

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER®



Triumph of the Tusk

ADVENTURE PATH

Hoof, Cinder, and Storm

By David Schwartz and
Shay Snow

Realm of the Mammoth Lords

Belkzen

50 MILES

Sarkoris Scar

Tusk Mountains

New Thassilon

• WYVERNSTING

• DEEPGATE

Kodar Mountains

• STORM TOWER

Ustalav

• BLISTERWELL

• SHADEFIELDS

TORRENTMOOT •

Varisia

• URGIR

The Gravelands

Mindspin Mountains



PATHFINDER

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Triumph of the Tusk

ADVENTURE PATH

ADVENTURE PATH 2 OF 3

Hoof, Cinder, and Storm

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by Ruvaidd Virk

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by Shay Snow

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Hoof, Cinder, and Storm

Chapter 1: Stampede of Bone4

As undead rampage across Belkzen and the ominous ancestor storms whirl overhead, it's not just orcs who are in danger. The massive aurochs herds are about to arrive on their yearly migration—right into the waiting claws of the unliving! The PCs seek aid from the Storm-Screamers of Rull, a primal hold whose orcs are masters of weather and beasts.

Chapter 2: The Battle for Blisterwell 22

For decades, two holds have clashed for control over the slag-strewn town of Blisterwell. Now that Ardax is in need of weapons for the upcoming war, he needs Blisterwell's steel. Yet his envoys have disappeared without a trace, so Ardax dispatches the PCs to resolve Blisterwell's old feud and bring its forges back online.

Chapter 3: Tracks of the Past..... 40

The bedraggled remnants of an orc hold seek refuge in Blisterwell, bringing terrible news: a Shoanti war party has flooded across the border from Varisia, intent on slaughtering orcs while they're distracted by an undead uprising. The PCs seek out the Shoanti raiders, only to learn that they might have a common enemy.

DOES BELKZEN NEED HEROES?

In "The Resurrection Flood," the PCs were coddled dignitaries who quickly had to seize weapons and initiative just to survive an undead uprising. In "Hoof, Cinder, and Storm," the PCs are now valued allies working for Ardax and investigating the supernatural cataclysm that's sweeping the land.

Yet the PCs aren't the only heroes. The Triumph of the Tusk Adventure Path strikes a difficult balance between presenting the PCs as exceptional contributors and showing that Belkzen doesn't need foreign saviors to solve its own problems. Throughout the adventure, the PCs are given more and more trust and autonomy, but it should remain clear that the PCs are (an important) part of a greater whole; all of Belkzen is working toward this goal. After all, fantasy stories have an unfortunate habit of setting up NPCs as helpless and in need of sophisticated rescuers. In addition, their Shoanti neighbors are strongly inspired by real-world cultures—cultures that popular media has often portrayed as needing outside saviors or reeducation. Thus, it's all the more important to show the strength, autonomy, and insight of orcs and Shoanti in this adventure to combat these tropes.

One way you might do that is through the Belkzen Operations article at the back of this book. It presents side quests that your group might explore with a second group of orc PCs, experiencing how the rest of Belkzen is saving itself.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Hoof, Cinder, and Storm" is designed for four characters.

- 6** The PCs begin this adventure at 6th level.
- 7** The PCs should be 7th level by the time they begin Chapter 2.
- 8** The PCs should be 8th level by the time they begin Chapter 3.

The PCs should reach 9th level by the time they complete the adventure.



Chapter 1: Stampede of Bone

The Torrentmoot celebration was not the diplomatic coup Ardax, Steward of Urgir, hoped it would be. Though the days leading up to the main event went relatively smoothly, when the rains finally came, they brought not new life but terrible magic; necromantic energies animated long-dead orcs that now rampage across Belkzen, and spectral weather called ancestor storms sweep across the skies. What's more, there are signs that rival orc holds are exploiting the chaos—perhaps even collaborating with whatever caused this “Resurrection Flood”—to undermine Ardax’s leadership.

The PCs were minor dignitaries dispatched to the Torrentmoot to make connections and assess whether Belkzen is as safe and welcoming as Ardax now claims. When undead attacked the Torrentmoot,

the PCs were evacuated in a beleaguered convoy that sought shelter with the Cleft Head Hold near the Belkzen-Ustalav border. However, the Cleft Head had secretly sided with Ardax’s enemies, and the convoy only survived thanks to the PCs’ infiltrating, seizing control of the traitors’ fortress, and overseeing its defense against the undead marauders in the area. Their efforts didn’t just save their own skins; the PCs also uncovered evidence of several holds turning against Ardax, suspiciously timed to coincide with the flood. Ardax has known that several holds resent him and his efforts (most notably the Unbroken Horn Hold), but others’ betrayals come as a surprise that the PCs will help uncover in this adventure.

In this adventure, the PCs clash with the One Eye Hold, one of two factions that control the industrial

city of Blisterwell. Once a dwarven pit mine, Blisterwell is now a cluster of vertical towns built into the mine shafts. However, a hold of Darklands orcs called the Haskodar emerged here a few decades ago and have slowly claimed more and more of Blisterwell. Desperate for any advantage, the One Eye leaders secretly allied with the Unbroken Horn Hold, promising allegiance in exchange for military support. What they received were undead orc soldiers known as oathrisen, so heavily armored that their deathless nature remains an open secret. As the flood began, One Eye orcs attacked, pinning down their Haskodar foes. Though not Ardax's friends, the Haskodar would eagerly support him if he helped break the One Eye's dominion.

Farther west, the Gutspear Hold has remained aloof from Ardax's politics. However, the ancestor storms sweeping the area recently veered into neighboring Varisia, startling the Shoanti people who live there. Thinking the ancestor storms were sinister magic the orcs had created, a Shoanti expeditionary force roved into western Belkzen to quash the magic and punish the orcs responsible. They encountered the Gutspear Hold, launching lightning attacks that have sent the orcs fleeing toward Urgir. Neither side realizes that the ancestor storms' creator is an enemy they have in common: the Whispering Tyrant.

GETTING STARTED

This adventure begins where the last ended, granting the PCs some brief downtime before reinforcements from Urgir arrive. This 40-strong force marches up to Splitskull Keep expecting a welcome from the Cleft Head's leader, K'zaard, along with news that the convoy was safely shepherded into Ustalav. What they find is a recent siege, the shattered bones of undead assailants, and the surviving Cleft Head Hold cheering the PCs' contributions in the recent battle. According to their original orders, the troops were supposed to assess the Cleft Head Hold's allegiance and battle worthiness, escorting representatives back to Urgir to coordinate a response to the undead threat. With the hold decimated and evidence of K'zaard's betrayal, though, there's little left for these troops to fight.

After speaking with survivors and confirming the PCs' contributions, these orcs look on the unlikely heroes with newfound respect. The new arrivals share notes before splitting up the convoy. Most are to be escorted to Ustalav, as originally intended, whereas the PCs receive a different invitation: traveling to Urgir to be rewarded by the Empty Hand Hold and likely aid Belkzen further. This campaign assumes the PCs accept.

The trip to Urgir is far easier than their flight from the Torrentmoot. As a former dwarven sky citadel, the orc stronghold Urgir always looks ready for battle, but the PCs should feel a heightened tension in the air. Gone is the festive feel of their first visit, replaced by the hustle and bustle of soldiers as they prepare to receive an attack or to launch one. Yet the PCs are still greeted as dignitaries, and given fine food and drink to celebrate their return, before being brought before the steward of Urgir.

Ardax asks the PCs to recount what has happened to them in the time since the undead attack. When his scouts confirm their story, he's impressed by their brave actions. Yet he is also upset, for this is another instance of disloyalty among the holds at an inopportune time. As promised, Ardax rewards the PCs with a set of *clawed bracers*, two *moderate healing potions*, a *scroll of haste*, a *scroll of heroism*, and a gold torc bracelet accented with garnets (worth 200 gp).

As he presents these, he speaks.

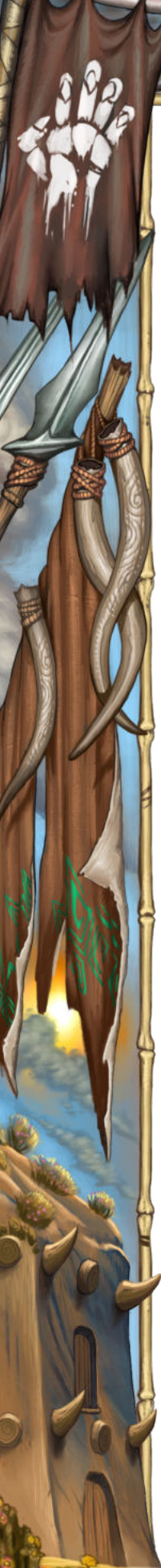
"You have proven yourself useful in a crisis. If you are willing to aid Belkzen in its current troubles, more treasures such as these await you. I need you only to swear your alliance to the Hold of Belkzen, and to Urgir, and to me as its steward for so long as these troubles persist. If you do, you will be under the protection of the Empty Hand Hold. Though I cannot guarantee your safety, we are by your side, and any who threaten you, be they orc or otherwise, face the retribution of myself and my hold.

"Righteous battle and rich reward await you. Do you so swear?"

There is no written contract between the PCs and Ardax, as he believes a person's word should be their bond. If the PCs object because of their allegiance to the organization they represent, Ardax tells them that their personal glory will reflect well on their employer when diplomacy resumes, and their contributions should not directly interfere with their other patrons' objectives. To seal the agreement, Ardax gives the party a *diplomat's badge* in the form of a medallion bearing the marks of Ardax and the Empty Hand Hold.

THE WAR COUNCIL

Once the PCs agree to aid Belkzen, Ardax invites them to attend a meeting of his war council to be held the next day. Eschewing as ever the throne room of the Great Palace, he holds the meeting in the briefing room of the Halls of the Closed Fist. Several dozen orcs, plus a smattering of people of other ancestries, represent interests in Urgir, and the orc holds that live in and around it.



Though anyone present may speak their mind, several factions within the council have unofficial speakers to present their position, encouraged by interjections and applause from their allies. The four largest factions (and their spokespeople) are as follows.

The Jobbers: An up-and-coming faction in the politics of Urgir, the Jobbers represent the new merchant class of orcs. They favor policies that will enrich business, and are often accused of dismissing tradition. The speaker for the Jobbers is Bravthur of the Empty Hand Hold, a young orc man with a passion for elven jewelry, which he acquired in his work as liaison for Urgir to visiting elven merchants.

The Provident: This faction represents the common orc hunters and raiders. The Provident supports a balance of power between the holds, and opposes any move they feel would disrupt this. Their speaker is Kragga of the Death's Head Hold, a rugged orc woman who often couches her practical knowledge in terms of folktales and parables.

The Reverent: This faction is formed from representatives of various religions—holy, unholy, and otherwise. Despite their differences, the Reverent share an interest in strengthening the orc people. Mother Agwilend of the Empty Hand Hold and Urgir's high priestess of Dretha speaks for the Reverent. This matronly orc woman often phrases her statements and commands in the form of rhetorical questions.

The Warmongers: Arguably the most traditional of the council's factions, the Warmongers prefer physical solutions to problems—especially violent solutions. Many of Belkzen's failings, they argue, can be traced back to hesitation and needless diplomacy. Their spokesman is Urgurak Ironmouth, a warrior-bard of the Bloodied Gauntlet Hold, who knows when to flatter and when to insult to get the most out of his fellow warriors.

A PC who asks around ahead of time or mingles before the meeting can learn about these factions with a successful DC 15 Diplomacy or Orc Lore check.

Ardax asks the PCs to sit near him, and at various points, he asks their opinion on the current debate. Have the PCs present their thoughts, either in character or in more general terms, and have one roll a DC 22 skill check appropriate to the tone or substance of their argument (others may Aid). Diplomacy and Intimidation are always suitable, and each topic suggests skills that may also be appropriate. If the PCs are split in which councilor

they support, you might have one PC from each side roll a check and use the higher result.

Ardax is primarily interested in gauging the PCs' skills in both strategy and rhetoric; his attitude is measured by the PCs' earning Esteem Points in this scene. A successful check impresses him, regardless of whether he agrees with the argument, and the party gains 1 Esteem Point (or 2 Esteem Points on a critical success). On a critical failure, the PC's input is not well received, and they lose 1 Esteem Point.

That said, Ardax is also weighing each side of each issue, carefully considering competing interests of strategic efficiency, cultural demands, and strong personalities at his table. If the PCs earn at least 1 Esteem Point

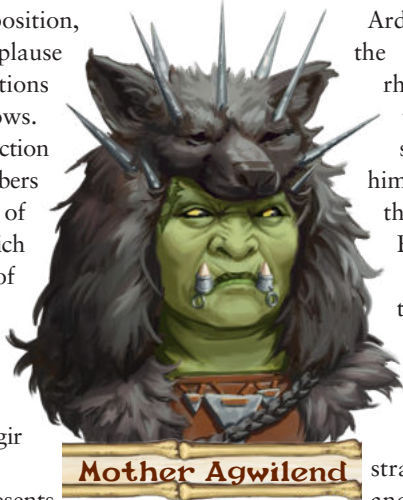
regarding an issue, Ardax rules in favor of whichever councilor the PCs supported. Each of these decisions has an effect later in this adventure and might also earn the PCs additional rewards at the end of the scene (detailed in Council Impact entries). If the PCs don't earn at least 1 Esteem Point toward a given issue, Ardax institutes a hybridized plan that incorporates some of each perspective; this provides no Council Impact in the later associated scene.

Lastly, make a note of which factions the PCs supported or opposed, as this can affect their standing with them in the next adventure, "Destroyer's Doom."

First Issue: Ancestor Storms

The discussion begins with the central issue: the necromantic rains that disrupted the flood festival, and reports that more of these "ancestor storms" are appearing across Belkzen. The idea of dealing with these storms by military force is soon put forward, and just as quickly quashed as an impractical idea. The councilors soon agree that these magical phenomena require an equally magical solution. However, the council becomes divided on what that magical solution entails. Mother Agwilend of the Reverent suggests a spiritual solution.

"Are these spirits not our honored dead? Do they not seek to communicate with us? Though their words are difficult to hear over the winds of death, should we not endeavor to understand? Only by listening to the spirits can we know what they desire, so we might act to appease them. Once that which fetters them to this world is removed, will not the spirits ascend to Volkorgoth? Must we fight our fallen warriors? Is it not better to succor them?"



Bravthur of the Jobbers counters.

"The ancestors are not the cause of these storms, but the victims. Long have they laid dormant, and long would they have continued to do so had not strange magic disturbed their deserved rest. But that which is created by magic can be countered by magic. If the Thunderer cannot stop these storms, then we must gather our workers of magic to quell the storms, or to push them back with stronger winds."

At this point, Ardax asks the PCs what means they would use. A PC can draw on their knowledge of Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion to make their argument. After consulting with the PCs and other advisors, Ardax shares his conclusions with the following speech, followed by what Belkzen's next steps will be.

"This is no mere weather magic to be calmed with spells. There is an intelligence behind these storms, but whether it is the ancestors or something else I do not yet know. We must study them further to determine their cause. Only then will we know whether these ancestor storms can be appeased... or destroyed."

Council Impact: Both of the following benefits last for the entirety of "Hoof, Cinder, and Storm."

If Ardax favors Mother Agwilend's proposal, mystics from many holds spread across the land to identify and commune with haunts. This grants the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus to skill checks and Perception checks made to detect haunts, as well as to initiative rolls in encounters involving haunts.

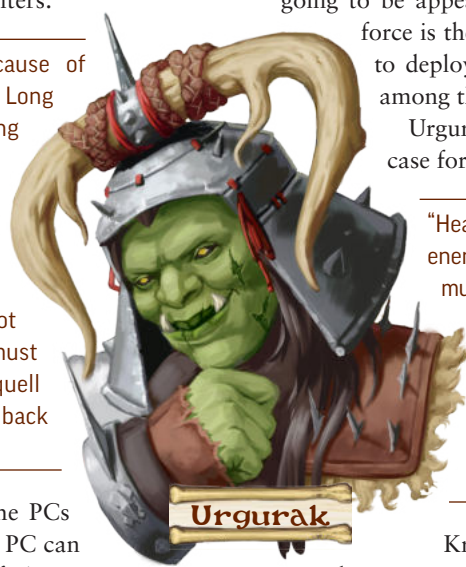
If Ardax favors Bravthur's proposal, Belkzen's mystics instead focus on battling the haunts and ancestor storms with force. Their ongoing efforts weaken the ancestor storms slightly, granting the PCs a +1 circumstance bonus to saving throws against haunts and a +1 circumstance bonus to skill checks made to Disable haunts.

Second Issue: Risen Dead

Talk then turns to the wider effect of the ancestor storms: the long deceased returning as undead. Once again a military solution is put forward, and this time it gains traction. The hordes of hungry dead are not

going to be appeased, nor can they be dispelled, so force is the only option. It is the strategy used to deploy that force that becomes the issue among the assembled orcs.

Urgurak of the Warmongers presents the case for unified action.



"Hear me, siblings! This is war, though the enemy take the form of our fallen kin. We must join forces to build an army and sweep across the plains returning the dead to their graves as we go. Anything less and the enemy will overwhelm us. Only cowards could turn their backs on such a worthy cause!"

Kragga of the Provident suggests an alternative.

"Such methods will not work here. These are ghouls and spirits, not dwarves in citadels. Our enemy has no stronghold we might besiege, much as Belkzen conquered this very city. Like ankhravs, they rise from the ground without warning. Better to divide our forces into smaller, more mobile units, that we may face the enemy where and when they appear."

Again, Ardax asks the PC what they would do in his situation. A PC might support their side with knowledge of strategy (using Warfare Lore), logistics (Survival), or the undead (Religion).

After consulting with the PCs, and other advisors, Ardax acknowledges the competing interests before sharing his strategy.

"Without having the holds united behind us, we lack the numbers to build an army as in ages past. I hear both sides' concerns. Here's how we will organize our warriors."

Council Impact: If Ardax favors Kragga's proposal, Ardax focuses on reconnaissance and skirmishing. Hundreds of scouting parties fan out from Urgir, sending back invaluable reports. This grants the PCs a +1 circumstance bonus to all checks to overcome obstacles during The Journey North (page 9).

If Ardax favors Urgurak's proposal, the commander gleefully begins assembling a small army to smash apart the most dangerous undead gatherings. This weeks-long rampage damages undead the PCs encounter later in the adventure, reducing foes' Hit Points in the Marching Dead and Oncoming Horde encounters (pages 20–21).



Third Issue: Other Holds

Mention of numbers raises another concern. Since the events of the festival, Urgir has not had contact with several allied holds including the Haskodar and the One Eye holds of Blisterwell, as well as wandering holds like the Gutspear and the Storm-Screamers of Rull. Add to that rumors spreading that the Unbroken Horn and the Wingripper holds are actively working against Ardax, perhaps even with eyes on Urgir?

Bravthur of the Jobbers suggests reestablishing communication.

"We few holds cannot face the current situation alone. We must send envoys to Blisterwell and to the lands north and west. Likely the other holds face the same dangers we do. We must work together if we are to prevail."

Urgurak of the Warmongers promotes a more offensive approach.

"We agree that allies are needed, but we do not know who we can trust. Send no envoys to speak friendly words and receive lies in return. Instead, send warriors to demand allegiance! And for those who will not give it freely, take their contributions by force."

For the third time, Ardax asks the PCs what they would do in his situation. A PC might couch their argument in terms of politics (using Society or Orc Lore) or strategy (Warfare Lore). After consulting with the PCs, and other advisors, Ardax replies.

"We must alienate neither our allies nor our potential allies. We will send our envoys with warriors to protect them from the dangers of travel, but not to wage war. The threat we face is too great to also war among our own kind. However, the holds must understand that disunity is not an option. Here's how we'll make that happen."

Council Impact: Both of the following benefits last for the entirety of Chapter 2.

If Ardax favors Bravthur's proposal, envoys are sent to the far-flung holds to reestablish contact and encourage those holds to unite against a common enemy under Ardax's oversight. This helps convey that Ardax and the Empty Hand Hold are friendly and open to negotiation, giving the PCs a +1 circumstance bonus to all Deception and Diplomacy checks made against orcs in Chapter 2.

If the PCs instead favor Urgurak's proposal, the envoys' message carries an unambiguous threat for those unwilling to work with Ardax. In Belkzen's culture, this isn't necessarily an insult; it's a legitimate

show of strength and willpower. This gives the PCs a +1 circumstance bonus to all Intimidation and initiative rolls made against orcs in Chapter 2.

Fourth Issue: Aurochs

As details are hammered out regarding Ardax's previous decisions, someone brings up the issue of the aurochs herds. They are coming south with the floodwaters, and the storms and undead will be a danger to them too.

Mother Agwilend of the Reverent dismisses the idea.

"Are the aurochs not wise animals that know to seek shelter from the storm? Are the hungry dead any more dangerous than the predators down from the mountains? How can we send warriors to defend mere animals when our own people are endangered? Should we not let nature take its course?"

Kragga of the Provident disagrees.

"Do you forget the story of Hetzek and the Many Gifts? All our strength and valor are for naught without the aurochs to clothe our bodies and fill our stomachs. We must ensure the safety of the aurochs, if we are to ensure the safety of our people. If the undead consume the aurochs we are as surely lost as if they had consumed us."

Again, Ardax asks the PCs for their opinion of the matter. Skills that might apply here include Nature, Survival, Farming Lore, Hunting Lore, or Plains Lore. After consulting with the PCs and other advisors, Ardax replies.

"It is clear to me now. We will send envoys to the other holds, but we must find the Storm-Screamers of Rull. Who in Belkzen knows more about the aurochs and about weather than Regnat and his druids? We must organize a search for the hold immediately."

Council Impact: If Ardax favors Mother Agwilend's proposal, Ardax assigns few defenders to the herds, instead trusting in their natural resilience and speed to keep them safe—at least for now. This makes the herds less wary of orcs, making it easier to handle the aurochs later in this chapter (pages 19–20).

If Ardax favors Kragga's proposal, he assigns numerous squads to find, shepherd, and defend the herds. This is only a temporary fix, and he acknowledges that as the aurochs enter the floodplain, they'll have less mobility and need more oversight. This strategy keeps the herds healthy, increasing their health later in this chapter (pages 19–20).

Meeting Adjourned

Soon after, the council is adjourned. Ardax thanks those in attendance for their time and loyalty, and he asks that the PCs rest in Urgir and report to him the following morning to assist with an upcoming wilderness operation.

Reward: Grant the PCs 40 XP for participating in the war council and an additional 40 XP if they earned three or more Esteem Points. If the PCs supported the arguments of any faction twice, its speaker gives them a gift after the meeting as a token of appreciation. If they favored the Jobbers or the Reverent, the PCs receive a small bottle of *empath's cordial* (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault* 89). If they stood with the Provident or the Warmongers, the PCs receive a *grudge stone* (*Treasure Vault* 94).

SEEKING THE STORM-SCREAMERS

Ardax has decided that the first task ahead is to make contact with Storm-Screamers of Rull. Led by the druid Regnat the Green, the orcs of this hold are among the best authorities on weather and wildlife in Belkzen. Urgir has not heard from the Storm-Screamers since before this year's flooding, and Ardax is anxious to locate them, confirm their allegiance, and enlist their help in protecting the herds and investigating the ancestor storms.

The Storm-Screamers roam widely, even more so than most nomadic holds, but their primary territory is in the foothills beneath the Whisperfall Pass. Ardax orders numerous scouting parties to be sent northward between the Flood Road and the Tusk Mountains to locate the Storm-Screamers. Scouting parties have orders to resolve any minor threats they encounter along the way, and to locate the Storm-Screamers if they can. If they do, they are to provide the Storm-Screamers with any assistance they might need and ensure a messenger is sent back to Urgir to report on the hold's location and situation.

If the PCs do not volunteer to be a scouting party, Ardax asks them directly for their aid.

The Journey North

There is a roughly 200-mile journey from Urgir to the PCs' designated search area, a trip of roughly 10 days by foot. Along the way, the PCs are likely to encounter groups of orcs migrating toward the Flood Road to hunt aurochs and other fauna that come south with the floodwaters and to trade with other orcs during the truce. Although many are suspicious of non-orcs, all respect the mark of Ardax when presented by the PCs.

This adventure assumes the trip is uneventful, though the GM should feel free to add encounters, particularly if the PCs are behind in experience. Predators also come to the plains to hunt both aurochs and aurochs hunters. A group of orcs might also ask the PCs to perform a small task, or resolve a dispute (as agents of Ardax or as disinterested outsiders).

This sequence uses the Victory Points subsystem from pages 184–186 of *GM Core* to track the PCs' progress as they overcome various obstacles, rather than mapping their exact overland route. Each obstacle presents a threshold representing the number of Victory Points needed to overcome the challenge. The obstacle also lists recommended skills and check DCs to earn points, though consider the PCs' creative alternatives in resolving checks.

Action progresses in phases, each representing about half a day's travel. During each phase, each PC can attempt a check to earn Victory Points. If their point total equals or exceeds the threshold value at the end of a phase, the group prevails and moves on. If they don't have enough points, they spend an additional phase overcoming the obstacle. If the PCs end a phase with at least 2 Victory Points more than the threshold requires, they begin the next phase with 1 Victory Point applied to the next obstacle.

Keep track of the number of phases the group needs to conclude these five obstacles. These and several later obstacles determine the health of the aurochs herd encountered later in this chapter (page 19).

Council Impact: If the PCs convinced Ardax to support Kragga during the war council's second issue (i.e., splitting up military forces into smaller groups), the PCs periodically encounter friendly scouts and trail signs that help them navigate. This provides the PCs a +1 circumstance bonus on all checks to overcome these obstacles.

SLOPES AND SLUDGE

OBSTACLE 6

Threshold 4; Overcome DC 21 Acrobatics, DC 22 Athletics, DC 22 Fortitude, DC 20 Plains Lore, DC 22 Perception, DC 20 Scouting Lore

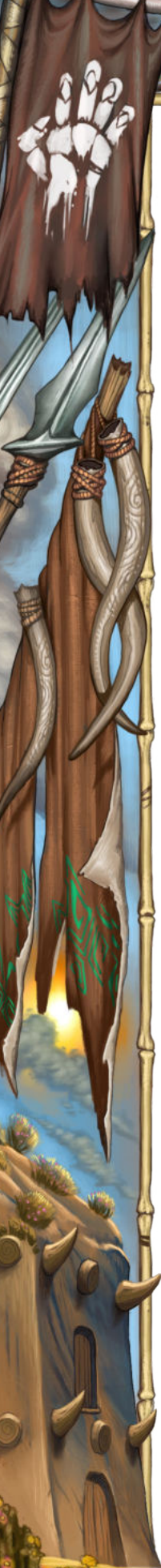
The rolling plains, usually an expanse of dusty hills, have turned into low, slippery slopes that defy even the best boots' grip. Navigating the muck requires balance, endurance, and a keen eye to spot the least problematic paths.

SEDGE AND SPOOR

OBSTACLE 6

Threshold 4; Overcome DC 22 Acrobatics, DC 22 Medicine, DC 21 Nature, DC 20 Plains Lore, DC 22 Scouting Lore, DC 20 Survival

As the elevation rises, the ground becomes drier. Seasonal moisture has revitalized Belkzen's foliage, much of it



protected by thorns, saw-toothed sedge, and irritating oils. Amid the plants, though, are signs of aurochs: hoofprints, cropped grasses, and dung. Following the trail requires avoiding hazardous plants (or treating the wounds they inflict) while tracking the herd.

NERVOUS HUNTERS

OBSTACLE 6

Threshold 4; **Overcome** DC 20 Belkzen Lore, DC 23 Deception, DC 21 Diplomacy, DC 22 Intimidation, DC 22 Society

A band of orc hunters is following the same herd, and they cross paths with the PCs. However, skirmishes with undead, ominous storms overhead, and the usual competitive spirit all encourage this group to keep its distance from strangers. By displaying the right customs, sharing gifts, and choosing words carefully, the PCs could coax these hunters into sharing their own knowledge of the area.

Special For every 5 gp in value the PCs offer in suitable gifts, they gain a cumulative +1 circumstance bonus to all checks to overcome this obstacle (maximum +5).

MAZE OF ARROYOS

OBSTACLE 6

Threshold 3; **Overcome** DC 22 Athletics, DC 22 Perception, DC 21 Survival, DC 20 Scouting Lore

Closer to the floodwaters' source, millennia of erosion have carved the land into a network of gullies and arroyos. The PCs' path winds across the raised berms between the depressions and periodically dips into the trenches as they find the most efficient path through this maze.

RULL'S WRATH

OBSTACLE 6

Threshold 4; **Overcome** DC 22 Crafting, DC 19 Orc Pantheon Lore, DC 19 Performance, DC 20 Religion, DC 22 Stealth, DC 21 Survival

Flood season occasionally brings cloudbursts nicknamed Rull's wrath, said to shimmer with the storm god's electrified excitement. The PCs notice the signs of an imminent downpour and have a few moments to brace themselves by assembling a shelter and taking cover. However, there's an esoteric way to survive these storms: appeasing Rull through offerings and thunderous music.

Special A PC who attempts an Orc Pantheon Lore, Performance, or Religion check to overcome this obstacle is exposed to lightning strikes, taking 8d8 electricity damage (DC 22 basic Reflex save). If a PC either critically succeeds at that skill check or takes at least 35 electricity damage from the lightning strike, the lightning temporarily brands their skin with Rull's sacred symbol (a storm cloud with lightning). This heals naturally over time, though a PC can Craft it into a *warding tattoo* or *warding tattoo (trail)* (*Secrets of Magic* 165) at half the normal price.

Blood Trail Camp

Moderate 6

As the cloudburst clears and the PCs ascend the foothills that day, they find an abandoned camp.

The tents and banners of an orc camp flutter ahead, although there is no sound or movement to suggest any occupants. On closer inspection, the camp seems less abandoned than attacked. Tents are collapsed and gear is in disarray, and the bodies of orcs lie where they fell. A banner displaying a hold's symbol hangs above the camp.

With a successful DC 15 Belkzen Lore, Heraldry Lore, or Orc Lore check, or a DC 20 Society check, a PC identifies the hold symbol as belonging to the Blood Trail Hold. That hold controls the eastern end of Whisperfall Pass, so this camp is at least 50 miles away from their usual territory. That's to be expected; most holds send hunting expeditions into the Flood Road area when aurochs are plentiful.

That's exactly what this group intended. However, their camp came under attack several days ago by wights animated by the ancestor storms. Most of the corpses belong to Blood Trail orcs, though a few appear partially mummified and decayed. The latter are orc wights destroyed in the counterattack. By investigating the camp, a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Survival check determines about 10 humanoids attacked from the south before roughly an equal number of humanoids scattered northward in several directions after the attack.

Creatures: Most of the surviving undead moved on, yet their foul influence reanimated several slain orcs as new wights. As the PCs approach, the wights feign true death, though a character who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check can discern that they are not ordinary corpses. If a PC spends more than a few moments examining the camp, or disturbs any of the corpses, the undead orcs rise up and attack the intruders. Though they retain their intelligence, the undead orcs seek only glory in battle and fight to the death.

SPITE-SCREAMER

CREATURE 5

UNCOMMON MEDIUM UNDEAD UNHOLY WIGHT

Variant wight (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 348)

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Necril, Orcish

Skills Athletics +12, Intimidation +12, Stealth +11

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

Items falchion

Grave Weapon This wight is bound to the falchion it died with.

AC 23; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11

HP 70, fueled by spite, void healing (*Monster Core* 360); **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** electricity 5, sonic 5

Final Spite ➤ As wight.

Fueled by Spite Each time a creature loses Hit Points due to a corrupting spite curse the wight inflicted, the wight gains 5 temporary Hit Points that last for 1 minute.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ falchion +15 (forceful, sweep), **Damage** 1d10+9 slashing plus corrupting spite

Melee ➤ claw +15 (agile), **Damage** 1d8+9 slashing plus corrupting spite

Ranged ➤ scream +13 (range increment 30 feet, sonic), **Damage** 3d8 sonic plus corrupting spite

Corrupting Spite (curse, divine, void; *Monster Core* 348) DC 22

Cleaving Rush ➤➤ The spite-screamer Strides and makes two melee Strikes at any point during that movement.

WIGHTS (3)

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Monster Core 348

Initiative Perception +10

Treasure: PCs who search the campsite find among the tents mostly clothing and personal items, as well as a few common and orc weapons, 20 gp worth of assorted jewelry, and a *shark tooth charm*. A communal tent contains a healer's toolkit, a repair toolkit, and a *traveler's any-tool*.

Development: Tattoos on the wights' bodies include designs common to the Blood Trail Hold, helping the PCs confirm their foes' affiliation in life. Given the attack occurred several days earlier, any orc survivors and wight assailants are long gone; tracking them is beyond the assumed scope of this adventure, particularly while the PCs' main objective of finding the Storm-Screamers and aurochs herds takes priority.

Into the Foothills

The search area assigned to the PCs is not steep, but navigation is difficult due to the rocky terrain. Finding a clear path requires a series of skill checks. Most of these checks are made by each character, though they may be able to Follow the Expert or Aid.

The outcome of this challenge doesn't impact the PCs immediately. Instead, each day they spend traveling impacts the herd's health in a later encounter.



FOREST OF STONE

OBSTACLE 6

Threshold 4; Overcome DC 21 Acrobatics, DC 20 Diplomacy, DC 23 Hunting Lore, DC 22 Intimidation, DC 23 Survival
Outcroppings, hoodoos, and other rock formations create an imposing barrier that the PCs must navigate. Shortcuts require squeezing through tight spaces, though a PC might employ geology to predict where the stone would have eroded to leave clearer paths. Living among the rocks are small, shy earth elementals resembling geckos that might act as guides if coaxed. Likewise, a PC might identify game trails that show how local fauna navigate the area.

Special Unless a PC speaks Petran or can use these skills without sharing a common language (such as with the Intimidating Glare skill feat), increase the DCs of these Diplomacy and Intimidation checks by 4.

SCALING CLIFFS

OBSTACLE 6

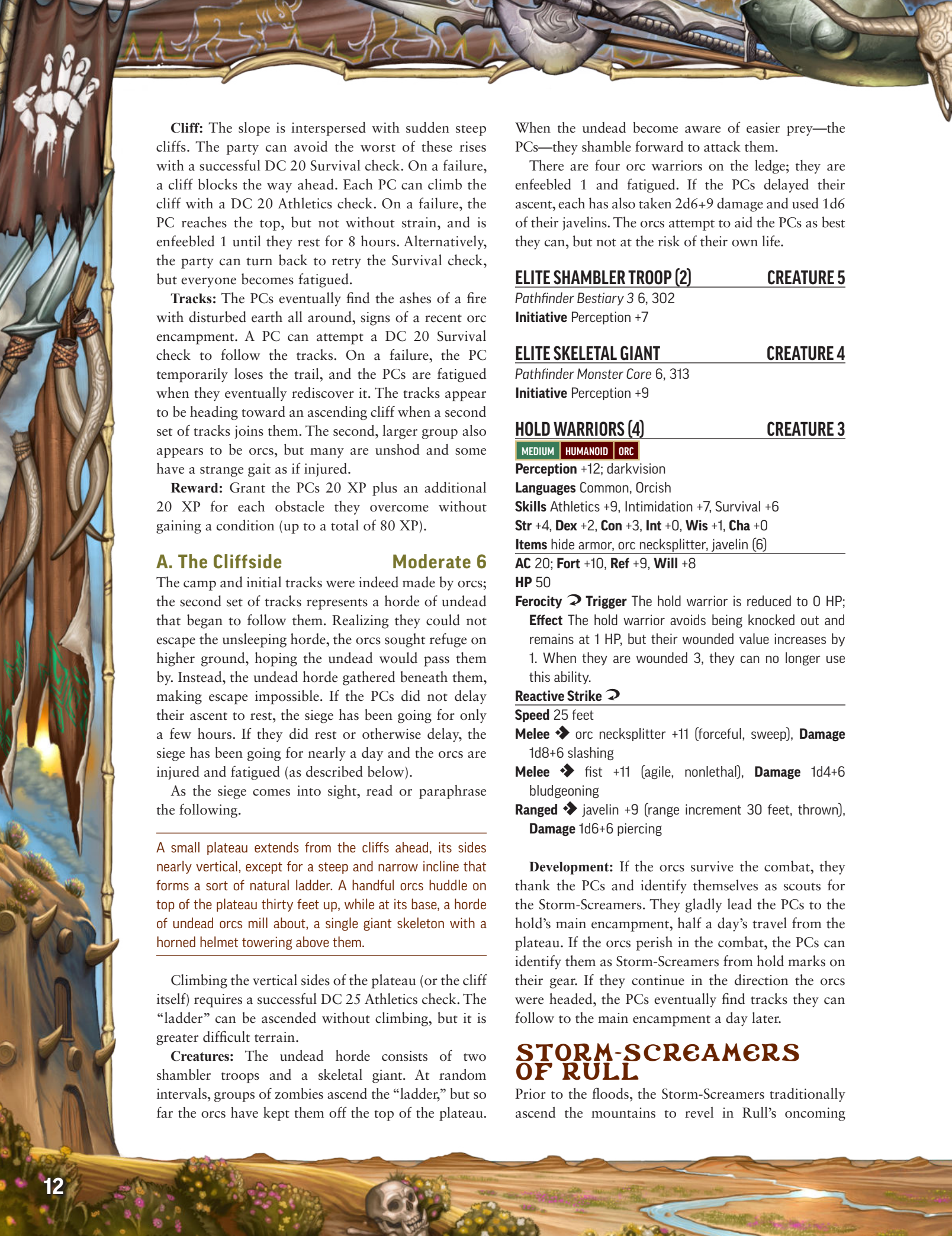
Threshold 4; Overcome DC 22 Acrobatics, DC 21 Athletics, DC 24 Perception, DC 23 Survival
The PCs encounter steep cliffs and jagged ascents. Climbing these obstacles is the most straightforward strategy, though there are enough narrow ledges that a sure-footed or keen-eyed adventurer could ascend these projections like stairs.

STORM-SCREAMER SIGNS

OBSTACLE 6

Threshold 4; Overcome DC 22 Mercantile Lore, DC 23 Occultism, DC 21 Orc Pantheon Lore, DC 22 Religion, DC 21 Society, DC 20 Scouting Lore, DC 22 Survival
Petroglyphs, ochre trail signs, and recent hearths suggest that the Storm-Screams of Rull live nearby. Yet these orcs seem to have obscured their movements and left only esoteric markings to communicate with each other (alongside a few trail signs left by bygone traders and travelers). The PCs can follow by deciphering these encoded messages, seeking tracks, or both.

Forest of Stone: Much of the area is covered in pillars of rock, some as large as buildings, others as slender as trees. Navigating the forest of stone requires a PC to succeed at a DC 20 Survival check. On a failure, the party finds themselves hemmed in by rocks. To continue forward, each PC must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check. On a failure, the PC pushes through, but sustains a twisted ankle or similar injury and is clumsy 1 until they rest for 8 hours. Alternatively, the party can turn back to retry the Survival check, but everyone becomes fatigued.



Cliff: The slope is interspersed with sudden steep cliffs. The party can avoid the worst of these rises with a successful DC 20 Survival check. On a failure, a cliff blocks the way ahead. Each PC can climb the cliff with a DC 20 Athletics check. On a failure, the PC reaches the top, but not without strain, and is enfeebled 1 until they rest for 8 hours. Alternatively, the party can turn back to retry the Survival check, but everyone becomes fatigued.

Tracks: The PCs eventually find the ashes of a fire with disturbed earth all around, signs of a recent orc encampment. A PC can attempt a DC 20 Survival check to follow the tracks. On a failure, the PC temporarily loses the trail, and the PCs are fatigued when they eventually rediscover it. The tracks appear to be heading toward an ascending cliff when a second set of tracks joins them. The second, larger group also appears to be orcs, but many are unshod and some have a strange gait as if injured.

Reward: Grant the PCs 20 XP plus an additional 20 XP for each obstacle they overcome without gaining a condition (up to a total of 80 XP).

A. The Cliffside Moderate 6

The camp and initial tracks were indeed made by orcs; the second set of tracks represents a horde of undead that began to follow them. Realizing they could not escape the unsleeping horde, the orcs sought refuge on higher ground, hoping the undead would pass them by. Instead, the undead horde gathered beneath them, making escape impossible. If the PCs did not delay their ascent to rest, the siege has been going for only a few hours. If they did rest or otherwise delay, the siege has been going for nearly a day and the orcs are injured and fatigued (as described below).

As the siege comes into sight, read or paraphrase the following.

A small plateau extends from the cliffs ahead, its sides nearly vertical, except for a steep and narrow incline that forms a sort of natural ladder. A handful orcs huddle on top of the plateau thirty feet up, while at its base, a horde of undead orcs mill about, a single giant skeleton with a horned helmet towering above them.

Climbing the vertical sides of the plateau (or the cliff itself) requires a successful DC 25 Athletics check. The “ladder” can be ascended without climbing, but it is greater difficult terrain.

Creatures: The undead horde consists of two shambler troops and a skeletal giant. At random intervals, groups of zombies ascend the “ladder,” but so far the orcs have kept them off the top of the plateau.

When the undead become aware of easier prey—the PCs—they shamble forward to attack them.

There are four orc warriors on the ledge; they are enfeebled 1 and fatigued. If the PCs delayed their ascent, each has also taken 2d6+9 damage and used 1d6 of their javelins. The orcs attempt to aid the PCs as best they can, but not at the risk of their own life.

