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Dungeons & Dragons

OFFICIAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ADVENTURES

ISSUE #111 • JUNE 2004



THE LORD OF BLADES AWAITS



Lords of Oblivion

THE ADVENTURE PATH CONTINUES

Strike on the Rabid Dawn

FIGHT PIRATE THRALLS OF ASMODEUS

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Dungeon

"When King Numedides lay dead at my feet and I tore the crown from his gory head and set it on my own, I had reached the ultimate border of my dreams. I had prepared myself to take the crown, not to hold it. In the old free days all I wanted was a sharp sword and a straight path to my enemies. Now no paths are straight and my sword is useless."

—King Conan, "The Phoenix on the Sword," Robert E. Howard



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Frank Brunner

A terrible thunderstorm batters a seaside port, yet thunder and lightning are nothing compared to what is about to be unleashed by the diabolic crew of the *Rabid Dawn*. A D&D adventure for 15th-level characters.

Christopher Perkins

The Shackled City Adventure Path enters the home stretch as the forces of evil take direct action against the heroes of Cauldron. Dangerous secrets are revealed, important NPCs bite the dust, and your heroes will never know who to trust again! A D&D adventure for 13th-level characters.

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ON THE COVER: Rising superstar Matt Cavotta reveals, for the first time ever, the Lord of Blades, a prominent villain from the *EBERRON* campaign setting and the focus of this issue's *Critical Threat*.





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POLY

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RPGA News

Ian Richards

Droids

Rich Handley & Abel Peña

Oh my! Former owners of C-3PO and R2-D2 come alive in this *Star Wars Role-playing Game* spectacular.

Global Positioning



Dark Sun Monster Appendix 2

David Noonan

Journey back to the blasted deserts of last month's DARK SUN campaign setting with these nasty beasties or spring them on your regular players who've memorized the *Monster Manual*.

June 2004
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Issue 111

POLYHEDRON: *Star Wars* Superfan and staff-favorite artist Jeff Carlisle catapults us back to the era of Saturday morning *Star Wars* cartoons with this image of the cast of Droids: *The Adventures of R2-D2 and C-3PO*.



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The Ten Commandments of Villainy

Acererak, Eclavdra, King Snurre, Eli Tomorast, Lolth.

It should come as no surprise that the most memorable NPCs from the early days of D&D were all villains, since the "good guys" of the game are (in theory, at least) the player characters. And since they're the province of the player, the good guys ended up being different in every game that utilized the old adventures. The villains, though, remained the same in every game and became part of the shared experience of D&D.

As a result, one of the things I pay close attention to when I'm plowing through adventure proposals for *DUNGEON* are the villains of the piece. A memorable, unique villain can go a long way toward getting an adventure accepted. So what makes a good villain for a D&D adventure?

- 1. The Villain Shall Not Be Too Complex:** Keep the concept simple; an overly-complex villain can bog down gameplay.
- 2. The Villain Shall Have Personality:** Take the time to work up some quotable quotes for your villain. Give him some strange quirks; maybe he has a pet stirge he dotes on. Maybe he's unnaturally edgy and constantly sweating. Or maybe he's constantly eating live bugs.
- 3. The Villain Shall Look Cool:** Think iconic villains from the movies or comic books; Darth Vader, Goldfinger, Magneto, Doctor Octopus. If you can recognize your villain by her silhouette, all the better.
- 4. The Villain Shall Have a Memorable Lair:** Villains who live in active volcanoes, palaces made of icy razors, or hollowed out petrified dragons are just naturally more interesting than those who live in a cave down by the river.
- 5. The Villain Shall Have Interesting Minions:** Those who work for the villain should have some characteristic that ties them together. Maybe they all wear the same spiky armor, or maybe they're all awakened baboons.
- 6. The Villain Shall Use Unique Weapons:** Pay attention to the weapons the villain uses; these should be as unique and memorable as the villain himself. Even if he doesn't use weapons, his spell selection or fighting style should be unusual.
- 7. Thou Shalt Not Shy Away From the Classics:** Mind flayers, demon lords, evil dragons, drow, yuan-ti, sahuagin, beholders. The list goes on and on; there are plenty of popular, iconic D&D monsters that make great villains. Don't be afraid to use them just because they're old school.
- 8. Thou Shalt Not Overuse the Classics:** At the same time, don't overuse a particular type of monster; familiarity breeds contempt, after all. For example, at the time of this writing, the following monsters are on the *DUNGEON* blacklist for overuse: dire rats, half-dragons, succubi, and pirates.
- 9. Thou Shalt Not Be Afraid To Let The Villain Go:** Nothing's worse than a DM with a pet villain. If your villain constantly gets away or comes back from death, the PCs grow frustrated. Eventually, if the PCs play their cards right, they should get to defeat the villain.
- 10. Thou Shall Ignore These Commandments As Necessary:** As evidenced by the adventures in this issue, we have no fear of using sly beholders who rule humans behind the scenes, or of having the PCs fight devil worshiping pirates. Clichés are valuable because they are easily recognizable, but you should use them as a starting point rather than as a goal.

And a half-dragon succubus pirate who commands legions of slaving dire rats does sound pretty cool.



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Dungeon

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STRIKE on the RABID DAWN

BY FRANK BRUNNER

ARTWORK BY ANDREW HOU & ARNOLD TSANG • CARTOGRAPHY BY ROB LAZZARETTI

"Strike on the *Rabid Dawn*" is a D&D adventure suitable for four 15th-level characters, although it can be adapted for 13th–14th level or 16th–17th level characters as described in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. Casters with access to *control water*, *control weather*, or *control winds* will prove especially valuable, as will characters with strong Swim skills. The adventure is best suited to a predominantly good- or neutral-aligned party of PCs.

This adventure uses a prestige class from the *Book of Vile Darkness*, but all relevant information is reprinted here. Additionally, this adventure uses vehicle statistics blocks as found in the *Arms and Equipment Guide*. Again, all necessary information is included in the text, but Dungeon Masters may find the *Arms and Equipment Guide* a useful reference for enriching play.

"Strike on the *Rabid Dawn*" takes place in the port city of Hardby (described in detail in *DUNGEON* #109). As most of the action takes place within a lighthouse and on a ship at sea, however, any suitable port from your campaign makes an appropriate substitution for Hardby.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Twenty years ago, Christophe Jean Markosian was a sergeant-constable in the guard of a barony on the fringes of civilization. Christophe was the scion of a gentrified family, minor but landed with a large tract of land that included an apple orchard, and the baron had no reason to suspect what was fated when he dispatched Christophe and two dozen pike men to "deal" with a mob of unruly peasants who were demanding something be done about a destructive blight on several local croplands. When the sun next rose on the town square, the cobblestones were littered with corpses and pitchforks; Christophe had ordered the guard to slaughter every last one of the farmers. Horrified by the atrocity, the baron threw the sergeant-constable and the offending guards into his deepest oubliette.

Fed on bread crusts and tormented by the rats that skittered away from his vicious kicks, young Christophe raged at this perceived injustice. Surely the baron was a fool for not conceding that strength was the only way to deal with mobs? After all, the farmers had already threatened to burn down a

local barracks if nothing was done about the blight. Sure, the threat may have been hollow, but were the lives of his guards really worth risking? And in any case, the peasants were already half-dead from starvation; Christophe had no doubt spared them greater suffering by ordering the slaughter. And hadn't that been what the baron had really wanted him to do in the first place?

And so Christophe languished in the depths of the oubliette. As the months turned to years, his anger and bitterness grew. It took nearly a decade of prayer to dark powers and self-inflicted punishment before the seeds of his hatred took root. Only a month after he began sacrificing the accursed rats in his dungeon pit did he suddenly begin manifesting sorcerous power. These spells were minor to begin with, but they afforded the now deranged sergeant all he required to make his escape. *Mage hand* won him the keys to the grate covering his pit, *jump* allowed him to reach the grate and clamber out, *magic missile* let him cut down the lone guard who watched his pit. In short order he was free.

After creeping back to the family estate over the course of several miserable nights, Christophe snuck onto the mansion grounds and murdered his parents, whom he blamed for not testifying passionately enough in his defense. He then slunk off into the seedier sections of a nearby town to ruminate upon his newfound powers.

It didn't take long for him to discover that his sacrifices and self-inflicted punishments had caught the attention of a powerful dark entity indeed...that none other than Asmodeus, Lord of the Ninth Layer of Hell, had granted him his magic. Finding himself drawn to the archdevil's philosophy of power and rulership, the former sergeant-constable dropped his first two names and dedicated his life to the Master of the Ruby Rod.

Since that day, Markosian has been building a network of Asmodean cultists, cutting across all levels of society, from princes to slum-dwelling half-fords. Many of his most trusted minions were recruited from the same guards he ordered to murder the peasants so long ago, once he freed them from imprisonment. After a few years of wandering, Markosian aligned himself with a secretive organization of devil-worshippers called the Horned Society. With their

support, he envisions several nations under Asmodeus, led by puppet rulers selected by him and his fellow Hierarchs of the Horned Society. Markosian recently set his plan into motion by blackmailing many aristocrats. Today, kings and generals whisper that the forces of the “Devil Behind Thrones” are formidable. Markosian’s diabolism is widely rumored, but only a choice few have been recruited into his personal inner circle. Other agents of the Horned Society leave him to his affairs, unsure of their decision to accept him into their dark ranks.

Markosian’s latest plot focuses on the recovery of an *iron flask* that imprisons Nyxthseht, an aspect of Asmodeus that personifies the arch-devil’s persuasive voice and fearful countenance. *Contact other plane* spells revealed that Nyxthseht commanded a considerable host of bearded devils in the Blood War. Markosian plans to free Nyxthseht in a flatteringly elaborate ceremony before asking the (hopefully) grateful aspect to temporarily transfer command of a bearded devil company to Markosian. With this infernal force added to the nobles already under his thumb, Markosian hopes to overtly seize power in several key nations.

On the quest to obtain Nyxthseht’s *iron flask*, Markosian assumed control of a pirate ship, the *Rabid Dawn*. Now, having used the ship and its crew to recover the flask and all components necessary for the ceremony of release, Markosian has commanded the ship to anchor in Hardby while he performs the releasing ritual. Markosian wants to conduct the ceremony in the berth deck of the ship while it is moored in the town’s harbor to prevent neighbors from hearing the beating of the flesh drums and smelling the brimstone and incense.

Unfortunately for him, some members of the pirate crew were not completely devoted to their evil lives, and thus weren’t susceptible to Markosian’s evil authority ability. When the true nature of Markosian’s plans became apparent to them, the distraught pirates absconded with their share of loot and went to a Hardby tavern. There, deep in their cups, they divulged the nature of the infernal ceremony to be conducted that night to agents of the city guard. These agents seized the besotted pirates and took them to Glorris Dart, one of Hardby’s harbor masters. Dent locked the pirates in the Leaning Lighthouse and now seeks the PCs, desperately hopeful that personages of such

surpassing might can thwart the cultists before they complete their ritual.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Glorris Dart locates the PCs and urges them to return with him to the Leaning Lighthouse. Once at the Leaning Lighthouse, the PCs discover that cultists have come to kill the turncoat pirates before they can betray more of the cult’s plans. On the stormy lighthouse bluff, the party battles a squad of devils and cultists. Afterward, PCs interrogate any survivors (or use divination magic) to find out exactly where the ceremony is taking place.

In violent weather, the heroes cross the harbor to the *Rabid Dawn*. They must avoid, kill, or negotiate with the sahuagin and advanced dragonne patrolling a perimeter around the galleon, and must then assault the ship itself. As the stresses of storm winds and high-level battle slowly splinter and sink the ship, Markosian and his cultists bring their ceremony to a frenzied climax. If the PCs are not quick enough in their struggles to reach the ship’s berth deck, they face a combined force of the cultists, pirate crew, and newly freed aspect of Asmodeus.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The default adventure hook is described in the “Beginning the Adventure” section. It assumes that at least one of the PCs is a well-known local hero, someone that the harbor master would turn to in a crisis. If the party contains no such characters, consider using any of the following adventure hooks:

- While out carousing, a PC overhears several tavern girls gossiping about how several pirates were just taken away to the Leaning Lighthouse. One of the girls, Celtane Thurmonk, heard one of the pirates mention that a PC’s stronghold (or similar holding) was on the cult’s list of places to plunder.
- For safekeeping, a temple of Pelor held the *iron flask* of Nyxthseht. After Markosian sacked the temple and looted the flask, the abbot of the Order tracked the fleeing galleon to Hardby. Via a *sending* spell, the abbot asks one of the PCs to investigate, starting with the Leaning Lighthouse, where records of all ships currently anchored or docked at the city are kept.
- The party is journeying along the coast when the tempest strikes. The nearest shelter is the Leaning Lighthouse. The

WIND AND SURF

The weather and the environment play a large role in this adventure. Because of the storm that assails Hardby this night, the potential for underwater combat, and the likelihood of characters trying to fly in the face of the gale, you should review the rules for underwater combat and weather effects on pages 92–95 of the *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide*.

In addition, powerful magic wielded by high-level characters can literally tear up the scenery in this adventure. The *Rabid Dawn* and the Leaning Lighthouse are both vulnerable structures. Sinking the ship or toppling the lighthouse into the ocean adds to the excitement and allows the players to feel the power of their high-level characters. You should thus be familiar with the rules for damage to objects on pages 165–167 of the *Player’s Handbook*.



heroes arrive just in time to meet Old Hiram Jenks, the lighthouse keeper, who attempts to lure them to the edge of the bluff as described in the “On the Precipice” section.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins after Dart has found at least one of the PCs in town. When he finds one of them, he quickly approaches and chatters rapidly.

A rain-drenched middle-aged man in leather armor calls out to you frantically. Lightning flashes and briefly illuminates his scarred face. He gasps for breath as he lurches to a stop before you.

“I’m terribly sorry to bother you. My name’s Glorris Dart. I’m one of Hardby’s harbormasters. Down by the bay ... no, just come and see for yourselves. At the Leaning Lighthouse, I have two dock rats in the gaol. They’ve been drinking, but I believe what they say. There’s a ship somewhere in the harbor with a devil-worshiper on it. Actually, a whole *cult* of devil-worshipers. And they’re in the process of proving it. They’re going to call up a devil tonight! In my harbor!”

Glorris knows little more than what he blurts out. He left the pirates in the care of some of his men and dashed out to fetch the PCs as soon as it became clear that the threat was credible. So far, the pirates have only confessed to being part of the devil ship’s crew. They rightly fear reprisal

by Markosian if they spill any further details and aren’t cooperating with the interrogation.

Creature: Glorris Dart is a stoop-shouldered, middle-aged human man, his face scarred by countless maritime accidents with fishhooks and worse. He’s been a harbormaster for nearly twenty years, and the thought of cultists using his precious harbor to summon devils both horrifies and enrages him. He does his best to convince the PC to come with him as soon as possible to aid in the interrogation of the captured pirates.

☛ **Glorris Dart, Male Human Exp5/Com3:** CR 7; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d6+3d4+8; hp 31; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d4+1, dagger); AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +9, Balance +5, Craft (carpentry) +4, Craft (rope-making) +2, Decipher Script +6, Gather Information +4, Knowledge (geography) +8, Listen +3, Profession (accountant) +6, Profession (sailor) +7, Search +6, Spot +13.

Feats: Alertness, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Appraise), Skill Focus (Knowledge [Geography]).

Language: Common.

Possessions: +2 dagger, leather armor, fisherman’s cap, satchel containing the Seal of the Harbormaster and waterproof dock logbooks, 2 potions of water walking, 2 potions of water breathing, 1 potion of fly, 32 gp.

THE LEANING LIGHTHOUSE

Rain lashes the top of the bluff. Blown by the wind, a crate tumbles past, smashing itself to bits on the headstones of a tiny cemetery next the lighthouse. The lighthouse tower is approximately 40 feet tall. It is difficult to stare up into the driving rain, but the top floor of the lighthouse leans into open air over the sea, canted at least 10 feet out from its foundations on the bluff. Like a giant bull's eye lantern, a beacon shines northward from the top of the lighthouse.

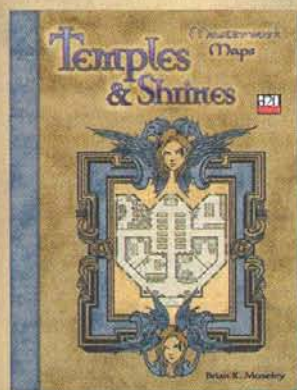
The storm winds are much stronger on the tiny peninsula where the Leaning Lighthouse is perched. The southerly winds are in the severe category, averaging 35 miles per hour. Small creatures must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) each round or be knocked prone, and Medium creatures must succeed at the same save in order to avoid being checked and unable to advance in the direction of the wind. Flying creatures are treated as one size smaller than normal for purposes of determining wind effects. The rain restricts visibility to half normal, resulting in a -4 penalty on Spot and Search checks. It automatically extinguishes unprotected flames, and it has a 50% chance of extinguishing protected flames. See pages 94 and 95 in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* for further effects of the rain and wind.

Occasionally the winds gust over 50 miles per hour, into the windstorm category. There's a 10% chance each round of such a powerful gust; check each round at initiative count 0. If the wind gusts, the effects last for 1 round (although it's possible that a new gust occurs at the end of that round). Note that it's possible for Small creatures to be blown over the edge of the nearby cliff!

The cliffs have become even more deadly in the driving rain. Any character within 5 feet of the cliff's edge must not only contend with the driving wind, but also runs a chance of stepping on a section of ground that has turned to mud. A character who steps into mud at the cliff's edge causes the mud to slough away over the edge. The character can avoid following the mudslide off the edge of the cliff with a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 22). The cliffs are 120 feet high and end in jagged rocks in the surf below. Anyone who falls off the cliff takes 12d6 points of damage from the fall.

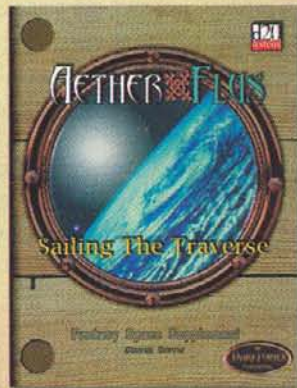
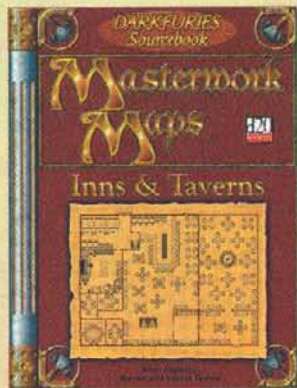
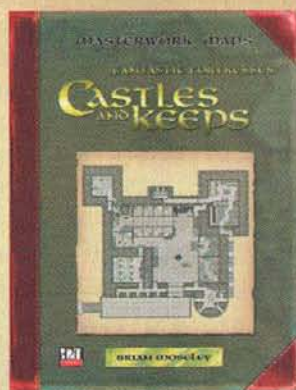
Although the storm carries with it the threat of lightning, a lightning rod affixed to the roof of the lighthouse prevents it from striking any targets on the ground near the lighthouse. If the lightning rod (or the lighthouse itself) is destroyed, of course, the chances of being struck by lightning return to normal, as detailed on page 94 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

STRIKE ON THE
RABID DAWN



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MASTERWORK MAPS
FLOOR PLANS ALONE ARE NOT ENOUGH





As the PCs approach the Leaning Lighthouse, a successful Spot check (DC 15) allows them to notice a figure leaning out the second-floor window of the lighthouse. The man waves a bullseye lantern and gesticulates wildly for attention, fervently pointing to the north near the cliff edge.

Glorris Dart can identify the figure as old Hiram Jenks, a deputy harbormaster. What Glorris has no way of knowing is that Hiram isn't quite himself any more, and he is attempting to guide Dart and the PCs toward the dangerous cliff edge; characters who follow Jenks' advice and approach the edge have an excellent chance of getting into trouble (as detailed above).

The area south of the lighthouse is an ancient cemetery that contains the graves of a long line of lighthouse keepers. Although the crumbling gravestones may look sinister, there are no undead lurking below them.

The lighthouse itself is made of worked stone. Note that the lighthouse has been leaning for centuries and is in danger of collapse. For each 5 foot section of outer wall that the characters bring to 0 hit points, the building stands a 15% cumulative chance of toppling into the sea. Before the lighthouse crumbles, it shakes for 1d4 rounds. Anyone still in the tower when it collapses into the sea suffers 12d6 points of falling damage and an additional 8d6 points of damage for being crushed by rubble (a successful DC 15 Reflex save halves this additional damage).

Those who suffer damage are buried in rubble at the base of the cliff.

Inside the lighthouse, light is provided by whale oil lanterns ensconced in the walls, one lantern per floor. Ceilings in the lighthouse are 12 feet high.

The lighthouse's front door is heavy and closed, but is not locked.

♣ **Lighthouse Outer Walls:** Hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 30.

LEVEL 1. LIGHTHOUSE STORAGE (EL 12)

The wind is blessedly muted inside the lighthouse. Crates marked "whale oil," "tack," and "polishing cloth" are stacked between cords of firewood and racks of short-spears, tridents, and harpoons. A flight of wooden stairs winds to the upper floor across from the entrance. Incongruously, the air here smells hot and smoky, almost of sulfur, not of salt or the sea.

A contingent of three soldiers stays at the Leaning Lighthouse to serve both as guardians and caretakers of the beacon. This floor is used for storage. The tridents, pikes, shortspears, light steel shields, chain shirts, and suits of leather armor here are all of common workmanship; if

totals become necessary to calculate, assume there are 1d6 of each present.

The stink of brimstone in the air should warn the PCs that something sinister is afoot, especially since there are devil cultists in the area.

Creature: As the PCs enter this room, an old man staggers toward them from the base of the stairs. He wears a leather rain poncho and a cap with earflaps and untied chinstraps, and his skin appears flushed and feverish. This is old Hiram Jenks, the deputy harbormaster, and he is infested with hellwasps.

When the cultists from the *Rabid Dawn* arrived to kill the captured pirates, Hiram was guarding them on the second floor above. The cultists quickly overwhelmed him and wasted no time in ordering their hellwasp swarm to inhabit Hiram's body. The brimstone odor comes from the breath of two Nessian warhounds that are hiding behind the crates, left here by Narn and Verdhar as watchdogs while they finish their job upstairs.

➤ **Hellwasp Swarm:** hp 93; *Monster Manual* 238.

➤ **Nessian Warhounds (2):** hp 114 each; *Monster Manual* 152.

♣ **Hiram Jenks, Deputy Harbormaster, Male Human**
Exp2/Ftr1: CR 2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d6+1d10-9; hp 8; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+2, club); AL NG; SV Fort -1, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 10 (currently 4), Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +5 (+7 with ropes), Craft (woodworking) +5, Escape Artist +2 (+4 with ropes), Listen +7, Perform (wind instruments) +3, Profession (bookkeeper) +5, Profession (sailor) +5, Spot +7, Use Rope +6.

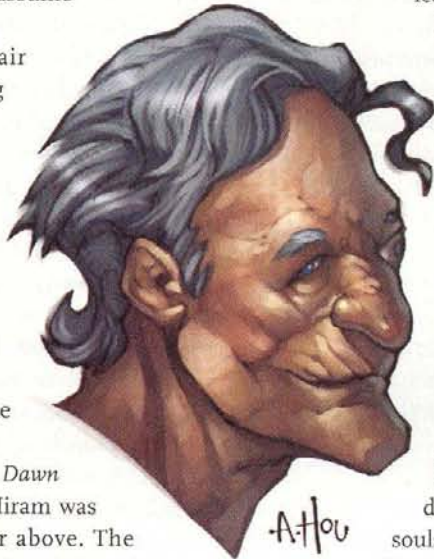
Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Leather armor, belaying pin (treat as club), back-up copy of the dock logbooks, 5 gp, 24 sp.

Tactics: The hellwasp swarm first tries to Bluff (-1 modifier) the PCs, telling them that there is nothing to see here because the pirates have been turned over to the local constabulary. He urges them to depart before the storm gets worse. The hellwasp swarm isn't particularly good at being tricky, though, and in addition to making a successful Bluff check must also make a successful Disguise check (at -1) to hide the fact that Hiram's skin roils and undulates under the writhing pressure of the swarm inside him.

If the swarm's trickery fails, it instead bargains with Hiram's life. It allows a few hellwasps to clamber out of his mouth and then back inside to prove to the PCs that it is what it claims to be, and then promises to release Hiram unharmed if the heroes return to the city immediately and



leave the lighthouse alone. This is also a lie, but it allows the swarm a second chance to Bluff the party.

If these ruses fail, or if the PCs attack, the swarm attacks with Hiram's body. If Hiram is killed (or the swarm is forced to vacate his body) it continues to attack but it does not pursue PCs outside, where it would be torn apart by the wind.

The Nessian warhounds remain hidden until combat breaks out or the PCs try to ascend to the second floor of the lighthouse. They try to flank a single opponent if possible. The hounds and the swarm both fight to the death, fueled by infernal lust for mortal souls.

Treasure: The Nessian warhounds each wear +2 *chainmail barding*. Also, each has a collar set with a single ruby. The collars are nonmagical but worth 800 gp each.

Development: Glorris Dart loses his nerve if the warhounds and the hellwasp swarm make an appearance. The terrified harbormaster returns to town to alert other authorities and leave what lurks in the Lighthouse to the PCs.

If the party somehow saves Hiram from his fate, his gratitude is boundless. He even offers to accompany the PCs to help them fight the remaining cultists and devils in the Lighthouse. More usefully, he can tell the party what he knows of the cultists that have invaded the Lighthouse: there are four members. One is a lion-headed dragon beast (a dragonne that has already returned to the *Rabid Dawn*), one is a devil covered with tiny barbs and spines, one is a human, and one is a harpy. He knows that the human casts spells and wears a necklace of mistletoe.

LEVEL 2. GAOL

A row of iron bars bisects this level of the lighthouse. A door swings ajar in the bars, and three human bodies are piled in the cell on the opposite side. The wooden stairs continue up to the next floor.

The three bodies are those of the Harborguards who were on duty when the cultists struck. The bodies show evidence of being killed by slashing weapons. A successful Heal check (DC 20) can distinguish some marks as claw wounds rather than weapon wounds. A broken arrow shaft, cold to the touch, still sprouts from one guardsman's neck. *Speak with dead* or similar spells reveal that the soldiers were assaulted by an overwhelming force that flew in from the air, just before the storm hit. The guards have

vague impressions of being attacked by a draconic beast, but they know no more details than that.

Treasure: Each body still carries a masterwork spear and light steel shield and wears masterwork leather armor. The coin purses have not been looted, and a shameless PC can scavenge a total of 15 gp, 9 sp, and 8 cp in all.

LEVEL 3. BARRACKS (EL 12)

This room is torn apart. The floor is covered with splinters and straw from shattered tables and smashed pallets. Scorch marks, some still smoldering, mar the walls. The staircase continues to climb to a trap door in the ceiling. Two horribly mutilated bodies lie in heaps opposite the staircase.

This was the sleeping and living room for the Harborguards stationed at the Leaning Lighthouse. The guards were waiting for Dart to return with assistance when they heard the cultists land on the roof above; upon investigating, they were quickly slain and their bodies stacked below in the gaol.

A successful Search check (DC 20) turns up several large ledgers under a ruined desk. These are the harbor-master's logs, and can be used to find the current location of the *Rabid Dawn* (see Development, below).

Creatures: The three cultists who are responsible for the mayhem in the lighthouse currently wait in this room for the storm to subside so they can return to the *Rabid Dawn*. These are Urelga, a harpy archer who wears a patch over one eye, Narn, a barbed devil who serves as a bodyguard of high-ranking members of the Horned Society, and Verdhar, a druid and the first mate of the *Rabid Dawn*.

These cultists have just finished torturing the pirates captured earlier. Their fears were confirmed: the human scum sang to the guards, and now the secrecy of the *Rabid Dawn* is compromised. Verdhar is considering sending Narn back to the ship via *greater teleport* to report while he and Urelga wait out the storm to avoid the risks of flying in severe winds.

Verdhar has nominal command of this squad, although Narn chafes under his rule and constantly challenges his decisions. The Nessian warhounds and hellwasp swarm in area K1 answer only to Narn.

➤ **Narn, Male Barbed Devil:** hp 126; *Monster Manual* 51.

➤ **Urelga, Female Harpy Archer:** hp 103; *Monster Manual* 151.

➤ **Verdhar, Male Human Drd13:** CR 13; Medium humanoid (human); HD 13d8+26; hp 92; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +9; Grp +10; Atk +11 melee (1d6+2/18–20, +1 scimitar); Full Atk +11/+6 (1d6+2/18–20, +1 scimitar); SA spells, wildshape 4/day (Large, plant, Tiny); SQ animal companion, a thousand faces, nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step,

venom immunity, wild empathy +18, woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 19, Cha 17.

Skills: Craft (alchemy) +6, Diplomacy +19, Handle Animal +11, Hide +11, Listen +20, Profession (sailor) +12, Spot +20.

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Iron Will, Natural Spell, Still Spell, Track.

Languages: Common, Infernal.

Spells Prepared (6/6/6/5/5/3/2/1; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* (2), *flare*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (2), *faerie fire*, *jump*, *obscuring mist*, *pass without trace*; 2nd—*animal messenger*, *flame blade*, *fog cloud*, *lesser restoration*, *owl's wisdom*, *warp wood*; 3rd—*cure moderate wounds* (2), *greater magic fang*, *poison*, *spike growth*; 4th—*cure serious wounds*, *air walk* (already cast on his animal companion), *flame strike* (2), *ice storm*; 5th—*baleful polymorph*, *control winds*, *transmute rock to mud*; 6th—*greater dispel magic*, *fire seeds*; 7th—*heal*.

Possessions: +1 scimitar, ironwood breastplate (7 days remaining on ironwood spell), light wooden shield, ring of protection +3, necklace of fireballs (Type VII), wand of chill metal (23 charges), potion of bull's strength, potion of bear's endurance, potion of barkskin +5, potion of meld into stone, charts of nearby seas, mistletoe, gold and platinum sickle pendant (1,200 gp value), coin purse with 9 pp, 45 gp, and two aquamarines (125 gp each).

Tactics: Urelga begins a battle by singing. She then stays out of range and peppers the party with arrows from her +1 frost composite longbow.

Verdhar and Narn grudgingly cooperate during the battle. Given time to prepare, Verdhar casts *owl's wisdom* on himself, *greater magic fang* on Narn, and then drinks his *potion of barkskin* +5. In combat, Verdhar stays out of melee range to blast the heroes with his spells. Narn wades into melee, attempting to grapple lightly armored foes (rogues if possible) and impale them on his spikes. He uses *hold person* on weak-willed musclemen and *scorching ray* on weak-bodied mages. As soon as he is reduced to one-third of his total hit points, Narn *teleports* to the *Rabid Dawn* to warn Markosian.

If the fight goes poorly, Verdhar flees to the roof where his animal companion waits. He orders the dire bear back to the *Rabid Dawn* and casts *transmute rock to mud* on the foundation of the Leaning Lighthouse. Normally this spell cannot affect the deep foundations of sizable structures, but because the Leaning Lighthouse is built on a cliff and has been tipping toward ruin for a century, *transmute rock to mud* proves very effective. The lighthouse immediately begins to topple, crumbling into the ocean as detailed at on page 18.

Development: If the PCs manage to capture any of the three cultists, interrogations prove difficult. Urelga is the most willing to talk; if her initial attitude of hostile can be

shifted to friendly she can be convinced to betray her captain in exchange for her life. She can tell the PCs that the *Rabid Dawn* is flagged as the salt trader *St. Asmod's Hope*. With this information, the PCs can determine the location of the *Rabid Dawn's* mooring in the harbor.

The dead bodies are those of the two pirates arrested earlier. Both bodies are horribly mutilated; *Speak with Dead* is useless on them. If brought back to life via *Resurrection* or *True Resurrection*, though, either pirate wants little more than to flee the area. Before he does so, though, he gratefully tells his rescuer as much as he knows about the *Rabid Dawn*; unfortunately, this amounts to little more than the ship's location and the fact that the captain has allied with devil cultists.

LEVEL 4. THE BEACON (EL 8)

The roof of the lighthouse is whipped by winds and salt spray. In the center of the roof, covered by a peaked cupola, is the hulking beacon of the lighthouse, its magic signal fire undimmed by the storm. Beyond, the howling tempest of the storm continues unabated.

The winds on the lighthouse roof are stronger than on the ground below. Each round at initiative count 0, there's a 25% chance that the winds gust from severe to wind-storm level. See the "Lighthouse Features" section for details on wind effects.

The lightning rod on the south edge of the roof attracts lightning bolts. At initiative count 0, when you check for wind gusts, check also to see if a bolt of lightning strikes the lightning rod. The chance of a lightning bolt strike is 5%. When the bolt hits, it deals 8d8 points of damage (Reflex save DC 20 for half damage) to all within 10 feet of the lightning rod. Once a bolt strikes, there is no chance of another until at least one minute has passed, per the DMG page 94. If the lightning rod is destroyed, any further bolts strike a random creature or the beacon itself.

The beacon is a metal structure similar to a bell or birdcage that surrounds a highly reflective metal and glass lens, inside of which burn a dozen *Continual Flame* spells. The light emitted by the beacon is a blinding cone of light to 120 feet, and anyone in it must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 20) each round or become blinded for 1 minute. Those who close their eyes need not make this saving throw. The beacon itself can be rotated in a complete circle as a standard action by anyone who turns the crank affixed to its base.

♦ **Lightning Rod:** Hardness 10; hp 20; Break DC 24.
Note: The lightning rod takes no damage from electrical attacks.

♦ **Lighthouse Beacon:** Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 30.

Creature: Verdhar's animal companion, a dire bear named Roshgok, waits patiently here in the storm. Verdhar

has cast *air walk* on the bear; while Verdhar's size prevents him from being blown away by the storm, he cannot walk into the wind. Roshgok guards the upper entrance into the lighthouse so that the cultists have ample time to finish what they came here to do. Roshgok roars and attacks any intruders who dare enter this area.

