to Yondalla somewhere within the city limits.

Cauldron (large town): Conventional; AL NG; Population 4,500 adults; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 600,000 gp; Mixed (79% human, 9% halfling, 5% gnome, 3% dwarf, 2% elf, 1% half-elf, 1% half-orc).

Authority Figures: Lord Mayor Severen Navalant, male human Ari10; Terseon Skellerang, male human Ftr8 (Captain of the Town Guard).

Important Characters: Lord Orbius Vhalantru, beholder (true overlord of Cauldron); Jenya Urikas, female human Clr6 (high priestess at the Church of St. Cuthbert); Kristof Jurgensen, male human Clr4 (cleric at the Shrine of Pelor); Omar Tiskinsen, human male Clr7 (high priest of the Church of Kord); Embryl Aloustinai, human female Wiz5/Clr9 (high priest of the Cathedral of Wee Jas); Ike Iverson, human male Clr7 (cleric at the Cathedral of Wee Jas); Artus Shemwick, male human Rog5 (fence and information broker working as a cook at the Tipped Tankard); Meerthan Eliothlorn, male half-elf Wiz12 (merchant staying at The Drowning Morkoth Inn); Skie Aldersun, female gnome Sor6 (owner of Skie's Treasures; detailed in the Web enhancement); Keygan Ghelve, male gnome Exp3/Ill1 (owner of Ghelve's Locks); Gretchyn Tashykk, female halfling Com1 (Lantern Street Orphanage headmistress); Patch, male half-orc Com1/Rog1 (spy for The Last Laugh guild); Vortimax Weer, male human Wiz10 (alchemist and potion brewer at Weer's Elixirs); Annah Taskerhill, human female Ari1/Brd3 (member of the Stormblades and daughter of local nobles, detailed in the "Flood Season" Web enhancement); Cora Lathenmire, human female Ari1/Ftr3 (member of the Stormblades and daughter of local nobles, detailed in the Web enhancement); Todd Vanderboren, human male Ari1/Rog3 (member of the Stormblades and adopted son of local nobles, detailed in the Web enhancement); Zachary Aslaxin II, human male Ari1/Rgr2/Clr1 (member of the Stormblades and son of local nobles, detailed in the Web enhancement).

Typical Guard Patrol: Members of the town guard are especially vigilant in the wake of the recent abductions. A typical patrol consists of a sergeant (War4) and 1d4+2 privates (War2). Guards typically wear breastplates emblazoned with the town emblem (a watchful eye wreathed in flames) and carry halberds, short swords, and shortbows.

RUMORS IN CAULDRON

As the adventure progresses, the PCs have ample opportunities to overhear rumors or hear news and gossip. These bits of information might be overheard in local taverns and inns, in shops, or even on the streets of the city. A successful Gather Information check yields one rumor (DC 15), two rumors (DC 20), or

three rumors (DC 25). Roll randomly or select appropriate rumors from the **Cauldron Rumors** table.

WEATHER IN CAULDRON

This adventure should be set during a rainy season; the descriptive text assumes that the adventure takes place at the start of winter. During Chapter 1, the weather in the region is somewhat brisk, windy, and overcast. Occasional rare breaks in the cloud cover allow the sun to peer through. As the adventure progresses, the rains begin; the first real storm should start about the time the party reaches the Lucky Monkey. After this, rainstorms should continue to plague the region, so that by the time the adventure is over the city of Cauldron should be in dire need of the *wands of control water* stolen by the cultists.

CHAPTER ONE: THE ONSET OF WINTER

The adventure starts as the PCs recover from their adventures in Jzadirune and the Malachite Fortress below Cauldron. For some time before winter starts, they should have ample time to spend some of the money they made in their previous adventure, explore the city of Cauldron a bit more, and perhaps make some potions, scrolls, or other minor magic items. The "Flood Season" Web enhancement contains two events that can take place during this period; these events have little to do with the plot of the adventure, but serve to add depth to the overall campaign.

THE SENDING

Some time on a morning after the PCs have fully recovered from their recent ordeal in the Malachite Fortress, they receive an urgent summons from Jenya Urikas at the temple of St. Cuthbert. The message says that she's been in contact with high priest Sarcem Delasharn and that he needs immediate assistance.

Assuming the party arrives at the Church of St. Cuthbert quickly, they find Jenya in a state of panic. She quickly ushers the PCs into a side room while worshipers and acolytes look on worriedly. Once the PCs and Jenya are in a private area, she confides in them that she just received a terribly disturbing message from Sarcem Delasharn, the high priest of the church. He sent the message via a *sending* spell to Jenya; she wrote down the message and her reply as soon as she was able and passes the hastily scribbled note to the party for them to examine.

PLAYER HANDOUT #1: THE SENDING FROM SARCEM

At Lucky Monkey. Have eight wands. Tavern's been attacked. Bandits led by barbaric apoman. Mortally wounded. Retreated to basement. They know we're here. Send assistance!

Sarcem? Is that you? Hang on! Conserve your resources. I'll send out aid immediately. Send no another message when you can, but until then, have.

When the PCs have read the note, Jenya tells them she meant to tell Sarcem to "have faith," but she ran out of room and the response was sent. Since the *sending*, Jenya has grown distraught. Aside from agonizing over the fact that she didn't plan her *sending* response that well, each passing minute puts Sarcem in greater peril. She briefly contemplated riding out to save him herself, but she can't leave the church unattended; if a disaster struck the city and the church was needed, Sarcem would never forgive her. So she turned to the PCs.

She asks them to ride out to the Lucky Monkey immediately to save Sarcem. She's willing to answer a few questions before the PCs leave; likely questions and her answers are given below.

What/where is the Lucky Monkey? The Lucky Monkey is a roadside tavern about a day's ride northwest of Cauldron. It's a popular, convenient rest stop for travelers on the northwest road. Jenya can provide a map of the Cauldron region (**Player Handout #2**) that shows the route to the Lucky Monkey.

Can you come with us to the Lucky Monkey? She cannot accompany the party, even though she desperately wants to. She must remain in Cauldron and tend to the church and any emergencies that might pop up.

Can you send any help with us? Jenya can't afford to send anyone with the PCs to the Lucky Monkey. If the PCs ask about Alek Tercival, the temple's resident paladin, she tells them that he is tending to another urgent matter at this time and is out of town. She refuses to go into any more detail about this matter.

What was Sarcem talking about when he mentioned the wands? Sarcem purchased eight *wands of control water* during this trip to the capital city; the wands are used to help control the waters of the central lake during the rainy season. Traditionally, clerics from the four main churches in Cauldron build the year's wands from scratch, but over the past several years the flood seasons have been minor at worst and the other three churches have lost interest in providing the time and effort to build wands this year. It is vital that the wands get back to Cauldron before the flood season starts.

Who do you think assaulted the Lucky Monkey? Jenya has no idea; she's heard rumors of bandits operating in the area, but an assault on the Lucky Monkey makes no sense. The owners aren't particularly wealthy, and bandits have never attacked any established structures in the region as long as she can remember. Hopefully the PCs can find some clues at the Lucky Monkey.

What's in it for us? Naturally, Jenya hopes that the PCs agree to ride to Sarcem's aid out of a sense of compassion, but she understands if they take a more mercenary angle to her request. She can offer them each a *potion of cure moderate wounds* immediately, and if they can rescue Sarcem or the wands, she'll give the party a reward of 5,000 gp (total, not per PC) as well.

If the party needs mounts, Jenya can arrange for a number of riding horses for them. She urges them to make haste to the Lucky Monkey; Sarcem is a fairly powerful cleric and he wouldn't call for help like this unless he were in dire peril. Jenya tries to arrange for a patrol of city guards to head out to the

Lucky Monkey as well, but wading through the red tape might take some time . . . time Sarcem doesn't have. See the "Flood Season" Web enhancement for Jenya Urikas's updated statistics.

CHAPTER TWO: DEATH AT THE LUCKY MONKEY

In this chapter, the PCs travel to a roadside tavern to save a high priest, only to find that they are too late. Sarcem has been killed by the werababoon Tongueater and his minions, and the villains are now busy looting the place. While they do expect travelers to continue to stop by, and planned to set up a few of their numbers as fake employees to turn away such visitors as needed, they think that their actions have gone unnoticed and are not expecting retaliation this soon.

If the PCs think ahead, they can secure maps of the Lucky Monkey in Cauldron before they leave. The Lucky Monkey is a fairly popular place to stay for travelers along the northwest road, so securing a map of the roadhouse is fairly easy, requiring a Gather Information check (DC 15) and 10 gp. If the PCs find a map, you can provide them with a copy of the inn's map.

CAULDRON ENVIRONS

Player Handout #2 consists of a rough map of the area surrounding Cauldron; they can obtain a copy of this map from Jenya, or barring that, from any number of merchants in town for a mere 15 gp. A PC who succeeds at a bardic knowledge or Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) knows enough about the region that he can draft his own copy of this map. The map only shows relative positions of areas of interest, and is not to a particular scale. That said, the Lucky Monkey (as well as the three frontier villages of Kingfisher Hollow, Hollowsky, and Redgorge) are all approximately 24 miles away from Cauldron.

Cauldron is located in a sub-tropical climate. The foothills surrounding the taller mountains are rugged and covered with scrub, but are fairly open for several miles before giving way to rolling savannahs. These savannahs then transform into particularly dense sub-tropical jungles a few miles farther out from the mountains. This region is a true frontier land; a few villages sit in the



foothills and lowlands (as indicated on the regional map), but aside from these and the roads, the area is still a true wilderness.

As long as the PCs stay to the roads, they shouldn't have any dangerous encounters. The most disturbing thing that happens might even go unnoticed by some parties: at several points during the journey through the lowlands, they pass within a few hundred feet of several large troops of baboons. Allow characters a Spot check (DC 23, or DC 18 if the character has the wild empathy special ability) as they do; success indicates that character notices the baboons become quiet and still as the group passes. Dozens of sinister black eyes follow their progress until the PCs are a bit down the road, at which time the baboons resume their normal behavior. A typical troop of baboons numbers about 30, and they defend themselves and their territory with great ferocity if threatened; if statistics become necessary, you can use those provided in the *Monster Manual*, page 193.

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE CAULDRON REGION

Aside from Cauldron and the Lucky Monkey, several other sites of possible interest are indicated on the player's map of the region. You can use these areas and names as springboards for future adventures in the area; details on these additional locations are beyond the scope of this adventure, although some of them may figure prominently in future adventures in the *Adventure Path: Shattered City* series.

Three of the locations shown on the regional map (Redgorge, Kingfisher Hollow, and Hollowsky) are small villages of no more than 500 inhabitants. Any of these villages could serve as a base of operations for characters who wish to explore some of these other sites.

Some hints as to the nature of the other locations can be found in the text; Hookface, for example, is rumored to be a powerful and ancient dragon, while the ruined city of Shatterhorn is known to be a yuan-ti haunt. Other locations, such as Crazy Jared's Hut or the Demonskar, aren't mentioned at all, and you can develop these locations into adventures of your own.

Finally, some of these locations may be detailed further in upcoming adventures in this series. If you develop one of these regions on your own and it happens to be developed differently in a future adventure, you can always change the adventure to unfold in a region you haven't expanded yet.

The Lucky Monkey



Upper Level

WEST

1 square = 5 feet

Ground Level



Basement



THE LUCKY MONKEY

At first sight, the Lucky Monkey doesn't look all that unusual. The roadhouse itself sits to the east of the road, partially surrounded by the dense jungle. The building is old and well used—the chimneys stained with soot, the roof sagging, the wood siding weathered and stained from last year's mildew. A smaller stable stands to the building's side in a similar condition. The façade of the building sports numerous carved wooden monkeys, many of which are engaged in risky, death-defying stunts. In one, a wooden monkey balances on a narrow tree branch to get a banana hanging over a sleeping tiger; in another, a monkey sits on a boulder completely unaware that a poacher sneaking up behind him was suddenly attacked and eaten by an ankheg.

As you step closer, though, you begin to see signs that something terrible has recently happened here—a broken window, a spray of blood against the wall, crushed plants and churned up earth in the space between the façade and the road. Then there's the harsh sound of construction... or more likely, destruction, coming from the building's interior.

Although several bandits lurk in the Lucky Monkey when the party first arrives at the roadhouse, they are not in the best condition to defend their ill gotten gains. Trel led the attack on the tavern. Once she made sure that Sarcem was dead and she had the *wands of control water*, she left for her headquarters in the Kopru Ruins. She left Tongueater and the rest of her minions behind to scrounge what wealth they could from the place and finish off the last few survivors. She doesn't expect her cohort to return to the cult headquarters for a few days.

The majority of the villains encountered in this chapter (including all the thugs and Alleybashers) have been at the alcohol stores; as a result they are all rather drunk. As long as they remain drunk (which lasts for approximately 2 hours after they realize they're under attack), the bandits suffer a -2 circumstance penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks. Defeating a drunk bandit is much easier than defeating a sober one, and you should reduce the XP award for such defeats by 50%.

Should the bandits discover they're under attack, they try to rally, but their drunken state fills them with false bravado. Rather than forming an organized defense, they tend to hit the party in small groups of three or four. As they search the roadhouse for the PCs, keep in mind that their drunkenness impacts many of their skill checks and attack rolls.

Sturdy wooden shutters cover both ground and second floor windows of the inn. The shutters were closed for the night when the bandits attacked, and the intruders have left them closed and locked. Breaking or forcing the shutters automatically alerts those in the room beyond that someone is attempting a forced entry.

❖ **Locked Shutters:** 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Open Locks DC 15; break DC 13.

Doors: Doors in the Lucky Monkey are of good quality.

❖ **Wooden Doors:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Open Locks varies by room; break DC 18.

OUTSIDE THE LUCKY MONKEY

The encounters in this section refer to the map of the Lucky Monkey and surrounding area.

1. THE LUCKY MONKEY

The bandits have locked the front doors (Open Locks, DC 28) and piled the ruin of a table against it, further blocking the door from outside intruders. Once the door is unlocked, a successful Strength check (DC 23) is still necessary to push open the doors.

2. STABLES

The stables can house up to twenty-four horses with ease, although at the time the bandits struck the building held only fourteen. All of them fled the stables, driven to terror by the lycanthrope's proximity.

3. SIDE ENTRANCE

These exterior doors to the Lucky Monkey have been locked (Open Locks, DC 28) and barricaded with a desk (Strength check, DC 23, to push open the doors from outside).

4. SERVICE ENTRANCE

Tongueater has converted the kitchen into his base of operations in the roadhouse, and he keeps these doors locked (Open Locks, DC 30).

5. HUNGRY WILDLIFE (EL 5)

After the slaughter of the majority of the guests and employees of the Lucky Monkey, Tongueater and his bandits hauled the bodies out to the edge of the jungle behind the roadhouse and stacked them here. The morbid mound of corpses numbers fifteen in all. The bandits looted the bodies thoroughly before stacking them.

Creature: The mound of bodies quickly drew the attention of local scavengers and predators, but they were chased off by the arrival of a pair of hungry deinonychuses. The dinosaurs have claimed the mound of bodies as their own and currently chew away at them contentedly. They attack any creature that attacks them or approaches within 20 feet of their feast.

❖ **Deinonychus (2):** hp 41, 38; *Monster Manual* 55.

INSIDE THE LUCKY MONKEY

The interior of the Lucky Monkey is comfortable, but most of it has been savaged by the bandits in their search for loot and booze. Most of the rooms have windows for light; after dark, lanterns and candles served to light the place. Throughout the roadhouse, the motif of lucky monkeys can be seen. For example, the mantles of the carved stone fireplaces feature numerous monkeys cavorting through trap-filled passageways.

M1. COMMON ROOM (EL 4)

Ruined tavern tables, bloodstains, torn up floorboards, and general wreckage dominate this once cozy tavern room.

Creatures: Although many of the bandits hired by the cultists are simple thugs, a similar number consist of a one-time gang of rogues that operated in a large city to the south. Known as the Alleybashers, these rogues operated numerous protection rackets and muggings until their leader was captured and they were forced to flee. The Alleybashers hired by Triel tend to think of the other thugs as lower rank and often try to order them around. The thugs detest being told what to do, and minor fights between the two groups are common.

Four thugs and two Alleybashers drink and carouse here.

☛ **Nather, Terney, Lence, and Jendy, Male and Female Human Ftr2 (4):** CR 2; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 2d10+4; hp 23, 20, 18, 17; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; BAB +2; Grap +5; Atk +7 melee (1d8+2/19–20, masterwork longsword); AL CN; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +1*, Jump +1*, Swim –3*. **Feats:** Great Fortitude, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (longsword).

*Includes –6 armor check penalty.

**Includes –11 penalty for weight of gear carried.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Chainmail, masterwork large steel shield, masterwork longsword, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, red sash.

☛ **Nathalie and Feristin, Alleybasher Male and Female Human Rog2 (2):** CR 2; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 2d6+5; hp 18, 14; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; BAB +1; Grap +1; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1/18–20, masterwork rapier) or +4 ranged (1d6/×3, shortbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will –1; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 13.

Skills: Bluff +6, Climb +6, Disable Device +8, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Search +7, Spot +4, Tumble +8. **Feats:** Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Languages: Common, Gnome, Halfling.

Possessions: Studded leather, masterwork rapier, shortbow with 20 arrows, red sash.

M2–4. PRIVATE BOOTHS (EL 3)

These smaller rooms were rented out to larger parties for private dining or meetings.

Creatures: A thug and an Alleybasher have retreated to area M3 for a more private place to explore their interests in each other. They are unlikely to immediately notice the sounds of combat in the main room.

☛ **Pierto, Male Human Ftr2:** hp 20; see area M1 for details.

☛ **Bria, Alleybasher Female Human Rog2:** hp 12; see area M1 for details.

M5. STAIRS

This flight of stairs leads up to area M31 of the upper floor.

M6. STAGE (EL 2)

This raised platform is arranged like a stage; a couple of large chairs sit against the walls before an extraordinarily large fireplace. Ashes have been scattered across the floor, and the fireplace itself is in ruins—large holes are smashed in the sides and back of it and crumbled bricks lie stacked haphazardly to the side.

Creature: A semiconscious thug lies in one of the chairs here. She rouses in 1d4 rounds if combat erupts in area M1.

☛ **Corene, Female Human Ftr2:** hp 18; see area M1 for details.

M7. BAR

The flight of stairs behind the bar leads up to area M28.

M8–9. RESTROOMS

The doors to each of these restrooms can be locked from the inside. Tongueater currently holds the keys to open these locks. Either of these locked doors can otherwise be opened with a successful Open Locks check (DC 20).

M10. TRAVELER'S ENTRANCE

Most travelers, after leaving their horses in the nearby stable, entered the Lucky Monkey by this door and arranged for rooms with a receptionist here.

M11. NIGHTCLERK'S QUARTERS

This room served as the personal quarters of the Lucky Monkey's nightclerk.

M12. ROOM KEY STORAGE

This room contains a large ruined chest of drawers that once contained copies of keys for all the rooms on the upper floor. The bandits smashed the drawers apart and took the keys to aid in their search.

M13. STOREROOM

This large room is a complete mess; it was used to store everything from firewood to bed linens to lamp oil to lumber.

M14. RECORDS ROOM/LIBRARY

Cabinets and shelves line the walls of this room; additional free-standing shelves clutter the central portion of the room. Most of them have been knocked over, and scrolls, papers, and books are scattered across the floor.

This room contained reading material for use by the Lucky Monkey's guests. It also held old guestbooks and other records kept by the roadhouse.

M15. CHAPEL TO FHARLANGHN

Once a comfortable, well-tended, and cozy chapel, this chamber now lies in ruins. Shattered chairs and torn up swaths of



carpet clutter the floor, and holes have been knocked in the walls. Even the altar has been smashed to splinters.

Funding for the Lucky Monkey's construction was partially provided by the church of Fharlanghn, on the condition that a small chapel dedicated to the Dweller on the Horizon be maintained on site. The caretaker of the shrine was a half-elf named Shensen (see area **M43**).

M16. PRIVATE LOUNGE

This lounge was used by the employees of the Lucky Monkey to relax, game, and eat.

M17. SHENSEN'S ROOM

This room looks like it once served as a combination lounge, library, conservatory, and bedroom. Unfortunately, it's now in the same condition as the rest of this place—in ruins. The bed's mattress is torn into tatters, an upright piano lies in fragments against the nearby wall, and pieces of furniture lie in heaps on the floor.

This is where Shensen Tesserill, the Lucky Monkey's current keeper of the Chapel of Fharlanghn, lived. She preferred to spend most of her time outside and was just returning from a walk when the bandits attacked. She is the only survivor of the bandit attack and has barricaded herself in the well room (area **M43**).

M18–19. EMPLOYEE QUARTERS

The waitresses, cooks, bartenders, and chambermaids employed by the Lucky Monkey lived in these rooms.

M20. GARDENING SUPPLIES

This room contains numerous gardening tools, along with a tiny bunk used by the Lucky Monkey's groundskeeper.

M21. COURTYARD (EL 5)

This central courtyard looks like it escaped the devastation that has been visited upon the rest of the roadhouse. Trees and flowerbeds accent the area, and a white gravel path winds past a pair of marble fountains that bear intricate carvings of monkeys taunting all manner of strange monsters.

While the bandits have left this area untouched, most of Tongueater's baboon minions have settled into the courtyard.

Creatures: Five hill baboons lurk in the courtyard. The baboons are loyal to Tongueater and won't attack Tongueater or anyone wearing a red sash on their wrist. The thugs and Alleybashers (all human men and women) are careful to always wear these sashes when they're around the savage creatures

➤ **Hill Baboons (advanced baboon) (5):** CR 1; Medium Animal; HD 3d8+3; hp 19, 18, 15 ×2, 13; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; BAB +2; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d6+3, bite); SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills: Climb +10, Listen +5, Spot +5. **Feats:** Alertness.

Tactics: The baboons attack anyone in the room who doesn't wear a red sash. They fight fiercely until slain.

Development: If a PC manages to charm, calm, or dominate one of the baboons, it can provide some information. A captive baboon "speaks" glowingly about the great ape leader (a reference to Tongueater), and that he currently resides in the man-food room (a reference to the kitchen—area M27). A baboon can describe Tongueater in vague terms, but it always describes his ape form. A friendly baboon also mentions the leader's metal tooth (a reference to the lycanthrope's falchion). The baboons don't remember Triel much beyond her armor and don't volunteer information about her. Non-dominated baboons won't willingly attack troop-mates.

M22. BANQUET HALL

This room could be rented to host banquets for large groups of important visitors. The stairs ascend to the second floor.

M23. STOREROOM

Cleaning supplies were kept here.

M24. PREPARATION ROOM

This room was used to prepare dinners for the banquet hall.

M25. MEETING ROOM

This small office was used by the employees for meetings.

M26. TREASURY

Five large iron safes sit against the opposite wall; each of them hanging open and empty. A desk against the wall to

the south lies on its side, its front smashed in and its mundane contents strewn about the place.

The door to this room is completely battered down. Several large safes held the monetary holdings of the Lucky Monkey; the Alleybashers have already cracked these safes and consolidated the money in the kitchen (area M27).

M27. KITCHEN (EL 6)

This large room was obviously the roadhouse's kitchen. The large metal tables for food preparation have all been pushed against the walls, leaving the firepit in the center of the room isolated. An impressive stack of coins, paintings, silverware, bottles of wine, and other costly looking treasures lie stacked near the firepit in organized piles.

The bandits decided to make this room their base of operations. The stairs lead up to area M30, and a broken-down door below them leads to a flight of stairs heading to the basement.

Creatures: Tongueater is here, busily counting the loot his minions have gathered together so far, or cursing and mocking Sarcem's severed head. Three hill baboons lurk in the room as well; they fight to the death to defend their beloved master.

➤ **Tongueater, Male Half-orc Werebaboon (afflicted lycanthrope) Bbn3, Hybrid Form:** CR 5; Medium Humanoid (Half-Orc, Shapechanger); HD 3d12+6 plus 1d8+3; hp 40; Init +7; Spd 50 ft.; AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 18; BAB +3; Grap +8; Atk +9 melee (2d4+7/18–20, masterwork falchion) and +6 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA lycanthropic empathy, rage 1/day; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, fast movement, scent, trap sense (+1), uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 20, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +10, Control Shape +7, Intimidate +5, Listen +5. **Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Heward's handy haversack, four potions of cure light wounds, potion of jump, potion of blur, potion of magic fang, potion of enlarge (at 5th level), masterwork studded leather, masterwork falchion, key ring (opens all locked doors in the Lucky Monkey).

Half-orc Form: As hybrid form but with the following changes: hp 36; Init +5; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Grap +6; Atk +7 melee (2d4+4/18–20, masterwork falchion); SV Fort +7, Ref +4; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 15.

CAMPAIGN SEED: SHENSEN TESSERIL AND OTHER RECURRING NPCs

Shensen can become one of the party's most supportive allies throughout the course of this adventure. Her good word goes a long way with Meerthan, should the party wish to join the Striders of Fharlanghn at a later date. She is more than willing to donate her skills, spells, and knowledge to the party for their use, and may even fall in love with a male PC of similar interests or skills to her own.

Developing Shensen into a key NPC over the course of this series of adventures is an excellent way to provide yet another layer of continuity to the overall campaign, and she might have an important role to play later. As the PCs continue to adventure and level up, you should level Shensen up as well (although you might want to wait until the PCs are equal to her level before starting this); she most likely continues to take druid levels, although her exact path of development is up to you.

Baboon Form: As hybrid form but with the following changes: AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Atk +8 melee (1d6+7, bite).

Tongueater is a feral half-orc who prefers to spend most of his time in hybrid form. In this form, his face and snout are baboonish, complete with large, razor-sharp fangs. A large mane of black hair sprouts from his head, and he is quite fond of facial warpaint, body piercings (mostly of bone or metal jewelry), and decorative, self-inflicted scar patterns. His studded leather armor is tailored to fit him in half-orc or hybrid form, but if he assumes baboon form the armor falls off.

➤ **Hill Baboons (3):** hp 15, 14, 12; see area **M21**.

Development: The bandits in area **M38** arrive in 3 rounds to aid Tongueater if they hear the sounds of battle in the kitchen.

Treasure: Tongueater has spread the collected loot of the Lucky Monkey out on a large table and is sorting through it, piling it into large leather sacks for transport back to the Kopru Ruins. The loot consists of 2,680 cp, 1,953 sp, 742 gp, 18 pp, and 4,500 gp worth of various art objects (paintings, sculptures, silverware, wine, and so forth) weighing a total of 120 pounds. This loot belongs to the murdered guests and employees of the Lucky Monkey. Tracking down the families of the victims is a daunting task, and few fault the PCs if they keep the loot.

One final item of note to be found here is Sarcem's severed head (the rest of his body can be found in the basement). Tongueater has mounted this grisly trophy on the wall and has eaten its tongue. If the high priest's head is returned to Cauldron, a *speak with dead* spell could provide valuable clues.

M28. STAIRS

These stairs descend to area **M7**.

M29. BRIDGE

This bridge leads over the courtyard below and allows the cooks to move between the bar and kitchen without disrupting the guests in the courtyard. It arcs 10 feet over the ground below.

M30. STAIRS

These stairs descend to area **M27**.

M31. STAIRS

These stairs descend to area **M5**.

M32. FLOPROOM

This large room contains several bunks for travelers who had a tight budget.

M33. GUEST ROOMS (EL 4 OR 6)

Several bandits are in the process of looting and destructively searching these rooms.

Creatures: Two of these rooms (determined randomly when the PCs arrive) contain a group of two thugs and two Alleybasher busy dismantling the place looking for loot. If one group of four bandits is attacked and they call for help, the second group of four comes to their aid if they hear the cries.

☛ **Shanni, Rollin, Wart, and Daniki, Male and Female Human Ftr2 (2 per group):** hp 21, 20 ×2, 18; see area **M1** for details.

☛ **Chana, Dantiano, Chupo, and Lystiviny, Alleybasher Male and Female Human Rog2 (2 per group):** hp 16, 15, 14 ×2; see area **M1** for details.

M34. GUEST LOUNGE

This room gave guests a quiet place to relax or play cards away from the hustle and bustle of the common room downstairs.

M35–36. BATHS

Each of these rooms contains a large round tub and a cabinet containing towels, scented oils, and soaps.

M37. HIGH CLASS GUEST ROOMS

These four guest rooms were fairly extravagant before the bandits took them apart.

M38. ORIN'S BEDROOM (EL 3)

This large room looks like a combination office, lounge, and bedroom. At one point, several wooden panels could be moved to separate the room into smaller areas, but they, like most of the other furniture in this room, have been smashed.

The one time owner of the Lucky Monkey, a human expert named Orin Marsh, lived in and ran his business from this large combination bedroom and office.

Creatures: A group of two thugs and an Alleybasher are still busy tearing this room apart.

☛ **Teruch and Ilsawyn, Female Human Ftr2 (2):** hp 21, 18; see area **M1** for details.

☛ **Paldi, Alleybasher Male Human Rog2 (1):** hp 16; see area **M1** for details.

Development: These bandits rush down the stairs to aid Tongueater if they hear sounds of battle or cries for help coming from the kitchen.

M39. BATTLEFIELD (EL 5)

This room is dominated by several large tanks, kegs, and other brewing equipment. The tanks are now empty and hacked to pieces, and the floor is a stinking morass of muddy earth soaked with a mixture of beer, mead, and blood. A terrible battle must have taken place here.

Sarcem and the other last survivors made their final stand in this chamber. Most of the bodies (including fallen bandits) were taken away to be piled at the edge of the jungle behind the roadhouse, but Tongueater was particularly disgusted with Sarcem, who put up quite a fight. The high priest's mutilated body lies slumped against the base of a battered keg, the head missing completely. After being burned by Sarcem's magic mace, Tongueater decided to leave the body's gear intact until he was ready to return to Cauldron.

Creatures: Three thugs and two Alleybashers have gathered near the passageway opposite the stairs, trying to come up with a safe way to batter down the door at the far end without getting too close to the deadly barricade (see area M42). An earlier attempt to burn the door down resulted in disaster.

☞ **Nisty, Moruka, and Lakus, Male and Female Human Ftr2 (3):** hp 24, 20, 17; see area M1 for details.

☞ **Arn and Ildawyn, Alleybasher Male and Female Human Rog2 (2):** hp 16, 14; see area M1 for details.

Treasure: Sarcem's bloody hand still grips his +1 *holy light mace*. His other gear consists of a suit of +1 *banded mail*, three empty potion bottles, a *ring of protection* +1, and a *periapt of wisdom* +2.

Development: These bandits rush up the stairs to aid Tongueater if they hear sounds of battle or cries for help coming from the kitchen.

M40. WINE CELLAR

This room contains several (now empty) wine racks.

M41. FRUIT CELLAR

This room contains fruit and vegetables, although most have been cast carelessly to the dirt floor by bandits searching for treasure.

M42. COLD STORAGE

This room feels moist and humid. Several sides of meat hang from hooks set into the ceiling, and a number of storage bins line the west wall. The far end of the room is empty except for an open metal box lying on its side; the box is lined with slowly melting frost.

The door of this chamber bears a sign, "NO FIRE BEYOND THIS POINT." This room was used to store meat and other perishables; the room itself was kept cold by a small container of brown mold (see page 117 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*) kept in a sealed metal box at the far end of the room. Shensen used the box of mold to create her barricade; the room is still cool, but not quite as cold as area M43.

M43. WELL ROOM (EL VARIABLE)

The temperature in this room is near freezing. A thin layer of frost coats the floor and walls of the northern portion of the room. A low, circular well sits in the center of the room, its mouth partially covered by a few planks of wood.

The door to this room is a solid, iron-reinforced wooden door that bulges at the seams, almost as if the wood had melted and expanded to clog the doorway. This is a result of Shensen's *wood shape* spell. Three dead Alleybashers lie on the ground before the door, killed by the **Trap**. Assuming the party can get by this door and the **Trap**, they find the room beyond to be near freezing. The well is 30 feet deep; huddled to the south of it is Shensen Tesseril.

☛ **Warped Wooden Door:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; break DC 18.

Trap (EL 2): The 5-foot squares to either side of the door to this room are thick with brown mold. Opening the door instantly exposes the character before it to the mold.

☛ **Brown Mold:** CR 2; 3d6 cold subdual damage within 5 feet; fire brought within 5 feet doubles its size; can be destroyed by cold damage (see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, page 117).

Creature (EL 5): When Sarcem was killed by Tongueater, Shensen knew that she only had a few seconds to live if she didn't think fast. She ran to the cold storage room, grabbed the metal box of brown mold, then fled to this room. As she passed through the door, she opened the box and scattered the mold all over it, then managed to *wood shape* the door, causing it to become ferociously stuck. Already wounded by the battle, the additional cold damage dealt by the mold nearly finished her. She barely managed to erect the barricade before collapsing.

☛ **Shensen Tesseril, Female Half-drow Brd1/Drd3/Mnk1:** CR 5; Medium Humanoid (half-elf); HD 1d6-1 plus 4d8-4; hp 16 (currently 0 including 5 points of subdual damage); Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 14; BAB +2; Grap +2; Atk +5 melee (1d6+1, unarmed strike); SA spells, countersong, fascinate, inspire courage (+1) (already used), unarmed strike, stunning attack 1/day (already used); SQ bardic knowledge, half-elf traits, evasion; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 9, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 14.

Skills: Animal Empathy +8, Concentration +6, Disguise +4, Diplomacy +5, Jump +35, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +8, Perform +7, Tumble +7. **Feats:** Run, Weapon Finesse (unarmed strike).

Druid Spells Prepared (4/3/2; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*create water*, *flare* (cast), *know direction*, *light* (cast); 1st—*calm animals* (cast), *cure light wounds* (cast), *summon nature's ally I* (cast); 2nd—*resist energy* (cast), *wood shape* (cast).

Bard Spells Known (3; base save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*daze*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*. (Shensen has cast two bard spells already today.)

Languages: Common, Druidic, Elven, Halfling.

Possessions: *Ring of protection* +1, *ring of jumping*, *wand of magic fang* (13 charges left), *wand of entangle* (7 charges left).

Shensen has long silver hair, dusky skin, and is nimble and athletic, although she is currently in poor shape from her fight with Tongueater and his goons. As a child, she was raised in a monastery and trained as a monk. But when her elders turned away a wounded druid who sought protection from wrongful punishment at the hands of an angry mob, she went against the wishes of her elders and let the druid into the monastery through a secret door. When her actions were discovered, the monks turned the druid over to the mob (which quickly executed him) and exiled Shensen. The experience left her embittered to the overly ordered and detached lifestyle of the monk, and although she retains some of the training she gained at the monastery, she never returned to that lifestyle. Instead, she became an explorer and wandering storyteller, combining the social graces of the bard with the reverence of nature of a druid. Eventually, she encountered the Striders of Fharlanghn and joined their ranks, and for the past year she's been the attendant



caretaker of the chapel of Fharlanghn at the Lucky Monkey.

Development: If rescued, Shensen is grateful, but her first order of business is to contact her mentor in the Striders of Fharlanghn (Meerthan Eliothlorn) and inform him of the attack on the Lucky Monkey (a holy place to Fharlanghn's followers). She must go meet him in Cauldron at the Drowning Morkoth Inn, and asks to travel with the party back to town (see "Life's Bazaar" and the accompanying Web enhancement for more information

on Meerthan Eliothlorn). She promises not to forget the aid the PCs gave her, and she is true to her word. After she reports to Meerthan, she returns to the group and rewards them with a pair of *boots of striding and springing*, given to her by Meerthan as thanks for her rescue and the rescue of the Lucky Monkey building before it was completely destroyed.

Shensen doesn't have much information to impart about the attack. She was returning from a walk when she heard the

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE CHURCH OF WEE JAS

Whereas the Church of St. Cuthbert can be an ally and supporter for the PCs, the Church of Wee Jas should be a recurring foil to their efforts. As the PCs become more powerful, they catch the eye of Ike and eventually that of Embryl herself. In public situations where the PCs might be trying to accomplish some social goal, the church of Wee Jas takes up a contrary position to the PCs' goals and desires, more often than not simply to oppose them.

The exact reasons for the church's adversarial nature are quite hidden, and should not come to light any time in the near future, for Embryl Aloustinai is in fact a close ally of the Cagewrights, the sinister faction working to transform Cauldron into a gate town to Carceri. She may be nothing more than a supporter, she may be one of the Shackleborn (key individuals fated to play important parts in the plans of the Cagewrights), or she may even be one of the Cagewrights

herself. Whatever her true allegiances, she notices the PCs and realizes that they have the stuff of greatness in them. She believes that should they be left to explore, develop, and learn on their own, chances are that they will eventually become powerful enough to pose a serious threat to the Cagewrights' plans for Cauldron.

If one of the PCs is a worshiper of Wee Jas, this can make for some entertaining roleplaying. The Wee Jas worshiper might soon find his loyalties divided between the church and his adventuring companions. One thing to note is that Wee Jas herself doesn't necessarily approve of Embryl's actions, and as she becomes more and more involved with the Cagewrights, it's more likely that splinter faiths of Wee Jas break off from the main church and form underground resistances to the growing corruption in the upper ranks of the religion. Perhaps the PC worshiper can join, or even found, such a group.

sound of combat. She ran to investigate and found the bandits had already slain most of the guests and employees. Only a few remained standing, including a human cleric who seemed to be the focus of the bandits' attention. She knows that the bandits were led by a horrible man-beast, and that this creature followed the orders of a beautiful woman with red hair wearing a suit of full plate emblazoned with a strange symbol: a mailed fist clutching six barbed arrows (a Knowledge—religion check, DC 20, identifies this as the holy symbol of Hextor). She lent what aid she could, but they were eventually forced to retreat to the basement, where the beast-man killed the cleric. This left Shensen alone and outnumbered. She fled to the far end of the basement, using a *resist elements* spell to protect her as she set up the brown mold barricade before staggering into the corner.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the party rescues Shensen, award them experience points as if they had defeated her in combat.

CHAPTER THREE: FIND THE MISSING WANDS

In this chapter, the PCs return to Cauldron as the rain begins to fall. The mood in the city is festive as the Flood Festival begins, but there is an undercurrent of tension. Rumors abound that the *wands of control water* used to hold the floodwaters at bay are lost, and the churches of Cauldron have done little to refute this gossip. The party must determine what happened to the wands quickly so an attempt to retrieve them can be made before the city begins to flood.

EVENT 1: THE FLOOD SEASON BEGINS

At some time during the climax of Chapter Two, the overcast skies darken and turn an angry shade of purple-grey, and within minutes, the first of many downpours begins to blanket the region with sheets of rain. The rainstorms aren't unending, but they are quite common. As the days pass, it quickly becomes apparent that the area is in for the wettest winter in more than a decade.

During these storms, the region is buffeted by strong winds, with a 5% chance per hour of a gust of severe winds that lasts for 1d6 rounds. The effects of strong and severe winds are given on Table 3-17 in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* (page 87). The driving rain and wind impose a -8 penalty on all Spot, Search, and Listen checks.

The only good thing to arise from the bad weather is the fact that it seems to have driven off all of the dangerous animals and beasts of the region; the party should not have any encounters on the way back, provided they stick to the road.

EVENT 2: RETURN TO CAULDRON

The storm lets up a little bit and even allows for a few sunny breaks by the time the group returns to the city. They find Cauldron to be unexpectedly busy in the wake of the sudden storm, for the city is rushing to prepare for the first of many expected Flood Festivals. Decorations are going up on building façades

and over streets, merchant and game booths pop up along streets and in vacant lots, bards and other entertainers come out in force to ply their trades, and overall, a carnival-like atmosphere seems to be settling over the city. Sarcem's death might make it difficult to enjoy the festivities; the Church of St. Cuthbert, in particular, feels anything but celebratory (see Event 3).

As the days go by, the festivities lose steam. The relentless rainstorms begin to depress the public, and the inexorable rise of the water level begins to worry them. If the *wands of control water* are not recovered quickly, flooding and riots are real dangers to the people of Cauldron. You should time the rise of the waters so that it provides a constant growing threat in the background. Use it to keep the PCs focused on their task. The lake has several natural drains into the Underdark and also out the side of the volcano into a number of surrounding rivers, so it won't overflow overnight. Most of the buildings around the lakeshore are built on stilts to avoid minor floods, but if the party takes too long to recover the wands, not even these measures can save the lower quarters of the city from flooding.

EVENT 3: THE HUNT BEGINS

The PCs should return to the Church of St. Cuthbert and report their findings to Jenya. She takes the news of Sarcem's death stoically. After a brief moment of despair her tearing eyes fill with a steely resolve. She's just become the high priestess of the church, and full authority to act on the situation is hers and hers alone. If she promised to reward the PCs with money for their rescue attempt, she points out that the group has yet to retrieve the *wands*; until they do so, the reward stays in the temple treasury. She hopes that she won't have to resort to such tactics to enlist the party's aid in recovering the wands, of course. If the PCs have it, she requests the return of Sarcem's holy mace, which is actually the property of the church and the badge of office of the new high priest or priestess. She does allow them to keep his other possessions if they brought his body back for proper interment in the church's burial catacombs. If they PCs left the body behind, Jenya sends some of her acolytes to retrieve it from the Lucky Monkey.

At this point, the recovery of the *wands of control water* should become the party's primary goal. They have no idea where the wands have been taken, but the group can pursue several leads. Searching for these clues is difficult and time consuming; researching a specific lead should take, on average, 4 hours of work. Jenya encourages the PCs to seek out the wands, but she is just as adamant that someone seek justice for Sarcem. If the PCs don't suggest casting *speak with dead* on his body, Jenya brings it up the following day, tracking the PCs down, if necessary, so they can benefit from the spell (see *Divination Magic*, below).

The Red-Haired Woman: If they managed to rescue and befriend her, Shensen can provide the best lead. If the PCs get a detailed description of the woman with red hair in plate mail from her, allow them a Knowledge (local) check or a bardic knowledge check (DC 25). If the group fails this check, they can (once they return to Cauldron) find out this information by

interviewing locals in town and making a successful Gather Information check (DC 21); each attempt takes 4 hours and costs 2d6 gp in bribes. Successfully identifying the woman in armor from Shensen's description reveals her to be none other than the notorious Triel Eldurast, a one-time town guard of Cauldron who escaped punishment after murdering several of her fellow guards while on duty. This event took place nearly a decade ago, so the specifics have grown hazy in the memories of the people of Cauldron. Nothing has been heard of Triel since her escape, so the guard and citizens eventually assumed she succumbed to her wounds and died in the wilderness. She orchestrated the attack on the Lucky Monkey.

Interrogating Prisoners: The PCs might have managed to capture one or more bandits at the Lucky Monkey. Unfortunately, interrogating them yields little useful information. They were all hired by Triel from the alleys of Cauldron or the surrounding environs, but none of them have been to (or even suspect the existence of) the Kopru Ruins under Cauldron. They can provide a detailed description of Triel, though, and know that their mission was to provide support for Tongueater, who had been charged with Sarcem's assassination and the theft of some magic items he was carrying. They are not too loyal, and a successful Intimidate check (DC 11) gets them talking; they're quite afraid that their roles in the assassination of a prominent local figure might get them executed.

Tongueater knows quite a bit more; he's actually been to the Kopru Ruins several times and knows about the secret entrance to the lava tube that leads to the ruins. It is unlikely he can be captured alive, though, since he is fanatic and fights to the death. Nonetheless, if captured, a successful Intimidate check (DC 20) impresses him enough that he admits working for Triel. If further pressed, he tries to Bluff his captors by feeding them false information (perhaps by telling them that Triel has a base of operations in a nearby city like Redgorge or dangerous region like the Demonskar). Getting the actual location of the Kopru Ruins out of him should be difficult without magic (such as *charm monster* or *suggestion*) or torture.

If the PCs take Tongueater prisoner, Triel sends groups of Alleybashers to save him. The first consists of four Alleybashers, and if they fail she personally leads a second group of six Alleybashers in an attempt to save her cohort.

Divination Magic: If a PC wishes to use a spell that the party doesn't have access to but that Jenya can cast, she gladly casts the spell for them for free if the request is brought to her attention.

Divination: Although it's unlikely that any of the PCs can cast this spell, Jenya can cast it using the *Star of Justice*, a magic +1 holy heavy mace that can cast divination once per week. If the PCs ask her to perform a divination about the current situation, she gladly does so. You should allow the PCs to come up with the question, and frame the answer such that it steers them towards a local fence named Artus (see **Event 4**); this way the party can approach Artus for information rather than waiting for him to come to them. Doing so catches Artus off guard. As a result, he

hasn't had time to properly work up a price for his services and only charges the PCs 300 gp for the information.

Locate Object: The wands of control water are kept in various rooms in the Kopru Ruins, deep below Cauldron. Success shows that the wands are deep underground, approximately 550 feet beneath the western gate. Unfortunately, this spell doesn't provide directions on how to reach this apparently inaccessible location, and keep in mind that lower-level casters might be out of range of the wands' location when they cast the spell, depending on where the spell is used.

Speak with Animals/Speak with Plants: If the PCs use this spell to interrogate the local flora and fauna near the Lucky Monkey, there's a 5% chance that the animal or plant can provide a description of Triel. Any of the hill baboons located in the Lucky Monkey can provide this description automatically, assuming their savage, hungry natures can be quelled long enough for a decent conversation.

Speak with Dead: The party can use this spell to interrogate fallen bandits or Tongueater without having to resort to Intimidate checks. Of course, the body does gain a saving throw to avoid the spell, and the answers are often cryptic, unclear, or repetitive. More importantly, the party can use this spell to speak with Sarcem's head. Sarcem can provide a description of Triel, and even verify that Triel took the wands from his body just before Tongueater cut off his head.

Visiting Other Churches: If the PCs ask about the Flood Festival tradition, Jenya (or pretty much anyone else in the city) can tell them about the festival's history as outlined in the "Adventure Background." Cunning (or paranoid) PCs no doubt become suspicious of the other three churches in Cauldron who used to help with flood control but have lately lost interest in the ritual. If this is brought to Jenya's attention, she too becomes concerned and agrees that it might be helpful to speak with representatives of the other three major churches in town.

The Shrine of Pelor: This small yellow tower is tended by a single 4th-level male human cleric of Pelor named Kristof Jurgensen. If he learns of the missing wands, he becomes quite concerned and makes a visit to Jenya to pledge his aid in any way that he can, but unfortunately his resources are limited. The shrine to Pelor has always been fairly small and minor in Cauldron, especially since Kristof's two superiors recently died, leaving him in charge of the entire shrine. Kristof is genuinely concerned about the situation, but he has no idea what happened to the wands.

The Church of Kord: The church of Kord is nearly as powerful and popular in Cauldron as the church of St. Cuthbert, if only because they sponsor numerous sporting events and demonstrations for the people of Cauldron throughout the year. This church is currently headed by a 6th-level male half-orc cleric of Kord named Asfelkir Hranleurt. He is attended by a 5th-level cleric, two 2nd-level clerics, four 1st-level clerics, and a dozen acolytes in training (1st-level commoners). These clerics are preparing for several mock combats and competitions to be held during the Flood Festival, and have little time to talk to

Kopru Ruins

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Overlook | 15 Southern Guardroom | 29 Secret Passage | 43 Prison |
| 2 Transport Cage | 16 Workroom | 30 Webbed Cavern | 44 Interrogation Chamber |
| 3 Upper Winch | 17 Welcome Trap | 31 Ettercap Lair | 45 Unfinished Trap |
| 4 Winch Operator's Barracks | 18 Guardroom | 32 Harpoon Spider Lair | 46 Guardroom |
| 5 Storage | 19 Storeroom | 33 Trapped Chamber | 47 Entrance to Tarkilar's Caverns |
| 6 The Phantom Lake | 20 Southern Armory | 34 Storeroom | 48 Bone Guardian |
| 7 Nightmare Beach | 21 Mess Hall | 35 Northern Armory | 49 Safe Cavern |
| 8 Kopru Lair | 22 Barracks | 36 Triel's Chambers | 50 Undead Spiders |
| 9 Beach of Ruin | 23 Southern Entrance | 37 Mess Hall | 51 Glyphs of Warding |
| 10 Trapped Foyer | 24 Skaven's Parlor | 38 Meeting Room | 52 Cult Treasury |
| 11 Lower Watch | 25 Skaven's Bedchambers | 39 Thug Barracks | 53 Rubble-filled Room |
| 12 Main Entrance | 26 Workroom Storage | 40 Alleybasher Barracks | 54 Glyph Trap |
| 13 The Gauntlet | 27 Spider Nest | 41 Bloodbath | 55 Undead Minions |
| 14 Northern Guardroom | 28 Abandoned Webs | 42 Northern Entrance | 56 Tarkilar's Cavern |



1 square = 10 feet

WEST

anyone about missing wands. Asfelkir himself is convinced that the lake won't flood anyway, since it hasn't flooded in over a decade. All the buildings down by the lake have been rebuilt on stilts and behind breakwaters, so there shouldn't be a problem. He doesn't know what happened to the wands, but if pressed, he drops hints that the clerics of Wee Jas might have had something to do with it. This is more because Asfelkir is trying to get the PCs off his back and has a natural dislike for the Wee Jas clerics than from any actual suspicions. In truth, the church of Wee Jas does have something to hide (see the "Campaign Seed: The Church of Wee Jas" sidebar).

The Cathedral of Wee Jas: This towering structure is one of the most impressive and beautiful in Cauldron. The church of Wee Jas has always been powerful in Cauldron, but not as well liked as the churches of Kord or St. Cuthbert, since the clerics of this church tend to be standoffish, curt, and even creepy. The clerics of Wee Jas are responsible for dealing with the unclaimed dead of Cauldron, and also maintain vast catacombs below their temple for anyone who's rich enough to afford the burial but doesn't have a personal crypt. Most of the dead of Cauldron are cremated.

The cathedral is run by a female human 5th-level wizard/9th-level cleric of Wee Jas named Embryl Aloustinai, although she rarely sees visitors and leaves the day-to-day operations to a male human 7th-level cleric of Wee Jas named Ike Iverson. The PCs aren't allowed to speak to Embryl, and even Ike remains aloof and uninterested in their worries. He's always viewed the Flood Festival as a waste of resources and time, and has no problems stating as such to the PCs. He's a haughty, disdainful character who doesn't think the PCs are important enough to spend more than 5 minutes talking to. He doesn't know what became of the wands, but if the PCs confront him with a description of Triel, he denies recognizing her. A successful Sense Motive check (DC 20) reveals that he's hiding something.

The cathedral is also staffed by two 5th-level clerics, three 2nd-level clerics, seven 1st-level clerics, and ten acolytes in training (1st-level commoners).

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the party manages to learn about Triel's involvement in the conspiracy, award them XPs for a CR 3 encounter. If they manage to get the location of the Kopru Ruins out of Tongueater, award them experience points for a CR 5 encounter (which helps offset the fact that they no longer need to go through Event 4 below to find the ruins).

EVENT 4: SINISTER INFORMANT (EL 5)

Eventually, the party's questions and investigations attract the attention of Artus Shemwick, a fence and information broker extraordinaire. Artus works part time at the Tipped Tankard tavern on the lakeshore as a cook, but his real source of income is from buying gems, art objects, and minor magic items, most of which are stolen. He also brokers in rumors and information. He has numerous contacts among the low-lives of Cauldron, and it isn't long before the party's investigation comes to his attention, possibly even via first-hand observation if they ever visit the Tipped Tankard and make a point of discussing their problems aloud.

Artus makes contact with the party by having an urchin deliver a note to one of the PCs. The note is brief, and is reproduced as **Player Handout #3**.

Player Handout #3

I know you're looking for the wands I can help, for a price. If you're interested, come alone to the Lakeside Pavilion tonight at midnight. Bring your gold pieces and you'll walk away with the location of the wands. Bring backup, and you'll never find them.

The Lakeside Pavilion is a large open building on the east shore of the lake; many public ceremonies take place here, but at night the place is deserted and sinister. If the PC who received the note goes there at midnight, Artus steps from the shadows to deal with him. If the PC brought backup that Artus can see, he calls off the meeting and does not make contact that night. Each night, he repeats his offer, doubling his fee each time until the PCs simply don't show up or the contacted PC finally shows up alone.

Creature: Artus has no intention of robbing the PC, although his methods of communication might not make that clear. If the PC honors the terms of the deal, Artus accepts the 500 gp payment and tells the character that Triel has joined forces with two other cultists (of which Artus has not been able to find out much at all) and that they plan to ransom the wands back to Cauldron after the town becomes desperate from the flooding. He also tells them that Triel and her minions have set up a base of operations in a subterranean ruin below Cauldron that can be reached by a hidden lava tube. He gives the PC a crude map of Cauldron with an "X" marked on the outer northeastern slope, about 200 feet down from the wall; this "X" marks the hidden entrance to the lava tube.

☛ **Artus Shemwick, Male Human Rog5:** CR 5; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 5d6; hp 17; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 14; BAB +3; Grap +2; Atk +6 melee (1d4+1, masterwork punching dagger); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +13, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10, Forgery +11, Gather Information +10, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Listen +5, Profession (cook) +9, Sense Motive +9, Sleight of Hand +10, Spot +5, Use Magic Device +10. **Feats:** Skill Focus (Appraise), Skill Focus (Sleight of Hand), Weapon Finesse (punching dagger).

Languages: Human, Elven, Gnome, Halfling

Possessions: Heward's handy haversack, leather armor, masterwork punching dagger, 4 doses of giant wasp poison, 1 dose of striped toadstool, merchant's scale, masterwork thieves' tools, 100 cp, 290 sp, 536 gp, and 10 pp. Artus has numerous stashes of additional gold, gems, and art objects throughout the city totaling 4,300 gp to help him purchase more expensive objects, but he'll need 1d6 hours to access these additional funds if he needs them.

Artus is a fairly nondescript man in his early twenties, but this is mostly an act. He can turn on the charm with ease, and cleans up real nice when he wants to make an impression on an important client.

Development: Artus is loosely affiliated with the Last Laugh, and has numerous friends in Cauldron. In the weeks to come, he tries to get revenge on the PCs if they attack him and he manages to flee. He might do this by secretly poisoning food or drink they order at the Tipped Tankard. He might also have other members of the thieves' guild harass the PCs.

If the transaction goes well, Artus can become a valuable resource for the PCs throughout the campaign. His prices for information rise as his clients become more rich and powerful, and he tries to keep close tabs on his best customers so that if the need arises, he can blackmail them for additional funds or to keep them quiet about his actual source of income.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs manage to learn what Artus knows without resorting to combat, grant them experience points as if they had defeated him in combat.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTO THE KOPRU RUINS

The PCs can find out about Triel's hideout in the caverns below Cauldron in a number of ways: they can learn of its existence from Artus, by successfully interrogating Tongueater, or through sheer luck and persistence. Characters who watch the northeastern slopes of Cauldron after dark have a chance of seeing Triel enter or exit the secret lava tube; there's a cumulative 5% chance she exits or enters the tube during any watch of at least 4 hours in length. She isn't particularly sneaky but usually operates under a *silence* spell when she exits the tunnel. The cover afforded by the terrain grants her a +2 circumstance bonus to her Hide check, bringing her total Hide check modifier to -2 (counting her armor check penalty of -5). Remember that Spot checks to notice her suffer a -1 penalty per 10 feet of distance, and stormy conditions further impact Spot checks by imposing a -8 penalty.

THE KOPRU RUINS

Two entrances grant access to these ruins. The secret lava tube entrance connects a hidden entrance on the northeast slope of Cauldron (area **12** on the map of Cauldron) to area **K1** of the ruins. It consists of a long, circular, winding, downhill passage that maintains a universal diameter of about 6 feet. The second entrance is an underwater passage that connects the Phantom Lake (area **K6**) to the central lake of Cauldron. This passageway also connects to several other underground lakes in the area, and is horribly complex to navigate. The most direct route between the Phantom Lake and the central lake is about 2,400 feet long and emerges into the central watery shaft at a depth of about 1,300 feet below its surface.

Dungeon Features: The ruins themselves are gloomy and dark, periodically lit by patches of phosphorescent fungus and

continual flame spells placed at key positions by the three cultists. The architecture is smooth and somewhat unsettling, looking almost like a more stable structure of dwarven design that was allowed to partially melt; all angles on the interior and exterior are smooth and curved. In many places, badly eroded carvings on the walls depict the ancient kopru enslaving other races and partaking in all forms of vile practices.

Numerous small fissures in the rock walls provide ventilation in this area. Nonetheless, the air in this entire complex is warm, humid, stale, and nasty smelling. The air won't hurt anyone who breathes it for extended periods, but it's unpleasant to smell and taste.

Unless stated otherwise, the ceilings in most artificial areas are 10 feet high. In caverns, the height increases to 20 feet, and in the outer cavern it reaches 120 feet at the highest point.

Doors: All the doors in the ruins are constructed of heavy stone that pivot on a central bar, allowing the door to rotate along the center and providing an opening to either side a little less than 3 feet wide. The cultists have fitted several of the more important doors with locks, but if the text doesn't say that a door is locked (or can be locked), it cannot be locked at all.

☛ **Stone Door:** 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; break DC 28.

The following encounters are keyed to the map of the Kopru Ruins:

K1. OVERLOOK

The lava tube suddenly ends at a small ledge overlooking a vast cavern. A small pile of wooden planks is stacked on the edge of the ledge. Nearly a hundred feet below, the waters of a lake filled with dimly glowing green algae lap against cave walls encrusted with pallid fungi. A small stone building is built into the side of the ledge wall, and a pair of heavy ropes descends from a winch on the side of the building across the lake to a similar winch attached to a wooden structure on the other side of the lake. Suspended on these ropes is a rickety looking wood and iron cage mounted on a system of pulleys. The phosphorescence of the lake just barely illuminates the vast cavern, and you can see what appear to be the partially melted ruins of several buildings protruding from a sparkling wall of volcanic rock along the far wall of the cave. Several of these buildings have small doorways at ground level, but you see no windows in the ominous dark façades. The air here is thick, warm, and excessively humid.

The planks can be used to form a makeshift bridge between the hanging cage and the ledge, allowing people to cross into the cage with ease when it is retracted up to this location. Anyone who falls off the ledge drops 90 feet into the nasty green water below and takes 2d3 points of subdual damage plus 5d6 points of normal damage; a successful Swim or Tumble check (DC 20) allows the character to hit the water gracefully and negate the normal damage.

K2. TRANSPORT CAGE

This cage can be raised or lowered between areas **K1** and **K9**. The winches in areas **K3** and **K11** control the cage operation.

The cage itself looks rickety, but it can support up to three Medium creatures with no problem. Up to six Medium creatures can cram into the cage, but this runs a chance of snapping the ropes that hold the cage. Each round the cage is overloaded, it must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 2 per additional Medium creature in the cage over the normal limit of three) to avoid crashing into the lake below. The cage has a Fortitude save bonus of +2. The cage descends 15 feet per round (90-foot total descent), so creatures in a falling cage take less damage the closer to area **K11** they are. Anyone who inspects the cage and makes a Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 20) can determine the cage's safety threshold.

A character can descend the ropes without the cage with a successful Balance check (DC 18) or Climb check (DC 15).

K3. UPPER WINCH

This room is dominated by a large winch. Operating the winch requires a successful Strength check (DC 10). Each round, the winch moves the cage at a speed of 10 feet. Since the distance between the two areas is about 60 feet, it takes 6 rounds for someone to move the cage from one location to the next. Safety features on the winch halt the progress of the cage if the operator ceases to use it before the cage reaches the other side. A successful Disable Device check (DC 20) removes this safety feature; with a result of 30 on the check, the missing safety isn't obvious. The winch also has a locking mechanism that prevents it from functioning; releasing this lock requires an Open Locks check (DC 25).

A tiny 1-foot-square circular window is set into the southern wall. Affixed to the wall next to this window is a *stone of alarm*; it can be activated by touch and removed from its mount with a successful Strength check (DC 15).

K4. WINCH OPERATOR'S BARRACKS (EL 3)

This room contains two bunks, a table, and two chairs; the thugs prefer to pass the time playing cards or taking shifts sleeping, for the most part.

Creatures: Two of Triel's thugs are always stationed here; they make sure no one uses the winch to lower the cage unless they're attended by Triel or one of the other cultists. Guard duty here is considered fairly relaxing, and is usually awarded to minions who have pleased Triel in some way. Each of the thugs carries a key to lock and unlock the winch in area **K3**.

☛ **Narthus and Kildiv, Male Human Ftr2** (2): hp 22, 20; see area **M1** of the Lucky Monkey for details.

Tactics: If the thugs realize that someone is trying to invade the cavern, one of them quickly makes sure that the winch in area **K3** is locked down, while the other activates the *stone of alarm*, filling the main cavern with a cacophonous din and alerting the denizens of the cavern.

K5. STORAGE

This small room contains two weeks rations and drinkable water, along with a sizable stack of replacement planks for the pile in area **K1**.

K6. THE PHANTOM LAKE

The waters of this large lake glow softly with thick, ropy, glowing algae. Now and then tiny curls of steam rise from the lake, filling the area with a cloying stink of soggy plant matter. The surface of the water ripples now and again, but it's impossible to tell if these ripples come from underwater currents welling up from below, or from something more sinister. . .

The water below the layer of algae—which grows to a depth of roughly 5 feet—is warm (around 80°F) thanks to the presence of several volcanic vents located in its bed. The phosphorescent algae provides illumination equal to that emitted by a torch, but dies quickly when removed from water or exposed to sunlight.

The lake itself is about 200 feet deep, but it has no true bottom. Rather, its bed branches into numerous aquatic waterways that wind through the rock; most of them eventually empty into the watery central shaft, but a few emerge from the sides of Cauldron to form rivers or streams.

Development: The lake itself is strangely free of animal life. This is due to the presence of the ravenous demon that has taken up a lair on the eastern beach (see area **K7**). The demon is watchful, and if it sees anyone enter the waters of the lake it quickly slithers into the water and swims out to feed.

K7. NIGHTMARE BEACH (EL 4)

This beach is horrifying. Thick carpets of pale fungus intermingle with sheets of clotted blood and partially eaten entrails and body parts. The entire place reeks of decay.

The cultists were given a single skulvyn demon to help guard their lair by their mysterious benefactors. None of the cultists can control the demon, but they periodically throw tributes to it in the form of homeless people or criminals snatched from the alleys of Cauldron. So as long as they let it keep its territory, the skulvyn is content to leave them alone.

Creature: If the PCs manage to reach this beach without entering the waters of the lake, they can find the skulvyn lurking here. A skulvyn is an aquatic demon that looks like a streamlined lizard with flippers instead of feet and four long tails that end in razor sharp spines. The demon slithers out into the lake to attack anything it hears or spots in or near the water. It is savage and cruel to the core, and defends its beach with fearless rage.

☛ **Skulvyn:** CR 4; Large Outsider (Aquatic, Chaotic, Evil, Extraplanar); HD 4d8+8; hp 31; Init +3; Spd 10 ft., swim 50 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 15; BAB +4; Grap +12; Atk +7 melee (1d8+4, bite) and +5 melee (1d6+2, 2 claws), or +7 melee (1d4+4 and wounding, 4 tail claws); SA slow aura, wounding; SQ DR 10/+1, outsider traits, SR 12, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +7,



Will +3; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 5, Wis 8, Cha 11.

Skills: Hide -1*, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Spot +6, Swim +19. **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Multiattack.

Slow Aura (Su): Living creatures that come within 30 feet of a skulvyn must succeed at Will save (DC 12) or become *slowed* for 4 rounds; a creature that makes this save is immune to the skulvyn's aura for 24 hours.

Wounding (Ex): Wounds resulting from a skulvyn's tail lash attacks bleed for an additional 1 point of damage per round thereafter. Multiple wounds from such attacks result in cumulative bleeding loss; the bleeding can only be stopped by a successful Heal check (DC 15) or the application of any healing spell.

Skills: Skulvyns gain a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks in water.

Tactics: Once the skulvyn senses prey nearby, it quickly slithers into the lake since it gains a substantial bonus to its Hide check in the water. The demon swims beneath anyone near the shore or in the water to catch them in its slow aura, then surges forth to grab one victim with a grapple before retreating underwater.

K8. KOPRU LAIR (EL 6)

This low cavern is filled with steam and thick sheets of ropy fungus. The place reeks of something rotten.

The fungus that coats the floor and walls here is thick and slippery; any bipedal creature attempting to walk on the ground

here must succeed at a Balance check (DC 12) each round to avoid slipping and falling prone. The creature that lives here can slither around on the fungus sheets with ease.

Creature: A lone and insane kopru has moved into this chamber, having traveled up through the lightless underwater tunnels of the Underdark, seeking the fabled ruins of its ancestors. The monster was enraged to learn that the ruins had been taken over by air-breathers, but it was wise enough to know that a frontal attack on the ruins would quickly turn sour since it was so outnumbered. Compounding its problems is the skulvyn in area K7; when the kopru first arrived here, it and the demon got into a terrible battle. The result of the fight was a draw, but only because the kopru managed to hold and constrict the demon for a couple rounds before the skulvyn broke free and retreated.

➤ **Kopru:** hp 41 (currently 38); *Monster Manual II* 134, or see the "Flood Season" Web enhancement.

Development: The kopru knows that it only survived its tangle with the skulvyn through luck—its normal attacks couldn't penetrate the demon's damage reduction easily. For the past few days, the monster has subsisted on the fungus in this cave while recuperating and trying to decide how to proceed.

It sees the arrival of the PCs as its greatest hope; it attempts to dominate one of them and uses its new minion to convince the other PCs to help it, first by slaying the skulvyn and then by systematically wiping out the intruders in the ruins. While the

goals of the kopru and the PCs might seem similar, the kopru has no intention of letting the PCs go once they have outlived their usefulness. Those it can't dominate it kills and eats.

K9. BEACH OF RUIN

This large beach is covered with rocks and patches of fitfully glowing phosphorescent fungus and algae. More impressive are the stony ruins that protrude from the sheer rock wall along the beach's western edge. The architecture of these ruins seems melted and somehow intimidating—whatever creatures built these dwellings were obviously inhuman and alien in nature.

A small building made of wood sits apart from these structures; the ropes descending from the ledge on the opposite side of the lake attach to a second winch on the side of this building.

If the characters manage to reach this area without alerting the cavern, chances are that they can infiltrate any of the buildings with ease. The denizens of the ruins are confident that no one knows about their hideout and as a result don't keep a watchful eye on this beach.

K10. TRAPPED FOYER (EL 4)

Trap: A low tripwire just past the arc of the northern door is triggered when a creature walks through this area. When triggered, the tripwire snaps and releases several key bits of webbing that hold the eastern wall in place, causing the entire mass of timber and wood to come crashing down in the corridor.

➤ **Falling Wall Trap:** CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; Atk +14 melee (6d6, falling timbers); Search (DC 27); Disable Device (DC 23).

K11. LOWER WINCH

This winch operates in the same way as the one in area K3. The cultists don't normally post guards here, since they figure that the trap in area K10 is protection enough.

K12. MAIN ENTRANCE

The ceiling of this large room rises in a 40-foot-high dome above; the floor is polished smooth. Water from condensation runs down the walls, and a pair of large braziers to the northeast and southeast provide smoky light. A long table with a dozen chairs dominate the center of the room.

Currently empty, the cultists use this chamber to meet with their mysterious benefactors; they recently delivered on their promise to construct a *Soulcage* for them and don't expect a new assignment for a while. Until then, this room sees little use.

K13. THE GAUNTLET (EL 7)

This long vaulted hallway seems empty and harmless; in truth, it is anything but. The eastern and western ends of the corridor hide two **Traps**, and anyone standing in the "safe" central section of the corridor is subject to attack from the guards to the north and south.

Trap: A pair of pit traps are located at either end of the corridor. The levers in area K16 can deactivate them, but they are currently active. Each pit trap is identical and fills a 10-foot-square region. If you're feeling particularly nasty, consider using the tilt-a-pit traps from the "Life's Bazaar" Web enhancement in place of these normal pits. In such a case, assume a gnome slave of the ancient kopru enclave built the tilt-a-pits, modeling them after those from his home in Jzadirune.

➤ **20-Foot-Deep Pit Traps (2):** CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; switch bypass; Reflex saving throw (DC 15) avoids; 20-ft.-deep (2d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-foot squares); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 23).

Tactics: As long as the complex is on alert, the Alleybashers in areas K14 and K15 keep an eye on this corridor through the arrowslits in the northern and southern walls. They fire upon any intruders they can see in the corridor.

K14. NORTHERN GUARDROOM (EL 3)

The three Alleybashers from area K40 wait here if the complex is on alert. The northern secret door leads to area K34.

➤ **Secret Door:** 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; break DC 28; Search DC 20.

Creatures: The three Alleybashers can make attacks with their arrows at any target in area K13 by utilizing the arrowslits in the wall.

➤ **Tilavast, Oarus, and Ristikus, Alleybasher Human Rog2 (3):** hp 17, 15 x2; see area M1 of the Lucky Monkey for details.

K15. SOUTHERN GUARDROOM (EL 3)

If the complex is on alert status, the three Alleybashers from area K22 are located here. The southern secret door leads to area K26.

Creatures: The three Alleybashers can make attacks with their arrows at any target in area K13 by utilizing the arrowslits in the wall.

➤ **Samus, Iteyl, and Abernath, Alleybasher Human Rog2 (3):** hp 19, 16, 12; see area M1 of the Lucky Monkey for details.

K16. WORKROOM (EL 6)

This huge room fades into darkness. What you can see in here are several large worktables covered with bits and pieces of scrap metal. Somewhere from the depths of the room, strange skittering sounds echo off the unseen walls, but as quickly as you notice them they fade into silence.

This large room was once a kopru spawning chamber, but after the cultists moved in they cleared out the room and transformed it into a huge workroom for the construction of a *Soulcage*. They intend to keep using the room in the future for additional projects, but for now the room lies unused and mostly empty... except for the **Creature** that the group's benefactors left here to serve as an additional guardian.

A pair of levers located next to the doors leading into this

room can be switched to activate or deactivate the pit traps in area K13.

Creatures: A mud slaad lurks in the far reaches of the room.

➤ **Mud Slaad:** CR 6; Medium Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar); HD 6d8+12; hp 46; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; BAB +6; Grap +9; Atk +9 melee (2d6+3, bite) and +7 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws); SA cringe, disease, sonic screech, *summon slaad*; SQ fast healing 3, feign death, outsider traits, resistances, sonic immunity; AL CN; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +12, Jump +12, Hide +11, Listen +7, Move Silently +11, Spot +7. **Feats:** Dodge, Improved Initiative, Multiattack.

Cringe (Su): As a standard action, a mud slaad can cower in fear. This is a mind-affecting effect. Any opponent attempting to strike or otherwise directly attack the cringing mud slaad, even with a targeted spell, must attempt a Will save (DC 12). If the save succeeds, the opponent can attack normally and is immune to the effect of that mud slaad's cringe for 24 hours. If the save fails, the opponent can't follow through with the attack, that part of the attacker's action is lost, and the attacker can't directly attack that mud slaad for as long as it continues to cringe. If the mud slaad stops cringing and then cringes again, the opponent may attempt a new Will save to attack it.

Disease (Ex): Any creature hit by a mud slaad's bite attack must succeed at a Fortitude Save (DC 15) or be infected with a disease that transforms the victim over the next week into a mud slaad. The infected creature can attempt a new save each day to throw off the infection.

Feign Death (Ex): If an opponent strikes a mud slaad and reduces it to 10 or fewer hit points, it can immediately attempt to feign death. This ability happens on the opponent's turn. Any creature that witnesses a mud slaad that is feigning death, including those creatures that watch it fall, can make a Sense Motive check (DC 22) to determine if the slaad's death is genuine. A cursory check will not reveal that the slaad's death is feigned, and even a Heal or Search check isn't guaranteed to discover the deception, so adroit is the mud slaad at stilling its breathing and reducing its heart rate. A successful check with either skill (DC 22) is required to reveal that the mud slaad still lives.

Resistances (Ex): All slaadi have acid, cold, electricity, and fire resistance 5.

Sonic Screech (Su): Once per day a mud slaad can emit a tremendous screech. Every creature within 30 feet must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or take 5d6 points of sonic damage.

Summon Slaad (Sp): Once per day, a mud slaad can attempt to summon one mud slaad with a 40% chance of success, or one red slaad with a 20% chance of success.

Tactics: The mud slaad, despite its appearance, harbors deep feelings of inferiority and shame after eons spent being tormented and mocked by more powerful slaadi. It lives in constant fear that more slaadi could appear at any moment to torture it, so it will not summon a red slaad, and it only attempts to call another mud slaad if it is in dire peril (it drops to fewer than 10 hit points and its cringe ability is ineffective). It prefers to open combat with its screech and then flail away with its bite and claws. If hard pressed, it feigns death and hopes its tormentors wander away.

Development: A character who examines the bits of metal and tools lying about this room and makes a successful Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 25) can tell that this room was used to build some sort of magic device, most likely something connected to the schools of Conjuraton, Abjuration, and Necromancy. Beyond this, though, nothing can be learned from investigating the remains.

Treasure: The slaad keeps its treasures wrapped in a ragged cloak in the far end of the room under a table; a Search check (DC 15) reveals it. This trove consists of 150 pp, three gems (600 gp, 100 gp, and 6 gp), and a masterwork lute (100 gp). Unknown to the mud slaad, the rag it wraps its treasure in is its greatest possession: a cloak of arachnida.



Tarkilar and Skaven

K17. WELCOME TRAP (EL 1)

Hundreds of thin white cords stretch from wall to wall in this chamber, all about 6 inches off the ground. The cords make a tangled sheet, and it looks nearly impossible to pass through the room without stumbling.

This room seems unused, but it actually contains a **Trap**.

Trap: The floor of this room is criss-crossed with tightly strung ettercap webs. The cultists and their minions know which parts of the floor are safe to tread upon, but anyone who walks carelessly into the room triggers the **Trap**. This causes a large ettercap web to drop from the ceiling, covering a 10-foot square area. The web has tiny bells attached to it, so the triggering of the trap alert the guards on duty in area **K18**.

✦ **Falling Web Trap:** CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Reflex saving throw (DC 15); entangles (Escape Artist, DC 20, or Strength check, DC 26, to escape); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 21).

K18. GUARDROOM (EL 6)

This room contains a table and several chairs, along with the **Creatures**.

Creatures: Four thugs lurk here, playing a complicated dice game, arguing loudly, and waiting for their shift to end.

✦ **Kristoff, Mathus, Stysai, and Jestie, Male and Female Human Ftr2 (4):** hp 25, 23, 20 ×2; see area **M1** of the Lucky Monkey for details. Each of these thugs carries one flask of alchemist's fire.

Tactics: If the guards hear the trap triggered in area **K17**, one of their number heads south to alert the other cultists while the remaining three open the door to area **K17** and begin to throw vials of alchemist's fire into the room on trapped PCs. Once each has thrown a vial, they close and block the door by pushing the table up against it. Once the door between rooms **K17** and **K18** is blocked, its Break DC increases to 30.

K19. STOREROOM

This room contains two weeks of dried food rations and drinking water kept in large barrels.

K20. SOUTHERN ARMORY

The walls of this room are loaded with weapon and armor racks. Swords and bows hang from pegs, and a dozen suits of armor hang on the far wall. A barrel of arrows and two small wooden kegs sit behind the armor stands.

The door to this room is locked (Open Locks, DC 30); Skaven has the key. The small kegs hold cheap ale.

Treasure: The weapon racks contain 12 longswords, 6 rapiers, and 8 longbows. A barrel in the corner holds 120 arrows. The armor stands hold nine suits of studded leather armor and four suits of chainmail. The ale is particularly cheap (5 gp per barrel) and hardly worth the cost of transport. Skaven uses the ale to reward the mercenaries who work for him.

K21. MESS HALL

This room contains a table and several chairs. A cabinet against one wall contains wooden eating utensils, plates, and the like.

Off-duty bandits use this room to eat, relax, and gamble, unlike their guard posts, which they use just to gamble. No one occupies this room right now.

K22. BARRACKS (EL 4)

This room contains several bunks. It looks like about a dozen people could sleep here.

Creatures: The bandits who work directly for Skaven sleep in these bunks. A Search check (DC 15) reveals that eleven human-sized individuals quarter here.

✦ **Samus, Iteyl, and Abernath, Alleybasher Human Rog2 (3):** hp 19, 16, 12; see area **M1** of the Lucky Monkey for details.

Development: If the complex has been alerted, these Alleybashers have relocated to area **K15**. Otherwise, they are asleep here when the party enters the room.

K23. SOUTHERN ENTRANCE (EL 5)

This chamber seems to be some sort of meeting room; a large table with a dozen chairs sit in the center of the room.

Creatures: A pair of thugs and a pair of Alleybashers can be found in this room.

✦ **Makrity and Chyles, Male Human Ftr2 (2):** hp 20, 19; see area **M1** of the Lucky Monkey for details.

✦ **Klarkus and Blare, Alleybasher Male and Female Human Rog2 (2):** hp 18, 13; see area **M1** of the Lucky Monkey for details.

Tactics: If the alarm has been raised, the mercenaries have upended the table to give them partial cover; the Alleybashers have readied actions to fire upon anyone who comes through the northeast door, and the thugs aid their Armor Classes with the aid another action by blocking attacks with their shields. The hired swords spring into melee should intruders get close enough to attack.

K24. SKAVEN'S PARLOR (EL 3 OR 8)

The door to this room is kept locked with an *arcane lock* cast by Skaven; a successful Open Locks check (DC 40) can unlock it. Without the *arcane lock*, the door still requires an Open Locks check (DC 30) or one of Skaven's keys to open it.

This room is like a breath of fresh air. While still a little warm, the air is dry and nowhere near as foul in here. A well-made desk sits against the opposite wall, which looks like it has been partially melted by an ancient lava flow. A bookshelf sits against the northern wall, and the room is well lit by a softly glowing *continual flame* that hangs from a chain set into the ceiling.

This room and the room directly to the north are the personal quarters of one of the three cultists responsible for the theft of the *wands of control water*.

Creatures: Skaven Umbermead is actually not a cleric like his two fellow cultists. Although he's trained as a wizard (specifically, as a diviner), his faith in his deity is as strong and devout as that of his fellow cultists. What his fellow conspirators don't know is that Skaven worships Vecna. Triel has always assumed he worships Ollidammara, and although Tarkilar no longer cares, he used to think Skaven worshiped Nerull.

Skaven can be found in this room if the complex isn't on alert; otherwise, he is in area K32. If he is encountered here, he is sitting at his desk poring over some ancient scrolls.

The air quality in this room and in area K25 is the result of the work of a Medium air elemental that Skaven bound to these rooms using a scroll of *lesser planar binding* several months ago. The elemental is ordered to maintain air quality in here and to defend it from anyone but Skaven who tries to touch any of the books or scrolls on the shelves in here or in area K25.

♠ **Skaven Umbermead, Male Halfling Div7:** CR 7; Medium Humanoid (halfling); HD 7d4+7; hp 30; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12; BAB +3; Grap -3; Atk +3 melee (1d4-2, masterwork dagger) or +6 ranged (damage varies, ranged touch); SA spells; SQ familiar, halfling traits; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 6, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +11, Craft (metalworking) +14, Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Listen +4*, Move Silently +5, Spellcraft +14, Spot +4*. **Feats:** Alertness (as long as Pywakit is within arm's reach), Combat Expertise, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge—arcana), Spell Focus (Evocation).

*Includes +2 bonus from Alertness (granted by familiar).

Spells Prepared (4/6/5/4/3, base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—detect poison*, ghost sound, mage hand, prestidigitation; 1st—chill touch, comprehend languages*, hold portal, magic missile** x2, true strike*; 2nd—detect thoughts*, ghoul touch, invisibility, scorching ray**, see invisibility*; 3rd—clairaudience/clairvoyance*, displacement, lightning bolt**, vampiric touch; 4th—arcane eye*, enervation, phantasmal killer.

Spellbook: Skaven's spellbook contains all the spells he has prepared, plus the following: 0—all cantrips (except daze); 1st—alarm, arcane lock, burning hands**, detect secret doors*, detect undead*, identify*, mage armor, silent image, unseen servant; 2nd—arcane lock, blindness/deafness, blur, locate object*, scare, spider climb, summon monster II, whispering wind; 3rd—dispel magic, gentle repose, sepia snake sigil, tongues*, water breathing; 4th—locate creature*, shout**, fear.

*Divination spell. Skaven's prohibited school is Enchantment.

**Evocation spell. The base save DC for these spells, where applicable, is 16 + spell level.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Gnoll, Halfling.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +1, goggles of minute seeing, slippers of spider climbing, pearl of power (1st level), wand of mage armor (40 charges), potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of gaseous form, six

potions of hiding, masterwork dagger, leather pouch containing 58 gp and 4 pp, key ring (contains keys to the winches at areas K3 and K11, the key to area K20, and keys to areas K24 and K25). He also carries one of the eight *wands of control water*.

♣ **Pywakit, Cat Familiar:** Tiny Magical Beast; HD special; hp 15; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 16; BAB +3; Grap -9; Atk +5 melee (1d2-4, 2 claws) and +0 melee (1d3-4, bite); SA channel touch spells; SQ improved evasion, share spells, empathic link, speak with master, speak with cats; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skaven is mysterious and introverted. He's bald, keeps his beard trimmed neatly, and has a dark complexion. Still, while handsome, he has little concept of social graces and would rather avoid contact with others. He tends to let the Alleybashers and thugs that work for him do as they please, as long as they don't disturb his studies. He eschews weaponplay and combat, and he doesn't openly wear a symbol of Vecna, keeping his faith a secret. Much of the design of the *Soulcage* was Skaven's work. Aside from his cat familiar, Pywakit, Skaven prefers the company of the ettercaps and spiders.

Tactics: Skaven prefers to avoid combat. If attacked, he attempts to escape the room by turning invisible or using one of his *potions of hiding*. If he manages to escape, he heads to area K32 to enlist the aid of the harpoon spider against the PCs. If unable to escape, Skaven uses his combat spells in an attempt to scatter the PCs and enable his flight to the harpoon spider.

♣ **Medium Air Elemental:** hp 23; *Monster Manual* 81.

Treasure: The numerous books and scrolls found here cover a range of topics and are written in a variety of languages. One common theme binds them together: mystery. Skaven is obsessed with mysteries and spends long hours poring over ancient texts of unexplained events. The scrolls currently on his desk are partial histories of the kopru that built this ruined city. This collection of books and scrolls is worth 1,200 gp to the right buyer, but if the PCs decide to keep them, they could possibly use them to research mysteries encountered later in the campaign.

K25. SKAVEN'S BEDCHAMBERS (EL 6)

The door to this room has been *arcane locked* by Skaven; an Open Locks check (DC 40) can unlock it. Without the *arcane lock*, the door lock still requires an Open Lock check (DC 30) or one of Skaven's keys to open. The door also bears a **Trap**.

This room, like the last one, is fairly cool and dry—and comfortable. A bed sits against the north wall, and a thick carpet covers most of the floor. More bookshelves line the walls here, their shelves sagging with books, tomes, and scrolls of all shapes and sizes.

Traps: Skaven has used his magic to ward this room. Aside from the *arcane lock* on the door, he has placed a *sepia snake sigil* on the door. The false back to the eastern bookshelf (see **Treasure**, below) is also warded by a *sepia snake sigil*.

♣ **Sepia Snake Sigils (2):** CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*sepia snake sigil*, 7th-level wizard, Reflex save, DC 16, negates); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Treasure: The back of the top shelf of the eastern bookcase can be pulled out, as revealed by a successful Search check (DC 25). The removable back is warded with a *sepia snake sigil*. In the hollow beyond the false back are two valuable objects: Skaven's spellbook and one of the *wands of control water*.

K26. WORKROOM STORAGE

This large room was used to store extra supplies for the workroom (area K16); it's currently empty. The secret door to the north can be discovered with a successful Search check (DC 20).

K27. SPIDER NEST (EL 3)

The door to this room is more difficult to open than most others; it's Break DC is 30 due to the webs on the other side.

This room is clogged with webs; it is impossible to see the full extent of the chamber. Peering through the strands of sticky webbing, you spot a dark, bulbous shape scuttling across the filaments in your direction.

Creatures: Six small monstrous spiders lurk at various points in this room; they quickly skitter forth to attack anyone foolish enough to open the door to this room.

➤ **Small Monstrous Spiders** (6): hp 8, 6, 5, 5, 4, 3; *Monster Manual* 210.

K28. ABANDONED WEBS

The corners of this room are clogged with webbing, but a 5-foot-wide, 8-foot-tall tunnel leads south into a web-lined tunnel.

The webs here and in the caves beyond coat every inch of floor, wall, and ceiling. Although most of the webbing is no longer sticky, it is quite soft. All creatures in this room and areas K30–K32 gain a +4 circumstance bonus on Move Silently checks.

K29. SECRET PASSAGE

Both of the secret doors that allow access to this passageway are masterfully hidden and require Search checks (DC 25) to discover.

K30. WEBBED CAVERN (EL 6)

The air in this cavern is thick, stuffy, and humid, and stinks of rotting fungus. Sheets of thick white webs choke every surface, and coils of the sticky stuff hang from above in thick ropy sheets. The webbing muffles sound, making the cavern seem much smaller than it actually is. In fact, the thick webs make it quite difficult to accurately judge the size of the chamber, or what might be lurking in its depths.

Creatures: Five monstrous spiders nest in this cavern. If combat here lasts more than 4 rounds, the two ettercaps from area K31 arrive on the fifth round to aid their spider allies.

➤ **Medium-Size Monstrous Spiders** (4): hp 14, 12, 11, 10; *Monster Manual* 210.

➤ **Large Monstrous Spiders** (2): hp 28, 22; *Monster Manual* 210.

Trap: Several portions of the floor in this room consist of fresh, sticky webbing. Each round a character who doesn't know the safe routes in the chamber moves more than 5 feet, the character must make a Reflex saving throw to avoid becoming stuck.

➤ **Sticky Webs:** CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; no reset; Reflex saving throw (DC 15) to avoid; entangles (Escape Artist, DC 26, or Strength check, DC 32, to break, 12 hit points per 5-foot section); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 22).

Treasure: The spiders have collected a fair amount of treasure. It's shrouded in a ball of webbing, and a successful Search check (DC 24) is necessary to locate it. The treasure consists of 620 gp, 4 pearls (100 gp each), an arcane scroll of *summon monster I* (1st-level caster), a *potion of clairaudience/clairvoyance*, and a *wand of burning hands* (1st-level caster, 23 charges).

K31. ETTERCAP LAIR (EL 6)

The floor of this cavern is trapped with masses of sticky webs, as detailed in area K30.

Creatures: A sizable nest of ettercaps lurks in this room, although only two of them can be encountered here at this time. They rush to the aid of the spiders in area K30 when they hear sounds of battle.

➤ **Ettercaps** (2): hp 28, 27; *Monster Manual* 88.

Tactics: The ettercaps use the sticky webs in this cave to their advantage, luring intruders into sticky sections of floor or bull rushing them into sticky walls as the opportunity presents itself. If they begin to lose the battle, they quickly flee to the east to area K32 and alert the harpoon spider there.

K32. HARPOON SPIDER LAIR (EL 7 OR HIGHER)

The spiderwebs in this cave are thick and tangled, hanging from the unseen roof above in coiling sheets. Large mounds of webs lie heaped on the floor, almost like sand dunes. The air in this cave is stale, hot, and stinks of decaying fungus.

Like areas K30 and K31, the floor of this cave is dotted with sticky spider webs.

Creatures: A dangerous predator from the Underdark known as a harpoon spider has lived in this cavern for some time, trapped here when a lava tube that led into this cave collapsed. The harpoon spider lived for some time on the indigenous bats and fish in the main cave, but eventually a tiny group of ettercaps and their spider allies found a way here. The ettercaps, amazed by the harpoon spider, worship it as a god, tending to its every need. One of the three ettercaps in the group can always be found by the harpoon spider's side.

If the complex is on alert, Skaven retreats to this cave. Skaven and the harpoon spider have become friends over the past several months; the spider is intrigued by Skaven's tales of Vecna, while Skaven finds the harpoon spider an amazing creature and wants to know all he can about the subterranean predator.

➤ **Harpoon Spider:** hp 36; see Appendix I for details.

➤ **Ettercap:** hp 26; *Monster Manual* 88.

Treasure: The spider keeps its valuables encased in a niche near the ceiling in the easternmost cul-de-sac in this cave; characters searching this area specifically can discover it with a successful Search check (DC 25). The treasure consists of 500 sp, 450 gp, a darkwood and silver masterwork lap harp (800 gp), a diamond ring (5,000 gp), a jade idol of Yondalla (700 gp), a +1 small steel shield, a *potion of hiding*, and *bracers of armor* +2. Skaven has also entrusted one of the *wands of control water* to the harpoon spider's treasure for safe keeping.

K33. TRAPPED CHAMBER (EL 5)

This chamber looks empty, except for a thick layer of dust on the floor.

Trap: This trap is triggered whenever the door in the northwest corner of the room is opened. Dozens of holes then open in the ceiling and floor, and a forest of rapier-thin poison spikes lance out of these holes to impale anything in the room. The spikes retract into the wall and the door closes itself after 1 round, at which point the trap automatically resets.

✦ **Poison Spike Trap:** CR 5; mechanical; touch trigger; automatic reset; Atk +16 melee (1d8+4 plus poison, spike); multiple targets (all creatures in area K33); poison (Medium spider venom, Fortitude save, DC 14, resists, 1d4 Str/1d6 Str); Search (DC 17); Disable Device (DC 21).

K34. STOREROOM

This room contains two weeks of dried food rations and drinking water kept in large barrels. The secret door to the south can be discovered with a successful Search check (DC 20).

K35. NORTHERN ARMORY

The door to this room is locked (Open Locks, DC 30); Triel has the key. The east and west walls of this room are dominated by weapon racks and armor stands. A wine rack with several unopened bottles sits against the southern wall.

Treasure: The weapon racks contain 7 longswords, 5 rapiers, and 11 longbows. The armor stands hold three suits of studded leather armor and six suits of chainmail. Each of the seventeen bottles of wine on the rack is worth 50 gp.

K36. TRIEL'S CHAMBERS (EL 7 OR HIGHER)

This large room is elegantly appointed and, if anything, even more humid and cloying than the other chambers. The reason is probably due to the large pool of bubbling water in the southern end of the room. A hammock swings to the west of the pool above a large chest, and the northern portion of the room seems to have been converted into a small combat training ground, complete with thick mats and combat dummies.

The door to this room is locked (Open Locks, DC 30); Triel has the key. The door also contains a **Trap**.

This room is the personal quarters to Triel Eldurast, the cultist most directly responsible for the death of Sarcem and the theft of the *wands of control water*.

Creature: Triel can be found in this room whether or not the alarm has been raised; she prefers to spend most of her time here when she isn't working. If the complex is on alert, she is attended by four Alleybashers.

✦ **Triel Eldurast, Female Human Ftr4/Clr3:** CR 7; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 4d10+4 plus 3d8+3; hp 55; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19; BAB +6/+1; Grap +10; Atk +12/+7 (1d10+9, +1 silver heavy flail); SA spells, rebuke/command undead; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 17.

Skills: Bluff +4, Concentration +11*, Craft (metalworking) +6, Diplomacy +4, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Spellcraft +6. Feats: Cleave, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Leadership, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (heavy flail), Weapon Specialization (heavy flail).

*Includes +4 bonus from Combat Casting.

Spells Prepared (4/4/3; base save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* ×2, *guidance*, *mending*; 1st—*cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *magic weapon**, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bull's strength*, *silence*, *shatter*.*

*Domain Spell. Domains: Destruction (smite 1/day, +4 to attack, +3 to damage), War (free Weapon Focus—heavy flail feat).

Languages: Common, Gnoll.

Possessions: Spiked+1 full plate, +1 silver heavy flail, 3 *wands of control water*, *wand of cure serious wounds* (7 charges, 5th-level caster), 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, *divine scroll* (*cure moderate wounds*, *hold person*, 3rd-level caster), *everburning torch*, silver holy symbol of Hextor, leather pouch containing 30 gp and 4 pp, key ring.

Triel is quite fond of the martial aspects of Hextor's teachings, and often wears facial warpaint similar to that worn by her cohort Tongueater. She has short but wild red hair, and she wears a suit of full plate festooned with spikes and the symbol of Hextor. Of the three cultists, she is easily the most beautiful and charismatic, and as a result she's the one they rely on to take care of things outside of the Kopru Ruins. She was once a city guard in Cauldron, but her growing bloodlust eventually got her into trouble. She fled the city for several years and eventually became a cleric of Hextor before joining the Ebon Triad.

✦ **Meryin, Sorkalath, Durkal, and Pindinson, Alley-basher Human Rog2 (4):** hp 19, 16, 15, 12; see area M1 of the Lucky Monkey for details.

Tactics: If the PCs have managed to invade this far without triggering an alert, they find Triel naked and enjoying a soak in her hot spring; she responds to unwelcome intrusions with great anger and attacks at once, despite her lack of armor. If only one PC enters, she might try to seduce the character into joining her in the pool, at which point she'll try to drown the gullible fool before suiting up and stalking through the complex looking for other intruders.

If the complex is on alert, Triel is ready to unleash pain on

anyone foolish enough to invade this room; she has also called the four Alleybashers from area K42 to her room for assistance. She casts *bull's strength* and *shield of faith* on herself, given time, then wades into combat, flail swinging, targeting opposing clerics before others. She pauses to heal herself if reduced to 20 hit points or less.

Trap: Anyone who tries to pass through the door without depressing a cleverly hidden switch on the exposed upper rim of the door (Search check, DC 30) suddenly finds the revolving door swinging shut while numerous razors extend from both its edges. If the door trap hits the character, he becomes pinned in place until the door is forced open (Strength check, DC 28) or he makes an Escape Artist check (DC 26).

✦ **Razordoor Trap:** CR 3; mechanical; touch trigger; automatic reset; Atk +15 melee (1d12+8/×3 plus pinning); Search (DC 15); Disable Device (DC 27).

Treasure: Triel prefers to carry her treasure with her, but when she sleeps or is bathing she keeps it stacked in the large chest under her hammock. This chest can be locked (Open Locks, DC 30) with a key she carries.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the party defeats an unmolested Triel, award them 80% the normal experience point total due to her reduced Armor Class.

K37. MESS HALL (EL 6)

This room is a combination mess hall and lounge used by Triel's minions to relax and unwind when they get the chance.

Creatures: Six thugs can be found here; if the alarm has been raised they are alert and ready for action.

✦ **Thistle, Adjar, Pyrus, Sukoro, Zoth, and Lonjiku, Male and Female Human Ftr2 (6):** hp 22, 20×2, 19, 18×2; see area M1 of the Lucky Monkey for details.

K38. MEETING ROOM

This unremarkable room is used by Triel to meet with her minions and hand out daily orders. A plain looking table and some uncomfortable chairs sit in the center; and several broken chairs are stacked in the corners of the room.

K39. THUG BARRACKS (EL 5)

This room contains several bunks; A dozen people could sleep here, although not all the beds look lived in.

Creatures: The thugs who work directly for Triel sleep in these bunks. A successful Search check (DC 15) determines that ten human-sized people sleep here.

✦ **Milo, Hamfist, Mari, and Eirlinaki, Male and Female Human Ftr2 (4):** hp 25, 22, 18, 17; see area M1 of the Lucky Monkey for details.

Development: If the complex has been alerted to the PCs, this room is empty and these thugs wait in area K46. Otherwise, the four thugs are asleep when the party enters the room.

K40. ALLEYBASHER BARRACKS (EL 4)

More bunks fill this chamber. A quick glance reveals that while several people probably live here, the room could accommodate more people than currently use the chamber.

Creatures: The Alleybashers working directly for Triel sleep in these bunks. A successful Search check (DC 15) determines that seven Alleybashers sleep here.

✦ **Tilavast, Oarus, and Ristikus, Alleybasher Human Rog2 (3):** hp 17, 15×2; see area M1 of the Lucky Monkey for details.

Development: If the complex has been alerted to the PCs, this room is empty, its denizens stationed at area K14. Otherwise, three Alleybashers sleep here when the party enters the room.

K41. BLOODBATH (EL 5)

This room seems to be empty of anything of interest, but in truth, it holds a dangerous **Trap**—an illusory floor covers a large pit in the center of the room. A 3-foot-wide ledge winds around the edges of the room, providing the only safe place to walk. The pit is filled with water and a swarm of creatures.

Trap: The center of this room is actually a 20-foot-deep pit filled with 10 feet of water. Falling in the pit won't hurt unless the victim is encumbered or can't swim. Of course, the monsters that lurk in the water are much more dangerous.

✦ **20-Foot-Deep Water filled pit:** CR 1; magical; constant effect; illusory floor covering pit; Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; 20 feet deep with 10 ft. water; Search (DC 24).

Creature: The water is filled with a hungry swarm of bloodbloater oozes. Bloodbloaters are Diminutive aquatic oozes that feed on blood. Individually they pose little threat, but they have a propensity to swarm in huge clouds of hungry protoplasm.

✦ **Bloodbloater Ooze Swarm:** CR 1; Medium Ooze (Aquatic, Swarm of Diminutive Oozes); HD 2d10+12; hp 22; Init +1; Spd 5 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; BAB +1; Grap +1; Atk swarm (1d6 plus 1 Str damage/0); SA blood drain, distraction; SQ amphibious, blindsight 60 ft., fire vulnerability, ooze traits, swarm traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will -5; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 22, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Skills: Swim +8.

Blood Drain (Ex): On each round a bloodbloater swarm does at least 1 point of damage to a victim, it also drains blood and causes 1 point of temporary Strength damage.

Distraction (Ex): Any nonmindless creature vulnerable to the swarm's damage that begins its turn with the swarm in its square is nauseated for 1 round; a successful Fortitude save negates the effect (DC 10). Spellcasting or concentrating on spells in a swarm requires a successful Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level). Using skills requiring patience and concentration in the swarm also requires a successful Concentration check (DC 20).

Swarm Traits: The bloodbloater swarm is not subject to critical hits or flanking. It is immune to mind-affecting spells, damage from all weapons, and to single target spells. It is vulnerable to area effects like alchemist's fire or spells like *burning hands*.

Although the swarm is Medium, it does not threaten nearby squares; it must enter a creature's square to attack (this provokes an attack of opportunity from the target). If the attacked creature does nothing but defend itself, the swarm does no damage; otherwise it automatically deals its listed swarm damage.

Treasure: Triel tossed one of the *wands of control water* into this pit for safe keeping. When she wants to retrieve it, she can simply use another wand to lower the water to an inch or two deep and snatch the wand from the relatively helpless landlocked blood-bloaters with a quick and well-gauntleted hand.

K42. NORTHERN ENTRANCE (EL 6)

This room seems fairly empty and clean, but like many other rooms in the ruins, it contains a dangerous trap. The ceiling in this room is 40 feet up, and a 5-foot-wide balcony runs around the rim of the room 20 feet above ground. A knotted rope that can be lowered to provide access to the balcony has been pulled up by the **Creatures** hiding above.

Creatures: Four Alleybashers lurk on the balcony surrounding this room. PCs can make Spot checks (DC 33) to detect the waiting rogues.

☛ **Meryin, Sorkalath, Durkal, and Pindinson, Alley-basher Human Rog2 (4):** hp 19, 16, 15, 12; see area M1 of the Lucky Monkey for details.

Tactics: The mercenaries fire arrows at any intruders that enter the room, although they wait and see if opponents first set off the trap. Characters who bypass the footshredder aren't attacked until the last PC has entered the room.

Development: If the caves are on alert, these rogues have joined Triel in area K36.

Trap: Anyone who opens the western door triggers this room's trap. Doing so causes the floor of the room to retract 6 inches down, revealing a forest of tiny spikes designed to shred the sole of the foot.

☛ **Footshredder Floor:** CR 1; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; multiple targets (all in contact with the floor of area K42); Atk +14 melee; any creature struck suffers 1d4 points of damage and is wounded as if by caltrops; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 23).

K43. PRISON

This room contains four small cages. Each can be locked with keys carried by Triel or with a successful Open Locks check (DC 30). These cages are used to hold prisoners of the cult, but the are all currently empty. PCs captured by the cult probably end up in one of these cages.

K44. INTERROGATION CHAMBER

This room contains a desk, a chair, and a strange apparatus that looks like a wooden bed covered with various iron straps and spikes. The device looks . . . uncomfortable.

The device is a torture rack designed to painfully stretch the person strapped into it. Triel uses this room to interrogate pris-

oners. Although no one is currently held here, PCs who are unlucky enough to be captured might end up in this device. If you have access to the *Book of Vile Darkness*, treat this device as a masterwork rack, otherwise assume that each round a character spends on the rack, he suffers 1 point of damage. A successful Escape Artist check (DC 22) is required to escape.

K45. UNFINISHED TRAP

The floor of this room is rough and unfinished, and seems to be pockmarked with hundreds of tiny holes drilled into the floor. There is no indication as to the purpose of these holes, but it must have taken someone months of mind-numbing work to drill them all.

Triel is in the process of building a second footshredder trap (see area K42) here, but she can't quite get the logistics of the project down and has given up on it for now. PCs in a hurry might waste valuable time trying to figure out what kind of weird trap awaits them in this chamber.

K46. GUARDROOM (EL 5)

Creatures: If the complex is on alert, Triel has posted the four thugs from area K39 to guard this route toward the treasury. The thugs do their best to prevent intruders from penetrating any further into the complex via this route.

☛ **Milo, Hamfist, Mari, and Eirlinaki, Male and Female Human Ftr2 (4):** hp 25, 22, 18, 17; see area M1 of the Lucky Monkey for details.

K47. ENTRANCE TO TARKILAR'S CAVERNS

This long room is partially collapsed. The northwestern portion has been destroyed by an ancient lava flow, but two circular lava tubes seem to provide access to the caves beyond.

The network of caves here (areas K48–K56) are the domain of the third cultist, Tarkilar. Since Tarkilar became a huecuva, he has become less interested in aiding his one-time companions, and more interested in fostering his hatred of the living. Someday soon he might finally forget his old alliances and seek out his old allies to satiate his growing hatred of the living.

K48. BONE GUARDIAN (EL 7)

Creature: Before Tarkilar was transformed into a huecuva several months ago, he managed to get his hands on a high-level *animate dead* scroll. He found the remains of a dead gargantuan tyrannosaurus in the foothills to the east of Cauldron, and over the course of several weeks smuggled the skeleton into this chamber, bone by bone. He then reassembled the skeleton and used the *animate dead* scroll to create a gargantuan skeleton.

☛ **Gargantuan Tyrannosaurus Skeleton:** hp 123; *Monster Manual* 165.

Tactics: The undead tyrannosaur can't move well, and it pretty much takes up the entire room with its bulk. It cannot

pursue creatures out of this room, but it has enough reach that it doesn't have to move far to be an effective guardian.

K49. SAFE CAVERN

The fairly narrow passage leading to this chamber is too small for the tyrannosaur skeleton to reach into. A PC who makes it to this cave might be able to do significant damage to the skeleton from the safety of this room.

K50. UNDEAD SPIDERS (EL 5)

The stink in this cavern is overwhelming. Sticky pools of congealed fluid lie in depressions in the floor, having drained from several rotting giant spider carcasses that have been pushed up against the northwest wall.

Creatures: Once in a while, some of the spiders in the southern caves curl up and die. Every time this happened, Tarkilar used his *wand of animate dead* (which has long since run out of charges) to animate the dead spider as a zombie before leading it back to this room and releasing it from his control. Currently, six Large monstrous spider zombies lurk in this room.

➤ **Large Monstrous Spider Zombies (6):** hp 35, 33, 31, 30, 27, 22; *Monster Manual* 192.

K51. GLYPHS OF WARDING (EL 6)

Trap: Triel recently purchased two scrolls of *glyph of warding* and used them to ward the exits to this cavern. Each *glyph* is identical, and triggers when an intruder passes over it.

➤ **Glyphs of Warding:** CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 5th level cleric, Reflex save, DC 14, half damage, 2d8 sonic); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

K52. CULT TREASURY (EL 8)

This cave glitters and glows; the volcanic rock here has formed millions of tiny black and red crystals that catch the light from a *continual flame* near the door and reflect it back a millionfold. The one thing that doesn't glitter is a large slab of dull black stone in the center of the room.

The slab of hardened lava in the middle of the chamber was originally naturally formed, but the cultists found its remote location and size intriguing enough that they hired a pair of dwarves (who were later used to create the **Creatures** that guard this place) to transform the block of stone into a clever chest. A successful Search check (DC 25) determines that the top of the stone slab is hinged and can be opened. Doing so triggers the **Trap** and reveals the cult's **Treasure**.

Creatures: The two dwarves the cultists hired to build the chest were rewarded with two rare gifts Tarkilar procured at great expense: a pair of worms harvested from a spawn of Kyuss. Tarkilar implanted the worms into the two dwarves after chaining them to the chest, and then watched in glee as the worms transformed the dwarves into undead mockeries of their

former selves. Tarkilar then used his ability to command undead to force the new spawn to serve as guardians.

Unfortunately, when Tarkilar accidentally transformed himself into a huecuva, he lost control of the spawn. Neither Skaven nor Triel could command them, and since that fateful day three months ago, none of them has been able to approach the treasury. Triel eventually planned to steal the *wands of control water* and then ransom them back to earn enough money to buy some items capable of controlling the spawn as well as Tarkilar. In the meantime, Triel had a +1 *silver heavy flail* constructed (she currently wields it) in case the huecuva went berserk.

In the meantime, the two spawn of Kyuss are content to lurk here, attacking anything that has the misfortune of entering.

➤ **Spawn of Kyuss (2):** hp 33, 29; *Monster Manual* II 186, or see the "Flood Season" Web enhancement.

Trap: The chest is coated with a thin layer of nitharit poison.

➤ **Poisoned Chest:** CR 5; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; poison (nitharit, Fortitude save, DC 13, resists, 0/3d6 Con); Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 19).

Treasure: The chest contains several leather sacks filled with coins: 15,500 cp, 8,000 sp, 4,500 gp, and 200 pp. Most of this consists of payment for the successful creation of the *Soulcage*.

K53. RUBBLE-FILLED ROOM

The floor of this large cavern is nearly completely covered by a partial cave-in that created a huge mound of loose debris in the center of the room. You can see a few hands and legs protruding from the rubble.

This cave-in happened about the time Tarkilar was transformed into a huecuva. The resulting shockwave of energy triggered a collapse in the already weak ceiling of this cavern, destroying several zombies and skeletons Tarkilar had stationed here to prevent interruptions to his ritual.

Clambering over the rubble is possible with a successful Climb or Balance check (DC 15); the rubble prevents a PC in this room from safely using ranged weapons to attack the tyrannosaur skeleton in area K48 without being in range of the skeleton's 20-foot reach.

K54. GLYPH TRAP (EL 4)

Trap: Tarkilar warded the narrow passageway between areas K54 and K55 with a single *glyph of warding* before he was transformed.

➤ **Glyph of Warding:** CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blindness], Fortitude save, DC 16, negates); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

K55. UNDEAD MINIONS (EL 4)

Once Tarkilar became a huecuva, he lost control of many of his undead. He quickly relocated these former minions to this chamber, where they await intruders.

Creatures: The eight humanoid zombies in here lurch into life when intruders enter this room.

➤ **Medium Zombies (8):** hp 16 each; *Monster Manual* 191.

K56. TARKILAR'S CAVERN (EL 9)

This cavern has seen better days. It was probably once a fairly well-appointed room, complete with carpets, a laboratory, a small altar, and a bed, but some recent terrific explosion has scattered the furnishings of the room into piles of twisted rubble along the edges of the cave.

This room is the lair of the third cultist, Tarkilar.

Creatures: Tarkilar spends most of his time worrying at the wires that bind his chainmail to his bones and arguing with what he thinks are the voices in his head. In truth, these voices are real and come from an invisible quasit named Gutturut who once served Tarkilar as a minion but is now only a tormentor.

➤ **Tarkilar, Male Gnoll Huecuva** Clr4/Rgr1/Ftr1: CR 9; Medium Undead; HD 8d12+3; hp 62; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 21; BAB +6/+1; Grap +11; Atk +12/+7 melee (2d4+8, +1 spiked chain) or +9 melee (1d6+5, slam); SA spells, favored enemy (elves +2), rebuke/command undead, huecuva blight; SQ darkvision 60 ft., turn resistance +2, damage reduction 15/silver, divine conversion, wild empathy; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +7; Str 20, Dex 10, Con —, Int 7, Wis 17, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +8*, Concentration +7, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Listen +6, Search +2, Spot +9. **Feats:** Craft Wondrous Item, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Power Attack, Toughness, Track.

Divine Conversion: A cleric who becomes a huecuva loses access to the domains he had in life and replaces them with the Death and Evil domains.

Huecuva Blight (Su): Victims hit with a successful attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 14) or fall prey to the huecuva blight. The incubation period is one day, and it immediately causes 1d2 points of temporary Strength and temporary Constitution damage after the incubation period. An infected victim must make a saving throw each day or take another 1d2 points of temporary Strength and temporary Constitution damage. The effects of huecuva blight are cumulative each day until the victim reaches 0 Constitution (and dies), makes two consecutive successful saves, or receives magical treatment (such as a *remove disease* spell).

Spells Prepared (5/5/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×2, *guidance*, *read magic*, *resistance*; 1st—*cause fear**, *doom*, *divine favor*, *entropic shield*, *obscuring mist*; 2nd—*desecrate**, *bull's strength*, *hold person*, *silence*.

*Domain Spell. **Domains:** Death (death touch 1/day), Evil (evil spells cast at +1 caster level).

Languages: Gnoll

Possessions: +1 chainmail (wired directly to his flesh and bones—removing it takes 1 hour of work), +1 spiked chain (wired directly to his arms—removal takes 10 minutes and Tarkilar cannot be disarmed), wand of inflict moderate wounds (35 charges), garnet-studded gold holy symbol of Erythnul (425 gp).

Until recently, Tarkilar was the most powerful of the three cultists. As a 7th-level cleric/1st-level ranger/1st-level fighter, he commanded the most defensible lair in the complex and served as

the main point of contact between this group and their mysterious superiors. This all ended a few months ago. Flush with money from the completion of the *Soulcage*, Tarkilar was finally able to afford a costly component to a ritual he believed would transform him into a lich. Unfortunately, the ritual was botched and caused a great explosion in this room (which also collapsed the ceiling of area K53); Tarkilar was slain by the explosion, but at the same time, the necromantic ritual partially worked. He rose from the ashes of his failure as a huecuva. Unfortunately, the ritual drained him of several levels of experience and left him a raving lunatic. Since the failure, he has lurked in his cavern with only Gutturut, a quasit he befriended with the aid of a *lesser planar ally* spell, as company.

Tarkilar is an intimidating sight: an undead gnoll with a suit of chainmail and a spiked chain wired directly onto his rotting flesh. He's nearly skeletal, and his dry skin is stretched tight over his bones. Clumps of his fur have torn free, leaving several bald patches in his once-thick pelt. His eyes glow with a nasty yellow light, as does his saliva. His fangs are jagged, sharp, and broken.

➤ **Gutturut, Quasit:** hp 16; *Monster Manual* 41.

Gutturut takes great glee in watching his one-time pal slowly grow insane. A few weeks ago, Tarkilar's friendship with the quasit finally faded and he attacked Gutturut, who escaped by turning invisible and flying away. Since then, Gutturut has entertained himself by tormenting the huecuva by pretending to be a set of different personalities arguing in its head.

Tactics: Upon seeing living creatures enter his lair, Tarkilar flies into a kill-crazy rampage, casting spells until an enemy comes within range of his spiked chain, then resorting to melee attacks. The undead gnoll is a cunning combatant and uses Power Attack wisely. If an alarm has been raised in the complex, Tarkilar has already cast his long-duration defensive spells. Gutturut watches quietly from a vantage point on the northern wall, waiting to see who wins the battle. If the PCs win, the quasit follows them around invisibly and waits for a good chance to cause some mischief.

Treasure: Gutturut recently stole the eighth wand of control water from Triel, who has yet to notice the theft. Gutturut isn't quite sure what to do with the wand, but he knows Triel wants it. Eventually, he plans to use it as a bargaining chip with the beautiful cleric to gain her as an ally.

CONCLUSION: FIGHTING THE FLOOD

Once the party manages to recover all eight wands of control water, they should return to the surface and report the good news to Jenya. Their return couldn't happen at a better time. The rains have been hitting Cauldron hard, and the central lake has just started to seep into the closest buildings. If the waters aren't controlled soon, the flood damage could be extensive. Jenya takes one of the wands and calls upon the aid of the fellow clerics in her church, as well as those of Kord, Pelor, and Wee Jas—no clerics of Wee Jas respond. She might also call upon any PCs who can use the wands to help. Over the next few

miserable hours, Jenya, any divine spellcasting PCs, and the other clerics can force back the waters until the rains falter. The whole ordeal takes 1d4+4 hours, -1 hour for each two wands of *control water* recovered; the night drains a total of 80 charges from the wands (split evenly among all the wands recovered). After the night is over, though, the PCs have saved several businesses from suffering great damage, and they find their popularity in the city rising once again.

The rains continue on and off throughout the rest of the winter, but it's nothing that the newly recovered wands can't handle. Eventually, the winter passes, and the churches of Cauldron prepare for the year with a newfound respect for the Flood Festival. Jenya gladly pays the PCs their reward (5,000 gp), even if the were good-hearted enough not to ask for one in the first place. All is well again in Cauldron . . . for the time being. . .

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

Although Flood Season is over, and the PCs have earned a much deserved break, the campaign is just beginning. The PCs should have reached 6th level by the end of this adventure. This should put them in prime condition to begin the third installment of the **Adventure Path: Shattered City** series, which will appear in *DUNGEON* #102. The PCs have probably forged some lasting friendships with some of the local citizens, such as Jenya, Shensen, and even Artus; they have likely made some powerful enemies whether any of the villains survived or not. Perhaps most important of all, their fame is growing by leaps and bounds. Only time will tell how some of the less-well-intentioned factions in and around Cauldron respond to the PCs growing power and fame.

APPENDIX I: NEW MONSTER

Harpoon Spider

Large Aberration

Hit Dice: 4d8+8 (26 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

Armor Class: 16 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+10

Attack: Bite +5 melee, or two fangs +6 ranged

Full Attack: Bite +5 melee and two fangs +6 ranged

Damage: Bite 2d4+4 and poison, or fangs 1d4 plus harpooning

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Harpooning, poison

Special Qualities: Dark-vision 120 ft., evasion, spines, web movement

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +5

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 9

Skills: Balance +6, Climb +16*, Hide +8, Jump +16*, Spot +6, Tumble +10

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Improved Trip (B), Lightning Reflexes

Environment: Any underground

Organization: Solitary, pair, or nest (3-12)

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

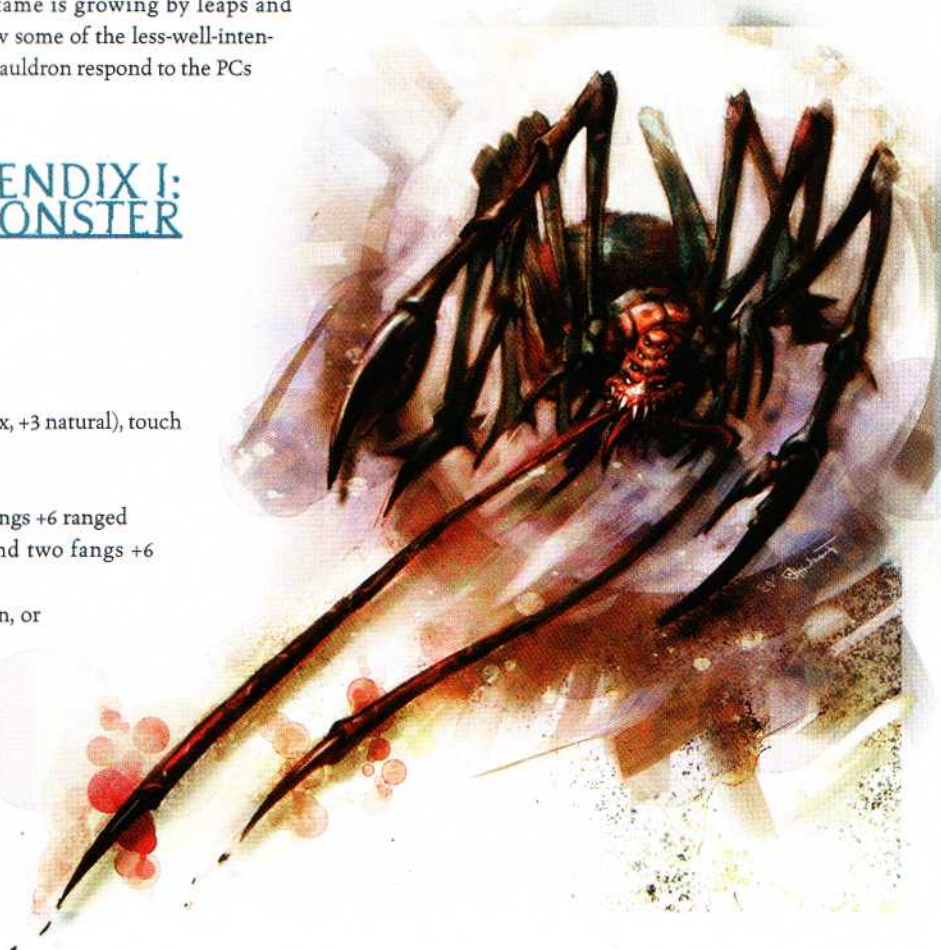
Advancement: 5-8 HD (Large), 9-12 HD (Huge)

A denizen of the Underdark, the harpoon spider is a lightning fast predator much feared by other denizens of the "night below."

Close examination reveals that the harpoon spider isn't a true spider at all, but something far more sinister. It superficially resembles a horse-sized black widow, save that it has ten legs and a body covered with hundreds of razor sharp spines. Each of its legs terminates in a tiny clawed hand, and its eight eyes are horribly humanlike. It can extend either of its large mandibles on a long leathery tendril with surprising force.

Harpoon spiders are quite intelligent and can often be found nesting with ettercaps and monstrous spiders. The harpoon spiders use these creatures to bolster the defenses of their lair. They have particularly morbid senses of humor and enjoy "playing" with their food while it ripens on their spines.

Harpoon spiders speak Undercommon.



COMBAT

A harpoon spider is a hunter, often stalking victims in a large territory around its lair. In combat, it uses its harpoon fangs to reel in prey, using its Improved Trip feat to administer a bite once its opponent has been reeled in. If the terrain permits, the spider prefers to attack victims from high vantage points (such as ledges).

Harpooning (Ex): As a full attack action, a harpoon spider can make two attacks with its fangs, firing them up to a range of 30 feet. The spider can fire at two different targets if it chooses, and can fire at targets at range while biting a close opponent without provoking an attack of opportunity. A successful hit deals 1d4 points of damage as the harpoon hooks the flesh of the target and immediately exudes a thick, sticky glue. The spider can reel in a harpoon as a free action; treat this as a trip attack against any creature attached to the fang. Failure indicates that the harpoon rips free (and deals another 1d4 points of damage to the victim). Success indicates that the victim is pulled off its feet and dragged back to the spider, who can immediately make a free bite attack against the victim. The harpoon spider can only pull a creature smaller than itself in this manner. Attempts to retract a creature of its size or larger automatically cause the fang to rip free as if the trip attack failed. The glue exuded by the spider's fangs quickly decomposes, and at the end of the spider's action the fang automatically detaches.

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 14); initial damage 1d6 temporary Dexterity, secondary damage 2d6 temporary Dexterity.

Spines (Ex): Any creature that attacks a harpoon spider with a Small or smaller weapon (including unarmed and natural attacks) must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 16) or suffer 1d6 points of piercing damage from the spider's spines. As a full-round action, a harpoon spider can pick up a smaller helpless creature with its legs and impale the body on the spines; causing 2d6 points of piercing damage. The spider can carry up to three Medium creatures in this manner (although if it carries two, it has a medium load, and if it carries three it has a heavy load). Harpoon spiders often carry their next meals in this manner.

Web Movement (Ex): Although they cannot spin webs themselves, harpoon spiders can climb around and through webs with ease using their climb speed. They are immune to the effects of the *web* spell.

Skills: *A harpoon spider gains a +8 racial bonus on Climb and Jump checks.

Feats: The harpoon spider gains the Improved Trip feat as a bonus feat, even though it does not have Combat Expertise.

APPENDIX II: CREATING A WEREBABOON

"Werebaboon" is a lycanthrope template that can be added to any humanoid or giant (referred to hereafter as the "character").

Size and Type: The character's type does not change, but the character gains the shapechanger subtype. The werebaboon can assume the shape and characteristics of a baboon. It may also

adopt a hybrid shape that combines features of the character and the baboon. A werebaboon's hybrid form is the same size as the baboon or base form, whichever is larger.

A werebaboon uses either the character's or the baboon's statistics and special abilities in addition to those set out below.

Hit Dice and Hit Points: Same as the character plus 1d8 from the baboon form. To calculate total hit points, apply Constitution modifiers according to the score the lycanthrope has in each form. For example a human commoner with a Constitution score of 11 as a human and a Constitution score of 13 as a baboon has 1d4 plus 1d8+1 hit points.

Speed: Same as the character or baboon, depending on which form the lycanthrope is using.

Armor Class: The character's natural armor increases by +2 in all forms. In hybrid form, the lycanthrope's natural armor bonus is equal to the natural armor bonus of its animal form or its base form, whichever is better.

Base Attack/Grapple: Add the base attack for the baboon (+0) to the base attack for the character. The werebaboon's grapple bonus uses its attack and modifiers for Strength and size depending on the werebaboon's form.

Attacks: Same as the character or baboon, depending on which form the werebaboon is using. A werebaboon in hybrid form gains a bite for natural attacks. This inflicts damage based on the hybrid form's size:

Hybrid Size	Bite
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6

A hybrid may attack with a weapon and a bite, or may attack with its natural attacks. The bite attack of a hybrid is a secondary attack, but does not penalize the character's attacks with any weapons it wields or its claws. A werebaboon in hybrid form may attack with weapons and use its bite attack as a secondary weapon in place of a weapon wielded in its off hand.

Damage: Same as the character or baboon, depending on which form the lycanthrope is using.

Special Attacks: A werebaboon retains all of the special attacks of the character or animal, depending on which form it is using, and gains those listed below. A werebaboon spellcaster cannot cast spells with V, S, or M components in animal form, or spells with V components in hybrid form.

Curse of Lycanthropy (Su): Any humanoid or giant hit by a natural werebaboon's bite attack in animal or hybrid form must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or contract lycanthropy. If the victim is not within one size category of the werebaboon (for example, a hill giant bitten by a wererat), the victim cannot contract lycanthropy from that lycanthrope. Afflicted lycanthropes cannot pass on the curse of lycanthropy.

Special Qualities: A werebaboon retains all the special qualities of the character and the baboon, and also gains the following:

Alternate Form (Su): A werebaboon can shift into baboon or

hybrid form as though using the *polymorph* spell on itself, though its gear is not affected and it does not regain hit points for changing form. It does not assume the ability scores of the animal, but instead adds the baboon's physical ability score modifiers to its own ability scores, as detailed below. A werebaboon can also assume a bipedal hybrid form with opposable thumbs and animalistic features. Changing to or from baboon or hybrid form is a standard action. A slain werebaboon reverts to its humanoid form, although it remains dead. Separated body parts retain their baboon form, however. Afflicted werebaboons find this ability difficult to control, but natural lycanthropes have full control over this power.

Damage Reduction (Ex): A werebaboon in animal or hybrid form gains DR 10/silver.

Lycanthropic Empathy (Ex): In any form, werebaboons can communicate and empathize with baboons. This gives them a +4 racial bonus to checks when influencing the baboon's attitude and allows the communication of simple concepts and (if the baboon is friendly) commands, such as "friend," "foe," "flee," and "attack."

Low-light Vision (Ex): The werebaboon gains low-light vision in any form.

Scent (Ex): The werebaboon gains scent in any form.

Base Saves: The werebaboon adds its base saves as a baboon (Fort +2 and Ref +2) to its total saves.

Abilities: All werebaboons gain +2 to Wisdom. In addition, when in baboon or hybrid form, a werebaboon's physical ability scores improve as follows: Strength +4, Dexterity +4, Constitution +2.

Skills: The lycanthrope gains skill points equal to (2 + Int

modifier, minimum 1), as if it had multiclassed into the animal type. (Animal is never its first Hit Die, though, and it does not gain quadruple skill points for any animal Hit Dice.) Climb, Listen, and Spot are the baboon's class skills.

Feats: Werebaboons receive Alertness and Iron Will as a bonus feat.

Environment: Same as either the character or baboon.

Organization: Solitary or pair, sometimes family (2–4), or troop (6–10)

Challenge Rating: By class level +2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually lawful evil. This is a reflection of how the baboon is perceived, not any innate quality of the baboon itself, so the Dungeon Master can arbitrarily assign the alignment of the animal form.

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: Same as the character, +2 (afflicted) or +3 (natural). In addition, the character's effective character level is increased by +1 (the racial hit dice of a baboon). Ω

James Jacobs writes, "When I was a kid, I saw a picture of a baboon. The baboon had a huge bloody gash on its face (I assumed from the gape-mouthed, fanged baboon in the picture on the facing page), and was staring directly into the camera with a look of pure evil. Ever since, baboons have freaked me out. When I heard that the werebaboon laid waste to the PCs when this adventure was playtested, I knew my terror had not been misdirected. Beware the baboons!"

DUNGEON #99 PREVIEWS

"Quadripartite"

By Peter Aperlo

When a mortal exposes himself to the secrets beyond time and space, he risks unlocking more than power. Such is the case when a mad wizard contacts these forces of chaos and summons them to the Prime Material plane. Only the assembled pieces of the Quadripartite can enable the PCs to defeat the minion of chaos and save the countryside from utter devastation. A D&D adventure for 14th-level PCs.



And a bonus for our subscribers...

"Fish Story"

By Adam Jortner

An elemental force threatens to break free from its ancient prison and overwhelm the village of Waterford. If the heroes act quickly, they can find a way to either negotiate with this great power or defeat it, but the repercussions of their actions might have more far-reaching consequences than they could foresee. A D&D adventure for 7th-level PCs.

Plus, "Maps of Mystery," "Critical Threats," and a new POLYHEDRON Mini-Game!



FLOOD SEASON

BY JAMES JACOBS

ARTWORK BY BRIAN SNODDY AND WAYNE REYNOLDS

MONSTER MANUAL II
CREATURES

"Flood Season" uses several monsters from *Monster Manual II*. To conserve space, their complete statistics were omitted from the adventure text, but that information has been provided as a service here to accommodate those readers who do not own *Monster Manual II*. We highly encourage those readers who have not yet picked up a copy of this supplement to do so, as the information provided here is skeletal, at best—intended only to provide you with the minimal information necessary to run the adventure.

➤ **Kopru:** CR 6; Medium Monstrous Humanoid (aquatic); HD 8d8; hp 36; Init +2; Spd 5 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; BAB +8; Grap +10; Atk +10 melee (1d6+2, tail slap), +8 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws), and +8 melee (1d4+1, bite); SA constrict 3d6+3, dominate person, improved grab; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 10.



Skills: Concentration +11, Escape Artist +11, Move Silently +10, Search +8, Swim +10. *Feats:* Iron Will, Multiattack.

Languages: Common, Aquan.

Constrict (Ex): With a successful grapple check, a kopru can constrict a grabbed opponent, dealing 3d6+3 points of bludgeoning damage.

Dominate Person (Su): Once per day, a kopru can produce an effect like that of a *dominate person* spell (caster level 10th; Will save DC 14), except that the range is 180 feet and the duration is eight days.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a kopru hits an opponent that is its own size or smaller with a tail attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity (grapple bonus +17, including a +7 racial bonus on grapple checks). If it gets a hold, it also constricts on the same round. Thereafter, the kopru has the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use its tails to hold the opponent (–20 penalty on grapple check, but the kopru is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals tail and constrict damage.

➤ **Spawn of Kyuss:** CR 5; Medium Undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 29; Init –1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; BAB +2; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d6+6 plus Kyuss's gift, slam), or +6 melee touch (create spawn), or +1 ranged touch (create spawn); SA create spawn, fear aura, Kyuss's gift; SQ curative transformation, fast healing 5, turn resistance +2, undead traits; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 9, Con —, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills: Hide +5, Jump +10, Move Silently +5, Spot +6. *Feats:* Toughness.

Create Spawn (Su): Once per round as a free action, a spawn of Kyuss can transfer a worm from its own body to that of an opponent. It can do this whenever it hits with a slam attack, but it can also make the transfer by means of a successful melee touch attack or ranged touch attack, hurling a worm at a foe from a distance of up to 10 feet.

Each worm is a Fine vermin with an AC of 10 and 1 hit point. It can be killed with normal damage or by the touch of silver. On the spawn's next action, the worm burrows into its host's flesh. (A creature with a natural armor bonus of +5 or higher is immune to this burrowing effect.) The worm makes its way toward the host's brain, dealing 1 point of damage per round

for 1d4+1 rounds. At the end of that period, it reaches that brain. While the worm is inside a victim, a *remove curse* or *remove disease* effect destroys it, and a *dispel evil* or *neutralize poison* effect delays its progress for 10d6 minutes. A successful Heal check (DC 20) extracts the worm and kills it.

Once the worm reaches the brain, it deals 1d2 points of Intelligence damage per round until it either is killed (by *remove curse* or *remove disease*) or slays its host (death occurs at 0 Intelligence). A Small Medium, or Large creature slain by a worm rises as a new spawn of Kyuss 1d6+4 rounds later; a Tiny or smaller creature quickly putrefies; and a Huge or larger creature becomes a normal zombie of the appropriate size. Newly created spawn are not under the control of their parent, but they usually follow whatever spawn of Kyuss created them.

Fear Aura (Su): A spawn of Kyuss continuously radiates a fear effect. This ability functions like a *fear* spell (caster level 7th; Will save DC 14), except that it affects all creatures within a 40-foot radius. Any creature that makes a successful saving throw against the effect cannot be affected again by the fear aura of that spawn of Kyuss for 24 hours.

Kyuss's Gift (Su): Any creature hit by a spawn of Kyuss's slam attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 12) or contract a supernatural disease. The incubation period is 1 day, and the disease deals 1d6 point of Constitution damage and 1d4 points of Wisdom damage (see Disease in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*). These effects manifest as rotting flesh and dementia. An affected creature gets only half the benefits of natural and magical healing, though a *remove disease* effect removes the affliction.

Curative Transformation (Ex): One *remove curse* or *remove disease* effect, or a more powerful version of either of these effects, transforms a spawn of Kyuss into a normal zombie.

"FLOOD SEASON" MOOKS

The thugs and Alleybashers make many appearances in "Flood Season," but their statistics are only printed once. They've been updated reproduced for your convenience here, so you always have a quick and easy reference when they show up in a fight.

♣ **Thugs, Male and Female Human Ftr2:** CR 2; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 2d10+4; hp 23, 20, 18, 17; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; BAB +2; Grap +5; Atk +7 melee (1d8+2/19–20, masterwork longsword); AL CN; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +1*, Jump +1*, Swim –4**. **Feats:** Great Fortitude, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (longsword).

*Includes –6 armor check penalty, –12 for Swim.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Chainmail, masterwork large steel shield, masterwork longsword, *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

♣ **Alleybashers, Male and Female Human Rog2:** CR 2; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 2d6+5; hp 18, 14; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; BAB +1; Grap +1; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1/18–20, masterwork rapier) or +4 ranged (1d6/×3, shortbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will –1; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 13.

Skills: Bluff +6, Climb +6, Disable Device +8, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Search +7, Spot +4, Tumble +8. **Feats:** Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Languages: Common, Gnome, Halfling.

Possessions: Studded leather, masterwork rapier, shortbow with 20 arrows.

CLERICS OF ST. CUTHBERT

The PCs aren't the only ones who gain experience in the course of this campaign. Jenya Urikas (the new high priest of St. Cuthbert in Cauldron), has gained a level by the onset of "Flood Season." She should continue to gain levels as the campaign progresses (as long as she's alive), although probably not at the same rate as the PCs (about 1 level per adventure). So by the end of "Flood Season," feel free to level up Jenya once more. Her stats for the duration of this adventure are provided below.

Sarcem Delasharn, the now deceased high priest of the church of St. Cuthbert, doesn't make a living appearance in the adventure. But if the PCs manage to resurrect him at some point in a later adventure (*raise dead* won't work since his tongue has been cut out and eaten by Tongueater the werebaboon), refer to the statistics provided below.

♣ **Jenya Urikas, Female Human Clr6 (St. Cuthbert):** CR 6; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 6d8+6; hp 37; Init –1; Spd 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor); AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17 with armor with *magic vestment* spell; BAB +4; Grap +4; Atk +5 melee (1d8, masterwork heavy mace), or +5 melee (1d6+1 plus 2d6 holy, +1 *holy light mace*)* or +3 ranged (damage varies, ranged touch); SA turn undead 5/day; AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 14.

*Jenya carries Sarcem's +1 *holy light mace*—the church's badge of office for its high priest—if the PCs return it to her in "Flood Season."

Skills: Concentration +7, Diplomacy +10, Heal +12, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +3, Spellcraft +7, Spot +3. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Leadership,

Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Heal).

Spells Prepared (5/5/5/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, guidance, light, mending, purify food and drink*; 1st—*bless water, command, divine favor, magic weapon, sanctuary**; 2nd—*bull's strength**, *hold person, lesser restoration, owl's wisdom, shield other*; 3rd—*create food and water, magic vestment**, *remove disease, searing light*.

*Domain spell. Domains: Protection (*protective ward* 1/day), Strength (feat of strength 1/day).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Possessions: +1 holy light mace (only if the PCs return it to her), masterwork chain mail (+1 with *magic vestment* spell), large steel shield, masterwork heavy mace, 2 scrolls of *cure serious wounds*, brown robe, 2 vials of holy water, keys to temple, holy symbol of St. Cuthbert.

♦ **Sarcem Delasharn, Human Male Clr 9:** CR 9; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 9d8+9; hp 46; Init -1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19; BAB +6; Grap +7; Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+2 plus 2d6 holy, +1 holy light mace); SA spells, turn undead; AL LN; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 13, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 19, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +13, Knowledge (religion) +6, Spellcraft +6. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Empower Spell, Weapon Focus (light mace)

Spells Known (6/6/6/5/4/2; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*create water, detect magic, purify food and drink* ×4; 1—*command, divine favor, endure elements, obscuring mist, protection from chaos, sanctuary**; 2—*bull's strength, consecrate, endurance, lesser restoration, shield other**, *zone of truth*; 3—*create food and water, magic circle against chaos**, *remove disease, speak with dead, water breathing*; 4—*control water, order's wrath**, *sending, tongues*; 5—*spell resistance**, *summon monster V*.

*Domain spell. Domains: Law (cast Law spells at +1 caster level), Protection (*protective ward* 1/day).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: +1 banded mail, medium steel shield, +1 holy light mace, ring of protection +1, *peripart of wisdom* +2, 2 potions of *cure serious wounds*, *potion of bull's strength*, silver holy symbol, clerical vestments.

Sarcem Delasharn is a barrel-chested man with flinty gray eyes, well-groomed black hair, and impressive sideburns. He takes his position as high priest of the Church of St. Cuthbert

in Cauldron seriously . . . almost too seriously. He runs a tight ship and expects nothing less than perfection from those under his charge. Tradition bound and loyal, he has become nothing less than enraged of late at the lackadaisical attitude that most of Cauldron's other churches have adopted over the last several years toward the Flood Festival ceremonies, and he secretly hoped that the Church of St. Cuthbert had a chance this season to single-handedly turn back the flood waters with the *wands of control water*. In particular, nothing would please Sarcem more than to see the public image of the church of Wee Jas become tarnished; he has long had a running feud with that church's high priestess.

Although early events in "Flood Season" result in Sarcem's untimely demise, you can still use these statistics for any 9th-level cleric of a lawful deity that the party might encounter in your campaign. In addition, there's a good chance the PCs decide to return Sarcem's body to Cauldron for a proper burial. Eventually, the PCs may have enough resources to have the high priest brought back to life.

A more sinister use for these statistics presents itself if the PCs opt to leave Sarcem's remains at the Lucky Monkey, especially if they claim his equipment as loot. In this case, Sarcem's spirit may be troubled enough to rise as a ghost or another undead creature. Some people even believe that a person slain by a lycanthrope rises as a vampire after death; since Sarcem was killed by just such a creature, perhaps he does just that (although this may be difficult if the PCs return to Cauldron with his head but leave his body behind). Should this occur, you can simply apply the appropriate undead monster template to these statistics to create a unique adversary for the group. Naturally, if Sarcem rises as an undead menace, anyone returning to the Lucky Monkey finds his body missing.

EXTRA ENCOUNTERS

These two encounters can help broaden the scope and feel of "Flood Season." Neither event advances the actual plot of the adventure, but they can add a wealth of detail and intrigue to an ongoing campaign set in Cauldron. These encounters might also help if the PCs are just shy of 3rd level and need a few more experience points before they're

STRIDERS OF FHARLANGHN

The Striders of Fharlanghn is a neutrally aligned organization dedicated to the destruction of the Cagewrights, an evil society intent on bringing their lords—the demodands of Carceri—to the Prime Material Plane to rule for eternity. Many of the Striders worship the deity Fharlanghn, but not all of them do; some, like Meerthan Eliothlorn, simply share the organization's view con-

cerning the Cagewrights, seeing them as a threat to the balance of power in the realm. A half-elf wizard himself, Meerthan is in town posing as a dwarven merchant named Tyro Amberhelm; he currently stays at The Drowning Morkoth Inn. Meerthan is the point contact for the Striders in the Cauldron region, and both Fario and Fellian (from issue #97's "Life's Bazaar"), as well as Shensen Tesseril report to him.

powerful enough to face the challenges of “Flood Season.” Likewise, each of them can be the start of a recurring location or theme for an ongoing adventure in the area. Players will no doubt want to return to Skie’s Treasury often during the campaign, and they might end up butting heads with the Stormblades for many sessions to come.

EVENT 1: A TRIP TO SKIE’S (EL 8)

Eventually, the PCs are going to want to either sell or buy magic items. This might be the most logical encounter to start the adventure with if you’re continuing with the same group that ran through “Life’s Bazaar.” After emerging victorious from the perils of the Malachite Fortress, they probably have a lot of loot to pawn off.

Numerous stores in Cauldron sometimes sell magic items and gear, but only one of them makes its sole business buying and selling magic items to adventurers: Skie’s Treasury. Skie is a retired gnome adventurer who spent much of her youth exploring the catacombs and chambers below Cauldron. She is quite knowledgeable about the creatures, traps, dangers, and general geography of these tunnels and is always eager to share some of her tips and knowledge with paying customers. You can use Skie to give PCs helpful hints or bits of advice as they continue to adventure in the region. She’s had enough of the adventuring lifestyle, however, and won’t agree to join any new groups for any price.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs arrive at Skie’s Treasury:

You have come to a modest building crafted from blocks of volcanic stone. The façade of the building bears dozens, if not hundreds of symbols and sigils that have been carved into the face of the stone with chisels. One door and a pair of tiny windows face the road and overlook the lake below. Above the door, a sign proclaims the establishment to be Skie’s Treasury, but more impressive are the numerous items of treasure—rings, coins, wands, necklaces, rods, potions, scrolls, and more—that seem to slowly orbit the sign and shine with soft golden light. Every now and then, two of the items bump against each other, ringing softly like a windchime.

The treasure orbiting the sign is a *permanent image* that was placed there not long after Skie purchased the building to set up her business. The runes on the façade of her store are in Gnome, and are in fact the names of various adventuring parties that have, throughout the years, patronized Skie’s store enough that she offered them a special “Adventurer’s Discount” in return for their loyalty. Some of the names include The Greenswords, The Unhumans, The Singers of

Ehlonna, and Varmint Patrol. A successful Spot check (DC 20) by someone who understands Gnome notices one rune that reads, “The Last Laugh.” This is the name of one of the Cauldron thieves’ guilds, as a successful Knowledge (local) or bardic knowledge check (DC 20) reveals.

Skie doesn’t give out the Adventurer’s Discount to just any party that comes in off the street; in order to qualify for this discount, an adventuring group must fulfill the following criteria:

- They must introduce themselves to Skie by name and by adventuring group, and must display strong bonds of friendship.
- They must patronize “Skie’s Treasury” at least once a month; transactions on these monthly visits are not required, but they are appreciated.
- On each visit, Skie likes to hear a story of the group’s recent accomplishments. She prefers to hear heroic tales and has little taste for mayhem and cruelty. Evil adventuring parties are never given the discount.
- Finally, the group as a whole must sell no less than 25,000 gp worth of magic treasure to Skie. She keeps detailed records of all transactions, and once a group has sold more than this amount in magic treasure to her (over any amount of time), and assuming that up until this point they have followed the first three points above on previous visits, she offers the group the Adventurer’s Discount.

The Adventurer’s Discount allows the lucky group to sell magic items at 60% market value, rather than 50% market value. Similarly, when they purchase items from Skie, they receive 10% off the market value of the item in question. Skie appreciates customer loyalty, and has no problem taking a hit to her income to reward those customers she values.

Finally, once a party gains the discount, Skie uses her *wand of stone shape* to rearrange the runes on the front of her store and add in the Gnome translation of the new party’s name to the façade.

Inside, the store’s shelves are fairly sparse, but never empty. Skie sells enough magic to keep herself in comfort, and has no real ambition to make a fortune at the job. Each of the items on her shelves is kept in a glass cabinet under lock and key, and each item is displayed on a silk pillow with a small placard that describes the item’s history, powers, and what party sold the item to Skie. She doesn’t allow shoppers to handle or physically inspect items unless they are beneficiaries of the Adventurer’s Discount.

You can handle transactions at Skie’s Treasury in two ways. The simplest is to just assume that she can afford to buy anything the party might find, and has for sale any magic item worth 3,000 gp or less. For an ongoing campaign set primarily in one region, though, where the PCs are likely to return to the same store again and again, this isn’t the most realistic choice. The preferred method of han-

dling transactions (although it takes a bit more paperwork) is the method presented below.

At any one time, Skie's Treasury has approximately 50,000 gp worth of magic items for sale, although no single item at this time is worth more than 3,000 gp. At the start of this adventure, the following items are for sale here (unless otherwise noted, all weapons and armor are sized for Medium creatures).

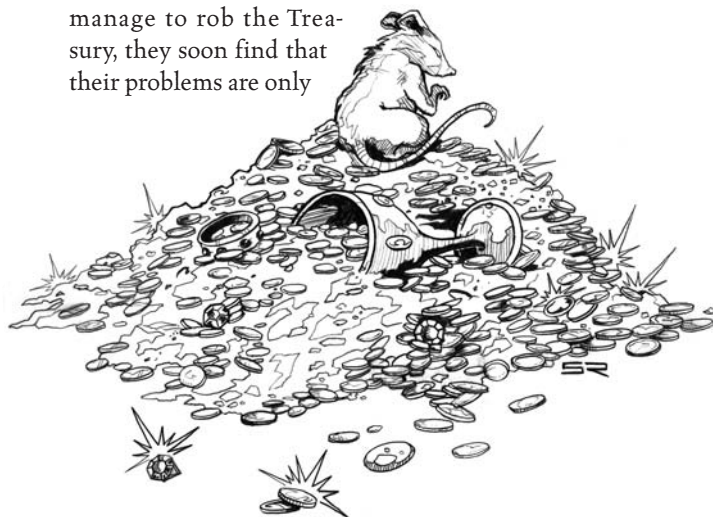
Item	Price	Discount Price
+1 <i>banded mail</i>	1,400 gp	1,260 gp
+1 <i>chainmail</i>	1,300 gp	1,170 gp
+1 <i>dagger</i> (Small)	2,302 gp	2,072 gp
+1 <i>kukri</i>	2,308 gp	2,077 gp
+1 <i>heavy steel shield</i>	1,170 gp	1,053 gp
+1 <i>leather armor</i> (2 available; one Small)	1,160 gp each	1,044 gp each
+1 <i>light mace</i> (Small)	2,305 gp	2,075 gp
+1 <i>longsword</i> (2 available; one Small)	2,315 gp each	2,084 gp each
+1 <i>scimitar</i>	2,315 gp	2,084 gp
+1 <i>spiked chain</i>	2,325 gp	2,093 gp
Arcane scroll of <i>flame arrow</i>	375 gp	338 gp
Arcane scroll of <i>ice storm</i>	700 gp	630 gp
Arcane scroll of <i>levitate</i>	150 gp	135 gp
Arcane scroll of <i>mirror image</i>	150 gp	135 gp
<i>Bag of holding</i> (Type 1)	2,500 gp	2,250 gp
<i>Cloak of resistance</i> +1 (2 available)	1,000 gp each	900 gp each
Divine scroll of <i>dispel magic</i>	375 gp	338 gp
Divine scroll of <i>lesser restoration</i>	150 gp	135 gp
Divine scroll of <i>raise dead</i>	6,125 gp	5,513 gp
Divine scroll of <i>silence</i>	150 gp	135 gp
Divine scroll of <i>speak with dead</i>	375 gp	338 gp
<i>Golembane scarab</i> (flesh)	2,500 gp	2,250 gp
<i>Hat of disguise</i>	1,800 gp	1,620 gp
<i>Heward's handy haversack</i>	2,000 gp	1,800 gp
<i>Potion of cure light wounds</i> (8 available)	50 gp each	45 gp each
<i>Potion of cure moderate wounds</i> (3 available)	300 gp each	270 gp each
<i>Potion of haste</i>	750 gp	675 gp
<i>Potion of owl's wisdom</i>	300 gp	270 gp
<i>Ring of feather falling</i>	2,200 gp	1,980 gp
<i>Ring of protection</i> +1	2,000 gp	1,800 gp
<i>Rope of climbing</i>	3,000 gp	2,700 gp
<i>Sleep arrows</i> (2 available)	132 gp each	119 gp
<i>Wand of cure light wounds</i> (25 charges)	375 gp	338 gp
<i>Wand of cure moderate wounds</i> (22 charges)	1,980 gp	1,782 gp
<i>Wand of Melf's acid arrow</i> (10 charges)	900 gp	810 gp

As the campaign progresses, feel free to alter the list of magic items for sale as you see fit. Remember to keep track of anything that the party sells to Skie as well. As a general rule, each month there is a cumulative 25% chance that an item is sold to an NPC. Once an item is sold, if her total inventory value is below 50,000 gp, there's a cumulative 20% chance each week that some new item is purchased to replenish stock. At any one time, Skie tries to keep about 10,000 gp and 1,000 pp in the large safe in the back room to make purchases with. Additional funds over this amount she usually converts to gemstones; she usually keeps another 10,000 gp in gemstones in the safe as well.

Skie's Treasury may seem a ripe location for some burglary to greedy characters, but the store is quite well guarded and likely beyond the capability of a low-level party to rob. Skie herself is an accomplished sorcerer and can probably handle a group of four low-level adventurers herself. In addition, she keeps several guards on staff to protect her inventory; two of these guards are always on duty in the Treasury. The glass cases that contain the inventory are all locked with good quality locks (Open Lock DC 30); she wears the only key around her neck on a silver chain. When the store is closed, Skie relocates her entire inventory into the safe in the back room.

This safe consists of a lead-lined solid steel box set in a 5-foot-square hole carved directly into the stone floor. The door of the safe is huge, nearly 3 feet across, and is set into the floor of the room like a trap door. A narrow ladder descends into the safe, and a small dumbwaiter used to transport items from the room above is set in one corner of the safe. When the door is closed, it is nearly impregnable. The safe door is amazing quality, and cracking it requires 3d6 minutes of focused work and a successful Open Lock check (DC 40).

Finally, if someone does manage to rob the Treasury, they soon find that their problems are only



beginning. As inferred by their rune on the façade of the building, the Last Laugh has an interest in Skie's Treasury. Skie has extended the discount to all members of this guild of thieves, and in return, they have promised to leave her store alone. In addition, Skie pays a monthly stipend to this guild; in return, they have vowed to track down and return any objects stolen from her store should such an affront be brought to their attention. A character who steals from the Treasury and remains in the region can expect to receive nightly visits from members of the Last Laugh as long as they remain in possession of stolen goods.

☛ **Skie Aldersun, Female Gnome Sor6:** CR 6; Small Humanoid (gnome); HD 6d4+12; hp 29; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16*, touch 12, flat-footed 15; BAB +3; Grap -1; Atk +4 melee (1d4+1, +1 dagger) or +5 ranged (1d4+1, +1 dagger) or +4 ranged (damage varies, ranged touch); SA spells; SQ gnome traits; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 17.

*Includes +4 armor bonus from *mage armor*.

Skills: Concentration +11, Craft (alchemy) +13, Knowledge +8 (arcana), Listen +2, Profession (shopkeeper) +5, Spellcraft +11. **Feats:** Craft Wondrous Item, Lightning Reflexes, Still Spell.

Spells Known (6/7/6/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, detect magic, disrupt undead, mage hand, mending, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*identify, jump, mage armor, magic missile*; 2nd—*detect thoughts, levitate*; 3rd—*fly*.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Gnome.

Possessions: +1 dagger, stone of alarm, wand of stone shape (20 charges).

Skie Aldersun retired from the adventuring lifestyle nearly a decade ago when she accidentally awakened a slumbering wyvern while attempting to steal some of its treasure. The enraged wyvern managed to slay the rest of her party (including her familiar, a cat named Newt) before she managed to strike a killing blow. The experience traumatized her, and she swore never to meddle with monsters again. But the adventuring lifestyle was still in her blood. Skie decided to open a store that catered to other adventurers, and since that day has lived vicariously through the tales of her clientele. She still maintains a terrible fear of all dragons and has never summoned a replacement familiar for her beloved Newt.

☛ **Treasury Guards, Male Human Ftr5 (2):** CR 5; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 5d10+10; hp 39; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; BAB +5; Grap +8; Atk +10 melee (1d10+6/19–20, +1 bastard sword) or +7 ranged (1d8/×3, masterwork longbow); AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +9*, Jump +9*, Swim +7*. **Feats:** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Lightning Reflexes,

Power Attack, Run, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword).

*Includes -2 armor check penalty (-4 for Swim).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, masterwork heavy steel shield, +1 bastard sword, masterwork longbow with 20 masterwork arrows.

◆ **Safe (lead-lined steel):** 6 in. thick walls, 5 cubic feet volume; Hardness 10; hp 180; break DC 35; amazing lock (Open Lock DC 40).

Ad-hoc XP Award: If the PCs manage to earn the Adventurer's Discount, give them a CR 3 experience award.

EVENT 2: UNWANTED ATTENTION (EL 7)

Word of the party's adventures in and below Cauldron, and the role they played in putting a stop to the kidnappings, begins to slowly spread. Every once in a while, a commoner or shopkeeper should recognize the group and thank them profusely for their work; some shopkeepers might even go so far as to give them small discounts on their merchandise. Unfortunately, not everyone in Cauldron is pleased with the party's growing fame.

One group in particular, a band of adventurers calling themselves the "Stormblades," has taken a particularly foul view of the PCs. The Stormblades are comprised of four local adventurers who are also all members of various noble families in Cauldron. These four young aristocrats decided to form an adventuring party to get some excitement, fame, and extra cash several months ago, and have spent those months exploring some of the less dangerous catacombs and lava tubes below the city. In particular, they recently wiped out a large tribe of pesky kobolds that had taken up residence in some old lava tubes below the southern section of Cauldron.

In any case, the news of the PCs' triumph over the slaver ring has all but eclipsed these admittedly less impressive accomplishments, and the Stormblades aren't happy about it. Rather than seek greater glories for themselves, however, they have started to obsess about the PCs, and begin to keep tabs on them as this adventure starts. As time progresses, the PCs may hear rumors that some people have been asking about them. They also might catch a glimpse of members of the Stormblades stalking them.

Eventually, the entire group confronts the PCs as they relax at a tavern (perhaps at the Tipped Tankard) or busy themselves at market or somewhere similar; stage the timing for this event at a time when the interruption is obnoxious but not dangerous—sometime before **Event 3** happens. The Stormblades merely want to harass the group and mock them publicly in an attempt to sully their prestige and reputation. The Stormblades hope to goad the PCs into

attacking them. If they're successful, the Stormblades fight back to defend themselves, but strive to do subdual damage unless the PCs raise the stakes by doing lethal damage. The city watch responds quickly to the public disturbance; within 2d4 rounds (the Stormblades take care to stage their plan in a place where the city watch is never far away) a patrol arrives to put the disturbance to an end.

Once the battle is over, assuming the Stormblades survive, they continue to harbor a grudge against the PCs. If they lost, the humiliation of being beaten down in a public place further enrages them; if they won, their success emboldens them and convinces them that the PCs' fame is even more misplaced. If any members of the Stormblades are wounded with real damage or killed, the survivors vow to see the player characters thrown in jail. Each member of this group is the child of an influential member of Cauldron's nobility, and the Stormblades' parents are more than willing to fund legal action against the PCs on behalf of their children. If all four members are killed, their parents and the guard defiantly press for the imprisonment and possible execution of the PCs. The extent of such legal actions are beyond the scope of this adventure, but they can haunt the party throughout their entire career in Cauldron if they don't handle the situation well.

Although the Stormblades could pose a fairly dangerous threat to a group of four 4th-level characters, they are an intrinsically chaotic group of thugs and it won't take much to make their practiced, almost choreographed fighting teamwork fall apart if the party manages to separate them or goad one of the members into doing something foolish.

☛ **Annah Taskerhill, Female Human Ari1/Brd3:** CR 3; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1 plus 3d6+3; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16*, touch 11, flat-footed 15*; BAB +2; Grap +1; Atk +5 melee (1d6-1/18-20, masterwork rapier) or +4 ranged (1d2 subdual, masterwork whip) or +4 ranged (1d8, masterwork light crossbow); SA bardic music, countersong, *fascinate*, spells; SQ bardic knowledge, inspire competence, inspire courage +1; AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16.

*Includes +4 bonus from *mage armor*.

Skills: Bluff +10, Diplomacy +16, Forgery +9, Gather Information +11, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Perform (sing) +10, Sense Motive +7. **Feats:** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Weapon Finesse (rapier), Weapon Focus (rapier).

Spells Known (3/2; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *read magic*; 1—*charm person*, *cure light wounds*, *expeditious retreat*.

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnome.

Possessions: Masterwork rapier, masterwork whip, masterwork light crossbow with 20 bolts, light steel shield, *wand of*

cat's grace (15 charges), *wand of mage armor* (30 charges), 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, noble's outfit, masterwork lute, gold ring (80 gp), leather pouch containing 40 gp.

Annah is the leader of the Stormblades, if only due to her remarkable gift with words. She has a knack for knowing how to say exactly the right thing at the right time, and it's a rare event indeed that she is forced to pay for her own meal or room while out on the road. The other members of the Stormblades all look up to her, and without her leadership it is likely that the group would quickly fall apart. Annah is tall and strikingly beautiful, with smooth dusky skin, long black hair braided into numerous cornrows, sharp features, and a great sense of fashion. She prefers to hang back in combat and encourage her three friends to fight for her with her bardic music, supporting them with her crossbow or whip as she gets the chance. Her actual feelings for the other members of the Stormblades is coldly mercenary; she sees them as little more than minions, but maintains the charade of friendship to further encourage their support of her. Her parents are some of Cauldron's most important nobles, and her father is reportedly a close personal friend of the Lord Mayor.

☛ **Cora Lathenmire, Female Human Ari1/Ftr3:** CR 3; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 1d8+3 plus 3d10+9; hp 33; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; BAB +3; Grap +5; Atk +7 melee (1d6+2/18-20, masterwork rapier) or +4 ranged (1d8/×3, composite longbow); AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Skills: Appraise +4, Bluff +5, Handle Animal +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +4, Ride +10, Sense Motive +3. **Feats:** Blind-Fight, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (rapier).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Masterwork breastplate, +1 *light steel shield*, masterwork rapier, *potion of bull's strength*, composite longbow with 20 arrows, noble's outfit, leather pouch containing 12 gp and 10 sp.

Cora is the most quiet and bloodthirsty of the group. Quick to anger, most of the Stormblades' fights start when Cora imagines an insult directed at her or her lover, Zachary. Although she's taken pains to practice the graceful rapier fighting style used by her allies, after a few rounds of combat she always loses her patience and starts using Power Attack to lash out with wild abandon. She has short red hair, numerous scars (mostly on her hands and forearms), and a swaggering gait. She dotes on Zachary, but thinks Todd is a coward and would like to teach him a thing or two about combat the hard way if given the opportunity. Her parents are well-known weapon traders, and they employ a number of smiths in town; characters who anger

her parents may find that many of Cauldron's weapons and armor dealers start charging them inflated prices.

♦ **Todd Vanderboren, Male Human Ari1/Rog3:** CR 3; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1 plus 3d6+3; hp 22; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; BAB +2; Grap +3; Atk +7 melee (1d6+1/18–20, masterwork rapier) or +6 ranged (1d6/×3, masterwork shortbow); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, trap sense +1, trapfinding; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +4, Forgery +7, Disable Device +8, Hide +9, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +5, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +4, Tumble +9. **Feats:** Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Weapon Focus (rapier).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Gnome.

Possessions: +1 studded leather armor, masterwork rapier, masterwork composite shortbow with 20 arrows, 3 *sleep arrows*, *potion of hiding*, *potion of glibness*, noble's outfit, masterwork thieves' tools, leather pouch containing 34 gp and 4 pp.

Todd is the only truly evil member of the Stormblades, but he keeps the true extents of his depravity well concealed. His goal is to someday take command of the Stormblades and found a criminal syndicate. Unfortunately, he has a horrible habit of insulting anyone and everyone, and then cackling loudly and mockingly at their discomfort. He's a little too thin for his frame, and his weak chin and long face make him look a bit like a weasel. His eyes are watery and his hair short and brown; his clothes are well made but he wears them without grace. He doesn't really like any of the other members of the Stormblades except Annah, with whom he's been in not-so-secret-lust for many years. He endures Zachary and Cora's presence only because Annah seems to prefer their company. Todd's real parents are dead; his adoptive parents have little time for him and if he gets in trouble, they only respond because society demands it. If he were to disappear, they wouldn't be broken hearted.

♦ **Zachary Aslaxin II, Male Human Ari1/Rgr2/Clr1:** CR 3; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 4d8; hp 18; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; BAB +2; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1/18–20, masterwork rapier) and +2 melee (1d4, masterwork kukri), or +6 ranged (1d8+1, masterwork mighty composite longbow [+1 Str]); SA combat style (two-weapon fighting), spells, favored enemy (humanoid—reptilian +2); SQ turn undead, wild empathy; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +6, Diplomacy +4, Heal +5, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +3, Survival +8.

Feats: Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (kukri), Track, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Spells Prepared (3/2+1, base DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*guidance*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*. 1—*cause fear*, *entropic shield**, *shield of faith*.

*Domain Spell. **Domains:** Luck (reroll 1/day), Strength (feat of strength 1/day).

Languages: Common.

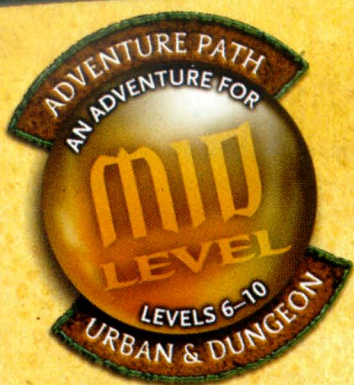
Possessions: Masterwork chain shirt, masterwork rapier, masterwork kukri, masterwork mighty composite longbow [+1 Str] with 20 masterwork arrows, *wand of cure light wounds* (10 charges), *wand of light* (35 charges), *pearl of power* (1st level), noble's outfit, silver holy symbol, leather pouch containing 7 gp.

Zachary is probably the most level-headed member of the Stormblades, perhaps because of his newfound faith in Kord. Although he has yet to fully embrace the teachings of the deity, in time he might repent his callous ways and turn to a less troublesome life. He has been with Cora for several months now, since before the Stormblades were founded, but lately he's been finding her rough nature tiresome and annoying. Annah has increasingly caught his eye of late, and before long he plans to dump Cora and try to court the bard. Zachary is tall and ruggedly handsome, with a well-trimmed beard and curly dark brown hair. His parents run a high-class inn named "The Coy Nixie" near the eastern gate of Cauldron; if he comes to harm, they are the most likely to hire assassins to seek vengeance.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award full experience points to the party if they manage to roleplay through a confrontation with the Stormblades and avoid getting into a fight with them. Naturally, if they later attack and defeat the Stormblades after this, they should not receive XP points for the combat since the threat had already been neutralized.







ZENITH TRAJECTORY

BY DAVID NOONAN

ARTWORK BY TOM BAXA, JEFF CARLISLE & MARK NELSON •
CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

"...[T]he savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him,—all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination—you know. Imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate."

—Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

"Zenith Trajectory" takes the player characters (PCs) from the town of Cauldron to an Underdark temple, where they must rescue a dwarven defender among a bloodthirsty cult of kuo-toans. The adventure is designed for a group of four 6th-level characters, and the PCs may reach 8th level by the conclusion of "Zenith Trajectory." You can easily modify the adventure to accommodate larger or smaller parties as well as PCs of higher or lower level (see the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar below).

When the PCs earn enough experience to attain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure. There isn't much time pressure on the PCs, so they can take time off during "Zenith Trajectory" for healing, item creation, or spellcasting.

The adventure takes place after the events of "Life's Bazaar" (DUNGEON #97) and "Flood Season" (DUNGEON #98). If you're playing through the adventures in sequence, characters should be familiar with the town of Cauldron and will recognize some of the NPCs in the adventure. You can also play "Zenith Trajectory" as a stand-alone adventure, because it doesn't explicitly rely on events from the previous adventures.

PREPARATION

You should have a copy of the *Player's Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and *Monster Manual* before you run "Zenith Trajectory." This adventure uses the revised versions of those books available in July, but you should be able to use the older books with little difficulty. A copy of DUNGEON #97 is also useful because it provides more detail on the town of Cauldron, including a large town map.

Pertinent statistical information is provided in the adventure text when appropriate. Because the kuo-toan temple at the adventure's conclusion has many NPCs with class levels, it's a good idea to familiarize yourself with those stat blocks before those sessions begin.

As in "Life's Bazaar" and "Flood Season," Campaign Seed sidebars are scattered throughout this adventure. Some campaign seeds refer to threads of the ongoing plot that future adventures in this series will use. Others are useful points for you to add your own creativity to the ongoing campaign.

BACKGROUND

Dark plots are afoot in the town of Cauldron, despite the best efforts of adventurers, who've already foiled a kidnapping conspiracy and averted a citywide flood. Vhalantru the beholder is still the city's puppetmaster, ruling from behind the guise of the Lord Mayor. The secret society of Cagewrights build their *soulcages* in secret, looking forward to the day when they can turn Cauldron into a massive gateway for an army of fiends from the Outer Planes.

For the interplanar gate to open, each of the *soulcages* must contain a sacrificial victim bearing an invisible birthmark: the Carcerian Sign. Most of these victims, known as the Shackleborn, are unaware of their sinister birthright. The characters may have met one Shackleborn, a child named Terrem, in "Life's Bazaar," but they were probably unaware of his birthmark. Now the Cagewrights have set their sights on another Shackleborn: Zenith Splintershield, a righteous dwarven defender who disappeared in the Underdark a decade ago. The Cagewright's divinations have revealed that Zenith yet lives, but is a prisoner of a kuo-toan cult deep underground—a prisoner of sorts.

Zenith marched into the Underdark with a small army of dwarves, steadfast in his determination to save the vast caverns from evil. But the Underdark didn't want to be saved, and Zenith's men faced countless grim battles against mind flayers, derro, and worse. As he buried friend after friend, Zenith despaired of his quest. Somewhere in the dark, he grew

insane—or had his first revelatory vision from the Eye in the Darkness, as he would put it. With the surviving dwarves, Zenith marched into the kuo-toan temple-fortress of Bhal-Hamatugn, as bid by his vision. The kuo-toans easily captured the dwarves, then mercilessly slaughtered all but Zenith in a horrid ritual. As he was being led to the sacrificial dais, Zenith began to babble wildly in Kuo-toan, prophesying the bloody death of the kuo-toan sorcerer-chieftain.

Intrigued, the kuo-toas spared Zenith's life. The following day, the kuo-toan chieftain was indeed dead, slain by a demon when its *planar binding* spell went awry. The kuo-toans unshackled Zenith and listened closely to his raving prophecies. Years later, Zenith is the de facto leader of the kuo-toans, goading them to greater atrocities in the name of the presence he knows only as the Eye in the Darkness. His dread ferocity in battle and his uncanny visions have amazed the kuo-toas, who venerate him with a passion that borders on worship.

The Cagewrights don't know any of this, but they need Zenith in their clutches just the same. For he bears the Carcerian Sign, and there's a *soulcage* waiting for him in Cauldron.

Meanwhile, Vhalantru has noticed the PCs, and he wants to determine whether they're an obstacle or a useful tool. After testing the characters' mettle, he sends them to look for Zenith Splintershield under completely false pretenses.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Vhalantru wants to test the characters, and the Lord Mayor has had difficulty lately collecting taxes from a merchant named Maavu. When an errand takes the PCs to northwest Magma Avenue, Vhalantru's agents release a fiendish umber hulk to rampage through the city—conveniently near many of Maavu's shops, offices, and warehouses. When the characters vanquish the marauding umber hulk, they get an invitation to Cusp of Sunrise, an invitation-only club for nobles.