ELITE SHAMBLER TROOP (2) CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 6, 302

Initiative Perception +7

ELITE SKELETAL GIANT CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Monster Core 6, 313

Initiative Perception +9

HOLD WARRIORS (4) CREATURE 3

MEDIUM **HUMANOID** **ORC**

Perception +12; darkvision

Languages Common, Orcish

Skills Athletics +9, Intimidation +7, Survival +6

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

Items hide armor, orc necksplitter, javelin (6)

AC 20; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8


HP 50


Ferocity  **Trigger** The hold warrior is reduced to 0 HP;


Effect The hold warrior avoids being knocked out and remains at 1 HP, but their wounded value increases by 1. When they are wounded 3, they can no longer use this ability.

Reactive Strike 

Speed 25 feet

Melee  orc necksplitter +11 (forceful, sweep), **Damage** 1d8+6 slashing

Melee  fist +11 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+6 bludgeoning

Ranged  javelin +9 (range increment 30 feet, thrown), **Damage** 1d6+6 piercing

Development: If the orcs survive the combat, they thank the PCs and identify themselves as scouts for the Storm-Screamers. They gladly lead the PCs to the hold’s main encampment, half a day’s travel from the plateau. If the orcs perish in the combat, the PCs can identify them as Storm-Screamers from hold marks on their gear. If they continue in the direction the orcs were headed, the PCs eventually find tracks they can follow to the main encampment a day later.

STORM-SCREAMERS OF RULL

Prior to the floods, the Storm-Screamers traditionally ascend the mountains to revel in Rull’s oncoming

weather and fury. After delighting in the deluge for several weeks, they descend to the Flood Road to hunt and fish. They take a special interest in the aurochs herds, believing it's the Storm-Screamers' responsibility to prevent any other hold from overhunting.

The undead uprising presents a new threat to the herds; if left unchecked, the undead could massacre countless thousands, causing years of famine in Belkzen. This hasn't gone unnoticed. Rather than perform their rituals together, the hold has split up to scout the undead forces, skirmish with these foes, and draw adversaries away from likely migration paths. Yet the hold's stretched thin and too zealous to ask neighboring holds for assistance. Even so, the Storm-Screamers would welcome Ardash's reinforcements.

Thankfully, upon overcoming the prior obstacles, the PCs reach Storm-Screamer territory and locate one of their lower-altitude camps. From here, the hold's leader **Regnat the Green** (male orc druid) coordinates his subordinates' efforts as best he can. Relatively few able-bodied adults are here, with most of the camp consisting of children and the elderly taking shelter amid the sturdy, waterproofed tents.

As the PCs approach, several camp guards intercept, briefly question, and escort the PCs to meet with Regnat.

Droplets trickle down the face of Regnat the Green, his tattooed body only partially protected from the rain as he examines a map made from sticks carefully tied together to depict the common passes and trails through the region's mountains. He looks up, glances to the approaching guards, and nods in understanding. "Ardash sends reinforcements? I welcome the help, though I question your numbers. Tell me you're the vanguard for some greater force."

He waits for confirmation before grimacing and continuing.

"I have few enough scouts, but I can send a few to guide anyone else Ardash sent. I just have you for now, and I'm going to put you to work. Come. Look." He pulls up the wooden map and points angrily. "This is us here, and this is the storm tower," he notes, identifying two points separated by a considerable distance. "When Rull brings the rain and meltwater, he looks to us to judge when to cease. We do that at the storm tower. Without our praise and prayers, he would rain all year and drown the world!" He chuckles at the thought but adds, "Or it would just drown Belkzen and the animals we eat. And so, Storm-Screamer mystics must reach the tower and scream."

He points back at one stick-path on the map. "A roc has built a nest along here. It's young—doesn't yet know not

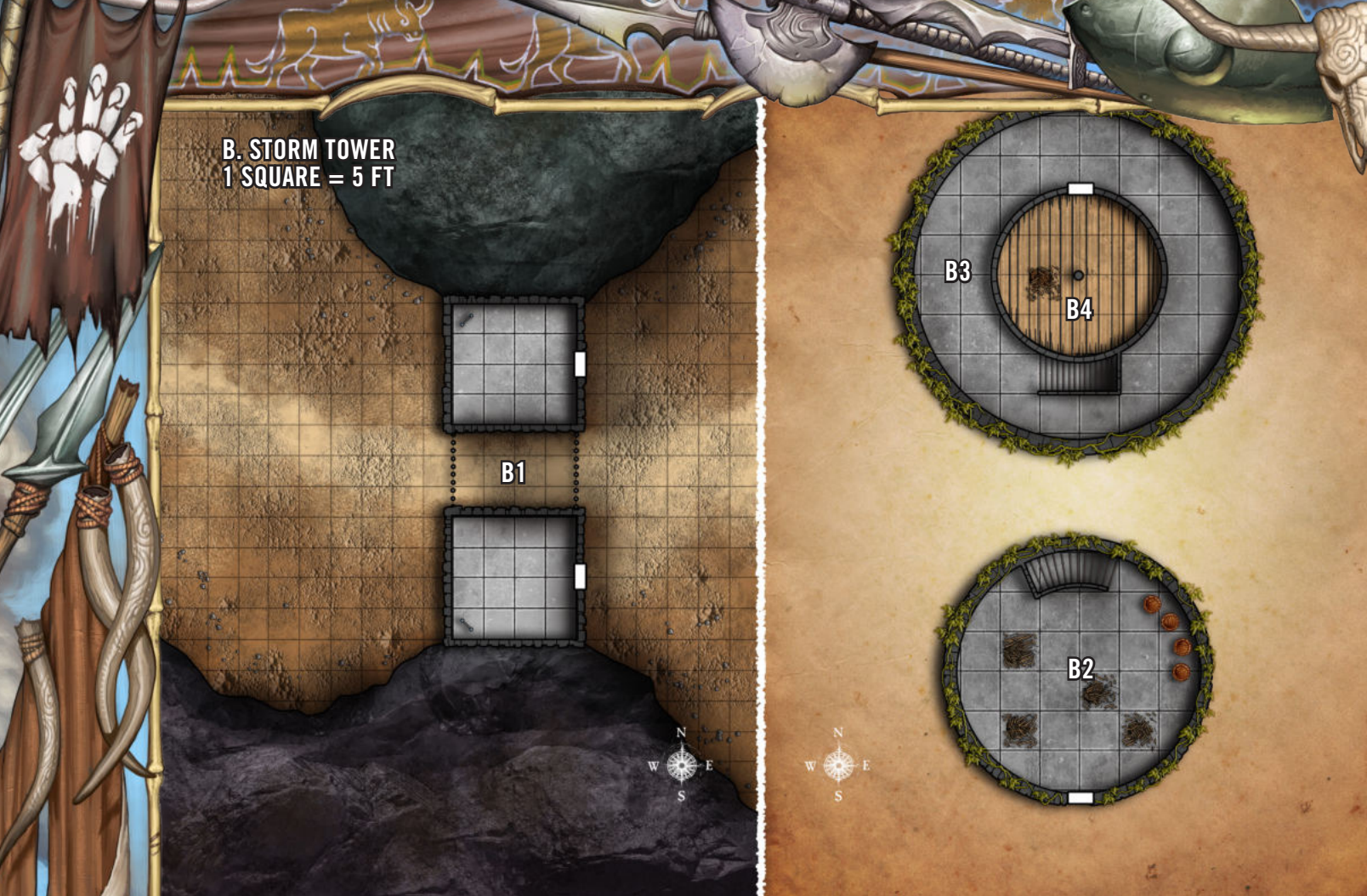
to eat orcs! And until it learns, it's an obstacle I can't risk." He meets his guests' gazes and says, "Teach it fear." He then points to the storm tower. "Only a few scouts made it past that bird, and they say trolls have taken over the storm tower. Phah! Storm pretenders! Clear them out! I will gather my team and be a few days behind you. Light the tower's signal to call us. Then, once Rull's pride is satiated, you can join the rest of my hold in guarding the herds. Ready?"

Regnat looks to the PCs and answers their questions. Likely queries appear below.

Tell us about the trolls. "Scouts identified about 10. There could be more nearby, but trolls get hungry easily; only a handful are likely to be at the tower at any time. A small group like you should be able to sneak up without attracting the whole group. Trolls act brave but fear death. If you can prove you are death itself—like by killing their leader completely dead—the rest should scamper off."

Why are the trolls "storm pretenders?" Regnat spits in disgust. "Rull rules Belkzen's skies! Too many trolls kowtow to Urxehl, a storm-demon Rull bested in ancient times. Where Urxehl's tears





B. STORM TOWER
1 SQUARE = 5 FT

B1

B2

B3

B4

fell, trolls sprouted like weeds.” The orc nods sagely before chuckling and adding, “He’s never stopped crying. Ha!”

How can we teach the roc fear? “When they’re young, we chase off rocs with arrows and lightning so they learn to hunt weaker prey. Those that don’t learn eventually die or migrate. This roc must be fresh from the nest and looking for a territory of its own. I’ve spoken to a few rocs, but they’re dumber than dust. If any of you knows bird-speech, you’re welcome to try.”

How are the aurochs? “Most herds are still far away. The early arrivals have lost many to the undead, and the most likely path for the herds goes toward an ancestor storm and more undead. Many Storm-Screamers are trying to divert the migration to safer areas. There are nearly a million beasts in a good year—too many for my hold to wrangle alone. Once we have the storm tower, you will help with the herds.”

What can you tell us about ancestor storms? “They’re unnatural. Not of Rull.” Regnat judges the PCs’ response before barking a laugh. “Not helpful, I know. This season is when storms do as Rull wills. Once I can commune with him, perhaps he’ll share his insights. Until then, avoid them; they rain ghosts.”

Storm-Screamer Allies: Before the PCs depart, Regnat the Green calls over two of the camp’s youngest warriors, **Kulagra** (male orc hunter) and **Chelvun** (female orc warrior). This is Kulagra’s first flood since being recognized as an adult, and he’s eager to prove his usefulness. Chelvun hails from the Bloodied Gauntlet Hold and traveled here to meet a potential mate. She’s a former acolyte of Gorum, but with that god’s death, she’s swiftly learning to love Rull’s rambunctious faith. She hopes that aiding the Storm-Screamers might seal her to a new patron. Both orcs use the statistics for a hold warrior (page 12).

Regnat asks the PCs to bring the pair along. They’re both tough and can serve as guides, but they’re still too inexperienced to operate independently. It’s clear their energy’s going to waste guarding this camp. The PCs are welcome to refuse, though Kulagra and Chelvun try to badger the PCs into reconsidering. If one or both accompany the PCs, they’re mostly responsible in their contributions, assisting the more capable PCs and learning from them. That said, both are young and eager to prove themselves, so periodically they might take on major risks that could require the PCs’ intervention. Do so sparingly enough that the players don’t grow to resent their companions’ recklessness.

First Nest

On the second day of travel, the PCs approach the roc's territory and begin noticing signs, such as hearing his hunting cries and catching glimpses of him soaring overhead in the distance. The pass through this portion of the low mountains weaves along wide ledges and into gentle valleys, neither of which provide enough cover to discourage a giant bird from swooping upon travelers. The closer the PCs get, the more frequently they spot the roc.

Creatures: As warned, **Sheartalon** (male young roc) is a fully fledged adolescent enjoying his first year of independence. His hunting skills aren't perfect, and he's stayed fed partly by raiding livestock and picking off the occasional orc. Sheartalon's developed a fascination with orcs, both finding their stringy meat tasty and enjoying the decorative pizzazz their corpses add to his nest.

There are three likely approaches to handling the threat Sheartalon poses: destroying his nest, negotiating, or fighting him.

Nest: The roc has chosen his nesting site well—a 150-foot-tall outcropping atop one of the low mountains. The PCs can hike up to the promontory's base easily enough, and the feature has enough narrow ledges and handholds that there are only three places where the climbing becomes difficult. Once they're 15 feet up, the PCs must succeed at a DC 19 Athletics check to Climb. The toughest stretch is 40 feet off the ground, requiring a DC 21 Athletics check to Climb. Finally, there's a narrow ledge that might lead to a lethal fall, 110 feet off the ground; a PC can rely on handholds to Climb with a DC 17 Athletics check, or they can hug the ledge with a DC 18 Acrobatics check to balance. As they ascend, have each climbing PC attempt one DC 18 Stealth check or DC 20 Survival check to Avoid Notice, noting the number of failures (treat critical failures as two failures).

These checks might not challenge stronger PCs, yet are imposing to others (especially given the potential falling damage). Remember the rules for Grabbing an Edge (*Player Core* 419) and Following the Expert (*Player Core* 438) to ease the ascent. Further, careful use of rope, pitons, and other equipment might give less athletic PCs an edge. Finally, while combat is possible at the nest, some PCs might stay below and contribute with ranged attacks and spells, with those at the nest having lesser cover against attacks from below.

The nest is about 10 feet wide and built from small boulders and tree branches. Several partial orc corpses adorn the perimeter. Once the PCs reach the nest, they have 4 rounds (minus 1 round

Moderate 6

for each failed Stealth or Survival check earlier) to inspect or destroy the nest before Sheartalon notices and swoops in to confront them. The nest has 5 Hardness, 120 Hit Points, and weakness 5 to fire. A PC can Force Open the nest with a DC 20 Athletics or Engineering Lore check, either heaving it toward the precipice or pulling it apart; this deals 20 bludgeoning damage on a success or 40 bludgeoning damage on a critical success.

If the PCs destroy the nest before he arrives, Sheartalon screeches angrily at them before noticing his destroyed home. Mournfully, he screeches again and flies away. However, if Sheartalon arrives before then, he attacks (see Fighting Sheartalon below). The nest sits atop a 15-foot-deep and 30-foot-long ledge. It's a 150-foot drop from the ledge, though there are two lower ledges at heights of 130 feet and 80 feet that might allow PCs to Grab an Edge (DC 20) to avoid falling the whole distance.

Negotiation: A PC who can communicate with birds (such as with the Animal Elocutionist feat, Animal Empathy feat, or *speak with animals* spell) can signal Sheartalon as he flies overhead. Curious, he descends to either circle or perch 60 feet above the PCs to listen. Sheartalon has three priorities: a secure territory, plenty of food, and making the unnatural weather go away. Sheartalon's starting attitude is indifferent, and the DC of Diplomacy and Intimidation checks is 24. The PCs might Coerce him into leaving or avoiding orcs. They might instead Make an Impression and then Request his compliance.

For each of his priorities they address in a meaningful way, the PCs gain a +1 circumstance bonus to their checks to influence Sheartalon. This might include explaining how orcs leave rocs alone if rocs leave orcs alone; bringing him a Medium or larger animal to eat (readily hunted with an hour's effort and a successful DC 18 Hunting Lore or Survival check); or explaining the ancestor storms in simple terms (with a DC 18 Occultism, Religion, or similar check) with assurances that the PCs are working to get rid of the storms.

If successfully convinced to cooperate, Sheartalon flies to his nest and delivers the orc corpses and *staff of protection* to the PCs as a show of good faith. He then flies off to hunt safer prey.

Fighting Sheartalon: The young roc is still growing, and he's always hungry. By camping out within sight of the nest, the PCs can easily lure Sheartalon to investigate. He circles hundreds of feet overhead for about 10 minutes before diving down to attack. He's initially greedy, staying at low altitudes to Strafe, incapacitate, and even Grab several targets to carry off. However, if reduced to 60 Hit Points, he tries to fly to his nest

with any prey he's Grabbed. He drops his meal and flees outright if reduced to 30 or fewer Hit Points. It's entirely possible Sheartalon carries one or more living PCs to his nest, splitting the party while continuing the fight. This poses a serious threat to anyone he carries off, though they can still reduce him to 30 Hit Points, convincing him to drop his prey and flee.

SHEARTALON

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE HUGE ANIMAL

Weak roc (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 7, 294)

Initiative Perception +16

Treasure: A *staff of protection* is wedged between the rocks that make up the nest. A PC can find it by Seeking with a successful DC 22 Perception check, and it's automatically found if the nest is destroyed.

Development: If befriended, Sheartalon might occasionally soar in sight of the PCs later in the campaign. If an outdoor encounter is going especially poorly for the PCs, he might even swoop in to Strafe their foes and screech triumphantly before flying off. Likewise, Sheartalon is familiar with other rocs in the area, potentially introducing the PCs to an eagle, newly fledged roc, or other bird if a PC seeks a creature companion.

B. STORM TOWER

A deep valley surrounded by steep hills protects the Storm-Screamers' wintering fort from the worst of the region's weather. The camp has only two permanent buildings: a gate house at the valley's entrance and a central keep from which one can observe the valley and the skies above. Most of the valley is open space for the orcs to pitch their tents. Nearly opposite the gate house, a trail winds up to the highest peak overlooking the valley to the beacon.

No orcs have occupied the wintering fort in several years. Six months ago, a group of trolls fleeing a losing battle with Blood Trail orcs stumbled upon the disused fort and decided to make it their lair. The trolls call themselves the Cleftneck Band after their leader Marguk Cleftneck. Unlike most two-headed trolls, Marguk was not born that way. During an attack on an orc camp, one of the warriors nearly decapitated Marguk. Since she didn't die, Marguk expected her regeneration to heal the wound, but instead a second identical head grew from it. Though initially antagonistic, her two heads eventually learned to work together, and she soon rose to lead the band that now bears her epithet.

The Storm-Screamers have skirmished with trolls before, though not this particular band. If the PCs lack acid or fire attacks, Regnat's alchemists can brew up to eight bottled lightnings (*Pathfinder Player Core* 2 284; lesser or moderate) or alchemist's fires (lesser or moderate) each day.

B1. Gate House

Moderate 6

Though no actual gate blocks the valley entrance, an arched stone building built into the gap reduces it to a more defensible width. The walls of the gate house can be climbed with a successful DC 20 Athletics check.

Creatures: One arm of the gate house serves as a kennel for the band's hunting lizards. At night, the lizards rest within the gate house, but when the sun is up, they bask on the rocky ground nearby. A single troll keeps watch on the approach from the top of the



gate house. If intruders approach, he commands the trained lizards to attack, and throws bolas attempting to trip opponents. If the lizards are insufficient to kill or rout the intruders, the troll joins the fray. If reduced to less than half his Hit Points, and he can retreat, he moves to join the trolls in area B2.

TROLL

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Monster Core 330

Initiative Perception +11

Items bola (3)

Ranged bola +12 (nonlethal, ranged trip, thrown 20 feet),
Damage 1d6+5 bludgeoning damage

ELITE GIANT MONITOR LIZARD (4)

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Monster Core 6, 225

Initiative Perception +9

B2. Lower Keep

Low 6

A cylindrical keep, half-covered in vines, stands at the center of the valley. The walls of the keep can be climbed with a successful DC 20 Athletics check. Where the vines grow, the DC is reduced to 15, but at the risk of thorns (see Hazards below). Inside, a stairway winds along the wall to the balcony above. Moss piled into outsized beds fill one half of the room. In the other half, hooks once intended for banners now support dried carcasses, some partially eaten.

Creatures: When not on watch or out hunting or raiding, the trolls spend their time in the lower level of the keep, or in the open area around it. If alerted to intruders by the troll on watch, they prepare for combat, otherwise, they may be sleeping or otherwise distracted.

TROLLS (2)

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Monster Core 330

Initiative Perception +11

Hazards: Thorny vines climb 20 feet up the side of the tower, except where they have been cut back to expose the door to the tower. Anyone taking an action to attempt to Climb the wall, or who is pushed into the wall, takes 1d6 piercing damage.

Treasure: A sprig of *primeval mistletoe* is woven into the keep's vines. A PC can extract it with a successful DC 22 Nature or Thievery check. On a failure, the character takes 1d6 piercing damage. On a critical failure, the *mistletoe* is also destroyed.

B3. Upper Keep

Severe 6

The stairs from below lead to a balcony, girded by a waist-high balustrade, that encircles the upper keep's

sole room. The windows of the upper room give a full view of the valley below, though Marguk usually keeps them covered with leather curtains to keep out the wind and the light. As with the room below, moss has been piled to create a bed for a large creature.

Creatures: Marguk claims the upper level of the keep as her personal domain, though she is often attended by one of the other trolls. If they hear combat down below, the trolls here observe from the top of the stairs, attacking anyone who attempts to reach the balcony. In combat, they may attempt to knock opponents off the stairs or balcony if the opportunity presents itself.

MARGUK CLEFTNECK

CREATURE 7

UNIQUE **LARGE** **GIANT** **TROLL**

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages Jotun, Orcish

Skills Athletics +16, Intimidation +16

Str +5, **Dex** +1, **Con** +6, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

Items *grim trophy*, +1 warhammer

Independent Brains Each of Marguk's heads rolls its own initiative and has its own turn. Neither head can Delay. At the start of a head's turn, that head gets 2 actions and 1 reaction. Each brain controls one of Marguk's arms, but both can move the legs. Any ability that would sever one of the heads (such as the *vorpai* weapon property) doesn't cause Marguk to die if she still has her other head, but it does cause her to lose the turns, actions, and reactions of the severed head. Mental effects that target a single creature affect only one of Marguk's heads.

AC 25; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +17, **Will** +12

HP 175, regeneration 20 (deactivated by electricity or fire);

Weaknesses electricity 10, fire 10

Head Regrowth Marguk's regeneration can regrow a severed head. After regaining Hit Points from regeneration, she attempts a DC 10 flat check. On a success, the missing head is fully restored. If Marguk loses her last remaining head, she dies immediately.

Partial Armor Marguk's armor primarily protects her abdomen and legs, leaving her shoulders and head exposed. Strikes made with ranged or reach weapons gain a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls against Marguk. At the GM's discretion, other attacks that can easily reach her head level (such as attacks made from high ground) also gain this bonus.

Reactive Strike

Speed 30 feet

Melee **◆** jaws +17 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d10+18 piercing

Melee **◆** warhammer +18 (reach 10 feet, shove), **Damage** 1d8+12 bludgeoning

Melee **◆** claw +16 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8+8 slashing

Sweeping Hammer ♦♦ **Requirements** Marguk is wielding a warhammer; **Effect** Marguk makes a warhammer Strike against each creature in a 15-foot cone.

Tenderized Feast ⤵ **Trigger** Marguk successfully Strikes a creature with her warhammer; **Effect** One of Marguk's heads takes advantage of the disoriented foe and makes a jaws Strike against that creature with a -2 penalty.

TROLL

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Monster Core 330

Initiative Perception +11

Treasure: Beside the bed of moss, a *spacious pouch II* holds the trolls' ill-gotten treasure. Within is a string of two dozen amber beads (each worth 5 gp), an opal cabochon (worth 100 gp), four chunks of silver (each worth 10 gp), a fine spyglass, 268 gp, and 320 sp.



Skeletal Drummer

B4. Beacon

The beacon at the top of this tower is a wide, shallow dish, its surface charred by many previous fires. Moss, scraped from the sides of the valley and dried, is stacked in a nearby recess to serve as fuel, and is quick to light. The burning moss produces abundant smoke as well as fire, allowing the lit beacon to be seen by day or night.

Night Hunters

Low 6

Orcs are not the only ones drawn to the beacon. Within a day of lighting the beacon, several orc groups begin arriving, yet a few of them disappear in the night. The only clue to the disappearances are spilled blood and large claw marks in the dirt.

Creatures: A pair of flame drakes, attracted by the fire and smoke of the beacon, sneak into the camp each night to attack orcs who wander from the light. They attempt to kill their target swiftly and carry the corpse away to consume it elsewhere. Smart enough not to draw attention to themselves, the drakes avoid using their fireball breath until they are outnumbered. Seeking only easy prey, the drakes flee if reduced to 25 Hit Points or fewer, or if the other is killed, and do not return.

If the PCs befriended Sheartalon earlier, he might be hunting the drakes. This might involve him swooping in to help the PCs during the encounter. Alternatively, you might skip this encounter altogether, leaving signs of Sheartalon's recent hunt that likely spared the PCs a fight.

FLAME DRAKES (2)

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Monster Core 129

Initiative Perception +12

CATTLE DRIVE

Once Regnat and his mystics arrive a few days later, they set up their rituals in the storm tower. Regnat checks in with the PCs, listens to their updates, and then confirms that the PCs are needed where the aurochs roam. Scouting reports have confirmed his suspicions: a few herds have been diverted, but many have stubbornly stuck to their old paths, which will lead them toward undead and ancestor storms.

Already, other Storm-Screamers are working to intercept the herds and scatter any undead in their path. Regnat uses his stick map to indicate where various groups are based on his latest reports, pointing to an area where he needs the PCs' contributions most. That region is about two days' trek away.

Long Shadows

The first night that the PCs camp, they're ambushed by more undead awoken by the ancestor storms and Tar-Baphon's influence.

Creatures: Several undead shadows made their way into the camp under cover of darkness, attempting to steal as many shadows as they can before sunrise. Attacking a shadow draws the others, as they seek the strongest warriors to join them.

These shadows have the silhouettes of orc warriors, and they boast to each other about who can slay the greatest foe as they jostle to fight the strongest PC.

SHADOWS (4)

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Monster Core 306

Initiative Perception +10

Languages Necril, Orcish

Marching Dead

Moderate 6

The lands south of the herd are rolling grasslands with stones periodically rising from the ground. As they patrol, the PCs can see the ancestor storm growing on the horizon. After several hours without incident, they hear the faint sound of drumming rapidly getting louder.

Council Impact: If the PCs convinced Ardax to support Urgurak during the war council's second issue (i.e., gathering military forces into a larger army to crush undead, rather than scout the region), these undead have already been decimated by recent clashes with orcs. This removes one elite skeletal champion from the encounter, and the others' starting Hit Points are reduced by 8 each. The skeletal champions voice their dismay at running into even more warriors, but the skeletal drummer barks for them to be quiet before drowning out their complaints with a thunderous beat.

Creatures: Approaching the PCs are a troop of six orc skeletons, one of which beats time on a drum. When they see the PCs, the skeletons move to attack. The skeletal soldiers believe they're at war and can't be convinced otherwise.

SKELETAL DRUMMER

CREATURE 3

UNCOMMON MEDIUM UNDEAD

Variant fiddling bones (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 92)

Perception +9; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril, Orcish

Skills Acrobatics +10, Diplomacy +9, Intimidation +9, Performance +13, Warfare Lore +10

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

Items drum

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

HP 30, void healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease,

paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5, piercing 5, slashing 5, sonic 5

Rhapsodic Flourish ⤵ (occult, sonic) **Trigger** The skeletal drummer would roll a saving throw against an auditory or sonic effect; **Effect** The skeletal drummer performs a refrain that deflects sonic vibrations. They roll a Performance check in place of the triggering saving throw. Sonic feedback rebounds from the effect, dealing 1d6 sonic damage to the source of the triggering effect if the Performance check succeeded or 2d6 sonic damage to the skeletal drummer on a failure.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ⤵ stomp +10 (finesse), **Damage** 2d8+3 bludgeoning

Melee ⤵ drumstick +10 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d6+3 bludgeoning

Ranged ⤵ thunderous beat +10 (magical, range 40 feet, sonic), **Damage** 2d6+4 sonic

Destructive Finale ⤵⤵ (occult, sonic) **Requirements** March to War is in effect; **Effect** The skeletal drummer performs a boisterous finale. They choose a 30-foot cone or 15-foot emanation, and they deal 4d6 sonic damage to all creatures in that area (DC 21 basic Reflex save). March to War immediately ends, and the skeletal drummer can't use March to War or Destructive Finale for 1d4 rounds.

March to War ⤵⤵ (auditory, emotion, mental, occult) The skeletal drummer plays a regular beat that compels others to march. Each creature in a 30-foot emanation must attempt a DC 19 Will save. Undead are immune. The effect lasts until the end of the skeletal drummer's next turn, but the skeletal drummer can Sustain the effect on all affected creatures that remain within the emanation.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected and is temporarily immune for 1 hour.

Success The creature can't use actions with the move trait except to march, which uses the Stride action to move up to half the creature's Speed. If the creature has other Speeds, it can also march using those modes of travel.

Failure As success, and the creature must spend at least 1 action each turn marching.

ELITE SKELETAL CHAMPIONS (5)

CREATURE 3

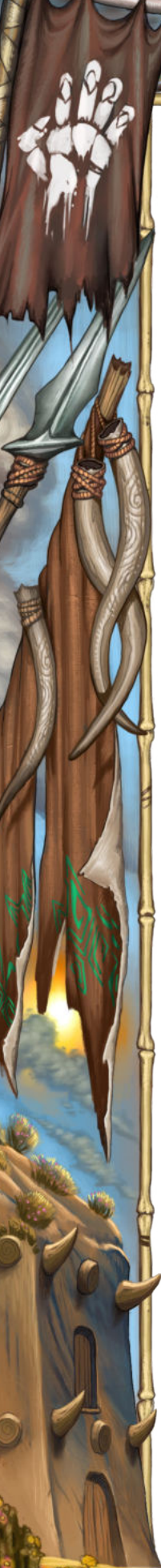
Pathfinder Monster Core 6, 312

Initiative Perception +10

Aurochs Migration

Moderate 6

Shortly after the PCs finish their skirmish with the skeletons, the blast of a horn rolls across the plains, calling everyone back to help move the aurochs herd. Once the PCs return, they have but a short while to rest before they called upon to help with the herd.



Moving the herd while keeping ahead of the oncoming undead is run using the chase rules from *GM Core* (page 192). Although only the PCs are making checks, their success or failure represents the success or failure of the entire assembly. Thus, when the PCs pass an obstacle, so do the orcs and aurochs. When you describe the results of the PCs' rolls, you should also describe the efforts of the orcs around them. As the PCs are being pursued, they will go first in the initiative order. The PCs start at the first obstacle. After the PCs' first turn, the undead horde enters at the first obstacle and advances one obstacle every round thereafter.

The first time the undead enter the same obstacle the PCs are at, the undead tear apart some of the aurochs. Reduce the herd's Health by 2 (see below), and do not advance during the following chase round. If the undead reduce the herd to 0 Health, they butcher more of the herd, ending the chase prematurely (see Development below).

Herd Health: The number of days the PCs took to resolve *The Journey North* (page 8) and *Into the Foothills* (page 10) determines the herd's overall health; the longer the PCs spent traveling, the more time undead have spent harrying and chipping away at the aurochs. The herd has 7 Health at the beginning of the chapter. For every two days the PCs spent on the aforementioned challenges, reduce the herd's Health by 1 (minimum 1 Health). Decrease the DCs of all of the following checks by an amount equal to the herd's Health. The herd's Health can change during this encounter.

Council Impact: Ardax's decision on his war council's fourth issue regarding the aurochs (page 8) affects the herd's capabilities in this encounter.

If the PCs convinced Ardax to support Mother Agwilend during the war council's fourth issue (i.e. letting nature protect the herds), few orcs directly intervened to shield the herds so far. However, this absence also means the aurochs haven't regained their fear of orcs this season, making it somewhat easier to approach and influence them. This gives the PCs a +1 circumstance bonus to all checks to earn Chase Points during this scene.

If the PCs instead convinced Ardax to support Kragga's proposal (i.e., actively guarding the herds until now), the herds have escaped the worst of the undead attacks so far. Increase the herd's starting Health by 1.

KEEP THEM ROLLING

OBSTACLE 6

Chase Points 2; Overcome DC 24 Intimidation to shout at the aurochs until they move, DC 20 Nature to convince the aurochs to move of their own accord

The aurochs have stopped to graze, but with danger approaching, the aurochs must be made to continue their migration.

Special On a critical failure, the aurochs stampede, dealing 4d6+6 bludgeoning damage to each PC with a DC 27 basic Reflex save.

UNSTABLE GROUND

OBSTACLE 6

Chase Points 2; Overcome DC 24 Athletics to pull aurochs out of the mud, DC 20 Survival to find areas of stable ground

The rain has turned areas of loose soil into sucking mud, more dangerous to heavy beasts than smaller humanoids.

BLAZE A NEW TRAIL

OBSTACLE 6

Chase Points 3; Overcome DC 22 Nature to lead the aurochs along an alternate route, DC 20 Athletics or Crafting to build obstacles or dig ditches to prevent the aurochs from going the wrong way

Once the aurochs are moving, they must be redirected from their instinctual path, which now intersects with an ancestor storm, onto a new, safer path.

WAYWARD AUROCHS

OBSTACLE 6

Chase Points 3; Overcome DC 20 Medicine to help an injured aurochs, DC 22 Perception to locate lost aurochs
Unfamiliar with the new path, some of the aurochs wander off from the main herd, and some may even be injured along the way.

CLAW MARKS

OBSTACLE 6

Chase Points 2; Overcome DC 24 Deception or Intimidation to scare off the predators or draw them away, DC 22 Survival to avoid the predators' hunting range

Spoor indicates predators in the area, which may cause the aurochs to circle up, or worse, stampede.

Special On a critical failure, the aurochs stampede, dealing 4d6+6 bludgeoning damage to each PC with a DC 27 basic Reflex save.

FORD THE STREAM

OBSTACLE 6

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 20 Athletics to lead the aurochs through the water, DC 22 Nature to calm the aurochs as they cross

Safety for the aurochs lies on the other side of a tributary of the Flood Road, but getting them to ford the river is no easy matter.

Development: If the herd of aurochs reaches the far side of the river without being caught, Regnat orders the hold and its allies to turn around and face the oncoming horde of undead. If the horde overtakes the herd before it crosses the river, the aurochs stampede,

dealing 4d6+6 bludgeoning damage to each PC with a DC 27 basic Reflex save.

Reward: Grant the PCs 40 XP for completing this encounter. Grant them an additional 20 XP if they shepherd the aurochs to the far side of the river before having to fight the undead. Grant them another 20 XP if the herd's Health at the end of the chase is 3 or higher.

Oncoming Horde

Severe 6

Yundarga intends this fight to take place by the tributary, after the aurochs have crossed, but if the assembly doesn't get that far, this combat occurs where the undead horde catches up with them. The farther ahead they are when they reach the ford, the more time the orcs have to rally a defense. If they passed the last obstacle, the PCs are joined by a hold warrior for each obstacle between them and the undead horde.

What follows is a pitched battle between the Storm-Screamers Hold and their allies against the undead horde, with scores of combatants on either side. There's no need to make rolls for anyone but the PCs and their immediate allies and enemies. Assume the PCs' own combat is a reflection of the tide of battle, so as they defeat enemies or fall to them, so to do the orcs at large. Between turns, describe the ebb and flow of battle to give the PCs a sense of the greater picture.

Council Impact: If the PCs convinced Ardax to support Urgurak during the war council's second issue (page 7), the undead forces were already damaged from earlier skirmishes with Urgurak's forces. This reduces the starting Hit Points of each veteran wight by 15 and reduces the starting Hit Points of the wight spell sniper by 25.

Creatures: As the two forces meet, the PCs are confronted by four wights that begin approximately 50 feet from the PCs. Three of these are capable melee combatants that cautiously approach to claw the PCs. The fourth is a magical archer that keeps its distance, peppering the PCs with spells and arrows.

VETERAN WIGHTS (3)

CREATURE 4

Elite wights (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 6, 348)

Initiative Perception +12

WIGHT SPELL SNIPER

CREATURE 7

UNCOMMON MEDIUM UNDEAD

Variant wight (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 348)

Perception +18; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril, Orcish

Skills Athletics +13, Intimidation +12, Religion +14, Stealth +16, Survival +16

Str +2, **Dex** +5, **Con** +2, **Int** +2, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +1

Items +1 striking composite shortbow (30 arrows), spellstrike arrow (type II), fearless sash^{TV}, leather armor

AC 25; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +17, **Will** +15

HP 115, void healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claw +16 (finesse), **Damage** 1d8+8 slashing plus life drain

Ranged ♦ composite shortbow +18 (deadly d10, magical, propulsive range increment 60 feet), **Damage** 2d6+7 piercing plus drain life

Divine Innate Spells DC 24; **4th** harm; **2nd** harm, noise blast, revealing light

Drain Life (divine) When the wight sniper damages a living creature using an unarmed attack or ranged weapon, the sniper gains 2d6 temporary Hit Points, and the creature must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or become drained 1. Further damage dealt by the wight sniper's attacks increase the value of the drained condition by 1 on a failed save, to a maximum of drained 4.

Drain the Prey ♦ (divine) **Trigger** The wight spell sniper kills a living creature; **Effect** The wight spell sniper breathes in the essence of the slain creature, making it easier to sense and hunt similar prey. The wight chooses one of the creature's traits (excluding rarity or size). Until the wight uses this ability again, it gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to Seek creatures with that trait and a +2 circumstance bonus to Survival checks to Track creatures with that trait. The saving throw DCs of the wight's spells and abilities increase by 1 against creatures with the same trait.

Development: If the PCs defeat the undead before them, the orcs rout the horde. There may be a few scattered undead left to dispatch, but the worst danger has passed.

If the PCs are defeated, this need not be the end of the campaign. The PCs might be revived after the battle. In such case, the undead were still defeated, but it cost the lives of most of the orc defenders.

With the aurochs situation resolved, the Storm-Screamers are free to focus their attention on understanding the ancestor storms. Regnat sends messengers with the returning scouts to affirm the hold's allegiance to Ardax and to apprise the overlord of what they have learned.

Reward: As thanks for saving the herds, the Storm-Screamers send the PCs off with a *motivating treat bag* (page 77) as well as ample tips for wrangling other fauna from Belkzen. This advice provides the PCs access to war pigs (page 79) as creature companions, if they didn't already have it.



Chapter 2: The Battle for Blisterwell

Once the aurochs herds are safe, the PCs can return to Urgir with the other scouts and the ambassadors from the Storm-Screamers. With no immediate threats to deal with, the PCs have some time in the city to buy, craft, and sell items, or to perform other downtime activities.

This is also an excellent opportunity to show how Urgir's inhabitants view the PCs in an increasingly positive light. Passersby recognize them, and the PCs might receive invitations to events with notable figures and NPCs they befriended earlier in the adventure. Acquaintances ask the PCs to recount their latest deeds, show off their scars, or share tips for fighting particular creatures. The PCs might also receive free services as favors, such as getting a mundane

tattoo, transferring property runes at no cost, or sharing access to an orc wizard's spellbook to learn new magic. With growing fame come competitions and challenges—mostly friendly—with orcs eager to test their mettle against these supposedly impressive foreigners through sparring, hunting competitions, and wordplay duels.

Once the PCs have enjoyed sufficient downtime, they receive an invitation to speak with Ardash. The overlord has heard of the PCs' deeds while seeking and aiding the Storm-Screamers. He asks them about a few notable events, then formally thanks them for their service. As a reward, he presents the PCs with *+1 size-changing hide armor* harvested from warcats of Rull—immense felids from northern Belkzen with

steely gray hides, giving the armor a metallic sheen. He also awards them three *moderate healing potions*, and two topazes (worth 100 gp each).

Ardax then turns to the business at hand. How he starts his next assignment depends on whether the PCs supported Bravthur or Urgurak during the war council's second issue (page 7). If the PCs supported Bravthur's call for diplomacy, use the following.

"Following the war council you attended, I sent emissaries across Belkzen, warning other holds of the undead attack and requesting their cooperation in battling the threat as one. Some turned us away. Some haven't reported back yet. But many share our values and have pledged support. Perhaps those holds that remained silent will continue listening and realize our words are sincere."

If the PCs supported Urgurak's plan to compel holds' loyalty through force, use the following.

"Following the war council you attended, Urgurak dispatched armed messengers across Belkzen to remind the holds that the Empty Hand holds Urgir, and all other holds would be wise to be our allies rather than our enemies. A few balked. Plenty others—including a few stubborn holdouts—buckled under the threat. These messengers might not have earned us friends, but friends weren't going to win this conflict; armies will."

Whichever tactic the PCs encouraged earlier, Ardax continues.

"We have many supporters now. Holy warriors of Burning Sun have come to affirm their hold's allegiance. Traders of the Ice Tusk, on their sojourn from the northern marches, have brought us beasts of war. We negotiate with the mercenaries of the Black Sun Hold, lest they side with our enemies. And certainly, we shall hear from more holds in the coming days."

His expression darkens as he continues.

"One of my top priorities is Blisterwell, and I sent some of my first emissaries there weeks ago. It's a forge city, built into old dwarven pit mines. If we're to win any war, we'll need its iron. No envoy has returned. Either they never made it there—perhaps swept up by one of these accursed storms—or something foul is happening in Blisterwell. As you have proven yourselves as both diplomats and warriors, I want you to travel to Blisterwell as my envoys. Resolve whatever problem disrupts communication, and acquire the allegiance and aid of the two holds who control those mines."

Ardax answers any questions the PCs have about the mission. The following are some likely questions and answers.

What is Blisterwell like? "The mine-city consists of seven pits, each hundreds of feet wide and over a hundred feet deep. Its people carve homes into the pit walls and along the basins. There's no easy way into Blisterwell; each of the main tunnels into the city has a guardhouse built over them."

Which holds control Blisterwell? "Many holds have held the mine-city since orcs seized it from dwarves. It is currently divided between the One Eye Hold and the Haskodar Hold. They don't share well. Since the Haskodar arrived about 20 years ago, it's been nothing but intermittent turf wars between the two for dominance. These last few years have been relatively peaceful. Urgir takes no sides in this quarrel and has traded in the past with both holds."

Who are the Haskodar Hold? "None in Belkzen knew of the Haskodar before they invaded Blisterwell. Ages ago, dwarves pushed orcs toward the surface from our Darklands homes. Most of us assumed all of the orcs made it here, but apparently some kept living far below, like the Haskodar. They reached the surface at their own pace within the last generation. And they're sophisticated in weaponry and strategy; they conquered about half of Blisterwell quickly before reaching the current stalemate. Their leader, Yundarga, has only been in charge for a year. She speaks plainly—maybe a little rudely. Whether she'll maintain the peace or prepare for war, I do not know."