♦ **Roshgok, Dire Bear Animal Companion:** hp 105; SQ link, share spells; *Monster Manual* 63.

OVER DARK WAVES

After the encounters in the Leaning Lighthouse, the PCs should learn of the existence of the *Rabid Dawn*, and that more devil cultists can be found there. They should have also learned that the cultists are performing terrible ritual that is nearing completion. Glorris Dart asks the PCs to seek out the *Rabid Dawn* and put a stop to the ritual if they don't seem to be heading in that direction themselves. Of course, if the characters cannot calm the storm, they face difficulty reaching the *Rabid Dawn*. The storm does not subside until several hours after midnight, that is, several hours after Markosian calls the aspect of Asmodeus. To make it to the *Dawn* before that happens, the PCs probably need to either *teleport*, fly, or take a ship that Glorris Dart offers, the *Crawdad*. Each means of transport presents its own challenges.

Teleportation is difficult because of the *Mordenkainen's private sanctum* spell that blankets the *Rabid Dawn*. This obfuscatory dweomer blocks attempts to *scry* the ship and gain the visual experience necessary for most teleportation spells. *Greater teleportation* and *dimension door* work, provided that the PCs have obtained a detailed, accurate description of the *Rabid Dawn* and her mooring location.

Flying over the harbor places the PCs at the mercy of the storm winds. Characters who swim have to contend with equally stormy water. Voyaging in a ship like the *Crawdad* requires a Profession (sailor) check (DC 20) for each 200 feet of advancement through the storm. Failure means the ship does not advance for five minutes as the crew rights the ship in the stormy waters. Failure by fifteen or more means that the ship capsizes. Since the *Rabid Dawn* is anchored 900 feet from shore, five successful Profession (sailor) checks are required. If you are using *Arms & Equipment Guide*, the *Crawdad* has the same statistics as a launch.

SIX IF BY SEA (EL 13)

Creatures: Captain Mange's crew includes six sahuagin pirates. These six sahuagin rangers call themselves the Tines of Sekolah, and swim alongside the ship when it is underway. Now, they lurk in the stormy waters surrounding the ship, guarding it against any approaching vessels or swimming enemies. If the party encroaches on the *Dawn* by sea and take no pains to avoid detection, these evil hunters spot them.



The Tines of Sekolah love to slaughter air-breathers, but ultimately they are mercenaries. Because they spend most of their time off ship, they have not come under Markosian's sway and thus retain their allegiance to Sekolah (and to a lesser degree, Captain Mange). The sahuagin swarm up the sides of any enemy ship that approaches and try to kill obvious sailors or others with nautical skills first. Quick-thinking characters might be able to shift the sahuagins' attitudes from hostile to neutral, in which case they accept a bribe of 500 gp per character to leave them unmolested. If their attitude becomes friendly, they allow the PCs to pass for a mere 100 gp per character. Only if they become helpful do they turn on their employer and assist the PCs in their efforts.

➤ **The Tines of Sekolah, Sahuagin Rgr6 (6):** CR 8; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 8d8+8; hp 47 each; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +8; Grp +11; Atk +14 melee (1d8+5, +2 *trident*); Full Atk +12/+7 (1d8+5, +2 *trident*) and +10/+5 melee (masterwork dagger); SA spells, favored enemy +4 (humans), favored enemy +2 (elves), blood frenzy, rake 1d4+1, improved two-weapon fighting; SQ animal companion, blindsense, freshwater sensitivity, light blindness, speak with sharks, water dependent, wild empathy +7; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Handle Animal +7 (+11 with sharks), Hide +9, Knowledge (geography) +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Ride +7, Search +8, Spot +6, Survival +11 (+13 following tracks).

Feats: Endurance^B, Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack^B, Power Attack, Track^B, Weapon Focus (trident).

Languages: Common, Aquan, Sahuagin.

Spells Prepared (2; save DC = 11 + spell level): 1st—*longstrider, resist energy.*

Possessions: +2 *trident*, masterwork dagger, studded leather armor, shark jaw holy symbol of Sekolah.

➤ **Large Shark Animal Companions (6):** hp 38 each; *Monster Manual* 279.

Tactics: The Tines of Sekolah enjoy bull rushing PCs into the water. Once PCs are in the water, the six shark animal companions finish them off. If the combat goes poorly for the Tines, they dive deep and return to the *Rabid Dawn*.

ONE IF BY AIR (EL 13)

Creature: Captain Mange raised a dragonne named Skraper since he was a kitten, and now the massive creature serves him as a faithful guardian. In the storm, Skraper's huge size (and healthy Fortitude save) allow him to fly with some assurance of stability.

➤ **Skraper, Advanced Dragonne:** CR 13; Huge magical beast; HD 24d10+144; hp 281; Init +5; Spd 40 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor); AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +22; Grp +38; Atk +30 melee (4d6+8/19–20, bite); Full Atk +30 melee (4d6+8/19–20, bite) and +25 melee (2d6+4, 2 claws); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA pounce, roar (DC 23); SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL NE; SV

Fort +22, Ref +15, Will +11; Str 27, Dex 13, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Listen +16, Spot +17.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Track.

Possessions: Skrafer's rawhide and platinum collar is an *amulet of health* +2 sized for a huge creature.

Tactics: Skrafer flies figure-eight patterns centered over the *Rabid Dawn* and if he spots the characters he immediately attacks, opening with a roar and following with a charge and pounce against the nearest character. Skrafer fights until reduced below 40 hit points, and then he wings his way back to the *Rabid Dawn*.

RABID DAWN FEATURES

The *Rabid Dawn* is a triple-masted, square-rigged vessel with fore- and aft-castles. In addition to the quarterdeck, poop deck, and forecastle, the ship has an oar deck, and berth deck. If you're using the *Arms & Equipment Guide*, the *Rabid Dawn* has the same statistics as a warship.

The ship's internal walls and its hull are made of wood. Each section of hull has the statistics given below; a hull section is 10 feet by 10 feet. If a hull section is destroyed, the *Rabid Dawn* begins to sink. If the storm has been magically calmed, the ship sinks in a number of minutes equal

to 30 divided by the number of destroyed hull sections. If the storm is still raging, the ship sinks four times as fast.

Below decks, the rooms are lit by everburning torches. Ceiling height averages about eight feet; Large creatures must squeeze to fit into most rooms in the lower decks.

The storm continues to rage during the course of this adventure (unless magic is used to alter it). The same wind conditions that were present around the Leaning Lighthouse are present in area R1. Additionally, the rough seas toss the ship around and constantly wash over the quarterdeck. Every area onboard is considered an uneven surface with a sloped floor. These conditions force characters to make successful Balance checks each round (DC 14) they try to move. Failure by 5 or more indicates the character falls. On the upper decks, the waves washing over the ship make the footing slippery, and the check rises to DC 16. Furthermore, in area R1, there's a 25% chance per round that a wave washes over the ship. Make this check at the start of a round. Everyone on deck must make a successful Reflex save (DC 20) or be knocked prone. If the save fails by 5 or more, that character is washed overboard. See the *Player's Handbook* page 67 for rules on fighting while balancing.

Soon after seizing the *Rabid Dawn* from a gnome trading coster, Captain Mange paid to have the entire ship permanently blanketed with *Mordenkainen's private sanctum*. This effectively prevents *scrying* anywhere inside the hull,

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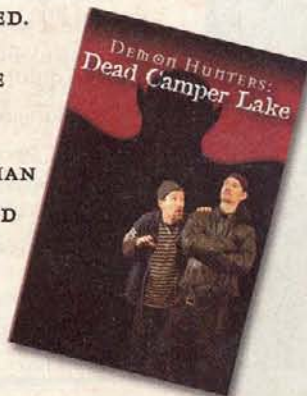
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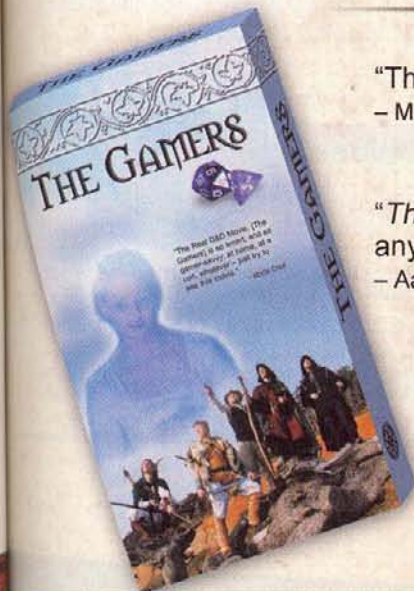
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on the top decks, and in the rigging. This spell also cloaks the *Rabid Dawn* in an unnatural mass of dark fog that resists all attempts of dispersal by the storm. Until the PCs pass this barrier, they cannot see or hear the ship or anything aboard. Once they pass through, however, they can see the ship and its crew normally.

If the *Rabid Dawn* sinks, all is not lost for the cultists. Captain Mange moored the warship in only 20 feet of water, so it doesn't have far to go if it sinks. If it does, crewmembers drink their *potions of water breathing* and rush to complete the ritual. Refer to the "Sunken Ship" sections in each area to see how specific encounters below are changed.

▀ **Rabid Dawn Hull Section:** Hardness 5; hp 100; Break DC 30.

RI. QUARTER DECK (EL 16)

This triple-masted galleon flies a red flag emblazoned with a white salt block, and it is violently tossed by the relentless waves of the storm. The moniker *St. Asmod's Hope* graces the ship's stern. The sails are furled, and as the waves toss the vessel, its spars rake the night sky like a claw scrabbling for purchase. Ballistas mounted on swiveling platforms dominate the fore and aft of the ship.

Of course, *St. Asmod's Hope* is not the ship's real name. The *Rabid Dawn* is known far and wide as a merciless pirate ship, so Captain Mange took pains to disguise his ship before setting into port. He couldn't resist having a little fun with the ship's false name, though, and particularly canny (or paranoid) players might notice that "Asmod" is short for Asmodeus.

The storm here is just as strong as it was near the Leaning Lighthouse, with severe winds prevailing. Normal missile fire suffers a -4 penalty on attack rolls, but siege weapons do not. The ship has turned into the wind, so

creatures blown away are pushed toward the stern of the ship and creatures that are checked cannot approach the bow.

Particularly keen-eared characters might be able to pick up the sound of beating drums belowdecks. A successful Listen check (DC 15) allows characters to hear the drums; don't forget the -4 penalty imposed by the storm. A successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 30) allows the player to know that these are devil-flesh drums of the Nine Hells, often employed in ceremonies by infernal cultists.

Creatures: Although the situation may look dire to a landlubber, the *Rabid Dawn* is in no danger of sinking, since her crew is busy on deck keeping her afloat. The crew consists of a large number of humans (two of which are actually *polymorphed* ogre mages) and scraggs (aquatic trolls), and they are led by Captain Mange himself.

By bugbear standards, Captain Mange cuts a dashing figure on the quarterdeck. He wears his maroon and black cloak clasped loosely at his neck and slung over one shoulder like a cape, and he makes grand flourishes with one or both of his cutlasses as he barks out orders over the din of the storm.

By the time the characters arrive, Captain Mange has probably heard of their approach from Narn, Skrafer, or the Tines of Sekolah. If not, he is certainly aware that two members of his crew are absent without leave. This, added to the infernal ceremony being conducted below, makes him extra cautious. In Captain Mange's case, cautious means stab first and cast *speak with dead* later.

The *Dawn's* crewmembers are completely devoted to Mange and, more recently, to Markosian. For his part, Captain Mange has found himself more often than not falling under the influence of the Disciple of Asmodeus's evil authority. He does not terribly mind, though, for Markosian has paid him well (the $+1$ *shock ballistae* on the forecastle and poop deck were looted from the same temple of Pelor that was holding Nythsecht's *iron flask*).

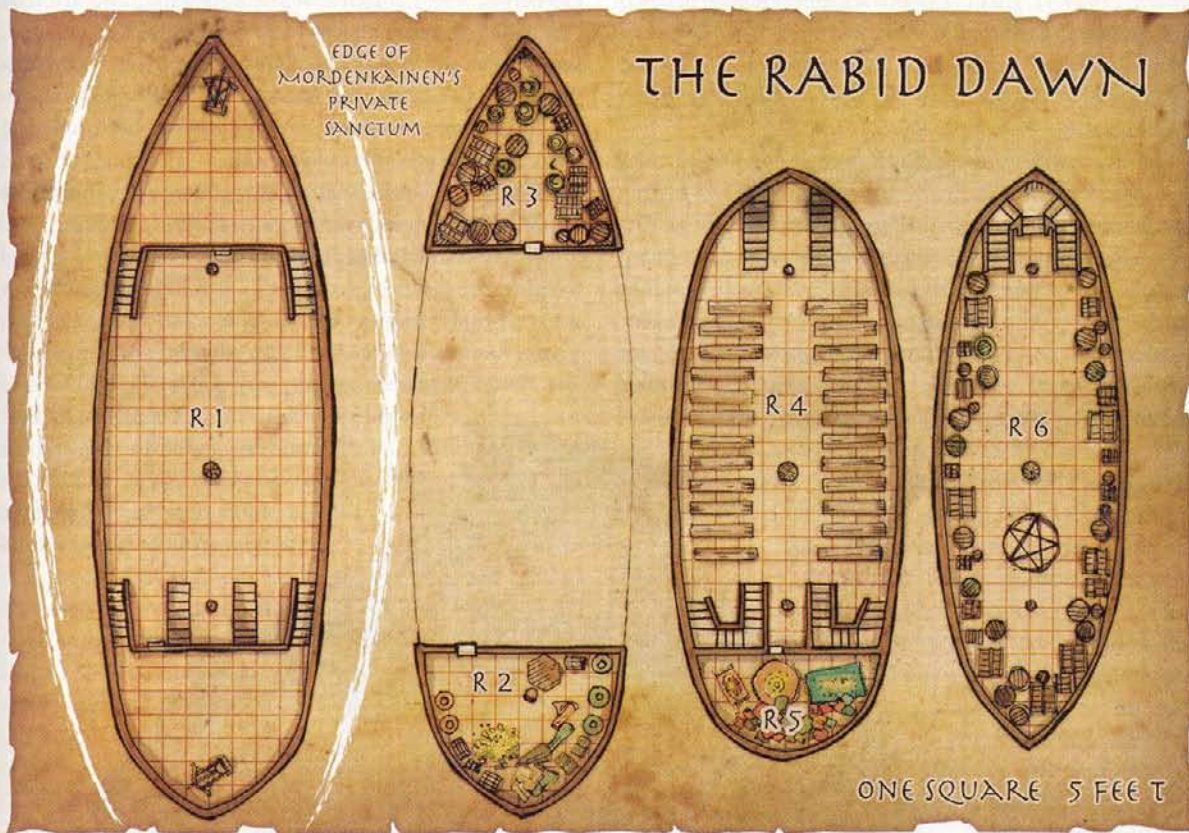
CUTLASS

The crew of the *Rabid Dawn* fight with cutlasses, light martial melee weapons similar to short swords. A cutlass's heavy basket hilt gives the wielder a $+2$ circumstance bonus on any checks to resist being disarmed. The cutlass first appeared in the *FORGOT-*



TEN REALMS Campaign Setting, but is reprinted here for ease of reference.

Weapon	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Cutlass	15 gp	1d4	1d6	19–20	—	3 lb.	Slashing and piercing



The most recent addition to the crew is a chuul, whom Mange purchased from an illithid slaver at Markosian's urging. So far, the intelligent crustacean is content to lurk in the bilge; Captain Mange feeds it well and even has stimulating conversations with it, two things its prior master had neither time nor interest in. The chuul, like the rest of the crew, is above decks at this time.

➤ **Pirates of the Rabid Dawn, Male Human Rog1/Ftr3 (12):** CR 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d6+3d10+4; hp 28 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+3/19–20, +1 cutlass) or +6 ranged (1d10/19–20, heavy crossbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ trapfinding; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; AL NE; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 6.

Skills: Balance +16, Climb +6, Escape Artist +4, Jump +8, Knowledge (local) +4, Profession (sailor) +4, Sleight of Hand +6, Swim +7, Tumble +7, Use Rope +6.

Feats: Agile, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Skill Focus (Balance), Weapon Focus (cutlass).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Leather armor, +1 cutlass, heavy crossbow, 24 bolts, *potion of water breathing*, matchstick-sized red glass-tipped rod medallion (a token of Asmodeus, 1 gp value), 2d10 gp each.

➤ **Chuul (1):** hp 93; *Monster Manual* 35.

➤ **Scrag (4):** hp 63 each; Atk/Full Atk +7 ranged (3d8 plus 1d6 electricity/19–20, +1 shock ballista); *Monster Manual* 248. As long as the storm rages, the scragrags are able to regenerate since so much water is washing over the ship's deck.

➤ **Ogre Mage (2):** hp 37 each; *Monster Manual* 200.

➤ **Captain Mange, Male Bugbear Ftr7/Rog5:** CR 14; Medium humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d8+7d10+5d6+45; hp 118; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 26, touch 14, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +12; Grp +18; Atk +20 (1d6+9/17–20, +1 elf bane cutlass); Full Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (1d6+9/17–20, +1 elf bane cutlass) and +18/+13 melee (1d6+6/17–20, +1 defending cutlass); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +4; AL NE; Str 22, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +8, Balance +17, Climb +18, Jump +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Profession (sailor) +8, Spot +5, Swim +24, Tumble +11.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Critical (cutlass), Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Two Weapon Defense, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (cutlass), Weapon Specialization (cutlass).

Languages: Common, Aquan, Goblin, Infernal.

Possessions: +3 chain shirt, +1 elf bane cutlass, +1 defending cutlass, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +1, amulet of

natural armor +1, gloves of swimming and climbing, potion of owl's wisdom, potion of bear's endurance, potion of jump (caster level 5th), two potions of water breathing, pearl earring (1,100 gp), 19 gp, key to the forward hold, key to captain's cabin.

Tactics: Although the PCs can't see the ship until they penetrate the *secure shelter* that surrounds it, they are themselves quite visible to the pirates unless they take pains to hide their approach. Most of the crew is busy keeping the ship afloat, but the chuul is perched on the bow of the ship keeping watch. Its Listen and Spot checks of +11 (modified to +7 from the storm conditions) should be fairly easy for the party to defeat unless they approach the *Rabid Dawn* in a ship of their own.

A pair of scragms man each +1 *shock ballista*, firing at will at anyone they notice. If the characters attempt a standoff battle, either from the *Crawdad* or from the skies, Captain Mange directs a fusillade of heavy crossbow fire from his pirates, keeps up the fire from the +1 *shock ballistae*, and commands any flying minions to rise up and take the fight to the PCs. If fire is too heavy, Mange retreats to the oar deck. In a stalemated standoff, Captain Mange moves below deck to recruit the erinyes in R5 to join the combat with their bows.

Once a character sets foot on the ship, the pirates have a decided advantage. They use their Tumble skill with abandon to achieve flanking position, and their skill with Balance is high enough that they don't need to make checks to move on deck (since even on a roll of 1 they hit the DC), as long as they move at half speed. Remember that characters who don't have at least 5 ranks in Balance

are considered flat-footed while balancing, and are thus susceptible to sneak attacks from the pirates. For their part, the human pirates on the *Rabid Dawn* all have enough ranks in Balance that they are not flat-footed while balancing. When low on hit points, they scramble up the rigging and snipe with their heavy crossbows. The chuul and two of the scragms act as shock troops, and they wade into melee to use their reach to help the pirates achieve flanking positions. The fact that they have reach lets them avoid having to move much during combat, but if they do move, they must all make Balance checks. The other two scragms each man a +1 *shock ballista*. Their size allows them to fire a ballista at no penalty and use a single full-round action to reload it. The ogre mages both fly near the bow of the ship and use their longbows or spells on the PCs; they're large enough that the winds can't blow them around



CAPTAIN MANGE

(at the worst, the wind checks their flight toward the bow of the ship).

Captain Mange attempts to flank as well. He uses spring attack to make sneak attacks and then move out of range. If he has ample time before the characters board the ship, the bugbear quaffs his potions (except the *potions of water breathing*, which he keeps for emergencies). Mange prefers to target elves; his hatred of them stemming from having been teased as a cub that his fashion sense made him more an elf than a bugbear.

If any other cultists or allies survived from previous encounters (including Narn, Urelga, Verdhar, the Tines of Sekolah, and Skraper), they can also be encountered here. Note that fighting so many powerful enemies at once is a dangerous proposition, even for 15th-level characters.

Treasure: At both the stern castle and the forecastle, a +1 *shock ballista* is mounted on a rotating platform. Both the statistics given on page 100 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* plus their magic qualities, which grant a +1 enhancement bonus on attack and damage and an additional 1d6 points of electrical damage. Both of these weapons were stolen from a temple of Pelor. Each contains a badly defaced inscription in Celestial; a successful Decipher Script check (DC 25) made by someone who can read Celestial allows the original inscription to be read: "In Pelor's name/Consider the beam/A shock to thy darkened eye."

Development: If Captain Mange, Skraper, Narn (if he's present), and at least half the other pirates are defeated, there's a chance that the PCs can talk the survivors into surrender. The pirates have an initial attitude of hostile; adjusting this attitude to at least indifferent with a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check convinces them to lay down their arms. These checks take only a full-round to perform rather than the standard minute, since the PCs have already displayed their prowess by defeating the captain.

If made friendly, the pirates give detailed information on the goings-on below deck, including the fact that Markosian wants to summon "the worst of the worst, mate, Asmodeus hissell!"

Development—Sunken Ship: If the ship sinks, it comes to rest on the harbor bed 20 feet down and rocks to starboard at a steep angle. Combat in this area proceeds according to the rules for underwater combat in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* (page 93). Both ballista are submerged in this case and can no longer effectively fire.

TWO VILE FEATS

Markosian and his Asmodean disciples each have two vile feats taken from the *Book of Vile Darkness*. Although neither of these feats are reprinted in full in this adventure, the effects of these two feats are summarized in this sidebar. For full details, consult the *Book of Vile Darkness*.

R2. CAPTAIN'S CABIN

The door to this room is locked (Open Lock DC 40).

This extravagantly appointed yet cramped chamber is outfitted with numerous expensive-looking tapestries, art, and furniture. A single hammock hangs above all the loot.

This is Captain Mange's personal quarters. He hasn't spent much time in here lately, and he keeps the key to the door on a chain around his neck at all times.

Treasure: In addition to the various art objects scattered around this room (worth a total of 1,450 gp), a successful Search check (DC 25) uncovers the cargo manifest for the *Rabid Dawn*. It lists the contents of the orlop deck, the forward hold, and includes a map of the ship.

Development—Sunken Ship: This room is partially flooded. A large air bubble is caught in the upper half of the room.

R3. FORWARD HOLD (EL 7)

The door to this area is locked (Open Lock DC 40) and has a Trap.

This small room is packed tight with crates and barrels. Many of the containers are labeled; "Winter Wheat," "Blue Whinnis," "Black Toad Ale," "Oil of Kraken," and "Thundergull Swag" are plainly visible closest to the door. Racks of oars line the walls, and spare sails, rope, and tackle are crammed into any spaces that remain.

Most of this stuff is booty and swag the pirates have recently captured and simply haven't had the chance to sell yet. A search of the area takes nearly an hour, but in the end produces the Treasure below.

Trap: After Captain Mange had some unfortunate incidents with foolish crewmen trying to sneak into this hold to steal swag, he paid for the installation of a deadly trap on the door. The trap triggers as soon as someone walks through the door without leaving the door's key in the lock. The trap unleashes a *prismatic spray* on the creature that passes through the door. The spray's blindness effect strikes everyone within ten feet of the door, but the spray itself affects only the person who walks through the door (and thus doesn't harm the ship itself). The trap resets instantly, so someone foolish enough to remain in the doorway is struck once per round until dead, petrified, or gone.

Disciple of Darkness: Once per day, while performing an evil act, the character may add a +1 luck bonus to any one die roll.

Evil Brand: The character gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks made against evil creatures.

↗ **Prismatic Spray Trap:** CR 7; magic device; proximity trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*prismatic spray*, 13th-level wizard, DC 20 Reflex, Fortitude, or Will save, depending on effect); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

Treasure: If the hold is searched, 2,590 gp of treasure in the form of coins, gems, and art objects can be liberated. Additionally, one crate contains several large jars of blue whinnis poison; 20 doses in all.

Development—Sunken Ship: This room is completely flooded. The blue whinnis jars break open and flood this room with poison. Anyone entering the room must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 14) or suffer 1 point of Constitution damage; one minute later the victim must save again or fall unconscious. Once the door is opened, the poison disperses to harmless levels into the surrounding water in only 1d6 rounds.

R4. THE OAR DECK

Although the oars are shelved and the ports shuttered, this deck is clearly meant to house oarsmen whose struggles would propel the ship in periods of calm wind. Hammocks swing lazily above the rowing benches. Toward the stern, a single door is set into the wall.

The drumming of the summoning ritual on the deck below is much easier to hear on this deck. A successful Listen check (DC 0) is all that is required to hear the pounding. Alert PCs who make a Listen check (DC 20) hear soft whispering and giggling beyond the aft door. If this check exceeds the DC by 10, and the listener speaks Infernal he notes that the voices are female and are complaining about all the attention that the “newcomer” is receiving.

Development—Sunken Ship: This area is flooded completely if the ship sinks.

R5. HAREM (EL 10)

This room is luxuriously appointed, draped with scarves and heaped with pillows. The outer walls are ablaze with dozens of ensconced candles, and the scent of vanilla lingers in the air.

The two dozen candles that flicker on the walls here are each *continual flames* created by a now-depleted wand once owned by Markosian.

Creatures: Two erinyes, Ciamathe and Ashraen, lurk in this chamber. Both are Markosian's allies and concubines. Both find their current quarters quite uncomfortable, and are apathetic and impatient to be off the ship. Moreover, they are enraged at Markosian for leaving them here while he conducts his infernal ceremony, and they are looking for new mortals to play with.

↗ **Ciamathe and Ashraen, Female Erinyes (2):** hp 85; *Monster Manual* 54.

Tactics: The two erinyes are quick thinkers and realize that if the PCs have made it this far, they're probably more than the two of them can handle. Although bound by their contract with Markosian to remain near to him and to never betray him, nothing in the contract forces them to attack probable enemies on sight. The erinyes stall for time and wait to see how the PCs react to their presence. If the PCs don't immediately attack, they claim to be captured celestials. If the PCs do attack, they *teleport* to Markosian's side in area R6. In any case, they immediately contact Markosian via *telepathy* to inform him of the intrusion.

Development—Sunken Ship: This area is completely submerged. If the ship sinks, the erinyes *teleport* to safety somewhere along the secluded shoreline north of town, where they wait to be contacted by Markosian. If he is slain or abandons them, they start to prey on locals as their hunger grows.

R6. THE BERTH DECK (EL 18; 19 IF NYXTHSEHT IS RELEASED)

This large chamber runs the length of the ship. Vermilion smoke hangs near the ceiling after pouring from braziers of brimstone against the walls. Crates, barrels, and other containers have been pushed against the walls or crammed into the bow or stern of the ship, leaving a large empty area in the center.

Normally used to hold supplies and loot, this entire deck has been commandeered by the cultists.

Creatures: This hold is where Markosian plans to release Nyxthseht from the *iron flask*. While he has always had the option to free the him by using the flask's command word, Markosian would rather have Nyxthseht as a more permanent ally. To try to win Nyxthseht's favor, he hopes to impress Nyxthseht with pomp and sacrifices. Devils are nothing if not vain, and flattering the devil by staging such an elaborate ceremony could be the perfect way for Markosian to win its favor and form an alliance.

Markosian's plans change if the PCs manage to reach this chamber before he completes his ritual. Only if the party is battered and beaten but courageously battling on does Markosian haughtily attempt to handle matters on his own. If, however, the PCs are still going strong, Markosian cuts the ritual short, releases Nyxthseht, and informs him that the PCs are a blood sacrifice for him to enjoy as he wills.

The cultists in this chamber consist of Markosian, his three sorcerer acolytes, and twenty-two human cultists. Of these cultists, sixteen are 1st-level aristocrats who have been gathered and swayed by Markosian, and if combat erupts, they cower or flee. If you're feeling particularly

insidious, one or two of these cultists could be minor but recognizable NPCs from your campaign that the PCs have previously encountered. The other six cultists are *Rabid Dawn* pirates who have been completely converted.

➤ **Asmodean cultists, Male Human**
Ftr3/Rog1 (6); hp 28 each; see area R1.

➤ **Nephthyn, Jocelle, and Catia, Asmodean Acolytes, Female Human Sor10 (3):** CR 10; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d4+10; hp 35 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (includes *mage armor*), touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +5; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d4+2/17-20, +1 *keen dagger*); SA spells; SQ cat familiar; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +15, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Intimidate +6, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (the planes) +3, Move Silently +5, Spellcraft +7.

Feats: Disciple of Darkness, Empower Spell, Evil Brand, Great Fortitude, Maximize Spell.

Languages: Common, Infernal.

Spells Known (6/7/7/7/6/3; save DC 14 + spell level):
0—acid splash, detect magic, flare, ghost sound, mage hand, ray of frost, read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue; 1st—charm person, jump, mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement; 2nd—detect thoughts, false life, scorching ray, touch of idiocy; 3rd—fireball, fly, suggestion; 4th—charm monster, phantasmal killer; 5th—dominate person.

Possessions: +1 *keen dagger*, ring of protection +2, potion of water breathing.

➤ **Markosian, the Devil Behind Thrones, Male Human Sor5/Ftr2/Disciple of Asmodeus 10:** CR 17; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d4+2d10+10d6+51; hp 129 (including extended *false life*); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (includes extended *mage armor*), touch 15, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +11; Grp +14; Atk +18 (1d10+6, +2 *unholy greatclub*); Full Atk +18/+13/+8 (1d10+6, +2 *unholy greatclub*); SA evil authority, spells, spell-like abilities, summon hellcats, greater command, summon major devil; SQ damage resistance 10/adamantine (from *stone-skin*), dread might, learn secret, *see invisibility* (permanent spell effect); AL LE; SV Fort +14, Ref +8, Will +16; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 24.

Dread Might (Ex): Markosian has a +2 divine bonus to his Armor Class and on saving throws and attack rolls.

Evil Authority (Sp): Once per day, Markosian can create a *mass suggestion* against all evil-aligned creatures within 50 feet that have 16 or fewer Hit Dice to recognize him as their superior. Affected creatures do not attack Markosian and do as he commands in the *suggestion*.



MARKOSIAN

Learn Secret (Ex): Once per day, Markosian can gain a +10 competence bonus on a Gather Information check.

Summon Hellcat (Sp): Once per day, Markosian can summon 1d4 hellcats; this ability works as a *summon monster* spell (caster level 11).

Summon Major Devil (Sp): Once per week, Markosian can use *greater planar ally* to call a devil and work out a bargain for aid.

Skills: Bluff +23, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +24, Disguise +7 (+9 acting), Gather Information +12, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +5, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Sense Motive +5, Swim +7.

Feats: Disciple of Darkness, Extend Spell, Evil Brand, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Maximize Spell, Weapon Focus (ray).

STRIKE ON THE
RABID DAWN

Languages: Common, Infernal.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*charm person* (DC 18), *command* (DC 18), *greater command* (DC 22). Caster level 11. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spells Known (6/7/6/6/7/4*, save DC 17 + spell level, Caster Level 11): 0—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st—*grease*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*; 2nd—*cat's grace*, *false life*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*, *touch of idiocy*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *fireball*, *fly*, *haste*; 4th—*enervation*, *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*; 5th—*dismissal*, *dominate person*.

*Markosian has already cast some spells today, so his total spells available are lower than normal when he is initially encountered. Normally, his spell slots are as follows: 6/7/7/7/4.

Possessions: +2 *unholy greatclub*, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *cloak of charisma* +4, *ring of protection* +1, *glove of storing* (contains his greatclub), *pearl of the sirines*, *portable hole* (see *Treasure*, below), *scroll of teleport*, *potion of bull's strength*, *potion of bear's endurance*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, set of four matched bloodstone cufflinks (1,000 gp for the set), 3 pouches of granite and diamond dust worth 250 gp (*stoneskin* material component), red leather coin purse containing 25 pp and three small rubies (1,000 gp each).

➤ **Nyxthseht, Aspect of Asmodeus:** CR 16; Large Outsider (Baatezu, evil, extraplanar, lawful); HD 16d8+112; hp 184; Init +5; Spd 40 ft., fly 120 ft. (good); AC 32, touch 20, flat-footed 27; Base Atk +16; Grp +26; Atk +24 melee (2d6+15, *Ruby Rod*); Full Atk +24/+19/+14/+9 melee (2d6+15/19–20, *Ruby Rod*); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA fear and weakness gaze, spells; SQ damage reduction 10/epic, darkvision 60 ft., diabolical insight, immune to fire and poison, resistance to acid 10 and cold 10, spell resistance 28, telepathy 100 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +17, Ref +15, Will +19; Str 22, Dex 20, Con 25, Int 22, Wis 24, Cha 26.

Fear and Weakness Gaze (Su): Acts as a *fear* spell (CL 20) that also deals 1d4 points of Strength damage, 60 feet, Will DC 26 negates. The save DC is Charisma-based. Note that this gaze attack affects the PCs and the cultists equally; canny players can use this to their advantage in the fight.

Spells: Nyxthseht casts spells as a 16th-level sorcerer, and chooses his spells from the sorcerer/wizard list as well as the Evil and Law domains.

Diabolical Insight (Ex): Nyxthseht gains a +6 insight bonus to his Armor Class; this applies even to his touch and flat-footed AC. This bonus is included in his Armor Class listed above.

Skills: Balance +7, Bluff +29, Concentration +15, Diplomacy +29, Disguise +27 (+29 acting), Gather Information +29, Intimidate +31, Jump +12, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (history) +25, Knowledge (local) +16, Knowledge (nobility) +25, Knowledge (religion) +25, Knowledge

(the planes) +16, Listen +26, Sense Motive +26, Spot +26, Tumble +24.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Improved Critical (greatclub), Iron Will, Persuasive, Spell Focus (enchantment).

