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DUNGEON

ISSUE 115 • OCTOBER 2004



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NEW COLUMNS BY WIL WHEATON AND MONTE COOK

DUNGEON

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Dungeon October 2004, Volume 18, Number 10 (ISSN# 0890-7102/USPS 0002-005) is published monthly by Paizo Publishing, LLC, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200, United States of America. Periodicals Postage Paid at Bellevue, WA 98009-9998 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Dungeon, Paizo Publishing LLC, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200.

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POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO
 Paizo Publishing, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201,
 Bellevue, WA 98005-4200.

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Printed in the U.S.A.

"Despite his minikin stature, his deformity and ugliness, he possessed a remarkable power, a mesmeric persuasion; and his pupils, whom he was said to have plunged into bottomless and ghoulish iniquities, were young men of the most brilliant promise. On the whole, his vanishment was regarded as a quite providential riddance."

— Clark Ashton Smith
"The Colossus of Ylourgne"



ADVENTURES

16 RAIDERS OF THE BLACK ICE

Wolfgang Baur

Bracing for a terrible winter, the adventurers find themselves snowlocked in the desolate Archbarony of Blackmoor. Will they venture into the treacherous Land of Black Ice to rescue an enslaved people? A D&D adventure for 3rd-level characters.



36 STEEL SHADOWS

Keith Baker

A killer stalks the warforged of Sharn. Some say the murderer is a vengeful spirit, while others blame human bigotry and fear. Can the adventurers expose the truth that lies hidden in the city's depths? A D&D EBERRON adventure for 7th-level characters, from EBERRON's creator.



56 STRIKE ON SHATTERHORN

Christopher Perkins

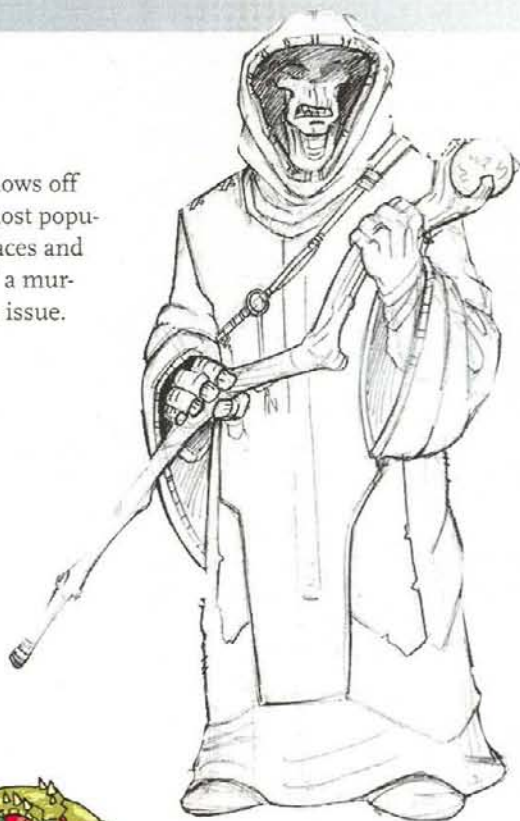
The pulse-pounding conclusion to the Shattered City Adventure Path was so awesomely huge that we had to split it into two parts. The eleven-adventure storyline enters its penultimate chapter as the heroes track the remaining Cagewrights to the ruined yuant-ti stronghold of Shatterhorn. A D&D Shattered City Adventure Path adventure for 18th-level characters.





ON THE COVER

Digital artist Jonathan Hill shows off the warforged, perhaps the most popular of EBERRON's many new races and the focus of "Steel Shadows," a murder mystery appearing in this issue.



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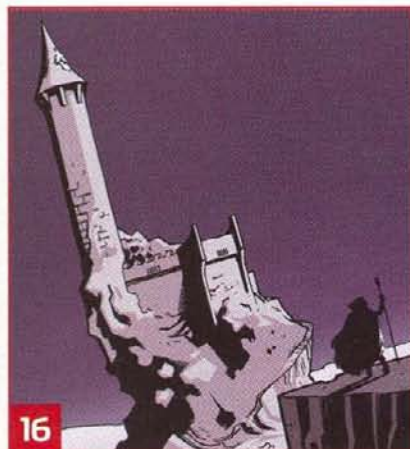
DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

Take advantage of the RPGA'S PLAYER REWARDS program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of *DUNGEON!* Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 11/30/04.



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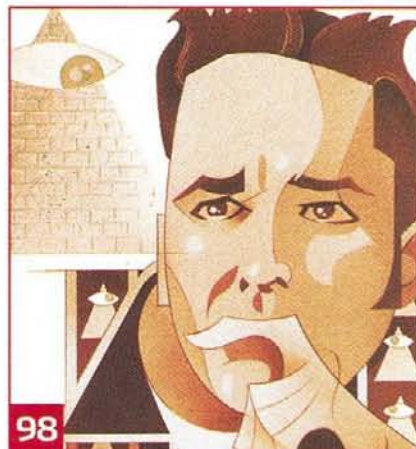
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- Steel Shadows (115SSDN)
- Strike on Shatterhorn (115SHDN)



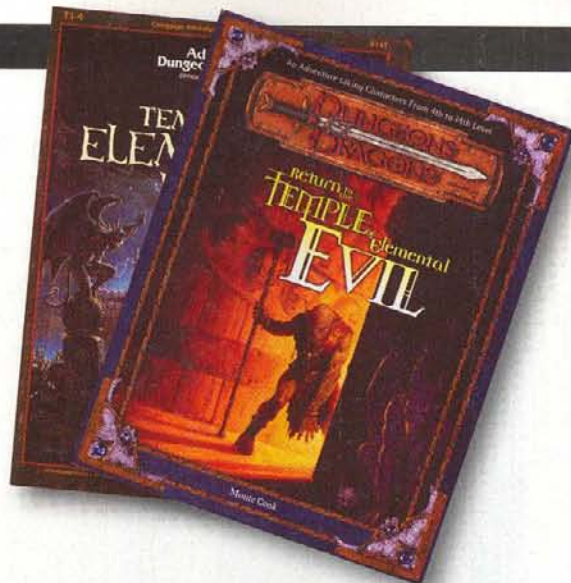
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WHAT DEFINES GREATNESS?

Four years ago, as a newly hired “fan-made-good” editor of *Polyhedron* *Newszine*, I somehow managed to worm my way into the official Wizards of the Coast playtest for Monte Cook’s *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil*. I’d long admired Monte for his design on adventures like *A Paladin in Hell* and *Dead Gods*, and for the enthusiasm and flat out skill at Dungeon Mastering that I’d enjoyed briefly at a Gen Con PLANESCAPE demo. But mostly, I was excited about playtesting *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil* because I’m a huge fan of the original adventure (published in 1985), which I consider one of the all-time greats. I knew Monte would design an interesting adventure, but I wanted to make sure that it would take a respectful approach to updating material beloved by thousands of D&D gamers, myself included.

As it turned out, I needn’t have worried. In addition to masterfully weaving new material with old, Monte also included elements inspired by another of Gary Gygax’s early masterpieces, the *Forgotten Temple of Tharizdun*. With my initial concerns immediately answered, I settled in to put the unfinished adventure to the test.

I loved the way that Monte put a new spin on familiar material. The Village of Hommlet had grown, but was still the same place I’d used to launch a half-dozen campaigns, Inn of the Welcome Wench and all. The “abandoned” moathouse, which for years had gnawed through characters like a rabbit eating a carrot, had sev-

eral new inhabitants, including a surprising blue dragon with (as we discovered in the playtest) a taste for NPCs.

But it wasn’t until we reached the moathouse’s lowest level that I began to suspect that *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil* was more than just a nostalgic rehash, albeit a very, very good one. It was one of the greats.

The bottom of a water-filled pool concealed a shaft leading to an immense subterranean chamber that hadn’t been in the original module. Sixty feet below was a strange black marble surface, veined in deep violet. The marble plane didn’t fill the entire shaft, leaving a wide gap that yawned into utter darkness. On the edge of the plane, actually the top of an immense inverted obelisk, we discovered a circular wooden platform suspended over the darkness with a simple rope and pulley.

As our nervous adventurers carefully lowered themselves into the unknown, a pair of grell (floating brains with a beak and 10 tentacles) descended out of nowhere to pick us off from above. Hennet the sorcerer rolled a really lousy grapple check, and with a whoosh he vanished into the darkness above, trapped in the squamous tentacles of a dangerous beast. Krusk wouldn’t have it. He abandoned our platform to climb the pulley rope, intent to rescue our sorcerer. He followed Hennet and the grell across the top of the obelisk and leapt off the opposite edge, bringing his mighty axe to bear on the slowly descending grell’s head.

The creature died instantly. No longer able to float, the grell corpse, Hennet, and Krusk plummeted 195 feet to their deaths. Despite the horrific circumstances, none of us could stop laughing. Before the grell attack, all of us were on edge, nervous about what might be lurking in the darkness. Once we found out, it was pure D&D excitement, a great session that’s stayed with me several years later.

Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil isn’t great because it was respectful to its source material, but because of scenes like the inverted obelisk and so many others that remain burned in my mind. Ever since that session, I’ve tried to design my own adventures around a few exciting central scenes. Many of the adventures in this issue of *DUNGEON* boast the same: *Strike on Shatterhorn’s Egg* of Merrshaulk comes to mind.

Next issue, a panel of expert game designers, editors, and fans (including Monte Cook, Ed Greenwood, and others) will list *DUNGEON*’S official list of the “30 Greatest D&D Adventures of All Time.” You’ll no doubt have a different list, filled with your own exciting memories. And we wouldn’t have it any other way.

ERIK

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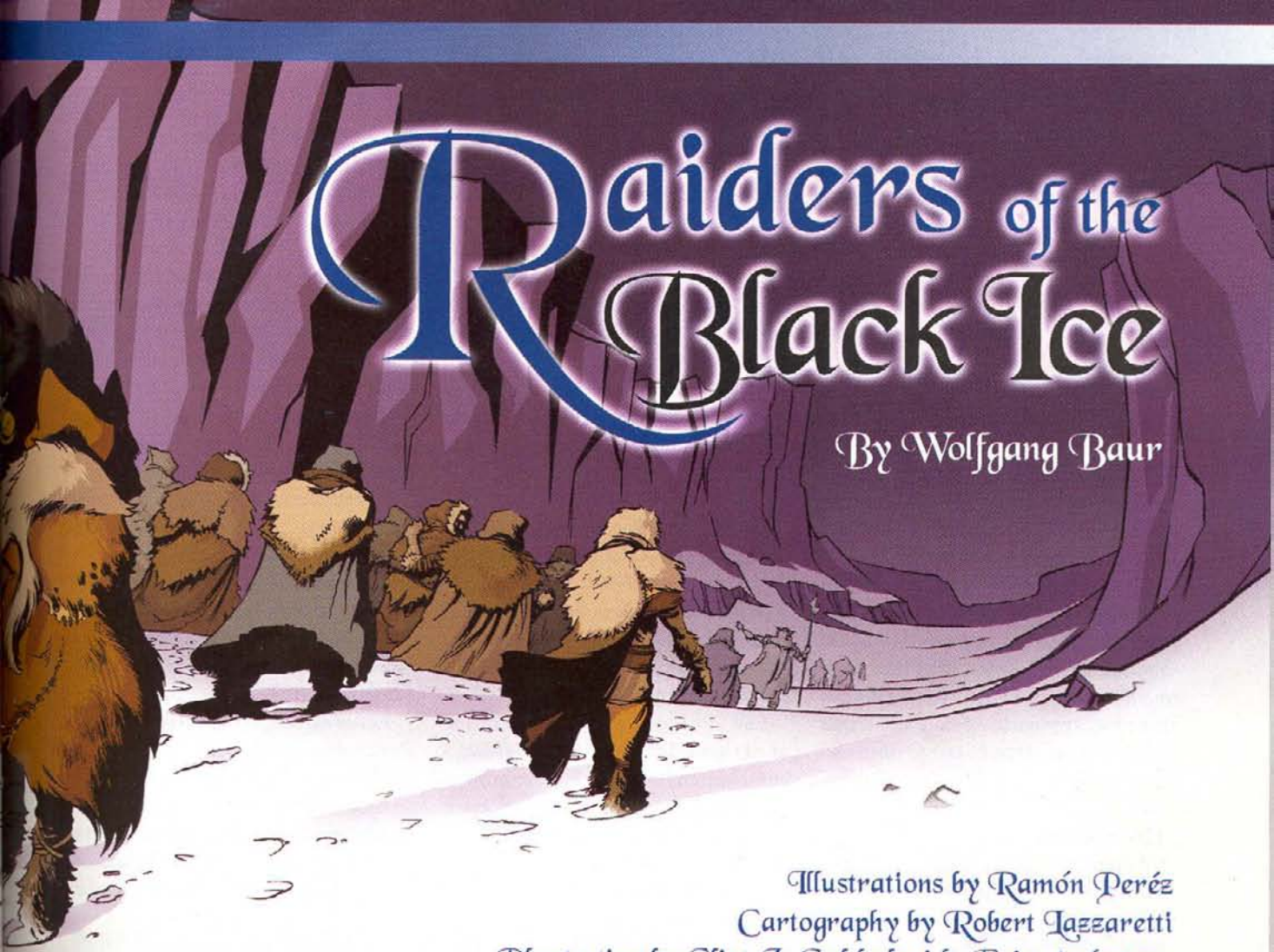
Any Setting

Low-Level (1-5)

Wilderness (cold desert) & Dungeon Crawl

The lands to the north of civilization are cold, inhospitable, and in the case of the Land of Black Ice, supernaturally dangerous. This massive ebon glacier looms at the crown of the world, shielding untold secrets from the light of the sun and serving as the home of countless unique and often terrifying creatures. Called frostfell by some and death by others, it is a land of cruelty and desolation incarnate.

"Raiders of the Black Ice" is designed for a party of four 3rd-level characters. Ideally, the group should include a character that has the Track feat. This adventure features many rules and creatures detailed in *Frostburn: Mastering the Perils of Ice and Snow*, published by Wizards of the Coast. A copy of *Frostburn* might be helpful to clear up situations that may arise during play with an inventive group of players, but all the rules to play this adventure as written are provided here.



Raiders of the Black Ice

By Wolfgang Baur

Illustrations by Ramón Pérez
Cartography by Robert Jazaretti
Playtesting by Clint J. Goldschmidt, Eric Anderson,
Brandon Haynes, Sean Payne, and Ted Albert (DM)

Adventure Background

Every year, villagers on the outskirts of Blackmoor turn their eyes to the north, fearing the arrival of the Black Ice raiders. Every year, the raiders come, plunder a few outlying settlements, and return to the Black Ice with their spoils.

This year, the raiders came and stayed. In early winter, they took the coastal village of Tonnsborg as their own, killing all who opposed them. Slowly, they sent small groups of captured villagers inland, onto the Black Ice, to a hidden stronghold. The number of villagers remaining is now a fraction of what it was, and those who remain are largely women, the elderly, and children. All are terrorized by the

raiders, their worgs, and their snow goblin lackeys.

Not everyone stayed and suffered. One villager escaped, taking skis for the long trip to seek help for his enslaved fellow villagers. But the winter is harsh, and the villager's body lies dead, frozen solid, less than a dozen feet from his destination. Only the written plea clutched in his hands explains his purpose. His Luminous Preponderancy, Archbaron Bestmo of Blackmoor, seems not to care, and has outright refused to send any of his small private army to help the village of Tonnsborg until spring.

True heroes have an opportunity to chase the raiders out of town—and then pursue them to their icy lair.

Adventure Synopsis

A desperate cry for help alerts the PCs to the fact that bands of raiders have overwhelmed the remote village of Tonnsborg. Upon traveling to the village, they find the place nearly depopulated, save for a few remaining villagers and a band of raiders led by a frost folk, one of a race of monstrous humanoids with the ability to fire blasts of icy mist from their eyes.

After rescuing the villagers and defeating these raiders, the PCs track the main bulk of the raider party across the infamous Land of Black Ice, encountering the perils of the frozen north in the form of deadly cold and dangerous creatures. The raiders' trail eventually leads the heroes to a citadel the raiders have built from the

black ice itself. The PCs must find a way into this citadel if they wish to rescue the surviving villagers, but in so doing they come up against a deadly frost folk mystic known as the Black Shaman.

Chapter One: Frozen Refugee

This adventure begins in the Archbarony of Blackmoor near the end of autumn, specifically, in the capital settlement of Dantredun. How the PCs came to be in Dantredun is up to you. They may have been following a treasure map revealed to be a fake upon their arrival in the village. Perhaps they've traveled to Dantredun at the behest of a powerful merchant or explorer from a southern nation in order to try to open up trade routes or simply map out and explore the remote region. The simplest approach, of course, is that the PCs are citizens of Dantredun, and grew up there.

Dantredun

Although it's the capitol of Blackmoor, Dantredun has relatively little to offer.

The archbaron's rule is harsh and arbitrary, and his court has little contact with other lands. The militias of the small underbaronies are typically leather-armored villagers, wielding shortspears, longbows, or slings. The archbaron's personal guard includes perhaps three score "knights" (heavy cavalry one step removed from bandits), and heavy and medium infantry made up of several hundred human and half-orc soldiers. Normally, so many troops would be impossible to support in such a small fiefdom, but the archbaron has funds for recruiting mercenaries to defend his people against raids from the southern hostile nation of Iuz and the barbaric Wolf Nomads. All the archbaron's troops are quartered in the town of Dantredun. Many more nonhuman soldiers can be called up from the surrounding area.

The archbarony once held ten underbaronies as feudal fiefdoms, but four of these are now ruined, including the former capitol town of Blackmoor itself. The archbarony has few resources, mainly walrus ivory, copper, gems, salt fish, and

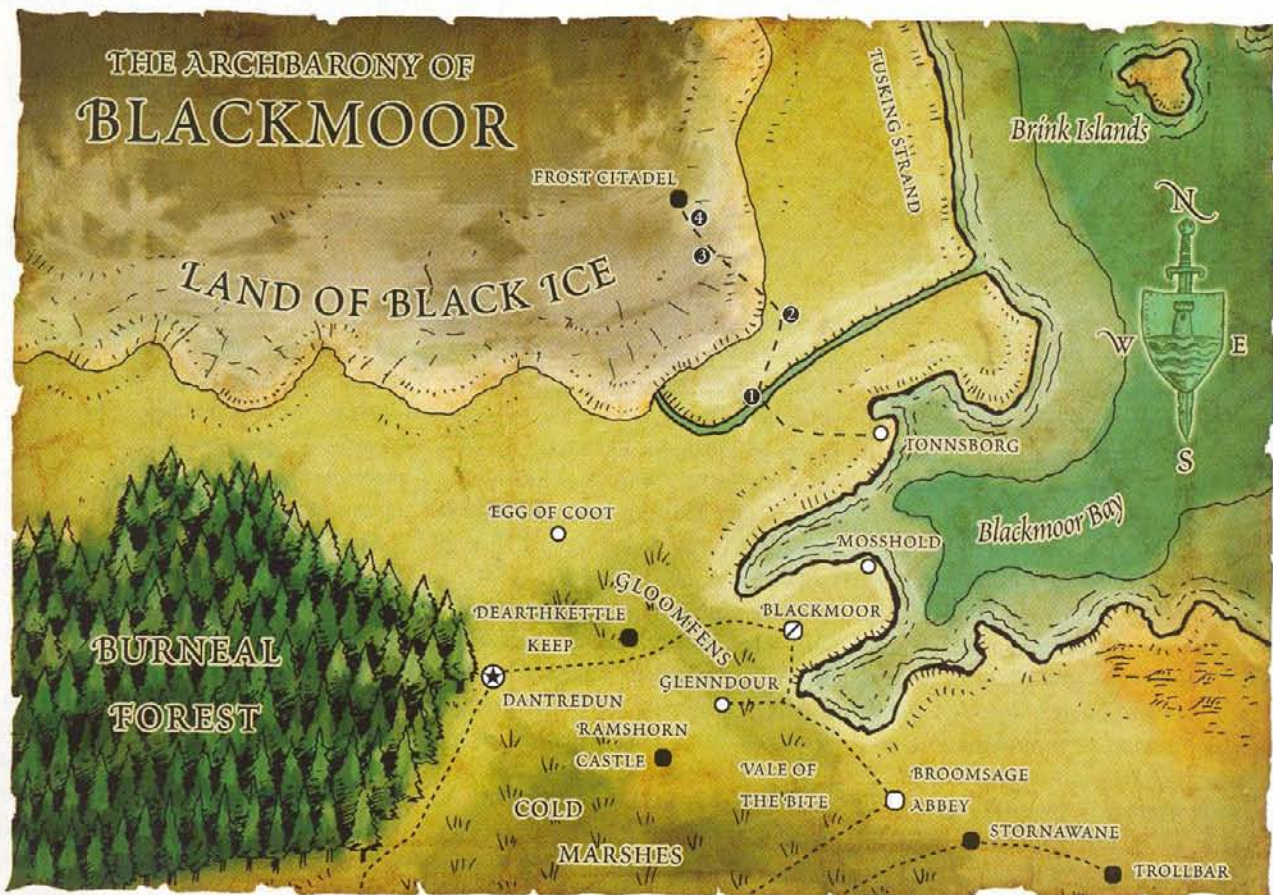
furs. The archbaron has no mint and strikes no coinage, and the realm is too marginal to do more than recirculate coins found in its ruins.

Dantredun is a walled village with rotting wooden gates that stand open day and night. Few invaders have ever bothered to threaten the settlement, though kobolds from the Burneal Forest are a constant nuisance, and raiders from Iuz and the Wolf Nomads frequently harass outlying farms. Many small villages and forts dot Blackmoor's lands, often built near stable lava pools or hot springs. The occasional sharp tremor or emission of poison vapors is an everyday hazard.

👑 Dantredun (village): Conventional; AL NE; 250 gp limit; Assets (10,878 gp); Population 709; Mixed (human 48%, orc 22%, halfling 14%, elven 9%, gnome 7%).

Authority Figures: His Luminous Preponderancy, Archbaron Bestmo of Blackmoor (NE male human Ftr11/Wiz4).

Important Characters: Angstet Nordqvist, male half-orc Ftr5 (Captain of the Guard), Martesh of the Stoneclaws, male human Bbn2 (tracker and hunter),



Ergovoi, male orc Clr3 (priest of Gruumsh), and Black Soot Hilda, female gnome Exp4 (armorer and weaponsmith).

A Desperate Plea

However the PCs reach Dantredun, the first snowstorm of the season arrives early, forcing them and the rest of the town to seek shelter. When the snow finally relents three days later, a man's body is found frozen solid, just outside the village gates. The corpse is huddled against the wall, knees drawn up to his chin. His skis are worn and ragged, and his body emaciated. He clutches a note to his chest, written on sealskin parchment and sealed with a large, ornate glob of red wax. The PCs should be the ones to discover the body, or at least should be allowed to read the message it grips. This corpse was once a trader named Hegobard from the distant northern village of Tonnsborg.

The wax seal bears a walrus icon—the heraldic symbol of the village of Tonnsborg, as a successful Knowledge (nobility and royalty) or bardic knowledge check (DC 15) reveals. If none of the PCs can determine this information, one of the locals makes the connection sooner or later.

Tonnsborg is a small village on Blackmoor Bay. Any knight or captain in the archbaron's watch recognizes the name and knows the town's location, 300 miles northeast along the Old Blackmoor Road. A successful bardic knowledge, Knowledge (nobility and royalty), or Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) allows a character to recognize the names Haarold Ventas (headman of Tonnsborg) and Nixa Foxtail (wise-woman of Tonnsborg and cleric of St. Cuthbert).

The archbaron's interest in sending aid to Tonnsborg is tempered by his own paranoia about letting any of his soldiers leave Dantredun. Likewise, none of the mercenaries or adventurers in town want to risk the perils of travel now that winter has come. If anyone is to come to Tonnsborg's aid, it must be the PCs.

The journey to Tonnsborg should be uneventful, since the archbaron's men patrol the road, even in winter. Overland movement rates across the landscape are slowed by the snow on the ground; consult the Appendix for details. The adventure begins with 4 inches of snow on the ground; until

the PCs reach Tonnsborg, no more snow falls. Skis and snowshoes are available in town (both cost 15 gp per person), as are sleds, dogs, and hearty arctic horses and ponies.

Skis and snowshoes allow full movement across icy or snowy surfaces. Although skis cannot be used at all on other terrain, downhill speed with skis can be as a run (x4) on slight grades or as a run (x5) on steep grades.

A dogsled costs 20 gp, but must be

pulled by eight riding dogs (for a total cost of 1,220 gp, likely beyond the means of a 2nd-level party) and requires the Handle Animal skill to pilot, but is perhaps the fastest method of travel over ice and snow. One dogsled can pull a single Medium creature or two Small creatures.

The PCs may stop at Dearthkettle Keep (where they will be treated well and warmly), where they can learn additional information about the troubles in Tonnsborg. With a successful Gather Information check (DC 15), they learn that several hunters have come south recently, claiming that the village has been captured by "raiders."

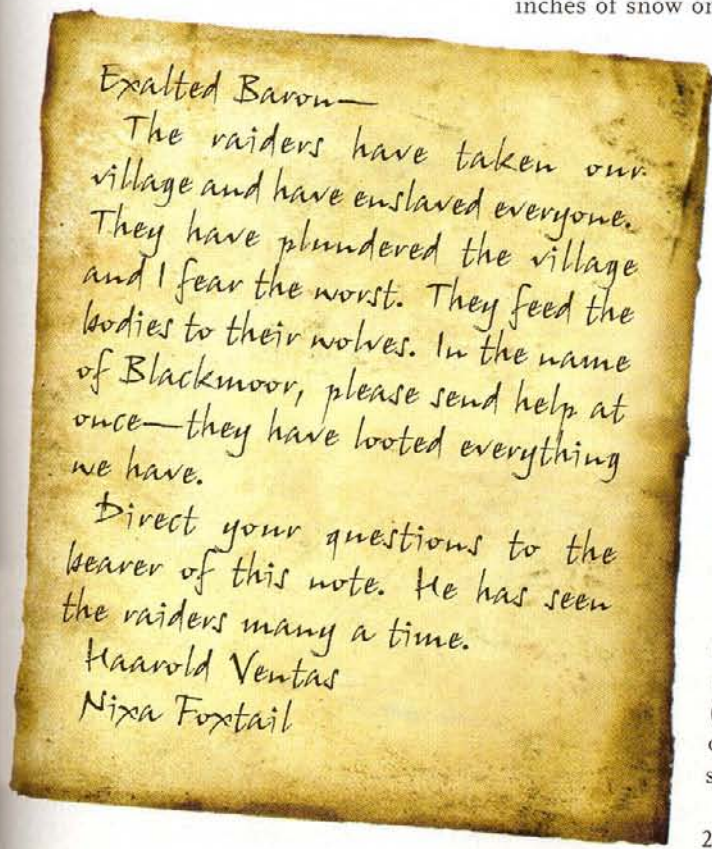
The party is unlikely to detour to visit the village of Mosshold or the ruins of Blackmoor unless they require relief or new supplies. The ruins of Blackmoor are too haunted and ill-omened to have permanent residents, but the Mossholders are friendly and eager to offer a warm spot by the fire to any visitors bringing news from the outside world.

Arrival in Tonnsborg (EL4)

The village of Tonnsborg sprawls ice-locked on Blackmoor Bay. The village itself might hold perhaps 150 people—there are only 20 buildings. Most are very low, partly dug into the tundra with turf walls and steeply pitched slate or thatch roofs. Smoke rises from just a few chimneys, one of them a longhouse bigger than most in the village. The doors of many of the smaller houses have been barricaded with blocks of ice.

Two houses stand out. At the rocky shore stands a carved and painted wooden boathouse, next to a wooden statue. The other is a large, low house made entirely of stone. The stone house has glass windows, shutters, a large stone chimney, and an attached dog run.

Tonnsborg is a flyspeck of a village, and is one of the most northerly permanent settlements in the world. The villagers are Zeai barbarians: sea fish-





erfolk in the summer, ice fishers in the winter, and hunters year round. They trade walrus tusks, salted fish, and seal pelts to points south for foodstuffs, iron, and cloth. Their headman, an elder named Haarold, led the village until he was captured in the recent raid.

Most of the figures of authority are missing from the village, taken by the raiders. Only thirty-eight villagers now remain. The terrified villagers consist of 4 older men, 12 adult women, and 20 young children, and have been barricaded in various smaller buildings throughout the village. Moving aside the blocks of ice and rubble that barricade these buildings takes several minutes of work; if the PCs set to this task, they're ambushed by the creatures that lurk in the village.

Tonnsborg (hamlet): Conventional; AL N; 100 gp limit; Assets (1,329 gp); Population 132; Isolated (human 91%, dwarf 6%, gnome 2%, elf 1%).

Authority Figures: Haarold Ventas, male human Exp3 (headman, miss-

ing), Nixa Foxtail, female human Clr1 (wise woman, head cleric of shrine of St. Cuthbert), Ugo the Smith, male human Exp2 (blacksmith, missing), Vonda Ahonnen, female human Ftr2 (archbaron's bailiff and sheriff, missing), Bjunhild Engmarsdottir, female human Exp2 (tanner, missing).

Important Characters: Svein Norkvist, human male Com2 (head fisherman, missing), Estvan the Black, male human Bbn2 (tracker and hunter), Inga Goldlock, female human Exp2 (fisherwoman, wife of Hegobard).

Others: Cuthbertine acolytes and altar boys (Clr1 and two Com1), Olaf and Folke Ogaard, human male fishermen (Exp1), Sinya Silverleaf, female elf (Drd1).

Creatures: Several snow goblins and a worg now guard the village from intruders. Unless the PCs are stealthy in their approach, the goblins and worgs notice them. The goblins quickly climb onto the rooftops and attempt to hide, using the roof as cover while the worg starts barking and howling.

If the worg does not bark at the party's approach, the goblins may be caught by surprise. They are too lazy and ill-disciplined to mount an effective watch, and prefer to spend their time eating, sleeping, and wrestling.

➤ **Blackfoot, Worg (1):** hp 28; *Monster Manual* 256.

➤ **Mag, Gossel, Enek, Mag-sen, Snow Goblins War1 (4):** CR 1/2, Small humanoid (goblinoid); HD 1d8+1; hp 8, 6, 5, 3; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grap +1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+1 club) or +2 ranged (1d6+1 javelin); SA —; SQ booming voice, darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +8, Hide +5, Intimidate +2, Listen +1, Move Silently +4, Spot +2.

Feats: Alertness.

Languages: Common, Goblin.

Possessions: Club, 2 javelins, leather armor, 20-gp amber necklace, bags of looted cloth, spoons, knives, needles, and fishhooks (all worthless).

Booming Voice (Ex): Snow goblins can be heard over great distance, and their powerful voices can be quite intimidating. Snow goblins gain a +4 racial bonus on all Intimidate checks.

Treasure: The worg wears a fine leather collar set with silver spikes; the collar is worth 20 gp.

Development: If combat breaks out, the villagers barricaded in the buildings watch expectantly but are too afraid to help (or even make any sound). The lone inhabitant of the headman's house watches the developments as well, and if the PCs defeat the goblins and the worg he reacts as detailed in that section.

A captured goblin happily spills the beans about the Black Shaman's tinkering with undead and the rough location of the raiders' stronghold in the Land of Black Ice. The shaman claims to have found a way to extend the Land of Black Ice into the lands to the south, but the goblins think he's full of it. "He's a small shaman, and the spirits do not love him." The goblins do not express this opinion when within 20 miles of the shaman.

If freed, the villagers quickly head south to safety near Dantredun, using three overloaded sleds and ponies. Before they flee, they warn the PCs about the inhabitant of the Headman's House, and beg them to rescue their fellow villagers. They don't know where the raiders took them, only that they were led out toward the Black Ice.

The Headman's House (EL2)

The headman's house is a large manor, complete with great hall, kitchen, and three sleeping chambers. The front doorway shows evidence of the raid; blood has frozen on the front step and there are signs of looting throughout. The house has no fire in the fireplace, and the rooms are icy cold. The attic loft is warmer, but only a little, as the goblins and worg sleep here at night on and under piles of blankets. A ladder connects the main floor to the loft.

Creature: The only resident of the building now is Angmesh, a frost folk raider. Together with his single worg and

the four snow goblins, he keeps watch over the village while the other frost folk take slaves back to the Frost Citadel. Like most frost folk, Angmesh outwardly looks quite similar to a human, but with bright blue eyes and pale snowy skin. A noticeable chill surrounds him and the entire house.

➤ **Angmesh, Male Frost Folk (1):** CR 2; Medium monstrous humanoid (cold); HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +4; Grap +6; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d8+2, battleaxe) or +5 ranged (1d8+2/×3, composite longbow); SA ice blast; SQ darkvision 60 ft., frost folk traits, immunity to cold, snowsight, vulnerability to fire; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Ice Blast (Su): Frost folk can produce a 20-foot cone of icy mist from their left eyes. This deals 2d6 points of cold damage to all creatures in the area (Reflex save DC 13 half). The save DC is Constitution-based. Once a frost folk uses this ability, he must wait 1d4 rounds before he can use it again.

Snowsight (Ex): Frost folk are never affected by snow blindness, and can see through falling snow with ease, even in whiteout conditions.

Skills: Climb +1, Hide +1 (+9 in snow or ice), Listen +2, Move Silently +1, Spot +2, Survival +2.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Battleaxe, composite longbow (+2 Str), studded leather armor, heavy wooden shield, bearskin cloak worth 20 gp, arctic fox leggings worth 100 gp, silver necklace worth 5 gp.

Tactics: If Angmesh sees the PCs defeat the goblins and his worg, he sets the headman's house on fire and flees using a set of skis. If he has time, he lights other buildings on fire too, hoping to delay pursuit by forcing the PCs to fight fires while he escapes.

Treasure: The back of the great hall is stuffed with plunder stolen from this village and other travelers over the past several weeks, and includes a fine suit of chainmail, two wooden shields, ten bear cloaks (each worth 20

gp), fifteen reindeer jackets (function as a cold weather outfit), and a small metal box stuffed with 200 ancient copper coins. These all belong to the villagers, but they have no use for them now and gladly let the PCs keep them as a reward.

In his haste to flee, Angmesh forgets to bring a large account book. This book is spread on the table in the great hall. Written in Common, it lists the inhabitants of the village (40 men, 47 women, 33 children, plus 8 dwarves, 3 gnomes and an elf), goods plundered (mostly cookpots, knives, furs, and axes, but also the items listed above), and losses suffered (5 snow goblins and 1 frost folk) by the raiders. It notes that most of the villagers have been relocated by dogsled to a location referred to as the "Frost Citadel." It doesn't mention how many more raiders dwell there, but does indicate that the raiders use worgs to pull their sleds.

Chapter Two: Frozen Journey

Once the PCs drive off or defeat the raiders, the villagers want little more than to flee their village to one of the safer enclaves to the south. They're convinced that until the raiders are all killed, they'll just return to Tonnsborg to finish the job in a few days. They beg the PCs to track down the raiders and rescue their kin, if possible. While any of the villagers can tell the PCs about the initial attack (the raiders consisted of a half-dozen frost folk, a lot of snow goblins, and nearly a dozen worgs), none of them know where the raiders came from. The last group of raiders left with a load of prisoners about 8 days ago.

If the PCs show Angmesh's account book to the villagers, the mention of the "Frost Citadel" jars the memory of one of the remaining elderly villagers. He recounts a story his father told him as a child, a story of a frozen fortress built of ice by ancient devils. This frozen fortress was, according to the legend, located in the Land of Black Ice roughly to the northwest of Tonnsborg—the same direction that

the raiders have always come from and returned to. This tiny clue may be enough to guide the PCs in the right direction, but fortunately, they may have an easier method of finding the Frost Citadel.

The raiders are confident that no one in Tonnsborg is brave enough or strong enough to follow, and haven't been particularly careful about covering their tracks between the village and the citadel.

The previous group of raiders were led by a frost folk named Lyotar; his band of a dozen goblins, four worg wargsleds (each pulled by a pair of worgs), and a dozen prisoners left quite a swath of footprints and tracks in the snow. On the day the PCs reach Tonnsborg, the trail is already 8 days old, but the disturbed snow (which creates a very soft surface) and the size of the band (effectively 40 creatures) means it's still relatively easy to track.

At this time, a successful Survival check (DC -1) is all that's required to follow the trail. Each day that passes, the DC increases by +1. If the PCs are moving faster than Lyotar, the trail gets fresher as they go, reducing the target DC by -2 per day. The lowest the target DC can get is -9, but at this point, the PCs should have either caught up to the raiders or reached the Frost Citadel.

Since someone without the Track feat can still follow tracks as long as the DC is less than 10, a group of PCs without this feat has, at the most, 11 days to track the raiders before the trail grows too old. If Angmesh fled the camp when the PCs arrived, his more recent tracks do little to help; tracking him alone is a DC 5 Survival check, so his trail is ironically more difficult to follow alone than the 8-day-old trail left by the previous band of raiders and prisoners.

At this point, there are still 4 inches of snow on the ground, which reduces the speed of overland travel appropriately. As this chapter plays out, fresh

snowfall is a possibility, which can further slow overland movement and obscure tracks.

Although Lyotar's group has several worg sleds, the group is also overburdened with loot and prisoners. As a result, they are moving at a speed of 30 ft., and cover 15 miles a day. They are currently 120 miles from Tonnsborg and about 100 miles from the Frost Citadel; at this rate, they'll reach the Frost Citadel in 8 days. Keep track of their progress as the days pass so you can determine when (or if) the PCs catch up. Remember that while tracking, the party moves at half normal speed, unless the tracker opts to take a -5 penalty on his Survival check. Survival checks to stay on the path must be made once per mile, but you should allow the PCs to take 10 on the check to avoid excessive die rolls.

Thus, assuming there's no fresh snowfall and assuming the PCs use skis to travel and take the -5 penalty on their Survival checks to move at normal speed, the PCs should catch up to Lyotar and the other raiders after 7 days of travel. Naturally, snow storms and alternate methods of travel can drastically alter this schedule.

Check the weather each day the PCs travel by rolling d% and consulting the following table.

Weather While Traveling (check each day)			
d%	Weather	Snow Level Change	Tracking DC adjustment
01-70	Clear	No change	+0
71-73	Heat wave	-1d6 inches	+2
74-80	Cold snap	No change	+0
81-90	Snow	+1d6 inches	+10
91-99	Snowstorm	+1d4 feet	+20
100	Blizzard	+1d4 feet	+30

Clear: The skies are cloudless and blue; no snow level change.

Heat wave: The day is unseasonably warm. In Blackmoor, the temperature is warm enough that characters unprotected from the cold don't need to make Fortitude saves. In the Land of Black

Ice, the temperature changes to Cold for that day.

Cold snap: The day is bitterly cold. In Blackmoor, the temperature changes to Severe Cold. In the Land of Black Ice, the temperature changes to Extreme Cold.

Snow: Falling snow reduces visibility ranges by half, resulting in a -4 penalty on Spot and Search checks. It has a 50% chance to extinguish exposed small flames, and reduces ranged weapon attacks by -4.

Snowstorm: As snow, but visibility is obscured beyond 5 feet; creatures beyond 5 feet away have concealment (attacks by or against them have a 20% miss chance). Wind speeds are severe (see *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, page 95) and cause whiteout conditions (see *Frostburn* for details).