After dinner at the Cusp, an alluring noblewoman named Celeste leads them into a private meeting room where they meet a dwarf so decrepit that he looks dead. The dwarf, Ironlord

Davked Splintershield, explains that he has been cursed by a terrible wasting disease because he disowned his three sons. The only way for the curse to be lifted, Davked relates, is to make peace with each of his three sons. He's done so with two sons, but he can't find the third son, Zenith Splintershield.

Celeste offers the PCs 5,000 gp each if they can find Zenith and return him to Cauldron. The characters head north from Cauldron into the mountains, eventually reaching an entrance to the Underdark near the hut of an old hermit named Crazy Jared. They climb down into the Underdark and reach the kuo-toan temple of Bhal-Hamatugn. There the PCs learn that Zenith is the leader of the kuo-toas, not a prisoner. They must contend with Zenith and the kuo-toas before returning to Cauldron to claim their reward.

ADVENTURE PACING

Most of the combat encounters in the first three chapters of the adventure are of a higher encounter level than the PCs' average level. That's intentional, because the PCs aren't under immediate time pressure and can fully heal and prepare spells after every major encounter.

Once the PCs reach Bhal-Hamatugn, "Zenith Trajectory" becomes a more traditional site-based adventure. There are fewer high-EL encounters there. Other than the climax, many of the high-EL encounters have extenuating circumstances that make them easier for the PCs.

Depending on how close to a new level the PCs are when they begin the adventure, they may attain a new level while in the mountains north of Cauldron or in the Underdark. Let the characters level-up without taking time off or undergoing training if they're traveling, because such a delay will bring the whole party to a halt. You can justify instantaneous level advancement by imagining that characters have been training in their spare time all along. For example, it's reasonable to assume that the 6th-level wizard has been practicing *wall of fire* for weeks and finally gets it right one day (the day she attains 7th level, of course).

HOW TO READ THE QUICK-REFERENCE FORMAT

As an experiment, this adventure alters the usual format for *DUNGEON* adventures in an effort to make key information easier for you to find quickly. At the beginning of each encounter are four entries.

Light: Indicates the source and strength of any light present, using the rules in Chapter 9 of the *Player's Handbook*. This doesn't include any light sources the PCs are carrying with them, of course.

Sound: Describes sounds that PCs might hear. Some will be automatic, while others require Listen checks at the listed DC.

Reaction: Indicates how the PCs' actions in this encounter might affect other areas. Reinforcements from adjacent rooms are the most common kind of reaction. The trigger for the reaction is listed first, then the reaction after a dash. Some reactions occur automatically; others happen only under certain conditions, which

are listed parenthetically. For example, the bugbears in the next room over will join the fray in 3 rounds if they succeed at a DC 15 Listen check, made every round of the fight. The reaction line for that encounter would read: "To sounds of battle—bugbears join fight in 3 rounds (Listen DC 15)."

Auras: In order from strongest to weakest, lists the magic auras PCs might see with a *detect magic* spell. The strength of each aura is listed, then in parentheses it lists the source of the aura, the Spellcraft DC required to tell what school the aura is, and what school it is. Keep in mind that PCs might not be able to see every aura listed right away because they don't have line of sight to it. If an encounter has evil auras, those are noted in this section after the magic auras. Auras of other alignments exist, but aren't part of the quick-reference format because they come up in play so rarely.

TREASURE

"Zenith Trajectory" gives out roughly 40% more treasure than the average recommended in Chapter 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*. The adventure has many monsters with class levels, all of whom are equipped by NPC standards. That means the PCs will collect a lot of gear that, when accumulated, is worth a lot of money. But the PCs will find that much of the monsters' equipment is inferior to the gear they already have, so they'll sell it at half its purchase price and thus get only half the economic value from it. The PCs will have more than a dozen masterwork heavy shields and rapiers at the adventure's end, but they probably have magic weapons and magic armor already.

It's a good idea to audit the PCs accumulated gear periodically, making sure that they adhere reasonably closely to the average PC wealth described in **Table 5-1** of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*. If the PCs don't bother with the kuo-toas' non-magical gear, for example, they'll be "undertreasured" and you might have Celeste give them a bonus for a job well done.

CAULDRON

The town of Cauldron is described in greater detail in "Life's Bazaar" and "Flood Season." If you aren't using those two adventures, the following brief description should suffice.

Cauldron is a large town nestled in the crater of an inactive volcano. The city streets form concentric rings around the inner ridge, and the cross-streets lead down to a small lake in the crater's center. A 50-foot-tall wall surrounds the city, broken only by four gates that lead to the outside world.

In general, upper-class neighborhoods are near the walls and lower-class ones surround the lake. The map of Cauldron identifies locations important to "Zenith Trajectory," plus locations featured in previous adventures and some spots you might find useful during the ongoing campaign.

Cauldron (large town): Conventional; AL NG; population 4,500 adults, 3,000 gp limit; Assets 600,000 gp; Mixed (79% human, 9% halfling, 5% gnome, 3% dwarf, 2% elf, 1% half-elf, 1% half-orc).

Authority Figures: Lord Mayor Severen Navalant, male human Ari10, Terseon Skellerang, male human Ftr8 (Captain of the Town Guard).

Important Characters: Lord Orbius Vhalantru, beholder (true overlord of Cauldron); Jenya Urikas, female human Clr7, (cleric at the Church of St. Cuthbert); Meerthan Eliothlorn, male half-elf Wiz13 (merchant staying at the Drowning Morkoth Inn); Keygan Ghelve, male gnome Exp3/Wiz (Ill)1 (owner of Ghelve's Locks); Gretchyn Tashykk, female halfling Com1 (Lantern Street Orphanage headmistress); Vortimax Weer, male human Wiz10 (alchemist and potion brewer at Weer's Elixirs); Skie Aldersun, female gnome Sor6 (proprietor of Skie's Treasury); Phalian Gurnezarn, male human Exp6 (blacksmith and proprietor of Gurnezarn's Smithy); Bjellkir Zanathor (proprietor of Zanathor's Provisions, a general store); Rivek Mol, male human Exp4 (proprietor of The Tipped Tankard); Halpeen Welvikk, male human Exp6 (proprietor of The Drunken Morkoth Inn); Tippys Surefoot, female halfling Exp4 (proprietor of Sure Foot Livery); Embril Aloustinai, human female Wiz5/Clr9 (high priest of the Cathedral of Wee

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Zenith Trajectory" is designed for a group of four 6th-level PCs, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 4th–5th or 7th–8th level characters.

- For lower-level characters, the most important thing you can do to adapt the adventure is give the PCs breathing room as they travel in the wilderness and make their forays into Bhal-Hamatugn. Have the kuo-toas go into "lock-down" mode when the PCs attack Bhal-Hamatugn, rather than have them respond to the sounds of battle in adjacent room. Roll for a possible wilderness encounter every 2 hours during the day and every 4 hours at night.

You should also replace certain creatures with less powerful creatures as indicated below:

Fiendish UMBER HULK: Replace with a normal umber hulk.

Dragons (Gottrod and Dhorlot): Reduce them by one age category each.

Cryohydra: Replace it with a regular hydra, and reduce it to six or even five heads if necessary. Make sure Jared refers to the place as the "pit of the six jaws" or "five jaws" as appropriate.

Kuo-toa Soldiers: Replace with normal kuo-toas.

High-Level Kuo-toas (Aabhaca, Mangh-Mictho, Hlanamm, Saagogoi) and Zenith: Reduce by one or two character levels.

Aushanna the Erinyes: Replace with chain devil or bearded devil.

Draconic Fingerlings: Reduce to only one swarm.

Traps: Replace door traps with *glyph of warding (blast)* traps that deal only 5d8 damage.

Other: Eliminate the Sea Mother statue's ability to augment the kuo-toa whips' lightning bolts.

- For higher-level characters, the easiest way to adjust the adventure is to add a level to each of the creatures that already have class levels, and increase each dragon by one age category. In addition, make the following changes:

Cryohydra: Add an eighth head. Jared mentions the "pit of the eight jaws."

Aushanna the Erinyes: Replace with barbed devil.

Draconic Fingerlings: Add a third swarm.

Traps: Upgrade the *greater glyph of warding* traps so they deal 10d8 damage, and upgrade the poison on Dhorlot's antechamber to purple worm poison.

Other: The Sea Mother statue adds 5d6 points of electricity damage to the kuo-toa whips' lightning bolts.

Remember that changing the Encounter Levels should raise or lower the amount of treasure in the adventure, and the effects will be particularly dramatic if the NPCs have gear the characters want themselves (rather than gear they'll sell at half price for cash). Chapter 3 in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* provides guidance for raising and lowering treasure amounts.

Jas); Asfelkir Hranleurt, male half-orc Clr7 (high priest of the Temple of Lordly Might dedicated to Kord).

Typical Guard Patrol: Vhalantru has started supplementing the town guard with mercenaries lately (it's been an eventful year in Cauldron, after all). A typical patrol consists of a sergeant (Ftr4) and 1d4+2 privates (Ftr2). Many are half-orcs. Guards typically wear breastplates and bucklers emblazoned with the town emblem (a watchful eye wreathed in flames) and carry masterwork halberds or longswords, and shortbows. The sergeant generally has two *potions of cure light wounds* and a *potion of sanctuary*.

Healing: If the characters have befriended the Church of St. Cuthbert (likely during the events of "Life's Bazaar" and "Flood Season," they have access to a 20% discount on potions and healing magic. And Jenya Urikas, the head of St. Cuthbert's order in Cauldron, will arrange to cast *raise dead* from a scroll if the PCs can make a 5,000 gp donation to the church. This is an intentional exception to Cauldron's spending limit, because a long trip elsewhere to get a *raise dead* spell might derail the adventure.

RUMORS IN CAULDRON

The rumor mill in Cauldron is as busy as ever. If the characters do some asking around (either with Gather Information checks or more specific inquiries), they may hear some of the following unsubstantiated tales. Many refer to the umber hulk's rampage described in Chapter 1. For several weeks after "Zenith Trajectory" starts, the PCs' fight against the umber hulk dominates conversation, and the PCs find they've achieved a certain level of celebrity—or notoriety, if the encounter didn't go well.

d12 roll Rumor

- 1 The umber hulk burrowed its way up into the city from the Underdark because its caverns were flooded this winter. There are hundreds of such fell creatures down there, and if they discover how much food is available on the surface, they'll destroy Cauldron! (False.)
- 2 A sinister cult of nobles, playing with dark magic they couldn't control, summoned the umber hulk. (False.)
- 3 Maavu the caravan-master was keeping the umber hulk as a pet. If you didn't pay the price he offered you, he'd feed you to the monster! (False, although Vhalantru's agents are spreading this rumor.)
- 4 Maavu was conducting magical experiments and storing the results in his warehouse. One of them escaped and tried to destroy everything in sight. (False, although Vhalantru's agents encourage this rumor too.)
- 5 Actually, people trying to stop the umber hulk did more damage than the monster did. (True or false, depending on how the encounter went.)
- 6 Maavu didn't have anything to do with the umber hulk. Most of the property damage was to his buildings. (True.)
- 7 Kidnappings, magic floods, rampaging monsters . . . Cauldron isn't as safe as it used to be. (True.)

- 8 Groups of cloaked figures have been seen jumping from rooftop to rooftop the last few evenings. (True; the Last Laugh guild is training new recruits.)
- 9 When there's fog on the city streets, a vampire stalks Lava Street. (False.)
- 10 A group called The Striders of Fharlanghn recently defeated a large bandit army west of town. (True.)
- 11 The Stormblades will be named "Champions of Cauldron" because they recently completed a dangerous mission in the tunnels below town. (False, although they did just do a mission below the city at Vhalantru's behest.)
- 12 The giants in the mountains north of the city are getting restless and plan to invade Cauldron this winter. (False.)

TRAVEL TO THE CAPITAL

Because Cauldron generally doesn't have magic items worth more than 3,000 gp available for sale, the characters may have to go elsewhere for their big-ticket shopping. The nearest large city is the capital, Sasserine, which boasts 21,000 residents and a 40,000 gp spending limit.

Sasserine is 200 miles south of Cauldron, however. If you want to play out the trip, use the hills and plains encounter table in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* to generate random encounters along the way. If you don't want shopping to become too much of a distraction, two scrolls of *teleport* (1,125 gp each) are sufficient to get the shopping trip done quickly. Vortimax Weer, proprietor of Weer's Elixirs, sells *teleport* scrolls, as does Skie's Treasury (detailed in the Web enhancement for "Flood Season"). Or you can simply decide that the journey to Sasserine and back was uneventful and leave it at that.

CHAPTER ONE: HULK SMASH

The adventure starts with the characters minding their own business on Magma Avenue Northwest when a fiendish umber hulk begins its rampage through the city. The timing of the attack is no accident, of course—Vhalantru has had the characters under sporadic and discreet surveillance, and he's decided the time is right to test their mettle.

The events of "Flood Season" (in *DUNGEON* #98) passed many weeks ago, so the characters are completely healed and have had plenty of time to do any shopping, item creation, or other long-term tasks. Before the adventure begins, inform spellcasters that they should prepare spells for a day spent running errands in town, keeping in mind that Cauldron hasn't been the safest city in the world lately.

Magma Avenue Northwest is a mix of small shops and larger mercantile warehouses, so the characters might go there for any number of reasons: replenishing the contents of a spell component pouch, repairing a loose pommel on a sword, or fencing some of the loot from their previous adventures. Even if they don't have specific business on Magma Avenue, it's one of the

four main thoroughfares encircling Cauldron, so they might just be passing through.

UMBER HULK ATTACK (EL 9)

Light: Daylight.

Sounds: UMBER hulk's entrance (DC 20). Burrowing umber hulk (DC 10; DC 30 to discern direction of movement and DC 40 to pinpoint). Approaching city watch (DC 10).

Reaction: See **Development** section below.

Auras: Dim (umber hulk, DC 21 conjuration); faint evil (umber hulk).

This encounter should play like a big set-piece action sequence from a movie, with lots of property damage, civilians caught in the crossfire, and other distractions. Because the characters begin completely rested and may eventually get help from the city watch, they have a better chance than the Encounter Level would otherwise indicate.

Have each PC make a DC 20 Listen check to get a moment's forewarning of the umber hulk attack. Those who succeed get a surprise round when they hear the low rumble, and the following boxed text applies to them.

You're walking among the crowds of Magma Street when you hear a low, almost imperceptible rumble, as if a lot of horses were passing close by. But the people around you don't seem to notice, continuing to walk and shop normally.

Those who succeeded at the Listen check should roll initiative, then take their surprise round actions. Then everyone hears and sees the following, making initiative rolls once you're done reading.

The rumble becomes a shaking, then a corner of a nearby warehouse collapses with a roar, revealing a burly, insectoid creature with massive mandibles, compound eyes, and wisps of flame visible between its plates of chitin. The street fills with screams and panic.

Map #1 indicates where the umber hulk emerges from Maavu's warehouse. The characters immediately have to deal with the umber hulk and the crowd. At the end of every round, assess how the battle is going, and introduce encounter elements to help or hinder the PCs if you need to. The **Development** section below provides a suggested schedule for reinforcements and complications, but let your own sense of pacing guide your decisions. It's okay if the PCs fight to their limit in this battle, because they'll have plenty of time to recuperate afterward.

There's a lot going on in this encounter. The terrain is complex, there are a number of NPCs to keep track of, and a bunch of characters are probably going to behave randomly because of the umber hulk's confusing gaze. Make sure you've read the stat blocks and keep your notes organized.

Magma Avenue is well-maintained cobblestone except where the umber hulk crashed through the wall, where the terrain is dense rubble, adding 5 to the DC of Balance and Tumble checks, and adding 2 to the DC of Move Silently checks. Warehouse and shop walls are 6-inch-thick wood (hardness 5, 60 hp, Climb DC 21). Exterior doors are strong wooden doors (hardness 5, 20 hp), and they're all unlocked because the shop proprietors flee in such haste.

Creatures: The most important creature in this encounter is the fiendish umber hulk, desperate to destroy as much of the city as possible. The characters also have to deal with crowds of Cauldron residents who were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. As the battle goes on, they may have to deal with the city watch (a help or hindrance, depending on the *confusion* rolls) and three Cauldron residents in particular danger (Beppo, Kyria, and Mergala). The characters may get some useful assistance from agents of the city's Magical Threats Agency, which will rush to Magma Avenue as soon as they can. The tactics for each character or group are discussed separately below.

❧ **Fiendish UMBER Hulk:** CR 9; Large aberration (extraplanar); HD 8d8+35; hp 71; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +16; Atk +11 melee (2d4+6, claw); Full Atk +11 melee (2d4+6, 2 claws) and +9 melee (2d8+3, bite); SA confusing gaze, smite good 1/day (+8 damage); SQ darkvision 60 ft., DR 5/magic, resistance to cold 10, resistance to fire 10, SR 13, tremorsense 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 23, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +12, Jump +5, Listen +11. **Feats:** Multiattack, Power Attack, Toughness.

Confusing Gaze (Su): *Confusion* as the spell, 30 feet, caster level 8th, Will DC 15 negates.

❧ **City Watch, Male and Female Half-orc Ftr 2 (4):** CR 2; Medium humanoid (orc); HD 2d10+4; hp 15; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +2; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d10+4/×3, masterwork halberd); SA —; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL LN or LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Intimidate +3, Sense Motive +1. **Feats:** Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Weapon Focus (halberd).

Possessions: Breastplate, buckler, masterwork halberd, short-bow with 20 arrows, 2d4 gp.

❧ **Kyria, Female Human Exp 2:** CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d6; hp 7; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +1 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger); SA —; SQ —; AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 13.

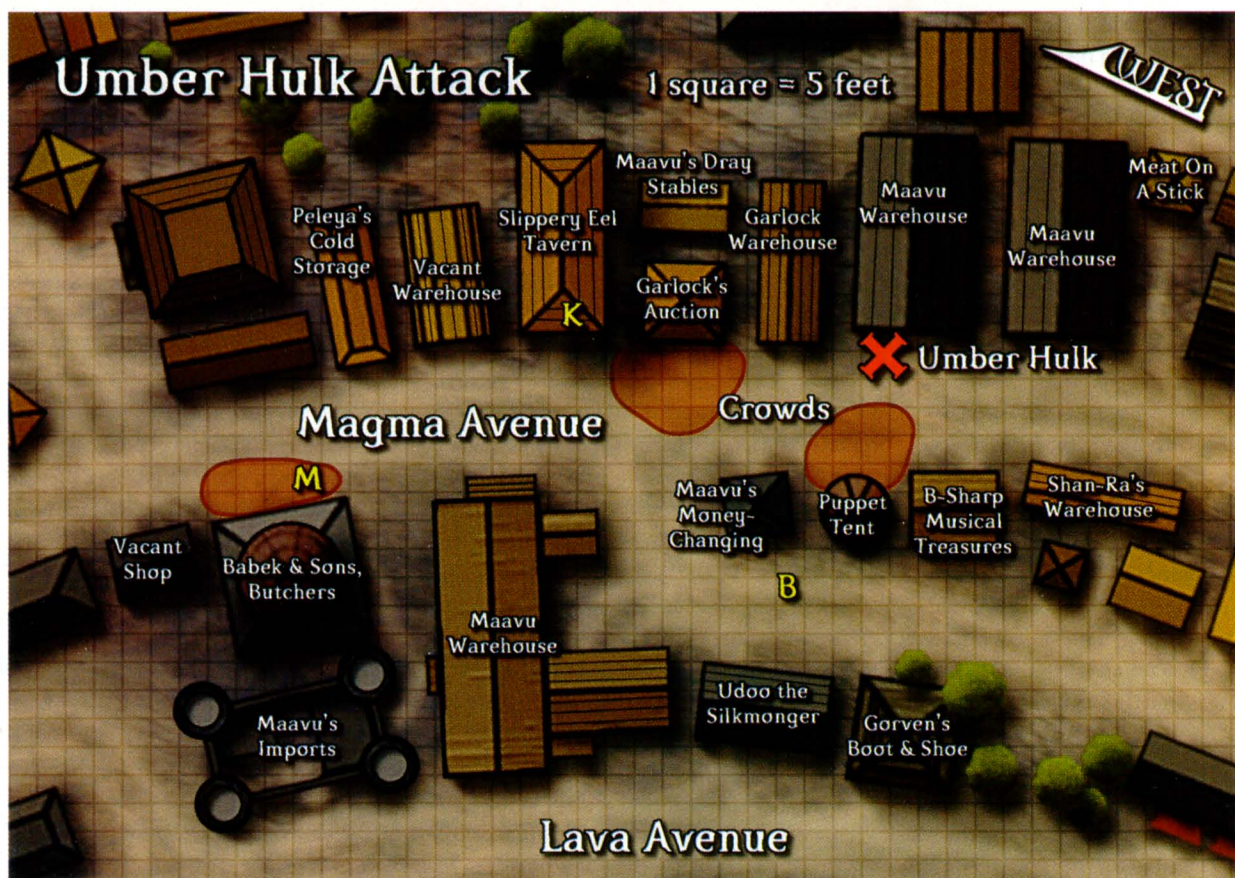
Skills: Appraise +4, Craft (seamstress) +7, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (local) +4, Sense Motive +4, Spot +7. **Feats:** Skill Focus (Craft—seamstress), Skill Focus (Spot).

Possessions: Dagger.

❧ **Beppo, Male Human Com 3:** CR 2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 3d4; hp 8; Init –1; Spd 30 ft. (5 ft. when moving fruit cart); AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9; Base Atk +1; Grp +0; Atk +0 melee (1d6–1, club); Full Atk +0 melee (1d6–1, club); SA —;

Umber Hulk Attack

1 square = 5 feet



SQ —; AL LG; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 8, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Appraise +5, Decipher Script +2, Knowledge (local) +3, Profession (foodmonger) +9. **Feats:** Diligent, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Profession—foodmonger).

Possessions: Club, fruit cart (see below).

☛ **Mergala, Female Elf Rog 3:** CR 3; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 3d6; hp 11; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/18–20, rapier) or +6 ranged (1d8+1/×3, composite longbow); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ elf traits, evasion, trap sense +1, trapfinding; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills: Disable Device +6, Escape Artist +9, Hide +9, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +9, Spot +8, Tumble +9. **Feats:** Dodge, Mobility.

Possessions: +1 studded leather, masterwork rapier, masterwork composite longbow (+1 Str) with 20 arrows, *potion of spider climb*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*.

☛ **MTA Agent, Male and Female Gnome Ill 3:** CR 3; Small humanoid (gnome); HD 3d4+9; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 12 (20 with spells active), touch 12, flat-footed 11 (19 with spells active); Base Atk +1; Grp –5; Atk +0 melee (1d4–2 Small club) or +4 ranged (1d6, light crossbow); Full Atk –1 melee (1d4–2 Small club) or +4 ranged (1d6, light crossbow); SA —; SQ gnome

traits, spell-like abilities; AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +8, Gather Information +2, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Spellcraft +10. **Feats:** Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Toughness.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *prestidigitation*, *spek with animals* (burrowing animal only). Caster level 1st; save DC 10 + spell level.

Spells Prepared (5/4/3; save DC 12 + spell level): 0—*detect magic*, *flight*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*; 1st—*color spray*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*; 2nd—*blur*, *web* ×2.

Spellbook: 0—all except necromancy, conjuration; 1st—*color spray*, *expeditious retreat*, *hypnotism*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *silent image*; 2nd—*blur*, *web*.

Possessions: Small masterwork light crossbow with 10 bolts, Small club, *potion of cure light wounds*, scroll of *dispel magic*, wand of *magic missile* (1st level), scroll of *fly*, scroll of *haste*, spellbook.

Umber Hulk Tactics: The umber hulk's mission is to destroy the city, so it focuses on property damage at first, relying on its confusing gaze to keep the city's protectors at bay. It won't completely ignore the city's residents; it might take a swipe at anyone who comes within reach. Once an attack deals the umber hulk 10 points of damage or a spell somehow hampers its ability to rampage, it attacks any obvious foe.

The umber hulk's most important ability is its confusing gaze. It's too busy trashing the city of Cauldron to actively try to

meet the eyes of PCs, so characters only have to make Will saves at the beginning of their turns. If a PC is within 30 feet of the umber hulk at the beginning of his turn, ask how they handle the confusing gaze (their options are described in the Gaze Attacks section in Chapter 8 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*).

If reduced to 50% of its hit points, the umber hulk burrows into the ground, leaving no tunnel behind it, then emerges 1d4 rounds later by digging up into the middle of a building. It then trashes the interior before moving out into the street again. It repeats this tactic when it reaches 25% of its remaining hit points.

The umber hulk saves its smite good ability for a bite attack against an enemy wearing the holy symbol of a good deity, unless it's about to die anyway, in which case it smites anyone nearby, hoping the target is good. It reserves use of its Power Attack feat for unarmored foes and buildings. If it misses an unarmored foe by 5 points or more, it won't use Power Attack against that character again.

When the umber hulk attacks a building, just skip right to damage, rolling 2d4+12 for each claw and 2d8+9 for the bite. A building wall has hardness 5 and 60 hp. If you don't want to keep track of hit points for wall sections, just assume that six attacks (or 2 full-round actions) are sufficient to tear a 5-foot hole in a building. Two adjacent 5-foot holes is enough damage to cause the entire wall to collapse.

Crowd Tactics: The passersby marked on the map of the umber hulk attack function as crowds (described in the City Streets section in Chapter 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*). As the DM, you have enough to keep track of without worrying about the exact composition of the crowd. Every round at initiative point 0, the crowds move 30 feet away from the umber hulk. If the crowd falls within range of the umber hulk's confusing gaze, however, the entire crowd doesn't move that round (those fleeing are hindered by those attacking, babbling, and so on). Characters can use Diplomacy or Intimidate to direct the crowds, as described in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*. Even a confused crowd can be directed, although it moves at only half speed because not everyone willingly responds.

City Watch Tactics: Unless the PCs warn the city watch ahead of time, 1d4+4 soldiers of the city watch rush into melee with the umber hulk, exposing themselves to its confusing gaze. Those who make their save—which won't be many of them—avert their eyes each round and attack as best they can with their

halberds. Once they realize they're out of their league, they attempt to retreat (read: flee) or desperately cry for help.

Kyria Tactics: Kyria is a seamstress who lives in the third-story apartment marked "K" on the map. The round she appears, she screams for help from the apartment window, holding a baby in her arms. On the following round, the umber hulk passes within 30 feet of her window. Once that happens, Kyria sets her swaddled baby on the window sill on her next action, twitches, and flees back into the apartment. The baby works its way free of the swaddling with a DC 10 Strength check (the baby has Str 1), making one check each time Kyria's initiative point comes up. Once the baby gets free, it wavers precariously on the window sill for one round, then falls to the street at Kyria's initiative point in the round after that.

Beppo Tactics: Beppo is a fruit merchant who frequents Magma Avenue in the spot marked "B." His cart is overladen with fruit and other comestibles. Beppo has a Strength of 8, so he can only move the cart 5 feet as a full-round action. Beppo is stubborn enough to have a good chance of resisting the umber hulk's confusing gaze (and he keeps his eyes closed after the first round anyway), but also stubborn enough to refuse to leave his fruit cart.

The cart weighs 800 pounds, but its wheels make it effectively weigh 400 pounds for the purposes of movement. As a full-round action, each character helping Beppo applies his Strength separately to the cart, using the heavy load listed on **Table 9-1: Carrying Capacity in the Player's Handbook**. Beppo, for example, has a heavy load of up to 80 pounds. If the sum of everyone's heavy load reaches or exceeds 400 pounds, the cart will move 20 feet with each of Beppo's move actions. Otherwise, it moves at only 5 feet per round during Beppo's turn.

Mergala Tactics: Disasters sometimes bring out the worst in people, and one of them is Mergala (marked "M"), a common criminal who tries to take advantage of the disorder to sneak into the warehouses and shops of Magma Avenue and help herself. She uses the Hide skill, moving 15 feet with each move action, until she reaches one of the following three buildings: Udoo the Silkmonger, Maavu's Imports, or Garlock's Auctions. Then she enters, spends a round casing the joint, then takes 2 rounds to grab all the valuables she can. She then runs away (60 feet as a full-round action because she's got 100 pounds of loot).

MTA Force Tactics: The Lord Mayor recently created a special section within the City Watch, the Magical Threats Agency,

CHANGES IN THE CITY WATCH

This might be the first time characters have contact with the half-orc mercenaries that Cauldron has hired, ostensibly "in response to recent events" (like the kidnappings and the Flood Festival debacle). Vhalantru has a more sinister motive, of course. As preparations to open the gateway to the Lower Planes continue, Vhalantru wants law enforcement officers who didn't grow up in Cauldron and aren't sentimental about the city or its residents.

The Magical Threats Agency, on the other hand, is the brainchild of Haanu Pershai, a watch captain who also happens to be a sorcerer. She set up the MTA herself, with low-level spellcasters (such as the gnomes that respond to the umber hulk) doing street patrols and higher-level spellcasters taking on investigative work. Vhalantru knows about the MTA but is unaware of the higher-level spellcasters acting as "investigative consultants" for Pershai.

in response to recent events. Their precinct station happens to be nearby, so they come to face the umber hulk. A group of four gnome wizards arrives with *mage armor* already cast, then they cast *shield* and *blur* while they assess the scene. The gnomes then attack from outside the range of the umber hulk's confusing gaze with their *wands of magic missile*. The MTA agents try to coordinate their efforts with the PCs if it looks like the PCs are being effective, offering to cast *haste* or *fly* from their scrolls, for example. They're also eager to lure the umber hulk into an alley, where they can cover it with *web* spells.

The MTA agents have decent Will saves, so they risk the umber hulk's confusing gaze if they must.

Development: This encounter includes a lot of NPCs, but you don't have to deal with them all at once. The umber hulk's confusing gaze ability means that fights against it probably last longer than normal, so you can introduce other NPCs gradually. The following schedule indicates when the characters have a chance of noticing each NPC. Adjust it depending on how the pacing of the battle goes. In particular, strive to give the characters one or two things to worry about beside the umber hulk. They should be somewhat distracted, but don't overwhelm them—or yourself.

Round 1: UMBER HULK AND CROWDS.

Round 2: Beppo.

Round 3: City Watch.

Round 5: Kyria.

Round 7: Mergala.

Round 10: MTA agents.

CHAPTER 2: DINNER AND A DEAL

Once the threat of the fiendish umber hulk is over, the PCs have passed Vhalantru's test. Accordingly, he's got work for them, but he disguises the nature of what he's asking the characters to do.

INVESTIGATING THE RAMPAGE

As Magma Avenue returns to normal, squads of the City Watch swarm the area, directing crowds, securing the crime scene (Maavu's warehouse), and otherwise urging everyone to move along, nothing to see here. A kindly sergeant takes a statement from the PCs, thanks them for their efforts, and says, "A representative of the Lord Mayor's office will be in touch with you, probably tomorrow, if there's anything else."

If the PCs want to do some investigating themselves, let them. The City Watch is willing to let them cross barricades and ask the occasional question of a witness, as long as they don't make a nuisance of themselves. But the Watch doesn't have time to escort them from place to place or get them interviews with people who aren't present.

The inside of Maavu's warehouse is completely trashed; the umber hulk's burrowing has even buckled the floor and covered everything with heavy rubble. A DC 20 Search check

reveals some sigils that may have formed part of a summoning circle, but it's impossible to know for certain. Any member of the City Watch and anyone who works on Magma Avenue Northwest knows that the warehouse belongs to a rich merchant named Maavu. But Maavu is nowhere to be found. Some of his employees helpfully suggest that Maavu might be at his manor on Obsidian Avenue Southwest, but the domestic staff there says they don't know where he is. Gather Information checks are likewise unhelpful.

More information becomes available later that evening. Shortly after sundown, a rumor spreads through the city about Maavu, and a DC 10 Gather Information check reveals that Maavu was seen fleeing the city at dawn on a black horse with clouds where its hooves should be.

A DINNER INVITATION

Also that evening, a strikingly beautiful woman who identifies herself as Celeste hands one of the PCs a white card and says, "I'd like to arrange a business dinner with you and your comrades for tomorrow sundown. You'll find it profitable. Dress appropriately." She demurs on further questions, saying over and over again, "We'll discuss it tomorrow night." If pressed, she hints that the invitation has something to do with the umber hulk rampage.

The white card is written with fine calligraphy, and it reads: "Cusp of Sunrise/Obsidian Avenue Northeast."

A DC 10 Knowledge (local) or Gather Information check reveals that the Cusp of Sunrise is a well-known dinner club and inn for nobles. Access is by invitation from a member only, and the membership list is reputed to be quite exclusive. A trip along Obsidian Avenue Northeast will reveal an ivy-covered, cross-shaped building with a circular tower that stretches as tall as the city walls. An engraved sign on the ironbound door says "C.o.S.—Members Only." Soft laughter and music can be heard from within.

KNOCKING ON THE DOOR

When the PCs arrive the next day, a knock on the door is met by an immense bald man in light blue robes. "You're the umber hulk people. I'm Renjin—welcome to the Cusp of Sunrise."

He doesn't move from the doorway, however, until the characters produce the white card Celeste gave them. He'd rather not ask for it directly, however, and coughs politely and acts ever more pleasant and nonchalant until the PCs get the idea to give him the invitation. He then smiles broadly and ushers them inside with a grand bow.

Once inside, he looks the PCs over from his mahogany desk. Any character who isn't wearing a noble's outfit (75 gp) and at least 100 gp in visible jewelry won't get beyond the antechamber. Renjin hints about clothing without actually saying the PCs are underdressed, repeatedly complimenting the outfit of everyone he sees who is dressed nicely. If a PC asks about a dress code, Renjin smiles broadly and mentions a clothier and



jeweler he knows on Lava Avenue Northeast who's "ever so tasteful."

Melee weapons are perfectly acceptable accessories in the Cusp of Sunrise, but medium or heavy armor is considered a dress code violation. Ranged weapons are likewise frowned upon, and Renjin mentions that "there are no stags to be hunted in the Grand Library, good sir" to anyone carrying a bow or crossbow.

Once everyone is ready, Renjin says, "Celeste will join you shortly. Until then, make yourselves at home. As invited guests, you have access to all areas except for the east wing. You'll find the Grand Library through the door behind me. Good evening."

The encounter with Renjin should last only as long as everyone at the gaming table is having a good time—there's no sense in dragging this out longer than necessary. What you're trying to get across is the exclusive, high-society nature of the club. If you can have a little fun watching the PCs deal with a world that's more foreign to them than the most dangerous dungeon, so much the better.

EXPLORING THE CUSP OF SUNRISE

The doors behind Renjin lead northeast to the biggest room in the club: the Grand Library.

The center of the Cusp of Sunrise is a room some 100 feet across—a circular tower whose inside surface is covered with bookshelves and iron ladders on sliding rails. A score of nobles are present, but only a few are reading. Most are clustered in conversation as they sip wine from slender flutes. Others play a dice game at a series of circular tables. A few eat, using fine cutlery while ensconced in plush leather chairs.

A harpsichord stands on a small stage to one side, but no one is playing it at present. Blue-robed servants scurry from noble to noble, appearing and disappearing through swinging double doors to the north, south, east, and west.

The PCs can explore beyond the Grand Library if they like. The doors behind them lead past Renjin's desk and outside. The other doors lead to the rest of the club.

North Door: Stables. Nobles who fancy horses make a show of arriving via this door. Stabling and grooming is free for members, and servants are always present grooming horses and repairing tack.

West Door: An engraved sign above the door says, "Dueling in West Courtyard Only." Passing through the door, The PCs find themselves in a glass-enclosed courtyard with finely manicured topiaries and flowering plants. No one is dueling at present, but blue-robed servants are cleaning the glass and trimming the bushes.

South Door: This hallway beyond this door leads to a succession of nicely appointed studio apartments (for out-of-town noble guests and philandering nobles whose spouses have kicked them out of the manor). Members can stay as long as they like for free. About half of the dozen apartments are occupied and thus locked.

East Door: An engraved sign above the door is marked "Offices." Despite Renjin's warning, no one stops the PCs if they walk through this door. Two spiral staircases lead up and down from the underground kitchen; observant characters soon realized that the servants always ascend on one staircase and descend on the other. The rest of the east wing is given over to six conference rooms of varying sizes. Characters who scan the area magically see moderate auras on three of the conference rooms, and a DC 20 Spellcraft check reveals that they're guarded by an abjuration effect (*Mordenkainen's private sanctum*, specifically). Those three doors are locked.

THINGS THE PCS CAN DO

While they wait for Celeste, the PCs can amuse themselves in any number of ways.

Order Drinks: A bar just past the harpsichord in the Grand Library serves dozens of different libations, each costing from 1 gp (house wine) to 100 gp (vintage faun-mead).

Order Food: Any servant can provide a menu or bring a meal to a PC who asks. Each day's menu features at least a half-dozen complete meals ranging in price from 1 gp (slow-roasted mutton with spiced potatoes and leafy greens) to 10 gp (rare venison, saffron-infused grain medley, and druid-tended vegetables). Meals arrive 10 minutes after a character orders one.

Play Dice: The nobles play a dice game called gemsnatcher that uses strange-shaped dice (conveniently, the same dice you play D&D with). Any number of characters can play gemsnatcher, although the tables seat only six. The game begins with each player simultaneously rolling a 4-sided die. Characters who roll a 1 have "snatched the gem" and trade their 4-sided die for a 6-sided die. Then everyone rolls simultaneously again, and anyone who rolls a 1 gets to "snatch the gem" and upgrade their die to the next larger one.

This continues until the round where one or more players are rolling the d20 for the first time (by virtue of rolling a 1 on the 12-sided die in the previous round, obviously). Everyone rolls the die one last time. Every player who doesn't roll a 1 in the final round must pay a number of coins equal to the d20 roll to the player who rolled the 20-sided die. For example, if you're the first player to upgrade to the 20-sided die, your first roll is

also the final round of the game. You roll a 14, so every player who didn't roll a 1 in the final round must pay you 14 coins.

At the Cusp of Sunrise, tables are designated "gold," "platinum," or "ingot." The kind of table tells you what kind of coin the winner gets paid in. Ingots are small platinum bars worth 100 gp, and they're available from the bartender. Gemsnatcher is played conversationally. A player typically regales the others with an anecdote, then everyone rolls the dice as they laugh. Someone might then ask a pointed question, and everyone rolls the dice while someone thinks of a witty answer.

Chat with Nobles: Most of the nobles engaged in conversation don't particularly welcome newcomers; they're considered to have an unfriendly attitude, although they are outwardly polite. Characters can use Diplomacy to improve a noble's attitude. Mentioning that they defeated the umber hulk immediately changes the nobles' attitude to friendly, although they insist that the PCs tell them about the battle rather than discuss anything else.

Perform: The unattended harpsichord is a magnet for a bard PC. The nobles are a jaded audience, however, especially when confronted with a musician they don't know. Unless the PCs have already identified themselves as the vanquishers of the umber hulk, the DCs for a Perform check (described in the Perform skill description in Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook*) are 4 higher than they'd otherwise be. The harpsichord is of masterwork quality, so it grants a +2 bonus on Perform checks.

Browse the Library: Most of the books cover Cauldron's history, and there's a treasure trove of genealogical data, as well (the Cagewrights have secretly been researching the family history of those born with the Carcerian Sign in case it's an inherited trait). Characters able to spend 4 hours researching a question here gain a +2 circumstance bonus on a Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (history), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (nobility and royalty), or bardic knowledge check.

Don't drag any of these activities out too long. Just as they're diversions for the nobles who frequent the club, so too are they diversions for the players at your table. If your players' eyes are glazing over, introduce Celeste and get on with the adventure.

A PRIVATE MEETING

Celeste makes sure the PCs have whatever food and drink they desire, then ushers them into a conference room in the East Wing (not one of the magically warded, locked ones). Awaiting her there is Davked Splintershield.

CAMPAIGN SEED: WHO IS CELESTE?

More importantly, is Celeste another agent of Vhalantru, an innocent dupe, or a woman with an agenda of her own? We aren't telling. Everyone at the Cusp of Sunrise knows that Celeste—always just Celeste, never a last name—has been a regular at the club for about five years. She doesn't talk about herself much and

stays away from gossip and noble intrigues. She's pretty enough that the noblemen chase her for dalliances, but not well-connected enough for serious courtships to develop.

A few of the noblemen are spellcasters in their own right, and they might tell a trusted friend this: *charm person* spells fizzle on Celeste (because she's not a humanoid).

Before you sits a dwarf so old and emaciated that he'd pass for a skeleton in some dungeons you've explored. Even his snow-white beard looks ragged and thin, as if it were about to fall out. But he wears fine robes, and beneath their voluminous folds you see a hint of chain—adamantine, perhaps?

"You're the heroes of the city right now, and it's heroes I need," he wheezes. "I'll pay you well if you rescue my son from the Underdark."

Davked then tells the tale of his son, Zenith, although Celeste takes over for part of the story when Davked gets too winded to keep speaking. Zenith was a righteous dwarven defender and the lord of the Malachite Fortress that guarded the underground approaches to Cauldron. About a decade ago he recruited a small army for a crusade to rid the Underdark of evil, marched into the darkness, and never returned.

Davked pleaded with him not to abandon the Malachite Fortress, and father and son nearly came to blows over the disagreement. Davked freely admits that he was a harsh, unyielding father to his three sons. But he's paid a terrible price: When his wife Marta died last year, she cursed him with her dying breath for driving her sons away. Davked will waste away to nothing unless he makes peace with each of his three sons. He's done so with two of his sons, but he can't possibly travel the Underdark in his frail condition. That's why he wants the PCs to bring Zenith back.

The PCs probably have some questions. Here are Davked's likely answers:

Can't magic cure you? I wish it could. Even the most powerful clerics of my faith have been unable to reverse what Marta wrought. Perhaps the gods found her words fitting—I can't argue with her sentiment.

How do you know he's alive? I've had cleric and wizard alike cast powerful divinations, and here's what they've revealed: Zenith is being held prisoner in a kuo-toan shrine in the Underdark north of here. The shrine is called Bhal-Hamatugn.

How will we find him? Find Bhal-hamatugn and you'll find my son Zenith—how many dwarves could there be in a kuo-toan shrine? You'll know him by his great righteousness, his jet-black beard, and the battle standard of the Splintershield clan, which he is honor-bound to carry.

How soon? The sooner the better, obviously. I don't know how long I've got, and I don't want to face the afterlife with a curse hanging over my head from this world.

How much money? I'll pay you 4,000 gp each, or 6,000 gp worth of arms and armor from the finest craftsmen in my clan. Plus Celeste says she'll sponsor you and pay your membership fee here at the Cusp of Sunrise. That's worth 1,000 gp right there, and the fact that she'll vouch for you is something money can't buy.

How do we get to Bhal-Hamatugn? (Celeste fields this question.) There's a complication. Another group of adventurers—they call themselves the Stormblades, perhaps you've heard of them—caved in all the passageways beneath Jzadirune

and the Malachite Fortress about a month ago. So there's no easy access to the Underdark from Cauldron anymore. However, there's reputed to be a fissure that leads to the Underdark in the mountains north of the city. Specifically, a hermit named Crazy Jared mentioned it to some of Davked's clansmen. I've got a map that'll get you to Crazy Jared's place. It's about two days north by horse, or four days on foot.

MAKING THE DEAL

Davked is willing to pay more for the PCs' services, but he won't exactly volunteer that information. If the characters ask for more money, he instead offers them an advance (he'll go as high as 50% paid in advance) or up to 7,000 gp in dwarven weapons and armor. His true limit is 6,000 gp or 9,000 gp in dwarven weapons and armor. If he reaches that point, he angrily wheezes that he should hire the Stormblades instead and tells Celeste the meeting is over.

THE TRUTH

Zenith does indeed have a father named Davked, but this isn't him. This is Gortio, a doppelganger who works for Vhalantru. The real reason that Vhalantru wants Zenith recovered is that Zenith bears the Carcerian sign and a *soulcage* awaits him in Cauldron. Gortio is smart enough to lie effectively, coming up with believable but unverifiable details in the answers he gives. He drank a *potion of glibness* before coming to the Cusp of Sunrise in case the characters employ truth-detecting magic. He says whatever the characters want to hear—all he cares about is that they accept the mission. Gortio doesn't know the real reason Vhalantru wants Zenith back in Cauldron. "Vhalantru wants Zenith back in Cauldron" is all the reason Gortio needs.

Gortio/Davked also doesn't quite lie when he tells the PCs that powerful divinations revealed Zenith's location, but he comes close. Spells did reveal the general whereabouts of the missing Shackleborn, but Gortio also knows that his master received the specific location and the name of Bhal-Hamatugn from an informant within the kuo-toan stronghold (see the "Campaign Seed: Dhorlot and the Cagewrights" sidebar for details). A Sense Motive check opposed by Davked's Bluff check (when the PCs ask about how they know Zenith is alive) here reveals that the dwarf isn't quite revealing everything he knows about how Zenith's whereabouts were determined. See "The Truth" below for details.

➤ **Gortio the Doppelganger:** hp 28; *Monster Manual* 67.

CHAPTER 3: JOURNEY TO THE UNDERDARK

Celeste provides a map showing the way to Crazy Jared's hut, which is some forty miles north of Cauldron along trails that wind through alpine meadows and rugged mountains. The characters have an 8% chance per hour of having a random encounter, rolled on the table below.

CAULDRON MOUNTAINS ENCOUNTER TABLE (EL 6)

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01–04	1 stone giant	8
05–09	1 bulette	7
10–13	1 chimera	7
14–16	1 hill giant	7
17–29	1d4+2 bugbears	6
30–40	1d3+1 ogres	6
41–49	1 ogre mage	6
50–58	1d3 displacer beasts	6
59–69	1d3 griffons	6
70–83	1 wyvern	6
84–90	1 troll	5
91–100	1d3 giant eagles	5

Once the characters reach the spot on the map marked “Crazy Jared’s Hut,” it takes a further 2 hours of searching to actually locate the small alpine meadow surrounded by scrubby trees where Jared makes his home.

CRAZY JARED (EL 7)

Light: Sunlight or moonlight (shadowy illumination), depending on time of day.

Sound: Wind rustling through the alpine meadow grass (automatic).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (Jared’s rod, DC 21 conjuration and transmutation); moderate evil (Gottrrod).

The PCs reach Jared’s strange home just as a dragon attacks.

In the center of the meadow to the west is a thatch hut surrounded by a low wooden fence crudely painted to look as if it were made of brick and mortar. Four thick posts have been driven into the ground at each corner of the fence, and a mixture of wood and fabric between the posts forms an unconvincing simulation of a stone tower. Here and there you see tufts of straw poking out of gaps in the “towers.”

With a whoosh of its crimson wings, a dragon soars over the ridge to the west of the hut, bearing down on it quickly. An older man carrying a silver rod runs from the hut in your direction.

Creatures: The dragon, Gottrrod, is trying to clear territory for itself. The PCs soon learn that Jared has earned his appellation but can still be a useful ally.



➤ **Gottrrod, Male Young Red Dragon:** CR 7; Large dragon (fire); HD 13d12+39; hp 121; Init +0; Spd 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor); AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +13; Grp +24; Atk +20 melee (2d6+7, bite); Full Atk +20 melee (2d6+7, bite), +14 melee (1d8+3, 2 claws), +14 melee (1d6+3, 2 wings), +14 melee (1d8+10, tail slap); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft (10 ft. with bite); SA breath weapon, spells; SQ darkvision 120 ft., immunity to fire, sleep, and paralysis, low-light vision, vulnerability to cold; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 25, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Appraise +17, Concentration +10, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (local) +17, Listen +17, Search +17, Sense Motive +17, Spellcraft +8, Spot +17. **Feats:** Flyby Attack, Hover, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite), Wingover.

Breath Weapon (Su): 40-ft. cone, damage 6d10 fire, Reflex DC 19 half.

Spells Known (5/4; save DC 11 + spell level): 0—detect magic, ghost sound, open/close, read magic; 1st—cure light wounds, mage armor.

♣ **Jared, Male Human Brd 10:** CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d6; hp 33; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +7; Grp +8; Atk/Full Atk +8 melee (1d3+1 non-lethal, unarmed strike); SA countersong 10/day, fascinate 10/day, inspire competence 10/day, inspire courage 10/day, inspire greatness 10/day, suggestion; SQ bardic knowledge +12; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 21.

CAMPAIGN SEED: GOTTRROD AND JARED

Gottrrod’s mother is a much older dragon, Hookface, who lairs on a mountain peak about 60 miles north of Crazy Jared’s hut. If the PCs kill Gottrrod and Hookface finds out, she will seek revenge, either personally or through another of her children.

Jared is a loon, but he could be a useful loon if the PCs befriend

him. He happily casts any spell he knows—including *legend lore*—on their behalf, and he knows a great deal about the history of Cauldron and the region.

Jared’s madness is beyond the power of *remove curse*, *greater restoration*, or *heal* to fix. But if the PCs discover how he went mad in the first place, it may point them toward a cure.



Skills: Concentration +13, Decipher Script +15, Diplomacy +22, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (local) +15, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +15, Perform (oratory) +18, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +15. **Feats:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Eschew Materials, Extend Spell, Great Fortitude, Iron Will.

Spells Known (3/5/4/3/1; save DC 15 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand, message, read magic, summon instrument*; 1st—*comprehend languages, disguise self, lesser confusion, silent image*; 2nd—*eagle's splendor, enthrall, minor image, tongues*; 3rd—*confusion, glibness, lesser geas, major image*; 4th—*hallucinatory terrain, legend lore*.

Possessions: Chain shirt, *rod of splendor*.

Gotrrod's Tactics: Gotrrod prefers to stay aloft, bombarding Jared's hut and any foes with blasts from his breath weapon. He commonly flies directly overhead at an altitude of 30 feet and breathes straight down, creating a 25-foot radius circular breath-weapon pattern on the ground. He only lands if it looks like there's no opposition or if he's taking more damage from ranged attacks and spells than his breath weapon is dealing.

Jared's Tactics: Jared is, quite frankly, as nutty as a fruitcake, and he's ill-equipped for combat. But if the PCs can keep him safe, he can be helpful indeed.

Once Jared sees the PCs, he yells, "Onward, my knights! For Anduria!" and uses his *rod of splendor* to garb himself in robes fit for a king. On the second round, he begins to use his inspire courage ability, composing a new verse in an epic poem every round. His epic tends to be equal parts flowery language and

play-by-play, but even a round that goes badly for the PCs gets a very sympathetic treatment in Jared's epic. If one PC does particularly well against Gotrrod, Jared switches to inspire greatness, targeting that character.

Jared's hut and the fences that surround it are made of wood and straw, so they immediately go up in flames if Gotrrod breathes on them. They deal 2d4 points of fire damage to any character standing next to them (within 5 feet) until they burn themselves out in about 20 minutes.

TALKING TO CRAZY JARED

Once the fight is over, Jared thanks the PCs in an imperious voice and says, "Behold the peaceable realm of Anduria! Have you seen a land more beauteous?" Then he casts *hallucinatory terrain* to cover the immediate vicinity in an illusion of verdant, sun-dappled rolling hills covered with ready-for-harvest vineyards and dotted with stands of flowering trees.

Jared isn't trying to fool the PCs; he openly casts the spell, and anyone who succeeds at a DC 19 Spellcraft check knows exactly what he did. But he is fooling himself. Jared lives his life under the delusion that he is King Jared IV, ruler of the (nonexistent) realm of Anduria. In reality, his illusion and enchantment spells keep him safe from the dangers of the mountains, and he's just a hermit in a thatched hut. But in his mind, he's a head of state, serving the brave and doughty yeomen of his realm.

Here are some questions PCs might ask, and his answers:

Are you crazy? What a bold question to ask of your liege! But I'll indulge it, for you are not the first citizen to make such a query. I'm as sane as any ruler, and saner than the demon-queen of Kheltos, who threatens my realm from north and south. (There's no such place as Kheltos.)

Is there an entrance to the Underdark near here? Indeed, a foul place known as the Pit of the Seven Jaws. If some servant will fetch me pen and parchment, I can easily sketch you a map of the place. Just last week I sent five hundred of Anduria's finest there to guard against an incursion by the mind flayers.

We come from Cauldron. How is that town, certainly one of the finer in my realm? Are the residents carefree under the gentle hand of the Lord Mayor? I am cheered to see the city rebuilt after the long siege by the army of Kheltos.

Do you know Zenith Splintershield? Know him? He bowed before this very throne before he left to battle the mind flayers of the Underdark. I sent five hundred of Anduria's finest to act as the vanguard of his army.

Have you heard of Bhal-Hamatugn? (Jared immediately casts *comprehend languages*.) It sounds Kuo-Toan, this phrase that trips ill from my tongue. In the third declension, it means "lucky blackness." Or perhaps "black fish"—my Kuo-Toan is somewhat rusty.

This isn't a castle. It is in need of repair, 'tis true. I'm considering a competition where the finest artisans in the realm will offer designs of grandeur for a new palace whose towers will scrape the sky itself.

If the characters confront Jared with proof of his delusion, he chuckles and says: "It is said that the royal blood of my family is tainted with a touch of madness. Too much inbreeding in a bygone age, I suppose. We'll just have to get along, knowing that our perceptions differ in certain minor ways."

The PCs can banter with Jared as long as they wish; he's a font of information, even if obviously imaginary details surround the useful answers Jared provides. Once Jared scrawls a map on

a tattered bit of parchment for the PCs, they can head further into the mountains. Another twenty miles on reasonably clear mountain trails leads to the Pit of the Seven Jaws.

PIT OF THE SEVEN JAWS (EL 8)

Light: Sunlight from pit opening (shadowy illumination).

Sound: Faint, intermittent hissing (DC 20).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint (drow armor, DC 17 abjuration).

This entrance to the Underdark would be used more, except that it's remote and guarded by a dangerous cryohydra. Hydras are complicated monsters, so it's a good idea to reread their entry in the *Monster Manual* before running this encounter.

This 40-foot-wide pit scars an otherwise unremarkable alpine meadow, surrounded by low mounds of the dirt and rock that once filled the hole. Peering down into the pit, you see a metal-grate stairway that spirals counter-clockwise down the interior surface of the pit. The pit bottom is dimly visible some 60 feet below. With the stairway in the way, you can't see the walls of the pit near the bottom from your vantage point.

The stairs are gradual, so it poses no particular difficulties to movement. However, the stairs are also extremely creaky, imposing a –10 penalty on Move Silently checks. Each flight of stairs descends 15 feet vertically, so the landings at the corners are 45 feet high (northeast), 30 feet high (northwest), and 15 feet high (southwest).

The PCs can't initially see it, but a rough fissure in the south wall near the pit floor leads into the Underdark.

Creatures: In the fissure is a seven-headed cryohydra. It listens (Listen +7) for the approach of intruders, hoping that the stairs will bring it another meal.

➤ **Seven-Headed Cryohydra:** hp 75; *Monster Manual* 155.

Tactics: The cryohydra waits in the fissure until the PCs reach the northwest landing, then attacks the lead PC or PCs with its breath weapon. It can't reach higher than the landing, so any PCs farther up the stairs are safe. Then it ducks back into the fissure while its breath weapon recharges. Because the stairs are a metal grate, not solid iron, they provide less cover to those standing on them (+2 bonus to AC and +1 bonus on Reflex saves). Once PCs reach the southwest landing, the cryohydra makes bite attacks with its heads between breath weapon attacks.

The cryohydra isn't smart enough to realize it, but its breath weapon attacks might bring down the stairs if they shatter the dozens of pegs that hold the stairs to the inside walls of the pit. Those pegs have hardness of 10 and 20 hit points each—but area effects like the cryohydra's breath attack them all at once, so it's easiest to assume that all pegs along a particular flight of stairs or landing share the same fate.

To calculate damage to the pegs, first figure out which pegs are involved: northwest landing, west stairs, southwest landing, or south stairs. Depending on where the cryohydra aims its



breath weapon, it may hit more than one set of pegs. Then calculate damage normally, letting PCs make their Reflex saves. Quarter the damage (because it's cold damage against an object), subtract 10 for the hardness, and apply the rest to the pegs.

If a set of pegs reaches 0 hp, the relevant landing or set of stairs collapses into the center of the pit, probably hitting the cryohydra and dealing damage according to the table below:

Falling object	Damage to Pit Bottom	Falling Damage to PCs
Northwest landing	7d6	3d6
West stairs	6d6	2d6
Southwest landing	5d6	1d6
South stairs	—	—

Treasure: In an alcove in the northeast corner of the pit bottom is the flash-frozen corpse of a drow elf. He carries a +1 *mithral shirt*, two masterwork scimitars, a masterwork composite longbow (+3 Str), five arrows, and 25 gp.

THE FISSURE

The fissure at the bottom of the Pit of Seven Jaws leads downward gradually, descending about 100 vertical feet over the course of a quarter-mile. A stalactite-studded ceiling is 20 feet to 50 feet ($1d4+1 \times 10$) overhead, and the fissure itself is 10 feet to 40 feet wide ($1d4 \times 10$) at any given point. For purposes of overland movement, the fissure counts as trackless mountains ($1/2$ movement). It's ten miles to the cavern containing Bhal-Hamatugn.

Random Encounters: There is a 10% chance per hour of an encounter as the characters to Bhal-Hamatugn. If an encounter is warranted, roll on the following table:

UNDERDARK ENCOUNTER TABLE

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01–03	1 behir	8
04–08	1 drider	7
09–13	1d3+1 minotaurs	7
14–17	1d3+1 centipede swarms	7
20–24	1 gauth (beholder)	6
25–34	1d3+1 derros	6
35–42	1 ettin	6
43–49	1d3 gargoyles	6
50–58	1d3+1 ghaunts (ghoul)	6
59–66	1d3+1 gricks	6
67–74	1d4+1 shadows	6
75–79	1d4+2 giant bombardier beetles (vermin)	6
80–84	1d3+1 bugbears	5
85–87	1d4+4 dire bats	5
88–91	1d4+2 drow elves	5
92–95	1d3 ogres	5
96–100	1 troll	5



CHAPTER 4: BHAL-HAMATUGN

After their journey through the mountains and into the Underdark, the characters reach the kuo-toan shrine of Bhal-Hamatugn. Here they face the kuo-toan religious fanatics who have fallen under Zenith Splintershield's sway. And they learn the chilling truth: Zenith is the leader, not the prisoner, of the kuo-toas.

The kuo-toas have killed or frightened away most of the other nearby denizens of the Underdark, so they don't fear an attack on Bhal-Hamatugn. A few guards watch the entrance, but the other kuo-toas are busy worshiping, monitoring the breeding program, and preparing for their next major battle. They respond quickly to a cry of alarm or other sign of trouble, but they go back to their usual routine after 12 hours. The kuo-toas of Bhal-Hamatugn are convinced of their invulnerability and the oracular wisdom of Zenith; their leader would surely have foreseen any serious invasion.

It may take the characters several forays into Bhal-Hamatugn before they reach Zenith Splintershield. After the first attack, the kuo-toas send Hlanamm and four kuo-toa soldiers to pursue the characters, discover where they're camping, and perhaps pick off any stragglers. The whips prepare new spells every midnight; although they're underground, the water clock in area 7 tells them when to meditate about Blipdoolpoolp's slimy majesty. If the PCs employed a *daylight* spell to force the kuo-toas to suffer light blindness, every whip prepares a *darkness* or *deeper darkness* spell the following midnight. Thereafter, in every encounter, one whip always readies *darkness* as a counter-spell against a *daylight* spell (assuming a whip is present).

FIRST GLIMPSE OF BHAL-HAMATUGN

The Underdark passage opens out into an immense rift cavern at least a half-mile across and several hundred feet deep. Faintly glowing with phosphorescence at the bottom of the rift is a massive stone structure shaped like a prehistoric spined fish. A wide stairway can be dimly seen leading up into the fish's mouth. A narrow ledge slopes down from your position, hugging the side of the cavern as it descends in a series of switchbacks.

Characters who succeed at a DC 20 Spot check note that water covers the floor of the cavern. From this distance, they can't tell how deep the water is.

The ledge heading downward is fairly smooth and well-traveled, although there aren't any discernable tracks on it. The characters can easily walk down to the shore, where they encounter the ferry-keeper.

THE FERRY (EL 7)

Light: Phosphorescence from Bhal-Hamatugn exterior (shadowy illumination).

Sound: Water dripping down cavern walls (DC 5); faint rhythmic croaking (DC 25).

Reaction: To sounds of battle—kuo-toas in area 15 sound alarm throughout Bhal-Hamatugn (Listen DC 20); to bright lights or flashy magic—kuo-toas in area 15 sound alarm (automatic).

Auras: Moderate (Aabhaca's bracers, DC 18 conjuration); faint evil (Aabhaca).

Many PCs will start a fight here. Those who don't may learn something about the nature of the kuo-toans, although the nature of the ferry-keeper may leave them more puzzled than ever.

There's a good chance this encounter or the next one will involve underwater combat. It's a good idea to read the Underwater Combat section in Chapter 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* beforehand if you aren't already familiar with it.

The water begins about 100 yards from the base of the stairway that leads into the structure. It's murky, silty water—obviously only a few inches deep at first, but impossible to tell by looking how deep it gets. A thin mist floats a few feet over the surface of the water.

A long canoe emerges from the mist, drifting slowly toward you. Crouched in the stern is a silvery, froglike creature the size of a human, holding a paddle in one hand and a shortspear in the other. The canoe stops about 20 feet from the water's edge, and the creature looks in your direction.

This is Aabhaca, the ferry-keeper. His kuo-toan keen sight is good enough to see even invisible PCs, as long as they're moving.

➤ **Aabhaca, Kuo-Toa Mnk 5:** CR 7; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 2d8+4 plus 5d8+10; hp 47; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., swim 50 ft.; AC 25, touch 17, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk +8 melee (1d8+2, unarmed strike) or +7 melee (1d6+3, shortspear) or +7 ranged (1d6+2, shortspear); Full Atk +8 melee (1d8+2, unarmed strike) and +2 melee (1d4+1, bite), or +6/+6 melee (1d8+2, unarmed strike) and +2 melee (1d4+1, bite), or +7 melee (1d6+3, shortspear) and +2 melee (1d4+1, bite), or +7 ranged (1d6+2, shortspear); SA stunning fist 5/day (DC 17); SQ adhesive, amphibious, immunity to poison and paralysis, keen sight, light blindness, resistance to electricity 10, slippery, evasion, still mind, *ki* strike (magic), slow fall 20 ft., purity of body; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +11 (+13 vs. enchantments); Str 15, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8.

Skills: Escape Artist +10, Hide +12, Listen +16, Move Silently +12, Search +4, Sense Motive +7, Spot +14, Swim +10. **Feats:** Alertness, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Mobility, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Keen Sight (Ex): Kuo-toas can spot invisible and ethereal creatures, as long as they're moving.

Light Blindness (Ex): Exposure to bright light (such as a *daylight* spell) blinds kuo-toas for 1 round and dazzles them as long as the light remains.

Slippery: Kuo-toans can wriggle free from webs and other forms of confinement.

Possessions: Shortspear, bracers of armor +2, canoe.

Tactics: Aabhaca will wait a moment for the characters to speak.

If the PCs attack right away, Aabhaca throws his shortspear at the nearest PC, then dives into the water. The following rounds, he swims for the stairway, which he reaches in 2 rounds. If he gets inside Bhal-Hamatugn, he sounds the alarm, then joins the soldiers in area 15 after getting another spear from area 16.

If the PCs don't say anything, he croaks, "Seek ye the Eye in Darkness? I'll guide you through the maw." Slowly putting his spear down, he beckons the characters into the canoe.

If the PCs speak to him, Aabhaca behaves in a friendly manner but speaks only cryptically. Many players will attempt some sort of ruse or false pretense to get Aabhaca to take them into Bhal-Hamatugn. Let them, and have them make Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks as appropriate as you roll Aabhaca's Sense Motive check. But Aabhaca's initial response is the same, no matter how well or badly the ruse goes. He beckons them into the canoe, then slowly paddles toward the stairway. Even if the PCs are completely honest ("We're here to bring Zenith Splintershield back to the surface"), Aabhaca paddles them across the surface of the lake.

But it matters whether Aabhaca believes them or not. If Aabhaca senses danger or falsehood from the PCs, he attempts to flip the canoe when the stern passes near the stalagmite by the stairway, 40 feet from the base of the stairs. The splash alerts the guards in area 15, who immediately begin shooting into the water. It takes a DC 10 Strength check to flip the canoe, and each PC in the canoe adds +2 to the DC. Whether Aabhaca succeeds or not, he dives under the surface of the water, then attacks whichever PC appears to have the most trouble swimming.

If Aabhaca believes the PCs, he drops them off at the stairway, then paddles off into the mist. Along the way, the PCs can pump Aabhaca for information about Zenith and Bhal-Hamatugn. This is your chance to be as cryptic as possible without lying outright or seeming deliberately evasive. Like many of the residents of

Bhal-Hamatugn, Aabhaca has a poor grasp of reality. His responses to the PCs' questions tend to wander and circle back on themselves, and he speaks as if the characters are fellow kuo-toan worshipers of the Sea Mother, even though they obviously aren't. For example, if the characters say, "Have you seen a dwarf named Zenith Splintershield?" Aabhaca responds, "I glimpse Zenith amid the great darkness, but he glimpses things beyond the dark, where it is darker still. Darker than dark, yes. And I see dimly what Zenith sees, in the dark. The cold, wet dark. It's dark, dark where I see Zenith. Are you from the dark?" And so on.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Because the characters are on a specific mission—recovering Zenith Splintershield—they earn full experience for Aabhaca whether they defeat him in combat or trick him into delivering them to Bhal-Hamatugn.

BHAL-HAMATUGN FEATURES

Once the characters get to the stairs, they've reached their goal: The kuo-toan fortress-shrine of Bhal-Hamatugn. Unless stated otherwise, dungeon features have the following characteristics.

Walls: Bhal-Hamatugn's walls are made of 1-foot-thick superior masonry (hardness 8, 90 hp, Climb DC 25, break DC 35) covering the solid stone that the giant fish is made out of. They're covered with a tiny droplets of condensation and trickles of water run down them, which is why the Climb DC is higher than it otherwise would be. Ceilings are 15 feet high.

Floors: Well-fitted flagstone floors are the rule, although they're uniformly wet, with large puddles collecting water in the center of most rooms. This makes them slippery and increases the DC of Balance and Tumble checks by 5. Some places are marked on the map as shallow pools. It costs 2 squares of movement to move into a square with a shallow pool, and the DC of Tumble checks in such squares increases by 2. The pools also impose a -2 circumstance penalty on Move Silently checks.

Doors: All the interior doors in Bhal-Hamatugn are carved from solid blocks



UPPER LEVEL



BHAL-HAMATUGN

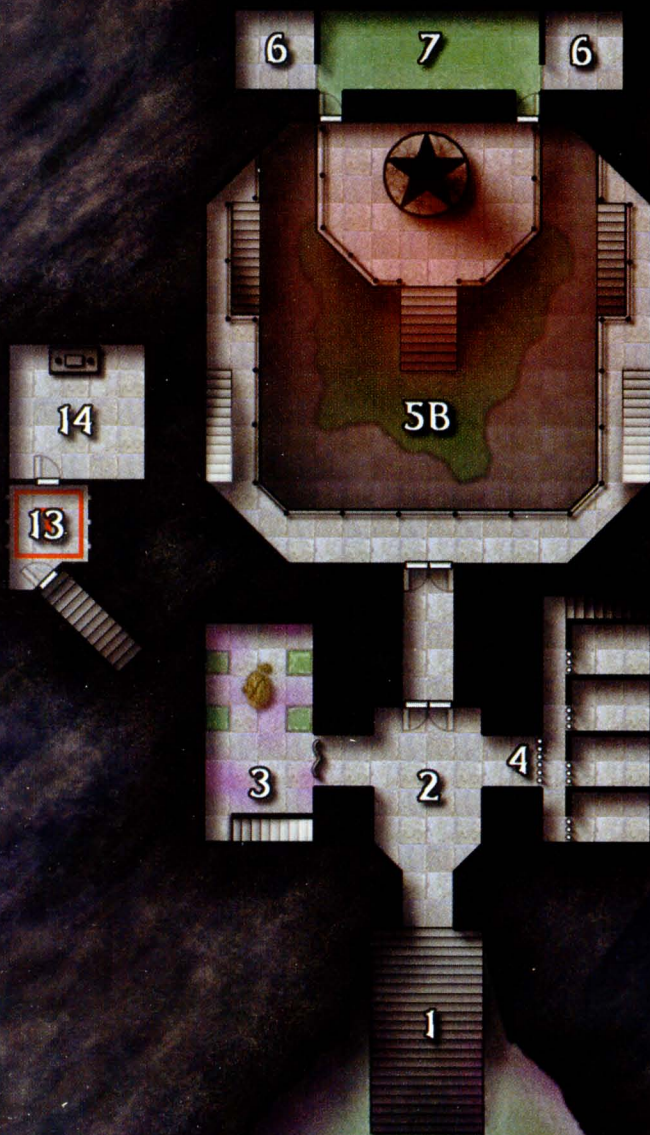
KEY

1. Stairway into the Maw
2. Entry Chamber
3. Soldier Living Quarters
4. Prison
5. Shrine to the Sea Mother
6. Priests' Chambers
7. Meditation Chamber
8. Torture Chamber
9. Artisans' Workshops
10. Hall of Kuo-Toan Heroes
11. Fingerling Pool
12. Living Quarters
13. Dhorlot's Antechamber
14. Dhorlot the Dragon-Father
15. Guard Posts
16. Armory
17. Mushroom Grotto
18. Antechamber of the Final Breath
19. Zenith's Chamber

1 square = 5 feet



MIDDLE LEVEL



LOWER LEVEL





of granite (hardness 8, 60 hp, break DC 28) and have nested hinges (described in Chapter 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*). The doors all have locks (DC 25), but they'll only be locked if the alarm has been sounded and it makes tactical sense to do so. Mangh-Michtho, Saagogoi, and Zenith each have a key for the doors—the same key opens every door in Bhal-Hamatugn. The doors lock from either side, and a locked door won't open from either side without a key.

Stairs: The staircases in Bhal-Hamatugn are steep stairs, requiring 2 squares of movement to enter each square when ascending. They're also slippery, so characters running or charging down them must succeed at a DC 15 Balance check or stumble and perhaps fall, as described in the Miscellaneous Features section in Chapter 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*. The stairs have railings wherever they don't have a wall next to them.

Illumination and Noise: Lighting and sound vary from room to room; they're described in the quick-reference section at the top of each encounter area.

1. STAIRWAY INTO THE MAW (EL 7)

Light: Phosphorescence from Bhal-Hamatugn exterior (shadowy illumination).

Sound: Sporadic froglike croaks (DC 20); Whispers in Kuo-Toan from guards in area 15 (DC 35)

Reaction: To sounds of battle—kuo-toans in area 3 awaken, grab weapons, and reach top of staircase in 4 rounds (DC 0, but the sleeping kuo-toans have a –10 penalty on Listen checks)

Auras: None.

When the characters approach Bhal-Hamatugn, they may come under fire from the kuo-toa soldiers keeping watch from the structure's "eyes."

Before you stands an immense structure of rough, wet stone in the shape of a fishlike creature. Its eye sockets are empty, revealing darkness beyond. Its slick surface is dotted with patches of faintly phosphorescent moss, giving the entire structure a faint purple glow. A steep but wide stone stairway emerges from the water and leads to the open mouth of the fish.

The PCs can try to sneak past the four kuo-toans in the eye sockets (area 15) above, but it'll be tricky because the kuo-toans have good Spot bonuses and can see moving invisible creatures.

Creatures: Four kuo-toan soldiers watch this area. They're actually hiding in area 15, but they probably fight characters in area 1.

➤ **Kuo-toa Soldier (4):** hp 20, 22, 18, 19; see the Appendix for complete statistics.

Tactics: The kuo-toans are watching from the rough crenellations that form the lower eyelid of each eye socket. As the PCs approach, check whether the kuo-toan soldiers see the PCs and whether the PCs see them; the kuo-toans have a Hide bonus of +7 and a Spot bonus of +12. If possible, the kuo-toans wait until a PC is within 30 feet of the eye sockets before firing their hand crossbows, because then they deal sneak attack damage. They focus their attacks on whichever PC is closest to the entrance. They have cover (+4 to AC, +2 to Reflex saves) from the sockets.

If the kuo-toan soldiers have a chance, they draw their rapiers and leap out of the eye-socket balconies and onto a nearby PC. They take 2d6 points of damage and deal 1d6 points of damage to whomever they land on. The impact automatically bounces them into a random adjacent square.

Development: The sounds of battle may awaken the off-duty soldiers in area 3. Check at the end of each round; it's a DC 0 Listen check to hear the battle, but they have a –10 penalty because they're sleeping for a net penalty of –7. If the kuo-toans from area 3 don't arrive on their own, one of the kuo-toa in area 15 rouses them if a protracted ranged battle develops.

2. ENTRY CHAMBER (EL 7)

Light: Pitch black. If the PCs have only darkvision, eliminate color reference in the read-aloud text below.

Sound: Faint rhythmic croaking (DC 20); Scurrying and rustling from area 4 (DC 14).

Reaction: To conversation—kuo-toans in area 3 awaken if necessary and attack (Listen DC 4; –10 on check if asleep).

Auras: Moderate (double doors on north wall, DC 21 abjuration).

Whether Bhal-Hamatugn has been alerted or not, this area is usually empty, but the battles in other rooms could spill into this chamber. The double doors leading deeper into the kuo-toan shrine are trapped.

Red and green-tinted frescos cover the walls in this largely empty chamber. A set of carved stone doors stands opposite you, flanked on the left by a fresco of a frog-creature carrying a strange staff with two-tined forks on both ends, and on the right by a squat male humanoid in plate armor with a black sphere where his head should be. Frescos to your right and left depict hundreds of red, spear-wielding kuo-toans marching through Underdark caverns. Curved shards of what look like thin, fragile porcelain cover the floor. Passageways lead left and right from here.

A DC 15 Search check reveals that the paint on the humanoid fresco is much fresher than the other frescos, which are starting to crack and peel. The new fresco is an “artistic” representation of Zenith himself. A DC 10 Knowledge (nature) check reveals that the porcelain shards are actually broken eggshells, and a DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check reveals that they’re from kuo-toa eggs. Spreading eggshells on the floor is a measure of hospitality among the kuo-toa.

Trap: The doors are carved with an abstract zig-zag pattern. They’re also trapped with a *glyph of warding* that goes off when any non-kuo-toa opens the door, whether it was locked or not. The kuo-toas can’t cast such a powerful *glyph of warding* themselves, so this trap can be encountered once. The kuo-toas are also careful to take any legitimate nonkuo-toa guest through the prison (area 3) and the torture chamber (area 8) rather than through this door.

➤ **Greater glyph of warding Trap:** CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*greater glyph of warding* [blast], 16th-level cleric, 8d8 sonic, DC 19 Reflex save half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

3. SOLDIER LIVING QUARTERS (EL 7)

Light: Phosphorescent patches on floor (shadowy illumination).

Sound: Faint rhythmic croaking (DC 20).

Reaction: To sounds of battle—kuo-toans in area 15 arrive in 2 rounds (automatic).

Auras: None; faint evil (four kuo-toas).

The text below assumes that the characters have managed to talk or sneak their way into Bhal-Hamatugn without starting a fight. Read the last sentence only if it’s appropriate.

Behind a ratty tapestry is a room faintly lit by purplish patches of phosphorescence on the floor. A midden-heap sits in the center of the room, and the walls have primitive stick-figure carvings of bipeds with spears on them. Four slight depressions in the floor hold an inch or two of water. Nestled into each depression is a sleeping frog-creature.

A DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check or the scent ability reveals that the phosphorescent patches are actually kuo-toa excrement—the glow is a byproduct of the glowing mushrooms in area 17.

Creatures: A few kuo-toan soldiers rest here. If the complex is on alert, they’re no longer asleep.

➤ **Kuo-toa Soldiers (4):** hp 16, 19, 18, 23; see the Appendix for complete statistics.

Tactics: Unlike their counterparts in area 15, these soldiers are likely to engage in melee combat as soon as they make contact with the PCs. They use the Tumble skill to set themselves up in flanking positions so that they can deal sneak attack damage with their rapiers. They have only one attack per round anyway, so they don’t give up anything if they move into new positions every round. They fight to the death, although they aren’t above feigning unconsciousness if they think they can get a sneak attack from the deception later.

4. PRISON (EL 8)

Light: Pitch black.

Sound: Rustling from cells (DC 10); Faint rhythmic croaking (DC 20).

Reaction: To brief movement of portcullis—Garekk in area 8 hides underwater (Listen DC 15); to raising the portcullis—Garekk hides underwater (automatic).

Auras: None; faint evil (White-Eye), faint evil (Cherrit).

This room puts characters in the dilemma of dealing with two prisoners who tell mutually contradictory stories.

Beyond the iron portcullis is a hallway running north and south. Along its east wall are a series of cells, divided by walls of solid masonry and enclosed by portcullises of their own. You can see two cells from where you are, plus parts of two others. Each of the cell portcullises has a 1-foot-square metal plate set about 5 feet off the ground. The bars are set only a few inches apart. Inset in the wall to your left is an iron lever pointing straight up.

First the characters have to contend with a loud portcullis. Once the PCs get into area 4 itself, two prisoners of the kuo-toas beg the PCs to release them.

The iron portcullis that bars the way into area 4 is easy to operate. Swinging the inset lever clockwise from the 12-o'clock to the 6-o'clock position sets the mechanism in motion that opens the portcullis. But the portcullis makes a shrieking, grinding racket when it opens or closes. If the PC who pulled the lever immediately reverses the course of the lever, the mechanism emits only a brief shriek. But otherwise the cacophony of the portcullis lasts for a full round.

Brief Noise: The kuo-toas in area 5 don't hear the brief shriek of metal on metal, but Garekk the mummy in area 8 might hear it and hide underwater.

Sustained Sound: Garekk automatically hears the portcullis open fully, and he hides underwater, waiting patiently for the PCs. If the PCs previously succeeded at a Listen check to hear the faint rhythmic croaking (whether in this room or not), have them attempt a DC 20 Listen check. If they succeed, tell them that they can't hear the rhythmic croaking anymore. If the players ask specifically about the croaking sound, tell them they can't hear it anymore; don't ask for a Listen check in this case.

Silencing the Portcullis: Most of the mechanism is behind the wall, so it's impossible to manually lubricate and repair the portcullis mechanism to be quieter. A *grease* spell is likewise problematic because the spellcaster can't target the relevant parts. A *silence* spell does the trick, however, and a DC 25 Disable Device check lets the PCs manually lift the portcullis without engaging the mechanism.

Each of the metal plates is a cover that swings outward to reveal a lever in the 12-o'clock position. Unlike the portcullis between area 2 and area 4, these levers make only a faint squeaking sound when pulled, but they're locked in place with big iron padlocks (Open Lock DC 25). The PCs can bash these locks open (hardness 15, 30 hp), but if they do so, there's a 50% chance that the blows also knock the gears out of alignment, sticking the portcullis in place.

Creatures: Two of the cells are empty. The northernmost cell holds White-eye, a wererat thief apprehended by the kuo-toas. The southernmost cell is occupied by Cherrit, an evil halfling sorcerer from Cauldron who knows part of the Cagewrights' plan. They've been locked up together for weeks, and each hates the other intensely.

➤ **White-Eye, Wererat Human Ftr 4:** CR 6; Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger); HD 4d10+4 plus 1d8+2; hp 37; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+2 nonlethal, unarmed strike); SA —; SQ alternate form, low-light vision, rat empathy, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +7; Ref +5; Will +3; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +5, Disable Device +4, Hide +5, Intimidate +4, Move Silently +5, Open Lock +5, Swim +12. **Feats:** Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Specialization (claw)

Hybrid Form: As human form, except: Init +5; AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 12; Atk +10 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +10 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) and +8 melee (1d6+1 and curse of lycan-

thropy and disease, bite); SA curse of lycanthropy, disease; SQ alternate form, DR 5/silver, lycanthropic empathy, low-light vision, rat empathy, scent; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 21, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills: As human form, except: Climb +16, Disable Device +7, Hide +8, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Swim +15.

Dire Rat Form: As hybrid form, except: Small humanoid (human, shapechanger); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 13; Atk +11 melee (1d3+4, claw); Full Atk +11 melee (1d3+4, 2 claws) and +9 melee (1d4+1 and curse of lycanthropy and disease, bite).

Skills: As hybrid form, except: Hide +12.

Alternate Form (Su): A wererat can assume a bipedal hybrid form or the form of a dire rat.

Curse of Lycanthropy (Su): DC 15 Fortitude save or contract lycanthropy.

Disease (Ex): Filth fever; bite; Fortitude DC 14; incubation period 1d3 days; damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con.

Rat Empathy (Ex): Communicate with rats and dire rats, and +4 racial bonus on Charisma-based checks against rats and dire rats.

Possessions: None.

✦ **Cherrit, Male Halfling Sor 6:** CR 6; Small humanoid (halfling); HD 6d4+6; hp 21 Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +3; Grp -2; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d2-1 nonlethal, unarmed strike) or +3 melee (spell effect, melee touch) or +6 ranged (spell effect, ranged touch); SA spells; SQ halfling traits; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +6, Climb +1, Hide +7, Jump -5, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Spellcraft +3. **Feats:** Dodge, Spell Focus (evocation), Eschew Materials.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/6/4; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, light, ray of frost, read magic, touch of fatigue; 1st—burning hands*, mage armor, magic missile, shield; 2nd—invisibility, web; 3rd—fireball*.

*Evocation spells. The save DC for these spells is 14 + spell level.

Possessions: None. Cherrit had an owl familiar, but the kuo-toas ate it.

As soon as either prisoner sees that the intruders aren't kuo-toas, he begs to be freed. The other prisoner immediately replies, "Don't free him! He's working with the kuo-toas!" The first prisoner replies, "Liar! You love the frog people, not I!" They both begin jabbering at once, accusing the other of perjury and inventing very specific stories about how the other one is a kuo-toan thrall.

Tactics: White-Eye knows that Cherrit is a spellcaster of some sort—he's seen Cherrit cast *light* occasionally—although he's not sure what kind. He claims that Cherrit tried to get White-Eye to talk one day, then relayed the conversation to the kuo-toan jailers while White-Eye was pretending to sleep. White-Eye was captured by the kuo-toas about three weeks ago as he tried to sneak into Bhal-Hamatugn, intending to rob it of its riches.

Cherrit knows that White-Eye talks to a rat, so he believes that White-Eye has a rat familiar (making him an arcanist) or is a druid. He was captured about five weeks ago. Cherrit claims that White-Eye is a mercenary magician working for the kuo-toas who locked himself in a cell moments before the PCs arrived.

Cherrit, a Cauldron native, is here looking for Zenith Splintershield too. He happened to see Zenith's strange birthmark a decade ago when the duo were fighting duergar beneath Cauldron. Cherrit didn't think anything of it at the time, but recently he heard a rumor that invisible birthmarks had immense arcane power and used a *legend lore* scroll to get to Bhal-Hamatugn. At first, he claims to be "in the wrong place at the wrong time" and admits his interest in Zenith only after a successful Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check on the part of the PCs. Even then, he claims to be checking on his old comrade's well-being and won't mention the birthmark unless charmed or otherwise compelled to do so.

The PCs can simply leave both White-Eye and Cherrit locked up, although if they announce their intention to do so, both try to bargain for freedom with detailed but completely fictitious descriptions of the kuo-toa defenses deeper in the temple (neither of them have been beyond the torture chamber in area 8. If one prisoner starts describing the rest of the temple, the other will loudly exclaim, "He's lying! He's leading you into a trap!")

Both prisoners try to conceal their true power from the PCs (White-Eye's lycanthropy and Cherrit's spellcasting). White-Eye takes hybrid form only if he's about to fight.

Development: If PCs are obviously badly wounded, either prisoner immediately attacks if freed. Otherwise, a freed prisoner promises to leave Bhal-Hamatugn and never return. They keep half their promise, returning a few hours later. White-Eye figures that the PCs might disrupt the kuo-toas enough to make temple-looting easier, while Cherrit figures he can still find Zenith. The PCs probably meet the former prisoners on a later foray into Bhal-Hamatugn—when it's least convenient for them.

The characters earn no experience for setting the prisoners free, nor do they earn experience for leaving them in their cells, because neither is a challenge. They earn experience only if they defeat the prisoners in a reasonably fair fight. But if the PCs set either prisoner free, they will undoubtedly have that chance in a later encounter, and they earn experience points then.

Ad-hoc XP Award: As they are when initially encountered, both prisoners are worth 20% less experience than normal because they have no equipment.

5. SHRINE TO THE SEA MOTHER (EL 9; SEE TEXT)

Light: Red glow from eyes of statue (shadowy illumination).
Sound: Rhythmic croaking (automatic if the kuo-toas in this area haven't been alerted yet); spellcasting (DC 15, but only if Mangh-Mictho in area 7 has been alerted); banging drums (automatic, but only for the 2 rounds before Aushanna arrives as described below).

Reaction: To sounds of battle—Mangh-Mictho puts on armor, casts prep spells, and emerges from area 7 in 5 minutes (automatic); To entry by nonkuo-toa—Aushanna arrives 2 minutes later (automatic).

Auras: Strong (Sea Mother statue, DC 25 conjuration and necromancy), moderate (Aushanna's bow, DC 20 evocation), faint (whip armor, DC 17 abjuration), faint (*cure* scroll, DC 16 conjuration), faint (*bear's endurance* scroll, DC 16 transmutation); overwhelming evil (Aushanna), strong evil (Sea Mother statue), moderate evil (four whips), faint evil (four kuo-toa soldiers).

Area 5 is another set piece battle, an immense room where the PCs will face low-level kuo-toas, a powerful devil, and the kuo-toan high priest in succession.

The read-aloud text assumes the characters are coming into area 5b, the middle level of area 5. Adapt it if the PCs arrive from area 5c (the lower level) or 5a (the upper level, although that's unlikely). In any case, nonevil PCs must succeed at a DC 17 Will save to enter area 5, because of the *magic circle against good* effect that's part of the statue's *unhallow* ability. Characters who step out onto the balcony see the following:

A 70-foot-high statue of a lobsterlike creature dominates this chamber. Its eyes glow with a bright crimson that illuminates the room. You stand on an iron-railed balcony. About 30 feet below you is the floor of the chamber, where four kuo-toas wearing banded armor stand in knee-deep water at the base of a stairway. The stairway leads up to a platform directly across the chamber from you that encircles the midsection of the lobster statue, a few feet below its massive crustacean claws.

The balcony you stand on follows the walls three-quarters of the way around the chamber. To your left and right are stairs leading both up and down. About 30 feet above you is another balcony, which extends only halfway along the left and right walls.

Frescos of bloody sacrifices—mostly stylized kuo-toas carrying dismembered body parts—cover the walls. Every single kuo-toa depicted is facing the lobster statue.

Creatures: The statue generates an *unhallow* effect that covers all of area 5. You need to know the PCs' alignments before this encounter starts, because the NPCs get +2 to AC and on saves against good PCs, but not neutral or evil ones.

The kuo-toa whips in area 5c are engaged in rhythmic croaking if they haven't been alerted yet. If they've had at least a few rounds warning, they have prepared enough electricity for a lightning bolt.

The characters immediately have to contend with two groups of kuo-toas: the whips at the base of the stairs and the soldiers on the upper balcony, who aren't initially visible to the PCs. Two minutes after the PCs enter this chamber, Aushanna the erinyes arrives, called from the Nine Hells by the power of Blipdoolpoolp's statue. Because the PCs won't necessarily face all these creatures at once, they're dealt with separately below.

➤ **Kuo-toa Whips** (4): hp 23, 24, 22, 21; see the Appendix for complete statistics.

➤ **Kuo-toa Soldiers** (4): hp 19, 17, 16, 22; see the Appendix for complete statistics.

➤ **Aushanna, Advanced Erinyes**: CR 9; Medium outsider (baatezu, evil, extraplanar, lawful); HD 12d8+60; hp 114; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (good); AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +12; Grp +21; Atk +17 melee (1d8+5/19–20, longsword) or +18 ranged (1d8+6/×3 plus 1d6 fire, +1 flaming composite longbow) or +17 ranged (entangle, rope); Full Atk +17/+12/+7 melee (1d8+5/19–20, longsword) or +18/13/+8 ranged (1d8+6/×3 plus 1d6 fire, +1 flaming composite longbow) or +16/+16/+11/+6 ranged (1d8+6/×3 plus 1d6 fire, +1 flaming composite longbow with Rapid Shot feat) or +17 ranged (entangle, rope); SA entangle, spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 5/good, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire and poison, resistance to acid 10 and cold 10, see in darkness, SR 20, telepathy 100 ft., true seeing; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +13, Will +12; Str 21, Dex 21, Con 21, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 20.

Skills: Concentration +20, Diplomacy +10, Escape Artist +17, Hide +20, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Listen +19, Move Silently +20, Search +17, Sense Motive +19, Spot +19, Survival +4 (+6 following tracks), Use Rope +5 (+7 with bindings). **Feats**: Dodge, Flyby Attack, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run.

Entangle (Ex): Aushanna can hurl her rope up to 30 feet at no range penalty; as *animate rope* spell (16th-level caster).

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*greater teleport* (self + 50 pounds of objects), *charm monster* (DC 19), *minor image* (DC 17), *unholy blight* (DC 19). Caster level 12th.

True Seeing (Su): As the spell; caster level 14th.

Possessions: +1 flaming composite longbow (+5 Str bonus) with 40 arrows, longsword, rope.

Kuo-toa Tactics: Both sets of kuo-toas are more than willing to engage in ranged combat because they know that if they can survive for a few minutes, Aushanna will arrive and reinforce them. The whips stay together in a group, casting their defensive spells (*entropic shield*, then *shield of faith*) and generating lightning bolts as often as they can. They only draw their morningstars and attack if they've already cast their defensive spells and the characters have moved down to engage them in melee. The soldiers spread out to the balconies on the east and west walls and fire their hand crossbows at the PCs. If the characters head toward the upper balconies (either by flying or ascending the stairs), two soldiers move to the platform in the center of the south wall, then untie the suspension bridges to the left and right of the door, which takes a full-round action.

If a kuo-toa is close enough to charge a PC on a balcony, it tries to bull rush the PC off the balcony, going with the PC if necessary—these are religious fanatics, after all. It's a 30-foot drop from the balconies and platforms in area 5b and a 60-foot drop from the upper balcony in area 5a. The presence of the rail gives a character resisting a bull rush attempt a +2 circumstance bonus on the Strength check.

Aushanna Tactics: Unlike the kuo-toas, Aushanna has to work quickly because she returns to the Nine Hells after 10 minutes. She flies up near the ceiling and peppers the PCs with arrows, using Rapid Shot to make four attacks. If the PCs deal her significant damage (more than 15 points in a single attack), she *teleports* away for a round or two, then *teleports* back. She takes advantage of her speed and maneuverability, using Flyby Attack and Shot on the Run to flit back and forth between squares with cover from the PCs.

If Aushanna arrives to find an empty chamber, she flies through Bhal-Hamatugn looking for intruders. With her *true sight* ability, she's likely to find them, but the search uses up some of the 10 minutes she's allotted on the Material Plane.

‡ **Statue of Blipdoolpoolp**: The lobster statue, made of pure obsidian, is essentially a massive, stationary magic item. It has the following effects, all with a caster level of 15th:

- Permanent widened *unhallow* that covers all of area 5. This prevents nonevil characters from entering area 5 (Will negates DC 17), blocks all mental charm and compulsion effects, makes rebuking easier and turning harder, and gives all creatures a +2 deflection bonus to AC and a +2 resistance bonus on saves against attacks made or effects created by good creatures.

- The statue counts as three additional whips for the purpose of the kuo-toas' lightning bolts, and the whips generating the lightning bolt need only be in the same room as the statue, not necessarily touching it. Four whips can generate a lightning bolt that deals 7d6 points of damage in area 5, and even a solo whip can generate a 4d6 lightning bolt.

- Whenever a nonevil character enters area 5, the statue uses a variant of a *planar ally* spell to call a specific erinyes devil, Aushanna, 2 minutes later. Aushanna returns to the Nine Hells after 10 minutes, and then won't return for another hour. If Aushanna is killed she is dead, and the statue can't call another outsider until a cleric of Blipdoolpoolp of at least 15th level learns the name of another demon or devil and makes a deal with it through the statue to serve as this area's guardian. Once the cleric learns the outsider's name, the process of establishing the new link requires a ritual that takes 12 hours of prayer and meditation. For the sake of this adventure, slaying Aushanna effectively ends this particular threat even if the PCs leave the kuo-toan stronghold and return later.

Treasure: If Aushanna is slain, the PCs can claim her bow and other equipment. As a called outsider, her body and possessions don't disappear when she dies.

Experience: This area essentially includes two EL 9 encounters: the kuo-toas present when the PCs enter, then Aushanna the erinyes, who arrives 2 minutes later. Depending on the PCs' actions, they might face these encounters one after the other, in separate forays, or even both at once if the kuo-toas are able to stall for time. If the characters defeat both during the same foray—no mean feat—they face the high priest, Mangh-Mictho, when he emerges from area 8. Mangh-Mictho is also an EL 9 encounter.

6. PRIEST'S CHAMBER (EL 6; SEE TEXT)

Light: Continual flame from brass brazier hanging in center of room.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Moderate (clay pot, DC 21 abjuration), faint (continual flame, DC 18 evocation).

These two rooms differ only in minor details. The personal quarters of the high-ranking whips, the chambers are notable only for their trap and treasure.

A stone cistern about 6 feet long and 4 feet across dominates this room. Shelves cover the walls. Most are empty, but a few hold moldy scrolls or rotting books. A lidded clay pot some 4 feet tall sits in the northern corner. An obviously magical flame burns in a brazier hanging from the ceiling.

The scrolls and books are mostly religious texts about Blipdoolpoolp, although they occasionally reference other faiths—mostly those of Wee Jas and Vecna. A PC who reads Kuo-toan that spends at least 20 minutes scanning them, however, spots a passing reference to the “dark wisdom of the dwarf Zee’niht Shpehn-trahshad.” The text provides no further details.

The cistern is filled with clean water. A priest sleeps there.

Trap: A greater glyph of warding guards the clay pot, triggering if anyone who isn't a kuo-toa wearing a holy symbol of Blipdoolpoolp breaks the clay pot or lifts the lid.

➤ **Greater Glyph of Warding Trap:** CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (glyph of warding [blast], 16th-level cleric, 8d8 sonic, DC 19 Reflex save half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 32, Disable Device DC 32.

Treasure: The contents of the pot are different in each priest's chamber. If the trap is triggered, the blast destroys everything but the coins.

East Chamber: 500 gp, malachite-handled mirror (100 gp), pearl necklace (300 gp), garnet ring (100 gp).

West Chamber: 1,200 sp, 200 gp, embroidered mantle (400 gp), ebony chess pieces (200 gp).

Ad-hoc XP Award: Because the characters will expect the second clay pot they encounter to be trapped, award 20% fewer experience points for it.

7. MEDITATION CHAMBER (EL 9)

Light: Illumination from doorways to area 6 (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint (Mangh-Mictho's armor, DC 17 abjuration). If Mangh-Mictho has cast his preparatory spells, he has the following additional auras: moderate (divine power, DC 19 evocation), faint (bear's endurance, DC 17 transmutation), faint (bull's strength, DC 17 transmutation), faint (owl's wisdom, DC 17 transmutation), faint (entropic shield, DC 16 abjuration), faint (shield of

faith, DC 16 abjuration), faint (magic weapon, DC 16 transmutation), faint (divine favor, DC 16 evocation); strong evil (Mangh-Mictho), faint evil (duergar).

This room is almost devoid of features, but one of the most powerful kuo-toas in Bhal-Hamatugn spends most of his time here. Read the last sentence of the boxed text only if Mangh-Mictho is present.

Murky water laps just a few inches below the threshold to this room. The room is empty of furniture, but the walls are covered with crab claws, mandibles, and other crustacean appendages carved in bas-relief. The warm light of a fire streams from doorways to your left and right. A kuo-toa wearing chitin-styled plate armor stands in the center of the room, water lapping at his knees.

The meditation chamber is where the whips come to prepare spells each day. Some of the claws on the north wall form shallow bowls that spill over into each other; the fountains form a water clock so the kuo-toas know when to pray to Blipdoolpoolp again. But the characters have to get through Mangh-Mictho, the head whip, before they can examine the water clock.

There's a chance the PCs have to engage in underwater combat here. It's a good idea to reread the Underwater Combat section in Chapter 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* before running this encounter.

Creatures: Mangh-Mictho, the head whip, spends most of his waking hours here, tending the shrine and notifying the other whips when it's time for them to return to the chamber and pray. He is waited upon by a duergar slave.

➤ **Mangh-Mictho, Male Kuo-toa Clr 8:** CR 9; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 2d8+6 plus 8d8+24; hp 75; Init +1; Spd 15 ft., swim 35 ft.; AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +8; Grp +10; Atk +11 melee (1d10+3, pincer staff); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d10+3, pincer staff); SA lightning bolt, pincer staff; SQ amphibious, immunity to poison and paralysis, keen sight, light blindness, resistance to electricity 10, slippery; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +14; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 21, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +15, Escape Artist +6*, Jump -8*, Listen +7, Search +4, Spellcraft +11, Spot +11, Swim +6*. **Feats:** Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (pincer staff), Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Focus (necromancy), Weapon Focus (pincer staff).

*Includes -2 armor check penalty (-4 for Swim)

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/7/5/5/4; save DC 15 + spell level); 0—cure minor wounds ×2, detect magic ×2, read magic, resistance; 1st—cure light wounds ×2, divine favor, entropic shield, magic weapon, protection from good*, shield of faith; 2nd—bear's endurance, bull's strength, darkness, owl's wisdom, shatter*; 3rd—bestow curse*, contagion*, deeper darkness, dispel magic ×2; 4th—control water, cure critical wounds, divine power, unholy blight*.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Destruction (smite once per day for +4 attack, +8 damage), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

†Evocation or Necromancy spells. The save DC for these spells is 16 + spell level.

Lightning Bolt: Every 1d4 rounds, whips can generate a lightning bolt that deals 1d6 points of electricity damage for every whip touching each other; Reflex save DC 13 + number of whips for half damage.

Keen Sight (Ex): Kuo-toas can spot invisible and ethereal creatures, as long as they're moving.

Light Blindness (Ex): Exposure to bright light (such as a *daylight* spell) blinds kuo-toas for 1 round and dazzles them as long as the light remains.

Slippery: Kuo-toans can wriggle free from webs and other forms of confinement.

Possessions: +1 mithral full plate, pincer staff, holy symbol.

➤ **Duergar Slave:** hp 9; *Monster Manual* 91.

Tactics: When he hears trouble, Mangh-Mictho first locks the door, then has his duergar slave help him put on his armor (4 minutes). Once armored, he casts preparatory spells in the following order: *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *owl's wisdom*, *entropic shield*, *shield of faith*, *magic weapon*, *divine favor*, and *divine power*. He moves to the door and listens for 1 round, then he unlocks the door to face the intruders in area 5.

When Mangh-Mictho has all the spells cast, his stats improve as follows: hp 103; AC 29; Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d10+10, +1 pincer staff); Fort +11, Will +16; Concentration +17, Jump -5, Listen +9, Spot +13, Swim +11; save DC 17 + spell level, 18 + spell level for Evocation and Necromancy spells.

By stepping into area 5, Mangh-Mictho can generate a lightning bolt every 1d4 rounds that deals 4d6 points of electricity damage. But Mangh-Mictho can also try to entice at least some of the PCs into entering area 7, so he might step back a square or two so he threatens an open door with his pincer staff, which has a reach of 10 feet. Once one or more PCs step into the room, Mangh-Mictho moves to the door himself and closes and locks it. He's willing to suffer attacks of opportunity for this action. If Mangh-Mictho gets PCs inside area 7 when the door is locked, he casts the raise water version of *control water*, filling areas 6 and 7 to the ceiling. Then the PCs have to contend with the dangers and difficulties of underwater combat, as described in Chapter 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*. Those outside the locked door see only a slowly growing puddle of water, unless they can open the door before their comrades drown.

8. TORTURE CHAMBER (EL 5)

Light: *Continual flame* from brass-and-wood brazier floating in northwest corner of room.

Sound: Dripping water (automatic), rhythmic croaking (DC 15, unless it stopped when the portcullis in area 4 opened).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint (*continual flame*, DC 17 evocation); moderate evil (Garekk).

Lurking in this room is the kuo-toas' torturer, a mummy named Garekk. If he heard the PCs approach, he's hiding underwater.

The passageway leading to this room slopes down slightly, and the omnipresent puddles eventually grow to the point where you're knee-deep in murky water. The room, lit by a floating brazier in the northwest corner containing an obviously magical flame, has all manner of torture implements: shelves with scalpels, thumbscrews, and a large jar of salt. A well-oiled stretching rack. Pairs of manacles hanging from the ceiling and the eastern wall.

Assuming the rack and shelves are of normal height, the room probably has 2 to 3 feet of standing water in it.

Creatures: Garekk rarely leaves this room, except to gather torture victims from the cells in area 4 or deliver "ritual components" to area 5. Garekk doesn't remember what race he used to be, and he's so twisted and decrepit that it's impossible to tell by looking at him.

➤ **Garekk, Mummy:** hp 55; *Monster Manual* 190 except Hide +7, Intimidate +13, Listen +8, Spot +4.

Tactics: If Garekk hears the portcullis in area 4 open or hears conversation in the southern hallway, he crouches underwater in the northeast corner of the room. When he first rises from the water—or when the PCs otherwise first see him—they must succeed at a DC 16 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. He attacks a paralyzed foe first if possible and the nearest enemy if not. (Kuo-toas are naturally immune to paralysis, so Garekk's despair ability doesn't get in the way.)

The room is filled with waist-high water to Medium creatures. Medium or larger creatures get cover from the water, but it costs 4 squares of movement to move into any square in the room (or they can swim if they wish). Small PCs have to swim, but they gain improved cover (+8 bonus to AC, +4 bonus on Reflex saves). Tumbling is impossible, and the DCs of Move Silently checks are increased by 2.

CAMPAIGN SEED: DHORLOT AND THE CAGEWRIGHTS

For a relatively young dragon, Dhorlot is fascinated—some might say obsessed—with creating half-dragon progeny. He's allied with the Cagewrights in Cauldron because bringing a horde of fiends to the Material Plane will open up new opportunities to pursue his avocation.

Dhorlot has been in Bhal-Hamatugn for several months, arriving at Mangh-Mictho's urging. When he arrived, he noticed Zenith's birthmark and immediately informed the Cagewrights, selling them the location of one of their Shackleborn in exchange for "breeding rights" when the gate from Carceri is open.

In the meantime, he's been impregnating the kuo-toas while keeping an eye on Zenith Splintershield for the Cagewrights.

9A. ARMORER'S WORKSHOP

Light: Pitch black. If the PCs have only darkvision, eliminate color reference in the read-aloud text below.

Sound: Dripping water (automatic); Hlanamm moving into position (PCs' Listen checks opposed by Hlanamm's Move Silently check of +9, but PCs get a +2 bonus because of the shallow water in area 9e).

Reaction: To conversation in a language other than Kuo-Toan—Hlanamm the Spearmaster in area 9e sneaks down the hallway toward the PCs, setting up a sneak attack with his spear.
Auras: None.

This vacant room is where one of the kuo-toas makes shields and armor for the rest of the tribe.

Down a long hallway is an alcove, partially covered with a bright red tapestry hanging from pegs in the ceiling. Beyond it is a primitive forge and a table with woodworking and leathercrafting tools.

9B. PAINTER'S WORKSHOP

Light: Pitch black. If the PCs have only darkvision, eliminate color reference in the read-aloud text below.

Sound: Dripping water (automatic); Hlanamm moving into position (PCs' Listen checks opposed by Hlanamm's Move Silently check of +9, but PCs get a +2 bonus because of the shallow water in area 9e).

Reaction: To conversation in a language other than Kuo-Toan—Hlanamm the Spearmaster in area 9e sneaks down the hallway toward the PCs, setting up a sneak attack with his spear.
Auras: None.

One of the kuo-toas prepares the paints that become the frescos elsewhere in Bhal-Hamatugn in this room.

Beyond the second red curtain is another alcove, dominated by a wooden table covered with mixing bowls, mud-pots, and ceramic jars of paint.

Treasure: The fresco paints in area 9b are worth 500 gp (Appraise DC 25 to discern their value).

9C. STONEMASON'S WORKSHOP

Light: Pitch black.

Sound: Dripping water (automatic); Hlanamm moving into position (PCs' Listen checks opposed by Hlanamm's Move Silently check of +9, but PCs get a +2 bonus because of the shallow water in area 9e).

Reaction: To conversation in a language other than Kuo-Toan—Hlanamm the Spearmaster in area 9e sneaks down the hallway toward the PCs, setting up a sneak attack with his spear.
Auras: None.

This alcove is for the stonemason, who does everything from repairs to the walls of Bhal-Hamatugn to arrowheads and spearpoints for Hlanamm in area 9e.

This alcove has a pedal-operated grinder and a table covered with chisels, picks, and shards of flint, some crudely fashioned into spearpoints.

9D. WEAVER'S WORKSHOP

Light: Pitch black. If the PCs have only darkvision, eliminate color reference in the read-aloud text below.

Sound: Dripping water (automatic); Hlanamm moving into position (PCs' Listen checks opposed by Hlanamm's Move Silently check of +9, but PCs get a +2 bonus because of the shallow water in area 9e).

Reaction: To conversation in a language other than Kuo-Toan—Hlanamm the Spearmaster in area 9e sneaks down the hallway toward the PCs, setting up a sneak attack with his spear.
Auras: None.

The kuo-toa weaver responsible for the tapestries in Bhal-Hamatugn plies his trade here.

A big loom covers most of the available floor space in this alcove. A half-completed tapestry on the loom depicts the green and black legs of what is apparently a kuo-toa, and the swirling black tail of something else. Another tapestry is rolled up and leaning in a corner.

The PCs should be glad the tapestry isn't completed. It depicts Dhorlot (who lives in area 14) impregnating a kuo-toa female.

Treasure: The tapestry in the corner, an abstract zig-zag design, is worth 400 gp. It weighs 75 pounds.

9E. WEAPONSMITH'S WORKSHOP (EL 7)

Light: Pitch black. If the PCs have only darkvision, eliminate color reference in read-aloud text below.

Sound: Dripping water (automatic); Hlanamm moving into position (PCs' Listen checks opposed by Hlanamm's Move Silently check of +9, but PCs get a +2 bonus because of the shallow water in area 9e).

Reaction: To conversation in a language other than Kuo-Toan or entry by nonkuo-toa—Hlanamm the Spearmaster attacks.
Auras: Moderate (Hlanamm's spear, DC 18 transmutation); faint evil (Hlanamm).

A kuo-toa rogue waits in ambush in this room, and it provides some insight into how the kuo-toa tribe works.

The final alcove holds a round table with a bag of feathers, wooden shafts of various lengths and thicknesses, and a stitched-together padded mannequin with several crossbow bolts sticking out of its head.

Creatures: Of the artisans, only Hlanamm the Spearmaster is present in his workshop. The others are in area 12.

➤ **Hlanamm the Spearmaster, Male Kuo-toa Rog 5:** CR 7; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 2d8+4 plus 5d6+10; hp 41; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., swim 50 ft.; AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +5; Grp +8; Atk +10 melee (1d6+4, +1 *shortspear*) or +9 ranged (1d6+4, +1 *shortspear*); Full Atk +10 melee (1d6+4, +1 *shortspear*) or +9 ranged (1d6+4, +1 *shortspear*); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ adhesive, amphibious, evasion, immunity to poison and paralysis, keen sight, light blindness, resistance to electricity 10, slippery, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +10*, Craft (weaponsmith) +8, Escape Artist +9*, Hide +9*, Jump +12*, Listen +7, Move Silently +9*, Search +4, Spot +9, Swim +9*, Tumble +11*. **Feats:** Alertness, Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (*shortspear*).

*Includes -1 armor check penalty (-2 for Swim).

Adhesive (Ex): Foes who miss a kuo-toa with a melee attack must succeed at a DC 14 Reflex save or have the weapon yanked from their grasp and stuck to the kuo-toa's shield. A shield can only trap one thing. It takes a DC 20 Strength check to pull something free from the shield.

Keen Sight (Ex): Kuo-toas can spot invisible and ethereal creatures, as long as they're moving.

Light Blindness (Ex): Exposure to bright light (such as a *daylight* spell) blinds kuo-toas for 1 round and dazzles them as long as the light remains.

Slippery: Kuo-toans can wriggle free from webs and other forms of confinement.

Possessions: +1 *shortspear* of returning, masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork heavy wooden shield.

Tactics: Hlanamm listens carefully, hoping to get warning of the PCs' approach. Then he hides at the entrance to his workshop. Ideally, he throws his spear when only one PC remains in the hallway, but he also throws if he gets too worried that he will lose the element of surprise. Hlanamm does whatever he can to deal sneak attack damage. If taken below half his hit points, he tries to flee to area 12, although the portcullis may keep him in area 11.

Treasure: The fresco paints in area 9b are worth 500 gp (Appraise DC 25 to discern their value). An abstract tapestry in area 9d is worth 400 gp, but it weighs 75 pounds.

10. HALL OF KUO-TOAN HEROES (EL 7)

Light: Pitch black.

Sound: None.

Reaction: To sounds of battle—kuo-toa soldiers in area 11 warn kuo-toas in area 12 (automatic); to pit trap triggering—area 11 warns area 12 (DC 10).

Auras: None; moderate evil (wraith).

This room has a pit trap and a resident wraith who eagerly takes advantage of PCs who fall down the pit.

This chamber is mostly empty, but attached to the walls are about two dozen motionless kuo-toas. Those on the east wall have shields and weapons, usually spears or rapiers. Some have large slashes in them—wounds that certainly look fatal. Those on the west wall all have grisly holes in their bellies and carry no weapons. A basalt altar with a single carved-stone crustacean claw is built into the south wall.

The PCs assume the worst—that the kuo-toas on the walls are zombies or some other undead. But the truth is far simpler: The kuo-toas honor their heroes by stuffing their bodies and mounting them here so that they can inspire others even after death. The east wall is for war heroes, and the west wall is for kuo-toan females who've died giving birth to the fingerlings in area 11.

Trap: A deep, spike-filled pit lies just inside the room through the double doors.

➤ **Spiked Pit Trap:** CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 25 Reflex save avoids; 40 ft. deep (4d6, fall); multiple targets (anyone standing in the marked area after a one-second delay); pit spikes (Atk +19 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+4 each); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 20.

Creature: A wraith haunts this room. It doesn't attack the kuo-toas because it's learned that doing so invites Mangh-Mictho's wrath.

➤ **Wraith:** hp 32; *Monster Manual* 258.

Tactics: The wraith lurks near the altar, hiding with only its head sticking out of the wall. If someone falls down the pit, the wraith swoops down to the pit through the floor and attacks the trap victim, hoping to drain him completely and create a spawn before the other PCs can help. Otherwise, the wraith waits until one PC stands apart from the others before attacking, if it can.

Treasure: Golden incense burners (1,000 gp) sit on the altar.

11. FINGERLING POOL (EL 8)

Light: Pitch black.

Sound: Tiny splashes from water (DC 10); occasional rustling and splashes from area 12 (DC 20).

NEW MAGIC ITEM

‡ **Sphere of the Unseen:** This variant of an elemental gem contains a conjuration spell tied to the Elemental Plane of Air. When the glowing glass sphere is broken, an invisible stalker appears as if summoned by a *summon monster* spell. The invisible stalker is

under the control of the creature that broke the sphere and remains for 13 rounds.

Strong conjuration; CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, *summon monster VII*; Price 4,550 gp.



Reaction: To sounds of battle—kuo-toa soldiers emerge from area 12 in 6 rounds, open portcullis, and join battle (automatic).
Auras: None; faint evil (two fingerling swarms), faint evil (two kuo-toa soldiers).

In this room, the PCs come into contact with the product of the kuo-toa's crossbreeding program: half-dragon kuo-toa fingerlings.

This octagonal room has a stone staircase ascending into an alcove in the northwest corner and an iron portcullis in the south wall. It looks like a net has been woven through the bars of the portcullis, but the net only reaches halfway up the bars. Most of the western half of the room is covered with standing water. The water is murky, so you can't tell how deep it gets, but if the floor is mostly level, it shouldn't be more than a foot deep. The walls are covered with frescos of young kuo-toas emerging from eggs and being handed spears by other kuo-toas.

The water is indeed shallow, except as marked on the map near the stairway. There it's 4 feet deep, providing cover for the guards in this room.

The lever that opens and closes the portcullis is inset into the west wall on the south side of the portcullis. It functions like the portcullises in area 4, except that it makes only a faint rattling noise. The net keeps the draconic fingerlings from swimming into area 12.

Creatures: Two kuo-toa soldiers crouch on either side of the staircase, and under the surface of the water lurk two draconic fingerling swarms (described in the appendix).

➤ **Kuo-toa Soldiers** (2): hp 19, 20; see the Appendix for complete statistics.

➤ **Draconic Fingerlings** (2): hp 62, 64; see the Appendix for complete statistics.

Tactics: The kuo-toa soldiers hide underwater if they know the PCs are coming, then raise their heads and hand crossbows above the surface hoping to surprise (and sneak attack) the PCs when they enter the room. Crouching in the deep water, the kuo-toa soldiers have improved cover (+8 bonus to AC, +4 bonus on Reflex saves) from PCs who aren't also in the deep water. The fingerling swarms simply attack any PC that sets foot in the water or comes within a vertical jump of the water's surface.

Experience: The PCs gain experience for the draconic fingerling swarms as if they defeated the swarms in battle if they get onto the stairs that lead to area 13. Their purpose here isn't to defeat acidic tadpoles, it's to recover Zenith Splintershield.

12. LIVING QUARTERS (EL 8; SEE TEXT)

Light: Phosphorescent patches on walls (shadowy illumination).

Sound: Trickling water (automatic).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint (whip armor, DC 17 abjuration), faint (cure scroll, DC 16 conjuration), faint (bear's endurance scroll, DC 16

transmutation); moderate evil (three whips), faint evil (six kuo-toa females).

This is where the rank-and-file kuo-toas sleep, bathe, and eat.

A pool of murky water lies in the center of this room. The walls are covered with primitive stick-figure drawings of bipeds with spears. Some carry oval-shaped objects. Nine kuo-toas glare at you balefully.

A straightforward fight is in store here, the only complication being the shallow water that covers much of the room.

Creatures: Three of the kuo-toas are whips, and the others are Bhal-Hamatugn's remaining females (the others died after giving birth to the fingerlings and are now stuffed in area 10).

➤ **Kuo-toa Whips** (3): hp 28, 30, 31; see Appendix.

➤ **Kuo-toa Females** (6): hp 11, 13, 9, 12, 10, 14; *Monster Manual* 163.

Tactics: The kuo-toa whips cast protective spells on themselves if they are forewarned of the PCs' approach. The females engage the PCs in melee, while the whips cast spells and generate lightning bolts. The kuo-toas fight to the death unless they can slip past the PCs and run away, in which case they head toward area 5.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Because this encounter features many low-level opponents, it's easier and thus less of a challenge than its encounter level would indicate. Reduce XP awards by 10%.

13. DHORLOT'S ANTECHAMBER (EL 6)

Light: Pitch black.

Sound: Occasional slithering from beyond north door (DC 25).

Reaction: To triggering either trap—Dhorlot in area 14 knows of PCs' presence (automatic).

Auras: Faint (door trap, DC 20 abjuration).

Trap #1: This empty room has two traps: one on the carved stone doors between this room and area 12, and one inside the room itself. Deal with the door trap first, then read the boxed text when the PCs get the door open.

➤ **Lightning Bolt Trap:** CR 6; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*lightning bolt*, 10th-level caster 10d6 electricity, DC 14 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28. The *lightning bolt* is wide enough to encompass the entire stairway.

This empty room has wall frescos in a zig-zag pattern so busy it's almost dizzying to look at. You see another carved stone door in the center of the north wall.

Trap #2: Characters who cross the room face the second trap, which triggers 6 seconds after the first PC steps beyond the threshold. Anyone in the room at that point gets targeted by the trap, unless they're Small or crawling, in which case the spears fly harmlessly overhead.

➤ **Poison Wall Spears:** CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +16 ranged (1d8+4 plus poison, spear); multiple targets (anyone Medium or larger in room); poison (Medium monstrous spider venom, DC 12 Fortitude save resists, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str); Search DC 17; Disable Device DC 21.

14. DHORLOT THE DRAGON-FATHER (EL 9; SEE TEXT)

Light: *Continual flame* from brass brazier on altar.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint (*continual flame*, DC 17 evocation); moderate evil (Dhorlot).

One of the most powerful allies of Zenith and kuo-toas, a black dragon, lives here. Dhorlot fathered the draconic fingerlings in area 12.

This plain chamber features a stone altar on its north wall and clay pots lining the east and west walls. In the center of the room crouches a black dragon the size of a horse, its nostrils twitching as it stares you down.

Creatures: Dhorlot is the only creature present in this area. The characters need to make their saves against the dragon's frightful presence during the round after Dhorlot first attacks.

➤ **Dhorlot the Dragon-Father:** CR 9; Large dragon (water); HD 16d12+48; hp 150; Init +0; Spd 60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.; AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +16; Grp +24; Atk +20 melee (2d6+4, bite); Full Atk +20 melee (2d6+4, bite), +17 melee 1d8+2, 2 claws), +17 melee (1d6+2, 2 wings), +18 melee (1d8+6, tail slap); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft. (bite 10 ft.); SA breath weapon, *darkness*, frightful presence, spells; SQ blindsense 60 ft., DR 5/magic; darkvision 120 ft., immunities (acid, sleep, and paralysis), low-light vision, SR 17, water breathing; AL CE; SV Fort +13, Ref +10, Will +11; Str 19, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +9, Climb +20, Diplomacy +8, Hide +8, Intimidate +19, Listen +17, Move Silently +16, Search +17, Knowledge (nature) +7, Spot +17, Swim +10. **Feats:** Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (tail slap).

Breath Weapon (Su): 80-ft. line, damage 10d4 acid, Reflex DC 21 half.

Darkness (Sp): 3/day—as darkness, but 50 ft., radius. Caster level 5th.

Frightful Presence (Ex): 150 ft. radius, HD 15 or less, Will DC 19 negates.

Water Breathing (Ex): Can breathe underwater indefinitely and freely use breath weapon, spells, and other abilities underwater.

Spells Known (5/4; save DC 11 + spell level): 0—*daze*, *detect magic*, *ray of fatigue*, *read magic*; 1st—*obscuring mist*, *shield*.

Tactics: Dhorlot applies typical dragon tactics—breath weapon or full attack every round—against intruders. He casts *shield* if he hears intruders at his door. But unlike the fanatical

kuo-toas, Dhorlot isn't willing to die to protect Bhal-Hamatugn. If reduced below 60 hp, he flees, bull-rushing PCs out of the way if he has to and using *obscuring mist* at an intersection to slow pursuit. If the PCs drive him off, he never returns to Bhal-Hamatugn.

Treasure: Most of the clay pots are empty, but some hold the dragon's hoard: 60 pp, 800 gp, 1,100 sp, 400 cp, finely wrought electrum bracers (500 gp for the set), four sets of silver flatware (50 gp each), three rubies (300 gp each), two emeralds (200 gp each), 1 cut zirconium (10 gp, but it takes a DC 15 Appraise check to avoid mistaking it for a 2,000 gp diamond), scroll of *dismissal*, scroll of *cloudkill*, scroll of *wall of fire*, wand of *see invisibility* (11 charges remaining), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of darkvision*, *potion of displacement*, oil of *keen edge*.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Because Dhorlot will readily flee, and because the close-quarters terrain favors the PCs, award 10% less experience for this encounter.

15. GUARD POSTS (EL 7)

Light: Pitch black.

Sound: Faint rhythmic croaking (DC 25).

Reaction: To sounds of battle—kuo-toans in area 3 awaken and attack in 6 rounds (automatic).

Auras: None; faint evil (four kuo-toa soldiers).

A narrow passageway connects these two small chambers. Neither has any furniture or features beyond the large openings in the south wall, which afford a view of the lake Bhal-Hamatugn sits in and the larger Underdark cavern.

There's a stone door in the north wall of the passageway that connects the two eye-chambers.

Creatures: It's likely that the PCs fought the kuo-toas here when they entered Bhal-Hamatugn. If they didn't, or if this is a later foray, four kuo-toa soldiers watch the entrance from these rooms, the eyes of the giant fish that is Bhal-Hamatugn.

➔ **Kuo-toan Soldiers (4):** hp 20, 22, 18, 19; see the Appendix for complete statistics.

Tactics: Because the kuo-toas guard Bhal-Hamatugn from exterior attack, they don't pay attention to the stairway that leads from area 3 to here. Accordingly, they suffer a -5 penalty on Spot and Listen checks against PCs coming up the stairs. Once engaged, they rush into melee, trying to make as much noise as possible to warn the rest of Bhal-Hamatugn.

16. ARMORY

Light: Pitch black.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: None.

This room is simply weapon and armor storage.

This small room has shields stacked on the floor and dozens of spears in racks on the wall.

Treasure: The room holds 40 heavy wooden shields, 120 shortspears, 10 pincer staffs, and 200 hand crossbow bolts. Five of the shields have had kuo-toa adhesive applied to them.

17. MUSHROOM GROTTO (EL 7; SEE TEXT)

Light: Phosphorescent patches on walls (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: To collapse of roof—every creature in Bhal-Hamatugn alerted to PCs' presence (automatic).

Auras: None.

Characters face two perils here: dangerous fungi and a roof that's about to collapse.

The floor of this large, T-shaped room is covered with bell-capped purple mushrooms standing a foot or two high. Two massive pillars are the room's only other visible feature. The southern pillar has partially collapsed and no longer reaches the ceiling. The northern pillar is cracked but otherwise intact. From the vantage point of the door, you can't see into the alcoves to the north and south.

The northern pillar is all that's holding up the roof. If it takes 30 points of damage, it collapses, caving in all of area 17 (everything west of the double doors). The cave-in functions as described in the Cave-Ins and Collapses section of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*.

The mushrooms that cover the floor count as light undergrowth, providing concealments and costing 2 squares of movement to enter each square. The DC of Tumble and Move Silently checks increases by 2.

Creatures: Four violet fungi live among the mushrooms. The kuo-toas don't mind because they're immune to poison.

➔ **Violet Fungus (4):** 15, 14, 16, 17 hp; *Monster Manual* 112.

Tactics: The violet fungi lurk near the interior corners of the room. Until they move and extend their tentacles, they're indistinguishable from the rest of the mushrooms. They shuffle forward and attack as soon as they have a living target that doesn't look like a kuo-toa. They aren't intelligent, so they mindlessly fight until slain.

Experience: If the PCs get caught in area 17 as it collapses, they earn experience as if it was a CR 8 trap.

18. ANTECHAMBER OF THE FINAL BREATH (EL 8)

Light: Pitch black.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint (Saagogoi's slippers, DC 17 abjuration); faint evil (Saagogoi).

The PCs have nearly reached Zenith, but they must first deal with a deadly guardian: Saagogoi, a kuo-toa monitor assassin.

This lozenge-shaped chamber has more frescoes, this time of kuo-toas emerging from the sea and marching into holes in the ground. The floor is covered with the same porcelain shards you found near the entrance. The eastern corner of the north wall features a set of double stone doors.

Creatures: If Bhal-Hamatugn has been alerted, or the PCs have made any noise opening the door, Saagogoi is perched directly above the door's threshold, using his *slippers of spider climbing* to cling to the wall where it meets the ceiling. Otherwise he's standing at attention at the doors to area 19.

➤ **Saagogoi, Male Kuo-toa Mnk 3/Assassin 3:** CR 8; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 2d8+4 plus 3d8+6 plus 3d6+6; hp 49; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., swim 50 ft.; AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +6; Grp +7; Atk +9 melee (1d6+1, unarmed strike) or +10 melee (1d4+1 plus poison, dagger) or +10 ranged (1d4+1 plus poison, dagger); Full Atk +7/+7/+2 melee (1d6+1, unarmed strike) or +10/+5 melee (1d4+1 plus poison, dagger) or +10 ranged (1d4+1 plus poison, dagger); SA death attack (DC 15), sneak attack +2d6, stunning fist (DC 15); SQ evasion, still mind, uncanny dodge, amphibious, immunity to poison and paralysis, keen sight, light blindness, resistance to electricity 10, slippery; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +12, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills: Disguise +2, Escape Artist +11, Hide +14, Jump +10, Listen +15, Move Silently +14, Search +7, Spot +19, Swim +9, Tumble +9. **Feats:** Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (dagger).

Keen Sight (Ex): Kuo-toas can spot invisible and ethereal creatures, as long as they're moving.

Light Blindness (Ex): Exposure to bright light (such as a daylight spell) blinds kuo-toas for 1 round and dazzles them as long as the light remains.

Slippery: Kuo-toans can wriggle free from webs and other forms of confinement.

Possessions: *Slippers of spider climbing*, 5 poisoned daggers (shadow essence; Fort DC 17; 1 Str drain/2d6 Str).

Tactics: Saagogoi is confident enough in his ability to hide in the ceiling shadows that he studies a foe for 3 rounds, then leaps from the wall and attacks a PC. He chooses whichever PC looks most like a wizard or sorcerer, because he knows they're less able to resist his death attack. Then Saagogoi runs from the chamber, trying to lure the PCs away from area 19. If possible, he hides again, then makes another death attack or sneak attack.

19. ZENITH'S CHAMBER (EL 10)

Light: Zenith's *sphere of the unseen* (shadowy illumination until Zenith breaks it).

Sound: Muttering from overhead corpses (automatic).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (teleportation circle, DC 24 conjuration), strong (Zenith's sphere, DC 21 conjuration), moderate (Zenith's amulet, DC 19 transmutation), faint (Zenith's gauntlets, DC 18 transmutation), faint (Zenith's armor, DC 17 abjuration), faint (Zenith's shield, DC 17 abjuration), faint (Zenith's axe, DC 17

transmutation), faint (muttering corpses, DC 17 necromancy); faint evil (Zenith).

This is it—the characters meet Zenith face-to-face. Not surprisingly, he won't return to Cauldron willingly.

Against the north wall sits a throne made of what looks like stitched-together skin. Four slender pillars surround a faintly luminescent circle about 5 feet across, carved into the stone of the floor. To either side of the throne hang banners depicting a dwarf in blue and white armor holding a waraxe aloft. Both banners are apparently upside-down.

A tired-looking dwarf slumps in the throne, a glowing sphere in his hand and an axe across his lap. "I prophesy your doom!" he whispers harshly.

If the characters have any light brighter than a candle with them, add the following:

Hanging by their feet from nooses attached to the 30-foot ceiling are dozens of rotting corpses, each with the top of its head removed. The corpses mutter and twitch in a pale mockery of life.

The throne is made from the scalps of the corpses, all foes that Zenith vanquished during his time in the Underdark. A unique necromantic effect (equivalent to a 3rd-level spell) makes the corpses mutter nonsense and flex their limbs from time to time, but the corpses aren't undead—they're just corpses. The tapestries are the Splintershield clan's battle standards. A successful DC 18 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check reveals this, as well as the information that hanging them upside-down is a grave insult to anyone of that clan. The circle in the floor is a permanent *teleportation circle*. Anyone who steps into the circle is teleported to the platform in area 5b between the pincers of the massive statue.

Creature: Zenith won't willingly leave his throne, but he's willing to listen to any entreaties from the PCs.

➤ **Zenith Splintershield, Dwarf Ftr 7/Dwarven Defender 3:** CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 7d10+24 plus 3d12+9; hp 88; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +10; Grp +14; Atk +16 melee (1d10+7/19–20/x3, +1 *dwarven waraxe*); Full Atk +16/+11 melee (1d10+7/19–20/x3, +1 *dwarven waraxe*); SA —; SQ dwarf traits, defensive stance 2/day, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Skills: Intimidate +11, Jump +8*, Sense Motive +2, Spot +2. **Feats:** Dodge, Endurance, Improved Critical (*dwarven waraxe*), Power Attack, Quick Draw, Toughness, Weapon Focus (*dwarven waraxe*), Weapon Specialization (*dwarven waraxe*).

*Includes –6 armor check penalty.

Defensive Stance: Zenith's defensive stance lasts for 8 rounds. It gives Zenith +2 to Str, +4 to Con, +2 on saves, and +4 to AC. His stats change to hp 108; AC 27; Full Atk +17/+12 melee (1d10+8/19–20/x3, +1 *dwarven waraxe*); Fort +15, Ref +6, Will +6 (not factoring in Zenith's dwarven bonuses); Str 21, Con 20.

Possessions: +1 full plate, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 dwarven waraxe, gauntlets of ogre power +2, amulet of health +2, sphere of the unseen.

Tactics: Zenith's first action is to hurl his sphere of the unseen at the south wall. That summons an invisible stalker that attacks any PC who hangs back rather than meeting Zenith in melee.

Zenith then adopts a defensive stance and tries to kill any PC who comes within reach. Each round, he utters another prophecy, pointing to a random character. Here are some sample prophecies, but feel to make up your own.

- "A man in blue will slay you before the year is done."
- "You'll be buried alive, but you won't be alone."
- "Your heart harbors two ships: betrayal and joy."
- "You will set your city aflame."

When possible, the prophecies should involve death or destruction and include specific detail, even if they're otherwise maddeningly vague.

When Zenith reaches 20 hp or less, he breaks out of the defensive stance and use the *teleportation circle* to go to area 5b. As soon as he can, he readies an action to attack anyone who follows him. He goes into a second defensive stance there and make his last stand before the red eyes of the Sea Mother.

If a PC uses magic such as a *see invisibility* or *invisibility purge* spell to fight the invisible stalker, describe Zenith's birthmark: the sign of Carceri like a big tattoo across his face. If the characters examine it later, they may discover that it's naturally invisible—it doesn't radiate magic at all.

CONCLUSION: GOING HOME

Once the characters defeat Zenith and get him out of Bhal-Hamatugn (provided he still lives), he becomes eerily docile. He follows the PCs wherever they go, but he won't speak or otherwise interact with them, other than taking offered food and water. If he's involved in a fight, he adopts a defensive stance and readies an action to attack anyone who comes within reach.

Cauldron is several days away. You can either use the random encounter tables from Chapter 3 or just declare that the trip back to town was uneventful. At the Cusp of Sunrise, Celeste happily pays the PCs, then takes Zenith away, ostensibly to meet his father. In reality, Zenith winds up shackled in a magic cage, and the plans of the Vhalantru and the Cagewrights are that much closer to fruition.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs undoubtedly have some shopping to do—both selling extra gear taken from Bhal-Hamatugn and spending the reward money for returning Zenith. They should be at or near 8th level—ready for the fourth installment of the **Adventure Path: Shackled City** series, which will appear in *DUNGEON* #104. The characters have unwittingly done the bidding of Vhalantru, but that doesn't mean he trusts them, nor is he willing to leave them alone.

APPENDIX: STAT BLOCKS

The following stat blocks cover creatures encountered in multiple areas.

➤ **Kuo-toa Soldier, Male Kuo-toa Rog 1:** CR 3; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 2d8+4 plus 1d6+2; hp 19; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., swim 50 ft.; AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+2/18–20, masterwork rapier) or +6 ranged (1d4/19–20, masterwork hand crossbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ adhesive, amphibious, immunity to poison and paralysis, keen sight, light blindness, resistance to electricity 10, slippery, trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 6.

Skills: Escape Artist +7*, Hide +6*, Listen +8, Move Silently +6*, Search +5, Spot +10, Swim +9*, Tumble +6*. **Feats:** Alertness, Weapon Focus (hand crossbow), Weapon Focus (rapier).

*Includes –1 armor check penalty (–2 for Swim).

Adhesive (Ex): Foes who miss a kuo-toa with a melee attack must succeed at a DC 14 Reflex save or have the weapon yanked from their grasp and stuck to the kuo-toa's shield. A shield can only trap one thing. It takes a DC 20 Strength check to pull something free from the shield.

Keen Sight (Ex): Kuo-toas can spot invisible and ethereal creatures, as long as they're moving.

Light Blindness (Ex): Exposure to bright light (such as a *daylight* spell) blinds kuo-toas for 1 round and dazzles them as long as the light remains.

Slippery: Kuo-toans can wriggle free from webs and other forms of confinement.

Possessions: Masterwork heavy steel shield with adhesive, masterwork rapier, masterwork hand crossbow with 10 bolts.

➤ **Kuo-toa Whip, Male Kuo-toa Clr 2:** CR 3; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 2d8+4 plus 2d8+7; hp 29; Init +1; Spd 15 ft., swim 35 ft.; AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d8+2, masterwork morningstar); SA lightning bolt; SQ adhesive, amphibious immunity to poison and paralysis, keen sight, light blindness, resistance to electricity 10, slippery; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 19, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +6, Escape Artist +3*, Listen +6, Search +4, Spellcraft +4, Spot +12, Swim –1. **Feats:** Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness.

*Includes –6 armor check penalty (–12 for Swim).

Spells Prepared (4/4; save DC 14 + spell level); 0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *read magic*, *mending*; 1st—*doom*, *entropic shield*, *protection from good**, *shield of faith*.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Destruction (smite once per day for +4 attack, +2 damage), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Adhesive (Ex): Foes who miss a kuo-toa with a melee attack must succeed at a DC 14 Reflex save or have the weapon yanked from their grasp and stuck to the kuo-toa's shield. A shield can only trap one thing. It takes a DC 20 Strength check to pull something free from the shield.

Keen Sight (Ex): Kuo-toas can spot invisible and ethereal creatures, as long as they're moving.

Light Blindness (Ex): Exposure to bright light (such as a *daylight* spell) blinds kuo-toas for 1 round and dazzles them as long as the light remains.

Lightning Bolt (Su): Every 1d4 rounds, whips can generate a lightning bolt that deals 1d6 points of electricity damage for every whip touching each other; Reflex save DC 13 + number of whips for half damage.

Slippery: Kuo-toans can wriggle free from webs and other forms of confinement.

Possessions: +1 banded mail, heavy wooden shield, masterwork morningstar, scroll of *bear's endurance*, scroll of *cure moderate wounds*.

DRACONIC FINGERLINGS

Diminutive Dragon (Aquatic, Swarm)

Hit Dice: 10d12 (65 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: Swim 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 18 (+4 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural), touch 17, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/—

Attack: Swarm 2d6 + 1d6 acid

Full Attack: Swarm 2d6 + 1d6 acid

Space/Reach: 10 ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: Distraction

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., feed, immune to weapon damage, swarm traits

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +9

Abilities: Str 1, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 1

Skills: Jump +9, Listen +13, Spot +13

Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes

Environment: Temperate aquatic

Organization: Solitary or colony (2–5)

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: None

Level Adjustment: —

A glistening school of of ebony tadpoles turns the water black as it swims closer.

The product of the union of a male black dragon and several kuo-toan females, the draconic fingerlings that make up this swarm will eventually grow up to become half-dragon kuo-toas. Until they develop limbs and grow much larger, they swim about in great schools, looking for food.

COMBAT

A draconic fingerling swarm seeks to surround and eat any living creature it finds in the water. If a meal flees, they give chase, even leaping out of the water briefly to bring down their prey. The swarm deals 2d6 points of damage plus 1d6 points of

acid damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move.

Distraction (Ex): Any living creature that begins its turn with draconic fingerling swarm in its space must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Feed (Ex): When a draconic fingerling swarm slays an opponent, it can feed on the corpse, dissolving and devouring the corpse as a full-round action. Feeding destroys the victim's body and prevents any form of raising or resurrection that requires part of the corpse. For every 3 Hit Dice the victim had, the draconic fingerling swarm gains an inherent +1 bonus to its Constitution score. The draconic fingerling swarm ignores living opponents if there's a suitable corpse to feed on within 30 feet.

Skills: A draconic fingerling swarm has a +4 racial bonus on Jump checks, which it uses to leap above the surface of the water to reach prey.

David Noonan is a designer/developer for Wizards of the Coast. He wrote parts of *Manual of the Planes* and the forthcoming *Complete Warrior*, and he helped revise the new edition of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. He lives in rural Washington state with his wife and son.

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ZENITH
TRAJECTORY





the DEMONSKAR LEGACY

BY TITO LEATI

ARTWORK BY MATT CAVOTTA AND JEFF CARLISLE
CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

INTRODUCTION

"The Demonskar Legacy" begins with a political crisis that threatens the security of the citizens of Cauldron, and turns into a desperate hunt for a missing paladin. This adventure is designed for a group of four 8th-level characters, and the PCs may reach 10th level by its conclusion. You can easily adjust the adventure for larger or smaller parties, as well as for PCs of higher or lower level (see the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar). When the PCs earn enough experience to gain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure.

The adventure takes place after the events of "Life's Bazaar" (DUNGEON #97), "Flood Season" (DUNGEON #98), and "Zenith Trajectory" (DUNGEON #102). If you're playing through these adventures in sequence, the heroes are familiar with the town of Cauldron and should recognize many of the NPCs in this adventure. You can also play "The Demonskar Legacy" as a stand-alone scenario, because it doesn't explicitly rely on knowledge gained from the previous adventures.

PREPARATION

Running "The Demonskar Legacy" requires the use of the revised versions of the *Player's Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*, but you can use the older books without much difficulty. Some creatures in this adventure appear in the *Monster Manual II* and *Fiend Folio*, but their statistics are given in full in the text. Access to previous "Adventure Path" episodes (found in DUNGEON #97, #98, and #102) are highly recommended as well, since they contain useful information about the city of Cauldron, including a poster map of the city in issue #97.

As in previous episodes of the campaign, Campaign Seed sidebars are scattered throughout the adventure. Some of these will be developed further in future adventures in this series, while others serve as helpful points at which you can expand the adventure and make it your own.

BACKGROUND

Despite the onset of spring, unrest has spread through Cauldron's population. Taxes have been raised numerous times to

help the city cope with damage caused by recent emergencies and to take precautions against further accidents during an eventful year. Since the last fiscal decree issued by Lord Mayor Navalant, taxes in Cauldron have become even higher than those in the much larger neighboring city, Sasserine. Protests and tax evasion are spreading. Visible benefits of the high taxes have yet to appear, and many Cauldronites grumble that the taxes are simply lining the pockets of the nobility.

In a way these feelings are justified, for in fact, the beholder Lord Orbius Vhalantru embezzles much of the collected money and uses it to fuel the wicked work of an outer planar faction called the Cagewrights and to pay the increasing number of mercenaries at his service. Cauldron's wealthiest citizens, whose taxes are collected first, are the first to suffer from the increases. Among these unhappy citizens is Maavu, a merchant whose warehouse was smashed by a fiendish umber hulk recently (see DUNGEON #102).

Today, dour tax collectors walk the city streets, invariably accompanied by patrols of heavily armed and ruthless half-orc mercenaries. Rumors circulate of special squads of the town guard that break into private houses, workshops, and stores to search for hidden goods, money, or other valuables. The captain of the town guard, Terseon Skellerang, recently announced special security measures against a sect of dangerous anarchists believed to be plotting to overthrow the city government. The lord mayor, for his part, has been quite absent lately, rarely showing up in public and leaving most matters to his collaborators. Lord Orbius Vhalantru figures prominently among the lord mayor's newest advisors. The beholder appears in public rarely, and does so disguised as an elf sorcerer of great wealth. On these occasions, Vhalantru is accompanied by a prominent cult leader of the Cagewrights by the name of Thifirane; a human transmuter who supplies him with the magic he needs to maintain his alternate form.

ENTER ALEK TERCIVAL

While chaos advances, a champion of good has been chosen by fate to play an important role in Cauldron's future. Heir to one of the city's greatest families, Alek Tercival became a paladin

after his father's death left him destitute. With the assistance of his childhood friend Jenya Urikas (now the high priestess of Cauldron's Temple of St. Cuthbert), Alek joined the church of St. Cuthbert with a strong (if rather flamboyant) passion. Alek's advancement in the church has been painfully slow, but throughout it all his devotion has remained strong.

Three years ago, after a few adventures in the wilderness around Cauldron, Alek managed to slay an incredibly old ogre near the village of Redgorge. In the monster's lair, he found a thin silver plate etched with odd drawings and characters. On the back of the plate the ogre had scratched a crude map to an underground ruin called "Vaprak's Voice," set on the rim of a geological rift called the Demonskar. Intrigued, Alek set out from the village of Redgorge and rode westward across the dense jungle, heedless of the terrible rumors about his destination. After a dangerous journey to the Demonskar's rim, Alek discovered a pair of enormous, truncated tubes jutting from the surface. A tremendous, echoing bellow issues from these tubes when the wind sweeps the area, earning the place its name. After a bit of exploration, he found a passage leading into ancient subterranean ruins, built ages ago by a cabal of evil spell weavers (*Monster Manual II* 187).

Alek Tercival was not the only recent visitor to Vaprak's Voice. A covey of three half-fey greenhags had inhabited the place for months, spending their nights unraveling many of the ruin's ancient secrets. Shortly after their arrival, they received a visit from the master of the Demonskar, a glabrezu named Nabthatoron. The hags recognized the demon's superiority and swore to serve him as vassals. Nabthatoron confided in the hags that he and his retinue were abandoned on the Material Plane five centuries ago, after a terrible battle with the early human colonists of the area. The colonists (the original founders of Redgorge) routed the demons, and an unknown demon lord held Nabthatoron personally responsible. Nabthatoron was thus banished to the Material Plane for as long as Redgorge remained unconquered by the forces of chaos.

On a recent visit to Vaprak's Voice, Nabthatoron learned about the Cagewrights and their plans to draw Cauldron into the infernal plane of Carceri. Although he still lacks details on this plan, the glabrezu knows that whatever disaster the Cagewrights have planned for Cauldron would surely affect Redgorge as well, making his long-desired conquest all the easier. For the first time in centuries, the demon feels his exile on the Material Plane may be drawing to a close.

When Alek arrived at Vaprak's Voice, Nabthatoron was present, meeting with the covey. The demon saw an opportunity in Alek's visit, and ordered the hags to spare the paladin's life if they could take control of him in some way. Obedient to the demon's will, the hags used their *mind blank*, *mirage* *arcana*, and *veil* abilities to assume the appearance of a trio of trumpet archons. Fooled by the covey's powerful deception, the paladin fell on his knees before them, overcome with awe.

From the false archons, Alek learned of the Demonskar's apocalyptic history, and of another apocalyptic event that would soon devastate the region (the transformation of Cauldron into a gate-town to Carceri). Although the "trumpet archons" knew about the forthcoming disaster, they did not say exactly what would happen. Pressed by Alek on the matter, they led him to an artifact called the *Starry Mirror*, informing him that it was an ancient oracular device which could give great insights to anyone bold enough to discover its secrets. In reality, the hags just wanted someone to take the risk of testing the ancient artifact. They lied to Alek, telling him that the *Starry Mirror's* divinatory powers would function only for someone who had proven his purity, and that they had for him a set of tasks to do just that.

At the end of the visit, the false archons gave Alek a chalice filled with *Amaranth Elixir*, a strength-enhancing draught used by the ancient spell weavers who built Vaprak's Voice. After drinking it, Alek became much more physically powerful and reckless. As the *Amaranth Elixir* dimmed his wisdom, the "archons" told him that he had been chosen to play the role of savior of the land. They warned him to keep his meeting with them a secret to everyone until the right moment, so the forces of evil could not strike against him. With this last recommendation, the "archons" gave Alek a *cloak of resistance* +1, with the covey's *hag eye* set in the clasp, allowing the hags to monitor his actions.

This final step done, the hags sent Alek back into the world as their unwitting agent. They use their *dream* ability to communicate to Alek and direct his actions, all at the behest of Nabthatoron. Unbeknownst to Alek, these "missions" are in fact designed to allow the hags to track down the location and leaders of the Chisel.

THE CHISEL

The Chisel is a secret organization of rich merchants and artisans. Based in the Stonemason District of Redgorge, the Chisel was founded ages ago by the same heroes who defeated Nabthatoron's original assault on the region. Descendants of these heroic colonists, most members of the Chisel are quite powerful and skilled individuals.

Although the original intent of the society was to do good for the region, the Chisel has in recent times shifted to a more selfish demeanor. Most of the Chisel's energy is now spent on improving the economic and political interests of its members. Recent events in Cauldron pushed the Chisel to investigate the problems facing the city, more out of a need to protect the monetary interests of the region than out of a desire to do good. The intelligence activity of one of the group's most influential members, a merchant named Maavu, was recently discovered and punished by Vhalantru (see "Zenith Trajectory," *DUNGEON* #102). Maavu was forced to leave the city to avoid further misfortune.

While Vhalantru managed to subvert Cauldron's Last Laugh thieves' guild, the Chisel has resisted such corruption and has become a thorn in the side of the Cagewrights. For this reason,

Vhalantru has been rallying the lord mayor and Terseon Skellerang against Maavu and his associates. When the adventure begins, Skellerang is already planning a large-scale police operation in Redgorge, in which he hopes to crush the Chisel once and for all.

After his quick departure, Maavu escaped to Redgorge. There, he met with two leaders of the Chisel, the Foreman and the Honest Minstrel, to deliberate on the situation. On this occasion, the conspirators had a special guest: Alek Tercival, sent by *dreams* from the hags to infiltrate the Chisel. With his magically acquired might and pride, Alek impressed the others so much that they agreed to help him in his "battle against evil" in Cauldron, although his story of an impending catastrophe left them puzzled and skeptical.

In Maavu's opinion, a good start to restore a righteous government in Cauldron would be to replace the town administrators with trusted people (that is, members of the Chisel). To this end, using his knowledge of the city legalities, Maavu devised a plan to remove the current captain of the town guard and put Alek in his place. According to an ancient law known as the Old Law of Peers, the five noblest families of Cauldron (after the lord mayor) have the right to challenge the captain of the town guard if they believe his behavior to be unworthy or immoral. Thanks to his ancestry, Alek happens to be among the few who can issue such challenge (the other nobles being the Taskerhills, the Lathenmires, the Aslaxins, and the Vanderborens). Satisfied with Maavu's plan, and inspired further by *dreams* sent by the hags, the impatient Alek wrote a letter of challenge to Terseon Skellerang. At the end of the meeting, the members of the Chisel, including Maavu, set out to deliver the letter and organize the plan, while Alek went back to Vaparak's Voice to prepare for the duel.

Unfortunately for Alek, now that he has played his part in planting this seed of chaos, he is of no more use to Nabthatoron. The glabrezu allowed the hags to dispose of him as they wished.

When Alek returned to prepare for the duel, they approached him in the guise of the archons and told him he had earned the right to use the *Starry Mirror* to divine the future of Cauldron. They took back their *hag eye* and led Alek to the *Starry Mirror*. Alek eagerly stepped into the *Starry Mirror*, hoping to arm himself with knowledge on how to stave off Cauldron's doom, but found himself instead trapped in a maze of mirrors. For the next several days, he wandered the mirror maze aimlessly, searching for the divinatory powers the "archons" had promised him. As the days wore on, madness began to worm its way into his mind. The thought that his "archon" allies had abandoned him to this endless maze soon consumed his every thought. When, through pure luck, he stumbled out of the maze and into an ancient spell weaver vault from which there was no apparent escape, his mind finally snapped.

And 500 miles away, in Cauldron, the challenge he issued is blossoming into chaos...

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The merchants of Cauldron organize a demonstration before the City Hall to protest against the recent abuses of the authorities, who have raised taxes and strengthened the city wall with half-orc mercenaries. During the demonstration, Maavu speaks out against the city government, revealing that the protector of the Temple of St. Cuthbert, Alek Tercival, has challenged the captain of the town guard, who is in part responsible for the recent abuse, to a legal duel. When a patrol of the town guard comes to arrest Maavu, a riot erupts. During the riot, a breathdrinker summoned by the Cagewrights attempts to kill Maavu, and the PCs must save him to gain useful information about the Chisel.

Following Maavu's directions, the PCs travel to Redgorge and meet the high handcrafters of the Chisel. Alek Tercival was also invited to the meeting, but the paladin fails to show up. The chief of the Chisel believes that the paladin knows

THE STORY SO FAR...

After the perils of the flood season, spring has come to Cauldron. A warmer sun shines brightly on the roofs of the city, bringing a little joy to its worried inhabitants. Nevertheless, persistent fears inspired by recent events lurks in Cauldron's alleys, sewers, and ancient buildings as the Cagewrights secretly further their plan of opening a permanent portal to Carceri within the city itself. The most prominent ally of these cultists, the beholder Vhalantru, subtly keeps the city under his control while posing as an influential advisor to the lord mayor. With his help, and with the aid of other evil groups like the Ebon Triad (see "Flood Season," in *Dungeon* #98), the Cagewrights are creating *soulcages*, artifacts necessary for opening the *gate* to Carceri, and placing them in secret locations throughout the city. The Cagewrights are also gathering the Shackleborn (creatures that bear the naturally invisible Carcer-

ian Sign on their faces), sacrificial victims destined to be imprisoned in the *soulcages*.

In "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97), the PCs disrupted a kidnapping ring based in an ancient fortress deep beneath the city. One of the kidnapped children was in fact one of the Shackleborn, and his rescue pleased Vhalantru greatly.

In "Flood Season" (*DUNGEON* #98) the PCs retrieved several stolen *wands of control water* needed by Cauldron's clergy to control the rising waters of the central lake during the winter rainstorms, overcoming several members of the Ebon Triad in the process.

In "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), the PCs' heroic actions against a rampaging umber hulk in the middle of the city caught the attention of the Cagewrights. Several of their agents tricked the unknowing PCs into returning another of the Shackleborn, the dwarf hero Zenith Splintershield, to Cauldron and the Cagewrights' clutches.



something of decisive importance and wants the PCs to find him. To find Alek Tercival, the heroes must use the information gathered thus far, and follow a very old map found in an antique shop. When they finally track Alek to Vaprak's Voice, they encounter the covey of half-fey hags who have been manipulating the paladin. After defeating the hags, the PCs navigate through the *Starry Mirror* to free Alek Tercival from a deadly trap. At the end, the PCs must battle the terrible creature that has schemed to turn the paladin into a pawn of chaos, Nabthatoron the glabrezu himself.

CAULDRON

The town of Cauldron is detailed the previous episodes of the Shattered City Adventure Path (see *DUNGEON* #97, *DUNGEON* #98, and *DUNGEON* #102). If you don't have access to the other installments of the campaign, refer to the brief description presented below.

Built over the rim of a dormant volcano, Cauldron consists of four concentric avenues centered on a central lake. The outer city walls feature four gates at the cardinal points, each one lead-

ing to a steep, winding road down to the lowlands below. The city buildings, made of volcanic rock and wood from the nearby forests, are packed around the main avenues and the docks of the central lake, which the local clerics keep clean with magic.

The map of Cauldron shows important locations in this adventure and the previous ones. The section around City Hall has been reproduced in detail, to accommodate the first episode of the adventure. Observant readers will note that the alignment of Cauldron's power center has shifted from neutral good to lawful neutral; this is a result of Vhalantru's growing control and influence over the town. The majority of Cauldron's citizens remain predominantly good aligned. Note also that many of the important characters in town have gained a few experience levels since the previous adventure.

Cauldron (large town): Conventional; AL LN; population 4,500 adults, 3,000 gp limit; Assets 600,000 gp; Mixed (78% human, 9% halfling, 5% gnome, 3% dwarf, 2% elf, 2% half-orc, 1% half-elf). Note that the half-orc population has recently grown with the arrival of Lord Vhalantru's half-orc mercenaries.

Authority Figures: Lord Mayor Severen Navalant, male human Ari10, Terseon Skellerang, male human Ftr10 (captain of the town guard).

Important Characters: Lord Orbuis Vhalantru, beholder (true overlord of Cauldron); Jenya Urikas, female human Clr8 (cleric at the Church of St. Cuthbert); Meerthan Eliothlorn, male half-elf Wiz13 (member of the Striders of Fharlanghn staying at the Drowning Morkoth Inn); Shensen Tesseril, female half-drow Mnk1/Brd1/Drd6 (member of the Striders of Fharlanghn staying in the copse of trees near the Lakeside Pavilion); Keygan Ghelve, male gnome Exp3/Wiz (Ill)1 (owner of Ghelve's Locks); Gretchyn Tashykk, female halfling Com1 (Lantern Street Orphanage headmistress); Vortimax Weer, male human Wiz10 (alchemist and potion brewer at Weer's Elixirs); Skie Aldersun, female gnome Sor6 (proprietor of Skie's treasury); Phalian Gurnezarn, male human Exp6 (blacksmith and proprietor of Gurnezarn's Smithy); Bjellkir Zanathor, male human Com3 (proprietor of Zanathor's Provisions, a general store); Rivek Mol, male human Rog1/Exp4 (proprietor of the Tipped Tankard); Halpeen Welvihk, male human Exp6 (proprietor of the Drunken Morkoth Inn); Tippet's Surefoot, female halfling Exp5 (proprietor of Sure Foot Livery); Kristof Jur-



gensen, male human Clr4 (cleric at the Shrine of Pelor); Embril Aloustinai, human female Wiz5/Clr9/Mystic Theurge 1 (high priest of the Cathedral of Wee Jas); Ike Iverson, human male Clr9 (cleric at the cathedral of Wee Jas); Asfelkir Hranleurt, male half-orc Clr8 (high priest of the Temple of Lordly Might, dedicated to Kord); Annah Taskerhill, human female Ari1/Brd8 (noble leader of the Stormblades); Cora Lathenmire, human female Ari1/Ftr8 (noble member of the Stormblades); Todd Vanderboren, human male Ari1/Rog7/Asn1 (member of the Stormblades and adopted son of local nobles); Zachary Aslaxin II, human male Ari1/Rgr4/Clr4 (noble member of the Stormblades); Artus Shemwick, human male Rog7 (fence and information broker working as a cook at the Tipped Tankard); Skylar

Krewis, human male Ftr4 (sergeant in the town guard); Celeste, "human female," class unknown (mysterious beautiful woman often found at the Cusp of Sunrise dinner club).

Typical Guard Patrol: Vhalantru made town patrols bigger and meaner with the introduction of the half-orc mercenaries. A typical patrol consists of a human sergeant (War4), 1d8+2 human privates (War2), and 1d4+2 half-orc fighters (Ftr2). Guards typically wear breastplates and bucklers emblazoned with the town emblem (a watchful eye wreathed in flames) and carry masterwork halberds, longswords, and shortbows. The sergeant has two *potions of cure light wounds* and a *potion of sanctuary*. After the recent umber hulk incident (see "Zenith Trajectory"), a security platoon constantly patrols the avenues. The platoon

RUMORS IN CAULDRON

As usual, a wide range of rumors are circulating in Cauldron. Note that a few rumors from the previous episodes of the Adventure Path are very pertinent to "The Demonskar Legacy" (rumor #7 from "Flood Season" and rumors #3, #4, and #6 from "Zenith Trajectory"). These days, the tax increase remains the most prominent topic in town. After the riot occurs, a successful Gather Information check (DC 10) allows a character to uncover one of the following rumors.

d12 roll Rumor

- 1 When Maavu the merchant fled the riot, a group of half-orc thugs chased him on the road to Sasserine. (False, although agents of the Chisel are spreading this rumor. Maavu in fact fled to Redgorge.)
- 2 Centuries ago, the first human colonists to settle the Cauldron region were led by Surabar Spellmason, the most powerful earth elemental of all time. He freed the region from demons and put the volcano under Cauldron to sleep. (True, assuming the history of your campaign does not feature a more powerful earth elemental already. Surabar Spellmason was a hero, a philosopher, and the inspirer of the Chisel.)
- 3 A cutpurse named Nibocha saw a doppelganger near the Tipped Tankard Tavern. Nibocha became aware of the creature's nature when she tried to pick the doppelganger's pocket. (True, the cutpurse tried to pick the pocket of Gortio, a doppelganger at Vhalantru's service, see *DUNGEON* #102.)
- 4 The town guard found a spellbook in Maavu's house filled with earth elemental spells, including one that could have summoned the umber hulk that assaulted Cauldron recently. (Partially true, but the book found in his house was planted by agents of Vhalantru.)
- 5 Three weeks ago, a gnome peddler named Flismatt met Alek Tercival at the Lucky Monkey. The paladin was helping the carpenters to repair the building, and helping them indeed. He could split logs with his bare hands and carry an elephant's load on his back! (True, although Alek's performance is a bit exaggerated. His augmented physical power derives from the *Amaranth Elixir*.)
- 6 Three months ago, Alek Tercival met with the Stormblades while they were playing a home version of "snatch the gem" at the Drunken Morkoth Inn. The paladin did not join in the game ("an immoral pursuit"), but amazed everyone pulverizing a bone, eight-sided die with his bare hand. (True, one of the *dreams* sent by the hag covey led Alek to find out if the Stormblades had any information about how to contact the Chisel; they were unable to help and insulted Alek in the process.)
- 7 The City Council raised the taxes to buy a powerful artifact that will permanently protect Cauldron from future floods. (False, although Vhalantru's agents are spreading this rumor. The Cagewrights need extra money to finance the construction of the last few *soulcages*.)
- 8 Lord Orbius Vhalantru, one of the Lord Mayor's most trusted advisors, was recently tasked with protecting Cauldron from future disasters. (True, although the beholder's plans for Cauldron have little to do with protecting it.)
- 9 The crater known as the Demonskar is polluted with smoke seeping from the Abyss. (False, although the fumaroles found there support this old superstition.)
- 10 The Last Laugh is preparing the assassination of prominent members of the City Council. (False, the Last Laugh is generally happy with the current officials and with Lord Orbius Vhalantru.)
- 11 A group of duergar have come to the tunnels below Cauldron. They seek revenge against the heroes who disrupted that slave ring late last year. (False, but this rumor might make the PCs worry about their encounter with Kazmojen and Pyllrak Shyraat, see *DUNGEON* #97.)
- 12 Terseon Skellerang is preparing a special task force to raid Redgorge. He thinks that a group of dangerous conspirators have their base there. (True, Terseon Skellerang fears the Chisel, who have a secret hideout in Redgorge.)

consists of a human lieutenant (Ari6, one of the trusted officers of the lord mayor), two half-orc sergeants (Ftr4), and 10+2d6 half-orc fighters (Ftr2). The platoon is 75% likely to include a cleric of Wee Jas (Clr3) and a wizard (Wiz3). The Magical Threats Agency (see "Zenith Trajectory") has a few spellcasting agents keeping watch on the town at all times, too (including Haanu Pershai, female gnome Ftr2/Sor6, their captain).

Healing: The PCs are likely to be very popular in the town at this point, and they are probably close friends with Jenya Urikas, the priestess of St. Cuthbert, and Shensen Tesseril, a druid and member of the Striders of Fharlanghn. Healing items and potions should be available to them at a 20% discount at the Church of St. Cuthbert. Moreover, Jenya Urikas can make higher-level clerical scrolls (such as *raise dead*) available for 1,000 gp per spell level. Shensen lacks Jenya's resources, but she is willing to prepare and cast any druid spells the PCs desire (assuming they remain allies). The temples of Kord and Pelor appreciate what the PCs have done for Cauldron but nonetheless still charge regular prices for their services. The clerics of the cathedral of Wee Jas charge 120% regular prices for their services, since their clerics tend to see the heroes as troublemakers; they have few qualms about making their unfavorable opinions known.

CHAPTER ONE: CHAOS IN THE STREETS

A huge demonstration is scheduled to take place around the City Hall on the morning this adventure begins. More than 700 citizens (most of them merchants) gather in the streets near City Hall to protest against the tax increases. Try to encourage the PCs to attend the demonstration; if they don't, the adventure can continue but they'll have to piece together what happened during the riot from second-hand sources. Some possible hooks to get the PCs to attend are listed below.

- Jenya Urikas heard that Alek Tercival is going to be at the demonstration, and since she won't be able to make it she asks the PCs to go in her place, contact Alek, and ask him to come visit her at the Church of St. Cuthbert. Alek's been out of contact for some time, and Jenya is growing worried for her friend.
- The Striders of Fharlanghn have been keeping tabs on the Cagewrights, and Meerthan Eliothlorn fears that they might take advantage of the demonstration to further their agenda somehow. He sends Shensen Tesseril (from "Flood Season") to the event to keep an eye on things; if she is allied with the party or has been developing a deeper relationship with one of the PCs, she asks them to come with her to the demonstration for companionship and support.
- If the PCs are still on good terms with Celeste (from "Zenith Trajectory"), she contacts them and offers one of them a pouch of 50 pp to simply go to the demonstration for her; she is too busy to attend but says that she'd like to have someone trustworthy there to observe and later report to her the gist of

the proceedings. Once the riot is over, however, she is nowhere to be found; her true reasons for sending the PC to the demonstration should remain unclear and mysterious.

- As the PCs relax at the Tipped Tankard (or anywhere else, for that matter) a large mob of loud and angry people passes by. Mention of "taxes" and "thugs" and other topics can be heard in the din. One of the members of the mob recognizes the PCs and asks them if they're going to the demonstration as well.

THE CAULDRON TAX RIOT (EL 8)

The demonstration against the tax increases, although somewhat spontaneous, was largely inspired by the Chisel, which has several affiliates among the crowd (including Maavu). The Chisel intends to make clear that Cauldron's population is not going to tolerate further abuses from the authorities. The Last Laugh, however, has learned about the programs of the Chisel from an informant, and has prepared a countermove to get rid of competition in Cauldron (see below).

The streets around the City Hall are packed tight with loud citizens rallying against the recent tax increase in Cauldron. Several guards stand in a ring around the building and use the hafts of their halberds to keep people out. Presently, a small group of dignitaries, easily recognizable as the town tax collectors, make their way to the entrance. The citizens boo and scream insults at the tax collectors as they scuttle inside the building.

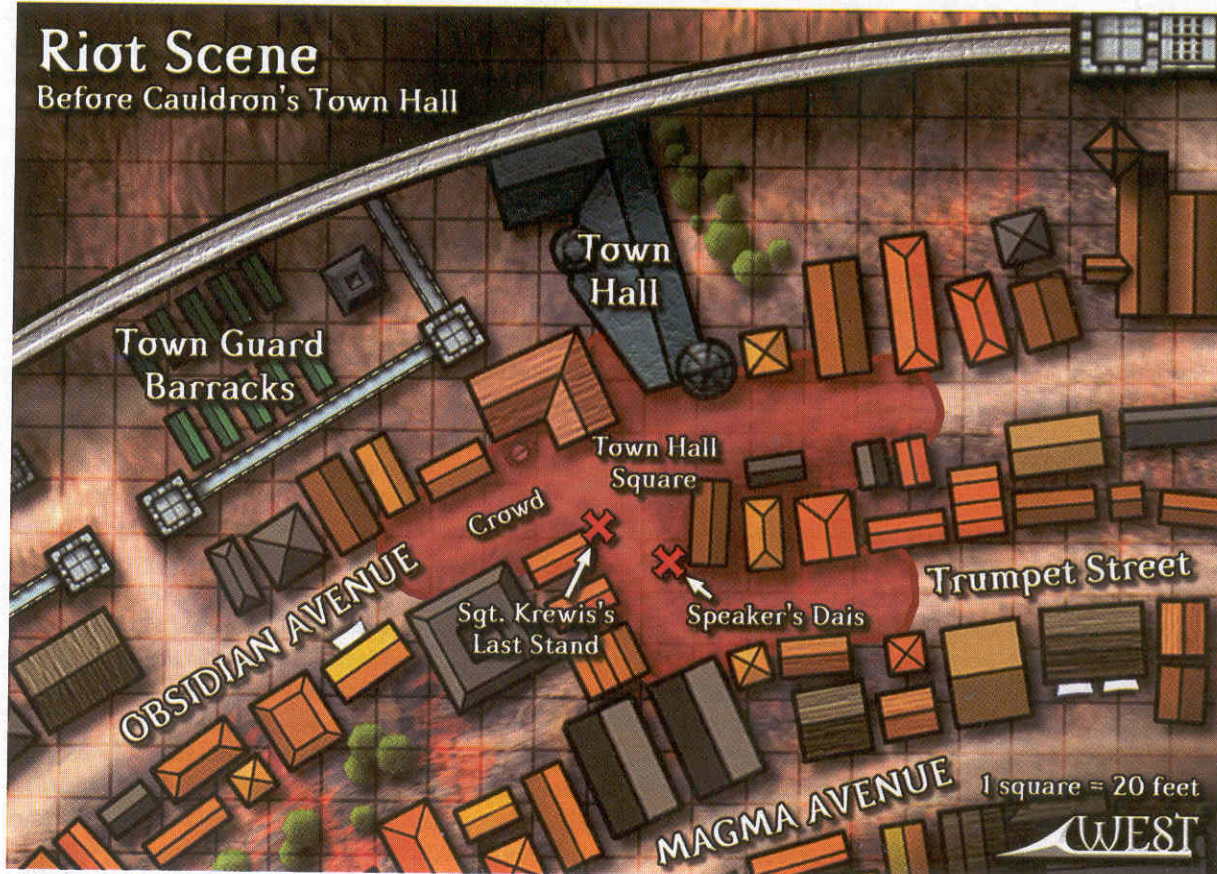
After the tax collectors have gone inside, Maavu climbs a prominent dais to speak. The merchant raises a hand and the demonstrators calm down a bit. After a moment of silence, Maavu addresses the audience resolutely. The merchant says that the Lord Mayor has received a letter of challenge, in which the noble Alek Tercival, paladin of St. Cuthbert, challenges the captain of the town guard, Terseon Skellerang, to prove his valor in a duel according to the Old Law of Peers. Maavu points out that the challenge has not been publicized by the City Council, which is itself illegal by the laws of the city and proof of the ill will the lord mayor's advisors bear the citizens. Maavu is a skilled orator, and the crowd becomes more and more angry as he speaks. When his words became too bold, a watch sergeant named Skylar Krewis rushes out of the City Hall to stop him. Read the following:

The words of the fervor-filled merchant continue to imbue the citizens with a mounting rage. The people's anger culminates when Maavu points out the fact that a group of armed half-orcs is already harassing the town: "Skellerang is feeding a band of filthy half-orc thugs a large share of our bread!" he screams. Then, wading in the crowd of people, a human watch sergeant escorted by several half-orc mercenaries approaches the dais to arrest the merchant: "In the name of Terseon Skellerang, Captain of the Town Guard, I must arrest you!" he declares, addressing Maavu.