Languages: Nyxthseht can speak all languages.

Spells Known (6/8/8/8/8/7/7/6/4; save DC 18 + spell level, or DC 20 + spell level for enchantment spells): 0—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *daze**, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st—*burning hands*, *charm person**, *hypnotism**, *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement*; 2nd—*daze monster**, *desecrate*, *scorching ray*, *touch of idiocy**, *whispering wind*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *hold person**, *secret page*, *suggestion**; 4th—*charm monster**, *order's wrath*, *polymorph*, *unholy blight*; 5th—*dominate person**, *dream*, *major creation*, *mind fog**; 6th—*geas/quest**, *mass suggestion**, *planar binding*; 7th—*blasphemy*, *insanity**; 8th—*power word stun**.

*Enchantment spell.

Equipment: *Ruby Rod* (this is a lesser variation of the actual *Ruby Rod*, and is the equivalent of a +3 *unholy greatclub*).

Tactics: If the party somehow manages to surprise Markosian, his curiosity is piqued by their stealth. He asks detailed questions about his allies and how they were defeated, trying to gauge both the party's veracity and its strength. If he judges the PCs to be too much to handle, Markosian simply nods in approval at their superior skills, then tries to flee with the *iron flask* to plot vengeance later. If he does fight a party that surprises him in his lair, then Markosian is certain to open the *flask* to gain Nyxthseht's help in the battle.

If Markosian is expecting the party, he takes immediate action on their arrival. If the party continues to try to speak to him as he attacks, he shouts above the drums that they will have time to confess all their sins when they are bound on the flaming racks of Nessus.

Markosian's acolytes avoid using *fireball*, *scorching ray*, or other spells that could damage the *Rabid Dawn*, and focus on casting *phantasmal killer*, *dominate person*, and *magic missile*. The pirate cultists flank the PCs, stabbing and slashing with their cutlasses. If Narn survived a confrontation with the PCs earlier, he is here and fulfills his role as Markosian's cohort and bodyguard, clawing, grappling, and impaling any character who approaches his leader.

If Markosian knows that the PCs are on board, he interrupts his ritual briefly to cast extended *stoneskin*, extended *greater invisibility*, extended *mirror image*, and extended *shield* spells.

In the opening round of combat, Markosian issues a *greater command* to "fall prone before the might of Asmodeus." Following that, his most effective tactic is to exploit the knowledge gained with his learn secret class ability. Since the *Rabid Dawn* anchored several several days ago to gather mundane supplies and recruit celebrants,

Markosian had time to Gather Information about powerful inhabitants of the Hardby region, and he likely learned a bit about the PCs, their fighting styles, and their strengths and weaknesses. For example; if a PC relies on his sword and has a horrible Reflex save, Markosian knows to target that PC's sword with a *grease* spell. Even if the PCs aren't from Hardby, Markosian makes it his business to know something useful about powerful individuals in the world, and at 15th-level, the PCs have certainly merited his attention.

Treasure: Markosian keeps his cult's treasury sorted in three large chests; the chests themselves are kept in the *portable hole* he carries. Each chest is unlocked and untrapped.

Chest #1: This maple footlocker contains twelve golden ingots worth 300 gp each. Two crystal goblets carved with flaming wings rest on top of these gold ingots. These goblets were recovered from the temple of Pelor from whom Markosian liberated the *iron flask*, and each is worth 900 gp.

Chest #2: This applewood chest contains several neatly stacked rows of coins. In all, there are 15,220 cp, 11,200 sp, 3,100 gp, and 120 pp. A scroll of *heal* and a scroll of *restoration* sit on top of the coins.

Chest #3: The last chest is a small oaken coffer that contains a loose pile of diamonds. Three are worth 100 gp, four are worth 200 gp, and two are worth 1,000 gp.

The last items of treasure lean against a wall of the *portable hole*—six elegant paintings from the temple of Pelor, each still in their frames. Each painting depicts an aspect of the sun in its daily journey around the world. They are worth 700 gp each.

Development—Sunken Ship: If the *Rabid Dawn* sinks, the cultists carry on with the ritual after drinking their potions of *water breathing* (if they have them). Those cultists without quickly drown, as they are too enthralled with the ritual to react logically, even as the hold becomes a watery nightmare.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If Markosian summons Nyxthseht and they escape or defeat the party, everything falls in place for the Devil Behind Thrones to seize power in the region. Nyxthseht cedes command of his company of bearded devils to

Markosian for sixty-six days, and during these two months, Markosian cuts a swath of hellfire and terror across the land. Unless the PCs can stop him, it all ends with a new realm of the Horned Society, a diabolical domain that spans the length and breadth of several former kingdoms.

If the party prevents Nyxthseht's arrival but allows Markosian to escape, he marks them for torture and death. His ego cannot abide being bested, and though patient, he toils indefatigably until the PCs are laid low, selling his soul twice over if he must to see to their dooms.

If the PCs destroy or capture Markosian, they might find themselves in an awkward situation if any of the cultists in the ship turn out to be allies or prominent aristocrats from elsewhere in the campaign world. Were they duped into joining the cult, or are they truly devoted to the cause of Asmodeus? How strong is Asmodeus's influence in the lands they thought free of evil taint? The party could spend many months investigating these leads, harried at every turn by Narn, Nyxthseht, or even Ciamathe and Ashraen. After all, Hell hath no fury like an erinyes scorned...

APPENDIX: THE HORNED SOCIETY

Just under a century ago, a wicked conclave of powerful adventurers created the Horned Society, carving a kingdom for themselves in the barren Middle Lands north of the Lake of Unknown Depths. From the Hall of Dread in squalid Molag, the thirteen Hierarchs of the Horned Society cowed and subsequently united the hobgoblin tribes indigenous to the region, gaining a powerful army and substantial protection in the process.

The Society swore itself to the worship of infernal beings from the Lower Planes, paying particular obeisance to Nerull the Reaper, the Oinodaemon Anthraxus the Decayed, and the nine Princes of Hell. Bizarre cultists, aimless murderers, and sadistic bandits flocked to the lands of the Horned Society, and the kingdoms of good looked northward with weary eyes.

But the dominion of the Horned Society was not to last. During the recent Greyhawk Wars, armies of the mad demigod Iuz the Evil crushed the Horned Society, laying

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Strike on the *Rabid Dawn*" is designed for four 15th-level characters, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

13th- or 14th-level PCs: Reduce the character levels of all NPCs by 1–2. Narn should become a bone devil and Nyxthseht an ice devil. Reduce the storm's wind power by one category, and remove the chance for windstorm-strength

gusts completely.

16th- or 17th-level PCs: Increase the character levels of all NPCs by 1–2. Narn should become an ice devil and Nyxthseht a pit fiend. The winds accompanying the thunderstorm should always be of windstorm strength, with gusts of hurricane force winds.

Remember to adjust the treasure per encounter according to Table 3–3 on page 51 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.



siege to Molag and sacrificing captured Hierarchs for the glory of their divine patron.

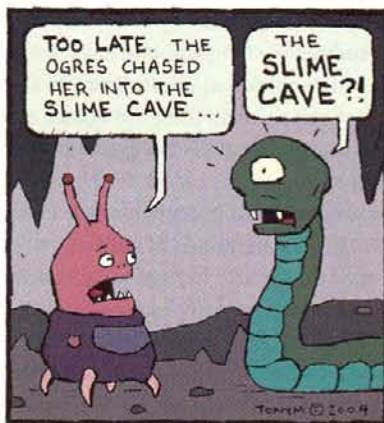
But a few Hierarchs somehow managed to survive the relentless onslaught of Iuz's forces. They fled the Middle Lands, taking their message of infernal influence to all corners of the continent. Over the last decade, hundreds of Horned Society cells have sprung up in cities like Greyhawk, Hardby, and Istivin.

Although he became a Hierarch with the blessing of the Unnameable Hierarch, the shadowy leader of the Society, Markosian receives little respect from the rank and file members of the organization, who view him as too ambitious and too incautious. For now, they keep him isolated from the Society as a whole, waiting for one of his many projects to succeed before fully bringing him into their confidence. Nonetheless, Markosian remains an asset, and the other Hierarchs won't look favorably upon his destruction at the hands of the player characters.

A few sessions after the heroes have forgotten about Markosian in favor of bigger and better adventures, consider sending a Horned Society-sponsored hit squad after them. This vengeance party might include a few devils and characters loaded with feats from the *Book of Vile Darkness*. If you want to really send your players screaming away, consider cracking open *DUNGEON* #105 to page 70 and having them face off against Warduke (LE male human FTR8). It'll be an encounter they won't soon forget. Ω

This adventure is dedicated to my Long Island group: Mike, Deb, Dov, and Heather. When we playtested this adventure, the dwarven cleric had a field day with his earthquake spell. We hadn't seen so much structural devastation since the frost giant army set up camp in the halfling burrow village!

MOUNT ZOGON



BY TONY MOSELEY

Dungeon's DELVE

PART TWO

LOWER CAVERNS

KEY

- 31. Entrance to Surface Tunnels
- 32. Entrance to Dwarven Stronghold
- 33. Ore Collection Hall
- 34. Primary Mining Tunnels
- 35. Secondary Mining Tunnels
- 36. Collapsed Mining Tunnels
- 37. Tressel Bridges
- 38. Whirlpool Cavern
- 39. Waterfalls
- 40. Ledges
- 41. Rock Pillar
- 42. Waterfall Cavern
- 43. Lofty Limestone Cavern
- 44. Stalagmites
- 45. Fossilized Dragon Skeleton
- 46. Slippery Ledge
- 47. Rapids
- 48. Makeshift Barricade
- 49. Entrance to the Deep Caverns
- 50. Entrance to the Deep Mines

Note: Primary Mining Tunnels slope gradually down towards the south.

Arrows = Direction of Flow
1 square = 5 feet

WEST

49



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DWARVEN
MINES

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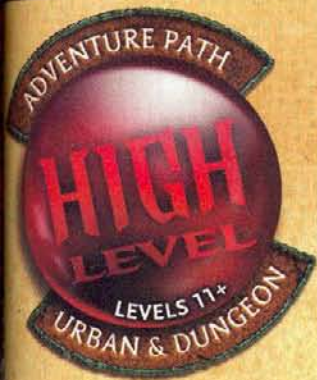
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LORDS of OBLIVION

BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

ARTWORK BY PETER BERGTING • CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

"Lords of Oblivion" is a *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*® adventure designed for four 13th-level characters. The characters should reach 14th level during the adventure, and 15th level by its conclusion. When the PCs earn enough experience to gain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure. The characters will be too involved in their mission to break from the course of the adventure to train, and they might not find opportunities to buy and sell magic items or prepare for a specific encounter.

This adventure is seventh part of the Shattered City Adventure Path that began with "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97), "Flood Season" (*DUNGEON* #98), "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), and "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" (*DUNGEON* #109). If you're playing through these adventures in sequence, the heroes are familiar with the town of Cauldron and should recognize many of the NPCs mentioned in the adventure.

PREPARATION

To run this adventure, you need the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. Some of the monsters appearing in this adventure are described in the *Fiend Folio*. Most of the monsters taken from this book have full stat blocks, but for one (the farastu demodands), the *Fiend Folio* is necessary. If you don't have this book, you can replace the farastus with hezrou demons from the *Monster Manual*.

Before you run "Lords of Oblivion," take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the statistics and abilities of the various NPCs and monsters in the adventure. These antagonists use tactics and magic items in combat, and the encounters can be challenging for even an experienced DM to run.

BACKGROUND

Evil forces are gathering in the town of Cauldron. A power-hungry beholder named Vhalantru, disguised as an influential noble in town, spent the past several years working with a secret organization called the Cagewrights. The Cagewrights are making final prepara-

tions for a complex ritual to transform Cauldron into a gate-town with a permanent portal between the Material Plane and the outer plane of Carceri. If the ritual is completed, an incarcerated horde of fiends trapped on Carceri's first layer escape the prison plane, ravage Cauldron, and set forth to conquer the surrounding area. Although not himself a Cagewright, Vhalantru has been promised lordship over Cauldron once the portal is established. To prepare for his new role, Vhalantru recently underwent a transformation of his own.

Vhalantru borrowed a set of scrolls from the Cagewrights describing a ritual called the *Zar'ilkoth Tarteros*. The ritual enables Vhalantru to absorb the spirit of a slain demodand and gain its powers. The ritual also transforms Vhalantru's body, giving it shator-like qualities. To complete the ritual, Vhalantru must sacrifice the souls of four insane beings to the powers of Carceri—a small price to pay for the spirit of a dead demodand.

Most of the Cagewrights are busy making final preparations for the ritual to turn Cauldron into a gate-town. A local Cagewright named Thifrane Rhiavadi has invited some of the worst criminal elements in the land—slavers, mercenaries, thieves, and even evil adventurers—to a secret meeting at her estate in Cauldron. There she informs them of the Cagewrights' plans, offers them a chance to help reshape the world, and guarantees them positions of power in exchange for their loyalty and complicity.

If they act swiftly, the heroes can storm House Rhiavadi and smash Thifrane's evil covenant. They can also fight their way through Oblivion, Vhalantru's subterranean lair, and confront the beholder for a final showdown.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs begin the adventure in Cauldron, having just explored the Ruins of Karran-Kural (as described in "Secrets of the Soul Pillars") or completed some other dangerous quest. Dark clouds fill the sky, reflecting the somber mood of the troubled townsfolk. Severen Navalant, the lord mayor, is missing and presumed dead. Contingents of mercenaries help the local militia patrol the streets, quelling riots and keeping order in the name of Navalant's

self-appointed successor, Lord Orbius Vhalantru. However, not everyone is pleased with the change in leadership. Raised taxes and a sharp increase in criminal activity have fueled rumors that Cauldron's leaders are corrupt or simply incompetent.

Cauldron's woes notwithstanding, the heroes might have good cause to suspect Lord Vhalantru of evildoing. He has so far remained an enigma, sequestering himself within his estate and rarely venturing into the public eye. The Striders of Fharlanghn, who seek to locate and eradicate the Cagewrights, suspect that Vhalantru knows something about the Cagewrights' activities. The Striders have been spying on Vhalantru ever since the lord mayor disappeared, but they have learned precious little.

The adventure begins when members of the Last Laugh thieves' guild capture one of the Striders of Fharlanghn, a half-elf named Skiriol Slyblade, who was watching the estates of Lord Vhalantru and Lady Rhiavadi. Unknown to the Last Laugh, Skiriol is linked telepathically by a *Rary's telepathic bond* spell to Meerthan Eliothorn, leader of the Striders in Cauldron. Meerthan asks the heroes to rescue Skiriol from the Last Laugh safe house, where he is being interrogated. The heroes must overcome the safe house's traps and rogues to reach Skiriol. They must also contend with a villain from their past—a rogue named Jil (see "Life's Bazaar" in *DUNGEON* #97). In exchange for her freedom, Jil provides the heroes with information about a secret gathering at Lady Rhiavadi's estate—a meeting where the Cagewrights' plans for Cauldron will be fully revealed. The heroes might infiltrate House Rhiavadi or find some other means of entry. Once inside the estate, they must contend with Lady Thifirane Rhiavadi and her guests, including the Last Laugh guildmaster, a notorious tiefling slaver, a cleric of Nerull from the nearby city of Sasserine, an unscrupulous dwarven merchant, and a vampire from the Underdark. If things go horribly awry, Thifirane flees to Oblivion, a subterranean sanctuary where Vhalantru is making final preparations for the ritual that will transform him into a Tarterian beholder.

CAULDRON

The town of Cauldron is built within the rim of a dormant volcano. Four concentric avenues ring a central lake, and a fortified wall encloses the town along the caldera's rim. Four main gates allow traffic in and out of Cauldron. The town's buildings are built primarily out of volcanic rock and timber. Refer to the map of Cauldron for a list of important sites from this adventure (and from previous ones). For more information about Cauldron and its inhabitants, see previous installments of the Shackled City Adventure Path.

👑 **Cauldron (large town):** Conventional; AL LE; population 3,850 adults; 3,000-gp limit; Assets 600,000 gp; Mixed (77% human, 8% halfling, 5% gnome, 3% dwarf, 4% half-orc, 2% elf, 1% half-elf).

RUMORS IN CAULDRON

Cauldron is unsettled of late, and not because of the amassing storm clouds in the skies overhead. The town is rife with ill rumors concerning everything from the recent rash of riots to brewing conflicts between the local temples. Hundreds of worried citizens have fled Cauldron, fearing that the recent turmoil is but a portent of some horrible event yet to unfold.

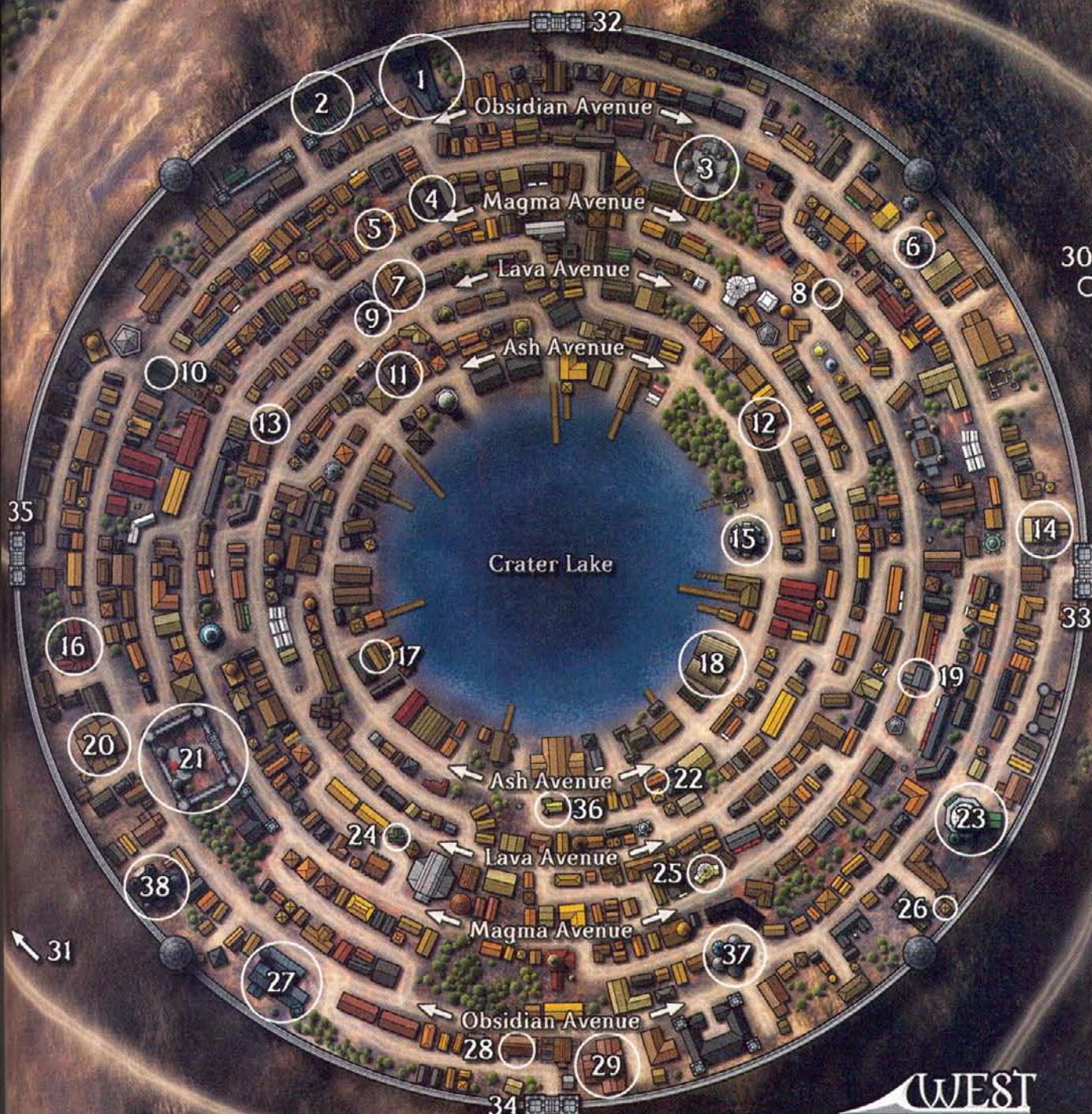
Cauldron's remaining citizens have grown close-lipped among all but their most trusted friends. The PCs find information harder to come by than before. A successful Gather Information check (DC 20) uncovers one of the following rumors. Anyone attempting such a Gather Information check can also make a Sense Motive check (DC 13) to detect the undercurrent of anger and fear running through the town's inhabitants.

Roll d10

- 1 Brigands ambushed and killed the lord mayor as he traveled to Sasserine to petition that city for aid. (False; Vhalantru killed the lord mayor in Cauldron and spread false rumors about his trip to Sasserine.)
- 2 Lord Vhalantru masterminded the lord mayor's disappearance to seize control of the town. Various greedy nobles have sworn fealty to Vhalantru, and no one—not even Captain Skellerang of the town guard—has the power or influence to oppose him. (True)
- 3 The Temple of Wee-Jas was recently stormed, its clerics massacred! Embril Aloustinai, the high priestess of the temple, was away when her temple was attacked, although word of the slaughter has already reached Sasserine. (True; the High Temple of Wee-Jas in Sasserine has denounced the attack but secretly blames Embril for abandoning her church in its time of need.)
- 4 A young boy abducted from the Lantern Street Orphanage has gone missing again, only months after his safe return. (True; members of the Last Laugh thieves' guild abducted the boy, one Terrem Kharatys, because he is a Shackleborn. The Cagewrights need Terrem to complete their portal ritual.)
- 5 A strange affliction is driving some citizens completely mad. The town's small jail is filled to the rafters with howling lunatics, and guard patrols are finding more of them every day. One poor soul was dragged down Obsidian Avenue screaming "I am Adimarchus!" or some damn fool thing. (True; the Cagewrights' preparations for turning Cauldron into a gate-town have yielded some strange side effects, including flashes of temporary insanity among certain members the local populace.)

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 Feet

CAULDRON



- | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Town Hall | 11 Tipped Tankard Tavern | 21 Lord Mayor's Residence | 31 Half-Orc Mercenary Camp |
| 2 Town Guard Barracks | 12 Lantern Street Orphanage | 22 Weer's Elixirs | 32 North Gate |
| 3 Church of St. Cuthbert | 13 Skie's Treasury | 23 Church of Wee Jas | 33 East Gate |
| 4 Maavu Warehouses | 14 Coy Nixie | 24 Ghelve's Locks | 34 South Gate |
| 5 Slippery Eel Tavern | 15 Lakeside Pavillion | 25 Church of Pelor | 35 West Gate |
| 6 Cusp of Sunrise | 16 Vanderboten Manor | 26 Westkey's Map Market | 36 The Brass Trumpet |
| 7 Maavu's Main Warehouse | 17 Minuta's Board | 27 Taskerbill Manor | 37 House Rhiavadi |
| 8 Tygot's Old Things | 18 Sure Foot Livory | 28 Zanathor's Provisions | 38 House Vhalantru |
| 9 Maavu Imports | 19 Gunezarn's Smithy | 29 Lathenmire Manor | |
| 10 Drunken Morkoth Inn | 20 Temple of Lordly Might (Kord) | 30 Secret Entrance to Lava Tubes | |

WEST

6 Gold and silver coins minted with a grinning jester face are becoming more popular and prolific in Cauldron of late. Most legitimate establishments accept these "jester coins" as though they were the sovereign's gold or silver. (True; these "jester coins," minted by the Last Laugh thieves' guild, are slowly flooding the local economy.)

CHAPTER ONE: THE BRASS TRUMPET

The characters begin the adventure in Cauldron, enjoying some down time and catching up on rumors. At some opportune moment, the PCs are invited to meet with the leader of the local chapter of an organization called the Striders of Fharlanghn; one Meerthan Eliothlorn, at the Drunken Morkoth Inn. Meerthan needs their help rescuing an agent who was captured while spying on House Vhalantru from a Last Laugh safe house before he cracks under interrogation and reveals the extent of the Striders' activities in Cauldron.

MEETING MEERTHAN

This adventure assumes that the PCs have already met and befriended at least one Strider of Fharlanghn agent in a prior adventure. Possible NPCs include Fario Ellegoth (male half-elf Ftr6/Rog6), Fellian Shard (male half-elf Rog3/Clr9—Fharlanghn), or Shensen Tesseril (female half-drow Mnk1/Brdr1/Drdr1). You should pick the Strider that the PCs trust the most to approach them. If the PCs haven't met any of them, they have heard of the PCs' exploits and decided that they are the best choice available to rescue their captured ally.

Whichever Strider approaches the PCs, they have instructions to accompany the characters to the Drunken Morkoth Inn, where Meerthan Eliothlorn waits to speak with them. Upon arriving at Meerthan's upstairs room, the Strider knocks four times on the door before opening it, then gestures for the PCs to enter. Beyond the door awaits a cozy, well-appointed chamber with a desk, a bed, and walls hung with mounted hunting trophies. A dwarf wearing a rich vest and golden circlet sits in a padded leather chair facing the door, his hands clasped tightly under his chin in a contemplative manner.

Meerthan Eliothlorn (male half-elf Wiz16) uses a *hat of disguise* to appear as a dwarf, but he reveals his true form once he and the characters are alone; that of a cloaked, 45-year-old half-elf with hazel eyes and a small crescent moon-shaped tattoo under his right eye. Meerthan cuts to the chase:

"One of my agents, a half-elf named Skiriol, was captured while spying on House Rhiavadi. He's being detained and interrogated in a Last Laugh safe house. Normally, this wouldn't be a problem. I keep a *bracelet of friends*, a magic item I can use to *teleport* my agents

out of harm's way in an instant. However, Skiriol gets into more than his fair share of trouble and, well, I can't use the bracelet on him a second time.

"Members of the Last Laugh are interrogating Skiriol as we speak. He has resisted their torture so far, but he can't hold out much longer. With the help of a spell called *telepathic bond*, I've managed to remain in contact with him. The Last Laugh doesn't know. Please forgive my presumption, but I've already told him that help is on the way. When you return, we can discuss what Skiriol has learned from his reconnaissance.

"The Brass Trumpet—an abandoned inn on Ash Avenue. That's where they're holding him."

Meerthan is willing to entertain questions—to a point. Every minute wasted is another minute Skiriol must endure the tortures of the Last Laugh's vaunted interrogators. Thanks to the *telepathic bond* with Skiriol, Meerthan knows everything of consequence concerning Skiriol's last mission. At this point, Meerthan is more concerned that Skiriol might divulge information about the Striders and their activities in Cauldron.

Meerthan knows that Skiriol's captors didn't take the time to blindfold him, clearly because they intend to kill him once the interrogation is complete. The Last Laugh's carelessness has allowed Skiriol to pass along the location of the safe house, a general description of areas B1, B2, B4, B5, B7, B8, and B9, and an estimated number of Last Laugh members inside (Skiriol counted at least ten goons, and he saw fifteen beds in area B5). He can also describe the four Last Laugh villains who captured him (see the descriptions of Jil, Finch, Mokaius, and Xendro, below). All of the Last Laugh members paint their faces white and black to resemble a grinning harlequin's visage. The description of the lead captor (a rascal of a woman standing 5 feet, 3 inches tall with black hair and dark brown eyes) may be familiar to the PCs who participated in the first installment of the Adventure Path series (see "Life's Bazaar," *DUNGEON* #97).

If the characters demand money for their services, Meerthan offers a payment of 2,000 gp but can be bargained up to 5,000 gp with a successful Diplomacy check (DC 25).

THE LAST LAUGH SAFE HOUSE

The Last Laugh's safe house in Cauldron is an abandoned inn called the Brass Trumpet. An iron sign set with a brass trumpet hangs outside the front doors, which appear newer than the rest of the building (the Last Laugh replaced the inn's original doors with fortified ones). The building's walls are made of mortared volcanic rock, and all of the windows on the ground floor have been bricked up. The windows on the second floor have solid wooden frames and panes of opaque, smoked glass. The second-

story floor (first-story ceiling) is made of timber. Unless noted otherwise, all ground-floor ceilings are 10 feet high, and all second-floor areas have 15-foot-high ceilings with heavy rafters. Doors always open into rooms; a door connecting two rooms always opens into the smaller room.

A Last Laugh thug stationed in area B8 watches the front doors through a small triangular hole cut into the glass of one second-story window. If the characters approach the building without making any attempts at concealment, the sentry automatically spots them and quietly alerts Finch, his boss (see area B8), who in turn alerts the rest of the safe house.

Characters who knock on the front doors receive no response from within.

❖ **Strong Wooden Doors (locked):** 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 25; superior lock (hardness 15; hp 30; Open Lock DC 40).

B1. ENTRY (EL 8)

Light: Three torches in sconces (two flanking the double doors on the north wall, one in the middle of the south wall).

Sound: Thugs quietly lurking on the other side of the arrow slits (Listen DC = the archers' Move Silently check).

Reaction: To intruders crossing the room and entering area B2—the two archers closest to the ladders alert the Last Laugh members in area B8.

This 20-foot-wide, 15-foot-deep room contains no furnishings. Arrow slits perforate the western and eastern walls—three arrow slits per wall.

A successful Search check made to notice unusual stonework (DC 15) reveals that the walls with the arrow slits are recent constructions. Behind each row of arrow slits lies a narrow passage with a wooden ladder at the north end. Each ladder leads up to an unlocked trap door in the ceiling that opens into area B8 above.

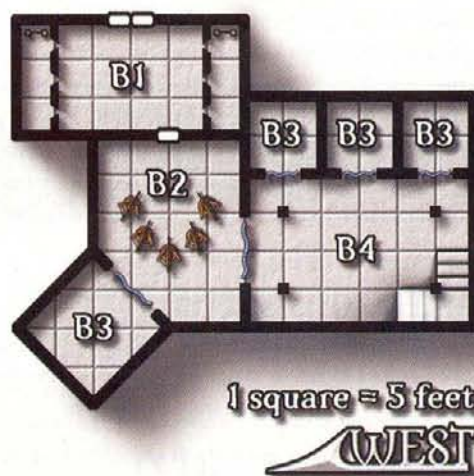
Creatures: Six Last Laugh thugs lurk behind the arrow slits, three per side. The arrow slits provide a +10 cover bonus to the thugs' AC and grant a +4 cover bonus on Reflex saves.

➔ **Last Laugh Thugs, male human Rogz/Warz (6):** CR 3; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d6+2d8+4; hp 25 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3;



Second Floor

Ground Floor



1 square = 5 feet
WEST

Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (2d4+3/18–20, falchion) or +5 ranged (1d6+2/x3, composite shortbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +5, Disable Device +4, Disguise +2, Hide +6, Gather Information +3, Intimidate +2, Jump +5, Knowledge (local) +4, Listen +7, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +5, Search +4, Spot +7, Tumble +6.

Feats: Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (falchion).
Language: Common.

DIVINATION SPELLS

Characters digging for information about Vhalantru or the Cagewrights can use *divination* and *commune* spells to answer their questions. If they don't have access to these spells, they probably know NPCs who do (such as Jenya Urikas at the Church of St. Cuthbert).

The Cagewrights have been careful to hide their activities from prying eyes and divination magic. They lurk in *Mor-*

denkainen's private sanctums and place *sequester* spells on their *soulcages* and Shackleborn prisoners. Even their plans cannot be gleaned through magic. However, the characters can gain cryptic clues or yes/no answers regarding Vhalantru and Thifrane Rhiavadi's strange new house guests. Don't be afraid to let the characters use such spells, but be aware that they might veer off in unexpected directions while pursuing various leads.

Possessions: Leather armor, falchion, composite shortbow (+2 Str), quiver of 20 arrows, pouch of 2d6 gp and 2d6 sp (all minted with the jester emblem of the Last Laugh guild).

B2. CROSSBOW BATTERY TRAP (EL 8)

Reaction: To sound of crossbows firing (Listen DC 12)—the rogues lurking in area B4 attempt to ambush intruders as they pass through the curtain.

This room contains a Trap that triggers when the north door is opened. Two heavy black curtains cover openings into areas B3 and B4.

Trap: Last Laugh rogues have rigged five heavy crossbows to iron tripods in the middle of the room. Fishing lines have been strung from the crossbows' firing mechanisms to the northern door. Any creature that opens the door without first disabling the trap triggers it. The trap can be easily disabled from inside the room simply by cutting the fishing lines (no Disable Device check required).

↗ **Crossbow Battery Trap:** CR 8; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +15 ranged (1d10 plus poison/19–20, 5 heavy crossbows); poison (blue whinnis, Fortitude DC 14 negates, initial 1 Con, secondary unconsciousness for 1d3 hours); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 23.

B3. SPIKED ROOMS (EL 5)

The Last Laugh guild has lined the floors of these rooms with grids of iron spikes as tall as short sword blades—dozens of them. These blades are part of the traps in area B6.

B4. COMMON ROOM (EL 7)

Light: Four torches in sconces (one mounted to each pillar).
Sound: Thugs hiding in the room (Listen DC = the thugs' Move Silently check).

Reaction: To sounds of battle in this room—two thugs from area B5 come to help in one round.

This room used to be the inn's common room. The room still contains some wooden chairs and tables, but the fireplace that once stood against the south wall has been dismantled and removed from the premises. Four timber pillars support the ceiling, and curtained alcoves line the north wall. A creaky wooden staircase leads up to the second level, and anyone attempting to climb the stairs takes a –5 penalty on Move Silently checks.

Creatures: Four Last Laugh thugs hide in the shadows, two on either side of the western curtain and two under the stairs.

➤ **Last Laugh Thugs, male human Rog2/War2 (4):** hp 23, 22, 19, 19; see area B1.

B5. LAST LAUGH HARLEQUINS (EL 12)

Light: Two torches in sconces (mounted on the south wall).
Sound: Harlequins hiding in the room (Listen DC = the thugs' Move Silently check).

Reaction: To sounds of combat—the thugs in area B4 clamber up the stairs to join in the fray, arriving in one round.