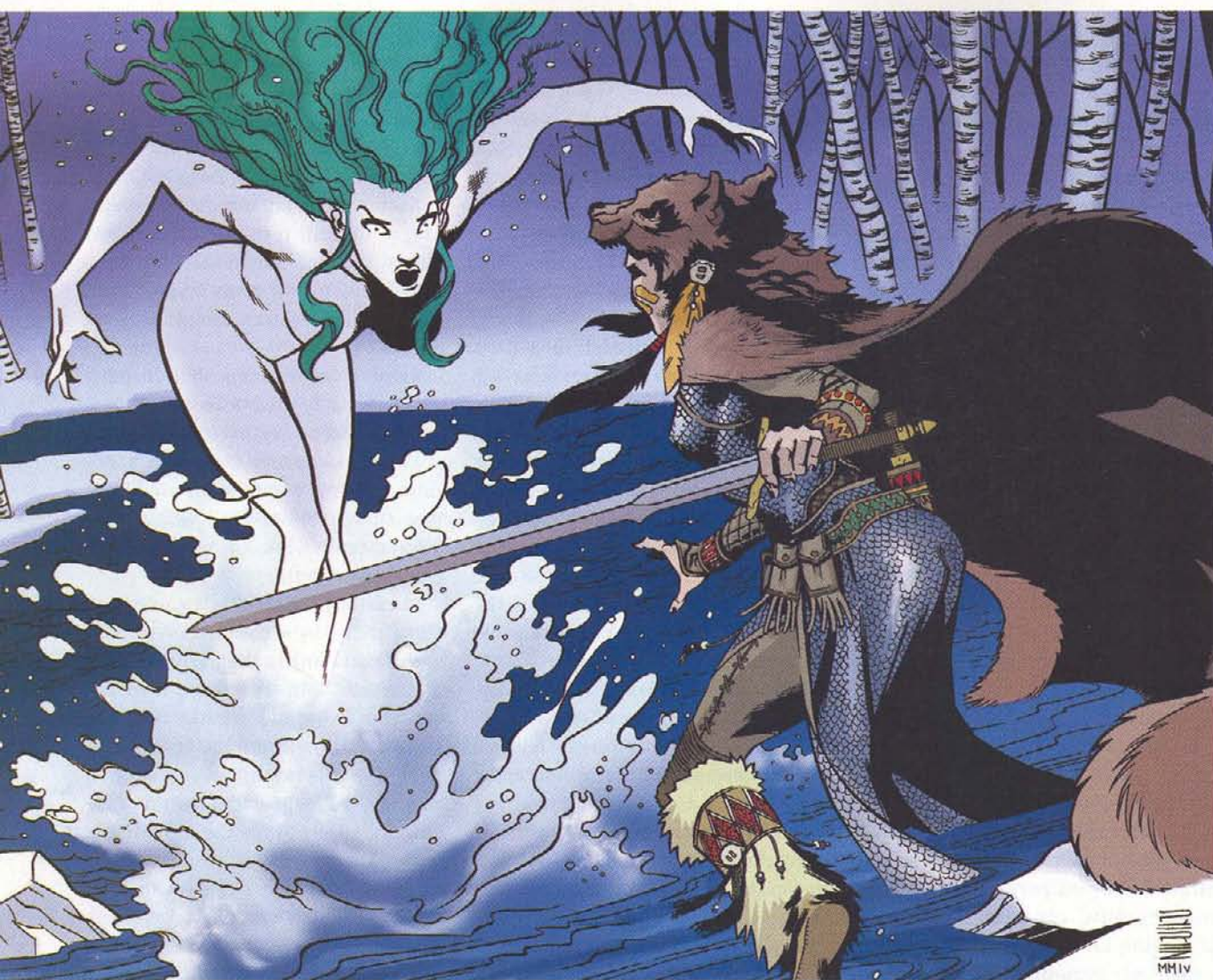
Blizzard: A blizzard is a snowstorm accompanied by windstorm-level winds.

Note that unless the party includes a character with the Track feat, any snowfall can quickly make it impossible to follow the trail. If this happens, the PCs might never find their way to the Frost Citadel. In this case, you can either fudge the die roll and instead treat it as if you rolled up a cold snap, or you can let the roll stand, in which case the tone of the adventure changes from one of rescue to one of survival. In such a case, the adventure can continue, but the PCs

will likely need to return to civilization to research the location of the Frost Citadel on old maps or by gathering information; this may take several days or even weeks. The raiders aren't going anywhere, though, and if the PCs don't reach the Frost Citadel for several months they'll still find the raiders there. Some (or all) of the prisoners may have perished in the meantime,

unfortunately.

As the characters track the raiders, they'll have a few set encounters. If you wish to further challenge the PCs, you can use the encounter tables in *Frostburn* to generate additional encounters.



1. Icy River (EL2)

Ahead is a narrow but swift river, the water pale brown with silt and about 25 feet across. The banks on either side are muddy and steep, but just to the west the banks slope gently down to the river's edge. The water itself is wider at that point, perhaps 40 feet or more. Small standing waves indicate the rocks of a ford.

The water is cloudy grayish-brown glacial icemelt from the Land of Black Ice and the plains nearby, and runs 2 to 3 feet deep at the ford and up to 8 feet deep elsewhere. The river is about 25 feet wide normally, and 40 feet wide at the ford. Though the ford is shallow, the water is fast-moving and extremely cold, so the crossing can be very dangerous. No

trees or large stones are available nearby for the party to build a dry crossing.

It costs 3 squares of movement to wade through the water at the ford, so a creature with a speed of 30 ft. can cross the ford in two rounds. Each round a person wades, he must make a successful Strength check (DC 12) to avoid being knocked prone by the current. A guide rope across the river and affixed to solid points on each bank grants a +5 bonus on this check. Once someone is swept off their feet, they must make a Swim check (DC 15) to regain their footing, otherwise they are swept 20 feet downriver into the deep water.

A character who attempts to swim across the river must make a successful Swim check (DC 15) to make progress. Failure indicates they are swept 20 feet downriver.

Regardless of how the party gets across, anyone who gets wet immediately suffers from the freezing water, and takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute of exposure. In addition, the character must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check to avoid taking cold damage from the temperature) to avoid mild hypothermia. Failure indicates the character becomes fatigued and suffers a -10 penalty on further Fortitude saving throws to avoid suffering from cold temperatures as long as he remains wet or continues to wear wet clothing. More detailed rules for hypothermia appear in *Frostburn*.

Creature: The freezing water is not the only danger present at the ford. At the only river crossing within miles, Maryoshka, an aquatic fey called a rusalka,

demands blood sacrifice from those who wish to cross. As the first PC starts to cross, the dark waters swirl and rise up into the shape of a young woman with black hair and greenish scales. Her hands are clawed, and her eyes are dark and bottomless. She speaks in a bubbling voice to the PCs; "You are in my river. Pay me with blood, or this one will never reach the other side."

Maryoshka is a tough negotiator. She insists on a warm, living creature such as a dog, horse, or person before she goes away and leaves the party alone. She accepts creatures summoned with a *summon monster* or *summon nature's ally* spell, but does not suggest such an offering. She prefers a complete sacrifice, but if the PCs can adjust her attitude to indifferent from hostile with a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 25) she accepts blood in the form of 1d6 points of self-inflicted damage. If her demands are not met, or the PC in the river tries to leave the river, she attacks.

➤ **Maryoshka, Rusalka (1):** CR 1; Medium fey (aquatic); HD 2d6; hp 8; Init +4; Spd 30 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +1; Grap +1; Atk/Full Atk +1 melee (1d4, dagger); SA beguiling song; SQ low-light vision, *water breathing*, *water symbiosis*; AL CN; SV Fort +0, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 18.

Skills: Diplomacy +6, Escape Artist +9 (+13 when in contact with the river), Hide +9 (+13 when in contact with the river), Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Perform (sing) +9, Spot +7, Swim +8, Use Rope +4 (+6 with bindings).

Feats: Combat Reflexes.

Languages: Common, Sylvan.

Beguiling Song (Su): Targets within 300 feet of the rusalka's chosen body of water must make a Will save (DC 17) to avoid this sonic mind-affecting effect. Success indicates the victim is immune to that rusalka's song for one day. Failure indicates the victim moves toward the rusalka; if the path brings him through a dangerous area he gains a second save. A beguiled victim that moves within 5 feet of the rusalka must make a DC 18 Will save or be charmed as per *charm monster* (caster level 8).

The beguiling effect lasts as long as the rusalka sings.

Water Breathing (Sp): Four times a day a rusalka can cast *water breathing* at caster level 12.

Water Symbiosis (Su): Although aquatic, a rusalka may move up to 300 yards away from her chosen body of water; if she moves further away she must hold her breath or start to suffocate.

2. Life on the Northern Plains (EU5)

As the PCs near this area, they hear a sudden thunderous trumpeting over the next low hill, accompanied by deep snarls and cries of pain. Over the hill, a primeval scene is in the process of playing out.

Creatures: A pack of five wild worgs have just attacked a woolly mammoth and her calf. The great elephantine beast has managed to gore one of the worgs, but it's quickly being surrounded. In her rage, the mammoth does not really discriminate between melee opponents. The best way to help her is to use ranged spells or missile weapons. Characters wading into melee against the wolves are targets, as the mother mammoth chooses her targets randomly each round from among all nearby. The mammoth calf is only a few days old and does not fight, depending wholly on his mother for defense.

➤ **Worgs (5):** hp 33, 30 (currently 7), 29, 27, and 22; *Monster Manual* 257.

➤ **Woolly Mammoth:** CR 12; Huge animal; HD 14d8+98; hp 161; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 17, touch 7, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +10; Grap +30; Atk +20 melee (2d10+18, gore); Full Atk +20 melee (2d6+12, slam) and +18 melee (2d6+6, 2 stamps) or +20 melee (2d10 +18, gore); improved grab, toss, trample 2d8+18 (DC 29); SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +16, Ref +8, Will +10; Str 34, Dex 8, Con 25, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills: Listen +10, Spot +11.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the woolly mammoth must hit a Large or smaller foe with a gore attack.

Toss (Ex): A creature grabbed by a woolly mammoth's gore attack is shaken vigorously and then hurled in a random direction. Resolve the toss as a bull rush

(+20 Strength modifier), except that there is no attack of opportunity. If the bull rush fails, the victim remains in his current square and is not grappled. Tossed victims take impact damage on landing as if they had fallen a distance equal to the distance they were tossed.

Development: If the PCs drive off or help kill the worgs but leave the mammoth and her calf unharmed, the mammoth regards them calmly for a moment before ushering her calf away from the raiders' trail. In this event, the spirit totem found in the Great Hall of the Frost Citadel becomes more useful to the PCs.

Entering the Land of Black Ice

Beyond the Burneal Forest the arctic takes on strange colors. Instead of the normal stark white snow and translucent blue-white ice, the landscape consists of endless fields of deep blue-black ice, topped only here and there by normal snowfall. Strange arctic monsters prowl these fields, and the winds scream like the peals of unseen ghosts.

As the PCs approach the boundary between the lands of Blackmoor and the Land of Black Ice, they first become aware of a low band of black on the horizon. As they draw nearer, the stripe resolves into a sheer edge of blue-black ice. The slope is treacherous and pockmarked with cave openings and scree.

If the characters are still tracking the raiders, the tracks lead to a section of ice that is relatively gently sloped. Climbing up onto the ice field elsewhere requires a successful Climb check (DC 18).

The cave openings are the result of summer melting, with black ice above and mud and regular ice below. None of these caves penetrates far, and no creatures currently lurk inside them.

The inhabitants of Blackmoor fear to enter the Land of Black Ice because of the strange beasts that lurk in its ebony clefts and nighted crags. Some stories tell of a warmer land beyond the black ice where the sun never sets and jungles abound, but the landscape here is bleak and depressing. Gently rolling fields of ebony ice stretch to the horizon, sometimes capped by swaths of snowdrifts or jagged escarpments of ice formations that reach into the sky like frozen claws.

3. The Boreal Outcropping (EL3)

A copse of stunted trees on a large earthen outcropping that protrudes from the Black Ice breaks the monotony of the terrain ahead.

Creatures: This patch of woeful pine trees is home to a colony of snow spiders that feed on a nearby rookery. The raiders' trail, if the PCs are still following it, goes around the trees, but as the only landmark in miles, the PCs may not be able to resist exploring them.

The snow spiders live among the trees and in the cracks of the outcropping. The small spiders attack anyone who comes within 50 feet of the outcropping, leaping directly into combat. The Medium spider is more cautious, and attacks only if its lair (the largest crevice of the outcropping, about 2 feet high and 4 feet wide) is threatened. It uses Spring Attack to keep the PCs at a distance when it can. Snow spiders are covered with tufts of wiry white fur and have eight cold blue eyes.

➤ **Small Snow Spiders (4):** CR 1/2 each; Small vermin; HD 1d8; hp 4 each; Init +4; Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +0; Grap -6; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d4-2 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA leap, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 7, Dex 18, Con 11, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +12, Hide +12 (+20 in snow or ice), Jump +24, Spot +8.

Feats: Spring Attack^B, Weapon Finesse^B.

➤ **Medium Snow Spider (1):** CR 1; Medium vermin; HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., climb 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grap +1; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d6 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA leap, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 18, Con 13, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +12, Hide +8 (+16 in snow or ice), Jump +28, Spot +8.

Feats: Spring Attack^B, Weapon Finesse^B.

Leap (Ex): Snow spiders are adroit at leaping onto prey and then leaping back in startling speed. They gain Spring Attack as

a bonus feat. In addition, if a snow spider can jump on its prey it can make a charge attack with a +4 attack bonus instead of the normal +2 bonus.

Poison (Ex): Small snow spider poison has a save DC of 10, and deals 1d3 Dex/paralysis. Medium snow spider poison has a save DC of 12 and deals 1d4 Dex/paralysis. In each case, paralysis lasts for 2d4 minutes.

Treasure: The spider lair contains hundreds of bones and a fair amount of treasure from past victims. This consists of three short swords, a suit of leather armor, two arctic fox furs worth 5 gp each, a copper holy symbol of St. Cuthbert, one set of snow shoes, one set of skis, one silver dagger, a +1 *short sword*, and a pair of *boots of elvenkind*.

4. A Snowflake Graveyard (EL1)

What at first appeared to be a number of strange snowdrifts ahead looks to be something more sinister. Perhaps a half-dozen dead animals—ravens, caribou, and wolves—lie frozen on the ground.

Creatures: This area has become infested with a patch of dangerous arctic plants called snowflake lichens. These plants grow on rocky surfaces or ice, and resemble strange patterns of snow crystals spread out across the surface. Other plants and animals that come too close to a snowflake lichen quickly succumb to its freezing aura. This particular patch is surrounded by all sorts of frozen animals: ravens, caribou, and wolves. The bodies should alert the party that this area is dangerous, but if not, the raiders' trail (if they haven't overcome them yet) takes a wide swath around this area.

➤ **Snowflake Lichens (6):** CR 1/6; Tiny plant (cold); HD 1d8-3; hp 1 each; Init +0; Spd 0 ft.; AC 6, touch 6, flat-footed 6; Base Atk +0; Grap —; Atk/Full Atk —; Space/Reach 1 ft./0 ft.; SA cold aura, numbing touch; SQ damage reduction 5/piercing or slashing, immunity to cold, low-light vision, plant traits, vulnerability to fire; AL N; SV Fort -1, Ref -4, Will +0; Str —, Dex —, Con 5, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Cold Aura (Su): Any creature within 10 feet of the plant must make a DC 7 Fortitude save at the beginning of its turn each round or take 1d6 points of cold damage; if the save succeeds, no damage is taken for that round. If a creature is caught within multiple overlapping areas of effect, the DC increases by +2 for every overlapping effect (to a maximum of DC 25 for 10 overlapping lichens). Multiple overlapping effects do not stack damage, they merely increase the difficulty of the save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Numbing Touch (Su): A creature that walks on or touches a snowflake lichen must make a Fortitude save (DC 11 +1 per additional lichen touched in the target's movement) or take 1 point of Dexterity damage, regardless of the number of overlapping effects. Creatures that touch it with booted feet or gloved hands gain a +2 bonus on the save. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +4 racial bonus.

Catching the Raiders (EL5)

Chances are that the PCs catch up to Lyotar's band of slaves somewhere in the Land of Black Ice. If Angmesh escaped on skis, he probably reaches Lyotar a few hours before the PCs and warns him of their approach.

Creatures: If the PCs overtake Lyotar's band of raiders, they find him herding a group of twelve villagers further into the Land of Black Ice, following them with four worg sleds (each pulled by a pair of worgs and loaded with plunder and snow goblins). If Angmesh has reached him, Lyotar expects the PCs and is actively keeping an eye behind him by taking 10 on Spot checks. Otherwise, he is effectively "taking 0" on Spot checks. If he realizes he's being pursued, he tries to outrun them but the villagers are simply too exhausted to keep up.

Lyotar is pulled by one worg sled, and each of the remaining three sleds are heaped with supplies and four snow goblins apiece.

Note that the EL for this encounter is lower than normal since the worgs are fatigued and Lyotar sends his forces out in small groups rather than trying to attack the PCs all at once.

➤ **Lyotar, Male Frost Folk (1):** hp 28; see "The Headman's House" for other stats.

➤ **Snow Goblins (12):** hp 5 each; see "Arrival in Tonnsborg" for other stats.

➤ **Fatigued Worgs (8):** hp 28; Init +1; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+3, bite); SV Ref +5; Str 15, Dex 13; *Monster Manual* 256.

Tactics: As soon as he realizes he can't outrun pursuit, Lyotar arranges the villagers into a wall of human shields, using them as cover to fire upon the PCs with his crossbow. Attempts to return fire with other ranged weapons should be treated as firing into melee, unless the PCs don't particularly care about shooting villagers, in which case a miss of 4 or less indicates a villager is struck. If the PCs approach his impromptu fortification of exhausted villagers, Lyotar unleashes a pair of worgs and sends them out to attack; he's loath to risk all of his worgs in such an attack because he needs them alive and healthy to pull the loot back to the Frost Citadel. He uses his ice blast on villagers and PCs alike when a melee opponent approaches within 20 feet. As the battle begins, he orders eight of the snow goblins to take two of the worg sleds and flee to the Frost Citadel to warn them of the PCs, leaving the remaining worgs and snow goblins behind to fight the PCs and prevent them from pursuing the others.

The worgs themselves are fatigued from pulling the sleds, and suffer a -2 penalty to their Strength and Dexterity. Nevertheless, they attack with eager rage. If the two worgs are slain, Lyotar sends the other two worgs and the four snow goblins up to melee the PCs in a desperate attempt to finish them off. While this battle progresses, he continues using his bow, engaging in melee only as a last resort. He refuses to abandon his slaves or surrender, and fights to the death.

If Angmesh has caught up to this band, he flees with the six snow goblins to help alert the Frost Citadel.

Development: The villagers consist of four men, six women, and two young girls, all 1st-level commoners. They are unarmed and wear furs and cold-weather gear. The leaders, Svein Norkvist and Bjunhild Engmarsdottir, tell rescuers that they know only that Lyotar mentioned he

was bringing them to some place called the "Frost Citadel," but they have no idea where this location could be. They do observe that they've been following a fairly straight course to the northwest since entering the Land of Black Ice.

The villagers are fatigued, bordering on exhaustion, and all suffer from mild frostbite. Nevertheless, with the food and supplies from captured worg sleds, they feel confident about making their way back to Tonnsborg on their own and encourage the PCs to continue on to the Frost Citadel to finish off the raiders.

Chapter Three: Frozen Citadel

This citadel can nevertheless be seen from miles away across the ice, a gray island in a sea of black. The citadel is cobbled together atop an upthrust mound of ice, so anyone approaching it must climb a small icy slope or climb the icy stairs carved up to the front door. Clambering up the slope requires a Climb check (DC 10). The stairs are easier to climb, but are still quite slippery. Anyone making more than a single action while climbing the stairs must make a successful Balance check (DC 12) to avoid slipping and falling 5 feet back down the stairs. This inflicts 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. A successful Reflex save (DC 10) allows the character to arrest the fall, otherwise he continues slipping and falling 5 feet per round until he reaches the bottom of the ice mound.

A second approach to the citadel is located on the north face of the mound. This is a fairly gentle slope that leads up to the kennel area. The raiders use this ramp for their worg sleds.

The citadel is normally fairly relaxed; the raiders are comfortable that the isolation keeps out intruders. The hooting, hollering, and booming voices of the snow goblins in area 8 resonates loudly out of the arrow slits, and although the goblins are periodically silenced by the frost folk, the PCs should be able to hear their arguing voices and disturbing screeches throughout the citadel.

If they've been warned of the PCs' approach, (perhaps by Lyotar, Angmesh, or even a group of snow goblins that manages to escape the PCs), however, the situation at the citadel is a bit more dangerous. In



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this case, the snow goblins are silent. The frost folk in area 7 and the goblins in area 8 watch the surrounding terrain from the arrow slits, and if they notice anyone approaching, the frost folk attack with their bows and the goblins start hollering alarms with their shockingly loud voices.

The citadel is home to eight frost folk in all, two of which (Angmesh and Lyotar) may have already been defeated by the PCs. Their large group of servants includes many

human slaves, ten worgs, several zombies, and quite a few snow goblins, none of them all that loyal. The PCs may have already slain most of the worgs and 16 of the snow goblins in prior encounters.

The citadel's leader is Lestvan the Black Shaman, a frost folk wizard who keeps an undead spirit wolf as a companion. These two live in the citadel's tower, and are spoken of in fearful whispers by everyone else in the Frost Citadel.

The interior of the citadel is slightly warmer than the surrounding terrain, but still counts as a cold region (see Appendix). With a few exceptions, the interior chambers are unlit since both frost folk and snow goblins have darkvision. Doors are made of wood and reinforced with iron; they are not locked, although the door into area 5 is barred on the inside.

◆ **Reinforced Wooden Doors:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 25.

1. Walls of Black Ice (EQ2)

The stronghold walls are of blocks of black ice, mortared with blood and ground bone. The ice is too dark to see through. The exterior arrow slits and windows seem to indicate a ground floor, first floor, second floor, a tower floor that extends above the rest of the citadel, and a partially enclosed lookout platform atop the tower.

The outer walls are 35 feet tall, and made of cut blocks of black ice quarried from the surrounding fields. This has increased the size of the ice hill the citadel stands on, which is roughly 40 feet tall, though 15 feet of that is the quarried ditch between the plain and the citadel. The total height to the tower is 60 feet above the surrounding ice.

◆ **Black Ice Walls:** 5 ft. thick; Hardness 10; hp 180; Break DC 75.

Creatures: To keep the walls perfectly cold and to prevent creatures from climbing them, the external walls have been seeded with hundreds of snowflake lichens, making the ice very difficult to climb or chip away. Assume that each five-foot square of an exterior wall's surface contains ten snowflake lichens. The lichens are kept away from the entrances to the citadel so a creature approaching one of them has little to fear. A creature that approaches the citadel from another direction enters the lichens' cold aura 10 feet from the wall, and must make a DC 25 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of cold damage. A creature touching the wall must also make a DC 21 Fortitude save or take 1 point of Dexterity damage from the lichens' numbing touch.

◆ **Snowflake Lichens (hundreds):** hp 1 each; see "A Snowflake Graveyard."

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs manage to scale the walls, break through the walls, or otherwise encounter and

overcome the snowflake lichens, award them experience points as if they defeated a CR 2 creature rather than individual awards for each lichen slain.

2. The Gate (E1 or 2)

The front door is one of the few parts of the citadel not made of ice. The blackened pine door's face is full of knots and looks very tough. The door is strengthened with greenish bronze bands and studded with nails. A stone carving of a spitting wyvern leers down from above the door.

Creature: The gate itself is opened and closed by a pair of zombie doormen, who obey anyone who calls out the phrase "Hail the Black Ice!" as they approach. As long as one person in a group calls out this pass phrase, the zombies don't attack; otherwise, they lunge to attack anyone who approaches within 10 feet or attacks them first.

➤ **Human Zombies (2):** hp 16; *Monster Manual* 266.

Development: If the frost folk have been warned of the party's arrival, they have prepared a cauldron of boiling water in area 7, and Maartan watches through an arrow slit as the PCs approach. If anyone enters the square directly south of the gate, Maartan upends the cauldron of boiling water into a large funnel, causing the water to spew out of the stone wyvern's mouth. The boiling water deals 1d6 points of fire damage to any creature in this square (Reflex DC 15 half). Any creatures in adjoining squares take 1 point of fire damage from the water (Reflex DC 10 negates). In addition to the damage of the heat, the water quickly melts the ice stairs and turns them into a slippery slope. Creatures standing on this square must make a successful Balance check (DC 15) or they slip and begin falling down the stairs, as detailed at the start of this chapter.

3. The Great Hall (E12)

This large room stands nearly twenty feet high, the cavernous ceiling supported by a network of wooden beams and ice pillars in the center

of the room. The walls are barren of décor, and what little light is available is provided by three fitfully sputtering torches that burn with pale blue radiance. Several untanned caribou hides and carcasses lie heaped nearby. A flight of stairs leads up to the west, and a leather curtain hangs on the upper portion of the western wall.

The stairs in the west wall lead upward to area 7. The leather curtain obscures an observation window that allows the creatures in area 7 to observe this room, although they generally keep the curtain closed. Climbing up to the curtain is difficult, as the icy walls of the Frost Citadel are quite slick (Climb check DC 20).

Creatures: The raiders keep the majority of their captured slaves in this large room, guarded at all times by three zombies. The slaves are exhausted, both from exposure and from abuse by the goblins and frost folk, yet do what they can with the caribou carcasses, stripping meat, cracking bones for marrow, and creating leather from the hides. Most are 1st-level commoners, but several are village leaders and other important NPCs who were captured in Tonnsborg. Haarold Ventas, Ugo the Smith, Vonda Ahonnen, Bjunhild Engmarsdottir, and Svein Norkvist (if the PCs have not stopped Lyotar's caravan) are all here, although they are all unconscious (stable at negative hit points), and in no condition to help the PCs. If the PCs are having a difficult time with the adventure, consider having one or two of these NPCs conscious. In this case, you'll need to build their statistics as needed. Their class levels are detailed in the Tonnsborg stat block earlier in this adventure.

The rafters above are home to three snow goblins who were chased out of the tribe that lives in area 8. The goblins aren't especially eager to fight anyone, and hide as best they can from intruders.

➤ **Human Zombies (3):** hp 16; *Monster Manual* 266.

➤ **Snow Goblins (3):** hp 5 each; see "Arrival in Tonnsborg" for other stats.

Tactics: The three zombies lunge to attack any non-goblins or frost folk who enter the room. If combat breaks out, the slaves cower in the corners of the room.

The sounds of combat in this room alert the nearby frost folk as well. Vovia (area 4) reacts by waiting for the combat to die down before sending a pair of zombies into this room. The frost folk in area 7 react more quickly, parting the curtains to look out and then using them as concealment (20% miss chance on attacks against them) while they use their longbows against any enemies in sight.

Token of the Mammoth

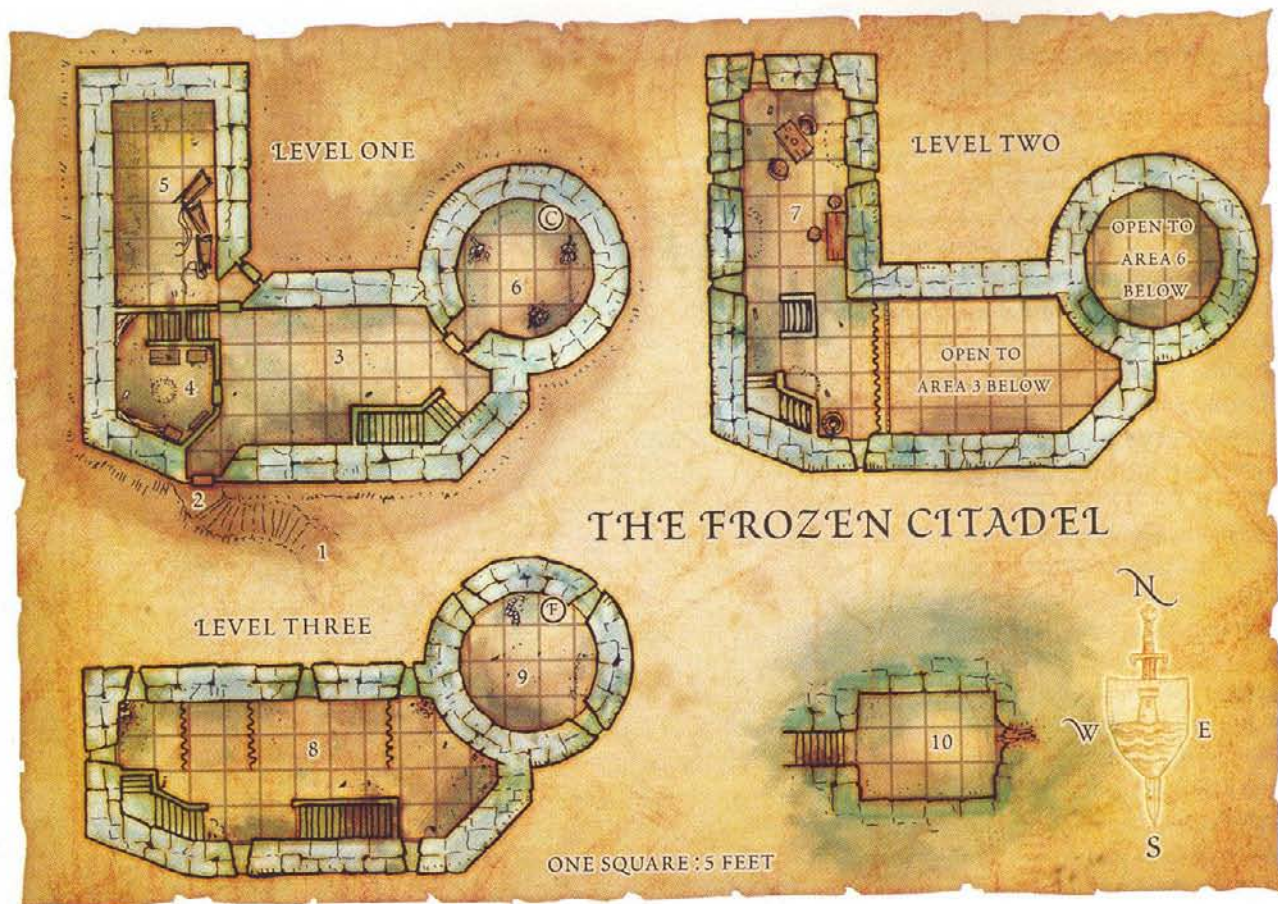
Worn about the neck as a magic necklace, or about the wrist as a magic bracelet, this token functions as an *amulet of natural armor* +1. If the wearer has the wild empathy class ability, he may use the token to *speak with animals* twice per day. Anyone who helped to save the mammoth calf earlier in the adventure is filled with a sense of welcome when touching the token, and can use the token to *speak with animals* at will, even if they don't have wild empathy. Alternately, characters who attacked or helped slaughter the mammoth or its calf find that the token is nonmagical in their hands.

Faint abjuration; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *barkskin*, *speak with animals*; Price 6,000 gp.

Treasure: The work done by the prisoners is shoddy at best, but there is one thing of value hidden here. A successful Search check (DC 20) discovers a small ivory token hidden under a pile of rather moldy furs. Carved to depict a wooly mammoth, it's worth 10 gp for the ivory and carving alone. The token is in fact a fetish hidden here several months ago by a captured human druid who was soon thereafter killed by the frost folk. He hid his fetish in this room, hoping it would be found later by other prisoners and give them the protection needed to organize a revolt, or at least to escape. Unfortunately, he hid it all too well, and unless the PCs find it, it remains hidden.

The three torches are each everburning torches.

Development: The prisoners have seen only this chamber, but they can



tell the PCs that “lots” of snow goblins and at least four frost folk live elsewhere in the citadel. The prisoners are in no condition to travel, and as long as the PCs don’t leave them behind in the citadel they should be safe; the raiders are more concerned about the intruders than their prisoners.

If the PCs leave the citadel before they defeat the raiders, though, the prisoners are doomed. The frost folk execute them all rather than risk an uprising of slaves, and the Black Shaman begins the process of animating them into zombie minions to help defend the fortress against subsequent attacks by the PCs.

4. Kitchens (E13)

This spacious kitchen is furnished with large wood and metal tables. Freestanding metal cabinets line most of the walls. What looks like a fire pit dominates the center of the room, except this pit is frozen over with strange icy formations

and mounds of snow. A low-slung hammock hangs from spikes driven into the walls to the south, and to the north, an archway opens into a narrow flight of stairs leading downward.

This is where the raiders prepare food. Being creatures of cold, they abhor open flames and cooked meat. Instead, they flash-freeze their dinners with their ice blast, gathering meat in the pit here so they can prepare entire meals. The snow goblins and prisoners, having little choice in the matter, have learned to stomach the frozen food.

The stairs to the north lead down to area 10.

Creatures: This room is guarded by a pair of zombies, stationed here mostly to prevent goblins from stealing food. The kitchen also serves as the personal quarters of a frost folk named Vovia. She has elevated the process of freeze-cooking food to an art, and uses all sorts of flavored ices and plants to season the meals.

When not peeling potatoes, dicing walrus blubber, or cracking and peeling snow spiders, Vovia spends her time relaxing in her hammock.

➤ **Vovia, Female Frost Folk (1):** hp 26; see “The Headman’s House” for other stats.

➤ **Human Zombies (3):** hp 16; *Monster Manual* 266.

Tactics: Unlike the other frost folk, Vovia has no real fear of the zombies and finds their presence oddly comforting. Still, she can’t control them, so if a fight breaks out she lets them take the lead and supports their tactics as best she can. If things turn grim, she surrenders and offers the party a “hidden treasure” if they spare her life. She refers to the frozen construct in the basement, which she is convinced is made of solid gold. Of course, she actually hopes that leading the PCs downstairs gives her ally Joki a chance to finish them off.

Development: If the citadel is on alert status, Vovia stations the zombies near the door and waits patiently for the PCs

to reach the kitchen. If she hears combat break out in area 3, she waits until the sounds die down and then quietly opens the door to let her two zombies out to attack any survivors. She remains in this room, in any case.

5. The Kennels (E12 to 8)

This long, narrow room reeks of filth and excrement. Filthy layers of straw line the floor, and wooden beams support the roof. Several large dog-sleds made of hide and mammoth bones sit near a pair of large double doors to the east.

The double doors are barred from the inside and can only be opened from the outside with a successful Strength check (DC 25).

Creatures: This long room serves the fort not only as a shed but as a kennel; the ten worgs the raiders use as guardian beasts and as pack animals are kept here. The exact amount of worgs encountered here depends on how many the PCs have already slain and how many have managed to escape back here. At least one worg remains here, since the raiders brought nine of them on their last raid (and left one in Tonnsborg). Their barking is a familiar sound to the raiders, as they often fight over food or pack rank; it will not be taken as an alarm unless it continues for more than seven rounds.

➤ **Worgs (1–10):** hp 28; *Monster Manual* 256.

6. Slaving Guardian (E13)

This circular, high-roofed chamber is empty, save for several mounds of well-gnawed bones. The ceiling rises nearly forty feet, where a closed trapdoor is clearly visible. The means to ascend to this trap door are clearly not.

The trap door in the ceiling provides access to area 9, the Black Shaman's lair. A rope ladder normally leads to this upper chamber, but the Black Shaman typically keeps this ladder pulled up to prevent anyone from disturbing him. When the raiders need to talk to him, they usually force a snow goblin to bellow up to the

upper room from the safety of the doorway to area 3. Needless to say, the Black Shaman has little interest in lowering the ladder for the PCs.

The inner walls of the tower are fortunately rather rough. Even accounting for the fact that they're made of black ice and are rather slippery, they can be scaled with a successful Climb check (DC 20). The trapdoor itself is fairly close to the wall, and clambering up and through it requires a slightly more difficult Climb check (DC 22). Of course, unless the PCs are particularly stealthy, the Black Shaman might have a surprise waiting for them when they near the trap door (see area 9).

Creature: The leader of the raiders makes his home on the upper floor of this tower. His companion, a particularly dangerous dire wolf named Ribchaw, guards this chamber from intruders and fellow raiders alike. The Black Shaman values his privacy. The bones are all that remains of those prisoners (and raiders) the Black Shaman has chosen to feed his pet.

If the alarm hasn't been raised and other sounds of combat haven't alerted him yet, Ribchaw's barking and growling when he lunges to attack the PCs certainly alerts him to their presence.

➤ **Ribchaw, Dire Wolf:** hp 45; *Monster Manual* 65.

7. Raiders' Barracks (E14)

This long room features a long leather curtain on the east wall. A few tables and chairs furnish the room. Several mounds of snow lie heaped near the walls; indentions in the snow seem to indicate that they're used as beds. To the south, a large cauldron hangs from a stand next to a stone block with a strange, funnel-shaped depression in it. Arrow-slits allow light from the world outside to seep into the murky chamber.

The leather curtain along the east wall obscures a window that overlooks area 3; the inhabitants of this room usually keep it closed.

Creatures: These barracks can house up to a half-dozen frost folk. Right now, only three are likely encountered here. If

Angmesh or Lyotar made it back to the Citadel, they are encountered here as well. One of the frost folk encountered here, Sniset, has dreams of becoming a cleric but has yet to actually take any cleric levels. Maartan is the loudest and most prone to use violence to solve problems, and Isbaara is the raiders' worg trainer.

➤ **Sniset, Maartan, and Isbaara, Frost Folk (3):** hp 22, 18, 15; see "The Headman's House" for other stats.

Skills: Isbaara's skills are slightly different than the standard frost folk's; they are Handle Animal +1, Hide +1 (+9 in snow or ice), Listen +2, Move Silently +1, Spot +2, Survival +2.

Tactics: Only Maartan, the warrior, is eager for a fight. The other two try to escape if Maartan is taken out, or if the fight seems to be going against them. They flee using the set of stairs opposite the one the PCs used to enter. The worg trainer, Isbaara, is particularly eager to get to her animals, and may make a stand downstairs in the kennels if she finds her worgs have been injured or killed.

8. Snow Goblin Den (E14)

This single large room is completely filthy. Nasty, poorly cured leather curtains hang from hooks in the ceiling, scraps of food lie scattered in all the corners, and graffiti is etched into the walls and darkened with blood.

Creatures: The frost folk didn't want to climb the extra stairs, so they gave this room over to their snow goblin minions. Currently, there are only seven snow goblins lurking here; if any more goblins made it back to the Citadel, they're encountered here as well. In theory, the goblins are ready to rush downstairs at the first sign of trouble—but actually, their own arguments and antics prevent them from hearing all but the loudest of alarms.

If the alarm is raised, their booming voices are silent and they lurk quietly in the room, waiting to defend it from invaders.

The snow goblins have recently reorganized their numbers into two groups. Drossel, Mat-mat, and Mag are the East Goblins, and control the curved wall. Irda, Snee, Clumpi, and Osves call themselves the West Goblins, and they control the

western leather curtains. If the PCs attack one group, the other group hangs back and jeers their goblin kin; they don't join the fight until at least one goblin is killed and they realize the fight is for keeps.

➤ **Snow Goblins (7):** hp 5 each; see "Arrival in Tonnsborg" for other stats.

Treasure: The goblins have a single tin cup they share (the East Goblins currently have control of it), four wooden goblets, a chip of garnet set on a bronze necklace (10 gp), a silver torc (50 gp), a whetstone, far too many leather straps, and a rabbit fur cloak (30 gp).

9. The Black Shaman (EL4)

This drafty room is strewn with dried herbs, powders, and rune-marked parchments. A large bed of snow lies heaped to the southeast, and a carelessly bundled rope ladder sits on the floor to the north near a trap door in the floor.

Creature: The coiled rope ladder is used by Lestvar to descend to the lower levels of the citadel on the rare occasions he needs to do so. Called the "Black Shaman" by his fellow frost folk, Lestvar is in fact a wizard who has menaced and bullied the others for many months now since his discovery of a *wand of animate dead*. He has used the wand many times to animate the bodies of frost folk he's slain to punish their disobedience. The other frost folk greatly fear him now, and dread being turned into zombies. Lestvar had little trouble convincing them that if they kept him well supplied with resources to continue his necromantic research, he wouldn't need to use other frost folk in such a way. He's nearly out of charges with his wand now, but the other frost folk have no way of knowing this and continue to serve him out of fear.

