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Rise of the Runelords

BURNT OFFERINGS

By James Jacobs



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ADVENTURE PATH  PART 1 of 6

Rise of the Runelords:

BURNT OFFERINGS



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"Burnt Offerings" is a Pathfinder Adventure Path scenario designed for four 1st-level characters. By the end of this adventure, characters should reach 4th level. This adventure is compliant with the Open Game License (OGL) and is suitable for use with the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game. The OGL can be found on page 97 of this product.

The following text is Open Gaming Content: all game mechanics.

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RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

WELCOME TO GOLARION!



The town of Sandpoint needs you!

Whatpoint? Sandwho? Whatwho? If the name of this friendly little coastal town doesn't mean anything to you yet, never fear—the book you're holding is here to fix that. Sandpoint, in a nutshell, is your PCs' new hometown. Here, they'll make friends, buy their first suit of armor, visit their first tavern, and eventually tangle with monsters. It's the start of a brand-new campaign, one set in the equally brand-new world of Golarion, the setting for the *Pathfinder Chronicles* Campaign Setting. The adventures your PCs are about to embark on will determine the fate of not just Sandpoint, but the surrounding region of Varisia as well. If they fail, their friends and countrymen might well be doomed to a new age of slavery and horror, but if they succeed, their triumphs shall be recorded by sages and kings, their immortality assured. They will become the latest entry into the *Pathfinder Chronicles*.

That's the idea behind the setting we've invented for *Pathfinder*—a place where the triumphs of heroes and the workings of villains are recorded in a constantly evolving codex of tales spanning centuries. For much of written history, world events followed charted routes. Oracles and seers mapped out the future in the stars above, and their prophecies always gave a reliable view of the ages to come.

Until a god died a century ago. No one saw that coming, and now, the old prophecies are failing. Oracles go mad and seers desperately try to account for the loss of the future. While some cry out that the world is at an end, they've been doing so for 100 years now. And the world's still here. It's just unclear where things are going. The future of Golarion is open, ready to receive the triumphs and failures of a new generation of heroes.



DESIGNER'S NOTES

Throughout “Burnt Offerings” and every *Pathfinder* adventure, you'll find notes and insights from the designers themselves. Marked throughout the volume in sidebars like this one, these comments offer “behind-the-scenes” glimpses into the writers' intentions, along with additional facts, suggestions for GMs, personal anecdotes, and other ancillary information to make running the game easier and reading the adventure more interesting.

Because, as we all know, PCs have a knack for doing the unexpected. How could any oracle or sage predict what they'll get up to next?

FINDING THE PATH

In *Pathfinder*, we'll present entire campaigns. Each of these Adventure Paths will run for six months, with each volume of *Pathfinder* including a new chapter in the campaign, along with additional advice and material to expand each adventure and develop the new world of Golarion. You can also expect a steady offering of at least six new monsters per volume in the *Pathfinder* Bestiary. But the bulk of each volume focuses on one expansive chapter of the current Adventure Path. We begin with “Burnt Offerings,” an adventure for four 1st-level characters. In this adventure, the PCs are faced with challenges ranging from goblin chieftains and ancient fiends to the awkward social situations that arise when suddenly cast into the roles of heroes in a small town.

FOREWORD

After you've read through "Burnt Offerings" and the additional material in this volume, head on over to **paizo.com**, where there are always lively and informative discussions about Paizo's Adventure Paths. I try to keep up with the threads personally, and you'll probably recognize a fair number of other names on the boards as well. This is the best way to let us know what you think of *Pathfinder* and the Adventure Paths, to share notes with other GMs and players, and to check out reader-submitted suggestions for how best to convert the Rise of the Runelords (and all of the Adventure Paths to come in *Pathfinder*) to any number of campaign settings. Also, check out our blog at **paizo.com**, which is where we post previews of future products and talk more about the operation here at Paizo Publishing. Long-time readers of the blog are doubtless already familiar, for example, with the following ten fun facts about goblins, but since the little menaces play such a key role in "Burnt Offerings," it made sense to reprint them here as well. Think of this as the Ten Commandments of Gobling, if you will. Although, of course, no goblin would ever think about writing these down! That's bad luck.

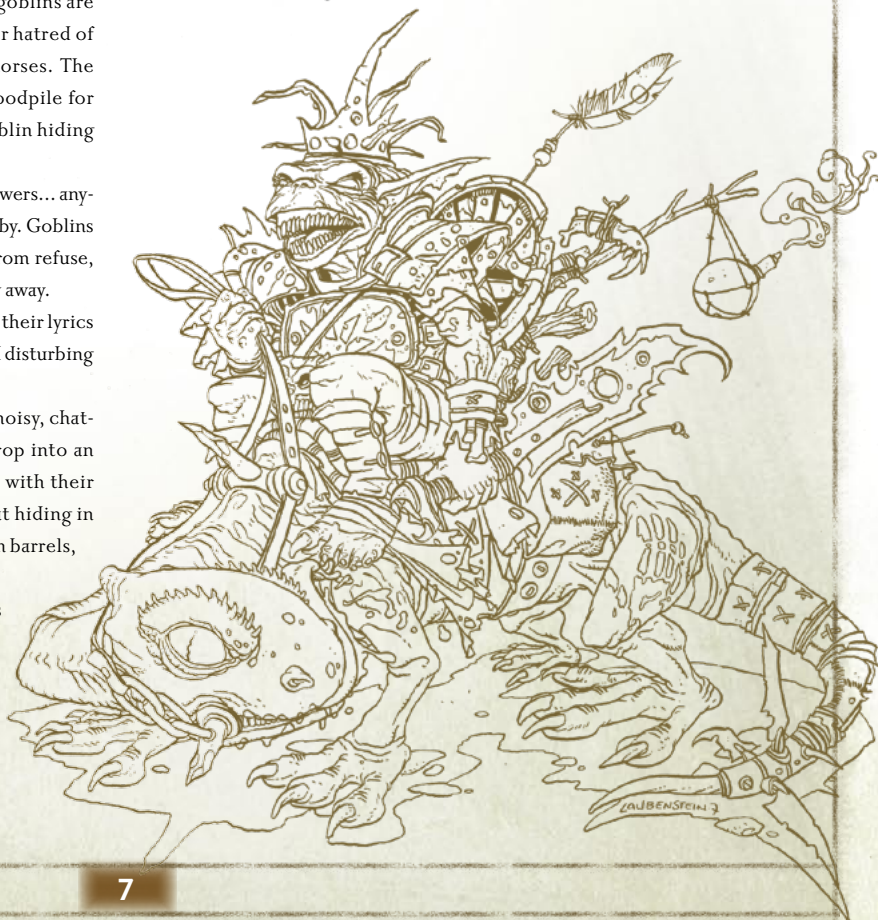
TEN FUN FACTS ABOUT GOBLINS

- 1: **Horse Hate:** Goblins excel at riding animals, but they don't quite get horses. In fact, their hatred of all things horse is matched only by their fear of horses, who tend to step on goblins who get too close.
- 2: **Dog Hate:** Although goblins raise horrible rat-faced creatures called (creatively enough) goblin dogs to use as mounts (and ride wolves or worgs if they can get them—goblins are quick to explain that wolves are NOT dogs), their hatred of plain old dogs nearly matches their hatred of horses. The feeling is mutual. If your dog's barking at the woodpile for no reason, chances are he smells a frightened goblin hiding in there somewhere.
- 3: **Goblins Raid Junkyards:** Garbage pits, gutters, sewers... anywhere there's garbage, you can bet goblins are nearby. Goblins are weirdly adept at crafting weapons and armor from refuse, and are fond of killing people with what they throw away.
- 4: **Goblins Love to Sing:** Unfortunately, as catchy as their lyrics can be, goblin songs tend to be a bit too creepy and disturbing to catch on in polite society.
- 5: **They're Sneaky:** An excited or angry goblin is a noisy, chattering, toothy menace, but even then, he can drop into an unsettling silence in a heartbeat. This, matched with their diminutive size, makes them unnervingly adept at hiding in places you'd never expect: stacks of firewood, rain barrels, under logs, under chicken coops, in ovens...
- 6: **They're A Little Crazy:** The fact that goblins think of things like ovens as good hiding places reveals much about their inability to think plans through to the most likely outcome. That, and they tend to be easily distracted, particularly by shiny things and animals smaller than them that might make good eating.

- 7: **They're Voracious:** Given enough supplies, a goblin generally takes nearly a dozen meals a day. Most goblin tribes don't have enough supplies to accommodate such ravenous appetites, which is why the little menaces are so prone to going on raids.
- 8: **They Like Fire:** Burning things is one of the great goblin pastimes, although they're generally pretty careful about lighting fires in their own lairs, especially since goblins tend to live in large tangled thistle patches and sleep in beds of dried leaves and grass. But give a goblin a torch and someone else's home and you've got trouble.
- 9: **They Get Stuck Easily:** Goblins have wiry frames but wide heads. They live in cramped warrens. Sometimes too cramped.
- 10: **Goblins Believe Writing Steals Your Soul:** The walls of goblin lairs and the ruins of towns goblins have raided are littered with pictures of their exploits. They never use writing, though. That's not lucky. Writing steals words out of your head. You can't get them back.

James

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RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



BURNT OFFERINGS

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS: CHAPTER ONE

The coastal town of Sandpoint has faced few trials and dangers over the course of its forty-two year history, but unfortunately, that is all about to change. Unknown to the town's founders, they chose to build their community over the ruins of an ancient stronghold once used as laboratory and prison, a place where horrific experiments and unholy explorations into what divides man from monster took place. These are the Catacombs of Wrath, one of several such sites used by Runelord Alaznist's apprentices during Thassilon's height, a place where arcanists explored and perfected the stolen arts of lifeshaping and fleshwarping. When Thassilon fell, these catacombs went dormant, but the one buried under Sandpoint was not fated to stay that way.

BURNT OFFERINGS

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Five years ago and hundreds of miles from the Varisian coast, a wicked and ambitious stone giant named Mokmurian awakened a slumbering tyrant—Runelord Karzoug. In his time thousands of years ago, at the height of Thassilon's rule, Karzoug drew his magic from the runes of the Sihedron—magical traditions closely tied to the seven primal sins. After his centuries-long slumber, Karzoug wasted no time in preparing his triumphant return by activating an ancient Thassilonian artifact called a *runewell*, a device capable of extracting magical essence from the souls of certain creatures who, in life, exemplified specific spiritual traits—in this case, greed. Only these souls were useful to Karzoug in completing his return to life, and so he sent Mokmurian, now his puppet, back into the world to make ready the harvest. Karzoug uses a potent scrying device called a *soul lens* to focus on sacrifices prepared with the proper rituals and marked with the Sihedron Rune (the ancient symbol of all seven schools of Thassilonian magic). As the sacrifice dies, the *soul lens* draws his soul across any intervening distance to fuel the *runewell*. Karzoug's growing need for greedy souls has spurred Mokmurian and his stone giant kin to further and further violence, and, in time, the PCs will be called upon to stand before these giants. Yet for now, the activation of the ancient *runewell* has had another, unanticipated, effect. Other runelords kept *runewells* of their own, and when Karzoug activated his, these others flared to dangerous life as well.

In most cases, the other *runewells* were hidden deep underwater, buried far underground, or lost in remote regions, and this sudden flare of ancient magic had little noticeable effect. Yet in the Catacombs of Wrath below the sleepy town of Sandpoint, where Runelord Alaznist kept a minor *runewell* keyed to the sin of wrath, these effects were not so isolated. The *runewell* sent a shockwave of magical energy up through the town above, manifesting in the form of violent nightmares from which many folk woke in a terrible rage that vanished in the span of a heartbeat. In a few unfortunate cases, however, the wrath found fertile soil.

Lonjiku Kaijitsu, a bitter noble who still seethed with rage at being cuckolded two decades before, woke in the middle of the night, called his wife to the back porch of their cliffside manor, and threw her over the edge to die on the jagged rocks below.

Jervas Stoot, an eccentric who channeled his rage from years of paternal abuse into the creation of hauntingly beautiful woodcarvings of birds, began to lay his plans for the murder of nearly two dozen folk who had wronged him over the years.

Nualia Tobyn, left pregnant and abandoned by a local cur and shamed in her foster father's eyes, finally succumbed to her anger and forsook the goddess of dreams and stars for the goddess of monsters and madness, promising herself that she would burn her father and his church to the ground.

These three unfortunates became consumed by their wrath, and their actions over the course of the next several months came to be known as the Late Unpleasantness. Those days are over now, fresh in memory still, but thankfully past. The people of Sandpoint now prepare to consecrate a new cathedral to replace the old one Nualia burnt to the

ground, and are eager to put all reminders of the Late Unpleasantness behind them for good.

Lonjiku's murderous act has gone all but unnoticed, and Stoot is long dead, yet Nualia has not been idle over the past five years. She is ready to finish what she started with that first fire. This time, all of Sandpoint shall become burnt offerings to her insane goddess.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs arrive in Sandpoint to attend the Swallowtail Festival (a ritual to consecrate the town's new cathedral) and end up defending the town from a goblin raid. In the days to follow, the PCs come to terms with their newfound local fame, making friends and contacts among Sandpoint's citizens. As rumors of massing goblin armies build, the disappearance of a local tavern owner leads the PCs to uncover treachery within Sandpoint Glassworks and the existence of an ancient catacomb below the town. An investigation of these discoveries reveals two things; that monsters dwell below the city and that the goblin raid on the town is but the first.

In order to save Sandpoint, the PCs must travel to Thistletop, the lair of the most powerful goblin tribe in the region, where they can confront the woman whose madness and wrath presents such a menace, yet who is herself the tip of a much larger conspiracy that will soon threaten all of Varisia.

Nualia's Story

The primary villain of "Burnt Offerings" is a bitter aasimar woman named Nualia. A foundling raised by Sandpoint's previous religious leader, a man named Ezakien Tobyn, Nualia's childhood was lonely and sad. Her unearthly beauty made the other children either jealous or shy, and many of them took to playing cruel jokes on her. The adults in town weren't much better—many of the superstitious Varisians viewed Nualia as blessed by Desna, a sort of "reverse deformity." Rumors that her touch or proximity could cure warts and rashes, that locks of her hair brewed into tea could increase fertility, and that her voice could drive out evil spirits led to endless awkward and humiliating requests over the years. Poor Nualia felt more like a freak than a young girl by the time she came of age, so when Delek Viskanta, a local Varisian youth, began to court her, she practically fell into his arms in gratitude.

Knowing that her father wouldn't approve of a relationship with a Varisian (he wanted her to remain pure so that she could join one of the prestigious Windsong Abbey convents), they kept the affair secret. They met many times in hidden places, a favorite being an abandoned smuggler's tunnel under town that Delek had discovered as a child. Before long, Nualia realized she was pregnant. When she told Delek, he revealed his true colors and, after calling her a slut and a harlot, fled Sandpoint rather than face her father's wrath. Nualia's shock quickly turned to rage, yet she had nowhere to vent her anger. She bottled it up, and when her father discovered her delicate condition, his reaction to her indiscretions only furthered her shame and anger. He forbade her to leave the church, lectured her nightly, and made her pray to Desna for forgiveness. In so doing, he unknowingly nurtured her growing hate.

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When the *runewell* in the Catacombs of Wrath flared to life, Nualia's own anger was a magnet to its magic. Seven months pregnant, the wrathful energies suffused her mind and she flew into a frenzy. She miscarried her child later that night, a child whose monstrously deformed shape she only glimpsed before blanching midwives stole it away to burn it in secret. As the child had been conceived in the smuggler's tunnels below town, in close proximity to a hidden shrine to Lamashtu (the goddess of monstrous births), the child itself was deformed and horrific. The double shock of losing a child and the realization she had been carrying a fiend in her belly for seven months was too much. Nualia fell into a coma.

As Nualia slept, she dreamed unhealthy dreams. Fueled by the wrath from below and the taint of Lamashtu, Nualia became further obsessed with the cruel demon goddess and the conviction that her wretched life was inflicted on her by those around her. She came to see her angelic heritage as a curse, and the demon-sent dreams showed her how to expunge this taint from her body and soul, replacing it with chaos and cruelty. When she finally woke, Nualia was someone new, someone who didn't flinch at what Lamashtu asked of her. She jammed her father's door shut as he slept, lit the church on fire, and fled Sandpoint.

The locals assumed Nualia had burned in the fire, a tragedy made all the worse by the death of Father Tobyn as well. Yet Nualia lived. She fled to Magnimar, where she enlisted the aid of a group of killers known as the Skinsaw Men. With their aid, she tracked down Delek and murdered him. Yet his death did not fill her need for revenge. Sandpoint and its hated citizens still lived.

Seeing a kindred spirit in the tortured woman, the mysterious leader of the Skinsaw Men gave Nualia a medallion bearing a carving of a seven-pointed star called a "Sihedron medallion." Nualia learned that she had a larger role to play, and that her dreams were a map to her destiny. Taking the advice to heart, Nualia returned to Sandpoint, and found herself drawn to the brick wall in the smuggler's tunnels where she and Delek had conceived her deformed child. Nualia bashed down the wall, and in so doing, discovered the Catacombs of Wrath and the quasit Erylium, also a follower of Lamashtu. For many months, Nualia studied under Erylium's tutelage. During this time, Nualia received another vision from Lamashtu—a vision of a monstrous goblin wolf imprisoned in a tiny room. In Nualia's dreams, she learned that this creature, a barghest named Malfeshnekor, was also one of Lamashtu's chosen. If she could find him and free him, he would not only help her achieve her vengeance against the town of Sandpoint, but he would be the key in cleansing her body of what she had come to see as her "celestial taint." Nualia wanted to be one of Lamashtu's children now. She wanted to become a monster herself.

PART ONE: FESTIVAL AND FIRE

For five years, the faithful of Sandpoint have attended church in smaller wooden structures rebuilt after fire destroyed the previous temple, and while their new pastor Abstalar was helpful, kind, and wise, church wasn't the same. Now, the new cathedral is finally done. All that remains is for the Swallowtail Festival to renew the site's blessings from the gods and it will be as if the Sandpoint Fire had never occurred.

This adventure assumes the PCs are in attendance, for whatever reason, at the Swallowtail Festival on the first day of autumn in Sandpoint. The *Rise of the Runelords Player's Guide* provides a wealth of information for your players on how to create characters to fit seamlessly into Varisia, yet you should encourage each player to come up with a reason why his character has come to the Swallowtail Festival. A cleric PC might be asked by a superior to travel to Sandpoint to witness the ceremony. A bard might be drawn by the opportunity to perform before a new crowd. A rogue might be tempted by the promise of networking with new contacts. A fighter might be hired to escort a merchant to town. And, of course, if the PC is local, he needs no reason apart from the fact that everyone in town will be there!

Make sure to familiarize yourself with the town of Sandpoint, detailed on pages 58–71 of this volume, before you begin this adventure. Much of the first half of "Burnt Offerings" is left for the PCs to experience in an organic order, and while they wait for the next stage of the adventure to unfold, you should encourage them to explore the town of Sandpoint.

The Swallowtail Festival

The Swallowtail Festival begins promptly, as scheduled, on the first day of autumn. The square before the church quickly becomes crowded as locals and travelers arrive, and several merchant tents featuring food, clothes, local crafts, and souvenirs are there to meet them.

Welcoming Speeches: The turnout for the opening speeches is quite respectable, and the four keynote speakers each deliver short but well-received welcomes to the festival. Mayor Deverin's friendly attitude and excitement prove contagious as she welcomes visitors to town and jokes about how even Larz Rovanky, the local tanner (and notorious workaholic) managed to tear himself away from the tannery to attend, much to everyone's but Larz's amusement. Sheriff Hemlock brings the crowd down a bit with his dour mood, his reminder to be safe around the evening's bonfire, and his request for a moment of silence to remember those who lost their lives in the fire that claimed the town's previous church five years ago. Fortunately, Cyrdak Drokus is more than up to the challenge of bringing the crowd's mood back up with his rousing anecdotes as he delivers a not-completely-irreverent recap of the long process the town went through to finance and construct the new cathedral. He throws in a bit of self-promotion at the end, as is his wont, inviting everyone to stop by the Sandpoint Theater the following evening to check out his new production of "The Harpy's Curse," revealing that the lead role of Avisera the harpy queen will be played by none other than the famous Magnimarian diva Allishanda! Finally, Father Zantus steps up to give a short speech thanking everyone for coming before declaring the Swallowtail Festival underway.

Swallowtail Release: At noon, Father Zantus and his acolytes wheel a large covered wagon into the square, and after recounting the short parable of how Desna first fell to earth and was nursed back to health by a blind child who she transformed into an immortal butterfly as a reward for her aid, they pull aside the wagon's

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cover, releasing the thousand children of Desna—a furious storm of a thousand swallowtail butterflies that swarm into the air in a spiraling riot of color to a great cheer from the crowd. Throughout the rest of the day, children futilely chase butterflies, never quite quick enough to catch them.

Lunch: Lunch is provided free, at the expense of Sandpoint's taverns. Each brings its best dishes—this event is a marketing push by the taverns as much to win new customers as it is to feed a hungry crowd. It soon becomes apparent that the darling of the lunch is, once again, Ameiko Kaijitsu, whose remarkable curry-spiced salmon and early winterdrop mead easily overshadow the other offerings, such as the Hagfish's lobster chowder or the White Deer's peppercorn venison.

Consecration: Finally, as the sun begins to set, Father Zantus takes the central podium, uses a thunderstone to attract everyone's attention, and clears his throat as he prepares to recite the Prayer of First Dreaming. Unfortunately, the thunderstone's detonation is also the prearranged trigger for the goblins, who have slowly been infiltrating the town while its citizens are merrily distracted.

Goblins in the Streets!

Goblins are sneaky little monsters, but even so, their infiltration of Sandpoint required the aid of a few key assistants. Most notable among these is local noble and businessman Lonjiku Kaijitsu. Although Lonjiku's involvement in the assault is far from willing, it's crucial to the goblins' plans. Lonjiku's been blackmailed, and by his own son Tsuto, no less. Tsuto threatened to reveal his father's ties to local Varisian criminals known as the Sczarni (SCAR-nee), promising to keep quiet if his father would simply comply with a few "innocent" requests; namely, making sure that someone leaves the north town gate open, that a ladder is left against the wall in the cemetery, and that on the night before the big festival no one would be at the Sandpoint Glassworks. Shamed by his son's knowledge of his ties to the Sczarni and his own lack of courage to stand up to his offspring, and ignorant of Tsuto's alliance with the local goblins or his part in the plan to raid Sandpoint, Lonjiku set things into motion and then feigned illness—he remains in his home on the bluff overlooking Sandpoint during the Swallowtail Festival.

When the thunderstone detonates, three different groups of goblins quickly mobilize. One group (smuggled in by Tsuto in a covered wagon and left behind some buildings south of the festival square) emerges and races north into the festival grounds. Another band invades via the open northern gate. Both of these groups are timed to throw the town into panic and distract the town guards from realizing that a third band of goblins is infiltrating the city's cemetery to steal the remains of the town's previous religious leader, Ezakien Tobyn.

Dozens of goblins take part in the raid, members of five different tribes scattered throughout the Sandpoint hinterlands who have been organized into this strike by the most powerful local goblin tribe of them all—the Thistletop goblins.

When the goblins attack, they shriek and leap and race and cackle, taking great joy in the panic and fear they spread among

the humans (whom most goblins insultingly call "longshanks"). Some goblins wave torches and light tents on fire, while others chase children and pets with ill intent. The entire time, goblin warchanters sing a horrifically catchy and nerve-wracking goblin song at the top of their lungs, further spurring their kin into murderous frenzy. Everywhere the PCs look, goblins tear through merchant stalls, menace locals with their dogslicers, throw rocks through windows, and otherwise make terrors of themselves.

There are thirty goblins raiding Sandpoint, but there's no need to run combat with all of them. You can focus strictly on the goblins the PCs encounter, using the following three encounters to introduce players to the kneebiting horror that is the goblin.

Initial Assault (EL 1)

As Father Zantus takes the stage to begin his speech, the PCs should be nearby. The point of this encounter is to force the PCs, who might or might not yet know each other, to work together to fight against a group of goblins.

A sharp retort, like the crack of distant thunder, slices through the excited crowd as the sun's setting rays paint the western sky. A stray dog that has crawled under a nearby wagon to sleep starts awake, and the buzz of two dozen conversations quickly hushes as all heads turn toward the central podium, where a beaming Father Zantus has taken the stage. He clears his throat, takes a breath to speak, and suddenly a woman's scream slices through the air. A few moments later, another scream rises, then another. Beyond them, a sudden surge of strange new voices rises—high-pitched, tittering shrieks that sound not quite human. The crowd parts and something low to the ground races by, giggling with disturbing glee as the stray dog gives a pained yelp and then collapses with a gurgle, its throat cut open from ear to ear. As blood pools around its head, the raucous sound of a strange song begins, chanted from shrill, scratchy voices.

At this point, ask the PCs to make Spot checks. Those who make a DC 12 check see that the shape that raced by and killed the dog now hides at the edge of the wagon—a single goblin, licking the blood from its dogslicer as it looks excitedly at the crowd, seeking out a new target. Characters who make the check may act in the surprise round.

The song is a nameless goblin rhyme, performed by several goblin warchanters and intended to give the goblins a boost of bardic music to spur them on.

Creatures: In this initial battle, a group of three goblins (including the one who just killed the dog) attacks the PCs.

GOBLINS (3)

CR 1/3

Goblin warrior 1 (MM 133)

hp 5 each

Melee dogslicer +3 (1d4+1/19–20)

TACTICS

Before Combat The goblins gain the benefits of their warchanter's inspire courage, gaining a +1 morale bonus on saving throws against fear and charm and on attack and damage rolls (included in the stats above).

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During Combat One goblin might try to clamber up onto a nearby table of food (DC 5 Climb) so he can gain a +1 bonus on attacks for higher ground against a PC. Another might get distracted by a plate of salmon and waste his action stuffing his pockets with food for later. A third could grab up a big carving knife if his dogslicer breaks. Each time a goblin takes an action, he should interact in some way with the environment, even if doing so wastes an opportunity to hurt a PC. The point of this battle isn't to test PC resources but to set the scene and flavor for the insanity that is the goblin.

Morale These goblins are convinced that the plan to raid Sandpoint can't fail and are far too excited to consider the possibility of losing the battle. As such, they fight to the death—but more by accident than out of any real sense of bravery.

Goblin Pyros (EL 2)

After the PCs defeat the initial three goblins, give them a few rounds to recover. As they do, impress upon them the chaos that has engulfed Sandpoint. Goblins race everywhere, running amok and singing and slashing indiscriminately. At the point the PCs seem about ready to take action, a sudden bloom of fire should grab their attention.

Creatures: A group of goblins has found the cart full of fuel for the bonfire just south of the festival grounds and have lit it on fire. Even if the PCs don't rush to investigate the burning wagons, they are soon confronted with several cackling and shrieking goblins armed with dogslicers and torches. As soon as the goblins see the PCs, they shriek in delight and attack.

GOBLINS (4)

Goblin warrior I (MM 133)

hp 5 each

Melee dogslicer +3 (1d4/19–20) or
torch –1 (1d2 plus 1 fire)

TACTICS

During Combat On the first round, the goblins gleefully try to burn PCs with their torches, but as soon as one of them is slain, the surviving goblins realize the fight's for real and switch to their dogslicers.

Morale If the warchanter dies, remaining goblin warriors panic and flee.

GOBLIN WARCHANTER

Female goblin bard I (MM 133)

NE Small humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14
(+3 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)

hp 7 (1d6+1)

Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3; +1 vs fear/charm

THE GOBLIN SONG

Goblins chew and goblins bite.

Goblins cut and goblins fight.

Stab the dog and cut the horse,

Goblins eat and take by force!

Goblins race and goblins jump.

Goblins slash and goblins bump.

Burn the skin and mash the head,

Goblins here and you be dead!

Chase the baby, catch the pup.

Bonk the head to shut it up.

Bones be cracked, flesh be stewed,

We be goblins! You be food!

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee whip +1 (1d2 nonlethal) or
dogslicer +1 (1d4/19–20)

Ranged shortbow +5 (1d4+1/X3)

Spells Known (CL 1st)

0 (2/day)—*daze* (DC 11), *ghost sound* (DC 11), *mage hand*, *message*

TACTICS

Before Combat The warchanter activates inspire courage, gaining a +1 morale bonus on saving throws against fear and charm and on weapon attack and damage rolls (included in the stats above).

During Combat The warchanter continues to sing during combat, using her whip to try to trip PCs. She casts *daze* on any PC who seems to be particularly dangerous.

Morale The warchanter fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +0; **Grp** –5

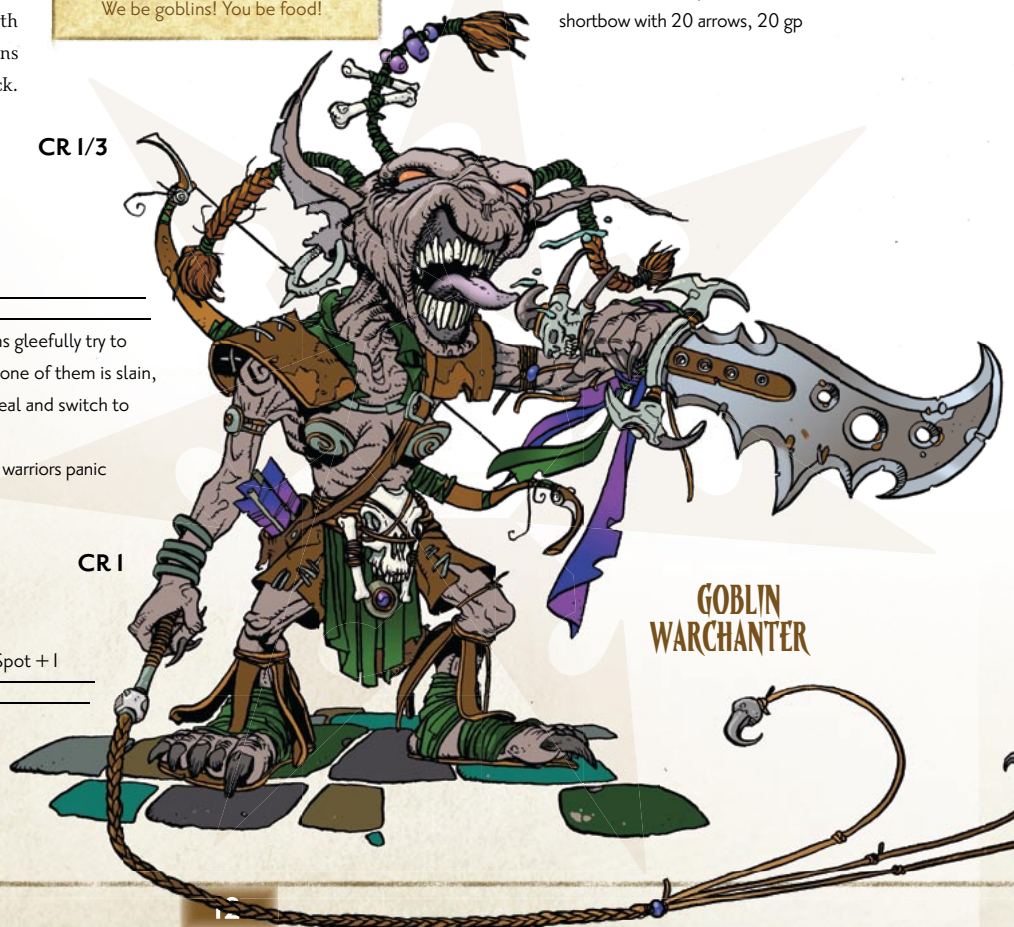
Feats Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon
Proficiency (whip)

Skills Concentration +5, Jump +3, Listen +4,
Move Silently +7, Perform (song) +5, Ride +7,
Tumble +7

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ bardic knowledge +0, bardic music 1/day
(countersong, fascinate, inspire courage +1)

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*; **Other Gear**
studded leather, whip, short sword,
shortbow with 20 arrows, 20 gp



BURNT OFFERINGS

Development: After tangling with the first two groups of goblins, the PCs are likely to be wounded. Keep them on their toes by describing goblin antics around them (perhaps a goblin leaps off a roof in an attempt to land on a victim but misses and breaks his neck, or maybe a goblin throws a lit torch at a fleeing mother only to have it land on another goblin and light his armor on fire), but allow them a few rounds to catch their breath. If they're particularly wounded, Father Zantus rushes to their side. He thanks them for what they're doing to help fight the goblins and can cast up to three *cure light wounds* or three *cure minor wounds* spells on PCs to heal them.

As soon as the PCs have mostly recovered, it's time to spring the big fight on them.

Die, Dog, Die! (EL 3)

This final event during the goblin raid occurs after things at the festival itself have calmed somewhat. Here and there, the sounds of battle, clanging swords, calls of support by the town guard, and shrieking and singing goblins echo through the streets, but at the festival itself, most of the citizens have fled. One or two goblins remain behind to scavenge food, and many more lie dead (along with a few unfortunate citizens). It should be obvious that the fight has moved on, especially when the sound of a scream and a frantic barking comes from the north.

Creatures: In front of the White Deer, a goblin commando mounted on a goblin dog has bravely attacked a noble and his hunting dog. The man in question is named **Aldern Foxglove** (CN male human aristocrat 4/rogue 3), a noble destined to play an important role in the next adventure, but whom for now is merely another frightened citizen. Aldern cowers behind a rain barrel where he calls for help, while his dog fights against the commando. As the PCs arrive on the scene, they're just in time to see the goblin commando kill the dog with his horsechopper. The dog crashes dying to the ground as the commando's goblin kin (who were themselves cowering nearby as the dog was handled) throw up a cheer and emerge from hiding.

The goblins are still distracted by their kill, and as they turn their attention to Foxglove, the PCs have the opportunity to attack with surprise.

GOBLIN COMMANDO

CR 1

Goblin ranger 1 (MM 133)

NE Small humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 12

(+3 armor, +3 Dex, -2 rage, +1 size)

hp 10 (1d8+2)

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk horsechopper +3 (1d8+2/×3)

Ranged shortbow +5 (1d4/×3) or

shortbow +1 (1d4/×3, mounted)

Special Attacks favored enemy +2 (animal)

TACTICS

GOBLIN WEAPONRY

The goblins of the Sandpoint hinterlands wield distinctive weapons called dogslicers and horsechoppers, after their preferred uses. A dogslicer is a length of junk metal tied to a handle with holes punched in the blades to lighten it and prevent tired goblin arms. A dogslicer is a light martial weapon that's similar to a short sword in most ways, save that it deals slashing damage rather than piercing damage. Goblin commandos are instead armed with halberds—called “horsechoppers” by them, but otherwise identical to Small halberds. Goblin weapons that aren't magic or masterwork are poorly made—on a natural 1, they break. Goblins should really carry spare dogslicers, but they don't think that far ahead, and occasionally end up standing in front of a hero without a weapon. Stupid little freaks.



Before Combat The goblin commando has already imbibed a *potion of rage* for his fight against the dog and has 2 rounds remaining on its duration (likely the surprise round and the first round of combat).

During Combat The commando makes sure to use his Mounted Combat feat to try to negate an attack each round against his mount, and uses his superior mobility to remain out of melee so he can shoot at the PCs with his bow from dogback (taking the standard -4 penalty for using a ranged weapon while mounted). If all of his goblin warriors are defeated, he drops his bow and races in to fight the PCs in melee.

Morale The commando fights to the death.

Base Statistics Once the goblin commando's *potion of rage* expires, his stats change as follows:

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14

hp 9 (1d8+1)

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

Melee mwk horsechopper +2 (1d8+1/×3)

Str 12, **Con** 13

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 17, **Con** 15, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +1; **Grp** -2

Feats Mounted Combat, Track

Skills Handle Animal +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Ride +11, Spot +5, Survival +5

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ wild empathy +0

Combat Gear *potion of rage* (already used); **Other Gear** studded leather, masterwork horsechopper, small wooden shield, shortbow with 20 arrows

GOBLIN DOG

CR 1

hp 10 each; see page 87

GOBLINS (4)

CR 1/3

Goblin warrior 1 (MM 133)

hp 5 each

Melee dogslicer +2 (1d4/19-20)

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



Development: Once the goblins are dealt with, Aldern thanks the PCs profusely. If one of the PCs is an attractive female human, elf, or half-elf, he focuses his attentions on her, complimenting her on her skills in the fight and on her beauty. Otherwise, he focuses his attention on the PC who seemed to do the most damage in the fight, complimenting him on his skill at arms and bravery. As he glances about nervously for more goblins, he informs the PCs that he'll be in town for a few more days; he's staying at the Rusty Dragon to the south, and when they get a chance, he'd love to talk with them more and perhaps reward them properly for saving his life.

By this time, the battle has been decided. Surviving goblins flee north in droves, in some cases preferring to leap to their certain death off cliffs rather than be captured. Several of the little menaces are in fact caught alive, but they prove useless when interrogated; none of these goblins know much more than that they were given orders to kill everyone in town and burn down the place. None of the captured goblins can even remember their leader's name, apart from the fact that he was one of "you longshanks." Their leader was on a secret mission to the town's graveyard—that much most goblins can say, but none of them know what that mission was. It was secret, after all!

In fact, this was Tsuto Kaijitsu. He led a group of Thistletop goblins into the cemetery, stole Ezakien Tobyn's remains, and then returned to Thistletop so his lover Nualia could offer the remains to Lamashtu in return for the first stage of her transformation into a demon. When Father Zantus discovers the theft, he reports it to Sheriff Hemlock (who might mention it at some point to the PCs) but tries to keep it quiet, hoping to avoid further distress to the people of Sandpoint.

PART TWO: LOCAL HEROES

As Sandpoint recovers from the attack and buries its (thankfully few) dead, the citizens do their best to get on with their lives. The cathedral is consecrated the next day during a much more subdued and indoor ceremony, but by the end of the week, the goblin attack is remembered mostly with chuckles. Now that the terror of the raid is over, memories of goblins accidentally lighting themselves on fire, getting stepped on by horses, or drowning in rain barrels that were only half full in the first place render memories of the raid in an almost comical light. But one thing the locals haven't forgotten is their new heroes.

Unless a PC takes extra care to hide it, his name soon becomes household knowledge. Everywhere the PCs go in town, locals

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welcome them. A simple walk down Main Street might result in local baker Alma Avertin charging out into the street and press a fresh-baked loaf of bread into the arms of the skinniest PC with worried comments that he must be starving. A visit to the Hagfish brings an immediate round of cheers, applause, and a round of drinks on the house (and likely a challenge to drink from Norah's tank). A trip to the Sandpoint Theater might have Cyrdak Drokus trying to talk the PC with the highest Charisma into auditioning for his new play. A stop at Savah's Armory is greeted with an instantaneous offer of 20% off anything in stock. Certainly not everyone in Sandpoint wants to be the PCs' new best friend, but they should feel more than welcome.

The events detailed in this part can happen in any order—feel free to mix things up as you wish, or to fit logically with the PCs' actions in town. These events can even continue to occur after the PCs have turned their attention to the Catacombs of Wrath, Thistletop, or even well into the next adventure.

The Shopkeep's Daughter

Pick a PC, preferably one who fancies himself a ladies' man or a popular fellow. The combination of his good looks, fame, and heroic qualities sends ripples through town, and now and then the PCs should overhear rumors and whispers about this PC's "availability." The PC should catch local young women giggling or blushing as he walks by, and he might receive a few anonymous love letters or other minor trinkets left as gifts at wherever he's been staying the night.

At some point before these idle fancies have a chance to develop into real relationships, one of Sandpoint's most brazen citizens makes her move. Daughter of the owner of the Sandpoint General Store, **Shayliss Vinder** (CN female human commoner 1) is certainly an attractive young woman, but it's her older sister who's been in the gossip lately. Rumor holds that Katrine Vinder's been "shacking up" with one of the men who works at the lumber mill, and her overly protective father's been up in arms about it.

So when Shayliss bashfully approaches a PC, her claim that her father has been too distracted with her sister's private life to keep up with the store's pest problem should seem plausible. Shayliss explains that the store has rats. Why, just yesterday, she's sure she saw one the size of a goblin hiding behind a barrel at the far end of the basement. Her father doesn't believe her, but she knows he's just more distracted by what Katrine might or might not be up to at the lumber mill. And since there's this handy new hero in town, well, Shayliss just thought maybe said hero could come back with her to kill a few rats in the store's basement. She stresses that there's not many rats, certainly not enough to warrant having more than one hero to take care of them. If other PCs insist on coming along, she throws her hands up in the air in disgust and says, "Never mind, I'll take care of them some other way" and walks off in a huff, hoping her hero comes with her alone anyway. If he doesn't she simply approaches him again when he's alone and repeats her request.

Of course, there are no dire rats in the general store basement. Shayliss is, if anything, even more of a troubleseeker than her sister, something that a DC 20 Gather Information or Knowledge (local)

check can warn a PC about. Any refusal to accompany Shayliss back to the store must be handled delicately; without a successful Bluff check or a DC 20 Diplomacy check, her infatuation with the PC quickly turns into bitter hate, and she could become a recurring foil as she spreads slanderous rumors about the PC and his friends.

Shayliss reveals her true intentions as soon as she has her chosen PC alone in the basement of her father's store; her bodice comes off and she slides herself into an embrace as she tries to guide the PC over to a convenient cot someone's set up in the back of the room.

Whatever develops from this awkward interlude, Shayliss' father **Ven Vinder** (LN male human commoner 7) is destined to head down into the basement not long after Shayliss makes her move. Allow both Shayliss and the PC a DC 15 Listen check to hear her father coming down the stairs at the far end of the basement. If neither notices his approach, they certainly will when he finds them, roars in rage, and threatens the PC with his large and meaty fists.

If the PC flees, Ven won't follow, but neither will he allow the PC or his friends to shop in his store any more. Being a well-liked man in town, Ven's displeasure with the PCs incurs a -2 penalty on all Diplomacy and Gather Information checks made in town until the PCs find some way to make things right with him.

A PC who tries to talk his way out of the situation can do so with a successful Bluff check or a DC 20 Diplomacy check; success with a roll 10 higher than the required DC indicates that the character has not only extricated himself, but has done so in a way that leaves no hard feelings with Shayliss, who might try to seduce the PC again at a later date.

This encounter is not meant to be physically ruinous to the PCs, but it can certainly head that way—Ven might be a commoner, but he knows his way around a fistfight. If the PC retaliates with lethal force, Ven tries to flee with his daughter to call the sheriff, at which point the PC's reputation in town immediately falls under scrutiny. If either Ven or Shayliss are killed, the PC faces a murder charge, spends 1d3 days in jail, and is then sent to Magnimar for trial.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs manage to navigate this delicate encounter without hurting anyone and without disrupting Vinder's family, award them a CR 2 experience award.

The Boar Hunt

This event occurs whenever the PCs decide to pay a visit to the Rusty Dragon to take up Aldern Foxglove's invitation after they saved him from certain "gobbling." If they don't visit him, he seeks them out 1d3 days after the goblin raid. Before he returns to his townhouse in Magnimar in a few more days, he was hoping to go on a boar hunt in nearby Tickwood, and would like to invite along the PCs. If they decline the offer, he seems disappointed but covers it quickly with a shrug. True to his word, he gives the PCs a reward of 50 gp for saving his life, then invites them to stop by his home in Magnimar the next time they're in town.

If the PCs agree to the boar hunt, Aldern claps his hands in delight. Aldern gladly buys each PC his own mount from Goblin Squash Stables, then eagerly leads the PCs and his three manservants

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

west over Tanner's Bridge and along the southern banks of the Turandarok River.

It's a two mile ride to the Tickwood Ford, just north of the upthrust limestone escarpment known as the Devil's Platter. Despite its ominous name, Tickwood is actually a relatively safe woodland, one well known to be the home of wild boars, deer, and perhaps one or two firepelt cougars—no goblin tribes dwell within its boundaries.

The ride to Tickwood takes about a half hour, but you should take advantage of this time to build up Aldern's character. He's a charming conversationalist, well-read and with a seemingly endless cache of stories about the high life in Magnimar. He's more interested in the PCs, though. Who are they? Where are they from? How long have they been fighting goblins? Do they have any harrowing tales of their adventures? In particular, Aldern should be particularly interested in the PC he was taken with in their previous encounter. Preferably, this should be an attractive female character, in which case his attention should seem like friendly flirting. If instead his attentions are on a character who seemed particularly good at fighting goblins, his attention should almost seem like a desperate attempt to "learn how to be a hero." Play up his attention as friendly at first, but by the time the PCs finish the hunt, they should feel a little bit annoyed or disturbed at Aldern's seemingly growing obsession.

The object of Aldern's obsession is destined to learn just how dangerous this man is during the course of the next adventure. For now, just make sure the PCs know who Aldern is and that they know he seemed to be a little bit too eager to make friends with one of them.