Suddenly, from within the angered crowd, an unassuming

Riot Scene

Before Cauldron's Town Hall



youth draws a hidden dagger and screams out, "Let's kill these half-orc brigands!" As his voice is drowned out by the roar of a hundred other people, the lad lunges at the nearest half-orc. In seconds, the mob erupts into a full-fledged riot.

The boy is a skilled provocateur of the Last Laugh (Rog4), one of many in the crowd. These provocateurs have been ordered to stir up a riot before the City Hall so the responsibility falls on Maavu and his associates.

The guards are badly outnumbered by the demonstrators, and Sergeant Krewis is rapidly cut off by the mob. Reinforcements are not likely to appear before he is beaten to death. If he is to be rescued, it is up to the PCs to save him. Meanwhile, an unknown villain has been observing the scene from an upper window of City Hall, and has summoned a breathdrinker to teach a lesson to Maavu (see below).

As with the umber hulk attack in "Zenith Trajectory," this encounter is quite complex. As usual, the actual outcome of the events depends on the party's actions. A round-by-round breakdown of the riot's progress appears below in **Tactics**.

Creatures: The most prominent NPCs involved in the riot are Maavu, Sergeant Krewis, and the breathdrinker. The supporting cast comprises the following: City Hall guards (War2, see also the description of the typical watch patrol in "Cauldron"), minor agents of the Last Laugh and the Chisel (Exp1 or Rog1), and simple demonstrators (Com 1). For sake of ease, you

can treat all of these factors as one "crowd" that takes its actions on an initiative rank determined by a 1d20 roll. Other important NPCs may be present as well, as you desire.

Maavu figures among the highest-ranking members of the Chisel. In addition to being a skilled merchant, he is also a wizard in the tradition of Surabar Spellmason, the legendary leader of the first human settlers of the region. Maavu is tall, handsome, and intelligent. He has a heroic streak in his personality, inspired by the Chisel's early history, and is unusually generous with the destitute. He despises "illiberal" laws, and constantly tries to outflank them to his own advantage. Although more than 50 years old, he still has the voice and manners of a young, energetic man. Maavu's familiar (a rat named Ollie) died during the umber hulk attack.

Krewis is a loyal and brave young man, and although he serves under Terseon Skellerang, he is a fair-minded and understanding soldier. After a brief but fruitful adventuring experience, he started his new career to settle down and marry in Cauldron. Like all soldiers, Krewis must follow orders, but if the heroes save him, he could become a useful ally among Cauldron's enforcers.

The breathdrinker is an ordinary member of its species, summoned by a Cagewright within City Hall and enhanced with wizard spells (see below). Its orders are simply to track Maavu and make short work of him.

♣ **Maavu Arlinal, Male Human Exp5/Wiz4/Hgh1:** CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 6d6+4d4+9; hp 42; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grap +5; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d4, dagger); SA spells; SQ improved skill focus +4, planned save +1; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +11; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +11, Concentration +8, Craft (alchemy) +19, Craft (weaving) +12, Diplomacy +18, Gather Information +13, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +7, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Listen +7, Profession (merchant) +10, Ride +5, Sense Motive +3, Spot +5, Spellcraft +8.

Feats: Brew Potion, Negotiator, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Craft, alchemy), Skill Focus (Craft, weaving), Skill Focus (Diplomacy).

Languages: Common, Terran.

Wizard Spells Prepared (4/4/3; base DC 12 plus spell level): 0—detect magic, mage hand, mending, open/close; 1st—mage armor, shield, shocking grasp, spider climb; 2nd—glitterdust, endurance.

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—alarm, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, identify, mage armor, shield, shocking grasp, spider climb, unseen servant; 2nd—bear's endurance, glitterdust, knock, locate object, see invisibility.

Possessions: Dagger, traveler's outfit, bracers of armor +3, Heward's handy haversack with food and wine for three days, two potions of gaseous form, elixir of hiding, scroll of expeditious retreat, 45 gp and 5 pearls (worth 100 gp each).

♣ **Sergeant Skylar Krewis, Male Human Ftr4:** CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 4d10+8; hp 30; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +4; Grap +6; Atk +8 melee (1d8+5/19-20, +1 longsword); AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +8, Jump +6, Ride +7, Swim +6.

Feats: Cleave, Endurance, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Language: Common.

Possessions: +1 longsword, dagger, breastplate, buckler, two potions of cure light wounds, potion of sanctuary (CL 3rd), two potions of cure moderate wounds, 7 gp in pouch.

♣ **Breathdrinker:** CR 7; Medium Elemental (air, extraplanar); HD 8d8+24; hp 64; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd fly 80 ft. (perfect); AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +6; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (2d4, wind scythe); SA fear gaze, steal breath; SQ air mastery, damage reduction 10/magic, elemental traits, invisibility; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills: Hide +12, Move Silently +10, Search +12, Spot +9, Survival +9.

Feats: Ability Focus (fear gaze), Flyby Attack, Track.

Fear Gaze (Su): Anyone within 30 feet of a breathdrinker who meets the creature's gaze must make a Will save (DC 18) or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds.

Steal Breath (Su): As a full-round action, a breathdrinker can force a helpless, breathing creature to make a Fortitude save

(DC 17) or take 1d6 points of Constitution damage. The breathdrinker heals 5 point of damage for each Constitution point lost by the victim.

Air Mastery (Ex): Any airborne creature takes a -1 penalty on attack and damage rolls against a breathdrinker.

Invisibility (Su): A breathdrinker can use invisibility on itself at will as a free action (caster level 8th).

Tactics: When the riot begins, make an Initiative check for the crowd by rolling 1d20; the result is when the crowd's actions take place in the round-by-round tactics listed below. The tactics listed here assume that the PCs do nothing to affect the outcome of the riot. Their actions can cause significant changes to the events listed here, in which case you can use these tactics as a guide to determine how things work out.

The rioting crowds make it extremely difficult to move around or cast spells. Movement in a crowd is halved (it costs 2 squares of movement to enter a square with a crowd). The crowd provides cover for anyone in it, enabling a Hide check and providing a bonus to Armor Class and on Reflex saves.

A character in the crowded region during the riot can take a full-round action to defend himself (and stand motionless) or move with the crowd (moving a distance equal to his normal speed in a random direction). If the character takes any other action, he must make a successful Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid suffering 1d8 points of nonlethal damage from various bruises and bumps. A character who tries to cast a spell in the crowd must make a successful Concentration check (DC 15) or lose the spell.

The rioters make attacks with improvised weapons (bricks, clubs, pieces of glass, rocks, etc.) each round against Sergeant Krewis and any other person they believe to be allying with the soldiers. A person surrounded by attacking rioters suffers 2d6 points of damage per round on the crowd's initiative; a successful Reflex save (DC 14) halves the damage done. A character who takes a full-round action to defend himself gains a +4 bonus to this Reflex save.

Characters can attempt to direct the rioters by making a DC 25 Diplomacy check or a DC 30 Intimidate check; the character making the check must be obvious to the rioters. Attempting to direct the rioters is a full-round action for Diplomacy, but a free action for Intimidate. Success indicates that a 20-foot square of rioters cease their destructive activity for a number of rounds equal to 1 + the character's Charisma modifier. Since there are nearly 30 groups of rioters this size, chances are that the PCs won't be able to calm the entire mob down before the security platoon arrives on round 9 of the riot, but they may be able to protect Sergeant Krewis with this tactic.

Round 0 (Surprise round): The riot begins on its initiative count; at this time, several members of the Last Laugh catch the half-orc guards flat-footed and kill them with a merciless barrage of sneak attacks.

Any PC who makes a successful Sense Motive check (DC 25) realizes that things are about to turn ugly and may take a standard action on his initiative check.

Round 1 (Riot begins): Sergeant Krewis tries to drink his *potion of sanctuary*; this provokes attacks of opportunity from the crowd. Since Krewis is surrounded, eight rioters attack him. Four of the attacks of opportunity attempt to sunder his potion before he can drink it.

Maavu casts *mage armor* on himself but takes no other action. Since he is still on the speaker's dais, the rioters gain no attack of opportunity on him, but he does not receive the benefit of cover from the crowd.

The rioters surge about haphazardly, damaging buildings and raising a din. The eight rioters surrounding Sergeant Krewis attack him. Archers in the windows of City Hall move into position. The Last Laugh provocateurs fade into the crowd (Hide check +8), their work done.

Inside city hall, the Cagewright begins casting *summon monster VIII* to summon a breathdrinker.

Round 2 (Riot escalates): Sergeant Krewis realizes that fighting back against the crowd could only further enrage them, so he spends his round defending himself from harm.

Maavu casts *expeditious retreat* on himself and retrieves his *potion of gaseous form* from his belt pouch.

The rioters continue to attack Sergeant Krewis. If he managed to drink his *potion of sanctuary*, he only suffers minimum damage each round from the rioters. The four archers in City Hall fire upon Maavu with their longbows (+3 ranged attack, 1d8/x3 damage). Remember that the archers have a -2 penalty to hit Maavu due to range.

The breathdrinker appears and the Cagewright casts *haste* and a quickened *protection from good* on it, and commands the elemental creature to kill Maavu. The Cagewright then retreats, adding no further chaos to the riot. The breathdrinker turns *invisible* as a free action and flies toward Maavu. Its *hasted* speed of 110 ft. allows it to reach Maavu this round by taking two move actions; there are too many buildings in the way for it to charge.

Round 3 (Breathdrinker attack): Sergeant Krewis continues to defend himself.

If Maavu goes before the breathdrinker, he tries to drink his *potion of gaseous form*; this provokes an attack of opportunity from the breathdrinker. If the breathdrinker goes first or its presence is revealed to Maavu, he instead tries to cast *glitterdust* over the entire area (with himself at the center) in a desperate attempt to make the breathdrinker visible.

The rioters continue attacking Sergeant Krewis. If the breathdrinker has already attacked, the archers spend the round unsure of what to do; otherwise they continue firing arrows at Maavu.

The breathdrinker becomes visible and uses its fear gaze on Maavu; if it paralyzes Maavu, it uses its steal breath ability on him. Otherwise, it attacks with its wind scythe twice (thanks to *haste*) and turns *invisible* at the end of the round. Once the breathdrinker becomes visible, the rioters in a 30-foot radius around speaker's dais flee in terror.

Round 4: Sergeant Krewis continues to defend himself.

If he remains unparalyzed, Maavu tries to escape the breathdrinker by fleeing. Unfortunately, the creature is fast enough that it should be able to keep up with him with ease.

The rioters continue attacking Sergeant Krewis. The archers resume their attacks on Maavu.

The breathdrinker continues to try to paralyze Maavu, attacking with its wind scythe each round Maavu remains mobile.

Rounds 5–8: Sergeant Krewis, the rioters, and the archers continue to perform their same actions from round four on the fifth and succeeding rounds as long as conditions don't change. Maavu puts all of his resources into an attempt to flee the area, and the breathdrinker continues its attack on Maavu until round 15, when it returns to the elemental plane of air in a blast of vapor.

Round 9: Cauldron's security platoon arrives on the scene. The platoon wastes no time in attempts to talk the crowd down and begins firing arrows into the mob, killing many people. The citizens, however, still outnumber the soldiers ten to one, and drive them off with an intense barrage of rocks, lit torches and coins. For the following hour chaos reigns supreme near the City Hall.

Development: If saved from certain death by the heroes, Krewis and Maavu become their friends (although with different perspectives), and grant them two interesting opportunities. Krewis thanks the PCs heartily and gives them one of his *potions of cure moderate wounds* (if one remains). In a future adventure, his intercession could allow the heroes to meet Terseon Skellerang without too many problems. A rescued Maavu, on the other hand, immediately invites the heroes to Redgorge to speak with the leaders of the Chisel (see "Maavu's Invitation"). In any case, Maavu does not remain in town long, and uses the chaos of the riots to sneak out and flee to Redgorge.

Ad Hoc XP: Award the heroes a CR 8 experience point award if they manage to help control the riot and save Krewis from the mob.

MAAVU'S INVITATION

If the heroes save Maavu from the breathdrinker, the merchant owes them his life, and he realizes it. As the riot distracts the guards and citizens, Maavu does his best to get the PCs' attention. He is wracked with guilt and worry about the riot, and thinks it was largely his fault that things got so out of hand. He pointedly asks the PCs if they believe that some evil is at work within the government and if they want to help to expose and defeat this hidden evil.

Maavu wants to leave town before some other enemy or law enforcer takes notice of him. Before he does, though, he invites the PCs to a meeting in Redgorge. He tells them that he has certain allies who may wish to speak with them, and that Alek Tercival should be there to answer questions as well. If the PCs agree to the visit, Maavu informs them that they must go to the Redhead Miner's Inn in Redgorge and answer "mortar" to the



appropriate question. Maavu imbibes his second *potion of gaseous form* to escape the city.

If the PCs don't trust Maavu and threaten to arrest him, Maavu does his best to escape and contact the characters at some later date to renew his offer.

Not long after the riot begins, the entire town guard breaks up the primary mob and restores order around City Hall by arresting and beating many citizens. Isolated pockets of rioters and looters continue to plague the city until the lord mayor himself appears on the City Hall's balcony late in the afternoon, where he promises that taxes will not be levied for three full months. Criers move quickly through the streets to spread the word, and by evening the chaos has ended. Patrols of the town watch (sans half-orcs) again patrol the streets, but tensions remain high.

A FIRE IN THE NIGHT (EL 9)

Later than night, agents of the Last Laugh call a pair of large fire elementals. The Last Laugh sends the elementals to ravage Minuta's Board, a cheap inn that boards any half-orc mercenaries who couldn't find space in the Town Guard Barracks. The Last Laugh hopes that this elemental attack casts further shadow on the Chisel's name.

A few hours after sunset, the City Hall bell begins to ring, warning the population of the fire. The orange glow of the flames make it easy to spot the burning building. If the heroes intervene, they find that the inn's occupants have evacuated the

building and started a bucket brigade to douse the flames, which already wreath the entire building. Several burly half-orcs begin chopping down the outlying wooden structures near the inn with their double axes in an attempt to prevent the fire from spreading to nearby houses.

As the PCs approach Minuta's Board, in the red light of the fire, they overhear whispers and screams against the half-orcs ("Go back to the hell you come from, mongrels!", "Have a taste of fire, spawn of the Unwinking Eye!", "Let's burn away the rot from your human half, freaks!"). These voices, of course, come from racist and irresponsible Cauldronites who simply despise the latest tenants at Minuta's Board. Other citizens, however, have rushed to help the half-orcs fight the fire.

In front of the flaming inn, its innkeeper Pilok Minuta (male human Com3) and a mercenary sergeant Rokewko (male half-orc Ftr4) argue. The innkeeper pulls at his hair, crying and yelling to the big half-orc. "Your thugs are demolishing my inn! Stop them!" Rokewko ignores the innkeeper, and turns away to tell his axemen in Orc to continue. Pilok grabs at Rokewko's arm in an attempt to get the sergeant's attention. Bewildered, sweaty, and visibly scorched by fire, Rokewko loses his temper and throws the innkeeper to the ground. The half-orc grabs Pilok's neck with a single hand, puts his foaming mouth at just one inch from the man's face, and yells, "You tiny idiot! You don't get it! Flame-demons inside kill us! Fire unstoppable! Blades useless!" As Pilok

CHAPTER TWO: THE CHISEL AND THE STAFF

whines incoherently, the half-orc puts his scimitar before the innkeeper's face, showing its twisted and melted blade.

Characters who make a successful Listen check (DC 20) hear faint cries for help coming from somewhere inside the burning building.

Creatures: As the PCs take in the scene, a gout of fire suddenly explodes through the doorway of the inn, enveloping and incinerating a screaming half-orc axeman. The two Huge fire elementals have burst out of the inn and into the street to seek further things to burn.

While the Last Laugh developed the plan of setting fire to Minuta's Board, these two fire elementals here were conjured by the same villain who summoned the breathdrinker in the City Hall. Unlike the breathdrinker, which was summoned, both fire elementals have been called from the Plane of Fire, and until they are dealt with they continue to burn buildings and people.

➤ **Huge Fire Elementals (2):** hp 136 each, *Monster Manual* 99.

Development: One of Pilok's scullery-boys (Com1, perhaps a party's acquaintance from the Lantern Street Orphanage) stumbled down the stairs during the evacuation of the upper floor and is stuck under a fallen timber. Inside the first floor of Minuta's Board, characters are exposed to extreme heat and smoke (see DMG 303–304). There is a 10% chance each round that flaming debris falls upon a character inside the burning building (1d6 concussion and 1d6 fire damage, Ref save negates). Freeing the scullery-boy requires a Strength check (DC 21, up to two other characters can assist).

Ten rounds after the fire elementals burst from the building, a half-orc cleric of Kord, Asfelkir Hranleuth, arrives on the scene and uses a *wand of control water* to help put out the fire and fight the elementals. If the PCs saved the scullery-boy, Asfelkir gladly takes him under his custody. The local cleric of Pelor, Kristof Jurgensen, also comes to help the wounded and those intoxicated by the smoke. When all is finished, and silence falls again on the streets, Kristof screams out at Cauldron: "Fools! The flames of discord will raise hell in our town!"

Ad Hoc XP: If the PCs save the scullery-boy, award them experience points for a CR 4 encounter.

ORDER RESTORED

The next morning, several town criers announce that order has been restored in Cauldron. The lord mayor pardons all citizens involved in the riot, and most of those who were arrested are freed before sunset. There is no pardon, however, for the "evil merchant" Maavu. His properties have been confiscated and he is sentenced to death in absentia. Town criers publicize Alek Tercival's letter of challenge, but also cite reliable sources that the paladin of St. Cuthbert has been possessed by demons. Thus, the lord mayor declares the challenge null and void. The government offers a reward of 5,000 gp to whomever finds and saves the possessed paladin. The crier also announces that after the destruction of Minuta's Board, all half-orc mercenaries in the Lord Mayor's service are to be transferred to an encampment outside the city walls.

Recent events probably leave the PCs puzzled about two NPCs: Maavu Arlinton and Alek Tercival. Maavu can be found at the Redhead Miner's Inn in Redgorge. On the other hand, finding Alek's Tercival is a bit more complicated; no one seems to have seen him recently.

JENYA AND ALEK

Alek Tercival and Jenya Urikas have been friends since childhood, although they drifted apart for a time during the paladin's "dissolute" years. The characters likely already know that Jenya has ties to Alek. Any other citizens they ask about Alek invariably refer them to Jenya; their friendship is fairly common knowledge.

If asked about him, Jenya admits that she's very worried about Alek. She supports Alek's supposed challenge to Skellerang, but greatly fears the rumor about him being victim of demonic possession. She adds that although Alek has not been back to the church for two months, he has been seen in several areas to the west, including Redgorge. Jenya tells the heroes about Alek's background and his conversion to St. Cuthbert (see "Background") and pleads them to help him.

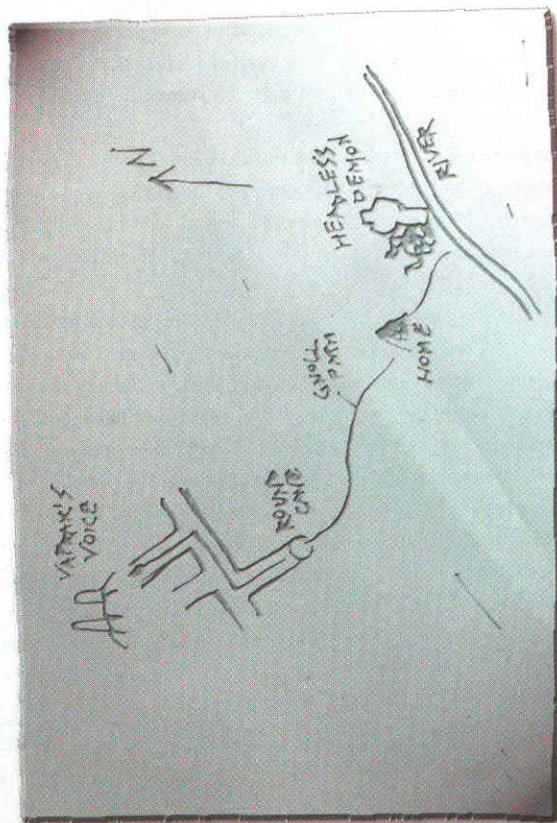
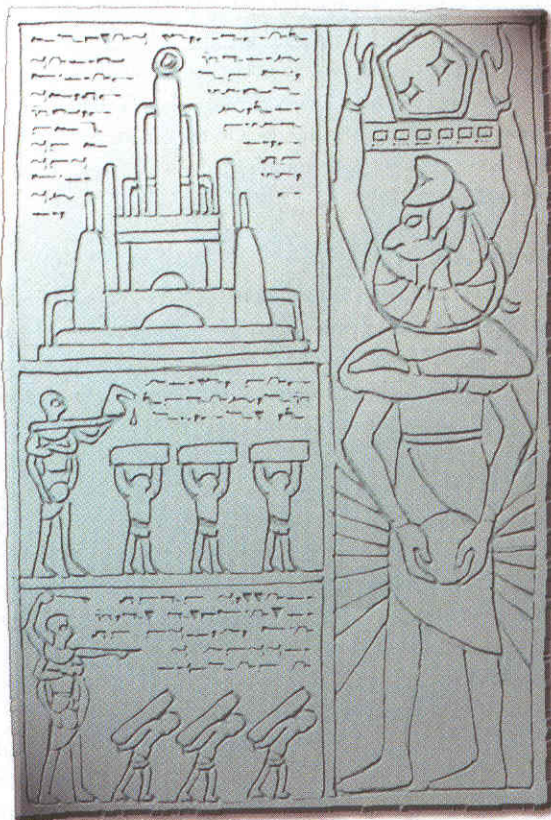
Jenya Urikas gives the PCs one other important piece of information about Alek. He often sold art objects he found in his adventures to Tygot Mispas, the proprietor of an antiquity shop over on Lava Avenue. He sold these objects to accumulate the necessary money to buy back his ancestral manor, which his father sold to pay off some debts. An investigation of his latest sales to Tygot might provide some clues as to where he's been spending his time over the last few months. At the very least, Tygot himself might have some information on Alek.

Jenya has already used the *Star of Justice* (a magic axe with prophetic powers, see "Life's Bazaar") to cast *divination* about Alek's current activities. The results were as follows: "Late on the path of justice, trapped between glass and stone, he weeps where many can see him, but he can see only himself."

TYGOT'S OLD THINGS

Tygot Mispas, a 120-year-old halfling retired from adventuring for two decades, owns a small but well-stocked antiquity shop on Lava Avenue. "Tygot's Old Things" specializes in nonmagical art objects gathered from across the known world. Tygot himself has excellent commercial contacts in the capital city of Sasserine, and frequently buys old documents and art objects from local adventurers. Tygot's best customers include the lord mayor himself and many nobles in Cauldron (including Lord Orbis Vhalantru).

His shop is a two-story structure with a small flat on the upper floor and a well-organized business area on the lower. Tygot shares the place with Lepook, an elderly and lazy blink dog that agreed to spend his old age with his "civilized" friend. Lepook keeps watch on the shop and on Tygot as well, acting as his "conscience" when the halfling's greed rears up. The main shop itself



contains an impressive assortment of less valuable antiquities, mostly vases, statuettes, small furniture, and tapestries. Tygot keeps his most precious wares in the basement, where no fewer than thirty art objects, worth an average of 300 gp each, can be found. The door that leads down to the basement is made of steel and is locked with two masterwork locks (Open Lock DC 30) requiring different keys. Apart from the occasional trip to the Coy Nixie for a frugal meal, Tygot spends his free time writing his memoir and casting diminutive plaster replicas of Cauldron's monuments (the City Hall, the Cathedral of Wee Jas, the Lakeside Pavilion, etc.). He sells these replicas in his shop for 1 gp each.

When the PCs arrive, Tygot recognizes them as the heroes who saved his shop from the floods and greets them warmly. Lepook *dimension doors* over to the most charismatic PC and sniffs his hands. Tygot respects the PCs enough to skip his usual attempt to palm off the first piece of junk at hand, and invites them inside for a cup of tea and a private chat. His office is neatly fitted out with fine, human-sized mahogany furnishings.

Tygot is content with idle chit-chat, but if the PCs ask him about Alek Tercival, Tygot becomes more animated. He says that the paladin is an interesting supplier of his shop, and a good friend to boot. As far as he knows, the paladin tithes one tenth of his treasure to the church of St. Cuthbert and puts the rest aside for some purpose. Whenever he found art objects on his journeys, he invariably came here to sell them for cash. Tygot keeps a meticulous register of his acquisitions, and can easily track down all of the objects that Alek brought in over the last month. He knows Alek found them in the Cauldron region, but Tygot has no idea where any of them originally came from.

The items are listed below:

- **The Volcanic Gosling:** A life-size statuette of a small goose carved in deep gray, polished basalt (8 lbs. weight, 250 gp value). One of twelve created by the heroine Tlimida about eight centuries before, on Midsummer's Day. According to legend, Tlimida also set the foundation stone of Caludron's City Hall. Tlimida, a descendant of the legendary Surabar Spellmason, was deeply moved by the sudden flight of a flock

CAMPAIGN SEED: ALEK'S TREASURE

In the past, Alek Tercival adventured with several diverse groups, earning friends and enemies in the Cauldron region and beyond. His main objective has always been to earn enough money to regain a high social status in his town and to buy back his family

estate. For this reason, he has stored a considerable amount of treasure in a cache known only to him. If Alek dies, this cache could become the object of a treasure hunt. The location of his estate, and the nature of its current owners and inhabitants, are left intentionally vague.



of ducks over the lake, and chose to immortalize its protagonists with these carvings.

- **The Knight in Brown:** A 250-year-old painting of a standing knight in brown robes (20 in. × 35 in., oil on wood, 150 gp value). The knight carries a bastard sword at his side and leans on a decorative sill. On the sill sits a horned helmet. Thought to be the portrait of Axel Herewall, bailiff of the distant town of Basan. The portrait is signed A. A. on the lower right corner.
- **The Baboon Mask:** A gold-plated, darkwood mask of an unknown baboonlike divinity (human size, 350 gp) once worshiped in the jungles west of Cauldron. The last reported sighting of a wer baboon (before the recent encounter with Tongueater in "Flood Season") dates back more than a century.
- **The God of the Lake:** A bust of a fish-like monster's head (a kopru), finely carved in pink marble (20 lbs., 300 gp value).

The neck bears signs of damage, and was probably severed from a life-size statue of a kopru divinity. Its eye sockets are hollow, for the statue's gemstone eyes were stolen long ago. The head dates back to a time well before the first settlers reached Cauldron, the histories of which never mention the presence of kopru in the area.

- **The Hegemonic Plate:** A rectangular plate of silver etched with odd figures and ciphers (6 in. × 8 in., 400 gp value, see **Player Handout #1**). A crude map and a few notes in Giant are scratched into the opposite side of the plate, which would be smooth otherwise. These scratched notes seem to be quite recent, but the plate itself has a definite aura of ancient weight about it.

While the other objects are unimportant to this adventure (but could provide foreshadowing for future adventures), the hegemonic plate (which Alek found in an old ogre's cave), summa-

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE HAUNTED VILLAGE

The Haunted Village is a ruined settlement set in the craggy foothills south of Cauldron. It was founded by Kozomagon Lidu, one of Surabar's greatest friends and competitors. Originally named Liduton, the Haunted Village thrived for only a very short time before most of its inhabitants perished during the Battle of Redgorge. Kozomagon was a necromancer, and she founded Liduton near an ancient underground necropolis. Just as Surabar used

his great elemental powers to defend his people, Kozomagon drew upon her powers to raise an army to protect Liduton. This foolish attempt to raise an army of undead to support the defenders of Redgorge ended in tragedy as the undead army turned on the citizens. Little is known today of the long-term results of this event, but rumors about powerful undead creatures in the Haunted Village continue to persist.

The Village of REDGORGE

WEST



rizes the terrible experiment of the spell weavers before the disaster that produced the Demonskar. A successful Decipher Script check (DC 30), *comprehend languages*, *legend lore*, or *vision* spell allows a PC to decipher the runes and reveals the plate is from an ancient society of powerful spell-casting creatures. A successful Knowledge (nature) check (DC 30) identifies the six-armed figures as spell weavers and the humanoid figures as ogres.

The spell weavers' leader is depicted on the right side of the plate; he holds something referred to as the "Starry Mirror" above his head. A string of ciphers under the depiction of the Starry Mirror represent numbers. These numbers are, in order, 3, 4, 5, 1, 2, and 3. These six numbers are the numeric combination that provide the key for properly using the *mirror jump* property of the *Starry Mirror* (see area V15 at Vaprak's Voice), although this is not indicated anywhere on the plate and is not revealed by spells such as *legend lore* or *vision*.

On the left side of the plate, three scenes are depicted. These three scenes should be read from bottom to top. The bottom scene depicts the ogre slaves of the spell weavers toiling to build the planar travel installation. The next scene up depicts the same ogres, empowered by the *Amaranth Elixir* and granted great strength to aid in their work. The plate does not indicate the *elixir's* less desirable quality of eroding the will and sense of self. The topmost scene shows the planar travel installation in its completed glory.

The map on the opposite side was carved by the old ogre himself not long after he discovered Vaprak's Voice in his wanderings, and shows the way from his lair to the spell weaver ruins. The ogre was slain by Alek before he could explore the site further. A successful Knowledge (local) check (DC 25) allows a character to note that a statue of a headless demon is said to stand on the banks of the Red River to the southwest of Cauldron.


If the PCs want to purchase one of these objects, Tygot asks for double the listed value at first. When he does so, Lepook howls loudly, and continues to do so as long as the price remains over the listed value. Tygot looks embarrassed, smiles a lot, and quickly lowers his asking price to that listed above.

TO REDGORGE

If Maavu extended an invitation to the heroes to visit him and his allies, the PCs should eventually take up his invitation and travel to Redgorge. This village was the first human settlement in the area. Founded about 800 years ago, Redgorge was at one time a much larger settlement. It never fully recovered from Nabthatoron's assault long ago. Redgorge sits in a narrow strip of flat ground between a cliff and an immense quarry of red pebble gravel. West of the village, a prodigious line of fortifications known as the Basalt Bastions protect the land, their massive walls unguarded and draped with vines. These fortifications, as impressive as Cauldron's outer walls, tower over the village itself. They were built ages ago by Surabar Spellmason's

powerful spells in a single week, to aid in the defense of Redgorge against the denizens of the Demonskar.

Today, Redgorge is a farming and mining village. The old Stonemason District, where Surabar Spellmason once dwelt, is visibly depopulated and most of its buildings lie empty and in ruin. Over the decades, most of Redgorge's masons left to work in Cauldron. The early colonists founded a second city nearby as well. This was the village of Liduton. After the Battle of Redgorge, casualties among the colonists there were so high that Liduton was completely abandoned. Today, its ruins are known simply as the "Haunted Village."

 **Redgorge (village):** Conventional; AL CG; population 600 adults, 200 gp limit; Assets 6,000 gp; Mixed (79% human, 9% dwarf, 5% gnome, 3% halfling, 2% elf, 1% half-elf, 1% half-orc).

Authority Figures: Mayor Sind Nebern, female human Exp7; Pragat Millak, male human Ftr6 (bailiff).

Important Characters: Oliron Masht, male human Ftr3/Wiz7/Hgh4 (adventurer and architect, a.k.a. the Foreman, high handcrafter of the Chisel); Ekaym Smallcask, male human Ftr3/Brd4/Hgh3 (adventurer and linguist, a.k.a. Honest Minstrel, high handcrafter of the Chisel), Maavu, male human Exp5/Wiz4/Hgh1 (outlawed merchant, a.k.a. Camel Driver, high handcrafter of the Chisel), Mikimax, male human Com5/Exp2/Hgh1 (innkeeper, a.k.a. Bird Seed, high handcrafter of the Chisel). *Note:* the "Hgh" abbreviation indicates levels in the High Handcrafter prestige class, which is detailed in the Appendix.

In Redgorge, the heroes can easily find shelter in any abandoned house if they're short on cash. Otherwise, they'll be able to afford to rent a room at the Redhead Miner's. This two-story inn, which can accommodate up to 30 guests, contains a large shop that caters specifically to adventurers and explorers. The inn has a large common room on the first floor, where villagers often come to have a drink before sunset. The innkeeper, Mikimax, is a big, smiling man who keeps his long red hair tied in a ponytail. He's also a member of the Chisel. Every evening when drinks are served, he puts dozens of delicious, free snacks on the bar and provocatively invites his tipsy customers to help themselves: "Come on over, beggars! You won't starve as long as Mikimax lives!"

When the heroes arrive, a handsome man in his mid-thirties quietly plucks the strings of a lute in a corner of the common room, heedless of Mikimax's call. This man, dark-haired and rather short, wears a fine blue robe and polished knee-high boots. When he sees the heroes before the bar he calls out a riddle to them: "What can bind with water, sand, and lime?" The heroes should know the answer to this riddle ("mortar") from Maavu.

The musician is Ekaym Smallcask (human male Ftr3/Brd4/Hgh3, Decipher Script +14). Also known as Honest Minstrel, Ekaym is a high-ranking member of the Chisel. Honest Minstrel is an adventurer based in Redgorge and a close friend of the Foreman, the mysterious leader of the organization. Ekaym is an exceptionally skilled linguist, and is often

called by the rulers of nearby kingdoms to work as an interpreter. If the PCs were not able to decipher the spell weaver writings on the hegemonic plate, Ekaym could help them out.

The Chisel knows the heroes from their growing fame, and the Foreman asked him to invite them to a private meeting. Honest Minstrel sings the riddle to test their wits, unaware that Maavu may have told them the answer already. In any case, after some small talk he invites the party to follow him to a private room in the basement of the Redhead Miner's, where a meeting of his "colleagues" is scheduled to take place soon. He simply says that the Foreman wants to talk with them. Maavu (if still alive) and Alek Tercival are also invited; Honest Minstrel tells the PCs this as well in an attempt to further intrigue them into attending the meeting.

TALKING WITH THE CHISEL

The leaders of the Chisel meet the heroes in a private room under the Redhead Miner's Inn. The room is silent and comfortable, with a great oak table in the middle. On the chamber's walls, beautiful frescoes depict the glorious moments of Surabar Spellmason's life:

- Surabar's arrival near at the foot of a dormant volcano, recognizable as Cauldron.
- An encounter between Surabar and a sword-wielding angel, in which the angel gives Surabar a glowing quarterstaff. A member of the Chisel, or a successful Knowledge (history) check (DC 25), can identify the angel as Nidrama, a movanic deva said to watch over the region. The same source identifies the glowing quarterstaff as *Alakast*, a magic weapon said to be particularly potent against evil outsiders.
- The foundation of Redgorge.
- Surabar's magical construction of the Basalt Bastions.
- The battle of Redgorge against the demonic denizens of the Demonskar; Surabar leads Redgorge's forces and a towering hyena-headed glabrezu leads the Demonskar forces.
- The transformation of Surabar into a mountain, symbolizing his death.

When the PCs arrive in the room, Oliron Masht, Foreman of the Chisel, is already sitting at the table's head. He is a tall human dressed in brown, with gray hair and a short, well-trimmed goatee. He greets the PCs and offers them a drink from a cask of vintage wine. Oliron is a powerful and fearless individual who has tempered the tradition of his organization with years of adventuring. Originally from Sasserine, where he works as one of the king's architects, his return to Redgorge a few months ago was prompted by rumors of evil afoot in the region. At first, he asks a few questions about the heroes' interests and goals, but doesn't say much about the Chisel or the matter at hand. If the PCs press for more details he asks them to wait for the other invitees to arrive.

Mikimax and Maavu (if he still lives) arrive after a few minutes, but Alek Tercival does not. Alek's absence worries the Foreman, but he admits that he did not expect the paladin to show up and starts the meeting without him.

During the meeting, the Foreman tries to persuade the heroes to cooperate with him. He and his colleagues discuss the following points. If Maavu is dead, substitute him with Mikimax (who helped him) when he is mentioned.

- The Foreman begins by raising a point of contention with the organization's current situation. The selfish interests of many of its members have violated the philosophy of the Chisel, which is to protect the region and support artisans and craftsmen. Most of the violators are Cauldronites who have shifted toward neutrality and no longer care about the wellness of society as a whole.
- The Foreman reveals his fears that some great force of chaos and evil is at work in Cauldron's government, and the lord mayor may be under its influence. All sources of divination magic indicate some great disaster on the horizon. The Chisel's greatest prophet, an earth weird, has not answered the Foreman's calls, so details on this disaster remain vague.
- The Foreman mentions Maavu at this point and notes that although his actions were well-intended, they nonetheless caused more harm than good. He now fears that the Chisel is becoming a scapegoat for the current troubles, and that forces from Cauldron may soon take drastic measures against the organization. Maavu justifies himself by claiming he meant to organize a peaceful demonstration, but that "some villain stirred up the riot to discredit any opposition." Honest Minstrel rightly suspects the Last Laugh, and takes Maavu for a ride: "They suckered you, nothing else!" At this point, a squabble breaks out between Maavu and Honest Minstrel (Maavu: "Better dead than slaves! A wandering strummer like you should know!" Honest Minstrel: "Peddler! You count lives like money! No difference to you, eh?"). The Foreman grows tired of the argument and demands silence.
- At this point, Honest Minstrel notes that his informants in Cauldron warned him that Terseon Skellerang plans to invade and search Redgorge, using the half-orc mercenaries now encamped outside the city walls. The members agree that the Hall of Carvings would survive such an invasion intact, but that such an event would be disastrous nonetheless. The villagers would oppose such actions and would fight against the invaders. The Foreman muses that Skellerang must be persuaded to renounce to his plan. Alek Tercival's public renouncement of his challenge should do just the thing, but unfortunately, no one knows where he is.
- Alek's absence worries the Foreman above everything else, and at this point he turns to the heroes. If they have already started to search for the missing paladin, the Foreman commends them for their insight. If they have not started yet, he asks them to do so while the Chisel keeps several eyes on Skellerang's actions. He has no reward to offer but the Chisel's friendship. The Foreman concludes the meeting by leading the PCs and the others on a short night walk along the Basalt Bastions. He looks intently toward the west at one point...toward the Demonskar. He sighs, then says philosophically, "Surabar's spells raised this wall in seven days, but

his guidance has failed to build a righteous society in as many centuries."

If the characters seem to be at a loss as to where to begin their search for Alek, the Foreman recommends they speak to Jenya Urikas at the Church of St. Cuthbert; the two of them have long been friends. He also informs the PCs that Alek had been spending a fair amount of time recently exploring the jungles near Redgorge, and he often used a rowboat to enter the jungle via the Red River. If he is told about the map scratched into the hegemonic plate from Tygot's shop, he can tell the PCs that a beheaded statue of a demon does indeed stand on the jungle banks of the Red River to the southwest.

JOURNEY TO THE DEMONSKAR

After speaking with Jenya, Tygot, and the Chisel, the PCs should be ready to head into the jungle via the Red River to try to track Alek down. The Area Map details the jungle region near Redgorge, and indicates all of the locations carved on the rear of the hegemonic plate. The jungles near Redgorge are fairly wild, with a few winding hunter's trails within. The most efficient way to penetrate the jungle is to take the Red River. Mikimax gladly supplies the PCs with plenty of food and all the mundane gear they may request, including a small but stable rowboat. The rowboat trip to the Headless Demon takes about four hours, during which the heroes should be impressed with the overwhelming presence of life around them.

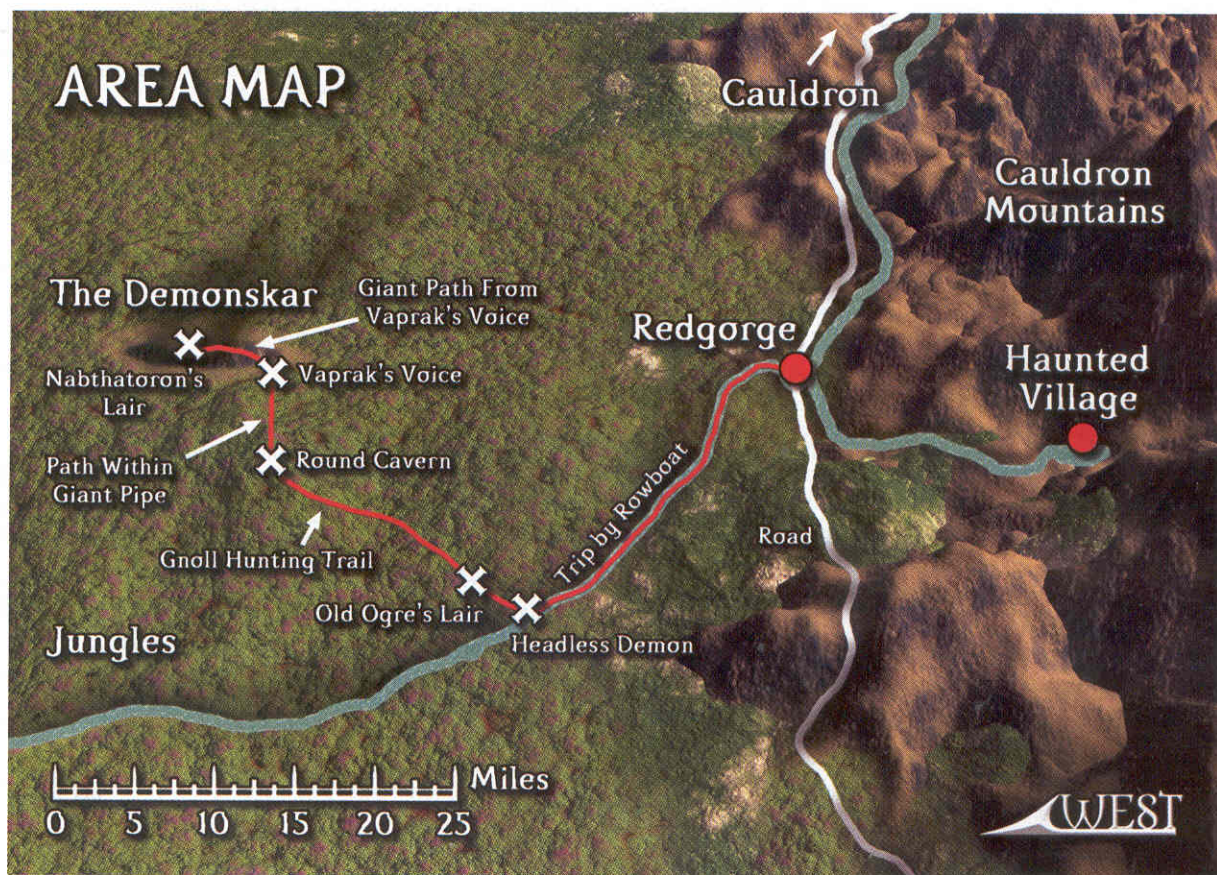
THE HEADLESS DEMON (EL 9)

A large beach runs along the northern bank of the Red River here. A badly weathered stone statue of some sort of humanoid creature stands at the edge of the jungle, overlooking the beach. The statue's neck ends in a stump, and its expressive canine head lies in the sand a few feet away. Patches of mold and moss grow on the statue, but the vegetation around it seems to have been cleared away recently. A narrow trail winds off to the northwest and into the jungle just beyond the statue.

The mold-encrusted idol is little more than a carved pillar. If a character examines the sculpture closely and makes a Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 15), he notices that the statue itself depicts a glabrezu. The statue itself was built ages ago by gnolls in an attempt to curry the favor of Nabthatoron. The glabrezu has little interest in the gnolls or this statue, but that hasn't kept the gnoll natives from viewing it as a sacred relic. Various local gnoll tribes often engage in short, brutal wars in order to lay claim to this land; it was during one of these battles nearly two centuries ago that the statue's head was knocked off.

Creatures: A band of gnoll rangers lies in wait in the jungles surrounding this beach. Their tribe recently gained control of this area, and these gnolls plan to ambush the next tribe of gnolls to arrive here. Unfortunately for the PCs, the gnolls take just as much offense at their arrival in the area.

AREA MAP



Gnoll Hunters, Male Gnoll Rgr3 (6): CR 4; Medium humanoid (gnoll); HD 5d8+15; hp 37 each; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +4; Grp +7; Atk/Full Atk +8 ranged (1d8+3 plus black adder venom/x3, masterwork longbow) or +8 melee (1d8+4, masterwork battleaxe); SA archery combat style, favored enemy (animal +2); SQ darkvision 60 ft., wild empathy; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +9, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +7, Swim +6.

Feats: Endurance^B, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot^B, Skill Focus (Hide), Track^B.

Possessions: Masterwork longbow (+3 Str bonus), 5 arrows poisoned with black adder venom, 15 arrows, masterwork spear, masterwork studded leather armor, 3 doses black adder venom.

Tactics: The gnolls remain hidden in the foliage on the north bank of the river and shoot the PCs with arrows as soon as they come within 300 feet of the beach. On the wooded banks

of the river, the gnolls have cover and concealment. They engage in melee only as a last resort.

THE OLD OGRE'S HOME (EL 11)

The path into the jungle from the headless demon leads to the old ogre's home; a shallow cave in the side of a low hill. Here, Alek Tercival recently killed a venerable but vicious ogre. A horrible odor of decay emanates from the interior of the cave. Inside, the PCs find the ogre's skeleton along with the carcasses of a pair of devoured baboons. A **Creature** has also moved into the recently abandoned cavern.

Creature: A forest sloth now lives in this cave. It is quite protective of its new lair and fights to the death as long as intruders stay inside the cave or attack it from outside. If the party includes any Small characters, the sloth attacks them before the others, trying to swallow a Small character whole.

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE GNOLL TRIBES

Several tribes of gnolls have recently appeared in the jungles near the Demonskar. Most were attracted to the region by legends spread by a wandering gnoll adept known as Triple Tail. According to this legend, the son of Yeenoghu emerged from the Abyss in a great fire from the Demonskar, an event that marked the start of a thirteen-century war that would eventually make the gnolls the

dominant race in the world. These gnolls are loosely organized brigands, but a few of them are religious fanatics inspired by Triple Tail. These gnolls, adepts and rangers of considerable ability worship Nabthatoron as the son of Yeenoghu. Although the glabrezu cares little for such worshippers, he nevertheless accepts human sacrifices from them.

🐾 **Forest Sloth:** CR 11; Large animal; HD 14d8+70; hp 147; Init +5; Spd 40 ft., brachiation 40 ft., climb 60 ft.; AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +8; Grap +19; Atk +15 melee (2d4+7, claw); Full Atk +15 melee (2d4+7, 2 claws) plus +10 melee (2d8+3, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA improved grab, swallow whole; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, poison immunity, scent; AL N; SV Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +4; Str 25, Dex 20, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +15, Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Spot +9.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Power Attack, Track.

Improved Grab (Ex): A forest sloth that hits a Medium or smaller opponent with both claws can start a grapple as a free action. If the sloth gets a hold, it automatically hits with its bite attack and can try to swallow the opponent in the next round.

Swallow Whole (Ex): A forest sloth can swallow an opponent up to Small size. A victim in the sloth's gullet takes 2d4+7 points of bludgeoning damage plus 1d8 points of acid damage each round. The AC of the sloth's gullet is 13; dealing 25 points of damage to it allows a swallowed creature to escape.

Treasure: A successful Search check (DC 25) made in the old ogre's cave uncovers what was once Alek Tercival's *wand of cure moderate wounds*. The wand is out of charges now, but the symbol of St. Cuthbert is still quite visible on its butt. Discovery of this clue should encourage the PCs that they're on the right track.

THE HUNTING TRAIL

From the Old Ogre's Home, the PCs face a 15-mile hike along a gnoll hunting trail in order reach the entrance to the Round Cavern. Although most animals have learned to avoid this hunting trail and the gnolls that use it, the trail is far from safe to travel. Gnoll hunters can be found often on the trail as they seek out food for their tribes. Worse, larger creatures have learned that the trail serves as a great place to hunt gnolls. The jungle track reduces overland movement to 3/4 its normal speed, and there's an 8% chance each hour that those traveling on the trail have one of the following encounters. Several of these encounters utilize creatures that appear in the *Monster Manual II*, the *Book of Vile Darkness*, or previous issues of *DUNGEON Magazine*; if you don't have access to these statistics simply roll 1d4 to determine the type of creature encountered rather than 1d8.

d8 roll Encounter

- 1 EL 7: A band of 6 gnolls (*Monster Manual* 130) led by two gnoll rangers (Rgr3, use stats from "The Headless Demon" above) returning from an unsuccessful hunt; if the gnolls hear the PCs approach they attempt an ambush.
- 2 EL 8: A herd of 4 dire boars (*Monster Manual* 63) lunge out of the jungle to attack the characters.
- 3 EL 8: A dire tiger (*Monster Manual* 65) stalks the party and attacks anyone who gets separated from the group.
- 4 EL 8: A pair of megaraptors (*Monster Manual* 60) sunning themselves in a small clearing take offense

at the PCs' intrusion into their territory.

- 5 EL 8: Three gambols (*Monster Manual II* 108) drop down from the trees above to surround and attack the last character in line.
- 6 EL 8: A band of three bar-Igura demons (*Book of Vile Darkness* 170) try to capture the PCs and return to the Demonskar with them.
- 7 EL 8: The PCs come across a troop of 6 hill baboons led by two werebaboon barbarians (Bbn3) feeding on the bodies of a band of gnoll hunters. Statistics for hill baboons (regular baboons advanced to 3 hit dice) and werebaboon barbarians can be found on page 36 of *DUNGEON* #97.
- 8 EL 9: An allosaurus and an ankylosaurus (*Monster Manual II* 70), locked in mortal combat (each is at 75% of their normal hit points), blocks the trail.

WINGS OF JUSTICE (EL 9)

At some point after the PCs leave the Old Ogre's Cave but before they reach the entrance to the Round Cave (most likely after they have settled down for the evening to rest but before they fall asleep), they have a brush with history. A PC that makes a Listen check (DC 14) hears a sudden flutter of large wings, and all wildlife falls suddenly silent. One round later, a beautiful woman emerges from the dense foliage and stands at the edge of the PCs' encampment. She has perfectly white skin and stern, sparkling eyes of silver. A pair of feathered wings spread out behind the woman's back and she raises a flaming sword, which emits a myriad of flickering beams of light.

Creatures (EL 10): This angelic creature is a movanic deva named Nidrama. She is the same angel encountered by Surabar Spellmason centuries before (as shown in the frescoes in Red-head Miner's Inn) and has long been a guardian against evil in the region. She has taken note of the PCs' actions and accomplishments, and has decided to make herself known to them just as she did for Surabar so many years ago.

🐾 **Nidrama, Movanic Deva:** CR 10; Medium outsider (extraplanar, good); HD 6d8+18; hp 45; Init +7; Spd 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (good); AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +6; Grap +11; Atk +13 melee (2d6+8 plus 1d6 fire/19-20, +1 flaming greatsword); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (2d6+8 plus 1d6 fire/19-20, +1 flaming greatsword); SA spell-like abilities; SQ angel traits, damage reduction 10/evil, darkvision 60 ft., divine equilibrium, fire resistance 20, heavenly deflection, immune to acid, immune to cold, immune to electricity, protective aura, soothing presence of nature, spell resistance 19; AL NG; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +11; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 17, Wis 19, Cha 23.

Skills: Balance +12, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +17, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Listen +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +12, Spot +13.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Languages: Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal.

Spell-like Abilities: At will—aid, consecrate, continual flame, create food and water, death ward, detect evil, discern lies (DC 20), poly-

morph, prayer, protection from arrows; 3/day—atonement, bless weapon, cure serious wounds, daylight, divination, ethereal jaunt, hallow, holy smite (DC 20), neutralize poison, plane shift (DC 21), remove curse, remove disease, remove fear; 1/day—commune, raise dead. Effective caster level 9th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Divine Equilibrium (Ex): Nidrama is immune to the effect of negative or positive planar energy traits.

Heavenly Deflection (Su): Once per round, Nidrama can deflect ranged attacks, rays, or single-target spells with her +1 flaming greatsword. To do this, she must succeed in a Reflex save (DC 20 plus enhancement bonus of the attack or spell level).

Protective Aura (Su): As a free action, Nidrama can surround herself with a nimbus of light that has a radius of 20 feet and acts as a double-strength magic circle against evil and as a minor globe of invulnerability cast as a 9th-level sorcerer.

Soothing Presence of Nature (Ex): Animals and plants may attack Nidrama only if magically compelled.

Development: Nidrama's first action after she reveals herself to the PCs is to invoke her protective aura and use *detect evil* to determine if anyone in their group is evil. If she detects any evil, her expression grows horribly sad and she *plane shifts* away. If she doesn't detect any evil and the PCs don't attack or insult her, she introduces herself and thanks the heroes for any good deeds they have accomplished in the recent past (such as putting a stop to the kidnapping ring, saving Cauldron from floods, protecting citizens from rampaging fiendish umber hulks, and saving Krewis from the mob). She then speaks the following to them:

"Powerful forces of chaos and evil are afoot. I dare not remain here long lest my presence attract the attention of those forces. Yet I could not sit by and watch you march into danger without warning you. The Lord of the Demonskar knows of your approach, and even now his minions prepare for your arrival. They shall use deceit and treachery against you, just as they have done with Alek Tercival before you. You must remain resolute; Alek Tercival must be saved.

"I have no aid to offer you but knowledge. In ages past, I provided to Surabar Spellmason a powerful weapon to assist him in his conflict with the Lord of the Demonskar. This was *Alakast*, a quarterstaff infused with an undying hatred of the fiends of the outer rifts. Unfortunately, *Alakast* was stolen centuries ago, ripped from Spellmason's tomb by a grave robber. Yet do not despair, for it is fated that *Alakast* should be wielded again against the Lord of Demonskar. It has found its way to you, and all that needs be done is for you to claim it. Seek *Alakast* in the lair of my false sisters, beyond the watchful eyes of the north.

"That is all I am at liberty to say...I wish you well in your travails, heroes, and never lose sight of your goals."

Nidrama has little else to say to the PCs, and unless they attack her she returns to the outer planes via a *plane shift*. Her advice to look, "beyond the watchful eyes of the north," is a clue to the location of the magic quarterstaff, which is hidden in area V14.

THE ROUND CAVERN

The hunting trail ends abruptly here and the trees thin out considerably to the north, granting a clear view of the sky. To the north, roiling yellow and brown clouds boil above a jagged, barren horizon. You can just make out the jagged line of the Demonskar's rim brooding at the base of these clouds. The ground itself between here and the rim is strewn with razor-sharp ridges of volcanic glass and jagged stone. Ruined strips of what can only be the metal framework of ancient structures protrude from the ground like broken fingers from a shallow grave. One particularly large structure juts from the ground only 20 feet from the end of the trail. The ruin appears like nothing more than a massive pipe protruding from the ground, its 20-foot-wide, 2-foot-thick frame sloping down into the tortured ground at a gentle slope.

This is the entrance to the "round cave" indicated on the back of the hegemonic plate. This pipe allows access to the ancient sewer network that once existed below the spell weaver city. The ruined pipes branch off and change direction many times, forming a maze. Characters who follow the route indicated on the map for about five miles emerge at area V1 of Vaprak's Voice. If the PCs decide to explore other routes, they find most of them to be collapsed. A few lead to other exits in the area, either opening back into the jungle or protruding from the walls of the Demonskar itself.

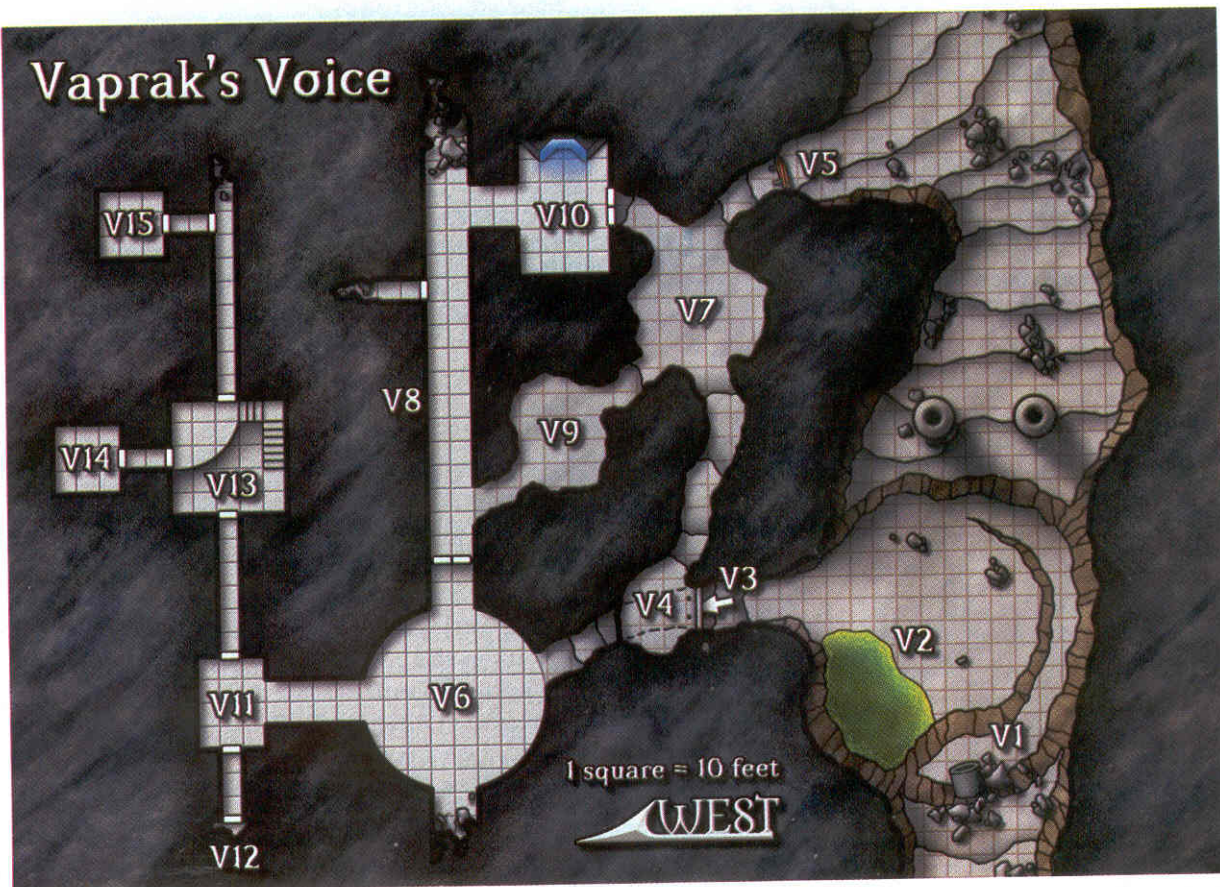
CHAPTER THREE: VOICE OF THE DESTROYER

The last mile of the ancient sewer pipe is dark and almost completely intact. As the PCs proceed down its length, a rhythmic rumbling moan grows until it is nearly deafening. When the heroes finally emerge into the open air, the assault on the senses is all but overwhelming. The heroes have come at last to the ruins of Vaprak's Voice, perched on the rim of the Demonskar itself.

VAPRAK'S VOICE FEATURES

The place known as Vaprak's Voice has two entrances, both set into the west wall of a deep fracture radiating from the rim of the vast Demonskar. Both entrances provide access to the ruins of a spell weaver laboratory that partially survived the eldritch blast that formed the Demonskar. For a time, a large tribe of ogres lived here. They gave the place its peculiar name, inspired by the thundering bellow issued from a pair of immense pipes near the entrance when the wind blew. Inside the complex, the areas of Vaprak's Voice can be divided into two distinct categories: rooms built by the spell weavers, which have an odd angular structure, and caverns dug by ogres, which are irregular and roughly hewn. The entire complex is rather dirty and foul smelling due to the sulfuric pollutants in the air about the Demonskar.

Vaprak's Voice



The spell weaver rooms are lit by magical plates, sort of still-active emergency lights, and have high ceilings, proportionate to the surface of the floor. The magical plates also heat the room to a comfortable temperature. The corridors can be 10 or 20 feet wide, with 15 or 30 feet high ceilings. Usually, the smaller corridors connect with rooms through perfectly smooth, still functional sliding doors. Like the lights, the doors are magic (CL 12), and open automatically when an intelligent being (Int 6 or higher) approaches within 5 feet. The doors slide up into the

ceiling, and remain open for one minute or as long as an intelligent being remains in range. A creature in a doorway that closes must make a Reflex save (DC 12) or be crushed and then pinned by the door, taking 3d6 points of damage. If the magic on the doors is dispelled when they are closed, the doors must be forced or battered open.

🛡️ **Stone Doors:** Hardness 8, hp 60, Lift DC 28.

HOW TO READ THE QUICK-REFERENCE FORMAT

This adventure alters the usual format for *DUNGEON* adventures in an effort to make key information easier for the DM to find quickly. At the beginning of each encounter are four entries.

Light: Indicates the source and strength of any light present, using the rules in Chapter 9 of the *Player's Handbook*. This doesn't include any light sources the PCs are carrying with them, of course.

Sound: Describes sounds that PCs might hear. Some are automatically heard, while others require Listen checks at the listed DC.

Reaction: Indicates how the PCs' actions in this encounter might affect other areas. Reinforcements from adjacent rooms are the most common kind of reaction. The trigger for the reaction is listed first, then the reaction after a dash. Some reactions occur automatically; others happen only under certain conditions, which are listed parenthetically. For example, the bugbears in the next

room over will join the fray in 3 rounds if they succeed at a DC 15 Listen check, made every round of the fight. The reaction line for that encounter would read: "To sounds of battle—bugbears join fight in 3 rounds (Listen DC 15)."

Auras: In order from strongest to weakest, lists the magic auras PCs might see with a *detect magic* spell. The strength of each aura is listed, then in parentheses it lists the source of the aura, the Spellcraft DC required to tell what school the aura is, and what school it is. Keep in mind that PCs might not be able to see every aura listed right away because they don't have line of sight to it. If an encounter has other auras (such as evil auras), those are noted in this section after the magic auras. Auras of other alignments exist, but aren't part of the quick-reference format because they come up in play so rarely.

VI. LANDING

Light: Outdoors (overcast by foul vapors).

Sound: Faint bubbling and whistling from the pool in area V2 (automatic); Thundering bellow from the vertical chimneys (automatic when the wind blows).

Reaction: None.

Auras: None.

Out of the dark passage, sharp and jagged rocks hang over a small ledge in the southeast part of a wide pit. The pit, roughly 150 feet in diameter, is set at the bottom of a large fissure among the arid, crystalline hills that border the Demonskar. Puffs of eye-watering smoke seep from a pool at the bottom of the chasm, about 50 feet below. On the other side of the chasm, a pair of gigantic metal tubes protrude from the rock, extending nearly fifty feet and out of the fissure. The burning stink of sulfur and acid is everywhere, and the ground and walls are wet with foul-smelling condensation. A ramp of roughly hewn stone steps wind down into the pit. As the wind rises and sweeps through the fissure, the two looming metal chimneys issue a thundering, deep bellow that echoes across the landscape.

The PCs can descend to area V2 via the slippery stairway as long as they make Balance checks (DC 12). Failure indicates a rough fall into the pit 50 feet below. Characters who wish to explore the northern reaches of the fissure can do so, although without flight numerous Climb checks (DC 15 for the slippery walls) are required to reach the opposite side of the pit. PCs who fly up and out of the fissure to survey the area are struck by the disturbing geographic illusion of a pair of black eyes and a gaping mouth formed by the chimneys and the pit. Characters who persist in flying above the fissure eventually draw the attention of flying demons from the Demonskar, but such encounters are beyond the scope of this adventure.

The horrendous stink of the foul vapor in the air here forces characters to make a Fortitude save (DC 12) to avoid becoming nauseated for 1d6 minutes. Success indicates that the character becomes accustomed to the smell.

The deafening moan of the twin chimneys lasts for 1d10 rounds, activating once every 1d6 minutes. While the chimneys roar, Listen checks are made at a -10 penalty.

V2. MEPHITIC POOL (EL 5)

Light: Shadowy outdoors (overcast by vapors).

Sound: Loud bubbling and whistling puffs from the chasm (automatic); Thundering bellow from the vertical chimneys (automatic when the wind blows).

Reaction: To sounds of battle—hill giants in area V4 prepare to ambush anyone who tries to pass through area V3 (Listen check DC 5, or DC 15 while Vaprak's Voice is howling).

Auras: None; strong evil (Kymzo).

The water in the shallow pool at the bottom of the chasm bubbles constantly, stirred by acrid vapors escaping from deep underground. A whistling puff of smoke erupts sporadically from the water's surface, spraying the surrounding rocks with warm, whitish droplets. On the west wall of the chasm, a 20-foot-tall, massive iron gate blocks the way to a passage dug into the rock. Over the blocked passage, a second cave mouth opens on the rocky wall, much like the balcony of a giant gatehouse.

The horrendous stink of the foul vapor in the air here forces characters to make a Fortitude save (DC 14) to avoid becoming nauseated for 1d6 minutes. Success indicates that the character becomes accustomed to the smell.

The deafening moan of the twin chimneys lasts for 1d10 rounds, activating once every 1d6 minutes. While the chimneys roar, Listen checks are made at a -10 penalty.

Creature: An ancient and wicked mephitis named Kymzo, once part of Nabthatoron's retinue, enjoys bathing in the bubbling pool. Kymzo serves the hags now, often acting as a contact between them and his prior demonic master. Kymzo has orders to let Alek Tercival pass by undisturbed, but no other humanoids are welcome in Vaprak's Voice.

Kymzo, Advanced Steam Mephitis: CR 5; Small outsider (fire); HD 6d8+6; hp 36; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average); AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +6; Grap +1; Atk +5 melee (1d3-1, claw); Full Atk +5 melee (1d3-1, 2 claws); SA breath weapon, spell-like abilities, summon mephitis; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 2, immunity to fire, vulnerability to cold; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +6; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 17.

Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +12, Climb -1 (+1 with ropes), Diplomacy +14, Disguise +12 (+14 acting), Escape Artist +14 (+15 with ropes), Hide +16, Intimidate +5, Listen +10, Move Silently +12, Spot +10, Use Rope +12 (+14 with bindings).

Feats: Agile, Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Breath Weapon (Su): Cone of steam 10 ft., fire damage 1d4, Reflex half DC 16. Living creatures that fail their saves get a -4 penalty to AC and a -2 penalty to attacks for 3 rounds.

Spell-like Abilities: Once per hour, Kymzo can use *blur* (CL 6). Once per day, he can create a boiling rainstorm (20-ft. square,

CAMPAIGN SEED: NABTHATORON'S HOME

Nabthatoron's lair is located somewhere in the depths of the Demonskar, and is inhabited by the survivors of the demon's original fiendish retinue. This place is beyond the scope of this adventure, but the PCs might want to seek and explore it later, especially

if Nabthatoron withdraws from the last fight at the ancient vault (see area A2). The glabrezu's lair should feature encounters with lesser demons of various kinds, namely Nabthatoron's unruly subordinates from the Battle of Redgorge.

2d6 fire damage, Reflex half DC 15, CL 6). This ability is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Summon Mephrit (Su): Kymzo may not use this ability due to Nabthatoron's banishment on the Material Plane.

Tactics: If Kymzo notices anyone else descending into this area, Kymzo uses his breath weapon to issue a special warning whistle (slightly different from the usual geyser sound from the pool, Listen DC 25 to notice this) and flies up through the small opening above the gate in area V3 to warn the hags of the intrusion.

V3. STEEL GATE

Light: Shadowy outdoors (overcast by vapor).

Sound: Loud bubbling and whistling from the pool in area V2 (automatic); Thundering bellow from the vertical chimneys (automatic when the wind blows).

Reaction: To attempts to raise or destroy the portcullis—the giants in area V4 prepare actions to throw boulders at anyone who passes under the portcullis (Listen check DC 10, or DC 20 while Vaprak's Voice is bellowing); to characters standing near the portcullis—the giants in area V4 prepare an ambush (Spot check DC 20).

Auras: None; moderate evil (hill giants in area V4).

The end of this narrow canyon contains a large cave opening in the side of the rift. A massive 15-foot-wide, 20-foot-tall, spiked iron portcullis blocks this entrance. About 15 feet above the gate is a much smaller cave mouth; this one barely two feet in diameter.

This entrance, created by the ogres decades ago, allows access to the surviving part of the ancient spell weaver complex. The portcullis is manned by a hill giant in area V4 who has been instructed to open the gates only for Alek Tercival or Nabthatoron. The balcony has a 6-foot-tall parapet that offers protection and concealment to the giant. When the portcullis is raised, the bars slide up into the ceiling and block off the smaller entrance above.

This smaller entrance is narrow enough that a Small creature can wriggle through with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 15); for Medium creatures the check is more difficult (DC 30). Creatures larger than that cannot pass through it at all. Tiny or smaller creatures can move through it with ease.

❖ **Huge Iron Portcullis:** 6 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 180; break DC 40; lift DC 37.

V4. BALCONY (EL 7)

Light: Faint light filtering in from area V3 (shadowy illumination).

Sound: Faint bubbling and whistling from the pool in area V2 (automatic); thundering bellow from the vertical chimneys (automatic when the wind blows).

Reaction: To sounds of battle—the giants in area V7 come to join the fray (Listen check DC 5).

Auras: None; moderate evil (hill giants).

A wide balcony looms over the north face of this passageway. An enormous winch system on the balcony above connects to a pair chains and pulleys attached to the portcullis. A giant-sized stool sits behind a 3-foot-tall wooden platform that runs along the balcony. Several spherical rocks are heaped near the balcony's edge.

The winch can be used to raise the portcullis in area V2 with a successful Strength check (DC 20).

Creatures: A hill giant named Muggo normally watches this area from the balcony above, although not very attentively. If the giant makes a successful Spot check (DC 20) he notices characters passing by below; he relies mostly on the portcullis itself and his hearing to alert him to intruders. If he knows the PCs are in the area (either because the mephrit from area V2 warned him or he heard the sounds of battle or portcullis smashing), he lies in wait and begins hurling stones down on the intruders as soon as they pass below the balcony. The balcony and parapet grant cover from attacks initiated from below.

Muggo is under the effects of *Amaranth Elixir*, so his stats are somewhat different than those of the typical hill giant.

➤ **Muggo, male hill giant:** CR 7; HD 12d8+48; hp 111; Init -1; Spd 30 ft. in hide armor; AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +9; Grp +22; Atk +18 melee (2d8+14, greatclub) or +17 melee (1d4+9, slam) or +8 ranged (1d6+9, rock); Full Atk +18/+13 melee (2d8+14, greatclub) or +17 melee (1d4+9, 2 slams) or +8 ranged (1d6+9, rock); SA rock throwing; SQ low-light vision, rock catching; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 29, Dex 8, Con 19, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +9, Jump +9, Listen +3, Spot +6.

Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Development: If the heroes retreat from Vaprak's Voice and return later but haven't defeated the giants, they find all of the hill giants from area V4 and V6 waiting for them on the balcony above.

V5. GIANT ENTRANCE

Light: Shadowy outdoors.

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE SPELL WEAVER RUINS

Although most of the spell weaver structures in the jungles west of Cauldron were swept away by the explosion that produced the Demonskar, it is possible that the complex at Vaprak's Voice is not the only surviving remnant of their civilization. Other ruins left by

the spell weavers are likely to be subterranean places, buried deeply in lava, rubble, and ash. These places likely feature enigmatic hazards like the *Starry Mirror* and marvelous devices like *Amaranth Elixir*. They also could contain magically frozen creatures, constructs, or even live spell weavers in suspended animation.

Sound: Faint bubbling and whistling puffs from the pool in Area V2 (automatic); thundering bellow from the vertical chimneys (automatic when the wind blows).

Reaction: To attempts to destroy the barrier—the giants in area V7 prepare an ambush.

Auras: None.

A 15-foot-wide, 15-foot-tall cave mouth opens on the rocky wall here, obstructed by a crude wall of logs and boards bound together with rope and huge iron nails. From the cave, a winding path leads downhill toward the misty, blighted heart of the Demonskar itself.

The wall of wood is a makeshift “doorway” built by the hill giants to keep out intruders. The wall weighs 1,500 lbs., so the average hill giant has little problem hefting it aside when necessary.

The path from the cave mouth allows a safe walk through the large crack on the Demonskar’s rim, and can be used by the heroes in a successive adventure to reach Nabthatoron’s lair (see the “Nabthatoron’s Home” campaign seed).

🔪 **Wood Wall:** 1 ft. thick; Hardness 5; hp 120; break DC 26.

V6. MEETING HALL

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: Bellow from the vertical chimneys outside (automatic when the wind blows).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (lights on the ceiling, DC 21, evocation); faint evil (if the ettins from area V9 are present).

The walls of this circular, domed chamber are carved and polished with exceptional precision and skill to look like cascades of petrified liquid. Several metal disks on the ceiling 60 feet above provide a pearly illumination as bright as torchlight. The center of the room is occupied by a bizarre, 30-foot-wide, 7-foot-tall metal and stone sculpture made of truncated pillars, short ramps, suspended slabs of stone, and a total of twenty chairs with triple arm-rests.

This hall was originally used as a meeting place for the spell weavers; the object in the center of the room is analogous to a meeting table. The spell weaver meeting table featured many mobile parts, but is now totally inert.

The door to the north is locked, the key to which is kept by the fire giant in area V10.

🔪 **Giant Door (strong, ironbound wood):** 8 in. thick; Hardness 6; hp 80; break DC 30, good lock (Open Lock DC 30).

Development: If the complex is on alert, the five ettins from area V9 are found here. The ettins fight any intruders to the death. A few rounds after the ettins are defeated, the three fey hags approach the PCs from area V11, disguised as trumpet archons (via *veil*); they also use *mirage arcana* to generate a heavenly choir and wisps of pleasing floral scents to accompany their entrance into the chamber. They smile heavenly at the

PCs and thank them for cleansing “this ancient and sacred site” from the taint of those terrible giants. One of the false archons carries a chalice filled with *Amaranth Elixir* and offers it to the most charismatic PC, saying that his heroism against the giants has earned him the right to drink the nectar of the Gods. The hags, however, have laced the liquid in the chalice with dark reaver powder (Fortitude save DC 20, primary damage 2d6 Con, secondary damage 1d6 Con plus 1d6 Str). If a PC drinks the liquid the effect of the poison and the *Amaranth Elixir* stack together. If the character succumbs to the poison, the hags recoil in horror and exclaim, “Only one who had been tainted with evil would react so to the nectar! You must destroy this hidden agent of evil at once!” The hags hope to trick the PCs into arguing or fighting amongst themselves so they can divide and conquer the group. Once their ruse is uncovered, they turn *invisible* and attempt to retreat to area V13.

V7. HILL GIANT CAVE (EL 10)

Light: Dim light from outside during the day.

Sound: Bellow from the vertical chimneys outside (automatic when the wind blows).

Reaction: To sounds of combat—the ettins in area V9 and the giant in area V4 come to aid their allies (Listen check DC 5, DC 15 while Vaprak’s Voice is howling.)

Auras: Moderate evil (hill giants).

This place reeks of sweaty, unwashed brutes and scorched meat. Four 12-foot-long stone beds covered with filthy animal skins lie near the walls. A huge firepit dominates the middle of the cave, under a chimney hole in the 40-foot-high ceiling above. The charred, dismembered skeleton of a huge ape lies over the bed of ashes. A pile of 1-foot-diameter polished spheres of rocks is stacked neatly against the south wall, with a hammer, a chisel, and an emery nearby. Four large burlap sacks sit against the west wall.

Creatures: The four hill giants the hags recruited sleep, feast, and carouse in this room. Three of them can be found here while the fourth guards area V4.

🔪 **Golot, Pogus, and Tibor, hill giants:** hp 123, 107, and 99, see area V4 for statistics.

Treasure: The four burlap sacks contain the personal belongings of the hill giants. Aside from the usual mundane items they carry in the sacks, they contain a total of 2,100 sp, 950 gp, a silver ring worth 400 gp, and a gold-plated halfling skull worth 250 gp.

V8. HALLWAY

Light: Dim light from ceiling (shadow illumination).

Sound: Faint rumble from the furnace in Area V10 (increases as the PCs walk northward along the corridor, automatic); faint bellow from the vertical chimneys outside (automatic when the wind blows).

Reaction: To conversation—the ettins from area V9 attack if they have not been stationed in area V6 (Listen check DC 5).

Auras: Strong evocation (lights on the ceiling, DC 21).

This huge, 20-foot-wide, 25-foot-high corridor is blocked by a cave-in at its northern end. Several magic plates on the ceiling fill the corridor with a soft, gray light.

The arcade to Area V10 emanates the bluish gleam of flames from the furnace there. The crude, dark passage on the east wall, dug by the giants, leads to the barracks of the hag covey's ogres.

V9. ETTIN BARRACKS (EL 11)

Light: Torchlight.

Sound: Bellow from the vertical chimneys outside (automatic when the wind blows).

Reaction: If the PCs did not encounter them before, the latter are resting here.

Auras: Faint evil (if the ogres are present).

Five nasty-looking piles of animal skins occupy this filthy cave. Several sacks, clay lamps and vases, cookware, and crude tools are scattered here and there, and six torches have been jammed into cracks in the walls.

Creatures: The five ettins at the covey's service sleep here. They are only encountered here if the characters manage to make it this far without alerting the complex. The ettins don't have their own treasure; the fire giant from area V10 has promised them payments if they agree to serve as guardians. Whenever the ettins try to collect on their payments, though, the fire giant confuses them with double-talk and sends them away empty-handed.

➤ **Ettins** (5): hp 65 each, *Monster Manual* 106.

V10. SMITHY (EL 12)

Light: Dim gray light from the ceiling and bright fiery blue light from the furnace.

Sound: Low rumble from the spell weaver furnace (automatic); faint bellow from the vertical chimneys outside (automatic when the wind blows).

Reaction: To sounds of combat—any giants remaining in area V7 come to aid their boss.

Auras: Strong (lights on the ceiling and the furnace, DC 21, evocation); faint (Dugobras's greataxe, DC 18, evocation); moderate evil (Dugobras).

This huge rectangular room has a prism-shaped, 50-foot-high ceiling. The walls are sculpted with a complex work. A shiny, metal furnace stands against the north wall, with rumbling, vertical blue flames inside. A large mound of broken anvils are stacked against the side of the furnace, and several more anvil fragments lie heaped inside the furnace, glowing red-hot. An enormous hammer lies on a big iron anvil in the middle of the room, beyond which several more anvils are stacked haphazardly. A great chair sits in the southwestern corner aside a

huge metal chest. A 7-foot-wide cubic cage of silver and platinum, its bars etched with mystical symbols, lies nearby, propped up against a pile of metal scrap.

A year ago, an unusually intelligent fire giant named Dugobras was contacted by the Cagewrights and hired to forge *soulcages* for them. The cagewrights told him of a powerful magic forge located on the rim of the Demonskar where he could build the cages. Upon arriving at Vaprak's Voice, Dugobras impressed the hags with his eloquence and strength and they agreed to let him take up residence in this room. He has since finished building *soulcages*, and now toils to build himself a set of masterwork full plate armor. The cage leaning against his stack of spare anvils is a discarded prototype *soulcage*. Dugobras' smithwork is so intense that he breaks an average of one anvil per week.

The flames in the spell weaver furnace are supernaturally hot. Any creature touching them takes 4d6 point of fire damage and must succeed in a Reflex save DC 15 or catch fire (see *Dungeon Master's Guide* 86). A creature placed completely inside the furnace takes 16d6 points of fire damage per round. The anvils in the furnace are kept ready for throwing. The magic fire in the furnace is permanent, but can be dispelled normally (caster level 20).

The chest, which weighs just over a ton, can be opened with a combination lock. The combination lock has four wheels with numbers from 0 to 9, and only Dugobras knows the key (9383). The combination lock can also be opened with a successful Open Locks check (DC 35). The chest is also protected by a **Trap**.

➤ **Iron Chest:** Hardness 10; hp 60; break DC 28.

➤ **Creatures:** Dugobras is more of an artisan than a warrior-type, and fights only if absolutely necessary. He prefers to face the heroes in Area V10 to make good use of his hot projectiles.

Dugobras does not make use of *Amaranth Elixir*, as he finds its side effects distasteful.

➤ **Dugobras, Male Fire Giant Exp5:** CR 12; Large giant (fire); HD 15d8+5d6+160; hp 258; Init +0; Spd 30 ft. in half-plate armor; AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +14; Grap +29; Atk +26 melee (2d8+17/×3, +1 huge warhammer) or +25 melee (1d4+11, slam) or +14 ranged (2d8+11 plus 2d6 fire, red-hot anvil fragment); Full Atk +23/+16/+11 melee (2d6+17/×3, +1 huge warhammer) or +25 melee (1d4+11, 2 slams) or +14 ranged (2d6+10 plus 2d6 fire, red-hot anvil fragment); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rock throwing; SQ immunity to fire, low-light vision, rock catching, vulnerability to cold; AL NE; SV Fort +18, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 32, Dex 10, Con 26, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +20, Craft (alchemy) +7, Craft (armorsmithing) +12, Craft (blacksmithing) +23, Disable Device +7, Intimidate +19, Jump +20, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +6, Spot +19, Use Magic Device +14.

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Craft blacksmithing), Skill Focus (Use Magic Device).

Languages: Common, Giant, Ignan.

Possessions: +1 huge warhammer, +3 chain shirt, dagger, wand of displacement (14 charges), wand of cure serious wounds (22 charges), wand of dispel magic (18 charges).

Tactics: Dugobras' first action in combat is to use his wand of displacement on himself; if he fails to activate the wand with a Use Magic Device check (DC 20) on this first round he abandons that tactic and starts hurling red-hot anvils at the heroes until they engage him in melee.

Trap: The large metal chest actually consists of two metal chests, the second of which is slightly smaller and encased inside the first. The space between the inner and outer chest is full of pressurized alchemist's fire. If the chest is broken, punctured, or forced open, the stuff explodes in a blast of fire and shrapnel. This explosion destroys the potions and scrolls in the chest but does not harm the other contents.

➤ **Alchemist's Fire Trap:** CR 7; mechanical; touch trigger; no reset; chest explodes (6d6 fire damage, Reflex half DC 20); multiple targets (all targets within 10 ft. of the chest); Search DC 30, Disable Device DC 30.

Treasure: The prototype *soulcage* is not magic, but the precious metals (silver and platinum) used to forge it have a value of 2,000 gp. The *soulcage* weighs 300 pounds. A character who studies the mystical symbols etched on the prototype's surface and makes a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 24) can tell that conjuration, abjuration, and necromancy magic were part of its creation. A successful Search check (DC 15) made while examining the pile of metal scrap nearby uncovers a small unlocked metal crate. Dugobras keeps two crystal jugs filled with ten doses of alchemist's fire apiece in the crate. Near the metal crate sits a half-full pot of hardened, sticky resin (used to set the trap in area V12).

The large metal chest contains 280 gp, 4,350 sp, a pouch containing 12 pieces of amber (100 gp each), a golden water boiler (worth 120 gp), a +1 arrow deflection light metal shield (emblazoned with the face of a wolf biting the shaft of an arrow), a wand of lightning (CL 7, 17 charges left), three potions of cat's grace, three potions of protection from elements (electricity), and a divine scroll with *magic fang*, *hold animal*, and *remove disease* (CL 5).

VII. FOUNTAIN

Light: Dim light from ceiling (shadowy light).

Sound: Bubbling from apparatus on the west wall (automatic).

THE AMARANTH ELIXIR

This magic *elixir* was used by the spell weavers to augment their slave laborers and make them easier to control. It greatly enhances a creature's Strength, but damages his Wisdom. The *Amaranth Elixir* in the fountain is permanently active, but remains so for just an hour if taken away in a container. The exact effect the *Amaranth Elixir* has on the drinker depends on his size.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (lights on the ceiling, sliding doors, fountain, DC 21, evocation), strong (*Amaranth Elixir*, DC 21, transmutation).

Six white pillars with capitols shaped like slender hands support a 20-foot-tall ceiling in this rectangular room. A 3-foot-diameter crystal globe is embedded ten feet up on each pillar. These hollow globes are half-filled with bubbling, transparent liquid that seems to replenish itself as quickly as it drains out of a hole in each globe's base. At the base of each pillar, a silver spigot allows this liquid to drain out of the pillar and down a narrow gutter to collect in a basin in the floor in the room's center. There, the liquid turns a deep purple color that evaporates as quickly as it is filled. A golden chalice sits on the basin's rim near the southeastern pillar.

This alchemical fountain is the source of the *Amaranth Elixir*. The crystal globes that generate the *elixir* are fairly difficult to destroy, but if one is wrecked all four globes explode. The resulting spray of crystal shards and boiling liquid fills the room, inflicting 6d6 slashing damage and 3d6 fire damage to all creatures in the room. A successful Reflex saving throw (DC 20) halves the damage. The apparatus no longer produces the *elixir* if it is ruined.

Treasure: The *Amaranth Elixir* increases the drinker's physical strength, but causes terrible strain on the drinker's sanity. Its exact effects depend on the imbiber's size (see "The *Amaranth Elixir*" sidebar).

The golden chalice on the basin's rim is of dwarven manufacture (value 350 gp). The hags use it as a prop when they offer the *Amaranth Elixir* to Alek Tercival or the PCs.

V12. EXPLOSIVE VAPORS (EL 8)

Light: Dim light from ceiling (shadowy light).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (lights on the ceiling, sliding door, DC 21, evocation).

The areas beyond this door have collapsed, leaving only a small pocket of space beyond the door. A vent in the floor allows flammable vapor to seep into this remaining space.

Drinker's size	Strength	Wisdom
Diminutive or smaller	no effect	no effect
Tiny	+2	-1
Small	+4	-2
Medium	+8	-4
Large	+4	-2
Huge	+2	-1
Gargantuan or bigger	no effect	no effect

The *Amaranth Elixir*'s effects can theoretically last forever, although there's a 25% chance the effect ends each time the sun sets. When this happens, the user becomes fatigued.



Trap: The crafty Dugobras smeared an alchemical resin of his own design into the guides of the door so that when it closes, the resin fills the gaps in the door's frame. Once the resin dries it forms an airtight seal. This allows the small space beyond to become pressurized with the flammable gas. Like the other spell weaver doors, this one opens when an intelligent being (Int 6+) comes within 5 feet. The resin contains tiny bits of flint and steel, so that when the door opens it generates a cascade of sparks that instantly ignites the pressurized gas beyond.

➤ **Explosive Vapor Trap:** CR 8; mechanical; proximity trigger; manual reset; gas (explosive, 10d6 fire, DC 18 Reflex save half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 30 feet of the trap); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 30.

VI3. THRONE ROOM (EL 12)

Light: Dim light from ceiling (equivalent to torchlight).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (lights on the ceiling, sliding doors, fountain, DC 21, evocation); moderate (Gaflon's shard weapons, DC 25, evocation); faint (hags' rings, DC 24, abjuration); moderate (hag eye, DC 26, divination); moderate evil (half-fey green hags).

The north portion of this square room contains a 7-foot-high platform connected to an L-shaped ramp. A strip of bas-reliefs depicting gaunt, magic-wielding, six-armed creatures decorates

the base of the platform. Each creature holds a disk in its lowest set of arms, which is represented like a shining sun. The rays emanating from the disks, engraved in the stone as straight lines, form the background of the composition. A white marble throne with triple armrests sits on the platform itself.

Once the seat of a spell weaver leader, this room is now used by the hag covey to meet with important visitors. When the heroes enter the complex, the three hags are here speaking with a nerra varoot named Gaflon about Alek Tercival's fate.

Creatures: Tribata, Sminelpa, and Olomasta are a trio of identical twin sisters, born of an unholy union between fey and green hag. They look similar to most green hags but sport the a pair of hairy antennas on their wrinkled foreheads and a pair of elongated, sickly-brown moth-like wings on their backs. When folded, the wings look much like dirty, ragged cloaks.

Gaflon looks like a hairless humanoid with mirror-like skin. He wears only a pair of soft boots and a loincloth with a leather belt, but carries a wicked-looking shard of mirrored glass the size of a longsword.

➤ **Tribata, Sminelpa, and Olomasta, Half-Fey Green Hags Rog2 (3):** CR 9; Medium fey; HD 11d6+11; hp 55, 51, 45; Init +4; Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good), swim 30 ft.; AC 27, touch 16, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +10; Grap +13; Atk +13 melee (1d6+3, claw); Full Atk +13 melee (1d6+3, 2 claws); SA sneak attack +1d6, spell-like abilities, weakness, mimicry; SQ darkvision 90

ft., evasion, immune to enchantment spells and effects, low-light vision, spell resistance 18, trapfinding; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +14, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 19, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 22.

Individual Spell-like Abilities: At will—*charm person* (DC 17), *dancing lights*, *disguise self*, *ghost sound* (DC 16), *invisibility*, *pass without trace*, *tongues*, *water breathing*; 3/day—*detect law*, *protection from law*; 1/day—*confusion** (DC 20), *dominate person** (DC 21), *eyebite** (DC 22), *faerie fire**, *hypnotism* (DC 18), *sleep** (DC 17), *suggestion** (DC 19). Caster level 11th.

*Indicates a hag's selected half-fey spell-like ability for the day.

Covey Spell-like Abilities: 3/day—*animate dead*, *bestow curse* (DC 19), *control weather*, *dream*, *forcecage*, *mind blank*, *mirage arcana* (DC 21), *polymorph*, *veil* (DC 22), *vision*. These abilities can be used as a full-round action by all three hags if they are within 10 feet of one another. Caster level 11th.

Weakness (Su): A green hag's successful touch attack deals 2d4 points of Strength damage (Fortitude negates, DC 22).

Mimicry (Su): Green hags can imitate the sound of animals found in the jungles surrounding the Demonskar.

Skills: Bluff +16, Concentration +13, Craft (weaving) +14, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +16 (+18 acting), Hide +16, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (the planes) +14, Listen +16, Spot +16, Swim +15.

Feats: Ability Focus (weakness), Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Natural Attack (claw).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Possessions: Each of the hags wears a matching ring of protection +2. Olomasta also carries the covey's hag eye.

➤ **Gaflon, Nerra Varoot Rog4:** CR 5; Medium outsider (extraplanar); HD 1d8+4d6+5; hp 24; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +4; Grap +5; Atk +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20, +2 wounding shard longsword) or +8 ranged (1d4+2/19-20, +2 wounding shard dagger); SA sneak attack +2d6, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., cold resistance 5, electricity resistance 5, evasion, fire resistance 5, mirror jump, reflective spell resistance 13, sonic vulnerability, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 17.

Skills: Bluff +9, Climb +8, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +9 (+12 acting), Gather Information +7, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Open Locks +9, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +8, Spot +8.

Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard longsword)^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard dagger)^B, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (shard longsword).

Languages: Common, Nerra.

Possessions: +2 wounding shard longsword, +2 wounding shard dagger, lockpicks, 8 blue quartzes (100 gp value each) in pouch.

Spell-like Abilities: 3/day—*disguise self*; 1/day—*mirror image*.

Mirror Jump (Su): A nerra can move through mirrored and reflective surfaces at will (similar to *shadow walk*, but traveling is through the Plane of Mirrors). This way, they can move between mirrors up to one mile away.

Reflective Spell Resistance (Sp): Targeted spells that fail to overcome a nerra's SR are reflected back to the caster. Gaze attacks are also reflected back to the source, and the nerra is immune to their effects.

Sonic Vulnerability (Ex): A nerra takes 150% damage from sonic attacks.

Tactics: The three hags try to perform different actions during a combat round (i.e. one makes claw attacks, one uses her weakness touch, and one uses a spell-like ability) in an attempt to make coordinated defenses against their tactics more difficult. If two hags are killed, the third tries to escape and seek Nabthatoron's help.

Gaflon tries to slip away to the *Starry Mirror*, where he can call a group of nerra kalareem for help (area V15).

Development: If the PCs arrive here without alerting the complex, they find the hags and the nerra in their normal forms. Otherwise, the heroes likely meet the hags after their battle with the ettins (area V6) and Gaflon at the *Starry Mirror* (area V15).

V14. HAG COVEY'S LAIR (EL 9)

Light: Dim light from ceiling (equivalent to torchlight).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (lights on the ceiling, sliding door, chromatic disk in the skeleton's hands, DC 21, evocation), strong (spell weaver skeletons, DC 20, necromancy); strong undead (spell weaver skeletons).

Three large beds sit in this room. Along the north wall hang a set of golden baboon masks. The smooth stone walls and the floor are covered by colorful and bizarre tapestries and carpets. An elaborate weaver's loom occupies the southwest corner. Various skeins of wool of many different colors are piled near the loom, next to a basket of sewing tools. A wooden chest sits in the southeast corner.

Creatures: The hags found four spell weaver skeletons in the surrounding ruins and animated them to serve as guardians.

NERRA WEAPONS

Nerras employ swords and daggers made of the substance of the Plane of Mirrors. They resemble shards of broken mirror set with a shiny hilt. A shard weapon is a +2 wounding weapon that requires an Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat to wield. Without this feat, the weapon's wounding quality cannot be utilized. Nerra can utilize

shard weapons with the Weapon Finesse feat if they have it. The magic qualities of nerra weapons in this adventure are maintained by contact with a living nerra; if the weapon is stolen or its owner slain, the weapon shatters into thousands of fragments. A nerra can rebuild its weapon only on the Plane of Mirrors.

The skeletons still carry their spell weaver chromatic discs (see *Monster Manual II* 118), although in their new undead states they can't make use of the devices. If any PC tries to activate one of these discs with Use Magical Device, the disk explodes, dealing 4d10 points of damage within a 30-foot radius.

The skeletons have been commanded by the hags to defend the chamber from any non-hag intruders.

➤ **Spell Weaver Skeletons (4):** CR 5; Medium undead; HD 10d12; hp 78 each; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +6; Grp +5; Atk +5 melee (1d4–1, claw); Full Atk +5 melee (1d4–1, 4 claws); SQ damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, immunity to cold; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 9, Dex 18, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Feat: Improved Initiative.

Treasure: The five baboon masks on the north wall are very similar to the one in Tygot's shop in Cauldron (see "Tygot's Old Things"). The carpets on the walls and floor (24 in total, each weighing 20 lbs.) are worth 200 gp each. The skeins of wool are high quality, well-dyed stuff (15 bales worth 20 gp and weighing 10 lbs. each). The chest in the southeast corner is unlocked, and contains the hag covey's treasure (see **Treasure** below).

The chest contains 130 gp in a large purse, 12 pieces of assorted silverware (jugs, plates, bowls) worth a total 450 gp, a golden armband (worth 120 gp), a wizard scroll (prying eyes, greater dispel magic, sequester, caster level 14th), a necklace of fireballs (type III, with just one 5D6 and two 3d6 spheres left), two potions of cure serious wounds, four potions of cure moderate wounds, and a +1 light mace.

A successful Search check (DC 25) made while searching the wall behind the baboon masks uncovers a hidden switch built into the wall. If the switch is triggered, a shallow drawer slides out of the wall. Wrapped in silk inside this drawer is Alakast, a +1 bane vs. evil outsiders quarterstaff. Both heads of the quarterstaff bear identical magic qualities. The hags sent some of their minions out to steal this staff from Surabar's tomb some time ago; they originally intended to present the staff to Nabthatoron as a trophy to aid in securing his friendship, but the glabrezu approached the hags on his own. Now, the hags keep Alakast hidden here as a "secret weapon" against the demon, should he ever betray the hags.

V15. STARRY MIRROR (EL 8)

Light: Dim light from ceiling (shadowy light).

Sound: Low hum from the Starry Mirror (automatic).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (lights on the ceiling, sliding door, DC 21, evocation), overwhelming (Starry Mirror, DC 35, illusion and transmutation).

The ceiling in this room forms a four-sided dome, much like an inverted pyramid. The apex of the dome is 30 feet off the ground. An odd, 10-foot-wide pentagonal mirror hangs on the west wall, from where it casts a dark reflection of the room. This reflection is distorted in an unsettling way, and dotted

with shimmering, star-like pinpoints of white light. A single chair of white stone with triple armrests sits in the middle of the room, facing the mirror. A colorful hexagonal diagram is engraved in the floor surrounding the mirror.

Centuries ago, the nerra of the Plane of Mirrors allowed the spell weavers to build and use the *Starry Mirror* for a high price. The mirror has lain dormant for centuries, and when Alek Tercival passed through the mirror at the urging of the three hags, the nerra sent Gaflon back through to discuss the matter.

The *Starry Mirror* was originally linked to four other portals at distant points across the Material Plane, of which only one other remains functional today. The *Starry Mirror* also allows intelligent creatures to use the mirror jump ability of the nerra. The diagram on the floor represents a scheme of the primary and secondary colors. This scheme, together with the string of numbers on the hegemonic plate, can give the PCs clues to successfully navigate the maze beyond the *Starry Mirror*.

Any PC who touches the *Starry Mirror* finds that it is actually a vertical surface of cold, reflective liquid, which can be passed through with ease. Whoever does so finds himself in one of the pentagonal rooms of the mirror maze.

A PC who looks intently into the *Starry Mirror* sees five pentagonal windows floating under its dark surface. Four of them show nothing but dull white light. The fifth shows an indistinct image of Alek Tercival sitting next to a large metal door in a stone wall, his expression filled with despair.

Creatures: If Gaflon escaped from any conflicts in area V13, the characters find him sitting on the spell weaver throne. He has used his *disguise self* spell-like ability to appear as Alek Tercival. In this guise, the varoot tries to distract and flank the heroes as other nerra silently emerge from the *Starry Mirror*. Gaflon knows Alek Tercival's appearance, having spied on him often through the *Starry Mirror* and into the ancient vault. When the PCs enter the room, Gaflon pretends to wake up from a magical sleep. He warns the PCs that something terrible is going to happen in Cauldron very soon, and that the mirror on the wall reflects future events. He claims that he is not intelligent enough to discern the truth in the mirror's reflections and asks the heroes to help.

A group of three nerra kalareem observes this room from the Plane of Mirrors. They intend to discourage further trespassers from entering the *Starry Mirror*, and are also observing Alek Tercival in the ancient vault, content with the fact that the paladin seems to be doomed. They wait for Gaflon's signal (he drops his dagger on the floor) before attacking.

➤ **Kalareem Nerra (4):** CR 3; Medium-Size Outsider (extraplanar); HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grap +4; Atk +9 melee (1d8+3/19–20, +2 wounding shard longsword); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+3/19–20, 2 +2 wounding shard longswords); SA shard spray, spell-like abilities; SQ cold resistance 10, darkvision 60 ft., electricity resistance 10, fire resistance 10, mirror jump, reflective spell



resistance 15, sonic vulnerability; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day—*mirror image*. Caster level 12th.

Shard Spray (Su): Three times per day a kalareem can release a spray of mirror shards (30 ft. cone, slashing damage 3d4 plus 2 points of cumulative bleeding damage per round).

Mirror Jump (Su): A nerra can move through mirrored and reflective surfaces at will (similar to *shadow walk*, but traveling through the Plane of Mirrors). This way, they can move between mirrors up to one mile away.

Reflective Spell Resistance (Sp): Spells that fail to overcome a nerra's SR are reflected back to the caster.

Sonic Vulnerability (Ex): A nerra takes 150% damage from sonic attacks.

Skills: Bluff +7, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +7 (+9 to act in character), Hide +9, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +7, Spot +8.

Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard longsword)^B, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (shard longsword)^B.

Languages: Common, Nerra.

Possessions: Two +2 wounding shard longwords.

Development: If the heroes kill at least two nerra, the survivors try to retreat to the Plane of Mirrors to report what hap-

pened to their superiors. This can eventually lead to further involvement with the nerra in the campaign.

CHAPTER FOUR: THROUGH THE SPECTRUM

In order to reach or contact Alek, the characters must travel through the *Starry Mirror* to his side. Long-range communication with Alek (such as with a *sending* spell) is useless, since he is mad with despair and in no condition to form intelligent replies. This adventure can conclude only if the PCs enter the *Starry Mirror*.

Once they pass through the *Starry Mirror*, the PCs find themselves in an extra-dimensional maze made up of an indefinite number of identical, pentagon-shaped, 15-foot-high rooms. The only differences between rooms are the colors of the ambient light: blue, yellow, red, violet, orange, and green (the primary and secondary colors, shown in the floor diagram of area V15). Each wall has a pentagonal portal the same size of the *Starry Mirror*. The semi-transparent surface of the portals reflects the room around it but with a tint of the appropriate hue.

The extra-dimensional space duplicates separately for all who enter, so the heroes always find themselves alone inside the rooms, no matter how many are inside at the same time. Sound carries across these duplicate rooms as a metallic echo, so characters can communicate with each other. Exit from the *Starry*

Starry Mirror



BEYOND THE STARRY MIRROR

Although the *Starry Mirror* contains an indefinite number of small chambers, there are only six varieties, each with a distinct tint (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet). Each room has five portals that lead to virtually identical chambers tinted to correspond to the portal used to access them (walking through a blue portal, for example, leads an adventurer to the blue-tinted chamber). Cracking the puzzle's code to reach Alek Tercival requires decoding the numeric instructions on the Hegemonic Plate, which correspond to the colored hexagonal floor diagram in area V15.

Keep the following points in mind when running this potentially confusing puzzle:

- 1) A PC who enters the *Starry Mirror* appears in a random color room (roll 1d6).
- 2) All PCs appear alone in the color room, even if two PCs appear in a room of the same color.
- 3) When a PC enters a portal in a color room, he appears in the middle of the color room of the corresponding color.
- 4) To reach the final exit chamber (a gray-tinted pentagonal chamber with a single mirror leading to area A1), a PC must follow the combination on the Hegemonic Plate, extrapolating the combination *numbers* (3, 4, 5, 1, 2, 3) into a series of combination *colors*. To do this, the PC must find the right successive color in the floor diagram in area V15 (above), counting the colors in clockwise order from the appearance room color.

SEQUENCE EXAMPLE

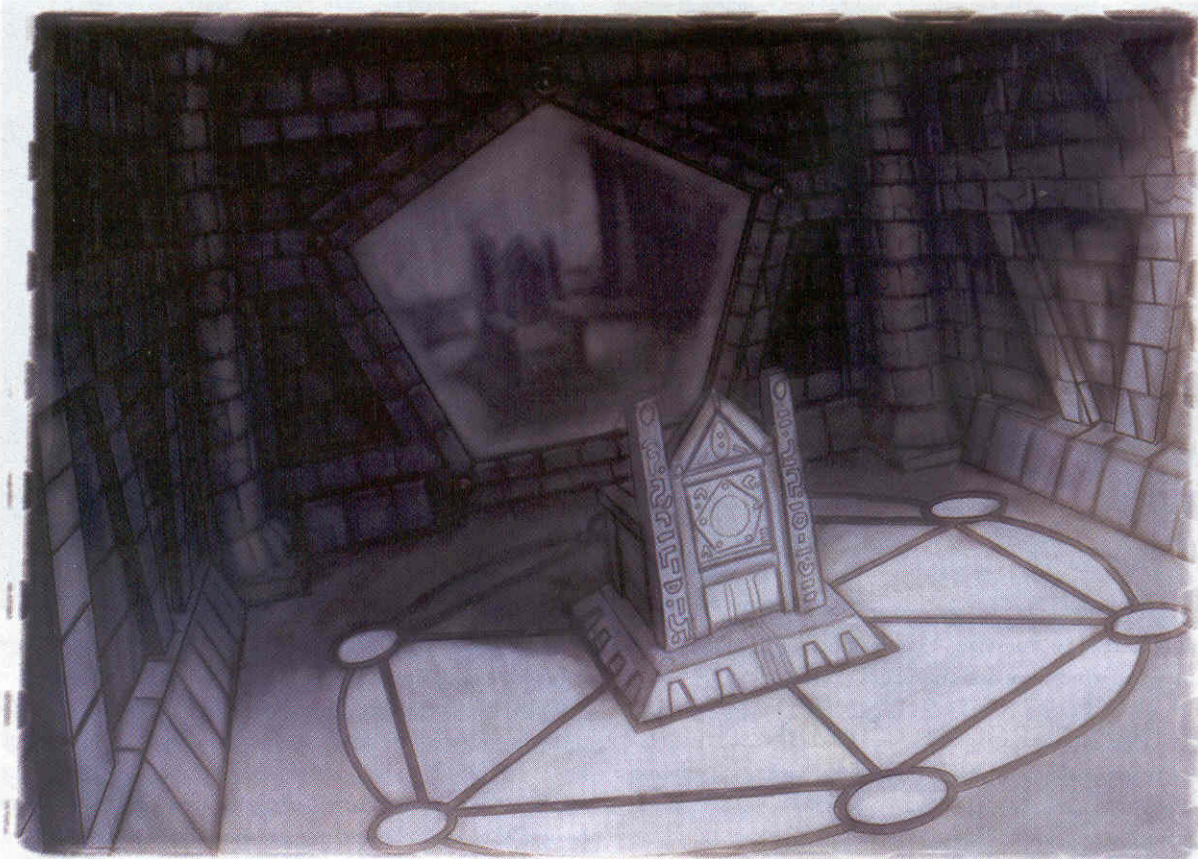
- 1) Random entrance color (1d6): "5" = "blue" (the PC appears in the blue room).
- 2) First combination color: "3" (first combination number on the Hegemonic Plate) = "orange" (third color from blue in a clockwise order).
- 3) Second combination color: "4" (second number on the Hegemonic Plate) = "violet" (fourth color from orange in a clockwise order).
- 4) Third combination color: "5" = "blue".
- 5) Fourth combination color: "1" = "violet".
- 6) Fifth combination color: "2" = "orange".
- 7) Sixth combination color: "3" = "blue".
- 8) At this point, upon entering the blue portal, the character appears in the exit room instead of the blue room.

NOTES

- No matter how many PCs are inside the *Starry Mirror*, PCs always appear alone in the color rooms. Their voices, however, can be heard by other party members in the *Starry Mirror*.
- Objects abandoned in the rooms disappear when the PC leaves the room.
- The nerra can mirror jump through the pentagonal mirror in area V15 and the destination mirror in area A1, but may not mirror jump into the color rooms inside the *Starry Mirror* itself.



HEGEMONIC PLATE NUMBER DETAILS



Mirror back into area V15 is impossible; the only way to escape this maze is through the one surviving exit point into the ancient vault.

To arrive at the exit *mirror*, the heroes must interpret the string of numbers from the hegemonic plate (3, 4, 5, 1, 2, 3) and turn it into a combination of colors. To do this, they must compare the numbers with the color diagram on the floor of area V15. For example, if a PC is in a yellow room and the next number of the sequence is 4, he must enter in the room with the fourth color in a clockwise order from yellow, which is red. When a PC enters the *Starry Mirror*, the color of the first room is determined randomly with a six-sided die. Characters grow hungry and thirsty normally in the mirror maze, so if they don't stumble on the exit, starvation eventually sets in. Time passes normally in the mirror maze as well, and although the environs are alien, there is no danger of encountering dangerous natives in this maze since each room duplicates for every creature in the maze. The portals between chambers should be treated as solid barriers for determining line of effect; spells cannot be cast through a portal as a result.

Certain divination spells can also aid in navigating the mirror maze. *Augury* spells can indicate if a portal choice is the correct one (weal) or an incorrect one (woe). *Commune* and *contact other plane* can provide the caster with the exact pattern required to exit the mirrors, providing the right questions are asked. *Divination* causes the image from the front of the hege-

monic plate to appear in the caster's mind, with the six numbers glowing in the appropriate colors needed to navigate the maze. *Locate creature* and *locate object* both fail if used to locate Alek or any of his equipment, since they are 500 miles away from Vaprak's Voice. *Find the path*, although likely beyond the reach of most characters of this level, is the best spell for the situation since it gives the exact route through the mirrors to reach Alek.

Once a PC traverses the six portals in the correct order, the final room grows dark, illuminated only by dim light streaming in from the five portals on the walls. All five portals now show one scene; area A1 of the ancient vault. Characters who look through the portals at this time see Alek Tercival sitting on the ground of a dark, windowless room lit only by the faint light of his glowing sword. A large slab of stone blocks an archway nearby, and Alek looks sunk in despair.

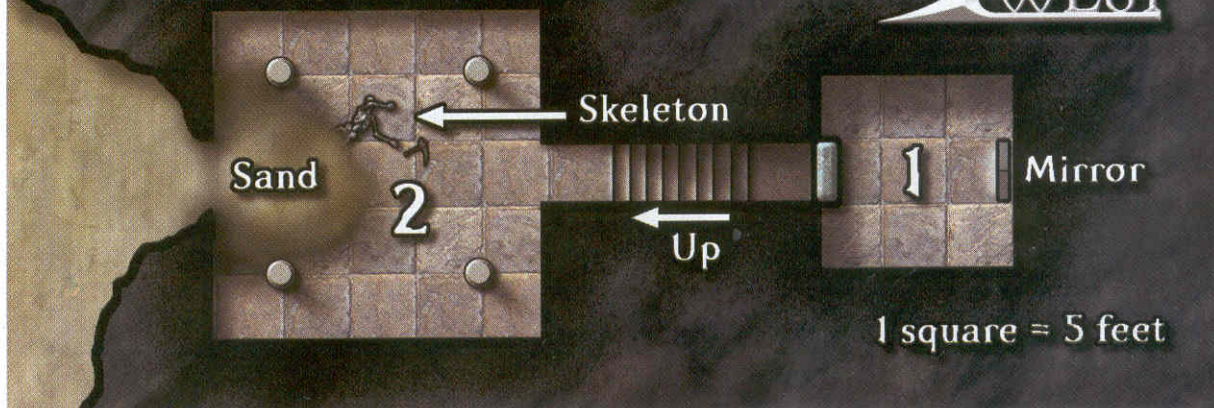
THE ANCIENT VAULT

The spell weavers of Vaprak's Voice used the *Starry Mirror* to *mirror jump* between five fixed destinations in their ancient empire. Each of these destination points contained a *mirror* that served as a focus; travel via the *Starry Mirror* provides a one-way trip. Currently, only one of these destination *mirrors* remains active, and even then, it is only partly functional. This *mirror* is located in an ancient spell weaver vault. The vault survived the ages mostly intact due to its exceptionally sturdy construction,

Ancient Vault

In the desert, 500 miles from Cauldron

WEST



and is located in a desert, 500 miles north of Cauldron, half buried in a windswept dune of sand.

A1. UNDERGROUND CHAMBER (EL 6)

Light: Dim light from Alek Tercival's sword (equivalent to torchlight).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (one-way portal mirror on the south wall, DC 21, transmutation), faint (Alek's cloak, DC 20, abjuration), faint (Alek's ring, DC 20, conjuration), faint (Alek's armor, DC 18, transmutation), moderate (Alek's sword, DC 22, evocation [good]); strong good (Alek Tercival).

A pentagonal, 5-foot-wide mirror is set into a wall of this square room. Twelve 7-foot-tall clay urns stand against the walls to either side, and an iron door, its face covered with countless scratches and chips, blocks an 8-foot-tall archway in the wall opposite the mirror.

This room was once a vault used to store magic items. These items have long since been looted, and even the clay urns are completely empty. The magic that once provided light to this room and allowed the door to open at the approach of an intelligent creature have both failed. The pentagonal mirror on the south wall is a one-way portal; while it radiates magic, it cannot be used to re-enter the mirror maze or return to Vaprak's Voice.

The scratches on the iron door are from Alek's hopeless attempt to hack down the door with his sword. The door itself does not form an air-tight seal; creatures that can assume gaseous form can pass through the cracks around the door with ease.

❖ **Large Iron Door:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28.

Creature: When the heroes arrive, Alek Tercival slumps near the iron door he's been trying to batter down and force open for the past few days. Now that the effects of the *Amaranth Elixir* have left him, he simply isn't strong enough to force open or batter down the door. His *ring of sustenance* keeps him alive, but frustration and fear have started to take their toll and erode at his already unstable sanity.

ALEK'S PROPHECIES

Alek's insanity has granted him the gift of prophecy. Although the vast majority of his prophecies are little more than insane ravings, a few of them are actually legitimate. Listed here are eight sample prophecies he can cry out during the climactic battle with Nabthatoron; you can use them as guides if you need to invent more prophecies. Some of these prophecies may provide hints as to what may come in future Adventure Path installments, while others are merely insane rants.

d8 Prophecy

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | "When the final cage is shackled the burning doom shall rise." |
| 2 | "The baboons watch and wait, patient and potent, for their empire to reign anew." |

- | | |
|---|--|
| 3 | "When thrice by thrice the ancient judgment falls, thunder strikes anew from Jarl Khurok's halls." |
| 4 | "Seven blackbirds have ye, yet death is not deceived." |
| 5 | "The Striders wander, their history true, yet with each step they grow more cruel." |
| 6 | "Chant a dirge of gold coins, your pockets fill with lies." |
| 7 | "Magic and death soon play their hand from windows on high above the land." |
| 8 | "Beware the unseen mark! Beware the eyes that kill! By treachery and deceit shall the true Lord fall and the false Lord rule!" |

Alek believes that the powers of good (the "trumpet archons" and their "heavenly potion") have abandoned him for failing to save Cauldron. His red eyes show that he has been weeping for a while, and the bleeding blisters on his hands testify to his frantic attempts to escape the chamber. Alek's despair is so great that when the characters arrive in his chamber, he barely acknowledges their arrival. Alek's insanity causes him a -2 penalty on all attack rolls, skill checks, and saving throws. Worse, he has come to believe that the insane thoughts that now race through his fractured mind are in fact prophecies granted to him from his days spent wandering in the depths of the *Starry Mirror*. This insanity also confers a -6 penalty to his Wisdom score as long as it persists. Spells like *bleed* or *prayer* can offset this penalty, but actually curing his insanity (and Wisdom penalty) requires a *heal* or *greater restoration* spell.

✦ **Alek Tercival, Male Human Ari5/Pal4:** CR 8; Medium humanoid; HD 5d8+4d10+9; hp 58; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (30 ft. base); AC 20 (+1 Dex, +6 masterwork banded mail, +2 masterwork large shield), touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +7; Grap +8; Atk +10 melee (1d8+2/19-20, +1 *holy longsword*) or +8 ranged (1d8+2/×3, composite longbow); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+2/19-20, +1 *holy longsword*) or +8/+3 ranged (1d8+2/×3, composite longbow); SA smite evil 1/day, turn undead; SQ aura of courage, aura of good, *detect evil*, divine grace, divine health, lay on hands (8 hp/day); AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 6, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +10, Diplomacy +18, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Gather Information +10, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +2, Ride +11, Spot +2, Swim +5.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common, Gnome.

Possessions: +1 *holy longsword* (light generator), +1 *banded mail*, masterwork large metal shield (with St. Cuthbert's symbol), composite longbow (Strength bonus +2), 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of sustenance*, 12 gp in belt pouch.

Development: Alek's current attitude toward the PCs is effectively indifferent; he remains non-responsive until his attitude is adjusted to helpful. Until he's coaxed out of his depression (with Diplomacy checks, Intimidate checks, or magic), he remains despondent, muttering prophecy #1 (see the "Alek's Prophecies" sidebar) over and over under his breath. A successful Listen check (DC 15) allows a character to hear this whispered prophecy. If he is brought to his senses, he stops muttering and provides what assistance he can. He is willing to relate the events of his past few months if asked, but he still believes that the fey hags were trumpet archons and that he has somehow failed the cause of good. If the PCs update Alek on the recent events in Cauldron and reveal that the "archons" were in fact half-fey green hags, he becomes very ashamed and very angry. He asks the PCs a lot of questions to learn as much as possible about what he missed. He agrees that his challenge to Terseon Skellerang must be withdrawn publicly to avoid what would be a disastrous con-

flict between Cauldron and Redgorge. Despite this, his despair and shame is such that he refuses to return to Cauldron and face the results of his actions, despite arguments to the contrary.

A2) ENTRANCE ROOM

Light: Dim light from outside (daylight).

Sound: Desert wind from outside (automatic).

Reaction: None.

Auras: None.

Four pillars support the ceiling of this square room. Along one wall an arcade allows access to the outside, its opening partially choked by sand. The sand has spread into the room, covering half of the floor. A human skeleton juts out of the heap of sand in the middle of the room, an iron pickaxe lying on the ground near its outstretched arm.

The arcade opens out into a massive desert some 500 miles to the north of Cauldron. The skeleton on the ground is human, all of its valuable gear having long since been looted. The pickaxe is unremarkable.

NABTHATORON'S RAGE (EL 14)

At some point after the PCs arrive in the ancient vault, Nabthatoron takes matters into his own hands. The glabrezu isn't about to let the heroes save Alek and possibly undo all the work he's done to get Skellerang to march on Cauldron. He's been *screaming* on Alek for some time, using a *crystal ball* back in his lair in the Demonskar, and happens to be watching when the PCs arrive on the scene. He quickly gathers his resources, and then at an opportune moment, he uses *greater teleport* to travel to Alek's side.

You should time Nabthatoron's arrival to be as dramatic as possible at some point before the heroes leave the ancient deposit but after they have had a chance to speak with Alek. The glabrezu appears from nothingness with a roar, crying out, "You shall not save your friend, mortals! This time of peace is at an end!"

Creature: Nabthatoron poses a terrible threat to the party, and it is very likely that Alek (and possibly some of the PCs) will be slain in this final encounter. Ideally, the PCs shouldn't be faced with this encounter unless they are fully healed and rested, with all of their spells prepared for the day. If this isn't the case, you can have Nidrama appear to aid the PCs in their battle against the glabrezu. Since this takes some of the glory away from the players, though, you should avoid introducing this *deus ex machina* until the last possible moment.

✦ **Nabthatoron, male glabrezu:** CR 14, hp 174, see *Monster Manual* 43. **Note:** Since he is exiled from his home plane, Nabthatoron cannot use his *summon tanar'ri* spell-like ability.

Tactics: When Nabthatoron appears, Alek's insanity intensifies. Filled with rage at the sight of the demon, he draws his weapon and fights with a primal frenzy. As he does, he spews out prophecy after prophecy at the top of his lungs. The "Alek's Prophecies" sidebar lists numerous sample prophecies he can utter during this combat.

Nabthatoron focuses his initial attacks on Alek Tercival, and tries to slaughter the paladin with his melee attacks as quickly as possible. If the PCs manage to cause the demon significant harm (more than 15 points of damage with a single attack), he takes the time to use *power word stun*, *confusion*, or *reverse gravity* to take them out of the combat so he can return to savaging Alek. If a PC seems to be getting through his damage reduction with ease, Nabthatoron uses *mirror image* and switches his full attention to that character. Otherwise, only when Alek is dead does the glabrezu turn his wrath fully on the PCs. If seriously threatened (brought down to less than 30 hit points), he teleports back to his lair in the Demonskar to plot revenge against the PCs.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If he has not already been slain, Alek Tercival collapses to the ground as soon as the PCs defeat Nabthatoron. In any case, Alek frantically motions for the PCs to draw near, his eyes wild and blood frothing at his lips. Assuming he was slain by Nabthatoron, the PCs should be shocked to see that the paladin still lives, despite wounds that should have left him quite dead.

As the PCs reach him, Alek grabs onto one of their arms or legs and looks deep into that character's eyes. He suddenly grows calm and a terrible aura of doom settles over the characters as a voice, not his own, issues from his gaping jaw:

"There is naught left for you in Cauldron, heroes! To return is to enter your own graves and to bring doom upon all you love! Seek the sign of the Smoking Eye if you wish to save them all!"

With this cryptic and final prophecy, Alek dies. If he had not suffered mortal wounds in the battle, his death should be mysterious; if he was fatally wounded in the battle, the fact that he stayed alive long enough to deliver these final words should be even more mysterious. In any case, the characters may well now be stranded in the middle of an unknown desert, 500 miles from their homes and without any way to stop Terseon Skellerang from marching upon Redgorge. The heroes may possess methods of contacting allies in the Cauldron region, and might even be able to *teleport* back to the city (or use similar methods of magic travel to return); but you should nonetheless end the session here, with Alek's final prophecy. The next installment of the Shattered City Adventure Path begins here, with the PCs looking out across the wasteland, the final prophecy weighing upon their minds. This adventure will appear soon in a future issue of *DUNGEON Magazine*.

APPENDIX I: NEW PRESTIGE CLASS HIGH HANDCRAFTER

The so-called high handcrafters are the leadership of the Chisel, the secret organization inspired by the ancient hero Surabar Spellmason. Although all high handcrafters recognize the authority of the Foreman as main leader of the organization, the Chisel promotes freedom of thought and responsible action among all its members. According to this philosophy all the high handcrafters,

including the Foreman, consider themselves peers. Less than a dozen high handcrafters are known to exist, and new ones are appointed exclusively in a mysterious hideout known as the Hall of Carvings, near the village of Redgorge.

The Chisel considers excellency in any kind of craft a way to achieve a superior state of efficiency and morality. High handcrafters are expected to be intelligent, able and versatile artisans more than powerful adventurers. Following the philosophy of excellency and responsibility in a man's actions, the high handcrafters gain substantial benefits, which affect their other classes as well. Moreover, the high handcrafters gain access to the Hall of Carvings and the unconditioned support of their peers. High handcrafters can come from any background, and the expert NPC class is frequently found among them.

Hit Dice: d6.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a high handcrafter, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Alignment: Any good.

Craft (any 2): 10 ranks in one Craft skill, 6 ranks in a second Craft skill.

Knowledge (architecture and engineering): 5 ranks.

Knowledge (the planes): 5 ranks.

Feats: Skill Focus in both of the Craft skills used to meet the Craft requirement.

Languages: Terran.

Special: Must be sponsored by an active member of the Chisel, who must lead the aspiring character to the Hall of Carvings in Redgorge to meditate before the Earth Pool for an hour.

CLASS SKILLS

The high handcrafter's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Craft (any) (Int), Knowledge (architecture and engineering), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (the planes) (Int), and Profession (Wis). Additionally, his exceptional dedication and versatility allows him to choose six additional skills as high handcrafter class skills. See Chapter 4: Skills in the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the high handcrafter prestige class:

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A high handcrafter is proficient with all simple weapons and light armor.

Improved Skill Focus (Ex): When a high handcrafter takes the Skill Focus feat, he gains a +4 bonus to the selected skill rather than a +3 bonus. At 5th level, this bonus increases to +5, and at 9th level it increases to +6.

Planned Save (Ex): A high handcrafter gains a +1 bonus on saving throws made against something expected. For example, if a high handcrafter makes a Spellcraft check to identify a spell as it is being cast, he gains the bonus to his save against it. The

same bonus applies when the high handcrafter is doing an obviously dangerous task, such as opening a nasty-looking treasure chest. He also gains the bonus against monster special attacks he understands and expects. If a high handcrafter were fighting a medusa, he'd get his planned save bonus against her gaze attack. At higher levels, the bonus for a planned save becomes +2 (at 4th level) and +3 (at 8th level).

Rebuke/Command Earth (Su): At 2nd level, the high handcrafter gains the ability to rebuke or command earth creatures as a cleric of level equal to his high handcrafter level (times per day equal to 3 plus Charisma modifier). If he possesses this ability from any other class levels (such as by having cleric levels and access to the Earth domain) his high handcrafter levels stack with that class for the purposes of determining the effects of this ability.

Craft Earth Talisman (Su): At 3rd level, the high handcrafter gains the ability to craft an *earth talisman* and infuse it with magic channeled from the Plane of Earth. Crafting an *earth talisman* is treated similarly to the procedure for crafting a wondrous item. Creating the *talisman* requires three days of work, and the high handcrafter must spend 100 experience points and 1,400 gp in raw materials. The cost in experience points and gold to craft an *earth talisman* is approximately 30% less than the cost required to make an identical item with Craft Wondrous Item, since only the creator can use the item in question.

When the high handcrafter completes the construction, he selects two of the following spells: *heat metal*, *make whole*, *resist energy*, *shatter*, *soften earth and stone*, or *wood shape*. From this point on, he may use the *earth talisman* to cast each of these spells at a caster level equal to his high handcrafter level, once per day each. The *talisman* itself appears as a small chisel, often worn on the neck on a fine chain. It does not take up a body slot, though, and the talisman must be firmly grasped in one hand to activate one of its powers.

An *earth talisman* functions only for the high handcrafter who made it. A high handcrafter can only have one talisman at a time; if he wants to change the *talisman's* abilities, he must destroy his current *talisman* and start anew.

Improved Earth Talisman (Su): At 6th level, the high handcrafter can improve his *earth talisman*. This requires 30 days of work and the expenditure of 1,000 experience points and 15,000 gp in raw materials.

THE HIGH HANDCRAFTER

Class Level	Base Atk	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Improved Skill Focus +4, planned save +1
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Rebuke/command earth
3th	+2	+3	+1	+3	Craft <i>earth talisman</i>
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Planned save +2
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Improved Skill Focus +5
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Improved <i>earth talisman</i>
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Summon <i>earth elemental</i>
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Planned save +3
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Improved Skill Focus +6
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Superior <i>earth talisman</i>

When the high handcrafter completes the construction, he adds two of the following spells to the list of spells he can cast using his *earth talisman*: *fabricate*, *lesser planar binding* (creatures with the earth subtype only), *major creation*, *transmute mud to rock*, *transmute rock to mud*, *wall of stone*. Each of these spells may be cast once per day.

An *improved earth talisman* grants its wearer a +2 competence bonus to all Craft checks.

Summon Earth Elemental (Sp): At 7th level, a high handcrafter gains the spell-like ability to summon one of the following monsters as if he were casting *summon monster VIII*: one greater earth elemental, 1d3 Huge earth elementals, or 1d4+1 large earth elementals.

Superior Earth Talisman: At 10th level, the high handcrafter can enhance his *improved earth talisman*. This requires 60 days of work and the expenditure of 2,500 experience points and 30,000 gp in raw materials.

When the high handcrafter completes the construction, he adds one of the following spells to the list of spells he can cast using his *earth talisman*: *earthquake*, *greater planar binding* (creatures with the earth subtype only), *iron body*, *polymorph any object*, *repel metal or stone*. This spell may be cast once per day.

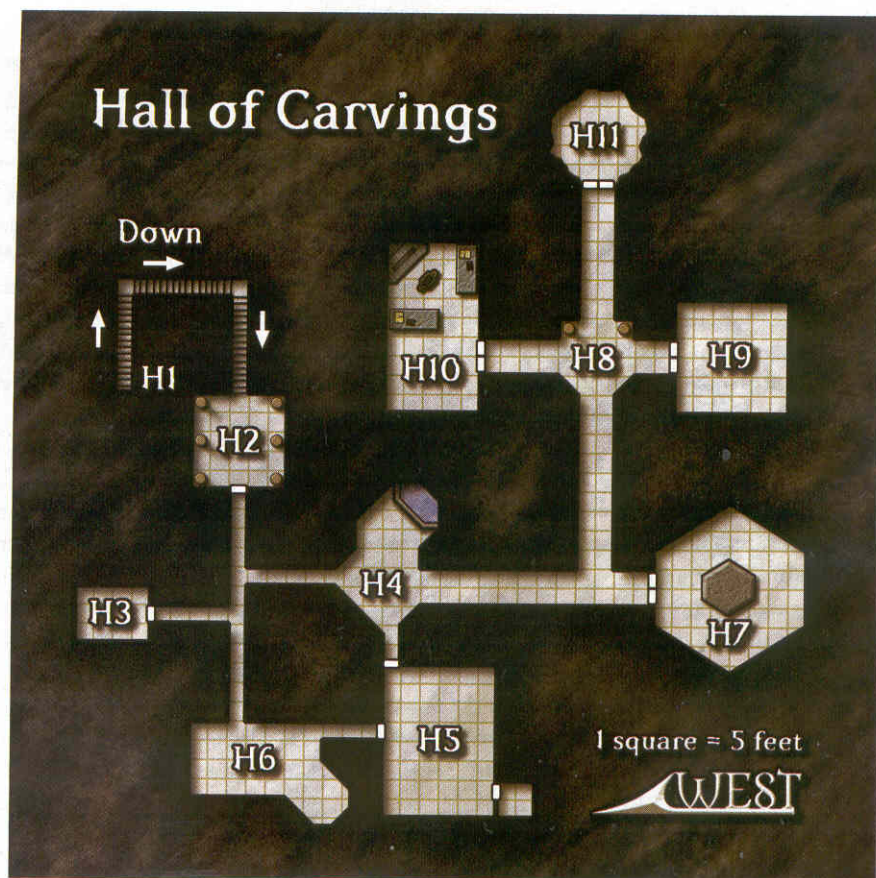
An *improved earth talisman* grants its wearer a +1 luck bonus on saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks.

APPENDIX II: THE HALL OF CARVINGS

Aside from the private room under the Redhead Miner's Inn, the Chisel has a much more secret and impressive hideout in Redgorge. The Hall of Carvings is the historical base of the Chisel and a periodic meeting place for its most important members. Surabar Spellmason built the hall and created several wards and guardians to protect it. The Hall of Carvings is accessible only to those who have earned the absolute trust of the Foreman and profess an interest in joining the Chisel. Characters with at least one level of high handcrafter are also allowed into the Hall of Carvings.

The Hall of Carvings takes its name from the abstract sculptural decoration of its vertical walls, which are made of light gray, beautifully veined marble. The pavements and the domed ceilings, which are 20 feet high, are completely smooth. The doors are made of slabs of stone, but open smoothly and easily at a touch. Crystal lamps containing *continual flames* illuminate

Hall of Carvings



the complex. A system of cleverly hidden ducts conveys air from the surface and drinking water from a nearby subterranean stream.

H1. ENTRANCE

The flagstone floors of an abandoned cellar above hide this long stairway. These slabs are attuned to a secret Terran rhyme. When the rhyme is properly performed in Terran (Performing check, DC 15), the slabs vibrate and gradually become insubstantial, eventually rising up in the air and opening the entrance. The slabs return to their original position after a minute. The same song can be sung from below to open the slabs to allow exit from the Halls.

H2. SURABAR'S DAUGHTERS

This atrium is flanked on both sides by two rows of three smooth pillars. These pillars are caryatid columns created by Surabar Spellmason. The caryatids attack anyone who does not address them properly in Terran as they enter the room. The password is: "Stand easy and rest well!" They also fight when so directed by the Foreman of the Chisel.

➤ **Caryatid Columns (6):** CR 6; Medium Construct; HD 6d10+20; hp 53; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (+3 Dex, +9 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +4; Grap +9; Atk +12 melee (1d10+9, +2 *bastard sword*); SQ break weapon, column form, construct traits, hardness 8, magic weapon; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will -3; Str 20, Dex 16, Con —, Int 6, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Skills: Diplomacy -3, Sense Motive +4.

Feats: Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword).

Break Weapon (Su): Any melee weapon or magical ranged weapon striking a caryatid column must make a Fortitude save (DC 13) or shatter without effect. Nonmagical missiles shatter automatically.

Column Form (Ex): When at rest, a caryatid column looks like an ordinary pillar and does not radiate magic.

Magic Weapon: A caryatid column's +2 *bastard sword* merges with it in its column form. If taken from the caryatid's hands, the weapon reverts to a nonmagical, useless stone form.

H3. WAREHOUSE

This room is well supplied with food, wine, consumables, spare parts, and firewood for the entire complex. The total value of the supplies here is 2,000 gp.

H4. FOUNTAIN

A beautifully carved fountain sits against the north wall of this room. An underground stream feeds the fountain from below, providing the Hall of Carvings with drinkable water.

H5. DINING ROOM

A large dining table and twelve chairs sit in the western part of the room. In the eastern part is a small kitchen.

H6. GUEST ROOM

This room is furnished with top quality beds and lockers, and can accommodate up to twelve people.

H7. CHAPTER HOUSE

This 30-foot-high hexagonal room's walls are dotted with a total of forty niches (five per wall, excluding the entrance side). Twenty-nine niches accommodate the bust of a man or half-elf, and the others are empty. The busts represent the previous Foremen of the Chisel, starting from Surabar Spellmason, whose sculptural portrait can be seen on the first niche set in the southwestern wall. A frieze of bas-reliefs at the base of the domed ceiling represents the same six episodes of Surabar's life depicted in the frescoes of the private tavern in the Redhead Miner's Inn.

A hexagonal stone table with twelve chairs sits in the middle of the room. Every season the top-ranking members of the Chisel hold meetings here.

H8. GUARDROOM

This room is guarded by two stone golems created by Surabar Spellmason. The golems look like massive and muscular construction workers. Like the caryatid columns in area H2, the golems attack whoever fails to give a password in Terran ("Break time, gentlemen!"). The golems also activate under the direction of the Foreman.

➤ **Stone Golems (2):** hp 77 each, *Monster Manual* 136.

H9. LIBRARY

Lined with wooden shelving and furnished with benches and a prominent lectern, this library contains many books about alchemy, sculpture, architecture, and engineering. The formal logs of previous Foremen can be found here, the oldest of which is four centuries old. Most of them are written in Terran. The information in the adventure background concerning the early history of the region can be found here (at your discretion), as can several spellbooks that might contain numerous unique earth spells. The total value of the books here is 30,000 gp.

H10. WORKSHOP

This is an amazingly well-equipped alchemy lab and artisan workshop that has been in use for nearly eight centuries. Several wooden and clay models of creatures, objects and buildings,

a few unfinished statues and many strange mechanical devices in various stages of completion clutter the room. A large alchemist's lab and several masterwork artisan's tool sets are arranged on the room's workbenches. The total value of the objects and devices here is 20,000 gp.

H11. DORMANT EARTH POOL

The walls of this chamber are decorated with elaborate, beautiful carvings. Part of the cavern's floor is occupied by what looks like a petrified lava pool, with a flat surface that contrasts neatly with the somewhat uneven ground. From time to time, the pool rumbles and narrow cracks form on its surface. Oddly enough, no heat and smoke issue from it when this happens.

The pool was actually the home of an earth weird befriended by Surabar Spellmason eight centuries ago. The earth weird returned to its native plane seven decades ago. The current Foreman does not know how to call the earth weird back, but is researching this matter on the books in the library (area H9). If it is recalled, the earth weird's ability to foretell disasters could reveal the ultimate goal of the Cagewrights as the main threat of the campaign. Ω

After a period of hard work in the tech dept of a factory, Tito Leati proudly earned his first level in the high handcrafters prestige class.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"The Demonskar Legacy" is designed for a group of four 8th-level PCs, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 6th–7th- or 9th–10th-level characters. If an encounter proves to be too difficult for the characters, you can provide them assistance with a timely intervention by the high handcrafters or have Nidrama appear to help them. This should be a last resort, of course, since it steals the thunder from the players.

For lower-level characters, the easiest way to make the adventure less deadly is to adjust the class levels possessed by specific enemies downward. Specific suggestions follow:

The Cauldron Tax Riot: Replace the breathdrinker with a belker or a large air elemental.

A Fire in the Night: Replace the Huge fire elementals with Large fire elementals.

The Headless Demon: Reduce the number of gnoll hunters to 4.

The Old Ogre's Home: Replace the forest sloth with a dire tiger.

Vaprak's Voice: Reduce the total number of hill giants in Vaprak's Voice from four to two. Replace the ettins with minotaurs. Remove all of Dugobras' expert levels. Reduce the damage done by the explosive vapor trap in area V12 to 6d6 fire damage. Remove the rogue levels from the half-fey green hags. Remove one or two of the spell weaver skeletons.

Nabthatoron's Rage: Change Nabthatoron into a hezrou.

For higher-level characters, you can make the adventure more difficult by simply reducing the amount of time the characters have to rest and recuperate between encounters. Characters who try to rest in Vaprak's Voice might be hounded by additional giants, and Nabthatoron could even send squads of demons out to ambush them as they rest. Specific suggestions for changes follow:

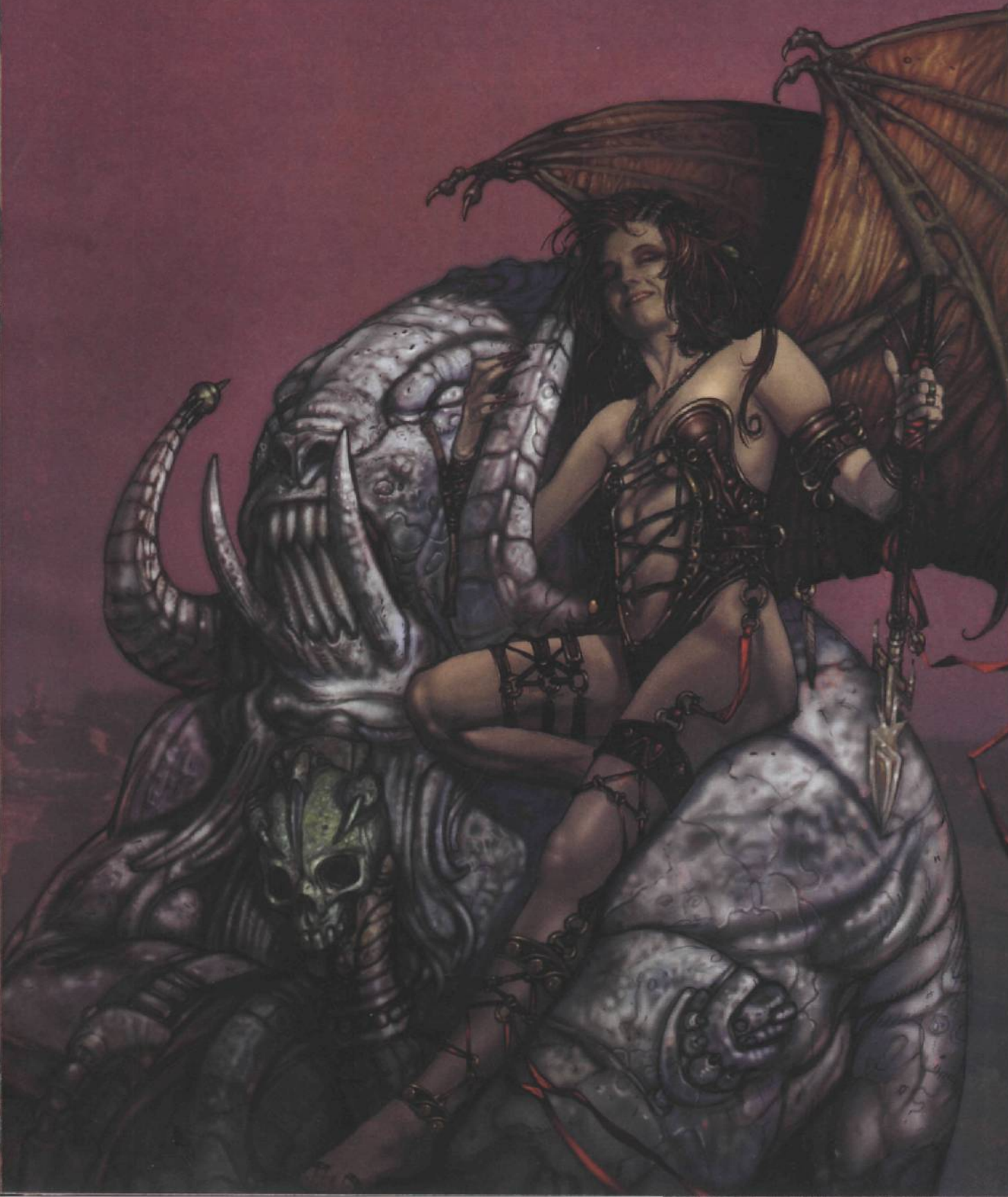
The Cauldron Tax Riot: Advance the breathdrinker's hit dice by four; note that this changes its size to Large (and increases its statistics appropriately).

A Fire in the Night: Replace the Huge fire elementals with greater fire elementals.

The Headless Demon: The gnoll hunters should be led by a gnoll Clr9.

Vaprak's Voice: Give Kymzo four levels of rogue. Replace the hill giants with chaotic evil stone giants, and the ettins with hill giants. Give Dugobras two levels of ranger or fighter. All traps that do damage should have their damage values increased by 4d6. Give the half-fey hags and Gaflon two more rogue levels each. Make the spell weaver skeletons into zombies. Give two to three levels of fighter to the kalareem nerra.

Nabthatoron's Rage: Nabthatoron himself should remain a challenge for even 11th-level characters, but you might consider adding one or two babau demons as minions of the glabrezu that can serve as distractions or bodyguards.





TEST OF THE SMOKING EYE

BY DAVID NOONAN

ARTWORK BY UDON ENTERTAINMENT • CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

"Test of the Smoking Eye" takes the characters to a strangely haunted layer of the Abyss where even demons fear to tread. On the layer known as Occipitus, the PCs deal with rivals who want to create their own evil kingdom there, and they have the chance to learn the layer's secret and even cleanse it of evil. This adventure is designed for a group of four 10th-level characters, and the PCs may reach 12th level by the end of the adventure. You can easily adjust the adventure for larger or smaller parties, as well as for PCs of higher or lower level (see the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar). When the PCs earn enough experience to gain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure. They'll spend almost the entire adventure away from the Material Plane, and opportunities for training are few and far between.

The adventure is part of the Adventure Path that began with "Life's Bazaar" (DUNGEON #97), "Flood Season" (DUNGEON #98), "Zenith Trajectory" (DUNGEON #102), and "The Demonskar Legacy" (DUNGEON #104). If you're playing through these adventures in sequence, the heroes are familiar with the town of Cauldron and should recognize some of the NPCs mentioned in this adventure. If you adjust the opening encounter, you can also play "Test of the Smoking Eye" as a stand-alone scenario, because the rest of the adventure doesn't explicitly rely on knowledge gained from the previous installments in the Adventure Path.

PREPARATION

Running "Test of the Smoking Eye" requires the revised versions of the *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. One important NPC appears in the *Fiend Folio*, but his statistics are given in full in the text. Access to previous "Adventure Path" episodes is helpful, although "Test of the Smoking Eye" takes place away from the characters' home town of Cauldron.

Before you run a game session of "Test of the Smoking Eye," take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the abilities of the NPCs in upcoming encounters. This adventure features a number of powerful outsiders that are versatile foes. The better you know what they're capable of, the better you can challenge the players at your table. These monsters are difficult for a DM to run without at least a quick glance ahead of time. It's also

worth reviewing the Occipitus section of this adventure, which details the special rules that apply on this layer of the Abyss.

As in previous episodes of the campaign, Campaign Seed sidebars are scattered throughout the adventure. Some of these are developed further in future adventures in this series, while others serve as helpful points at which you can expand the adventure and make it your own.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, a demon army invaded Celestia, intent on rampaging and pillaging as much as they could. The heavenly host repulsed the demonic army, but at great cost: the angels of Celestia had to cast the part of Celestia occupied by the demons into the Abyss, tearing apart the fabric of the plane. This massive chunk of planar matter came to rest on the 507th layer of the Abyss, known as Occipitus to its denizens.

The demon warlord Adimarchus, the fallen angel who led the demon horde to Celestia, acted quickly to incorporate the wreckage of Celestia into Occipitus. In so doing he became the demon lord of the plane, wielding almost limitless power there.

Adimarchus's power grew with each passing year until about 50 years ago, when he made a move against a rival demon lord named Graz'zt. In the midst of a battle between Adimarchus's forces and those of Graz'zt, Adimarchus simply disappeared. Some say Graz'zt killed or captured him, while others say he fled when defeat seemed likely. A few even wonder whether he might have had an attack of conscience and left the Abyss completely on a quest for celestial redemption.

When a demon lord is deposed, there's generally a vicious power struggle between powerful demons, each seeking to control the vacated layer of the Abyss. Not so with Occipitus. While demon armies rushed to it after word of Adimarchus's defeat spread, few tarried overlong because the layer quickly developed a reputation.

Even to demons, Occipitus was a cursed place. Fiends who tarried there seemed to suffer all manner of misfortune, from madness to magical maladies to overly ambitious subordinates. To most demons, the cause seemed obvious; the chunk of Celestia that Occipitus absorbed was somehow still influencing events there. That Adimarchus disappeared at a crucial moment was further proof that Occipitus's curse makes the layer more

trouble than it's worth. It is only sparsely populated today, mostly by unlucky fiends with no place else to go.

About a decade ago, a half-demodand named Kaurophon grew curious about Occipitus and explored the plane. While there he met Saureya, an imprisoned angel who was cast down with Celestia and survived Adimarchus's reign. Saureya told Kaurophon that Adimarchus built a test into the very fabric of Occipitus that prospects had to pass before becoming the new ruler of the layer. Kaurophon attempted this "Test of the Smoking Eye" but failed for reasons he doesn't fully understand (although Saureya knows why). Chastened, Kaurophon left Occipitus for Carceri.

But Kaurophon never forgot Occipitus' secret, and he bided his time. He joined a group called the Cagewrights—a mix of fiends and like-minded creatures from the Material Plane dedicated to building a permanent gateway from Carceri to the Material Plane large enough for an invading army. When a discussion among Kaurophon's fellow Cagewrights turned to a powerful set of do-gooders from the Material Plane, Kaurophon remembered Occipitus and realized that the adventurers would make useful pawns. Perhaps they could pass the Test of the Smoking Eye, and then Kaurophon could either usurp their power directly or influence them from behind the scenes.

Kaurophon has observed the PCs for a time, usually indirectly through agents and minions. What he didn't expect was that the Test of the Smoking Eye would figure prominently in the dying words of a prophetic paladin. Kaurophon is proceeding with his plan, but he's troubled that a paladin also wanted the PCs to undertake the Test of the Smoking Eye.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

For characters playing through the Adventure Path, "Test of the Smoking Eye" begins at the moment "The Demonskar Legacy" ends: with the paladin Alek Tercival's dying demand that the players "seek the sign of the Smoking Eye." Kaurophon arrives on the scene within moments and takes the PCs to Occipitus, promising answers that may save Cauldron's residents from foretold doom.

Kaurophon convinces the characters to undertake the Test of the Smoking Eye, which takes them first to the ruins of a celestial cathedral. From there the test takes them to strange, organic tubes that lead inside the half-skull that is Occipitus's most prominent feature. There they meet Saureya, who tells them more about the nature of the test Kaurophon has urged them to undertake. Finally, the characters confront the final test at the center of Occipitus, deal with Kaurophon's hidden agenda, and decide the future fate of the layer.

CHAPTER ONE: AN UNLIKELY EMISSARY

"Test of the Smoking Eye" begins where "The Demonskar Legacy" left off, with the PCs looking out across the desert wasteland, hundreds of miles from Cauldron. They've just heard the final prophecy of the paladin Alek Tercival, which warned them not to return to Cauldron and instead to seek the "Smoking Eye."

But the PCs weren't the only ones who heard Tercival's dying words. A half-demodand named Kaurophon was scrying the PCs and heard it as well. Kaurophon has been trying to think of

THE STORY SO FAR

As spring warms into summer, changes are afoot in Cauldron, a town built in the crater of a dormant volcano and the PCs' base of operations. A sinister group known as the Cagewrights plan to turn Cauldron into a gateway city that directly connects the lower prison-plane of Carceri to the Material Plane. Then a great fiendish army can rampage across the globe, destroying anything they wish. To open the gateway to Carceri, the Cagewrights are creating artifacts called *soulcages*, each of which contains a Shackleborn—a sacrificial victim doomed from birth by an invisible birthmark. The Cagewrights have a powerful ally in the beholder Vhalantru, who rules the city through secret intimidation, intrigue, and magic.

In "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97), the PCs disrupted a kidnapping ring based in an ancient fortress deep beneath the city. One of the kidnapped children was in fact one of the Shackleborn, and his rescue pleased Vhalantru greatly.

In "Flood Season" (*DUNGEON* #98), the PCs retrieved several stolen *wands of control water* needed by Cauldron's clergy to control the rising waters of the central lake during the winter rainstorms, overcoming several members of a cult called the Ebon Triad in the process.

In "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), the PCs' heroic actions

against a rampaging umber hulk in the middle of the city caught the attention of the Cagewrights. Several of their agents tricked the unknowing PCs into returning another of the Shackleborn, the dwarf hero Zenith Splintershield, to Cauldron and the Cagewrights' clutches.

In "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), the PCs searched for Alek Tercival, a missing paladin key to ending unrest in Cauldron as the Cagewrights' plans grew closer to fruition. The PCs defeated those responsible for manipulating Tercival, but the paladin died shortly after the PCs defeated his tormentors. Tercival used his last breath to tell the PCs, "There is naught left for you in Cauldron, heroes! To return is to enter your own graves and to bring doom upon all you love! Seek the sign of the Smoking Eye if you wish to save them all!"

If you're playing "Test of the Smoking Eye" as a stand-alone adventure, alter Kaurophon's true motivations to meet the needs of your ongoing campaign. As long as he gets the PCs to attempt the Test of the Smoking Eye, the adventure should run smoothly. The characters don't need to trust Kaurophon completely; characters playing through the Adventure Path will almost certainly harbor suspicions.



a way to lure the PCs to Occipitus, and Tercival's prophecy suddenly makes matters much easier. Yet he is troubled—did the paladin know about Kaurophon and Occipitus?

ENTRANCE ROOM (EL 9)

Light: Sunlight from outside.

Sound: Desert wind from outside (automatic).

Reaction: To PCs' discussion of a quick departure (via teleport, for example) or a return to Cauldron—Kaurophon's immediate appearance (automatic).

Auras: Faint (Alek's cloak, DC 20, abjuration), faint (Alek's ring, DC 20, conjuration), faint (Alek's armor, DC 18, transmutation), moderate (Alek's sword, DC 22, evocation [good]), dim evil (Nabthatoron the glabrezu's corpse, if he didn't teleport away at the end of the fight).

This is where the last adventure left off. It's also where Kaurophon arrives and convinces the characters to accompany him to Occipitus. To get the PCs on his side, he'll create a minor fight, then come to the rescue.

Tercival's final prophecy—"Seek the sign of the Smoking Eye if you wish to save them all!"—plays right into Kaurophon's goals, even if he has to change his plans a bit. Thinking quickly, he casts *invisibility* on himself, then *disguise self* to appear in human form with a tunic emblazoned with a smoking eye shape. He continues scrying on the PCs, who undoubtedly discuss what they'll do next. Put yourself in Kaurophon's shoes—

you want to learn more about the PCs, but you want to make sure they come with you to Occipitus. If the conversation breaks down or starts to head in a direction you don't like, it's time for Kaurophon to take action. If the players are getting frustrated with their predicament, that's also your cue to act. Kaurophon wants the PCs to undertake healing and other spellcasting, because it's in Kaurophon's interest for the PCs to be at their strongest.

Creatures: When Kaurophon is ready to make his appearance, he uses a scroll to *greater teleport* to the outside of the ancient vault (or someplace else the PCs won't be able to see him); to successfully use this scroll Kaurophon must make a successful caster level check (DC 14). Remember that as long as the scroll doesn't misfire (see *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, page 238), the scroll's spell is not consumed and Kaurophon can try to use it again the next round. Once he arrives, he uses a scroll of *summon monster IX* to summon 1d4+1 babau demons; to use this scroll he must make a successful caster level check (DC 18). Kaurophon briefs the babaus on his plans, then sends them in to attack the PCs. One round after this combat begins, Kaurophon appears in the gap in the vault's wall and attacks the babaus he summoned. If this spell misfires, the babaus attack Kaurophon. Thinking quickly, he flees into the Ancient Vault to lead the demons to the PCs and the combat proceeds as detailed in Tactics below.

➤ **Babaus (3):** hp 68, 65, 61; *Monster Manual* 40.



➤ **Kaurophon:** hp 65; see Appendix for stat block.

Tactics: Because the babaus were summoned, they can't make the careful plans that their kind are known for. Instead they rush in and try to set up flanking positions so they can make sneak attacks. Kaurophon has ordered the babaus not to use their *darkness* spell-like ability, because he wants to make sure the PCs see him come to the rescue.

Kaurophon's tactics are simple: wait a round for the fight to start, then come to the PCs' aid by attacking a babau with *magic missile* or by casting a beneficial spell (such as *bear's endurance*) on a PC. He shouts "I'm here to help!" and "Die, demon!" frequently to make his intentions obvious.

Development: The characters should make short work of the babau demons, especially with help from Kaurophon. Only if the PCs are gravely wounded from the events in "The Demonskar Legacy" will this be a tough fight. If the babau demons start to get the upper hand, Kaurophon dismisses them as a standard action while pulling out a blank scroll and pretending to read a *dismissal* spell from it. Characters with *detect magic*, *arcane sight*, or similar magic might be able to tell that he didn't actually use the scroll.

Once the PCs defeat the babaus, Kaurophon has a sales pitch to make.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Although normally you wouldn't award experience points for monsters summoned by magic (since they are technically part of the summoner's CR), go ahead and award experience points for the three babaus encountered here; this award represents the defeat of the

babaus as much as it does forging an alliance with Kaurophon.

INVITATION TO OCCIPITUS

The PCs have a new ally, who introduces himself as Kaurophon and briefly explains that he was sent "by the power of the Smoking Eye" to guide the PCs to the outer plane of Occipitus. If the PCs can pass the Test of the Smoking Eye, Kaurophon says, they can cleanse Occipitus of evil and win a great victory for the forces of good.

Kaurophon should be pretty convincing. What he says matches Tercival's dying words, he's wearing a smoking eye symbol, and he just helped the PCs. Plus he offers an immediate way out for characters stranded in the desert by a one-way portal. But PCs are naturally suspicious, and they'll undoubtedly question Kaurophon further.

Kaurophon's whole plan relies on the PCs' trust—or at least the allaying of their immediate suspicions. He submits willingly to divination spells, relying on his +8 Will save bonus, his +19

Bluff bonus, and his ability to tell partial truths to defeat Sense Motive checks and such spells as *discern lies* and *zone of truth*.

Kaurophon's likely answers to PC questions are listed below. They aren't necessarily intended to be read aloud verbatim. Adjust them so they make sense within the ongoing conversation—and add anything Kaurophon may have overheard before he teleported to the ancient vault. Choose your words with care—Kaurophon lies if he has to, but he can accomplish more by leaving out parts of the truth.

What's Occipitus? What's the Smoking Eye? "It's another plane, once part of Celestia but now corrupted and consumed



aa⁰³
Kaurophon

ADDING NEW PCS

If some PCs died during the course of "The Demonskar Legacy"—or if you just have some new players—you'll need to introduce them to the rest of the PCs somehow.

It's possible that a new PC might wander into the entrance chamber from the desert wastes. They may be lost and dehydrated, or they might have been sent to join the party by a village shaman

or a strange series of prophetic dreams.

If a player is willing to sit out the first encounter, it's easier to add the PC when Kaurophon takes the PCs to Occipitus. The new PC was recently stranded on Occipitus by a planar rift, a trapped portal, or a spell that sent him to a random plane (such as *prismatic spray* or *dismissal*).

TEST OF THE
SMOKING EYE

by evil. I've traveled its lands for years, and I think I've uncovered the secret of controlling the plane and cleansing it." (True)

Who lives there? "Few creatures do. Even demons regard it as haunted, because the light of good still shines there. Yet the evil is so strong that the angels of Celestia count it as lost forever. Unfortunately, some demons and other creatures have moved there, trying to pass the Test of the Smoking Eye and expunge what good remains there." (True)

Where is it? "It is part of the Abyss right now. But if the right person passes the Test of the Smoking Eye, he could separate it from the Lower Planes. Perhaps it would become a demiplane, or perhaps it would again become part of Celestia. (True, although Kaurophon isn't saying that the process might take centuries.)

What is Occipitus like? "In the center of Occipitus is a half-buried skull the size of a mountain, and from its eye comes perpetual flame that fills the sky. Around it are parts of what was once Celestia, mixed with a strange, almost living landscape: Occipitus's original evil." (True)

What are you? "I'm a planar traveler, and I've wandered the planes for hundreds of your years. Because I was born of an illicit dalliance between fiend and human, I'm welcome nowhere. Perhaps my heritage is the reason I want to help someone pass the Test of the Smoking Eye and purify Occipitus. But I'm not one for introspection." (True)

What is the Test of the Smoking Eye? "It's a test created by the former ruler of the plane, who disappeared years ago. Whoever passes the Test of the Smoking Eye becomes the new rightful ruler of Occipitus. I know the test has three parts, each hidden somewhere on Occipitus. Passing the first part of the test reveals the location of the second part, and so on. I stumbled upon the location of the first test, but I'm not powerful enough to pass it. The prophet's final words give me hope that you have sufficient power." (True; Kaurophon doesn't know who Tercival is, so he refers to him only as "the prophet.")

What's the first part of the test? "You must enter a hidden chamber within a ruined Celestial cathedral. There you must choose one of two doors: one with a bebilith demon behind it and one with an avoral guardinal." (True. If pressed about what happened to him, Kaurophon lies: "I chose correctly and battled the bebilith, but it was too strong for me. I was lucky to escape with my life.")

How'd you get here? "Much to my surprise, I found myself here just moments after I heard the prophet's words inside my head. I suppose that I'm the "sign of the Smoking Eye" he talked about. (True, although Kaurophon is leaving out that the "words inside my head" were the result of his own *screaming* spell.)

What's in it for you? "I want to see a new direction for Occipitus, and I have the sense that it has a crucial role to play in the battle between good and evil." (True, although Kaurophon's idea of a "new direction" and a "crucial role" is unstated because it's probably at odds with the PCs' sensibilities. If pressed, Kaurophon lies, saying "I want to see evil expunged from Occipitus—then I'll have a place I can call home.")

We need to buy more gear/rest and heal first. "If it's truly necessary, so be it, but beware! Rivals of unsurpassed evil lurk near the first part of the Test. If we wait too long, they'll gain a lead on us. Besides, I know of places on Occipitus where healing is easier, and a place I suspect holds Celestial weapons of great power." (True; Kaurophon is referring to the Cathedral of Feathers and the Plain of Cysts respectively.)

Rivals? "Yes, some demons dream of ruling Occipitus themselves and remaking the place as a plane of pure evil. I know of at least two such groups—one led by a succubus and another led by a renegade rakshasa. They're close to finding the first part of the test."

What if we get stranded there? "I've prepared a few scrolls of plane shift for you. Simply read them, and you'll be transported back to the Material Plane." (True, and a DC 26 Spellcraft check or *read magic* spell verifies that the scrolls are genuine.)

Where'd those babaus come from? "If I had to guess, I'd say that your recent actions against the forces of evil got you noticed by someone, and that someone sent the babaus out to finish you off." (True; if Nabthatoron's body is present he suggests the possibility that slaying the glabrezu may have triggered some sort of conjuration spell to call the demons.)

You're evil! "You're detecting my unfortunate heritage—the fiendish blood that flows through my veins. Just as I'm trying to purify my own soul, so too am I trying to end the battle between good and evil on Occipitus. I hope that someday my aura will be as pure as yours." (True, although Kaurophon is choosing his words with great care.)

You're using an illusion! "My true form isn't as pleasant as this one, and I wanted to make sure you'd hear my plea." (True)

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

The PCs are stranded in the middle of the desert, but that doesn't mean they're without the ability to check up on what Kaurophon is saying.

Knowledge Checks: A DC 20 Knowledge (the planes) check is sufficient to know that Occipitus is indeed a layer of the Abyss that most demons regard as cursed or haunted. A DC 25 check reveals the layer's history in brief: After a great battle between good and evil, part of Celestia was pulled through a planar rift and landed in Occipitus. A DC 30 check reveals details of the battle, including the name of Adimarchus and the reason for the planar rift. It also provides a brief physical description of the plane that matches Kaurophon's description.

Bardic Knowledge: As above, with the same DCs.

Divination Spells: *Divination*, *contact other plane*, and *commune* spells deliver accurate results, but the answers are colored somewhat by the desire of good and lawful deities to see Occipitus cleansed of evil. For example, answers might downplay the danger of going to Occipitus and emphasize the importance of the Test of the Smoking Eye. If a cleric uses one of these spells to inquire about Kaurophon, the answers are truthful, but include an extra clause that pushes the PCs toward Occipitus anyway. For example, if a cleric uses *commune* to ask "Is Kau-

rophon planning to betray us?" the answer might be "Yes, but he'll succeed only in betraying himself." If a cleric asks, "Is this a trap?" the answer might be "Yes, but beyond the trap lies your destiny and Cauldron's salvation."

PREPARING TO LEAVE

Once the PCs have had their questions answered and made preparations, Kaurophon gives each of up to three spellcasting PCs a scroll of *plane shift*. Then he bids the PCs link hands and they *plane shift* to Occipitus. Kaurophon uses his *lesser amulet of the planes* to accomplish this, although he won't advertise the fact that he's carrying such a valuable item.

Kaurophon is in somewhat of a hurry, because he's worried about the rival test-takers and he wants the PCs on Occipitus before the Cagewrights put into motion other plans for them. But he knows the PCs need to be at their best, so he'll encourage spell preparation, healing, and other reasonable preparations.

CHAPTER TWO: CATHEDRAL OF FEATHERS

After the opening chapter, the PCs probably spend the rest of the adventure in Occipitus, the 507th layer of the Abyss. While most of the Abyss is crawling with demons, Occipitus has areas where the power of good hasn't been completely expunged, so many fiends give the layer a wide berth.

Which isn't to say that Occipitus is a hospitable place to visit. When part of the celestial landscape fell into Occipitus, Adimarchus used the power of the layer itself to consume the wreckage. This had the side effect of twisting Occipitus into the vaguely organic layer it is today. And the consumption of the celestial landscape is neither complete nor a one-way process. Parts of Occipitus remain a testament to the enduring power of good.

Occipitus appears as a great basin surrounded by impossibly steep mountains that rise to the sky. Near the center of the basin is a low mountain that looks like a half-buried skull. Amoeba-like blobs of fire continually issue forth from the skull's exposed eye, rising to form the sky and streaming to the mountaintops that form the basin. The fiery blobs, known as plasms, bathe the entire landscape in a reddish light.

Despite its unusual nature, Occipitus is still a part of the Abyss, and the layer is mildly evil-aligned and mildly chaos-aligned. Lawful or good characters take a -2 circumstance penalty on all Charisma-based checks. Lawful good characters suffer a -4 penalty.

The Skull: While the mountain-sized skull appears to be made of bone from a distance, a close inspection reveals that it's made of a chalky, white rock. The DC for Climb checks up the skull is 30 because the rock is prone to crumble without warning. While the mountain isn't hollow like a real skull would be, it does have a few interior chambers detailed in Chapter Four of this adventure. The few creatures who know about the chambers access them through an underground tube hidden just south of the skull.

The skull has no major features other than the eye socket from which the plasms issue. Because the plasms are exceptionally dangerous, few venture into the eye socket. Because the skull is visible from almost anywhere on Occipitus, it's a useful landmark for the layer's denizens.

Occipitus Sky: The sky has thousands of plasms full of fire and evil energy streaming to the far edges of the layer. The plasms aren't alive, but they do respond to life by moving nearer to it. Characters who fly too near the fiery sky find themselves trapped in a swarm of plasms drawn to their life energy. A plasm deals 8d6 points of fire damage and 8d6 points of unholy damage to anyone who touches it. Each plasm takes up four 5-foot squares, has a fly speed of 30 ft. (perfect), and has an effective Initiative of +0. Every round on its turn, a plasm moves toward the closest living creature within 120 feet. Like a swarm, a plasm takes up any four adjacent squares. They're not living creatures, though; they don't have hit points and can't be hurt by weapons or most magic. A plasm is dispersed if it takes 100 points each of cold and holy damage in a round.

The lowest plasms float 200 feet above the surface of the layer, but at a few points an eddy of plasms floats low enough to be attracted by creatures on the ground. Then the plasm descends, rising only when it no longer has living creatures within 120 feet. At 400 feet off the ground, there's an unbroken mass of plasms, all drifting toward the edge of the layer.

If you're running an aerial encounter on Occipitus, randomly scatter four-square plasms across roughly a quarter (between 200 and 300 feet) or half (between 300 and 400 feet) of the encounter map. Few creatures venture above 400 feet, where the plasms cover every square. During a plasm eddy, scatter four-square plasms across a quarter of the encounter map, no matter what the altitude. Such eddies are effectively CR 9 hazards.

Flying creatures on Occipitus notice another unusual aspect to the plane: there's no wind.

Flats: The "ground" on Occipitus is a fleshy, springy surface, warm and slightly damp to the touch. Nothing grows in the grayish-red substance. It can't be dug, only cut into chunks and removed. It's not alive, however.

The flats stretch unbroken for miles, but the traveler to Occipitus quickly notices variations in the flats that add to its skinlike quality. Some patches of flat have thick, hairlike fibers emerging from them, while others have surface variations reminiscent of scales and wrinkles.