➤ **Lestvar, The Black Shaman, Male Frost Folk Wizard 4:** CR 4; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 4d8+4 plus 4d4+4; hp 34; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +6; Grap +6; Atk +7 melee (1d6, masterwork quarterstaff); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6, masterwork quarterstaff); SA ice blast, spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., frost folk traits, immunity to cold, snowsight, vulnerability to fire; AL NE; SV

Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +10; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +7, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Listen +6, Spellcraft +12, Spot +6, Survival +6.

Feats: Combat Casting, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (necromancy).

Languages: Common, Goblin, Giant.

Wizard Spells (4/4/3; save DC 12 + spell level): 0—*acid splash, flare, light, ray of frost*; 1st—*chill touch**, *ray of enfeeblement**, *shield, sleep*; 2nd—*command undead, glitterdust, mirror image*.

Spellbook: Contains all prepared spells, all cantrips, plus *continual flame*. At your discretion, he may also know some of the new spells detailed in *Frostburn*.

*Necromantic spell; save DC 13 + spell level.

Possessions: Masterwork quarterstaff, *bracers of armor* +1, *wand of animate dead* (5 charges, CL 7th, each charge can animate a single skeleton or zombie of up to 8 Hit Dice), *cloak of protection* +1, spellbook.

Tactics: If Lestvar hears trouble downstairs, he cracks open the trap door and waits for a PC to come within 5 feet of it before throwing the door open and using his ice blast on the intruders. He follows this up with *rays of enfeeblement* or *sleep* on climbing characters, using *mirror image* or *glitterdust* if attacked with ranged weapons.

Treasure: In addition to his spellbook, Lestvar has a collection of scrolls, including one labeled "History of the Northern Tribes," one called "Treatise on Goblinoid Speech and Thought", and a very strange, large, and untitled volume written entirely in runes. This book measures 3 feet tall by 2 feet wide, and the runes in it are the size of gold coins. Written in Giant, it contains invocations to the gods of frost and winter, especially to Thrym, the chaotic evil god of frost giants. It's unlikely any of the PCs can read it without a *comprehend languages* spell or special skills, but it does seem to have been written by one "White Jarl of Jutunheim" and several of its prayers are devoted to the spread of Eternal Ice. This book can be used to introduce divine spells from *Frostburn* into your campaign; a divine spellcaster who studies the tome (which takes a week of 8-hour study periods) can add any of the spells in *Frostburn* to his

spell list if he doesn't already know the spells.

Development: The Black Shaman's death breaks the resolve of the raiders. If they see conclusive proof of his death, they immediately flee the citadel.

10. Crypt of the Automaton (EL2 or 7)

This room seems to have been carved directly into the frozen foundation of black ice below the citadel. Crates and barrels of food and supplies line the walls, and a low mound of snow lies heaped in the northeastern corner of the room. A particularly fine-looking tapestry is draped over something round that protrudes from the eastern wall.

A successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 15) is enough to note that the construction of this room predates the rest of the citadel by many decades; perhaps by centuries. The reason for this is simple: ages ago, the frost folk noted an unusual shape buried in the frozen ice here. After they dug down to the shape, they found it to be a strange construct from an ancient realm that predated the Black Ice. They freed the creature's head and were amazed to find it still lived. The creature is known as a nimblewright, and it told tales of the wealth of southern lands, of magical constructs, and of secrets of its ancient empire. It was intriguing enough that it drew the frost folk back to this site for many years in a row, but they feared what it could be capable of and never finished freeing it from its frozen prison. They built the citadel above as a permanent settlement. Eventually, the nimblewright stopped answering questions or telling tales, perhaps because it grew bored, or perhaps because it died.

Today, the room serves as a cellar for the kitchen and is the sleeping quarters for the primary hunter. He finds the nimblewright's protruding head disturbing, and threw the tapestry over it to put it out of sight.

Creatures: The snow pile is used by Joki, a frost folk who serves the raiders as a hunter. He never takes part in the raids, preferring the solitude of the hunt. He feels little kinship with the other frost



folk, with the exception of his close friend Vovia, who lives upstairs; her dedication to the raiders is the only thing that's kept him around. Joki does not respond to sounds of battle or alarms unless Vovia retreats down here.

If the tapestry is removed, the PCs find the nimblewright's head protruding from a carved-out section of the wall. The nimblewright's long exposure to cold has caused it to enter a state of exceeding torpor, having consumed the last vestiges of its energy over the past to converse with the ancient frost folk who partially freed it. Until it is removed fully from the ice it remains motionless. Chipping away the ice is

probably the best solution. This method takes 1d4+2 hours of work (modified by -1 hour for each additional worker; up to two additional workers can help at once). Fire can be used to melt the ice but brings a chance of collapse. If fire is used, the amount of time required to free the nimblewright becomes 3d6 minutes. A successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 20) allows the workers to use fire to melt the ice without any additional problems. If this check fails by 5 or less, the melting causes the ice around the nimblewright to suddenly cave in on itself; this deals 8d6 points of damage to the nimblewright. If the check fails

by more than 5 points, the entire cellular caves in, crushing anyone within. Cave-ins are detailed on page 66 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*.

➤ **Joki, Male Frost Folk (3):** hp 19; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d8+2, battleaxe) or +5 ranged (1d8+2/×3, composite longbow); SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +4; see "The Headman's House" for other stats.

Skills: Climb +1, Heal +2, Hide +1 (+9 in snow or ice), Listen +2, Move Silently +1, Spot +2, Survival +7.

Feats: Self-Sufficient, Skill Focus (Survival).

➤ **Oskari Lodestar, Nimblewright:** CR 7; Medium construct; HD 10d10+20; hp 75 (currently 18); Init +7; Spd 40 ft.; AC 24,

touch 17, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +7; Grp +11; Atk +11 melee (2d6+4/15–20, rapier-hand); Full Atk +11 melee (2d6+4/15–20, 2 rapier-hands); SA spell-like abilities, tripping thrust; SQ augmented critical, construct traits, spell resistance 27, vulnerabilities; AL CG; SV Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 24, Con —, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 19; *Monster Manual II* 162.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*alter self*, *cat's grace*, *entropic shield*, *feather fall*, *haste*. Caster level 10.

Skills: Balance +9, Jump +19, Tumble +22.

Feats: Combat Expertise^B, Combat Reflexes^B, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Mobility, Spring Attack.

Languages: Common (archaic), Elven, Dwarven.

Treasure: The tapestry Joki used to cover the nimblewright's head is finely made, probably from the southern nation of Perrenland. It depicts a summer scene in a forest with a mounted hunter, a boar, and a pack of dogs. It is large, roughly 8 feet tall and 15 feet wide, weighing 180 pounds and worth 2,000 gp.

Development: Oskari the nimblewright can become a valued ally of the party if treated well. He's fairly powerful; the DM shouldn't let him do all the work for the PCs, but if they free him before dealing with the rest of the Frost Citadel, the nimblewright certainly has no problems assisting in killing or driving off raiders.

After centuries frozen in the ice, his memory is poor and he remembers only a few details about his past. In this capacity, he can serve as a wealth of adventure hooks for the DM.

Concluding the Adventure

This adventure concludes as the PCs defeat the Black Shaman and disrupt the raiders. The surviving frost folk flee into the Land of Black Ice. The surviving prisoners can either be escorted back home, or allowed to rest and recover in the Frost Citadel (at which point they'll be able to find their own way home after equipping themselves with gear found in the Frost Citadel).

Beyond the Frost Citadel, the PCs can either seek out the northern wonders

beyond the Black Ice or return to tell their tales to Archbaron Bestmo and hope for a reward. If they succeed in a Diplomacy check (DC 20) they can collect a 500 gp reward, a knighthood for the party leader, and the offer of an officer's position in the army. If the check fails, the archbaron banishes them for failing to prevent the raid in the first place.

You can use the nimblewright's memories to set hooks for future adventures deeper into the ice. Alternately, he may accompany the party south, for reasons of his own. In this case, he discourages them from ever visiting the Land of Black Ice again. If your players are like most adventurers, telling them not to go somewhere is an almost irresistible lure. Whether they find an army of snow goblins, packs of Zeai barbarians, or a hot spring that powers a self-sustaining group of lost nimblewrights is up to you.

Appendix: Surviving on the Ice

Part of what makes this adventure challenging is the bitter cold of winter. The sun shines for a mere 6 hours each day. The winds and snows make travel difficult, and the lack of firewood or grazing on the Black Ice itself presents additional challenges, especially for a 3rd-level party with limited resources. These rules for surviving in cold are more fully detailed in *Frostburn*.

Cold Protection

A creature's protection from the effects of cold can be broken down into levels of protection, as follows:

Level 0: Creature with no protection against cold at all.

Level 1: Creature with Cold Endurance feat, creature with fur, creature native to cold terrains.

Level 2: Creature with fur and native to cold terrain, creature native to extremely cold terrain.

Level 3: Creature with *endure elements* effect, creature with resistance to cold 5 or more.

A creature can increase its level of cold protection by using specialized equipment.

Equipment	Cold Protection Modifier
No special clothing	+0
Armor insulation, cold weather outfit, fur clothing	+1
Cold weather outfit + fur clothing, armor insulation + fur clothing	+2
Improvised shelter	+3

Exposure to Cold

Cold and exposure deal nonlethal damage. This nonlethal damage cannot be recovered until the character escapes the cold and warms up again. Once a character is rendered unconscious through the accumulation of nonlethal damage, the cold and exposure deals lethal damage at the same rate.

Cold (Blackmoor Region): An unprotected character in cold weather (below 40° F) must make a Fortitude save each hour (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Characters whose protection against cold is at least level 1 are safe at this temperature range.

Severe Cold (Land of Black Ice): In conditions of severe cold (below 0° F), an unprotected character must make a Fortitude save once every 10 minutes (DC 15, +1 per previous check), taking 1d6 points of nonlethal damage on each failed save. A partially protected character need only check once per hour. Characters whose protection against cold is at least level 2 are safe in this temperature range; those with level 1 protection are partially protected.

Extreme Cold: In conditions of extreme cold (below -20° F), an unprotected character takes 1d6 points

Overland Movement

Recent Snowfall

	None	Up to 12"	13-24"	25-60"	61"+
On Foot, 20 ft.	15 miles	7 miles	7 miles	3 miles	0 miles
On Foot, 30 ft.	20 miles	15 miles	10 miles	5 miles	0 miles
Mounted, 60 ft.	25 miles	25 miles	12 miles	12 miles	6 miles
Skis	0 miles	35 miles	18 miles	9 miles	4 miles
Snowshoes	0 miles	10 miles	10 miles	10 miles	10 miles
Dogsled	0 miles	50 miles	50 miles	25 miles	0 miles

of cold damage per 10 minutes (no save), and must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) each 10 minutes or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Those wearing metal armor or coming into contact with exposed metal are affected as if by a *chill metal* spell. A partially protected character takes damage and makes saving throws once per hour. Characters

whose cold protection is at least level 3 are safe in this temperature range; those with level 2 protection are partially protected, and those with level 1 are unprotected.

Any character who takes nonlethal damage from cold or exposure is beset by frostbite or hypothermia; if you don't have *Frostburn*, treat the character as fatigued. These penalties end when the character recovers the nonlethal damage she took from the cold and exposure.

Scaling The Adventure


"Raiders of the Black Ice" is designed for a group of four 3rd-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 1st-2nd-level characters or 4th-5th-level characters. All NPCs in the adventure should have their class levels adjusted by an amount equal to the increase or decrease in average party level from 3rd. Note that lower-level characters will find the perils of the freezing temperature to be much more dangerous; you should consider making potions of endure elements available in Tonnsborg, or perhaps you should set the adventure in the summer when the cold is less extreme.

1st-2nd Level: Replace the worgs with wolves, and the frost folk with 2nd-level snow goblin warriors. Remove the Medium snow spider from encounter 3. The dire wolf Ribchaw should become a worg.

4th-5th Level: Replace the worgs with dire wolves. All frost folk should gain 1-2 levels of rogue. Advance Maryoshka the rusalka by 4 Hit Dice, or give her 2 levels of sorcerer. Add 1-2 Medium snow spiders to encounter 3. The dire wolf Ribchaw should become a winter wolf.

Effects of Ice and Snow

Characters moving across ice or snow must spend 2 squares of movement to enter a square covered by ice, and the DC for Balance and Tumble checks increases by +5.

Overland movement over ice and snow is summarized on the following table. 

Wolfgang Baur lives in Seattle and dreams about monkeys. He is a former editor of *DUNGEON* magazine. "Raiders of the Black Ice" marks his seventh adventure in these pages.

MOUNT ZOGON



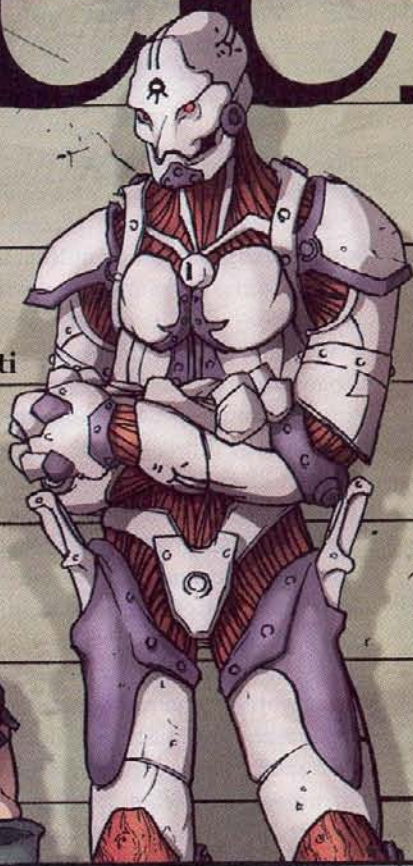
BY TONY MOSELEY

Steel

By Keith Baker

Illustrations by Attila Adorjany

Cartography by Robert Lazzaretti



A killer is stalking the warforged of Sharn. Some say the murderer is a vengeful spirit, while others blame human bigotry and fear. Can the adventurers expose the truth that lies hidden in the depths of Sharn?

"Steel Shadows" is a D&D adventure suitable for four characters of 7th level. This adventure is set in the city of Sharn in the *EBERRON* campaign setting. Since this is a mystery-themed adventure, at least one of the characters should have the Investigate feat.

Adventure Background

War spurs innovation, and in the terrible conflict that shattered the

kingdom of Galifar, magic was used in many new and deadly ways. The foremost artificers were the heirs of House Cannith, and the warforged were their greatest creation. Tireless and immune to the frailties of flesh and bone, these sentient constructs were used by the armies of the five warring nations of Aundair, Breland, Cyre, Karnath, and Thrane.

When the war finally came to an end, the Treaty of Thronehold gave the surviving warforged the rights of free citizens. In Breland, a large number of warforged settled in the city of Sharn. Unscrupulous trade barons bound

many of these naïve warforged in indentured servitude, and many of the warforged of Sharn now work in the underground districts of Ashblack or Blackbones.

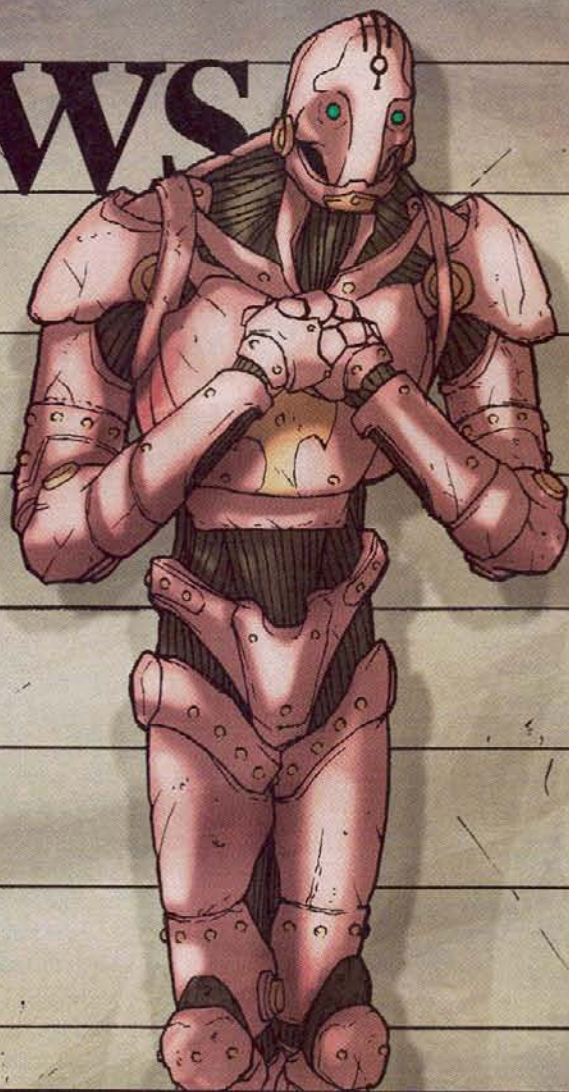
Over the last few months, there have been a string of murders in the Blackbones district. The victims have all been warforged, and the corpses have been horribly mutilated. The local humans blame Jack-in-Irons, a ghost said to haunt the foundries. Many warforged believe that humans are responsible, and tensions are rising. But the true killer is a warforged: a brilliant, unhinged artificer who intends to reshape the destiny of his race.

Shadows

EBERRON

Mid-Level (6–12)

Urban & Dungeon Crawl



Adventure Synopsis

The adventure begins with one of two different paths that lead the party to Blackbones in search of Jack-in-Irons, the ghost rumored to be behind the murders.

In Chapter One, the characters investigate the murders. A powerful Cannith nobleman doesn't want the party interfering with Jack-in-Irons, and two shifter rogues are sent to stop the investigation—permanently. The chapter closes with a conflict between angry warforged and human bigots, and in the midst of this conflict the true identity of the killer is revealed.

In Chapter Two, the party must confront the murderer in his lair and put

an end to the killings. In the process, they may learn the truth about the Cannith lord who created the killer, and in so doing set the stage for future adventures in Sharn.

Adventure Hooks

This section presents two introductory encounters to start the adventure off. If the PCs have no ties to warforged or to the Last War, start the adventure with **Adventure Hook 1: Working with the Watch**. If, on the other hand, one of the characters is a warforged or fought in the Last War, start the adventure with **Adventure Hook 2: A Friend in Need**.

Adventure Hook 1: Working with the Watch

It is raining in the city of Sharn. A cold wind has blown in from the Dagger River, and sheets of icy water fall from the sky. Many pedestrians caught on the vast balcony plazas of the Bazaar of Middle Dura have taken shelter under merchant pavilions; the closest apparently belongs to a half-orc selling spiced Marcher sweetmeats.

Before long, a deep voice calls out to the PCs, and a gaunt man wearing a hooded green oilskin cloak steps into the tent. Gray and black war within his beard, and his face is a map of wrinkles and

But I Don't Use EBERRON!

It is possible to adapt "Steel Shadows" to a campaign setting other than EBERRON, but doing so requires certain changes to be made.

In EBERRON, the warforged are a known commodity, and thousands of these magical soldiers are spread across Khorvaire. If the adventure is moved to a different setting, the warforged could be a local phenomenon. Perhaps these living constructs were created as an experiment by a powerful guild of wizards, in which case this guild should take the place of House Cannith. The lord of the land has granted the warforged freedom—most likely as a reward for service in a recent war. Nevertheless, they are feared by most normal people and thus confined to the Blackbones ghetto.

For those who do not possess the *EBERRON Campaign Setting* book, warforged are living constructs that bridge the gap between human and golem. They have emotions and can be affected by mind-altering spells. They have Constitution scores and can feel pain and can suffer nonlethal damage. However, they have many of the benefits of constructs: all warforged are immune to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, disease, nausea, fatigue, exhaustion, and energy drain, and do not need to eat or sleep. Warforged possess natural light fortification, and have a 25% chance to avoid damage from critical hits or sneak attacks. Finally, warforged have a natural weapon: a slam attack that deals 1d4 points of damage on a successful hit.

scars. Despite his age, he carries himself with the confidence of a soldier, and as he throws back his cloak he exposes the uniform of a member of the Sharn Watch.

The stranger is Dolias Nain (LG Male Human Warrior 3). One of the few honest soldiers in the Sharn Watch, Dolias is getting too old to fight. He may be a friend of an NPC the party has dealt with in the past, or he may belong to the same church as a PC paladin or cleric. Regardless, he knows who the characters are and what they are capable of. He's been looking for them for hours, and he wants their help.

Dolias would rather talk to the party somewhere private, like at his sparsely furnished quarters in Daggerwatch, but if the PCs seem hesitant to accompany him he'll agree to talk to them immediately.

"I don't know what you know of the Watch," Dolias says as he wrings the water out of

his cloak. "But these days it seems that the commanders are more interested in gold than justice. A murderer is at large beneath the city. In the last month, he's killed eight warforged. The Watch have always stayed out of the Cogs, and since only warforged have been killed, the commanders say no living creature has been harmed and are content to let the atrocity go."

Dolias sighs heavily. "I want this killer stopped. But I am only an old man, and the Watch is not loved in Blackbones. I know I wouldn't be trusted. So I come to you: will you find this murderer and see that justice is done?"

Dolias has no gold to offer. He's living on a shoestring budget himself. He may appeal to the party's sense of justice and religious beliefs. He can offer his personal gratitude and a friendly ear within the Sharn Guard. If the party is unmoved, he offers the one treasure he possesses—a +1 *axiomatic longsword* that has been in his family for generations—as a reward if the party stops the killer. This sword is safely secured in a nearby House Kundarak vault, so if the party is completely unscrupulous, they can't get a magic sword by killing an old man.

If the party agrees to the task, Dolias tells them to seek out a warforged named Ash at the Red Hammer tavern and smithy in Blackbones. He thanks them for showing an old man that there is still hope for justice in Sharn, and sends them on their way.

**Adventure Hook 2:
A Friend in Need**

If you use this adventure hook, the individual who approaches the PCs is actually a courier from House Tharashk. He presents one of the characters with a sealed letter:

My Friend,

I know that we have not spoken since the war. However, if this letter reaches you, I implore you to come to the Blackbones district of Sharn. Someone is murdering warforged. I have heard of your recent exploits, and I hope that you can put an end to the terror that haunts my home. Look for me in the Red Hammer—ask anyone in Blackbones for directions.

Your comrade in arms,
Ash

It is up to the DM to decide how Ash knows the chosen character. A warforged character may have been produced on the same creation forge as Ash. If the character fought in the war, Ash may have saved her life during a horrible ambush or fought at her side in the last terrible battle. Ash does not have to be one of the character's oldest and closest friends—just an old ally who is now in need.

**CHAPTER ONE:
BLACKBONES**

Whichever adventure hook the DM chooses, the party should ultimately end up in the Blackbones district in search of the Red Hammer. As the PCs enter Blackbones, read them the following.

The industry of Sharn is buried beneath the ground. Vast foundries and forges tap into lava flows that rise up from the depths, and tanneries, slaughterhouses, and other unsavory trades are hidden in the labyrinth that lies beneath the city. The heat is oppressive, the air is full of smoke and foul odors, and the ringing sound of metal on metal echoes through the dark and claustrophobic tunnels. This is Blackbones, the gateway to the lower Cogs.

The soot-covered halls seem to stretch on forever, punctuated by doors leading to workhouses or austere hostels. Warforged focus on their work while goblins and filthy human children lurk in the shadows. There are no signs of the Sharn Watch, but a few of the foundries have armed guards who watch passers-by with suspicious eyes. Up ahead, a distinctive sign indicates the entrance to a building—the Red Hammer.

At the Red Hammer the party meets the local warforged and obtains a number of leads. The subsequent encounters can occur in any order as the party decides what to investigate next, and there is no reason that the characters must follow every lead. But their investigation does stir up tensions, and ultimately this results in a fight between humans and warforged.

The Red Hammer

The Red Hammer is a social haven for the warforged of Blackbones. Part tavern, part smithy, it provides a source for conversation and repairs. Numerous warforged relax in the common room. A former soldier from the army of Thrane swaps war stories with a Brelish scout, while across the room a Cyran archer is being polished by a Karnn siege engineer. The lighting is dim and the air is filled with smoke from the small forge in the northern corner of the room.

The warforged react with guarded curiosity to any living creatures that enter the Red Hammer. Ash is tending the forge, and any of the patrons can point him out to the party if asked.

Ash (N Warforged Expert 3) is a former siege engineer. He is built for skilled labor; while strong, he has minimal armor plating. For a warforged, he is surprisingly charming and personable. One of the senior armorers in the Red Hammer, Ash minds the business while the owner is away. After introductions are made, he ushers the group over to a corner table and outlines the current troubles.

"Almost half of the warforged of Sharn live in Blackbones. Most made pacts with the guilds, exchanging services for shelter and a lump sum at the end of the term. After thirty years of war, ten years pounding steel seems simple enough, and most of the soldiers just want someone to tell them what to do.

"There have been difficult times. But we have always persevered. Then, last month, we found Leatherneck. He was damaged beyond hope of repair. His arms were... missing. Over the past few weeks, seven other warforged have been destroyed. The humans call the killer Jack-in-Irons. Shadowblack claims humans are responsible for the deaths. Me, I just want to stop being afraid."

Ash is willing to answer any questions the PCs may have; answers to probable questions are given below.

Did the victims have anything in common? "Yes, all eight victims worked at the Tain Foundry." (This doesn't occur to Ash until someone asks—a master inquisitive he's not.)

How were they killed?

"All of the victims were ripped apart and pieces of the bodies were missing. Some believe that the killer is some sort of beast from the deep ruins—something that actually eats metal."

Is there a pattern to the killings? "There have been eight deaths in four weeks, with

no obvious pattern." (Ash can indicate the locations of the killings on a map, and although he doesn't see a pattern to the locations, a character with the Investigate feat can make a Search check [DC 15] to quickly deduce that the Tain foundry is at the epicenter of the murders.)

Has anyone else done anything about the murders? Shadowblack is a local warforged who reveres the Lord of Blades, a zealous crusader for warforged rights and dominance who dwells in the distant Mourmland. With the murders, many warforged are starting to take him more seriously—something that concerns the peaceful Ash. Shadowblack spends most of his time at the Red Hammer, and Ash can point him out to the party.

Who found the most recent victim? **Where was the body found?** "The most recent victim was found by Dandy, a local warforged that often comes to the Red Hammer. Dandy found the victim just after

the attack and tried to repair him." (Dandy is present at the Red Hammer. Ash can point him out to the PCs.)

Where are the bodies now? "I believe the bodies have been claimed by Slogar d'Cannith, the lord of the local Cannith Forgehold." (A forgehold is a stronghold, usually run by house Cannith, where industrial work is performed. Ash can provide directions to this location if the PCs ask.)

Do you have any theories about the killer? Ash lowers his voice when he answers this question. He'd rather not let Shadowblack overhear his opinions. "A living creature would have certainly left more clues, don't you think? Me, I think the stories about that ghost are more than just stories." If asked to elaborate, Ash can relate the legend of Jack-in-Irons.



Ash

The Legend of Jack-in-Irons

The party may hear the story of Jack-in-Irons from Ash or at the Tain Foundry. It's also possible that a character already knows the tale if he can make a successful bardic knowledge or Knowledge (local) check (DC 20). The legend of Jack-in-Irons is as follows.

Sharn is built on the ruins of Dorasharn, one of the oldest human settlements in Khorvaire. Dorasharn was destroyed during the War of the Mark, the conflict that occurred when the first dragonmarked houses exterminated the bearers of aberrant dragonmarks. When Dorasharn was seized by the aberrant army, most of the inhabitants were allowed to flee, but a few were held as prisoners or slaves. One of these was Jack d'Cannith, a weaponsmith of remarkable skill. Jack was imprisoned in one of the deepest lava forges in Dorasharn, bound in mystical chains and forced to toil for the aberrant warlords. He was still trapped in the depths when the final battle shattered the city and buried the remnants under tons of rock. According to legend, the magical chains were so powerful that Jack's spirit was trapped in Dorasharn. Today, there are dozens of stories about the vengeful Jack-in-Irons. Sometimes he preys on dragonmark heirs. Sometimes he kills arrogant smiths who dare to match his skills. Lately, he's being blamed for the deaths of the warforged in Blackbones. He is the bogeyman of the Cogs, and superstitious crafters often carry a single chain link as a shield against his anger.

Ash does whatever he can to be helpful. He can escort the party to any of the murder scenes or introduce them to other warforged. He can arrange free lodging for them at the Red Hammer. He has no influence at the Tain Foundry or the Cannith Forgehold, but he can escort the PCs there (or at the very least, provide directions). Paranoic PCs may doubt Ash's intentions, but Sense Motive, *discern lies*, and similar efforts reveal that Ash is being honest and upfront with the party.

Interviewing Other Patrons

As the PCs speak with Ash, the other warforged pay closer and closer attention to the discussion. At some point, preferably when the PCs are about done with their questions, the other warforged in the room start piping in with their own theories about the murderer, opinions about the PCs, or whatever else may be nagging them.

Eight of the warforged in the common room are little more than drones (Neutral Warforged Warrior 1). For the most part, these warforged just want to be left alone to do their various jobs. Most were built for the Brelish army, but there are a few from other nations. These warforged don't want to find a new place in the world. They enjoyed the simplicity of the war and are content to live lives of indentured servitude. Three other warforged in the Hammer deserve particular mention, and may have additional clues for the PCs.

Shadowblack (LE Warforged Barbarian 1/Rogue 2): Shadowblack's body is covered



with blackened mithral plating, and dagger hilts extend from internal sheaths built into his thighs. His initial attitude is unfriendly. Ash introduces the

PCs to him carefully, warning them that he's quick to anger and has lots of friends amongst the warforged of Blackbones.

Shadowblack is a devotee of the doctrines of the Lord of Blades, a warforged visionary who advocates the destruction of all creatures of flesh. A full description of the Lord of Blades appears in *DUNGEON* #111, but this information is not necessary to play "Steel Shadows." He has no actual ties to the Lord of Blades, and even though Shadowblack is a skilled combatant he would rather let others fight on his behalf. He blames the human guards of the Tain Foundry for the deaths and says that they are using Jack-in-Irons as a distraction to conceal their own crimes. He has been urging the warforged to rise up and destroy the foundry before the murderers can strike again.

Shadowblack should be presented as a suspicious character. His hostility is obvious, and characters may rightfully wonder if Shadowblack is staging the murders to drum up support for the Lord of Blades. Even though he has nothing to hide, Shadowblack refuses to cooperate with any interrogation unless his attitude is adjusted to helpful (Diplomacy or Intimidate check DC 40). Even then, he has nothing of note to add to the investi-

gation aside from his own wild theories about the Tain Foundry.

If he notices someone use magic against him in an attempt to secure his cooperation, he loudly accuses the party of being in league with the killer. This immediately drops the attitude of all of the warforged in the room by one category; they don't all support Shadowblack's zealotry, but the 'forged won't stand by while one of their own is threatened by an outsider. Unless the party wants to get into a fight with ten angry warforged, provoking Shadowblack is a bad idea.

Shadowblack spends almost all of his time in the Red Hammer, preaching to any warforged that will listen. As a result, characters who want to follow Shadowblack find that he never leaves. On the rare occasions when the Red Hammer is closed, he simply wanders around nearby tunnels until it opens again.

Dandy (N Warforged Warrior 4):



Dandy was built for the heavy infantry of Cyre. He is six and a half feet tall and covered with adamantite plating. He is one of the few warforged in the Hammer who wears clothes; he's currently dressed in a teal and orange artisan's outfit. Ash tells the characters (under his breath) that Dandy is the one who found the most recent of the killer's victims before introducing them to him.

Despite his imposing appearance, Dandy is one of the most peaceful members of the community. He has turned his back on warfare and wants to become a bard. In general, he is enthusiastic but not very bright.

Dandy believes that the killer stalking Blackbones is some sort of monster, based on the terrible injuries and missing body parts. Dandy discovered the body of the most recent victim and is still traumatized by it. He mentions that when he first saw the body, it was in the shadows at the end of an alley. He thinks he saw a figure looming over it but as he called out and approached the figure ran off. It was only when he approached further that he

realized what was going on. The fact that he was fewer than 30 feet away from the killer still terrifies him, and the fact that he didn't even get a good look at the killer dismays him greatly. If asked to describe the body's condition, he does his best but quickly breaks down in sobs and cannot continue. In this case, Ash quietly points out that the bodies of the victims are being stored at the Cannith Forgehold. If Shadowblack sees Dandy break down in sobs, he quickly rises to defend him from the "intolerant, hateful fleshies."

Copper (CN Warforged Artificer 9, see page 50 for full stats): Well over six feet tall



and covered in coppery metal, this warforged is unusually lean and gaunt. His limbs are out of proportion to his body, as if they were stretched out on

a rack, and his fingers are long and delicate. Copper is often seen carrying a large burlap sack of scrap metal—garbage he's collected from the tunnels of Blackbones. Before Ash introduces the PCs to Copper, he asks them to go easy on him since he's a little simple-minded and seems to be particularly afraid of whatever it is that's killing warforged in the area.

Copper's initial attitude is friendly. Once an armorer in the service of Cyre, he was driven mad when his homeland was destroyed. Now he wanders the tunnels and foundries, collecting scraps of metal that he contributes to the smiths of the Red Hammer. He is a pathetic creature who speaks in a rambling stream of consciousness. When running Copper, take pains to make him seem pathetic and harmless, rather than a suspect.

If anyone asks him about the killings, Copper seems to grow fearful. He mutters phrases like, "It's tearing us apart. It exposes our flaws! It towers! More powerful than any one of us! It's going to kill us all!" He continues in this vein for as long as anyone wants to listen; his rants are nothing new to the other warforged in the Hammer. They are embarrassed

by his condition, but at the same time they'll rise to his defense if the PCs antagonize him.

Copper is more than he seems. His half-mad mutterings in truth refer not to the killer and the warforged, but to himself and the voices his madness periodically bring on. When he mutters "It's tearing us apart!" he's really saying "The voices are tearing me apart!" Of course, at this early stage in the adventure, this should not be made apparent to the PCs. They should interpret his ravings as fearful rants brought on by the killer.

Copper is in fact an experimental warforged prototype created in the last days of the war. He was intended to be a field medic, with the ability to salvage materials from the battlefield and use these parts to repair wounded warforged. The destruction of Cyre has shattered his mind. For the last few years he has been a ruin, barely able to hold it together enough to eke out a living collecting garbage and selling scrap metal to smiths and foundries. Yet from his madness has come a terrible epiphany. Copper now believes that warforged are flawed, because they have been built by human hands. He thinks that his victims are calling out to him and begging to be rebuilt by fellow warforged into new and perfect forms. Copper is well on the way to finishing his first creation, a mismatched, horrific juggernaut cobbled together from parts scavenged from his victims.

It is critical for Copper to be portrayed as both friendly and pathetic; he should not be an immediate suspect. If the PCs use *zone of truth* or *discern lies* on him and he fails his saving throw to resist the spell, he grows increasingly nervous. If forced to answer a question that reveals his crimes, he instead tries to flee into Blackbones. In this case, the other warforged come to his defense (inadvertently enabling his escape), assuming that the PCs antagonized the poor creature into flight.

After talking to the other warforged, the party should have a number of possible leads to follow. They can try to examine the bodies at the Cannith forgehold. They can visit the sites where the victims were killed. Or they can go to the foundry where the victims all worked, and where Shadowblack suspects the killer may be hiding.

Slogar's Forgehold

House Cannith's interests in this district are spread throughout the various foundries and workhouses, and the forgehold of Blackbones is small but luxurious. A silent, grim warforged guards an open door, beyond which is visible a small atrium. A young woman wearing the livery of the house studies a sheaf of parchment within.

Few people live in the forgehold of Blackbones. This woman is Morla Cannith (LN Human Female Magewright 2/Expert 1, Sense Motive +5, Will +6), an administrative assistant who manages day-to-day business for Lord Slogar d'Cannith. Her initial attitude is indifferent. If the PCs ask her about the murders, she says that they're a terrible tragedy and acknowledges that they still have the bodies of the victims. If the characters wish to examine the bodies, Morla must be made friendly with a successful Diplomacy Or Intimidate check (DC 15). A member of House Cannith receives a +5 circumstance bonus on this check, and a Cannith character with the Favored in House feat can simply ask to see the bodies as a favor. If any of these attempts succeed, Morla cheerfully leads the way to the workshop where the bodies are being stored.

The bodies are kept in a large underground arcane workshop. The walls are lined with glittering crystal mosaics, strange alchemical devices, and sheets of foil inscribed with mystical sigils, along with a set of shelves overflowing with spell components. The eight victims have been arranged on the floor against the eastern wall. The corpses are covered with black silk sheets embroidered with silver sigils.

Morla allows the characters to remove the protective sheets and examine the warforged corpses, but only if she's allowed to supervise the procedure. Some of the bodies are missing limbs, while others have enormous gashes in their torsos. Two corpses are missing their heads. To the untrained eye, the warforged seem to have been torn apart by some terrible beast. But a skillful observer may see beyond the obvious injuries.

If a character possesses the Investigate feat and makes a successful Search check (DC 15), he notices that while the

bodies have been mutilated in different ways, each one shares a specific injury: a deep penetration wound in the center of the chest, probably caused by a dagger. Despite the other terrible injuries, it seems that this chest wound was the killing blow in each case.

If no one in the party possesses Investigate, the killing wound can be discovered with a successful Search (DC 25) check, although its significance is left to the players to determine.

A second clue is hidden in the bodies, one that requires a successful Search check (DC 20) by a character with the Investigate feat to discover. Success indicates the character realizes that the missing body parts were not merely hacked off; they were meticulously chiseled away and severed to preserve the limb as best as possible. The limbs were removed post-mortem, and in a way that indicates the killer had both patience and time with the dead body. The killer also likely has the Craft Construct feat, judging by the precision of the amputations.

Of the bodies, only four have complete enough heads that a *Speak with Dead* spell can function, and of those four, only one (the most recent) is intact enough to be able to function properly. A *Speak with Dead* spell cast on the other three corpses works in only a limited manner, and can only answer in one or two words per question. All of the warforged were neutral, and thus they gain Will saves against this spell if cast by a differently aligned cleric. The bodies all have Will saves of +3.

The mostly intact corpse is also the most recent victim, the one whose murder was witnessed (and nearly interrupted) by Dandy. Copper killed his victims with a +1 *construct bane dagger* after luring the victim into a secluded alley with the dismantled links of gold chain. He used a *skill enhancement* infusion and a *cat's grace* infusion to increase his Hide skill, and as the victim gathered up the scattered gold links, Copper lunged at him from hiding and delivered a killing blow to the chest. None of the victims saw him clearly before they were killed, so if asked to describe the killer the bodies can only say that the killer was shockingly fast, tall, and lean. If asked what race the killer was, the body can answer

that it was a warforged. None of these answers specifically identifies Copper as the killer, but they should point the PCs in his direction nevertheless.

Creature: Not long after the PCs begin investigating the bodies (perhaps just after they finish a *Speak with Dead* spell), they are interrupted by the arrival of the forgehold's owner, Lord Slogar d'Cannith. Despite his small stature and the gray and silver running through his dark goatee, he projects an aura of authority. He is dressed in rich robes of dark blue velvet, and he wears the Cannith seal on a chain around his neck. "What is the meaning of this intrusion?" he growls.

Lord Slogar is an influential member of House Cannith. He oversaw Copper's creation during the Last War, and brought him to Sharn when he fled Cyre's destruction. He was disappointed when he realized that the destruction drove Copper insane, but soon realized that the warforged artificer's insanity had unleashed an unforeseen vein of innovation and creativity. Slogar knows that Copper is in the process of building a new construct from amputated warforged parts, and he's determined to let the madman continue in the hopes of somehow profiting from the end result of his machinations.