Who are the One Eye Hold? "Before the Haskodar invasion, the One Eye Hold ruled Blisterwell uncontested for many generations. They are skilled tunnel fighters and proud of their ability to survive in harsh conditions. To be honest, the One Eye has been slowly in decline since the Haskodar arrived, but they're still capable. They're led by Zdagren Half-Ear, a skilled tactician and absurdly lucky son-of-a-bristleboar. That luck can make him stubborn, though. None of his reckless acts have gotten him killed yet, so he's not known for listening to others' advice."

Who were the first envoys? "My representative was Branx, a manager in Urgir's forges. He has a keen eye for both metal and people. He took maybe eight assistants and guards with him. Branx isn't the fighter he was in his youth, but if they were attacked, he wouldn't have fallen easily."

Should we have bodyguards? Ardax scrutinizes the PCs for a moment before giving a good-natured laugh. "I wouldn't be sending you if I didn't trust your strength. And if there's some trouble in Blisterwell, I'd rather you not attract attention with an entourage."



AVOIDING THE AMBUSH

If the PCs sense the orcs' deception, they might still play along and travel with these guards. However, the PCs might decide to subdue these warriors before reaching Blisterwell. If so, the PCs need to find their own way into Blisterwell. This might require some improvisation, but you can quickly get them back on track. Whatever the case, the PCs should earn the same experience and treasure reward, even if they recover those rewards from other sources.

Through the Gatehouse: The PCs might trick their way or break into a gatehouse, starting the upcoming encounter at an advantage. This still leads to combat, One Eye reinforcements, and Haskodar intervention, but enemy combatants are scattered and less numerous. You might even have the PCs overpower the immediate combat threats, notice reinforcements, and slip away with Haskodar scouts.

Over the Edge: The PCs might instead sneak in, involving a short infiltration (GM Core 196), with the PCs bypassing patrols, rappelling into a district, and blending in. Afterward, Haskodar agents notice the PCs and invite them to meet with Yundarga.

Council Impact: How the PCs resolved the council's second issue (page 7) affects how Blisterwell's orcs view them.

If Ardax sided with Kragga during the council, Ardax's less aggressive policies have made Blisterwell's orcs receptive to negotiation. The PCs receive a +1 circumstance bonus to all Deception and Diplomacy checks against orcs for the duration of this chapter.

If Ardax sided with Urgurak during the council, Ardax's tougher tactics projected strength, making Blisterwell's orcs wary of retribution. The PCs receive a +1 circumstance bonus to all Intimidation checks against orcs for the duration of this chapter. In addition, the PCs gain a +1 circumstance bonus to initiative checks for combats that include one or more orc foes.

BLISTERWELL

Blisterwell is roughly 100 miles from Urgir across the Blood Plains. It would take about five days on foot, but Ardax outfits the PCs with suitable mounts—mostly horses, though the PCs might secure lower-level versions of the war pig (page 79)—that can get them there in roughly half the time.

As the PCs approach Blisterwell, it doesn't appear to be a city at all. Seven squat stone forts form a rough circle over a quarter-mile in diameter, with a few tents

clustered around each. Only as the PCs get closer (or perhaps higher) do they see that each fort sits on the edge of an open pit, each hundreds of feet wide, and 120 to 200 feet deep. Each steep pit is riddled with side tunnels and dwellings that are just partway out of the cliff. Groundwater has pooled into ponds at the bottom of six of the shafts, with rough stone buildings scattered about the damp, uneven floors.

Ancient History: Millennia ago, Blisterwell was a series of mines founded by dwarven prospectors from Koldukar (now Urgir). Operations expanded into smelting and manufacturing goods of iron, copper, and lead until orcs conquered the area. Recognizing the mines' value, they took over the local industries. In fact, treatises and tools in these smithies provided a huge boost to orc industrial techniques, and occasionally old inscriptions and caches are still uncovered in forgotten tunnels here.

Sadly, Blisterwell suffers from mismanagement and infighting that stifles its growth and prosperity. The easiest ore veins have been depleted, and operations rarely run smoothly enough for locals to open up new excavations. Thus, the past few millennia have seen waves of half-hearted mining, brief revivals, and expanding shantytowns that eventually collapse and slide into the water that pools in the largest neighborhoods.

Recent History: Blisterwell was under the One Eye Hold's sole control until the Haskodar invasion in 4701 AR. Below, the Haskodar Hold had occupied territory in the upper Darklands, often clashing with the hryngar kingdom of Fellstrok. About 20 years ago, Haskodar and hryngar made peace, finding a new way to coexist: the Haskodar Hold, equipped with hryngar armaments, would travel to the surface, conquer their own territory, and trade some of the surface wealth with Fellstrok. Through surprise and steel, the Haskodar Hold boiled from the ground and easily chased the One Eye Hold from several Blisterwell districts.

Though initially they enjoyed the hryngar's deal, much of the Haskodar Hold became disillusioned with the arrangement. The dwarves are pushy and entitled allies who rarely consider the Haskodar equals. Their support dwindled more with each passing year, meanwhile hryngars grew rich on Haskodar labor. At the same time, surface orc culture percolated into the Haskodar's own traditions, creating a much stronger connection and loyalty to Belkzen's people. As old leaders died, **Yundarga** (female orc barbarian) seized power, promising to sever the hold's obligations to Fellstrok and create a better future for her hold.

Recent Events: Even without hryngar support, Haskodar forces nibble away at One Eye territory.

Leading the latter, Zdagren Half-Ear has been desperate for some edge to kick out the rival hold, knowing that otherwise the One Eye could fail entirely within his lifetime. To this end, he formed a pact with the Unbroken Horn Hold, agreeing to support that hold's ambitions in exchange for reinforcements to reclaim Blisterwell. Only a few reinforcements ever came: tireless orc warriors who carefully shield their identities. In fact, these are oathrisen (page 83), undead servitors animated in defiance of Belkzen's widespread aversion to such necromancy. Knowing that rumors of necromancy would undermine his leadership, Zdagren has silenced any among his hold who learns too much. A few of those slain even arise as oathsworn, bolstering his forces. It's a bitter pill, yet it's worked so far. The oathrisen are exceptional shock troops who have reclaimed ground lost over the past decade.

When the PCs arrive, the One Eye Hold controls the southern half of the city: Broketooth, Freshpool, Forgetown, High Snout, and Market Bottom. The Haskodar maintain control of Hungrymouth, the Pits, and Soot Bottom, but the neighborhood of Fort Point is seeing heavy combat and they are likely to lose control of it soon. In addition, the One Eye Hold controls the surface gatehouses, giving them total control over who enters or exits the city via the surface. While the Haskodar can still access the Darklands, those tunnels crisscross hryngar territory and are too risky to use.

Thus, when Branx and his diplomatic entourage arrived, the One Eye Hold intercepted them at the surface. Per the Unbroken Horn's orders, Zdagren had the envoys imprisoned, preventing the Haskodar Hold from hearing the message and responding. In the short term, Zdagren besieges the Haskodar Hold, knowing he'll rally Blisterwell to support the Unbroken Horn once it finally tries to overthrow Ardax and seize Urgan.

BLISTERWELL

SETTLEMENT 7

CITY ORC

Government anarchy

Population 9,750 (85% orcs, 7% humans, 4% goblins, 2% dromaars, 2% others)

Languages Common, Orcish

Religion animism, Lamashtu, Varg

Threats pollution from mining and smelting, subterranean monsters, war between the One Eye and Haskodar Holds

Recession Blisterwell is treated as 2 levels lower for the purposes of Earning Income.

Azorena (manipulative female orc wizard) necromancer and Unbroken Horn representative

Yundarga (conflicted female orc barbarian) leader of the Haskodar Hold, yet to prove herself

Zdagren Half-Ear (desperate male orc fighter) leader of the One Eye Hold

A One Eye Welcome

Well before the PCs can approach any of the gatehouses, they are intercepted by four hold warriors riding dire wolves. The lead rider speaks up.

"Turn back, travelers, Blisterwell is not trading. The duplicitous Haskodar Hold once again attempts to wrest control of One Eye mines. Until they are put back in their place, our steel is needed here."

The riders are willing to fight to keep intruders out. If a PC presents the diplomat's badge, the lead orc exchanges a silent look with his allies, then agrees to take the PCs to a gatehouse, where they can speak



Blisterwell Warrior

THE ONE EYE PERSPECTIVE

While performing missions for the Haskodar, the PCs have opportunities to speak with One Eye orcs, whether chatting to Gather Information while in disguise, or attempting to Coerce secrets from a prisoner of war.

A PC can ask about the oathrisen with a DC 20 Diplomacy check to Gather Information or an Intimidation check to Coerce against the target's Will DC.

Critical Success Some of those who have disappeared for speaking against the oathrisen, Azorena turns into the undead themselves.

Success The oathrisen conceal themselves because they are undead. The Unbroken Horn agent, Azorena, controls them with strange rituals she performs in the Porphyry Keep. Few among the One Eye like the situation, but none dare speak out, as those who did have disappeared.

Failure The Unbroken Horn warriors are never seen without their armor, which covers everything, including their faces.

Critical Failure If the PCs are in disguise, they are recognized as intruders, and the guards are called, arriving in groups of 2d4 hold warriors (page 12).

to a sergeant. The PCs are taken to the Broketooth gatehouse, where Kosz, the sergeant in charge, checks their credentials, and orders a unit to escort the PCs to speak with Zdagren.

If the PCs ask any of the One Eye orcs about the situation in Blisterwell, they are told much the same: the Haskodar Hold made an unprovoked attack and the mine-city is once again at war. External trade is suspended but, as the PCs represent Ardax, an exception is being made to allow them to speak to the hold's leader.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check to Sense Motive notes that the One Eye orcs are withholding information and don't trust the PCs. With a critical success, a PC realizes these orcs intend to betray them.

C. Trap

Moderate 7

The One Eye orcs have no intention of taking the PCs to see their leader. Instead, the PCs are taken via twisting tunnels nearly to the bottom of Broketooth before their escorts turn on them. The betrayal takes place as the tunnel widens to about 30 feet across, with Blisterwell's nearest neighborhood and houses about 100 feet away.

Creatures: A sergeant and six warriors escort the PCs. They have orders to subdue and shackle the PCs, but failing that, they are prepared to deal killing blows. Any PCs who are aware of their escorts' imminent deception (such as through the earlier Perception check to Sense Motive) gain a +1 circumstance bonus to their initiative roll (or +2 if they got a critical success).

Though this encounter begins as a moderate threat, reinforcements soon arrive to fight the PCs. See Development (page 27).

BLISTERWELL WARRIORS (4)

CREATURE 4

MEDIUM HUMANOID ORC

Perception +14; darkvision

Languages Common, Orcish

Skills Athletics +11, Intimidation +10, Nature +8, Survival +10

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items breastplate, heavy shield, pick, hatchets (3)

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

HP 65

Ferocity ⤿

Reactive Strike ⤿

Speed 25 feet

Melee ⬥ pick +14 (fatal d10), **Damage** 1d6+9 piercing

Ranged ⬥ hatchet +12 (range increment 10 feet, thrown), **Damage** 1d6+9 slashing

Able Rider ⬥ The Blisterwell warrior Commands their mount, automatically succeeding at their check to control the animal. They then Raise their Shield or Draw a weapon.

HOLD SERGEANT

CREATURE 5

MEDIUM HUMANOID ORC

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Common, Orcish

Skills Athletics +13, Intimidation +11, Survival +9

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

Items breastplate, falchion, javelin (6)

AC 23; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +9, **Will** +13

HP 80

Ferocity ⤿

Opportunistic Strike ⤿ **Trigger** A creature within the hold sergeant's melee reach is hit by a melee attack by one of the hold sergeant's allies; **Effect** The hold sergeant makes a Strike against the triggering creature.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ⬥ falchion +15 (forceful, sweep), **Damage** 1d10+10 slashing

Ranged ⬥ javelin +13 (range increment 30 feet, thrown), **Damage** 1d6+10 piercing

Bark Orders ⬥ (auditory, concentrate, emotion, mental) Bellowing mightily, the hold sergeant gives himself and

all orc allies within 60 feet a +1 status bonus to attack and damage rolls until the start of the hold sergeant's next turn.

Development: One round after the second wave appears, a similar-sized group of Haskodar orcs arrives from the other direction, and attacks the One Eye orcs. The PCs should recognize that they are a different group of orcs from their Haskodar Hold marks, and their red eyes indicate their deep orc heritage. One of the Haskodar Hold sergeants addresses the PCs.

"The One Eye are no longer allies of Ardax. Come with us and we will explain. Our warriors will hold them off while you escape."



Yundarga

The combat might continue for another round as the PCs withdraw behind their rescuers. However, the two forces are evenly matched, allowing the combat to conclude narratively.

If a PC is captured, this is not the end for that PC. They are taken to the One Eye Hold's prison, which the party has an opportunity to break into later in this chapter. In the meantime, that PC's player shouldn't be out either. Allow them to create a Haskodar orc to play as a temporary character until the original character is rescued.

Reward: Although this is an extreme encounter, the PCs are not going to fight all the orcs. Instead, grant them 60 XP for escaping the second wave of attackers.

HELPING THE HASKODAR

The PCs are led through a series of cramped, twisting tunnels to Blisterwell's central pit and through its muddy streets to Soot Bottom. The neighborhood lives up to its name with an ever-present smog from the Haskodar smelters and forges. The PCs are then taken up the wall via a series of stairs and tunnels to a chamber where Yundarga holds court. A gruff warrior, she became leader of the Haskodar Hold a little more than a year ago after challenging Tulluk Clovenface. Though Yundarga spared the elder chief's life, Tullock died soon after. Yundarga has long believed that the deal with Fellstrok was ill-advised, holding that King Brithuan's true intent was to turn the orcs against each other in preparation for his own invasion of the surface. She believes the orcs of Belkzen have little to gain from fighting among

themselves, but sees no peaceful resolution to the war she has inherited.

Various maps of Blisterwell cover the table in the center of the room. Around it, Yundarga's advisors argue over strategy. Most are veteran warriors, but a few wear slate-gray cloaks identifying them as cave druids (an offshoot of the Stone Order), including Ysok Rockcaller, the hold's spiritual leader. Yundarga greets the PCs and asks what message they bring from Urgir. After hearing from them, she replies.

"You've come at an ill time. The Haskodar and One Eye Holds fought for years, though our early victories became stalemates recently. We forged a truce that the One Eye broke a few weeks ago. A truce they broke with Unbroken Horn reinforcements! I don't know what Zdagren offered the Unbroken Horn, but the warriors sent from the north are strong and tough. We've had to fall back from several borders, and the One Eye now controls the gatehouses, sealing us in. Sealing you in, too.

"The Unbroken Horn loathes Ardax's Empty Hand Hold. That means the One Eye has turned against Ardax, so you will find no allies there. It's lucky you weren't captured like Ardax's other messengers. Let's be clear: my predecessor would have ignored Urgir's call for help. I'm pragmatic. We are like two strangers backed into a corner by hungry wolves; if we don't work together, we will be consumed."

Yundarga extends a hand to seal a deal. "Our fight is now your fight. If we survive, your fight shall be the Haskodar's fight."

If the PCs agree to help, Yundarga and her advisors brief them on the conflict's current state, indicating on the map which areas are controlled by each hold. Currently, many warriors are guarding key passages and crossings, blocking One Eye forces from invading more districts. Yundarga's hope is that the PCs can open up several lesser-known tunnels, allowing Haskodar forces to circumvent their enemies' defenses and launch a counterattack from several directions. If the PCs can sabotage some One Eye resources along the way, all the better.

There are several targets this improvised war council identifies, giving the PCs some flexibility in which ones they strike first. The haunted tunnel is mandatory, and the Freshpool depot objective occurs last, once the PCs and their allies are ready to launch their counterattack. The Old Marrow encounter is not an objective but rather an event that interrupts the PCs' movements.

Old Marrow (page 29): A warg who once worked with the One Eye Hold now hunts the PCs.

Lizards of the Lake (page 30): Giant, cantankerous lizards known as zetogekis dwell along the shores and undeveloped pit slopes. They and orcs mostly avoid each other. If the PCs can goad the zetogekis, they'll rampage through One Eye territory.

Haunted Tunnel (page 31): The most promising shortcut is a fairly wide tunnel that curves northeast, connecting the Broketooth district and Highsnout. It hasn't been used in years and is mostly forgotten, thanks in part to its haunted reputation.

Highwall Forge (page 32): The One Eye Hold now controls several ancient dwarven forges that help equip their troops. The PCs are to sneak in, disable the forges, and escape with as many quality weapons as they can carry.

Freshpool Depot (page 33): These warehouses serve as a forward base for One Eye invaders. Before the Haskodar counterattack, the PCs and several allies raid this site as a feint, luring One Eye defenders here to weaken other positions.

Muckside Prison (page 34): The One Eye Hold has captured numerous Haskodar warriors, as well as Branx's delegation. The PCs can launch a jailbreak to rescue the diplomats and fighters.

D. Marrow's Prey

Moderate 7

As is common among orcs, the One Eye Hold keeps a variety of large animals that provide labor, combat prowess, and companionship. This community favors wolves, despite wolves not being an ideal fit for this environment. Most are kept in kennels closer to the surface, where they can be released to run and hunt. Periodically, One Eye beastmasters also include wargs, typically negotiating for the latter's service by providing food, shelter, and morbid amusement. Yet wargs are willful creatures. When a warg overstays its welcome—often by eating its hosts—it's chased away, if not killed outright.

Such is the case for an old and particularly powerful warg named Old Marrow. With age came mischievous restlessness, fueling antics ranging from stealing chickens and public urination to eating an elderly beastmaster and kicking embers to start house fires. Sensing his orc hosts would soon turn on him, he slipped away and has haunted less populated stretches of Blisterwell. This new life is more fulfilling and less filling; Old Marrow has to pick his hunts carefully so

that the One Eye Hold doesn't organize a concerted hunt for his hide.

The supposedly haunted tunnels (page 31) serves as his primary den, though he skulks in various neighborhoods of Blisterwell at any given time. The PCs likely come to his attention when they clear a path through the haunted tunnel, after which he observes them from a distance and plots an ambush. If the PCs focus on other objectives first, Old Marrow spots them then and times his ambush for shortly after they emerge.

The warg is canny but not invisible. Each time the PCs travel to another objective, they can attempt a DC 28 Perception check to notice Old Marrow as he skulks behind rubble and watches them hungrily from several hundred feet away. He risks getting closer each time, reducing each subsequent Perception DC by 1 (to a minimum DC 24). If a PC has an ability granting them long-range vision, consider using the minimum Perception DC for their checks.

If the PCs perceive and contact him, Old Marrow glares warily and doesn't approach at first. A few minutes later, he shows himself about 100 feet away, waiting for the PCs to speak if they have anything worthwhile to say. This is a brief Influence encounter (GM Core 187) with only two social rounds.

During the first, Old Marrow skulks a few feet closer to get a better whiff of the PCs, loudly sniffing and making crude remarks in Orcish about their apparent value as prey. During this social round (assuming the PCs don't take the warg's macabre observations as a reason to start combat), the PCs take a -2 penalty to their checks to Influence Old Marrow. Any PC who is trained in Nature or succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check (requiring no action) notes that it's customary for wargs to spend some time sizing each other up before speaking, and this beast isn't quite ready to stop studying and start speaking.

This is, however, an ideal time to Discover more about Old Marrow. In addition to uncovering his Influence skills, resistances, and weaknesses, a PC who succeeds at a Discover check might notice Old Marrow's brand, notice his collar, see how lean he is from not eating enough, or learn more about wargs' sense of humor.

- The brand is a single eye imprinted on his flank, the burn creating a small bald spot. The eye brand is quite faint on one side, suggesting it wasn't



Old Marrow

applied evenly—likely because Old Marrow was struggling or ran away partway through.

- The collar is another unwanted “gift” from the One Eye Hold. It’s clasped shut with a locking mechanism that would take some careful work to undo. The collar is heavily scuffed from Old Marrow’s repeated attempts to scratch, pull, or rub it off.
- Wargs are known for their grim sense of humor—anything from tales of tragedy to grisly lyrics—which helps them bond with pack mates. Given Old Marrow is alone, he might appreciate trading macabre jokes.

At the beginning of the second round, Old Marrow makes it clear he can speak and understand language. At the end of the following statement, he taunts a particularly fearful or plump PC.

The creature’s hackles lower as he settles on his paws atop a large boulder. “Your smell. It is not polluted by Blisterwell’s filth. If you were to disappear, no one would notice or mourn, yet I would feast. Why should I not gobble up all of you?” He stares hungrily toward one of the interlopers before adding, “Or maybe just... you. Better you be my prey than the One Eye’s.”

Despite licking his lips ominously afterward, Old Marrow is toying with the PCs, not trying to start a fight immediately.

OLD MARROW

LEVEL 9

LARGE BEAST

Grizzled warg survivor

Perception +21

Will +18

Discovery DC 22 Heraldry Lore, DC 23 Hunting Lore, DC 23 Medicine, DC 23 Nature, DC 25 Perception

Influence Skills DC 24 Athletics (to demonstrate the PC’s strength), DC 24 Intimidation, DC 24 Performance (to tell sardonic jokes), DC 24 Thievery (to remove his collar; only works once), DC 25 Deception, DC 26 Diplomacy

Influence 2 Old Marrow decides the PCs are not worth hunting. After making small talk and providing the PCs simple directions to other parts of Blisterwell, he withdraws.

Influence 4 In addition to taking the PCs off his menu, Old Marrow thinks the PCs might help him get petty revenge on the One Eye Hold. He asks a few questions about their intentions, and once it’s clear they have a common enemy, he briefly summarizes his time with the One Eye and assures the PCs that when they launch their attack, he’ll assist them. If pressed for details, he chuckles sadistically and salivates, refusing to say much

more beyond “You’ll see.” He then withdraws. Details appear in the March on Broketooth encounter (page 36).

Resistances Old Marrow is a survivor with a mean streak. Appealing to any higher sense of honor, patriotism, or similar virtues just proves that a PC is an idealistic nobody, increasing that PC’s check DC by 2.

Weaknesses Old Marrow hasn’t eaten well for weeks. If given at least 1 Bulk of good meat, he gobbles it down and becomes far less dour. This decreases the DC of all Influence checks by 1. Showing off trophies (gear or body parts) taken from One Eye foes or disparaging One Eye orcs through Performance amuses Old Marrow, reducing that check’s DC by 2.

If the PCs end the scene with a negative Influence Point total Old Marrow is insulted, thinks the PCs weak, and attacks immediately, starting combat about 80 feet away on a sloping field with ample low boulders that can provide cover or difficult terrain.

If the PCs earn 0–1 IP, Old Marrow decides the PCs are worth hunting, and he withdraws to plan his ambush. He first hunts an orc, severely wounding them before dragging the orc onto a cliff about 30 feet above where the PCs are likely to travel. He hopes that the orc’s struggles will attract the PCs’ attention and cause a few to Climb (DC 20 Athletics) up to investigate. With the party split, Old Marrow then ambushes the PCs from on the ground below, having crept within 35 feet of them. If the PCs save Old Marrow’s would-be prey, they might provide additional intelligence about the One Eye hold, the oathrisen, and more (see the sidebar on page 26).

In either combat, Old Marrow fights until reduced to 40 Hit Points, at which point he tries to flee. If cornered, he fights to the death.

OLD MARROW

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE LARGE BEAST

Perception +21; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Languages Goblin, Orcish

Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +20, Deception +17, Stealth +18, Survival +16

Str +6, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +1

AC 27; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +20, **Will** +18

HP 175

Insulting Lesson ⤴ (linguistic, mental) **Trigger** A creature within 30 feet of Old Marrow critically fails at a skill check or attack roll; **Effect** Old Marrow quips with mocking advice. He Feints the triggering creature, even if the creature is not within Old Marrow’s melee reach.

Reactive Strike ⤴

Speed 40 feet

Melee ⤴ jaws +19 (fatal d10), **Damage** 3d6+11 piercing plus lone wolf

F. HAUNTED TUNNELS

1 SQUARE = 5 FT



Lone Wolf Old Marrow works alone and excels when attacking isolated prey. His Strikes against creatures who are not adjacent to any of their allies deal 1d6 additional precision damage.

Swallow Whole ♦ (attack) Medium, 2d6+9 bludgeoning, Rupture 30 (*Monster Core* 360)

E. Lizards of the Lake Moderate 7

Blisterwell's ponds gather rainwater and industrial waste, making them toxic to all but a few endemic fish and shrimp. However, the murky water is also a suitable food source for several dozen zetogekis that migrated here centuries ago. These immense lizards made of stone dine exclusively on the mineral-rich waters of hot springs, but the slag-rich waters here are a suitable alternative. After several years of recurring clashes and fatalities, the orcs learned to share Blisterwell, leaving some cliffs and pools abandoned around Forgetown and the city's central shaft. The zetogekis are wary of the orcs but fight if disturbed.

Now that the One Eye Hold has seized Forgetown, Yundarga believes these zetogekis might be weaponized. She wants the PCs to rile them somehow, be that by baiting them, picking fights, or destroying their cliff nests. The hope is that the zetogekis will then rampage throughout Forgetown, causing One Eye casualties and sabotaging more of their war materiel. This objective very likely involves fighting several

zetogekis. However, exactly how and where that encounter takes place depends on the PCs' strategies.

Whatever their strategy, the PCs have several skill checks, such as to climb the slopes, lure zetogekis, create tempting bait, and so on. The default DC for these checks depends on where the PCs want to drive the lizards. The far easier angle of approach, which is DC 20, has shallower slopes and is along some of the zetogekis' normal paths, but this direction would draw the creatures toward residential neighborhoods populated primarily by noncombatants. If the PCs want to send the zetogekis toward military targets and workshops, they'll need to approach from a steeper side and make a greater effort, increasing the check DCs to 22. Either approach can fulfill this objective, but PCs have to live with the ramifications (and possibly violations of their anathema) of indirectly harming bystanders if they choose the easier path.

The Cliffs: The zetogekis nest and bask along a series of steep inclines and landings on the steep southwest slopes of First Pool overlooking Forgetown. These are jagged inclines ascending at roughly a 70-degree angle with 20-foot-deep ledges about 20, 70, and 100 feet above water level. Climbing these slopes involves DC 18 Athletics checks. It is these zetogekis' courtship season, with males gathering rubble to construct impressive and high-altitude nests to attract mates. Fueled by hormones and reproductive drive, they're especially territorial. By sneaking up and wrecking a few nests while zetogekis are away gathering more rocks, the PCs are sure to start a fight among the zetogekis as they blame each other, chase each other all throughout Forgetown, and (if they spot them) clobber the PCs.

Lures: The Blisterwell water is sufficient for zetogeki nutrition, but it's underwhelming. Richer mineral sources could lure the lizards, whether that's for their own consumption or to use as decorations for their nests. The most likely source of these minerals would be a forge, such as stealing at least 5 bulk of ore from the Highwall Forge encounter (page 32). If the PCs construct lures without rich mineral bait, increase the skill check DCs by 2. A successful lure can draw several zetogekis to investigate, allowing the PCs to fight them on level ground. If the PCs want to avoid combat altogether, though, they need to concoct a more elaborate plan—ideally involving several skill checks for each PC—such as creating a trail of mineral breadcrumbs before spooking the zetogekis once they've wandered into Forgetown. Ideal skills for baiting zetogekis include Deception, Hunting Lore, Nature, Stealth, Survival, and Thievery.

Combat: Barring a suitably elaborate scheme to lure the zetogekis with minimal violence, two zetogekis converge on the PCs to chase them away—or mangle the intruders if they don't run. These zetogekis fight until reduced to 20 Hit Points, at which point they flee. Once both flee, the commotion riles the rest of the colony, causing several more zetogekis to scatter and ultimately cause chaos in Forgetown.

ZETOGEKIS (2)

CREATURE 7

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 301

Perception +15; low-light vision

Treasure: The zetogekis don't keep any treasure of their own. However, once stories spread of the zetogeki rampage, Yundarga decides this has earned the PCs a piece of gear crafted from zetogeki parts to commemorate their feat. Her subordinates make the PCs' choice of either *zetogeki hide armor* (page 79) or a *kinetic club* (page 77).

F. Haunted Tunnel

Moderate 7

An old tunnel map indicates a series of passages that connect Broketooth to Highsnout. Access to these tunnels would allow the Haskodar to circumvent the One Eye's defensive position in Forgetown. Observation by Haskodar scouts—or perhaps even one of the PCs, if they are assisting with espionage—reveals that the One Eye avoid key tunnels that would allow passage between the two pits. Yundarga believes the One Eye must know about the tunnel but avoid it because of some danger within. Unwilling to miss a potential advantage, she sends the PCs to investigate.

The tunnels in question are part of the lower mine shafts. A distraction by Haskodar warriors allows the PCs to sneak into Broketooth. From there, PCs disguised as miners can easily make their way to the tunnels. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Diplomacy check to Gather Information learns from local miners that the tunnels are believed to be haunted, though they disagree on the nature of the spirits. Some say they were orcs killed in a mining accident, others say it is the burial place of ancient dwarves. A few believe it is the domain of a jealous earth elemental. On a critical failure, the PCs are recognized as intruders, and the guards are called, arriving in groups of 2d4 hold warriors (page 12).

Creatures: In truth, these tunnels are claimed by the stygira Slastryth. He keeps a pack of sod hounds to track rare gems and defend his growing collection. For many years, the bloodthirsty fey has been observing the conflict between the two orc holds for his own amusement, occasionally instigating trouble when



the war becomes cold. Slastryth has learned Orcish in addition to the languages standard for stygira.

Slastryth attempts to scare off intruders with his Gem Gaze. If the PCs do not flee, but instead react with violence, the stygira sics his sod hounds on them. The elementals take advantage of the twisting tunnels and their earth glide ability to attack from multiple angles. The stygira focuses his attacks on enemies who have been knocked down by the hounds. He does not chase intruders beyond the tunnels he claims.

If the PCs do not flee, but attempt to communicate, Slastryth listens to what they have to say. He is initially unfriendly. If his attitude is increased to at least indifferent, he introduces himself and discusses his fascination with the orc war. The PCs may be able to convince Slastryth to let the Haskodar forces pass through the tunnel. They must assure him that this will lead to more bloodshed and succeed at a Diplomacy check to make a Request against his Will DC. The PC gains a +1 circumstance bonus on this check if they offer him gems worth at least 20 gp, or +2 for gems worth at least 50 gp. If the PCs ever worsen his attitude, Slastryth attacks.

SLASTRYTH

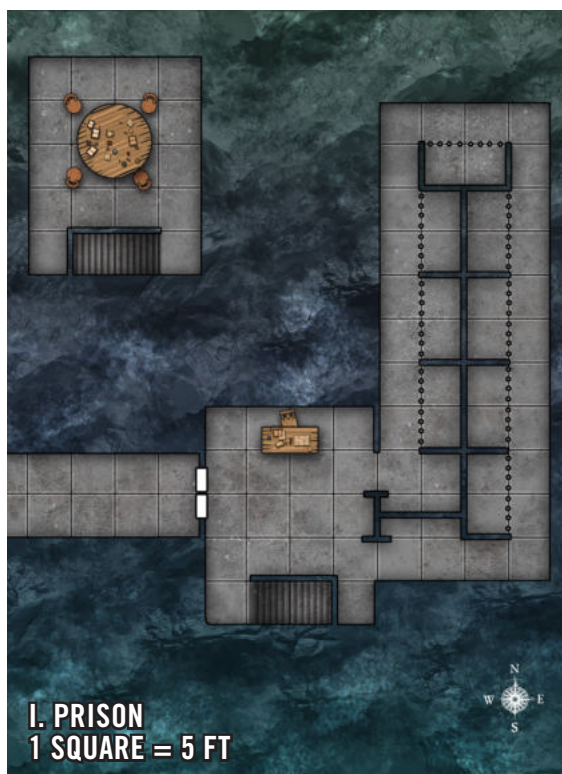
CREATURE 7

Stygira (*Bestiary* 2 255)

Initiative Perception +17

Languages Aklo, Cyclops, Jotun, Orcish, Petran

Items amethyst crystal (worth 20 gp), *clandestine cloak*



SOD HOUND (6)

Monster Core 142

Initiative Perception +9

Treasure: A PC who searches the tunnels and succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check discovers a niche near the ceiling of a tunnel. The niche can be reached with a successful DC 15 Athletics checks. Slastryth sleeps within the niche and also stores his collection here. Inside, the PCs find gems of various colors, with a total value of 100 gp.

Development: The PCs can meet their objective by killing Slastryth or by gaining his cooperation. While either solution works for Yundarga's purposes, allowing the stygira to live may prove problematic in the future. When Blisterwell is no longer at war, Slastryth may take his bloodthirst out on the Haskodar, or go in search of new entertainment (perhaps showing up in a later adventure).

G. Highwall Forge

Highwall Forge is one of several buildings—half-constructed, half-excavated—on the high terrace on the east wall overlooking First Pool. One of the oldest smithies in Forgetown, it is also one of the most productive, owing to the elementals bound within its forges. The workshop had operated independently until recently, when the One Eye seized control.

CREATURE 3

The Haskodar intend to make a foray from Fort Point onto the terrace, attacking various buildings in the process. This is a diversionary skirmish; in the confusion, the PCs will assault the Highwall Forge, one of the smithies currently under One Eye control. Their objectives are twofold: break or destroy the magic forges, then loot as much useful equipment as possible while the Haskodar warriors cover their retreat.

The Highwall Forge is an old facility carved into the steep, sloping rock face. Heavy wooden stairs are bolted into the stone, ascending 50 feet to the smithy, part of which extends out from the cliff atop an equally sturdy platform. Most of the workshop is inside the artificial cave, particularly the forges. The cliff is steep but not vertical, and its rough-hewn surface provides handholds; Climbing the cliffs here requires a DC 17 Athletics check.

Creatures: A master blacksmith leads two assistants in working the forges here. Surrounded by incomplete weapons, the smiths instead wield their forge hammers and other tools in defense of the workshop.

Though not original dwarven construction, the workshop contains a magical forge created by the orcs' predecessors. In addition to consuming a miniscule amount of fuel, the forge can animate itself to defend the facility. Once combat begins, the forge raises itself atop animated legs and fights the PCs, spewing fire and smoke. The orcs here know about the forge's magic, but they're not pleased to have it stomping around the workshop, scattering ingots and finished gear.

What's more, the 15 feet of platform that extends from the cave isn't suited to the forge's weight. If the forge ends its turn atop any part of the platform, the structure creaks and groans ominously. If the forge ends a second turn atop the platform, any part of the platform in or adjacent to the forge's space collapses, dropping anyone in it 50 feet to the neighborhood's bottom. Creatures in the collapsed sections adjacent to another flat surface can attempt to Catch an Edge (DC 17).

HOLD WARRIOR (3)

CREATURE 3

Page 12

Initiative Perception +12

Melee ♦ warhammer +12 (shove), **Damage** 1d6+6 bludgeoning

MAGICAL FORGE

CREATURE 8

LARGE **CONSTRUCT** **MINDLESS**

Weak animated furnace (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 6, 18)

Initiative Perception +13

Hardness 8

Once the PCs resolve the combat, they have a limited time to sort through and recover valuables. Their Haskodar allies are already signaling them to hurry, as One Eye reinforcements have been spotted. The PCs have two minutes to search before needing to leave. While they could try to stay longer, any additional gains they make here would be outweighed by the loss of life suffered by their Haskodar allies while holding the escape route.

Each minute, a PC can attempt one of the following activities to appraise and gather valuables. These activities can earn the PCs Victory Points (*GM Core* 184) to track their overall success. Within reason, a PC can also use abilities or cast a couple spells without impeding this search, at the GM's discretion. If a PC has an ability that dramatically speeds up how quickly they can perform one of the tasks below (such as the Quick Identify or Quick Coercion skill feats), grant that PC a +2 circumstance bonus to the associated skill checks.

- **Appraise Goods:** The PC assesses the finished goods stored toward the front of the workshop. This requires a successful DC 21 Crafting check, a DC 22 Society check to scan the work logbooks for ideal loot, a DC 23 Perception check, or a DC 20 Lore check associated with manufacturing or trade. If a PC can detect magic, they can instead attempt a DC 22 Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion check to locate magical gear.
- **Interrogate Captives:** If the PCs captured any of the smiths alive, they can question their captives to learn what's more valuable. This requires a successful DC 21 Intimidation check, a DC 22 Deception check, or a DC 24 Diplomacy check.
- **Load Gear:** The PC instead focuses on loading the loot for a speedy getaway, which might include creating improvised bags and slings for hefting heavy loads. This requires a successful DC 21 Hunting Lore check, DC 22 Crafting check, or a DC 23 Survival check. A PC can instead rely on their raw strength to carry as much as possible, attempting a DC 24 Athletics check; for every 2 Bulk the PC can carry before becoming encumbered, they gain a +1 circumstance bonus to this check.

Treasure: The number of Victory Points the PCs earned determines how much treasure they receive. For every Victory Point, the PCs receive 20 gp. If the PCs earned at least 2 Victory Points, they also acquired an alloy orb and an iron cube from the looted goods. If the PCs earned at least 4 Victory Points, they also uncovered a cold iron ingot. Finally, if they earned at least 5 Victory Points,

the PCs also recovered a breastplate inscribed with a +1 *resilient* rune.

H. Freshpool Depot

Severe 7

Haskodar scouts—perhaps with the aid of stealthy PCs—report the One Eye Hold is amassing troops in a repurposed warehouse on the edge of the Freshpool district with the intent of attacking Fort Point from two sides. Yundarga decides the Haskodar must strike first with a raid on the One Eye barracks at Freshpool. Her plan is to send troops to attack at midday, when most of the One Eye warriors are resting or sleeping.

Initially, it seems like the plan has gone off without a hitch; the outer guards are quickly dispatched, and the unprepared warriors inside either surrender or cannot properly defend themselves with limited arms and armor. However, as the PCs move further into the barracks they discover unexpected resistance.

Creatures: One of the approaching combatants is a heavily armored orc warrior colloquially referred



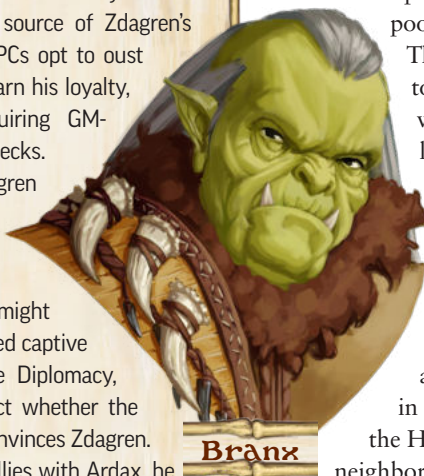
SAVING ZDAGREN

This adventure assumes the PCs assault Porphyry Keep and defeat Zdagren. However, the One Eye leader isn't their sworn enemy, and the PCs might have learned of the necromancer Azorena (page 26 sidebar). She's the power behind the throne and source of Zdagren's fearsome new warriors. If the PCs opt to oust Azorena, rescue Zdagren, and earn his loyalty, there are several steps, requiring GM-generated objectives and skill checks.

Contact Zdagren: If Zdagren knows of the PCs' plan, he can help them bypass Porphyry Keep's defenses. However, the PCs need to convince him. They might write a coded offer that a released captive carries back to him. Skills like Diplomacy, Society, and Stealth could affect whether the letter avoids interception and convinces Zdagren.

Bolster Support: If Zdagren allies with Ardash, he could be overthrown. The PCs could infiltrate One Eye checkpoints to bolster support for Zdagren and arm his followers, ensuring he stays in power.

Break the Curse: Azorena's magic infects Zdagren, turning him into an oathrisen if he dies. Her death might not end the spell, and he needs the PCs to cure him before betraying the necromancer. Magic like *cleanse affliction* (against a 4th-rank effect) might be sufficient, or you might require an hour-long ritual involving Zdagren—and a distraction to prevent Azorena from interrupting!



to as an oathrisen—likely the PCs' first exposure to the fearsome fighters that have consistently pushed back the Haskodar defenders. A handful of living orcs, hastily armored, follow the oathrisen, but keep their distance from their unnatural allies.

At this point, the One Eye warriors are ordered to keep the oathrisens' undead nature a secret to avoid eliciting anti-necromancy protests. If an oathrisen is reduced to 20 or fewer Hit Points, it attempts a fighting retreat. If it's destroyed, any surviving warriors make an effort to drag off (or dispose of) the body to prevent their enemies from examining the oathrisen. If they can't escape with the body, a warrior instead mutilates the body as an action (increasing the DC of checks to study or Recall Knowledge about the creature by 4) before fleeing.

BLISTERWELL WARRIORS (3)

CREATURE 4

Page 26

Initiative Perception +14

BLISTERWELL OATHRISEN

CREATURE 7

Page 83

Initiative Perception +15

I. Muckside Prison

Moderate 7

The prison sits at the edge of the Muck, the murky pool at the center of the Broketooth district. The two-story guardhouse is connected to a single-story prison block, with high windows providing some air but almost no light. The floors are constantly damp, and the guards prefer to spend their time on the upper floor. The outer doors have a simple lock that is rarely used.