Auras: Moderate (2 *amulets of health* +2, DC 19 transmutation), faint (2 *potions of shield of faith*, DC 16 abjuration), faint (2 *potions of mage armor*, DC 16 conjuration), faint (20 +1 bullets, DC 16 transmutation).

This room serves as barracks for the Last Laugh thugs assigned to guard the safe house. Fifteen wooden cots are spread around the room.

Characters who inspect the northwest corner of the room and succeed at a Search check (DC 25) find a well-hidden secret door (leading to area B7).

Creatures: This area contains four Last Laugh thugs and a pair of 24-year-old monk/assassins named Mokaius and Xendro. They are twins with shaved heads, faces painted half-white and half-black, and lithe builds.

➤ **Mokaius and Xendro, male human Mnk6/Asn2:** CR 8; Medium humanoid (human); HD 6d8+2d6+16; hp 56 each; Init +3; Spd 50 ft.; AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +6; Atk +7 melee (1d8+1, unarmed strike) or +9 ranged (1d4+2, sling with +1 bullet) or +9 ranged (1d2+1 plus poison, masterwork shuriken); Full Atk +5/+5 melee (1d8+1, unarmed strike) or +9 ranged (1d4+2, sling with +1 bullet) or +9 ranged (1d2+1 plus poison, masterwork shuriken); SA death attack (DC 12), flurry of blows, ki strike (magic), poison use, sneak attack +1d6, stunning fist 4/day (DC 17); SQ evasion, purity of body, slow fall 30 ft., still mind, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +6 (+7 against poison), Ref +11, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +8, Climb +4, Disable Device +2, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +8, Hide +11, Jump +18, Listen +5, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +5, Search +2, Spot +5, Tumble +12, Use Rope +5 (involving bindings).

Feats: Combat Reflexes^B, Dodge, Improved Trip^B, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Stunning Fist^B, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Language: Common.

Possessions: *Amulet of health* +2, *potion of mage armor*, *potion of shield of faith* (+2), sling with 20 +1 bullets, 5 masterwork shuriken (coated with large scorpion venom; Fortitude DC 18 negates, initial and secondary 1d6 Str), monk's outfit, 1 sp (minted with a jester emblem; used to bypass the magical ward in area B8).

➤ **Last Laugh Thugs, male human Rog2/War2 (4):** hp 20, 17; see area B1.

Tactics: Mokaius and Xendro have orders from Jil not to allow intruders to find or pass through the secret door leading to area B7. They cartwheel and leap about the room like acrobats when closing in for the kill, counting on the thugs to help them flank foes.

If they hear sounds of combat in area **B4**, Mokaius and Xendro send the two thugs to investigate. They and two other thugs remain here to guard the secret door, hiding in the shadows until intruders move into the room. The twins' relatively low Intelligence makes them suboptimal assassins (they can't cast spells, and the DC to resist their death strike ability isn't particularly high), but they put their poisoned shuriken and Stunning Fist feats to good use in combat.

B6. EMPTY BEDROOM (EL 5)

Reaction: To the sound of the weakened floor collapsing—every creature in the Last Laugh safe house is alerted. The occupants of areas **B4** and **B5** investigate immediately, while the inhabitants of areas **B8** and **B9** stay where they are.

All of the furniture has been removed from these rooms, and a fine layer of dust covers the wooden floor.

Members of the Last Laugh have skillfully weakened sections of the floor so that they collapse under any significant weight. These weakened sections are indicated on the map.

Trap: When one or more characters step on a weakened section of floor, the floor collapses underfoot, dropping the characters onto a bed of iron spikes 10 feet below (see area **B3** for details). Characters who enter the room through a window automatically step onto a weakened section of floor. A successful Reflex save (DC 18) allows an affected character to avoid the fall (by grabbing hold of a sturdier section of the floor). The weakened floor can be detected with a successful Search check (DC 24), but not with mere prodding. Moving around the outside walls of the room without causing the floor to collapse requires a successful Balance check (DC 15).

↗ **Bed of Spikes:** CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; no reset; 10 ft. deep (1d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-foot squares); spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d6 spikes per target for 1d6+5 each); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC —.

B7. WARDED SECRET PASSAGE

Reaction: To *alarm* spell being triggered—Jil prepares an action to deliver a coup de grace to her prisoner the instant his would-be saviors enter the interrogation room. The occupants of area **B8** take up hiding positions.

Auras: Faint (*alarm* spell, DC 16 abjuration).

Two well-made secret doors (Search DC 25) conceal this 5-foot-wide, 10-foot-long dark passage. The northern secret door makes a grinding noise when opened, loud enough to alert the denizens of area **B8**.

Trap: Finch (see area **B8**) has cast an *alarm* spell in this secret passage. Any creature that enters the passage not carrying one or more of the Last Laugh's "jester coins" triggers a gentle *alarm* bell that can be heard only in the interrogation room (area **B9**).

B8. CURTAINS (EL 12)

Light: Hooded lantern (in the southwest corner).

Sound: Shuffling feet and muffled voices (Listen DC 20).

Reaction: To sounds of combat—Jil prepares a coup de grace as detailed in area **B7**.

Auras: Moderate (+2 *leather armor* in chest, DC 18 abjuration), faint (*cloak of elvenkind* in chest, DC 16 illusion).

Five thick red curtains hang from the rafters of this 15-foot-by-30-foot chamber. The curtains divide the room into a maze of 5-foot-wide passages and are thick enough to catch missile fire.

Tied across the top of each curtain are seven tiny bells that jingle madly if the curtain is disturbed; a character trying to quietly move a curtain takes a –10 penalty on his or her Move Silently check. Set into the northwest and northeast corners of the floor are two unlocked wooden trap doors that pull open to reveal a wooden ladder and narrow passage (area **B1**) below.

The southwest corner of the room holds a small table with a hooded lantern resting on it and a locked wooden chest (good lock; Open Lock DC 30). The chest's contents are described under Treasure, below.

An artfully hidden secret door in the south wall (Search DC 30) leads to area **B9**. Attempting to pass through it triggers a Trap (see area **B9** for details).

Creatures: Jil's trusted lieutenant, a halfling named Finch (so named because of his fidgety nature and golden-yellow hair), sits on the floor in the southwest corner, playing cards in the dim light of the lantern while his boss interrogates the half-elf prisoner in area **B9**. Finch does not paint his face like most Last Laugh rogues; instead, he has a four-pointed red star circling his left eye. He also wears a flashy red-and-gold cape. Standing by one of the north windows, watching the front entrance of the safe house, is a

SAFE HOUSE ENCOUNTER LEVELS

The Last Laugh's safe house contains several encounters, none of them particularly dangerous to a group of well-equipped, high-level characters. The safe house's encounters have been designed to show just how powerful and

effective the heroes have become. Furthermore, it's okay if the characters' success leads to overconfidence—an attitude that, if carried over into the next chapter, could cost them dearly.



Last Laugh thug who answers to Finch. The thug has cut a tiny triangular hole in the smoked glass window—large enough to see outside, but hard to notice from the ground (Spot DC 14).

➤ **Finch, male halfling Rog5/Sor6:** CR 11; Small humanoid (halfling); HD 5d6+6d4+11; hp 45; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +6; Grp +0; Atk +10 melee (1d4–2/19–20, short sword); Full Atk +10 melee (1d4–2/19–20, short sword); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, halfling traits, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +7 (+9 against fear); Str 6, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +9, Climb +8, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +5 (+7 acting in character), Hide +15, Gather Information +13, Intimidate +5, Jump +4, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Search +7, Sleight of Hand +8, Spellcraft +7, Spot +5, Tumble +13.

Feats: Acrobatic, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Halfling.

Spells Known (7/7/6/3; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—acid splash, dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand, open/close, ray of frost, read magic; 1st—alarm, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement, shield; 2nd—invisibility, scorching ray; 3rd—displacement.

Possessions: Small short sword, leather armor, wand of hold person (30 charges), cape of the mountebank, ioun stone (dusty rose prism grants +1 insight bonus to AC), slippers of spider climbing, pouch containing 32 gp (all minted with the jester emblem of the Last Laugh guild), keys to all locked doors in the safe house, key to the chest in area B8.

➤ **Last Laugh Thug, male human Rog2/War2:** hp 25; see area B1.

Tactics: Given sufficient time to prepare, Finch casts *displacement* and *shield* (in that order) upon himself. He then uses his *slippers of spider climbing* to climb up to the rafters, where he moves quietly through the shadows and above the jingling red curtains. From this vantage point, Finch either uses his *wand of hold person* or his ranged spells. If seriously wounded, he uses the *dimension door* ability of his *cape of the mountebank* to flee to area B9. The nameless Last Laugh thug hides among the curtains, hoping to fell a held opponent.

Treasure: Finch carries the key to the locked chest, which contains Skiriol's gear and a sack of 300 gp (each coin minted with a jester's grinning visage). Skiriol's gear consists of a suit of +2 *leather armor*, a *cloak of elvenkind*, a masterwork rapier with a small black opal (100 gp) set in the pommel, a masterwork composite shortbow with 20 arrows, a vial of antitoxin, a set of masterwork thieves' tools, a smokestick, a tanglefoot bag, and three tindertwigs.

Development: If captured or dominated, Finch can disclose Skiriol's location and point to the secret door leading to area B9. With enough coaxing, Finch reveals that he answers to the Jester who runs the guild's lucrative black-mailing and counterfeiting divisions—a smarmy local noble (male human Ari7) named Rhant Tarragona. Finch also knows where the Last Laugh mints its bogus coins. (If the PCs share this information with the authorities, Rhant Tarragona is arrested and detained for questioning, and the coin-minting operating is shut down.)

Finch knows that Jil serves the Jester in charge of the assassination division—a half-fiend named Velior Thazo. Finch is quick to point out that Jil doesn't like Velior. She has spurned his sordid advances on multiple occasions. Finch does not know about the secret summit meeting at House Rhiavadi, but he knows that Vhalantru is a beholder. Although Finch enjoys Jil's good humor and her company, his loyalty to her quickly evaporates if forced to choose between his life and hers.

B9. INTERROGATION CHAMBER (EL 16)

Light: *Continual flame* spell (cast near the ceiling, above the rafters).

Auras: Moderate (Jil's *gloves of Dexterity* +6, DC 19 transmutation), Moderate (+1 *shadow studded leather* worn by Jil, DC 17 abjuration and illusion), faint (Jil's +1 *whip*, DC 16 transmutation), faint (Jil's *wand of silence*, DC 16 illusion), Faint (*continual flame*, DC 17 evocation).

The secret door in the north wall is trapped (see Trap, below).

A male half-elf lies face down on a wooden torture rack in the middle of this windowless 15-foot-square, 15-foot-high room. Magical light from an unseen source above the rafters paints the walls and floor in dark shadows. The wooden rack is shaped like an "X" with iron manacles binding the half-elf's wrists and ankles. The half-elf's back is striped with crimson lacerations. Standing next to the prisoner is a young woman in black garb with half her face painted black, the other half painted white. She holds a dripping blade near the half-elf's throat with one gloved hand and the handle of a silvery whip in the other. Something about her stance suggests a catlike readiness, and she smiles triumphantly.

The black-clad figure is Jil, a respected member of the Last Laugh. She has whipped her helpless captive into near-unconsciousness. Before the characters can enter, she uses a readied action to coldly slit Skiriol's throat and leaps back 5 feet, pressing against the opposite wall. As she moves back, she says, "He's yours. I'm done with him." Jil hopes this brutal act will enrage the PCs enough to ignore the Trap on the secret door.

Creatures: Skiriol (male half-elf Rog8) is barely conscious (his current hit points are at 0) or dead, but Jil

remains a threat to the PCs. Finch the halfling (see area B8) might also be here. The manacles binding Skiriol's wrists and ankles can be unclasped as a full-round action.

➔ **Jil, female human Rog5/Asn8:** CR 13; Medium humanoid (human); HD 13d6+13; hp 66; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +9; Grp +9; Atk +16 melee (1d6/19–20 plus poison, masterwork short sword) or +16 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal plus trip attack, +1 *whip*) or +16 ranged (1d6/×3, masterwork shortbow); Full Atk +16/+11 melee (1d6/19–20 plus poison, masterwork short sword) or +16/+11 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal plus trip attack, +1 *whip*) or +16/+11 ranged (1d6/×3, masterwork shortbow); SA death attack (DC 23), hide in plain sight, poison use, sneak attack +7d6, spells; SQ evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +4 (+8 against poison), Ref +12, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +16, Bluff +17, Diplomacy +11, Disable Device +11, Disguise +17 (+19 acting), Escape Artist +15, Forgery +11, Hide +27, Intimidate +10, Jump +2, Move Silently +22, Open Lock +14, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +4, Spot +11, Tumble +14, Use Magic Device +12.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Silent Spell, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Gnome.

Spells Known (4/4/4/1; save DC 13 + spell level); 1st—*disguise self*, *detect poison*, *obscuring mist*, *true strike*; 2nd—*illusory script*, *pass without trace*, *spider climb*, *undetected alignment*; 3rd—*deep slumber*, *magic circle against good*, *misdirection*, *nondetection*; 4th—*dimension door*, *freedom of movement*, *greater invisibility*.

Possessions: +1 *shadow studded leather armor*, +1 *whip*, *gloves of dexterity* +6, *wand of silence* (6 charges), masterwork short sword, sword sheath with poison reservoir (coats blade with deathblade poison when the weapon is drawn; Fortitude DC 20 negates, initial 1d6 Con, secondary 2d6 Con; holds 3 applications), masterwork shortbow with 20 arrows, black cloak and clothing, pouch containing 20 sp and 45 gp (all minted with the jester emblem of the Last Laugh guild).

Tactics: Given time to prepare, Jil casts *magic circle against good*, and *spider climb* on herself. If she doesn't have time to cast spells, she uses her ability to hide in plain sight to avoid detection until 3 rounds have passed and she can attempt a death attack with her poisoned short sword. While studying her victim, she can cast her silent spider climb and silent true strike spells. Jil uses her +1 *whip* to make disarm and trip attempts but prefers hit-and-run tactics to a straight fight. She saves her *dimension door* spell for a quick escape, fleeing from the safe house if reduced to half her hit points. If cornered and unable to escape, she surrenders, hoping to trade information for her life and waiting for any opportunity to escape her captors. Jil con-

Observatory



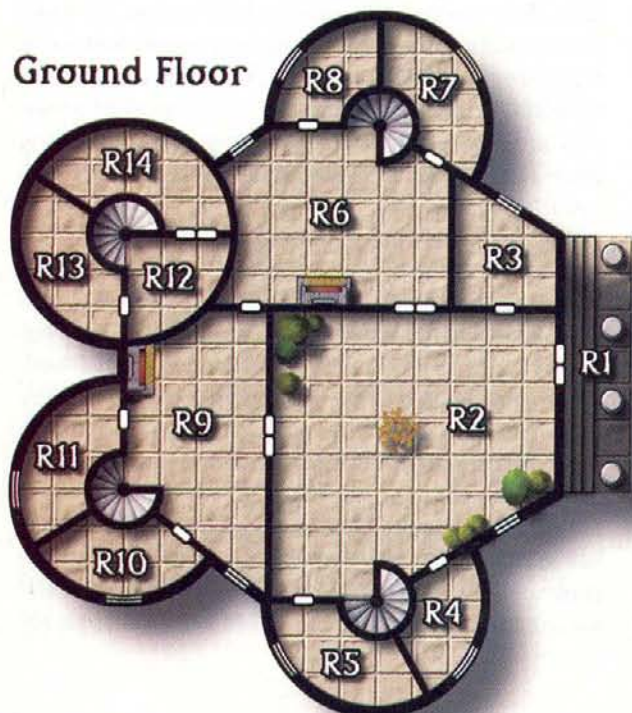
1 square = 5 feet



Second Floor



Ground Floor



fesses that her mission was to determine Skiriol's affiliations, locate others like him, and dispose of all of them.

The characters might know Jil from previous installments of the Adventure Path (she first appeared in "Life's Bazaar" in *DUNGEON* #97). Treat her attitude as indifferent unless the characters have angered her in the past. If she has struck up a friendship with one of the characters, she avoids harming that character. Jil has no love for Jester Velior Thazo, her superior in the Last Laugh, and a character toward whom she's favorably disposed can persuade her to betray the Last Laugh with a successful Diplomacy check (DC 25). Jil knows that Velior is attending a secret conference at House Rhiavadi, meeting with Lady Thifirane Rhiavadi and several others to discuss the future of Cauldron and the Last Laugh's role in "the new world order." She doesn't know where the Last Laugh is minting jester coins, or who runs the operation.

If he fled to this chamber, Finch the halfling casts *invisibility* on himself and uses the torture rack for cover as he targets characters with his wand or his spells.

Trap: Two scythe-like blades slash any creature that steps through the secret door. The blades are hidden in compartments on each side of the secret door and are coated with dragon bile poison.

↗ **Slashing Blades Trap:** CR 9; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; hidden lock bypass (Search DC 25, Open Lock DC 30); Atk +16 melee (2d4+8 plus poison/x4, 2 scythes); poison (dragon bile, Fortitude DC 26 negates, initial 3d6 Str, secondary none); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 21.

Development: Unless the characters catch Jil by surprise, she probably has time to kill Skiriol before they arrive on the scene. If the characters retrieve Skiriol's body, either they or Meerthan Eliothlorn can have it taken to the Church of St. Cuthbert to be raised.

If Skiriol is saved, he tells the characters everything he knows about Lady Rhiavadi and her estate. If Skiriol dies, this information comes from Meerthan instead (see Meeting Meerthan for details).

- House Rhiavadi is an imperious structure with four squat towers, one capped with an observatory. A set of heavy oak doors on the ground floor provides the only obvious entrance, although the building has many windows on the first and second floors.
- Members of the town guard, including half-orc mercenaries hired by Lord Vhalantru, have been seen entering and leaving the manor at all hours of the day and night. Some of the half-orcs head

straight to House Vhalantru after leaving House Rhiavadi, and vice versa. Sometimes they stay inside for hours.

- Lady Rhiavadi has not been seen entering or leaving her house in weeks, although members of her household staff (all halflings) come and go during the day. She must have a dozen or more servants.
- Lady Thifirane Rhiavadi has several shady guests staying at her manor.
- A comely yet pale half-elf clad in scant, tight-fitting black garments arrived at House Rhiavadi last night by horse-drawn coach. She wore a cloak of black shadow that fluttered about her, even though the night air was still. Her coach had blackened windows and sped off into the night after dropping off the woman. She moved with grace up to the doors, whereupon a smiling halfling dressed in a black suit ushered her inside.
- A band of well-armed humans—perhaps mercenaries or adventurers—arrived at House Rhiavadi two days ago. One of them carried a black mace capped with an iron skull and a heavy shield with the symbol of Nerull emblazoned on it.
- Lady Rhiavadi's other guests include a contingent of five well-armed dwarves who arrived three days ago. One of them was a white-haired, white-bearded dwarf wearing a black, leather half-mask that covers his right eye. Set into the mask's eye socket was a black gem.

CHAPTER TWO: PARTY AT HOUSE RHIAVADI

Lady Thifirane Rhiavadi, Vhalantru's scheming confidante and a high-ranking Cagewright, lives in a formidable manor

on Obsidian Avenue. Known for hosting outlandish gatherings at her opulent manor, Thifirane has invited some of the realm's worst villains to her estate to learn about the Cagewrights' plans for Cauldron and to tempt them into joining forces with the Cagewrights and their fiendish allies once Cauldron has fallen. The PCs can learn of the secret gathering from Jil (see Chapter One) or more reliable sources (such as the Striders of Fharlanghn). This chapter describes House Rhiavadi and its current occupants.

Although this chapter comes before the chapter describing House Vhalantru, the characters might very well decide to investigate House Vhalantru first; in that case, proceed to Chapter Three. Once they have finished pursuing Vhalantru, they may decide to confront Lady Rhiavadi and her guests.

HOUSE RHIAVADI

Like many buildings in Cauldron, House Rhiavadi has walls composed of gray and black volcanic rock. The building has two stories and four squat towers. Three of the towers have pointed spire caps. A domed observatory made of alabaster and glass surmounts the fourth tower. A large portico supported by four marble pillars covers the main entrance doors. Each pillar is carved to resemble a dragon. The windows of House Rhiavadi are made of frosted glass set in heavy copper frames, with locked wooden shutters covering them at night.

Unless noted otherwise, *continual flame* spells illuminate the manor's chambers. The doors of House Rhiavadi are of sturdy wooden construction with ornate bronze hinges and fittings. Moreover, permanent *unseen servants* open the interior doors whenever one or more creatures approach within 5 feet and close the portals once the creatures have passed through; the exceptions to this rule are the front

KEY TO HOUSE RHIAVADI

Not all of the rooms in House Rhiavadi have denizens or items of interest to the characters. Moreover, its inhabitants flit about like moths, rarely staying in one area for long.

R1. Front Doors

R2. Main Hall

R3. Drawing Room

R4. Cloakroom

R5. Lavatory and Boudoir

R6. Dining Hall

R7. Sitting Room

R8. Tea Room

R9. Kitchen

R10. Servants' Quarters

R11. Pantry and Larder

R12. Tower Foyer

R13. Wine Cellar

R14. Half-orc Barracks

R15. Master Tower Foyer

R16. Master Bathroom

R17. Master Bedchamber

R18. Secret Study

R19. Upstairs Parlor

R20. Tower Foyer

R21. Gallery

R22. Staircase (up to observatory)

R23. Observatory

R24. Guest Tower Foyer

R25. Guest's Bathroom

R26. Guest's Bedchamber

R27. Library

R28. Conservatory

R29. Ballroom

doors (area R1) and the doors barring Lady Rhiavadi's private quarters (areas R15–R18), which are *arcane locked* (at 13th level). The ceilings in House Rhiavadi are 15 feet high unless noted otherwise.

◆ **Strong Wooden Doors:** 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 25 (DC 35 if *arcane locked*).

◆ **Shuttered Windows:** 1 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 8; break DC 18; good lock (hardness 15; hp 30; Open Lock DC 30).

THE HOUSEHOLD “STAFF”

Lady Rhiavadi's household staff consists of six middle-aged halflings employed as cooks, maids, and manservants. They are formally dressed, well treated, and free to go where they please. They never question the lady of the house or her orders, and they wouldn't think to betray her. In truth, all of Thifirane's halfling servants are simulacra, created using the *simulacrum* spell. (The models upon which the simulacra are based have been *polymorphed* into animals and caged in area R18.) Each *simulacrum* is treated as a 1st-level commoner with 4 hit points; it is destroyed if reduced to 0 hit points, turning into a small mound of cold, wet slush. Thifirane can't abide people destroying her simulacra, as they cost precious time and XP to create.

Thifirane's servants constantly move about the manor, performing mundane errands and chores. They occasionally retire to their quarters for a time, usually during the night when Lady Rhiavadi needs some private time to herself. While a *simulacrum* can communicate, it generally prefers not to.

ENTERING HOUSE RHIAVADI

House Rhiavadi's front doors have an *arcane lock* spell cast upon them (at 13th level).

Each door sports a bronze knocker shaped like a balled fist. A bas-relief of a two-headed raven is carved above the architrave.

If the PCs knock on the front doors, one of the half-orc guards in area R2 opens the doors and tries to frighten them off, saying only that Lady Rhiavadi isn't interested in anything they have to offer. However, the guard isn't especially bright, and characters can trick their way inside using the Bluff skill, either by pretending to be late guests or Lord Vhalantru's emissaries. The guard is naturally suspicious and gets a +5 circumstance bonus on his Sense Motive check to oppose any Bluff check.

Once the PCs make it inside, read them the following:

Soft music fills this opulent, sparsely furnished hall. A few chairs and plants stand against the walls beneath brightly colored tapestries, a 5-foot-wide, 10-foot tall spiraling column of butterflies floats in the middle of the hall, moving to the sound of the music.

The butterflies and the music are elements of the same *permanent image* spell (cast at 13th level).

Creatures: Four half-orc fighters on loan from Zarn Kyass have taken up semi-permanent residence in House Rhiavadi as guards. Generally, two of them stand guard in this hall. Thifirane ensures their loyalty with 500 gp per month to stand around and look impressive. Each half-orc carries a key to one of the locked chests in area R14, where they relax when not on shift. The two half-orcs on guard when the PCs arrive are named Blackspine and Wormspit; the two resting in area R14 are named Kralk and Yaughr.

➤ **Half-orc Ftr8 (4):** CR 8; Medium humanoid (half-orc); HD 8d10+16; hp 59 each; Init +6; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +8; Grp +11; Atk +13 melee (1d8+6/×3, +1 *orc double axe*) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+6/×3, +1 *orc double axe*) and +11 melee (1d8+4/×3, +1 *orc double axe*) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft., half-orc traits; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8.

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

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (orc double axe), Improved Critical (orc double axe), Improved Initiative, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (orc double axe), Weapon Specialization (orc double axe).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: +1/+1 *orc double axe*, masterwork light crossbow, 20 bolts, +2 *chainmail*, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*.

Treasure: Four chests found in area R14 contain the collected pay for these half-orcs; each chest contains 2,500 gp.

Development: Unless the PCs can fast talk their way around the guards, they'll have to fight their way through them to get into the house via the front door. If combat does break out, the clashing swords and battle cries of the half-orcs are loud enough to alert the entire household, including Thifirane and her guests (see area R29).

EXPLORING HOUSE RHIAVADI

The characters likely explore the house after they make it inside. Most of the rooms are opulent and well decorated, but there isn't much of interest to the PCs except possibly for the secret study (area R18). The secret door leading to this chamber requires a successful Search check (DC 15) to locate. If they find their way inside, read them the following:

This room contains a large desk carved with fancy scrollwork, a tall-backed chair, and six small cages resting atop small tables or hanging from the ceiling by steel chains.

All of the cages are bell-shaped and locked (Open Lock DC 20), and each one contains a different animal: bat, lizard,



monkey, rat, raven, and toad. All of these caged animals are actually people whom Thifirane has transformed into animals using her *baleful polymorph* spell. Some of them have acquired the mental abilities of the animals, while others still retain their original mental faculties and can express themselves, albeit crudely.

The raven's cage hangs from the ceiling. A secret compartment in the base of the raven's cage holds Thifirane's spellbook (see *Treasure*, below). Finding the secret compartment requires a successful Search check (DC 30).

The caged animals are actually six 2nd-level halfling commoners kidnapped by Thifirane and used as models for her simulacra (see *The Household Staff* for details). They are grateful if rescued but have no reward money to offer their saviors. They are willing to work off their debt, however. Thallo Quickstride, the halfling polymorphed into a monkey, retains his Intelligence and can articulate his feelings using gestures. When he sees the characters, Thallo points excitedly to the raven's cage, hoping the characters will find Thifirane's hidden spellbook and a spell to turn him and the others back into halflings.

Treasure: Thifirane's spellbook contains all the spells she has prepared plus the following: 1st—*feather fall*, *reduce person*; 2nd—*arcane lock*, *darkvision*, *knock*; 3rd—*fireball*, *greater magic weapon*, *protection from energy*; 4th—*dimensional anchor*, *fire trap*, *mass reduce person*; 5th—*break*

enchantment, *lesser planar binding*, *permanency*, *sending*; 6th—*chain lightning*, *contingency*, *flesh to stone*, *stone to flesh*; 7th—*sequester*, *simulacrum*, *statue*.

LOOTING HOUSE RHIAVADI

Characters who crash the gathering at House Rhiavadi might take the time to loot the place. After all, Lady Rhiavadi surrounds herself with all sorts of beautiful, expensive things. Not every object of value on display in House Rhiavadi is described in this chapter, however. For simplicity, assume that Thifirane has precious art objects and collectibles (paintings, sculptures, tapestries, statuettes, rugs, furnishings, vases, books, musical instruments, and the like) worth a total of 40,000 gp. Any character who spends 10 minutes looting can make a Search check (DC 15); a successful check yields $2d6 \times 100$ gp worth of miscellaneous treasure, most of which is quite heavy and awkward to transport.

THE PLOT REVEALED (EL 20)

The main encounter awaiting the PCs in House Rhiavadi occurs in the Ballroom, area R29. Read this encounter thoroughly before attempting to run it. The high number of NPCs and monsters means that a battle in here could last a long time, and likely spills out into adjacent areas of the manor.

The floor of this grand ballroom has black, lavender, and ivory tiles that spiral in toward the center of the room. Directly above the spiral's core hangs a dazzling crystal chandelier lit by magic flames. A tapestry hanging on the north wall has a dark symbol stitched into it. The symbol resembles an eye impaled on an upward-pointing arrow. Beneath the tapestry stands a table covered with a magnificent arrangement of crystal wine goblets, each one filled with some sweet vintage. A semicircle of seven black chairs faces the tapestry and the table of goblets.

This encounter assumes that the PCs arrive just as Thifirane gathers her guests and discloses the Cagewrights' secret designs for Cauldron. It doesn't matter what time of the day the gathering occurs, but if the characters arrive at some other time, you will need to modify the encounter accordingly. For instance, you could alter the encounter so that the NPCs haven't gathered yet and are spread throughout the manor, or you could assume that the meeting has concluded and some of the bad guys are preparing to depart. Regardless, the characters should still feel daunted by the number of foes. Fortunately for them, not all of Thifirane's guests are prepared (or eager) for a fight with high-level adventurers.

Thifirane has turned her ballroom into a meeting hall, where she intends to reveal the Cagewright's plans to her guests. The seven chairs are enough to accommodate (from left to right) Adrick Garthûn, Khyron Bonesworn, Melagorn Thureq, Mhad, Vervil Ashmantle, Velior Thazo, and Zarn Kyass. Adrick's two dwarven bodyguards stand by the southwest doors, while Vervil's babau demons have positioned themselves near the south doors. Thifirane's shield guardian remains by the north set of doors, while Thifirane herself stands next to the table of wine goblets, facing her guests.

Any number of things can happen once the characters make it this far. If they announce their presence and show their true faces, Thifirane recognizes them immediately; the PCs are famous heroes, after all. If the characters wear disguises, Thifirane has a chance to penetrate their disguises (see the Disguise skill description, pages 72–73 of the *Player's Handbook*). The characters might pass themselves off as a band of evil adventurers who heard about the secret gathering at House Rhiavadi, or they might pretend to be emissaries or acquaintances of Lord Vhalantru. They might also announce themselves by kicking in the door, drawing weapons, and taking the fight to Thifirane in her own house!

If Thifirane has an opportunity to formerly address her guests, and the characters do not immediately intervene, read or paraphrase the following:

Lady Rhiavadi lets the wine goblet that she is holding drift from her hand. It floats next to her, suspended in the air as if held by some unseen servant. A golden weasel with beady black eyes slinks across the floor toward her, and she scoops it up and begins stroking it affectionately. Her voice fills the hall as she welcomes her honored guests and shares her chilling vision of the future.

"More than five centuries ago, the demodands sent a few of their kind to our reality. Disguised as humans, they mated with humans and other denizens of this plane. Most of their spawn were stillborn, but a few survived. They mated and produced the next generation with demodand blood. As the generations passed, all obvious traces of their demodand ancestry faded away. Today, we recognize this sacred lineage by an invisible birthmark: the sign of Carceri!"

At this point, Lady Rhiavadi gestures to the symbol on the tapestry behind her, which begins to writhe. "We call these honored descendants 'the Shackleborn,' and their sacrifice is the key to unlocking a portal to Othrys, the first layer of Carceri. Here, demodands and countless other fiends have languished for near-eternity. In Cauldron, we have found more Shackleborn than anywhere else in the realm, and in Cauldron, we have the perfect conditions for the Ritual of Planar Junction."

The tapestry's writhing rune suddenly grows before your eyes, becoming a twisted black tree with metal cages dangling from its iron branches. "For the past five years, the Cagewrights have labored in secret to build thirteen soulcages to drain the life energy from the Shackleborn. These soulcages hang from an artifact called the Tree of Shackled Souls—the device that gathers the life energy needed to unlock the prison doors of Carceri. All of the preparations are now complete. The Shackleborn are safely in our hands and ready to give their lives to change the world forever. All that remains is the ritual itself, and it is already underway."

The black tree bursts into flames and melts into nothingness. "Once the ritual is complete, Cauldron won't be the same quiet little burg it is today. It will be the unholy font from which darkness gushes forth, a roiling pit filled with doom and despair for our enemies. Almost immediately, fiendish armies will sweep across the land and lay waste to surrounding territories, enslaving the weak and carving out new dominions. Naturally, we expect resistance on all sides, and that's where you come in."

As Lady Rhiavadi's revels draw to an end, a fat tiefling with boarlike tusks speaks up. "All eyes will be on Cauldron," he chuckles. "We'll have their worst fears to toy with."

"Precisely," replies Thifirane. "As kings raise armies to

confront the legions of Carceri, your slavers, merchants, mercenaries, spies, and assassins will methodically search for weaknesses from within, soften their resolve, and convince them that their only true choices are to yield or die."

If the PCs interrupt Thifirane's speech, they might lose valuable clues about the Cagewright's plans. Likewise, the PCs can miss the speech entirely if they simply attack the group the instant they enter the room. In this case, the PCs can learn much of the above information via spells like *speak with dead*, or by finding documents in Thifirane's bedchamber that outline her speech.

Once her speech has concluded, Thifirane mentions what each of her guests stands to gain by joining the Cagewrights until, finally, the gathering devolves into a half-dozen or more small conversations. Thifirane isn't prepared to say anything more about the Ritual of Planar Junction or the *Tree of Shackled Souls*, assuring her guests that some level of secrecy must be maintained.

Creatures: Thifirane Rhiavadi and her guests are described below.

Thifirane Rhiavadi: A 37-year-old lady of fine breeding, Thifirane wears an elegant yet elaborate black gown decorated with arcane glyphs stitched in silver thread. The dress has a strange asymmetry to it—the latest fashion among the noblewomen of Sasserine, no doubt. A bizarre hairpiece holds her golden-brown hair up above her neckline, and around her neck hangs a pendant shaped like a tiny silver cage (actually a shield guardian amulet). More disturbing than her attire is the living beholder eye grafted to her forehead—a gift from Vhalantru. Thifirane's shield guardian—another gift, this time from her fellow Cagewrights—stands no more than 10 feet from its mistress.