As such, the last thing Slogar wants is interfering adventurers. He listens to what the party has to say, then coldly informs them that the warforged are under the protection of House Cannith. The party's assistance is thus both unnecessary and unwanted. He demands that they leave Blackbones at once before they further damage his investigation. Of course, Slogar has no intention of sharing any of his findings with them or encouraging them in any way. He is more polite to a character from House Cannith, but his message remains the same: go away, you meddlers!

The characters can try to weasel information out of Slogar before they go, but he won't say anything more than that he is close to locating the murderer. If he can be made helpful, he may take that one character into his confidence, saying only that perhaps the killer's motivations can profit those who know what to look for.

Lord Slogar d'Cannith, Male Human Artificer 4/Dragonmark Heir 3:



CR 7; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 4d6+4 plus 3d8+3; hp 37; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +5; Grp +5; Atk/Full

Atk +5 melee (1d3, unarmed strike); SA improved least dragonmark, improved lesser dragonmark, infusions; SQ additional action points, artificer knowledge +6, artisan bonus, craft homunculus, disable trap, house status, item creation; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 16.

Skills: Appraise +9, Bluff +12, Concentration +8, Disable Device +9, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Open Lock +8, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +11 (+13 scrolls), Use Magic Device +10 (+12 wondrous items, +14 scrolls).

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Extraordinary Artisan, Favored in House, Iron Will, Least Dragonmark, Lesser Dragonmark, Persuasive, Scribe Scroll.

Dragonmark: Slogar has the lesser dragonmark of House Cannith (mark

Repercussions of Violence

Several of the NPCs encountered in this adventure are both important personages and unpleasant individuals. In particular, the PCs might find themselves in combat with Lord Slogar or Molric Torranol. Unfortunately, both of these NPCs have connections; attacking either invites disaster. The corrupt authorities may not care about the death of a few warforged, but the murder or assault of an influential dragonmark heir or a supervisor of a foundry brings the full force of the law against the party. Furthermore, House Cannith may hire bounty hunters, assassins, and worse to avenge insult or murder of their name—the characters might be able to survive the experience, but they'd be forced to live as hunted fugitives. This development is beyond the scope of "Steel Shadows" but could nonetheless serve as a foundation for an exciting campaign in which the PCs are exciting trying desperately to clear their names.

of making) and the following spell-like abilities: 2/day—*repair light damage*, *repair serious damage*. Caster level 9th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin.

Infusions: 4/3.

Possessions: *Ring of mind shielding*, *potion of invisibility*.

Development: The party may consider attacking Lord Slogar. If they do so, or if they refuse to leave after his repeated requests, he'll try to cut his losses, drinking his *potion of invisibility* to escape with his skin intact.

Assuming instead that the PCs leave without a fight, Lord Slogar quickly dispatches two shifter rogues to locate and eliminate them before they learn too much. This attack is detailed below under "Tunnel Ambush."

The Tain Foundry

The Tain Family is one of the wealthiest bloodlines of Sharn, and their foundry is the largest in Blackbones. Dozens of warforged are spread throughout the compound, where they haul ingots and crates or work with molten metal and glass. A handful of humans and dwarves monitor the work. The warforged work without rest, food, or drink, toiling without complaint in conditions that could kill a human being.

Getting past the guards at the gate requires the use of magic or a successful Diplomacy or Bluff check (DC 15). Success buys an audience with the captain of the guard and the chief overseer—who are coincidentally the same person—one Molric Torranol.

As the PCs are led by the guards to his office, they hear a strange hammering sound. Upon arrival, they find that two guards have pinned a scrawny warforged to the ground. A dwarf stands in front of the warforged, having just delivered a powerful kick to the warforged's chest. It staggers back in the arms of its captors, but does not cry out. As the PCs arrive, the dwarf turns and notices them. He makes an impatient gesture, and the guards drag the warforged from the room.

Creature: This dwarf is Molric Torranol, supervisor of the Tain Foundry. He is bald and clean-shaven, a personal

affectation that other dwarves may consider to be a sign of a disturbed mind. He is in excellent physical condition; he trained as a monk of Dol Dorn for many years before his love of drink and cruelty drew him away from his monastic rule. He wears a fine red robe and a golden medallion of office. If someone makes a successful Spot check (DC 20), they notice an unusual bracelet on his left wrist: a narrow silver band supporting a larger circle of gold—what appears to be a single link of a gold chain.

Molric is initially unfriendly. In order to get any information from him, the party must make a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check to make him at least friendly (DC 25). Dwarves receive a +5 circumstance bonus on this check, but warforged suffer a -5 penalty.

Although he won't initiate any fights, it's possible that the PCs may be driven to attack him (perhaps in response to his beating of the warforged servant). He only attacks for lethal damage if the PCs do, and reports their actions to the authorities the first chance he gets.

➔ **Molric, Male Dwarf Monk 2/Warrior 2/Expert 2:** CR 5; Medium



h u m a n o i d (dwarf); HD 2d8+4 plus 2d8+4 plus 2d6+4; hp 38; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +4;

Grp +6; Atk +8 melee (1d8+4, +1 *longsword*); Full Atk +6/+6 melee (1d8+4, +1 *longsword* using Whirling Steel Strike and flurry of blows); SA flurry of blows, unarmed strike; SQ dwarf traits, evasion; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +3, Climb +4, Diplomacy +3, Intimidate +4, Jump +3, Profession (foundry manager) +5, Sense Motive +9, Tumble +9.

Feats: Deflect Arrows^B, Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Stunning Fist^B, Weapon Focus (*longsword*), Whirling Steel Strike.

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Possessions: +1 *longsword*, *bracers of armor +1*, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, medallion of office (10 gp), purse containing 30 gp and 15 pp

Development: If someone can break through his initial gruffness, Molric laughs and pulls out a bottle of mead, offering drinks all around. He is now willing to answer questions; some likely questions and answers are detailed below.

What do you know about the murderer? Molric firmly believes in the legend of Jack-in-Irons, and if the party hasn't heard the story he tells it to them. He believes that the vengeful undead smith is angry because the unnatural warforged have taken over the foundries and smithies of the undercity—and that Jack-in-Irons will continue to kill until all of the warforged in Blackbones have been destroyed.

And this doesn't concern you? "The foundry did just fine before the warforged. They should have been melted down at the end of the war—Jack's just taking matters into his own hands. I suppose they're good workers, though, so hopefully someone'll do something about the situation before it affects the foundry here."

Why were you beating that warforged? "That pile of slag's a halfwit, but for some reason the Tains took him in, anyway. I can't get much useful work out of him, so I beat him instead to help keep the other warforged in line."

Are you Jack-in-Irons? This question causes Molric to guffaw loudly. "Of course not! You gotta beat the damn things to keep them in line, but killing them won't help production!"

What's that bracelet? "The smiths of the Cogs always carry a link of chain as protection against Jack-in-Irons. I found this one at the site of one of the murders, and none of my warforged have been killed yet, so it must work!" Molric may give this bracelet to the PCs if they seem particularly keen on tracking down Jack-in-Irons—"Ye'll need the protection more than me!" The gold link is worth 10 gp, and is one of those used by Copper to lure victims into his clutches.

What can you tell us about the victims? Molric simply shrugs if asked a question like this. He has no interest in the personal

lives of the warforged, and in fact can only barely tell one apart from the other.

Crime Scenes

There is little to be found at the murder scenes. Too much time and traffic have passed for any hope of tracking the murderer. Nevertheless, no one's really done a good search or investigation of the crime scenes yet.

At each crime scene, allow players the opportunity to make Search checks; they can take 20 on these checks (doing so takes two hours of searching). A successful Search check (DC 25) uncovers 1d4–2 links of gold chain. A result of 0 or less indicates that there is nothing at that particular crime scene to find. The last crime scene always has at least one gold link to be found. Each of these links is the size of a thumb-tip and is worth 10 gp. Copper lures his victims into dark alleys with several of these links, scavenged from a large length of gold chain he found in a ruined forge several months ago. After each murder, he gathers up as many of the links as he can find to re-use them, but the scuffle invariably causes some of them to be kicked into gutters, under rocks, or into cracks and drainage holes at the base of the walls.

Particularly canny PCs may use the gold links as a focus for *scrying*. Copper gains a +10 bonus on his Will save since the PCs have no real idea of where the links are from, but this bonus is somewhat mitigated by the –4 penalty incurred by the fact that the PCs are using one of his possessions to scry on him. Successfully scrying on Copper reveals him in his lair. Each hour of scrying, there's a cumulative 10% chance of seeing a clue somewhere nearby that reveals the location of his lair. Just what Copper is up to when scryed is up to you, but he shouldn't be working on his copper juggernaut; save that surprise for the climax of the adventure!

Tunnel Ambush (EL 8)

Some time after they have talked to Slogar d'Cannith, the party is attacked by a pair of shifter rogues sent by Lord Slogar to ensure that the PCs don't interfere with Copper's work. The shifters attack while the characters are traveling

from through one of the many tunnels in Blackbones, perhaps as they return home after a day of investigation. You should read or paraphrase the following at the start of the encounter.

Blackbones is a maze of tunnels. The centers of industry are well lit, but in the tunnels that link them together the ever-burning torches are spread farther apart, and this creates long stretches of shadow. Goblins often build nests in some of these passages, temporary shelters made from whatever refuse was at hand, but this section of tunnels seems curiously free of their chattering presence.

Creatures: The PCs should all make Listen and Spot checks, opposed by the rogues' Move Silently and Hide checks. Any characters who hear or see the shifters are allowed a standard action in the surprise round. Otherwise, the shifters wait for the PCs to come within 30 feet before they shift and make sneak attacks with their heavy crossbows.

Shifters are descended from humans and natural lycanthropes. Gifted with the ability to take on animalistic features by shifting, these two shifters are touched with the grace and deadly speed of tigers, a fact borne out by their cat-like eyes, sharp canines, and black and orange striped hair.

The statistics for the shifters include the +2 bonus to Dexterity and 20-foot bonus to speed they gain while shifted; shifting is a free action they take when they spring their ambush, and it lasts for 6 rounds. Their Shifter Ferocity feat lets them continue fighting without penalty if disabled or dying, even when they aren't shifting at the time.

➤ **Sszarkus and Worlask, Male Shifter Rogue 4/Ranger 2 (2):** CR 6; Medium humanoid (shapechanger); HD 4d6+4 plus 2d8+2; hp 39, 31; Init +5; Spd 50 ft; AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grap +7; Atk +8 melee (1d8+3 plus Large scorpion venom on first hit, +1 longsword) or +11 ranged (1d10 plus Large scorpion venom on first shot, masterwork heavy crossbow); Full Atk +6 melee (1d8+3 plus Large scorpion venom on first hit, +1 longsword) and +6 melee

(1d6+1, masterwork short sword) or +11 ranged 1d10 plus Large scorpion venom on first shot, masterwork heavy crossbow); SA favored enemy (human) +2, shift 2/day, sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, low-light vision, shifter traits, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge, wild empathy +0; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +13, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Balance +16, Climb +4, Hide +14, Jump +21, Listen +8, Move Silently +14, Spot +8, Survival +7, Tumble +14.

Feats: Dodge, Longstride Elite, Shifter Ferocity, Track^B, Two-Weapon Fighting^B.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Masterwork heavy crossbow, 10 crossbow bolts, +1 longsword, masterwork short sword, +1 leather armor, cloak of resistance +1, 3 doses of Large scorpion venom (Fort DC 18, 1d6 Str/1d6 Str).

Tactics: The shifters aim their initial sneak attacks at obvious spellcasters during the surprise round, hoping to disable them quickly. On the first round of combat, they charge into melee and flank the toughest-looking fighter, then turn to melee when the characters close. The two place their personal honor over safety, and neither will attempt to retreat or surrender despite the situation.

Development: Although unlikely, the shifters may be captured alive. They constantly attempt to escape if tied, and spit and growl instead of answering questions. Only if their initial attitude of hostile is adjusted to helpful (DC 50) or if they're magically compelled do they answer questions. Neither knows anything useful about the murders, but they can say that they were hired to kill the PCs by a small, gray-haired human who wore blue robes; they don't know his name, but the PCs doubtless recognize the description of Lord Slogar. If they return to the forgehold to confront him, they find Lord Slogar to be missing—he's retreated to an undisclosed location in the upper section of Sharn to wait things out. If they become obsessed with Lord Slogar and neglect the investigation, news of the eventual slaughter at the Red Hammer should put them back on track.

Rumble! (EL 9)

As the PCs investigate the murders and interview suspects, their actions trigger an event that has been building over the past several days—a violent conflict between the warforged and the human guards of the Tain Foundry.

You should run this event at some point after the PCs have visited the Tain Foundry and have spoken to Molric. Perhaps they are returning to the foundry to confront Molric with some evidence, or perhaps they're on their way to the Red Hammer to confront Copper with their discoveries. In any case, the PCs suddenly hear the

sound of a loud argument between several warforged and humans.

The party is 30 feet away from a bend in the passage when the argument begins. Around the corner, a riot is brewing. Shadowblack has finally convinced a group of warforged to stand up against the murderous creatures of flesh (although Shadowblack has wisely chosen to stay out of the battle). His vigilantes set to the streets, and before long find Molric Torranol and a group of his guards at this intersection. The two sides are on the verge of a full-scale combat.

If the party moves quickly, they can attempt to calm the hostile crowd. As long



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as the PCs get the attention of the group within two rounds and immediately start trying to use Diplomacy or Intimidate to defuse the situation, they'll be able to hold off hostilities for about a minute. After this time, a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 25) is enough to calm the warforged and the guards enough that each group peacefully goes their own way, the warforged back to the Red Hammer and the guards and Molric back to the foundry. Otherwise, it's time to roll for initiative!

Creatures: Six warforged face off against Molric and four of his personal guards. If things come to blows, the PCs are free to choose which side they wish to assist: If they choose a side, the opposition howls in rage and attacks them as well.

➤ **Warforged Fighter 3 (6);** CR 3; Medium construct (living construct); HD 3d10+6; hp 25, 23, 22, 21, 19, 18; Init +0; Spd 20 ft; AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +3; Grap +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+1, slam); SA —; SQ damage reduction 2/adamantine, light fortification (25% chance to ignore additional damage from critical hits or sneak attacks), warforged traits; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Craft (armorsmith) +2, Intimidate +1.

Feats: Adamantine Body, Iron Will, Power Attack.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Amulet of natural armor +1, oil of repair moderate damage.

➤ **Tain Guards, Male Human Warrior 2 (4);** CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d8 plus 3; hp 14, 12, 12, 10; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grap +3; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+1, masterwork club); SA —; SQ —; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills: Intimidate +4, Knowledge (local) +1, Listen +1, Spot +1.

Feats: Dodge, Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, light steel shield, masterwork club.

➤ **Molric:** See page 44 for statistics.

Tactics: For the first few rounds of battle, the Tain forces use nonlethal attacks. When the first guard falls they switch to dealing lethal damage. Molric always at-

tacks to inflict lethal damage. With each blow he calls out the name of a relative or friend killed by a warforged in the Last War. Yes, he is a despicable bigot—but he does have a reason for his hatred.

The warforged are grim and determined, and they fully intend to kill the Tain forces with their bare hands. Whenever possible they gang up on isolated targets, using superior numbers and flanking tactics to bring down the enemy one at a time.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs defuse the situation with diplomacy, intimidation, or magic, award them experience as if they defeated a CR 9 creature. If they joined sides with one group, award them experience normally for foes defeated, but cut the final award in half due to the aid received by their impromptu allies. If they sit back and let the two groups fight it out, they earn no experience.

Copper Revealed

After this adventure begins, the PCs have only two days to uncover the killer's identity. Discovering the gold links at the crime scenes (or noticing the one that Molric found) is the primary clue. If the PCs ask warforged at the Red Hammer about these unusual chain links, Ash, Dandy, or Shadowblack can all confirm that Copper sometimes uses them to pay for repairs or other pieces of equipment. Of course, Copper won't be present at the Red Hammer on this visit; he's busy preparing for his next murder.

The PCs may use spells like *Speak with Dead*, *Divination*, *Detect Lie*, and *Zone of Truth* to narrow down the list of suspects to Copper.

If the PCs fail to deduce the identity of the killer before two days have passed, Copper takes matters into his own hands. He has but one thing left to gather for his juggernaut—a head. He goes to the Red Hammer late in the night of the second day and kills the three warforged he finds there—one of the drones, Shadowblack, and Ash. News of the triple murder spreads like wildfire after Dandy arrives at the Red Hammer a few hours later. The PCs should hear of it soon enough.

The shocking development causes a near-panic in Blackbones. This is the largest murder yet, and the first to take place in a building. Warforged retreat to

their homes, or hide in rubble or crates if they have none. Other people gawk at the ruin in the Red Hammer and frantically spread rumors while they watch the shadows for a glimpse of Jack-in-Irons. No one's brave enough to enter the Red Hammer to investigate, but plenty peer through windows at the carnage inside. Shadowblack's torso is shattered and some of the internal components have been removed. A nameless warforged soldier has lost both arms. And Ash's head is nowhere to be seen.

No one bars the characters' entry into the Red Hammer. A character who makes a successful Search check (DC 20) notes that the missing body parts have been carefully removed in the same manner as from the other victims, but that the remains do not bear the single, clean killing wound to the torso that the previous victims had. Rather, each of these bodies bears several smaller stab wounds and one deep killing wound elsewhere on the body, indicating that the victims put up a fight against their murderer. The search also reveals fragments of copper lodged in Shadowblack's and Ash's hands.

Shadowblack and the drone's body are both in good enough condition that a *Speak with Dead* spell works normally (both have Will saves of +1), and both of them can identify Copper as their killer. If the PCs don't use *Speak with Dead* to identify the killer, the traces of copper on Shadowblack's and Ash's hands can be analyzed by a character with the Investigate feat; a successful Search check (DC 15) to analyze this clue confirms that the copper may have been scraped from Copper's armor plating.

CHAPTER TWO: THE IRONMONGER

Once the PCs suspect Copper is the killer, they'll find him fairly difficult to track down. The warforged at the Red Hammer know only that he's often seen at the Tain Foundry. A successful DC 25 Gather Information check (which gains a +4 bonus on the roll if the character is attempting the roll at or near the Tain Foundry) is enough to learn that Copper lives in a small closet in the basement of the Tain Foundry. Molric is willing to lead the PCs to Copper's closet if his at-

titude is at least friendly; otherwise, he'll need a bribe of at least 100 gp. If Molric is dead, any other worker at the foundry can do so instead.

Copper's closet is detailed below as encounter area 1. The secret door in the closet opens into a narrow tunnel that soon opens into a large set of caverns under the Tain Foundry. These caves aren't natural; they were in fact created by Copper over the course of several months. He used several *wands of soften earth and stone* he created to turn the stone to clay, and then scooped the clay out and disposed of it elsewhere in Blackbones.

These caves are generally unlit, but Copper keeps several everburning torches handy for light and any room he's encountered in also has a few torches in it. Ceiling height averages about 10 feet unless the room description says otherwise.

1. The Curious Closet

Copper's closet is located in the basement of the Tain Foundry, one of nearly two dozen identical closets in a long hallway filled with doors. These storage closets have been serving as barracks for the warforged ever since the Last War ended and Tain Foundry's had more workers than their standard barracks could accommodate. Of course, since warforged don't sleep, they only use their barracks as a place to store their belongings or to retreat for privacy for their few hours a day of break time.

Unfortunately, Copper's closet appears to be empty.

Nevertheless, there is something important to be found here; a secret door in the east wall provides access to a narrow tunnel. The secret door can be found with a successful Search check (DC 20). The door is in fact a wooden panel painted to look like stone. It can be pulled aside with a successful Strength check (DC 14).

The secret door opens onto a dark, narrow fissure. The walls of the passage are loose chunks of rock, and it seems that the tunnel could collapse at any moment. The air is cold and dank, filled with the stench of rot and mold. A few scraps of metal and chain links are scattered along the floor of the passage. A successful Survival check (DC 20) by

a character with the Track feat reveals that a single warforged has recently moved through this tunnel.

Molric (or any other Tain Foundry guides who led the PCs to the closet) refuses to accompany the PCs into the tunnel. It certainly looks unsafe, but a successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 15) is enough to reveal that the passageway is quite sound.

2. The Field of Blades (EL 6)

After a hundred feet, the fissure becomes a full-fledged cavern. Fifty feet down the tunnel, the stone floor is guarded by a particularly insidious Trap.

Trap: A host of razor-sharp blades hidden in niches along the floor guards this section of the passage. Anyone stepping into the trapped section activates the trap, which causes two effects to occur.

First, a thin metal cable drops out of the ceiling 10 feet to the south of the trapped area. The cable is then pulled north violently by a set of counterweights hidden in the wall, moving north to the northern section of the trap. The cable makes a bull

rush attack against any creatures in its path; it has an effective Strength check of +15. Anyone who fails to beat the cable's Strength check is pushed north by five feet for each 5 points by which the cable's Strength check result is greater than the defender's check result. This may knock characters all the way into area 12, but not before they suffer the second effects of the trap. Small or smaller creatures are not affected by the cable, since it passes just over their heads.

At the same time the cable activates, the dozens of blades set in the floor spring out and begin rotating wildly in place, turning the floor into a whirling deathtrap. The cable passes harmlessly just above the tips of these blades, but any creature standing or lying in the trapped section (or knocked into the section by the cable) takes 10d6 points of slashing damage per round they remain in the trapped area. The blades continue rotating for 1 minute before they wind down.

Copper navigates this section by flipping one of two hidden switches in the wall on either side of the trap to temporarily disable it. The noise generated by

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the trap is more than enough to alert him to the PCs' intrusion into his lair.

↗ **Legslasher Trap:** CR 7; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; hidden switch bypass (Search check DC 20); Bull rushing cable (+15 Strength check) and spinning blades (10d6 damage per round for 1 minute, Reflex DC 20 half); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 28.

3. Living Rubble (EL 9)

The tunnel widens here into a broad cavern. This long chamber is filled with refuse and scraps of metal. Bits of broken weaponry and rusting armor are mixed together with tools, coins, chain links, and other odds and ends. It's a magpie's dream, but it's hard to say if there is anything of value hidden in the rubbish.

Copper knows that there's a chance that intruders could stumble into his lair. Those who survive the legslasher trap must deal with the guardians he has stationed here.

The door in the southeast is actually a Trapped copper gate.

🔑 **Copper Gate:** Hardness 10, hp 40, Break DC 35.

Creatures: During Copper's early wanderings through the forgotten tunnels of Sharn, he stumbled into a ravid's lair. The creature had never seen a warforged before and wasn't quite sure what to make of it. Copper was intrigued by the creature (in particular, its ability to infuse life into inanimate objects), and quickly managed to strike a bargain with it. In return for a safe place to live and regular deliveries of things to animate and play with, the ravid would serve as a guard for Copper's lair. Intrigued, the ravid agreed, and Copper smuggled it into his lair in his *bag of holding*. He had hoped to use the ravid's ability to animate objects to aid in the creation of his juggernaut, but this soon proved impractical and he was forced to use other forms of magic.

The ravid lurks near the eastern mound of rubble if it hears the trap in area 2 activate. Its presence has animated two iron chains, a mound of scrap metal, and seven discarded warforged body parts that Copper couldn't use. These animated objects rush to attack any intruders. The

ravid has forbidden the objects to attack Copper, but hasn't bothered to give them any more complex orders. Note that any other nonmagical objects discarded by the PCs in this room may become animated objects as well.

➤ **Ravid:** hp 18; *Monster Manual* 213.

➤ **Small Animated Warforged Arms and Legs (7):** hp 15 each; SA —; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; *Monster Manual* 13.

➤ **Medium Animated Iron Chains (2):** hp 31 each; Spd 30 ft., climb 15 ft.; SA constrict 1d6+1; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., hardness 10, low-light vision; *Monster Manual* 13.

➤ **Large Animated Scrap Metal (1):** hp 52; Spd 40 ft.; SA trample 1d8+4; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., hardness 10, low-light vision; *Monster Manual* 13.

Trap: The copper gate is locked (Open Lock DC 30) and bound with a *shocking grasp* trap created by Copper. The trap activates if any non-construct touches the gate.

↗ **Shocking Gate:** CR 4; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset (1 minute delay); spell effect (*shocking grasp*, 5th-level wizard, 5d6 electricity damage); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

Treasure: One of the warforged arms wears a *ring of counterspells* (contains *scorching ray*) that, to casual observation, seems to be a decoration on the warforged's finger (both the finger and ring are made of iron). A successful Search check (DC 20) or a *detect magic* reveals the ring's presence.

4. Copper's Sanctum (EL 9)

The tunnel finally comes to an end, opening onto a large cavern. This chamber is filled with odd pieces of junk that may once have had arcane significance. The floor is covered with broken vials that once held potions, rotting scraps of bat fur, rusting iron filings, and similar useless components.

On the far eastern wall you see a complex mosaic of glowing dragonshards, connected to a vast array of bubbling beakers and other alchemical devices. A large humanoid figure lies in front of the bank of crystals; draped over it is a sheet of embroidered black silk. The grisly as-

sortment of discarded warforged limbs lying on the ground around it hint at what may lie beneath the sheet.

This is Copper's laboratory and workshop. It is here that he built his "perfect warforged." The body under the sheet is complete, it is merely undergoing the final process of accumulating enough magic energy to activate. But before the PCs can approach the figure, they'll need to deal with Copper.

Creature: Copper waits for the PCs in the southwest section of this room, where he has just finished sorting warforged body parts for the creation of a second copper juggernaut. He's a bit annoyed that the PCs have managed to get into his lair, but since his creation is only a few minutes away from life, he realizes he must distract the PCs for as long as possible. When he sees them enter, he claps his hands in glee and moves to stand between them and the nearly-activated juggernaut, calling out, "Ah! You've arrived! They told me you were on the way!"

Copper hopes to be able to distract the PCs by talking to them. He's confident that when the juggernaut awakens it can kill them with ease, so he answers any questions the PCs pose to him. Probable questions and answers follow.

Who are "they"? "They are many. There are those who give and those who beg, those who help and those in need."

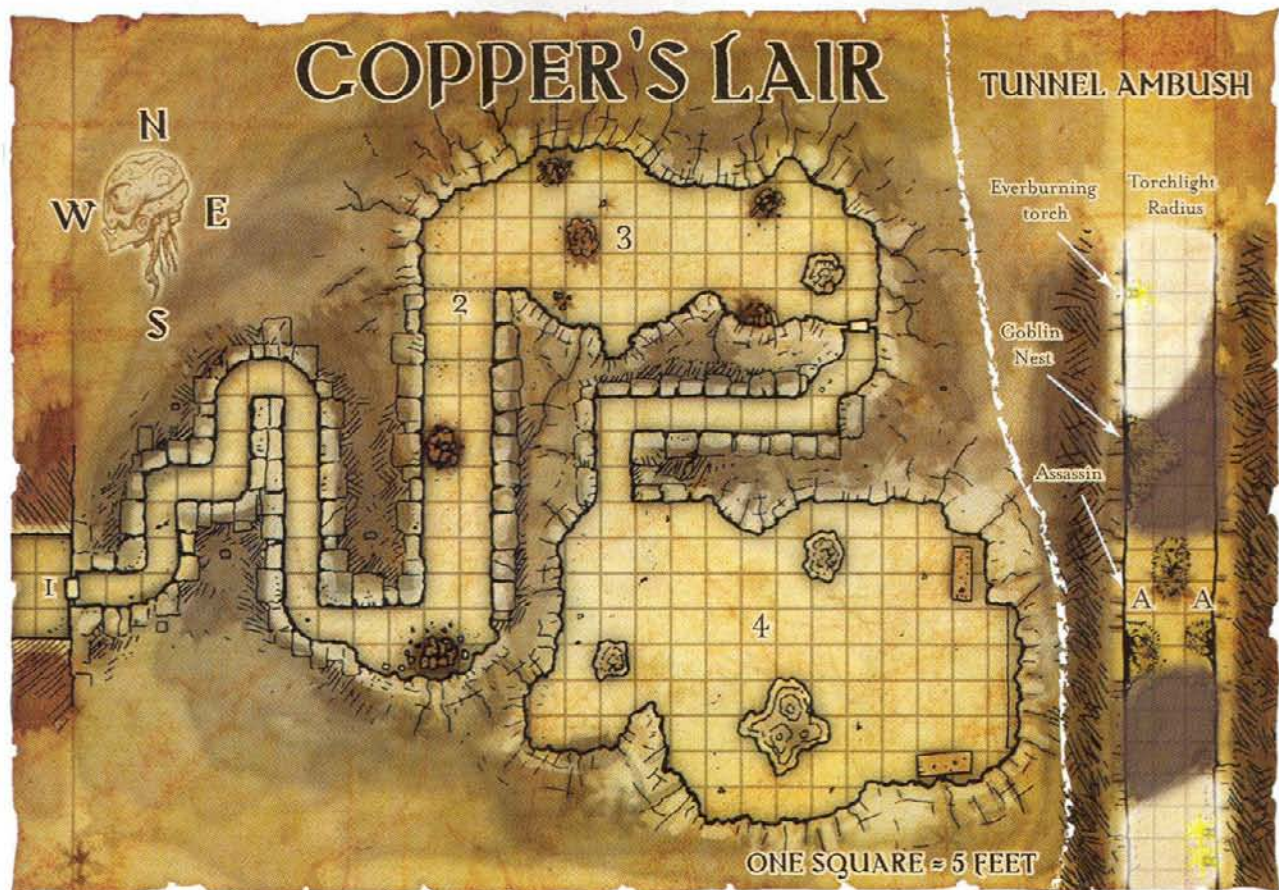
Why did you kill those people? "They asked for death, to be reborn, to be perfected. We are tainted by the touch of flesh. The spark of perfection is held within, but only I can set it free."

Where did you get all this fancy equipment and those dragonshards? "The First Creator cannot help his children. Only I. Only I can. So he gives to me the tools, that I can birth the generation that is to come."

What's under that sheet? "Life. It is life. Life the way it was meant to be, not tainted by the flesh but pure and honest and true."

If the PCs attempt to pass him and approach the sheet, Copper gives up on the verbal delaying tactic and attacks.

➤ **Copper, Warforged Artificer 9:** CR 9; Medium construct (living construct); HD 8d6; hp 30; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch



11, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +6; Grap +6; Atk +7 melee (1d4+1 plus 1d6 fire/19–20, +1 *construct bane flaming burst dagger*); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d4+1 plus 1d6 fire/19–20, +1 *construct bane flaming burst dagger*); SA infusions; SQ artificer knowledge +11, artisan bonus, damage reduction 10/adamantine (for first 90 points of damage absorbed), craft homunculus, disable trap, item creation, light fortification (25% chance to ignore additional damage from critical hits and sneak attacks), metamagic spell trigger, retain essence, warforged traits; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +8, Craft (alchemy) +10, Craft (armorsmithing) +10, Craft (trapmaking) +10, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Spellcraft +14, Use Magic Device +15 (+17 scrolls).

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Construct, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Rod, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Iron Will, Magical Aptitude, Scribe Scroll, Wand Mastery.

Infusions: (4/4/3/2). If Copper hears the trap in area 2 activate, he takes

about 3 minutes to cast several infusions. He casts *stone construct* (grants damage reduction 10/adamantine for first 90 points of damage prevented) on himself. He casts *greater armor enhancement* (grants a +5 enhancement bonus to armor), *toughen construct* (grants +4 enhancement bonus to natural armor), and *weapon augmentation* (grants +1 *flaming burst* quality to a weapon) on both himself and his copper juggernaut. The benefits for these infusions are included in his stat block and the copper juggernaut's stat block. Each infusion lasts for 90 minutes, so if that time expires or the infusions are dispelled, make sure to alter their stat blocks as appropriate. If Copper casts these infusions, he only has four 1st-level infusions available for use when the PCs reach him.

Possessions: +1 *construct bane dagger*, *bag of holding* (type II), *ring of resistance* +2 (grants +2 resistance bonus on all saving throws), *wand of repair light damage* (16 charges), *wand of magic missiles* (CL 5, 37 charges), 24 gold chain links (10 gp each).

Tactics: Copper uses his *wand of magic missiles* until someone closes to melee range. His Wand Mastery feat allows him to fire a total of four missiles with each use of the wand, and his metamagic spell trigger ability allows him to channel metamagic feats through the wand by expending extra charges. Thus he can add Empower Spell by spending 2 extra charges. In melee, he attacks with his dagger, focusing his attacks on any warforged in the party in a desperate final attempt to "release them from their flesh-tainted lives."

Development: Once Copper's hit points fall to zero or below, he whispers "Perfection awaits..." one last time before deactivating. A moment of silence settles on the room, but in a few seconds, a terrible rumbling sound issues forth from beneath the figure to the east...

The Juggernaut Awakens (EL 9)

A few seconds after Copper is slain, the copper juggernaut awakens. Read the following to the PCs when this occurs.

Wondrous Item: Seal of Longstriding

This blackened mithral disk is inscribed with silvery runes of transmutation and a stylized whirlwind. When embedded in a warforged's chest (requiring a full-round action), it occupies the same space as an amulet and increases the character's base land speed by 10 feet. This adjustment counts as an enhancement bonus.

Faint transmutation; CL 2nd; Craft Wondrous Item, *longstrider*; Price 4,200 gp.

Light suddenly fills the dragonshard mosaic on the northern wall, and with a powerful pulse of energy the mosaic shatters into splinters. As it does, the shrouded figure stands in a fluid motion and the sheet falls to the floor. The creature that stands revealed is a disjointed nightmare stitched together from fallen warforged and chunks of spiked armor. The monster's right arm is nearly as large as the rest of its body, and the massive spiked fist suddenly ignites in angry orange flames. Layers of mismatched metal cover its torso and legs. And its head once belonged to your friend Ash.

Creature: This monstrous creation is analogous to a flesh golem, save that its body is crafted from the parts of warforged and its animating force is formed from fragments of the dozens of tormented souls of the victims from which its body parts were harvested. Copper intended this copper juggernaut to be the first of a new race of warforged. Unfortunately, while his skills at creating the body were great, he was unable to give the construct true life. As it lurches to life, all it possesses is a terrible rage. It is a mindless force of destruction, and if the PCs don't stop it, the copper juggernaut eventually finds its way into Blackbones and wreaks unimaginable chaos and devastation.

The copper juggernaut's statistics are modified for the infusions Copper has placed on it. If these infusions expire or are dispelled, make sure to adjust the juggernaut's statistics appropriately. The juggernaut's oversized arm is treated as if armed with a Gargantuan gauntlet, although the juggernaut suffers no penalties to attack with the oversized gauntlet. The gauntlet

is technically part of its body, and cannot be disarmed or sundered.

➤ **Copper Juggernaut:** CR 9; Large construct; HD 13d10+30; hp 104; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 29, touch 8, flat-footed 29; Base Atk +9; Grap +24; Atk +16 melee (1d8+8 plus 1d6 fire, +1 *flaming burst oversized gauntlet*); Full Atk +16/+11 melee (1d8+8 plus 1d6 fire, +1 *flaming burst oversized gauntlet*); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA armor spikes, extended charge; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 2, spell resistance 19;

AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will 3; Str 24, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Feats: Improved Bull Rush^B, Improved Grapple^B, Power Attack^B.

Armor Spikes (Ex): The copper juggernaut inflicts 1d8+7 points of piercing damage with a successful grapple or bull rush attack.

Enhanced Charge (Ex): When the copper juggernaut charges, it gains a +4 bonus on its attack roll rather than the standard +2 bonus. Its base speed increases to 40 feet



when it charges, and if it successfully hits, it inflicts +2d6 additional damage to any attack made as part of the charge, including a bull rush attack.

Possessions: *Seal of longstriding.*

Tactics: The juggernaut charges whenever possible, making full use of its enhanced charge attack. If it isolates a single opponent it attempts to grapple, using its inhuman strength to crush the life from its weaker opponent. It cannot be reasoned with and will fight to the bitter end.

Treasure: Most of Copper's valuables are either on his person or in his *bag of holding*. The tools scattered around the workshop are of masterwork quality, and can serve an armorsmith, trapmaker, or weaponsmith.

Development: When the juggernaut is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points it falls to pieces. All of the various components come apart, leaving a pile of scrap metal and the remnants of half a dozen warforged. The *seal of longstriding* pops out of its chest and rolls a few feet toward the party, but its oversized gauntlet falls into ruin.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs fail to destroy the copper juggernaut or fail to stop Copper, the juggernaut kills Copper when he activates it and then goes on a destructive rampage throughout Blackbones that ends only when the juggernaut threatens to clamber up into the upper portions of Sharn, at which point an organized defense finally puts it down.

If, on the other hand, the PCs are victorious, Copper and his juggernaut have been

destroyed. The warforged who flocked to Shadowblack's call are humiliated to learn that one of their own was responsible. Even Molric is repentant; the killings were not some divine retribution against the warforged, and for all he knows his abuse of the warforged in his employ may have contributed to Copper's madness.

The PCs may still have a few unresolved questions. In particular, who sent the shifters after them? And what about the fancy equipment in Copper's lair? Where did it come from? Who is this First Creator he spoke of?

Observant characters who asked the right questions may correctly conclude that Slogar d'Cannith gave him the equipment. If confronted, Slogar may even admit it:

"It was an experiment, built to gather remains from the battlefield and use them to repair the living. But something happened during the war, something that took time to come to the surface. Yes, I knew what Copper was doing. But I wanted to see if it would succeed, if it could somehow improve on our work. And who died? Warforged. My house gave them life. If their deaths serve my house and their race, I'd call that balancing the books."

Slogar is willing to talk to the party because he believes there's nothing they can do about it. Slogar is wealthy and powerful, and even if they could convince the Watch to arrest Slogar, they'll have a hard time making any accusations stick. Slogar won't admit to sending the shifters after


Scaling the Adventure

"Steel Shadows" is designed for a group of four 7th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 6th-level characters or 8th-9th-level characters. All NPCs in the adventure should have their class levels adjusted by an amount equal to the increase or decrease in average party level from 7th. Since much of this adventure concerns investigation and not combat, actual changes to encounters beyond this should be minimal, although you might consider raising or lowering the various skill check DCs by a few points to accommodate the range in levels.

6th-Level: Remove the Large animated object and one of the Medium animated objects from encounter 3. Reduce the copper juggernaut's Hit Dice by 4; this lowers its attacks by 3 and all its saving throws by 1.

8th-9th Level: Advance the ravid by 2-4 Hit Dice, and add a second Large animated object to encounter 3. The copper juggernaut's Hit Dice should be increased by 4-8.

the PCs. For now, he gets away with it. It's just another day in Sharn, a city that isn't known for happy endings.

And then there are the stories of Jack-in-Irons? Are they true? Did Copper's actions perhaps awaken the ancient spirit? Perhaps the real Jack-in-Irons rises up on its own mission of vengeance, a mission that may or may not be limited to the warforged of Sharn... 

Keith Baker is the creator of the EBERRON campaign setting.

THE PORTENT



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STRIKE ON SHATTERHORN

ADVENTURE PATH PART TEN

By Christopher Perkins
Illustrations by Eric Kim & Tom Fowler
Cartography by Christopher West

Adventure Path
High-Level (13-20)
Dungeon Crawl



Smoke still rises from the shattered buildings and ruined streets of the troubled town of Cauldron, yet if not for the actions of a band of heroes, it would not exist at all. A sinister cabal of cultists bent on plunging Cauldron into the prison plane of Carceri had awakened the volcano below the town, and amidst the attacks of dragons and fiends from the outer planes, these heroes were able to evacuate the city and then strike at the cultists in their lair near the volcano's heart. Now, this cult, the Cagewrights, lies shattered, their members put on the defensive for the first time. All that remains is to finish the job, but the surviving Cagewrights still have some surprises left in their mysterious stronghold under the snake-haunted ruins of Shatterhorn.

"Strike on Shatterhorn" is a *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* adventure designed for four 18th-level characters. This adventure is part of the Shattered City Adventure Path that began with "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97) and continued with "Flood Season"

(*DUNGEON* #98), "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" (*DUNGEON* #109), "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111), "Foundation of Flame" (*DUNGEON* #113), and "Thirteen Cages" (*DUNGEON* #114). If the characters earn enough experience to gain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure so that their final quest doesn't lose its momentum. The Adventure Path concludes in *DUNGEON* #116 with "Asylum."