Because the flats are spongy, characters gain a +2 bonus on Tumble and Move Silently checks there.

Characters walking the flats may notice some other features common to the terrain, including the following.

Ulcers: What the denizens of Occipitus call "ulcers" are 5-foot or 10-foot wide holes in the flat surface. The ulcers generate caustic, bubbling red liquid—sometimes just a seepage, but other times what looks like a fountain. The ulcer fluid isn't blood, but it looks and smells like it.

The seeping ulcers simply have a shallow pool of ulcer fluid around them. Such pools are usually about a foot deep and 20 to

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30 feet across. It costs 2 squares of movement to move into a square with a shallow pool, and the DC of Tumble checks in such squares increases by 2. Fountain ulcers have a similar pool around them, but above the pool floats a pink mist—miniscule droplets of the ulcer fluid. The mist provides concealment and damages creatures within it. The fountain itself is usually $1d4 \times 10$ feet tall, with mist rising to half the fountain's height.

Regardless of whether it's a liquid or a mist, ulcer fluid deals $1d4$ points of acid damage per round of contact if kept continuously warm.

Celestial Rubble: Part of Celestia has been subsumed into the pervasive evil of Occipitus, but some parts remain as a reminder of the layer's celestial origins. While some specific locations are detailed in Chapters Two and Three of the adventure, the wreckage of Celestia has been scattered across Occipitus. Such areas have dense rubble in half of the available squares, and ruined structures—usually stone walls, partial statues, or intricately carved monoliths—scattered across another 10% of the encounter map.

A square of dense rubble costs 2 squares of movement to enter. Dense rubble adds 5 to the DC of Balance and Tumble checks, and it adds 2 to the DC of Move Silently checks.

Unlike the rest of Occipitus, areas of celestial rubble aren't evil- or chaos-aligned.

Tremor Zones: Parts of Occipitus—often but not always near celestial rubble—quiver continuously, as if a minor earth-

quake were always going on there. A typical tremor zone has a 100-foot radius. Within that range, the vibrations are enough to knock a character over. Every round at initiative point 0, every character within a tremor zone must resist a trip attempt from the tremors; the tremors have a +0 Strength bonus. Characters who fail the opposed check are knocked prone.

Ossaic Forests: Formed of a chalky, crumbling substance, the ossaic forests are collections of gently curving columns that pierce the spongy surface of the layer. Visitors from the Material Plane often say they look like massive rib-bones thrust into the air. Within the ossaic forests, about a quarter of the squares on an encounter map have columns within them, and another 25% of the squares have rubble from toppled columns.

The columns take up an entire space and have AC 3, hardness 5, and 300 hp. They stretch $(1d4+2) \times 10$ feet tall and take a DC 20 check to climb. The rubble doesn't slow movement, but it does add 2 to the DC of Balance and Tumble checks.

Fibrous Forests: Some parts of Occipitus have house-sized tangles of fleshy, ropelike plants that feed off the layer's surface. Although they aren't living creatures, these tangles of fibers slowly attempt to consume creatures who stay in one place too long. Creatures within 20 feet of a tangle who spend more than a round in the same square find that some of the tendrils attempt a grapple against them at initiative point 0. Individually, the tendrils aren't effective against foes who resist them; they have a total grapple bonus of +0. If a tendril succeeds at a

grapple, it attempts to pin a foe during each successive round. The fiber tangles don't deal any damage. If they pin a helpless or dead foe, they'll slowly consume him at the rate of one point of Constitution drain per hour.

Even a 5-foot step each round is enough to keep the fiber tendrils at bay. Travelers can walk through the forest for hours without seeing a single tangle move.

To draw an encounter in the fibrous forests, draw enough tangles on the map so that most but not all the squares are within reach of one or more tangles. Each tangle takes up four to nine adjacent squares. Tangles are 5 feet tall if they take up four to six squares and 10 feet tall if they take up seven or more squares.

RANDOM OCCIPITUS ENCOUNTERS

What the PCs encounter on Occipitus depends on the terrain.

TABLE 2-1: FLATS ENCOUNTERS (EL 10)

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01-10	1 hezrou demon	11
11-30	1d3 vrock demons	11
31-40	1 gray slaad	10
41-60	1d4+2 babau demons	10
61-65	1 green slaad	9
66-75	1d3 chaos beasts	9
76-85	1d3 fiendish dire lions*	9
86-90	1 succubus and 1 half-fiend cleric	9
91-100	5d6 fiendish bison*	8

* Described in appendix.

TABLE 2-2: OSSAIC FOREST ENCOUNTERS (EL 10)

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01-10	1 hezrou demon	11
11-25	1d3 vrock demons	11
26-50	1d4+3 babau demons	10
51-70	1d4+3 fiendish centaur Rgr2*	10
71-80	1d3 chaos beasts	9
81-95	1d4+3 fiendish owlbears*	9
96-100	5d6 fiendish bison*	8

* Described in appendix.

TABLE 2-3: FIBROUS FOREST ENCOUNTERS (EL 11)

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01-20	1d3 hezrou demons	13
21-35	1d3 fiendish dire bears*	11
36-50	1d3 vrock demons	11
51-65	1d4+2 babau demons	10
66-85	1d4+2 fiendish girallons*	10
86-100	1d3 greater shadows	10

* Described in appendix.

TABLE 2-4: AERIAL ENCOUNTERS (EL 11)

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01-10	1 nalfeshnee demon	14
11-35	1d4+2 vrock demons	13
36-50	1d4+2 fiendish wyverns*	11
51-60	1d3 greater shadows	10
61-90	Plasm eddy**	9
91-100	1d4+3 fiendish giant eagles*	8

* Described in appendix.

** Described in Occipitus section above.

TABLE 2-5: CELESTIAL RUBBLE ENCOUNTERS (EL 10)

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01-10	1 leonal guardinal	12
11-30	1d3+1 spectres	10
31-45	1 couatl	10
46-55	1 stone golem	10
56-70	1d3 green slaads	9
71-100	1d3 ghost Ftr5	9

TABLE 2-6: SKULL ENCOUNTERS (EL 12)

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01-10	1 nalfeshnee demon	14
11-25	1d4+2 vrock demons	13
26-45	1d3 hezrou demons	13
46-55	1d4+2 babau demons	10
56-65	1d3 greater shadows	10
66-80	1d3 succubus demons	9
81-100	Plasm eddy**	9

** Described in Occipitus section above.

ARRIVAL ON OCCIPITUS

Light: Flames from the plasms overhead (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint crackling from the sky (automatic).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evil (plane as a whole).

Kaurophon's plane shift isn't accurate enough to drop the PCs right at the Cathedral of Feathers. Because the PCs can't teleport to a place they've never been, they face an overland journey.

With a flash you find yourself standing on an open plain, linking hands with your comrades. The sky seems to be made of flame, bathing everything in a reddish glow. Off in the distance looms the skull Kaurophon described: a white monolith the size of a small mountain. Clouds of flame stream from the skull's single exposed eye socket and up into the sky. About a half-mile ahead stands a cluster of gently curving white pillars, almost as if giant rib bones had been stuck in the ground.

In the distance behind you is a steep mountain ridge whose top seems to touch the fiery sky. It stretches around the entire horizon—as if you were standing inside a vast bowl with a fiery lid. The ground beneath you is spongy and wrinkled. It's more like skin than dirt.

CATHEDRAL



Based on landmarks such as the Skull and the ridge mountains, Kaurophon estimates that the PCs are about 100 miles from the Cathedral of Feathers, the location of the first part of the test. He points out the direction of travel through the ossaic forest and lets the PCs handle the travel plans.

Kaurophon warns the PCs about the dangers of flying: "It's safe as long as you stay close to the ground. But fly too high and you'll attract the plasmids, which will destroy you in a conflagration of fire and absolute evil."

If the PCs can fly over the ossaic forest, it's a 92-mile journey to the Cathedral. If they're traveling overland, it's 110 miles.

If the PCs don't have a way to feed themselves on the way, Kaurophon suggests hunting fiendish bison. PCs can also make Survival checks to forage (DC 10; you feed one extra person for every 2 points by which your check result exceeds 10).

On the path from the *plane shift* point to the Cathedral of Feathers, there's an 8% chance per hour of an encounter, whether the PCs are traveling or have made camp. If an encounter occurs, use the relevant encounter table described in the Occipitus section above.

THE CATHEDRAL OF FEATHERS

Eventually the PCs' journey leads them to the Cathedral of Feathers, a ruined structure once part of Celestia. Shortly after the cathedral fell into Occipitus, Adimarchus installed the first part of the Test of the Smoking Eye underneath the cathedral.

Mindful of the strange properties of the layer, Adimarchus ensured that his successors would have the necessary heritage to control an evil layer tinged with good. Specifically, he created an abjuration similar to *forbiddance* that prevents anyone born of the Lower Planes from entering the antechamber or either of the Test Rooms.

The abjuration has thus far stymied Liuvessh, a succubus who also seeks to pass the test. Frustrated at her inability to enter the antechamber, she's staked out the cathedral, hoping to capture other test-takers and wring the secret of the test from them.

PROPERTIES OF THE CATHEDRAL OF FEATHERS

Because the cathedral sits within an area of Celestial rubble, characters don't suffer the -2 or -4 penalties on Charisma-based checks due to the plane's evil- and chaos-aligned trait. The cathedral has areas of light and heavy rubble (mostly fallen stone and wrecked furniture) strewn across its floors. The cathedral itself is tilted because it sits on a slight slope. The angle is just enough to make Balance and Tumble checks more difficult (-2 circumstance penalty within the cathedral).

Unless stated otherwise, the ceilings are 20 feet tall, the floors are flagstone, and the walls are superior masonry. The rooms on the ground floor have great holes in their roofs, so flying or climbing PCs need not enter through the narthex.

Celestial Flashback: The interior of the cathedral is imbued with a phenomenon known as celestial flashback. Every round, there's a 10% chance that the ruined cathedral transforms back into the version of the cathedral that once graced the slopes of Mount Celestia. Such a transformation only lasts for a round, but it's a complete transformation. The cathedral temporarily becomes whole, it regains the magic traits it once had, and anyone inside is effectively standing in Celestia.

Celestial flashback has the following effects:

- All spells with the Good or Law descriptors and those from the Healing subschool are automatically empowered (as the metamagic feat), although such spells don't use up higher-level spell slots.
- All walls are undamaged, and there's no rubble on the floor. The furniture is magically whole, candles glow in wall sconces, and the air is filled with gentle breezes heavy with incense. The tilt of the floor disappears. Characters who can see out doors or windows see verdant alpine meadows, not the rubble-strewn landscape of Occipitus. Golden sunlight, not the red-ringed light of Occipitus, fills the cathedral.
- While the building truly changes, the views out the windows aren't real; it's more like the windows are remembering what they're supposed to show you. Characters who leave the cathedral during a flashback find themselves standing in Occipitus, looking at a ruined cathedral.
- The entire cathedral is *consecrated* and *hallowed*. Attached to the *hallow* effect is a *bless* spell that affects all lawful or good creatures. If evil creatures are inside the cathedral during a flashback, they aren't forced out by *hallow's magic circle against evil* effect, but no evil creature can enter the cathedral during a flashback.
- The air is filled with downy feathers. They aren't numerous enough to provide concealment, and they don't have any game effect.
- No changes are evident from outside the cathedral.

When the characters are engaged in combat inside the cathedral, roll for celestial flashback at initiative point 0 each round. If there's a flashback, it lasts until the end of the following initiative point 0.

NARTHEX (EL 9)

Light: Flames from the plasms overhead (as sunlight).

Sound: None, or voices (if driders are casting spells; Listen DC 5; Listen DC 15 reveals it's spellcasting and Spellcraft DC 16 [*mage armor*, *silent image*] or DC 17 [*invisibility*] reveals which spell).

Reaction: To PCs outside exterior doors—driders prepare according to Tactics section (automatic unless PCs are moving

silently); to sounds of battle—Liuvesh and Arrokh prepare ambush in the Sanctuary, as described in their tactics section (Listen DC 10).

Auras: Faint (*levitate*, DC 17, transmutation), faint (*invisibility*, DC 17, illusion), faint (*silent image*, DC 16, illusion), faint (*mage armor*, DC 16, conjuration), faint good (cathedral), faint evil (driders).

To enter the narthex from outside the cathedral, the PCs must force open a stuck set of stone doors (Strength DC 28). Because they're double doors, up to three other PCs can assist the strongest PC. Remind the PCs that they can take 20 on this check, spending 2 minutes straining at the door. If they take 20, they succeed as long as the strongest character has a Strength score of 18 or higher.

The information above and the content of the boxed text assume that the PCs give the driders enough time to cast spells beforehand. Adjust accordingly if the PCs confound their efforts; read the last sentence only if the driders cast *silent image*.

With a grinding sound, the doors swing open to reveal what was once a beautiful cathedral. The remnants of tapestries hang on the cracked stone walls, and broken furniture and fallen stonework cover much of the floor.

In the wall opposite is another set of stone doors. But between you and the doors is a gaping hole in the flagstone floor that descends into darkness.

Creatures: The driders are floating near the ceiling, directly above the doorway to the exterior. They cast spells as soon as they see anyone enter the room.

➤ **Driders (2):** hp 42, 47; *Monster Manual* 89.

Tactics: If the driders hear the PCs coming, one uses its *clairaudience/clairvoyance* spell-like ability to observe who's outside the door while the other one casts a *silent image* of an open pit in the floor. In the second round, they both cast *invisibility*. In the third round, they both cast *levitate* and rise to the roof, where they hang upside-down and await the PCs. In the fourth round, they cast *mage armor*.

When the PCs enter the narthex, one drider casts *web* to keep them there while the other fires a *lightning bolt* from the ceiling. They'll repeat in the second round, each drider casting the other spell. Then they'll use *magic missiles*, their *dispel magic* spell-like ability, and *rays of enfeeblement* (against heavily armored PCs, if possible) before gently floating downward to engage in melee.

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE FATE OF ADIMARCHUS

So what happened to Adimarchus after he challenged Graz'zt? Graz'zt enjoys boasting that he slew the fallen angel, but the other demon princes are quick to point out that Graz'zt has never been able to provide physical proof of this deed. What cannot be disputed, though, is the fact that after the battle, Adimarchus was

simply and utterly gone. If anyone knows the truth about his fate, they have kept it secret for nearly five decades.

In fact, Adimarchus' fate is closely tied to the troubles facing Cauldron. Expect this mystery to be further developed in future installments of the *Shackled City Adventure Path*.

SANCTUARY (EL 11)

Light: Flames from the plasms overhead (as sunlight).

Sound: Gentle rustling of paper (Listen DC 20).

Reaction: To sounds of battle—driders prepare ambush in Narthex, as described in their tactics section (Listen DC 10).

Auras: Strong (Arrokh's longspear, DC 21, transmutation), overwhelming evil (Arrokh), strong evil (Liuvas), faint good (cathedral).

This room has a vaulted ceiling some 60 feet high at the apex, supported with buttresses but showing several gaping holes in the roof. Most of the floor is a sea of debris—collapsed archways, shattered glass, and broken pews—but a clear path leads down the center of the room. Several large piles of debris still smolder and smoke.

Where an altar undoubtedly once stood is now a rough-hewn statue, propped up on stones so it doesn't tilt like everything else in the cathedral. The statue depicts an obscenely fat biped with the head of a ram. Black silk hanging from nearby pillars gives the statue the appearance of bat wings.

The statue was left here by followers of Orcus who briefly contemplated taking over Occipitus after Adimarchus's disappearance. Orcus called them back to his home on the 113th layer of the Abyss after several months because he had higher-priority missions for them there.

Of more immediate concern are the two evil outsiders lying in wait for the PCs.

Creatures: This is where the celestials used to worship before the cathedral was cast down into the Abyss. Now a succubus and a noble salamander lurk in wait for the PCs.

➤ **Liuvas, Succubus:** hp 36; *Monster Manual* 47.

Possessions: +1 wounding spear.

➤ **Arrokh, Noble Salamander:** hp 110; *Monster Manual* 219.

Possessions: +3 longspear.

Tactics: If Liuvas and Arrokh hear the PCs fighting the driders, they move into ambush position: Liuvas perched high among the buttresses but within 50 feet of the door, and Arrokh behind the statue. Their preferred tactic is to wait until PCs enter the sanctuary (readying actions if they beat the PCs on an initiative check), then have Liuvas swoop down and kiss a PC while Arrokh uses his *wall of fire* to split the party and keep other PCs from interrupting Liuvas and the hopefully smitten PC. Then Arrokh will use more *walls of fire* and *fireballs* to harry the party, hoping to draw them into melee with him rather than with Liuvas. Liuvas relies on her fire resistance 10 and doesn't mind taking a little damage from Arrokh's spell-like abilities. Liuvas resorts to melee with her +1 wounding spear only as an act of desperation.

If things go poorly for Liuvas, she'll ask to parley while attempting to *charm* or make a *suggestion* to a PC. Arrokh has a similar backup plan: grappling and constricting a PC, then using the hostage to bargain for his escape.

If Liuvas and Arrokh are surprised, Arrokh is idly moving a *flaming sphere* from debris pile to debris pile while Liuvas stud-

ies a book she found propping open the door to the meditation chambers. She's looking for clues, but she won't find any in the celestial hymnal she's studying.

Treasure: A set of four golden candelabras that are worth 250 gp each sits on a partially ruined shelf.

Development: Characters who reach the eastern end of the sanctuary find a set of stairs heading down; these stairs lead to the antechamber and the first part of the Test of the Smoking Eye. A DC 10 Craft (stonemason) check is sufficient to notice that the stairway wasn't put in by the same artisans who built the cathedral—in this case, Adimarchus had the lower level created after the Cathedral of Feathers fell into the Abyss.

LIBRARY (EL 10)

Light: None.

Sound: Gentle rustling of paper (automatic within the Library, Listen DC 10 through the door).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (book trap, DC 21, abjuration), faint good (cathedral).

Before you is a ruined library, with broken shelves lining the walls and sheaves of parchment littering the floor. Strangely, the library's books float in midair, lazily circling the center of the room. Each book is open, and the pages flap like bird's wings as they orbit an unseen point.

Unlike the other rooms on the ground floor, the library has an intact ceiling and walls. Although the interior is wrecked, the library contains the remnant of a powerful trap left by the cathedral's celestial guardians.

Trap: The books are themselves a trap. If anyone enters the room or disturbs a book's flight, 2d6 books pull out of their orbit and fly toward the intruder. Each book attacks with a +10 melee touch attack and deals 2d8 points of holy damage on a hit. Books that miss land harmlessly on the ground and become normal books; books that successfully hit are destroyed in a flash of light. Characters who remain in the room or continue to disturb books face a barrage of 2d6 books per round until they retreat or the 200 floating books are destroyed or inert on the ground. Keep track of how many books activate each round.

✦ **Flying Book Trap:** CR 10; magical; proximity trigger; special reset (trap is gone when no books remain); 2d6 +10 melee touch attacks (2d8 holy damage each); multiple targets (anyone in the room or disturbing the books from outside it); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

Treasure: Most of the books are celestial religious texts and hymnals. A few are old enough to be worth a great deal to book collectors; three of them are worth 1,000 gp each, but it takes a DC 25 Appraise check to discern which books are valuable.

MEDITATION CHAMBER

Light: Flames from the plasms overhead (as sunlight).

Sound: Gentle rustling of paper (Listen DC 25).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint good (cathedral).

Frescoes of angels cover the walls of this large, open room, although most have been scraped from the wall or otherwise defaced. The rugs on the floor are stained and torn, and much of the furniture—mostly chairs and end tables—is missing legs or has ruined cushions. In neat rows across the room are a series of empty pedestals. Two piles contain broken statuary, ripped oil paintings, and a lot of wooden debris.

This room was once an art gallery where worshipers could engage in prayer amid objects of inspiring beauty. Most of the statues, oil paintings, and other great works are long gone, but persistent PCs can still glean treasure from the celestial ruins.

The room has been ransacked, but the looters weren't exactly art critics. Accordingly, some valuable items remain. Because the place is such a mess, it may take some time to find and identify some rich pieces of celestial art. Ten squares contain undamaged art, and an equal number contain just broken frames, defaced portraits, waterlogged books, and other detritus. It takes a PC a full-round action to search a square, and a minute to appraise a found item. If a PC takes 20 on both checks, it takes 22 minutes per square (and if the PCs have secured the rest of the building, you may want to suggest this option to the players). Each square has Search and Appraise DCs listed for the treasure it contains. All these art objects are rare, exotic items, so PCs who fail the Appraise checks don't realize that what they're holding is valuable.

Kaurophon complains that the PCs are taking too long searching for treasure—until the PCs pull something valuable out of the debris. As long as the rest of the cathedral is secure, Kaurophon's greed gets the better of him at this point and he offers to help search in exchange for a share of the treasure.

Treasure: The squares with treasure have the following DCs:

East Pile 1: Platinum and teak music box (1,000 gp), Search DC 15, Appraise DC 20.

East Pile 2: Rolled-up oil portrait of a lillend (100 gp), Search DC 20, Appraise DC 15.

East Pile 3: Masterwork ivory harp with golden strings (750 gp), Search DC 15, Appraise DC 25.

West Pile 1: Statuette of Kyurek, favored of Pelor (150 gp), Search DC 20, Appraise DC 20.

West Pile 2: Embroidered silk mantle (100 gp), Search DC 20, Appraise DC 20.

West Wall 1: Slightly torn oil portrait of Lake Empyrea (200 gp), Search DC 15, Appraise DC 25.

North Wall 1: Lightning-bolt amulet carved in ebony (150 gp), Search DC 20, Appraise DC 20.

North Wall 2: Blown-glass hurricane lamp (100 gp), Search DC 20, Appraise DC 15.

North Wall 3: Torn oil portrait of Sacrima the planetar (350 gp), Search DC 15, Appraise DC 20.

East Wall 1: Gold cup set with sapphires (2,500 gp), Search DC 20, Appraise DC 15.

ANTECHAMBER (EL 15)

Light: Continual flame torches set in sconces on each wall.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (Adimarchus's ward, DC 25, abjuration), moderate (mummy's half-plate, DC 19, abjuration), faint (mummy's cloak, DC 17, abjuration), faint (mummy's ring, DC 16, abjuration), faint (mummy's brooch, DC 16, abjuration), strong evil (mummy lord), faint evil (plane as a whole).

The stone stairway descends about 40 feet, ending in a landing that opens into a square room roughly hewn from the granite underneath the cathedral. The heady scent of spices—cloves and cinnamon, among others—fills the air. Sitting at an oak desk in the center of the room is a withered, dessicated corpse covered in a strange mix of funereal wrappings and golden-filigree armor. Both the north and south walls have iron doors in them.

As soon as the PCs make their presence known, the corpse at the desk rises to its feet. Any PC who sees the mummy lord must immediately make a successful Will save (DC 17) or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. The mummy lord, Adimarchus's proctor for the first part of the exam, explains the test.

The corpse lifts both hands, showing they're empty, then speaks: "Adimarchus, Most Potent Ruler of Occipitus, bids you welcome to the Test of the Smoking Eye. If you are here, then Occipitus lies fallow, without a strong hand to guide its development. Know then that you are a pretender to Adimarchus's throne. If you are worthy, step forward and undertake the Test of Judgment."

One withered hand points to the north door. "Behind that door lies Thathnak the bebilith." The corpse points in the other direction. "Behind that door lies Halalia the avoral guardinal." Choose one door, slay the occupant behind it, then pass through the door on the other side. I will meet you there."

Creature: The mummy lord prefers not to answer questions. It won't bother the PCs, who can make whatever preparations they like before entering the room. It only attacks if it is itself attacked first.

➤ **Mummy Lord:** hp 95; *Monster Manual* 190. This mummy lord has the Travel domain rather than Protection, so it has *teleport*, *dimension door*, and *longstrider* prepared rather than *slay living*, *spell immunity*, and *sanctuary* respectively.

Tactics: The mummy lord fights cautiously because it is bound by an oath to Adimarchus to administer the test until Occipitus has a new ruler. The creature casts *spell resistance*



and divine power before unleashing its offensive spells such as *dismissal* and *insect plague*. The mummy lord castigates PCs who attack it, saying "What student is so foolish as to attack the proctor of the test?" The mummy lord doesn't pursue PCs who retreat.

Development: Kaurophon can't pass further than the landing because he was born on a Lower Plane. He offers to stay behind and act as a guard. If the players insist, he'll angrily demonstrate that he physically can't enter the antechamber. Kaurophon claims that he doesn't know why he can't enter the antechamber, but he's lying. Kaurophon waits for the PCs just outside the cathedral, and he'll scry on their progress if he can.

NORTH CHAMBER (EL 10)

Light: Phosphorescent glow from the silk bridges (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Overwhelming evil (bebilith), faint evil (plane as a whole).

Two things dominate this vast chamber: a series of wooden platforms that form a network of bridges, seemingly connected by fine silken cords, and a massive, misshapen spider with red eyes and fangs that drip steaming saliva. You can see a door at the far end of the chamber. The ceiling is 30 feet above you, and the floor, covered in spikes, is 30 feet below.

Creature: As the mummy promised, this room has a bebilith in it with murder on its mind. Immediately roll initiative, because Thathnak attacks anything that comes through the door—even Adimarchus himself.

➤ **Thathnak, Bebilith:** hp 158; *Monster Manual* 42.

Tactics: At first, the bebilith is a straightforward combatant, using its web on the first PC it sees, then charging it. It makes full attacks as often as it can, hoping to poison foes and rend their armor.

Against foes who aren't immobilized by the bebilith's web, the demon has a few other tricks it can employ. It can bull rush a foe off the bridge; this provokes an attack of opportunity, but then the bebilith makes a +17 bull rush check (+19 if charging) opposed by the PC's Strength check. If the bebilith wins, it pushes the PC back 5 feet plus 5 more feet for every 5 points by which it won the opposed check. The bebilith can also grapple a foe (+29 bonus), then climb to the ceiling (at half speed with a successful grapple check) and drop the PC onto the spikes (6d6 falling damage, plus 1d4 spikes attack at +10 for 1d4+3 and 1 Con).

If the bridge comes apart as described in the Development section below, the bebilith uses its Climb speed to attack from the walls or ceiling if it can. With a Jump bonus of +28, it's also adept at leaping gaps in the bridge network.

Development: The silk cords that connect the bridge segments to one another cannot withstand much damage. If a bridge square takes 20 points of damage, it falls, sending anyone standing on it to the spikes below. The bebilith is Huge, so it won't fall unless five of the bridge squares beneath it fall. The



bridge falls apart in segments because it is heavily tethered to the walls by a vast network of silken strands.

Falling: If a combatant is bull rushed off the bridge, or a bridge segment collapses, the creature takes 3d6 points of damage and lands on 1d4 spikes. Each spike attacks with a +10 bonus, dealing 1d4+3 points of damage, plus 1 point of temporary Constitution damage (courtesy of years of residue from the bebilith's toxic drool). If the bebilith falls, it doesn't take the Constitution damage because it's immune to its own toxins.

SOUTH CHAMBER (EL 9)

Light: None.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint (*magic circle against good*, DC 18, abjuration), overwhelming good (avoral guardinal), overwhelming evil (Adimarchus's calling diagram), faint evil (plane as a whole).

Hundreds of tin bird cages hang from the ceiling of this chamber. In the end of the otherwise featureless room is a circle of powdered silver. Inside is a forlorn-looking creature with a hawklike face, white bird wings, and taloned feet.

Creature: Adimarchus trapped the avoral guardinal here with a *planar binding* spell and a calling diagram. If the characters disturb the diagram, the avoral guardian is freed. The avoral guardinal has been trapped here for decades, and he just wants

to go home. He pleads with the PCs to free him by disturbing the circle of powdered silver that traps him.

The avoral guardinal's initial attitude is unfriendly, because he deeply distrusts anyone he meets in the Abyss. He doesn't know or care about the Test of the Smoking Eye, but he still helps any creature he feels he can trust. He addresses the PCs in Celestial first, then switches to common if they don't understand. He uses *true seeing* to discern any subterfuge the PCs may employ.

➤ **Halalia, Avoral Guardinal:** hp 66, *Monster Manual* 141.

Tactics: If the PCs attack the avoral, he fights back as best he can. If he's still trapped inside the circle, he uses *lightning bolt*, *hold person*, *dispel magic*, *magic missile*, and his fear aura against PCs. If a drawn-out melee develops, he protects himself as best he can with *blur* and *magic circle against evil* and heals himself with his lay on hands ability.

Development: After the PCs talk to the avoral guardinal for about a minute, all the PCs should make Diplomacy, Bluff, or Intimidate checks depending on the tenor of the conversation. The following circumstance modifiers apply: PCs demonstrate that they're good by speaking Celestial, casting good spells, or displaying holy symbols of good-aligned gods (+2); PCs free the guardinal (+4); PCs give the guardinal a way to get back to Elysium (+8); PCs display connection to evil gods or demons (-4); PCs describe their intention to rule Occipitus (-8). The PCs can aid another on this check, or they can each make their own rolls. If they chose to make their own rolls, only the highest result counts.

Hostile (result less than 5): The guardinal attacks as detailed in **Tactics**.

Unfriendly (result 5–14): The guardinal verbally challenges the PCs, referring to them repeatedly as “evildoers, or worse yet, the duped minions of evil.” He’ll urge them to turn from their evil ways, but he won’t attack unless he’s attacked first.

Indifferent (result 15–24): The guardinal remains aloof and distrustful. “Many a demon so deep in the Abyss wears a kind face, but it’s all illusion and lies.” If freed, he simply departs, seeking his own way home to Elysium.

Friendly (result 25–39): The guardinal uses his healing and other spell-like abilities on behalf of the PCs and aids them in any battles near the Cathedral of Feathers. But he won’t go elsewhere on Occipitus, opting instead to wait in the cathedral until he can figure out a way to get home.

Helpful (result 40 or more): As above, but the guardinal joins the PCs’ quest no matter where on Occipitus it takes them. Kaurophon is none too pleased when he finds out, naturally, but begrudgingly agrees to play along.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs free the guardinal, award them experience equal to what they would receive for defeating it in combat.

CHAMBER OF THE LANTERN

Light: Continual flame torches set in sconces on each wall, and lantern of guidance.

Sound: None.

Reaction: Two rounds after PCs open door—mummy lord arrives (automatic).

Auras: Strong (lantern of guidance, DC 22, divination), moderate (permanent image, DC 20, illusion), strong evil (mummy lord), faint evil (plane as a whole).

Before you read this boxed text, find out whether any of the PCs speak Abyssal. If none speak it, omit the translation of the inscription.

Frescoes depicting a black-feathered angel in battle with hordes of demons and devils cover the walls of this room. Where the wall meets the ceiling is a sentence carved into the granite, repeated over and over again as it encircles the room: “Know who made you.”

The room’s only other feature is a tall stairway leading to a dais. On the dais is a lantern attached to a four-foot pole by a short length of chain. A string of red sigils glows in midair, surrounding the dais at a 10-foot distance.

The sigils are just a *permanent image* (caster level 20th) concocted by Adimarchus to look like a trap. They’ll probably keep the PCs from grabbing the lantern before the mummy lord has a chance to enter the room.

THE FIRST TEST

It might seem that Adimarchus was hoping for a good successor, because the right answer to the first test involves slaying a demon rather than a guardinal. But Adimarchus was evil to the core. The

This encounter proceeds in one of two ways.

If the PCs Have Defeated the Bebilith: They have passed the first part of the test, so the mummy lord appears in a flash of light, solemnly marches up the stairs, picks up the lantern, and hands it to the PCs. It ignores the PCs unless they attack it directly, and even then, it just protects itself and doesn’t fight back until it’s discharged its duty and delivered the lantern.

As it hands the lantern to the PCs (which one doesn’t matter), read the following:

“Heed the words of Adimarchus,” intones the mummy. “You have passed the Test of Judgment. Attend to the wisdom of Adimarchus! Always deal with rivals first, and enemies second. This lantern shall guide you to the second test: the Test of Resolve.” There’s a flash of light, and the mummy is gone.

The beam from the lantern of guidance points back out the chamber (either through the north or south chamber, whichever one the PCs entered through), then out of the cathedral.

If the PCs Haven’t Defeated the Bebilith Yet: The mummy appears, but it tries to drive the PCs back from the Chamber of the Lantern. Read the following:

With a flash of light the mummy appears. “Fools! Don’t seek a reward you don’t deserve! Return and begin anew!”

Everyone should roll initiative at this point. The mummy uses spells or melee attacks to get the PCs to retreat, but it doesn’t pursue them beyond this room, instead waiting here for them to finish. Every round, it repeats its desire that the PCs retreat.

Development: If the PCs reenter the cathedral after they defeated the bebilith, and if there are more good PCs in the party than evil ones, they notice that the celestial flashbacks now happen 25% of the time. If they reenter the cathedral after they’ve completed the second part of the test, they notice that the celestial flashbacks happen 50% of the time. Occipitus is adapting to the possibility of a new, good-aligned ruler.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Award experience for the mummy lord only if the PCs defeat it in battle, not if it disappears at the conclusion of its message.

CHAPTER THREE: PLAIN OF CYSTS

The beam from the lantern of guidance takes the PCs across the surface of Occipitus again, leading them on another overland journey. The PCs won’t realize it until they arrive, but their des-

real lesson in the Test of Judgment is implied in the proctor’s words: “Deal with rivals first, and enemies second.” Adimarchus wanted future rulers of Occipitus to know that just because a creature shares your alignment doesn’t make it your ally.

mination is the Plain of Cysts, one of the battlefields where demon fought angel until the entire plain was cast into the Abyss. It's an 80-mile journey.

On the path from the Cathedral of Feathers to the Plain of Cysts, there's an 8% chance per hour of an encounter, except in the celestial rubble, where the chance of an encounter is only 5%. If an encounter occurs, use the relevant encounter table described in the Occipitus section above.

A CELESTIAL BATTLEFIELD, FALLEN TO THE ABYSS

Light: Flames from the plasms overhead (as sunlight).

Sound: None.

Reaction: Five encounters listed below occur at DM's discretion.

Auras: Faint evil (plane as a whole), faint good (contents of cysts). Other auras are listed in the specific encounters.

Once you reach the top of a low ridge, you see a plain where some rock and soil mixes with the strange, fleshy firmament of Occipitus. Dozens of broken weapons, shields, and the occasional bone litter the ground. Every 20 feet or so, a translucent ovoid—like a cocoon of some kind—lies on the ground. Each has a black tube on one end that disappears into the ground at the other. Bipodal silhouettes are visible in some of the nearer ovoids.

Kaurophon explains that the essence of the slain demons was absorbed back into the Abyss almost immediately, but that Occipitus still struggles to absorb the fallen celestials. Hence the cysts, each of which contains the body of a celestial or a good-aligned object. "Some demons say that the more the cysts... 'digest' is the word, I suppose... the angels, the more good is infused into Occipitus and the more dangerous it becomes for fiends here," he explains.

Most cysts take up two adjacent squares and are 5 feet tall, although some are "doubles" that are 10 feet square and 10 feet tall. To the touch, a cyst feels like it's made of gelatin, soft and slightly quivering whenever disturbed. Each cyst has 200 hit

points, although 20 points of damage with a slashing weapon is sufficient to carve into them enough to get at whatever's inside.

THE TEST OF RESOLVE

Unlike the first part of the Test of the Smoking Eye, the second part doesn't involve defeating a particular enemy. Instead, the character bearing the *lantern* must walk the path outlined on the map without stopping overlong or diverging from it. Specifically, at the end of the lantern-bearer's turn, he or she must be at least 15 feet farther down the path than the lantern-bearer was at the start of the turn. If he isn't, the lantern-bearer and any other creature within 20 feet—friend or foe—is teleported back to the ridge where the test begins. The 15-foot-wide path isn't marked in any way, but the *lantern of guidance* shows the way clearly.

The PCs won't have any idea what's going on at first, and they might be teleported back to the start several times before they figure out what the test of resolve entails. That's OK, as long as the players are enjoying themselves as they wrestle with the mystery of the involuntary teleporting. The players will probably make incorrect assumptions about why they were teleported back to the beginning, such as "you aren't supposed to mess with the cysts" or "you aren't supposed to fight the demons." But the reality of the test is this: Adimarchus wants to make sure his successors can focus on the task at hand and aren't distracted by riches or pointless battles.

Accordingly, it's your job as DM to provide the distractions. Five encounters appear below, but they aren't keyed to specific locations on the path. Use your own judgment and sense of pacing to spring them on the PCs in whatever order you like.

If the PCs get hopelessly stuck or frustrated by the second part of the test, you can have Saureya (described in the Tube Entrance encounter in Chapter Four) fly by and explain to the PCs how the test works. But bail the players out only if you're sure that they will never figure it out on their own.

NEW MAGIC ITEM: LANTERN OF GUIDANCE

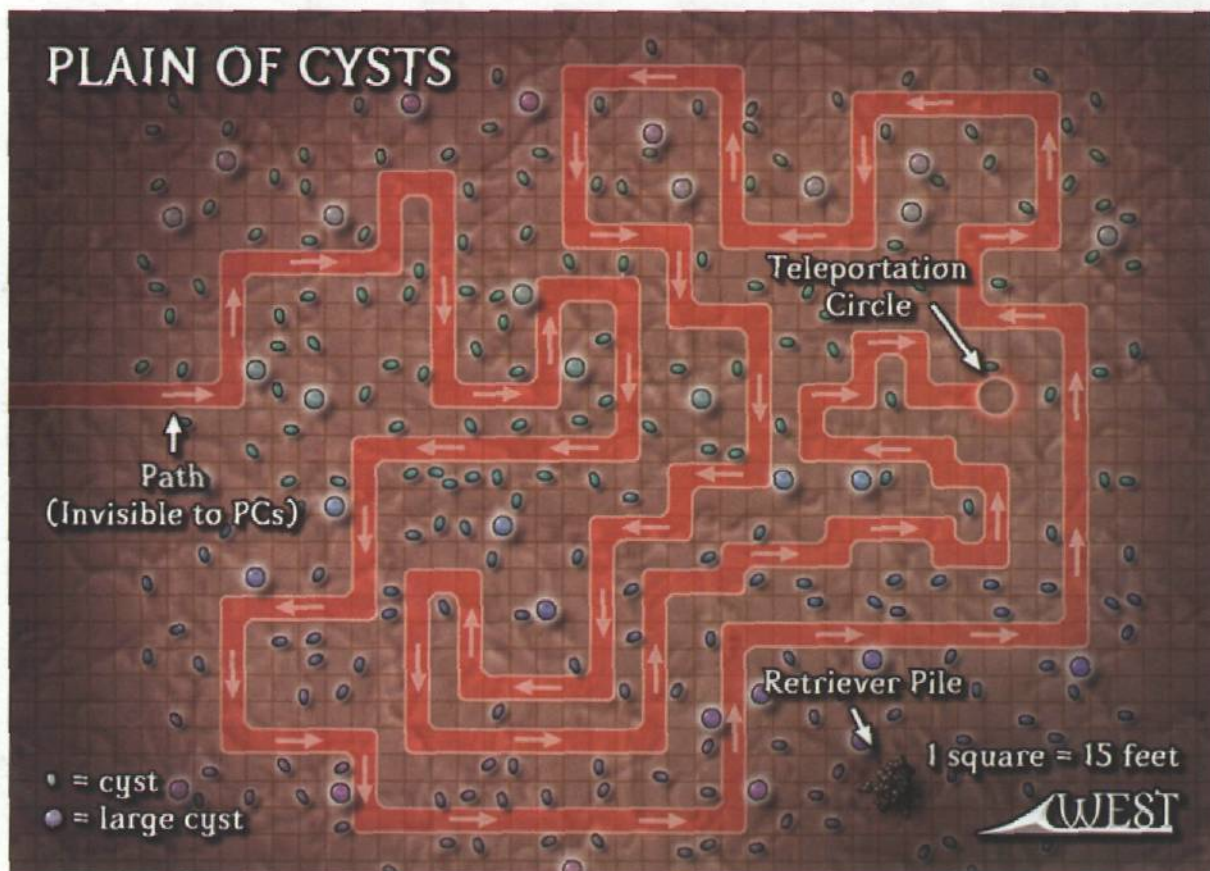
A miniature bullseye lantern chained to a 4-foot length of dark wood, a *lantern of guidance* never goes out except within areas of magical darkness—neither the strongest wind nor full immersion in water can douse its silvery flame. But its true power lies in its ability to unerringly guide the lantern-bearer toward one of three specific locations. This functions as a *find the path* spell; the *lantern's* light always shines in the correct direction of travel, and the lantern-bearer has an instinctive sense of any physical actions to take (such as avoiding trip wires or speaking passwords to avoid magic glyphs). Up to three locations can be programmed into a *lantern of guidance* when it is created. If the lantern-bearer brings the lantern to the first location, it immediately switches to the

second location and leads the bearer in that direction. Likewise, when the lantern-bearer reaches the second location, the *lantern* immediately switches to the third location. Once the third location is reached, the *lantern* loses its guidance ability forever.

It's not immediately apparent from looking at the *lantern*, but because it's a fairly small lantern connected to a sturdy handle by a short length of chain, it's an effective heavy mace. The *lantern's* creators knew that its light would often take the lantern-bearer into harm's way, so they enhanced the item to function as a +2 heavy flail. This property remains even after the *lantern of guidance* has successfully guided a bearer to all three of its pre-set locations.

Strong divination; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *find the path*; Price 10,000 gp.

PLAIN OF CYSTS



ABYSSAL BASILISK (EL 12)

Auras: Overwhelming evil (basilisk; will stun *detect evil* caster of 9 HD or less for 1 round).

From behind a particularly large cyst crawls a spiny-backed lizard with eight legs. It fixes its brightly glowing, green eyes on you and licks its drooling lips.

Creature: The basilisk wandered into the plain of cysts several weeks ago, and it's quite hungry. It attacks immediately.

➤ **Abyssal Greater Basilisk:** hp 188; *Monster Manual* 24.

Tactics: The basilisk hopes to turn all but one of its foes to stone, then use its smite good bite on the remaining enemy, kill it, and eat it. It closes to within 30 feet as quickly as possible.

Because the basilisk has a gaze attack, make sure each PC within 30 feet states at the beginning of his or her turn whether he or she is looking at the basilisk (Fort save DC 21), averting eyes (the basilisk gets concealment from you, but there's a 50% chance you won't have to attempt the save), or closing eyes completely (giving the basilisk total concealment, but no save required).

EASY RICHES

Auras: Moderate (holy sword, DC 18, evocation) moderate (full plate, DC 19, abjuration), moderate (shield, DC 19, abjuration), faint (breastplate, DC 17, abjuration), moderate (scroll,

DC 19, conjuration), faint (cloak, DC 17, abjuration), faint (bracers, DC 17, transmutation).

Start this encounter by having the PCs make Spot checks. If any of them get a result of 15 or higher, read the following.

To your left you spy a cyst with a glowing, golden longsword inside. Deeper into the cyst you the glint of other metallic objects.

The cysts aren't dense enough to block divination spells such as *detect magic*, so the PCs can examine the objects before they retrieve them. The PCs have found something all too rare in a D&D game: worthy treasure just lying around, theirs for the taking. But keep close track of where the lantern-bearer is standing. If the lantern-bearer steps off the path or pauses while others do, it's back to the beginning for anyone nearby.

Treasure: The contents of this cyst are a +1 *holy bastard sword*, a *cloak of resistance* +3, and a set of *lesser bracers of archery*. The body upon which these items once rested has been absorbed by *Occipitus*.

Development: After finding the treasure in this cyst, the PCs might attempt a more comprehensive search of every cyst, hoping to find other treasure troves. Kaurophon objects vehemently, even if the PCs offer him a share of the loot. He pleads with the characters to proceed with the Test: "These treasures have been here for years—certainly they can rest another day or two, can they not?" The avoral guardinal likewise finds opening



the cysts distasteful—"even the demons respected the fallen better than that." The involuntary teleportation also thwarts dedicated tomb-robbing, unless the PCs figure out why the teleportation is occurring.

But NPC objections and involuntary teleportation are both surmountable obstacles. It will take the PCs 80 hours of cyst-searching (divided by the number of PCs) to clean out of the Field of Cysts. During this time there's a 15% chance per hour of a random encounter on the Fibrous Forests table. After eight hours, the PCs uncover a 4th-level treasure. A total of ten such treasures lie within the cysts (determine contents as described in Chapter Three of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

RETRIEVER (EL 11)

Auras: Faint evil (retriever).

Start this encounter with Listen and Spot checks (DC 20 on both). Adapt the following boxed text depending on the PCs' success or failure.

To your right you hear a hiss, and you see an insectoid leg peeking out from behind a cyst.

Creature: The retriever is busy excavating a ruined suit of spiked plate mail from the ground, so the PCs can potentially surprise it. The retriever has a Listen bonus of +0 and a Spot bonus of +0. It attacks the PCs as soon as it's aware of their presence.

➤ **Retriever:** hp 135; *Monster Manual* 46.

Tactics: The retriever remains at range if it can, cycling through its eye rays in the following order: fire, cold, electricity, petrification. It prefers to move out from behind a cyst, fire an eye ray, then move back behind the cyst to gain cover. The first creature to damage the retriever becomes its focus for the rest of the fight. When it focuses its efforts on one PC, it hopes to render the PC unconscious or dead, then drag it back to its junk pile (marked on the map). Once the retriever is dragging someone away, it ignores attacks until it's reduced to one-quarter of its hit points or less. It then focuses on the PC who brought it below one-quarter of its hit points.

Treasure: Characters who examine the retriever's junk pile discover a +1 *unholy dagger*, a suit of masterwork full plate, 190 pp, 3,200 gp, and 5,950 sp.

NOT DEAD YET (EL 10)

Auras: Strong good (couatl).

Start this encounter with a DC 25 Spot check. Characters who succeed see the following.

A cyst ahead of you contains a brilliantly colored feathered serpent within it. You see its wing make a feeble twitch.

Rescuing the couatl from the cyst is simply a matter of carving in through the translucent goo. Even when removed from



the cyst, the couatl remains unconscious. Several slashing wounds across its sinuous form bleed sluggishly.

Creature: The couatl is named Tiluklatl. He fell unconscious during the battle, and suffered a trip through a planar rift into the Abyss, the formation of its cyst, and partial absorption into the fabric of Occipitus. He doesn't awaken until he receives a *remove curse* or *break enchantment* spell. Tiluklatl is otherwise

stable at -3 hit points, so he can't do anything until he gets some healing.

Even if the PCs are able to restore him to consciousness, Tiluklatl is disoriented and prone to lashing out at anyone in sight. The PCs must do some fast talking to keep him from attacking them.

➤ **Tiluklatl, Male Couatl:** hp 60 (currently -3), *Monster Manual* 37.

Development: Tiluklatl's starting attitude is unfriendly. The following circumstance modifiers apply to Diplomacy or Intimidate checks to adjust his attitude: PCs heal him so he has 30 or more hit points (+2 to Diplomacy); PCs ask for help getting the avoral guardinal home (+2 to Diplomacy); PCs explain what's happened since Tiluklatl was knocked out (+4 to Diplomacy); PCs display connection to evil gods or demons (-4 to Diplomacy, +2 to Intimidate); PCs describe their intention to rule Occipitus (-8 to Diplomacy, +4 to Intimidate).

Hostile (result less than 5): Tiluklatl attacks, either because he's completely disoriented or because he doesn't trust the PCs. He grabs a Small or light PC, grapples and constricts him or her, then flies into the sky before jettisoning his opponent. Tiluklatl doesn't know about the plasmids, so he may attract them.

Unfriendly (result 5-14): Tiluklatl simply flees with his *plane shift* spell-like ability.

Indifferent (result 15-24): Tiluklatl scans the group with *detect evil* and *detect chaos*. If he finds no chaotic or evil creatures among the PCs, he thanks them briefly, questions them using *detect thoughts*, then leaves with *plane shift*. If chaotic or evil creatures are present, he *plane shifts* away.

Friendly (result 25-39): As above, but Tiluklatl is willing to accept a group with one or two chaotic members. If he trusts a group after the questioning, he uses his spells and spell-like abilities on their behalf before *plane shifting* away with the avoral guardinal.

Helpful (result 40 or more): As above, but Tiluklatl joins the PCs' quest. If the avoral guardinal needs to get back to Elysium, the couatl *plane shifts* there, then *plane shifts* back to Occipitus to try to find the PCs.

WEE JAS GRAVE ROBBERS (EL II)

Auras: Moderate (*plane shift* scroll, DC 19, conjuration), moderate (*flame strike* scroll, DC 19, evocation), 3 moderate (assassin armor, DC 19, abjuration), faint (*cure serious wounds* scroll, DC 17, conjuration), faint (*dispel magic* scroll, DC 17, abjuration), faint (*speak with dead* scroll, DC 17, necromancy), 3 faint (assas-

sin daggers, DC 17, transmutation), faint (cleric armor, DC 17, abjuration), faint (cleric spear, DC 17, transmutation), 3 faint (assassin potions, DC 16, illusion).

Have the characters make Listen checks at the start of this encounter. Those PCs who get a result of 10 or higher hear the following.

You hear a low muttering coming from ahead and to the right. Between two cysts you spot four human-shaped figures cloaked in black. One of them is holding a skull aloft, while the others look around as they lean on their shovels.

Creatures: The cloaked figures are followers of Wee Jas on the trail of a powerful magic item known in lore as the *lens of the blacksun*. They've just completed a *speak with dead* spell cast on the skull of a celestial who died during the demon invasion of Celestia.

➤ **Wee Jas Assassins, Male and Female Human Rog5/Asn2 (3):** CR 7; Medium humanoid (human); HD 7d6+7; hp 34, 33, 32; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +4; Grp +5; Atk +9 melee (1d4+3 plus poison/19–20, +1 dagger) or +8 ranged (1d4+2 plus poison/19–20, dagger); Full Atk +9 melee (1d4+3 plus poison/19–20, +1 dagger) or +8 ranged (1d4+2 plus poison/19–20, dagger); SA death attack (DC 13), poison use, spells, sneak attack +4d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge, trapfinding, trap sense +1; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +13, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +1, Disguise +7, Hide +13, Intimidate +9, Jump +12, Listen +8, Move Silently +13, Spot +10, Tumble +15.

Feats: Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (dagger).

Spells Known (2; save DC 11 + spell level): 1st—*jump*, *obscuring mist*, *true strike*.

Possessions: +1 dagger, +1 studded leather armor, *potion of invisibility*, 5 daggers, 6 doses of giant wasp poison (1d6 Dex/1d6 Dex; Fort DC 18).

➤ **Velasia, Wee Jas Cleric, Female Human Clr7:** CR 7; Medium humanoid (human); HD 7d8+7; hp 40; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk +9 melee (1d8+4/×3, +1 spear) or +8 melee touch (spell); Full Atk +9 melee (1d8+4/×3, +1 spear) or +8 melee touch (spell); SA spells, rebuke undead; SQ —; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +11, Knowledge (religion) +10, Spellcraft +10.

Feats: Spell Focus (necromancy), Toughness, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Weapon Focus (spear).

Spells Prepared (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/1+1; save DC 13 + spell level; 14 + spell level for necromancy): 0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*, *read magic*, *purify food and drink*; 1st—*cause fear*^{NS}, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *detect evil*, *sanctuary*, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bear's endurance*, *cure moderate wounds*, *death knell*^{NS}, *lesser restoration*, *silence*; 3rd—*contagion*^{NS}, *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*^{NS}, *protection from fire*; 4th—*death ward*^{NS}, *divine power*.

N: Necromancy spell; also, remember that all *inflict wound* spells are necromancy as well.

*Domain Spell; Domains: Death (death touch 1/day, damage 7d6), Magic (use magic items as 3rd-level wizard).

Possessions: +1 full plate, +1 spear, scroll of *flame strike*, scroll of *plane shift*, scroll of *cure serious wounds*, scroll of *speak with dead*, scroll of *dispel magic*.

Tactics: Two of the assassins maneuver into flanking positions, preferably against front-line melee fighters, and then make sneak attacks with their poisoned blades. The third hides or turns invisible, makes a death attack after studying a PC for 3 rounds, then hides again. If possible, the cleric casts *divine power* and *bear's endurance* before entering melee combat herself. Once the cleric enters the fray, the assassins tumble away from their targets and try to attack spellcasters instead.

END OF THE PATH (EL 15)

The end of the winding path across the Plain of Cysts is a well-hidden, permanent *teleportation circle*. Characters who step into it are taken to a clearing in the middle of a fibrous forest (marked on the map), where another mummy lord proctor is present. But this mummy isn't alone.

Light: Flames from the plasms overhead (as sunlight).

Sound: None.

Reaction: Tendrils from the fibrous clumps wave slowly in the PCs direction (automatic).

Auras: Dim (lingering aura from *teleportation circle* lasts 1d6 × 10 minutes, DC 24, conjuration) strong evil (mummy lord), faint evil (plane as a whole).

With a lurch in your stomach, you realize you're teleporting again. But this time you don't reappear on the edge of the Plain of Cysts. You appear in a clearing, surrounded by fibrous growths that sprout from the spongy ground and waver in the air, some reaching 10 feet tall. Another mummy stands before you.

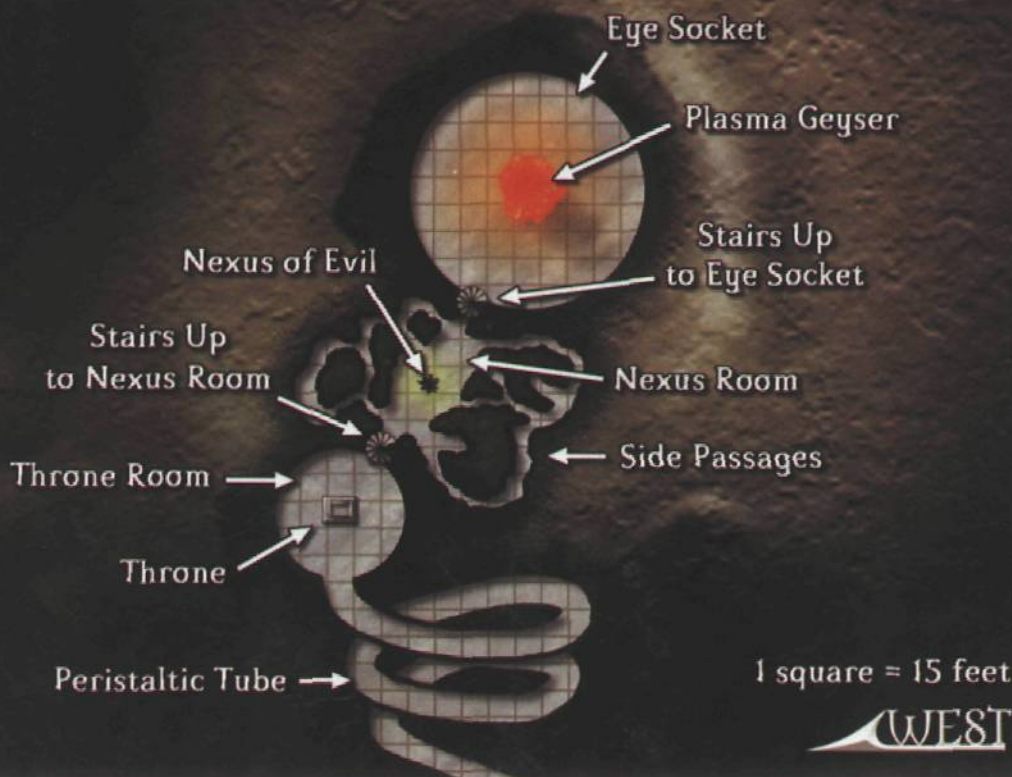
"Heed the words of Adimarchus," intones the mummy. "You have passed the Test of Resolve. Attend to the wisdom of Adimarchus! Let neither riches nor weaponry, neither allies nor enemies, tempt you from your course. Instead, spread such distractions before your rivals. The lantern shall guide you to the final test: the Test of Sacrifice. Your ascension to the throne of Adimarchus draws nigh!" The mummy then vanishes in a flash of acrid smoke and wet light.

Creature: If the PCs interrupt the mummy, it ignores them. If they attack the mummy, it fights back to the best of its ability, reciting the above text as it fights.

➤ **Mummy Lord:** hp 95; *Monster Manual* 190. This mummy lord has the Travel domain rather than Protection, so it has *teleport*, *dimension door*, and *longstrider* prepared rather than *slay living*, *spell immunity*, and *sanctuary* respectively.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Award experience for the mummy lord only if the PCs defeat it in battle, not if it teleports away at the conclusion of its message.

THE SKULL

CHAPTER FOUR:
SECRETS OF THE SKULL

Once the PCs arrive in the fibrous forest clearing, the *lantern of guidance* points directly at the Skull. Once again, the PCs have an overland journey ahead of them, although this one is only 50 miles long. Characters who correctly guess that the Skull is the destination can simply *teleport* there and avoid the rigors of the journey altogether.

On the path from the teleportation point to the Skull, there's a 15% chance per hour of an encounter. Once the PCs enter the Plain of Ulcers, though, they have no encounters except for the one detailed below with Vorkaire the dragon. If an encounter occurs, use the relevant encounter table described in the Occipitus section above.

PLAIN OF ULCERS (EL 11)

Light: Flames from the plasmas overhead (as sunlight).

Sound: Bubbling from fountain ulcers (automatic).

Reaction: To PCs approaching the Skull; Vorkaire attacks.

Auras: Moderate evil (Vorkaire the dragon), faint evil (plane as a whole).

About a half-mile from the skull, the flat Occipitus plain on which the PCs have been traveling develops more frequent ulcers, described in the Occipitus section above. Most are of the seeping variety, but occasionally the PCs pass by a fountain ulcer.

Eventually the ulcers take up much of the terrain, and the PCs wind their way through them on their way to the Skull. That's when they draw the attention of Vorkaire, an adult black dragon hunting for fresh meat.

Creature: This is a straightforward fight—Vorkaire is looking for food because he's tired of fiendish buffalo meat. The PCs are the first travelers he's seen in days, mostly because a lot of Occipitus's other denizens don't go into the ulcer field—they know the dragon hunts there.

➤ **Vorkaire, Adult Black Dragon:** CR 11; Large dragon (water); HD 19d12+76; hp 194; Init +0; Spd 60 ft, fly 150 ft.

CAMPAIGN SEED: FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

Although the majority of this adventure takes place on the Abyss, the PCs have several opportunities to befriend powerful celestial creatures. If Halalia, Tiluklatl, or even Saureya survive this adventure on good terms with the PCs, they can be called upon later in the campaign with spells like *planar ally*. Any of these celestials

may have ties to Nidrama, a movanic deva that has long served as a guardian for the Cauldron region, and if the PCs befriended her in "The Demonskar Legacy," their allies on the Upper Planes can grow to be quite extensive. These allies can even intervene on the PCs' behalf later in the campaign if you feel that they need assistance at a crucial moment.

(poor), swim 60 ft.; AC 27, touch 9, flat-footed 27; Base Atk +19; Grp +29; Atk +25 melee (2d6+6, bite); Full Atk +25 melee (2d6+6, bite) and +20 melee (1d8+3, 2 claws), and +19 melee (1d6+3, 2 wings) and +20 melee (1d8+9, tail slap); SA breath weapon, frightful presence, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, immunity to acid, sleep and paralysis, spell resistance 18, blindsense 60 ft., keen senses, darkvision 120 ft., water breathing; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +11, Will +12; Str 23, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Breath Weapon: 80 ft. line of acid, 12d4 points of damage, Reflex half DC 23.

Frightful Presence: 180 ft. range, Will negates DC 20, creatures with 4 or less HD are panicked for 4d6 rounds, creatures with 5 HD to 18 HD are shaken for 4d6 rounds.

Skills: Intimidate +23, Knowledge (the planes) +23, Listen +23, Search +23, Sense Motive +23, Spot +23, Survival +12;

Feats: Flyby Attack, Power Attack, Snatch, Track, Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (tail slap).

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*corrupt water*, *darkness* (radius 60 ft.). Caster level 6th.

Spells Known: (6/6; save DC 11 + spell level): 0—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound*, *guidance*, *read magic*; 1st—*mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*.

Tactics: Vorkaire is content to cast *mage armor* and *shield*, then circle overhead and launch its breath weapon at the PCs and cast *ray of enfeeblement* until they do something that necessitates a change in his tactics. If the PCs fly up to engage Vorkaire in melee or make strong ranged or spell attacks, the dragon responds by diving into melee with whichever PC the dragon perceives as the most compelling threat. Vorkaire grapples spellcasters, uses its teeth and claws to tear into lightly armored foes, and tries to bull rush heavily armored foes into one of the ulcer pools.

If the PCs are traveling invisibly they still encounter Vorkaire, but they'll see him coming from a long way off. Vorkaire flies over the ulcer field at an altitude of 60 feet, so his blindsense picks up invisible creatures on the ground. The dragon doesn't bother hiding, so the PCs see him gliding over the landscape long before he flies directly overhead.

Vorkaire knows that the plasms are deadly, so he avoids flying too high. His breath weapon reaches only 80 feet, so he rarely flies above that altitude in any event.

Development: The players can search for Vorkaire's lair if they can use magic to find it—or if they successfully interrogate a helpless Vorkaire. The dragon dwells in a hollow that was once a particularly large ulcer just northwest of the Skull. Kaurophon argues against a side trip at this juncture, pointing out that the Test of the Smoking Eye is nearly complete. In any case, a successful Search check (DC 25) is required to find the concealed entrance to his lair if the PCs don't know its exact location.

Treasure: Vorkaire's lair is undefended in his absence, and contains a +2 *heavy mace*, 2,500 gp, and four opals worth 500 gp each.

TUBE ENTRANCE (EL 12)

Light: Flames from the plasms overhead (as sunlight).

Sound: Low roar from the skull's eye socket overhead (automatic).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evil (plane as a whole).

As the ground slopes upward toward the base of the skull, the light from the *lantern of guidance* shines directly upon a perfectly round ulcer pool. A shadow at the bottom of the pool could be a trick of the light—or it could be a passageway under the caustic fluid.

A creature that looks like a raven-winged angel lies on the ground next to the entrance, flat on its back. It struggles weakly against several iron spears that have pinned its wings to the ground, then lies still.

If Kaurophon is still with the group, he gasps when he sees the angel and says, "It's Saureya! I met this pitiful creature many years ago—and he said he knew many secrets about the Test of the Smoking Eye!"

The dark shadow in the bottom of the pool is indeed a passageway, and the *lantern of guidance* indicates that the way onward is through it.

Creature: Saureya has been pinioned here by Zaur Sza and Motruk, a rakshasa and fire giant who also hope to pass the Test of the Smoking Eye. If the PCs aid him, Saureya may reveal more than Kaurophon wishes him to.

Saureya has a nearly 8-foot-tall, lithe frame. His long, feathery wings are jet black. Tattered robes cover very little of his body, but a mass of scars, welts, and rough black spiral tattoos cover almost every inch of skin. The wounds on his wings are bleeding profusely, streaming blood that seemingly has flecks of gold in it.

➤ **Saureya, Fallen Astral Deva:** CR 12; Medium Outsider (Angel, Extraplanar, Good); HD 12d8+48; hp 110 hp (currently 0 hp); Init +8; Spd 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (good); AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +12; Grp +18; Atk +18 melee (1d8+9, slam); Full Atk +18 melee (1d8+9, slam); SA spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, immunity to acid, cold, and petrification, protective aura, resistance to electricity 10, resistance to fire 10, spell resistance 20, tongues, uncanny dodge; AL N; SV Fort +14 (+18 against poison), Ref +12, Will +12; Str 22, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 20.

Skills: Concentration +19, Diplomacy +22, Escape Artist +19, Hide +19, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (history) +19, Knowledge (the planes) +19; Listen +23, Move Silently +19, Sense Motive +19, Spot +23, Use Rope +4 (+6 with bindings).

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Saureya doesn't have a heavy mace of disruption, nor does he have access to any spell-like ability with the Good descriptor. His natural weapons are not treated as good-aligned.

Development: Keep track of how many rounds pass from the moment you read the boxed text above. The struggle the PCs witnessed there was Saureya's final attempt to break free under his own power—an attempt that took him from 0 hp to -1 hp. He continues to lose 1 hp per round until he dies, stabilizes himself, or receives healing from the PCs.

If brought above 0 hp, Saureya regains consciousness. He thanks the PCs, greets Kaurophon by name, then starts to walk away. He'll talk to the PCs for a while, but he'd rather be alone and will eventually fly away no matter what. If the PCs healed him, his starting attitude is friendly, although he's a gruff, weary sort who doesn't exude much warmth or friendship to anyone. If he recovers on his own and later encounters the PCs, his starting attitude is unfriendly.

Saureya's answers to questions the PCs are likely to ask are given below. Adapt the exact wording to follow the character of the conversation, emphasizing that Saureya just doesn't care about good vs. evil, the Test of the Smoking Eye, who rules Occipitus, or anything else.

What are you? I was once an astral deva. But when this part of Celestia fell into the Abyss, I fell along with it. Now I don't know what I am.

Who did this to you? The spikes, you mean? A rakshasa and his bodyguard—a giant. They're on their way inside the skull. Presumably they're trying to pass the Test, too.

What's with the scars/tattoos? The former ruler of this layer, a fallen planetar named Adimarchus, found it amusing to keep me around as his prisoner. He found me a kindred spirit, I suppose—where else are you going to find an angel around here? Adimarchus also thought it would be amusing to torture me repeatedly and put these blasphemous sigils on my flesh.

Why don't you heal the scars with magic? What's the point? Healing them wouldn't change the fact that they happened.

What happened to Adimarchus? He disappeared on the eve of a great and pointless battle between his horde and that of

Graz'zt, a particularly vicious demon lord. Some say Graz'zt had him kidnapped and assassinated. Others say the battle was just a ruse for some other plan of Adimarchus's.

You know Kaurophon? Of course. We met—was it a year ago, Kaurophon?—yes, about a year ago at the Cathedral of Feathers. He was wondering why he couldn't enter the antechamber, much less get to one of the doors. So I told him: Adimarchus wanted to keep anyone born of the Lower Planes from becoming the next ruler of Occipitus. Adimarchus was always hopeful that his successor would be another fallen angel or someone formerly of the light.

What do you know about the Test of the Smoking Eye? Well, I helped Adimarchus create it—is that good enough for you? He confided in me throughout its construction; after all, I was exactly the kind of successor he wanted. I was able to introduce a flaw into the test, because Adimarchus wasn't always thinking clearly. Ruling a layer of the Abyss will do that to you.

A flaw? Well, you don't need to complete all three parts of the test—just the last part. The first two parts simply point you in the direction of the final part, the part that really matters. The proctors—those mummies that Adimarchus created—can't tell who's passed previous parts of the test and who hasn't. I suspect that's what the rakshasa is doing. The flaw is a little subterfuge on my part, from back when I dreamed of rescue. I dreamed a powerful angel would come and rescue me, and together we'd come here and perform the third part of the test before Adimarchus knew what was going on. Then all of Occipitus would be borne anew, lifted right out of the Abyss and reconnected to its rightful place in Celestia. I'm no longer so naive.

Why are you here? I was waiting for you, frankly. After all these years, I had a mild curiosity about the people who were going to pass the Test of the Smoking Eye. Now that curiosity is satisfied.

What's the third test? I'm not telling—and before you start with the threats, I've had centuries of practice resisting torture

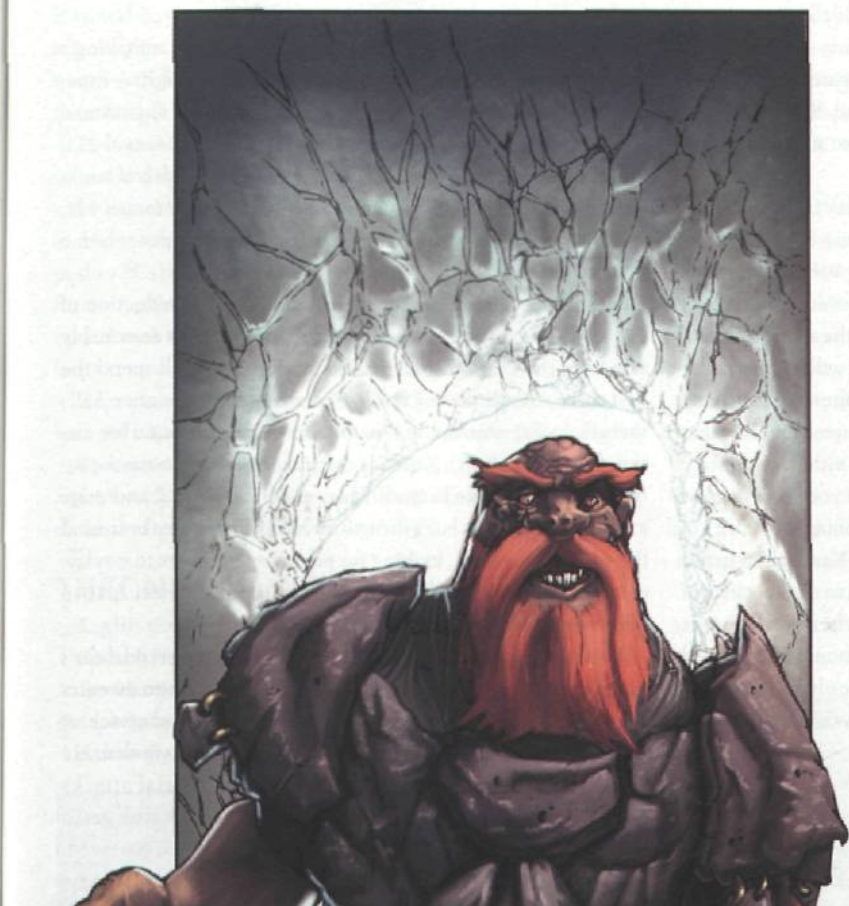
CAMPAIGN SEED: MORE ABOUT SAUREYA

Saureya was one of the few angels who was on the battlefield when the Celestial army created the planar rift that cast the land down into the Abyss. Adimarchus captured Saureya shortly thereafter, sensing a kindred spirit: an angel alienated from his peers and cast out of heaven. Adimarchus kept Saureya prisoner for years, treating him as a "court jester" of sorts on Occipitus. Because they were the only two angels on the layer, an odd, strained friendship developed over the years. If only Saureya would completely cast off his old morality, Adimarchus often told him during their long conversations, there would be a place of power for him among Occipitus's demonic host.

Saureya never gave in to Adimarchus's temptations, although he's so disillusioned and poisoned by long-term exposure to Occipitus that his alignment has shifted to neutral. It was Saureya

who planted the seed of worry in Adimarchus's mind about a worthy successor to his throne. Saureya is the true architect of the Test of the Smoking Eye, although he introduced his ideas so gradually that Adimarchus believed they were his own. Likewise, Saureya advocated a strong stand against Graz'zt—a battle that precipitated Adimarchus's disappearance from Occipitus.

Is Saureya an incredibly subtle puppetmaster, manipulating Adimarchus into death or exile, then manipulating Kaurophon into bringing the PCs to Occipitus? Or did he merely exact a petty revenge against Adimarchus by twisting his desire for a worthy successor? Saureya certainly isn't saying. He's quick to point out that he doesn't care about the plots and machinations of others. Whether that claim represents the truth of an exhausted soul or is itself a machination remains to be seen.



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from someone more ruthless and cruel than you. The rakshasa tried to force the information from me. He failed.

Why keep the test a secret? I'll say this—knowing in advance what the test is won't help you prepare in any meaningful way. You could succeed. You could fail. You could turn your back on the whole idea. I'm not going to meddle in your fate. My own fate is trouble enough.

What happens if we pass the test? The very fabric of Occipitus's reality is yours to command—you do know how to control an entire layer of the Abyss, don't you? No? Well, I'd humbly suggest a line of academic inquiry, then. Like every other part of the Abyss, Occipitus responds to power, and the more powerful you are, the more Occipitus will bend to your will.

Do you know about Cauldron/the Cagewrights/Alek Tercival? Affairs on other planes don't interest me. For that matter, affairs on this plane don't interest me either.

Any advice? I'd catch that rakshasa, unless you want to grow whiskers when he recreates Occipitus in his image.

A DC 20 Sense Motive check reveals that Kaurophon gets a lot more interested whenever the topic turns to the specifics of the final test, and he gets visibly nervous whenever Saureya describes his previous meeting with Kaurophon. He's worried that the PCs will figure out the truth: the only reason Kaurophon brought them to Occipitus was to pass the first two tests and lead Kaurophon to the third.

PERISTALTIC TUBE (EL 12)

Light: None.

Sound: Low, rhythmic thumps, not unlike a heartbeat (automatic); murmured conversation (DC 10; DC 20 reveals it's a conversation in Infernal about low-quality provisions).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (*lantern of guidance*, DC 22, divination), Faint evil (plane as a whole).

After a brief, unpleasant swim in the ulceric fluid, you find fresh air and a tubelike tunnel. This round tunnel features a smoother, firmer "skin" than the surface of Occipitus. It descends steeply for about 20 feet, then levels out, stretching beyond your field of vision.

Assuming the PCs move through the tube, read the following:

Though it descends at first, the tube quickly changes course, rising and spiraling clockwise. After walking several hundred feet, it's apparent that you're somewhere inside the Skull itself. Every 50 to 100 feet, there's another curve to the right.

After the PCs have walked about 400 feet, have them make Listen checks as detailed above under "Sound" to hear the Creatures that lurk around the corner.

Creatures: Leaning against the wall of the tube are a bipedal tiger in rich, red robes and a heavily armored giant with black

skin, red hair, and a massive greatsword. Between them lies a bulky sack, atop which sits a *lantern of guidance*.

Zaur Sza the rakshasa and Motruk the fire giant are taking a break from their climb. They attack the PCs on sight—especially if they see that the PCs also have a *lantern of guidance*.

➤ **Zaur Sza, Male Rakshasa:** hp 55; *Monster Manual* 211. Zaur Sza has *bull's strength* as a 2nd-level spell, not *Melf's acid arrow*.

➤ **Motruk, Male Fire Giant:** hp 140; *Monster Manual* 121.

Tactics: These two combatants know their roles when a fight starts.

Zaur Sza is confident that between his damage reduction of 15/good and piercing and spell resistance of 27, he's reasonably safe from the PCs' ordinary attacks. So Zaur Sza will spend the first three rounds casting spells to make Motruk tougher: *bull's strength*, *bear's endurance*, and *haste*. On the fourth round (or earlier if he's badly hurt), Zaur Sza casts *invisibility*, then starts casting spells to protect himself: *bear's endurance*, *shield*, and *mage armor*. He then casts *bull's strength* on himself and sneaks around the edges of the fight, looking for enemy spellcasters to waylay, using the *lantern of guidance* as a heavy flail (+12 melee, 1d10+6 points of damage).

Motruk stays near Zaur Sza until he's received *bear's endurance* and *bull's strength*. Those two spells give him 30 extra hit points, +2 on Fortitude saves, and a greatsword attack of +22/+17/+12 melee (3d6+18). He then wades into melee. He has the feats to make a number of effective special attacks including the following (all of which assume that Motruk gets a *bull's strength* from Zaur Sza).

Overrun Attack: This provokes an attack of opportunity. Resolve that attack, and then compare Motruk's opposed attack roll at +20 (+22 if charging) against the foe's Strength or Dexterity check. Motruk's foe is prone if Motruk wins, and Motruk can keep moving. Motruk often uses overruns to get front-line fighters out of the way so he can reach the spellcasters hiding behind them.

Power Attack: Motruk sometimes uses the Power Attack feat to take a -7 penalty on the attack in exchange for +14 damage. That means his greatsword attack is +15/+10/+5 for 3d6+32 points of damage. Against stunned or helpless enemies, he uses the Power Attack feat as much as possible, attacking at +7/+2/-3 for 3d6+48 points of damage.

Sunder Attack: Motruk can damage a foe's weapon, dealing 3d6+18 points of damage against it, if he succeeds at an attack roll at +34, opposed by the foe's attack roll. If he uses the Power Attack feat in conjunction with a sunder attack, he still has a +19 on the opposed check, and his attack does 3d6+48 points of damage. Hit points for PC weapons are listed on page 166 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Development: If the tunnel surface, including the ceiling or walls, takes any damage, the passageway starts to constrict in rings that move upward, creating periodic waves on the surface of the tunnel that force upward any creature standing in the tunnel. The effect is similar to that of an esophagus pushing food toward the stomach. Any area spell that deals damage (such as *fireball*) is sufficient to start the peristaltic waves, as is

any ranged weapon that misses its target cleanly (meaning that it would have missed if it were a ranged touch attack). Melee attacks that miss the target cleanly (missing even the target's touch AC) have a 10% chance per attack of striking a tunnel floor or wall, starting the peristaltic waves.

Everyone in the tunnel sees the waves forming as soon as the tunnel is damaged. Every round thereafter at initiative point 0, a wave passes through the area, making a bull rush attack against each creature with a +12 on the Strength check. The wave always pushes PCs the maximum amount, and it's always in a straight line further up the tunnel. Unconscious creatures move 20 feet up the tunnel each time a peristaltic wave passes. The peristaltic waves last 30 minutes before subsiding as suddenly as they began.

Zaur Sza makes checks at +1 (+3 after *bull's strength*) to resist the bull rush. Motruk makes checks at +14 (+16 after *bull's strength*).

Treasure: In addition to a second *lantern of guidance*, Zaur Sza and Motruk's bag has 10 days of bland, dried food, 4 throwing rocks, and a scroll of *plane shift*.

THRONE ROOM (EL 10)

Light: *Continual flame* torches set in sconces on each wall.

Sound: Rhythmic thuds (DC 10)—the golem smacking the wall.

Reaction: To sounds of battle—Myaruk the lich in the nexus room begins spellcasting according to his Tactics section below.

Auras: Faint evil (plane as a whole).

The tube's upward spiral ends in a round chamber with a doorway in the opposite end leading to a spiral staircase. Furniture in this room is limited to a massive iron throne festooned with spikes. Most of the back of the throne is missing, although the framework of the back remains. Before the throne lies a pile of wood—furniture debris from the looks of it. There are ceramic shards on the floor; it looks as if someone smashed dozens of clay pots here.

Creature: Behind the throne lurks a 7-foot tall human-shaped creature made of soft clay, with an oversized chest and thick arms that hang to its knees. It slowly slams its big fists into the walls, but stops and gazes toward the PCs. This is a berserk clay golem, and it attacks anything that enters the throne room.

The pottery debris is the remains of another clay golem guardian—these golems turn to hard ceramic and then shatter when they die. The presence of the bits of pottery makes Move Silently checks across the floor much more difficult, imposing a –10 penalty.

➤ **Berserk Clay Golem:** hp 87; *Monster Manual* 134.

Tactics: The golem is an unsubtle opponent, and it lumbers up to any foe it sees and slams it until it falls. Originally, two clay golems were bound to the room as guardians, but now that the one surviving golem is berserk it can follow the PCs anywhere.

Development: In the likely event that Myaruk the lich in the nexus room upstairs hears the fight against the clay golem,

he starts casting spells in the order described in his Tactics section. Two rounds after Myaruk starts casting, an invisible magic sensor from his *clairvoyance* spell appears in the throne room. A character that can see invisible objects can see this sensor. The sensor can be dispelled as if it were an active spell (caster level check against DC 21).

NEXUS ROOM (EL 13)

Light: Pale luminescence surrounding the black flames of the nexus (shadowy illumination).

Sound: Crackling from nexus (automatic).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Strong (nexus, DC 24, necromancy), moderate (Myaruk's periapt, DC 19, transmutation), moderate (Myaruk's scroll, DC 20, conjuration), faint (Myaruk's wand, DC 17, necromancy), faint (Myaruk's armor, DC 17, abjuration), faint (Myaruk's potion, DC 16, illusion), strong evil (nexus), strong evil (Myaruk the lich), faint evil (plane as a whole). If Myaruk has cast spells prior to combat, he has the following auras: moderate (*true seeing*, DC 20, divination), moderate (*divine power*, DC 19, evocation), faint (*desecrate*, DC 17, necromancy), faint (*shield of faith*, DC 16, abjuration), faint (*entropic shield*, DC 16, abjuration).

A bonfire of utter blackness dominates the center of this room. It crackles as if it were normal flame, but it's a slick, glossy black rather than the orange-red of a fire. Surrounding the black flames is a pale yellow corona that casts light about the room. A sheaf of papers lies scattered near the base of the black-flame bonfire. More than a dozen passages originate in this room, with at least some of them doubling back on themselves.

This room contains a nexus of evil eldritch power. The flames improve the spellcasting and spell-like abilities of any evil creature who touches them.

For evil creatures, the nexus functions like a combination *prayer bead of karma* and *prayer bead of smiting*, granting +4 caster levels and the ability to cast *unholy blight* (Will DC 17 partial) once per day. The caster level bonus lasts for 1 hour, and it also improves spell-like abilities with caster levels. It deals 4d8 points of negative energy (which heals undead) per round to anyone who touches the flames, regardless of their alignment. The flames themselves grant concealment to anyone standing within them.

Nonevil creatures who touch the nexus don't receive the benefits, and instead take 2d4 negative levels (Fortitude DC 23 negates after 24 hours have passed).

Creature: A lich named Myaruk has traveled from a distant plane to study this nexus, hoping to duplicate it elsewhere. And Myaruk doesn't want to share his find with anyone else, evil or not.

➤ **Myaruk, Male Human Lich Clr 7/Thaumaturgist 4 (Vecna):** CR 13; Medium undead (augmented humanoid); HD 11d12; hp 71; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +7; Grp +8; Atk +8 melee touch (1d8+5 negative energy plus paralysis, Will DC 16 half); Full Atk +8

melee touch (1d8+5 negative energy plus paralysis, Will DC 16 half); SA fear aura, paralyzing touch, spells; SQ +4 turn resistance, contingent conjuration, damage reduction 15/bludgeoning and magic, extended summoning, immunity to cold, electricity, polymorph, and mind-affecting attacks, improved ally; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +15; Str 13, Dex 12, Con —, Int 16, Wis 22, Cha 13.

Fear Aura (Su): Will DC 16 negates; creatures of less than 5 HD are affected as a fear spell from a 11th-level caster.

Paralyzing Touch (Su): In addition to dealing 1d8+5 points of negative energy damage (Will half DC 16), the lich's touch permanently paralyzes living creatures (Fort negates DC 16). Remove paralysis or any spell that can remove a curse restores movement to the victim. Myaruk often combines this touch attack with a spontaneous *inflict wounds* spell to deal even more damage.

Contingent Conjuration: The first time Myaruk is attacked in melee, a xill (*Monster Manual* 259) is automatically summoned, appearing at the beginning of the next turn from the attacking creature.

Skills: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +17, Hide +9, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (religion) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Listen +14, Move Silently +9, Search +11, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +19, Spot +14.

Feats: Augment Summoning, Craft Wondrous Item, Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Penetration.

Spells Prepared (6/7+1/6+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1; save DC 16 + spell level; 17 + spell level for conjuration and necromancy spells): 0—*detect magic*^D (2), *mending*, *read magic*^D, *resistance*, *virtue*; 1st—*bless* (2), *comprehend languages*^D, *deathwatch*^{EN}, *detect evil*^D, *entropic shield*, *protection from good*^{EB}, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*aid*, *darkness*, *death knell*^{EN}, *desecrate*^{EB}, *hold person*, *silence*, *spiritual weapon*; 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*^{DB}, *deeper darkness*, *dispel magic*, *protection from energy*, *summon monster III*^C (2); 4th—*dismissal*, *divine power*, *summon monster IV*^C (2), *unholy blight*^{EB}; 5th—*slay living*^N, *summon monster V*^C (2), *true seeing*^{DB}; 6th—*find the path*^{DB}, *harm*^N, *summon monster VI*^C.

*Domain spell. Domains: Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Knowledge (cast divination spells at +1 caster level; all Knowledge skills are class skills); C: Conjuration spell; D: Divination spell; E: Evil spell; remember that *summon monster* spells

are evil if they are used to summon an evil monster; N: Necromancy spell.

Possessions: *Periapt of wisdom* +2, +1 full plate, *potion of invisibility*, *wand of inflict serious wounds* (13 charges remaining), scroll of *plane shift*, four vials of unholy water, silver dust (worth 100 gp), 250 gp ointment for *true seeing* spell.

Tactics: If Myaruk hears a fight down in the throne room, he touches the nexus in the first round to gain +4 caster levels and an extra *unholy blight*. Each round thereafter, he casts these spells in order: *clairvoyance*, *desecrate*, *divine power*, *shield of faith*, *entropic shield*, and finally *true seeing* if he suspects there might be unseen PCs around.

Myaruk hides inside the vortex before the PCs arrive if possible; as long as he remains in the vortex he heals 4d8 points of damage per round. He then starts casting *summon monster* spells, sending waves of creatures against the PCs. Each summoned creature remains for 30 rounds and has +4 Strength and +4 Constitution due to Myaruk's Augment Summoning feat. Myaruk's plan is to let the monsters do the fighting for him, but he's flexible enough to take a round away from summoning to use *slay living*, *harm*, or *unholy blight* on a PC who gets too close. If pressed in melee, he starts converting his spells into the appropriate *inflict* spells and making touch attacks against a PC.

If reduced to less than a quarter of his hit points and forced out of the vortex—and it looks unlikely that he'll be able to cast *harm* or an *inflict* spell that'll cure him—Myaruk retrieves the scroll of *plane shift* and uses it to escape.

Development: The *lantern of guidance* points toward the far corner of the room, where a spiral staircase leads up for several hundred feet. Eventually the stairs emerge in the eye socket of the Skull, where the third part of the Test of the Smoking Eye takes place.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: The PCs don't earn experience for summoned creatures they defeat, just for Myaruk himself. If Myaruk uses the nexus to boost his caster level and to gain healing each round, award 125% the normal experience points for this encounter.

TEST OF SACRIFICE (EL 14)

Light: Flames from the plasma gusher (as sunlight).

THE MINIONS OF MYARUK

Prior to this fight, the PCs have probably faced a rakshasa and a clay golem—two creatures with high damage reduction and either high spell resistance or outright spell immunity. These can be frustrating fights. This room is the PCs' chance to mow through piles of lower-level foes before facing the lich itself.

Don't be shy about starting the PCs with summoned monsters they can easily beat—just keep them coming, and the players should have a good time watching the body count add up.

This encounter is also a good place to spend some time beforehand thinking carefully about which monsters Myaruk will summon. This is a good time to pick monsters such as fiendish vermin, fiendish animals, and elementals if the PCs have had their fill of regular demons by this point. But consider carefully how complicated you want this fight to be on your side of the DM screen. There's nothing wrong with using straightforward monsters such as fiendish dire wolves, Medium earth elementals, and Large earth elementals so you keep all the NPCs straight.

Sound: Loud roar from plasma gusher (automatic—imposes -10 on Listen checks to hear anything else).

Reaction: None.

Auras: Overwhelming (plasma gusher, DC 24, conjuration), moderate (*wall of force*, DC 20, evocation), strong evil (mummy lord), faint evil (plane as a whole).

The spiral staircase emerges into what can only be the eye socket of the skull itself. The stairway ends in a shallow depression, with curving walls that eventually become the ceiling some 60 feet up. From the center of the eye socket—in midair—a gusher of blinding red light rushes outward and upward, eventually spreading to fill the sky with the fiery clouds you've seen throughout your time here. The origin of the gusher isn't visible—it's as if the plasma is being vented from a rip in the fabric of the plane itself.

At the opening of the eye socket float a multitude of the fiery clouds, drifting across the eye socket opening. The clouds don't drift into the eye socket, however.

Another greater mummy waits here; the mummy is dressed in golden armor and remains silent for a few moments.

Any creature who enters one of the plasma gusher squares takes 15d6 points of fire damage and 15d6 points of unholy damage per round. If this damage kills the creature, its remains

are consumed utterly. If someone the dead creature regarded as an ally bull-rushed or otherwise placed the creature into the plasma gusher, the ally gains the sign of the smoking eye template (described in Appendix I).

Creatures can move through the squares with the plasma gusher—it's a 2-foot-wide cylinder, suspended roughly 3 feet off the ground, so it's easy to duck under.

The PCs can't see it, but a *wall of force* (marked on the map) prevents the plasmas from approaching any closer than they already are.

After the PCs have had a moment to adjust to their surroundings and ask you questions, the mummy lord speaks.

The mummy lifts both hands to show they're empty, then speaks: "Adimarchus, Most Potent Ruler of Occipitus, bids you welcome to the Final Test of the Smoking Eye. A worthy successor to the throne of Adimarchus must complete only one more task. To rule Occipitus—to grasp its power and use it for good or ill—means to sacrifice everything you hold dear. The final test is this: sacrifice an ally to the plasma, and Occipitus is yours!"

From behind you comes Kaurophon's voice. "Sacrifice? That's it? No problem!"



Creatures: This sets up the adventure's final fight: the PCs take on Kaurophon, who should be magically charged by the nexus from the previous room. Kaurophon fights to the death, trying his utmost to force a PC into the plasma gusher so he can claim his reward. Of course, if a PC pushes Kaurophon into the plasma gusher, they can claim the same reward—Kaurophon certainly regards the PCs as useful allies, even if he turned on them.

➤ **Kaurophon:** hp 65; see Appendix.

➤ **Mummy Lord:** hp 95; *Monster Manual* 190. This mummy lord has the Travel domain rather than Protection, so it has *teleport*, *dimension door*, and *longstrider* prepared rather than *slay living*, *spell immunity*, and *sanctuary* respectively.

Tactics: Kaurophon has been fighting cautiously thus far, but now he unleashes completely, trying to knock out as many PCs as possible, as fast as possible. If there's one PC who was particularly friendly or distrustful toward Kaurophon up until this point, Kaurophon focuses his attacks on that PC. Otherwise, he takes out whatever he perceives as the biggest threats first. Kaurophon knows he has to keep at least one PC alive to pass the final test. But he has no need for additional survivors.

Kaurophon has observed the PCs in action in numerous fights by this time, so he's ready for any PC tactic he's seen before. By now he knows which characters have poor Fortitude saves, for example, so he targets those characters with his *disintegrate* scroll.

The mummy lord defends itself, but won't otherwise influence the battle.

Development: This adventure assumes that Kaurophon has remained with the PCs and has survived to this point. If he hasn't survived, you still have a few options.

If Kaurophon still lives but has been separated from the PCs, he should arrive in this room a few rounds after them; he's been following them for some time and is ready to take the final part of the Test himself.

If Kaurophon was killed, his force of will combined with the evil of this plane may transform him into a ghost, in which case his spirit waits here for the PCs and attacks them on sight. Kaurophon can no longer gain control of Occipitus now that he's undead, but his anger at the PCs for disrupting his plans still makes him a dangerous opponent.

Note that sacrificing an ally is an evil act. Even if Kaurophon betrays the party and tries to sacrifice one of the PCs, forcing him into the gusher can have serious consequences for characters like paladins or good-aligned clerics.

Nevertheless, there is a way to successfully pass this final test without sacrificing an ally and thus without committing an evil act. If a character voluntarily enters the gusher with the full intention of sacrificing himself, he takes the full damage indicated above. If this damage is enough to kill the character, though, he is instead healed of all damage, forced gently but inexorably out of the gusher by invisible force, and granted the Sign of the Smoking Eye as a reward for his selfless act. The forces of good have an interest in seeing Occipitus ruled by a non-evil being, and they are able to intervene in the Test once in this manner. A character who gains the Sign of the Smoking Eye template in this manner knows that it was a one-time boon; further acts of self-sacrifice in the gusher bring only death.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If Kaurophon used the nexus prior to fighting the PCs, award 10% more experience for this encounter.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

"Test of the Smoking Eye"—both the adventure and the Test itself—draws to a close when the PCs defeat Kaurophon. One of the PCs might now have the Sign of the Smoking Eye himself, becoming an heir to the conflicted layer of Occipitus.

In any case, the characters have earned a respite. The entrance to the peristaltic tube is well-hidden and the plasmas make the eye-socket unreachable, so nothing bothers the PCs for a time if they need to rest and heal. And the PCs have certainly done what Alek Tercival commanded with his dying breath; they not only sought the Sign of the Smoking Eye, but they might literally possess it. In any case, they've earned a trip back to the Material Plane—to revisit Cauldron and perhaps learn more about the lore behind Occipitus.

Unless the PCs take specific actions to prevent it, other pretenders to the throne of Adimarchus could also pass the test—and given enough time, some undoubtedly will. Anyone who does also receives the Sign of the Smoking Eye template. These rivals to the throne focus their efforts on establishing morphic and military control of Occipitus.

APPENDIX I: SIGN OF THE SMOKING EYE TEMPLATE

The visible mark of one destined to rule Occipitus, the Sign of the Smoking Eye template imbues a creature with the essence of the plane (an evil place tinged with good). Receiving the Sign

CAMPAIGN SEED: SIGN OF THE SMOKING EYE

The Sign of the Smoking Eye template permanently marks the one who has been granted it. Aside from the relatively minor benefits and penalties the template grants to a creature, it marks him as the heir to Occipitus. Further ramifications of this dubious honor may

be explored in future episodes in the *Shackled City Adventure Path*, or you can develop further events and encounters based on this on your own. Certainly, the Sign of the Smoking Eye draws a lot of attention, most of which will be unwelcome.

of the Smoking Eye is a necessary first step on the path to ruling the plane as a demon lord. But because Occipitus isn't wholly evil, the Sign of the Smoking Eye can also be a useful tool for a creature determined to expunge every trace of evil from the plane and restore it to its Celestial glory.

The Sign of the Smoking Eye enables its bearer to establish morphic control over Occipitus. The previous bearer of the Sign, the fallen angel Adimarchus, could remake the landscape with a wave of his hand, control magic use across the layer, and draw nigh-limitless evil power from the fabric of the plane itself. Such abilities require both immense personal power and mastery of the esoteric techniques of morphic planar control—neither of which is granted by this template. With time, study, and the acquisition of further power, someone with the Sign of the Smoking Eye can turn Occipitus into a world that reflects its master's every desire.

CREATING THE SIGN OF THE SMOKING EYE

"Sign of the Smoking Eye" is an acquired template that can be added to any living creature with at least one eye (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A creature with the Sign of the Smoking Eye uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Appearance: One of the base creature's eyes (usually the left one) is replaced with magical flame that gives off no heat and does not burn the surrounding flesh. When the eye is open, it provides illumination as a candle. The base creature's vision is unaffected—he or she can still see through the transformed eye normally. The eye also gives off wisps of bitter smoke. The smoke doesn't obscure vision, but it does give a +10 bonus to creatures trying to track the base creature by scent.

Attacks: The base creature gains a +1 insight bonus on all attacks as the power of Occipitus subtly guides his blows.

Special Qualities: The base creature retains all special qualities and gains those described below.

Spellcasting: The base creature's effective caster level for spells and spell-like abilities goes up by +1. The power of Occipitus makes the base creature's spells last slightly longer, reach slightly farther, and deal slightly more damage.

Imbued with Evil: Regardless of the base creature's actual alignment, spells and spell-like abilities with the evil descriptor treat the base creature as if his or her alignment were evil. Spells and spell-like abilities with the good descriptor treat the base creature as if his or her alignment were good. Magic items are similarly fooled. An *unholy blight* spell, for example, won't damage a creature with the Sign of the Smoking Eye, no matter what his or her actual alignment is.

Lie in State: When the base creature dies, his or her body disappears after a number of rounds equal to the base creature's Hit Dice. The body reappears dead but intact in the Skull's eye socket on Occipitus. Any equipment the base creature was carrying, holding, or wearing at the moment of death is likewise transported to Occipitus—and it's likewise reconstituted if it was destroyed at the moment of death. Each time this ability is used, there's a 20% chance that the base creature loses the Sign of the Smoking Eye template. *Dimensional anchor*, *dimensional lock*, and similar spells delay the body's transportation in this manner, but once the spell effect ends the body transports to Occipitus immediately.

Morphic Potential: A creature with the Sign of the Smoking Eye has the potential to change the landscape of Occipitus through conscious effort, provided the base creature is powerful enough to do so. Details of how this ability can be used are up to the DM, but in any case, no creature of 20th-level or lower can wield such power consciously. Over time, even a lower-level character exerts a subconscious influence on Occipitus, however, and the landscape and the essential nature of the plane changes to conform to the base creature's alignment and desires.

Saves: The base creature gains a +1 insight bonus on all saving throws—it's almost as if the layer of Occipitus is looking out for him or her.

Challenge Rating: The base creature's CR remains unchanged.

Level Adjustment: Same as the base creature +1. The creature is now treated as one level higher than the base creature's equivalent class level for purposes of determining experience point awards. For example, if a 12th-level human fighter gains this template, he is treated as a 13th-level character when determining experience point awards, and thus gains slightly fewer experience points than he would have without the template's additional powers and bonuses.

APPENDIX II: STAT BLOCKS

➤ **Kaurophon, Male Half-Fiend Half-Human Sor 11:** CR 14; Medium outsider (augmented humanoid, extraplanar); HD 11d4+33; hp 65; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 18 (with mage armor), touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +5; Grp +6; Atk +6 melee (1d4+1, claw); Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws) and +1 melee (1d6, bite); SA spells, spell-like abilities, smite good +11 1/day; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to poison, resistance to acid 10, resistance to cold 10, resistance to electricity 10, resistance to fire 10, spell resist-

save that it can be used only once per day.

Strong conjuration; CL 15th; Craft Wondrous Item, *plane shift*; Price 24,000 gp.

NEW MAGIC ITEM: LESSER AMULET OF THE PLANES

A lesser amulet of the planes functions as an *amulet of the planes*,

ance 21; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 21.

Skills: Bluff +19, Concentration +17, Diplomacy +7, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (the planes) +9, Spellcraft +18.

Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Spell Focus (Evocation), Spell Penetration.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Infernal

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—darkness, poison. 1/day—blasphemy, contagion, desecrate, unholy blight. Caster level 11th. Save DCs are 15 + spell level.

Spells Known (6/8/7/7/7/5; save DC 15 + spell level): 0—acid splash, arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand, message, ray of frost, resistance, touch of fatigue; 1st—disguise self, identify, mage armor, protection from evil, shield; 2nd—bear's endurance, cat's grace, glitterdust, invisibility, mirror image; 3rd—dispel magic, displacement, fireball, haste; 4th—dimension door, greater invisibility, scrying; 5th—cone of cold, telekinesis.

Possessions: Cloak of charisma +2, wand of magic missile (9th level, 22 charges), wand of web (18 charges), bag of holding II, large silver mirror (for scrying spells), scroll of disintegrate, scroll of mass suggestion, lesser amulet of the planes.

➤ **Fiendish Bison:** CR 3; Large magical beast; HD 5d8+15; hp 37; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +13; Atk +8 melee (1d8+9, gore); Full Atk +8 melee (1d8+9, gore); SA smite good (+5 damage) 1/day, stampede; SQ darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, low-light vision, resistance to cold 5, resistance to fire 5, scent, spell resistance 10; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 22, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 4.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +5.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance.

➤ **Fiendish Centaur Rgr2:** CR 6; Large monstrous humanoid; HD 6d8+18; hp 43; Init +4; Spd 50 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +6; Grp +17; Atk +15 melee (3d6+7, Large masterwork greatsword) or +13 ranged (2d6+5/×3, Large masterwork composite longbow [+5 Str]; Full Atk +15/+10 melee (3d6+7, Large masterwork greatsword) and +9 melee (1d6+2, 2 hooves) or +13/+8 ranged (2d6+5/×3, Large masterwork composite longbow [+5 Str]; SA archery combat style, smite good (+6 damage) 1/day, favored enemy human +2; SQ darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, resistance to cold 5, resistance to fire 5, spell resistance 11, wild empathy +1; AL

NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +11, Will +7; Str 20, Dex 18, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 17, Cha 9.

Skills: Listen +5, Move Silently +8, Spot +8, Survival +9.

Feats: Dodge, Rapid Shot[®], Weapon Focus (hoof), Weapon Focus (greatsword), Track[®].

Languages: Abyssal, Elven.

Possessions: Large masterwork greatsword, Large masterwork composite (+5 Str) longbow, 20 arrows.

➤ **Fiendish Dire Bear:** CR 9; Large magical beast; HD 12d8+51; hp 105; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +9; Grp +23; Atk +19 melee (2d4+10, claw); Full Atk +19 melee (2d4+10, 2 claws) and +13 melee (2d8+5, bite); SA improved grab, smite good (+12 damage) 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 10/magic, low-light vision, resistance to cold 10, resistance to fire 10, scent, spell resistance 17; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +13; Str 31, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Listen +10, Spot +10, Swim +13.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Run, Toughness, Weapon Focus (claw).

➤ **Fiendish Dire Lion:** CR 7; Large magical beast; HD 8d8+24; hp 60; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +6; Grp +17; Atk +13 melee (1d6+7, claw); Full Atk +13 melee (1d6+7, 2 claws) and +7 melee (1d8+3, bite); SA improved grab, pounce, rake 1d6+3, smite good (+8 damage) 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, low-light vision, resistance to cold 10, resistance to fire 10, scent, spell resistance 13; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +2, Listen +7, Move Silently +5, Spot +7.

Feats: Alertness, Run, Weapon Focus (claw).

➤ **Fiendish Giant Eagle:** CR 4; Large magical beast; HD 4d10+4; hp 26; Init +3; Spd 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +12; Atk +7 melee (1d6+4, claw); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+4, 2 claws) and +2 melee (1d8+2, bite); SA smite good (+4 damage) 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, evasion, low-light vision, resistance to cold 5, resistance to fire 5, spell resistance 9; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +6, Sense Motive +4, Spot +15, Survival +3.

Feats: Alertness, Flyby Attack.

KAUROPHON'S TACTICS

Except during the final fight, Kaurophon is exceedingly cautious. In combat, he spends several rounds casting defensive spells such as *greater invisibility*, *displacement*, *haste*, *bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, *shield*, *mirror image*, and *protection from evil* before using his offensive spells. He'll happily cast spells such as *bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, and *haste* on the PCs, because Kaurophon realizes that such spellcasting is an effective way to ingratiate himself to the PCs and prove his "good" intentions.

In the final fight, the gloves come off in a hurry. Both of Kaurophon's 5th-level spells can benefit immensely from the +4 caster levels he may have gained from the nexus room, so he'll use *cone of cold* on as many PCs as possible. After he surveys the damage his initial attack does, he's got a lot of options. *Greater invisibility* can keep him out of harm's way, especially in conjunction with *dimension door*. *Telekinesis* can disarm the toughest fighter or take a spellcaster out with a grapple. Kaurophon knows he needs to keep one PC alive for the sacrifice. He does his best to kill all the others.

➤ **Fiendish Girallon:** CR 7; Large magical beast; HD 7d10+20; hp 58; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., climb 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +7; Grp +17; Atk +12 melee (1d4+6, claw); Full Atk +12 melee (1d4+6, 4 claws) and +7 melee (1d8+3, bite); SA rend 2d4+9, smite good (+7 damage) 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, low-light vision, resistance to cold 5, resistance to fire 5, scent, spell resistance 12; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 22, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +14, Move Silently +8, Spot +6.

Feats: Iron Will, Toughness (2).

➤ **Fiendish Owlbear:** CR 5; Large magical beast; HD 5d10+25; hp 52; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +14; Atk +9 melee (1d6+5, claw); Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+5, 2 claws) and +5 melee (1d8+2, bite); SA improved grab, smite good (+5 damage) 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, resistance to cold 5, resistance to fire 5, scent, spell resistance 10; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +8.

Feats: Alertness, Track.

➤ **Fiendish Wyvern:** CR 7; Large dragon; HD 7d12+14; hp 59; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor); AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +7; Grp +15; Atk +10 melee (1d6+4 plus poison, sting) or +10 melee (2d6+4, talon) or +10 melee (2d8+4, bite); Full Atk +10 melee (1d6+4 plus poison, sting) and +8 melee (2d8+4, bite) and +8 melee (1d8+2, 2 wings) and +8 melee (2d6+4, 2 talons); SA improved grab, poison, smite good (+7 damage) 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, immunity to sleep and paralysis, low-light vision, resistance to cold 5, resistance to fire 5, scent, spell resistance 12; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills: Hide +7, Listen +13, Move Silently +11, Spot +16.

Feats: Ability Focus (poison), Alertness, Flyby Attack, Multiattack[®], Ω

Dave Noonan works in Wizards of the Coast's RPG R&D department. He co-authored the Manual of the Planes and is no stranger to the pages of this magazine, having authored the Pulp Heroes and Mecha Crusade Polyhedron Mini-Games as well as "Zenith Trajectory," the third module in the Shackled City Adventure Path.

CONTINUE THE ADVENTURE IN DUNGEON #109

"SECRETS OF THE SOUL PILLARS"

BY JESSE DECKER

EXPLORE THE ADVENTURE PATH IN DUNGEON:

#97: "Life's Bazaar"

#98: "Flood Season"

#102: "Zenith Trajectory"

#104: "The Demonskar Legacy"

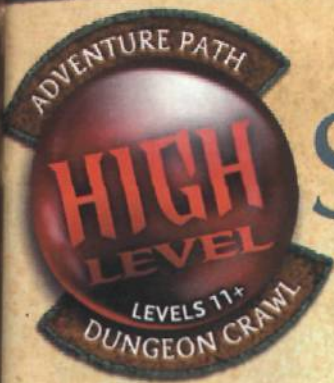
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SECRETS of the SOUL PILLARS

BY JESSE DECKER

ARTWORK BY ANDREW HOU • CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

"Secrets of the Soul Pillars" begins with an assassination attempt targeted against the PCs at the request of Vhalantru, a powerful agent of evil and the behind-the-scenes ruler of the city of Cauldron. This adventure is designed for a group of four 12th-level characters; the PCs should reach 13th level during the adventure and approach the midpoint between 13th and 14th level by its conclusion. You can easily adjust the adventure for larger or smaller parties, as well as for PCs of higher or lower level (see the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar). When the PCs earn enough experience to gain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure. Because the players spend most of their time in or beneath the city of Cauldron, opportunities to break from the course of the adventure to rest and recover, buy and sell magic items, or prepare for a specific encounter abound. The players are largely in control of the pace of play.

The adventure is part of the Shackled City Adventure Path that began with "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97), "Flood Season" (*DUNGEON* #98), "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), and "The Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107). If you're playing through these adventures in sequence, the heroes are already familiar with the town of Cauldron and should recognize many of the NPCs mentioned in this adventure. If you make minor adjustments to the adventure, you can also play "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" as a stand-alone scenario. Although the adventure includes NPCs introduced in earlier installments of the Shackled City Adventure Path, it doesn't explicitly rely upon knowledge gained from the previous adventures.

PREPARATION

Running "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" requires the *Player's Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. Several monsters featured in this adventure appear in the *Fiend Folio*, but their statistics are given in full in the text. Access to previous "Adventure Path" episodes is useful, although "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" includes all the information that you need to run the adventure in the campaign's central city, Cauldron.

Before you run a game session of "Secrets of the Soul Pillars," take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the abilities of the NPCs and monsters in upcoming encounters. This adventure features a number of powerful undead creatures and spellcasters, some of whom use specific tactics to shift the battle in their favor. The better you know their capabilities, the better you can challenge the players at your table.

As in previous episodes of the campaign, Campaign Seed sidebars are scattered throughout the adventure. Some of these may be developed in future adventures in this series, while others serve as helpful points at which you can expand the adventure and make it your own.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The past year has not been kind to Cauldron, and the evil forces that have long simmered beneath its surface are nearly ready to openly claim control of the city. A powerful and greedy beholder named Vhalantru has long called the town home, charming the lord mayor, various nobles and prominent merchants, and members of the town guard as it suits his whims. Disguised as an influential noble, Vhalantru spent the last several years working with an evil organization called the Cagewrights. The Cagewrights wish to turn the city of Cauldron into a gate town with a permanent portal between the Material Plane and the prison plane of Carceri. If the Cagewrights are successful, an incarcerated horde of fiends trapped on Carceri's first layer can escape and ravage the town and a great swath of the surrounding area. Although not himself a Cagewright, Vhalantru has allied himself with their cause in exchange for promised lordship over the town once the portal is established.

One of Vhalantru's most successful ploys, both in terms of maintaining his hold on the city and in terms of aiding his Cagewright allies, has been the careful monitoring of any noteworthy adventuring groups resident in Cauldron. Knowing that the Cagewrights risk serious opposition from the forces of good should their plan come to light, Vhalantru has carefully manipulated the careers of most of the city's adventurers, including those of the PCs. Once

these adventurers have proven themselves capable, but before they reach a level of personal power that might allow them to challenge the beholder himself, Vhalantru arranges one of two fates: recruitment or death.

When the PCs embarked on their journey to the distant Abyssal layer of Occipitus (in "Test of the Smoking Eye," *DUNGEON* #107), Vhalantru had already taken note of their achievements. Although he knew little of the group's destination or mission on the outer planes, his informants gave him enough information to let him assume that the group was headed on a doomed mission to the Abyss. When the PCs unexpectedly return victorious, Vhalantru knows that they must be dealt with immediately. Seldom one to dirty his own hands, he puts events into motion as soon as the PCs arrive, pitting some of the city's most powerful servants of Wee Jas against them. The Cathedral of Wee Jas itself has profited from its allegiance to Vhalantru, but of late has done little to aid his efforts. While the Cathedral's powerful high-priestess is away from the city on errands of her own, Vhalantru demands that its second in command, a cleric named Ike Iverson, destroy the adventurers.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Whether they return from their labors on Occipitus as described in "Test of the Smoking Eye" or from some other long and dangerous journey, the PCs arrive in Cauldron to find it greatly changed. Powerful contingents of mercenaries patrol the streets, keeping order in the name of Lord Orbius Vhalantru, the acting ruler of the city since the mayor's sudden absence. These mercenaries have succeeded at keeping order, but fear and suspicion grows with each passing week as the citizens gain no relief from the increased taxes. Rumor and speculation run wild through the city even as the mercenaries crack down viciously on any signs of trouble, ostensibly to prevent further riots (like the one the PCs encountered in "The Demonskar Legacy," *DUNGEON* #104).

Before the characters have a chance to react to these changes, they find themselves beset by the growing malig-

nancy within the city. Three well-trained and well-equipped assassins, enhanced by powerful magic, strike at the PCs. Should the heroes survive, some quick detective work and divinatory magic leads them to the Cathedral of Wee Jas. After dealing with its defenders, the characters discover a strange artifact. This is a *soulcage*, built by the Cathedral's leaders in alliance with the Cagewrights, and it yields clear clues that some dangerous and powerful conspiracy is at work within the city. Further research leads the group deep beneath the city to an ancient ruin made by spell weavers, an ancient race that made this region their home before disappearing forever several centuries ago. The enigmatic creatures built a horrific underground complex dedicated to researching a strange combination of necromancy and cold magic.

The complex is a great repository of powerful lore, but it is filled with horrors of its own. A powerful Cagewright loremaster still resides in the complex along with his undead servants, continuing the research that first led the Cagewrights to the *soulcages* and the gate ritual that their construction enables. Worse, the final chamber is guarded by a dracolich named Vittriss Bale. Once the characters have defeated these deadly guardians, they can study the strange lore preserved by the spell weaver's magic and learn of the Cagewrights' terrible plans.

CAULDRON

The town of Cauldron is detailed in the previous episodes of the Shackled City Adventure Path. If you don't have access to the other installments of the campaign, refer to the brief description presented below.

The city of Cauldron is built within the rim of a dormant volcano. Four concentric avenues ring a central lake, and the outer walls feature four main gates. The city buildings are built primarily out of volcanic rock and timber. Refer to the map of Cauldron for a list of important sites from this adventure and from previous ones.

👑 Cauldron (large town): Conventional; AL LE; population 4,000 adults, 3,000 gp limit; Assets 600,000 gp;

THE STORY SO FAR

Powerful forces of evil have gathered in Cauldron, a town built in the crater of a dormant volcano and the PCs' base of operations. A sinister group known as the Cagewrights has long labored to turn Cauldron into a gateway city that directly connects the lower prison-plane of Carceri to the Material Plane. To open the gateway to Carceri, the Cagewrights must create artifacts called *soulcages*, each of which is fated to cage one of the Shackleborn—sacrificial victims doomed by an invisible birthmark.

In "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97), the PCs rescue one of the Shackleborn, a young human boy, from Underdark slavers.

In "Flood Season" (*DUNGEON* #98), the PCs recover several key

magic wands from the Ebon Triad, a cult allied with the Cagewrights.

In "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), the PCs are tricked into tracking down and returning another of the Shackleborn to Vhalantru's clutches.

In "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), the PCs track down the missing paladin Alek Tercival, only to become stranded in a strange land far from home.

In "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), the PCs are recruited by a mysterious figure to undertake several grueling tests on the Abyssal layer of Occipitus, after which they set into motion the redemption of a fallen realm.



Mixed (77% human, 9% halfling, 5% gnome, 3% dwarf, 3% half-orc, 2% elf, 1% half-elf). Note that the half-orc population continues to grow while the overall population of the city shrinks.

Authority Figures: Lord Mayor Severen Navalant, male human Ariro (missing), Lord Orbius Vhalantru, beholder (true overlord of Cauldron and acting authority while the lord mayor is missing), Terseon Skellerang, male human Ftr10 (captain of the town guard).

Important Characters: Jenya Urikas, female human Clr15 (cleric at the Church of St. Cuthbert); Meerthan Eliothorn, male half-elf Wiz14 (member of the Striders of Fharlanghn); Shensen Tesseril, female half-drow Mnk1/Brd1/Drd11 (member of the Striders of Fharlanghn); Fario Ellegoth male half-elf Ftr5/Rog5 (member of the Striders of Fharlanghn); Fellian Shard, male half-elf Rog3/Clr7—Fharlanghn (member of

the Striders of Fharlanghn); Keygan Ghelwe, male gnome Exp3/Wiz(III)2 (owner of Ghelwe's Locks); Gretchyn Tashykk, female halfling Com1 (Lantern Street Orphanage headmistress); Vortimax Weer, male human Wiz10 (alchemist and potion brewer at Weer's Elixirs); Skie Aldersun, female gnome Sor6 (proprietor of Skie's Treasury); Phalian Gurnezarn, male human Exp6 (blacksmith and proprietor of Gurnezarn's Smithy); Bjellkir Zanathor, male human Com3 (proprietor of Zanathor's Provisions, a general store); Rivek Mol, male human Rog1/Exp4 (proprietor of the Tipped Tankard); Halpeen Welvikk, male human Exp6 (proprietor of The Drunken Morkoth Inn); Tippys Surefoot, female halfling Exp5 (proprietor of Sure Foot Livery); Kristof Jurgensen, male human Clr5 (cleric at the Shrine of Pelor); Embril Aloustinai, human female Wiz5/Clr9/Mystic Theurge 3 (high priest of the Cathedral of Wee Jas); Ike Iverson, human male Clr13 (cleric at the Cathedral of Wee Jas); Asfelkir Hranleurt, male half-orc Clr8 (high priest of the Temple of Lordly Might dedicated to Kord); Annah Tasker-

hill, human female Ari1/Brdr10 (leader of the Stormblades, Cauldron nobility); Cora Lathenmire, human female Ari1/Ftr8/Duelist 2 (member of the Stormblades, Cauldron nobility); Todd Vanderboren, human male Ari1/Rog7/Asn3 (member of the Stormblades and adopted son of local nobles, currently deceased); Zachary Aslaxin II, human male Ari1/Rgr5/Clr5 (member of the Stormblades, Cauldron nobility); Artus Shemwick, human male Rog7 (fence and information broker working as a cook at the Tipped Tankard); Skylar Krewis, human male Ftr6 (sergeant in the town guard); Celeste, "human female," class unknown, (mysterious beautiful woman who's not actually a human at all, often found at the Cusp of Sunrise dinner club).

Typical Guard Patrol: Vhalantru made town patrols bigger and meaner over the course of spring with the introduction of half-orc mercenaries. A typical patrol now consists of a half-

orc sergeant (Ftr4), 1d8+2 human privates (War2), 1d6+2 half-orc fighters (Ftr2), and an ogre. Guards typically wear breastplates and bucklers emblazoned with the city's emblem (a watchful eye wreathed in flames) and carry halberds, longswords, and shortbows (all of masterwork quality). The sergeant carries two *potions of cure moderate wounds*.

Because of the emphasis on security, a special patrol filled with Vhalantru's most trusted mercenaries patrols the main avenues of the city. These special patrols consist of a human lieutenant (Ari6, a trusted member of the lord mayor's staff who has profited by Vhalantru's rise in power), two half-orc sergeants (Ftr4), 2d6+10 half-orc fighters (Ftr2), and either a human cleric of Wee Jas (Clr3) or a human wizard (Wiz3).

RUMORS IN CAULDRON

Even at its quietest, Cauldron is a city rife with rumors. Now that the troubles in Cauldron continue to escalate, though, its citizens have more on their mind than gossip. Those who remain in Cauldron have grown close-lipped with all but their most trusted friends, and when they speak of recent events, it is with an anger that wasn't present a year ago.

In many previous Adventure Path installments, a successful Gather Information check allowed the PCs to uncover numerous rumors about current events in town. These idyllic times are coming to an end. Now, a successful Gather Information check (DC 20) only gives the PCs sullen complaints about living conditions, rants about taxes, and fearful glances over the shoulder. Cauldron's citizens are likely to turn the tables on the PCs and press them for information or advice.

A more successful Gather Information check (DC 30) allows the PC to uncover an actual rumor from a nervous, cranky citizen.

d8 roll Result

- 1 Many of the adventurers who used to call Cauldron home have moved on to bigger cities and richer prizes. (False. Over the past 10 years, Vhalantru has carefully manipulated most adventuring groups into taking on challenges too difficult for them, and that work has left Cauldron with a very low number of active adventurers.)
- 2 The Lord Mayor has journeyed to the larger city of Sasserine to petition their aid. (False. Vhalantru recently killed the Lord Mayor and spread many false rumors about the mayor's actual whereabouts.)
- 3 Lord Vhalantru's leadership is the only thing holding the city together. (True, although he's not the benevolent noble that most think him to be.)
- 4 The high taxes have driven many citizens out of the city. (True. The city's population has

decreased by more than 500 adults because of the high taxes, strange events, and increasingly oppressive government.)

- 5 Embril Aloustinai, the high priestess of Wee Jas, fled the city in shame. (False. Embril left the city for reasons of her own, unknown to even her second in command, Ike Iverson.)
- 6 The Lord Mayor was assassinated by members of the Last Laugh thieves' guild. (False, Vhalantru killed the Lord Mayor and spread many false rumors about the mayor's actual whereabouts.)
- 7 A pair of young divers saw a huge monster in Crater Lake; they barely escaped before it saw them! They didn't get a good look at it, alas. (True. Two youths challenged each other to see who could dive deeper into the lake, and during the stunt they caught a glimpse of the advanced morkoth that lives at the bottom of the lake.)
- 8 Unholy blue lights have been seen flickering from the second-story windows of Ghelve's Locks; Ghelve has gotten into dangerous and evil magic. (Partially true. The blue lights have been seen in the windows, but Ghelve has merely been practicing his illusion magic.)

CHAPTER ONE: WELCOME BACK

The adventure begins when the characters return to Cauldron. Whether they return from adventures on the Abyssal layer known as Occipitus as described in "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107) or from some other journey depends upon the events of your campaign. If you are using this adventure without the other portions of the Shattered City Adventure Path, the adventure begins when the characters arrive in Cauldron for the first time.

As soon as the characters arrive in Cauldron, they draw the deadly attentions of Orbius Vhalantru. The beholder does not yet want to risk an open confrontation with the characters—he does not fear them (far from it), but his cover is too perfect to risk on the characters right now, and although he's confident that he and his minions could destroy them handily, the characters are powerful enough that one of them might escape with the news that the city's savior and current de facto leader is in fact a powerful beholder. Such news would be enough to draw the attention of powerful forces from the larger city of Sasserine, forces that Vhalantru cannot hope to confront before the successful completion of the Cagewrights' plan. And so he turns to the Cathedral of Wee Jas.

Embril Aloustinai, the high priestess of Wee Jas in Cauldron, is away from the city, leaving Ike in charge of the

temple and its dealings with Vhalantru and the Cagewrights. The temple of Wee Jas has been part of the alliance from the beginning, providing divine magic when needed and undead workers to handle the most basic aspects of the Cagewrights' efforts to build the *soulcages*. Despite these contributions, Vhalantru and the other Cagewright leaders know that the Cathedral has held back much of its strength, gathering influence and wealth from their dealings with the Cagewrights while risking little. Unwilling to let this continue, Vhalantru bullies Ike Iverson into coordinating the assassination attempt against the characters.

Ike reluctantly commits the Cathedral's resources to the task, knowing that without Embril in town to back him he dare not gainsay the will of Vhalantru and the other Cagewrights. Although Ike would rather not tangle with a group as successful as the characters have become, once he begins the process he commits the full might of the Cathedral to the task, including his own considerable spellcasting abilities. Through Vhalantru's agents, Ike possesses a great deal of information about the characters, and Ike himself has likely met them in the past.

Allow the characters to spend a few days learning of the growing tensions within the city and renewing contact with old friends. During this time Ike uses *screaming* on the PC with the lowest Will saving throw to gain a thorough understanding of their lodging, their security measures

while in town, and their habits. Once he's had a few days to observe the characters, his assassins strike.

ASSASSINS (EL 14)

Light: Night.

Sound: None (the assassins move under the cover of a *silence* spell).

Reaction: Varies depending on the location of the ambush, but often none.

Auras: The auras in this encounter are listed by NPC:

- **Tulrak Gar-Hurk:** Faint abjuration (chain shirt, ring, *magic vestment*, *protection from energy*), faint transmutation (amulet, greatsword), faint conjuration (potion), moderate abjuration (*spell resistance*), moderate conjuration (ring), moderate transmutation (gauntlets, *air walk*, *greater magic weapon*, *heroes' feast*, *imbue with spell ability*, *mass bear's endurance*, *mass bull's strength*); faint evil.
- **Kennock Brage:** Faint abjuration (bracers, ring, *protection from energy*), faint conjuration (potion), faint transmutation (amulet, cloak), faint universal (rod), moderate abjuration (*spell resistance*), moderate transmutation (*air walk*, *heroes' feast*, *imbue with spell ability*, *mass bear's endurance*, *mass bull's strength*); faint evil.
- **Zaenna Quespin:** Faint abjuration (shield, studded leather, ring, *protection from energy*), faint conjuration

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Secrets of the Soul Pillars" is designed for a group of four 12th-level PCs, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 10th–11th or 13th–14th level characters.

10th–11th-level PCs: As long as the party prepares carefully and rests fully after each major encounter, only the final encounter with the dracolich is really out of their reach. You'll want to make the following changes to specific encounters:

Assassins: The assassins still attack when the characters have let their guard down, but they no longer have the *lesser rods of silent spell* or use *silence* to stifle the characters' spellcasting. Reduce each assassin's level by one.

Interlude: Reduce Zarian Dhor's level by two, removing one level of fighter and one level of barbarian.

Temple of Wee Jas: Remove the stone giants from area W1, reduce the number of gray render zombies guarding Ike Iverson to three, replace the bone devil with an erinyes, and reduce Ike Iverson's level to 12.

The Ruins of Karran-Kural: On the first level, replace the ice devil with a barbed devil, and replace the iron golem with a stone golem. On the second level, replace the demodand with a hezrou demon, reduce Fetor's loremaster level by one, remove either Orgo or Xail from area K14, and reduce the dracolich's age category by one.

13th–14th-level PCs: To challenge higher-level characters, you can easily adjust the power level of most of the foes in this adven-

ture by adding class levels to the NPC villains. You can also add a sense of urgency to the adventure, encouraging the characters to take on more than one encounter between rest periods. The easiest way to do this is to have Jenya Urikas receive a dire vision from St. Cuthbert that predicts Cauldron's fall within a month's time. The characters must push through both this adventure and the next one in the Adventure Path in one month of game time or the Cagewrights' plan comes to fruition. You'll want to make the following changes to specific encounters:

Assassins: If you increase Ike Iverson's level, make sure that the assassins receive the benefit of any additional spells that he might be able to cast to further increase their combat ability.

Interlude: Increase Zarian Dhor's level by two, adding one level of fighter and one level of barbarian.

Temple of Wee Jas: Advance the stone giants in area W1 by 4–8 HD, replace the gray render zombies guarding Ike Iverson with bodaks, replace the bone devil with a barbed devil, and increase Ike Iverson's level to 14 or 15.

The Ruins of Karran-Kural: On the first level, replace the ice devil with a horned devil, and advance the iron golem by 4–8 HD. On the second level, advance the demodand by 2–4 HD, increase Fetor's loremaster level by one, increase Orgo's level by 1–2 and Xail's HD by 4–8, and advance the dracolich by 2 HD (advancing it by an age category makes it far too deadly a foe even for 15th-level characters).



(potion), faint transmutation (amulet, gloves, rapier), strong universal (rod), moderate abjuration (*spell resistance*), moderate transmutation (*air walk*, *heroes' feast*, *imbue with spell ability*, *mass bear's endurance*, *mass bull's strength*); faint evil.

The assassins attack the characters wherever they stay in Cauldron, preferably when they are gathered for an evening meal. If the characters are particularly vigilant, the assassins might have to cast their pre-combat spells further away from the group, reducing the amount of time that these crucial spells will be active (see the Tactics section below for more details on these spells).

None of the assassins know anything about the Cagewrights, Vhalantru's true nature, or the *soulcages*.

Creatures: Tulrak Gar-Hurk, Kennock Brage, and Zaenna Quespin have worked together for many years. Ike trusts their abilities and their discretion because of the trio's past dealings with the temple of Wee Jas. The three assassins are ruthless and efficient.

Ike Iverson casts several spells on the assassins before they make their attack. All spells are cast at 13th level, and their durations are long enough that none are in danger of expiring during the initial fight with the characters. If tracking the duration of the spells becomes an issue, assume that 2 minutes of each spell's duration has elapsed before the encounter begins.

➤ **Tulrak Gar-Hurk, Male Half-Orc Rog3/Ftr7:** CR 10; Medium humanoid (half-orc); HD 3d6+7d10+30; hp 96; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +9, Grp +17; Atk +22 melee (2d6+17/17–20, +3 greatsword); Full Atk +22/+17 melee (2d6+17/17–20, +3 greatsword); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, immune to fear, immune to poison, SR 25, trapfinding, trap sense +1, AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 26, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills: Appraise +6, Balance +3, Climb +20, Hide +7, Jump +22, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +6, Tumble +7.

Feats: Blind Fight, Cleave, Dodge, Power Attack, Improved Critical (greatsword), Iron Will, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Languages: Common.

Imbued Spells (caster level 13, save DC 15 + spell level): 1—*cure light wounds*, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds*.

Possessions: +1 chain shirt (+3 chain shirt with *magic vestment*), +1 greatsword (+3 greatsword with *greater magic weapon*), *gauntlets of ogre power*, *ring of protection* +1, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *ring of counterspells* (*dispel magic*), *potion of cure serious wounds*, 250 gp.

Spells From Ike Iverson: The benefits of these spells are included in the statistics above: *air walk*, *greater magic weapon*, *heroes' feast*, *imbue with spell ability*, *magic vestment*, *mass bear's endurance*, *mass bull's strength*, *protection from*

energy (fire) (ignore first 120 points of fire damage), spell resistance, status.

➤ **Kennock Brage, Male Human Sorro:** CR 10; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d4+40; hp 76; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5, Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d4+1/19-20, dagger); SA spells; SQ immune to fear, immune to poison, SR 25; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 20.

Skills: Bluff +18, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Intimidate +7, Concentration +17, Spellcraft +13.

Feats: Empower Spell, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Penetration.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Dagger, bracers of armor +2, ring of protection +1, amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of charisma +2, lesser rod of silent spell, potion of cure serious wounds, 250 gp.

Spells Known (6/8/7/7/6/4; save DC 15 + spell level): o—acid splash, arcane mark, detect magic, ghost sound, light, mage hand, message, open/close, read magic; 1st—charm person, disguise self, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement, shield; 2nd—knock, mirror image, see invisibility, scorching ray; 3rd—displacement, haste, lightning bolt*; 4th—greater invisibility, ice storm; 5th—cone of cold*.

*Evocation spells. The save DC for these spells is 17 + spell level.

Familiar: Kennock has a raven familiar, but he knows how powerful the PCs are and does not expose it to the dangers of this encounter.

Spells From Ike Iverson: The benefits of these spells are included in the statistics above: *air walk*, *heroes' feast*, *mass bear's endurance*, *mass bull's strength*, *protection from energy (fire)* (ignore first 120 points of fire damage), *spell resistance*, *status*.

➤ **Zaenna Quespin, Female Human Rog3/Clr7 (Vecna):** CR 10; Medium humanoid (human); HD 3d6+7d8+30; hp 84; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +7, Grp +11; Atk +16 melee (1d6+5/18-20, +1 rapier); Full Atk +16/+11 melee (1d6+5/18-20, +1 rapier); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, spells, immune to fear, immune to poison, SR 25, trapfinding, trap sense +1; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +9; Str 18, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +6, Bluff +5, Concentration +10, Disable Device +6, Diplomacy +1, Disguise -1 (+1 acting), Hide +10, Intimidate +1, Jump +6, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +8, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +10, Search +6, Spellcraft +7, Spot +8, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks), Tumble +10.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier).

Languages: Common.

Spells Prepared (6/5+1/4+1/2+1/1+1, save DC 12 + spell level); o—cure minor wounds (2), detect magic (2), read

magic, guidance; 1st—protection from good^{EE}, cure light wounds (2), divine favor, obscuring mist, shield of faith; 2nd—bear's endurance, cure moderate wounds, death knell^{EE}, desecrate^{EE}, silence; 3rd—dispel magic*, cure serious wounds, searing light; 4th—cure critical wounds, unholy blight^{EE}.

*Domain spell. ^{EE}Evil Spell. **Domains:** Evil (cast Evil spells at +1 caster level), Magic (use magic items as 3rd-level wizard).

Possessions: +1 studded leather (+3 studded leather with magic vestment), +1 light shield, +1 rapier, gloves of Dexterity +2, ring of protection +1, amulet of natural armor +1, lesser rod of silent spell, potion of cure serious wounds, 250 gp.

Spells From Ike Iverson: The benefits of these spells are included in the statistics above: *air walk*, *heroes' feast*, *magic vestment*, *mass bear's endurance*, *mass bull's strength*, *protection from energy (fire)* (ignore first 120 points of fire damage), *spell resistance*, *status*.

Tactics: Zaenna and Tulrak each cast *divine favor* before the fight begins, while Kennock casts *greater invisibility* on himself. Then Kennock casts *haste* on the group and Zaenna casts *silence* on a small pebble that Tulrak carries. The three burst in on the PCs, maneuvering to keep PC spellcasters within the radius of the *silence* spell. Kennock and Zaenna make liberal use of their *lesser metamagic rods of silent spell*. All three concentrate their attacks on the primary spellcasters among the characters, hoping to drop them quickly and discard the rock with the *silence* spell. This allows them to capitalize on the advantage of their metamagic rods, and then bring their spells to bear against the non-spellcasters in the adventuring group. In particular, the three strive to bring down any divine spellcasters quickly, knowing that if they cripple the character's access to healing magic the fight is much more likely to go in their favor.

Development: Although the assassins have been paid well, they refuse to throw their lives away foolishly. If one or more of their number drops, the remaining two flee unless they have a good chance of destroying the remaining characters quickly. If any assassins flee, they take refuge in the temple of Wee Jas and confront the characters there in the company of Ike Iverson.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: Because the assassins have the advantage of being prepared for the fight against the players and the benefit of numerous spells from a powerful cleric, award 150% the normal amount of experience points for this fight.

INVESTIGATION

After the assassination attempt, the characters should undertake a brief investigation to discover who ordered the attack on them. Ike Iverson was careful in selecting the best assassins he could buy and did not stint on using his own spells to increase their chances of success. Despite his diligence, Ike succumbs to his own arrogance in one sense: he does little to cover his involvement with the assassins. Although they pose a serious threat to the characters, if

they survive it should be relatively easy to trace the attack to the temple of Wee Jas.

As the PCs get into their investigations, it's important that you make the players feel almost as if they have free run of Cauldron, and that their knowledge of the city proves useful. The information in this section describes the actions of the most prominent and trusted NPCs that the players are likely to contact, but assumes that the PCs already know who it is they need to talk to.

If you've never run an adventure in Cauldron before, this section gives you an overview of where the characters can turn for help and information during the course of this adventure. You can allow PCs Gather Information or Knowledge (local) checks to know who would be a good source to go to for information of a specific kind, in this case.

Because the characters are under little time pressure throughout the adventure and have the run of the city, encounters with these NPCs could occur at nearly any stage during the adventure, not merely after the assassination attack. In particular, they may be returning to some of the NPCs they spoke to earlier to learn more after they deal with Ike and his minions at the Cathedral of Wee Jas. Thus, general notes about the NPCs' attitudes and available information should prove more helpful than specific encounter descriptions.

THE CHISEL

The Chisel, a secret organization of rich merchants and artisans, remains active in Cauldron. Although the organization focuses its efforts on the economic interests of its members, characters who participated in "The Demonskar Legacy" likely have ties to them and would do well to seek out Maavu Arlental, an important member of the organization and a likely ally. Maavu is in Cauldron, overseeing the repair and reconstruction of his warehouse on Magma Avenue.

If Maavu died in the events described in "The Demonskar Legacy," the information described below can be obtained from another member of the Chisel like Oliron Masht or Ekaym Smallcask, although to contact them the PCs must travel to the nearby village of Redgorge.

Maavu Arlental: Maavu is nearly 55 years old, but he remains tall and handsome and has the voice and energy of a much younger man. Maavu can offer the characters little in the way of magical aid, but he can relate any of the rumors described earlier, give the characters an accurate view of the discontent that still grows within Cauldron, and can provide reasonable estimates of the changes that have been made to the town guard. Maavu also knows that many of Cauldron's residents have moved away and that a great deal more seem to be considering such a move. Maavu has a keen understanding of the dangers that travel poses to commonfolk, and he can help the characters understand that conditions must be bad indeed within the city for anyone, much less large numbers of people, to consider a dangerous and expensive relocation. He can also tell them

that although the city government has graciously pardoned him for his part in the Cauldron Tax Riot and are allowing him to rebuild his warehouse, he still suspects things aren't all as they seem with the rulers of the city. For now, however, he prefers to keep his theories to himself.

Maavu is at a loss to explain the assassination attempt, but rightly points out that the PCs have made a lot of enemies over the last year, any one of which could be behind the attempt.

CHURCHES, SHRINES, AND CATHEDRALS

The PCs have probably made contact before with some of Cauldron's temples, especially with Jenya and the Church of St. Cuthbert.

Asfelkir Hranleurt: The high priest of the Temple of Kord's reaction to questions depends entirely upon his past dealings with the PCs. He can confirm that the Cathedral of Wee Jas has grown more powerful over the past several months, but he sees nothing to worry about in this. He's been in Cauldron for many years, and over those years he's seen the strength of all Cauldron's religious institutions wax and wane. He's quick to point out that the Temple of Lordly Might has remained a solid pillar of the community throughout, but has little more to add. He reacts to news of the assassination attempt with indignation and outrage, no matter what his prior relationship was with the PCs, but he has no actual insights into the source of the attempt.

Embril Aloustinai: Embril is the high-priestess of the Cathedral of Wee Jas and one of the Cagewrights' most powerful allies. She is away on mysterious errands of her own for the duration of "Secrets of the Soul Pillars." Should the opportunity arise, hinting at Embril's power and spellcasting ability can help foreshadow events in a future Adventure Path module.

In any case, if the PCs seek out the Cathedral of Wee Jas before the assassination takes place, they find it to be "closed for renovation work." If they persist in attempts to enter the Cathedral, Ike simply moves up his plans a bit and defends the Cathedral from the PCs as detailed in Chapter Two.

Jenya Urikas: Jenya is a young woman with premature streaks of gray in her rich brown hair. When the characters first return to Cauldron, Jenya sends them a note welcoming them back to the city. Should the characters wish to meet with her, she's more than willing to discuss conditions in Cauldron, their previous adventures, or whatever else the group might be interested in.

One thing she's heard that has been troubling her is the growing rivalry between the Cathedral of Wee Jas and the Shrine of Pelor. She's heard that father Kristof of Pelor believes that the Wee Jas worshipers plan to build their Cathedral high enough to block the sun's morning rays from reaching the Shrine of Pelor. While it's true that the Cathedral has recently undergone some additional con-

struction, Jenya is more worried that the added friction between the two churches points to something more.

Should the characters require healing or other assistance after the assassins' attack, Jenya is happy to help them. Depending upon their participation in previous adventures, Jenya may even offer to only charge the PCs for expensive material components. She performs the spell-casting herself in most cases.

If asked, Jenya uses the *Star of Justice* (a +1 holy mace with the power to cast *divination* once per week, and a sacred relic of the Church of St. Cuthbert) to help the players track down their assassins. If the *Star of Justice* is used in this manner, it provides the following clue:

"Cages above and bones below

Death the door and magic the key

Knives but dust and souls the prize."

Although the meaning of the first line of this riddle should not become apparent until the characters have been through the Cathedral of Wee Jas (and perhaps not even then), the second line has clear meaning to Jenya or any PC who makes a successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 20); "death" and "magic" appearing so close together seems to point toward the worship of Wee Jas. Clever players might figure out that the third line indicates that the assassins are ultimately unimportant and that instead it is the soul pillars in the ruins of Karran-Kural and the *soulcages* that hold Cauldron's fate.

Kristof Jurgensen: The last few months have not been kind to the sole resident priest of the Shrine of Pelor. Kristof is wild-eyed and paranoid these days, convinced that the Cathedral of Wee Jas is out to get him. He points to the new construction atop their central spire as proof; the higher reaches come close to blocking the rays of the rising sun over his humble shrine. Although his attitude may seem extreme to the PCs, it is unfortunately justified. Embril has long hated Kristof, and over the past few years has been doing what she can to force him out of town. Unfortunately, Kristof has no proof apart from his paranoia. If told about the assassination attempt, he immediately blames the Cathedral of Wee Jas, if a bit too earnestly; he is not put off by the fact that nothing on the assassins' bodies indicated they were worshippers of Wee Jas.

Nidrama: An enigmatic protector of the region, Nidrama is a female movanic deva. She willingly aids any characters who have proven themselves in the defense of Cauldron. Even if the events of "The Demonskar Legacy" did not take place in your campaign, Jenya can direct the characters to Nidrama. As a 10-Hit Die creature, she may be summoned via *planar binding* or *planar ally* spells. Nidrama begins any encounter with the characters with an attitude of friendly. A DC 20 Diplomacy check shifts her attitude to helpful. Although she can't take a direct hand in the intrigues of Cauldron, she is willing to help characters by casting *divination*, *commune*, or any other cleric spell (caster level 9th).

Nidrama's celestial overlords cannot give her direct information about Vhalantru's disguise or about the *soulcages*, but they can point the players toward the temple of Wee Jas once the assassination encounter has taken place. Of course, if the PCs simply cast *divination* or *commune* themselves, they can receive the same information.

THE CITY GOVERNMENT

Although Cauldron's government may seem like the last entity the PCs might want to consult, they may still attempt to do so.

Skylar Krewis: If he was rescued from the Cauldron Tax Riot by the PCs in "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), Sergeant Krewis remains a strong ally. Lately, he's been patrolling the northeast quarter of the city; locating him during the day requires a successful Gather Information check (DC 20). Skylar can confirm that the Cathedral of Wee Jas has donated a large amount of money and magic resources to the government, but notes a little bitterly that little of these resources have trickled down to the guards themselves; they are more overworked than ever. If asked about possible corruption higher in the government, Skylar glances around nervously before admitting that, "Things have definitely been better in the Guard." He refuses to go into further detail, claiming that his suspicions are merely that, and until he can find proof of his fears he doesn't want to name any names. He does warn the PCs to avoid too much contact with more powerful members of the guard and government, and that if they get into too much trouble he'll do what he can to smooth things over. Just how much Skylar can help if the PCs run afoul of the guard or government is up to you; you can use him to keep the campaign from derailing too badly if the PCs get caught breaking into the Cathedral of Wee Jas, for example, and are thrown in jail.

If the PCs ask Skylar to aid in tracking down the source of the assassins, he agrees readily and asks that their bodies be turned over to the guard for *speak with dead* spells. If the PCs prefer not to do so (perhaps fearing government involvement), Skylar understands and tells them he'll do what he can to find out who ordered the assassination. If the PCs seem to be stuck in tracking them down, Skylar can inform them a few days later that it looks like the assassination attempt has links to the Cathedral of Wee Jas. You should only hand Chapter Two to the PCs in this manner if they're truly stumped, though; it's much more satisfying for them to figure it all out on their own.

THE SEEDY UNDERBELLY

The PCs may have made contacts with some of Cauldron's seedier citizens over the past several adventures. The local thieves' guild, the Last Laugh, has closed its doors and most of its direct agents are nowhere to be found. Characters who persist in trying to contact members of this group

may find themselves receiving more and more threatening warnings to mind their own business. One sometime agent of the Last Laugh is a bit more approachable, however, if the price is right.

Artus Shemwick: If the PCs played "Flood Season," (*DUNGEON* #98), they may try to contact Artus Shemwick, a local fence and information broker with ties to the Last Laugh. The guild has recently cut ties with him as well, much to his distress, and as a result he's a bit more cautious about fencing goods or information. He can be found at the Tipped Tankard, where he works part-time as a cook; his initial attitude toward the PCs should vary, depending on how their last meeting went, but he shouldn't be friendly or helpful. If he can be made helpful, though, he agrees to look into any questions the PCs may have. His price is steep; 2,500 gold pieces. You can use Artus to guide the PCs toward the next chapter of the adventure as you see fit; at the very least, his information should point them to an NPC who can help them more. If asked to find out who ordered the assassination attempt, he raises his price to 5,000 gp. Artus has a feeling that the Last Laugh is behind it, and wants the extra money to finance a quick getaway if he gets in over his head. As with Sergeant Krewis, you can use Artus to lead the PCs to Chapter Two if they're stuck for clues.

SHOPKEEPERS

Friendly shopkeepers are probably the best place to go hunting for rumors. The PCs can learn a rumor from them without having to make Gather Information checks.

Tygot Mispas: Tygot Mispas, the halfling owner of an antiquity shop on Lava Avenue, helped the PCs uncover the mystery of "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104). He (and any other shopkeepers the PCs may have befriended) can tell the PCs that the newest set of taxes levied against his business have nearly bankrupted him, and although he's been in Cauldron for his entire life (well over 100 years), he's for the first time seriously considering moving somewhere less expensive. Tygot expresses concern and shock if told about the assassination, but has no further insights as to who may have arranged it.

THE STORMBLADES

The adventuring company known as the Stormblades consists of four young adventurers culled from Cauldron's nobility. One member of the group is currently dead and lies in state at the temple of Wee Jas. While adventuring under Cauldron, they were set upon by a powerful group of undead lead by a human wizard. Unbeknownst to the Stormblades, this was Feter Abradius (see area K12), a dangerous loremaster and member of the Cagewrights. Feter's ambush was arranged by Ike Iverson, who was in turn acting under orders from Vhalantru.

Annah Taskerhill: A tall, strikingly beautiful, young human woman, Annah has traditionally held little regard for

the PCs. Her group's recent defeat under Cauldron has rattled her, though, and she doesn't seem as cocky and self-assured as she may have in prior encounters with the PCs. If they ask to meet with her, she'll grant them a brief meeting at the Coy Nixie tavern. Her initial attitude is unfriendly, but if she can be made friendly she tells them what happened deep under Cauldron, along with mentioning Todd Vanderboren's tragic fate. She confides that the wizard who ambushed them seemed to know all about their tactics, strengths, and weaknesses; it was no idle attack. If the characters can shift her attitude to helpful, she admits that they were on a mission to scout the lower caverns against a possible kuo-toa invasion, and that the mission was given to them by Ike Iverson of the temple of Wee Jas.

Cora Lathenmire: A young cauldron noble like the other members of the Stormblades, Cora is even less interested in talking with the characters than Annah is. If approached in person or through other social contacts, Cora replies that she is considering retiring from adventuring and suggests that the characters contact Annah Taskerhill if they wish to discuss the Stormblades' adventures.

Zachary Aslaxin II: Zachary is a tall and ruggedly handsome young noble with a well-trimmed beard and curly dark brown hair. Like Cora, Zachary has no interest in talking with the characters and directs them to Annah. If asked about Todd, he scowls but says nothing. He'd rather have seen Todd taken to the Temple of Kord for *resurrection*, but since none of the clerics there are powerful enough to perform such magic, he grudgingly went along with the plan to seek aid from the Cathedral of Wee Jas.

Todd Vanderboren: The ambush in the caverns beneath Cauldron claimed Todd's life. His companions escaped with his body, and he currently lies in state in the Cathedral of Wee Jas awaiting *resurrection*. See area W4.

THE STRIDERS OF FHARLANGHN

A neutral organization, the Striders of Fharlanghn are nevertheless opposed to the Cagewrights and their plans. The Striders do not yet know the extent of the Cagewrights' plans nor do they know about the existence of the *soulcages*. However, they do suspect that the Cagewrights have a contact very high in the Cauldron government (although they do not yet suspect Vhalantru).

Fario Ellegoth and Fellian Shard: Friends and adventurers, these two know a great deal about the changes to the city's guards, the growing tensions among the populace, and once the assassination attempt has taken place, they even know that the Cathedral of Wee Jas has a temporary high-priest whom they suspect of having spent a large amount of the temple's resources creating several powerful undead creatures. That the Cathedral of Wee Jas has donated a great deal of magical support to the town guard and to the new mercenaries the government hired to help protect the town has not escaped their notice; they worry that the Cathedral

may be growing too powerful as a result and may threaten Cauldron's religious balance.

Fellian and Fario have information of great relevance to the characters, although it is up to the PCs to recognize this fact. Because they have been scouting the city so thoroughly, Fario and Fellian are well aware of many of the unusual goings on in the city. In particular, they can describe the strange preparations of late at the Cathedral of Wee Jas. Several powerful mercenaries (including at least two stone giants) now guard the temple, and lesser priests and lay-worshippers have been denied access to the temple since the day of the assassination attempt. To the two Striders, it appears that the temple is readying itself against an attack. The characters might guess that it is themselves whom the temple's inhabitants are preparing to fight, but Fario and Fellian have no way of knowing this. If they are told about the assassination, they recommend that the PCs speak with Meerthan about the event immediately, and are willing to introduce them to him.

Both Fario and Fellian have a permanent *Rary's telepathic bond* linking each of them to Meerthan.

Shensen Tesseril: Originally stationed at a roadside inn named the Lucky Monkey, Shensen has taken up residence in the small copse of trees near the Lakeside Pavilion at Meerthan's request. She has been keeping an eye on many aspects of Cauldron normally overlooked by others, and has recently become somewhat alarmed at the strange smells (stranger than usual, that is) that have been wafting in from the lake of late. Additionally, plants that live close to the lake shore are dying, and more and more dead fish are washing up on the shore. The locals seem to think nothing of it, but Shensen worries that these signs might point to some instability in the caverns deep below Caul-



dron. In fact, these developments are a subtle indication of the actions of Cagewrights deep below who have begun to stir the ancient heart of the volcano. As a result, plumes of noxious gasses have risen as far as the surface, creating stranger than usual odors around the lake. These activities foreshadow events to come in a future Adventure Path installment.

If told about the assassination attempt, Shensen is shocked and enraged. She volunteers any of her spells to aid the PCs if necessary, but since her investigations have been so focused on the more natural problems facing Cauldron, she can't provide any further information. She does recommend that the PCs speak with Meerthan about the event immediately, though, and is willing to introduce them to him.

Shensen has a permanent *Rary's telepathic bond* linking her to Meerthan.

Meerthan Eliothlorn: Meerthan leads the Striders investigating Cauldron. He provides magical support and directs the efforts of the other Striders within the city.

Meerthan maintains a magical disguise as a male dwarf merchant, and does not readily divulge either his allegiance to the Striders, his real nature, or his spell-casting abilities. Meerthan shares a permanent *Rary's telepathic bond* spell with the three other Strider agents in Cauldron.

Meerthan knows about the current situation in the Cathedral of Wee Jas, and once he hears about the assassination he becomes sure that they are involved somehow. Meerthan willingly shares what he knows with the characters if they contact him, speaking to them in his dwarf disguise. He never takes it upon himself to contact them,

CAMPAIGN SEED: DRAGONSPAWN

Regardless of whether or not the characters played through "Zenith Trajectory" (the adventure that introduced Dhorlot the Dragonfather), Dhorlot's progeny continue to pose a credible threat for many years to come. If the characters have not yet confronted Dhorlot, or if he managed to escape their first encounter, they might be forced to deal with the now adult (advanced an age category) black dragon. Dhorlot's progeny hold a multitude of differing views, but most will at least be curious about the characters

because of their reputation in the region and perhaps because of their dealings with their father.

The characters, having grown quite powerful, should be prepared to find their attitudes emulated throughout the city as well. Should the characters deal peaceably with Zarik or others of Dhorlot's progeny, the citizens of Cauldron might well allow a few to settle in their midst. Should the characters find themselves in conflict with one or more of Dhorlot's descendants, they might well find that other citizens have taken it upon themselves to drive other half-dragons out of the city.

though, since he prefers to work through his agents and remain impartial to current events.

MAGICAL INVESTIGATION

The PCs should have access to a large number of divination spells that can make their investigation much easier. Even if none of them can cast these spells, they should have allies in Cauldron who can. Don't volunteer any of these spells to them; they should hit upon the idea of using magic themselves.

Divination: The *divination* spell can provide a great deal of information, albeit in cryptic form. Any casting of the *divination* spell that successfully provides an answer gives the few cryptic lines of text described under Jenya's description above.

Vision/Legend Lore: Either of these powerful spells proves incredibly useful should the characters take the time or expend the resources to cast them. If cast on one of the assassin's bodies, the caster learns a great deal about the assassin's life, including a glimpse of the meeting with Ike Iverson during which the assassins receive their orders to kill the player characters.

Speak with Dead: Casting *Speak with Dead* on an assassin's body can prove quite informative, if the spell is cast successfully (remember that the body gets a Will save to resist this spell). The affected corpse gives short, cryptic answers, but given the right questions reveals the involvement of the temple of Wee Jas. Here are sample answers to questions the characters might put to the corpse:

- **Who sent you?:** The Veiled Woman (DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check to recognize this as a little-known appellation for Wee Jas).
- **Why did you attack us?:** The pay was good.
- **Do you worship Wee Jas?:** No.
- **Why were you in Cauldron?:** Hired.
- **What were you hired to do?:** Kill you.

Commune/Contact Other Plane: Casting either of these spells provides the characters with a quick way to bypass much of the legwork normally required for an investigation of this sort. A character's deity can answer questions about the assassination accurately, within the restrictions described under the description of the *commune* spell. If the PCs use *contact other plane* and try to contact an outer plane, there's a 10% chance that the power contacted is allied with either Wee Jas or the Cagewrights, and lies on all its answers.

INTERLUDE: THE DRAGONSPAWN

Light: Daylight

Sound: Background noises of the city (DC 0), Zarik Dhor's bellowing challenge (DC 0).

Reaction: To sounds of battle: A guard patrol arrives in 1d4 minutes.

Auras: Faint conjuration (one of Dhorlot's potions), faint illusion (one of Dhorlot's potions), faint transmutation (Dhorlot's gloves and three of his potions), moderate abjuration (Dhorlot's chain shirt, cloak, and ring), moderate transmutation (Dhorlot's spiked chain).

As you move down the street, noting again the subtle signs of tension among the commonfolk of the city, a thundering cry echoes from behind you. Turning, you see a powerful draconic warrior in the center of the street about 20 yards away. Clad in light chain armor and holding a huge spiked chain, the warrior stands several feet above the head of the tallest human. Although he halts his advance, the commoners in the street rush to get out of the monster's way. His face, a rough mix of dragon and bull, seems to grind out a question: "Did you kill the Dragon Father?"

Nearly 50 years ago, just after reaching young adulthood, the black dragon Dhorlot began an obsessive drive to create half-dragon progeny. One of his most bizarre couplings was with a female minotaur shaman who led a tribe far to the north. Dhorlot proved a cruel overlord to the minotaur tribe, but he did not stay long, viewing his time with the minotaurs as a waste because the progeny matured too slowly for his obsessive tastes and because none of them ever developed proper wings. Dhorlot later joined the organization known as the Cagewrights and continued his breeding experiments in the kuo-toan shrine of Bhal-Hamatugn. If the characters played through "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102) it is likely that they met and even killed Dhorlot while exploring the shrine in search of Zenith Splintershield.

In this encounter, one of Dhorlot's most powerful progeny, a half-black dragon minotaur named Zarik Dhor, comes looking for the characters. Unlike the other encounters in this adventure, there is no set time or place for the encounter with Zarik. It's up to you to decide when, if, and how the encounter occurs, based on the needs of your group. A complex character in his own right, Zarik's selfish nature and occasional bouts of cruelty are balanced by his disdain for his father's behavior. This conflict gives the characters at least some chance of negotiating with him rather than having the encounter default to a simple combat. Here are some of the best ways to use the interlude with Zarik in your game.

Interject Action: Should either of the investigation stages of the adventure bog down, a short but intense combat encounter with Zarik can offer a diversion. Because the encounter can come at any time, it grants you a great deal of control over the pace of the game session. Zarik might want to challenge the characters physically for any number of reasons. Perhaps he had plans to confront Dhorlot himself as a confirmation of his own might. Because the characters have robbed him of that chance (by killing or driving Dhorlot out of the region), Zarik instead wishes to measure

his strength against them. On the other hand, Zarik could have vengeance itself in mind—he held no love for his draconic sire, yet his bond to his heritage compels him to take vengeance on the characters.

Interject Roleplaying: It's possible for the right mix of characters, particularly those with an abundance of divinatoric magic, to proceed through the short investigative sections of this adventure quite quickly. If this happens in your group, you might wish to introduce Zarik not as a direct physical threat but rather as a powerful potential antagonist who's more interested in talking with the characters than smashing them into pulp. In this case, Zarik came to Cauldron to learn about those who killed his father, and he has immensely personal decisions to make regarding the fate of his draconic sire as well as those who killed him (or drove him out of his chosen home of Bhaal-Hamatugn). If you choose to use Zarik in this way, he can provide an interesting opportunity for roleplaying in the midst of an otherwise combat-intensive adventure.

Provide Additional Experience: Many of the encounters in this adventure are quite challenging, especially if the characters aren't careful to rest and replenish their resources between encounters. In the event that one or two characters perish, or if they've found other adventures in the Adventure Path to be too lethal, there's some chance that the group could fall behind the

suggested level. This interlude encounter, whether run as a combat- or roleplaying-focused encounter, provides an opportunity for the characters to gain a few extra experience points and bring them back to the adventure's stated level ranges.

Creature: Zarik Dhor, a powerful half-black dragon minotaur fighter/barbarian, sought out the characters because of their previous interactions with the dragon Dhorlot. He appears as a fearsome reptilian minotaur with the signature horns of a black dragon.

➤ **Zarik Dhor, Male Half-Black Dragon Minotaur**
Ftr4/Bar4: CR 14; Large Dragon; HD 10d12+4d10+70; hp 162; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; AC 30, touch 14, flat-footed 27; Base Atk +14, Grp +29; Atk +28 melee (2d6+20, +2 *spiked chain*); Full Atk +28/+23/+18 melee (2d6+20, +2 *spiked chain*) and +23 melee (1d8+5, bite) and +23 gore (1d8+5 gore); Space/Reach 10ft./10ft. (15 ft. with spiked chain), SA breath weapon, powerful charge 4d6+11, rage 2/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immune to acid, sleep, and paralysis, low-light vision, natural cunning, scent, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +18, Ref +13, Will +12; Str 32, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Breath Weapon (Su): 1/day, 60-foot line of acid, 6d8; Reflex DC 18 half (DC 20 if raging). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Rage (Ex): While raging, Zarik's statistics change as follows: AC 28, touch 12, flat-footed 25; Grp +31; Atk +30 melee (2d6+23, +2 *spiked chain*); Full Atk +30/+25/+20 melee (2d6+23, +2 *spiked chain*) and +25 melee (1d8+6, bite) and +25 gore (1d8+6 gore); SA powerful charge 4d6+13; SV Fort +20, Will +14; Str 36, Con 24.

Skills: Intimidate +16, Listen +17, Search +14, Sense Motive +4, Spot +15, Survival +10, Swim +21.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (spiked chain), Weapon Specialization (spiked chain).



Zarik Dhor



Languages: Common, Draconic, Giant.

Possessions: +3 chain shirt, +2 spiked chain, cloak of resistance +3, gloves of dexterity +2, ring of protection +2, potion of bull's strength (2), potion of bear's endurance (2), potion of see invisibility (2), potion of cure serious wounds (2), 1,900 gp.

Tactics: Should the characters decide to fight this powerful foe, Zarik uses the extra reach of his spiked chain to maintain reach superiority and take out spellcasters first. Beyond this simple approach, Zarik wastes no time with fancy tactics—he rages and starts laying about with his spiked chain. He saves his breath weapon until he can target more than one character, preferably after at least one of them has been severely wounded.

CHAPTER TWO: DEATH AND MAGIC

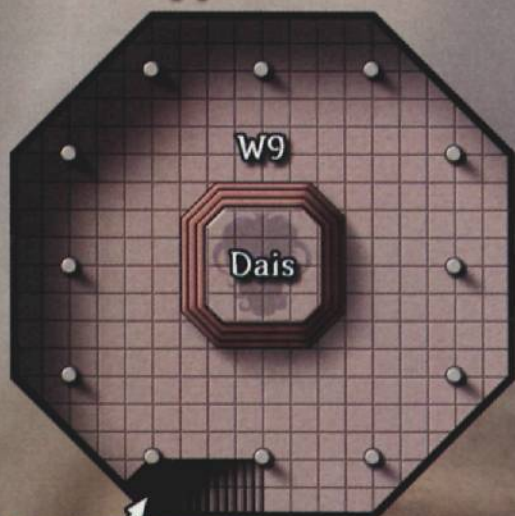
Eventually, the characters trace their assailants to the Cathedral of Wee Jas. This temple, now the most powerful in Cauldron, has been growing in power in recent years. Led by the potent spellcaster Embril Aloustiani, the Cathedral allied itself early with the Cagewrights and Vhalantru. The alliance has given the Cathedral a great advantage over the other temples in the city. Although much of the city's populace viewed the Cathedral of Wee Jas with a small amount of suspicion in years past, the clergy's prominent

place in city affairs has paid off handsomely in terms of both financial resources and new worshipers. Each time that Vhalantru succeeded in gathering more power to himself or enacting a "city-saving" measure, the clerics of Wee Jas were on hand to lend their support. As it has grown in political might, so too has the temple grown in the eyes of the populace, and due to newly finished construction atop the already impressive central tower, the Cathedral is now one of the grandest buildings in all of Cauldron.

As soon as the assassins fail, Ike Iverson puts the Cathedral on a defensive footing. He places formidable guards in the Grand Hall and ensconces himself on the upper story with even more powerful minions. With the assassins gone, Ike knows that it's only a matter of time before the PCs find their way to him, and he prefers to meet them in the sheltered might of his Cathedral rather than in the open city. If the assassins fail, Ike must also tread carefully around Vhalantru. He quickly assures the beholder that when the characters come to the Cathedral, he'll deal with them personally. Vhalantru is willing to give Ike a second chance to dispose of the characters only because Ike is too powerful a minion to waste. Furthermore, the beholder knows little of Embril Aloustiani's enigmatic journey away from the city, and does not wish to waste time with a confrontation, should the powerful high-priestess make an unexpected return to Cauldron.

TEMPLE OF WEE JAS

Upper Level



Down to
Secondary Tower
(W6-W8)

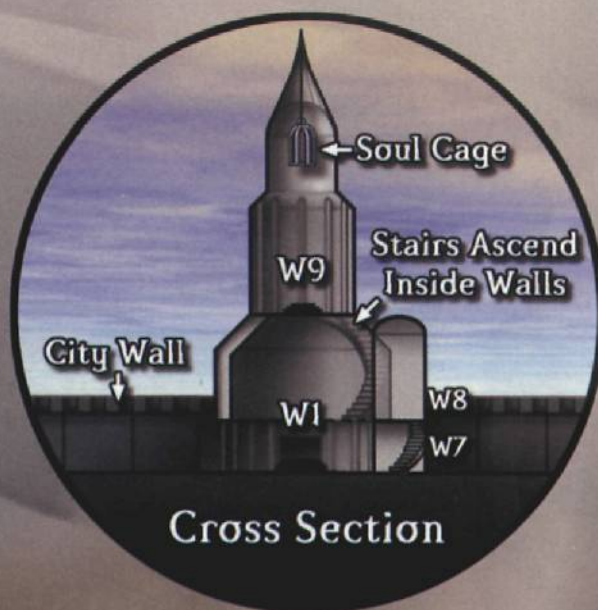
Ground Level

Obsidian Avenue



1 square = 5 feet

WEST



Cross Section

Upper Level

Ground Level

Secondary Tower

As the players enter the Cathedral, however, they know nothing of this behind-the-scenes maneuvering between the evil powers in the city. Instead they find a grand temple protected by powerful mercenaries and curiously devoid of lesser priests and every-day worshipers.

The Cathedral itself is built primarily of stone created by hundreds of *wall of stone* and *stone shape* spells cunningly woven together. The result gives the impression that the entire structure was carved from a single immense block of volcanic stone, including the new addition atop the central dome. Internal walls are eight inches thick (consisting of two *walls of stone* side by side and joined with *stone shape* spells) and have been magically treated to increase their strength. Internal doors are of iron and covered with etchings and carvings of images sacred to Wee Jas. Each door is currently kept locked; Ike carries the master key for the doors, and has temporarily confiscated all the other keys until the current trouble is over.

The entire Cathedral is protected by an *unhallow* spell cast at 20th level. The *unhallow* effect also holds an *invisibility purge* spell (also cast at 20th level). *Unhallow* provides evil creatures in the Cathedral with the following benefits. (These benefits have not been included in the stat blocks for evil creatures encountered in the Cathedral.)

- Turn undead checks suffer a -4 profane penalty.
- Rebuke undead checks gain a +4 profane bonus.
- All creatures are affected by a *protection from good* spell (+2 deflection bonus to AC and +2 resistance to saves vs. attacks and spells made by good creatures).
- *Invisibility purge* throughout the entire Cathedral.

◆ **Magically Treated Stone Wall:** 8 in. thick; Hardness 16; hp 120; Climb DC 30; Break DC 56.

◆ **Iron Door:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 40.

W1. THE GRAND HALL (EL 13)

Light: Torchlight throughout the room from ten everburning torches.

Sound: Guards talking quietly (DC 15).

Reaction: To sounds of battle—Ike and the other creatures in room W9 ready themselves for battle according to the tactics described in that room (Listen DC 15).

Auras: Moderate evocation (*unhallow*), faint evocation (everburning torches).

- **Elite Half-Orc Guards (3):** Faint abjuration (full plate and heavy shield), faint transmutation (dwarven waraxe and gauntlets).
- **Calmus Vel:** Faint abjuration (full plate, light shield, and cloak), faint illusion (scroll), faint transmutation (heavy mace and periapt).
- **Evil:** Faint (half-orcs, Calmus Vel), strong (*unhallow*).

The grand hall of the Cathedral of Wee Jas is a magnificent sight. The huge octagonal room measures 150 feet across and the vaulted ceiling rises to a height of 50 feet in the hall's center. Pillars engraved with images sacred to the faith of Wee Jas ring the massive chamber, and an exquisitely rendered symbol of the death goddess covers most of the chamber's otherwise bare floor. Built to house huge gatherings and contain powerful magical ceremonies, the hall is as beautifully and sturdily built as any building in the city. Strangely, there are no pews or other items of furniture at all in the chamber. Other than the grand doors leading into the main hall and a second set of even larger doors to the east, one small door in the southwest corner of the room hangs slightly ajar. A second normal-sized door opens onto a southern balcony about fifteen feet above the ground. The balcony provides access to a narrow set of stairs encased in an intricate iron lattice. These stairs wind upward along the inner surface of the chamber's walls to a third door high up near the ceiling above.

Although normally the chamber holds spare but functional seating for the commonfolk, Ike has cleared the hall of everything but the torches that light the grand room. Knowing that the characters will bring force against the Cathedral soon, he warned the lesser priests to stay away and to keep the commonfolk out of the Cathedral until the conflict is resolved.

The lesser clerics and visitors are housed in outbuildings removed from the Cathedral itself, and pose no threat to the characters once Ike and the guardians in the main temple have been destroyed. If the characters investigate the outbuildings they encounter a few functionaries with minor spellcasting ability. These priests have served in Vhalantru's patrols at the orders of Ike and Embril, but they know nothing of the Cagewrights, Vhalantru's true nature, or the *soulcages*.

The stairway that winds up the inside of the upper reaches of this chamber provides access from the smaller outer tower (areas W6-W8) to the newly constructed Hall of Night's Rising (area W9). The iron lattice provides both support to the stairway and cover to anyone on the stairs.

◆ **Iron Lattice:** 3 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 90 per 5 ft. section; Climb DC 15; Break DC 28.

Creatures: An elite group of guards lingers in the Grand Hall, awaiting the arrival of the characters. The guards are all well aware of the characters' appearances, but not their tactics, strengths, or weaknesses. They attack on sight.