➤ **Thifirane Rhiavadi, female human** **Tr13**; CR 13; Medium humanoid (human); HD 13d4+13; hp 51; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +6; Grp +6; Atk +6 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger) or +8 ranged (eye ray); Full Atk +6/+1 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger) or +8/+3 ranged (eye ray); SA spells, eye ray; SQ *contingency*, *scry* on familiar, weasel familiar named Sular; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6 (+8 with familiar), Will +10; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Contingency (Sp): Thifirane has cast a *contingency* spell on herself, activating a *lesser globe of invulnerability* during the first round of combat during her action. If her familiar is within 5 feet of her, it gains the benefits of the spell as well.

Eye Ray (Su): Thifirane has one of Vhalantru's small beholder eyes grafted to her forehead. Once per round as a free action, she can fire a ray from the eye that duplicates the effect of an *inflict moderate wounds* spell, dealing 2d8+10 points of damage to the target (Will DC 12 half). The eye ray has a caster level of 13th and a range of 150 feet.

Skills: Concentration +17, Decipher Script +17, Knowledge (arcane) +18, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +14, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Spellcraft +18.

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation, transmutation), Spell Penetration.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal, Undercommon.

Spells Prepared (5/6/6/6/6/4/3/2; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*detect magic*, *flare**, *light*, *mending*, *read magic*; 1st—*enlarge person*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *unseen servant* (already cast); 2nd—*alter self*, *bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, *fox's cunning*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility*; 3rd—*greater magic weapon*, *haste**, *lightning bolt**, *nondetection* (2; both already cast), *slow**; 4th—*Evard's black tentacles*, *fire shield*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere**, *Rary's mnemonic enhancer*, *shout**, *stoneskin*; 5th—*baleful polymorph**, *Mordenkainen's private sanctum* (already cast), *teleport*, *wall of force*; 6th—*disintegrate**, *eyebite*, *greater dispel magic*; 7th—*ethereal jaunt*, *forcecage**.

*Evocation or transmutation spell. The save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

Forbidden Schools: Enchantment, Illusion.

Possessions: *Ring of protection* +2, *hat of charisma* +2 (functions as a *cloak of charisma* +2), *ring of mind shielding*, *crystal wand of magic missile* (7th-level caster; 30 charges), *arcane scroll of greater dispel magic* (cast at 12th level), *scroll of stone to flesh*, *scroll of prismatic spray*, dagger, silver cage pendant (doubles as shield guardian amulet), pouch of spell components (including 600 gp worth of diamond dust for *nondetection* and *stoneskin* spells), small ivory plaque (50 gp; material component for *Rary's mnemonic enhancer*), small ivory statuette of a beholder set with precious gems (1,500 gp; focus for *contingency* spell).

➤ **Thifirane's Shield Guardian:** hp 112; *Monster Manual* 223.

Spell Storing (Sp): The shield guardian has a *fire shield* spell stored in it. It activates the spell when so commanded by Thifirane, usually before she heads into battle. Once the spell is used, the shield guardian can store another spell (or the same spell again).

Adrick Garthûn: Adrick is an unscrupulous dwarven merchant who provides the gold and silver that the Last Laugh needs to mint their own brand of coinage. For his contributions to "the cause," he desires exclusive mining rights in the mountains around Cauldron. He appears as a snowy-haired, snowy-bearded dwarf of 90 years wearing a black leather half-mask with a translucent black gem set into the eyehole. The mask covers up an eye he lost in battle. His good eye is crisp blue, like a frozen lake, and he has a pale complexion. He is fond of smiling, revealing that all of his teeth are made of gold. Adrick is joined by two bodyguards, Daxavalt and Kerg.



VERVIL ASHMANTLE



KHYRON BLOODSWORN



ADRICK GARTHÛN



MHAD

➤ **Adrick Garthûn**, male dwarf **Ftr5/Rog5**: CR 10; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 5d10+5d6+20; hp 68; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +8; Grp +12; Atk +14 melee (1d10+7/×3, +1 *dwarven waraxe*) or +10 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d10+7/×3, +1 *dwarven waraxe*) or +10 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., dwarf traits, evasion, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +7* (+11 against poison), Ref +7*, Will +4*; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 14.

*Adrick gets a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against spells and spell-like effects.

Skills: Appraise +5, Balance +4, Climb +8, Diplomacy +4, Hide +7, Intimidate +11, Jump +10, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Swim +8, Tumble +7.

Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (*dwarven waraxe*), Weapon Specialization (*dwarven waraxe*).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Possessions: +1 studded leather armor, +1 light steel shield, +1 *dwarven waraxe*, belt of giant strength +2, light crossbow with 10 bolts, leather half-mask set with a black diamond (1,000 gp).

➤ **Daxavalt and Kerg**, male dwarf **Ftr6**: CR 6; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 6d10+18; hp 62, 60; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.;

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +6; Grp +9; Atk +12 melee (1d8+7/×3, +2 *dwarven urgrosh*) or +7 ranged (1d10/19–20, heavy crossbow); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+7/×3, +2 *dwarven urgrosh*) and +10 melee (1d6+5/×3, +2 *dwarven urgrosh*) or +10 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft., dwarf traits; AL LE; SV Fort +8* (+12 against poison), Ref +3*, Will +3*; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

*Dwarves get a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against spells and spell-like effects.

Skills: Intimidate +4, Jump –4.

Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (*dwarven urgrosh*), Weapon Specialization (*dwarven urgrosh*).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Possessions: Masterwork full plate armor, +2 *dwarven urgrosh*, heavy crossbow with 10 bolts, pouch containing 2d6 gems (worth 100 gp each).

Khyron Bonesworn: The leader of a band of evil adventurers called the Necrocants, Khyron is a powerful up-and-coming cleric of the god of death. He aspires to rule the city of Sasserine and displace the high priest of the city's hidden temple of Nerull. Khyron is a sensationally handsome and charismatic 26-year-old man with short black hair and creepy yellow eyes. He wears spiked full plate and carries a heavy shield adorned with the symbol of his god.

He wields a black heavy mace with a black, skull-shaped head. His fellow Necrocants include Melagorn Thureq, a gaunt figure with long white hair clad in black robes. The other two members of the Necrocants, Oster Zandridge (male human Rog6/Asn2) and Tervas Shatterskull (male half-orc Brb8), are lurking about Cauldron but are not attending the conference.

➤ **Khyron Bonesworn, male human Clr10 (Nerull):** CR 10; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d8+10; hp 67; Init -1; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +7; Grp +8; Atk +9 melee (1d8+2 plus 2d6 against good creatures, +1 unholy heavy mace) or +6 ranged; Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+2 plus 2d6 against good creatures, +1 unholy heavy mace) and +6/+1 ranged; SA spells, rebuke undead 6/day (+2 bonus on checks to rebuke undead); AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +11, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +13, Disguise +5 (for acting in character), Hide -1, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (religion) +8, Spellcraft +5.

Feats: Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment, necromancy), Spell Focus (enchantment, necromancy).

Language: Common.

Spells Prepared (6/5+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1; save DC 13 + spell level): ○—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, detect poison, light, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*bane**, *disguise self^o*, *divine favor, doom**, *entropic shield, shield of faith*; 2nd—*bear's endurance, death knell**, *hold person**, *invisibility^o*, *resist energy, silence*; 3rd—*animate dead^o*, *dispel magic, invisibility purge, magic circle against good, magic vestment*; 4th—*cure critical wounds, death ward^o*, *divine power, freedom of movement*; 5th—*greater command**, *slay living*^o*, *spell resistance*.

*Enchantment or necromancy spell. The save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

D: Domain spell. **Domains:** Death (death touch 1/day), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

Possessions: +1 full plate with armor spikes, masterwork heavy steel shield (bears symbol of Nerull), +1 unholy heavy mace, spiked gauntlets, holy symbol of Nerull, wand of cure moderate wounds (1d8+5 points; 9 charges), scroll of flame strike, scroll of raise dead, potion of bull's strength.

➤ **Melagorn Thureq, male half-elf Nec9:** CR 9; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 9d4+12; hp 38; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4-1/19-20, masterwork dagger) or +7 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); SA spells; SQ half-elf traits, toad familiar named Glortus; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 10.

*Melagorn gets a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells and effects.

Skills: Concentration +13, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (history) +11, Spellcraft +14.

Feats: Alertness (when Glortus is in arm's reach), Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus

(necromancy), Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Penetration.

Languages: Common, Elven, Draconic, Orc.

Spells Prepared (4/6/6/5/3/2; save DC 13 + spell level): ○—*detect magic, open/close, read magic, touch of fatigue*; 1st—*disguise self, expeditious retreat, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement (2), shield*; 2nd—*blur, false life, mirror image, spectral hand, Tasha's hideous laughter, touch of idiocy*; 3rd—*displacement, lightning bolt, ray of exhaustion, vampiric touch (2)*; 4th—*bestow curse**, *enervation (2)*; 5th—*feblemind, waves of fatigue**.

*Necromancy spell. The save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

Forbidden Schools: Divination, Conjunction.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +2, headband of intellect +2, potion of haste, potion of invisibility, spellbook (includes all of his prepared spells plus an additional 1d4+1 ○-level, 1d4+1 1st-level, 1d4+1 2nd-level, 1d4 3rd-level, 1d3 4th-level, and 1d2 5th-level spells).

Mhad: This 330-year-old half-elf vampire has long black hair with a silvery-white stripe running through it. Although breathtaking in life, her alabaster-white visage is now a twisted mask of utter contempt, and her eyes burn crimson. She wears an elegant but tattered black gown and silvery-gray bracers studded with red bloodstones. The black cloak of shadow she appears to wear is actually her traveling companion, Hate (a dread wraith). Both Mhad and Hate inhabit the Ruins of Shatterhorn east of Cauldron, sharing it with a secret coven of Cagewrights. Mhad wants the Cagewrights and their fiendish masters to help her annihilate a widespread order of lawful good monks called the Order of the Silver Dream that has tried and failed to destroy her several times in the past 200 years.

➤ **Mhad, female half-elf vampire Mnk9/Sha4:** hp 90; *Monster Manual* 251.

➤ **Hate, dread wraith:** hp 104; *Monster Manual* 258.

Vervil Ashmantle: The self-proclaimed "Lord Ashmantle" is a corpulent, mean swine of a tiefling, not to mention a notorious slaver who deals primarily in surface races. Fat in all the wrong places, he traces his abyssal ancestry back to a nalfeshnee demon. His bloodshot eyes are sunken deep into the folds of his face, and his lower jaw sports a pair of stumpy, four-inch-long yellow tusks. He wears a gold ring on one tusk and a black platinum ring scribed with silver runes on the other. He hides his bloated body beneath elegant purple robes threaded with gems. Two babau demons serve as his traveling companions and henchmen "on the road." Vervil wants to legitimize and rule the slave trade, and the only way that can happen is by allying with the Cagewrights and their fiendish masters.

➤ **Vervil Ashmantle, male tiefling Sor11:** CR 12; Medium outsider (native); HD 11d4+22; hp 48 (70 with *bear's endurance*); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-

footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d4+2/19–20, dagger); SA *darkness* 1/day, spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., rat familiar named Milton, resistance to cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +18, Concentration +16, Spellcraft +15.

Feats: Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Spell Penetration.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Orc.

Spells Known (6/7/7/7/7/4; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *detect poison*, *flare*, *light*, *read magic*; 1st—*charm person*, *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*; 2nd—*bear's endurance*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*, *summon swarm*; 3rd—*displacement*, *fireball*, *fly*, *suggestion*; 4th—*enervation*, *greater invisibility*, *wall of fire*; 5th—*baleful polymorph*, *teleport*.

Possessions: Amulet of natural armor +2, black platinum ring of counterspells (*feeblemind*), ring of protection +2, red gem-studded robe (worth 1,500 gp), wand of fireball (5th level; 22 charges), 3 potions of cure moderate wounds, scroll of cloudkill, scroll of phantasmal killer, dagger.

➤ **Babaus (2):** hp 66 each; *Monster Manual* 40.

Jester Velior Thazo: One of the Last Laugh's five guildmasters, referred to within the organization as Jesters, has elected to attend Lady Thiffrane's secret conference. Velior Thazo runs the assassination division of the Last Laugh and usually appears in public as a dour young woman standing barely 5 feet tall, with a slender build and short, curly-red hair. When not hiding his true form, Velior appears as a bat-winged humanoid with claws, fangs, short horns, and smoldering orange eyes.

➤ **Velior Thazo, male half-fiend human Clr7 (Erythnul)/Rog3:** CR 12; Medium outsider (augmented humanoid, native); HD 7d8+3d6+20; hp 63; Init +7; Spd 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (average); AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +7; Grp +12; Atk +14 melee (1d8+6, +1 *morningstar*) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); Full Atk +14 melee (1d8+6, +1 *morningstar*) and +7 melee (1d6+2, bite) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA smite good 1/day for +10 damage, sneak attack +2d6, spells, spell-like abilities, rebuke undead 10/day; SQ DR 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, immunity to poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, SR 17, trap sense +1, trapfinding; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +10; Str 20, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +7, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +7, Escape Artist +6, Heal +8, Hide +9, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Spellcraft +5, Spot +10, Tumble +6.

Feats: Combat Casting, Extra Turning, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (*morningstar*)^u.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Infernal.

Spells Prepared (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*, *read magic*, *resistance*; 1st—*command*, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *doom*, *protection from good*^d, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *hold person*, *sound burst*, *spiritual weapon*^d; 3rd—*cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *magic vestment*^d, *searing light*; 4th—*cure critical wounds*, *summon monster IV*, *unholy blight*^d.

D: Domain spell. Domains: Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), War (Weapon Focus as bonus feat).

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*darkness*, *poison* (DC 15); 1/day—*contagion* (DC 15), *desecrate*, *unholy blight* (DC 15). Caster level 10th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: +2 breastplate, +1 large steel shield, +1 *morningstar* ("Bloodfever"), *periapt of wisdom* +2, *gauntlets of ogre power*, *potion of alter self*, holy symbol of Erythnul.

Zarn Kyass: The "Blue Duke" Zarn Kyass deals in ogre and half-orc mercenaries. He has provided several of his finest mercenaries to Lord Vhalantru and Cauldron at a generous discount, and he claims to have countless more. Zarn Kyass wishes to be made a general or archduke once the Cagewrights' plans for Cauldron come to fruition and the fiends of Carceri are unleashed upon the land. Zarn Kyass uses his *polymorph* spell-like ability to conceal his true form when traveling abroad, but within House Rhivadi he prefers his true form. He enjoys a special rapport with Lady Thiffrane and has secretly grown infatuated with her—a weakness he guards well.

➤ **Zarn Kyass, male ogre mage Ftr4:** CR 12; Large giant; HD 5d8+4d10+36; hp 85; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 22, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +7; Grp +16; Atk +13 melee (3d6+10/19–20, +1 *greatsword*) or +6 ranged (2d6+5/×3, composite longbow); Full Atk +13/+6 melee (3d6+10/19–20, +1 *greatsword*) or +6/+1 ranged (2d6+5/×3, composite longbow); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 90 ft., flight, low-light vision, regeneration 5, SR 19; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17.

Skills: Concentration +16, Listen +12, Spellcraft +10, Spot +12.

Feats: Cleave, Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (*greatsword*), Weapon Specialization (*greatsword*).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Giant, Orc.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*darkness*, *invisibility*; 1/day—*charm person* (DC 14), *cone of cold* (DC 18), *gaseous form*, *polymorph*, *sleep* (DC 14). Caster level 9th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: +2 chain shirt, +1 *greatsword*, amulet of natural armor +2, composite longbow (+5 Str) with 20 arrows.

Tactics: The encounter with Thiffrane and her guests will test the skills of even the most experienced DM. To

make running the battle easier, each villain's tactics are summarized below; however, the DM can deviate from these preset tactics as the situation warrants.

Thifirane Rhiavadi: Thifirane already has a *nondetection* spell cast on herself and keeps her shield guardian close to her at all times. Before entering combat, she casts the following spells, in sequence, if time allows: *stoneskin*, *mage armor*, *shield*, *bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, *fox's cunning*, *see invisibility*, *haste*. These spells also affect her weasel familiar. On her first initiative action, Thifirane activates a *contingency* spell that, in turn, triggers a *lesser globe of invulnerability* spell (which also affects her familiar). She also instructs the shield guardian to activate its *fire shield* spell. In combat, Thifirane uses her eye ray and her offensive spells (*baleful polymorph*, *cone of cold*, *disintegrate*, *eyebite*, *forcecage*, *greater dispel magic*, *lightning bolt*, *magic missile*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere*, and *slow*), occasionally switching out a spell to cast a scroll (*prismatic spray*) or expend a charge from her crystal *wand of magic missile*. She uses her *wall of force* spell to divide her enemies or block their advance. Her weasel familiar tries to stay within 5 feet of Thifirane, yet out of harm's way. The shield guardian uses its *shield other* ability to absorb damage dealt to Thifirane. However, if she is reduced to half her hit points, Thifirane abandons her shield guardian and *teleports* to Oblivion (see area O9), where the PCs may encounter her again.

Adrick Garthûn: Adrick tries to flank foes to gain the benefit of his sneak attack. Otherwise, both he and his bodyguards use straightforward combat tactics. If both of his henchmen are killed or incapacitated, Adrick surrenders or flees. He may even switch sides if he thinks he stands a good chance of survival with little possibility of retribution.

Khyron Bonesworn: Khyron hasn't pledged his undying allegiance to the Cagewrights, but he isn't foolish enough to cross them, either. He packs a lot of defensive spells. Before jumping into battle, Khyron casts *magic vestment* on his shield. He then casts *shield of faith*, *spell resistance*, *freedom of movement*, *bear's endurance*, and *divine power* on himself (in that order). Time allowing, he also casts *magic circle against good* and *death ward*. When combat erupts, he likes to wade into battle with his *unholy mace*, saving his *hold person* and *slay living* spells for particularly annoying foes. If gravely wounded, he pulls out of combat long enough to cure himself. His comrade-in-arms, Melagorn, casts *false life*, *displacement*, and *shield* on himself (in that order), then bombards enemies with offensive spells.

Mhad: Although arguably the most lethal combatant in House Rhiavadi, Mhad doesn't like fighting unfamiliar opponents in unfamiliar surroundings. She stays out of the fight as long as possible. If attacked, she and her dire wraith flank and try to stun and drain the attacker as quickly as possible. Under no circumstances does she join forces with the heroes, but if she and the characters are the last ones standing, Mhad lets them live for the time being.

As soon as night falls, she returns to her lair in the Ruins of Shatterhorn east of Cauldron.

Vervil Ashmantle: Vervil orders his babaus to attack the PCs while he casts *greater invisibility* and other defensive spells on himself. The tiefling takes magical "cheap shots" (a *magic missile* here, a *baleful polymorph* there) while physically staying on the outskirts of the battle.

Jester Velior Thazo: Jester Velior Thazo calls upon Erythnul, god of slaughter, to help him destroy his new enemies. If he has time to prepare for battle, he casts *bull's strength*, *bear's endurance*, *shield of faith*, and *divine favor* on himself (in that order). Against ranged foes, he casts *unholy blight* or *searing light*. He then closes for melee combat, furiously swinging his +1 *morningstar*.

Zarn Kyass: At the first sign of trouble, Zarn turns invisible and moves to protect Thifirane. He uses straightforward tactics in battle, swinging his greatsword at singular enemies and saving his *cone of cold* for an opportune moment. If Thifirane is killed, Zarn flies into a rage and attacks her slayer without mercy or quarter.

Development: Nothing the PCs accomplish at House Rhiavadi prevents the Cagewrights from proceeding with the Ritual of Planar Junction. The best the characters can hope for is to take down a member of the Cagewrights' inner circle (Thifirane Rhiavadi) and several of the realm's most despicable criminals.

CHAPTER THREE: THE HUNT FOR VHALANTRU

The final chapter of the adventure deals with the characters' search for Vhalantru. Whether enticed by rumors or their own growing doubts about Vhalantru's intentions, the PCs decide to pay a visit to Lord Vhalantru's estate. This chapter deals with the repercussions of that decision.

To most citizens of Cauldron, Lord Orbius Vhalantru is a charitable elf noble with no known family in Cauldron or in the surrounding area. In public forums, he used to jokingly refer to himself as "one of Cauldron's proud orphans." When the lord mayor recently vanished without a trace, Lord Vhalantru quickly swept in and took control. However, the situation in Cauldron has steadily deteriorated, leading some people to doubt Vhalantru's political commitment and intentions. He rarely makes public appearances anymore, and the half-orc mercenaries he hired to bolster the town guard are little more than thugs more interested in safeguarding his estate than insuring the well-being of the common folk. Only the Cagewrights and a few select members of the Last Laugh know for certain that Vhalantru is a beholder whose ultimate goal is to enslave Cauldron's populace and transform the town into his own personal demesne.

HOUSE VHALANTRU

House Vhalantru is a stately, three-story manor located on Obsidian Avenue. Like many estates in Cauldron, it has walls of mortared volcanic rock. However, the interior surfaces on the second and third floors (including walls, floors, and ceilings) are made of sturdy wood. In addition, Vhalantru has taken strides to make the house appear more "elven." The wood paneling and railings display some of the finest leaf scrollwork in Cauldron, and the windows are made of glass set in light wooden frames, with lovely silver laurel designs running through the glass.

Unless noted otherwise, natural light provides illumination during bright hours, and candelabras provide light during the dark hours. The doors of House Vhalantru are of sturdy wooden construction with ornate silver hinges and fittings. All ceilings are 15 feet high unless noted otherwise, and secret doors require a successful Search check (DC 20) to locate.

❖ **Strong Wooden Doors:** 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 25; Open Lock DC 30.

THE TOWN GUARD

The half-orc mercenaries Vhalantru hired to bolster the town guard also watch over his estate. Twelve guards stand watch inside the building (of which six can be encountered in area V7). A fresh crew relieves the previous watch every 12 hours. The guards should be encountered in groups of two or three as needed to provide exciting encounters as the PCs explore the interior of the estate. Since the estate isn't that big, other guards can come to help those in combat with the PCs; as a general rule you can assume that a new group of three guards arrives once every 1d4+1 rounds once combat begins.

THE NAGAS

Vhalantru has also persuaded three spirit nagas to "haunt" the manor during his absence. These creatures converge

on the heroes as they begin exploring the upper levels of the house.

LOOTING HOUSE VHALANTRU

Characters who try to loot House Vhalantru find very few items of value—a few token art objects but no large collections. The trove is worth a total of 5,000 gp. Any character who spends 10 minutes looting can make a Search check (DC 20); a successful check yields 1d6 × 100 gp worth of miscellaneous treasure, most of which is quite heavy and awkward to transport.

V1. ENTRANCE FOYER

Sound: Chatting guards (area V2), soft chirping of birds (area V15).

Reaction: Loud noises (such as doors opening) may alert the guards in area V2.

The front doors are unlocked, and four lifelike statues in alcoves greet visitors as they enter: a female elven wizard in robes, a male elven ranger with a longbow, a female elven cleric carrying a shield with the symbol of Corellon Larethian carved into it, and a male elven druid wearing a cowl and carrying a vinelike whip.

Unlike the other statues in the estate, these ones are simply expert carvings. A red carpet stretches from the front doors to the far end of the main hall (area V2).

Secret doors in the easternmost alcoves require a successful Search check (DC 15) to locate.

V2. MAIN HALL (EL 4)

Sound: Chatting guards, soft chirping of birds (area V15).

Reaction: Loud noises may be heard by the guards in area V7.

KEY TO HOUSE VHALANTRU

Not all of the rooms in House Vhalantru have occupants or items of interest to the characters. Moreover, its inhabitants are not locked down to a particular room and tend to move about.

The following locations are keyed to the House Vhalantru map. Rooms marked with an asterisk (*) are described in more detail in this chapter; feel free to flesh out the areas not fully described herein.

V1. Entrance Foyer*

V2. Main Hall*

V3. Servants' Quarters

V4. Fountain of Sehanine Moonbow*

V5. Kitchen

V6. Dining Room

V7. Parlor*

V8. Wine Storage*

V9. Shaft to Oblivion*

V10. Master Study

V11. Master Bedroom

V12. Bathroom

V13. Library

V14. Servants' Quarters

V15. Aviary*

V16. Guest Bedroom

V17. Guest Bathroom

V18. Deluxe Guest Bedroom

A 5-foot-wide staircase climbs up the eastern wall to an overhanging balcony 15 feet above. The red carpet that began at the front doors crosses the room and continues up the stairs to the balcony on either side. Two heavy 5-foot-tall candelabras stand in the middle of the hall but are unlit.

Four statues—actually four adventurers turned to stone by Vhalantru—stand in different corners of the room: a male dwarven fighter wearing full plate and carrying a greatsword, a female halfling rogue/sorcerer perched atop a stone pedestal with a staff in one hand and a short sword in the other, a male human monk in a battle-ready unarmed stance, and a male gnome cleric of Garl Glittergold holding a morningstar and clutching a light steel shield.

Development: If the characters free the adventurers from their stony tombs (using *break enchantment*, *stone to flesh*, or similar magic), the DM should create statistics for them as needed. The petrified NPCs should be at least a couple levels lower than the PCs and could make excellent cohorts for PCs who take the Leadership feat.

V4. FOUNTAIN OF SEHANINE MOONBOW

Sound: Spouting water.

The secret door in the north wall requires a successful Search check (DC 20) to locate.

Vhalantru thought it would be a clever touch to build a fountain in his house, because surely that's what elves do! He charmed a local sculptor into crafting a statue of the elven goddess Sehanine Moonbow ("the Lady of Dreams"), then placed it atop the marble plinth where the water spills out into the basin. Three marble benches and several painted ceramic vats of sweet-smelling earth add to the decor.

V7. PARLOR (EL 13)

Sound: Multiple guards gambling and shouting at each other.

Five plush chairs surround a large round table in the middle of this room. Couches, wine cabinets, and other furnishings are haphazardly arranged.

The northern door leading to area V8 is locked with a good lock (Open Lock DC 30).

Creatures: Six half-orc guards enjoy some off-duty time in this room. One relaxes on a leather couch while the other five engage in a rowdy, sometimes bitter game played with dice, goblin finger bones, and hard-earned coins. They attack intruders on sight, particularly if it looks like they're headed for the door to area V8.

➔ **Hired Mercenaries, male half-orc Ftr8:** hp 59 each; see "Entering House Rhiavadi".

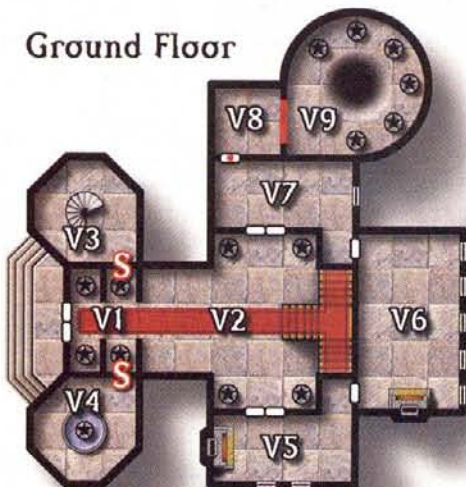
Third Floor



Second Floor



Ground Floor



V8. WINE STORAGE

Auras: Moderate (*illusory wall*, DC 19 illusion).

Rows of shelves along the north wall hold several dozen bottles of good wine. Boxes of wine are piled all over the room, making it difficult to get at the walls without moving the boxes aside.

A *true seeing* spell or tactile inspection of the east wall reveals that part of the wall is illusory. Characters can walk through the *illusory wall* and enter area V9.

V9. VEILED SHAFT (EL 3)

Auras: Moderate (*illusory wall* (floor), DC 19 illusion).

Behind the illusory wall lies a circular room containing six statues—the petrified remains of four more adventurers and their animal companions: a male halfling rogue with a quizzical expression etched into his face, a female elven wizard aiming a wand, a female human druid petrified while drinking a potion, her cheetah animal companion, a male human ranger with his longsword and short sword crossed in a blocking maneuver, and his black bear animal companion.

Trap: An *illusory wall* spell conceals a smooth, 50-foot-deep, 10-foot-wide shaft in the middle of the floor. Any creature that steps on the *illusory floor* must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 16) or fall to area O1, taking 5d6 points of damage. In addition to landing prone, the fallen character is attacked by the creatures in area O1.

V15. AVIARY (EL 13)

Sound: Chirping birds.

More than a dozen birdcages fill this room, each one home to three or four small but colorful birds (finches mostly). Most of the cages sit atop shelves or tables by the windows, but a few hang from the ceiling by elegant chains.

The birds' music can be heard over the balcony and down into the ground floor of the manor. The chirping helps evoke a sense of natural tranquility, making the dark stone edifice feel less dreary. One of the cages contains a pair of pigeons trained to deliver messages to Sasserine. Tied to their right legs are tiny scroll tubes that can safely store a short message.

Creatures: As the heroes explore the aviary, three spirit nagas hiding in nearby rooms converge on the PCs' location. The nagas use their *invisibility* spells to approach the characters unseen.

➤ **Spirit nagas (3):** hp 82, 76, 73; *Monster Manual* 192.

Tactics: The spirit nagas aren't interested in conversation. If possible, they cast *displacement*, *divine favor*, *shield of faith*, and *cat's grace* before slithering in for the kill, and they would rather bite the PCs than *charm* them.

OBLIVION

Vhalantru built the subterranean redoubt of Oblivion to suit his own tastes. Consequently, creatures lacking the ability to fly will have a difficult time navigating the lair. Oblivion has three levels spaced roughly 100 feet apart (Level 1 being the closest to the surface, and Level 3 being the deepest). Two long shafts (areas O2 and O4) connect the various levels. A third shaft—this one 10 feet in diameter and 50 feet long—serves as the entrance to Oblivion, connecting area O1 with area V9 in Vhalantru's estate.

Vhalantru used his *disintegrate* eye ray to carve Oblivion out of the rock beneath Cauldron. The beholder tends to favor spherical rooms and tubular passageways (although exceptions exist). Since Vhalantru has darkvision, he has little need for illumination, and visitors are expected to bring their own light sources.

Scaling the vertical and curved walls of Oblivion requires a successful Climb check (DC 25).

The lair includes some unusual features that required the expert services of several Cagewrights to complete, including Vhalantru's insidious "oblivion doors" (see area O3) and the transmutation circle for the *Zar'ilkoth Tarteros* ritual (see area O15).

O1. NASTY FARASTUS (EL 14)

A 10-foot-wide shaft drops through the ceiling of this 30-foot-high, 40-foot-wide cylindrical chamber. Carved into the rough walls of the cylinder at various heights are 21 shallow alcoves, each niche holding an ancient statue.

Each niche holds one of Vhalantru's petrified victims.

A 12-foot-high opening in the north wall gives way to a vertical drop of 200 feet (see area O2).

Creatures: Three half-orc "guards" stand watch in front of the north exit—or so it seems. The half-orcs are actually zombies that have been treated by Vhalantru and Thifirane with experimental magical portals that activate when the zombies are destroyed. As soon as intruders appear, the half-orc zombies lunge toward them. Once destroyed, a zombie shivers momentarily and drops its weapons. Moments later, a farastu demodand explodes from within the zombie, clawing its way to freedom with a terrible rush of tar and stink. Once a farastu emerges, it fights the PCs to the death.

Farastu demodands are detailed in the *Fiend Folio*. If you don't have access to this book, you can replace them with hezrou demons.

➤ **Half-orc Zombies (3):** hp 16 each; *Monster Manual* 266 (use statistics for the human commoner zombie).

➤ **Farastu demodands (3):** hp 71 each, *Fiend Folio* 42.

O2. EAST SHAFT

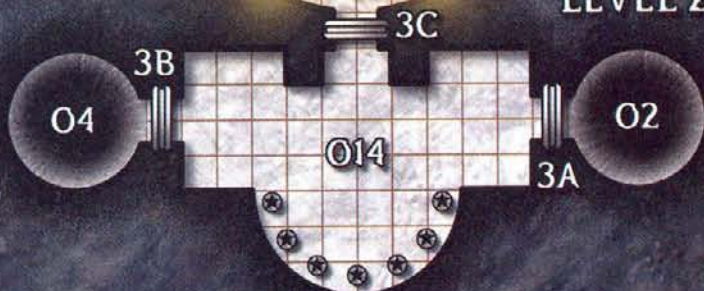
Sound: See text below.