"Strike on Shatterhorn" can be played as a stand-alone adventure. In this case, the PCs must finish the work started by another band of adventurers that perished saving the town of Cauldron from annihilation (see "Thirteen Cages" in *DUNGEON* #113). The heroes are sent by concerned individuals (perhaps the Striders of Fharlanghn) to investigate the recent upheaval in Cauldron and "deal with it." Upon arriving in the vil-

lage of Redgorge, the PCs meet with several high-ranking Cauldronites who helped coordinate the town's evacuation. They learn of a thwarted plot by an evil organization called the Cagewrights to transform Cauldron into a gate-town to the plane of Carceri. Jenya Urikas, the high priestess of the Church of St. Cuthbert in Cauldron, asks the heroes to eradicate the surviving Cagewrights, who have retreated to their lair in the Ruins of Shatterhorn (located in the wilderness east of Cauldron) before they can regroup.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For the past several years, a sinister cabal called the Cagewrights has conspired to transform the town of Cauldron into a gateway to the prison plane of Carceri, unleashing the fiendish hordes confined there. The Cagewrights spent years consolidating their power and preparing for the ritual of planar junction, using knowledge gleaned from repositories

CAULDRON AND ENVIRONS



of arcane lore called the Soul Pillars. In preparation for the final ritual, they built artifacts called soul cages to hang from a fell device called the *Tree of Shackled Souls*. The town trembled as the ritual drew nigh, and events unfolded as the Cagewrights divined... initially. Then, unexpectedly, an upstart band of adventurers appeared on the scene and smashed the Cagewrights' designs for Cauldron, disrupting the ritual and slaying many of the cabal's leaders in the process.

A few Cagewrights, including a former cleric of Wee Jas named Embril Aloustinai, escaped the carnage beneath Cauldron. They have withdrawn to their secret redoubt in the nearby ruins of Shatterhorn, an ancient yuan-ti stronghold hidden in the jungle east of the town. Angered and dumbfounded by their recent "setback," the surviving Cagewrights plot their next move. Desperate to free the demon prince Adimarchus from his prison on Carceri,

Embril has resurrected a spell weaver (a creature described in *Monster Manual II*, pages 187–188) whose body was recently recovered from the ruins of Karran-Kural (see "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" in *DUNGEON* #109). In exchange, the spell weaver—a master of necromantic lore—has agreed to help Embril. With an appropriate sacrifice to Nerull, the god of death, Embril believes she can secure the god's aid in freeing Adimarchus from his prison on Carceri.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The heroes have thwarted the Cagewrights' machinations, and all seems well again in the Cauldron region. Even if Cauldron was partially (or even wholly) destroyed by a volcanic explosion, the characters helped save the lives of most of its citizens. Until the town can be rebuilt, the Cauldronite refugees are able to find food, water, and temporary shelter near the villages of Redgorge and

Kingfisher Hollow. Various churches and organizations join forces to help the refugees, including the churches of Kord and St. Cuthbert, the Striders of Fharlanghn, and the Chisel (a secret alliance of wealthy merchants). Agents from the neighboring city of Sasserine have started to arrive to ascertain the damage, gather information, and distribute additional provisions as needed. The characters may choose to help with the relief efforts, but before long they are approached by Jenya Urikas, the high priestess of the Church of St. Cuthbert.

Justice must be served to those responsible for the chaos in Cauldron. Using divination spells, Jenya determines that the surviving Cagewrights have withdrawn to their hidden stronghold under the ruins of Shatterhorn. She asks the heroes to serve Cauldron once more by disposing of the remaining Cagewrights before they can do more harm. The characters should

have no trouble reaching Shatterhorn, where they find the ruins overrun with half-mad creatures and Cagewrights. By the time the heroes find Embril Aloustinai, she has abandoned her faith in Wee Jas and pledged her eternal devotion to Nerull. Consumed by a mad desire to free Adimarchus, the converted cleric hopes that an appropriate sacrifice can persuade Nerull to permit Adimarchus's escape from Carceri (for Nerull, it seems, has the power to come and go from Carceri as he pleases).

CHAPTER ONE RUINS OF SHATTERHORN

Shatterhorn, located roughly 50 miles east of Cauldron in a section of the Amedio Jungle known as the Grayhaunt, is a 200-foot-high jagged spire of solid rock reaching up toward the sky. Four hundred years ago, a yuan-ti prophet named Ssythar Vassha claimed Shatterhorn was a divine oracle—an instrument for communing with the yuan-ti god Merrshaulk. He and his followers raised a keep around the spire, and used it as a base for their raids. One stormy night, an incredible bolt of lightning split Shatterhorn into three, cracking it open from peak to base. At first, the yuan-ti took the event as an ill omen, but when no trace of Ssythar Vassha could be found, his followers assumed that Merrshaulk had rewarded the visionary yuan-ti by taking Ssythar Vassha into his eternal embrace. Ssythar Vassha's followers built a secret temple beneath Shatterhorn and placed a statue of the "prophet ascendant" in its greatest hall. Other yuan-ti prophets rose to take Vassha's place and lead the cult, but it soon became clear that Shatterhorn had lost its alleged power to commune with Merrshaulk. The yuan-ti cult's fortunes turned, and they were driven off and exterminated by their enemies.

The characters come to the ruins of Shatterhorn seeking to capture or eliminate surviving Cagewrights, who have been using the ruins of Shatterhorn as a secret staging area for their plots in Cauldron. Shatterhorn harbors five, possibly six, high-ranking Cagewrights who share the ruins

and the dungeons below with a number of allied creatures. The journey to the ruins from Cauldron should pose little threat to high-level PCs, especially if they use *greater teleport* to travel there.

ARRIVAL

A 200-foot-tall spire of jagged rock stands in a rough clearing, dwarfing the surrounding trees. Some great force has split the rock into three sections, forming deep clefts. Around the base of the cleft spire, someone has built a one-story stone keep. Many of the keep's walls have collapsed, and a thick shroud of fog envelops the structure. The lone, shrill cry of a baboon echoes in the desolation of this dreary place.

An eerie, nonmagical fog engulfs the keep, reaching a height of 20 feet before thinning out. Creatures within the thick fog have concealment against attacks made more than 10 feet away. Rain seems to fall more frequently here than in other areas, making all surfaces slick and damp (–2 penalty on Balance and Climb checks).

THE RUINED KEEP (EL 18)

Use the Ruins of Shatterhorn map for the following encounter.

A single-story stone keep surrounds the Shatterhorn. Although most of the keep's mortared walls remain intact, its entire roof structure has collapsed, exposing the various rooms and corridors to the open sky. Some of its thick walls have collapsed as well, leaving behind heaps of rubble (moving through 5 feet of debris costs 10 feet of movement). Over the years, assorted denizens have cleared the debris from the rooms to create lairs for themselves. Countless adventurers have plundered the keep as well, drawn by false rumors of dragon hoards hidden within the ruins.

The ruined keep is far from the impenetrable bastion it once was. The Cagewrights, in particular, have done precious little to fortify the keep, arguably to preserve its "abandoned" appearance. That said, the Cagewrights have left a monstrous garrison in the ruins to dispatch unwanted interlopers (see Creatures, below). The ruins are also in-

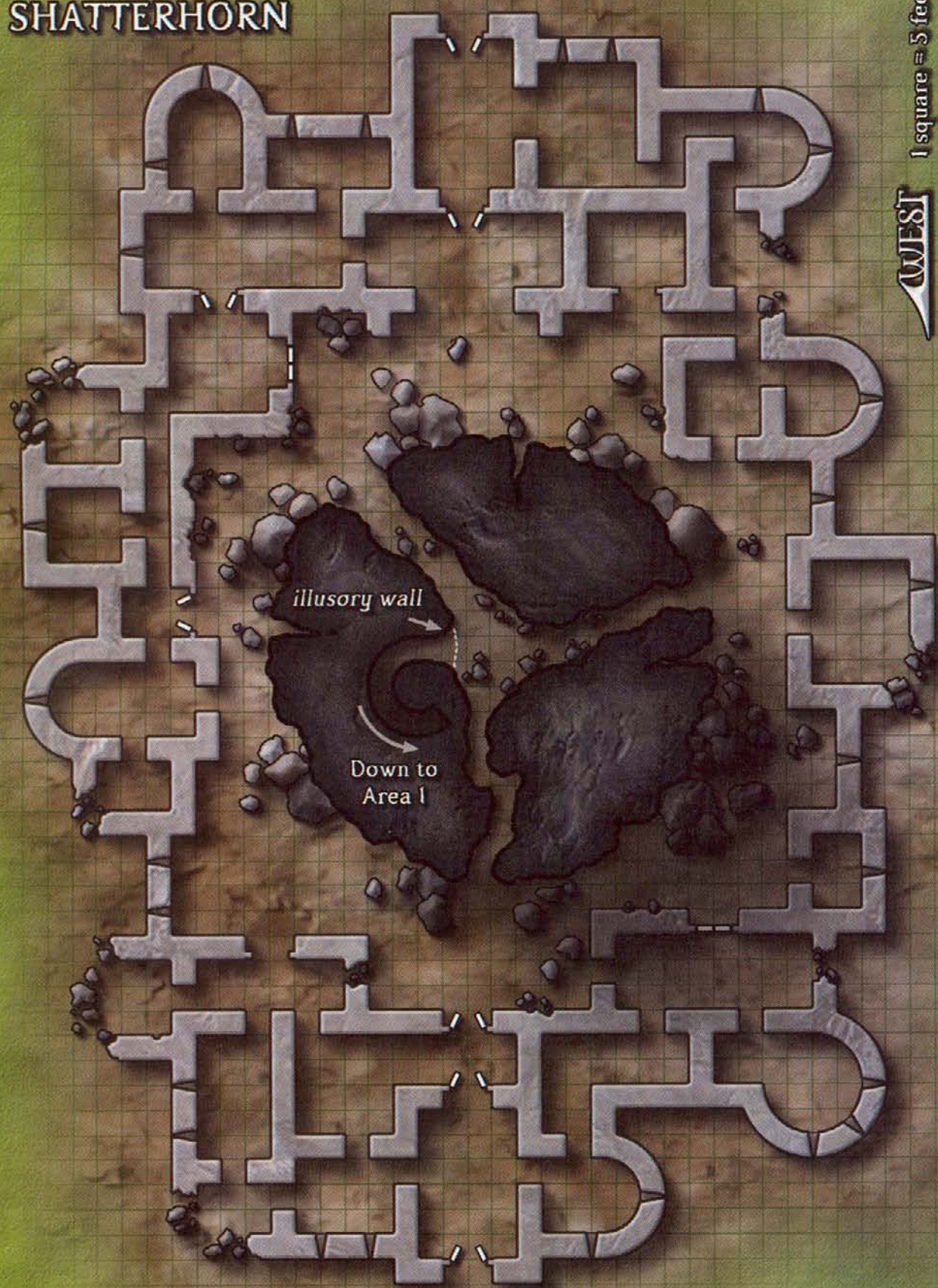
habited by troops of screaming baboons that fall strangely silent in the company of strangers.

The characters probably have more than one way to reach the keep or may circumvent it altogether by teleporting directly into the dungeon beneath (see Chapter Two). Characters searching the keep notice serpentine bas-reliefs and frescoes carved on the inside walls, although heavy rain has eroded some of the finer works. Stone basins built into the floor that once served as yuan-ti baths now hold murky pools of water. Decrepit wooden doors bear rusted iron hinges and handles shaped like serpents and dragons, and some of the floor stones bear chiseled yuan-ti inscriptions. Characters searching for treasure discover that the ruins have been picked clean, except for the occasional armor fragment or rusted weapon.

Creatures: The ruins are crawling with baboons (*Monster Manual*, page 286), and characters navigating the ruins notice that the normally skittish baboons become quiet and still as the party passes, fixing their black eyes on the characters until they pass out of sight, at which point the baboons resume their normal behavior. Only if attacked do they scatter, in which case they retreat in a strangely orderly, unnervingly silent exodus.

In addition to the baboons, characters exploring the ruined keep or the Shatterhorn itself may attract the attention of the keep's guardians: a hill giant barbarian named Ghath, his two dire wolf pets, a small gang of half-orc bandits called the Grayhaunt Marauders, and their trained spider eater mounts. These mercenaries work for the Cagewrights and can be placed anywhere inside the keep walls. (The hill giant normally patrols the keep's interior, while one Grayhaunt Marauder and mount usually stays near the outermost corners of the keep.) They converge on any area where trouble is detected.

A pair of ancient will-o'-wisps that predate the fall of Shatterhorn also haunt the ruins, remaining invisible until they strike. Predatory and opportunistic, yet loosely allied with Ghath and the Grayhaunt Marauders, they join the bat-

THE RUINS OF
SHATTERHORN

1 square = 5 feet

WEST

tle in the keep's defense 2 rounds after combat erupts.

➤ **Ghath, Male Hill Giant Barbarian**
10: CR 17; Large giant; HD 12d8+72 plus 10d12+60; hp 263; Init +3; Spd 40 ft. (base 50 ft.); AC 26, touch 10, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +19; Grp +30; Atk +27 melee (2d8+10/17-20, adamantite greatsword) or +25 melee (1d4+7, slam) or +19 ranged (2d6+7, rock); Full Atk +27/+22/+17/+12 melee (2d8+10/17-20, adamantite greatsword) or +25 melee (1d4+7, 2 slams) or +19 ranged (2d6+7, rock); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rage 3/day, rock throwing; SQ DR 2/—, improved uncanny dodge, light fortification (25% chance to ignore critical hit), low-light vision, rock catching, trap sense +3; AL CE; SV Fort +25, Ref +12, Will +13; Str 25, Dex 12, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +6, Jump +23 (includes *ring of improved jumping*), Listen +8, Spot +8.

Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Rage (Ex): Three times per day, Ghath can enter a state of fierce rage that lasts for 9 rounds. The following changes are in effect as long as he rages: hp 307; AC 24, touch 8, flat-footed 24; Grp +32; Atk +29 melee (2d8+13/17-20, adamantite greatsword) or +27 melee (1d4+9, slam); Full Atk +29/+24/+19/+14 melee (2d8+13/17-20, adamantite greatsword) or +27 melee (1d4+9, 2 slams); SV Fort +27, Will +15; Str 29, Con 27; Climb +10, Jump +25. At the end of his rage, Ghath is fatigued for the duration of the encounter.

Possessions: +2 *light fortification hide armor*, adamantite greatsword, *ring of force shield*, *ring of improved jumping*, *amulet of health* +4, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, *cloak of resistance* +4, *potion of fly*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, leather bag (contains 4 throwing rocks, a bowl and spoon, a chunk of cheese, a drinking horn, a haunch of meat, and 3,250 gp).

➤ **Dire Wolves (2):** hp 64 each; *Monster Manual* 65.

➤ **Grayhaunt Marauders, Male Half-orc Fighter 8 (4):** CR 8; Medium hu-

manoid (half-orc); HD 8d10+16; hp 59 each; Init +2; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +8; Grp +11; Atk +13 melee (1d8+6/×3, masterwork orc double axe) or +12 ranged (1d8+4/×3, composite longbow with +1 *seeking arrow*); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+6/×3, masterwork orc double axe) and +11 melee (1d8+4/×3, masterwork double axe) or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+4/×3, composite longbow with +1 *seeking arrow*); SQ darkvision 60 ft., half-orc traits; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Intimidate +10, Listen +3, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (orc double axe), Improved Critical (orc double axe), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (orc double axe), Weapon Specialization (orc double axe).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: +2 *breastplate*, masterwork orc double axe, composite longbow (+3 Str) with 25 +1 *seeking arrows*, *lesser bracers of archery*, ivory hunting horn (100 gp), backpack (holds a whetstone, a waterskin, flint and steel, 50 feet of hemp rope, a cooking pot, 3d20 gp in a pouch, and 1d6 days of trail rations).

➤ **Spider Eaters (4):** hp 42 each; *Monster Manual* 234.

➤ **Ancient Will-o'-Wisps (2):** CR 11; Small aberration (air); HD 25d8+100; hp 212 each; Init +15; Spd fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 31, touch 31, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +18; Grp +9; Atk/Full Atk +30 melee touch (4d6 electricity); SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, natural invisibility; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +18, Will +18; Str 1, Dex 33, Con 18, Int 17, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +28, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +0 (+2 acting), Intimidate +2, Listen +34, Search +31, Spot +34, Survival +18 (+20 following tracks).

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Natural Attack (touch), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse[®].

Tactics: The ruins provide Ghath with plenty of rocks to throw, but he prefers

step
AWAY
from The
Twenty.

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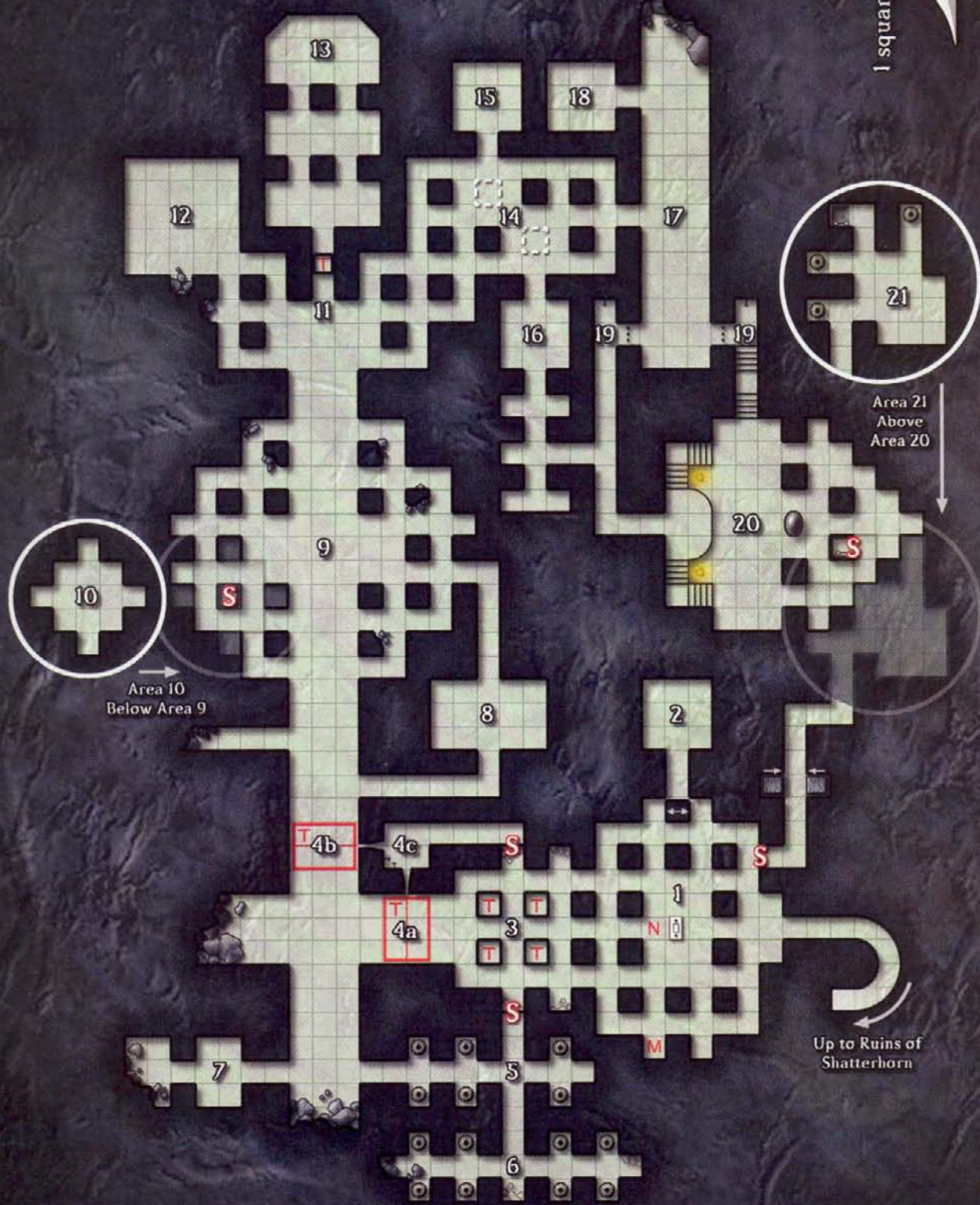
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UNDER SHATTERHORN

1 square = 5 feet



melee combat over ranged combat. He uses the fog for concealment as he closes in for the kill, and his dire wolves are trained to provide flanking opportunities and sniff out invisible foes. Against poorly armored foes, Ghath uses his Power Attack feat, taking a -5 penalty on attack rolls to gain a +10 bonus on damage rolls with his greatsword (when Ghath rages, these modifiers increase to -10 and +20, respectively).

One of the half-orcs blows his hunting horn when the battle is first joined, alerting the keep's other denizens and setting off a riot of baboon shrieks. The half-orcs and spider eaters provide aerial support, using their +1 *seeking arrows* to ignore the 20% miss chance caused by the fog. The half-orcs only fight on the ground if their mounts are slain. The half-orcs know that spider eaters are surprisingly frail and generally do not fly more than 20 or 30 feet off the ground.

The will-o'-wisps are tenuous allies of the Cagewrights and their minions. They serve as the giant's invisible "eyes" and "ears" until he's killed, and they are quick to attack characters that split off from the group. If one of the will-o'-wisps is slain, the other flees.

Development: The hill giant hurls rocks at any interlopers he sees while sending his dire wolves after characters who keep their distance. The half-orcs prefer not to leave the spider eater mounts behind, but a half-orc deprived of his mount pursues characters into the cleft. Only the will-o'-wisps know about the *illusory wall* in the cleft (see The Cleft Horn, below). Their unfriendly attitude aside, the will-o'-wisps are open to negotiation. A successful Diplomacy check can shift the wisps' attitude to indifferent, friendly, or helpful. They can also impart useful information if bribed with 5,000 gold pieces worth of treasure. They recognize the Cagewrights as "the ones wearing the silver, cage-shaped pendants" and can describe each of them, as well as provide the location of the dungeon entrance.

If the characters raise the alarm or otherwise make a lot of noise, they alert Ssythar Nahazir's familiar (see The Cleft Horn, below).

THE CLEFT HORN

Shatterhorn is a fractured, horn-shaped spire of solid rock 90 feet wide at its base and 200 feet tall. A narrow cleft separates the towering thirds of the spire, creating three narrow, debris-strewn passages that meet at the heart of the spire. These passages are open to the sky and widen toward the top. Climbing the inside or outside walls of Shatterhorn requires a DC 17 Climb check (including a -2 penalty for the slick surface).

The entrance to the dungeon is carved into the northern fragment of Shatterhorn and consists of a 10-foot-tall, 5-foot-wide downward-spiraling passageway. The passage makes several descending revolutions before opening into area 1 of the dungeon. An *illusory wall* spell (cast at 9th level) obscures the passageway, disguising it as part of the surrounding rock wall. The wall appears absolutely real when viewed, but physical objects can pass through it without difficulty. A character with *true seeing* active does not perceive the *illusory wall* but instead sees the open passageway. The *illusory wall* is permanent until dispelled.

Creatures: Ssythar Nahazir has hidden his snake familiar among the rocks near the *illusory wall*. If it sees intruders entering the cleft or otherwise hears disturbing noises, it slithers down the spiraling passage and alerts its master in area 1.

➤ **Snake Familiar:** CR —; Tiny viper; HD 17; hp 36; Init +7; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.; AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +12; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +17 melee (1 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA deliver touch spells, poison; SQ empathic link, improved evasion, scent, speak with snakes, speak with master; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +11, Will +13; Str 4, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Balance +11, Bluff +5, Climb +11, Concentration +16, Hide +15, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +13, Spellcraft +6, Spot +13, Swim +5, Use Magic Device +6.

Feat: Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse^B.

CHAPTER TWO UNDER SHATTERHORN

The "dungeon" under Shatterhorn contains temples, catacombs, and hidden vaults built by the yuan-ti. Characters can reach the dungeon under Shatterhorn using the downward-spiraling passage at the base of the spire (see The Cleft Horn) or using powerful magic.

The dungeon under Shatterhorn has the following features:

Illumination: Unless noted otherwise, all dungeon corridors and chambers are torchlit. The torches cast eerie shadows upon the walls, ceiling, and floor.

Stonework: All areas have 10-foot-high, bare stone ceilings unless specified otherwise. The walls are made of mortared bricks of black volcanic rock covered with painted plaster murals depicting yuan-ti and other serpentine creatures. Most of the murals have faded, and in many areas the plaster has peeled or fallen away, revealing damp black stone underneath.

Secret Doors: Marked "S" on the map, secret doors are actually 3-inch-thick barriers of painted plaster that blend seamlessly with the surrounding murals and stonework. A secret door doesn't open like a normal door; it must be smashed through (hardness 2; hp 15). Unless the fragments of a smashed secret door are moved to another area, a programmed *make whole* spell automatically reassembles a broken secret door after 1 hour.

➤ **Secret Door:** 3 in. thick; hardness 2; hp 15; break DC 13.

Illusory Effects: Various minor illusory effects pervade the dungeon, courtesy of permanent *minor image* and *ghost sound* spells. Tiny illusory snakes slither across the floor, emerge from cracks in the walls, or coil around sundry objects. These shiny-black vipers dissolve into nothingness when touched. A rattling noise echoes through the dungeon as well, but the rattling always seems distant, and its origin cannot be traced. These illusions pose no threat yet serve to keep interlopers on edge.

Collapsed Areas: Over the years, earth tremors have caused sections of the dungeon to collapse; attempts to



clear collapsed sections only cause further collapse. If you wish to expand the dungeon, you can add new areas to any of the places where the map currently shows a collapse.

1. TEMPLE OF FANGS (EL 18)

Ten thick pillars support the 10-foot-high ceiling of this large, unlit room. Deep alcoves are recessed into the west and east walls. A few snakes slither away from you across the floor, and a distant rattling noise emanates from the deeper darkness. A sculpted stone altar rests in the middle of the room, its surfaces stained with dry blood and carved with serpentine motifs. One end of the altar curls up to form the head of a great snake with stony fangs and gems for eyes.

The distant rattling noise is an eerie illusory effect (see Dungeon Features).

The eastern alcoves are, in fact, part of one large alcove with a “rolling pillar” in the middle of it. The pillar looks like a protruding section of wall but has stone rollers tucked into its base, allowing it to roll to the north or south. Noticing the rolling pillar requires a DC 25 Search check, and rolling it requires a DC 25 Strength check. The rolling pillar conceals a 10-foot-long passage leading to area 2.

A secret door (see Dungeon Features) is set into the south wall and leads to area 22.

The altar weighs close to 1,800 pounds and radiates a continual *unholy aura* (caster level 18th) to a range of 30 feet. All evil creatures within range gain a +4 deflection bonus to AC, a +4 resistance bonus on saves, spell resistance 25 against good spells and spells cast by good creatures, and immunity to possession and mind-affecting effects. In addition, if a good creature succeeds on a me-

lee attack against a warded creature, the offending attacker takes 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage (Fortitude DC 22 negates). Destroying the altar negates the unholy aura.

◆ **Altar of Fangs:** 3 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 540; Break DC 50.

Creature: Ssythar Nahazir, a mad yuan-ti Cagewright, hides behind the altar (in the square marked “N” on the map). Nahazir believes he is a prophet of Merrshaulk gifted with divine insight, which explains the self-chosen title of Ssythar (a Yuan-ti word meaning “chosen one”). Nahazir has a serpentine head and scaly skin, but otherwise appears human. He conceals his features beneath a form-fitting black robe, and around his neck he wears a silver pendant shaped like a tiny cage. His snake familiar, if present, is coiled around one of his wrists.

During his exploration of the catacombs, Nahazir stumbled upon a yuan-ti

SSYTHAR NAHAZIR

pure-
blood
mohrg guard-

ing a collection of burial urns (area 5). He used a *command undead* spell to win the mohrg's favor and relocated it to this chamber. It hides in the alcove marked "M" and emerges to attack when spotted or when someone other than Nahazir stands adjacent to the altar. The mohrg has serpentine fangs and a slinky gait, but it does not speak and could easily be mistaken for a human mohrg.

Ssythar's statistics below assume he's had time to cast *mage armor* and *shield* and drink his *potion of barkskin* +3.

➔ **Ssythar Nahazir; Male Halfblood Yuan-ti Sorcerer 10:** CR 15; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 7d8+7 plus 10d4+10; hp 72 (86 with *false life* spell); Init +5; Spd 30 ft. (60 ft. with *expeditious retreat*); AC 29 (31 within 30 ft. of altar), touch 14 (16 within 30 ft. of altar), flat-footed 27 (29 within 30 ft. of altar); Base Atk +12; Grp +14; Atk +15 melee (1d6+2/18-20, masterwork scimitar) or +14 ranged (1d8+2/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +15/+10/+5 melee (1d6+2/18-20, masterwork scimitar) and +9 melee (1d6+1 plus poison, bite) or +14/+9/+4 ranged (1d8+2/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA poison (Fort DC 14, 1d6/1d6 Con), *produce acid*, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ *alternate form*,

chameleon power, darkvision 60 ft., *detect poison*, immunity to possession and mind affecting effects when within 30 ft. of altar, scent, spell resistance 16 (spell resistance 25 against good when within 30 ft. of altar); AL CE; SV Fort +6 (+10 within 30 ft. of altar), Ref +10 (+14 within 30 ft. of altar), Will +16 (+20 within 30 ft. of altar); Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 22.

Skills: Bluff +17, Concentration +17, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +6 (+8 acting), Intimidate +8, Hide +12 (+22 when using *chameleon power*), Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (history) +19, Knowledge (religion) +14, Listen +16, Spellcraft +12, Spot +16, Use Magic Device +15 (+17 scrolls).

Feats: Alertness^B, Blind-Fight^B, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Empower Spell, Heighten Spell, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Terran, Yuan-ti.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*animal trance* (DC 18), *cause fear* (DC 17), *entangle* (DC 17); 1/day—*deeper darkness*, *neutralize poison* (DC 20), *suggestion* (DC 19). Caster level 8th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/6/7/6/4; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*acid splash*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *ghost sound*, *message*, *open/close*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st—*disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*; 2nd—*command undead*, *false life*, *see invisibility*, *scorching ray*; 3rd—*displacement*, *lightning bolt*, *slow*; 4th—*enervation*, *Evard's black tentacles*; 5th—*teleport*.

Possessions: Masterwork scimitar, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus), 20 arrows, empowered *wand of idiocy* (as per the empowered *touch of idiocy* spell; 12 charges), *wand of poison* (Fortitude DC 16 negates; 8 charges), *potion of barkskin* (+3), scroll of *crushing despair*, scroll of *dominate person*, *cloak of Charisma* +2, *Ring of Thirteen* (see Appendix), silver cage pendant (15 gp), pouch of 10 pp.

➔ **Advanced Mohrg (Yuan-ti Pureblood):** CR 11; Medium undead; HD 20d12; hp 148; Init +10; Spd 30 ft.;

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +10; Grp +17; Atk/Full Atk +17 melee (1d6+10, slam) or +17 melee touch (paralysis, tongue); SA create spawn, improved grab, paralyzing touch (DC 25); SQ darkvision 60 ft., undead traits; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +14, Will +13; Str 25, Dex 23, Con —, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +19, Hide +28, Listen +16, Move Silently +28, Spot +22, Swim +11.

Feats: Alertness, Contagious Paralysis*, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Paralysis*, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility.

*See Appendix 1 for details.

Tactics: Nahazir has already cast *mage armor* and *false life* on himself (each spell has a remaining duration of 1d8 hours). If forewarned of danger, Ssythar drinks his *potion of barkskin* +3 and casts the following spells on himself, in the following order: *see invisibility* (lasts 100 minutes), *shield* (lasts 10 minutes), *expeditious retreat* (lasts 10 minutes), and *displacement* (lasts 10 rounds). If his familiar is present (see The Cleft Horn, above), it gains the benefits of these spells as well. Time allowing, Nahazir casts one or more *resist energy* spells, then hides.

At range, Ssythar Nahazir prefers to cast heightened *slow* (5th level; save DC 19), followed by *enervation*, *Evard's black tentacles*, empowered *lightning bolt*, and empowered *magic missile*. In melee, he jabs foes with his empowered *wand of idiocy* or *wand of poison*. Nahazir must make a successful Use Magic Device check (DC 20) to use the *wand of poison*, and he cannot take 10 on this check. He saves a *teleport* spell for his escape, retreating to the Temple of Merrshaulk (area 20) to make his final stand.

The mohrg tries to grapple and paralyze foes. Its paralysis is contagious, thanks to its Contagious Paralysis feat (see the Appendix).

Trap: Any non-yuan-ti that defaces or otherwise damages the altar must make a successful Will save (DC 22) or be *teleported* inside the hollow black egg in the Temple of Merrshaulk (area 20). This trap even affects a creature that damages the altar with a ranged attack.

➔ **Teleportation Trap:** CR 8; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell

effect (*greater teleport*, 13th-level wizard, Will DC 22 negates); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

Treasure: The two gems embedded in the altar's "eyes" are black sapphires worth 1,000 gp apiece.

2. HIDDEN VAULT

The walls of this room are painted with plaster murals depicting eleven golden serpents, one per 5-foot section of wall. Each serpent holds a painted, unfurled scroll in its mouth, and arcane runes adorn each scroll. Some of the plaster has chipped or fallen away, marring the images.

The scrolls painted on the walls are treated as pages of a spellbook. Each scroll outlines a different arcane spell that can be transferred either to a spellbook or an actual scroll. Only seven of the eleven scrolls can be deciphered; the other four are too damaged to read, but can be repaired with *make whole* spells. The legible spells are *bestow curse*, *control undead*, *eyebite*, *finger of death*, *greater planar binding*, *stone to flesh*, and *summon monster VII*. The unreadable spells are *Bigby's grasping hand*, *create greater undead*, *limited wish*, and *waves of exhaustion*.

3. PLASTER PILLARS (EL 18)

Thick pillars support the 10-foot-high ceiling of this hall. Four alcoves hold heaps of dust and bone intermingled with shards of painted ceramic. A stone arm—the remains of a shattered statue, perhaps—rests on the floor between the pillars. The arm looks human-sized and is broken at the shoulder. On one of its stony fingers you see an iron ring.

The alcoves hold the shattered remains and spilled contents of four ceramic burial urns. The ceramic fragments are painted with serpentine motifs and images of yuan-ti dressed in ceremonial armor and robes. Amid the refuse lie yuan-ti bones and tattered funereal wrappings. The northeast and northwest alcoves contain secret doors leading to area 4C and 5, respectively (see Dungeon

Features for more information about Shatterhorn's secret doors).

The four pillars surrounding the stone arm are actually made of painted plaster. Although the plaster pillars look like ordinary stone pillars, careful inspection and a successful Search check (DC 25) reveal the truth. The stone arm is all that remains of a petrified human rogue. The iron ring bears an inscription: "Here lies your doom." A *Nystul's magic aura* spell makes the ring radiate magic as though it was a *ring of evasion*, but the aura is false. Touching the ring or the petrified arm causes the four plaster pillars to shatter and awakens the Creatures.

Creatures: Each plaster pillar holds a medusa rogue in *temporal stasis*. Disturbing the petrified arm dispels the *temporal stasis* and causes the plaster pillars to shatter, releasing the medusas. Before they were placed in *temporal stasis*, the medusas imbibed *potions of bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, and *eagle's splendor*; the potions last roughly 3 minutes. The bonuses imparted by these potions are included in the stat block below; if they are dispelled, remember to adjust the stats accordingly. Yuan-ti clerics also placed *greater magic weapon* spells on the medusas' short swords; the effects last 7 hours.

➤ **Female and Male Medusa Rogue 10 (4):** CR 14; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 6d8+30 plus 10d6+50; hp 157, 150, 142, 129; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +13; Grp +14; Atk +22 melee (1d6+4/17–20, +3 *short sword*) or +19 melee (1d4+1 plus poison, snakes) or +20 ranged (1d6×3, masterwork shortbow); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d6+4/17–20, +3 *short sword*) and +20 melee (1d6+4/17–20, +3 *short sword*) and +14 melee (1d4+1 plus poison, snakes) or +20/+15/+10 ranged (1d6×3, masterwork shortbow); SA petrifying gaze (DC 22), poison (DC 18), sneak attack +5d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +3, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +18, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 23, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 24.

Skills: Balance +8, Bluff +26, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +14 (+16 acting), Escape Artist +14, Hide +25, Intimidate +17, Jump +3, Move Silently

+25, Search +8, Spot +15, Tumble +21, Use Rope +6 (+8 bindings).

Feats: Ability Focus (petrifying gaze), Improved Critical (short sword), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Yuan-ti.

Possessions: +2 *chain shirt*, 2 short swords (+3 *short swords* with *greater magic weapon* spells), masterwork shortbow, 20 arrows.

Tactics: Each opponent within 30 feet of a medusa must make a saving throw against its petrifying gaze attack each round at the beginning of his or her turn in the initiative order. The medusas do not make active gaze attacks on their turns, instead attacking with their short swords and snakes. They also try to make sneak attacks against flanked opponents.

4. PIT TRAPS (EL 14)

You come to a four-way intersection of 15-foot-wide passages illuminated by torches in sconces. Like other areas of the dungeon, the walls are adorned with faded murals depicting yuan-ti rituals and great serpents. The passage to the north has collapsed.

This intersection contains two concealed pit traps (areas 4A and 4B, respectively). An *illusory wall* spell (caster level 9th) conceals an arrow slit overlooking each pit. Behind these concealed arrow slits, a farastu demodand stands watch in a 10-foot-square room (area 4C). When one or more characters stand on a pit, the farastu pulls a stone lever set into the wall of area 4C, opening the pit doors; the secret room contains two stone levers, one for each pit. A pit can also be opened using a *knock* spell or, once detected, it can be forced open with a successful Strength check (DC 30).

Creature: The farastu in area 4C serves the Cagewrights. If characters discover and open the secret door leading to its chamber, it brazenly charges forth to attack them. A farastu is a fiendish creature that stands 7 feet tall and weighs about 220 pounds. It has long arms and legs, and a large, oblong head. Its body continually oozes a thick, black, tarlike

substance that slowly trickles down its emaciated frame.

➔ **Farastu Demodand:** CR 11; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 11d8+22; hp 68; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +11; Grp +23; Atk +15 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +15 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) and +10 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA adhesive slime, improved grab, rage, spell-like abilities, *summon demodand*; SQ cold resistance 10, damage reduction 10/good, fire resistance 10, immune to acid, immune to poison, scent, spell resistance 23; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 16; *Fiend Folio* 42.

Adhesive Slime (Ex): The black slime farastus exude grants them a +8 racial bonus on grapple checks and disarm checks. A weapon that strikes a farastu becomes stuck fast unless the wielder succeeds on a Reflex save (DC 17). Prying off a stuck weapon requires a Strength check (DC 17). Oil dissolves the farastu's adhesive slime; it requires 10 minutes to renew its adhesive coating. It can also dissolve its slime at will, and the substance breaks down 1 minute after the creature dies.

Rage (Ex): The farastu can fly into a rage three times per day, much like a barbarian. The farastu gains +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, +2 Will saves, and -2 AC. Its statistics change as follows: hp 93; AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +13; Grp +25; Atk +17 melee (1d4+6, claw); Full Atk +17 melee (1d4+6, 2 claws) and +12 melee (1d6+3, bite); SV Fort +11, Will +10; Str 23, Con 18; Climb +24. The rage lasts for 7 rounds, but the farastu can end it earlier if it desires. It is not fatigued at the end of its rage.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic, clairaudience/clairvoyance, fear* (DC 17), *invisibility, tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud, ray of enfeeblement*; 2/day—*dispel magic*. Caster level 11th. The Save DCs are Charisma-based.