Should the characters succeed in sneaking past the guards or enter the Cathedral in disguise, the guards react quickly and intelligently should they discover that the characters have infiltrated the temple.

None of the guards in this room know anything about the Cagewrights, Vhalantru's true nature, or the *soulcages*.

◆ **Stone Giants (2):** hp 125, 118; *Monster Manual* 124.



➤ **Elite Half-Orc Guard Ftr8 (3):** CR 8; Medium humanoid (orc); HD 8d10+16; hp 64; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +8, Grp +12; Atk +15 melee (1d10+7/19-20/x3, +1 dwarven waraxe); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d10+7/19-20/x3, +1 dwarven waraxe); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Jump +15.

Feats: Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven waraxe), Greater Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Improved Critical (dwarven waraxe), Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Specialization (dwarven waraxe).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: +1 full plate, +1 heavy shield, +1 dwarven waraxe, gauntlets of ogre power, 200 gp.

➤ **Calmus Vel, Human Clr8:** CR 8; Medium humanoid (human); HD 8d8+24; hp 63; Init -1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +6, Grp +7; Atk +9 melee (1d8+2, +1 heavy mace); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+2, +1 heavy mace); SQ rebuke undead, spells, spontaneous casting (inflict); SW —; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +9; Str 13, Dex 8, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +13, Heal +14, Knowledge (religion) +11.

Feats: Combat Casting, Improved Counterspell, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (heavy mace).

Languages: Common.

Spells Prepared (6/5+1/4+1/4+1/2+1, save DC 13 + spell level); 0—cure minor wounds (2), detect magic (2), read magic, guidance; 1st—cause fear*, cure light wounds (2), comprehend languages, divine favor, shield of faith; 2nd—bear's endurance, bull's strength, cure moderate wounds, death knell*, hold person; 3rd—dispel magic*, cure serious wounds (2), magic vestment, protection from energy; 4th—cure critical wounds, death ward*, greater magic weapon.

*Domain spell. Domains: Death (death touch 1/day, damage 7d6), Magic (use magic items as 4th-level wizard).

Possessions: +1 full plate, +1 light shield, +1 heavy mace, periapt of wisdom +2, cloak of resistance +2, scroll of mirror image.

Tactics: Unlike the assassins, the half-orcs and the stone giants know little of the characters' strengths, having been told only that adventurers are likely to show up and that they need to be killed.

Once more than four of his fellow guards have fallen, Calmus Vel attempts to retreat through the door to the south and rush up the stairs to join Ike. Far from discouraging this tactic, Ike hopes that Calmus's retreat leads battle-weary characters his way just as he's finishing his own preparations for the conflict.

W2. THE HIGH ALTAR

Light: Torchlight throughout the room from four ever-burning torches.

Sound: None.

Reaction: To sounds of conversation—guards in the Grand Hall prepare an ambush against anyone entering area W1 from this room (Listen DC 15).

Auras: Faint evocation (everburning torches), moderate evocation (*unhallow*).

- **Evil:** Strong (*unhallow*).

A massive pair of double doors, if opened, would provide this area a commanding view of the area to the west. Two beautifully sculpted pillars frame a massive onyx altarstone encrusted with runes and elaborate magical glyphs. The jet-black walls have been painted with images sacred to Wee Jas: stylized sarcophagi, obscure magical symbols, and other religious imagery. Two massive tapestries cover the wall directly behind the altar, giving those standing to the west an impressive view of the altar and its imagery of the death goddess. A single door sits in the corner of the room to the southwest.

The high altar sits on a raised platform a few steps above the floor of the Grand Hall. The room itself exists entirely for ceremonial purposes and to impress gathered worshipers with the might and grandeur of Wee Jas. Normally, the huge doors are kept open into the Great Hall, supported by the edges of the short flight of stairs that lead down into it, but Ike has closed and locked the doors.

❖ **Massive Bronze Double Door:** 4 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 120; Break DC 34; Open Lock DC 40.

Treasure: Two of the wall hangings are small enough to be stolen, but they are still quite large and have relatively little resale value when compared with the magical equipment of Ike and the mercenaries guarding the temple. Each wall hanging weighs 120 pounds and sells for 100 gp in the appropriate marketplace. Unless the characters declare their actions in the Cathedral openly to the town guard, attempting to sell the wall hangings in Cauldron likely leads to trouble.

W3. PREPARATION CHAMBER

Light: Torchlight throughout the room from 2 everburning torches.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (everburning torches), moderate evocation (*unhallow*).

- **Evil:** Strong (*unhallow*).

This well-appointed chamber houses several comfortable chairs. The walls are pleasantly decorated with hanging art, and a long polished wooden table rests against the northern wall. Two bookcases hold a few minor religious texts, writings of those devoted to the service of Wee Jas.

The priests of Wee Jas use this room to prepare themselves before addressing a gathering of followers or performing rituals at the high altar. The room has seen little use since Embril left the city.

Treasure: This sitting and reading room has comfortable enough furnishings, but little of real value. The texts that fill the bookcases grant a +1 circumstance bonus on Knowledge (religion) checks made while consulting them. These books are bulky and heavy, and must be stored in a reasonably orderly library to provide a researcher with this bonus. The full set of books is worth 500 gp.

W4. RITUAL CHAMBER

Light: Torchlight throughout the room from 4 everburning torches.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (everburning torches), faint necromancy (*gentle repose*), moderate evocation (*unhallow*).

- **Evil:** Strong (*unhallow*).

This long chamber is strikingly bare, its polished walls and floor a glossy black. Gilded sconces hang in each corner, and each holds a torch that glows with a silently flickering green flame. The austere room is divided by a thick velvet curtain about two thirds of the length of the room away, and the body of a young man lies on a long low table in the middle of the room. An elaborate holy symbol of Wee Jas covers most of the floor.

This clean and nearly bare room is used for minor rituals conducted by the temple's priests. It currently houses Todd Vanderboren's body, kept preserved with a *gentle repose* spell (caster level 13). Until his recent demise, Todd was part of the Stormblades, a group of young Cauldron nobles that the PCs might well have run across before. The Stormblades have been growing in power and rival the PCs as the city's most accomplished adventuring group. Knowing that the Stormblades' growing exploits might provide them with enough fame to challenge him for control of the city, Vhalantru arranged for the group to be ambushed deep beneath Cauldron. The ambush nearly succeeded in destroying the group, and it left Todd dead and his companions demoralized and fragmented.

Todd's body lies here awaiting a *resurrection* spell. The body itself appears to be relatively intact, and although it bears numerous wounds, none of them seems mortal. Todd was actually slain by a *finger of death* spell cast by Fetor Abradius. Although the Stormblades quickly secured funds to pay for Todd's *resurrection*, the Stormblades do not know that Ike Iverson, the priest retained to perform the powerful spell, is in league with Vhalantru and awaits the beholder's orders before performing the ceremony.

Treasure: Todd Vanderboren's body is richly appointed, and anyone who takes the time to search his corpse finds a



gold ring studded with emeralds worth 300 gp, a fine silver necklace worth 100 gp, and a beautiful silk-lined cape worth 200 gp.

Development: Should the characters loot or harm the body, the rest of the Stormblades (and Todd himself, should he ever be brought back to life) seek restitution for the missing items. Alternately, if the PCs rescue Todd's body and aid in his *resurrection*, they may well be able to finally forge a lasting friendship with the rival adventurers.

W5. PRIESTS' QUARTERS

Light: None.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Moderate evocation (*unhallow*).

- **Evil:** Strong (*unhallow*).

Single bedrooms fill the back of the temple, providing rooms for lesser clerics, visiting priests, or other guests too unimportant to house in richer quarters in the city. With Embril away and Ike's orders to vacate the building, the lesser clerics who usually occupy these rooms are not present, and the rooms are strikingly empty. Each holds a simple palate, a small wooden dresser, and a scone sometimes used to house an everburning torch, but other than these simple furnishings the rooms are unremarkable.

W6. STORAGE CHAMBER

Light: None.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Moderate evocation (*unhallow*).

Evil: Strong (*unhallow*).

This small storage chamber is packed with dozens of boxes and lined with shelves. A musty smell fills the air, mixed with hints of exotic incense.

This room stores extra ceremonial gear, robes, and other mundane supplies used in the normal functioning of the Cathedral. Because most of the priests and staff have been ordered away from the building, the room remains full of supplies but packed and orderly.

W7. IKE IVERSON'S CHAMBER

Light: Torchlight throughout the room from two everburning torches.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (everburning torches), moderate evocation (*unhallow*).

Evil: Strong (*unhallow*).

This bedroom is immaculately clean and perfectly ordered. The thick carpet is embroidered with hundreds of small designs of skulls and bones and arcane runes. The room's furnishings include a large, well-made bed, two large armoires filled with rich clothes and ceremonial robes, and a large desk.

This room is Ike Iverson's personal chamber. Papers cover the desk in orderly stacks, but they hold nothing but records of the Cathedral's day-to-day business for the last two months (corresponding to the time that Embril has been absent from the city).

Treasure: Ike's minor possessions fill the room, and some have considerable value. A successful Search check (DC 15) reveals three gilded candlesticks worth 50 gp each, a small money pouch containing 102 platinum pieces, and two beautifully made wall hangings worth 150 gp each.

W8. EMBRIL ALOUSTINAI'S CHAMBER

Light: Torchlight throughout the room from two everburning torches.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint conjuration (potions hidden in desk), faint evocation (everburning torches), moderate evocation (*unhallow*).

Evil: Strong (*unhallow*).

A thick red carpet, emblazoned with the holy symbol of Wee Jas, covers the entire floor. The circular chamber has no windows to the outside, but a large window, currently covered by a thick curtain, overlooks the Grand Hall. The furniture consists of a well-made bed, a beautiful wooden armoire, and a small but beautifully carved wooden desk.

This richly appointed room serves as Embril Aloustina's private chamber when she's in Cauldron. Because she's been gone for some time, none of her important possessions remain in the chamber.

The desk contains a fair amount of paperwork that outlines the day-to-day activities of the Cathedral's faithful. A successful Search check (DC 30) of the desk reveals a false bottom in one of the drawers. The hidden compartment underneath holds three potions of *cure moderate wounds* and a small sheaf of letters exchanged between Embril and a Cagewright loremaster named Feter Abradius (see area K12 below). All but one of the letters are brief reports that allude to a continuing and taxing search for something unnamed. Each letter concludes that all remains on schedule, but that the final answers still elude the searcher. The final letter is reproduced as Handout 1 on the following page.

W9. THE HALL OF NIGHT'S RISING (EL 15)

Light: Torchlight throughout the room from six everburning torches.

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint abjuration (Ike's full plate and cloak), faint evocation (everburning torches), faint illusion (two of Ike's scrolls), faint transmutation (Ike's periapt and boots), moderate conjuration (one of Ike's scrolls), moderate evocation (*unhallow* and Ike's ring), strong abjuration (*soulcage*), strong conjuration (*soulcage*), strong evocation (Ike's bastard sword), strong necromancy (*soulcage*).

- **Evil:** Moderate (Ike Iverson), strong (*unhallow*, bone devil, dread wraith, zombies).
- **Undead:** Overwhelming (dread wraith, zombies).

The ceiling of this vaulted chamber rises over fifty feet high. A low dais commands the center of the room, and a strange silvery-gray cage hangs down from the ceiling above.

The Hall of Night's Rising is the temple's most sacred chamber, used only for the Cathedral's most important rituals. Few creatures, even dedicated worshipers of the Death Goddess, ever see this chamber. Since the alliance with the Cagewrights was finalized, this hall has held a *soulcage*, one of the artifacts needed to bring about the Cagewrights' plans to turn Cauldron into a gate town. Although the *soulcage* hangs empty, its purpose is a secret that Ike Iverson cannot allow the characters to discover. The *soulcage*'s presence and the potential wrath of both Vhalantru and Embril force Ike to stand here against the characters.

Creatures: To make ready for the PCs' eventual arrival, Ike Iverson surrounded himself with the Cathedral's most powerful undead guardians and cast *planar ally* to recruit the services of a bone devil.

➤ **Bone Devil:** hp 105, *Monster Manual* 52.

➤ **Gray Render Zombies (5):** hp 146, 133, 133, 125, 121, *Monster Manual* 267.

➤ **Dread Wraith:** hp 104, *Monster Manual* 258.

➤ **Ike Iverson, Male Human Clr13:** CR 13; Medium humanoid (human); HD 13d8+13; hp 75; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +9, Grp +11; Atk +15 melee (1d10+5/19-20, +3 *spell storing bastard sword*); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d10+5/19-20, +3 *spell storing bastard sword*); SA rebuke undead, spells, spontaneous casting (inflict); SQ —; AL LE; SV Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +15; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 20, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +17, Diplomacy +8, Heal +13, Knowledge (religion) +17, Spellcraft +17.

Feats: Combat Casting, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Tomb-Tainted Soul (see sidebar), Weapon Focus (bastard sword).

Languages: Common, Infernal.

Spells Prepared (6/7+1/6+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/2+1/1+1, save DC 15 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic* (2), *guidance*, *read magic*; 1st—*bane*, *cause fear**, *comprehend languages*, *divine favor*, *obscuring mist* (2), *sanctuary*, *shield of*

faith; 2nd—bear's endurance, bull's strength, death knell*, hold person (2), resist energy, silence, spiritual weapon; 3rd—dispel magic*, magic vestment (4), protection from energy; 4th—air walk, death ward*, dismissal, divine power, greater magic weapon (2); 5th—divine favor (quickened), flame strike, righteous might, slay living*, shield of faith (quickened); 6th—antimagic field*, harm, heroes' feast; 7th—destruction*, inflict serious wounds (quickened).

*Domain spell. Domains: Death (death touch 1/day, damage 7d6), Magic (use magic items as 6th-level wizard).

Possessions: +1 light fortification full plate (+3 light fortification full plate with magic vestment), masterwork light shield (+3 light shield with magic vestment), +1 spell storing bastard sword (contains hold person; +3 spell storing bastard sword with greater magic weapon), periapt of wisdom +2, cloak of resistance +2, scroll of invisibility, scroll of mirror image, scroll of teleport, boots of striding and springing, ring of counterspells, silver holy symbol marked with verses of anathema worth 500 gp, master key to all locks in the Cathedral of Wee Jas.

Tactics: Ike casts *magic vestment* on his armor and shield and *greater magic weapon* on his sword twice a day each as long as he's waiting for the PCs to attack. The bonuses granted from these spells are included in the stat block above. He casts a *hero's feast* every morning as well between the hours of 7:00 and 8:00; if the PCs attack between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M., Ike and the other creatures in this room gain 1d8+6 temporary hit points, a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls and Will saves, and immunity to fear effects and poison. These bonuses are not included in the stat block above.

Once Ike or his minions hear the sound of combat in the Great Hall, Ike takes the following actions unless there is an obviously better course of action available to him.

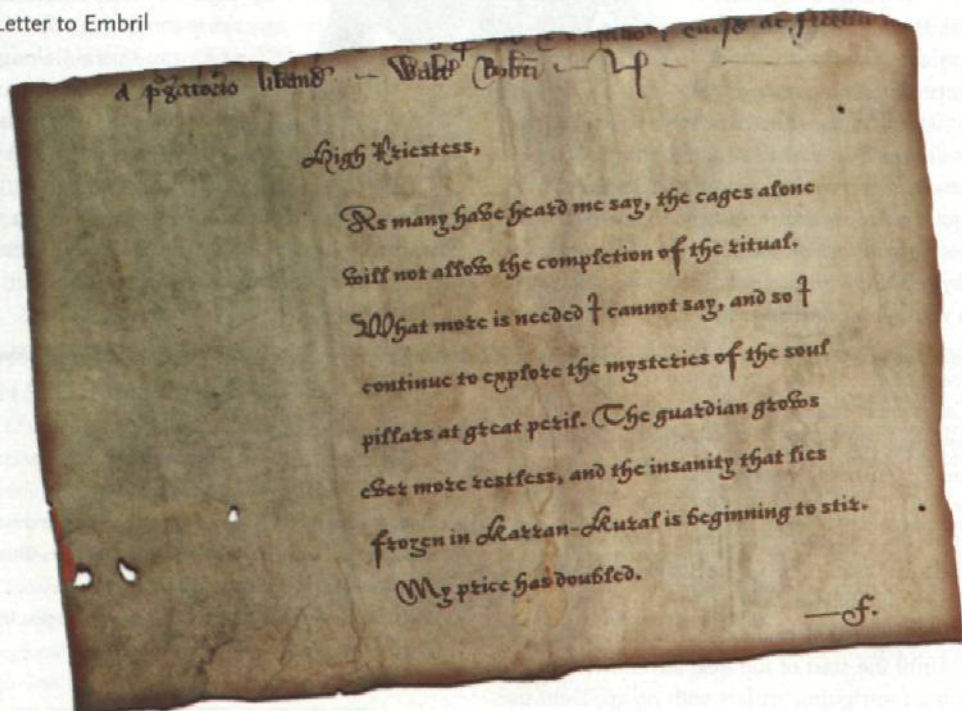
- Round 1: Casts *air walk* on self and starts walking up near the ceiling of the room.
- Round 2: Casts *death ward* on self, continues air walking.
- Round 3: Casts *bull's strength* on self, reaches ceiling and takes up a defensive position above the *soulcage*.
- Round 4: Casts *bear's endurance* on self, retrieves scroll of invisibility from pack.
- Round 5: Casts *invisibility* on self, retrieves scroll of mirror image from pack.
- Round 6: Casts *mirror image* on self.
- Round 7: Readies an action to cast *flame strike* on the PCs as they enter the room.

Once combat starts, the dread wraith and gray render zombies simply advance on the closest character and attack. The bone devil first attempts to separate one or two of the characters from the rest of the group using *walls of ice*, then advances on a lightly armored character or a character who's obviously an arcane spellcaster. It knows that these characters are more vulnerable to poison than hardier melee fighters, and attempts to take them out of the fight quickly with its poison and fear abilities.

The undead obey Ike's commands and fight to the death without hesitation. If pushed below 20% of his total hit points, the bone devil asks for quarter unless the fight is going extremely well for Ike and the undead.

Ike himself opens combat with his prepared *flame strike*. He casts his quickened *shield of faith* and *divine favor* over

Handout 1: Letter to Embri



the first two rounds of combat while he approaches close enough to cast *destruction* on a PC. He saves his quickened *inflict serious wounds* to cast on himself if he's badly wounded. He can also swap out his higher level spells to cast *mass inflict wounds* spells to heal himself and his undead minions while also damaging the PCs.

Development: The *soulcage* can yield a great deal of information to the PCs even though it has little value in its own right to anyone other than the Cagewrights. The *soulcage* is roughly the size of a coffin for a Medium humanoid, and despite the fact that it appears to be made of various kinds of rare metal weighs only 50 pounds.

SECRETS REVEALED

In the aftermath of the battle in the Cathedral of Wee Jas, the PCs have two obvious options open to them. They can openly claim that they were responsible for the killings inside the temple (justified, of course, because of the assassination attempt against them), or they can be discrete and cover up their involvement. Perhaps surprisingly, there are few repercussions from the events in the Cathedral. Even if the characters have no physical evidence that the assassins were sent by agents of Wee Jas, Ike's monstrous guards and their violent reactions to the PCs' visit are enough to persuade the city's overworked guards that the PCs once again were working in the defense of the city. Jenya can help greatly in smoothing over the reactions of the guards by offering to cast *speak with dead* spells on the assassins to verify their role as killers hired by the church of Wee Jas.

The recovery of the *soulcage* from the Cathedral represents the PCs' greatest step yet toward Cauldron's salvation, although they may not recognize it at the time. It doesn't take long for Vhalantru to realize that Ike foolishly kept this *soulcage* in a place where the PCs could get to it, and when he does he sets into motion a series of events detailed in the next installment of the Shackled City Adventure Path, "Lords of Oblivion."

But Vhalantru's reaction should occur behind the scenes at this time. Until the start of the next adventure, the PCs are faced with an intriguing artifact with no apparent use.



If they decide to ignore the *soulcage* (or worse, leave it hanging in the Cathedral), they may miss out on several important clues that could lead them to the ruins of Karran-Kurral; in this case, you should consider introducing the location of the ruins in an alternate manner. Perhaps an agent of Wee Jas attacks to avenge Ike's death, and on his body the PCs discover a journal that contains oblique references to the *soulcage* and the ruins.

Researching the Soulcage: The *soulcage* radiates strong abjuration, conjuration, and necromancy magic and strong evil. The silver and gray bars of the cage twist in on themselves in strange and disturbing patterns. Anyone who examines the cage and makes a successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 25) realizes that the cage is associated with Carceri. Since it's a minor artifact, *identify* and *analyze dweomer* do not reveal the *soulcage's* functions. *Legend lore* or *vision* are much more informative, and reveal that the cage is a powerful focus for a ritual to establish a permanent portal between the Material Plane and Carceri. The spell indicates that this particular *soulcage* was built by a fire giant named Dugobras (from "The Demonskar Legacy"). It also reveals the *soulcage* has ties to something called the "soul pillars of Karran-Kurral," along with a short quote from an anonymous source: "An ancient hate stolen from the souls of the dead, the cage is but the key to a greater evil." Neither spell reveals further details of

the ritual (such as the fact that this is actually a spare *soulcage*, that there are more *soulcages* needed to complete the ritual, or the role of the Shackleborn in the ritual).

TOMB-TAINTED SOUL

[General]

Your soul is tainted by the foul touch of undeath.

Prerequisite: Any non-good alignment.

Benefit: You are healed by negative energy and harmed by positive energy as if you were an undead creature. This feat gives no other penalties or benefits of the undead type.

This feat is from the upcoming *Libris Mortis: the Book of The Undead*, from Wizards of the Coast.

The ruins of Karran-Kural, are not common knowledge, but a successful DC 25 Knowledge (history) check reveals that the ruins are part of an ancient spell weaver empire that dominated the area long ago. The Knowledge check also reveals that the ruins are believed to be near Cauldron, but not their exact location.

If the characters are unwilling or unable to cast the divination spells necessary to examine the *soulcage*, Jenya and any other allied NPCs urge them to continue investigating it if the matter is brought to their attention. If necessary, Jenya offers to handle the expense of paying an NPC spellcaster to cast *legend lore* to fully examine the *soulcage*, although if she is forced to do so her opinion of the PCs turns a little sour.

Finding Karran-Kural: Locating the spell weaver ruins that house the origin of the *soulcage* is impossible without magic, as there is no physical record of the ruins' existence outside of the ruin itself. If no PC can cast the spell, Jenya casts *find the path* on one of the characters to lead them to the entrance of the ruins.

Although the ruin is less than a mile underground, the only route to reach it is via a tangled maze of twisting volcanic tunnels that wind through the depths of the volcano for an overall length of about four miles. Complicating matters is the fact that these tunnels are flooded with water, in many places water with fairly strong currents equivalent to rough water (Swim check DC 15). PCs who can't easily navigate these tunnels by swimming can walk along the bottom at half speed, providing they carry enough gear to weigh themselves down (see page 92 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*). At a speed of 15 feet a character takes nearly two and a half hours to reach the entrance of the ruins, so if the PCs have to rely on Jenya's *find the path* spell, they'll have just enough time to arrive at their destination, provided they set out immediately after she casts the spell.

CHAPTER 3: THE RUINS OF KARRAN-KURAL

Centuries ago, a mighty civilization of enigmatic creatures known as spell weavers delved deep below the volcano that now cradles the city of Cauldron. When a mighty cataclysm

to the west transformed a spell weaver city into the smoking crater known now as the Demonskar, the spell weavers themselves faded from prominence. Traces of their might and cruel experiments linger on, however, and it was in one such ruin that the lore of the Cagewrights was born.

Driven by alien desires and a great understanding of necromantic magic, the spell weavers built a tomb designed to garner ever more insight into frozen death. In the twisted spell weaver mind, the forces of cold and death held some mystical connection, the understanding of which promised ever greater arcane power. Deep in the heart of the dormant volcano, the spell weavers built their insidious laboratory/tomb, where they blended the forces of necromantic magic, the magical essence of cold, and the undead flesh of members of their own race.

Had the spell weavers confined their experiments to nebulous arcane forces and their own willing dead, their sinister designs perhaps could have been excused, if not understood. But knowing neither conscience or mercy, the spell weavers used dead slaves and captives of other races in their necromantic rites as well.

The lore hidden in this tomb, called Karran-Kural by the spell weaver architects that built it, remains as vast as it is cruel, and it was here, nearly thirty years ago, that the Cagewrights laid their plans for Cauldron. In delving between the magical essences of ice and death, the spell weavers discovered a number of strange arcane formulae that dealt with the merging of worlds. From these secrets the Cagewrights extracted the genesis of the ritual that can transform Cauldron into a gate town. And it is upon the enigmatic principles and arcane formulae of the heartless spell weavers that the *soulcages* were built.

Although the bulk of the Cagewrights' efforts have long since shifted away from Karran-Kural, one powerful loremaster remains, plunging ever deeper into the dark and frozen secrets stored in the soul pillars of Karran-Kural. These soul pillars store the lore of the spell weavers and serve as the distant prototypes of the *soulcages* so essential to the Cagewrights' ritual. Should the characters succeed in exploring the ruins and thwarting the loremaster and the last deadly guardians left by the spell weavers, they gain

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE VENGEANCE OF WEE JAS

The Cathedral of Wee Jas in Cauldron has a long and powerful reach, and Ike Iverson's defeat and probable death draws the attention of her most powerful servants. Good and neutral worshipers of Wee Jas who look into the affair quickly learn that Ike and Embril were straying beyond the bounds of Wee Jas's portfolio, and therefore let the issue rest. However, the characters might find themselves beset by vengeance-hungry servants of the death goddess for years to come. Many regional powerful necromancers and undead creatures pay homage to Wee Jas. Although none are directly affiliated with

the Cathedral, many stood to gain by the Cauldron sect's involvement with the Cagewrights. As the characters become a more and more visible force in Cauldron, they could well find themselves targeted by other powerful servants of Wee Jas.

Embril herself eventually returns to Cauldron, and serves as a featured antagonist in an upcoming installment of the *Adventure Path*. As such, hints of her whereabouts should be kept vague but intriguing, and the later adventure could benefit from a foreshadowing of her personal power and her mastery of both arcane and divine magic.

RUINS OF KARRAN-KURAL

Level 1

1 square = 5 feet

WEST



their first direct victory against the Cagewright conspiracy, however unintentional their victory might be.

The entire complex is lit by small panels set flush with the ceiling; these small panels shed a pale blue light equivalent to torchlight. The panels also cool the complex to a frigid 10° F. Characters unprepared for such cold temperatures must make a Fortitude save every hour that they remain within the ruins of Karran-Kural (DC 15 + 1 per previous check) or suffer 1d6 points of nonlethal damage on each failed save. See page 302 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* for more information on the effects of extreme cold. All of the creatures in the encounters below are either immune to the cold or wear sufficient clothing. The magic panels are part of the walls of the spell weaver tomb, and they lose all magical properties if removed. One panel is located in the ceiling of each five-foot square. The magic that powers the tiles functions at caster level 20; if dispelled, the tile simply ceases to function for 1d4 rounds. Only by destroying the majority (at least 80%) of the tiles will the temperature and lighting return to more natural levels. The effects of such a development on Karran-Kural are up to you.

The corridors in Karran-Kural are as wide as they are tall. Ceiling height in smaller rooms is usually ten feet, but can be much higher in the larger chambers. Doors are made of iron and covered with ancient runes and strange depictions of six-armed humanoids working great magic. Characters who saw the Hegemonic Plate from "The Demonskar

Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104) can make a DC 15 Intelligence check to recognize the figures as the same creatures found on that plate. Characters already aware of Karran-Kural's origins and the connection between this and the ruins near Vaprak's Voice automatically recognize the figures.

One notable feature of the ruins are the numerous ice lattices. The locations of these lattices are indicated on the maps of the ruins. An ice lattice consists of one-inch thick strands of ice that crisscross from wall to wall at various angles. The spell weavers infused these lattices with the magical essences of cold and death, and the lattices carry these energies still. Anyone touching a strand of the lattice suffers 1d6 points of cold damage and 1d6 points of negative energy damage (no save). A character moving full speed through the lattice must make an Escape Artist check (DC 25) to avoid contacting a strand. Moving at half speed lowers the DC to 15, and moving extremely carefully (five feet per round or less), lowers the DC to 5.

Evil outsiders and undead can move through ice lattice strands with no ill effect. The ancient spell weavers wore magic rings that also allowed them to pass through the lattices, but none of these rings remain in the ruins today. The lattices are an innate defense of Karran-Kural, and if destroyed they reform completely within a week's time.

◆ **Magic Ceiling Panel:** 1 ft. square, 6 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 45; Break DC 35.



❖ **Iron Doors:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60, Break DC 28.

❖ **Ice Lattice:** Hardness 5; hp 10 per five foot square; Break DC 25.

K1. ENTRANCE TO KARRAN-KURAL

Light: None.

Sound: Sloshing of water to the west (automatic).

Reaction: None.

Auras: None.

The ancient flooded lava tubes open here into a pair of smaller, air-filled tubes that lead to the east. The temperature drops alarmingly to the east, and the two passageways merge just before they are blocked by an enormous wall of ice. A narrow tunnel has been hacked through the ice near its southern edge, allowing access into a larger area beyond.

The ice wall is part of the ancient protections the spell weavers created to secure Karran-Kural from invasion. The Cagewrights managed to bore a narrow passageway through the ice wall, at which point its magic properties faded and it became a normal (but quite thick) wall of ice. Medium creatures can pass through the tunnel with ease, but larger creatures must squeeze. The ice itself remains

frozen only due to the proximity of Karran-Kural, and if melted does not reform.

Beyond the wall of ice, a second barrier once existed. Again, the Cagewrights ruined this warding, leaving the once magic portcullis in a twisted heap that can be passed through with relative ease by creatures of up to Large size.

Beyond the ruined portcullis a large set of double doors is all that remains of the once formidable barriers that protected the ruins. These doors are not magic, nor are they locked.

K2. SPELL WEAVER COFFINS

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles), strong necromancy (spell weaver coffins).

Pale blue lights set flush in the ceiling light this hallway. The walls have a subtle curve, and the entire length is etched with disturbing images and symbols.

Strange glassy circles, each roughly 5 feet in diameter, checker the length of the hallway's floor. Under each disc, a six-armed humanoid figure hangs motionless as if suspended in fluid or encased in glass.

At each end of the hall, a pair of frost-rimed metal doors stands closed.

The circular panes in the floor are magic spell weaver coffins; each is actually a cylinder of magic ice that contains a frozen body of a spell weaver. Each cylinder weighs six tons and completely encases the spell weaver to a depth of 8 feet. The material loses much of its strength if taken beyond the magical energies that pervade the spell weaver ruins, reverting to normal ice in such a case.

The bodies in the coffins are not alive, nor are they dead. They are in a form of suspended animation, and remain so as long as the magic of the ruin persists. Every 1 to 6 minutes the characters spend within the ruin, one of the spell weaver corpses nearby jerks or moves in response to some strange twist in the magical energies of the complex. If the PCs aren't examining the coffin at this time, a successful Spot check (DC 20) allows them to notice the movement. As long as the bodies remain frozen, they pose no threat to the players. The strange behavior should set the tone of characters' exploration and emphasize the alien power of the spell weavers.

Roll Corpse Behavior

- 1 Jerk violently away from the top of the coffin, seemingly recoiling from the nearest PC.
- 2 Pound violently but silently on the underside of the coffin's top pane.
- 3 The corpse's mouth opens as if in a powerful scream, but silence remains.
- 4 A thin wail escapes a coffin (Listen check DC 15 to notice).
- 5 The corpse calmly runs its fingers along the underside of the coffin's top pane.
- 6 The corpse's arms move languidly in patterns resembling arcane spellcasting.
- 7 The corpse folds all six of its arms as if in prayer.
- 8 The corpse violently tears at its own flesh, without apparent effect.

Each coffin is essentially a minor artifact (caster level 20). They can be destroyed with enough damage, at which point any remaining ice and dead flesh melt away into a foul-smelling but otherwise harmless black mist.

❖ **Spell Weaver Coffin:** Hardness 12; hp 90; Break DC 36.

K3. THE ICE PRISON (EL 13)

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles), moderate evocation (*walls of ice*), strong evocation (ice lattice).

Evil: Overwhelming (ice devil).

This chamber is nearly circular, although two sides are made flat by thick walls of ice. The entire room is filled with a lattice of thin icy strands, each flickering with faint magical energies.

Two ice walls block two of the exits from this room. These walls are identical to the *wall of ice* spell (caster level 20), save that they affect only the area shown on the map. When a wall is broken, a plane of frigid air remains where the wall stood. Creatures passing through this plane of air suffer 1d6+20 cold damage (no save, spell resistance applies). The zone of frigid air remains for 20 minutes.

The walls are an innate defense of Karran-Kural; if destroyed they reform completely within a week's time.

❖ **Walls of Ice:** 3 ft. thick; Hardness 0; hp 36; Break DC 35.

Creature: This chamber houses an ancient and insane guardian, an ice devil bound to defend the ruins by the spell weavers. Having lived in isolation for ages, Izzaedruzz now lies in wait for any who might try to enter the compound. When the Cagewrights first entered the ruin, they lost several soldiers to the devil, and on further expeditions they used teleportation magic to bypass the room entirely.

➤ **Izzaedruzz, Male Ice Devil:** hp 153, *Monster Manual* 56.

Tactics: Izzaedruzz attempts to split up intruders with *walls of ice* so he can fight them one at a time to take maximum advantage of the slowing effect of his icy spear.

Although Izzaedruzz has the full use of his abilities, he can only *teleport* within the confines of this room and the nearby corridors (both areas labeled K2). If overmatched, Izzaedruzz buys time by cowering behind *walls of ice* to regenerate.

Izzaedruzz can move at full speed without risking damage from the ice lattice.

K4. THE FROZEN STAIRCASE

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles).

The south end of the corridor ends in a staircase choked in rubble and ice. Determined characters could possibly dig their way through it down to a lower level, but the features of this area are beyond the scope of this adventure.

K5. THE SCRYING LATTICE

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles and scrying lattice (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles), strong divination (scrying lattice).

Six doors line the north and south walls of this passageway, three to a side. The hall itself ends at a tangled lattice of icy strands that flicker and writhe with cold blue tendrils of light.

The icy lattice at the end of the hallway is a powerful scrying device built ages ago by the spell weavers. If properly identified (using *identify* or *analyze dweomer*), the lat-



tice can be used to cast *scrying* once per day as the spell cast by a 13th-level caster. The lattice is bound to the structure of Karran-Kural, and it cannot be moved intact. However, the lattice regrows and repairs itself in one week's time if damaged. The Cagewrights have used this lattice often to scribe upon their enemies.

◆ **Scrying Lattice:** Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 25.

K6. CELLS OF DESPAIR

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles), strong necromancy (spell weaver coffins).

This chamber is empty, save for a set of four of the ubiquitous circular discs set into the floor.

Each of these rooms houses four spell weaver coffins put to special purpose. Unlike the other coffins, they contain corpses of elves. The spell weavers thought to plumb the nature of despair by entombing the elves in this way, binding the corpses with physical and magical restraints that tugged against the very souls of the dead elves. These horrid rites left the elven souls trapped in a state of eternal despair. Anyone in the chamber must make a successful

Will save (DC 15) each round or be so overcome by despair that they find it hard to summon the will to act. This effect is exactly like the *slow* spell cast by a 15th-level wizard, except that it is a supernatural mind-affecting, enchantment effect. The *slow* effect lasts for 10 minutes.

A cleric who can channel positive energy can release these trapped souls with a successful Turn Undead check. Each trapped soul (one per coffin) effectively has 15 Hit Dice for purposes of determining success or failure for turning checks. Successfully releasing a trapped soul fills the room with a momentary pulse of powerful energy, and any creature in the room at this time gains the benefit of an empowered, maximized *aid* spell (caster level 15). Multiple freed souls extend the duration of any existing *aid* effects by fifteen minutes, but the other effects of the spell do not stack.

K7. CELLS OF AGONY

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles), strong necromancy (spell weaver coffins).

This chamber is empty, save for a set of four of the ubiquitous circular discs set into the floor.

Each of these coffins contain the corpse of a sturdy dwarf. The spell weavers used their fearful magic to trap these dwarves in a state of constant pain, and like the elven souls trapped in area K6, they project these feelings even though they have been dead for centuries. Any living creature in the room must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15) each round or be overcome by agony and gain a -5 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks for the next minute. This is a supernatural necromantic effect.

The dwarven souls can be released in the same manner and with the same results as the elven souls in area K6.

K8. CELLS OF SOLITUDE

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles), strong necromancy (spell weaver coffins).

This chamber is empty, save for a single circular disc set into the floor.

These two rooms each house a single spell weaver coffin. Although the spell weaver bodies laid to rest here underwent significant magical treatment, the experiments performed here were failures in the eyes of the spell weavers (unlike those in areas K6 and K7, which they deemed a success). Plunged into frigid and eternal isolation, the spell weaver soul imprisoned within the single coffin in each room was intended to illuminate the magical essence of solitude and bring the spell weaver arcanists even greater power. However, even after long years of study the spell weavers were unable to glean any useful knowledge from the trapped souls. Unlike the elven and dwarven souls in the prior areas, these souls are permanently bound to their coffins and can be released only through the destruction of the coffin itself, as detailed in area K2.

❖ **Spell Weaver Coffin:** Hardness 12; hp 90; Break DC 36.

K9. PIT ROOM (EL 13)

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles).

This barren room contains only one unusual feature; a smooth-sided, five-foot-diameter pit descends into the floor against the west wall.

The pit in the floor wall leads 20 feet down to the second level of the Karran-Kural ruins, to area K10. The pit was created with a pair of *disintegrate* spells by a Cagewright many years ago when they realized that the section of ruins

they sought lay directly below this chamber. The walls of the pit are perfectly smooth.

Creature: An ancient iron golem guards this room, and once a fight begins it pursues characters as far as area K3. The golem itself is an ice-rimed relic from the ancient dominion of the spell weavers, yet it continues to fulfill its duties as guardian.

❖ **Iron Golem:** hp 135, *Monster Manual* 136.

Development: The ice devil imprisoned in area K1 long ago learned to leave the golem alone, and should the characters manage to get both involved in the same encounter, the ice devil avoids the golem and uses its *cone of cold* ability to stay at range and harass the characters while they tangle with the construct.

K10. RUINED CHAMBER

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles).

The walls of this partially collapsed room are blasted and pitted from some ancient calamity. The room's collapse is total to the north, a solid wall of frozen stone. A smooth-sided pit rises up from the ceiling near the east wall.

The opening in the ceiling leads up twenty feet to area K9.

K11. CAGEWRIGHT GUARDIAN (EL 13)

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles), strong evocation (ice lattice).

Evil: Overwhelming (kelubar demodand).

This large room is filled with a tangled lattice of icy strands and beams that stretch from wall to wall, floor to ceiling, and everywhere in between.

This entire room is filled with a massive ice lattice similar to those found in other areas of the ruins.

Creature: The Cagewrights knew that it was extremely unlikely that an enemy would discover the ruins of Karran-Kural, but nor did they want to trust the obscure location alone to the site's defense. A powerful Cagewright wizard called up a denizen of Carceri to guard the ruin, and used a hedged prison from a *binding* spell to insure the kelubar demodand would remain a guardian of the ruins forever. The *binding* spell prevents the kelubar from leaving this room or any of the adjoining hallways. And since the kelubar is filled with rage over its predicament, anyone who enters the room is seen as an enemy. The other Cagewrights typically use *teleport* to travel directly to one of

the nearby rooms, and so avoid confrontations with the kelubar entirely.

The kelubar demodands are the bureaucrats of a legion of self-appointed keepers of the Carcerian population. This kelubar, Olarithusk, is typical for his race; an obese 8-foot-tall humanoid with knobby skin coated with a pale green slime.

➤ **Olarithusk, Male Kelubar Demodand:** CR 13; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 13d8+39; hp 104; Init +5; Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 27, touch 11, flat-footed 27; Base Atk +13; Grp +18; Atk +18 melee (1d4+5 plus 1d6 acid, claw); Full Atk +18 melee (1d4+5 plus 1d6 acid, 2 claws) and +16 melee (1d6+2 plus 1d6 acid, bite); SA acidic slime, sneak attack +4d6, spell-like abilities, stench, *summon demodand*; SQ acid immunity, cold immunity, damage reduction 15/good, evasion, fire immunity, outsider traits, poison immunity, spell resistance 25, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +10; Str 20, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 18.

Acidic Slime (Ex): The slime secreted by a kelubar adds 1d6 points of acid damage to its melee attacks. On a successful critical hit, it deals an additional 1d10 points of acid damage.

Stench (Ex): All creatures (except other demodands) within 30 feet of a kelubar must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 19) or be nauseated as long as the creature remains in the area, and for 10 rounds after the creature leaves. A successful save means that the creature is immune to that kelubar's stench for one day.

Summon Demodand (Sp): Olarithusk can attempt to summon 1d2 kelubars with a 40% chance of success.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear* (DC 18), *invisibility*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*; 2/day *acid fog*, *dispel magic*. Effective caster level 13th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Skills: Bluff +24, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +28, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Gather Information +6, Hide +9, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (local) +18, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Listen +18, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +22, Spot +18, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes).

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Multiattack, Spring Attack.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Demodand.

K12. THE SCRYING CHAMBER (EL 14)

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint abjuration (one of Fetor's rings), faint conjuration (Fetor's potion), faint evocation (ceiling tiles), faint transmutation (Fetor's headband and amulet), moderate abjuration (Fetor's cloak), moderate conjuration (one of Fetor's scrolls), moderate enchantment (one of Fetor's scrolls), moderate evocation (one of Fetor's rings), strong divination (scrying ice), strong no school (Fetor's rod).

• **Evil:** Moderate (Fetor).

This perfectly circular room is featureless save for an irregular smear of black ice that covers the center of the floor. Even from a distance the ice seems filled with distant and shadowy images.

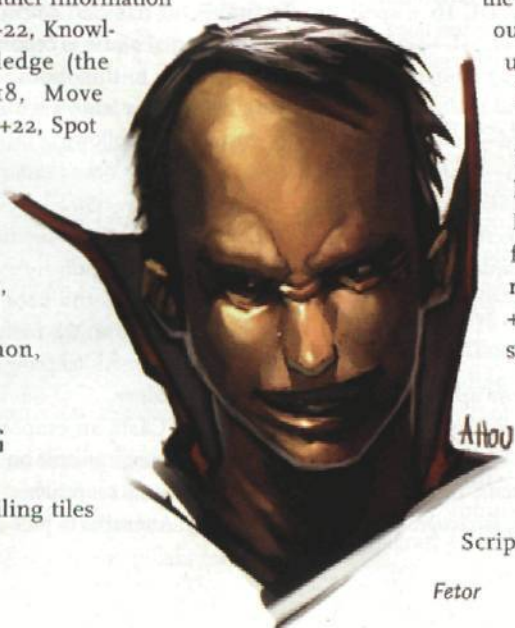
The center of the room holds a potent magic device that allows the user to scry. A single Cagewright loremaster, a cruel and selfish man named Fetor Abradius, spends his days here *scrying* and contemplating the lore of the spell weavers. He has already mastered much of the lore of the soul pillars, but he has no plans of leaving until every scrap of the spell weavers' powerful lore is his.

The inky black ice patch in the center of the room is a more powerful version of the scrying lattice found in area K5. It can be used to cast *scrying* three times per day (caster level 20th). The ice is bound to the structure of Karran-Kural, and it cannot be moved intact. It regrows and repairs itself in one week's time if damaged.

Creature: Fetor Abradius remains a Cagewright only in name. Convinced that the spell weaver lore offers far more potential power than the Cagewrights initially estimated, Fetor remained here with the few servants that his allies and masters allowed him, and continued to bargain with the dracolich in area K18 for access to the soul pillars. Fetor uses the scrying ice to gather information about the outside world and report it to the mighty undead dragon. The dracolich in turn allows Fetor to study the soul pillars.

➤ **Fetor Abradius, Male Human, Wiz7/Loremaster 7:** CR 14; Medium humanoid (human); HD 14d4+28; hp 64; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +6, Grp +5; Atk +5 melee (1d4-1/19-20, dagger); Full Atk +5/+0 melee (1d4-1/19-20, dagger); SA spells; SQ applicable knowledge, dodge trick, greater lore +13, lore of true stamina, more newfound arcana; AL NE; Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +14; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 22, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +19, Decipher Script +23, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowl-



Fetor

1 square = 5 feet

WEST

Level 2

Entrance from
Area K9

K10

K12

Ice Lattice

K11

K13

K14

K15

Ice Lattice

K16

K17

K18

- KEY**
- K10. Ruined Chamber
 - K11. Cagewright Guardian
 - K12. The Scrying Chamber
 - K13. The Library of Souls
 - K14. The Twin Pillars
 - K15. Empty Coffins
 - K16. Feto's Bedchamber
 - K17. Summoning Chamber
 - K18. Tomb of the Bone Dragon

Ice Bridge Soul Pillars

Entrance

K18 (Side View)

edge (nature) +23, Knowledge (religion) +23, Knowledge (the planes) +23, Spellcraft +25 (+27 with scrolls), Use Magic Device +11 (+13 with scrolls).

Feats: Craft Wondrous Item, Death Frost Spell (see sidebar), Empower Spell, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge [arcana]), Spell Focus (necromancy).

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Demodand, Infernal, Spell Weaver.

Spells Prepared (4/6/7/5/5/4/4/2; save DC 16 + spell level); 0—detect magic (2), light, mage hand; 1st—alarm*, comprehend languages, mage armor*, magic missile (2), shield; 2nd—blindness/deafness (3), command undead, bear's endurance, mirror image, see invisibility; 3rd—halt undead, haste, lightning bolt, vampiric touch (2); 4th—confusion (2), dimension door (2), enervation; 5th—dominate person, lightning bolt (empowered), magic missile (quickened), vampiric touch (empowered); 6th—circle of death, disintegrate, greater dispel magic, mirror image (quickened); 7th—greater teleport, lightning bolt (quickened).

*This spell is already cast.

Spellbooks: Feto's spellbooks contain those spells he has prepared plus the following: 0—all cantrips; 1st—charm person, comprehend languages, identify; 4th—animate dead, scrying; 5th—cone of cold, teleport, wall of stone; 6th—create undead; 7th—control undead, finger of death, forcecage.

Familiar: Because Feto has seven loremaster levels that do not contribute to a familiar's power, he chooses not to keep one, seeing it more as a vulnerability than an asset.

Possessions: Ring of counterspells (dispel magic), metamagic rod of lesser empower spell, ring of protection +2, headband of intellect +2, amulet of natural armor +2, cloak of resistance +3, potion of cure serious wounds, scroll of dominate person, scroll of dimension door, dagger, spell component pouch, spellbooks, 300 gp.

Tactics: Feto has cast *alarm* and *mage armor* ahead of time. The mental *alarm* is centered on the mid-point of the passage leading to this room. In the likely even that the players trigger the *alarm* while approaching the room, Feto employs the following tactics.

- Round 1: Casts *bear's endurance* and quickened *mirror image*.
- Round 2: Casts *see invisibility* and draws *metamagic rod of lesser empower spell*.
- Round 3: Opens the door and casts an empowered *lightning bolt* down the hallway. If foes are still alive he casts a quickened *lightning bolt* and takes a 5-foot step behind the door.
- Round 4: Casts an empowered *magic missile* and a quickened *magic missile* on a divine spellcaster.
- Round 5: Casts *confusion*.
- Round 6: Attempts to pick off stragglers with *vampiric touch*.

K13. THE LIBRARY OF SOULS (EL 10)

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles), strong necromancy and strong evocation (library corpses).

- **Evil:** Strong (library corpses).

Fifteen corpses stand frozen in place, equally spaced along the length of this rectangular room. From head to toe, the corpses are covered in faintly glowing blue runes.

The room holds fifteen corpses; five each of dwarves, elves, and humans. Each is covered with spell weaver runes and glyphs. Anyone who successfully reads the glyphs learns that the corpses record the history of Karran-Kural and its spell weaver creators. The history is brief, but it outlines the spell weaver belief that a fundamental connection exists between the magical essences of death and cold and that the tomb was built to explore that strange connection.

Trap: The door to this room is locked with an amazing lock (Open Lock DC 40), and trapped with a powerful energy-draining trap. The trap activates as soon as anyone tries to open the door.

➤ **Energy Drain Trap:** CR 10, magic device; visual trigger (true seeing); automatic reset; Atk +8 ranged touch; spell effect (*energy drain*, 17th-level wizard, 2d4 negative levels for 24 hours, DC 23 Fortitude save negates); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34.

K14. THE TWIN PILLARS (EL 13)

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint abjuration (Orgo's full plate), faint conjuration (Orgo's potion), faint evocation (ceiling tiles), faint transmutation (Orgo's greataxe, gauntlets, and amulet), strong necromancy and strong evocation (soul pillars).

This room descends 20 feet below the level of the entry corridor and rises to a height of 40 feet above it. A 10-foot-wide walkway runs around the outside of the room. This rectangular room is dominated by two large pillars, each made of what looks like gray necrotic flesh. The chill in the room emanates from these pillars, and now and again a tortured visage forms and then fades on a pillar's surface with a faint whisper.

This rectangular room holds two soul pillars; horrid repositories of the spell weaver's lore. Unlike those in area K18, the soul pillars in this room hold only minor repositories of knowledge. Activating one of the pillars requires 10

minutes of concentration and a successful Intelligence check (DC 10). Anyone successfully activating these pillars can ask a series of questions of the undead spirits trapped within. The tortured spirits impart knowledge in the form of answers to yes/no questions, just as if the character had cast *contact outer plane* to contact a demideity. The character using the pillar must make a second Intelligence check to avoid Intelligence and Charisma loss just as if he had cast *contact outer plane*.

Creatures: Two powerful creatures (brought here with the help of Wee Jas clerics) now serve the Cagewright loremaster Fetor. They stay in this room to study the soul pillars at Fetor's orders.

➤ **Orgo Blacksword, Male Fiendish Half-Orc Ftr9:** CR 11; Medium humanoid (orc); HD 9d10+18; hp 67; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +9, Grp +14; Atk +17 melee (1d12+10/19-20/x3, +1 greataxe); Full Atk +17/+12 melee (1d12+10/19-20/x3, +1 greataxe); SA smite good 1/day (+9 melee damage); SQ damage reduction 10/magic, resistance to cold and fire 10, SR 14; AL LE; Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 21, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +12.

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Greater Weapon Focus (greataxe), Improved Critical (greataxe), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe).

Languages: Infernal.

Possessions: +1 full plate, +1 greataxe, gauntlets of ogre power, amulet of natural armor +1, potion of cure serious wounds, 250 gp.

➤ **Xail, Bone Naga:** CR 11; Large undead; HD 15d12; hp 97; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +7, Grp +14; Atk +9 melee (2d4+3 plus poison, sting); Full Atk +9 melee (2d4+3 plus poison, sting) and +4 melee (1d4+1 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA poison, spells; SQ detect thoughts, guarded thoughts, immune to cold, damage reduction 5/slashing or bludgeoning, spell resistance 23, telepathy, undead; AL LE; Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +11; Str 16, Dex 13, Con —, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Poison (Ex): Bite: Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Strength. Sting: Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Constitution. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Detect Thoughts (Su): A bone naga can continually detect the thoughts of those around it. This ability functions as the *detect thoughts* spell (caster level 9th; Will save DC 15), and it is always active.

Guarded Thoughts (Ex): Nagas are immune to any form of mind reading.

Telepathy (Su): A bone naga can communicate telepathically with any creature within 250 feet that has a language.

Skills: Bluff +21, Concentration +21, Diplomacy +7, Hide +15, Intimidate +23, Listen +20, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +21, Spot +20.



Feats: Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Empower Spell, Spell Focus (evocation).

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/7/6/6/5/3; save DC 13 + spell level); 0—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *message*, *open/close*, *read magic*; 1st—*charm person*, *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile**, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*; 2nd—*knock*, *mirror image*, *see invisibility*, *scorching ray**, *spider climb*; 3rd—*displacement*, *haste*, *fireball**, *icefane corpse***; 4th—*displacement*, *Evard's black tentacles*, *ice storm**, *wall of ice**; 5th—*cone of cold**, *overland flight*, *wall of force**; 6th—*Bigby's forceful hand**, *necrotic mist***; 7th—*waves of exhaustion*.

*Evocation Spell. The base save DC for these spells is 14 + spell level.

**New spell. See Appendix 2: The Lore of the Spell Weavers.

Tactics: In the likely event that the keen-eared bone naga becomes aware of the party before they become aware of it or Orgo, Xail casts *displacement* on itself and Orgo before the fight starts, following with *shield*, *overland flight*, and *spider climb* on itself. It casts *haste* on Orgo on the first round of combat, and then follows that the next round with *Evard's black tentacles*, attempting to trap most of the party in the corridor leading into the room. Xail then uses *wall of force* to contain the group within the area covered by the tentacles and *Bigby's forceful hand* to push anyone who escapes back into the tentacle-covered area. If possible, it lays a *necrotic mist* on top of the tentacles area and then blasts the group with empowered evocation spells such as *cone of cold* and *fireball*. If the tactic works, Xail uses *waves of exhaustion* and *ray of enfeeblement* to ensure that the characters remain trapped by the tentacles. Xail uses multiple *Evard's black tentacles* if necessary. Orgo knows this strategy and how deadly it can be, so he works to engage characters at the edge of the tentacle- and *necrotic mist*-covered area, hopefully preventing them from leaving the reach of the tentacles without exposing himself to their grasp.

K15. EMPTY COFFINS

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles).

This long hallway is lined with numerous iron doors, each of which is choked over with ice.

Each door opens into a small cell that houses an empty spell weaver coffin; an empty cylindrical hole in the floor about five feet in diameter and eight feet deep. Other than this, the rooms are bare and featureless. The Cagewrights used these rooms to store supplies, and there's a 10% chance per room that some mundane supplies (torches, dried food, frozen water, tools, etc.) remain in the empty coffin.

K16. FETOR'S BEDCHAMBER

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: To creatures entering the room and triggering the *alarm*—Fetor takes two rounds to cast defensive spells as detailed in the Tactics section for area K12 and then uses *dimension door* to come here to investigate.

Auras: Faint abjuration (*alarm*), faint evocation (ceiling tiles).

The original purpose for this chamber is unclear, but someone has certainly been using it recently as a campsite. A simple bed sits against the wall opposite a desk and chair. Large stacks of paper are piled on the desk.

Fetor sleeps and compiles notes in this chamber, but lately he's been spending the vast majority of his time in area K12. He moves back and forth between this room and area K12 via dimension door to save time and avoid the demodand in area K11. He used a scroll of *permanency* to make an *alarm* spell permanent here; if his room is entered, the alarm is triggered and he quickly comes to investigate.

Although Fetor carries his material wealth and spellbooks on his person, the papers on his desk contain extensive and valuable notes on the nature of the ruins, the soul pillars, and the Cagewrights themselves. These notes are complex, disorganized, and hold the observations of a cruel and subtle mind. Little can be gleaned from the notes upon casual study, but a character who studies the notes and makes a successful Decipher Script check can learn much. The information gained depends on the result of this check; each check requires eight hours of work. The PCs may well need to bring these notes to a friendly NPC who is skilled at Decipher Script to learn all there is to know from the notes. Meerthan is probably their best bet for this task.

- **DC 25:** Insight into the nature of the soul pillars to gain a +6 circumstance bonus on any Intelligence-based attempts made to retrieve knowledge.
- **DC 30:** The knowledge that a group called the Cagewrights seeks to put the *soulcages* to use in a powerful ritual. (However, the notes contain no details on individual Cagewrights or the group's final motives.)
- **DC 35:** The Cagewrights' ritual requires the presence of the Shackleborn, individuals born with a special invisible birthmark. An image of this birthmark appears in the text as well.

K17. SUMMONING CHAMBER

Light: Dim light from ceiling tiles (shadowy illumination).



Birthmark of the Shackleborn

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Auras: Faint evocation (ceiling tiles), moderate abjuration (summoning circle).

This empty chamber contains an intricate pentagram carved into the stony floor and inlaid with some form of metal. The pentagram seems to be empty.

The pentagram is a permanent *magic circle against evil* (focused inward) that the spell weavers used for their summoning rituals and similar rites.

K18. TOMB OF THE BONE DRAGON (EL 16)

Light: None.

Sound: None.

Reaction: To triggering of *alarm* spell, Vittriss Bale readies for combat.

Auras: Strong necromancy and strong evocation (soul pillars).

Evil: Overwhelming (Vittriss Bale).

Undead: Overwhelming (Vittriss Bale).

This room opens into a massive dome. A wide but broken walkway circles about a third of the room's circumference, and a thick ice bridge extends away from the door into the center of the room. Five massive pillars, composed of gray and necrotic flesh, stretch from the floor to the ceiling.

This huge chamber is the last great repository of spell weaver lore. It houses five massive soul pillars and is protected by a powerful dracolich, the most dangerous undead guardian the spell weavers ever created. The room itself has

make use of his *greater teleport* spell to flee. Given time to animate undead servants, hire a bodyguard or two, and learn spells targeted at the characters' weaknesses, the evil loremaster could become a dangerous recurring foe.

CAMPAIGN SEED: A LINGERING NEMESIS

Cifted with remarkable intelligence and cruelty, Fetor Abradius is not about to let his work or his life fall to a band of adventurers. Should the PCs gain the advantage, Fetor does not hesitate to

an almost spherical shape, excepting only its level floor. The only door to the chamber opens in the middle of the western wall onto a broken walkway that runs about a third of the circumference of the room. A dangerous ice bridge leads out to the mid-point central soul pillar, and a solid platform.

The ice bridge is nearly 10 feet thick, and can easily support the weight of the characters and the dracolich. Characters can move across the bridge at half speed with no trouble, but moving at full speed requires a Balance check (DC 15) or the creature falls prone.

A small ice lattice anchors the bridge and one of the soul pillars. The strands fill only a small area and are easily avoided, but characters touching one of the strands deliberately suffer the effects described at the start of this chapter.

Creature: Vittriss Bale is a powerful dracolich. Cruel and dangerous in life, centuries of boredom and imprisonment have made him even more so. Feter, the Cagewright loremaster with whom the dracolich has formed a tenuous alliance, is careful never to enter the room without first declaring his presence and ensuring that the dracolich is willing to let him examine the soul pillars unharmed.

➤ **Vittriss Bale, Male Adult Green Dracolich:** CR 16; Huge undead (air); HD 20d12, hp 130; Init +0, Init +1; Spd 40 ft., swim 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor); AC 30, touch 8, flat-footed 29; Base Atk +20; Grp +38; Atk +28 melee (4d6+10 plus 1d6 cold, bite), Full Atk +28 melee (4d6+10 plus 1d6 cold, bite) and +28 melee (2d6+5 plus 1d6 cold, 2 claws) and +28 melee (1d8+5+1d6 cold, 2 wings) and +28 melee (2d6+15+1d6 cold, tail slap); Space/Reach 15ft./10ft. (bite 15 ft.); SA breath weapon, control undead, frightful presence, paralyzing gaze, paralyzing touch, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ damage reduction 5/bludgeoning and magic, darkvision 120 ft., immune to acid, cold, electricity, sleep, paralysis, and polymorph, invulnerability, low-light vision, spell resistance 24, undead, water breathing; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +13, Will +14; Str 31, Dex 12, Con —, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 22.

Skills: Bluff +29, Concentration +17, Diplomacy +13, Disguise +6 (+8 acting), Hide +0, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowledge (nature) +26, Listen +25, Move Silently +20, Search +23, Sense Motive +11, Spot +25, Swim +18.

Feats: Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Multiattack*, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Multiattack, Power Attack, Tempest Breath*.

* From the *Draconomicon*. See Appendix 1: *Draconomicon* Feats.

Languages: Common, Infernal, Draconic, Spell Weaver.

Breath Weapon (Su): 50-ft. cone, damage 12d6 acid, Reflex DC 26 half. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Control Undead (Sp): Once every three days, Vittriss Bale can use *control undead* as the spell (caster level 15th). Vittriss cannot cast other spells while this ability is in effect.

Frightful Presence (Ex): 180-ft. radius, HD 19 or less, Will DC 26 negates.

Invulnerability (Su): If Vittriss Bale is slain, his spirit immediately returns to his phylactery, from where it may attempt to possess a suitable corpse.

Paralyzing Gaze (Su): Paralysis for 2d6 rounds, 40 ft., Fortitude DC 26 negates. The save DC is Charisma-based. If the saving throw is successful, the character is forever immune to the gaze of this particular dracolich.

Paralyzing Touch (Su): A creature struck by any of Vittriss Bale's physical attacks must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 26) or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*suggestion* (DC 19). Caster level 6th.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7*/5; save DC 16 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *message*, *read magic*; 1st—*alarm*, *mage armor*, *shield*, *ray of enfeeblement*; 2nd—*mirror image*, *spider climb*.

*Vittriss Bale keeps an *alarm* spell cast on the corridor leading to this chamber, so assume that he has cast two of his 1st-level spells before he even begins prepping for the combat with the characters.

Tactics: Despite his long isolation and mental instability, Vittriss retains his cruelty and combat skill. When Vittriss becomes aware of the PCs, he readies himself with *mage armor*, *shield*, *mirror image*, and *spider climb*. He then clings to the wall above the door and waits to surprise the characters. Vittriss is careful to use the room's terrain to his advantage, capitalizing on his ability to fly and cling to the walls with the *spider climb* spell.

Treasure: The spell weavers saw fit to furnish their captive dracolich with a small horde of treasure. At the bottom of the room, amid the ice and rubble, the characters find 5,361 gp, 1,739 pp, 5 small diamonds (925 gp each), 5 large diamonds (1,500 gp each), three platinum rings set with diamonds (1,750 gp each), a platinum scepter set with emeralds (5,000 gp), and a matching platinum crown set with emeralds (7,000 gp). They also find two magic items: an *amulet of health* +2 and a +2 *keen bastard sword*.

Development: Having been created, bound, and isolated by the spell weavers, Vittriss Bale has never had the chance to stow a draconic corpse for possession should he be defeated. If killed, the dracolich's spirit retreats to its phylactery, a small jewel-inlaid silver box worth 2,500 gp. It remains trapped in the phylactery until a dragon corpse is brought within 90 feet, at which point he can possess the corpse and reform his true body in 2d4 days. If the phylactery is destroyed or rendered nonmagic, Vittriss Bale is forever destroyed.

❖ **Vittriss Bale's Phylactery:** Hardness 20, hp 40, Break DC 40.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

"Secrets of the Soul Pillars" ends when the PCs defeat Vittriss Bale and gain access to the soul pillars of Karran-Kural. They should have learned during the course of the



adventure that the temple of Wee Jas is up to something sinister, but more importantly, they should have learned of the Cagewrights and their plans for Cauldron. If the PCs report this knowledge to their NPC friends, these allies become quite distraught and concerned. Many of them begin their own research into what's going on behind the scenes in Cauldron, and some of the information they soon uncover plays a major role in the next adventure in this series, "Lords of Oblivion." If the PCs' enemies learn of this information, nothing much changes. Vhalantru and the Cagewrights have already decided that something must be done now to stop the PCs, and are already taking actions to solve this situation once and for all. The PCs may or may not realize it, but they will soon come under the direct attack of the Cagewrights themselves.

Until then, the PCs should now have some time to rest, relax, create magic items, and otherwise recover from the trials they have endured in the Cathedral of Wee Jas and the ruins of Karran-Kural.

APPENDIX 1: DRACONOMICON FEATS

The Improved Multiattack and the Tempest Breath feats first appeared in the *Draconomicon*.

IMPROVED MULTIATTACK [GENERAL]

You are particularly adept at using all of your natural weapons at once.

Prerequisites: Three or more natural weapons, Multiattack.

Benefit: Your secondary attacks with natural weapons have no penalty on the attack roll. You still add only 1/2 your Strength bonus, if any, to damage dealt.

Normal: Without this feat, your secondary natural attacks are made at a -5 penalty (or a -2 penalty if you have the Multiattack feat).

TEMPEST BREATH [METABREATH]

You can make your breath weapon strike with the force of a windstorm.

Prerequisites: Str 13, breath weapon, Power Attack, size Large or larger.

Benefit: When you use your breath weapon, in addition to its normal effects, creatures in the area are affected as though struck by wind effects. The force of the wind depends on your size, as indicated below. For the effects of high winds, see Table 3-24 on page 95 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*.

Dragon Size**Wind Force**

Large

Severe

Huge

Windstorm

Gargantuan

Hurricane

Colossal

Tornado

Because your breath weapon has an instantaneous duration, creatures ignore the checked effect unless they are airborne (in which case they are blown back 1d6x5 feet).

When you use this feat, add +1 to the number of rounds you must wait before using your breath weapon again.

APPENDIX 2: SPELL WEAVER LORE

The spell weavers built the tomb complex called Karran-Kural to study the relationship between death and cold, and to turn this knowledge to their one passion—magical power. Although the true fruits of this research might well be lost, the malignant auras of the entombed spell weavers, the unwholesome lore that resides in the necrotic pillars, and the strange magical energies that suffuse the ruin itself still propagate a small fraction of their discoveries.

This lore comprises two feats and three spells, all of which are described below. Once a creature has spent at least a day in the ruins of Karran-Kural, the feats and spells become available options, provided the creature has the requisite levels and abilities.

DEATH FROST SPELL [METAMAGIC]

Your mastery of necromantic magic combined with your understanding of the strange energies that suffuse the ruins of Karran-Kural allow you to enhance necromancy spells so that they inflict cold damage in addition to their normal effects.

Prerequisites: Spell Focus (necromancy), must have spent at least 1 day in the ruins of Karran-Kural.

Benefit: A Death Frost spell inflicts an extra 2d6 points of cold damage against any creature affected by the spell. If the

spell allows a saving throw to partially or completely resist its effects, the same saving throw applies to the extra cold damage. For example, *ghoul touch* allows a Fortitude save to resist its effects completely, and therefore a successful save against a Death Frost *ghoul touch* negates both the extra cold damage and the spell's regular effects. If the enhanced spell has lingering effects, the extra cold damage occurs only at the onset of the spell's effects. Spells enhanced by Death Frost gain the cold descriptor. A Death Frost spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

FLESH OF THE ICE TOMB [GENERAL]

Your exposure to the strange energies that suffuse the ruins of Karran-Kural and long hours of near masochistic exposure to extreme cold have left your death-tainted flesh highly resistant to cold. You easily resist the damage caused by even extreme or magical cold.

Prerequisites: Tomb-Tainted Soul (from *Libris Mortis*), Endurance, must have spent at least 1 day in the ruins of Karran-Kural.

Benefit: Treat all cold damage you suffer as nonlethal damage.

RIME

Necromancy [Cold]

Level: Sor/Wiz 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You infuse the target's body with the unwholesome chill of the grave. This chill dulls the creature's reactions and weakens its stamina. If the saving throw fails, the target suffers a -4 penalty to Dexterity and a -4 penalty on Fortitude saves.

Material Component: A pinch of dirt from a grave dug during a winter month.

CAMPAIGN SEED: SECRETS OF THE SOUL PILLARS

The soul pillars hold great stores of knowledge, and you can use them to impart a great deal of information to the players. Each use of the soul pillars requires a minute of concentration and an Intelligence check.

Long-term use of soul pillars exposes a character to dangerous necromantic energy, as befits the disturbing practice of learning from tortured undead souls. Feel free to create strange and detrimental side effects for characters who work too long with the soul pillars; a gradual shift in alignment to evil might be one possible result.

The soul pillars dispense their foul knowledge in small and erratic spurts. A successful activation allows the user to pull knowledge

from the undead spirits trapped in the soul pillar. This works like the *contact outer plane* spell contacting a greater deity (caster level 20). Each use of a soul pillar requires a DC 16 Intelligence check to avoid having the user's Intelligence and Charisma reduced. This check follows the rules and restrictions of *contact outer plane*. Feto's notes on the soul pillars provide a +6 competence bonus on this check.

Unlike *contact outer plane*, a soul pillar is not limited to one-word answers. You should feel free to dispense cryptic phrases or even longer clues in addition to the one-word answers given to most questions. As an example, if a character asks a soul pillar about *soulcages*, the response might be:

"When cages of metal hold souls of pain the prison will open."

ICEFANE CORPSE

Necromancy [Cold]

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Area: One undead creature

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You infuse the affected undead with a powerful burst of necromantic cold. Affected undead gain the following benefits:

- One of the undead creature's natural attacks becomes infused with supernatural cold, and inflicts 1d6 additional points of cold damage on a hit.
- Fire resistance 10.
- Any time the undead suffers cold damage, it is instead healed for an amount of hit points equal to the damage it would have suffered. Any resistance to cold that the undead creature might have does not reduce the amount of healing that it receives when exposed to cold damage.

Material Component: A wight's thumbnail.

NECROTIC MIST

Necromancy [Cold]

Level: Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: Fog spreads in 20-ft. radius, 20 ft. high

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude partial

Spell Resistance: Yes

A chill black mist seeps from the ground. The mist carries with it an unwholesome chill. It slows and freezes living creatures caught in its grasp, while at the same time healing undead.

Living creatures in the cloud suffer 2d6 points of cold damage per round on your turn (no save). Upon entering the cloud or at the beginning of each round spent within the cloud, a living creature must make a Fortitude saving throw or become *slowed*.

Undead within the cloud heal 5 hit points of damage per round.

The mist obscures all sight, including darkvision, beyond 5 feet. A creature within 5 feet has concealment (attacks have a 20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker can't use sight to locate the target).

Material Component: A small piece of a tombstone dedicated to a creature that became undead after being buried for at least 1 month. Ω

Jesse Decker took a pass on a career in biochemistry for the jet-set, limousine lifestyle of the gaming industry. He now works as a game designer at Wizards of the Coast. In the past he worked as an editor on Dragon Magazine, and his writing credits include Hammer & Helm from Green Ronin as well as the upcoming Unearthed Arcana and other titles from Wizards of the Coast.

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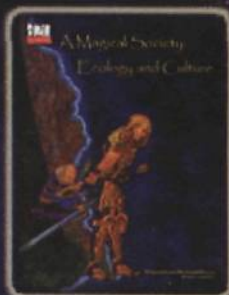
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FACES OF CAULDRON

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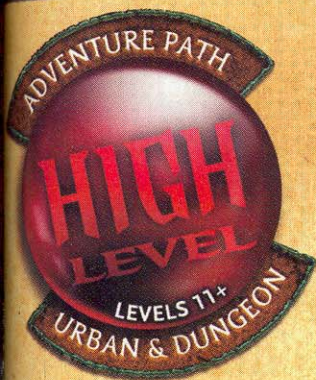
1. Maavu Arlinal
2. Jil
3. Jenya Urikas
4. Alek Tercival
5. Celeste

6. Embril Aloustinai
7. Ike Iverson
8. Fellian Shard
9. Fario Ellegoth
10. Shensen Tesseril

11. Crazy Jared
12. Orbius Vhalantru
13. Severen Navalant
14. Skylar Krewis
15. Terseon Skellerang

16. Nidrama
17. Cora Lathennire
18. Zachary Aslaxin II
19. Todd Vanderboren
20. Annah Taskerhill





LORDS of OBLIVION

BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

LORDS OF OBLIVION

ARTWORK BY PETER BERGTING • CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

"Lords of Oblivion" is a *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*® adventure designed for four 13th-level characters. The characters should reach 14th level during the adventure, and 15th level by its conclusion. When the PCs earn enough experience to gain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure. The characters will be too involved in their mission to break from the course of the adventure to train, and they might not find opportunities to buy and sell magic items or prepare for a specific encounter.

This adventure is seventh part of the Shackled City Adventure Path that began with "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97), "Flood Season" (*DUNGEON* #98), "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), and "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" (*DUNGEON* #109). If you're playing through these adventures in sequence, the heroes are familiar with the town of Cauldron and should recognize many of the NPCs mentioned in the adventure.

PREPARATION

To run this adventure, you need the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. Some of the monsters appearing in this adventure are described in the *Fiend Folio*. Most of the monsters taken from this book have full stat blocks, but for one (the farastu demodands), the *Fiend Folio* is necessary. If you don't have this book, you can replace the farastus with hezrou demons from the *Monster Manual*.

Before you run "Lords of Oblivion," take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the statistics and abilities of the various NPCs and monsters in the adventure. These antagonists use tactics and magic items in combat, and the encounters can be challenging for even an experienced DM to run.

BACKGROUND

Evil forces are gathering in the town of Cauldron. A power-hungry beholder named Vhalantru, disguised as an influential noble in town, spent the past several years working with a secret organization called the Cagewrights. The Cagewrights are making final prepara-

tions for a complex ritual to transform Cauldron into a gate-town with a permanent portal between the Material Plane and the outer plane of Carceri. If the ritual is completed, an incarcerated horde of fiends trapped on Carceri's first layer escape the prison plane, ravage Cauldron, and set forth to conquer the surrounding area. Although not himself a Cagewright, Vhalantru has been promised lordship over Cauldron once the portal is established. To prepare for his new role, Vhalantru recently underwent a transformation of his own.

Vhalantru borrowed a set of scrolls from the Cagewrights describing a ritual called the *Zar'ilkoth Tarteros*. The ritual enables Vhalantru to absorb the spirit of a slain demodand and gain its powers. The ritual also transforms Vhalantru's body, giving it shator-like qualities. To complete the ritual, Vhalantru must sacrifice the souls of four insane beings to the powers of Carceri—a small price to pay for the spirit of a dead demodand.

Most of the Cagewrights are busy making final preparations for the ritual to turn Cauldron into a gate-town. A local Cagewright named Thifirane Rhiavadi has invited some of the worst criminal elements in the land—slavers, mercenaries, thieves, and even evil adventurers—to a secret meeting at her estate in Cauldron. There she informs them of the Cagewrights' plans, offers them a chance to help reshape the world, and guarantees them positions of power in exchange for their loyalty and complicity.

If they act swiftly, the heroes can storm House Rhiavadi and smash Thifirane's evil covenant. They can also fight their way through Oblivion, Vhalantru's subterranean lair, and confront the beholder for a final showdown.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs begin the adventure in Cauldron, having just explored the Ruins of Karran-Kural (as described in "Secrets of the Soul Pillars") or completed some other dangerous quest. Dark clouds fill the sky, reflecting the somber mood of the troubled townsfolk. Severen Navalant, the lord mayor, is missing and presumed dead. Contingents of mercenaries help the local militia patrol the streets, quelling riots and keeping order in the name of Navalant's

self-appointed successor, Lord Orbius Vhalantru. However, not everyone is pleased with the change in leadership. Raised taxes and a sharp increase in criminal activity have fueled rumors that Cauldron's leaders are corrupt or simply incompetent.

Cauldron's woes notwithstanding, the heroes might have good cause to suspect Lord Vhalantru of evil-doing. He has so far remained an enigma, sequestering himself within his estate and rarely venturing into the public eye. The Striders of Fharlanghn, who seek to locate and eradicate the Cagewrights, suspect that Vhalantru knows something about the Cagewrights' activities. The Striders have been spying on Vhalantru ever since the lord mayor disappeared, but they have learned precious little.

The adventure begins when members of the Last Laugh thieves' guild capture one of the Striders of Fharlanghn, a half-elf named Skiriol Slyblade, who was watching the estates of Lord Vhalantru and Lady Rhiavadi. Unknown to the Last Laugh, Skiriol is linked telepathically by a *Rary's telepathic bond* spell to Meerthan Eliothorn, leader of the Striders in Cauldron. Meerthan asks the heroes to rescue Skiriol from the Last Laugh safe house, where he is being interrogated. The heroes must overcome the safe house's traps and rogues to reach Skiriol. They must also contend with a villain from their past—a rogue named Jil (see "Life's Bazaar" in *DUNGEON* #97). In exchange for her freedom, Jil provides the heroes with information about a secret gathering at Lady Rhiavadi's estate—a meeting where the Cagewrights' plans for Cauldron will be fully revealed. The heroes might infiltrate House Rhiavadi or find some other means of entry. Once inside the estate, they must contend with Lady Thifirane Rhiavadi and her guests, including the Last Laugh guildmaster, a notorious tiefling slaver, a cleric of Nerull from the nearby city of Sasserine, an unscrupulous dwarven merchant, and a vampire from the Underdark. If things go horribly awry, Thifirane flees to Oblivion, a subterranean sanctuary where Vhalantru is making final preparations for the ritual that will transform him into a Tarterian beholder.

CAULDRON

The town of Cauldron is built within the rim of a dormant volcano. Four concentric avenues ring a central lake, and a fortified wall encloses the town along the caldera's rim. Four main gates allow traffic in and out of Cauldron. The town's buildings are built primarily out of volcanic rock and timber. Refer to the map of Cauldron for a list of important sites from this adventure (and from previous ones). For more information about Cauldron and its inhabitants, see previous installments of the Shackled City Adventure Path.

👑 Cauldron (large town): Conventional; AL LE; population 3,850 adults; 3,000-gp limit; Assets 600,000 gp; Mixed (77% human, 8% halfling, 5% gnome, 3% dwarf, 4% half-orc, 2% elf, 1% half-elf).

RUMORS IN CAULDRON

Cauldron is unsettled of late, and not because of the amassing storm clouds in the skies overhead. The town is rife with ill rumors concerning everything from the recent rash of riots to brewing conflicts between the local temples. Hundreds of worried citizens have fled Cauldron, fearing that the recent turmoil is but a portent of some horrible event yet to unfold.

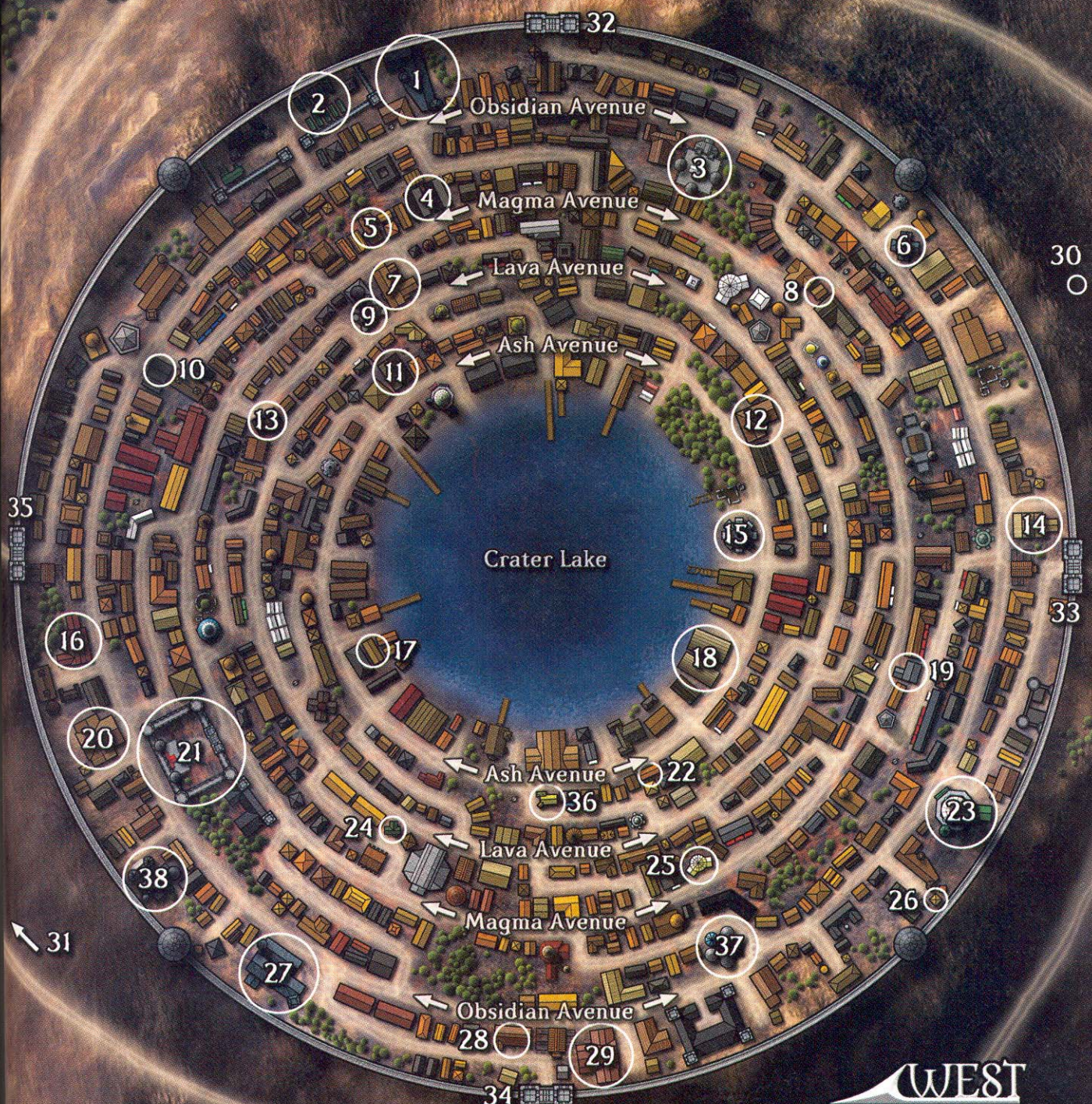
Cauldron's remaining citizens have grown close-lipped among all but their most trusted friends. The PCs find information harder to come by than before. A successful Gather Information check (DC 20) uncovers one of the following rumors. Anyone attempting such a Gather Information check can also make a Sense Motive check (DC 13) to detect the undercurrent of anger and fear running through the town's inhabitants.

Roll d10

- 1 Brigands ambushed and killed the lord mayor as he traveled to Sasserine to petition that city for aid. (False; Vhalantru killed the lord mayor in Cauldron and spread false rumors about his trip to Sasserine.)
- 2 Lord Vhalantru masterminded the lord mayor's disappearance to seize control of the town. Various greedy nobles have sworn fealty to Vhalantru, and no one—not even Captain Skellerang of the town guard—has the power or influence to oppose him. (True)
- 3 The Temple of Wee-Jas was recently stormed, its clerics massacred! Embril Aloustinai, the high priestess of the temple, was away when her temple was attacked, although word of the slaughter has already reached Sasserine. (True; the High Temple of Wee-Jas in Sasserine has denounced the attack but secretly blames Embril for abandoning her church in its time of need.)
- 4 A young boy abducted from the Lantern Street Orphanage has gone missing again, only months after his safe return. (True; members of the Last Laugh thieves' guild abducted the boy, one Terrem Kharatys, because he is a Shackleborn. The Cagewrights need Terrem to complete their portal ritual.)
- 5 A strange affliction is driving some citizens completely mad. The town's small jail is filled to the rafters with howling lunatics, and guard patrols are finding more of them every day. One poor soul was dragged down Obsidian Avenue screaming "I am Adimarchus!" or some damn fool thing. (True; the Cagewrights' preparations for turning Cauldron into a gate-town have yielded some strange side effects, including flashes of temporary insanity among certain members of the local populace.)

0 400 800 1200 1600 2000
Feet

CAULDRON



- | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Town Hall | 11 Tipped Tankard Tavern | 21 Lord Mayor's Residence | 31 Half-Orc Mercenary Camp |
| 2 Town Guard Barracks | 12 Lantern Street Orphanage | 22 Weer's Elixirs | 32 North Gate |
| 3 Church of St. Cuthbert | 13 Skie's Treasury | 23 Church of Wee Jas | 33 East Gate |
| 4 Maavu Warehouses | 14 Coy Nixie | 24 Ghelve's Locks | 34 South Gate |
| 5 Slippery Eel Tavern | 15 Lakeside Pavillion | 25 Church of Pelor | 35 West Gate |
| 6 Cusp of Sunrise | 16 Vanderboten Manor | 26 Westkey's Map Market | 36 The Brass Trumpet |
| 7 Maavu's Main Warehouse | 17 Minuta's Board | 27 Taskerbill Manor | 37 House Rhiavadi |
| 8 Tygot's Old Things | 18 Sure Foot Livory | 28 Zanathor's Provisions | 38 House Vhalantru |
| 9 Maavu Imports | 19 Gurnezarn's Smithy | 29 Lathenmire Manor | |
| 10 Drunken Morkoth Inn | 20 Temple of Lordly Might (Kord) | 30 Secret Entrance to Lava Tubes | |

6 Gold and silver coins minted with a grinning jester face are becoming more popular and prolific in Cauldron of late. Most legitimate establishments accept these “jester coins” as though they were the sovereign’s gold or silver. (True; these “jester coins,” minted by the Last Laugh thieves’ guild, are slowly flooding the local economy.)

CHAPTER ONE: THE BRASS TRUMPET

The characters begin the adventure in Cauldron, enjoying some down time and catching up on rumors. At some opportune moment, the PCs are invited to meet with the leader of the local chapter of an organization called the Striders of Fharlanghn; one Meerthan Eliothlorn, at the Drunken Morkoth Inn. Meerthan needs their help rescuing an agent who was captured while spying on House Vhalantru from a Last Laugh safe house before he cracks under interrogation and reveals the extent of the Striders’ activities in Cauldron.

MEETING MEERTHAN

This adventure assumes that the PCs have already met and befriended at least one Strider of Fharlanghn agent in a prior adventure. Possible NPCs include Fario Ellegoth (male half-elf Ftr6/Rog6), Fellian Shard (male half-elf Rog3/Clr9–Fharlanghn), or Shensen Tesseril (female half-drow Mnk1/Brdr1/Drdr1). You should pick the Strider that the PCs trust the most to approach them. If the PCs haven’t met any of them, they have heard of the PCs’ exploits and decided that they are the best choice available to rescue their captured ally.

Whichever Strider approaches the PCs, they have instructions to accompany the characters to the Drunken Morkoth Inn, where Meerthan Eliothlorn waits to speak with them. Upon arriving at Meerthan’s upstairs room, the Strider knocks four times on the door before opening it, then gestures for the PCs to enter. Beyond the door awaits a cozy, well-appointed chamber with a desk, a bed, and walls hung with mounted hunting trophies. A dwarf wearing a rich vest and golden circlet sits in a padded leather chair facing the door, his hands clasped tightly under his chin in a contemplative manner.

Meerthan Eliothlorn (male half-elf Wizi6) uses a *hat of disguise* to appear as a dwarf, but he reveals his true form once he and the characters are alone; that of a cloaked, 45-year-old half-elf with hazel eyes and a small crescent moon-shaped tattoo under his right eye. Meerthan cuts to the chase:

“One of my agents, a half-elf named Skiriol, was captured while spying on House Rhiavadi. He’s being detained and interrogated in a Last Laugh safe house. Normally, this wouldn’t be a problem. I keep a *bracelet of friends*, a magic item I can use to *teleport* my agents

out of harm’s way in an instant. However, Skiriol gets into more than his fair share of trouble and, well, I can’t use the bracelet on him a second time.

“Members of the Last Laugh are interrogating Skiriol as we speak. He has resisted their torture so far, but he can’t hold out much longer. With the help of a spell called *telepathic bond*, I’ve managed to remain in contact with him. The Last Laugh doesn’t know. Please forgive my presumption, but I’ve already told him that help is on the way. When you return, we can discuss what Skiriol has learned from his reconnaissance.

“The Brass Trumpet—an abandoned inn on Ash Avenue. That’s where they’re holding him.”

Meerthan is willing to entertain questions—to a point. Every minute wasted is another minute Skiriol must endure the tortures of the Last Laugh’s vaunted interrogators. Thanks to the *telepathic bond* with Skiriol, Meerthan knows everything of consequence concerning Skiriol’s last mission. At this point, Meerthan is more concerned that Skiriol might divulge information about the Striders and their activities in Cauldron.

Meerthan knows that Skiriol’s captors didn’t take the time to blindfold him, clearly because they intend to kill him once the interrogation is complete. The Last Laugh’s carelessness has allowed Skiriol to pass along the location of the safe house, a general description of areas **Br**, **B2**, **B4**, **B5**, **B7**, **B8**, and **B9**, and an estimated number of Last Laugh members inside (Skiriol counted at least ten goons, and he saw fifteen beds in area **B5**). He can also describe the four Last Laugh villains who captured him (see the descriptions of Jil, Finch, Mokaius, and Xendro, below). All of the Last Laugh members paint their faces white and black to resemble a grinning harlequin’s visage. The description of the lead captor (a rascal of a woman standing 5 feet, 3 inches tall with black hair and dark brown eyes) may be familiar to the PCs who participated in the first installment of the Adventure Path series (see “Life’s Bazaar,” *DUNGEON* #97).

If the characters demand money for their services, Meerthan offers a payment of 2,000 gp but can be bargained up to 5,000 gp with a successful Diplomacy check (DC 25).

THE LAST LAUGH SAFE HOUSE

The Last Laugh’s safe house in Cauldron is an abandoned inn called the Brass Trumpet. An iron sign set with a brass trumpet hangs outside the front doors, which appear newer than the rest of the building (the Last Laugh replaced the inn’s original doors with fortified ones). The building’s walls are made of mortared volcanic rock, and all of the windows on the ground floor have been bricked up. The windows on the second floor have solid wooden frames and panes of opaque, smoked glass. The second-

story floor (first-story ceiling) is made of timber. Unless noted otherwise, all ground-floor ceilings are 10 feet high, and all second-floor areas have 15-foot-high ceilings with heavy rafters. Doors always open into rooms; a door connecting two rooms always opens into the smaller room.

A Last Laugh thug stationed in area **B8** watches the front doors through a small triangular hole cut into the glass of one second-story window. If the characters approach the building without making any attempts at concealment, the sentry automatically spots them and quietly alerts Finch, his boss (see area **B8**), who in turn alerts the rest of the safe house.

Characters who knock on the front doors receive no response from within.

❖ **Strong Wooden Doors (locked):** 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 25; superior lock (hardness 15; hp 30; Open Lock DC 40).

B1. ENTRY (EL 8)

Light: Three torches in sconces (two flanking the double doors on the north wall, one in the middle of the south wall).

Sound: Thugs quietly lurking on the other side of the arrow slits (Listen DC = the archers' Move Silently check).

Reaction: To intruders crossing the room and entering area **B2**—the two archers closest to the ladders alert the Last Laugh members in area **B8**.

This 20-foot-wide, 15-foot-deep room contains no furnishings. Arrow slits perforate the western and eastern walls—three arrow slits per wall.

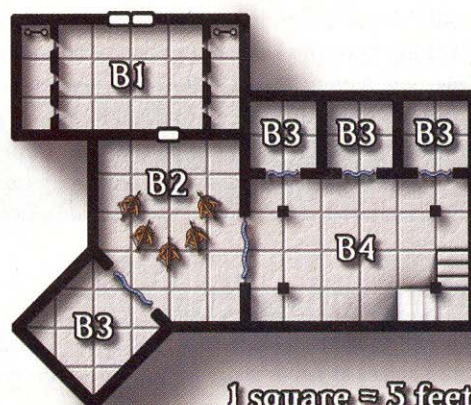
A successful Search check made to notice unusual stonework (DC 15) reveals that the walls with the arrow slits are recent constructions. Behind each row of arrow slits lies a narrow passage with a wooden ladder at the north end. Each ladder leads up to an unlocked trap door in the ceiling that opens into area **B8** above.

Creatures: Six Last Laugh thugs lurk behind the arrow slits, three per side. The arrow slits provide a +10 cover bonus to the thugs' AC and grant a +4 cover bonus on Reflex saves.

➤ **Last Laugh Thugs, male human Rogz/Warz (6):** CR 3; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d6+2d8+4; hp 25 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3;



Second Floor



Ground Floor

1 square = 5 feet
WEST

Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (2d4+3/18–20, falchion) or +5 ranged (1d6+2/×3, composite shortbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +5, Disable Device +4, Disguise +2, Hide +6, Gather Information +3, Intimidate +2, Jump +5, Knowledge (local) +4, Listen +7, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +5, Search +4, Spot +7, Tumble +6.

Feats: Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (falchion).

Language: Common.

DIVINATION SPELLS

Characters digging for information about Vhalantru or the Cagewrights can use *divination* and *commune* spells to answer their questions. If they don't have access to these spells, they probably know NPCs who do (such as Jenya Urikas at the Church of St. Cuthbert).

The Cagewrights have been careful to hide their activities from prying eyes and divination magic. They lurk in *Mor-*

denkainen's private sanctums and place *sequester* spells on their *soulcages* and Shackleborn prisoners. Even their plans cannot be gleaned through magic. However, the characters can gain cryptic clues or yes/no answers regarding Vhalantru and Thiffrane Rhiavadi's strange new house guests. Don't be afraid to let the characters use such spells, but be aware that they might veer off in unexpected directions while pursuing various leads.

Possessions: Leather armor, falchion, composite shortbow (+2 Str), quiver of 20 arrows, pouch of 2d6 gp and 2d6 sp (all minted with the jester emblem of the Last Laugh guild).

B2. CROSSBOW BATTERY TRAP (EL 8)

Reaction: To sound of crossbows firing (Listen DC 12)—the rogues lurking in area B4 attempt to ambush intruders as they pass through the curtain.

This room contains a Trap that triggers when the north door is opened. Two heavy black curtains cover openings into areas B3 and B4.

Trap: Last Laugh rogues have rigged five heavy crossbows to iron tripods in the middle of the room. Fishing lines have been strung from the crossbows' firing mechanisms to the northern door. Any creature that opens the door without first disabling the trap triggers it. The trap can be easily disabled from inside the room simply by cutting the fishing lines (no Disable Device check required).

➤ **Crossbow Battery Trap:** CR 8; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +15 ranged (1d10 plus poison/19–20, 5 heavy crossbows); poison (blue whinnis, Fortitude DC 14 negates, initial 1 Con, secondary unconsciousness for 1d3 hours); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 23.

B3. SPIKED ROOMS (EL 5)

The Last Laugh guild has lined the floors of these rooms with grids of iron spikes as tall as short sword blades—dozens of them. These blades are part of the traps in area B6.

B4. COMMON ROOM (EL 7)

Light: Four torches in sconces (one mounted to each pillar).

Sound: Thugs hiding in the room (Listen DC = the thugs' Move Silently check).

Reaction: To sounds of battle in this room—two thugs from area B5 come to help in one round.

This room used to be the inn's common room. The room still contains some wooden chairs and tables, but the fireplace that once stood against the south wall has been dismantled and removed from the premises. Four timber pillars support the ceiling, and curtained alcoves line the north wall. A creaky wooden staircase leads up to the second level, and anyone attempting to climb the stairs takes a –5 penalty on Move Silently checks.

Creatures: Four Last Laugh thugs hide in the shadows, two on either side of the western curtain and two under the stairs.

➤ **Last Laugh Thugs, male human Rog2/War2 (4):** hp 23, 22, 19, 19; see area B1.

B5. LAST LAUGH HARLEQUINS (EL 12)

Light: Two torches in sconces (mounted on the south wall).

Sound: Harlequins hiding in the room (Listen DC = the thugs' Move Silently check).

Reaction: To sounds of combat—the thugs in area B4 clamber up the stairs to join in the fray, arriving in one round.

Auras: Moderate (2 *amulets of health* +2, DC 19 transmutation), faint (2 *potions of shield of faith*, DC 16 abjuration), faint (2 *potions of mage armor*, DC 16 conjuration), faint (20 +1 *bullets*, DC 16 transmutation).

This room serves as barracks for the Last Laugh thugs assigned to guard the safe house. Fifteen wooden cots are spread around the room.

Characters who inspect the northwest corner of the room and succeed at a Search check (DC 25) find a well-hidden secret door (leading to area B7).

Creatures: This area contains four Last Laugh thugs and a pair of 24-year-old monk/assassins named Mokaius and Xendro. They are twins with shaved heads, faces painted half-white and half-black, and lithe builds.

➤ **Mokaius and Xendro, male human Mnk6/Asn2:** CR 8; Medium humanoid (human); HD 6d8+2d6+16; hp 56 each; Init +3; Spd 50 ft.; AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +6; Atk +7 melee (1d8+1, unarmed strike) or +9 ranged (1d4+2, sling with +1 *bullet*) or +9 ranged (1d2+1 plus poison, masterwork shuriken); Full Atk +5/+5 melee (1d8+1, unarmed strike) or +9 ranged (1d4+2, sling with +1 *bullet*) or +9 ranged (1d2+1 plus poison, masterwork shuriken); SA death attack (DC 12), flurry of blows, ki strike (magic), poison use, sneak attack +1d6, stunning fist 4/day (DC 17); SQ evasion, purity of body, slow fall 30 ft., still mind, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +6 (+7 against poison), Ref +11, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +8, Climb +4, Disable Device +2, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +8, Hide +11, Jump +18, Listen +5, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +5, Search +2, Spot +5, Tumble +12, Use Rope +5 (involving bindings).

Feats: Combat Reflexes^B, Dodge, Improved Trip^B, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Stunning Fist^B, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Language: Common.

Possessions: *Amulet of health* +2, *potion of mage armor*, *potion of shield of faith* (+2), sling with 20 +1 *bullets*, 5 masterwork shuriken (coated with large scorpion venom; Fortitude DC 18 negates, initial and secondary 1d6 Str), monk's outfit, 1 sp (minted with a jester emblem; used to bypass the magical ward in area B8).

➤ **Last Laugh Thugs, male human Rog2/War2 (4):** hp 20, 17; see area B1.

Tactics: Mokaius and Xendro have orders from Jil not to allow intruders to find or pass through the secret door leading to area B7. They cartwheel and leap about the room like acrobats when closing in for the kill, counting on the thugs to help them flank foes.

If they hear sounds of combat in area **B4**, Mokaius and Xendro send the two thugs to investigate. They and two other thugs remain here to guard the secret door, hiding in the shadows until intruders move into the room. The twins' relatively low Intelligence makes them suboptimal assassins (they can't cast spells, and the DC to resist their death strike ability isn't particularly high), but they put their poisoned shuriken and Stunning Fist feats to good use in combat.

B6. EMPTY BEDROOM (EL 5)

Reaction: To the sound of the weakened floor collapsing—every creature in the Last Laugh safe house is alerted. The occupants of areas **B4** and **B5** investigate immediately, while the inhabitants of areas **B8** and **B9** stay where they are.

All of the furniture has been removed from these rooms, and a fine layer of dust covers the wooden floor.

Members of the Last Laugh have skillfully weakened sections of the floor so that they collapse under any significant weight. These weakened sections are indicated on the map.

Trap: When one or more characters step on a weakened section of floor, the floor collapses underfoot, dropping the characters onto a bed of iron spikes 10 feet below (see area **B3** for details). Characters who enter the room through a window automatically step onto a weakened section of floor. A successful Reflex save (DC 18) allows an affected character to avoid the fall (by grabbing hold of a sturdier section of the floor). The weakened floor can be detected with a successful Search check (DC 24), but not with mere prodding. Moving around the outside walls of the room without causing the floor to collapse requires a successful Balance check (DC 15).

➤ **Bed of Spikes:** CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; no reset; 10 ft. deep (1d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-foot squares); spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d6 spikes per target for 1d6+5 each); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC —.

B7. WARDED SECRET PASSAGE

Reaction: To *alarm* spell being triggered—Jil prepares an action to deliver a coup de grace to her prisoner the instant his would-be saviors enter the interrogation room. The occupants of area **B8** take up hiding positions.

Auras: Faint (*alarm* spell, DC 16 abjuration).

Two well-made secret doors (Search DC 25) conceal this 5-foot-wide, 10-foot-long dark passage. The northern secret door makes a grinding noise when opened, loud enough to alert the denizens of area **B8**.

Trap: Finch (see area **B8**) has cast an *alarm* spell in this secret passage. Any creature that enters the passage not carrying one or more of the Last Laugh's "jester coins" triggers a gentle *alarm* bell that can be heard only in the interrogation room (area **B9**).

B8. CURTAINS (EL 12)

Light: Hooded lantern (in the southwest corner).

Sound: Shuffling feet and muffled voices (Listen DC 20).

Reaction: To sounds of combat—Jil prepares a coup de grace as detailed in area **B7**.

Auras: Moderate (+2 *leather armor* in chest, DC 18 abjuration), faint (*cloak of elvenkind* in chest, DC 16 illusion).

Five thick red curtains hang from the rafters of this 15-foot-by-30-foot chamber. The curtains divide the room into a maze of 5-foot-wide passages and are thick enough to catch missile fire.

Tied across the top of each curtain are seven tiny bells that jingle madly if the curtain is disturbed; a character trying to quietly move a curtain takes a –10 penalty on his or her Move Silently check. Set into the northwest and northeast corners of the floor are two unlocked wooden trap doors that pull open to reveal a wooden ladder and narrow passage (area **B1**) below.

The southwest corner of the room holds a small table with a hooded lantern resting on it and a locked wooden chest (good lock; Open Lock DC 30). The chest's contents are described under Treasure, below.

An artfully hidden secret door in the south wall (Search DC 30) leads to area **B9**. Attempting to pass through it triggers a Trap (see area **B9** for details).

Creatures: Jil's trusted lieutenant, a halfling named Finch (so named because of his fidgety nature and golden-yellow hair), sits on the floor in the southwest corner, playing cards in the dim light of the lantern while his boss interrogates the half-elf prisoner in area **B9**. Finch does not paint his face like most Last Laugh rogues; instead, he has a four-pointed red star circling his left eye. He also wears a flashy red-and-gold cape. Standing by one of the north windows, watching the front entrance of the safe house, is a

SAFE HOUSE ENCOUNTER LEVELS

The Last Laugh's safe house contains several encounters, none of them particularly dangerous to a group of well-equipped, high-level characters. The safe house's encounters have been designed to show just how powerful and

effective the heroes have become. Furthermore, it's okay if the characters' success leads to overconfidence—an attitude that, if carried over into the next chapter, could cost them dearly.



Last Laugh thug who answers to Finch. The thug has cut a tiny triangular hole in the smoked glass window—large enough to see outside, but hard to notice from the ground (Spot DC 14).

➤ **Finch, male halfling Rog5/Sor6:** CR 11; Small humanoid (halfling); HD 5d6+6d4+11; hp 45; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +6; Grp +0; Atk +10 melee (1d4–2/19–20, short sword); Full Atk +10 melee (1d4–2/19–20, short sword); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, halfling traits, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +7 (+9 against fear); Str 6, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +9, Climb +8, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +5 (+7 acting in character), Hide +15, Gather Information +13, Intimidate +5, Jump +4, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Search +7, Sleight of Hand +8, Spellcraft +7, Spot +5, Tumble +13.

Feats: Acrobatic, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Halfling.

Spells Known (7/7/6/3; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—acid splash, dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand, open/close, ray of frost, read magic; 1st—alarm, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement, shield; 2nd—invisibility, scorching ray; 3rd—displacement.

Possessions: Small short sword, leather armor, *wand of hold person* (30 charges), *cape of the mountebank*, *ioun stone* (dusty rose prism grants +1 insight bonus to AC), *slippers of spider climbing*, pouch containing 32 gp (all minted with the jester emblem of the Last Laugh guild), keys to all locked doors in the safe house, key to the chest in area B8.

➤ **Last Laugh Thug, male human Rog2/War2:** hp 25; see area B1.

Tactics: Given sufficient time to prepare, Finch casts *displacement* and *shield* (in that order) upon himself. He then uses his *slippers of spider climbing* to climb up to the rafters, where he moves quietly through the shadows and above the jingling red curtains. From this vantage point, Finch either uses his *wand of hold person* or his ranged spells. If seriously wounded, he uses the *dimension door* ability of his *cape of the mountebank* to flee to area B9. The nameless Last Laugh thug hides among the curtains, hoping to fell a held opponent.

Treasure: Finch carries the key to the locked chest, which contains Skiriol's gear and a sack of 300 gp (each coin minted with a jester's grinning visage). Skiriol's gear consists of a suit of +2 *leather armor*, a *cloak of elvenkind*, a masterwork rapier with a small black opal (100 gp) set in the pommel, a masterwork composite shortbow with 20 arrows, a vial of antitoxin, a set of masterwork thieves' tools, a smokestick, a tanglefoot bag, and three tindertwigs.

Development: If captured or dominated, Finch can disclose Skiriol's location and point to the secret door leading to area B9. With enough coaxing, Finch reveals that he answers to the Jester who runs the guild's lucrative black-mailing and counterfeiting divisions—a smarmy local noble (male human Ari7) named Rhant Tarragona. Finch also knows where the Last Laugh mints its bogus coins. (If the PCs share this information with the authorities, Rhant Tarragona is arrested and detained for questioning, and the coin-minting operating is shut down.)

Finch knows that Jil serves the Jester in charge of the assassination division—a half-fiend named Velior Thazo. Finch is quick to point out that Jil doesn't like Velior. She has spurned his sordid advances on multiple occasions. Finch does not know about the secret summit meeting at House Rhiavadi, but he knows that Vhalantru is a beholder. Although Finch enjoys Jil's good humor and her company, his loyalty to her quickly evaporates if forced to choose between his life and hers.

B9. INTERROGATION CHAMBER (EL 16)

Light: *Continual flame* spell (cast near the ceiling, above the rafters).

Auras: Moderate (Jil's *gloves of Dexterity* +6, DC 19 transmutation), Moderate (+1 *shadow studded leather* worn by Jil, DC 17 abjuration and illusion), faint (Jil's +1 *whip*, DC 16 transmutation), faint (Jil's *wand of silence*, DC 16 illusion), Faint (*continual flame*, DC 17 evocation).

The secret door in the north wall is trapped (see Trap, below).

A male half-elf lies face down on a wooden torture rack in the middle of this windowless 15-foot-square, 15-foot-high room. Magical light from an unseen source above the rafters paints the walls and floor in dark shadows. The wooden rack is shaped like an "X" with iron manacles binding the half-elf's wrists and ankles. The half-elf's back is striped with crimson lacerations. Standing next to the prisoner is a young woman in black garb with half her face painted black, the other half painted white. She holds a dripping blade near the half-elf's throat with one gloved hand and the handle of a silvery whip in the other. Something about her stance suggests a catlike readiness, and she smiles triumphantly.

The black-clad figure is Jil, a respected member of the Last Laugh. She has whipped her helpless captive into near-unconsciousness. Before the characters can enter, she uses a readied action to coldly slit Skiriol's throat and leaps back 5 feet, pressing against the opposite wall. As she moves back, she says, "He's yours. I'm done with him." Jil hopes this brutal act will enrage the PCs enough to ignore the Trap on the secret door.

Creatures: Skiriol (male half-elf Rog8) is barely conscious (his current hit points are at 0) or dead, but Jil

remains a threat to the PCs. Finch the halfling (see area B8) might also be here. The manacles binding Skiriol's wrists and ankles can be unclasped as a full-round action.

➤ **Jil, female human Rog5/Asn8:** CR 13; Medium humanoid (human); HD 13d6+13; hp 66; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +9; Grp +9; Atk +16 melee (1d6/19–20 plus poison, masterwork short sword) or +16 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal plus trip attack, +1 *whip*) or +16 ranged (1d6/×3, masterwork shortbow); Full Atk +16/+11 melee (1d6/19–20 plus poison, masterwork short sword) or +16/+11 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal plus trip attack, +1 *whip*) or +16/+11 ranged (1d6/×3, masterwork shortbow); SA death attack (DC 23), hide in plain sight, poison use, sneak attack +7d6, spells; SQ evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +4 (+8 against poison), Ref +12, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +16, Bluff +17, Diplomacy +11, Disable Device +11, Disguise +17 (+19 acting), Escape Artist +15, Forgery +11, Hide +27, Intimidate +10, Jump +2, Move Silently +22, Open Lock +14, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +4, Spot +11, Tumble +14, Use Magic Device +12.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (*whip*), Silent Spell, Weapon Finesse.

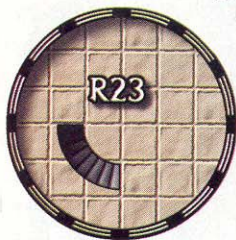
Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Gnome.

Spells Known (4/4/4/1; save DC 13 + spell level); 1st—*disguise self*, *detect poison*, *obscuring mist*, *true strike*; 2nd—*illusory script*, *pass without trace*, *spider climb*, *undetectable alignment*; 3rd—*deep slumber*, *magic circle against good*, *misdirection*, *nondetection*; 4th—*dimension door*, *freedom of movement*, *greater invisibility*.

Possessions: +1 *shadow studded leather armor*, +1 *whip*, *gloves of dexterity* +6, *wand of silence* (6 charges), masterwork short sword, sword sheath with poison reservoir (coats blade with deathblade poison when the weapon is drawn; Fortitude DC 20 negates, initial 1d6 Con, secondary 2d6 Con; holds 3 applications), masterwork shortbow with 20 arrows, black cloak and clothing, pouch containing 20 sp and 45 gp (all minted with the jester emblem of the Last Laugh guild).

Tactics: Given time to prepare, Jil casts *magic circle against good*, and *spider climb* on herself. If she doesn't have time to cast spells, she uses her ability to hide in plain sight to avoid detection until 3 rounds have passed and she can attempt a death attack with her poisoned short sword. While studying her victim, she can cast her silent spider climb and silent true strike spells. Jil uses her +1 *whip* to make disarm and trip attempts but prefers hit-and-run tactics to a straight fight. She saves her *dimension door* spell for a quick escape, fleeing from the safe house if reduced to half her hit points. If cornered and unable to escape, she surrenders, hoping to trade information for her life and waiting for any opportunity to escape her captors. Jil con-

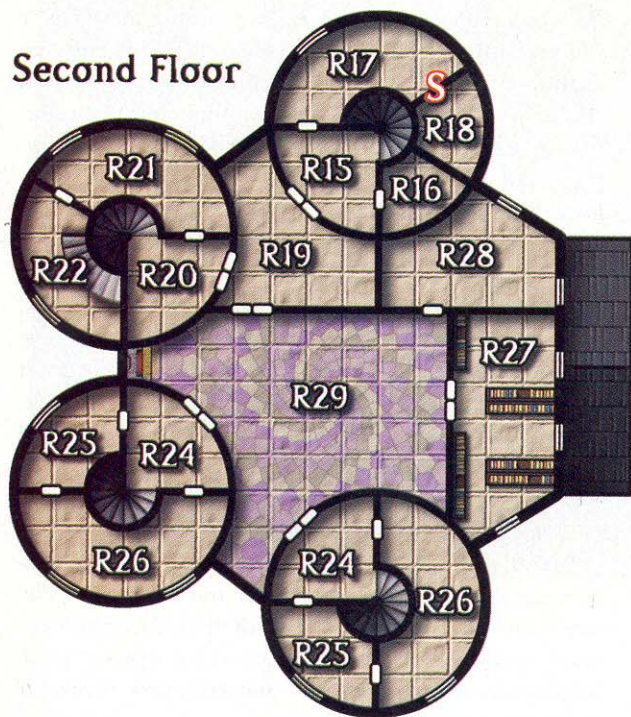
Observatory



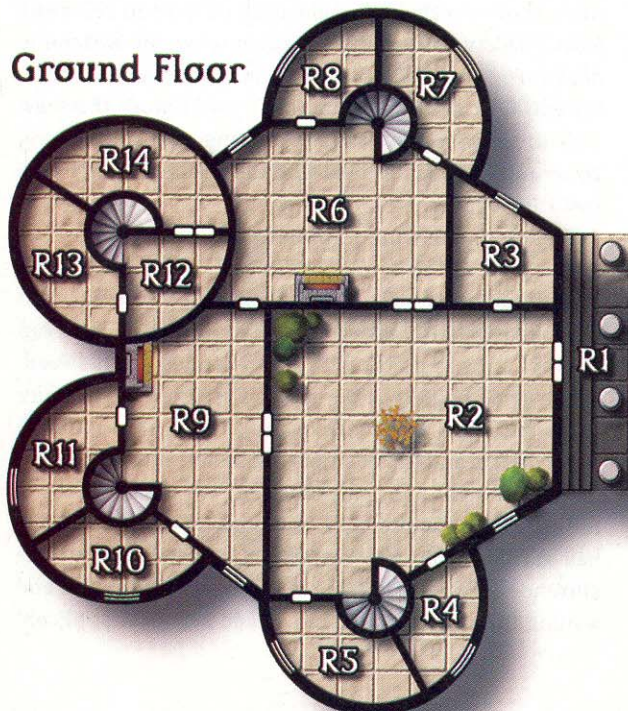
1 square = 5 feet



Second Floor



Ground Floor



fesses that her mission was to determine Skiriol's affiliations, locate others like him, and dispose of all of them.

The characters might know Jil from previous installments of the Adventure Path (she first appeared in "Life's Bazaar" in *DUNGEON* #97). Treat her attitude as indifferent unless the characters have angered her in the past. If she has struck up a friendship with one of the characters, she avoids harming that character. Jil has no love for Jester Velior Thazo, her superior in the Last Laugh, and a character toward whom she's favorably disposed can persuade her to betray the Last Laugh with a successful Diplomacy check (DC 25). Jil knows that Velior is attending a secret conference at House Rhiavadi, meeting with Lady Thifirane Rhiavadi and several others to discuss the future of Cauldron and the Last Laugh's role in "the new world order." She doesn't know where the Last Laugh is minting jester coins, or who runs the operation.

If he fled to this chamber, Finch the halfling casts *invisibility* on himself and uses the torture rack for cover as he targets characters with his wand or his spells.

Trap: Two scythe-like blades slash any creature that steps through the secret door. The blades are hidden in compartments on each side of the secret door and are coated with dragon bile poison.

➤ **Slashing Blades Trap:** CR 9; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; hidden lock bypass (Search DC 25, Open Lock DC 30); Atk +16 melee (2d4+8 plus poison/x4, 2 scythes); poison (dragon bile, Fortitude DC 26 negates, initial 3d6 Str, secondary none); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 21.

Development: Unless the characters catch Jil by surprise, she probably has time to kill Skiriol before they arrive on the scene. If the characters retrieve Skiriol's body, either they or Meerthan Eliothlorn can have it taken to the Church of St. Cuthbert to be raised.

If Skiriol is saved, he tells the characters everything he knows about Lady Rhiavadi and her estate. If Skiriol dies, this information comes from Meerthan instead (see Meeting Meerthan for details).

- House Rhiavadi is an imperious structure with four squat towers, one capped with an observatory. A set of heavy oak doors on the ground floor provides the only obvious entrance, although the building has many windows on the first and second floors.
- Members of the town guard, including half-orc mercenaries hired by Lord Vhalantru, have been seen entering and leaving the manor at all hours of the day and night. Some of the half-orcs head

straight to House Vhalantru after leaving House Rhiavadi, and vice versa. Sometimes they stay inside for hours.

- Lady Rhiavadi has not been seen entering or leaving her house in weeks, although members of her household staff (all halflings) come and go during the day. She must have a dozen or more servants.
- Lady Thifirane Rhiavadi has several shady guests staying at her manor.
- A comely yet pale half-elf clad in scant, tight-fitting black garments arrived at House Rhiavadi last night by horse-drawn coach. She wore a cloak of black shadow that fluttered about her, even though the night air was still. Her coach had blackened windows and sped off into the night after dropping off the woman. She moved with grace up to the doors, whereupon a smiling halfling dressed in a black suit ushered her inside.
- A band of well-armed humans—perhaps mercenaries or adventurers—arrived at House Rhiavadi two days ago. One of them carried a black mace capped with an iron skull and a heavy shield with the symbol of Nerull emblazoned on it.
- Lady Rhiavadi's other guests include a contingent of five well-armed dwarves who arrived three days ago. One of them was a white-haired, white-bearded dwarf wearing a black, leather half-mask that covers his right eye. Set into the mask's eye socket was a black gem.

CHAPTER TWO: PARTY AT HOUSE RHIAVADI

Lady Thifirane Rhiavadi, Vhalantru's scheming confidante and a high-ranking Cagewright, lives in a formidable manor

on Obsidian Avenue. Known for hosting outlandish gatherings at her opulent manor, Thifirane has invited some of the realm's worst villains to her estate to learn about the Cagewrights' plans for Cauldron and to tempt them into joining forces with the Cagewrights and their fiendish allies once Cauldron has fallen. The PCs can learn of the secret gathering from Jil (see Chapter One) or more reliable sources (such as the Striders of Fharlanghn). This chapter describes House Rhiavadi and its current occupants.

Although this chapter comes before the chapter describing House Vhalantru, the characters might very well decide to investigate House Vhalantru first; in that case, proceed to Chapter Three. Once they have finished pursuing Vhalantru, they may decide to confront Lady Rhiavadi and her guests.

HOUSE RHIAVADI

Like many buildings in Cauldron, House Rhiavadi has walls composed of gray and black volcanic rock. The building has two stories and four squat towers. Three of the towers have pointed spire caps. A domed observatory made of alabaster and glass surmounts the fourth tower. A large portico supported by four marble pillars covers the main entrance doors. Each pillar is carved to resemble a dragon. The windows of House Rhiavadi are made of frosted glass set in heavy copper frames, with locked wooden shutters covering them at night.

Unless noted otherwise, *continual flame* spells illuminate the manor's chambers. The doors of House Rhiavadi are of sturdy wooden construction with ornate bronze hinges and fittings. Moreover, permanent *unseen servants* open the interior doors whenever one or more creatures approach within 5 feet and close the portals once the creatures have passed through; the exceptions to this rule are the front

KEY TO HOUSE RHIAVADI

Not all of the rooms in House Rhiavadi have denizens or items of interest to the characters. Moreover, its inhabitants flit about like moths, rarely staying in one area for long.

R1. Front Doors

R2. Main Hall

R3. Drawing Room

R4. Cloakroom

R5. Lavatory and Boudoir

R6. Dining Hall

R7. Sitting Room

R8. Tea Room

R9. Kitchen

R10. Servants' Quarters

R11. Pantry and Larder

R12. Tower Foyer

R13. Wine Cellar

R14. Half-orc Barracks

R15. Master Tower Foyer

R16. Master Bathroom

R17. Master Bedchamber

R18. Secret Study

R19. Upstairs Parlor

R20. Tower Foyer

R21. Gallery

R22. Staircase (up to observatory)

R23. Observatory

R24. Guest Tower Foyer

R25. Guest's Bathroom

R26. Guest's Bedchamber

R27. Library

R28. Conservatory

R29. Ballroom

doors (area R1) and the doors barring Lady Rhiavadi's private quarters (areas R15–R18), which are *arcane locked* (at 13th level). The ceilings in House Rhiavadi are 15 feet high unless noted otherwise.

❖ **Strong Wooden Doors:** 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 25 (DC 35 if *arcane locked*).

❖ **Shuttered Windows:** 1 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 8; break DC 18; good lock (hardness 15; hp 30; Open Lock DC 30).

THE HOUSEHOLD “STAFF”

Lady Rhiavadi's household staff consists of six middle-aged halflings employed as cooks, maids, and manservants. They are formally dressed, well treated, and free to go where they please. They never question the lady of the house or her orders, and they wouldn't think to betray her. In truth, all of Thifirane's halfling servants are simulacra, created using the *simulacrum* spell. (The models upon which the simulacra are based have been *polymorphed* into animals and caged in area R18.) Each *simulacrum* is treated as a 1st-level commoner with 4 hit points; it is destroyed if reduced to 0 hit points, turning into a small mound of cold, wet slush. Thifirane can't abide people destroying her simulacra, as they cost precious time and XP to create.

Thifirane's servants constantly move about the manor, performing mundane errands and chores. They occasionally retire to their quarters for a time, usually during the night when Lady Rhiavadi needs some private time to herself. While a *simulacrum* can communicate, it generally prefers not to.

ENTERING HOUSE RHIAVADI

House Rhiavadi's front doors have an *arcane lock* spell cast upon them (at 13th level).

Each door sports a bronze knocker shaped like a balled fist. A bas-relief of a two-headed raven is carved above the architrave.

If the PCs knock on the front doors, one of the half-orc guards in area R2 opens the doors and tries to frighten them off, saying only that Lady Rhiavadi isn't interested in anything they have to offer. However, the guard isn't especially bright, and characters can trick their way inside using the Bluff skill, either by pretending to be late guests or Lord Vhalantru's emissaries. The guard is naturally suspicious and gets a +5 circumstance bonus on his Sense Motive check to oppose any Bluff check.

Once the PCs make it inside, read them the following:

Soft music fills this opulent, sparsely furnished hall. A few chairs and plants stand against the walls beneath brightly colored tapestries, a 5-foot-wide, 10-foot tall spiraling column of butterflies floats in the middle of the hall, moving to the sound of the music.

The butterflies and the music are elements of the same *permanent image* spell (cast at 13th level).

Creatures: Four half-orc fighters on loan from Zarn Kyass have taken up semi-permanent residence in House Rhiavadi as guards. Generally, two of them stand guard in this hall. Thifirane ensures their loyalty with 500 gp per month to stand around and look impressive. Each half-orc carries a key to one of the locked chests in area R14, where they relax when not on shift. The two half-orcs on guard when the PCs arrive are named Blackspine and Wormspit; the two resting in area R14 are named Kralk and Yaughr.

➤ **Half-orc Ftr8 (4):** CR 8; Medium humanoid (half-orc); HD 8d10+16; hp 59 each; Init +6; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +8; Grp +11; Atk +13 melee (1d8+6/×3, +1 *orc double axe*) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+6/×3, +1 *orc double axe*) and +11 melee (1d8+4/×3, +1 *orc double axe*) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft., half-orc traits; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Intimidate +10, Listen +3, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (orc double axe), Improved Critical (orc double axe), Improved Initiative, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (orc double axe), Weapon Specialization (orc double axe).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: +1/+1 *orc double axe*, masterwork light crossbow, 20 bolts, +2 *chainmail*, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*.

Treasure: Four chests found in area R14 contain the collected pay for these half-orcs; each chest contains 2,500 gp.

Development: Unless the PCs can fast talk their way around the guards, they'll have to fight their way through them to get into the house via the front door. If combat does break out, the clashing swords and battle cries of the half-orcs are loud enough to alert the entire household, including Thifirane and her guests (see area R29).

EXPLORING HOUSE RHIAVADI

The characters likely explore the house after they make it inside. Most of the rooms are opulent and well decorated, but there isn't much of interest to the PCs except possibly for the secret study (area R18). The secret door leading to this chamber requires a successful Search check (DC 15) to locate. If they find their way inside, read them the following:

This room contains a large desk carved with fancy scrollwork, a tall-backed chair, and six small cages resting atop small tables or hanging from the ceiling by steel chains.

All of the cages are bell-shaped and locked (Open Lock DC 20), and each one contains a different animal: bat, lizard,



monkey, rat, raven, and toad. All of these caged animals are actually people whom Thifirane has transformed into animals using her *baleful polymorph* spell. Some of them have acquired the mental abilities of the animals, while others still retain their original mental faculties and can express themselves, albeit crudely.

The raven's cage hangs from the ceiling. A secret compartment in the base of the raven's cage holds Thifirane's spellbook (see *Treasure*, below). Finding the secret compartment requires a successful Search check (DC 30).

The caged animals are actually six 2nd-level halfling commoners kidnapped by Thifirane and used as models for her simulacra (see *The Household Staff* for details). They are grateful if rescued but have no reward money to offer their saviors. They are willing to work off their debt, however. Thallo Quickstride, the halfling polymorphed into a monkey, retains his Intelligence and can articulate his feelings using gestures. When he sees the characters, Thallo points excitedly to the raven's cage, hoping the characters will find Thifirane's hidden spellbook and a spell to turn him and the others back into halflings.

Treasure: Thifirane's spellbook contains all the spells she has prepared plus the following: 1st—*feather fall*, *reduce person*; 2nd—*arcane lock*, *darkvision*, *knock*; 3rd—*fireball*, *greater magic weapon*, *protection from energy*; 4th—*dimensional anchor*, *fire trap*, *mass reduce person*; 5th—*break*

enchantment, *lesser planar binding*, *permanency*, *sending*; 6th—*chain lightning*, *contingency*, *flesh to stone*, *stone to flesh*; 7th—*sequester*, *simulacrum*, *statue*.

LOOTING HOUSE RHIAVADI

Characters who crash the gathering at House Rhiavadi might take the time to loot the place. After all, Lady Rhiavadi surrounds herself with all sorts of beautiful, expensive things. Not every object of value on display in House Rhiavadi is described in this chapter, however. For simplicity, assume that Thifirane has precious art objects and collectibles (paintings, sculptures, tapestries, statuettes, rugs, furnishings, vases, books, musical instruments, and the like) worth a total of 40,000 gp. Any character who spends 10 minutes looting can make a Search check (DC 15); a successful check yields $2d6 \times 100$ gp worth of miscellaneous treasure, most of which is quite heavy and awkward to transport.

THE PLOT REVEALED (EL 20)

The main encounter awaiting the PCs in House Rhiavadi occurs in the Ballroom, area R29. Read this encounter thoroughly before attempting to run it. The high number of NPCs and monsters means that a battle in here could last a long time, and likely spills out into adjacent areas of the manor.

The floor of this grand ballroom has black, lavender, and ivory tiles that spiral in toward the center of the room. Directly above the spiral's core hangs a dazzling crystal chandelier lit by magic flames. A tapestry hanging on the north wall has a dark symbol stitched into it. The symbol resembles an eye impaled on an upward-pointing arrow. Beneath the tapestry stands a table covered with a magnificent arrangement of crystal wine goblets, each one filled with some sweet vintage. A semicircle of seven black chairs faces the tapestry and the table of goblets.

This encounter assumes that the PCs arrive just as Thifirane gathers her guests and discloses the Cagewrights' secret designs for Cauldron. It doesn't matter what time of the day the gathering occurs, but if the characters arrive at some other time, you will need to modify the encounter accordingly. For instance, you could alter the encounter so that the NPCs haven't gathered yet and are spread throughout the manor, or you could assume that the meeting has concluded and some of the bad guys are preparing to depart. Regardless, the characters should still feel daunted by the number of foes. Fortunately for them, not all of Thifirane's guests are prepared (or eager) for a fight with high-level adventurers.

Thifirane has turned her ballroom into a meeting hall, where she intends to reveal the Cagewright's plans to her guests. The seven chairs are enough to accommodate (from left to right) Adrick Garthûn, Khyron Bonesworn, Melagorn Thureq, Mhad, Vervil Ashmantle, Velior Thazo, and Zarn Kyass. Adrick's two dwarven bodyguards stand by the southwest doors, while Vervil's babau demons have positioned themselves near the south doors. Thifirane's shield guardian remains by the north set of doors, while Thifirane herself stands next to the table of wine goblets, facing her guests.

Any number of things can happen once the characters make it this far. If they announce their presence and show their true faces, Thifirane recognizes them immediately; the PCs are famous heroes, after all. If the characters wear disguises, Thifirane has a chance to penetrate their disguises (see the Disguise skill description, pages 72–73 of the *Player's Handbook*). The characters might pass themselves off as a band of evil adventurers who heard about the secret gathering at House Rhiavadi, or they might pretend to be emissaries or acquaintances of Lord Vhalantru. They might also announce themselves by kicking in the door, drawing weapons, and taking the fight to Thifirane in her own house!

If Thifirane has an opportunity to formerly address her guests, and the characters do not immediately intervene, read or paraphrase the following:

Lady Rhiavadi lets the wine goblet that she is holding drift from her hand. It floats next to her, suspended in the air as if held by some unseen servant. A golden weasel with beady black eyes slinks across the floor toward her, and she scoops it up and begins stroking it affectionately. Her voice fills the hall as she welcomes her honored guests and shares her chilling vision of the future.

"More than five centuries ago, the demodands sent a few of their kind to our reality. Disguised as humans, they mated with humans and other denizens of this plane. Most of their spawn were stillborn, but a few survived. They mated and produced the next generation with demodand blood. As the generations passed, all obvious traces of their demodand ancestry faded away. Today, we recognize this sacred lineage by an invisible birthmark: the sign of Carceri!"

At this point, Lady Rhiavadi gestures to the symbol on the tapestry behind her, which begins to writhe. "We call these honored descendants 'the Shackleborn,' and their sacrifice is the key to unlocking a portal to Othrys, the first layer of Carceri. Here, demodands and countless other fiends have languished for near-eternity. In Cauldron, we have found more Shackleborn than anywhere else in the realm, and in Cauldron, we have the perfect conditions for the Ritual of Planar Junction."

The tapestry's writhing rune suddenly grows before your eyes, becoming a twisted black tree with metal cages dangling from its iron branches. "For the past five years, the Cagewrights have labored in secret to build thirteen soulcages to drain the life energy from the Shackleborn. These soulcages hang from an artifact called the Tree of Shackled Souls—the device that gathers the life energy needed to unlock the prison doors of Carceri. All of the preparations are now complete. The Shackleborn are safely in our hands and ready to give their lives to change the world forever. All that remains is the ritual itself, and it is already underway."

The black tree bursts into flames and melts into nothingness. "Once the ritual is complete, Cauldron won't be the same quiet little burg it is today. It will be the unholy font from which darkness gushes forth, a roiling pit filled with doom and despair for our enemies. Almost immediately, fiendish armies will sweep across the land and lay waste to surrounding territories, enslaving the weak and carving out new dominions. Naturally, we expect resistance on all sides, and that's where you come in."

As Lady Rhiavadi's revels draw to an end, a fat tiefling with boarlike tusks speaks up. "All eyes will be on Cauldron," he chuckles. "We'll have their worst fears to toy with."

"Precisely," replies Thifirane. "As kings raise armies to

confront the legions of Carceri, your slavers, merchants, mercenaries, spies, and assassins will methodically search for weaknesses from within, soften their resolve, and convince them that their only true choices are to yield or die."

If the PCs interrupt Thifirane's speech, they might lose valuable clues about the Cagewright's plans. Likewise, the PCs can miss the speech entirely if they simply attack the group the instant they enter the room. In this case, the PCs can learn much of the above information via spells like *speak with dead*, or by finding documents in Thifirane's bedchamber that outline her speech.

Once her speech has concluded, Thifirane mentions what each of her guests stands to gain by joining the Cagewrights until, finally, the gathering devolves into a half-dozen or more small conversations. Thifirane isn't prepared to say anything more about the Ritual of Planar Junction or the *Tree of Shackled Souls*, assuring her guests that some level of secrecy must be maintained.

Creatures: Thifirane Rhiavadi and her guests are described below.

Thifirane Rhiavadi: A 37-year-old lady of fine breeding, Thifirane wears an elegant yet elaborate black gown decorated with arcane glyphs stitched in silver thread. The dress has a strange asymmetry to it—the latest fashion among the noblewomen of Sasserine, no doubt. A bizarre hairpiece holds her golden-brown hair up above her neckline, and around her neck hangs a pendant shaped like a tiny silver cage (actually a shield guardian amulet). More disturbing than her attire is the living beholder eye grafted to her forehead—a gift from Vhalantru. Thifirane's shield guardian—another gift, this time from her fellow Cagewrights—stands no more than 10 feet from its mistress.

➤ **Thifirane Rhiavadi, female human** **Tr13:** CR 13; Medium humanoid (human); HD 13d4+13; hp 51; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +6; Grp +6; Atk +6 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger) or +8 ranged (eye ray); Full Atk +6/+1 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger) or +8/+3 ranged (eye ray); SA spells, eye ray; SQ *contingency*, *scurry* on familiar, weasel familiar named Sular; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6 (+8 with familiar), Will +10; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Contingency (Sp): Thifirane has cast a *contingency* spell on herself, activating a *lesser globe of invulnerability* during the first round of combat during her action. If her familiar is within 5 feet of her, it gains the benefits of the spell as well.

Eye Ray (Su): Thifirane has one of Vhalantru's small beholder eyes grafted to her forehead. Once per round as a free action, she can fire a ray from the eye that duplicates the effect of an *inflict moderate wounds* spell, dealing 2d8+10 points of damage to the target (Will DC 12 half). The eye ray has a caster level of 13th and a range of 150 feet.

Skills: Concentration +17, Decipher Script +17, Knowledge (arcane) +18, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +14, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Spellcraft +18.

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation, transmutation), Spell Penetration.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal, Undercommon.

Spells Prepared (5/6/6/6/6/4/3/2; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*detect magic*, *flare**, *light*, *mending*, *read magic*; 1st—*enlarge person*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *unseen servant* (already cast); 2nd—*alter self*, *bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, *fox's cunning*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility*; 3rd—*greater magic weapon*, *haste**, *lightning bolt**, *nondetection* (2; both already cast), *slow**; 4th—*Evard's black tentacles*, *fire shield*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere**, *Rary's mnemonic enhancer*, *shout**, *stoneskin*; 5th—*baleful polymorph**, *Mordenkainen's private sanctum* (already cast), *teleport*, *wall of force*; 6th—*disintegrate**, *eyebite*, *greater dispel magic*; 7th—*ethereal jaunt*, *forcecage**.

*Evocation or transmutation spell. The save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

Forbidden Schools: Enchantment, Illusion.

Possessions: Ring of protection +2, hat of charisma +2 (functions as a cloak of charisma +2), ring of mind shielding, crystal wand of magic missile (7th-level caster; 30 charges), arcane scroll of *greater dispel magic* (cast at 12th level), scroll of *stone to flesh*, scroll of *prismatic spray*, dagger, silver cage pendant (doubles as shield guardian amulet), pouch of spell components (including 600 gp worth of diamond dust for *nondetection* and *stoneskin* spells), small ivory plaque (50 gp; material component for *Rary's mnemonic enhancer*), small ivory statuette of a beholder set with precious gems (1,500 gp; focus for *contingency* spell).

➤ **Thifirane's Shield Guardian:** hp 112; *Monster Manual* 223.

Spell Storing (Sp): The shield guardian has a *fire shield* spell stored in it. It activates the spell when so commanded by Thifirane, usually before she heads into battle. Once the spell is used, the shield guardian can store another spell (or the same spell again).

Adrick Garthûn: Adrick is an unscrupulous dwarven merchant who provides the gold and silver that the Last Laugh needs to mint their own brand of coinage. For his contributions to "the cause," he desires exclusive mining rights in the mountains around Cauldron. He appears as a snowy-haired, snowy-bearded dwarf of 90 years wearing a black leather half-mask with a translucent black gem set into the eyehole. The mask covers up an eye he lost in battle. His good eye is crisp blue, like a frozen lake, and he has a pale complexion. He is fond of smiling, revealing that all of his teeth are made of gold. Adrick is joined by two bodyguards, Daxavalt and Kerg.



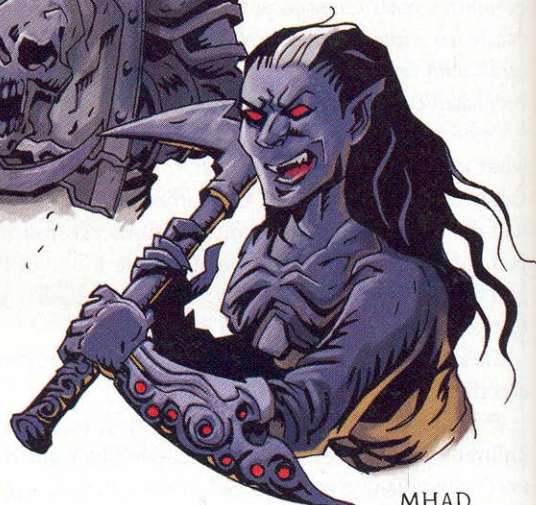
VERVIL ASHMANTLE



KHYRON BLOODSWORN



ADRICK GARTHÛN



MHAD

➤ **Adrick Garthûn**, male dwarf **Ftr5/Rog5**: CR 10; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 5d10+5d6+20; hp 68; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +8; Grp +12; Atk +14 melee (1d10+7/×3, +1 *dwarven waraxe*) or +10 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d10+7/×3, +1 *dwarven waraxe*) or +10 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., dwarf traits, evasion, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +7* (+11 against poison), Ref +7*, Will +4*; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 14.

*Adrick gets a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against spells and spell-like effects.

Skills: Appraise +5, Balance +4, Climb +8, Diplomacy +4, Hide +7, Intimidate +11, Jump +10, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Swim +8, Tumble +7.

Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (*dwarven waraxe*), Weapon Specialization (*dwarven waraxe*).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Possessions: +1 studded leather armor, +1 light steel shield, +1 *dwarven waraxe*, belt of giant strength +2, light crossbow with 10 bolts, leather half-mask set with a black diamond (1,000 gp).

➤ **Daxavalt and Kerg**, male dwarf **Ftr6**: CR 6; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 6d10+18; hp 62, 60; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.;

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +6; Grp +9; Atk +12 melee (1d8+7/×3, +2 *dwarven urgrosh*) or +7 ranged (1d10/19–20, heavy crossbow); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+7/×3, +2 *dwarven urgrosh*) and +10 melee (1d6+5/×3, +2 *dwarven urgrosh*) or +10 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft., dwarf traits; AL LE; SV Fort +8* (+12 against poison), Ref +3*, Will +3*; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

*Dwarves get a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against spells and spell-like effects.

Skills: Intimidate +4, Jump –4.

Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (*dwarven urgrosh*), Weapon Specialization (*dwarven urgrosh*).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Possessions: Masterwork full plate armor, +2 *dwarven urgrosh*, heavy crossbow with 10 bolts, pouch containing 2d6 gems (worth 100 gp each).

Khyron Bonesworn: The leader of a band of evil adventurers called the Necrocants, Khyron is a powerful up-and-coming cleric of the god of death. He aspires to rule the city of Sasserine and displace the high priest of the city's hidden temple of Nerull. Khyron is a sensationally handsome and charismatic 26-year-old man with short black hair and creepy yellow eyes. He wears spiked full plate armor and carries a heavy shield adorned with the symbol of his god.

He wields a black heavy mace with a black, skull-shaped head. His fellow Necrocants include Melagorn Thureq, a gaunt figure with long white hair clad in black robes. The other two members of the Necrocants, Oster Zandridge (male human Rog6/Asn2) and Tervas Shatterskull (male half-orc Brb8), are lurking about Cauldron but are not attending the conference.

➤ **Khyron Bonesworn, male human Clr10 (Nerull):** CR 10; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d8+10; hp 67; Init -1; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +7; Grp +8; Atk +9 melee (1d8+2 plus 2d6 against good creatures, +1 unholy heavy mace) or +6 ranged; Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+2 plus 2d6 against good creatures, +1 unholy heavy mace) and +6/+1 ranged; SA spells, rebuke undead 6/day (+2 bonus on checks to rebuke undead); AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +11, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +13, Disguise +5 (for acting in character), Hide -1, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (religion) +8, Spellcraft +5.

Feats: Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment, necromancy), Spell Focus (enchantment, necromancy).

Language: Common.

Spells Prepared (6/5+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, detect poison, light, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*bane**, *disguise self*^o, *divine favor, doom**, *entropic shield, shield of faith*; 2nd—*bear's endurance, death knell**, *hold person**, *invisibility*^o, *resist energy, silence*; 3rd—*animate dead*^o, *dispel magic, invisibility purge, magic circle against good, magic vestment*; 4th—*cure critical wounds, death ward*^o, *divine power, freedom of movement*; 5th—*greater command**, *slay living*^o, *spell resistance*.

*Enchantment or necromancy spell. The save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

D: Domain spell. **Domains:** Death (death touch 1/day), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

Possessions: +1 full plate with armor spikes, masterwork heavy steel shield (bears symbol of Nerull), +1 unholy heavy mace, spiked gauntlets, holy symbol of Nerull, wand of cure moderate wounds (1d8+5 points; 9 charges), scroll of flame strike, scroll of raise dead, potion of bull's strength.

➤ **Melagorn Thureq, male half-elf Nec9:** CR 9; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 9d4+12; hp 38; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4-1/19-20, masterwork dagger) or +7 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); SA spells; SQ half-elf traits, toad familiar named Glortus; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 10.

*Melagorn gets a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells and effects.

Skills: Concentration +13, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (history) +11, Spellcraft +14.

Feats: Alertness (when Glortus is in arm's reach), Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus

(necromancy), Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Penetration.

Languages: Common, Elven, Draconic, Orc.

Spells Prepared (4/6/6/5/3/2; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, open/close, read magic, touch of fatigue*; 1st—*disguise self, expeditious retreat, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement* (2), *shield*; 2nd—*blur, false life, mirror image, spectral hand, Tasha's hideous laughter, touch of idiocy*; 3rd—*displacement, lightning bolt, ray of exhaustion, vampiric touch* (2); 4th—*bestow curse**, *enervation* (2); 5th—*feeblemind, waves of fatigue**.

*Necromancy spell. The save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

Forbidden Schools: Divination, Conjunction.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +2, headband of intellect +2, potion of haste, potion of invisibility, spellbook (includes all of his prepared spells plus an additional 1d4+1 0-level, 1d4+1 1st-level, 1d4+1 2nd-level, 1d4 3rd-level, 1d3 4th-level, and 1d2 5th-level spells).

Mhad: This 330-year-old half-elf vampire has long black hair with a silvery-white stripe running through it. Although breathtaking in life, her alabaster-white visage is now a twisted mask of utter contempt, and her eyes burn crimson. She wears an elegant but tattered black gown and silvery-gray bracers studded with red bloodstones. The black cloak of shadow she appears to wear is actually her traveling companion, Hate (a dread wraith). Both Mhad and Hate inhabit the Ruins of Shatterhorn east of Cauldron, sharing it with a secret coven of Cagewrights. Mhad wants the Cagewrights and their fiendish masters to help her annihilate a widespread order of lawful good monks called the Order of the Silver Dream that has tried and failed to destroy her several times in the past 200 years.

➤ **Mhad, female half-elf vampire Mnk9/Sha4:** hp 90; *Monster Manual* 251.

➤ **Hate, dread wraith:** hp 104; *Monster Manual* 258.

Vervil Ashmantle: The self-proclaimed "Lord Ashmantle" is a corpulent, mean swine of a tiefling, not to mention a notorious slaver who deals primarily in surface races. Fat in all the wrong places, he traces his abyssal ancestry back to a nalfeshnee demon. His bloodshot eyes are sunken deep into the folds of his face, and his lower jaw sports a pair of stumpy, four-inch-long yellow tusks. He wears a gold ring on one tusk and a black platinum ring scribed with silver runes on the other. He hides his bloated body beneath elegant purple robes threaded with gems. Two babau demons serve as his traveling companions and henchmen "on the road." Vervil wants to legitimize and rule the slave trade, and the only way that can happen is by allying with the Cagewrights and their fiendish masters.

➤ **Vervil Ashmantle, male tiefling Sor11:** CR 12; Medium outsider (native); HD 11d4+22; hp 48 (70 with *bear's endurance*); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-

footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d4+2/19–20, dagger); SA *darkness* 1/day, spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., rat familiar named Milton, resistance to cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +18, Concentration +16, Spellcraft +15.

Feats: Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Spell Penetration.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Orc.

Spells Known (6/7/7/7/7/4; save DC 14 + spell level): o—acid splash, arcane mark, daze, detect magic, mage hand, detect poison, flare, light, read magic; 1st—charm person, disguise self, mage armor, magic missile, shield; 2nd—bear's endurance, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, scorching ray, summon swarm; 3rd—displacement, fireball, fly, suggestion; 4th—enervation, greater invisibility, wall of fire; 5th—baleful polymorph, teleport.

Possessions: Amulet of natural armor +2, black platinum ring of counterspells (feebmind), ring of protection +2, red gem-studded robe (worth 1,500 gp), wand of fireball (5th level; 22 charges), 3 potions of cure moderate wounds, scroll of cloudkill, scroll of phantasmal killer, dagger.

➤ **Babaus (2):** hp 66 each; *Monster Manual* 40.

Jester Velior Thazo: One of the Last Laugh's five guildmasters, referred to within the organization as Jesters, has elected to attend Lady Thiffrane's secret conference. Velior Thazo runs the assassination division of the Last Laugh and usually appears in public as a dour young woman standing barely 5 feet tall, with a slender build and short, curly-red hair. When not hiding his true form, Velior appears as a bat-winged humanoid with claws, fangs, short horns, and smoldering orange eyes.

➤ **Velior Thazo, male half-fiend human Clr7 (Erythnul)/Rog3:** CR 12; Medium outsider (augmented humanoid, native); HD 7d8+3d6+20; hp 63; Init +7; Spd 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (average); AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +7; Grp +12; Atk +14 melee (1d8+6, +1 morningstar) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); Full Atk +14 melee (1d8+6, +1 morningstar) and +7 melee (1d6+2, bite) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA smite good 1/day for +10 damage, sneak attack +2d6, spells, spell-like abilities, rebuke undead 10/day; SQ DR 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, immunity to poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, SR 17, trap sense +1, trapfinding; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +10; Str 20, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +7, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +7, Escape Artist +6, Heal +8, Hide +9, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Spellcraft +5, Spot +10, Tumble +6.

Feats: Combat Casting, Extra Turning, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (morningstar)^B.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Infernal.

Spells Prepared (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1; save DC 14 + spell level): o—cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance, light, read magic, resistance; 1st—command, cure light wounds, divine favor, doom, protection from good^D, shield of faith; 2nd—bear's endurance, bull's strength, hold person, sound burst, spiritual weapon^D; 3rd—cure serious wounds, dispel magic, magic vestment^D, searing light; 4th—cure critical wounds, summon monster IV, unholy blight^D.

D: Domain spell. **Domains:** Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), War (Weapon Focus as bonus feat).

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—darkness, poison (DC 15); 1/day—contagion (DC 15), desecrate, unholy blight (DC 15). Caster level 10th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: +2 breastplate, +1 large steel shield, +1 morningstar ("Bloodfever"), periapt of wisdom +2, gauntlets of ogre power, potion of alter self, holy symbol of Erythnul.

Zarn Kyass: The "Blue Duke" Zarn Kyass deals in ogre and half-orc mercenaries. He has provided several of his finest mercenaries to Lord Vhalantru and Cauldron at a generous discount, and he claims to have countless more. Zarn Kyass wishes to be made a general or archduke once the Cagewrights' plans for Cauldron come to fruition and the fiends of Carceri are unleashed upon the land. Zarn Kyass uses his *polymorph* spell-like ability to conceal his true form when traveling abroad, but within House Rhiavadi he prefers his true form. He enjoys a special rapport with Lady Thiffrane and has secretly grown infatuated with her—a weakness he guards well.

➤ **Zarn Kyass, male ogre mage Ftr4:** CR 12; Large giant; HD 5d8+4d10+36; hp 85; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 22, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +7; Grp +16; Atk +13 melee (3d6+10/19–20, +1 greatsword) or +6 ranged (2d6+5/×3, composite longbow); Full Atk +13/+6 melee (3d6+10/19–20, +1 greatsword) or +6/+1 ranged (2d6+5/×3, composite longbow); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 90 ft., flight, low-light vision, regeneration 5, SR 19; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17.

Skills: Concentration +16, Listen +12, Spellcraft +10, Spot +12.

Feats: Cleave, Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Giant, Orc.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—darkness, invisibility; 1/day—charm person (DC 14), cone of cold (DC 18), gaseous form, polymorph, sleep (DC 14). Caster level 9th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: +2 chain shirt, +1 greatsword, amulet of natural armor +2, composite longbow (+5 Str) with 20 arrows.

Tactics: The encounter with Thiffrane and her guests will test the skills of even the most experienced DM. To

make running the battle easier, each villain's tactics are summarized below; however, the DM can deviate from these preset tactics as the situation warrants.

Thifirane Rhiavadi: Thifirane already has a *nondetection* spell cast on herself and keeps her shield guardian close to her at all times. Before entering combat, she casts the following spells, in sequence, if time allows: *stoneskin*, *mage armor*, *shield*, *bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, *fox's cunning*, *see invisibility*, *haste*. These spells also affect her weasel familiar. On her first initiative action, Thifirane activates a *contingency* spell that, in turn, triggers a *lesser globe of invulnerability* spell (which also affects her familiar). She also instructs the shield guardian to activate its *fire shield* spell. In combat, Thifirane uses her eye ray and her offensive spells (*baleful polymorph*, *cone of cold*, *disintegrate*, *eyebite*, *forcecage*, *greater dispel magic*, *lightning bolt*, *magic missile*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere*, and *slow*), occasionally switching out a spell to cast a scroll (*prismatic spray*) or expend a charge from her crystal wand of *magic missile*. She uses her *wall of force* spell to divide her enemies or block their advance. Her weasel familiar tries to stay within 5 feet of Thifirane, yet out of harm's way. The shield guardian uses its *shield other* ability to absorb damage dealt to Thifirane. However, if she is reduced to half her hit points, Thifirane abandons her shield guardian and *teleports* to Oblivion (see area 09), where the PCs may encounter her again.

Adrick Garthûn: Adrick tries to flank foes to gain the benefit of his sneak attack. Otherwise, both he and his bodyguards use straightforward combat tactics. If both of his henchmen are killed or incapacitated, Adrick surrenders or flees. He may even switch sides if he thinks he stands a good chance of survival with little possibility of retribution.

Khyron Bonesworn: Khyron hasn't pledged his undying allegiance to the Cagewrights, but he isn't foolish enough to cross them, either. He packs a lot of defensive spells. Before jumping into battle, Khyron casts *magic vestment* on his shield. He then casts *shield of faith*, *spell resistance*, *freedom of movement*, *bear's endurance*, and *divine power* on himself (in that order). Time allowing, he also casts *magic circle against good* and *death ward*. When combat erupts, he likes to wade into battle with his *unholy mace*, saving his *hold person* and *slay living* spells for particularly annoying foes. If gravely wounded, he pulls out of combat long enough to cure himself. His comrade-in-arms, Melagorn, casts *false life*, *displacement*, and *shield* on himself (in that order), then bombards enemies with offensive spells.

Mhad: Although arguably the most lethal combatant in House Rhiavadi, Mhad doesn't like fighting unfamiliar opponents in unfamiliar surroundings. She stays out of the fight as long as possible. If attacked, she and her dire wraith flank and try to stun and drain the attacker as quickly as possible. Under no circumstances does she join forces with the heroes, but if she and the characters are the last ones standing, Mhad lets them live for the time being.

As soon as night falls, she returns to her lair in the Ruins of Shatterhorn east of Cauldron.

Vervil Ashmantle: Vervil orders his babaus to attack the PCs while he casts *greater invisibility* and other defensive spells on himself. The tiefling takes magical "cheap shots" (a *magic missile* here, a *baleful polymorph* there) while physically staying on the outskirts of the battle.

Jester Velior Thazo: Jester Velior Thazo calls upon Erythnul, god of slaughter, to help him destroy his new enemies. If he has time to prepare for battle, he casts *bull's strength*, *bear's endurance*, *shield of faith*, and *divine favor* on himself (in that order). Against ranged foes, he casts *unholy blight* or *searing light*. He then closes for melee combat, furiously swinging his +1 *morningstar*.

Zarn Kyass: At the first sign of trouble, Zarn turns invisible and moves to protect Thifirane. He uses straightforward tactics in battle, swinging his greatsword at singular enemies and saving his *cone of cold* for an opportune moment. If Thifirane is killed, Zarn flies into a rage and attacks her slayer without mercy or quarter.

Development: Nothing the PCs accomplish at House Rhiavadi prevents the Cagewrights from proceeding with the Ritual of Planar Junction. The best the characters can hope for is to take down a member of the Cagewrights' inner circle (Thifirane Rhiavadi) and several of the realm's most despicable criminals.

CHAPTER THREE: THE HUNT FOR VHALANTRU

The final chapter of the adventure deals with the characters' search for Vhalantru. Whether enticed by rumors or their own growing doubts about Vhalantru's intentions, the PCs decide pay a visit to Lord Vhalantru's estate. This chapter deals with the repercussions of that decision.

To most citizens of Cauldron, Lord Orbius Vhalantru is a charitable elf noble with no known family in Cauldron or in the surrounding area. In public forums, he used to jokingly refer to himself as "one of Cauldron's proud orphans." When the lord mayor recently vanished without a trace, Lord Vhalantru quickly swept in and took control. However, the situation in Cauldron has steadily deteriorated, leading some people to doubt Vhalantru's political commitment and intentions. He rarely makes public appearances anymore, and the half-orc mercenaries he hired to bolster the town guard are little more than thugs more interested in safeguarding his estate than insuring the well-being of the common folk. Only the Cagewrights and a few select members of the Last Laugh know for certain that Vhalantru is a beholder whose ultimate goal is to enslave Cauldron's populace and transform the town into his own personal demesne.

HOUSE VHALANTRU

House Vhalantru is a stately, three-story manor located on Obsidian Avenue. Like many estates in Cauldron, it has walls of mortared volcanic rock. However, the interior surfaces on the second and third floors (including walls, floors, and ceilings) are made of sturdy wood. In addition, Vhalantru has taken strides to make the house appear more "elven." The wood paneling and railings display some of the finest leaf scrollwork in Cauldron, and the windows are made of glass set in light wooden frames, with lovely silver laurel designs running through the glass.

Unless noted otherwise, natural light provides illumination during bright hours, and candelabras provide light during the dark hours. The doors of House Vhalantru are of sturdy wooden construction with ornate silver hinges and fittings. All ceilings are 15 feet high unless noted otherwise, and secret doors require a successful Search check (DC 20) to locate.

❖ **Strong Wooden Doors:** 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 25; Open Lock DC 30.

THE TOWN GUARD

The half-orc mercenaries Vhalantru hired to bolster the town guard also watch over his estate. Twelve guards stand watch inside the building (of which six can be encountered in area V7). A fresh crew relieves the previous watch every 12 hours. The guards should be encountered in groups of two or three as needed to provide exciting encounters as the PCs explore the interior of the estate. Since the estate isn't that big, other guards can come to help those in combat with the PCs; as a general rule you can assume that a new group of three guards arrives once every 1d4+1 rounds once combat begins.

THE NAGAS

Vhalantru has also persuaded three spirit nagas to "haunt" the manor during his absence. These creatures converge

on the heroes as they begin exploring the upper levels of the house.

LOOTING HOUSE VHALANTRU

Characters who try to loot House Vhalantru find very few items of value—a few token art objects but no large collections. The trove is worth a total of 5,000 gp. Any character who spends 10 minutes looting can make a Search check (DC 20); a successful check yields 1d6 × 100 gp worth of miscellaneous treasure, most of which is quite heavy and awkward to transport.

V1. ENTRANCE FOYER

Sound: Chatting guards (area V2), soft chirping of birds (area V15).

Reaction: Loud noises (such as doors opening) may alert the guards in area V2.

The front doors are unlocked, and four lifelike statues in alcoves greet visitors as they enter: a female elven wizard in robes, a male elven ranger with a longbow, a female elven cleric carrying a shield with the symbol of Corellon Larethian carved into it, and a male elven druid wearing a cowl and carrying a vinelike whip.

Unlike the other statues in the estate, these ones are simply expert carvings. A red carpet stretches from the front doors to the far end of the main hall (area V2).

Secret doors in the easternmost alcoves require a successful Search check (DC 15) to locate.

V2. MAIN HALL (EL 4)

Sound: Chatting guards, soft chirping of birds (area V15).

Reaction: Loud noises may be heard by the guards in area V7.

KEY TO HOUSE VHALANTRU

Not all of the rooms in House Vhalantru have occupants or items of interest to the characters. Moreover, its inhabitants are not locked down to a particular room and tend to move about.

The following locations are keyed to the House Vhalantru map. Rooms marked with an asterisk (*) are described in more detail in this chapter; feel free to flesh out the areas not fully described herein.

V1. Entrance Foyer*

V2. Main Hall*

V3. Servants' Quarters

V4. Fountain of Sehanine Moonbow*

V5. Kitchen

V6. Dining Room

V7. Parlor*

V8. Wine Storage*

V9. Shaft to Oblivion*

V10. Master Study

V11. Master Bedroom

V12. Bathroom

V13. Library

V14. Servants' Quarters

V15. Aviary*

V16. Guest Bedroom

V17. Guest Bathroom

V18. Deluxe Guest Bedroom

A 5-foot-wide staircase climbs up the eastern wall to an overhanging balcony 15 feet above. The red carpet that began at the front doors crosses the room and continues up the stairs to the balcony on either side. Two heavy 5-foot-tall candelabras stand in the middle of the hall but are unlit.

Four statues—actually four adventurers turned to stone by Vhalantru—stand in different corners of the room: a male dwarven fighter wearing full plate and carrying a greatsword, a female halfling rogue/sorcerer perched atop a stone pedestal with a staff in one hand and a short sword in the other, a male human monk in a battle-ready unarmed stance, and a male gnome cleric of Garl Glittergold holding a morningstar and clutching a light steel shield.

Development: If the characters free the adventurers from their stony tombs (using *break enchantment*, *stone to flesh*, or similar magic), the DM should create statistics for them as needed. The petrified NPCs should be at least a couple levels lower than the PCs and could make excellent cohorts for PCs who take the Leadership feat.

V4. FOUNTAIN OF SEHANINE MOONBOW

Sound: Spouting water.

The secret door in the north wall requires a successful Search check (DC 20) to locate.

Vhalantru thought it would be a clever touch to build a fountain in his house, because surely that's what elves do! He charmed a local sculptor into crafting a statue of the elven goddess Sehanine Moonbow ("the Lady of Dreams"), then placed it atop the marble plinth where the water spills out into the basin. Three marble benches and several painted ceramic vats of sweet-smelling earth add to the decor.

V7. PARLOR (EL 13)

Sound: Multiple guards gambling and shouting at each other.

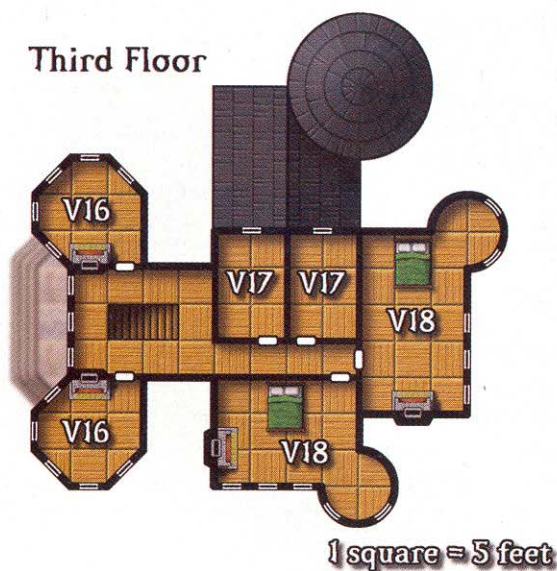
Five plush chairs surround a large round table in the middle of this room. Couches, wine cabinets, and other furnishings are haphazardly arranged.

The northern door leading to area V8 is locked with a good lock (Open Lock DC 30).

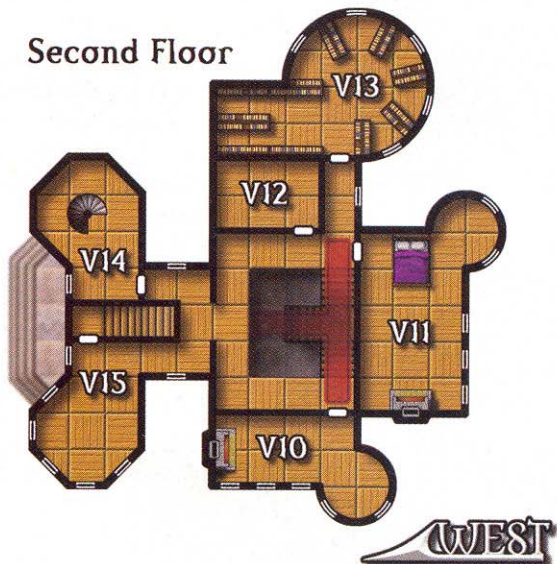
Creatures: Six half-orc guards enjoy some off-duty time in this room. One relaxes on a leather couch while the other five engage in a rowdy, sometimes bitter game played with dice, goblin finger bones, and hard-earned coins. They attack intruders on sight, particularly if it looks like they're headed for the door to area V8.

➔ **Hired Mercenaries, male half-orc Ftr8:** hp 59 each; see "Entering House Rhiavadi".

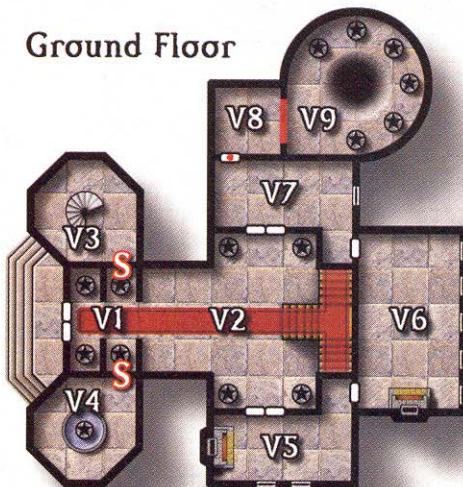
Third Floor



Second Floor



Ground Floor



LORDS OF
OBLIVION

V8. WINE STORAGE

Auras: Moderate (*illusory wall*, DC 19 illusion).

Rows of shelves along the north wall hold several dozen bottles of good wine. Boxes of wine are piled all over the room, making it difficult to get at the walls without moving the boxes aside.

A *true seeing* spell or tactile inspection of the east wall reveals that part of the wall is illusory. Characters can walk through the *illusory wall* and enter area V9.

V9. VEILED SHAFT (EL 3)

Auras: Moderate (*illusory wall* (floor), DC 19 illusion).

Behind the illusory wall lies a circular room containing six statues—the petrified remains of four more adventurers and their animal companions: a male halfling rogue with a quizzical expression etched into his face, a female elven wizard aiming a wand, a female human druid petrified while drinking a potion, her cheetah animal companion, a male human ranger with his longsword and short sword crossed in a blocking maneuver, and his black bear animal companion.

Trap: An *illusory wall* spell conceals a smooth, 50-foot-deep, 10-foot-wide shaft in the middle of the floor. Any creature that steps on the *illusory floor* must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 16) or fall to area O1, taking 5d6 points of damage. In addition to landing prone, the fallen character is attacked by the creatures in area O1.

V15. AVIARY (EL 13)

Sound: Chirping birds.

More than a dozen birdcages fill this room, each one home to three or four small but colorful birds (finches mostly). Most of the cages sit atop shelves or tables by the windows, but a few hang from the ceiling by elegant chains.

The birds' music can be heard over the balcony and down into the ground floor of the manor. The chirping helps evoke a sense of natural tranquility, making the dark stone edifice feel less dreary. One of the cages contains a pair of pigeons trained to deliver messages to Sasserine. Tied to their right legs are tiny scroll tubes that can safely store a short message.

Creatures: As the heroes explore the aviary, three spirit nagas hiding in nearby rooms converge on the PCs' location. The nagas use their *invisibility* spells to approach the characters unseen.

➤ **Spirit nagas** (3): hp 82, 76, 73; *Monster Manual* 192.

Tactics: The spirit nagas aren't interested in conversation. If possible, they cast *displacement*, *divine favor*, *shield of faith*, and *cat's grace* before slithering in for the kill, and they would rather bite the PCs than *charm* them.

OBLIVION

Vhalantru built the subterranean redoubt of Oblivion to suit his own tastes. Consequently, creatures lacking the ability to fly will have a difficult time navigating the lair. Oblivion has three levels spaced roughly 100 feet apart (Level 1 being the closest to the surface, and Level 3 being the deepest). Two long shafts (areas O2 and O4) connect the various levels. A third shaft—this one 10 feet in diameter and 50 feet long—serves as the entrance to Oblivion, connecting area O1 with area V9 in Vhalantru's estate.

Vhalantru used his *disintegrate* eye ray to carve Oblivion out of the rock beneath Cauldron. The beholder tends to favor spherical rooms and tubular passageways (although exceptions exist). Since Vhalantru has darkvision, he has little need for illumination, and visitors are expected to bring their own light sources.

Scaling the vertical and curved walls of Oblivion requires a successful Climb check (DC 25).

The lair includes some unusual features that required the expert services of several Cagewrights to complete, including Vhalantru's insidious "oblivion doors" (see area O3) and the transmutation circle for the *Zar'ilkoth Tarteros* ritual (see area O15).

O1. NASTY FARASTUS (EL 14)

A 10-foot-wide shaft drops through the ceiling of this 30-foot-high, 40-foot-wide cylindrical chamber. Carved into the rough walls of the cylinder at various heights are 21 shallow alcoves, each niche holding an ancient statue.

Each niche holds one of Vhalantru's petrified victims.

A 12-foot-high opening in the north wall gives way to a vertical drop of 200 feet (see area O2).

Creatures: Three half-orc "guards" stand watch in front of the north exit—or so it seems. The half-orcs are actually zombies that have been treated by Vhalantru and Thifirane with experimental magical portals that activate when the zombies are destroyed. As soon as intruders appear, the half-orc zombies lunge toward them. Once destroyed, a zombie shivers momentarily and drops its weapons. Moments later, a farastu demodand explodes from within the zombie, clawing its way to freedom with a terrible rush of tar and stink. Once a farastu emerges, it fights the PCs to the death.

Farastu demodands are detailed in the *Fiend Folio*. If you don't have access to this book, you can replace them with hezrou demons.

➤ **Half-orc Zombies** (3): hp 16 each; *Monster Manual* 266 (use statistics for the human commoner zombie).

➤ **Farastu demodands** (3): hp 71 each, *Fiend Folio* 42.

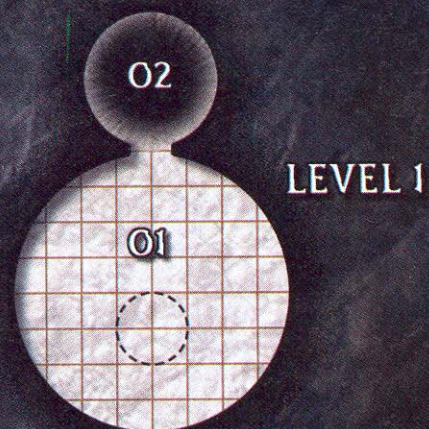
O2. EAST SHAFT

Sound: See text below.

