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Rise of the Runelords

FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS

By Wolfgang Baur



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ADVENTURE PATH ✦ PART 4 of 6

Rise of the Runelords:

FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS



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RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



MADE OF HIT POINTS

Wolfgang Baur's been busy these days. I suspect he's always been busy, but lately it's been worse—between writing adventures for numerous companies, he's been writing adventures for and developing the ingenious Open Design project (wolfgangbaur.com/opendesign), in which paying patrons act as sponsors and even get to help shape the plot and design of his published adventures. And let's not forget launching a brand new gaming magazine, *Kobold Quarterly*, either. I knew I wanted Wolfgang to write one of the adventures for *Rise of the Runelords* when we first started plotting out the campaign, but I was worried that he'd just be too busy to be able to say yes.

Fortunately, I seem to have an ability to offer him adventures he can't say no to. Even back when we were plotting out *Savage Tide*, Wolfgang was busy—he wasn't sure if he'd have time to write one of the adventures for that campaign either, but when Erik Mona and I told him, "You'd get to stat up Iggywilv, and write encounters where the PCs are quite likely to get into fights with demon lords," his fate was sealed. Likewise with *Rise of the Runelords*. When I approached him for an installment of *Pathfinder's* first Adventure Path, he seemed hesitant. But when

I told him, "The adventure I have in mind for you is something along the lines of a spiritual sequel to the classic *Against the Giants* adventures, but with stone giants," his schedule suddenly opened right up. Wolfgang, as it turns out, has a fondness for giants.

And that fondness shows, not only in this *Pathfinder's* adventure, "Fortress of the Stone Giants," but in the giant-themed monsters Wolfgang designed for us and in the ecology-style exploration of the stone giant way of life he couldn't resist writing. I, for one, am quite grateful for it—Wolfgang's long been one of my favorite game designers, and even though I'm sitting here in the big chair at *Pathfinder*, I don't mind admitting that working with Wolfgang kind of makes me geek out a little. I mean, this guy was helping to design *Planescape* and *Al-Qadim* and running magazines and giving tieflings their names while I was back in college working at a movie theater with vague dreams of someday, maybe, working for TSR or *Wizards of the Coast*. (As destiny would have it, I sort of ended up working for both of them.)

So it's with a great deal of pride that I present to you "Fortress of the Stone Giants." Wolfgang's turned what are arguably the least-interesting of the six classic races of giants into something new and

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exciting, but at the same time, the dungeons under Jorgenfist have a decidedly old-school feel to them. In fact, for those out there who aren't running *Rise of the Runelords*, I suspect that "Fortress of the Stone Giants" would fit quite well into that old trilogy of G1-G3, maybe somewhere between Chief Nosnra of the hill giant steading and Jarl Grugnir of the glacial rift?

AGAINST THE GIANTS

I suspect that most gamers my age have memories of those old adventures *Against the Giants*. I've never played through them as a player, but I've run them as a GM more times than I can remember. In particular, I remember one Saturday afternoon how a friend and I decided to play these adventures as a one-player versus the giants campaign. He opted to play a human fighter—a bold choice in those days, since human fighters were probably the most "boring" of them all. As it turned out, Karg Skullsplitter was anything but boring. He was made out of hit points, and although he dressed like Conan, he was actually really smart. He put on airs about being dumb to lull his enemies into thinking he was little more than a thug, then ended up using all sorts of insane tactics and brilliant plans to get things done. And he did it with a huge axe.

Of course, not all of Karg's plans hinged on brilliant tactics. Even today, two decades later, I can remember him standing in the doorway to area 1A of the *Hall of the Fire Giant King*, holding off wave after wave of fire giants, hell hounds, ettins, gnolls, and even a chimera. He had to use a *heal* spell out of his *ring of spell storing*, but he pretty much carved his way through all of the giants on level one by standing in that doorway and bellowing out challenges to goad the giants into attacking him. Sometimes, being made out of hit points means you don't have to outthink the enemy.

Naturally, not every player in those games fared so well. One in particular, a halfling druid named Darryn, had this amusing (to me,

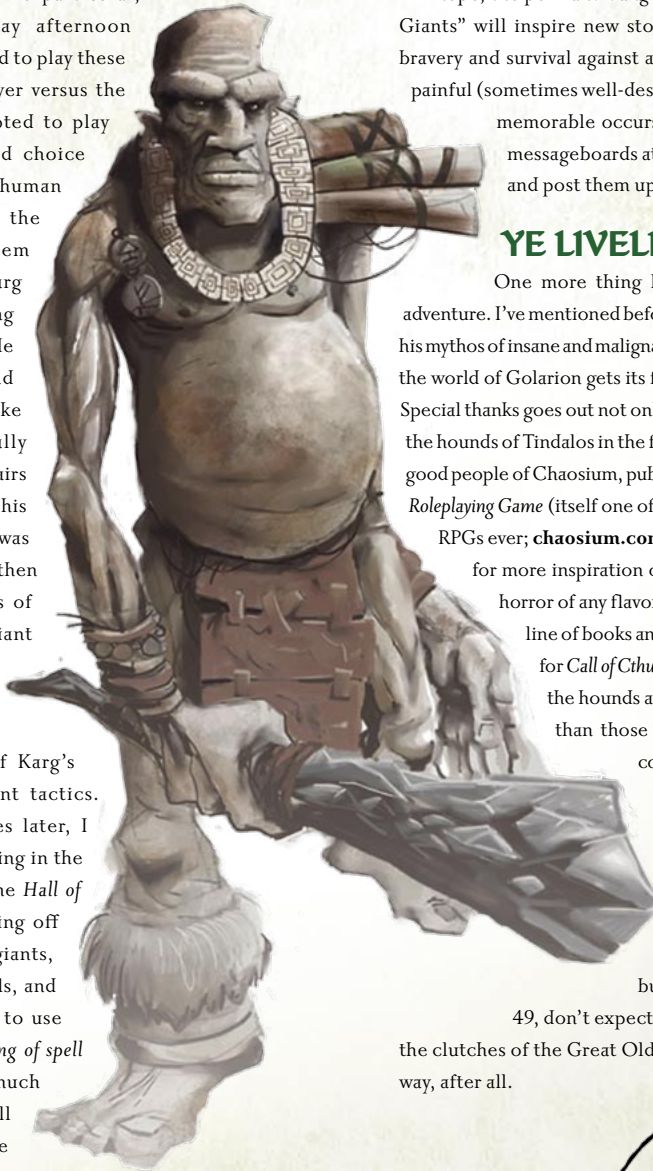
at least) knack for being savaged by dragons. His player was fond of picking on the other players for getting killed while bragging about his own invincibility, so I'm pretty sure I wasn't the only one amused that evening when he was mauled near to death by the white dragons in area 2A of the glacial rift. (Helpful Tip: Just because white dragons are the weakest of the dragons doesn't mean they're easy to kill!) And that was just the warm-up for Darryn—a few weeks later, he stumbled into the clutches of a certain red dragon named Brazzermal in area 7 of the lowest level of the *Hall of the Fire Giant King*. That time, the carnage *did* end up killing him. The resulting temper tantrum made me feel a little guilty. But only for a few seconds.

I hope, the peril and danger awaiting in "Fortress of the Stone Giants" will inspire new stories like these, tales of impressive bravery and survival against all odds as well as tales of tragic and painful (sometimes well-deserved) death. If anything particularly memorable occurs in your game, head on over to our messageboards at paizo.com/paizo/messageboards and post them up! I'd love to hear about them.

YE LIVELIEST AWFULNESS

One more thing before moving on to this volume's adventure. I've mentioned before my fondness for H. P. Lovecraft and his mythos of insane and malignant Great Old Ones, and in this volume, the world of Golarion gets its first real taste of the Cthulhu Mythos. Special thanks goes out not only to Frank Belknap Long for inventing the hounds of Tindalos in the first place, back in 1929, but also to the good people of Chaosium, publishers of the well-loved *Call of Cthulhu Roleplaying Game* (itself one of the longest-lived continually-in-print RPGs ever; chaosium.com). Any self-respecting gamer looking for more inspiration on the hounds of Tindalos (or cosmic horror of any flavor) should certainly check out the huge line of books and adventures that have been produced for *Call of Cthulhu* for more. The actual game stats for the hounds as they appear here are pretty different than those from the *Call of Cthulhu* version, of course, but flavor transcends rules.

We'll be returning to Lovecraft country later on in *Rise of the Runelords*, and eventually Lovecraft fans should be seeing some familiar names over in the GameMastery adventures as well, but as I explain in more detail on page 49, don't expect Golarion to fall too completely into the clutches of the Great Old Ones. A little Lovecraft goes a long way, after all.



James

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RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS: CHAPTER FOUR

The stone giants of the Storval Plateau have traditionally been a stabilizing element among their kind, a voice of moderation and temperance among brutish thugs like hill giants, ogres, and ettins. Where these lesser races might go to war for the slightest of reasons, the stone giants preach caution and patience. Yet now, one of their own has fallen from the path of tradition. Lord Mokmurian has become the pawn of Runelord Karzoug, and now that one stone giant has swayed his people to war, Varisia might never be the same.

FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In stone giant society, those born with an innate magical ability are often marked. Although these markings border on deformities, the stone giant gifted with sorcerous power can expect a role of honor and power in his tribe. The disadvantage of unsightly crystalline growths on the skin or a diminished physical stature are outweighed by the increase in social status and respect.

When the stone giant Mokmurian was born, his parents were thus pleased with his diminutive stature. Mokmurian grew slowly, and as he became a young adult he stood barely more than ten feet tall. His parents and kin waited anxiously for him to develop the magical powers his deformity promised, yet Mokmurian had a secret he dared not reveal. He knew he had no burgeoning inborn magical ability. He knew he was nothing more than an unsightly runt. And he knew that when he reached full adulthood without developing the gifts of the elders or sorcerous talent he would be shamed and likely exiled.

So Mokmurian fell to study, secretly poring over the texts of spellbooks taken from adventurers or taboo magical writings preserved in stone from the days of Thassilon. It took him years, but eventually the self-taught wizard mastered the art of magic. Casting spells as a wizard but hiding his need to study, he successfully posed as a sorcerer to his tribe for nearly three decades. It wasn't until he took a wife that his charade collapsed, for when she discovered his hidden spellbooks, she confronted Mokmurian in rage and shame. In desperation, he killed her with his magic, but before he could conceal his crime, his tribe's elders found out. They burnt his books, censured him as a traitor, and exiled him into the wild.

Humiliated, enraged, and alone, Mokmurian wandered the Storval Plateau. Forced to conserve his prepared spells for emergencies and harried constantly by stone giant hunters and scouts, Mokmurian decided to seek solace in one of his people's taboo lands—the Vale of the Black Tower. This ancient Thassilonian ruin held memories of his people's slavery, and the giants avoided it as a result. Mokmurian found the place to be strangely soothing, and when he discovered not only a network of caves below the site, but an ancient library of Thassilonian lore, he knew he had finally found home.

Mokmurian spent several years more studying the magic of the library, organizing its holdings, and translating the ancient texts. All the while, as he grew more powerful, the seething seed of humiliation festered. His need to return to his tribe and show them just how powerful he became entangled with a growing sense of entitlement to all of Varisia. He had learned that most, if not all, of the land's mighty monuments had been built by his enslaved ancestors, yet now, much of the land was infested with humanity—insects who cared little for the land's history and who treated his ancestors' stony triumphs as curiosities at best or foundations for their cities at worst.

In his studies, Mokmurian learned also of the runelords and their mighty cities. Most of these cities were gone, sunk under the seas or all but destroyed by the catastrophe that laid low Thassilon so long ago. Yet rumors persisted that one of these ancient cities had survived through the ages—Xin-Shalast, the

city of greed. Mokmurian grew obsessed with it. If he'd found such power and secrets in this one remote Thassilonian ruin, how much treasure and lore might await him in a lost city? Mokmurian devoted the next ten years of his life to the search for Xin-Shalast, and when he finally discovered the site of the ancient city, he was not disappointed.

Yet Xin-Shalast was not abandoned. Where once dwelt the armies and artisans of Runelord Karzoug now lived monsters—cruel and bickering factions of lamias, flights of dragons, degenerate tribes of skulking humanoids, pockets of immortal devils bound to ancient ruins, and even bands of bitter cloud giants. Relying on his now considerable wizardly power, Mokmurian made the dangerous journey to the spires of Xin-Shalast, high on the face of the mountain called Mhar Massif. Following upon fragments and legends he'd gleaned from his studies, he made his way to Runelord Karzoug's tomb. Hoping to find the greatest treasures and magic of Xin-Shalast, Mokmurian opened the ancient tomb, and in so doing, sealed his own fate.

Karzoug was unable to fully awaken simply due to one ambitious giant's tinkering—the runelord's release from hibernation required much more elaborate and complex magical rituals. Originally, these rituals were to be performed by Karzoug's surviving apprentices and minions, yet the fall of Thassilon left none to undertake these tasks. In Mokmurian, Karzoug had his first window to reality in 10,000 years, and the slumbering wizard struck with fierce and desperate power. Mokmurian felt Karzoug enter his mind and soul, and his fate from that point on was no longer his own—his one driving goal became Karzoug's revival.

Now the runelord's puppet, Mokmurian found himself in command of even more power as the lamias of Xin-Shalast pledged their loyalty to him. With this army, Mokmurian descended from the city back onto the Storval Plateau and to the Vale of the Black Tower. He and his lamias claimed the tunnels below as their lair, fortifying the land above, and calling it Jorgenfist. Over the course of several years, Mokmurian united the stone giants of the plateau under his banner. His rallying call of taking back the lands of the ancestors and claiming the stolen treasures of Thassilon found fertile soil in the minds of these tribes' young soldiers, and those elders who opposed Mokmurian's near-heretical call were too slow and mired in tradition to react quickly enough to stem his recruitment. Before they realized the scope of what he was doing, their tribes had abandoned their traditions for the siren call of glory and riches.

Today, Mokmurian has gathered hundreds of giants to his side in Jorgenfist—giants ready and eager to take back the treasures of Thassilon for themselves, yet unknowingly little more than components for Karzoug's return. For all of these new recruits have been branded with the Sihedron Rune, and even if they fall in combat in the coming war, their souls will be put to the runelord's use.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins with the party caught in the middle of a hasty defense of the town of Sandpoint; the PCs must help

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turn aside a raid by a warband of stone giants. The PCs' help in Sandpoint's defense determines how many of Sandpoint's citizens are kidnapped, how much of the city is razed, and what their goals are for the rest of the adventure.

After the PCs repulse the giants, they learn that this was just a scouting party. The full army is still marshalling in the mountains of the Storval Plateau, where one encampment has become a rallying point against humanity. It is to here, the fortress of Jorgenfist, that the giants return with their captives. If the PCs can strike at the commanders of this fortress of stone giants they can save Varisia from invasion.

The PCs must undertake an arduous journey into the wilderness to reach Jorgenfist-controlled lands on the Storval Plateau. Once there, they discover that the giants are readying the tribes for a massive attack on the human-dominated lands to the south. Only by defeating Mokmurian, the eldritch leader of these giants, can they disrupt these plans.

At the end, the PCs defeat Mokmurian and discover that he is Karzoug's agent. Worse, by killing as many greedy giants as the PCs did in this adventure, they have unwittingly provided Karzoug with the last batch of souls he needs to complete his awakening. There is still time to stop him, as even a mighty runelord cannot fully regain his powers immediately after sleeping for thousands of years. Before Karzoug can rise again, the PCs must take steps to defeat him and destroy his *runewell*, the source of the arcane energies that have sustained him for millennia.

Fortunately, by defeating Mokmurian and gaining access to the ancient Thassilonian library deep under the fortress, the PCs also learn the only way to destroy Karzoug's *runewell*: it must be shattered from within by weapons etched and enhanced by magic that opposes the arcane power of greed using something called a *runeforge*.

The PCs should be 10th level when they begin "Fortress of the Stone Giants," and they should gain enough experience to reach 11th level by the time they're ready to delve into the dungeons below the fortress.

PART ONE: STONES OVER SANDPOINT

As this adventure begins, rumors of increased giant activity in the lowlands of Varisia are on everyone's tongue. The stories speak of remote villages attacked by hill giants mounted on trumpeting elephants, of platoons of ogres raiding remote farms and eating everyone, and of bands of stone giants pressing ever southward through the Malgorian Mountains, Churlwood, and even down along the Lost Coast. None of the larger towns along the Lampblack River or Ember Lake have reported attacks from giants, but the growing number of sightings at the fringes of civilization are enough to cause Magnimar's standing army to take notice. Patrols have increased along the Lost Coast Road, the Dry Way, and the Lampblack Trail. Signs of giants are there—immense footprints, houses crushed to splinters, and second hand tales of sightings by hermits and hunters. Yet so far, the giants have not engaged in a full-on attack.

That changes soon enough.

These giants have avoided large confrontations for a purpose—they're on preliminary scouting missions in Varisia to gauge the lay of the land, not to take prisoners and raze towns. In all, there are less than a dozen scouting parties of giants active in western Varisia, spread from the Chavali River to the north and along the Malgorian Mountains to the east. Charged with determining the basic defensive capacities of Varisia's settlements as well as with seeking out allies among the lowland ogres and goblinoids, the scouting parties purposefully avoid encounters with patrols. Perhaps the most successful patrols are those comprised primarily of stone giants—their skill at hiding among rocky terrain allows them to use the Malgorian Mountains and the Fogscar Mountains as blinds to move deeply into Varisia without being seen. Lord Mokmurian hopes to gather much intelligence about the region before he marches his armies down from the Storval Plateau and into Varisia, and he has expressly forbidden most of the scouting parties from interacting in any major way with the natives in hopes of minimizing chances that the people of Varisia catch wind of what's in store for them. Yet one scouting party in particular is poised to break that silence.

Sandpoint has a special place in Karzoug's (and thus Mokmurian's) plans, for thousands of years ago, one of Karzoug's greatest spies was stationed there at a structure known as a Hellfire Flume, where he served as a double agent in Runelord Alaznist's army. This spy was a man named Xaliasa, and in life one of Karzoug's closest confidants. Yet as Thassilon's rule waned, the pressure of Xaliasa's mission drove him mad and, in the end, this madness betrayed Karzoug. The runelord did not divulge to Mokmurian details beyond hints that Xaliasa had something to do with a place called "Runeforge." Karzoug did make clear that Mokmurian should reduce the site to nothing more than dust and ashes.

Yet first, Mokmurian needed to determine which of the Hellfire Flume ruins was the right one. After much research, Mokmurian narrowed the possibilities down to four different sites along the Lost Coast. He ordered the leader of one of the raiding parties, a giant named Teraktinus, to gather stones from the hearts of these four ruins, one of which happens to be the Old Light of Sandpoint. Once these four stones are secured, Mokmurian hopes to have a stone giant eldar named Conna use *stone tell* on them, and in so doing determine which ruin marks Xaliasa's grave so that, when his army marches, he can take special care in destroying this particular site for his master.

Of course, Teraktinus doesn't intend to simply rob Sandpoint of one simple stone block—he's already whipped his giants into a frenzy of greed with promises of wealth awaiting plunder on the morning.

Return to Sandpoint

If the PCs have already returned to their hometown of Sandpoint before this adventure begins, you can proceed immediately with the raid on Sandpoint. It's possible, though, that the PCs are elsewhere when you're ready to begin this adventure, especially if they decided to become the caretakers of Fort Rannick at the

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conclusion of “The Hook Mountain Massacre.” In this case, you should arrange to have them return to Sandpoint so they are in town when Teraktinus comes calling. Listed below are two ways you can lure the PCs back to town.

- Shalelu Andosana, Sandpoint’s unofficial hinterlands guardian, finds evidence of giant activity in the region. She contacts her closest friend among the PCs, using a *scroll of animal messenger* if necessary, and asks the group to return to Sandpoint—she’s got a hunch that trouble of a much larger variety than goblins is brewing.
- If you’ve extended the timeline of your campaign and a year has passed since “Burnt Offerings,” the PCs could be invited back to town to take part in Sandpoint’s newest festival: Goblin Day. A celebration of the defeat of the Thistletop goblins, Goblin Day centers around a parade in which children dressed as goblins march up Festival Street and High Street to gather in the northern square out in front of the cathedral. Mayor Deverin wants the PCs to attend so they can regale Sandpoint with tales of their adventures over the previous year.

Sandpoint Today

Before you begin “Fortress of the Stone Giants,” give the PCs some time to visit Sandpoint if they’ve been away for a time. This is a great moment to let the PCs feel like heroes—while the citizens of Sandpoint have gone on with their lives, the PCs have broken up cults of murderers, defeated a clan of deadly ogres, explored Thassilonian ruins, and tangled with legendary monsters from the deep. They’ve become legends to the folk of Sandpoint—but that doesn’t mean that everyone in town is friendly to them. Feel free to have old rivalries and feuds with locals like Ven Vinder or the Scarnettis flare up during this visit.

March of the Giants

The stone giant Teraktinus and his allies spend their days hiding in the plentiful tors and rock outcroppings that dot the Lost Coast, moving further south each night. When the patrol finally nears Sandpoint, though, Teraktinus prepares to raid the town. They will launch their assault on Sandpoint at dawn, so the humans can behold their fury and glory in perfect clarity.

Mokmurian has remained in contact with Teraktinus via daily *sending* spells, and when he learns that the giants have arrived at Sandpoint, sends his red dragon ally Longtooth out to aid Teraktinus. Longtooth reaches Teraktinus’s camp the night before the raid on Sandpoint is scheduled to begin.

On the morning of the raid, any PC who is out and about at sunrise can make a DC 30 Spot check—success indicates that he spots several humanoid silhouettes standing atop the nearest tors of Ravenroost, lit by the rising sun. The size of these shapes should leave little doubt to any PCs who spot them—the giants are here!

Once the sun rises, the giants move quickly down from Ravenroost and approach Sandpoint, using the woods and the cliffs along the Turandarok River to mask their approach. If the PCs don’t spot the giants on the tors, no one else in town does

either, and the raid begins as outlined below. If the PCs do notice the giants, they have about ten minutes to prepare. Depending on the nature of these preparations, they might be able to prevent even more citizens of Sandpoint from being taken.

The Raid Begins

If the PCs are caught unprepared for the attack on Sandpoint, they first notice the giants’ proximity when a thunderous crack of stone against stone rings through the air—one of the more exuberant giants throwing a boulder at Sandpoint’s north wall. As Sandpoint wakes and discovers itself under attack, screams and cries of terror mingle with the growing howls and roars of the attacking giants. By the time anyone makes it to the cathedral and rings the bells in warning, the raid is fully underway.

The attacking warband consists of 12 stone giants, three dire bears, Longtooth, and Teraktinus. If Teraktinus were a better tactician, or if the giants worked together in this raid, they’d likely be unstoppable. Fortunately for Sandpoint and the PCs, the impulsive young giants split along tribal lines, falling into small groups that assault the town with little attempt at coordinating the timing of their efforts with one another. Since the giants approach initially from the northeast, the first events of the raid occur there, while additional attacks begin to appear further south soon thereafter.

Each of these incursions on Sandpoint are detailed on the following pages. The first assault occurs at the northern wall—the giants there take several rounds to taunt and harass the guards frantically trying to defend the wall. You can assume that when the PCs arrive at that location, that’s Round 1 of the raid. Each new development during the raid occurs at a set round some time later. If the PCs are fast and efficient, they should be able to keep up with each new development and handle them as they occur. If they end up getting distracted or take too long at one event, they could find that two or three more have begun and might have to pick and choose which threat to answer and which to allow to run its course. Repercussions of any raid events the PCs don’t respond to properly are summarized in the development section for each event.

During any of these battles, the PCs might wish to recruit the aid of some of Sandpoint’s guards. Unfortunately, these brave souls are ill-prepared to face foes as deadly as giants. A few of Sandpoint’s locals actually have class levels—if the PCs have befriended any of them (such as Sheriff Hemlock, Father Zantus, Shalelu Andosana, or Ameiko Kaijitsu), they might come to the PCs’ aid. Since there’s no way to really predict who these NPCs might be in your campaign (or indeed, who’s even still alive), this adventure assumes that the PCs receive no real aid from the town of Sandpoint in the following encounters.

Round 1: The Northgate Siege (EL 11)

Three giants dressed in thick pelts heft huge rocks pulled from the ground. Periodically, one hurls a rock against Sandpoint’s northern gate. The iron-reinforced oak timbers splinter and crack as the stones hit it, but so far, the gate holds.

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Creatures: Although Teraktinus warned these three young giants to wait for Longtooth's initial flight over Sandpoint to launch their attack, the giants were too excited about the raid, and once the youngest of the three saw a human moving around on the wall, he tossed a rock. Although they've revealed their presence now, the three giants wait until they see Longtooth's opening strafe of the town before they make any real attempt to take the wall.

When the PCs arrive, the giants are about 200 feet up the road from the gate, calling out taunts and jeers in broken Common to the terrified guards who cower behind the wall and frantically move wagons into place to help barricade and reinforce the gate.

STONE GIANTS (3)

CR 8

hp 119 each (MM 124)

TACTICS

During Combat As soon as the PCs bring any sort of significant force against these three giants, their taunts end immediately and they move forward to fight.

Morale As soon as one of the three giants is slain, the survivors panic and flee back to their base camp in the Ravenroost tors.

Development: This encounter is, in a way, intended to be a distraction. Fighting the giants here does little to help the city itself, since the giants, if left to their own devices, waste a lot of time demolishing the gate and walls. By the time the raid is over, they've only barely begun to raid the town and are forced to retreat before taking any prisoners or doing much more damage than destroying the wall itself. The PCs can break off combat with this group or ignore them entirely without much impact on the rest of town.

Round 7: Chaos at Tanner's Bridge (EL 12)

The east side of the town is poorly arranged for defense, with no city wall to speak of and only the languid flow of the Turandarok River to slow attackers. The river itself is only 10 feet deep here, shallow enough for stone giants and dire bears to wade through just south of the northernmost bridge into town.

Creatures: When the giants to the north start throwing boulders, a pair of stone giants using the trees in the swamp on the north side of the Mill Pond as cover emerge onto the road at the east side of Tanner's Bridge, assuming that they just couldn't see Longtooth's initial flight over Sandpoint due to the intervening rise of the rivers' northern bank. Unless someone opposes them, this group storms over Tanner's Bridge, driving their trained dire bears before them, and set to gathering prisoners at once.

STONE GIANTS (2)

CR 8

hp 119 each (MM 124)

DIRE BEARS (3)

CR 7

hp 105 each (MM 63)

Development: This group of giants and bears has orders to rove down River Street and prevent anyone from escaping town to the east. At the same time, they do what they can to rob riverfront businesses and catch several locals as prisoners. Each giant carries a large leather bag, in which he can carry up to three human-sized prisoners slung over his back (in which case at least one of the prisoners should be a named NPC like Das Korvut or Larz Rovanky; see *Pathfinder* #1). Defeating the giants before Round 25 prevents these prisoners from being taken and allows bucket brigades to form and help contain the spread of fires.

Round 8: Dragonfire Inferno (EL 10)

Creature: Longtooth doesn't follow the giants on foot as they approach Sandpoint; his greater speed in the air affords him the luxury of waiting for the visual signal of the giants being in place to swoop down to attack. His keen eyesight allows him to see the premature assault on the northern gate, and he launches into the air at once—it takes him 8 rounds to reach Sandpoint.

Once he arrives in town, Longtooth gleefully swoops and flaps over Sandpoint. This is his first real attack on a human settlement, and he spends as much time roaring and periodically landing on the roofs of sturdy buildings to glower and menace as he does actually breathing fire or gulping up fleeing citizens. On Round 8 of the raid, he swoops in from the north and breathes fire on the Sandpoint Garrison—the building is mostly stone, so it weathers the attack better than Longtooth's targets in the succeeding rounds.

The dragon wheels and circles, swooping in to breathe fire on a new building once every 4 rounds. The list of his targets during the rest of the raid are as follows:

Round 12—Sandpoint Cathedral: While the northern wings of the cathedral catch fire quickly, the southern section is relatively fireproof. Longtooth alights on the roof of the cathedral for 2 rounds to roar and mock the town before taking to the air again.

Round 16—Sandpoint Theater: The bright colors of this building prove too tempting a target; once Longtooth breathes on it, the building catches fire quickly. Cyrdak Drokus uses his bardic music to aid attempts to quell the fire, but without assistance, the theater is doomed.

Round 20—The Hagfish: Longtooth lands on the beach just west of the Hagfish and lights both it and the nearby docks (and a ship, the *Wistful Widow*) on fire, then spends the next three rounds catching and eating people trying to escape from the burning buildings.

Round 24—Salmon Street: Longtooth strafes southern Sandpoint, setting fire to the Sandpoint Mercantile League, Fatman's Feedbag, and all of the buildings surrounding Shark Alley.

Once a wooden building is on fire, chances of it burning to the ground are strong. The citizens of Sandpoint can organize bucket brigades that can contain the fire, but they can do little to save the buildings the dragon targets directly with his breath weapon. Saving a building from burning down requires PC intervention in the form of magic. *Quench* is the most efficient

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way of stopping a fire. *Gust of wind* can extinguish a fire if applied within a round of the dragon's initial breath weapon attack. *Pyrotechnics* can convert a fire to harmless smoke and light if cast on a burning building within 4 rounds of the fire starting—each 4 rounds (or fraction thereof) the fire continues to burn requires an additional *pyrotechnics* spell. *Cone of cold* or *sleet storm* can extinguish any fire, provided the spell's area of effect can encompass the entire building. Additional spells and effects might work, subject to GM approval.

Of course, the best way to prevent Longtooth from lighting these devastating fires is to kill him or drive him off. His flight gives him superior mobility, but at several points during the raid he lands on the ground to eat a few victims—these are excellent times for PCs who lack the ability to fly to attack the dragon. Longtooth is proud and arrogant, and if a PC can taunt him effectively (with a successful Intimidate check or a DC 30 Bluff check) or attract his attention with an attack that deals more than 20 points of damage with a single shot, he swoops down to breathe fire on the PC and then fight in melee.

LONGTOOTH**CR 10**

Male juvenile red dragon

CE Large dragon (fire)

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses, low-light vision; Listen +21, Spot +21**DEFENSE****AC** 28, touch 9, flat-footed 28

(+4 armor, +15 natural, -1 size)

hp 168 (16d12+64)**Fort** +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +12**Immune** fire, paralysis, sleep**Weakness** vulnerable to cold**OFFENSE****Spd** 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)**Melee** bite +26 (2d6+10) and

2 claws +24 (1d8+5) and

2 wings +23 (1d6+5) and

tail slap +23 (1d8+14)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)**Special Attacks** breath weapon (40 ft. cone, 8d10 fire damage, Reflex DC 22 half)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 4th)

4/day—locate object

Spells Known (CL 3rd)1st (6/day)—*mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *true strike*0 (6/day)—*arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 12), *mage hand*,*open/close***TACTICS****Before Combat** Longtooth casts *mage armor* before the raid begins.**During Combat** Though Longtooth has not yet acquired the frightful presence aura of a grown dragon, he's still plenty terrifying for any commoner or non-heroic citizen of the city. If forced into melee, Longtooth is fond of using *true strike* followed by a full Power Attack to maximize damage against a single foe. He uses *ray of enfeeblement*

against foes who seem able to hit him particularly hard.

Morale Longtooth abandons the raid and flees back to Jorgenfist to lick his wounds in area **A5** if reduced to less than 50 hit points.**STATISTICS****Str** 29, **Dex** 10, **Con** 19, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 14**Base Atk** +16; **Grp** +29**Feats** Hover, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (claw)**Skills** Appraise +21, Bluff +21, Concentration +21, Intimidate +23, Jump +32, Listen +21, Search +21, Spot +21**Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant**Other Gear** *amulet of mighty fists* +1

Treasure: Longtooth carries some of his treasure with him at all times; he finds it reassuring to feel wealth against his scales. This includes a gold-and-amber ring worth 500 gp, his obsidian *+1 amulet of mighty fists*, and an enormous silver armband worth 2,500 gp. The rest of his treasure is kept safe in his high mountain cave (area **A5**), near the Jorgenfist fortress.

Development: If the party kills or drives away Longtooth, Sandpoint avoids a serious fire that burns half the town, which would leave much of the population without shelter and its dock district in ruins. Instead, the city suffers only a few burnt-out houses, all quickly extinguished by quick-acting citizens and bucket brigades from the river and harbor.

Round 9: Mill Pond (EL 12)

Three giants with huge tree-trunk clubs reach through second-story windows and pull citizens out of their homes, knocking some over the head and shackling others together with leg irons. "More prisoners!" they yell. "Bring us your fat, greedy merchants, and we will spare your miserable lives! Fail, and you'll burn in dragon fire!"

Creatures: Teraktinus himself (along with his two favorite stone giant henchmen) approaches Sandpoint from the east, emerging from the woods to take up a position just at the southern end of the Mill Pond on the eastern bank of the river. Teraktinus had his two allies haul armloads of throwing stones down from the tors, and as they deposit the deadly missiles on the ground, Teraktinus bellows out his challenge, then he and his two allies begin bombarding Sandpoint with their boulders.

TERAKTINUS**CR 10**

Male stone giant ranger 2

CE Large giant (earth)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +9, Spot +8**DEFENSE****AC** 29, touch 12, flat-footed 27

(+6 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dexterity, +11 natural, -1 size)

hp 168 (16d8+96)**Fort** +18, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6**OFFENSE****Spd** 40 ft.**Melee** +1 *dwarf bane heavy pick* +21/+16/+11

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(1d8+11/19–20/x4) and
+1 pick +21 (1d6+6/19–20/x4)

Ranged rock +13/+8/+3 (2d8+15)

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

Special Attacks favored enemy
(dwarf +2)

TACTICS

During Combat Teraktinus leaves the bombardment of Sandpoint to his allies, and wastes no time in carrying out his own mission. He makes his way through Sandpoint toward the Old Light—if no one stands in his way, he reaches the ruins on round 20, spends five rounds digging through the ruins for a good-sized stone for Mokmurian, then sounds the call for retreat with his war horn. If anyone gets in his way, he proves quite creative at finding things to throw at his enemies—chimneys, pieces of buildings, and wagons work as well as thrown rocks in a pinch. In any event, foes brave enough to stand in his way insult him enough that he abandons his mission long enough to try to kill them. If faced with particularly powerful foes, he uses his war horn to summon aid (Longtooth if the dragon’s still available; or the closest group of giants otherwise).

Morale Teraktinus fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 14, **Con** 23, **Int** 8, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +26

Feats Improved Critical (heavy pick, light pick), Power Attack, Quick Draw, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (heavy pick, light pick)

Skills Hide –2 (+6 in rocky terrain), Listen +9, Spot +8, Survival +12

Languages Common, Dwarven, Giant

SQ rock catching, wild empathy +4

Gear +2 hide shirt, +1 dwarfbane heavy pick, +1 light pick, ring of protection +1, war horn

STONE GIANTS (2)

CR 8

hp 119 each (MM 124)

Development: The stony bombardment damages several buildings—each round the bombardment continues, 1d3 citizens are slain from collateral damage. Each of the giants can make off with up to three human-sized prisoners in their bags if they are able to raid the town unopposed.

Round 12: Beer or Death (EL 10)

Two giants shout threats at Two Knight Brewery, their voices booming and insistent. “If you don’t give us all the beer, we’ll smash you flat!” shouts one of them. Another throws a stone at the building. “Beer or death! Your choice!”

Creatures: These two stone giants are late to the raid after they stopped to chase a farmer heading into town. When they arrive, they approach from the southern Lost Coast Road. Seeing the raid in full swing, they barrel across the bridge but are immediately distracted again—this time by the delicious smell of beer wafting out of Two Knight Brewery.

Their voices, booming and insistent, carry well over the chaos of the raid. As one shouts, the other rips up from the ground the “Welcome to Sandpoint” sign and hurls it at the brewery.

STONE GIANTS (2)

CR 8

hp 119 each (MM 124)

Development: These giants waste all their time at the brewery, and if the PCs ignore them, the building is destroyed. On round 25, the giants catch Gaven Deverin and, recognizing his holy symbol of Abadar as one of the signs they’ve been told to look for when

harvesting greedy prisoners, gleefully stuff him into a barrel and flee back to Jorgenfist.

Round 16: Looting Scarnetti Manor (EL 11)

On this round and each succeeding round, have all of the PCs who are outside and have a view of Schooner Gulch Bluff make DC 25 Spot checks. With a success, a character notices smoke rising from what can only be Scarnetti Manor.

Creatures: Three stone giants have swung wide so as to approach Sandpoint from the south—the approach resulted in their late arrival, but should allow them relative freedom in looting the manor houses and capturing nobles. Two of the giants pull a large wagon between them that they intend on filling with prisoners and loot, and while they actually arrive at Scarnetti Manor on Round 10 of the raid, the smoke rising from a tipped-over wood stove that starts a fire doesn’t alert characters in town to the attack until Round 16, at the earliest.

STONE GIANTS (3)

CR 8

hp 119 each (MM 124)

Treasure: These giants have already loaded a lot of treasure into their wagon, including four woven silk tapestries worth 1,200 gp each; three chests of silver- and gold-inlaid tableware worth 1,000 gp in all; barrels of wine, brandy, and olive oil worth a total of 1,400 gp; and a teakwood desk inlaid with silver and gold worth 600 gp. Unfortunately, all of this belongs to the Scarnetti family. Even if the Scarnettis have become the PCs’ enemies, they’ll gratefully reward the PCs if the party can prevent these giants from kidnapping the entire family, paying a reward of 1,000 gp.



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If the PCs bother to search the teakwood desk and make a DC 30 Search check, they find a hidden compartment that contains several letters addressed to Titus Scarnetti from local crime lord Jubrayl Vhiski that reveal not only the fact that Titus hired Jubrayl to burn down several grain mills in the region (therefore ensuring that Scarnetti's own mill in town would gain more business), but that Jubrayl has reversed the attack and is now blackmailing the Scarnetti family for regular payments, lest he reveal to Sheriff Hemlock that Scarnetti paid one of his boys to light those fires. If the PCs present this evidence to Sheriff Hemlock and Mayor Deverin, the Scarnetti family is all but ruined and the grateful town of Sandpoint scrapes up a reward of 2,000 gp for the PCs for the resolution to the troubling arsons. Alternatively, the Scarnettis themselves would pay up to 3,000 gp to the PCs to keep them quiet if the PCs come to them first with this evidence.

Development: If the party defeats the warband raiding the nobles' homes, they save the Scarnetti family from being carried off and stop the looting of the manor house. Such an event might be the only thing to patch up any long-standing feuds the PCs might have with the surly and cantankerous nobles.

Round 25: Retreat!

From the giants' point of view, the raid is a success if they manage to continue for 25 rounds. At this point, Teraktinus blows his

horn to signal the retreat. The surviving giants flee back into the tors and, over the next several days, make their way back to Jorgenfist with their prisoners and treasure. The PCs might be able to track them down and defeat them before the giants can return, of course.

The raid fails if the giants are all slain or if their morale is shaken enough that they rout. Not every giant needs to be slain to force a rout. In fact, as soon as any two of the following three conditions are met, the remaining giants drop everything and flee back into the tors, abandoning the raid entirely.

- Teraktinus is slain.
- Longtooth is slain or forced to flee back to Jorgenfist.
- At least eight giants and dire bears (in any combination) are slain.

The Prisoner

Once the raid is over, the question on everyone's mind is, "Why did the giants attack Sandpoint?" Answers can come most easily from a captured giant—perhaps one reduced to negative hit points who stabilized before bleeding to death, or maybe one the PCs charmed, incapacitated, or otherwise defeated without killing. A lone, captured stone giant with only a few hit points left quickly loses much of his stoic pride—the shame at having been defeated by humans coupled with the pain of his wounds makes him quick to talk. Prisoners remain

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belligerent and insulting unless their attitudes are compelled into a friendlier nature.

If the PCs capture one or more stone giants, they might learn some information from their prisoners. Intimidate won't work here, as the stone giants' natural arrogance makes them believe that all smaller creatures are to be pitied and despised (see "Born of Stone" on page 52). A clever story and a DC 25 Bluff check gets a giant to say more than it intended, and a DC 30 Diplomacy check wins over a giant completely. If a giant can't be convinced to talk, read the following text.

The injured giant squints, frowns, and then chuckles to itself. "Defeated by nosy little humans," it says. "Never thought this would happen to the Plateau People. Well, I won't tell you everything, but I will tell you this: My lord is mighty Mokmurian, one of the dark giants of old come again. His magic, the things he has made... He has convinced the tribes that they will rule all the lowlands again, down to the sea. He has mastered the ancient arts.

"He will certainly kill you all, run rough over your tiny homes with the army he has called. The fortunate few will become his slaves. You beat us today, but you won't beat us when there are a hundred or a thousand of the true people marching together. Lord Mokmurian will make it happen. He's almost as smooth a talker as you are, little one." He scratches his nose. "Teraktinus—he was the leader of our scouting party. He convinced us that you'd be easy pickings and we'd all get rich. He obviously underestimated you, and he paid for his mistake. I've no interest in paying for that mistake as well—grant me safe passage out of your lands, and I'll tell you everything you wish to know."

The PCs doubtless have plenty of questions for the prisoner—likely questions (and the prisoner's answers) are given below.

Who is Mokmurian? "I already told you—he's our lord and leader. He promised us glory and riches, and although our raid on your town didn't go so well, that's because Teraktinus was a fool. When Lord Mokmurian marches down from the Storval Plateau, he will take from you everything."

What is Mokmurian? "I have only heard him speak from afar, and have only heard from others of the power of his magic. He is the rarest of us all, a child of the stones who has mastered the magic of the Ancient Lords. They say he can turn the living into immobile stone and can turn his own flesh into granite armor. I've even heard he can cause the very stones of the world to reject those who stand upon them and cast them into the sky. And I'm sure he can do much more than that."

Who are these Ancient Lords? "They are gone now, but our elders tell us they once ruled over our ancestors, enslaved them, forced them to build the monuments that grace Varisia even today. Many of my brothers believe that Mokmurian is one of these Ancient Lords risen from the past to rebuild his empire."

How many giants does Mokmurian command? "He has at least seven tribes of my brothers under his command, with each tribe numbering in the dozens. The number of lesser kin he's conscripted—ogres, hill giants, ettins, trolls—is not insignificant

either. He also enjoys the support of several lamias—degenerate followers of the Mother of Monsters, those!"

When is he going to attack Varisia? "I am not sure. He sent several scouting parties, of which my band was but one, into the lowlands to gather intelligence. He does this to prepare for his coming attack. His fury will come soon. Perhaps even by month's end."

Where is he based? "Mokmurian has claimed a place taboo to my people: the Valley of the Black Tower in the Iron Peaks. He calls his fortress Jorgenfist, after the name of the fortress that guards the entrance to the afterlife. Our elders found the name blasphemous, but Mokmurian is powerful enough not to fear blasphemy."

Where is Jorgenfist? "Jorgenfist lies within the Valley of the Black Tower in the center of the Iron Peaks. It overlooks the waters of the Muschkal River, but can also be approached by heading due east from the Storval Stairs."

Why was your leader trying to steal a piece of the Old Light? "I can't say. He mentioned having a special mission from Lord Mokmurian, but didn't tell me what it was. Didn't tell any of us. My people's elders have ways of prying secrets from the stones—perhaps that stone knew something that Lord Mokmurian needed to learn?"

Alternate Intelligence

The PCs can learn much of what they need to know about Mokmurian, his army, and the location of his fortress from a captured stone giant. If they didn't manage to take any of the raiders prisoner, though, they'll need to discover much of that information in another way. Spells like *commune*, *divination*, and *contact other plane* can certainly aid in this regard—skew your answers to these spells so you can provide bits and pieces of the information given above out to the PCs. Alternatively, if any of Teraktinus's giants escaped, they could return to Sandpoint to try a second raid, or maybe even hole up on Devil's Platter or in Mosswood and begin making regular raids into the farmlands. The PCs might then be called upon to defeat these giants, and one of them might well fall to his knees and beg for his life in trade for telling the PCs what he knows about Mokmurian and his plans.