The Haskodar believe the survivors of the first delegation from Urgir are being kept prisoner here (along with any PCs that might have been captured in the ambush). A distraction provided by the Haskodar allows the PCs to sneak into the neighborhood. The buildings around the prison house poor miners and laborers. As long as they don't appear obviously out-of-place or threatening, the locals willfully ignore them. If the PCs are not subtle, the residents alert nearby guards who arrive in groups of 2d4 hold warriors.

Creatures: As the war with the Haskodar is heating up, the prisoners are a low priority. At most times, there are four warriors on guard, along with two sergeants alternately keeping the guards in line and trying to extract useful information from the prisoners.

Confronted with obvious intruders, the guards are hostile and immediately attack. If PCs disguise themselves as One Eye Hold orcs (with or without prisoners), the guards are initially indifferent. A combination of Deception checks (to Impersonate and Lie) and Society checks (to Create a Forgery) might allow the PCs to extract the envoys without bloodshed, or at least distract the guards long enough for other PCs to open the locks or get into a flanking position.

In combat, if the opportunity presents itself, a guard activates a portcullis (see Hazards) to divide the PCs.

BLISTERWELL GAOLERS (2)

CREATURE 5

MEDIUM HUMANOID ORC

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Common, Orcish

Skills Athletics +13, Diplomacy +10, Intimidation +12, Medicine +11, Stealth +10

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

Items chain shirt, heavy crossbow (10 bolts), +1 sap, shortsword

AC 21; Fort +12, Ref +10, Will +15

HP 85; Resistances mental 5

Ferocity 2

Reactive Strike 2

Speed 25 feet

Melee 1 sap +15 (magical, sweep), Damage 1d8+8 slashing

Melee 2 shortsword +15 (agile, finesse, versatile s),
Damage 1d6+8 piercing

Ranged 1 heavy crossbow +13 (range increment 120 feet,
reload 2), Damage 1d10+4 piercing

Disarming Rebuke 2 The Blisterwell gaoler attempts to Disarm a creature, with a +2 circumstance bonus to the roll. On a success, the gaoler can also make a sap Strike against the target. Both attacks count toward his multiple attack penalty, but the penalty increases only after both attacks.

Punish Prisoners The Blisterwell gaoler can quickly subdue under-equipped foes, dealing an additional 1d6 precision damage with all Strikes against creatures that aren't wielding a weapon or shield. This damage applies to creatures even if they are using exceptional unarmed combat options, such as jaws, claws, or special Strikes granted by a stance.

HOLD SERGEANTS (2)

CREATURE 5

Page 26

Initiative Perception +15

Hazards: The two doorways leading to the prison block are rigged with portcullises that slam closed when triggered, cutting off any means of escape. By the doors on the guardhouse side are winches; a character adjacent to one can use an Interact action to trigger the corresponding portcullis to fall, or three interact actions to raise it back up (this resets the trap).

SLAMMING GATES (2)

HAZARD 5

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 23 (expert)

Description A pressure-sensitive floor panel causes a spiked door to slam down into place from the ceiling, skewering anyone caught underneath.

Disable Thievery DC 26 (trained) to jam either the floor panel or the associated winch

AC 22, Fort +15, Ref +5

Hardness 12, **HP** 50 (BT 25); Immunities critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Slam Closed 2 **Trigger** Pressure is placed on the associated floor tile; **Effect** The door falls, closing off the hallway. The door deals 3d8+3 bludgeoning damage and 3d8+3 piercing damage to anyone beneath or adjacent to the door when it falls, and it pushes them out of its space (away from the door, or in a random direction if

AGENT OF THE UNBROKEN HORN

An uncanny childhood experience with haunts led to Azorena's lifelong fascination with the thin boundary between life and death. Though battle magic is the focus for most wizards of Wyvernsting, Azorena was able to learn from them and still follow her own path. Her studies led Azorena to the worship of Zagresh, in his aspect as god of the dead (even if her teachers favored his destructive aspect).

The overthrow of Zagresh during the War of Immortals confounded Azorena. That his godhood was stolen by one of her hold's greatest enemies made her angry. Thus, when the Death Tower Hold sought the aid of Wyvernsting to reclaim Zagresh's godhood, Azorena was happy to do her part.

Now Azorena serves as the Unbroken Horn Hold's agent in Blisterwell. Ostensibly, her job is to command the oathrisen and to create new ones. Yet she is also there to ensure the One Eye Hold do not break their agreement. That Zdagren has allowed Azorena to conduct her blasphemous rituals within the heart of Porphyry Keep is upsetting to those who know of it. None dare object, however, for fear of Zdagren, Azorena, or both.

the creature is directly beneath the door) as it falls. A creature that succeeds at a DC 22 Reflex save takes no damage and moves out of the way in a random direction. On a critical success, they choose the direction.

Lifting the closed door requires a successful DC 25 Athletics check. Hitting the floor panels triggers the trap. The slab uses the same AC and saves as the trap, but it has Hardness 8 and 60 HP (BT 30).

Development: The prison cells are locked with simple locks (requiring three successful DC 20 Thievery checks to unlock). One of the sergeants on duty carries a ring of keys (that unlock the cells) on their belt.

The cells are occupied by three orcs—the only survivors of Ardax's first delegation—as well as any PCs that got captured. Among the survivors is their leader, Branx Splitanvil, a gray-haired orc who does not hesitate to criticize any action he sees as less than perfect. Branx normally serves as a manager in Urgir's forges. A demanding taskmaster, he only wants to draw the best out of his materials and his apprentices. His guards, Kraal and Zurdren, stew over their capture, but the prospect of escape fills them with thoughts of revenge. If stats are needed, treat Branx as a hold sergeant (page 26) and the two

guards as hold warriors (page 12), except they have no armor or weapons.

Once the envoy and his guards are brought to safety, they are able to provide the PCs with information they gleaned during their imprisonment. They have overheard the guards talking about the reinforcements from the Unbroken Horn Hold, and the rumors that the oathrisen are undead. They also heard that an Unbroken Horn agent resides in Porphyry Keep and advises Zdagren.

ASSAULT ON PORPHYRY KEEP

The discovery that the oathrisen are undead creatures convinces Yundarga that an alliance with their rival hold is no longer a possibility. The One Eye have gone too far, perhaps even aligning themselves with the Whispering Tyrant. The raids and intelligence gathering the PCs participated in were just a few of the operations Yundarga sent against the One Eye Hold. Their success has emboldened her to move to the final stage of her plan: an assault on the One Eye stronghold of Porphyry Keep.



Despite its name, Porphyry Keep is not a freestanding building, but a monolith the color of dried blood projecting from a wall overlooking Highsnout. The stone is carved inside and out, older sections in the smooth, geometric style of the dwarves, the majority in the more jagged aesthetic of the orcs. Porphyry Keep is framed by four long, cantilevered balconies, which serve as watchtowers, and make it look from the outside almost like a sideways castle.

Yundarga's plan is to bypass Forgettown and march her troops on the less defended Broketooth district. From there, they take the "haunted" passage into Highsnout. This puts her troops between Porphyry Keep and the bulk of Zdagren's army. To properly defend the keep, Zdagren will need to recall his troops, which the bulk of the Haskodar forces will waylay. This leaves the keep mostly undefended while elite strike forces (including the PCs) infiltrate the keep and confront the One Eye hold's leaders.

The map for areas **J3** and **J4** of Porphyry Keep appears on the inside of this adventure's back cover.

March on Broketooth

Moderate 7

On the day of the invasion, the Haskodar army gathers in Soot Bottom, and marches southwest. Read or paraphrase the following.

The battle begins in earnest when the vanguard of Yundarga's army attempt to cross the bridge into Forgettown. This, however, is merely a feint. As One Eye warriors move to reinforce the troops at the bridge, the remainder of the Haskodar forces rush the barricades of Broketooth. The unprepared defenders are quickly overwhelmed, and the Haskodar march onward. As the army circles the Muck, the warriors of Broketooth rally a second defense.

The PCs are assumed to be in the mass of the army, away from the initial fighting. The One Eye forces, still believing the Haskodar will try for Forgettown, maintain their defensive position. Yet, a few eager warriors riding dire wolves rush from the line to attack the Haskodar's flank.

Creatures: The approaching riders use buildings as cover, darting between them as they approach. When a small group sees the PCs within charging distance, they attack. The orcs are fanatics who fight to the death, but the wolves flee if their rider is dismounted.

BLISTERWELL WARRIORS (3)

CREATURE 4

Page 26

Initiative Perception +14

ELITE DIRE WOLVES (3)

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Monster Core 6, 350

Initiative Perception +12

Old Marrow's Return: If the PCs earned at least 4 Influence Points with Old Marrow (page 29), the warg briefly joins the fight. With a series of barks on his turn, he urges the dire wolves to rebel against their riders, causing each dire wolf to Buck as a reaction. The dire wolves then continue fighting the PCs, but each flees if reduced to 30 Hit Points. Old Marrow sticks around long enough to Stride toward, Strike, and Stride away from one of the warriors, favoring a prone target. He then retires to watch from the combat's periphery, occasionally mocking the combatants' poor form. Unless prevented from doing so, he later drags off a fallen orc to eat.

J. Porphyry Keep

The Haskodar army enters Highsnout through the tunnels and marches on Porphyry Keep. As they do, Yundarga surveys the fortress and notices various flag-based signals being sent from the main keep. She advises the PCs to be ready to go over the walls and neutralize the signalers, which will likely bring them into contact with Zdagren and his lackeys.

The Porphyry Keep is a maze of hallways and rooms; the following presents the route the PCs are mostly likely to take to reach the overlook. The PCs are free to explore the remaining rooms, though most have little of interest. In addition to encounters listed here, the keep is occupied by numerous noncombatants who flee from intruders. If stats are needed, treat them as orc scrappers (*Monster Core* 258).

If the PCs need to take short rests (to Refocus or Treat Wounds, for example), they can safely do so several times in one of the side rooms. Repeatedly resting might attract unwanted attention, though.

J1. WATCH BALCONY

LOW 7

As they reach the fortified ground-level entrance, engineers begin erecting scaffolds and ladders to reach the two lower balconies 35 feet up. Once the skeletal siege tower nears completion, the PCs and the other infiltrators are called to ascend.

Climbing the scaffold requires a successful DC 10 Athletics check. A waist-high wall encircles the balcony; anyone behind it (and atop the 15-foot-wide walkway) gains greater cover against attacks from below the level of the balcony.

Creatures: Not expecting the Haskodar to reach the keep, only a half dozen orcs are stationed on the balcony, but they do their best to rain arrows on the

army below. They turn their bows on anyone climbing up the siege tower, and switch to their axes when one reaches the banister.

PORPHYRY GUARDS (3)

CREATURE 5

MEDIUM **HUMANOID** **ORC**

Perception +14; darkvision

Languages Common, Orcish, Sakvroth

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +11, Blisterwell Lore +12, Crafting +10, Intimidation +10, Survival +10

Str +4, **Dex** +3, **Con** +5, **Int** +1, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

Items battle axe, chain mail, composite longbow (20 arrows)

AC 22; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +12

HP 82; **Resistances** slashing 4

Ferocity ⚡

Reactive Strike ⚡

Speed 25 feet

Melee ⚔ battle axe +14 (sweep), **Damage** 1d8+8 slashing

Ranged ⚔ composite longbow +15 (deadly d10, range increment 100 feet, volley 30 feet), **Damage** 1d8+6 piercing

Double Shot ⚔ The porphyry guard makes two longbow Strikes targeting two different creatures within the longbow's first range increment. Both Strikes uses the guard's current multiple attack penalty, but each strike takes a -2 penalty.

Weapon Master The porphyry guard has access to the critical specialization effects of any weapons they wield.

J2. THE LOWER COURT

MODERATE 7

Once inside the keep from a lower balcony, the PCs can push past the One Eye defenders to ascend the 10-foot-wide stairs leading up to a large hall that measures 40 feet wide by 80 feet long. This "lower court" serves as a room for mustering troops. Side passages branch off to other parts of the lower keep, and another set of 5-foot-wide stairs at the far end lead upward toward the PCs' objective.

Creatures: When the One Eye become aware that the Haskodar are entering through the balcony, they send an oathrisen and some hold warriors to intercept them. The warriors are visibly unnerved by their undead ally, a situation the PCs can exploit. As an action, a PC can make a Diplomacy or Intimidation check against a hold warrior's Will DC. On a success, the warrior flees. On a critical success, they assist the PCs in fighting the oathrisen.

HOLD WARRIOR (4)

CREATURE 3

Page 12

Initiative Perception +12

Hoof, Cinder,
and Storm

Chapter 1:
Stampede of
Bone

Chapter 2:
The Battle for
Blisterwell

Chapter 3:
Tracks of the
Past

Belkzen
Operations

Quahs of
Moon and
Sun

Adventure
Toolbox

OATHRISEN

Page 83

Initiative Perception +15

J3. THE UPPER COURT

Stairs from the lower court lead to hallways outside the upper court, from which PCs can hear chanting. A throne carved from the porphyry of the keep sits at one end of this largest room in the keep. The upper court is normally used for large gatherings and official business. Currently, however, a corpse rests upon a bier in the middle of the chamber, surrounded by arcane symbols painted on the floor, lit candles, and other ritual paraphernalia. The PCs may recognize the corpse as a One Eye orc they encountered earlier in this chapter, whether in combat or conversation.

Creatures: The room has been claimed by Azorena, the Unbroken Horn hold's agent in Blisterwell, as the only suitable place to perform the ritual to create the undead oathrisen. She is in the middle of such a ritual when the PCs enter, guarded by two porphyry shield bearers.

If the PCs are obviously intruders, these guards attack. If the PCs are disguised as One Eye orcs, but don't immediately go to one of the other exits, the guards confront them, demanding to know their business. Azorena continues her ritual, but if combat breaks out, or the PCs interfere with the ritual, she breaks off her chanting with great annoyance and takes her frustration out on the PCs. The shield bearers prioritize Azorena's safety, either by pinning down ranged threats or staying near her to shield her from harm.

Azorena is holding a *horrid figurine* depicting Zagresh on a pile of heads, and carries it even when she goes into combat. A PC can identify the image with a successful DC 20 Religion check or a DC 15 Orc Lore check. Azorena uses *summon undead* to call forth a wight, and casts spells from behind her allies. She is particularly vicious toward anyone displaying the marks of The Empty Hand or Urgir.

AZORENA

CREATURE 7

UNIQUE MEDIUM DROMAAR HUMAN HUMANOID ORC

Female dromaar wizard

Perception +14; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril, Orcish

Skills Arcana +16, Deception +11, Diplomacy +11, Intimidation +11, Religion +14

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

Items *horrid figurine* (Treasure Vault 115), spellbook, scroll of fireball (4th rank), scroll of lightning bolt (4th rank), scroll of peaceful rest, scroll of see the unseen, wand of blazing bolt (3rd rank)

CREATURE 7

AC 22 (21 without *mystic armor*); **Fort** +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +14; +1 status bonus against divine spells

HP 90

Ferocity 2

Whispered Secrets While she possesses the *horrid figurine*, Azorena treats oathrisen as if they were two levels lower for the purpose of casting *create undead*. The *figurine* acts as her secondary caster and always provides a +4 circumstance bonus to the primary check.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +11 (agile, finesse, nonlethal, unarmed), **Damage** 2d4+7 bludgeoning

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 26, attack +16; **4th** flicker, summon undead, vision of death; **3rd** grim tendrils (2), lightning bolt, vampiric feast; **2nd** blood vendetta, darkness, false vitality, telekinetic maneuver; **1st** command (2), mystic armor (already cast), phantasmal minion; **Cantrips** (4th) gouging claw, ignition, shield, telekinetic hand, telekinetic projectile, void warp

Wizard Focus Spells 2 Focus Points; **4th** spiral of horrors; **1st** fortify summoning

Arcane Rituals create undead (oathrisen)

Drain Bonded Item ♦ (arcane) **Frequency** once per day;

Requirements The *horrid figurine* is on Azorena's person;

Effect During the current turn, Azorena can cast one spell she prepared today and already cast, without spending a spell slot. She must still Cast the Spell and meet the spell's other requirements.

PORPHYRY SHIELD BEARERS (2)

CREATURE 5

MEDIUM HUMANOID ORC

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Common, Orcish, Petran

Skills Athletics +13, Intimidation +10, Society +11

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

Items half-plate, hatchet, steel shield with shield spikes

AC 23; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +14

HP 85

Ferocity 2

Shield Block 2

Shield Warden When the shield bearer has their shield raised, they can Shield Block when an attack is made against an adjacent ally. If they do, the shield prevents that ally from taking damage instead of the shield bearer.

Tenacious Shield ♦ **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** The shield bearer's shield would be destroyed; **Effect** The shield is not destroyed and its Hit Points are instead reduced to 5.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ hatchet +15 (agile, sweep, thrown 10 ft.), **Damage** 1d6+10 slashing

Melee ♦ shield spikes +15, **Damage** 1d6+10 slashing

Ranged ♦ hatchet +15 (agile, sweep, thrown 10 ft.),

Damage 1d6+10 slashing

Offensive Block ♦♦ The shield bearer can Step, make a shield spikes Strike, and Raise their Shield in any order.

Retributive Bash The porphyry shield bearer deals an additional 1d8 damage with weapon Strikes against any creature that has damaged the shield bearer or an adjacent ally since the beginning of the shield bearer's last turn.

Treasure: Among the ritual items on Azorena's worktable are 24 pieces of black onyx (worth 10 gp each) and a *gallows tooth*.

J4. THE OVERLOOK

MODERATE 7

This room is dominated by several large openings which look out upon the Highsnout pit. The window sills are 3 feet high and 3 feet wide; from the windows it's a 75-foot drop to the ground below. The battle going on below is displayed in miniature on the table in the center of the room.

Creature: Zdagren commands his army from the overlook, accompanied by a sergeant and two warriors. The warriors relay Zdagren's orders to the troops below via signal flags. The occupants initially assume anyone entering the room brings messages from elsewhere in the keep. If the PCs are disguised as One Eye orcs, the sergeant demands their report, but is quick to dismiss them unless the PCs succeed at an elaborate Lie.

Once it becomes obvious the PCs are intruders, the orcs move to defend their leader, though Zdagren does not shy from combat himself. If the PCs did not fight Azorena's guard, the sound of combat draws them here after 1d4 rounds.

The desperate Zdagren fights to the death, though his followers may flee or surrender when significantly injured. Once the One Eye leader is down, his followers surrender. If the PCs attempt to capture Zdagren, or keep him alive once unconscious, the other orcs take the opportunity to attempt to kill him themselves.

HOLD WARRIOR (2)

CREATURE 3

Page 12

Initiative Perception +12

HOLD SERGEANT (1)

CREATURE 5

Page 26

Initiative Perception +15

ZDAGREN HALF-EAR

CREATURE 7

Page 88

Initiative Perception +17

ZDAGREN REDUX

SEVERE 7

The One Eye Hold leader's bargain with the Unbroken Horn Hold has brought the influence of Zagresh and the Whispering Tyrant into Blisterwell. Combine that with Zdagren's agitated mental state and violent death, and it is inevitable that his soul would stay tethered to the Universe as an undead.

Creatures: Whether killed by the PCs or one of his own followers, 1d4 rounds after Zdagren dies, he rises as undead creature. Casting *peaceful rest* delays his transformation for its duration. Damaging the corpse does not stop this process unless the body is completely destroyed (as with *disintegrate*). In the rounds before he becomes undead, a faint red mist seeps from Zdagren's corpse. When the transformation is complete, the red mist coalesces into a transparent apparition of Zdagren in shades of blood red.

If any of the One Eye orcs are still present, they aid the PCs in attempting to destroy the spirit of Zdagren. If none are present, you might have some Haskodar orcs arrive to reinforce the PCs.

ELITE BLISTERWELL OATHRISEN

CREATURE 8

Page 83, *Monster Core* 6

Initiative Perception +17

AFTERMATH

Without Zdagren directing them, the commanders on the ground each make a push with their warriors for their own personal glory. The Haskodar army takes advantage of the One Eye hold's disorganization, cutting off enemy units from their allies and forcing them to retreat or surrender. Once the bulk of the One Eye army is routed, the Haskodar smash their way into Porphyry Keep and claim the stronghold. Though the Haskodar have effectively won Blisterwell, it takes several more weeks to clear out all the holdouts among the One Eye orcs and to assert control of all the pits.

Though most of its population yet live, the One Eye Hold itself is no more. Many of its former members accept defeat and swear allegiance to Yundarga and the Haskodar Hold. Others flee the mine-city and eventually join up with other nearby holds. A small number, believing in the goals of the Unbroken Horn Hold, travel north to Wyvernsting to join them.

Not long after the siege, the PCs are brought to Yundarga in the Porphyry Keep. She thanks them for their help in defeating the One Eye Hold and presents them with four ingots of cold iron (worth 100 gp each), a precious metal drawn Blisterwell's deepest mines. The Haskodar Hold leader reaffirms her promise to aid Urgir with metal and warriors.



Chapter 3: Tracks of the Past

Having proven themselves capable negotiators and warriors, the PCs are able to enjoy a few days of recuperation and rest, as well as spend time exploring the starting changes in Blisterwell. The Haskodar Hold is already preparing to support Ardax by strengthening their defenses and beginning the manufacturing of goods and weapons.

After a night of solid rest, a stir passes through the orc hold and murmuring starts of a large orc warband making their way toward Blisterwell. This sets most of the hold on edge, preparing for another fight before a scout from the group finally arrives and requests to speak with the leadership of the Haskodar Hold. Not long after this initial discussion, the PCs receive an invitation from Tulluk Clovenface and Ysok Rockcaller to attend a meeting between the

Haskodar and Gutspear Holds. By the time the PCs arrive, it seems as though conversations have been moving slowly for quite some time.

As the doors to the meeting chamber creak open, the arguing voices fall silent and Tulluk Clovenface stands, gesturing to two unfamiliar orcs seated at the table. "Good, you've arrived. These are the leaders of the Gutspear Hold and they've come with a ridiculous request."

The female orc visibly bristles before Ysok steps into the conversation, gesturing to introduce the scowling guest. "This is Sugha Sunfist and Ryko the Inked. They've come to Blisterwell for assistance and as you know, we don't have many we can spare." He turns to the Gutspear orcs. "If you'd like to share your story."

Ryko frowns, glancing at their sullen companion before speaking carefully. "On our return from business in Rolgrimmur, we were attacked by a group of Shoanti warriors. We moved to the next camp and another group appeared at night, striking quickly before leaving. They didn't seem to have any intent to kill, just trying to chase us away while yelling about orcs disrespecting the Shadefields."

"From the timing and the attack styles, I believe we're dealing with the Lyrune- and Sklar-Quahs." Sugha adds, pulling out a map and pointing out the location of their previous camp. "We don't want to cause an incident since they seemed to be more distressed than warmongering. We requested the Haskodar Hold send out a legion of soldiers to handle them, as our people are currently split up."

"A legion we don't have available." Tulluk grumps, folding his arms over his chest. "Which is why we've sent for you to come and assist with whatever's got the Shoanti up in arms."

Sugha and Ryko are willing to answer a handful of questions from the PCs, but they're clearly impatient and concerned about handling the situation quickly and decisively. They give as much information as necessary to ensure that the PCs have a successful mission, though they're reticent to provide information about what they were doing at Rolgrimmur.

What hold are you from? "The Gutspear Hold," Sugha answers proudly. "We've recently ousted the Eight Fingers Hold and taken their territory, but the Shoanti attacked and chased us along the Kodar Mountains. We were hoping to gather forces from Belkzen to assist in this situation, but we know the current issues make it difficult."

Who's been attacking you? "Two Shoanti quahs: the Lyrune-Quah and the Sklar-Quah." Ryko shifts a little in their seat before providing further information. "They're two separate groups of Shoanti, like holds. The Lyrune-Quah is known to attack during the night from a distance while the Sklar-Quah is the quah of the burn riders, foolhardy warriors that wrap their horses in grass and then ride them through wildfires to surprise their enemies. It's no surprise that they've teamed up since their lands are intertwined, though it's rare for either of the quahs to make such brazen assaults with little provocation."

What's happening in the Shadefields? "Recently? Nothing that we're aware of." Sugha sighs and shakes her head. "It's a section of the Blood Plains closer to Shoanti territory. Two hundred or so years ago there was a large battle there between orcs and Shoanti, and the Shoanti casters did... something. They tied their spirits to the land and slaughtered the orcs. No Belkzen orc has been able to approach the area since."

Do you have advice on how to handle this? "Hunt them down and show them your strength." Tulluk suggests sullenly, before being interrupted by Ryko clearing their throat.

"I recommend a few skirmishes to show them we're not afraid nor backing down, then approaching them to talk. Find out what the issue is and if they need assistance, provide it. It's unlikely they'll make unreasonable requests; they're a practical group."

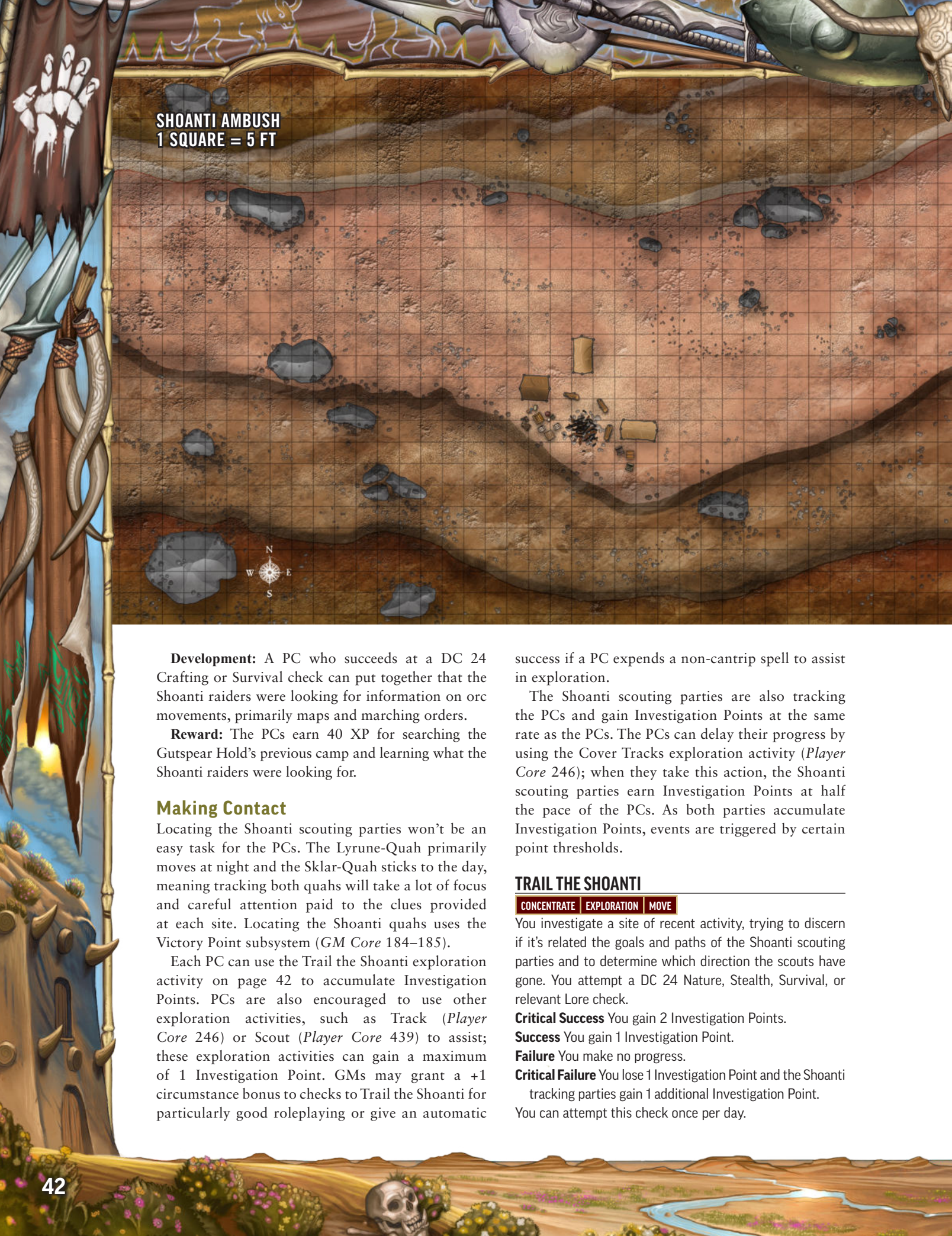
What can you bring to Ardax's cause? Sugha is careful as she replies, glancing back once more at Ryko. "During our time in Rolgrimmur we learned some things about the dwarves and their leadership. We're... in communication with them. We're already loyal to Ardax the White-Hair, but they may be able to provide some assistance for the Foundry."

Moving on the Offense: When the PCs agree to assist the Gutspear Hold, Sugha looks noticeably relieved. She hands over the map she's been using to track Shoanti and orc movements, pointing out to the PCs the locations of previous skirmishes as well as the locations of various storage caches in the badlands should they need rations or supplies. They're able to resupply within Blisterwell, but the expectation is that they'll be on the move quickly. As they finish preparations, Ysok approaches the PCs with some last-minute advice.

"If I may," Ysok begins, offering over the reins of a horse already dressed and ready for travel. "I'd like to offer a few words of advice, as an old man who's seen much. Killing Shoanti warriors recklessly and with little care for the rules of war has been a remarkably poor decision we've made in our past. By no means act in cowardice, but perhaps consider that a wounded enemy can still become an ally, while a dead enemy can become a tool of our destruction."

THE ABANDONED CAMP

In order to make contact with the Shoanti, the PCs will first need to locate one of their scouting parties. Fortunately, they have a lead as Sugha's map provides directions to their previous camp. The abandoned camp is about a day's travel outside of Blisterwell and the signs of a skirmish are still fairly fresh. A cursory investigation of the area reveals signs that the remaining tents were ransacked, though camping supplies and valuable objects that had been left behind during the retreat haven't been touched and any food and clean water is stacked on crates and tables to keep it clean and off the ground. Comparatively, any vessel that might have held written information is empty with scraps of parchment scattered across the ground.



SHOANTI AMBUSH
1 SQUARE = 5 FT

Development: A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Crafting or Survival check can put together that the Shoanti raiders were looking for information on orc movements, primarily maps and marching orders.

Reward: The PCs earn 40 XP for searching the Gutspear Hold's previous camp and learning what the Shoanti raiders were looking for.

Making Contact

Locating the Shoanti scouting parties won't be an easy task for the PCs. The Lyrune-Quah primarily moves at night and the Sklar-Quah sticks to the day, meaning tracking both quahs will take a lot of focus and careful attention paid to the clues provided at each site. Locating the Shoanti quahs uses the Victory Point subsystem (*GM Core* 184–185).

Each PC can use the Trail the Shoanti exploration activity on page 42 to accumulate Investigation Points. PCs are also encouraged to use other exploration activities, such as Track (*Player Core* 246) or Scout (*Player Core* 439) to assist; these exploration activities can gain a maximum of 1 Investigation Point. GMs may grant a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Trail the Shoanti for particularly good roleplaying or give an automatic

success if a PC expends a non-cantrip spell to assist in exploration.

The Shoanti scouting parties are also tracking the PCs and gain Investigation Points at the same rate as the PCs. The PCs can delay their progress by using the Cover Tracks exploration activity (*Player Core* 246); when they take this action, the Shoanti scouting parties earn Investigation Points at half the pace of the PCs. As both parties accumulate Investigation Points, events are triggered by certain point thresholds.

TRAIL THE SHOANTI

CONCENTRATE | EXPLORATION | MOVE

You investigate a site of recent activity, trying to discern if it's related the goals and paths of the Shoanti scouting parties and to determine which direction the scouts have gone. You attempt a DC 24 Nature, Stealth, Survival, or relevant Lore check.

Critical Success You gain 2 Investigation Points.

Success You gain 1 Investigation Point.

Failure You make no progress.

Critical Failure You lose 1 Investigation Point and the Shoanti tracking parties gain 1 additional Investigation Point. You can attempt this check once per day.

EXPLORING THE BADLANDS

This time of exploration is the perfect time to give the PCs space to roleplay and spend quality time together. In between events, if the party is low on Investigation Points or XP and wants to do something more active, use the table below to give them a random encounter by rolling 1d20 to determine what they come upon in the wilderness.

BADLANDS RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Roll	Encounter	Threat
1-3	2 war pigs (page 87)	Trivial 8
4-6	1 trighoul (page 86)	Trivial 8
7-9	2 cave bears (<i>Monster Core</i> 41)	Trivial 8
10-11	2 aurochs herds (page 82)	Low 8
12-13	2 moonstalkers (page 85)	Low 8
14-15	3 war pigs (page 87)	Low 8
16-17	2 living tars (<i>Monster Core</i> 257)	Low 8
18	4 war pigs (page 87)	Moderate 8
19	1 elite roc (<i>Monster Core</i> 6, 294)	Moderate 8
20	1 graveknight (<i>Monster Core</i> 178)	Moderate 8

EVENT 1: OPOSSUM HUNTING

LOW 8

This event occurs the day after the PCs have accumulated 5 Investigation Points. Events 1, 3, and 4 take place in an open, rocky area; use a map of your own design or a Flip-Mat with relevant terrain.

The afternoon sun hangs bright in the sky, the heat baking the dry terrain. As the winds begin to pick up, swaying the branches of what few hardy bushes grow in this parched wasteland, a fierce growl can be heard from atop a large, cracked boulder. Dark against the sun's burning light, an enormous shape leaps down with a ravenous shriek.

Creatures: The interference of the Whispering Way in the Kodar Mountains has driven a particularly territorial khravgodon down into the badlands. The creature is irritable at its loss of territory and hasn't had a proper meal in several days. When the PCs capture its attention, it tries to grab someone and run off with them to feast, fighting to the death to keep its prey.

KHRAVGODON

CREATURE 9

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 192

Initiative Perception +18

Treasure: Once the khravgodon is defeated, the PCs discover that there are a fair number of items tangled up in the fur of the old marsupial. After cutting some of the matted knots of fur free, they're able to retrieve a *moderate roc-shaft arrow* (page

GUTSPEAR CACHES

As the PCs travel throughout the badlands, resources are scarce. Should the party find itself running low on supplies, there are several Gutspear Hold caches marked on the map Sugha gave them where they can restock as needed.

Locating a cache requires a DC 23 Survival check and replaces a PC's exploration activity for the day. The caches have food and various common survival items as well as one moderate healing potion per cache. If the PCs are in desperate need, you can have level-appropriate items or treasures they missed stored in a cache they use.

Each cache is marked with a tablet that states: "Take only what nature cannot provide." Anyone who gets greedy and takes from a cache out of selfishness rather than survival is cursed with constant nightmares of starvation and dehydration, becoming fatigued until they repent by replacing what they took.

81) and a total of 10 *sighting shot* arrows and bolts (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault* 82), five of each type.

EVENT 2: NIGHT ARCHERS

MODERATE 8

This event occurs the evening of the day after the PCs have accumulated at least 10 Investigation Points. Use the map on page 42 for this event.

The moon rises as the evening grows cool, the campfire burning low as its smoke fades down to the barest whisper. Just as the wind dies down, a loud whistle rings across the clearing, slicing through the quiet of the night. Silent but for their warning call, a group of Shoanti warriors steps out from the shadows, bows pulled taut with arrows at the ready. The warriors all have black bands tattooed across their eyes and their dark clothing blends with the shadows.

"Leave these lands," one of them shouts authoritatively. "Let our ancestors rest, and yours pay penance for all they've done!"

Creatures: The Lyrune-Quah warriors aren't interested in killing the PCs or fighting to the death; rather they're trying to intimidate them into abandoning the badlands and returning to Blisterwell. Once someone on either side falls in combat or the warriors are collectively reduced to 60 Hit Points, they retreat back into the darkness.

LYRUNE-QUAH ARCHERS (2)

CREATURE 7

Variant hunter (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide* 219)

Initiative Stealth +17



LYRUNE-QUAH SCOUT

CREATURE 6

Variant monster hunter (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide* 227)

Initiative Stealth +13

Development: As they pulled back into the dark cover of night, the warriors left behind a satchel containing a marked-up map and orders from their leader on this expedition, **Tsiwak Eclipse Rider** (thoughtful female aiuvarin Shoanti tracker). A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Society or relevant Lore check while examining the map can determine that each of the locations marked on the map are sites of historic (and particularly bloody) battles. Reading over Tsiwak's orders, it's clear that she's concerned about orc hold movements near the Shadefields as well as the increase in undead activity and suspects some sort of magic is being harvested from these battlefields. She references someone in her letter as "the hothead" but doesn't clarify who this could be, just that they're impulsive and she's concerned that if her scouting party can't scare off the PCs that they'll do something drastic.

Treasure: In the same satchel, the PCs find a *returning starknife* (page 81).

EVENT 3: RILED DRAKES

MODERATE 8

This event occurs the day after the Shoanti scouting parties have accumulated at least 5 Investigation Points.

Morning rises on the Cinderlands, hot as any other day. The few sounds of wildlife are quickly cut off by the sound of whooping, hoofbeats, and the thunderclap of large wings. Heading in from the west, several humans on horses wrapped in strange grass coats approach quickly, riding furiously in perfect formation as something shrieks behind them.

The group suddenly swerves into an outcropping of rocks, revealing two desert drakes chasing after them; the riders vanish into the environment but the massive predators continue forward towards the bright heat of the sun, shrieking violently as they dive toward the camp.

Creatures: Fed up with the perceived interference of Belkzen orcs, the Shoanti quahs decided to pool their resources in order to scare off the PCs. The Lyrune-Quah warriors spent the evening tracking down a nest of some mating desert drakes and informed the burn riders of the Sklar-Quah of the area. During the early morning hours, the burn riders harassed the monsters before luring them out and running them directly into the PCs' campsite, hoping that the fight will exhaust them and encourage them back to Blisterwell.

The angry drakes are violent but more intent on teaching their tormentors a lesson than killing them,

not caring to take the time and differentiate the innocent PCs from the burn riders. They use their Sandstorm Breath as soon as possible to take control of the environment and retreat when someone on either side goes unconscious, pettily swiping at camp supplies as they leave. The PCs can attempt to convince the drakes that they aren't the ones they're after with Diplomacy checks, but the DC increases by 2 as the burn riders are well-hidden and the incensed drakes want payback.

DESERT DRAKES (2)

CREATURE 8

Pathfinder Monster Core 133

Initiative Perception +15

Development: Once the PCs have dealt with the desert drakes, one of the burn riders approaches to get a better look at the PCs. This is **Otehika Cinder Eater** (hotheaded nonbinary Shoanti burn rider), the leader of the Sklar-Quah scouting party. With a haughty look, they click their tongue at the party. "You should go back where you came from and tell them we won't tolerate your meddling in the Shadefields. Our ancestors didn't hold with your trickery and we won't either."

Otehika has no interest in talking through things and if the PCs attempt to start a fight or speak back to them, they let out a sharp whistle, riding away with the other two burn riders at their side.

Treasure: While Otehika was scolding the PCs, they failed to notice one of their pouches sliding free. Inside the pouch is 240 gp and a small pot about the size of a child's palm that makes a jingling noise when shaken. The pot is carved with fine, intricate designs of flames and the sun. This is a jingle pot (described in Lyrune-Quah Art on page 72) gifted to them by Tsiwak.

EVENT 4: BOLSTER AND BLUSTER MODERATE 8

This event should occur the day after the Shoanti scouting parties have accumulated at least 10 Investigation Points.

As the PCs are moving along through the badlands, they come across the signs of recent hoof prints and a handful of the unusual grass the Sklar-Quah burn riders cover their horses in. As they investigate, they also find evidence of a campsite that was recently packed up. The grass is dry much like hay or wheat, but it's extremely thick and has a waxy coating to it. A successful DC 24 Crafting or Nature check reveals that the wax around the grass is fire resistant, allowing the burn riders to ride their horses through the flames of the frequent wildfires that pop up in the Cinderlands.

Creatures: Once the PCs have finished examining the campsite, two young Sklar-Quah warriors, **Cicla** and **Heyoka Dawn Singer** (impulsive male human Shoanti warriors) step out from behind the bushes nearby. Despite their orders, these twins from the Sklar-Quah scouting party have become impatient with the situation and decided to try to challenge the PCs to a proper fight to prove themselves to Otehika as future burn riders. During combat, they attempt to use their Counting Coup reaction as early as possible. Clearly young and brash, neither of the young men are eager to die for their cause and they retreat once one of them is reduced to half or fewer Hit Points.

Impressionable youths: While they are trained warriors, Cicla and Heyoka's inexperience makes them susceptible to intimidation tactics. Attempts to Demoralize using boasts of personal experience or frightening stories of battle gain a +1 circumstance bonus. On a critical success, a PC can attempt a DC 23 Diplomacy or Intimidation check to persuade the twins to stand down.

SKLAR-QUAH WARRIORS (2)

CREATURE 8

RARE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +16

Languages Common, Orcish, Shoanti, Varisian


Skills Acrobatics +17, Athletics +19, Intimidation +18, Nature +15

Str +5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3

Items +1 striking battle axe, composite shortbow (20 arrows), hatchet (2)


AC 26; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +16, **Will** +13

HP 130


Counting Coup  **Trigger** An enemy moves within the Sklar-Quah warrior's reach; **Effect** The Sklar-Quah warrior swings their weapon as close to their enemy as they can without touching them, immediately attempting a Demoralize check. On a success, the enemy is off-guard until the beginning of their next turn.