OBLIVION

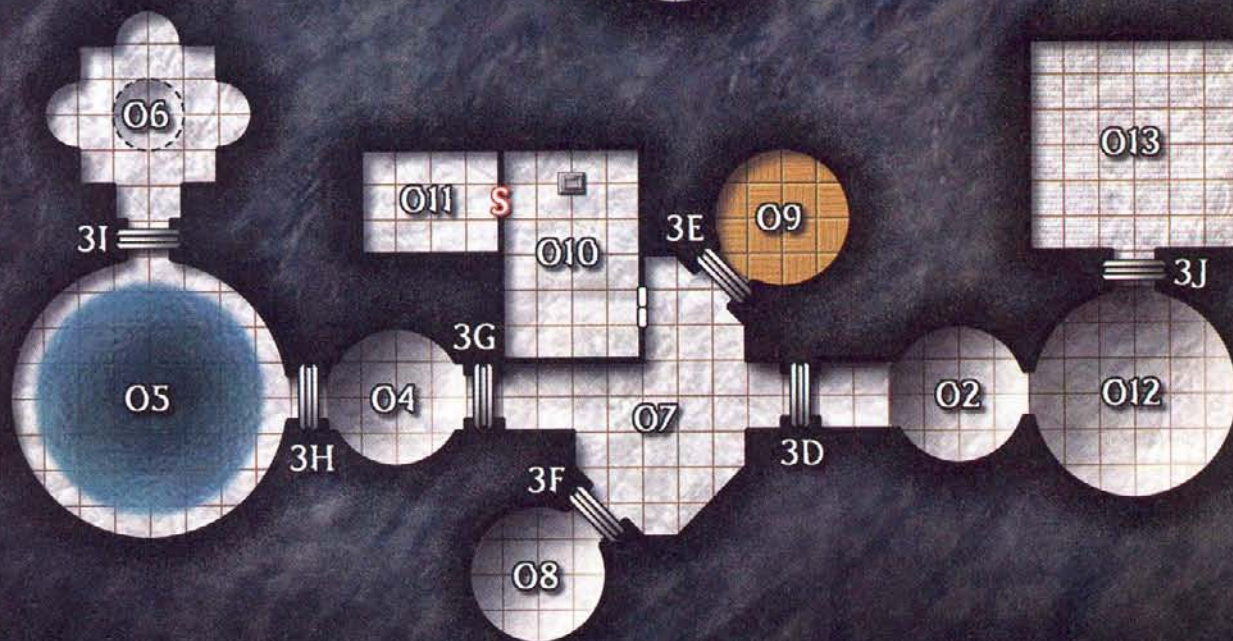
- KEY**
- 01. Nasty Farastus
 - 02. East Shaft
 - 03. Oblivion Doors:
 - 3A *flesh to stone*
 - 3B *fear*
 - 3C *disintegrate*
 - 3D *finger of death*
 - 3E *inflict moderate wounds*
 - 3F *sleep*
 - 3G *charm person*
 - 3H *slow*
 - 3I *charm monster*
 - 3J *telekinesis*
 - 04. West Shaft
 - 05. Beholder Bath
 - 06. Book Vault
 - 07. Eyes in the Dark
 - 08. Empty Room
 - 09. Thifirane's Quarters
 - 10. Flamewardens
 - 11. Ti'irok's Treasury
 - 12. Empty Room
 - 13. Art Treasury
 - 14. Trophies
 - 15. Oblivion's Womb



1 square = 5 feet



LEVEL 3





Auras: Strong (oblivion doors, DC 24 evocation).

This vertical shaft measures 20 feet wide and stretches 220 feet tall, connecting every level of Vhalantru's lair. Sound carries well in the shaft, so characters in the shaft or in open rooms adjacent to the shaft (such as areas **O1** and **O12**) gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Listen checks.

Scaling the vertical walls of the shaft requires a successful Climb check (DC 25).

O3. OBLIVION DOORS (EL 10)

Reaction: To the sound of an oblivion door opening—any creature lurking on the other side prepares for combat.

Auras: Strong (oblivion door, DC 24 evocation).

A large and intricate circular door measuring 9 feet across completely blocks the passageway. The portal has interlocking parts made of composite materials—primarily darkwood, bone, iron, and adamantite. The door's face has been worked into the likeness of a stylized beholder with ten eyestalks. Set into each eyestalk is a different color gemstone, and set into the large central eye is a transparent crystal the size of a human fist. The thick stone doorframe is shaped like a ring and carved with eight strange glyphs.

Oblivion doors are recurring features in Vhalantru's lair. They're designed to make travel through the complex challenging for all creatures other than beholders. The strange glyphs on the doorframe spell the word O-B-L-I-V-I-O-N in Undercommon, but they have no bearing on how the doors operate. The color of a particular gem is also irrelevant.

Beholders have ten eyestalks. Not coincidentally, Vhalantru's lair contains ten oblivion doors, and each one is attuned to a different beholder eyestalk (as shown in the table below). Vhalantru opens an oblivion door by firing the correct eye ray at the fist-sized crystal embedded in the door's central eye. Spellcasters can bypass the doors by casting similar spells on the fist-sized crystal. For instance, oblivion door **O3J** (connecting areas **O12** and **O13**) is specifically attuned to the *telekinesis* eye ray, yet casting a *telekinesis* spell on the central crystal also works.

Oblivion Door	Attuned Eye Ray
3A	<i>flesh to stone</i>
3B	<i>fear</i>
3C	<i>disintegrate</i>
3D	<i>finger of death</i>
3E	<i>inflict moderate wounds</i>
3F	<i>sleep</i>
3G	<i>charm person</i>
3H	<i>slow</i>
3I	<i>charm monster</i>
3J	<i>telekinesis</i>

Each oblivion door weighs 5,000 pounds, and forcing one open physically requires a nearly impossible Strength check (DC 50). A rogue can attempt to “finesse” the door, tricking it into opening with a successful Open Lock check (DC 45). However they do it, when the PCs unlock their first oblivion door, read or paraphrase the following:

The door makes some dull grinding noises, then splits into three sections. Each section quickly retracts into part of the adjoining doorframe. Once the three sections have fully retracted, the passage stands open.

Oblivion doors stay open for 3 rounds, then close automatically. Anyone standing in the doorframe when an oblivion door closes is crushed for 10d6 points of damage per round (Reflex DC 15 half).

There is nothing stopping characters from using spells such as *teleport*, *dimension door*, *ethereal jaunt*, and *passwall* to circumvent the oblivion doors.

❖ **Oblivion Door (locked):** 3 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 540; Break DC 50; Open Lock 45; impervious to spells and spell-like abilities except for the spell effect keyed to that particular door.

Trap: If the wrong eye ray or the wrong spell is cast on an oblivion door, or if an attempt to Open Lock or bash it open fails, the door remains sealed and instead fires 1d10 rays of force back at the offender. The rays of force emanate from small gems set into the oblivion door’s eyestalks. A character with an active *shield* spell may count the spell’s +4 shield bonus toward her touch AC, since the spell was designed to absorb force damage.

↗ **Force Ray Trap:** CR 10; magic device; spell trigger (varies by door); automatic reset; Atk +10 ranged touch (1d6+1 points of damage per ray, 1d10 rays); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 33.

04. WEST SHAFT

Sound: See area O2.

Auras: Strong (oblivion doors, DC 24 evocation)

This 20-foot-wide shaft measures 120 feet tall and connects Levels 2 and 3 of Vhalantru’s complex. The shaft is otherwise similar to the east shaft (area O2).

05. BEHOLDER BATH

The lower half of this spherical room is filled with water seepage from Cauldron’s lake. Vhalantru has taken to calling the room his “bath,” although he’d intended to use the space for something else.

06. BOOK VAULT

Auras: Faint (*levitation* fields, DC 16 transmutation).

This 20-foot-square room has a 10-foot-diameter, bowl-shaped indentation carved out of the floor, the ceiling,

and every wall. Floating in the exact middle of the room, just out of arm’s reach from the floor, is a single book with a red leather cover.

Most of this room radiates magic. The bowl-shaped indentations in the walls generate crisscrossing *levitation* fields that have the effect of suspending objects in the middle of the room, where a creature like Vhalantru can get at them easily. Currently, only one book is kept here.

Treasure: The book in question has the words “Zar’ilkoth Tarteros” scrawled on the inside front cover. Vhalantru used it to gather information about the ritual to turn him into a Tarterian beholder, but he’s done with the tome for the time being. Characters wishing to perform the Zar’ilkoth Tarteros ritual themselves can do so, but such rituals take weeks to prepare.

07. EYES IN THE DARK (EL 13)

Sound: Panting and howling warhounds.

Reaction: To sounds of baying warhounds—the occupants of area O10 prepare for combat.

A terrible howl fills the darkness ahead, and then you see three pairs of glowing red eyes.

Several doors lead into this irregularly shaped nexus chamber, which is guarded by the Creatures. They wear the Treasure.

Creatures: Three Nessian warhounds lair here. They belong to a group of mercenaries called the Flamewarders (see area O10). The warhounds attack anyone they don’t recognize.

➤ **Nessian warhounds (3):** hp 114 each; *Monster Manual* 152.

Treasure: The Nessian warhounds wear black leather collars studded with diamonds and rubies. Each collar is worth 4,500 gp (total value 13,500 gp).

08. EMPTY ROOM

This spherical chamber is currently empty and unused.

09. THIFIRANE’S QUARTERS

Light: *Continual flame* spell.

Auras: Faint (*continual flame* spell, DC 17 evocation).

Vhalantru has set aside this spherical room for Thifirane Rhiavadi (see Chapter Two). To make Thifirane more comfortable, a wooden floor has been built across the room’s equator, creating a hemispherical space with a flat floor. Thifirane has already made the room her own, adding various handpicked pieces of furniture and bringing along some of her outlandish wardrobe in large, unlocked trunks. Characters searching through Thifirane’s belongings won’t find anything of great value.

Development: If Thifirane fled House Rhiavadi, she is “regrouping” in this chamber. Her weasel familiar may be with her as well. See Chapter Two for her tactics.

O10. FLAMEWARDERS (EL 18)

Light: Nine everburning torches (in sconces).

Sound: Crackling torch flames (Listen DC 15).

Auras: Faint (*continual flame* on everburning torches, DC 17 evocation).

Sconces shaped like stony fists protrude from the walls of this 20-foot-high chamber at regular intervals, each one grasping an everburning torch. In the middle of the room, a tall woman with hair like flames swings her greatsword at unseen foes, seemingly oblivious to your presence. Her body is covered with a layer of rust-colored fur, and her eyes smolder. She is clad in a mithral breastplate, wears metal gauntlets, and has a large shield floating beside her, moving as she moves. A pink, rhomboid-shaped stone orbits her head lackadaisically, and she wears a red-lacquered armband on one upper arm. As she cleaves the air in front of her, you see that fire plays across one edge of her greatsword, ice across the other.

Suddenly she stops, looking barely out of breath. Casting a baleful glance at you, she walks over to a great, fire-scorched throne at the north end of the room. The throne is carved in the shape of a fire giant. From behind the throne emerges a sneering wolf with flame-colored fur and red embers for eyes.

"Flameless Ones, have you come to pay tribute to Ti'irok Coalfire?" the fiery wolf hisses.

A fire giant named Ti'irok Coalfire leads a small legion of mercenaries comprised of haraknin canomorphs (fiery humanoids than can assume hell hound form). This mercenary company is called the Flamewarders, and a few years back it caught the attention of the Cagewrights. Ti'irok has been serving the Cagewrights loyally ever since, thanks in no small part to the generous stipend they pay him. Ti'irok is away handling various important matters, but he's left behind his best lieutenant to guard his secret treasury (area O11).

Creatures: The flame-haired woman practicing her swordsmanship is Ti'irok's lieutenant—a powerful female haraknin canomorph named Aszithef. Although she initially resented Ti'irok buying her clan, he has treated her people fairly and paid them well. Ti'irok has also won Aszithef's devotion by entrusting her with his prized greatsword *Coldfire*. Aszithef is bored without Ti'irok and the others around. Still, she has Khetru, and between the two of them, they should be able to mop the room with the PCs' guts. Khetru demands that the characters pay a tribute of 10,000 gp, plus an additional 5,000 gp for each Nessian warhound they killed in area O7 (lest they face the wrath of the Flamewarders). If the characters try to negotiate, Aszithef and Khetru deliberately frustrate the characters at every turn, hoping to provoke them into a fight.

➤ **Aszithef, female haraknin Ftr7/Rog6:** CR 16; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, fire, lawful shapechanger); HD 4d8+7d10+6d6+68; hp 149; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 30, touch 15, flat-footed 27; Base Atk +15; Grp +22; Atk +25 melee (2d6+14/17-20 plus 1d6 cold plus 1d6 fire, *Coldburn*) or +20 ranged (1d8+4/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +25/+20/+15 melee (2d6+14/17-20 plus 1d6 cold plus 1d6 fire, *Coldburn*) or +20/+15/+10 ranged (1d8+4/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA breath weapon, command fiendish hound, sneak attack +3d6; SQ alternate form, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, scent, trap sense +2, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +13, Will +8; Str 24, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Breath Weapon (Su): Cone of fire, 30 feet, every 2d4 rounds, damage 1d4+1, Reflex DC 20 half. A haraknin's breath weapon ignites flammable materials within the cone. It can use its breath weapon while biting.

Command Fiendish Hound (Sp): Aszithef can use *greater command* at will against hell hounds and Nessian warhounds.

Alternate Form (Su): Aszithef can transform into a hell hound or back as a move action at will, as if by *alter self*. She prefers to fight in humanoid form.

Skills: Balance +6, Climb +18, Hide +23, Intimidate +4, Jump +20, Listen +15, Move Silently +22, Search +7, Spot +15, Survival +6 (+14 when tracking by scent), Tumble +23.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Track^B, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword), Whirlwind Attack.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Giant, Ignan, Infernal.

Possessions: +2 mithral breastplate, *Coldburn* (+2 flaming frost greatsword), masterwork composite longbow (+5 Str bonus), 20 arrows, +1 animated large steel shield, gauntlets of ogre power, ioun stone (pink rhomboid; +2 Dex), ring of protection +2, 2 potions of cure serious wounds, red-lacquered armband set with a diamond (2,000 gp), 120 pp.

➤ **Khetru, male haraknin Ftr5/Rog5:** CR 13; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, fire, lawful shapechanger); HD 4d8+5d10+5d6+42; hp 108; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +12; Grp +17; Atk +19 melee (1d12+10/×3, +1 greataxe) or +16 ranged (1d8+5/×3, masterwork composite longbow [+5 Str]); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d12+10/×3, +1 greataxe) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (1d8+5/×3, masterwork composite longbow [+5 Str]); SA breath weapon, command fiendish hound, sneak attack +3d6; SQ alternate form, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, fire subtype, scent, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +7; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Breath Weapon (Su): Cone of fire, 30 feet, every 2d4 rounds, damage 1d4+1, Reflex DC 20 half. A haraknin's breath weapon ignites flammable materials within the cone. It can use its breath weapon while biting.

Command Fiendish Hound (Sp): Khetru can use *greater command* at will against hell hounds and Nessian warhounds.



Alternate Form (Su): Khetru can transform into a hellhound or back as a move action at will, as if by *alter self*. He prefers to fight in humanoid form.

Skills: Hide +16, Jump +22, Listen +13, Move Silently +16, Spot +13, Survival +8 (+16 when tracking by scent), Tumble +8.

Feats: Acrobatic, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Track⁸, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe).

Languages: Common, Infernal.

Possessions: +2 chain shirt, +1 adamantine greataxe, masterwork composite longbow (+5 Str bonus), 30 arrows, ring of protection +1, potion of blur, potion of bull's strength, 2 potions of cure serious wounds, potion of protection from energy (cold), oil of greater magic weapon +3, red-lacquered gold armband set with an emerald (1,000 gp), 25 pp, 100 gp.

Development: If the characters kill Aszithef and claim the greatsword *Coldfire* for themselves, they might need to reckon with T'irok Coalfire in the future. (He'll turn up in a future Adventure Path module and won't be pleased to see *Coldfire* in their possession.)

O11. TI'IROK'S TREASURY

The secret door leading into this room is quite large (5 feet wide by 13 feet tall) and bulky, requiring a successful Strength check (DC 25) to push open. Detecting the secret

door requires a Search check (DC 20). The door was designed with a fire giant in mind.

T'irok isn't happy about having to store a significant amount of his treasure here, particularly since he doesn't know Vhalantru particularly well. The giant's goods are described under Treasure.

Treasure: Two enormous iron chests rest in the middle of the room. Both chests are locked (Open Lock DC 30), and T'irok took the keys with him. Moreover, each chest weighs close to 800 pounds.

Chest #1 contains 22,150 gp, 30 large geodes worth 300 gp each, a suit of dragonhide plate, a mithral heavy shield, 15 cold iron javelins sized for a Large individual, masterwork chainmail barding (for a horse or nightmare), and a suit of masterwork full plate made for a Large individual.

Chest #2 contains 18,925 gp, an unlocked iron box containing 450 pp, 10 flasks of oil, an iron strongbox containing 4 potions of invisibility, and an adamantine battleaxe.

O12. EMPTY ROOM

This hemispherical chamber is currently unused. The Nessian warhounds in area O7 used to play with T'irok the fire giant in this chamber, and the floor is strewn with old bones, spoor, and tattered bits of leather.

O13. ART TREASURY (EL 13)

Bricks cover the walls, floor, and ceiling of this 20-foot-high vault. Some of the bricks in the north wall have been neatly removed, creating rows of cubbyholes and giving it a slightly pockmarked look. Many of the cubbyholes hold bits of treasure.

Many of the cubbyholes are filled with treasures Vhalantru has amassed over the years (see *Treasure*). The beholder guards his treasure well, however (see *Creatures*).

Creatures: Observant characters who succeed at a Search check (DC 22) will notice the pair of stone golems embedded in the chamber floor. Because of the brickwork, it's hard to tell where the bricks end and the edges of each golem begin. The golems rise up from the floor and attack any non-beholder who removes something of value from a cubbyhole. The golems are gifts from Vhalantru's Cagewright friends.

➤ **Stone golems (2):** hp 107 each; *Monster Manual* 136.

Treasure: The cubbyholes contain the following items: 24 ceramic urns containing 100 gp apiece, 7 painted copper urns containing 50 pp apiece, a pouch of 5 moss agates (10 gp each), a pouch of 8 azurites (10 gp each), a pouch of 5 zircons (40 gp each), silver oakleaf brooch (80 gp), a pair of matched crystal candlesticks (400 gp), white velvet sash set with tiny rubies (600 gp), set of ivory and obsidian chess pieces (1,200 gp), silver brazier engraved with crashing waves (1,700 gp), gold necklace set with lapis lazuli (2,100 gp), gold bracelet set with sapphires (3,000 gp), platinum scepter set with emeralds (3,000 gp), a silver clam-shaped case containing 4 black pearls (4,000 gp), platinum crown set with emeralds (7,000 gp), *wand of bull's strength* (42 charges), scroll of *cure serious wounds*, *amulet of natural armor* +4, +1 *frost kama*, and a *minor ring of energy resistance (acid)*.

O14. TROPHIES

The walls of this 30-foot-high hall are carved with myriad bas-reliefs depicting various Underdark creatures and terrains. This hall also holds an impressive collection of monstrous statues, arranged in a semicircle and all very lifelike.

Vhalantru keeps several petrified monster trophies in this hall. From west to east, they are as follows: juvenile black dragon, juvenile minotaur, harpy, otyugh, rust monster, kuo-toa, and phantom fungus.

O15. OBLIVION'S WOMB (EL 16)

Light: Six everburning torches in sconces along walls.

Sound: Manic gibbering (from lunatics).

Auras: Strong (Zar'ilkoth Tarteros ritual circle, DC 22 transmutation), Faint (*continual flame* spells on everburning torches, DC 17 evocation).

The great round door separates, revealing a 50-foot-wide, 50-foot-high hemispherical chamber with weird, abstract murals painted on the ceiling. Everburning torches in sconces brightly illuminate the room, revealing its contents. A bloated sphere with nine flailing eye-stalks floats in the middle of the room, pale green fluid weeping from knobby, festering sores covering its body. It hovers above a 20-foot-diameter symbol carved into the floor: a triangle inscribed within a circle, both inlaid with gold. At the three corners of the inscribed triangle, chained to the stone floor, are three figures wearing crude leather straitjackets fitted with black straps and iron buckles. They appear to be a human male, a half-orc male, and a gnome female. The figures are held in place by ankle and wrist manacles, their heavy chains looped around iron rings securely fastened to the floor. Suddenly, arcs of black lightning leap from their eyes and strike the beholder, causing its great bulk to heave and become even more distended for an instant. The three figures collapse into heaps of ash on the floor, leaving behind nothing but charred straitjackets and burnt buckles.

The beholder turns to face you, as though aware of you for the first time. Pressed up against the convex pane of its enormous central eye, you can see the horribly fat visage of some demonic creature with a wide mouth full of sharp, triangular teeth. Suddenly, the beholder's own mouth spreads wide, and slime pours from its gums onto the stone floor.

Creature: Characters who participated in "Life's Bazaar," the first Adventure Path module (in *DUNGEON* #97), should vaguely recognize the beholder. However, Vhalantru has undergone a staggering transformation, merging his life force with that of a shator demodand to become something truly vile.

The three bound figures were commoners whom the Cagewrights abducted and afflicted with *insanity* spells. Nothing of them remains except bits of their apparel.

➤ **Vhalantru, Shator Tarterian beholder:** CR 16; Large aberration; HD 11d8+44; hp 93; Init +6; Spd 5 ft., fly 20 ft. (good); AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +8; Grp +12; Atk +9 ranged touch (eye rays*) and +5 melee (2d4+4 plus paralysis, bite); Atk +9 ranged touch (eye rays*) and +5 melee (2d4+4 plus paralysis, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA eye rays (DC 20), paralyzing slime, spell-like abilities; SQ all-around vision, antimagic cone, darkvision 120 ft., flight, freedom of movement, immunities, resistance to cold 20 and fire 20, scent, see invisibility; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +11; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 21.

*Note: Vhalantru has nine eyestalks instead of ten; he is missing his *inflict serious wounds* eye ray (having given it as a gift to Thifirane Rhiavadi).

Paralyzing Slime (Ex): Creatures struck in melee by Vhalantru's bite attack must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw (DC 19) or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds. Vhalantru can choose to spit a globule of slime as a ranged touch attack with a range of 30 feet, with the same effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear* (DC 19), *invisibility*, *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*cloudkill* (DC 20), *fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *stinking cloud* (DC 18); 2/day—*dispel magic*; 1/day—*mass charm monster* (DC 23). Caster level 15th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Freedom of Movement (Su): Vhalantru gains the benefit of continuous *freedom of movement*, as the spell (caster level 10th).

Immunities: Immunity to acid, mind-influencing attacks, and poison.

See Invisibility (Su): This ability functions as the *see invisibility* spell, except that it is always active and its range extends to the limits of Vhalantru's vision.

Skills: Hide +12, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Listen +18, Search +21, Spot +22; Survival +2 (+4 following tracks).

Feats: Alertness, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will.

Languages: Common, Elven, Infernal, Undercommon.

Tactics: Many of Vhalantru's combat options involve weakening or incapacitating his foes. He might taunt characters by spitting paralyzing slime in their direction once or twice. He also wants to test out some of his new spell-like abilities, including *ray of enfeeblement* and *cloudkill*. As a beholder, he can use his eye rays as a free action every turn. To stay away from the melee fighter, Vhalantru levitates up toward the ceiling.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

"Lords of Oblivion" puts the heroes on the offensive, giving them a long-awaited opportunity to take the fight to the Last Laugh, the Cagewrights and their would-be allies, and the ambitious Lord Vhalantru. By the end of the adventure, they

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Lords of Oblivion" is designed for a group of four 13th–14th-level PCs, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 11th–12th or 15th–16th level characters. Most of the enemies encountered are NPCs with class levels; you can adjust the adventure in either direction by simply adjusting their class levels up or down by a number equal to that which the PCs vary from 14th level (for Chapters Two and Three). The encounters in Chapter One should remain unchanged, although you might want to lower Finch and Jil a level or two if the PCs are 11th or 12th level.

11th–12th-level PCs: In Chapter Two, the PCs shouldn't encounter Thifrane and her guests all at once. They should

should know about the Cagewrights' plans for Cauldron. Moreover, Vhalantru should no longer pose any threat. However, a couple important puzzle pieces are still missing. The PCs may know about the Ritual of Planar Junction, but they don't know where the ritual is taking place or where the Cagewrights have hidden the Shackleborn and their nefarious soulcages. These questions and others will be answered in the final three adventures of the series.

TARTERIAN CREATURE (TEMPLATE)

A creature on any plane other than Carceri can, through ancient magic and arcane rituals, barter with a fiendish spirit trapped in the Tarterian Depths of Carceri. This bargain allows the fiendish spirit a momentary yet priceless flicker of freedom as it bestows the bargainer with fragments of its power. The fiendish spirit is annihilated as a result, but many fiends would rather be destroyed than trapped on Carceri for all eternity.

In exchange for its newfound fiendish powers, the beneficiary, now a Tarterian creature, gives up its soul upon death. Put another way, when the Tarterian creature dies, its soul goes to Carceri and is trapped there. For as long as the spirit remains trapped on Carceri, *raise dead*, *resurrection*, and *true resurrection* spells automatically fail to restore the creature to life.

CREATING A TARTERIAN CREATURE

"Tarterian" is an acquired template that can be added to any living corporeal creature of evil alignment (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). A Tarterian creature uses all of the base creature's statistics and abilities except where noted here. It also gains new special abilities and special qualities based on the type of demodand spirit it absorbed:

FARASTU DEMODAND SPIRIT

Special Attacks: The Tarterian creature with the farastu spirit retains all of the special attacks of the base creature but also gains the following abilities:

be scattered throughout the house, and shouldn't react to their intrusion in an organized manner. In Chapter Three, remove one of the spirit nagas, one of the farastus, one of the Nessian warhounds, and one of the haraknins (the remaining haraknin's class levels should be reduced appropriately). Vhalantru should be in the process of transformation, but when the PCs encounter him, he should not yet have gained the Tarterian creature template.

15th–16th-level PCs: No changes are necessary in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, increase the spirit naga hit dice by 4 to 8, and the farastu and warhound hit dice by 2 to 4. Give Vhalantru one or two farastu minions as well.

Adhesive Slime (Ex): The Tarterian creature exudes a sticky, tarlike slime that acts as a powerful adhesive, holding fast creatures or items that touch it. The Tarterian creature gets a +8 racial bonus on grapple checks and disarm checks due to the adhesive slime. A weapon that strikes a Tarterian creature is stuck fast unless the wielder succeeds on a Reflex save. (The save DC is Constitution-based.) Prying off a stuck weapon requires a successful Strength check (DC 17).

Lantern oil or some other flammable oil (such as alchemist's fire) dissolves the Tarterian creature's adhesive slime; the creature requires 10 minutes to renew its adhesive coating if doused with oil. A Tarterian creature can dissolve its adhesive slime at will, and the substance breaks down 1 minute after the Tarterian creature dies.

Rage (Ex): Three times per day, the Tarterian creature can fly into a frenzy, raging like a barbarian (see the Player's Handbook, page 25). However, that the Tarterian creature is not fatigued at the end of its rage.

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

Special Qualities: The Tarterian creature with the farastu spirit retains all of the special qualities of the base creature but also gains the following qualities:

Freedom of Movement (Su): The Tarterian creature gains the benefit of continuous freedom of movement, as the spell (caster level 10th).

Scent (Ex): The Tarterian creature can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell. Darkvision out to 60 feet.

Immunity to acid and poison.

Resistance to cold 5 and fire 5.

Cannot be raised or resurrected.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: +2 Str, +2 Cha.

Skills: The Tarterian creature's adhesive slime gives it a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks.

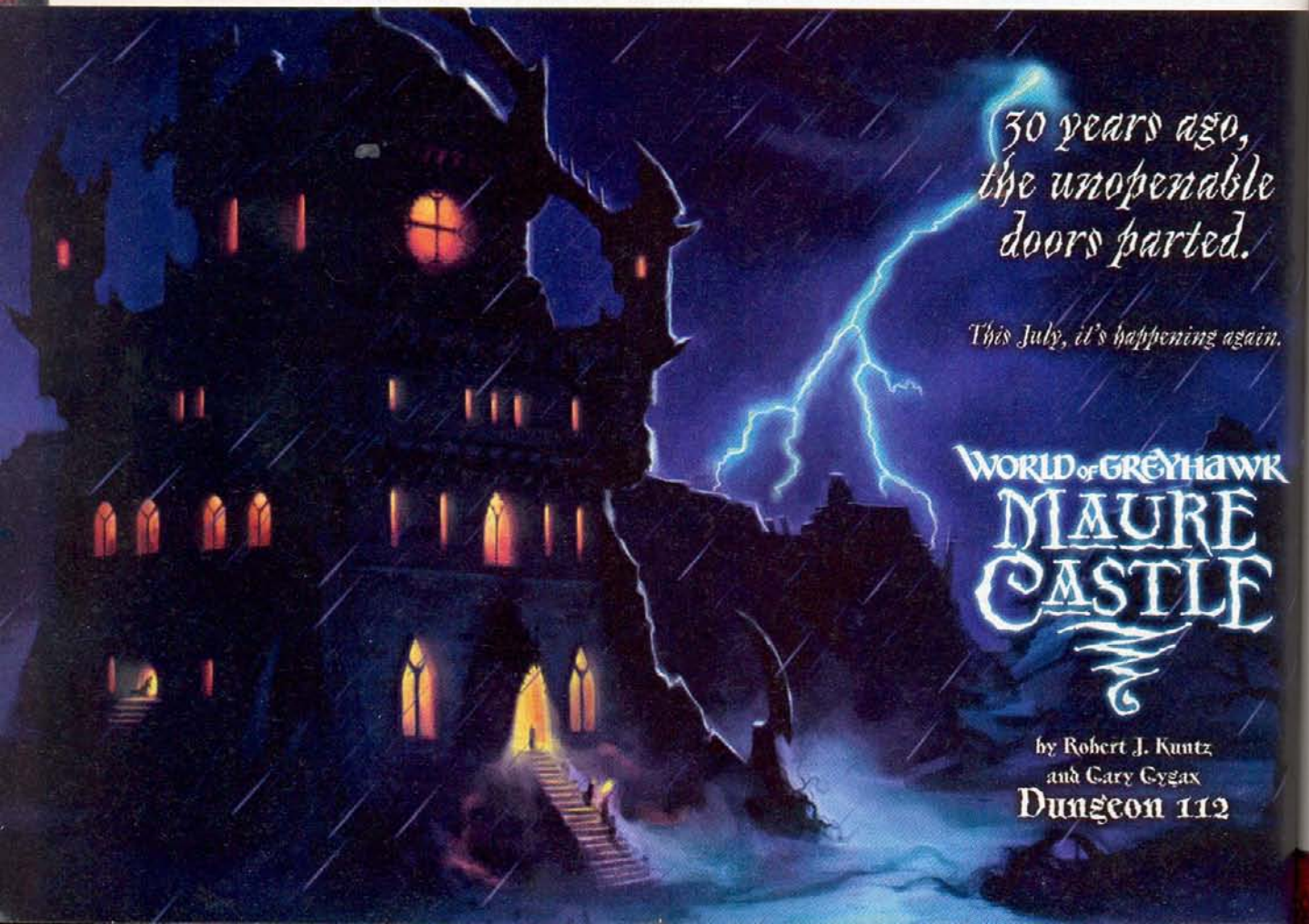
CR: Same as the base creature +2.

KELUBAR DEMODAND SPIRIT

Special Attacks: The Tarterian creature with the kelubar spirit retains all of the special attacks of the base creature but also gains the following abilities:

Acidic Slime (Ex): The slime secreted by a Tarterian creature adds +1d6 points of acid damage to each of its melee attacks. On a successful critical hit, this burst of acid deals +1d10 points of acid damage instead.

Stench (Ex): The Tarterian creature's slime reeks of filth and decay. All creatures (except other Tarterian creatures) within 30 feet of a kelubar must succeed on a Fortitude save or be nauseated for as long as the creature remains within the area, and for 10 rounds after the creature leaves. A successful save means the creature is immune to that Tarterian creature's stench for 24 hours (but not the stench of other Tarterian creatures). The save DC is Constitution-based.



30 years ago,
the unopenable
doors parted.

This July, it's happening again.

WORLD OF GREYHAWK MAURE CASTLE

by Robert J. Kuntz
and Gary Gygax
Dungeon 112

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear*, *invisibility*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*; 2/day—*acid fog*, *dispel magic*. Caster level 13th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Special Qualities: The Tarterian creature with the kelubar spirit retains all of the special qualities of the base creature but also gains the following qualities:

Freedom of Movement (Su): The Tarterian creature gains the benefit of continuous *freedom of movement*, as the spell (caster level 10th).

Darkvision out to 120 feet.

Immunity to acid and poison.

Resistance to cold 10 and fire 10.

Cannot be raised or resurrected.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: +4 Str, +4 Cha.

Skills: The Tarterian creature gets a +2 racial bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive checks.

CR: Same as the base creature +2.

SHATOR DEMODAND SPIRIT

Special Attacks: The Tarterian creature with the shator spirit retains all of the special attacks of the base creature but also gains the following abilities:

Paralyzing Slime (Ex): Creatures struck in melee by the Tarterian creature's claw or bite attack must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds. The Tarterian creature can choose to spit a globule of slime as a ranged touch attack with a range of 30 feet, with the same effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fear*, *invisibility*, *spider climb*, *tongues*; 3/day—*cloudkill*, *fog cloud*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *stinking cloud*; 2/day—*dispel magic*; 1/day—*mass charm monster*. Caster level 15th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

CAMPAIGN SEED: RECURRING VILLAINS

The PCs are going to meet a large number of new villains in this adventure, particularly in Chapter Two. Chances are that some of these villains are going to escape; if they do, they can continue to play a minor role in the campaign as incidental menaces. If the PCs need to go on a short sidequest to gain some experience, perhaps they could track down the rest of the Necrocants and prevent them from realizing their plans to take over Sasserine. Or perhaps they can track Adrick to his hidden lair to disrupt the flow of gold and silver to the Last Laugh.

CAMPAIGN SEED: THE LAST LAUGH

The Last Laugh thieves' guild is led by five masters, of which only one (Velior Thazo) is detailed in this adventure. The other four can be detailed as you see fit. If the PCs

Special Qualities: The Tarterian creature with the shator spirit retains all of the special qualities of the base creature but also gains the following qualities:

Freedom of Movement (Su): The Tarterian creature gains the benefit of continuous *freedom of movement*, as the spell (caster level 10th).

Scent (Ex): The Tarterian creature can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

See Invisibility (Su): This ability functions as the *see invisibility* spell, except that it is always active and its range extends to the limits of the Tarterian creature's vision.

Darkvision out to 120 feet.

Immunity to acid, mind-influencing attacks, and poison.

Resistance to cold 20 and fire 20.

Cannot be raised or resurrected.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: +6 Str, +6 Cha.

Skills: The Tarterian creature gets a +2 racial bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive checks.