PART TWO: JOURNEY TO JORGENFIST

The stone giant fortress of Jorgenfist is located in the middle of the Iron Peaks, almost in the center of the entire region that encompasses Varisia and the Storval Plateau. By now, the PCs might have access to some exotic methods of travel—let them plan their journey to Jorgenfist however they wish. This adventure assumes they make the journey on foot (or perhaps on horseback) from Sandpoint, up the Lost Coast Road, over to Ember Lake, then up to Galduria, Wolf's Ear, Ravenmoor, and finally the Storval Stairs. Once they reach the top of the stairs, they can head directly east into the Iron Peaks and the Valley of the Black Tower. Up through Ravenmoor, this journey travels

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along roads and tracks and trails, but beyond Ravenmoor it's open country. The journey is about 320 miles long—230 along roads, 60 along open grasslands, and 30 through broken hills and low mountains. At a speed of 30 feet, the journey takes just over 15 days.

During the journey, consult *Pathfinder #3's* gazetteer of Varisia for notes on the regions the PCs travel through and for a large list of wandering monsters you can use to liven up the journey. The rest of this part gives several optional encounters you can run as you see fit—each of these encounters is presented in rough detail only, so you can customize details and maps to your campaign.

Signs of Giants

As the PCs head toward the Storval Plateau, mention things that foreshadow the giants they'll be fighting soon. The scouting parties that have plagued the Varisian lowlands over the past several weeks have left their mark everywhere—some examples follow.

- The PCs come across an enormous campsite. At the center, a campfire made of tree trunks in a ring of boulders sits, the mostly eaten carcass of a roasted 14-foot-long aurochs in the ashes.
- Although the scouting parties avoided direct confrontations with settlements, they did attack many caravans and lone hunters they encountered along the road. These battle sites should bespeak a terrible fury, littered with shattered stones and pulped bodies left for the scavengers after every bit of valuable loot had been stripped away.
- Stopping in any town along the way, the PCs can hear all manner of horror stories. Every third person seems to have either sighted a giant in the last few days or knows someone who has, and of these, at least half can tell stories of a friend or acquaintance who's gone missing. In almost every case, the missing folks are merchants, soldiers, hunters, or travelers, and fears are they've been caught and killed by the giants.
- Although the giants are strong, there are monsters like wyverns, manticores, and flame drakes that can cause even these enormous creatures problems. The PCs could come across a cairn of stones under which the body of a slain stone giant has been laid to rest.

Ogre Cattle Rustlers (EL 11)

Although most of the scouting parties are well on their way back to Jorgenfist by the time the PCs begin their own journey, a few deserters have struck out into the lowlands to make their own fortunes. One such group of deserters is a band of four ogre barbarians who snuck away from their scouting party a month ago. They spent a few weeks hiding out, and now that they're sure the giants have returned to Jorgenfist, they have emerged from hiding to begin raiding on small outlying farms. The PCs could hear about these ogre cattle rustlers while passing through a town like Galduria, or perhaps they have the good fortune of stumbling across the latest ranch to attract the ogres' attention, and the

PCs see them grabbing up livestock for supper. They could even encounter the four ogres after such a raid, in which case a DC 15 Listen check is enough for the party to notice the sound of the approaching ogres and their panicked, mooing catch. Once the ogres notice the PCs, they put down their captured cows and loot, take up their weapons, and attack.

OGRE CATTLE RUSTLERS (4)

CR 7

Male ogre barbarian 4

hp 79 each (MM 199)

TACTICS

During Combat The ogre scouts wade into battle without much care for anything except getting to melee as quickly as they can. Once in the thick of it, they rage and go all out to destroy one opponent at a time; they gang up on the same foe, using flanking bonuses and not splitting attacks unless they must for space reasons.

Morale If two ogres are defeated, the others panic and flee in different directions into the wilderness, eventually heading back to Jorgenfist to rejoin Mokmurian's armies. Canny PCs can follow an ogre fleeing in this manner right into the Valley of the Black Tower.

Treasure: The ogres have accumulated a few bits of treasure from their raid apart from the cattle: a chest filled with 6,000 sp and three barrels of fine brandy worth 400 gp each (each weighs 300 pounds).

Development: If any of the scouts escape to Jorgenfist, their reports of the PCs eventually reach Mokmurian's ears, and the keen-witted giant realizes that heroes are probably coming for him. For two weeks after this encounter (starting 1d6 days after the ogres flee), all of the Iron Peak patrols and guards at Jorgenfist are both forewarned and exceptionally diligent, gaining a +4 circumstance bonus on Spot checks made to notice intruders.

The Storval Stairs (EL 12)

The Storval Rise is one of the most unique and infamous landmarks in Varisia; the change in terrain from the fertile lowlands to the rugged stony scrublands of the plateau above marks the lands of giants with an unmistakable boundary. The rise itself often reaches dizzying heights of 1,000 feet or more, but at the location known as the Storval Stairs, the cliffs are only 400 feet high, and feature an ancient Thassilonian monument once used by armies of enslaved giants for easy foot travel between the lowlands and the plateau.

The Storval Stairs (pictured on page 12 of the *Rise of the Runelords Player's Guide*) rise in two-foot steps, and are flanked on either side by immense statues of Runelord Karzoug (although the southern statue has finally begun to crumble and erode) and walls of ancient towers, buildings, and dwellings. Until recently, harpies and trolls dwelt in the area, but Mokmurian intends to use the stairs as a convenient invasion point, marching his army down into Varisia when he is ready. To prepare for this time, he sent one tribe of stone giants here to "clean it out." The place is now all but abandoned, with four stone giants remaining as

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sentinels to keep the harpies, trolls, and other undesirables from returning and complicating Mokmurian's plans for the stairs.

Walking up the stairs takes 2 squares of movement per square for Medium or smaller creatures.

Creatures: The four stone giants who stand guard here have moved into one of the buildings at the top of the stairs. One of the four watches from a post atop the shoulder of the northern statue of Karzoug at all times—if he spots anyone approaching the stairs, he alerts his kin by throwing a boulder onto the roof of their building. All four giants then arrange themselves at the top of the stairs, where large piles of throwing boulders have been stacked.

If the PCs attempt to climb the stairs, the giants abandon rock throwing in favor of a controlled landslide—they can kick and push and drop boulders down the stairs at an alarming rate. Any characters climbing the stairs must make a DC 15 Reflex save each round or take 3d6 points of damage from the tumbling stones.

STONE GIANTS (4)

hp 119 each (MM 124)

TACTICS

During Combat All four giants abandon their landslide attack as soon as any PC manages to engage them in melee. The giants do their best to prevent any PC from fleeing into the plateau itself.

Morale Although brave and loyal, if three giants are slain, the fourth tries

to escape back to Jorgenfist to report to Mokmurian—repercussions are the same in this event as for the Development section for the Ogre Cattle Rustlers, above.

Treasure: The giants have gathered a fairly respectable stash of treasure for themselves, mostly taken from the harpies and trolls they defeated over the past month. They keep this treasure in a mound in the back of their temporary home, and one giant is always on guard there except when they're defending the stairs. The treasure consists of 3,306 sp, a carved mammoth bone statuette of a much smaller mammoth worth 700 gp, an eye patch with mock eye of black star sapphire and moonstone worth 900 gp, a mithral anklet worth 1,000 gp, and a jeweled gold crown worth 4,000 gp.

ADC 25 bardic knowledge or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check reveals that the crown is in fact the Lost Crown of the Pallgreves clan, one of the oldest noble families of Janderhoff. The dwarves would gladly pay 10,000 gp for its return.

Iron Peak Patrols (EL 11)

Once the PCs enter the Iron Peaks, the chances of encountering hunting parties of stone giants increase dramatically—these giants are charged with catching game to feed Mokmurian's growing army. A hunting party consists of two stone giants and three trained dire bears used to track prey. It's unusual

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to encounter groups of humanoids in the Iron Peaks, and the giants aren't stupid—they quickly come to the conclusion that the PCs are “heroes” come to confront Mokmurian and his army, especially when the PCs don't immediately die in the first round of combat. The giants order the bears to fight the PCs and then try to flee back to Jorgenfist to alert Mokmurian on the second round of combat when this becomes clear.

STONE GIANTS (2)

hp 119 each (MM 124)

CR 8**DIRE BEARS (3)**

hp 105 each (MM 63)

CR 7**PART THREE: INTO THE VALLEY OF THE BLACK TOWER**

Known for ages as the Valley of the Black Tower, so named for the ominous spiked edifice that stood as a lone sentinel over the valley's riverside boundary, this region has long been viewed as taboo by the stone giant tribes that dwell in and around the Iron Peaks. Their tales speak of how the magic of the Ancient Lords still functions within the Black Tower, and how one of their minions still “lives” beyond death inside. Mokmurian was not deterred by these rumors, and he came to the valley not long after he was exiled. Here he discovered that the stories were true—an ancient mummy from Thassilon dwelt below the Black Tower, and had even become the patron of a small flock of particularly devout harpies. Mokmurian used his magic to impress the harpies and his silver tongue to forge a tenuous alliance with them, enough that they allowed him to explore the caves below the tower's foundation. Therein, Mokmurian discovered an ancient library, and its stores of knowledge set him along the path to Xin-Shalast.

When the giant wizard returned from his journey, now bound to Runelord Karzoug, the harpies and their undead master could sense the presence of the Thassilonian ruler within him and their tenuous alliance became more solid. They even helped Mokmurian build a fortress around the cave entrance and incorporated the Black Tower into the surrounding wall. Mokmurian's army came to populate the fortress soon thereafter—he houses his favored troops in the buildings within its walls and has directed other tribes to set up camps in the valley beyond as they arrive.

The Valley of the Black Tower is relatively small and Jorgenfist dominates the view within. A map of the valley itself is presented on page 20—when the PCs first arrive, read or paraphrase the following as they take in the view for the first time.

The mountains give way here to a wide valley perched on the upper edge of a cliff overlooking the Muschkal River. At the western edge of the valley entrance a lone watchtower stands upon a low hill, but this structure is overshadowed by the larger one that looms in the valley proper. Here stands a ring-shaped stone wall, fifty feet in height and surrounding several buildings, the most impressive of which is a looming black tower with blade-like crenellations that overlooks the river gorge. Within the ring, a one-hundred-fifty-foot-tall stone spire rises, surrounded

by three low buildings. Apart from the black tower, five smaller towers are built into the fortress wall—one of these towers is wider than the others and seems to be the only gateway into the courtyard within.

Yet the fortress is not the only sign of life here, for surrounding it are seven large camps of towering tents, yurts, and stone shelters. Smoke rises from campfires and the sound of grating laughter and the clash of weapon training fills the air, competing with the periodic trumpeting of large and angry-sounding animals from somewhere within the fortress itself.

Stone giants are not normally warlike, mostly due to the calming and stable influence of the wise and patient elders who traditionally shape their societies. The giants Mokmurian has called to his side, however, are young and impetuous warriors. In many cases, he gained their favor through force by publicly challenging elders to open duels and then, one by one, striking them down with his potent magic. In other cases, displays and promises of wealth (Karzoug made sure Mokmurian was loaded up with plenty of treasure from Xin-Shalast before sending him back to the Storval Plateau to build an army) were all that was needed to lure the younger generation away from tradition. Today, the seven tribes encamped around Jorgenfist follow Mokmurian's commands. Deprived of the stabilizing influence of their elders, and with little but fear and awe to lead them, these giants have grown cruel and violent. Only one elder remains in the region: Conna the Wise, once Mokmurian's tribal mother and, ironically, the only elder who didn't support the call to exile him once his lack of true sorcerous skill was found out. Forced into servitude after Mokmurian slew her husband, Conna rarely leaves Jorgenfist these days. She quietly hopes for someone to rise up against Mokmurian so she can try to return her wayward children to their traditional ways and keep them from what she believes is a suicidal and reckless plan to wage war upon Varisia.

Mokmurian has other methods to control his tribe, though. He has branded each member with the Sihedron Rune. Although the giants believe this to be Mokmurian's personal rune and wear it proudly to display their allegiance to him, in fact, the rune completes the ritual of binding—when any of these stone giants dies, any elements of greed in his soul are siphoned directly into Karzoug's *runewell* high in Xin-Shalast. Mokmurian also counts among his allies numerous other powerful creatures, including Longtooth, the red dragon; several lamias (of which only two priests of Lamashtu remain in the region); troll thugs; and the ancient horrors whose servitude he has mastered through research in the library deep under the Valley of the Black Tower. His most compelling method, though, is via an ancient magic item he discovered in the library—the *Runeslave Cauldron*. With this ancient Thassilonian artifact, once used to punish workers and ensure loyalty, Mokmurian has a powerful tool to handle any giant he discovers harboring doubts about the coming war. The cauldron unmakes giants placed inside it, then returns them to life as creatures called runeslaves—near-mindless minions to the ancient magic of Thassilon, and a very effective deterrent to other giants who might harbor thoughts

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of rebellion against their new and cruel lord (see page 90). With these tactics, Mokmurian has turned his giants further and further toward evil—and all his resources will soon be directed toward the utter destruction of Varisia.

A1. Watchpost (EL 11)

Despite being only two stories, this stone watchtower's proportions are immense—scaled for humans it could contain up to five floors, but the sixteen-foot-tall door at the tower's base indicates that the beings that use it are anything but human.

Creatures: This watchpost is run by a taiga giant named Cinderma. Exiled from her tribe several years ago after she tortured and murdered a group of dwarves who sought to forge an alliance with her tribe, Cinderma wandered the Storval Plateau before hearing rumors of an army gathering in the Iron Peaks. She presented herself and her skills to Mokmurian, and he accepted her readily enough, assigning her to this watchtower after the previous tenant was slain in an attempt to capture a young blue dragon for sacrifice to Karzoug.

Although she employs a pair of ettins, Cinderma prefers to keep the day shift to herself, watching over the path leading out of mountain valley from the roof of this tower. If she sees intruders coming, she calls out a warning to the sleeping ettins

below, who quickly wake and throw wet wood and greenery onto a watch fire that burns just outside the entrance to the tower, sending up a plume of smoke to warn the fortress of visitors, either friendly or hostile. In the evening, Cinderma turns over the task to her ettins and spends her time carousing in one of the camps to the east, retiring to this tower late in the night to catch a few hours of rest.

Most of the visitors arriving lately are friendly, as more tribes join Mokmurian's cause over the coming days and weeks, so smoke alone won't create a sense of alarm at the fortress. If no friendly visitors arrive shortly after nightfall, however, her absence is noted and a patrol of two adult stone giants is sent to investigate. If the patrol finds evidence of a fight, the fortress goes on alert for two weeks, or until the PCs are caught.

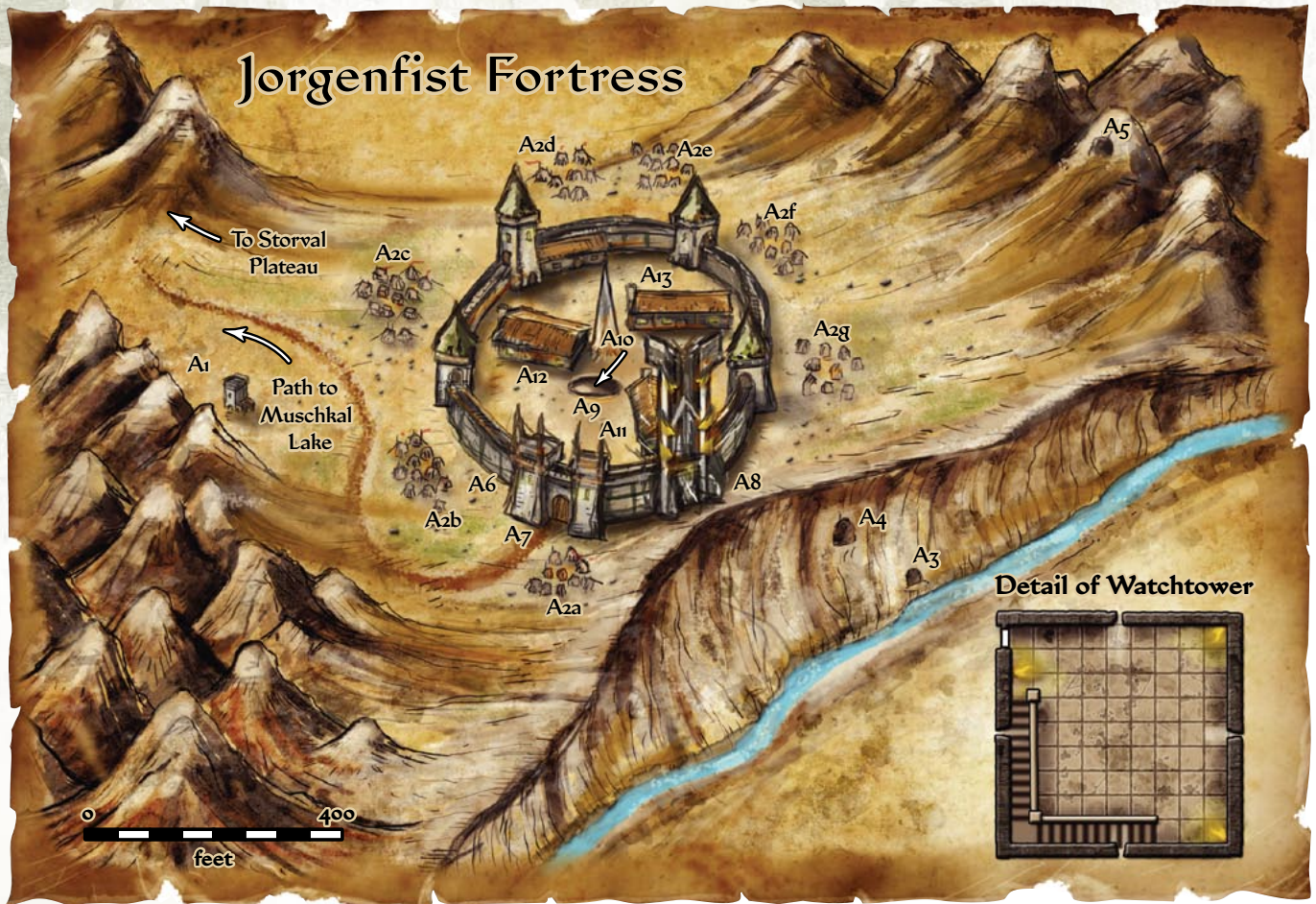
If this or any other circumstance alerts the majority of Jorgenfist's forces to the presence of intruders, wandering pairs of stone giants begin to actively scout the area looking for the PCs. The GM should place these roaming guards wherever he deems appropriate. In addition, several creatures in the fortress might change their locations or tactics, as noted in their descriptions.

CINDERMA

Female taiga giant
CE Huge giant
hp 133 (see page 84)

CR 10

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ETTINS (2)

hp 65 each (MM 106)

CR 6

A2. The Jorgenfist Army

Jorgenfist is not nearly large enough to house the multiple tribes of giants who have answered Mokmurian's call for war. Instead, these giants are scattered in seven camps placed around the fortress, each corresponding to one of the major giant tribes who have thrown in their lot with Mokmurian. The sheer number of giants within each of these camps should put off any thought of a direct and open assault on Jorgenfist—fortunately for the PCs, Mokmurian has forbidden any of these giants from entering the stone ring that comprises Jorgenfist's walls, for fear that if they knew the true nature of his plans, allies, and dealings they would desert his army. If the PCs can make it through these camps and into the fortress itself, they have little to worry about from these giants.

Nevertheless, should the number of giants and their leaders become important, they are summarized below. Many of the stone giant groups have a single leader, having broken from their people's traditions of rulership. Note that only the leaders of these tribes have had any direct contact with Mokmurian, so few of these giants have any reliable

information about what lies within Jorgenfist's walls. They all bear the Sihedron Rune either between their shoulders or at the small of their backs, branded there during the ritual of empowerment by one of the two lamia priests (known to most of the giants out here as the Lion Sisters) when they joined Mokmurian's armies.

A2a. Black Fist: This tribe consists of 32 hill giants led by a beady-eyed chieftain named **Doach** (CE male hill giant fighter 2). These hill giants are completely loyal to Mokmurian and hope that the wealth and power they'll gain during the war will allow them to return to their ancestral lands on the shores of Lake Skotha and wrest control of a prime site from an established clan.

A2b. Red Shield and Nightshade: These two allied ogre clans have banded together to form one tribe led under **Papa Beshk** (CE male ogre barbarian 4). Much of their time is spent bickering and fighting among themselves—Mokmurian has been forced to send his own giants into this camp no less than five times to officiate disputes and keep fighting to a minimum. In all, 46 ogres can be found here.

A2c. Maidens of Minderhal: This tribe of 11 stone giants is unusual for its composition. Entirely female, this tribe has a reputation for being among the cruelest and most excessive in its vile ways. Many other giants have tried to woo members of the Maidens only to be rebuffed (at best) or mutilated (at

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worst). This group is led by an exceptionally tall woman named **Halvara** (LE female stone giant cleric of Minderhal 5).

A2d. Jormunsir: Led by a one-eyed grizzled old giant named **Vlorian** (NE male stone giant ranger 3), the Jormunsir number 20 stone giants strong. Their secret hope is to use the wealth and power gained from conquering Varisia to claim the lands surrounding Minderhal's Anvil as their own.

A2e. Valissgander: This tribe of stone giants numbers 18 strong—their leader is a loud and abusive thug named **Zinderall** (CE male stone giant fighter 1), whose followers are days away from implementing a swift and brutal coup. They plan on feeding their chieftain to Longtooth, but haven't yet decided on who among them will replace him—the only thing that's currently keeping Zinderall alive, unknown to him.

A2f. Crannoch: The 22 stone giants of the Crannoch tribe are the most efficient hunters in the region—as a result, this camp is usually empty save for a few giants while the rest are out hunting. A dozen dire bears round out this tribe's inhabitants—they are led by a giant of few words named **Oriandian** (CN stone giant ranger 4). The Crannochs joined Mokmurian's army due to a great dissatisfaction with their traditional ways, many having already turned to the worship of Uragra, a fierce god of savagery (see page 57).

A2g. Kavarvatti: This was the tribe that once counted Mokmurian as its own. Until his return, the Kavarvattis were led by two elders, a couple named Vandarrec and Conna. When Mokmurian returned from Xin-Shalast, he challenged his tribe father Vandarrec to battle and defeated (but did not yet kill) him. He seized control of the tribe and led them here, then brought the broken-spirited Vandarrec and Conna down to the Shrine of the Ancestors in area **B6**, where he murdered the old giant before his wife's shocked eyes. Conna knew it would be foolish to openly oppose Mokmurian at the time, both because he had wrested control of the tribe and because his own powers far exceeded hers, so she swallowed her rage and pride and pledged her service to him, secretly vowing to do what she could to engineer a revenge.

Mokmurian ceded the day-to-day rule of the Kavarvatti tribe to Barl Breakbones, a giant who soon became Mokmurian's wizardly apprentice. After Barl's defeat at Hook Mountain, rulership of the Kavarvattis fell to one of Barl's bodyguards, a hulking brute named **Drogart** (CE male stone giant fighter 3). Drogart recently discovered Barl's fate (see *Pathfinder #3*), and while he's disappointed that his tribe won't be augmented by the Kreeg ogres, the unexpected windfall of becoming chieftain has gone a long way toward soothing his spirits. Barl was a cruel chieftain, but Drogart might be worse—what he lacks in Barl's magical power, Drogart more than makes up for in brute sadism. He often has his giants scouring the Storval Plateau for Shoanti to torment.

A3. Caverns of the Night Wyverns (EL 10)

A musky smell lingers near the entrance to this cave—a thick, almost reptilian stink. The sound of something slithering inside, like scales over stone, gives further indication that the dark depths are inhabited.

This cavern overlooks the Muschkal River at a height of fifty feet, and has long been home to a nest of nocturnal wyverns. Known as night wyverns, these creatures are stronger and hardier than their diurnal kin, and their dark blue scales mark them as creatures of the night. Mokmurian has secured the aid of these three wyverns for his imminent attack, but for now the wyverns are content to leave the giants living in the valley above alone.

NIGHT WYVERN (3)

CR 7

Nocturnal elite wyvern (MM 259, *Advanced Bestiary* 190)

N Large dragon

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +16, **Spot** +12 (+8 in bright light)

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 17

(+2 Dex, +8 natural, –1 size)

hp 73 (7d12+28)

Fort +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7

Immune paralysis, sleep

Weaknesses light sensitivity

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor)

Melee sting +12 (1d6+4 plus poison) and

bite +11 (3d8+3) and

2 wings +10 (1d8+3) and

2 talons +10 (2d6+3)

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

Special Attacks improved grab, poison (DC 17, 2d6 Con/2d6 Con)

TACTICS

During Combat The wyverns fight as a group, one distracting and flanking a foe while the others use Improved Grab to grapple and sting.

Morale A night wyvern flees into the mountains if reduced to less than 15 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 15, **Con** 19, **Int** 6, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +17

Feats Flyby Attack, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Hide +12, Listen +16, Move Silently +16, Spot +12 (+8 in bright light)

Languages Draconic

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Light Sensitivity (Ex) Night wyverns are dazzled when operating in an area of continual bright light (such as sunlight or that created by a daylight spell).

Treasure: The wyverns have a fire opal that fascinates them endlessly—they've placed the sparkling gemstone atop a low mound of sand in the center of their cave, where they can watch it as the sun rises and they drift off to sleep. The fire opal is worth only 200 gp, a paltry sum compared to the value of the rest of their treasure that lies heaped, almost forgotten, in the southwest spur cave. Buried under a collection of favorite skulls,

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horse and elk thighbones, and well-gnawed bits of hide is a chest containing 1,435 gp and 2,987 sp. Behind the chest lies an ancient magical staff the wyverns found in a Thassilonian ruin. It is a staff of heaven and earth with only seven charges remaining.

A4. Deathweb Cave (EL 9)

This cave crawls. Countless bloated, many-legged insects trample one another as they carpet the floor and climb the walls, creating a susurrus of a million clicking bug legs. The deepest part of the caves seems to be unnaturally thick with darkness and fallen webs.

This cave's entrance is 250 feet above the narrow beach below. The insects covering the floor are disgusting but mostly harmless, attracted to the cool darkness and the bodies left by the deathwebs that lair deeper in. The innermost reach of the caves is thick with webs spun by the undead denizens of the cave. As long as these webs remain, it's a DC 40 Search check to notice the secret door in the cave's northern wall. If the webs are cleared, this drops to a DC 30 Search check. The tunnel beyond leads on a winding route into a mazelike system of narrow tunnels infested with redcaps. One route through this maze leads into the caves below Jorgenfist—see area B7b for more details.

Creature: This cave was the nest of several giant funnel web spiders years ago, but Mokmurian used them to test out a vile ritual he learned from several books on necromancy in the Library

of Thassilon (see area C7), turning them into undead monsters called deathwebs.

DEATHWEBS (3)

CR 6

hp 78 (see page 79)

TACTICS

During Combat The deathwebs attack all creatures save for Mokmurian who dare to enter this cave, but they wait for a few rounds for intruders to make their way into the cave before they strike. If visiting creatures do not enter the cave, the deathwebs use their web ability to capture living things up to 50 feet away.

Treasure: Although the deathwebs don't collect treasure deliberately, over the years many foolish adventurers have come into their clutches (as have a few young night wyverns and giants). As a result, the cave is cluttered with old webs, withered skins, and old bones, along with a dozen longswords (one of them a Large +1 longsword), a +2 halberd, three Large warhammers, a set of full plate armor, and a druid's staff with a *spellstaff* spell still in effect on it (the staff contains a *rusting grasp* at CL 12th).

A5. Longtooth's Cave (EL 0 or 10)

This cave entrance is almost impossible to reach except from the air: the entrance is 450 feet up the side of a near-vertical mountain face. Shattered skeletons of dozens of animals, wyverns, and even a few rocs litter the ground far below the cave entrance. Within, the cave is a simple affair, 200 feet deep and 50 feet wide. The final 50 feet of depth are strewn with thousands and thousands of coins (mostly copper).

Footing here is treacherous, as the coins slip and slide underfoot for Medium or smaller creatures. Moving through this terrain requires a DC 10 Balance check—if the check fails by 5 or more, the creature falls prone. Creatures walking on the coins are considered flat-footed unless they have 5 or more ranks in Balance. If they take damage while balancing, they must make a DC 10 Balance check to remain standing.

Creature: This cave belongs to one of Mokmurian's deadliest allies, the red dragon Longtooth. Mokmurian met and battled the dragon on his journey back from Xin-Shalast, but rather than slay the dragon after their fight (even though Longtooth killed a half-dozen of the lamias that were traveling with him), Mokmurian offered Longtooth a job. In return for his life, Longtooth agreed to serve Mokmurian as a hero in his army. The prospect intrigued the young dragon, and now, years after his initial defeat, he and Mokmurian have become grudging friends. Longtooth has been instrumental in the capture of dozens of younger dragons over those years—dragons that Mokmurian sacrificed to Karzoug—as few creatures on Golarion yield greedier souls than dragons.

If Longtooth survived the raid on Sandpoint and managed to make it back to this cave, he is bitter and foul-tempered about his failure and nurses a grudge against the PCs. When he sought out aid from Mokmurian, the stone giant was enraged that Longtooth fled the battle and forbade his lamias from providing the dragon



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with any healing. Sullen and cantankerous, Longtooth retreated to this cave to recover naturally, and does not come to the aid of Jorgenfist if the alarm is raised. Memories of his initial defeat at Mokmurian's hands have returned to his thoughts, and although he has gathered much treasure for himself since joining the giant, he's seen how much more Mokmurian has claimed for himself over the years. Longtooth has grown discontented with his role as Mokmurian's minion, and this latest development has pushed him over the edge.

If the PCs confront the bitter dragon in his lair, Longtooth recognizes them at once but does not attack. He's not eager to try his luck against the PCs again so soon after they've defeated him, and he instead offers them a truce. He'll tell them everything he knows about Jorgenfist and Mokmurian, if in return the PCs promise to leave him alone and grant him a share of any treasure they take out of Jorgenfist. His initial attitude toward the PCs is unfriendly, but if they can make him helpful he'll even volunteer his aid in fighting against the stone giants (although in this case he demands two shares of the treasure).

Longtooth knows quite a bit about Mokmurian. Feel free to tailor what he knows to your group—if they're doing well so far, you might only want to reveal to the PCs a rough estimate of the creatures dwelling in Jorgenfist and the caverns below. If they're having some trouble, you might want to have Longtooth sketch out a map of the cavern level for them. Longtooth has never been

STAFF OF HEAVEN AND EARTH
Aura Strong transmutation; CL 9th
Slot —; Price 53,000 gp
DESCRIPTION
Topped by a swirling cloudy stone and wrapped with black iron filigree, this staff allows use of the following spells:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Air walk</i> (2 charges) • <i>Control winds</i> (2 charges) • <i>Gust of wind</i> (1 charge) • <i>Spike stones</i> (2 charges) • <i>Stone shape</i> (1 charges)
CONSTRUCTION
Requirements Craft Staff, <i>air walk</i> , <i>control winds</i> , <i>gust of wind</i> , <i>spike stones</i> , <i>stone shape</i> ; Cost 26,500 gp, 2,120 XP

into the library level below the caverns, but he does suspect that a deeper level exists.

LONGTOOTH **CR 10**
hp 168 (see page 12)

Treasure: Although a carpet of coins covers the innermost section of Longtooth's cave, most of these coins are copper pieces. In all, the coins consist of 360,055 cp, 23,145 sp, 3,403 gp, and 23 pp.

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In addition, the collection of treasure includes several gemstones: a water opal worth 1,000 gp, a rich blue diamond worth 1,600 gp, and a black opal worth 8,000 gp are Longtooth's favorites, though there are 53 additional gems worth a total of 3,500 gp. A fine linen tapestry depicting monks sparring in a courtyard is rolled up and leans against the wall—this tapestry weighs 50 pounds but is worth 600 gp. Finally, a set of solid silver idols sits on a ledge on the innermost wall. These idols are each worth 600 gp—one depicts a wyvern with a human rider, one a human warrior trampling a demon underfoot, one a centaur dressed in plate mail armor, and one a leaping fish with a wide mouth filled with teeth. A sixth idol is in fact made of platinum. It depicts Runelord Karzoug, and is worth 5,000 gp.

A6. Jorgenfist Walls (EL 8 per tower)

The walls surrounding the fortress are made of enormous blocks of stone sealed together via countless *stone shape* spells. They are 30 feet wide at the base and not entirely vertical; they slope inward slightly and become about 15 feet wide on the battlements, which are 50 feet high. Having poor handholds, the walls require a DC 30 Climb check to ascend.

The four towers are 45 feet square and 70 feet tall, with at least one wide rock-throwing slot on each side. The tops are conical, and the interiors have stairs going from ground level (which is dark and used for storage) to a single interior floor 40 feet up.

Creatures: A single stone giant watches the approach to Jorgenfist from each of the rooms atop the four towers. Each has a stack of 50 rocks at hand to throw at approaching enemies.

STONE GIANTS (1 PER TOWER)

CR 8

hp 119 each (MM 124)

A7. The Stone Gate (EL 10)

The fortress has a solid stone gate—two doors that tower 15 feet high and 7 feet wide apiece. It fits neatly into the wall between two of the 70-foot-high towers, and looks very difficult to open. The gate requires a DC 22 Strength check to push open as long as the stone bar inside is not lowered in place. If the bar is lowered it becomes much more difficult to open. *Knock* cast at caster level 10th is sufficient to open the gate if it is barred.

STONE GATE

Hardness 15; hp 300; Break DC 50 with stone bar in place

Creatures: The guardians of this gate are a trio of unusual harpies—students of the Black Monk (see area A8). These harpies were living in nests atop the Black Tower when Mokmurian first visited, and they were intrigued enough by the giant to agree to an alliance. They forbade him from entering the Black Tower itself, but had no cares about him exploring the caves below.

These harpies are students of the ancient undead monk that dwells within the Black Tower. After thousands of years of solitude, even the undead can grow lonely and ache for companionship—when six harpies entered the tower nearly two decades ago, the Black Monk only killed three before offering the surviving three the opportunity to train as its pupils. Seeing this as a way to escape the mummy's wrath, the harpies agreed, but soon found that the ancients' lore suited them well. Today, the harpies see themselves as the guardians of the Black Tower, the lair of their undead master. It was the Black Monk's decision to allow Mokmurian to use the site as a base for reasons the harpies don't care to know.

In daylight or at night, the dread mummy's harpies keep the bargain they made with the giants; they sing softly, with just a 75-foot range, and the giants leave them be in exchange for their help in guarding the gate from intrusions. The harpies draw creatures away from the fortress, over the cliffs. Though the giants sometimes hear snatches of the song, they are largely immune to it (though ogres and young giants do sometimes fall from the cliffs in suspicious accidents...).

HARPY MONK (3)

CR 7

Female harpy monk 6

LE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +13, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 19, flat-footed 17

(+2 deflection, +3 Dexterity, +1 monk, +1 natural, +3 Wisdom)

hp 84 (13d8+26)



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Fort +9, **Ref** +13, **Will** +13; +2 against enchantment

Defensive Abilities evasion, slow fall 30 ft.; **Immune** nonmagical disease

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)

Melee unarmed strike +14/+9/+4 (1d8+3) and 2 claws +9 (1d3+1) or flurry of blows unarmed strike +13/+13/+8/+3 (1d8+3) and 2 claws +8 (1d3+1)

Special Attacks captivating song (DC 17), stunning fist 7/day (DC 17)

TACTICS

During Combat These harpies are fond of using their captivating song to attract prey, flying out over the river and tricking victims into walking off the edge of the cliff. Those who avoid the fall are subjected to flyby attacks—the harpies use these attacks to disarm foes and stun them. They enter melee only when they can all gang up on a single foe at a time.

Morale The harpies flee into the mountains if they are reduced to 20 hit points or less.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 6, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +14

Feats Ability Focus (captivating song), Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Disarm, Mobility, Stunning Fist

Skills Bluff +11, Listen +13, Perform (song) +9

Languages Common, Giant, Thassilonian

SQ ki strike (magic)

Gear ring of protection +2

A8. The Black Tower (EL 11)

This tower is not like the others that comprise the fort—its architectural style is far more intricate and ancient in appearance, bearing similarities to many of the other ancient monuments that dot the Varisian landscape. Made of black stone and decorated with gargoyles, the tower's walls are streaked with thick lichens and moss. It soars twice as high as the other towers, its facade effectively dominating the view.

The Black Tower is part of an ancient building from Thassilon's time, once known as the Therassic Monastery. The tower itself served as a bell tower and lookout location for an order of evil monks devoted to the worship of the Peacock Spirit, a mysterious faith whose rituals were kept secret from all but the initiated. The tower's gargoyles depict saints and demons of the Thassilonian pantheon, though they are so weathered that they are unrecognizable today save as vaguely demonic forms.

The Black Tower has one entrance, a large stone door that swings open easily at a touch. The tower interior seems much colder than it should be, even so high in the mountains. The

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stone walls and floor glitter with a thin coat of frost, making movement in the largely empty chamber treacherous—it's a DC 12 Balance check to walk on the icy floor.

A DC 20 Search reveals that a trap door is set in the floor in the middle of the room, its face coated with ice as well, but like the entrance doors, the trap door swings open easily with the slightest tug to reveal a 5-foot-wide circular shaft that drops into the darkness below. This shaft is 50 feet deep, and opens into a barren circular chamber with a domed, 20-foot-high ceiling. The floor here is icy as well, and the air cold enough to qualify as severe cold (see DMG 302).

Creature: The single denizen of this chamber is an ancient Thassilonian monk, wrapped tightly and preserved as an undead guardian by his order in the final days of the empire. Over the next ten thousand years, the Black Monk (as he took to calling himself as his undead flesh darkened) remained here, guarding the monastery grounds. As time consumed the complex, the Black Tower eventually became the only part of the building to survive above ground, protected by the same preservative magic that enhanced all of Thassilon's great monuments. Ironically, the Black Monk was not an initiate authorized to enter the library that the Therssionic Monastery was built to protect, and for the past several thousand years his charge has dwindled to this tiny room, more than a metaphor for his constricting mind and personality.

The Black Monk is tightly bound in linens—having perfected an ancient secret of mental flight, his legs are no longer needed. Although he was not high enough in rank to peruse the library's lore, his brothers did grant him the great honor of protecting 18 sacred scrolls from the library. These scrolls are kept in a large iron scroll tube the monk never releases his grip on.

The Black Monk is quite insane after all this time, and any character who makes a successful DC 29 Listen check can hear him speaking in Thassilonian, muttering, "The green light! The green light! The green light!" over and over again. His eyes burn green, and he sees only the pain and rage of his order's disbanding and decay. Once or twice a century, the Black Monk experiences periods of lucidity—it was during one of these that he took the harpies under his tutelage, and when he felt his insanity creeping back, he ordered them out of his lair and forbade them to ever return. Now, he views any who dare enter his tomb as thieves searching for the scrolls he so fervently guards.

THE BLACK MONK**CR II**Male dread mummy human monk 8 (*Advanced Bestiary* 86)

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +15, Spot +15**Aura** gaze of despair

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DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 21, flat-footed 25

(+2 deflection, +4 Dexterity, +1 monk, +8 natural, +4 Wisdom)

hp 52 (8d12)

Fort +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10 (+2 against enchantment)

Defensive Abilities evasion, resistant to blows, slow fall 40 ft., turn resistance +4; **DR** 5/—; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 10

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Spd 5 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee unarmed strike +17/+12 (1d10+10 plus mummy rot) or flurry of blows +16/+16/+11 (1d10+10 plus mummy rot)

Special Attacks breath of death, command undead, create spawn, stunning fist 8/day (DC 18)

Spell-Like Abilities (caster level 8th)

At will—*animal messenger*, *calm animals* (DC 14), *heat metal*, *summon swarm*

2/day—*commune with nature*, *control winds*, *dominate animal* (DC 16), *insect plague*

1/day—*control weather*, *creeping doom*, *earthquake*, *sunbeam* (DC 20)

TACTICS

During Combat The Black Monk enjoys using Improved Trip to knock foes surrounding him down, then uses the benefits of Combat Reflexes to make attacks of opportunity against foes to trip them again when they try to stand. He uses his spell-like abilities against foes who can remain out of reach of his melee attacks, or who prove too canny to trip, but never uses *earthquake* for fear of damaging the Black Tower itself.

Morale The Black Monk fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 18, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +15

Feats Ability Focus (breath of death), Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Concentration +11, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Listen +15, Spot +15, Tumble +15

Languages Thassilonian

SQ flight, ki strike (magic), wholeness of body (16 hp/day)

Gear belt of giant strength +4, ring of protection +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath of Death (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, the Black Monk can exhale a 30-foot cone of tomb gas, ice, and dust. Each living creature in this area must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or gain 1d4 negative levels. A creature killed by this effect rises as a zombie under the Black Monk's control in 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Command Undead (Su) As a free action, the Black Monk can automatically command all undead within 30 feet, except those with

more character levels or higher Charisma scores.

Create Spawn (Su) A creature killed by the Black Monk's mummy rot ability turns to dust. One week later, as long as the Black Monk still exists, the dust reforms next to the Black Monk as a new dread mummy. A dread mummy created in this manner is under the command of the Black Monk and remains so until either it or its creator is destroyed.

Flight (Su) The black monk's flight speed is similar to that granted by the *fly* spell, but it cannot be dispelled.

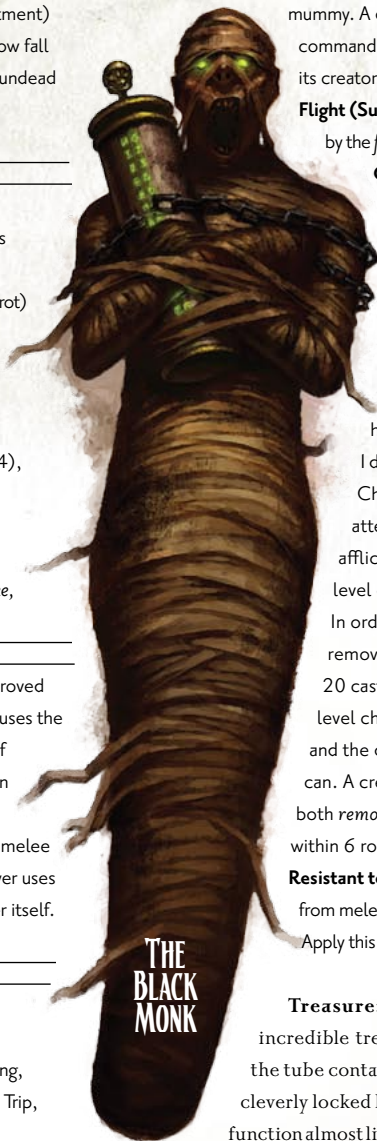
Gaze of Despair (Su) Any creature within 100 feet of a dread mummy that meets its gaze must make a DC 18 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Mummy Rot (Su) A creature hit by the Black Monk's unarmed strike must make a DC 18 Fortitude save or contract mummy rot. This disease has an incubation period of 1 minute, and deals 1d6 points of Constitution damage and 1d6 points of Charisma damage with each failed save. A character attempting to cast a healing spell on a creature afflicted with mummy rot must make a DC 20 caster level check, or the spell has no effect on that creature. In order to eliminate mummy rot, the curse must first be removed with a *break enchantment* or *remove curse* (DC 20 caster level check for either). Thereafter, no caster level check is necessary to cast healing spells on the victim, and the disease can be cured just like any normal disease can. A creature killed by mummy rot turns to dust unless both *remove disease* and *raise dead* are cast on the remains within 6 rounds.

Resistant to Blows (Ex) The Black Monk takes only half damage from melee and ranged weapons, natural weapons, and falls. Apply this reduction before applying damage reduction.

Treasure: The scrolls the Black Monk guards are an incredible treasure—not even the monk himself knows what the tube contains. The scroll tube is made of adamantine and is cleverly locked by a series of interconnected spinning discs that function almost like a combination lock. With five successful DC 40 Open Lock checks in a row, this lock can be picked. Alternatively, a character who can read Thassilonian (or who can keep track of the dozens of runes with a DC 30 Decipher Script check) can use the runes on the scroll case to puzzle out the combination with five successful DC 20 Intelligence checks in a row. Or, of course, the tube can be forced open (hardness 20, hp 60), but doing so destroys the fragile scrolls inside (they can be repaired with no less than 100 *mending* spells or 10 *make whole* spells in this case). A *knock* unlocks two of the locks, so it'll take three castings of this spell to open the tube. The scroll tube is worth 1,200 gp.