Feel free to make as much or as little of the actual boar hunt as you wish. The boars of Tickwood aren't all that fierce—use stats for a dog for the encounter, or simply describe the hunt and the catch. Aldern invites them back to the Rusty Dragon that evening, where he hands the boar over to Ameiko to cook for a big dinner. You can use this dinner to further build the doomed noble's obsession with his chosen PC as you see fit. Of course, you can also use this dinner to introduce the PCs to Ameiko, since she plays an important role in the next part of this adventure.

Monster in the Closet (EL 1)

Alergast and Amele Barrett are a typical Sandpoint family, with two children (little Aeren and baby Verah) and a loyal family dog named Petal. They were present at the Swallowtail Festival,

where Aeren saw a goblin light a cat on fire and then caper around the burning remains—the poor boy really hasn't been the same since. Every night, his howls of terror send Petal into a barking fit, and when his parents investigate, Aeren claims a goblin came out of his closet. Alergast checked the closet dutifully but found nothing, and ever since the kid's complaints about the "closet goblin" have grown more and more tiresome to his parents. Yesterday, Alergast threatened to make Aeren sleep in the woodshed if he couldn't learn to "be a man" and sleep through an entire night without crying and telling stories.

All of this is told to the PCs by a tearful Amele Barrett 2d4 evenings after the goblin raid; she approaches the PCs in a panic, clutching baby Verah to her chest with one hand and clinging to the back of Aeren's shirt with the other. She goes on to say that, last night, Alergast didn't go to soothe Aeren when he had his night terrors. But then, a few moments later, they heard poor Petal cry out in pain and Aeren's screams turn shrill. This time Aeren wasn't just having nightmares. Amele pauses, takes a breath, and then shows the PCs Aeren's arms. They're covered with fresh goblin bites.

When Alergast burst into the room, he found a goblin crouched on his son's chest. Petal was dead, a knife deep in his ear, and the goblin was frantically trying to chew off Aeren's arm. Alergast attacked the goblin and chased it back into the closet, where it clambered into a hole it had cleverly hidden under an old fur. Alergast flew into a rage, and as he started tearing apart the closet in an attempt to get at the goblin, Amele panicked and fled the house with her children to seek out the PCs for aid.

Creature: The goblin in the Barrett house is a commando named Gresgurt who snuck into the building after the raid turned sour. He found a loose floorboard in the closet, frantically hacked an opening large enough for him to fit into the enclosed crawlspace under the house, and pulled a fur over the hole to hide. He only intended to stay there for

a few hours until things died down outside, then planned on sneaking out of town, but the exhaustion of the raid caught up with him and he fell asleep. When he woke the next night and tried to sneak out, he woke Petal and Aeren. As frightened by the dog as the kid was of him, Gresgurt fled back into the crawlspace, visions of the hateful and frightening dog filling his little goblin mind. It seemed like every time Gresgurt peeked



SEEDS OF OBSESSION

In "The Skinsaw Murders," Aldern is destined to become a monstrous undead murderer, one who leaves notes for the PC he's become obsessed with in this adventure. Kudos to Richard Pett for coming up with this creepy link between adventures, and rest assured that the more you establish Aldern as a harmless noble from the big city, the better. The PCs shouldn't expect him to be a major part of the campaign, so when they discover he is in fact one of the primary villains of the next adventure, the shock will be all the more delightful.

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out, that dog was there, ready to bark. Unable to escape for fear of the dog, Gresgurt subsisted on spiders and worms plucked from the dirt floor of the small crawlspace for days, and over those days, his fear turned to anger. His driving desire shifted from escape to a burning need to kill the dog. And yet, he had no real weapons; he'd broken his horsechopper in his efforts to get into the crawlspace below the house. All he had left were fragments of the blade, one of which he used to build a crude knife. Tonight, he emerged, killed Petal, and in his nearly starved state tried to eat Aeren alive.

When the PCs arrive at the Baretts house, they find it disturbingly silent. Upon reaching Aeren's room, they find Alergast Barrett on his belly, as if he had crawled into the closet. In truth, he did just that. In an attempt to kill the goblin, Alergast underestimated the creature. When he reached down into the hole to try to grab Gresgurt, the goblin jumped up and cut his throat. Ravenous, the commando tried to haul Alergast's body into the crawlspace to eat it, but the body got stuck once he got the upper torso through the hole.

If the PCs pull back Alergast's body, they find him to be quite dead, the flesh of his face and upper torso eaten away. An instant later, the insane goblin shrieks in rage at its stolen



GOING TOO FAR?

Up to now, the goblins have been as much comic relief as they have menaces. While the fate of the Baretts is grim and depressing, it serves an important role: putting some fear into the game. It establishes the goblins not only as dangerous creatures, but as remorselessly evil little bastards. As the adventure progresses, the PCs should come to think of goblins with equal parts dark humor and worry; sure, they're comedic in some ways, but they also eat babies. They're vile monsters, and it's no good to have the primary villains of an adventure be nothing more than a laughing stock.

Nevertheless, for some game groups, this event might be a bit too gruesome and depressing. In this case, feel free to have the PCs arrive just in time as Alergast is being pulled into the goblin's hole. He's at—l hit points, but if the PCs act fast, they can still save him from a tragic fate. In the end, as long as the PCs remember that the goblins are as dangerous as they are anything else, this encounter serves its purpose regardless of how many NPCs you kill off.

dinner and leaps up out of the hole to attack. By this point, Gresgurt's long captivity in the crawlspace has left him almost feral with hunger and fear, and he's come to view the entire house as his.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

GREGGURT

Goblin ranger 1 (MM 133)

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14

(+3 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)

hp 9; see page 13

Melee knife +3 (1d3+1)

Development: If the PCs kill Greggurt, Amele is thankful until she discovers her husband's fate, whereupon she has a complete breakdown. The PCs might be at a loss as to what to do with the situation, but fortunately the commotion quickly summons Sheriff Hemlock, who takes in the scene with his customary grim expression. He thanks the PCs for helping and arranges to have the Barrett family stay at the cathedral for a few days. Amele's sister from Magnimar soon arrives in Sandpoint to take the distraught family back south to live with her. If the PCs are present when she collects her sister's broken family, she shoots them a cold glare and mutters, "Too bad you heroes weren't a bit more thorough in your 'heroing.'"

Grim News from Mosswood

Run this event when you feel the PCs have recovered from their ordeal with the goblins and are ready to move on with the adventure. **Shalelu Andosana** (CG female elf ranger 2/fighter 1) isn't quite a bounty hunter, a survivalist, or a mercenary, but a mix of all three. The elven woman passes through town once or twice a season to buy supplies and never remains more than a few days, always staying at the same room at the Rusty Dragon free of charge. Near the end of each visit, she meets with Sheriff Hemlock and Mayor Deverin for a few hours at the garrison to give a report on the state of the hinterlands before she leaves town again, a pouch of gold at her side. Both Hemlock and Deverin value Shalelu's reports, since they provide a non-biased insight into how the local farmlands are faring and keep the town council abreast of burgeoning dangers in the region.

Shalelu's visit today to Sandpoint is unexpected—she last passed through town only a month ago and wasn't expected until the last week of autumn. She dispenses with her visit to the Sandpoint Market and the Rusty Dragon, instead requesting an immediate meeting with Sheriff Hemlock and Mayor Deverin. The unusual meeting and Shalelu's ragged look combine to make an already jumpy populace suspect that the woman brings news of a new goblin threat.

Sheriff Hemlock seeks out the PCs and asks them to join himself, Mayor Deverin, and Shalelu at the town hall, explaining that he's got some news that might interest them. The meeting takes place in a comfortable office on the second floor of the town hall. If they haven't met Kendra Deverin yet, Hemlock introduces the PCs to the mayor and she gratefully thanks each of them for the help they provided Sandpoint during the raid.

Hemlock introduces Shalelu to the PCs as an "unofficial member of Sandpoint's town guard" (an introduction that causes the elven woman to smirk) and the PCs to Shalelu as "Sandpoint's newest crop of heroes." Hemlock explains that Shalelu has been

CR I

a thorn in the side of the local goblin tribes for years, and that few in the region know more about them than her. He goes on to recap her report that Sandpoint hasn't been the only place in the region that's had goblin troubles. In short, there's been an increase in goblin-related raids along the Lost Coast Road, particularly in the dale between Nettlewood and Mosswood. Only a day ago, a farm south of Mosswood was burnt to the ground by a group of goblins. Shalelu was thankfully nearby, and while the farm couldn't be saved, she did rescue the family and drive off the goblins; the family is staying at a nearby farm for now, but the goblin problem is obviously not going away.

At this point, Hemlock cedes the floor to Shalelu, asking her to tell the PCs what she told him.

"Belor's told me of your work against the goblins—well done. I've dedicated the last several years of my life to keeping them from causing too much trouble around these parts, but they're tenacious and fecund little runts. Like weeds that bite.

"Anyway, there's five major goblin tribes in the region, and, traditionally, they're pretty good at keeping each other in line with intertribal squabbles and the like. Yet from what I've been able to piece together, members of all five tribes were involved in the raid on Sandpoint. A fair amount of the Mosswood tribe goblins I dealt with yesterday were already pretty beat up, and there was a lot of chatter about the 'longshanks' who killed so many of them. Now that I've met you, it seems obvious from their descriptions who they were talking about. Seems like you've made an impression.

"In any event, the fact that the five tribes are working together disturbs me. Goblin tribes don't get along unless they've got something big planned, and big plans require big bosses. I'm afraid that someone's moved in on the goblins and organized them. And judging by these recent raids, what they're organizing seems like bad news for all of us."

After Shalelu's speech, Sheriff Hemlock announces that he's taking a few of his men south to Magnimar to see about securing additional soldiers to station at Sandpoint for a few weeks, at least until the extent of the goblin threat can be determined. While he's out of town, he's asked Shalelu to sniff around Shank's Wood, Devil's Platter, and other places where goblins live to see if she can discover anything else about what's going on. He would also like the PCs to maintain a public presence in Sandpoint over the next few days, if they don't mind. "The locals seem to have taken to you," he says, "And seeing you around town will do a lot for keeping worries down over the next few days." Hemlock's destined to run into a lot of red tape in Magnimar, and after several days of frustrated dealings with city bureaucracy, he returns to Sandpoint with only a dozen green soldiers.

Once the meeting is over, Shalelu asks to join the PCs for dinner at the Rusty Dragon (or wherever else they may be staying); she'd like to hear more from them about the Sandpoint raid, and in return she's got a fair amount of goblin lore she can impart to the PCs. Beyond the "Ten Fun Facts about Goblins" listed in the foreword, the elven ranger can reveal the following important tidbits about local goblinoids.

- **Goblin Tribes:** As she mentioned earlier, there are five major goblin tribes in the region. The closest to Sandpoint are the

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Birdcruncher goblins that live in caves along the western edge of the Devil's Platter, although traditionally these goblins are the least aggressive of the five. To the south are the **Licktoad** goblins of the Brinestump Marsh, pests that are excellent swimmers. East are the **Seven Tooth** goblins of Shank's Wood, goblins who've secured a place for themselves by raiding Sandpoint's junkyard and rebuilding the stolen refuse into armor and weapons. Further east are the **Mosswood** goblins, likely the largest tribe but one traditionally held back by feuding families within their own ranks. And finally, there are the **Thistletop** goblins, who live on the Nettlewood coast atop a small island that some say holds a passing resemblance to a decapitated head.

- **Goblin Heroes:** Shalelu notes that goblins generally live short, violent lives. It's unusual for a single goblin to achieve any real measure of notoriety, but when one does, it's well-earned. Currently, five goblins enjoy the status of "hero."

Big Gugmut is an unusually muscular and tall goblin from Mosswood who, it is said, had a hobgoblin for a mother and a wild boar for a father. **Koruvus** was a champion of the Seven Tooth tribe, who was as well known for his short temper as he was for his prized possession—a magic longsword sized for a human that the goblin stubbornly kept as his own (despite the fact that it was too large for him to properly wield). Koruvus vanished several months ago after he supposedly discovered a "secret hideout" in a cave along the cliffs, but the Seven Tooth goblins remain convinced that he's out there still, a ghost or worse, waiting to murder any goblin who tries to discover his hideout. **Vorka** is a notorious goblin cannibal who lives in the Brinestump marsh, a "hero" mostly to goblins other than the Licktoad tribe. **Ripnugget** is the current leader of the Thistletop goblins and controls what the five tribes agree is the best lair. And then there's **Bruthazmus**, an infamous bugbear ranger who lives in northern Nettlewood and often visits the five tribes to trade things he's stolen from caravans for alcohol, news, or magic arrows. Shalelu notes that Bruthazmus has a particular hatred of elves, and that they have fought on several occasions. To date, neither of them has managed to get the upper hand on the other, but Shalelu bitterly vows that she won't be the first to fall in their private war.

Shalelu continues to have a presence throughout the Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path; as with Sheriff Hemlock, Ameiko

Kaijitsu, and Father Zantus, you should use her as a recurring NPC to keep the PCs invested in the region. She can become an ally of the group, even joining them in their efforts against the goblins for a time if you think they need a little extra help. She might develop a romantic relationship with one of the PCs, especially if one of them is of a like mind and shares her love of the natural world and hatred of the goblins who squat in its tangled places.

It's likely that, after this event, the PCs will want to start scouring the region for goblins and reasons for their increased aggression, but you should use Hemlock's request for them to stay in town as an anchor for now. Once the next chapter begins, the PCs will have plenty to keep them busy in town before they turn their attentions to the hinterlands.



The Missing Bartender

Run this event in the morning at some point after Sheriff Hemlock has left town to request more soldiers from Magnimar. The PCs are approached by a timid elderly halfling woman named **Bethana Corwin** (NG female halfling commoner 1), a maid who works for Ameiko Kaijitsu at the Rusty Dragon. She's obviously upset and asks to speak to the PCs somewhere in private.

In short, her employer has gone missing. Bethana woke earlier this morning to find that Ameiko hadn't started breakfast for the first time Bethana could remember. Worried, she knocked on Ameiko's door but didn't get a response. Against her better judgment, Bethana entered Ameiko's room to find it empty and the bed un-slept in. Worse, she found a crumpled piece of parchment near the bed—a note from Ameiko's older brother Tsuto.

At this point, Bethana hands the PCs the note. Although it was written in Kaijitsu's native tongue (likely to keep prying eyes from reading it, Bethana muses), Ameiko had been teaching Bethana the language over the last few years. The halfling has helpfully translated the note's message on the opposite side—this note is reproduced as Handout #1.

Bethana explains that Tsuto was something of a scandal when he was born 21 years ago, since he's a half-elf. Bethana sagely notes, with big eyes, that neither of Ameiko's parents are elves. It was obvious that old Lonjiku wasn't the boy's father, and his rage at the discovery of his wife's indiscretion was the talk of the town for months. Lonjiku's wife Atsui never revealed who the father was, and it's a testament to Lonjiku's stubbornness that they remained married. Tsuto was handed over to the Turandarok Academy to be raised outside of the Kaijitsu family, ignored by his father and forbidden visits from his mother. His older sister Ameiko visited him in secret a few times a month to keep him company, bring him some food, and promise him that someday things would get all

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sorted out. That all changed six years ago, when they had a terrible argument in which Tsuto struck Ameiko. Bethana doesn't know what the argument was about, but whatever it was is what sent Ameiko away from Sandpoint for a year, during which time she made a living as an adventurer. She returned to Sandpoint five years ago to attend her mother's funeral. Tsuto was quite public in his opinions that his father had pushed Atsui off the cliff to her death, and during the funeral there was a confrontation. Lonjiku nearly broke Tsuto's jaw with his cane, after which Tsuto cursed him and left Sandpoint. Ameiko's tried to reestablish contact with him ever since, but was never able to track him down.

Bethana's worried that Tsuto's up to no good. Since Sheriff Hemlock's out of town, the PCs are the only ones she can turn to. She begs them to head over to the Glassworks and find out what happened to Ameiko as soon as possible.

PART THREE: GLASS AND WRATH

The process of glassmaking is as much an art as it is a craft, and one that the Kaijitsu family has held pride in for several generations. After the family was exiled from Tian Xia and made the perilous journey over the crown of the world, they finally settled in Magnimar, where the family trade played a key role in their acceptance into society. When the Sandpoint Mercantile League was established, the Kaijitus were there, and not long after Sandpoint was founded, they began construction of what would become one of the town's most unique and profitable businesses—the Sandpoint Glassworks.

The three main components of glass are all found in abundance locally: sand, seaweed, and salt-resistant plants (the ashes of which form an important reagent in the process), and lime extracted from stone quarried from the cliffs of Devil's Platter and the Ashen Rise. All that remained was the technical proficiency to work these components into glass. The fact that the building's basement once doubled as a smuggler's base is one of the Kaijitsu family's best-kept secrets. Lonjiku's more scrupulous father put a stop to the smuggling operation and bricked up the offending chambers in the basement not long after he inherited the Glassworks 34 years ago, but knowledge that the Glassworks was once a smuggling operation persisted in the town's hidden lore.

Now the Glassworks is little more than a front for the machinations of a bitter, vengeful son. When Tsuto Kaijitsu joined Nualia's group in Magnimar a year ago, he was already in love with her. He'd seen her on the streets of Sandpoint many times, but never had the courage to approach the mysterious beauty. So when she approached him with an offer of a job, he felt as if fate had finally dealt him a good hand. When he learned that her plans involved burning his hometown as an offering to her goddess, Lamashtu, Tsuto was even more thrilled—not at the opportunity to serve the goddess of monsters (Tsuto doesn't have much interest in religion) but as an opportunity to get revenge on the town he blamed for his bitter and joyless childhood.

Tsuto's primary job was to serve as the link between Sandpoint and Thistletop, since not only did he know the town the

Handout 1

Hello, sis!

I hope this letter finds you well, and with some free time on your hands, because we've got something of a problem. It's to do with father. Seems that he might have had something to do with Sandpoint's recent troubles with the goblins, and I didn't want to bring the matter to the authorities because we both know he'd just wear himself out of it. You've got some pull here in town, though. If you can meet me at the Glassworks at midnight tonight, maybe we can figure out how to make sure he faces the punishment he deserves. Knock twice and then three times more and then once more at the delivery entrance and I'll let you in.

In any case, I don't have to impress upon you the delicate nature of this request. If news got out, you know these local rubes would assume that you and I were in on the whole thing too, don't you? They've got no honor at all around these parts. I still don't understand how you can stand to stay here.

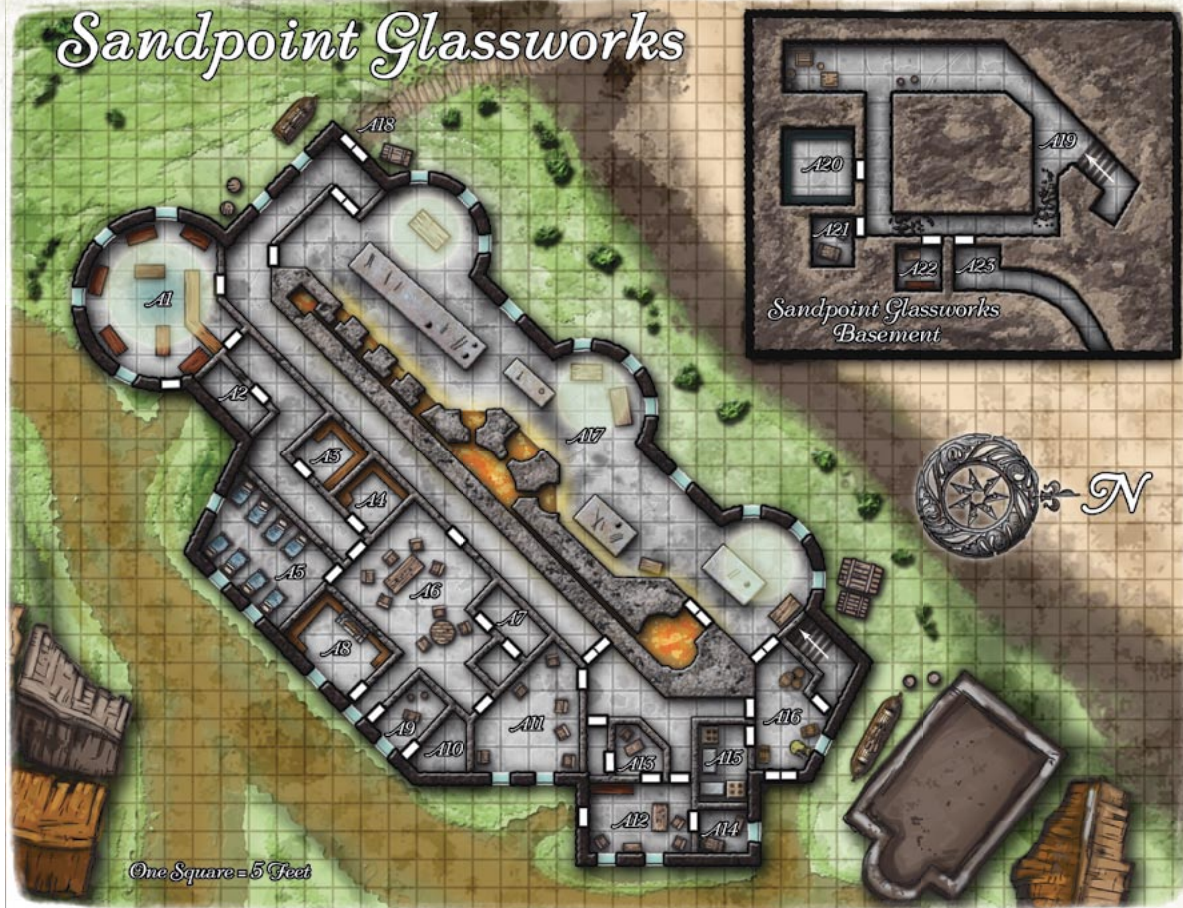
Anyway, don't tell anyone about this. There are other complications as well, ones I'd rather talk to you in person about tonight. Don't be late.

Tsuto

best, but he had links to one of its most important citizens—his father. After blackmailing Lonjiku into aiding the preparation of Sandpoint for the goblin raid, Tsuto had his father right where he wanted him. A few days after the raid, he sent his father a note demanding a payment of 2,000 gp or Tsuto would reveal his role in the raid. Infuriated, Lonjiku decided it was time to take care of his son. He agreed to the payment, and when he arrived at the Glassworks late one night several days after the raid, he attempted to murder Tsuto. Unfortunately for Lonjiku, Tsuto had come up with the same plan. Before Lonjiku arrived, the goblins killed all of the workers who lived on site. Tsuto and a half-dozen goblins ambushed Lonjiku as he entered the Glassworks, murdered him, and put his body on display in area A17.

His father dealt with, Tsuto sent a note to his sister, Ameiko, the one person in Sandpoint he didn't hate. He asked her to meet him at the Glassworks the night after he murdered his father, hoping to convince Ameiko to join Nualia's band. Unfortunately, he miscalculated his sister's loyalty to Sandpoint, and when she refused to join with him, he had his goblins beat her unconscious, bound her, and locked her in area A21 below the Glassworks. He's not quite sure what to do with her and plans on heading back north to Thistletop with her to ask Nualia for advice, intending to leave the Glassworks an abattoir to further throw fear in to the hearts of Sandpoint's citizens.

BURNT OFFERINGS



Investigating the Glassworks

When the PCs arrive at the Glassworks, they find the building curiously silent. Neighbors have noticed the lack of traffic into and from the building, but since the furnace chimney still plumes with smoke, most assume that the building was simply closed to allow Lonjiku and his workers some privacy while they worked on a big project. A quick investigation of the building perimeter reveals that curtains have been drawn over the windows and all the doors are locked. The skylights above that look into areas **A1** and **A17** are unobscured, and a character who makes a DC 20 Climb check to get on the roof can look through them (which, in the case of **A17**, reveals a gruesome sight indeed). The rumble of the Glassworks' furnace is plainly audible from within, but a character who listens at any of the curtained windows along area **A17** and makes a DC 12 Listen check can also hear what sounds like high-pitched giggles, shrieks, and breaking glass.

All of the external doors can be picked with a DC 20 Open Lock check; battering them down takes a bit more work (Hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 23). In either case, such acts are quick to draw gawkers eager to find out what Sandpoint's new heroes are doing trying to break into the Glassworks. A DC 15 Diplomacy check or a successful Bluff or Intimidate check are more than enough to calm the locals, especially given the odd fact that the Glassworks should be open for business anyway. Several locals suggest that the

PCs head up to Kaijitsu Manor to talk to Lonjiku or his servants rather than breaking into the place, but a trip up Schooner Gulch Road to the manor reveals that none of the servants there have seen Lonjiku since yesterday evening. They assume he's working down in the Glassworks and point to the smoke pouring out of its chimney as proof. In fact, the Glassworks are now under the control of Lonjiku's treacherous son and his goblin allies.

- A1. Display Room:** This room contains a shop where customers can browse the various glassware produced here. Bottles, windowpanes, and glasswork art are the primary contents.
- A2. Storeroom:** Finished glassware products are stored here.
- A3. Cleaning Closet:** Cleaning supplies and tools like brooms are kept here.
- A4. Storeroom:** Tools, clothing for servants, firewood, and other miscellaneous supplies are kept here.
- A5. Servant's Quarters:** Lonjiku's staff of skilled laborers lives on site; the eight workers sleep here. The beds are all in various states of disarray and blood is spattered over the walls and sheets. No bodies are apparent—they've been taken by the goblins to area **A17** after they murdered the sleeping workers the night before.
- A6. Dining Room:** The staff used this room to relax, eat, and play cards in their off hours. The room is a wreck—when Tsuto's goblins came through here, they made a mess of it.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

- A7. Washroom:** Contains several washtubs for bathing and laundry; the small room nearby is a toilet.
- A8. Kitchen:** This is where the staff prepared their meals; the goblins tore this place apart looking for food, and the room is in disarray as a result.
- A9. Pantry:** This room is a mess; barrels and sacks of grain and crates of dried fish and venison have been completely demolished, and most of the food is missing. A broken dogslicer lies near the northern corner, discarded by one of the goblins who ruined it trying to get at the food.
- A10. Storeroom:** This room contains several mounds of firewood for the kitchen stove.
- A11. Meeting Room:** The staff meets here to discuss work schedules or large projects.
- A12. Reception:** Customers seeking custom glass jobs or looking for business opportunities to export glass meet with a representative here to arrange business.
- A13. Office:** A smaller office for more private meetings with important customers.
- A14. Files:** Several cabinets and shelves containing files and contracts with dozens of exporters and businesses from Magnimar, Korvosa, and other local towns fill this room.
- A15. Preparation:** The primary agents for glassmaking (sand, soda ash, and lime) are prepared here for use in area **A17**.
- A16. Loading Room:** A wheelbarrow sits against a wall here, and shelves on the walls contain additional reagents to create different colors of glass (manganese for clear glass, cobalt for blue, and tin for white glass; untreated glass is green, while too much of any reagent makes black glass). A safe on the floor hangs open after Tsuto used his father's key to open it and stole the gold and silver used to make red and yellow glass.
- A17. Glassworking Room:** A long furnace burns along the southeast wall of this equally long room. Marble tables sit throughout the chamber, used to work raw glass into usable shapes, with nearby wooden tables cluttered with various tools of the trade. The building's furnace rumbles loudly, causing any Listen checks made in this room to take a -4 penalty. The main furnace burns at the northeast end, a large chamber that utilizes alchemically treated wood that burns with a hot blue light. The workers use this room to melt glass, but Lonjiku also periodically "rented" the furnace to Sczarni thugs for the disposal of evidence, as the fires are hot enough to burn bones and teeth. A creature pushed into the furnace takes 6d6 fire damage per round; fortunately the opening is narrow enough to prevent a Medium creature from being pushed inside too easily. As the furnace's stone pipes run to the southwest, they reach smaller and progressively cooler furnaces used to keep glassworking projects at the proper temperature; glass shatters if it's allowed to cool too quickly.

When the PCs arrive, this room is a gruesome display of goblin boredom. The bodies of the eight murdered

staffers lie in various stages of dismemberment; the goblins have been burning legs and arms in the furnace with glee, and pouring melted glass on the remains in an attempt to duplicate Tsuto's masterpiece. This would be his father's body, propped up in a chair in the central alcove and encased in thick runny sheets of hardened glass.

This is where the PCs are most likely to encounter Tsuto's goblins; see "Against the Goblins" for details on this fight.

- A18. Stairs:** This flight of stairs leads down to the beach below.
- A19. Underground Storage:** Crates and barrels. Used to store sand and other raw materials. Two wheelbarrows sit against the wall. Just east of the stairs up to area **A18**, a brick wall has been dismantled to reveal an older passageway leading south.
- A20. Storage:** This room is used to store glassware, windows, and other finished goods.
- A21. Storage:** The door to this room is locked. Although used as a secondary storage room, Tsuto Kaijitsu has recently turned it into an impromptu holding cell. His sister, Ameiko, lies on her side on the floor in here, bound at the wrists and ankles with rope and blindfolded and gagged with strips of leather. For more information about her reaction to being rescued, see "Rescuing Ameiko."
- A22. Secret Office:** Once used by smugglers to track their illicit businesses, this room has served Tsuto Kaijitsu for the past few days as a place to orchestrate his actions in Sandpoint. After murdering his father and imprisoning his sister, Tsuto drank himself to sleep in this room. He likely wakes when a goblin fleeing from the PCs races down here to warn him of trouble (see "Against the Goblins").
- A23. Smuggler's Entrance:** The long tunnel leading north from this room winds through the bedrock below Sandpoint. Built decades ago by smugglers, the tunnel remains stable and serviceable as it winds on a lazy northeasterly route for just over 1,750 feet before reaching a dead end. A DC 20 Search check reveals a secret door that opens into a 30-foot-diameter cave on the side of the cliff overlooking the Varisian Bay. The cave mouth slopes down to a narrow beach; no Survival check is required to note the crude collection of goblin beds or remnants of their meals strewn about the cave.

Along the tunnel's southern half, two side tunnels branch off. One of these leads east to a collapse after 400 feet (it once led all the way to the Turandarok River), but the one to the west seems to have once been bricked over at the point where it diverges from the main tunnel. This westerly passageway winds for 50 feet before turning north for another 100 feet. This tunnel was an attempt to break into what the smugglers assumed would be the garrison basement, so that they could smuggle prisoners out for great profit. Yet what they discovered were the Catacombs of Wrath, and what the smugglers found there convinced them to brick up the tunnel and never speak of it again. The brick wall was torn down recently on Nualia's return to the area, after which she established contact with the quasit queen of the catacombs.

BURNT OFFERINGS

Against the Goblins (EL 3)

In all, there are eight goblins in the Glassworks. If the PCs follow the sound of breaking glass and their evil little shrieks, they find them capering and defiling the bodies of the murdered workers in area A17. Unless the PCs are particularly noisy, they should be able to reach area A17 without alerting the goblins. Give the PCs the advantage of a surprise round against the little monsters, because once the battle begins, things can get ugly quickly.

Keep in mind that this fight is in a glassworking factory. The goblins are masters of improvisational fighting, and are quick to use the environs of the room to their advantage in the following ways.

- Some goblins use tongs dripping with molten glass as improvised weapons to burn the PCs.
- A goblin might attempt to trip a PC; if he falls prone, three goblins pile onto him and attempt to carry him into the furnace. Chances of this succeeding are nil as long as the PC isn't helpless, but it should give the PCs a bit of a hair-raising time nevertheless—especially if the PC being fed into the furnace is unconscious.
- Goblins who can't reach a PC in melee throw bottles or sling panes of glass at them as improvised ranged attacks.
- As the battle progresses, feel free to mark certain squares as containing broken glass. Treat these squares as if they contained caltrops.

GOBLINS (8)

CR 1/3

Goblin warrior 1 (MM 133)

hp 5 each

Melee dogslicer +2 (1d4+1/19–20) or
tongs of molten glass –2 touch (1d4 fire)

Ranged hurled glassware –1 (1d3)

TACTICS

During Combat The goblins are still riding the high from killing the staff, and react to the PCs' arrival with excitement. Most of them fight with dogslicers, but one or two goblins attack the PCs using tongs dripping with molten glass.

Morale Once at least five are dead, one of the surviving goblins recognizes the PCs, drops his weapon, and shrieks out (in Goblin), "Wait! It's those longshanks what stopped the raid! Run for your lives!" The remaining goblins panic and flee for the basement, seeking to regroup below with Tsuto. Once at his side, the goblins fight until he is defeated, at which point any surviving goblins flee down the smuggler's tunnel or cower and beg for mercy.

TSUTO KAIJITSU

CR 3

Male half-elf rogue 1/monk 2

LE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; **Listen** +3, **Spot** +3

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 13

(+2 Dex, +1 deflection, +2 Wis)

hp 12 (1d6+2d8–3)

Fort +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5; +2 vs. enchantment

Defensive Abilities Dodge, evasion; **Immune** sleep

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +3 (1d6+1) or
flurry of blows +1/+1 (1d6+1)

Ranged composite shortbow +3 (1d6+1/X3)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

During Combat Tsuto's main advantage in battle is his mobility. He uses Tumble to move around the battlefield and flanks foes with his goblins as he can. When facing spellcasters, he uses his stunning fist to keep them occupied. He only resorts to a flurry of blows when he's surrounded or backed into a corner.

Morale If brought below 8 hit points, or if all of his goblins are slain,



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Tsuto runs for his life down the smuggler's tunnel, abandoning all thought of returning to Nualia with his sister in tow and fleeing back to Thistletop.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 15, **Con** 8, **Int** 13, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Feats Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +4, Bluff +5, Diplomacy +8, Disable Device +6, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Gather Information +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +3,

Open Lock +6, Perform (wind instruments) +6, Search +5, Tumble +8

Languages Common, Elven, Goblin

SQ trapfinding

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*; **Other Gear** composite shortbow (+1 Strength), *ring of protection* +1, masterwork thieves' tools, masterwork flute, silver earrings (25 gp for the pair), journal, 6 pouches of gold dust worth 50 gp each, 8 pouches of silver dust worth 5 gp each, 10 pp

Interrogating Tsuto

Although the goblins know close to nothing if captured and interrogated, Tsuto is a different story. His loyalty to Nualia is unwavering, and unless the PCs use magical means like *charm person* to secure his cooperation, he remains silent in the face of any attempt to get him to talk. He attempts to escape at the first opportunity, but if faced with no other option, tries to take his own life, trusting (erroneously) that when she grows powerful enough, Nualia will bring him back from the dead.

Tsuto's journal likely proves a better source of information. This small, leather-bound booklet contains two dozen parchment pages, most of which Tsuto has filled with maps of Sandpoint or erotic drawings of Nualia (who can be recognized as the presumed-dead adopted daughter of Father Tobyn with a DC 15 Knowledge [local] check). The maps each depict different attack plans. The first set shows the attack plans for a group of thirty goblins—one of these battle maps is circled, and the PCs should recognize it as the attack the goblins made on Sandpoint at the start of the adventure. Of more pressing concern are the next several pages, which illustrate an assault on Sandpoint by a force of what appears to be two hundred goblins. None of these are circled, and while many are scratched out as if they've been rejected, the implications should be ominous nonetheless.

Most of the drawings of Nualia do not depict her with her demonic hand, although one on the last pages of the book depicts her with demonic hands, bat wings, horns, a forked tail, and fangs.

Three short passages in the notebook contain information of particular interest to the PCs—these are reproduced on page 25 as Handout #2.

If the PCs secure Tsuto's cooperation via magic, he can be a font of information, revealing the entirety of Nualia's plans, her current location, and even information on Thistletop's layout and defenses. If asked about his journal, he confirms that Nualia plans to offer Sandpoint as a burning sacrifice to Lamashtu in return for a transformation from the angelic to demonic, a ritual she's already begun by burning Father Tobyn's

remains. He doesn't know much about the creature she calls "Malfeshnekor," only that it's some monster that she believes is imprisoned somewhere below Thistletop and that releasing and recruiting it will make their coming raid on Sandpoint a guaranteed success.

Rescuing Ameiko

If for some reason the PCs wait until after sunset to investigate the Glassworks, Tsuto and his goblins have returned to Thistletop; Ameiko is placed in a cell in area **D9** and if the PCs don't rescue her in a few days, she is eventually sacrificed to Lamashtu in area **D12**, yet another burnt offering to appease Nualia's wrath.

Ameiko is conscious but badly wounded, stable at -2 hit points and in no shape to aid the PCs unless they can heal her. Even if healed, though, she remains distraught at her brother's treachery. Tsuto revealed to Ameiko that he and several other mercenaries were led by Nualia and hinted that she's got big plans for Sandpoint's future. Tsuto warned Ameiko that she didn't want to be in town when those plans came through, and offered her a chance to join his group at Thistletop. Ameiko recoiled at the suggestion and slapped her brother in shock that he'd sunk to such a low. He responded by unleashing his goblins on her. They overwhelmed her and left her here. She's grateful for the PCs' rescue, but is eager to leave and warn her father. If the PCs don't break the bad news to her, she learns soon enough, taking the news stoically.

In adventures to come, as Ameiko becomes the heritor of the Kaijitsu holdings in Sandpoint, how the PCs treat her in this encounter can spell the difference between having an ally or enemy among Sandpoint's nobility.

Catacombs of Wrath

This site was originally a laboratory and prison run by a cruel man named Xaliasa, a man who had given his soul to the demon Lamashtu in return for eldritch and dark powers. He was a thaumaturge in the service of Runelord Alaznist, but unknown to her, Xaliasa was also a secret assassin pledged to Karzoug. Working as a double agent eventually drove Xaliasa mad, and he came to be known to his minions as the Scribbler. He perished in the now inaccessible lower levels of the Catacombs when Thassilon fell and Alaznist's empire sank under the sea. Yet not all of his minions perished—his quasit familiar Erylium survived.

After spending centuries alone and trapped in the dark catacombs, the quasit Erylium went somewhat insane. Originally obsessed with escaping, she eventually came to see the complex as her own private empire. The zombies imprisoned in area **B9** became her subjects, and the vargouille guardian of area **B4** her pet. She poured over the crumbling texts and notes left behind by her thaumaturge master, and eventually became a thaumaturge herself, selecting Lamashtu as her demonic patron as had her master so long ago. And for thousands of years more, Erylium ruled her tiny realm with petty cruelty and glee.

When smugglers broke into the Catacombs four decades ago, they caught Erylium off guard. Rather than attempt to trick the

BURNT OFFERINGS

Handout 2

After the circled battle map:

The raid went about as planned. Few Thistletop goblins perished, and we were able to secure Tobyn's casket with ease while the rybas were distracted by the rest. I can't wait until the real raid. This town deserves a burning, that's for sure.

After the last of the second batch of maps:

Ripnugget seems to favor the overwhelming land approach, but I don't think it's the best plan. We should get the quasit's aid. Send her freaks up from below via the smuggling tunnel in my father's Glassworks, and then invade from the river and from the Glassworks in smaller but more focused strikes. The rest except Brithazmus agree, and I'm pretty sure the bugbear's just being contrary to annoy me. My love's too distracted with the lower chambers to make a decision. Says that once Maffeshnekor's released and under her command, we won't need to worry about being subtle. I hope she's right.

Before the last illustration depicting Nualia as a succubus:

My love seems bent on going through with it—nothing I can say convinces her of her beauty. She remains obsessed with removing what she calls her 'celestial taint' and replacing it with her Mother's grace. Burning her father's remains at the Thistletop shrine seems to have started the transformation, but I can't say her new hand is pleasing to me. Hopefully when she offers Sandpoint to Lamashtu's fires, her new body won't be as hideous. Maybe I'll luck out. Succubi are demons too, aren't they?



ERYLIUM

intruders into serving her, she attacked them and scared them off. By the time she'd recovered from her triumphant celebrations, they'd already bricked up her escape route. Yet the event had done the trick and broken the quasit out of her madness.

Over the next four decades, she listened for countless hours at the top of the ruined stairs, eager to learn more of those whom she soon came to think of as the Enemy Above. Every week, Erylium used her *commune* ability to learn more and more about Sandpoint from her demonic patron. As the years wore on, Lamashtu's cryptic responses led Erylium to believe that something was coming, something that would provide her with a real army, and that her general was even now being groomed by Lamashtu for her glory.

Five years ago, the *runewell of wrath* mysteriously reactivated. Erylium saw this as a sign, and used the *runewell* to call forth several monsters called *sinspawn* to aid her in the times to come. Soon thereafter, Lamashtu revealed that Erylium's general was nearly ready, but that it fell to Erylium to recruit her. She would know her by her silver hair and violet eyes, a rarity in the world above. When Nualia arrived not long thereafter, a fresh convert to Lamashtu's side, Erylium took to the role of mentor with pride. The quasit knows that soon her empire shall grow.

B1. Guard Cave (EL 2)

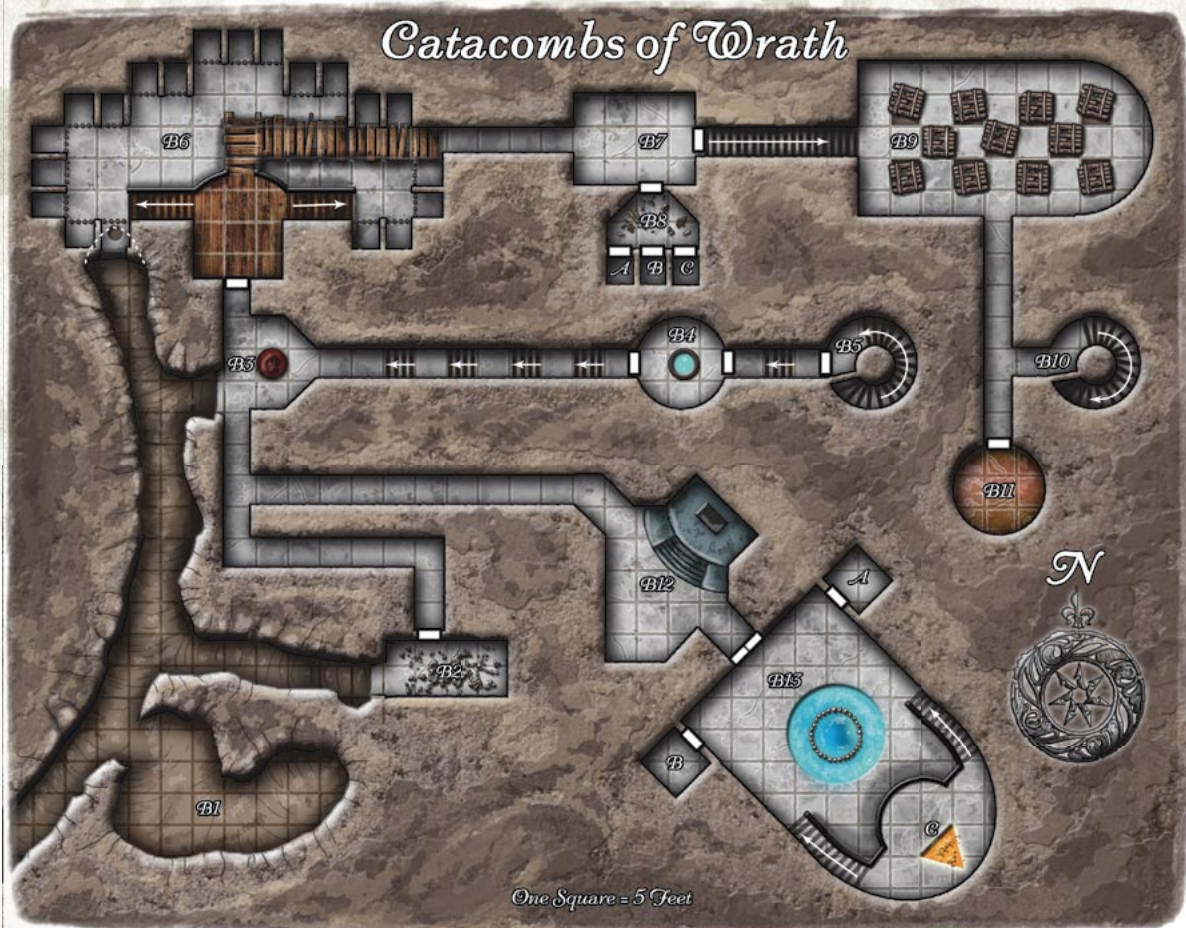
Creature: A *sinspawn* dwells in this cave, charged by Erylium to guard the approach to her realm. The *sinspawn* does its job admirably, standing at its post for hours at a time until it is relieved by another.

SINSPAWN

hp 19; see page 90

CR 2

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B2. Old Storeroom

The original purpose of this chamber is unclear, but large mounds of rubble lie strewn on its floor. The wall to the west has been torn down to reveal a tunnel leading to the west.

An investigation of the rubble reveals that most of it seems to have consisted of broken urns and other pottery containers that once held food stores, long since crumbled to dust.