Summon Demodand (Sp): Once per day, a farastu can attempt to summon 1d4 farastus with a 30% chance of success.

Skills: A farastu's adhesive slime gives it a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks.

Skills: Climb +22, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +6, Hide +12, Intimidate +16, Listen +14, Move Silently +12,

Shatterhorn Treasure

Some areas of the dungeon contain treasure. Whenever treasure is called for, roll or choose randomly from the following table:

d%	Treasure
01–04	Black funereal vestments traced with gold (150 gp)
05–08	Black gold fang-shaped ring with single-dose poison reservoir (180 gp)
09–12	Amber serpent figurine (200 gp)
13–16	Crystal flask containing <i>elixir of sneaking</i> (250 gp)
17–20	Crystal flask containing <i>elixir of hiding</i> (250 gp)
21–24	Vial of <i>silversheen</i> (250 gp)
25–28	Gold mask with small obsidian horns (360 gp)
29–32	Snakeskin-wrapped scroll tube containing a 3rd-level divine scroll*
33–36	Gold, wavy-bladed ceremonial dagger inlaid with red garnets (500 gp)
37–40	A <i>bead of blessing</i> (600 gp)
41–44	Silver scroll tube (10 gp) containing a 4th-level divine scroll*
45–48	Gold serpent-shaped bracer inlaid with jade (750 gp)
49–52	Golden necklace with eight dangling jade orbs (900 gp)
53–56	<i>Salve of slipperiness</i> in a snakeskin-wrapped flask (1,000 gp)
57–60	Crystal flask containing <i>elixir of fire breath</i> (1,100 gp)
61–64	Ivory scroll tube (50 gp) containing a 5th-level divine scroll*
65–68	Gold circlet with black gold inlay and amber tracery (1,200 gp)
69–72	Fire opal pendant on a fine gold chain (1,400 gp)
73–76	Platinum necklace with dangling jet fangs (1,500 gp)
77–80	Platinum bracelet set with three black pearls (2,000 gp)
81–84	Snakeskin tube containing <i>oil of magic vestment</i> +4 (2,400 gp)
85–88	Golden headdress with emerald and golden topaz inlays (2,500 gp)
89–92	Golembane scarab (2,500 gp)
93–96	<i>Necklace of fireballs</i> , type II (2,700 gp)
97–100	Gold ring set with rubies (3,500 gp)

*Roll on Table 7–24: Divine Spell Scrolls in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*.

Search +10, Sense Motive +12, Spot +14, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks).

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Demodand.

Trap: The pit traps in areas 4A and 4B are well hidden. When the appropriate lever in area 4C is pulled, the lid of each pit opens in the middle, dropping creatures into the pit. Pit 4A is 30 feet deep and filled with whirling blades the size of longswords that shred anything that falls in, dealing slashing damage each round; these blades are treated as magic weapons for the purposes of penetrating damage reduction. Pit 4B is 30 feet deep and has large stone rollers 10 feet down (and 10 feet above the pit's floor) that pulverize anything that drops in; creatures that survive the rollers land on a bed of poisoned iron spikes.

➔ **Whirling Blades Pit (area 4A):** CR 12; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 22 Reflex save avoids; 30 ft. deep

(3d6, fall); whirling blades every round (10d8+10, slashing, Reflex DC 25 half); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 30.

➔ **Grinding Poison Spike Pit (area 4B):** CR 12; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 22 Reflex save avoids; stone rollers (10d6, bludgeoning) and 30 ft. deep (3d6, fall); pit spikes (Atk +15 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 plus poison each); poison (purple worm poison, DC 24 Fortitude save resists, initial damage 1d6 Str, secondary damage 2d6 Str); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 30.

Development: Triggering either pit trap alerts the blackguard in area 9.

5. SERPENTINE URNS (EL 10)

The walls of this catacomb are filled with 5-foot-deep alcoves. Within each alcove stands an ornate, 4-foot-tall, varnished ceramic urn. The urns are painted with images of serpents, scimitars, and yuantti dressed in ceremonial armor.

These catacombs contain yuan-ti burial urns. Each sealed urn weighs 180 pounds and contains the desiccated remains of a pureblood or halfblood yuan-ti priest or warrior encased in sawdust. Clay canopic jars placed at the bottom of the urn contain the yuan-ti's vital organs (heart, liver, and so forth). Each mummified yuan-ti is buried with some Treasure. Opening or smashing an urn also triggers a Trap.

☛ **Magically Treated Ceramic Burial Urn:** 1 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 10; cold and fire resistance 10; break DC 25.

Trap: Opening or smashing an urn triggers a *wail of the banshee* spell that affects all creatures within a 40-foot-radius spread. An urn can be lifted and moved without activating the trap.

↗ **Wail of the Banshee Trap:** CR 10; magic device; touch trigger; no reset; spell effect (*wail of the banshee*, caster level 17th, DC 23 Fortitude negates); multiple targets (kills up to 17 creatures); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34.

Treasure: Each urn has a 20% chance of containing a valuable item. If the characters smash or search an urn, consult the Shatterhorn Treasure sidebar to determine what, if anything, they find.

6. BROKEN URNS (EL 10)

This unlit passage contains ten 5-foot-deep alcoves. Large ceramic urns occupy eight of the alcoves, and the two remaining alcoves contain shattered urns and sawdust. To the north, the tunnel has collapsed.

This area is similar in all respects to area 5, including the presence of several *wail of the banshee* traps on the urns. The eight intact burial urns contain the mummified remains of yuan-ti packed in sawdust; these urns are trapped and may contain treasure. The southernmost smashed urn used to contain a yuan-ti mohrg guardian, but Ssythar Nahazir took command of the creature and moved it to area 1. The western smashed urn wasn't sealed properly and cracked open on its own, spilling its contents onto the floor. Characters searching the refuse find the moldering, desiccated remains of a pureblood yuan-ti priest with no valuables. Five canopic jars contain-

ing the dead priest's shriveled vital organs lie amid the remnants of the urn.

7. EMPTY ROOMS

Much of the plaster has broken off the walls here, revealing the black stone underneath. These rooms are otherwise empty. This area might make a suitable redoubt for characters that need to regroup and heal.

8. PREPARATORY CHAMBER

This torchlit chamber contains two oval stone tables with built-in shelves beneath them. The shelves are lined with clay jars and tattered funereal vestments and wrappings. The murals on the walls depict yuan-ti burial rituals: the removal of vital organs, the placement of the organs in clay canopic jars, the mummification of the body, the placement of the remains in a large ceramic urn, and the ritual sealing of the urn.

Yuan-ti priests used the stone tables during mummification rituals. The shelves under the tables hold empty clay canopic jars (for storing vital organs) and black funeral wrappings.

9. SERPENTINE HALL (EL 16)

The four innermost pillars of this chamber bear lit torches in serpentine sconces, and the flickering light casts sinister shadows upon the walls, ceiling, and floor. Some of the pillars are cracked and crumbling, revealing slick black stone beneath the plaster murals. The murals depict masses of writhing snakes and yuan-ti clad in black robes and golden armor.

One of the northwest pillars (marked "S" on the map) bears a mural of a masked pureblood yuan-ti priest (Ssythar Vassha) dressed in black robes and wearing a golden coronet. In one hand the



ALURAD SORIZAN

yuan-ti priest clutches a green viper, and the other hand is outstretched and has an eyeball set into its palm. A successful Search check (DC 25) reveals that the palm's eye can be depressed. Pressing the eye causes the entire pillar to sink into the floor. The pillar drops 25 feet, revealing a secret vault underneath (area 10). The pillar stops descending once it becomes flush with the floor of the secret chamber. The top of the pillar contains a visible stone plate; if stepped on, the plate causes the pillar to ascend to the floor level of area 9. One round later, the pillar rises to the ceiling. Anything atop the pillar when it reaches the ceiling is crushed for 20d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 15 half). Any creature still in area 10 when the pillar rises is effectively trapped there, as there's no way to lower the pillar from within the secret vault.

Creatures: In addition to the sinking pillar, this hall contains one of the Cagewrights—a blackguard named Alurad Sorizan. Until recently, Alurad spent most of his time disposing of adventurers sent to Cauldron to investigate the trouble there. His morbid fascination with slaughter and evisceration puts off

most of the other Cagewrights. He wears a cloak and gloves made of stitched human skin, and he keeps the ripped-out hearts of his victims in his quarters (area 12). Alurad has shaggy black hair, blood-red tattoo patterns on his face, and the unholy symbol of Erythnul is prominently displayed on his shield. Alurad and his fiendish dire badger servant hide behind the two easternmost pillars, ready to leap out and attack the characters when they least expect it.

A strange madness has overcome Alurad Sorizan. He believes he is Adimarchus, former ruler of a layer of the Abyss known as Occipitus. The PCs may have visited this realm in "Test of the Smoking Eye" (DUNGEON #107). If one or more of the characters acquired the Sign of the Smoking Eye template as a result of completing that adventure, "Adimarchus" senses that they have been to his lost realm and says, "You dare to steal for me? Occipitus is mine, not yours, and so it will always be." He focuses all of his attacks on such characters and orders his fiendish dire badger servant to attack them as well.

➤ **Alurad Sorizan, Male Human Cleric 6/Fighter 2/Blackguard 8 (Erythnul);** CR 16; Medium humanoid (human); HD 6d8+12 plus 2d10+4 plus 8d10+16; hp 164; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +14; Grp +18; Atk +20 melee (1d10+5/17-20, +1 *bastard sword of mighty cleaving*) or +14 ranged (1d4+4/19-20 plus poison, dagger); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d10+5/17-20, +1 *bastard sword of mighty cleaving*) or +14 ranged (1d4+4/19-20 plus poison, dagger); SA poison use, rebuke undead 4/day (1d20+3, affects 2d6+13 HD), smite good 2/day (+1 to attack, +8 damage), sneak attack +2d6, spells; SQ *detect good*, evasion, fiendish servant; AL CE; SV Fort +17, Ref +5, Will +12; Str 18, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +1 (+3 acting), Hide +18, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (religion) +4.

Feats: Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Fiendish Servant*, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Persuasive, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword).

*See the Appendix for details on this feat.

Language: Common.

Blackguard Spells Prepared: 1st—*corrupt weapon*, *cure light wounds*, *magic weapon*; 2nd—*eagle's splendor*, *inflict moderate wounds* (DC 14); 3rd—*cure serious wounds*; 4th—*freedom of movement*.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/4+1/4+1/2+1; save DC 12 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *light*, *read magic*; 1st—*bless*, *divine favor*, *doom* (DC 13), *protection from good*^D (DC 13), *shield of faith*; 2nd—*align weapon*, *bull's strength*, *cure moderate wounds*, *death knell* (DC 14), *invisibility*^D; 3rd—*invisibility purge*, *nondetection*^D (DC 15).

D: Domain spell. **Domains:** Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

Possessions: +2 *improved shadow full plate*, +2 *heavy steel shield*, +1 *bastard sword of mighty cleaving*, *ring of evasion*, *Ring of Thirteen*, 2 *potions of extended bear's endurance*, 2 *potions of heroism*, 3 poisoned daggers (deathblade poison; injury, Fortitude DC 20 resists; initial damage 1d6 Con, secondary damage 2d6 Con), cloak and gloves made of stitched human skin, iron key (unlocks chest in area 12).

➤ **Fleshripper, Fiendish Dire Badger:** CR —; Medium magical beast (augmented animal, extraplanar); HD 9d8+36 plus 3; hp 92; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.; AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +6; Grp +9; Atk +9 melee (1d6+3, claw); Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+3, 2 claws) and +4 melee (1d8+1, bite); SA blood bond (+2 on attack rolls, checks, and saves if he sees Alurad being threatened or harmed), rage, smite good 1/day (+9 damage against good foe); SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., empathic link, improved evasion, low-light vision, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10, scent, speak with blackguard, SR 14; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Listen +9, Spot +9.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Natural Attack (bite, claw), Toughness, Track^B.

Rage (Ex): If Fleshripper takes damage in combat, it flies into a rage on its next turn. Alurad can snap Fleshripper

out of its rage with a successful Handle Animal check (DC 20), but it cannot end its rage voluntarily. While raging, its statistics are as follows: hp 110; AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Grp +11; Atk +11 melee (1d6+5, claw); Full Atk +11 melee (1d6+5, 2 claws) and +6 melee (1d8+2, bite); SV Fort +12; Str 21, Con 23.

Tactics: Given sufficient preparation time, Alurad quaffs a *potion of extended bear's endurance* (lasts 6 minutes) and a *potion of heroism* (lasts 30 minutes), then casts *freedom of movement* (80 minutes), *corrupt weapon* (on his sword; lasts 8 minutes), *bull's strength* (lasts 6 minutes), *shield of faith* (lasts 6 minutes), and *divine favor* (lasts 10 rounds) on himself. The potions and *divine favor* spell modify Alurad's statistics as follows: hp 196; AC 27, touch 13, flat-footed 27; Grp +20; Atk +26 melee (1d10+9/17-20, +1 *bastard sword of mighty cleaving*) or +18 ranged (1d4+8/19-20 plus poison, dagger); Full Atk +26/+21/+16 melee (1d10+9/17-20, +1 *bastard sword of mighty cleaving*) or +18 ranged (1d4+8/19-20 plus poison, dagger); SV Fort +19, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 22, Con 18; Bluff +11, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Hide +20, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (religion) +6.

Upon confronting foes, Alurad threatens to carve out their hearts and add them to his "altar" (see area 12). If Fleshripper is killed or Alurad is reduced to 30 or fewer hit points, he flees and hides in area 12, casting *nondetection* on himself and making his final stand there.

10. SUNKEN VAULT (EL 9)

This unlit 15-foot-square room contains four statues in alcoves. The statues depict halfblood yuan-ti warriors with humanoid bodies and serpentine heads. Each statue holds a stone chest in its claws, and the front of each chest is carved with a demonic face.

One can reach this vault via the "sinking pillar" in the chamber above (see area 9 for details). The statues are handsomely carved yet nonmagical. The stone chests are actually part of the statues, but they can



be opened and hold the Treasure. All of the chests are fitted with a locking mechanism (Open Lock DC 30), and the southern chest is trapped (see Trap, below).

◆ **Stone Yuan-ti Statues:** 6 feet tall; hardness 8; hp 150 (30 for stone chest); break DC 30 (25 for stone chest).

Trap: Touching the southern chest causes it to expel an *incendiary cloud* spell that fills the room.

↗ **Incendiary Cloud Trap:** CR 9; magic device; touch trigger; no reset; spell effect (*incendiary cloud*, caster level 15th, 4d6/round for 15 rounds, Reflex DC 22 half; Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33).

Treasure: The western chest holds 1,500 pp. The northern chest contains ten eye agates (10 gp each), six carnelians (50 gp each), four deep green spinels (100 gp each), four violet garnets (500 gp), two white opals (1,000 gp each), and a fire elemental gem (2,250 gp). The eastern chest contains 1d4 items rolled randomly on the Shatterhorn Treasure table (see page 68). The southern chest contains a *serpent's eye* on a green velvet cushion; the *serpent's eye* has 7 charges

remaining. The *serpent's eye* is detailed in the Appendix.

11. STATUE OF SSYTHAR VASSHA (EL 15)

A 6-foot-tall black marble statue stands at the end of this 15-foot-wide hall, facing west. It depicts a humanoid creature with subtle snakelike features clad in a black robe and wearing a coronet. In one outstretched hand it grasps a viper, and its other outstretched hand has an unblinking eye set into its palm, staring blindly down the passageway. Behind the statue is a 5-foot-deep empty alcove.

The statue depicts the pureblood yuan-ti prophet Ssythar Vassha. The statue of Ssythar Vassha is fixed to the floor and cannot be lifted or pushed over without breaking it. However, a successful Search check (DC 20) reveals that the statue stands atop a circular flagstone with built-in rollers that enable the statue to be turned to face any direction. If the statue is turned to face

the eastern alcove, the back wall of the alcove rises into the ceiling. This "back wall" is actually a hollowed-out 10-foot-high, 5-foot-wide, 5-foot-thick stone shell. As it rises into the ceiling, it reveals the Creature and area 13 beyond.

◆ **Statue of Ssythar Vassha:** 6 feet tall; hardness 8; hp 150; break DC 30.

Creatures: The hollow stone shell that seals off area 13 contains a 9-foot-long crystal snake (a unique golemlike construct) that's released once the shell rises into the ceiling. The transparent crystal snake is filled with bright energy that illuminates a 15-foot radius and provides shadowy illumination out to a 30-foot radius. Once released, it attacks any non-yuan-ti it encounters.

↗ **Crystal Snake:** CR 15; Medium construct; HD 18d10+20; hp 165; Init +7; Spd 40 ft.; AC 35, touch 17, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +9; Grp +14; Atk/Full Atk +14 melee (1d8+7, bite) or +16 ranged touch (5d8, *searing light*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA destructive resonance, *searing light*; SQ construct traits, DR 15/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., death burst,

fast healing 5, immunity to magic, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +13, Will +6; Str 20, Dex 24, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Destructive Resonance (Su): The crystal snake can emit a low-frequency hum as a free action. At the beginning of its turn, it deals 6d6 points of sonic damage to any creature within 10 feet of it. A successful Fortitude save (DC 19) halves the damage; the save DC is Constitution-based.

Searing Light (Su): As a standard action, the crystal snake can fire a beam of *searing light*, as the spell with a range of 250 feet. Once the crystal snake uses its *searing light* ray, it can't use it again until 1d4 rounds later. The snake must succeed on a ranged touch attack to strike its target. A creature struck by the blazing ray takes 5d8 points of damage (10d6 if the target is undead, 10d8 if the target is an undead creature particularly vulnerable to sunlight, 5d6 if the target is a construct or inanimate object).

Death Burst (Su): When the crystal snake is reduced to 0 hit points, it explodes in a 20-foot-radius burst of searing radiance that deals 40 points of damage to every creature in the area (60 points if the target is undead, 80 points if the target is an undead creature particularly vulnerable to sunlight, or 30 points if the target is a construct or inanimate object). A successful Reflex save (DC 19) halves the damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): The crystal snake is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance except spells and effects with the sonic descriptor (such as *shatter*, *shout*, and *greater shout*).

12. ALURAD'S CHAMBER

This large chamber has slimy black walls with bits of painted plaster clinging to them. Around the base of the walls lie the broken fragments of murals. Four pieces of furniture rest in the middle of the room: a wooden cot, a monstrous wooden chest with clawlike feet, a table covered with clay jars and lit candles, and a wooden chair draped with skin.

The furnishings belong to the blackguard Alurad Sorizan (see area 9). The cot is where he sleeps. The wooden chest has a built-in superior lock (Open Lock DC 40) and contains the Treasure. The table holds twelve clay canopic jars splattered with dried blood, each one containing the heart of one of Alurad's past victims. Coupled with the lit candles, the table serves as a morbid altar to Erythnul (the god of slaughter). The flesh draping the chair belongs to a former comrade whom Alurad betrayed, killed, and skinned.

Treasure: Alurad's chest contains trophies taken from victims of his wrath, including an adamantite battleaxe, a +1 *axiomatic scimitar* wrapped in human skin, a +1 *evil outsider bane spiked chain*, a +1 *shocking burst kukri*, four +1 *cold iron arrows*, three +2 *bolts of wounding*, a scroll of *sympathetic vibration*, and a *lesser rod of empower metamagic*.

13. TOMB OF SSYTHAR-VASSHA (EL 18)

The walls of this secret vault are painted with murals depicting yuan-ti warriors in golden armor marching toward the east end of the room. Some of the plaster has cracked and fallen away, revealing wet black walls underneath. Two thick pillars support the 20-foot-high ceiling. Serpentine sconces built into the pillars hold flaming torches.

This tomb was built to hold the remains of Ssythar Vassha, a powerful yuan-ti cleric of Merrshaulk. Several years ago, a half-elf vampire named Mhad, while scouring the dungeon for a suitable lair, stumbled upon this crypt. She removed Vassha's mummified corpse from its resting place, unceremoniously scattered his bones around the base of the sarcophagus, and took it as her own. A small hole chiseled into the lid allows Mhad to enter and leave the sarcophagus in gaseous form. Lifting the lid requires a DC 23 Strength check.

When the Cagewrights arrived at Shatterhorn, they struck up a tenuous alliance with Mhad, inviting her to join their cause. Hunted by powerful enemies and desperately seeking allies,

the vampire reluctantly agreed. Recent events in Cauldron have soured Mhad on the alliance, and she has retreated to her crypt to consider other options. The vampire Mhad enters and leaves the crypt by assuming gaseous form and slipping through a crack in a wall between area 12 and area 13, thereby circumventing the crystalline snake that lurks in the hollow pillar between here and area 11.

Four everburning torches are mounted to the pillars and can be removed easily. They fill the room with flickering orange light and wavering shadows.

Creatures: Unless she was destroyed in "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111), Mhad is resting inside the sarcophagus, watched over by her undead minions. Mhad's shadow companion floats above the sarcophagus, but as soon as it detects intruders, it sinks into the sarcophagus and wakes its mistress. Mhad is swathed in a black shroud that is, in fact, a dread wraith called Hate. Both the vampire and the dread wraith emerge the following round, while the shadow hides in the sarcophagus (attacking the first creature that peers inside). If Mhad was destroyed in "Lords of Oblivion," she and her incorporeal companions are not present.

➤ **Mhad, Female half-elf vampire Monk 9/Shadowdancer 4:** hp 90; *Monster Manual* 251.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +3, +2 *keen kama*, +1 *frost sling* with 10 bullets, *ring of protection* +2.

➤ **Shadow:** hp 19; *Monster Manual* 221.

➤ **Hate (Dread Wraith):** hp 104; *Monster Manual* 258.

Tactics: If she has time to rise from her undead slumber, Mhad uses her hide in plain sight ability and crouches atop the sarcophagus, ready to spring into action. She uses Spring Attack to leap forward, strike once with her +2 *keen kama*, and leap back onto the sarcophagus. If her enemies close to within melee range, she attacks with a flurry of unarmed strikes, coupling her first attack with her Stunning Fist feat (Fortitude DC 22 negates) and using the sarcophagus as higher ground (+1 bonus on attack rolls). She can use this feat ten times per day. Against ranged foes, she uses her *dominate* ability (Will DC 17 negates), her +1

frost sling, or her children of the night ability to call up 1d6+1 rat swarms.

Trap: Lifting the sarcophagus lid triggers a trap. Scythelike blades hidden in the sides and seams of the sarcophagus slash madly about, striking any creatures standing in adjacent squares (Reflex DC 24 half). The scythe blades are coated in a supernatural yuan-ti poison that saps all moisture out of living creatures, turning its victims into desiccated husks. The trap resets when the lid is put back into place.

↗ **Poisoned Scythe Trap:** CR 12; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset (trap resets when lid is replaced); scythe blades (+20 melee, 1d4 blades per target for 2d4+5/×4 plus poison each); poison (DC 24 Fortitude save resists, initial and secondary damage 2d6 Con); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

Treasure: In addition to her gear, Mhad keeps several items of value in the sarcophagus, hidden in a secret compartment (DC 25 Search check to locate). These items include a *periapt of wound closure*, a *python rod*, a scroll of *blade barrier*, a scroll of *summon monster VII*, a *potion of rage*, a *potion of greater magic fang* (+2), a coffer containing 260 pp, and 1d4 items from the Shatterhorn Treasures table (see page 68).

14. ILLUSORY PILLARS (EL 18)

Two of the pillars in this hall are illusory, created by *permanent image* spells (caster level 18th). A *true seeing* spell pierces the illusion and reveals the Creatures standing "inside" them. The illusory pillars can also be detected after a thorough inspection of the pillars (Will DC 23 disbelief).

Creatures: Two half-iron golems stand within the illusory pillars, stepping out to attack characters who enter areas 15 or 16. The Cagewrights experimented on two half-orc fighters, promising them great power. Instead, they joined iron plates and metal limbs to their flesh and transformed them into obedient constructs.

➤ **Krojen and Tyrrx, Male Half-Iron Golem Half-Orc Fighter 13:** CR 16; Medium construct; HD 13d10+20; hp 129, 113; Init +4; Spd 30 ft. (can't run); AC 33, touch 10, flat-footed 33; Base Atk +13; Grp +21; Atk +24 melee (1d8+14/19–

20/×3, +3 *adamantine battleaxe*); Full Atk +24/+19/+14 melee (1d8+14/19–20/×3, +3 *adamantine battleaxe*); SA breath weapon; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine, magic immunity, rust vulnerability; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 27, Dex 10, Con —, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Skills: Climb +16, Jump +16.

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Greater Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Greater Weapon Specialization (battleaxe), Iron Will, Improved Initiative, Improved Critical (battleaxe), Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe).

Breath Weapon (Su): As a free action, an iron half-golem can emit a cloud of poisonous gas from its limbs in a 10-foot cone. The cloud lasts 1 round, and the half-golem can emit another cloud once every 1d4+1 rounds (Fortitude DC 16; initial 1d4 Con; secondary 3d4 Con). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): An iron half-golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells function differently against the creature, as noted here. A magical attack that deals electricity damage slows an iron half-golem (as the *slow* spell) for 3 rounds, with no saving throw. A magical attack that deals fire damage breaks any *slow* effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points.

Rust Vulnerability (Ex): An iron half-golem is affected by rust attacks, such as that of a rust monster or a *rusting grasp* spell.

Possessions: +4 *studded leather armor*, +1 *tower shield*, +3 *adamantine battleaxe*.

15. SECRET MANSION (EL 18)

The north and south walls of this room are carved with 2-foot-high niches, two per wall. A 1-foot-tall gold statuette of a yuan-ti abomination stands in each niche. An 8-foot-diameter, semicircular stone basin emerges from the eastern wall op-

posite the doorway, its sides carved with serpentine engravings. Water pours out of a stone snake's head carved above the basin, filling it.

The basin once served as a yuan-ti bath. A drain at the bottom of the basin allows the water to bleed away, and a *decanter of endless water* embedded in the wall provides a steady water supply. The gold statuettes are described under Treasure, below.

Characters who can see invisible objects or have *true seeing* see a shimmering portal, 4 feet wide and 8 feet high, in the middle of the room. The portal is the hidden doorway to a *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion* spell, but the characters can't pass through it. Xokek, the shadar-kai Cagewright, has sealed himself and two death slaadi inside the mansion. If the mansion is successfully dispelled, Xokek and the slaadi appear instantly in the middle of the room.

Creatures: Xokek hates the world and everyone in it. He struggles with the same shadow curse that afflicts all shadar-kai (who are also known as "shadow fey"). Xokek joined the Cagewrights because their apocalyptic vision of a world enslaved by the fiendish hordes appealed to him, and he quickly became a member of the "inner circle" by demonstrating his glaring misanthropy and subtle guile. He remains locked away in his *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion* and has forbidden entry to all others except his two death slaadi companions, who assume the forms of shadar-kai monks.

Xokek, like all shadar-kai, is a graceful, stealthy fey with gray skin and black eyes. He stands slightly over 5 feet tall, has long black hair, and wears dark clothing that seems to pull the shadows around him. The death slaadi appear as unarmed shadar-kai wearing body-tight black leather.

➤ **Death Slaadi (2):** hp 142 each; *Monster Manual* 231.

➤ **Xokek, Male Shadar-kai Illusionist 9/Rogue 6:** CR 16; Medium fey (extraplanar); HD 3d6+3 plus 9d4+9 plus 6d6+6 plus 3; hp 76; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +9; Grp +9; Atk +13 melee (1d6+1/19–20, +1 *short sword*) or +13 ranged (1d6/×3,

masterwork shortbow); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (1d6+1/19–20, +1 short sword) or +13/+8 ranged (1d6/x3, masterwork shortbow); SA sneak attack +4d6, spells; SQ displacement (50% miss chance), evasion, hide in plain sight, shadow curse, superior low-light vision, toad familiar, trap sense +2, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +14, Will +10; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 13; *Fiend Folio* 150.

Hide in Plain Sight (Su): Xokek can use the Hide skill even while being observed, as long as Xokek is not illuminated by natural daylight, the *daylight* spell, or a similar magic light. He can hide himself from view in the open without having anything to actually hide behind.

Shadow Curse (Su): Any time Xokek is stunned, dazed, staggered, or unconscious (other than from natural sleep), he must make a successful Will save (DC 15) or gain a negative level. The negative level cannot be removed until he returns to the Plane of Shadow and transfixes his soul to his body again with a *greater restoration* spell. On the Material Plane, he must use a *wish* or *miracle* spell to restore his soul. When afflicted with the shadow curse, Xokek cannot be raised from the dead or *resurrected*, and cannot gain experience. On the Plane of Shadow, Xokek ameliorates the effects of the shadow curse and suffers no ill effects; however, if he leaves the plane without restoring his soul, the shadow curse returns. Xokek does not wear a *gal-ralan* (a magic armband many shadar-kai wear to protect themselves from the shadow curse, but at the cost of a point of Constitution).

Superior Low-Light Vision (Ex): Xokek can see four times as far as a human in low-light conditions.

Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +10, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +1 (+3 acting), Escape Artist +12, Hide +15 (+25 in shadowy light), Intimidate +3, Jump +2, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Listen +18, Move Silently +18, Search +9, Spellcraft +17, Spot +18, Survival +5 (+7 underground or on other planes), Tumble +13, Use Rope +3 (+5 bindings).



XOKEK

Feats: Alertness, Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (illusion), Spell Penetration, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Slaad, Sylvan.

Spells Prepared (5/6/6/5/3/2; save DC 13 + spell level, DC 14 + spell level for illusions): 0—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *read magic*; 1st—*disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *true strike*; 2nd—*cat's grace*, *darkness*, *fox's cunning*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *see invisibility*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *fireball*, *major image*, *shadow dagger** (2); 4th—*silent haste*, *phantasmal killer*, *shadow puppeteer**; 5th—*Mordenkainen's private sanctum* (already cast), *silent shadow puppeteer**.

*These new spells are detailed in the Appendix.

Spellbook: 0—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*, *open/close*, *read magic*; 1st—*color spray*, *disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage*

armor, *magic missile*, *shield*, *true strike*, *ventriloquism*; 2nd—*blur*, *cat's grace*, *darkness*, *fox's cunning*, *invisibility*, *minor image*, *mirror image*, *misdirection*, *see invisibility*, *sepia snake sigil*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *fireball*, *haste*, *illusory wall*, *invisibility sphere*, *major image*, *shadow dagger**; 4th—*dimension door*, *greater invisibility*, *phantasmal killer*, *rainbow pattern*, *shadow puppeteer**, *wall of fire*; 5th—*cloudkill*, *greater dispel magic*, *mirage arcana*, *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*, *teleport*.

Possessions: *Bracers of armor* +3, +1 short sword, *major cloak of displacement*, *blackstone rune* (1 charge remaining; see Appendix), *Ring of Thirteen*, scroll of *cloudkill*, scroll of *greater dispel magic*, scroll of *teleport*, *masterwork dagger*, *masterwork shortbow*, 20 arrows, spellbook protected by *sepia snake sigil* (Reflex DC 15 negates), *spell component pouch*, *silver cage pendant* (15 gp).

Tactics: The slaadi stand between Xokek and his enemies. They rely on their natural attacks, stun ability, and po-

tent spell-like abilities, and if one slaad dies, the other uses its summon slaad ability to bring forth reinforcements (1–2 blue slaadi, 60% chance of success). Meanwhile, Xokek uses his hide in plain sight ability while casting silent *haste* and silent *shadow puppeteer* (in that order), followed by *shadow dagger*. He looks for opportunities to flank opponents and make sneak attacks using his *shadow dagger*. Xokek relies on his *major cloak of displacement* to protect him from attacks and uses his scroll of *teleport* to escape if reduced to 6 or fewer hit points.

Treasure: The four niches each contain a solid gold statuette of a ruby-eyed, serpent-bodied yuan-ti abomination wielding a pair of scimitars or a longbow. Each statuette is worth 1,500 gp. Digging the *decanter of endless water* out of the wall takes 10 minutes of work, or a spell like *stone shape*.

16. SERPENT SENTINEL (EL 5)

This room is empty except for the serpentine wall murals, some pieces of netting in the corners, and some iron hooks jutting from the ceiling. A sinister, serpent-like hissing begins as soon as a living creature approaches within 20 feet of this room. This room once served as sleeping quarters for the yuan-ti priests. They used to hang hammock nets from the ceiling hooks, and a few traces of their old hammocks lie strewn in the corners.

Trap: A permanent *serpent sentinel* spell (caster level 18th) has been cast in the middle 5-foot square of this room. The *serpent sentinel* spell is similar in all respects to the *Mordenkainen's faithful hound* spell, except that it manifests as a hissing serpent instead of a barking dog.

17. SLITHERING HALL

This 15-foot-wide hall stretches from east to west. The plaster wall murals have broken away in places, revealing slimy black stone beyond. Most of the murals show yuan-ti engaging in morbid rituals or hunting humans in the forest. One particularly graphic mural along the southern wall depicts a 25-foot-long serpent with maroon scales, a pair of arms, and the vague shape of a human torso. In place of a head, six long serpents project from the top of its torso. Yuan-ti priests wearing black robes and golden masks genuflect before the horrid abomination. Wrapped in the creature's coils are several human sacrifices.

The large mural on the south wall depicts a yuan-ti anathema, revered by the yuan-ti as an incarnation of their deity (see *Fiend Folio*, page 193). The eastern end of the hall has collapsed, and the western end holds a pair of heavy iron portcullises (see area 19).

18. CAGEWRIGHTS QUARTERS

This torchlit room contains four beds draped with blankets and furs. The west, north, and east walls each bear a mural depicting a loathsome serpent with a black body banded in swaths of bright crimson, its head vaguely human, with stringy hair and yellow fangs.

Four of the resident Cagewrights (Nahazir, Kyan, Viirdran, and Embril) use this room as sleeping quarters, as well as a place to meditate or prepare spells.

The wall murals depict three spirit nagas, and each one radiates magic. Any creature

that touches a naga mural as a standard action gains the benefits of a particular spell (caster level 9th): *invisibility* (west mural), *cure light wounds* (north mural), *shield of faith* (east mural). Each mural can be used seven times per day. Destroying or defacing a mural (hardness 2; hp 5) also destroys its magical property.

Development: If Ssythar Nahazir fled from area 1, he can be found here. He uses the northern mural to heal himself, then uses the other murals as needed. If she survived "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111), Thifrane Rhiavadi is here as well; see that adventure for Thifrane's statistics.

19. PORTCULLISES

A heavy iron portcullis blocks this archway. A stone lever juts from the wall of an adjacent alcove, and pulling up on the lever raises the portcullis. The stone lever is too heavy for a *mage hand* spell to move, but an *unseen servant* or *telekinesis* works. A creature with more than a 5-foot reach can also lift the lever from the south side of the portcullis, but squeezing an arm through the bars to reach the lever requires a successful Escape Artist check (DC 22).

♦ **Iron Portcullis:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Lift DC 25; Break DC 25.

20. TEMPLE OF MERRSHAULK (EL 18)

This is some sort of temple, its walls covered with murals of gigantic, entwined black and gold snakes, its ceiling 30 feet high. A 10-foot-high stone balcony clings to the north wall and overlooks the rest of the chamber. Flanking the balcony are two stone braziers carved with serpentine motifs. To the south,

RUNES OF THE EGG OF MERRSHAULK

Rune	Rune Name	Spell	Effect (Duration)
1	Arrythar	<i>Death ward</i>	Immunity to death spells and negative energy (1d6 hours)
2	Dessath	<i>Spell resistance</i>	Spell resistance 32 (1d6 hours)
3	Fyrraess	<i>Resist energy</i>	Resistance to acid 10 (1d6 hours)
4	Kjaras-eth	<i>True seeing</i>	<i>True seeing</i> (1d6 hours)
5	Mhavaess	<i>Resist energy</i>	Resistance to electricity 10 (1d6 hours)
6	Thysstrune	<i>Stoneskin</i>	Damage reduction 10/adamantine (1d6 hours)
7	Uraess	<i>Resist energy</i>	Resistance to fire 10 (1d6 hours)
8	Vasshaess*	<i>Teleport without error</i>	Tracer teleported into the egg; Will DC 22 negates (instantaneous)
9	Yutharaess	<i>Resist energy</i>	Resistance to cold 10 (1d6 hours)
10	Z'thareth	<i>Heal</i>	Heals up to 150 hp (instantaneous)

*See the Trap section for details.

between some thick pillars, rests a 6-foot-wide, 9-foot-tall black stone egg carved with strange runes. The egg rests atop a 2-foot-high stone base shaped like a claw, holding the egg in place.

An *unhallow* spell (caster level 9th) wards this chamber and area 21 above. Creatures in the room gain the benefits of magic circle against good. All turning checks made to turn undead take a -4 penalty, and turning checks to rebuke undead gain a +4 profane bonus (spell resistance does not apply to this effect). Evil creatures in the area also gain the benefit of a *freedom of movement* spell.

The black egg is a magically treated, 8,000-pound stone ovoid called the Egg of Merrshaulk. The runes etched across its surface grant magical powers to anyone who traces them (caster level 20th). The egg bears ten runes in all, and tracing a rune (a full-round action) causes it to glow for 6 hours, during which time the rune's power cannot be invoked again. Each rune bestows a different spell-like effect upon the tracer, as noted on the Runes of the Egg of Merrshaulk table.

The Cagewrights in the temple (see Creatures, below) may avail themselves of the egg's powers. If they hear enemies approaching, they trace one or more of the runes to gain their power (in addition to preparing spells).

The walls south of the black egg are adorned with life-sized murals depicting pureblood yuan-ti priests wearing black veils and clutching silver staffs shaped like coiled serpents. One of the southernmost pillars contains a secret door leading to a 5-foot-wide, 20-foot shaft with a stone ladder (see Dungeon Features for more information). The ladder climbs 10 feet to area 21.

Creatures: Two Cagewrights and two farastu demodands can be found here. The first Cagewright is an elf arcane archer named Kyan Winterstrike, and she stands next to the Egg of Merrshaulk. The other, a dark elf eldritch knight named Viirdran Daraqor, stands on the balcony. A few months ago, they were bitter rivals, and now, inexplicably, they are madly in love with one another. The other surviving Cagewrights speculate that Kyan's and Viirdran's apparent insanity may

have something to do with the Egg of Merrshaulk, when in fact they have been touched by the madness of Adimarchus. The farastu lurk in the south end of the room, behind the pillars, but emerge to attack when intruders appear.

Kyan has jade green eyes and long, midnight-blue hair held back by an ornate silver headdress. She is otherwise the typical, pale-skinned elven beauty. Viirdran has the black skin, white hair, and sinister bearing common to all drow. His eyes flicker and flash like lightning, and he wears tight-fitting black clothing with weblike patterns. He moves with the dark grace of a hunting spider.

Kyan's statistics assume she has had time to drink her *potion of barkskin* +5 and to cast *shield* and *expeditious retreat*. Likewise, Viirdran's stats assume he has had time to drink his *potion of barkskin* +3, his *potion of bear's endurance*, and to cast *mage armor*, *shield*, and *fox's cunning*.

➤ **Kyan Winterstrike, Female Elf Wizard 1/Fighter 6/Arcane Archer 8:** CR 15; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 1d4+1 plus 6d10+6 plus 8d8+8; hp 75; Init +9; Spd 60 ft.; AC 30, touch 17, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +14; Grp +15; Atk +16 melee (1d8+2/19-20, +1 *longsword*) or +26 ranged (1d8+6/×3 plus 1d6 cold, +1 *frost longbow* with +4 *arrow*); Full Atk +16/+11/+6 melee (1d8+2/19-20, +1 *longsword*) or +24/+24/+19/+14 ranged (1d8+5/×3 plus 1d6 cold, +1 *frost longbow* with +4 *arrow*); SA enhance arrow +4, *hail of arrows*, *imbue arrow*, *phase arrow*, *seeker arrow*, spells; SQ bat familiar, elf traits, low-light vision; AL CN; SV Fort +15, Ref +16, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Enhance Arrow (Su): Every nonmagical arrow Kyan shoots becomes magical, gaining a +4 enhancement bonus.