The scrolls kept inside were known as the *Emerald Codex of the Therassic Order*, a compilation of spells and enlightened rituals related to the worship of the Peacock Spirit, a once-powerful faith of the Thassilonian Empire. The codex consists of 18 large scrolls



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prepared on wyvern hide—they must be handled with extreme care to avoid fragmentation. All 18 scrolls are written in Thassilonian. The first nine scrolls describe certain curses (all particularly gory and painful variants of *bestow curse*—actual game effects remain unchanged). Each of the next eight contain one divine spell each: *greater restoration*, *heroes' feast*, *order's wrath*, *scrying*, *slay living*, *unholy blight*, *regenerate*, and *symbol of stunning* (all at caster level 15th).

The final scroll, written in Thassilonian, describes the entrance to the library (area C7) and even gives the password required to bypass the shining child bound to the entrance.

A9. Pit

A quarry-style pit at the center of the fort serves as the primary entrance into the underground portions of the stone giants' fortress. The walls of the pit have numerous other cave entrances, most of which open into small storage caves but a few of which provide access to larger caves or the underground areas beyond. Characters who descend without stealth into the pit quickly attract the attention of the bears in area B1 and the stone giant champion in area B3.

The pit itself is 60 feet deep. The ramp that runs along its inner wall descends only halfway into this pit before reaching area B2. The pit floor is a tangle of bones and broken bodies, a combination of humanoid, giant, and even four dragon corpses (three blues and a red, all Large). Flocks of crows, buzzards, and other scavenging birds swarm over the bodies, picking at the flesh until only bones remain. An investigation of the uneaten carcasses reveals that they all have the Sihedron Rune carved crudely on their torsos in the case of the humanoids and dragons, or branded on the small of the back in the case of giants. These bodies are all that remain of those Mokmurian and his lamia priests have sacrificed to Karzoug's *runewell*. These sacrifices draw large crowds to the pit edge, and comprise the only instance in which giants other than those favored by Mokmurian are allowed inside the fortress walls.

A10. The Spire (EL 10)

White streaks cover the sides of this stone spire and the surrounding ground, thick as paint. Among these immense bird droppings are splintered elk bones and scraps of hide. The spire rises to a needle point one hundred and fifty feet above, but at a height of fifty feet an opening in the northern face allows access to a round chamber within which has been built an enormous nest.

Creatures: The tall central spike monolith of the castle is not the most important structure, but at 150 feet high, it towers over the walls and watchtowers. The spike is an ancient Thassilonian watchpost that has become the preferred nesting site for two partly tamed rocs. They nest in the 25-foot-diameter chamber halfway up the spire's height. The rocs serve the stone giants as messengers, mounts, and guardians, but they are still violent and ill-tempered.

During daylight hours, they are likely to spot intruders approaching the castle. At night, they sleep in their nest, but

squawk at the sound of intruders or combat on the spike, waking the entire fortress.

The two rocs do not attack giants, but if they spot any Medium or smaller humanoids (or any animals of Large size or smaller) they shriek and launch out of the spire nest to swoop down and attack, likely alerting the surrounding areas to the intrusion as well.

Rocs (2)

CR 8

hp 119 each (MM 124)

TACTICS

During Combat The rocs prefer to attack creatures on the ground with snatch flyby attacks, staying well out of reach of melee. With their 80 foot flying movement, they can certainly make it work.

Morale If one roc is killed, the other immediately retreats to its nest, regardless of its current hit points. If confronted there, it fights to the death.

A11. The Mammoth Stables (EL 13)

The air in this building is close, warm, and thick with the smells of manure. A ten-foot-wide path leads down the middle of the building, flanked on either side by huge stables, eight in all.

Creatures: This stable is used to house several mammoths, mounts used by stone giant cavalry. Only five of the stables are currently occupied—the keepers of this stable are currently out on the Storval Plateau attempting to catch and break three more mammoths for the coming war, and won't return for several weeks.

A DC 20 Handle Animal check is enough to keep the mammoths from trumpeting a warning and bringing giants to investigate within 1d4+1 rounds. If the mammoths are attacked, they fight back with an unexpected rage, crashing out of their pens with ease.

MAMMOTHS (5)

CR 8

Primitive elephant (MM 272, *Advanced Bestiary* 200)

N Huge animal

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +10, **Spot** +10

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 8, flat-footed 17

(+9 natural, -2 size)

hp 129 (11d8+80)

Fort +16, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee gore +18 (3d8+18) or

slam +18 (3d6+12) and

2 stamps +13 (2d6+6)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks trample 2d8+18 (DC 27)

TACTICS

During Combat The mammoths fight separately, trumpeting and bull rushing any character they catch in their tusks in the

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direction of the stable exit or, if the fight proceeds into the courtyards, into the pit (area **A9**). The mammoths trample as a group if the party succeeds in killing one of them.

Morale The mammoths fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 34, **Dex** 10, **Con** 25, **Int** 1, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +26

Feats Alertness, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Natural Attack (gore, slam), Iron Will, Toughness, Track

Skills Hide -4, Listen +10, Move Silently +4, Spot +10, Survival +5

Treasure: The mammoths have no treasure, though their tack and harness is worth 300 gp per set.

A12. The Feasting Hall (EL 10)

This huge hall is well stocked with smoked meat, bread, casks of ale, and long benches and tables built for giants. It's hard to see in the hall's dim light; the only illumination comes in through the doors and through smoke holes in the ceiling.

Creature: This hall is filled with supplies for the coming war, stocked over the past several months by hunters and gatherers and guarded by one of Mokmurian's favorite pets, a grizzled dire bear who stands nearly 14 feet tall at the shoulder. Named Embers, the bear knows that anyone shorter than eight feet in height has no business in here, and he roars a challenge to any such intruders a second before he lumbers to the attack. If Jorgenfist isn't on alert already, the bear's roars certainly do the trick and rouse the giants to defend the fortress.

EMBERS

CR 10

Male advanced dire bear (MM 63)

N Huge animal

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +13, Spot +14

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 8, flat-footed 18

(+10 natural, -2 size)

hp 189 (18d8+108)

Fort +17, **Ref** +11, **Will** +12

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee 2 claws +27 (2d6+15) and

bite +21 (2d8+7)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks improved grab

TACTICS

During Combat Embers uses Improved Grab to grab and crush a Small foe if he can. If no Small foes are available, he uses Power Attack and Cleave to make the most of his attacks.

Morale Embers fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 40, **Dex** 11, **Con** 23, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +36

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Endurance, Improved Natural Attack (claw),

Power Attack, Run, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Listen +13, Spot +14

Treasure: Embers has no treasure, but his pelt is worth a great deal, even marked with cuts and scars (but not if burnt or destroyed by acid). If the hide is treated carefully with a DC 25 Survival check or a DC 12 Craft (leather), it is worth 1,200 gp.

A13. The Bear's Hall (EL 10)

The inside of this stone building is very dark; there are no windows, and just one smoke hole far above. The space is not quite square; the far wall curves to match the outer walls of the fortress. Inside, hundreds of bear skulls are neatly arranged on large shelves, as well as a golden bear pelt, a black bear pelt, and even a white bear pelt. The hall seems deserted.

In older days, the stone giants and ogres of the Storval plateau worshiped bear totems, and their berserkers and shamans found strength in the physical example of the dire bear. While the tribes still keep bears as watch animals and hunting companions, since the coming of Lamashtu's missionaries they are no longer worshiped. Mokmurian initially had this hall built and decorated to satisfy tribal traditions, but his army now openly worships Lamashtu or has lost interest in matters of faith entirely.

Since the loss of interest, Mokmurian has used this building as guest quarters to house giants whose allegiance and tribes he is courting. For hill giants, ogres, and even most stone giant tribes, Mokmurian doesn't bother with this stage—he simply enters the camp, demonstrates his power by killing the tribe's elders or most powerful champions, then takes their warriors and malcontents away to join his army. For the more dangerous giant tribes—notably frost giants—Mokmurian has opted for more diplomatic tactics.

Creature: A frost giant emissary from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings to the north has been staying in this building for the last week, after securing an allegiance with Mokmurian. His tribe, 30 strong, is on the march south and is scheduled to arrive at Jorgenfist in several weeks—the arrival of these frost giants will signal the time for the attack on Varisia. Until then, Isvig Fjordersen, the frost giant emissary, has passed the time waiting here, sullen and cranky in the too-warm-for-him weather and uninterested in mingling with the other giants of the area. Isvig does not join in the defense of the fortress, but if intruders dare enter this room he attacks at once, grateful for something to take out his impatience on.

ISVIG FJORDERSEN

CR 10

Male frost giant (MM 122)

hp 129

Treasure: Isvig keeps his personal stores of treasure in a large hide sack at the foot of his sleeping furs. This includes 998

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gp, 1,082 sp, three brown-green garnets worth 100 gp each, a platinum ewer worth 700 gp, and a solid mithral idol of a rearing bear worth 500 gp.

PART FOUR: UNDER JORGENFIST

The caves under Jorgenfist might look natural to the untrained eye, but they are in fact all that remains of the upper subterranean level once hidden under the Therassic Monastery—only one chamber on this level still bears a passing resemblance to its original shape (area B11). A DC 30 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check is enough to note the somewhat artificial nature of these caverns.

The air in these caves is a bit warmer than that outside, but numerous tiny ventilation tunnels keep the caves from growing too stale. Most of the stone giants Mokmurian recruited from his old tribe live on the surface in area A2g—these caves are used primarily for workshops, worship, and barracks for commanders in his army.

The caves themselves have high ceilings, averaging 20 feet in height in the tunnels, while in caverns they generally arch up to heights of 40 feet. The walls, floor, and ceiling are rough and laced with furrows and air vents, but despite their almost wrinkled look remain quite strong—stone giants are particular about their lairs, and there's little chance of cave-ins within these halls.

Although Mokmurian has forbidden most of the rank-and-file giants of his army (including those from his old tribe) entrance into these caves, he did select four loyal stone giants as guardians. These Pit Guardians report to Galenmir, the general of Mokmurian's army. When Jorgenfist is not on alert, these giants can generally be found relaxing in the great hall in area B4 during the day or sleeping in their barracks in area B10 at night. When the caves are on alert, though, these giants lie in wait in area B2, ready to defend the caves from invaders or to respond to sounds of combat elsewhere in the complex.

B1. Cave of the Dire Bears (EL 10)

The floor of this cavern is a bone-strewn mess. What appear to be three dens of bones, bits of cloth and leather, and swaths of matted fur line the walls to the east. The air in here is thick with the scent of animal dung and spoiled meat.

Creatures: Three dire bears live in this cave. Trained, in theory, to guard the entrance, the bears actually spend much of their time sleeping. If the alarm is raised, a giant makes sure to rouse the bears—otherwise the sleeping animals take a –10 penalty on Listen checks to hear intruders passing by the entrance of their cave.

DIRE BEARS (3)

hp 105 each (MM 63)

TACTICS

During Combat The dire bears fight to defend the entrance to the caverns and nothing else. They use their claws at first and might try to bull rush a foe off the ramp if position allows it. If the PCs retreat out of the caves to the surface above, the bears let them escape.

Development: If a fight here spills out onto the ramp in area A9, Galenmir emerges from his lair in area B3 onto the pit floor of area A9 to hurl boulders at anyone in sight on the ramp above.

B2. The Elders' Entryway (EL 12)

The ramp descends halfway into the pit before ending here at a cave entrance that leads underground.

A smoldering brazier sits in an alcove just to the right of the entrance.

Creatures: If the fortress is on alert, the caverns' four stone giant Pit Guardians are stationed here, two in the western tunnel and two

to the north. Otherwise, this entrance might at first seem empty, when in fact the stone giant elder Conna waits to intercept the PCs here, hidden in the side cave near the brazier.

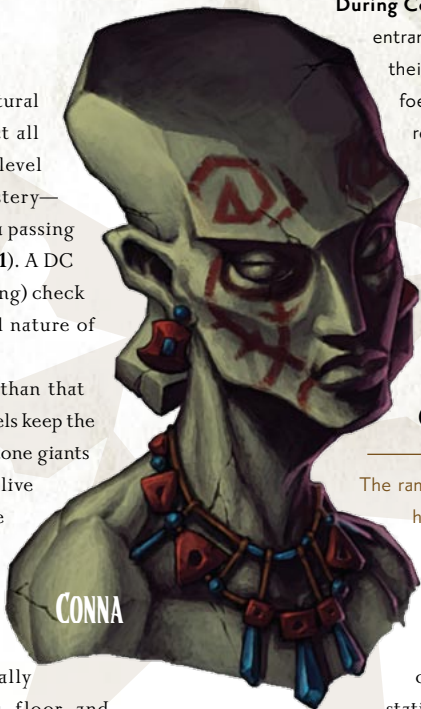
Conna is an old, angular giant. She wears heavy bearskins over her shoulders, and a spear rests by her side. When she spots the PCs, she steps out of hiding and holds out her hands to them, palms up.

Conna is observant, and since she bowed before Mokmurian, she's made sure to speak only when spoken to and to take care of Mokmurian's infrequent demands with swift efficiency. As a result, Mokmurian has grown used to her presence, and lax in what he says when she is in earshot. She's doubtless heard about the raid on Sandpoint by now, and if the PCs are known to be approaching Jorgenfist, awaits their arrival with anticipation.

When she sees the PCs, she furtively attempts to contact them, speaking first in Giant, then in Common. If the PCs attack her, she sighs heavily and fights defensively until she can escape out of the Pit to reconsider her options. If the PCs agree to hear what she has to say, she's quick and to the point.

"I don't have much time, but know that if you are here to slay Mokmurian, I am your ally. Come with me to a place we can speak in peace, for I would aid you in your quarrel here—without my assistance you might find only your graves below Jorgenfist."

If the PCs accompany her, she leads them to area B6 to finish her conversation with them in the presence of her ghostly husband.



FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS



CONNNA THE WISE

Female stone giant elder sorcerer 6 (MM 124)

N Large giant (earth)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +21

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 27

(+4 armor, +2 deflection, +2 Dexterity, +11 natural)

hp 178 (14d8+6d4+100)

Fort +16, **Ref** +10, **Will** +13

Resist acid 10

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee +1 shortspear +20/+15/+10 (1d8+7)

Ranged rock +14 (2d8+10)

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

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)

1/day—stone shape, stone tell, transmute rock to mud or transmute mud to rock (DC 19)

Spells Known (CL 6th; +14 ranged touch)

3rd (4/day)—fly

2nd (6/day)—blink, scorching ray

1st (7/day)—charm person (DC 16), mage armor, obscuring mist, shocking grasp

0 (6/day)—dancing lights, daze (DC 15), flare (DC 15), ghost sound

CR 12

(DC 15), light, mending, prestidigitation

TACTICS

Before Combat Conna casts *mage armor* twice a day, so it's always in effect during her waking hours.

During Combat Conna's main tactic is to stall. She uses Combat Expertise to increase her AC to 34 with a bonus from Dodge when she can. If she has time to prepare, she casts *fly* and *blink* on herself.

Morale Conna doesn't want to fight the PCs. Her tactics focus on escape so she can recover in hiding and plan a new method of contacting the PCs so she can again try to plead her case and recruit them in her plans against Mokmurian.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 14, **Con** 20, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +24

Feats Alertness (as long as Gutfinder is in arm's reach), Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Extend Spell, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility

Skills Climb +24, Concentration +17, Hide +15 (+23 in rocky terrain), Jump +28, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Spellcraft +10, Spot +21

Languages Common, Giant, Draconic

SQ familiar (bat named Gutfinder), rock catching

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* +4; **Other Gear** +1 shortspear, ring of minor acid resistance, ring of protection +2, cloak of Charisma +2

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

PIT GUARDIANS (4)

Stone giants
hp 119 each (MM 124)

CR 8

Morale Although Galenmir is no coward, he realizes when he's been beaten. If reduced to 30 hit points or less, he drinks his *potion of gaseous form* and seeps into the cracks and crevices of the caves, working his way up and out of the Pit to gather a group of eight stone giants to then lead back into the Pit to seek out the PCs. While he's aware that Mokmurian will likely be furious at this breach of edict, Galenmir assumes his lord will be even more furious if the PCs are allowed to explore the caves uncontested.

B3. The General's Lair (EL 12)

This cavern opens out to the east onto the bony tangle of the pit floor; a hanging dire bear fur over this exit is open but can be pulled shut to cut out the draft. The rest of the walls in this cavern are lined with hanging furs as well, including the floor—they're piled particularly high in a mattress to the south.

The hanging furs conceal an exit to the west that leads deeper into the tunnels (marked "S"). Noticing this exit from inside the room requires a DC 15 Search check.

Creature: The cavern is the home of Galenmir, Mokmurian's general and second in command of his army. One of the oldest giants to submit to Mokmurian's rule, Galenmir cares little whom he follows as long as he has the opportunity to lead others in battle and to gain more glory for himself.

When Mokmurian assigned Galenmir to this cave, the proud giant rankled a bit at what he interpreted as "door guard" duty. Given those are his orders, though, Galenmir performs them admirably, rewarding himself in the hours before sleep by generating attack plans for every possible contingency and situation once his army marches on Varisia.

GALENMIR**CR 12**

Male stone giant fighter 4 (MM 124)

LE Large giant (earth)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +19

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 11, flat-footed 29

(+7 armor, +2 Dex, +11 natural, +2 shield, -1 size)

hp 193 (14d8+4d10+108)

Fort +21, **Ref** +9, **Will** +9

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +3 *heavy pick* +24/+19/+14/+9 (1d8+19/19-20/x4)

Ranged rock +17 (2d8+16)

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

Special Attacks rock throwing

TACTICS

Before Combat Galenmir drinks his *potion of heroism* and applies his *oil of keen edge* to his pick if he has time before entering combat—these benefits are incorporated into this stat block.

During Combat Galenmir stacked several rocks next to the pit entrance to his lair and uses these against intruders he catches descending into the Pit. If confronted in close quarters, he uses Improved Bull Rush to keep his enemies from surrounding him and to set himself up for tactical advantages. He always opens a battle with a 5-point Power Attack (included in his stats above), adjusting the amount by which he power attacks by 2 points each round depending on if he's consistently hitting or missing his enemies with his third and fourth attacks.

STATISTICS

Str 33, **Dex** 14, **Con** 22, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +14; **Grp** +29

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Mobility, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Spring Attack

Skills Climb +30, Handle Animal +11, Hide +17 (+25 in caves), Ride +12, Spot +19

Languages Common, Giant

SQ rock catching

Combat Gear *potion of heroism*, *potion of gaseous form*, *oil of keen edge*, *oil of darkness* **Other Gear** +2 breastplate, +1 light steel shield, +3 heavy pick, cloak of elvenkind, 19 pp, 18 gp, 13 sp

Treasure: Galenmir's wealth is mostly invested in his gear, but he also has an impressive collection of scalps and war trophies, including the preserved head of a frost giant jarl, the beards of 100 dwarves (each neatly bundled and secured with a silver ring worth 10 gp), and bits of broken and dented breastplates from the plate armor of a dozen different warriors (worth 20 gp each).

Galenmir's favorite collection is a neatly sorted grouping of 33 shields, each marked with the name of a human, elf, or dwarf hero Galenmir defeated in combat. He remembers each one; anyone who makes a DC 25 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check recognizes that one of the shields belonged to Anstan Jeggare, an exiled bastard from the affluent Jeggare family of Korvosa. This shield alone is magical—a +1 *arrow catching heavy steel shield*. If returned to the Jeggare family, the nobles pay full price as a reward (rather than the standard half price if the shield is sold on the market).

B4. The Great Cave of Jorgenfist (EL 0 or 12)

This huge cavern contains four large tables set up around a central platform on which sits an immense stone throne. From the ceiling above hang carved stalactites, some fashioned to look like dangling spears, while others look like dragon's teeth. The flickering light of a large fire burns behind a row of stalagmites to the south, and lots of fairly fresh bones are scattered around the edges of the cave.

Creatures: If Jorgenfist is not on the alert, during the day, the caverns' four Pit Guardians can be found here relaxing, eating, and arm wrestling. They aren't paying particular attention and take a -4 penalty on Spot and Listen checks to notice the PCs.

FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS

PIT GUARDIANS (4)

Stone giants

hp 119 each (MM 124)

CR 8

B5a. Kitchen (EL 9)

A large firepit burns and crackles in the eastern part of this cave, with an iron cauldron hanging over the flames from a frame of tree trunks. Kitchen supplies sized for giants sit along the southern wall, including buckets of water, wooden trenchers for food, and gallon-sized mugs.

Creatures: This room is always occupied, even late at night, by Grumelda the watcher, a female stone giant with a particular knack for preparing bland food. She keeps the fire burning at all hours, ready to prepare whatever meals Mokmurian may demand. Grumelda has little interest in war and fighting, but if she spies trouble in the great cave to the north she races into the room, wielding a long iron ladle as a club.

GRUMELDA

Female stone giant (MM 124)

N Large giant

hp 119

CR 8

B5b. Larder

This room is a carnivore's paradise: the cave is packed with entire sides of elk, smoked haunches of deer and wild boar, and massive slabs that can only be mammoth ribs. The room is filled with stacks of meat of all kinds, smaller quantities of spices and roots, and many sacks of grain.

A closer search of the smoked meat here reveals some gruesome human, elf, and dwarf remains. One small barrel is labeled "CANDY" in Giant—inside are hundreds of human, elf, and dwarf eyes floating in a thick suspension of foul-smelling brine.

B6. Shrine of the Ancestors (EL 8)

The walls of this cave are painted with red, yellow, brown, and black figures, among which are apparent images of giants, mammoths, elk, deer, and wyverns. Others are harder to figure out: ogres, perhaps, or giant children, or even humans. The dwarves are very clear, with beards and tiny axes being crushed under enormous giant feet. A simple oil lantern lights a small altar at the far end of the cavern. A modest offering of antlers, hooves, and patches of fur has been piled in front of the altar.

When Mokmurian first came to these caves, he set up this small shrine dedicated to his people's ancestral spirits. As he became more and more obsessed with Thassilon, his interest in religion waned, and after he returned from Xin-Shalast his first act in this chamber was to sacrifice Vandarrec, the father of his old tribe. The now-deposed mother of his tribe, Conna, has tended to this shrine since Mokmurian's blasphemous sacrifice, and only she knows that her husband's spirit now haunts this chamber. The other denizens of the surrounding caverns have learned to avoid this cave due to the haunt (see the Haunts sidebar).

If the PCs enter this cave without Conna, the haunt plays out as detailed on page 34. Conna's presence soothes the angry spirit, and as long as she is in the room, the haunt does not manifest beyond periodically animating one of the cave paintings so that it appears to dance just at the corner of the viewer's eye.

Conna explains to the PCs what happened to her husband here several years ago, then goes on to explain that Mokmurian's minions avoid this cave due to the haunting. Since Vandarrec's spirit remains quiet in Conna's presence, this is a perfect place to have a brief meeting with the PCs about their common problem—Mokmurian.

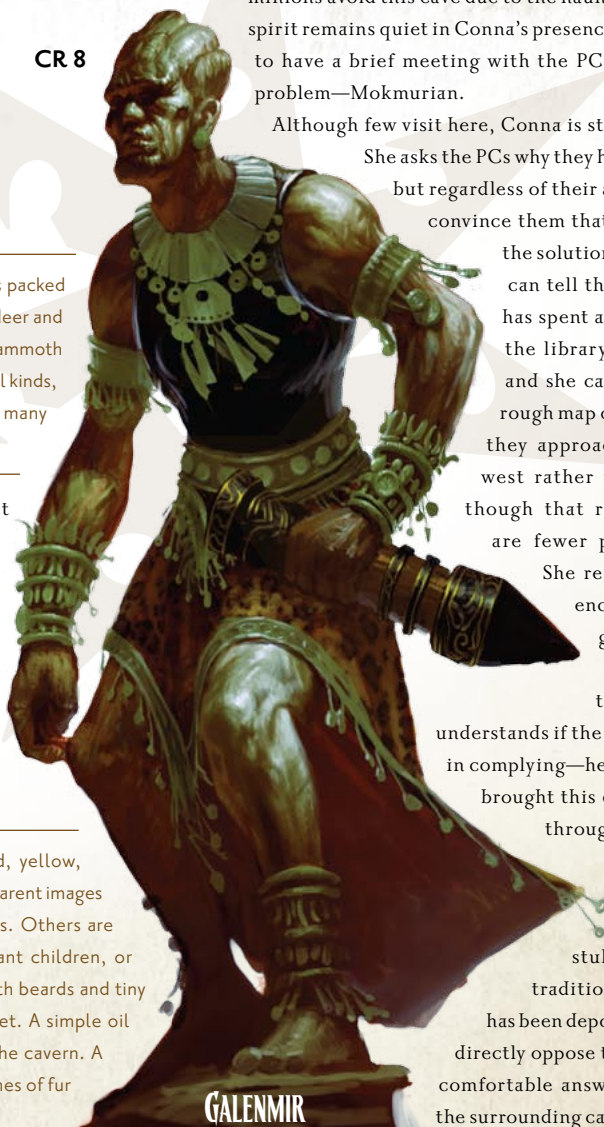
Although few visit here, Conna is still nervous and rushed.

She asks the PCs why they have come to Jorgenfist, but regardless of their answer does her best to

convince them that slaying Mokmurian is the solution to their problems. She can tell the PCs that Mokmurian has spent almost all of his time in the library level below this one, and she can even draw the PCs a rough map of the caves, suggesting they approach area B14 from the west rather than the north—even though that route is longer, there are fewer perils along the way.

She requests that if the PCs encounter any more stone giants they defeat the giants without killing them, if possible, but understands if the PCs have little interest in complying—her kin, in her mind, have brought this doom upon themselves through their own actions.

Conna will not accompany the PCs, mostly out of stubborn respect for her traditions—once a giant elder has been deposed, that elder must not directly oppose the new ruler. Yet she is comfortable answering questions about the surrounding caverns, and she agrees to



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cast spells on PCs if they wish—*fly* and *mage armor* being the best choices.

Before she parts ways with the PCs, Conna begrudgingly tells them one more thing. She fears that Mokmurian has fallen under the influence of a powerful evil spirit indeed—one of the Ancient Lords themselves. She has heard him whisper a name when he felt he was alone, the name “Karzoug,” a name Conna recognizes from secret myths shared by the elders. Karzoug was one of those who enslaved her people, and if Mokmurian has fallen victim to this Ancient Lord’s influence, the danger facing her people and all of Varisia may be greater than anyone knows.

Haunt: Vandarrec’s blasphemous sacrifice has bound him to this world—his soul cannot move on to the afterlife until the one who performed this profane act is himself slain. Until then, Vandarrec’s tormented spirit haunts this chamber. Only 1d4 rounds after any creature enters this room, the paintings on the wall suddenly animate into a display of violence. A heartbeat later, the largest giant in the mural seems to rise up out of the wall, taking the shape of an enormous stone giant. With shocking speed, unseen knives flay the giant’s stony flesh and cut deep into the phantom’s belly so its exposed guts drip with black blood. It moans in terrible pain and reaches out to crush anyone within 20 feet of the altar with its bloodstained hands.

FLAYED GIANT**CR 8**

Notice Spot DC 15 (to notice the paintings on the walls begin moving); **Effective HD** 13

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity; **Reset** automatic (24 hours)

Effect All creatures within 20 feet of the altar must make a DC 18

Will save to resist being paralyzed with fright for 1d8 rounds at the gruesome sight. Those who become paralyzed must then make a DC 18 Fortitude save to avoid dying of fright as the ghostly giant seems to crush their bodies to pulp.

B7a. Enga’s Cave (EL 12)

This cave is cluttered by tiny mounds of carefully sorted junk—bones, scraps of armor, broken weapons, stones, dead rats, and chitin harvested from large vermin. A net hammock hangs from a pair of stalagmites to the southwest near a four-foot-wide crack in the wall that winds deeper underground.

Creature: During his travels through the Storval Plateau, not long after he returned from Xin-Shalast, Mokmurian encountered a curious creature—a kobold barbarian named Enga Keckvia. Mokmurian initially ignored the brave little kobold when she demanded payment from him for using her territory (a dried riverbed) as a road, but when she stabbed him in the ankle he realized there was more to her than he thought. He was intrigued and offered her a place in his army, figuring that he might need a brave, powerful, little thing like Enga for special missions. Enga herself, a wanderer from distant Andoran, had seen enough hardship during her travels and liked the idea of a paying job.

Enga’s role these days is twofold. Her primary job is to guard this passage from the River Caves from vermin or other intrusions. Two or three times a week, she makes forays into the tunnels to hunt down and kill the vermin that grow within. Her other job is to serve as a liaison between the giants and the tribes of redcaps that dwell deep in the River Caves (see area **B7b**). Neither the giants nor the redcaps enjoy the other’s company overmuch, but although they live in close proximity they don’t have overlapping territories. Periodically, Mokmurian demands tributes and favors from the redcaps, and at these times, Enga becomes his messenger and collector.

The arrival of humans in the cave puzzles Enga, particularly if they don’t enter her lair from the River Caves entrance, but she recovers quickly enough to fly into a frothing frenzy just before she attacks. Being able to present humans to Mokmurian is certain to get her a bonus!

ENGA KECKVIA, KOBOLD “RATCATCHER”**CR 12**

Female kobold barbarian 12 (MM 161)

CE Small humanoid (reptilian)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +16, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16

(+6 armor, +2 Dex, –2 rage, +1 shield, +1 size)

hp 131 (12d12+36)

Fort +12 **Ref** +6 **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge; **DR** 2/—

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +3 *shortspear* +22/+17/+12 (1d4+8)

Special Attacks greater rage 4/day

TACTICS

During Combat Enga is brave and fearless, despite (or perhaps due to) her small stature. She rages on the first round of combat and, if possible, fights with her back to a wall so she can minimize flankers. She focuses her anger on obvious healers first and foremost.

Morale Enga flees into the River Caves if reduced to less than 20 hit points, hoping to lose her tormenters in the maze-like region. If she’s got a few rounds, she rigs a quick but deadly trap by removing her *necklace of fireballs* (but keeping one bead) and leaving it on the ground. She then moves about 60 feet away and waits; once she sees someone reach the necklace, she throws her bead and detonates the entire necklace at once. She then doubles back to area **B7** via a different route and seeks out one of the lamias in area **B13** for aid, possibly recruiting them to *stone shape* the entrance to the small caves shut.

Base Stats When Enga isn’t raging, her stats change as follows:

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 18

hp 95

Fort +8 **Will** +7

Melee +3 *shortspear* +19/+14/+9 (1d4+5)

Grp +10

Str 14, **Con** 12

Swim +6

STATISTICS

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HAUNTS

Haunts function somewhat like traps, but are difficult to detect since they do not “exist” until they are triggered. When a haunt is triggered, its effects manifest at initiative rank 10 on a surprise round; the haunt effect vanishes as soon as the surprise round is over and things return to normal (haunts never persist into actual round-by-round “combat”). Those in the haunt’s vicinity can make a specific skill check to notice the haunt in time to react—if a character notices it, he may make an initiative check to determine when he acts in the round. Once a haunt is active, a successful turn undead attempt against the haunt’s effective Hit Dice ends it immediately, although the character making the turn attempt must notice the haunt and must act before it in the surprise round it is activated. If the turning attempt results in a destruction result, that particular haunt is exorcised and permanently disabled. Once a haunt triggers, it cannot trigger again for 24 hours.

A haunt is assigned a CR score, calculated as if it were a trap. For experiencing and surviving a haunt, award the entire party XP as if it had defeated a creature of that CR. All haunts are mind-affecting fear effects, even those that can produce physical effects.

Str 20, **Dex** 15, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +13

Feats Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (shortspear)

Skills Craft (trapmaking) +17, Hide +10, Listen +16, Survival +11, Swim +6

Languages Draconic, Common

SQ light sensitivity, trap sense +4

Combat Gear necklace of fireballs (type IV); **Other Gear** +1 breastplate, +1 buckler, +3 shortspear, 11 gp, 12 sp, 12 cp

B7b. The Small Tunnels (EL 11)

The narrow crack in the southwest wall connects to a tangled maze of caves the giants refer to as the River Caves. These tunnels lead a winding route south, eventually ending at a secret door that opens into area **A4**. Along this way, dozens of other tunnels intersect the primary passage, sloping ever downward in an increasingly vexing maze. These tunnels are infested with all manner of vermin, rats, slimes, and other creatures, but the most dangerous are a large clan of violent fey creatures called redcaps.

Navigating the small tunnels is a claustrophobic ordeal. The tunnels vary between three and five feet wide and wrap over and under each other in a tangled three-dimensional maze riddled with dead ends. You can expand these tunnels as you wish, but little beyond their possible use as an alternate entrance into the caverns has any impact on the adventure.

Creatures: The redcaps have lived in the small caves for decades—they once had full run of these caverns, but when Mokmurian moved in and the giant killed several of their

number, the fey were forced to remain in the River Caves. They’ve begrudgingly ceded the caves to the giants, hoping that Mokmurian will eventually get tired and move on, but for now the redcaps are making do with their new lot in life.

Characters who spend much time in these caves are guaranteed to encounter a murder party of five redcaps—the redcaps take intrusions into these tight caves very personally and very violently.

REDCAPS (5)

CR 6

hp 64 each (see page 80)

B8. Tannery (EL 9)

This room reeks of vinegar, rotting hair, and worse. A single large stone basin sits in the middle of the room, about ten feet square and filled with foul-looking fluid upon which float patches of wet fur. Around the basin stand a dozen wooden frames over which leather and hides are stretched. At the far end of the cave, a stinking mound of hides and furs awaits tanning.



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The wet fur belongs to bear hides currently being tanned; additional hides are stretched on racks here, ready to be taken up to the surface for softening and further working. These hides and leathers will eventually be turned into tabards and patches for giants to wear over their armor to further enhance their fearsome natures. The liquid in the vat is particularly foul—a character who falls into the stuff must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1d4 rounds.

Creatures: A group of nine ogres, kept docile and loyal via the magical combination of threats and abuse from the lamia priests and, periodically, Mokmurian himself, toil here daily to supply leather and furs for the growing army above. They look upon an intrusion by the PCs as an excuse to quit work for at least a few minutes to take part in a fight, and do so with great guffaws and chortles.

OGRES (9)

CR 3

hp 29 each (MM 199)

TACTICS

During Combat These ogres are as interested in humiliating the PCs as they are in hurting them and often attempt to knock PCs into the tanning vat using bull rushes.

B9. Armory (EL 10)

The walls of this room have been chiseled away and made almost regular. Four anvils stand in the middle of the room, while to the south burns a bright forge fire. Immense bellows stand near a row of low iron cages, each featuring a filthy mound of straw. The bellows' handles extend through the cages, allowing anyone imprisoned within to work the bellows without the necessity of leaving their confines. To the north, mounds of steel and the broken and bent pieces of a dozen weapons await work.

Many of the weapons and armor being forged for the coming war are being created elsewhere, either in the surrounding camps or at tribal forges in the Iron Peaks. This forge is concerned mostly with repairing broken or damaged weapons.

Creatures: Two stone giant smiths work here, repairing the broken weapons almost as fast as they're coming in. The cages near the bellows contain several dwarven prisoners, all of whom might not be immediately recognizable as dwarves, as the giants have shaved off their beards for the sport of it. If the giants managed to capture any unnamed NPCs from Sandpoint and made it all the way back here, they have joined the dwarves in these cages. The prisoners are all exhausted, but if freed, they grab up broken weapons and eagerly (if foolishly) join any fight against the giants.

STONE GIANTS (2)

CR 8

hp 119 each (MM 124)

DWARF PRISONERS (9)

CR 1

Dwarf warrior 1 (MM 91)

hp 6 each

B10. Pit Guardian Barracks

The tunnel widens here into a gallery, the walls of which are streaked with glittering veins of mica. To the north, four large mounds of furs have been arranged—a nimbus of bones and bits of half-eaten food lies strewn around each.

Creatures: The four Pit Guardians sleep here—if the alarm isn't raised and it's night, the PCs find the four giants snoring loudly in these makeshift beds.

PIT GUARDIANS (4)

CR 8

Stone giants

hp 119 each (MM 124)

B11. Chamber of the Sihedron (EL 11)

The doors to this room are made of stone and carved with an immense seven-pointed star—the Sihedron Rune. The doors themselves are unlocked but quite heavy. It takes a DC 20 Strength check to push them open, which causes their ancient stone hinges to grind and grate, announcing the PCs loudly to the room's caretaker.

This immense hall is an unexpected break from the rough stone walls of caverns and caves. The rectangular chamber is fifty feet wide and a hundred feet long, with rib-like spines arching up to a vaulted ceiling fifty feet overhead. The room's floor is loose soil, while the wall opposite the doors is carved with an immense bas-relief of a seven-pointed star. Throughout the room, seven fifteen-foot-tall tree trunks have been driven into the ground like immense stakes, their sides carved with countless more stars. Each trunk has been fitted with an iron ring from which dangle chains affixed to manacles. Next to each trunk stands an iron brazier filled with smoldering coals. A long branding iron, its tip also featuring the seven-pointed star, leans against each brazier.

Although the original purpose of this room is lost to the ages, the carvings of the Sihedron Rune made it a perfect place for Mokmurian to use as an indoctrination chamber. When he returned to Jorgenfist, he, his lamia minions, and a particularly vile giant named Lokansir took time to run each of his new recruits through a grueling ritual in which their minds were assaulted, their bodies purified, and their flesh eventually branded with the Sihedron Rune. While these giants believe this ritual is merely symbolic of joining Mokmurian's army, it has a hidden purpose—it is the same ritual used by other agents of Karzoug to prepare souls for the *runewell* of greed. When any of these giants die, their souls power Karzoug's imminent freedom as surely as any other sacrifice.

The soil on the floor of this room was brought in by the chamber's guardian so even here, underground, he could feel more at home.

Creature: Among the giants of the Storval Plateau periodically rise those who are greater than their kin. In these giants, the blood of the ancients is said to run true, and they are what they were in the time before Thassilon enslaved them.

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They are known as the jotunblood, and their powers far exceed those of their lesser kin.

As he was escorting his new lamia allies back from Xin-Shalast to Jorgenfist, Mokmurian encountered one of the jotunblood, a nomadic hill giant named Lokansir. Mokmurian sensed the greatness in Lokansir and made an offer: join his army and take part in the looting of Varisia, and Mokmurian would make Lokansir rich and powerful. The two spoke often during the remainder of the journey, and by the time they'd reached Jorgenfist, Lokansir had become Mokmurian's closest and most trusted ally. Lokansir was particularly enthralled by Mokmurian's stories of Xin-Shalast, and the jotunblood hill giant became one of the few to whom Mokmurian confided his true goal to awaken Karzoug by offering up an incredible number of specially prepared souls of greed.

Since then, Lokansir has grown ever more obsessed with Thassilon, particularly the stories of how the ancients used rune giants to control other giants. He's made a few trips into the Library of Thassilon (area C7) but is far too dim-witted and impatient to learn much from the tomes there. Instead, he decorated his shoulders and arms with Thassilonian runes in an attempt to focus this magic, but so far, these experiments have had no real results. His current desire is to make the journey to Xin-Shalast himself, but he's contented himself with the coming war for now—there will be plenty of time for visits to the Kodar Mountains once Varisia is conquered.

Lokansir is likely in this room meditating when the PCs first enter, melded with the soil and earth on the floor and thus hidden completely. If he notices intruders, he waits for them to draw near to his hiding spot in the earth before emerging with a roar to strike with his greatclub.

If during the raid on Sandpoint any of the giants made off with named NPCs, they are found here, barely conscious and hanging by the arms from manacles. Badly tortured and at 0 hit points, each prisoner has been branded on the chest with the Sihedron Rune. The ritual of preparation complete, they await sacrifice at the Pit—an event scheduled for some point only a few days after the PCs first arrive in the region.

LOKANSIR

Male jotunblood hill giant

CE Huge giant

Init -2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +10, Spot +10

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 6, flat-footed 22

(-2 Dexterity, +16 natural, -2 size)

hp 231 (22d8+132)

Fort +19, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6

SR 19

OFFENSE

Spd 50 ft.

Melee +3 greatclub +29/+24/+19/+14 (3d8+19/19-20)

Ranged rock +13 (2d8+11)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks earth-shaking bellow

TACTICS

During Combat Lokansir isn't too bright, and his combat tactics reflect that. He rarely bothers moving around much in combat except to get in reach of enemies to crush them with his favorite club. He avoids using his earth-shaking bellow while underground, but if brought below 50 hit points and unable to merge with earth, he'll use this ability in desperation.

Morale Lokansir melds into earth if reduced below 50 hit points and waits for his fast healing to heal him completely before emerging. If somehow prevented from using this tactic, the desperate giant tries to flee out of the caves up into Jorgenfist to find more earth to hide in. If he manages to heal back to full, he tracks down the PCs with single-minded stubbornness for revenge.

STATISTICS

Str 33, **Dex** 6, **Con** 23, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +35

LOKANSIR



CR II

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greatclub), Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub)

Skills Climb +20, Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Giant

SQ meld into earth, rock catching

Other Gear +3 greatclub

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Earth-Shaking Bellow (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, Lokansir can loose an earth-shaking bellow that functions like an *earthquake* spell, affecting a 40-foot-cone.

Meld Into Earth (Su) At will, Lokansir can meld into earth (not solid stone) as if using the *meld into stone* spell, except that he may remain in the earth as long as he wishes. A *move earth* spell cast upon his location causes him to be expelled from the earth and take 5d6 points of damage. While melded with earth, he gains fast healing 1.

B12. Red Dragon Captives (EL 9)

The passageway widens here into a cylindrical cavern, the walls black with soot and scorch marks.

Creatures: Two young red dragons are being kept here for eventual sacrifice to Karzoug—each dragon has already been marked with the Sihedron Rune. Since branding works poorly on creatures immune to fire, Mokmurian marked the dragons by prying scales from their chests to form a crude but workable shapes of the rune.

When they were first captured by Mokmurian and Longtooth, these two young dragons fought tenaciously. They were subdued nonetheless, bound in iron, and hauled back here, where Lokansir aided in preparing the dragons for sacrifice. The lamia priestesses then used their *charm monster* abilities to befriend them, and have repeated this process every few days for several weeks. The dragons now view the lamias as their mistresses and wear the Sihedron Rune with pride. They take quick offense to intruders, roaring warnings to their lamia mistresses and quickly attacking with their breath weapons.

Both dragons are still under the effect of *charm monster* spell-like abilities cast by the lamias. If a dragon is released from this charm effect, it quickly realizes what's been done to it and flies to area B13 for vengeance, attacking with fury any lamias it finds there before attempting to escape the caverns entirely. They have no interest in rewarding PCs for being released—in a way, they view their not attacking the PCs as reward enough. Any PC who tries to force a reward from a freed dragon quickly finds himself in combat with them.

ECONTREDOR AND SULAMINGA

Male young red dragons

CE Large dragon (fire)

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses; Listen +19, Spot +19

CR 7

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21
(+12 natural, -1 size)

hp 123 (13d12+39)

Fort +11, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

Immune fire

Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +20 (2d6+7) and
2 claws +17 (1d8+3) and
2 wings +17 (1d6+3) and
tail slap +17 (1d8+10)

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

Special Attacks breath weapon (40-ft. cone; 6d10 fire; DC 21)

Spells Known (CL 1st; +12 ranged touch)

1st (4/day)—*cure light wounds*, *shield*

0 (5/day)—*daze* (DC 11), *detect poison*, *mage hand*, *ray of frost*

TACTICS

During Combat The two dragons attempt to intimidate first, swearing to roast their foes in twin streams of fire, but if actually forced to fight, they use all their melee attacks first, both dragons flanking a single fighter or other dangerous-looking foe.

Morale While charmed, the dragons fight to the death. If freed from the charm, they attempt to escape into the wilds if reduced to 40 hit points or less.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 10, **Con** 17, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +24

Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Alertness, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Appraise +17, Bluff +17, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Listen +19, Search +17, Spot +19

Languages Draconic

B13. Cavern of the Lamia Priests (EL 12)

Incense smoke hangs heavy in the air of this cavern, thick enough to give the cave a gauzy, almost dream-like feel and scenting the place with a vaguely metallic tang. Soft chanting fills the air as well—the voices' rich, modulated tones that are strangely soothing. The cavern's walls are painted on all sides in spiraling patterns of rich blue and purple, while here and there the angular symbol of a three-eyed jackal-like visage leers out of these dark colors in vivid reds. Elsewhere, depictions of three-headed bats with enormous fangs and a coiling snake with a horned head at each end of its body glower from the walls. A large block of stone sits against one wall, its top and sides greasy with fresh blood.