B3. Welcoming Chamber

A red marble statue of a strikingly beautiful but, at the same time, monstrously enraged human woman stands in the middle of this room, her stony expression twisted in fury. The woman wears flowing robes, and her long hair is held back from her face by an intricate headdress of hooks and blades. In her left hand she carries a large book, the face of which is inscribed with a seven-pointed star. Her right hand holds a glittering metal and ivory ranseur.

The statue depicts Runelord Alaznist, identifiable as such with a DC 35 Knowledge (history) check.

Treasure: The masterwork ranseur can be removed with a little tugging. As a replica of Runelord Alaznist's signature weapon, the ranseur is a work of art as much as a weapon. It's worth 400 gp.

B4. Washing Pool (EL 2)

Water ripples quietly in a circular stone pool lined with skulls here. Smears of what looks like blood mar the pool's rim in places.

This pool was once used as a place to wash the grime of the world above from the feet of visitors to the Catacombs of Wrath. Once an hour, the waters of the pool magically replenish and are purified. The blood on the pool's rim was left by several of the sinspawn that have taken to using the pool as a watering hole.

Creature: This approach to the Catacombs of Wrath is still guarded by an ancient creature, a hideous vargouille that generally rests in the shadows near the wall. The monster was placed here by the Scribbler, and over the centuries has remained, patiently waiting for a release from its duties and eager to attack anything that enters the room that doesn't bear the stink of Lamashtu on its skin.

VARGOUILLE
hp 5; (MM 254)

CR 2

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B5. Stairs

A flight of spiral stairs winds up around a circular pillar into darkness above.

These stairs once led up to a small vault on the surface, but when Thassilon fell, that structure collapsed. If the PCs somehow manage to dig their way up through the 30 feet of rock between the top of the stairs and the surface, they find themselves emerging in an alley in the cluster of buildings between Tower Street and Junker's Way.

B6. Ancient Prison (EL 4)

This large chamber was obviously once a prison, as testified by the nearly two dozen cells that line the room's perimeter. A rickety wooden platform overlooks the room, with two flights of stairs descending to the prison floor ten feet below. A five-foot-wide wooden walkway runs from the northern edge of the platform to a passageway to the east.

As its appearance suggests, this room was indeed used to keep prisoners, mostly agents of Shalast who ventured too close to Bakrakhani holdings. Skeletons lie in most of the cells, prisoners who starved to death ages ago. Although the walkway above the room looks rickety, it's actually quite stable.

Creatures: Two sinspawn wait here. If the alarm is raised, they've hidden themselves in the rafters just under the platform, waiting to reach up and attack anyone who comes too close to the edge. If the alarm isn't raised, the sinspawn are bickering in the eastern part of the room over a collection of skulls, tearing and biting at each other enough to cause wounds but never so much that their fast healing can't keep them alive and conscious.

SINSPAWN (2)

hp 19; see page 90

CR 2

B7. Interrogation Chamber

This room contains several ancient relics of what appear to be torture implements, although their function and style seem strange and archaic. In one corner sits a spherical cage with spikes protruding inward from its iron bars. In another stands what appears to be a star-shaped wooden frame, its surface studded with hooks. And in the center of the room is a long table covered with leather straps and a number of cranks that seem designed to rotate and swivel.

All of the torture devices here saw plenty of use back in Thassilon's day, but are far too decayed or rusted to be much use today.

B8. Ancient Study

The crumbling remnants of several chairs and a long table clutter the floor of this room. To the south stand three stone doors, each bearing a strange symbol that resembles a seven-pointed star.



A SEMI-OPTIONAL DUNGEON

It's possible for your PCs to completely miss the Catacombs of Wrath and to move on to Thistletop after dealing with Tsuto. If they do, don't worry. As presented here, player curiosity is expected to compel your PCs into this dungeon, but if they don't take the bait, information they uncover later in the adventure should send them back here. In the end, the Catacombs of Wrath are optional; they play a much more important role in the fifth chapter of *Rise of the Runelords*, and exploring them now is a great way to foreshadow "Sins of the Saviors." It's also a great way to give your PCs a little bit more XP so that Thistletop doesn't completely murder them.

If your PCs miss the catacombs, consider having one or two sinspawn clamber up into Sandpoint later in the adventure to raise a little hell. When the PCs defeat them, tracking the strange monsters back to the Glassworks and thence to the catacombs should lead the PCs into these chambers with ease.

This room once served as a study, but time (and Erylium's centuries of frustration) have taken their toll here. A search of the rubble uncovers the fragments of countless books and scrolls with bits of spiky writing in a strange language all over them. These were once part of the Scribbler's library, and taught Erylium much of what she knows today as a thaumaturge, but are now useless.

The three doors to the south were once prison cells. Within each is a single skeleton of a badly deformed humanoid; one has three arms, another has an enormous misshapen skull, and the third has a ribcage that goes all the way down to its pelvis—a pelvis with stunted legbones strewn below its strangely flat girth.

Treasure: A DC 20 Search of the torn-up pages uncovers a single intact scroll under a broken chair. The writing on this scroll seems strange and archaic, and attempts to decipher the spell via a Spellcraft check suffer a -10 penalty unless the reader can read Thassilonian. *Read magic* works normally to reveal the fact that it's a scroll of *flaming sphere* (CL 5th).

B9. Prisoner Pits (EL 4)

The ceiling of this strangely cold chamber arches to a vaulted height of twenty feet. The floor contains eleven wooden lids strewn haphazardly over eleven five-foot-wide pits in the ground. From the darkness within these pits echo up strange shuffling sounds and, every so often, a low moan.

Each of the pits is 20 feet deep. The wooden covers over the top of each are quite fragile, and collapse if anyone walks on them. A DC 15 Reflex save allows a character to leap to safety in an adjacent square, otherwise a 20-foot fall into the pit below is only the beginning of the victim's problems.

Creatures: Each of these pits contains a single human zombie, a pitiful creature left over from an age thousands of years in the past, their flesh maintained by necromantic magic. These zombie pits once served as yet another way the Bakrakhani tormented their prisoners, yet now, they serve only as Erylium's playthings.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



After Nualia opened the Catacombs of Wrath, very few creatures wandered into the dungeon from the hidden smuggler's tunnel entrance. One of them, though, was a goblin hero of the Seven Tooth tribe named Koruvus. When he discovered the secret tunnel, he brashly declared to the other goblins that he was going to explore it, loot the pirate treasure doubtless hidden within, and come back to take over the Seven Tooth tribe. He never returned, but the Seven Tooth goblins expect him to do so any day.

In fact, Koruvus stumbled into the Catacombs of Wrath and drank from the waters atop the altar at **B12**, whereupon he was twisted into a monstrous, insane mockery by the fickle cruelty of Lamashtu's whims. He's come to see Erylium as his new queen, and follows her orders slavishly. The quasit was initially amused by this development, but it didn't take her long to grow tired of Koruvus's loud nature and she ordered him to guard her flock in area **B9**. Koruvus does so obsessively, leaving only to drink from the fountain at **B4** or to scavenge rats in the smuggler's tunnels for food when he can't stand the hunger pangs any longer.

KORUVUS

Male mutated goblin fighter 2

CR 3

CE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen -1, Spot -1

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14

(+4 natural, +1 Dex)

hp 24 (2d10+9); fast healing 1

Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** -1

Immune acid, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 longsword +3 (1d8+5/19-20) and

mwk handaxe +3 (1d6+2/X3) and

silver dagger +2 (1d4+1/19-20)

Special Attack breath weapon

TACTICS

During Combat Koruvus takes his duty as guardian of this chamber seriously, and immediately attacks anyone who enters the room. He uses his breath weapon on the first round of combat, then moves in to engage the largest, most dangerous-looking foe with his weapons.

Morale Koruvus fights to the death, and pursues foes all the way to the glassworks or the northern exit if necessary before returning here.

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STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 13, **Con** 16, **Int** 3, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +6

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Toughness

Skills Intimidate +5

Languages Common, Goblin

Other Gear +1 longsword, masterwork handaxe, silver dagger

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, Koruvus can spew a 20-foot-long line of foul-smelling and acidic blood from his mouth. Any creatures in this area take 2d4 points of acid damage (DC 13 Reflex half). A creature that takes damage from the foul-smelling acid must also make a DC 13 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

ZOMBIES (II)

CR 1/2

hp 16 each; (MM 266)

TACTICS

During Combat The zombies cannot escape their pits, but if they sense life in the room above, they wail and cry out.

Morale Zombies fight to the death.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: Characters can kill the zombies with ease using ranged weapons, and as such should be awarded a CR 1 experience award in all for killing them.

Bio. Blocked Stairs

This flight of spiral stairs once led down to even deeper complexes below Sandpoint, but like the flight of stairs leading up from area B5, the ancient cataclysm has closed this route.

BII. Meditation Chamber

This strange room consists of a fifteen-foot-diameter sphere. Several objects float in the room, spinning lazily in space—a ragged book, a scroll, a bottle of wine, a dead raven surrounded by a halo of floating and writhing maggots, and a twisted iron wand with a forked tip. Yet perhaps the most unnerving aspect of the room is the walls, for they are plated in sheets of strange red metal that ripple every once in a while with silent black electricity that seems to coalesce into strange runes or even words far too often for the effect to be chance.

This unusual room still bears a magical effect placed here long ago. Any creature or object that enters the room is immediately affected by a *levitate* spell and floats in the air. The Scribbler found levitation to be an excellent way to relax, but was unable to cast the spell himself and so hired one of Alaznist's apprentices to create this room for him.

Erylium spends a few hours a day here, drinking and snacking on maggots while she reads her favorite book, but she is currently located in area B13.

This room was important to the Scribbler in life, and in his unquiet rest, his spirit still manifests here as the crackling lighting. Someone who can read Thassilonian script may recognize snatches of words here and there in these shapes, words having to do with anger, wrath, and a need for revenge, but never anything close to a full thought. The Scribbler's spirit was stirred to wakefulness by the reactivation of the *runewell* in area B13, and while his spirit is not fully aware or able to interact with the world of the living yet, it will be soon enough. More information about the Scribbler can be found in chapter five of *Rise of the Runelords*, "Sins of the Saviors"—for now, the lightning should seem like nothing more than one more strange feature of these peculiar chambers.

Treasure: The bottle of wine was brought to Erylium by Tsuto several hours ago as a gift. The scroll is an arcane scroll of *burning hands* (CL 3rd). As with the scroll in area B8, this scroll is archaic and difficult to decipher without magic.

The book is a magically preserved but still ancient prayer book dedicated to the worship of Lamashtu, the Mother of Monsters. Written in Abyssal, this well-read tome is Erylium's pride and joy,



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the most important of her belongings. The book reads as much like a bestiary of the world's most horrific and cruel monsters (along with numerous woodcut illustrations of how they kill) as it does a religious text. The book is worth 100 gp.

The iron wand is a *wand of shocking grasp* (28 charges) that Erylium knows is magic but can't use—she plans on someday using it to bargain for a magic wand that she can use.

B12. Shrine to Lamashtu

The tunnel widens here into what appears to have once been a small shrine, for to the northeast steps lead up to a platform of gray stone. Sitting atop the platform is an ancient altar, little more than a jagged block of black marble with a shallow concavity on top of it. This basin is filled with what appears to be filthy water.

Unlike the other Runelords, Alaznist was a woman of faith—faith in ruin, devastation, and wrath. She did not worship one demon, but drew inspiration from all of them. She encouraged her minions to venerate demons as well—she cared not who they revered, as long as they were destructive.

The demon queen Lamashtu, then not quite ascended to full divinity, was a favorite choice—she was certainly the Scribbler's patron. The Scribbler used this altar to commune with Lamashtu—Erylium uses the altar for the same purpose, and it was here that she baptized Nualia and began to teach her.

The liquid pooled atop the altar is an unholy manifestation that appears on altars sacred to Lamashtu under the right conditions. Known as the Waters of Lamashtu, this liquid can be bottled and used as unholy water. If a creature drinks directly from the altar, he must make a DC 14 Fortitude save. Success indicates the creature becomes violently ill, vomits the fluid, and is sickened for 2d4 hours. Failure indicates the water takes root and drives the victim mad, inflicting 2d6 points of Intelligence damage. A creature reduced to 0 Intelligence undergoes a horrific transformation as the Waters of Lamashtu unmake him and then reform him into a monstrous, deformed parody of his previous form. His Intelligence score heals normally, but his new maximum Intelligence is 3. Each of these deformities is unique, representing the victim's "inner monster;" an example of what the waters have wrought on a particularly violent goblin are presented above in Koruvus's stat block. This condition can be removed with a *remove curse* or *break enchantment* spell against CL 14th. In any event, a creature transformed by this remains a feral puppet of Lamashtu until cured or slain.

There's enough water to affect one drinker or to bottle 4 vials of unholy water. As long as a thaumaturge of Lamashtu performs the correct daily rituals at the altar, the fluid replenishes at the rate of one vial's worth per 2d6 months.

B13. Cathedral of Wrath (EL 5)

This huge room looks like nothing more than an immense underground cathedral. Stone doors stand to either side of the main entrance, but beyond this, the walls are carved with strange, spiky runes. In the center of the room is a

large pool, a ring of polished human skulls balanced on stone spikes arranged in a circle around the deeper midsection. At the far end of the room, a pair of stone stairways leads up to a pulpit on which sits a second pool, this one triangular and filled with churning, bubbling water that looks almost like translucent lava. Yet while wisps of what look like heat and steam rise from the strange orange liquid, the room itself is deathly cold.

While Runelord Alaznist encouraged the veneration of demons, her true faith lay in the purity of wrath. And thus, at each of her most important holdings, she made sure to place a "shrine" to her favored sin in the form of a minor *runewell*. Less potent than those used by the other runelords, but more numerous, the *runewells of wrath* allowed communication between those stationed at distant locations. In addition, they were empowered with the capacity to harvest wrath from the souls of the dead so as to create her favored shock troops—sinspawn. When Karzoug activated his much more powerful *runewell* five years ago, the lesser *runewell* in this room flared back to life. Ever since, Erylium has taken care to nurture it. Its magic had been waning, but the recent slaughter of so many goblins above has done wonders to recharge the pool's wrath, and now it glows and bubbles nearly as much as when it was first reactivated years ago. Erylium hopes that when Nualia leads the second, "real" assault on Sandpoint—the number of goblins slaughtered alone will give Erylium enough sinspawn to expand her own army into the world above and begin harvesting more victims to transform into new sinspawn.

When the *runewell* was reactivated, it became infused with ambient wrath. Every time a creature with a wrathful soul (including most goblins and quite a few of the victims murdered years ago by Stoot) dies within a mile of the *runewell*, it gains one "wrath point." There's no limit to the number of wrath points the well can store, but it currently contains only 20. Each time the well's waters are tapped (as detailed below) it expends a number of wrath points. If enough points are expended to put its total at zero or negative wrath points, the *runewell* deactivates, its waters fading away. Reactivating the *runewell* requires long-lost rituals that are certainly beyond Erylium's ability to replicate.

The lesser *runewell of wrath* itself is only 3 feet deep, yet any living creature that enters its freezing orange waters immediately takes 2d6 points of cold damage and must make a DC 15 Will save or be overcome with wrath. Failure indicates the creature becomes enraged (identical to the barbarian rage ability) and immediately attacks the nearest living creature. If no living creatures are in sight, the enraged creature is compelled to seek out a victim, moving at full speed in his search. This rage persists for 2d6 minutes, after which point the character becomes fatigued. Each use of the *runewell* in this manner costs 3 wrath points.

The *runewell* can also be commanded to disgorge a sinspawn. To manifest a sinspawn, a creature need only allow a few drops of its blood to fall into the pool—one round later, a sinspawn emerges from the well and immediately attacks the closest creature in which it cannot scent wrath (as defined in the sinspawn's monster entry on page 90). Each use of the *runewell* in this manner costs 6 wrath points.

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Creature: Although the Catacombs of Wrath are now open, and technically Erylium is free to leave at any time, her thousands of years spent as the catacombs' queen have left her with a bit of agoraphobia and the senseless worry that if she leaves her catacombs, someone could move in and steal her crown. As a result, she still spends nearly all of her time here.

When the PCs enter the room, the quasit flies into a rage. She shrieks, accuses the PCs of "Daring to intrude upon the Mother's sanctum," and slashes her own wrist with her dagger, allowing some of her blood to drip into the *runewell* and form a sinspawn. As she does, the *runewell*'s glow diminishes noticeably. A DC 20 Sense Motive allows a character to note the sudden look of worry that Erylium gets when she sees this. She does not create any more sinspawn after the first one.

ERYLIUM

CR 4

Female quasit thaumaturge of Lamashtu 3 (MM 46; *Book of Fiends*, 11)

CE Tiny outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 17, flat-footed 17

(+5 Dex, +5 natural, +2 size)

hp 30 (3d8+3d6+6); fast healing 2

Fort +5, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

DR 5/cold iron or good; **Immune** poison; **Resist** fire 10

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect)

Melee 2 claws +11 (1d3–1 plus poison) and bite +6 (1d4–1)

Ranged +1 *returning dagger* +12 (1d2/19–20)

Space 2–1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Atk hideous spittle

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)

At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only)

1/day—*cause fear* (30-foot radius, DC 14)

1/week—*commune* (6 questions, CL 12)

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd)

2nd—*inflict moderate wounds* (DC 15), *shatter*^D (DC 15), *summon monster II*

1st—*bane* (DC 14) *disguise self*^P (DC 14), *shield of faith*, *summon monster I*

0—*guidance*, *inflict minor wounds* (DC 13), *mending*, *resistance*

D domain spell; **Domains** Chaos, Trickery

TACTICS

Before Combat Erylium becomes invisible and casts *shield of faith* as soon as she hears enemies approaching.

During Combat Although tough to hit and capable of healing wounds quickly, Erylium remains something of a coward in a fight. She uses flight to maintain ranged superiority over foes, using spells like *summon monster* or *shatter* (aimed at the largest weapon carried by her foes) in the first few rounds of combat. She uses her Tiny +1 *returning dagger* against foes once she runs out of spells, but if cornered, she fights with her claws and bite. She saves her hideous spittle for use against a particularly powerful foe that corners her in melee combat.

Morale If reduced to 10 hit points or less, Erylium becomes invisible and flees, waiting for her fast healing to fix her up before returning here to attack the PCs again.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 20, **Con** 13, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +4; **Grp** –5

Feats Adept Summoner, Master Summoner, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +10, Hide +19, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Spellcraft +12, Spot +6

Languages Abyssal, Common, Thassilonian

SQ alternate form (raven), corruptions, summon familiar (black wren named Orm)

Gear +1 *returning dagger*, miniature tiara worth 50 gp, miniature black silk gown worth 25 gp, obsidian unholy symbol of Lamashtu worth 10 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 14, 1d4 Dex/2d4 Dex.

Corruptions (Ex) Erylium's close association with Lamashtu and thaumaturgical magic have corrupted her even more than a normal quasit. These corruptions are as follows:

Raspy Voice: Erylium's voice is raspy and harsh, granting her a +3 bonus on Intimidate checks but a –3 penalty on Perform (oratory or sing) checks.

Scaly Skin: Erylium's skin is much more scaly than that of a normal quasit, increasing her natural armor by +2.

Terrible Breath: Something inside of Erylium is rotten, and it makes itself known every time she speaks. She suffers a –2 penalty on Bluff and Diplomacy checks, but may belch a hideous wad of phlegm once per day as detailed under Hideous Spittle.

Hideous Spittle (Ex) Once per day, Erylium can belch a wad of foul phlegm at any living target within 20 feet as a +11 ranged touch attack. If she hits, the creature must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Feats Adept Summoner (*The Book of Fiends*, 15) grants Erylium abnormal command over her summoned creatures, but further twists her body and causes her to suffer an additional lesser corruption. The duration of any *summon monster* spell she casts is extended by a number of rounds equal to her Charisma modifier (3 rounds). Master Summoner (*The Book of Fiends*, 16) increases the range of her *summon monster* spells to Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level), but afflicts her with a greater corruption.

SINSPAWN

CR 2

hp 19; see page 90

Ad Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs create and then kill enough sinspawn, they can remove the menace the *runewell* poses to the Sandpoint region. Grant them a CR 3 experience award if they accomplish this.

PART FOUR: THISTLETOP

Eventually, the PCs need to confront the Thistletop goblins. Most likely, Tsuto's notebook provides the primary lead to this section of the adventure, but the PCs might turn their attention to Thistletop

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for any number of reasons. If they get to this point and still haven't decided to mount an expedition to Thistletop, fell free to have one of their NPC allies approach them with just such a plan. Shalelu Andosana may have discovered that Bruthazmus the bugbear has joined forces with several humanoids and moved into Thistletop, and might want the PCs to accompany her on an investigation of the lair. Ameiko might discover further evidence about her brother's involvement, or if Tsuto escaped, he might even try to abduct her again—tracking the goblins he hired to nab her should be relatively easy. A pair of bedraggled merchants could stumble into town with a tale of how goblins jumped them and stole their prize horse Shadowmist. They offer a reward of 250 gp for the horse's return (see area C18). Finally, if all else fails, you can have Father Zantus approach the PCs with news; he's used several divination spells to determine that the goblins that stole Father Tobyn's remains took them to Thistletop. He asks the PCs to travel to the goblin lair to discover the fate of the beloved cleric's remains, and, if possible, to return them to Sandpoint.

The map of the Sandpoint hinterlands on page 33 shows the location of Thistletop, and also reveals a large number of other locations that can serve as the sites for future adventures in the region. Several are featured in the central portion of the next adventure in *Rise of the Runelords*—"The Skinsaw Murders" contains more information about the hinterlands you can use to expand your campaign. For now, though, it's the trip to Thistletop that matters.

If the PCs follow the Lost Coast Road east, they can reach the Thistle River crossing relatively quickly—it's a six mile journey (two hours by foot), and unless you want to spring an attack on the PCs by a group of six goblin warriors (a CR 2 encounter), they shouldn't run into much trouble along the way.

Thistletop is located on the Varisian coast—approaching the goblin lair by land is a little difficult since the tangles of Nettlewood are in the way. A DC 14 Survival check finds a route through the woods. If the check exceeds this roll by 10, the PCs come across one of several narrow goblin trails that eventually lead to area C1. Each attempted Survival check takes 1d4 hours of wandering in the woods, and for each hour of wandering there's a 30% chance that 1d4 PCs stumble into a patch of poison-thorned plants, either stinging nettles (Fortitude DC 12 to avoid 1 point of Dexterity damage) or a goblinberry patch (Fortitude DC 12 to avoid 1 point of Strength damage). A character can substitute a Knowledge (nature) check for these saving throws to avoid damage.

Thistletop itself is a curiously round island about 60 feet off shore, connected to the mainland by a rope bridge. The island itself has an unusual genesis—it was in fact once the head of one of Karzoug's sentinel statues that stood upon the ridge of land called the Rasp before the nation of Bakrakhhan became the Varisian Gulf. The statue itself has long since crumbled and become overgrown by the Nettlewood, but the head escaped such obscurity by landing in the surf. The magical nature of the statue's construction drastically slowed the process of erosion on the head's features, and when the sun hits the western cliff of the isle just right, one can just make out a shadow of the

statue's face. The head once contained a small complex, but today only a few of the original rooms remain.

One of these rooms contains a barghest named Malfeshnekor. An ancient agent of Alaznist, the monster was captured by Karzoug's minions and imprisoned here for interrogation. Yet the end came too soon, and when the statue's head tumbled into the sea, Malfeshnekor found itself one of the few surviving creatures. And yet, the outsider remained trapped. For the next several centuries it waited. For a time, a group of Lamashtu cultists settled in the rooms above. Himself a loyal minion of Lamashtu, Malfeshnekor quickly discovered he was able to communicate empathically with any priest who stood before the altar. In so doing, he was able to lead the cultists to discover the small complex in which he waited, but the cultists were slaughtered by a hellcat guardian before they reached him.

It was well over a century later that Malfeshnekor sensed new creatures settling nearby—goblins. Like the Lamashtu cultists, with these goblins, the barghest had a crude empathic link. Malfeshnekor couldn't quite communicate with them as he had with the clerics of Lamashtu, but the goblins could still sense him. Drawn to Thistletop for reasons the goblins didn't quite comprehend, it quickly became the most coveted tribal land among their kind. Traditionally, the Thistletop goblins were led by clerics who could sense the barghest's empathic urgings during their rituals. These urgings encouraged the goblins to explore the lower levels of their lair, yet goblins are fragile and stupid creatures. None of them ever found the secret door that led to Malfeshnekor's level, and now that the current leader of Thistletop is himself too unwise to receive Malfeshnekor's empathic sendings, the barghest had begun to finally despair.

And then, with Nualia's arrival and the reconsecration of the temple, Malfeshnekor knew his time of freedom was close. Nualia is his salvation, and he her path to becoming a true demon.

C1. Hidden Entrance

The briars and thistles that grow so rampantly in Nettlewood grow even more dense and tangled here, close to the shore. Although not quite dense enough to block the sound of waves crashing on the unseen shores to the west, the undergrowth is certainly thick enough to block sight and access to the coast. Few trees grow this close to the edge of the sea, but the briars themselves often reach heights to rival them; here, the patch is nearly twenty feet high.

The thorns that comprise the walls here are quite damp; the fog every morning and evening ensures that. As a result, the brambles don't burn well. An attempt to smoke out the goblins or burn down their thistle maze only results in a slow-burning smoky fire that alerts the goblins to the PCs' precise location.

While the PCs can certainly attempt to reach Thistletop by the sea or by traveling along the beaches, the goblins themselves have created this small network of tunnels and chambers in the briars to make it easier for them to come and go. If the PCs discover these tunnels, they can certainly use them as well. A cleverly constructed rigid mat of thistles and nettles hides the entrance to the tunnels. A DC 12 Search check is enough to notice that the briars here can be lifted aside to

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reveal a four-foot-high tunnel leading into the briars. Similar “thistle doors” are within the tunnels beyond—they can be discovered with a DC 12 Search check as well. Opening a thistle door is a full-round action, although a character can try to open them quickly as a move action. Doing so requires a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid being scratched and jabbed by thorns for 1 point of damage. A character wearing gauntlets or heavy armor automatically makes this saving throw.

C2. Thistle Tunnels

A four-foot-high tunnel winds through the dense briars and nettles. The floor is hard-packed earth, with patches of wiry plants growing stubbornly here and there.

Large creatures must crawl to navigate the thistle tunnels. Bipedal Medium creatures can navigate them by stooping over and hunkering down, effectively squeezing to move, and thus taking a –4 penalty on attack rolls and a –4 penalty to AC; such characters must spend 2 squares of movement for each square traveled. Small and smaller creatures can move about normally, as can most quadrupedal Medium creatures (including goblin dogs). The larger chambers within all have higher ceilings, wherein these penalties do not apply to Medium creatures.

Although the ceilings and walls of these tunnels consist of tangled, thorny vines, a character that brushes against them need not worry about damage. A character pushed into a wall must make a

DC 15 Reflex save to avoid taking a point of damage (characters in heavy armor automatically make this save).

A creature with the woodland stride ability (such as any druid of at least 2nd level) can move through these tunnels without penalty, despite size, and can even pass through the tangled briars with ease, effectively “walking through the walls” of this area. Gogmurt the goblin druid uses this ability to great effect when defending the area, but certainly doesn’t expect to ever face enemy druids who can do the same.

It’s possible to hack a new path through the briars with any slashing weapon. A five-foot-square section of briars has hardness 1 and 40 hp. Hacking at briars counts as being pushed into a wall for chances of taking damage from the nettles and thorns.

C3. The Howling Hole

Three thistle tunnels open into a large cave-like chamber. Above, the thorny canopy grows thin enough that tiny slivers of the sky above can be seen, while below, the ground consists of trampled dirt. To the west, the distant sound of sloshing waves echoes up from a hole.

The Thistletop goblins use this chamber as a staging room for raids, gathering here to receive final pep-talks from the commandos. The hole drops down into area C27 below, a sea cave inhabited by a dangerous tidal predator known as a bunyip. It’s a DC 20 Climb check to navigate the 70-foot shaft, which opens into the sea cave

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below 10 feet above sea level. The water is deep enough that a fall deals 2d3 nonlethal plus 4d6 lethal damage.

The goblins know something monstrous lives down below—the bunyip's roars drive them into a panic on a daily basis, but none of the goblins have actually seen the bunyip up close. At best, they've had brief glimpses of something big and gray swimming in the water now and then. Depending on the goblin interrogated, the shape is that of a fish, an octopus, a ghost, or an enormous crab. The goblins have taken to dropping prisoners (and unruly goblins) into the hole, since the "Howling Hole," as they call it, usually remains quiet for a few days after such a sacrifice.

C4. Refugee Nest (EL 4)

This thirty-foot-diameter, low-ceilinged chamber stinks of smoke. A shallow fire pit smolders in the center of the floor, while nine tangled reed and leaf nests line the walls.

Creatures: After the assault on Sandpoint, the Birdcruncher goblins were left leaderless. Many of them fled into the wilderness, but nearly two dozen of them fled north to throw themselves upon Chief Ripnugget's mercy. The Thistletop chieftain is a hard goblin to please, and he's forced the Birdcruncher refugees to live here for the past several days while he decides what to do with them. So far, half of their number have been tossed down the Howling Hole or handed over to Nualia for living sacrifices. The remaining goblin refugees huddle here in fear that one of them may be next. Nonetheless, if presented with intruders, the ten goblin refugees launch into a frenzy of shrieks and fury in a desperate attempt to gain Ripnugget's favor by killing longshank intruders.

GOBLIN REFUGEES (10)

CR 1/3

Goblin warrior I (MM 133)

hp 5 each

C5. Goblin Dog Kennel (EL 3)

The floor and walls of this musty-smelling chamber are covered with matted, wiry fur. Well-gnawed bones lie scattered about the floor, and a dozen wooden stakes have been driven into the ground near the walls.

Creatures: The Thistletop goblins kennel their twelve goblin dogs here, keeping them tied to the stakes via leashes of hairy, fraying rope. Currently, only four goblin dogs are here; the other eight can be found to the north in areas C10 and C16.

GOBLIN DOGS (4)

CR 1

hp 10 each; see page 87

C6. Tangletooth's Den (EL 2)

A cloying musky scent lies heavy in the air here. A matted nest of red and black hair sits to the east.

Creature: Tangletooth, Gogmurt's fire pelt animal companion, spends the majority of her time sleeping here, periodically snarling at goblins that wander by the tunnel to the northwest. A fire pelt is a cougar native to the region, its silky fur a mix of red and black stripes.

TANGLETOOTH, FIRE PELT ANIMAL COMPANION CR — hp 19; (MM 274, leopard)

C7. Gogmurt's Lair (EL 4)

A tangle of vines hang from the thorny ceiling of this chamber, each suspending a clattering collection of bird skulls, rib bones, teeth, and other bits of gruesome decor. In a few places the vines droop all the way to the floor. A large nest of nettles and thorny vines sits to the south, a halo of half-eaten dead birds and rats indicating that whatever sleeps there eats in its bed.

Creature: Gogmurt has served Warchief Ripnugget as an advisor and the Thistletop goblins as a spiritual leader for many years, but over the last few months, the presence of the "longshanks" (Nualia and her allies) have been an unwelcome thorn in Gogmurt's side. He argued against the attack on Sandpoint, reasoning it would only rile up the humans and visit eventual retaliation in the form of hunting dogs, horse-mounted soldiers, and adventurers. Yet Nualia's words made more sense to Ripnugget, who for the first time chose to ignore Gogmurt's advice. The bitter goblin druid has all but washed his hands of the tribe as a result, and in his foul mood has ordered more goblin refugees than necessary into the Howling Hole.

Gogmurt has been brooding here for days, and has been expecting adventurers to strike at Thistletop at any time, day or night. While he doesn't agree with Ripnugget's current tactics, he remains loyal to the idea of the Thistletop goblin tribe, and reacts swiftly to defend this area once he hears intruders. His woodland stride ability gives him incredible mobility in this area; he can step through the thorny walls with ease during fights. He hasn't been sleeping at all lately, and has taken to daily castings of *lesser restoration* to fight off fatigue.

GOGMURT

CR 4

Male goblin druid 4 (MM 133)

NE Small humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 14

(+3 armor, +2 Dex, +1 size)

hp 29 (4d8+8)

Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6; resist nature's lure

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee flame blade +3 touch (1d8+2 fire) or

spear +3 (1d6-1/x3) or

Ranged produce flame +6 (1d6+4 fire) or

sling +6 (1d3-1)

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 4th)

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2nd (3/day)—*animal messenger*, *flame blade*, *lesser restoration* (already cast)

1st (4/day)—*charm animal* (DC 13), *cure light wounds* (2), *entangle* (DC 13)

0 (5/day)—*cure minor wounds*, *flare* (2, DC 12), *guidance*, *mending*

TACTICS

Before Combat Gogmurt drinks a *potion of speak with animals* and casts *flame blade*, then activates his *wand of produce flame* before investigating. These spell effects have been incorporated into the stat block. If he thinks there's time, he also casts *animal messenger* to send a thrush out to the island to deliver a bloodstained goblin tooth to Warchief Ripnugget; a pre-arranged code to warn him that the adventurers have finally arrived to murder them all. He calls Tangletooth to his side and directs her in combat using *speak with animals*.

During Combat Gogmurt casts *entangle* on the first round of combat, taking care to place the spell so that it blocks access to area C9 but doesn't block his own possible escape routes. If the PCs have animal minions, he casts *charm animal* on one of them. On following rounds, he fights with his *flame blade* in one hand, throwing fire from *produce flame* in the other when he needs to make ranged attacks. As soon as he's brought below 20 hit points, he retreats by fleeing into the brambles, heals himself as best he can, and then returns to ambush the PCs from behind by swapping out a remaining first-level spell to *summon nature's ally I*.

Morale If ever brought below 10 hit points and he has no healing left, Gogmurt attempts to flee north to warn Warchief Ripnugget about the PCs. If surrounded or captured, Gogmurt's resolve breaks and he sobs for mercy.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +3; **Grp** -2

Feats Brew Potion, Combat Casting

Skills Handle Animal +8, Knowledge (nature) +8, Survival +11

Languages Common, Druidic, Goblin

SQ animal companion, nature sense, trackless step, wild empathy +7, woodland stride

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of speak with animals* (2), *potion of tree shape* (2), *wand of produce flame* (34 charges); **Other Gear** +1 leather armor, spear, sling, cloak of resistance +1

Development: If the PCs capture Gogmurt alive, he responds to interrogation attempts with cursing and spitting unless he's made friendly (his initial attitude is hostile) with a Diplomacy check, successfully Intimidated, or reduced to 5 or fewer hit points. At this point, the craven druid sobs for mercy. He knows that the PCs are here for what the goblins did to Sandpoint, and tries to justify the assault by saying it was all the "longshank's" fault before clapping a hand over his mouth as he realizes he probably just insulted his captors.

Gogmurt knows that Warchief Ripnugget has become enthralled with several taller folk of late, in particular a "very angry woman with weird eyes and a torn-up belly" whom he suspects Ripnugget has become infatuated with. The chieftain has certainly been placing a lot of trust in this strange woman's advice—it was at her urging that

the assault on Sandpoint took place. Gogmurt has distanced himself from the chieftain and his new allies, not wanting to be tainted by her bad ideas. He does know that she has four dangerous allies of her own, a brutish bugbear mercenary named Bruthazmus who lived for many years in a hut on the northeastern side of Nettlewood, a quiet human man who wears lots of metal armor, a dark-skinned violent human woman who's used fire to scorch several goblins who got too close to her, and a male half-elf who seems too happy all the time and who sometimes plays the flute. Gogmurt suspects that the half-elf and the angry woman with the torn-up belly are lovers, because he's seen them "going at it like donkey rats" in the woods at times. He woefully mutters that this news only made Chief Ripnugget angrier when the druid tried to use it in an attempt to win back his chieftain's favor. "Worse than a harpy, that one!" Gogmurt spits. Then quickly clarifies his accusation: "The woman. Not Chief Ripnugget. Don't tell him I called her a harpy!"

Gogmurt begs the PCs not to hurt any more goblins, pointing out that the angry lady and her friends are the real troublemakers. If they can get into Ripnugget's fort to the north and get rid of them, Gogmurt promises that no goblin will ever bother Sandpoint again—a promise he can't possibly honor, but he's desperate enough to say anything. He refuses to accompany the PCs north. If forced to come with them, his piteous sobbing and sniffing should make stealth close to impossible.

C8. Watchposts

Three of these passageways, closed off at either end by a thistle door, allow goblins to keep an eye on the sea surrounding their main lair to the north. The assault on Sandpoint left the goblins a little underpopulated, though, and currently no one mans these posts.

C9. Rope Bridge (EL 2)

A rope bridge spans the gulf between the cliff and a roundish, flat-topped island sixty some feet to the north. Thick patches of nettles and briars grow here and there atop the island, but its most impressive feature is a wooden one-story stockade. Two thirty-foot-tall watchtowers guard the stockade's southern facade. The rope bridge itself is made of hairy rope and thick wooden planks; the whole thing creaks and sways in the wind above the churning surf eighty feet below.

Trap: This rope bridge might seem treacherous, and it is. The goblins have rigged it so that if more than three Medium creatures (with a Small creature counting as 1/3 a Medium creature and a Large creature as three Medium ones) attempt to cross, the western supports tear free, dropping the planks down to hang vertically from the eastern rope and dumping anyone on the bridge into the waters below. A DC 13 Reflex save allows a creature on the bridge to grab at the remaining ropes or leap to safety (if he's within 5 feet of either shore). A series of knotted ropes at the base of the northern posts allow one to tie off the trap so that it can support four times the weight, or alternately, allowing one to manually trigger the trap.

Originally, the goblins rigged the bridge so that it would fall completely into the water below, but when they tested it and

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realized that they'd stranded themselves on the island, they rebuilt the bridge so it would be easier to repair.

RIGGED ROPE BRIDGE

CR 2

Type mechanical

Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 15

EFFECTS

Trigger location or manual; Reset manual

Effect 80-foot fall into water (2d3 nonlethal plus 4d6 lethal); multiple targets (all creatures on rope bridge); DC 13 Reflex save avoids.

C10. Thistletop (EL 5)

The stockade is made of thick wood. Closer inspection reveals that most of the wood seems to have been scavenged from ships—a few nameplates remain affixed to some of the timbers, while others look like they might have once been masts.

The front doors leading into area C11 are barred from the inside if the alarm is raised; otherwise they hang ajar. The walls of the stockade itself can be scaled with a DC 20 Climb check.

Creatures: Four goblins mounted on goblin dogs patrol the grounds surrounding the stockade, but being goblins, they are easily distracted. Unless the alarm has been raised, the four goblins are gathered to the northwest of the stockade, enraptured by a game of “Killgull,” a mean-spirited pastime in which a sea gull is caught and a length of 30-foot-long twine tied to its leg while the other end is held by a goblin. The other goblins take turns trying to pelt the gull out of the sky with thrown rocks, while the goblin holding the twine tries to help the gull avoid being hit by tugging and yanking the twine. Each goblin gets three throws. If the gull still lives at the end, the goblin holding the twine wins. Otherwise, the goblin whose stone kills the gull wins. Whoever wins gets to eat the sea gull. Whatever's left over is then used to attract new sea gulls. While the goblins play, they let their goblin dogs wander around as they will, although the creatures generally run around the goblins and shriek and yap at the gulls.

Note that additional goblin guards watch from the towers (area C13 and C15); see those areas for details on how closely they're paying attention.

THISTLETOP GOBLINS (4)

CR 1/3

Goblin warrior 1 (MM 133)

hp 5 each

GOBLIN DOGS (4)

CR 1

hp 10 each; see page 87

C11. Trophy Hall

The floor of this room is hard-packed soil, as if the builders either ran out of lumber after building the walls and roof, or as if they simply never thought about building a floor. A number of poorly preserved horse and dog heads are mounted along the eastern wall, while along the southern wall hangs a pair of large batlike wings tacked to the wall with daggers.



WALKING THROUGH WALLS

Astute readers will quickly note that Gogmurt's advantage of being able to effectively “walk through the walls” of areas C1–C9 is also shared by any PC druid. Does this give a party with a druid in its ranks an unfair advantage? Perhaps, but at the same point, that is by design. Most encounters feature fights with monsters, and yet not all character classes excel at fighting monsters. A character with potent social skills, like a bard, has a good chance at defusing several encounters in “Burnt Offerings” before they proceed to fights. Rogues can undo traps with ease. Clerics can turn battles with undead into cakewalks. Designing encounters where specific character classes can shine is important, since it gives players who chose those classes a moment to shine and validates their choice. If the encounter lets a character use an ability that rarely matters in most encounters (such as a druid's wilderness stride ability), so much the better!

The wall-hangings represent the greatest trophies of Warchief Ripnugget. The horses and dogs are farm animals that Thistletop's commandos have caught over the years and brought back here for Ripnugget to kill in area C16. The bat wings once belonged to a harpy named Bristanch that dwelt a half-mile down the coast. Ripnugget's triumph over the harpy is perhaps the single greatest triumph the goblin can boast of, since Bristanch murdered nearly half the Thistletop tribe (including two of the previous chieftains) before Ripnugget killed her.

Treasure: One of the daggers used to display Bristanch's wings once belonged to the harpy herself—this dagger has a pearl handle, a treasure worth 100 gp. The other six daggers are mundane.

Development: If the alarm is raised, the six goblins from area C14 are found here, ready to defend the room from any intruders.

C12. Food Stores

This door has been nailed shut; it can be opened with a DC 24 Strength check, or by a DC 10 Disable Device check and 1d4 minutes of work.

This storeroom is half-filled with crates, barrels, and large sacks of grain. A small hole has been chopped into the lower side of one of the barrels, allowing pickles and brine to drain out to give the room a singular stink of vinegar.

Like all goblins, the Thistletop goblins enjoy eating. The broken pickle barrel is something of a recent scandal here; none of the goblins are confessing to the crime, and Warchief Ripnugget has become flustered enough by the vandalism that he's threatened to lock whoever's responsible in with the “monster” in area C18 once he finds out who's responsible. Until then, Ripnugget has had the door nailed shut to prevent future crimes.

C13. Pickle Thieves (EL 1)

An open flight of wooden stairs winds up to a trap door in the ceiling, thirty feet above.

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Creatures: Two goblins are, in theory, on guard duty atop this tower, but they've both fallen asleep. These goblins are responsible for raiding the pickle barrel in area C12, as a search of a bag hidden in the northeast corner of the watchtower confirms. This bag can be found with a DC 15 Search check; within are a few half-eaten pickles. The goblins were planning on eating the evidence, but after eating most of their stolen pickles they collapsed into a food coma. If wakened by the sound of battle (remember that sleeping creatures have a -10 penalty on Listen checks) or a raised alarm, these two goblins assume that they've been caught and, in a panic, hurl their remaining stolen pickles out of the tower into the thistle patch to the west, and only then move to support any fights down below with hurled javelins.

THISTLETOP GOBLINS (2)

CR 1/3

Goblin warrior I (MM 133)

hp 5 each

C14. Barracks (EL 2)

Six poorly constructed bunk beds, little more than hammocks slung from rickety frames, stand along the walls of this room. Each is heaped with a vermin-infested blanket and a lump of straw that serves as a frustrating pillow.

Creatures: Each of these bunk beds sleeps three goblins—the Thistletop tribe numbers 18 in all (not counting Warchief Ripnugget, his wives, or Gogmurt), although twelve of them are on duty elsewhere. As long as the alarm hasn't been raised, the remaining six goblins are here, sleeping. If the alarm is raised, these six goblins move into area C11 to help guard the trophy hall.

THISTLETOP GOBLINS (6)

CR 1/3

Goblin warrior I (MM 133)

hp 5 each

C15. Eastern Guard Tower (EL 2)

An open flight of wooden stairs winds up to a trap door in the ceiling, thirty feet above.

Creatures: Like area C13, this open-air tower gives a great view of the surrounding area. The goblins guarding this tower aren't quite as irresponsible as the pickle thieves there, but neither are they paragons of observation. Habitual card-players, these two play with a deck of forty-three cards cobbled together from three different sets of cards, making up the rules as they go along. Their games are generally more argument than anything else, but if they hear battle or other signs of intrusion, they abandon their cards at once to join the fight.

THISTLETOP COMMANDOS (2)

CR 1

Goblin ranger I (MM 133)

hp 9 each; see page 13

C16. Exercise Yard (EL 3)

This large courtyard is open to the sky. Tenacious clumps of partially trampled grass grow fitfully here and there in the hard-packed earth, in places stained with blood or scratched with furrows. To the north, what looks to be two dead goblins lie slumped at the entrance to an outbuilding.

This yard serves the goblins as a place to exercise, to train their goblin dogs, and as an impromptu arena. Warchief Ripnugget often uses this area to challenge creatures and prisoners brought back by raiders (typically horses and dogs, but sometimes actual humanoid prisoners).