Hail of Arrows (Sp): Once per day, in lieu of her regular attacks, Kyan can fire an arrow at each and every target within range, to a maximum of eight targets. Each attack uses her primary attack bonus (+26 ranged), and each enemy may only be targeted by a single arrow.

Imbue Arrow (Sp): Kyan gains the ability to place an area spell upon an arrow. When the arrow is fired, the spell's area is centered on where the arrow lands, even if the spell could normally be centered

only on the caster. This ability allows Kyan to use the arrow's range instead of the spell's range. It takes a standard action to cast the spell and fire the arrow. The arrow must be fired in the round the spell is cast, or the spell is wasted.

Phase Arrow (Sp): Once per day, Kyan can fire an arrow at a target known to her within range, and the arrow travels to the target in a straight path, passing through any nonmagical barrier or wall in its way (a *wall of force*, *wall of fire*, or similar barrier stops the arrow). This ability negates cover, concealment, and armor modifiers, but otherwise the attack is rolled normally. Using this ability is a standard action (and firing the arrow is part of the action).

Seeker Arrow (Sp): Kyan can launch an arrow once per day at a target known to her within range, and the arrow travels to the target, even around corners. This ability negates cover and concealment modifiers, but otherwise the attack is rolled normally. Using this ability is a standard action (and firing the arrow is part of the action).

Skills: Craft (bowmaking) +19, Handle Animal +6, Hide +13, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Listen +14, Move Silently +13, Ride +11, Search +3, Spellcraft +5, Spot +11.

Feats: Alertness^B, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialization (longbow).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven.

Spells Prepared (3/2): save DC 11 + spell level; 10% chance of spell failure; 0—*detect magic*, *light*, *read magic*; 1st—*expeditious retreat*, *shield*.

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*burning hands*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *mount*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*.

Possessions: Mithral chain shirt, silver cage pendant (*lesser amulet of the planes*; see Appendix), +1 *longsword*, +1 *frost longbow*, four quivers with 25 arrows each (100 arrows total), *cloak of resistance* +3, *greater bracers of archery*, *Ring of Thirteen*, 2 *potions of barkskin* (+5), 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, spellbook, silver headdress (250 gp).

➤ **Viirdran Daraqor, Male Drow Fighter 7/Evoker 5/Eldritch Knight 3:** CR 16; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 7d10 plus 5d4 plus 3d6; hp 78 (108 with *bear's endur-*

KYAN
WINTERSTRIKE



VIIRDAN DARAOOK

ance); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 29, touch 18, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +12; Grp +14; Atk +20 melee (1d6+4/15–20, adamantine rapier or masterwork cold iron rapier) or +19 ranged (1d4, masterwork hand crossbow); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d6+4/15–20, adamantine rapier or masterwork cold iron rapier) or +19 ranged (1d4, masterwork hand crossbow); SA spells; SQ darkvision 120 ft., elf traits, light blindness, spell-like abilities, spell resistance 26, weasel familiar; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +6 (+8 against spells and spell-like abilities); Str 15, Dex 22, Con 10, Int 16 (20 with *fox's cunning*), Wis 8, Cha 12.

Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds Viirdran for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, he is dazzled as long as he remains in the affected area.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*. Caster level 15th.

Skills: Climb +12, Concentration +12, Craft (alchemy) +17, Intimidate +11, Jump +12, Knowledge (arcana) +14 (+16 with *fox's cunning*), Listen +3, Ride +18, Search +5 (+7 with *fox's cunning*), Spellcraft +16 (+18 with *fox's cunning*), Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness^B, Brew Potion, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Disarm, Mobility, Quick Draw, Scribe Scroll, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier), Whirlwind Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon.

Spells Prepared (5/6/5/4/2; caster level 7th; save DC 13 + spell level, or DC 15 + spell level with *fox's cunning*): 0—*acid splash, detect magic, mage hand, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*expeditious retreat, mage armor, magic missile (2), shield, true strike*; 2nd—*fox's cunning, scorching ray, see invisibility, spider climb, web*; 3rd—*fireball, fly, haste, protection from energy*; 4th—*enervation, ice storm*.

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*alarm, expeditious retreat, feather fall, jump, mage armor, magic missile, shield, true strike*; 2nd—*alter self, fox's cunning, scorching ray, see invisibility, shatter, spider climb, web*; 3rd—*fireball, fly, greater magic weapon, haste, hold person, lightning bolt, protection from energy*; 4th—*dimension door, enervation, ice storm, stone-skin, wall of ice*.

Possessions: Adamantine rapier, masterwork cold iron rapier, masterwork hand crossbow, 10 bolts, silver cage pendant (*lesser amulet of the planes*; see Appendix), *gloves of Dexterity* +4, *Ring of Thirteen*, *bead of force*, *potion of barkskin* (+3), *potion of bear's endurance*, scroll of *Bigby's interposing hand*, scroll of *greater magic weapon*, scroll of *wall of ice*, 2 flasks of alchemist's fire, tanglefoot bag, spell component pouch, spellbook emblazoned with lightning bolt patterns and protected by *fire trap* (1d4+7 fire damage; Reflex DC 17 half; Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29).

➤ **Farastu Demodands (2):** hp 80, 74; see area 4.

Tactics: If alerted to the presence of intruders, Kyan and Viirdran trigger the runes on the Egg of Merrshaulk to gain various defensive benefits. If pressed for time, Kyan drinks her *potion of barkskin* +5 (lasts 120 minutes) and casts *expeditious retreat* (lasts 10 rounds) and *shield* (lasts 10 rounds). She stays behind Viirdran, peppering foes with arrows while he engages in melee. Against large numbers of foes, she uses her hail of arrows ability. If things turn sour, she uses her *lesser amulet of the planes to plane shift* to Skullrot, on the first layer of Carceri (see "Asylum" in *DUNGEON* #116). She gambles that the characters won't pursue her.

At the first sign of trouble, Viirdran casts *mage armor* on himself (lasts 5 hours), followed by *protection from energy* (fire; lasts 50 minutes), *shield* (lasts 5 minutes) and *fox's cunning* (lasts 5 minutes). Finally, he drinks his *potion of barkskin* +3 (lasts 60 minutes) and *potion of bear's endurance* (lasts 3 minutes). During the first round of combat, he casts *haste* (lasts 5 rounds; affects up to five creatures), then draws his adamantine rapier and leaps into battle. He uses his cold iron rapier instead against any obvious fey or demonic targets. He uses his Mobility feat to increase his AC by +5, taking a -5 penalty on attack rolls. Like Kyan, he flees to Carceri if things go badly.

As soon as foes are detected, the farastus try to summon more demodands (1d4 farastus; 30% chance of success). Whether their attempts fail or succeed, they and any other farastus that appear attack the following round fight until slain. The Cagewrights pull back to give the demodands room to fight, if necessary.

Trap: The "vasshaess" rune carved into the Egg of Merrshaulk is part of a trap. Any Medium or smaller creature tracing the rune is instantly teleported inside the egg (Will DC 22 negates). The egg is hollow and filled with flesh-eating acid. Any creature trapped inside takes 10d6 acid damage per round, and may start to drown. The egg can be smashed open, although doing so disgorges the acid within, spilling it across the floor; any creature standing on the floor within 15

feet of the smashed egg takes 1d6 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 15 half). The acid drains away through cracks in the floor after 1 round. If the black egg is broken, it loses its magical properties.

The egg traps one creature at a time, during which the "vasshaess" rune glows and remains inactive. While the other runes become inert for 6 hours after use, the "vasshaess" stops glowing as soon as the creature trapped inside the egg dies and liquefies.

➤ **Egg of Merrshaulk:** CR 12; magical; touch trigger; automatic reset; teleportation (Will DC 22 negates) into acid (10d6 acid per round); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34; Hardness 16; hp 180; Break DC 39.

Development: If Kyan or Viirdran is killed or incapacitated, the other cries out, "I will avenge you, my love! Our salvation waits for us ... in Carceri!" He or she then flees to Skullrot on Carceri, using a *lesser amulet of the planes*. If the characters pursue the fleeing Cagewright, proceed with "Asylum", the final adventure in the Shackled City Adventure Path.

21. EMBRIL'S JAR (EL 20)

The murals that adorn the walls of this irregularly shaped room depict scenes of yuan-ti engaging in carnal pleasures and offering sacrifices to an aspect of their dread god, who appears as an enormous serpent with multiple heads—some vaguely humanoid, others snakelike. A human woman lies atop a black crystal slab in the middle of the room. An enigmatic figure looms above her—a scrawny white-skinned humanoid dressed in black robes, with a vaguely birdlike face, large dark eyes, a long neck, and six spindly arms. It waves its arms over the woman, as though unleashing some invocation.

An *unhallow* spell (caster level 9th) wards this chamber and area 20 below. Creatures in the room gain the benefits of *magic circle against good*. All turning checks made to turn undead take a -4 penalty, and turning checks to rebuke undead gain a +4 profane bonus (spell resistance does not apply to this effect).

Evil creatures in the area also gain the benefit of a *freedom of movement* spell.

The three ceramic urns contain the mummified remains of three yuan-ti pureblood clerics, their desiccated remains suspended in sawdust, their organs placed in clay canopic jars at the bottom of each urn. Each urn contains a Treasure and also conceals a greater shadow—a dark remnant of the yuan-ti sealed within (see *Creatures*, below).

One of the alcoves contains a stone ladder descending a 5-foot-wide, 10-foot-deep shaft to area 20. A secret door in the northwest alcove conceals a passage leading to area 22.

Creatures: The figure lying on the slab is Embril Aloustinai, a raven-haired beauty. Embril is not dead, but she has transferred her life force into a black *magic jar* gem clutched to her chest. The enigmatic six-armed figure standing next to her is a spell weaver that Embril recently *resurrected*. Normally, spell weavers do not associate or communicate with other races, but this particular spell weaver feels obliged to help Embril realize her plan to free Adimarchus from Carceri, as deranged and malevolent as that plan might seem. The spell weaver communicates with Embril via telepathy.

Hidden inside the ceramic burial urns are three greater shadows, one per urn, all under Embril's command. They emerge if Embril's soulless body or the spell weaver is attacked.

Embril intends to prove her devotion to Nerull with a worthy sacrifice; in her madness, she believes that a suitable sacrifice will allow her to commune with Nerull, unlock the secret of escaping Carceri, and use this knowledge to free Adimarchus from the prison plane. According to the spell weaver, Embril must first deliver a powerful soul to Nerull. She intends to take over a character's body, thus trapping the character's life force in the *magic jar* receptacle. She then *plane shifts* to Carceri with the *magic jar* gem and her body, where she waits for a representative of Nerull to arrive and claim the character's soul. Embril does not keep a familiar, as she sees them as more a liability than a benefit



to her safety. The spell weaver harbors secret doubts that Embriil's plan will succeed, but it uses a *mind blank* spell to conceal such thoughts from Embriil and others.

➔ **Embriil Aloustinai, Female Human Wizard 5/Cleric 9/Mystic Theurge 5 (Nerull):** CR 19; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d4+5 plus 9d8+9 plus 5d4+5; hp 66; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +10; Grp +10; Atk +10 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed strike); SA rebuke undead 10/day (1d20+5, affects 2d6+12 HD), spells; SQ —; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +20; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 23, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +9, Concentration +23, Craft (alchemy) +12, Decipher Script +12, Diplomacy +14, Disguise +9 (+11 acting), Hide +6, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (religion) +12,

Knowledge (the planes) +9, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +22.

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wand, Extra Turning, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Improved Counterspell, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Penetration.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Elven.

Wizard Spells Prepared (caster level 10th; 4/5/5/4/4/2; save DC 14 + spell level, DC 16 + spell level for necromancy spells): 0—*detect magic, light, mage hand, read magic*; 1st—*mage armor, magic missile (2), shield, unseen servant*; 2nd—*cat's grace, scorching ray (2)*, see *invisibility, web*; 3rd—*dispel magic, haste, hold person, lightning bolt*; 4th—*crushing despair, enervation, shout, stoneskin*; 5th—*magic jar* (already cast), *teleport*.

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*comprehend languages, mage armor, magic missile, obscuring mist, protection from good, shield,*

Tenser's floating disk, unseen servant; 2nd—*arcane lock, cat's grace, knock, locate object, Melf's acid arrow, owl's wisdom, scorching ray*, see *invisibility, web*; 3rd—*arcane sight, dispel magic, fly, haste, hold person, lightning bolt, phantom steed, tongues*; 4th—*crushing despair, enervation, fear, lesser geas, shout, stoneskin, wall of fire*; 5th—*baleful polymorph, break enchantment, cone of cold, feeblemind, Leomund's secret chest, magic jar, teleport, wall of stone*.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 14th; 6/7+1/7+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/4+1/2+1; save DC 13 + spell level, DC 15 + spell level for necromancy spells): 0—*cure minor wounds (2), detect poison, guidance, purify food and drink, resistance*; 1st—*bane, cure light wounds (2), disguise self^P, divine favor (2), hide from undead, shield of faith*; 2nd—*bear's endurance, cure moderate wounds (2), death knell^P, desecrate, silence, sound burst, undetectable alignment*; 3rd—*animate*

dead^D, cure serious wounds, invisibility purge, magic circle against good, prayer, protection from energy; 4th—cure critical wounds (3), death ward^D, neutralize poison, sending; 5th—commune, plane shift, slay living^D, spell resistance, true seeing; 6th—blade barrier, greater dispel magic, heal, harm, mislead^D; 7th—destruction^D (2), greater scrying.

D: Domain spell. Domains: Death (death touch 1/day; damage 9d6), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

Possessions: Headband of intellect +4, periapt of wisdom +6, wand of enervation (16 charges; command word "aghatreth"), mantle of faith, Ring of Thirteen, potion of owl's wisdom, platinum bracelet with 13 cage-shaped charms (750 gp), magic jar gem (containing Embril's life force), silver unholy symbol (500 gp), tiny Leomund's secret chest replica (50 gp; also see Treasure, below), pouch of diamond dust (stoneskin spell component; 250 gp).

➤ **Spell Weaver:** CR 18; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 18d8-18; hp 86; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 31, touch 18, flat-footed 27; Base Atk +18; Grp +16; Atk +17 melee (1d4-2/19-20, masterwork dagger); Full Atk +17/+12/+7/+2 melee (1d4-2/19-20, masterwork dagger); SA spell-like abilities, spells; SQ chromatic disk, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to mind-affecting effects, shielded mind, spell weaving, spell resistance 21, telepathy; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +14, Will +14; Str 6, Dex 19, Con 8, Int 22, Wis 18, Cha 23.

Chromatic Disk (Su): This 6-inch-diameter indestructible disk holds ten additional spell levels of energy that the spell weaver can tap and use as it wishes—the spell weaver could, for example, cast two extra 5th-level spells in a day, or three 3rd-level spells and one 1st-level spell, or any other combination of extra spell levels that adds to ten, so long as no single spell is higher than 5th level. (Two 0-level spells are the equivalent of one 1st-level spell for this purpose.) The spell weaver must hold the disk in one of its hands to tap this energy. The disk recharges itself to full power every night, at midnight. A spell powered by the disk is cast as though the caster had the Spell Focus feat for the spell in question. Only

a spell weaver can use a chromatic disk. If any other creature touches the disk or attempts to use it, it explodes, dealing 4d10 points of damage to everything within a 30-foot radius.

Shielded Mind (Ex): Attempts by creatures of other races to communicate telepathically with the spell weaver, or to read its mind, always fail. A creature making such an attempt must succeed on a Will save (DC 17) or be affected as if by a *confusion* spell (caster level 20th) for 1d6 days. The effect can be *dispelled* or removed with a *heal* spell. This effect does not occur if the spell weaver voluntarily initiates telepathic communication.

Spell Weaving (Su): A spell weaver can cast more than one spell simultaneously, as long as the sum of the spell levels is six or less. It could, for example, cast one 6th-level (or higher) spell, one 4th-level and one 2nd-level spell, one 3rd-level and three 1st-level spells, or three 2nd-level spells. (A single 0-level spell occupies one arm.) Casting a 6th-level or higher level spell requires all six of the spell weaver's arms.

Spell-Like Abilities: Always active—see invisibility; at will—*detect magic*, invisibility; 1/day—*plane shift* (Will DC 21). Caster level 20th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Telepathy (Su): Spell weavers can communicate with each other telepathically at a range of up to 1,000 miles. (There are no other living spell weavers within telepathic range of the spell weaver encountered in this adventure.)

Skills: Concentration +12, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +27, Listen +25, Spellcraft +27, Spot +25, Use Magic Device +27.

Feats: Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Heighten Spell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Spell Focus (evocation)^B, Spell Focus (necromancy)^B, Spell Penetration^B, Widen Spell.

Spells Known (caster level 20th; 6/8/8/7/7/7/6/6/6; save DC 16 + spell level, DC 17 + spell level for evocation and necromancy spells): 0—*acid splash*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *mage hand*, *message*, *open/close*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*; 1st—*charm per-*

son, *magic missile*, *protection from evil*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*; 2nd—*detect thoughts*, *eagle's splendor*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*, *spider climb*; 3rd—*fireball*, *fly*, *gaseous form*, *haste*; 4th—*confusion*, *enervation*, *fire shield*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere*; 5th—*baleful polymorph*, *cone of cold*, *telekinesis*, *wall of force*; 6th—*disintegrate*, *greater dispel magic*, *Otiluke's freezing sphere*; 7th—*finger of death*, *prismatic spray*, *teleport without error*; 8th—*horrid wilting*, *mind blank*, *polar ray*; 9th—*Bigby's crushing hand*, *energy drain*, *wish*.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +8, ring of protection +4, masterwork dagger, forked metal rod (focus for *plane shift* spell).

➤ **Greater Shadows (3):** hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 221.

Tactics: Embril's life force can remain inside the *magic jar* gem for up to 10 hours. While her soul is confined to the *magic jar* gem, Embril senses all living creatures within 100 feet (provided they are within line of sight of the gem); she can tell these life forces apart from the spell weaver's as it has a *protection from evil* spell in effect, which protects it from *magic jar* and other attempts at possession. As soon as she notices them, Embril tries to possess one of the characters as a full-round action. If the attempt fails, she tries to possess a different character the following round. Once she succeeds in taking a host body, Embril uses the possessed body to scoop up her own body and the *magic jar* gem it clutches (a move action) and then uses *plane shift* to travel to Carceri with them.

The greater shadows gang up on one foe, hoping to take down that character quickly. The *unhallow* effect makes them harder to turn.

A cautious creature, the spell weaver has cast *mind blank* as well as *protection from evil* to shield itself against Embril's *magic jar* spell. It guards Embril's body until she successfully possesses one of the characters, at which point it gives her the focus she needs to cast her *plane shift* spell (a forked metal rod). Once she vanishes, the spell weaver continues to fight the PCs as long as it looks like they don't have the upper hand in combat; if they do, it teleports away to safety.

Treasure: Each of the ceramic burial urns contains a valuable item, determined by rolling on the Shatterhorn Treasure table (see page 68). Embril's replica *Leomund's secret chest* can be used to recall the actual chest from the Ethereal Plane; the larger chest is worth 5,000 gp and is Trapped. It contains a scroll of *cone of cold* (caster level 10th), a scroll of *heal* (caster level 14th), a *wand of cure moderate wounds* (24 charges; command word "savar"), Embril's spellbook, and a *tome of understanding +1*.

Trap: Embril's *secret chest* has a *greater glyph of warding* placed on it (caster level 14th) that triggers a *slay living* spell if anyone other than Embril opens it.

➤ **Greater Glyph of Warding:** CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*slay living*, 14th-level cleric, death, DC 20 Fort save for 3d6+14 damage); Search DC 31, Disable Device DC 31.

Development: If Embril escapes to Carceri with her body and the *magic jar* gem containing the character's life essence, she arrives on Carceri and casts *commune* to contact Nerull to alert him that she has a soul for him in return for the key to releasing Adimarchus. She then waits for Nerull or one of his minions to come for the captured soul; she doesn't have long to wait. Nerull accepts her offering, but does not fulfill her desires completely. Rather than return to the Material Plane, Embril decides to use her *greater scrying* spell to seek out Adimarchus and *teleports* to his Carcerian prison, an asylum called Skullrot, only to be captured by the asylum's lich warden. More details await in issue #116 of *DUNGEON* in the climax of the Shackled City Adventure Path: "Asylum."

Characters wishing to rescue their abducted comrade must travel to Carceri as detailed in "Asylum." Until the missing character's body is recovered, you should allow that player to take on the role of a cohort, or perhaps one of their other allies from the region (such as one of the Striders of Fharlanghn or even Jenya). Of course, once their missing companion is dead, *true resurrection* can be used to bring him back to life even though his body and soul are on Carceri. In this case, Nerull considers the theft of Embril's gift

an affront, and sends a marut after the resurrected character within 24 hours to punish him for his escape.

➤ **Marut:** hp 112; *Monster Manual* 159.

22. CRUSHING WALLS (EL 10)

No decorative murals adorn this narrow tunnel, which wends through the black rock and curves off into darkness.

This 5-foot-wide hall joins areas 1 and 21, and a Trap has been placed here to crush the unwary. Pulling down a stone lever east of the trap deactivates it and allows for safe passage through the tunnel.

Trap: Two large blocks of stone are set into the walls of the tunnel 25 feet from the secret door leading to area 1. Any creature that passes between the blocks—whether walking, climbing, jumping, or flying—causes them to smash together. Seconds later, the blocks retract into the walls, ready to crush the next creature that passes between them.

➤ **Crushing Walls Trap:** CR 10; mechanical; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; lever bypass; no attack roll required (18d6, crush, Reflex DC 23 half); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 27.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

"Strike on Shatterhorn" concludes as the PCs defeat the final Cagewright in the ruins below the ancient yuan-ti fortress. Of course, some of the Cagewrights may flee to Carceri, but as long as at least three of them are slain, the blow is enough to ruin the organization.

Yet there remains one final enemy to overcome: Adimarchus himself. The fallen angel (now an insane demon prince) is still imprisoned in Skullrot, a massive asylum built of skulls and located on Carceri. If she escaped to Carceri, Embril still has a chance to free Adimarchus, but even if she doesn't the steps the Cagewrights have taken have weakened his bonds. Very soon, he'll escape from Carceri, return to the realm of Occipitus on the Abyss, and quickly re-establish his empire and avenge his long impris-

onment on those responsible. And the PCs may well be at the front of this list, simply for their involvement in the destruction of his Cagewrights.

Even if Embril still lives, the PCs should have some time to relax before the final chapter of the Shackled City Adventure Path begins. Carceri is a dangerous place; even the most powerful heroes should take care to prepare before approaching the Asylum of Skullrot! ☞

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Strike on Shatterhorn" is designed for a group of four 18th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 16th–17th-level characters or 19th–20th-level characters. All NPCs in the adventure should have their class levels adjusted by an amount equal to the increase or decrease in average party level from 18th. Specific changes to the adventure follow.

16th–17th Level: Remove the fog from the above-ground ruins, and remove the advanced will-o'-wisps. Remove the advanced mohrg from area 1, and replace the *wail of the banshee* traps with *insanity* or *scintillating pattern* traps. Remove one of the death slaadi from area 15. Replace the spell weaver in area 21 with a farastu demodand.

19th–20th Level: One way of increasing the difficulty of this adventure is to introduce a countdown element. For example, if the PCs don't manage to defeat all of the Cagewrights before they're forced to retreat or rest, they may have the chance to bolster their numbers with more demodands, or perhaps even a marilith or balor demon. Add the ghost template to the ancient will-o'-wisps. Advance all demodands encountered by 2–4 Hit Dice, and the crystal snake by 4–8 Hit Dice. Add a second resurrected spell weaver to area 21.

APPENDIX 1:
NEW FEATSCONTAGIOUS PARALYSIS
[MONSTROUS]

Your paralyzing attack is contagious.

Prerequisite: Paralysis as an extraordinary or supernatural ability.

Benefit: Any creature paralyzed by your special attack can confer paralysis to other creatures that touch it. Any creature touching a creature that you have paralyzed is immediately affected as if you had delivered a paralyzing attack upon it (using the same save DC to resist, if allowed).

If a creature successfully saves against your contagious paralysis attack, it can't be affected again by that attack for 24 hours.

This feat is from *Libris Mortis: The Book of Undead*.

IMPROVED FIENDISH SERVANT

You gain the service of a powerful, fiendish animal servitor.

Prerequisites: Fiendish servant class feature.

Benefits: You can call an ape, black bear, boar, crocodile, dire badger, dire bat, dire weasel, heavy warhorse, leopard, monitor lizard, constrictor snake, Large viper snake, or wolverine as a fiendish servant. In addition, the servant gains the fiendish creature template (see *Monster Manual*, pages 107–108). The fiendish servant otherwise conforms to the rules in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* (page 183).

IMPROVED PARALYSIS
[MONSTROUS]

You are better at paralyzing your victims.

Prerequisites: Undead type, paralysis extraordinary ability.

Benefit: When your natural attacks threaten to paralyze your foe, add a +4 bonus to the save DC.

This feat is from *Libris Mortis: The Book of Undead*.

APPENDIX 2:
NEW SPELLS

SHADOW DAGGER

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 0 ft.

Effect: One shadowy masterwork dagger

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates; see text

Spell Resistance: No

A shadowy masterwork dagger appears in your hand. On subsequent rounds, you can wield the dagger as though it was a real masterwork dagger. Each time the dagger hits, it deals normal damage and forces the target to make a Will save. If the Will save fails, the shadow dagger deals an additional 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6).

SHADOW PUPPETEER

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 20-foot-radius emanation centered on you

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates; see text

Spell Resistance: Yes

You can manipulate the shadows around you, giving them sinister, monstrous forms. All creatures within range, except those specified by you, must make a successful Will save or be clawed and bitten for 2d6 points of damage +1 point of damage per caster level (maximum +15). Affected creatures within range must make a new Will save each round at the beginning of your turn or take damage.

This spell needs light to function and deals no damage in areas of total darkness.

Material Component: A candle.

APPENDIX 3:
NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Amulet of the Planes, Lesser: A lesser amulet of the planes functions as an amulet of the planes, save that it can be used only once per day.

Strong conjuration; CL 15th; Craft Wondrous Item, *plane shift*; Price: 24,000 gp.

Blackstone Rune: This rune is a complex sigil drawn on a small, glossy stone. On command, a blackstone rune allows its bearer to *plane shift* between the Plane of Shadow and the Material Plane (in either direction), along with up to 50 pounds of objects. A blackstone rune can be used three times before its magic fades.

This item originally appeared in the *Fiend Folio* (page 151).

Moderate conjuration; CL 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *plane shift*; Market Price: 3,300 gp; Weight: —.

Ring of Thirteen: The Cagewright leaders wear matching magic rings designed to protect them from detection and harm. A *Ring of Thirteen* is a *ring of protection* +2 that also protects its wearer with constant *protection from good*, *nondetection*, and *endure elements*. These rings function only for evil creatures; a non-evil creature who wears a *Ring of Thirteen* gains a negative level for as long as the ring is worn. This negative level never actually results in actual level loss.

Strong abjuration; CL 15th; Forge Ring, *protection from good*, *nondetection*, *endure elements*, creator must be evil; Price 54,000 gp.

Serpent's Eye: This 2-inch-diameter spherical black orb has a golden slitlike band, giving it the appearance of a reptilian eye. When grasped, the *serpent's eye* allows the owner to use *foresight* (as the spell) once per day. The *serpent's eye* has 50 charges when created.

Strong divination; CL 17th; Craft Wondrous Item, *foresight*; Price 30,000 gp.

MASTERING THE GAME

STARTING A NEW CAMPAIGN (PART 2)

The People Around the Table

BY MONTE COOK

You've decided to start a campaign. Maybe it's your first one. Maybe it's your twentieth. Either way, there are things you must consider before you ever design the first adventure or detail the campaign world.

Who Are You Going to Invite?

There simply is no more important consideration when starting a campaign than deciding who's going to be involved. It seems like an easy question at first. "All my friends," might be the answer. Or even, "whomever I can get to play." But let's explore this a bit further.

First and foremost, you want to gather together fun people who you can enjoy spending not just an evening with, but a number of evenings (or Saturday afternoons, or whatever) on a regular basis. The ideal is for all of your players to be your best friends as well (and for them to all be best friends with

each other). That's not always going to happen. Sometimes your best friends aren't gamers, or just don't like fantasy, or whatever genre you're interested in. Sometimes people move away, or sometimes you're the one who's just moved into a new town and don't know any other gamers.

This is where things get tricky. You don't want to automatically exclude new people, but you don't want to take all comers, either. Even if you're willing to play with anyone, and can get along with everyone, that doesn't mean that everyone in the group feels that way.

In such a case, you have to consider your invitations carefully. If your friend Rick really put a damper on your last campaign with his constant rules arguing, you might have to not invite him. Even if he's a good friend. If one player's actions make the whole experience less fun for you and everyone else, then he shouldn't get invited. If you're mak-

ing him happy but in the end no one else has any fun, what's the point? Find other activities to do with Rick.

If you're bringing in a lot of new people—people you don't know—things are even harder. The best rule of thumb is to give people the benefit of the doubt. However, go into it with your eyes wide open. A good group that works well together and gets along is a valuable commodity and it often doesn't come easy. Further, make sure you let the players know exactly what you expect from the game. This includes not only the genre and scope of the actual campaign, but how seriously (or not) you take things like player absences, lots of off-topic jokes or conversations, rules debates, power-gaming, player in-fighting, and other issues. (I'll be dealing with these kinds of style issues, often called table rules, in an upcoming column.) Let them know ahead of time that your game might not be their cup of tea. Although such forewarning might scare off some potential players, in the long run the whole group will be happier if everyone has a shared set of expectations.

Gathering a group of people to take part in a roleplaying game is almost like actually gathering together a real group of adventurers. Ideally, you don't want a paladin and an assassin in the same group, and you want to make sure all the necessary bases—a healer, a spellcaster, a sneaky character, a strong fighter, etc. are covered. Likewise, you want the group of players to mesh well, being similar enough to each other to get along but different enough to be an interesting, diverse group.

The Perfect Player

The perfect player has many qualities. First, he's reliable. He shows up for the game regularly and on-time. If he can't make it, he lets you know well in advance.

The perfect player pays attention during the game. He takes notes when it will help him remember important facts about the game world or the current plotline of the campaign. He's interested in the DM's world, interested in the other players' characters, and motivated to create a character that fits in and works well with both. At the start

of the session, the perfect player helps refamiliarize himself and everyone else with where things were left off last time. (It's worth stressing, because it doesn't get said enough—players who actually take the time to get to know some of the details of the DM's setting and show that the events of the game have some meaning to them are worth their weight in gold. DMing is both hard work and a real creative endeavor, two things which deserve the attention and appreciation of others. No bigger compliment for a DM exists than to have players who show that they are interested and invested enough to remember NPC and place names, show genuine concern for the events of the campaign, and treat—at least in some small way—the DM's creation like a real place.)

The perfect player is familiar with the rules but is always willing to let the DM be the final arbiter. He never slows the game down by pointing out an incorrect ruling or usage of the rules. He's willing to help other players who don't know the rules as well as he does but doesn't try to boss them around or dictate their characters' actions. He doesn't try to force his style of play on others. He doesn't get angry at the in-game actions of other players even when he disagrees. The perfect player doesn't pick fights with other PCs, boast overmuch about his character or his game knowledge, or demand to see other players' character sheets and belittle the choices they've made for their characters.

He knows not to try to hog the lime-light, and gives everyone their turn. He doesn't argue endlessly about what the party should do but isn't afraid to speak up, either. The perfect player is always ready to tell the DM what his character does when it is his turn. He doesn't bring everything to a standstill while he decides what to do. He's often even pre-rolled his attacks or checks that he knows he's going to make.

A perfect player doesn't get up from the game table in mid-session to do something else, leaving the game in the lurch by his absence. He doesn't interrupt the flow of the game with unrelated conversation or inappropriate jokes that break the mood.

The perfect player isn't continually borrowing other players' books, dice, pencils or other supplies. He doesn't forget his character sheet at home.

The perfect player respects the location of the game. If it's someone's home he doesn't wreck anything, doesn't leave behind a mess (including a lot of dirty dishes or pizza boxes), and doesn't overstay his welcome by staying after the game too long. If there's food or drinks involved with the game, the perfect player shares what he has brought with others.

The perfect player might not actually exist. He's an ideal to shoot for—he's who we want in our games, and he's who we should strive to be when we play in other people's games.

A Mixed Group

One great thing about gaming groups is that sometimes they consist of a group of like-minded people that would otherwise never get together and interact. A single group might have a doctor, a retail store clerk, a high school student, an engineer, and a stay-at-home mom. Dealing with a diverse group brings up special challenges, however.

Young Players

With the hobby being 30 years old now, the likelihood of a group containing players ranging in age from 50 to 15 is greater than ever. A wide age range in a game group brings with it its own challenges. Before you let someone much younger than the rest of the group (or at least much younger than you) into the game, consider the kinds of issues you might be introducing in the campaign. Lots of harsh violence—and in particular gory descriptions of such—probably isn't appropriate for really young kids (under 10 or so). Sexual themes, or even just situations that might illicit players to make comments about sexual situations, also aren't a good idea if there are children playing. Older players who won't show this kind of consideration for the younger players probably shouldn't be invited to join a group of kids. The last thing you want is to find yourself as the DM having to explain the birds and bees to a young player when

he asks the meaning behind some off-hand comment you make, or another player makes.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, older players may lose patience with a game that contains younger players who will want to take less mature actions or who may be more interested in a silly game than a serious one.

In the end, it's simply important to be aware that roleplaying games are usually a very different experience when you're 11 than they are when you're 17, and both are different from when you are 36.

Mixed Company

One way for a group of male gamers to make sure that they never have a girl or a woman join their ranks is to fill their games with terrible female stereotypes, their game sessions with crude humor, and their game rooms with rank odors. Maybe you want your group to be a "boy's club," but if you don't, take a look around. The reasons there are no women around the table might become obvious if you open your eyes (or take a whiff).

If you're fortunate enough to play in a game group with both men and women—or boys and girls—be aware of issues that can come up in the game to which the different genders might react differently. Primarily, think about sexual situations. You don't ever want to make a player feel truly uncomfortable because of something that happens in the game. This is particularly true if it's something that's actually happening to his or her character. A woman may not want a male DM putting her character into a situation where sexuality is an issue. A man may not want a female player making sexual advances toward his character. A player of either gender might not appreciate the DM having female NPCs traipsing around in skimpy, unrealistic clothing acting foolishly, or making homophobic characters (or remarks).

Run the game you want, but consider the effects it could have on the people you invite, or tailor your game a bit to attract the people that you want to attend.

Practical Considerations

There are practical issues to consider. If some of the players are smokers, are you willing to allow them to smoke during the game (and if you're not also the host, is the host willing to have them smoke inside)? If they must go elsewhere or outside to smoke, are you willing to take breaks to allow it?

Do any of your players have allergies? If you're going to be playing in a house with cats, don't invite players who are allergic to cats, or at least make it very clear to them that they'll be in a place with cat dander all around them for 4–6 hours every week, and then let them take responsibility for themselves.

Solving Disputes

In some roleplaying games, the DM is called the referee, or even the judge. This comes out of really old-school gaming, when roleplaying games were little more than wargames where the players fought each other with an independent arbiter that made rulings on what actions were allowed.

In addition to everything else you have to do, a DM's got to be able to solve disputes between players. With the players working together, such disagreements are only rarely in-game disputes. More often, they are rooted in personality conflicts of the players, not the characters.

Once you've got your group together and the game is up and running, things can still go wrong. Despite your best efforts, some of the personalities around the table might clash.

Being the DM means more than just creating an interesting world and running the NPCs in the game. It's a social position, and with it comes responsibilities. If the group's not having fun, it's your job to do what you can to change that. If two players aren't getting along, it's your responsibility to do what you can to solve the dispute. Being a DM isn't just being a creator and a manager, it's also being a den mother. (Or, if you'd rather, a pack leader—or at least a facilitator.)

If it's simply an in-game issue, where two characters are feuding, either decide to let them play it out, or tell them that you'd rather not have intra-

party conflicts in your game (in fact, tell them how you feel about that before the campaign even starts). If it's the case that two players disagree over a rule interpretation or whether one of their characters can or can't do something, that's easy. Just decide for yourself the way you want it handled in your game, and then be consistent about doing it the same way from then on.

Out-of-game issues need to be solved outside the game. The players might deny that it's an out-of-game issue: "No, I'm just playing my *character*. It's my *character* that hates Bob's character. I don't have a problem with Bob." This might be true, but more often than not it's an excuse. If it's true, it's a simple problem. Just ask the players, for the sake of everyone else's fun, including yours, to find a way for their characters to get along. Roleplaying is important, but it's a game and the goal is to have fun. Roleplaying a character accurately but in a way that makes another player or the whole group miserable is not a laudable goal, and you should tell your players that.

More than likely, though, it's actually an out-of-game issue. Rick doesn't like Bob, or Rick's playing style just rubs Bob the wrong way. Maybe one player is overbearing and tries to boss the other players around, or he just hogs the DM's attention. While these are problems that manifest in the game, they are really out-of-game problems. That is to say, they don't have anything to do with the characters or events in the fictional world of the campaign.

Outside of the game session, contact all players involved. First, do so individually, hearing out what each has to say. Explain to each that his actions are hurting the game and detracting from everyone's fun. Explain why, and be as precise as you can, with examples. "You're being a jerk Bob, and I wish you'd stop wrecking the game," isn't going to help. Try not to embarrass them or put them on the spot. It's entirely possible that they might not know their actions are affecting anyone else in a detrimental way. Then, if you think it would help, bring them together. In any event, appeal to their

sense of fun, and to their connection to their other friends trying to enjoy themselves. Most people are going to come around.

If the problem is completely out-of-game—for example, Bob is mad at Rick because they had an argument at school—let them know that they can live their lives however they want, but at the game table you're responsible for the group's enjoyment and you can't let their feelings for each other get in the way of that. Make it clear that you don't see your role as DM to be anything beyond what goes on at the gaming table.

Of course, the problem might be that the personality conflict includes you. You and a player are continually butting heads. He's not agreeing with your rulings, doesn't like the way you run the game, or he's mad at you for some extraneous reason but it's affecting how he acts in the game. You can't let this situation continue. Talk to the player outside the game and try to clear up the conflict. If it's an issue that has to do with how you run the game, don't confront him during the game—you'll be wasting the whole group's time. Ask him to table the issue so the game can move on, promising that you'll talk about it afterward. Hear him out. Consider his opinion. Ultimately, you're the DM, and it's your game. You can interpret rules and conduct a session however you please. However, don't interpret that to mean that you're always right or that no one else might have a valuable suggestion.

If it's a purely personal issue, handle it outside the game and ask the player—no matter what else happens—to not bring out-of-game issues to the table for the sake of everyone's good time. Even if he's mad at you, he shouldn't want to spoil everyone else's fun. And if he doesn't care about the group's fun, then he's probably not someone you want to game with after all.

Getting Rid of Someone

Sometimes, for the good of the game—which is to say, for the good of the group—you've got to get an offending player out of the campaign. The obvious choice is the worst one: kill his charac-

ter and don't invite him back. This is bad because you're allowing what is basically an out-of-game issue to affect what happens in the game. This is, quite frankly, going to make you look vindictive and the players that stay—even if they're glad the offending player is gone—will look at you and your DMing in a new light. You're also setting a precedent that you might not want to set. If a good player's character dies, do they have to leave as well?