This cavern has been claimed by the lamias—although most of Mokmurian's lamia allies are out in the world preparing Varisia for Karzoug's awakening, two priestesses of Lamashtu have remained behind to serve Mokmurian as advisors and to aid him in whatever way they can. Unknown even to Mokmurian, these

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lamias are in regular contact with their own sinister masters and mistresses in Xin-Shalast via *sending* spells, where they offer regular but brief reports on Mokmurian's progress.

In the meantime, the lamia priests have transformed this cavern into a cathedral dedicated to the Mother of Monsters, Lamashtu. A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the three-eyed jackal as Lamashtu's symbol, while the images of fanged bats and horned amphisbaena snakes can be identified with a DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check as the symbols of the demon lords Barypon and Fendrast, respectively, lesser lords in Lamashtu's service.

Creatures: Two lamia clerics dwell here, Seval and Zaelsar. They react to intrusions into their temple with cold amusement, as if it were some only slightly humorous attempt at a joke that the PCs would even consider treading upon this holy ground. Seval asks if the PCs are here to pledge their souls to Lamashtu, a sneer on her beautiful face, while Zaelsar scratches her claws along the stony floor, creating a discordant sound not unlike fingernails on slate. Neither lamia expects the PCs to talk for long, which is fine for them—they've not dined on humanoid flesh for too long and are eager to rectify that lapse.

SEVAL AND ZAELSAR

Female lamia cleric 8 (Lamashtu)
CE Large magical beast

CR 10

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +6, Spot +12

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 20

(+2 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dexterity, +7 natural, -1 size)

hp 136 (9d10+8d8+51)

Fort +15, **Ref** +13, **Will** +15

OFFENSE

Spd 60 ft.

Melee +2 flail +19/+14/+9 (2d6+5) and

touch +12 (1d4 Wisdom drain) and

2 claws +12 (1d4+1)

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

Special Attacks feat of strength 1/day (+8 Strength for one round), rebuke undead 6/day (+5, 2d6+11)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th)

At will—*disguise self*, *ventriloquism* (DC 13)

3/day—*charm monster* (DC 17), *major image* (DC 16), *mirror image*, *suggestion* (DC 16)

1/day—*deep slumber* (DC 16)

Spells Prepared (CL 8th)

4th—*freedom of movement*, *poison* (DC 22), *sending*, *unholy blight*^D (DC 20)

3rd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 21), *cure serious wounds* (2), *dispel magic*, *magic vestment*^D (already cast), *stone shape*

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*^D, *cure moderate wounds* (2),

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death knell (DC 20), *sound burst* (DC 18)

1st—*command* (DC 17), *cure light wounds* (3), *divine favor*, *protection from good*^P, *sanctuary* (DC 17)

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

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

TACTICS

Before Combat Each lamia casts *magic vestment* at the start of her day—if the PCs arrive at this room after sundown, that spell has expired and the lamias lose their +2 armor bonuses to their Armor Class. If they hear the dragons or trolls fighting to the north or south, they take several rounds to cast preparatory spells (*freedom of movement*, *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *mirror image*, and finally *protection from good*) before moving into the neighboring room to join the battle.

During Combat Each lamia casts *divine favor* on the first round of combat, then moves in to fight the enemy in melee. They focus their attacks on the same target, one lamia attacking with her melee attacks while the other combat casts spells at the target, then switch off the next round. These lamia are merciless, and if one of them drops to negative hit points, the other doesn't hesitate to use *death knell* on her dying sister.

Morale If a lamia is reduced to 40 hit points or less, she tries to cast *sanctuary* and then uses her healing magic on herself while attempting to put some distance between her and the PCs. If reduced to 20 hit points, a lamia casts *sending* to warn Mokmurian before she attempts to flee to another room in this complex, where she can find an ally to aid her.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +22

Feats Dodge, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spell Focus (necromancy), Spring Attack

Skills Bluff +19, Concentration +19, Hide +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Spellcraft +9, Spot +12

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant, Thassilonian

SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Other Gear +2 *flail*, *peript of Wisdom* +2, *ring of protection* +2

Treasure: The two incense burners atop the altar are made of silver chased with mithral and are worth 400 gp each.

A DC 25 Search check is enough to notice that the altar has been slid across the stone floor several times. A DC 20 Strength check allows a PC to push it aside to reveal a small hollow in the ground below, within which sit several vile books full of descriptions on how to disembowel, decapitate, drown, and otherwise slaughter all major types of giants and humanoids, especially in ritual killings and sacrifices. Many of these horrific sacrifices involve opening of a victim's belly, inserting a small but ravenous monster, and then magically healing the belly wound shut so that the monster is forced to gnaw its way to freedom in a mock birth. While horrific, these scrolls are lavishly illustrated by a talented (but demented) artist, and are worth 500 gp in all. Anyone who looks through all of the scrolls discovers one near the end is in fact a *scroll of remove curse*.

B14. Tyrant Trolls (EL 12)

The walls of this wide passageway are hung with furs, while to the southeast the tunnel constricts and slopes down at a sharp angle.

A DC 20 Spot check is enough to notice that behind these hanging furs, the walls are riddled with one-foot-wide openings that look into larger caves beyond. If the furs are pulled aside, these gaps are plainly visible.

Creatures: A pair of rather violent, stupid trolls stand guard here. Once servants to the stone giant tribe of Kavarvatti, Mokmurian pays them poorly (but enough to keep their interest) to guard the entry tunnel to the Library of Thassilon itself. They keep guard in shifts, with one always peering through the cracks between the walls and hanging furs while the other one sleeps. If a troll spots the PCs, he waits for one to come within ten feet of his wall before stabbing at him with his +2 *ranseur*, roaring in excitement as he does. The other troll wakes and attacks in the same way from the opposite wall one round later, likely being able to easily reach PCs who have backed away from the first wall.

HUREK AND DUREK

CR 10

Male troll fighter 5

CE Large giant

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +7, Spot +6

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 21

(+7 armor, +3 Dexterity, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 142 (6d8+5d10+88); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +17, **Ref** +6, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +2 *ranseur* +20/+15 (2d6+17/×3) or

2 claws +17 (1d6+9) and

bite +15 (1d6+4)

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

Special Attacks rend 2d6+13

TACTICS

During Combat The trolls fight with their +2 *ranseurs* through the narrow windows as long as they can, gaining a +4 cover bonus to their AC and Reflex saves against foes attacking them from the central passageway. As soon as anyone manages to get into one of the side caves, they drop their *ranseurs* and continue the fight with their claws and teeth. The trolls do not coordinate their attacks in any way, simply fighting as long as they can.

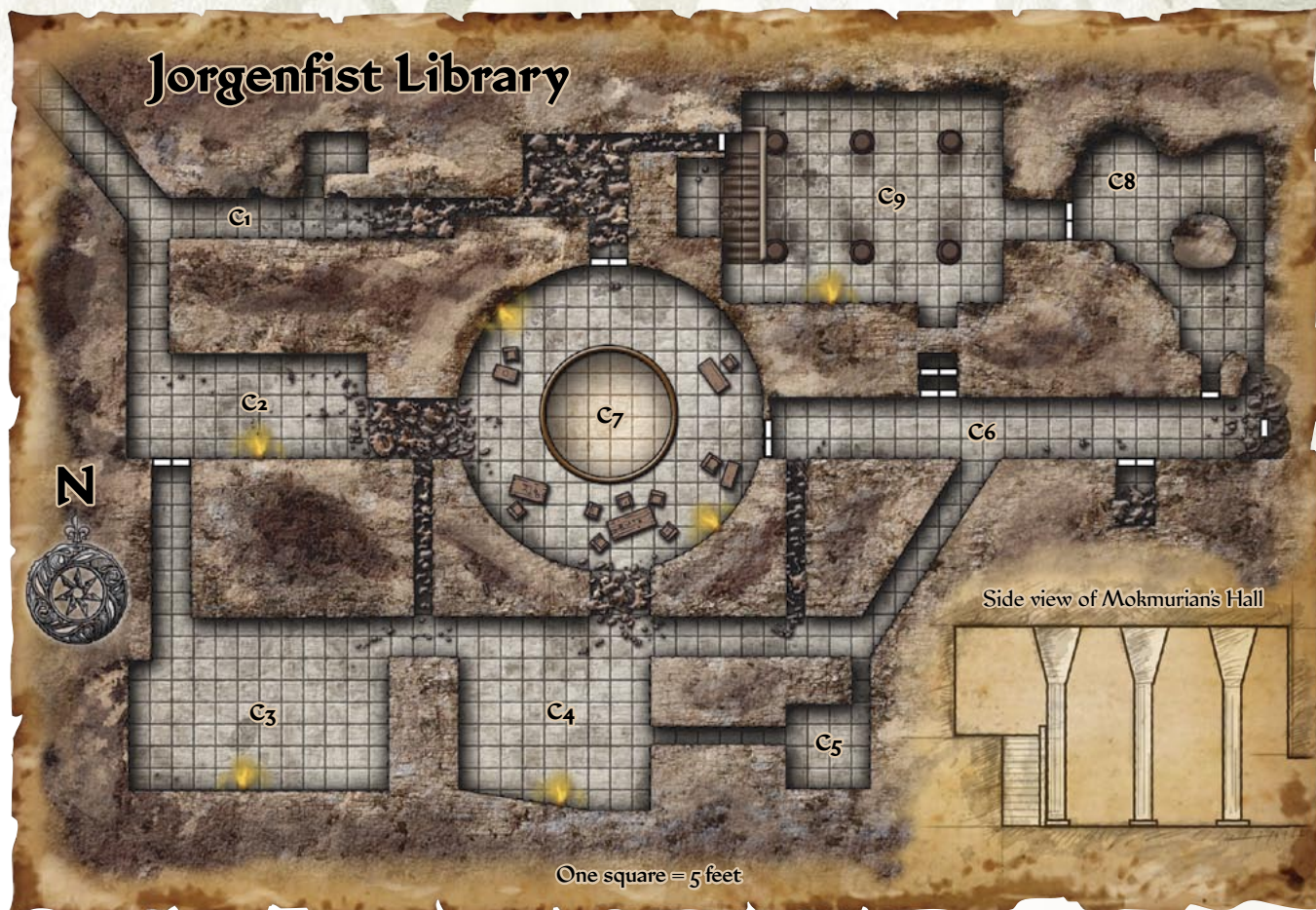
Morale These brutish trolls are barely smarter than animals and trust their regeneration implicitly to keep them alive. They fight to the death, even in the face of foes who use acid and fire.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 16, **Con** 26, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +22

FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS



Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (ranseur), Weapon Specialization (ranseur)
Skills Climb +11, Listen +7, Spot +6
Languages Giant
Gear +2 breastplate, +2 ranseur

Treasure: Each troll carries a bag of treasure at his belt—payment from Mokmurian for his work here. Hurek's bag contains a large collection of colorful, striped, shiny, but ultimately worthless stones weighing 100 pounds in all. Unless an Appraise DC 15 succeeds, the stones resemble valuable agate, onyx, and mithral ore of various kinds. Durek carries the real treasure—assorted bits of armor and helmets and a dire bear skull. The armor includes a suit of Small half-plate, a masterwork breastplate, six chain shirts, and a +1 ghost touch gauntlet.

PART FIVE: THE ANCIENT LIBRARY

From area B14, a 10-foot-wide tunnel winds down through the bedrock in a corkscrew for several hundred feet before the walls change to regular worked stone and it arrives at area C1—the entrance to an ancient library of Thassilonian construction. Located about 800 feet below the Black Tower,

this hidden library was once accessible from that tower, but the tunnels that connected them have long since collapsed.

The Therassic wizard-monks who attended this library were not directly affiliated with Runelord Karzoug, although they paid regular tithes to him. Their true loyalties lay with the Peacock Spirit, a god of scholars whose purpose was a closely guarded secret even from many of his worshipers—only the most devout knew his true name. The monks, scholars, and wizards who dwelt in the Therassic Monastery trafficked with creatures of aberrant appetites, devils and strange creatures now lost to arcane knowledge. Over the years, much of the rest of their works have crumbled, but this section of their monastery, warded by the same preservative magic that protects all of Varisia's Thassilonian monuments from erosion and decay, has remained intact for all those centuries. Now and then, the works here are discovered again by explorers and tomb robbers, but most of them perish to the menacing guardians that still occupy the halls. It wasn't until Mokmurian that someone demonstrated sufficient wizardly power to claim the priceless wisdom held within these halls.

The workmanship of these tunnels is distinctly different than the tunnels above or the giantcraft of Jorgenfist itself. Characters who make a DC 20 Knowledge (architecture and engineering)

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

check and who have been in Thassilonian ruins before (such as the Catacombs of Wrath or the lower level of Thistletop) realize that the style is ancient Thassilonian.

Ceiling heights in the library average at 10 feet in the hallways but rise to vaulted roofs 20 feet high in the chambers themselves. There is no illumination down here at all, unless otherwise noted in the text. In several places, the ancient preservative magic has faded, causing sections of the library to crumble and cave in. Attempts to dig out these sections should be dangerous and intensive—strive to make the PCs realize it's probably easier to follow the path of least resistance, but if they insist on digging out tunnels, the noise certainly attracts guardians and monsters from other areas.

C1. Entrance

The gradual change from natural cavern to worked stone is finally complete after the long spiraling descent into the depths. The walls here are regular but strangely rounded—hard angles have been polished away to smooth corners, rendering the entire area somewhat disorienting to look upon. With no hard lines defining edges of rooms, the place seems subtly alien.

The walls of this complex have been rounded to protect the place from a specific type of dangerous outsider the Therassic wizard monks often dealt with—an enigmatic species of entities that inhabit the angles of time, quite unlike the bulk of all other life (who inhabit its curves). These are the hounds of Tindalos, and by rounding the angles and corners of these rooms, even to such a small degree, the ancients protected themselves from retribution should their dangerous dealings with these monsters ever go awry.

Additionally, the scanderig that dwells in area C5 constantly moves through the stone walls of the library. Although its initial encounter with the PCs is scripted there, it can theoretically make an attack on the PCs at any point once they begin exploring the library. Use the scanderig to keep them on their feet.

C2. Chamber of Reduction (EL 11)

A pair of double doors stands in the southern wall of this room. The floor is made of glossy, polished black and gray marble. To the east, what might have once been another exit has long since caved in. Yet nothing in the room compares to the curious effect that its walls have—looking into the room, it's bizarrely impossible to judge the chamber's exact dimensions. Any wall looked at directly remains stable, but everywhere else through peripheral vision the walls seem to stretch away into impossibly infinite gulfs, as if the room itself were somehow “unhooked” from its own physicality.

Creature: This chamber is the guardpost of a single obese giant, his body covered with scars in the shape of Thassilonian runes. Once a hill giant soldier, he attempted to desert the army when he grew suspicious of Mokmurian's true motives. When

the traitor was turned over by his own brothers, Mokmurian punished him by using the *runeslave cauldron* (see page 91) to ensure his loyalty and eventual death.

The runeslave giant wears a heavy hide breastplate and has a slightly hunched back and pale lanky hair. His arms and legs are twisted a little and monstrosly overdeveloped muscles bulge and strain against his seemingly too-tight skin. Unaffected by the room's trap, the giant remains out of immediate sight from the northern hallway against the north wall and quickly moves to attack the first person to notice his presence.

RUNESLAVE HILL GIANT

CR 7

hp 102 (see page 90)

Trap: This entire room is in fact a cunning trap—the warped dimensions of the chamber are the only warning that something inside isn't quite right. Anyone who sets foot in the room must immediately make a DC 23 Will saving throw or become disoriented as it becomes difficult to judge distance—those who fail become nauseated for 1d4 rounds. Worse, any humanoid in the room must also make a DC 23 Fortitude save to resist being reduced in size to the next smaller size category down from his actual size, as if by *reduce person*. This effect persists for 24 hours, but can be dispelled by *enlarge person* or a successful *dispel magic*.

CHAMBER OF REDUCTION

CR 10

Type magical

Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity; **Reset** automatic

Effect spell effect (*mass reduce person* heightened to 9th level; DC 23 Fortitude negates) plus nausea for 1d4 rounds (DC 23 Will save negates)

C3. The Cauldron of Giantkind (EL 11)

Runes are carved in bands along the walls of this chamber, which is unnervingly lit by a reddish glow from the slowly burning flames in a shallow firepit in the center of the room. An immense iron cauldron, its side emblazoned with an etching of a seven-pointed star, stands above these flames. Smoke rises from the cauldron's unseen bubbling contents, and a halo of human bones and fragments of what might be dried flesh lie scattered around the cauldron's three-pronged base.

This 12-foot-tall cauldron is a powerful magical artifact Mokmurian found here on his first journey into the library. It wasn't until after he returned from Xin-Shalast that he deciphered the cauldron's secret. Known as the *runeslave cauldron*, this was an ancient device created by Thassilonian wizards to transform unruly giants into loyal slaves who would make even better monument builders. The wizard-monks of the monastery had just completed the construction of this one and were preparing to send it to Karzoug as a gift when their world came to an end.

FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS



Now that Mokmurian knows how to use the *runeslave cauldron*, he's been researching ways to use it to augment his army. His current plans are to carry the cauldron with him on his march and use it to resurrect fallen giants and recycle them back into the war.

The cauldron is an evil artifact and the smoke it produces has debilitating effects on good-aligned characters—see the *runeslave cauldron* sidebar on page 91 for more details.

Creatures: One of the treasures Mokmurian discovered in the library was a *stone golem manual*—a rare treasure indeed, for Mokmurian had long wished he could create constructs like these. The stone golem he created guards this chamber—a hulking brute with a skull-like face and glowing blue runes carved into its forehead. The golem attacks any non-giant that enters the room. Humanoids enlarged to 8 feet tall or more qualify as giants by its reasoning—it allows creatures disguised in this manner to pass unmolested.

STONE GOLEM

hp 107 (MM 136)

CR II**C4. The Ogre Lord's Gallery (EL 12)**

The chill in this room isn't quite enough to frost the floors and walls, but it's certainly enough to frost the breath. The room itself contains what must

be two dozen large suits of armor mounted on what appear to be frozen or preserved ogres, trolls, and hill giants, all staged as if rallying for war.

Creatures: Five of the suits of armor in the room are in fact worn by undead guardians posted here by Mokmurian. The leader of these undead is a headless zombie lord Mokmurian created from the body of a powerful ogre warlord. This figure is nearly 11 feet tall, dressed in plate armor, and wielding a wicked-looking hatchet in each gauntleted hand. The figure's helm is open-faced, but inside there is no head—only a raw, ragged stump of a neck. Called the Headless Lord, Mokmurian keeps this ogre's head in area C9, where it can speak to him and keep him alerted and apprised of events experienced by its body. If Mokmurian holds the head in his hand and stares into its undead eyes, he can even observe events as if viewing them through the Headless Lord's empty helm. The four figures around the Headless Lord were hill giants whom Mokmurian set against the lord one at a time to see how it fared in battle—when these giants perished by the lord's wrath, they rose as zombies under his control.

The Headless Lord watches the western entrance to the room constantly, and if it spies anyone approaching it waits patiently for them to make the first move as its head alerts Mokmurian and describes the intruders to him.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

THE HEADLESS LORD**CR 9**Male ogre zombie undead lord fighter 4 (MM 267, *Tome of Horrors II* 214)

NE Large undead

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1**Aura** desecration**DEFENSE****AC** 31, touch 10, flat-footed 30

(+9 armor, +1 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size)

hp 74 (12 HD; 8d12+4d10)**Fort** +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9**Defensive Abilities** turn resistance +4; **DR** 10/magic and slashing;**Immune** undead immunities**OFFENSE****Spd** 30 ft.**Melee** *runechill hatchet* +17/+12 (1d8+13/×3) and
runechill hatchet +17 (1d8+8/×3)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** command undead, create spawn, summon undead**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 12th)1/day—*darkness*, *fear* (DC 13)**TACTICS**

During Combat The Headless Lord orders its four hill giant zombies to attack as soon as anyone enters this room, or as soon as it sees someone outside the room preparing to use ranged attacks or spells. The Headless Lord casts *fear* on the PCs as soon as it can catch at least three of them in the area of effect. It attempts to keep all three of its zombies within its aura of desecration at all times.

Morale The Headless Lord fights to the death.**STATISTICS****Str** 28, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 5**Base Atk** +8; **Grp** +23**Feats** Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (handaxe), Weapon Specialization (handaxe)**Skills** Climb +19, Intimidate +12**Languages** Common, Giant; undead telepathy 100 ft.**SQ** headless**Gear** +1 full plate, two runechill hatchets**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Command Undead (Su)** At will, the Headless Lord can command or rebuke zombies as a 12th-level cleric.**Create Spawn (Su)** Any creature slain by the Headless Lord rises as a zombie in 1d4 minutes. These zombies remain under the control of the Headless Lord.**Aura of Desecration (Su)** The Headless Lord radiates a 20-foot-radius aura of desecration. Undead within this area (including the Headless Lord) gain a +1 profane bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws. All turning checks made in this area suffer a -3 penalty. Undead created or summoned into this area gain +1 hit points per HD.**Undead Telepathy (Su)** The Headless Lord can communicate telepathically with any other undead within 100 feet.**Headless (Su)** Although the Headless Lord lacks a head, it can still hear and see and speak as if it had one.**ZOMBIE HILL GIANT (4)****CR 7**

NE Large undead

Init -2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0**DEFENSE****AC** 18, touch 7, flat-footed 18

(+8 armor, -2 Dexterity, +3 natural, -1 size)

hp 183 (24d12+27)**Fort** +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +14**DR** 5/slashing; **Immune** undead traits**Weakness** single actions only**OFFENSE****Spd** 40 ft.**Melee** slam +19 (1d8+12)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**THE HEADLESS LORD**

FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS

TACTICS

During Combat These zombies fight simply, shambling forward to attack the closest target each round.

Morale The zombie hill giants fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 6, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +24

Feats Toughness

SQ created in aura of desecration

Gear masterwork full plate

Treasure: The suits of armor on display here are all Large sized, and, not counting those worn by the zombies and the Headless Lord, consist of seven masterwork heavy steel shields, four masterwork suits of half plate, and three masterwork suits of full plate.

C5. Scanderig's Lair (EL 10)

This twenty-foot-square room is shaped almost like a silo—its ceiling arches up to a vaulted height of one hundred feet. The room itself appears to be empty.

Creature: One of the guardians of this complex that dates from ancient Thassilon is a creature called a scanderig. This subtle and tricky creature can move through the stone surrounding the library like a fish swims through water, and for some time after Mokmurian's first visit here, the scanderig was the giant's greatest annoyance. Eventually, Mokmurian managed to catch the outsider in a *magic circle of protection against law* and, through several weeks of magical torture, convinced the creature to serve him as it once served its ancient Thassilonian masters.

The scanderig is highly mobile, and while this chamber serves it as a lair, it's usually on the move through the walls of the entire complex. It prefers to wait to make its first attack against the PCs on rounds just after they've finished battles with other creatures, fighting for only one or two rounds before slipping back into the walls. If the PCs haven't given up by the time they near this chamber, the scanderig decides to launch a more substantial attack on them, fighting to the death rather than risking more torture at Mokmurian's hands for letting the PCs get too close to him.

SCANDERIG

hp 126 (see page 86)

CR 10

C6. Library Entrance (EL 12)

This long hallway has a looming ceiling forty feet above and is decorated with an intricate display of stone supports and beams. The walls are carved in long swaths of densely scribed runes—the seven-pointed star is repeated often. To the east, the hallway has caved in entirely—a battered door protrudes from the rubble, but the hall beyond is completely filled with rubble. To the west, the hall ends at an immense bronze double door that bears a huge mirror-like silver inlay of the ubiquitous seven-pointed star. This bronze double

door has no obvious hinges, handles, or locks, save for a single tiny star-shaped indentation at the center of the larger mirrored star.

Anyone who can read Thassilonian can decipher the runes on the walls as meditative prayers to the Peacock Spirit meant to calm and prepare the minds of any who seek to use the library. Anyone who reads one of these prayers becomes affected by a *calm emotions* spell (CL 20th) for 10 minutes.

The bronze doors that lead to area C7 are locked by a persistent *arcane lock* spell (CL 15th)—even if it is dispelled, the arcane lock remanifests 1d4 rounds after the doors are closed again. The doors can be opened safely with the key that Mokmurian carries (he took the key from the clockwork librarian inside area C7 after using *knock* to bypass the doors). The doors are magically reinforced and difficult to damage or break down. Worse, a deadly outsider bound here not long after the Therassic wizard-monks finished building the library itself wards the doors—it is summoned to attack anyone who attempts to open the doors without the key. A password (“Viosanxi,” indicated on the final scroll of the Emerald Codex in area A8) uttered during any attempt to force open the door prevents the monster from being summoned.

Creature: Any attempt to force open the doors to area C7 without uttering the password causes the door's surface to become infused with a dull gray glow. The glow rapidly brightens to near-blinding levels, and then a strange figure floats out of the door's surface. It seems humanoid, but it's hard to tell since the entire thing sheds harsh, blinding light. The creature begins screaming, not stopping even to catch its breath as it drifts forward to attack. This alien monster is a shining child, a creature conjured from a distant, insane corner of the planes. It remains for 20 rounds before vanishing once again, spending those 2 minutes attacking anything in sight. The door can summon an endless number of shining children, but only one at a time.

SHINING CHILD

hp 153 (see page 88)

CR 12

C7. Library of Thassilon (EL 9)

Numerous glowing crystal lanterns hang on fine chains from the domed ceiling sixty feet above, filling this circular room with bright light. The walls of the room are carved with more runes and sigils, while overstuffed wood and leather chairs and polished oak tables surround a thirty-foot-wide shaft in the floor.

This room contains the collected lore of the Therassic wizard-monks, one of Thassilon's greatest and most respected orders of scholars. The wizard-monks went to great effort to protect the monastery above this chamber and the rooms that surround it, but the bulk of these preservation efforts were focused in this chamber. In this room, the passage of time has no effect upon inanimate objects. Living creatures still age, but paper, leather, wood, stone, and even dead bodies do not decay—they remain forever pristine and new. The same effects constantly recycle and

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

RUNECHILL HATCHET

Aura moderate necromancy; **CL** 5th
Slot —; **Price** 5,312 gp; **Weight** 6 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

Runechill hatchets are sized for Large creatures, but can be wielded by Medium creatures as battleaxes or Small creatures as greataxes. Their blades are jagged and carved with Thassilonian runes, and the weapons always feel cold to the touch. A *runechill hatchet* functions as a +1 *handaxe*, but once per day as a free action, its wielder can cause the runes on the blade to flare up with flickering cold blue light. For the next five rounds, the axe inflicts +1d6 points of negative energy damage on a hit—any creature that takes any amount of this additional negative energy damage must also make a DC 12 Fortitude save or take 1 point of Strength damage. An undead creature struck by a *runechill hatchet* does not gain this negative energy as healing, but instead must make a DC 12 Will saving throw or flee as if panicked for 1d4+5 rounds.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *chill touch*; **Cost** 2,812 gp, 200 XP

purify the air and sustain creatures without the need for food or drink. These effects apply only as long as those objects remain in this chamber, though—if brought out, the delay of time catches up immediately. Bodies corrupt and skeletons crumble to dust, wood turns brittle and rots, books flake away and disintegrate into powder, and even stone grows weathered and aged, all in the course of a few heartbeats.

Furthermore, extradimensional travel does not function in this chamber—the entire place is warded by a *dimensional lock* effect that bars all manner of teleportation and planar travel.

The central shaft contains the library's holdings. The walls of the shaft, 30 feet wide and 50 feet deep, consist of shelf after shelf of books, scrolls, tablets, and other means of storing information. All of these books are written in Thassilonian, and thanks to the chamber's preservative effects, all are in excellent condition. The subjects cover all facets of Thassilonian life—this chamber represents perhaps the single greatest repository of lore from this nearly forgotten age in all of Golarion, and as such, if its existence were made public, it would become a magnet for scholars from around the world. There are no ladders or stairs provided for those who wish to peruse the stacks—the wizard-monks used flight and levitation to sort the holdings and saw no need to make their collection easier for lesser folk to examine.

The PCs can certainly use this library to research all manner of subjects relating to Thassilon. The appendix to this adventure provides some sample bits of information that pertain directly to the remainder of the Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path. If the PCs wish to learn more about other parts of this ancient empire, feel free to give them as much or as little information as you desire. You could even let them read parts of (or all of) the article on Thassilon from *Pathfinder* #1. The only thing the PCs

need is time—and until Mokmurian is dealt with, any long-term research done here is doomed to painful interruptions when the stone giant wizard eventually comes to call.

Creature: One remnant from Thassilon remains alive in this chamber—a curious clockwork creature built by the wizard-monks to serve as a caretaker, sorter, and assistant for those who wished to use the library. Unfortunately, while the clockwork librarian does not age, it technically counts as a living creature and as a result is not subject to the preservative nature of the magic in this chamber. Over the ten thousand years it spent here, alone, it became relatively able at repairing itself, but with each bout of self-repair, it grows a little more unhinged and confused. Today, parts of it constantly smoke, its limbs creak and whirl, and it has grown increasingly paranoid about losing the key that winds it up.

The clockwork librarian clatters and smokes to life when it notices anyone enter the room and hobbles over to greet them in an ungainly lurch (one of its three legs doesn't quite work right any more). It addresses newcomers in Thassilonian, asking "Which volume of lore would you like me to retrieve for you? There are currently 24,491 volumes, scrolls, pamphlets, and unbound manuscripts available. Please indicate which one you wish by author, title, subject, or date of acquisition by the Therassic Monastery." The librarian waits patiently for requests—if no one addresses it in Thassilonian, it wordlessly follows visitors around, waiting for requests and hoping no one tries to damage any of the books. The librarian isn't a very effective combatant, but if it must, it fights to the death to defend the library.

If the PCs can speak to the librarian, its assistance grants a +10 bonus on any Knowledge checks made to research matters about Thassilon in this library. Consult the Appendix for information on what kinds of information the PCs can find in here.

CLOCKWORK LIBRARIAN

CR 9

Clockwork human expert 8 (*Advanced Bestiary* 42)

LN Medium construct

Init +3; **Senses** Listen –2, Spot –2

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15

(+3 Dexterity, +5 natural)

hp 72 (8d12+20)**Fort** +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4**DR** hardness 10; **Immune** construct traits; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10**Weaknesses** vulnerability to electricity

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.**Melee** +8 unarmed strike (1d3+2 nonlethal)

TACTICS

During Combat The clockwork librarian is not a war construct and only fights to defend itself or the library.**Morale** Although relatively ineffectual in combat, the clockwork library defends the library to the death.

FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 11, **Wis** 7, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Feats Diligent, Investigator, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Knowledge [arcana])

Skills Appraise +13, Craft (bookbinding) +11, Decipher Script +13, Gather Information +10, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Search +13

Languages Giant, Thassilonian

SQ metal skin, windup key

Gear ring of levitation (as boots of levitation), windup key

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Metal Skin (Ex) The clockwork librarian is made of metal and counts as a ferrous creature for the purpose of *rusting grasp* and other spells that have special effects on metal.

Vulnerability to Electricity (Ex) The clockwork librarian takes double damage from electricity on a failed save and half damage on a successful save.

Windup Key (Ex) The clockwork librarian must be wound up each day by placing a small key into its side. Each full round the key is turned, the librarian can be active for 4 hours (maximum 24 hours); each round of turning the key provokes an attack of opportunity. The librarian has been careful to keep itself wound over the past 10,000 years—the possibility of losing its key is its greatest fear.

C8. Lean and Athirst (EL 10)

This strange, empty room has been smoothed over to an even greater extent than the other chambers in this complex—every angle of the walls is smoothed over in gentle arcs, removing any element of harsh regular lines entirely from view. Patches of what appear to be scorch marks stain the walls and floors here and there, especially to the south, where part of the wall has fallen away.

Mokmurian is no fool and he does not entirely trust even his closest allies among his army, to say nothing of the rank-and-file giants themselves. Inspired by the text in a particularly ancient book he studied in the library, he altered this room to serve as an anchor for the conjuration of a trio of dangerous entities from the incalculable depths of time: hounds of Tindalos.

Mokmurian takes pains to keep a silent mental *alarm* spell on the doors leading into area C9 active at all times.

Creatures: These alien outsiders were initially bound to this chamber by several *planar binding* spells. By reducing the number of angles in the room, Mokmurian was able to greatly extend the length of service from the three creatures. Since they inhabit time in a different way than other life, dwelling upon its angles rather than flowing along its curves, the smoothed architecture acts almost as a hedge to keep the hounds bound for months rather than the normal maximum of weeks that *planar binding* can do.

The hounds loathe being bound like this, yet the *planar binding* spell prevents them from acting against Mokmurian. They have been ordered to guard this chamber, or to come to Mokmurian's side if he calls for them. The hounds lurk in the room, eager to vent their frustration upon anything that moves.

HOUNDS OF TINDALOS (3)

CR 7

hp 85 each (see page 82)

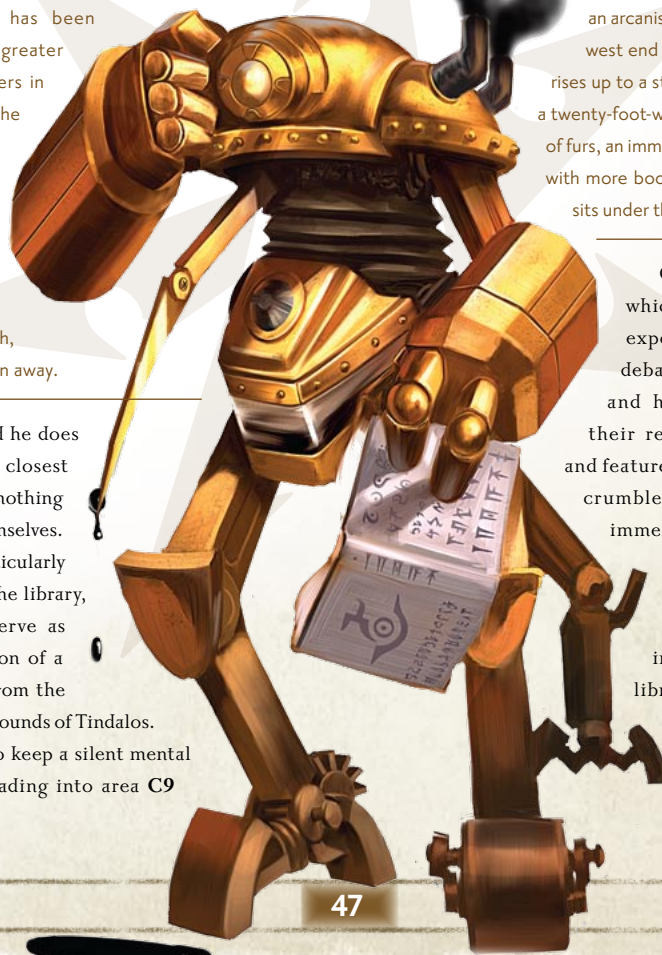
C9. Mokmurian's Lair (EL 15)

This vast chamber might have once been a lecture hall, but now the place is empty of furniture. Six five-foot-wide pillars, each carved with spiraling patterns of runes, rise up to support the hundred-foot-high ceiling. Spread through the hall in neatly organized stacks and piles are arcane trappings, candles, books, scrolls, knives, and bundles of powders and ingredients—the entire place looks like an arcanist's laboratory or storeroom. At the west end of the room, a wide flight of stairs rises up to a stone door in the wall, just north of a twenty-foot-wide stage. Here sits a large mound of furs, an immense chair, and a table stacked high with more book and scrolls. An ironbound chest sits under the table against the far wall.

Once a grand lecture hall in which the Therassic wizard-monks expounded on their latest theories, debated the finer points of magic, and held symposiums to further their research, all of the furniture and features of this room have long since crumbled to dust, leaving behind an immense room and a perfect fit for Mokmurian's inflated ego.

Mokmurian has converted this entire room into his personal lab, workshop, library, and bedchamber. Rubble blocks the western approach. Mokmurian used a few *wall of stone* spells to block off the southern entrance and

CLOCKWORK LIBRARIAN



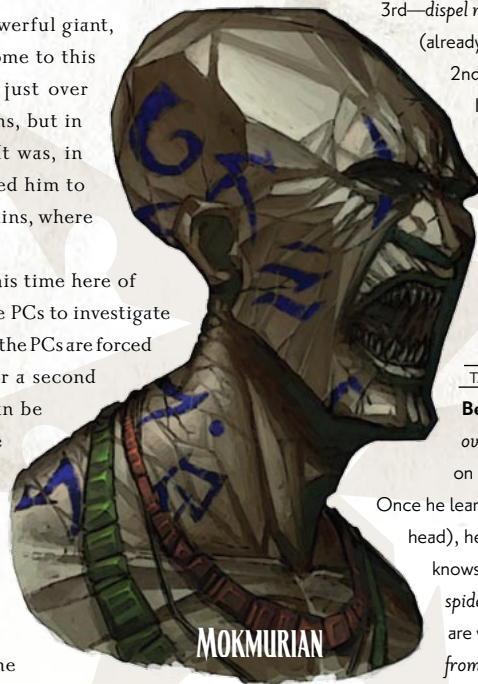
RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

has been considering doing the same to the eastern one, but he prefers the convenience of a physical exit over being forced to keep several *dimension door*, *passwall*, and *teleport* spells prepared at all times.

Creatures: Mokmurian is a powerful giant, though one would not initially come to this conclusion from his stature. At just over 10 feet tall, he towers over humans, but in stone giant circles, he's a runt. It was, in many ways, his height that doomed him to his journey into the Kodar Mountains, where he became enslaved by Karzoug.

Mokmurian has spent most of his time here of late, and on the first attempt by the PCs to investigate this room, he is encountered here. If the PCs are forced to retreat and come back later for a second fight, feel free to have Mokmurian be much more mobile—he may be encountered in the library (area C7), the temple to Lamashtu (area B13), or even up on the surface.

Mokmurian has several advance warning systems set up. If the PCs encountered and fought the Headless Lord in area C4, the undead ogre's head (which Mokmurian keeps in a gold birdcage on his desk) warns him of the intruders, and Mokmurian uses the ogre's head to watch them fight. Likewise, the door to this room from area C8 is warded with an *alarm* spell, which alerts him to trouble in that room even if the sounds of combat don't.

**MOKMURIAN****CR 15**

Male stone giant wizard (transmuter) 14

CE Large giant (earth)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *see invisibility*;

Listen +21, Spot +21 (+24 in bright light)

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 17, flat-footed 28 (+2 vs. good)

(+4 armor, +3 *defending club*, +6 Dexterity, +11 natural, -1 size)

hp 210 (14d8+14d4+112)

Fort +17, **Ref** +14, **Will** +15 (+2 vs. good)

DR 10/adamantine (for 140 points of damage); **Immune** mental control, possession; **Resist** fire 30

OFFENSE

Spd 70 ft. (*spider climb*), fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee *defending spell-storing club* +23/+18/+13/+8 (1d8+7)

Ranged rock +22 (2d8+10)

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

Spells Known (CL 14th, ranged touch +20)

7th—*limited wish*, quickened *haste*,
reverse gravity

6th—*disintegrate* (DC 22), *flesh to stone* (DC 22), *greater dispel magic*, quickened *acid arrow*, quickened *scorching ray*

5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 21), *overland flight*, quickened *shield*, *telekinesis* (DC 21), *wall of force*

4th—*dimension door*, *fire shield*, *mass reduce person* (DC 20), *polymorph*, *solid fog*, *stoneskin*

3rd—*dispel magic*, *fireball* (DC 19), *fly*, *greater magic weapon* (already cast), *lightning bolt* (DC 19), *slow* (DC 19)

2nd—*blindness/deafness*, *cat's grace*, *glitterdust* (DC 18), *resist energy*, *scorching ray* (2), *see invisibility*

1st—*alarm* (already cast), *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor* (already cast), *magic missile*, *protection from good*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *reduce person* (DC 17)

0—*arcane mark*, *disrupt undead*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 16)

Prohibited Schools enchantment, illusion

TACTICS

Before Combat Mokmurian casts *mage armor* and *overland flight* on himself and *greater magic weapon* on his club every morning after he prepares his spells.

Once he learns that the PCs are coming (likely via the ogre's head), he casts *resist energy* (to resist a type of energy he knows the PCs favor, or otherwise fire), *see invisibility*, *spider climb*, and *stoneskin*. If he suspects the PCs are very close he casts *expeditious retreat*, *protection from good*, and *cat's grace*. All of these effects are incorporated into his stats above. He then hides in his alcove and waits to ambush the PCs.

During Combat Mokmurian's first action when the PCs enter his room is to cast *solid fog*, catching as many of them as possible in the spell's area of effect. He then puts on his *fogcutting goggles* so he can target the PCs with ease with his ranged attack spells. As soon as someone emerges from the fog, he casts *reverse gravity* on that area, shaping the area to encircle the *solid fog*. If a PC gets too close to him, he uses *telekinesis* to hurl her across the room and hopefully back into the *solid fog*. His goal is to maintain range superiority on his enemies, but if melee seems inevitable, he casts *mass reduce person* first to shrink down foes, coupling that with his quickened *shield* spell. Then, on the first round of actual melee, he casts quickened *haste* on himself. If any hounds of Tindalos survive, he calls on them to aid him in battle as well.

Morale Mokmurian fights until reduced to 40 hit points or less, at which point he *dimension doors* up to area B13, hoping to get healing from his lamia minions. If they're dead, he flees up to the surface and gathers a group of a dozen stone giants and any of the named giants who still live to mount a return to the library to finish off the PCs. If the PCs have secured an alliance with Conna and she still lives, she's among the giants who Mokmurian recruits—when and if this patrol encounters the PCs, Conna switches sides to aid them, a move that throws the other stone giants into chaos. The next round, half of those giants defect as well, joining Conna and the PCs against Mokmurian. In this event, Mokmurian fights again until reduced to less than 30 hit points, then tries to use *limited wish* to teleport to Xin-Shalast. Yet unfortunately for him, Karzoug, who has been watching his actions through the link

FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS



FROM BEYOND

As mentioned in the Hound of Tindalos entry in the bestiary on page 83, these creatures came originally from the pen of pulp author Frank Belknap Long, one of H.P. Lovecraft's closest friends. It's only natural that Long's bizarre monsters found their way so easily into the Lovecraft mythos. Yet how did they find their way into the world of Golarion?

In picking new monsters to populate the world and to feature in the *Pathfinder* Bestiary, I've always envisioned a healthy dose of creatures inspired from real-world myth. The monsters of the Lovecraft mythos, although relatively recent inventions when compared to things like manticores and lamias, are no less inspiring. Yet since they were invented and played roles in stories set on Earth, it doesn't particularly make sense for all of them to appear in Golarion.

My philosophy on which of the monsters of this myth cycle work well in a fantastic setting like the *Pathfinder* Chronicles is simple: if they appeared in a fantastic setting in their original fiction incarnation (such as the dholes, night gaunts, or even Nyarlathotep, all of whom have strong roles in Lovecraft's stories about Earth's Dreamlands), they'd fit well in Golarion. Likewise, if the monster in question is capable of travelling through dimensions, worlds, or even the depths of space (such as the mi-go, the dimensional shamblers, Ithaqua, or in this case, the hounds of Tindalos), it makes sense that they could find their way to Golarion as well. And finally, some of the outer gods are just that—they're outside of everything, and therefore can reach anywhere. This category includes entities like Yog-Sothoth and Azathoth, and even mystical realms like Leng and Kadath. Many of the monsters and locations of the Lovecraft mythos are firmly rooted in Earth (such as Cthulhu), and those won't be showing up in Golarion, but you can certainly expect their more well-travelled cousins to make cameo appearances now and then.

—James Jacobs

their souls have shared ever since Mokmurian's trip to the City of Greed, has other plans for him (see Development, below).