Creatures: Four goblin dogs have been left to run free in this yard. The slaving creatures often scratch at the walls around area C18 to torment the creature within, but otherwise have fun chasing each other and fighting.

GOBLIN DOGS (4)

CR 1

hp 10 each; see page 87

C17. Storage Shed

Shelves lined with crude tools, nets, and tack and harness line the walls here. To the northeast stands a large L-shaped wooden cage that contains dozens of rabbits.

The rabbits are used to feed the goblin dogs, while the other tools here are used to train the creatures. In emergencies, the rabbits can serve the goblins as backup food supplies, but goblins who snack on rabbits before the rest of the food runs out are generally thrown into the Howling Hole, under Chief Ripnugget's, "Steal food, become food" policy.

C18. Caged Horse (EL 2)

The door to this outbuilding has been nailed shut, and additional boards have been nailed over these nails. The door itself is cracked and splintered in places. Two dead goblins, their heads crushed in by something heavy, lie in the dirt by the door, their ripening bodies covered with flies.

The door to this outbuilding can be opened with a DC 25 Strength check, or by a DC 15 Disable Device check and 2d4 minutes of work. A DC 20 Heal check can establish that both goblins were slain when a large hoofed animal, likely a horse, stepped on their heads.

Creature: The Thistletop goblins have captured horses many times before, bringing them back here for their chieftain to kill during cruel bloodsports in the exercise yard. Yet always before, these captured horses were light riding horses. Locked inside this room is a terrible mistake—a heavy warhorse named Shadowmist, stolen several days ago from traveling merchants. The goblins murdered the two caravan guards (but the merchants escaped on horseback to Sandpoint) and one of the two remaining horses,

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but Shadowmist proved to be more than a match for the goblins. Through a mixture of luck and false bravado, the goblins managed to catch Shadowmist while only losing four of their own. They bound up the horse's legs, loaded it into the merchants' wagon, and hauled it back here as a prize for Chief Ripnugget.

Tragedy struck when the excited goblins dumped the horse in the exercise yard and cut its bonds. Shadowmist had fallen into a torpor during the journey, but once his bonds were free he leapt to his feet and began racing in circles in the yard. The goblins panicked and fled, calling on Chief Ripnugget to kill the creature, but when he tried to do so, the horse proved even tougher than Ripnugget was expecting. The chief took a crushing blow to the arm, breaking it and forcing him to flee. Enraged, he accused the goblins who had caught the horse of trying to assassinate him, then told them to trap the monster in the shed while he figured out what to do with it. Mortified, the goblins managed to lure the horse into the shed (losing three of their number in the process—two outside, one inside), but in the end managed to nail the door shut while Shadowmist stomped and raged inside.

Since then, Ripnugget has asked Gogmurt several times to come "take care of the monster horse," but the druid has refused to help as long as Ripnugget allows Nualia to stay in Thistletop. Enraged at his stubborn druid's answer, the equally stubborn goblin chief

has decided to let Shadowmist reach the verge of starvation before attempting to kill him again.

Shadowmist is a magnificent creature, yet his days in captivity have begun to take their toll. Slowly starving, the wild-eyed horse can be a great asset for the PCs if they can calm him down with a DC 25 wild empathy or Handle Animal check or magic like *charm animal*. If the PCs offer Shadowmist food, they gain a +10 bonus on their checks to calm the horse down.

SHADOWMIST

CR 2

Heavy warhorse (MM 273)

hp 30 (currently has 22 nonlethal damage from starvation)

C19. Throne Room (EL 6)

If the alarm is raised, all of the doors into this room are closed tightly and locked. Ripnugget carries the keys, but the doors can be picked with a DC 20 Open Lock check.

This large throne room is decorated with hanging furs along its walls, mostly black and red-striped firepelt skins, various dog pelts, and in some cases, what look like horse hides. Four square timbers support the ceiling, their faces studded with dozens of iron spikes, with the lower reaches decorated

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with dozens of impaled and severed hands in various stages of decay. To the northeast, a wooden platform supports a throne heaped with dog pelts and horse hides. Dog skulls adorn the armrests and a horse skull leers over the throne's back.

The hands are all that remain of the last several dozen human victims of the Thistletop goblins; the rest of these victims have long since been eaten or smoked and put into storage in area C20. The spikes make it relatively easy to climb the pillars with a DC 5 Climb check.

Warchief Ripnugget, lord of the Thistletop goblins, has been spending an increasing amount of time here in his throne hall. His favorite pastimes include watching his commandos stage mock battles, being entertained by warchanters, or plotting additional raids on Sandpoint to present to his new obsession—Nualia. His interest in his wives has all but vanished, so enthralled has he become by the exotic aasimar.

While most of the Thistletop goblins personally feel that Ripnugget's obsession with Nualia is embarrassing and even traitorous, none of them are brave enough to confront their leader with their feelings (with the exception of the druid Gogmurt).

In truth, Ripnugget's obsession with Nualia has nothing to do with sexual attraction—her skin is too smooth, ears too small, and she's just too tall to interest the goblin in that way, but it makes a convenient cover to hide his real interest—he believes that she may well be the key to unraveling the mystery of what Malfeshnekor really is. When she arrived with her entourage and an offer of alliance, Ripnugget (in a rare display of common sense) realized that they were more than a match for he and his goblins, and, instead of fighting, chose to listen to what she had to say. When she revealed her holy symbol and spoke of Malfeshnekor, Ripnugget was shocked but recovered his wits quickly enough. He came to believe that this strange woman was in fact Malfeshnekor's mouthpiece, and that she had been sent to Thistletop to usher the goblins into a new age of triumph. Certainly, her plan to assault Sandpoint seemed like a good idea at the time, and even though it didn't quite go through like she promised, the fact that she's managed to awaken the temple (area D12), establish a link with Malfeshnekor, and has slowly but surely opened up the ancient chambers deep below (and in so doing increased the size of the Thistletop holdings) has been more than enough proof to Ripnugget that Nualia is the best hope for his tribe's future.

Creatures: Even if the alarm is raised, Warchief Ripnugget can be found here. If caught by surprise, he's in the middle of watching his commandos re-enact the raid on Sandpoint as they fight against a *silent image* provided by the warchanter. If the alarm is raised, his commandos clamber up the three pillars closest to the throne and hide, while the warchanter ducks behind the throne. In either case, his pet gecko Stickfoot waits loyally at his side.

Assuming the PCs don't immediately attack when they enter the room, Warchief Ripnugget is willing to parley in the same way that he spoke to Nualia several months ago. This time, though, he doesn't have any intentions of allying with his visitors; he merely wants time to size the PCs up before he orders them slain. He certainly recognizes them from their heroic stand at Sandpoint—although he wasn't present at the assault, he's heard plenty of

stories about the longshanks who proved so key in the town's defense. He knows the PCs are formidable foes, especially since they've reached his throne room alive. In any case, he refuses to let the PCs step more than 5 feet into his throne room, informing them that they have not yet earned the right to approach him.

If the PCs agree to talk, he picks the least-armored PC, compliments that character on being someone who looks like they understand the value of the spoken word over battle, and allows that one PC to approach. Of course, Ripnugget doesn't really have any intention of talking. As soon as that PC is within 5 feet of the northeast pillar, he gives the order to attack.

WARCHIEF RIPNUGGET

CR 4

Male goblin fighter 4 (MM 133)

NE Small humanoid

Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 18

(+5 armor, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)

hp 34 (4d10+8)

Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +0; racial save modifiers

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 dogslicer +7 (1d4+4/19–20)

TACTICS

Before Combat Ripnugget drinks his *potion of barkskin* +2 as soon as he hears anyone about to enter his throne hall if the alarm has been raised.

During Combat Ripnugget mounts up on Stickfoot the first chance he gets, so he can take advantage of his Mounted Combat feats in battle. He prefers to use a combination of Spirited Charge and Ride-By attacks.

Morale Ripnugget fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 13

Base Atk +4; Grp +1

Feats Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (dogslicer), Weapon Specialization (dogslicer)

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +5, Move Silently +6, Ride +13

Languages Common, Goblin

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* +2, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2);

Other Gear mwk breastplate, +1 dogslicer, dented crown worth 20 gp, key ring for all locks in areas C11–C24 and areas D1–D3

STICKFOOT, GIANT GECKO

CR 1

hp 11; see page 89

THISTLETOP COMMANDOS (3)

CR 1

Goblin ranger 1 (MM 133)

hp 9 each; see page 13

THISTLETOP WARCHANTER (1)

CR 1

Goblin bard 1 (MM 133)

hp 7; see page 12

BURNT OFFERINGS

TACTICS

During Combat The warchanter inspires courage in all of her allies on the first round of combat. On round two, she abandons her bardic music to support the fight, first with *daze*, then a *ghost sound* of more goblins approaching from one of the southern doors to trick PCs into wasting time reacting to that illusory threat. She may also use her *wand of silent images* to create an illusion of a curtain dropping down between her and the rest of the room, providing herself cover she can use to shoot arrows through against anyone who fails to see through the illusion.

STATISTICS

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, *wand of silent image* (5 charges); **Other Gear** studded leather, whip, short sword, shortbow with 20 arrows, 20 gp

Development: Warchief Ripnugget fights to the death, but it's still possible to catch him alive. In this case, he tries to buff the PCs into thinking that he was responsible for the raid on Sandpoint, and that he should be brought back to town for a trial, because "isn't that what you longshanks do?" This is, of course, a stalling tactic; he hopes to escape at the first opportunity to seek aid from Nualia or, if he's really desperate, from Gogmurt the druid. Only if he's charmed or otherwise magically compelled can he be made helpful, in which case he knows the layout of the rooms on level one below (but not level two), and can tell the PCs much about Nualia, her plans, her allies, and Malfeshnekor (whom he suspects is a goblin god imprisoned somewhere on the level below).

C20. Food Storage

The door to this room is locked; the key is carried by Chief Ripnugget. The lock can be picked with a DC 20 Open Lock check.

This foul-smelling butchery is a horrifying affront to all the senses. Haunches of poorly smoked meat hang from hooks along the ceiling or lie heaped in and atop crates. In some cases, the meat seems to be dog or horse, but in many other cases, the meat has all-too-recognizable features, like feet, hands, or grimacing faces.

This food store contains the goblins' favorite food—the meat of their vanquished enemies. The fate of several missing travelers and merchants is revealed here, although no single body is in an intact enough state that they are easily recognizable.

C21. Armory

This room contains a small armory of crudely made weapons (mostly dogslicers and shortbows) and several small goblin-sized suits of studded leather armor and dented shields. To the south stand a pair of workbenches.

Treasure: The workbenches are where the goblins cobble together weapons for their tribe. All of the weapons and suits of armor here are Small sized. In all, there are twenty-three dogslicers, eleven shortbows, eighty arrows, eleven suits of studded leather, six light wooden shields, and two coiled whips. On the north wall hangs a single masterwork dogslicer. With the exception of this

lone dogslicer, the gear stored here is of poor quality, bespeaking typical goblin crafting expertise.

C22. Meeting Room

A round table and a few chairs are this room's only furnishings.

Warchief Ripnugget uses this room to meet with his commandos, issuing orders or receiving reports from the field.

C23. Chieftain's Room

Several rugs made from dog or horse hide lie strewn over the dirt floor of this room. Against the north wall stands an impressive collection of horseshoes, each nailed to the wall. To the east sits a ragged padded chair next to a rickety desk that may have once been an expensive antique. To the west sits a canopied bed covered with silk sheets and sporting a once-impressive headboard that featured nymphs and satyrs cavorting in a forest. The bed's sheets are stained with dirt, while the headboard is *bashed and battered*.

Warchief Ripnugget lives in style—even if his furniture has been mostly scavenged from shipwrecks or Junk Beach in Sandpoint, it's the best junk a goblin can find. The horseshoe collection is one hundred twenty-two shoes strong, although none of them are intrinsically valuable.

Treasure: Although Ripnugget keeps most of the tribe's treasure in area C24, he keeps one item to himself—a silver holy symbol of Lamashtu that looks like a three-eyed fanged jackal head with tiny garnets for eyes given him by Nualia. Worth 40 gp, Ripnugget keeps this symbol under his pillow, where a DC 15 Search check can uncover it.

A DC 20 Search of the chair to the east finds a large iron key wedged under the seat; this key opens the treasure chest in area C24.

C24. Treasury (EL 3)

This small, foul-smelling room features little more than a reeking hole in the ground, its rim stained with refuse and waste.

Although goblins are prone to relieving themselves in the wild or off the edge of the cliff outside, some of them sometimes remember that they're supposed to keep this latrine looking used. In fact, the west wall of this nasty-smelling room hides a secret door that can be discovered with a DC 20 Search check. Beyond is another small room, this one much less foul-smelling and containing a single extra-large sea chest with a heavy iron padlock. The key to this lock is hidden in Chief Ripnugget's room (area C23).

Trap: The sea chest is trapped, courtesy of one of Chief Ripnugget's predecessors who had a great talent for such devices. The trap triggers if the chest is attacked, if the lock is attempted with a pick, or even if the lock is tried with the proper key and turned left instead of right. When triggered, a rusty blade of jagged metal springs out of the chest's

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lid. The blade was once poisoned, and while the poison has long since decayed, the blade still has a great chance of giving victims tetanus.

FILTHY SLASHER TRAP

CR 3

Type mechanical

Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 22

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset manual

Effect Atk +8 melee (scything blade; 1d8/19–20); Fortitude DC 14 to resist catching tetanus (see sidebar)

Treasure: Inside of the chest is the accumulated wealth of the Thistletop tribe, culled from junkyards, shipwrecks, ambushed merchants, and unfortunate rival goblin tribes over the past decade or so. This collection consists of an unorganized pile of 7,432 cp, 2,490 sp, 89 gp, 3 pp, a leather pouch of 34 badly flawed malachites worth 1 gp each, a Medium chain shirt, a Medium masterwork scimitar, a pair of masterwork manacles, a gold holy symbol of Sarenrae worth 100 gp, a jade necklace worth 60 gp, and a fine blue silk gown with silver trim worth 150 gp.

C25. Submerged Sea Cave

This entrance to the sea caves under the thistle maze is underwater, but can be noticed from above with a DC 20 Spot check. Navigating the waters is tough, requiring a DC 20 Swim check due to the surf's strong undertow. The cliffs leading up from the beaches here are 80 feet high; and can be scaled with a DC 10 Climb check.

C26. Sea Cave

Unlike the entrance at C25, this sea cave entrance remains above water even at high tide, although there are no ledges leading into the cave beyond. It's a DC 20 Swim check to navigate the churning surf leading south.

C27. Bunyip Lair (EL 3)

A glittering grotto sparkles here, its walls dripping with moisture and alive with sea urchins, anemones, and other tidal life. The cave's roof rises to a natural dome ten feet above the water where a five-foot-wide chimney rises through the roof in a shaft. The waters here are less choppy, but they are far from still. A five-foot-wide, fifteen-foot-long ledge sits just above the water level to the south.

Navigating the sheltered waters here is somewhat easier than at the entrances to the sea cave—it's only a DC 15 Swim check to move around in here. The western entrance remains underwater even at low tide; the water in the cave itself is 20 feet deep at its

deepest point directly under the shaft, but never gets shallower than 10 feet.

Creature: This cave is the lair of a dangerous coastal predator called a bunyip. A sleek aquatic hunter that looks something like a seal with fins and a mouth full of several rows of sharklike teeth, the bunyip has learned that food often falls down from the hole above, especially when it roars. It's grown somewhat lazy in its hunting as a result, and rarely leaves this cave anymore, spending much of its time sleeping on the southern ledge.

BUNYIP

CR 3

Tome of Horrors I, 31

Medium magical beast

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., keen scent, low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12

(+3 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 32 (5d10+5)

Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +1

OFFENSE

Spd 10 ft., swim 50 ft.



BURNT OFFERINGS

TETANUS

This disease, also called "lockjaw," is typically introduced via deep wounds from contaminated objects like rusty metal. Tetanus victims become more and more prone to violent muscle spasms, splitting headaches, fever, and difficulty swallowing. Stiffness of the jaw is a common result of tetanus infection.

Infection—*injury*; Fortitude DC 14; Incubation 1d6 days; Damage 1d4 Dex. Each time someone takes Dexterity damage from tetanus, there's a 50% chance his jaw muscles stiffen, preventing speech and the use of spells with verbal components for the next 24 hours.

Melee bite +9 (1d6+1/18–20/X3)

Special Attacks augmented critical, frenzy, roar

TACTICS

During Combat The bunyip roars as soon as it sees intruders, then dives into the water to attack the closest foe. Once it selects a target, it only switches to another foe only when its current foe is dead or when another target hits it for more than 8 points of damage.

Morale Although the bunyip is territorial, it still flees into the open sea if brought below 8 hit points. It returns 3d6 hours later to try to reclaim its lair.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 16, **Con** 13, **Int** 2, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6

Feats Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Listen +4, Spot +4, Swim +9

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Augmented Critical (Ex) A bunyip threatens a critical hit with its bite on a roll of 18–20, and inflicts triple damage on a successful critical hit. Creatures killed by a critical hit are typically dismembered or beheaded, making it difficult or impossible to affect the remaining body with spells like *speaking with dead* or *raise dead* that require a relatively intact corpse.

Frenzy (Ex) A bunyip that detects blood in the water has a 50% chance of flying into a frenzy the following round. While in a frenzy, the bunyip gains a +4 morale bonus to its Strength, but takes a –4 penalty to its AC. The bunyip cannot end its frenzy voluntarily, and remains frenzied as long as prey remains nearby.

Keen Scent (Ex) A bunyip can notice creatures by scent in a 180-foot radius and can detect blood in the water at a range of up to a mile.

Roar (Su) A bunyip's roar is supernaturally loud and horrifying. All creatures with 4 HD or less within a 100-foot spread of a roaring bunyip must make a DC 13 Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, an affected creature is immune to that bunyip's roar for 24 hours. This is a sonic, mind-affecting, fear effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Treasure: A search of the cave pool's bed quickly turns up an incredible tangle of bones, all that remains of the bunyip's meals. Many of the bones are from goblins, but a fair amount are larger and human-sized. Several items of value lie scattered down here as well; each DC 20 Search of the area randomly turns up one of the following: 3d6 gp (to a maximum of 100 gp), a deep green

spinel worth 100 gp, a rusted masterwork kukri with an intact violet garnet in its hilt worth 200 gp, a rotted quiver containing 3 +1 arrows, and a bone wand of shield with 9 charges remaining.

Thistletop Dungeon: Level One

Two hundred years ago that a Varisian cult of Lamashtu fled here from the east to avoid being slaughtered by the advancing Chelish army. Taken with the unique shape of this small island, the cultists established a church of Lamashtu atop it, expanding into the ground below and excavating the chambers on this level. Near the end of that excavation, they discovered the intact second level below, but in opening it, they also unwittingly released a hellcat that had been trapped in area E2 for thousands of years. The cultists were quickly slaughtered by the outsider, which had gone insane after its long imprisonment. The monster has long since fled into the world, leaving the complex roughly in its current condition when the Thistletop goblins first came to dwell here.

Although goblins can see in the dark, several of Nualia's followers cannot, and so hooded lanterns hang in each hallway and in most rooms throughout the complex; these lanterns are generally left lit only during daylight hours. Ceiling height averages at 8 feet in most rooms, and doors are generally rickety wooden affairs rigged by the goblins.

D1. Feast Hall

A single lantern hangs from a hook on the wall next to where the stairs enter this room from the north. Several rickety doors open into this room, and a few discarded dog pelt rugs lie forgotten in the northeast corner.

Before Nualia arrived, the goblins used this room as a feast hall. Ripnugget let Nualia move the table and chairs that once stood in here up north to area D14, and since then the goblins have taken to having their meals wherever they want.

D2. Chieftain's Harem (EL 2)

Dozens of ratty cushions, lumpy pillows, and rumpled dogskin furs lie heaped in the south half of this chamber, which smells of a nauseating mixture of vinegar and rotten flowers.

Creatures: The stink in the air is, horrifyingly enough, perfume worn by the four hideous goblin women who lounge about in this chamber. These four are Warchief Ripnugget's wives, although he hasn't had time to visit them in weeks. Starved for attention, the goblins have taken to one of Nualia's allies with an obscene and disturbing glee. This is Bruthazmus the bugbear, and unless he suspects intruders have reached this level, he's 80% likely to be encountered here (he's otherwise to be found in his lair at area D4d).

For many years, Bruthazmus lived a lonely life as a trapper in the northern reaches of Nettlewood, periodically stalking the Lost Coast Road for merchants and couriers to jump. The day he met Nualia, he thought the exotic-looking woman was some sort of nature spirit. He tried to catch her to sell her to pirates from Riddleport, but she

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Thistletop Dungeon: Level One



handily defeated him without taking a wound herself. So when she offered him a job as her bodyguard rather than executing him, the bugbear seized the chance. He's long coveted the prime location claimed by the Thistletop tribe, and now that he's here, he knows he has Nualia to thank for his turn in fortunes. He remains cruel and abusive to most others he meets (including Nualia's other allies, whom he does not enjoy the company of, but excluding these delightful goblin wives), but has taken to treating Nualia almost as a mother.

Bruthazmus hasn't quite gotten over the fact that he hasn't been given permission to go down to Sandpoint and cause problems. He's bitterly jealous of Tsuto as a result, whom he suspects has been razing Sandpoint all the time Bruthazmus has been caged up here. His cloying hatred of elves doesn't help the bugbear's attitude toward Tsuto, and he often fantasizes about adding Tsuto's ears to his elf-ear necklace, even though the half-elf's ears aren't nearly as pointed as he would like.

BRUTHAZMUS

CR 3

Male bugbear ranger 1 (MM 29)

CE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15

(+2 armor, +3 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 37 (4d8+16)

Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee heavy flail +6 (1d10+6/19–20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +6 (1d8+4/x3)

Special Attacks favored enemy +1 (elf)

TACTICS

BURNT OFFERINGS

During Combat Bruthazmus reacts to intrusions on his personal time with roars and curses. There's a 50% chance he's not wearing his armor if encountered in area **D2**; in any event, he flies into combat with his heavy flail with a murderous glee. He attacks elves in preference to any other target.

Morale If brought below 15 hit points, Bruthazmus attempts to flee to area **D15**, where he barricades the door and then races downstairs to area **E4** to join Nualia, hoping to get some healing and then remaining at her side as a bodyguard until the PCs are no longer a threat.

STATISTICS

Abilities Str 17, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6

Feats Point Blank Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Hide +8, Move Silently +7, Survival +6

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ wild empathy +0

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Other Gear** studded leather armor, heavy flail, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Strength) with 20 arrows and 4 +1 *elf-bane arrows*, 4 pp

THISTLETOP GOBLIN WIVES (4)

CR 1/3

Goblin warrior 1 (MM 133)

hp 5 each

D3. Goblin Nursery

The walls of this room are lined with small wooden cages. Inside each cage is a dirty mound of straw.

Horribly, this is the Thistletop nursery. Most goblin tribes have equally reprehensible methods of raising children—very few tribes actually coddle and protect their young, since the theory is that such activity only results in adult goblins who can't defend themselves. Goblin wisdom instead supports methods like these cages, where fast-growing goblin babies and children are raised like animals on daily regimens of raw meat and abuse so they grow up properly mean and strong.

There are no babies kept here currently—the Thistletop goblins have had other things (such as planning the raid on Sandpoint) on their mind lately. GMs seeking to confront their players with awkward social situations might want to put a few sharp-toothed feral goblin children and babies in these cages for the unsuspecting adventurers to discover.

D4a. Tsuto's Chambers

This room is clean and well-organized. A low dresser to the southwest has a stack of papers sitting atop it, weighted down by a large chunk of obsidian, while to the northwest sits a well-made bed.

If Tsuto escaped from death in part three of this adventure, there's a 30% chance he's here, sleeping. Otherwise, he's encountered at area **D15**. If he's here, the half-elf does everything in his power to escape to area **D15**.

The notes on the nightstand are mostly rough drafts of Tsuto's plans to blackmail his father and to use the Sandpoint Glassworks as a staging ground for the coming investigation of the Catacombs of Wrath—it's unlikely that there's anything here that's news to the PCs by this point, although if they haven't discovered the Catacombs of Wrath yet, these notes should point them in that direction.

D4b. Orik's Chambers (EL 3)

This one-person bedroom shows many signs of having been lived in. The bed itself is rumpled and unmade, and a half-eaten meal of bread and smoked salmon sits on the nightstand. A few articles of dirty clothing sit at the foot of the bed.

Creature: This is the current home of Orik Vancaskerkin, a down-on-his-luck mercenary from the lawless city of Riddleport to the north. After a scam involving a tiefling prostitute, a shift alchemist, and an *elixir of love*, Orik was forced to flee Riddleport. He's pretty sure that Clegg Zincher, the now dead alchemist's powerful brother, still carries a grudge for what Orik did to the alchemist when he discovered, to his horror, that the *elixir of love* was actually just cheap ale laced with lavender. While Orik bears no regrets for murdering the alchemist, he does regret the fact that Clegg Zincher effectively made it impossible for Orik to continue



BRUTHAZMUS

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living in Riddleport. He misses his home town greatly, despite the fact that little good ever came of living there, and has several half-formed plans to return there some day to face Clegg and perhaps seize control of Zincher's Arena for himself.

But doing something like that requires allies and money, and when a strange but beautiful woman approached him in the seedy Magnimar bar he'd taken up in, he accepted her offer to serve as her bodyguard without question. Since then, and since helping plan the assault on Sandpoint, Orik has come to think that his allegiance to Nualia may be just the latest in a long string of bad choices. Still, she pays regularly in platinum, and to date he hasn't really had to do much actual body guarding, since she's remained here at Thistletop for some time. He knows she's after something in the chambers

below, but doesn't know (or care) what it is. Orik has also developed something of an infatuation with another of Nualia's henchman, the foul-tempered (charmingly so, to Orik) Lyrie Akenja. Unfortunately, Lyrie seems more obsessed with Tsuto than anything else. Orik's considered murdering Tsuto to remove him from the picture, but since the half-elf is currently Nualia's lover, he's avoided such drastic moves to this point. Things have become so unbearably complicated for Orik that he's considering giving up on the whole thing and heading east to Korvosa to try his luck there.

Orik is ruggedly handsome, with a visage and demeanor that doesn't mesh well with smiles and laughter. Of late, he's spent most of his time here, waiting for something, anything, to develop down in the chambers below or with the Sandpoint situation so he can collect his final payment from Nualia. The raid on Sandpoint has left him somewhat conflicted, since on his one visit to the town on his way south to Magnimar several months ago, he found the place friendly and charming.

ORIK VANCASKERKIN

CR 3

Male human fighter 3

CN Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19

(+7 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield)

hp 27 (3d10+6)

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft. without armor)

Melee mwk bastard sword +7 (1d10+2/19–20) or

mwk bastard sword +4 (1d10+5/19–20, 3-point Power Attack)

Ranged composite longbow +4 (1d8/x3)

TACTICS

During Combat Orik relies on his strength in battle, focusing his attacks on taking down one target at a time and preferring to fight with his back to a wall or an ally. He generally fights with a 3-point Power Attack, which changes his attack as detailed above.

Morale If reduced to less than 5 hit points, Orik throws down his weapons and begs for mercy. He promises to help the PCs however he can if given his life—this promise is mostly legitimate, as detailed in **Development** below.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12,

Cha 8

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Feats Athletic, Blind Fight,

ORIK VANCASKERKIN

BURNT OFFERINGS

Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)

Skills Climb +2, Intimidate +5, Swim -2

Languages Common, Goblin

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Other Gear** +1 banded mail, masterwork heavy steel shield, masterwork bastard sword, composite longbow with 20 arrows, everburning torch, 2 pp

Development: If Orik surrenders, he does what he can to ensure his continued well-being. If that includes giving his wealth to the PCs or even aiding them against Nualia and her other allies, so be it. Unfortunately, Orik hasn't explored much of the dungeon here, and can say nothing about areas **D7-D9** (except that there's some kind of wriggly monster in there), areas **D9-D10**, or any of the chambers on level two (although he does know that the lower level is much older than this one). He's only been in the temple of Lamashtu (area **D12**) once, enough to know that he doesn't want to go back if he can help it; that religion kind of gives him the chills. He knows that the temple is guarded by a pair of "monster dogs," but beyond knowing that their howls are horrifying, he isn't sure what they are.

D4c. Lyrie's Chambers

While this bedroom is clean and brightly lit by an everburning torch lying on the nightstand, the room's spartan decor makes it unclear if it's actually lived in.

In fact, this chamber does belong to another of Nualia's minions, but since Lyrie spends most of her time researching the tentamort in area **D7** or studying the various artifacts and relics recovered from the dungeons below, she's only encountered here during the night as she sleeps.

Treasure: The everburning torch belongs to Lyrie, a spare in case the one she carries is lost.

D4d. Bruthazmus's Chambers

This bedroom has a faint, musty odor. The bed is covered with matted gray and black hair, and bloodstains mar the stone floor, while a morbid stack of birds' feet lies heaped on the floor by the side of the bed.

Bruthazmus the bugbear has taken to sleeping in area **D2** of late, and hasn't been back to this room in days. The bloodstains are all that remain of his last meal taken here—the bugbear prefers his food still alive and wriggling as he eats, and has taken a liking to seagull (although he detests the texture of their feet and won't eat them).

D5: Nualia's Chambers

This large chamber seems to serve a dual purpose. To the north is a fine bed with silk sheets, while to the south, a desk and chair under a hanging lantern make a comfortable-looking study.

This large room serves Nualia as a bedchamber, although she's not spent much time here recently. She had the fine bed to the north brought in piece by piece from Magnimar, one of her few concessions toward luxury.

D6. Workroom

Crates, barrels, and mounds of miscellaneous refuse lie heaped against the walls here. To the north, the sound of crashing surf echoes in.

Most of the junk scavenged from Junk Beach by the Seven Tooth goblins ends up here, tribute sent north to the Thistletop goblins to keep them on the greater tribe's good side. While the raw materials here can be turned into furniture, dogslicers, or even armor, at this point only a goblin is likely to see value in the mounds of refuse.

D7. Tentamort Hunting Grounds (EL 4)

The floor of this cavern seems strangely polished and smooth. To the east, a thick curtain of vines and nettles hangs down over a wide opening overlooking the Varisian Gulf.

Creature: This cavern has been the lair of a deadly monster called a tentamort for many years. The monster looks something like a leathery, eyeless squid with a squat body the size of a rain barrel. Its lower body splits into a tangle of tentacles the creature uses to slowly move on, while two longer tentacles, one thick and muscular and the other lithe and tipped with a bone stinger, emerge from either side. Exceptionally long-lived, the nearly mindless predator has fed on sea birds for years and has grown quite adept at snatching them out of the sky from its perch overlooking the sea to the east. When the goblins moved in, they lost several to the tentamort's tentacles (including one of their best fighters) before they decided to leave the monster alone.

Lyrie spent several days studying the monster after she arrived, going so far as to lure several goblins in here so she could watch the monster eat them, but she's learned all she can of the creature and grew bored with it a few days ago.

TENTAMORT

CR 4

Tome of Horrors I, 252

N Medium aberration

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18

(+1 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 22 (4d8+4)

Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Spd 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

Melee tentacle +5 (1d4+2) and

sting +0 (1d4+1 plus liquefy organs)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with sting)

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Special Attacks constrict 1d4+2, improved grab

TACTICS

During Combat The tentamort is relatively stupid; it won't attack anyone beyond the range of its blindsense, and tends to ignore creatures aside from the closest target.

Morale The tentamort fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 12, **Con** 12, **Int** 1, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +9

Feats Improved Initiative, Stealthy

Skills Climb +11, Hide +6, Move Silently +6

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a tentamort must hit an opponent no larger than one size category larger than itself (Large foes for most tentamorts) with its tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it establishes a hold, it can constrict and gains a +4 bonus on sting attacks made against the grappled foe. A tentamort has a +4 racial bonus on grapple checks.

Liquefy Organs (Su) A creature stung by a tentamort is injected with an acidic enzyme that quickly dissolves internal organs. The victim must make a successful DC 13 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of Constitution damage on the round he is stung, and again on the following round. A victim stung more than once never has to save more than once per round, and despite the total number of stings, the lingering danger persists only for one additional round.

D8. Tentamort Lair

Dozens of strange dead bodies lie scattered about this room. Most are of sea birds and ospreys, but there are six dead goblins here as well. Each body is literally skin and bones, as if all of the interior organs and muscles have somehow been drained away, leaving behind skeletons draped with leathery, slowly rotting skin.

Treasure: The goblins who fell victim to the tentamort were never recovered by their kin, and their armor and weapons lie in rotting, rusty heaps where they fell. One of the bodies belongs to the ex-goblin hero Tiovunk; his carcass still wears a suit of +1 *hide armor* (made from dogs) and wields a ruined (but once masterwork) horsechopper and a masterwork short bow. The armor and weapons are both Small.

D9. Prison

The southern wall of this room is a bank of cells with iron doors, six in all. The rest of the room is obviously a torture chamber; a rack sits against the far wall, an iron maiden stands to the north, and a fire pit smolders below a spiky cage dangling from a chain in the ceiling to the east.

If the goblins have captured any prisoners during the adventure they're kept here. Since their jailer and torturer, Brunkel, went missing during the raid on Sandpoint, this area has been neglected

by the goblins, who often forgot to come down to check on prisoners for several days anyway, leaving the prisoners to ration their already meager food and water to avoid thirst and hunger.

Each of the iron doors enclosing the cells can be broken with a DC 26 Strength check, or the locks picked with a DC 25 Open Lock check. Keys for the cells can be found in area **D10**.

D10. Brunkel's Lair

A dusty nest of rags, dog hides, and straw sits in the northeast corner of this room. To the south, a long workbench cluttered with pliers, hooks, tongs, saws, and knives runs along the wall.

Brunkel, a goblin fighter/rogue and the second-toughest goblin in the tibe, once lived here where he served as a torturer and jailer. The Thistletop goblins assumed that if anyone could survive the raid on Sandpoint, it would be Brunkel. They were wrong—Brunkel died on the sheriff's sword within minutes of the raid's beginning.

Keys to the cells in area **D9** can be found scattered among the torture implements on the southern workbench.

D11. Chapel Entrance

Two large stone doors sit in the western walls here, their faces carved with images of horrific, deformed monsters clawing their way out of pregnant women of all races.

These two stone doors are well-maintained, and open easily. A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the scene depicted on the doors as one common to churches of Lamashtu.

D12. Chapel to Lamashtu (EL 5)

Stone fonts containing frothy dark water sit to the north and south of the eastern entrance to the room, and twin banks of stone pillars run the length of the long chamber. At the western end, shallow stairs rise to a platform about two feet off the ground. The walls surrounding this platform are lit by hanging braziers that emit glowing red smoke, giving the place an unnerving crimson lighting that throws the bas-relief carvings of countless monsters feasting on fleeing humans into lurid display. A black marble altar stone, its surface heaped with ashes and bone fragments, squats before a ten-foot-tall statue. The sculpture depicts a very pregnant but otherwise shapely naked woman who wields a kukri in each taloned hand and has a long reptilian tail, bird-like taloned feet, and the snarling head of a three-eyed jackal with a forked tongue. Its left kukri flickers with fiery orange light while the right one glows with a cold blue radiance.

Recently reconsecrated by Nualia, this shrine to Lamashtu had lain dormant for many years, ever since the previous chieftain succumbed to rabies and left Ripnugget in charge. Ripnugget has always viewed his inability to receive Malfeshnekor's empathic sendings as a flaw, but after he threw several goblins who dared

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question this flaw into the Howling Hole, no one at Thistletop talks about it. Ripnugget has come to view Nualia's arrival as Lamashtu's blessing, and her weekly sermons have become mandatory for the goblins despite the fact that one or two of them end up sacrificed on the altar if they can't offer up other goblins or prisoners in their place. A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the temple and statue as being sacred to Lamashtu. The glowing effects on the statue's kukris are *continual flames*.

Every day that Nualia leads a service here, she prepares a *desecrate* spell instead of a *bull's strength* spell, and casts it at the start of her sermon. If the PCs wish to time their infiltration of Thistletop to coincide with one of her ceremonies, they'll find the upper reaches of the fortress empty and easy to infiltrate, but if they come upon this room they may well encounter more than they can handle.

An examination of the altar reveals smears of ash and bits of bone; a body was burned here recently (the remains of Nualia's foster father).

Creatures: When Nualia arrived here, drawn by her dreams, she quickly re-dedicated this chapel to Lamashtu in much the same way Sandpoint would re-dedicate their own chapel several months later. In reward, Lamashtu sent her three of her minions as a reward, lean creatures that look like jackals with smoking red eyes and black fangs—yeth hounds. Two lurk in the shadows of the chamber while the other remains at Nualia's side—all three are completely loyal to her. When she performs sacrifices to Lamashtu, Nualia does so with her bastard sword, beheading the victim and then inviting the yeth hounds to feast on the body while she holds the decapitated head over the altar so it can watch its body be consumed.

When no one else is here, the yeth hounds hover near the ceiling to the north and south. If they sense any intruders, they quickly race down through the air to attack, their howls quickly putting the complex on alert.

During rituals, all of the goblins in the complex, as well as Tsuto, Lyrie, and Bruthazmus, gather here to watch and pray. Orik attended the first service, but has since bowed out, claiming that someone needs to guard the complex during ceremony. To his relief, Nualia agreed. In any event, taking on a room of goblins and cultists is not a good plan for low-level PCs.

YETH HOUNDS (2)

hp 19 each (MM 260)

CR 3

D13. Goblin Art Gallery

The lower four feet of the walls in this empty room are covered with crude drawings in mud, blood, and paint. Most of the drawings show goblins engaged in some sort of violence against humans, horses, or dogs. One picture on the north wall is at least three times the size and complexity of the other scrawlings. This image shows Thistletop from the side, the goblin stockade perched atop it like a crown. A cave has been drawn into the center of the image, and looming inside is what appears to be an immense, muscular goblin with snake-like eyes and a dogslicer in each taloned hand. If the scale compared to the rest of the drawing is to be believed, this goblin must be at least thirty feet tall.

Fortunately for the PCs, the depiction of Malfeshnekor here is based on nothing more than goblin hopes and dreams.

D14. War Room

A large table surrounded by chairs fills much of this room. A slateboard to the north is covered with scribbles in chalk, but the map of Sandpoint that has been carefully inscribed on it leaves no doubt as to the purpose of this room—this is doubtless where the recent raid was planned.

An investigation of the slate and the notes written there can confirm this and more. Namely, that once “the whispering beast is tamed,” the architects of the plan intend to mount a second raid on the town, one that incorporates not only additional goblin tribes culled from as far as the Fogscar mountains to the north, but creatures referred to as “sinspawn” who shall invade Sandpoint from below. If the PCs have fought sinspawn already, they recognize these dangerous monsters as the ones mentioned here. No exact timetable is given for when this second raid is to happen, but close examination reveals that it is scheduled for only a few months away.

D15. Research Room

A large wooden worktable sits in the middle of this room, its surface cluttered with scrolls, books, stone tablets covered with dense, spiky runes, and fragments of carvings that appear to have been chipped off of statues or bas-reliefs. To the north, a floor-to-ceiling set of wooden shelves sag with picks, shovels, brushes, lanterns, and other equipment one might expect to see at an archeological site.

This chamber has been claimed by Nualia and her minions as a place to study and research the artifacts that they've recovered from the chambers below and from other ancient Thassilonian sites they've raided. The secret door to the east was built by the cult of Lamashtu that once dwelt here after their excavations uncovered a sealed stairway leading down to the chambers below; they installed this door to prevent the discovery of the chambers by their enemies. The door's been used often recently, and if the alarm isn't raised, it actually hangs ajar. If it's closed, it's only a DC 18 Search check to find it due to the heavy traffic that's been passing through it over the past few weeks.

Creatures: Although all five of the bandits have spent time in this room, only Lyrie Akenja and Nualia have the obsessive interest in these ruins to spend much time here. And since Nualia's been spending more and more of her time in the observation chamber below (area E4), Lyrie's been able to study here in peace and quiet, a luxury she's quite enjoyed.

Nualia hired Lyrie primarily for her knowledge of arcana and architecture, her ability to read Thassilonian, and for her arcane magic. Lyrie was in a desperate place when Nualia encountered her in Magnimar. Lyrie had recently been informed that she was no longer under consideration to join an organization of explorers called the Pathfinders as an initiate. She suspects bitterly that they kept copies of her notes and applicant thesis, and that their rejection of her application had more to do with the fact that they suspect she

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murdered two of the competing initiates. That this is true doesn't matter to Lyrie. When Nualia offered to pay her in platinum to study Thassilonian relics, she gratefully accepted.

Lyrie is in her early twenties, with dark skin and long hair braided tightly into cornrows. She's always had a poor self-image about herself, a quality that has left her bitter and cruel, quick to assume insult in innocent comments or to look at things in the bleakest possible manner. Her only true friend is her cat familiar, Skivver, and he has a bad habit of scratching and marking his territory.

LYRIE AKENJA

Female human wizard 3

CE Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14

(+2 Dex, +4 armor)

hp 12 (3d4+3)

Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee dagger +0 (1d4-1/19-20)

Spells Known (CL 3rd)

2nd—*mirror image*, *shatter* (DC 15)

1st—*burning hands* (DC 14), *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement*

0—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*

TACTICS

Before Combat If she has a few rounds before combat starts, Lyrie casts *mirror image* and *mage armor*.

During Combat Lyrie knows she's outclassed in most fights, and prefers to avoid combat when alone if possible. If forced into combat, she focuses most of her spells on heavily armored characters, casting *shatter* on a weapon and *ray of enfeeblement* in an attempt to get them to suffer for wearing such heavy armor. She relies heavily on her *wand of magic missile* in combat.

Morale Lyrie is a coward at heart, and as soon as she's hit for damage, she attempts to flee to the closest ally for help. If she believes the PCs have harmed Tsuto, though, her anger takes over and she fights to the death in an attempt to avenge him.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 14, **Con** 12, **Int** 15, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +0

Feats Alertness (as long as Skivver's in arm's reach), Dodge, Mobility, Scribe

CR 3

Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation)

Skills Concentration +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Move Silently +5, Spellcraft +10

Languages Common, Goblin, Thassilonian

SQ summon familiar (cat named Skivver)

Combat Gear *wand of magic missile* (CL 1st, 38 charges), *potion of cure light wounds*, *scroll of sleep*, *scroll of comprehend languages*, *scroll of minor image*, *scroll of see invisibility*, *scroll of whispering wind*; **Other Gear** dagger, *cloak of resistance* +1, silver comb (25 gp), fine silk gown (60 gp), everburning torch, small pouch of artifacts (hair, fingernail clippings, used handkerchiefs, and a pearl earring worth 50 gp) stolen from Tsuto Kaijitsu, 3 pp

Spellbook 0—all; 1st—*comprehend languages*, *detect secret doors*, *floating disc*, *identify*, *obscuring mist*, *sleep*, 2nd—*locate object*, *minor image*, *see invisibility*, *spider climb*

Development: If Tsuto escaped from the PCs earlier and the alarm is raised, he's encountered again here. He and Lyrie have pushed the table up against the eastern door, making it a DC 22 Strength check to push the door open. If Bruthazmus escaped the PCs as well, he too is waiting here, hoping to hold them off from reaching the lower level.

Thistletop Dungeon: Level Two

Cracks line the walls here and there, and while the first few rooms are fairly clean, dust and rubble clutter areas E6–E10. Spider webs clutter the corners of the room. Areas E1–E4 are lit by lanterns left on the floor by Nualia and her minions, but areas E5–E10 are unlit unless otherwise indicated.

This level is part of the original complex that was hidden in the head of Karzoug's sentinel statue. When the statue collapsed, the head came to rest at an angle; as a result, the entire level is sloped downward toward the west, as this level existed before the sentinel of Karzoug's head fell and came to rest at a slight angle. While the canted floor doesn't appreciably impact movement, it does grant creatures a +1 bonus on attack rolls made against foes who stand in squares west of the attacker's square.

Air quality in these chambers is surprisingly good, and temperature never varies from a comfortable 60°F. Both of these conditions are remnants of what once were several



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magical concessions toward comfort from long ago; most of the other effects (such as lighting) have long since failed, but the replenishment of air and temperature maintenance remain functional. *Detect magic* reveals this as a faint transmutation aura.

E1. Ancient Door

A stone door just around the corner from the steps hangs slightly ajar, the detailed carvings that once covered its surface defaced by chisel marks and hammer blows to the extent that only a few remnants of images (mostly of gemstones and crowns) remain. The floor here is slanted toward the west.

This door was damaged hundreds of years ago when the cultists of Lamashtu tried to batter it open, only to release the monster that once lurked in the room beyond.