Reactive Strike 


Speed 25 feet

Melee  battle axe +20 (magical, sweep), **Damage** 2d10+9 slashing

Melee  hatchet +19 (agile, sweep), **Damage** 2d8+9 slashing

Ranged  hatchet +18 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8+9 slashing

Ranged  composite shortbow +18 (deadly d10, propulsive, range increment 60 feet), **Damage** 2d6+8 piercing

Guerrilla Tactics  **Requirements** The Sklar-Quah warrior is holding their hatchet; **Effect** The Sklar-Quah warrior makes a ranged Strike with their hatchet and then draws their battle axe.

Development: Once their defeat is clear, whether through battle or words, the Dawn Singer twins drop everything and run, hurling immature insults over their shoulders at the PCs. If one falls in combat, the other scoops him up and runs away just the same. If the PCs attempt to speak with the young men, they can't gather much information from them as they babble on about all of the "Belkzen torture techniques" they've been trained to endure, with each technique becoming more gruesome and improbable than the one before.

The PCs can Track the twins to find the Shoanti scouting camp, but it still takes over a day to do so. By the time the PCs see the camp, it's the evening of the next day and rather late to approach.

Treasure: During their haste to retreat, one of the twins drops a *cindergrass poultice* (page 80) and a pouch of purple pepper powder (page 81). He briefly pauses to pick them up before abandoning it in favor of returning to the safety of the Shoanti camp.

Reward: If the PCs resolve this combat peacefully, reward them the same amount of XP as if they'd defeated the twins in combat.

EVENT 5: NIGHTTIME SMOKE

SEVERE 8

This event should occur in the evening, the day after Event 4. Use the map on page 42 for this event.

The Shoanti scouting camp is quiet during the evening, with a few Lyrune-Quah warriors keeping watch around the edge of camp while others rest by the bonfire in the center. After a few minutes of quiet, the warriors perk up at the sound of a strange hissing noise before shouting out a warning as a large acid flask smashes into the middle of the fire, causing it to erupt in a spray of chemicals and flame.

A group of orcs emerges from the darkness, led by a woman in scale mail emblazoned with the symbol of Zagresh. She growls in Orcish to her party, "Take on the nomads and snap their spines like the arrows they carry."

The orcs roar as they sweep forward, shouting curses and war chants. One name rises above the fray, over and over again: "Zagresh! Zagresh! Zagresh!"

Creatures: The PCs aren't the only orc party that's been tracking the Shoanti scouts through the badlands. This group of Zagresh cultists believes the strange happenings in the Shadefields is a sign from Zagresh to finally claim the land from its Shoanti protectors in the name of the Destroyer and have been trying to kill the Shoanti scouts as a sacrifice. The cultists attack both the PCs and the Shoanti and fight to the death, refusing to give an inch to anyone they view as heretics against Zagresh. In combat, the champion of Zagresh attempts to place himself in the middle of his enemies before using his Fit of Rage ability.

If the PCs obtained less than 10 Investigation Points, they're off-guard to the Zagresh cultists for the first round of combat. If they obtained 10 or more Investigation Points, the cultists are off-guard to the PCs for one round of combat as they were fully focused on tracking the Shoanti and unaware of the party's movements through the Cinderlands.

ORACLE OF ZAGRESH

CREATURE 10

RARE MEDIUM DROMAAR HUMAN HUMANOID ORC

Perception +19

Languages Common, Orcish

Skills Athletics +22, Intimidation +20, Religion +19, Stealth +18

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +6

Items javelin (10), +1 striking orc necksplitter, +1 scale mail

AC 28; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +18, **Will** +20

HP 172; curse of the destroyer's bloodlust

Reactive Strike ⤴

Ferocity ⤴

Speed 25 feet

Melee ⤴ *orc necksplitter* +23 (forceful, magical, sweep), **Damage** 2d8+6 slashing

Melee ⤴ *claw* +20 (acid, agile), **Damage** 2d8+6 slashing plus Destructive Touch

Melee ⤴ *jaws* +20 (acid), **Damage** 2d8+6 piercing plus Destructive Touch

Ranged ⤴ *javelin* +21 (thrown 30 feet), **Damage** 2d6+6 piercing

Divine Spontaneous Spells DC 29, attack +21; **5th** (2 slots) *crisis of faith*, *spiritual armament*; **4th** (3 slots) *divine wrath*, *unfettered movement*; **3rd** (3 slots) *bane*, *blindness*, *crisis of faith*; **2nd** (3 slots) *deafness*, *revealing light*, *spiritual armament*; **1st** (3 slots) *bane*, *runic body*, *runic weapon*; **Cantrips (5th)** *daze*, *divine lance*, *forbidding ward*, *guidance*, *shield*, *stabilize*

Revelation Spells DC 28, 2 Focus Points; **5th** *call to arms* (Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide 230), *battlefield persistence* (Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide 230)

Curse of the Destroyer's Bloodlust After a turn where the oracle of Zagresh doesn't make a Strike, she takes a -2 status penalty to her AC and saving throws until she makes another Strike. During this penalty, she gains a +2 status bonus to her Strikes and fast healing 5.

Destructive Touch ⤴⤴ **Requirements** Zagresh's Gaze is active; **Effect** The oracle's hands and tusks ooze acid, making a soft sizzling noise and dealing an additional 1d6 acid damage to her unarmed attacks.

Zagresh's Gaze ⤴ **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The oracle of Zagresh throws aside her weapons and focuses on the pure divine power of destruction. She attempts a DC 27 Will save. On a success, she gains access to her claw and jaws Strikes. This effect lasts 1d4 rounds.

CHAMPION OF ZAGRESH

CREATURE 8

RARE MEDIUM DROMAAR HUMAN HUMANOID ORC

Perception +17

Languages Common, Orcish

Skills Athletics +16, Intimidation +18, Religion +17

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +5

Items crossbow (20 bolts), +1 striking greatclub, splint mail

AC 27; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +16, **Will** +17

HP 170

Destructive Vengeance ⤴ **Trigger** The champion of Zagresh is injured by an enemy within 15 feet; **Effect** The champion of Zagresh increases the amount of damage he takes by 2d6 and deals 2d6 void damage to the triggering enemy. In addition, the champion deals 2 extra void damage with their Strikes against the triggering creature until the end of his next turn.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ⤴ *greatclub* +20 (backswing, magical, shove), **Damage** 2d10+6 bludgeoning

Ranged ⤴ *crossbow* +18 (range 120 feet), **Damage** 2d8+4 piercing

Champion Devotion Spells DC 25, 1 Focus Point; **4th touch of corruption** (Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide 229)

Fit of Rage ⤴⤴⤴ **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The champion swings his greatclub in a wide circle, making a melee Strike against all creatures within reach. On a critical hit, enemies are moved back 5 feet. This is forced movement. Each Strike counts toward the champion's multiple attack penalty, but his penalty doesn't increase until he's made all of his attacks.

Intimidating Strike ⤴⤴ The champion of Zagresh makes a melee Strike. If they hit and deal damage, the target is frightened 1, or frightened 2 on a critical hit.

Development: When the battle ends and the cultists are defeated, it is undeniable that the PCs were trying to help the Shoanti. A few Shoanti warriors approach the PCs and warily ask them to follow them to their leader. Tsiwak is overseeing the repair of some tents when the PCs approach.

"Ah, there you are, good." An aiuvarin woman turns from the sight of damaged supplies and gives a curt nod. "I'm Tsiwak Eclipse Rider, lead scout of the Lyrune-Quah. You'll join us for breakfast in the morning with our fellow Shoanti. It's clear that we need to talk."

Tsiwak refuses to take no for an answer, countering every refusal bluntly in a polite tone. Once the PCs agree, she gives a firm nod and advises them that they'll be asked for their weapons at the front of the scouting camp so they're not startled by this request when they arrive. Any refusals or further questions are

countered with a curt but polite answer. Tsiwak is not a woman to argue with easily and she does not feel that she has the authority to speak for her elders.

Treasure: The Shoanti scouts examine the bodies of the Zagresh cultists but insist that the PCs take any treasures found as thanks for assisting them against the attack. Among the bodies, the PCs locate a *venom lash* (page 79).

Breakfast with the Elders

When the PCs arrive at the Shoanti scouting camp in the morning, the twin warriors Cicla and Heyoka are waiting at the edge of the camp to greet them. The twins are eager to learn more about the PCs after the fight from the night before and chatter on endlessly, barely giving anyone a chance to answer their incessant questioning as they collect the party's weapons and lead them through the camp. They seem particularly interested in hearing about any other fights the PCs have been in, the more dramatic, the better.

Once the group approaches the largest tent in the camp, the twins grow respectfully quiet and Cicla informs the PCs that the five leaders are waiting for them inside.

The inside of the large, conical tent is much cooler than the already hot morning air outside despite the moderately sized fire burning at the very center. Around the fire is a wide spread of food and five figures quietly partaking in breakfast. Tsiwak and the leader of the Sklar-Quah scouting party sit among the five, the latter scarfing down a bowl of grits topped with chunks of poisonous-looking purple peppers. Tsiwak sips at a steaming cup of tea before introducing the others.

"It's my honor to introduce my elders: Grandmother Datiti, shaman of the Lyrune-Quah." Tsiwak gently rests her hand on the shoulder of an elderly human woman who smiles broadly, her long silver hair braided with several large beads.

"Grandmother Anpawi, shaman of the Sklar-Quah." She gestures to another human woman, this one much younger than Grandmother Datiti. Grandmother Anpawi's stern look doesn't change at the introduction, sipping her tea disdainfully in the way only old women can. Tsiwak barely acknowledges this before gesturing at an older dromaar man.

"This is Uncle Memscut of the Shadde-Quah. And I've heard that you're acquainted with our resident hothead, Otehika."

Otehika chokes at the sudden acknowledgment, swallowing hard and nodding in an attempt to look dignified. Tsiwak visibly suppresses a fond smile. Grandmother Datiti gestures at several cushions around the fire. "Please, dear guests, sit. Fill your stomachs and share your morning with us. We have much to discuss."

The PCs can take this time to ask any questions they like of the Shoanti sitting around them. Grandmother Datiti has a habit of answering questions with idioms and stories, while Grandmother Anpawi disdains of the PCs and provides as little information as possible in the form of curt replies. Uncle Memscut and Tsiwak answer what they can with straight, to the point answers and Otehika answers with similar directness around a mouthful of food.

Why are you attacking the Gutspear Hold?

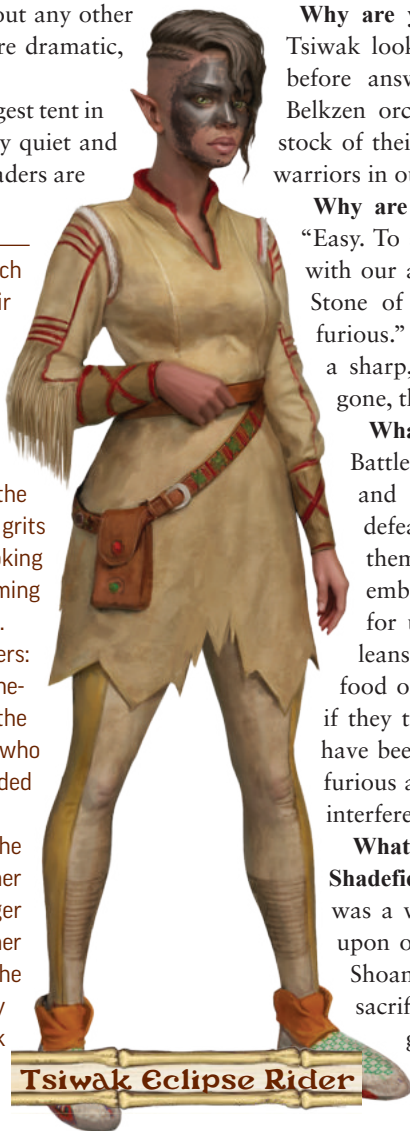
Tsiwak looks into the fire for a long moment before answering. "Mostly to clear out the Belkzen orcs from the Blood Plains and take stock of their forces before we gather all of the warriors in our quahs and march on Belkzen."

Why are you planning a raid on Belkzen?

"Easy. To stop you fools from messing about with our ancestors. An ancestor storm at the Stone of the Cracked Skull is roused and furious." Grandmother Anpawi gives the PCs a sharp, suspicious look. "Once you're all gone, they'll rest."

What is this ancestor storm? "During the Battle of the Shadefields, twenty warriors and four shamans gave their souls to defeat the One Eye orcs. They bound themselves to the area in the form of an emberstorm and it's been a sacred site for us ever since." Grandmother Datiti leans over as she answers, putting more food on the plate of the smallest PC even if they try to refuse. "But now their spirits have been roused to wander in a new form, furious and grieved. We thought it to be the interference of Belkzen's orcs."

What happened at the Battle of the Shadefields? "The Battle of the Shadefields was a vicious fight to prevent an invasion upon our lands, which ended with twenty Shoanti warriors and four shamans sacrificing themselves to become a great guardian of the land. Of the many grievances that led our people to that fateful battle, perhaps



Tsiwak Eclipse Rider

our greatest was against the One Eye Hold orc Aidri Skullsplitter, who betrayed the affections of a Lyrune-Quah warrior named Diskah Night Watcher at the Stone of the Cracked Skull." Grandmother Datiti sighs deeply. "It's a cruel and tragic story."

What's the Stone of the Cracked Skull?

"That's where Aidri killed Diskah." Otehika swallows a mouthful of food before clarifying, another spoonful halfway to their mouth. "She cracked her head against the rock. One of the shamans who later sacrificed themselves in the great battle was Diskah's father."

How can we stop this? "You can't."

Tsiwak and Grandmother Anpawi answer simultaneously. Tsiwak bows her head deferentially to the elder and Grandmother Anpawi softens slightly, gesturing for her to finish. "These are our ancestors and our responsibility."

Will you help Ardax the White-Hair against Tar-Baphon? "Is *that* why he's rallying so many troops?" Otehika asks wonderingly, before looking at their elders and sighing. "We can't. While Tar-Baphon is no friend to the Shoanti, he isn't our problem right now. Not while our ancestors are so angry. We're all needed to help appease them."

After breakfast, the Shoanti leaders thank them for their assistance and praise their desire for peace; however, no promise has been made that they'll hold off on raiding Belkzen. As the PCs step out of the tent, a hiss from behind another tent catches their attention. Cicla pokes his head around the tent and gestures for them to follow him.

Cicla moves quickly through the various tents before ducking into a smaller tent. Heyoka gives a wave from where he's sitting, carving at some wood.

"We heard you talking with the elders." Heyoka says by way of greeting.

"And we heard them say that you can't help, which is wrong. They're planning on just going into the storm and praying hard to stop it, but I heard Uncle talking to Tsiwak about how he doesn't think that'll work. About how they need an honor guard. And I was thinking—"

"We were thinking." Heyoka interrupts.

"Right, yeah, we were thinking, what if we had an honor guard filled with tough Belkzen warriors and then the storm would be mad at *them* instead of at our *elders* so they can get the praying done, and then—"

"We could all work together against the undead king, and show our worth as warriors!"

The twins explain to the PCs that there will be an important meeting at the bonfire that afternoon and by Shoanti law, no one is forbidden to speak their minds and make their opinions known during this time. If the PCs present the idea to the elders and convince them to agree, then they'll be able to help the Shoanti appease the ancestor storm, showing their commitment to forming an alliance, and free up the warriors to assist Ardax.

PEACE TALKS

The bonfire meeting starts promptly after lunch, with the entirety of the Shoanti scouting party gathered around to discuss their next moves in settling the ancestor storm. When the PCs arrive there's noticeable confusion in the crowd, but Cicla and Heyoka usher them into the inner seats before anyone

can question it, giving them the chance to speak quickly and convey their ideas.

This encounter uses the Influence subsystem (*GM Core* 187) to determine how successful the PCs are in convincing the elders to use them as an honor guard when they go to assuage the ancestor storm. While listening to the elders describe the situation and the ritual components needed, the PCs have 2 rounds where they can only Discover information about the elders. Once it's their turn to speak, they have only 3 rounds to make their case.

Previous Actions: Through their interactions with the Shoanti, the PCs may have gained the favor of some of the leaders. If the PCs gave the Dawn Singer twins a fight or a good scare in event 4, they gain 1 free Influence Point with Otehika. If the PCs returned the jingle pot to Otehika, they gain 1 free Influence Point with Tsiwak. The PCs start with 1 free Influence Point with Grandmother Datiti just for being brave enough to join the bonfire.

TSIWAK ECLIPSE RIDER

UNIQUE MEDIUM AIUVARIN ELF HUMAN HUMANOID
Female aiuvarin Lyrune-Quah scout

Perception +19

Will +18

Discovery DC 20 Art Lore, DC 26 Perception, DC 22 Scouting Lore, DC 24 Society

Influence Skills DC 20 Art Lore or Crafting (discussing pottery), DC 23 Performance, DC 24 Diplomacy

Influence 2 Tsiwak agrees that the PCs have a part to play in bringing peace between the orcs and the Shoanti by



helping settle the ancestor storm. She votes in favor of the PCs.

Influence 4 Tsiwak quietly murmurs something to Grandmother Anpawi, who considers the party for a long moment. They gain a +1 circumstance to all checks to persuade her in the next round.

Resistances Tsiwak dislikes being spoken down to and doing so increases all Influence DCs by 2 for the rest of the encounter.

Background Tsiwak is the head scout of the Lyrune-Quah and has spent several years traveling with Otehika across the Cinderlands. She's quiet and respectful, confident in her position despite being several years younger than most human elders. She's very shy about her feelings for Otehika, though she has given them a jingle pot as a sign of affection.

Appearance Tsiwak has short hair that she wears braided close to her scalp, with a black band tattooed across her eyes.

Personality serious, focused, quiet

OTEHIKA CINDER EATER

UNIQUE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Nonbinary human Sklar-Quah burn rider

Perception +16

Will +15

Discovery DC 20 Horse Lore, DC 26 Perception, DC 24 Society

Influence Skills DC 20 Horse Lore, DC 23 Diplomacy, DC 24 Society

Influence 2 Otehika agrees with the plan eagerly, voting in favor of the PCs.

Influence 4 Otehika excitedly starts discussing ideas with Uncle Memscut on how to fight Tar-Baphon and gather enough warriors to ally with the orcs of Belkzen. The PCs gain 1 Influence Point with Uncle Memscut.

Resistances Otehika reacts very poorly to attempts to intimidate themselves or any of the other leaders. Doing so automatically loses all Influence Points with Otehika.

Background Otehika is an extremely talented burn rider from the Sklar-Quah. They were chosen several years ago to travel with Tsiwak as a guard while scouting for the quahs of the Cinderlands. They're extremely oblivious to Tsiwak's feelings for them, despite also having feelings for her.

Appearance Otehika has their hair scalp locked, though it looks as though this may have only happened because they caught their hair on fire at some point.

Personality stubborn, brash, disorganized



Grandmother Anpawi

GRANDMOTHER DATITI

UNIQUE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Female human Lyrune-Quah shaman

Perception +19

Will +16

Discovery DC 20 Medicine, DC 22 Perception, DC 24 Society

Influence Skills DC 20 Medicine, DC 24 Diplomacy, DC 25 Nature

Influence 2 Grandmother Datiti enthusiastically agrees to the plan, encouraging the PCs to speak proudly about their skills. She votes in favor of the PCs.

Influence 4 Waiting until they have a moment before heading out to the ancestor storm, Grandmother Datiti offers the PCs an *eye of the moonwarden* (page 80), saying that it was her favorite when she was a young adventurer.

Resistances Grandmother Datiti is not so old that she cannot tell when people are mocking or underestimating her. Any disrespectful PCs immediately lose 1 Influence Point with her.

Background Grandmother Datiti is an elderly shaman from the Lyrune-Quah and was a very experienced adventuring wizard when she was young woman. She has little to fear and craves the excitement of traveling once again.

Appearance Grandmother Datiti wears her very long silver hair in wide braids, with large beads threaded throughout the style.

Personality sweet, wise, gentle

GRANDMOTHER ANPAWI

UNIQUE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Female human Sklar-Quah Shaman

Perception +17

Will +20

Discovery DC 26 Perception, DC 22 Religion, DC 20 Sarenrae or Shelyn Lore, DC 24 Society

Influence Skills DC 20 Sarenrae or Shelyn Lore, DC 22 Religion, DC 23 Diplomacy, DC 24 Society

Influence 2 Grandmother Anpawi gives a single silent nod. She votes in favor of the PCs.

Influence 4 Grandmother Anpawi waits until after the bonfire and approaches the PCs, offering them a gift of a *cindergrass cloak* (page 84) and a Type II *box of unspooling* (page 84).

Weaknesses Grandmother Anpawi thinks fondly of Tsiwak and considers her wiser than most. Praising Tsiwak's accomplishments and leadership reduces the DCs of Grandmother Anpawi's Influence Skills by 2.

Background Grandmother Anpawi is a shaman of the Sklar-Quah and the youngest shaman of her generation.

Appearance Grandmother Anpawi has long dark hair shot with streaks of pure white that is worn loose.

Personality stern, suspicious, traditionalist

UNCLE MEMSCUT

UNIQUE MEDIUM DROMAAR HUMAN HUMANOID ORC

Male dromaar Shadde-Quah shaman

Perception +17

Will +16

Discovery DC 26 Perception, DC 20 Seafaring Lore, DC 24 Society, DC 22 Survival

Influence Skills DC 20 Seafaring Lore, DC 22 Survival, DC 25 Diplomacy

Influence 2 Uncle Memscut agrees with the logic of the PCs' argument and votes in their favor.

Influence 4 Uncle Memscut considers the PCs for a long moment before turning and addressing Tsiwak directly about her thoughts on scouting further into Belkzen. For the next round, the PCs gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Influence Tsiwak.

Resistances Uncle Memscut holds no personal loyalty to Belkzen or anything occurring within the nation, and pleas to appeal to him being a fellow dromaar fall flat. DCs to Influence are raised by 2 for one round.

Background Uncle Memscut is from the shores of Varisia, where the Shadde-Quah lives. He spent most of his life in and on the water and chose to travel to the Cinderlands at the request of his friend, Grandmother Datiti.

Appearance Uncle Memscut is completely bald, with a tattoo of a large octopus across his scalp. He wears small glasses, though they seem almost like they don't belong on his face.

Personality honorable, slow to speak, forthcoming

Round 1 (Whispered Conversations): The Dawn Singer twins sit on either side of the party, whispering facts about the different leaders as they begin the bonfire discussion. They're full of rumors and history and eager to provide the PCs with as much information as possible. PCs gain a +1 circumstance bonus to all Discover checks during this round.

Round 2 (Handling the Storm): The leaders each describe the anger of the ancestor storm and their current plan to assuage it, along with the items they'll need for the ritual. PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus to any Lore, Society, or Perception checks to Discover.

Round 3 (Opening Remarks): The PCs are invited to speak and must present their case for why they would

be an effective honor guard for the leaders as they work to calm the ancestor storm. Each PC is expected to explain how they would assist in protecting them, specifically targeting one of the leaders. PCs who do not speak during this round automatically critically fail at their Influence check, targeting a leader who has yet to be addressed. Once all of the PCs have attempted to Influence, the leaders begin the next round.

Round 4 (Questions): Each one of the five leaders asks the PCs a question, either based on their own concerns or on the statement the PC initially gave in the previous round. Once the question is asked, the PC must answer as best as they can, attempting an Influence check against that leader. PCs who attempt to answer twice are swiftly rebuked by Grandmother Anpawi, who

threatens to have a *silence* spell cast on them for speaking out of turn.

Round 5 (Final Statement): The PCs each receive one last chance to Influence any of the leaders, restating their goals and how this would bring a new era of alliance between the Shoanti and Belkzen, as well as ensure that the leaders are able to safely perform the ritual to calm the ancestor storm.

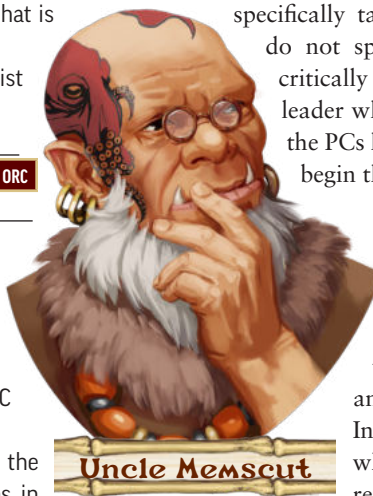
Voting: After the final statements, the leaders silently move into a nearby tent to discuss the PCs' plan and what options lie before them. If the majority of the leaders vote in favor of the PCs, the vote passes and the PCs are elected as the honor guard for the ancestor storm ritual. Grandmother Datiti solemnly informs the party that none of the leaders can guarantee their safety and that she'll personally see their souls to Pharasma if anything happens.

If the vote doesn't pass, see *Appealing the Elders* for an opportunity for the PCs to gain the trust of the elders and earn the right to become the honor guard.

Reward: The PCs earn 50 XP for heading peace negotiations with the Lyrune-Quah and the Sklar-Quah at this pivotal bonfire meeting. If they convinced the Shoanti leaders to accept them as an honor guard during the ritual to calm the ancestor storm, they earn an additional 50 XP for a total of 100 XP and can move on to *Fighting the Storm* (page 51). If they failed to become the honor guard, continue on to *Appealing the Elders*.

APPEALING THE ELDERS

If the PCs lose the vote to serve as honor guard, Tsiwak offers them a chance to prove themselves the next day. There are several tasks around the Shoanti camp that



haven't been properly addressed due to the leaders being preoccupied with the ancestor storm. Tsiwak suggests the PCs help with these various tasks to show their sincerity to the elders.

Each task has certain skill checks that must be completed to finish the task, but clever players might use special abilities or spellwork to address the problems their characters face. Reward roleplaying, expenditure of resources, and ingenuity with a +1 circumstance bonus to a skill check or by letting the PC automatically succeed at their attempt. Completing all three tasks takes about a full day.

Food Preparation: When the Lyrune-Quah first experienced the severe weather of the ancestor storm, they were unprepared for its brutality and lost several valuable containers of food and water that need to be replaced. The PCs can help address the issue by making new containers (DC 24 Crafting to imitate Lyrune-Quah pottery styles or DC 26 Society or Art Lore to assist in adapting another style), accompanying a group of warriors in collecting food from a nearby cache of supplies (DC 24 Athletics to carry things or DC 24 Survival to hide the cache), or hunting and foraging for food (DC 24 Nature or Survival). Each PC may attempt one check, with three successes counting as a completed task.

War Pig Wrangling: A small pack of war pigs that escaped from Gutspear Hold several months ago has grown feral and is becoming a serious nuisance as they uproot and devour Lyrune-Quah crops necessary for their seasonal migrations. The pigs live close to the territory of a roc but have made a home in a series of tunnel-like ditches where it can't easily hunt them. Tsiwak asks the PCs to either kill the pigs or drive them out for the rocs to eat, potentially endearing the rocs to the Shoanti travelers and making their passage a bit safer. If the PCs choose to drive the pigs to the rocs, they can attempt Intimidation, Nature, and Survival checks against the pigs' Will DCs. Each PC can attempt one check and they need a total of four successes, with each failure increasing the DC by 1.

If the PCs kill the pigs, they can make a DC 24 Survival check to butcher them and bring the meat back to automatically succeed one check for the Food Preparation task.

WAR PIGS (2)

Page 87

Initiative Perception +14

CREATURE 6



Otehika Cinder Eater

Youth Mentorship: The Sklar-Quah's young burn rider hopefuls have been getting antsy, several of them loudly suggesting more brazen attacks against orc holds and glorifying the idea of a bloody battle.

Otehika suggests the PCs help them knock a little sense into them, either by scaring them with grim stories of real fights (DC 24 Intimidation, Performance, or Warfare Lore) or giving them a small taste of serious battle.

If the PCs choose the latter, the PCs can describe their easy victory against the inexperienced trainees but must make a DC 22 Diplomacy or Intimidation check to make their lesson stick. Each PC can make one check and they need a total of three successes, with each failure increasing the DC by 1.

Development: If the PCs succeed on at least two of the tasks, the elders are impressed by their commitment and agree to have them as their

honor guard. If the PCs fail at all the tasks, the elders reluctantly accept them on Tsiwak's suggestion and the twins' petitioning due to their sincere efforts, but doubt their competence. Either way, they gain 50 XP.

Fighting the Storm

The PCs are woken early the next morning by Tsiwak, who encourages them to start preparing for the day. If asked about what dangers await them around the ancestor storm, she admits that she's unsure, but the Grandmothers will be sharing their knowledge over breakfast. The party is able to make their standard daily preparations and the Shoanti scouting party is more than willing to sell them any common adventuring items or alchemical goods of 7th-level or lower.

As the PCs and the other ritualists settle in around the morning fire, Otehika passes them each a chunk of fried bread with a thick jam spread across the top while Grandmothers Anpawi and Datiti confer quietly. Uncle Memscut stands by, merely nodding or shaking his head as he listens until Grandmother Anpawi makes her way over, settling down on a cushion before turning to address the PCs with a stern expression.

"You do not know our ways or our history." Grandmother Anpawi starts, immediately holding up a hand for silence to stave off any rebuttals or arguments. "This is to be expected. We're a private people. I will tell you about the Shadefields.

"When Belkzen was pushing into the Blood Plains, we hoped there might be some who might choose alliance

over violence. Orcs moved as we did, never settling in one space, traveling and raising their families across the land. We reached out to the holds, sending messengers to discuss the matter.” She sips at her tea for a moment before continuing.

“Aidri Skullsplitter was sent to us from the One Eye Hold, supposedly to negotiate. Diskah was her main contact, and it became clear that she had great affection for Skullsplitter. However, those affections were for naught; Diskah led a group of diplomats and warriors to talk with the One Eye leaders and her trust was repaid with cold-blooded murder at the hands of the one she’d entrusted her heart to. It was then that we knew there would be no peace, not at that time.

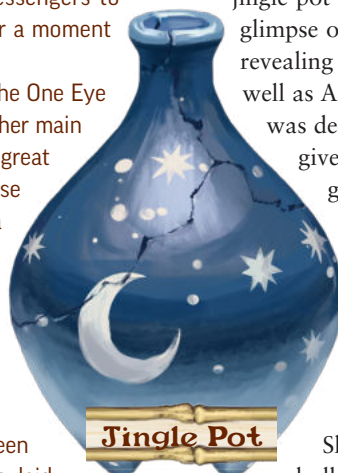
“But the long history of animosity between our two peoples now disturbs those who laid down their very souls to protect us. To bring our ancestors to rest, we must bring Diskah to rest. We have to show her that there are those outside of our people who will not betray, who come with open hearts and palms. We will address her spirit at the central point of the Shadefields, a cairn built to honor those who died for us. You will need to protect us from the storm and its unsettled spirits while we try and bring her soul comfort. Do you understand?”

Even though Grandmother Anpawi has phrased this as a question, if any of the PCs respond negatively, she just sighs loudly and returns to her tea. As the group prepares to leave, the elders gather around the fire and beckon the PCs to join them. Each elder shares a story of a time they received protection from their ancestors and throws a small item into the fire. Grandmother Datiti then asks each PC to relinquish an item and its story to the fire as an offering of thanks for past protection and a plea for future protection.

Each PC who agrees to Grandmother Datiti’s request should toss an object into the flames and explain the item’s significance or how it was once useful. When everyone willing has gone, Grandmother Datiti blesses each participant and marks them with the ashes of the burnt objects before scattering the rest of the ashes, concluding the ceremony with a prayer for the peace and protection of the ancestors’ lands. After a few minutes, horses are brought over to the fire, including any mounts the PCs may be traveling with, and the journey begins.

Rewards: For participating in the storytelling and protection ceremony, PCs earn 40 XP. If everyone participated, Grandmother Anpawi gives the youngest PC a handful of aurochs jerky (page 80) and then promptly acts like the exchange never happened.

Soothing Diskah: Each encounter has an inline header called Soothing Diskah where part of a broken jingle pot is found. Each piece will give the PCs a glimpse of the tragic past, culminating in a scene revealing how the One Eye Hold killed Diskah as well as Aidri, who had not betrayed her love but was deceived by her leaders. These visions will give the PCs a fuller picture of the truth and give them an advantage when addressing Diskah’s tormented spirit.



Jingle Pot

APPROACHING THE ANCESTORS LOW 8

The party and the ritualists arrive outside the Shadefields as the afternoon sun reaches its zenith. The Shadefields is a large, rocky area with the bulk of its land between a seasonal riverbed and a large cliff. This encounter is in flat, rocky terrain; use a map of your own design or a Flip-Mat with relevant terrain.

The high peaks of the Kodar Mountains can be seen in the distance as the group moves into the Shadefields. Despite the clear, bright sky, there’s an unnatural chill in the air. The mounts whinny nervously and repeatedly hesitate on the path before finally refusing to go any further, clustering together in a frightened huddle.

The winds intensify and a low moaning noise can be heard in the distance, sounding almost like words in various tongues. The air tingles with energy and the smell of smoke seems to spread from further within, intensely acrid as it permeates the air. As the group presses forward there is a distant rumble like thunder, as if an invisible boundary has been crossed. Lightning flashes across the suddenly dark sky and the distant words on the wind grow into a hauntingly loud wail.

Hazard: Stepping into the Shadefields activates the occult weather hazard, the first layer of protection formed around the ancestor storm. The supernatural storm threatens the party with lightning strikes and a propulsive wind. Among the faces in the clouds of the occult weather, the PCs can see hundreds of orcs from different holds throughout history, all trapped within this haunt.

OCCULT WEATHER

HAZARD 9

UNIQUE COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL HAUNT OCCULT

Stealth +20 (expert) or *detect magic*

Description The sky suddenly darkens with storm clouds rumbling overhead, the faces of the dead forming in the clouds above as their voices wail along the high winds.

Disable DC 28 (expert) Occultism to funnel the magic powering the weather back into itself, or DC 30 (expert) Religion to exorcise some of the trapped souls and weaken the storm; three total successes in any combination are required to disable the haunt

Thunder of Cries ⤵ (auditory, sonic) **Trigger** A creature enters the haunt's area; **Effect** The clouds darken and thunder roars, filled with the wails and screams of those killed in these lands. The shrieks of the spirits deal 3d6+13 sonic damage to all creatures in the area (DC 28 basic Fortitude save). The haunt then rolls initiative.

Routine (4 actions) The occult weather intensifies, with winds picking up speed and lightning and thunder sounding overhead. The occult weather uses 3 actions to make lightning Strikes against three random creatures, favoring orcs or anyone who attempted to Disable it within the past round, then uses Wind of Screams as its final action.

Wind of Screams ⬥ The occult weather intensifies the wind blowing around the area, buffeting all creatures within a 60-foot line. Each creature in the line must attempt a DC 32 Fortitude save or be knocked prone, taking 1d10+6 bludgeoning damage.

Ranged lightning +21 (electricity, range increment 60 feet), **Damage** 2d10+11 electricity

Reset The haunt deactivates 1 minute after all creatures leave the Shadefields but resets immediately. The occult weather resets 1 day after being disabled if the ancestor storm isn't put to rest.

Treasure: Several ancient weapons and armor litter the ground after the haunt is disabled, the most prominent a *spiritsight crossbow* (*Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide* 263) and a *shadefield knife* (page 81).

Soothing Diskah: Among the treasures, the PCs discover a cracked clay pot with faded patterns of stars missing a large shard, similar to the one found in Otehika's abandoned bag while they were tracking the Shoanti. When someone picks up the pot, read or paraphrase the following.

The moment a single finger grazes the weathered clay, a figure suddenly materializes in the middle of the group. A dromaar woman wearing clothing reminiscent of the Lyrune-Quah carefully carves designs into a small bluish clay pot before setting it up for firing, a gentle smile on her face. Beside her is a handful of dark pebbles with singular eyes painted on them. She fades away, still smiling.

"What was that?" Otehika blurts out. Grandmother Datiti takes the broken pot, examining it.

"This seems to be the remains of a jingle pot. They are usually gifts from children to parents or tokens of affection between young lovers." The elderly woman casts

an amused glance toward Tsiwak and Otehika, who both look away with flushed expressions. "Someone made this for someone very special a long time ago, and it seems that they wish to tell us something. Let's keep it for now."

RIVER BATTLE

LOW 8

This encounter is in flat, rocky terrain with a dry riverbed; use a map of your own design or a Flip-Mat with relevant terrain.

Walking further into the Shadefields, the rocks and dirt underfoot slowly give way to scattered patches of light grass. The plant life grows more abundant the closer the group gets to the mostly dried out riverbed, the smallest traces of long gone rain lingering in crusted clumps of mud. The smell of smoke is more present now and the winds pick up again, the faint sound of chanting and battle cries echoing in the distance.

As the group makes their way further into the ancestor storm the sun in the sky shifts dramatically, moving to late afternoon, and the sound of running water can be heard from the riverbed. Once all of the PCs have stepped into the area, the sounds of battle explode around them.

Hazard: The battle illusion haunt activates when the PCs move into the next layer of the ancestor storm but the elders are left behind, leaving them out of harm's way. Otehika follows the PCs and is swept up into the hazard as well, making them both a potential ally or obstacle in this encounter. If over half the PCs pass their initial saving throws, have Otehika automatically fail theirs to give them a challenge.

BATTLE ILLUSION

HAZARD 9

UNIQUE COMPLEX MAGICAL HAUNT OCCULT

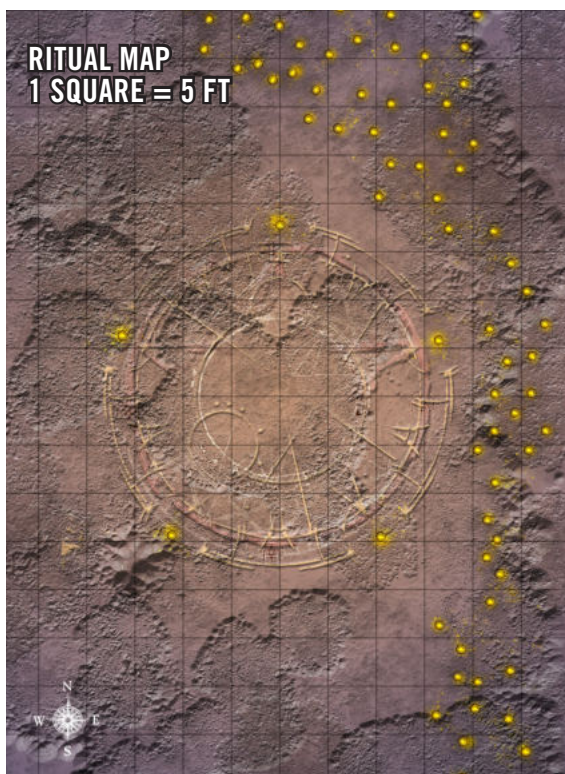
Stealth +24 (expert)

Description The scene of the arid Cinderlands melts away as the water of the river refills and green grass spreads across the land. The sounds of battle can be heard everywhere and all allies have vanished, murderous orcs from the One Eye Hold taking their place.

Disable DC 30 Occultism or Religion (expert) twice to weaken the haunt or *dispel magic* (4th rank; counteract DC 27) to counteract the illusions

Cries of War ⤵ (illusion, incapacitation, mental, occult, visual) **Trigger** Two or more creatures enter the haunt's area; **Effect** Each creature sees the forms of nearby allies shift and fade, replaced with hostile One Eye orcs. Each creature in the area must attempt a DC 30 Will save. The haunt then rolls initiative.

RITUAL MAP 1 SQUARE = 5 FT



Critical Success The creature sees through the illusions and is temporarily immune to the haunt's routine for 1 minute.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature believes the illusions are true; if they become confused by the haunt's routine, they can't attempt flat checks to end the confused condition when they take damage.

Critical Failure As failure and the creature is filled with feelings of abandonment and betrayal. When the creature rolls against the haunt's routine, they must roll twice and take the worse result. This is a misfortune effect.

Routine (1 action; illusion, incapacitation, mental, occult)

The haunt continues the illusion, making victims feel as though they've been abandoned and are surrounded by attackers on all sides. Each creature in the haunt's area must make a DC 28 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected and temporarily immune for 1 minute.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is confused for 1 round.

Critical Failure The creature is hostile toward the supposed One Eye orcs and must spend all actions moving toward and attacking One Eye orcs. This hostility lasts for 1 minute, until the haunt is disabled, or until they fall unconscious. They cannot voluntarily stop attacking those they perceive as enemies.

Reset The haunt deactivates 1 minute after all creatures leave the ShadeFields but resets immediately. The battle illusion resets 1 day after being disabled if the ancestor storm isn't put to rest.

OTEHIKA CINDER EATER

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +16

Languages Common, Orcish, Shoanti, Varisian

Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +21, Intimidation +20, Nature +17

Str +6, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3

Items +1 striking battle axe, composite shortbow (20 arrows), hatchet (2)

AC 27; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +18, **Will** +15

HP 150

Counting Coup **Trigger** An enemy moves within Otehika's reach; **Effect** Otehika swings their weapon as close to their enemy as they can without touching them, immediately attempting a Demoralize check. On a success, the enemy is off-guard until the beginning of their next turn.

Reactive Strike

Speed 25 feet

Melee battle axe +21 (magical, sweep), **Damage** 2d10+11 slashing

Melee hatchet +20 (agile, sweep), **Damage** 2d8+11 slashing

Ranged hatchet +19 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8+11 slashing

Ranged composite shortbow +19 (deadly d10, propulsive, range increment 60 feet), **Damage** 2d6+9 piercing

Twin Takedown **Frequency** once per round; **Requirements** Otehika wields two melee weapons, each in a different hand. **Effect** Otehika makes two Strikes against their target, one with each of the required weapons. If both hit the same target, combine the damage from the weapons for the purpose of resistances and weaknesses. They apply their multiple attack penalty to each Strike normally.