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 22, **Con** 18, **Int** 22, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +17; **Grp** +28

Feats Alertness (when Clathmere is in arm's reach), Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack

Skills Climb +24, Concentration +24, Hide +19 (+27 in rocky terrain), Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +12, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +6, Knowledge (geography) +16, Listen +21, Spellcraft +28, Spot +21 (+24 in bright light)

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant, Orc, Terran, Thassilonian

SQ rock catching, summon familiar (hawk named Clathmere)

Combat Gear wand of bear's endurance (13 charges); **Other Gear**

+1 defending spell-storing club (vampiric touch), bracers of armor +4, robe of runes, bag of holding (type II), key to area C7, 500 gp in diamond dust

Spellbook Mokmurian keeps his spellbooks in his bag of holding.

Apart from containing all of the spells he has prepared, this extensive collection also contains most of the spells in the PH, up through and including 7th-level spells. Feel free to introduce new spells from other sources via these books—if you do, you should also consider swapping some of these spells for those he normally prepares.

Treasure: Much of the treasure Mokmurian has gathered over the past several years (in particular, the riches he gained from his trip to Xin-Shalast) have long since been distributed to his minions and army as payment. Still, a relatively impressive collection of loot remains here as his personal wealth. Apart from his impressive collection of books on spellcraft and all of the spell components and laboratory equipment scattered throughout the room (which is worth a collected total of 1,500 gp, but weighs several hundred pounds), the chest under his desk contains the bulk of his remaining wealth, including 12,000 gp, 1,100 pp, an amber-and-sapphire necklace worth 4,000 gp, a set of ivory runestones worth 1,400 gp, and a scroll of *contact other plane*.

In addition, scattered among the stacks of Mokmurian's invasion plans, battle tactics, and research notes is a single piece of paper depicting a map of the Lost Coast region of Varisia. Four points along the coast have "X" marks on them—three placed several hundred feet out to sea along the coast, but one is right over Sandpoint. A note on the map, written in Giant, reads "Hellfire Flume ruins—foundation stones from each would know where the traitor Xaliasa dwelt and perhaps where he hid his key to Runeforge." This cryptic note is important to the next adventure in this campaign, and further details on its contents are presented at the start of *Pathfinder* #5's "Sins of the Saviors."

Development: Although Karzoug is not magically controlling Mokmurian, nor is the giant under any magical compulsion to do the runelord's will, Karzoug still maintains a link with the giant, a connection of the soul established when Mokmurian triggered Karzoug's awakening. As soon as it becomes apparent that Mokmurian has failed him, Karzoug's anger and impatience gets the better of him. He sends his mind down from the Spires of Xin-Shalast, out across the Storval Plateau and, from this vast distance, seizes control of Mokmurian. This control is such that even if Mokmurian were dying or even in the process of being disintegrated or being plane shifted to another reality that the effects are, for a moment, delayed.

At this time, Mokmurian's body suddenly goes rigid. He spasms a few times, and then his head turns to face the PCs, mechanically and clumsily, as if being moved by massive invisible hands. In a strangely accented voice, a voice that sounds almost human, he speaks, his eyes already glazing over in death.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

"So these are the heroes of the age. More like gasping worms to me, soon to be crushed back into the earth when I awaken the armies of Xin-Shalast, when the name Karzoug is again spoken with fear and awe. Know that the deaths of those marked by the Sihedron—the giants you have so conveniently slain for me—hasten my return, just as yours soon will. Fools, all of you. Is this all you could manage in ten thousand years?"

At that, Karzoug laughs a cruel, mocking laugh that echoes and fades. Mokmurian dies as well, his soul snuffed out as the link between him and Karzoug ends. Characters who heard Karzoug's voice in area **E8** of Thistletop (*Pathfinder* #1, page 55) can make a DC 15 Wisdom check—success indicates that they realize the two voices are the same.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs need not slay Mokmurian in order to disrupt the stone giant army—remember, most of the stone giants gathered at Jorgenfist aren't evil. If the PCs can force Mokmurian to flee, or even convince Conna and a group of giants to rebel against their cruel overlord, that'll be enough to save Sandpoint and the rest of Varisia from an invasion. The tribes around Jorgenfist break up and return to the Storval Plateau with surprising speed, the giants eager to seek forgiveness from their abandoned elders or to put some distance between themselves and the mighty heroes who slew their fearful lord.

Yet the eerie "dying" words spoken by Karzoug should leave little doubt in the PCs' minds that Mokmurian was but a pawn in some greater game, and the threat to Varisia is, if the voice is to be believed, even greater than before. Something more must be done, and now, for the first time, the PCs have the resources to learn what that is. The Library of Thassilon is theirs to explore now, and within its collection of ancient books, scrolls, maps, and tomes, the secret to defeating Runelord Karzoug awaits.

APPENDIX: RESEARCHING THASSILON

Until this point, very few in Varisia knew much about Thassilon apart from the fact that the mysterious monuments that dot the land came from this ancient empire, and that the rulers of the land were despots and tyrants of the worst possible order. With the discovery of the Thassilonian Library, the PCs have a window into the ancient times of Thassilon, and with this window they can learn much of this time. Given here are the two most relevant Knowledge (history) checks that a character might use to learn more about Thassilon. Note that while the DCs are high, using the library to aid in the research grants a +20 bonus to the check. Further, recruiting the aid of the clockwork librarian adds another +5 bonus on the roll.

As the PCs investigate Thassilon, Karzoug, and the empire of Shalast, take the time to add some flavor to their research. Mention the names of the books they pour through—tomes with titles like *An Accounting of the Holdings of Greater Shalast*; or *A Sculptor's Guide to the Fleshpots of Xin-Shalast*; or *Lord of Wealth: Karzoug's Trade and Conquests*, as told from the *Rune Court of Xin-Shalast* are good examples of the types of titles held in the library.

ROBE OF RUNES

Aura strong transmutation; **CL** 13th

Slot body; **Price** 44,000 gp

DESCRIPTION

This robe is made of crimson silk and emblazoned with dozens of spindly Thassilonian runes, each symbolizing a different type of magical effect or syllable of power. Favored by wizards, this robe can provide some benefit to any spellcasting creature. While worn, it grants a +4 enhancement bonus to Intelligence and allows the wearer to recall, as a free action, up to four levels of spells per day that he had prepared and then cast. Each time a spell is recalled and prepared again in this manner, the sudden rush of magical energy infuses the wearer with power—for one round after recalling a spell, the wearer's spell save DCs and attack rolls for spells gain a +2 enhancement bonus.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *fox's cunning*, *limited wish*;

Cost 22,000 gp, 880 XP

FOGCUTTING LENSES

Aura faint transmutation; **CL** 5th

Slot face; **Price** 8,000 gp

DESCRIPTION

These goggles are made of carefully-polished rock crystal, with frames of polished brass and a simple leather strap and buckle sized for a giant's head (but easily adjustable to smaller wearers). The goggles allow the wearer to see through magical and normal fogs, mists, and similar obscurement. They do not confer darkvision or low-light vision. Further, the goggles distort and skew vision in areas not shrouded by fog, and when observing areas like this the wearer suffers a -4 penalty on Spot and Search checks and a 20% miss chance when attempting to hit creatures.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *darkvision*, *fog cloud*;

Cost 4,000 gp, 320 XP

Xin-Shalast

Results of Knowledge (history) checks about Xin-Shalast are as follows:

Check

DC Result

DC 20 Xin-Shalast is a legendary lost city, rumored to be hidden somewhere in the Kodar Mountains. None have yet discovered its location, but many have tried.

DC 30 Xin-Shalast was the capital city of an empire called Shalast, one of seven that comprised the ancient empire of Thassilon.

DC 35 Xin-Shalast was ruled by Runelord Karzoug, one of the rulers of the Thassilonian Empire. Rumor holds he built his palace above all of Golarion so he could look down on his domain as well as see unconquered lands to continually fuel his lust for more.

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- DC 40** The palace of Xin-Shalast stands upon the mythical mountain called Mhar Massif. This mountain of legendary proportions pierces the skies and lies at the headwaters of the sacred river Alph—which Varisian folklore says leads to a earthly paradise sacred to Desna.
- DC 45** Mhar Massif is said to serve as a bridge to strange realms beyond Golarion. At the foot of the mountain stands the Lower City of Xin-Shalast, where the innumerable servants of the runelord dwelt. From his palace high above, the runelord used unholy ceremonies and incantations to call down unknown beings from the skies.
- DC 50** The River Alph truly exists and runs somewhere through the Kodar Mountains. Anyone who finds it can follow it all the way to Xin-Shalast.

Karzoug

Results of Knowledge (history) checks about Karzoug are as follows:

Check

DC Result

- DC 35** Karzoug was the Runelord of Greed, who ruled a region called Shalast, part of the ancient empire of Thassilon, thousands of years ago.
- DC 40** Karzoug's armies were composed primarily of powerful stone giants and hordes of hill giants that followed his every command.

- DC 45** Karzoug focused his magic on the school of transmutation, magic associated in Thassilonian times with the virtue of wealth. Under his rule, though, it became more associated with the sin of greed. Among the runelords, his mastery of greed magic was uncontested, yet in the schools of illusion and enchantment (related to the sins of pride and lust), his skills had atrophied greatly.
- DC 50** Karzoug warred with his neighbors, but none more so than against Alaznist, the Runelord of Wrath and ruler of Bakrakhan. Between their nations, along a ridge known as the Rasp, Karzoug built immense sentinel statues to watch over Bakrakhan, while Alaznist built towers called Hellfire Flumes to prevent Karzoug's armies from invading. Citizens of both nations worried that Karzoug's and Alaznist's wars would soon escalate to the point where they could bring about the end of the world.
- DC 55** As Karzoug and Alaznist's war intensified, and as other wars among other runelords threatened more than just their armies, the runelords devised methods in which they could escape the world, enter a state of suspended animation, or the like, so they could ride out cataclysms. In theory, their surviving minions would then waken them to reclaim their empires once the cataclysms had ended.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



BORN OF STONE

A PATHFINDER'S GUIDE TO STONE GIANTS

“Once, in the ancient days, the stone and spirits spoke to the giants of the plateau, and the giants of every hill and valley knew what the earth brought forth. The elves brought bronze to the giants, and it made good knives, shining, but not as sharp as stone. The elves spoke to wood, and the giants to stone. All was as it should be. Then came the rune giants, and their little masters full of wrath, pride, and greed, and the stone days were over. From them we learned iron and steel, and the gods changed, and the earth was no longer enough.”

—Conna the Wise, stone giant elder

BORN OF STONE

The history of the stone giants is almost entirely a history of tribal rivalries, followed by the rise of the many other giant races. The taiga giants, hill giants, and stone giants remain tightly bound by what is largely a shared history, faith, and culture. Of these three races, though, in ancient times the stone giants were the ones who allied themselves most closely with the empire of Thassilon, learning the use of iron, rune magic, and advanced weapons. These changes brought the stone giants out of their simple existence as hunters and gatherers, but with the empire's fall they were driven from civilized lands. Now, the stone giants are split into two antagonistic groups: those who side with their ancient cousins—the taiga giants—and long for the past; and those who hope to recapture the days of empire and seek to find the magic of the rune giants, to become the new masters of a restored empire.

HISTORY OF THE STONE GIANT

The stone giants of Varisia tell that, in the days of glory, stone giants were the first and only giants, and they lived in the hills and in the wide glacial valleys—anywhere there was game to hunt. In time, evil gods seduced them, birthing the first giants of fire and frost. Still others abandoned the early hunting and gathering to become cloud giants and storm giants, lifted to the heavens by beneficent gods to oppose fire and frost. The stone giants were sad to see their cousins wander in so many directions, so far from the simple truths of stone. Then, wizards with powers over runes—the runelords of Thassilon, or, as the giant legend remember them, the Ancient Lords—came and marked many giants as their slaves, creating the first rune giants. Heeding the commands of their tiny masters, these corrupt giants enslaved all of giantkind, including the stone giants themselves.

Although slaves, the stone giants were kept by many races, and learned and shared much. At the will of the rune giants and their human overlords, they crafted great monuments and vast cities, adopted new tools, and learned new magic. Their old customs of riding mammoths for the hunt changed to include making war from mammothback against any realm that opposed their imperial masters. All the while, though, they stayed true to the old ways: hunting, raiding, and building their villages and temples—blatant acts of rebelliousness against the mandates of the Ancient Lords. In time, their beliefs spread among the other slave races working under the direction of their master masons, and the other servants of Thassilon came to praise Minderhal, god of justice and all giants.

Yet with the passage of a fleeting few stone giant generations, the Ancient Lords were cast down in a cataclysm of starfire and rebellion. The Ancient Lords vanished along with their rune giant taskmasters, and with them too died the giants' concern for the society of humans. The stone giants retreated to the plateaus, hills, and mountains, but their cousins who had stayed behind and fled the rule of Thassilon barely recognized their "imperial" relations. The Thassilonian stone giants worked stone differently; the rune giants' magic had changed their skin and shape, and they could no longer speak to the ancestor spirits as the taiga giants did. Inter marriages brought only deformed children, and soon the cousins drifted apart.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE STONE GIANT

While elusive and wary of the smaller "civilized" races, stone giants are an ancient people and much might be learned from them. Characters with ranks in Knowledge (nature) can learn more about stone giants. When a character makes a successful skill check, reveal the following lore, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (nature)

DC	Result
18	Stone giants are reclusive, stony-skinned giants who live high in mountains.
23	Impassive and aloof, stone giants hunt large prey and live in hills, caves, and mountains. They are difficult to see among stones and are capable of crushing foes by throwing massive boulders.
28	Stone giants worship Minderhal, a god of strength and law. They revere their elders and frequently ally themselves with other giants and lesser giantkin. Numerous stone giant clans tame dire bears.
33	Many stone giant elders can speak to stones and command the earth to do their will. Stone giants believe they are the purest form of giants, from which all other species of giants are descended.

And so these once kindred people became two races: the taiga giants who kept to the old customs and the stone giants who were forever changed by the rule of man. So stone giants have remained, caught between two worlds: the old ways they romanticize and long for, and the new ways half-abandoned with the fall of Thassilon.

ANATOMY OF THE STONE GIANT

Stone giants stand about 12 feet tall and are recognizable by their chiseled countenances, with many appearing similar to living statues. Their gray, pebbled skin roughens and hardens over time, so that stone giant elders often resemble chipped and craggy rock. While not actually stone, this hardened skin is as tough as boiled leather, but much thicker; in the oldest giants, their gray skin can be up to two inches thick. It's not true that moss and lichens grow on stone giants, although some hunters do wear clothes sewn with bits of moss as camouflage.

Stone giants have an affinity for hiding in natural stone surroundings. More than just a function of their skin tone, they can sit motionless for hours and use their slow, patient movement to get within rock-throwing distance of large prey. Despite their large size, they are surprisingly stealthy.

Stone giant bones are strong but partly hollow, allowing them to move more quickly than their size might indicate. A series of reinforcing chambers, like the cells of a honeycomb, help the hollow bones retain their strength even at a lighter weight. Stone giant lungs are enormous for their size, and when they are moving quickly or engaged in strenuous activity, their breath rushes from hugely flared nostrils. They seem largely unaffected by altitude, and can climb high peaks without the loss of breath or vigor.

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SOCIETY OF THE STONE GIANT

Stone giants possess an ancient and multi-faceted culture with many clans relating histories that measure in millennia. While many outsiders take them for simple brutes, the stone giant decision not to build cities or form unified nations is one born of a history of slavery and victimization under an empire of vice.

In modern times, stone giant society is an amalgam of two walks: the high culture, numerous taboo skills learned during the days of ancient Thassilon, and the low culture, glorified by the craggiest elders.

The stone giant high culture, often called the Rune Road, is fading, but it is still remembered by those giants who have lived for centuries and heard the tales from their own ancestors. Many of the runic songs and legends refer back to the time when they built cities for other races and raised their own vast settlements. These elders tell stories of how their ancestors built towers reaching into the heavens, cored to the heart of the earth, and worked the world's tallest mountains into the faces of gods. While storytellers use these tales to remind their people of the feats they're capable of, they are bittersweet legends that go hand in hand with warnings against the cruelty of the smaller races, their petty tyrants, and the black-armored ungiants that would do their will. It is this high culture that leads stone giants to build structures, work in iron, and mistrust those not of their tribe.

In contrast, the ancient stone giant low culture is based on the hunting of large prey, from mammoth and dire elk to wyverns and rocs. They live in simple caves (worked as little as possible), survive by the strength of their herds, and seek a simple balance in peace with the strength of their mountain. It is this aspect of their culture that harkens back to the simple ways of their ancestors and the traditions the taiga giants still embrace. Many stone giant communities say they embrace these ancient ways wholeheartedly, but in action find the worked stone and iron of the high culture too useful to abandon.

Government

Stone giant society is largely clannish, with a number of interrelated families (usually a dozen or fewer) occupying the same region and working together for a common good. While stone giants rarely war, their clans are insular in nature, with little cooperation occurring between unrelated groups. Stone giants typically claim a specific mountain—or, for larger groups, an entire mountain chain—as their ancestral holding.

A society largely uninterested in power over their kin, stone giants live in a relatively peaceful zygarchy, wherein power is held by the eldest couple of the clan. The ruling couple takes no special title and their extended family gains no special influence or power among their clansmen (though in practice, the children of a clan's rulers have been known to exert great influence over their parents). The duality of such leadership is thought to balance the passions of a single ruler and remind leaders that the clan is family first and servants second. Although the eldest couple technically rules the clan, the position is rarely a coveted one. The responsibilities of rulers—settling disagreements, guarding clan heirlooms, and dealing with other clans—far outweigh the few benefits of respect and choicest living

space. These duties fall to the eldest couple, as their age supposedly grants them the patience and wisdom to deal with such decisions evenly (and, as some young warriors and hunters would joke, because they have little better to do in their dotage). Should a member of the ruling couple die, the next most senior couple of the clan ascends, with the surviving leader retaining a place as a respected advisor for the remainder of his or her days. Considering the length of a stone giant lifetime, it is not uncommon for a ruling couple to have a small council of former-ruler widows and widowers as advisors.

Daily Life

Aside from hunting, wrestling, and rock throwing—largely the pastimes of clan members of both sexes younger than 300 years old—stone giants are skilled herdsmen and weavers. They often tend herds of giant rams, mountain aurochs, avalanche llamas, dire elephants, and similar gigantic, sturdy mammals, leading them up and down steep mountainsides in pursuit of water and shelter as the season dictates. Sometimes even more deadly than the stone giants themselves, herds of these gigantic beasts spook easily or might trample small mountain climbers with neither their herders nor themselves even noticing. From the thick fur of their herds, stone giant craftsmen create giant weavings of enormous size but of only moderate quality. The largest are 20 feet high and 50 feet long, depicting hunting scenes, masonry works, and raids between clans or tribes. They weigh from 200 to 500 pounds and can be worth hundreds of gold pieces depending on quality, size, condition, and materials. These tapestries divide caverns and giant longhalls into smaller, usable spaces. Aside from these hangings, stone giants also weave heavy clothing to keep them warm in the frigid climes and howling winter storms they so often wander through. The youngest giants often perform this weaving, as their fingers are more flexible and are able to weave tighter fabric.

Communities

While simple people, stone giants are not savages. Although many clans incorporate caves into their living spaces, few natural fissures can hope to accommodate a stone giant's size. As such, the hollows they dig into solid mountainsides are typically wide, open spaces that hardly feel like chambers of confining rock. Their intuition when working with stone and masterful knowledge of engineering allow them to create completely stable artificial cave complexes capable of housing several families. These subterranean levels are supplemented by sturdy stone structures built against the mountainside. A stone giant community often consists of several small functional buildings used as stables, storage sheds, and workhouses and longhalls used to house warriors and hunters. These structures are surrounded by a sturdy wall set with hulking watchtowers, from which stone giant guards command a view of their surrounding lands and can bombard invaders with rocks from a great distance.

The center of stone giant society is always in a tribe's Great Cavern. This is usually the first cave the tribe settled around, which over time becomes the largest. Raiding parties boast of their successes there (or lick their wounds and bemoan failure),

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and all the major clan ceremonies of naming, marriage, funerals, and taking tribal titles, such as war leader or clan elder, are held there. The Great Cavern is typically decorated with wall painting done over stone.

Art and Architecture

On any given evening, the great cave of a stone giant community is filled with the grinding thrum of stone giant voices recounting the legends and histories of their people. In their gravelly voices, elders and skilled scops recount these lengthy tales verbatim as they have through the centuries, imparting their own artistic flair and voice to each retelling. Stone giant bards and elders take great pride in performing before their clan, while nearly every community member delights in a flawlessly repeated, eloquently performed retelling of their people's familiar stories.

Aside from the work of their weavers, the majority of stone giants' artistic endeavors turn to sculpting and stone crafting. Stone giant masons and quarrymen achieve astounding results with simple tools, partly due to their great strength, but also due to their deep understanding of what stone can do. Their tools are simple ones: rope and string, squares and levels, and powerful stone hammers.

In addition, stone giants use temperature to splinter large blocks of stone, heating with fire, then cooling with water, snow, and ice until a stone cracks along the lines they have already scratched along its surface. In this way, they frequently generate stone blocks up to 20 tons in weight. These are too heavy for even a giant to lift (they carry blocks up to about 1 ton), so they use log rollers or pebble slurries to move the largest stones over distances.

As the master masons of the Thassilonian Empire, they designed and directed the construction of great temples, monuments, dams, towers, and more mysterious works in the service of the runelords. The giants retain an oral history of these monuments, but they no longer build in this imperial style, seeing no reason for such needless opulence. To the stone giants, these monuments are dead places, reminders of an empire that failed and an alliance with humans in which they were ultimately betrayed.

Death

Stone giants are long-lived, often reaching the age of 800 years or even older. Clan members are not considered elders until they reach their sixth century, and the very oldest live to nearly a millennia. Juveniles are acknowledged as adults at age 90 for women and 120 for males.

Stone giant funerals take a number of forms, but burial is rarely one of them. Caves and the earth are a birthplace, but not a proper resting place for stone giant bones. Instead, chieftains and elders are usually mummified by exposure upon great mountaintops or high plateaus. There they are watched over by a shaman or sometimes by an exile, who must make sure animals do not disturb the body. The eyes of a mummy are the only portion that typically decays, creating hollow sockets. Once dried and withered, the mummy is dressed in rich furs, jewelry, and armor or bright woven wrappings and set in a place of honor in the tribe's ancestral vault,



RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

an ancient catacomb often near the stone giant community, but in some cases hundreds of miles away.

The funerals of less prominent giants are often fiery pyres, the smoke of which can sometimes be seen for 30 miles or more. In areas of little wood, stone giants are buried under a cairn of stones piled up by the surviving members of the tribe. The size of this cairn indicates the respect accorded to the giant. “He’ll leave a mountain” is a statement of respect, showing that a particular giant is well-loved by his people.

STONE GIANT RELIGION

Stone giants worship many gods and goddesses, just as other sentient races do, but several are common to almost all tribes. Domains marked with an “*” can be found in the system reference document (d20srd.org).

Ancestral Ghosts

The Ancestors, Father, Mother, The Spirits of the Earth
N divine spirits of stone giants, earth, and mountains

Like taiga giants, stone giants place great value on the proper regard for spirits, ghosts, and ancestors. The two races of giants both speak with ancestors frequently through magic, using these conversations to set plans to determine the right time to hunt, move their great herds, and watch for omens of things to come. Some elders have been haunted by their predecessors when they pursued goals or strategies that risked the destruction of the entire tribe. In many cases, an elder who is haunted by the tribe’s ghosts loses his influence—this is much more common among the taiga giants than among the stone giants, but it happens in both races. The ancestral ghosts usually have a painted shrine where their descendants burn candles and offer up sacrifices of marrow, burnt fur, and amber.

Domains: Death, Divination, Knowledge, Luck, Protection.

Favored Weapon: Club.

Erastil

Father Strongbow, the Hunter, Old Deadeye
LG god of farming, family, hunting, and trade

Although he is widely worshipped among humans, in giant depictions, the hunter’s god is always shown as a rugged old giant with a spear, stone, or greatclub in hand, wearing the furs of his prey. His followers often smear his statues with blood from their kills, giving the idols a warm reddish-brown patina. Giants always leave a stone for Erastil at his shrine before going out to hunt. Family members neatly pile new stones upon the shrine every day until the hunters’ return. The stones of hunters who die in the field are always left where they were dropped, and eventually used to expand or improve the shrine.

Domains: Animal, Community*, Good, Law, Plant.

Favored Weapon: Longbow.

Fandarra

Blood Mother, the Bleeding Stone, the Earth Seer
N goddess of birth, death, earth, and knowledge

While her worship is not limited to stone giants, Fandarra’s aspect as an earth goddess, source of wisdom, and devourer of

FANDARRA



MINDERHAL



the weak is appealing to many stone giant elders. She is known for her gifts of magical bears and mammoths, given to her favored champions. In even the best of times she asks for great sacrifices, mass bloodlettings, butchered livestock, mammoth pelts, the skulls of enemies, and the like. In times of calamity or suffering her demands grow more severe and only worshipers’ lives will appease.

Fandarra is usually depicted as a bald, gray-skinned giant wearing a crown of leaves, a dress of rich red mammoth fur, and holding a haunch of meat in one hand and a stone tablet in the other. In her vengeful aspect, she wears a necklace of knives or arrowheads, and in her fertile aspect she is shown either pregnant or lifting up twin giants in her two hands.

Domains: Community*, Death, Earth, Knowledge, Plant.

Favored Weapon: Stone dagger.

Minderhal

He Who Makes and Unmakes, Lawgiver, Lord of Giants
LE god of creation, justice, giants, and strength

At the height of the Thassilonian Empire, the worship of Minderhal expanded beyond the giants who first prayed to him

BORN OF STONE

and drew in thousands of worshipers from across the empire. With the empire's collapse, stone giants are among his few remaining followers. The many races that once praised him have all been destroyed or have abandoned him. In the time of the empire, Minderhal was depicted both as a powerful smith and a raging stone monstrosity. His worship was concerned with matters of law, justice, and architecture, as well as stonework and metalwork.

While Minderhal is still worshiped among a few scattered giant tribes on the Storval Plateau and in the Kodar Mountains, his scattered faith has been entirely forgotten by the smaller races. With the collapse of the broader religion, most carvings of Minderhal are simple works made of softer stone, wherein he's often shown bearded and wise, although still strong. Still, despite centuries of waning influence, many stone giants—especially stone giant elders—embrace the teachings of the Lord of Giants.

Domains: Artifice*, Earth, Glory*, Law, Strength.

Favored Weapon: Hammer.

Urazra and the Bear Cult

Breaker of Bones, Gore Pelt, the Red Bear
CE god of battle, brutality, and strength

This new faith (only a few hundred years old) has grown quickly in popularity among more brutal stone giants. Urkav promises his followers great strength, fortitude, and immunity to pain for their acts of savagery and sacrifices of flesh. In addition, many of his followers are powerful barbarians, able to rage as their totem does, gaining strength and power from that fury. The cult is somewhat contentious among stone giants. Many elders oppose it, claiming it plays to the worst, most bestial aspects of giant nature, and that it rejects both wisdom and civilization. The cult spreads through charismatic preachers who claim that will and strength are more important than faith, works, knowledge, or history. The bear cultists are largely young male giants, eager to raid and to rend and torture prisoners.

Domains: Animal, Chaos, Destruction, Strength, War.

Favored Weapon: Claw or spiked gauntlet.

STONE GIANT MAGIC

The most common magic among stone giants is that of the elders, which runs toward divinations and transmutations. Elders are simply the oldest of any given clan, and they keep the secrets of stone magic. Typically, they teach these secrets to one or two trusted members of the tribe, who gain their powers when an elder dies or when they unlock forgotten ways granted by communing with their ancestral mountain and the spirits of their forefathers.

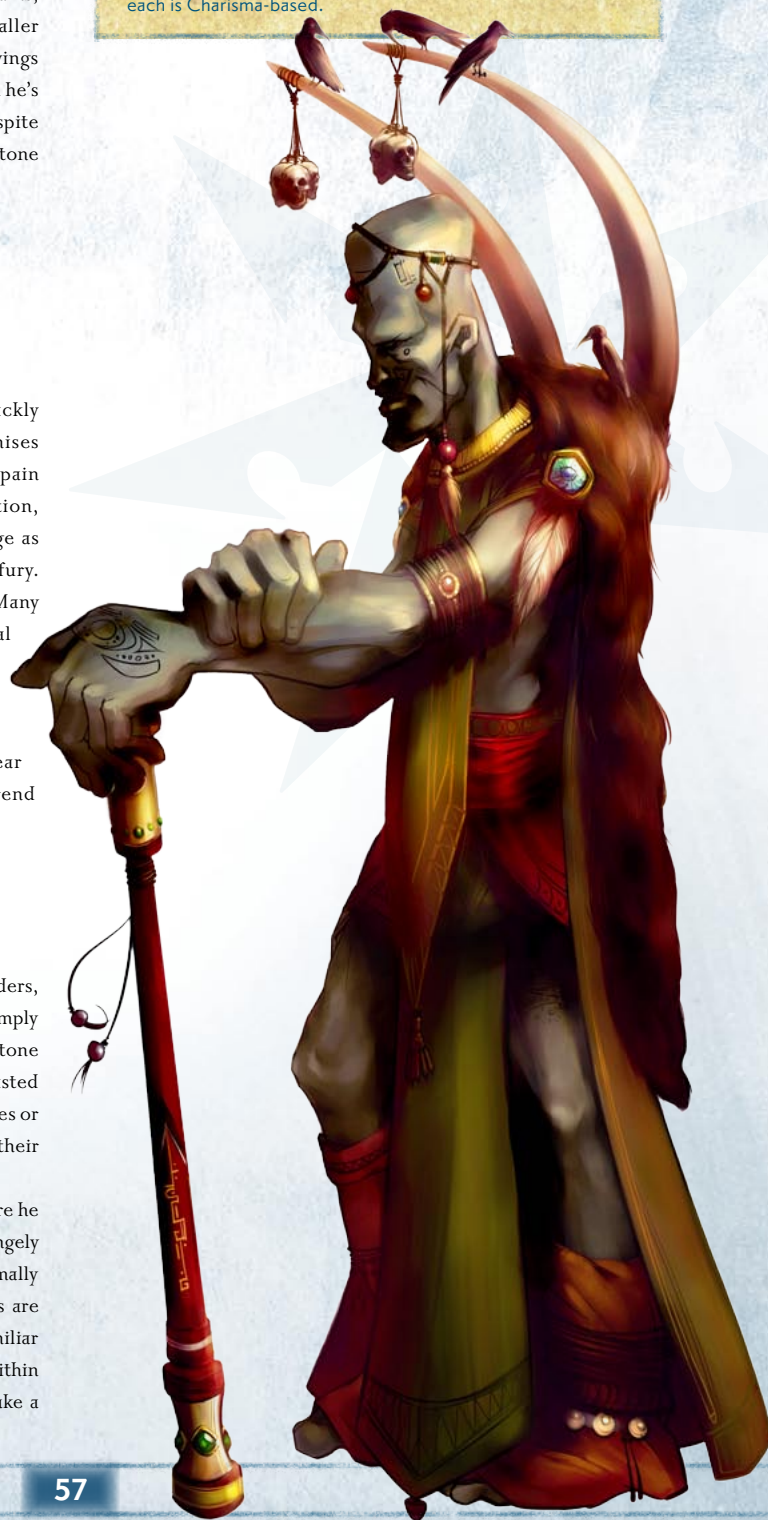
Occasionally, a stone giant manifests sorcerous ability before he reaches old age. These young sorcerers are often marked by strangely colored flesh, crystalline formations on their skin, or abnormally short stature. Both revered and shunned, these magic-users are thought to have been possessed by the ancestors and are familiar with their ways. As such, they are afforded higher standing within a tribe, gain the ear of the clan's ruling couple, and often take a

STONE MAGIC

Many stone giant elders gain a measure of control over the earth, but those few who nurture this innate magic unlock even greater abilities.

Prerequisite: Stone giant elder (700 years or older), Cha 17.

Benefit: In addition to the usual spell-like abilities of a stone giant elder, the giant gains the ability to use *passwall*, *statue*, *spike stones*, *stone skin*, and *wall of stone* once per day. These spells are cast as if by a 10th-level sorcerer. The save DC for each is Charisma-based.



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BEASTS OF BATTLE

Whether as aid on the hunt or as support in battle, beasts kept by stone giants are often as massive as they are deadly.

Dire Bears: Dire bears and stone giants have a long history together; bears are to stone giants what dogs are to humans. Hunting together and using the dire bear's excellent sense of smell, stone giants bring down greater prey than they ever could alone. The dire bears' speed, intelligence, size, and territorial nature also makes them intimidating guardians. One legend tells that dire bears and stone giants were both born to the goddess Fandarra—from her tryst with Estig the Hunter—and that they are brothers. Certainly, bears and stone giants get along well, and many tribes have one or several "Bear Fathers," the hunters whose skill at handling bears earns them special respect among their fellows.

Dire Wolves: The least common animal to hunt alongside stone giants are dire wolves. These are found primarily among tribes where the prevalence of the bear cult discourages the use of bears as working animals. Many northerly tribes call dire wolves "dog-giants" and hold them as embodiments of natural wisdom, whose howls are songs of forgotten lore. Stone giant bards often adopt dire wolves as companions.

Mammoths: In ancient days, the warrior-priests of Minderhal's temples owned hundreds of mammoths trained in mounted combat. Over time, the use of war mammoths has faded among Storval stone giants, although each major tribe does seek to capture and train a handful of mammoths as mounts. A fully trained and blooded war mammoth is worth a great deal to a stone giant tribe. These animals are always treated well, often to the point that bear-cultists resent the food and attention given to mammoths rather than to their totems.

role similar to a tribal shaman or holy man. For all their influence, though, stone giant sorcerers—especially those marked by strange physical traits—find themselves socially outcast, rarely find mates and thus almost never rise to rule.

Wizards are unknown in stone giant society, the art of studying arcane magic being forbidden, a taboo held in remembrance of ancient Thassilon.

Regardless of when a stone giant gains his magical ability, the channels of magic flow in similar ways. Such spellcasters typically gain power over the earth, with *stone shape*, *stone tell*, *transmute rock to mud*, and *transmute mud to rock* being the most common manifestations, but others are known (see the Stone Magic feat on page 57). Giants who nurture their magical abilities and become true sorcerers typically gain spells that deal with stone—

such as *stoneskin* or *wall of stone*, or that might aid warriors in battle or speed travel through the mountains—as a variety of transmutation spells do.

STONE GIANTS IN BATTLE

Stone giants know little of war. While their storytellers weave tales of a time when the armies of the earth marched in great legions under the command of rune-etched generals, those times are long past. Today, most stone giants have replaced the spear and shield of the raider with the bow and boulder of the hunter. Both stone and taiga giants domesticate and rely upon animals in their hunts. These animals help hunters find prey, serve as transportation, and help harry dangerous animals.



BORN OF STONE

THE STONE GIANT ARMORY

Although not typically a warlike people, when stone giants march into battle they do so with specially designed tools employing the ancient knowledge of their people.

Shatter Boulder: A shatter boulder is a 60-pound rock specially carved to break into thousands of sharp fragments when it strikes a hard surface (such as a cliff side or an armored foe). These iron-braced weapons function as splash weapons (see Throw Splash Weapon on page 158 of the PH). Treat this attack as a ranged touch attack with a range increment equal to that listed in the giant's rock throwing ability (180 feet for a stone giant) or 10 feet if the user does not have rock throwing. A direct hit from a shatter boulder deals 2d8 points of damage (plus one and a half times the user's Strength modifier; 2d8+12 for the typical stone giant). Every creature within 15 feet of the point where the boulder hits takes 1d4 points of damage from

rocky shrapnel. Due to their rarity and the precision with which they are crafted, shatter boulders typically cost 180 gp and are sized for Large creatures (Medium or smaller creatures take the normal penalties for using inappropriately sized weapons).

Mammoth Lance: These lances are carved from single fir trees, usually lance pine, cliff fir, or ashwood oak. They are 20 feet long, and even after being carved and hollowed in places still weigh nearly 200 pounds (150 for Medium versions). A mammoth lance is always tipped with an enormous iron or stone spike up to 3 feet long, and the better ones have carved grips for a rider to hold. They provide a 20-foot reach and threaten spaces 15 to 20 feet away from the wielder. Foes 10 feet or closer are not threatened. The typical mammoth lance is size Large, deals 3d8 points of piercing damage (2d8 as a Medium weapon), and has a ×2 critical multiplier.

In the rare times disputes do erupt between stone giant clans, the elders of both communities meet and seek to resolve their disagreements. If these negotiations end in insult or otherwise prove fruitless, a war of sabotage might erupt. During such fracas, young warriors from both sides steal each other's livestock, sabotage structures, and abduct female stone giants—the theft of an enemy's wife is a mark of honor for any young stone giant.

Only rarely do such feuds break into actual warfare. When they do, though, mountains shake with the force of stampeding war mammoths and the stone magic of powerful elders can call down avalanches a mile wide. Although stone giant elders are slow to participate in such battles—seeing them as shortsighted and wasteful—many younger clan members relish the blood-haze of battle. In the face of deadly warfare, the weaker tribe is swiftly determined and typically concedes to the demands of the stronger. Pride and stubbornness, however, have led to more than one clan being buried under the rage and rocks of their cousins.

STONE GIANT EQUIPMENT

The traditional weapons of a stone giant hunter or warrior are the thrown boulder and a powerful club made from a tree trunk, often banded with iron. Taiga giants still use these weapons exclusively, but stone giant clans have seen other weapons and other ways. They often use sharp picks, mammoth lances, huge hammers, and spears—along with the trick of carving shatter boulders. Some clans also rely upon their shamans to cast spells over their boulders, enhancing them with *flame arrow*, *silence*, or similar spells.

Armor for stone giants usually consists of thick leathers and furs. Some stone giant clans still bear the breastplates, rune-marked helmets, and shields of the Thassilonian Age, but in most cases these have rusted away and are lost to time.

Aside from such tools of war, stone giants are well versed in crafting the tools and equipment necessary to travel and

survive in rugged mountains. Great thick ropes of tightly woven vines, roots, and animal hair; massive hammers; pitons of stone and iron; and massive harnesses for dire elephants and other creatures capable of supporting a giant all allow stone giant hunters to make their way over even the most treacherous slopes with ease.

ADVENTURES WITH STONE GIANTS

Stone giants are not always foes, although they certainly consider humans something like small but dangerous vermin. If you're interested in creating your own plots involving stone giants, consider the following adventure hooks.

Bridge to the Past: The elders of a stone giant clan all receive visions of a massive bridge built from the banks of Lake Skotha to the mysterious island known as Chorak's Tomb. Believing this to be the will of their ancestral spirits, all of the clan's resources turn to this new project. But one sensitive stone giant hunter fears the voices speaking to his family's elders are not those of the ancestors, but something darker, welling from the death-shrouded isle.

Exile: An ancient stone giant is sighted wandering through Korvosa's holdings near Abken, stealing livestock and trampling fields into strange patterns. While the giant avoids humans and has an uncanny knack for hiding himself, his presence is causing a panic around the small community. The community leaders want the giant gone—by force if necessary—and are willing to pay anyone who can convince the elusive giant to leave, whether his intentions be for good or ill.

Rise of the Ruinlord: A young firebrand has wrested control of the Spirehall stone giants deep in the Red Mountains. A fanatic of Urazra, this new stone giant chieftain seeks to bring his people into an age of dominance over the weaker and smaller races. He demands the reconstruction of a Thassilonian tower high in the mountains to serve as his throne, but first, he sends his minions to kidnap several "small folk" to search the ruin for magic of the ancient age.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



DRAGONS OF GOLARION

THE MYTH AND THE FLAME

Powerful, nearly immortal creatures, dragons elicit both stark terror and unrestrained awe from almost all who behold them. At once among the world's most deadly terrors and wisest guardians, no other creature in existence can match a dragon's terrible beauty. Despite millennia of study, the body of work comprising draconic lore remains dishearteningly small, and these magnificent creatures largely remain the stuff of fearful legends and heroic tales. Yet, what follows is a sample of what is known about dragons, from their heartbreaking genesis to their terrifying final opus.

DRAGONS OF GOLARION

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DRAGONS

As recorded in draconic history, so goes the creation of the multiverse and all dragonkind:

In the beginning flowed the two waters, the fresh and the salt. These waters were the first gods, one male and one female, who respectively embodied the forces of Law and the forces of Chaos. Although opposites, the two waters lived in relative harmony, and from their union came the lesser gods. For them, the fresh water created the sky and the world, and there he sent the younger deities to live and grow and shape all the facets of reality. The two waters watched with bemusement as their children named the sky Heaven and the world Hell, and with them defined the first acts of Good and Evil.

The industrious new gods continued the waters' creation and brought together the four elements to draft a new place between Heaven and Hell, a realm filled with islands of life. Calling this new world Material, for it was crafted from the elements and not merely thoughts, the new gods rested and admired their works.

Then one of the young gods—the first born from the waters, who called himself Dahak—secretly took on a dreadful and awe-inspiring form and went to the world of Hell. There he reveled and rampaged, making it an eternal nightmare of devastation and suffering, a place of darkness and ever-burning fire. Where his brothers and sisters nurtured the seeds of creation, Dahak only destroyed and in doing brought death into being, embittering his siblings toward him forever. Yet he cared little, withdrawing from his family to rule among the shadow realm of Hell.

A short time later, the salt waters hatched six more gods and made them appear as six Beautiful Metals. Shortly after their birthing, Dahak arose from the shadows and, before the waters could stop him, named the Beautiful Metals: Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze, Brass, and Copper. When he finished, he shaped them in honor of his own terrible and awesome form and cast them from the waters to the Material below. There, they shattered into dozens of lesser mortal creatures of the same metals. These were the first dragons. Dahak then descended to the Material world and indulged in his favored creations, death and murder, and the young dragons knew fear.

Horrified, the waters tried to intervene, but they found that they could not enter the Material world without names. The fresh water declared, "I shall then be Apsu, for I am the first." Apsu took the form of a great and radiant dragon and went to the Material world and rallied his mortal children around him. A mighty battle followed, but together, the metallic dragons rose up against Dahak and defeated him.

Even as Apsu stood poised to strike the killing blow, though, Dahak cried out to his mother, the great salt sea, and begged for his life. Unwilling to see her first son perish, the nameless sea spoke to the injured and brutalized survivors of Dahak's attacks, offering to heal them of the injuries Dahak himself had caused in exchange for saving his life. Some few of Apsu's children, weakened and in utter pain, accepted the offer, and as one, those who accepted exchanged goodness, love, and mercy for vengeance, wrath, and cruelty, and rose from where they had fallen on the battlefield. Good stripped from them their metallic sheens and Evil replaced that shine with dull chromatic hues. Apsu dropped Dahak and placed a clawed foot on his son's head, then rallied the mortal metallics around again him and once more sent them into battle. The horrible conflict that resulted lasted for days. Brother killed traitorous brother and cousin slaughtered good-hearted cousin. Blood spilled across the lands in waves, flooding the world of their battle with a stinking red ocean of death.

Near the conclusion of the long battle, Dahak slipped out from under his father's claw and fled. The surviving chromatic dragons, seeing this, withdrew from the field and took to the sky to follow their brutal master. When the metallics made ready to pursue, Apsu held them back. "You shall have your chance again some day, but stem your rage and for now know peace"

Thereafter, Apsu returned to his mate, ready to demand why she had aided their treacherous son. Yet, instead of the formless salt sea, he found an angry being

in a monstrous dragon form, many-faced and writhing with the countenances of seemingly all she had created. His beloved opposite had given herself a name, and to this day its sound pains all dragons.

"I then am Tiamat," she said, "for I am mother of all. You have failed, Apsu, and my children have met death. I shall never forgive you." With that, she lunged at the fatigued Apsu, biting and scratching and tearing him until he could stand no more. Even as the last of his strength bled away under her terrible claws, he allowed himself to fall from his primeval realm to the Material below.

His metallic children found him shortly thereafter, hid him under a giant spruce tree, and nursed him back to health. When he could move again, Apsu led his metallic children away from the tiny Material world they found themselves on, taking them across the endless waters to other realms. Yet, vengeful Dahak and his fierce chromatic minions pursued, and each time somehow found Apsu and his followers. This exodus of dragons occurred for millennia, until Apsu found himself on a distant sphere called Golarion. Something here, about this world, called to him and his children.