E2. The Hellcat's Hall

Two pillars support the ceiling in here. In many places the stone walls, floor, and ceiling are caked with ancient grime and soot. Alcoves in the north and south wall contain partially damaged statues of a man in robes clutching a book and a glaive. The entire room is canted toward the west, and whatever ancient upheaval caused the complex to tilt knocked the statues from their bases so that now they lean against the southern walls of their alcoves.

The statues once depicted Runelord Karzoug, although time and the hellcat's endless anger have left them too damaged to be recognizable beyond their basic shapes. The hellcat is long gone, having been released hundreds of years ago by the clerics of Lamashtu that settled in the chambers above.

E3. Trapped Hall (EL 3)

This short hallway rises in a slope to the east. Five feet from the western door, the floor is polished and shiny, unlike the dusty floor elsewhere. A pair of stone statues depicting stern men wielding glaives stand in alcoves north and south of this section of the hallway. At the eastern end stand two stone doors, their faces carved with strange runes. Between the doors is a third alcove in which a partially collapsed statue sits. The top half of the statue is missing, leaving behind a ragged stump of a torso.

The eastern statue broke long ago, tumbling down the hallway to come to a rest against the western door, which made it difficult to open for Nualia and her minions on their first visit. They've cleared away the rubble since then.

Trap: Two hidden iron portcullises are recessed into the ceiling around the polished section of floor, as indicated on the map. When a creature steps between them, a pressure plate causes them to both drop with a clang; one round later, the two statues began slashing at the space between them, cutting the trapped

intruder to ribbons. A lever that raises and lowers the portcullises and switches the trap on and off can be found in area E4.

When Nualia first explored this area with her allies, one of her bodyguards (a stoic Shoanti barbarian named Jagen) triggered the trap and was killed by it. Since then, she and her remaining allies have taken the exploration of these chambers very slowly, with Tsuto checking for traps extensively before they move on to new areas. The polished section of floor is all that remains of the mess Jagen made after the survivors cleaned the place up—Nualia burnt his remains in the temple (area D12) as an offering to Lamashtu and sold his gear during a trip to Magnimar a few days later.

While she's working in area E4, Nualia keeps the trap activated; when her allies wish to visit her, they call out from the doorway to area E2 to have her turn the trap off. If the PCs trigger the trap, Nualia hears the noise and prepares for trouble. Once the trap is triggered, the glaives continue slashing whoever stands in the room as long as pressure remains on the square between them. Both glaives are standard glaives and can be sundered against the traps attack roll of +8 (attempts to sunder the glaives do not provoke attacks of opportunity from the trap). Two rounds after the trap activates, a 10-foot-deep pit opens in the square, dumping what remains of the victim into the area below before the whole thing resets itself. A still-living victim can attempt a DC 20 Reflex save to avoid falling into the pit by either clinging to the portcullises or the statue alcoves, but when the pit closes automatically one round later, the victim's weight on the lid could start the cycle all over again.

SLASHING CAGE TRAP

CR 3

Type magical

Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset automatic

Effect portcullises drop to seal target in 5-foot area between them

(Reflex DC 15 to jump to an adjacent 5-foot-square as they drop);

1 round later, both statues slash at the area with their glaives for 2

rounds; 2 glaives +8 (1d10/x3); 10-foot fall after 2 rounds (2d6

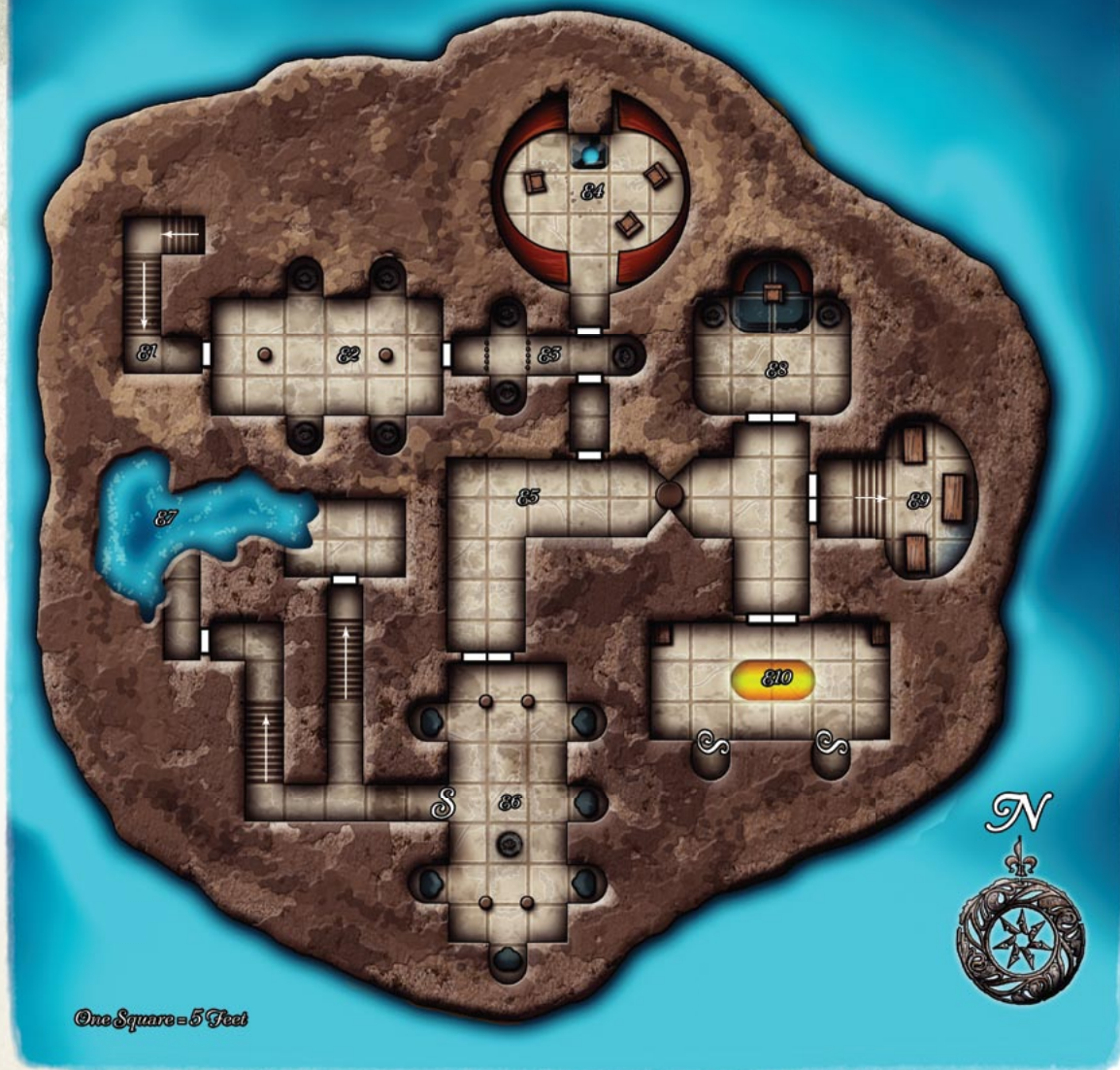
damage, fall, Reflex DC 20 negates).

E4. Observation Deck (EL 6)

A wide stone ledge of red marble lines the curving walls of this room, which is well-lit by four burning skulls that sit in each corner. Three chairs rest in the room, and both stone ledges are covered with books, scrolls, teeth, bones, scrimshaw artwork, jars of deformed creatures soaking in brine, taxidermied animals and limbs, and other strange objects. To the north, a large round fountain filled with frothy blue water fills the room with the gentle sound of bubbling.

The bubbling font of water used to allow those who drank from it the ability to view the surrounding terrain from the sentinel statue's eyes. Now, the fountain merely functions as a perpetually full container of drinking water. The burning skulls bear continual flames.

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The objects on the shelves are various holy texts, scrolls, relics, and objects sacred to the worship of Lamashtu, identifiable as such with a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check.

Creature: The primary villain of this adventure is likely encountered here. Nualia's recent success with the ritual to offer her foster father's corporeal remains to Lamashtu (a sacrifice more symbolic than anything else) saw her rewarded with a promise of things to come—her left hand has been transformed into a demonic red talon. With the exception of her demonic hand and her scarred belly, the rest of her body is incongruously beautiful. Yet in her madness, Nualia has come to view her silver hair, violet eyes, and shapely figure as a curse, a scar visited upon her by her angelic heritage. She wants to shed this part of her, to become fully monstrous to better serve her new mistress. She wears the mark of her devotion to

Lamashtu proudly, keeping her midriff bare to expose the ugly scars and wounds across her belly. A DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check is enough to recognize this as the Mark of Lamashtu, denoting the carrier not only as one devoted to the Mother of Monsters, but one capable of birthing monsters from her own body.

The transformation of her hand into talon is not the only reward Lamashtu has sent Nualia. Her third yeth hound is a constant companion, loyal and eager to please her.

NUALIA**CR 5**

Female aasimar fighter 2/cleric 3 (Lamashtu)

CE Medium outsider (native)

Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

DEFENSE

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AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15

(+6 armor, -1 Dex)

hp 39 (2d10+3d8+10)

Fort +9, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6

Resist acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft. (30 ft. base)

Melee +1 bastard sword +9 (1d10+4/18–20) and
claw +2 (1d6+1)

Ranged composite longbow +3 (1d8/×3)

Special Attacks rebuke/command undead 5/day (+2, 2d6+5)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

1/day—daylight

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd)

2nd—*bull's strength*^D, *death knell* (DC 14), *shatter* (DC 14)

1st—*cause fear* (DC 13), *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *protection from good*^D, *shield of faith*

0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic*, *mending*

D domain spell; **Domains** Evil, Strength

TACTICS

Before Combat If Nualia suspects combat is imminent, she casts *bull's strength* and *shield of faith* on herself.

During Combat Nualia activates her *Sihedron medallion* as a free action at the start of combat to gain *false life* and casts *divine favor*. She prefers to fight her fights with her bastard sword, her face an impassive mask save for her eyes, which blaze with anger. She saves *shatter* to use on any weapon that seems to be particularly dangerous in an enemy's hands.

Morale Nualia fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 8, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Lamashtu's Mark (p 56), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)

Skills Concentrate +5, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (religion) +3, Ride +2

Languages Common, Celestial, Goblin

SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Other Gear +1 breastplate, +1 bastard sword, *Sihedron medallion* (p 55), masterwork composite longbow with 20 arrows, gold holy symbol (100 gp), 7 pp, 5 gp

YETH HOUND

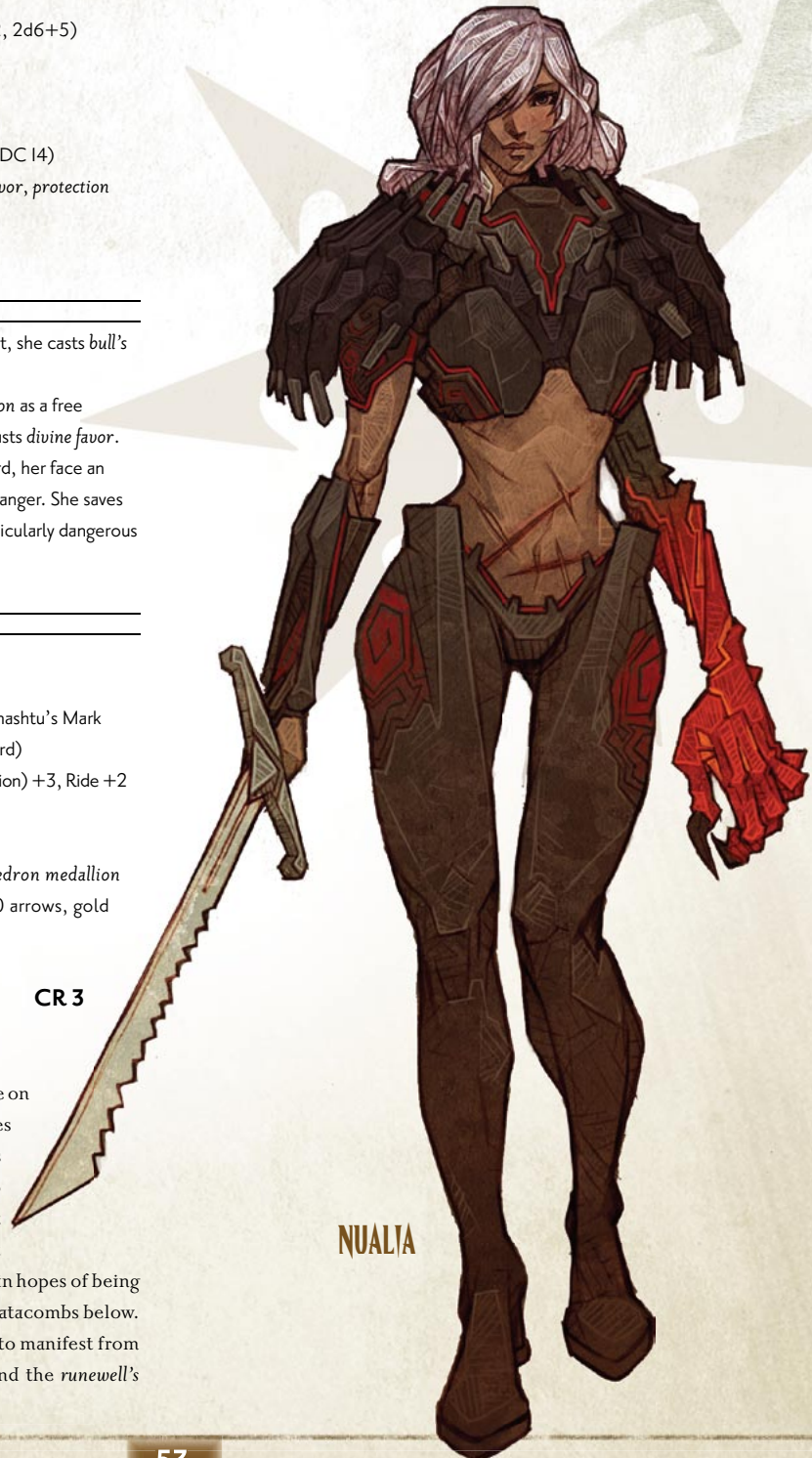
hp 19; (MM 260)

Treasure: Nualia's notes and several journals lie on the tables here. Sorting through these notes takes several hours, but reveals the entirety of Nualia's story, as detailed on pages 9–10. The notes also outline her plans to send an army of goblins against Sandpoint and to burn the town to the ground, not only to offer it all as a burnt offering to Lamashtu in hopes of being made a half-fiend, but to fuel the *runewell* in the catacombs below. The notes go on to detail how to cause sinspawn to manifest from the runewell, and that if one were to overextend the *runewell*'s

stores, it would be deactivated. Nualia isn't sure how to reactivate it, and several times stresses that the *runewell* shouldn't be used much until after Sandpoint is razed and the deaths of hundreds of angry citizens and goblins have refilled the well.

E5. Portal of Greed

The southern wing of this L-shaped hallway ends at a pair of stone doors carved with the depictions of two skeletons reaching out to clutch a skull



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between them, while to the east the hallway narrows down to frame a circular carving of what seems to be an immense stack of gold coins that rises from floor to ceiling. The edges of these coins are carved with tiny, spiky runes.

The stack of oversized coins is actually a pillar that can be triggered to sink into the floor to provide access to the rooms beyond. Nualia and her allies have not yet discovered the method to trigger the pillar—hidden in the wall to the left and right are tiny, coin-sized slots. A DC 28 Search check reveals the coin slots and the fact that there's a hollow space beyond the pillar. Inserting at least 1 gp into each slot causes the pillar to noisily grind down into the floor. The coins themselves vanish, transported to Karzoug's treasury hundreds of miles away in legendary Xin-Shalast.

The pillar itself bears a *permanent image* (CL 15th) to make it look as if it were made of gold—it is in fact made of stone.

E6. Crypt (EL 6)

Four pillars support the domed ceiling of this room. Several alcoves containing standing sarcophaguses grace the walls, and a statue of a stern man wielding a glaive and holding a book stands at the far end of the chamber.

This small crypt was used to inter the bodies of the complex's architects, as was tradition in Karzoug's time. The architects, in this case, were interred alive, but now, only bones remain inside.

The secret door can be found with a DC 25 Search check.

Creatures: Although the architects willingly allowed themselves to be buried alive here, three of the six were not able to maintain their devotion for long. They died in horror, and now their shadows haunt the chamber. These three shadows emerge to attack any intruders 1d6 rounds after the room is entered. Nualia and her allies haven't discovered the secret door here yet, and have largely left the room alone for now.

SHADOWS (3)

CR 3

hp 19 each (MM 221)

TACTICS

During Combat These shadows do not pursue foes out of the room.

Morale The shadows fight to the death.

E7. Collapsed Treasury (EL 5)

The sound of sloshing water fills this room, which has nearly collapsed entirely into a large tide pool. What few walls do remain intact here bear detailed and impressive carvings of incredible treasures filled to overflowing with coins, gems, jewelry, and other items of value. To the east, the walls depict a carving of a towering mountain, its peak carved in the shape of a stern face just above a great palace. Below, the side of the mountain's valley cradles an immense city of spires.

In the pool, the remains of what must have once been an incredible treasury lie in the sloshing waters. Shattered urns, crumbled stone chests, rusted bits of once beautiful armor and weapons, and other long-ruined

treasures from an ancient past lie below. Most impressive of them all is a large, coral-encrusted helmet sized for a giant; the helm measures nearly five feet across, and its full-face guard bears an expression of twisted rage and fangs. The helm itself appears to be made of gold.

A DC 30 Knowledge (history) check identifies the city depicted as legendary Xin-Shalast, a city rumored to be hidden somewhere in the Kodar Mountains. Tales speak of the city as having streets of gold and buildings carved from immense gems, but although countless explorers have sought it (and many have died or vanished), none have ever managed to locate this fabled city. Most scholars agree that it never existed at all, that it was a fictitious location invented by the ancients.

The pool is connected to the sea via an underwater 10-foot-wide tunnel. The tunnel is 20 feet long in all, and the powerful riptide within makes navigating it possible only with a DC 20 Swim check. It emerges at the base of the island, about 30 feet underwater, an entrance hidden by coral growth and seaweed that can be discovered from outside by a DC 25 Search check.

Creature: Only 1d3 rounds after the PCs enter this room, the gold helmet down below suddenly shifts and moves, as if it were rotating to look at them. While paranoid PCs might suspect the helmet is the head of a golem, it is in fact nothing more than a helmet for one of the now long-dead giant soldiers once enslaved by the runelords. The helm itself has become the home of a 450 pound hermit crab, and it reacts poorly to any attempts to enter what it's come to think of as its pool. When it attacks, the helm suddenly rises up to release a pair of immense claws and spindly legs.

GIANT HERMIT CRAB

CR 5

Advanced monstrous crab (*Tome of Horrors I*, 46)

Large vermin (aquatic)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 18

(+4 armor, +1 Dex, +5 natural, –1 size)

hp 59 (7d8+28)

Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Immune mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., climb 5 ft.

Melee 2 claws +10 (1d6+6)

Special Attacks constrict 1d6+6, improved grab

TACTICS

During Combat The crab pursues foes who flee no farther than the top of the stairs or the underwater exit to the sea bed.

Morale The crab fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 10, **Con** 18, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +15

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a giant hermit crab must hit an opponent at least one size category smaller than itself with a claw attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action

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SIHEDRON MEDALLION

Aura faint necromancy; **CL** 5th

Slot neck; **Price** 3,500 gp

DESCRIPTION

This medallion hangs on a leather cord, a silver disc inscribed with a seven-pointed star. Although few know the actual significance of the star today, it was once a very important symbol in ancient Thassilon, for this star symbolized the seven virtues of rule and the seven schools of Thassilonian magic. These medallions were given to favored agents of the runelords; the medallions granted some minor benefits to the wearer, but also allowed the runelords to use those who wore them as proxies. By concentrating on a scrying device, a runelord could sense the world through the *Sihedron medallion* wearer's senses, and could speak through her voice.

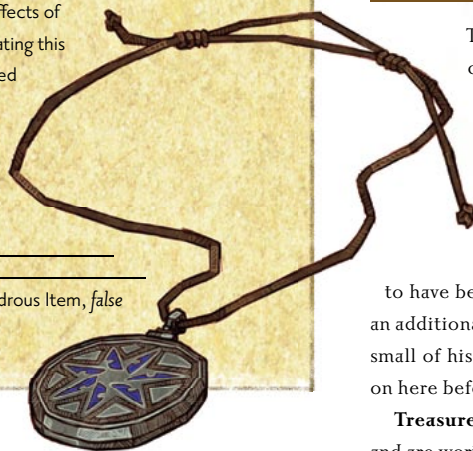
At this time, Karzoug does not know of the existence of this medallion, but a PC wearing one of these items might find himself in trouble at a later point in the campaign. For now, though, the medallion serves as a thematic link to the next adventure, and can serve as a valuable piece of protection.

While worn, a *Sihedron medallion* grants its wearer a +1 resistance bonus on all saving throws. Once per day, it may be commanded to bestow the effects of *false life* on the wearer—activating this function is a free action. Placed on the neck of a dead body, the *Sihedron medallion* preserves the body indefinitely via a gentle repose effect.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *false life*, *gentle repose*, *resistance*;

Cost 1,750 gp, 140 XP



without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it establishes a hold, it can constrict.

Treasure: Although this was once a treasury, the loot gathered here didn't stay long before it was transported to Xin-Shalast. A search of the pool takes 3d6 minutes, but uncovers 3,500 sp, 630 gp, 40 precious stones worth 10 gp each, and a jade *amulet of natural armor* +1. The greatest treasure in the room is the ancient helm. The helm isn't solid gold (much of it is bronze) but it's still worth 200 gp if the PCs can haul its 300 pound weight up out of the hole it's been resting in for hundreds of years.

E8. Communication Room

This barren room contains an upraised dais on which sits a marble throne. To either side stand statues of a man clutching a book and a glaive. A ghostly figure seems to be seated in the throne, an image of the same man who appears in the statues. He seems to be addressing an audience as he moves his hands about, fingers decorated with hooked rings, but the

words issuing from his phantom mouth are difficult to make out and in a strange language.

This room once allowed the agents stationed here to communicate with a projected image of Karzoug. When the statue collapsed, the magic here was damaged, and now a short loop of Karzoug's last message plays endlessly; over the ages, the illusion has slowly faded, so that all that remains is this ghostly echo.

His spoken words are in Thassilonian, and repeat the following short message over and over: "...is upon us, but I command you remain. Witness my power, how Alaznist's petty wrath is but a flash compared to my strength. Take my final work to your graves, and let its memory be the last thing you..."

The image is harmless, and functions at CL 17th.

E9. Transmutation Room

This room contains three low tables, their tops covered with a strange and chilling selection of tools, saws, long bladed knives, and objects whose purpose is not readily apparent. A strange collection of bones lies near the southern table—too many to be one skeleton, but too few to be two.

The working of transmutation magic went beyond the classic transformation of lead into gold for the wizards of Shalast—they worked the magic of change upon every matrix they could shape. This room was used to change and modify living flesh; the tools remaining on the tables being used for quick adjustments where magic wasn't necessary, or to cut away extraneous tissue. The skeleton seems to have belonged to a two-headed man with what seems to be an additional partial skeleton of a smaller man growing from the small of his back—all that remains of the last poor soul worked on here before the end came.

Treasure: The surgical tools on the tables are exquisitely made, and are worth 100 gp in all. Sitting on the easternmost table is an object that, upon closer examination, isn't a tool at all. It appears to be a silver and gold seven-pointed star, one surface studded with nodules and blades, and the other featuring a thin curved handle. This is the only remaining key to area E10.

E10. Malfeshnekor's Prison (CL 7)

The doors to this room are made of stone but bear no handles. An indented outline of a seven-pointed star, its shape covered by hollows and slits, graces the spot where handles should be.

This door is sealed with an *arcane lock* spell (CL 17th), but the key in area E9 can be used to easily twist and open the doors.

This room is lit by a ten-foot-wide pit of flickering fire that fills the room with a strange humid heat and the smell of burning hair. In the northern corners of the room, wooden risers each hold several dozen golden candles

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LAMASHTU'S MARK

You have been marked as one of Lamashtu's favored minions.

Prerequisites: Con 13, Lamashtu as patron deity.

Benefit: Your abdomen bears several ugly scars, as if your belly had been torn open by a clawed hand. Lamashtu's Mark identifies you as favored of the Mother of Monsters, and if it is visible, you gain a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks but a -2 penalty on Diplomacy checks.

Once per day as a free action, you may invoke Lamashtu's name as you strike a non-evil foe with any melee attack. As you do, you cause the creature struck to become deformed in some hideous manner (cloven hoof, horns, forked tongues, and vestigial limbs like wings and tails are common deformities). The deformity imparts a penalty of 1d4 points to the target's Charisma score for 1 hour; the target can resist this effect by making a Fortitude save (DC 10 + your character level + your Charisma modifier). The physical deformity vanishes as soon as the Charisma penalty fades.

Any offspring you sire or give birth to gain the fiendish template.

that burn without melting, while to the south the wall bears an immense carving of a seven-pointed star.

The fire pit is 10 feet deep—any creature that falls in takes appropriate falling damage and suffers 1d6 fire damage per round. The flames themselves are magically sustained, and can burn forever without going out.

Two alcoves to the south are hidden by secret doors. A DC 25 Search check discovers the doors (one check per door)—the alcoves beyond were once used to store valuable supplies for the conjuration and entrapment of magical creatures, but when the end came to Thassilon, one of the wizards stationed here raided the chambers and fled with most of the contents. Each alcove contains little more than dusty shelves today, although a bit of treasure still remains in the western one (see **Treasure**, below).

Creature: The powerful barghest Malfeshnekor, once one of Alaznist's lieutenants and the commander of a legion of sinspawn, spent the last several thousand years imprisoned in this room. Karzoug's agents captured the barghest and transported him here, using a *binding* spell (hedged prison) to imprison him here so that he could be interrogated at a leisurely pace. Yet when the end of Thassilon came, it happened fast. Malfeshnekor was forgotten, survived the sentinel statue's collapse, and has now gone nearly insane with rage and hunger—despite the fact that he need not eat, his supernatural hunger has not abated. Although the *binding* keeps him from physically leaving this room, nothing prevents him from assaulting anyone who enter it.

MALFESHNEKOR

CR 7

Male advanced elite greater barghest (MM 23)

NE Large outsider

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +16, Spot +16

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 19

(+4 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

hp 85 (10d8+40)

Fort +11, **Ref** +11, **Will** +10

DR 10/magic

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee bite +17 (2d6+8) and
2 claws +12 (1d6+4)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks feed

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)

At will—*blink*, *invisibility sphere*, *levitate*, *misdirection* (DC 17), *rage* (DC 18)

1/day—*charm monster* (DC 19), *crushing despair* (DC 19), *dimension door*, *mass bull's strength*, *mass enlarge*

TACTICS

Before Combat If Malfeshnekor hears activity outside, he casts *invisibility sphere* on himself. In the following rounds, he casts *blink* and *mass bull's strength*, then waits for his intruders to enter.

During Combat Malfeshnekor prefers to engage foes inside of his prison in melee, casting *rage* on the first round of combat. He saves *crushing despair* and *charm monster* to use against foes who attack him with ranged attacks beyond the limits of this room.

Morale Malfeshnekor has no choice but to fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 18, **Con** 19, **Int** 18, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +22

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Power Attack

Skills Bluff +18, Climb +21, Diplomacy +18, Hide +13 (+17 in wolf form), Intimidate +20, Jump +25, Knowledge (history) +10, Listen +16, Move Silently +18, Sense Motive +16, Spot +16, Tumble +17

Languages Common, Giant, Goblin, Worg, Infernal

SQ change shape

Treasure: Each of the racks in the northern corners contains 30 eternal candles, minor magic candles that burn eternally without heat, similar to a *continual flame* spell but shedding only shadowy light in a five-foot radius. Each eternal candle is worth 25 gp.

A single silver coffer sits on its side on one of the shelves in the western alcove. The coffer itself is worth 100 gp, but the real treasure sits inside, buried in a bed of fine white sand—a *ring of force shield*. When activated, the shieldlike pane of force generated manifests as a seven-pointed star—the Sihedron rune.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Relatively little involving the metaplot of Rise of the Runelords occurs during the course of "Burnt Offerings." Although its events are closely tied to Karzoug's awakening, and certain characters in the adventure have ties to characters who the PCs are destined to meet later in the campaign, the adventure's primary purpose is to introduce them to their new home of Sandpoint and to instill in them a desire to protect it and its citizens.

BURNT OFFERINGS



In the short term, the goblin menace facing Sandpoint is most easily dealt with by defeating Nualia; with her out of the picture, her surviving minions quickly fall to bickering among themselves. Of them all, only Tsuto might harbor enough of a need for revenge against the PCs that he might become a recurring problem. Defeating Malfeshnekor is purely optional; doing so causes the Thistletop goblins to fall apart as a tribe over the course of a few months. Without Nualia to lead all five tribes, the goblins return to being only a minor menace at the fringes of the wild lands.

The second danger facing Sandpoint is, of course, Erylium and the *runewell* in the Catacombs of Wrath. Defeating the quasit certainly robs the area of an organizing force, but unless the PCs also defuse the *runewell*, sinspawn periodically emerge from below to cause problems for the town. Without a major source of wrathful souls, they never become a significant threat, but the place remains a peril. Eventually, the PCs will be returning to the Catacombs of Wrath, but for now, let them think that deactivating the *runewell* closes the book on this particular dungeon.

In any event, once the PCs have stopped Nualia's plans for good, they deserve a rest and a chance to relax in Sandpoint. Give them some time to craft magic items, bolster relation-

EXTRA XP?

You might find that once your players have gone through everything in this adventure, including the Catacombs of Wrath and the lower level of Thistletop, they're well into 4th level, and may even be pushing 5th. But before you panic and begin worrying that the PCs are going to be too high-level for "The Skinsaw Murders" (which assumes PCs start at 4th level), keep in mind the fact that not all of the encounters in "Burnt Offerings" need to be completed in order for the PCs to rescue Sandpoint from Nualia and her goblin army.

In fact, it's probably best to consider starting "The Skinsaw Murders" at about the point where the PCs defeat Nualia, even if they haven't reached Malfeshnekor or set foot in the Catacombs of Wrath. Erylium and Malfeshnekor have languished in their respective dungeons for centuries and they can wait for the PCs to get to them!

ships with NPCs, and perhaps meet new characters in town. They might even have a few additional encounters with local creatures; a lost goblin snake (p 88) that ends up in the harbor can rile things up pretty good, and the appearance of an attic whisperer (p 92) might give the PCs a creepy bit of fore shadowing for the inevitable Skinsaw Murders.

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LIGHT OF THE LOST COAST

Those who head north from Magnimar along the rocky coastline quickly find themselves in a peculiar country. Fog drapes the rolling landscape, floating spectrally along damp and lonely moors. Small woodlands grace the region, their tangled depths redolent of nettles and pepperwood and pine sap, while further inland, river valleys lined by majestic redwoods wind between ragged tors and limestone escarpments. This vastness and the sense of isolation have earned the region its local name. This is the Lost Coast.

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Yet there are pockets of civilization along the Lost Coast. Traditional Varisian campsites can be found in nearly every gulch and hollow along the cliff-lined reaches, and lonely houses sit upon bluffs now and then—domiciles for eccentrics or the rich seeking a bit of peace far from the bustle of Magnimar's streets. Roadside inns grace the Lost Coast road every 24 miles or so, placed by virtue of the distance most travelers can walk given a day's travel. Low stone shrines to Desna, goddess of wanderers and patron of the Varisians, give further opportunities for shelter should one of the all-too-common rainstorms catch the traveler unaware. Given time, any of these seeds of civilization could bloom into a full-grown town, or even a city. It's happened once already, along the shores of a natural harbor nestled among the cliffs some 50 miles northeast of Magnimar. What was once a larger-than-normal Varisian campsite in the shadow of an ancient ruined tower has become the Lost Coast's largest town: Sandpoint.

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As one approaches the town of Sandpoint, the footprint of civilization upon the Lost Coast grows more clear. Farmlands in the outlying moors and river valleys grow more numerous, and the blue-green waters of the Varisian Gulf bear more and more fishing vessels upon its surface. Passage over creeks and rivers is more often accomplished by wooden bridge than ford, and the Lost Coast Road itself grows wider and better-kept. Sight of Sandpoint from either approach (south or east) is kept hidden by the large upthrust limestone pavements known as the Devil's Platter or the arc of rocky outcroppings known as Whistler's Tors, but as the final bend in the road is rounded, Sandpoint's smoking chimneys and bustling streets greet the traveler with open arms and the promise of warm beds, a welcome sight indeed for those who have spent the last few days alone on the Lost Coast Road.

From the south, entrance to Sandpoint is governed by a wooden bridge, while from the north a low stone wall gives the town a bit of protection. Here, the Lost Coast Road passes through a stone gatehouse that is generally watched by one or two guards—the southern bridge is typically unattended. Aside from the occasional goblin, the citizens of Sandpoint have traditionally had little worries about invasion or banditry—the region simply isn't populated enough to make theft a lucrative business. Hanging from a bent nail at both the gatehouse and the southern bridge is a sign and a mirror—painted on each sign is the message: "Welcome to Sandpoint! Please stop to see yourself as we see you!"

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Small Town conventional (mayor); **AL** NG

GP Limit 800 gp; **Assets** 49,600 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 1,240

Type isolated (90% human, 3% halfling, 2% dwarf, 2% elf, 1% half-elf, 1% gnome, 1% half-orc)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Kendra Deverin mayor (NG female human aristocrat 4/expert 3);

Belor Hemlock, sheriff (CG human male fighter 4); **Abstalar**

Zantus, town priest (CG male human cleric 4); **Titus Scarnetti**, nobleman (LN male human aristocrat 6); **Ethram Valdemar**, nobleman (NG male human aristocrat 5/expert 2); **Lonjiku Kaijitsu**, nobleman (LN aristocrat 3/expert 2)

Sandpoint's History

Millennia ago, before the fall of Thassilon, what is known today as the Lost Coast was not a coast at all. It was a series of rocky bluffs and cliffs that ran through a vast moor that stretched between the end of the Fogscar Mountains south to the Mushfens. Called the Rasp, this ridge of stony tors and limestone escarpments marked the boundary between the nations of Shalast and Bakrakhan. When Thassilon fell, the nation of Bakrakhan collapsed and slid into the sea, forming what is called today the Varisian Gulf—the Rasp became the region's new coastline.

Before these cataclysmic events, the Rasp was heavily patrolled by the armies of Shalast and Bakrakhan. Violent clashes between the two were common. Karzoug, leader of Shalast, used his impressive magic and giant slaves to erect immense statues in his image along the Rasp, granite sentinels that stood hundreds of feet in height and from whose stony eyes he could look out upon the nation of Bakrakhan from the safety of his throne in distant Xin-Shalast. In response, Alaznist, leader of Bakrakhan, built several destructive watchtowers called Hellstorm Flumes along the Rasp. Each of these towers housed a contingent of her soldiers, commanded by sorcerers and thaumaturges hand-picked from her personal guard. Atop each Flume burned a constant vortex of arcane fire, one that its commander could direct to scorch intruding armies for miles around. The Flumes did a remarkable job at keeping Karzoug's forces from effectively invading Bakrakhan, while his own Sentinel Statues prevented Alaznist from launching any surprise invasions of her own. And so the two nations existed in tenuous balance until the cataclysmic fall of their world.

After Thassilon's fall and Bakrakhan's destruction, the Rasp became the new coastline. Karzoug's Sentinel Statues collapsed, although here and there fragments of these once mighty guardians still stand. Bakrakhan's Hellstorm Flumes fared no better—most of these watch towers fell into the sea during the cataclysm. Only one remained above the waves, and even it crumbled to less than a quarter of its original height. Varisian travelers preserved in their oral traditions stories of how ruined towers once cast fire down upon the surrounding lands, but over the generations, these tales evolved. The ruin's location at the edge of the sea seemed to indicate that it was once a lighthouse, and in time, beams of fire became beams of light. Today, the Varisians view the last Hellstorm Flume as nothing more than an ancient ruined lighthouse, a landmark they call the Old Light. No record of the tower's destructive purpose remains in the modern mind, yet clues to its violent legacy remain unsuspected in catacombs that once connected to the tower's dungeons.

More recently, settlers from the southern nation of Cheliah have come to Varisia. The city of Magnimar was settled by colonists dissatisfied with the strong reliance on Chelish support in Eastern Varisia, and before long the need for additional farmland

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grew apparent. To the south, the sloppy expanse of the Mushfens made farming difficult, so the settlers turned their eyes northward along the Lost Coast. For much of its length, the coast offered little shelter, with one exception—a perfect cove about 50 miles away. A cove overlooked by a curious stone ruin.

The foundation of a new town is not a matter to be taken lightly, nor one to be funded by one man. Four powerful families from Magnimar had designs on the region, and rather than work against each other, they consolidated their efforts and formed the Sandpoint Mercantile League. These four families, the Kaijitsus (glassmakers and jewelers), the Valdemars (shipbuilders), the Scarnettis (loggers), and the Deverins (farmers and brewers), sailed north to claim their land after securing the rights from the Charterhouse in Magnimar. Yet when they arrived, they found the place already settled by a large tribe of Varisians.

Refusing to be set back, the Sandpoint Mercantile League began a series of talks with the Varisians, promising them an important place in the new township. Unfortunately, after a week of talks that seemed to be going nowhere, an impatient man named Alamon Scarnetti took matters into his own hands. Rounding up a group of his brothers and cousins, the Scarnettis mounted a murderous raid on the Varisian camp, intent on killing them all and leaving evidence to blame local goblins for the deed. Yet the Scarnettis, too drunk and overconfident, managed to kill only five Varisians before they were themselves forced to flee, leaving behind three of their own.

The Sandpoint Mercantile League fled back to Magnimar, and in the months to follow were embroiled in the repercussions of Alamon's assault. Magnimar's Varisian Council demanded punishment for all four families, but the High Court arbitrated a peace between them, in no small thanks to the remarkable diplomatic skills of a young bard and member of one of the families accused—Almah Deverin. Not only did she manage to assuage the Varisians' call for blood payment, she also managed to salvage the plans for Sandpoint by promising not only to incorporate the worship of Desna into the new town's cathedral, but to pay the Varisian Council a generous share of any profits made by Sandpoint businesses over the course of the next 40 years. One year later, the Sandpoint Mercantile League began construction on several buildings with the full cooperation of the Varisian people. In the 42 years since Sandpoint's foundation, it has flourished. Although the initial term of the compact with the Varisian Council has passed, Sandpoint's government has elected to extend the compact another 20 years, much to the consternation of a few locals.

Today, Sandpoint is a thriving community. Many industries, including fishing, lumber, farming, hunting, brewing, tanning, shipbuilding, and Kaijitsu's own legacy of glassmaking, have flourished, luring skilled laborers from as far as Korvosa and Riddleport to relocate here. Yet Sandpoint's location on the Lost Coast has also recently drawn settlers of another bent. As explorers and adventurers begin to piece together the fragments of ancient Thassilon's influence over the region so long ago, the presence of Thassilonian ruins have acted as a magnet. The Old Light is no exception, and a few of Sandpoint's recent arrivals are more interested in this ruin than anything else.

Over its four decade history, Sandpoint has been thankfully free of major disasters. Every winter brings its share of strong storms, yet the natural harbor, sandbars, and cliffs do a remarkable job of blunting the force of wind and wave, leaving the town relatively untouched. Elders in town spin yarns of a few really big storms, but apart from the town's somewhat rocky beginning with the Varisians, only two events have really qualified as disasters: the Sandpoint Fire and Chopper. These two events, occurring in such close and recent proximity as they have, are generally lumped together as the "Late Unpleasantness," even though the two events didn't have any obvious links. Natives of Sandpoint are reluctant to talk about either event, preferring to look ahead to brighter times.

The Late Unpleasantness

When Jervis Stoot made clear his intentions to build a home on the island just north of the Old Light, locals paid him no mind. Jervis had already garnered something of a reputation for eccentricity when he began his one-man crusade to carve depictions of birds on every building in town. Stoot never made a carving without securing permission, but his incredible skill at woodcarving made it a given that, if Stoot picked your building as the site of his latest project, you seized the opportunity. "Sporting a Stoot" soon grew to be something of a bragging point, and Jervis eventually extended his gift to include ship figureheads and carriages. Those who asked or tried to pay him for his skill were rebuffed—Stoot told them, "There ain't no birds in that wood for me t'set free," and went on his way, often wandering the streets for days before noticing a hidden bird in a fencepost, lintel, steeple, or doorframe, which he'd then secure permission to "release" with his trusty hatchets and carving knives.

Stoot's excuse for wanting to move onto the isle seemed innocent enough—the place was a haven for local birdlife, and his claim of "Wantin' ta be with th' birds" seemed to make sense. So much so, in fact, that the guild of carpenters (with whom Stoot had maintained a friendly competition for several years) volunteered to build a staircase, free of charge, along the southern cliff face so that Stoot could come and go from his new home with ease. For 15 years, Stoot lived on the island. His trips into town grew less and less frequent, making it something of an event when he chose a building to host a new Stoot.

Sandpoint was no stranger to crime, or even to murder. Once or twice a year, passions flared, robberies went bad, jealousy grew too much to bear, or one too many drinks were drunk, and someone would end up dead. But when the bodies began to mount five years ago, the town initially had no idea how to react. Sandpoint's sheriff at the time was a no-nonsense man named Casp Avertin, a retired city watch officer from Magnimar. Yet even he was ill-prepared for the murderer who came to be known as Chopper. Over the course of one long winter month, it seemed that every day brought a new victim to light. Each was found in the same terrible state: bodies bearing deep cuts to the neck and torso, hands and feet severed and stacked nearby, and the eyes and tongue plucked crudely from the head and missing entirely.

Over the course of that terrible month, Chopper claimed 25 victims. His uncanny knack at eluding traps and pursuit quickly

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wore on the town guard, taking particular toll on Sherrif Avertin, who increasingly took to drinking. In any event, Sherrif Avertin himself became Chopper's last victim, slain upon catching the murderer in a narrow lane—known now as Chopper's Alley—as he was mutilating his latest victim. Yet in the battle that followed, Avertin managed a telling blow against the killer. When the town guard found both bodies several minutes later, they were able to follow the killer's bloody trail.

A trail that led straight to the stairs of Stoot's Rock.

At first, the town guard refused to believe the implications, and feared that Chopper had come to claim poor Jervis Stoot as his 26th victim. Yet what the guards found in the modest home atop the isle, and in the larger complex of rooms that had been carved into the bedrock below, left no room for doubt. Jervis Stoot and Chopper were the same, and the eyes and tongues of all 25 victims were found upon a horrific altar to a birdlike demon whose name none dared speak aloud. Stoot himself was found dead at the base of the altar, having plucked his own eyes and tongue loose in a final offering. The guards collapsed the entrance to the chambers, burned Stoot's house, tore down the stairs, and did their best to forget. Stoot himself was burned on the beach in a pyre, his ashes blessed and then scattered in an attempt to stave off an unholy return of his evil spirit.

As fate would have it, the people of Sandpoint would soon have a new tragedy to bear, one that almost eclipsed Chopper's rampage. A month after the murderer was slain, a terrible fire struck Sandpoint. The fire started in the Sandpoint Chapel and spread quickly. As the town rallied to save the church, the fire spread, consuming the North Coast Stables, the White Deer Inn, and three homes. In the end, the church burnt to the ground, leaving the town's beloved priest Ezakien Tobyn dead.

All that remains today of the once-loved Stoot carvings are ragged scars on buildings and figureheads where owners used hatchets to remove what had become a haunting reminder of a wolf in their fold. The homes and businesses ravaged by the fire have been reconstructed, and the Sandpoint Chapel has finally been rebuilt as well. With the consecration of this new cathedral, Sandpoint can finally put the dark times of the Late Unpleasantness in the past.

SANDPOINT AT A GLANCE

Most of the buildings in Sandpoint are made of wood, with stone foundations and wood shingle roofs. The majority are single-story structures, with a few noted exceptions. The town is often thought of as two districts by the locals. Uptown consists of areas 1–12. Most of these buildings are relatively new, and the streets are open and less crowded. This section of town is also physically above the rest, situated on a level bluff overlooking the southern half of town, which consists of areas 13–46. The majority of the town's buildings can be found downtown, which grows increasingly crowded as available space is claimed by new arrivals. Downtown is built on a gentle slope that runs from a height of about 60 feet above sea level to the west down to only a few feet above the waterline to the east and south.

Sandpoint Harbor is a fairly deep natural harbor, 30 feet for most of its expanse, with sharply rising slopes near the shore. The languid waters of the Turandarok River wind down from the hinterlands, skirting Devil's Platter to empty into the harbor—the river is often used to transport lumber harvested far upriver down to the local saw mill. South of town rises another bluff on which Sandpoint's most affluent landowners have staked their claims.