Resting: When the haunt is disabled, the sounds of battle stop as suddenly as they began and the PCs reconnect with the elders. The PCs can take 10 minutes to rest and Treat Wounds at this time. If several of them have taken damage, Grandmother Datiti offers to cast one 6th-rank 3-action *heal* on the group before they progress further.

Treasure: The illusion has shattered but a few things remain afterward. Stuck in the mire of the riverbed is an old leather satchel of Belkzen make with the brand of a single eye pressed into the front. Inside are two moderate elixirs of life and a flask of old orc whiskey that acts as one moderate bravo's brew.

Soothing Diskah: Read or paraphrase the following.

"May I see that?" Grandmother Datiti asks. She takes the leather bag and inspects it carefully. Uncle Memscut points out a hidden seam, revealing a concealed pocket containing several smooth pebbles, each painted with a single eye.

As the pebbles fall into his palm, a familiar figure reappears. This time, the Lyrune-Quah woman steps forward with a clay pot in hand, holding it out to a Belkzen orc whose clothes bear a symbol of a singular eye. The newly made pot is expertly carved with small patterns of the moon, stars, and constellations. The Belkzen woman accepts it with a blush, smiling widely as they both fade away.

"Poor girl," Grandmother Anpawi clucks as Uncle Memscut places the pebbles into the cracked pot. "What an awful thing to happen to someone so young."

"It seems to me that there might be more to this story than we know," Tsiwak says softly. Her eyes linger where Aidri Skullsplitter had stood with a sheepish smile. "Perhaps once we learn the full truth, we will know how to bring Diskah Night Watcher to peace."

C. THE STONE OF CRACKED SKULL MODERATE 8

The rest of the journey is uneventful, if unsettlingly quiet as the clouds roll ominously. Refer to the map on page 54 for all encounters marked C.

A simple stone cairn soon comes into view, built upon a large rock jutting out from the earth. A strange smoke with no source visibly lingers in the air, seeping around the cairn in an ominous barrier. The smoke does not cede for those who step through it, rippling over skin and hair with the faint scent of ozone.

"This the Stone of Cracked Skull," Uncle Memscut says softly, with clear awe in his voice. "This is where Diskah Night Watcher found her end and the shamans dedicated their souls to protect these grounds; where we drove back those who would take our land with no care for our traditions. This is a sacred place."

Creatures: Once anyone touches the cairn, a squad of One Eye phantoms emerges from the smoke to the east, supernatural remnants of the One Eye Hold orcs from battles past. These phantoms can't be reasoned with, hellbent of finding honor in glorious battle despite their war being long over. They prioritize targeting non-orcs and fight to the death.

ONE EYE PHANTOMS (4)

Page 84

Initiative Perception +15

CREATURE 6

Resting: Once the One Eye phantoms are defeated, the PCs are able to take a 10-minute break to Refocus and Treat Wounds before finally stepping into the center of the ancestor storm.

Soothing Diskah: The final piece of the jingle pot remains on the cairn and the elders gather together to put the pieces back together. PCs are welcome to assist in this process by attempting a DC 25 Crafting or relevant Lore check. Once the jingle pot has been fully reassembled, read or paraphrase the following.

Diskah and Aidri's forms appear once again, this time followed by a small cluster of Lyrune-Quah warriors. Diskah excitedly motions to the group as Aidri watches fondly. Aidri says something to Diskah, squeezing her hands tight before leaving the group. The group chats comfortably as they're waiting when suddenly a spear sails past them, plunging into the chest of a warrior. Cries of fear, confusion, and anger ring out as arrows and spears hail down on the group. Shadowy figures leap toward them, weapons raised with deadly intent. Seemingly abandoned and betrayed, Diskah screams in rage as an orc grabs her by the hair and yanks her down toward the slab of stone sticking out of the earth.

Aidri Skullsplitter bursts into view, frantically calling for Diskah. She screams in horror as she arrives too late to warn the Shoanti of treachery, Diskah limp against the stone as blood pools from her head. Aidri slumps helplessly over Diskah's prone form, unmoving as an enraged Shoanti warrior covered in blood raises their spear in a final act of vengeance. The vision fades before Aidri's end can be witnessed.


Tsiwak looks toward the repaired jingle pot with a sorrowful expression while Grandmother Anpawi shakes her head pityingly. "It seems that Aidri Skullsplitter did not betray Diskah but was betrayed herself, and by her own people no less. How awful."

"We must inform Diskah of the truth," Grandmother Datiti says solemnly. "It is her grief at her beloved's betrayal that anchors her here. The truth will heal her soul and set her free to join Aidri, wherever she has gone, and bring the ancestor storm to heel."

C. DEFENDING THE RITUAL MODERATE 8

Now that the party knows the truth, they can use their knowledge to assure Diskah of Aidri's feelings and help her find peace. The elders prepare the ritual around the cairn, using it as the center.

Grandmothers Anpawi and Datiti begin drawing the ritual circle while Uncle Memscut chants softly, lighting bundles of herbs to sprinkle over the area. As they work, Tsiwak approaches and clears her throat.



"I want to thank you for helping us. You could have just let the cultists set our tents ablaze and abandoned us to our own pride. So, before anything else happens... thank you." She watches her elders work for a moment before giving a decisive nod. "I'm proud to have you as our allies and guard."

Otehika grins and gives a salute. "Nothing better happen. I want to see how Belkzen orcs ride and how you fight!" They punch their fist into their opposite hand. "Maybe I'll even teach all of you how to be burn riders!"

As the elders finish preparing the ritual circle, Grandmother Anpawi calls for Tsiwak and Otehika to join them. She turns to the PCs with some final instructions.

"While we're in the circle, the storm will try to stop us. Our ancestors are confused and angry, and they may take drastic measures against those they mistake as enemies. But we will not fail our duties to them and to our people." She pauses and gives a firm nod. "You're now counted among the friends of the Shoanti. Help us finish this, and maybe these lands can learn real peace."

Once the ritual begins, the storm reacts violently. Read or paraphrase the following.

The elders begin to chant and the wind picks up with a shriek, dust and ash exploding out in a violent wave. As the dust settles, three forms leap out of nowhere with loud battle cries.

Hazard: Once the ritualists begin their attempt to settle the ancestor storm, the storm fully whips up in a rage, its spirits screaming and trying to terrorize the PCs. The storm doesn't directly target the ritualists with violence, instead attempting to distract and torment them to disrupt the ritual while using its offensive abilities to attack the PCs.

Creatures: Before acting, the Shoanti ancestor storm summons three Shadefield spirits, the furious souls of Shoanti warriors who fought at the Battle of the Shadefields. These spirits have guarded the Shadefields for generations as a legendary haunt but have now been swept into the frenzied ancestor storm formed by the necromantic energies seeping into the land. They now view anyone on the land as treacherous foes and fight until destroyed.

While these lower-level spirits shouldn't be too difficult for the PCs to dispatch of, the real issue is that they persistently stymie the PCs' progress on disabling the hazard. They target PCs who attempted a Disable

check with their Corrupting Gaze and try to corral them into concentrated areas to hit them with cindery assaults, mostly ignoring the ritualists unless there are no PCs to defend them.

SHOANTI ANCESTOR STORM

HAZARD 8

RARE COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL HAUNT OCCULT

Stealth DC 22 (trained) to notice the smoke intensifying and filling with the tortured faces of lost souls

Description Smoke and fire explode up around the boundaries of the storm, accusatory screams and threats of violence echoing over the winds and crackling of flames. Broken weapons and shields litter the ground and Shoanti warriors emerge from the smoke, blood running down their faces as they prepare for battle.

Disable DC 26 Occultism to redirect the anger of the haunt back onto itself, DC 28 Intimidate to goad the Shadefield spirits into attacking someone outside of the ritual circle, or DC 28 Religion to assuage the spirits in the area. Four successes are needed to disable the haunt long enough for the ritual to be completed.

Ancestors' Wrath ⤿ (mental, occult, spirit) **Trigger** The ritual begins; **Effect** The ancestor storm howls in fury and pain. This deals 2d10+11 spirit damage to all non-Shoanti creatures in the area, who must attempt a DC 28 basic Fortitude save. The haunt then rolls initiative.

Routine (4 actions) The ancestor storm uses 1 action to release a pulse of void energy, restoring 10 Hit Points to each Shadefield spirit in the area, before using its next 2 actions to make an arrows of rage Strike against all non-Shoanti creatures within 60 feet of the cairn. The haunt then uses its 4th action to use Calling the Blood on one random leader participating in the ritual. The haunt loses an action for each Shadefield spirit killed, and when there are no Shadefield spirits remaining, the haunt uses its next action to summon a new Shadefield spirit into the battle.

Calling the Blood ⬠ (auditory, mental) The ancestor storm randomly chooses a Shoanti ritualist to distract. The ritualist must attempt a DC 26 Will save or become fascinated by the voices of their ancestors for 1 round, increasing the DCs to Disable the haunt by 2 for the duration.

Ranged ⬠⬠ arrows of rage +20 (fire, magical, occult, range increment 60 feet), **Damage** 3d12 piercing plus 1d6 persistent fire

Reset The haunt deactivates 1 minute after all creatures leave the Shadefields but resets immediately. The haunt is only permanently disabled when Diskah Night Watcher is put to rest. Otherwise, the haunt reforms within 24 hours of being Disabled.

SHADEFIELD SPIRITS (3)

CREATURE 5

Variant ghost (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 160)

MEDIUM **INCORPOREAL** **SPIRIT** **UNDEAD**

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Common, Orcish, Shoanti, Varisian

Skills Intimidation +13, Occultism +12, Stealth +10

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

Site Bound The Shade field spirit is bound to the Shade fields.

AC 20; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +14

HP 70, rejuvenation, void healing; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, fire, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 5 (except force, ghost touch, spirit, or vitality; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Rejuvenation Putting Diskah Night Watcher's spirit to rest allows the Shade field spirit to return to its original role as a guardian haunt.

Speed fly 25 feet

Melee ♦ fiery hand +15 (agile, finesse, magical), **Damage** 2d6 void plus 1d6 persistent fire

Cindery Assault ♦♦ (divine) The Shade field spirit cries out in pain and anguish as flaming objects and debris fly about in a 30-foot emanation. Creatures in this area take 3d6 bludgeoning damage plus 1d6 persistent fire damage (DC 20 basic Reflex save).

Corrupting Gaze ♦♦ The Shade field spirit stares at a creature it can see within 30 feet. The target takes 3d6 void damage (DC 20 basic Will save). A creature that fails its save is also stupefied 1 for 1 minute.

Sworn to the Storm The Shade field spirit gains a +1 circumstance bonus to attacks against creatures that have attempted to Disable the Shoanti ancestor storm.

Healing: If the PCs are low on Hit Points going into the next encounter, Grandmother Anpawi casts a 5th-rank 3-action *heal* on the group.

C. THE STORM'S BACKLASH SEVERE 8

Once the PCs defeat the Shade field spirits and Disable the ancestor storm haunt, the air shudders for a long moment and the world grows dark as clouds suddenly swarm overhead before freezing in place.

As the ancestor storm halts and slowly fades away, the chanting of the ritualists can be heard, though they're nowhere to be seen. The land fades into the remnants of a war zone, the badlands covered in broken and rusted weapons and long dead skeletons of all ancestries. Where the ritual circle once was, there stands Diskah Night Watcher as if she were still living. As she frowns and looks around herself, she notices the jingle pot at her feet and

bends to scoop it up with a soft expression before realizing that she's not alone.

Diskah quickly tucks the pot into her bag before pulling out her battle axe and klar, her expression hardening into a severe snarl. Behind her, two silvery forms shift into view with their bows ready to fire. "I am Diskah Night Watcher and you, servants of necromancy, scum of Belkzen, you have disturbed my place of mourning. I will cut you down, as all of my descendants should have done!"

Creatures: **Diskah Night Watcher** (female dromaar Shoanti shaman) has been angry for hundreds of years and is eager to expend her rage on those related to the woman she considers her betrayer. She mistakenly believes that Belkzen is behind the necromantic energies infecting the land and is enraged by the



Diskah Night Watcher

Hoof, Cinder,
and Storm

Chapter 1:
Stampede of
Bone

Chapter 2:
The Battle for
Blisterwell

Chapter 3:
Tracks of the
Past

Belkzen
Operations

Quahs of
Moon and
Sun

Adventure
Toolbox

tainting of a sacred Shoanti site, seeing it as a cruel final insult by those who destroyed her life. She is supported by moonstalkers, phantom Lyrune-Quah warriors who fight until destroyed.

Diskah truly loved Aidri and is shaken by the appearance of the jingle pot, making her off-guard for the first round of combat. The PCs can try to talk her down throughout the combat; succeeding at a DC 26 Diplomacy or Society check lowers Diskah's attitude to Unfriendly and she is willing to stop attacking and listen to the PCs. If Diskah stops fighting, the moonstalkers pause and wait for her to act, as they are drawn to the ritual site by her anger.

Once fighting stops, the PCs can try to persuade her of the potential of peace between Belkzen and the Shoanti with the Reveal the Truth and Reveal Aidri's Heart actions below and on page 59. A line of reasoning that doesn't impress Diskah has her reinitiating combat for 1 round, which automatically brings the moonstalkers back into the fight, before begrudgingly giving the PCs another chance to speak.

DISKAH NIGHT WATCHER

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE MEDIUM DROMAAR HUMAN HUMANOID ORC

Female dromaar Shoanti shaman

Perception +21

Languages Common, Orcish, Shoanti, Varisian

Skills Athletics +18, Intimidation +19, Nature +20

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

Items +1 striking battle axe, hatchet (2), +1 leather lamellar armor (Treasure Vault 11), sanguine klar (Treasure Vault 22)

Blessing of the Land As long as she's within the boundaries of the Shadefields, Diskah treats all terrain as one difficulty less, for example difficult terrain has no effect, and she treats greater difficult terrain as difficult terrain.

AC 26; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +15, **Will** +21

HP 130

Shield Block 2

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ battle axe +19 (magical, sweep), **Damage** 2d8+11 slashing

Melee ♦ klar +18 (integrated, magical, versatile P), **Damage** 2d8+11 slashing

Melee ♦ hatchet +18 (agile, sweep), **Damage** 2d8+9 slashing

Ranged ♦ hatchet +16 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 2d6+9 slashing

Primal Prepared Spells DC 28, attack +21; **5th** elemental form, howling blizzard; **4th** hydraulic torrent, mountain resilience, wall of fire; **3rd** grease, lightning bolt, slow; **2nd** blazing bolt, shatter, sound body; **1st** fear, thunderstrike (×2); **Cantrips (5th)** caustic blast, electric arc, frostbite, guidance, ignition, stabilize

Druidic Order Spells DC 28, 2 Focus Points; **5th** untamed shift (Untamed Form only), tempest surge

Ancestral Fury ♦ Diskah cries out in grief and rage. All creatures within a 30-foot radius must attempt a DC 28 Will save or have the fleeing condition for 1 round. Diskah can't use Ancestral Fury again for 1d4 rounds.

Lunar Blaze ♦♦ **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Diskah calls out to the moon and is wreathed in fiery white moonlight for 1 minute. While this ability is active, Diskah is immune to fire damage and her melee Strikes deal an additional 1d6 persistent fire damage. Any creature that hits her with a melee attack or otherwise touches her takes 1d8 fire damage.

Spirit's Blessing ♦♦ **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Diskah loosens one of the plaits in her braid and regains one 4th-rank spell slot she can use to cast any of her prepared 4th-rank spells.

MOONSTALKERS (2)

CREATURE 7

Page 85

Initiative Perception +15

SOOTHING DISKAH

The partnership between the PCs and the Shoanti elders baffles and intrigues Diskah, who once dreamed of such unity. The PCs have three opportunities to try to Reveal the Truth to convince Diskah that Tar-Baphon, not Belkzen, is behind the spiritual unrest in the Shadefields. If the PCs fail all three checks, Diskah believes them liars and fights to the death, cursing Belkzen and all its people for their treachery and shamelessness.

REVEAL THE TRUTH

AUDITORY LINGUISTIC

The PC explains to Diskah that Tar-Baphon's machinations are causing the necromantic energy in the land and that Belkzen is standing against the Whispering Tyrant. The PC attempts a DC 24 Arcana, Occultism, or Religion check. If the PC has evidence such as orders from Ardash, the DC is lowered by 1.

Critical Success Diskah takes a moment to attune to the Shadefields, searching for what is amiss. She acknowledges the PC's magical abilities and allows a follow-up argument. If the PCs are persuasive, she ends the fight.

Success Diskah hesitates, unwillingly swayed by the argument. She isn't fully convinced but the DC of future Reveal the Truth checks are reduced by 5.

Failure Diskah is unimpressed by the argument and resumes combat for 1 round.

Moving On: If the PCs succeed at Revealing the Truth, they can then Reveal Aidri's Heart to help her move on to the afterlife and finally end the ancestor

storm. The PCs have three opportunities to Reveal Aidri's Heart; if they fail all three checks, Diskah remains unconvinced but resolves to go into the afterlife and ask Aidri herself.

REVEAL AIDRI'S HEART

AUDITORY | LINGUISTIC

The PC presents Diskah with the truth behind the One Eye Hold's betrayal and Aidri's love for her. The PC attempts a DC 26 Diplomacy or Crafting check, lowering the DC by 2 if they use physical evidence such as the jingle pot or the leather satchel.

Critical Success Diskah weeps for her lost love and thanks the PCs for showing her the truth.

Success Diskah hesitates, hopeful but pained and angry at the grief and hurt she experienced. She isn't fully convinced but the DC of future Reveal Aidri's Heart checks are reduced by 5.

Failure Diskah argues back that Aidri led her people into a trap and rants about the deception of Belkzen and their disregard for her people, increasing the DC by 1.

Development: Once Diskah is either soothed by the truth or defeated in combat, the illusory scene vanishes alongside any remaining moonstalkers, leaving her and the PCs among the ritual circle surrounded by the ritualists. The ritualists are startled by her sudden appearance but nod deferentially to their ancestor. Diskah considers the PCs for a long moment before giving them a respectful nod and shutting her eyes as she begins to disappear alongside the smoke and fire, the air finally clearing of the acrid smell of unnatural smoke. Birdsong is heard as the Shadefields are finally returned to their natural state.

Treasure: As Diskah's spirit fades from view, her soul finally at rest, her *sanguine klar* (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault* 22) stays behind, a memento for the PCs who found her peace.

If the PCs soothed Diskah's soul through arguments and persuasion, the Lyrune-Quah respects their diplomacy and decorates the sanguine klar with the moon and stars as a reminder to be wise. If the PCs defeated Diskah in combat, the Sklar-Quah appreciates their martial prowess and decorates the sanguine klar with imagery of the sun and flames as a reminder to be bold.

Reward: If the PCs are able to soothe Diskah Night Watcher by revealing the truth, grant them XP as if they'd defeated her and the moonstalkers in combat.

Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs have finished guarding the ritualists during their ritual to settle the Shoanti ancestor storm,

they're welcomed back at the Shoanti scouting camp as honored guests. A raucous party is held that evening with food aplenty, including a contest to see who can eat the most spicy peppers. The twins Cicla and Heyoka pester the PCs for details about their experience in the ancestor storm and recount the details to their friends, bragging that they were among the first to befriend the heroic outsiders. Young children dramatically reenact the day's events, with some of them playing specific PCs and doing their best to emulate their manner of speech. The PCs are considered by both quahs to be friends and good companions.

Tsiwak takes her time penning a letter to the leaders of the Gutspear Hold, advising them of the situation and apologizing for damages incurred during the initial raids. Uncle Memscut saddles his horse the morning after the ritual, stating that he'll take the news of what's happening in Belkzen to the other Shoanti quahs and see if they have bodies or supplies they can donate to the cause of Ardax the White-Hair.

"It's been some time since I was around other orcs," he mentions to the PCs before leaving. "It will be interesting to travel to Belkzen once I've spread the message. It's been a long, long time."

The PCs are invited to breakfast with the elders once more and Grandmother Datiti introduces them to all the matriarchs at the campsite, treating them as honored guests. Each PC is gifted soft padded shoes decorated with beaded patterns personalized for them and a fine pelt as well as a pat on the cheek from the old woman. Grandmother Anpawi gives the PCs an extra serving of food with her trademark scowl, nodding at them before they leave.

The PCs return to Blisterwell triumphant, with written missives from the Lyrune-Quah and Sklar-Quah for the leaders of the Gutspear and Haskodar Holds as well as one for Ardax the White-Hair. Ardax's letter from the two quahs pledges support and warriors to his cause along with an offer for allyship within the uncertain future of Belkzen.

Blisterwell has been well into its rebuilding of the Foundry and starting production on weaponry, and the leaders of the Haskodar Hold are only mildly surprised to see the PCs still alive after their time among the Shoanti. Tulluk Clovenface is more than happy to send the PCs back to Urgir with his oath to Ardax and a crate of weapons to back up his word. Otehika sends word that they're gathering all of the Sklar-Quah's burn riders to fight by their side and that Uncle Memscut is discussing the matter with other quah leaders. It seems that soon the future of Belkzen won't be so uncertain, but it's up to the PCs to see that through.



Belkzen Operations

INTRODUCTION

While the PCs work with Ardax to address parts of the ongoing undead crisis in Belkzen, they're far from the only forces in play. Belkzen is a large place with many moving parts working hard out of direct view of the PCs. Ardax commands an impressive host of competent orcs carrying out his orders, as do other leaders among the orc holds. Orcs across Belkzen are used to proactively confronting their challenges head-on, a part of life that doesn't change simply due to the PCs' involvement.

Three adventures are presented below to help illustrate these ideas, each dealing with an issue in Belkzen independent of any main missions the PCs are involved in. They're intended to be played using a second, predominantly orc party controlled by the players separately from their original PCs. Unlike typical adventures, these jobs present a general overview of the mission objectives and story beats designed to provide 2–5 hours of gameplay and include both encounters and monetary rewards. All other minutiae, such as the inclusion of specific items as loot, are left up to the discretion of the GM.

Consider these adventures as a framework with built-in flexibility for adapting to different groups. Some might enjoy additional or more difficult combat encounters throughout, while others might wish to have more social encounters and opportunities for extended roleplay. For those groups that don't wish to create new characters, these adventures can also be adapted as side quests for the PCs during extended downtime, as part of a different objective given by Ardax or one of his advisors, or simply as a random encounter while scouting. They can even be utilized as adventures outside of Belkzen or become more personal for the PCs with some slight tweaking and re-skinning.

Perhaps the espionage presented in Job 1 occurs in the population of a different orc hold, or the foreign agents originated from elsewhere in the Inner Sea region connected to a PC. The mirage dragon troubling the Ice Tooth Hold in Job 2 could easily instead be a horned dragon or fortune dragon causing problems for a different hold because they were feeling threatened, or an empyreal dragon that orc fanatics of now-dead gods use as an excuse to cause mayhem.

The lost cargo of Black Sun mercenaries in Job 3 might contain some other commodity and could be protected by trolls, giants, or a different enemy orc faction.

Of course, these adventures are far from the only potential ongoing events of note. For every orc hold and mile of land contained within the borders of Belkzen, there's bound to be a vast number of adventure hooks to further illustrate the diversity of the land. Perhaps the PCs hear of a conflict between the Burning Sun and a group of Twisted Nail orcs that are spiteful about the former being granted land rights to hunting grounds bordering the Gravelands. What danger might they present large enough to divert vital forces from handling the ancestor storms?

Maybe when the PCs were sent on a mission to Blisterwell, a second group was sent on a mission to contact the Steel Eaters of The Foundry, only to be presented with newly awoken dwarven spirits piloting machines of war within the city. What do these disturbed apparitions threaten, and how might they be assuaged?

It could be that word reaches the PCs that a force of Lastwall soldiers fights against a different kind of ancestor storm that features fallen Iomedaeen soldiers mistaking all living things for Tar-Baphon's army, marching inexorably forward in a misguided attempt at retribution. Still, there are even more possibilities: reanimated skeletons from stores of bonemeal or swarms of insects threaten attempts at growing new crops on Belkzen's limited agricultural lands; tensions between groups of orcs worshipping new and replaced gods threaten to destroy Ardax's alliance from within; representatives from Oprak or New Thassilon arrive in Urgir bringing grim tidings of border events requiring immediate attention.

Whatever side adventures your group has, remember to have fun engaging with the unique and multifaceted culture of the indomitable orcs within Belkzen.

JOB 1: INTRUDER ALARM

This side job is suitable for 6th-level characters. It's presented as taking place within Urgir, although it can be adapted to anywhere Ardax considers important enough to position his intelligence assets. You can use *Pathfinder Flip-Mat Classics: Urban Tavern* and

Pathfinder Flip-Mat: Thieves' Guild for Dervach's inn and secret lair, or use your own.

Background

Since Ardax's rise to Overlord in Urgir, all attempts at espionage by foreign spymasters within the city have been thwarted. This success is in large part due to the Whispering Blades, a secret orc hold charged by Ardax to handle missions of intrigue in Belkzen.

Repeated failures aren't enough to deter some parties, however. When diplomatic invitations for the Torrentmoot were sent, they landed in the hands of allies and enemies alike. One such hand belongs to Baron **Teqior** (ambitious male vampire noble), head of a minor noble house in Ustalav with interest in utilizing Belkzen for his own machinations. Teqior believes that with Ardax distracted by his inevitable failure of a diplomatic endeavor, he has a perfect opportunity to infiltrate Belkzen. He sent some of his spies to meet a contact within Urgir named **Dervach** (intimidating male orc innkeeper). Few know of Dervach's true identity as a conspirator dragon with their own plans to infiltrate Ardax's advisors.

The Job Offer

The Whispering Blades are aware of the foreign agents in Urgir. Rather than immediate eviction, squad leader **Ilhat** (solemn female orc spymaster) has decided to use the opportunity to test potential new recruits.

Ilhat has previously communicated with each PC through various methods to gauge their interest in espionage. Her last message instructed them to await further briefing this morning within an alleyway on Urgir's third level. Once the PCs gather, an arrow with a single oversized roc feather fletching (a signature of the Whispered Blades) pierces the ground between them. Attached is a missive scratched into rawhide.

The missive explains that hostile agents have made their way through Urgir's gates. The Whispering Blades wish to observe how the party fares with the task of discovering these agents. Their instructions are to find the intruders by mingling with the artisan residents of this level, ascertain their intent, and then deal with them appropriately.

There's a time limit of 12 hours to complete this operation before it is considered a failure. The party will be judged on their performance and paid up to 40 gp each afterward. The missive ends with an order to dispose of the message. Any PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Fortitude save to eat the missive with ease impresses a secretly watching Ilhat, increasing that PC's total payout to 50 gp.

Tracking the Agents

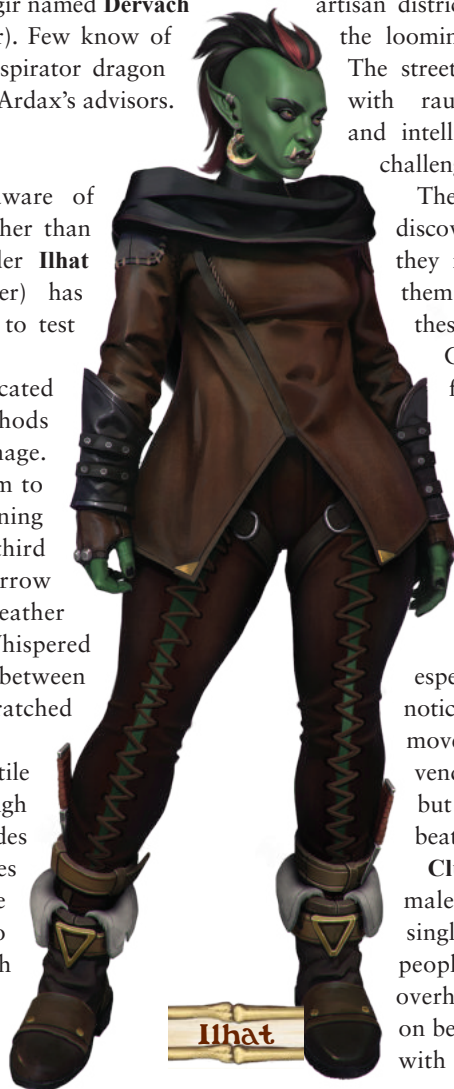
Third-level streets run hot, warmed by active forges churning out arms and armor. Fighting squares are sectioned out for orcs eager to test out their new equipment and put on a show. Accompanying these sights are mobile food stalls that follow the crowds. Expert jewelers, clothiers, bone artists, and other artisans can also be found here, along with the occasional high-comfort inn.

Today, however, all the hustle and bustle of the artisan district is heightened tenfold thanks to the looming threat of the ancestor storms. The streets and shops are full to bursting with raucous orcs, making navigation and intelligence gathering an even greater challenge than normal.

There are three clues for the PCs to discover about the foreign agents while they navigate through this level. Have them attempt a DC 22 check to find these leads; Diplomacy or Society to Gather Information is an obvious fit, but PCs can also use Orc Lore or Underworld Lore to find the right rumors, Athletics or Intimidation to draw the attention of overly excited orcs, Crafting to get on an artisan's good side, or other skills as you see fit.

Clue 1: Doxar (boisterous male orc braggart) loves arm wrestling, especially against foreigners. He noticed that some of the agents only move at night and swerved away from a vendor waving bulbs of garlic for sale, but only shares if one of the PCs can beat him in a match.

Clue 2: Kzalc Redeye (gluttonous male orc observer), named for his single functioning eye, regularly people-watches throughout Urgir. He overheard the agents discussing a deal on behalf of their employer "the Baron" with "the innkeeper" last night and is



willing to tell the PCs if they can get through the crowds quickly enough to obtain his favorite meat pies from a food vendor.

Clue 3: Usheru (friendly female orc merchant) deals frequently with foreigners unfamiliar with the local economy. She made some sales with the agents and saw them going to Dervach's inn, but she only tells the PCs this if they can find a thief that stole a necklace from her earlier.

As the PCs are pressed for time, it might be useful to enter initiative and track the number of rounds it takes to find and complete each lead, with each round representing about 2 hours. Should they fail to gather all clues within 5 rounds, they find an envelope in their pack marked with a drawing of a roc feather that contains the missing information—Ilhat is watching and willing to help but counts it against the PCs.

Event 1: Inn Secret (Low 6)

The gathered information leads the PCs to an inn with a flat roof, boarded up doors and windows, and a sign saying "closed for repairs." PCs who succeed at two DC 20 Thievery or Athletics checks can break in through the doors or windows. Alternatively, a PC who climbs up to the roof and succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check can see the presence of a secret door with a ladder leading into the inn's back room. A PC who explores the surrounding area and succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check finds another closed building with an entire false floor used as an emergency exit from Dervach's underground lair.

There are no light sources inside the inn. It is immaculately decorated, appropriate for housing entitled craftsmen, and not at all in need of repairs.

Creatures: The door to the back room is locked and inside waits a single invisible phade, tasked with guarding a secret entrance to the lair being used by the agents. The secret door is rigged with a 3rd-rank *alarm* spell.

PHADE

CREATURE 7

Pathfinder Monster Core 140

Initiative Perception +16

Development: If the PCs tripped the *alarm*, two of the agents (actually vampire servitors) prepare to engage the PCs near the lair entrance while their two assistants stay back and out of combat. If PCs discovered the emergency exit tunnel, they instead emerge through a bookshelf near Dervach.

Event 2: Conspirator Lair (Severe 6)

The secret stairs lead to a large room covered in

bookshelves. Dervach sits in a decorated chair at the far end of the room while four Ustalavic agents pore over a series of documents and maps on a large table in the room's center.

Creatures: Regardless of entryway, the PCs are first engaged by Dervach who asks their intentions in an obviously demeaning tone. He attempts to convince the party to leave in exchange for a considerable sum or information. Should bribery fail, Dervach reluctantly enters combat using ranged mental blasts and spells to avoid disrupting his disguise. Dervach transforms after one servitor dies or if he's hit in melee. Upon reaching half health, Dervach urges the party to reconsider working together, as he knows many secrets he could share and is willing to turn against the Ustalavic agents. If the PCs accept, he does exactly what they ask to prove his loyalty. Should they decline and Dervach reaches 30 or fewer Hit Points, he attempts to flee through his emergency tunnel.

YOUNG CONSPIRATOR DRAGON

CREATURE 8

Pathfinder Monster Core 110

Initiative Perception +16

VAMPIRE SERVITORS (2)

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Monster Core 336

Initiative Perception +12

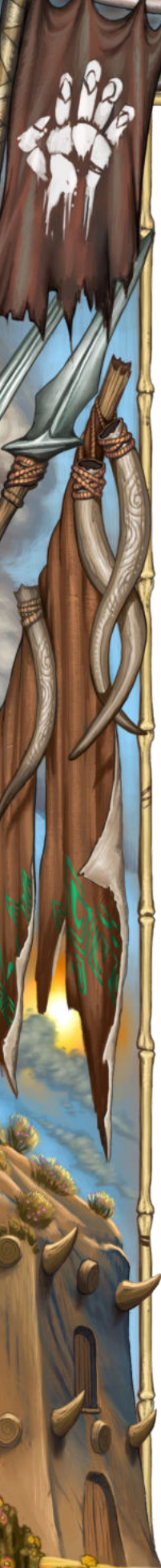
Development: The PCs find evidence of infiltration orders, reconnaissance plans, information on important Belkzen figures, and plans to kill and impersonate one of Ardax's advisors.

Getting Paid

Once the room is clear of enemies, Ilhat congratulates the PCs by emerging from the shadows. She provides the promised payment, with some extra for any especially impressive PCs. She then offers a chance to join the Whispering Blades as new agents, protecting Belkzen from the shadows. Declining isn't penalized, but Ilhat reminds them that both she and Ardax expect complete silence from the PCs lest they want a black roc arrow to be the last thing they see. Those who accept receive a small gray roc feather and are told further communication will be forthcoming.

If Dervach escapes, Ilhat emerges holding him unconscious in his orc disguise with a comment that the party forgot something. For this, or for the party requiring help with the clues, she only provides the 40 gp payment and comments that perhaps they aren't as ready as she believed.

If Dervach was killed, Ilhat muses that he could've been a useful asset, but his lair should suffice. If



Dervach is allowed to live, Ilhat humors his request for cooperation, planning to find out what exactly he knows. The party is commended on their foresight and tasked to help keep an eye on the dragon in future missions. Dervach is cooperative but secretly plots vengeance against the PCs, sending word to Baron Teqior about their involvement.

JOB 2: FREEZE AND FAUNA

This side job is suited for 7th-level characters. This is presented near the Algid Wastes in northern Belkzen. You can use *Starfinder Flip-Mat: Ice World* to represent both Ice Tooth Hold and Nashisa's cavern or use your own map.

Background

As spring brings floodwaters, the icy Algid Wastes thaw, and herds of megafauna migrate from the Realm of the Mammoth Lords. During this migratory cycle, orcs of the Ice Tooth Hold have their most prolific hunts to stockpile trade and essential resources. This time, however, the herds are deviating from their migration paths, instead appearing directly by Ice Tooth settlements in a series of stampedes.

Behind this anomaly is **Nashisa** (impulsive female mirage dragon). Prior to winter, Nashisa settled down in the wastes believing she'd found a new lair among the reflective glaciers and ice—perfect for admiring her own visage. Unfortunately, spring's onset melted both her home and good mood. Disgruntled, Nashisa has forcibly gained the service of various beasts in the area to sow havoc in the wastes, causing the changes in megafauna activity.

It's all the Ice Tooth Hold can do to keep their settlements safe from trampling herds, let alone stop the source. Messages have been sent to traveling Ice Tooth orcs and to nearby Wyvernsting in a bid to find aid for their plight.

The Job Offer

Trandat (diplomatic male orc merchant) of the Ice Tooth Hold offers this job to the PCs. Trandat was near Urgir with early season trading goods when he learned of the problems back home but doesn't wish to be indebted to the Unbroken Horn Hold.

In addition to a sum of 140 gp for the PCs' success, Trandat vows to ensure the Ice Tooth joins Ardax as allies. He can't promise anything save for some payment if Wyvernsting orcs succeed first. With a successful DC 21 Diplomacy check, a PC can convince him to offer 20 gp up front and increase the sum to 160 gp.

The North Hold

Reaching Ice Tooth Hold on mounts normally takes 4 to 5 days on the Flood Road. However, the dangers of ancestor storms, displaced beasts, and patrols in hostile orc territories extends the journey to a week. During this time, you might include some overland challenges for the party. This could also be a roleplaying opportunity for the PCs to learn more about the Ice Tooth orcs. Especially appropriate roleplay might be rewarded by useful training, improving the PCs' odds of succeeding at checks in the next section.

The PCs arrive at the Ice Tooth encampment around midday, only to be greeted by barely contained chaos. Ice Tooth orcs run around trying to complete a dizzying array of tasks to prepare for more stampeding herds. Herders try to shepherd escaped animals back into pens, crafters repair damaged fortifications, hunters lay traps to reroute riled beasts, and others care for food stores.

The hold begins with an indifferent attitude toward the PCs that improves if the PCs help with their preparations. The party has 2 rounds during which each PC can attempt a DC 23 check using an appropriate skill for the activity they choose. Every two successes or single critical success raises the attitude toward the PCs by one step, while two failures or a critical failure decreases their attitude by one step.

Event 1: Megafauna Stampede (Moderate 7)

The following morning, a herd of megafauna rapidly approaches, harried by a hive of ankhraivs.

Creatures: While the Ice Tooth orcs deal with the stampede, the PCs are called to handle the ankhraivs. Being ice-dwelling variants, the ankhraivs have the cold trait as well as resistance to cold and weakness to fire equal to their level.

ANKHRAVS (2)

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Monster Core 20

Initiative Perception +7

ANKHRAV HIVE MOTHER

CREATURE 8

Pathfinder Monster Core 20

Initiative Perception +16

Developments: PCs who succeed at a DC 22 Nature check to Recall Knowledge realize that the ankhraivs' behavior was atypical. Afterward, the leaders of the hold thank the party. If they dealt with the ankhraivs without a single PC gaining the dying condition, the hold is impressed by their tenacity, improving the hold's attitude by one step.

Traversing the Waste

If the hold is at least friendly toward the PCs, they're offered more appropriate mounts while their original mounts recover. Each PC can choose between a bear, dire wolf, dinosaur, or woolly mammoth. Trandat then informs the PCs that a group of Wyvernsting orcs have already left with an Ice Tooth guide to track the source of the disturbance.

Locating Nashisa requires trekking across the icy Argid Wastes. This effort is slow going, as the party faces cracked sheets of ice, blistering cold winds, and beasts looking for fresh meals. As the PCs travel, each PC can attempt a DC 23 check of any appropriately described skill to further the tracking process and encounter interesting features among the wastes. For each success, the PCs discover one of the following.

- A secluded, still-frozen lake inhabited by various water elementals.
- Frozen animals arranged in a cluster that seem to be alive and slowly thawing out.
- A frightened group sneaking away from a pair of oblivious frost giants loudly arguing over dinner.

Event 2: Nashisa's Dilemma (Severe 7)

The PCs eventually find themselves near a large, slowly thawing lake. Along its eastern shore rests a line of trees, while the western shore has icy cliffs covered by a massive mansion made of ice complete with shimmering spires.

This ice palace is an illusion by Nashisa to alleviate her irritability and establish territory. Interacting PCs can disbelieve it with a successful DC 24 Will save. Beyond the illusion lies an entrance to a series of long tunnels with icy sides polished to absolute perfection, culminating in a large cavern. In the middle rests Nashisa, who admires herself in a massive floor mirror; a group of frustrated orcs attempt to catch her attention while keeping an eye on a group of roosting frost drakes behind her.

Prodded long enough, Nashisa finally acknowledges the presence of the two parties. She explains how she ended up here and her present state of being irritated, hungry, and too busy to move somewhere else. With so many here to admire her, she's willing to hear what they have to say so long as it's interesting.

The party must now compete against the Unbroken Horn group to successfully convince Nashisa to leave the area first, as both Ice Tooth guides report the truth of what happens. One way to do this is granting each PC an opportunity to make an argument with a DC 26 skill check. PCs wearing reflective metal armor that shows Nashisa her own reflection decrease this DC by 2. Using details from their journey to help Nashisa

find a new home further reduces the DC by 1. If any PC fails, Nashisa becomes irritated and sends a frost drake to briefly shut them up. Alternatively, if the PCs are showing great success, the Unbroken Horn orcs might try to rouse a frost drake themselves to distract the PCs. The PCs each have two chances to achieve a total of 5 successes (critical successes count as 2, critical failures count as -1).

Creatures: Should the party simply want to fight Nashisa or fail to achieve 5 successes and subsequently have Nashisa declare her preference for the Unbroken Horn group, she calls forth two frost drakes to engage the PCs. Seeing an opportunity, some Unbroken Horn orcs join the fight, for which you can use the statistics of an orc commander with the elite template (*Monster Core* 6).

FROST DRAKES (2)

CREATURE 7

Pathfinder Monster Core 132

Initiative Perception +14

ELITE ORC COMMANDERS (2)

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Monster Core 6, 259

Initiative Perception +10

Nashisa flies around the cavern flinging petty comments and unhelpful tactical advice along with beauty tips instead of engaging. If all enemies are defeated, she yields with a huff and supposes she can vacate somewhere else to reflect in peace.