OBLIVION

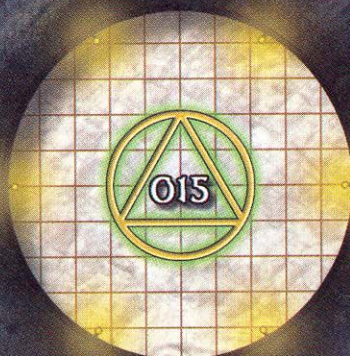
- KEY**
- 01. Nasty Farastus
 - 02. East Shaft
 - 03. Oblivion Doors:
 - 3A *flesh to stone*
 - 3B *fear*
 - 3C *disintegrate*
 - 3D *finger of death*
 - 3E *inflict moderate wounds*
 - 3F *sleep*
 - 3G *charm person*
 - 3H *slow*
 - 3I *charm monster*
 - 3J *telekinesis*

- 04. West Shaft
- 05. Beholder Bath
- 06. Book Vault
- 07. Eyes in the Dark
- 08. Empty Room
- 09. Thifirane's Quarters
- 010. Flamewardens
- 011. Ti'irok's Treasury
- 012. Empty Room
- 013. Art Treasury
- 014. Trophies
- 015. Oblivion's Womb

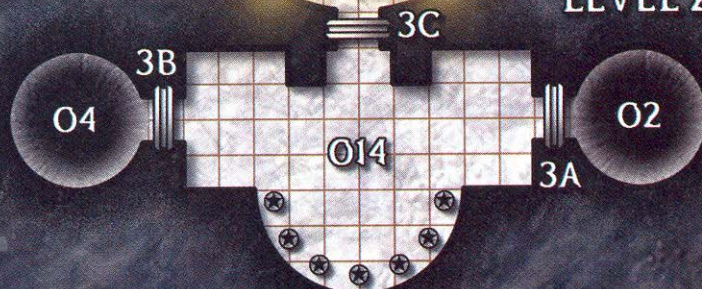


LEVEL 1

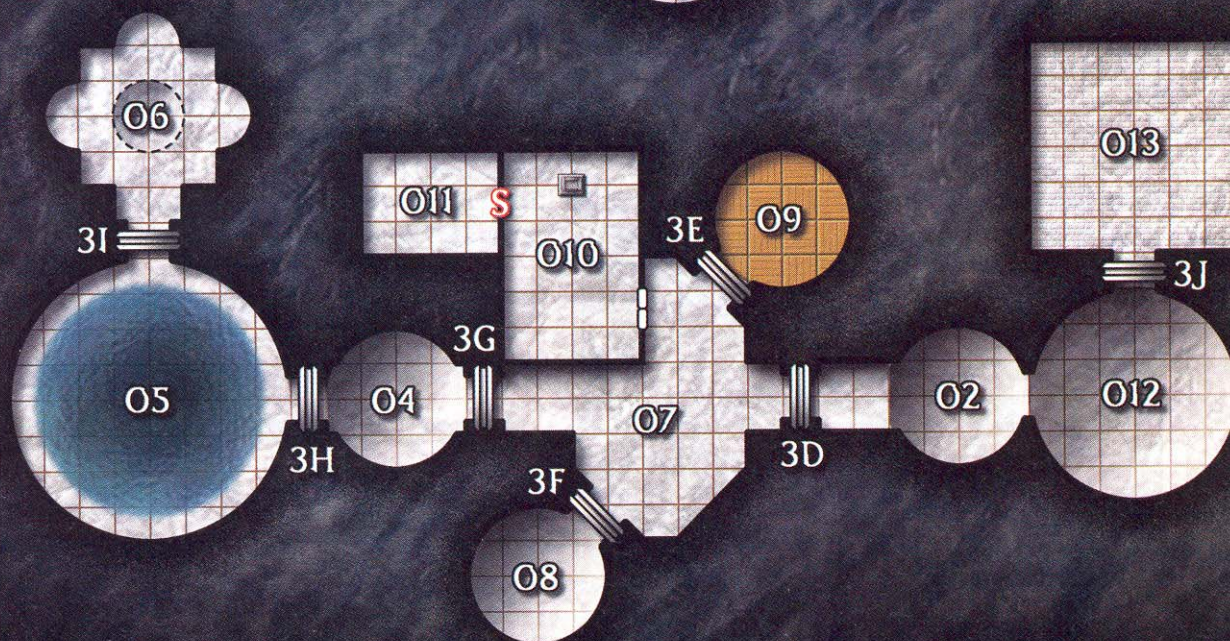
1 square = 5 feet



LEVEL 2



LEVEL 3





Auras: Strong (oblivion doors, DC 24 evocation).

This vertical shaft measures 20 feet wide and stretches 220 feet tall, connecting every level of Vhalantru's lair. Sound carries well in the shaft, so characters in the shaft or in open rooms adjacent to the shaft (such as areas **O1** and **O12**) gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Listen checks.

Scaling the vertical walls of the shaft requires a successful Climb check (DC 25).

O3. OBLIVION DOORS (EL 10)

Reaction: To the sound of an oblivion door opening—any creature lurking on the other side prepares for combat.

Auras: Strong (oblivion door, DC 24 evocation).

A large and intricate circular door measuring 9 feet across completely blocks the passageway. The portal has interlocking parts made of composite materials—primarily darkwood, bone, iron, and adamantite. The door's face has been worked into the likeness of a stylized beholder with ten eyestalks. Set into each eyestalk is a different color gemstone, and set into the large central eye is a transparent crystal the size of a human fist. The thick stone doorframe is shaped like a ring and carved with eight strange glyphs.

Oblivion doors are recurring features in Vhalantru's lair. They're designed to make travel through the complex challenging for all creatures other than beholders. The strange glyphs on the doorframe spell the word O-B-L-I-V-I-O-N in Undercommon, but they have no bearing on how the doors operate. The color of a particular gem is also irrelevant.

Beholders have ten eyestalks. Not coincidentally, Vhalantru's lair contains ten oblivion doors, and each one is attuned to a different beholder eyestalk (as shown in the table below). Vhalantru opens an oblivion door by firing the correct eye ray at the fist-sized crystal embedded in the door's central eye. Spellcasters can bypass the doors by casting similar spells on the fist-sized crystal. For instance, oblivion door **O3J** (connecting areas **O12** and **O13**) is specifically attuned to the *telekinesis* eye ray, yet casting a *telekinesis* spell on the central crystal also works.

Oblivion Door	Attuned Eye Ray
3A	<i>flesh to stone</i>
3B	<i>fear</i>
3C	<i>disintegrate</i>
3D	<i>finger of death</i>
3E	<i>inflict moderate wounds</i>
3F	<i>sleep</i>
3G	<i>charm person</i>
3H	<i>slow</i>
3I	<i>charm monster</i>
3J	<i>telekinesis</i>

Each oblivion door weighs 5,000 pounds, and forcing one open physically requires a nearly impossible Strength check (DC 50). A rogue can attempt to “finesse” the door, tricking it into opening with a successful Open Lock check (DC 45). However they do it, when the PCs unlock their first oblivion door, read or paraphrase the following:

The door makes some dull grinding noises, then splits into three sections. Each section quickly retracts into part of the adjoining doorframe. Once the three sections have fully retracted, the passage stands open.

Oblivion doors stay open for 3 rounds, then close automatically. Anyone standing in the doorframe when an oblivion door closes is crushed for 10d6 points of damage per round (Reflex DC 15 half).

There is nothing stopping characters from using spells such as *teleport*, *dimension door*, *ethereal jaunt*, and *passwall* to circumvent the oblivion doors.

❖ **Oblivion Door (locked):** 3 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 540; Break DC 50; Open Lock 45; impervious to spells and spell-like abilities except for the spell effect keyed to that particular door.

Trap: If the wrong eye ray or the wrong spell is cast on an oblivion door, or if an attempt to Open Lock or bash it open fails, the door remains sealed and instead fires 1d10 rays of force back at the offender. The rays of force emanate from small gems set into the oblivion door’s eyestalks. A character with an active *shield* spell may count the spell’s +4 shield bonus toward her touch AC, since the spell was designed to absorb force damage.

⚡ **Force Ray Trap:** CR 10; magic device; spell trigger (varies by door); automatic reset; Atk +10 ranged touch (1d6+1 points of damage per ray, 1d10 rays); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 33.

04. WEST SHAFT

Sound: See area O2.

Auras: Strong (oblivion doors, DC 24 evocation)

This 20-foot-wide shaft measures 120 feet tall and connects Levels 2 and 3 of Vhalantru’s complex. The shaft is otherwise similar to the east shaft (area O2).

05. BEHOLDER BATH

The lower half of this spherical room is filled with water seepage from Cauldron’s lake. Vhalantru has taken to calling the room his “bath,” although he’d intended to use the space for something else.

06. BOOK VAULT

Auras: Faint (*levitation* fields, DC 16 transmutation).

This 20-foot-square room has a 10-foot-diameter, bowl-shaped indentation carved out of the floor, the ceiling,

and every wall. Floating in the exact middle of the room, just out of arm’s reach from the floor, is a single book with a red leather cover.

Most of this room radiates magic. The bowl-shaped indentations in the walls generate crisscrossing *levitation* fields that have the effect of suspending objects in the middle of the room, where a creature like Vhalantru can get at them easily. Currently, only one book is kept here.

Treasure: The book in question has the words “Zar’ilkoth Tarteros” scrawled on the inside front cover. Vhalantru used it to gather information about the ritual to turn him into a Tarterian beholder, but he’s done with the tome for the time being. Characters wishing to perform the Zar’ilkoth Tarteros ritual themselves can do so, but such rituals take weeks to prepare.

07. EYES IN THE DARK (EL 13)

Sound: Panting and howling warhounds.

Reaction: To sounds of baying warhounds—the occupants of area O10 prepare for combat.

A terrible howl fills the darkness ahead, and then you see three pairs of glowing red eyes.

Several doors lead into this irregularly shaped nexus chamber, which is guarded by the Creatures. They wear the Treasure.

Creatures: Three Nessian warhounds lair here. They belong to a group of mercenaries called the Flamewarders (see area O10). The warhounds attack anyone they don’t recognize.

➡ **Nessian warhounds (3):** hp 114 each; *Monster Manual* 152.

Treasure: The Nessian warhounds wear black leather collars studded with diamonds and rubies. Each collar is worth 4,500 gp (total value 13,500 gp).

08. EMPTY ROOM

This spherical chamber is currently empty and unused.

09. THIFIRANE’S QUARTERS

Light: *Continual flame* spell.

Auras: Faint (*continual flame* spell, DC 17 evocation).

Vhalantru has set aside this spherical room for Thifirane Rhiavadi (see Chapter Two). To make Thifirane more comfortable, a wooden floor has been built across the room’s equator, creating a hemispherical space with a flat floor. Thifirane has already made the room her own, adding various handpicked pieces of furniture and bringing along some of her outlandish wardrobe in large, unlocked trunks. Characters searching through Thifirane’s belongings won’t find anything of great value.

Development: If Thifirane fled House Rhiavadi, she is “regrouping” in this chamber. Her weasel familiar may be with her as well. See Chapter Two for her tactics.

O10. FLAMEWARDERS (EL 18)

Light: Nine everburning torches (in sconces).

Sound: Crackling torch flames (Listen DC 15).

Auras: Faint (*continual flame* on everburning torches, DC 17 evocation).

Sconces shaped like stony fists protrude from the walls of this 20-foot-high chamber at regular intervals, each one grasping an everburning torch. In the middle of the room, a tall woman with hair like flames swings her greatsword at unseen foes, seemingly oblivious to your presence. Her body is covered with a layer of rust-colored fur, and her eyes smolder. She is clad in a mithral breastplate, wears metal gauntlets, and has a large shield floating beside her, moving as she moves. A pink, rhomboid-shaped stone orbits her head lackadaisically, and she wears a red-lacquered armband on one upper arm. As she cleaves the air in front of her, you see that fire plays across one edge of her greatsword, ice across the other.

Suddenly she stops, looking barely out of breath. Casting a baleful glance at you, she walks over to a great, fire-scorched throne at the north end of the room. The throne is carved in the shape of a fire giant. From behind the throne emerges a sneering wolf with flame-colored fur and red embers for eyes.

"Flameless Ones, have you come to pay tribute to Ti'irok Coalfire?" the fiery wolf hisses.

A fire giant named Ti'irok Coalfire leads a small legion of mercenaries comprised of haraknin canomorphs (fiery humanoids than can assume hell hound form). This mercenary company is called the Flamewarders, and a few years back it caught the attention of the Cagewrights. Ti'irok has been serving the Cagewrights loyally ever since, thanks in no small part to the generous stipend they pay him. Ti'irok is away handling various important matters, but he's left behind his best lieutenant to guard his secret treasury (area O11).

Creatures: The flame-haired woman practicing her swordsmanship is Ti'irok's lieutenant—a powerful female haraknin canomorph named Aszithef. Although she initially resented Ti'irok buying her clan, he has treated her people fairly and paid them well. Ti'irok has also won Aszithef's devotion by entrusting her with his prized greatsword *Coldfire*. Aszithef is bored without Ti'irok and the others around. Still, she has Khetru, and between the two of them, they should be able to mop the room with the PCs' guts. Khetru demands that the characters pay a tribute of 10,000 gp, plus an additional 5,000 gp for each Nessian warhound they killed in area O7 (lest they face the wrath of the Flamewarders). If the characters try to negotiate, Aszithef and Khetru deliberately frustrate the characters at every turn, hoping to provoke them into a fight.

➤ **Aszithef, female haraknin Ftr7/Rog6:** CR 16; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, fire, lawful shapechanger); HD 4d8+7d10+6d6+68; hp 149; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 30, touch 15, flat-footed 27; Base Atk +15; Grp +22; Atk +25 melee (2d6+14/17–20 plus 1d6 cold plus 1d6 fire, *Coldburn*) or +20 ranged (1d8+4/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +25/+20/+15 melee (2d6+14/17–20 plus 1d6 cold plus 1d6 fire, *Coldburn*) or +20/+15/+10 ranged (1d8+4/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA breath weapon, command fiendish hound, sneak attack +3d6; SQ alternate form, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, scent, trap sense +2, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +13, Will +8; Str 24, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Breath Weapon (Su): Cone of fire, 30 feet, every 2d4 rounds, damage 1d4+1, Reflex DC 20 half. A haraknin's breath weapon ignites flammable materials within the cone. It can use its breath weapon while biting.

Command Fiendish Hound (Sp): Aszithef can use *greater command* at will against hell hounds and Nessian warhounds.

Alternate Form (Su): Aszithef can transform into a hell hound or back as a move action at will, as if by *alter self*. She prefers to fight in humanoid form.

Skills: Balance +6, Climb +18, Hide +23, Intimidate +4, Jump +20, Listen +15, Move Silently +22, Search +7, Spot +15, Survival +6 (+14 when tracking by scent), Tumble +23.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Track[®], Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword), Whirlwind Attack.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Giant, Ignan, Infernal.

Possessions: +2 mithral breastplate, *Coldburn* (+2 flaming frost greatsword), masterwork composite longbow (+5 Str bonus), 20 arrows, +1 animated large steel shield, gauntlets of ogre power, ioun stone (pink rhomboid; +2 Dex), ring of protection +2, 2 potions of cure serious wounds, red-lacquered armband set with a diamond (2,000 gp), 120 pp.

➤ **Khetru, male haraknin Ftr5/Rog5:** CR 13; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, fire, lawful shapechanger); HD 4d8+5d10+5d6+42; hp 108; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +12; Grp +17; Atk +19 melee (1d12+10/×3, +1 greataxe) or +16 ranged (1d8+5/×3, masterwork composite longbow [+5 Str]); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d12+10/×3, +1 greataxe) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (1d8+5/×3, masterwork composite longbow [+5 Str]); SA breath weapon, command fiendish hound, sneak attack +3d6; SQ alternate form, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, fire subtype, scent, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +7; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Breath Weapon (Su): Cone of fire, 30 feet, every 2d4 rounds, damage 1d4+1, Reflex DC 20 half. A haraknin's breath weapon ignites flammable materials within the cone. It can use its breath weapon while biting.

Command Fiendish Hound (Sp): Khetru can use *greater command* at will against hell hounds and Nessian warhounds.



Alternate Form (Su): Khetru can transform into a hellhound or back as a move action at will, as if by *alter self*. He prefers to fight in humanoid form.

Skills: Hide +16, Jump +22, Listen +13, Move Silently +16, Spot +13, Survival +8 (+16 when tracking by scent), Tumble +8.

Feats: Acrobatic, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Track[®], Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe).

Languages: Common, Infernal.

Possessions: +2 chain shirt, +1 adamantite greataxe, masterwork composite longbow (+5 Str bonus), 30 arrows, ring of protection +1, potion of blur, potion of bull's strength, 2 potions of cure serious wounds, potion of protection from energy (cold), oil of greater magic weapon +3, red-lacquered gold armband set with an emerald (1,000 gp), 25 pp, 100 gp.

Development: If the characters kill Aszithef and claim the greatsword *Coldfire* for themselves, they might need to reckon with T'irok Coalfire in the future. (He'll turn up in a future Adventure Path module and won't be pleased to see *Coldfire* in their possession.)

011. TI'IROK'S TREASURY

The secret door leading into this room is quite large (5 feet wide by 13 feet tall) and bulky, requiring a successful Strength check (DC 25) to push open. Detecting the secret

door requires a Search check (DC 20). The door was designed with a fire giant in mind.

T'irok isn't happy about having to store a significant amount of his treasure here, particularly since he doesn't know Vhalantru particularly well. The giant's goods are described under *Treasure*.

Treasure: Two enormous iron chests rest in the middle of the room. Both chests are locked (Open Lock DC 30), and T'irok took the keys with him. Moreover, each chest weighs close to 800 pounds.

Chest #1 contains 22,150 gp, 30 large geodes worth 300 gp each, a suit of dragonhide plate, a mithral heavy shield, 15 cold iron javelins sized for a Large individual, masterwork chainmail barding (for a horse or nightmare), and a suit of masterwork full plate made for a Large individual.

Chest #2 contains 18,925 gp, an unlocked iron box containing 450 pp, 10 flasks of oil, an iron strongbox containing 4 potions of invisibility, and an adamantite battleaxe.

012. EMPTY ROOM

This hemispherical chamber is currently unused. The Nessian warhounds in area 07 used to play with T'irok the fire giant in this chamber, and the floor is strewn with old bones, spoor, and tattered bits of leather.

O13. ART TREASURY (EL 13)

Bricks cover the walls, floor, and ceiling of this 20-foot-high vault. Some of the bricks in the north wall have been neatly removed, creating rows of cubbyholes and giving it a slightly pockmarked look. Many of the cubbyholes hold bits of treasure.

Many of the cubbyholes are filled with treasures Vhalantru has amassed over the years (see *Treasure*). The beholder guards his treasure well, however (see *Creatures*).

Creatures: Observant characters who succeed at a Search check (DC 22) will notice the pair of stone golems embedded in the chamber floor. Because of the brickwork, it's hard to tell where the bricks end and the edges of each golem begin. The golems rise up from the floor and attack any non-beholder who removes something of value from a cubbyhole. The golems are gifts from Vhalantru's Cagewright friends.

➤ **Stone golems (2):** hp 107 each; *Monster Manual* 136.

Treasure: The cubbyholes contain the following items: 24 ceramic urns containing 100 gp apiece, 7 painted copper urns containing 50 pp apiece, a pouch of 5 moss agates (10 gp each), a pouch of 8 azurites (10 gp each), a pouch of 5 zircons (40 gp each), silver oakleaf brooch (80 gp), a pair of matched crystal candlesticks (400 gp), white velvet sash set with tiny rubies (600 gp), set of ivory and obsidian chess pieces (1,200 gp), silver brazier engraved with crashing waves (1,700 gp), gold necklace set with lapis lazuli (2,100 gp), gold bracelet set with sapphires (3,000 gp), platinum scepter set with emeralds (3,000 gp), a silver clam-shaped case containing 4 black pearls (4,000 gp), platinum crown set with emeralds (7,000 gp), *wand of bull's strength* (42 charges), scroll of *cure serious wounds*, *amulet of natural armor* +4, +1 *frost kama*, and a *minor ring of energy resistance (acid)*.

O14. TROPHIES

The walls of this 30-foot-high hall are carved with myriad bas-reliefs depicting various Underdark creatures and terrains. This hall also holds an impressive collection of monstrous statues, arranged in a semicircle and all very lifelike.

Vhalantru keeps several petrified monster trophies in this hall. From west to east, they are as follows: juvenile black dragon, juvenile minotaur, harpy, otyugh, rust monster, kuo-toa, and phantom fungus.

O15. OBLIVION'S WOMB (EL 16)

Light: Six everburning torches in sconces along walls.

Sound: Manic gibbering (from lunatics).

Auras: Strong (Zar'ilkoth Tarteros ritual circle, DC 22 transmutation), Faint (*continual flame* spells on everburning torches, DC 17 evocation).

The great round door separates, revealing a 50-foot-wide, 50-foot-high hemispherical chamber with weird, abstract murals painted on the ceiling. Everburning torches in sconces brightly illuminate the room, revealing its contents. A bloated sphere with nine flailing eyestalks floats in the middle of the room, pale green fluid weeping from knobby, festering sores covering its body. It hovers above a 20-foot-diameter symbol carved into the floor: a triangle inscribed within a circle, both inlaid with gold. At the three corners of the inscribed triangle, chained to the stone floor, are three figures wearing crude leather straitjackets fitted with black straps and iron buckles. They appear to be a human male, a half-orc male, and a gnome female. The figures are held in place by ankle and wrist manacles, their heavy chains looped around iron rings securely fastened to the floor. Suddenly, arcs of black lightning leap from their eyes and strike the beholder, causing its great bulk to heave and become even more distended for an instant. The three figures collapse into heaps of ash on the floor, leaving behind nothing but charred straitjackets and burnt buckles.

The beholder turns to face you, as though aware of you for the first time. Pressed up against the convex pane of its enormous central eye, you can see the horribly fat visage of some demonic creature with a wide mouth full of sharp, triangular teeth. Suddenly, the beholder's own mouth spreads wide, and slime pours from its gums onto the stone floor.

Creature: Characters who participated in "Life's Bazaar," the first Adventure Path module (in *DUNGEON* #97), should vaguely recognize the beholder. However, Vhalantru has undergone a staggering transformation, merging his life force with that of a shator demodand to become something truly vile.

The three bound figures were commoners whom the Cagewrights abducted and afflicted with *insanity* spells. Nothing of them remains except bits of their apparel.

➤ **Vhalantru, Shator Tarterian beholder:** CR 16; Large aberration; HD 11d8+44; hp 93; Init +6; Spd 5 ft., fly 20 ft. (good); AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +8; Grp +12; Atk +9 ranged touch (eye rays*) and +5 melee (2d4+4 plus paralysis, bite); Atk +9 ranged touch (eye rays*) and +5 melee (2d4+4 plus paralysis, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA eye rays (DC 20), paralyzing slime, spell-like abilities; SQ all-around vision, antimagic cone, darkvision 120 ft., flight, freedom of movement, immunities, resistance to cold 20 and fire 20, scent, see invisibility; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +11; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 21.

*Note: Vhalantru has nine eyestalks instead of ten; he is missing his *inflict serious wounds* eye ray (having given it as a gift to Thifirane Rhiavadi).

Paralyzing Slime (Ex): Creatures struck in melee by Vhalantru's bite attack must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw (DC 19) or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds. Vhalantru can choose to spit a globule of slime as a ranged touch attack with a range of 30 feet, with the same effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear* (DC 19), *invisibility*, *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*cloudkill* (DC 20), *fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *stinking cloud* (DC 18); 2/day—*dispel magic*; 1/day—*mass charm monster* (DC 23). Caster level 15th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Freedom of Movement (Su): Vhalantru gains the benefit of continuous *freedom of movement*, as the spell (caster level 10th).

Immunities: Immunity to acid, mind-influencing attacks, and poison.

See Invisibility (Su): This ability functions as the *see invisibility* spell, except that it is always active and its range extends to the limits of Vhalantru's vision.

Skills: Hide +12, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Listen +18, Search +21, Spot +22; Survival +2 (+4 following tracks).

Feats: Alertness[®], Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will.

Languages: Common, Elven, Infernal, Undercommon.

Tactics: Many of Vhalantru's combat options involve weakening or incapacitating his foes. He might taunt characters by spitting paralyzing slime in their direction once or twice. He also wants to test out some of his new spell-like abilities, including *ray of enfeeblement* and *cloudkill*. As a beholder, he can use his eye rays as a free action every turn. To stay away from the melee fighter, Vhalantru levitates up toward the ceiling.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

"Lords of Oblivion" puts the heroes on the offensive, giving them a long-awaited opportunity to take the fight to the Last Laugh, the Cagewrights and their would-be allies, and the ambitious Lord Vhalantru. By the end of the adventure, they

should know about the Cagewrights' plans for Cauldron. Moreover, Vhalantru should no longer pose any threat. However, a couple important puzzle pieces are still missing. The PCs may know about the Ritual of Planar Junction, but they don't know where the ritual is taking place or where the Cagewrights have hidden the Shackleborn and their nefarious soulcages. These questions and others will be answered in the final three adventures of the series.

TARTERIAN CREATURE (TEMPLATE)

A creature on any plane other than Carceri can, through ancient magic and arcane rituals, barter with a fiendish spirit trapped in the Tarterian Depths of Carceri. This bargain allows the fiendish spirit a momentary yet priceless flicker of freedom as it bestows the bargainer with fragments of its power. The fiendish spirit is annihilated as a result, but many fiends would rather be destroyed than trapped on Carceri for all eternity.

In exchange for its newfound fiendish powers, the beneficiary, now a Tarterian creature, gives up its soul upon death. Put another way, when the Tarterian creature dies, its soul goes to Carceri and is trapped there. For as long as the spirit remains trapped on Carceri, *raise dead*, *resurrection*, and *true resurrection* spells automatically fail to restore the creature to life.

CREATING A TARTERIAN CREATURE

"Tarterian" is an acquired template that can be added to any living corporeal creature of evil alignment (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). A Tarterian creature uses all of the base creature's statistics and abilities except where noted here. It also gains new special abilities and special qualities based on the type of demodand spirit it absorbed:

FARASTU DEMODAND SPIRIT

Special Attacks: The Tarterian creature with the farastu spirit retains all of the special attacks of the base creature but also gains the following abilities:

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Lords of Oblivion" is designed for a group of four 13th–14th-level PCs, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 11th–12th or 15th–16th level characters. Most of the enemies encountered are NPCs with class levels; you can adjust the adventure in either direction by simply adjusting their class levels up or down by a number equal to that which the PCs vary from 14th level (for Chapters Two and Three). The encounters in Chapter One should remain unchanged, although you might want to lower Finch and Jil a level or two if the PCs are 11th or 12th level.

11th–12th-level PCs: In Chapter Two, the PCs shouldn't encounter Thifirane and her guests all at once. They should

be scattered throughout the house, and shouldn't react to their intrusion in an organized manner. In Chapter Three, remove one of the spirit nagas, one of the farastus, one of the Nessian warhounds, and one of the haraknins (the remaining haraknin's class levels should be reduced appropriately). Vhalantru should be in the process of transformation, but when the PCs encounter him, he should not yet have gained the Tarterian creature template.

15th–16th-level PCs: No changes are necessary in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, increase the spirit naga hit dice by 4 to 8, and the farastu and warhound hit dice by 2 to 4. Give Vhalantru one or two farastu minions as well.

Adhesive Slime (Ex): The Tarterian creature exudes a sticky, tarlike slime that acts as a powerful adhesive, holding fast creatures or items that touch it. The Tarterian creature gets a +8 racial bonus on grapple checks and disarm checks due to the adhesive slime. A weapon that strikes a Tarterian creature is stuck fast unless the wielder succeeds on a Reflex save. (The save DC is Constitution-based.) Prying off a stuck weapon requires a successful Strength check (DC 17).

Lantern oil or some other flammable oil (such as alchemist's fire) dissolves the Tarterian creature's adhesive slime; the creature requires 10 minutes to renew its adhesive coating if doused with oil. A Tarterian creature can dissolve its adhesive slime at will, and the substance breaks down 1 minute after the Tarterian creature dies.

Rage (Ex): Three times per day, the Tarterian creature can fly into a frenzy, raging like a barbarian (see the Player's Handbook, page 25). However, that the Tarterian creature is not fatigued at the end of its rage.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear*, *invisibility*, *tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*; 2/day—*dispel magic*. Caster level 11th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Special Qualities: The Tarterian creature with the farastu spirit retains all of the special qualities of the base creature but also gains the following qualities:

Freedom of Movement (Su): The Tarterian creature gains the benefit of continuous freedom of movement, as the spell (caster level 10th).

Scent (Ex): The Tarterian creature can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell. Darkvision out to 60 feet.

Immunity to acid and poison.

Resistance to cold 5 and fire 5.

Cannot be raised or resurrected.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: +2 Str, +2 Cha.

Skills: The Tarterian creature's adhesive slime gives it a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks.

CR: Same as the base creature +2.

KELUBAR DEMODAND SPIRIT

Special Attacks: The Tarterian creature with the kelubar spirit retains all of the special attacks of the base creature but also gains the following abilities:

Acidic Slime (Ex): The slime secreted by a Tarterian creature adds +1d6 points of acid damage to each of its melee attacks. On a successful critical hit, this burst of acid deals +1d10 points of acid damage instead.

Stench (Ex): The Tarterian creature's slime reeks of filth and decay. All creatures (except other Tarterian creatures) within 30 feet of a kelubar must succeed on a Fortitude save or be nauseated for as long as the creature remains within the area, and for 10 rounds after the creature leaves. A successful save means the creature is immune to that Tarterian creature's stench for 24 hours (but not the stench of other Tarterian creatures). The save DC is Constitution-based.

30 years ago,
the unopenable
doors parted.

This July, it's happening again.

WORLD OF GREYHAWK MAURE CASTLE

by Robert J. Kuntz
and Gary Gygax
Dungeon 112

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear*, *invisibility*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*; 2/day—*acid fog*, *dispel magic*. Caster level 13th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Special Qualities: The Tarterian creature with the kelubar spirit retains all of the special qualities of the base creature but also gains the following qualities:

Freedom of Movement (Su): The Tarterian creature gains the benefit of continuous *freedom of movement*, as the spell (caster level 10th).

Darkvision out to 120 feet.

Immunity to acid and poison.

Resistance to cold 10 and fire 10.

Cannot be raised or resurrected.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: +4 Str, +4 Cha.

Skills: The Tarterian creature gets a +2 racial bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive checks.

CR: Same as the base creature +2.

SHATOR DEMODAND SPIRIT

Special Attacks: The Tarterian creature with the shator spirit retains all of the special attacks of the base creature but also gains the following abilities:

Paralyzing Slime (Ex): Creatures struck in melee by the Tarterian creature's claw or bite attack must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds. The Tarterian creature can choose to spit a globule of slime as a ranged touch attack with a range of 30 feet, with the same effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear*, *invisibility*, *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*cloudkill*, *fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *stinking cloud*; 2/day—*dispel magic*; 1/day—*mass charm monster*. Caster level 15th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Special Qualities: The Tarterian creature with the shator spirit retains all of the special qualities of the base creature but also gains the following qualities:

Freedom of Movement (Su): The Tarterian creature gains the benefit of continuous *freedom of movement*, as the spell (caster level 10th).

Scent (Ex): The Tarterian creature can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

See Invisibility (Su): This ability functions as the *see invisibility* spell, except that it is always active and its range extends to the limits of the Tarterian creature's vision.

Darkvision out to 120 feet.

Immunity to acid, mind-influencing attacks, and poison.

Resistance to cold 20 and fire 20.

Cannot be raised or resurrected.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: +6 Str, +6 Cha.

Skills: The Tarterian creature gets a +2 racial bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive checks.

CR: Same as the base creature +3. Ω

Chris Perkins is the Design Manager for RPG R&D at Wizards of the Coast, leading a team of talented designers including Bruce Cordell, David Noonan, James Wyatt, Jesse Decker, and Rich Baker. A former DUNGEON editor-in-chief, his favorite pastimes include dreaming up new adventures for the magazine.

CAMPAIGN SEED: RECURRING VILLAINS

The PCs are going to meet a large number of new villains in this adventure, particularly in Chapter Two. Chances are that some of these villains are going to escape; if they do, they can continue to play a minor role in the campaign as incidental menaces. If the PCs need to go on a short sidequest to gain some experience, perhaps they could track down the rest of the Necrocants and prevent them from realizing their plans to take over Sasserine. Or perhaps they can track Adrick to his hidden lair to disrupt the flow of gold and silver to the Last Laugh.

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE LAST LAUGH

The Last Laugh thieves' guild is led by five masters, of which only one (Velior Thazo) is detailed in this adventure. The other four can be detailed as you see fit. If the PCs

manage to kill Jil (or worse, convert her to their cause), the Last Laugh takes notice. If they kill Velior, they declare war on the PCs. Times are strange in Cauldron, though, and it's possible that the Last Laugh bides their time before launching a campaign of revenge against the PCs. In any case, the nature and location of their guildhall is left to you to decide.

CAMPAIGN SEED: PETRIFIED ANCIENTS

The petrified victims found in Oblivion (particularly those in area 01) represent a wide range of individuals that have crossed Vhalantru in the past; adventurers, politicians, merchants, and even minions. It's even possible that an NPC that the PCs met earlier in the campaign but have since lost contact with can be found here, petrified and on display. If the PCs rescue any of these individuals, they may be able to provide rewards or further adventures as you see fit.





FOUNDATION OF FLAME

BY CHRIS THOMASSON

ARTWORK BY UDON WITH BEN HUEN, CHRIS STEVENS,
CHRISTINE CHOI, AND JIM ZUBKAVICH
CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

FOUNDATION
OF FLAME

The steaming jungles of the distant south hold countless mysteries and dangerous curiosities. One of the most astounding wonders of the verdant domain is the city of Cauldron, a community forged in the caldera of a long dormant volcano. A haven for mercantile nobles and artisans cashing in on the jungle's abundant wealth, Cauldron swirls with political intrigue. Thanks to a secret society called the Cagewrights, the city also swirls with intrigue of a more infernal nature. Plans set into motion centuries ago are finally coming to fruition, and the heart of the ancient volcano stirs once more. The endgame begins.

"Foundation of Flame" is the eighth adventure in the Shackled City Adventure Path. It begins after the PCs emerge from the lair of Lord Orbius Vhalantru, having finally dispatched the horrid beholder in "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111). During the course of "Foundation of Flame," disaster visits the troubled town of Cauldron, and the PCs are called upon to help evacuate the dying city. This adventure is designed for a group of four 15th-level characters, and the PCs should achieve 16th level by the time they complete it.

This adventure is part of the Shackled City Adventure Path that includes "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97), "Flood Season" (*DUNGEON* #98), "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" (*DUNGEON* #109), and "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111). If you're not using the Adventure Path, "Foundation of Flame" can occur when any dark, evil organization plots the downfall of a major city in your campaign world.

PREPARATION

Running "Foundation of Flame" requires the *Player's Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. Access to previous Adventure Path modules is helpful. "Foundation of Flame" has a somewhat unusual format, in that the sequence of play is determined by a series of events rather than encounters keyed to specific locations on a map.

Running an event-based adventure is tricky. It can be difficult to keep up the pace, and it's easy to waste time flipping pages between events. Review the entire module prior to play to familiarize yourself with its contents. This adventure introduces many new rules for handling large crowds and adjudicating city-based disasters. You should feel free to reorganize the timing of the events as you see fit. Take the time to familiarize yourself with the abilities and tactics for the primary villains in the adventure, in particular the derro assassin Kravichak, the demodands, the Crater Lake Monster, and the mighty dragon Hookface.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Cagewrights are an ancient organization that has long served the demodands of Carceri, scheming neutral evil outsiders who plot to increase their power on the Material Plane. The organization's ultimate goal is to allow the denizens of Carceri unrestricted access to the Material Plane through a dark magical event known as the ritual of planar junction. If performed properly, this ritual creates a permanent gateway between the two planes, enabling the demodands to expand their extraplanar jail and enslave new prisoners to serve their dark whims.

But the ritual requires extensive planning to succeed. The demodands sent a few of their kind to the Material Plane centuries ago, disguised as humanoids. In this guise, they interbred with the denizens of this plane. The resulting spawn were mostly stillborn, but a few twisted unfortunates survived. As the generations passed, the fiendish taint became diluted. Eventually, all visual traces of demodand ancestry faded entirely. But the taint in the blood and soul remained. Every few generations, an indication of this taint surfaces in the form of an invisible birthmark in the shape of an unholy sigil known as the Carcerian Sign. These are the Shackleborn.

The Cagewrights know about the Shackleborn, and they also know that their sacrifice during the ritual of planar junction could unleash enough tainted life energy to open the portal to Carceri. The Cagewrights have been scheming

while keeping watch on the Shackleborn for hundreds of years. Yet the Shackleborn were few in number, and for a time the Cagewrights began to fear that they had all died off. Then, five years ago, a favored Cagewright servant named Fetor Abradius made a terrific discovery in an ancient ruined complex far beneath Cauldron. There, on several ancient repositories of magical lore known as the Soul Pillars, he learned of a ritual that would allow the harnessing of an erupting volcano's vast power, a ritual that was strangely similar to the ritual of planar junction.

Fetor reported to his masters, and one of the thirteen leaders of the Cagewrights soon arrived—a vile man named Nulin Wiejeron. In Cauldron he found not only a way to enhance the souls of sacrificed Shackleborn with a volcanic eruption (thus vastly reducing the number of Shackleborn needed for the ritual), but also a city with a fortuitous number of Shackleborn among its citizenry. He also discovered a decadent nobility and a foolish lord mayor. The only troubling elements were the city's churches. The citizens were unusually devout in their faith, but Wiejeron was only minimally concerned. If all went according to plan, these temples would never become suspicious enough to notice the Cagewrights and their machinations, especially if his organization was able to gain the support of the city's powerful Cathedral of Wee Jas.

All that remained was to collect thirteen Shackleborn, construct the artifacts that would siphon their souls (the *soulcages*), and merge this energy with the volcano itself (via an artifact called the *Tree of Shackled Souls*). Nearly five years later—and despite numerous setbacks—the Thirteen true Cagewrights are finally ready to begin the ritual of planar junction. All that remains is to wait a few more days for their members to congregate in the deep chambers below Cauldron. Unfortunately, some of the hired help have plans of their own, and their impatience may give the PCs a chance to stop the nefarious plan—if they can act quickly enough.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

After recovering from previous adventures, the PCs receive a message from Jenya Urikas, the high priestess of St. Cuthbert. The message is an invitation to meet with the most influential nobles of Cauldron to determine the fate

of the city and set a new course for its leadership.

During this meeting, a raving derro sorcerer and his berserker minions attack, seeking to further strike a blow against the city's leadership. After defeating the derro, the PCs conclude their business and see to the wounded.

Shortly thereafter, the earthquakes begin. More tremors follow, growing worse and worse as time passes. The PCs must assist in the evacuation of all of Cauldron's citizens. This harrowing process must proceed despite the PCs' knowledge that the Cagewrights are likely behind the earthquakes. As they nearly complete their task, a terrible visitor arrives in Cauldron to add to the chaos... the fearsome red dragon Hookface, angry after being awakened from a 50-year sleep!

CHAPTER ONE: A MEETING OF MINDS

"Foundation of Flame" begins when the PCs emerge from the lair of the Carcerian beholder, Orbius Vhalantru. Most likely wounded, weary, and possibly carrying their dead, the PCs need time to rest. How long they have to recover from the previous adventure is up to you. If they managed to finish "Lords of Oblivion" with little trouble or are above 15th level, Jenya could summon them to the meeting only a few hours after they emerge. If, on the other hand, they took heavy casualties, give them a few days to recover, resupply, and prepare. When you judge enough time has passed, one of the PCs receives a *sending* spell from Jenya.

"My friends, I request the pleasure of your company as soon as possible at the Town Hall. Your attendance is vital to Cauldron's future."

Jenya seeks a simple "We'll be there shortly" or something similar. If the PCs decline, she tries another *sending* spell, pleading the importance of the meeting. If that attempt fails, nearly all of Cauldron's influential citizens are slain by Kravichak and his berserker minions (see *Insanity Plea*, on page 62). Jenya manages to escape and locates the PCs later to fill them in on events and to express her disappointment that they weren't there to aid in the city's defense. The quakes begin soon thereafter.

CAMPAIGN SEED: ENDGAME

"Foundation of Flame" is the eighth adventure in the Shackled City Adventure Path, and represents the beginning of the final story arc in the series. In these last three adventures, the PCs finally get to make some important decisions and strike decisive blows against the Cagewrights and the sinister forces that have organized them.

In the next adventure, "The Thirteen Cages" (appearing in *DUNGEON* #114), the PCs return to Cauldron and delve

deeply into the awakening volcano to confront the Cagewrights for the first time and to prevent them from transforming Cauldron into a gateway to Carceri. In the final adventure, "Asylum" (appearing in *DUNGEON* #115), the PCs finish the job of defeating the Cagewrights after they flee to their home base in the ruins of Shatterhorn, and confront the demon lord Adimarchus himself in his Carcerian prison.

Jenya Urikas has called a meeting of the town's remaining powerful, influential, or perceptive members. She intends to determine a course of action for the city, including compiling a list of potential replacements for the lord mayor's office. In addition to inviting the PCs, she also invites all other allies to the cause, including clerics from the other temples (excluding the now closed temple of Wee Jas), prominent merchants, and members of the Chisel and the Striders of Fharlanghn.

Jenya's invitation list also includes the heads of Cauldron's most important noble families, some of which are parents of NPCs the player characters might have already encountered. The meeting itself takes place in a large conference room in the Town Hall. As the meeting progresses, the PCs should have ample opportunities to size up the nobles and others, either through conversation (Diplomacy checks) or careful observation (Sense Motive checks). Most of the nobles do not respond well to intimidation, and any attempted Intimidate checks automatically turn their attitude unfriendly. The nobles aren't foolish enough to assault the PCs, but they are generally brave enough to argue with them.

The meeting begins with Jenya introducing everyone. Her goals for the meeting include the following:

- How should Cauldron go about replacing the lord mayor? Historically he appointed a successor, but unfortunately the previous mayor never took this step.
- Would a new form of government be better for the city? Jenya is pondering the concept of going to a ruling council format, with the office of lord mayor becoming a tie-breaking position in the council.
- Jenya asks the PCs to report on what they've learned about the city's troubles.

Of course, the meeting quickly crumbles into several heated discussions amongst those present. The most important thing to do here is allow the PCs the chance to form their own opinion about what's good for Cauldron, and to let them flex their political muscles a bit. Allow them to endorse their own candidates and make their own case for him or her. Encourage roleplaying between the PCs and the others present by asking for Diplomacy checks or Sense Motive checks.

Ultimately, the PCs should feel like they have a great responsibility here to the city and its people. If you feel they're losing sight of the goal of the meeting, Jenya

reminds them of this on a few occasions. They should feel the weight of this responsibility, and know that suffering could arise if they make the wrong choice.

The various participants at the meeting are detailed below. Only brief statistics are given for each, for two reasons. First, when combat breaks out (see *Insanity Plea*, below), the majority of these NPCs quickly flee. Even if they were to remain, only a few of them are capable of providing concrete assistance. Second, many of the NPCs at this meeting have played key roles in prior adventures in the series. As a result, they may have progressed in wildly different ways in different campaigns. Feel free to replace the NPCs here with others that have become important in your specific campaign. After all, the purpose of this encounter is to allow the players a chance to roleplay with the numerous friends and allies they have made over the course of the *Shackled City Adventure Path*.

THE NOBILITY

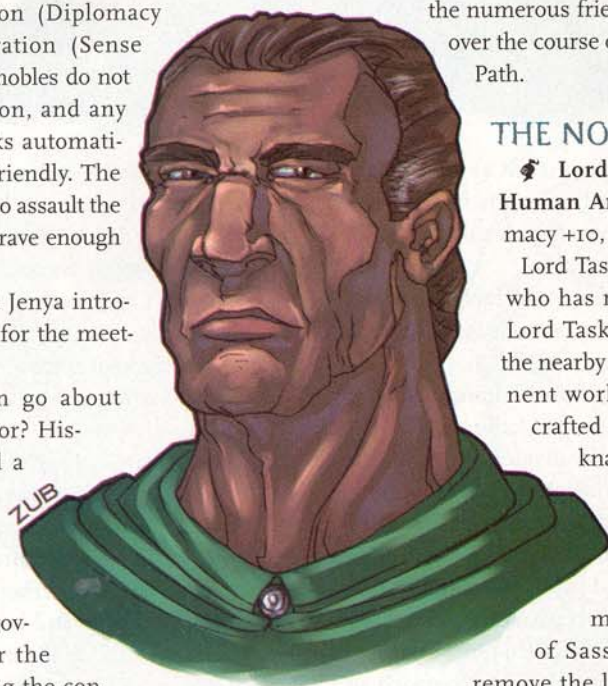
♣ **Lord Ankhin Taskerhill, Male Human** **Ari8:** AL NE; Bluff +15, Diplomacy +10, Sense Motive +12.

Lord Taskerhill is the wealthiest noble who has not yet abandoned Cauldron. Lord Taskerhill owns several mines in the nearby mountains, as well as a prominent workshop that ships exquisitely crafted obsidian furniture and knickknacks to the indolent cities of the north. Before the trouble in Cauldron really started (and the PCs appeared on the scene), Lord Taskerhill made contacts in the nearby city of Sasserine to hire an assassin to remove the lord mayor. He was forced to

abandon those plans when his contact abruptly went silent (the work of the Cagewrights, who wanted a malleable person in charge of the city).

Ankhin responds poorly to diplomatic attempts to pursue another candidate for lord mayor, and tries to return the subject to the appointment at any opportunity. Although haughty and cool to the PCs, he probably responds best to intimidation, since he's quite a coward at heart.

He has always made the appearance of being a dutiful citizen, even spending time socializing with the boorish ex-lord mayor. Secretly, Lord Taskerhill has always dreamed of becoming lord mayor himself, using his combined political power and material wealth to rise to heights of power undreamed of by previous lord mayors. From this meeting, he seeks to cement the support of the other nobles for his candidacy. He wanted to hold this meeting at his own manor—all the better to impress his inferiors with his wealth and



power—but Jenya flatly denied him for all the same reasons.

Unknown to him, Taskerhill is currently being scryed by a deranged derro sorcerer named Kravichak (see *Insanity Plea*). If a PC has an Intelligence of at least 12, he may notice the scrying sensor. Make a secret Intelligence check (DC 20) for him; success indicates that he notices it. Likewise, spells like *detect scrying* can reveal the sensor. If the PCs notice

the sensor and take drastic action (such as attempting to dispel it), Kravichak immediately teleports in (as detailed under *Insanity Plea*) and the meeting detailed here must be rescheduled.

♣ **Lord Premiach Vanderboren, Male Human Exp3/Ari3:** AL LN; Bluff +11, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (local) +10, Sense Motive +8.

♣ **Lady Aeberrin Vanderboren, Female Human Exp2/Ari4:** AL LG; Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Sense Motive +10.

The Vanderborens are the equivalent of real estate tycoons. Less respected by the other nobles because they're self made, they constantly look for ways to make the other nobles look bad to increase their standing among their new peers. They also own and fund two orphanages in town, including the Lantern Street Orphanage, which played a prominent role in "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97). Both Vanderborens got their start on their feet: Premiach as a runner for a messenger service and Aeberrin as a server at a tavern.

Lord Vanderboren is a savvy businessman with a keen eye for things that other people often overlook. He is still uncomfortable with the title bestowed on him by the late



lord mayor. His time on the streets gave him something of a rough edge, and he asks the PCs to call him Premiach or "Vandy," whichever they prefer. He doesn't say much throughout the proceedings, speaking mostly only when directly solicited for input. He also has the bad habit of occasionally interrupting someone when an idea occurs to him, and he often makes crass jokes when he's nervous (and he's very nervous at this meeting).

Lady Vanderboren is fiercely protective of her husband and her family's newfound status. As a result, she seems overly assertive and might even come across as an ambitious, power-hungry person. Perceptive PCs who see the nobles interacting with each other will begin to suspect the truth before long, though.

The Vanderborens were the only family invited that sent two representatives. They didn't realize that tradition in Cauldron is that one person (the head of the household) speaks for the family so no other family feels as though one of its rivals is more heavily favored than any other. The Vanderborens realized this only too late due to an overheard remark made by Lord Aslaxin, and they're still embarrassed. The Vanderborens want the city to remain safe and prosperous and have no real political agenda. However, Premiach is most interested in hearing about Orbis Vhalantru's lair, and he tries to find out repeatedly who owns it (so he can make an offer on the place).

♣ **Lord Zachary Aslaxin I, Male Human Ari9:** AL N; Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Sense Motive +10.

The Aslaxins are primarily art dealers. They ship most of the non-obsidian artwork crafted by local craftsmen out of

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE STORMBLADES

The PCs may have had prior encounters with some of the noble families in the past; specifically, with their children. The Stormblades are a competing adventuring group comprised of Ankhin Taskerhill's daughter, Zachary Aslaxin's son, and the adopted son of the Vanderborens. A fourth member of the Stormblades exists (Cora Lathenmire), but her parents are not among Cauldron's nobility. The nobles' attitudes regarding the PCs at this meeting depends on how the heroes have interacted with their children in prior

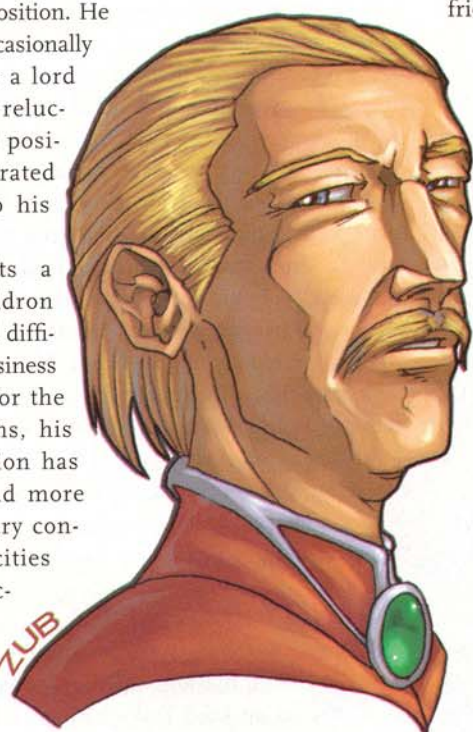
adventures. If the PCs are heated competitors with the Stormblades, they may suffer a -2 or -4 penalty on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks during the meeting. If the two adventuring groups have become allies, they may gain a +2 or +4 circumstance bonus on these skill checks.

In any case, the Stormblades themselves are not currently available for the PCs to speak with, nor do they aid in the coming evacuation of Cauldron. Their current whereabouts and activities are explored in an upcoming adventure; for now, any attempt to find or contact them should fail.

town, but the bulk of the family's fortune is tied up in shipping art and furniture, both simple and exotic, into town. The Aslaxins don't get along particularly well with the Taskerhills. Lord Aslaxin has always resented the Taskerhill control of the local obsidian trade, which turns a tidy profit each year.

Zachary can be described in one word: ice. Cool, silent, and calculating, he always gives the impression that he's appraising everything he sees, almost as if everyone he meets is a piece of art whose value must be determined. Lord Aslaxin becomes very interested in any PC with a Charisma of 12 or more, spending time engaged in conversation with that character in an attempt to win him or her over. He is sincere, serious, and earnest, but he also takes the opportunity to quietly inform anyone he speaks with that he expects Ankhin Taskerhill to make a bid for the office of lord mayor. He believes that only someone with ulterior motives would actually want such a difficult position. He also mentions occasionally that he'd prefer a lord mayor who was reluctant to take the position, an orchestrated move to set up his actual plan.

Aslaxin wants a peaceful Cauldron because he's had difficulty with his business lately. In fact, for the past few months, his financial situation has grown more and more dire. His primary contacts in other cities have been reluctant to do business lately, and he's getting desperate. He



came to this meeting determined to walk out the only candidate for lord mayor. He never broaches the subject, but once it comes up, he circuitously approaches the idea of a nominee from this group. Although he seems as if he's not personally interested, he really wants the position, mostly for the salary and the opportunity to steal the coveted obsidian trade from his rival house: the Taskerhills.

☛ **Lady Ophellha Knowlern, Female Elf Exp4/Ari2:** AL NG; Bluff +8, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (local) +14, Sense Motive +13.

Lady Knowlern owns a multitude of businesses. She has never married, and inherited her money from her parents. She owns a small brewery, the Drunken Morkoth Inn, and two crematories in the city, among many other interests and investments. Not nearly as openly powerful as the other nobles present, she was invited because she knows the city, is a genuinely compassionate person who likes Cauldron, and is a close friend of Jenya Urikas.



Person	Gender	Race	Class/Level	Allegiance
Fario Ellegoth	Male	Half-elf	Ftr5/Rog5	Striders of Fharlanghn
Fellian Shard	Male	Half-elf	Rog3/Clr7	Striders of Fharlanghn
Keygan Ghelve	Male	Gnome	Exp3/Ill2	Merchant
Kristof Jurgensen	Male	Human	Clr5	Clergy (Pelor)
Maavu Arlital	Male	Human	Exp5/Wiz4/Hgh2*	The Chisel
Meerthan Eliothorn	Male	Half-elf	Wiz16	Striders of Fharlanghn
Omar Tiskinsen	Male	Human	Clr7	Clergy (Kord)
Shensen Tesseril	Female	Half-drow	Mnk1/Brd1/Drd11	Striders of Fharlanghn
Skie Aldersun	Female	Gnome	Sor6	Merchant
Tygot Mispas	Male	Halfling	Rog3/Exp3	Merchant

*High: High Handcrafter (prestige class detailed in "The Demonskar Legacy," DUNGEON #104).

Ophella projects a stern, commanding aura. She has cultivated this almost fierce exterior as a defense mechanism to keep suitors away. At heart, though, she's quite compassionate, and if the PCs recount any of their adventures that deal with the plight of the less fortunate, a successful DC 20 Spot check reveals that Ophella is listening carefully, and perhaps surreptitiously wiping a tear away from her eye. For the most part, however, she's distant, terse, and somewhat unpleasant.

Ophella Knowlern is here at Jenya's request to keep an eye on the other nobles. She has no interest in becoming lord mayor, but she has a definite interest in who does. She observes the meeting and tries to gauge what everyone present really wants. Secretly, Lady Knowlern hopes that Jenya herself will make a bid to become lord mayor, but she's unwilling to put her friend on the spot by nominating her without discussing the matter privately first. She might also throw her support behind Lord Vanderboren or even Lord Aslaxin, as she finds the latter noble hard to read and believes him to be sincere in his concern for the city.

ADDITIONAL ALLIES

Jenya called upon representatives from the temples of Kord and Pelor for both moral support and so they could help judge the character of anyone who is nominated for lord mayor.

Jenya herself seems taken with Lord Aslaxin. He walks her around the room, refilling her goblet while talking softly in her ear and listening intently to everything she says. Jenya is a logical choice for the PCs to select as their candidate for lord mayor. She honestly doesn't want the position, but truly persuasive PCs might be able to convince her it's the best thing for the city with a successful Diplomacy check (DC 35). Lord Taskerhill and Lord Aslaxin oppose this move vehemently; they each make a DC 20 Diplomacy check to oppose the PCs. Each success invokes a -2 penalty to the PC's own check to convince Jenya.

In addition to the PCs, Jenya has invited several others to the meeting to help decide Cauldron's future. You should select additional NPCs from the list on the previous page that the PCs have had contact with in prior adventures. The following table lists the names and brief interests of several

other key and prominent NPCs that may be invited to the meeting.

Omar Tiskinsen, the second-in-command of Cauldron's church of Kord, falls firmly into Lord Taskerhill's camp. He spends most of his time loudly recounting stories of his athletic prowess while Lord Taskerhill smiles thinly and chuckles at all the right moments.

Kristof seems entirely out of place. The other nobles mostly ignore the least powerful cleric, and he nervously sips too much wine while waiting for the evening to end.

The Striders of Fharlanghn (Fario, Fellian, Shensen, and Meerthan) stay fairly quiet during the meeting, watching the nobles and anyone else nominated for the post. If pressed for their own nominations, they nominate the PC that has formed the closest bond with their organization. Otherwise, they prefer to remain silent observers.

The merchants (Keygan, Skie, and Tygot) quickly become fairly vocal and passionate about supporting their choices for lord mayor. Keygan supports Taskerhill, Skie the Vanderborns, and Tygot Aslaxin. A successful Diplomacy check (DC 30) can convince them to support a new nominee.

Maavu represents a group called the Chisel, a secret organization of merchants and artisans that the PCs may have had dealings with in the past (especially if they played "The Demonskar Legacy," from *DUNGEON* #104). Most of the other participants of the meeting (with the exception of the Striders, Jenya, and the PCs) assume Maavu is there to help represent the merchants of Cauldron; he does own several warehouses in town. Maavu supports Lord Aslaxin's nomination, and stridently opposes Lord Taskerhill. A successful Diplomacy check (DC 30) can convince him to support a new nominee, unless that nominee is Ankhin Taskerhill.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs help select a good choice for lord mayor, award them experience points as if they had defeated a CR 15 creature to reward their roleplaying efforts.

INSANITY PLEA (EL 17)

A servant of the true power behind the Cagewrights and their demodand masters, the derro savant Kravichak has been scrying on Lord Taskerhill since his arrival at the meeting. Kravichak has decided that Cauldron has calmed

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE NEW RULER OF CAULDRON

Although the meeting with Cauldron's nobles may ultimately come to nothing (especially if the PCs fail to successfully evacuate the city in Chapter Two), the PCs won't be aware of this at the time. Eventually, the citizens of Cauldron attempt to rebuild their lives. Just how the city recovers and rebuilds can be quite strongly influenced by the results of this meeting, even though dire times are coming for Cauldron.

One thing alluded to is the possibility that one of the PCs may become a favored nominee for the office of lord mayor. For the remainder of the Adventure Path, Cauldron is in no shape to be worrying much about the government, but eventually the city will need new leadership. Ruling a city and defending it from yet unseen dangers could form the basis of a continuing campaign beyond the final adventure in this series.

down too much; a little chaos and fear can only further the Cagewrights' plans. When the meeting reaches a particularly tense moment, Kravichak and his barbarian minions teleport into the room.

The meeting room itself is a large, comfortable sitting room, 40 feet long by 30 feet wide. Many large chairs are scattered about the room, but the center is a large freestanding 10-foot by 10-foot fireplace that has been filled with a roaring blaze. The fireplace can provide cover, but anyone who is bull-rushed into it takes 1d6 points of fire damage and must make a successful Reflex save (DC 15) or catch on fire.

Creatures: Kravichak and his barbarian minions appear with little fanfare, using a *teleport* spell and appearing within 10 feet of Lord Taskerhill. Since he's been observing the room via his *scry* spell, his familiarity is "viewed once" and he has a 76% chance of successfully teleporting into the room. If he fails, he continues to try once per round until successful.

Kravichak looks like a small, hunched dwarf with pale, blue-white skin and bulging white eyes. He wears unkempt but fine robes, and a long, wispy goatee hangs from his chin and upper lip. His hair is crudely cut in no particular fashion, chopped by one of his berserkers when the mood suits him. The derro has roughly even odds of being filthy or fastidiously clean. When Kravichak speaks, his voice sounds grating and squeaky, breaking into upper registers frequently. The derro often erupts into spasmodic, lurching giggles, which often end up giving him a bad case of hiccups. His four berserker minions constantly foam at the mouth, from which streams an unending litany of shrill gibberish.

Utterly insane, the derro savant teleported into the Cagewrights' lair one day and declared himself their ally. Despite their initial attempts to rid themselves of the crazed creature, the Thirteen have since decided that the sorcerer has his uses. He has been sent on many deadly missions with little expectation for survival, but each time, he and his berserkers managed to return alive and successful. Some within the Cagewrights believe that some of his berserkers have died at some point, but since only Kravichak seems able to tell them apart, no one is entirely sure.

➤ **Kravichak Riolgh, Male Derro Sor13:** CR 16; Small monstrous humanoid; HD 3d8+12 plus 13d4+52; hp 110; Init +9; Spd 50 ft., fly 90 ft. (good); AC 29, touch 19, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +9; Grp +4; Atk +11 melee (1d3/19–20, +1 dagger) or +17 ranged (1d3/19–20, +1 dagger) or +17 ranged (damage varies, ray); Full Atk +11/+11/+6 (1d3/19–20, +1



FOUNDATION
OF FLAME

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Foundation of Flame" is designed for a group of four 15th-level characters, but it can be scaled for use by groups of 13th- to 17th-level PCs. When adjusting the encounters in this adventure, simply raise or lower the class levels for enemy NPCs by an amount equal to the difference between the PCs and 15th level.

Another way to adjust the difficulty of the adventure is to adjust the amount of Evacuation Points required to successfully evacuate a section of the city. Characters of 13th–14th level should only have to accumulate 12 Evacuation Points to clear a section, while those of 16th–17th level may need to accumulate 20 points (or more) per section.

dagger) or +11 ranged (1d3/19–20, +1 dagger) or +17 ranged (damage varies, ray); SA poison use, sneak attack +1d6, spells, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., madness, spell resistance 15, vulnerability to sunlight; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +13, Will +20; Str 8, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 4, Cha 28.

Skills: Concentration +23, Bluff +13, Hide +11, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +11, Spellcraft +12.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Empower Spell, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (ray).

Languages: Dwarven, Undercommon.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—darkness, ghost sound; 1/day—daze (DC 19), sound burst (DC 21). Caster level 3rd. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spells Known (6/8/7/7/8/7/5*; save DC 19 + spell level):
0—acid splash, arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost, resistance; 1st—feather fall, grease, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement, shield; 2nd—detect thoughts, scorching ray, spectral hand, touch of idiocy, web; 3rd—dispel magic, fireball, ray of exhaustion, haste; 4th—confusion, enervation, greater invisibility, scrying; 5th—baleful polymorph, telekinesis, teleport; 6th—disintegrate, mass suggestion.

*Note that Kravichak has already cast some of his spells; his normal daily spell use is 6/9/8/8/8/8/5. His fifth-level spells have been adjusted for one teleport spell; if he must cast multiple teleports to get to the meeting room, make sure to adjust his available spells appropriately.

Possessions: +1 dagger, amulet of health +2, cloak of charisma +4, gloves of dexterity +2, bracers of armor +4, metamagic rod of lesser empower, ring of protection +2, potion of cure serious wounds (2), scroll of blight, scroll of insanity, scroll of Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion, scroll of teleport, wand of invisibility (50 charges), wand of fly (28 charges), 123 pp, 64 gp.

➤ **Kravichak's Berserkers, Male and Female Derro Bbnro (4):** CR 13; Small monstrous humanoid; HD 3d8+6 plus 10d12+20; hp 108; Init +7; Spd 60 ft.; AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +13; Grp +12; Atk +20 melee (1d10+5/×3 plus poison, +1 greataxe); Full Atk +20/+20/+15/+10 melee (1d10+5/×3 plus poison, +1 greataxe); SA poison use, rage 3/day, sneak attack +1d6, spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 2/—, fast movement, illiteracy, improved uncanny dodge, madness, spell resistance 15, trap sense +3, uncanny dodge, vulnerability to sunlight; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 3, Cha 16.

Rage (Ex): hp 134; AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 19; Grp +14; Atk +21 melee (1d10+8/×3 plus poison, +1 greataxe); Full Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (1d10+8/×3 plus poison, +1 greataxe); SV Fort +13, Will +12; Str 20, Con 18; Climb +14.

Poison: The berserkers have coated their weapons with Large scorpion venom (Fortitude save DC 18, 1d6/1d6 Str damage).

Skills: Climb +12, Hide +12, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Survival +6. Climb +12, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Survival +6.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

Languages: Undercommon.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—darkness, ghost sound; 1/day—daze (DC 19), sound burst (DC 21). Caster level 3rd. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: +2 chain shirt, +1 greataxe, amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, ring of protection +1, potion of bear's endurance, potion of bull's strength, potion of cat's grace, potion of cure serious wounds (2), 3d6 assorted gems (100 gp each), 125 pp.

Tactics: Kravichak loves to see his berserkers hurl themselves into battle, but he loves hurling spells in with them even more. Spellcraft checks to determine the spells he casts are nearly pointless, since he frequently shouts out the names of the spells as he casts them. Most of the time he says the name of the spell correctly, but sometimes he makes honest mistakes. Kravichak is especially fond of ray spells, and his gibbering screams of joy and ecstasy while he casts them have unhinged otherwise doughty warriors.

Kravichak's initial plan was to teleport into the meeting and kill everyone. The presence of the PCs doesn't surprise him, but it does alter his plans; he's not insane enough to not recognize they pose the greatest initial threat. He orders his berserkers to kill them while he focuses his spells on them at range. If you elect to have any of the other NPCs remain to assist the PCs, the derro extend their attacks to them as well.

Kravichak teleports in with some defensive magic already cast. He has used his wand of fly on himself and his wand of invisibility on each of his four berserkers. He has also cast shield and detect thoughts on himself, and haste on the entire group. The stat blocks above incorporate the benefits of these spells.

Meerthan, Jenya, and any other high-level NPCs in the room react quickly when the attack begins. Meerthan gathers the five nobles and teleports away to safety, and the others simply flee via the doors as they can. Each of the nobles has 30 hit points and an AC of 15. No statistics for the other NPCs are provided, as they realize that they're either severely outclassed or spend their time trying to protect those who are lower level. If you wish to have some of the NPCs remain to aid the PCs, you'll need to build their statistics.

Development: If one or more of the nobles dies, the survivors certainly have an easier time selecting a new lord mayor. Jenya arranges raise dead and resurrection spells as necessary, but the onset of the events of Chapter Two soon make the prospects for a new meeting remote.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MOUNTAIN AWAKENS

The Cagewrights don't immediately realize that Kravichak has launched his own, private assault against the leaders and heroes of Cauldron. When they do notice his absence, however, things quickly accelerate. The leaders of the Cagewrights have specifically ordered everyone within the complex deep under Cauldron to remain; this close to success, they aren't willing to risk exposure and want their lair to be as well defended as possible. After the events of "Lords of Oblivion," the cagewrights know that the PCs have struck a major blow against their plans, especially if Thiferane was killed. When the Cagewrights discover Kravichak is gone, they quickly determine what happened by casting several divination spells. The Cagewrights have been awaiting the return of their remaining members to begin the ritual, but this was more out of respect than necessity. Once they realize what has happened, the Cagewrights immediately begin the ritual of planar junction.

The secondary effects of the ritual include steadily increasing tremors, soon joined by fissures opening in the ground. Dark clouds converge over the city, crackling with energy. These clouds signify the first tenuous connection between Carceri and the Material Plane. As the barrier between the planes weakens, demodands (*Fiend Folio*, p. 42) begin falling from the clouds and onto the surrounding countryside and city. It is the beginning of the end for Cauldron, and only the PCs can do anything about it.

The timing for the rest of the adventure depends on when the Cagewrights begin the ritual of planar junction. If the PCs only barely survived their battle with Kravichak, you can wait long enough for them to rest and recover spells. If they made it through the battle with no problems, the ritual could begin as early as only a few hours later. If the PCs seem determined to track down Kravichak's masters, that's a good sign to start the ritual as well.

As a result of their tampering with the forces within the volcano, the Cagewrights set off a chain reaction that threatens to destroy Cauldron. As "Foundation of Flame" progresses, the effects of these forces proceed through two distinct stages, each of which is detailed below. The Cagewrights foresaw these devastating effects and have taken steps to ensure their safety. The artifact that serves as a focus for the ritual, the *Tree of Shackled Souls*, suppresses the effects of earthquakes and volcanic activity within a half mile. Since the Cagewrights' underground hold is located deep underground, these stabilizing effects do not extend to the city above. Further details on this can be found in the next Adventure Path installment.

As this chapter begins, the Cagewrights have just begun the ritual of planar junction. Consequently, the volcano is

just beginning to stir in a series of uneasy rumblings and grumblings. Initially, these tremors are ignored. The townsfolk are no strangers to minor earthquakes, and react with little more than nervous jokes. As the minutes pass and the tremors continue to occur, however, the joking ceases. It doesn't take long for the citizens to realize something terrible is on the way. Soon after these tremors begin, Jenya calls the PCs to the Church of St. Cuthbert for an emergency meeting.

SUMMONED TO THE TEMPLE

It's possible that once the tremors begin to shake Cauldron, the PCs can learn of the doom coming to the city on their own by using various divination spells or skill checks. In this case, allow them to draw their own conclusions about what's happening. When the need to evacuate the city becomes apparent, Jenya may still contact them for advice or aid. If, on the other hand, there isn't a PC that can cast powerful divination magic, or they seem to be ignoring the coming dangers or making plans to go elsewhere, use Jenya to focus their goals as detailed below.

Jenya used a *divination* spell to determine what she could about the tremors. The cryptic response she received was "Attend to the heart of the matter." Still unclear on the meaning of that response, she assigned several acolytes the task of combing through libraries in the church and city looking for clues. Her own best guess is that St. Cuthbert doesn't want her to spend time deliberating about the source of the tremors, but instead to see to Cauldron's populace (the "heart" of the city), most of whom are helpless to save themselves should the volcano become fully active. She then used a *commune* spell to speak to St. Cuthbert himself, and her fears were confirmed. Some dire event has awakened the ancient volcano, and if the citizens of Cauldron aren't evacuated at once, the results of an explosion would be unthinkable. Her only option, it seems to her, is to recruit the PCs to aid in the city's evacuation. She quickly contacts them with a *sending* spell.

"Heroes of Cauldron! Please attend to me at once at the temple. The city and its citizens require your immediate aid. Hurry!"

When the PCs reach the Temple of St. Cuthbert, an acolyte awaits their arrival on the church steps, dancing from foot to foot with impatience. He immediately conducts them to the familiar inner sanctum of the temple, where Jenya Urikas stands calmly in the center of the room, giving orders to her clergy and occasionally reaching out to steady herself by clutching a nearby chair when a tremor shakes the building. When she sees the PCs, she wastes no time and asks the heroes to hear her out.



"I believe it to be no coincidence that the attack on the city's leaders, Lord Vhalantru's death, and these tremors all occurred so quickly one after another, especially in light of all the other near catastrophes that have hit our city of late. But I cannot put these pieces together. Nor do I feel that I, or the citizens of Cauldron, have the time for such deliberation. I have consulted with St. Cuthbert, and his answers have led me to believe that I have neglected my duty to the city in my pursuit of these other questions. The citizens of Cauldron are my first priority, and it is to them that I must see before any other concerns. That is why I have called you here."

Jenya doesn't reveal the exact details of what she's learned from St. Cuthbert, and dismisses such questions as irrelevant. She is aware that the Cagewrights have some plan in the works, and that the tremors are likely a result of that plan being set into motion. If the PCs would rather track down the Cagewrights Jenya reminds them that without evacuating the city first, many people will die when the tremors grow stronger. She also points out that the PCs are the most capable of helping the panicked and disorganized citizens to safety, and that as heroes of Cauldron, the townsfolk should acknowledge them whereas messengers of the churches might be ignored. She vows that while the PCs help evacuate the city, she plans to devote her temple's most capable researchers, including herself, to determining where the Cagewrights are operating and what must be

done to stop them. Her findings are described in the next installment in the Shattered City Adventure Path.

Once the PCs have agreed to aid in the evacuation, Jenya recommends they conserve their strength as much as possible for the battle with the Cagewrights that surely lies ahead. She retrieves a fully charged *wand of cure moderate wounds* from her desk and hands it to a PC that can use it, asking that character to use it to keep himself strong and the citizens of Cauldron safe. As the PCs depart, Jenya tells them that she is relocating her clergy to a large, vacant manor house near the north gate. If they need further healing or aid, they can seek her out there. She also asks where the PCs plan to send those whom they evacuate; if the PCs have no ideas she recommends that the refugees be sent to the nearby town of Redgorge and promises to use a *sending* spell to alert the town's leaders.

THE EVACUATION OF CAULDRON

The second stage of volcanic activity in the region begins shortly after the PCs leave their meeting with Jenya, but before they can officially get started on the task of evacuation. This stage lasts for the remainder of the adventure. The shift is sudden, and is not normal behavior for an earthquake or the beginnings of a volcanic eruption. In addition to worsening tremors and other volcanic hazards, this stage is accompanied by a darkening of the skies and roiling clouds above. Oddly colored lightning and flashes of energy pulse in the clouds, and a successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 30) allows a character to realize that

the cloud formations are disturbingly similar to those found on the prison plane of Carceri. Eventually, fissures begin to open in the ground, unleashing steam, toxic gas, and even magma. The central lake boils and begins to flood the lower reaches of Cauldron. Portals begin opening in the skies above, raining demodands down upon the countryside. Time is running out for Cauldron.

To completely evacuate Cauldron and its population of 3,850 individuals, the PCs must eventually travel to every section of the city. For the purposes of running the evacuation, Cauldron has been split into five sections: four quadrants that reach from the city walls to Ash Avenue, and the lakefront area at the center of town from Ash Avenue inward. The PCs don't need to personally escort each citizen out of the city; the city watch, helpful merchants, and other NPCs are also helping to organize the evacuation. But without the PCs there to help take care of the major problems, the majority of the citizens are doomed.

To evacuate a section, the PCs must convince the locals to help them by spreading the word. The best way to do this is by performing acts of heroism that free trapped or endangered citizens and allow them to escape. Once a section of the city has been evacuated, simply tell the PCs that they have done all they can here and can move on to a new section of town. The order in which the PCs evacuate the city is largely up to them, but the Lake District is in the most danger due to flooding and other trouble coming from the depths of the lake. As the PCs begin to evacuate the city, allow them Gather Information or Knowledge (nature) checks (DC 20). Success indicates that they learn (either via rumors and panicked citizenry or via their own knowledge of how volcanoes function) that the Lake District should be one of the first sections evacuated.

The rest of this chapter provides details on more than a dozen events that the PCs may encounter as they evacuate the city. One of these events, the Morkoth Rises, can only occur in the central section of the city, but the majority can occur anywhere. If the PCs successfully deal with an event, they gain a number of Evacuation Points as detailed in that event's Development section. To successfully evacuate a city section, the PCs must accumulate at least 16 Evacuation Points in that section. The characters should have to overcome at least two events per city section, and may need to tackle three. Evacuation points in excess of 16 do not count toward the successful evacuation of other city sections.

LOCAL HEROES AND VICTIMS

In many of the following events, local Cauldronites are in peril and the PCs must rescue them to help with the evacuation of the city.

The PCs may have to carry citizens (who are often unconscious) to safety. Unless stated specifically in the text, 80% of the victims are Medium, and the rest are Small. Carrying victims can reduce a PC's speed and skill

checks due to encumbrance. A Medium victim has an average weight of 175 pounds and a Small victim has an average weight of 50 pounds.

But not all of the locals are victims. The PCs can attempt to influence the public into aiding them in their evacuation efforts. In each of the events detailed later in this chapter, a section described under Citizen Aid details how the locals can help the PCs successfully complete the encounter. Of course, the citizens of Cauldron aren't heroes themselves, so they'll need to be convinced to help.

In order to convince the locals to help, a PC must make a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 30) to secure aid. These checks normally take a minute to perform, but a character can rush the check as a full-round action, taking a -10 penalty on the check as a result. Diplomacy generally works better in this situation, since intimidating the locals damages the PCs' heroic reputation. Each Intimidate check made in an event to convince the locals to help reduces the Evacuation Point award for that event by 1.

You should encourage the PCs to roleplay their attempts to secure the aid of the locals. If they say certain things during this roleplay, they can gain bonuses (or penalties) on their Diplomacy or Intimidate checks, as detailed on the following table.

Situation	Diplomacy Modifier	Intimidate Modifier
The PC reminds the citizens of the group's previous heroism in town.	+2	+2
The player roleplays effectively, appealing to the townsfolk's humanity and innate decency.	+2	-2
The PC can prove he's acting on the authority of Cauldron's leadership.	+2	+2
The PC reveals information about the Cagewrights and their plans.	-2	+2
The PC plays on the crowd's fears, telling them they'll die a fiery death unless they cooperate.	-4	+2
The PC is analytical and logical, pointing to the devastation that has already threatened the city as an example of what will happen to the townsfolk's friends and family if the civilians don't help.	+2	+2
The PC plays to the guilt of the citizens for abandoning their fellows.	+2	-2
The PC offers bribes to anyone who helps with the evacuation.	+2	+2

If the PCs wish to recruit a citizen with specific skills (such as Handle Animal or Heal), they'll need to make a successful Gather Information check (DC 20) to find the desired individual after ten minutes of interviewing locals.

0 400 800 1200 1600 2000
Feet

CAULDRON



- | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Town Hall | 11 Tipped Tankard Tavern | 21 Lord Mayor's Residence | 31 Half-Orc Mercenary Camp |
| 2 Town Guard Barracks | 12 Lantern Street Orphanage | 22 Weer's Elixirs | 32 North Gate |
| 3 Church of St. Cuthbert | 13 Skie's Treasury | 23 Church of Wee Jas | 33 East Gate |
| 4 Maavu Warehouses | 14 Coy Nixie | 24 Ghelva's Locks | 34 South Gate |
| 5 Slippery Eel Tavern | 15 Lakeside Pavillion | 25 Church of Pelor | 35 West Gate |
| 6 Cusp of Sunrise | 16 Vanderboren Manor | 26 Westkey's Map Market | 36 The Brass Trumpet |
| 7 Maavu's Main Warehouse | 17 Minuta's Board | 27 Taskerhill Manor | 37 House Rhiavadi |
| 8 Tygot's Old Things | 18 Sure Foot Livery | 28 Zanathor's Provisions | 38 House Vhalantru |
| 9 Maavu Imports | 19 Gurnezarn's Smithy | 29 Lathenmire Manor | |
| 10 Drunken Morkoth Inn | 20 Temple of Lordly Might (Kord) | 30 Secret Entrance to Lava Tubes | |

☛ **Cauldronite Citizen, Comr:** CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d4+3; hp 7 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +0; Grp +0; Atk/Full Atk +0 melee (1d3, unarmed strike); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (varies) +4, Profession (varies) +4, Swim +4.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Toughness.

Languages: Common.

VOLCANIC HAZARDS

As the adventure proceeds and you run the events below, the escalating tremors and volcanism create additional hazards for the characters. Use these hazards as you see fit to liven things up between events, or to increase the danger and add variety to an event you run more than once.

Tremor (EL 1): Tremors shake the ground, cause minor property damage, and generate rising feelings of panic within the citizenry. Each tremor only lasts for 1d4+2 rounds. Each round during a tremor, creatures standing on the ground must make a DC 15 Reflex save or fall prone.

Building Collapse (EL 6): A creature inside a collapsing building takes 8d6 points of bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 15 half) and is pinned beneath the rubble. Pinned creatures take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute while pinned. If a pinned creature falls unconscious, he or she must make a DC 15 Constitution check or take 1d6 points of lethal damage each minute thereafter until freed or dead.

Yawning Fissure (EL 2): As the volcanic activity proceeds, fissures begin to tear open the ground beneath Cauldron. A single fissure consists of a 5-foot-wide crack that opens to a depth of 1d3x10 feet. A creature in the square when a fissure opens can avoid falling in with a successful Reflex save (DC 20).

Crushing Fissure (EL 7): A crushing fissure functions as a yawning fissure, save that 1d4+2 rounds after it opens it slams shut. Creatures inside a fissure when it closes are crushed for 12d6 points of damage and are buried. Buried creatures take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute and cannot breathe or cast spells with material components. A burrowing speed allows a buried creature to escape.

Steam Vent (EL 5): A vent opens in the ground and fills a 10-foot-spread area with steam. The steam deals 8d6 points of fire damage (DC 15 Reflex save half).

Gas Vent (EL 7): A cloud of superheated gas boils up from a vent in the ground, engulfing a 30-foot-radius spread. Everyone in the area takes 6d6 points of fire damage (Reflex save DC 15 halves). In addition, the cloud is toxic. A creature exposed to the cloud must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or take 1d4 points of Strength damage and 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The initial and secondary damage is the same. Note that the steam that rises from the boiling waters of the lake is also composed of this toxic gas, and can affect anyone within 10 feet of the water's surface once the lake boils over.

Lava Vent (EL 10): A vent opens in the ground and a gout of lava blasts out of it to a height of 1d4x10 feet, spattering everything within a 20-foot burst. Creatures in the area take 10d6 points of fire damage (DC 18 Reflex halves). Anyone who is damaged by the lava continues to take damage for 1d3 rounds after exposure, but this additional damage is only half that dealt during actual contact (5d6 fire).

Boiling Tsunami (EL 8): The deep tremors cause the waters of the central lake to periodically flood the lower portions of the city. Waves wash as high as Ash Avenue in places. These waves make the waterfront area a priority for evacuation, as not only do they drown victims caught, but the waters themselves have been heated to boiling by the volcanic activity deep below. A single wave of boiling water strikes everyone within a 30-foot spread. Characters in the area take 8d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 15 half) and must make a successful Balance check (DC 18) or be knocked prone and dragged 20 feet closer to the waterline by the sharp undertow. Characters very near the water risk being dragged into the lake itself. Immersed characters take 8d6 points of fire damage per round they remain within the scalding water and must make a Fortitude save due to exposure to the toxic waters (see Gas Vent, above).

EVACUATION EVENTS

The descriptions of these events assume that the adventure takes place during the day; if you set the events to occur during the night, modify each event's description as appropriate.

You should plan which events the PCs face in each city section before the game starts. Plan for 2–3 events per section. Since there are 13 events in all and five city sections, you'll need to run some events multiple times in order to give the PCs a chance to earn enough Evacuation Points. You can combine two or more events or add volcanic hazards to form different and interesting variations.

AD-HOC EXPERIENCE AWARDS

Most of these events do not involve traditional fights with monsters or traps to be discovered and overcome. Each time the PCs complete an event, they should earn an experience point award as if for a creature of a Challenge Rating equal to the amount of Evacuation Points they earned for the encounter. A 15th-level character thus gains no experience points for an event that goes poorly and results in an Evacuation Point award of fewer than 8 points. Only four of the events (7, 11, 12, and 13) should have experience points awarded normally for the defeat of monsters rather than for Evacuation Points earned.

1. THE UPPER STORY (EL 8)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy from clouds (automatic); cries for help and screams (automatic).

A tall tenement structure stands here, the windows on the top floor thrown open. A hysterical man leans precariously out one of the windows, a wailing child clutched in his arms. On the street below, another man stands screaming up at the man in the window, gesticulating wildly and pointing at the ground floor.

Creatures: The two men are brothers. Rhegin is trying to convince his stubborn brother Tomash to abandon the house and to flee Cauldron. Tomash has lived in this home his entire life, and sees no reason to leave. Rhegin has noticed several cracks forming in the building's foundation and is growing desperate. A successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 20) confirms that the building is nearing collapse.

Rhegin is afraid to enter the teetering building but is quite concerned for his brother's welfare. Despite Rhegin's best efforts, all he's managed to do is drive Tomash into a near frenzy of panic. Tomash is almost completely unaware that his youngest child dangles precariously from his grip, and is equally oblivious to Rhegin's warnings that the building could collapse at any time.

A DC 10 Sense Motive check makes it clear that any sudden moves might further panic Tomash into doing something stupid—like dropping his son, Hagin. Tomash also has a 2-year-old daughter Uhlia, who is also trapped within the building.

If the PCs try to talk Tomash down using Diplomacy or Intimidate, treat Tomash as hostile. His attitude must shift to at least friendly (DC 35) before he agrees to come down. Rhegin aids the PCs in any Diplomacy checks they make with the aid another action (he has Diplomacy +0). Unless the PCs rush their check (and suffer a -10 penalty), each check takes a minute to perform. It takes Tomash one additional minute to grab his other child and exit the building once he's convinced he needs to leave.

Of course, the PCs can also attempt to force Tomash to leave the building. The front door to the building is locked (DC 25). Once through the door, it takes a minute to get upstairs to Tomash's location. The PCs can also attempt to climb or fly up to his window and bring him down that way.

Once Tomash sees the PCs trying to break into his house or come for him, his panic takes over. He backs into his room, slamming his window shutters and locking them as he goes. If the PCs charge him or cast spells, he is so startled that he must make a Reflex save (DC 12) or drop his son. Any PC that has reach to the square directly under the window can then attempt a DC 20 Reflex save to catch the falling infant. Failure indicates the child (who has only 1 hp) takes 2d6 points of falling damage. If Tomash drops Hagin, he wails in anguish and collapses inside the building.

Otherwise, Tomash must be successfully pinned, knocked unconscious, or otherwise immobilized before he

can be carried anywhere. Once he is pinned, he stops struggling, and merely pleads that the PCs not forget his babies. His daughter Uhlia is only 7 years old, but if the PCs break into the house she panics as well and hides (Hide +4) in a closet and must be found before she can be rescued. A search of the house for her takes 1 minute, unless she hears her father call her name.

With each passing minute, there is a cumulative 20% chance a tremor strikes. If this occurs, the building collapses, likely killing Tomash and his two children.

Citizen Aid: If the PCs can convince nearby townspeople to help, they add their voices to the requests for Tomash to calm down and flee the building, automatically granting the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy or Intimidate checks.

Development: The PCs gain 8 Evacuation Points for successfully convincing Tomash to leave the building before it collapses. If Tomash dies, reduce the Evacuation Points awarded by 1. For each of his children who die, reduce the total Evacuation Points by 2. If the PCs resort to force to bring Tomash and his children out, their hostility reduces the Evacuation Points by 1.

2. TRAPPED TOWNSFOLK (EL 9)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic); coughing from collapsed house (Listen DC 28).

A narrow residential street here is filled with rubble. The shattered remains of a large house seem to be the primary source of the rubble. It must have collapsed fairly recently, since the rock dust hasn't settled and the debris still shifts periodically.

The rubble has trapped a family of 1d4+2 citizens. One family member has just managed to stagger clear of the rubble, but the rest of the family is still trapped. These trapped individuals have 2 minutes to live before they die of suffocation.

A successful Spot check (DC 20) indicates that the PCs see someone stagger out of the rubble (the escaping family member) and collapse to the street. This person was at 0 hit points after the collapse, and the strain of escaping has reduced him to -1 hit points. Unless he stabilizes or is healed, he'll soon die.

A successful Listen check (DC 28) means the PCs hear faint coughing and muffled cries for help coming from the rubble.

The rubble must be shifted carefully. If a PC simply rushes in and starts tossing rocks around, the rubble shifts inward, burying the trapped citizens alive. If this happens, a successful Listen check (DC 18) lets the digging PC hear the screams of the trapped individuals as the rubble pins them down. At this point, they'll die in 3 rounds unless freed.

If the PCs stop to analyze the rubble, a successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 15) or a successful Search check (DC 28) allows the PC to realize how best to move the debris. A character with stonemasonry receives a +4 bonus on these checks. The rubble can be shifted and moved with a successful DC 22 Strength check. Up to six other individuals can use the aid another action (by making a DC 10 Strength check) to aid the character moving the rocks. Each successful Strength check uncovers 1d4–1 people.

Magic can be used to clear rubble quickly as well. *Disintegrate*, if cast on the rubble, immediately frees the trapped family with no further injury. *Transmute rock to mud* frees the family from the rubble but they immediately begin drowning in the viscous mud. They must be freed in 3 rounds or they all die. Extracting someone from the mud is a standard action. *Stone to flesh* converts the pile of rubble into a hideous mound of inert flesh. This doesn't change the situation for the trapped townsfolk at all, unfortunately, but if the PCs inflict at least 100 points of damage to the AC 0 mound of flesh they can extract the family safely. Two *stone shape* spells can reach the trapped family, creating a narrow tunnel a Medium creature can crawl through without difficulty.

Citizen Aid: The PCs can call upon the aid of any helpful locals to tend to the escaped family member's wounds, or to help move aside rubble.

Development: The PCs gain 9 Evacuation Points for successfully saving the trapped family members. Each family member that dies reduces this award by 1 point; if all family members perish, the PCs gain no Evacuation Points at all.

3. SQUISHED (EL 9)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic); screams from within the fissure (automatic).

A massive fissure at least 50 feet long and half that wide at its widest point bisects the street ahead. Steam rises from the crack in jets. Suddenly, the ground convulses sharply, and the edges of the fissure crumble a bit and slowly start to close up. A chorus of screams wells up from within.

This massive crack split a major road, and fourteen hapless townsfolk have tumbled inside. Several were knocked unconscious by the fall, but none have died—yet. The crack has widened and deepened by several feet for the past few rounds until it reached its current depth of 50 feet. The tremors and crumbling edges have made it impossible for anyone to climb out. To make matters worse, the buckling earth now seems about to reverse its course, and the crack has started to close. If it closes all the way, every one of the townsfolk inside will be crushed and buried alive.

The crevice is closing at a rate of 5 feet every 2 rounds. Its current width is 25 feet. Thus, the PCs must descend into the crevice and retrieve the wounded and unconscious townsfolk within 10 rounds. Climbing the sides requires a successful DC 25 Climb check due to the shifting soil and tremors. A PC anchoring a rope from the top reduces the DC by 5. Even so, a character with a speed of 30 feet climbing to the bottom reaches it in about 3 rounds. A PC can climb twice as fast using the accelerated climbing option described on page 69 of the *Player's Handbook*, but doing so results in a –5 penalty on any Climb checks. Failure by 5 or more indicates that the character slides to the bottom of the rift, taking 1d6 points of nonlethal falling damage per 10 feet (Reflex DC 15 half). Of course, a brave PC can also simply slide down the narrow side of the 50-foot-deep fissure and reach the bottom in a single round. Naturally, characters that can fly can reach the trapped townsfolk with ease.

Five of the citizens are unconscious and at –4 hit points when the PCs arrive. If not stabilized, they die in 6 rounds. To get full credit and experience for the encounter, the PCs must see that any unconscious civilians are brought to a safe zone (a temple or city gate).

Citizen Aid: Any citizens aiding the PCs can help tremendously with this encounter. They can anchor ropes, climb or fly down (if the proper spells are cast on them), or use the aid another action to help a character with the Heal skill stabilize unconscious citizens brought to the top.

Development: The PCs gain 9 Evacuation Points for successfully rescuing all 14 of the trapped locals. Reduce this award by 1 for each local who perishes (minimum award of 0).

4. A CITY AFLAME (EL 10)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic); screaming from inside the building (automatic); coughing from top floor of structure (Listen DC 30).

Plumes of smoke rising from minor fires have become an unfortunately common sight, but for now it seems that none of them are too large for the citizens to handle themselves. Not so the billowing wall of dark smoke rising from behind a nearby row of buildings; even now licks of flame can be seen rising dangerously high.

This fire is the first of any significant size to start during the seismic activity, and if the PCs don't help fight it, the fire quickly grows out of control. Currently, it is contained to a single large (mostly wooden) house. To make a bad situation worse, a family was in the three-story building when the fire started, and they're unable to reach an exit. The screams of the trapped folk on the ground floor are impos-

sible to ignore, but the coughing of the victim on the upper floor is more difficult to hear.

Upon entering the burning building, a breathing character takes 1d6 points of fire damage per round (no save). He must also make a Fortitude save every 5 rounds (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. A character who holds his breath can avoid the lethal damage, but not the nonlethal damage. Those wearing heavy clothing or any sort of armor take a -4 penalty on these saving throws. In addition, those wearing metal armor are affected as if by a *heat metal* spell (see page 239 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Unless a character in the building takes a move action to avoid flames and falling burning debris, he takes an additional 2d6 points of fire damage per round and must make a successful Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid catching on fire.

The thick smoke in the burning building also poses a hazard. Anyone breathing the smoke must make a Fortitude save each round (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or spend that round coughing and choking. Note that this prevents the character from moving to avoid fire and falling debris and results in 2d6 fire damage. A character who chokes for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. The smoke also obscures vision, and provides concealment to characters within it.

Eight people are trapped in the burning building. Four of them have succumbed to the heat and smoke and are unconscious, and the other four cower in the few relatively safe pockets left.

To find a trapped citizen, a PC must spend 5 rounds searching in the building. A successful DC 25 Listen check also reduces the amount of time by 2 rounds, as the coughing Cauldronites lead the PCs to their location. A successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 20) reduces the search time by 1 round, as the PC is able to determine where the living quarters of the family members are likely to be. Once the required amount of time has passed, the character must make a successful Search check (DC 20) to find a citizen. For every 5 points by which this Search check exceeds the DC of 20, an additional citizen is located.

An area effect cold or water spell directed at the ground floor extinguishes one-third of the fire; three such spells put the fire out completely and enable the PCs to retrieve civilians without having to worry about the fire (although the smoke persists for many more minutes and the family will still die if left unattended). A *quench* spell cast by a caster of at least 10th level puts out the blaze entirely.

Any citizen still trapped in the house after 4 minutes perishes.

Citizen Aid: The PCs can call upon any citizens aiding them to begin a bucket brigade to put out the fire. Doing so has no immediate effect, but after 2 minutes all fire damage suffered is halved as the bucket brigade's work begins to take hold.

PCs can also enlist hardy citizens to accompany them on forays into the structure to use the aid another action to aid a PC's Search check. A Cauldronite can only make one such trip before having to stagger outside and rest his weary lungs and tend to his burns.

Development: The PCs gain 10 Evacuation Points for successfully rescuing the family and putting out the fire. If they fail to extinguish the fire, reduce the Evacuation Point award by 2. Reduce the award by 1 point for each family member who perishes. If all family members perish, the PCs gain no Evacuation Points for this event, even if they put out the fire.

5. LAKE OF FIRE (EL 10)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

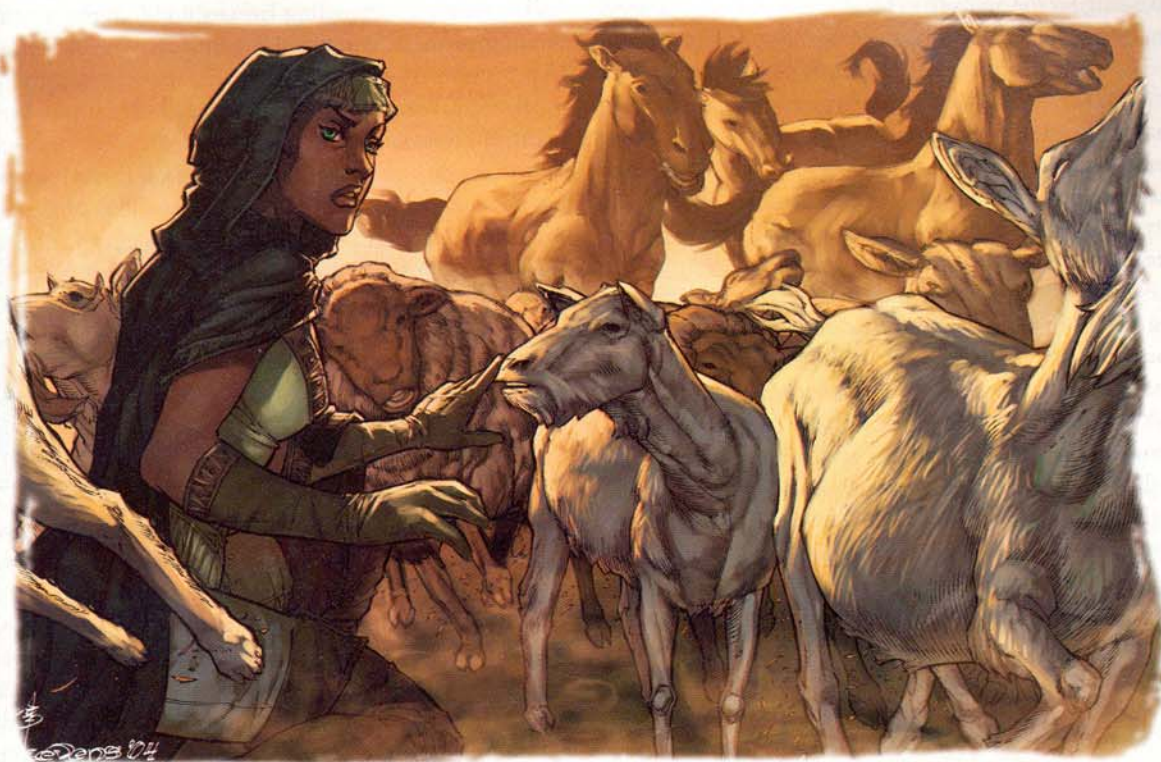
Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic); pop and crack of the rapidly cooling volcanic rock (Listen DC 30).

Several streets meet here at an intersection that forms an open square. The cobblestones seem to be covered in a thick layer of rough, black rock. Several pedestrians stand motionless in the center of the intersection; in fact, they look to have stopped mid-stride. Two additional figures are slumped over near the center of the intersection, either unconscious or dead. Whatever their situation, the tendrils of smoke rising from the bodies is a bad sign.

A lava vent opened up just above this intersection, and a river of thick magma bubbled to the surface. It then flowed down the street to this intersection, pooling in the shallow depression of the convergence of roads. The pool of magma quickly cooled once it stabilized as an 80-foot-diameter pond, and the top layer formed an insulating shell of volcanic rock. The next several people to walk by didn't realize the street they were walking on was actually a layer of hardened magma until they reached the thinner center, at which point two fell into the lava. The remaining ten people now stand frozen on a lake of magma, too terrified to move.

The magma pond is mostly hardened, but a nearly 1-foot-thick layer of lava still smolders beneath the crust. The crust can support 200 pounds of weight in one five-foot square, except for at its center, where a five-foot square can only hold 150 pounds. If a character breaks through the crust, he immediately takes 2d6 points of fire damage. As if that wasn't bad enough, the character becomes wedged in the stone crust and requires a DC 20 Strength check or a DC 25 Escape Artist check to get free. A trapped person takes 2d6 fire damage each round he remains stuck, and takes half damage for 1d3 rounds after being freed.

The two unfortunates who lie slumped over near the center of the lake were the first victims of this hazard. When they first fell through, their screams of terror and



pain alerted several nearby citizens who immediately rushed to their aid, not realizing the danger. Only when they got close enough to see the lick of flames from the hole did they realize their mistake.

To add to the danger, lava has begun seeping to the surface again. Not enough has seeped up to cause the crust to break apart, but fissures begin forming 2 minutes after this event begins. Every round thereafter, one citizen succumbs to the lava and perishes. The PCs must move quickly to save the ten scattered and panicked townsfolk.

Walking out to save the townsfolk is dangerous because the added weight could cause the shell of rock to crack open, especially if a PC enters a local's square to pick him up. The PCs can convince the locals to walk toward them with a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 25); remember that these checks normally take a minute to perform and if the PCs wish to rush the check as a full-round action they take a -10 penalty on the roll. Talking the individuals off the lava must be done one at a time.

Cold and water spells harden any volcanic crust within their areas of effect. Increase the support weight by 25 pounds for each 10 points of damage such a spell deals. Any spell that deals non-cold damage, including *ice storm*, actually causes the crust to break apart, sending any creatures within 20 feet on the crust into the lava unless they succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save.

Flight can result in a speedy rescue. However, the locals are terrified, and aren't necessarily convinced that a PC won't drop them back onto the lava. Until at least one

person is rescued by a flying PC, each attempted flight rescue requires the flying PC to make a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 15) to convince a trapped local to trust the flying PC. A flying PC can attempt to grapple a stubborn civilian, but if he fails to do so the struggle causes the crust below to fracture, dealing 2d6 points of fire damage to the local and 1d6 points of fire damage to the PC.

Citizen Aid: There is little aid that helpful citizens can provide, with the possible exception of using the aid another action to help with Diplomacy or Intimidate checks.

Development: The PCs earn 10 Evacuation Points for rescuing the ten trapped civilians. Reduce this amount by 1 point for each civilian who perishes.

6. STAMPEDE! (EL 11)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic); rumble of approaching herd as opposed to the constant rumble of the tremors (Listen DC 30).

Sure Foot Livery, near the lake at the center of town, is the largest livestock (and livestock accessory) business in Cauldron. When the tremors first began, the animals kept in the stables here began to panic, and as the situation in Cauldron worsened, the staff eventually lost control of the herd. As the tremors grew worse and fissures and gouts of lava began to appear, the animals went berserk. Sure Foot Livery's employees fled to their homes to see to their personal affairs, leaving the livestock to fend for itself. It didn't

take long for the animals to break out and begin stampeding through the streets of Cauldron.

The PCs can encounter multiple stampedes as they attempt to evacuate Cauldron. If you run this event more than once you should liven things up with falling demodands or volcanic hazards. In any case, the animals madly attempt to find a way out of the bucking, heaving city, but they've mostly just been running around the streets in giant circles.

PCs can deal with the herd in several ways. Destroying the herd is the most obvious solution, although doing so impacts the number of Evacuation Points gained for this event.

A less destructive option is to try to herd the animals along the city streets, eventually leading them to a city gate so they can escape down the mountainside. This is a more challenging prospect, but animal-loving PCs might seek such an avenue. To accomplish this, the PCs must first calm a heard down so that it can be led. A DC 30 Handle Animal check is enough to stop a stampeding herd. Making a Handle Animal check in this manner is a full-round action. Characters with the wild empathy ability receive a +2 bonus on this check.

Creatures: The livestock herd is composed mostly of horses, although a few oxen, cattle, and other animals are scattered throughout it as well. Details on the mob subtype appear in the Appendix.

➤ **Livestock Stampede (3):** CR 8; Gargantuan animal (mob); HD 30d8+60 (mob of 3 HD animals); hp 195; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9; Base Atk +22; Grp +40; Atk mob (5d6+9); Full Atk mob (5d6+9); Space/Reach 20 ft./0 ft.; SA —; SQ low-light vision, scent, mob traits; AL CN; Fort +20, Ref +17, Will +10; Str 22, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +4.

Feats: Endurance, Improved Bull Rush[®], Improved Overrun[®], Run.

Tactics: The animals in the stampede are terrified, and are simply looking for a way out of the city. The stampede attempts to overrun any PCs in its path during the first round of combat. PCs that enter the stampede or are overrun by it are subject to the herd's mob damage.

PCs can try to control the stampede by erecting magical barriers (like *walls of stone* or *fire*) in its path. Such obstacles can be used to direct the herd out of town while causing minimal damage. Six such spells placed in strategic locations should be sufficient to redirect the stampede to a city gate.

Citizen Aid: If the PCs secure the aid of a local with ranks in Handle Animal (see page 67), that local can aid a single Handle Animal check with the aid another action. If none of the PCs has the Handle Animal skill, one of these helpful locals can make the check for them.

Development: The PCs gain 11 Evacuation Points for calming the animals or redirecting them out of the city. For

each group of stampeding livestock killed, reduce this award by 2, to a minimum of 5 points.

7. ANGRY ELEMENTAL (EL 11)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic).

A steaming fissure yawns at the edge of the street here, lit from below by an ominous orange glow. Instantly, the fire within surges, growing suddenly brighter and fiercer. A spray of lava spurts from the fissure and spatters the surrounding area as a glowing appendage of flame erupts from within. A burning figure clambers out of the vent, howling in a voice that crackles and roars like an inferno.

The lava vent remains active for 1d6 rounds. Depending on where you place this event, the lava may or may not create secondary fires that the PCs must battle.

Creatures: The magma-filled reservoirs of the volcano below Cauldron have been home to numerous fire elementals. Much like a beehive incited to frenzy by mayhem, these elementals have been shaken into a brilliant furor. They flow with the rest of the magma, eventually surfacing at various points in the region to unleash their fury on the surrounding terrain. They are quite enraged as well to find that "squatters" have taken up residence on the surface of "their" volcano. Those fire elementals that emerge into Cauldron proper, like this one, seek to drive the terrified citizens away and cleanse the mountain of the taint of humanity.

➤ **Elder Fire Elemental:** hp 204; *Monster Manual* 99.

Tactics: The fire elemental attacks the first creatures it sees, which is likely to be the PCs unless they're being stealthy. Otherwise, it immediately attacks nearby buildings or townsfolk. The elemental isn't particularly smart, so it won't try to bull rush or carry PCs into the area of the lava vent, but it does find fighting near the vent more comforting.

Citizen Aid: Civilians can't help the PCs in this straight-up fight. The most helpful thing citizens can do is run in and drag unconscious PCs to safety if no elementals are within 10 feet of the down character.

Development: The PCs gain 11 Evacuation Points for defeating the fire elemental.

This event works well multiple times, although as the adventure progresses you should make the encounter more difficult. Adding another elder fire elemental or 1d4 greater fire elementals to the battle is an effective way to accomplish this. The PCs should gain an additional Evacuation Point over the standard 11 for each additional elemental slain.

8. MOB TROUBLE (EL 12)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic); sound of shouting mob over the constant rumbling and crackle of energy above (Listen DC 20). Fear does terrible things to people. At several times during the evacuation, the PCs could encounter mobs of panicked citizens, fueled by fear and guided by the cries of a few insurgents and doomsayers. Usually, these mobs are interested only in attempting to flee the city, but sometimes the mobs are more destructive. Some of them loot shops and homes, but the worst are the mobs who have become convinced that certain groups or individuals are responsible for the trouble. In this event, the PCs come face to face with a mob that is convinced that the volcano is awakening as a direct result of the trouble the PCs have been stirring up.

If you're playing this adventure as part of the Shackled City Adventure Path, make some of the mob's leaders minor NPCs that the PCs may have slighted, insulted, or otherwise annoyed in a prior adventure. They could even be people the PCs have never met but through their actions in prior adventures may have influenced. One might be a housewife whose husband was killed in the Cauldron Tax Riot (*DUNGEON* #104, "The Demonskar Legacy"). Another might be Mergala, the female elf rogue who the PCs might have apprehended while they fought an umber hulk that was savaging the town (*DUNGEON* #102, "Zenith Trajectory"). They might even be surviving members of a minor thieves' guild known as the Alleybashers that the PCs all but wiped out many months ago (*DUNGEON* #98, "Flood Season"). Whatever the tie, the PCs may or may not recognize these individuals, but they should certainly recognize the threat the mob represents.

Creatures: When the angry mob attacks, it surges forth and tries to overwhelm the PCs. They make grapple attacks en masse and try to pummel the characters to death. Each mob consists of about 40 people, and there are three mobs in all.

➤ **Angry Mob (3):** CR 9; Gargantuan humanoid (mob); HD 40d8+80 (mob of 1-HD humanoids); hp 260; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +30; Grp +47; Atk mob (5d6+7); Full Atk mob (5d6+7); SA constrict 5d6+7, expert grappler, improved grab; SQ infectious frenzy, mob traits; AL CN; Fort +14, Ref +12, Will +25; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Expert Grappler (Ex): The mob can maintain a grapple without penalty and still make attacks normally against other targets (normally, attacking other targets while grappling imposes a -20 penalty on grapple checks).

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the mob must damage an opponent with its mob attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins a grapple, it establishes a hold and constricts. It can continue to deal automatic constriction damage each round it maintains the hold with a successful grapple check.

Infectious Frenzy (Ex): In crowded areas (such as on the city streets of Cauldron) the angry mob's frenzy has an infectious quality that draws bystanders and other nearby humanoids of no more than 1 HD into its mass. This effectively grants the mob fast healing 5 in such situations. Additionally, every round the number of negative levels inflicted on the mob from effects that target specific numbers of individuals is reduced by 1.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Bull Rush[®], Improved Overrun[®].

Tactics: If the PCs hear the mob before they see it, they have a chance to avoid this event by hiding or otherwise escaping. Likewise, once the mob attacks, the PCs can probably escape via flight or teleportation with little difficulty. Although this prevents unnecessary violence, it also fails to defuse the mob, which is free to do more damage to the city.

The mob is a collection of irrational, frightened townsfolk, and they behave as such. They attack with mindless ferocity until reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, at which point the mob disperses. The mob charges the PCs, hoping to grapple them and drag them down so they can begin crushing them. If the PCs seek to avoid the mob rather than confront them, the mob exults in their perceived victory. So emboldened, they march toward a location in town the PCs frequent; a favorite tavern (perhaps the Tipped Tankard), the building in which they live, or even the church of St. Cuthbert. Once there, they quickly begin to dismantle and destroy the location to vent the anger and fear they had hoped to inflict upon the PCs themselves.

The best tactic in handling the mob is a non-hostile approach. The mob's initial attitude is hostile, and if a PC has attacked them already, Diplomacy checks are made at a -10 penalty, or -20 if the attacking PCs are using lethal attacks. The mob disperses if the PCs can adjust its attitude to friendly (DC 35) or helpful (DC 50). Intimidate checks can also disperse the mob, but rather than calm them down these checks (if successful) merely cause the mob to scatter, only to reform about 20 minutes later to hunt down the PCs again.

Of course, magic is perhaps the PCs' best way to handle the angry mobs. Any of the mass enchantment spells (*mass charm person*, *mass suggestion*, etc.) or a bard's *fascinate* ability can cause large portions of the crowd to disperse. Each individual affected imparts 2 negative levels on the mob as a whole, as detailed in the Appendix. Spells like *entangle* can slow down the mob without hurting individuals. Illusion spells and fear spells can also be effective at directing or dispersing the mob. Of course, the group's combined wrath and mob mentality has given it a particularly high Will save, so mind-affecting attacks are far from a sure thing.

Citizen Aid: Civilians are likely to be more a hindrance than help in this event. The mob assumes that

anyone in the company of the PCs is likewise responsible for their woes, and regular Cauldronites aren't likely to survive the mob's crush for long without quick thinking on the PCs' part. This challenge is best handled by the characters alone.

Development: The PCs earn 12 Evacuation Points for dispersing the mob in a non-violent manner. If the mob is dispersed with violence, word of the heavy-handed heroes spreads quickly. This grants all future angry mobs encountered a +2 morale bonus on all attack rolls, grapple checks, and saving throws. Likewise, any Diplomacy checks made against future angry mobs suffer a -2 penalty. PCs earn only 3 Evacuation Points for dispersing the mob violently.

9. GAS EXPLOSION (EL 12)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic); hissing and rumbling of the gas building beneath the street (Listen DC 40).

When this event begins, the PCs should make a Listen check (DC 40) and a Spot check (DC 30). A successful Listen check allows them to hear a strange rumbling and hissing sound under the ground, and a successful Spot check indicates they notice the ground swelling slowly, almost imperceptibly, upward about 20 feet ahead of them. A successful Knowledge (nature) check (DC 25) indicates that these are signs of imminent volcanic activity. This knowledge grants the character and anyone he warns a +4 bonus on the Reflex save to halve damage done by the impending explosion.

The PCs have only three rounds after this event begins to react. If none of them make the Listen or Spot check to notice the impending explosion, they are caught at ground zero when it does explode.

The ground heaves suddenly, lurching violently upward. An instant later, a massive explosion rips through the street. A ball of fire the size of a large house tears through the cobbles, followed by a thunderous blast of stone debris.

Pockets of toxic, volatile gas have been building in the many chambers and passages riddling the mountain beneath Cauldron. Some manage to dissipate harmlessly in the form of gas vents, but others—like this one—are touched off by the smallest spark and burn away in an explosive flash. This particular pocket had been building for some time beneath the streets of the city. When a crack beneath the pocket allowed some magma to seep into the cavity, it triggered a massive explosion that has now left a large crater in a major thoroughfare of Cauldron.

The explosion has a primary blast radius that affects a 30-foot-radius burst. It also has a secondary blast radius that affects everything in a ring-shaped burst from 31 feet

to 60 feet. Everything in the primary blast radius takes 8d6 fire damage and 8d6 bludgeoning damage; a successful Reflex save (DC 18) halves the damage. Everything in the secondary blast radius takes 2d6 fire damage and 2d6 bludgeoning damage; a successful Reflex save (DC 12) halves the damage.

The resulting crater in the street is 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet deep at the center. Smoke rises from the rift, obscuring everything in the crater and for an additional 30 feet beyond. Anyone breathing the smoke must make a Fortitude save each round (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or spend that round coughing and choking. A character who chokes for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of non-lethal damage. The smoke also obscures vision, and provides concealment to characters within it.

Dense rubble chokes the entire 60-foot-diameter area. Entering a square of dense rubble requires two squares of movement, the DCs for Balance and Tumble checks increase by 5, and the DC of Move Silently checks increases by 2.

There's little the PCs can do to prevent the gas explosion, although a few spells can minimize or stop it. A *wall of stone* or *wall of iron* (cast to topple onto the bulge) placed over the bulging section of ground delays the explosion by one round per caster level, but such a spell can only be cast once this area has been cleared of pedestrians. A wall spell used in this manner reduces the final radius of rubble to 30 feet. Wall spells also can be used to provide cover from the explosion. *Transmute rock to mud* immediately triggers the explosion, but reduces all bludgeoning damage inflicted by the explosion to the minimum possible. Creatures inside a *prismatic sphere* or a solid wall *forcecage* are completely protected from the explosion. Simply changing the shape of the stone (with spells like *stone shape* or *disintegrate*) causes the explosion to occur immediately. Of course, *miracle* or *wish* can negate the explosion with ease.

Creatures: When this event begins, three locals are standing in the primary blast zone and nine are in the secondary blast zone. If the PCs notice the bulging ground in time, they can yell at the locals to run, or can even use magic or physical force to move them. Any local caught in the primary blast radius is probably killed instantly, but those in the secondary blast radius might survive. Certainly several locals need immediate attention or they'll die of their wounds. Of course, the rubble and thick smoke complicate matters, making it difficult for the PCs to reach wounded locals.

Citizen Aid: Helpful citizens can provide great help here in tending to the wounded; an average citizen of Cauldron has Heal +0, but they can also use the aid another action to assist PCs who use Heal to stabilize dying locals.

Development: The PCs earn 12 Evacuation Points for preventing the explosion from killing anyone. Each local slain by the explosion reduces this award by 1 Evacuation Point.

10. URBAN AVALANCHE (EL 12)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic); rumble of approaching avalanche (automatic).

A low rumble that permeates the air sounds and even feels different than the periodic tremors that have been shaking Cauldron. The sound continues to build, quickly adding numerous screams to its chorus. An instant later, the source of the strange sound is apparent. From one of the steep streets that leads to the edge of the city, rubble from collapsed buildings and other debris is sliding and tumbling downward, forming an avalanche of detritus and ruin that threatens to engulf everything in its path.

A group of well-meaning city guards and townsfolk sought to consolidate the rubble from a number of structures in order to keep the streets clear. Unfortunately, these good intentions have resulted in catastrophe. One of these piles of rubble has collapsed and shifted into several other piles. As this event begins, the mass of rubble slides down one of the steep streets toward the city's center. The avalanche of rubble picks up steam and mass as it tumbles down the slope. Many citizens piled their belongings in the street in preparation to leave the city, and the avalanche is only too happy to pick them up and carry them along on its journey. The shifting, sliding, tumbling mass now moves quickly down the slope toward the PCs.

When this event begins, all PCs can make a DC 20 Listen check to hear the approaching slide (and to realize it's something different than a tremor), or a DC 25 Spot check to see its rapid approach. Those who notice the avalanche have one round to react.

The urban avalanche has a width of 100 feet. Any PC in its path takes 15d6 points of bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 20 halves). A PC that fails to save against this damage becomes buried and pinned by the rubble. Buried characters take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute; if a buried character falls unconscious, he or she must make a DC 15 Constitution check or take 1d6 points of lethal damage each minute thereafter until freed or dead. Finding a buried character requires a DC 25 search check. Once a character is found, a successful Strength check (DC 20) frees the character.

Of course, the PCs aren't the only ones caught in the avalanche. Several townsfolk are caught up in its path, most of whom are slain outright by the swath of rubble. The disaster leaves a trail of chaos in its wake as it comes to a shuddering stop on the street where it struck the PCs. After the avalanche, 1d6 locals remain alive but buried in the rubble. If they aren't rescued in 1d6 minutes (determine times for each local individually), they perish.

In addition, a major route out of the city has been blocked, and the PCs must ensure that the street is

reopened. The street can be cleared manually, but doing so requires 16 hours of work for one person. Each additional person reduces the amount of time appropriately; thus, a group of four PCs could clear the road enough to allow passage in 4 hours. A far more efficient solution is to use magic to help clear the street. Using the various summoning spells to call upon aid is a good start; a summoned earth elemental is a tremendous boon here if the summoning PC can speak Terran. An earth elemental of size Large or larger counts as two additional people in determining how long it takes to clear the road, even given the short duration of the summoning spell. A creature with a burrow speed counts as one additional person. Other summoned creatures do not remain long enough to provide any substantial aid, unless they can cast some of the following spells.

Spells such as *move earth* and *telekinesis* can clear huge chunks of rubble at once. Each such spell cast on the affected area counts as an additional person. *Disintegrate* can also cut down on the time required; each use of *disintegrate* counts as an additional person. *Sympathetic vibration* does an excellent job at reducing the larger pieces of rubble to manageable fragments; every two rounds a *sympathetic vibration* spell continues it acts as an additional person. Similar spells can also help, but most destructive area-affect spells like *fireball* generally do nothing to help and create new problems of their own.

To determine the final time required to clear the road, simply add up the number of people assisting with the project and the number of "people" provided by spells, and then divide 16 hours by this amount. For example, a group of four PCs assisted by 6 citizens can clear the road in a little more than 90 minutes of work. If the PCs cast *move earth*, two *telekinesis* spells, and two *disintegrate* spells, summon a Large earth elemental, and use a *sympathetic vibration* spell for 16 rounds, the magic adds 15 to the total, reducing the time required to clear the street to about 38 minutes.

Every 10 minutes, there's a 10% chance that a new event occurs, or some new volcanic activity manifests in the clean-up area. You can determine the new event or hazard randomly, or select one that seems appropriate. These new events normally won't increase the time required to clear the street, but they can put locals at risk and can further deplete the PCs' resources.

Citizen Aid: If the PCs successfully enlist the aid of the locals for this event, they can gather 3d6 citizens to aid in clearing the street. Once the cleaning begins, the PCs don't even need to remain to help, freeing them up to continue with the evacuation elsewhere. Of course, if the PCs leave the locals to clear the street and a new event or hazard manifests, the locals will likely be slain.

Development: The PCs earn 12 Evacuation Points for clearing the street of the urban avalanche. Each of the 1d6

locals trapped in the avalanche that perishes reduces this award by 1; likewise, each local that perishes while helping to clear the street reduces the award by 1.

11. FALLING FARASTU (EL 14)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic).

Auras: Overwhelming evil (farastu).

Without warning, a body tumbles from the sky, landing with a wet thump in the middle of the street, splattering a large area around it with a copious spray of thick black sludge. The creature is humanoid in shape, about seven feet tall and possessing overly long arms and legs and a deformed, oblong head. Its skin secretes more of the tarlike ooze even as its body shudders twice and then lies still.

This unfortunate creature only seems to be the precursor of a full-fledged storm of falling bodies as another dozen or so similar creatures tumble out of the sky. They simply appear in the sky at varying elevations, crashing down through roofs, glancing off of statues and walls, or simply thudding down into the street like the first. And unlike the initial victim, it appears that at least a few of the creatures have angrily survived their falls.

As the ritual of planar junction continues to build and the life forces of the Shackleborn are drained, some demodands begin finding ways to push through the portal prematurely. However, since the portal isn't completely formed, only a few make it through (usually in small groups of about a dozen), and most appear high enough above the city that the fall slays them. Some, however, are healthy enough on landing to still pose a threat.

Creatures: A few farastu demodands that have landed near the PCs still live. The demodands waste no time in rounding up civilians for their new prison on the Material Plane, but they eagerly engage hostile PCs. On the initial farastu rain, four of the creatures survive in varying levels of health. The EL for this encounter has been reduced slightly to account for the damage the demodands have already suffered. If you run this event multiple times, feel free to increase or decrease the number of surviving farastus (and their corresponding hit points)

➤ **Farastu Demodands (4):** CR 11; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 11d8+22; hp 71 (currently 68, 60, 56, and 42); Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +11; Grp +23; Atk +15 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +15 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) and +10 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA adhesive slime, improved grab, rage, spell-like abilities, *summon demodand*; SQ cold resistance 10, damage reduction 10/good, fire resistance 10, immune to acid, immune to poison, scent, spell resistance 23; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 16; *Fiend Folio* 42.

Adhesive Slime (Ex): The black slime farastu exude grant them a +8 racial bonus on grapple checks and disarm checks. A weapon that strikes a farastu becomes stuck fast unless the wielder succeeds on a Reflex save (DC 17). Prying off a stuck weapon requires a Strength check (DC 17). Oil dissolves the farastu's adhesive slime; it requires 10 minutes to renew its adhesive coating. It can also dissolve its slime at will, and the substance breaks down 1 minute after the creature dies.

Rage (Ex): The farastu can fly into a rage three times per day, much like a barbarian. The farastu gains +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, +2 Will saves, and -2 AC. Its statistics change as follows: hp +22; AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +13; Grp +25; Atk +17 melee (1d4+6, claw); Full Atk +17 melee (1d4+6, 2 claws) and +12 melee (1d6+3, bite); SV Fort +11, Will +10; Str 23, Con 18; Climb +24. The rage lasts for 7 rounds, but the farastu can end it earlier if it desires. It is not fatigued at the end of its rage.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear* (DC 17), *invisibility*, *tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*; 2/day—*dispel magic*. Caster level 11th. The Save DCs are Charisma-based.

Summon Demodand (Sp): Once per day, a farastu can attempt to summon 1d4 farastus with a 30% chance of success.

Skills: A farastu's adhesive slime gives it a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks.

Skills: Climb +22, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +6, Hide +12, Intimidate +16, Listen +14, Move Silently +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +12, Spot +14, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks).

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Demodand.

Tactics: Farastus are not the most intelligent of creatures, but they possess a natural cunning that enables them to spot trouble when they see it. They are unlikely to assume the PCs are normal townsfolk as a result unless the PCs use a disguise. The farastus are also used to working in groups to subdue unruly prisoners on their home plane. Since that's all they think of the PCs, they fall back on their habitual tactics.

The first thing the farastus attempt is to summon more of their kind. This done, at least one farastu uses *ray of enfeeblement* on the toughest-looking melee fighter; if the PCs face more than two farastus, two of them target the same PC with their rays. The remaining farastus become *invisible* and attempt to disarm the weakened character. If this tactic works, the farastus repeat it on another target. If it doesn't prove successful, some resort to more rays in an attempt to subdue one character, while the others try to pummel the other characters with their natural attacks. A farastu that manages to engage an arcane spellcaster in melee attempts to grapple the foe.

Citizen Aid: In this event, the citizens of Cauldron are more likely to be a hindrance than a help. Farastus won't



hesitate to use citizens as hostages, threatening to tear out throats unless the PCs surrender. The best thing the PCs can do for the townsfolk is order any helpful citizens away.

Development: The PCs gain 12 Evacuation Points for defeating the demodands.

12. DESCENDING KELUBAR (EL 13)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic); kelubar shouting at its prisoners (Listen DC 20).

Auras: Overwhelming evil (kelubar).

If the PCs hear the shouting kelubar demodand before they see it, they'll have a better chance to get to it before it hurts any of the locals.

An immensely obese creature flies in lazy circles in the sky on bat-like wings that seem too small to effectively support its bulk. The creature's leathery skin is knobbed, rough, and coated with pale green slime. Its bloated face is demonic and hateful.

A crowd of cowering civilians huddles below the circling monster as it barks out orders in a thick, phlegmatic voice. The townsfolk root through the rubble of a fallen building, placing stones atop each other as if building some sort of structure.

Creature: A kelubar arrived early from Carceri due to the same sporadic magic that brought the falling farastus (see event 11). However, unlike its lesser brethren, the kelubar

has wings and was able to descend safely to the city below. It has already begun rounding up terrified townsfolk for the new prison and is already giving orders to begin building a new set of cells. The kelubar knows that the cells are likely to collapse from tremors, a fact that makes it enjoy the rebuilding all the more due to its hopelessness. So far, it has recruited fifteen strapping locals.

➤ **Kelubar Demodand:** CR 13; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 13d8+39; hp 97; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 27, touch 11, flat-footed 27; Base Atk +13; Grp +18; Atk +18 melee (1d4+5 plus 1d6 acid, claw); Full Atk +18 melee (1d4+5 plus 1d6 acid, 2 claws) and +16 melee (1d6+2 plus 1d6 acid, bite); SA acidic slime, sneak attack +4d6; spell-like abilities, stench, *summon demodand*; SQ damage reduction 15/good, evasion, immune to acid, immune to cold, immune to fire, immune to poison, spell resistance 25, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +10; Str 20, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 18; *Fiend Folio* 44.

Acidic Slime (Ex): The slime secreted by a kelubar adds 1d6 points of acid damage to each of its melee attacks. On a successful critical hit, this burst of acid deals an additional 1d10 points of acid damage.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear* (DC 18), *invisibility*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*; 2/day—*acid fog*, *dispel magic*.

Stench (Ex): A kelubar's slime reeks of filth and decay. All non-demodands within 30 feet must succeed on a Fortitude

save (DC 19) or be overcome with nausea. This condition lasts as long as the creature remains in the area, and for 10 rounds after the creature leaves. A successful save means the creature is immune to that kelubar's stench for 1 day (but not to the stench of other kelubars).

Summon Demodand (Sp): Once per day, a kelubar can attempt to summon 1d2 kelubars with a 40% chance of success or 1d4 farastus with a 60% chance of success.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): A kelubar retains its Dexterity bonus to Armor Class even when flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker, and it cannot be flanked except by a rogue of 11th level or higher. It can flank characters that also have uncanny dodge as if it were a 7th-level rogue.

Skills: Kelubars have a +4 racial bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive checks.

Skills: Bluff +24, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +28, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Gather Information +6, Hide +9, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (local) +18, Listen +18, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +22, Spot +18, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes).

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Multiattack, Spring Attack.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Demodand.

Tactics: Allow the kelubar Spot and Listen checks at an initial encounter distance of 100 feet to notice the PCs, and another at 50 feet. Remember to apply penalties for distance, and the kelubar takes a -5 penalty on its checks since it's distracted. If the kelubar notices the PCs before they engage it, it immediately attempts to summon 1d2 more kelubars. If it still hasn't been engaged in melee, it casts *acid fog* on the locals below out of spite before focusing its attention on the PCs.

The kelubar uses its stench in an attempt to ensure that none of the surviving townsfolk can come to the PCs' aid. It then flies up into the air and activates its *invisibility*, followed by another *acid fog* centered on the PCs. The kelubar then alternates *invisibility* with *Melf's acid arrow* and other ranged attacks, moving between each attack to keep the PCs off guard. If the PCs seem capable of seeing through its *invisibility*, the kelubar abandons the ranged attacks and moves to engage a spellcaster in melee.

Citizen Aid: As with the farastus, Cauldronites are unlikely to help here. The kelubar is a savage opponent, and it has no qualms about annihilating irritating townsfolk that get in its way (or even those that get out of its way).

Development: The PCs gain 13 Evacuation Points for defeating the kelubar. Subtract 1 point for each local slain during the battle.

13. THE MORKOTH RISES (EL 13)

Light: Overcast daylight (as sunlight).

Sound: Faint rumbling (automatic); crackle of energy (automatic); screams and roars of the morkoth (automatic)

Auras: Faint abjuration (*ring of protection* +2), moderate conjuration (*bracers of armor* +2), faint conjuration (*wand of*

cure light wounds), faint evocation (*wand of lightning bolt*); overwhelming evil (half-fiend morkoth)

Since this event takes place on the shores of the central lake, it can only occur in the central section of the city. If you choose to start this event when the PCs are in another part of the city, they can be drawn into this event by hearing the screams of citizens attacked by the morkoth (or the morkoth's roars, for that matter). If the PCs have a view of the lake, they might even see the massive creature surface from quite a distance.

The waters of the central lake have been steaming and bubbling periodically for some time, but the current uprising of frothy water is unusual. Suddenly, a massive pale gray shape surges out of the boiling water with a thunderous roar! The creature's face is that of a deep-sea fish with protruding red eyes and a gaping fanged maw. Horns protrude from its brow and chin, and a spiny saillike fin runs along its back. Its lower body resembles that of an octopus in that it has eight tentacles, but the creature also sports long, lobster-like legs. The front pair of these legs end in massive pincers. A pair of huge silvery wings or flippers unfurl from the creature's sides, lifting it out of the water and into the air. The creature's flesh is blistered in places, obviously scalded by the boiling water, and it roars again as it approaches the shore and a large group of panicked citizens.

Once this encounter begins, the waters of the central lake have become suffused with toxins and heat from the volcanic activity deep below. Anyone who contacts the lake takes 1d6 points of fire damage, and anyone immersed in the water takes 10d6 points of fire damage per round. In addition, the toxins in the water are released into the air. Anyone who breathes the water or the air within 10 feet of the water's surface must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or take 1d4 points of Strength damage and 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The initial and secondary damage is the same.

Creature: This is a powerful half-fiend morkoth, the legendary monster of the lake that has long haunted the tales of Cauldron's fishermen and lakeside dwellers. Ages ago, the depths of the volcano were the home of two outposts of powerful creatures, the aquatic kopru and the enigmatic spell weavers. The two races clashed over territory in the depths below until a now-forgotten disaster caused both outposts to collapse. The Morkoth has lived in the depths of the lake for hundreds of years, ever since it was originally called from the outer planes by the kopru to guard their deep underwater lairs.

Since then, the morkoth has lurked in the depths of the lake, expanding its vast network of spiraling tunnels and occasionally swimming to the surface on exceptionally dark nights to pluck one or two victims from midnight swims or early morning fishing trips for its own debased amusement. Stories spread of the lake monster, but before today the beast has never surfaced in daylight. The sudden

awakening of the volcano transformed the lower reaches of the lake into a boiling hell, and the morkoth has been forced to swim upward to escape the scathing currents. As it reaches the surface, it's already taken some damage from the boiling water. It leaps clear of the water on wings never used to fly, but after a few flopping false starts it takes to the air with a fury and vents its rage on the hapless populace nearby. The half-fiend morkoth's first action in combat is to use *summon monster IX* to summon 1d3 vrock to aid in its assault on Cauldron.

➤ **The Crater Lake Monster, Advanced Half-fiend Morkoth:** CR 13; Large outsider (aquatic, extraplanar); HD 21d8+126; hp 220 (currently 176); Init +9; Spd swim 50 ft., fly 50 ft. (average); AC 27, touch 16, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +15; Grp +25; Atk +20 melee (1d8+6/19–20, claw); Full Atk +20 melee (1d8+6/19–20, 2 claws) and +15 melee (2d6+3, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA hypnotism, smite good (1/day +20 damage against good target), spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to poison, resistance to acid 10, resistance to cold 10, resistance to electricity 10, resistance to fire 10, spell reflection, spell resistance 31; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +13, Will +16; Str 22, Dex 20, Con 23, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 19; *Monster Manual II* 152.

Hypnotism (Su): The morkoth can hypnotize any number of creatures within 20 feet. Any creature in this area must make a successful Will saving throw (DC 24) or stand motionless and watch the morkoth. Hypnotized creatures are helpless against the morkoth's attacks but may attempt a new saving throw at the same DC each round that the morkoth attacks it. Hypnosis is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Spell Reflection (Su): Any spell effect resisted by the morkoth's spell resistance reflects the spell back upon the caster. In this case, the caster becomes the target or point of origin for the spell's effect, as appropriate. If the morkoth is the subject of a *dispel magic* spell, its spell reflection ability is suppressed for 1 round.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*darkness*, *poison* (DC 18), *unholy aura* (DC 22); 1/day—*desecrate*, *unholy blight* (DC 18), *contagion* (DC 17), *blasphemy* (DC 21), *horrid wilting* (DC 22), *summon monster IX* (fiends only), *destruction* (DC 21). Caster level 21. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Skills: Balance +7, Concentration +18, Hide +28, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (nature) +16, Knowledge (the planes) +16, Listen +28, Spellcraft +30, Spot +28, Swim +38, Tumble +17, Use Magic Device +19.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Skill Focus (Hide)^B, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device).

Languages: Abyssal.

Possessions: Ring of protection +2, bracers of armor +2, wand of cure moderate wounds (22 charges), wand of lightning bolt (18 charges).

➤ **Vrocks (1d3):** hp 115 each; *Monster Manual* 48.

Tactics: After summoning the vrock, the morkoth takes to the air, flying in circles and using its spell-like abilities and wand of lightning bolt at random on the crowd below. In order to use its wands, the morkoth must make a successful Use Magic Device check (DC 20). Its check is high enough that it always makes the check, unless it rolls a 1 (in which case it can't use that particular wand for a day). Despite its bestial form, the creature is quite intelligent and if it encounters the PCs it quickly realizes that they should be the focus of its attacks. It resorts to melee only as a last resort.

Since the morkoth is an aquatic creature, it can't stay out of the water for long. It must hold its breath while out of the water; it can do so for 11 rounds since it's taking standard and full-round actions. Once this time runs out, the morkoth must make a DC 10 Constitution check every round to continue holding its breath; each round, the DC increases by 1. If it fails the check, it begins to suffocate (see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, page 304). The morkoth tries to retreat to the water one or two rounds before it must start making Constitution checks; it also retreats if brought below 40 hit points. It's immune to poison so it doesn't have to worry about the toxic effects of the water or the air above it, but it only has fire resistance 10 so it likely takes damage each round from the boiling water. Once it has its breath back, the desperate morkoth bursts out of the boiling lake and flies at top speed in a random direction, hoping to find more hospitable waters to retreat to. There are several rivers in the surrounding area, but the chances of the morkoth reaching one before it suffocates is a mere 10%. Each round that it is prevented from making a double move, this chance is reduced by 1%, so if the PCs can keep it busy for ten rounds, victory is assured.

Citizen Aid: As with the demodand encounters, Cauldronites are more likely to die than help in this event.

Development: The PCs gain 14 Evacuation Points for defeating the half-fiend morkoth. In fact, the destruction of the legendary lake monster increases the heroes' Evacuation Point totals by +2 for the four other sections of the city as well. Reduce the Evacuation Points earned for this section by 1 for every citizen killed, but as long as the morkoth is eventually defeated, the bonus points for other city sections are still earned.

CHAPTER THREE: HOOKFACE

Once the PCs successfully evacuate the city, having accumulated at least 16 evacuation points in each of the five city sections, they may feel like celebrating. Certainly, their accomplishment is impressive. A few stragglers remain in the shuddering city, but for the most part Cauldron has been successfully emptied. Yet the deadliest part of this adventure has yet to begin.

A mature adult red dragon named Hookface has laired in the mountains near Cauldron for nearly 300 years. He spent the last 50 asleep in his lair far to the north. The dragon has had little interest in the city, and its residents have come to believe him to be more myth than fact. Hookface is all too real, however, and the recent events in Cauldron have woken him from his dreaming.

The first few tremors could be felt for miles around, and they woke Hookface immediately and angered him greatly. As the tremors increased, his anger became curiosity, and he flew to the top of his mountain lair to see if he could discover the source of the seismic activity. He immediately took note of the strange, swirling black cloud roiling above Cauldron to the south. He gathered his gear and took wing, eager to see if new plunder could be had from the once thriving town.

The timing of this final event is up to you, but it's best played as the PCs are leading the last group of citizens from the city. As the refugees leave via one of the cracked city gates, allow the PCs to make DC 20 Spot checks to notice Hookface's approach as he swoops down out of the clouds and weaves between the occasional falling demodand. Hookface doesn't immediately single out the PCs, preferring to swoop over the city looking for treasure. He casts *detect magic*, and flies 60 feet above the ground, searching for magic auras. If the PCs don't take precautions to hide or disguise themselves, allow Hookface a Spot check each round (DC 40). Success means the dragon's amazing eyesight picks up the PCs' gear. If the PCs haven't taken action against the dragon yet, they'll be forced to react as he attacks.

Note that Hookface is a deadly foe. If the PCs are particularly low on resources, you might wish to consider

augmenting their numbers with some friendly NPCs like Jenya or some of the Striders of Fharlanghn encountered in previous installments of the Adventure Path.

➤ **Hookface, Male Mature Adult Red Dragon:** CR 18; Huge dragon (fire); HD 25d12+150; hp 312; Init +0; Spd 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor); AC 34, touch 10, flat-footed 32; Base Atk +25; Grp +45; Atk +35 melee (2d8+12, bite); Full Atk +35 melee (2d8+12, bite), +30 melee (2d6+6, 2 claws), +30 melee (1d8+6, 2 wings), and +30 melee (2d6+18, tail slap); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft. (15 ft. with bite); SA breath weapon (50 ft. cone, 14d10 fire, Reflex DC 28 half), crush (2d8+18, DC 28), frightful presence (210-ft. radius, HD 24 or fewer, Will DC 26 negates), spell-like abilities, spells; SQ blindsense 60 ft., damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 120 ft., immunity to fire, immunity to magic sleep effects and paralysis, low-light vision, spell resistance 23, vulnerability to cold; AL CE; SV Fort +24, Ref +20, Will +22, Str 35, Dex 10 (currently 14), Con 23, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 18.

Skills: Appraise +32, Bluff +9, Concentration +24, Diplomacy +22, Intimidate +27, Jump +40, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (geography) +15, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (nature) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Knowledge (religion) +15, Listen +32, Search +29, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +17, Spot +32.

Feats: Adroit Flyby Attack, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Improved Snatch, Multisnatch, Power Attack, Quicken Breath, Snatch, Wingover.

Languages: Draconic.

Spell-Like Abilities: 7/day—locate object. Caster level 9th.

Spells Known (6/7/7/7/5; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, ghost sound, guidance, mage hand, read magic, resistance; 1st—alarm, magic

DRACONOMICON FEATS

Several of Hookface's feats are from the *Draconomicon*. If you don't have this book, brief descriptions of the effects of these feats are detailed below.

<i>Draconomicon</i> Feat	Effect
Adroit Flyby Attack	Flyby attacks do not provoke attacks of opportunity.
Improved Snatch	You can use the Snatch feat on creatures two size categories smaller than yourself.
Multisnatch	You take only a –10 penalty on grapple checks when grappling with only the part of your body that made the attack.
Quicken Breath	You can use your breath weapon as a free action. When you use this feat, add +4 to the number of rounds you must wait before using your breath weapon again.



CAMPAIGN SEED: HOOKFACE'S LAIR

Hookface has 20,000 gp worth of coins, goods, and art items, roughly 60 gems (average value of 100 gp), 1d4 medium magic items, and at least one major magic item in his hoard, in addition to the magic items he's carrying. Finding this hoard, and negotiating the traps and guardians within Hookface's lair, is an adventure beyond the scope of "Foundation of Flame."

missile, protection from good, shield, shocking grasp; 2nd—cat's grace, cure moderate wounds, darkness, sound burst; 3rd—dispel magic, protection from energy, stinking cloud; 4th—fire shield, greater invisibility.

Possessions: Cloak of resistance +4, pale blue rhomboid ioun stone, ring of minor cold resistance, ring of feather falling, bag of holding (type I).

Tactics: Hookface has already cast *cat's grace*, *fire shield*, *protection from energy (cold)*, *protection from energy (electricity)*, and *protection from good* on himself. He takes a great deal of joy in the fear his appearance causes, so he saves his *greater invisibility* spell for troublesome opponents or to escape.

Hookface prefers to fight from the air, making flyby attacks and snatching a single PC, then flying high into the air. He uses Multisnatch to maintain a hold on the grappled character, only taking a -10 penalty on the grapple check to maintain the hold.

In the first round of combat, he uses this tactic along with a quickened breath weapon. After successfully snatching a character, he swoops into the air to a height of at least 100 feet before dropping the unfortunate character into the city below. Hookface repeats this attack unless it proves ineffective, at which point he lands and engages in an all-out brawl.

Hookface doesn't fight to the death if he can help it. If he can't slay a magic-loaded PC quickly and depart with the body, he flees if reduced to 100 or fewer hit points. If Hookface succeeds in taking one of the PCs down and flying off with the body, he doesn't go far. He stops about 100 yards north of the city walls and begins the process of stripping the character of her possessions. Once that task is done (which takes about 2 minutes), he roasts the body with his breath weapon and gulps it down. With that accomplished, he finally takes flight for his lair in the north mountains.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

"Foundation of Flame" concludes as the PCs successfully evacuate Cauldron and defeat Hookface. Not long after the PCs arrive at the prearranged location (likely the village of Redgorge), Jenya contacts them with some information she's uncovered about the Cagewrights and the source of the volcanic activity. Her findings are revealed in the next issue of *DUNGEON*. In the meantime, the PCs have accomplished something incredible. For successfully evacuating Cauldron, award the party experience points as if for a CR 17 creature. This large experience point award in part compensates for the relatively light haul of treasure to be gained in this adventure, but also rewards the PCs for role-playing and the sheer accomplishment of saving hundreds (if not thousands) of lives from certain doom.

Unfortunately, the volcanic activity has thrown Redgorge into chaos as well. More refugees join those fleeing from Cauldron, and the city's leaders (including the potential replacement for the position of lord mayor) decide to lead the refugees further from danger and begin the long trek to a roadhouse inn about a day's travel away—The Lucky Monkey. Jenya plans on keeping the surviving townsfolk there for three days while the PCs attempt to stop the ritual of planar junction deep beneath Cauldron. She also sends riders to the nearby towns of Hollowsky and Kingfisher Hollow to apprise them of the situation.

Finally, remember that the PCs will need most of their strength to deal with the Cagewrights and their minions deep under Cauldron. Allow them time to rest, recuperate, and prepare for the assault on the Cagewrights—the ritual of planar junction takes several days to complete. Sooner than later, however, the PCs must return to Cauldron and make one last desperate attempt to stave off a terrible doom. If the Cagewrights complete their ritual, the volcanic eruption quickly becomes the least of their worries.

APPENDIX

THE MOB SUBTYPE

A mob is in many ways similar to a swarm, save that it is made of much larger creatures. A mob can be composed of Small, Medium, or Large creatures.

A mob has a single pool of Hit Dice and hit points, a single initiative modifier, a single speed, and a single Armor Class. A mob makes saving throws as a single creature. A mob of Small or Medium creatures consists of 40 individual creatures. A mob of Large creatures consists of 15 individual creatures.

A single mob occupies a square 20 feet on a side, but its reach is 0 feet. In order to attack, it moves into an opponent's space, which provokes an attack of opportunity. It can occupy the same space as a creature of any size since it tramples over and moves around its victim. A mob can move through squares occupied by enemies and vice versa without impediment, although the mob provokes an attack of opportunity if it does so. A mob can move through openings large enough for its component creatures.

Larger mobs are represented by multiples of single mobs. The area occupied by large mob like this is completely shapable, though the mob usually remains in contiguous squares.

A mob has no clear front or back and no discernable anatomy, so it is not subject to critical hits or flanking.

Reducing a mob to 0 hit points or lower causes it to break up, though damage taken until that point does not degrade its ability to attack or resist attack. Mobs

are never staggered or reduced to a dying state by damage. Also, they cannot be tripped, grappled, or bull rushed, and they cannot grapple an opponent unless otherwise specified.

Unlike standard swarms, mobs are made up of relatively small numbers of individual creatures, so spells or effects that target specific numbers of creatures can have an effect on a mob. Each specific creature that is slain, disabled, or otherwise incapacitated by spells or effects that target specific creatures inflicts 2 negative levels on the mob. A mob that gains negative levels equal to its Hit Dice breaks up as if reduced to 0 hit points. Negative levels gained in this manner are not the result of negative energy (and thus cannot be blocked by *death ward* or removed by *restoration*), but never result in permanent level loss. A mob takes half again as much damage (+50%) from spells or effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons and many evocation spells. Unlike normal swarms, they are not especially susceptible to high winds.

Unlike swarms of smaller creatures, a mob's skills and feats do not increase to match its increased Hit Dice. Rather, the mob's skills and feats remain identical to those possessed by the individual creatures in the mob. All mobs gain Improved Bull Rush and Improved Overrun as bonus feats.

Although mobs are treated as one creature, it sometimes becomes necessary to determine the fate of a specific individual caught up in the mob. If a mob is dispersed by non-lethal attacks, there are no casualties. If the mob is dispersed by lethal attacks, assume that 30% of its number are slain and 30% are reduced to 0 hit points. To determine a specific individual's fate, simply roll d%; a result of 01-30 indicates death, 31-60 indicates the victim is reduced to 0 hit points, and a roll of 61-100 indicates the victim escapes relatively unscathed.

Mob Attack: Mobs attack and damage foes in the same manner as swarms (see page 316 of the *Monster Manual*). Ω

Chris Thomasson is the former editor of *DUNGEON*, but this is his first appearance in its pages as an author. Writing this bio, he's reminded of all the authors whose bios he was forced to compose when they forgot to send one in—and the occasional humiliation he put them through as a result—and he's glad he remembered to write this silly thing.

MOUNT ZOGON



BY TONY MOSELEY



THIRTEEN CAGES

ADVENTURE PATH PART NINE

by Chris Thomasson
Illustrations by Ramón Pérez
Cartography by Christopher West

Adventure Path • High-level (13–20) • Dungeon Crawl

Things are unwell in the town of Cauldron. The city, built on the inner rim of a volcano long thought to be dormant, is dying. The volcano is waking. Its citizens have been evacuated, yet the peril remains, for terrible fiends from Carceri have been manifesting in the tortured skies above. It seems that the volcano's awakening is but a symptom of something worse infesting its fiery heart.

"Thirteen Cages" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 16th-level characters. The PCs should reach 17th or possibly 18th level by the adventure's conclusion. When the PCs earn enough experience to gain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure.

This adventure is the ninth part of the Shattered City Adventure Path that began with "Life's Bazaar" (DUNGEON #97), "Flood Season" (DUNGEON #98), "Zenith



Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), "Secret of the Soul Pillars" (*DUNGEON* #109), "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111), and "Foundation of Flame" (*DUNGEON* #113). The Shackled City Adventure Path continues in *DUNGEON* #115 with "Strike on Shatterhorn," by Christopher Perkins.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Cauldron has been evacuated. Violent tremors began rocking the city several hours ago, followed by lava-spewing cracks, monsters falling from the sky, and other catastrophes. While the PCs helped organize the city's evacuation, the high-priestess of St. Cuthbert, Jenya Urikas, spent her time concentrating on locating the Cagewrights, the evil organization responsible for the terror in Cauldron.

The Cagewrights, long plotting to turn Cauldron into a gateway for the fiendish demodands of Carceri, are well into the ritual of planar binding, a ceremony that uses life energy of the Shackleborn (descendants of demodands who came to this plane hundreds of years ago) to create this gateway. The lynch-pin for this ritual is the *Tree of Shackled Souls*, an artifact created by the Thirteen (the Cagewright leaders). The tree is a hideous adamantine and mithral structure with thirteen branches built to hold thirteen soulcages. In each cage is imprisoned one of the Shackleborn. In "Foundation of Flame," events conspired to force the Cagewrights to begin the ritual earlier than they planned; without all thirteen of their ruling members present (some of their number are unable to make it to Cauldron on such short notice), the ritual took longer for them to complete than

they had anticipated. Yet complete it they did. As this adventure begins, the Cagewrights and their apprentices are relaxing after completing the ritual of planar binding while the *Tree of Shackled Souls* begins to absorb the volcanic energies of the mountain and the soul energies of the thirteen Shackleborn. The PCs finally have a window of opportunity to stop the portal from opening, but that window is closing rapidly.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs begin the adventure on the outskirts of Cauldron after having evacuated the town. They meet with Jenya, who tells them how to reach the Cagewrights (her divinations proved moderately successful), and that they have mere hours before a terrible event is completed that endangers them all.

The characters then travel into the heart of the volcano beneath

Cauldron. They battle demodands and eight members of the Thirteen before meeting the mastermind behind the Cagewrights' plot, a sinister, malformed demodand named Dyr'ryd. After defeating him, they must deactivate or destroy the *Tree of Shackled Souls*, which could have dire consequences of its own if not handled delicately.

CHAPTER ONE: REVELATIONS AND DESCENT

Now that the PCs have evacuated Cauldron, and the townsfolk stream toward safety as they head down the mountain under the direction of the town guards and clergy, Jenya of St. Cuthbert contacts them for an urgent meeting in a hastily erected tent along the side of the road. She's dirty, exhausted, and has a nasty cut across one cheek. She quickly gets down to business.

"We know that the organization responsible for this catastrophe are the Cagewrights. They seek to turn Cauldron into the site of a permanent portal to Carceri, the home plane of their demodand masters. Their sign is called the Carcerian Eye, and as you now know, Lord Orbius Vhalantru was in league with this group."

"The tremors are the result of a ritual the Cagewrights are performing to achieve this end. It seems they have found a way to harness the latent power of the volcano to open the portal to Carceri. Judging by the fact that the volcano's activity has so far been relatively calm, as far as volcanic eruptions go, I believe that the majority of the volcano's energy is being siphoned into some sort of focus to power the final creation of the portal. I don't know how much longer the Cagewrights need, but every second wasted is a second closer to Cauldron's doom.

"Fortunately, not all is yet lost. You still have a chance to put a stop to their plans, but alas, I know not how much time you have left. My divinations have uncovered the

DEMODANDS

Many of the monsters encountered in this adventure are demodands, cruel and powerful fiends from the prison plane of Carceri. Demodands are detailed in full on pages 42–45 of the *Fiend Folio*. If you don't have access to this book, you can substitute similar evil outsiders from the *Monster Manual* as follows. The simple substitution lists an outsider with an equal CR, although this outsider might not have the same or similar combat options as the demodand in question, and its alignment should be changed to neutral evil. The complex substitution requires a bit more work on your part, but the end result is much closer to the demodand it replaces.

Demodand	Simple Substitution	Complex Substitution
Farastu (CR 11)	Hezrou demon	Half-fiend kuo-toa Bbn7
Kelubar (CR 13)	Death slaad	Half-fiend troglodyte Rog10
Shator (CR 16)	Horned devil	Half-fiend 22-HD Large mohrg Sor6

Note that in the 3.5 rules, farastus have damage reduction 10/good and kelubars and shators have damage reduction 15/good.

approximate location of where the Cagewrights are performing their ritual; deep under Cauldron near the volcano's core in a magically reinforced stronghold built to withstand the volcano's activity. Alas, these same magical reinforcements prevent direct observation or divinations about it or its contents, as well as block teleportation magic. Yet you cannot let this stop you; if they complete their ritual, we can't get the citizens of Cauldron far enough away in time to avoid an unspeakable doom! I've been able to determine which of the lava tubes gives the most direct route to the proximity of their stronghold, and can supply you with the last of the church's healing stores, but beyond that, Cauldron's fate is in your hands. There should be time still for you to rest and recover from the evacuation, but don't tarry much longer. Once you embark on this quest, I doubt you'll have a chance to rest again until it's resolved, so make sure to watch your resources closely!"

Jenya hands the PCs a fully charged wand of cure moderate wounds and six potions of cure serious wounds, telling the characters that this is all that remains of the church's healing stores. She's used all of her prepared spells,

unfortunately, so there's little additional assistance she can offer them.

The exact amount of time left for the PCs to defeat the Cagewrights is not static; you should use the imminent threat of the opening of the portal to spur the PCs onward. Although the dangers encountered in this adventure are significant, the greatest problem facing the PCs is the fact that they'll probably need to complete this entire adventure without stopping to rest and recover resources. As a general rule, as long as the PCs don't flee the dungeon or stop to rest, they should have enough time to stop the creation of the Carcerian portal. If they insist on retreating from the Fiery Sanctum to rest, recover resources, identify magic items, or otherwise waste time, the *Tree of Shackled Souls* completes its work and opens the portal as detailed in "Concluding the Adventure." If, on the other hand, the PCs come up with creative solutions to the problem (such as retreating to the Astral Plane or some other timeless region, where they can rest without fear of "advancing the clock"), don't punish them. After all, coming up with unexpected solutions is part of the fun of playing a high-level adventure!

CHAPTER TWO: THE FIERY SANCTUM

If the PCs decide to approach the Cagewrights' stronghold (known to them as "The Fiery Sanctum") via the lava tubes, they've got an approximately 4-mile hike through stifling, tremor-laden tunnels. Treat these treacherous, rubble-strewn tunnels as trackless mountains for determining overland movement speeds; thus, a party moving at a speed of 30 can reach area C1 in about 90 minutes. Feel free to liven up this journey with additional hazards (perhaps some of the volcanic hazards from "Foundation of Flame" in *DUNGEON* #113) or monster encounters, but remember that each encounter the PCs are forced to endure on the way to the Sanctum further erodes their resources. Jenya's description of the tunnels is reliable enough that the PCs can use *greater teleport* to get within 10 minutes of area C1.

However the PCs reach the Fiery Sanctum, the areas inside the fortress have many aspects in common. Ceiling height in the complex remains constant at 15 feet unless otherwise noted. The rooms and chambers are lit by numerous tiny cages (replicas of the soulcages) containing squirming, glowing fire beetle larvae; these "lanterns" provide illumination equal to torchlight.

Most doors in the Sanctum are made of stone and are unlocked. Secret doors in this dungeon are quite cleverly hidden and require a successful Search check (DC 35) to locate.

Several areas feature heavy cloth draperies woven cunningly to resemble the volcanic rock so common in the Sanctum. The cloth feels like stone even to the casual touch, but can be pushed aside for passage beyond. These draperies are used to conceal areas the Cagewrights want to keep private but easily accessible. Finding one of these curtains requires a DC 20 Search check. Parting a curtain can be made as part of a move action.

If the PCs use *find the path* to help navigate the dungeon, remember

that the numerous thin stone walls that block several passageways in the complex register as blocked routes; *find the path* works around them. Unless PCs discover these walls, the shortest path to the *Tree of Shackled Souls* is neither the safest nor the most direct.

Many areas in the Fiery Sanctum include lakes or rivers of lava. Make sure you are familiar with the lava rules on page 304 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

Finally, the presence of the *Tree of Shackled Souls* suppresses all teleportation magic in the Fiery Sanctum; for complete details, refer to the *Tree of Shackled Souls*.

❖ **Stone Door:** 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 28, Open Lock (when locked) DC 40.

C1. THE GATE (EL 8)

A monstrous gate of black metal blocks further progress along this smooth, volcanic tunnel. Fully fifteen feet high and eight feet wide, the gate is emblazoned with the symbol you've come to know as the Carcerian Eye—the symbol of the Cagewrights. A twisted, leering visage sculpted from the same metal as the gates adorns the lintel over the door. The face seems both calm and entirely insane, if such a thing is possible, and its race or gender is indeterminate. Its glowering eyes have also been carved in the symbol of the Carcerian Eye.

This gate is made of adamantite and is both locked and trapped.

❖ **Adamantine Gate:** 1 ft. thick; Hardness 20; hp 480; Open Lock DC 40 if *arcane lock* is dispelled; Break DC 50 (*arcane lock*).

Traps: The *alarm* is triggered if someone opens the gate without a proper password (Adimarchus's name, pronounced by two people, one in Abyssal and the other in Celestial, spoken within 20 feet of the gate). This password also deactivates the *disintegrate* trap for one minute. The *disintegrate* trap can target two creatures per round within

CAMPAIGN SEED: FATE OF THE STORMBLADES

If you're playing "Thirteen Cages" as part of the Shackled City Adventure Path, and the PCs have had run-ins with the competing adventuring group known as the Stormblades in prior adventures, this adventure is an excellent point to tie up any loose ends. You can incorporate the Stormblades in one of two ways, depending on how the PCs are handling the adventure. If you feel that the PCs are having a rough time of it and could use some help, or if the PCs have forged friendships and alliances with the Stormblades in prior adventures, they can encounter the group as allies. If the PCs are waltzing through the adventure, or made bitter enemies of the Stormblades in prior adventures, the Stormblades can serve as additional mercenary help for the Cagewrights.

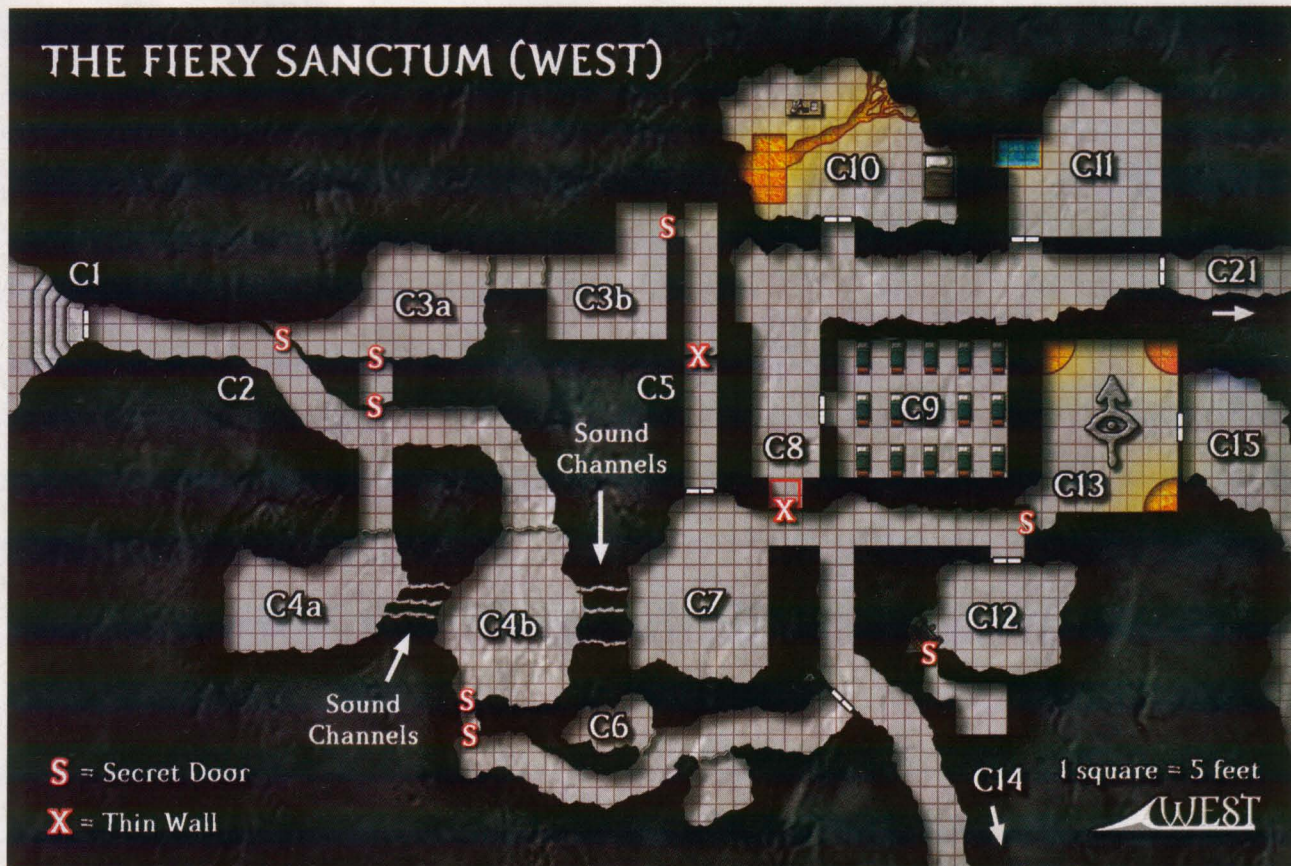
If you wish to include the Stormblades, you'll need to design their stats to fit your campaign. The Stormblades consist of Anah Taskerhill (female human Ar1/Brd14), Cora Lathenmire (female human Ar1/Ftr8/Duelist 6), Todd Vanderboren (male human Ar1/Rog7/Assassin 7), and Zachary Aslaxin II (male human Ar1/Rgr7/Clr7).

range. The sickly green beams of the spell launch from the eyes of the visage over the door to strike at the two nearest creatures within 10 feet.

➤ **Alarm Trap:** CR —; magic device; proximity trigger (20 ft.); automatic reset; spell effect (mental *alarm*, 1st-level wizard, mentally alerts specific members of Cagewrights within 1 mile); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

➤ **Disintegrate Trap:** CR 8; magic device; proximity trigger (10 ft.); automatic reset; Atk +10 ranged touch (twice); spell effect (*disintegrate*, 13th-level wizard, 26d6 damage, DC 19

THE FIERY SANCTUM (WEST)



Fort save for 5d6 damage); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

C2. DETOUR

The curve in the tunnel hides a secret door that leads to Gau's chambers. If the PCs take no precautions to move quietly, she automatically hears them as they pass by and prepares for combat.

C3. GAU'S CHAMBERS (EL 15)

The severe neatness and organization of this chamber stands in stark contrast to the animal stench that fills the room—a combination of sweat, manure, and wet fur makes the air thick and fetid. This appears to be some sort of dueling or training chamber. Practice dummies line the walls, along with weapon and armor racks displaying exotic equipment of all sorts. The most disturbing thing about the chamber are the spikes protruding from the walls in clusters at various heights.

These two chambers (areas C3a and C3b) are inhabited by a minotaur named Gau. If the PCs pass these rooms by, Gau repositions herself at area C5 to ambush them later.

Gau's living quarters (area C3b) are sparse, furnished with little more than a few dire bear rugs and a large bed made of animal hides and bones.

Creature: Gau is the most martial—and the most feral—of the Cagewrights. Not particularly bright, she is valued for her intense loyalty to Dyr'ryd, the Cagewrights, and their plans.

➤ **Gau Kleecho, Female Minotaur**
Bbn11: CR 15; Large monstrous humanoid; HD 6d8+24 plus 11d12+44; hp 181; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 25, touch 12, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +17; Grp +29; Atk +27 melee (2d6+14 plus



2d6/15–20, +2 vicious falchion) or +24 melee (1d8+8, gore); Full Atk +27/+22/+17/+12 melee (2d6+14 plus 2d6/15–20, +2 vicious falchion) and +19 melee (1d8+4, gore); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA powerful charge 4d6+12, greater rage 3/day; SQ damage reduction 2/—, darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, improved uncanny dodge, natural cunning, scent, trap sense +3; AL NE; SV Fort +15, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 27, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 7, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Greater Rage (Ex): hp 232; AC 23, touch 10, flat-footed 22; Grp +32; Atk +30 melee (2d6+18 plus 2d6/15–20, +2 vicious falchion) or +27 melee (1d8+11, gore); Full Atk +30/+25/+20/+15 melee (2d6+18 plus 2d6/15–20, +2 vicious falchion) and +22 melee (1d8+11, gore); SV Fort +18, Will +10; Str 33, Con 24.

Skills: Intimidate +5, Listen +13, Search +5, Spot +5.

Feats: Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (falchion), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (falchion).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Possessions: +2 elven chain, +2 vicious falchion, gauntlets of ogre power, amulet of natural armor +1, Ring of Thirteen, winged boots, potion of cure serious wounds, 35 pp, 20 gp.

Tactics: Gau rages and Power Attacks for at least 10 points, reducing the amount as needed in later rounds until she hits with at least three of her four attacks in a given round. She also charges, goring and using Improved Bull Rush to push opponents into the barbed spikes on the walls of her chambers. Creatures pushed into the spikes take 2d6 points of piercing damage, plus additional damage equal to Gau's current Strength modifier. In addition, creatures stuck on the nasty spikes must take a full-round action (that provokes attacks of opportunity) to yank themselves free with a successful Strength check or Escape Artist check (DC 20). A creature that does so takes an additional 2d6 points of damage from the spikes as they tear loose.

Treasure: Three of the weapons on the racks are unusual. One is an adamantine morningstar and another a silver flail. The most impressive weapon is a trophy Gau won from a paladin; a holy avenger emblazoned with the symbol of Pelor.

C4. FARASTU LAIRS (EL 14)

Beyond the heavy curtain is an irregular room. Odd, uncomfortable pieces of furniture lie about the chamber, including several long, narrow beds. Bizarre statuary and paintings adorn the walls and several low pedestals, and a thick, black, tarry substance covers most of the room's surfaces.

Areas C4a and C4b have similar décor. The tarry substance is exuded by the three farastus that live here.

Creatures: The farastus are likely to hear PCs passing in the hallway to the north and prepare for combat by hiding in the shadows of the room. If the PCs pass by, one farastu in the first room shouts a warning to the other group after 1 round (the sound chan-

nels between areas C4a and C4b allow farastus in either room to hear these warnings automatically), then they all move to flank the PCs in the hall.

➤ **Farastus (3 each):** hp 71; *Fiend Folio* 42.

Tactics: The floor in each room is caked with farastu slime. Creatures other than farastus treat these areas as filled with dense rubble (*DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* 60).

C5. BREAKAWAY WALL

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, this is one of several thin stone walls built to baffle *find the path* spells.

➤ **Thin Stone Wall:** 1/4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 15; Break DC 15.

C6. GUARD STATION (EL 11)

Creatures: A pair of vrock have been stationed here via *binding* by Shebelesh (second-in-command of the Cagewrights). The demons lurk in small, cramped quarters behind two heavy stone-colored curtains, which they hurl aside to attack the party's middle ranks as they pass by. Remember that, like the PCs, the vrock's *greater teleport* spell-like abilities don't function this close to the *Tree of Shackled Souls*.

➤ **Vrock (2):** hp 115 each; *Monster Manual* 48.