CR: Same as the base creature +3. Ω

Chris Perkins is the Design Manager for RPG R&D at Wizards of the Coast, leading a team of talented designers including Bruce Cordell, David Noonan, James Wyatt, Jesse Decker, and Rich Baker. A former DUNGEON editor-in-chief, his favorite pastimes include dreaming up new adventures for the magazine.

manage to kill Jil (or worse, convert her to their cause), the Last Laugh takes notice. If they kill Velior, they declare war on the PCs. Times are strange in Cauldron, though, and it's possible that the Last Laugh bides their time before launching a campaign of revenge against the PCs. In any case, the nature and location of their guildhall is left to you to decide.

CAMPAIGN SEED: PETRIFIED ANCIENTS

The petrified victims found in Oblivion (particularly those in area O1) represent a wide range of individuals that have crossed Vhalantru in the past; adventurers, politicians, merchants, and even minions. It's even possible that an NPC that the PCs met earlier in the campaign but have since lost contact with can be found here, petrified and on display. If the PCs rescue any of these individuals, they may be able to provide rewards or further adventures as you see fit.

LORD OF BLADES

A SNEAK PEAK AT EBERRON'S METAL MESSIAH

BY KEITH BAKER, BILL SLAVICSEK, AND
CHRISTOPHER PERKINS
ARTWORK BY MATT CAVOTTA



Mystery surrounds the enigmatic Lord of Blades, whose reality is wrapped in legend, and whose very existence threatens the future of the common races of Eberron. The Lord of Blades, a powerful and charismatic warforged, gathers followers from among the living constructs and seeks to build an empire upon the ruins of Cyre, deep in the desolate region now known only as the Mournland. His enclave rises above the broken land as a beacon to other warforged who have grown disenchanted with life among the common races.

Some speak of the Lord of Blades as a great philosopher and teacher. Others describe him as a power-mad warlord and self-styled prophet who wishes to challenge the weaker, flesh-bound races for supremacy of Khorvaire. His hidden enclave follows a strict regiment that crosses theocratic ideals with the power of a military dictatorship; the Lord of Blades serves as both god and king to his followers. In his camp, the Lord of Blade's word is law. The warforged that have joined him must accept his rule or be destroyed.

Where did the Lord of Blades come from? Some tales proclaim that he led the warforged armies of Cyre in the Last War. Contradictory stories paint him as a newer warforged, perhaps even the last to emerge from the Cannith creation foundries before they were dismantled as required by the Thronehold Accords. One dark and disturbing legend explains that the Lord of Blades caused the destruction of Cyre and warns that he plans to repeat this act in each of the Five Nations. Whatever the truth, the Lord of Blades has emerged as a messiah to that segment of the warforged population that seeks to embrace their construct heritage over their living heritage. The vast

majority of warforged, however, consider the Lord of Blades to be a false or deluded prophet, or even an abomination that must be destroyed.

The Lord of Blades has a small but devoted band of fanatical warforged in his camp. He preaches an apocalyptic vision of a future wherein the warforged inherit the world by blade and blood. His most-trusted followers, his lieutenants and apostles, have adopted names that honor the Lord of Blades and place them at the head of his band—names such as Saber, Falchion, and Scimitar. His followers hang upon his every word and sermon, memorizing his proclamations and prophecies as part of their daily devotion.

In battle, the Lord of Blades has few equals. Usually, adventurers must contend with his followers and lieutenants, for to face the Lord of Blades directly is to invite death. His many blades, sharp and deadly, surround him like armor and form a whirlwind of blood and steel when he charges into battle. The only reason he has not spread his campaign of conquest beyond the Mournland, many believe, is because his army is still too small. A relatively small faction of warforged is attracted to his teachings, and not all of these zealots have been able to yet reach his side. Rumors persist that the Lord of Blades seeks to recover a creation forge and rediscover the secret of warforged creation, but it doesn't appear that he has yet mastered the ability to churn out new warforged on a regular basis.

In the meantime, the Lord of Blades' agents attack Karnath and Thrane outposts to free warforged slaves, raid Cannith strongholds in search of information on warforged creation, and search distant Xen'drik for artifacts that may have some ties to modern warforged. His followers have no fear of dying for their cause; they believe the Lord of Blades can repair them and raise them up again in time for the final battle against the flesh-bound races.

➤ **The Lord of Blades, Warforged (Male Personality) Fighter 2/Artificer 5/Warforged Juggernaut 5:** CR 12; Medium construct (living construct); HD 2d10+6 plus 5d6+15 plus 5d12+15; hp 121; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22; BA +8/+3; Grap +12; Atk +12 melee (1d4+4, slam) or +13 melee (1d8+5/17–20, +1 keen adamantine two-bladed sword) or +12 ranged (1d8+5 plus special/x3, masterwork longbow with +1 bane arrow); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d4+4, slam) or +11/+6 melee (1d8+5/17–20, +1 keen adamantine

two-bladed sword) and +11 melee (1d8+3/17–20, +1 keen adamantine two-bladed sword) or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+5 plus special/x3, masterwork longbow with +1 bane arrow); SA Armor blades, artificer infusions, charge bonus, extended charge, superior bull rush; SQ Construct perfection, craft homunculus, craft reserve, DR 2/adamantine, disable trap, healing immunity, item creation, living construct traits, reserved, resistance to fire 10 (granted by armor), retain essence; AL LE; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +8, Craft (armorsmithing) +12, Craft (weaponsmithing) +12, Disable Device +7, Intimidate +13, Jump +19, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Search +7, Spellcraft +9 (+11 to decipher a spell on a scroll), Use Magic Device +8 (+10 to blindly activate a wondrous item, +12 to activate a spell on a scroll).

Feats: Adamantine Body†, Brew Potion[®], Cleave, Craft Magic Arms and Armor[®], Craft Wondrous Item[®], Exotic Weapon Proficiency (two-bladed sword), Great Cleave, Greater Powerful Charge[®]†, Improved Bull Rush, Legendary Artisan†, Power Attack, Powerful Charge[®]†, Scribe Scroll[®], Two-Weapon Fighting.

†This feat is presented in the *Eberron Campaign Setting*.
Languages: Common, Dwarven, Giant.

Artificer Infusions: 4/4/1; save DC 12 + infusion level.

Armor Blades (Ex): The Lord of Blades' body is covered with +1 human bane adamantine blades that deal 1d8+1 points of slashing damage (plus an additional 2d6+2 points of damage to humans) on a successful grapple attack. While the armor blades can't be removed, they can be affected by spells like any other weapon. (Most warforged juggernauts have adamantine armor spikes that deal piercing damage. The Lord of Blades' adamantine armor blades are unique variants.)

Charge Bonus (Ex): The Lord of Blades gets an extra +2 bonus on his attack roll when charging (total bonus +4).

Construct Perfection (Ex): The Lord of Blades has fully embraced his construct heritage. He is not subject to nonlethal damage or extra damage from critical hits. Furthermore, he gains immunity to all mind-influencing effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), death effects, necromancy effects, ability damage, and ability drain.

Craft Homunculus (Ex): The Lord of Blades can create a homunculus as if he had the Craft Construct feat. He must emulate the spell requirements as normal for making a magic item, and he must pay all the usual gold cost and 75% of the normal XP cost (although he can spend points from his craft reserve; see below). He can also upgrade an existing homunculus that he owns, adding 1 HD at a cost of 2,000 gp and 120 XP (to a maximum of 10 HD). If the homunculus has more than 6 Hit Dice, it becomes a Small creature and advance as described in the *Monster Manual* (+4 Str, –2 Dex, damage increases to 1d6); it also gains 10 extra hit points for becoming a Small construct.

Craft Reserve: The Lord of Blades has a pool of points that he can spend instead of XP when crafting a magic item. Currently, he has no craft points in his reserve, but he can increase his craft reserve upon gaining a level in artificer or using the retain essence ability (described below).

Disable Traps: The Lord of Blades can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has the Difficulty Class higher than 20. He can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps; if he beats a trap's DC by 10 or more with a Disable Device check, he can study the trap, figure out how it works, and bypass it (with his party) without disarming it.

Extended Charge (Ex): The Lord of Blades' speed is 25 feet when making a charge.

Healing Immunity: The Lord of Blades is immune to the effects of spells from the healing subschool. In addition, he cannot benefit from the effects of consumable spells and magic items, such as *heroes' feast* and potions.

Item Creation (Ex): The Lord of Blades can create a magic item even if he doesn't have access to the spells that are prerequisites for the item. He must make a successful Use Magic Device check (DC 20 + caster level) to emulate the spell normally required to make the item, and he must make a successful check for each prerequisite for each item he makes. If he fails a check, he can try again each day until the item is complete. If he comes to the end of the crafting time and he has still not successfully emulated one of the powers, he can make one final check—even if he has already made a check that day. If that check also fails, the creation process fails and the time, money, and XP expended to craft the item are lost.

For purposes of meeting an item's prerequisites, the Lord of Blades has an effective caster level of 7th. If the item duplicates a spell effect, however, the caster level drops to 5th. Costs are determined using the item's minimum caster level or the Lord of Blades' artificer level (5th), whichever is greater.

The Lord of Blades can make Use Magic Device checks to emulate nonspell requirements, including alignment and race, using the normal DCs for the skill. He cannot emulate skill or feat requirements, however, including item creation feat prerequisites. He must meet the caster level prerequisite, including the minimum level to cast a spell he stores in a potion, scroll, or wand.

The Lord of Blades' infusions do not meet spell prerequisites for creating magic items.

Living Construct Traits: The Lord of Blades is immune to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, disease, nausea, fatigue, exhaustion, and energy drain. He cannot heal damage naturally. Although he does not need to sleep, the Lord of Blades must still rest for 8 hours before preparing spells. When reduced to 0 hit points, he is disabled just like a living creature. He can take only a single move action or standard action in each round, but strenuous activity does not risk further injury. When his hit points are less than 0 or greater than –10, the Lord of Blades is inert. He is unconscious and helpless, and he cannot perform any actions. In this state,

he does not lose additional hit points unless more damage is dealt to him, as with a living creature that is stable.

Reserved: The Lord of Blades takes a -5 penalty on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Sense Motive checks.

Retain Essence (Su): The Lord of Blades can salvage the XP from a magic item and use those points to create another magic item. He must spend a day with the item, and he must also have the appropriate item creation feat for the item he is salvaging. After one day, the item is destroyed and the Lord of Blades may add the XP it took to create the item to his craft reserve.

Superior Bull Rush (Ex): The Lord of Blades gains a +5 bonus on Strength checks when making a bull rush attempt, defending against a bull rush, or breaking down doors. In addition, when he makes a successful bull rush against an opponent, he deals an additional 1d8+5 points of damage with his +1 *human bane adamantine armor blades* (in addition to the normal results of the bull rush). If the bull rush was made as part of a charge, he deals +2d6 points of extra damage (from the Greater Powerful Charge feat).

Possessions: +4 *composite adamantine plating of fire resistance*, +1 *human bane adamantine armor blades*, +1 *keen*/+1 *keen adamantine two-bladed sword*, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str), 6 +1 *dwarf bane arrows*, 6 +1 *elf bane arrows*, 6 +1 *gnome bane arrows*, 6 +1 *halfling bane arrows*, 6 +1 *human bane arrows*, *embedded wand of magic missile* (7th level; 30 charges), *ring of improved jumping*, *oil of repair serious damage* (3d8+5 points), *oil of resist fire*, 3 vials of mineral ointment (500 gp each, *armor enhancement* material component), pouch of diamond dust (250 gp; *stone construct* material component).

TACTICS AND ALLIES

Against poorly armored foes, the Lord of Blades uses Power Attack, taking a -4 penalty on attack rolls to gain a +4 bonus on damage rolls. This tactic adjusts his melee combat statistics as follows: Atk +8 melee (1d4+8, slam) or +9 melee (1d8+9/17-20, +1 *keen adamantine two-bladed sword*); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d4+8, slam) or +7/+2 melee (1d8+9/17-20, +1 *keen adamantine two-bladed sword*) and +7 melee (1d8+7/17-20, +1 *keen adamantine two-bladed sword*).

The Lord of Blades enjoys charging and bull rushing his opponents, for obvious reasons. Less a fan of ranged combat, the Lord of Blades usually instructs one of his obedient warforged minions to carry his masterwork composite longbow until needed. (In combat, this trained minion maintains a readied action to hand the bow to his master when so ordered.) Deprived of his favorite ranged weapon, the Lord of Blades relies on his embedded *wand of magic missile* to snuff unreachable foes; however, he must make a successful Use Magic Device check (DC 20) to activate the wand.

Although the Lord of Blades surrounds himself with zealous warforged, he also relies on a pair of crafty homunculi

named Hilt and Pommel. Advanced to Small size and sheathed in studded leather armor, they remain near the Lord of Blades at all times, using aid another actions or flanking to help their master gain bonuses on his attack rolls. They count on the Mobility feat to protect them from attacks of opportunity while maneuvering around foes. If either homunculus is destroyed, the Lord of Blades takes 2d10 points of damage. If the Lord of Blades dies, Hilt and Pommel turn to dust, leaving behind their armor and amulets.

Given sufficient preparation time before a battle, the Lord of Blades casts the following infusions on himself: *armor enhancement* (casting time 1 minute, grants resistance to electricity 10, duration 50 minutes), and *stone construct* (casting time 1 round, grants DR 10/adamantine, duration 50 minutes or maximum 50 points of damage), *bull's strength* (+4 to Strength, duration 5 minutes), and *shield of faith* (+2 deflection bonus to AC, duration 5 minutes). He then places the following infusions upon Hilt and Pommel: *shield of faith* (see above for effect and duration) and *cat's grace* (+4 to Dexterity, duration 5 minutes). He saves his two remaining 1st-level infusion slots for casting *repair light damage* spells (each repairs 1d8+5 points of damage) on himself or his minions after the fight.

The Lord of Blades and his homunculi together have a combined EL of 13. The Lord of Blades surrounds himself with other warforged as well (although none as powerful as him).

Hilt and Pommel (advanced homunculi): CR 6; Small construct; HD 10d10+10; hp 65 each; Init +1; Spd 15 ft. (20 ft. base), fly 40 ft. (good); AC 17, touch 12, flatfooted 15; BA +5; Grap +0; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+1 plus poison, bite); SA Poison; SQ Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 13, Con —, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills: Hide +15, Listen +9, Spot +9.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Dodge, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility.

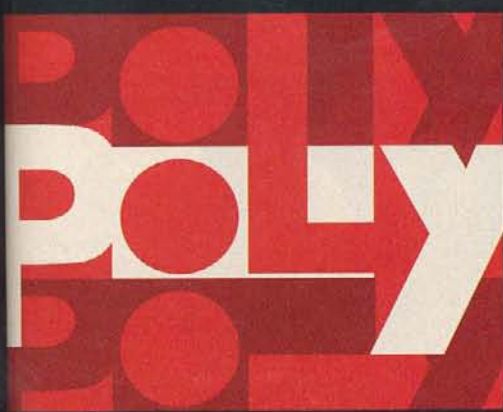
Possessions: +1 *studded leather armor*, *amulet of natural armor* +1.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial damage sleep for 1 minute, secondary damage sleep for another 5d6 minutes. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

Construct Traits: A homunculus has immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromancy effects, mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or energy drain. Cannot heal damage, but can be repaired. Darkvision 60 ft. and low-light vision.

For more information on the warforged, the Mourmland, and the evil Lord of Blades, check out the Eberron Campaign Setting, available in June wherever you buy DUNGEONS & DRAGONS.

THANK THE MAKER! STAR WARS RETURNS TO POLYHEDRON



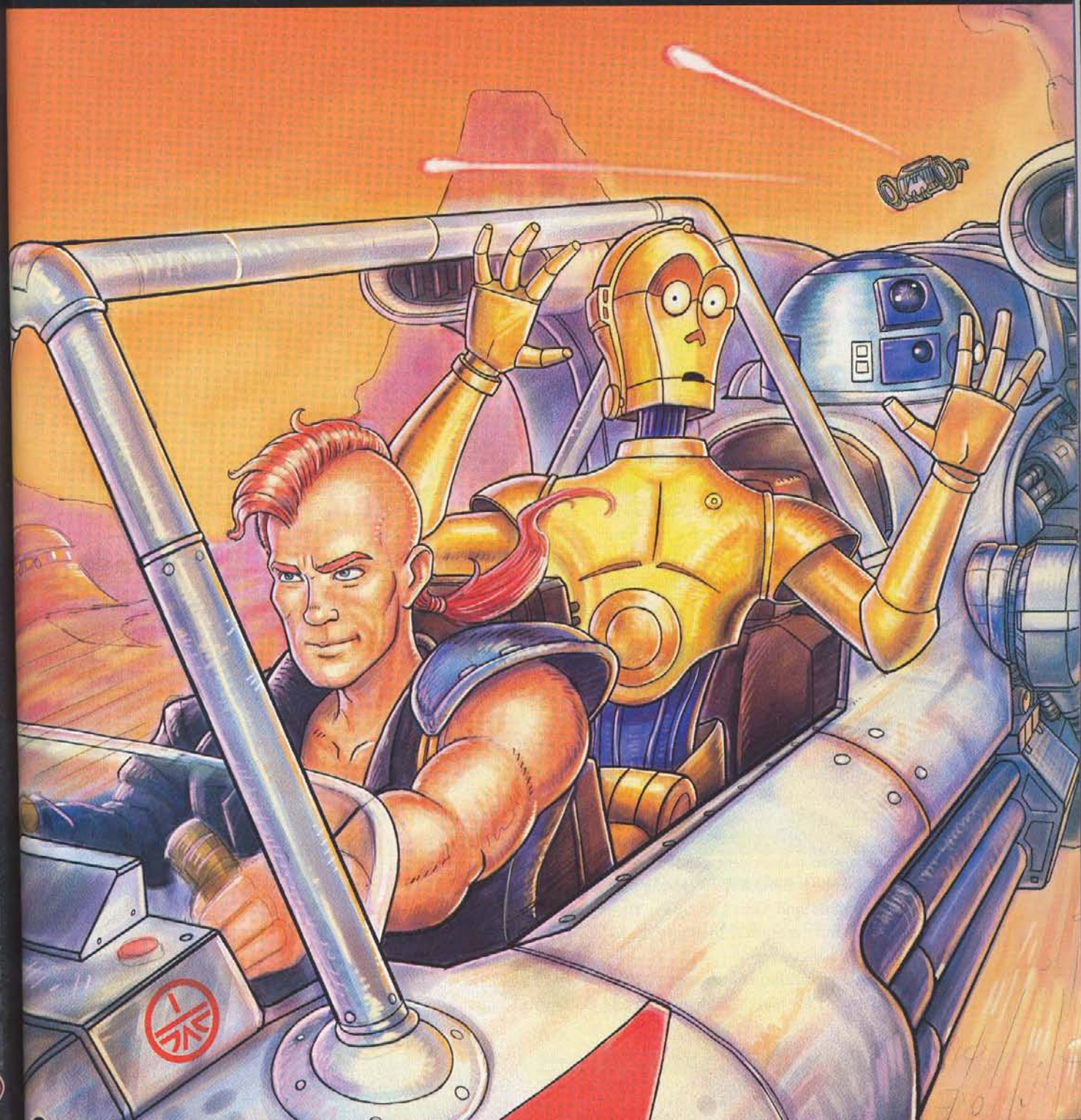
RPGA News

Farewell to the Living City

More Dark Sun Monsters

A Bevy of Baleful Beasties

Polyhedron 170



News from the Top: The RPGA Update

Farewell to the Living City

In this installment of News from the Top I'd like to address a couple of issues. The first is a kind of history and explanation to where we are today with the Network's long-running LIVING CITY campaign. In essence, a tribute to those that helped develop this campaign as well as an explanation to what we intend now.

I think we can safely say LIVING CITY (LC) was the precursor to what has become the norm for the RPGA and shaped the way gamers today play within the organization. It has had a huge impact on our development, and this is why: LC was the first of our true campaigns. Set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, players and NPCs alike struggled for fame and notoriety within the streets, markets, buildings, and dungeons in, under, or around the thriving city of Ravens Bluff.

This campaign had a good, solid foundation and was so akin to what D&D was—open-ended high adventure with a sense of advancement—that it soon caught the imagination of the majority of the membership. Like all systems though, the more that participate the more the flaws show. Until the launch of 3rd Edition D&D, though, these flaws were relatively minor.

With 3rd Edition, the flaws of a continuing campaign became very real. What D&D edition would the campaign support? Well, the current one, obviously. How do we convert thousands of characters with all their accumulated wealth and equipment for players who have been playing for multiple years? Not to labor the point, it wasn't a process that we were geared to achieve at the time, and a lot of player as well as staff pain followed.

Without the ability to fix the issues now presented and with the RPGA having the new fledgling colossus of LIVING GREYHAWK gathering pace, many options were discussed and tabled. One was from OrganizedPlay.com. This revolved around an out-of-house contract to solve, fix, track, and maintain the campaign without stretching the already exhausted RPGA staff. Also, they offered to do it quickly and to stop the pain of the players who were still unsatisfied with the conversion and other fixes in place. They tried this until the end of 2003, when, faced with dwindling numbers that were less than one quarter of the starting monthly numbers, they called it a day and dropped the contract.

This effectively means the RPGA staff had to do a lot of long, hard soul-searching a second time. Still without the staff numbers to support this campaign and with more fixes necessary *plus* the addition of a new FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign already within house *plus* LG reaching Titan size, we sadly decided that the RPGA wouldn't continue LC. This said, we also realized that LC and its players deserved to have a fitting finale, and to that end we have allowed for a closing bridge of adventures at both Origins and Gen Con Indy. These are being worked on by some of the authors that have made LC truly live for many players for many years.

To those who have contributed to this campaign, understand that your work wasn't for naught and we sincerely thank you.



You helped shape what we play today. LG and the new LEGACY OF THE GREEN REGENT campaigns are all born from the lessons learned from the development and running of LC. Like all good home campaigns, it's just time to stop and play something else.

The Retailer Program

Speaking of playing something else... In January this year, the RPGA launched a new retailer program designed to support play within stores. Each month we produce a new kit that stores can purchase from Wizards of the Coast's Direct Sales department. Within these kits are three quality-printed specially illustrated copies of the latest LEGACY OF THE GREEN REGENT adventure, three special clear cell spell templates for GMs to use during play, alternative paint promotional miniatures from the latest D&D MINIATURES expansion, posters and a window cling to advertise the event and identify the store as a D&D CAMPAIGNS site plus formats and 12 new terrain tiles to support a 12-player D&D MINIATURES tournament. So, if you'd like your store to run these or you are willing to help your store run them, get them to contact Wizards of the Coast Direct Sales department at 1-800-564-1636.

Until next time, may the goddess Tymora shine favorably on your d20s.

Ian Richards
Worldwide RPGA Director
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STAR WARS

DROIDS

THE ADVENTURES OF R2-D2 AND C-3PO

by Rich Handley and Abel G. Peña Illustration by Jeff Carlilse

SOME FRIENDSHIPS ARE FORGED IN A SINGLE MOMENT, others from a lifetime of experiences shared. Poets have devoted countless pages to celebrating such friendships, but there is another about which far less has been written. That friendship is forged in chrome.

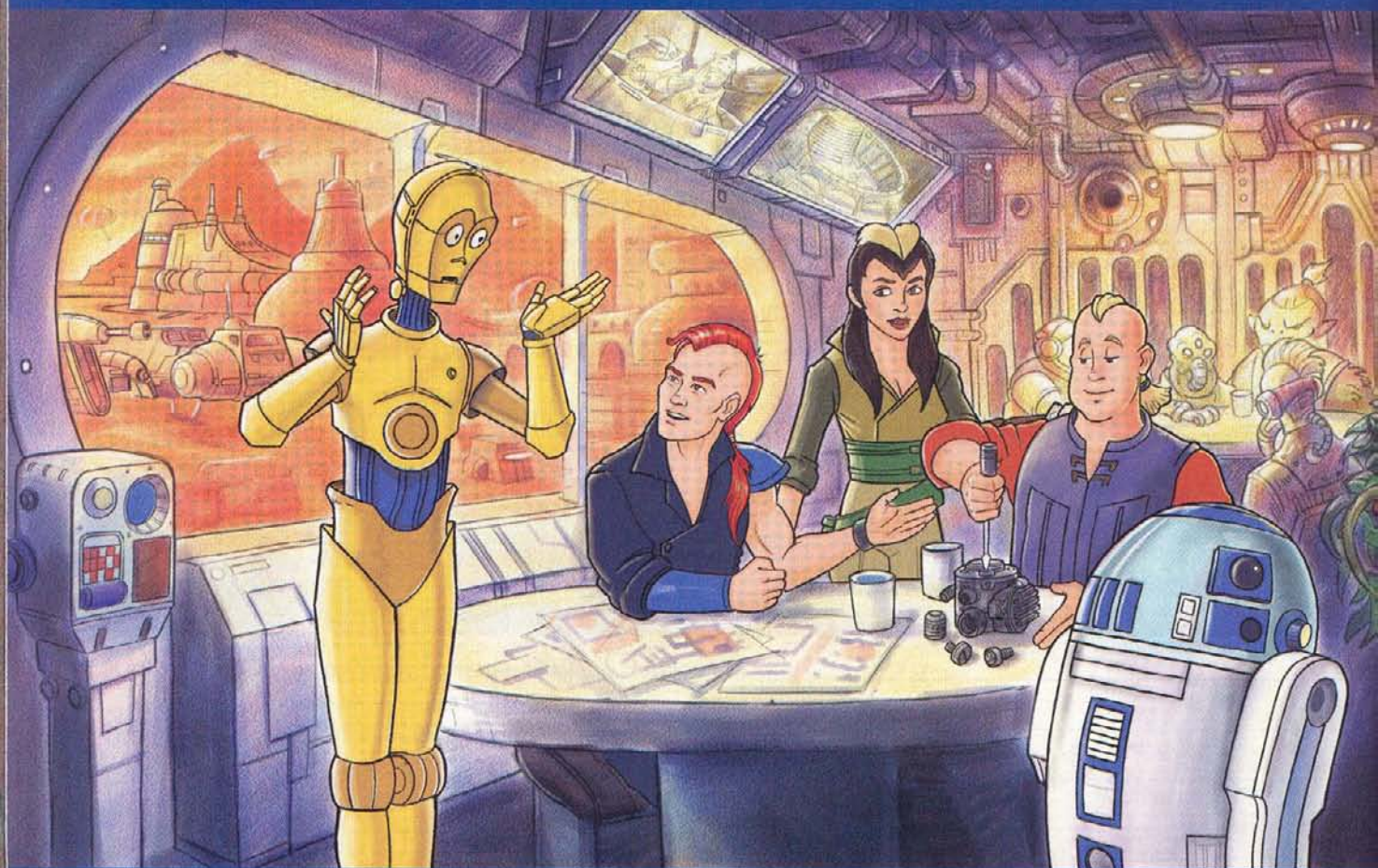
C-3PO, built by nine-year-old Anakin Skywalker from the scrapped remains of several Cybot Galactica protocol droids, had a marked tendency toward prissiness and fretting. The smaller R2-D2, an astromech droid with an amazing knack for thinking its way out of trouble, had little tolerance for such qualities. And yet, theirs is a friendship that has stood the test of time—nearly sixty years by the time of the Yuuzhan Vong invasion.

Introduced to each other before the Battle of Naboo and reacquainted ten years later, Artoo and Threepio went on to share many fascinating adventures. Some were deadly, some humor-

ous, but each re-affirmed the warmth and caring they had for one another. Some of the pair's most exciting exploits took place on the desolate planet of Ingo, as revealed in the popular *Droids: The Adventures of R2-D2 and C-3PO* animated series, which ran on ABC starting September 1985 and lasting a single season of 13 episodes. Set 15 years before *A New Hope*, the series shed new light on an unexplored corner of the *Star Wars* universe. This article covers the highlights of the series, providing rules and suggestions for incorporating the background of the cartoon series into your *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* campaigns.

Boonta Bounty

Long before they first encountered Luke Skywalker on desolate Tatooine, C-3PO and R2-D2 were the property of a notorious smuggler named Zewel Hortine. When authorities arrested Hortine while in orbit over the planet Ingo, the criminal flushed his contraband-laden cargo bay into the planet's



atmosphere to avoid further prosecution. Stationed in the bay at the time, C-3PO and R2-D2 plummeted to the surface, landing with a crash in the forbidding Vaj Desert.

Luckily, they were found by Thall Joben, a young racer from a nearby settlement. Joben hired the droids to help him in the speeder repair shop he maintained with his friend and racing partner, Jord Dusat. This brought the droids into direct conflict with the evil Fromm Gang, a crime syndicate led by the blue Annoo-dat Sise Fromm and his angry punk of a son, Tig. One of Jabba the Hutt's greatest rivals, Sise was a mastermind of crime, a killer without a conscience whose very name reduced even the most stalwart of Annoo-dat to shivers.

Jord and Thall had built themselves a speeder called the *White Witch*, which they believed could tear up the tracks against any opponent. However, when they accidentally witnessed Tig Fromm's secret project, the *Trigon One*, the young gangster became obsessed with eliminating them before they could reveal what he was up to. To that end, he kidnapped Jord Dusat.

With help from a woman named Kea Moll, who had come to the repair shop to have her ship (a *Starrunner*-class starship called *The Sand Sloth*) repaired, Thall and the droids sped to Tig Fromm's secret base. Thall used a decoy to get R2-D2 inside the base so the droid could hack into the computer and locate Jord's cell and rescue him. Kea later gave them a ride to the Boonta Speeder Race on Ko Vari, also known as Boonta.

En route, Kea's ship suffered more malfunctions and she diverted to Annoo for repairs. Secretly, she and her mother Demma were members of a resistance group against the

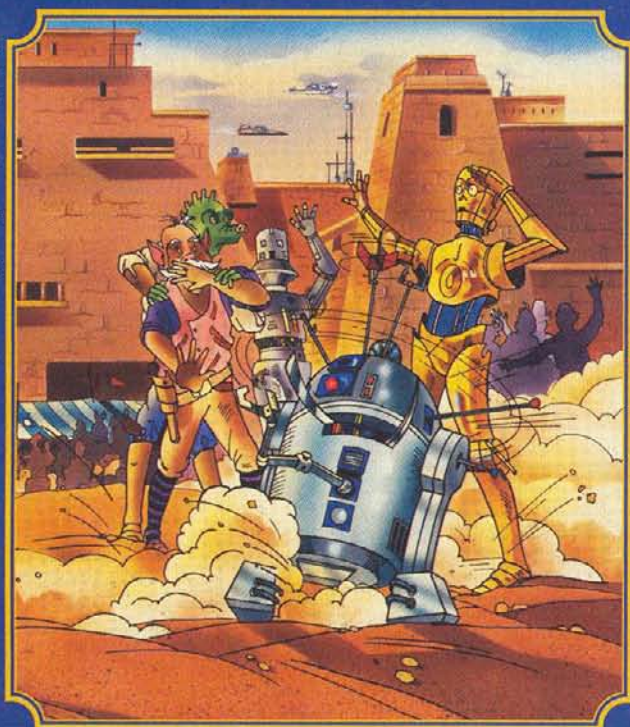
Empire. The *Trigon One*, Kea told the droids, was a weapons satellite that represented a danger to the galaxy if it ended up in the wrong hands. Demma had sent Kea to find Tig's base so the resistance could destroy it. This was not the first time the droids had crossed paths with such resistance groups, and it certainly would not be the last.

The racing team agreed to help Kea complete her mission, but when she and Jord slipped aboard Sise's ship, they were captured by the gangster's guards. Thall managed to free them from their bonds, and they escaped the Fromm ship by stealing the *Trigon One* from the cargo bay. Sise was not pleased; his son had failed—again.

Desperate to get back in his father's good graces and frustrated at the mocking he took from Vlix Oncard, his father-appointed bodyguard, Tig Fromm vowed to get back the *Trigon One*, and to avenge himself on the racers and their droids. Again capturing Kea and Jord, the Annoo-dat youth offered Thall an ultimatum: if he didn't return the satellite, his friends would die; but as with most of Tig's plans, this, too, went awry. Helping their masters escape, Artoo and Threepio rigged the *Trigon* to crash into Sise's Ingo fortress, destroying both the fortress and the satellite. Needless to say, Sise Fromm was not amused.

At last, Thall and Jord made their way to Boonta with Kea and the droids. This was to be the youths' first major competition, but they almost never made it to the starting gate. As soon as the group settled into their assigned berthing, Tig's shuttle opened fire on their speeder, forcing Artoo to use an emergency control on its outer hull to launch it to safety. The





speeder crashed into a junkyard and was damaged on impact, but the junkyard's attendant, a rickety droid called Proto One, offered to fix it for them.

Meanwhile, the Fromm gang hired the infamous bounty hunter Boba Fett to destroy the droids and their human masters. Though Jabba had put a bounty on the Fromms' heads, Fett owed them a favor and took their job instead. Fett first tried to eliminate the group from within, sending his personal droid, BL-17, to befriend C-3PO and kill the humans. The droid gassed Joben and Dusat's garage, but Artoo saved Kea from asphyxiation. Not realizing BL-17 was responsible, Threepio accepted his offer to move the *White Witch* to a more secure location until the race. This gave the droid just the access he needed to sabotage the *White Witch* by placing a thermal detonator in the *Witch's* engine.

On the morning of the Boonta, Fett entered the race in his own *Silver Speeder* to ensure the deaths of the Joben-Dusat racing team. Extending winches from the *Silver Speeder* to the *White Witch*, Fett tried to make the other speeder crash, but Artoo saved his masters by severing the cords. He tried again using a magnetic beam, which caused the thermal detonator to dislodge and destroy his racer instead. Thall won the race, and Fett (who escaped the explosion thanks to his jetpack) took the Fromms prisoner to collect Jabba's bounty as payment for his lost droid and racer.

Speeder mogul Zebulon Dak, impressed by Thall's handling of the *Witch*, offered him, Jord, and Kea full-time jobs. Not since Sebulba the Dug threaded the Stone Needle during the Boonta Eye Classic some two decades earlier had Dak seen such expert flying. They accepted immediately, but upon learning they'd not be able to bring Artoo and Threepio along, they declined the offer. Unwilling to deprive their masters of this

opportunity, the droids entered an escape pod and blasted off as Thall's ship jumped to lightspeed.