Only a few hundred feet north of town rises an upthrust spur of rocky land topped with a few trees—this is known now as Chopper's Isle, once the home to Sandpoint's most notorious criminal. A remote outcropping accessible only by flight or by a skilled climber, locals now believe the isle to be haunted by Chopper's ghost. Children often dare each other to go out to the isle's base at low tide and touch the barren cliff face that surrounds it, but no one's visited the top in years.

The sight that strikes all visitors to Sandpoint at first is the ruins of the Old Light. The original height of this tower is unknown, but those who have studied the ancient architecture of the crumbling remains estimate it might have stood more than 700 feet tall. Today, less than a quarter of that remains. The Old Light rises from sea level and is built into the face of a 120-foot-tall cliff, the tower extending another 50 feet above that level to culminate in ragged ruins. The remaining shell is yet another reminder that neither the Chelaxians nor the Varisians are the first settlers of this land, yet apart from a few badly weathered carvings signifying that the peak of this tower once held a brilliant light, no insight to the tower's true purpose remains.

1. Sandpoint Cathedral

Easily the largest building in Sandpoint, this impressive cathedral is also the town's newest structure. Built over the foundations of the previous chapel, Sandpoint Cathedral is not dedicated to the worship of a single deity. Rather, it gathers under its eaves the six most commonly worshiped deities in the region, providing chapels for all of these deities in a communal forum. In a way, Sandpoint Cathedral is six different churches under one impressive roof.

Yet even the previous chapel wasn't the first holy site in this location. The core of both the original chapel and the new cathedral is an open-air courtyard surrounding a set of seven standing stones themselves surrounding a circular stone altar. These stones served the Varisians for centuries as a place of worship; although they generally venerated Desna at these stones, the stones themselves have a much older tradition. Unknown to anyone alive today, the seven standing stones once represented the seven Thassilonian schools of magic and served as a focus for wizards who wished to direct the destructive power of the nearby Hellstorm Flume. No one in Sandpoint suspects the standing stones are anything more than an ancient site of worship. Varisian oral tradition maintains that the seven stones represent the seven towers of Desna's otherworldly palace, but this is merely a story perpetuated by early Varisian seers eager to hide yet another bit of their homeland's destructive history.

The original chapel built here was a collection of six different shrines, each its own building and connected to the others by open-air walkways. Desna's worship was incorporated into

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these shrines as part of the peace accord with the local Varisians, but the original builders also incorporated five other deities as well. Four of these (Abadar, Sarenrae, Shelyn, and Gozreh) were patrons of the original founders of the Sandpoint Mercantile Consortium, while the fifth, Erastil, was the most popular among the initial settlers.

When the chapel burnt to the ground five years ago, Mayor Deverin set into motion a bold initiative. Not only would the chapel be rebuilt, but it would be done on a grand scale. A cathedral would be built in place of the chapel, and it would be made of stone and glass. Funding for this project came partially from the founding families, partially from Sandpoint businesses eager to earn favor in the eyes of the gods, and partially from the respective churches. It took years to finish the cathedral, but the end result is truly impressive. To the south, facing Sandpoint's heart, are the shrines of civilization: Erastil and Abadar. To the west, offering a view of the Old Light and the sea beyond, are the shrines of Shelyn and Gozreh. And to the east, offering a view of the Sandpoint Boneyard and the rising sun, are the shrines of Sarenrae and Desna.

The previous chapel hosted less than a dozen acolytes, led by a well-loved cleric named Ezakien Tobyne, who sadly perished in the fire that claimed the church. The new high-priest of Sandpoint is his most accomplished student, a pleasant man named **Abstalar Zantus** (CG male human cleric 4). Himself a worshiper of Desna, Abstalar is very open about matters of faith and has slipped into the role of adviser for worshipers of other gods of Sandpoint with ease.

More information about the six gods and goddesses of Sandpoint can be found in the *Rise of the Runelords Player's Guide*.

2. Sandpoint Boneyard

Set in the shadow of the Sandpoint Cathedral and accessible via a gate to the north or from several doors leading into the cathedral itself, this expansive cemetery overlooks the Turandarok River. Stone vaults owned by affluent members of the town stand near the cemetery's edges or at its center, while dozens of humble plots, each marked with a simple gravestone, sit amid trees and shrubberies. The boneyard is well-maintained, kept by a man named **Naffer Vosk** (NG male human rogue 1/cleric 2), a deformed smuggler Father Tobyne took pity on after his ship wrecked just north of town a decade ago. Naffer has found redemption in Sarenrae, and despite a twisted spine that, from birth, has given him a sinister lurching gait, he's one of the town's most devout citizens. He keeps the boneyard meticulously clean and is also responsible for ringing the church bells every day at dawn, noon, and dusk.

3. The White Deer

A pair of wooden life-sized deer, carved with painstaking care from white birch, stand astride the entrance to this sizable tavern and inn. The White Deer commands an impressive view of the Varisian Gulf to the north. The building is new, recently rebuilt after the previous inn at this location burnt to the ground five years ago in the same fire that destroyed the Sandpoint Chapel. The new building is a grand affair, three stories tall with a stone first floor

and wooden upper floors with a dozen large rooms that can accommodate two to three guests each.

A somber and quiet Shoanti man named **Garridan Viskalai** (LN male human expert 4) owns the White Deer and runs the place with the aid of his family and a few local girls. Although his parents were members of the Shriikirri-Quah tribe, they abandoned their ties to settle in Sandpoint. Garridan regrets their choice, but his love for his wife and family keeps him rooted firmly in town.

Eager to encourage visitors to stay at his inn, Garridan keeps the prices of his rooms and board low, matching those of the Rusty Dragon (area 37) despite the fact that his accommodations are much cleaner and more spacious. Still, his gruff attitude tends to make his establishment less popular than the Dragon. Garridan is the brother of Sandpoint's sheriff, Belor Hemlock, although the two of them are in a long-running feud stemming from what Garridan sees as his brother's complete abandonment of Shoanti tradition.

4. The Way North

As with several other buildings in the vicinity, this one-story structure was recently rebuilt after the Sandpoint Fire. Originally a stable, the building has been converted by its owner, an aged but spry gnome named **Veznutt Parooh** (NG male gnome wizard 2/expert 4), into a cramped and cluttered library to house his tremendous collection of maps and sea charts. Maps of local regions, from the immediate vicinity up to the whole of Varisia and the Storval Plateau, can be purchased from him for prices ranging from 5 gp to 100 gp, depending on the size and level of detail. When not here crafting copies of old maps, Veznutt can usually be found arguing over history with his best friend Ilsoari at Turandarok Academy (area 27).

5. Jeweler

This squat stone building escaped the fire that ravaged northern Sandpoint, much to the relief of its owner, a wild-haired jeweler named **Maver Kesk** (LG male human expert 3). Maver retains a half-dozen local toughs (LN human warrior 3) as guards, but he has a habit of leaving doors and vaults open—a trait his wife **Pennae Kesk** (LN female human commoner 2) often berates him for publicly.

6. Junker's Edge

Garbage gathered by Gorvi's boys (see area 7) is routinely dumped over the edge of this cliff to gather on the beach below. Several of the town's Gozreh worshipers (in particular Hannah Velerin; see area 45) rankle at this practice, but until an equally cost-effective and convenient option is presented, the town council is reticent to change its ways. In any event, the sea generally makes short work of the junk, ensuring it never piles up too high.

Unknown to the citizens of Sandpoint, another reason the garbage never grows too high is the fact that goblins from the Seven Tooth Tribe regularly sneak along the coast to raid the beach for bits of metal, scraps of food, not-quite-broken tools, and other "valuable" prizes. The Seven Tooth goblins have made a name for themselves among the local goblin tribes as the best traders as a result.

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7. Gorvi's Shack

This dilapidated shack is home to one of Sandpoint's few half-orcs, a fat, heavily tattooed lummoxt named **Gorvi** (CN male half-orc warrior 3). Despite the ramshackle look of his home, Gorvi's made quite a pretty penny for himself serving as Sandpoint's dung-sweeper, enough that he employs about two dozen vagrants and curs who would otherwise be causing trouble along the boardwalk, paying them regularly in copper to haul one of his distinctive red wheelbarrows through the streets to collect refuse and garbage. Sandpoint pays him handsomely for his services, a job that no one else really wants but everyone wants to see done. Lately, Gorvi's been making a menace of himself more than usual, spending evenings down on the boardwalk, harassing ladies, and raising hackles at the Hagfish (area 33). Mayor Kendra has had to ask him to ease up on the drinking and carousing more often lately, but Gorvi has grown content in the belief that he won't be run out of town as long as he continues to ensure the streets are clean.

8. Sage

The sole occupant of this ancient building is a cantankerous old man named **Broderick Quink** (NG male human expert 7), a balding expert on Varisian history and engineering. Broderick claims to have spent two decades of his youth studying with dwarven engineers at Janderhoff and three decades as a cataloger at the Great Library of Magnimar, and is continually baffled and enraged that his learning and obvious intelligence haven't afforded him more prestige. Broderick has been studying ancient Thassilonian ruins for the past several years and has recently become obsessed with the Old Light. No one believes his theories that the tower was once a war machine capable of spewing fire to a range of more than a mile.

9. Locksmith

A flamboyant dwarf named **Volioker Briskalberd** (LG male dwarf rogue 2/expert 3) has owned and operated Sandpoint's locksmith business since the town's founding. Something of an institution, most of the town's locks were built by Volioker. He's long been an enemy of the Sczarni (see area 43), who have used both diplomacy and intimidation in their attempts to recruit him to their side. Volioker's distaste for thievery and scoundrels may have its genesis in his childhood as a street orphan in Magnimar, although he's traditionally close-mouthed about his past. He's a tremendous fan of the arts, and never misses a new show at the playhouse.

10. Sandpoint Garrison

This stone fortress serves double duty as Sandpoint's militia barracks and its jail. The jail itself is located in an underground wing, while the above-ground portion houses the town's guard. Sandpoint's town guard consists of a dozen full-time watchmen (human warrior 2); about twice this many servants and other experts (smiths, cooks, bookkeepers, couriers, and the like) dwell here as well. Guards patrol the city alone; there's generally not much trouble beyond the odd drunk for them to handle, so usually only three or four are on duty at any one time.

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Sandpoint also maintains a militia of 62 able-bodied men and women (human warrior 1) who are expected to attend training and exercise here at least once a week. This militia can be brought to service in 1d3 hours.

The garrison is currently under the watchful eye of Sheriff **Belor Hemlock** (CG male human fighter 4), a native Shoanti who inherited the post of sheriff when the previous holder, Casp Avertin, was murdered by Chopper. Belor saw the town through that last terrible night and is generally held to be the man who stopped Chopper's rampage. In the emergency election that followed a week later, the people of Sandpoint officialized his role, and Belor became the first Shoanti sheriff of Sandpoint. Honored and eager to live up to Casp's legacy, Belor changed his last name to its Chelish translation, from Viskalai to Hemlock, a choice that has endeared him to Sandpoint's mostly Chelish populace but hasn't sat well with his brother Garridan (see area 3). Belor's not-as-secret-as-he'd-like romance with Kaye Tesarani (see area 43) has put further strains on his relationship with his family.

The jail below the garrison is generally empty save for a few drunks or Sczarni doing time for some minor crime. Murderers and other hardened criminals generally stay for only a few days before an escort from Mag-nimar arrives to bring them to the high court for trial in the big city. The garrison's jailor is a heavily scarred brute named **Vachedi** (CG male human barbarian 3), a Shoanti tribesman who hopes someday to earn enough money to buy back his two sons from Kaer Magan slavers.

11. Sandpoint Town Hall

The majority of the ground floor of this two-story building consists of a meeting hall large enough to seat most of Sandpoint's adults, although town meetings have rarely been even half so well attended. The upper floor contains offices and storerooms, while a vault in the basement below has been functioning as the town bank for decades. Plans to build a proper bank have been stalled for various reasons since the town was founded. Sandpoint's mayor, **Kendra Deverin** (NG female human aristocrat 4/expert 3), can often be found in this building, tending to the town's needs.

12. Savah's Armory

The northeast corner of this building bears a few scars from the Sandpoint Fire, but fortunately for its owner, **Savah Bevaniky** (NG female human fighter 2/rogue 1), the building escaped significant damage. Savah's shop sells all manner of weapons and armor, including several masterwork items and exotic weapons

like a spiked chain, a dozen masterwork shuriken, and a +1 *repeating crossbow* with a darkwood and ivory stock that bears the name "Vansaya." She's not sure what the name means—she bought the weapon from an adventurer on the way to Riddleport a year ago, and the combination of its high price and complexity has ensured its semi-permanent stay in her shop.

13. Risa's Place

Risa Magravi (NG female human sorcerer 4) operated this tavern for the first 30 years of Sandpoint's history, and even now that she's gone mostly blind in her old age and has left the day-to-day affairs of the job to her three children **Besk**, **Lanalee**, and **Vodger** (NG human commoner 2), the mysterious Varisian sorceress remains a fixture of the tavern. Known as much for Risa's tales of ancient legends and myths as for its spiced potatoes and cider, this tavern is a favorite of the locals if only because its out-of-the-way location ensures strangers rarely come by.

14. Rovanky Tannery

Situated at the edge of town, **Larz Rovanky** (LG male human expert 3) runs Sandpoint's tannery with ruthless efficiency. He expects perfection from his workers and his products, and as a result often works long hours on his own during the stretches when he's temporarily fired the help. His leather and fur goods are of high quality, enough so that locals generally don't mind the extra wait for custom orders while Larz fusses with getting things perfect.

15. Red Dog Smithy

Named for its owner's affection for large red mastiffs, two to three of which can always be seen lounging about nearby, Red Dog Smithy is owned by a bald and powerfully muscled man named **Das Korvut** (LN male human fighter 1/expert 3). Das's temper is, perhaps, his true claim to fame—he has little patience for customers, and even less for everyone else. Sandpoint suffers his foul-mouthed attitude and frequent drunken midnight rants because he really does know his job. And as long as he's busy hammering metal, he stays relatively calm and confined to his smithy. The local children have recently been circulating a somewhat cruel rhyme about Das that they've taken to chanting at hopsquares, a rhyme sure to come to an end once the smith hears it.

"Here comes crazy-man Das Korvut,
Mad as a cut snake in a wagon rut.
See how his chops go bouncity-bounce?
How many people has he trounced?
One! Two! Three! Four..."



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16. The Pillbug's Pantry

Nestled at the base of a cliff and tucked between several old tenements, nothing but a painting of a pillbug perched on a mushroom indicates this building's anything more than yet another home. The proprietor of this establishment is a short, rotund man named **Aliver "Pillbug" Podiker** (LE male human adept 5), an accomplished herbalist, gardener, and secret poisoner. Although he's of mixed Chelish/Varisian blood, the Sczarni (see area 43) have taken to treating him as a full-blooded Varisian. While his primary source of income is from legitimate sales of medicine and potions, he maintains a healthy side-business selling poison to Sczarni locals as well. Before he'll even admit to being a poison merchant, though, a potential customer first has to ask him, "Have any happy pillbugs turned up lately?"

17. Bottled Solutions

This cluttered shop is filled with shelves upon shelves of bottles, bags, and other alchemical containers, some covered with dust and others so new that the pungent stink of their brewing still fills the air. **Nisk Tander** (NG male half-elf wizard 1/expert 2) fancies himself a more gifted alchemist than he really is—items purchased from this shop have a 5% chance of not working as intended, either being subdued, inert, or wildly unpredictable in their actual effects (such as a flask of alchemist's fire bursting in a flash of light that acts as a daze spell in a five-foot-radius, or a vial of antitoxin functioning instead as a vial of acid). A DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check is good enough to determine if something purchased at Bottled Solutions is good or not, but Nisk doesn't take kindly to people looking too closely at his wares before they buy.

18. Cracktooth's Tavern

A particular favorite of patrons of the Sandpoint Theater, Cracktooth's Tavern is always full after the latest show at the nearby playhouse lets out. A large stage gives actors, singers, and anyone else the opportunity to show their stuff. Every night a crowd of would-be entertainers packs the taproom in the hopes of being discovered. Owner **Jesk "Cracktooth" Berinni** (NG human male half-orc expert 3) might look like a thug, but he's actually quite well-read and possesses a scathing wit—nights when he takes the stage to deliver his observations on the political situations in Magnimar are quite popular.

19. House of Blue Stones

This long stone building is primarily a single large chamber, the floor decorated with polished blue stones set within winding pathways of reed mats. This structure was built 10 years after Sandpoint was founded by a wandering monk named Enderaki Sorn—today, the monastery is tended by Enderaki's daughter, **Sabyl** (LN female human monk 4), her father having passed away seven years ago. A worshiper of Irori, the god of self-perfection and knowledge, Sabyl maintains a large collection of old books and scrolls in the basement chambers below. She opens both the meditation floor and her library to fellow worshipers, but

others must convince her of their good intentions with a DC 25 Diplomacy check before she'll let them in. Use of Sabyl's library grants a +4 bonus on Knowledge (history) and Knowledge (the planes) checks.

20. Sandpoint Glassworks

One of the oldest industries in Sandpoint, the Glassworks has been owned by the Kaijitsu family from the town's inception. The glass-working trade has been in the family for generations, and many of their techniques—perfected in distant Minkai—result in dazzling and impressive works that fetch top price among the nobles of Magnimar, Korvosa, and beyond. The Sandpoint Glassworks is detailed in full in "Burnt Offerings."

21. Sandpoint Savories

The smells issuing from this bakery fight against the salty tang of the sea every morning except on Sunday. Owned and operated by the Avertin family for the past two decades, **Alma Avertin** (LG female human expert 7) still hasn't quite recovered from the brutal death of her son Casp five years ago under Chopper's blade. Her twin daughters **Arika** and **Aneka** (LG female human expert 2) all but run the business these days.

22. The Curious Goblin

The sign out in front of this shop shows a wide-eyed goblin reading a book nearly as tall as him. Inside, this bookshop is a testament to one man's obsession with the printed word. **Chask Haladan** (CG male human bard 3/expert 3) has maintained his love affair with books for nearly 70 years and shows no sign of giving it up any time soon. His store is surprisingly complete, and while almost all of his wares are far too pricy for any of the locals to shop here with any frequency, a nest egg gathered in his adventurous youth combined with a frugal lifestyle makes the success of his business secondary to his own satisfaction. Several locals, including Brodert Quink (area 8), Sabyl Sorn (area 19), and Ilisorai Gandethus (area 27) can often be found here, either chatting with Chask or sitting in one of several large chairs, reading.

23. Sandpoint Theater

Brand-new cathedrals and ancient ruins aren't the only incongruities Sandpoint boasts. This massive playhouse, financed entirely by its larger-than-life owner, **Cyrdak Drokus** (CN male human bard 6), features one of the most impressive theaters on this side of Varisia—it certainly competes with the playhouses of Magnimar, a fact that Cyrdak takes great pride in, since he was forced to flee that city for mysterious reasons he's eager to hint at but reticent to expound upon (although they certainly involve another local of note—Jasper Korvaski). The Sandpoint Theater often showcases local talent, but it's the three weekend shows that locals generally look forward to. Cyrdak uses his contacts in Magnimar to great extent, ensuring that the most exciting new productions in the big city are available here as well. Although Cyrdak enjoys flirting with all of Sandpoint's young women, his romantic relationship with Jasper (area 40) is one of the town's worst-kept secrets.

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24. Carpenter's Guild

The vast majority of the buildings in Sandpoint were erected by members of the town's large and eternally-busy Carpenter's Guild. Currently overseen by Guildmaster **Aesrick Battlehorn** (LG male dwarf expert 5), a dwarf who left his homeland with a near heretical fondness for working with wood rather than stone, the Sandpoint Carpenter's Guild has recently been accepting a growing number of projects in the outlying farmlands as well as work about town. The guild has been in a minor feud with the Sandpoint Shipyard (area 46) for years, one that most often flares up over which guild has claim to the best lumber from the mill.

25. Sandpoint Lumber Mill

This long building was one of the first to be built when Sandpoint was founded. Owned by the industrious Scarnetti family, daily operation of the mill has recently been left more and more to a penny-pinching businessman named **Banny Harker** (NG male human expert 3) and his partner **Ibor Thorn** (NG male human expert 2). Neighbors have been complaining that the two have been running their insidiously noisy logsplitter into the wee hours of the night as they rush to keep up with demand in the face of an increased availability of lumber from Magnimar, but Harker's influence with the Scarnettis has so far kept any mandates against operating the logsplitter from coming to pass.

26. General Store

Owned and operated by **Ven Vinder** (LN male human commoner 7) and his family, Sandpoint's oldest and best-stocked general store has a little bit of everything—farm equipment, weapons, tack, tools, furniture, food, and even homemade pies by Ven's wife **Solsta** (LG female human commoner 4). Ven even keeps a shocking supply of alcohol in his basement, although a customer has to ask to see the “wine cellar” before Ven'll admit to his special stock. Ven has a particular fondness for harsh bitter grog and rotgut imported from places as far as the orc city of Urglin. His true pride, though, is his daughters, whom he dotes upon. Lately, he's been increasingly distracted by what he believes is a budding romance between his daughter **Katrine** (NG female human commoner 1) and that no-good Harker from the lumber mill. Unfortunately, Ven's obsession with Katrine's nightlife has rendered him all but blind to the actions of his other daughter **Shayliss** (CN female human commoner 1), whose reputation as “easy” is growing by the month.

27. Turandarok Academy

As families thronged to Sandpoint, the town founders quickly came to realize that they needed somewhere to handle the education of children, a place to house unfortunate orphans, and somewhere to busy older children to keep them from becoming delinquents. The answer was the Turandarok Academy. Part school, part orphanage, retired adventurer **Ilsoari Gandethus** (LN male human wizard 4/rogue 2) volunteered to be the academy's headmaster if he could have the basement of the two-story building to himself. The town agreed, and today, the rooms below the Academy are almost a museum of the strange things and trophies Ilsoari has collected over his years. He keeps these chambers locked, but the children who attend classes on the ground floor and the orphans who live on the upper floor have countless stories about what's down there, ranging from a goblin farm to a nest of phantom spiders to the Sandpoint Devil itself. Although the contents are much less sinister (Ilsoari is all too happy to show off his collection of exotic weapons, strange maps, and monster trophies to anyone who asks nicely), the old wizard does nothing to dissuade the children's tales.

28. Madame Mvashti's House

Although from outside this appears to be an ancient, decrepit manor house with several rooms, only one person lives in this old building—ancient and mysterious **Niska Mvashti** (N female human druid 3/sorcerer 4/mystic theurge 1). Old even when Sandpoint was founded some 40 years ago, Madame Mvashti (as she prefers to be called) is a Varisian historian and seer, part of a long tradition of oracles in her family. As with many seers, the current age's unexpected departures from established prophecies have left her with a lifelong sense of brooding worry. She performs most of her readings with cards or carved bones but seems only very rarely to enjoy casting her predictions.

Madame Mvashti had long complained that the yearly travels of her extended family hurt her bones, and when Sandpoint was founded, as part of the accord with the Sandpoint Mercantile League, the local Varisians demanded a large manor house be built for their respected elder. Once she passed away, the house was to revert to the town's property, but Madame Mvashti has proven exceptionally tenacious and long-lived. She survives primarily on support and volunteer help from local Varisians, although she spits and curses at those she knows belong to the Sczarni. Druids from the hinterlands make weekly visits to her home, often helping her along on the long walks she still enjoys in the nearby countryside.



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29. Grocer's Hall

This building's facade is open to the air where it faces the market. During the day, bins and trays and tables here are heaped with produce brought in that morning from the outlying farms. Near the back of the store are tools, seeds, feed, tack, and other supplies useful for farming. The other half of this building is filled with living quarters, meeting halls, file rooms, and storage. **Olmur Danvakus** (LG male halfling expert 4) took up the post of guildmaster here after the previous guildmaster was murdered by Chopper.

30. Vernah's Fine Clothing

Rynshinn Povalli (NG female half-elf expert 5) has owned and operated this clothing shop for the last five years. The only daughter of a kindly woman named Vernah, Rynshinn never knew her father, Iremiel, only that he was killed by goblins less than a week after she was born. At the time, Vernah's tempestuous affair with the mysterious elven bard was the talk of the town. Every year on the anniversary of Rynshinn's birth, a small package of elven coins, medicine, and toys mysteriously appeared somewhere in the upper floors of this building. Vernah always claimed the gifts were placed by Iremiel's ghost, but locals generally believe the gifts were granted by one of his living relatives. Rynshinn, for her part, holds out against hope that her father somehow survived and that it's not his ghost but him who leaves these mysterious birthday presents.

Since her mother's death five years ago during Chopper's murder spree, Rynshinn has used much of the money from those gifts to expand her mother's tailoring business, and even founded a guild that brings together dozens of quilters, crafters, sewers, and tailors so they can sell their wares here. She's looking into opening a shop in Magnimar as well, but has yet to find a partner there whom she trusts. A number of Sandpoint's young men idly court Rynshinn, who many hold to be the town's most beautiful citizen, but to date, the lonely woman has politely eschewed all possible suitors for reasons she has not shared.

31. Wheen's Wagons

A lanky man named **Bilivar Wheen** (N male human expert 3) owns this workshop. Bilivar is a down-on-his-luck wheelwright who's lately been spending more time at various taverns (especially the Hagfish—area 33) than here working—ever since his daughter Tanethia drowned in the Mill Pond last year, his wife **Vorah** (LN female human commoner 1) has grown more and more shrill and

paranoid that her remaining two children's days are numbered as well. Bilivar's been heard to mutter about packing up and skipping town to some of his drinking buddies at the Hagfish, but no one thinks he'll really follow through on this plan.

32. Scarnetti Mill

As with the Sandpoint Lumber Mill, this building is owned by the Scarnettis. All of the flower and grain produced here is supplied by local farmers. Mysterious fires have claimed the Soggy River Mill, the Biston Pond Mill, and most recently the Cougar Creek Mill, leaving this mill the only functioning grain mill in the region. Accusations of Scarnetti-sponsored arson have been flying high, but the manager of this mill, constantly worried and

sneezing **Courrin Whesterwill** (NG male human expert 2), has gracefully lowered the prices for its use to record lows until the outlying mills can be rebuilt, a gracious move that has alleviated, to some extent, extensive public outcry.

33. The Hagfish

One of Sandpoint's most popular taverns, especially among fishermen and gamblers, the Hagfish is also Sandpoint's best bet for a good old-fashioned seafood meal.

Owned by a gregarious one-legged man named **Jargie Quinn** (CG male human rogue 2/expert 2), the Hagfish gets its name from the large glass aquarium that sits behind the bar, the home of a repellent hagfish that Jargie affectionately calls Norah (despite the fact that he's had "Norah" replaced dozens of times—hagfish

don't live all that long in Quinn's aquarium). Hanging from a nail next to Norah's tank is a leather pouch bulging with coins: prize money for anyone who can drink down a single tankard of "water" scooped from Norah's tank. It's a single silver coin to try, but the trick is that, since she's a hagfish, the water in Norah's tank is thick and horrifically slimy and foul-tasting. Few can stomach the stuff, but those who do get to keep however many coins have accumulated in the pouch, and then get to carve their names in the ceiling beam above the bar. To date, there are only 28 names carved there, and the Hagfish has been in business for nearly 10 years.

But there's certainly more to this tavern than Norah. Jargie's game tables are always well-attended, with games ranging from cards to checkers to dice to darts. Tall tales are a favorite pastime here, with one popular game called "yarning" involving seeing how long a local can string along an impromptu fable without contradicting himself. The most popular subject of these tales is traditionally Old Murdermaw, the legendary giant red snapper



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who might or might not dwell in the depths of the Varisian Gulf. Jargie himself is quite an accomplished yarner, with the ever-changing story of how he lost his leg being his favorite starting point for his tales.

34. Valdemar Fishmarket

Like the Grocer's Guild across the market, the facade of this long building is open to the air. Here, locals can shop among the day's catch, picking out cod, salmon, tuna, shellfish, and even the odd octopus for the evening's meal. **Turch Sterglus** (LG male human rogue 1/expert 5), a retired fisherman with a lazy eye and a wild white beard, runs the fishmarket in a lovably crochety manner, constantly complaining about the weather or the day's catch or the antics of local youth, but always packaging his customers' purchases with a smile and a wink. The fishmarket itself is owned by the Valdemar family, but most locals act as if the building and business were Turch's, often tipping the loveable old man a few extra coins. Turch's five sons, each smarter than the next, have made a career working for their father as fish cleaners, haulers, and even cooks.

35. Sandpoint Market

On most days, Sandpoint's marketplace is empty save for the odd group of children who enjoy using the wide-open area to play whistball or other games. Twice a week, the market fills with vendors. At the start of each week, the farmer's market radically increases the daily selection of goods available at the Grocer's Hall, while all day at the end of the week merchants from Magnimar, Galduria, Nybor, Wartle, and beyond take part in the Town Market. Goods purchased at the Town Market adhere to Sandpoint's 800 gp limit, but prices are generally 75% of the regular asking price.

36. Sandpoint Meat Market

Local butcher **Chod Bevuk** (NG male human expert 3) runs the Sandpoint Meat Market. Half of this building doubles as a slaughterhouse, with the meat itself put on display for sale in the front half of the market. Most of the meat processed here is from livestock or animals caught by hunters. Chod still claims to this day that he encountered Chopper several days before he was ultimately caught and that the two of them fought, leaving Chod with one less finger, but most locals believe that the wound was self-inflicted in an attempt to get attention. Chod's penchant for lies and exaggeration in all matters not relating to his business don't help lend credence to his version of how he lost the little finger of his left hand.

37. The Rusty Dragon

This large structure is Sandpoint's oldest inn, notable for the impressive (and quite rusty) iron dragon that looms on the building's roof, doubling as a lightning rod and decoration. Owned and operated for the past six years by the lovely and popular **Ameiko Kaijitsu** (CG female human aristocrat 1/bard 3/rogue 1), the Rusty Dragon is not only one of the town's most popular eateries (made so, in large part, by the spicy and exotic food served here), but also a great place to meet visitors from out of town, since most newcomers to Sandpoint come upon this inn first, the north Lost Coast Road

being less traveled. It certainly doesn't hurt that Ameiko's exotic beauty is more than matched by her skill at music, and few are the evenings that pass without at least two or three songs by the talented woman. Some bad blood exists between Ameiko and Cyrdak, and one never seems to miss a chance to badmouth the other, but no one in town really understands the reason behind their rivalry. Of greater concern to Ameiko is the long-running feud with her family—leaving town to become an adventurer scandalized her family enough, but when she returned, rich and successful (and with a seemingly endless supply of eccentric hairstyles), with a desire to purchase and renovate Sandpoint's oldest tavern, her family officially took to shunning her. Ameiko claims not to care, but becomes evasive when anyone asks her why she returned to Sandpoint when she was obviously doing well as an adventurer. Some believe she has a secret lover in town, while others theorize that something happened on her last adventure that took the bravery out of her. In any event, the Rusty Dragon is probably the most adventurer-friendly establishment in town, with its ubiquitous "Help Wanted" board near the bar and Ameiko's "discount rooms for anyone who tells an exciting adventure story" policy.

38. Goblin Squash Stables

The sign above this door perpetuates one of the greatest fears of the lowly goblin—being trampled underfoot by a horse. Tended by a retired hunter named **Daviren Hosk** (N male human ranger 4), Daviren's hatred of goblins is nearly legendary in Sandpoint. In a somewhat grisly display, over the entrance to the stable's covered barn is his collection of goblin ears: preserved and nailed to three different rafters, each bearing the goblin's name burned into the leathery flesh—mostly because Daviren knows that writing down a goblin's name is one of the worst things you can do to desecrate his memory. The bitter ranger's pride and joy is a large glass bottle filled with brine in which he's preserved the body of Chief Whartus of the now extinct (due in large part to Daviren) Bonegrinder Tribe.

39. Two Knight Brewery

While Sandpoint's taverns serve a wide variety of spirits, they all proudly serve the mead, ale, and rum brewed here at the Two Knight Brewery. Established almost 40 years ago by two brothers (both worshipers of Abadar and cousins of Mayor Deverin) only a few years after Sandpoint was founded, their expertise at brewing has only increased over the years. Tragically, Wade Deverin was one of the first of Chopper's victims, a murder that has shaken his brother **Gaven's** (LG human male paladin 2/expert 3) faith. Locals whisper that since Wade's death, the brew from here simply hasn't tasted as good, but they would never say something to this effect to Gaven's face.

40. Sandpoint Mercantile League

This large building serves many purposes. One can book passage on a ship bound for other ports, arrange for caravans or carriages for overland travel, or send messages to folk in town or as far away as Korvosa or even Riddleport. Inquiries into land ownership, building construction, and founding new businesses,

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

both in Sandpoint proper and in the surrounding hinterlands, must begin their processes of official foundation here. Although ownership of the league remains split evenly between Sandpoint's four noble families, few of them take part anymore in the actual day-to-day business, leaving such matters in the capable hands of **Sir Jasper Korvaski** (LG male human paladin 3/expert 1). In his younger years, Jasper was a paladin of Abadar, and although he's long since given up the more dangerous lifestyle of a crusader, he remains loyal and devout. Despite his best efforts, his romance with **Cyrdak Drokus** (area 23) has become one of Sandpoint's worst-kept secrets. The Scarnettis, easily Sandpoint's most conservative family, find the rumors of this relationship scandalous and offensive, but it's unclear if they're more offended by the relationship itself or the fact that the majority of Sandpoint is so accepting of it. In any event, the Scarnettis have been doing their best to make things difficult for Jasper in an attempt to not-so-subtly convince him to move back to Magnimar, but the support of the other three families has, so far, kept the Scarnettis from becoming too obnoxious.

41. Sandpoint Boutique

This large boutique and shop sells all manner of clothing, weapons, toys, artwork, books, and tools imported from throughout the world, although most of the wares here are Varisian in nature. The place is owned by **Hayliss Korvaski** (LN female human cleric 2/expert 2), who is, like her brother Jasper, a devout worshiper of Abadar. Yet unlike her brother, her temper isn't braced by a desire to keep everyone happy. Hayliss isn't afraid of making enemies and wears her disdain for the Scarnettis on her sleeve. She's even gone as far as sometimes upcharging her goods for members of the Scarnetti family, in spite of Mayor Deverin's repeated requests to keep the peace.

42. Fatman's Feedbag

If the Hagfish is Sandpoint's most popular tavern, Fatman's Feedbag is its most notorious. Bar fights are common, and Sheriff Hemlock typically has to come down here two or three times a week to sort them out when they grow particularly violent or loud. The majority of the clientele here are Varisian scoundrels or less-reputable sailors.

Most believe this tavern is owned and operated by an enormous man named **Gressel Tenniwar** (CN male human rogue 2/expert 1), but in fact the owner is a lanky thug named **Jubrayl Vhiski** (NE male human rogue 7), one of the Feedbag's regulars. Jubrayl is also the leader of the local gang of Sczarni, an extended network of Varisian thieves, highwaymen, con

artists, graverobbers, smugglers, and murderers. Nearly two dozen of the Varisians in Sandpoint are members of the Sczarni, all cruel and self-serving men and women who take care to maintain respectable jobs as laborers, fishermen, and hunters, but who draw their true income taking part in various illegal Sczarni scams and stunts. Sheriff Hemlock suspects that Jubrayl is the local leader, and would like nothing more than to bring him in, but the Sczarni are experts at walking the line between legalities and taking the blame for their direct superiors. So while Sheriff Hemlock's sent many of Jubrayl's boys to jail over the last several years, he's never come close to the ringleader himself, much to Jubrayl's continued amusement.



43. The Pixie's Kitten

Many of Sandpoint's crasser locals have a much more colorful name for this establishment, but **Kaye Tesarani** (CG female human rogue 3/sorcerer 1) runs the town brothel with class and distinguished grace. She pays her girls and boys quite well, and the three Shoanti bouncers she employs (CG human male barbarian 3) are more than enough to handle troublemakers. Although prostitution isn't illegal in Sandpoint, the Scarnettis have long lobbied for it being outlawed, viewing the Kitten as a place where vice and criminal activity can take root. Certainly, Jubrayl has tried for the last five years to get in on the brothel business, but Kaye's not-so-secret friendship (and romance) with the town's sheriff make this a delicate, long-term goal for the Sczarni at best.

44. The Feathered Serpent

This cramped and cluttered shop smells of a strange mixture of incense, spice, and dust. Its sole proprietor, **Vorvashali Voon** (LN male human wizard 2/rogue 2/expert 2), an exotic-looking character with bright blue eyes, long red hair, and almost bronze-colored skin, is gregarious and excited about every customer. Not everything in his shop is for sale, rendering it part museum in its eclectic collection of strange relics, statues, and monument fragments. Vorvashali's stock changes constantly, as his dozens of contacts from Magnimar come in weekly to buy and trade stock. Adventurers seeking magic items and other tools of the trade can find what they're looking for here more often than not.

45. Hannah's

While Abstalar Zantus (area 1) does his best to take care of Sandpoint's truly sick and needy, he can't help everyone. For minor aches, pains, and illnesses, most of Sandpoint's citizens depend on **Hannah Velerin** (NG female elf cleric 3/expert 1). Hannah spends most of her mornings out in the surrounding

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wilds, gathering herbs or simply enjoying Gozreh's bounty. In the afternoons, she returns to her shop and home here to prepare medicines and receive patients. Hannah's ironically the one to go to when either one wants to end a pregnancy or needs a midwife to aid in a birth; Hannah encourages all of the women she sees to carry to term, and advises the use of pinberry extract to young women as a way to prevent unwanted pregnancies from happening in the first place, but in cases where there's no other option, her other services are discrete and confidential.

46. Sandpoint Shipyard

The southern facade of this long building is open to Sandpoint Harbor, allowing its small army of shipwrights, ropemakers, and sailmakers to work their trade in one of four drydocks right on the shore. The shipyard is owned by the Valdemars, with **Belven Valdemar** (NG male human aristocrat 1/expert 5), old Ethram's eldest son, overseeing the constant work here. Belven is a handsome and quite available bachelor, but his dedication to his craft and family have so far left him little time to entertain the dozens of young women who've been trying to catch his eye for the past several years.

47. Valdemar Manor

This manor house commands a breathtaking view of the town of Sandpoint and the harbor below, as befits the family most connected to the town's shipbuilding and fishing industries. The family itself remains under the patriarchal rule of old **Ethram Valdemar** (NG male human aristocrat 5/expert 2), the only one of the original members of the Sandpoint Mercantile League still alive. Ethram's years are numbered, though, for the old man has a lung infection that keeps coming back, no matter how often the family pays to have it cured.

48. Scarnetti Manor

Perhaps Sandpoint's most notorious noble family, many of Sandpoint's elderly Varisian locals still haven't forgotten or forgiven Alamon Scarnetti's assault on their people more than 40 years ago, even with Alamon 20 years in the ground at the Sandpoint Cemetery. The Scarnetti family, now headed by Alamon's only surviving son **Titus** (LN male human aristocrat 6), controls Sandpoint's mills and the lumber industry. The control of the lumber the Valdemars need for their enterprises is not lost on the Scarnettis, and they use this fact as often as possible to leverage Valdemar support. The Scarnettis are easily Sandpoint's most traditional family, who cling to old Chelish values that are, in many cases, outdated today.

49. Kaijitsu Manor

This manor is the smallest of the four noble houses overlooking Sandpoint, yet the Kaijitsus are perhaps the richest family in town. What this manor lacks in stature and size it more than makes up for in the exotic and impressive furnishings within. **Lonjiku Kaijitsu** (LN aristocrat 3/expert 2) has carried on his father's proud work as glassmaker, and the Sandpoint Glassworks

is perhaps the town's most prosperous business, with its products regularly shipped as far as Korvosa. Lonjiku's accomplishments are all the more impressive when one takes into account that he and his family are newcomers to Varisia, the survivors of an exiled family from Minkai sent over the crown of the world a half-century ago for unknown crimes. Lonjiku was born in Magnimar and has never visited his motherland, but he carries memories of its wonders in the form of stories told to him by his now deceased parents. Yet for all of his success at business, Lonjiku has found the role of father to be one he's particularly ill-suited for. His eldest son Tsuto, in addition to being proof of his wife's affair with an unknown elf, left the region several years ago after an argument that resulted in Lonjiku striking his son with his cane. His eldest daughter Ameiko shamed him not only by becoming an adventurer, but by opening and running a tavern and flophouse—"hardly women's work," he's fond of telling anyone who'll listen. Of course, those who know Lonjiku know his short temper is his real problem.

50. Deverin Manor

Living within the largest manor, the Deverins have traditionally held the role of "leader" in Sandpoint. Old Amos Deverin served as the town's mayor for its first 23 years, and his son Fenchus served for the next 11. Both Deverins perished to unfortunate accidents (Amos to a runaway horse on Festival street and Fenchus to a snakebite while on a boar hunt), leaving Amos's youngest daughter as the heir to the family fortune and a likely candidate for mayor. **Kendra Deverin** (NG female human aristocrat 4/expert 3) didn't initially want the job, but after she was nominated for the role by her close friend Casp Avertin, she won the election by a landslide, something her primary opponent in the election, Titus Scarnetti, has never quite come to terms with. For some time there was talk of her and Casp becoming wife and husband, but Casp's death at Chopper's hands cut that short. Kendra's recovered now from the shock, but has put aside all interest in romance for politics. She shares this manor with her brother's rather large family, and although her sister-in-law Vana constantly complains about needing even more space and luxuries, Kendra has done a saintly job so far in keeping her temper under control.

The Hinterlands

On page 33 of this volume of *Pathfinder*, you'll find a map of the farmlands and wilderness that immediately surrounds the town of Sandpoint. "Burnt Offerings" sends the PCs to Thistletop and on a short boar hunt into Tickwood, but a significant portion of the next adventure in the campaign, "The Skinsaw Murders," takes place outside of town and along the Lost Coast. Additional details on locations like the Devil's Platter, Foxglove Manor, Habe's Sanitarium, and the Dragon's Punchbowl, including wandering monster charts for the hinterlands, can be found in *Pathfinder* #2. In the meantime, there should be plenty in the town of Sandpoint, in the Catacombs of Wrath, and in the dungeons of Thistletop to keep your PCs busy before they turn their attentions to other mysteries of the Lost Coast.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



THASSILON

NOTES ON A FALLEN EMPIRE

The Thassilonian wizard is a figure straight from legend: rune-marked, sneering, and powerful enough to destroy armies with a word or summon creatures who are now myths themselves. Their empire rose on the back of a prudent king and his seven greatest wizards, but magic and the corruptions of power unraveled it in the end. When wizards runemark their goods, they take part in the traditions of the Empire, where runes marked all the property of the great wizards, and giants and dragons bent to human will.

THASSILON

INTRODUCTION TO THASSILON

The sprawling empire of Thassilon was powered by conquest and its sophisticated rune magic. That magic defined the empire's rulers and included various forms of blood sacrifice, powerful glyph-laying, and dimensional warping. Without rune magic and the binding of the rune giants, the Thassilon legions would never have conquered their vast lands. With them, though, they were unstoppable.

The Laying of Runes

The early empire was not founded by the runelords who later grew to dominate it, but rather by the First King Xin, who was honored in the names of the empire's seven capital cities. More than 11,000 years ago, Xin established lawful orders of knighthood and wizardry, endowed monastic traditions, and devoted donations of the kingdom's wealth to charity and the end of hunger. Yet, more than a benevolent ruler, Xin was a visionary. In seeking to create a paradise of civilization within the span of his own lifetime, he called out to beings from beyond reality and bargained with ancient dragons. These mysterious accords granted Xin an understanding of rune magic—said by some to be the written language of creation—and brought the worship of the mysterious goddess Lissala to Thassilon. Inscribing his orders, contracts, and writs with these symbols of power, he regulated trade, established justice, and arranged his ever-growing lands into seven great domains with an efficiency inspired by magical aid and compulsion. Xin's just, magic-suffused decrees became known as the Rune Law, and brought about incredible works, empowered the servants of the domain, and compelled the creation of wonders, all of which motivated Thassilon's swift ascendance in power and influence. This was called the Celestial Age of the Empire.

Runelords and Rune Giants

Xin outlived his creation in some ways. Unable to keep track of all his swiftly growing empire's provinces, taxes, armies, and subjects, he appointed governors, favoring arcanists for their knowledge and the ease with which they could be bribed with insights into rune magic. The greatest of these magistrates were the seven runelords, powerful wizards who showed especial skill and passion for the use of runes and the imperial arcana, which would later be known as sin magic (see sidebar). Yet, as these wizards' powers increased, they grew discontent with servitude and living at the whim of the First King. In secret, they forged their own pacts with mysterious extraplanar powers, covetous dragons, and the devious aboleths. From these bargains, the first rune giants were born, 40-foot-tall paragons of strength and obedience that could in turn control the other giant races. With these armies of giant slaves the runelords erected not just roads and walls, but immense monoliths and statues in honor of—at first—the empire, but later, their own images.