Getting Paid

Upon returning to the Ice Tooth Hold, the PCs receive the promised payment. If they succeeded in driving Nashisa away, the PCs establish initial lines to discuss allying with Ardax. If the PCs helped Nashisa find a new place to stay, she decides they make a good entourage and calls upon them at a future date to aid in setting up her new lair. If they killed her, the Ice Tooth express concerns about other dragons seeking revenge. If the party failed to best the Unbroken Horn orcs, they are paid but do not establish the Ice Tooth Hold as allies. However, if the Ice Tooth orcs are friendly or better toward them, the PCs might receive another chance to gain the hold as allies.

JOB 3: BETWEEN A ROC AND A HARD PLATE

This side job is suited for 8th-level characters. It's presented as taking place in a sparsely used cliffside outpost near mountains but can be easily adapted to other areas. You can create your own map or use *Pathfinder Flip-Mat Classics: Swamp* for the cliffside

outpost and *Pathfinder Flip-Mat Classics: Hill Country* to represent the top of the cliff with the roc nest.

Background

The Black Sun is a nomadic mercenary group available for hire, providing their service to the orc holds that prove the most deserving. Though they are without permanent allies, the hold still observes the Flood Truce and grudgingly respects Ardax's power in Urgir. As such, Black Sun orcs were present near the Flood Plain celebrations. More importantly, they were nearby when the ancestor storms began stirring, scattering the group as they fled for their lives.

A group of Black Sun orcs were driven to seek refuge in an abandoned cliffside outpost. Unbeknownst to them, the outpost had been recently claimed by a pair of rocs nesting atop the cliff. Just as the orcs were settling down to recuperate, they were awoken by

thundering wingbeats and sharp talons. Once more, the orcs were chased away to find safety, with one crucial difference: in the chaos of the roc attack, the Black Sun left behind their precious cargo of recently acquired adamantine.

The Job Offer

Milgat (disciplined nonbinary orc administrator) summons the PCs to a small office. They inform the PCs that a scouting party recently found evidence of Black Sun activity by the northern mountains, but no orcs. Seeing as Ardax wishes to ally with the mercenary hold, he's sending the PCs to locate and aid the Black Sun members. The PCs are given a map with the scouting party's information. Upon their return, Milgat rewards the PCs with 200 gp total. Should the PCs establish the Black Suns as an ally, Milgat increases this amount, up to 300 gp. If a PC succeeds at a DC 24 Diplomacy check to negotiate, Milgat increases the maximum payment to 350 gp, with 30 gp offered up front.

The Missing Suns

Arriving at the map's location, the PCs find damaged supplies with identifiable Black Sun markings. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Nature check discovers the damage was caused by exceptionally massive claws or talons. Tracking the wreckage requires a PC to succeed at a DC 24 Perception or DC 22 Survival check, leading the PCs to a cave where the orcs are currently resting. As they approach, the PCs find that a group of mountain tigers are also making their way into the cave to make the Black Sun orcs their next meal. A PC can drive away the tigers with successful DC 20 Intimidation or Nature check.

Most of the Black Sun orcs inside are injured and resting, though a couple remain posted with weapons near the front of the group. **Burrehd** (proud female orc fighter) thanks the PCs for driving off the tigers and explains that their group is recovering from both the aftermath of an ancestor storm and running into some winged beasts in the dark. The less-injured orcs were planning to attempt to recover their belongings.

Burrehd is clearly hesitant to accept any offered help, expressing her lack of authority to speak on behalf of the entire hold and general desire to not be indebted to other holds. If the PCs indicate their affiliation with Ardax and desire to speak with Black Sun leadership, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Diplomacy check gets Burrehd to agree



to a trade with the party—they retrieve Black Sun goods left behind, and in return, she helps broker communication between the two groups.

If asked what the goods consist of, Burrehd is intentionally vague. Each pack is marked with a Black Sun insignia, for a grand total of six packs of goods.

Event 1: Outpost Exploration (Low 8)

The cliffside outpost has been used by various orcs in the past but is mostly abandoned in recent times. Searching among the area for the proper cargo requires the PCs to succeed at two DC 24 Perception checks. The PCs eventually find the specified cargo of Black Sun symbol packs in a collapsed wagon.

Creatures: Unfortunately, these packs are accompanied by a group of daeodons drawn by the scent of meat within the rations, and they attack the party on sight.

DAEODON (6)

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Monster Core 43

Initiative Perception +12

Development: The noise from fighting the daeodons echoes through the area, alerting the nesting rocs. When only two daeodons remain, the rocs fly down in a tremendous swoop to carry off the noisy prey. One succeeds in grabbing two daeodons, catching three packs in its talons in the process. The other roc attempts to grab the PC with the fewest amount of Hit Points. A PC can avoid getting grabbed with a successful DC 26 Reflex save. If grabbed, the roc attempts to bring them up above its nest and drop them in. A grabbed PC can attempt a DC 26 Escape check to free themselves; alternatively, another PC successfully hitting the roc with a ranged attack is enough to free the grabbed PC before the roc makes it up the cliff.

Treasure: When examining the remaining packs, the PCs find not just the items Burrehd mentioned, but chunks of adamantine hidden beneath. This means the bags accidentally carried by the first roc up to the nest likely also contain adamantine.

Event 2: Roc Attack (Severe 8)

Should the PCs wish to retrieve the rest of the adamantine, they must make it up to the roc nest. Climbing up the cliff is possible and direct but difficult. Alternatively, they can find a winding carved path up to the nest that is easier but takes longer. They might also lure the rocs down again and fight them on the ground before climbing up.

Creatures: If the rocs are still nesting once the PCs are visible within 60 feet, they're immediately hostile.

One roc is at full health, while the second was injured by the Black Sun orcs and has the weak adjustment applied (*Monster Core 7*).

ROC

CREATURE 9

Pathfinder Monster Core 294

Initiative Perception +18

WEAK ROC

CREATURE 8

Pathfinder Monster Core 7, 294

Initiative Perception +16

Treasure: Within the nest, the PCs find the final three packs full of adamantine. They also find three unhatched roc eggs, which are highly valuable both for trade and the chance to imprint a roc and gain an invaluable flying companion. The rocs might have other treasure scattered within the nest as you see fit.

Getting Paid

When the PCs return to the Black Sun orcs, Burrehd is happy to see them alive. If the PCs return all six packs of adamantine chunks, Burrehd becomes visibly excited and thanks the party profusely for their aid. Once the group returns to the greater group of Black Sun orcs, she offers to come to Urgir to help facilitate discussions of allying with Ardax. Both Milgat and Ardax are pleased about this development and grant the PCs their full monetary reward. Ardax also plans to send the party as part of the convoy to discuss future plans with the Black Suns.

If asked, Burrehd is willing to sell up to five chunks of adamantine for 450 gp each. Successfully haggling with her can bring this price down to 425 gp, but no lower. She also offers to trade one chunk per egg, but for no more than two eggs.

Should the party return only some of the adamantine and not bring up any of the packs contents, Burrehd welcomes them but is clearly disappointed. She doesn't want to mention the adamantine if the PCs didn't know about it, though she attempts to discover what happened to the remainder. If she suspects no foul play, she gruffly thanks the party for doing their best. She offers to speak with the leader of the hold in regard to allying with Ardax but makes no promises.

If the PCs lie about obtaining the adamantine in a desire to keep it for themselves, Burrehd and the Black Suns realize they were betrayed. They are publicly hostile toward the PCs and Ardax and refuse talks of allying until the appropriate justice is meted out. Ardax scolds the party, citing the importance of allies over treasure no matter its value, and reconsiders assigning future missions to the group.



Quahs of Moon and Sun

THE SHOANTI

The Shoanti are the indigenous people of the northern parts of Varisia and can be found throughout the Storval Plateau and Velashu Uplands, with their tribes extending out into Belkzen and the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. Though they're collectively referred to as one people, their society is composed of seven quahs, each with their own culture, traditions, beliefs, and goals. These quahs are the Lyrune-Quah, archers and hunters; the Shadde-Quah, known for fishing and sailing; the Shriikirri-Quah, with skills in riding and training animals; the Shundar-Quah, practitioners of magic and diplomacy; the Sklar-Quah, warriors and soldiers; the Skoan-Quah, guardians of the dead; and the Tamiir-Quah, raiders and mountaineers. Though the quahs are separated by land and beliefs, they share the same base structure along with a common ancestry and history.

Shoanti History

If one were to ask five different Shoanti tribespeople where the Shoanti came from, they'd come away with five different origin stories, though the stories will share three commonalities: the foolishness of the Thassilonian empire, the brutality of Chelaxian invasions, and the endurance of Shoanti spirit.

Prior to the fall of the Thassilonian empire, the Shoanti existed as the runelords' warrior class. They served not only as a well-trained and dedicated militia, but as highly sought personal bodyguards for elite spellcasters in the empire. Upon the assassination of Emperor Xin and the usurpation of Thassilon by the runelords in -6420 AR, the Shoanti's spiritual leaders could sense that change was coming. The Shoanti watched as the runelords fell to their own cardinal sins, leaving the everyday citizens of the empire unprotected when Earthfall came to claim them. Many of these citizens were welcomed into the quahs of the Shoanti as they prepared to flee the coming dangers.

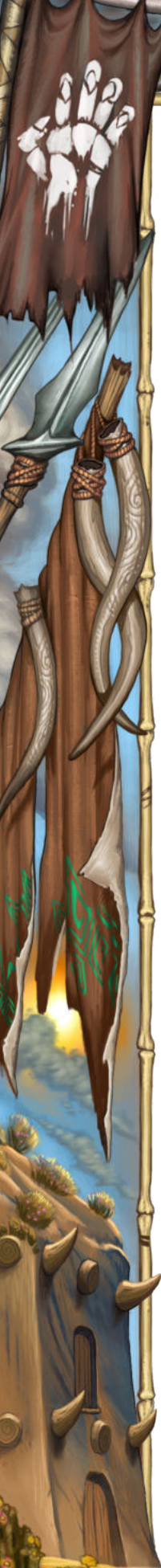
It was through this bolstering of numbers that Shoanti culture managed to survive the bleak terrors of the Age of Darkness. Folktales of heroes who rose up in Golarion's time of need are still told throughout the quahs. Some of the most famous are of Kwektene, the girl who used her small size to find shelter for her

TIMELINE

Date	Event
The Age of Legends (unknown)	The Shoanti become the warrior class of the runelords of the Thassilonian Empire.
The Age of Darkness (unknown)	Gathering in large groups and accepting outsiders into their quahs, the Shoanti survive Earthfall's fallout.
The Age of Anguish (unknown)	The Shoanti settle in the land that will become modern-day Varisia.
4406 AR	Cheliox invades Varisia through the Bloodsworn Vale, warring against the Shoanti.
4406 AR	Fort Korvosa is founded over a Shoanti sacred site called the Grand Mastaba.
4462 AR	Chieftain Galstak Sevendeaths unites the Sklar-Quah and Skoan-Quah against Cheliox, sparking the Last Shoanti War.
4488 AR	Galstak is killed by the Korvosan Guard, ending the Last Shoanti War.
4507 AR	The Chelaxian colonists force the Shoanti out of their ancestral lands, and the various quahs scatter to the wilderness.
4708 AR	Shoanti heroes of the Lyrune-Quah, Sklar-Quah, and Skoan-Quah provide invaluable assistance in helping to overthrow the tyrannical queen Ileosa Arabasti after she seizes control of Korvosa's Crimson Throne.

whole family and saved them from the wrath of a fey lord; Tlizi, the stubborn man who not only outdrank a clan of dwarves to keep his herding grounds, but defeated the orcs who followed in an arm wrestling match; and Imponna, a woman so clever she talked Zon-Kuthon himself into returning the sun.

When the sun returned to Golarion, the Shoanti people settled back into their traditions: traveling, fighting, hunting, and harvesting. They paid little heed to other nations' squabbles until the Chelaxian expansion known as the Everwar brought the conflict to them. In 4406 AR, Chelaxian colonists settled in Varisia and formed the stronghold of Korvosa atop a sacred pyramid, forcing the Shoanti from their



ancestral lands and onto the Storval Plateau and other regions that were less fertile and habitable. The quahs united to fight back but ultimately found themselves scattered to the harsh wilderness. Some Shoanti carved out their lives in areas such as the Cinderlands and the Kodar Mountains, while others left for cities like Magnimar and Korvosa.

Now the Shoanti people watch as the world changes again, trying to keep to themselves and protect their families and traditions. Though they sometimes accept outsiders into their quahs and count some orcs and dromaars among their numbers, they hold no trust in their hearts for Chelaxians. Most Shoanti view New Thassilon with heavy suspicion, remembering how easily one benevolent leader fell to a crowd full of ambition and desire.

Oral Tradition

There's no official written Shoanti language; instead, the Shoanti use Taldane when they need to communicate with the written word. Stories and history are traditionally passed down orally, with the most prominent tales memorialized through song and poem. From a young age, Shoanti are taught to remember and protect the history of their people. This history is fiercely guarded, as it's one of the few things that hasn't been stolen from them, and the Shoanti take great offense to an incorrect (or worse, purposefully revised) retelling of their past.

Whenever different quahs meet, they hold storytelling sessions to recite tales passed down by their ancestors as well as share news of more recent heroes and events. Young children often complain of the lengths of these recitations, but they're quickly hushed as they learn the tales of their ancestors and news of the day. The Skoan-Quah, who keep the dead, are well-known for their dedication to preserving the stories of those long gone. Individual members dedicate themselves to memorizing the chronicles of important figures and ensuring their deeds live on. A story told by a single Skoan-Quah might take several hours and span entire centuries as they impart the lessons of the dead.

Shoanti Appearance

A common belief throughout non-Shoanti cultures is that Shoanti are always bald, a misconception encouraged by mischievous Shoanti youths. The fact is, Shoanti grow hair like any other human, but different quahs are known to treat their hair and scalp differently. The Shadde-Quah keep their hair short and heads shaved, allowing for more efficient diving and less distraction when in water, while the

Tamiir-Quah insist on letting their hair grow long and braiding it into complicated twists and patterns. Most other quahs often have tribal tattoos on their scalps, and will shave and regrow their hair according to the season of the year or their stage in life. One of the few cultural commonalities between the quahs is that when a member of a quah experiences a loss—of a friend, family member, or even treasured animal companion—they will braid and cut their hair, presenting it to the Skoan-Quah for burial with that beloved companion.

Shoanti Cuisine

Most Shoanti cuisine is designed to be quickly packed and long-lasting due to the nomadic nature of the quahs. Dried meat and fruit are staples of travel, with many quahs storing caches of food and supplies throughout the Cinderlands. The quahs are careful to respect each others' territory, only resorting to using another quah's supplies in times of great desperation. Such an act must be repaid by replacing what was taken or with some other equivalent favor.

Pickling is a popular preservation technique amongst several quahs, but the inconvenience of transport makes pickled food a delicacy that's usually left in caches to be retrieved when a quah camps nearby. The Shadde-Quah are known for pickled seafood and salted fish, while the Sklar-Quah specialize in preserving hot peppers. Quick pickling is the common option for a traveling quah, with food that needs longer fermentation being considered a luxury.

Camping is the opportunity to feast on perishables. Any fresh meat or fish not slated for preservation is cooked over the fire. If a quah is staying in one location for some time, they dig cooking pits and build a fire with large heated rocks placed upon the burning wood and coals. Tubers and meat are sealed in heavy pots and then cooked on the rocks for up to three days, rendering the food exquisitely tender.

None of the Shoanti quahs traditionally practice animal husbandry due to their nomadic culture, instead caring for the environment and removing unwanted predators to encourage the growth of wildlife and edible plants. An area of the Cinderlands with an unusually large population of rabbits or bountiful berry bushes is often part of the path of a quah's annual travels.

Animism

The Shoanti take great care to live in harmony with nature. They believe that all spirits return to the wilderness and inhabit parts of the world, such as stones, trees, and rivers, which means they themselves

will one day be part of nature as well. As such, the Shoanti strive to respectfully communicate with the spirits around them by thanking the plants and animals they consume and explaining to a tree why it will be cut down. Many traditional Shoanti idioms refer to a previous or future life, such as assuring someone they'll be reborn as a sacred animal for their charitable nature or irritably suggesting an oblivious friend must have been a rock in their last life.

The Shoanti hold a strong reverence for their dead, especially those of the Shadefields who bound their very souls to the land so they could protect their people from beyond. Most Shoanti, particularly the Skoan-Quah, abhor undead, as their existence goes against the cycle of spirits returning to inhabit nature. As the Shoanti keepers of the dead, the Skoan-Quah are known for their elite warriors trained to hunt down and free undead of their abominable state so that they might properly return to the natural cycle. Pharasma, while not a central figure of worship among all the quahs, always receives respect for her role in keeping the cycle in proper flow, lest one's ancestors be barred from finding their proper place.

QUAH STRUCTURE

Shoanti quahs are structured in similar ways, though some might have different terms or even additional layers due to the duties of their specific quah. For example, the Shundar-Quah, responsible for maintaining good relations between quahs and ensuring a continued line of communication across the land, have an entirely separate rank in their society known as friend speakers. This title is given to diplomats who often take on positions among other quahs to ensure peace and understanding. When they return home to their family in the Shundar-Quah, friend speakers are treated with the utmost respect.

Quahs are typically led by councils of elected leaders representing the different familial clans. These councils contain an odd number of councillors to prevent voting deadlocks and most choose one council member to act as an official speaker and leader when interacting with outsiders. Below the council, clans usually specialize in various responsibilities, with their names often based on a quah's sacred animals to distinguish themselves from other members of the quah. For instance, in the Skoan-Quah, the Vulture Clan is responsible for the overseeing of body preparation, while the Rat Clan ensures that the burial spaces for Shoanti dead are kept clean and maintained, each representing their clan's animal guide. While all the clans have a speciality they're known for within their quah, every member is free to choose their role in the community.

The Lyrune-Quah

The Lyrune-Quah are the night archers and hunters of the Shoanti, with their name translating into the Moon Tribe. They focus on quick skirmishes and well-timed hunts, each warrior training for years to guarantee they can take down a target with a single arrow. The quah is known for their stealth and comfort in the dark, preferring to travel by moonlight rather than beneath the blazing sun of day.

The Lyrune-Quah's sacred animals, represented by its clans, are mostly nocturnal like the clan itself. The clans of the Lyrune-Quah are the Raccoon Clan, the foragers and botanists of the quah; the Fox Clan, in charge of reconnaissance; the Opossum Clan, dedicated to religious and magical study; the Skunk Clan, warriors devoted to ranged weaponry and hunting; and the Owl Clan, the warriors with the most experience in heavy weaponry.

Being invited into the inner circles of the Lyrune-Quah is a rare gift, even among other Shoanti. Honored guests are first introduced to all of the matriarchs of a tribe, then presented with two gifts: something practical, such as a bow or shoes, and something luxurious, such as a fine pelt or a glazed pot. This gesture communicates to visitors that the Lyrune-Quah are not only wise, but also wealthy and willing to share what they have with those they welcome.

TERRITORY

The Northern Cinderlands, along the edge of the Kazaron River, are the primary traveling land of the Lyrune-Quah. During summer months, the quah travels along the river, fishing and hunting the abundant wildlife while tending to the various plants they've cultivated for generations. Trees and bushes are pruned, bark is checked for parasites, beehives are cleaned of excess wax, and honey is collected. As the heat drones on, the quah dries meat and hides to ensure they'll have plenty of food during their travels to the south come winter.

Once winter is fully upon the region, the Lyrune-Quah move further south, intermingling with the Sklar-Quah and other quahs in the area before they reach the base of the Storval Rise and settle into their winter encampment. The plateau collects the brunt of the snow, allowing the lowlands a milder winter perfect for spending the short days crafting and setting up large fires to create sturdy pots for storage. Hunters will occasionally travel the Storval Stairs for prey, preferring to hunt large animals. The larger the game, the less often hunting needs to occur on the dangerous mountain, which is soaked in the magic of Thassilon and Kaer Maga. The Lyrune-Quah forbid

their members to approach Kaer Maga, suspicious of the City of Strangers and its tolerance of creatures such as trolls and the undead.

As the quah travels with the seasons, they pass by two important landmarks: the shrine of Desna known as the House of the Moon and a ruined wizard tower, the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers. The quah always stops at the House of the Moon to tend the shrine and pay their respects. They keep a far distance from the acropolis, though there have been rumblings between the warriors of the Lyrune-Quah and the Sklar-Quah that something should be done about the monstrosities housed within the ancient tower.

FASHION

Lyrune-Quah members grow their hair long and often cut it into scalp locks or shave the sides and back of their head, leaving long growth in the center that's often braided flat against the scalp. Their clothes are dyed with dark colors and fit more closely to the skin than the fashion of most other quahs, allowing them to blend in with the night sky and ensure none of their clothing gets snagged while riding their horses across the plateaus. They wear soft-bottomed moccasins for quiet footsteps that aid in stealthy investigations, helping them stalk enemies and prey for miles before deciding whether to strike or leave.

Much like in other quahs, tattooing is a sacred practice and art for the Lyrune-Quah. Few tattoos are granted without first being earned, and a Lyrune-Quah member's first tattoo is often the band around their eyes. This solid black tattoo assists with night vision and keeping eyes clear during the rare times a quah member would move around during the day. When a Lyrune-Quah youth reaches adulthood, they're tattooed with the animal of their clan as a symbol of their maturity. Married couples often have the animal of their partner's clan tattooed next to their original piece. Celestial objects are also popular motifs, particularly the moon, stars, and various constellations.

ART

The Lyrune-Quah rarely craft art pieces without a practical use. As they travel through the Cinderlands in the fall, quah members spend time digging up the rich clay hidden underneath the topsoil. This clay is dried and wrapped in loosely woven sheets of fabric before being stored in large piles on sleds belonging

to the various clans. Volcanic clay is highly valued and primarily used in devotional pieces to Pharasma and Desna due to its dark color. Prior to leaving the banks of the Kazaron River, mussel shells are ground and stored to be used as a tempering agent for potting.

Once the quah is settled at the base of the Storval Rise, potting begins in earnest.

Lyrune-Quah pottery is remarkably fine and intricate, with bottle and jar shapes being passed down from parent to child over the course of generations. Urns are crafted with volcanic clay, and the red clay of the Cinderlands is used to make sturdy cookware. The blue clay of the Kazaron River is often used in children's art pieces. Jingle pots, small pots filled with pebbles,

are often given to parents, though occasionally a teenager will craft a jingle pot and gift it to someone they're romantically interested in.

Lyrune-Quah pottery has become a topic of interest in Korvosa due to its stark differences from other known pottery cultures. Art collectors are intrigued by the pottery techniques of the quah, including how the clay pieces are fired in open flames and how they're engraved between the drying and firing periods. Quah members are suspicious of this interest but are more than willing to trade basic pots and cookware for goods they're unable to produce in the badlands, especially items made with glass.

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality in the Lyrune-Quah is incredibly diverse, but the focus of worship is a mixture of the Radiant Prism pantheon (the goddesses Desna, Sarenrae, and Shelyn) and Pharasma. Worship of the Radiant Prism can be found across all clans of the quah, and mothers often craft pendants of rainbow moths for their children to wear while traveling, hoping to ensure their safety with a sign of the trio of goddesses.

Pharasma oversees the quah's ancestor worship and veneration. Totems of her spiral are exchanged among warriors before a skirmish, with each warrior inscribing their clan's rune on the back of the totem so the psychopomps who collect their souls can reunite them with their families in the afterlife.

The quah makes an annual pilgrimage to the House of the Moon on the Storval Plateau, an ancient Desnan temple they've cared for throughout centuries of worship. In the center of the temple is a large pool of cool water, and any children born between trips to the temple are carefully dipped in this water to allow



Rainbow Moth Pendant

Desna's blessings to protect them. On rare occasions, a childbirth will occur during a trip to the House of the Moon. When this happens, the parent is placed into the pool, and the doulas oversee the child's birth before blessing them as a banus, or Moth Child.

MOONLIT WARRIORS

Lyrune-Quah warriors, most of whom hail from the Skunk and Owl clans, are renowned for their silence and speed, striking quickly from the shadows. The nocturnal activity of their quah gives them an advantage against humanoid opponents, who are usually diurnal to match the lifestyle of nearby settlements. These expert trackers and hunters hide in the cover of darkness, opting to stay unseen for as long as possible before striking strategically with ranged weapons like bows and throwing knives.

The success of these stealth tactics have some claiming that Lyrune-Quah warriors are invisible at night and can only be seen in the light of the moon, which gives them strength beyond normal humans. There are also rumors among non-Shoanti that the most powerful Lyrune-Quah warriors are actually ritually created werewolves blessed by Desna who can transform at will. If asked about these tales, a Lyrune-Quah warrior will only laugh, though playful youths might tell the questioner to wait for a full moon and find out for themselves.

Warriors are often tasked with removing invasive local wildlife and predators threatening the quah, warning off poachers, and dealing with unsavory criminals who might target their people. While experienced warriors opt to deal with problematic humanoids with warning shots and stern messages, a favorite prank of young Lyrune-Quah warriors in training is to wear thick pelts over their clothing and shout about the moon's terrible curse upon invaders of the land to scare off their "prey."

The Sklar-Quah

The Sklar-Quah, or Sun Tribe, is often seen as an aggressive collection of warriors thanks to stories of their fearsome burn riders, an elite cavalry formed through a rite of passage called the Burn Run. However, the quah isn't as concerned with making war against the world as the stories say and tends to keep to themselves, mostly posturing at the other quahs they run into during their travels. Much like their neighbors in the Hold of Belkzen, the Sklar-Quah values strength and discipline; no concessions are given without a display of power first.

The sacred animals of the Sklar-Quah, represented by their clans, are the Bison Clan, the crafters

and storytellers of the quah; the Gopher Clan, the Sklar-Quah's sneakiest clan and the first feet on the ground in emergencies; the Snake Clan, a clan of warriors built around quick strikes and intimidation tactics; the Turtle Clan, the quah's dedicated cartographers and strategists; and the Chicken Clan, which stands guard for the entire quah and produces the highest number of burn riders of all the clans. Despite the stereotypes of other cultures, the Chicken Clan is named for the fierce prairie chickens of the Cinderlands, which proudly fight to the bitter end to protect their territory. The males of this breed are known for the fierce, flame-like feathers in their plumage, which the Sklar-Quah often incorporate into their crafts.

Though daunting, the Sklar-Quah consider presenting all of their finest warriors during an outsider's arrival to be a mixture of an honor and threat. "We take you seriously as an opponent" is their message, "but we're not afraid of you." Visitors are guided into buildings or to firesides between two rows of warriors, beginning with the newest recruits and ending with the most experienced and fearsome burn riders. If the visitor shows fear or declines to walk down the row, they're treated with scorn and no longer considered an honored guest among the Sklar-Quah. Guests who prove worthy of respect are gifted adornments for their clothing or weapons, which subtly mark them as a friend to the Sklar-Quah.

TERRITORY

The Sklar-Quah share their lands between the Skoan-Quah and the Lyrune-Quah with relative ease and peace, considering their warmongering reputation. While just as nomadic as the other quahs, the Sklar-Quah travel around their lands quarterly rather than in the summer/winter pattern of the Lyrune-Quah. Spring is spent between the outskirts of Kaer Maga and the banks of the Yondabakari River, enjoying the fertility of the lowlands. The bushes there have been cultivated to always be ripe and heavy with berries, root vegetables are buried in the rich mountain soil, and freshwater fish is smoked for longevity.

A few weeks before the heat of summer hits, the Sklar-Quah begin packing and wrapping up in their white headscarves as they make their way through the Cinderlands. They harvest the clay under the soil and apply it around their eyes, which helps them to see more easily during the bright light of day and provides protection from the various emberstorms. Conical tents layered with the same flame-resistant grasses are quickly set up with hardy spikes when the sight of an emberstorm appears. The tents are

wide, allowing for entire clans to sit and rest inside safely, and separate tents are erected to keep the horses and dogs of the quah comfortable and relaxed. These tents are broken down quickly in the case of brush fires and can even provide ventilation during a poisonous gas eruption.

Once fall arrives, the Sklar-Quah prepare for their most sacred part of year: the guarding of the Kallow Mounds, the Shoanti ancestral burial site. The entire quah gathers to meet with the Skoan-Quah at the border of their lands and welcome their shamans into their protection, taking time to pay their respects to the fallen Shoanti heroes from the past year. The journey to the Kallow Mounds takes one week, and each day is spent with the two quahs fasting during the day and sharing stories of the fallen heroes over a feast at night. Upon arrival at the Kallow Mounds, the

Sklar-Quah spend another week in the shadow of the mounds, offering prayers and devotions to Pharama for the coming year.

FASHION

Sklar-Quah members grow their hair long and tie it into long braids decorated with beads and trinkets that clink together as they ride across the Cinderlands. Warrior bands can often be heard long before they arrive, depending on how decorated they are from previous battles. Members of the quah wear bright warm colors that feature fringes on most clothing, despite the possible burn risk. When traveling or working outside, civilians wear a white scarf wrapped around their heads and lower faces, allowing them to travel without becoming too hot in the burning sun. Children walking alongside their parents will occasionally be stopped to have a ladle of water poured over their heads and necks, making sure that they're comfortable and safe.

Burn riders can be identified at formal events by their fancy burn rider regalia. After a successful Burn Run (see War as Art below), a runner is accepted as a burn rider and crafts their own fancy burn rider regalia. The exquisite regalia is woven in all colors of the rainbow and crafted with symbols of one's clan, the sun, Shelyn, and Sarenrae. The burn riders also craft a roach: a headdress of stiffened animal hair and roc feathers dyed to match the rainbow of the regalia tunic, and a large bustle featuring roc feathers worn on the back. This regalia is for formal ceremonies and celebrations. Upon the passing of a burn rider, they're interred in their tunic and roach while their bustle is burned as a devotional act to Shelyn and Sarenrae.

WAR AS ART

The arts of the Sklar-Quah can be seen among the decorations on their tents and the beads in their hair; however, their true artistic devotion is to battle. Nothing is more glorious than riding into battle, and nothing is more beautiful than the sight of a triumphant warrior returning home to their family. This devotion to warfare influences their connection to the gods, with Sklar-Quah depictions of Shelyn and Sarenrae showing them dressed in formal fancy burn rider regalia and perched on horses with their weapons alight in the flames of the brushfire.

The famous Burn Run is held during the height of summer in the Cinderlands, when the winds and sun are at their most vicious. Senior burn riders set a controlled burn that prospective riders must outrun to the safety of the river. This tradition's necessity is twofold: allowing future burn riders to prove



themselves and using the burn to prevent wildfires from spreading beyond control.

Though many non-Shoanti believe the Burn Run is a trial faced by all men in the quah, it's actually only faced by those who wish to participate with no gender restrictions. Prospective burn riders announce their intent to run during the celebratory festival after a Burn Run and spend the next year training for the trial. The morning of the run, the heads of the clans gather to check the weather before anointing the runners in sacred designs with clay and braiding their hair back. The runners' heads are then shaved, and the hair is tossed into the fires as a sacrifice to Sarenrae and Shelyn before the run begins.

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality in the Sklar-Quah is centered on Sarenrae and Shelyn, though Desna is respected due to her place in the Radiant Prism pantheon, and Pharasma is revered for her guidance of the dead. Though other deities are worshipped within the quah, Sarenrae and Shelyn are central to the quah's lifestyle and philosophy. While the heat of the sun can be oppressive, the Sklar-Quah appreciate how its light brings life and protection, providing nourishment through plant life and fire. This is most exemplified in the blazing wildfires of the Cinderlands, which can devastate the land but also provide opportunity for new growth.

Cindergrass, a wild grass that grows in the volcanic plains of the Cinderlands, is an important, near-sacred element of life for the Sklar-Quah and strongly associated with Sarenrae. Its uses in crafting tent covers, items of clothing, and the iconic caparisons of burn rider horses represent the intimate love and intertwined lives of Sarenrae and Shelyn as well as the protection the goddesses provide their followers. As no mortal (at least, per the Sklar-Quah) can exist without the burning heat of the sun, neither could the grass exist without the fertile soil produced by destructive volcanoes.

The summer solstice is a sacred time when the entire quah camps in a shaded area for several days, with the day of the solstice serving as the grand finale. A large feast is held, and all are welcome to journey to the quah and join the festivities. Cindergrass crafting holds special significance during these celebrations, as it's believed that items crafted within the solstice will grant particularly potent protection against flames and heat. Contests are held to see who

can dance on hot coals the longest, with the winner gaining the honor of leading the final meal of the solstice celebration.

CUISINE

The food of the Sklar-Quah is noticeably spicier than most cuisine in the Saga Lands, even among orcs and the other Shoanti quahs. Sklar-Quah children are introduced to spicy peppers and hot seasonings at a young age, training them to handle greater heat as they get older. When young children complain of the heat from the sun and the Cinderlands, they're offered whole pickled peppers and cold water to quench their thirst and encourage their bodies to sweat and cool them down.

This ability to tolerate spicy food and hot peppers is known as "Grandfather Pah's gift" in the quah, and children eschewing the spice are often lightly scolded for being so rude as to return Grandfather Pah's gift to him. The tale of Grandfather Pah is passed down early in a child's life; it not only explains their affinity for the food, but also highlights the best qualities of a Sklar-Quah adult: bravery, cleverness, and adventurousness.

It's said that during the Age of Darkness, Grandfather Pah was wandering the grasslands looking for food for his family when he came across Asmodeus. The deity was sitting comfortably in a fancy chair, surrounded by smoked meats and seeds for various edible plants. Seeing that Grandfather Pah was starving and had a family to feed, Asmodeus offered him a deal: if he could eat a hot pepper without crying or sweating, he could have all the food before him. Grandfather Pah countered the offer that if he ate the pepper without crying or sweating, not only would he get all the food before him, but he would also get the seeds of the pepper and the ability to eat spicy food would be passed down to all of his children and cousins. They were in agreement, and Asmodeus presented him with the spiciest pepper in all Golarion, the Kuthite's kiss. Grandfather Pah considered it, took out his false elk teeth, and popped the pepper in his mouth, chewing and swallowing in one bite. He then yawned, stretched, and told Asmodeus to start picking up food; they had a long hike ahead of them. While the veracity of the story is questionable, Kuthite's kiss is a breed of hot pepper exclusive to the Cinderlands and a popular seasoning in Sklar-Quah meals.





Adventure Toolbox

The following new rules appear throughout “Hoof, Cinder, and Storm.”

BELKZEN GEAR

Belkzen’s crafters have developed the following weapons and tools throughout the centuries, creating many from local flora and fauna. Some items are known to all, while others are favored by certain holds that take pride in the arts of combat or alchemy.

FAULTLINE HAMMER

ITEM 6

UNCOMMON MAGICAL

Price 250 gp

Usage held in 1 or 2 hands; Bulk 2

The steel head of this +1 *striking earthbreaker* has a large crack that zigzags down its center, making it look like it could crack in half with any swing. This belies the hammer’s strength; its strikes can shatter stone with ease.

Activate—Create Faultline ◆ (concentrate) **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** You Strike an object or raised shield with the *faultline hammer* and would deal piercing damage to that object; **Effect** Until the end of your next turn, any weapon that Strikes the object deals additional damage as though the weapon had the razing trait (*Treasure Vault* 26). The triggering Strike also deals this additional damage.

KINETIC CLUB

ITEM 7

UNCOMMON EARTH MAGICAL

Price 325 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk 2

Embedded along the length of this +1 *striking greatclub* are the teeth and scales of a zetogeki, a giant lizard that can absorb and then release bursts of kinetic energy. The more momentum a wielder builds up while swinging the weapon, the more forceful the impact when it finally makes contact.

Activate—Store Kinetic Energy ◆ (concentrate) **Frequency** once per hour; **Trigger** You add a circumstance bonus to your attack with the *kinetic club*’s backswing trait and successfully Strike your target; **Effect** You channel the club’s stored energy into the Strike, dealing 1d6 additional damage. If the club has a *greater striking* rune, increase the additional damage to 2d6. If the club has a *major striking* rune, increase the additional damage to 3d6.

MOTIVATING TREAT BAG

ITEM 5

UNCOMMON MAGICAL

Price 135 gp

Usage worn; Bulk L

This stiff, cloth pouch is embroidered with whimsical images of playful pets. When you perform your daily preparations in the presence of your creature companion, three treats appear in the bag: an encouraging treat, a reward treat, and a soothing treat. These treats are always suitable for your companion and last until the next time you perform your daily preparations.

Activate—Toss a Treat ↻ (manipulate) **Trigger** Varies by treat; **Effect** You pull out one of the treats and toss it up to 30 feet into the waiting mouth of your companion. The effect varies by the treat.

- **Encouraging Treat** (mental) **Trigger** You Command your companion, and it performs a skill check; **Effect** The treat motivates the companion to perform the task, allowing you to Aid it as though you had prepared to help.
- **Reward Treat** (healing, mental) **Trigger** Your companion critically succeeds at a skill check or attack roll; **Effect** The treat grants the companion 1d6+6 temporary Hit Points that last until the end of your next turn.
- **Soothing Treat** (healing) **Trigger** Your companion attempts a save to reduce its sickened condition, would reduce the value of its frightened condition at the end of your turn, or attempts a flat check to end persistent damage; **Effect** Reduce the DC of the check to end persistent damage by 2 or reduce the sickened condition by 2. If the companion would reduce its frightened condition value by 1 at the end of its turn, it instead reduces that condition’s value by 2.

Activate—Rustle the Bag ◆ (auditory, manipulate) **Effect** You Command your companion. Until the end of your turn, it gains a +5-foot status bonus to each of its Speeds, but must use at least one action to move closer to you.

OSTEOMANCER’S POUCH

ITEM 8

UNCOMMON MAGICAL

Price 480 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk –

This leather pouch holds a pair of six-sided dice carved from actual knucklebones. When rolled, the dice grant you a vision of a distant location, though their power is unreliable.

Activate—Roll the Bones ♦♦ (concentrate, manipulate)

Frequency once per day; **Effect** You roll the dice. If you roll two 1s, the activation fails with no effect. Otherwise, the dice cast *clairvoyance* for you. When cast in this way, the spell's range becomes 100 feet × the result of your roll.

PUPPETMASTER EXTRACT

ITEM 8

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE CONTACT POISON

Price 85 gp

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

Activate ♦ Interact

Distilled from a trighoul's vital fluids, this gummy, ooze-like toxin springs to life when it makes contact with flesh. It swiftly grows spines that dig into the victim, twitching with rudimentary intelligence as they root around for the nervous system. If the toxin embeds itself deeply enough, it seizes control of the victim's body.

Unlike most poisons, puppetmaster extract can affect a dead body with mostly intact flesh. Each round, a corpse without sentience automatically fails its Fortitude save against the poison. At stage 4, the poison stops causing damage and confusion; instead, it reanimates the corpse as an elite plague zombie (*Monster Core* 6, 356) without the unholy trait; a larger body instead uses statistics for a zombie brute or zombie hulk, whichever matches its size. The corpse stands as a free action at the beginning of its turn and attacks nearby creatures. When the poison's duration expires or the poison is cured, the body's state of animation ends.

Saving Throw DC 26 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 minute; **Maximum**

Duration 8 rounds; **Stage 1** 1d12 piercing damage and 1d12 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 1d12 piercing damage and 2d12 poison (1 round); **Stage 3** 1d12 piercing damage, 2d12 poison damage, and confused for 1 round (1 round); **Stage 4** 3d12 poison damage and confused for 1 round (1 round)

RENDING GAUNTLETS

ITEM 5+

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL

Usage worn bracers; **Bulk** L

These heavy gloves are reinforced with thick animal hide and sharpened bone.

Activate—Shredding Finisher ♦ (manipulate) **Frequency** once per hour; **Requirements** You hit the same creature with two unarmed Strikes in the same round; **Effect** The gauntlets' spikes dig into the creature just before you tear them free, dealing the listed piercing damage.

Type lesser rending gauntlets; **Level** 5; **Price** 130 gp

The gauntlets deal 2d6 piercing damage.

Type moderate rending gauntlets; **Level** 12; **Price** 1,700 gp

The gauntlets deal 4d6 piercing damage.

Type greater rending gauntlets; **Level** 19; **Price** 32,000 gp

The gauntlets deal 6d6 piercing damage.

STORMSHARD

ITEM 6+

UNCOMMON MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** —

These shards of coalesced necromantic essence are sometimes found in the wake of an ancestor storm. Howling spirits are faintly visible, trapped inside the jagged, dark-green glass.

You can use the shard to cow the undead or briefly release the tormented souls from inside the glass. While you hold the *stormshard*, you gain a +1 item bonus to Intimidation checks to influence the undead. In addition, you can Demoralize undead creatures, even if those creatures are mindless or otherwise immune to emotion, fear, or mental effects.

Activate—Free the Spirits ♦♦ (concentrate, manipulate)

Frequency once per day; **Effect** You briefly release the



spirits from the *stormshard* before drawing them back into the glass. Each creature in a 10-foot emanation takes 4d8 void damage (DC 20 basic Fortitude save). You treat the result of your saving throw as one degree of success better than its outcome.

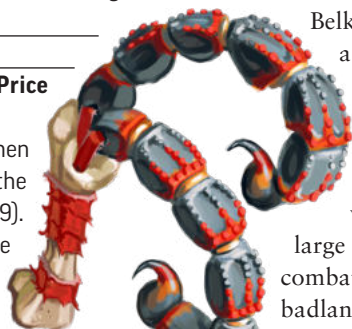
Type *stormshard*; **Level** 6; **Price** 230 gp

Type *greater stormshard*; **Level** 12; **Price** 1,800 gp

The item bonus increases to +2. When activating the *stormshard* to release the spirits, the damage increases to 8d8 (DC 29). In addition, you can choose to increase the radius of the emanation by up to 10 feet.