C7. KELUBAR COMMAND (EL 15 OR EL 17)

This chamber reeks of a strong, acrid odor. A pale green ichor coats the floor in the chamber beyond, and strange, warped furniture can be seen among the room's contents. Against the far wall a rack has been attached to the wall, and stretched out on it are the burned and disfigured remains of at least seven humanoids, although an exact number is difficult to ascertain given the condition of the corpses.

Creatures: This chamber is the lair of a pair of kelubar demodands that answer directly to Dyr'ryd.

➤ **Kelubars (2):** hp 97 each; *Fiend Folio* 44.

RING OF THIRTEEN

The Cagewright leaders all wear matching magic rings designed to protect them from detection and harm. A *Ring of Thirteen* is a *ring of protection* +2 that also protects its wearer with constant *protection from good*, *nondetection*, and *endure elements*. These rings function only for evil creatures; a non-evil creature who wears a ring of thirteen gains a negative level for as long as the ring is worn. This negative level never actually results in actual level loss.

Strong abjuration; CL 15th; Forge Ring, *protection from good*, *nondetection*, *endure elements*, creator must be evil; Price 54,000 gp.

Tactics: If the kelubars are warned of the PCs' approach, they turn *invisible* and wait for the characters to investigate this chamber before attacking. If the PCs show no inclination to enter the kelubars' lair, they wait until the characters leave the area before gathering any nearby allies to stalk and ambush the PCs.

If combat breaks out here and Gau is lurking to the north of area C5, she breaks through the wall to come to the kelubars' aid. The Flamewarders in area C8 quickly warn T'irok Coalfire in area C10 and then marshal in the corridor outside that area in preparation for battle.

C8. PASSAGE OF FIRE (EL 17)

The floor, walls, and ceiling are polished to a mirror finish in this stiflingly hot hall, the light of dozens of cages of glowing grubs reflected a hundredfold. The western wall has been carved in a series of terrifying scenes. Fiends of all shapes and sizes force creatures of an even wider variety into burning servitude. Lording over them all, however, is a horrifying menace. Its misshapen face seems to face two directions, implying that nothing escapes its fierce, maniacal gaze.

Characters who stride boldly into the area just north of the thin wall that closes off this hallway stumble into a particularly devastating Trap. In addition, several creatures lie in wait to ambush anyone who approaches.

Creatures: Areas C8-C10 have been given over to the Flamewarders, a mercenary band composed of extraplanar creatures known as haraknin: hell hounds that can assume humanoid form. The Flamewarders are led by a fire giant named Tīrok Coalfire.

Two Flamewarders stand guard here at all times, listening for sounds of intruders beyond the breakaway wall. If they hear sounds of battle from area C7, one of them alerts their commander Tīrok in area C10, while the other retrieves the other two Flamekin stationed in area C9. The haraknin mercenaries are under orders not to attack beyond the breakaway wall but to form ranks to repel invaders from here.

➔ **Flamewarders, Male and Female Haraknin** Ftr5/Rog5 (4):

Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, fire, lawful shapechanger); HD 4d8+12 plus 5d10+15 plus 5d6+15; hp 108; Init +7; Spd 40 ft.; AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +12; Grp +17; Atk +19 melee (1d12+10/×3, +1 greataxe) or +16 ranged (1d8+5/×3, masterwork composite longbow [+5 Str]); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d12+10/×3, +1 greataxe) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (1d8+5/×3, masterwork composite longbow [+5 Str]); SA breath weapon, sneak attack +3d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, fire subtype, scent, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +13, Will +8; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Breath Weapon (Su): Cone of fire, 30 feet, every 2d4 rounds, damage 1d4+1, Reflex DC 20 half. A haraknin's breath weapon ignites flammable materials within the cone. It can use its breath weapon while biting.

Skills: Hide +18, Jump +17, Listen +13, Move Silently +18, Spot +13,

Survival +7 (+15 when tracking by scent), Tumble +11.

Feats: Acrobatic, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe).

Languages: Common, Infernal.

Possessions: +2 chain shirt, +1 adamantite greataxe, masterwork composite longbow (+5 Str bonus), 30 arrows, ring of protection +1, potion of blur, potion of bull's strength, 2 potions of cure serious wounds, potion of protection from energy (cold), oil of greater magic weapon +3, red-lacquered gold armband set with an emerald (1,000 gp), 25 pp, 100 gp.

Tactics: The haraknin fight for the admiration of and devotion to their fire giant commander, not out of any loyalty to the Cagewrights. They attempt to block the PCs from moving out of the trapped area behind the break-away wall as long as possible. If the battle goes poorly, the Flamewarders make a fighting

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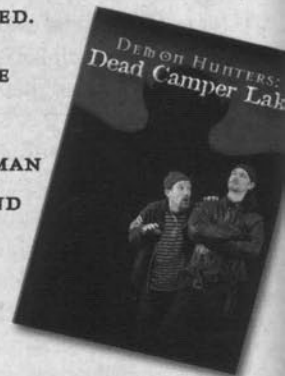
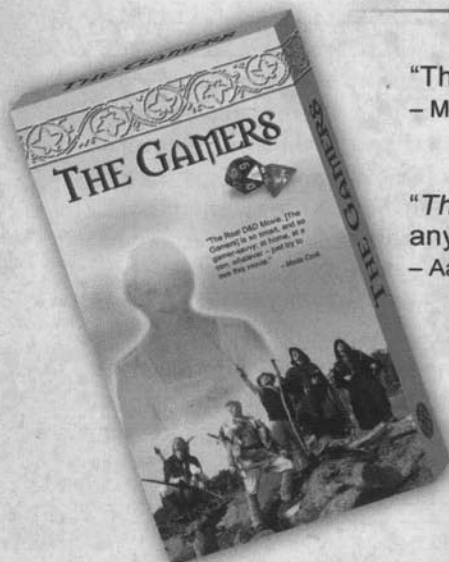
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retreat toward area C10, where their commander joins the fray.

Trap: The 10-foot area right behind the break-away wall is dreadfully trapped. When anyone steps on the area without speaking Dyr'ryd's name aloud, the monstrous, two-faced creature in the wall carving (a representation of Dyr'ryd himself) launches beams of negative energy at the intruders. As long as a PC stands on one of the four squares behind the wall, the wall continues to fire two beams each round at targets in the area (determined randomly from available targets).

↗ **Energy Drain Trap:** CR 10; magic device; location trigger (10-foot area behind break-away wall); automatic reset; multiple traps (two simultaneous *energy drain* traps); Atk +10 ranged touch and +10 ranged touch; spell effect (*energy drain*, 17th-level wizard, 2d4 negative levels); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34.

Development: If the PCs met and killed Aszithel Flamewarder in "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111) and one of them now wields her greatsword, the flamewarders recognize the weapon and become enraged, taking special pains to focus their attacks on that character.

C9. FLAMEWARDER BARRACKS

Long cots fill this chamber in orderly rows. The cots are immaculately made and look quite uncomfortable. Closed footlockers rest at the end of each bed. The walls bear only a single decoration—a tapestry depicting a black silhouette on a field of red of a bearded face outlined in flames and howling in fury. The air smells strongly of brimstone.

Creatures: These are the barracks for the haraknin Flamewarders. Most are stationed elsewhere, but a pair of them rest here now unless they have been summoned to help protect area C8.

↗ **Flamewarders (2):** hp 108; see area C8.

Treasure: The footlockers contain spare uniforms, whetstones and armor-cleaning supplies, and bits of food. A DC 30 Search check turns up a few items of interest, including a total of 347 gp, 445 sp, a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, and a *wand of knock* (10 charges).

C10. TĪIROK'S CHAMBERS (EL 19)

The walls here are rough and natural, although the floor is polished smooth. A massive iron bed fills half the wall to the east, and a stream of glowing lava runs slowly though the center of the room to what appears to be a large sunken pool built into the west wall. A tapestry made of a dark, heavy metal adorns the wall across from the door, displaying a silhouette of a bearded face outlined in flames and howling in fury, all on a field of red. A large iron bookshelf sits on the floor below, carrying several oversized books. Next to that and facing the door is a massive iron table cluttered with metal sheets and a dragon's skull.

The leader of the Flamewarders dwells here. He is TĪirok Coalfire, a fire giant who assembled his band of haraknin on a trip to the Elemental Plane of Fire many years ago. He bought the entire lot of them from an efreeti slaver and had them transported back to his clan's lands. After a failed coup against his clan leader, TĪirok found himself out of favor. Consequently, he left his clan behind, haraknin in tow, to seek his fortune as leader of a mercenary band.

After a few successful campaigns, TĪirok's remarkable band of Flamewarders drew the attention of the Cagewrights. He has been serving the Cagewrights loyally—thanks in no small part to the massive sums of gold they pay him—for the past six years. TĪirok still holds the contract of purchase for the haraknin, but he has never resorted to keeping the lawful creatures in line with it—he has had no need. Through their battles togeth-

er, he has always tried to treat them well, if strictly, and the haraknin have thrived under TĪirok's leadership.

TĪirok's lieutenant and cohort was a female haraknin named Aszithel. He assigned her to the beholder Orbius Vhalantru to act as an intermediary between the creature and the Cagewrights (and also to keep an eye on the eye tyrant), but she has not reported back in several days, likely due to the PCs' interference in "Lords of Oblivion."

Creatures: TĪirok is likely aware of the PCs' approach due the sounds of battle from area C8, and has marshaled two of his haraknin to help prepare his reception for the PCs.

↗ **TĪirok Coalfire, Male Fire Giant**
Ftr8: CR 18; Large giant (fire); HD 15d8+90 plus 8d10+48; hp 249; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 30, touch 11, flat-footed 30; Base Atk +19; Grp +34; Atk +32 melee (3d6+20 plus 1d6 fire/17–20, *Blackfire*) or +29 melee (1d4+11, slam) or +19 ranged (2d6+11 plus 2d6 fire, rock); Full Atk +32/+27/+22/+17 melee (3d6+20 plus 1d6 fire/17–20, *Blackfire*) or +29 melee (1d4+11, 2 slams) or +18/+13/+8/+3 ranged (2d6+11 plus 2d6 fire, rock); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rock throwing; SQ immunity to fire, low-light vision, rock catching, vulnerability to cold; AL LE; SV Fort +21, Ref +7, Will +11; Str 32, Dex 11, Con 22, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +20, Craft +19, Intimidate +17, Jump +20, Spot +19.

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Leadership, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Languages: Common, Giant, Infernal.

Possessions: +3 moderate fortification full plate, *Blackfire* (+2 flaming burst unholy greatsword), gloves of Dexterity +2, helm of telepathy, ring of protection +2, 2 emeralds (1,000 gp each), 500 gp.

↗ **Flamewarders (2):** hp 108; see area C8.

Tactics: T'irok uses his *helm of telepathy* to contact Dyr'ryd as soon as he's aware of the PCs. He and his Flamewarders ready actions to attack the first target they see. Otherwise, they draw weapons as soon as they become aware of the characters; T'irok engages in melee and the Flamewarders move to the edges of the room to fire their bows.

T'irok begins the encounter near his bed. As soon as the opportunity presents itself, he attempts to use his Improved Bull Rush feat to push someone into the lava pool. A PC who falls in takes 20d6 points of fire damage from total immersion in the 12-foot-deep pool.

Development: The metal sheets on the table serve T'irok as paper; he uses special metal inks to write on them. Two sheets might be of interest to the PCs. The first contains a few notes about the ritual of planar junction; namely, that once it is completed the *Tree of Shackled Souls* still requires several hours to build up enough energy to open the portal. During this vulnerable time the tree must be defended at all costs.

The second is a list of tasks that includes the following:

- 1 See to Decrihni. The constant organ playing has got to stop.
- 2 Speak to the wyrm about the collar. Ensure it is still cared for.
- 3 Speak to Dyr'ryd once the portal is open to inquire about the dispensation land.
- 4 Establish plan with Nulin and Thearynn about a plan to round up remaining townsfolk as workers for the lords from beyond.
- 5 Polish Blackfire. (This last entry is crossed out.)

C11. TESTING CHAMBER (EL 0 OR 17)

This chamber is some sort of martial training facility. Combat dummies in various states of repair line the walls, weapon racks containing padded practice weapons rest in racks

on other walls, and curls of mist rise from a low pool in a nook across from the door, heated by trickles of lava running down the walls into fissures around its edges.

The lava running down the walls heats the stone around the pool, creating a hot bath in which weary haraknin can relax. The pool is far too hot for creatures lacking some resistance to fire, however, at an uncomfortable 150 degrees. Creatures exposed to the water take 2d6 points of fire damage, or 8d6 per round if fully immersed.

Creatures: Four Flamewarders train here. The door to this chamber is normally kept open, so chances are that they'll hear the sound of combat in nearby areas. If they do, they quickly grab their weapons and join the battle.

➤ **Flamewarders (2):** hp 108; see area C8.

C12. DECRIHNI BAIUL'S CHAMBER (EL 14)

The first object that draws your eye is a massive pipe organ in a nook along the west wall. Black iron pipes run up from the large organ, running along the contours of the natural ceiling. The keys are made of what appear to be the fingerbones of various humanoid creatures, and the organ bench is the skeleton of a dwarf, bent into a squatting position with hands raised to support the musician. A gilded bed sits against the opposite wall next to a carved stone wardrobe that looks to be part of the rock wall of the room. A small shrine sits against the south wall, and the scent of burning incense fills the air.

Shebeleth Regidin has graciously allowed his protégé, Decrihni Baiul, to assume chambers separate from his own, something most of the other members of the Cagewrights' inner circle have refused to do. Decrihni is of a martial bent, and spends nearly as much time in combat drills with the Flamewarders and Gau as he does aiding Shebeleth in his rituals and arcane researches.

Creatures: Decrihni stands about 5 feet tall, and has a thick, barrel-shaped body and arms and legs like the trunks of healthy trees. His eyes protrude from beneath a coarse brow and his bulbous nose is shot through with burst blood vessels. His shaggy black hair is chopped short, and he wears a scraggly black beard.

➤ **Decrihni Baiul, Male Human**
Ftr5/Clr9: CR 14; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d10+5 plus 9d8+9; hp 99; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +11; Grp +15; Atk +18 melee (2d4+10/19–20, +2 *spell storing spiked chain*); Full Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (2d4+10/19–20, +2 *spell storing spiked chain*); SA rebuke/command undead, spells; SQ —; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 18, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +7, Concentration +10, Craft (weaponsmithing) +9, Intimidate +7, Jump +1, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Perform (keyboard instrument) +2, Spellcraft +10.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Improved Critical (spiked chain), Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Weapon Focus (spiked chain), Weapon Specialization (spiked chain).

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/5+1/5+1/4+1/2+1/1+1; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *read magic*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (2), *detect law*, *divine favor*, *protection from good**, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bear's endurance*, *cure moderate wounds*, *darkness*, *hold person*, *shatter**, *sound burst*; 3rd—*cure serious wounds*, *magic circle against good**, *prayer*, *searing light*, *stone shape*; 4th—*cure critical wounds*, *divine power*, *unholy blight**; 5th—*dispel law**, *quickened divine favor*.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: +3 *full plate*, +2 *spell storing spiked chain*, cold iron spiked chain, *gauntlets of ogre power*, *ring of protection* +2, *potion of invisibility*, *scroll of righteous might*, 23 gp.

MOLTENWING'S LAIR



When the PCs arrive in this chamber, they find Decrihni madly playing his pipe organ. Decrihni isn't very good, but he makes up for his lack of skill with sheer exuberance.

Tactics: Decrihni casts *divine power* and a quickened *divine favor* on himself as soon he notices the PCs. He then wades into melee gleefully, his eyes shining and maniacal spittle flying from his lips as he occasionally shouts prayers to the dark powers in which he believes (chief among them being Adimarchus).

Development: Decrihni's pipe organ is more than it appears. A successful Search check (DC 30) uncovers a strange set of symbols carved into an obscure corner of the pipe organ. A successful Decipher Script or Perform (keyboard instrument) check (DC 30) reveals that the symbols indicate a specific chord on the organ, which can be successfully played by anyone with at least 1 rank in Perform (keyboard instrument) or with a successful Dexterity check (DC 25). Doing so causes the keyboard to swing open and reveal

a narrow, twisting passage into the stone behind. This leads to a private shrine of Decrihni's dedicated to the demon prince Adimarchus. The walls are painted with a mix of blood and other, more foul substances in mad, haphazard swirls. The room reeks, and a shrine in its center holds a stone statue featuring the Carcerian Eye. Adimarchus's name is also painted on nearly every available surface in Abyssal, Infernal, and Undercommon, along with terribly crafted poems praising the "dark lord of madness" and all his works.

A character with the Sign of the Smoking Eye template (detailed in *DUNGEON* #107) feels a strange reaction to this room; good characters become overwhelmed with sorrow and pity while evil characters are filled with exultation and joy. A neutral character feels nothing, but all characters with this template immediately understand that the shrine can be used to draw upon the energies of the Abyssal layer of Occipitus to use *wish* once as a spell-like ability. This *wish* must be made in this room

and does not cost experience points to cast; once used, the connection between Occipitus and this altar is burned away, forever gone.

C13. MEETING ADJOURNED

Every surface of this large, rectangular room has been polished to a mirror sheen. Quarter-circle pools of lava in three of the room's four corners augment the light provided by numerous grub cages. Massive double doors carved with the Carcerian Eye exit the room to the east, but the chamber is dominated by an immense, carved stone table, also in the shape of the Carcerian Eye. Thirteen chairs surround the table, the one at the head larger than the others.

This is the meeting chamber of the Thirteen. They gather here when great events must be discussed, or when the group must be informed as a whole of one of Dyr'ryd's decisions.

C14. PYROCLASTIC ACTIVITY (EL 17)

This massive cavern is lit by a large lake of lava. Islands of volcanic stone protrude from the molten rock, but gaps of five to fifteen feet separate them. To the east, the cavern wall curves gently to a larger ledge. At the rear of that far ledge hangs a magnificent tapestry, black with thread of gold strung through it. Through a gap between the tapestry and the wall, you can see a dark chamber extending even further beyond.

Long before the Cagewrights discovered the volcano, long before even the founders of Cauldron built the first structure in the bowl of the dormant volcano above, Garathrynakh the pyroclastic dragon (known also as Moltenwing) dwelt here. Moltenwing spent several decades after first coming to the Material Plane ravaging now ancient towns and civilizations, but eventually grew weary and retreated into the depths of this volcano to sleep. Above, his



legend faded, and eventually settlers reached the mountains and built the first buildings of the city.

When the Cagewrights first found the crude series of chambers near the volcano's heart, they had no idea they were trespassing in the outer warren of caverns around Moltenwing's lair. Their intrusion awoke the dragon, who responded with fury. The Cagewrights were not interested in a fight, however, and managed to secure the dragon's reluctant friendship with large amounts of gold, magic, and flattery. A bargain was struck between the two parties. The Cagewrights would send regular payments of treasure to Moltenwing during their stay in the caverns. In return, the dragon would not bother them. Later, when the *Tree of Shackled Souls* was completed, the Cagewrights also asked the dragon to guard a magic collar that could be used to shut the *Tree* down in the event of an emergency (see the *Tree of Shackled Souls*).

Creature: Moltenwing spends most of his time snoozing on a ledge submerged 7 feet below the lava level on the far eastern portion of the cavern (see the map for details). When the PCs enter the room, Moltenwing lounges there and can make a Listen check to detect their approach. Moltenwing has a -18 penalty on this check due to the distance between him and the entrance to his lair. If he fails to hear them, he can continue to make Listen checks each round, and eventually detects them with his blindsense when they approach within 60 feet.

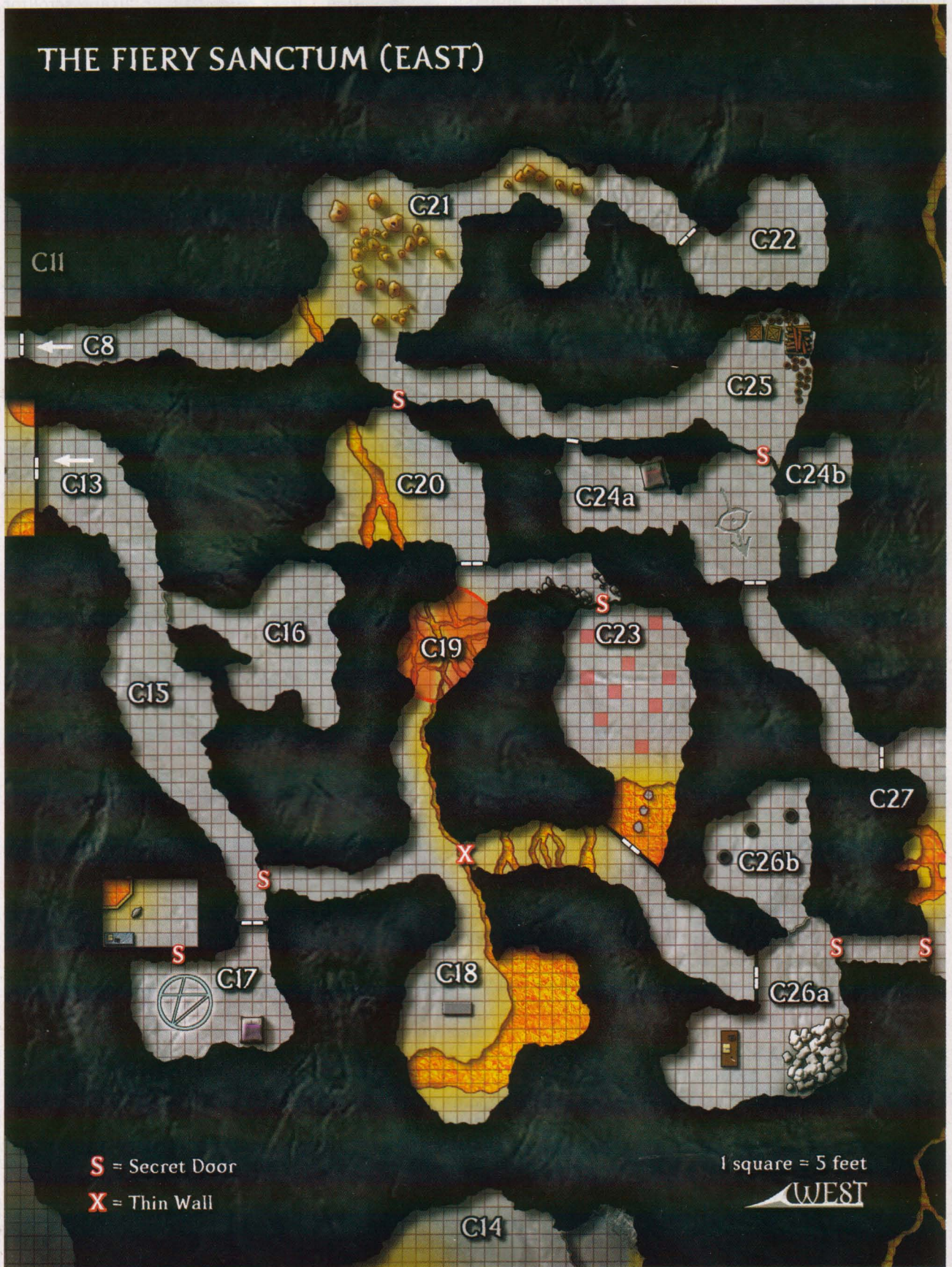
When the PCs arrive, he does nothing. Only the tip of his snout is exposed to the surface (DC 45 Spot check reveals), resting on the edge of the ledge in the southeastern corner of the chamber. He waits until they come within 60 feet or step onto the large ledge to the north of his position, then bursts from the lava, splattering everything within 30 feet with magma. Creatures in the area take 2d6 points of fire damage, and 2d6

more for the next 2 rounds from the hot lava; a successful Reflex save (DC 15) negates this damage.

Moltenwing knows by their entrance that the PCs are not of the Cagewrights. They always contact him with a *sending* before approaching. However, he is curious about even more humanoids daring to enter his lair, and is supremely confident in his ability to handle them should the need arise. After potentially showering them with lava, he steps up onto the large ledge and bellows at them to identify themselves.

Moltenwing has given his word to the Cagewrights, but more importantly, they have shown him proper respect and showered him with wealth. He doesn't want the cash flow to stop, so he acts to protect the Cagewrights from any perceived threats. While he talks, he tries to keep the PCs in a line respective to his position (to use his breath weapon), and warns them not to approach closer than halfway across the room. The dragon isn't a skilled

THE FIERY SANCTUM (EAST)



diplomat, and clever PCs might be able to wrangle some interesting bits of information from him before he decides to attack.

Moltenwing's initial attitude is hostile, but he's willing to talk to the PCs long enough for them to make Diplomacy or Intimidate checks to adjust his attitude. If the PCs can adjust his attitude to friendly (DC 35) he admits that he has indeed formed an alliance with the Cagewrights. He'll also, at this point, proudly announce that he guards something of incredible import for them, since they're obviously too weak and puny to guard their own treasure. Only if the PCs make him helpful (DC 50) does he volunteer the names and brief descriptions of the Thirteen if asked. If the PCs can successfully Bluff him into believing they're Cagewright allies and his attitude is helpful, he'll hand over the important thing he's guarding (the *dispersal collar*) if they ask for it. Otherwise, Moltenwing grows tired of the discussion in a few minutes and if the PCs haven't left his lair by then, he attacks. Of course, if he ever suspects that they're here to harm the Cagewrights, he attacks immediately.

➤ **Moltenwing (Garathrynakh), Male Mature Adult Pyroclastic Dragon:** CR 16; Huge dragon (extraplanar); HD 25d12+150; hp 312; Init +0; Spd 60 ft., fly 100 ft. (poor), climb 40 ft., burrow 45 ft.; AC 35, touch 11, flat-footed 35; Base Atk +25; Grp +44; Atk +36 melee (2d8+13, bite); Full Atk +36 melee (2d8+13, bite), +34 melee (2d6+8, 2 claws), +34 melee (1d8+8, 2 wings), +36 melee (2d6+18, tail slap), or +36 melee (2d8+18, crush); SA breath weapon, frightful presence (Will DC 25, 210 ft.), spell-like abilities; SQ blindsense 60 ft., damage resistance 15/magic, fast healing 3, immunity to fire, sleep, paralysis, and sonic, keen senses, spell resistance 26; AL NE; SV Fort +23, Ref +17, Will +20; Str 33, Dex 10, Con 23, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 16; *Draconomicon* 183.

Breath Weapon (Su): 50-ft. cone of superheated ash and sonic force, 14d6 half fire and half sonic, Reflex

DC 28 half; or 100-ft. disintegrating line, death, Fort DC 28 negates.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*produce flame*, *sound burst* (DC 15); 1/day—*pyrotechnics* (DC 15), *shatter* (DC 15), *shout* (DC 17), *wall of fire* (DC 17). Caster level 7th.

Skills: Appraise +31, Bluff +31, Concentration +34, Diplomacy +5, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (the planes) +31, Listen +31, Search +31, Sense Motive +31, Spot +31.

Feats: Cleave, Fast Healing*, Flyby Attack, Great Cleave, Hover, Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack, Wingover.

*This epic feat gives Moltenwing fast healing 3.

Possessions: *Amulet of mighty fists* +2, *cloak of resistance* +3 (worn rolled up as a collar), *ring of protection* +3, *ring of evasion*.

Tactics: When Moltenwing attacks, he tries to catch at least two PCs in the area of his disintegrating line breath weapon. He then attempts to bull rush a PC into the lava. If successful, he dives in after them, grapples them in the magma to keep them from escaping, and eats their charred remains without resurfacing. Otherwise, he tries to hover over the PCs to gain a +1 bonus on attacks and takes full attack actions, using his breath weapons when he can.

The dotted lines on the map represent passages Moltenwing has carved out beneath the islands so he can crawl through the magma without having to squeeze. When moving through the magma, Moltenwing uses his burrow speed.

Treasure: Behind the massive tapestry is Moltenwing's hoard chamber. He has amassed an impressive amount of treasure worth a total of roughly 34,000 gp: 2,411 gp, 339 pp, 32 assorted gems worth a total of 2,762 gp, a silver hand mirror (50 gp), an oaken hairbrush inlaid with jade (60 gp), a green dragon-skin rug (500 gp), a pair of platinum bracers (600 gp each), a silver candelabra (700 gp), a silk tapestry depicting the constellations, with diamonds set as stars (1,200 gp), a *potion of*

lesser restoration, an arcane scroll of *charm person*, *knock*, and *ray of enfeeblement*, a clay golembane scarab, a cloak of Charisma +4, a wand of bull's strength (24 charges), and a *dispersal collar*. This last item is the device the Cagewrights built as a safety measure against catastrophe should the *Tree of Shackled Souls* fail; see the *Tree of Shackled Souls* for more details.

C15. ROUGH PASSAGE

If the PCs don't take care to remain silent while traversing this passageway, the demodands lurking in area C16 likely hear them and react accordingly.

C16. DEMODAND TORTURE CHAMBER (EL 15)

The walls of this chamber look like melted wax, and the air smells acrid and foul. Various implements of torture also occupy the chamber, including a bed of wicked, barbed spikes, some sort of stretching device resembling a rack, and hooks on the wall that hold corpses in various states of decay. A large chest sits in an alcove to the south.

Creatures: Two farastus and a kelubar inhabit this chamber. They have had no task or purpose for months, and their boredom led them to gather a few torture devices and turn this chamber into a room more reminiscent of those they occupied on Carceri. Despite their orders not to risk discovery by meddling with surface dwellers, the kelubar managed to sneak to the surface a few times to capture beggars to torture.

➤ **Kelubar:** hp 97; *Fiend Folio* 44.

➤ **Farastus (2):** hp 71 each; *Fiend Folio* 42.

Treasure: The demodands have amassed a fair amount of treasure from their victims. The large chest contains 1,455 gp, a divine scroll of *flame strike* (10th level), a divine scroll of *mass cure light wounds*, a +1 dagger, a +2 breastplate, and a *periapt of health*.

C17. FREIJA DOORGAN'S CHAMBERS (EL 16)

A large canopied bed rests against the far wall, the covers pulled tight and neatly tucked. Workbenches and shelves line the other walls, covered with magical apparatus, books and papers. A circle has been carved into the floor. Arcane glyphs and runes have been scribed and intertwined around and through the circle, and it glows with a soft, silvery light.

Creature: Freija Doorgan is the item creation expert for the Cagewrights. She crafted most of her own gear and much of that carried by her fellows in the organization. She also aids Shebeleth in research matters. Her library isn't here as she hasn't been engaging in any research, but enough portions of it are that an arcanist interested in conjuring magic or item creation could find reference materials of interest.

Freija is a rail-thin woman who wears her hair pulled back tightly from her face. She wears austere robes that cover her from neck to wrist to ankle, always of the same blood red color. She is fastidiously clean, and her chambers are the only ones in the complex that look scrubbed. This cleanliness is actually a sign of her obsessive compulsive behavior. She prepares for every battle by casting the same preparatory spells in the same order. If her robe is mussed in a fight she becomes enraged and focuses on the character responsible with grim implacability until that person is dead, all the while screaming,

"You got me dirty! How dare you, you filthy, filthy maggot" and similar imprecations.



Freija Doorgan

Female Human Conjurer 15: CR 15; Medium humanoid (human); HD 15d4+48; hp 95; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.;

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +7; Grp +6; Atk +7 melee (1d4–1, masterwork dagger) or +10 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d4–1, masterwork dagger) or +10 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA spells; SQ empathic link, scry on familiar, share spells, weasel familiar named Hirt; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +11; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 22, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +21, Decipher Script +16, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (architecture & engineering) +14, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Spellcraft +26.

Feats: Augment Summoning, Craft Staff, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus (conjuration), Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Penetration, Toughness.

Wizard Spells Prepared (5/7/7/6/6/6/5/3/2; save DC 16 + spell level, conjuration 18 + spell level): 0—*acid splash*, *dancing lights*, *open/close*, *ray of frost*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st—*grease**, *magic missile* (3), *obscuring mist**, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*; 2nd—*glitterdust**, *Melf's acid arrow**, *scorching ray*, *spider climb*, *web** (2), *whispering wind*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *fireball* (2), *protection from energy*, *stinking cloud**; 4th—*charm monster*, *confusion*, *dimension door**, *Evard's black tentacles**, *ice storm*, *wall of fire*; 5th—*cloudkill** (2), *feeblemind*, *telekinesis*, *teleport*, *wall of stone**; 6th—*acid fog**, *chain lightning*, *disintegrate*, *greater dispel magic*, *summon monster VI**; 7th—*forcecage**, *prismatic spray*, *summon monster VII**; 8th—*horrid wilting*, *summon monster VIII**.

*Conjuration spells. Prohibited schools: divination, illusion.

Possessions: Masterwork dagger, masterwork light crossbow, 20 bolts, belt of health +2 (as *amulet of health* +2), headband of intellect +4, bracers of armor +4, cloak of resistance +2, periapt of proof against poison, ring of counterspells (*dispel magic*), Ring of Thirteen, wand of enervation (25 charges), wand of magic missile (9th

level, 50 charges), scroll of *fly*, scroll of *dimension door*, scroll of *summon monster VIII*, spellbooks (contains all spells prepared plus all other conjuration spells of levels 1–8 in the *Player's Handbook*), 5 gems (100 gp each), 100 pp.

Tactics: If warned of the PCs, Freija casts *displacement* and *shield*. She prefers to fight from behind a screen of summoned monsters. As soon as she hears the PCs outside, she casts *summon monster VIII* to summon a vrock, followed by her other *summon monster* spells in descending order. She uses her wand of enervation to maximum effect, targeting spellcasters first if she can.

Treasure: Equipment from the workbenches includes expensive reagents used to craft magic items worth 3,000 gp, and the gear from the area can be used to put together two full alchemist's labs if it's relocated.

Development: In a secret drawer of one of Freija's workbenches (Search DC 30, Open Lock DC 30) is a collection of notes written in Abyssal that details the creation of the *dispersal collar*, a device Freija was ordered to create should the need ever arise to shut down the *Tree of Shackled Souls* in the event of an emergency. The notes mention that the collar has been secured with "that dark wyrm of Gehenna."

C18. FIRESTREAM (EL 17)

A stream of lava running along the far wall of the tunnel empties into a pool of molten rock that fills the majority of the eastern section of this cavern. A rough stone table covered with scraps of charred, nearly raw meat, along with several stone stools stands in the room's center. A water barrel rests near the entrance.

The pool of lava is only 3 feet deep; creatures can wade through it as if it were dense rubble but suffer damage from the lava each round.

Creatures: Four Flamewarders guard this chamber. They can serve as reinforcements for areas C20

or C27 as necessary. Two of the Flamewarders are located on the north side of the pool, with the second pair on the southern shelf with their bows at the ready. If combat begins, they make sure to call out warnings to the nearby denizens.

➤ **Flamewarders (4):** hp 108; see area C8.

C19. FALLING FLOOR (EL 9)

A tall stone door stands in the northern wall of this cavern, with passages leading to the east and south. A single rill of lava flows out of the far wall through this chamber, then follows the east wall of the passage around a bend to the south.

Trap: The floor is actually an illusion that blends seamlessly into the bordering stone floor and walls. The illusion conceals a network of artificially deepened lava streams that criss-cross the true floor in an intricate pattern. The one visible stream is part of the illusion, although it mirrors one of the many streams on the actual floor. Characters who don't see through the illusion or fly over it step in one of the 1-foot-deep streams of lava, at which point they can make Will saves to recognize the illusion for what it is.

➤ **Illusory Floor and Lava Trap:** CR 9; magic device; proximity trigger (entire room); automatic reset; *illusory wall* on floor conceals network of 4-foot-deep, 3-foot-wide lava streams (8d6 fire damage from partial immersion, 4d6 fire damage on following round, 2d6 fire damage on third round); multiple targets (all creatures touching the floor in the room); DC 16 Will disbelief (if interacted with); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29.

C20. GATHERING CHAMBER (EL 16 OR EL 19)

This large chamber looks partly natural and partly sculpted. The ceiling is high here, reaching to roughly 30 feet. Two thick streams of lava course

slowly along the floor. One emerges from the north wall and the other from the south. The two lava rivers merge in the center of the room and continue to flow through a channel to the south. Sturdy stone benches line the walls where the lava doesn't flow, sculpted out of the volcanic rock. The Carcerian Eye has been carved into the south wall. The sculptor was either a master or had the aid of magic, for the disturbing image seems to follow movement in the room.

This central gathering chamber is used by the Thirteen when they must confer with their mercenaries, apprentices, or other servants. It is also a central rallying point used in the case of intruders.

Creatures: If the PCs have already encountered T'irok in area C10 and dealt with the Flamewarders there, two Flamewarders guard this chamber along with a glabrezu named Ja'akrand called here by Shebeleth (who uses his *gate* scroll to do so). The powerful demon was initially unhappy about being called from the Abyss until it realized it had been called to the Material Plane. It now intends to destroy as many souls from this plane as it can during its stay here, and its pincers snap and twitch in anticipation of mortals to rend.

If the PCs have not yet dealt with T'irok but raised the alarm, the fire giant has been notified to coordinate a defense in this room. The Cagewrights connected these passages in such a way as to channel intruders to this point, and T'irok has drilled his Flamewarders in the defense of this chamber. If this is the case, Shebeleth has not used his scroll of *gate* to call the glabrezu, relying on the resilient fire giant and his band to repel the intruders. T'irok brings the four Flamewarders from areas C10–C11 to help defend the chamber, leaving the other four in area C8 to defend that area of the Fiery Sanctum.

➤ **Flamewarders (2 or 4):** hp 108; see area C8.

➤ **Ja'akrand, Male Glabrezu:** hp 174; *Monster Manual* 43.

➤ **T'irok Coalfire:** hp 249; see area C10.

Tactics: The Flamewarders tumble to flank and attack single targets until they take him or her down. The glabrezu is a more cunning foe. It hangs back and uses its spell-like abilities to great effect. It activates *mirror image* in the first round, then uses *power word stun* on an arcane spellcaster or rogue it can see (it's trying to pick a target with lower hit points). Flamewarders make sure to attack stunned targets to maximize their sneak attacks. Ja'akrand then uses *reverse gravity* on heavily armored characters, sending them to the 30-foot ceiling for 3d6 points of falling damage. It engages in melee only when that is the best option left available.

T'irok uses tactics as described in area C10, bull rushing likely targets into the lava stream, where they take 4d6 points of fire damage (followed by 2d6 the following round and 1d6 the round thereafter).

C21. STALAGMITE GARDEN (EL 14)

A cluster of large stalagmites rises toward the roof of this fifteen-foot-high cavern. Each has been sculpted into humanoid shapes of exquisite detail. In addition, parts of the figures appear to be made of some clear material, allowing you to see that the stalagmites seem to be filled with lava. The molten-rock glows from within the partially translucent figures, casting strange shadowy shapes on the walls. The display of statuary would be quite beautiful if not for the gruesome scenes depicted. Each figure displays a visage of cruel savagery, snarls in fury, or grimaces in pain. Several display cruel deformities or vicious wounds, the light from the magma within causing them to glow with terrible fire.

This garden is kept by Grehlia Cairnis, apprentice Cagewright to Nulin Wiejeron. A sculptor by hobby,

she uses spells to augment her trained ability to create these tributes to Nerull.

Grehlia joined the Cagewrights a year ago. She was recruited by Nulin as a hireling first, then brought on board once she completed several missions for the Cagewrights. Some of the other members of the Thirteen objected when she was initiated, claiming that she was too advanced in skill and experience to be pliable enough to accept her role within the organization, but her enthusiasm and skill eventually allayed their doubts.

Grehlia is open about the worship of her deity, and keeps a small shrine in the chambers she shares with Nulin, spending at least an hour every day in prayer to her dark deity. She suspects that the other divine casting members of the Cagewrights are uncomfortable with her faith, but she doesn't know why. She asked Decrinhi once about his god, but he only sneered and stalked away. Shebeleth secretly believes that Grehlia's faith in Nerull may prove to be a liability when she eventually learns the truth of the organization's devotion to Adimarchus. He has Decrinhi keep an eye on her; Embryl does the same when she is around. Grehlia knows she is being watched and resents the suspicion. Thus, despite their similarities in combat style or faith, she finds herself mostly avoiding the company of the other clerics.

Creature: Grehlia is small and stout. She has mousy brown hair cropped just above her ears. She typically keeps it slicked back with some greasy substance to keep it out of her eyes. Her eyes are the same brown as her hair, and she tends to breathe through her mouth unless she's on a job. In such cases, her focus sharpens noticeably, and she moves as silently and gracefully as any to have practiced her trade. She speaks with a noticeable lisp, but any who have pointed her impediment out to her have usually ended up scream-

ing with agony as the dark power of Nerull coursed through their bodies.

➤ **Grehlia Cairnis, Female Human Rog2/Clr11 (Nerull)/Assassin 1:** CR 14; Medium humanoid (human); HD 3d6+3 plus 11d8+11; hp 84; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +9; Grp +12; Atk +15 melee (1d6+5 plus poison, +2 *spiked gauntlets*) or +12 ranged (1d6+3/x3, +1 *composite shortbow* [+2 Str]); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d6+5 plus poison, +2 *spiked gauntlets*) or +12/+7 ranged (1d6+3/x3, +1 *composite shortbow* [+2 Str]); SA death attack (DC 13), rebuke undead, sneak attack +2d6, spells; SQ evasion, poison use, trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +13; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +15, Craft (sculpting) +9, Disguise +4, Forgery +5, Hide +15, Jump +6, Listen +9, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +1, Spot +9, Tumble +12.

Feats: Ability Focus (death attack), Acrobatic, Empower Spell, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Focus (necromancy), Weapon Focus (spiked gauntlets).

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/6+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/2+1/1+1; save DC 14 + spell level, necromancy 16 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic* (2), *light* (2); 1st—*bane*, *command*, *cure light wounds* (2), *divine favor* (2), *protection from good**; 2nd—*aid*, *align weapon*, *cure moderate wounds* (2), *hold person*, *invisibility**; 3rd—*cure serious wounds* (2), *daylight*, *dispel magic*, *non-detection**, *prayer*; 4th—*air walk*, *cure critical wounds*, *divine power*, *poison*, *unholy blight**; 5th—*dispel good**, *flame strike*, *slay living*; 6th—*harm*, *mislead**.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, Hide are class skills).

Possessions: +3 chain shirt, +2 light steel shield, +2 spiked gauntlets, +1 composite shortbow (+2 Str bonus), belt of ogre power (as gauntlets of ogre power), periapt of wisdom +2, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +2, scroll of bear's endurance, scroll of harm, 4 doses giant wasp poison (DC 18; 1d6 Dex/1d6 Dex), 10 pp, 34 gp.

Tactics: Grehlia favors *inflict wounds* spells used in conjunction with attacks from her spiked gauntlets. If she knows the PCs are only a few rounds away from reaching this area, she casts the following spells in this order: *aid*, *protection from good*, *air walk*, *invisibility*, *prayer*, and *divine power*, followed finally by *harm* (she holds the charge for the first round of combat). She then hides within the maze of her statuary garden. She attempts to stay hidden until the PCs enter, then sneaks up on a lightly armored character to strike with her spiked gauntlets and *harm*. She then attempts to withdraw to the statue garden, using *flame strike* and *slay living* at range before being forced into melee.

Development: Sounds of battle here are probably heard by Thearynn in area C22, as well as Nulin in area C27 and Shebeleth in area C24a.

C22. THEARYNN LOUVEL'S CHAMBERS (EL 17)

This chamber is almost barren of furnishings. A narrow cot rests against the far wall next to a workbench containing a few tools and a simple wooden chest. A perch that looks like it might act as a rest for a large bird sits in one corner; a number of black, foul-looking droppings litter the floor beneath it. An iron brazier heats the cold space.

Creature: Thearynn Louvel is the most paranoid of the Cagewrights. He lives isolated from the other members of the Thirteen, nurturing his mistrust and his own form of madness. Thin and pale, with wide, darting brown eyes, he keeps his head shaved except for a small forelock in the middle of his brow that he toys with when nervous, making it greasy and flat. He favors summoning spells because he can avoid combat by making other creatures fight for him. One of the only Cagewrights not to take a human apprentice, he thought that selecting an outsider would ensure that he wouldn't be betrayed. As all three of his previ-

ous apprentices (humans all) tried to assassinate him and assume his position as one of the Thirteen, his paranoia is understandable. He wears frayed brown robes to avoid showing signs of obvious wealth, and only ventures from his chambers on the summons of Dyr'ryd or to visit Moltenwing, with whom he is completely fascinated.

Xarthyx the quasit serves Thearynn as an apprentice. Bored with his life in the Abyss, the quasit was intrigued when he was called up by Thearynn and offered an apprenticeship. Xarthyx has made incredibly rapid leaps in his spellcasting, but his raw power and inexperience leads him to make mistakes, a trait Thearynn hasn't had the inclination to correct. The quasit is a dark green color, with a bloated, rotund belly and a tendency to twitch his tail and salivate tremendously when excited.

➤ Thearynn Louvel, Male Human

Conjurer 15: CR 15; Medium humanoid (human); HD 15d4+45; hp 68; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +7; Grp +7; Atk +8 melee (1d6, masterwork quarterstaff) or +8 ranged touch (spell); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d6, masterwork quarterstaff) or +8 ranged touch (spell); SA spells; SQ empathic link, share spells, weasel familiar; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 20, Wis 8, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +21, Decipher Script +14, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +18, Knowledge (history) +18, Knowledge (the planes) +22, Listen +1, Spellcraft +25, Spot +1.

Feats: Alertness (as long as familiar is in arm's reach), Augment Summoning, Craft Rod, Craft Wand, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe

Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (conjunction), Spell Focus (illusion).

Wizard Spells Prepared (5/7/6/6/6/4/3/2; save DC 15 + spell level, 16 + spell level for conjuration or illusion spells): 0—*acid splash** (2), *detect magic*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*; 1st—*charm person*, *expeditious retreat*, *grease**, *mage armor**, *shield* (2), *ventriloquism*; 2nd—*darkvision*, *Melf's acid arrow** (2), *mirror image*, *see invisibility*, *Tasha's hideous laughter*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *fly*, *protection from energy*, *slow*, *stinking cloud**; 4th—*charm monster*, *dimension door**, *Evard's black tentacles** (2), *greater invisibility*, *phantasmal killer*; 5th—*baleful polymorph*, *cloudkill**, *dominate monster*, *feeblemind*, *telekinesis*, *wall of stone**; 6th—*acid fog*, *greater dispel magic*, *summon monster VI*, *true seeing*; 7th—*phase door**, *reverse gravity*, *silent summon monster VI*; 8th—*incendiary cloud*, *summon monster VIII*.

*Conjunction spells, which are this character's specialty. Prohibited schools: evocation and necromancy.

Possessions: Masterwork quarterstaff, Amulet of health +2, headband of intellect +2, bead of force, boots of levitation, iridescent spindle ioun stone, ring of protection +2, Ring of Thirteen, greater extend metamagic rod, scroll of summon monster V, scroll of summon monster VII, wand of web (25 charges), wand of summon swarm (10 charges), ointment for true seeing (250 gp), spellbooks (contain all prepared spells plus all other conjuration spells from the *Player's Handbook* of levels 1–9).

➤ **Xarthyx, Quasit Sorcerer 11:** CR 12; Tiny outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil); HD 3d8+3 plus 11d4+11; hp 57; Init +5; Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 20, touch 17, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +8; Grp –1; Atk +15 melee (1d3–1 plus poison, claw) or +15 ranged touch (by spell); Full Atk +15 melee (1d3–1 plus poison, 2 claws) and +10 melee (1d4–1, bite) or +15 ranged touch (by spell); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA poison (DC 14, 1d4 Dex/2d4 Dex), spells, spell-like abilities; SQ alternate form, bat familiar, damage reduction

5/cold iron or good, darkvision 60 ft., empathic link, fast healing 2, immunity to poison, resistance to fire 10, share spells; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +11, Will +10; Str 8, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 19.

Skills: Bluff +21, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +4 (+6 to act in character), Hide +19, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Spellcraft +19 (+21 to decipher spells on scrolls), Spot +6, Use Magic Device +14 (+16 involving scrolls).

Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device), Spell Focus (evocation), Weapon Finesse.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only); 1/day—*cause fear* (DC 15, 30-foot radius). Caster level 6th.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/7/7/4; save DC 14 + spell level, 15 + spell level for evocation spells): 0—*acid splash*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *flare*, *open close*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st—*burning hands*, *detect secret doors*, *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *shield*; 2nd—*bear's endurance*, *scorching ray*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *touch of idiocy*, *web*; 3rd—*displacement*, *fireball*, *ray of exhaustion*, *stinking cloud*; 4th—*confusion*, *enervation*, *ice storm*; 5th—*cone of cold*, *teleport*.

Possessions: Cloak of charisma +2, ring of chameleon power, 2 scrolls of arcane lock, 2 divine scrolls of cure moderate wounds, scroll of phase door, wand of searing light (10 charges, 6th level), wand of unholy blight (10 charges, 8th level), carved ruby amulet (symbol of Adimarchus), 23 pp, 13 gp.

Tactics: Thearynn has developed a plan to deal with those out to get him, and he has drilled with Xarthyx extensively in this deadly plan. When Thearynn becomes aware of intruders, he casts *true seeing* and uses his *boots of levitation* to ascend into a hole sculpted into the ceiling. The hole is actually not visible to those on the ground, due to a permanent *illusory wall* spell concealing the entrance.



Not even the rest of the Thirteen are aware of this hidey hole. Thearynn can see through the illusion due to his *true seeing* spell, and he has a small ledge in the hole on which he can lie down and observe the entire room. He casts his defensive spells when he hears battle in area C21. He also casts *ventriloquism* on himself.

Xarthyx's job, meanwhile, is to turn invisible and wait. When the PCs enter the room, Thearynn casts *open/close* to close the door behind them. The invisible quasit uses a scroll of *arcane lock* to seal it (the PCs automatically hear the quasit read the scroll, but he doesn't turn visible). The imp then flies to a corner of the room near the ceiling and begins launching a barrage of deadly spells—mostly evocations—at the intruders.

Thearynn meanwhile casts *acid fog*, filling the room with the deadly mist, followed by *Evard's black tentacles* to try to keep them grounded. If the PCs look as though they're capable of handling the fog, he casts his *summon monster* spells, using his *greater extend metamagic rod* to keep the summoned creatures around longer. By virtue of his *ventriloquism* spell, he's able to throw his voice even when casting spells, making it seem as though the caster is everywhere at once. If Thearynn takes more than half his hit points in damage, he casts *phase door* to escape to area C25. If this happens, the PCs encounter Theraynn again in the fight with Shebeleth, where he makes his last stand.

Treasure: Thearynn keeps his spellbooks in his secret niche in the ceiling, along with some rambling notes, mostly written in Abyssal, that are the obvious product of a dysfunctional mind. Among the bits and pieces of trivia, though, is a passage that reads, "I know the Fish is out for me. I know the Fish wants my power. I know the Fish is a traitor. A liar, backstabber—I know. The sneaky Fish. Set the traps on the south wall. I know he's tunneling—tunneling to me. Sneaky Fish. Rotten Fish."

C23. ARDETH WEBB'S CHAMBER (EL 18)

A pool of glowing lava nearly 30 feet across fills a sunken region to the south of this large cavern. The ceiling is 40 feet high, and the room appears to be some sort of training facility. Paper screens line most of the walls, painted in various impressionistic patterns and designs, and reed mats cover the floor. Weapon racks hold a variety of exotic weapons. A pair of practice dummies hangs from the high ceiling along the east wall, and a low, wooden cot sits against the west. To the south stands a large armoire.

This chamber is the home of Ardeth Webb, one of the Thirteen, but another member of the group is found here as well: Nulin "Fish" Wiejeron, the spymaster of the Thirteen. He spends a great deal of time here training with Ardeth, and he has long planned to make his stand in this room given its unusual features.

This chamber has been enhanced with several permanent *invisibility* spells, each of which fills a five-foot-square as indicated on the map. Anyone who stands on them and says aloud, "Blessings of Adimarchus" in any language as a free action becomes invisible, as the *invisibility* spell (caster level 10th).

Creatures: Ardeth is an enigma, even to her comrades. All they know is that she has been a part of the Thirteen longer than any other member except Dyr'ryd. She was born on the Material Plane over 150 years ago, the spawn of a servant of a dark monastery that trafficked with the spawn of the Nine Hells of Baator. Her mother died in childbirth and Ardeth was brought up by the monks. At the age of 20 she left the monastery, and by age 40 she had been recruited by Dyr'ryd. Money and material gain have never driven Ardeth—only power motivates her. It was during her long time among the Cagewrights that she became a tattooed monk (this prestige class is detailed in full on pages 82–84 of *Complete Warrior*,

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but all relevant details are presented in her stat block below).

Ardeth keeps her own counsel most of the time. She seems content to pursue the machinations devised by Embryl and Shebeleth, secure in the knowledge that they bring the Cagewrights' goals ever closer to fruition. She knows that her silence unnerves the others, and that brings her a certain amount of perverse joy.

Ardeth stands about 5 and a half feet tall, and weighs about 130 pounds. Fit and strong, she spends most of her days conversing (and planning) with Dyr'ryd or honing her skills with Nulin. She keeps her head shaved to display a twisted tattoo of a scorpion across her scalp. Her eyes are dark and her face ageless, adding to the mystique that surrounds her. She typically wears simple white robes.

Ardeth's most striking features are her tattoos. The most prominent is the scorpion tattoo on her shaved head. The body of the creature begins on her forehead, its pincers sweeping down on either side of her eyes. Its hindquarters end just above her neck, its tail coiling around her neck to end just above the joining of her collarbones. She bears a crane tattoo on her back, a tiger on her right arm, a wasp on her left, and a phoenix on her chest. The most disturbing aspect of her tattoos is that they are twisted and malformed, possibly from the effects of her fiendish blood. Two small horns jut from Ardeth's brow, and the faint smell of brimstone follows her wherever she goes.

Nulin "Fish" Wiejeron earned his nickname years ago when he worked as a waterfront tavern bouncer in a distant city. He became something of a local legend due to his ruthlessness and cold-blooded willingness to engage in violence. If someone insulted him or threatened him with violence, they turned up dead within a day, their bodies picked clean. He learned his skills as an assassin when he felt the money he earned

in the tavern couldn't keep him comfortable—and when the job became boring as fewer and fewer patrons were willing to risk his ire by misbehaving. Shebeleth and the other Cagewrights recognized his talents, chief among them his discretion. Eventually, he proved himself enough times that he was offered a position among the Thirteen. Never one to pass up an opportunity for more power and influence, Nulin readily accepted.

Nondescript in the extreme, Nulin is quiet, and seems content to mostly go along with the plans the other Cagewrights cook up. He wears dark clothing as a rule, but owns a massive wardrobe, with clothing suitable for the throne room as well as beggar's rags. A master of disguise, the balding, ordinary-looking assassin's many outfits find frequent use. He has no chambers of his own here, spending most of his time on the surface until recently. He now spends his time here with Ardeth, training, or with his apprentice in area C21.

➤ **Ardeth Webb, Female Tiefling Monk 6/Tattooed Monk 10:** CR 17; Medium outsider (native); HD 16d8+32; hp 119; Init +5; Spd 80 ft.; AC 28, touch 24, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +11; Grp +21; Atk +20 melee (2d8+8, unarmed strike); Full Atk +19/+19/+14/+9 melee (2d8+8, unarmed strike); SA *darkness* 1/day (CL 16th), ki strike (magic); SQ *darkvision* 60 ft., evasion, immunity to disease, immunity to poison, immunity to aging, purity of body, slow fall 30 ft., still mind, spell resistance 25, tattoos (crane, phoenix, scorpion, tiger, wasp); AL LE; SV Fort +14, Ref +17, Will +16; Str 22, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 8.

Tattoos (Su or Sp): Ardeth's tattoos are infused with magical energy. Unless the effect of a tattoo is continu-

ous, activating one is a move action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. Tattoos that activate as a spell-like ability function at caster level 10.

Crane: Immune to nonmagical disease, poison, and aging penalties.

Phoenix: Gains constant SR 25.

Scorpion: Force an opponent attacking her to use his lowest ability score modifier instead of his Strength or Dexterity modifier when making his attack roll. Ardeth must activate this tattoo on her opponent's turn, before that success or failure of the attack is determined. She must be aware of the attack and not flat-footed to use this ability; 5/day.

Tiger: While fighting unarmed, gain +1 bonus on attack rolls and deal +1d6 damage per hit; 10 rounds; 5/day.

Wasp: Haste on self; 10 rounds, 5/day.

Skills: Balance +18, Escape Artist +17, Hide +26, Jump +39, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +22, Move Silently +24, Spot +23, Tumble +26, Use Rope +7 (+9 with bindings).

Feats: Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Possessions: Belt of giant strength +4, boots of health +2 (as amulet of health +2), gloves of dexterity +4, headband of wisdom +2 (as *periapt of wisdom* +2), amulet of mighty fists +2, bracers of armor +4, cloak of arachnida, ring of minor fire resistance, Ring of Thirteen, 3 potions of cure serious wounds.

➤ **Nulin "Fish" Wiejeron, Male Human Rog5/Ftr2/Asn8:** CR 15; Medium humanoid (human); HD 13d6+12 plus 2d10+2; hp 82; Init +4; Spd 40 ft.; AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +11; Grp +13; Atk +19 melee (1d6+5/15–20, +3 rapier) or +15 ranged (1d6+2/×3, composite shortbow [+2 Str]); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d6+5/15–20, +3 rapier) or +15/+10/+5 ranged (1d6+2/×3, composite shortbow [+2 Str]); SA death attack (DC 20), poison use, sneak attack +7d6, spells; SQ evasion, hide in plain sight, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +1, trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +9 (+13 against poison), Ref +14,



Will +5; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +6, Bluff +13, Climb +5, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +19 (+21 acting), Escape Artist +11, Gather Information +13, Hide +26, Intimidate +11, Jump +11, Listen +12, Move Silently +26, Search +11, Spot +12, Tumble +18.

Feats: Dodge, Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (rapier), Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier).

Assassin Spells Known (4/4/3/1; save DC 12 + spell level): 1st—*detect poison, feather fall, jump, true strike*;



2nd—*alter self, invisibility, spider climb, undetectable alignment*; 3rd—*deep slumber, deeper darkness, magic*

circle against good, misdirection; 4th—*dimension door, greater invisibility, locate creature*.

Possessions: +3 shadow silent chain shirt, +1 mithral buckler, +3 rapier, composite shortbow (+2 Str bonus), 30 arrows, amulet of health +2, gloves of Dexterity +2, boots of striding and springing, goggles of night, hat of disguise, Ring of Thirteen, 2 potions of cure serious wounds, potion of haste, wand of displacement (10 charges), 2 gems (500 gp each), 3 gems (100 gp each).

Tactics: Fish and Ardeth use the invisibility squares in this room to great effect. The two pursue similar tactics, disappearing one round, then moving and attacking in the next. If a PC seems able to *see invisibility*, they focus their attacks on that character almost exclusively. When they activate a square, they whisper the command word in Abyssal. A successful Listen check (DC 20, modified for distance) allows a character to hear this command word.

Treasure: The weapon racks contain two each of every monk weapon (see page 40 of the *Player's Handbook*), each is masterwork qual-

ity. In addition, the following magic monk weapons are kept here: a +3 *adamantine dragon bane nunchaku* and a +2 *ghost touch kama*. A secret compartment beneath Ardeth's cot (Search DC 30 to find) contains an arcane scroll of *dimension door* and *dimensional anchor*, a *staff of frost* (23 charges), and a *druid's vestment*. Finally, the armoire contains Fish's expansive wardrobe, which is worth a total of 2,400 gp.

Development: If Ardeth is defeated before Fish, the PCs are faced with an interesting conundrum. The assassin, who is pragmatic before all things, remains invisible but breaks off combat to address the PCs. He offers information in exchange for his life. After extracting a promise of safety from the most lawful-looking PC, Fish (still invisible) quickly answers any questions the PCs may have. He can tell them the names and basic powers of all the other Cagewrights, the purpose of the ritual of planar binding, and of the purpose of the *Tree of Shackled Souls*. He only reveals that the *dispersal collar* can safely deactivate the tree if his initial attitude of hostile can be made helpful with a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 50). Finally, if asked who it is the Cagewrights serve, he takes a deep breath and admits they serve a powerful demon prince imprisoned on Carceri, and that this demon prince is named Adimarchus.

C24. SHEBELETH REGIDIN'S CHAMBERS (EL 19 OR 20)

The western half of this chamber is decorated lavishly as a bedchamber. Fine rugs cover the stone floors, and tapestries the walls. An ornate desk sits against one wall, emblazoned across the front with the Carcerian Eye. A wardrobe built of ebony sits near a large, four-poster bed. The room narrows to the east, then opens into a second chamber. This one is much more spartan. The floor is bare, but has been carved

once more with the symbol of the Cagewrights. An altar and font stand near the far wall, both covered in a strange glowing script.

The strange altar is dedicated to Adimarchus, and the spidery runes on it sing his praises in Abyssal. The font nearby contains 20 doses of unholy water. As with the secret shrine of Adimarchus in area C12, characters who have the Sign of the Smoking Eye template feel a strange bond to the altar if they approach within ten feet of it. In this area, such a character gains a +4 insight bonus on attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks as he is able to draw upon the power of Occipitus via this altar.

The area to the east (area C24b) is Shebeleth's personal library. The tomes in this chamber cover a wide range of subjects, from the outer planes to local history.

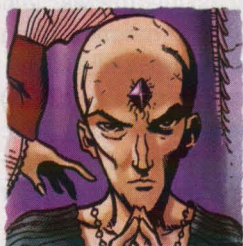
Creatures: Of the Thirteen, few wield as much power as Shebeleth. Only Dyr'ryd and Embryl Aloustinai are more powerful. The other members secretly fear this intimidating priest. Shebeleth was the primary builder of the *Tree of Shackled Souls*. A keeper of lost mysteries and arcane knowledge, he owns a tremendous collection of books worth quite a bit of money (see *Treasure*, below). Shebeleth is also a fair musician, a trait his apprentice has attempted to emulate. Strains of his eerie compositions on the violin fill the Cagewrights' complex at all hours, sending chills down everyone's spines.

Shebeleth is tall and gaunt. He rarely eats, taking his meals in his chambers while he works. He wears nondescript dark robes that cover him from his neck to his feet, with long, voluminous sleeves that conceal even his hands. In battle, however, he throws his sleeves back to reveal spindly arms covered in gruesome scars. The rest of the Thirteen speculate that similar scars actually cover his entire body, signifying his commitment to whatever force grants him his clerical powers. Shebeleth keeps his head shaved and

sports no facial hair. His only adornments are a dark, diamond-shaped crystal embedded in the middle of his forehead and his holy symbol, a dark iron amulet in the shape of the Carcerian Eye that hangs from a thick iron chain.

Shebeleth is always attended by a shator demodand minion named Keeriv. The demodand secretly believes Shebeleth should be serving it, as is only proper, but it has greater respect and fear for Dyr'ryd.

➤ **Shebeleth Regidin, Male Human**
Clr10/Loremaster 7: CR 17; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d8+40



plus 7d4+28; hp 120; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25, touch 12, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +10; Grp +9; Atk +10 melee

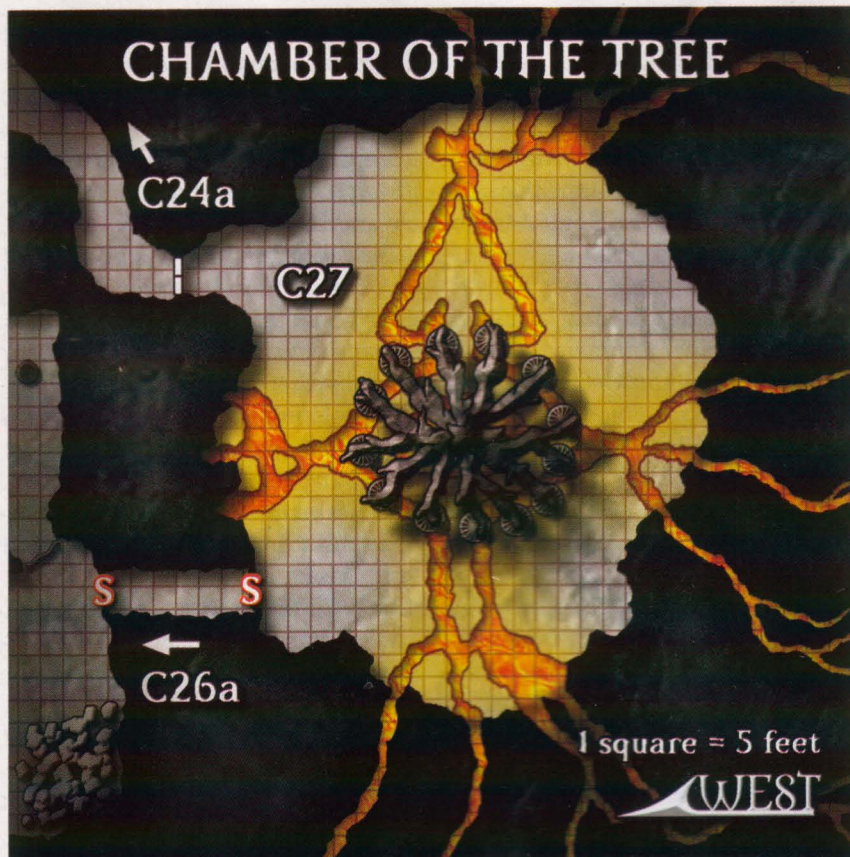
(1d8, +1 morningstar) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8, +1 morningstar) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA rebuke undead, spells; SQ dodge trick, greater lore, lore +9, newfound arcana, secrets of inner strength, secret knowledge of avoidance; AL NE; SV Fort +15, Ref +12, Will +22; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 22, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +14, Concentration +24, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +12 (+14 acting), Gather Information +11, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +16, Perform (string instruments) +11, Spellcraft +15.

Feats: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge—the planes), Widen Spell.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Demodand, Infernal.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/7+1/7+1/6+1/6+1/5+1/5+1/3+1/2+1/1+1; save DC 16 + spell level): 0—cure minor wounds, detect magic (2), light, read



magic, resistance; 1st—bane, cure light wounds (2), detect good, doom (2), protection from good*, shield of faith; 2nd—align weapon, cure moderate wounds (2), death knell, invisibility*, resist energy, status, undetectable alignment; 3rd—bestow curse, cure serious wounds, dispel magic, magic circle against good, nondetection*, searing light (2); 4th—confusion*, cure critical wounds (2), death ward, greater magic weapon, sending (2); 5th—break enchantment, dispel good*, flame strike (2), empowered searing light, spell resistance; 6th—blade barrier (2), greater dispel magic, harm (2), mislead*; 7th—blasphemy*, destruction (2), empowered flame strike; 8th—empowered blade barrier, widened flame strike, polymorph any object*; 9th—summon monster IX, time stop*.

*Domain spell. Domains: Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, Hide are class skills).

Possessions: +3 mithral breastplate, +1 small wooden shield, +1 morningstar, masterwork light crossbow, 20 bolts, belt of health +4 (as amulet of health +2), gloves of dexterity +2, periapt of wisdom +4, cloak of resis-

tance +2, dusty rose prism ioun stone, ring of minor fire resistance, Ring of Thirteen, metamagic rod of empower, oil of magic vestment (+4), potion of fly, scroll of mass cure moderate wounds, scroll of dimensional anchor, scroll of widened flame strike, scroll of invisibility purge, scroll of plane shift, holy symbol, three gems (100 pp each).

➤ **Keeriv, Shator:** hp 127; Fiend Folio 45.

Tactics: Shebeleth has been aware of the PCs for some time now, but remained unconcerned. This fearlessness is his own brand of madness—unless magically compelled, he feels no emotions whatsoever. When the PCs arrive, he turns to them and attempts to stall them with conversation as long as possible to give the *Tree of Shackled Souls* time to complete its job. If combat does erupt, he reacts by casting time stop, then spell resistance, magic circle against good, and protection from good on himself if there's time, followed by summon monster IX to summon a hezrou.

Keeriv casts *mage armor*, *bull's strength*, *blink*, and *true strike* if he realizes the PCs are near. While Shebeleth talks, he lurks in the shadows of the chapel, trying to appear threatening until combat erupts.

Development: Combat here is likely heard in area C27 by Dyr'ryd (Listen DC 35).

Treasure: The shelves in area C24b hold numerous tomes that address matters arcane and planar. Also on the shelves are an arcane scroll of *analyze dweomer*, an arcane scroll of *phase door*, and an arcane scroll of *fire shield*. Construction plans for the *Tree of Shackled Souls* can be found here as well. Written in Abyssal, these plans outline in detail the Cagewrights' goals. They do not mention the *dispersal collar* (those plans are found in area C17), but they do mention a failsafe back-up plan for shutting down the tree should something go awry, and that Freija has been tasked with implementing this plan.

C25. FOOD AND SUPPLIES

This large cavern is used to store food, water, and other supplies. Several barrels of wine, ale, and fresh water rest against the north wall, and three heavily laden shelves hold several hundred pounds of food.

Treasure: A successful DC 25 Search check reveals a small cask behind a sack of dried beef on one of the shelves that holds six potion vials, each labeled clearly in Abyssal as a potion of *cure moderate wounds*.

C26. DYR'RYD'S CHAMBER (EL 15)

The walls of this large chamber are sickly dark red. In the corner of the chamber lays a pile of cushions nearly 30 feet across, stacked nearly 6 feet high. The cushions, like the floor, are covered in a pale, sickly slime. A desk behind a bend in the chamber is sized for someone overly large—at least 10 feet tall.

This is Dyr'ryd's personal chamber. The leader of the Thirteen and pre-eminent Cagewright is currently spending his time in area C27 with the *Tree of Shackled Souls*.

Creatures: Three fellow demodands await Dyr'ryd's pleasure here. They won't leave this room to investigate the sounds of battle elsewhere, instead remaining here to guard Dyr'ryd's treasury and the secret door.

➤ **Kelubar:** hp 97; *Fiend Folio* 44.

➤ **Farastu (2):** hp 71 each; *Fiend Folio* 42.

Treasure: Area C26b serves Dyr'ryd as a treasury. Three urns hold a total of 2,333 gp and 639 pp. Also among the loose treasure are two *potions of cure moderate wounds* and a *potion of bull's strength*. There are signs that more treasure was at one point stored here, but the majority of it was used to finance the construction of the *Tree of Shackled Souls*.

C27. TREE OF SHACKLED SOULS (EL 20)

This massive elliptical chamber glows with a hellish light from lava bubbling through shaped channels that form a familiar pattern in the floor. These rivers of lava form the sign of the Carcerian Eye, and from the eye's "pupil" grows a horrendous sight.

A large tree of metal erupts from the lava there. Thirteen branches sprout from a central trunk several feet across, twisting menacingly around the chamber to increase the diameter of the area occupied by the tree to nearly 60 feet. The branches are covered in wicked barbs, but each branch tapers to end in a hook. From each hook hangs a cage, and within each cage you see the slumped form of a humanoid figure. These must be the Shackleborn—individuals cursed by fate to be the keys to unlocking the gate to Carceri.

The terrible metal tree is the *Tree of Shackled Souls*. The PCs may recognize some of the Shackleborn in the thirteen soulcages, including Terrem and Zenith Splintershield. Full de-

tails on this artifact and how the PCs can deactivate it are detailed below.

Creature: Dyr'ryd waits here for the PCs, the last line of defense for the *Tree of Shackled Souls*. The massive demodand is actually two entities inhabiting the same, monstrous body. He looks like a normal shator with the exception of a second, loathsome face and a small, stunted arm and leg that protrudes from the side of his head. This second face resembles Dyr'ryd's, but is not identical. The demodand's main face is actually the personality known as Dyr, while the second, cancerous face goes by the name Ryd. When Dyr'ryd speaks, both voices rasp just out of sync. Utterly insane, Dyr'ryd often converses with itself, especially when it's excited. One face compliments the other on a particularly devastating attack, while if a stratagem fails, one chastises the other, screeching imprecations for a few seconds while the vestigial leg twitches and the arm clenches its tiny fist. Of the two faces, Ryd is far more foul tempered, and more likely to attempt Intimidate checks. Dyr is smoother and more prone to using Bluff or Diplomacy than resorting to threats.

➤ **Dyr'ryd, Advanced Shator Demodand:** CR 19; Large outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 19d8+76; hp 180; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 70 ft. (poor); AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +19; Grp +29; Atk +28 melee (3d6+13/x3, *Mindbite*) or +20 ranged touch (paralysis, slime spit); Full Atk +28/+23/+18/+13 melee (3d6+13/x3, *Mindbite*) and +23 melee (3d6+5 plus paralysis, bite) or +20 ranged (paralysis, slime spit); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (20 ft. with *Mindbite*); SA paralyzing slime, spell-like abilities, spells, *summon demodand*; SQ darkvision 120 ft., damage reduction 15/good, immune to acid, cold, fire, mind-affecting effects, and poison, scent, *see invisibility*, spell resistance 30, two-faced; AL NE; SV Fort +15, Ref +13, Will +14; Str 23, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 22.

MINDBITE

This intelligent +4 *defending guisarme* is a potent weapon. Not actually evil, it has served Dyr'ryd for many years, and is mostly indifferent to his cruelty. Unlike most magic weapons, this *guisarme* resizes to best fit its wielder. *Mindbite* has Intelligence 14, Wisdom 14, Charisma 10, an Ego of 14 and is Neutrally aligned. It can speak Common, Demodand, and Ignan, and has darkvision 60 ft. and can hear. *Mindbite* can *detect magic* at will and *daze monster* three times a day; it can also use *feeblemind* and *confusion* once a day each. The *guisarme* has a dry voice and a wit to match. It enjoys a good battle, although it grows impatient with characters that don't share at least one aspect of neutrality in their alignment.

Strong evocation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor; Price 90,000 gp.

Paralyzing Slime (Ex): Lasts for 3d6 rounds; Fortitude save (DC 23) negates. His maximum range when spitting slime is 30 feet.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear* (DC 20), *invisibility*, *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*cloudkill* (DC 21), *fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *stinking cloud* (DC 19); 2/day—*dispel magic*; 1/day—*mass charm monster* (DC 24). Caster level 15th.

Spells: Dyr'ryd casts arcane spells as an 8th-level sorcerer.

Summon Demodand (Sp): 1/day, 1d2 shators (30% chance of success) or either 1d4 kelubars or 1d6 farastus (70% chance of success).

Two-Faced (Ex): Once per round, the demodand's second face can take an additional standard action independent of the actions taken by the rest of the body. The action is limited to the following tasks: casting a spell, activating a spell-like ability, activating a magic item, or attempting a skill or ability check requiring



a mental ability score (Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma).

Skills: Bluff +28, Concentration +26, Diplomacy +30, Disguise +17 (+19 to act in character), Gather Information +8, Hide +9, Intimidate +30, Knowledge (arcana) +25, Knowledge (local) +14, Knowledge (the planes) +25, Listen +16, Move Silently +13, Search +25, Sense Motive +25, Spot +16.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Trip, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Spells Known (6/8/8/6/4; save DC 16 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *read magic*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *ray of frost*; 1st—*enlarge*, *grease*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *true strike*; 2nd—*bull's strength*, *invisibility*, *see invisibility*; 3rd—*displacement*, *haste*; 4th—*stone shape*.

Possessions: *Mindbite* (intelligent +4 *defending guisarme*), *gauntlet of extend spell* (functions as *metamagic rod of extend spell*, but worn as a *gauntlet*), *medallion of thoughts*, *ring of evasion*, *Ring of Thirteen*.

Tactics: If warned, Dyr'ryd uses *clairaudience/clairvoyance* to check through the complex and determine in which direction the PCs are heading. When the PCs approach this chamber, he casts *invisibility* on himself, then the following spells in order: *mage armor*, *bull's strength*, *displacement*, and *true strike*. When the PCs enter, he casts *haste*. He extends *displacement* and *haste* with his

gauntlet, reserving the last use of the item in case his spells are dispelled.

When the PCs enter, Dyr'ryd tries to stall them much as Shebeleth does in area C24. Revealing his massive, horrid form to the PCs, he asks why they've come. He grills them with difficult questions and tries to convince them that servitude to the demodands is not only inevitable, but good for the people of the Material Plane. He also tells the PCs that destroying the tree will set off a chain reaction that will destroy the mountain (although this is true, the PCs are unlikely to believe him given the circumstances). Dyr'ryd answers many of the PCs' remaining questions about the Cagewrights or the Thirteen—anything to stall them as long as possible—but refuses to disclose how the tree functions or what could shut it off.

In combat, Dyr keeps the PCs at bay with its spells and spell-like abilities, while Ryd shouts at its other face to hack the characters to bits with *Mindbite*. Once engaged in melee, the demodand uses its reach with its weapon to keep the PCs at a distance. If it can, Dyr'ryd bull rushes spellcasters or ranged attackers into one of the lava channels.

THE TREE OF SHACKLED SOULS

This artifact is the culmination of all the Cagewrights' scheming. Built to bear thirteen Soulcages—and the

Shackleborn imprisoned within them—the *Tree of Shackled Souls* resembles a massive, intricately spiked, adamantine thorn bush.

Attached to each branch is a soulcage. They sway gently as the seismic energy fueling the artifact courses through the device, as well as through the very air of the chamber. At the time of this adventure, each soulcage holds one of the Shackleborn. Their life energies combine with the raw elemental power of the volcano to form the matrix necessary to establish the massive portal to Carceri. The tree acts as a conduit and focus for that power. The Shackleborn are vital to the process, but their use is now passed; all that remains in the cages are their lifeless bodies; only a *wish* or *miracle* can restore them to life. Destroying the soulcages or removing their bodies does not stop the portal from forming.

The *Tree of Shackled Souls* is constructed from adamantine with a mithral core. It has hardness 20 and 1,500 hit points. It also radiates a massive *dimension lock* effect to a radius of a quarter-mile (see page 221 of the *Player's Handbook*). Any divination spells that attempt to reveal information directly about the tree automatically fail. Finally, the Cagewrights enhanced the tree to generate a stabilizing effect on the earth and stone surrounding it to a quarter-mile. This aura prevents tremors or other seismic activity from affecting this or any of the chambers within the Fiery Sanctum.

The tree's primary function is to act as a conduit for establishing a permanent gate to the plane of Carceri. Doing so requires a complex ritual to be performed over the course of several hours; as this adventure begins, the Cagewrights have just finished this ritual. At this point the tree functions on its own, slowly building up its power over the course of several more hours before it finally tears open the gate to Carceri. Dyr'ryd remains in the chamber to observe the process and make sure nothing goes

wrong, but even if he and the rest of the Cagewrights are slain, the portal is still created if the PCs do nothing to stop it. The exact amount of time required for the tree to finish this process is variable; you should time this event for maximum excitement in your campaign.

The characters can prevent the tree from completing the construction of the Carcerian gate in one of two ways, by destroying it or by using the dispersal collar found in area C14.

Destroying the Tree: If the PCs can get through its hardness, they can destroy the tree with physical and magical attacks. Doing so prevents the creation of the portal, but has cataclysmic results nevertheless, as detailed in Concluding the Adventure, below.

Shackle the Tree: The Cagewrights built a failsafe device to contain the tree's energy should they need to postpone the ritual for some reason. They constructed a *dispersal collar* that, when fitted around any of the tree's branches or trunk, disperses the energy stored within the tree harmlessly and gradually. In theory, this would allow the Cagewrights to restart the ritual of planar binding at a later date, but the PCs can use the device to harmlessly defuse the situation. The *dispersal collar* is in area C14, guarded by Moltenwing.

Once attached, the *dispersal collar* takes 30 minutes to disperse the energy. It does so by emitting blinding light; anyone who looks at the tree during this time must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 30) or be permanently blinded.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure can end in one of three ways: in defeat, with an eruption, or in total success. Each possibility is detailed below.

DEFEAT

Should the PCs fail and be defeated, the *Tree of Shackled Souls* completes its dark duty and creates a permanent

rift between the plane of Carceri and the city of Cauldron. Demodands pour through and set out to create a demodand empire in this part of the world. Whether they succeed in this grand endeavor is out of the characters' hands, although this scenario can form the foundation for an apocalyptic new campaign in which new PCs strive to close the portal and reclaim lost lands.

ERUPTION

If the PCs destroy the tree, the pent-up seismic energy is released in a massive rush back into the volcano's heart. They have prevented the formation of the Carcerian gate, but in so doing have triggered a massive volcanic eruption that eventually destroys the city above and possibly the PCs with it. The eruption process takes 10 minutes once the tree is destroyed, so PCs may be able to escape by using magic to flee.

Characters that remain in the volcano when it erupts are immediately slain (no save) and their bodies and equipment destroyed. Only a well-phrased *wish* or *miracle* can avert the explosion at this point. With Cauldron's destruction, this is a pyrrhic victory at best.

SUCCESS

The best solution to the situation is to use the *dispersal collar*. If the PCs use this device, the ground gives one last lurch as the tree is drained of energy. This final tremor is massive, and can be felt for dozens of miles. Characters still in the Fiery Sanctum are thrown to the ground if they fail a Reflex save (DC 20). Above, a significant portion of the southeast corner of Cauldron, weakened by previous tremors, collapses in a tremendous blast of sound. Many of the buildings collapse, and the central lake immediately drains and forms a new river that runs down the mountainside to one of the lakes far below. The ground remains stable and the city can be rebuilt, but the familiar concentric ring of

Cauldron has been permanently broken. It bears this scar for the remainder of its existence.

FROM THE ASHES

Ideally, the PCs complete the adventure by shackling the tree, freeing Cauldron from the potential tyranny of the demodands without completely destroying the city. The Shackleborn, one in each of the Soulages, remain dead. Their bodies are withered and pinched as if completely drained of moisture, due to their soul energy being funneled into the tree. The bodies are intact, however, and now that things have been set right, the thirteen descendants of the demodands can be raised from the dead.

Jenya Urikas (or whoever the PCs helped support as the new lord mayor at the start of "Foundation of Flame") is leading citizens of Cauldron toward the Lucky Monkey Inn to regroup when the PCs emerge. If the PCs share the news of their success, Jenya, near tears, hugs them all and stops the massive procession to spread the word that the city has been saved. The PCs are heralded as the heroes of the city, and the new lord mayor makes a vow to have statues of the characters erected at this very spot in honor of the moment. He also promises to name a new holiday in Cauldron after the heroes (named after their group name, if they have one, or simply "Heroes Day" if they do not).

Allow the PCs time to bask in their victory. They've accomplished something incredible. Over the next several weeks, the citizens of Cauldron slowly return to their shattered city and begin the process of rebuilding. The PCs can aid in this process as they see fit, but things are not quite safe in Cauldron yet. Two additional adventures approach in the next two issues of *DUNGEON*.

For one last villain remains. Adimarchus himself.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Mad God's Key" is designed for a group of four 1st-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 2nd–3rd level characters. All NPCs in the adventure should have their class levels advanced by an amount equal to the increase in average party level, with the exception of Marek and Flegon, the two thugs who the PCs catch at Theldrat's shop.

Replace the zombies in area T7 with ghouls. Area T10 should become infused with unholy energies that grant the skeletons found there a +2 profane bonus to Armor Class, a +2 profane bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls, and fast healing 2. In area T12, replace the owlbear skeleton with an ogre zombie.

Remember that if you change the level of the encounters in this adventure, you'll need to adjust the treasure amounts as well. Consult the section on Treasure that begins on page 51 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more specific details.

Chris Thomasson once cackled gleefully as DUNGEON editor over the lethal Adventure Path encounters his evil authors concocted. He was nearly giddy over being able to add to the legacy. Have fun with Moltenwing!

MOUNT ZOGON



BY TONY MOSELEY

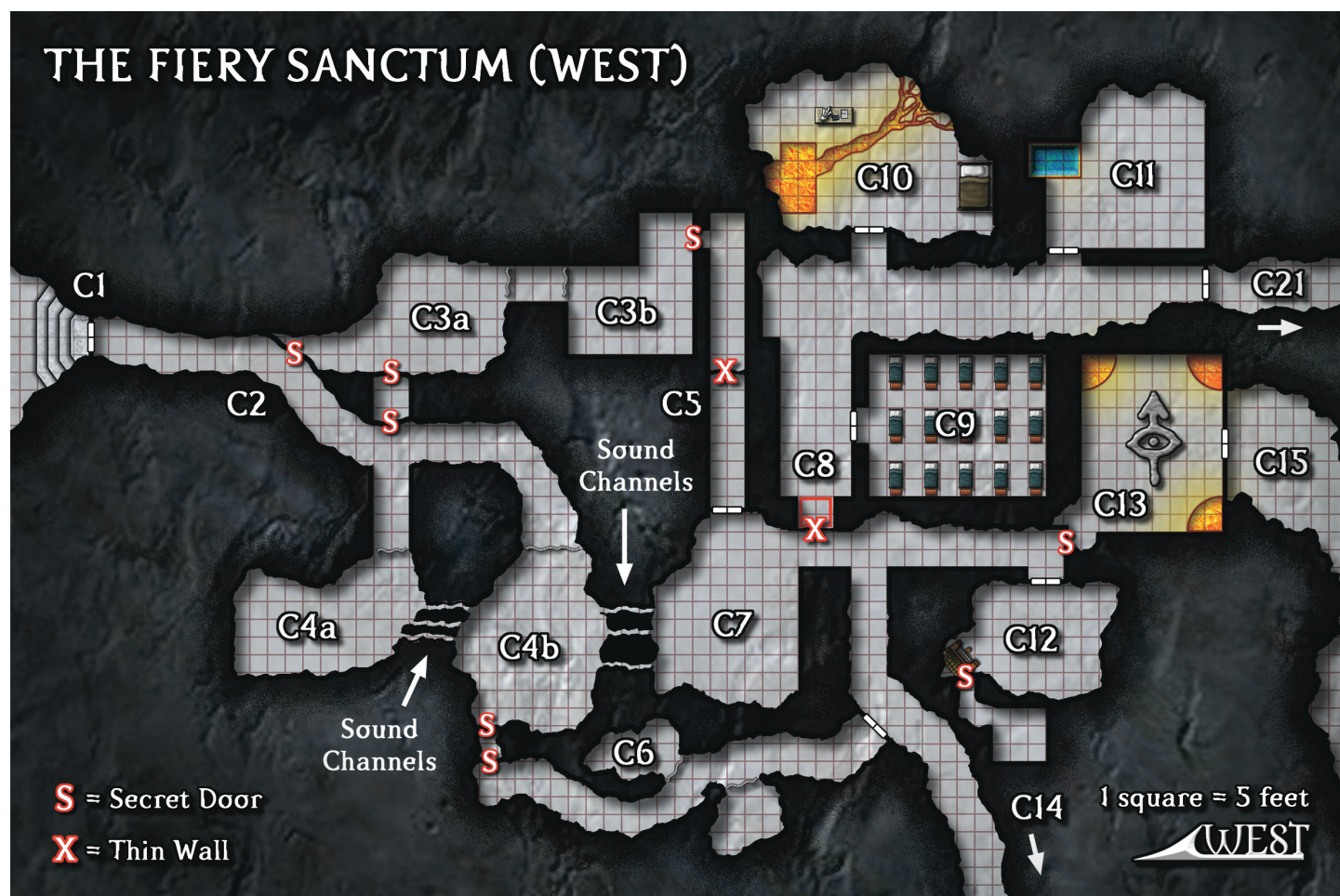


THIRTEEN CAGES

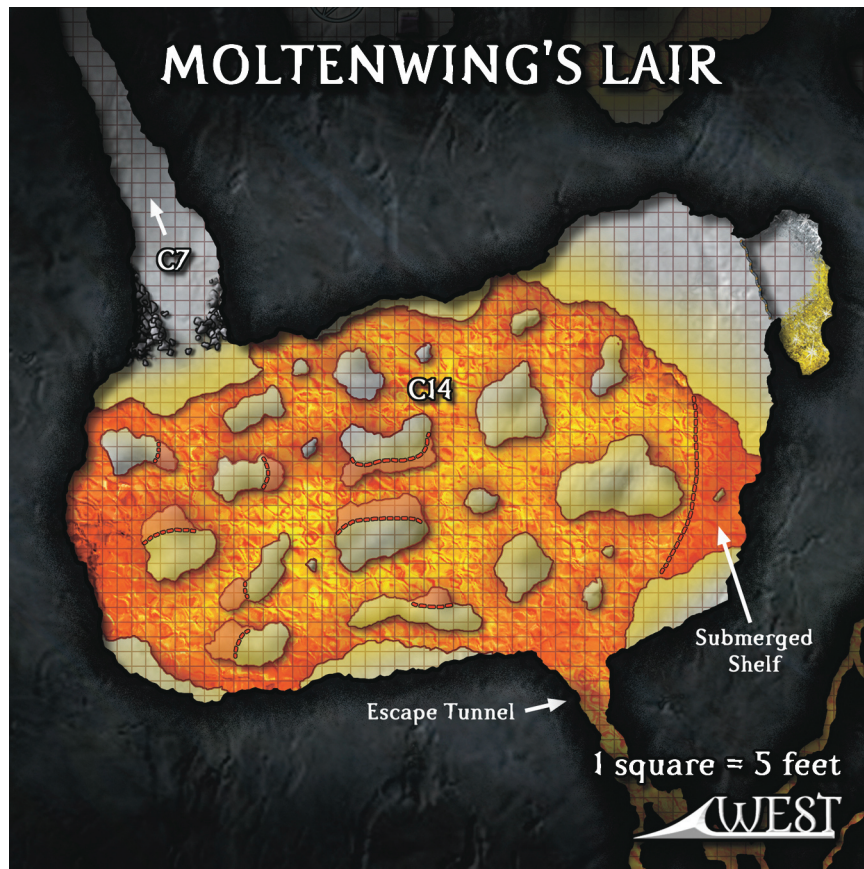
by Chris Thomasson

At last! The heroes finally track down the insidious Cagewrights for a final showdown in their lair deep beneath the volcano of Cauldron. But who secretly leads the Thirteen, and what will his

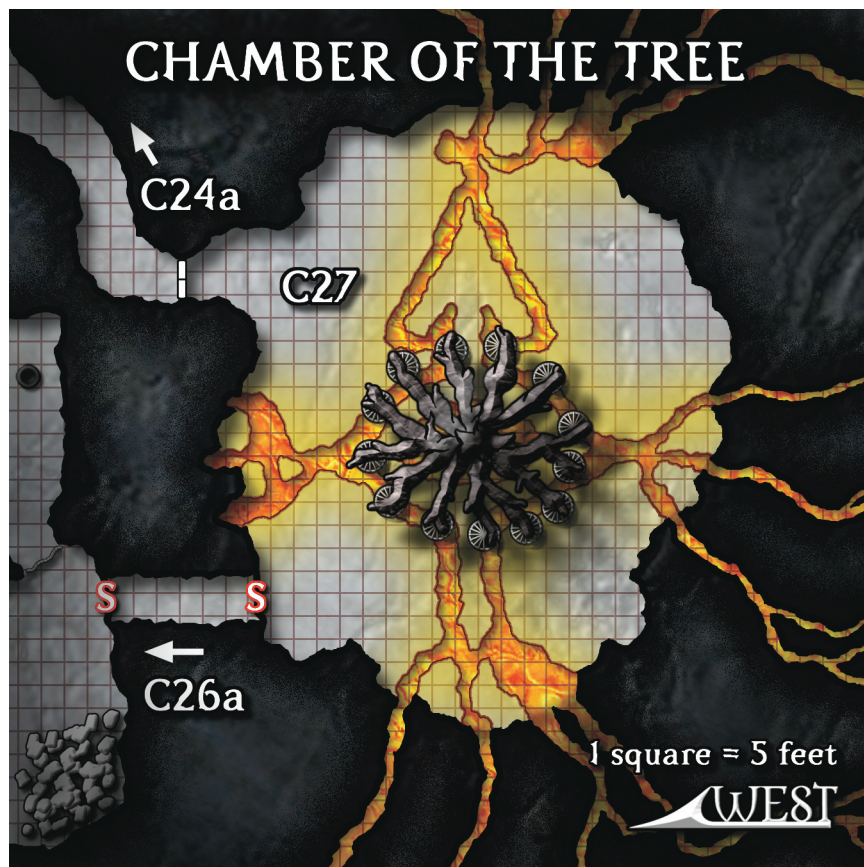
final message mean for the PCs? A Shackled City Adventure Path scenario for 16th-level characters.



Christopher West



Christopher West



Christopher West

THE FIERY SANCTUM (EAST)



Christopher West

ERRATA: Scaling the Adventure

“Thirteen Cages” is designed for a group of four 16th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 14th–15th level characters or 17th–18th level characters. All NPCs in the adventure should have their class levels advanced or reduced by an amount equal to the increase in average party level.

14th–15th-Level Characters: Lower-level characters have fewer resources; as a result, they’ll be more likely to need to stop and rest or retreat and regroup before they manage to even reach the *Tree of Shackled Souls*. You should relax the time restrictions in this adventure somewhat for lower-level adventurers, perhaps allowing them one or even two opportunities to rest before the *Tree* completes its task. Consider replacing Moltenwing with a slightly less powerful dragon. Dyr’ryd should be reduced to normal Hit Dice for a shator demodand.

17th–18th-Level Characters: It’s likely that characters of this level have access to the most powerful spells in the game (*wish*, *miracle*, *time stop*, etc.), so be prepared for the additional challenges running such high-level characters bring. One good way to increase the challenge of this adventure is to reduce the time the PCs have before the portal opens. Perhaps their and Jenya’s initial divinations reveal that they only have 4 hours left before the portal opens, and whatever they do must be done in that amount of time. All of the demodands and demons encountered should be advanced by two Hit Dice for each level by which the party’s average level exceeds 16 at the start of the adventure. Moltenwing’s lair should gain a group of four elder fire elementals under the dragon’s command. Dyr’ryd should be advanced by 2 more Hit Dice; this increases his size to Huge and brings all the appropriate adjustments to Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Natural Armor, attack rolls, and weapon damage.

Remember that if you change the level of the encounters in this adventure, you’ll need to adjust the treasure amounts as well. Consult the section on Treasure that begins on page 51 of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide* for more specific details.



STRIKE ON SHATTERHORN

ADVENTURE PATH PART TEN

By Christopher Perkins
Illustrations by Eric Kim & Tom Fowler
Cartography by Christopher West

Adventure Path
High-Level (13-20)
Dungeon Crawl



Smoke still rises from the shattered buildings and ruined streets of the troubled town of Cauldron, yet if not for the actions of a band of heroes, it would not exist at all. A sinister cabal of cultists bent on plunging Cauldron into the prison plane of Carceri had awakened the volcano below the town, and amidst the attacks of dragons and fiends from the outer planes, these heroes were able to evacuate the city and then strike at the cultists in their lair near the volcano's heart. Now, this cult, the Cagewrights, lies shattered, their members put on the defensive for the first time. All that remains is to finish the job, but the surviving Cagewrights still have some surprises left in their mysterious stronghold under the snake-haunted ruins of Shatterhorn.

"Strike on Shatterhorn" is a *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* adventure designed for four 18th-level characters. This adventure is part of the Shackled City Adventure Path that began with "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97) and continued with "Flood Season"

(*DUNGEON* #98), "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" (*DUNGEON* #109), "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111), "Foundation of Flame" (*DUNGEON* #113), and "Thirteen Cages" (*DUNGEON* #114). If the characters earn enough experience to gain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure so that their final quest doesn't lose its momentum. The Adventure Path concludes in *DUNGEON* #116 with "Asylum."

"Strike on Shatterhorn" can be played as a stand-alone adventure. In this case, the PCs must finish the work started by another band of adventurers that perished saving the town of Cauldron from annihilation (see "Thirteen Cages" in *DUNGEON* #113). The heroes are sent by concerned individuals (perhaps the Striders of Fharlanghn) to investigate the recent upheaval in Cauldron and "deal with it." Upon arriving in the vil-

lage of Redgorge, the PCs meet with several high-ranking Cauldronites who helped coordinate the town's evacuation. They learn of a thwarted plot by an evil organization called the Cagewrights to transform Cauldron into a gate-town to the plane of Carceri. Jenya Urikas, the high priestess of the Church of St. Cuthbert in Cauldron, asks the heroes to eradicate the surviving Cagewrights, who have retreated to their lair in the Ruins of Shatterhorn (located in the wilderness east of Cauldron) before they can regroup.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For the past several years, a sinister cabal called the Cagewrights has conspired to transform the town of Cauldron into a gateway to the prison plane of Carceri, unleashing the fiendish hordes confined there. The Cagewrights spent years consolidating their power and preparing for the ritual of planar junction, using knowledge gleaned from repositories

CAULDRON AND ENVIRONS



of arcane lore called the Soul Pillars. In preparation for the final ritual, they built artifacts called soul cages to hang from a fell device called the *Tree of Shattered Souls*. The town trembled as the ritual drew nigh, and events unfolded as the Cagewrights divined... initially. Then, unexpectedly, an upstart band of adventurers appeared on the scene and smashed the Cagewrights' designs for Cauldron, disrupting the ritual and slaying many of the cabal's leaders in the process.

A few Cagewrights, including a former cleric of Wee Jas named Embril Aloustinai, escaped the carnage beneath Cauldron. They have withdrawn to their secret redoubt in the nearby ruins of Shatterhorn, an ancient yuan-ti stronghold hidden in the jungle east of the town. Angered and dumbfounded by their recent "setback," the surviving Cagewrights plot their next move. Desperate to free the demon prince Adimarchus from his prison on Carceri,

Embril has resurrected a spell weaver (a creature described in *Monster Manual II*, pages 187–188) whose body was recently recovered from the ruins of Karran-Kural (see "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" in *DUNGEON* #109). In exchange, the spell weaver—a master of necromantic lore—has agreed to help Embril. With an appropriate sacrifice to Nerull, the god of death, Embril believes she can secure the god's aid in freeing Adimarchus from his prison on Carceri.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The heroes have thwarted the Cagewrights' machinations, and all seems well again in the Cauldron region. Even if Cauldron was partially (or even wholly) destroyed by a volcanic explosion, the characters helped save the lives of most of its citizens. Until the town can be rebuilt, the Cauldronite refugees are able to find food, water, and temporary shelter near the villages of Redgorge and

Kingfisher Hollow. Various churches and organizations join forces to help the refugees, including the churches of Kord and St. Cuthbert, the Striders of Fharlanghn, and the Chisel (a secret alliance of wealthy merchants). Agents from the neighboring city of Sasserine have started to arrive to ascertain the damage, gather information, and distribute additional provisions as needed. The characters may choose to help with the relief efforts, but before long they are approached by Jenya Urikas, the high priestess of the Church of St. Cuthbert.

Justice must be served to those responsible for the chaos in Cauldron. Using divination spells, Jenya determines that the surviving Cagewrights have withdrawn to their hidden stronghold under the ruins of Shatterhorn. She asks the heroes to serve Cauldron once more by disposing of the remaining Cagewrights before they can do more harm. The characters should

have no trouble reaching Shatterhorn, where they find the ruins overrun with half-mad creatures and Cagewrights. By the time the heroes find Embril Aloustinai, she has abandoned her faith in Wee Jas and pledged her eternal devotion to Nerull. Consumed by a mad desire to free Adimarchus, the converted cleric hopes that an appropriate sacrifice can persuade Nerull to permit Adimarchus's escape from Carceri (for Nerull, it seems, has the power to come and go from Carceri as he pleases).

CHAPTER ONE RUINS OF SHATTERHORN

Shatterhorn, located roughly 50 miles east of Cauldron in a section of the Amedio Jungle known as the Grayhaunt, is a 200-foot-high jagged spire of solid rock reaching up toward the sky. Four hundred years ago, a yuan-ti prophet named Ssythar Vassha claimed Shatterhorn was a divine oracle—an instrument for communing with the yuan-ti god Merrshaulk. He and his followers raised a keep around the spire, and used it as a base for their raids. One stormy night, an incredible bolt of lightning split Shatterhorn into three, cracking it open from peak to base. At first, the yuan-ti took the event as an ill omen, but when no trace of Ssythar Vassha could be found, his followers assumed that Merrshaulk had rewarded the visionary yuan-ti by taking Ssythar Vassha into his eternal embrace. Ssythar Vassha's followers built a secret temple beneath Shatterhorn and placed a statue of the "prophet ascendant" in its greatest hall. Other yuan-ti prophets rose to take Vassha's place and lead the cult, but it soon became clear that Shatterhorn had lost its alleged power to commune with Merrshaulk. The yuan-ti cult's fortunes turned, and they were driven off and exterminated by their enemies.

The characters come to the ruins of Shatterhorn seeking to capture or eliminate surviving Cagewrights, who have been using the ruins of Shatterhorn as a secret staging area for their plots in Cauldron. Shatterhorn harbors five, possibly six, high-ranking Cagewrights who share the ruins

and the dungeons below with a number of allied creatures. The journey to the ruins from Cauldron should pose little threat to high-level PCs, especially if they use *greater teleport* to travel there.

ARRIVAL

A 200-foot-tall spire of jagged rock stands in a rough clearing, dwarfing the surrounding trees. Some great force has split the rock into three sections, forming deep clefts. Around the base of the cleft spire, someone has built a one-story stone keep. Many of the keep's walls have collapsed, and a thick shroud of fog envelops the structure. The lone, shrill cry of a baboon echoes in the desolation of this dreary place.

An eerie, nonmagical fog engulfs the keep, reaching a height of 20 feet before thinning out. Creatures within the thick fog have concealment against attacks made more than 10 feet away. Rain seems to fall more frequently here than in other areas, making all surfaces slick and damp (–2 penalty on Balance and Climb checks).

THE RUINED KEEP (EL 18)

Use the Ruins of Shatterhorn map for the following encounter.

A single-story stone keep surrounds the Shatterhorn. Although most of the keep's mortared walls remain intact, its entire roof structure has collapsed, exposing the various rooms and corridors to the open sky. Some of its thick walls have collapsed as well, leaving behind heaps of rubble (moving through 5 feet of debris costs 10 feet of movement). Over the years, assorted denizens have cleared the debris from the rooms to create lairs for themselves. Countless adventurers have plundered the keep as well, drawn by false rumors of dragon hoards hidden within the ruins.

The ruined keep is far from the impenetrable bastion it once was. The Cagewrights, in particular, have done precious little to fortify the keep, arguably to preserve its "abandoned" appearance. That said, the Cagewrights have left a monstrous garrison in the ruins to dispatch unwanted interlopers (see Creatures, below). The ruins are also in-

habited by troops of screaming baboons that fall strangely silent in the company of strangers.

The characters probably have more than one way to reach the keep or may circumvent it altogether by teleporting directly into the dungeon beneath (see Chapter Two). Characters searching the keep notice serpentine bas-reliefs and frescoes carved on the inside walls, although heavy rain has eroded some of the finer works. Stone basins built into the floor that once served as yuan-ti baths now hold murky pools of water. Decrepit wooden doors bear rusted iron hinges and handles shaped like serpents and dragons, and some of the floor stones bear chiseled yuan-ti inscriptions. Characters searching for treasure discover that the ruins have been picked clean, except for the occasional armor fragment or rusted weapon.

Creatures: The ruins are crawling with baboons (*Monster Manual*, page 286), and characters navigating the ruins notice that the normally skittish baboons become quiet and still as the party passes, fixing their black eyes on the characters until they pass out of sight, at which point the baboons resume their normal behavior. Only if attacked do they scatter, in which case they retreat in a strangely orderly, unnervingly silent exodus.

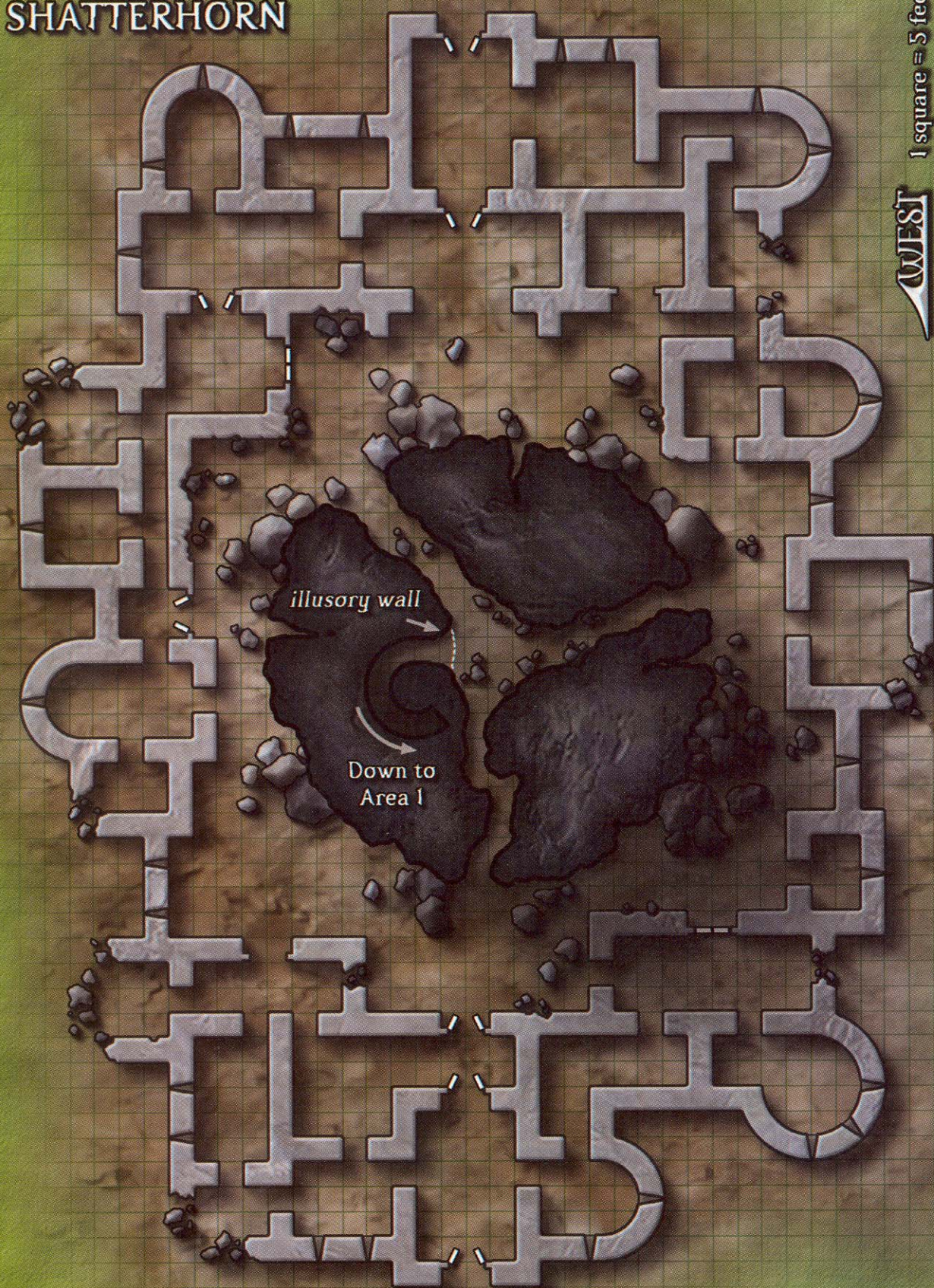
In addition to the baboons, characters exploring the ruined keep or the Shatterhorn itself may attract the attention of the keep's guardians: a hill giant barbarian named Ghath, his two dire wolf pets, a small gang of half-orc bandits called the Grayhaunt Marauders, and their trained spider eater mounts. These mercenaries work for the Cagewrights and can be placed anywhere inside the keep walls. (The hill giant normally patrols the keep's interior, while one Grayhaunt Marauder and mount usually stays near the outermost corners of the keep.) They converge on any area where trouble is detected.

A pair of ancient will-o'-wisps that predate the fall of Shatterhorn also haunt the ruins, remaining invisible until they strike. Predatory and opportunistic, yet loosely allied with Ghath and the Grayhaunt Marauders, they join the bat-

THE RUINS OF SHATTERHORN

1 square = 5 feet

WEST



tle in the keep's defense 2 rounds after combat erupts.

➤ **Ghath, Male Hill Giant Barbarian** 10: CR 17; Large giant; HD 12d8+72 plus 10d12+60; hp 263; Init +3; Spd 40 ft. (base 50 ft.); AC 26, touch 10, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +19; Grp +30; Atk +27 melee (2d8+10/17–20, adamantite greatsword) or +25 melee (1d4+7, slam) or +19 ranged (2d6+7, rock); Full Atk +27/+22/+17/+12 melee (2d8+10/17–20, adamantite greatsword) or +25 melee (1d4+7, 2 slams) or +19 ranged (2d6+7, rock); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rage 3/day, rock throwing; SQ DR 2/—, improved uncanny dodge, light fortification (25% chance to ignore critical hit), low-light vision, rock catching, trap sense +3; AL CE; SV Fort +25, Ref +12, Will +13; Str 25, Dex 12, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +6, Jump +23 (includes *ring of improved jumping*), Listen +8, Spot +8.

Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Rage (Ex): Three times per day, Ghath can enter a state of fierce rage that lasts for 9 rounds. The following changes are in effect as long as he rages: hp 307; AC 24, touch 8, flat-footed 24; Grp +32; Atk +29 melee (2d8+13/17–20, adamantite greatsword) or +27 melee (1d4+9, slam); Full Atk +29/+24/+19/+14 melee (2d8+13/17–20, adamantite greatsword) or +27 melee (1d4+9, 2 slams); SV Fort +27, Will +15; Str 29, Con 27; Climb +10, Jump +25. At the end of his rage, Ghath is fatigued for the duration of the encounter.

Possessions: +2 *light fortification hide armor*, adamantite greatsword, *ring of force shield*, *ring of improved jumping*, *amulet of health* +4, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, *cloak of resistance* +4, *potion of fly*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, leather bag (contains 4 throwing rocks, a bowl and spoon, a chunk of cheese, a drinking horn, a haunch of meat, and 3,250 gp).

➤ **Dire Wolves (2):** hp 64 each; *Monster Manual* 65.

➤ **Grayhaunt Marauders, Male Half-orc Fighter 8 (4):** CR 8; Medium hu-

manoid (half-orc); HD 8d10+16; hp 59 each; Init +2; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +8; Grp +11; Atk +13 melee (1d8+6/×3, masterwork orc double axe) or +12 ranged (1d8+4/×3, composite longbow with +1 *seeking arrow*); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+6/×3, masterwork orc double axe) and +11 melee (1d8+4/×3, masterwork double axe) or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+4/×3, composite longbow with +1 *seeking arrow*); SQ darkvision 60 ft., half-orc traits; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Intimidate +10, Listen +3, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (orc double axe), Improved Critical (orc double axe), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (orc double axe), Weapon Specialization (orc double axe).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: +2 *breastplate*, masterwork orc double axe, composite longbow (+3 Str) with 25 +1 *seeking arrows*, *lesser bracers of archery*, ivory hunting horn (100 gp), backpack (holds a whetstone, a waterskin, flint and steel, 50 feet of hemp rope, a cooking pot, 3d20 gp in a pouch, and 1d6 days of trail rations).

➤ **Spider Eaters (4):** hp 42 each; *Monster Manual* 234.

➤ **Ancient Will-o'-Wisps (2):** CR 11; Small aberration (air); HD 25d8+100; hp 212 each; Init +15; Spd fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 31, touch 31, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +18; Grp +9; Atk/Full Atk +30 melee touch (4d6 electricity); SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, natural invisibility; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +18, Will +18; Str 1, Dex 33, Con 18, Int 17, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +28, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +0 (+2 acting), Intimidate +2, Listen +34, Search +31, Spot +34, Survival +18 (+20 following tracks).

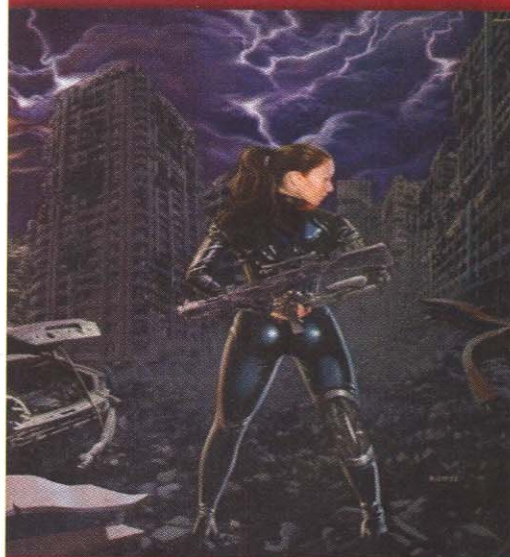
Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Natural Attack (touch), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse^B.

Tactics: The ruins provide Ghath with plenty of rocks to throw, but he prefers

step away from The Twenty.

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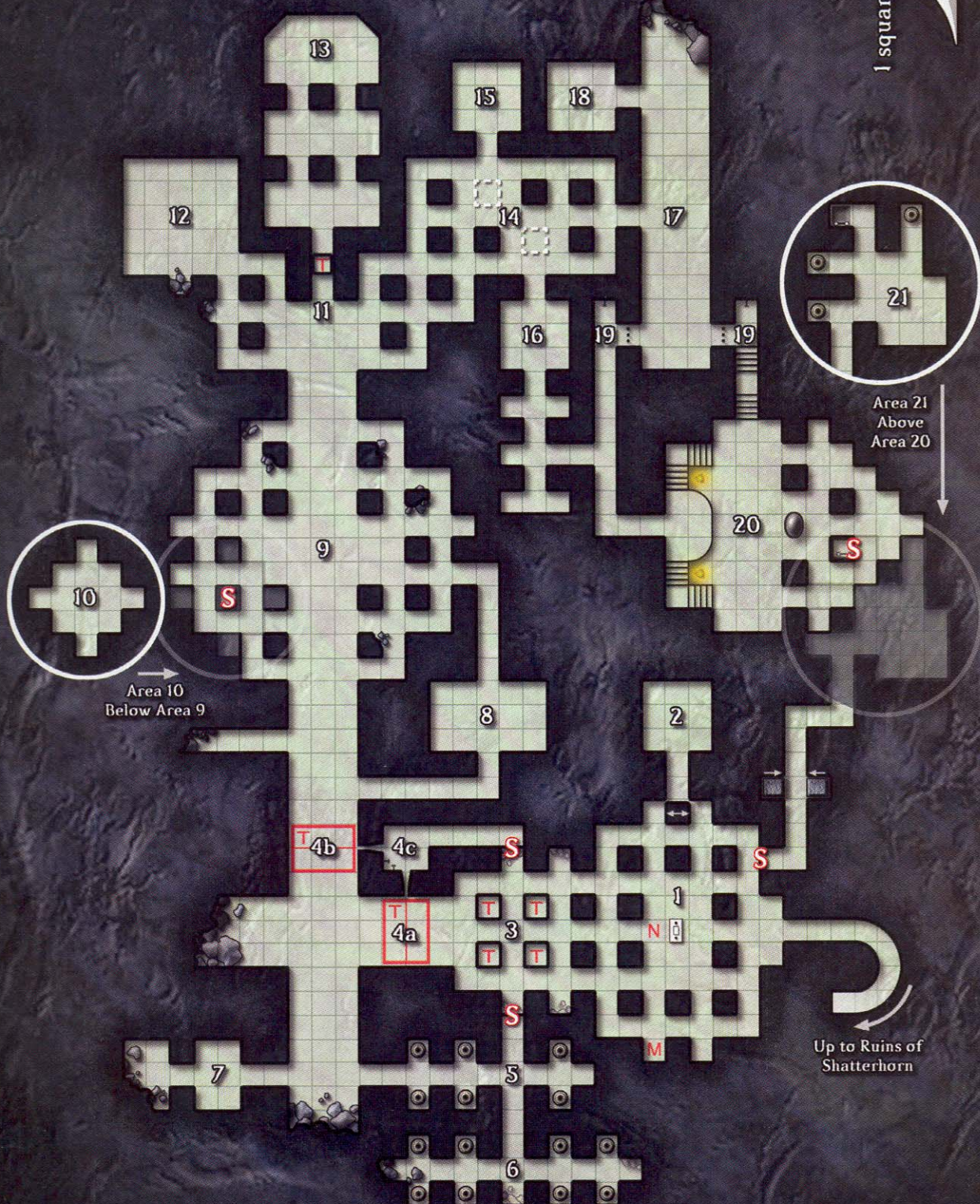
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UNDER SHATTERHORN

1 square = 5 feet

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melee combat over ranged combat. He uses the fog for concealment as he closes in for the kill, and his dire wolves are trained to provide flanking opportunities and sniff out invisible foes. Against poorly armored foes, Ghath uses his Power Attack feat, taking a -5 penalty on attack rolls to gain a +10 bonus on damage rolls with his greatsword (when Ghath rages, these modifiers increase to -10 and +20, respectively).

One of the half-orcs blows his hunting horn when the battle is first joined, alerting the keep's other denizens and setting off a riot of baboon shrieks. The half-orcs and spider eaters provide aerial support, using their +1 *seeking arrows* to ignore the 20% miss chance caused by the fog. The half-orcs only fight on the ground if their mounts are slain. The half-orcs know that spider eaters are surprisingly frail and generally do not fly more than 20 or 30 feet off the ground.

The will-o'-wisps are tenuous allies of the Cagewrights and their minions. They serve as the giant's invisible "eyes" and "ears" until he's killed, and they are quick to attack characters that split off from the group. If one of the will-o'-wisps is slain, the other flees.

Development: The hill giant hurls rocks at any interlopers he sees while sending his dire wolves after characters who keep their distance. The half-orcs prefer not to leave the spider eater mounts behind, but a half-orc deprived of his mount pursues characters into the cleft. Only the will-o'-wisps know about the *illusory wall* in the cleft (see The Cleft Horn, below). Their unfriendly attitude aside, the will-o'-wisps are open to negotiation. A successful Diplomacy check can shift the wisps' attitude to indifferent, friendly, or helpful. They can also impart useful information if bribed with 5,000 gold pieces worth of treasure. They recognize the Cagewrights as "the ones wearing the silver, cage-shaped pendants" and can describe each of them, as well as provide the location of the dungeon entrance.

If the characters raise the alarm or otherwise make a lot of noise, they alert Ssythar Nahazir's familiar (see The Cleft Horn, below).

THE CLEFT HORN

Shatterhorn is a fractured, horn-shaped spire of solid rock 90 feet wide at its base and 200 feet tall. A narrow cleft separates the towering thirds of the spire, creating three narrow, debris-strewn passages that meet at the heart of the spire. These passages are open to the sky and widen toward the top. Climbing the inside or outside walls of Shatterhorn requires a DC 17 Climb check (including a -2 penalty for the slick surface).

The entrance to the dungeon is carved into the northern fragment of Shatterhorn and consists of a 10-foot-tall, 5-foot-wide downward-spiraling passageway. The passage makes several descending revolutions before opening into area 1 of the dungeon. An *illusory wall* spell (cast at 9th level) obscures the passageway, disguising it as part of the surrounding rock wall. The wall appears absolutely real when viewed, but physical objects can pass through it without difficulty. A character with *true seeing* active does not perceive the *illusory wall* but instead sees the open passageway. The *illusory wall* is permanent until dispelled.

Creatures: Ssythar Nahazir has hidden his snake familiar among the rocks near the *illusory wall*. If it sees intruders entering the cleft or otherwise hears disturbing noises, it slithers down the spiraling passage and alerts its master in area 1.

➤ **Snake Familiar:** CR —; Tiny viper; HD 17; hp 36; Init +7; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.; AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +12; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +17 melee (1 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA deliver touch spells, poison; SQ empathic link, improved evasion, scent, speak with snakes, speak with master; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +11, Will +13; Str 4, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Balance +11, Bluff +5, Climb +11, Concentration +16, Hide +15, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +13, Spellcraft +6, Spot +13, Swim +5, Use Magic Device +6.

Feat: Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse^B.

CHAPTER TWO UNDER SHATTERHORN

The "dungeon" under Shatterhorn contains temples, catacombs, and hidden vaults built by the yuan-ti. Characters can reach the dungeon under Shatterhorn using the downward-spiraling passage at the base of the spire (see The Cleft Horn) or using powerful magic.

The dungeon under Shatterhorn has the following features:

Illumination: Unless noted otherwise, all dungeon corridors and chambers are torchlit. The torches cast eerie shadows upon the walls, ceiling, and floor.

Stonework: All areas have 10-foot-high, bare stone ceilings unless specified otherwise. The walls are made of mortared bricks of black volcanic rock covered with painted plaster murals depicting yuan-ti and other serpentine creatures. Most of the murals have faded, and in many areas the plaster has peeled or fallen away, revealing damp black stone underneath.

Secret Doors: Marked "S" on the map, secret doors are actually 3-inch-thick barriers of painted plaster that blend seamlessly with the surrounding murals and stonework. A secret door doesn't open like a normal door; it must be smashed through (hardness 2; hp 15). Unless the fragments of a smashed secret door are moved to another area, a programmed *make whole* spell automatically reassembles a broken secret door after 1 hour.

➤ **Secret Door:** 3 in. thick; hardness 2; hp 15; break DC 13.

Illusory Effects: Various minor illusory effects pervade the dungeon, courtesy of permanent *minor image* and *ghost sound* spells. Tiny illusory snakes slither across the floor, emerge from cracks in the walls, or coil around sundry objects. These shiny-black vipers dissolve into nothingness when touched. A rattling noise echoes through the dungeon as well, but the rattling always seems distant, and its origin cannot be traced. These illusions pose no threat yet serve to keep interlopers on edge.

Collapsed Areas: Over the years, earth tremors have caused sections of the dungeon to collapse; attempts to



clear collapsed sections only cause further collapse. If you wish to expand the dungeon, you can add new areas to any of the places where the map currently shows a collapse.

1. TEMPLE OF FANGS (EL 18)

Ten thick pillars support the 10-foot-high ceiling of this large, unlit room. Deep alcoves are recessed into the west and east walls. A few snakes slither away from you across the floor, and a distant rattling noise emanates from the deeper darkness. A sculpted stone altar rests in the middle of the room, its surfaces stained with dry blood and carved with serpentine motifs. One end of the altar curls up to form the head of a great snake with stony fangs and gems for eyes.

The distant rattling noise is an eerie illusory effect (see Dungeon Features).

The eastern alcoves are, in fact, part of one large alcove with a “rolling pillar” in the middle of it. The pillar looks like a protruding section of wall but has stone rollers tucked into its base, allowing it to roll to the north or south. Noticing the rolling pillar requires a DC 25 Search check, and rolling it requires a DC 25 Strength check. The rolling pillar conceals a 10-foot-long passage leading to area 2.

A secret door (see Dungeon Features) is set into the south wall and leads to area 22.

The altar weighs close to 1,800 pounds and radiates a continual *unholy aura* (caster level 18th) to a range of 30 feet. All evil creatures within range gain a +4 deflection bonus to AC, a +4 resistance bonus on saves, spell resistance 25 against good spells and spells cast by good creatures, and immunity to possession and mind-affecting effects. In addition, if a good creature succeeds on a me-

lee attack against a warded creature, the offending attacker takes 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage (Fortitude DC 22 negates). Destroying the altar negates the unholy aura.

◆ **Altar of Fangs:** 3 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 540; Break DC 50.

Creature: Ssythar Nahazir, a mad yuan-ti Cagewright, hides behind the altar (in the square marked “N” on the map). Nahazir believes he is a prophet of Merrshaulk gifted with divine insight, which explains the self-chosen title of Ssythar (a Yuan-ti word meaning “chosen one”). Nahazir has a serpentine head and scaly skin, but otherwise appears human. He conceals his features beneath a form-fitting black robe, and around his neck he wears a silver pendant shaped like a tiny cage. His snake familiar, if present, is coiled around one of his wrists.

During his exploration of the catacombs, Nahazir stumbled upon a yuan-ti

SSYTHAR NAHAZIR

pure-
blood

mohrg guard-
ing a collection of burial urns (area 5). He used a *command undead* spell to win the mohrg's favor and relocated it to this chamber. It hides in the alcove marked "M" and emerges to attack when spotted or when someone other than Nahazir stands adjacent to the altar. The mohrg has serpentine fangs and a slinky gait, but it does not speak and could easily be mistaken for a human mohrg.

Ssythar's statistics below assume he's had time to cast *mage armor* and *shield* and drink his *potion of barkskin* +3.

➤ **Ssythar Nahazir; Male Halfblood Yuan-ti Sorcerer 10:** CR 15; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 7d8+7 plus 10d4+10; hp 72 (86 with *false life* spell); Init +5; Spd 30 ft. (60 ft. with *expeditious retreat*); AC 29 (31 within 30 ft. of altar), touch 14 (16 within 30 ft. of altar), flat-footed 27 (29 within 30 ft. of altar); Base Atk +12; Grp +14; Atk +15 melee (1d6+2/18–20, masterwork scimitar) or +14 ranged (1d8+2/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +15/+10/+5 melee (1d6+2/18–20, masterwork scimitar) and +9 melee (1d6+1 plus poison, bite) or +14/+9/+4 ranged (1d8+2/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA poison (Fort DC 14, 1d6/1d6 Con), *produce acid*, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ *alternate form*,

chameleon power, darkvision 60 ft., *detect poison*, immunity to possession and mind affecting effects when within 30 ft. of altar, scent, spell resistance 16 (spell resistance 25 against good when within 30 ft. of altar); AL CE; SV Fort +6 (+10 within 30 ft. of altar), Ref +10 (+14 within 30 ft. of altar), Will +16 (+20 within 30 ft. of altar); Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 22.

Skills: Bluff +17, Concentration +17, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +6 (+8 acting), Intimidate +8, Hide +12 (+22 when using *chameleon power*), Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (history) +19, Knowledge (religion) +14, Listen +16, Spellcraft +12, Spot +16, Use Magic Device +15 (+17 scrolls).

Feats: Alertness^B, Blind-Fight^B, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Empower Spell, Heighten Spell, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Terran, Yuan-ti.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*animal trance* (DC 18), *cause fear* (DC 17), *entangle* (DC 17); 1/day—*deeper darkness*, *neutralize poison* (DC 20), *suggestion* (DC 19). Caster level 8th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/6/7/6/4; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*acid splash*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *ghost sound*, *message*, *open/close*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st—*disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*; 2nd—*command undead*, *false life*, *see invisibility*, *scorching ray*; 3rd—*displacement*, *lightning bolt*, *slow*; 4th—*enervation*, *Evard's black tentacles*; 5th—*teleport*.

Possessions: Masterwork scimitar, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus), 20 arrows, empowered *wand of idiocy* (as per the empowered *touch of idiocy* spell; 12 charges), *wand of poison* (Fortitude DC 16 negates; 8 charges), *potion of barkskin* (+3), scroll of *crushing despair*, scroll of *dominate person*, *cloak of Charisma* +2, *Ring of Thirteen* (see Appendix), silver cage pendant (15 gp), pouch of 10 pp.

➤ **Advanced Mohrg (Yuan-ti Pureblood):** CR 11; Medium undead; HD 20d12; hp 148; Init +10; Spd 30 ft.;

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +10; Grp +17; Atk/Full Atk +17 melee (1d6+10, slam) or +17 melee touch (paralysis, tongue); SA create spawn, improved grab, paralyzing touch (DC 25); SQ darkvision 60 ft., undead traits; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +14, Will +13; Str 25, Dex 23, Con —, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +19, Hide +28, Listen +16, Move Silently +28, Spot +22, Swim +11.

Feats: Alertness, Contagious Paralysis*, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Paralysis*, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility.

*See Appendix 1 for details.

Tactics: Nahazir has already cast *mage armor* and *false life* on himself (each spell has a remaining duration of 1d8 hours). If forewarned of danger, Ssythar drinks his *potion of barkskin* +3 and casts the following spells on himself, in the following order: *see invisibility* (lasts 100 minutes), *shield* (lasts 10 minutes), *expeditious retreat* (lasts 10 minutes), and *displacement* (lasts 10 rounds). If his familiar is present (see The Cleft Horn, above), it gains the benefits of these spells as well. Time allowing, Nahazir casts one or more *resist energy* spells, then hides.

At range, Ssythar Nahazir prefers to cast heightened *slow* (5th level; save DC 19), followed by *enervation*, *Evard's black tentacles*, empowered *lightning bolt*, and empowered *magic missile*. In melee, he jabs foes with his empowered *wand of idiocy* or *wand of poison*. Nahazir must make a successful Use Magic Device check (DC 20) to use the *wand of poison*, and he cannot take 10 on this check. He saves a *teleport* spell for his escape, retreating to the Temple of Merrshaulk (area 20) to make his final stand.

The mohrg tries to grapple and paralyze foes. Its paralysis is contagious, thanks to its Contagious Paralysis feat (see the Appendix).

Trap: Any non-yuan-ti that defaces or otherwise damages the altar must make a successful Will save (DC 22) or be *teleported* inside the hollow black egg in the Temple of Merrshaulk (area 20). This trap even affects a creature that damages the altar with a ranged attack.

➤ **Teleportation Trap:** CR 8; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell

effect (*greater teleport*, 13th-level wizard, Will DC 22 negates); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

Treasure: The two gems embedded in the altar's "eyes" are black sapphires worth 1,000 gp apiece.

2. HIDDEN VAULT

The walls of this room are painted with plaster murals depicting eleven golden serpents, one per 5-foot section of wall. Each serpent holds a painted, unfurled scroll in its mouth, and arcane runes adorn each scroll. Some of the plaster has chipped or fallen away, marring the images.

The scrolls painted on the walls are treated as pages of a spellbook. Each scroll outlines a different arcane spell that can be transferred either to a spellbook or an actual scroll. Only seven of the eleven scrolls can be deciphered; the other four are too damaged to read, but can be repaired with *make whole* spells. The legible spells are *bestow curse*, *control undead*, *eyebite*, *finger of death*, *greater planar binding*, *stone to flesh*, and *summon monster VII*. The unreadable spells are *Bigby's grasping hand*, *create greater undead*, *limited wish*, and *waves of exhaustion*.

3. PLASTER PILLARS (EL 18)

Thick pillars support the 10-foot-high ceiling of this hall. Four alcoves hold heaps of dust and bone intermingled with shards of painted ceramic. A stone arm—the remains of a shattered statue, perhaps—rests on the floor between the pillars. The arm looks human-sized and is broken at the shoulder. On one of its stony fingers you see an iron ring.

The alcoves hold the shattered remains and spilled contents of four ceramic burial urns. The ceramic fragments are painted with serpentine motifs and images of yuan-ti dressed in ceremonial armor and robes. Amid the refuse lie yuan-ti bones and tattered funereal wrappings. The northeast and northwest alcoves contain secret doors leading to area 4C and 5, respectively (see Dungeon

Features for more information about Shatterhorn's secret doors).

The four pillars surrounding the stone arm are actually made of painted plaster. Although the plaster pillars look like ordinary stone pillars, careful inspection and a successful Search check (DC 25) reveal the truth. The stone arm is all that remains of a petrified human rogue. The iron ring bears an inscription: "Here lies your doom." A *Nystul's magic aura* spell makes the ring radiate magic as though it was a *ring of evasion*, but the aura is false. Touching the ring or the petrified arm causes the four plaster pillars to shatter and awakens the Creatures.

Creatures: Each plaster pillar holds a medusa rogue in *temporal stasis*. Disturbing the petrified arm dispels the *temporal stasis* and causes the plaster pillars to shatter, releasing the medusas. Before they were placed in *temporal stasis*, the medusas imbibed *potions of bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, and *eagle's splendor*; the potions last roughly 3 minutes. The bonuses imparted by these potions are included in the stat block below; if they are dispelled, remember to adjust the stats accordingly. Yuan-ti clerics also placed *greater magic weapon* spells on the medusas' short swords; the effects last 7 hours.

➤ **Female and Male Medusa Rogue 10 (4):** CR 14; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 6d8+30 plus 10d6+50; hp 157, 150, 142, 129; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +13; Grp +14; Atk +22 melee (1d6+4/17–20, +3 short sword) or +19 melee (1d4+1 plus poison, snakes) or +20 ranged (1d6×3, masterwork shortbow); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d6+4/17–20, +3 short sword) and +20 melee (1d6+4/17–20, +3 short sword) and +14 melee (1d4+1 plus poison, snakes) or +20/+15/+10 ranged (1d6×3, masterwork shortbow); SA petrifying gaze (DC 22), poison (DC 18), sneak attack +5d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +3, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +18, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 23, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 24.

Skills: Balance +8, Bluff +26, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +14 (+16 acting), Escape Artist +14, Hide +25, Intimidate +17, Jump +3, Move Silently

+25, Search +8, Spot +15, Tumble +21, Use Rope +6 (+8 bindings).

Feats: Ability Focus (petrifying gaze), Improved Critical (short sword), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Yuan-ti.

Possessions: +2 chain shirt, 2 short swords (+3 short swords with *greater magic weapon* spells), masterwork shortbow, 20 arrows.

Tactics: Each opponent within 30 feet of a medusa must make a saving throw against its petrifying gaze attack each round at the beginning of his or her turn in the initiative order. The medusas do not make active gaze attacks on their turns, instead attacking with their short swords and snakes. They also try to make sneak attacks against flanked opponents.

4. PIT TRAPS (EL 14)

You come to a four-way intersection of 15-foot-wide passages illuminated by torches in sconces. Like other areas of the dungeon, the walls are adorned with faded murals depicting yuan-ti rituals and great serpents. The passage to the north has collapsed.

This intersection contains two concealed pit traps (areas 4A and 4B, respectively). An *illusory wall* spell (caster level 9th) conceals an arrow slit overlooking each pit. Behind these concealed arrow slits, a farastu demodand stands watch in a 10-foot-square room (area 4C). When one or more characters stand on a pit, the farastu pulls a stone lever set into the wall of area 4C, opening the pit doors; the secret room contains two stone levers, one for each pit. A pit can also be opened using a *knock* spell or, once detected, it can be forced open with a successful Strength check (DC 30).

Creature: The farastu in area 4C serves the Cagewrights. If characters discover and open the secret door leading to its chamber, it brazenly charges forth to attack them. A farastu is a fiendish creature that stands 7 feet tall and weighs about 220 pounds. It has long arms and legs, and a large, oblong head. Its body continually oozes a thick, black, tarlike

substance that slowly trickles down its emaciated frame.

➤ **Farastu Demodand:** CR 11; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 11d8+22; hp 68; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +11; Grp +23; Atk +15 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +15 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) and +10 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA adhesive slime, improved grab, rage, spell-like abilities, *summon demodand*; SQ cold resistance 10, damage reduction 10/good, fire resistance 10, immune to acid, immune to poison, scent, spell resistance 23; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 16; *Fiend Folio* 42.

Adhesive Slime (Ex): The black slime farastu exude grants them a +8 racial bonus on grapple checks and disarm checks. A weapon that strikes a farastu becomes stuck fast unless the wielder succeeds on a Reflex save (DC 17). Prying off a stuck weapon requires a Strength check (DC 17). Oil dissolves the farastu's adhesive slime; it requires 10 minutes to renew its adhesive coating. It can also dissolve its slime at will, and the substance breaks down 1 minute after the creature dies.

Rage (Ex): The farastu can fly into a rage three times per day, much like a barbarian. The farastu gains +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, +2 Will saves, and -2 AC. Its statistics change as follows: hp 93; AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +13; Grp +25; Atk +17 melee (1d4+6, claw); Full Atk +17 melee (1d4+6, 2 claws) and +12 melee (1d6+3, bite); SV Fort +11, Will +10; Str 23, Con 18; Climb +24. The rage lasts for 7 rounds, but the farastu can end it earlier if it desires. It is not fatigued at the end of its rage.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear* (DC 17), *invisibility*, *tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*; 2/day—*dispel magic*. Caster level 11th. The Save DCs are Charisma-based.

Summon Demodand (Sp): Once per day, a farastu can attempt to summon 1d4 farastus with a 30% chance of success.

Skills: A farastu's adhesive slime gives it a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks.

Skills: Climb +22, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +6, Hide +12, Intimidate +16, Listen +14, Move Silently +12,

Shatterhorn Treasure

Some areas of the dungeon contain treasure. Whenever treasure is called for, roll or choose randomly from the following table:

d%	Treasure
01–04	Black funereal vestments traced with gold (150 gp)
05–08	Black gold fang-shaped ring with single-dose poison reservoir (180 gp)
09–12	Amber serpent figurine (200 gp)
13–16	Crystal flask containing <i>elixir of sneaking</i> (250 gp)
17–20	Crystal flask containing <i>elixir of hiding</i> (250 gp)
21–24	Vial of <i>silversheen</i> (250 gp)
25–28	Gold mask with small obsidian horns (360 gp)
29–32	Snakeskin-wrapped scroll tube containing a 3rd-level divine scroll*
33–36	Gold, wavy-bladed ceremonial dagger inlaid with red garnets (500 gp)
37–40	A <i>bead of blessing</i> (600 gp)
41–44	Silver scroll tube (10 gp) containing a 4th-level divine scroll*
45–48	Gold serpent-shaped bracer inlaid with jade (750 gp)
49–52	Golden necklace with eight dangling jade orbs (900 gp)
53–56	<i>Salve of slipperiness</i> in a snakeskin-wrapped flask (1,000 gp)
57–60	Crystal flask containing <i>elixir of fire breath</i> (1,100 gp)
61–64	Ivory scroll tube (50 gp) containing a 5th-level divine scroll*
65–68	Gold circlet with black gold inlay and amber tracery (1,200 gp)
69–72	Fire opal pendant on a fine gold chain (1,400 gp)
73–76	Platinum necklace with dangling jet fangs (1,500 gp)
77–80	Platinum bracelet set with three black pearls (2,000 gp)
81–84	Snakeskin tube containing <i>oil of magic vestment</i> +4 (2,400 gp)
85–88	Golden headdress with emerald and golden topaz inlays (2,500 gp)
89–92	Golembane scarab (2,500 gp)
93–96	<i>Necklace of fireballs</i> , type II (2,700 gp)
97–100	Gold ring set with rubies (3,500 gp)

*Roll on Table 7–24: Divine Spell Scrolls in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

Search +10, Sense Motive +12, Spot +14, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks).

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Demodand.

Trap: The pit traps in areas 4A and 4B are well hidden. When the appropriate lever in area 4C is pulled, the lid of each pit opens in the middle, dropping creatures into the pit. Pit 4A is 30 feet deep and filled with whirling blades the size of longswords that shred anything that falls in, dealing slashing damage each round; these blades are treated as magic weapons for the purposes of penetrating damage reduction. Pit 4B is 30 feet deep and has large stone rollers 10 feet down (and 10 feet above the pit's floor) that pulverize anything that drops in; creatures that survive the rollers land on a bed of poisoned iron spikes.

➤ **Whirling Blades Pit (area 4A):** CR 12; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 22 Reflex save avoids; 30 ft. deep

(3d6, fall); whirling blades every round (10d8+10, slashing, Reflex DC 25 half); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 30.

➤ **Grinding Poison Spike Pit (area 4B):** CR 12; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 22 Reflex save avoids; stone rollers (10d6, bludgeoning) and 30 ft. deep (3d6, fall); pit spikes (Atk +15 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 plus poison each); poison (purple worm poison, DC 24 Fortitude save resists, initial damage 1d6 Str, secondary damage 2d6 Str); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 30.

Development: Triggering either pit trap alerts the blackguard in area 9.

5. SERPENTINE URNS (EL 10)

The walls of this catacomb are filled with 5-foot-deep alcoves. Within each alcove stands an ornate, 4-foot-tall, varnished ceramic urn. The urns are painted with images of serpents, scimitars, and yuan-ti dressed in ceremonial armor.

These catacombs contain yuan-ti burial urns. Each sealed urn weighs 180 pounds and contains the desiccated remains of a pureblood or halfblood yuan-ti priest or warrior encased in sawdust. Clay canopic jars placed at the bottom of the urn contain the yuan-ti's vital organs (heart, liver, and so forth). Each mummified yuan-ti is buried with some Treasure. Opening or smashing an urn also triggers a Trap.

☛ **Magically Treated Ceramic Burial Urn:** 1 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 10; cold and fire resistance 10; break DC 25.

Trap: Opening or smashing an urn triggers a *wail of the banshee* spell that affects all creatures within a 40-foot-radius spread. An urn can be lifted and moved without activating the trap.

↗ **Wail of the Banshee Trap:** CR 10; magic device; touch trigger; no reset; spell effect (*wail of the banshee*, caster level 17th, DC 23 Fortitude negates); multiple targets (kills up to 17 creatures); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34.

Treasure: Each urn has a 20% chance of containing a valuable item. If the characters smash or search an urn, consult the Shatterhorn Treasure sidebar to determine what, if anything, they find.

6. BROKEN URNS (EL 10)

This unlit passage contains ten 5-foot-deep alcoves. Large ceramic urns occupy eight of the alcoves, and the two remaining alcoves contain shattered urns and sawdust. To the north, the tunnel has collapsed.

This area is similar in all respects to area 5, including the presence of several *wail of the banshee* traps on the urns. The eight intact burial urns contain the mummified remains of yuan-ti packed in sawdust; these urns are trapped and may contain treasure. The southernmost smashed urn used to contain a yuan-ti mohrg guardian, but Ssythar Nahazir took command of the creature and moved it to area 1. The western smashed urn wasn't sealed properly and cracked open on its own, spilling its contents onto the floor. Characters searching the refuse find the moldering, desiccated remains of a pureblood yuan-ti priest with no valuables. Five canopic jars contain-

ing the dead priest's shriveled vital organs lie amid the remnants of the urn.

7. EMPTY ROOMS

Much of the plaster has broken off the walls here, revealing the black stone underneath. These rooms are otherwise empty. This area might make a suitable redoubt for characters that need to regroup and heal.

8. PREPARATORY CHAMBER

This torchlit chamber contains two oval stone tables with built-in shelves beneath them. The shelves are lined with clay jars and tattered funereal vestments and wrappings. The murals on the walls depict yuan-ti burial rituals: the removal of vital organs, the placement of the organs in clay canopic jars, the mummification of the body, the placement of the remains in a large ceramic urn, and the ritual sealing of the urn.

Yuan-ti priests used the stone tables during mummification rituals. The shelves under the tables hold empty clay canopic jars (for storing vital organs) and black funeral wrappings.

9. SERPENTINE HALL (EL 16)

The four innermost pillars of this chamber bear lit torches in serpentine sconces, and the flickering light casts sinister shadows upon the walls, ceiling, and floor. Some of the pillars are cracked and crumbling, revealing slick black stone beneath the plaster murals. The murals depict masses of writhing snakes and yuan-ti clad in black robes and golden armor.

One of the northwest pillars (marked "S" on the map) bears a mural of a masked pureblood yuan-ti priest (Ssythar Vassha) dressed in black robes and wearing a golden coronet. In one hand the



ALURAD SORIZAN

yuan-ti priest clutches a green viper, and the other hand is outstretched and has an eyeball set into its palm. A successful Search check (DC 25) reveals that the palm's eye can be depressed. Pressing the eye causes the entire pillar to sink into the floor. The pillar drops 25 feet, revealing a secret vault underneath (area 10). The pillar stops descending once it becomes flush with the floor of the secret chamber. The top of the pillar contains a visible stone plate; if stepped on, the plate causes the pillar to ascend to the floor level of area 9. One round later, the pillar rises to the ceiling. Anything atop the pillar when it reaches the ceiling is crushed for 20d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 15 half). Any creature still in area 10 when the pillar rises is effectively trapped there, as there's no way to lower the pillar from within the secret vault.

Creatures: In addition to the sinking pillar, this hall contains one of the Cagewrights—a blackguard named Alurad Sorizan. Until recently, Alurad spent most of his time disposing of adventurers sent to Cauldron to investigate the trouble there. His morbid fascination with slaughter and evisceration puts off

most of the other Cagewrights. He wears a cloak and gloves made of stitched human skin, and he keeps the ripped-out hearts of his victims in his quarters (area 12). Alurad has shaggy black hair, blood-red tattoo patterns on his face, and the unholy symbol of Erythnul is prominently displayed on his shield. Alurad and his fiendish dire badger servant hide behind the two easternmost pillars, ready to leap out and attack the characters when they least expect it.

A strange madness has overcome Alurad Sorizan. He believes he is Adimarchus, former ruler of a layer of the Abyss known as Occipitus. The PCs may have visited this realm in "Test of the Smoking Eye" (DUNGEON #107). If one or more of the characters acquired the Sign of the Smoking Eye template as a result of completing that adventure, "Adimarchus" senses that they have been to his lost realm and says, "You dare to steal for me? Occipitus is mine, not yours, and so it will always be." He focuses all of his attacks on such characters and orders his fiendish dire badger servant to attack them as well.

➤ **Alurad Sorizan, Male Human Cleric 6/Fighter 2/Blackguard 8 (Erythnul);** CR 16; Medium humanoid (human); HD 6d8+12 plus 2d10+4 plus 8d10+16; hp 164; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +14; Grp +18; Atk +20 melee (1d10+5/17–20, +1 bastard sword of mighty cleaving) or +14 ranged (1d4+4/19–20 plus poison, dagger); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d10+5/17–20, +1 bastard sword of mighty cleaving) or +14 ranged (1d4+4/19–20 plus poison, dagger); SA poison use, rebuke undead 4/day (1d20+3, affects 2d6+13 HD), smite good 2/day (+1 to attack, +8 damage), sneak attack +2d6, spells; SQ *detect good*, evasion, fiendish servant; AL CE; SV Fort +17, Ref +5, Will +12; Str 18, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +1 (+3 acting), Hide +18, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (religion) +4.

Feats: Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Fiendish Servant*, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Persuasive, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword).

*See the Appendix for details on this feat.

Language: Common.

Blackguard Spells Prepared: 1st—*corrupt weapon*, *cure light wounds*, *magic weapon*; 2nd—*eagle's splendor*, *inflict moderate wounds* (DC 14); 3rd—*cure serious wounds*; 4th—*freedom of movement*.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/4+1/4+1/2+1; save DC 12 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *light*, *read magic*; 1st—*bless*, *divine favor*, *doom* (DC 13), *protection from good*^D (DC 13), *shield of faith*; 2nd—*align weapon*, *bull's strength*, *cure moderate wounds*, *death knell* (DC 14), *invisibility*^D; 3rd—*invisibility purge*, *nondetection*^D (DC 15).

D: Domain spell. **Domains:** Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

Possessions: +2 improved shadow full plate, +2 heavy steel shield, +1 bastard sword of mighty cleaving, ring of evasion, Ring of Thirteen, 2 potions of extended bear's endurance, 2 potions of heroism, 3 poisoned daggers (deathblade poison; injury, Fortitude DC 20 resists; initial damage 1d6 Con, secondary damage 2d6 Con), cloak and gloves made of stitched human skin, iron key (unlocks chest in area 12).

➤ **Fleshripper, Fiendish Dire Badger:** CR —; Medium magical beast (augmented animal, extraplanar); HD 9d8+36 plus 3; hp 92; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.; AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +6; Grp +9; Atk +9 melee (1d6+3, claw); Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+3, 2 claws) and +4 melee (1d8+1, bite); SA blood bond (+2 on attack rolls, checks, and saves if he sees Alurad being threatened or harmed), rage, smite good 1/day (+9 damage against good foe); SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., empathic link, improved evasion, low-light vision, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10, scent, speak with blackguard, SR 14; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Listen +9, Spot +9.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Natural Attack (bite, claw), Toughness, Track^B.

Rage (Ex): If Fleshripper takes damage in combat, it flies into a rage on its next turn. Alurad can snap Fleshripper

out of its rage with a successful Handle Animal check (DC 20), but it cannot end its rage voluntarily. While raging, its statistics are as follows: hp 110; AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Grp +11; Atk +11 melee (1d6+5, claw); Full Atk +11 melee (1d6+5, 2 claws) and +6 melee (1d8+2, bite); SV Fort +12; Str 21, Con 23.

Tactics: Given sufficient preparation time, Alurad quaffs a *potion of extended bear's endurance* (lasts 6 minutes) and a *potion of heroism* (lasts 30 minutes), then casts *freedom of movement* (80 minutes), *corrupt weapon* (on his sword; lasts 8 minutes), *bull's strength* (lasts 6 minutes), *shield of faith* (lasts 6 minutes), and *divine favor* (lasts 10 rounds) on himself. The potions and *divine favor* spell modify Alurad's statistics as follows: hp 196; AC 27, touch 13, flat-footed 27; Grp +20; Atk +26 melee (1d10+9/17–20, +1 bastard sword of mighty cleaving) or +18 ranged (1d4+8/19–20 plus poison, dagger); Full Atk +26/+21/+16 melee (1d10+9/17–20, +1 bastard sword of mighty cleaving) or +18 ranged (1d4+8/19–20 plus poison, dagger); SV Fort +19, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 22, Con 18; Bluff +11, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Hide +20, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (religion) +6.

Upon confronting foes, Alurad threatens to carve out their hearts and add them to his "altar" (see area 12). If Fleshripper is killed or Alurad is reduced to 30 or fewer hit points, he flees and hides in area 12, casting *nondetection* on himself and making his final stand there.

10. SUNKEN VAULT (EL 9)

This unlit 15-foot-square room contains four statues in alcoves. The statues depict halfblood yuan-ti warriors with humanoid bodies and serpentine heads. Each statue holds a stone chest in its claws, and the front of each chest is carved with a demonic face.

One can reach this vault via the "sinking pillar" in the chamber above (see area 9 for details). The statues are handsomely carved yet nonmagical. The stone chests are actually part of the statues, but they can



be opened and hold the Treasure. All of the chests are fitted with a locking mechanism (Open Lock DC 30), and the southern chest is trapped (see Trap, below).

◆ **Stone Yuan-ti Statues:** 6 feet tall; hardness 8; hp 150 (30 for stone chest); break DC 30 (25 for stone chest).

Trap: Touching the southern chest causes it to expel an *incendiary cloud* spell that fills the room.

↗ **Incendiary Cloud Trap:** CR 9; magic device; touch trigger; no reset; spell effect (*incendiary cloud*, caster level 15th, 4d6/round for 15 rounds, Reflex DC 22 half; Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33).

Treasure: The western chest holds 1,500 pp. The northern chest contains ten eye agates (10 gp each), six carnelians (50 gp each), four deep green spinels (100 gp each), four violet garnets (500 gp), two white opals (1,000 gp each), and a fire elemental gem (2,250 gp). The eastern chest contains 1d4 items rolled randomly on the Shatterhorn Treasure table (see page 68). The southern chest contains a *serpent's eye* on a green velvet cushion; the *serpent's eye* has 7 charges

remaining. The *serpent's eye* is detailed in the Appendix.

11. STATUE OF SSYTHAR VASSHA (EL 15)

A 6-foot-tall black marble statue stands at the end of this 15-foot-wide hall, facing west. It depicts a humanoid creature with subtle snakelike features clad in a black robe and wearing a coronet. In one outstretched hand it grasps a viper, and its other outstretched hand has an unblinking eye set into its palm, staring blindly down the passageway. Behind the statue is a 5-foot-deep empty alcove.

The statue depicts the pureblood yuan-ti prophet Ssythar Vassha. The statue of Ssythar Vassha is fixed to the floor and cannot be lifted or pushed over without breaking it. However, a successful Search check (DC 20) reveals that the statue stands atop a circular flagstone with built-in rollers that enable the statue to be turned to face any direction. If the statue is turned to face

the eastern alcove, the back wall of the alcove rises into the ceiling. This "back wall" is actually a hollowed-out 10-foot-high, 5-foot-wide, 5-foot-thick stone shell. As it rises into the ceiling, it reveals the Creature and area 13 beyond.

◆ **Statue of Ssythar Vassha:** 6 feet tall; hardness 8; hp 150; break DC 30.

Creatures: The hollow stone shell that seals off area 13 contains a 9-foot-long crystal snake (a unique golemlike construct) that's released once the shell rises into the ceiling. The transparent crystal snake is filled with bright energy that illuminates a 15-foot radius and provides shadowy illumination out to a 30-foot radius. Once released, it attacks any non-yuan-ti it encounters.

↗ **Crystal Snake:** CR 15; Medium construct; HD 18d10+20; hp 165; Init +7; Spd 40 ft.; AC 35, touch 17, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +9; Grp +14; Atk/Full Atk +14 melee (1d8+7, bite) or +16 ranged touch (5d8, *searing light*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA destructive resonance, *searing light*; SQ construct traits, DR 15/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., death burst,

fast healing 5, immunity to magic, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +13, Will +6; Str 20, Dex 24, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Destructive Resonance (Su): The crystal snake can emit a low-frequency hum as a free action. At the beginning of its turn, it deals 6d6 points of sonic damage to any creature within 10 feet of it. A successful Fortitude save (DC 19) halves the damage; the save DC is Constitution-based.

Searing Light (Su): As a standard action, the crystal snake can fire a beam of *searing light*, as the spell with a range of 250 feet. Once the crystal snake uses its *searing light* ray, it can't use it again until 1d4 rounds later. The snake must succeed on a ranged touch attack to strike its target. A creature struck by the blazing ray takes 5d8 points of damage (10d6 if the target is undead, 10d8 if the target is an undead creature particularly vulnerable to sunlight, 5d6 if the target is a construct or inanimate object).

Death Burst (Su): When the crystal snake is reduced to 0 hit points, it explodes in a 20-foot-radius burst of searing radiance that deals 40 points of damage to every creature in the area (60 points if the target is undead, 80 points if the target is an undead creature particularly vulnerable to sunlight, or 30 points if the target is a construct or inanimate object). A successful Reflex save (DC 19) halves the damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): The crystal snake is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance except spells and effects with the sonic descriptor (such as *shatter*, *shout*, and *greater shout*).

12. ALURAD'S CHAMBER

This large chamber has slimy black walls with bits of painted plaster clinging to them. Around the base of the walls lie the broken fragments of murals. Four pieces of furniture rest in the middle of the room: a wooden cot, a monstrous wooden chest with clawlike feet, a table covered with clay jars and lit candles, and a wooden chair draped with skin.

The furnishings belong to the blackguard Alurad Sorizan (see area 9). The cot is where he sleeps. The wooden chest has a built-in superior lock (Open Lock DC 40) and contains the Treasure. The table holds twelve clay canopic jars splattered with dried blood, each one containing the heart of one of Alurad's past victims. Coupled with the lit candles, the table serves as a morbid altar to Erythnul (the god of slaughter). The flesh draping the chair belongs to a former comrade whom Alurad betrayed, killed, and skinned.

Treasure: Alurad's chest contains trophies taken from victims of his wrath, including an adamantite battleaxe, a +1 *axiomatic scimitar* wrapped in human skin, a +1 *evil outsider bane spiked chain*, a +1 *shocking burst kukri*, four +1 *cold iron arrows*, three +2 *bolts of wounding*, a scroll of *sympathetic vibration*, and a *lesser rod of empower metamagic*.

13. TOMB OF SSYTHAR-VASSHA (EL 18)

The walls of this secret vault are painted with murals depicting yuan-ti warriors in golden armor marching toward the east end of the room. Some of the plaster has cracked and fallen away, revealing wet black walls underneath. Two thick pillars support the 20-foot-high ceiling. Serpentine sconces built into the pillars hold flaming torches.

This tomb was built to hold the remains of Ssythar Vassha, a powerful yuan-ti cleric of Merrshaulk. Several years ago, a half-elf vampire named Mhad, while scouring the dungeon for a suitable lair, stumbled upon this crypt. She removed Vassha's mummified corpse from its resting place, unceremoniously scattered his bones around the base of the sarcophagus, and took it as her own. A small hole chiseled into the lid allows Mhad to enter and leave the sarcophagus in gaseous form. Lifting the lid requires a DC 23 Strength check.

When the Cagewrights arrived at Shatterhorn, they struck up a tenuous alliance with Mhad, inviting her to join their cause. Hunted by powerful enemies and desperately seeking allies,

the vampire reluctantly agreed. Recent events in Cauldron have soured Mhad on the alliance, and she has retreated to her crypt to consider other options. The vampire Mhad enters and leaves the crypt by assuming gaseous form and slipping through a crack in a wall between area 12 and area 13, thereby circumventing the crystalline snake that lurks in the hollow pillar between here and area 11.

Four everburning torches are mounted to the pillars and can be removed easily. They fill the room with flickering orange light and wavering shadows.

Creatures: Unless she was destroyed in "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111), Mhad is resting inside the sarcophagus, watched over by her undead minions. Mhad's shadow companion floats above the sarcophagus, but as soon as it detects intruders, it sinks into the sarcophagus and wakes its mistress. Mhad is swathed in a black shroud that is, in fact, a dread wraith called Hate. Both the vampire and the dread wraith emerge the following round, while the shadow hides in the sarcophagus (attacking the first creature that peers inside). If Mhad was destroyed in "Lords of Oblivion," she and her incorporeal companions are not present.

➤ **Mhad, Female half-elf vampire Monk 9/Shadowdancer 4:** hp 90; *Monster Manual* 251.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +3, +2 *keen kama*, +1 *frost sling* with 10 bullets, *ring of protection* +2.

➤ **Shadow:** hp 19; *Monster Manual* 221.

➤ **Hate (Dread Wraith):** hp 104; *Monster Manual* 258.

Tactics: If she has time to rise from her undead slumber, Mhad uses her hide in plain sight ability and crouches atop the sarcophagus, ready to spring into action. She uses Spring Attack to leap forward, strike once with her +2 *keen kama*, and leap back onto the sarcophagus. If her enemies close to within melee range, she attacks with a flurry of unarmed strikes, coupling her first attack with her Stunning Fist feat (Fortitude DC 22 negates) and using the sarcophagus as higher ground (+1 bonus on attack rolls). She can use this feat ten times per day. Against ranged foes, she uses her *dominate* ability (Will DC 17 negates), her +1

frost sling, or her children of the night ability to call up 1d6+1 rat swarms.

Trap: Lifting the sarcophagus lid triggers a trap. Scythelike blades hidden in the sides and seams of the sarcophagus slash madly about, striking any creatures standing in adjacent squares (Reflex DC 24 half). The scythe blades are coated in a supernatural yuan-ti poison that saps all moisture out of living creatures, turning its victims into desiccated husks. The trap resets when the lid is put back into place.

➤ **Poisoned Scythe Trap:** CR 12; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset (trap resets when lid is replaced); scythe blades (+20 melee, 1d4 blades per target for 2d4+5/×4 plus poison each); poison (DC 24 Fortitude save resists, initial and secondary damage 2d6 Con); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

Treasure: In addition to her gear, Mhad keeps several items of value in the sarcophagus, hidden in a secret compartment (DC 25 Search check to locate). These items include a *periapt of wound closure*, a *python rod*, a scroll of *blade barrier*, a scroll of *summon monster VII*, a *potion of rage*, a *potion of greater magic fang* (+2), a coffer containing 260 pp, and 1d4 items from the Shatterhorn Treasures table (see page 68).

14. ILLUSORY PILLARS (EL 18)

Two of the pillars in this hall are illusory, created by *permanent image* spells (caster level 18th). A *true seeing* spell pierces the illusion and reveals the Creatures standing “inside” them. The illusory pillars can also be detected after a thorough inspection of the pillars (Will DC 23 disbelief).

Creatures: Two half-iron golems stand within the illusory pillars, stepping out to attack characters who enter areas 15 or 16. The Cagewrights experimented on two half-orc fighters, promising them great power. Instead, they joined iron plates and metal limbs to their flesh and transformed them into obedient constructs.

➤ **Krojen and Tyrrx, Male Half-Iron Golem Half-Orc Fighter 13:** CR 16; Medium construct; HD 13d10+20; hp 129, 113; Init +4; Spd 30 ft. (can’t run); AC 33, touch 10, flat-footed 33; Base Atk +13; Grp +21; Atk +24 melee (1d8+14/19–

20/×3, +3 adamantine battleaxe); Full Atk +24/+19/+14 melee (1d8+14/19–20/×3, +3 adamantine battleaxe); SA breath weapon; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine, magic immunity, rust vulnerability; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 27, Dex 10, Con —, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Skills: Climb +16, Jump +16.

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Greater Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Greater Weapon Specialization (battleaxe), Iron Will, Improved Initiative, Improved Critical (battleaxe), Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe).

Breath Weapon (Su): As a free action, an iron half-golem can emit a cloud of poisonous gas from its limbs in a 10-foot cone. The cloud lasts 1 round, and the half-golem can emit another cloud once every 1d4+1 rounds (Fortitude DC 16; initial 1d4 Con; secondary 3d4 Con). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): An iron half-golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells function differently against the creature, as noted here. A magical attack that deals electricity damage slows an iron half-golem (as the *slow* spell) for 3 rounds, with no saving throw. A magical attack that deals fire damage breaks any *slow* effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points.

Rust Vulnerability (Ex): An iron half-golem is affected by rust attacks, such as that of a rust monster or a *rusting grasp* spell.

Possessions: +4 studded leather armor, +1 tower shield, +3 adamantine battleaxe.

15. SECRET MANSION (EL 18)

The north and south walls of this room are carved with 2-foot-high niches, two per wall. A 1-foot-tall gold statuette of a yuan-ti abomination stands in each niche. An 8-foot-diameter, semicircular stone basin emerges from the eastern wall op-

posite the doorway, its sides carved with serpentine engravings. Water pours out of a stone snake’s head carved above the basin, filling it.

The basin once served as a yuan-ti bath. A drain at the bottom of the basin allows the water to bleed away, and a *decanter of endless water* embedded in the wall provides a steady water supply. The gold statuettes are described under Treasure, below.

Characters who can see invisible objects or have *true seeing* see a shimmering portal, 4 feet wide and 8 feet high, in the middle of the room. The portal is the hidden doorway to a *Mordenkainen’s magnificent mansion* spell, but the characters can’t pass through it. Xokek, the shadar-kai Cagewright, has sealed himself and two death slaadi inside the mansion. If the mansion is successfully dispelled, Xokek and the slaadi appear instantly in the middle of the room.

Creatures: Xokek hates the world and everyone in it. He struggles with the same shadow curse that afflicts all shadar-kai (who are also known as “shadow fey”). Xokek joined the Cagewrights because their apocalyptic vision of a world enslaved by the fiendish hordes appealed to him, and he quickly became a member of the “inner circle” by demonstrating his glaring misanthropy and subtle guile. He remains locked away in his *Mordenkainen’s magnificent mansion* and has forbidden entry to all others except his two death slaadi companions, who assume the forms of shadar-kai monks.

Xokek, like all shadar-kai, is a graceful, stealthy fey with gray skin and black eyes. He stands slightly over 5 feet tall, has long black hair, and wears dark clothing that seems to pull the shadows around him. The death slaadi appear as unarmed shadar-kai wearing body-tight black leather.

➤ **Death Slaadi (2):** hp 142 each; *Monster Manual* 231.

➤ **Xokek, Male Shadar-kai Illusionist 9/Rogue 6:** CR 16; Medium fey (extraplanar); HD 3d6+3 plus 9d4+9 plus 6d6+6 plus 3; hp 76; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +9; Grp +9; Atk +13 melee (1d6+1/19–20, +1 short sword) or +13 ranged (1d6/×3,

masterwork shortbow); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (1d6+1/19–20, +1 short sword) or +13/+8 ranged (1d6/x3, masterwork shortbow); SA sneak attack +4d6, spells; SQ displacement (50% miss chance), evasion, hide in plain sight, shadow curse, superior low-light vision, toad familiar, trap sense +2, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +14, Will +10; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 13; *Fiend Folio* 150.

Hide in Plain Sight (Su): Xokek can use the Hide skill even while being observed, as long as Xokek is not illuminated by natural daylight, the *daylight* spell, or a similar magic light. He can hide himself from view in the open without having anything to actually hide behind.

Shadow Curse (Su): Any time Xokek is stunned, dazed, staggered, or unconscious (other than from natural sleep), he must make a successful Will save (DC 15) or gain a negative level. The negative level cannot be removed until he returns to the Plane of Shadow and transfixes his soul to his body again with a *greater restoration* spell. On the Material Plane, he must use a *wish* or *miracle* spell to restore his soul. When afflicted with the shadow curse, Xokek cannot be raised from the dead or *resurrected*, and cannot gain experience. On the Plane of Shadow, Xokek ameliorates the effects of the shadow curse and suffers no ill effects; however, if he leaves the plane without restoring his soul, the shadow curse returns. Xokek does not wear a *gal-ralan* (a magic armband many shadar-kai wear to protect themselves from the shadow curse, but at the cost of a point of Constitution).

Superior Low-Light Vision (Ex): Xokek can see four times as far as a human in low-light conditions.

Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +10, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +1 (+3 acting), Escape Artist +12, Hide +15 (+25 in shadowy light), Intimidate +3, Jump +2, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Listen +18, Move Silently +18, Search +9, Spellcraft +17, Spot +18, Survival +5 (+7 underground or on other planes), Tumble +13, Use Rope +3 (+5 bindings).



XOKEK

Feats: Alertness, Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (illusion), Spell Penetration, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Slaad, Sylvan.

Spells Prepared (5/6/6/5/3/2; save DC 13 + spell level, DC 14 + spell level for illusions): 0—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *read magic*; 1st—*disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *true strike*; 2nd—*cat's grace*, *darkness*, *fox's cunning*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *see invisibility*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *fireball*, *major image*, *shadow dagger** (2); 4th—*silent haste*, *phantasmal killer*, *shadow puppeteer**; 5th—*Mordenkainen's private sanctum* (already cast), *silent shadow puppeteer**.

*These new spells are detailed in the Appendix.