Over time, the emperor's generals, advisors, and runelords saw that Old Xin (as he was called in his dotage) could not maintain his mastery of the realm or his potent magics. After ruling 110 years, Xin's magic consumed him in a conflagration of scarlet flames that destroyed much of the imperial palace, and left no remains

SIN MAGIC

Each runelord was a master of a school of magic, a specialist wizard of the deadliest caliber. In Thassilon, there were only seven recognized schools of magic (their wizards lumped divination magic into the universal school), and each school was associated with one of the seven virtues of rule.

Envy: The art of suppressing magic other than your own. *Related School:* abjuration. *Prohibited Schools:* evocation and necromancy.

Sloth: Calling agents and minions to perform your deeds for you, or creating what you needed as you need it. *Related School:* conjuration. *Prohibited Schools:* evocation and illusion.

Lust: Magically controlling and dominating others to satisfy your desires, and controlling other creatures' minds, emotions, and wills. *Related School:* enchantment. *Prohibited Schools:* necromancy and transmutation.

Wrath: Mastery of the raw destructive powers of magic, and channeling those destructive forces. *Related School:* evocation. *Prohibited Schools:* abjuration and conjuration.

Pride: Perfecting your own appearance and your domain through trickery and illusions. *Related School:* illusion. *Prohibited Schools:* transmutation and conjuration.

Gluttony: Magic that manipulates the physical body to provide an unending thirst for life. *Related School:* necromancy. *Prohibited Schools:* enchantment and abjuration.

Greed: Magically transforming things into objects of greater value or use, and enhancing the physical self. *Related School:* transmutation. *Prohibited Schools:* enchantment and illusion.

CAMPAIGN OUTLINE

Spanning the first six volumes of *Pathfinder*, the Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path takes PCs from 1st level and pastoral Sandpoint to higher than 15th level and the impenetrable spires of Xin-Shalast. For GMs preparing to run this campaign, the following pages present a brief outline of the upcoming adventures. GMs are encouraged to use these previews to foreshadow upcoming events and create side adventures custom suited to their campaigns.



POSITIVE THASSILONIAN RUNES

of the First King. Careless of their emperor's mysterious end, the runelords seized their domains for themselves, subjugating Xin's most powerful generals and viziers and leaving his eldest son a puppet emperor in the city of Xin—a small mountain prison where he could be controlled. The runelords themselves turned to greater plans, furthering their own control of the runes in hopes of subjugating their peers. Each meant to claim the empire for himself, master the runes as Xin had, and reap the wealth of the nation to fuel magics beyond any the First King had ever imagined.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

THE SKINSAW MURDERS

By Richard Pett, Level 4–6

A murderer terrorizes Sandpoint. Victims are left mutilated and faceless, and carved into their chests is a mysterious rune left by a madman calling himself “The Skinsaw Man.” The PCs investigate, encounter the Skinsaw Man’s ghoul minions, and confront the murderer—the PCs’ acquaintance Alden Foxglove—in a haunted mansion near Sandpoint. There, it’s revealed that he is but an agent of a larger cult based in the city of Magnimar.

Hearing of the PC’s involvement with the Skinsaw Man, vexed Magnimarian guards attempt to hold the PCs as suspects. The PCs must travel to the city and avoid being jailed while investigating the Skinsaw cult, whose agents prove all too aware of their pursuit. The search leads to a decommissioned clocktower, which the PCs must infiltrate, then battle the cultists and confront their leader, a sadistic lamia from the ruins of Xin-Shalast. Unknown to the PCs, the lamia has been charged with harvesting “souls of greed,” to aid in the Runelord Karzoug’s awakening, and her use of the Sihedron Rune—the same symbol both Nualia and the Skinsaw Man employed—hints at a larger conspiracy.



NEUTRAL THASSILONIAN RUNES

Ways of the Empire

At its height, the Empire of Thassilon covered an area more than a thousand miles wide, from the oceans to soaring mountains, over deserts and along rivers—a region vast in scope and natural riches. This empire’s figureheads were the sons and daughters of Xin, but they were almost powerless. In practice, Thassilon was ruled by the seven powerful runelords, maniacal arcanists who used magic to fuel their own decadence. It’s unclear from records whether the same seven extended their lives over hundreds of years or their apprentices took their names and titles upon their masters’ deaths.

Virtues of Rule: Stemming from the teachings of First King Xin and the goddess Lissala, the runelords held that wealth, fertility, honest pride, abundance, eager striving, righteous anger, and rest were the seven virtues of rule—rewards one could enjoy for being in a position of power. But the runelords soon abandoned the positive side of these traits and embraced greed, lust, pride, gluttony, envy, wrath, and sloth as the rewards of rule. Since the fall of Thassilon, the original seven virtues are remembered as the great sins of the soul, although only a few scholars who have studied ancient Thassilon know of their true sources.

Castes: Thassilon had two castes of people: the militia and the providers. The militia followed martial pursuits, and they praised battle and the simple pleasures in life. The providers were the farmers, miners, artists, and skilled craftsmen who were more mystical and, as a rule, less content under the runelords’ yoke. Today, the descendants of the militia caste exist as the Shoanti barbarian tribes of the Storval Plateau, while the descendents

of the provider caste, the Varisians, are a nomadic people who still practice mystical traditions from Thassilonian times. Both peoples remember the tyranny of the empire—if not the wizards themselves, nor even the title “runelord”—in their histories and legends. Barbarian tales, passed on by storytellers for thousands of years, remember the runelords as the *Azghat*, a larger-than-life pantheon of war-bringers and punishers of the dishonorable. The Varisians remember the rulers of Thassilon as demons and speak of them only in hushed tones.

DOMAINS OF THE EMPIRE

Thassilon consisted of seven individual domains, each of which was ruled by one of the seven runelords. Under distinct and exploitive law, each domain embodied its ruler’s favored virtues of rule. Each runelord had a capitol city that shared the name of his domain, but was prefaced by the word “Xin”—ancient Thassilonian for “imperial” and “throne of,” after the first emperor. Thus, the capitol of Shalast was called Xin-Shalast.

Bakrakhan, the domain of wrath, shared its eastern border with Shalast, and the two domains were locked in an enduring war until Bakrakhan was destroyed and sunk under the sea during the cataclysm that precipitated Thassilon’s fall. Bakrakhan was a place of many warring tribes who all served the runelord but hated each other. They raided Shalast constantly, stealing gold and mithral ore from caravans, plundering small settlements, and loosing their rage on anyone who dared oppose them. Bakrakhan’s thick forests were said to be home to hundreds of tribes of sinspawn and humanoids, with goblins, gnolls, and bugbears chief among them. Enslaved forest giants were common in Bakrakhan.

Cyrusian, the domain of pride, was traditionally the most powerful domain and de facto capitol of the empire. Its great river connections and centralized location allowed it to exert power over trade routes and communications, and its cities were larger and more numerous than the outlying provinces: names like Corveilles, Xin-Cyrusian, and Justnoque are remembered, though Torandey is the only great Cyrusian city still inhabited. At the same time, its rune giants and enslaved dragons built more and greater monuments to Cyrusian glory than any other domain. The dragons that flew through Cyrusian’s skies were signs both of its power (for many were tamed) and its boundless arrogance, as many dragons were allowed to pillage outlying lands as they pleased in reward for work well done.

Edasseril, the domain of striving ambition and envy, was rich in timber, precious gems, and iron, as well as in enslaved giants, powerful horses, bisonlike aurochs, and large herds of sheep. In other respects, it was less blessed: wild elves raided from the forests, as did ettercaps and ettins. The marshy river city of Xin-Edasseril suffered frequent plagues, despite the best efforts of the priests of Desna, and in modern times has been gutted for stone to build the city of Melesa nearby, on higher ground.

Eurythnia, the domain of fertility and lust, was largely built on its sea-going traffic and trade with distant lands, counting on spices and brothels to fill its coffers. Lust for exotic lovers also brought the slave trade to Eurythnia, making it the only

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Desgard's Thousand Columns

domain to import slaves, especially elves, from over the sea. Its people were often disturbed by ghosts and will o'wisp along the shores, where ships frequently wrecked and sailors drowned. Raids from sahaugin were also a regular danger for the coastal domain, though in the years of the empire, enslaved ocean giants guarded Eurythnia's shipping from piracy.

Gastash was the domain of abundance and gluttony, but was largely a peaceful and plentiful home for its citizens. The land was fertile and blessed with good harvests, which were in turn sold to the less agriculturally rich domains. Peace and satiety were Gastash's advantages, but even so, things were often difficult. Ankhkeg infestations were common, bulettes ate many farmers and servants of the runelord, and bandits from other kingdoms were frequent visitors. The lands of Old Gastash remain fertile, including the region around the modern city-state of Korvosa and its holdings.

Haruka, the domain of rest and sloth, in the imperial south, was slow, indolent, and cunning. Its vicious priesthoods of the

Peacock Spirit and Lissalaa both fought pitched battles about their faiths and heresies, one of the few topics that moved the populace to action. Most of the Harukans worked as slavers, selling flesh from their markets or enjoying the abuse of their property. It was widely considered a cruel and often hypocritical domain, lazy by nature. The main enemies to peace in Haruka (other than the riots), were the wild gnoll tribes, frog-like humanoids called boggards, and the free hill giants who frequently sided with rebel slaves in the hills against their masters. Stories claim a council of metallic dragons razed the city of Xin-Haruka to the ground, though this is surely exaggeration.

Shalast was the domain of wealth and greed, and an ancient home of the giants of the Storval Plateau and of the monasteries of the Peacock Spirit. As the second largest domain, after Cyrusian, Shalast collected wealth from its gold, mithral, and copper mines, but it was never enough. Runelord Karzoug always wanted more, and the capitol of Xin-Shalast was said to be paved with gold; though in fact, most of the gold went

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

THE HOOK MOUNTAIN MASSACRE

By Nicolas Logue, Levels 7–9

The heroic PCs are approached by the Sandpoint garrison to reestablished contact with a strangely silent border fort to the east, on rugged Hook Mountain. They arrive to find it overrun by ogres and join a rag-tag band of rangers in an attempt to retake it.

Impressed with their success, the Sandpoint garrison grant the PCs stewardship over the fort. Developing ties to their new base, the party becomes embroiled in local events, including a mysterious haunting in the nearby woods. The haunt is the ghost of a nymph who was once the lover of the fort's ex-commander. In order to placate her, the PCs must either rescue her lover from the ogres or return his mortal remains to be buried in the nymph's grove.

The PCs travel north to confront the ogres in their village, a fortified complex now ruled by a stone giant warlord, the priest Barl Breakbones, who openly wears the Sihedron Rune and is forcing the ogres to forge additional weapons for a rising stone giant army. By defeating him, the PCs prevent a greater ogre offensive, but learn of stone giant forces already marching on Sandpoint.



NEGATIVE THASSILONIAN RUNES

into the treasury and the alchemical furnaces of the capital and never returned.

Shalast was known for wild ogres and forest giants, as well as enslaved stone giants and exotic dwarven artificers. Its treasures were sometimes carried on powerful mammoth-drawn caravans. Normal people survived largely as miners, smiths, and traders, providing further wealth. Many abandoned mines still litter the Storval Plateau; the mountain passes of Shalast still contain monasteries and ruins now abandoned to the wilderness.

RULERS OF THASSILON

Although the great and wise First King Xin forged the realm that would become Thassilon, the division of his empire and the cruel decadence of his governors, the runelords, are the only memories that remain of this once-great land. Each of these megalomaniacal rulers reshaped their fraction of the empire as they willed, scarring the land with monuments to their glory and shapes of their boundless corruption.

The symbols of the runelords were as pervasive as their graven images. As each ruler became associated with a particular virtue of rule, so too did their images imply mastery of a certain school of arcana and one of seven weapons of rule. Although arcanists first and foremost, each ruler was regularly depicted bearing an imperious looking ceremonial pole arm, which once marked him as a guardian of the Thassilonian empire and defender of Xin himself. Although these symbols became meaningless in the face of the runelords'

varied depravities, each ruler retained his traditional, scepter-like weapon as a public reminder of his connection to the Celestial Age and as a physical embodiment of his mastered magic.

Alaznist, Runelord of Wrath, was a powerful, blood-cloaked wizard and raging arcane knight. Her magic-, drug-, and mutation-enraged legions carried her thunderbolt-lance blazon and terrorized the neighboring lands of Shalast. Known for her charisma (some would say her ability to terrify her followers), she ruled Bakrakhan and seemed close to forcing a humiliating peace treaty on Karzoug when the world shook and her entire kingdom sank below the waves. Stories occasionally tell of coins of Bakrakhan being drawn up in fishing nets. Alaznist was said to wield an ancient ransuer of charred adamantine—impaled with the skull of the first Runelord of Wrath—as her weapon of rule.

Belimarius, the Runelord of Envy and the Queen of Edasseril, was a bitter and poisonous politician, consumed by her magic to always see her peers as scheming and flourishing beyond her reach. As a result, she stewed and plotted against all of them with intrigues, poison, and assassins. It's unclear how her kingdom functioned; almost all records of it are clearly written to show only a completely false paradise of perfect rulership, perfect harmony, and perfect arcane skill. According to the official accounts, nothing ever went wrong in Edasseril. The other runelords seem to have avoided discussing her. She was a heavyset woman who looked to be the eldest of the runelords and always carried a wand of ebony and a speaking mirror—an antique even in those ancient times—with which she often consorted. Her halberd-like weapon of rule was said to be capable of stealing memories but was rarely used in battle by the paranoid queen.

Karzoug, Runelord of Greed, was a wizard known for his calculating mind and utter mercilessness. Rumored to be either half-vampire or descended from draconic stock, absolute greed powered his every action. Certainly Karzoug was covetous and deeply corrupt—famed for ordering the immolation of an entire city for its tax collectors' shorting of a few silvers—but that was the reward granted him by the runes for his power and dedication to magic. He long fought the silent war of assassins, mage-poison, and demon-fetches against Alaznist, the queen of Bakrakhan. In the end, something sank her kingdom below the waves, even as the Thassilonian empire fell. Karzoug was enough of a master of the arcane that many suspect his hand in triggering the murder of an entire kingdom. His weapon of rule was a burning glaive, studded with priceless meteoric gemstones.

Krune, Runelord of Sloth and Lord of Haruka, was the least active of the Runelords, as his reward for rulership was apathy and pleasant indolence. Krune is remembered as a mild runelord, unconcerned with war, and yet powerful when attacked. He was the chief priest of the rune-goddess Lissala, and his mastery of the runes was complete. His weapon was a rod marked with all the secret runes of the priesthood and his flesh was said to be inscribed with the symbols of a hundred secret spells. This might explain his survival over time—few runelords wished to confront the one of their number who could potentially turn their runic powers against them. He enjoyed the defense of his weapon of rule, a dragon tooth longspear capable of moving and attacking of its own volition.

THASSILON

The Sunken Queen

Sorshen was the Runelord of Lust and Lady of Eurythnia. She always wore red and white garments of the richest and most enticing design and carried a slim, lewdly-shaped staff made entirely of mithral. In battle, she was said to wield a double-headed guisarme, marked with masculine and feminine ends and said to be capable of summoning two seductive guardians. Her skill at magic was said to be matched only by her beguiling voice. With song, glance, and touch, she seduced and betrayed all of the other runelords over the years. Although they knew she was treacherous, they trusted her time and again, as her propositions always seemed eminently reasonable (though they invariably gave her the advantage in every future dealing). In her private life, stories agree that Runelord Sorshen was a whore, rutting with anything that took her fancy. Accusations of rape, perversion, and violent outbursts might have been exaggerated by her enemies, but if so she was remarkably consistent in her outrages. The one person's privacy she took seriously was her own; the servants who worked in her private palace were all blinded and most were mute, communicating through fawning touches.

Xanderghul, the Satrap of Cyrusian and Runelord of Pride, was the devoted keeper of the Peacock Throne and a master of the body, mind, and spirit. The only one of the runelords to follow the Peacock Spirit, he claimed that his lands were the ancient capital of the empire and he was first among equals. The amazing thing is that he was probably right. His features were said to be severe and imperious, marking him as a descendant of kings. He prided himself on single-handedly holding the empire together, and thus created his realm to be a paradise for the nation's most elite and affluent citizens, guarded over by legions of enslaved angels. Among the runelords, he took great pride in avoiding political squabbling and warmongering, seeing himself and his kingdom as above such things and saving his angelic armies for truly great causes. A master of diplomacy and the arts, he carried a feathered staff of *lignum vitae*. In wartimes, though, he displayed incredible prowess with his godscepter, a polearm like a lucerne hammer said to have been created by Xin himself. In many respects, he was the closest runelord to those of the Celestial Age, though his arrogance grew greater every year.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS

By Wolfgang Baur, Levels 10–11

The PCs must repel a warband of stone giants in a deadly clash to defend Sandpoint. Repulsing the invaders, they learn that their enemies were but a scouting party and the actual army is still marshalling in the mountains. They also learn that one tribe, the giants of Jorgenharth, is responsible for gathering the giants against humanity and that their defeat might forestall Sandpoint's ruin. Only by infiltrating the giants' citadel and defeating the seer Mokmuriar and his cabal of disguised lamia priests can they hope to disrupt these plans.

Upon ending the giants' threat, the PCs discover that Mokmuriar was but the agent of Karzoug, and that by killing the greedy giants the PCs have unwittingly provided the half-risen runelord with nearly all the souls he needs to complete his awakening. Yet, there's still time before Karzoug can fully regain his powers. Using Mokmuriar's library of Thassilonian lore, the PCs learn that a *runewell* is being used to gather Karzoug's power, and that its magic might be countered by employing an ancient arcane device known as a *runeforge*.

SINS OF THE SAVIORS

By Stephen S. Greer, Levels 12–13

The PCs return to the Catacombs of Wrath beneath Sandpoint in search of a map to the *runeforge*. Daring the ruin's perilous deeper levels, they discover the device's location far to the north on the shore of a frozen mountain lake. Upon venturing there, the PCs run afoul of a white dragon as they seek the entrance to the *runeforge*'s dungeon. Below lies a trap-laden complex guarded by ageless minions of ancient Thassilon. Fighting to the center, the PCs gain the opportunity to empower their gear with the *runeforge*'s primal energy. They must still, however, visit the outer seven sections of the dungeon to etch runes of arcane might upon their weapons. Ultimately, the PCs gain their own personal sigils to combat the power of the ancient rune magic of Thassilon, including the Sihedron Rune itself.

Zutha, the Lord of Gluttony, hungered for myriad exotic vices, but none more so than pure life energy. As ruler of Gastash, he controlled fertile lands and rich seas. His body, however, required constant renewal befitting his unique, undead state. Still capable of experiencing all the sensations of life, it was said the morbidly obese runelord never supped on the same meal twice and imported exotic foods and meal-slaves from across the world. Despite his disconcerting nature, he was a clever merchant, often described as “more deadly with a pen than with a pike”—his favored weapon was a set of magical rings and ioun stones, whose resonances he had mastered in some way that no other wizard understood, preferring these even to his scythe-like weapon of rule. Zutha's domain sold supplies and foodstuffs to every side in every war; those who crossed him soon found their copper, tin, wool, oil, wheat, rye, and other supplies running thin.

FAITH IN THASSILON

Most of the runelords were not very religious and discouraged the worship of the gods among their people, other than the cult of Lissala. They generally crushed religions that threatened their rule, but the people of Thassilon (particularly those of the provider caste) still worshiped in secret.

Lissala

Lissala was the goddess of runes, fate, and the reward of service, a goddess of harsh duty and obedience, but also of generous bounty. Her faith reinforced the belief in a ruler's price, but also the belief that all workers receive their due, that all works are rewarded, and that faith is an answer to adversity. Her stoicism in the early years of the empire turned to harsher practices in later years; her cult is remembered for its flagellation, mortification of the flesh, and extravagant “Feasts of Sigils” on high holidays. Though Lissala's faith is dead, some believe her runes and their power may yet be restored.

The Peacock Spirit

God of mind, body, and soul, the Peacock Spirit was worshiped by mages, scholars, and ascetics, and was well-known for sponsoring the runelords' knights of the Order of the Green Feather. Difficult to understand, neither male nor female, and never depicted as more than an eye or feather in illustrations or statuary, the true nature of the spirit-god was deliberately hidden under many veils. The god's hidden name and extensive mysteries were known only to initiates and priests, and these secrets seem to have died out with the sect itself. The followers of the Peacock Spirit often displayed remarkable powers of mind and body, and the end of their faith was a great loss. The early emperors were all initiates of the Peacock Spirit, and its symbols were drawn upon their thrones.

Minderhal

Lord of giants, the god of strength and giantkind, Minderhal was depicted both as a powerful giant smith and a raging stone behemoth in his numerous shrines—the faith seems to have changed over time or varied between the numerous giant races honoring him. His worship was concerned with matters of law, justice, and architecture, as well as stonework and metalwork. In later years, the god was a patron of the rune giants, and his priests enforced obedience to the runelords.

While Minderhal is still worshipped among a few scattered tribes on the Storval Plateau, his faith is scattered and largely forgotten. His great temples, smelters, and quarry-shrines are all gone, and the sacrifices of blood and treasure that once filled his temple treasuries are little more than a trickle now. Even at the empire's height, Minderhal was a god for the common people and the slave giants, not a god of the empire's powerful monument-builders.

Desna

Goddess of dreams, stars, travelers and luck, the goddess Desna was born from the western ocean, brought to land by a powerful

THASSILON

SPIRES OF XIN-SHALAST

By Greg Vaughan, Levels 14–15+

The PCs journey high into the mountains to the vast and ruined Thassilonian city of Xin-Shalast to confront Karzoug and his minions. While Karzoug still can't leave the boundaries of Xin-Shalast, he'll be able to do so soon if the PCs don't defeat the lamias, cloud giants, dragons, and creatures of ancient magic bound to his service. Yet, before the PCs can use their rune-empowered weapons to destroy his *runewell*, they must finally do battle with Karzoug, the Runelord of Greed, himself.

storm. Luck and travel are two of her domains; over the years, she shared her gifts of prophecy, auguries, and omens. Her faith alone among the religions of Thassilon has survived into the modern age, and worshipers are relatively common in the world today. Her travelers' shrines are always stocked with candles, food, and firewood by an order of itinerant priests.

Fiend Worship

The indulgence of the seven virtues of rule throughout Thassilon attracted the interests of foul beings across Golarion and from beyond. Thaumatuages, the agents and missionaries of such fundamentally evil beings, spread their cultic beliefs throughout the empire, extolling them as ways in which the common people might experience the virtues of their masters. Although widely damned by the runelords—hypocritically, as more than one drew power from fiendish accords—these dark faiths flourished under their rule. Of especial size and influence were the cults of Mamon, Orcus, Pazuzu, Rubicante, and especially Lamashtu—whose popularity in Thassilon proved an early step toward her eventual ascension to godhood.

CYCLOPEAN MONUMENTS OF THASSILON

With their enslaved giant armies, the wizards of Thassilon built massive tombs, enormous magical constructs, and staggering monuments that survive today, mute testimonies of a mysterious age long past. Many of these monuments still exist, built to an inhuman scale, as befits the works of rune giants and stone giants. For all of them, their meaning and true purpose is lost to time. A few of the most famous include:

The Black Squares of Ungevick
Desgard's Thousand Columns
The Dome Hive
The Falling Runewheel
The Great Temple of Lissala
The Green Spire of Lemriss
Hollow Mountain
The Irespan

The Lady's Light
Minderhal's Anvil
The Obelisk Forest of Mundatee
The Rune Mausoleum
The Storval Stairs
The Sunken Queen
Ygrath's Pier

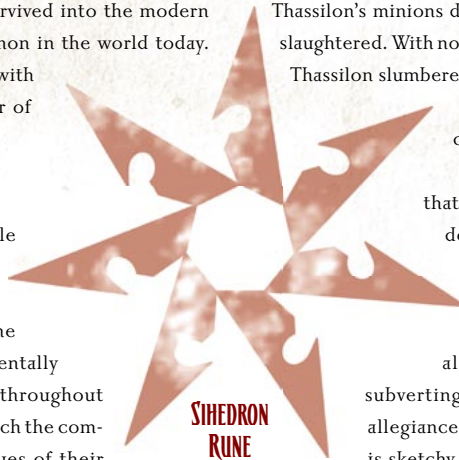
THE FALL OF THASSILON:
GLORY AND DECLINE

Why Thassilon fell remains a mystery, but as the end drew near, the seven wizard kings of Thassilon retreated into the depths of their greatest monuments, entombing themselves with orders for their minions to release them later to reclaim their empire. Alas, Thassilon's minions defied their orders, were enslaved, or were slaughtered. With no one left to waken them, the wizard-kings of Thassilon slumbered for countless ages. The few scholars who research the ancient empire maintain three common theories for its collapse.

The Aboleth's Revenge: One theory is that aboleths destroyed the empire in a long-delayed retaliation for the runelords' theft or corruption of aboleth glyph and life-creation magic. The invasion is said to have come from the sea, driving inland along the rivers and lakes, and ultimately subverting and destroying anyone who professed allegiance to the runelords. Evidence for this theory is sketchy at best, as most scholars are unwilling to consult primary sources among the aboleths.

Thassilon and Beyond: In time, the law and charity of the early empire gave way to corruption, cronyism, and the summoning of aberrations from beyond the planes. These included the shining children, the scarlet walkers, the inverted giants, and the Oliphaunt of Jandelay, a creature so powerful and yet so difficult to control that it was summoned only once to destroy an invading army—and even so, dismissing it afterwards destroyed a quarter of the Peacock Legion. This theory holds that the madness of these unknowable creatures warped all they touched, turning the rune magic of Thassilon into a mockery of its former glory. Without its magic, inherently corrupted Thassilon fell apart into squabbling fiefdoms, none potent enough to restore a central throne. Unfortunately, no one can prove a change in the quality of the empire's magic, which is long since lost.

Revolt of the Giants: This theory holds that the rune giants who served the runelords and secured their power revolted against their masters one summer just before the harvest, setting fields and forests ablaze, tearing down monuments they had built, and devouring every soldier, every priest of Lissalaa, every monk of the Thassilonian Order, and every wizard and sorcerer they could find. They destroyed every sign of the Rune Goddess and the Peacock Spirit, and forbade anyone from learning or using the runes ever again. After destroying the ruling class, the rune giants wandered into the north, never to return. Some scholars claim this was a symptom of the empire's fall, not its cause.



RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

OPENING MOVES

To Eando Kline, Adventurer,
Street of a Thousand Sols, Magnimar.

Greetings and salutations from the city of Absalom, center of enlightened humanity and Jewel of the Inner Sea. The Decemvirate sends its warmest regards and strong support for your affairs in distant Varisia. May your exploits prove bountiful and memorable, your cohorts trustworthy, and your rewards sublime. At your request, I have enclosed information on the history and duties of the Pathfinder Society—our society—so that you might establish a front of operations for us in the City of Monuments. Our agents in the field report that Varisia, with its ties to ancient Thassilon, remains a steady source of lost artifacts and lore. I expect regular reports as you prepare your exploits for publication, and as you spread the influence of the Society to distant lands.

Yours,

Shenala.

Venture-Captain of the Pathfinder Society,
Absalom.

PATHFINDER'S JOURNAL



Even in Golarion, a world rife with adventure and marvelous beasts, the exploits of heroes still stir hearts and inspire the masses. Those who seek moral lessons from their myths follow the deeds of Aroden, last of the first humans, who emerged from the tumult that sunk the continent of Azlant, gave culture to the people of Taldor, and reclaimed the Starstone from the depths of the Inner Sea. Those who seek excitement prefer saga heroes like Bragi Balehammer or the indefatigable Molaho Khem, whether or not these fanciful adventurers ever really existed. But those who seek to claim the mantle of fame for themselves, who seek to enrich themselves by unwinding the secret history of the world, turn to champions whose exploits can be read, verified, and followed. Such bravos tread the footsteps of the elusive Pathfinder Society.

Members of the society are part archeologist, part historian, and part foolhardy adrenaline addict. They chase rumors of treasure like miners prospect gold, and often come out richer in the end. Their mother lodes are the crumbling ruins of ancient civilizations and the forgotten funeral chambers of centuries-dead monarchs. Such places often boast powerful guardians or recalcitrant squatters, so the life of a pathfinder is wrought with danger. Most do not survive.

The greatest of their exploits live forever in the form of the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, a multi-volume series of chapbooks published by the order's inner circle in the city of Absalom and distributed throughout the world by members of the society. Upon the completion of a particularly notable discovery or journey, society members send a record of their exploit to their venture-captain superior, who in turn reviews it for accuracy before forwarding the manuscript to Absalom, where the masked rulers of the Pathfinder Society and much of the order's infrastructure are housed.

Venture-captains work directly for the Decemvirate, an inner circle of 10 experienced pathfinders that publishes the *Pathfinder Chronicles* and guides the overall organization's activities. Because most in the society consider themselves adamant individualists, this direction is often quite subtle, allowing individual pathfinder agents to believe they act of their own accord when actually doing the bidding of the Ten. Members of the society often joke about the inscrutable "will of the Ten" to justify unusual or indefensible orders from above, and few refrain from privately blaming their unknown superiors when some gambit goes terribly wrong.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

But when things go right, a pathfinder agent has much to gain. If his exploits reach the *Pathfinder Chronicles* he achieves a certain notoriety and respect in life, and a certain immortality in death. For as long as the society itself strives to unlock the world's secrets, so long as the *Chronicles* circulate among eager adventurers, the exploits of the greatest pathfinders will live forever.

PATHFINDER DUTIES

The society recognizes no formal bylaws, but adherence to a general code of behavior is expected of all members, and reports of activity in contrast to this code are grounds for removal from the organization. Most of the time this ostracism involves a venture-captain failing to respond to queries from field agents, but in especially egregious cases powerful pathfinders have been tasked with eliminating rogue members of the organization who have brought shame to the order.

Loosely summarized, the three “understood” member duties follow:

Explore: Pathfinders are expected to further the knowledge and reputation of the society by traveling to distant lands, unearthing forbidden secrets, and piecing together the secret history of the world. The organization first took form in the mighty, ancient city of Absalom, and while countless secrets remain undiscovered even on the ruin-laden Isle of Kortos, agents are encouraged to travel uncharted lands on the fringes of known cartography in search of ever-more-fantastic mysteries.

Report: In the course of their adventures, pathfinders are expected to keep detailed journals, maps, and accounts of their exploits. At the conclusion of a successful venture, the agent sends a copy of his notes to his immediate superior, a regional venture-captain, who makes a full analysis (often involving divination). Especially noteworthy exploits make their way to Absalom and the Decemvirate, who compile the best tales into irregularly published editions of the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, which make their way back to venture-captains for distribution to pathfinder agents in the field.

Cooperate: The society places no moral obligations upon its members, so agents span all races, creeds, and motivations. At any given time, a pathfinder lodge might house a fiend-summoning Chelaxian, an Andorian freedom fighter, an antiquities-obsessed necromancer, and a friendly halfling raconteur. Anything can (and often does) happen in the field, but the lodge is inviolate, and agents are forbidden from battling within its confines. Even beyond the lodge, pathfinder agents are expected to respect one another's claims and stay out of

each other's affairs unless to offer a helping hand. According to long-held tradition, pathfinders must attempt to parley before a potential conflict, regardless of potential enmity based on national affiliation, personal allegiances, or other factors.

This doesn't always happen, and rogue pathfinders often gain great wealth and notoriety by manufacturing accidents in the field that leave treasure and arcane lore unclaimed. Many believe that such treachery in the earliest days of the organization led to the masking of the Decemvirate and the subsequent execution or exile of dozens of treacherous agents. To this day, nervous pathfinders speak of the “twenty eyes” monitoring all pathfinder behavior, with the implication that the hapless agent about to suffer betrayal might be one of the masked leaders of the organization.

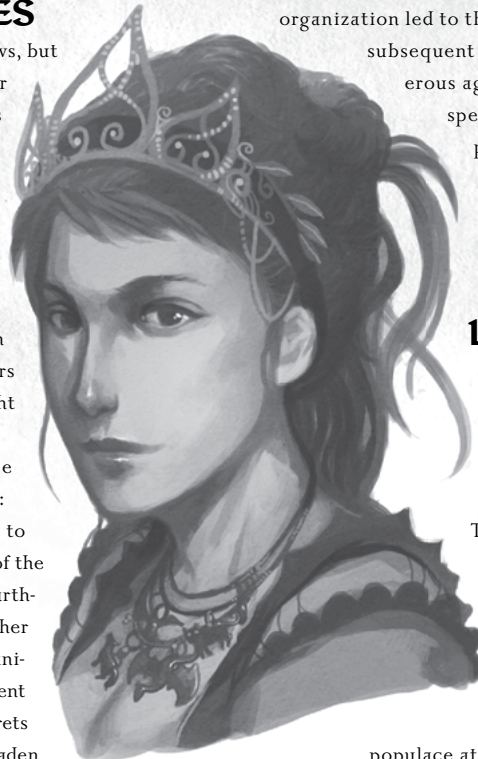
THE PATHFINDER LODGE

Most pathfinders wander the world in search of riches and adventure, settling down only long enough to plan their next caper or fully exploit an ancient ruin of its treasure and secrets.

These adventurers are responsible for the reputation of the Pathfinder Society across the world, from the howling plains of Varisia in the north to the magic-wracked kingdom of Geb to the south. But another class of pathfinder exists, a group unknown to the

populace at large yet integral to the success of the organization. These are the venture-captains who manage regional affairs and their at-times-considerable cadres of cohorts, retainers, menials, and guardians. Venture-captains generally station themselves in pathfinder lodges, secret locales meant to house the paperwork, plans, and infrastructure of the society that also occasionally serve as the temporary residences of wandering pathfinder agents.

With a few notable exceptions positioned on the outskirts of oft-explored locales such as the sunken continent of Azlant or the distant shores of fair Arcadia, most lodges are situated in major cities, where crossroads of trade and adventure attract pathfinders with rumors of forgotten lore and unclaimed riches. Lodges vary in form, ranging from secret underground lairs to decommissioned temples to stately manor houses. Each boasts a library of transcribed exploits, at least one set of the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, and a trove of maps, historical treatises, and enchiridions of fabulous and dangerous beasts. Particularly influential venture-captains often keep a small store of magic items provided by the Decemvirate to be distributed to agents to fulfill specific quests of interest to the directing council in Absalom. Most lodges offer modest accommodations to visiting pathfinder agents and their



VENTURE-CAPTAIN
SHEVALA

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companions, as well as comfortable sitting rooms where a venture-captain might receive reports from his field agents. All lodges are considered safe havens for pathfinders, so that even bitter enemies must eschew violence when within their sanctuary (a rule often used to trick rivals into working with one another).

A brief summary of important pathfinder lodges follows:

Absalom: The Grand Lodge of Absalom stands alone among its fellows. Unlike lesser chapter houses in towns throughout the continent, who mask their purpose behind facades of commerce or domesticity, the Grand Lodge wears its affiliation proudly. The Glyph of the Open Road, so often hidden in a map's compass rose or a book's embellishment to show the covert approval of the Pathfinder Society, blazes above the gate of a sheer-walled redoubt at the heart of Absalom. The wall circles seven sturdy fortresses that date back to the city's founding, perhaps the estate of a long-dormant noble house or the bastion of a forgotten government. For the last 400 years this has been the stronghold of the Pathfinders, the seat of the Decemvirate, and the repository of the order's greatest treasures and legends.

Few outside the society know what lies beyond the gate. The largest of the seven structures, a five-towered palace known as Skyreach, looms over the city district, one of the half-dozen architectural marvels that define Absalom's renowned skyline. Within its white walls dwell the eldest members of the Decemvirate and a hundred menials to support them, as well as dozens of display chambers and trophy rooms boasting centuries of exploration and accomplishment. On the rare occasions in which the Ten summon pathfinder agents to Absalom for a general assembly, gatherings take place in the massive oratory chamber at the center of Skyreach, under natural illumination cast down through an intricate and ancient skylight.

Other structures within the walls of the Grand Lodge include a combat training arena, a rickety old wooden dormitory for the use of visiting pathfinders, and a vast open-air menagerie. The strange calls of foreign beasts on display here often emerge from the Grand Lodge's gate or over its walls, terrifying the neighborhood. Near the back of the compound squats a doorless, windowless structure known as the Repository. Within its chambers, reachable only by magic, dwell 66 tongueless convicted criminals who, under a powerful *geas* approved by Absalom's Directors, transcribe approved reports from field agents to create new editions of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* for later distribution to pathfinders throughout the world.

Almas: The proud nation of Andoran, on the northern coast of the Inner Sea sandwiched between diabolical Cheliox to the west and the ancient, moribund empire of Taldor to the east, has long suffered at the whims of its neighbors. Founded 3,000 years ago as the western frontier of Taldor, it eventually became a crossroads with the annexation of Cheliox, which

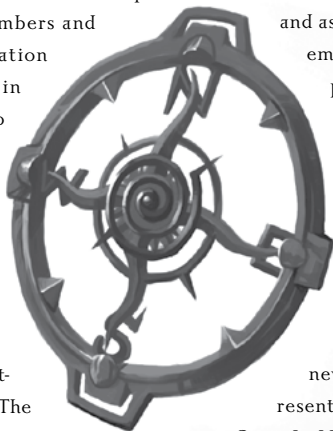
easily surpassed it as the jewel of Taldorian expansion. As centuries passed Taldor became more and more decadent and effete, allowing its outer dependencies to fall one by one to secession or neglect, leaving former vassal states like Andoran, Cheliox, and Galt to fend for themselves. Andoran, Galt, and other nations began setting their own path, but Cheliox, rife with religious and political refugees from "proud" Taldor and flush with a related sense of entitlement and manifest destiny, decided to replace one empire with another. Following a century of conflict now known as the Everwar, almost all of Taldor's former marchlands—including Andoran—fell under Chelioxian control. Despite the warfare that accompanied the expansion of this new empire, the dependencies assimilated well and enjoyed relative peace for centuries.

Then, a century ago, a great thunder shook the heavens and savage storms inundated all of Golarion. When the weather cleared, the church of Aroden, patron god of Cheliox and Taldor before it, lost all contact with its powerful deity. Somehow, they knew deep within their hearts, Aroden was dead. Any notion of the Chelioxian Empire as a place of safety and prosperity soon died with him. The empire's heartland fell to petty squabbling between opportunistic nobles and religions, washing the fields of Cheliox with blood and cutting off border nations from the imperial support they had come to expect over centuries of relative safety. When the devil-worshipping House of Thrune cowed the warring factions into submission and assumed the Chelioxian throne, Andoran and Galt embraced the sermons of their most radical secular philosophers, casting aside their own aristocracies in the name of the People in hopes of forging a more egalitarian society.

In Andoran, at least, the initial revolution succeeded, catapulting radical but wise philosopher-merchants to the heights of local government. This new aristocracy, claiming to better represent the will of its citizens than the old divinely inspired monarchs, embraced new ideas and new opportunities, welcoming representatives of the Pathfinder Society with open arms.

Outside Absalom, Andoran is the nation most accepting of pathfinder activity, allowing agents to openly go about their business in the local ruins and places of mystery so long as their affairs are registered with the proper authorities in the capital city of Almas. Even in the field, Andorian pathfinders are far more likely than their fellows from other nations to declare their affiliation to the society and to their nation, so that some even fly the Eagle Crest of Andoran. The Decemvirate and non-Andorian venture-captains frown on such ostentation, of course, but the growing power of the Almas Lodge leaves little room for criticism.

The lodge itself is situated in Andoran's capital Almas, in a massive cathedral once dedicated to Aroden but converted completely to the design of the local venture-captain, a hawk-nosed middle-aged swordsman named Brackett. Andorian flags



RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

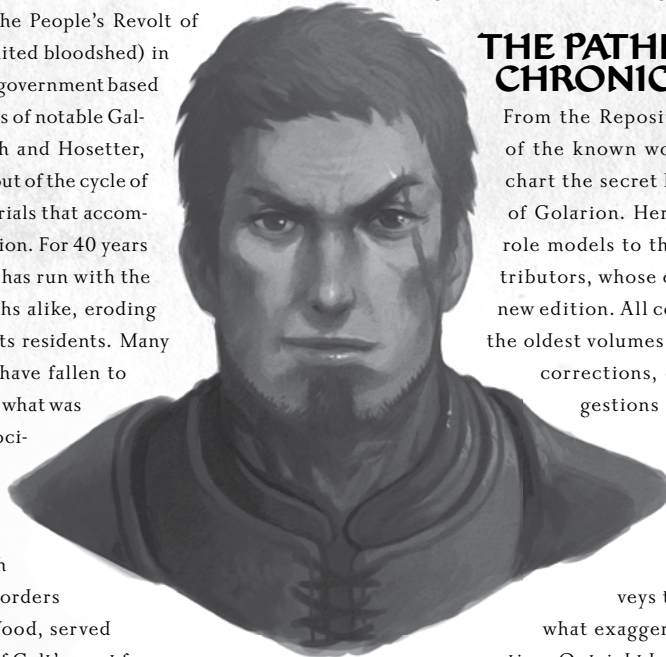
line the walls next to immense tapestry maps of the Inner Sea region, adorned with sewn-in notes on sites of interest ranging from Cheliox and Mwalgi in the west to the southern rim of Qadira in the east. Andorian pathfinders tend toward sword-play over magic, and the most junior often serve as additional muscle or protection for pathfinder agents of all nationalities. The growing fear that these mercenaries send reports to Brackett that eventually find their way to the Executive Office of Andoran is beginning to cause problems throughout the society, but no immediate resolution to this burgeoning crisis suggests itself.

Woodsedge: Whereas the People's Revolt of Andoran resulted (after limited bloodshed) in a new form of participatory government based on the political philosophies of notable Galtan scholars like Jubannich and Hosetter, Galt itself has never pulled out of the cycle of revenge killings and show trials that accompanied its own Red Revolution. For 40 years the heavily forested nation has run with the blood of patriots and pariahs alike, eroding the culture and sanity of its residents. Many institutions and museums have fallen to riot or plunder, and much of what was once Galtan culture and society has been lost.

In happier days, the Galtan Lodge at Woodsedge, where the Gorrish River meets the eastern borders of the ancient Verudran Wood, served as the repository of some of Galt's most famous historical and magical artifacts. Notable among these fabled treasures were the *Thorncrown of Iomedae*, *Vesper's Rapier* (rescued from a little-known fey enclave at the heart of the forest), and the *Golden Carriage of Gaspar Longfellow*, which famously carried a king of Old Galt to the headwaters of the vast Sellen river system, in the northern kingdom of Numeria. The lodge fell to banditry three years ago, spreading its treasures and secrets to all corners of the kingdom and beyond. Fanatical revolutionaries put the lodge's venture-captain to the sword and hanged her servants from the high parapets of the lodge's three towers.

Few Galtans know that the Ten have dispatched a trio of venture-captains from Absalom to Woodsedge in an effort to recover what was lost and to avenge the cruel murders. The three agents pose as natives to deflect the suspicions of nervous Galtans on the lookout for treachery from blood-hungry revolutionaries or reactionary killers in the employ of this month's "stable" government. They are Lofton, an elderly former adventurer who poses as a barrister arguing futilely for the condemned in a series of ostentatious show trials sponsored by the Revolutionary Council, Senri Stenn, a scheming sorceress who poses as a popular actress, and Thuurv, a mangy

half-orc brute who spends his days as a gate-guard for one of the city's few surviving nobles. The latter is much smarter than he looks, and actually leads the contingent. When not otherwise engaged in their cover activities, the trio sponsors foreign and domestic pathfinders on missions to reclaim lost treasures and discover the still-hidden secrets of the faerie-haunted Verduran Wood or the numerous independent River Kingdoms to the north. They base their operations in the hidden basements of the so-called Barren Museum, a looted and near-forgotten ruin near the city's central square, just out of sight of the blood-soaked guillotines.



PATHFINDER
LANDO KLINE

THE PATHFINDER CHRONICLES

From the Repository in Absalom to the edge of the known world, the *Pathfinder Chronicles* chart the secret history and unknown corners of Golarion. Heroes of the *Chronicles* serve as role models to the current generation of contributors, whose own legends spread with each new edition. All copies are written by hand, and the oldest volumes bear countless margin notes, corrections, observations, and travel suggestions (some centuries out of date).

Many pathfinders travel with a bard companion (often referred to as a "chronicler") who observes the agent's adventures and conveys them in a lyrical, often somewhat exaggerated fashion to ensure publication. Outright braggadocio carries significant risk, however, as an exploit that makes its way from the field to a venture-captain to the Decemvirate is bound to encounter divination spells to confirm the basic truths behind the tall tales. The *Chronicles* are meant to do more than entertain, after all, and are intended as guideposts for future travel and exploration. Too many errors put the entire society at risk.