Type *major stormshard*; **Level** 18; **Price** 19,000 gp

The item bonus increases to +3. When activating the *stormshard*, the damage increases to 13d8 (DC 38), and you can increase the radius of the emanation by up to 20 feet.



Venom Lash

VENOM LASH

ITEM 7

UNCOMMON MAGICAL POISON

Price 350 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

With careful alchemical treatments, orc weaponsmiths can enhance the durability and flexibility of giant scorpion tails to create multi-headed +1 *striking flails*. Additional enchantments allow the stingers to generate their own venom. When you would apply this flail's critical specialization, you can instead deal 1d6 persistent poison damage to the target. You gain an item bonus to the persistent poison damage equal to the weapon's item bonus to attack rolls.

Activate—Envenom ♦ (manipulate, poison) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You temporarily fill the flail's stingers with venom. The next successful Strike you make with it before the end of your next turn deals 2d6 persistent poison damage to the target. If the Strike critically succeeds and if you would apply persistent poison damage with this weapon's alternate critical specialization, you combine the two effects to deal 3d6 persistent poison damage to the target.

ZETOGEKI HIDE ARMOR

ITEM 8

UNCOMMON EARTH INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 500 gp

Usage worn armor; **Bulk** 2

This +1 *fire-resistant hide armor* is adorned with the shale-like scales of the *zetogeki*, a giant reptile that dwells near sites of volcanic activity. Like the armor's namesake, you can adjust the scales to better absorb kinetic energy at the cost of some mobility.

Activate—Shift Scales ♦ **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Until the end of your next turn, you gain resistance 5

to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, but your Speeds are reduced by 10 feet (minimum 5 feet).

Creature Companion

Belkzen's native swine is the bristle boar, a fearsome beast whose spines make it unsuitable for riding. Millennia ago, orcs seized domesticated pigs from neighboring lands and back-bred them to create the more fearsome war pigs (page 91). These animals are large enough to carry an armored orc into combat, hardy enough to weather Belkzen's badlands, and indiscriminate enough in their palate to subsist on whatever sustenance they can root up.

To the inexperienced handler, a war pig is a moody pet at best, though they're quite intelligent and curious. Without proper enrichment and training, however, they seek their own entertainment—often by destroying gardens, eating spellbooks, or undermining the foundation of a small house. They're also good at recognizing words, as war pigs have been known to destroy their pens if they hear the name of (but do not receive) their favorite treat.

WAR PIG

Size Large

Melee ♦ hoof (agile), **Damage** 1d6 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ tusk, **Damage** 1d8 piercing

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

Hit Points 8

Skill Intimidation

Senses low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Speed 35 feet

Special mount

Support Benefit Your war pig bodychecks your enemies, leaving them numb from the impact. Until the start of your next turn, Strikes you make that deal damage to a creature within your war pig's reach make the target clumsy 1 until the end of your next turn.

Advanced Maneuver Bucking Frenzy

BUCKING FRENZY ♦♦

The war pig transforms any fear it feels into fury before kicking wildly. Reduce the war pig's frightened value by 1 (minimum 0). The war pig then makes hoof Strikes against up to three different foes within its reach. These Strikes each take a -2 penalty to their attack rolls unless the war pig began its turn with the frightened condition. Each attack counts toward the war pig's multiple attack penalty, but the penalty only increases after all the attacks have been made.

CINDERGRASS

This unique grass grows in the volcanic plains of the Cinderlands, resisting the heat from cinderstorms and wildfires with its thick, waxy coating. Shoanti of the Sklar-Quah weave this plant into tent coverings, cloaks, and caparisons to protect themselves and their mounts from heat. That said, some burn riders pride themselves on not wearing cindergrass clothing, relying instead on intrinsic toughness and bravery to weather their home's embers.

SHOANTI GEAR

The harsh conditions of the Cinderlands and Storval Plateau have inspired countless tools to aid Shoanti survival.

AUROCHS JERKY

ITEM 9

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE PROCESSED

Price 80 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk –

Activate **◆◆** Interact

Aurochs meat already makes for tough jerky, but with the right alchemical treatment, it becomes legendarily resilient and imparts that durability to those who eat it. Eating the jerky causes a pair of inch-long horns to grow from your forehead (or causes your existing horns to grow noticeably) for 1 hour. During this time, you gain a +1 item bonus to Fortitude saves. You can end the effect prematurely, causing the horns to retract or revert to their normal size, with a free action that has the concentrate trait.

Aurochs' Endurance **◆** (concentrate) **Trigger** You begin your turn and are fatigued; **Effect** You suppress the fatigued condition for 10 minutes. During this time, you are not immune to fatigue and can become fatigued by subsequent effects, but you gain a +2 item bonus to saving throws against effects that would fatigue you.

BOX OF UNSPOILING

ITEM 5+

UNCOMMON EXTRADIMENSIONAL MAGICAL

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk 1

This storage container decorated with images of wildlife and berries is popular among Shoanti quahs and other nomadic groups. The box functions like a *spacious pouch*, holding an amount of Bulk depending on its type, and is inscribed with magic to keep its contents cool to allow for travel with perishable items like meat and fruit. Items in the box are kept fresh for up to a year.

Type I; Level 5; Price 200 gp; Capacity 25 Bulk

Type II; Level 8; Price 575 gp; Capacity 50 Bulk

Type III; Level 12; Price 1,640 gp; Capacity 100 Bulk

Type IV; Level 14; Price 3,600 gp; Capacity 150 Bulk

CINDERGRASS CLOAK

ITEM 7

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 250 gp

Usage worn cloak; Bulk L

This hooded cloak woven of long, waxy grass is designed so it can close over your entire body. While wearing this cloak, you have resistance 5 to fire.

Shed Cinders **↻** (manipulate) **Frequency** once per hour;

Trigger You would take fire damage; **Effect** With a flick of the cloak, you deflect and smother the flames. The cloak's resistance to fire increases to 15 against the triggering effect. Until the end of your next turn, your flat check to remove persistent fire damage is 10 instead of 15, which is reduced to 5 if another creature uses a particularly appropriate action to help. If you take at least 5 points of fire damage after applying the fire resistance, the cloak gains the broken condition.

CINDERGRASS POULTICE

ITEM 6

UNCOMMON CONSUMABLE HEALING MAGICAL OIL

Price 33 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk L

Activate **◆** (manipulate)

This thick, waxy gel erases the effects of flame. It restores 2d12 Hit Points to a creature when applied to their body. If the creature has taken fire damage within the last minute, it restores additional Hit Points equal to the amount of fire damage the creature took within the last minute (maximum +10). Finally, the creature becomes immune to the effects of severe heat for 1 hour.

DUST GOGGLES

ITEM 8

UNCOMMON MAGICAL

Price 250 gp

Usage worn eyepiece; Bulk –

These sand-colored goggles keep the harsh weather of the Cinderlands at bay. While wearing the goggles, you ignore penalties to Perception from desert weather effects and gain a +1 bonus to Perception checks involving sight.

EYE OF THE MOONWARDEN

ITEM 9

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 620 gp

Usage worn pendant; Bulk –

This beaded pendant crafted by Lyrune-Quah shamans features an uncut moonstone that warns the wearer of danger. When a hostile creature comes within 30 feet of you, the stone glows with moonlight only you can see.

Activate—Lunar Illumination **◆** (concentrate) **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Bright moonlight shines out of the gem in a 30-foot emanation, forcing hostile creatures in the area to make a DC 26 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1 round.

NOMAD'S SHAWL

ITEM 7

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 330 gp

Usage worn; Bulk L

The intricate beading of this shawl subtly guides you. While you wear the shawl, you always know which direction is north and gain a +1 item bonus to Survival checks.

Activate—Mind's Map ◆ (concentrate) You focus your mind's eye on a location you've been to previously. The beads on the shawl shift colors to create a map of the area based on your memories. You can dismiss this effect as a free action.

NOSTALGIC POT

ITEM 7

UNCOMMON MAGICAL

Price 300 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

This small pot filled with pebbles is imbued with the nostalgia of its owner. While this pot is on your person, you get a +1 item bonus to saves against emotion effects.

Jingling Memories ◆ (concentrate, emotion) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You shake the pot, granting a +1 item bonus to an ally to save against an emotion effect.

PEPPER POULTICE

ITEM 7

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE

Price 55 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk –

Activate ◆ Interact

This mash of Cinderlands peppers has been fermented into a potent poultice to expel toxins from the body. When you have the sickened condition, you can slather this poultice onto your skin to reduce your sickened value by 1.

PURPLE PEPPER POWDER

ITEM 8

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE PROCESSED

Price 60 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk –

This nearly black purple powder is made from the extremely spicy Kuthite's kiss pepper and is a favorite among the Sklar-Quah. When you eat a meal flavored with this purple pepper powder, you gain resistance 10 to fire and resistance 5 to poison for 1 hour.

RETURNING STARKNIFE

ITEM 8

UNCOMMON MAGICAL

Price 430 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

This *returning throwing knife* is specially made for Lyrune-Quah hunters, and its blade is carved with constellations.

Ribbon Wrap ↻ (concentrate) **Frequency** once per hour; **Trigger** You deal damage to a target with the starkknife;

Effect Silver ribbons of starlight entangle the target, dealing 4d6 spirit damage. This is silver damage for the purposes of weaknesses, resistances, and the like. The target must attempt a DC 24 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage and is clumsy 1.

Failure The creature takes full damage and is immobilized for 1 round.

Critical Failure The creature takes full damage and is restrained with an Escape DC of 24.

Roc-Shaft Arrow

ROC-SHAFT ARROW

ITEM 5+

UNCOMMON CONSUMABLE MAGICAL

Ammunition arrow

Activate ◆ Interact

Each of these arrows is made from an immense roc's flight feather, most of whose vanes have been trimmed to expose the arrow's shaft. When an activated roc-shaft arrow hits a target, the arrow briefly grows a pair of avian wings and attempts to carry off the target. The target must succeed at a Fortitude save or be moved to a space you choose within an area determined by the arrow's type; if the target critically fails, the arrow can move them an additional 10 feet. If this would move the target into a hazardous space, this effect gains the incapacitation trait.

Type lesser roc-shaft arrow; **Level** 5; **Price** 24 gp

The arrow can move the target 10 feet (20 feet on a critical failure), and the Fortitude save DC is 19.

Type moderate roc-shaft arrow; **Level** 10; **Price** 160 gp

The arrow can move the target 15 feet (20 feet on a critical failure), and the Fortitude save DC is 27.

Type greater roc-shaft arrow; **Level** 15; **Price** 1,000 gp

The arrow can move the target 20 feet (30 feet on a critical failure), and the Fortitude save DC is 34.

SHADEFIELD KNIFE

ITEM 9

RARE MAGICAL

Price 650 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

This +1 *striking dagger* made of black stone is carved from the bloodstained earth of the Shadefields and carries the grudge of the Shoanti who perished on that battlefield.

Activate—Vengeful Blood ◆ (concentrate, emotion, fear, mental, visual) **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Blood seeps out of the knife, coating your hand. Enemies within 30 feet who can see this must succeed at a DC 26 Will save or become frightened 1 (frightened 1 and doomed 1 on a critical failure). The knife continues to bleed for 1 minute or until you make a successful Strike with it, which deals an additional 1d6 persistent bleed damage.

UNLIKELY WAR BEASTS

Followers of Zagresh have a history of capturing wild aurochs for use in magical experiments, taking the strongest of a herd to make the beasts even larger and more aggressive. Once the aurochs have been transformed into monstrous goliaths, their captors bard them with armored plates and magical weapons that complement their horns. In battle, these aurochs are utilized to pull siege weapons, break through enemy defenses, and trample frontline forces.



AUROCHS HERD

Massive aurochs herds roam the badlands of Belkzen, grazing upon the limited grass and plant life dispersed throughout the wasteland's valleys. Having adapted to the arid mountain terrain, aurochs herds eat a much more diverse diet of scrub and brush than their domesticated counterparts as they steadily migrate down the Flood Road. The herds show little patience for predators and demonstrate a preference for charging threats with their razor-sharp horns. Bull aurochs display natural instincts to strategically protect other, weaker members of the herd, often surprising intruders with their coordinated tactics and defensive maneuvers.

AUROCHS HERD

CREATURE 7

GARGANTUAN ANIMAL TROOP

Perception +12; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet

Skills Athletics +18, Survival +14

Str +6, **Dex** +2, **Con** +6, **Int** -5, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

AC 24; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +12, **Will** +12

HP 150 (16 squares); **Thresholds** 100 (12 squares), 50 (8 squares); **Weaknesses** area damage 10, splash damage 5

Stampede ➤ **Trigger** The aurochs herd's Hit Points drops below a threshold; **Effect** The aurochs herd uses Trample but moves in a direction directly opposite of the threat; the DC increases to 27 and the bludgeoning damage increases to 4d6+6 (prone creatures take 5d6+6 bludgeoning damage instead).

Troop Defenses (*Rage of Elements* 233)

Speed 25 feet; troop movement

Form Up ➤ (*Rage of Elements* 232)

Circle of Horns ➤ The largest males in the herd form a ring of protection around the more vulnerable members. The herd gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC until the start of its next turn.

Horn ➤ to ➤➤➤ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The aurochs herd makes a melee attack against each enemy within 5 feet (DC 22 basic Reflex save). The damage depends on the number of actions.

➤ 2d8+8 piercing damage

➤➤ 2d8+10 piercing damage

➤➤➤ 2d10+9 piercing damage

Puncturing Charge ➤➤ **Requirements** The aurochs herd has formed a Circle of Horns; **Effect** The aurochs herd Strides to an enemy and makes a Horn Strike, dealing 3d8+8 piercing damage plus Improved Knockdown.

Trample ➤➤➤ Huge or smaller, hoof (3d6+6 bludgeoning damage; prone creatures take an additional 1d6 damage), DC 25 (*Monster Core* 360; any creature that fails its save is knocked prone)

Troop Movement Whenever the aurochs herd Strides, it first Forms Up as a free action to condense into a 20-by-20-foot area (minus any missing squares,) and then moves up to its Speed. This works just like a Gargantuan creature moving; for instance, if any of the herd's squares enter difficult terrain, the extra movement cost applies to the whole troop.



BLISTERWELL OATHRISEN

Most undead are reanimated without consent, but those known as oathrisen arise willingly—at least at first. These loyal subordinates swear themselves to a cause or leader, vowing to assist even in death. Within days of their death, their oath reanimates them and restores most of their memories. In theory, an oathrisen's existence lasts no more than a year. In practice, the cause's leader might demand their service indefinitely. If denied their afterlife too long, some oathrisen turn on their former masters, afterward either becoming independent or destroying themselves.

The oathrisen presented here is a variant that frequents Blisterwell during the events of this Adventure Path. Other regions and traditions might create oathrisen with different abilities.

BLISTERWELL OATHRISEN CREATURE 7

UNCOMMON MEDIUM UNDEAD

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril, Orcish

Skills Athletics +17, Deception +15, Intimidation +15, Warfare Lore +11

Str +6, **Dex** +1, **Con** +5, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

Items +1 falchion, full plate

AC 26; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +14, **Will** +15

HP 110, void healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyze, poison, unconscious

Armored Disguise A Blisterwell oathrisen's undead nature is not obvious.

While wearing armor, an oathrisen gains a +4 circumstance bonus to its Deception checks to Impersonate a living orc and does not require a disguise kit to do so. Creatures that don't notice the disguise are not subject to the oathrisen's Frightful Presence. An oathrisen can abandon its disguise as a free action with the manipulate trait when it attempts to Demoralize a creature.

Drop the Mask Once a Blisterwell oathrisen is reduced to less than half its Hit Points, portions of its armor break off. This reduces its AC by 2, increases its Speed by 5 feet, and gives it weakness 5 to vitality damage. This also immediately exposes nearby creatures to the oathrisen's frightful presence.

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 30 feet, DC 25

Reactive Strike ⤵

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ *falchion* +18 (forceful, sweep), **Damage** 1d10+9 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed plus wound ripper

Melee ♦ fist +17 (agile, free-hand), **Damage** 1d6+9 bludgeoning plus wound ripper

Ranged ♦ whisper +15 (range 60 feet, sonic), **Damage** 4d6 sonic plus curse of whispers

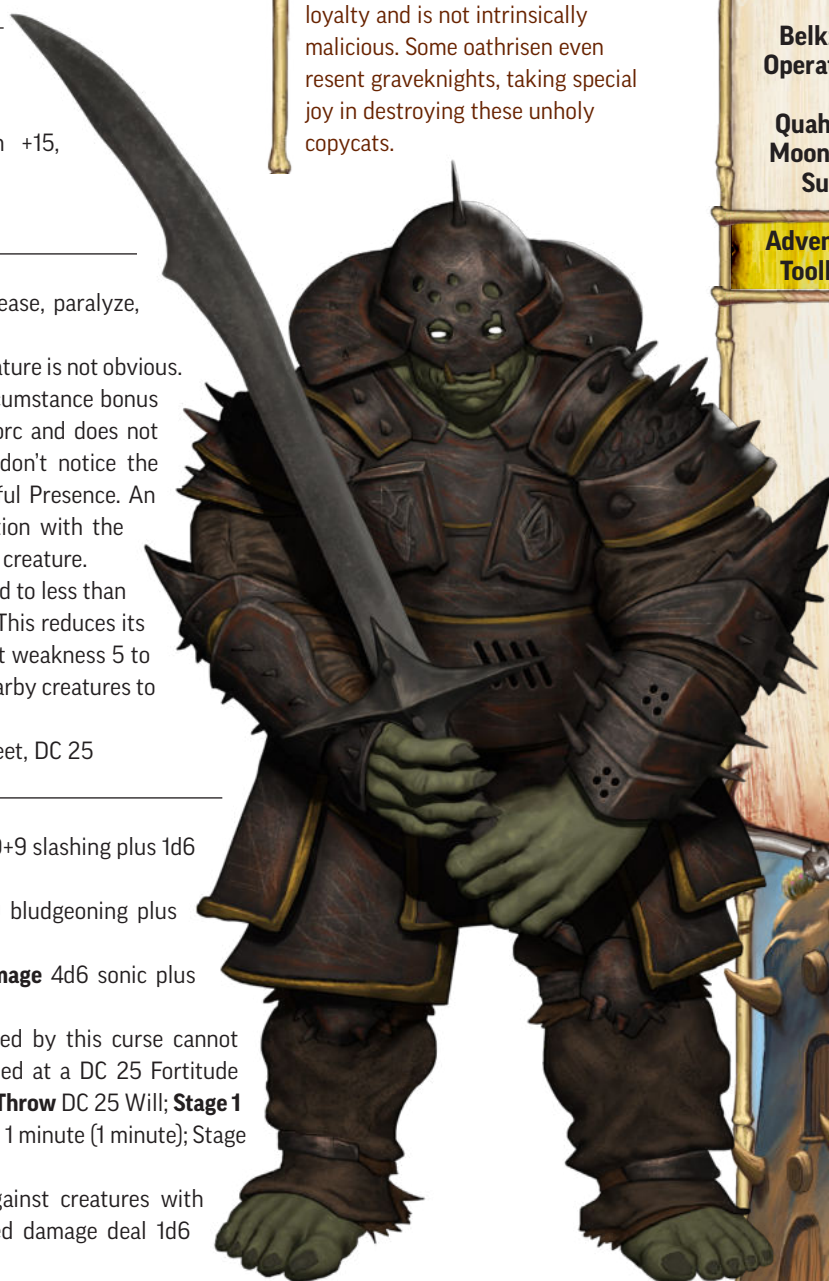
Curse of Whispers (curse, divine) A creature muffled by this curse cannot speak above a whisper. The creature must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude save to use actions with the auditory trait; **Saving Throw** DC 25 Will; **Stage 1** muffled for 1 minute (1 minute); **Stage 2** muffled for 1 minute (1 minute); **Stage 3** muffled for 1 day (1 day)

Wound Ripper A Blisterwell oathrisen's Strikes against creatures with the wounded condition or taking persistent bleed damage deal 1d6 additional precision damage.



KNIGHT BY ANOTHER NAME

An oathrisen resembles a graveknight (*Monster Core* 178)—both being heavily armored, corporeal, undead warriors. Yet a graveknight arises through its own unholy ambitions and is inextricably bound to its armor. By comparison, an oathrisen reanimates out of loyalty and is not intrinsically malicious. Some oathrisen even resent graveknights, taking special joy in destroying these unholy copycats.





ATONEMENT FOR THE DAMNED

PCs might try to calm the phantoms instead of destroying them. At the GM's discretion, the PCs may attempt skill checks to talk down the spirits. On a success, the phantom's AC lowers by 2 as they become more willing to move on from their shame and dishonor, and they might even waver in attacking the PCs. Spells or rituals like *atone* that require penitent creatures have no effect on these phantoms.

STORM SPIRITS

The ancestor storms plaguing Belkzen attract many types of dangerous ghosts, phantoms, and spirits, including the two found below.

One Eye Phantom

When the One Eye Hold betrayed Diskah Night Watcher (see Breakfast with the Elders, page 47-48), the dying shaman's anguish rippled out and bound the spirits of the traitors to the Ethereal Plane.

ONE EYE PHANTOM

CREATURE 6

RARE **MEDIUM** **ETHEREAL** **INCORPOREAL** **PHANTOM** **SPIRIT**

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Common, Orcish

Skills Intimidation +14

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

Walk the Ethereal Line ♦♦ The One Eye phantom walks the thin line between the Ethereal Plane and the Universe in order to exist on both planes simultaneously. They can shift back to solely on the Ethereal Plane by using this ability again.

AC 24; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +18, **Will** +14

HP 70; **Immunities** bleed, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision; **Resistances** all damage 5 (except force, *ghost touch*, or spirit; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Ectoplasmic Bleed If a creature hits the phantom with a melee Strike, the creature is splashed with ectoplasm, taking 2d4+7 spirit damage (DC 21 basic Reflex save). On a failure, the creature is also slowed 1.

Susceptible to Death Though phantoms aren't alive, neither are they undead, and they are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of death. A phantom whose Hit Points are reduced to 0 as a result of a death effect (such as from a spell like *execute*) is immediately whisked away to the River of Souls, where their soul resumes the usual path to afterlife.

Speed fly 25 feet

Melee ♦ phantom greatclub +17 (backswing, finesse, magical, shove), **Damage** 2d8+9 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ phantom fist +17 (agile, finesse, magical, shove), **Damage** 2d6+8 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ phantom javelin +17 (magical, thrown 30 feet), **Damage** 2d8+8 piercing

Phantom Touch (spirit) Each time they make a Strike, the One Eye phantom can choose to deal spirit damage instead of the normal physical damage type.

Skullcracker ♦♦ (concentrate, illusion, mental, occult, spirit) The One Eye phantom grabs the head of a creature as a jagged, spectral stone seeped with blood manifests before it. The One Eye phantom smashes the head of the creature against the stone with supernatural force, dealing 2d12+7 spirit damage with a DC 19 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage.

Failure The creature hallucinates that their skull has been fractured. They take full damage and are stupefied 2.

Critical Failure As failure, but double damage and stunned 1.

Moonstalker

The most tenacious hunters of the Lyrune-Quah track and kill nocturnal beasts under the light of the moon. When such a warrior perishes during the hunt, sometimes their spirit lingers and transforms into a specter of the night, refusing to move on until their prey is slain.

MOONSTALKER

CREATURE 7

RARE MEDIUM GHOST INCORPOREAL SPIRIT UNDEAD

Perception +18; darkvision

Languages Common, Orcish, Shoanti

Skills Medicine +15, Nature +15, Shadefields Lore +13, Stealth +17 (+19 in moonlight), Survival +17


Str -5, **Dex** +6, **Con** +0, **Int** +2, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +2

Site Bound The moonstalker can stray no more than 120 feet from the hunting grounds where it was slain.

AC 25 (27 in moonlight); **Fort** +10, **Ref** +18, **Will** +16


HP 90, rejuvenation, void healing; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 9 (except force, *ghost touch*, spirit, or vitality; double resistance vs. non-magical)


Cover of Night A moonstalker in an area illuminated by moonlight gains a +2 status bonus to AC and Stealth checks. In the light of a full moon, they are concealed.

Lunar Shift  **Trigger** The moonstalker is hit by a Strike; **Requirements** The moonstalker is in an area illuminated by moonlight; **Effect** The moonstalker teleports through a beam of moonlight to another moonlit space within 120 feet. This does not trigger reactions.


Rejuvenation (divine) Slaying the moonstalker's prey from their final hunt allows them to move on to the afterlife.


Speed fly 25 feet


Melee  ghostly shortsword +18 (agile, finesse, magical), **Damage** 2d6+6 void

Ranged  ghostly composite longbow +18 (agile, deadly d10, finesse, magical, propulsive, range increment 100 feet, reload 0, volley 30 feet), **Damage** 2d8+11 void

Primal Innate Spells DC 25; **1st** *alarm, fear*; **2nd** *mist*

Corrupting Gaze  The moonstalker stares at a creature it can see within 30 feet. The target takes 4d6 void damage (DC 25 basic Will save). A creature that fails its save is also stupefied 1 for 1 minute.

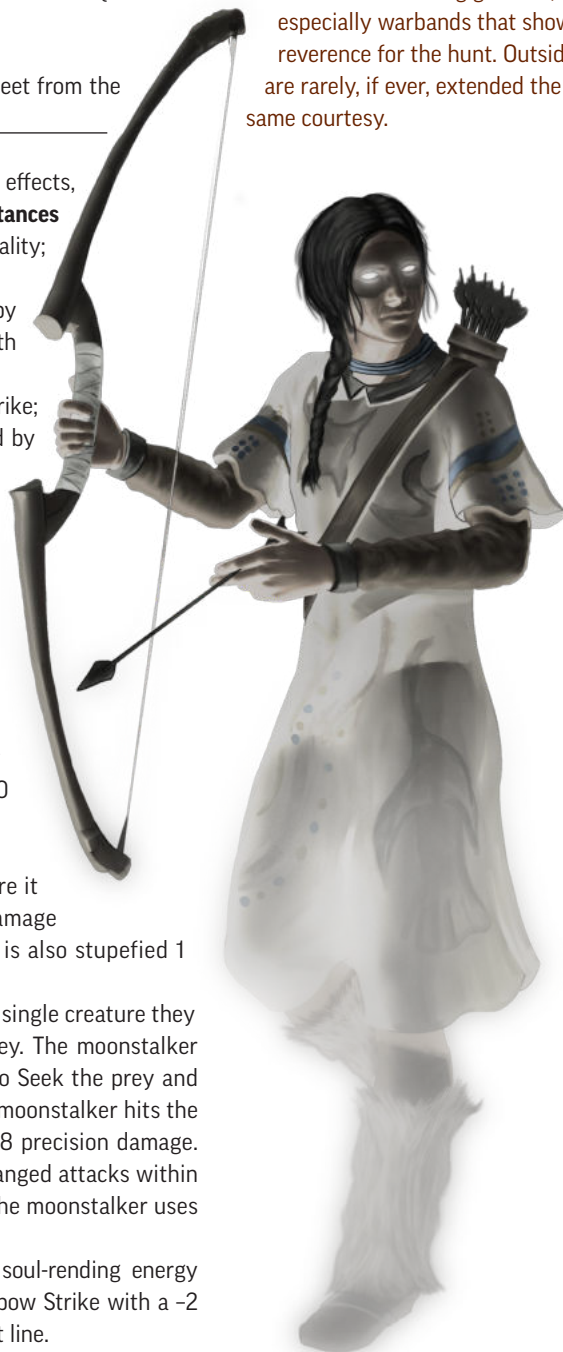
Hunt Prey  (concentrate) The moonstalker designates a single creature they can see and hear, or one they're Tracking, as their prey. The moonstalker gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to Seek the prey and to Survival checks to Track the prey. The first time the moonstalker hits the designated prey in a round, they deal an additional 1d8 precision damage. The moonstalker also ignores the penalty for making ranged attacks within their second range increment. These effects last until the moonstalker uses Hunt Prey again.

Soul Pierce  (divine, void) The moonstalker infuses soul-rending energy into a spectral arrow, making a ghostly composite longbow Strike with a -2 circumstance penalty against each creature in a 100-foot line.



LOYAL IN DEATH

Though moonstalkers retain few memories of life, their connections to their quah resonate with them even after their demise. Moonstalkers have been seen protecting living Shoanti warriors who make camp within their hunting grounds, especially warbands that show reverence for the hunt. Outsiders are rarely, if ever, extended the same courtesy.



PUPPETMASTER SERUM

Orc alchemists familiar with fleshwarping techniques have synthesized an elixir called puppetmaster extract (page 78). The elixir transforms the drinker's limb into a tentacle that can temporarily animate the dead. One must take great care when crafting the serum, as incorrectly mixed batches have been known to dissolve organs from within, cause permanent paralysis, and grow tentacles in unwanted places.



TRIGOUL

Despite the name given by orcs of the Dirt Sea, the trighoul is not a ghoul at all, but a mutagenic abomination. Its three tentacles bristle with hundreds of neural spines that let it "glide" across the sands at high speed and manipulate the nervous system of a corpse through the spinal column. Trighouls were originally created over a thousand years ago by fleshwarpers aligned with the Whispering Tyrant, giving them to raiders as weapons. While the use of trighouls is now regarded with shame and disgust, some still take advantage of the creatures to lure enemies to their deaths using the corpses of their slain comrades.

TRIGOUL

CREATURE 8

RARE **LARGE** **ABERRATION**

Perception +12; **darkvision**

Languages Aklo, Common, Necril, Orcish

Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +16, Deception +17 (+19 when manipulating a corpse), Stealth +18 (+20 in sand)

Str +4, **Dex** +6, **Con** +3, **Int** +4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

AC 27; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +19, **Will** +16

HP (body) 100

HP (tentacle) 20, tentacle regrowth; **Weaknesses** pain sensitivity; **Resistances** fire 10

Pain Sensitivity When a trighoul's tentacle is severed, it becomes stunned 1. Its Speed is reduced by 15 feet until the tentacle is regrown.

Tentacle Regrowth A trighoul ordinarily has three tentacles. A creature can attempt to sever a tentacle by specifically targeting it and dealing damage equal to the tentacle's Hit Points. A tentacle that isn't severed completely returns to full Hit Points at the end of any creature's turn. A severed trighoul tentacles regrows, restored to full Hit Points, after 1d4 rounds.

Speed 45 feet

Melee ♦ tentacle +20 (agile, finesse, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d6+6 bludgeoning plus 1d6 piercing and Improved Grab

Melee ♦ jaws +20 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d6+6 piercing

Ranged ♦ spit +20 (acid, range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** 2d8+9 acid plus 3 acid splash damage

Puppeteer Corpse ♦ (manipulate) **Requirements**

The trighoul is hidden, and there's at least one corpse within 10 feet; **Effect** The trighoul attaches a tentacle to the corpse of a Large to Small creature. That tentacle replaces its Strike with a melee corpse Strike that deals bludgeoning damage equal to the total damage dealt by its tentacle. A controlled corpse is destroyed when it takes 20 Hit Points of damage. The trighoul can detach from a corpse as a single action with the manipulate trait.

Puppet Show ♦ to ♦♦♦ (concentrate, manipulate) **Requirements** The trighoul is using Puppeteer Corpse; **Effect** The trighoul manipulates up to three corpses to silently Impersonate the living. A creature that fails to detect the deception is off-guard to the trighoul's corpse Strike. The deception ends immediately after the trighoul attacks.



WAR PIG

While not native to Belkzen, these swine instead descended from livestock raided and re-homed millennia ago during orc raids. Generations of selective breeding favored larger animals suited to Belkzen's harsh environment and fearsome predators, resulting in the modern war pig. During the flood season, these pigs gorge and grow fat, gradually consuming their reserves to become leaner and meaner during the rest of the year.

Arguably domesticated, war pigs rarely remain in captivity for more than a few generations. Most orcs loathe the notion of their swine becoming too tame, instead releasing part of their herd every year to grow fierce before recapturing them seasons later. The downside is that these feral swine associate humanoids with food. Rogue war pigs sometimes form roving gangs that uproot fields, run amok, and even knock over trade caravans to eat rations (and the occasional merchant).

The "war" in war pigs comes from their use as mounts. With the right motivation, a war pig is a porcine juggernaut able to carry a fully armored orc into combat. Without discipline, care, and treats, that same pig can become 600 pounds of willful chaos that's as likely to trample foes as it is to flee combat, find a mud puddle, and crush its rider after flopping down to vigorously wallow.



PACKING ON THE POUNDS

The statistics here depict a typical war pig. However, these swine grow 100 pounds heavier during times of plenty. To depict a fattened war pig, apply the following changes.

- Decrease its Speed by 5 feet, and decrease its Reflex save modifier to +10.
- Increase its AC by 1, its Fortitude save modifier to +18, and its Hit Points by 10.
- The war pig gains a +2 status bonus to Athletics checks to Shove creatures.

WAR PIG

CREATURE 6

LARGE ANIMAL

Perception +14; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Athletics +14, Intimidation +12, Survival +13

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

AC 23; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +12, **Will** +13

HP 110

Squealed Outrage  **Trigger** The war pig is damaged by an adjacent creature;

Effect The war pig makes a hoof Strike at the triggering creature.


Speed 35 feet

Melee  hoof +17 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+8 bludgeoning

Melee  tusk +17, **Damage** 2d8+8 piercing

Bulldoze  **Frequency** once per round;

Effect The war pig Shoves an adjacent creature, after which it can either Stride or Step.

Wallow  **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The war pig rapidly rolls over. If it has a rider, the war pig Bucks (*Monster Core* 358) as a free action. The war pig gains 1d8 temporary Hit Points for 1 minute and can then attempt an immediate flat check to recover from a single source of persistent acid, fire, or mental damage. If the war pig Wallows in an area with ample mud, water, loose soil, or similar material, the war pig instead gains 2d8 temporary Hit Points, for 1 minute and reduces the flat check DC to recover from persistent damage by 1.





Zdagren Half-Ear

Leader of a Desperate Hold

Zdagren of the One Eye Hold was born in the pits of Blisterwell and, as a child, could envision no other future than to work its mines. When the Haskodar Hold emerged from the Darklands and began competing for control of Blisterwell, the trajectory of his life changed. At first he was too young to fight on the front lines, yet Zdagren learned from numerous veterans, acting as their squire before eventually adopting his fallen mentors' armaments to reinforce the One Eye Hold's forces.

In one early battle, he gained his moniker by deflecting a decapitating blow; he kept his head, but his ear was less lucky. It seems this near-death escape granted him a sense of invulnerability—and not wholly undeserved. His bravery earned him respect, and he's demonstrated extraordinary luck when surviving overwhelming odds. Some of his most daring feats stemmed from his damaged ear, which he uses as an excuse for ignoring spoken orders or pretending not to hear his detractors. Despite his insubordination, his gambits usually worked, and he climbed Blisterwell's hierarchy to become advisor to the then-leader Molkk Dwarf-Mangler.

Orcs of the One Eye pride themselves on their ability to survive harsh conditions. That they flourished amid Blisterwell's cramped tunnels and toxic tailings was proof of their resilience. When sacrifices needed to be made to hold off the onrush of the Haskodar Hold, the One Eye orcs faced them with stoicism. But even One Eye orcs have their limits. In times of peace, conditions didn't improve. In times of war, they continually lost ground. Though Molkk had survived numerous challenges to his position, faith in his leadership eroded. Zdagren was quick to finish off his old boss by orchestrating a coup. Under Zdagren's command, the One Eye Hold has finally halted the Haskodar's progress, forcing a string of ceasefires.

Zdagren's leadership is only marginally better than his predecessor's, and as the hold's commander, he can no longer deflect blame onto Molkk. Thus it came as a welcome surprise when emissaries from the Unbroken Horn Hold offered their support on behalf of their leader, Paskis. Though the terms of the agreement weren't favorable, Zdagren convinced the other One Eye leaders that a debt to the distant Unbroken Horn Hold was preferable to destruction by their immediate enemy, the Haskodar Hold.

To oversee the arrangement, Paskis dispatched her agent, Azorena. That spellcaster didn't lead a massive army, but rather an honor guard of 13 soldiers, their faces hidden within close-faced helms. What they lacked in numbers, these oathrisen warriors (page 83) made up for with selfless tenacity, hewing apart Haskodar forces with ease. The more Zdagren studied these warriors, the more he realized they weren't mere orcs; they were undead! A soft taboo discourages animating the dead in Belkzen, fueled in part by orcs' wariness of the Whispering Tyrant and his undead minions. Azorena's high standing and necromancy suggested the Unbroken Horn had secretly allied with the lich. Yet by now, Zdagren had no other choice. The One Eye would crumble without Unbroken Horn aid, and these oathrisen would no doubt ensure his hold's destruction before departing.

With oathrisen allies, the One Eye Hold has retaken Forgettown and Freshpool, and it continues to make headway into Fort Point. The One Eye Hold have also seized the gatehouses into Blisterwell, cutting off Haskodar access to the surface. Though he considers victory in Blisterwell inevitable, Zdagren is worried. Will he be remembered as the leader who defeated the Haskodar, or the coward who sold out his hold to the Whispering Tyrant?

He doesn't realize the decision has already been made for him. Over the past few weeks, Azorena has woven a necromantic contingency around Zdagren, ensuring that even death won't end his obligations to the Unbroken Horn Hold.

Campaign Role

Zdagren Half-Ear is the primary antagonist in the second chapter of this adventure, though the PCs don't confront him face-to-face until the end of the chapter. Instead, they face his machinations to control Blisterwell, starting when his followers attempt to capture the PCs. Throughout the chapter, the PCs (and their Haskodar allies) counter his troops' movements and undermine his resources, leading to the eventual assault on his strongholds. Along the way, the PCs should also learn about Zdagren's alliance with the Unbroken Horn Hold and its undead warriors—reinforcements that have proven effective but unpopular.

If he could, Zdagren might entertain ending the alliance and defecting to Ardax's coalition. However, Zdagren feels he can't back out for numerous reasons. First, he suspects that the Haskodar Hold would evict the One Eye from Blisterwell, even if Ardax were to enforce some long-term settlement between the two holds. Second, he knows there are various agents throughout his hold—both Unbroken Horn spies and One Eye pretenders seeking his throne—who might destroy him if he falters. Finally, he has a growing, uncomfortable premonition that he's been cursed, like some *geas* he can't identify.

He's right. Upon dying, he swiftly reanimates as an elite oathrisen (page 83; *Monster Core* 6) and continues fighting the PCs. If the PCs are especially tactful and sneaky, they might use their time in Blisterwell to uncover this reanimation curse on Zdagren, negotiate a secret truce with him, and break the spell, earning the lucky orc's loyalty. This might not extend to the whole One Eye Hold, but it would allow the PCs to bypass several encounters and confront Azorena as the chapter's villain. If so, consider applying the elite adjustments to that spellcaster to make her a more imposing threat. Recommendations for breaking the curse appear on page 34 but are beyond this adventure's expected scope, requiring some GM improvisation.

ZDAGREN HALF-EAR

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE MEDIUM HUMANOID ORC

Perception +16 (+18 for initiative); darkvision

Languages Common, Hallit, Orcish, Petran

Skills Acrobatics +13, Athletics +18, Deception +16, Diplomacy +16, Intimidation +14, Society +14, Warfare Lore +14

Str +6, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Items breastplate, +1 striking orc knuckle daggers (2)

AC 26; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +12, **Will** +13 (+14 vs. auditory)

HP 110

Half-Ear's Luck ♦ **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger**

Zdagren takes a critical hit or critically fails a saving throw; **Effect** The critical hit becomes a normal hit, or the critical failure becomes a normal failure.

Reactive Strike ↻

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *orc knuckle dagger* +19 (agile, disarm), **Damage** 2d6+8 piercing

Double Slice ♦♦ Zdagren makes two Strikes against the same target, one with each of his knuckle daggers. Zdagren combines the damage of any attacks that hit and applies precision damage, resistances, and weaknesses only once. Both attacks count toward his multiple attack penalty, but the penalty increases only after both attacks.

Formation Command ♦ (auditory) Each ally within 30 feet of Zdagren can Step, or Stride up to half their Speed. Each ally can benefit from Formation Command only once per round.



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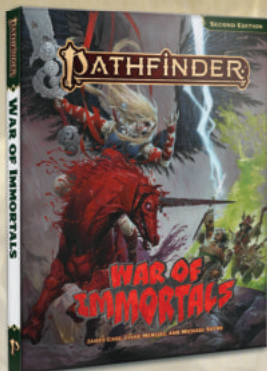
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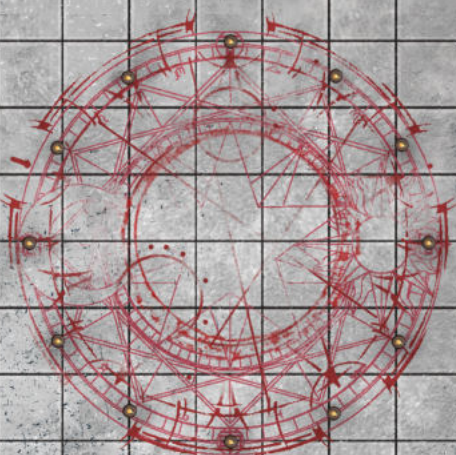
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PORPHYRY KEEP
1 SQUARE = 5 FT

J3



J4



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