"I SHALL THEN BE APSU."

*I shall then be Apsu,
for I am the first.
I am the primeval,
who was of Heaven
and of Material
before they had names,
for I created them with Chaos.
I then shall go
and I shall end Death.*

Thus begins the four-thousand-line epic, *Draconic Apsu*, the story of the creation of the races of the true dragons as recorded in the fourth generation by the gold sage Gunnarrex. The first two lines frequently show up throughout draconic literature and on the Obelisks of Fate and the Obelisks of Destiny. The ninth line of the poem, "and I shall end Death," appears all across *Dragonfall*. Many of the metallic dragons use this line as a battle cry when they enter combat with chromatic dragons.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

APSU

Waybringer, the Exiled Wyrn, Maker of All

LG god of dragons, glory, leadership, and peace

Apsu and his metallic children have lived on countless planets in the time since he fell to the Material Plane. Having long fled from Dahak in his search for a world where his children might know peace, Apsu keeps no fixed domain upon the Outer Planes. Rather, his cathedral-like lair, the Immortal Ambulatory, is a traveling demiplane capable of manifesting a physical gate upon Golarion. Here he holds court over his mortal children and makes plans to destroy Dahak once and for all. Wise and cautious, Apsu hates to see other creatures suffer, even as he himself endlessly feels the stings of his son's betrayal and his mate's rejection. Sinuous and long-winged, with scales that sparkle like mother-of-pearl, Apsu appears lean and ancient. As Dahak's unhealing wounds attest, however, he is anything but weak.

Domains: Creation, Good, Earth, Law, Travel.

Favored Weapon: Breath weapon or quarterstaff.

DAHAK

The False Wyrn, Sorrowmaker, the Endless Destruction

CE god of destruction, dragons, evil, and treachery

Almost universally hated by metallic and chromatic dragons alike, Dahak nonetheless retains enough divine power to remain a constant threat to Apsu and his children. No dragon trusts Dahak, but his offers of power and endless life tempt many evil dragons. In his aspect as the Endless Destruction, Dahak can call down rains of stone around him, leading some to incorrectly speculate that he caused the Starfall. Covered in bony ridges, spikes, and long curving horns, Dahak bears numerous scars all across his blood-brown scales. These gifts from Apsu ache constantly and further fuel his hatred and anger.

Domains: Chaotic, Destruction, Evil, Scalykind, Trickery.

Favored Weapon: Bite or scourge.

It was here that Apsu decided to make his stand. Here, far from the eyes of his fickle mate, he declared the metallic dragons would end the menace of his traitorous son and his hated creations.

DRAGON CLANS

As recorded upon the Obelisks of Destiny and Obelisks of Fate, all metallic and chromatic dragons of the world belong to one of forty bloodlines (sometimes called clans), originating during the exodus of dragons across the many worlds of the Material Plane. Of these forty, thirty-eight still exist today. In each breed, the clan descending from the first homogeneous color pairing is known as the pure bloodline (see below), with the eldest pure female called the *suryx* ("empress" or "queen") and the eldest pure male, frequently the most physically powerful dragon of that breed, declared the *thyl* (which roughly translates as "god-emperor"). Groups of related breeds—such as metallic or chromatic—are called sept.

Metallic Dragons

Metallic dragons trace their clans through the blood of their mothers. While the blood of the father does affect the child's personality and appearance, the mother's traits almost universally prove dominant.

In the earliest of times, dragons of different breeds could mate with one another and produce viable offspring. The dragons could breed in twenty-five combinations (gold father with copper mother, silver mother with bronze father, brass mother and father, and every other possible pairing), and so they did. In the third generation, the most powerful female from each pairing founded her own bloodline, producing five clans for each of the five colors, with each clan descending from a father of a specific color. While mating between the breeds can still occur, doing so is frowned upon.

In every clan, the eldest female serves as leader and has the responsibility to mate with another member of her same bloodline, assuring the purity of her bloodline. Her siblings and cousins may mate with dragons from other bloodlines as they see fit. Those of the pure bloodline—the clan descended from two progenitors of the same color—find themselves beset with suitors and matchmakers from the day they hatch, as the other bloodlines consider it an honor to have pure blood injected into their clans.

While the vast majority of metallic dragons remain utterly true to their goodness, a tiny fraction (a little more than 1%) drift away from the exalted calling of their family. These tarnished dragons, as they're called, vary in frequency and proclivity by breed, as noted in the following entries.

When the dragons formed their bloodlines, each metallic breed had five clans. Over time, two have gone extinct, leaving twenty-three clans of metallic dragons. Each clan traces back to a survivor of the exodus, and all but the pure bloodlines are tinged with the blood of other metallic dragons as passed along from their fathers. The bloodlines take their names from the female dragons who founded them.

Brass: Sentimental and mercurial, brass dragons openly display their feelings and express their deep emotions with passion and vigor. When a brass dragon needs to cry, it cries; when it needs to laugh, it laughs. A brass dragon rarely, if ever, attempts to stifle its emotions. Brass dragons abhor silence and frequently speak to fill quiet moments with mirthful yet oft-inappropriate comments and asides.

Hardy but easy to coerce, brass dragons respond to strong emotions more readily than solid reasoning. As such, evil and selfish creatures find it easiest to tarnish a brass dragon with tales of woe and suffering than with offers of treasure or power, although in this regard "easy" is a relative term. Brass dragons remain true to their alignment more often than all other metallics, save only the stoic golds. When a brass dragon does give in to tarnishing, however, it becomes a terrifying yet pitiable creature, as such a shift always—without fail—leads the dragon to insanity.

The pure brass dragon bloodline hails from the ancient dragon Orikal, a herald and diplomat in Apsu's army. Some sages claim the now extinct, gold-fathered clan of Mishtuu contributed

DRAGONS OF GOLARION

to the fall of Thassilon but in its zeal it overextended, allowing the Thassilonians to hunt it to ruin. The other three extant brass clans are the bronze-fathered Lyxstryxl, the copper-fathered Wymerid, and the silver-fathered Gorlam.

Bronze: Stoic and protective—but seldom jealous—bronze dragons epitomize the ideals of bodyguards. Their patient and calm natures also make bronzes natural scholars, and more draconic sages and numerologists hail from their breed than any other.

Strong and resilient, bronze dragons pick up tarnish around their edges, but in their hearts they remain uncorrupted. Bronze dragons tend to slip more easily from the stringency of lawfulness than from the virtues of good. Those bronzes who do stray often find themselves hunted by their kin—not to kill them but to bring them back to the disciplined lifestyle so many of their kind find comforting. Tarnished bronzes who refuse to repent usually take on humanoid forms and flee into cities, where they've been known to become members of town watches, bodyguards, or other protective occupations.

The pure bronze dragon bloodline hails from Pyropex, the leader of Apsu's bodyguards. All four other bronze dragon bloodlines still exist: brass-fathered Mox, copper-fathered Orix, gold-fathered Spravevost, and beautiful, silver-fathered Ruddantyl.

Copper: The hedonistic coppers accept and forgive the foibles and vices of those around them, declining to pass judgment on those who do not fully give in to sin and evil. Their natural ability to look at situations from multiple points of view would make coppers perfect diplomats, but their tendency to vacillate eliminates them from such roles.

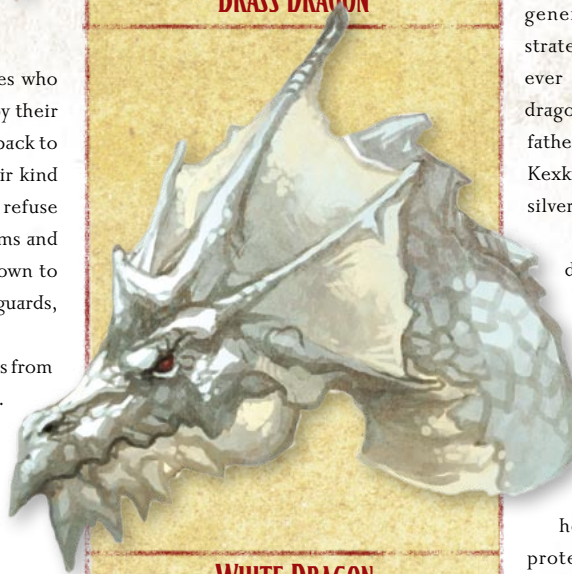
Malleable and easily swayed, copper dragons embrace neutrality more readily than most of their metallic kin. They also go on draconic rampages more frequently than any other breed in their sept, and many metallics who turn evil hail from among their ranks.

The pure copper dragon bloodline, Perxop, hails from a quiet but determined compromiser. The bronze-fathered clan of Kaelklig went extinct shortly after the Earthfall, due to numerous ill-advised battles with red dragons (including the red paragon Tashraxmort). Three other copper clans still exist: brass-fathered Yt, gold-fathered Straxel, and silver-fathered Orrstreng.

Gold: Patient and wise, gold dragons speak little and consider their words all the weightier for their scarcity. The epitome of wisdom and reason, gold dragons reside in vast lairs filled with books, scrolls, clay tablets, and all other forms of written



BRASS DRAGON



WHITE DRAGON

communication. Gold dragons are avid readers and possess memories longer than many human empires. As such, they make exceptional advisors and scholars.

Nigh incorruptible, gold dragons retain their purity regardless of what might attempt to sully them. The least likely of any dragon breed to drift in their alignment, gold dragons remain trusted paragons of good and lawfulness.

The pure gold dragon bloodline hails from Aurixia, Apsu's greatest general and one of the most strategically minded beings to have ever existed. All four other gold dragon bloodlines still exist: brass-fathered Perspykus, bronze-fathered Kexkyxl, copper-fathered Aleirt, and silver-fathered Ectrym.

Silver: Sometimes called draconic paladins, silver dragons instinctively possess pious and chivalric souls. They formed the backbone of Apsu's armies and metallic dragons rally around them in times of war. They deal fairly with all creatures of goodly heart and advocate the benign protectiveness of law and rightful rulership. Paladins or blackguards, silver dragons live with passion and

fervor, never sacrificing nobility and honor for an easy solution.

The most easily tarnished metallic dragons, silvers have a higher rate of shifting from good to neutrality than all other lawful breeds. When pure of heart, though, silver dragons shine like exalted beacons of virtue.

The pure silver dragon bloodline hails from Argix, a crusading daughter of Apsu who led multiple incursions against chromatic dragon strongholds. All four other silver dragon bloodlines still exist: brass-fathered Kosthrum, bronze-fathered Meshiavel, copper-fathered Bollivik, and gold-fathered Tyss.

Chromatic Bloodlines

Opposing the metallics in all things, chromatics trace their bloodlines via the father. Although the mother contributes to the child's personality and personal power, the father's traits always dominate.

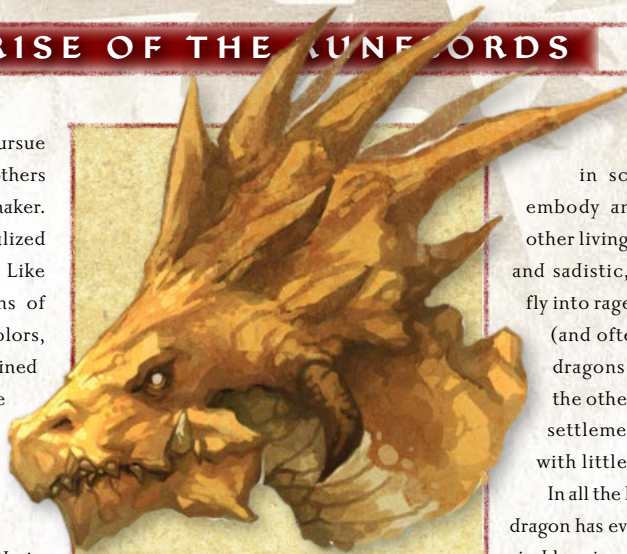
When those injured by Dahak accepted the tainted salve offered by his immortal mother, they realized only too late the ramifications of their choice. Those who survived the first catastrophic battle with the metallics split in their regard for their treacherous progenitor,

RISE OF THE DRAGONFOLDS

with some turning from him to pursue their own rage-filled whims, while others embraced the power of the Sorrowmaker. Over time, though, both groups realized the need to procreate to survive. Like the metallics, the first generations of chromatic dragons mated across colors, but in their case the fathers determined the attributes of the offspring. Unlike the metallics, though, once these early chromatic dragons reached maturity they erupted into terrible orgies of rape, incest, and lust. The powerful red males spread their seed with ease, founding five great and terrible bloodlines for their crimson-hued offspring. The other males, discovering the relative power of the colors, could overpower or woo potential mothers of progressively fewer colors. As a result, the blue dragon progenitors could usually only spread their seed to the blue, green, black, and white females, being unable to convince (or force) the red females to copulate, thus creating four blue clans. Likewise, the green fathers of the clans could not spread their seed to the blue or red females, and founded only three bloodlines, while the black males could only produce two. Lowliest of all, the white males could only barely overpower their white-scaled counterparts, and thus to this day the inbred white dragons trace back only one single bloodline.

Chromatic dragons occasionally rampage, taking to the sky to rain destruction upon whatever communities of lesser beings exist nearby, indulging an instinctual drive to shed blood and wreak devastation. Such rampages often result—directly or indirectly—in the demise of the dragons, leading most to avoid such an attention-drawing spectacle. As such, the chaotic chromatics (black, red, and white) tend to rampage far more often than their calmer and less emotional lawful cousins.

Unlike their metallic kin, most chromatic dragons do not make much effort to trace or maintain their clans. Two exceptions exist: the lawful green dragons, whose obsession with breeding exceeds even that of the dark elves, and the pure bloodline of the reds, which remains almost as inbred as the lone white clan. Each bloodline takes its name from the male dragon who founded the line.



COPPER DRAGON



BLACK DRAGON

Black: As dark in soul as in scale color, black dragons embody an insatiable hatred of all other living creatures. Short-tempered and sadistic, black dragons frequently fly into rages for the most insignificant (and often imagined) slights. Black dragons rampage more often than the other chromatic dragons, razing settlements in or near their swamps with little or no provocation.

In all the long course of time, no black dragon has ever become good, although a sizable minority of Pellthol-clan dragons have turned chaotic neutral. These rare dragons tend to become obsessed with music or other art forms and frequently kidnap the artisans and bards of lesser races to become their personal entertainers.

The pure black dragon bloodline hails from Geris, a cruel torturer known for extracting the locations of metallic dragon strongholds from captives. The only other bloodline is the white-mothered Pellthol clan.

Blue: Second only to red dragons in power, lawful blue dragons use their keen intellects and frighteningly calm demeanors to coerce desert- and sky-dwelling creatures. So insidious and deeply layered are their plots that most of their servants never realize they serve such evil beings. Blue

dragons delight in the slow, undetected tainting of paladins and other paragons of virtue, putting such creatures through a series of noble-seeming quests that result in a major victory for the blue dragon and its more powerful (and always evil) lieutenants. Occasionally, blue dragons live relatively close together, with each controlling an area that borders on the territory of at least one of their kin. Over time, these areas of control can extend across entire regions, with the blue dragons working together in mutually beneficial ways, whether that means pitting their nations against one another in war or increasing trade between the two. Blue dragons never themselves rampage, though they delight in aerial battle more so than perhaps any other draconic breed. Rather than rampage, they express their displeasure by mobilizing armies or even entire nations to destroy whatever vexes them.

Blue dragons of the non-green mixed clans occasionally slip from their lawful perches, becoming somewhat unpredictable neutral evil oppressors and fickle bargainers. When such a change

DRAGONS OF GOLARION

occurs, other blue dragons in neighboring regions move in to eliminate such a threat to their carefully orchestrated power structure. A neutral evil blue dragon not engaged in such a large-scale power play has little to fear as long as he does nothing to attract the attention of his cerulean kin. Members of the Ehmailin clan most commonly—but even then still rarely—slip into relative beneficence and become lawful neutral or even—more unlikely still—lawful good.

The pure blue dragon bloodline hails from Skel, the second dragon to accept Dahak's treacherous promise. In addition to the green-mothered clan of Ehmailin, the swift, black-mothered Uztaabil, and white-mothered Hox clans still exist, although in declining numbers. Of all chromatic dragons, blue dragons create the most half-dragon and dragon-blooded offspring. Such scions serve them well as proxy leaders and the powers behind humanoid thrones.

Green: Where blue dragons use their careful minds to scheme their way into far-reaching political power, green dragons turn their keen intellects onto the task of self-improvement. The scholars and wizards of the chromatic dragons, green dragons fill their lairs with books, scrolls, and all sorts of collections of wisdom. While they hate the lesser races of the world, green dragons begrudgingly admit that humanoids provide a valuable service in recording knowledge on easily transportable media. Ever seeking answers to questions others fear to ask, green dragons analyze all information they can find, regardless of its source or affect on their sanity. Many green dragons have shattered their minds delving too deeply into the mysteries of the multiverse. Of the chromatic dragons, only greens practice draconic numerology, and because of their obsessive personalities they tend to master it and add to it far more than their metallic cousins. Green dragons only rampage when their minds break under the strain of their discoveries.

More than any other chromatic breed, green dragons most often lose their evil alignments and take up the mantle of lawful neutral's academic indifference. This still occurs in less than 2% of the green dragon population and almost always in the pure bloodline of clan Virid.

Unlike all other chromatic dragons, green dragons trace their genealogies with the help of the Obelisks of Fate. The pure green



BRONZE DRAGON



GREEN DRAGON

dragon bloodline hails from Virid, a cruel but calculating lieutenant of the first chromatic army. Two-thirds of all mixed-blood green dragons belong to the black-mothered clan Tixok, with the remainder claiming descent from white-mothered clan Syxstryxl.

Red: Unbelievably powerful and irredeemably terrible, the dreadful reds rival the breathtaking golds in sheer draconic magnificence. As evil and frightening as they are beautiful and impressive, red dragons demand and deserve respect from all the living creatures of the multiverse. Even gold dragons, their hated enemies, acquiesce to the magnitude of destructive fury full-grown red dragons can command. Consummate evil dragons, reds covet, lust for, and dominate all they see and meet. They rampage without concern, completely disregarding the abilities of humanoids and the tales of dragon slayers.

Red dragons almost never stray from the chaos and evil that permeate and define their souls. When they do, they rarely deviate more than one step. Red dragons never become lawful. They never become good.

The pure red dragon bloodline hails from Nerothroch, the first dragon to listen to Dahak and the first to taste the blood of his kin. Alone among the chromatic dragons, four mixed-blood clans exist: black-mothered Huuromyth, blue-mothered Vuellthak, green-mothered Daraxa, and white-mothered Zosh.

White: Scions of the weakest and stupidest of Dahak's followers, white dragons express their many faults in their bestial personalities and actions. Driven from the best hunting grounds by their stronger cousins, white dragons traveled into the cold wastes, where they have long struggled to survive. As such, white dragons remain the rarest of all true dragon breeds. If not for their excellent natural camouflage and inhospitable domains, some sages speculate white dragons would have long ago gone extinct. White dragons rarely rampage, for in their desolate domains there is little point, but when they do their victims leave trails of red snow scattered across miles of territory.

All white dragons belong to the inbred clan of Nivus. All white dragons have pure white scales that occasionally take on ice-blue edges in the eldest of their kind. On extremely rare occasions, a white dragon hatches with small black spots scattered about on its

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scales, giving it the look of a rocky winterscape. White dragons view these speckled hatchlings as abominations and kill them on sight. To date, none have survived more than a few months before being discovered and murdered.

White dragons almost never vary in alignment, but when they do they become neutral evil—never chaotic neutral or any kind of good. Some sages hypothesize that speckled white dragons, if allowed to grow, would eventually become chaotic good members of their race.

The pure (and only) white dragon bloodline hails from Nivus, a cowardly clutchmate of Nerothroc who took Dahak's offer despite suffering the smallest of wounds on his clawed foot.

PHYSIOLOGY

Dragons feel the passage of time differently from other creatures of the multiverse, mortal or immortal. Unlike all other mortal creatures, dragons only become more powerful as they age—their bodies and minds never decline as a result of the roll of years.

Just as blood courses through their veins, so too does magic pulse within the bodies of dragons, altering, regulating, and enhancing every biological system to the peak of mortal perfection. Truly the paragons of all living creatures, dragons seamlessly mesh multiple disparate ideals—flesh and magic, majesty and brutality, covetous greed and exalted virtues—into singular beings.

Easily at the top of their food webs, regardless of location, dragons nonetheless leave a far lesser impact on their surroundings than creatures of their size otherwise might. Thanks to their hyper-efficient digestive systems, dragons require a minimal amount of food, can eat both organic and inorganic materials, and produce almost no waste. Magic sustains dragons and aids in their digestion (as well as every other biological system), allowing them to gain nutrients from plants, animals, and minerals with equal ease. Some sages even suggest that dragons somehow take nutrition from the innate magics of this world or parallel planes, though this theory is largely unproven.

Internal Physiology

A complex system of glands throughout the dragon's body regulates the balance between biology and magic. These glands create and manipulate magical energy, aid in the creation of breath weapons, and enhance the dragon's body with magic. As integral to a dragon's health as its nervous system, the presence of these glands separates true dragons from lesser beings of their type. The following description of this glandular system begins at the dragon's head and works back toward its tail. Not coincidentally, perhaps, this also roughly corresponds to the importance of the glands in the dragon's health.

Superior Arcanicus Gland: At the back of a dragon's throat, protected behind the arcanic process (a spur of bone connected to the third vertebrae), exists a lump of porous flesh about the size of the dragon's eye. This gland performs two vital but largely mysterious functions: it either absorbs magical energy around the dragon or creates its own arcane spark—which is a highly disputed question among sages—and it secretes a protomagical ichor vital to the dragon's breath weapon. This ichor, called

drathyrum, varies slightly in composition by breed. The superior arcanicus gland constantly secretes drathyrum, allowing dragons to use their breath weapons at will. When a dragon uses its breath weapon, though, it “burns off” all the drathyrum within its throat, forcing it to wait several seconds for the protomagical ichor to recoat its esophagus before it can breathe again. When a dragon doesn't use its breath weapon, the secreted drathyrum oozes down into the dragon's stomach, where it is reabsorbed and channeled to the aortic arcanicus gland.

Inferior Arcanicus Gland: In dragons with two breath weapons (such as most metallics) a second, smaller, arcanicus gland exists opposite the superior arcanicus gland. The inferior arcanicus gland is half the size of the superior gland but performs essentially the same function.

Aortic Arcanicus Gland: This gland secretes reabsorbed drathyrum directly into the dragon's bloodstream at the base of the aorta. From here, drathyrum spreads throughout the dragon's body, enhancing its muscles and strengthening its bones.

Pericardial Arcaduct: While not a gland itself, the arcaduct is absolutely vital to the glandular system. Ten strands of nerve fiber, insulated from one another by muscular linings that can flex to allow them to touch, enwrap this miniscule duct. The nerve bundle runs from a nerve clot above the dragon's small intestine to its heart, where the ten nerves then form an overlapping latticework of nerve fibers within the pericardium. These nerve fibers magically regulate the dragon's heart rate, acting as part of its parasympathetic nervous system that can put the dragon in magical hibernation when necessary. The duct itself runs from the dragon's small intestine, along the outer contour of the pericardial sac (without ever penetrating it), to the aortic arcanicus gland.

Gastroarcanicus Gland: Located within the dragon's stomach just ahead of the duodenum, this gland secretes a magical slurry that combines with natural intestinal fluids to break down substances indigestible or toxic to the bodies of lesser creatures. This process allows a dragon to maximize its absorption of nutrients and minimizes the amount of waste it produces.

External Physiology

Despite their psychological and magical differences, all true dragons look exceedingly similar to one another. Indeed, aside from their heads, placements of spines and similar features, and minor variations in their wing shapes and neck and tail lengths, most draconic bodies appear indistinguishable from one another. Without the skull, many lesser races cannot differentiate a dragon skeleton's breed. The following sections look at the traits common to all true dragons as well as that which is specific to individual breeds.

Limbs: Sages of lesser races frequently set the number of draconic limbs at six, inviting much disagreement and violence from draconic scholars, who claim true dragons possess seven limbs (see Draconic Numerology). Regardless, dragons have four legs (with the front pair sometimes referred to as arms), two wings, and a tail. Powerful, magically enhanced muscles wrap a dragon's limbs, giving it strength far beyond that of a lesser being of similar size and build.

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Neck: Depending on the individual and the breed, a dragon's neck ranges in length from roughly half its body's length to fully double the measure of its torso.

Head: A dragon's head marks the creature as an individual more than any other part of its body. As unique as humans (or more so, if you ask one), dragons possess wide variations in their faces and heads. Horn length, scale color, eye color, muzzle length, tooth size, jaw shape, and dozens of other, minor variations produce individual differences greater than in any other intelligent race. While a dragon's breed allows scholars to make general statements about its appearance—much as a human's ethnicity—no two dragon faces look exactly alike.

The Magic of Draconic Death

So much more than merely a biological creature, a dragon stores magical energy in its body within complex weaves of nerve fibers along its spine that extend into its wings (this aids in allowing all dragons to fly and manifest breath weapons). At the instant a dragon ceases to live, the stored magical energy within it releases in a burst felt by other true dragons nearby as well as any creature detecting magic at the time.

Supporting the theory that dragons absorb magic from the world around them, a dragon that remains in an area of no magic for a prolonged amount of time (on the order of months, at the very least) takes ill, becoming sickly and weak. If this time

DRAGONFALL

When dragons die, many attempt to ensure their bodies end up in a draconic graveyard known as Dragonfall. Some dragons near the ends of their lives travel to the nigh-impassable mountain Shearphorus, which surrounds this massive boneyard. Others use powerful magic or strike incredible deals with other beings to have their remains borne there. Dragons of all breeds consider interment in Dragonfall the greatest of honors, for such esteemed dragons shall one day rise again during the Final Flight. To that end, dragons go to stunning lengths to increase the odds of receiving an honored burial there.

More than merely a graveyard, Dragonfall represents the past and future of dragonkind. Protected by a dazzling display of magical and physical wards and guardians, entering Dragonfall is all but impossible for non-dragons.

See *GameMastery Module 12: Guardians of Dragonfall* for more information about this wondrous location.

extends to years, the dragon enters a deep hibernation, slowing its body functions to such an extent that its heart beats scarcely more than once a week and the higher processes of its brain cease almost completely. Dragons fear this near-death hibernation, calling it pakthryxl (which translates roughly to “doomed life”). After decades of the pakthryxl state, a dragon simply dies, its

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

body's magical stores spent to such a point that it has no magic to release back into the world, dooming it from any chance of entering Dragonfall.

PSYCHOLOGY

As a species, dragons tend to share the following behaviors and personality traits:

Covetousness: As part of their racial drive to reach Dragonfall, dragons must hoard treasures of various kinds. What they define as treasure tends to vary by breed, although all dragons consider precious metals—especially when refined—acceptable to hoard. This undeniable instinct, as impossible to suppress as breathing and eating, leads all dragons to covet wealth and treasure. The good dragons tend to suppress this instinct when faced with something another living being owns (although it is a bad idea to show off a prized possession to even a gold or silver dragon, lest this instinct gets the better of it). Evil dragons make no distinction between unattended treasures and those owned by other living creatures—even other dragons. Only when an evil dragon has a mate does he even attempt to suppress his covetousness, but even so, many chromatic mates spend decades stealing from one another.

Racial Arrogance: Dragons invented civilization and they never hesitate to remind lesser races of that. Supposedly, long before even the first fey formed, dragons had laws, culture, science, and powerful magical theories. They created hereditary monarchies before the first elf took the title of king, uncovered mathematics and developed numerology prior to the rise of human seers, and put into practice a complex and codified set of laws millennia ere the protodwarves ever copied such acts. From the most subjective accomplishments of art to the pinnacle of exacting and repeatable science, dragons created (and claim they perfected) every discernable piece of civilization long before the lesser races.

This undeniable truth of firstness gives dragons a rampant racial arrogance. For a creature to even suggest that its race could have created, discovered, or invented something—anything—before or better than dragons is an insult rectified only with the fool's death. When dealing with a draconic sage or scholar, wise speakers should frequently belittle the accomplishments of their own people while praising the creative and technical skills of dragons.

Treacherous Hunger: A neophyte scholar of draconic lore first learns the saying, "Always assume a dragon's next move is to eat you." Those who forget this lesson invariably make delicious meals. Regardless of scale color, age, size, or general observed temperament, a dragon remains, at its very core, a magnificently potent predator. Although dragons have magically efficient metabolisms, they do frequently hunger. When ignored or neglected, this hunger can gnaw at the mind of a dragon, sending a chromatic into a rampage or causing an otherwise exalted metallic to lash out. Those schooled in the ways of dragons always bring along extra food when dealing with a draconic ally (particularly of a kind favored by the breed).

REWRITING HISTORY

Despite their claims and the revisionist histories they frequently write, dragons did not create everything first. On some level, most draconic historians know this, but in their arrogance they do their best to hide this uncomfortable truth from their kin. Because intensive genealogy (a study dragons truly did create) records the name of every dragon who has ever lived, draconic historians cannot simply invent a dragon to have supposedly created something that first came from a lesser race. As a result, many otherwise unremarkable dragons in history have later received wondrous accomplishments attributed to them thanks to a draconic historian rewriting the past.

While many young or stupid dragons (such as the easily fooled whites) undoubtedly believe their awesome species invented, discovered, or uncovered everything known in the world, wiser dragons do not. Their unfathomable draconic arrogance, however, prevents even the most open-minded and outspoken dragons from admitting as much to anyone—dragon or other. Fortunately, most creatures have enough survival instincts to not push the matter.

THE OBELISKS

Eldest of all intelligent creatures native to Golarion and the other worlds that exist within the Material Plane, few question that dragons originated the tenets of civilization or that they invented the practice of genealogy (among other sciences). Draconic obsession being what it is, many lawful dragons carefully collect and maintain two massive libraries of genealogy that contain—between them—every single dragon who has ever lived. These genealogical resources exist on opposite sides of the world, floating slowly in the clouds miles above the surface of the planet below.

Known together as the obelisks and separately as the Obelisks of Destiny and the Obelisks of Fate, these impressive libraries forever slowly orbit the world in a complex pattern that brings them over the same spot precisely every 39,062.5 years. The Obelisks of Destiny record the family links of metallic dragons, while the Obelisks of Fate track the chromatics.

The sets of obelisks are physically identical. Six five-sided black marble obelisks form the centerpiece of each library, rising from a perfectly flat, perfectly round floating island of obsidian. One of these pentagonal obelisks, double the size of the others, stands in the center, with the other five arranged with perfect radial symmetry around it, such that lines drawn connecting all five would form a pentagram with the largest column in the center. All five smaller pillars are aligned such that each face of the large central obelisk is directly parallel with one of the faces of an outer monolith.

Softly glowing Draconic writing appears on every side of each central obelisk. This script records, one clan per face, the suryx and thylx of the pure bloodlines. Directly opposite, the lesser obelisk's facing side records the same information (albeit in non-glowing script), with the other four sides of the smaller monolith recording

DRAGONS OF GOLARION

the names of the queens and kings of all other clans belonging to the same breed. Only fifteen of the twenty-five faces of the Obelisks of Fate record names, as ten of the possible breed combinations never occurred and thus founded no bloodlines. Two of the faces of the Obelisks of Destiny hold less script than the others, as two metallic clans have gone extinct.

On average, every side of every pillar is roughly two-thirds to three-quarters filled, beginning at the top. Draconic scholars continue to debate what will occur when the first face completely fills in.

In addition to these obvious records of each clan's suryx and thyxl, extradimensional spaces beneath the obsidian islands hold long shafts of white marble. The walls of these shafts record the names (along with parents) of every metallic or chromatic dragon ever hatched. At all times a handful of great wyrms patrol the shafts, adding names when necessary and protecting the precious genealogical work from the depredations of time, vandals, and the unworthy eyes of non-dragons.

DRACONIC LANGUAGE

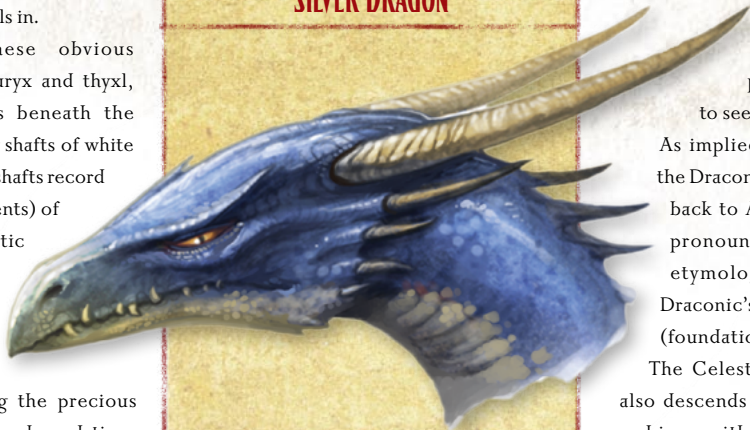
One of the first languages, Draconic has provided thousands of words to various other tongues and dialects all across the multiverse, from the Common word "dragon" itself to the Elven "ithallyn." Almost every word from Draconic has been absorbed by other languages, although, as with all dialects, time has frequently made etymology difficult to discern.

A dragon speaks Draconic with the entirety of its long tongue, such that even the most carefully pronounced words from a humanoid sound slurred. Draconic sounds tonal to humanoid ears (and, frankly, to the ears of all non-dragons), although dragons who deign to discuss such matters unequivocally deny that. This debate comes from the true dragon's use of its arcanic process when speaking, a spur of bone absent from non-dragons (as well as non-true dragons of the dragon type). A dragon vibrates its arcanic process to produce a subtext of meaning impossible for non-dragons to replicate or understand. As an unintended by-product of this use, two true dragons may speak to one another in Draconic in such a way as to mask their true conversation from lesser races.

As a written language, Draconic uses a mixture of phonetic letters and pictographic symbols. It relies most heavily on its letters



SILVER DRAGON



BLUE DRAGON

and only uses pictographs for highly important words—typically nouns—such as "dragon" and "hoard." From a high count of more than 20,000 pictographs right before the language shifted to a true alphabet, Draconic now uses only twenty.

Scholars, therefore, can trace the rough age of something written in Draconic by the number of different pictographs used. As a side note, non-dragons rarely bother using pictographs when writing in Draconic and write almost exclusively in letters. Kobolds alone eschew

Draconic letters, favoring the old pictographs in an attempt to seem "more dragon."

As implied by the *Draconic Apsu*, the Draconic word for "first" traces back to Apsu's name. Currently pronounced *atsu*, the word's etymology connects it with Draconic's *aauu* ("one") and *apsyk* (foundation, founder, founding).

The Celestial word *aasu* ("new") also descends from Apsu's name and combines with *imarr* (another word borrowed from Draconic, which means "birth") to form the word *aasimar*, which itself has become a word in Common to mean a child born of Heaven and Earth.

DRACONIC NUMEROLOGY

The lawful dragons—particularly bronzes and greens—practice a unique form of numerology used to make vague predictions of the future not subject to the whims and fancies of living creatures. Many of these dragons catalog the heavens, generating detailed star charts that—when combined with their extensive numerological predictions—accurately forecast the positions of stars, planets, comets, and every other imaginable celestial body. Some go so far as to claim their predecessors predicted the Earthfall, although such draconic astronomers can never produce evidence to verify such stories.

Some of these number-obsessed dragons also study and practice advanced mathematics, developing systems they claim no lesser mortal creature could hope to understand. Most dragons, even those who practice numerology, don't see the point in these theoretical and impractical fields of mathematics, cannot hope to understand the complicated equations used in these formulae, and continue to treat such studies with derision.

As chaotic dragons cannot muster the attention required to perform, much less formulate, complicated mathematics, they view

RISE OF THE RUNEWEAVERS

draconic numerology as a bizarre (and boring) form of magic. As such, many of these chaotic dragons dracomorphize (i.e., ascribe draconic traits to) certain numbers. Such superstitious beliefs call the numbers 2 and 5 rightful and draconic (2 being the number of original septs and 5 the number of breeds within each sept) even as they vilify 6 and 11 as inferior, lesser, and non-draconic (as there were originally 6 metallic dragons and the current number of original true dragons equals an unbalanced 11, counting the grays). The number 7, as the sum of 2 and 5, is also a strong number of great fortitude that also represents a dragon's body. Dragons consider the number 10, as the product of 2 and 5, the luckiest number of all. These beliefs pervade draconic thought more deeply than any skeptical, logic-minded dragon cares to admit. If asked (and assuming it doesn't just eat the incredibly rude questioner), a dragon of any color claims to have seven limbs (two wings, four legs, and a tail) and flares with shock and anger—and at this point likely eats the uncouth rube questioning it—if said to have only an unlucky six (discounting the tail).

The Number Ten: As the luckiest of all numbers, dragons incorporate ten into everything they can, building decads into their art and architecture and long ago creating the base-10 (decimal) system. The proliferation of the base-10 system among the lesser races greatly pleases draconic numerologists.

The Perfect Number: Roughly two millennia ago, a dragon of an unknown breed appeared suddenly at the Obelisks of Destiny. When greeted, the mysterious dragon introduced himself as Bryemr and claimed he came to Golarion with a message from a possible future. In that future time, Bryemr explained that dragons no longer existed on Golarion and that only a tiny number eked out livings on the nearby planets and in well-hidden planar refuges across the multiverse. Bryemr brought hope with him as well, telling of how, just before a series of cataclysms and world-spanning dragon-hunts all but eradicated their kind, dragons uncovered a formula to arrive at a perfect number. This perfect number could reshape the world to make it safe and comfortable for all dragonkind. Unfortunately, before the dragons could solve the formula to extract the perfect number, their time ran out and they were slaughtered. Although most dragons scoffed at his claims, Bryemr convinced many draconic



GOLD DRAGON



RED DRAGON

numerologists by providing advanced mathematical formulas that helped to predict the future all the way up until the death of Aroden.

In the past twenty or so centuries, draconic numerologists have striven to uncover the formula for the perfect number. Those who took Bryemr's dire warnings to heart consider the recent death of Aroden and the start of the Age of Lost Omens as signs that their time runs short. Efforts to solve this formula have recently redoubled, distracting many draconic numerologists from making lesser predictions or working to develop other techniques. Many Bryemrites, as they are called, predict that uncovering the perfect number will permit dragons to launch the Final Flight.

OTHER DRACONIC BREEDS

The metallic and chromatic septs represent the vast majority of true dragons, although many other septs exist (with new ones appearing periodically). Aside from the original two septs, most new breeds arise when a large group of gray dragons spontaneously claim similar essences (see sidebar). Non-evil dragons who share a sept generally get along fairly well, as seen by the cooperation among all metallic dragons. Evil dragons rarely get along well with anyone, regardless of relationships.

Known Septs

Scholars, Pathfinders, and eyewitnesses confirm the existence of the following true dragon septs, although the exact breeds of dragons that comprise them generally remain under debate.

Abomination Dragons: Among the rarest of all dragons, these breeds formed from the crossbreeding of metallics and chromatics. Since metallic dragons would never allow such interbreeding, these pitiable creatures almost always result from rape or perverse magical experimentation. While most such acts do not create a viable offspring, five abomination dragon breeds nonetheless exist: hoarfrost, rot, ruin, rust, and suffocation.

Dragons of the Celestial Host: Linked by their embodiments of the five elements of Tian Xia, these dragons only live on that continent. They have long, snake-like and wingless bodies and frequently sport colorful scales. The five breeds of this sept are dragons of the earth, dragons of flames, dragons of steel, dragons of the waves, and dragons of the woodlands.

DRAGONS OF GOLARION

Humour Dragons: Said to have burst from the body of a dead dragon god, only four breeds belong to this disgusting sept: choleric, melancholy, phlegmatic, and sanguine. Unapologetically chaotic and utterly foul, these dragons are almost universally shunned by others.

Mineral Dragons: These dragons tend to have angular, rough scales that look like the crystalline minerals they represent. Seers believe five breeds belong to this all-lawful sept, although to this point they have only confirmed the existence of the coal, pyrite, silicon, and sulfur dragons.

Sin Dragon: Irrepressibly vile and irredeemably evil, the sin dragon leaves in its wake a terrible swath of chaos. The sin dragon belongs to no sept, although some scholars attempt to place it and the virtue dragon together.

Thaumaturgic Dragons: Easily the most powerful natural spellcasters among dragonkind, the eight breeds of this sept each represent one of the common schools of magic: abjuration, conjuration, divination, enchantment, evocation, illusion, necromancy, and transmutation. Dragons of these breeds are universally neutral.

Virtue Dragon: The eternal opponent of the sin dragon, the virtue dragon represents the very pinnacle of draconic goodness. It outshines even the paladin-like silver in its exaltedness. Like the sin dragon, the virtue dragon belongs to no sept.

DRAGONKIN

Besides the true dragons, myriad creatures of the dragon type fill the multiverse. Frequently the result of perversions of majestic true dragons or the misconceived offspring of gray dragons, these various dragonkin are in many places more pervasive than their true dragon ancestors.

Dragon Turtles: Common to the warm waters off the western coast of Garund, dragon turtles frequently prey upon merchant ships and trading vessels that would dare the treacherous journey around the Eye of Abendego. Many a dockside legend tells of sunken graveyards littered with the booty of countless ships, patrolled by greedy and gluttonous dragon turtles, or of such beasts grown so massive as to be mistaken for islands.

Dragonnes: Among the fiercest predators of the Deserts of Kelesh, large prides of dragonnes prowl along trade routes and frequently besiege oases. Some of the more powerful prides have even begun challenging the influential blue dragons of the region.

Drakes: The five common drakes correspond to the magical energies: caustic drakes to acid, flame drakes to fire, ice drakes to cold, lightning drakes to electricity, and the powerful thunder drakes to sonic. Drakes live in almost every environment, spreading destruction and mayhem. True dragons see these creatures as blasphemously formed vermin and actively seek their extinction.

Pseudodragons: Native to the northern continent of Avistan, large populations of pseudodragons can be found in Chelax, Nidal, Andoran, Varisia, and even as far north as Numeria. Depending on their numbers and how they interact with the local humanoid populations, these clever dragonkin receiving varying treatment, being held as welcome guests, hunted as destructive pests, or any behavior in between.

GRAY DRAGONS

When Dahak descended to the Material Plane and began his slaughter of the mortal dragons there, he began with the powerful and incorruptible platinum. He succeeded so completely that only one platinum dragon, a pregnant female, remained alive to hear his offer of salvation. She not only spurned his offer but, with nearly the last of her strength, struck him with a claw, ripping out one of his teeth. In response, Dahak cursed her, but not to death. He stripped from her the shine and gloss of her platinum countenance, but he gave her no color in its place. Reduced to a shriveled gray husk, she fled the battlefield and slinked into hiding nearby.

A year later, she laid a clutch of lead-gray eggs, and when they hatched, a dozen weak and pathetic gray-colored dragons flopped and wriggled around her. As they grew, these dragons found themselves outcast from the ranks of both metallic and chromatic dragons. Gathering their small numbers, these ill-fated dragons ever strive for the grandeur of their good and evil-aligned cousins, but reproduce only rarely and in pitiable numbers. Thus, gray dragons have sought to influence their fate with the blood of other creatures, ultimately giving rise to many of the myriad dragonkin races in existence today. Both metallic and chromatic dragons see gray dragons' desperate reproductive experimentation as blasphemous squandering of the draconic bloodline, and as such, the few gray dragons that still exist do so in solitude and secrecy.

Wyverns: Common in many of the mountain ranges of Avistan, wyverns are among the most feared and deadly predators of such rocky regions and the surrounding lands. In some lands, though, such as among the dwarves of Hantz Mountain or the orcs of the Hold of Belkzen, these savage dragonkin serve as deadly mounts and beasts of war.

FINAL FLIGHT

Long ago, in a time well before the death of Aroden and the collapse of prophecy, the draconic sage Hrynryx wrote of the ending and beginning of worlds. The ending comes first in his writing, in a time known as the Final Flight. Following that event, a time known as the Great Hatching apparently births a new generation of dragons. Details of both remain sketchy and contradictory, but according to Hrynryx, the many dead who currently slumber within Dragonfall shall arise again, awakening from their long sleep. Drawn as if by a singular thought, these reborn dragons shall take to the sky and circle the globe, serving the desires of Dahak and bringing final destruction to the world. Their wings shall blot out the sun, their claws and teeth shall sunder the earth, and their terrible breaths shall lay waste to country, home, and hearth. Not a single thing shall exist above the level of the boiling seas, for all the world's surface shall be reduced to slag.