Spellbook: 0—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*, *open/close*, *read magic*; 1st—*color spray*, *disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage*

armor, *magic missile*, *shield*, *true strike*, *ventriloquism*; 2nd—*blur*, *cat's grace*, *darkness*, *fox's cunning*, *invisibility*, *minor image*, *mirror image*, *misdirection*, *see invisibility*, *sepia snake sigil*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *fireball*, *haste*, *illusory wall*, *invisibility sphere*, *major image*, *shadow dagger**; 4th—*dimension door*, *greater invisibility*, *phantasmal killer*, *rainbow pattern*, *shadow puppeteer**, *wall of fire*; 5th—*cloudkill*, *greater dispel magic*, *mirage arcana*, *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*, *teleport*.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +3, +1 short sword, major cloak of displacement, blackstone rune (1 charge remaining; see Appendix), Ring of Thirteen, scroll of *cloudkill*, scroll of *greater dispel magic*, scroll of *teleport*, masterwork dagger, masterwork shortbow, 20 arrows, spellbook protected by *sepia snake sigil* (Reflex DC 15 negates), spell component pouch, silver cage pendant (15 gp).

Tactics: The slaadi stand between Xokek and his enemies. They rely on their natural attacks, stun ability, and po-

tent spell-like abilities, and if one slaad dies, the other uses its summon slaad ability to bring forth reinforcements (1–2 blue slaadi, 60% chance of success). Meanwhile, Xokek uses his hide in plain sight ability while casting silent *haste* and silent *shadow puppeteer* (in that order), followed by *shadow dagger*. He looks for opportunities to flank opponents and make sneak attacks using his *shadow dagger*. Xokek relies on his *major cloak of displacement* to protect him from attacks and uses his scroll of *teleport* to escape if reduced to 6 or fewer hit points.

Treasure: The four niches each contain a solid gold statuette of a ruby-eyed, serpent-bodied yuan-ti abomination wielding a pair of scimitars or a longbow. Each statuette is worth 1,500 gp. Digging the *decanter of endless water* out of the wall takes 10 minutes of work, or a spell like *stone shape*.

16. SERPENT SENTINEL (EL 5)

This room is empty except for the serpentine wall murals, some pieces of netting in the corners, and some iron hooks jutting from the ceiling. A sinister, serpent-like hissing begins as soon as a living creature approaches within 20 feet of this room. This room once served as sleeping quarters for the yuan-ti priests. They used to hang hammock nets from the ceiling hooks, and a few traces of their old hammocks lie strewn in the corners.

Trap: A permanent *serpent sentinel* spell (caster level 18th) has been cast in the middle 5-foot square of this room. The *serpent sentinel* spell is similar in all respects to the *Mordenkainen's faithful hound* spell, except that it manifests as a hissing serpent instead of a barking dog.

17. SLITHERING HALL

This 15-foot-wide hall stretches from east to west. The plaster wall murals have broken away in places, revealing slimy black stone beyond. Most of the murals show yuan-ti engaging in morbid rituals or hunting humans in the forest. One particularly graphic mural along the southern wall depicts a 25-foot-long serpent with maroon scales, a pair of arms, and the vague shape of a human torso. In place of a head, six long serpents project from the top of its torso. Yuan-ti priests wearing black robes and golden masks genuflect before the horrid abomination. Wrapped in the creature's coils are several human sacrifices.

The large mural on the south wall depicts a yuan-ti anathema, revered by the yuan-ti as an incarnation of their deity (see *Fiend Folio*, page 193). The eastern end of the hall has collapsed, and the western end holds a pair of heavy iron portcullises (see area 19).

18. CAGEWRIGHTS QUARTERS

This torchlit room contains four beds draped with blankets and furs. The west, north, and east walls each bear a mural depicting a loathsome serpent with a black body banded in swaths of bright crimson, its head vaguely human, with stringy hair and yellow fangs.

Four of the resident Cagewrights (Nahazir, Kyan, Viirdran, and Embril) use this room as sleeping quarters, as well as a place to meditate or prepare spells.

The wall murals depict three spirit nagas, and each one radiates magic. Any creature

that touches a naga mural as a standard action gains the benefits of a particular spell (caster level 9th): *invisibility* (west mural), *cure light wounds* (north mural), *shield of faith* (east mural). Each mural can be used seven times per day. Destroying or defacing a mural (hardness 2; hp 5) also destroys its magical property.

Development: If Ssythar Nahazir fled from area 1, he can be found here. He uses the northern mural to heal himself, then uses the other murals as needed. If she survived "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111), Thifrane Rhiavadi is here as well; see that adventure for Thifrane's statistics.

19. PORTCULLISES

A heavy iron portcullis blocks this archway. A stone lever juts from the wall of an adjacent alcove, and pulling up on the lever raises the portcullis. The stone lever is too heavy for a *mage hand* spell to move, but an *unseen servant* or *telekinesis* works. A creature with more than a 5-foot reach can also lift the lever from the south side of the portcullis, but squeezing an arm through the bars to reach the lever requires a successful Escape Artist check (DC 22).

❖ **Iron Portcullis:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Lift DC 25; Break DC 25.

20. TEMPLE OF MERRSHAULK (EL 18)

This is some sort of temple, its walls covered with murals of gigantic, entwined black and gold snakes, its ceiling 30 feet high. A 10-foot-high stone balcony clings to the north wall and overlooks the rest of the chamber. Flanking the balcony are two stone braziers carved with serpentine motifs. To the south,

RUNES OF THE EGG OF MERRSHAULK

Rune	Rune Name	Spell	Effect (Duration)
1	Arrythar	<i>Death ward</i>	Immunity to death spells and negative energy (1d6 hours)
2	Dessath	<i>Spell resistance</i>	Spell resistance 32 (1d6 hours)
3	Fyrraess	<i>Resist energy</i>	Resistance to acid 10 (1d6 hours)
4	Kjaras-eth	<i>True seeing</i>	<i>True seeing</i> (1d6 hours)
5	Mhavaess	<i>Resist energy</i>	Resistance to electricity 10 (1d6 hours)
6	Thysstrune	<i>Stoneskin</i>	Damage reduction 10/adamantine (1d6 hours)
7	Uraess	<i>Resist energy</i>	Resistance to fire 10 (1d6 hours)
8	Vasshaess*	<i>Teleport without error</i>	Tracer teleported into the egg; Will DC 22 negates (instantaneous)
9	Yutharaess	<i>Resist energy</i>	Resistance to cold 10 (1d6 hours)
10	Z'thareth	<i>Heal</i>	Heals up to 150 hp (instantaneous)

*See the Trap section for details.

between some thick pillars, rests a 6-foot-wide, 9-foot-tall black stone egg carved with strange runes. The egg rests atop a 2-foot-high stone base shaped like a claw, holding the egg in place.

An *unhallow* spell (caster level 9th) wards this chamber and area 21 above. Creatures in the room gain the benefits of magic circle against good. All turning checks made to turn undead take a -4 penalty, and turning checks to rebuke undead gain a +4 profane bonus (spell resistance does not apply to this effect). Evil creatures in the area also gain the benefit of a *freedom of movement* spell.

The black egg is a magically treated, 8,000-pound stone ovoid called the Egg of Merrshaulk. The runes etched across its surface grant magical powers to anyone who traces them (caster level 20th). The egg bears ten runes in all, and tracing a rune (a full-round action) causes it to glow for 6 hours, during which time the rune's power cannot be invoked again. Each rune bestows a different spell-like effect upon the tracer, as noted on the Runes of the Egg of Merrshaulk table.

The Cagewrights in the temple (see Creatures, below) may avail themselves of the egg's powers. If they hear enemies approaching, they trace one or more of the runes to gain their power (in addition to preparing spells).

The walls south of the black egg are adorned with life-sized murals depicting pureblood yuan-ti priests wearing black veils and clutching silver staffs shaped like coiled serpents. One of the southernmost pillars contains a secret door leading to a 5-foot-wide, 20-foot shaft with a stone ladder (see Dungeon Features for more information). The ladder climbs 10 feet to area 21.

Creatures: Two Cagewrights and two farastu demodands can be found here. The first Cagewright is an elf arcane archer named Kyan Winterstrike, and she stands next to the Egg of Merrshaulk. The other, a dark elf eldritch knight named Viirدران Daraqor, stands on the balcony. A few months ago, they were bitter rivals, and now, inexplicably, they are madly in love with one another. The other surviving Cagewrights speculate that Kyan's and Viirدران's apparent insanity may

have something to do with the Egg of Merrshaulk, when in fact they have been touched by the madness of Adimarchus. The farastus lurk in the south end of the room, behind the pillars, but emerge to attack when intruders appear.

Kyan has jade green eyes and long, midnight-blue hair held back by an ornate silver headdress. She is otherwise the typical, pale-skinned elven beauty. Viirدران has the black skin, white hair, and sinister bearing common to all drow. His eyes flicker and flash like lightning, and he wears tight-fitting black clothing with weblike patterns. He moves with the dark grace of a hunting spider.

Kyan's statistics assume she has had time to drink her *potion of barkskin* +5 and to cast *shield* and *expeditious retreat*. Likewise, Viirدران's stats assume he has had time to drink his *potion of barkskin* +3, his *potion of bear's endurance*, and to cast *mage armor*, *shield*, and *fox's cunning*.

☛ **Kyan Winterstrike, Female Elf Wizard 1/Fighter 6/Arcane Archer 8:** CR 15; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 1d4+1 plus 6d10+6 plus 8d8+8; hp 75; Init +9; Spd 60 ft.; AC 30, touch 17, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +14; Grp +15; Atk +16 melee (1d8+2/19-20, +1 *longsword*) or +26 ranged (1d8+6/×3 plus 1d6 cold, +1 *frost longbow* with +4 *arrow*); Full Atk +16/+11/+6 melee (1d8+2/19-20, +1 *longsword*) or +24/+24/+19/+14 ranged (1d8+5/×3 plus 1d6 cold, +1 *frost longbow* with +4 *arrow*); SA enhance arrow +4, *hail of arrows*, *imbue arrow*, *phase arrow*, *seeker arrow*, spells; SQ bat familiar, elf traits, low-light vision; AL CN; SV Fort +15, Ref +16, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Enhance Arrow (Su): Every nonmagical arrow Kyan shoots becomes magical, gaining a +4 enhancement bonus.

Hail of Arrows (Sp): Once per day, in lieu of her regular attacks, Kyan can fire an arrow at each and every target within range, to a maximum of eight targets. Each attack uses her primary attack bonus (+26 ranged), and each enemy may only be targeted by a single arrow.

Imbue Arrow (Sp): Kyan gains the ability to place an area spell upon an arrow. When the arrow is fired, the spell's area is centered on where the arrow lands, even if the spell could normally be centered

only on the caster. This ability allows Kyan to use the arrow's range instead of the spell's range. It takes a standard action to cast the spell and fire the arrow. The arrow must be fired in the round the spell is cast, or the spell is wasted.

Phase Arrow (Sp): Once per day, Kyan can fire an arrow at a target known to her within range, and the arrow travels to the target in a straight path, passing through any nonmagical barrier or wall in its way (a *wall of force*, *wall of fire*, or similar barrier stops the arrow). This ability negates cover, concealment, and armor modifiers, but otherwise the attack is rolled normally. Using this ability is a standard action (and firing the arrow is part of the action).

Seeker Arrow (Sp): Kyan can launch an arrow once per day at a target known to her within range, and the arrow travels to the target, even around corners. This ability negates cover and concealment modifiers, but otherwise the attack is rolled normally. Using this ability is a standard action (and firing the arrow is part of the action).

Skills: Craft (bowmaking) +19, Handle Animal +6, Hide +13, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Listen +14, Move Silently +13, Ride +11, Search +3, Spellcraft +5, Spot +11.

Feats: Alertness^B, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialization (longbow).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven.

Spells Prepared (3/2; save DC 11 + spell level; 10% chance of spell failure): 0—*detect magic*, *light*, *read magic*; 1st—*expeditious retreat*, *shield*.

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*burning hands*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *mount*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*.

Possessions: Mithral chain shirt, silver cage pendant (*lesser amulet of the planes*; see Appendix), +1 *longsword*, +1 *frost longbow*, four quivers with 25 arrows each (100 arrows total), *cloak of resistance* +3, *greater bracers of archery*, *Ring of Thirteen*, 2 *potions of barkskin* (+5), 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, spellbook, silver headdress (250 gp).

☛ **Viirدران Daraqor, Male Drow Fighter 7/Evoker 5/Eldritch Knight 3:** CR 16; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 7d10 plus 5d4 plus 3d6; hp 78 (108 with *bear's endurance*).

KYAN
WINTERSTRIKE



VIIRDAN DARAOOR

ance); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 29, touch 18, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +12; Grp +14; Atk +20 melee (1d6+4/15–20, adamantite rapier or masterwork cold iron rapier) or +19 ranged (1d4, masterwork hand crossbow); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d6+4/15–20, adamantite rapier or masterwork cold iron rapier) or +19 ranged (1d4, masterwork hand crossbow); SA spells; SQ darkvision 120 ft., elf traits, light blindness, spell-like abilities, spell resistance 26, weasel familiar; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +6 (+8 against spells and spell-like abilities); Str 15, Dex 22, Con 10, Int 16 (20 with *fox's cunning*), Wis 8, Cha 12.

Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds Viirdan for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, he is dazzled as long as he remains in the affected area.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 15th.

Skills: Climb +12, Concentration +12, Craft (alchemy) +17, Intimidate +11, Jump +12, Knowledge (arcana) +14 (+16 with *fox's cunning*), Listen +3, Ride +18, Search +5 (+7 with *fox's cunning*), Spellcraft +16 (+18 with *fox's cunning*), Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness^B, Brew Potion, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Disarm, Mobility, Quick Draw, Scribe Scroll, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier), Whirlwind Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon.

Spells Prepared (5/6/5/4/2; caster level 7th; save DC 13 + spell level, or DC 15 + spell level with *fox's cunning*): 0—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*; 1st—*expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile* (2), *shield*, *true strike*; 2nd—*fox's cunning*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility*, *spider climb*, *web*; 3rd—*fireball*, *fly*, *haste*, *protection from energy*; 4th—*enervation*, *ice storm*.

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*alarm*, *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *jump*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *true strike*; 2nd—*alter self*, *fox's cunning*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility*, *shatter*, *spider climb*, *web*; 3rd—*fireball*, *fly*, *greater magic weapon*, *haste*, *hold person*, *lightning bolt*, *protection from energy*; 4th—*dimension door*, *enervation*, *ice storm*, *stone-skin*, *wall of ice*.

Possessions: Adamantine rapier, masterwork cold iron rapier, masterwork hand crossbow, 10 bolts, silver cage pendant (lesser amulet of the planes; see Appendix), gloves of Dexterity +4, Ring of Thirteen, bead of force, potion of barkskin (+3), potion of bear's endurance, scroll of Bigby's interposing hand, scroll of greater magic weapon, scroll of wall of ice, 2 flasks of alchemist's fire, tanglefoot bag, spell component pouch, spellbook emblazoned with lightning bolt patterns and protected by *fire trap* (1d4+7 fire damage; Reflex DC 17 half; Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29).

➤ **Farastu Demodands (2):** hp 80, 74; see area 4.

Tactics: If alerted to the presence of intruders, Kyan and Viirdran trigger the runes on the Egg of Merrshaulk to gain various defensive benefits. If pressed for time, Kyan drinks her *potion of barkskin* +5 (lasts 120 minutes) and casts *expeditious retreat* (lasts 10 rounds) and *shield* (lasts 10 rounds). She stays behind Viirdran, peppering foes with arrows while he engages in melee. Against large numbers of foes, she uses her hail of arrows ability. If things turn sour, she uses her *lesser amulet of the planes* to *plane shift* to Skullrot, on the first layer of Carceri (see "Asylum" in *DUNGEON* #116). She gambles that the characters won't pursue her.

At the first sign of trouble, Viirdran casts *mage armor* on himself (lasts 5 hours), followed by *protection from energy* (fire; lasts 50 minutes), *shield* (lasts 5 minutes) and *fox's cunning* (lasts 5 minutes). Finally, he drinks his *potion of barkskin* +3 (lasts 60 minutes) and *potion of bear's endurance* (lasts 3 minutes). During the first round of combat, he casts *haste* (lasts 5 rounds; affects up to five creatures), then draws his adamantite rapier and leaps into battle. He uses his cold iron rapier instead against any obvious fey or demonic targets. He uses his Mobility feat to increase his AC by +5, taking a -5 penalty on attack rolls. Like Kyan, he flees to Carceri if things go badly.

As soon as foes are detected, the farastus try to summon more demodands (1d4 farastus; 30% chance of success). Whether their attempts fail or succeed, they and any other farastus that appear attack the following round fight until slain. The Cagewrights pull back to give the demodands room to fight, if necessary.

Trap: The "vasshaess" rune carved into the Egg of Merrshaulk is part of a trap. Any Medium or smaller creature tracing the rune is instantly teleported inside the egg (Will DC 22 negates). The egg is hollow and filled with flesh-eating acid. Any creature trapped inside takes 10d6 acid damage per round, and may start to drown. The egg can be smashed open, although doing so disgorges the acid within, spilling it across the floor; any creature standing on the floor within 15

feet of the smashed egg takes 1d6 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 15 half). The acid drains away through cracks in the floor after 1 round. If the black egg is broken, it loses its magical properties.

The egg traps one creature at a time, during which the "vasshaess" rune glows and remains inactive. While the other runes become inert for 6 hours after use, the "vasshaess" stops glowing as soon as the creature trapped inside the egg dies and liquefies.

➤ **Egg of Merrshaulk:** CR 12; magical; touch trigger; automatic reset; teleportation (Will DC 22 negates) into acid (10d6 acid per round); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34; Hardness 16; hp 180; Break DC 39.

Development: If Kyan or Viirdran is killed or incapacitated, the other cries out, "I will avenge you, my love! Our salvation waits for us ... in Carceri!" He or she then flees to Skullrot on Carceri, using a *lesser amulet of the planes*. If the characters pursue the fleeing Cagewright, proceed with "Asylum", the final adventure in the Shattered City Adventure Path.

21. EMBRIL'S JAR (EL 20)

The murals that adorn the walls of this irregularly shaped room depict scenes of yuan-ti engaging in carnal pleasures and offering sacrifices to an aspect of their dread god, who appears as an enormous serpent with multiple heads—some vaguely humanoid, others snakelike. A human woman lies atop a black crystal slab in the middle of the room. An enigmatic figure looms above her—a scrawny white-skinned humanoid dressed in black robes, with a vaguely birdlike face, large dark eyes, a long neck, and six spindly arms. It waves its arms over the woman, as though unleashing some invocation.

An *unhallow* spell (caster level 9th) wards this chamber and area 20 below. Creatures in the room gain the benefits of *magic circle against good*. All turning checks made to turn undead take a -4 penalty, and turning checks to rebuke undead gain a +4 profane bonus (spell resistance does not apply to this effect).

Evil creatures in the area also gain the benefit of a *freedom of movement* spell.

The three ceramic urns contain the mummified remains of three yuan-ti pureblood clerics, their desiccated remains suspended in sawdust, their organs placed in clay canopic jars at the bottom of each urn. Each urn contains a Treasure and also conceals a greater shadow—a dark remnant of the yuan-ti sealed within (see *Creatures*, below).

One of the alcoves contains a stone ladder descending a 5-foot-wide, 10-foot-deep shaft to area 20. A secret door in the northwest alcove conceals a passage leading to area 22.

Creatures: The figure lying on the slab is Embril Aloustinai, a raven-haired beauty. Embril is not dead, but she has transferred her life force into a black *magic jar* gem clutched to her chest. The enigmatic six-armed figure standing next to her is a spell weaver that Embril recently *resurrected*. Normally, spell weavers do not associate or communicate with other races, but this particular spell weaver feels obliged to help Embril realize her plan to free Adimarchus from Carceri, as deranged and malevolent as that plan might seem. The spell weaver communicates with Embril via telepathy.

Hidden inside the ceramic burial urns are three greater shadows, one per urn, all under Embril's command. They emerge if Embril's soulless body or the spell weaver is attacked.

Embril intends to prove her devotion to Nerull with a worthy sacrifice; in her madness, she believes that a suitable sacrifice will allow her to commune with Nerull, unlock the secret of escaping Carceri, and use this knowledge to free Adimarchus from the prison plane. According to the spell weaver, Embril must first deliver a powerful soul to Nerull. She intends to take over a character's body, thus trapping the character's life force in the *magic jar* receptacle. She then *plane shifts* to Carceri with the *magic jar* gem and her body, where she waits for a representative of Nerull to arrive and claim the character's soul. Embril does not keep a familiar, as she sees them as more a liability than a benefit



to her safety. The spell weaver harbors secret doubts that Embriil's plan will succeed, but it uses a *mind blank* spell to conceal such thoughts from Embriil and others.

➤ **Embril Aloustinai, Female Human Wizard 5/Cleric 9/Mystic Theurge 5 (Nerull):** CR 19; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d4+5 plus 9d8+9 plus 5d4+5; hp 66; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +10; Grp +10; Atk +10 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed strike); SA rebuke undead 10/day (1d20+5, affects 2d6+12 HD), spells; SQ —; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +20; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 23, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +9, Concentration +23, Craft (alchemy) +12, Decipher Script +12, Diplomacy +14, Disguise +9 (+11 acting), Hide +6, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (religion) +12,

Knowledge (the planes) +9, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +22.

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wand, Extra Turning, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Improved Counterspell, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Penetration.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Elven.

Wizard Spells Prepared (caster level 10th; 4/5/5/4/4/2; save DC 14 + spell level, DC 16 + spell level for necromancy spells): 0—*detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *read magic*; 1st—*mage armor*, *magic missile* (2), *shield*, *unseen servant*; 2nd—*cat's grace*, *scorching ray* (2), *see invisibility*, *web*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *haste*, *hold person*, *lightning bolt*; 4th—*crushing despair*, *enervation*, *shout*, *stoneskin*; 5th—*magic jar* (already cast), *teleport*.

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*comprehend languages*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*, *protection from good*, *shield*,

Tenser's floating disk, *unseen servant*; 2nd—*arcane lock*, *cat's grace*, *knock*, *locate object*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *owl's wisdom*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility*, *web*; 3rd—*arcane sight*, *dispel magic*, *fly*, *haste*, *hold person*, *lightning bolt*, *phantom steed*, *tongues*; 4th—*crushing despair*, *enervation*, *fear*, *lesser geas*, *shout*, *stoneskin*, *wall of fire*; 5th—*baleful polymorph*, *break enchantment*, *cone of cold*, *feeblemind*, *Leomund's secret chest*, *magic jar*, *teleport*, *wall of stone*.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 14th; 6/7+1/7+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/4+1/2+1; save DC 13 + spell level, DC 15 + spell level for necromancy spells): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect poison*, *guidance*, *purify food and drink*, *resistance*; 1st—*bane*, *cure light wounds* (2), *disguise self*^P, *divine favor* (2), *hide from undead*, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bear's endurance*, *cure moderate wounds* (2), *death knell*^P, *desecrate*, *silence*, *sound burst*, *undetectable alignment*; 3rd—*animate*

dead^D, cure serious wounds, invisibility purge, magic circle against good, prayer, protection from energy; 4th—cure critical wounds (3), death ward^D, neutralize poison, sending; 5th—commune, plane shift, slay living^D, spell resistance, true seeing; 6th—blade barrier, greater dispel magic, heal, harm, mislead^D; 7th—destruction^D (2), greater scrying.

D: Domain spell. Domains: Death (death touch 1/day; damage 9d6), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

Possessions: Headband of intellect +4, periapt of wisdom +6, wand of enervation (16 charges; command word "aghatreth"), mantle of faith, Ring of Thirteen, potion of owl's wisdom, platinum bracelet with 13 cage-shaped charms (750 gp), magic jar gem (containing Embril's life force), silver unholy symbol (500 gp), tiny Leomund's secret chest replica (50 gp; also see Treasure, below), pouch of diamond dust (stoneskin spell component; 250 gp).

➤ **Spell Weaver:** CR 18; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 18d8-18; hp 86; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 31, touch 18, flat-footed 27; Base Atk +18; Grp +16; Atk +17 melee (1d4-2/19-20, masterwork dagger); Full Atk +17/+12/+7/+2 melee (1d4-2/19-20, masterwork dagger); SA spell-like abilities, spells; SQ chromatic disk, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to mind-affecting effects, shielded mind, spell weaving, spell resistance 21, telepathy; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +14, Will +14; Str 6, Dex 19, Con 8, Int 22, Wis 18, Cha 23.

Chromatic Disk (Su): This 6-inch-diameter indestructible disk holds ten additional spell levels of energy that the spell weaver can tap and use as it wishes—the spell weaver could, for example, cast two extra 5th-level spells in a day, or three 3rd-level spells and one 1st-level spell, or any other combination of extra spell levels that adds to ten, so long as no single spell is higher than 5th level. (Two 0-level spells are the equivalent of one 1st-level spell for this purpose.) The spell weaver must hold the disk in one of its hands to tap this energy. The disk recharges itself to full power every night, at midnight. A spell powered by the disk is cast as though the caster had the Spell Focus feat for the spell in question. Only

a spell weaver can use a chromatic disk. If any other creature touches the disk or attempts to use it, it explodes, dealing 4d10 points of damage to everything within a 30-foot radius.

Shielded Mind (Ex): Attempts by creatures of other races to communicate telepathically with the spell weaver, or to read its mind, always fail. A creature making such an attempt must succeed on a Will save (DC 17) or be affected as if by a *confusion* spell (caster level 20th) for 1d6 days. The effect can be *dispelled* or removed with a *heal* spell. This effect does not occur if the spell weaver voluntarily initiates telepathic communication.

Spell Weaving (Su): A spell weaver can cast more than one spell simultaneously, as long as the sum of the spell levels is six or less. It could, for example, cast one 6th-level (or higher) spell, one 4th-level and one 2nd-level spell, one 3rd-level and three 1st-level spells, or three 2nd-level spells. (A single 0-level spell occupies one arm.) Casting a 6th-level or higher level spell requires all six of the spell weaver's arms.

Spell-Like Abilities: Always active—see *invisibility*; at will—*detect magic*, *invisibility*; 1/day—*plane shift* (Will DC 21). Caster level 20th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Telepathy (Su): Spell weavers can communicate with each other telepathically at a range of up to 1,000 miles. (There are no other living spell weavers within telepathic range of the spell weaver encountered in this adventure.)

Skills: Concentration +12, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +27, Listen +25, Spellcraft +27, Spot +25, Use Magic Device +27.

Feats: Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Heighten Spell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Spell Focus (evocation)^B, Spell Focus (necromancy)^B, Spell Penetration^B, Widen Spell.

Spells Known (caster level 20th; 6/8/8/7/7/7/7/6/6/6; save DC 16 + spell level, DC 17 + spell level for evocation and necromancy spells): 0—*acid splash*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *mage hand*, *message*, *open/close*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*; 1st—*charm per-*

son, *magic missile*, *protection from evil*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*; 2nd—*detect thoughts*, *eagle's splendor*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*, *spider climb*; 3rd—*fireball*, *fly*, *gaseous form*, *haste*; 4th—*confusion*, *enervation*, *fire shield*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere*; 5th—*baleful polymorph*, *cone of cold*, *telekinesis*, *wall of force*; 6th—*disintegrate*, *greater dispel magic*, *Otiluke's freezing sphere*; 7th—*finger of death*, *prismatic spray*, *teleport without error*; 8th—*horrid wilting*, *mind blank*, *polar ray*; 9th—*Bigby's crushing hand*, *energy drain*, *wish*.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +8, ring of protection +4, masterwork dagger, forked metal rod (focus for *plane shift* spell).

➤ **Greater Shadows (3):** hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 221.

Tactics: Embril's life force can remain inside the *magic jar* gem for up to 10 hours. While her soul is confined to the *magic jar* gem, Embril senses all living creatures within 100 feet (provided they are within line of sight of the gem); she can tell these life forces apart from the spell weaver's as it has a *protection from evil* spell in effect, which protects it from *magic jar* and other attempts at possession. As soon as she notices them, Embril tries to possess one of the characters as a full-round action. If the attempt fails, she tries to possess a different character the following round. Once she succeeds in taking a host body, Embril uses the possessed body to scoop up her own body and the *magic jar* gem it clutches (a move action) and then uses *plane shift* to travel to Carceri with them.

The greater shadows gang up on one foe, hoping to take down that character quickly. The *unhallow* effect makes them harder to turn.

A cautious creature, the spell weaver has cast *mind blank* as well as *protection from evil* to shield itself against Embril's *magic jar* spell. It guards Embril's body until she successfully possesses one of the characters, at which point it gives her the focus she needs to cast her *plane shift* spell (a forked metal rod). Once she vanishes, the spell weaver continues to fight the PCs as long as it looks like they don't have the upper hand in combat; if they do, it *teleports* away to safety.

Treasure: Each of the ceramic burial urns contains a valuable item, determined by rolling on the Shatterhorn Treasure table (see page 68). Embril's replica *Leomund's secret chest* can be used to recall the actual chest from the Ethereal Plane; the larger chest is worth 5,000 gp and is Trapped. It contains a scroll of *cone of cold* (caster level 10th), a scroll of *heal* (caster level 14th), a *wand of cure moderate wounds* (24 charges; command word "savar"), Embril's spellbook, and a *tome of understanding* +1.

Trap: Embril's *secret chest* has a *greater glyph of warding* placed on it (caster level 14th) that triggers a *slay living* spell if anyone other than Embril opens it.

➤ **Greater Glyph of Warding:** CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*slay living*, 14th-level cleric, death, DC 20 Fort save for 3d6+14 damage); Search DC 31, Disable Device DC 31.

Development: If Embril escapes to Carceri with her body and the *magic jar* gem containing the character's life essence, she arrives on Carceri and casts *commune* to contact Nerull to alert him that she has a soul for him in return for the key to releasing Adimarchus. She then waits for Nerull or one of his minions to come for the captured soul; she doesn't have long to wait. Nerull accepts her offering, but does not fulfill her desires completely. Rather than return to the Material Plane, Embril decides to use her *greater scrying* spell to seek out Adimarchus and *teleports* to his Carcerian prison, an asylum called Skullrot, only to be captured by the asylum's lich warden. More details await in issue #116 of *DUNGEON* in the climax of the Shackled City Adventure Path: "Asylum."

Characters wishing to rescue their abducted comrade must travel to Carceri as detailed in "Asylum." Until the missing character's body is recovered, you should allow that player to take on the role of a cohort, or perhaps one of their other allies from the region (such as one of the Striders of Fharlanghn or even Jenya). Of course, once their missing companion is dead, *true resurrection* can be used to bring him back to life even though his body and soul are on Carceri. In this case, Nerull considers the theft of Embril's gift

an affront, and sends a marut after the resurrected character within 24 hours to punish him for his escape.

➤ **Marut:** hp 112; *Monster Manual* 159.

22. CRUSHING WALLS (EL 10)

No decorative murals adorn this narrow tunnel, which wends through the black rock and curves off into darkness.

This 5-foot-wide hall joins areas 1 and 21, and a Trap has been placed here to crush the unwary. Pulling down a stone lever east of the trap deactivates it and allows for safe passage through the tunnel.

Trap: Two large blocks of stone are set into the walls of the tunnel 25 feet from the secret door leading to area 1. Any creature that passes between the blocks—whether walking, climbing, jumping, or flying—causes them to smash together. Seconds later, the blocks retract into the walls, ready to crush the next creature that passes between them.

➤ **Crushing Walls Trap:** CR 10; mechanical; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; lever bypass; no attack roll required (18d6, crush, Reflex DC 23 half); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 27.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

"Strike on Shatterhorn" concludes as the PCs defeat the final Cagewright in the ruins below the ancient yuan-ti fortress. Of course, some of the Cagewrights may flee to Carceri, but as long as at least three of them are slain, the blow is enough to ruin the organization.

Yet there remains one final enemy to overcome: Adimarchus himself. The fallen angel (now an insane demon prince) is still imprisoned in Skullrot, a massive asylum built of skulls and located on Carceri. If she escaped to Carceri, Embril still has a chance to free Adimarchus, but even if she doesn't the steps the Cagewrights have taken have weakened his bonds. Very soon, he'll escape from Carceri, return to the realm of Occipitus on the Abyss, and quickly re-establish his empire and avenge his long impris-

onment on those responsible. And the PCs may well be at the front of this list, simply for their involvement in the destruction of his Cagewrights.

Even if Embril still lives, the PCs should have some time to relax before the final chapter of the Shackled City Adventure Path begins. Carceri is a dangerous place; even the most powerful heroes should take care to prepare before approaching the Asylum of Skullrot! ☞

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Strike on Shatterhorn" is designed for a group of four 18th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 16th–17th-level characters or 19th–20th-level characters. All NPCs in the adventure should have their class levels adjusted by an amount equal to the increase or decrease in average party level from 18th. Specific changes to the adventure follow.

16th–17th Level: Remove the fog from the above-ground ruins, and remove the advanced will-o'-wisps. Remove the advanced mohrg from area 1, and replace the *wail of the banshee* traps with *insanity* or *scintillating pattern* traps. Remove one of the death slaadi from area 15. Replace the spell weaver in area 21 with a farastu demodand.

19th–20th Level: One way of increasing the difficulty of this adventure is to introduce a countdown element. For example, if the PCs don't manage to defeat all of the Cagewrights before they're forced to retreat or rest, they may have the chance to bolster their numbers with more demodands, or perhaps even a marilith or balor demon. Add the ghost template to the ancient will-o'-wisps. Advance all demodands encountered by 2–4 Hit Dice, and the crystal snake by 4–8 Hit Dice. Add a second resurrected spell weaver to area 21.

APPENDIX 1: NEW FEATS

CONTAGIOUS PARALYSIS [MONSTROUS]

Your paralyzing attack is contagious.

Prerequisite: Paralysis as an extraordinary or supernatural ability.

Benefit: Any creature paralyzed by your special attack can confer paralysis to other creatures that touch it. Any creature touching a creature that you have paralyzed is immediately affected as if you had delivered a paralyzing attack upon it (using the same save DC to resist, if allowed).

If a creature successfully saves against your contagious paralysis attack, it can't be affected again by that attack for 24 hours.

This feat is from *Libris Mortis: The Book of Undead*.

IMPROVED FIENDISH SERVANT

You gain the service of a powerful, fiendish animal servitor.

Prerequisites: Fiendish servant class feature.

Benefits: You can call an ape, black bear, boar, crocodile, dire badger, dire bat, dire weasel, heavy warhorse, leopard, monitor lizard, constrictor snake, Large viper snake, or wolverine as a fiendish servant. In addition, the servant gains the fiendish creature template (see *Monster Manual*, pages 107–108). The fiendish servant otherwise conforms to the rules in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* (page 183).

IMPROVED PARALYSIS [MONSTROUS]

You are better at paralyzing your victims.

Prerequisites: Undead type, paralysis extraordinary ability.

Benefit: When your natural attacks threaten to paralyze your foe, add a +4 bonus to the save DC.

This feat is from *Libris Mortis: The Book of Undead*.

APPENDIX 2: NEW SPELLS

SHADOW DAGGER

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 0 ft.

Effect: One shadowy masterwork dagger

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates; see text

Spell Resistance: No

A shadowy masterwork dagger appears in your hand. On subsequent rounds, you can wield the dagger as though it was a real masterwork dagger. Each time the dagger hits, it deals normal damage and forces the target to make a Will save. If the Will save fails, the shadow dagger deals an additional 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6).

SHADOW PUPPETEER

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 20-foot-radius emanation centered on you

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates; see text

Spell Resistance: Yes

You can manipulate the shadows around you, giving them sinister, monstrous forms. All creatures within range, except those specified by you, must make a successful Will save or be clawed and bitten for 2d6 points of damage +1 point of damage per caster level (maximum +15). Affected creatures within range must make a new Will save each round at the beginning of your turn or take damage.

This spell needs light to function and deals no damage in areas of total darkness.

Material Component: A candle.

APPENDIX 3: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Amulet of the Planes, Lesser: A lesser amulet of the planes functions as an amulet of the planes, save that it can be used only once per day.

Strong conjuration; CL 15th; Craft Wondrous Item, *plane shift*; Price: 24,000 gp.

Blackstone Rune: This rune is a complex sigil drawn on a small, glossy stone. On command, a blackstone rune allows its bearer to *plane shift* between the Plane of Shadow and the Material Plane (in either direction), along with up to 50 pounds of objects. A blackstone rune can be used three times before its magic fades.

This item originally appeared in the *Fiend Folio* (page 151).

Moderate conjuration; CL 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *plane shift*; Market Price: 3,300 gp; Weight: —.

Ring of Thirteen: The Cagewright leaders wear matching magic rings designed to protect them from detection and harm. A Ring of Thirteen is a ring of protection +2 that also protects its wearer with constant *protection from good*, *nondetection*, and *endure elements*. These rings function only for evil creatures; a non-evil creature who wears a Ring of Thirteen gains a negative level for as long as the ring is worn. This negative level never actually results in actual level loss.

Strong abjuration; CL 15th; Forge Ring, *protection from good*, *nondetection*, *endure elements*, creator must be evil; Price 54,000 gp.

Serpent's Eye: This 2-inch-diameter spherical black orb has a golden slitlike band, giving it the appearance of a reptilian eye. When grasped, the serpent's eye allows the owner to use *foresight* (as the spell) once per day. The serpent's eye has 50 charges when created.

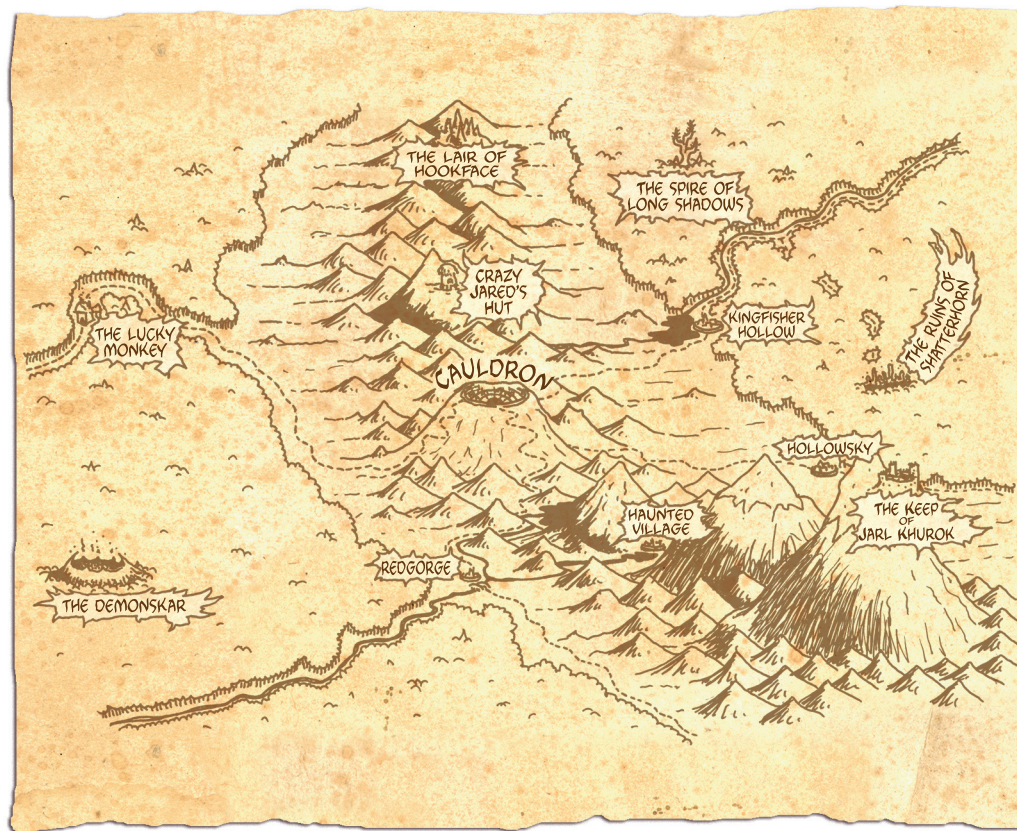
Strong divination; CL 17th; Craft Wondrous Item, *foresight*; Price 30,000 gp.



STRIKE ON SHATTERHORN

by Christopher Perkins

The pulse-pounding conclusion to the Shackled City Adventure Path was so awesomely huge that we had to split it into two parts. The eleven-adventure storyline enters its penultimate chapter as the heroes track the remaining Cagewrights to the ruined yuan-ti stronghold of Shatterhorn. A D&D Shackled City Adventure Path scenario for 18th-level characters.

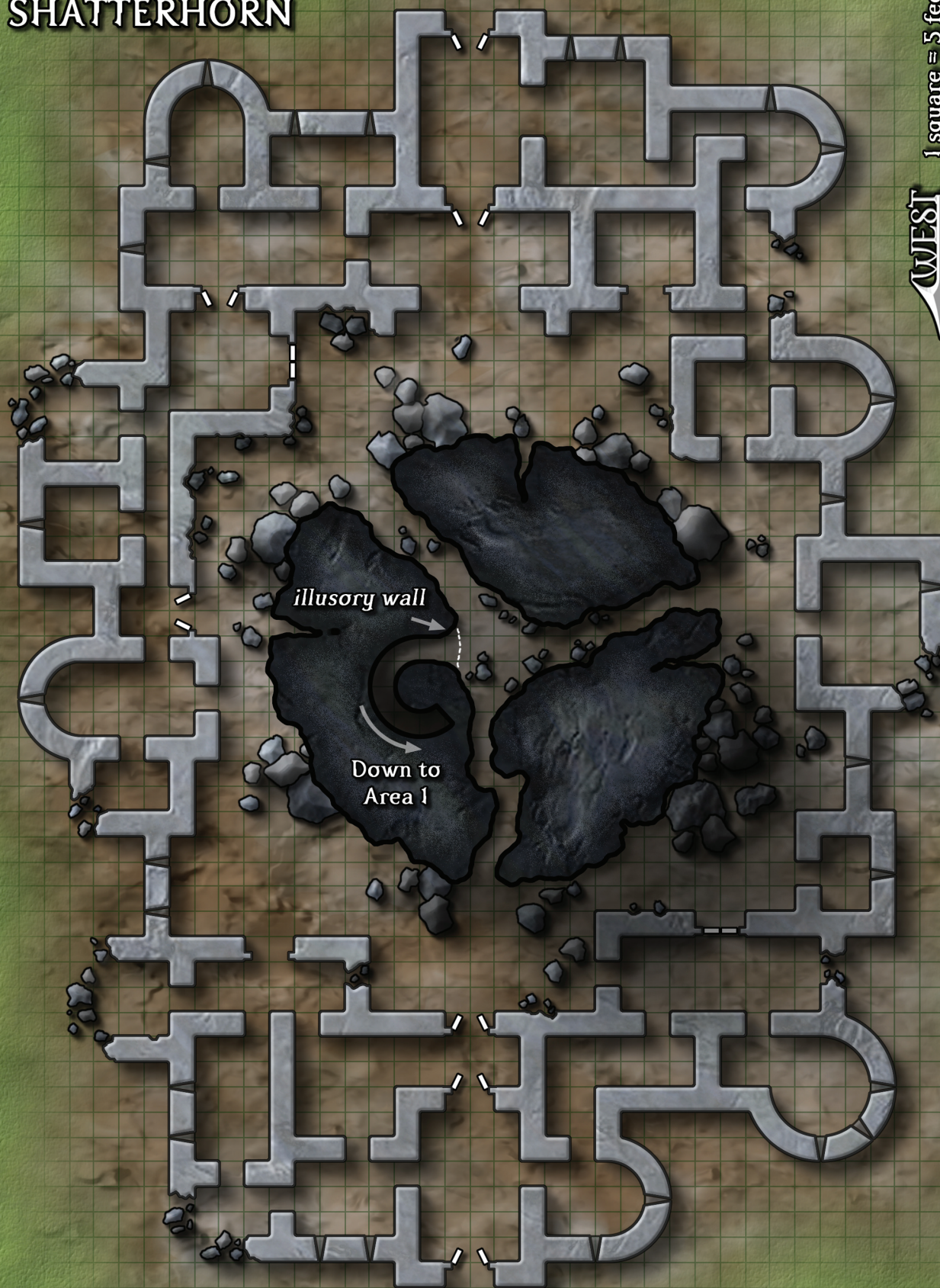


Chris West

THE RUINS OF SHATTERHORN

1 square = 5 feet

WEST

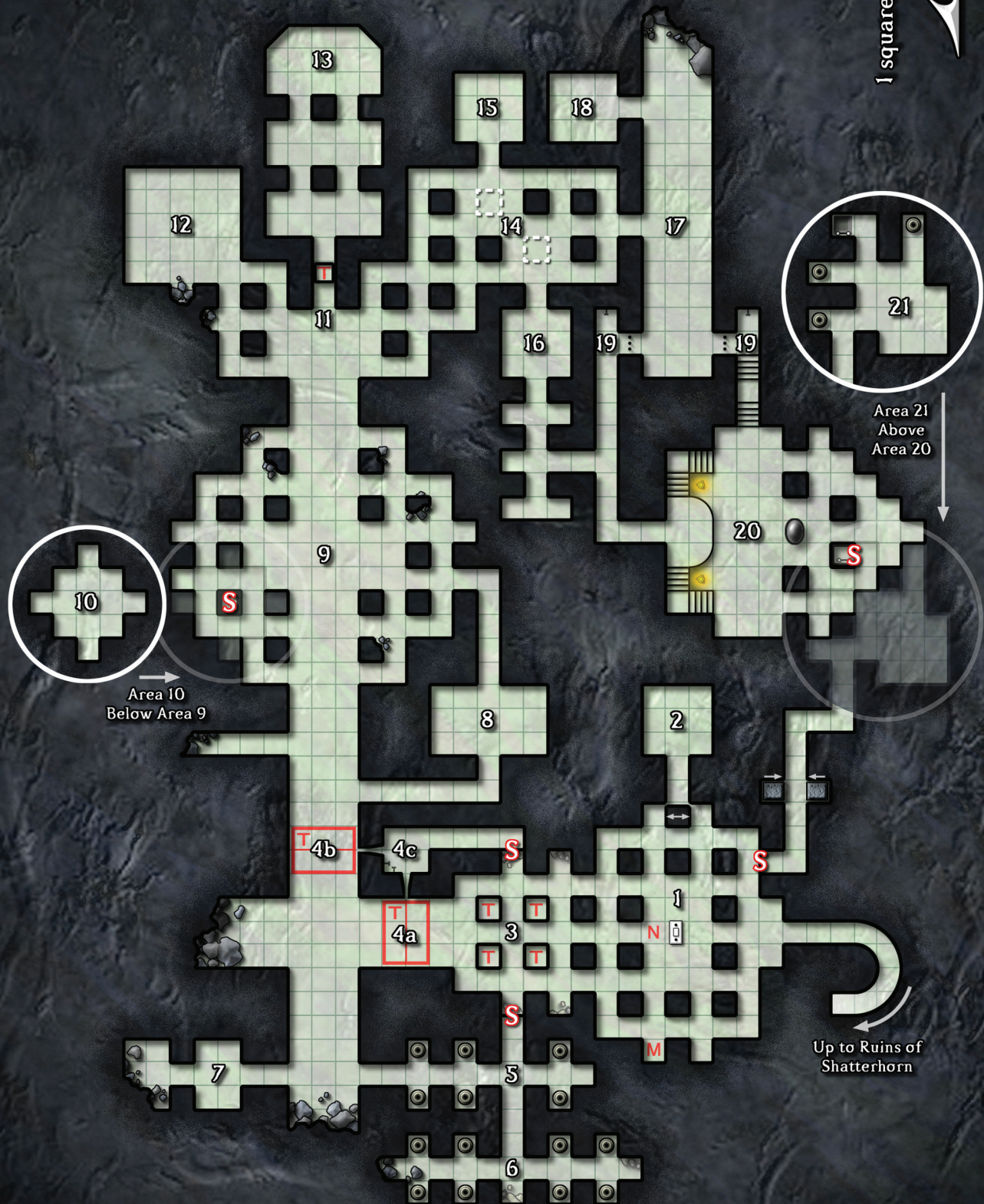


Chris West

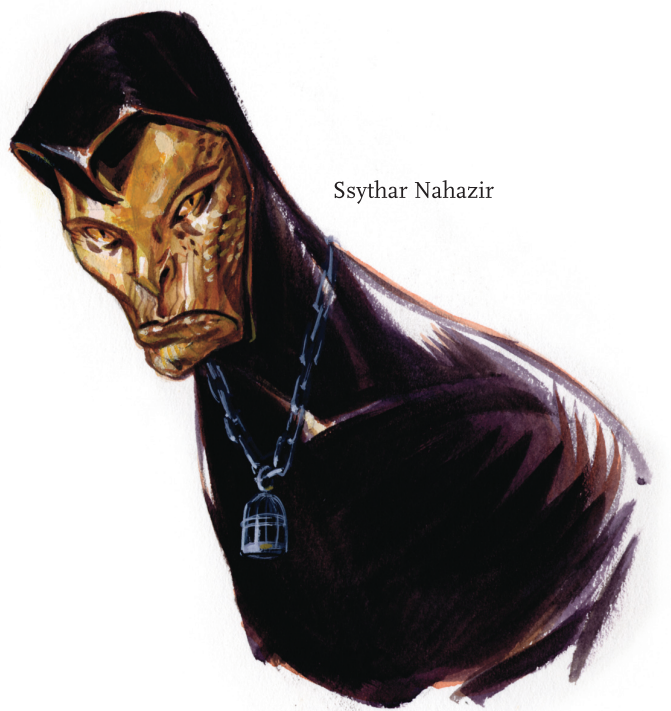
UNDER SHATTERHORN

1 square = 5 feet

WEST



Chris West



Ssythar Nahazir

Tom Fowler



Xokek

Tom Fowler



Kyan Winterstrike

Tom Fowler



Alurad Sorizan

Tom Fowler

Viirdran Daraqor





By Christopher Perkins

Illustrations by Atilla Adorjany & Eric Kim of UDON • Cartography by Christopher We

Asylum

Adventure Path
High-level (13–20)

Outer Planes (Carceri)
& Dungeon Crawl

The Cagewrights are defeated. The *Tree of Shackled Souls* is no more. Lord Vhalantru has been exposed and put down for the menace he truly was. The town of Cauldron has been saved from volcanic apocalypse. The heroes of Cauldron have earned their place in history, and more than deserve a time of rest, yet fate is not so kind. For the true menace behind the curtain still lives. As long as Adimarchus, the demon prince of madness, continues to dream his haunted dreams and writhe away the years in torment in the fiendish asylum of Skullrot, Cauldron can never be truly safe.

"Asylum" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 19th-level characters. It concludes the Shackled City Adventure Path that began with "Life's Bazaar" (DUNGEON #97) and continued with "Flood Season" (DUNGEON #98), "Zenith Trajectory" (DUNGEON #102), "The Demonskar Legacy" (DUNGEON #104), "Test of the Smoking Eye" (DUNGEON #107), "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" (DUNGEON #109), "Lords of Oblivion" (DUNGEON #111),

"Foundation of Flame" (DUNGEON #113), "Thirteen Cages" (DUNGEON #114), and "Strike on Shatterhorn" (DUNGEON #115). If all goes well, the characters should reach 20th level during this adventure, and should be poised for epic levels by its conclusion. When the characters earn enough experience to gain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure so that their final quest doesn't lose its momentum.

Adventure Background

For the past several years, a sinister cabal called the Cagewrights has conspired to transform the town of Cauldron into a gateway to the prison plane of Carceri, unleashing the fiendish hordes confined there. The Cagewrights spent years consolidating their power and preparing for a grand ritual of planar junction, using knowledge gleaned from repositories of arcane lore called the Soul Pillars. In preparation for the final ritual, they built artifacts called *soul cages* to hang from a fell device called *Tree of Shackled*



Souls. The town trembled as the ritual drew nigh and events began to unfold as the Cagewrights had planned. Then, unexpectedly, an upstart band of adventurers appeared on the scene and smashed the Cagewrights' designs for Cauldron, destroying the *Tree of Shackled Souls* and slaying many of the cabal's leaders.

The Cagewrights are now scattered, dead or defeated, their plans in ruins and their organization crippled. Yet in the grand scheme of things, they were but a symptom of an evil far greater than any mere mortal organization could hope to achieve; they were inspired, and in many ways created, by the insane demon prince Adimarchus. Players who have worked their way through the Shattered City Adventure Path have no doubt come across his name before, yet this obscure demon prince is an enigma. In "Asylum," his tragic genesis and his current vile incarnation are at last laid to light.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventure begins as the PCs travel to Orthrys, the first layer of Carceri. To prevent the Cagewright menace from returning, the characters must destroy Adimarchus, the inspiring force behind the organization. Traveling to Carceri, the PCs confront Adimarchus in the howling

halls of Skullrot, hoping to rid the multiverse of his deranged designs forever.

Chapter One: Spawn of Madness

In the prior adventure ("Strike on Shatterhorn," in *DUNGEON* #115), the PCs defeated the last of the Cagewrights in their secret lair under the ruined yuan-ti stronghold of Shatterhorn. The PCs may have their own reasons for traveling to Carceri after finishing this adventure; some of the Cagewrights may have fled to the prison plane, and if the PCs are particularly unlucky, one of the Cagewrights may have escaped to Carceri with a PC's soul!

If, on the other hand, the PCs managed to defeat the Cagewrights completely, they may not immediately have a reason to venture to Carceri. Likewise, if you're playing "Asylum" as a stand-alone adventure, you'll need other reasons to send the PCs into Orthrys, the first layer of Carceri and the realm in which this adventure takes place.

If you're playing "Asylum" as part of the Shattered City Adventure Path, give the PCs some time to relax and recuperate after their adventures. They may wish to craft magic items, research spells, or aid in the reconstruction of Cauldron. If

they're lower than 19th level, you should consider running them on another adventure or two first, so they'll be ready for the challenges ahead.

Once you're ready to begin the adventure, start with "Smoking Eyes" below. This initial encounter can also serve to engage PCs who haven't played prior adventures in the Shattered City Adventure Path; after defeating the resurrected menace in "Smoking Eyes," their interest should be piqued enough for them to travel to Carceri to investigate.

Smoking Eyes (EL 21)

In "Lords of Oblivion" the PCs defeated one of the primary villains in the Shattered City campaign, a beholder named Vhalantru who had infused his body and soul with the spirit of a shator demodand shortly before the climactic battle with the PCs. Vhalantru was most likely slain in this battle, but his mind, like those of the Cagewrights, had been touched by Adimarchus's insanity. The loss of the beholder, and thus the loss of control of Cauldron, was the first in a series of disastrous events for Adimarchus that ultimately led to the Cagewrights' downfall and the failure of the ritual of planar junction that should have opened

a permanent portal between Cauldron and Skullrot. Adimarchus's rage at this loss sent out a powerful wave of insanity into his one-time realm of Occipitus on the Abyss, which reacted immediately by creating a magical duplicate of the slain beholder and infusing it with raw power and Abyssal might.

For some time, the reborn Vhalantru wrestled with confusion and madness. He could not comprehend how he had been destroyed by a band of adventurers, nor did he fully understand how he had come to be in this alien realm. Had his thoughts been entirely his own, Vhalantru could have become the new ruler of this Abyssal layer, yet his already questionable sanity had been shattered. Memories of his defeat at the PCs' hands seethed in him, tore at him, and he turned all his power and might toward revenge.

It wasn't long before he realized he had also gained some control over the very chaos and evil of Occipitus. Having been "born" of the realm, he had gained the Sign of the Smoking Eye, a guttering flame where his central eye had been. Using these powers, he began to dominate Occipitus and bend it to his will. Before long, he encountered one of the realm's most tragic inhabitants, the fallen astral deva Saureya. It took the beholder several days to break through Saureya's cynicism and lingering tatters of purity, but eventually his ministrations bent the fallen angel to his will and he

agreed to use *plane shift* to send Vhalantru back to the Material Plane.

Creature: Vhalantru is, in many ways, a fragment of the beholder he once was. His scheming brilliance, his gift for deception, and his long-term goals are gone, replaced by a relentless urge to destroy the PCs and avenge his defeat. *Plane shift* doesn't send creatures exactly to where they want to go, so it takes Vhalantru some time to return to Cauldron. When he arrives, though, he wastes no time. He's unsure of where the PCs are, but figures that they remain Cauldron's heroes. If Cauldron was destroyed in "Thirteen Cages" his rage builds greater; he may have been evil, but Cauldron was his home too, and he blames its ruin on the PCs.

Vhalantru knows the region well, and it shouldn't take him long to find the refugees. Once he does, he begins a frothing frenzy of destruction, charming citizens and setting them against each other in battle, disintegrating building supports, hurling burning timbers with *telekinesis*, and killing and petrifying anyone who tries to get in his way. As he does, he roars out the PCs' names amidst a storm of curses and sputtering epithets. Vhalantru's attack should occur when the PCs are together and nearby; they should hear of his assault soon after it begins. Practical PCs might take the time to cast preparatory spells; compassionate ones probably rush to fight the beholder immediately to prevent it from hurting more innocents. If you find the PCs are taking too long to prepare their spells (more than a minute is certainly too long), feel free to have Vhalantru discover where they are (perhaps from charmed townsfolk) and bring the fight to them.

If the PCs respond to his challenge, the beholder roars in rage as he notices them and attacks. If they ignore him, Vhalantru can do an amazing amount of damage before he is eventually slain. But killing the beholder won't solve the problem forever.

Vhalantru is a 16-foot-diameter bloated sphere of red pulsating leathery flesh covered with tiny spines and dull chitinous plates. His central eye has been replaced with a ball of flame that gives off no heat and does not burn the surrounding flesh. Plumes of bitter smoke leak upward from the burning socket, yet the eye still

functions as normal. Although his Abyssal rebirth has significantly increased his size and strength, Vhalantru should still be readily recognizable to PCs that have encountered him before.

➤ **Vhalantru, Fiendish Smoking Eye**
Advanced Beholder: CR 21; Huge aberration (extraplanar); HD 33d8+198; hp 346; Init +6; Spd 5 ft., fly 20 ft. (good); AC 28, touch 10, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +24; Grp +39; Atk/Full Atk +26 ranged touch (eye ray) and +27 melee (2d6+6, bite); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA eye rays (DC 32), smite good 1/day (+20 damage); SQ all-around vision, antimagic cone, damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., flight, resistance to cold 10, resistance to fire 10, spell resistance 25; AL CE; SV Fort +19, Ref +15, Will +23; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 18.

Skills: Hide +30, Knowledge (arcana) +39, Listen +38, Search +41, Spot +40.

Feats: Ability Focus (eye ray), Alertness^B, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (ray).

Languages: Common, Elven, Infernal, Undercommon.

Eye Rays: The effects of Vhalantru's eye rays manifest at caster level 14.

Note: The Sign of the Smoking Eye template appears in *DUNGEON* #107, but all pertinent details are reprinted in the stat block above. Also, although Vhalantru had the Tarterian creature template and was missing his *inflict moderate wounds* eyestalk the last time the PCs fought him, his rebirth on Occipitus has both removed the prior template and restored his missing eyestalk.

Tactics: As Vhalantru's attack can occur anywhere, no maps are provided for this encounter. If you have prior Adventure Path installments handy, you can use the street maps for the Umber Hulk Attack (page 34 of *DUNGEON* #102) or the Riot Scene (page 51 of *DUNGEON* #104). Vhalantru's attention shifts to the PCs once they arrive. Remember that he knows the PCs and their capabilities quite well. He tries to keep spellcasters in the zone of his antimagic eye, uses his *charm monster*, *charm person*, *fear*, *inflict moderate wounds*, *sleep*, and *slow* eye rays on fighters and other characters with good Fortitude



saves, and uses his *finger of death*, *flesh to stone*, and *disintegrate* eyes on others. If a PC seems to be particularly efficient at damaging him with a weapon, he'll use his *telekinesis* eye to attempt to disarm the character. Vhalantru knows that if he dies, he'll soon be reborn on Occipitus, and thus fights to the death without fear. Nevertheless, he fights using his Combat Expertise feat to full effect in order to maximize his time on the Material Plane.

Development: Vhalantru is a tough opponent; if the PCs are having a tough time with him, you should consider augmenting their strength with other powerful local NPCs like Jenya Urikas or Nidrama. You should also consider running them through another adventure before running the rest of "Asylum." If the PCs can't handle Vhalantru, they'll have a tough time with what awaits them on Carceri.

If Vhalantru is slain, his body vanishes in 33 rounds, reappearing dead but intact on Occipitus. If Adimarchus still lives, it is only a few weeks before another surge of the demon prince's insanity reaches Occipitus and restores the beholder to life, at which point he begins his quest for revenge against the PCs again. Quick-thinking PCs can use spells like *dimensional anchor* or *dimensional lock* to prevent the body from returning to Occipitus for as long as the spell lasts. Simply destroying the body before it returns does not stop the death-to-life cycle.

Even if the PCs manage to permanently prevent Vhalantru's body from returning to Occipitus to be reborn, they'll have only gained a small reprieve. Adimarchus's insanity simply targets other villains and minions. In time, the PCs could find themselves facing reborn Cagewrights or any other villains from the Shackled City Adventure Path like Hookface, Tongueater, or Kaurophon. Only by destroying Adimarchus can this destructive cycle be broken.

The Final Enemy Revealed

With the reborn Vhalantru put down (even if temporarily), the PCs should realize that something still remains of the Cagewright menace. Unfortunately, no one on the Material Plane can provide further information. The PCs must turn to divination magic to learn more. If none of the PCs

can cast spells like *divination*, *commune*, or *contact other plane*, Jenya Urikas, local high priestess of St. Cuthbert, can intervene with a *commune* spell.

You should use the results of these divination spells to steer the PCs toward Carceri. The one thing that they shouldn't discover as the result of these spells, though, is Skullrot's exact location. In order to prevent Adimarchus' release, Graz'zt went through great effort to imbue the asylum with wards and protection against discovery via magic. Although the deities themselves may know of its location, mere mortal magic such as *commune* or *discern location* cannot provide more information about Skullrot other than that it is located on the first layer of Carceri—Orthrys.

Listed below are key pieces of information you should strive to provide the PCs when they begin researching the situation; this information may come about as the result of multiple spells, but if the PCs ask intelligent questions, you should make sure to reward them with the following points.

1) Adimarchus is the true enemy—the driving force behind the Cagewrights. His name had been hidden from magic and divination for the past 50 years, but the defeat of his favored minions (the Cagewrights) has weakened these restraints.

2) Adimarchus is imprisoned in Skullrot, a mighty asylum hidden somewhere on the first layer of Carceri (Orthrys). The exact location of this asylum remains hidden from magic.

3) The defeat of the Cagewrights has driven Adimarchus's insanity to new levels of power; his madness can now "leak" out of his asylum to be funneled into his one-time lair of Occipitus (the 507th layer of the Abyss). Given enough time, these "insanity leaks" can engineer a method of releasing him.

4) Vhalantru's resurrection is a direct result of Adimarchus's insanity working on the malleable features of Occipitus. As long as Adimarchus exists, his insanity can infinitely re-create the beholder (and possibly other enemies) from the raw stuff of Occipitus.

5) Although Skullrot's location on Orthrys cannot be divined by magic, it can be learned through physical means. Unfortunately, those few who know the

way to Skullrot are imprisoned on Orthrys already. To discover Skullrot's location, one must travel to Orthrys and learn the way from one of those imprisoned there.

Unexpected Assistance (EL 16)

Before the PCs leave for Carceri, they are contacted by someone they might have forgotten—Nidrama, the angelic guardian of the Cauldron region. Vhalantru's assault on the PCs and the Cauldron refugees did not go unnoticed by Nidrama, but as has happened many times before, ancient (and as Nidrama is fond of saying, outdated) strictures and rules governing celestial intervention in mortal affairs prevented her from stepping in to provide aid. She took a risk in attempting to aid the PCs before ("The Demonskar Legacy" in *DUNGEON* #104), to the great displeasure of her superiors. With the reborn Vhalantru's attack, Nidrama finally has had enough and decides to throw in her lot with the PCs.

Creature: Nidrama is a movanic deva, one of many angels charged with observing and representing the needs of the Positive Energy Plane, the Negative Energy Plane, and the Material Plane. Nidrama's charge is the region surrounding Cauldron. She observed the transformation of the spell weaver city into the Demonskar, the fall of the yuan-ti empire around Shatterhorn, and the demise of the powerful frost giant Jarl Khurok. And recently, she observed the rise in power of the Cagewrights and their destruction by the PCs.

She has perfectly white skin and stern, sparkling silver eyes. A pair of feathered wings spreads out behind her back and she wields a flaming greatsword. Although not very tough compared to the heroes, she comes with an array of useful spell-like abilities and some knowledge of the planes, and can provide welcome support to the characters during their travels and exploration of Carceri.

Nidrama presents herself to the PCs not long after they decide they must travel to Carceri to finish off Adimarchus, begging their understanding for her delay in coming to Cauldron's aid and offering her skills and sword to them in any way they need to further their chances against the prisoner of Skullrot. If the PCs include obviously evil characters, Nidrama still offers her ser-

New Feat— Practiced Magic

Your spell-like abilities are more powerful.

Prerequisite: Spellcraft 4 ranks, spell-like abilities.

Benefit: Your caster level for your spell-like abilities increases by +4. This can't increase your caster level for spell-like abilities beyond your Hit Dice. However, even if you can't benefit from the full bonus immediately, if you later gain non-caster-level Hit Dice you may be able to apply the rest of the bonus.

If you have spellcasting ability from multiple sources (from gained templates or from a character class) you must choose which set of spell-like abilities gain the feat's effect.

This does not affect how often you can use your spell-like abilities in a day. It only increases your caster level, which would help you penetrate spell resistance, increases the duration and damage of some spells, and so on.

Special: You may select this feat multiple times. Each time you choose it, you must apply it to a different set of spell-like abilities.

vices to the PCs as long as the predominant party alignment is good or neutral, but she keeps an eye on evil characters and does her best to treat them fairly and honorably in an attempt to teach them the error of their ways without preaching to them. If the majority of the party is evil, you may wish to replace Nidrama with a different outsider the PCs may have encountered in the past who nonetheless would like to see Adimarchus defeated. One likely alternate is Aushanna, the erinyes guardian of the shrine to the Sea Mother ("Zenith Trajectory," *DUNGEON* #102).

Since her encounter with the PCs some time ago, Nidrama has known in her heart that she would eventually go against the will of her superiors and ignore celestial law to aid the PCs in whatever way she could. To prepare for this event, she has spent the intervening time training and honing her

skills; although she is still a fair bit less powerful than the PCs, she is quite a bit more powerful than she was during their last meeting. One unfortunate (although by no means unforeseen by Nidrama) result of her rebellion against celestial law is the fact that she is now a fallen deva, and no longer has the direct support of the celestial host. She has lost several of her spell-like abilities and her protective aura special quality as a result, and her weapons are not automatically treated as good-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. Nevertheless, her ability to cast *aid*, *death ward*, and *prayer* at will makes her an invaluable ally.

➤ **Nidrama, Fallen Movanic Deva, Fighter 6:** CR 16; Medium outsider (extraplanar, good); HD 6d8+24 plus 6d10+24; hp 108; Init +7; Spd 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (good); AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +12; Grp +17; Atk +19 melee (2d6+10 plus 1d6 fire, +1 *flaming burst greatsword*); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (2d6+10 plus 1d6 fire, +1 *flaming burst greatsword*); SA spell-like abilities; SQ celestial traits, damage reduction 10/evil, darkvision 60 ft., divine equilibrium, fire resistance 20, heavenly deflection, immune to acid, immune to cold, immune to electricity, soothing presence of nature, spell resistance 19; AL CG; SV Fort +14, Ref +10, Will +13; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 17, Wis 19, Cha 24; *Fiend Folio* 57.

Skills: Balance +14, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +18, Handle Animal +19, Intimidate +20, Jump +7, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Listen +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +12, Spot +13, Tumble +9.

Feats: Cleave, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Practiced Magic, Quickened Spell-Like Ability (*bless weapon*), Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Languages: Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*aid*, *continual flame*, *create food and water*, *death ward*, *detect evil*, *discern lies* (DC 21), *polymorph*, *prayer*, *protection from arrows*; 3/day—*quickened bless weapon*, *cure serious wounds*, *daylight*, *divination*, *ethereal jaunt*, *neutralize poison*, *plane shift* (DC 22),



remove curse, *remove disease*, *remove fear*; 1/day—*raise dead*. Caster level 12th.

Divine Equilibrium (Ex):

Nidrama is immune to the effect of negative or positive planar energy traits.

Heavenly Deflection (Su): Once per round, Nidrama can deflect ranged attacks, rays or single target spells with her +1 *flaming burst greatsword*. To do this, she must succeed in a Reflex save (DC 20 plus enhancement bonus of the attack or spell level).

Soothing Presence of Nature (Ex): Animals and plants may attack Nidrama only if magically compelled.

Possessions: +1 *flaming burst greatsword*, *ring of protection* +2, *boots of teleportation*.

Development: Nidrama is open and honest with the PCs now. If asked why she hasn't helped the PCs more before this, she grows weary and sad, saying only that she lacked the courage until now to go against celestial law. She's abandoned her place in the celestial hierarchy in favor of directly intervening in mortal matters, and she's not willing to risk possible friendship and alliance with the PCs by further withholding information. Nidrama knows much about the Cagewrights, Adimarchus, and the history of Cauldron. Although not even she knows Skullrot's precise location, you can use her to answer any other outstanding questions the PCs may have about the Shattered City Adventure Path as you see fit.

If one of the PCs' souls was stolen by Embril at the end of "Strike on Shatterhorn," you may want to let that player run Nidrama until his actual character is rescued.

The Tarterian Depths of Carceri

Hatred, betrayal, and despair suffuse the bleak plane of Carceri. Many of the creatures that dwell here are petitioners and exiles that have given up all hope of escape. Portals on many planes allow travel to Carceri, but almost none allow travel in the other direction. Only creatures with the ability to *plane shift* or the wherewithal to sail the River Styx hold any hope of escape.

Before they travel to Orthrys, the PCs may wish to research the layer. A successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 20) means the character knows a fair amount about the plane (approximately the same amount of information contained on page 161 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, in fact). Nidrama can provide this information if she is with the party. Once the characters have a working knowledge of Carceri, a second Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 30) allows them to narrow the field a bit to two key locations on Orthrys that might contain information about the location of Skullrot. If none of the PCs make this roll, this information can be learned with several days of study in a well-stocked library. Two locations in particular seem likely to offer information about Skullrot. The first is the Bastion of Lost Hope—an outpost for anarchists and a marketplace for all sorts of goods; the PCs might be able to buy information about Skullrot's location here. The second is Harrowfell—a terrible tower said to contain a gemstone that grants *mind blank* to those who touch it, and said to be ruled by a strange marilith demon with a smoking left eye. (Although Adimarchus and Occipitus are not mentioned, the smoking eye marilith should clue the PCs in that she has some ties to the demon prince of madness.)

For more information on the plane of Carceri, consult page 161 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* or pages 104–108 of the *Manual of the Planes*.

Exploring Orthrys

Characters who *plane shift* to Carceri arrive in a random location on Orthrys, Carceri's first layer. (If they use an *amulet*

of the planes or lesser *amulet of the planes*, they can pinpoint their destination, so long as they know where they're going.) Orthrys is a realm of vast bogs and quicksand. The River Styx runs freely through the layer, saturating the ground with its magic. Fetid swamps thrive where the river does not flow, and though patches of dry ground exist, they are rare and usually climb swiftly to rugged mountains. The perpetually crimson sky paints the jagged mountains and stinking bogs of Orthrys in a hellish light, and swarms of insects feast upon travelers indiscriminately.

Terrain: Orthrys consists of vast bogs with quicksand pits, rocky crags, and rugged mountains. For rules on moving through bogs and quicksand, see Marsh Terrain on page 88 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*; for rules on traveling through rugged mountain terrain, see Mountain Terrain on page 89 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

Encounters: If the PCs find themselves slogging through the swamps or exploring some of the layer's important sites, roll for random encounters every hour using the Orthrys Random Encounters table, below. Do not use any given encounter more than once. If you need further encounters, you can use these four as templates.

Orthrys Random Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–25	Demodand squad	15
36–50	Demon troupe	18
51–75	Slaadi gang	15
76–100	Stygian marauders	18

Demodand Squad (EL 19)

Demodands are the self-appointed keepers of the Carcerian population. Jailers and wardens of the prison plane, they are themselves trapped here as surely as the petitioners they watch. This demodand squad consists of a huge, wrinkled shator and nine lean, tar-oozing farastus. Demodands are roughly humanoid in shape, with fiendish faces and sharp claws.

This squad is traveling to Skullrot to pay tribute to its warden, Dark Myrakul. They have a single prisoner they intend to offer up as a sacrifice to the warden: a half-celestial human paladin named Kharidian. Kharidian is currently at 0 hit points and stuck fast to one of the farastus, encased in the

demodand's adhesive slime. If rescued, he helps the characters complete their quest to the best of his ability, giving his life if necessary to save one of theirs.

Although these demodands know the way to Skullrot, they won't reveal its location to others unless magically compelled (and doing so is against their nature, possibly granting the compelled or charmed demodand an additional save to throw off the enchantment). The surest way to learn of Skullrot's location is to silently stalk the demodands, following them to their eventual destination. Of course, the PCs have no real way of knowing where they're going without using magic.

➤ **Kharidian, Male Half-Celestial Human, Paladin 9:** hp 90 (0 currently); *Monster Manual* 145.

➤ **Shator Demodand:** CR 16; Large outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 15d8+60; hp 127; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 70 ft. (poor); AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +15; Grp +25; Atk +22 melee (2d6+11, +2 *guisarme*) or +20 melee (1d6+6 plus paralysis, claw); Full Atk +22/+17/+12 melee (2d6+11, +2 *guisarme*) or +20 melee (1d6+6 plus paralysis, 2 claws) and +18 melee (2d6+3 plus paralysis, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (20 ft. with +2 *guisarme*); SA paralyzing slime, spell-like abilities, spells, *summon demodand*; SQ darkvision 120 ft., damage reduction 15/good, freedom of movement, immune to acid, immune to cold, immune to fire, immune to mind-affecting effects, immune to poison, outsider traits, scent, see invisibility, spell resistance 30; AL NE; SV Fort +13, Ref +11, Will +12; Str 23, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 21; *Fiend Folio* 45.

Skills: Bluff +20, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +24, Disguise +20 (+22 acting), Gather Information +7, Hide +17, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (local) +18, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Listen +20, Move Silently +17, Search +17, Sense Motive +21, Spot +20, Survival +3 (+5 following tracks or on other planes).

Feats: Alertness, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Trip, Multi-attack, Spell Penetration.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Demodand, Infernal.

Paralyzing Slime (Ex): Fortitude save (DC 21) or become paralyzed for 3d6 rounds. A

shator may spit a globule of slime as a +17 ranged touch attack with a range of 30 feet.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear* (DC 19), *invisibility*, *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*cloudkill* (DC 20), *fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+17 ranged touch); *stinking cloud* (DC 18); 2/day—*dispel magic*; 1/day—*mass charm monster* (DC 23). Caster level 15. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spells Known (as 8th-level sorcerer; 6/8/7/6/4): 0—*dancing lights*, *daze* (DC 15), *flare* (DC 15), *ghost sound*, *read magic*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *ray of frost* (+17 ranged touch); 1st—*charm person* (DC 16), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*, *true strike*; 2nd—*bull's strength*, *detect thoughts* (DC 17), *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 17); 3rd—*blink*, *fireball* (DC 18); 4th—*confusion* (DC 19).

Summon Demodand (Sp): Once per day, a shator can attempt to summon 1d2 shators with a 30% chance of success, or either 1d4 kelubars or 1d6 farastus (shator's choice) with a 70% chance of success.

➤ **Farastu Demodands (9):** CR 11; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 11d8+22; hp 68; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +11; Grp +23; Atk +15 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +15 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) and +10 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA adhesive slime, improved grab, rage, spell-like abilities, *summon demodand*; SQ cold resistance 10, damage reduction 10/good, fire resistance 10, freedom of movement, immune to acid, immune to poison, scent, spell resistance 23; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 16; *Fiend Folio* 42.

Skills: Climb +22, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +6, Hide +12, Intimidate +16, Listen +14, Move Silently +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +12, Spot +14, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks).

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Demodand.

Adhesive Slime (Ex): The black slime farastus exude grants them a +8 racial bonus on grapple checks and disarm checks. A weapon that strikes a farastu becomes stuck fast unless the wielder succeeds on a Reflex save (DC 17). Prying off a stuck weapon requires a Strength check (DC 17). Oil dissolves the farastu's adhesive slime; it requires 10 minutes to renew

its adhesive coating. It can also dissolve its slime at will, and the substance breaks down 1 minute after the creature dies.

Rage (Ex): The farastu can fly into a rage three times per day, much like a barbarian. The farastu gains +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, +2 on Will saves, and -2 AC. Its statistics change as follows: hp 93; AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +13; Grp +25; Atk +17 melee (1d4+6, claw); Full Atk +17 melee (1d4+6, 2 claws) and +12 melee (1d6+3, bite); SV Fort +11, Will +10; Str 23, Con 18; Climb +24. The rage lasts for 7 rounds, but the farastu can end it earlier if it desires. It is not fatigued at the end of its rage.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear* (DC 17), *invisibility*, *tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+12 ranged touch); 2/day—*dispel magic*. Caster level 11th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Summon Demodand (Sp): Once per day, a farastu can attempt to summon 1d4 farastus with a 30% chance of success.

Skills: A farastu's adhesive slime gives it a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks.

Demon Troupe (EL 18)

This demon troupe is wandering Orthrys looking for trouble. It consists of a nalfeshnee, four hezrous, and six vocks.

➤ **Nalfeshnee:** hp 175; *Monster Manual* 45.

➤ **Hezrous (4):** hp 138 each; *Monster Manual* 44.

➤ **Vocks (6):** hp 115 each; *Monster Manual* 48.

Slaadi Gang (EL 15)

Like the demons, slaadi on Orthrys typically wander about looking for trouble. This gang consists of a death slaad, two gray slaadi, and four blue slaadi.

➤ **Death Slaad:** hp 142; *Monster Manual* 231.

➤ **Gray Slaadi (2):** hp 95 each; *Monster Manual* 231.

➤ **Blue Slaadi (4):** hp 68 each; *Monster Manual* 229.

Stygian Marauders (EL 18)

Stygian marauders are tiefling outlaws who prey on travelers and pillage battlefields near the River Styx. They ride on nightmares.

➤ **Stygian Marauders, Tiefling Fighter 2/Rogue 10 (6):** CR 13; Medium outsider

(native); HD 2d10+2 plus 10d6+10; hp 72 each; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +9; Grp +11; Atk +12 melee (1d8+3/19–20, +1 longsword) or +14 ranged (1d8+1/x3, masterwork longbow with +1 *dementia arrow*); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+3/19–20, +1 longsword) or +14/+9 ranged (1d8+1/x3, masterwork longbow with +1 *dementia arrow*); SA *darkness* 1/day, sneak attack +5d6; SQ *darkvision* 60 ft., improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, resistance to cold 5, resistance to electricity 5, resistance to fire 5, trap sense +3, trapfinding; AL CE; Fort +7, Ref +11, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +6, Bluff +12, Climb +7, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +10 (+12 acting in character), Hide +16, Intimidate +17, Jump +4, Listen +9, Ride +19, Spot +9, Tumble +14.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Quick Draw, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Ride-By Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Infernal.

Possessions: +1 studded leather armor, +1 light steel shield, +1 longsword, masterwork longbow, 20 *dementia arrows*, tanglefoot bag, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of neutralize poison*.

➤ **Nightmares (6):** hp 45 each; *Monster Manual* 194.

Orthrys Site I: The Bastion of Lost Hope

A fortress made of black igneous rock squats in a mountain range. The ambient, reddish light of Orthrys lends the place a brooding air of menace. Only one entrance offers itself, a portal that one can't help but notice strongly resembles the maw of a massive demonic toad.

No one person rules the Bastion. Instead, it serves as an outpost for anarchists and a haven for some of the worst traitors ever to cross the planes. Here a traveler can obtain all manner of nefarious goods and services. Visitors to the Bastion would do well to remember that they're on a plane of liars and traitors, and to trust no one within its walls. Demodands, Stygian marauders, night hags, and worse can be found here, either plying a trade or shopping. Obviously good-aligned crea-

New Weapon Quality— Dementia

Dementia weapons usually appear charcoal gray in color. Additionally, a creature critically hit by a dementia weapon must make a successful Will save (DC 16) or be confused for 7 rounds (as the *confusion* spell).

Moderate enchantment (compulsion); CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *confusion*; Price +2 bonus.



tures (such as Nidrama or a paladin) aren't particularly welcome here, but if they can adjust the residents' initial attitude of unfriendly to helpful, the merchants agree to take their coin as well. As a general rule, several hundred customers and merchants can be found here, many of them fairly powerful. Characters starting a fight here should find themselves quickly outnumbered and overwhelmed.

Information: Information is pricy at the Bastion; each attempt to Gather Information requires a bribe of at least 2,000 gp. The information brokers of the Bastion are perfectly willing to accept payment in magic items, but they don't give change. With a successful Gather Information check (DC 20), a character can learn some facts about the plane's "movers and shakers." With a successful DC 30 check, they can also learn the location and powers of certain planar touchstones, such as the tower of Harrowfell (see below).

Anyone who asks about Skullrot is met with poorly-concealed claims of ignorance. A bribe of at least 10,000 gp (or equivalent worth in magic items) and a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 30) is required to get any further information. A successful skill check and bribe is enough to learn the asylum's location, but little more.

Equipment: The Bastion's gp limit for purchasing magic items and equipment

is 40,000 gp, although prices are generally double the normal asking price.

Orthrys Site 2: Harrowfell (EL 18)

A sixty-foot-tall, twenty-foot-diameter tower stands atop a rocky crag, surrounded on all sides by bone-strewn battlefields and fetid quagmires. A fence of skull-capped spears follows a twenty-foot-long rough-hewn staircase leading from the bog up to the tower's entrance, which stands agape. The tower itself is made of broken weapons, armor, and bones, held together by terrible magic.

This appalling tower is built around the top of the rocky crag. The tower is hollow, and sprouting from the crag's peak is a 9-foot-tall black crystal vaguely resembling a great black blade split down the middle. Travelers come to Harrowfell to touch the V-shaped crystal and gain its power. Any creature that touches the crystal gains the benefits of a *mind blank* spell for 24 hours (caster level 20).

Creatures: This tower is currently held by a troupe of demons led by a cynical marilith named Byakala. Once one of Adimarchus's generals, Byakala was ironically imprisoned in Carceri by the demon prince only a few months before he was himself trapped here. Byakala

has consigned herself to her fate, and for many decades has claimed Harrowfell as her own. She has gathered several lesser demons to her side as minions, and charges visitors steep prices for the honor of using the crystal at the tower's peak. Normal prices are either 2,000 gp (or the equivalent in magic items) or a live humanoid (to be used as food or worse).

Byakala and her demons make a point of using the crystal every day, and are always under the effects of a *mind blank* as a result. Although Byakala's left eye is a burning, smoking orb, she doesn't actually have the Smoking Eye template. Adimarchus once granted his generals the physical manifestation of the smoking eye as a badge of office. Her long stay in Carceri has left her bitter, and as long as visitors don't insult or threaten her, she has little interest in starting fights.

► **Byakala, Marilith Demon:** hp 216; *Monster Manual* 44.

► **Hezrou Demons (2):** hp 138 each; *Monster Manual* 44.

► **Babau Demons (5):** hp 66 each; *Monster Manual* 40.

Development: If one of the characters acquired the Sign of the Smoking Eye template as a consequence of completing "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), Byakala assumes (perhaps wrongly) that the character has assumed lordship of Occipitus, the 507th layer of the Abyss. She tries to parley with the character, curious to know what brings the new lord of Occipitus to the Tarterian depths, and she is secretly hopeful the new lord has come to free her. If the character has not claimed lordship of Occipitus but tries to convince the demons otherwise, he must succeed at a Bluff check. If the check fails, the demons attack. If the check succeeds, the demon troupe reports that a vast army of trapped fiends has recently dispersed throughout Orthrys, having failed in its latest bid to escape the plane (this army is the same one the Cagewrights failed to release). Byakala's lost any interest in serving demonic masters, and under no circumstances does she agree to join forces with the PCs. If the PCs pressure her to join, she grows angry and attacks them rather than risk becoming someone's minion once again.

If, on the other hand, the PCs tell Byakala they've come to Carceri to destroy Adi-



marchus, she reacts with disbelief. With a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 30), though, the PCs can convince her of their sincerity, at which point she grows visibly excited. Too cowardly to stand against the demon prince herself, the thought of him being put down greatly appeals to her sense of vengeance. She knows the way to Skullrot, and gladly gives directions to the asylum once she believes the PCs.

Chapter Two: Skullrot

Murky, stench-ridden bogs surround the asylum of Skullrot, extending for miles in every direction. Swarms of large black mosquitoes, more annoying than dangerous, hound creatures attempting to cross the black quagmire. The swamp surrounding the asylum is vast and trackless; once the PCs get directions to the place they can use spells like *greater teleport* to travel there quickly. If the PCs are forced to use more mundane means for travel, they'll need to traverse 3d6x100 miles of stinking swamp to reach Skullrot. The swamp is fairly dangerous, and those traveling through it have a 15% chance per day of an encounter with one of its denizens. These encounters can be with one of the random encounters from Chapter One, or with other encounters you design. Fiendish black dragons, demons, demodands, half-fiend 30-HD krakens, and worse are said to lurk therein.

As characters approach within 5 miles of the asylum, they notice trampled reeds and crisscrossing tracks. Within 1 mile of the asylum, they stumble upon the bloated, maggot-ridden corpses of slaughtered fiends. Had the Cagewrights' plot to open a portal between Carceri and the Material Plane succeeded, the gate would have formed near the asylum. When word of the plot reached the denizens of Carceri, fiends converged on the asylum in droves, hoping to be among the first to cross over. When the portal failed to open, the fiends turned on each other, leaving behind a bloody mess. Characters searching the carcasses find little of value; the victors of the battle have long since looted the dead.

The Howling Halls of Skullrot

A bare black rock rises above the fetid quagmire, and upon it stands a towering

SKULLROT

Level 1



1 square = 10 feet

WEST

white edifice over 200 feet high. Frightful screams and howls fill the air around the structure. Dozens of iron cages hang from bone spurs along the outside walls of the upper floors, each one holding a humanoid skeleton or corpse. Four massive, horned skulls surmount the structure.

Skullrot looms high above the stench-ridden swamps of Orthrys and can be seen from a mile away. The entire building is made from fiendish skulls cemented together with hard resin. Four massive goristro demon skulls are fixed to the uppermost floor, glowering menacingly into the tortured sky.

The skull walls have the strength and consistency of stone, yet they are porous, allowing the wails of mad fiends to carry beyond. The dangling cages are grisly to behold and serve to ward off spirits and other unwanted visitors.

Skullrot embodies the eternal despair and hopelessness of Carceri. Fiends and wayward souls driven mad by futile attempts to escape can be found here, locked away for all time. Skullrot also serves as a prison for beings

deemed too dangerous to roam free and too valuable to kill, chief among them the demon prince Adimarchus. Dark Myrakul, his fiendish annis assistant Slouva, and a host of flesh golems and demodands mind the asylum and its deranged residents.

Skullrot Features

The following features are common throughout Skullrot unless noted otherwise:

Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: Skullrot is made entirely of fiendish skulls, cemented together with hardened resin (excreted by what remains a mystery). The walls, floors, and ceilings have the strength of magically treated masonry, yet they are porous. Characters in gaseous form can pass through walls as easily as they move through open air, and the constant howls and screams of Skullrot's incarcerated fiends can be heard throughout the structure and even in the surrounding swamp. Ceilings are 20 feet high throughout the asylum.

♦ **Skull Walls:** 1 ft. thick; Hardness 16; hp 180 (per 10-foot-by-10-foot section); Break DC 55; Climb DC 15. Since they

Campaign Seed: Fate of the Cagewrights

If any of the Cagewrights fled to Carceri during "Strike on Shatterhorn," they are invariably drawn to the asylum and to Adimarchus. The warden of Skullrot, however, quickly overcomes them, infects them with his touch of insanity, and locks them away for all time (see area 9 for details)—an ironic fate, to be sure. Dark Myrakul takes exception to anyone who comes to Skullrot seeking to harm or free one of his "guests," and he doesn't give up his prisoners for any price. The PCs may encounter them as gibbering shells or even as caged zombies, but they have nothing to fear from these Cagewrights now.

The one exception is Embril Aloustinai. If she escaped to Carceri with a character's soul in her *magic jar* gem, she uses *commune* to contact Nerull and alerts him she has a soul to trade for Adimarchus's release. Unfortunately for Embril, Nerull doesn't intend to fully honor this bargain. He sends one of his favored minions to collect on the soul and tells Embril that only the Smoking Eye can free Adimarchus. If any of the PCs has this template, Embril becomes obsessed with capturing that PC and bringing him to Adimarchus's prison. She returns to the Material Plane soon after and tracks that PC down, attempting to kidnap him as well.

are not made of stone, Skullrot's walls are impervious to spells such as *stone shape* and *transmute rock to mud*.

Howling: The fiendish howling and screaming that fills the asylum drowns out all but the loudest noises. Listen checks made in Skullrot suffer a -10 penalty.

Illumination: The creatures entrusted to oversee the asylum have darkvision, and do not require light to see. Orthrys's red sky bleeds through the porous walls of the asylum, giving the walls a dull red

glow that isn't quite sufficient to actually illuminate the interior.

Doors: Skullrot's doors are made of magically treated iron.

♦ **Iron Door:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 20; hp 120; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 40.

Dangling Cages: Eighty iron cages hang from bone spurs on the outside of Skullrot. Seventy-two of the cages contain animated skeletons and zombies—the remains of adventurers who unwisely meddled in Dark Myrakul's affairs. The skeletons vigorously shake their cages while the zombies groan mournfully.

♦ **Dangling Cage:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 40.

♦ **Skeletons (42):** hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* 226.

♦ **Zombies (30):** hp 16 each; *Monster Manual* 266.

Special Spell Effects: Skullrot is protected by the equivalent of an *unhallow* spell (caster level 30th). Creatures in the asylum (but not those in the dangling cages outside the asylum) gain the benefits of *magic circle against good*. All turning checks made to turn undead take a -4 penalty, and turning checks to rebuke undead gain a +4 profane bonus (spell resistance does not apply to this effect). The *unhallow* spell also carries an *invisibility purge* spell that affects the whole interior.

In addition, Skullrot is protected by the equivalent of a *dimensional lock* spell. This effect bars *astral projection*, *blink*, *dimension door*, *ethereal jaunt*, *etherealness*, *gate*, *plane shift*, *shadow walk*, *teleport*, *greater teleport*, *teleportation circle*, and similar spell-like effects and psionic abilities. It does not block *banishment*, *dismissal*, or similar spells, nor does it prevent summoned creatures from appearing or disappearing.

1. Balcony

This balcony, made entirely of skulls, rises 30 feet above the swamp. Tall iron doors bar entry into the structure. The iron doors are *arcane locked* (see Asylum Features for details).

2. Demodand Guards (EL 18)

Mournful howls resonate within this dark chamber. The walls of leering skulls bring no comfort, and the floor is covered in sticky tar.

The floor is coated in adhesive slime. Characters moving across the floor must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 17) or be held fast; prying oneself free requires a DC 17 Strength check. Characters who make a successful save can move at half speed through the slime. The demodands that guard the room (see Creatures, below) can move through the adhesive slime with impunity. A pair of *arcane locked* iron doors open out onto a balcony (area 1), and a staircase of skulls rises up out of the slime and leads to area 3.

Creatures: Ten farastus guard the room. They fight to the death and take no prisoners.

♦ **Farastu Demodands (10):** hp 71 each; see page 46.

Development: The guardian in area 3 uses *clairvoyance/clairaudience* to observe the events in this room if combat breaks out. He then tries to summon an additional 1d4 farastus (60% chance of success) before moving to the top of the staircase and filling area 2 with an *acid fog*. He then targets visible foes with *Melf's acid arrow* and *rays of enfeeblement*.

3. Hexavog (EL 19)

The fiendish howls are loudest here, in the asylum's heart. This room sits at the base of a 20-foot-diameter shaft that soars up into darkness. Balconies with iron railings line the walls at higher levels.

Dark Myrakul has tasked a deformed kelubar demodand to serve as a captain of the guard for Skullrot. This creature is Hexavog, and he's spent too many years in Skullrot and has been driven mad himself. Hexavog spends countless days singing aloud—a wretched attempt to quell the screams of the myriad fiends trapped in Skullrot. Upon sighting intruders, he sings (in Abyssal) "What madness is this? What madness, indeed! Endless torment, dark despair, caged in bone, can't be freed. All the tales end the same: See you screaming, twisting, dreaming, dreaming you never came."

Creatures: Hexavog moves well despite his massive, undulating bulk. His filthy stench fills the room; all non-demodands within the area must make a Fortitude save against the stench or suffer its ill effects. Hexavog is a monstrously bloated and



filthy fiend with batlike wings and six rubbery arms, his black skin coated in wretched green slime.

♦ **Hexavog, Six-armed Advanced Kelubar Demodand:** CR 19; Large outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 22d8+132; hp 234; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 29, touch 10, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +22; Grp +35; Atk +30 melee (1d8+9 plus 1d6 acid, claw); Full Atk +30 melee (1d8+9 plus 1d6 acid, 6 claws) and +28 melee (1d8+4 plus 1d6 acid, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA acidic slime, sneak attack +8d6, spell-like abilities, stench, *summon demodand*; SQ damage reduction 15/good, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, immune to acid, cold, fire, and poison, outsider traits, spell resistance 25, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +21, Ref +14, Will +15; Str 28, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +29, Concentration +31, Diplomacy +31, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Gather Information +29, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (the planes) +27, Listen +27, Perform (sing) +16, Sense Motive +27, Spot +27, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes).

Feats: Ability Focus (stench), Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Multiattack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*fear*), Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*Melf's acid arrow*).

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Demodand, Infernal, Terran.

Acidic Slime (Ex): Each of Hexavog's claw and bite attacks deals +1d6 points of acid damage. On a successful critical hit, this burst of acid deals +1d10 points of acid damage instead.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairvoyance/clairaudience*, *fear* (DC 18), *invisibility*, *Melf's acid arrow* (+22 ranged touch), *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+22 ranged touch); 2/day—*acid fog*, *dispel magic*. Caster level 22nd; the save DCs are Charisma-based.

Stench (Ex): All creatures (except demodands) within 30 feet of Hexavog must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 29) or be nauseated as long as the creature remains in the area and for 10 rounds thereafter. A successful save means that the creature is immune to Hexavog's stench for 1 day. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes the Ability Focus (stench) feat.

Summon Demodand (Sp): Once per day, Hexavog can attempt to summon 1d2 kelubars (40% chance of success) or 1d4 farastus (60% chance of success).

Tactics: Hexavog spends most of his time observing various areas of the asylum using *clairvoyance/clairaudience*. He tries to summon 1d4 farastus (60% chance of success) and fills the room with an *acid fog* before wading into battle. If he has support from the farastus, Hexavog tries to flank foes to make sneak attacks. If reduced to half its hit points, he flies up the shaft to area 10, singing as he goes. In addition to his regular attacks, Hexavog makes liberal use of quickened *Melf's acid arrows* or quickened *fears* every round; he can quicken each up to three times a day.

Remember, Hexavog cannot turn invisible because of the *invisibility purge* effect within Skullrot (see Asylum Features). If he cannot escape the characters, Hexavog tries to bargain for his life. An expert liar, he tells the heroes whatever he thinks they want to hear. He also likes to gloat when he's clearly winning and may be goaded into revealing some useful information.

Development: Hexavog knows that Adimarchus is trapped in area 10. However, the kelubar believes that Adimarchus has learned how to "slip" into the minds of other living creatures, making them do things. Hexavog himself has been "touched" by Adimarchus and occasionally feels a driving need to free the demon prince from captivity. However, to date Hexavog has resisted the urge to cross Dark Myrakul. Only

his great skill at bluffing has kept Dark Myrakul from learning of this weakness. Hexavog knows that it's only a matter of time before Adimarchus escapes; he just hopes it's not his fault when it happens.

The farastus in area 2 come to Hexavog's aid if combat erupts here. In addition, Slouva (see area 8) likely hears any battle that breaks out here despite the intervening distance and the -10 penalty from the howling fiends, thanks to her high Listen check and the low DC (-10) to hear a battle. She arrives 2d4+1 rounds after combat begins to aid Hexavog. If particularly hard pressed, Slouva retreats to her lair (area 6) to send her minion there after the PCs.

4. Golem Lab (EL 17)

This hideous laboratory holds six glass vats, each one four feet tall, four feet wide, and filled with red fluid. The vats hold naked human corpses, their faces peeled off. Human brains and vital organs float in glass canisters on bone shelves above the vats. A table consisting of patchwork flesh canvas stretched over a bone frame dominates the middle of the room. Bone flanges fitted with hooks protrude from the table, and stretched between the hooks are six peeled-off human faces.

Dark Myrakul uses this room to make his hideous flesh golems, two of which stand ready to destroy unwanted interlopers. Any corpse immersed in one of the vats is permanently preserved as though warded by a *gentle repose* spell; this magic property is as much an effect of Skullrot itself as of the vats, which lose this property if brought outside of the asylum. If the PCs lost one of their own to Embril's *magic jar* gambit in "Strike on Shatterhorn," that PC's preserved dead body can be found here, awaiting use in golem creation. Particularly sinister DMs may wish to have the character's body already used to help create the two golems located here.

Creatures: Dark Myrakul's flesh golems are lumbering, apelike brutes with sunken black eyes and skin made of stitched human faces. These golems are much larger and more dangerous than a standard flesh golem.

➤ **Advanced Flesh Golems (2):** CR 15; Huge construct; HD 27d10+40; hp 188 each;

Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 10, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +20; Grp +41; Atk +31 melee (4d6+13, slam); Full Atk +31 melee (4d6+13, 2 slams); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA berserk; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 5/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 37, Dex 14, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Treasure: Tucked under the table are three jars of special unguents (400 gp each), three spools of stitching twine (100 gp each), and an incantation to *Graz'zt* written in blood on a scroll. The incantation allows a character to substitute a *miracle* spell for the *limited wish* spell needed to craft a flesh golem, and is worth 1,000 gp to a collector or worshiper of *Graz'zt*.

5. Dark Myrakul's Study (EL 19)

The middle of this room holds three tables made of hardened black resin. They vaguely resemble flat-topped mushroomrooms. Two are covered with fat tomes, flasks, candles, and scrolls. The third holds a metal apparatus shaped like a pair of claws, one holding an iron flask inlaid with silver runes, and the other suspended above the flask, its talons hooked into the flask's brass stopper. A fat iron chest shaped like a crouching, demonic toad rests in one corner.

This room serves as Dark Myrakul's workshop and study. Characters searching the tables find the Treasure. However, any living creature that enters the room causes the clawlike apparatus to pull the stopper on the *iron flask*, releasing the Creature trapped within. Only Dark Myrakul knows the correct command word to control the creature ("cthirol").

The iron toad-shaped chest contains more of this room's Treasure.

Creature: Unplugging the *iron flask* releases an advanced devourer. It fights until destroyed and relentlessly pursues its quarry.

➤ **Advanced Devourer:** CR 19; Huge undead (extraplanar); HD 36d12; hp 234; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25, touch 7, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +18; Grp +39; Atk +29 melee (2d6+13, claw); Full Atk +29 melee (2d6+13, 2 claws); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA energy drain (DC 36), spell-like

abilities, trap essence (DC 36); SQ dark-vision 60 ft., spell deflection, spell resistance 21, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +13, Ref +12, Will +23; Str 36, Dex 8, Con —, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 23.

Skills: Climb +52, Concentration +39, Diplomacy +8, Jump +52, Listen +42, Move Silently +38, Sense Motive +42, Spot +42.

Feats: Ability Focus (energy drain), Ability Focus (trap essence), Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Great Fortitude, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Improved Trip, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*confusion*), Weapon Focus (claw).

Tactics: At the start of the encounter, the devourer has 10 levels of trapped essence. In addition to attacking with its claws, the advanced devourer can use its quickened *confusion* once per round, up to three times a day.



Treasure: The iron chest contains two blocks of *incense of meditation* wrapped in a black shroud, a *wand of false life* (6 charges), and any items taken from Cagewrights trapped in area 9. Any items taken from a PC's body stolen by Embril can be found here as well. Characters searching the tables find a scroll of *antilife shell*, a scroll of *planar ally* (calls a bebilith named Iyacchai), a scroll of *discern location*, a *potion of remove curse*, three *potions of inflict serious wounds*, an unholy font made out of a shator's skull (100 gp; focus for *screying* and *greater screying* spells), a collection of four malefic tomes titled *The Black Codices of Graz'zt* (a must-read for clerics of Graz'zt, containing unholy prayers and grim treatises on death and undeath; the set is worth 8,000 gp to an interested buyer), a tiny reliquary containing a fragment of bone etched with profane runes (500 gp; focus for the *unholy aura* spell), a type II *bag of holding* containing 20,000 gp (used to cover the costs of flesh golem creation), and a tiny black box traced with silver runes and skull designs (250 gp) containing three black sapphires (worth 15,000 gp, 17,000 gp, and 20,000 gp respectively; foci for *soul bind* spells).

The iron flask on the desk can be salvaged with ease, although chances are it's empty by the time the PCs get to it.

6. Slouva's Bedchamber (EL 15)

A ten-foot-long bed made of lashed bones dominates this room. The blankets covering the bed are of stitched flesh and fur. The room is otherwise bare.

This room belongs to Slouva, Dark Myrakul's assistant. Slouva is a fiendish annis barbarian that spends the majority of her time tormenting the deranged prisoners of Skullrot, feeding their hopelessness. She can usually be found in area 8 on one of the upper floors of the asylum, but may have retreated to this room after coming down to area 3 to aid Hexavog in a fight.

Creature: Although she keeps no valuables in this chamber, Slouva does keep a dangerous minion here, a particularly servile yet dangerous chasme demon named *Eriznisith*. Slouva finds the chasme's

drone to be quite soothing, and often uses it to drown out the howling of the asylum's prisoners when she sleeps.

Like most chasme, *Eriznisith* is a disgusting, fly-like demon. An expert in punishment and torture, Slouva sometimes enlists his aid when a prisoner has done something particularly naughty and needs to be reprimanded. *Eriznisith* has tufts of hair sprouting at random from his tough, insectoid flesh. He has large buzzing wings and six limbs, two of which resemble long, thin human arms. His head is vaguely humanlike, although exaggerated and ugly, with a hard, hooked horn where a human's nose would be.

➤ **Eriznisith, Advanced Chasme Demon:** CR 15; Large outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil, *tanar'ri*); HD 18d8+108; hp 199; Init +6; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +18; Grp +27; Atk +22 melee (2d6+5/19–20, claw); Full Atk +22 melee (2d6+5/19–20, 2 claws) and +20 melee (1d6+2, bite) and +20 melee (1d6+2, gore); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA drone, fear aura, spell-like abilities, wounding; SQ damage reduction 10/good, immune to electricity, immune to poison, resistance to acid 10, resistance to cold 10, resistance to fire 10, spell resistance 23, *summon tanar'ri*, telepathy 100 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +17, Ref +17, Will +12; Str 20, Dex 22, Con 22, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 18; *Book of Vile Darkness* 172.

Skills: Concentration +27, Hide +23, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Listen +22, Move Silently +27, Search +23, Spot +22, Survival +22 (+24 on other planes).

Feats: Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Natural Attack (claw), Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack.

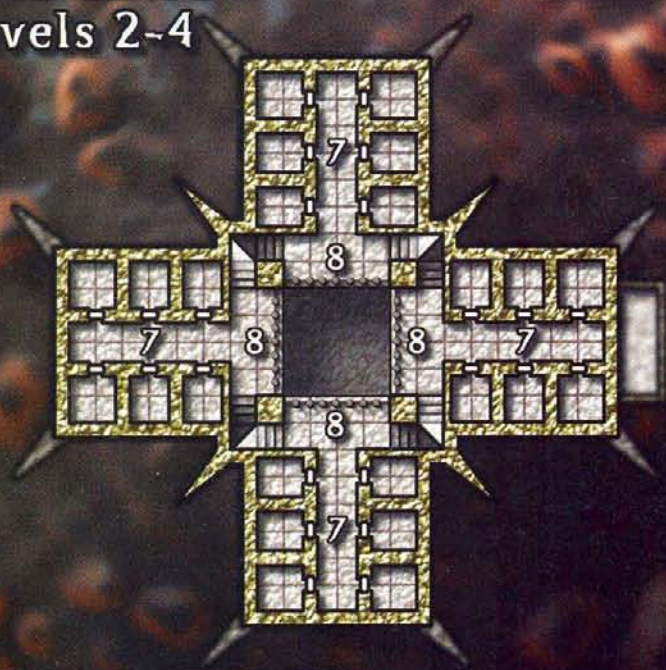
Languages: Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic.

Drone (Su): As a full-round action, *Eriznisith* can beat his wings to create a droning buzz in a 60-foot spread. Each creature in the area must make a DC 23 Will save or fall asleep for 2d10 rounds. Although the ability otherwise functions like the *sleep* spell, there is no Hit Dice limit for this effect. Demons and creatures that are immune to *sleep* effects are immune to a chasme's drone. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Fear Aura (Su): As a free action, *Eriznisith* can create an aura of fear in a 5-

SKULLROT

Levels 2-4



1 square = 10 feet

WEST

foot radius. All creatures in this area must make a DC 23 Will save or become panicked. If the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by Lrznisith's fear aura for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Wounding (Ex): A wound resulting from any of Lrznisith's attacks continues to bleed for an additional 1 point of damage per round thereafter. Multiple wounds result in cumulative damage. The bleeding can be stopped by a successful DC 10 Heal check or the application of a magical healing effect.

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp): Once per day, Lrznisith can attempt to summon 1d4 rutterkins or 1 chasme with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*contagion* (DC 18), *darkness*, *desecrate*, *detect good*, *dispel magic*, *fly*, *insect plague*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+24 ranged touch), *protection from good*, *see invisibility*, *telekinesis* (DC 19), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of gear only), *wave of grief* (DC 16); 1/day—*circle of nausea* (DC 17), *unholy aura* (DC 22). Caster level 10th.

Note: Chasmes are detailed in the *Book of Vile Darkness*. If you don't have access to this book, the stats above should be enough to run this encounter. Even though a few of the demon's spell-like abilities (*circle of nausea* and *wave of grief*) and the details on one of the demons it can summon (rutterkin) are also detailed in that book, the chasme's other abilities should still be enough to menace the PCs.

Tactics: Lrznisith doesn't allow anyone but Slouva or Dark Myrakul into this room; all others are intruders upon his mistress' domain and are attacked immediately. If brought below 40 hit

points and Slouva isn't here as well, he teleports to area 8 on the 4th floor to report his failure to his mistress and recruit her aid in launching a counter-attack against the PCs.

7. Howling Fiends (EL Varies)

These wings of the asylum contain six cells each (84 cells total, spread across four stories). An *arcane locked* iron door bars each cell. The cell itself contains a screaming Creature bound in magically treated spiked chains. Creatures with bite attacks also wear iron masks with a narrow mouth slot for feedings. The chains and masks prevent the creatures from using any of their natural attacks. The chains also bind the creatures to the floor, walls, and ceiling. Moreover, any creature that struggles against the chains takes 4d4+10 points of damage per round from the spikes.

◆ **Spiked Chains:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 20; hp 120; Break DC 30; Escape Artist 50; Open Lock DC 40.

◆ **Iron Mask:** 1 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 30; Break DC 24; Escape Artist 50; Open Lock DC 40.

Creatures: Each cell contains a single insane creature. Some of the creatures appear calm, while others are raving mad. The chains prevent them from leaving the cell's confines or attacking with their natural weapons. A metal mask prevents them from making bite attacks. To determine the type of creature in a particular cell, roll randomly on the following table:

The three types of yugoloths are fiendish neutral evil outsiders detailed in *Monster Manual III*. If you don't have this book, simply re-roll on the table.

The creatures imprisoned here are horribly insane and attack anyone who frees

Howling Prisoners of Skullrot

d%	Creature
01-10	Fallen Angel: astral deva (01-60), planetar (61-100)
11-20	Fallen Archon: hound archon hero (01-50), trumpet archon (51-100)
21-30	Berserk advanced flesh golem (see area 4 for statistics)
31-40	Demodand: farastu (01-50), kelubar (51-85), or shator (86-100)
41-50	Demon: balor (01-10), hezrou (11-40), succubus (41-70), vrolock (71-100)
51-60	Devil: hamatula (01-30), erinyes (31-60), cornugon (61-90), pit fiend (91-100)
61-70	Fallen Guardinal: avoral (01-50), leonal (51-100)
71-90	Slaad: red (01-25), blue (26-50), green (51-75), death (76-100)
91-100	Yugoloth: mezzoloth (01-50), nycaloth (51-85), ultraloth (86-90)



them, despite their actual alignment. A *greater restoration*, *miracle*, or *wish* is required to restore an insane creature's mind; each creature freed in this manner reacts differently, depending on its alignment and the PCs' attitude. Remember that even if cured of their insanities, these outsiders are still criminals who committed some extremely heinous acts in order to end up here, and releasing them might have unforeseen repercussions beyond the scope of this adventure.

Of course, Dark Myrakul knows if any of his prisoners are freed, and quickly comes to investigate.

8. Balconies (EL 19)

Each of these balconies has a four-foot-high spiked iron railing strung with chains. Some of the spikes have skulls impaled on them.

Three Creatures patrol the third floor of the asylum, feeding prisoners and tightening chains. Once they've inspected all

of the residents on that level, they move on to the other floors, or even up to area 9 on floors 5–8.

Creatures: Dark Myrakul's assistant, Slouva, is a fiendish annis with black scraggly hair and pebbly, midnight blue skin. She carries a black jug filled with edible brown sludge that she serves to those prisoners who need to eat and drink—the outsiders imprisoned here don't, but the prisoners in area 9 certainly do. She paces the howling halls with her two flesh golem bodyguards, chanting merrily. Dark Myrakul's flesh golems are lumbering, apelike brutes with sunken black eyes and skin made of stitched humanoid faces.

➤ **Slouva, Fiendish Annis Barbarian 11:** CR 19; Large monstrous humanoid; HD 7d8+21 plus 11d12+33; hp 173; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 30, touch 10, flat-footed 29; Base Atk +18; Grp +30; Atk +27 melee (1d8+10, claw); Full Atk +27 melee (1d8+10, 2 claws) and +25 melee (1d6+6, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA greater rage 3/day, improved grab, rake +27 melee (1d6+10), rend 2d6+14, smite good 1/day (+18 damage), spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 2/—, damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, improved uncanny dodge, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10, spell resistance 23, trap sense +3; AL CE; SV Fort +14, Ref +11, Will +9; Str 26, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +19, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +0 (+2 acting), Hide +5, Intimidate +13, Jump +19, Listen +21, Spot +21.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Giant.

Greater Rage (Ex): Slouva can fly into a rage three times per day. While raging, her statistics are as follows: hp 227; AC 28, touch 8, flat-footed 27; Grp +33; Atk +30 melee (1d8+13, claw); Full Atk +30 melee (1d8+13, 2 claws) and +28 melee (1d6+7, bite); SA rake +30 melee (1d6+13), rend 2d6+18; SV Fort +17, Will +11; Str 32, Con 22.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—disguise self, fog cloud. Caster level 8th.

Possessions: +4 mithril breastplate, amulet of mighty fists +2, chime of opening (43 charges), black jug (command word “urvalak”), cold iron ladle (can be wielded as a cold iron club).

Wondrous Item: Black Jug

Three times per day, when the proper command word is spoken, this hideous iron jug fills with enough nutritious but foul-tasting brown gruel to feed 30 Medium or smaller creatures or 15 Large creatures. The jug weighs 40 pounds empty and 75 pounds full.

Moderate conjuration; CL 10th; Craft Wondrous Item, create food and water; Price: 32,400 gp.

➤ **Advanced Flesh Golems (2):** hp 188 each; see area 4.

Tactics: The sly annis hopes to run the asylum one day, and being a treacherous creature, she plans to turn against Dark Myrakul if the opportunity presents itself. As long as Dark Myrakul is in charge, however, she obeys his commands and defends the asylum as best she can.

If confronted, she sends her golems into battle. If they are destroyed, she flies into a rage and lunges forth with claws and teeth bared. If truly hard-pressed, Slouva flees and uses her *chime of opening* to unlock one of the denizens of area 7 (preferably an insane pit fiend). Roll on the *confusion* spell table (*Player's Handbook*, page 212) to determine how the pit fiend behaves once released. Slouva hopes the pit fiend distracts her enemies long enough for her to reach area 10 and alert Dark Myrakul.

9. Cells (EL Varies)

The inner walls of these corridors are lined with *arcane locked* iron doors. The doors lead to cramped cells, each holding a prisoner stricken with insanity.

Creatures: Unlike the celestials and fiends imprisoned in area 7, the residents of these cells are not bound with chains. Instead, they wear tight-fitting straight-jackets made of stitched demon hide. They carry no gear and have no spells prepared. Roll on the following table to determine what type of NPC is confined to each cell, and use the NPC statistics in Chapter 4 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* as necessary for their statistics.

SKULLROT

Levels 5-8

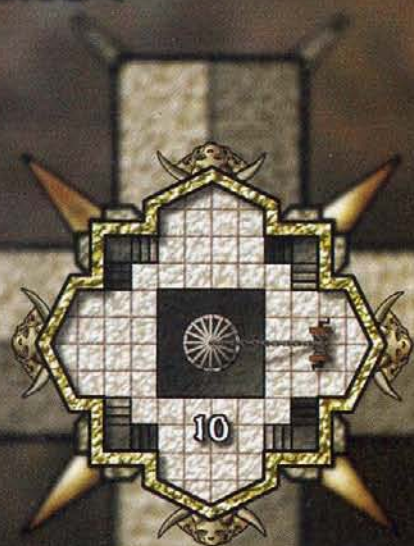


1 square = 10 feet

WEST

SKULLROT

Level 9



1 square = 10 feet

WEST

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If any of the Cagewrights escaped from Shatterhorn and found their way here, they can be found in one of these cells, stripped of their gear and their sanity. (Their possessions can be found in area 5.)

Forlorn Wards of Skullrot

d%	NPC
01–10	Barbarian, level 1d10+10
11–20	Bard, level 2d6+8
21–30	Cleric, level 2d6+8
31–40	Fighter, level 1d10+10
41–50	Monk, level 1d10+10
51–60	Fallen paladin, level 1d10+10
61–70	Ranger, level 1d10+10
71–80	Rogue, level 1d10+10
81–90	Sorcerer, level 2d6+8
91–100	Wizard, level 2d6+8

Repercussions for freeing any of these insane criminals should be similar to those for freeing the outsiders in area 7.

10. Adimarchus's Prison (EL 24)

The staircases lead up to this twenty-foot-high chamber. The floor gives way to a forty-foot-wide shaft in the middle of the room. A large iron cage is suspended over the shaft, its base level with the floor of the room. The cage itself is shaped like a coffin made of metallic bones, the bars studded with spikes and cruel hooks. No door seems to be apparent on the cage, as if it were built to never be opened. Slumped on the floor of the cage is an angelic figure with purple skin, golden tattoo-like patterns crisscrossing its body, and wings of metallic gold feathers. It covers its face with its hands and appears to be sobbing.

The central shaft drops 160 feet to the floor of area 3. A thick iron chain connects the hemispherical cage to a heavy iron winch that's bolted to the floor. Using the winch to raise or lower the cage requires a DC 26 Strength check; the cage ascends or descends at a rate of 20 feet (one floor) per round.

The angelic creature trapped inside the cage is none other than the demon prince of madness himself—Adimarchus. While Dark Myrakul torments him with words, Adimarchus tries desperately to tap into the minds of creatures capable of rescuing him. Dark Myrakul knows what the demon prince hopes to accomplish, but he doesn't

believe for an instant that Adimarchus can succeed. The failure of the Cagewrights is all the proof the lichfiend needs of this fact.

Creatures: The undead half-fiend Dark Myrakul is the warden of Skullrot; he spends the majority of his time here tormenting Adimarchus, and is here when the PCs first arrive at Skullrot. He trusts his minions to handle intruders, but if those intruders make it all the way up here he realizes that the defense of Skullrot has fallen to him alone. He is attended at all times by one of his greatest creations, a demonflesh golem. This golem is similar in basic appearance to a flesh golem, yet its parts have been harvested from demons, resulting in a far more horrifying creation than a mere flesh golem.

Dark Myrakul himself appears as a humanoid skeleton with clawed hands, horns, and fangs. He is clad in jet-black chainmail, and bony wings spring from his back. (Although Dark Myrakul's batlike wings are missing their leathery flaps, he can still fly.) Once a half-demon, Dark Myrakul underwent a painful and torturous process similar to that some human-

oids undertake to become a lich; with the aid of his demonic patron Graz'zt, Dark Myrakul became a vile undead menace known as a lichfiend. Today, Dark Myrakul is one of Graz'zt's most dangerous servants. Although a cleric, he does not gain his spells directly from Graz'zt. Rather, Graz'zt acts as Dark Myrakul's patron; the lichfiend's spells are granted by his faith in abstract forces of chaos and evil.

➤ **Dark Myrakul, Male Half-fiend/Half-human Lichfiend Cleric 18 (Graz'zt):** CR 23; Medium undead; HD 18d12; hp 141; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 30, touch 12, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +13; Grp +17; Atk +21 melee (2d4+10/19–20/x4, +4 keen vorpal adamantite scythe) or +17 melee (1d4+4, claw) or +17 melee touch (1d8+5* plus insanity, touch); Full Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (2d4+10/19–20/x4, +4 keen vorpal adamantite scythe) and +12 melee (1d6+2, bite) or +17 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) and +12 melee (1d6+2, bite) or +17 melee touch (1d8+5* plus insanity, touch); SA fear aura, insanity, rebuke undead 7/day (1d20+6; affects 2d6+22 HD), smite good 1/day (+18 damage), spell-like abilities, spells; SQ damage reduction 15/



Dark Myrakul

Lichfiend

"Lichfiend" is a monster template that is nearly identical to the lich template detailed in the *Monster Manual*, save that whereas the lich is the result of a humanoid spellcaster seeking to prolong his life via undeath, the lichfiend is an outsider spellcaster who seeks only to gain personal power at the expense of his free will.

The lichfiend template is identical to the lich template, save for the following differences:

- The lichfiend template may be applied to any evil outsider that has the Evil Brand feat and is at least caster level 11 in a spell-casting class.

- A lichfiend's touch does not threaten permanent paralysis; rather, it threatens permanent insanity, as the spell of the same name.

- Lichfiends do not create phylacteries to house their life force. Rather, their life force is maintained by a powerful fiendish patron or evil deity. This patron can revoke the lichfiend's undead status (thereby destroying the lichfiend) as a free action at any time, so lichfiends are unquestioningly loyal to their patrons. A lichfiend that is killed crumbles to dust and its life force returns to its patron, who may create a new body identical to the lichfiend's prior body if he wishes, or he may simply absorb the lichfiend's life force, destroying it utterly. The only way to permanently slay a lichfiend is to use a *miracle* or *wish* within one round of the lichfiend's destruction to prevent its life force from returning to its patron, or to convince its patron to destroy the life force rather than restore it to a body.

bludgeoning and magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, electricity, mind-affecting attack, poison, and polymorph, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10, and sonic 10, spell resistance 28, turn resistance +4; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +16; Str 18, Dex 14, Con —, Int 18, Wis 20, Cha 18.

*A successful Will save (DC 23) reduces the damage by half. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Skills: Concentration +21, Diplomacy +25, Heal +26, Hide +6, Knowledge (religion) +25, Knowledge (the planes) +25, Listen +13, Move Silently +6, Search +12, Spellcraft +25, Spot +13.

Feats: Craft Construct, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Evil Brand*, Greater Spell Penetration, Hover, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (poison), Spell Penetration.

*This feat is detailed on page 49 of the *Book of Vile Darkness*. It grants a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks made against evil creatures.

Fear Aura (Su): Creatures of less than 5 HD in a 60-foot radius that look at a lichfiend must succeed on a Will save (DC 23) or be affected as though by a *fear* spell (caster level 18th). A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the lichfiend's fear aura for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Insanity (Sp): Dark Myrakul does not have a paralyzing touch. Instead, any living creature the lich hits with its touch attack must succeed on a Will save (DC 23) or be affected as if by an *insanity* spell (caster level 18th). *Remove curse* does not remove insanity, but a *greater restoration*, *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* spell can restore the character. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*darkness*, *quickened poison* (Fort DC 17), *unholy aura* (Fort DC 22); 1/day—*blasphemy* (Will DC 21), *contagion* (Fort DC 17), *desecrate*, *destruction* (Fort DC 21), *horrid wilting* (Fort DC 22), *summon monster IX* (farastu demodand), *unhallow*, *unholy blight* (Will DC 18). Caster level 18th; the save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spells Prepared (Caster level 18; save DC 15 + spell level): 0—*create water* (3), *cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *read magic*; 1st—*bane* (DC 16), *cause fear*^D (DC 16), *deathwatch*, *divine favor* (2), *doom* (2, DC 16), *entropic shield*; 2nd—*align weapon*, *eagle's*

splendor, *death knell*^D (DC 17), *hold person* (DC 17), *owl's wisdom*, *silence* (2, DC 17); 3rd—*animate dead*^D, *bestow curse* (2, DC 18), *contagion* (2, DC 18), *create food and water*, *deeper darkness*; 4th—*discern lies* (DC 19), *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *greater magic weapon* (already cast), *sending*, *spell immunity*, *unholy blight*^D (DC 19); 5th—*flame strike* (2, DC 20), *slay living*^D (DC 20), *spell resistance* (2), *true seeing*; 6th—*antilife shell*, *banishment*, *create undead*^D, *greater dispel magic* (2); 7th—*destruction*^D (2, DC 22), *summon monster VII* (2); 8th—*create greater undead*^D, *fire storm* (DC 23), *greater spell immunity*, *summon monster VIII*; 9th—*energy drain* (+15 ranged touch, DC 24), *implosion* (DC 24), *wail of the banshee*^D (DC 24).

D: Domain spell. **Domains:** Death (death touch 1/day; +17 melee touch), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: +4 chainmail of sonic resistance, +1 keen vorpal adamantite scythe (with *greater magic weapon* cast on it), amulet of natural armor +3, silver unholy symbol of Graz'zt (500 gp), pouch containing 6 black onyx gems (500 gp each; material components for *animate dead*, *create undead*, and *create greater undead* spells), iron keys to cell doors (in areas 7 and 9).

➤ **Demonflesh Golem:** CR 18; Huge construct (extraplanar); HD 24d10+40; hp 229; Init +3; Spd 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (average); AC 33, touch 7, flat-footed 33; Base Atk +18, Grp +36; Atk +27 melee (2d6+10, slam) and +29 melee (2d6+12/19–20, claw); Full Atk +27 melee (2d6+10, slam) and +29 melee (2d6+12/19–20, claw) or +27 melee (1d6+10 plus daze, tail lash); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft. (25 ft. with tail); SA claw graft, fear gaze, spell-like abilities, whip tail graft; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 15/adamantine and good, immune to electricity, immunity to magic, fast leg graft, resistance to acid 20, resistance to cold 20, resistance to fire 20, see invisibility; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 31, Dex 8, Con —, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 13; *Fiend Folio* 86.

Skills: Climb +29, Jump +28.

Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Focus (slam), Weapon Focus (tail lash).

Claw Graft (Ex): A demonflesh golem's left arm can attack independently of its control; this allows the golem to effectively

attack with this claw as a free action. The clawed arm has a Strength score of 35, attacks at the golem's full base attack bonus (plus its higher Strength bonus), and gains its full Strength bonus on damage rolls.

Fear Gaze (Su): Range 30 ft., DC 19 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): 3/day—darkness, poison (DC 15), unholy aura (DC 19); 1/day—destruction (DC 18), horrid wilting (DC 19), unholy blight (DC 15). Caster level 20th.

Whip Tail Graft (Ex): As a full-round action, a demonflesh golem can direct its tail to attack one creature within 25 feet. Wounds from the tail burn fiercely, causing the creature struck to be dazed for 1 round unless it makes a DC 11 Fortitude save.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A demonflesh golem is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. A death effect slows it for 1d6 rounds. A spell with the chaotic or evil descriptor breaks any slow effect on the golem and cures 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage it would otherwise deal. It is fully affected by spells with the law or good descriptor, unless its construct traits make it immune to the spell's effects.

Tactics: Before confronting interlopers, Dark Myrakul casts *greater spell immunity* (immune to *disintegrate*, *heal*, *magic missile*, and *searing light*; lasts 180 minutes), *spell resistance* (lasts 18 minutes), *shield of faith* (lasts 18 minutes), *eagle's splendor* (lasts 18 minutes), *owl's wisdom* (lasts 18 minutes), *divine power* (lasts 18 rounds), and *divine favor* (lasts 1 minute). With these spells in place, Dark Myrakul has the following modified statistics: hp 159; AC 35, touch 17, flat-footed 33; Base Atk +18; Grp +25; Atk +35 melee (2d4+20/19–20/x4, +4 keen vorpal adamantite scythe) or +31 melee (1d4+7, claw) or +31 melee touch (1d8+5* plus insanity, touch); Full Atk +35/+30/+25/+20 melee (2d4+20/19–20/x4, +4 keen vorpal adamantite scythe) and +12 melee (1d6+3, bite) or +31 melee (1d4+7, 2 claws) and +26 melee (1d6+3, bite) or +31 melee touch (1d8+5* plus insanity, touch); SR 30; SV Will +18; Str 24, Wis 24, Cha 22; Diplomacy +27, Heal +28, Listen +15, Spot +15; cleric spell save DC 17 + spell level; save DCs for spell-like abilities increase by +2.

The lichfiend likes to cast offensive spells such as *implosion*, *energy drain*, *destruction*,

summon monster, *banishment*, and *greater dispel magic*. In melee, Dark Myrakul wields his +1 keen vorpal adamantite scythe. If he can't hit an enemy with his scythe, the lich uses his melee touch attack, combined with his quickened *poison* spell-like ability. His weapons are treated as magic for purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

Development: If destroyed, Dark Myrakul's body vanishes as his life force returns to Graz'zt's side. Fortunately for the PCs, Graz'zt has other pressing matters on his six-fingered hands at this time, and doesn't get around to investigating Dark Myrakul's death for several days. When he does notice the lichfiend has been slain and realizes that Skullrot's security has been compromised, his reaction is quick and brutal, as detailed in *Concluding the Adventure*.

Adimarchus Unleashed (EL 27)

The characters can choose to leave Adimarchus confined in his cage; however, he eventually escapes, either through his own actions or those of his deranged "followers" (the Cagewrights, for example). Additionally, his madness continues to leak out of the cage and into Occipitus, rebuilding and rebirthing Vhalantru (or other slain minions) at an increasing pace. The longer Adimarchus lives, the more of his madness escapes to torment the PCs in this manner. If the heroes destroy Dark Myrakul and either Slouva or Hexavog takes over as warden, Adimarchus might convince his new jailer to release him in exchange for the promise of even greater power. Unlike the lichfiend, the annis and the kelubar have no allegiance to Graz'zt and are easily swayed.

The cage that holds Adimarchus was created by Graz'zt, and should be treated as a major artifact. Its resemblance to the *soulcages* the PCs encountered earlier in the Adventure Path is no coincidence; the cage is Adimarchus's entire world, and in his insane inspirations gifted upon the Cagewrights, the design of the cage was a central theme. As long as the cage remains intact, Adimarchus cannot use any of his supernatural or spell-like abilities. (He can still shift between his two forms, however; see below for details.) Moreover, his effective Strength drops to 3, making it difficult for him to even stand. The cage itself is

Alternate Keys to Adimarchus's Cage

If your players haven't gone through "Test of the Smoking Eye," or if none of the current characters have the Sign of the Smoking Eye template, you'll need to adjust the conditions for freeing Adimarchus from his cage so that the PCs still have a chance to complete the adventure. The most important thing, no matter how you decide Adimarchus's cage can be destroyed, is that the PCs should be key in some way to the action.

One option is that only good outsiders can damage the cage. If Nidrama is with the party, she can destroy the cage if the PCs can keep her alive long enough to reach it. Otherwise, the PCs may need to use summoned monsters to do the work for them (unless, of course, one of the PCs happens to be a good outsider as well).

Another option is to require that the cage can only be destroyed if it is attacked simultaneously by a lawful good creature and a chaotic evil creature.

A particularly challenging option might be to require the PCs to find a creature with the Smoking Eye template (such as a reborn Vhalantru), somehow transport that creature to area 10 of Skullrot, and then convince or force that creature to destroy the cage.

Note that the more obscure the conditions become, the less likely the PCs are to realize how to destroy the cage. They'll likely need to do some research in large libraries, consult with powerful outsiders, or use potent divination magic to learn the secret. Fortunately, Adimarchus isn't going anywhere, so they should have time to figure things out. Unfortunately, the longer they wait, the more likely it is that Graz'zt realizes his enemy's prison is unguarded (see "Concluding the Adventure").

impervious to magic and blocks any spell that targets its occupant—yet the cage is not as perpetual as its creator had hoped.

The reason for this is simple. When Graz'zt created the cage, he did so using several wishes to duplicate, in part, the effects of a powerful *binding* spell, infusing the cage with these magical energies. Unfortunately, even with these powerful spells he was unable to create a cage that would last forever; the only way to do so required an "escape clause" that would grant possibility of escape under a specific circumstance. By including such a flaw in the cage, he was able to ward the cage from other forces to such an extent that even other demon princes and other quasi-divine entities can do nothing to harm it.

As the escape clause, Graz'zt came up with a condition he felt certain would never come to pass; only the rightful ruler of Occipitus can damage the cage and release its prisoner. Graz'zt felt that any demonic ruler of Occipitus would be the last creature who would want to see Adimarchus released (thus releasing a powerful contender for rulership of Occipitus), but what he didn't realize was that anyone who passed the Test of the Smoking Eye could become the ruler of this Abyssal realm—including creatures that have no interest in ruling Occipitus!

Graz'zt kept this secret to himself, telling no one (least of all Adimarchus himself), yet anyone bearing the Sign of the Smoking eye who looks upon the cage immediately understands the nature of the flaw. To such a creature, the cage appears rusty, fragile, and feeble, something that can be bashed apart with a single weapon blow.

Releasing the catch on the winch causes the cage to plunge nine stories, dealing 16d6 points of damage to anything it strikes. If the creature that releases the catch has the Sign of the Smoking Eye template, the fall destroys the cage. Adimarchus is protected from the fall by the cage, but is freed as a result of such a fall.

As long as Adimarchus is imprisoned in the cage, he is immune to all damage and magic effects; he cannot be harmed at all. If the PCs want to end the threat his madness poses, they must release him and then slay him.

Creature: If freed, Adimarchus reacts strangely to a character with the Sign of the Smoking Eye template (see "Test of the Smoking Eye" in *Dungeon* #107). In his angelic

form, he sees the character as a hated enemy who threatens to usurp his power, and he attacks that character to the exclusion of others. In his demonic form, he sees the character as a potential ally and heir apparent, and does not attack her (even if she attacks him), determining to win her allegiance in the war against Graz'zt. Only after persistent failed attempts to win the character's allegiance does Adimarchus turn against her.

A character with the Sign of the Smoking Eye template gains a +4 insight bonus on attack rolls made against Adimarchus and a +4 insight bonus on level checks to bypass the demon prince's spell resistance. In addition, all of the character's weapons are treated as cold iron and good-aligned for the purpose of overcoming Adimarchus's damage reduction.

Adimarchus's statistics appear in the Appendix.

Continuing the Campaign

With Adimarchus freed from Skullrot and likely slain by the PCs, "Asylum" and the Shackled City Adventure Path comes to a close. Yet this does not necessarily herald the end of your campaign; much is left to be done in the Cauldron region.

As for the PCs themselves, they're likely regarded as heroes by the refugees of Cauldron. Their actions in Skullrot go unknown by the majority of the populace, yet Cauldronites still view them as saviors, and rightfully so. The PCs have braved terrible fates in the defense of the region, and they deserve some rest. Give them some time to relax and enjoy the freedom they fought so hard for, and in time, if you are continuing the campaign, they'll get the itch to go on a new adventure soon enough. Some possible epic-level adventures are detailed below. With a little work, these adventure seeds can also serve as ideas for starting a brand new campaign in the area with new 1st-level characters.

- **Adimarchus Returns:** If released from Skullrot, Adimarchus returns to the Abyss to reclaim his realm. After reasserting his lordship over Occipitus, Adimarchus spends the next several months attracting deranged worshippers, rebuilding his demonic army, and plotting the downfall of his enemies. Whether or not that includes the heroes,

MOUNT ZOGON



only time will tell! Note that even if the PCs kill Adimarchus on Carceri, his body reforms on Occipitus. If the PCs don't travel there to finish him off, he'll simply return again and again.

- **The Vanishing Plague:** In rebuilding Cauldron, some workers uncover the ruins of a small gnomish enclave in the rock below the town. In so doing, the workers unleash a particularly potent strain of the Vanishing, a magical disease detailed in "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97). Unlike that version, this one is contagious and resists magical curing. The PCs must find a cure for the disease before all of Cauldron's citizens succumb.
- **Lord of the Ebon Triad:** The Ebon Triad (first introduced in "Flood Season" in *DUNGEON* #98) is a secretive alliance of heretics from the churches of Erythnul, Vecna, and Hextor; they played a key role in the creation of the *soulcages* used by the Cagewrights, yet their presence in this campaign has always been subtle and minor. Now that the Cagewrights are gone, what sinister plans might the Ebon Triad's shadowed leader have in store for the region, and why are agents of the Ebon Triad so intrigued by the ruins of the Spire of Long Shadows to the northeast of Cauldron?
- **Menace from Below:** The PCs have likely already delved into the Underdark below

the Cauldron region once (in "Zenith Trajectory," *DUNGEON* #102). Other entrances to the Underdark that once existed below Cauldron were recently collapsed by adventurers working for Vhalantru. In her explorations of the region, Shensen Tesseril has discovered that something has recently cleared these passages, something that did so from below. Why did Vhalantru want these entrances closed, and what new menace is creeping up toward town from below now that the recent volcanic activity has reopened them?

- **Nabthatorn's Revenge:** Since his defeat at the end of "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), the body of the exiled glabrezu Nabthatorn has been recovered by his minions. Unable to restore true life to their master, these vile minions used forbidden necromantic lore stolen from spell weaver ruins to restore the demon to life as an undead menace. Now more powerful than ever, Nabthatorn seethes with a need for revenge against the heroes who laid him low.
- **An Abyssal Home Away from Home:** If any of the PCs gained the Sign of the Smoking Eye template in "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), they feel periodic urges to return to the Abyssal layer of Occipitus. What changes have been evolving there, now that Adimarchus is finally defeated, and what is the meaning behind the dreams of burning and suffering bearers of the Smoking Eye have begun to endure?

- **Necroclastic Doom:** After studying the lore contained on the Soul Pillars found during "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" (*DUNGEON* #109), the local wizard

Meerthan Eliothlorn made a disturbing discovery. The soul pillars were damaged during the recent volcanic activity, and the necromantic energy within is building at an alarming rate. Before long, this energy could erupt in a manner similar to the volcano below, spewing negative energy instead

of lava and wreaking unimaginable havoc. In order to defuse the soul pillars, the PCs must delve deeper than ever before into the ruined spell weaver holdings below Cauldron.

- **Haunted House:** Soon after purchasing House Vhalantru (explored by the PCs in "Lords of Oblivion" in *DUNGEON* #111), the Vanderborens moved into their new home. Less than a month later, they and their servants have vanished. Those who enter House Vhalantru and stay for a few minutes agree that something seems strange about the empty mansion now... and those who stay for longer vanish utterly. What fell menace has claimed the estate for its own, and what is the source of the strange lights that can sometimes be seen flashing inside the house at night? Has Vhalantru indeed returned from the grave to reclaim his domain?
- **Perils of Politics:** In "Foundation of Flame" (*DUNGEON* #113), the PCs helped lay the foundations for Cauldron's future, and may have chosen a new lord mayor. The new lord mayor could find himself in over his head when other nobles, guildmasters, and important NPCs start jockeying for favors, and may call upon the PCs to help sort out what is best for Cauldron's future.
- **You Killed My Master!:** In "Thirteen Cages" (*DUNGEON* #114) the PCs met and defeated many of the Cagewrights and their apprentices. Yet some of the apprentices were not present at the time of this adventure, and still live. With their masters and mistresses slain, these apprentices seek each other out and found a new cabal, one with a far more simple mission than the original Cagewrights. These new Cagewrights seek only the deaths of the PCs; revenge for the same fates they visited upon their lords and ladies.
- **Return of Ssythar Vassha:** Something the PCs did during "Strike on Shatterhorn" (*DUNGEON* #115) has had unforeseen consequences. Perhaps it was the destruction of the Egg of Merrshaulk, or maybe it was the defiling of the Temple of Fangs. Whatever the cause, Ssythar Vassha, the one-time lord of Shatterhorn and



Adimarchus,
(Demonic Form)

prophet of the dark god of the yuan-ti, has returned to life and is gathering the scattered yuan-ti tribes of the jungle to his banner in preparation for a war to reclaim the lands surrounding Cauldron in Merrshaulk's unholy name!

- **Graz'zt's Rage:** Characters who free Adimarchus, either through their actions or inactions, earn Graz'zt's eternal enmity. Once the demon prince realizes that Dark Myrakul is slain, he absorbs the lichfiend's life force out of spite and then sends his son, Athux, to eliminate the heroes. A master of disguise with access to a vast planar spy network, Athux first sends assassins to dispose of the characters. Only if they fail does the son of Graz'zt deal with them personally. Graz'zt himself avoids direct confrontation with the PCs unless he can arrange an ambush; after all, the PCs have already defeated one demon prince!

Finally, know that some mysteries of the Shattered City Adventure Path must, for now, remain mysteries. Who is Celeste, and why did she trick the PCs into bringing Zenith Splintershield back to Cauldron to face his fate? And what monstrous catastrophe caused the spell weaver empire to end so spectacularly so long ago? The answers to these questions, and more, shall be unveiled in *Age of Worms*, the second *DUNGEON* Adventure Path, set to begin in 2005!

By day, Christopher Perkins is the mild-mannered Design Manager for RPGs and Miniatures at Wizards of the Coast. By night, he's a D&D-playing fiend who revels in fighting monsters and watching his players squirm. He writes adventures to stay sane.

Appendix

Adimarchus, Demon Prince of Madness

Adimarchus (Angelic Form)

Medium Outsider (Chaotic, Evil, Extraplanar, Tanar'ri)

Hit Dice: 30d8+312 (525 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (good)

AC: 42 (+6 Dex, +7 armor, +9 insight, +10 natural), touch 25, flat-footed 36

Base Attack/Grapple: +30/+38

Attack: +41 melee (1d6+11 plus special, +3 anarchic clawed gauntlet)

Full Attack: +39/+34/+29/+24 melee (1d6+11 plus special, +3 anarchic clawed gauntlet) and +37/+32/+27 melee (1d3+5 nonlethal plus trip, +1 brilliant energy whip) or +39/+34/+29/+24 melee (1d6+11 plus special, +3 anarchic clawed gauntlet) and +37/+32/+27 melee (2d4+5/19–20/x4, razorwings)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft. (15 ft. with whip)

Special Attacks: Implosive strike, razorwings, spell-like abilities, *summon tanar'ri*

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 20/good and cold iron, darkvision 120 ft., golden tattoos, immune to acid, immune to cold, immune to electricity, immune to petrification, immune to poison, lie in state, madness, outsider traits, resistance to fire 10, resistance to sonic 10, shroud alignment, spell resistance 35, telepathy 300 ft.

Saves: Fort +30, Ref +23, Will +28

Abilities: Str 27, Dex 22, Con 36, Int 16, Wis 5, Cha 32

Skills: Bluff +46, Concentration +46, Diplomacy +48, Disguise +46 (+48 acting), Intimidate +48, Knowledge (religion) +36, Knowledge (the planes) +36, Listen +30, Sense Motive +30, Spot +30, Survival +30 (+32 on other planes)

Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Trip, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Flyby Attack, Mobility, Spring Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Whirlwind Attack

Environment: Skullrot or Occipitus (507th layer of the Abyss)

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 23

Treasure: Quadruple standard

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Advancement: —

Adimarchus (Demonic Form)

Medium Outsider (Chaotic, Evil, Extraplanar, Tanar'ri)

Hit Dice: 30d8+312 (525 hp)

Initiative: +10

Speed: 50 ft.

AC: 45 (+6 Dex, +9 insight, +20 natural), touch 25, flat-footed 39

Base Attack/Grapple: +24/+36

Attack: +42 melee (2d6+23/17–20 plus special, *Ashen Blade*) and +34 melee (1d6+6 plus 1d4 negative levels, 4 tentacles)

Full Attack: +42/+37/+32/+27 melee (2d6+23/17–20 plus special, *Ashen Blade*) and +34 melee (1d6+6 plus 1d4 negative levels, 4 tentacles)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft. (15 ft. with tentacles)

Special Attacks: *Ashen Blade*, enervating bite, spell-like abilities, *summon tanar'ri*

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 20/good and cold iron, darkvision 120 ft., fast healing 15, immune to acid, immune to cold, immune to electricity, immune to petrification, immune to poison, lie in state, madness, outsider traits, resistance to fire 10, resistance to sonic 10, shroud alignment, spell resistance 35, telepathy 300 ft.

Saves: Fort +30, Ref +23, Will +28

Abilities: Str 35, Dex 22, Con 36, Int 16, Wis 5, Cha 32

Skills: Bluff +44, Concentration +46, Diplomacy +46, Disguise +44 (+46 acting), Intimidate +46, Knowledge (reli-

Adimarchus,
(Angelic Form)



gion) +36, Knowledge (the planes) +36, Listen +30, Sense Motive +30, Spot +30, Survival +30 (+32 on other planes)

Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*true seeing*), Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Environment: Skullrot or Occipitus (507th layer of the Abyss)

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 23

Treasure: Quadruple standard

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Advancement: —

Adimarchus is a fallen celestial and the exiled demon prince of madness. Centuries ago, he led a rampaging army of demons on an invasion of Celestia. The heavenly host repulsed the demonic army, but at great cost: the angels of Celestia were forced to cast the part of Celestia occupied by the demons into the Abyss, tearing apart the fabric of the plane in the process. This massive chunk of planar matter came to rest on a layer of the Abyss called Occipitus.

Adimarchus acted quickly to incorporate the wreckage of Celestia into Occipitus. In doing so, he became the demon prince of the plane, gaining almost limitless power there and becoming a demon prince in the process. Even in defeat, he knew success. For many years, Adimarchus ruled Occipitus, crafting from the ruins a great demonic empire.

Fifty years ago, Adimarchus made a move against a rival demon prince named Graz'zt. In the midst of a battle between Adimarchus's forces and those of Graz'zt, Adimarchus simply disappeared. Some say Graz'zt killed or captured him, while others say he fled when defeat seemed likely. A few even wonder if he had an attack of conscience and left the Abyss completely on a quest for celestial redemption.

The truth behind Adimarchus's disappearance centers on his love for Athux, a resolute aasimar paladin with six fingers on each hand. Five decades ago, Athux embarked on a quest to redeem Adimarchus's soul. The aasimar cut a swath across the tumorous plains of Occipitus and confronted the demon prince in his own throne room. Adimarchus and Athux fought until, exhausted, the demon prince

sundered the aasimar's sword with his own dark blade. Clutching Athux by the throat, Adimarchus saw something in the aasimar's eyes that sparked his compassion. He could not kill Athux, nor could he subject the paladin to the torments of Occipitus. He tried to lure Athux over to the side of evil, but his attempts were half-hearted at best. Athux remained a prisoner on Occipitus and stood by Adimarchus's side as the demon prince plotted against his rival, Graz'zt. All the while, Athux fueled Adimarchus's rage against demonkind. A strange friendship bloomed, puzzling Adimarchus's minions and spurring some to betray him. Graz'zt learned of the planned assault against him and the alliance of Adimarchus and Athux, and in true demonic fashion, he conspired with Adimarchus's treacherous minions to overthrow his rival.

During the epic battle between Adimarchus's army and Graz'zt's hordes, demons swayed by Graz'zt captured Athux with surprising ease, imprisoning him in an asylum on Carceri. Adimarchus could not bear the loss of Athux, and the treachery of fiends rekindled the fallen angel's burning hatred. Adimarchus abandoned his hordes, his realm, and his evil ways, fleeing to Carceri to rescue Athux and find redemption. Alas, the tale of Adimarchus and Athux would not end well.

As Graz'zt's army crushed Adimarchus's abandoned demon horde, Adimarchus arrived at the demonic asylum of Skullrot on Carceri to find Athux overcome with dementia, the prisoner of one of Graz'zt's most powerful allies—a powerful undead priest of Graz'zt named Dark Myrakul. Unable to wrest the aasimar from Dark Myrakul's clutches, Adimarchus traded his own freedom for the paladin's restored mind and safe return to Celestia. The lichfiend readily agreed. The imprisoned Adimarchus watched as Athux shook off his "lunacy," only to transform into a black-skinned fiend with six fingers on each hand. Athux had misled Adimarchus from the start. He was, in fact, Graz'zt's devoted son. At that moment, Adimarchus realized his foolishness. Graz'zt had found a weakness in his rival—a long-buried desire for redemption that Adimarchus assumed he'd lost long ago—and used that weakness to dethrone his enemy. The very thought drove Adimarchus mad.

Dark Myr-

akul has spent the past 50 years tormenting Adimarchus with the knowledge that his futile quest for redemption and his pathetic pursuit of love ultimately cost him his realm, his freedom, his mind, everything. The lichfiend's words fuel the demon prince's madness. More black-hearted than ever, Adimarchus craves freedom, power, vengeance, and myriad other things no demon should ever possess. Fractured are the demon prince's thoughts. Unbeknownst to Myrakul, Adimarchus's demonic insanity has granted him the power to plant fragments of his consciousness in distant minds and twist them in profound ways. Living creatures "touched" by Adimarchus become strangely drawn to him. The Cagewrights represented the most dangerous of these "children" of Adimarchus, yet now that they have failed to rescue their "father," Adimarchus's will and rage have bloomed into something altogether new; he has transformed into two distinct creatures, each with a burning fury to escape Skullrot at any cost.

Adimarchus has two forms. The first is that of a beautifully androgynous angel with pale purple skin, golden tattoo-like patterns that shift lyrically across his bare flesh, metallic gold wings as sharp as razors, and dead black eyes. In this form, he wears a golden breastplate and wields two weapons: a brilliant energy whip and a golden gauntlet fitted with sharp, birdlike talons. His other form is a lithe humanoid with ash-black skin, opalescent white eyes, black fangs, and four shadowy tentacles protruding from his back, each one ending in a lamprey's maw. In this form, he wields a smoldering greatsword made of ash and cinders. In either form, Adimarchus's right eye burns with a smoking flame, more so when the demon prince is incensed.

Combat (Angelic and Demonic Forms)

Adimarchus is a single being, but he can shift between his two forms on a whim. Changing between these two forms is a free action, and the demon prince's statistics change to match whatever form he has



assumed. Attacking Adimarchus is like fighting two separate creatures; damage taken in one form isn't carried over to the other. To kill Adimarchus, the characters must slay both of his forms. Characters may try to destroy the evil in Adimarchus by slaying his fiendish form; however, both forms have been equally tainted by evil, and killing one form does not redeem him. Adimarchus is wholly demon, and beyond redemption. In fact, unless both forms are slain, Adimarchus can reform his slain "half" after 1d10 days.

Although each of his two forms has unique special attacks and qualities, many of them are identical. Attacks and qualities that both forms have are detailed here.

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp): Once per day, Adimarchus can automatically summon 1d3+1 glabrezus or 1 marilith.

Lie in State (Su): If both of Adimarchus's forms die, Adimarchus (in his current form) disappears after 24 rounds. The body reappears dead but intact on Occipitus, his home layer of the Abyss. Any equipment Adimarchus was wearing or carrying at the moment of his death is likewise transported to Occipitus—and is likewise reconstituted if it was destroyed. *Dimensional anchor*, *dimensional lock*, and similar spells delay the body's transportation in this manner, but once the spell's effect ends, the body transports to Occipitus immediately. After lying in state for 1d100 days on his home plane, both of Adimarchus's forms are restored to full life. If Adimarchus is slain on his home plane, he is dead forever.

Madness (Ex): Adimarchus uses his Charisma modifier on Will saves instead of his Wisdom modifier, and is immune to *confusion* and *insanity* effects.

Shroud Alignment (Su): Spells and spell-like abilities with the good descriptor treat Adimarchus as if his alignment were good. Magic items are similarly fooled.

Combat (Angelic Form)

In this form, Adimarchus wears a +2 *breastplate of command*, and wields a +3 *anarchic clawed gauntlet* and a +1 *brilliant energy whip*. A clawed gauntlet functions like a spiked gauntlet, only it deals 1d6 points of slashing damage (instead of 1d4 points of piercing damage).

Implosive Strike (Su): Three times per day and no more than once per round,

Adimarchus can cause an opponent to implode with any normal melee attack that deals lethal damage. In addition to taking damage, the target must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 28) or collapse in on itself and be killed instantly. Adimarchus must declare that he is using this ability before the attack roll is made. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Razorwings (Su): These gold-plated wings have razor-sharp feathers. Adimarchus can attack with them as an off-hand weapon, although not in the same round he attacks with two hand-held weapons. The wings deal damage as a +1 *keen scythe*.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): Always active—*mind blank* (self only); At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mirror image*, *greater teleport* (Will DC 28); 3/day—*blindness/deafness* (Fort DC 23), *entropic shield*, *greater command* (Will DC 26), *plane shift* (Will DC 26), *unholy blight* (Will DC 25); 1/day—*blasphemy* (Will DC 28), *flame strike* (Ref DC 26), *song of discord* (Will DC 26), *word of chaos* (Will DC 28). Caster level 30th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Golden Tattoos (Ex): Adimarchus's golden tattoos grant him complete immunity from any extra damage caused by critical hits or sneak attacks.

Combat (Demonic Form)

In this form, Adimarchus carries an artifact known as the *Ashen Blade*. This is a +5 *greatsword* that appears to be made of ash and cinders. Once per round, a creature struck by the weapon must make a successful Reflex Save (DC 18) or be immolated in a bloom of white-hot fire, taking 21d6 points of damage. Half of the damage is fire damage, and the other half results directly from divine power. A successful save halves the damage. Adimarchus typically activates this power on the first successful hit with his sword in a round.

Enervating Bite (Su): Any creature bitten by one of Adimarchus's tentacles gains 1d4 negative levels. On a critical hit, the bite instead inflicts 2d4 negative levels. The Fortitude save to remove these negative levels is DC 38; this save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): Always active—*mind blank* (self only); At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *greater teleport* (Will DC 28), *true seeing*; 3/day—*darkness*,

Scaling the Adventure

While "Asylum" is designed for four characters of 19th level, it can be modified for lower-level characters using the following methods. Don't forget to adjust the treasure found in the adventure appropriately.

17th–18th-Level Characters: Creatures and NPCs should have their class levels lowered by 1 (or their racial Hit Dice by 2–4) for each level by which the average party level is lower than 19. In particular, the reborn Vhalantru and Dark Myrakul should have their Hit Dice or levels lowered. Additional NPCs (Jenya, or members of the Striders) may accompany the PCs on their journey into Carceri to provide additional support for lower-level characters. If things are going particularly rough for the PCs and they don't mind enlisting some fiendish aid, perhaps Byakala the marilith can be convinced to aid in the battle.

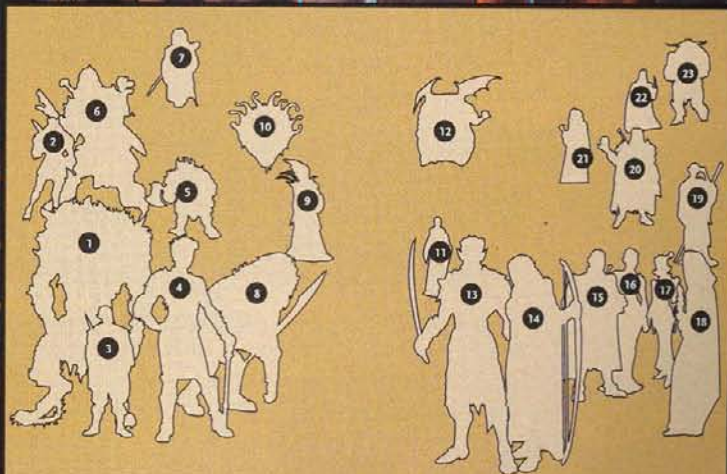
20th-Level and Above: Little work is required to make the adventure appropriate for 20th-level characters, apart from adding 1 or 2 class levels to the NPCs and villains in the adventure. You should consider reducing Nidrama's role in this event, and perhaps the PCs must deal with Adimarchus in three day's time, before Graz'zt arrives to inspect the prison!

greater dispel magic, *plane shift* (Will DC 26), *unholy blight* (Will DC 25); 1/day—*horrid wilting* (Fort DC 29), *maze*, *wall of force*. Caster level 30th. The save DCs are Charisma-based. ☞

FACES OF CAULDRON

Illustrated by Joff Carlisle





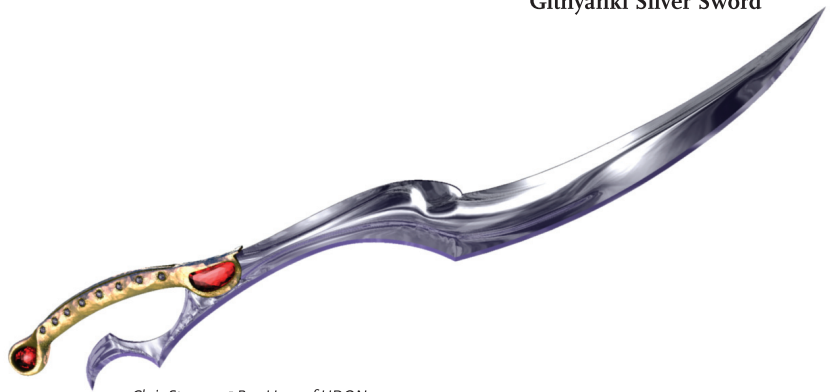
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|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Tarkilar | 6. Ti'irok | 12. Dyr'ryd | 18. Embril Aloustinaï |
| 2. Aszithef | 7. Kaurophon | 13. Viirdran Daraqor | 19. Thearynn Louvel |
| 3. Skaven | 8. Tongueater | 14. Kyan Winterstrike | 20. Alurad Sorizan |
| 4. Triel Eldurast | 9. Thifirane | 15. Nulin Wiejeron | 21. Ssythar Nahazir |
| 5. Kazmojen | 10. Vhalantru | 16. Ardeth Webb | 22. Xokek |
| | 11. Shebeleth Regidin | 17. Freija Doorgan | 23. Gau Kleecho |

Lashmire



Chris Stevens &
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Githyanki Silver Sword



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Smoking Eye

Nidrama

ASYLUM

by Christopher Perkins

In the final chapter of the Shackled City Adventure Path, the heroes abandon the Material Plane to seek out a demon prince imprisoned in a bizarre asylum on the Prison Plane of Carceri. There they do battle with the surviving Cagewrights, duplicitous demodands, and the mad Adimarchus himself. A D&D Shackled City Adventure Path scenario for 19th-level characters.

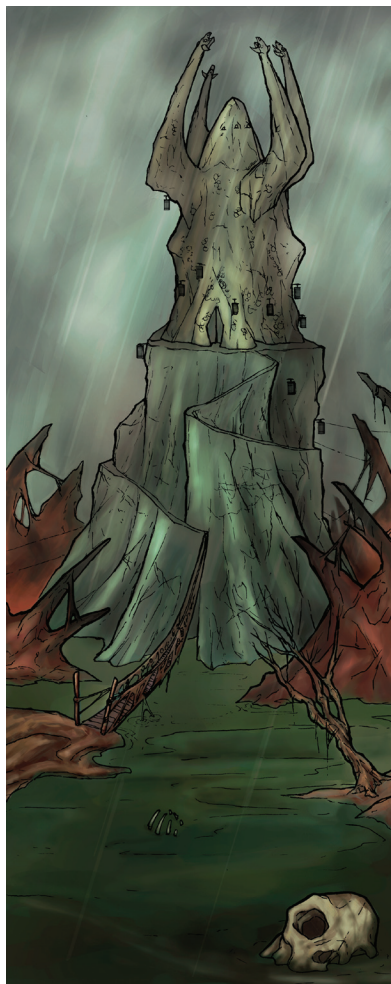


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Skullrot



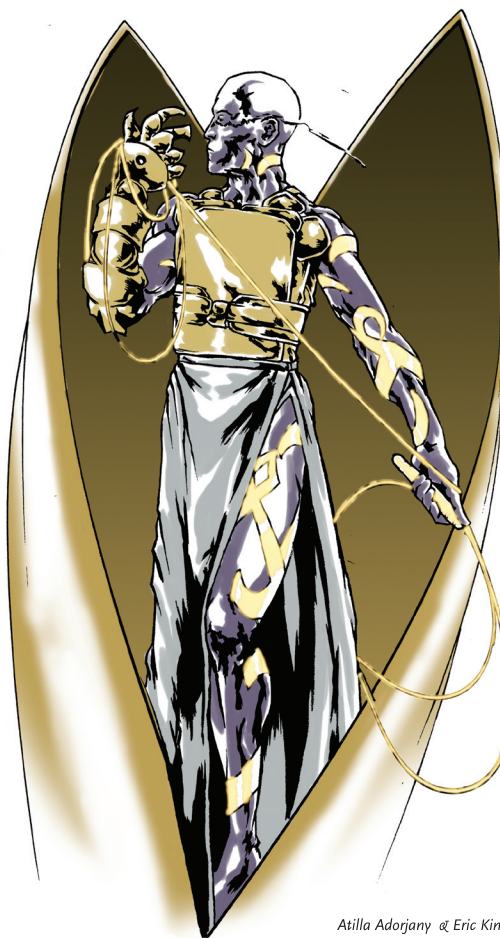
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Dark Myrakul



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Adimarchus (Angelic Form)

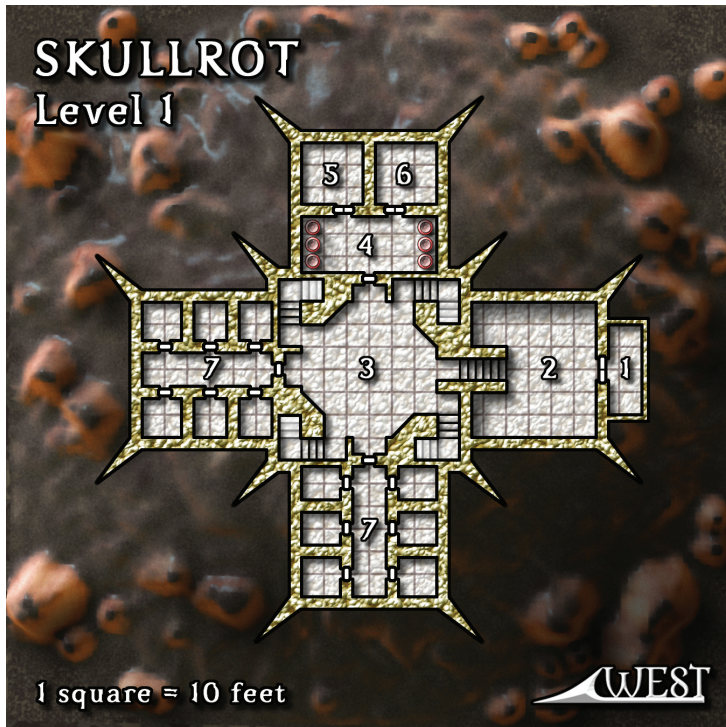


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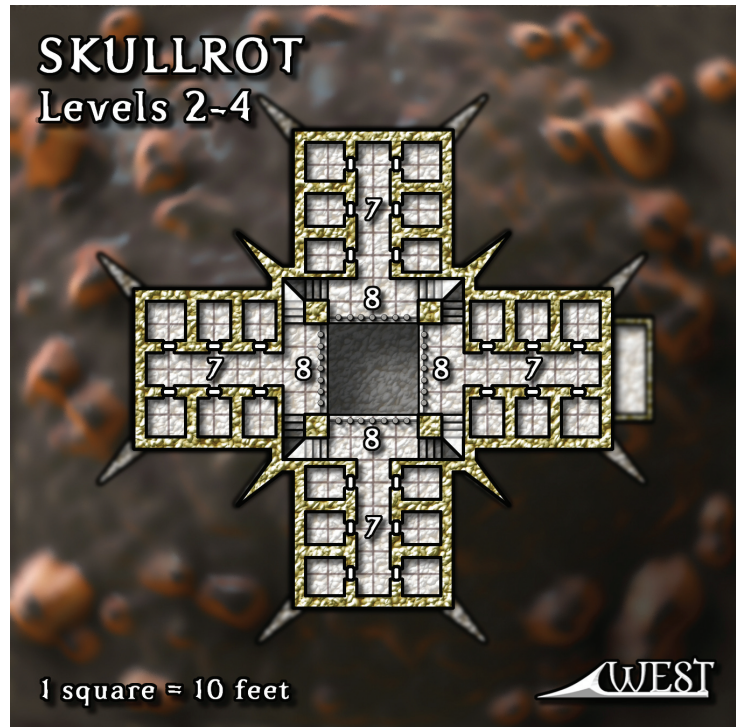
Adimarchus (Demonic Form)



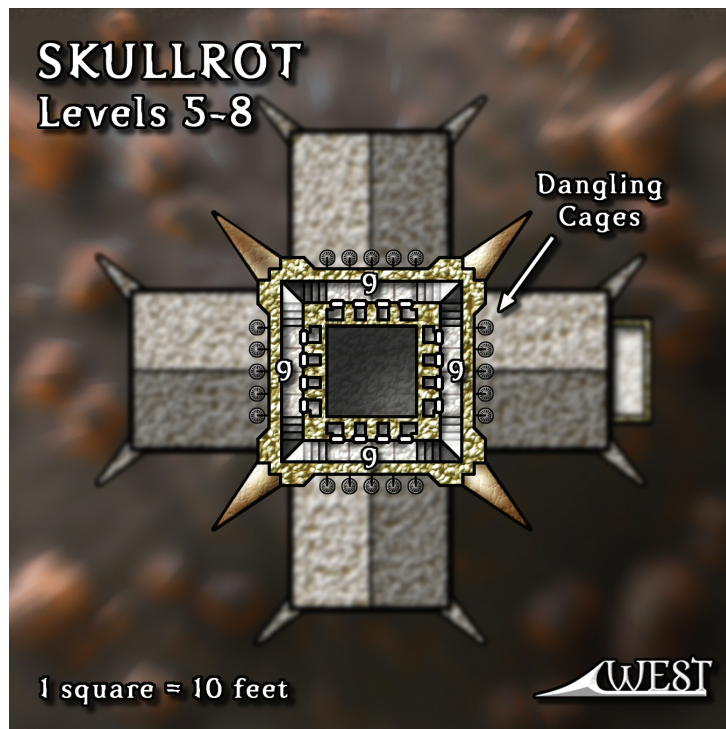
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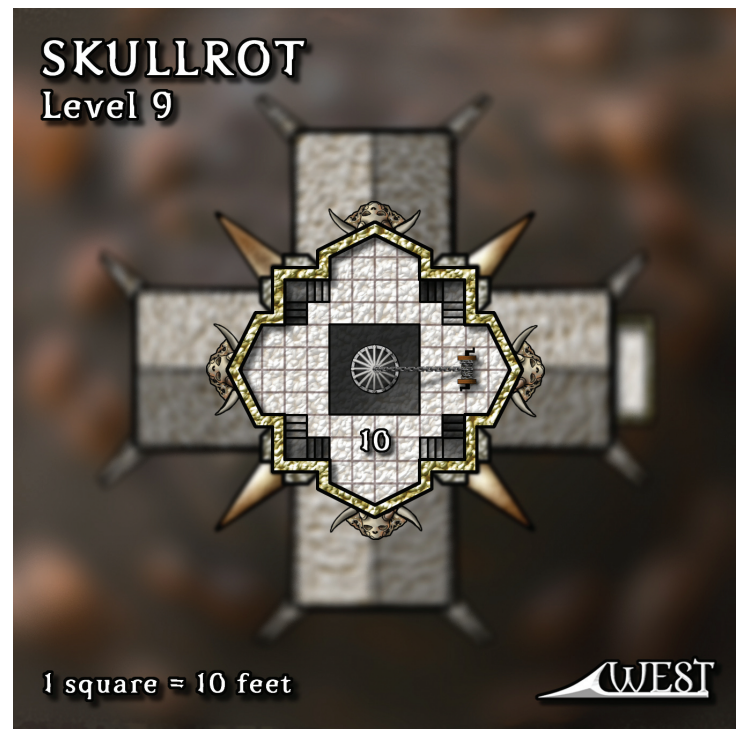
Christopher West



Christopher West



Christopher West



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