Pathfinders share information extensively with one another, but they protect their secrets from outsiders with near-religious zeal. Agents believe they are engaged in a noble goal, even while exploiting tombs, indigenous peoples, and every opportunity that crosses their path. Lesser scholars, which is to say tomb-robbers unaffiliated with the Pathfinder Society, are crass villains who contribute nothing to the greater understanding of the world, selling off their treasures without bothering to record the stories behind them or further understanding of lost races, cultures, and times. For this reason, pathfinders attempt to keep distribution of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* to members of the society alone. Because most volumes come packed with maps, trap diagrams, and detailed explanations leading to highly profitable and extraordinarily fragile locales, common treasure-hunters, bizarre cultists, and

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wealthy artifact collectors do their best to acquire copies of the journals, and a multi-volume set can often fetch thousands of gold pieces in the right markets.

Some of the most famous volumes of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* include:

Volume 1: The original edition of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* is the most widely circulated book in the series; copies can be found in markets throughout the continent. Its three protagonists enjoy saint-like reputations within the society, and have even become folk heroes outside the pathfinders, inspiring many children and would-be adventurers to set out on a life of exploration. The best-known tale features the most famous pathfinder of all, Durvin Gest, the allegedly immortal bon vivant who discovered and explored the towering remnants of the sunken continent of Azlant thousands of miles west of the Arch of Aroden, at the heart of the Arcadian Ocean. There Gest rescued a cache of priceless *ioun stones* from the lair of a fierce roc and explored time-lost dungeons opened to the air by the collapse of the continent in ancient days. Items discovered on this quest still adorn the treasure galleries of Skyreach, and the Azlanti "technology" discovered within serves the society hundreds of years after its discovery. In the volume's other pulse-pounding tales, marooned sailor Gregaro Voth explores monolithic ruins in the simian-choked Forbidden Jungle, and the merchant prince Selmius Foster of Absalom opens the spice markets of distant Vandu to western traders by racing a marid and an efreet through a series of heroic challenges.

Volume 2: Durvin Gest catalogues 31 Siege Castles outside Absalom. Borden Thalian discovers the headwaters of the Vanji River in a mountain lake deep in the interior of the southern continent. There he discovered a lost city of elaborate jade statuettes and sculptures, possibly crafted by the ancient cyclopes who ruled the southlands before the fall of the *Starstone* that formed the Inner Sea and cast the world into a thousand years of utter darkness.

Volume 3: Widely circulated among members of the society but almost unknown to the populace at large, this volume tells the sorry tale of Selmius Foster's death at the hands of a ravenous pack of dog-men on the Far Eastern Isle of Bhopan, off the southern continent's east coast, as related by his servant and chronicler, Adolphus. After a series of escalating misadventures, Adolphus weds Princess Ganjay, the Opal of Bhopan. The two abscond with the royal treasury, which they use to found a pathfinder lodge in Quantum, the shining capital of Nex. Elsewhere, Gojan the Sharp endures a decade of hardship under the oppressive Ontar, the Black Sovereign of Numeria, in order to gain access to the Silver Mount, a titanic edifice of steel that looms over Numeria's capital, Starfall. Included in this volume is a complete catalogue of seven different types of

skymetal littered about the plains of Numeria and the (wildly outdated) prices each variety is likely to garner in the markets of Taldor and Absalom.

Volume 4: Durvin Gest commandeers *The Silken Purse* from the pirate queen Mastrien Slash and pilots the ship around the horn of the southern continent, encountering a bizarre matriarchal society with origins dating back thousands of years. Gest abandons Slash at the continent's southern cliffs in an apparent sacrifice, but history tells that the pirate queen eventually wrested control of the nation, whipping it into a frenzy of military expansion that ended only when it reached the southern borders of the land of Geb. The supremely powerful archmage who ruled that land turned most of the army into the stone statues that now litter Geb's southern frontier, sometimes referred to as the Field of Maidens.

Volume 5: This mysterious volume has never been read in modern times, and no known copies exist outside the Grand Lodge of Absalom. Sketchy records dating back hundreds of years recall a Decemvirate-sponsored effort to recall the volume, but other than a few scholarly sources that suggest one of its exploits involved Durvin Gest, little is known about the volume's contents.

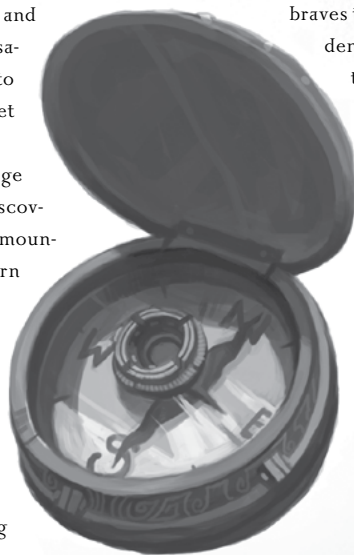
Volume 23: The Galtan warrior-mage Escobar Vellian braves the waterlogged temple of Xanthuun in the Soden Lands, battling a horde of drowned zombies to reach the fabled treasure holds of Ammelon VI, last patriarch of the ancient kingdom of Ghol-Gan. References to submerged chambers below the Gold Phoenix Aviary have led hundreds to their deaths in the years since the publication of this exploit, and the bulk of Ammelon's treasure remains undiscovered.

Volume 56: Published within the last decade, this volume details venture-captain Shevala's exploration of the Spire of Nex, an impossibly tall tower situated about 10 miles from Absalom's northeast walls. Along with El Raja Key, the Red Redoubt of Karamoss, and dozens of other so-called Siege Castles littering the abandoned battlefields outside Absalom, no one in

a thousand years had penetrated the eldritch tower until a team of mathematicians in Shevala's employ cracked a complex cipher keyed to the structure's "unopenable" door. Her now-famous exploit includes a full catalogue of the unusual treasures and beasts encountered within.

Much of the remainder features detailed sketches, maps, and accounts of the Gozarin Necropolis in central Osirion, penned by a pathfinder with the unlikely name "Scepter." A short appendix outlines the halfling Vurano's trek to the frozen northlands beyond the Hold of the Mammoth Lords and the unusual covens of human witches encountered there.

Countless volumes have yet to be written.



RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

BESTIARY



SIZE COMPARISON

Rural terrors, crazed goblinoid cronies, and nightmares to haunt the dreams of Sandpoint's populace comprise this month's Bestiary. While making names for themselves as heroes in "Burnt Offerings," PCs encounter mangy goblin dogs, a wall-crawling giant gecko, and the reborn horror of the sinspawn. Yet these aren't the only foes PCs might encounter in and around the seemingly peaceful town of Sandpoint. In addition to the new monsters directly referenced in this month's adventure, the attic whisperer, goblin snake, and Sandpoint devil might easily find their way into any Rise of the Runelords campaign.

Goblin Snake: Although goblin snakes typically dwell in the Brinstump Marsh, where they live among goblins of the Licktoad tribe, they have been sighted now and then elsewhere along the Varisian coast. If you wanted to add a few of these creatures to the southern section of Thistletop, they should fit right in. You also never know what might be living beneath Sandpoint's docks, and the townsfolk rarely investigate for merely that reason.

Attic Whisperer: The attic whisperer might make for an interesting additional encounter after the PCs return to Sandpoint from a preliminary excursion to Thistletop—just because they've moved beyond the "Local Heroes" chapter doesn't mean the call for help dries up. Turandarok Academy is a good place to have an attic whisperer show up in Sandpoint.

The Sandpoint Devil: Although a bit tough to throw at a 1st–3rd-level party, you should certainly drop in hints about this monster early on. While it's not scheduled to make an official appearance in the campaign, the players don't know this.



THE PATHFINDER BESTIARY

Every month, *Pathfinder* features a lengthy bestiary of new creatures related to the volume's adventure, campaign supplements, and *Pathfinder's Journal*. A brief introduction explains how these beasts might be used to enhance your game and offers a comparison of the new creatures' sizes, giving you a feel for how the month's offerings stand compared to the average adventurer. On the following pages, organized by Challenge Rating, you'll find new monstrosities with full game statistics, ecological details, ideas for potential treasures, variations found throughout the world, and more—all built to challenge characters of roughly the same levels as the volume's adventure. The variety changes every month, building a campaign-specific bestiary that ranges from the lowest-level fodder to the most intimidating high-level abominations.

And in the end, you can spring a sighting of the Sandpoint devil on them at any point you think the campaign needs a sudden injection of horror. With numerous overland travels planned for the campaign—beginning as early as the PCs' journey to Thistletop in this volume's adventure—there should be ample opportunities for eerie howls in the night and half-glimpsed, strangely equine forms.

While the attic whisper and goblin snake come straight from Richard Pett and Wes Schneider's diseased minds, the Sandpoint devil is a result of mass hysteria—the best place to find new monsters—and legends of the Jersey Devil.

BESTIARY



GOBLIN DOG

This mang y dog's face has the flat nose, beady eyes, and protruding teeth of a rat grown grotesquely large. Tiny clawed forelimbs and a long, hairless pink tail add to its verminous appearance, and the smell of sun-baked sewage practically steams off its patchy fur.

GOBLIN DOG

N Medium animal

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +1, **Spot** +1

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 12
(+2 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 9 (1d8+5)

Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

Immune disease

OFFENSE

Spd 50 ft.

Melee bite +2 (1d6+3 plus allergic reaction)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

TACTICS

Before Combat Goblin dogs usually squeal for help then hide if they know danger is coming, hoping to surprise opponents. They typically only attack prey smaller than them or that they outnumber.

During Combat Erratic attackers, goblin dogs are constantly moving, squealing and barking all the while.

CR 1

Morale Once incensed by battle, a goblin dog is likely to fight until mortally wounded or outright killed.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +0; **Grp** +2

Feats Toughness, Track^B

Skills Balance +6, Hide +6, Move Silently +6, Jump +14

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Allergic Reaction (Ex) Goblin dogs constantly shed copious amounts of dander to which all creatures (except for those with the goblinoid subtype) are violently allergic. Any non-goblinoid creature that is damaged by a goblin dog's bite attack, deals damage with a natural weapon or unarmed attack, or attempts to grapple, ride, or otherwise come into close contact with the creature, must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or break out in an itching rash. Any creature affected by this rash takes a –2 penalty to Dexterity and Charisma for 1 day (multiple allergic reactions do not stack). The spell *remove disease* or any magical healing removes the rash instantly. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills Goblin dogs have a +4 racial bonus on Balance, Hide, and Move Silently checks.

ECOLOGY

Environment Any temperate forest, swamp, or underground

Organization Solitary or pack (2–12)

Treasure None

Alignment Always neutral

Advancement 2–6 HD (Medium), 7–12 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment —

Goblin dogs are loathed by men and beasts alike. Ugly, stinking, craven, and foul-tempered, only the lowest creatures bother with the rat-faced canines. It's no surprise that goblins find kindred spirits in the shunned, disgusting beasts. Constantly itching, afflicted with a species-wide case of mange exacerbated by prolific dander, even the healthiest goblin dogs look sickly and starved. What creatures their malformed and diseased appearance don't ward off, their constant reek—like a dozen dogs wetted by sewer water—undoubtedly does.

ECOLOGY

Nocturnal hunters, goblin dogs possess remarkable sight, allowing them to see in complete darkness. Despite their skin disorders, the ugly hounds are quite resilient to diseases, but their skin affliction has given rise to all manner tales about people catching "goblin rash."

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Goblin dogs hunt in packs, working together to prey upon larger creatures. If an individual finds its own source of food, though, it abandons its pack mates to avoid sharing its find.

Goblins and their kin—being the sole creatures unaffected by the canines' irritating dander—often keep goblin dogs in and around their lairs, finding uses for them as guards and mounts. Remarkably, goblins seem to actually enjoy the beasts' hideous stink.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



GOBLIN SNAKE

Blank white eyes, broad torn ears, and a wide maw filled with jagged yellow teeth and oversized fangs sway atop the body of this serpent. Combining the worst features of a rabid maniac and an oversized snake, scales that look more greasy than slick form a powerful, black, and limbless trunk. At the top, from its gray, lipless goblin head, flicks a long, thin, forked tongue.

GOBLIN SNAKE

CE Small aberration (goblinoid)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +3, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12

(+2 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size)

hp 13 (2d8)

Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., burrow 5 ft.

Melee bite +2 (1d6)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks goblin breath, lunge

TACTICS

Before Combat If a goblin snake expects danger, it uses its menace and snake empathy to convince any goblins or serpentine allies to defend it. Afterward, or if its alone, it spends a round finding an advantageous position, coiling to lunge at the first creature to near.

During Combat A goblin snake lunges and belches its goblin breath as often as possible, shrieking all the while to attract aid or predators more dangerous than its attackers.

CR 1

Morale Ultimately cowardly creatures, goblin snakes flee from most larger creatures, fighting only if no other options remain.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 15, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +1; **Grp** -3

Feats Alertness

Skills Bluff +2, Hide +7, Intimidate +2, Listen +3 Spot +5

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ snake empathy +6

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Goblin Breath (Ex) Once every 1d4 rounds a goblin snake can release a disgusting belch. Any creature within 5 feet of the goblin snake must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d6 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same goblin snake's goblin breath for 24 hours. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect from the sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throw.

Lunge (Ex) A goblin snake can coil itself to attack normally out-of-reach opponents. First, a goblin snake must spend a full-round action tightly coiling itself. In any following round, it can attack a creature within 10 feet as if it had double its normal reach. It gains a +2 bonus on this attack. Moving before it attacks causes a goblin snake to uncoil, preventing it from lunging. A goblin snake must spend a round recoiling between lunge attacks.

Snake Empathy (Ex) This ability functions similarly to a druid's wild empathy ability, but allows goblin snakes to verbally communicate with and be understood by snakes and similar serpentine reptiles. Goblin snakes have a +4 racial bonus on these checks. Its base check equals its racial Hit Dice.

ECOLOGY

Environment Any underground

Organization Solitary, pair (2), nest (3-16)

Treasure None

Alignment Usually chaotic evil

Advancement 3-9 HD (Medium), 10-18 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment +1

Tenacious predators and bullies, goblin snakes are shrill, impulsive, and endlessly hungry. When their instinctual cunning takes hold, though, these maniacal goblinkin exhibit all the stealth and deadly cunning of the serpents they resemble.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Cruel and selfish, goblin snakes care for little more than their next meal and indulging their unfounded arrogance. Although stupider than goblins, their cruelty and terrifying shape allow them to take positions of inflated prominence within goblin society, as fearful goblins typically defer to the beasts. Enjoying the company of snakes, goblin snakes are often accompanied by 1d6 normal smaller serpents. A goblin snake and five small vipers make a CR 4 encounter.

BESTIARY



GIANT GECKO

An oversized lizard the size of a horse scans the area, its bulging eyes darting this way and that, completely independent of one another. Every few moments a long pink tongue snaps from its wide mouth, either to snatch up some unseen insect or moisten an eye.

GIANT GECKO

N Medium animal

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +2, **Spot** +2

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12
(+2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 11 (2d8+2)

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

Melee bite +2 (2d4+1)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

TACTICS

Before Combat When hunting, giant geckos prefer to grab smaller prey from above, often waiting in ambush on unexpected surfaces.

During Combat Giant geckos make full use of the terrain, scaling walls and attacking from higher ground whenever possible.

Morale Clever beasts, giant geckos know when they are outmatched and flee if reduced to fewer than half their hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 15, **Con** 12, **Int** 2, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Feats Improved Initiative

CR 1

Skills Balance +10, Climb +22

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Expert Climber (Ex) The unique physiology of gecko feet allow geckos to climb any surface, no matter how slick or sheer. In effect, giant geckos are treated as constantly being under a natural version of the spell *spider climb*. This ability also provides them with an additional +8 bonus on Climb check, which stacks with their racial bonus.

Skills Giant geckos have a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks. They can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

ECOLOGY

Environment Any warm forest or mountains

Organization Solitary, pair, or nest (3–6)

Treasure None

Alignment Always neutral

Advancement 3–7 HD (Medium), 8–14 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment —

Oversized lizards, giant geckos rarely threaten creatures larger than dogs or halflings. Known for their relative intelligence, some savage humanoids employ them as watchdogs or sometimes even mounts.

ECOLOGY

Omnivorous reptiles, giant geckos eat more meat than their smaller cousins but still enjoy fruits, nectars, and other sweet plants. The unique structure of geckos' widely-spaced toes make them peerless climbers, able to scamper across any surface with ease.

Numerous species of giant geckos exist, like the Storval Plateau's spire striders, the frostleapers that dwell in the Land of the Linnorm Kings, and Geb's urbane glitterscale geckos.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



SINSPAWN

A horribly deformed humanoid, hairless and emaciated, lurches out of the shadows. Its unnaturally long arms end in three-fingered talons, and its legs bend like those of a dog. A writhing network of bulging veins form dark blue patterns across its pallid skin. But worst of all is its face—its nose is little more than a pair of slits, and its eyes are bulging and red. The lower jaw splits in half at the chin into two wretched arms that end in tiny three-fingered hands to either side an open gullet with a lolling tongue.

SINSPAWN

Always NE Medium aberration

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent sin; Listen +1, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13

(+1 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 19 (3d8+6); fast healing 1

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Immune mind-affecting effects; **SR** 11

OFFENSE

CR 2

Spd 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +2 (1d4+1) and
bite +0 (1d6 plus wrathful bite)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

TACTICS

During Combat A sinspawn that faces a single foe generally attempts to capture its enemy alive, making untrained Heal checks to stop bleeding if necessary, so the victim can be returned to the nearest runewell before he is murdered. Against multiple foes, the sinspawn focuses its attacks on the weakest-looking foes first.

Morale Sinspawn fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Feats Improved Initiative, Multiattack

Skills Hide +11, Move Silently +11

Languages Thassilonian

SQ martial proficiency

ECOLOGY

Environment Any (near runewells of wrath)

Organization Solitary, pair (2), or cult (3–9)

Treasure No coins, no goods, standard items (weapons and armor only)

Alignment Always chaotic evil

Advancement By character class; **Favored Class** barbarian

Level Adjustment +3

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Martial Proficiency (Ex) A sinspawn is proficient in all simple and all martial weapons, and in all forms of armor and shields except tower shields.

Scent Sin (Su) A sinspawn has the scent ability, but only against extraordinarily wrathful creatures. This includes any creature under the effects of a barbarian rage or similar effect, a creature with the evil subtype, a creature under the effects of the sinspawn's wrathful bite, or a creature (GM's discretion) that is excessively wrathful.

Wrathful Bite (Su) A creature bitten by a sinspawn must make a DC 12 Will save or become overwhelmed by feelings of wrath, anger, and rage. These emotions are so powerful that the affected creature finds it hard to do anything but rage impotently. For 1d6 minutes after succumbing to a sinspawn's wrathful bite, the victim is effectively sickened, and takes a –2 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks. A victim suffering from this effect who is bitten again by a sinspawn must make a DC 12 Will save or the wrath increases, leaving him staggered and thus able to take only a single move action or standard action each round (but not both, nor can he take full-round actions). Further bites increase the duration of the effect, but not the magnitude.

Skills Sinspawn have a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks.

Sinspawn are a mockery of the flesh, the shape of humanity warped and twisted by an all-encompassing wrath, transforming their familiar shape into one of horror and ruin. Sinspawn were originally created by Runelord Alaznist, who used life-shaping magic she and her fellow runelords stole from the alien aboleths to fashion

BESTIARY

shock troops she could use in her endless confrontations with her numerous enemies (primarily the Runelord Karzoug). She invested in these monsters not only anger and the capacity to murder, but a twisted sense of free will to encourage the desire to gain in power and strength—not just to please their mistress, but to please themselves. This final stroke of twisted brilliance made all the difference, and what could have manifested as little more than a new form of intelligent construct became an entirely new form of aberrant life.

ECOLOGY

Sinspawn are magically created from profane pools of quickened soul-energy fueled by the departed spirits of creatures filled with wrath in life. The primal ooze that results must manifest in a specially prepared container known as a *runewell*, otherwise the harvested ectoplasm quickly evaporates and is lost. When a wrathful creature dies near a functional *runewell*, the device duplicates its wrath, allowing the soul to go on to its final reward but retaining an imprint of its anger. Normally, a *runewell* can only harvest wrathful souls that die within a radius of no more than a mile, but with the use of a magical scrying device called a *soul lens*, one can harvest souls from the world over provided they have been marked with the Sihedron Rune (the seven-pointed star symbolizing the seven schools of Thassilonian magic) and have been properly prepared with certain rituals just prior to their death.

It takes four souls to provide enough raw wrath for a sinspawn to emerge, fully grown, from a *runewell*. Once created, a sinspawn is its own creature; no vestige but anger remains from the original souls. It has no capacity to procreate, but those sinspawn intelligent enough to understand the nature of their creation often seek out victims to capture alive and return to a *runewell*. Their, the sinspawn uses its wrathful bite and quickly murders its prey, the dead creature's rage-infected soul fueling the creation of more monstrosities.

The average sinspawn stands nearly 5 feet tall, and weighs about 100 pounds. Although they can live as long as humans, most succumb to violent ends long before their time. A sinspawn normally feeds on flesh (preferring it still living as it's consumed), but as long as a sinspawn is within a mile of a functioning *runewell*, the magic can sustain the creature without food or water indefinitely.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

In ancient Bakrakahn, Alaznist kept entire villages of sinspawn at her beck and call. The bickering creatures, left to their own devices, required near-constant policing from more powerful agents to prevent them from murdering each other. This typically consisted of periodic offerings of slaves into the walled compounds, to give the sinspawn victims to enact their rage upon. After the fall of Thassilon, the few surviving sinspawn perished after only a few decades. With Karzoug's awakening, and the sympathetic activation of long-dormant *runewells*, these creatures may well return to life—the recrudescence of sinspawn under Sandpoint in “Burnt Offerings” showcasing how most such events would pan out.

TREASURE

Sinspawn have little interest in gold or jewelry but take a particular keen liking to armor and weapons, be they standard, masterwork, bejeweled, or magical in nature.

ADVANCED SINSPAWN

While sinspawn often advance as fighters, rangers, or rogues, their favored class is barbarian. Spellcasting sinspawn are uncommon, and often serve not as leaders but as valued advisers and ranged support in sinspawn conflicts. They make excellent sorcerers and clerics (typically worshiping violent deities like Rovagug or Lamashtu), but lack the patience to become wizards. Sinspawn druids and bards are unheard of.

A sinspawn's spell resistance increases by +1 for each class level it gains. Its ability score modifiers are Strength +2, Dexterity +2, Constitution +4, Wisdom +2, Charisma +2.

VARIANT SINSPAWN

As Runelord Alaznist created the first sinspawn near the end of the Thassilonian rule, the other runelords had little time to build upon her discoveries. Yet this does not mean that sinspawn associated with the other six sins cannot exist. While sinspawn tied to the other sins have nearly identical statistics to those presented here (their bite attack inflicting different urges but having the same game effects), they are quite different in appearance, have slightly different ability score modifiers, and have different favored classes.

Envyspawn: These sinspawn are short and thin, rarely taller than four or five feet in height. They generally have fewer vein markings on their skin than other sinspawn. Their ability score modifiers are Strength +4, Dexterity +2, Constitution +4, Wisdom +2, and their favored class is ranger.

Gluttonspawn: Gluttonous sinspawn are grossly overweight, yet retain their kins' energy and speed. Their ability score modifiers are Strength +2, Constitution +6, Wisdom +2, Charisma +2, and their favored class is fighter.

Greedspawn: The sinspawn of greed are the tallest of their kind, generally seven feet in height and with a glittering gold coloration to their veins. Their ability score modifiers are Strength +2, Dexterity +4, Constitution +4, Charisma +2, and their favored class is rogue.

Lustspawn: Despite their monstrous faces and talons, lustspawn have perfectly formed male or female bodies capable of sexual intercourse (but not of actual procreation). Their ability score modifiers are Strength +2, Dexterity +2, Constitution +2, Charisma +6, and their favored class is sorcerer.

Pridespawn: These sinspawn are particularly emaciated, with larger eyes than most of their kin and often with full heads of hair. Their ability score modifiers are Strength +2, Dexterity +2, Constitution +4, Intelligence +4, and their favored class is wizard.

Slothspawn: Thick rolls of excess skin hang from the frames of sloth sinspawn, and their legs are atrophied to nearly half the normal length (yet they unnervingly retain the speed of their kin). Their ability score modifiers are Strength +2, Constitution +4, Wisdom +4, Charisma +2, and their favored class is cleric.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



ATTIC WHISPERER

The thing in the corner of the attic resembles an emaciated child. It is a gray, forgotten remnant with cobwebs and dust covering the leering, fox skull that serves as its head. In tiny, claw-like hands it grasps a stuffed child's toy—a ratty dolly with pins in its eyes. Worse are the voices, the calling whispers that haunt the air, filling it with nursery rhymes, sobbing, and laughing at the same time, as if the air around the creature were alive with lost invisible children.

ATTIC WHISPERER

NE Small undead

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +9

Aura aura of sobs

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14
(+4 Dex, +3 natural, +1 size)

hp 39 (6d12)

Fort +2, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d4+1 plus steal breath) and
touch +3 (steal voice)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks steal breath, steal voice

Spell-like Abilities (CL 6th)

3/day—ghost sound (DC 13), invisibility (DC 16), minor
image (DC 15)

TACTICS

Before Combat An attic whisperer never enters combat when its victim is aware of it or there are multiple opponents. It uses its invisibility, skills at misdirection, and ambush tactics to surprise victims, or, preferably, simply attack when its prey is asleep.

During Combat Not physically powerful, attic whisperers try to use their steal breath ability to render single opponents unconscious and savage them while they're defenseless.

Morale Possessing the thoughts of children, attic whisperers are easily intimidated. They often flee after losing a third of their hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 9, **Dex** 19, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +3; **Grp** -2

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (bite)

Skills Bluff +12, Climb +5, Hide +17, Knowledge (local) +8, Listen
+12, Move Silently +13, Spot +9

Languages Common

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Sobs (Su) All the voices an attic whisperer steals linger around it in an invisible but audible aura of unnerving—often child-like—whimpers, limericks, songs, and sobs. This aura surrounds an attic whisperer in a 10-foot radius. Any sentient living creature that enters this area loses the benefit of any bardic music ability and takes a -1 penalty on all attack rolls, damage rolls, and Will saving throws. An attic whisperer can suppress or reactive its aura as a free action.

Steal Breath (Su) A creature damaged by an attic whisperer's bite attack must make a DC 16 Will save or become fatigued for 1 hour. A fatigued creature affected by this attack becomes exhausted for 1 hour, while an exhausted creature falls unconscious for 1 hour. This sleep is magically induced, and a sleeper can only be roused by a targeted dispel magic (dispel check DC 17), remove curse, or the attic whisperer's destruction. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Steal Voice (Su) Any creature hit by this touch attack must make a DC 16 Will save or lose its ability to speak for 1 hour. During that time, the creature cannot talk, cast spells with verbal components, use bardic music, turn undead, or use any other skill or ability that requires speech. This ability has no effect on creatures incapable of speech. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Once an attic whisperer has stolen a creature's voice it can perfectly mimic that voice (or any other it has previously stolen) at any time, even after its victim's voice has returned. While mimicking a voice, the attic whisperer can speak in any language the voice's owner knew, regardless of its prior knowledge of the language. Those familiar with an individual's voice can make a

BESTIARY

Sense Motive check opposed by the attic whisperer's Bluff check to realize a mimicked voice is inauthentic.

ECOLOGY

Environment Any urban or ruins

Organization Solitary, pair (2), generation (3–9)

Treasure No coins, 10% goods, no items

Alignment Usually neutral evil

Advancement 7–18 HD (Small)

Level Adjustment —

Children seem to experience emotions more intensely than adults. Quicker to laugh and swifter to love, certainly, but also more vulnerable to sorrow and faster to wither when abandoned. It is such desertion, the desperation and hopeless freezing of an innocent's dreams, that gives rise to the tragic abominations called attic whisperers.

Attic whisperers haunt shadowy, forgotten places like old buildings and dilapidated institutions, places that were once homes to both young children and subtle evils. Hiding in drafty attics and moldy basements, these creatures might lie dormant for decades while the quick go about their lives—often a scant floor away. The coming of a child, though, rekindles some hope in these creatures, their animating spirits motivated by loneliness, ever-seeking comfort and companionship. Once they find a potential playmate, an attic whisperer does all it can to assure it will never be lonely again.

With the ability to steal one's voice, along with the air from living lungs, these undead torment and terrify by circumstance alone, misunderstanding fear for further rejection and their own murderousness for love. And ever surrounding these creatures murmur the lost whispers of others they sought comfort from, voices of the long departed, oftentimes dead at the hands of these broken-hearted undead.

ECOLOGY

An attic whisperer spawns as the result of a lonely or neglected child's death. Rather than animating the body of the dead youth, the creature rises from an amalgam of old toys, clothing, dust, and other objects associated with the departed—icons of the child's neglect. The widely varying materials that fuse together to form these creatures lead to attic whisperers with wildly varying appearances.

As attic whisperers are undead, they have no need for food and no bodily processes. Thus, they rarely impact the urban or ruined environments they haunt.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Attic whisperers linger in the places where they were formed, typically old homes, orphanages, schools, debtors' prisons, workhouses, and similar places where children might be discarded. Afflicted in death by the same boredom in loneliness they knew in life, attic whisperers seek playmates and friends, preferably those of the approximate age they were when they died, or other simple or innocent folk. An attic whisperer might

spend years in motionless solitude in an abandoned building, waiting for someone to come play.

Should it find a potential playmate, an attic whisperer attempts to lure its friend to it, singing nursery rhymes, leaving trails of old toys, or calling out in the stolen voices of other children. When the monster reveals itself it typically terrifies its would-be playmate. In a fit of disappointment and anger the attic whisperer often steals the mortified child's voice and breath, leaving him unconscious. Yet, such an experience rarely dissuades an attic whisperer, which might later sneak into the child's bedroom, stalk him from gable windows and closet doors, or seek to fulfill his angry wishes against family and friends.

Attic whisperers are typically jealous creatures and brook no competition for their playmates' affections, even if the playmate has no idea the attic whisperer actually exists. These undead can prove especially dangerous to the parents, siblings, servants, pets, and young friends of those they fixate upon. Although pitiful, attic whisperers are wholly merciless in their selfishness. By the same token, an attic whisperer usually has no interest in other creatures besides its playmate, turning invisible or otherwise hiding when others come near. As such, many hauntings by these tragic creatures go ignored as a child's nightmares and imaginary friends.

TREASURE

Destroying an attic whisperer reduces it to its component parts, usually consisting of dusty junk left to molder in the attics of old houses. While the creature's destruction causes much of its body to disintegrate, there's a 20% chance that a toy or trinket left among the remains might be worth something. Such items usually take the form of china dolls, small locket, music boxes, precious marbles, fine teacups, sculpted metal soldiers, or the like.

Can you hear him waking?

Up above the stairs?

Can you hear him weeping?

Is he really there?

Can you say 'I'm speaking'?

Are you saying naught?

Is it you who's weeping?

Is it you he's caught?

When the nursery rhyming

Has whispered up above

Is it you who sounds

In the attic, my love?

When you hear your voice

Echoing on high

Is the voice a whisper

Is it just his lie?

—Varisian nursery rhyme

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



THE SANDPOINT DEVIL

An unnatural amalgam of loathsome animal parts, this mangy beast skulks forward—walking perversely upright—on the rear legs of a powerful horse. Its body and head grossly equine, the torn wings of some giant bat sprout from the thing's pox-spotted hide. Calloused, milky eyes glare balefully from a nearly skeletal head as a rasping hiss escapes a muzzle filled with broken yellow wolfteeth.

SANDPOINT DEVIL

NE Large outsider (native)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +20, **Spot** +20

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 18
(+3 Dex, +9 natural, –1 size)

hp 102 (12d8+48)

Fort +10, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

Immune fire; **SR** 14

DR 5/cold iron

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor)

Melee 2 kicks +19 (1d8+8) and
bite +14 (2d6+4)

CR 8

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks bay, hellfire breath, trample (2d6+126)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)

At will—fog cloud (DC 15), gust of wind (DC 15), pyrotechnics (DC 15), scare (DC 15)

3/day—dimension door (DC 17), phantasmal killer (DC 18)

TACTICS

Before Combat Delighting in the fear of its prey, the Sandpoint devil prefers to enter combat under the shroud of night and magically created fog. It terrorizes its foes further by baying, circling overhead, or allowing lone wanderers to momentarily glimpse its form.

During Combat As soon as its foes are suitably skittish the Sandpoint devil charges into battle, trampling victims and catching as many as possible in a blast of its hellfire breath.

Morale The Sandpoint devil flees if reduced to fewer than 15 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 8, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +24

Feats Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Stealthy

Skills Climb +15, Disguise +9, Hide +16, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (geography) +7, Listen +20, Move Silently +20, Search +6, Spot +20, Survival +11

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bay (Su) When the Sandpoint devil screams, all creatures within a 300-foot-radius spread must succeed on a DC 19 Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic, mind-affecting, fear effect. Whether or not the save is successful, a creature is thereafter immune to the Sandpoint devil's bay for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Hellfire Breath (Su) The Sandpoint devil can unleash blasts of infernal flame in a 30-ft cone, once every 1d4 rounds (damage 6d6 fire, Reflex 20 half). Any creature that fails the save also takes a –4 penalty on attack rolls, saves, ability checks, and skill checks. This effect lasts for a number of days equal to the damage taken, but is otherwise treated and can be removed as per the spell *bestow curse*. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Trample (Ex) Reflex half DC 24. The save DC is Strength-based.

ECOLOGY

Environment Any coastal

Organization Solitary (unique)

Treasure None

Alignment Always neutral evil

Advancement 13–24 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment —

A shadow in the Lost Coast's all-too common mists, it makes its presence known by baying terrible half-howls, half-screams that echo from the eerie stones of the Devil's Platter. The Sandpoint devil has haunted the lands around its namesake town for more than 10 years. Those who have seen the beast and borne witness to its horror describe it as a horse-like thing, with a nearly skeletal head filled with sharp, lupine teeth. From its lean, equine body jut a pair of ragged bat

BESTIARY

"FACTS" ABOUT THE SANDPOINT DEVIL

Rumors and legends of a rarely seen but terrible monster have preyed upon the fears of Sandpoint's populace for 10 years. Here are several widely believed (though oft-conflicting) rumors regarding the famed Sandpoint devil.

Bad Omen: It's bad luck to see the Sandpoint devil. Any who do are cursed to suffer an ill fate. It's said the devil flies over Sandpoint in warning before tragedies, murders, and shipwrecks.

Devil-Spawned: The Sandpoint devil is the son of a widow-woman named Agatha Leeds who used to live north of town and was said to practice dark magics and consort with evil beings. When she wandered into town round with child, she avoided all questions about her pregnancy. Weeks later, Leeds's home was found reduced to cinders with its owner missing. Soon after, the first sightings of the Sandpoint devil began.

Disappearances: Evidence of the Sandpoint devil often disappears before it can be widely studied. Tracks, bitten animals, weapons with its blood, and similar such evidence regularly vanish, no matter how well watched or guarded. Many who have sought out the Sandpoint devil have disappeared without a trace either during their hunts or in the weeks following their return.

Fire Starter: Descriptions, paintings, and other evidence regarding the Sandpoint devil often mysteriously catch on fire, sometimes burning entire homes to the ground.

Immortal Protector: Some Varisians say the Sandpoint devil has lived along the Lost Coast for thousands of years, protecting it from those who would exploit the land. Its modern misdeeds are merely its way of fending off the most recent encroachment of civilization.

One of Many: The Sandpoint devil is sometimes seen in the company of other local legends and spooks, most commonly a white stag, the ghost of a young girl, and a zombie without feet.

wings, its forelegs end in powerful hooves, capable of supporting it weirdly upright like a man. Details vary of its other features, but eyes that glow a demonic red; a tail like a reptile; and broken, stag-like antlers are also commonly reported.

The Sandpoint devil most commonly appears on misty, moonless nights. A thief of livestock, kidnapper of children, and bringer of woes, countless tales surround the beast. Fully half the farmers in the Sandpoint region claim to have seen the creature on at least one occasion. Some stories say the devil is a manifestation of evil and that its coming foretells times of great woe—explaining its numerous sightings around the time of the Late Unpleasantness. Others explain away the creature as some ancient, wizard-warped beast that hides in the deepest crags of the Devil's Platter.

Yet, for all the talk and to-do about the legend, little concrete proof ever lingers to widely confirm the creature's existence. Thus, many hold that the Sandpoint devil is but the drunken fantasy of local boozers and simple yokels. But even cynics are

quick to change their minds when the mists rise on the lonely moors and only a few timber walls protect against the lurking, hungry things prowling the night.

ECOLOGY

Despite tales of its hell-spawned origins, the Sandpoint devil is not an actual devil, but rather a creature of flesh and blood—though one possessed of a cruel cunning and innate maliciousness. A strict nocturnal carnivore, it finds penned livestock and unwary travelers make easier prey than wild beasts and dines on such creatures whenever possible—leading to no end of local outcry. A wise hunter, it typically carries its meal back to its lair to dine in safety, ever wary of those who would hunt it in turn or attempt to follow it. Inexplicably, the thing seems to enjoy the taste of fearful prey and often goes to great lengths to terrorize its meals before slaying them. After particularly large meals, the beast has been known to go into short cycles of hibernation, lasting anywhere from a week to three months.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

The Sandpoint devil makes its home in a deep, vertical cave near the center of the Devil's Platter, preferring a lonely lair where few other creatures can interrupt its rest. The creature haunts the region merely because it was born nearby and food remains abundant, but it could comfortably survive in any temperate environs.

As a unique creature, the Sandpoint devil has no complex society and it will continue to spend its nights hunting prey and terrorizing townsfolk until its menace is ended. Although some claim the Sandpoint devil serves a master greater than its own hunger, such rumors have never been proven.

TREASURE


While it carries no treasure, the bottom of the cave in which the Sandpoint devil lairs is heaped with the remains of countless meals. Rotting clothing, rent armor, rusted weapons, and 1d6x100 gp worth of useful equipment, coins, and rarer items lie discarded amid the decade-old charnel mound. Among these goods doubtlessly lie buried several personal items connected with the monster's past victims and other objects identifiable by local residents.

VARIANTS

Although the Sandpoint devil is a unique creature, similar mysterious abominations might be found elsewhere in Golarion. Once, a creature matching the description of the Sandpoint devil was reported as far east as Darkmoon Vale, capering at the whim of a local witch. Deep in the jungles to the south, statues of a being very similar to the Sandpoint devil have been found in the ruins of Wat Kyript. The tribes of the Ginji Mesa also have a similar local legend, fearing the Nightsnake, a gigantic serpent with bat wings and the power to transfix a man with its gaze.

Hypnotic Gaze (Su): As per the spell *hypnotism*, 30 feet, Fortitude DC 19. The save DC is Charisma-based. A Sandpoint devil with a hypnotic gaze has CR +1.

CHARACTERS



Valeros

MALE HUMAN FIGHTER 1

ALIGN NG INIT +6 SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES		DEFENSE	
14	STR	HP 11	
15	DEX	AC 17	
12	CON	touch 12, flat-footed 15	
13	INT	Fort +3, Ref +2, Will -1	
8	WIS		
10	CHA		

OFFENSE

Melee longsword +4 (1d8+2)
Melee longsword +1 (1d8+2)
shortsword +1 (1d6+1)
Ranged shortbow +3 (1d6)


SKILLS

Climb +1
Intimidate +4
Ride +6
Swim -4

FEATS

Big Game Hunter⁸, Improved Initiative, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Combat Gear alchemist's fire; **Other Gear** chainmail, longsword, shortbow with 20 arrows, shortsword, backpack, rations (2), silk rope, 1 gp



Seoni

FEMALE HUMAN SORCERER 1

ALIGN LN INIT +2 SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES		DEFENSE	
8	STR	HP 5	
14	DEX	AC 12	
12	CON	touch 12, flat-footed 10	
10	INT	Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +3	
13	WIS		
15	CHA		

OFFENSE

Melee quarterstaff -1 (1d6-1)
Ranged dagger +2 (1d4-1)
Spells Known (CL 1st, 2nd with evocation)
1st (5/day)—mage armor, magic missile
0 (6/day)—acid splash, detect magic, daze (DC 12), read magic
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st)
1/day—dancing lights


SKILLS

Bluff +6
Concentration +8
Spellcraft +4

FEATS

Dodge, Spell Focus (evocation), Varisian Tattoo (evocation)⁹

Combat Gear smokestick, tanglefoot bag; **Other Gear** dagger, quarterstaff, backpack, sunrod (5), rations (4), 27 gp



Kyra

FEMALE HUMAN CLERIC 1 (SARENRAE)

ALIGN NG INIT -1 SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES		DEFENSE	
13	STR	HP 10	
8	DEX	AC 15	
14	CON	touch 9, flat-footed 15	
10	INT	Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +7	
15	WIS		
12	CHA		

OFFENSE

Melee scimitar +1 (1d6+1/18-20)
Ranged lt crossbow -1 (1d8/19-20)
Special Attacks greater turning 1/day, turn undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+2)
Spells Prepared (CL 2nd)
1st—bless, command (DC 13), cure light wounds⁰
0—detect magic, light, read magic
D domain spell (healing, sun)


SKILLS

Concentration +6
Heal +6
Knowledge (religion) +4

FEATS

Country Born⁸, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scimitar)

Gear chain shirt, heavy wooden shield, light crossbow with 10 bolts, scimitar, backpack, rations (6), silver holy symbol, 12 gp



Merisiel

FEMALE ELF ROGUE 1

ALIGN CN INIT +3 SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES		DEFENSE	
12	STR	HP 7	
17	DEX	AC 15	
12	CON	touch 13, flat-footed 12	
8	INT	Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +1 (+2 vs enchantment)	
13	WIS	Immune sleep	
10	CHA		

OFFENSE

Melee rapier +1 (1d6+1/18-20)
Ranged dagger +3 (1d4+1/19-20)
Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

SKILLS

Climb +3
Disable Device +4
Hide +7
Intimidate +2
Jump +3
Listen +5
Move Silently +7
Search +4
Spot +5
Tumble +7

FEATS

City Born (Riddleport)⁹, Dodge

Combat Gear acid, alchemist's fire (2), thunderstone; **Other Gear** leather armor, daggers (6), rapier, backpack, grappling hook, hooded lantern, oil (5), rations (3), silk rope, thieves' tools, 25 gp

PREVIEW

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BESTIARY

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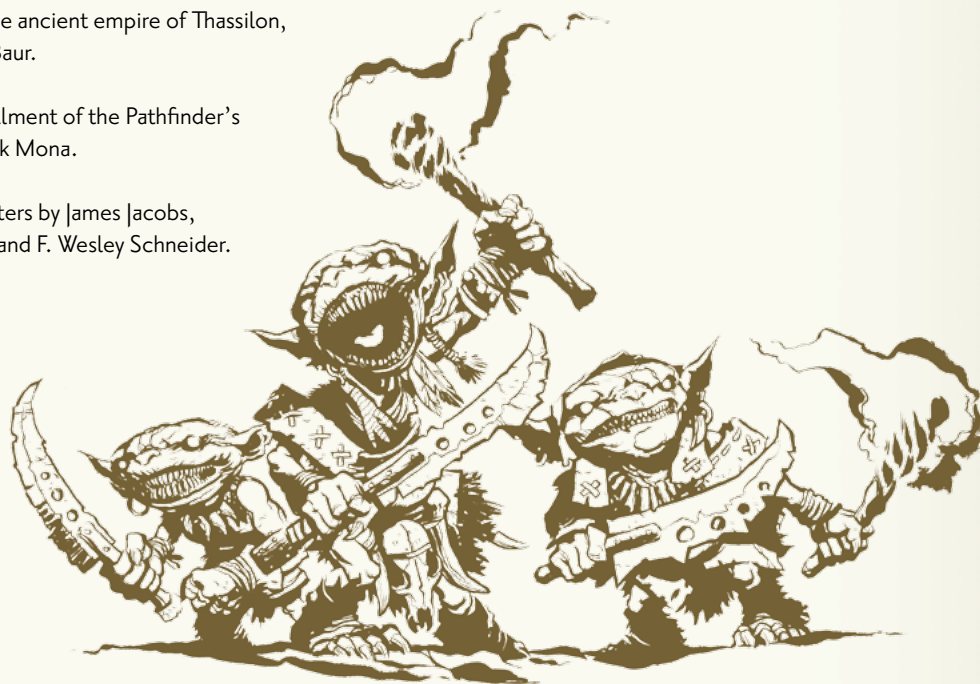
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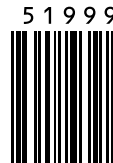
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