Yet not all life shall end. Apsu shall reign supreme in the end. The dragons, of course, shall survive this closure, but so too shall a few plants and creatures, here and there, protected by swooping dragons, begin the world anew. And in this time after the cooling of the world, the dragons shall forever reign supreme.



FOOL'S GOLD

13 Desnus, 4707 AR

They say the heart's natural state is one of yearning, and nowhere is this truer than in regard to the open road. Put me too long in any given city, and my legs will itch for the feel of a horse beneath them, my toes for the sand of distant shores. Yet just two days out of Kaer Maga, the rains hit, drenching me so thoroughly that I dared not unwrap my journal from its oilskin, and I began to remember why it is that man builds cities in the first place.

Thus it was with a glad heart that I came to the crumbling walls of Sirathu, poorest of Korvosa's holdings. Everything I'd heard of it in the past had painted it as a backwater suited solely for sharecroppers and herdsman (and the occasional disgraced noble), but as I arrived its muddy streets were abuzz with activity, even given the rain that fell in obscuring sheets from the tiled roofs. Taking the opportunity to dry out and rent a room at the Royal Hare, I spent a bit of time in the common room, and was well rewarded. It seems that since the town's inception, a font known as the White Prince's Fountain has stood dry in the market square. When it was originally constructed, the leaders of Korvosa promised it would be enchanted to provide limitless amounts of pure, clean water,

so that the town might never need bother with wells. Before it could be finished, however, the collapse of the Chelaxian Empire drew the city's attention elsewhere, and the fountain has stood dry ever since, a symbol of the nobility's low opinion of the common man. A few months ago, however, a young local girl was found unconscious next to the fountain, which now poured forth water so pure that it rejected even the dust of the air. And the girl, too, seemed changed, speaking sometimes as a child and sometimes in a stranger's voice, warning those who would listen that they must rise up and break with Korvosa entirely before it's too late. While not all of the locals have gathered arms and rushed to the child's standard, the strange events leave little doubt among these practical people that, one way or another, change is coming.

As is fitting with my role and nature, I of course attempted to arrange an audience with the child, but the locals are understandably suspicious of outsiders and reluctant to endanger their supposed oracle. Perhaps if I remain for a few days and gain their trust, they'll change their minds. If not, well—between the disturbing puzzle box I took off the dead elf in the swamps and the ioun stone that still needs to be examined by someone more experienced in such matters, I have more than enough mysteries on my plate.

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3 Erastus, 4707 AR

Three weeks! Three weeks I chased those gods-damned thieves across southeastern Varisia, and only now, hiding in the dark crotch of a bridge like a beggar, am I finally able to begin thinking clearly again.

It was my own fault, of course. The wine at the Royal Hare is less watered-down than most, and as the night of my arrival wore on the patrons proved too eager an audience for tales of my wanderings. Unable to resist, I expounded until my voice was hoarse, plied by the steady stream of drinks from my new friends, locals and travelers alike. While recounting my journey upriver on this latest mission, I came to my encounter with the owlbear, and as a grand finale pulled out the skull-embossed puzzle-box I acquired there. It had the desired effect, provoking gasps and signs against evil, but my pride proved my undoing.

Later that night, after I had staggered back to my room and readied myself for bed, there came a knock at the door. Made foolish by wine, I presumed it to be yet another admirer, perhaps a comely local lass looking for a tumble with the mysterious stranger. Cracking the door and peering out, I discovered three figures I recognized from the common room: a burly half-orc, a Varisian woman, and an effete elf. Before I could react, the half-orc slammed the door forward and into my nose, which broke with a crunch. My eyes clouded with pain, I stumbled backward, fumbling for my dagger, as the three moved quickly into the room. The elf and the woman ignored me completely as they rifled through my possessions, chattering urgently in some language or cant I couldn't understand. I, for my part, had little attention to spare them either, as my blurred vision filled with the looming dark mass of the half-orc. I jabbed tentatively at his shape with my dagger, but he caught my arm and squeezed until the bones groaned in protest and I dropped the weapon, lest he break my wrist. Grabbing my throat with his other massive paw, he lifted me free of the floor and thrust me against the wall, keeping me out of the way of the searchers.

At that moment the elf let out a triumphant cry. In the tongue of his people, he blurted out something about "the box." In response the woman hissed angrily at him in their mystery language, and the half-orc turned his head to mumble something back over his shoulder. That was all the chance I needed. Pulling my legs up tight, I withdrew a hidden dagger from my boot and swung it hard and underhand into the orc's side, sliding it flat between his ribs. He grunted as my blade slid forward to the quillons and I torqued left with all my might. Warm blood and worse drenched my arm and chest, and the half-orc and I dropped to the floor in a tangled mess.

Thrusting the twitching corpse aside, I stood just in time to see the window shutters swing free and hear the quiet thuds of bodies hitting mud. Singing a quick psalm of healing to mend my nose and purge the unbidden tears that blurred my sight, I ran to

the window and found the elf and woman mounting a pair of waiting horses, a third steed standing unladen and obviously intended for the half-orc. I turned to gather my gear and give chase, only to discover my pack missing, along with this precious journal and the wayfinder that, in more cautious moments, I keep around my neck to prevent such things. Taking up my sword, I vaulted after them to the street below. Yet before I could cut them down, the thieves put spurs to flanks and raced south along the town's main road, followed by my screams of impotent rage.

The next seven days are a blur of motion. Pounding on the door of the local horse trader, I purchased a swift-looking mare at an outrageous price and was on the road within hours, using all of my meager tracking skills to follow the bandits' trail. Had they even for a day crossed into the woods or attempted to double back and ambush me, all would assuredly have been lost, but the bastards flaunted their confidence by staying to the road, always just a half-day's ride ahead of me. At night, sometimes, I would see their

The strange fountain offers pure water and ill omens.



RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

campfire in the distance, but though I rode until my horse blew bloody foam and I swayed unconscious in the saddle, the trail led ever onward, until at last I topped a rise and found myself staring out over the vast expanse of Korvosa, the grandest metropolis in Varisia. In the burgeoning light of dawn it glittered like spun gold, every roof and steeple reflecting the honeyed glow. Yet only a fool takes Korvosa at face value.

At the bottom of the hill the wide trail suddenly became a paved road, straight and level. For the last mile into town I rode on massive slate slabs surrounded by shards of gray flint. It was the only time I had seen such a road in Varisia, and I wondered as I went if similar thoroughfares crisscross all of Cheliox.

This road took me through a tent city filled with the sights and smells normally associated with native Varisians and Shoanti, which the locals derogatorily call Thief Camp. To the south, Thief Camp gives way to an area of roughly built wooden houses and shops catering to visitors from elsewhere in the region. Residents of the city use this unnamed area as a buffer between themselves and, as they put it, "those thieves and savages outside." After making a few subtle inquiries with the merchants and traders in Thief Camp, I at last followed the road to a massive stone bridge ending in a black-marble gatehouse in the Wall of Erodred.

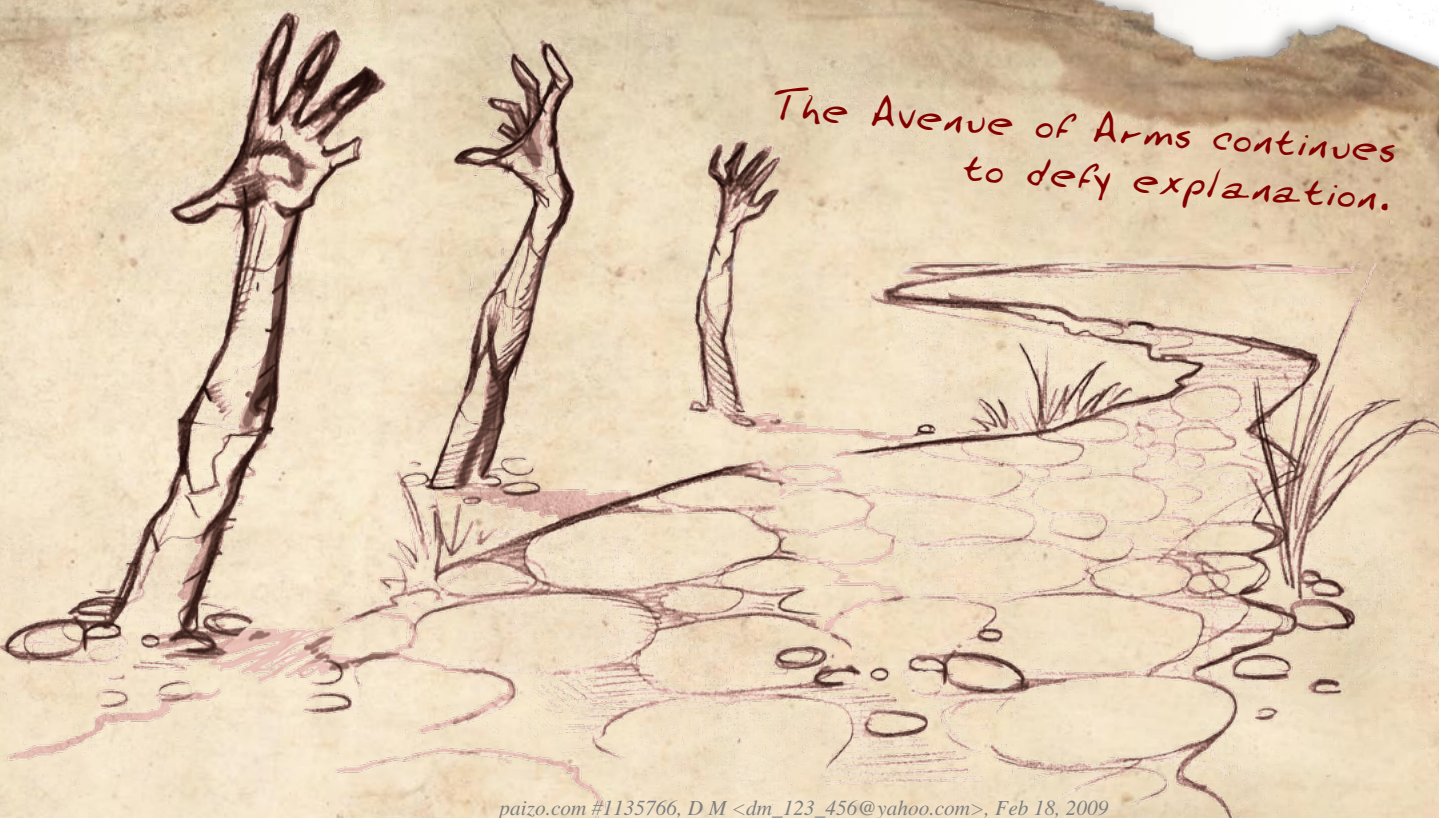
That twenty-foot-high wall, made of black marble, bears along its top a row of black, downward-pointing metal spikes, broken only by the occasional leering bust of some fiend or another. From what I understand, this reflects modern Chelioxian architectural sensibilities, and was yet another failed attempt by a monarch of Korvosa—in this case the recently deceased king, Erodred the Second—to lure Cheliox into reabsorbing the city.

At the gate, I stopped and attempted to press one of the guards for information on the two thieves who had passed before me, but though I offered healthy bribes, the guardsman shoved away my palmed coins with bored disdain. Of all the times to run across an honest guard... Fortunately for me, my questions were overheard by a nearby beggar who was happy to point me in the right direction, and there began a long stretch of skulking and information gathering that bled my purse almost dry.

Despite nearly a dozen bridges, Korvosa is a divided city, carved apart by the Jeggare River and the Strait of Saint Alike. Seven districts, divided further into one to five wards apiece, split the city into relatively distinct administrative, cultural, and economic sections. While no single wall surrounds the entire city, several wards are physically defined by walls of varying ages and styles.

I spent six days in the North Point District, canvassing the inns and taverns in search of my quarry. Comprised of four large, sparsely populated wards, North Point houses many of the city's oldest non-noble families. The Infernal Wall opens onto Northgate, home of the city hall, the gloomy Arbiter's Hall, and the Bank of Abadar. The remnants of the city's first mainland walls define the northern edge of the ward, dividing the influential Gaters (as they're called by the rest of the city) from the truly old money in Mainshore.

Coming up empty and growing increasingly nervous, I crossed into the inviting but bustling Midland District. When people think of Korvosa, they generally think of the cosmopolitan crowds of Midland. Regardless of the bustle, I knew almost immediately that I wouldn't find who I sought there—the district contains the Korvosan Guard's headquarters, as well as both a department of the beloved Sable Knights and the hard-hearted Order of the Nail. As such, it's not exactly welcoming toward the lawless,



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nor to vigilantes bent on their own form of justice. I circled northwest and climbed into the Heights District, passing by the University of Korvosa on my way.

It was here that I finally struck gold. Leaving the Posh and Turtle just below Korvosan Tower, I found myself waylaid by one of several beggars I had contracted to keep watch for my quarry. Surprisingly nimble in his stinking rags, the panhandler led me north along the waterfront via the Avenue of Arms. As I reached its north end, I came upon an intersection with a wide, tree-lined boulevard, and there, leaning against one of the trees' slender trunks, slouched the foppish elf who had eluded me for so long.

Circling wide around the square, I approached from behind and at an angle, keeping the bole of the tree between us. When I grew close enough to brush up against its smooth bark, I turned and drew my dagger, wrapping my arms around both tree and elf and pinning him there, dagger pricking the skin beneath his chin. Placing my cheek next to his, I whispered in his ear.

"Hello, friend."

To his credit, he didn't flinch. Instead he turned his head slowly, careful not to impale himself on my blade, until he could look me in the face. At that, his eyes widened the tiniest bit, and I smiled with all of my teeth.

Faster than I could blink, he straightened his legs and leapt into the air, bringing his throat clear of my blade. Before I could react, he slammed an elbow down on my still-sore wrist, smashing it between bone and the tree trunk. I howled and lost my grip, and then he was off, dodging through the busy streets. Obviously more experienced with the territory, he nearly lost me in the crowds of that lane as we raced across a narrow bridge, over the Strait of Saint Alika, and into the least desirable section of the city: Old Korvosa.

Completely covering Endrin Isle, Old Korvosa is, as the name implies, the oldest section of the city. And the dirtiest. And the most dangerous. The cramped tenements of Bridgefront make the claustrophobic apartments of Old Dock appear roomy and expansive, seeming more akin to the towering shanties of Kaer Maga's Warren district. Coming to the end of the bridge, I found myself suddenly in an entirely new environment. I had heard tales of Old Korvosa, of course, but the stories never really conveyed the sights and stomach-churning smells of the place. Here, maimed veterans of the Goblinblood Wars sat begging along the streets. There, dealers in pesh and qat peddled their wares in plain sight. All of this I took in at a glance, but spared no attention for.

The elf veritably danced through the crowded, stinking throngs. Even as I fell behind in our slow-moving chase, I watched with begrudging respect the way he spun full around to dodge through a group of thick-handed copper beaters, or grabbed a stirrup to slip under a slow-moving horse. Elves and halflings always make the best cutpurses, and this one was no exception.

At last we broke through the first two blocks of the district, past the walls of ramshackle tenements and squeezed townhouses. With Bridgefront behind me, I found myself in Garrison Hill. Still

EXPLORING KORVOSA

Established during the expansion of the Chelaxian Empire as the primary settlement in Varisia, Korvosa remains closely tied to its roots in devil-worshipping Cheliox and continues to be the unofficial capital of the region in the eyes of most foreigners, rivaled only by Magnimar. Korvosa is the setting of the Pathfinder Curse of the Crimson Throne Adventure Path, and further information on its web of political intrigue and infernal pacts can be found in *Pathfinder* volumes 7–12 and in the forthcoming *Guide to Korvosa*.

crowded, this oldest part of the city (outside of Fort Korvosa itself) at least provides wider avenues and boulevards, especially as you near the cliffs of the island, where the high walls of the rebuilt fort still stand, proud and erect.

The elf leapt through a merchant's cart, stomping on a display of wrinkling Ravenmoor grapes, then vaulted over the bewildered Varisian tending the makeshift stall and tumbled along the alley floor behind. Not trusting the slick fruit, I instead leapt to the side of the cart, planted one foot on the wall of the nearby building, and spun through the air behind the merchant.

I landed awkwardly in a puddle of something, and my feet slipped out from under me, gravity slamming me hard into the pavement. The foul liquid, redolent of urine and fish, splashed up around me, soaking my clothing and coating me in a slick of filth. The elf reached the end of the alley and turned, passing from view. Struggling to my feet, I followed.

And stopped short. The narrow waterfront lane I found myself in held a dozen or so people, but not one of them an elf. Painfully aware of the stares of the fishermen around me, I breathed hard, attempting to ignore the burning in my chest. That's when I heard a soft wooden bang to my right. Turning, I noted a small greasy window almost level with the street, with scuff marks scarring the sill. Without a second thought, I dashed at the window and dropped, trusting the slimy filth covering me to grease my slide. With my right foot leading I smashed through the glass and struck something soft and yielding on the other side.

The elf and I landed hard on the rough-hewn floor of a cellar, with me on top. For a moment we lay there head-to-toe with each other, gasping to regain our wind, then simultaneously launched into a flurry of kicks that bloodied each other's faces but lacked the leverage to do any real damage. That tactic proving ineffective, I rolled off the elf and came to my feet. At that moment, the extent of my injuries became apparent. Long slivers of glass stuck out of my legs, chest, and arms, and wide patches of blood coated my body, seeping through my already befouled clothing. Darkness framed my vision and my knees buckled with exhaustion, but I managed to grab the edge of the window frame and catch myself. Through the haze of a raging headache I noticed the elf moving even slower, and took the opportunity to hum an aria borrowed from the priests of Desna, feeling the magic inherent in the music close the worst of my

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

wounds and fill my veins with new life. Bits of glass fell from my flesh as I stepped forward, still shaky, and drew my sword.

Rising slowly, one arm held close against his chest to immobilize it, the elf began to weave his fingers in strange movements, mouth moving but eyes still set in that same expressionless mask. A spell? Really? With my sword drawn? Fast as he was, not even an elf could concentrate on a spell and still expect to dodge me. Before he could finish his incantation, I lunged forward and ran my sword clear through his stomach, carrying him to the ground with me, where I lay panting on his corpse, his blood flowing out between us and warming my hands.

For a short time I stayed there, surveying my surroundings from the floor. On first blush, it looked like a water-damaged empty basement. In fact, it looked like a basement on second and third blishes as well. Sighing, I sat up on the dead elf's chest, causing a spurt of blood to blast a streak of crimson on my arm. Absently, I backhanded his face. Why did he run down into an abandoned basement? Maybe he lived in the building above. Maybe he knew

someone who did. Still, his strength was in his speed, and he had sacrificed it. Why? Glancing down at the body, I noticed for the first time a thin chain around his neck, at the end of which hung a softly glowing key.

Maybe he had a way out after all.

Snatching up the key, I walked up the wooden stairs leading out of the dusty basement and tried the key in the door. No luck. Over the next several minutes I tried putting the key into anything resembling a hole I could find in that dust-filled, gods-forsaken basement. At last my frustration got the best of me, and I fell to kicking the elf's corpse, punctuating each strike with a curse or unanswered question. Then with one final kick, his body shifted, and I discovered what I had been missing: beneath where the elf had fallen, his wide puddle of blood seemed to drain, ever so slowly, into a previously unseen crack beneath the body.



Gods, the smell.

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As I moved the key near the crack it began to glow more brightly. Encouraged, I stuck it in and twisted. With an audible, grinding crunch, a rectangular outline of cracks suddenly formed in the floor, with a dozen parallel cracks running across it. The parallel sections recessed in a series of mechanical chunks, forming a steep, crudely cut set of stairs, dripping now with blood. A terrible draft of corruption washed into the basement.

Ah, how wonderful. Sewers. A section of the famed Vaults of Korvosa.

With a quick search of the elf's body, I found little to identify him, but plucked an unused handkerchief from of his pouches and put it to my nose. As I had hoped, it was perfumed. Elves. I tied it around my head to cover my mouth and nose.

Holding my sword out before me, I descended into the yawning sewer, searching for any indication of recent passage. At the foot of the stairs, a low-ceilinged tunnel flowed sluggishly with a morass of salt-water sludge a foot deep, stretching out into the darkness. Holding up the elf's key, which continued to glow with a pale blue light, I continued cautiously down the tunnel. After a time, the passage curved and I caught a glimmer of dim radiance, accompanied by the shuffling and snorting of something huge. Then the tunnel opened up, and I found myself staring down upon one of the island's many cesspits... and its inhabitants.

Massive three-legged monstrosities with mouths that filled their bulbous bodies waddled around in the filth and refuse collected below the city. If they saw me they did not react, for they continued their disgusting work, shoveling huge piles of garbage into their gaping maws. Careful to make as little noise as possible, I edged around the circular chamber on a narrow, man-sized walkway. Three other similarly sized pipes opened into the cesspit, and as with the stairs, the key grew brightest near the far tunnel. Fair enough. Not wanting to remain near the massive, dangerous, and nauseating creatures any longer than I already had, I moved quickly down the passage. Almost immediately the air changed, the odor lessening until it felt almost fresh.

Taking heart, I continued on, finally coming to a raised dais made of wood and covered in a thick and muddy layer of pine needles and dirty hay. A wooden trap door waited in the roof above. In front of me, horizontal lines cut directly into the stone wall created a makeshift ladder. Climbing it, I slid a dagger's blade into the slight gap between door and roof and pried. The thin blade provided little in the way of a view, but after several finger- and toe-cramping minutes I guessed the room beyond to be empty.

Taking a deep breath, I threw open the door, scampering up the ladder and through the hatch as quick as I could. I was alone, but I felt certain someone had heard my entry. Silently I took in the boot-filled mudroom in which I found myself before moving into a well-appointed entry hall. Kicking off my slime-coated boots so as to not leave a trail, I began my exploration in earnest. Voices drifted throughout the seemingly endless building, forcing me more than once to duck into a side room and press my ear to the door.

It was in one of these rooms that my luck finally turned and I found myself surrounded by piles of bags, weapons, works of art,

KORVOSA'S OFFAL SECRET

Built where the land meets the water and straddling a major river that dumps into the most prosperous clam field in Varisia, the lower sections of Korvosa face a huge, stinking problem: their own waste. Many of the sewers beneath Korvosa drain into massive cesspits to the south, but the isolated wards on Endrin Isle trust to an alternative means of disposal: otyughs. The otyughs of Korvosa have more than tripled in number (and can still only barely keep up with the city's offal) since Lord Magistrate Dess Leroung imported them from Cheliox almost two centuries ago. Large steel plugs in the streets, opened by equally massive crank-driven winches, separate the city's population from its surly waste disposers. These otyughs occasionally break out of the sewers and rampage through Old Korvosa, where they're subsequently corralled and incarcerated again by guardsmen wielding longspear coated in tranquilizing poisons.

and other seemingly random but valuable items, each tagged with a tiny note listing a date and location. Throwing myself into the mounds of goods, I burrowed frantically, and was soon rewarded by my own pack, its tag noting the circumstances of its theft. Tearing it open, I discovered everything as I had left it, with the notable exception of the missing puzzle box. Such losses bothered me little, however, and with a lightened heart I slipped the thong of the wayfinder over my head and clutched the journal to my chest, vowing to never let either pass from my sight again. With one longing look at the piles of loot—who knows what other secrets might rest within such a trove?—I made haste for the door, only to run headlong into a bewildered youth wearing all red, approaching from the direction of the sewers.

We stared at one another for a few surprised seconds, then I kicked him hard in the knee and sprinted the other way. Behind me, his cries of alarm as he went down were answered by other voices, and the clank of weapons sounded from several directions.

A staircase loomed up suddenly in front of me, and without thinking, I took it, taking the steps two or three at a time. Ahead of me, sunlight slanted through a windowed landing, broken only by the brace of red-garbed guards who came charging down the stairs, swords drawn. I was out of options. Summoning up the last of my strength, I put my head down and charged, backpack held in front of me like a shield. The surprised guards' blades whistled over my head, and then I was crashing through the glass, pack protecting my newly healed skin from the jagged shards as I plunged in free-fall to the cobblestones that appeared below, tucking and rolling to spread the impact over my whole body. Above me, the guards looked on in astonishment as I tumbled to my feet, the broken glass raining down around me.

Seeing their expressions, I was unable to resist and swept my arm out in a low, mocking bow. Then I turned and raced laughing into the streets of Old Korvosa, the fresh breeze cool on my face and stones smooth beneath my bare feet.

BEASTS OF THE RUNELORDS

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SIZE COMPARISON

Few dare to gaze past the veil of the mundane, living in contented ignorance within the simple borders of their everyday concerns. Yet beyond such walls of obliviousness teem horrors undreamt of by closed-minded philosophies—creatures from beyond the fringes of the explored world, remnants of ages long dead, or things born of anathema realities. While so-called civilized Man performs feats of delusion to expel thoughts of such beings from his fragile mind, those from beyond are all too aware and watch the simple works of Man with malevolent, ravenous interest.

This bestiary reveals seven such beasts from beyond: invaders from alien dimensions, inscrutable fey, horrors from the other side of death, and the remnants of ancient civilizations. Each cataloged and documented by scholar of the unknown Wolfgang Baur—some say at the cost of his very sanity—all seven terrors feature in this volume’s adventure, “Fortress of the Stone Giants.” Beyond those encounters, however, any of these beasts might give rise to their own subplots and side treks.

Outsiders: The hounds of Tindalos, shining children, and forgefiends all originate in realities completely inhospitable to

mortals. Attracting the attention of any such creature can only lead to suffering, either at the flesh-ripping gaze of the Lovecraftian hounds, within the blazing maw of the fiendish scanderig, or through the fatal manipulations of the extradimensional shining children.

Twisted Nature: The natural world is rarely the Elysian paradise bards laud in poetry and song. Even the most placid woodland has its dark side. In the depths below, monstrosities of black chitin and poison fangs hunt to appease hungers so insatiable that—in the case of the deathweb—even death cannot quell them. The fey too, so-called embodiments of nature, manifest more than the serenity of the natural world, with brutes like the redcap embracing its unfeeling cruelty and endless bloodshed.

The Ageless: The echoes of the past can be heard, even millennia later. In the case of the taiga giants, the supposed progenitors of dozens of giant races, ways long lost and forgotten still hold sway in corners of the world untouched by civilization, while the magic that created the giant monument builders of ancient Thassilon—the living tools known as runeslaves—still lingers in forgotten vaults, waiting to be used again.

BESTIARY



DEATHWEB

Whatever terror of gigantic legs and venom-dripping fangs this arachnid horror once was could have been no more appalling than the undead remnant it has become. The house-sized creature's wasted exoskeleton cracks and splits as it skitters forward with unnatural speed, and from the web of rotted gashes crisscrossing its bulbous body pour swarms of fat, poison-bloated spiders.

DEATHWEB

Always N Gargantuan undead

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +16, Spot +1

Aura poison swarm 10 ft.

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 18
(+2 Dex, +12 natural, -4 size)

hp 78 (12d12)

Fort +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +11 (2d8+9) and
2 claws +8 (1d8+4)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks web

CR 6

TACTICS

During Combat A deathweb uses its web ability and Awesome Blow feat to scatter its victims, then attacks the largest foe with its powerful mandibles.

Morale A deathweb fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +27

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack

Skills Climb +17, Listen +16, Move Silently +17

SQ undead traits

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison Swarm (Ex) The area around a deathweb is filled with swarms of living spiders that nest in the undead thing's exoskeleton. Any creature that comes within 10 feet of a deathweb takes 1d4 points of damage per round and must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or be poisoned (initial and secondary damage 1d3 Con). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Any attack that deals more than 10 points of damage and has an area of effect large enough to affect every square a deathweb occupies destroys its poison swarm for 3 rounds. After this time, new spiders well up from inside the beast and recreate the swarm.

Web (Ex) The deathweb can create sticky webs to ensnare enemies. A deathweb can throw a web at will, but no more than once every 5 rounds. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against Colossal or smaller targets. As a standard action, an entangled creature can escape with a successful DC 16 Escape Artist check or burst it with a DC 24 Strength check. The check DCs are Constitution-based, and the Strength check DC includes a +8 racial bonus.

The slimy webbing created by a deathweb has 10 hit points. It is difficult to burn and has an effective DR of 10 against fire. Fires that do more than 10 points of damage in a round burn away the web; these fires also deal the same damage on creatures entangled in the web.

Skills Deathwebs have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks. A deathweb can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or swarm (2–8)

Treasure none

Advancement 21–30 HD (Gargantuan), 31–40 HD (Colossal)

Level Adjustment —

Deathwebs are the exoskeletons of truly massive monstrous arachnids animated by magic and masses of smaller, symbiotic spiders. Although their bodies resemble the powerful predators they once were, they are now broken, hollow things, teeming with swarms of their lesser kin. Potent necromantic energies might create a deathweb, but these horrors have also been known to animate spontaneously in areas teeming with insectile vermin or tainted by the worship of perverse spider cults. They are most commonly found in areas where strong magics were once worked, especially deep underground, in mountain caves, and sometimes in old-growth forests with dense undergrowth or a thick canopy.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



REDCAP

Snarling and spitting, this tiny figure looks like a hateful old man, his face wrinkled like month-old fruit. The bent, three-foot-tall cretin wields a rusted scythe nearly double his size in his gnarled hands, and wears a pair of overly large spiked iron boots. Upon his grizzled head sits a bent hat, gruesomely stained bright crimson.

REDCAP

Always NE Small fey

Init +9; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +12, Spot +12

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 16

(+2 armor, +5 Dex, +3 natural, +1 size)

hp 64 (8d6+32); fast healing 3

CR 6

Fort +6, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

DR 10/cold iron

OFFENSE

Spd 60 ft.

Melee Medium scythe +11 (2d4+8) and
kick +4 (1d6+6)

Special Attacks boot stomp

TACTICS

During Combat Lone redcaps try to wear down their opponents by using their boot stomp ability to make a series of hit-and-run attacks. Groups, however, are much more bold, swarming larger foes and slicing them to shreds with their terrible scythes.

Morale Bloodthirsty creatures, redcaps fight until they are barely able, fleeing only if reduced below 5 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 20, **Con** 18, **Int** 16, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

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

Feats Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scythe)

Skills Bluff +13, Hide +20, Intimidate +15, Jump +29, Knowledge (nature) +14, Listen +12, Move Silently +16, Spot +12, Tumble +18

Languages: Common, Giant, Sylvan

SQ heavy weapons, irreligious, red cap

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Boot Stomp (Ex): A redcap wears heavy iron boots with spiked soles that it uses to deadly effect in combat. It can use its boots to make a secondary attack as part of a full attack action or can use them to make an attack as part of its movement just as if it had the Spring Attack feat. A redcap is only treated as having Spring Attack when attacking with its boots and no other weapon.

Heavy Weapons (Ex) A redcap's powerful hands and arms allow it to wield Medium weapons without penalty.

Irreligious (Ex): Bitter and blasphemous, a redcap cannot stand the symbols of good-aligned religions. If a foe spends a standard action presenting such a holy symbol, any redcap that can see the character becomes frightened for 1 minute and attempts to flee.

Red Cap (Su) A redcap wears a tiny, shapeless woolen hat, dyed over and over with the blood of its victims. While wearing its cap, a redcap gains a +4 bonus on damage rolls and fast healing 3 (reflected above). These benefits are lost if the cap is removed or destroyed, and caps are not transferable, even between redcaps.

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or gang (3–12)

Treasure standard

Advancement by character class; **Favored Class** barbarian

Level Adjustment +6

Redcaps are misshapen, humanoid fey with sharp teeth, bat-like ears, enormous feet, and filthy white beards. Their large hands can wield a full-size scythe, and they often wear spiked and bladed boots. Their nut-brown skin and dark eyes are always topped by a reddish cap, which they wash in the blood of their defeated enemies.

BESTIARY

Redcaps stand about three feet tall in their bare feet, or three-and-a-half in their spiked boots. They always wear their bloody caps, and sometimes gore trickles down onto their eyebrows or nose. Their hands and feet are quite large for their body size, and their torso is small but very flexible. Redcaps occasionally sport elaborate scars, the results of desperate attempts to keep their caps moistened.

Redcaps are impulsive in combat, quick to charge opponents several times their size, and are always yelling for blood. In close combat, they fight in groups against a single foe whenever they can, using teamwork to overcome “big ’uns.” They are always happy to use their speed and boots to trample a prone or fallen foe into reddish paste. Masters of the ambush, few things make a redcap happier than leaping out of the brush to hamstring a victim before he even knows he’s under attack.

ECOLOGY

Redcaps are fey that embody the merciless savagery of nature. The cat playing with a mouse before killing it, the venus flytrap that lies in wait for the unsuspecting insect—these are the aspects of the natural world that give rise to redcaps, and to which the tiny sadists look for cues on how to live. They kill something every day, just to keep their caps charged with life-giving blood. They have little taste for meat, oddly enough, preferring to drink leftover blood or to suck marrow from bones. Any warm-blooded prey will do, though they prefer sentient victims; redcaps are ruthless hunters.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Redcaps are possessed of a sick and twisted sense of humor, heavy on punch lines that involve physical torment steeped in irony. They are tough, violent, and largely uncaring about anyone but themselves, and while they treat other redcaps with respect, and offer all fey a minimum of courtesy, everyone else is a dupe, a threat, or a victim in their eyes. Even in their bloodthirsty bands, redcaps fight constantly, both to establish dominance and just for enjoyment. They heal quickly and have a high tolerance for pain, and sometimes forget that other fey do not. They consider those who do not fight somehow “too delicate” or “flowery.”

These malicious fey live in hilly terrain by preference, but can also be found underground and in forests and mountains. They often serve as mercenaries for dryads, sprites, and other more refined fey (despite their frailties), and frequently appear wherever large concentrations of fey gather. More commonly, they’re encountered in abandoned keeps and other dwellings, particularly those left vacant by some terrible tragedy. Redcaps seem to be attracted by the air of doom surrounding such places, and dwelling in such environs proves useful for luring passersby into traps.

Redcaps place immense value in their caps, and believe that if they don’t keep them constantly moistened with the blood of their prey they will sicken and die. While evidence for this theory is sparse, the paranoid creatures go to great pains to honor

REDCAPS IN FOLKLORE

In British folklore, redcaps (also called “powries” or “dunters”) are malicious pike-wielding goblins, elves, or fairies. According to legend, a redcap must kill regularly and dye its hat in the blood of its victims, for if its hat dries out, it dies. As redcaps are far too quick for humans to outrun and too strong for most to overpower, the only way to escape one of them is to quote a passage from the Bible. Upon doing so the redcap disappears, leaving behind only a single tooth.

The most infamous powrie of all was Robin Redcap, supposed familiar of Scottish Lord William de Soulis, whose murders and tortures during the lord’s reign were said to be so extensive that his castle sank into the ground under the sheer weight of the sins committed within.

GMs who wish to extrapolate upon legends of redcaps in their games might want to make the teeth of red caps simple magic items—perhaps granting +1 bonuses on saving throws or similar minor benefits—or directly tie the fey creatures’ caps to their physiology, causing them to weaken if it’s lost.

their superstition. They often hire or force other creatures into placing beneficial enchantments on their caps, making their skin tougher, their weapons more effective, or, most commonly, their hats easy to locate if stolen. Some even go to such extremes as stitching their caps to their scalps with spider silk thread.

TREASURE

Redcaps carry their treasure either in their boots or hidden in their caps, and prefer gems for their easy portability. While redcaps have little regard for material wealth themselves, they understand the allure that such things hold for their victims, and they frequently use treasure to goad the greedy into traps.

REDCAP TRAPS

Redcaps are fond of traps, particularly those that render a victim helpless or bring him down to the redcaps’ level while still leaving him alive and fresh for the fey to do as they will. Most redcap traps are straightforward but contain a particularly malicious twist: razorlines hung at knee height or bladed snares designed to take the leg off of running quarry, or a shallow pit trap filled with biting insects that places the prey’s face at ground level, ripe for disfigurement. The exception to the fey’s “take them alive so it lasts longer” rule are the bloodletting traps. While redcaps relish the chance to get their hands dirty and commit their atrocities in a personal, face-to-face setting, in particularly target-rich environments such methods are no longer efficient enough. In these cases, redcaps design special traps aimed specifically at exsanguination, using crude but effective methods such as pits with hollow stakes or immense deadfalls that press the victim between two smooth, flat rocks. In both cases, the blood that wells out flows through crude channels to vessels or basins where one or more redcaps can wash their hats, wallowing in a pint-sized orgy of blood.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



HOUND OF TINDALOS

All the evil in the universe is seemingly concentrated into this creature's lean and hungry body. Many-jointed limbs extend from its gaunt, quadrupedal form, each ending in numerous twitching, clawed digits. From between the pallid flesh of its grasping forelimbs protrudes an alien face warped in a perpetual scream, a starved-looking visage where wide, depthless black eyes yawn above a fleshless, shuddering maw. A sharply pointed tongue projects from between its shattered teeth, quivering perversely.

HOUND OF TINDALOS

Always NE Medium outsider

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +18, Spot +18

Aura ripping gaze (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 17, flat-footed 15

(+7 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 85 (10d8)

Fort +11, **Ref** +14, **Will** +12

Immune poison, mind-affecting effects

DR 10/magic

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee bite +17 (2d6+2) and

2 claws +12 (1d6+1)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)

CR 7

At Will—*air walk, fog cloud, invisibility, locate creature*

3/day—*dimensional anchor, greater scrying* (DC 21), *haste, slow* (DC 17)

TACTICS

During Combat What beings it can't overwhelm with its slashing claws and ripping gaze, a hound of Tindalos wears down with hit-and-run teleporting attacks.

Morale A hound of Tindalos reduced to fewer than half its hit points teleports away. The beast never forgets a victim, though, and will return to attack again and again until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 25, **Con** 18, **Int** 20, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +12

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +22, Concentration +17, Hide +20, Jump +21, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (geography) +18, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Listen +18, Move Silently +20, Search +18, Spot +18, Survival +18, Tumble +22

SQ angled entry, otherworldly mind

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Angled Entry (Su) A hound of Tindalos has mastered all dimensions and moves through space in a way that other creatures cannot understand. A hound can *greater teleport* once per round as a free action and *plane shift* itself three times per day as a standard action. These abilities function as a 10th-level caster. In both cases, the square a hound of Tindalos appears in must be adjacent to an angle in the physical environment, such as a corner in a wall. (Where a hound can teleport to is determined by the GM.) It can teleport from any location. Indoors, the angle created by a wall and either the floor or ceiling is the most common point of reappearance of a teleporting hound of Tindalos. Angles circumstantially or momentarily created by folds of clothing, flesh, or items are not significant enough to allow a hound to teleport through. A hound could not, for example, teleport into a spherical room. Complex architectures and open outdoor environments can make it difficult for a hound of Tindalos to appear.

Otherworldly Mind (Ex) Any non-outsider who uses a divination spell or similar ability that allows him to read or communicate with a hound of Tindalos's thoughts must make a DC 20 Will save. Those who succeed take 5d6 points of damage and their spell immediately ends (providing no information). Those who fail suffer the same fate and are affected by the spell *insanity*.

Ripping Gaze (Su) The gaze of the hound tears the fabric of matter, destroying flesh at a distance and leaving deep, bloodless rents (5d6 damage, 30 feet, Fortitude DC 17 negates). The DC is Charisma-based. The number of dice rolled to determine the damage of this attack is always half a hound's total Hit Dice.

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or pack (2–13)

Treasure none

Advancement 11–22 HD (Medium), 23–34 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment —

BESTIARY

Horrors from beyond the boundaries of known reality, the hounds of Tindalos stalk the timeless netherways of existence, intruding upon the mortal world only when summoned by reckless spellcasters or in pursuit of fools who tread upon their immaterial domain. Akin in shape to some tortured combination of humanoid and lithe jungle predator, hounds of Tindalos are not actually related to canines of any kind—nor any creature from the known world. Little is recorded about the hounds themselves, with what knowledge exists being gleaned from the occasional bloodstained notes and manic observations that survive the beasts' victims. If the writings of the near-insane are to be trusted, the creatures possess a strange relationship to time and physical space, their gazes ripping through layers of soft physicality while their steps allow them passage through the angles of reality. Although possessed of great cunning and cruel intelligence, these otherworldly horrors are anathema to the beings of the mortal world and have never shown any evidence of understanding or attempting to communicate with mortals.

ECOLOGY

Outside the mysterious netherrealm that crazed students of the arcane and howling madmen ascribe as their home, hounds of Tindalos have no place in any sane environment. They seem disinterested in the lands of forests, water, and rock that comprise Golarion, suffering these too-real places only when stalking a particular quarry. If encountered when not hunting, it's likely the beast has been bound to the world by some powerful magic. Such captivity greatly pains a hound of Tindalos, which leads the already ravenous, destructive creature to new heights of savagery.

For all their strange abilities and dreadful disposition, hounds of Tindalos are thankfully quite rare. Aside from those summoned by powerful magic, a hound will only enter the physical world in pursuit of one who has trod the mysterious paths beyond time and reality. Once such a beast "has the scent" of an intruder, it tirelessly stalks its prey, hunting it from beyond the boundaries of its world, through the ethers of the adjacent Ethereal Plane or to any other plane to which its quarry might flee. The hunt only ends when the hound has savaged and feasted upon the remains of its victim. Fear of hounds of Tindalos and similar horrors might explain why the fledging magical art of chronomancy remains the purview of short-lived madmen and the naive.

SOCIETY

Hounds of Tindalos have no apparent society, though little is known of how the creatures behave amid the eternal ethers they naturally inhabit. Some savants believe they have no feelings or thoughts beyond the guardianship of the places between time and reality, being set to guard such hypothetical reaches by some ancient force or malign alien god.

TREASURE

Hounds of Tindalos carry nothing with them and seem wholly disinterested in all physical objects besides their prey. Yet, the

HOUNDS OF THE MYTHOS

"God, they are breaking through! They are breaking through! Smoke is pouring from the corners of the wall. Their tongues—ahhhh—"

—Frank Belknap Long, "The Hounds of Tindalos"

The hounds of Tindalos first appeared in Frank Belknap Long's short story of the same name, which appeared in the March 1929 issue of the fantasy and horror fiction pulp *Weird Tales*. Although the titular beasts make no direct appearance in the story, the vague menace of their "lean and athirst" forms and their odd ability to travel through the angles of time so inspired future contributors to H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos that the beasts have ever since been a part of that body of works. Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game has long featured these timeless hunters, and readers are encouraged to investigate chaosium.com for more details on these horrors in both gaming and literature.

remnants of attacks by such creatures tend to be frighteningly uniform. Aside from shocking scenes of gore and furious feeding, the victims of hounds of Tindalos tend to be aware of the stalking and often try to document what arcane dabbling led to their miserable fates. Any character who discovers such notes may spend one week deciphering and studying the victim's ravings. After that time, the character may reference the writings to gain a +1 circumstance bonus on any Knowledge (arcana) check that relates to arcane time travel, magical teleportation, or unknown planes of existence.

VICTIMS OF THE HOUNDS

None know how many enthusiastic students of reality's mysteries have met bloody ends at the claws and rending gazes of the hounds of Tindalos. While these three incidents are well-documented, countless more have doubtlessly met pitiable ends at the hounds' claws.

Dr. Jibyri Kamendori: A researcher of heightened awareness and monastic traditions in his home country of Vudra, Kamendori's body was found by his students in the Black and Gray lecture hall at the University of Castigali, ripped to shreds seemingly as he reproduced a number of ancient diagrams he'd discovered upon the Plateau of Leng.

Lord Halafax Chalmers II: When his wife was lost at sea, Lord Chalmers was taken in by the theories of the experimental magician Vartashad the Displacer and came to believe he and the mage could travel back in time to save his wife. Although the attempt led to Lord Chalmer's grisly end, he took copious notes on the wizard's strange preparations. Vartashad the Displacer's whereabouts are still unknown.