As stated earlier, the best way to deal with an out-of-game problem is with an out-of-game solution. Try as I might, I simply can't come up with a better solution than to simply talk to the player—preferably alone, and certainly not at a game session with everyone else. Part of being the DM is taking the responsibility of being the custodian of everyone's fun, and that means that when a difficult task arises, like kicking someone out of the group, it's something you have to do. Bite the bullet and do it. Explain things to him as plainly and as kindly as you can. Suggest that he could probably find a game that fits his style of play elsewhere. If it's important to you, tell him that your game group relationship has nothing to do with your real world relationship and that you want to still be friends. Expect him to be a little hurt and disappointed, but know that he'll get over it. The whole thing is not unlike breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, really.

The player might offer to change his ways. It's up to you to determine whether or not he's sincere, and regardless of whether he means it, whether it's even possible. However, if you've reached the point where you're asking him to leave, you should have already taken him aside in the past and tried to let him know that his behavior is disruptive or un-fun. In this case, you know that more than likely your intervention isn't going to get him to change, or at least not change for long.

Don't hesitate to eject a troublesome player from the campaign. Don't make excuses for putting up with him if he's ruining everyone else's good time. Don't say "he's one of the few players I can find around here." A small group is

better than an unpleasant evening each week as you try to deal with the troublesome player.

In any event, don't let yourself have a short-term memory for these kinds of things. If you have problems with a player or players in one campaign, make sure you don't invite them to join the next one.

It's a game. You and everyone else at the table are supposed to be having fun. An enjoyable roleplaying campaign is a precious thing. Do whatever you must to prevent anything or anyone from spoiling it. ▣

Monte Cook is the author of the DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide. He runs his own publishing company, Malhavoc Press, located online at www.montecook.com.

Next Time: The physical aspects of your game: miniatures, battlemats, or nothing at all.



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FENCES AND DEALERS

BY FRANK BRUNNER
ILLUSTRATION BY
ATTILA ADORJANY

Upend an adventurer's loot sack, and one is likely to find tumbling out not only a small cascade of coins but also tomes from a necromancer's library, filigreed tableware, a handful of sapphires, and flasks of hobgoblin rotgut. How can a battered hero liquidate these valuables and gain the cash needed to pay for the *regeneration* of his severed shield arm?

While the financial transactions could occur "offstage," roleplaying such encounters allows the DM to introduce new plot hooks and intriguing NPCs. This entry in the Campaign Workbook details five traders, both legal and illegal, who traffic in exotic curios, arms, gems, rare books, and foreign monies.

Saint Vorgan's Museum of the Recondite

The curator of this repository of exotica is Malagron Donegal. Finding Malagron in the dim vaults of Saint Vorgan's can be challenging; he has been known to lie in a mummy's sarcophagus for hours to "really appreciate the finality of the art." A meeting with Malagron is a mini-adventure: the sarcophagus lid may be trapped ("The poison is still virulent after all these ages? Fascinating!"), a bulette skeleton may animate ("The last time I buy from a necromancer!"), or a map room depicting a miniature City of Brass may suddenly erupt in a roaring *wall of fire* ("Even a fool knows not to step in the Street of Burning Thaumaturgy!").

Once the party secures safe audience with Malagron, he

is eager to deal. His lust for oddments compels him to buy any objects save loose gems. He spends up to 10,000 gp per month, and if his indifferent attitude is improved to helpful, he pays a 5% finder's fee above value. With the museum virtually deserted because of its dangerous exhibits, the source of Malagron's wealth, like Saint Vorgan himself, is a mystery. Some whisper that Malagron's true clientele are outsiders, others that he discovered a head-size diamond in the helmet of an old plate suit; and still others claim that he is the self-exiled prince of a distant land.

➤ **Malagron Donegal, Obsessed Curator, Male Human Expert 8:** CR 7; hp 31; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Atk +5 (1d4-1/19-20, adamantite dagger); AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Notable Skills: Appraise +18, Decipher Script +11, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +7, Knowledge (geography) +9, Knowledge (history) +18, Knowledge (religion) +11, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +12, Use Magic Device +12.

Feats: Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Appraise), Skill Focus (Knowledge—history), Toughness.

Possessions: Adamantine dagger, leather armor, catalog of the museum's holdings indexed by room, aura, and year of acquisition.

The Verlakki Brothers

These itinerant halfling triplets park their mahogany box wagon in a city's low quarter and keep an eye on the fastest escape route. Idriss specializes in arms deals, Aloysius in stolen gems and jewels, and Marcellus in purloined art and illegal magic. All three Verlakkis are abrasive and



cruel. They dress in waistcoats and top hats, and they go out of their way to belittle any PC with a low Charisma score.

The Verlakki Brothers begin with an unfriendly attitude; if mollified to indifference, they deign to buy from the PCs. They can make purchases of up to 5,000 gp per month, but they never buy anything that will not fit inside their wagon. Trafficking with the wanted halflings is risky: there is a 30% chance that the city watch comes sniffing around the low quarter during a deal. In such a case, every PC must roll an opposed Hide check to avoid being spotted and arrested as a Verlakki accomplice.

☞ **Idriss, Aloysius, and Marcellus Verlakki, Cruel Fences, Male Halfling Rogue 10 (3):** CR 10; hp 48; Init +9; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 15; Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6+2/19–20, +2 longsword) or +14/+9 ranged (1d6/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA sneak attack +5d6; SQ slippery mind; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +15, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Notable Skills: Appraise +14, Bluff +13, Disguise +9, Forgery +12, Hide +16, Move Silently +10, Search +7, Sense Motive +12, Sleight of Hand +18.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Rapid Reload.

Possessions: +2 longsword, +2 glamered leather armor, waistcoat of resistance +2, meerschaum.

The Belled Cat Gallery

Dravinia Illesereva, a drow, runs this new art dealership. Intelligent and earnest, she wears modest subfusc, but underneath the floppy brim of her sunhat is a radiant face. Accustomed to prejudice from all sides, she is happy to deal with the PCs, gladly buying art objects and eclectic artifacts worth up to 5,000 gp per month.

An opposed Sense Motive check reveals that Dravinia lives in fear. The matriarch of the Illesereva clan has branded Dravinia an apostate of the Vault and put a bounty on her head. If the PCs are ever able to convince the matriarch to forget Dravinia (perhaps by defeating two drow "retrieval" squads), then the expatriate drow can provide the PCs with a map to the Underdark chasm where her grandfather hid his legendary *chef d'oeuvre*, a lapis lazuli mirror of mental prowess.

☞ **Dravinia Illesereva, Persecuted Businesswoman, Female Drow Bard 2:** CR 3; hp 12; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Atk +0 melee (1d4–1/19–20, dagger) or +2 ranged (1d4/19–20, hand crossbow); SA *dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*; AL NG; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 17.

Notable Skills: Appraise +7, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +12, Listen +8, Perform (string instruments) +8, Sense Motive +6, Spot +7, Use Magic Device +7.

Feats: Alertness.

Bard Spells Known (3/1, Base Save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, ghost sound, mage hand, message, prestidigitation*; 1st—*charm person, identify*.

Possessions: Dagger, hand crossbow, leather armor, lyre.

The Earl's Wife

After two months of marriage, the Earl of Chirlanton was sufficiently irritated by his wife's harangues (chiefly on the topic of his long hours at court) to order her handmaidens to find the young lady a hobby. After one look at the dashing paladin of Pelor who paid a visit at the handmaidens' request, Eloise Winters, Lady Chirlanton, had found her hobby: Patroness of Adventurers.

Eloise has more gold than sense, and if the party contains a male with a Charisma greater than 13, she gladly pays 110% of an item's value and purchases goods valued up to 15,000 gp per month. If the party has no such male, Eloise is still happy to deal with the PCs, although she pays only the standard value of the item.

The danger in dealing with Lady Chirlanton is her infantile covetousness. Eventually, Eloise hears of a fantastically powerful and beautiful item (say, the *Jacinth of Inestimable Beauty*) and, accustomed to having whatever she wants, orders the PCs to fetch it for her. If the PCs decline, Eloise is utterly incapable of grasping why the PCs would not do her this favor after she has helped them so much, and she considers it a direct insult. She uses her political connections to harass the ingrates with thugs until they acquiesce (use the rogue stats on p. 123 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*; Eloise sends four killers equal to the party's level).

☞ **Eloise Winters, Lady Chirlanton, Childish Aristocrat Female Human**

Aristocrat 2: CR 1; hp 16; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Full Atk +1 melee (1d4–1, masterwork silver dagger); AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 7, Wis 7, Cha 14.

Notable Skills: Appraise +1, Bluff +4, Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +4, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +1, Sense Motive +2.

Feats: Negotiator, Run.

Possessions: Masterwork silver dagger, fashionable tight-bodied court dress, sequined diary with records of sponsored adventurers and their recovered treasure.

The Moneychanger's Table

Outside the temple of Olidammara, the bald gnome Hugo Verdubb keeps a table under an awning. He is very efficient and spare; his table has nothing on it but one logbook and two balances. A coffer of coins and a jeweler's kit rest at his feet. Six hulking men-at-arms fill the rest of the space in Hugo's shade.

Despite his veneration of the Laughing Rogue, Hugo deals true. He buys fine jewelry and gems, cut or uncut, at full value, and foreign coins at full value less a 10 percent money-changing fee. He also advances loans, collecting interest of 20 gp per week per 1,000 gp lent. Hugo maintains very close ties with the local Thieves' Guild. If the PCs offer him goods pilfered in a non-union job, he may make a Gather Information check (DC 20) to discover that the PCs have been operating outside the Guild's aegis. The party can then expect a gang of goons to arrive within the hour to give them a physical demonstration of the benefits of Guild membership.

☞ **Hugo Verdubb, Usurer and Gem Merchant, Male Gnome Expert 4:** CR 3; hp 26; Init –1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk +3 melee (1d4–1/19–20, dagger); SA: *dancing lights, ghost sound, prestidigitation, speak with burrowing animals*; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +6; Str 8, Dex 9, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 12.

Notable Skills: Appraise +12, Bluff +8, Craft (alchemy) +4, Diplomacy +12, Gather Information +11, Hide +7, Listen +11, Profession (bookkeeper) +9, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9.

Feats: Skill Focus (Appraise), Skill Focus (Gather Information).

Possessions: Mauve leather armor, dagger, jeweler's lens. ☞

FIFTY FAIRS AND MARKETS

BY RICHARD PETT

ILLUSTRATION BY ATTILA ADORJANY

Markets and fairs are the life and soul of the city. Most are mundane affairs where farmers come to town to sell livestock or fishermen come to sell their catch. The markets and fairs suggested by this entry in the Campaign Workbook, however, are anything but ordinary, and each offers opportunities for adventure.

Markets and fairs offer the Dungeon Master an opportunity to introduce new and unusual items into the campaign at a moment's notice. They also give the players unique opportunities to spend their hard-earned gold pieces. Each time your PCs are wandering the streets of the city, roll d% and consult the Random Markets & Fairs table, below.

The markets and fairs presented in the table below (or those of your own design) provide a bit of constantly changing local flavor to your city, making it seem like a vibrant, living environment. If you keep a campaign calendar (and you should), note the date of the festival. A year later (in game time), when the PCs encounter the same festival, they'll have a real sense of accomplishment and an understanding that time marches on in the city.

Market prices are generally 10–20% lower than those listed in the *Player's*

Handbook, although choice is considerably narrowed by the particular specialist market.

Expanded Sample: Saint Hellowell's Scribery Market and Fayre

The local Saint Hellowell died over 100 years ago, but an annual market is held on the anniversary of his death to celebrate his life's work of collecting the written word in all its forms. The PCs may find a plethora of scrolls, old maps, and knowledge from the traders who flock to the local area. A particularly valuable tapestry work—the *Illuminai Magnifica*—is stolen by a group of wizards who believe the tapestry details a powerful spell. The tapestry was a peace offering from a neighboring baron. Unless it is recovered, war could erupt. The town gates are locked and the town leadership announces a strict curfew and a huge reward for the tapestry's safe return. Meanwhile, the thieves accidentally release a demon that was bound to the tapestry and it goes on the rampage.

Random Markets & Fairs (d%)

- 01–02 **Sir Berzimon's Challenge:** Warriors battle to win the belt of champions. The town is awash with cheap armor and weapons.
- 03–04 **Bird Market:** After 20 years, this cacophonous market now even attracts traders in griffons and hippogriffs.
- 05–06 **Tanners' Mart:** Masterwork leatherworkers come to sell fabulous goods at reasonable rates.



- 07–08 **March of the Master-tailors:** Exquisite clothing from all corners of the known lands are sold. The winner gets a contract to dress the local lord's huge extended family.
- 09–10 **Fayre of Wonders:** Wizards descend on the area to create the finest illusion of the year. Scrolls and spellbooks abound.
- 11–12 **Beast Market:** Livestock farmers come to trade. Occasionally a group of adventurers appears with some fabulous beast to sell.
- 13–14 **Merry Mart:** Jesters come to raise a smile and trade in all manner of colorful wares, specializing in exotic, fanciful masks. Perhaps one has a curse of sorrow attached to it.
- 15–16 **Lordship's Auction:** After falling on desperate times, the local lord is forced to sell a manor full of prized possessions—invitation only. Can the heroes use their silver tongues to get access to the auction?
- 17–18 **Fishermen's Longest Day:** A prize is awarded for the strangest sea creature caught. Who knows what will appear in the fishermen's nets this year?
- 19–20 **Inventors' Market and Fayre:** The greatest scholars and engineers in the land come to show their new ideas and creations during a week of wonder.
- 21–22 **Efreeti Souk:** A trio of efreeti brothers disguised as merchants use a local market to sell their ill-gotten gains.
- 23–24 **Painters' Days:** Artists come to sell their wares and take commissions—perhaps the heroes would like a suitably grand portrait?
- 25–26 **Smithies' Market:** Master-smithies come to compete for the golden anvil.
- 27–28 **Sotillion's Sampling:** Pop corks and sample some of the known world's greatest wines for four days of merry making and sore heads.
- 29–30 **Dwarven Miners' Auction:** Ore sold cheap in vast quantities to the highest bidder.
- 31–32 **Impromptu Market:** A shipwreck washes up and an impromptu market occurs as goods wash ashore. Do the PCs join in the bargain hunt or ensure that the goods return to their rightful owners?
- 33–34 **Poor Merchants Market:** A bankrupt merchant's stock is put under the hammer—but will the PCs spot the magic item amongst the rubbish?
- 35–36 **Fakirs' Mart:** A pair of fey-touched traders sell what they claim to be goods from ethereal travel—but is it all just illusion and bluff?
- 37–38 **Harpers' Bazaar:** A warring trio of gypsy tribes arrives to trade charms and totems. They battle over possession of a famous magical gold harp—will the heroes help settle the dispute or steal the harp for themselves?
- 39–40 **Halfling Ale Market:** Halflings arrive to sell their wares and compete for the title of Master Brewer.
- 41–42 **Lockmasters' Mart:** Locksmiths try to open the Prince of Locks and gain the prize hidden in the chest it bars.
- 43–44 **Bladesmens' Moot:** Mercenaries offer their services for a year at a special market.
- 45–46 **Lovers' Market:** Love potions, charms and spells abound, but will the heroes fall under the spell of the hag covey that attends?
- 47–48 **Alchemy Fayre:** New formulas abound—but do they work?
- 49–50 **Copper Souk:** Snake-charmers, magicians, and acrobats abound as foreign merchants offer minor treasures from the Distant West.
- 51–52 **Ship Armada:** Sailors come together to trade boats of all descriptions.
- 53–54 **Cobblers Fayre:** Master-bootmakers arrive to ply their wares.
- 55–56 **Zett's Memory:** A meat market specializes in keeping up the tradition of the exotic cook Zett, who could make tasty pies from any meat.
- 57–58 **Cake Market:** Chefs arrive to compete for the local lord's prize of Best Cake. This year, a 10-foot-high monster is seen heading through the streets to the castle. Does the massive cake contain a deadly surprise for the lord?
- 59–60 **Land Mart:** Auction for local land and property.
- 61–62 **Adventurers' Hawk:** Open market for heroes to sell their dungeongotten goods.
- 63–64 **Badger Festival:** Gnomes sell guard badgers (generally to each other).
- 65–66 **Peddlers' Week:** Poor traders come to sell what little they have, but one of them claims to have a magic ring which money cannot buy.
- 67–68 **Timber Market:** What seems like an ordinary market turns nasty when a dead treant is peddled and its relatives come to exact revenge.
- 69–70 **Sword Fair:** Master sword-makers arrive in town to take commissions and sell their exotically carved goods.
- 71–72 **Antiquaries Vend:** Unusual, bizarre, and even dangerous ancient and exotic goods are sold at this huge market held over three days.
- 73–74 **The Lizardfolk Hawk:** Lizardfolk come to hold their annual market, an historical bequest of a long-dead lord. Local traders don't like the barter of the lizardfolk and trouble often erupts.
- 75–76 **Poultry Market:** There's a cockatrice in the box...
- 77–78 **Harvest Mart:** Elves have a huge amount of weapons and armor at bargain rates. Can it be that they robbed a battle burial ground?
- 79–80 **Moon Moot:** An obscure law allows trade only at night.
- 81–82 **Storm's End:** Townsfolk and locals gather at a hilltop market to thank the gods for a good harvest.
- 83–84 **The Games:** Traders sell games they have devised and join in with local contests of strength.
- 85–86 **Mountain-men Moot:** Wild men descend from the hills to trade fur.
- 87–88 **The Jewel of Markets:** Dwarf miners come to sell uncut stones; thieves abound.
- 89–90 **Oak Fayre Market:** Locals gather around an ancient oak to trade.
- 91–92 **Bottumen's Eye:** A potion market is held under the watchful gaze of a beholder who "invites" arcane spellcasters to join him in his tower lair.
- 93–94 **Meadow Fayre:** This year's food market is alive with mosquitoes. Could it be that the townsfolk have offended a local druid?
- 95–96 **Zester's Demand:** Evil items and paraphernalia are given up to the church at a special market to celebrate the local god.
- 97–98 **The Great Market:** They say that if you can't buy it here it doesn't exist!
- 99–00 **Traders' Quandary:** The local lord waives taxes to allow free trade—prices plummet! ♣

PASSAGES INTO DARKNESS

DOORS AND GATES

BY MIKE MEARLS

ILLUSTRATION BY ATTILA ADORJANY



Doors serve an important, though often overlooked, purpose in a dungeon. They are the links between regions and encounters that can provide easy passage or form an impenetrable wall. Just as a castle may have a heavily fortified gate, a dungeon's inhabitants could use strange magic and weird monsters to seal off their lairs. This article presents ten strange doorways that you can use to give a dungeon more flavor or present the characters with an unexpected obstacle.

These doors work sort of like templates. You can take a trapped door and apply these features to it to add an additional barrier to opening it. Where appropriate, the doors list their hit points, hardness, and the Strength check DC needed to open them. If a door lacks these traits, it cannot be physically attacked. For example, a barbarian could not hack apart a magical field with his axe.

☛ **Energy Barrier:** This gleaming, translucent door holds within it some sort of searing energy such as fire, burn-

ing cold, acid, or electricity. An observer can see the flames or swirling energy within the door's spectral frame. This door does not open. Rather, the PCs must walk through its energy field to continue on. Choose any single energy descriptor. Anyone who passes through this door frame suffers 2d6 damage of the chosen type (Reflex DC 15 for half). Elemental creatures, outsiders immune to several energy types, and similar creatures use these doors to keep mortals out of their inner sanctums.

A successful *dispel magic* against caster level 9 cancels out the door for 1d4 minutes.

◆ **Invisible:** An invisible door can provide an unexpected barrier to a charging barbarian or an overly enthusiastic scout. It is also more difficult to pick an invisible lock or find an invisible trap. Anyone attempting to use Disable Device, Open Lock, or Search on the door suffers a -4 competence penalty on their checks. Any effect that allows a PC to see invisible objects cancels this penalty.

You can use this as a sort of template to modify other doors or trapped portals that you create. A successful *dispel magic* against caster level 9 causes the door to become visible for 1d4 minutes.

◆ **Isolation Door:** This door consists of two stone doorways that are connected by a tiny room barely large enough to hold a single person. The connecting chamber is small enough, and the doors positioned just right, that it is impossible to send more than one character at a time through them without battering the doors to pieces. The doors swing inward toward the tiny room that connects them and are hinged on opposite sides. Thus, if both doors are opened they block the way through. Leaving one door ajar also makes it difficult to open the second door more than a few inches, as the open door occupies the space where a character would have to stand while opening the second one. The characters must open one door, enter the small room, close the door behind them, then open the next door. This arrangement forces the PCs to enter the area beyond the door one person at a time.

Hardness: 8; hit points: 30; Break DC 26.

◆ **Maze Door:** This stone slab has four buttons spaced across its top edge, and

four more along its right edge. A series of intricate grooves carved into it gives the appearance of a strange, elaborate pattern. These grooves cut across each other, save for one. This groove retains its edges when it intersects with another groove, rather than form a plus-shaped cross. In other words, the channel that crosses it stops when it hits its raised edge then continues on the other side. To open the door, the characters must trace this unblemished channel from one button at the top of the door to another button on the right side. You can create the maze as a handout for the players to solve, or simply ask for a successful Intelligence check (DC 15). Each attempt takes one minute. Pushing these two buttons simultaneously opens the door.

Hardness: 8; hit points: 45; Break DC 28.

◆ **Mind Sentinel:** Crafted from flesh harvested from a mimic and treated with a variety of magical spells, this door has a repulsive, fleshy appearance. Veins within it throb and pulse, and without regular meals from its keepers it eventually withers and dies. This door's veins all lead to a single, bulging eye mounted in its center. This eye peers into the minds of all who approach, posing a psychic query that requires a Knowledge check (DC 20) to correctly answer. The mind sentinel rummages through the PCs' minds, though it can do nothing aside from pose its question. A correct answer opens the door. Choose a Knowledge field of study that is appropriate for the dungeon.

Hardness: 2; hit points: 30; Break DC 18.

◆ **Necroportal:** This doorway is constructed from arms, legs, and skulls taken from skeletons animated via necromantic magic. If touched by anyone other than an evil undead creature, the skulls cackle and shriek to attract any guards in the area. However, these undead hate their duty. A Diplomacy check (DC 20) can convince them to remain quiet in return for something they desired in life, such as meat, ale, a gold coin, or something else placed in one of the door's skulls.

Hardness: 1; hit points: 25; Break DC 16.

◆ **Troll Flesh Door:** This door looks like it was made from petrified wood, but a closer inspection reveals that it consists of a gray, warty material with a damp, waxy feel. Built from troll flesh preserved using

necromantic magic, this door repairs 5 points of damage per round, though it is unable to heal fire or acid damage. Any trap found within it may be disabled as normal, but it repairs the "damage" in 2d4 minutes and resets the trap.

Hardness: 2; hit points: 40; Break DC 20.

◆ **Vine Barrier:** This doorway consists of an assassin vine cultivated to form a thick barrier of leafy vines. The druids or shamans who tend to the plants magically enhance them to allow certain creatures, such as orcs or those bearing a particular holy symbol, to pass. When others attempt to move through, the vines grab at them and attempt to hold them still. Anyone moving through the door must succeed at a DC 15 Strength check to penetrate it. On a failed check, a character is trapped in the vines and must use a standard action for another Strength check to break free. A trapped PC is not considered helpless, but he loses his Dexterity bonus to AC.

Hardness: 5; hit points: 35; Break DC special.

◆ **Void Barrier:** This inky, black gate is a slab of darkness from the Negative Energy Plane shaped into a rectangular form. This door does not open on hinges. Rather, one must simply walk through it. However, the negative energy within it has a strange effect on the senses. Anyone reaching through the door is unable to sense anything beyond it, even the floor on the other side. Instead, he feels nothing but empty space. Neither sound nor light can pass through it, making it difficult for the characters to determine what lies on the other side without blundering through it or using magic.

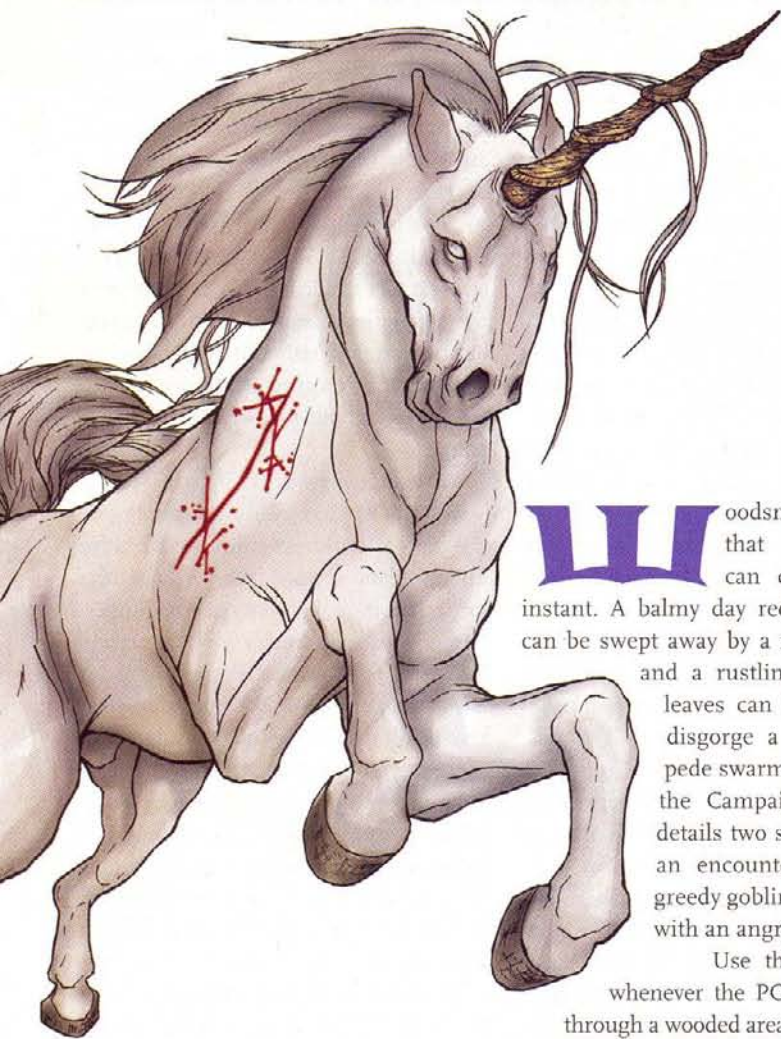
◆ **Water Lock:** This circular, bronze barrier is inscribed with Aquan runes. It has a latch set in its middle, and it is cool and damp to the touch. This door serves as an airlock that holds back water. The area beyond could be flooded, or it might be dry. In the event that the characters unleash a torrent of water, they must all make Strength checks (DC 20) or be swept back 4d20 feet and suffer 3d6 damage. On a successful check, a character holds his ground. Opening this door could flood an entire dungeon level.

Hardness: 10; hit points: 120; Break DC 45. ☞

SYLVAN AMBUSHES

BY FRANK BRUNNER

ILLUSTRATION BY ATTILA ADORJANY



Woodsmen know that the forest can change in an instant. A balmy day redolent of pine can be swept away by a roaring storm, and a rustling pile of oak leaves can burst open to disgorge a roiling centipede swarm. This entry in the Campaign Workbook details two such surprises, an encounter with some greedy goblins and a run-in with an angry druid.

Use these ambushes whenever the PCs are traveling through a wooded area. Each ambush is scalable by level. Motivations and backgrounds are provided for each NPC, but whenever possible, the DM should link the NPCs encountered here to the events and circumstances of her established milieu.

The Bleeding Destrier (EL 8)

A cold wind rushes down from the escarpments and swirls the dead leaves on the trail ahead. For a moment after the leaves settle, a mighty white horse with feathered hair on its fetlocks and a single horn on its brow pauses on the trail, head bowed,

crimson stains marring its pure flank. Then, it leaps into the underbrush.

Creatures: A goblin tribe called the Spit of Maglubiyet and their barghest leader, Vortwug, have mocked up a white horse as a wounded unicorn. To complete their lure's disguise, they have stabbed the hapless beast. A Survival or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 20) suffices to inform the PC that although something about the "unicorn" lacks verisimilitude, the blood is quite real.

If the PCs take the bait and track the white charger (blood spatters on birch bark are easy to spot, requiring a DC 4 Survival check to follow), they encounter the Traps in order, separated by 100 feet, and the creatures below.

➤ **Centipede Swarm:** hp 31; *Monster Manual* 238.

➤ **Goblins (12), Spit of Maglubiyet Tribe:** hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* 133.

➤ **Vortwug the Conqueror, Barghest:** hp 35; *Monster Manual* 22.

➤ **Bukityn the Heavy Warhorse:** hp 31 (currently 20); *Monster Manual* 273.

Tactics: If the party refuses the bait and ignores the "unicorn," Vortwug casts *rage* on the Spit and *crushing despair* on the party. He then orders the tribe to attack

while he *dimension doors* behind the PCs to flank. If he feels the PCs are serious threats, he employs *blink*; otherwise he plunges claw-first into melee.

If the party has set off either trap, Vortwug orders his minions to attack before the PCs can recover, preferably while some are at the bottom of the pit.

Traps: Bukityn, the destrier, has been trained to leap over the pit and the deadfall's tripwire as he flees the party.

↗ **Spiked Pit Trap:** CR 3; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 20 ft. deep (2d6, fall); multiple targets (two adjacent five-foot squares); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes strike target for 1d4+2 each); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 20. At the bottom of the pit, the goblins cultivate a centipede swarm (Creatures, above) that attacks anything in the pit.

↗ **Timber Deadfall Trap:** CR 4; mechanical; touch trigger (tripwire attached); manual reset; multiple targets (10-ft. square); Atk +15 melee (6d6, logs); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 24.

Treasure: Though he cannot use it, Vortwug carries a *wand of detect magic*. He also has a velvet purse stuffed with 31 gp and three emeralds (150 gp each). Each goblin carries a six-inch, half-full, stopped brass spittoon carved in Maglubiyet's likeness. Each spittoon can bring 50 gp from a collector.

Scaling the Ambush: To run this encounter at EL 3, remove Vortwug and the deadfall trap, and change the centipede swarm to a rat swarm. To run it at EL 12, give each goblin two levels of fighter, make Vortwug a greater barghest with four levels of sorcerer, and give four of the goblins spider eater mounts.

The Arrowhawk Gambit (EL 11)

The forest here smells of fallen leaves and fresh rain. Maple seeds swirl in the air, and nuthatches and chickadees twitter in the boughs above. Ahead, chest-high over the trail, something flashes in the shafts of forest sunlight.

A Spot check (DC 20) from 60 feet away indicates that the flashes are from six levitating, oblate spheroids. A manipulative anti-civilization druid named Gryth

hides in *tree shape* in the forest 40 feet off the trail. When the PCs approach, read the following:

The six egg-shaped objects are blue and iridescent, like opals dipped in the sky. They wheel and orbit each other four feet off the ground. Suddenly a screech rends the heavens, and the air is charged with the scent of ozone.

Creatures: Long ago, a band of arrowhawks moved to this forest, attracted by the isolation and plentiful game. When Gryth the Pure recently took this section of the wood under his strict care, he discovered the creatures. Because they are native to the Elemental Plane of Air, he considers them a blemish on the natural order. Fearing to attack the electric raptors himself, he has caused their naturally levitating eggs to drift in front of the party on the trail. He hopes that as the arrowhawks defend their eggs from the PCs, both unnatural presences will be eliminated from the forest.

➤ **Adult Arrowhawks (4):** hp 38 each; *Monster Manual* 19.

➤ **Gryth the Pure, Cleanser of Forests, Human Male Drd10:** CR 10; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d8+10; hp 58; Init +2; Spd 30; AC 20 (24 with *barkskin*), touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +7; Grp +9; Atk +10 melee (1d6+2/18–20, masterwork scimitar); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6+2/18–20, masterwork scimitar); SA spells, wild shape 4/day (Small, Medium, or Large); SQ animal companion, nature sense, wild empathy +12, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, venom immunity; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +14; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 20, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +4, Concentration +14, Handle Animal +13, Heal +14, Knowledge (nature) +11, Survival +14.

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Iron Will, Natural Spell, Scribe Scroll.

Spells Prepared (Drd 6/6/5/4/4/3, Base Save DC 15+spell level): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds (2), detect magic, detect poison, guidance*; 1st—*charm animal, entangle, faerie fire, longstrider, obscuring mist, produce flame*;

2nd—*barkskin, bear's endurance, lesser restoration, summon swarm, tree shape*; 3rd—*cure moderate wounds, greater magic fang, poison, wind wall*; 4th—*cure moderate wounds, dispel magic, flame strike, ice storm*; 5th—*animal growth, call lightning storm, wall of thorns*.

Possessions: Masterwork scimitar with lion's head pommel, +2 leather armor, +2 heavy wooden shield, *potion of owl's wisdom, potion of bear's endurance, scroll of stone-skin, scroll of cure serious wounds, scroll of tree stride*.

➤ **Rexan, dire lion:** hp 65; *Monster Manual* 63. Rexan came with Gryth from a savannah far to the south, where a herd of centaurs chased the druid away because of his mercilessly intolerant views.

Tactics: The arrowhawks attack with their electric tail rays and stay out of melee range. If someone in the party speaks Auran, diplomacy is possible. Once the birds' attitude improves from hostile to friendly, the arrowhawks gather their eggs and depart peacefully.

While the party is dealing with the arrowhawks, Gryth uses his *stoneskin* scroll, sharing the spell with Rexan. He then uses wild shape to take the form of a dire bear and casts *animal growth, barkskin, greater magic fang*, and *bear's endurance* on himself, sharing the spells with Rexan as well. He then casts *call lightning storm*. In combat, he sends Rexan into melee while he casts *wall of thorns* and *entangle* to divide and slow the PCs, followed up by bolts of lightning, *ice storms*, and *flame strikes* before wading into melee himself.

Treasure: Gryth carries nothing of value other than his possessions, four small diamonds (250 gp each), and 14 gp. The arrowhawk eggs bring up to 100 gp each in the right market, but note that selling the young of an intelligent species should have serious alignment consequences for good characters.

Scaling the Ambush: To run this encounter at EL 6, change the arrowhawks to juvenile arrowhawks, reduce their number to two, and make Gryth a 3rd-level druid. To run this encounter at EL 15, change the arrowhawks to elder arrowhawks, increase their number to six, and make Gryth a 13th-level druid. ▣

Wil Save 2: Electric Boogaloo

Even though I've played games since I was first given the "red box" D&D set for Christmas in the 1970s, I didn't actually become a gamer until high school in the 1980s, when my best friend Darin took me with him to his friend Cal's house to play Steve Jackson's *Illuminati*. After about three sessions, I was hooked, and *Illuminati* is still my favorite game of all time. (It only took a few months for my friends to tire of my constant suggestion, "Hey! Maybe we should play *Illuminati*!" and it's still a joke in our group to this day.) From there, I graduated to *Car Wars*, *OGRE*, *Diplomacy*, and *Warhammer 40K*, until I found my way back to RPGs.

Playing RPGs as a teenager was very different from playing as a kid. When I was a kid, DMing was about killing my buddies with sinister traps, and playing was about getting as much treasure as possible... but when I was a teenager, the concept of "roleplaying" became real.

Entire sessions would go by without a single battle, as we combed through a village for clues to some mystery, and character development became even more important than trying out whatever new spell I'd just picked up.

When we were younger, and free from any "real" responsibilities, we played several times a week. I'm sure *DUNGEON* readers can recall those nights where a group of guys would get together, order a stack of pizzas and several two-liter bottles of Jolt, and play until the sun came up, just for the sake of doing it.

No? Okay, maybe that was just us. You're missing out, though, if you didn't. There's something incredibly hilarious about spinning two d10s together and watching them crash off the table when you've been dungeon crawling for ten

hours straight, and your hands are trembling from the excitement of finally getting that artifact your DM has been alluding to for weeks.

Well... maybe it has more to do with the sleep deprivation and the overload of caffeine and sugar. I won't even get started on "Miniature Theatre, featuring the antics of Eroth and Dave."

Playing RPGs as an adult is nothing like playing as a teenager. We all have jobs, and many of us have homes, children, and spouses. Even though many of our spouses are also gamers, some of us have moved so far out into the suburbs it's just not practical to get together that often. The quest for treasure and character advancement is nothing compared to the quest to just get together to play.

My friend Cal ran a D&D game last year, in a world that he started building while we were still in high school. I was so excited to play with my group again!

My wife and I worked out our schedules so I could attend play sessions, but something always came up at the last minute: I didn't want to stay up late on weeknights, because I had to get up early with the kids for school. Weekends were usually out, because I had little league games to attend. (Though I'd much rather die repeatedly in some catacomb and lose half my XP than listen to some suburban dad scream, "WHY AREN'T YOU HAVING FUN, KYLE?! DON'T LOOK AT ME! SWING THE %#\$@ING BAT!") When I had a little bit of free time, and I was faced with the choice of gaming or having a date with my wife... well, as I said before: a lot of things have changed since I was a teenager. Before I knew it, months had gone by, the party

had advanced beyond 10th-level, and there was no way my poor little 1st-level monk could join them.

A few weeks ago, Cal sent out an e-mail to our D&D list. In it, he lamented the demise of that campaign, due to too many players not being able to work out their schedules, and announced a new, "no stress" campaign, which will be less dependent upon everyone attending each session. I signed up immediately.

This time, I'm playing an entirely new character: a tiefling soulknife, combining rules from the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, the *Dawnforge* campaign setting, and *Green Ronin's Book of Fiends* (isn't the Open Gaming License cool?) and I will start building his history as soon as I turn in this column—funny how I can't work on my game because I have to write about working on my game, isn't it?

The days when we could play four nights a week are long gone for us. This campaign will meet bi-weekly to accommodate our various responsibilities, and if fewer than four of the six PCs can't make it, we'll just play other games instead, like *Settlers*, *Puerto Rico*, or, if I have anything to say about it, *Illuminati Deluxe Edition*. All hail Bavaria! ☞

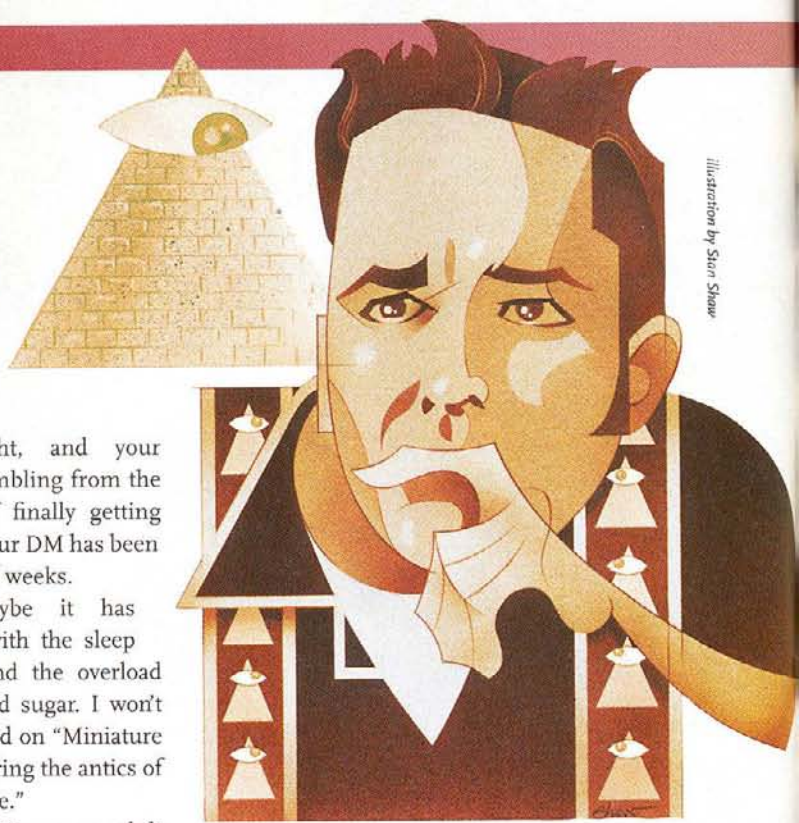


Illustration by Stan Shaw