Sevina Eldridge: Citing some tragic indiscretion during her days as an adventurer in the River Kingdoms, the sorceress Sevina lived for 40 years in an estate of round rooms. Sevina's rent body was found in her home after a devastating explosion tore several jagged cracks in her laboratory. Strangely, though, the remains of her corpse were discovered on the opposite side of her manor.

RISE OF RUNELORDS



TAIGA GIANT

Stark white scars and tribal patterns tattoo the dusky skin of this towering brute. Skulls, stone fetishes, and crude but deadly wooden weapons mark the nearly twenty-foot-tall savage as a deadly warrior.

TAIGA GIANT

CR 10

Usually CN Huge giant

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +12

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 24

(+3 armor, +2 deflection, +2 Dex, +11 natural, -2 size)

hp 133 (14d8)**Immune** enchantment and illusion spells**Fort** +14, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft. (30 ft. in hide armor)**Melee** greatclub +19 (3d8+16)**Ranged** rock +14 (3d8) or
javelin +10 (2d6)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Special Attacks** rock throwing, run and throw

TACTICS

Before Combat If hunting or otherwise expecting danger, a taiga giant always summons ancestral spirits to aid it, typically those that bring with them the benefits of the *bless* spell.

During Combat Taiga giants usually pelt their opponents with spears and rocks, in the latter case throwing great boulders while they race closer to engage their foes in melee.

Morale Proud but not stupid, a lone taiga giant flees if reduced to less than a quarter of its hit points. Groups of taiga giant hunters, though, might fight to the death in an attempt to appear brave among their peers.

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 14, **Con** 21, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 15**Base Atk** +10; **Grp** +29**Feats** Cleave, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Track**Skills** Climb +21, Knowledge (religion) +8, Move Silently +9, Spot +12, Survival +19**SQ** spirit summoning, rock catching

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Spirit Summoning (Su) Once per day, a taiga giant can perform a 10-minute ritual to summon ancestral spirits to aid it in battle. These invisible spirits grant the giant a +2 deflection bonus to Armor Class, immunity to enchantment and illusion spells, and one of the following spell effects: *bless*, *endure elements*, *protection from evil*, *protection from good*, or *see invisibility*. These spell effects last for an entire day (regardless of their normal duration). A taiga giant's ancestral spirits can be detected by *detect undead* or any spell that reveals invisible creatures. These beings occupy the same space as the taiga giant and can be turned or rebuked as a single creature with as many HD as the taiga giant. Turning or rebuking these spirits banishes them for the remainder of the day, though the giant may resummon them the following day. These spirits cannot be attacked or interacted with in any other way.

Run and Throw (Ex) A taiga giant can throw a boulder in the same round he takes a full move action. This ability functions exactly as the Spring Attack feat, but only applies to a ranged attack with a rock.

Rock Catching (Ex) A taiga giant of at least Large size can catch Small, Medium, or Large rocks (or projectiles of similar shape). See page 119 of the MM for details.

Rock Throwing (Ex) The range increment is 140 feet for a taiga giant's thrown rocks.

Skills When hunting, taiga giants often wear lichen-crusting hunting cloaks and camouflage that help hide even their great size. This and their natural stealth grant them a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks in grasslands or forested terrain.

ECOLOGY

Environment sub-arctic plains and forests**Organization** solitary, warband (2-7), or tribe (22-48)**Treasure** standard**Advancement** by character class; **Favored Class** druid**Level Adjustment** +7

On the wide hills and in the deep boreal forests, taiga giants are masters of the hunt and the kill. They command not just vast reserves of physical strength and speed, but great faith, allowing them to tap into personal stores of spiritual power.

Ranging in height from 17 to 20 feet tall—with women generally being a foot shorter than men—taiga giants have

BESTIARY

light brown skin, often crisscrossed with extensive tribal tattoos or covered in hardened mud and foliage to camouflage them during the hunt. Although obviously of a more primitive disposition, they are most likely to be mistaken for strangely colored cloud or storm giants than any other giant race.

While non-giants know them as taiga giants, among their own tribes they call themselves “Urganta,” the word in the Giant language for “People.” This name stems from their ancient stories—largely reinforced by the studies of modern scholars—that suggest taiga giants were among the first giants to inhabit Golarion and that many, if not all, of the giants of the continent of Avistan are descended from this race. Whatever the truth of their history, the ages have not been kind to these giants, and now taiga giants are only found in some of the harshest, most remote environments in the world, their ancient holdings largely taken over by better-adapted or stronger giant races.

ECOLOGY

Taiga giants are nomadic hunters, always seeking large prey and avoiding the civilized settlements of other races. They often raid small villages for livestock and other goods, caring no more for the morality of such acts than does a man gathering honey from a beehive. Taiga giants thrive in hilly, mountainous, and forested terrain, though they tend to stay in the northern climes. Their nomadic wanderings, however, take them to many places, and taiga giants are sometimes found in unexpected corners of the world, often in pursuit of herds of great beasts.

Despite the typical scantness of their garb, taiga giants are well-insulated against the alpine cold and tundra conditions. Their hair changes seasonally: dark brown or black in summer, then fading to red and brown in fall, and finally becoming white or blond in the winter. The pale hair falls out in spring, when new black hair grows in very quickly.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Taiga giants follow mammoth, aurochs, and elk herds as part of their nomadic way of life. They hunt in the winter, net salmon in the spring and autumn, and gather what they can from the taiga in the summer.

A tribe of taiga giants typically consists of approximately 30 to 40 related members, with nearly half being hearty, battle-ready hunters and warriors. The other members tend to be children and the elderly, though the tribe’s most skilled shamans are commonly among this latter number. Nomads since a time beyond reckoning, taiga giants survive off the strength of the herds they follow, crafting many of their goods and simple shelters from bone and fur.

Taiga giants are patient hunters, work well in warbands or hunting groups, and often keep deadly animals as hunting companions—typically dire wolves, dire bears, and smilodons. They fight in cooperation with their animals, often using thrown rocks to wear down foes, then sending in their savage allies to

flank or trip a foe while the giants use their reach weapons to strike from a distance.

Taiga giants feel contempt for most humanoids significantly smaller than themselves, fearing and distrusting them. Tribal legends say that the progenitors of many of the smaller races were once giants, cast down from their original statures and malformed for crimes against their race and for a variety of vices. They are friendly toward hill giants and stone giants, and they tolerate ogres.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Taiga giants carry their treasure in bags or rucksacks when they are travelling, though this treasure might be split between their persons and their homes when settled for a season. In either case, any of the treasure from the Giant’s Bag sidebar on page 120 of the MM would be appropriate for a taiga giant to possess, with primitive goods being of their own make and worked equipment stolen from smaller races.

TRIBAL ANCESTORS

More so than any other giant race, taiga giants live in fear and respect of their people’s ancestral spirits. Largely forgotten by many of the other giant races, the ghosts of this ancient people hold great wisdom and the power to bestow their blessings upon those who do them honor. As such, taiga giants do much to please the souls of their ancestors.

Jewelry: Many taiga giants—especially hunters and those who expect to face battle—wear jewelry made of mammoth ivory, elk horn, amber, or beaten copper. These fetishes are crafted either to embody the power of a particular animal totem or depict a specific ancestor spirit. In either case, the taiga giant wears the jewelry in the hopes that the spirit it represents will give him its blessing. Taiga giants are not exclusive in whom or what they seek blessings from and do not see it as a slight against any one spirit to seek the protection and power of dozens, even hundreds, of spirits through necklaces or cords strung with numerous uniquely carved bits of jewelry.

Song: From an early age, taiga giants are taught how to meditate on the will of their ancestors and spend at least an hour in silence every day. At night, however, the plains and forests near their camps are filled with timeless songs and throaty chants that the spirits supposedly find pleasing. These songs tell a tale of a single tribe or individual ancestor’s greatness, or serve as a meditation aid for the chanters to focus on.

Tattoos: Taiga giants often cover their tanned skin in white scars and tribal tattoos. These tattoos relate lengthy tribal epics to those versed in the particulars of taiga giant history, and serve as much as a name for the tattooed individual as any single word. The process of receiving one’s scar tattoos is a lengthy and painful one held as a coming-of-age rite for both males and females, with the deep cuts being meted out by the tribe’s eldest shaman or storyteller.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

**SCANDERIG (FORGEFIEND)**

More than ten feet tall, this lumbering humanoid fiend looks to have been born of living ore and sculpted pig iron. A massive maw splits its prodigious belly and through the sockets of its eyes, flared nostrils, and both mouths flickers an angry glow, as if a furnace raged within the brute's bowels. The impression is cemented as its jagged belly maw belches forth a blast of cinders and sparks.

SCANDERIG**CR 10**

Always LE Large outsider (earth)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., see in darkness; Listen +13, Spot +13**DEFENSE****AC** 25, touch 11, flat-footed 23

(+2 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size)

hp 126 (11d8+77)**Fort** +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8**Immune** fire, poison**Resist** acid 10, cold 10**OFFENSE****Spd** 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.**Melee** bite +19 (3d6+9) and

2 claws +14 (1d8+4) and

bite +14 (1d6+4)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** rend equipment, searing spew**Spell-like Abilities** (CL 11th)At will—*major image* (DC 13), *passwall*, *pass without trace*, *shatter* (DC 12), *stone shape*3/day—*deeper darkness*, *dimensional anchor*, *flesh to stone* (DC 16), *quicken produce flame*, *wall of stone*, *wall of fire***TACTICS****During Combat** Once it closes to melee, a scanderig gnaws the armor from its foe using its rend equipment ability, then burns foes using its searing spew and spell-like abilities. It traps any foes who try to escape by using *stone shape*, *wall of stone*, or *wall of fire*.**Morale** A scanderig flees if reduced to fewer than 25 hit points.**STATISTICS****Str** 28, **Dex** 14, **Con** 24, **Int** 15, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +11; **Grp** +24**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*produce flame*)**Skills** Concentration +21, Disable Device +16, Escape Artist +16, Hide +12, Jump +17, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +16, Listen +13, Move Silently +16, Sense Motive +13, Spot +13**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Infernal, Terran**SQ** adamantine bite, earth glide**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Adamantine Bite (Ex)** A scanderig's primary bite attack is considered to be adamantine for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction and penetrating hardness.**Earth Glide (Ex)** A forgefiend can glide through stone, dirt, or almost any other sort of earth except metal. Its burrowing leaves behind no tunnel or other signs of its presence. A *move earth* spell cast on an area containing a burrowing forgefiend flings the outsider back 30 feet, stunning the creature for 1 round unless it succeeds on a DC 15 Fortitude save.**Rend Equipment (Ex)** If a scanderig hits with its primary bite attack, it chews any armor worn by its foe if the victim fails a DC 24 Reflex save. This attack deals 3d6+18 points of damage to the opponent's armor. Creatures not wearing armor are unaffected by this special attack. Armor reduced to 0 hit points is destroyed. The save DC is Strength-based. As a standard action, a scanderig can attempt to bite a foe's weapon or shield. For the purposes of this attack the scanderig is treated as though it had the Improved Sunder feat and deals 2d6+18 points of damage.**Searing Spew (Su)** A scanderig can belch forth a searing pile of slag from its gigantic body maw, burning foes and filling an area with molten iron. This slag can affect any 10-by-10-foot area adjacent to the scanderig. Any creature in the area takes 14d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 22 save for half). This slag quickly cools, forming a rugged pile of misshapen metal, which is treated as difficult terrain. A scanderig can use this ability once every 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based.**See in Darkness (Su)** Scanderigs can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, even that created by a *deeper darkness* spell.**ECOLOGY****Environment** any underground**Organization** solitary or team (2–6)**Treasure** standard**Advancement** 12–22 HD (Large), 23–33 HD (Huge)**Level Adjustment** —

BESTIARY

“Miners speak of the scanderig as death in armor plate. But death is kinder than those things.”

—Hedrig Bluefoot, dwarven mithral miner (ret.)

Scanderigs, more commonly known as “forgefiends,” look like large, heavily armored, barrel-shaped creatures, with enormous mouths in their bellies in addition to the normal-sized ones in their heads. Their powerfully clawed hands are capable of digging through stone and ore, allowing the brutes to reach the raw metals for which they endlessly hunger. Their heads are slightly conical, and their skin is thick and segmented, as if they were wearing numerous fused plates of armor. This steely appearance causes many who encounter these ravaging outsiders to mistake them for some manner of rampaging golem or other diabolical construct.

ECOLOGY

Scanderigs are native to the Elemental Plane of Earth, where they fight constantly with one another in their efforts to consume vast quantities of ore, which they then regurgitate as slag, somehow taking nourishment from the transformation of the metal’s state. Occasionally, forgefiends make their way through subterranean portals onto the Material Plane, where they gorge themselves on rich and relatively uncontested mineral veins. A forgefiend might live quite happily inside a mountain’s heart for centuries, only causing trouble when the ore runs out or interlopers attempt to mine its territory.

Unlike many elemental creatures born from the hostile forces that comprise their primeval realms, forgefiends reproduce asexually—when one individual manages to locate a large enough supply of metal, it regurgitates a puddle of molten ore, sculpting it into its own image and breathing life into it via an unknown process. From that point, the new scanderig has only hours to escape its parent’s territory before it is attacked and consumed for its own metals.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

While most scanderigs dwelling on the Elemental Plane of Earth face constant competition from others of their race for mineral food sources, on other planes they often become lords of the areas they inhabit. Menacing underground-dwelling races, these brutes are quite capable of destroying small communities or, at least, disrupting mining operations. Some particularly dim-witted subterranean creatures even pay homage to scanderigs out of fear, bringing these gluttonous warlords great meals of unworked metal ore.

Covetous of the lands they inhabit—or, more aptly, the delicious minerals in those lands—scanderigs often create simple earthen traps in their territories, such as deep pits, deadfalls, and the like. Collapsing tunnels and stony barriers are a forgefiend’s most common ways of deterring trespassers, as it can pass or burrow through the earth with relative ease.

Scanderigs care only for themselves and have a vague contempt for non-outsiders. Willing to perform menial tasks for the ore they endlessly hunger for, scanderigs sometimes come to serve

creatures more powerful than themselves or who frequently pay them in mined minerals, such as derro, genies, or elemental lords. Even beyond such arrangements, forgefiends are by their nature greedy, and are always willing to be bribed, provided their victims or patrons can supply them with significantly more ore than they would get by simply attacking outright. They might also temporarily work with other scanderigs, digging through stone or iron to reach the best ore, but generally view other forgefiends as competition and are quick to attack their fellows if challenged.

SCANDERIGS IN DWARVEN FOLKLORE

While the depths of Golarion are home to an untold number of horrors, the forgefiend holds a special place in dwarven myth. Naturally attracted to the high concentrations of ore found in dwarven mines and forges, the scanderig is a rare but very real threat to dwarves everywhere, and it is capable of wreaking terrible devastation. While most dwarves are prudently compelled to destroy forgefiends whenever possible, there are stories of the occasional corrupt dwarven wizard or priest summoning such creatures to make war on another dwarven clan or in an attempt to guard a particularly rich vein of ore.

In addition to the creature’s fearsome reputation, the legend of marauding scanderigs has become such a pervasive part of dwarven culture that it’s often used as an all-purpose bogeyman for frightening dwarven children and instilling good smithing habits, as seen in this popular dwarven nursery rhyme:

*“For every scrap of slag you waste,
a scanderig is making haste.
Those who use excessive ore,
find scanderigs at their door.”*

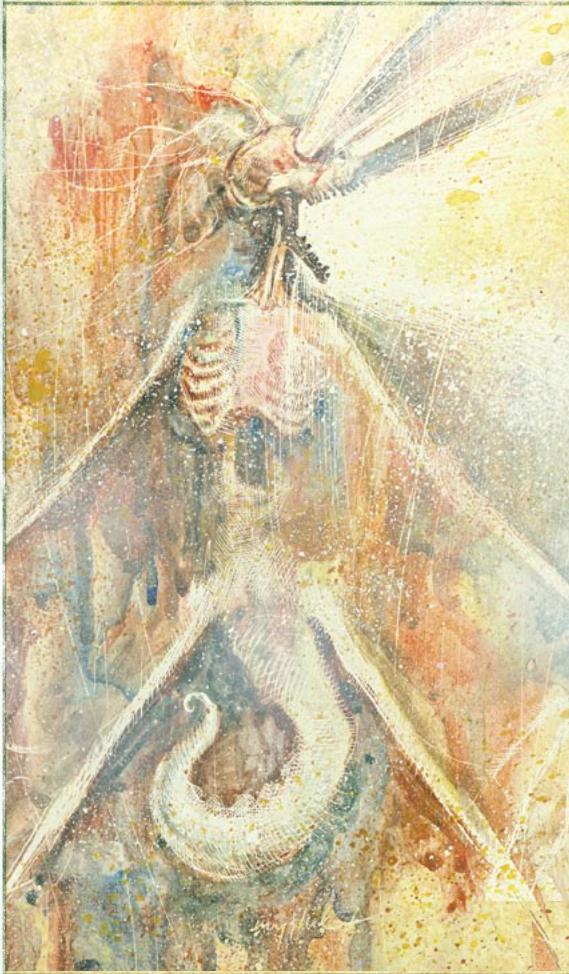
EXAMPLE SCANDERIGS

Found in the depths throughout Golarion, the depredations of forgefiends are vast and varied, and might lead to all manner of underground adventures.

Anvilbitter: According to local stories, the deepest tunnels below the dwarven community of Ramstaltown are haunted by the forgefiend known as Anvilbitter. Dwarven mothers frequently tell tales of the famous scanderig to keep their children from wandering off alone, and nearly every problem or mishap the town faces is blamed on ol’ Anvilbitter. The scanderig pays little attention to the town, though, having found the forgotten vaults of the dwarves’ forefathers, which it has gradually been eating through for years.

Father Fire: The tribes living upon the long-dormant volcano, Mount Hakamachti, were terrified and amazed when an angry voice sounded from within, demanding that the earth at the mountain’s base be mined and that all shines be dropped into the volcano’s mouth. Although the natives say the voice is the god of the volcano, it is in fact a scanderig that has come to live in the fiery depths.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



SHINING CHILD OF THASSILON

This creature is almost too bright to gaze upon, its emaciated body sheathed in writhing flames of pure light and supporting a prehensile tail, clawed hands, and a twisted skull projecting beams of fire from its eyes and mouth.

SHINING CHILD OF THASSILON

CR 12

Always CE Medium outsider (evil)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +21, Spot +21

Aura aura of blinding light

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 20, flat-footed 27

(+7 deflection, +3 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 153 (18d8+72)

Fort +15, **Ref** +14, **Will** +11

Immune fire, poison; **SR** 26

Resist cold 10, sonic 10

OFFENSE

Spd fly 50 ft. (perfect)

Melee burning touch +21 (2d12 fire)

Ranged searing ray +21 (5d6 fire)

Spell-like Abilities (CL 12)

At will—quicken *greater teleport*, *light*, *major image* (DC 20)
3/day—*mirage arcana* (DC 22), *greater dispel magic* (DC 23),
rainbow pattern (DC 21), *sunbeam*, *spell turning*, *wall of force*
1/day—*scintillating pattern* (DC 25), *screen* (DC 25), *symbol of insanity* (DC 25)

TACTICS

During Combat Shining children prefer to maintain ranged superiority via flight, attacking with rays of searing light from a distance. If pressed in melee, they rely on their aura, burning touch, and *symbol of insanity* to thin out the ranks of their foes.

Morale Shining children generally fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 17, **Con** 18, **Int** 15, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +18; **Grp** +18

Feats Ability Focus (aura of blinding light), Dodge, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*greater teleport*), Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +28, Concentration +25, Diplomacy +30, Intimidate +30, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (the planes) +23, Listen +21, Search +23, Spot +21, Use Magic Device +28

Languages telepathy 120 ft.

SQ outsider traits, radiant armor

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Blinding Light (Ex) A shining child can radiate a 50-foot-radius aura of blinding light as a free action. This creates a condition of illumination equal to daylight and imposes a –4 circumstance penalty on Hide checks within the aura. Creatures within the affected area must succeed on a DC 25 Fortitude save or be blinded. A creature who successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same shining child's aura for 24 hours. Other shining children are immune to the aura. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Burning Touch (Su) A shining child corrupts the positive energy within a living creature into an unnatural, disintegrating, burning light. By making a successful touch attack, it can cause a living foe to burst into this searing radiance. The light of a shining child deals 2d12 points of fire damage when it first hits and 2d6 points of fire damage for the next 5 rounds. The burning light can be “extinguished” by immersing it in darkness, such as that created by *darkness* or similar spell or simply by entering an area devoid of any other source of light. This attack does not affect constructs, undead, or similar non-living creatures.

Radiant Armor (Su) The light that surrounds a shining child grants a deflection bonus to its AC equal to its Charisma bonus. The bonus can be reduced to +2 for 1 round by casting *deeper darkness* on the shining child (ordinary darkness has no effect).

Searing Ray (Su) A shining child's primary attack is a ray of searing positive energy. This attack has a range of 120 feet (no range increment). This ray deals double damage to undead.

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, visitation (2–9), or incursion (10–30)

Treasure none

Advancement 19–32 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment —

BESTIARY

“The shining child is the herald of evil, dressed in beauty and light but promising destruction.”

—The Record of Lost Scandye

Always obscured by harsh rays of blinding light, the true appearance of the shining children is difficult to discern—and this is just as well, as many creatures find their warped geometry, weirdly glowing eyes and mouth, and pulsating, many-hued skin painful to behold. Those who risk blindness and gaze into the luminous figure describe the general form of the shining child as humanoid, though it seems to have a prehensile tail, and its hands resemble a horrible mixture of fingers and claws, with five pairs of claws and double thumbs on each hand. Its face is difficult to see, as its eyes and mouth constantly exude beams of light in whatever direction the child is looking. These strange beings warp positive energy into powerful searing flames. Everything they touch catches fire and burns into dust, forever lifeless.

Shining children can communicate via telepathy with any creature that has a language. This generally manifests as a constant psychic roar like that of metal tearing or a raging fire, but when they seek to make their thoughts known their voices are strained and raspy.

ECOLOGY

Shining children are not of Golarion and defy classification even by scholars of the infinite planes. Destructive by their very nature, these radiant horrors have no place in any known environment and defy many of the fundamental laws of nature—being unbound by the need to eat, requirements of sleep, and even gravity.

Adding to the enigma of these beings, it is unknown whether a shining child can truly be killed. When destroyed, a shining child’s body disappears completely in a flash of light, leaving only a burned afterimage on the nearest surface—a silhouette that looks like a shadow but is somehow brighter than everything around it, even in full daylight. Not even magic seems able to hold their form in place after “death,” leading many to believe that a dying shining child simply disperses its energy into the surrounding ether.

Descriptions of the skin and head shapes of shining children vary considerably. It might be that male and female shining children are sexually dimorphic, or there might be other poorly understood differences, perhaps between juvenile and adult forms, molting forms, or larval and pupated forms. The answers to such questions are unlikely to ever be discovered, as shining children are notoriously unwilling—sometimes murderously so—to discuss themselves.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

According to the sparse records available, the first contact with these beings was made by a cabal of Thassilonian wizards attempting to research new means of teleportation. The strange creatures don’t appear to have individual names and refer to themselves as

“the shining one” or “the shining child,” as if they were a singular entity, leaving sages somewhat puzzled on the question of their species or uniqueness. Due to the temperamental nature of the creatures, few have dared to pry too deeply.

Shining children are not native to the Material Plane. They might be native to realms of madness, the heart of a black star, or some even stranger place. While many theorize what their origins might be, the creatures themselves refuse to offer any concrete answers.

When summoned, shining children appear to have little concern for their fellows or those who called upon them. They do seem to enjoy burning sentient beings, though, and are willing enough to obey their summoners if they’re provided with adequate opportunities to burn and torture mortal victims.

CHILDREN OF THASSILON

Shining children are primarily known today through their association with the Thassilonian wizards who first discovered them. Though any alliance appears to have been tenuous and volatile at best, ancient writings describe beings of pure light who guarded the most important artifacts of the ancient empire or walked before their armies, consuming vast swaths of humanity in a blaze of killing light. There are also whispers that the scholars managed to learn great arcane secrets from the creatures, knowledge alien to man and god alike, but if this is true, the secrets continue to be guarded well or are simply lost.

THEORIES OF ORIGIN

As little concrete fact can be determined regarding shining children—due as much to their violent natures as their extreme rarity—it seems that any scholar who learns of these beings has a theory regarding their strange nature. Presented here are four of the best known theories regarding their origins.

Dimensional Intruders: These ancient horrors come from beyond any known dimension, called forth by intangible sacrifices and long-forgotten magic. Now they wait for the planes to align properly again so that they might use the power of the conjunction to return home.

Faces of the Future: The shining children come from a world of the future, where a race of beings outgrew their physical forms and became creatures of pure energy and unknowable pursuits. A variant of this theory holds that the shining children are the celestials of a future age wherein all behavior has been regimented and purified to such a degree that residents of the past, no matter how good by the standards of the time, are hideously warped and in need of the children’s cleansing fire.

Reality’s Vanguard: Shining children come from the bleeding edge of reality, an immaterial place where light and dark have grown sentient and engage in continual war, both made thoroughly evil by their endless conflict.

Star Children: All shining children are actually reflections of a single creature, a vast and dying star grown sentient and projecting its mad will at random through time and space, refracting through the lenses and angles of planes and dimensions.

RISE OF THE RUNELORDS



THE RUNESLAVE

Numerous severe-looking runes spark and flicker upon the body of this towering giant, seemingly seared into the creature's skin. Although its eyes look dull, its muscles bulge grotesquely, as if barely contained by a thin layer of flesh, and it moves unnaturally fast for a creature of such ponderous size. A horrid expression—either rage or pain—contorts the giant's features as it speeds forward.

The ageless monuments and awesome cities of Thassilon rose upon the backs of countless slaves, but none bore the sin-poisoned civilization's burden more than the giants. Able to perform the work of dozens of human slaves, Thassilon's titanic servants—hill giants, stone giants, taiga giants, and others—crafted marvels nigh unparalleled in any era before or since and shaped the face of what is now modern Varisia. Yet, as viciously as the runelords worked their slaves and for all they demanded, the giant-crafted marvels were not enough. And so, working the corrupt rune magic that was theirs alone, the runelords manufactured a damning curse and laid it over their most tireless and effective workers, and in so doing created a new breed of servant: the runeslave.

Creating a Runeslave

"Runeslave" is an acquired template that can be added to any giant (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A runeslave uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Speed: A runeslave's base land speed is 20 feet faster than the base creature. Other forms of movement, such as flying or swim speeds, are unaffected.

Special Qualities: Runeslave creatures have all the base creature's special qualities as well as those described below.

Arcane Decay (Su): The symbols etched upon a runeslave's body put great stress on its physical form, choking its mind and ultimately killing the giant. This slow decay of a runeslave's mental faculties manifests as a disease with the following traits.

Arcane Decay—non-contagious, Fortitude DC 30, incubation period instant, damage 1 Int, 1 Wis, 1 Cha.

All runeslaves are "infected" by this disease. Only *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* can prevent or cure arcane decay, but in so doing removes the entire template, reverting the runeslave back to the base creature. Multiple successful Fortitude saves only delay the decay and do not cure the creature of the disease.

Arcane Surge (Su): Three times per day, as a free action, a runeslave can gain the benefits of the spell *haste* for 6 rounds. Using this ability forces the giant to make an additional Fortitude save against arcane decay, even if it has already made its daily save to resist the disease. If it fails, the runeslave takes damage from the disease as normal.

Vulnerable Mind (Ex): A runeslave takes a –8 penalty on any save made to resist a mind-affecting spell or ability.

Immune to Fear (Ex): Runeslaves are immune to all fear effects.

Immune to Pain (Ex): Runeslaves can continue to function even after taking great punishment. They continue to fight without penalty even when reduced to 0 or fewer hit points (as per the *Diehard* feat) and are immune to nonlethal damage and death from massive damage.

Abilities: Change from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Int –2, Wis –2, Cha –2.

CR: Same as base creature.

Sample Runeslave

Among the weakest of the true giant races, hill giants were most commonly the victims chosen for transformation into runeslaves, as their efforts left the most to be desired and their numbers were most expendable.

HILL GIANT SLAVE

CR 7

Male runeslave hill giant (MM 123)

CE Large giant

Init –1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20

(–1 Dex, +9 natural, +3 armor, –1 size)

BESTIARY

hp 102 (12d8+48)

Fort +12, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2 (–6 versus mind-affecting effects)

Immune fear

Weakness vulnerable mind

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft. in hide armor (base speed 60 ft.)

Melee greatclub +18 melee (2d8+13)

Ranged rock +8 (2d6+9)

Special Attacks rock throwing

TACTICS

During Combat As soon as it is provoked, the runeslave uses its arcane surge ability and charges into combat, fighting with whatever it has on hand.

Morale The runeslave has lost nearly all sense of self-preservation and fights until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 29, **Dex** 8, **Con** 19, **Int** 2, **Wis** 6, **Cha** 3

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +20

Feats Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Improved Sunder, Weapon Focus (greatclub)

Skills Climb +9, Jump +9, Listen +1, Spot +4

Languages Giant

SQ arcane decay, arcane surge, immune to pain

Other Gear hide armor, greatclub

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Arcane Decay This giant has taken an additional 2 points of Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma damage from arcane decay.

Rock Throwing (Ex) The range increment is 120 feet for a hill giant's thrown rocks.

The Curse of the Runeslave

As the benefits of turning their giant servants into runeslaves swept across Thassilon, each of the seven runelords came to employ the corruptive magic in varying ways. While in most of the runelords' holdings the giants merely continued to serve as expendable labor, in Bakrakan, the runelord of wrath, Alaznist, incorporated runeslaves into her vast armies, using them as living siege engines. In Cyrusian, the domain of Pride, Runelord Xanderghul used the magic as a punishment upon any slave who garnered his fickle ire.

While the magic used to create runeslaves resided almost exclusively in the hands of the runelords, the number of giant slaves that would benefit from this ultimately fatal "improvement" far exceeded Thassilon's rulers' ability and interest to transform. As such, a number of different methods of creating runeslaves were created, each originating in a separate domain but eventually spreading throughout the empire.

Runeslave Cauldron: Brought forth from Gastash, the domain of gluttony, these massive cauldrons were crafted to be large enough to fit an adult stone giant and infused with necromantic energies. If the body of any dead giant were placed within the profane cauldron, it was immediately resurrected, but now affected with arcane decay (see sidebar).

Poisoning: In Edasseril, the domain of envy, the alchemists of the poison laboratories of Runelord Belmarius discovered a way to turn arcane decay into a toxin, allowing the contagion to be delivered via a deadly poison.

Arcane Decay Poison: Injury, Fortitude DC 22, initial 1d6 Con, secondary results in contracting arcane decay. This poison only affects creatures of the giant type.

Mass Rite: In the Grand Sybaritum of Xin-Haruka, Runelord Krune grew weary of cursing filthy giant after filthy giant, and so devised a method to transform hundreds of his slaves at a time. Summoning whole legions of his giants before him, Krune called down the might of the rune goddess Lissala and cursed his slaves en masse, sending countless faithful slaves to their doom.

RUNESLAVE CAULDRON

Aura strong necromancy (minor artifact); **CL** 20th

Slot —; **Weight** 900 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This 12-foot-high, 10-foot-diameter cauldron is made of solid iron, cast in one piece and thick enough to withstand great heat. Its side is marked with the Sihedron Rune, while many other Thassilonian runes grace its rim. Normally empty, the cauldron must be activated by filling it with a specially prepared broth of rare necromantic ingredients and rainwater that has filled several open graves. The cost of the special ingredients is 10,000 gp, but once the cauldron is filled, a fire lights under it automatically and keeps the broth bubbling and functional for one year.

A *runeslave cauldron* has the ability to infuse the body of a freshly slain giant, reviving it and transforming it into an even more brutish creature well-suited for magical control. A giant corpse placed inside the cauldron's bubbling broth rises from the cauldron one hour later as if *true resurrection* had been cast on it. In addition, the newly revived giant gains the runeslave template. The cauldron can revive up to five giants a day in this manner. Non-giant corpses placed in the broth are unaffected by the cauldron's magic.

Any living creature (save for a runeslave) completely immersed in the boiling broth inside a functional *runeslave cauldron* immediately takes 6d6 points of fire damage per round. In addition, it must make a DC 20 Fortitude save each round—failure indicates that the cauldron's necromantic energy snuffs out the victim's life, killing him instantly.

The smoke produced by the cauldron as it boils is particularly noxious to good-aligned beings. It spreads to a radius of 30 feet around the cauldron, and while the smoke isn't thick enough to obscure vision, its foul-smelling vapors sting and burn those of good alignment. Each round such a creature remains in the smoke, he must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or be blinded and nauseated for as long as he remains in the area plus an additional 1d6 rounds after leaving it.



RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

VALEROS

MALE HUMAN FIGHTER 10

ALIGN NG INIT +8 SPEED 30 ft.

DEITY Cayden Cailean HOMELAND Andoran

ABILITIES

18	STR
19	DEX
12	CON
13	INT
8	WIS
10	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 69
AC 24
touch 15, flat-footed 20
Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +3

OFFENSE

Melee +1 frost longsword +17/+12 (1d8+7/17–20 plus 1d6 cold) or +1 frost longsword +15/+10 (1d8+7/17–20 plus 1d6 cold) and +1 short sword +14/+9 (1d6+3/19–20)
Ranged +1 comp longbow +15/+10 (1d8+5/×3)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +14

SKILLS

Climb	+14
Intimidate	+13
Ride	+17
Swim	+11

FEATS

Big Game Hunter⁸, Combat Expertise, Greater Weapon Focus (longsword), Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)



Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds (3); **Other Gear** +2 mithral breastplate, +1 frost longsword, +1 short sword, +1 composite longbow (+4 Str) with 20 arrows, silver dagger, amulet of natural armor +1, belt of giant strength +4, gloves of Dexterity +2, ring of protection +1, cloak of resistance +1, backpack, lucky tankard, rations (6), 50 ft. silk rope, 30 pp, 17 gp

Born a farmer's son in the quiet Andorian countryside, Valeros spent his youth dreaming of adventure and exploring the world. For the past several years, he's done exactly that, having been a mercenary with the Band of the Mauler, a guard for the Aspis Consortium, a freelance bounty hunter, and hired muscle for a dozen different employers in as many lands. Gone is his youthful naivete, replaced by scars and the resolve of a veteran warrior. Although he possesses a keen wit, he finds the simplest, most direct approach is often the best, and has little patience for convoluted schemes or magical chicanery. While noble at heart, Valeros hides this beneath a jaded, sometimes crass demeanor, often claiming that there's no better way to end a day's adventuring than with "an evening of hard drinking and a night of soft company."

SEONI

FEMALE HUMAN SORCERER 10

ALIGN LN INIT +2 SPEED 30 ft.

DEITY Pharasma HOMELAND Varisia

ABILITIES

8	STR
14	DEX
12	CON
10	INT
13	WIS
21	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 36
AC 15
touch 14, flat-footed 13
Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +8

OFFENSE

Melee staff of fire +4 (1d6–1)
Ranged mwk dagger +8 (1d4–1/19–20)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4

Spells Known (CL 10th, 11th evocation)
 5th (4/day)—cone of cold (DC 22)
 4th (6/day)—dimension door, wall of fire
 3rd (7/day)—fly, haste, lightning bolt (DC 20)
 2nd (7/day)—invisibility, resist energy, scorching ray, web
 1st (8/day)—burning hands (DC 18), enlarge person, mage armor, magic missile, shield
 0 (6/day)—acid splash, arcane mark, daze (DC 15), detect magic, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)
 1/day—dancing lights

SKILLS

Bluff	+18
Climb	+2
Concentration	+14
Listen	+3
Spellcraft	+13
Spot	+3

FEATS

Alertness (when Dragon is in reach), Dodge, Extend Spell, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Penetration, Varisian Tattoo (evocation)⁸

FAMILIAR

Dragon (blue-tailed skink: as lizard, MM 275)



Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds, rod of lesser empower metamagic, staff of fire (25 charges), scroll of fireball, wand of magic missile (CL 3rd, 50 charges); **Other Gear** mwk dagger, amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of Charisma +4, ring of protection +2, handy haversack, everburning torch, rations (4), 60 pp, 34 gp

Despite being a consummate adventurer, Seoni is something of an enigma to her compatriots. Quietly neutral on most matters, bound by codes and mandates that she rarely feels compelled to explain, the sorceress keeps her emotions tightly bottled. Extremely detail-oriented—a trait that has led Merisiel to often call her a "control freak"—Seoni is a careful and meticulous planner, a schemer who frequently finds herself frustrated by the improvised plans of her more impulsive companions. Despite all of this, Seoni has stuck by her comrades through numerous tight spots, a fact that continues to amaze and confuse Valeros, who often wonders loudly (although not altogether unappreciatively) about "the witch and her schemes."

CHARACTERS

MERISIEL



FEMALE ELF ROGUE 10

ALIGN CN **INIT** +5 **SPEED** 30 ft.

DEITY Calistria **HOMELAND** Varisia

ABILITIES

12	STR
21	DEX
12	CON
8	INT
13	WIS
10	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 47

AC 23

touch 16, flat-footed 18

Fort +4, **Ref** +14, **Will** +4
(+6 against enchantment)

Defense evasion, trap sense +3, improved uncanny dodge;
Immune sleep

OFFENSE

Melee +1 keen rapier +13/+8
(1d6+2/15–20)

Ranged dagger +12 (1d4+1/19–20)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +8

Special Attack crippling strike, sneak attack +5d6

SKILLS

Bluff	+12
Disable Device	+11
Hide	+17
Jump	+18
Listen	+9
Move Silently	+17
Open Lock	+14
Search	+11
Sleight of Hand	+14
Spot	+11
Tumble	+16

FEATS

City Born⁸, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse



Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of invisibility* (2); **Other Gear** +3 shadow silent moves studded leather armor, +1 keen rapier, daggers (12), amulet of natural armor +1, boots of speed, gloves of Dexterity +2, ring of jumping, ring of protection +1, rations (3), masterwork thieves' tools, polished jade worth 50 gp, 120 pp

Merisiel's life experiences have taught her to enjoy things to their fullest as they occur, since it's impossible to tell when the good times might end. Just over a century old—still an adolescent as her people count age—she's already grown used to watching her friends grow old. She's open and expressive with her thoughts and emotions, and never hesitates to make them known when things go wrong. Never the sharpest knife in the drawer, Merisiel makes up for this by carrying at least a dozen of them on her person. She hasn't met a problem yet that can't, in one way or another, be solved with things that slice. While she's always on the move and working on her latest batch of plots for easy money, in the end it comes down to being faster than everyone else—either on her feet, or with her beloved blades. She wouldn't have it any other way.

KYRA



FEMALE HUMAN CLERIC 10

ALIGN NG **INIT** -1 **SPEED** 20 ft.

DEITY Sarenrae **HOMELAND** Qadira

ABILITIES

13	STR
8	DEX
14	CON
10	INT
21	WIS
12	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 68

AC 20

touch 10, flat-footed 20

Fort +10, **Ref** +3, **Will** +16

OFFENSE

Melee +1 holy scimitar +10 (1d6+2/18–20)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +8

Special Attacks greater turning 1/day, turn undead 8/day (+3, 2d6+11)

Spells Prepared (CL 7th, +4 ranged touch)

5th—*flame strike*⁹ (DC 20), *righteous might*, *spell resistance*, *summon monster V*
4th—*air walk*, *divine power*, *fire shield*⁹, *freedom of movement*, *restoration*
3rd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 18), *dispel magic* (2), *remove disease*, *searing light*⁹
2nd—*aid*, *bull's strength*, *heat metal*⁹ (DC 17), *resist energy*, *spiritual weapon* (2)
1st—*bless*, *cure light wounds*⁹, *divine favor* (2), *sanctuary* (DC 16), *shield of faith* (2)
0—*detect magic* (2), *light*, *mending* (3)
D domain spell; **Domains** healing, sun

SKILLS

Concentration	+15
Heal	+18
Knowledge (religion)	+13

FEATS

Combat Casting, Country Born⁸, Extra Turning, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scimitar), Weapon Focus (scimitar)



Combat Gear *holy water* (3), *wand of cure moderate wounds* (40 charges), *wand of lesser restoration* (25 charges); **Other Gear** +2 chainmail, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 holy scimitar, cloak of resistance +1, periapt of Wisdom +4, ring of protection +1, backpack, gold holy symbol (with continual flame) worth 300 gp, rations (4), 30 pp

Kyra was one of the few survivors of a brutal raid on her hometown, and on the smoking ruins of her village she swore her life and sword arm to Sarenrae. Possessed of a fierce will, pride in her faith, and skill with the scimitar, Kyra has traveled far since her trial by fire. She lost her family and home that fateful day, yet where another might be consumed by anger and a thirst for revenge, Kyra has found peace in the Dawnflower, and in the belief that, if she can prevent even one death at evil hands, her own losses will not have been in vain. While her faith runs deep, she does not see herself as an evangelist and saves her sermonizing for those with ears to hear her enlightenment—a virtue largely learned after many frustrating philosophical arguments with Merisiel and Valeros.

PREVIEW

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by Stephen S. Greer

The plot of the resurrected Runelord of Greed has been revealed, but what weapon holds the power to combat his murderous return? Only by delving into the depths of a seven-dungeon labyrinth of sin can the PCs discover the ancient magic capable of defeating their deathless foe—though doing so might mean embracing the very vices they would fight to defeat.

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by Sean K Reynolds

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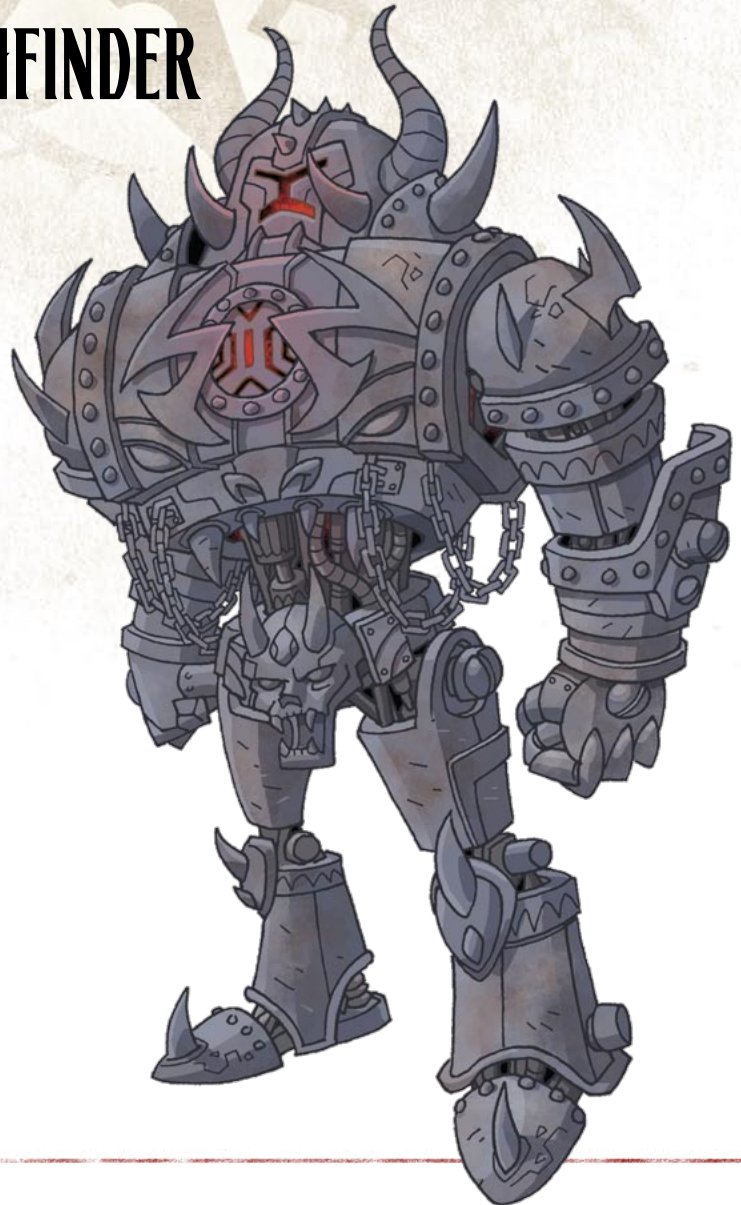
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