Thall Joben and Jord Dusat

Ever since he was 10 years old, Thall Joben knew he wanted to be a speeder racer. He'd studied the history of the sport more than some astronomers studied the heavens, and he knew it was his destiny to race. His father refused to let him try, saying the only place racing would ever get him would be a medical bed. Furious, Thall left his home on Beheboth, stowing away aboard a freighter bound for Boonta. The planet, he'd read, had once been called Ko Vari but had been re-named by the Hutts to cash in on an untapped market by letting humans take part in the deadly Boonta races. The races were named for a decadent Hutt holiday commemorating Boonta the Hutt's ascendance to godhood. Lasting three days and spanning three worlds (Tatooine, Ko Vari, and Arami), the holiday marked the Hutt's three-day epic battle (and victory) against the Parliament of Moralan, which had long encroached on Hutt territory. On Boonta, Thall met a rebellious youth named Jord Dusat, an orphan, who challenged him to a race on his first day and was impressed when Thall beat him by more than five seconds. The two became fast friends and eventual business partners, and Jord accompanied him back to Beheboth when he received news of his father's death. It was only at the funeral that his mother revealed a stunning secret: his father had once been a champion speeder himself, but he'd left the sport after a crash nearly killed him a mere two days before Thall's birth. Thall's mother died a few months later, leaving Jord his only real family.



Thall Joben: Male Human Fringer 3; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Defense 16 (+4 class, +2 Dex); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 20/13; Atk +3 melee (1d3+1, punch) or +4 ranged; SQ adaptive learning (Repair), barter; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +1; SZ M; FP 2; Rep +1; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Equipment: Lightsaber, racing speeder (the *White Witch*), tool pouch, utility belt.

Skills: Hide +5, Jump +4, Knowledge (landspeeders) +6, Pilot +8, Profession (mechanic) +7, Read/Write Basic, Repair +8, Speak Basic, Survival +4.

Feats: Acrobatic, Skill Emphasis (Pilot), Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Jord Dusat: Male Human Fringer 3; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Def 16 (+4 class, +2 Dex); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 17/13; Atk +4 melee (1d3+2 punch) or +4 ranged; SQ adaptive learning (Repair), barter; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +1; SZ M; FP 1; Rep +1; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 14.

Equipment: Emergency crash suit, hydrosponder, souped-up landspeeder.

Skills: Craft (body work) +8, Knowledge (Boonta) +5, Pilot +7, Profession (mechanic) +5, Read/Write Basic, Repair +5, Speak Basic.



Feats: Skill Emphasis (Pilot), Trustworthy, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Kea Moll

A native of the planet Annoo, Kea was an accomplished pilot at an early age. Much of her childhood was spent living on the farm her mother managed, which left her a good deal of free time to practice flying. When she was 15, her mother revealed a secret she'd kept to protect her: she was an agent for a local resistance cell against the Empire. Having witnessed many atrocities committed by the Empire on her world and others, Kea quickly joined her mother in helping the resistance, and when she was seventeen, she was assigned her first solo mission: to make her way to Ingo and destroy the Fromm Gang's *Trigon One*. The mission was a success, not only in ending the Fromms' plans but also in allowing her to make contact with businessman Zebulon Dak, a resistance operative who used his wealth and success as a cover so none would suspect his activities. Dak offered her a job along with Thall Joben and Jord Dusat, but neither of her friends suspected her true function: to spy on Balmorra, Millennium Engineering, and other manufacturing plants working for the Empire. Kea later went on to become a valuable member of the Rebel Alliance, and was among the founders of New Republic Intelligence (NRI).



Kea Moll: Female Human Scout 3; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Def 15 (+4 class, +1 Dex); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 19/13; Atk +2 melee (1d3, punch) or +2 ranged (3d6, holdout blaster or 4d8, blaster cannon); SQ trailblazing; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +3, FP 3; Rep +2; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Equipment: Electrobinoculars, frag grenades, holdout blaster, sawed-off blaster cannon, *Starrunner*-class starship (the *Sand Sloth*), thermal detonator.

Skills: Astrogate +5, Computer Use +4, Pilot +6, Profession (agro-farmer) +5, Read/Write Basic, Ride +3, Speak Basic, Speak Dat-an, Move Silently +2, Search +5, Spot +4, Survival +7.

Feats: Alertness, Track, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, simple weapons).

The Fromm Gang

The Annoo-dat crime boss known as Sise Fromm made a fast name for himself by eliminating a rival named Klin Kartoosh. Klin was a big name in the spice-running racket, and a long-time associate of the Desilijic Hutt clan. Controlling through fear a number of planets in the vicinity of the Annoo System, the elderly criminal made an immediate enemy of Jabba the Hutt when he hired the notorious bounty hunter Boba Fett to execute Kartoosh. As arrogant as he was dangerous, Sise never took Jabba's threat seriously, believing he, not the Hutt, would come out on top in the end. The many failures of his son Tig, unfortunately, made it difficult to maintain his reputation, especially after Tig accidentally destroyed Sise's vacation palace on Bolad. Tig's failures were legendary, earning him the nicknames Baby-Face Fromm and

Junior, and the humiliation this caused Sise was immeasurable. To that end, he assigned a personal bodyguard, Vlix Oncard, to keep watch over his embarrassment of a son. Vlix never let the younger Fromm forget it.



Sise Fromm: Male blue Annoo-dat Scoundrel 3/Noble 3/Crimelord 3; Init -2; Def 17 (+9 class, -2 Dex); Spd 2 m (without hoverchair); VP/WP 36/13; Atk +5 melee (1d3+1, punch) or +3 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SQ bonus class skill (Intimidate), favor +2, illicit barter, inspire confidence, lucky (1/day), resource access; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +10; SZ M; FP 0; DSP 20; Rep +10; Str 12*, Dex 7*, Con 10*, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 11.

* Scores reduced due to effects of aging.

Equipment: Hoverchair (with hidden blaster pistol), thugs.

Skills: Appraise +15, Bluff +21, Diplomacy +10, Forgery +10, Gather Information +8, Intimidate +11, Listen +4, Knowledge (Annoo) +15, Knowledge (streetwise) +10, Pilot +8, Read/Write Dat-an, Read/Write Basic, Sense Motive +12, Speak Dat-an, Speak Basic, Speak Huttese.

Feats: Alertness, Infamy, Persuasive, Skill Emphasis (Diplomacy), Toughness, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).



Tig Fromm: Male blue Annoo-dat Scoundrel 2; Init +2; Def 17 (+5 class, +2 Dex); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 6/9; Atk +1 melee (1d3, unarmed strike) or +3 ranged; SQ illicit barter, lucky (1/day); SV Fort -1, Ref +5, Will -1; SZ M; FP 0; DSP 2; Rep +1; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 9, Int 17, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Equipment: Combat droid menagerie, datapad, converted Imperial shuttle (the *Voor Viper*).

Skills: Bluff +3, Computer Use +7, Craft (electronics) +8, Disable Device +5, Knowledge (droids) +9, Knowledge (streetwise) +6, Pilot +4, Read/Write Dat-an, Read/Write Basic, Repair +9, Speak Dat-an, Speak Basic, Speak Binary, Spot +4.

Feats: Gearhead, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).



Vlix Oncard: Male blue Annoo-dat Soldier 6; Init -1; Def 13 (+4 class, -1 Dex); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 53/17; Atk +9/+4 melee (1d4+3, combat gloves) or +5 ranged (1d8/DC 18, stunner); SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +3; SZ M; FP 0; DSP 8; Rep +3; Str 17, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Equipment: Combat gloves, Sav'ruuchi-original designer suit, stunner.

Skills: Jump +5, Profession (bodyguard) +10, Intimidate +13, Read/Write Dat-an, Read/Write Basic, Speak Dat-an, Speak Basic.

Feats: Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Vehicles and Ships

One of the most thrilling elements of the *Droids* cartoon series was the wide array of exciting ships and vehicles that, through their design, helped to root the show in the *Star Wars* universe. The following three vessels played an important part in the cartoon's first story arc.

White Witch

Jord and Thall's baby, the *White Witch*, is a heavily modified Mobquet speeder. A popular model with urban teens of the Core a decade ago, this vehicle remained a lasting retro favorite with Outer Rim youths for its hassle-free maintenance and reliable components. Thanks to the joyhopper system installed by Jord, the vehicle's repulsorlifts allow it to ride noticeably higher than an average speeder for a short period of time, a nostalgic throwback to hydraulic height-augmenting systems of pre-repulsorlift days.

Craft: Modified Mobquet C/L-82 Landspeeder; **Class:** Ground (Speeder); **Cost:** Not available for sale; **Size:** Large (3.5 meters long); **Crew:** Unique (1 pilot); **Passengers:** 1; **Cargo Capacity:** 15 kilograms; **Ground Speed:** 150 m (max. speed 380 km/h); **Altitude:** up to 4 meters; **Defense:** 11* (-1 size, +2 armor); **Hull Points:** 16; **DR:** 5; **Weapon:** None.

*Provides one-half cover to its passengers.

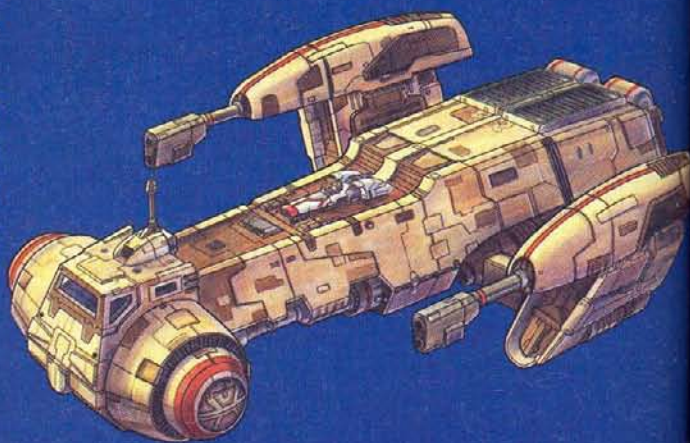


Weapon: Laser Cannon; **Fire Arc:** Front; **Attack Bonus:** +3 (-1 size, +4 fire control); **Damage:** 3d8; **Range:** 20 m.

Weapon: Vibrosaw (3); **Fire Arc:** Front; Right; Left; **Attack Bonus:** 11 (-1 size, +2 fire control); **Damage:** 2d10; **Range:** 1 m.

Weapon: Harpoon (magnetic); **Fire Arc:** Front; **Attack Bonus:** 11 (-1 size, +2 fire control); **Damage:** 2d10; **Range:** 10 m.

*Provides one-half cover to its passengers.



Sand Sloth

Kea spent many hours learning the ins and outs of the *Sand Sloth* while working on this sleek beauty alongside her father. A reliable ship built for hit-and-run missions, the *Sand Sloth* became Kea's by default when her father never came back from "work" one day—killed on a mission for the resistance against the Empire that went awry.

Craft: Corellian Engineering Corporation *Starrunner*-class starship; **Class:** Transport; **Cost:** Not available for sale; **Size:** Small (31 meters long); **Crew:** Unique (1 pilot); **Passengers:** 6; **Cargo Capacity:** 20 metric tons; **Consumables:** 3 months; **Hyperdrive:** ×2 (backup ×12); **Max Speed:** Ramming; **Defense:** 21 (+1 size, +10 armor); **Shield Points:** 60; **Hull Points:** 120; **DR:** 10.

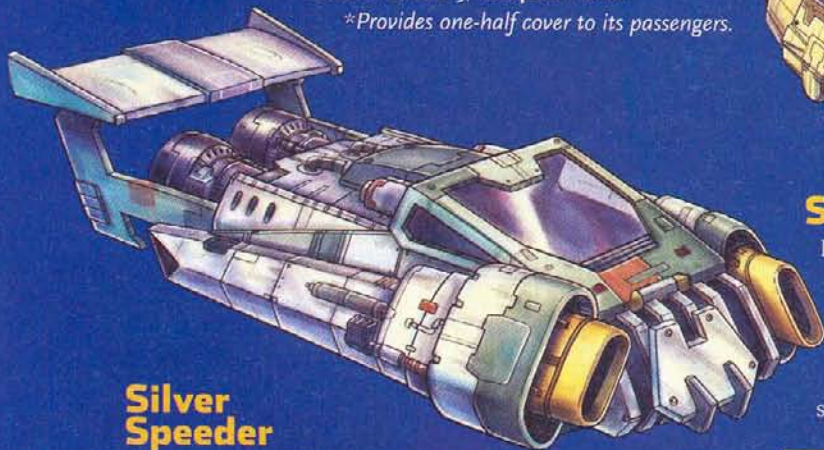
Weapon: Laser cannons (2 fire-linked); **Fire Arc:** Front; **Attack Bonus:** 15 (+1 size, +4 fire control); **Damage:** 5d10×2; **Range Modifiers:** PB +0, S +0 M/L n/a.

Weapon: Ion cannon; **Fire Arc:** Partial turret (front, left, right); **Attack Bonus:** 13 (+1 size, +2 fire control); **Damage:** Special; **Range Modifiers:** PB +0, S +0 M/L n/a.

Silver Speeder

Boba Fett acquired the *Silver Speeder* from an Iotran mark after chasing her down to the planet Rivvidu. The brutish power of the vehicle gave the bounty hunter such difficulty chasing it down, he decided to keep it as a spoil of the hunt. Fett repainted most of the landspeeder subdued shades, making the *Silver Speeder* more inconspicuous if a bit of a misnomer.

Craft: Modified zZip X-X Landspeeder; **Class:** Ground (Speeder); **Cost:** Not available for sale; **Size:** Large (3.7 meters long); **Crew:** Unique (1 pilot); **Passengers:** 1; **Cargo Capacity:** 10 kilograms; **Ground Speed:** 150 m (max. speed 390 km/h); **Altitude:** up to 3 meters; **Defense:** 12* (-1 size, +3 armor); **Hull Points:** 18; **DR:** 5.



Alien Anthology

Addendum

Annoo-dat Blue (Ret)

For countless centuries, the blue-skinned Ret of the planet Gelefil were a peaceful lot who farmed crops all day and enjoyed fine ales at night. Cut off from the rest of the galaxy by a lack of technology, they led simple lives, ignorant that life existed elsewhere in the universe. Many yearned for more out of life, and yet, something kept them from seeking it out. It wasn't that they lacked ambition—they simply had no idea how much more the galaxy had to offer. Three centuries before the Clone Wars, however, all that changed when an army of Annoo-dat invaders landed on Gelefil. Hailing from Annoo, a planet in the same system, the Annoo-dat had recently developed space travel to find another homeworld to replace their own, which had become largely unlivable.

Fascinated by the newcomers' technology, many Ret set aside their former lifestyle, embracing the New Way that the Annoo-dat represented. Not all Ret were so willing to embrace technology, but the nay-sayers were soon swallowed up in the wave of excitement that quickly spread around the planet. Much to the confusion of the Annoo-dat, the invasion went off without a hitch, for instead of fighting back, the Ret were downright enthusiastic about accepting the invaders' lead. Upon learning of the invasion, the Old Republic sent emissaries to negotiate an end to hostilities. However, not a single shot was fired during the entire operation, and before the emissaries arrived, the Ret had already changed their name to Annoo-dat to honor those who had elevated them from ignorance. They also began calling their world Annoo, in honor of the Annoo-dat's former homeworld.

Within a century, the two races were so intertwined that the invader/invadee status became meaningless, each occupying an equal niche in Annoo-dat society. To avoid confusion, scientists have come to refer to the former Ret as the blue Annoo-dat, and the original, orange-scaled reptilian Annoo-dat as the Annoo-dat Prime. Neither species has adapted such a nomenclature, however, referring to themselves only as Annoo-dat.

Personality: In addition to adapting the Annoo-dat invaders' technology, the blue Annoo-dat borrowed their personality traits, language and even history as well. They became more aggressive, more hostile, and many joined the military, invading other worlds alongside their reptilian brothers. In time, most vestiges of the peaceful Ret vanished into the past, replaced by the more savage, brutal veneer of the Annoo-dat Prime, as though they'd always been the scourge of the spaceways. The blue Annoo-dat are still torn on the matter of technology, however, with the younger tending toward total reliance on machinery to solve any problem and the elderly relying more on intelligence and intuition over the cold hand of science.

Physical Description: Blue Annoo-dat are not generally tall, though some have been known to pass 2 meters in height. The average adult male height is 1.68 meters, while the average female height is 1.72 meters. Body sizes range from frail and thin to hugely muscled and rotund. Greenish-blue scales cover their hairless bodies up to their blue-lipped faces. Mottling brackets

their eyes, with patches of aqua along the brows and ears. Long, spotted fingers end in sharp, talon-like claws, while their pointy-heeled feet end in two knobby, oversized toes. Glands along their cheeks gorge with blood when their tempers rise, burning a deep crimson on their otherwise cyan faces.

Homeworld: Annoo, formerly known as Gelefil, is one of seven habitable worlds of the fourteen-planet Annoo System (located in the Nimat Corridor section of the Outer Rim Territories). The original Annoo, now desolate and lifeless, was rendered uninhabitable after centuries of civil war between Annoo-dat Prime factions.

Language: The original Ret language, Tra'ang'a, has largely fallen out of usage, though linguists have retained recordings and lexicons for posterity. Currently, most blue Annoo-dat speak two languages, Dat-an (the language of the Annoo-dat Prime) and Basic. Because of the great volume of business they do with the Hutts, many also have taken to learning Huttese.

Example Names: Sise Fromm, Tig Fromm, Vlix Oncard, Klin Kartoosh, Deg Bostel.

Age in Years: The Annoo-dat are extremely long-lived; gangster Sise Fromm, in fact, is 900 years old. Child 1–25; young adult 26–160; adult 161–500; middle age 501–700; old 701–820; venerable 821+.

Adventurers: Because of the enthusiasm with which the Ret embraced space travel, Annoo-dat spread quickly throughout the galaxy. Many serve the Annoo-dat military, while others have entered private business and a wide range of other professions, such as bounty hunting, piloting, and racing. Ironically, given their once-idyllic way of life, one of the most successful farming supply consortiums in the galaxy, Bostel-Krex, is half-owned by the Annoo-dat merchant Deg Bostel.

Annoo-dat Blue Species Traits

- ⊕ Ability Modifiers: +2 Constitution, +2 Wisdom.
- ⊕ Medium-size: As Medium-size creatures, blue Annoo-dat have no special modifiers due to their size.
- ⊕ Speed: Blue Annoo-dat base speed is 10 meters.
- ⊕ Red In The Face: When a blue Annoo-dat grows angry, translucent glands on its face fill with blood, making it difficult for them to conceal their tempers. If a blue Annoo-dat loses his temper during a delicate negotiation, he suffers a –4 penalty on Bluff and Diplomacy checks. By the same token, at the GM's discretion, he may gain up to a +4 bonus on Intimidate checks when dealing with a subordinate.
- ⊕ Skill Bonuses: Blue Annoo-dat gain a +2 species bonus on Sense Motive and Spot checks.
- ⊕ Free Language Skills: Read/Write and Speak Dat-an.

Blue Annoo-dat Commoner: Init +0; Defense 10; Spd 10 m; VP/WP 0/12; Atk +0 melee (1d3, unarmed strike) or +0 ranged; SQ Species traits; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +1; SZ M; FP 0; DSP 0; Rep +0; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10. Challenge Code A.

Equipment: Variety of personal belongings.

Skills: Profession (any one) +1, Read/Write Basic, Read/Write Dat-an, Speak Basic, Speak Dat-an, Sense Motive +2, Spot +2.

Feats: None.

New Planets

Ingo

The planet Ingo, a Mid-Rim world in the Bortele Cluster, contains four major continents, two of which are largely uninhabited due to extreme polar conditions. The other two continents are both arid deserts sparsely settled by members of a hundred different species, none of which are indigenous. Relatively free of any enticing features whatsoever, Ingo is often overlooked by the commercial space lanes. Little in the way of organized government exists on Ingo, and most of the settlers do as they please. This leads to frequent settlement squabbles, some of which have proven fatal over the years. Still, the settlers leave each other alone for the most part, if for no other reason than because of one unavoidable truth: traveling the Vaj Desert and other endless sandy wastes just to wage war just doesn't seem worth the effort.

Ingo has five moons, three of which (Meragon, Gravaj, and Por Raton) are wholly unremarkable. The other two, Terig and Dram, were purchased by the House of Tagge Mining Company to accommodate massive drilling operations for scatrium, fravisite, and other rare metals. Ingo orbits an unremarkable star and is the second of sixteen unremarkable planets.

In fact, were it not the homeworld of famed speeder racers Thall Joben and Jord Dusat, as well as Wraith Squadron hero Shalla Nelprin and her sister, New Republic commando Vula Nelprin, it might have escaped mention in the history books entirely. As it is, Ingo is little more than a footnote.

Annoo (Gelefil)

The once-agricultural planet known as Gelefil has a unique history among the millions of planets in the galaxy, in that it is among the only worlds ever to be willingly conquered. For centuries, the planet Gelefil was an idyllic world. The peaceful Ret who lived there had no need for fighting, for their planet was a virtual paradise of tranquility where each Ret provided for his own family and peace reigned. Following an Annoo-dat invasion, Gelefil's citizens renamed their world Annoo to honor their conquerors.

Though much of the planet's northern beauty was preserved, large sections of Annoo's southern regions were set aside as manufacturing districts. There, both species worked together to usher their world into a more modernized age. Mechanized agriculture increased the output of the simple farming a thou-

sand-fold, while the production of textiles and other goods allowed Annoo to enter the galactic economy. And for the first time in the world's history, a planet-wide army stood ready to protect Annoo from further invasions. The world once known as Gelefil entered a golden new age where everyone prospered.

And yet, every golden age has its tarnish. For the planet Annoo, that tarnish came in the form of General Ashaar Khorda, an Annoo-dat Prime radical who, shortly before the Clone Wars, very nearly succeeded in overthrowing the government and taking control of the entire planet. His war crimes drew the attention of the Old Republic, however, whose intervention forced him to escape and form a band of self-styled freedom fighters against the Republic.

Ko Vari (Boonta)

The planet Ko Vari was nicknamed Boonta by the Desijilic Hutts in order to further the clan's immense wealth. The much despised Yenchara the Hutt realized that by giving humans a chance to take part in the deadly Boonta races, they could cash in on an untapped market with huge potential. The Boonta races of Ko Vari, Tatooine, and Arami were named for a three-day decadent Hutt holiday commemorating Boonta the Hutt's ascendance to godhood. The races had long fascinated humans, and Yenchara was happy to do whatever it took to line his clan's wide pockets.

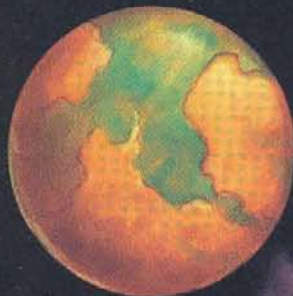
It was a shrewd move. Without the Boonta races, there wasn't much about the planet that would normally have attracted a plague of womp rats, let alone booming commerce. An orbiting scrapyard provided repair facilities for passing spacecraft, while a plumbing supply plant operated on the farthest south of the planet's three major continents. However, that was about it. By nicknaming the planet Boonta and adjusting the parameters of the compact speeders to accommodate the human form, Yenchara drew more attention to the planet, attracting human colonists with a penchant for danger to settle there. In time, the planet became a Mecca for extreme sports, and it wasn't long before other such events cropped up. The annual Zed'hoffa Orbital Diving Competition, held over Boonta's Living Pits, has become especially popular.

Ko Vari is the fourth of seven planets in the Dernatine System. Once a highly settled world, it was all but decimated during the Great Sith War, and later again by Xim the Despot. It never completely recovered. ●

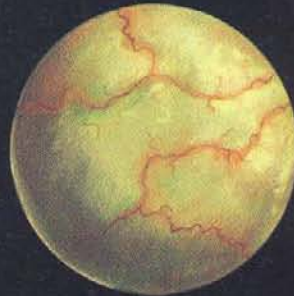
INGO



ANNOO



KO VARI (BOONTA)





Old Urban Firehouse

Ground Floor

Upper Floor

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| 1) Main Entrances | KEY | 10) Rec Room |
| 2) Garages | | 11) Stairs to Ground Floor |
| 3) Workshop Area | | 12) Fire Pole & Storage Area |
| 4) Showers | | 13) Dispatch Desk |
| 5) Fire Pole & Ready Room | | 14) Laundry Room |
| 6) Utility Room | | 15) Small Bathroom |
| 7) Stairs to Upper Floor | | 16) Lounge and Dining Area |
| 8) Men's Room | | 17) Kitchenette |
| 9) Ladies' Room | | 18) Overnight Rooms |

Occult Bookstore

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1) Front Entrance | KEY |
| 2) Popular Books & New Items | |
| 3) Sales Counter | |
| 4) Older Book Section | |
| 5) Rare Book Section | |
| 6) Storage Area | |
| 7) Bathroom | |
| 8) Living Area | |
| 9) Owner's Bedroom | |
| 10) Private Magical Sanctuary | |

1 square = 5 feet

Dark Sun Monsters

Part Two

Written by David Noonan Art by Tom Fowler

Last issue's *POLYHEDRON* section presented DARK SUN, a D&D campaign set on the blasted desert world of Athas, where life is cheap and each sandstorm brings the promise of sightless death. The campaign setting first appeared just over a decade ago, and last issue's *DM's Guide to DARK SUN* featured several new and familiar creatures from the world of Athas. We didn't quite have room to cover every monster we wanted to, however, which is where this addendum comes in. While these creatures are suitable for any D&D campaign, to make the most of them you'll want a copy of *DUNGEON #110* and the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*.

Monster Types

Because psionics are so prevalent on Athas, animals can have psionic powers, so long as the powers aren't central to their threat as monsters. If an animal relies on psionics to survive in the world, build it as a magical beast, not an animal.

Mammals are very rare on Athas (beyond many of the PC races), so most animals found in the *Monster Manual* don't exist in a DARK SUN game. Only snakes and vermin will be familiar to your players. Most of the fauna that surrounds them should seem dangerous and alien. DARK SUN monsters look alien enough that it's sometimes hard to tell what creature type they are at a glance. A kank, for example, looks like a giant ant, but it's actually an animal and hence trainable as a mount.

Belgoi

Medium Humanoid (Belgoi) (Psionic)

Hit Dice: 4d8 (18 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+4

Attack: Claw +4 melee (1d4+1 plus 1d3 Con)

Full Attack: 2 claws +4 melee (1d4+1 plus 1d3 Con)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Psi-like abilities, Constitution drain

Special Qualities: Low-light vision

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +3

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 13

Skills: Hide +5, Move Silently +5, Survival +5.

Feats: Stealthy, Track

Environment: Warm desert

Organization: Gang (4-9), tribe (10-40 plus 50% noncombatants and 1 4th-level leader and 1d3 2nd-level sergeants

and 1d6 inixes or 1d6 kanks).

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +4

The creature appears human at first glance, but the long claws on the ends of its fingers, the puckered, toothless mouth, and the webbed, three-toed feet indicate otherwise. It is dressed in rags and a ceramic bell hangs from a cord around its neck.

Belgois roam the wastes beyond the city-state walls, assaulting unwary travelers and using psi-like abilities to lure victims into carefully planned ambushes.

A belgoi is 6 feet tall and weighs 150 pounds.

Combat

Belgois like to sneak up on an encampment, then use *attraction* on the bells they wear to lure guards away from the safety of the camp. They then either attack the now-defenseless camp or walk the guards into an ambush.

Constitution Drain (Su): Creatures hit by a belgoi's claw attack must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or take 1d3 points of Constitution damage. The save DC is Constitution-based. Unlike undead with this ability, belgois don't gain temporary hit points when they drain Constitution.

Psi-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*attraction* (+6 bonus on interaction checks, DC 14*), *mass misive* (640 ft. range, DC 14*); 1/day—*ego whip* (DC 13), *psionic blast* (DC 14). Manifester level 5th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

*Includes augmentation for the belgoi's manifester level.



Belgoi Society

Belgois eke out their meager survival by eating the foes they ambush. They have no stomach for a fair fight, and the entire tribe usually moves on when merchant patrols or soldiers from a nearby city-state threaten them. They are nomadic and don't keep anything they can't carry.

Because belgois are such notorious raiders of small villages and trade caravans, they're usually attacked on sight by armies and militias that guard smaller settlements. No dragon-king tolerates a belgoi tribe within five days travel of his city.

Dune Reaper

Drone

Large Magical Beast
 Hit Dice: 8d10+24 (68 hp)
 Initiative: +2
 Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
 Armor Class: 17 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 15
 Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+19
 Attack: Claw +15 melee (1d8+7)
 Full Attack: 2 claws +15 melee (1d8+7) and mandibles +10 melee (1d8+3)
 Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
 Special Attacks: Improved grab, rend
 Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent
 Saves: Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +3
 Abilities: Str 24, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 11
 Skills: Jump +16, Listen +5, Spot +5, Survival +4
 Feats: Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw)

Environment: Warm desert
Organization: Solitary, Pack (1 warrior and 1d4+1 drones) or hive (1d4 warriors and 4d4+4 drones plus one 1 18-HD warrior matron)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: —
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 9–12 HD (Large), 13–24 HD (Huge)

Warrior

Large Magical Beast (Psionic)
 Hit Dice: 12d10+48 (114 hp)
 Initiative: +2
 Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
 Armor Class: 23 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +12 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 21
 Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+23
 Attack: Claw +20 melee (1d8+9)
 Full Attack: 2 claws +20 melee (2d6+9) and mandibles +15 melee (1d8+4)
 Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
 Special Attacks: Improved grab, psi-like abilities, rend
 Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent
 Saves: Fort +12, Ref +10, Will +6
 Abilities: Str 28, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 15
 Skills: Concentration +19, Jump +33, Listen +7, Spot +7, Survival +7
 Feats: Cleave, Mental Leap, Power Attack, Power Specialization, Weapon Focus (ray)
Environment: Warm desert
Organization: Solitary, Pack (1 warrior and 1d4+1 drones) or hive (1d4 warriors and 4d4+4 drones plus one 1 18-HD warrior matron)
Challenge Rating: 9
Treasure: —
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 13–17 HD (Large); 18–36 HD (Huge)



This large quadruped has scythelike forepaws and a pair of powerfully muscled rear legs. Mandibles on either side of its skull guard a toothy maw, and a row of sharp scales runs down the center of its back.

Dune reapers are social creatures who build sandstone hives in the desert wastes, then proceed to systematically hunt everything nearby into extinction. They're organized like ants, with a single female known as the matron organizing teams of warriors and drones to do her bidding.

While the drones and warriors look the same, they function quite differently. The drones have limited intellects and are little more than animals, but the warriors are as smart as humans and have psionic powers. No matter what their caste, dune reapers have fearsome bladelike forelimbs that can tear through armor and flesh with ease.

Drones and warriors are 6 feet tall at the shoulder and weigh 3,000 pounds.

Combat

Dune reapers prefer to lie in wait for their foes, hiding behind or atop sand dunes until their prey draws near. Once a fight starts, they're straightforward combatants, but they're

smart enough to use basic tactics like flanking and concentrating on wounded enemies.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a dune reaper must hit with its mandible attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Rend (Ex): A dune reaper that establishes a hold with a successful grapple check latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals 2d8+10 points of damage.

Skills: Dune reapers have a +5 racial bonus on Jump checks due to their powerful leg muscles.

Dune Reaper Society

Dune reapers are omnivores, eating nearly anything they come into contact with. Not only do they use their meals for sustenance, but as raw material for the adhesive saliva that dune reaper drones secrete. Dune reapers use this secretion to bind sand and pulverize gravel, which they then sculpt into elaborate multichamber lairs of sandstone.

Captured dune reavers are common sights in Athasian gladiator arenas, because they go often go berserk when separated from their prides. They make terrifying, ferocious opponents for humanoid gladiators. Dune reaver forelimbs are sometimes made into bone swords, and their scaly hides are often made into armor.

Dune Reaper Drones

Drones comprise about two-thirds of all dune reapers. What they lack in intellect they make up for in perseverance and ferocity. Drones can smell which of their fellow dune reapers are warriors, and receive orders from them in a subtle olfactory language.

Drones are aggressive, territorial combatants that use ambushes, flanking, and other rudimentary combat tactics to good effect. They cooperate with each other better when a warrior leads them into battle—without the warrior, their attacks tend to be unfocused, but no less ferocious.

Dune Reaper Warriors

The warriors are the sergeants of dune reaper society, directing teams of drones as they hunt and build their warrens. All warriors are females, but only the largest one in a hive, known as the matron, can lay eggs for the drones to fertilize.

Warriors are almost always accompanied by one or more dune reaper drones. Using olfactory cues, the warrior directs the drones to charge the dune reapers' adversaries while the warrior uses its *energy push* and *mind thrust*. Then the warrior enters the fray itself. If battle turns against it, the warrior uses *mass cloud mind* to escape and report back to the matron and the rest of the hive.

Psi-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*missive*, *read thoughts* (DC 14); 3/day—*energy push* (6d6, DC 18); 1/day—*mass cloud mind* (DC 18), *mind thrust* (11d10, DC 18*). Manifest level 11th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

* Includes augmentation for the warrior's manifest level.

Earthdelver

Small Elemental (Earth)

Hit Dice: 1d8+2 (6 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 20 ft. (2 squares), burrow 20 ft.

Armor Class: 17 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-4

Attack: Claw +3 melee (1d2)

Full Attack: 2 claws +3 melee (1d2) and bite -2 melee (1d3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Earth mastery

Special Qualities: Earth glide, elemental traits

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Escape Artist +6, Listen +3, Spot +3

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse^a

Environment: Elemental Plane of Earth

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —

Level Adjustment: —

This small quadruped has claws and a snout made of blackest obsidian and a body aggregated from pebbles.

Elemental clerics of earth often summon earthdelvers to do their bidding on the Material Plane.

An earthdelver is 3 feet long and weighs 35 pounds.

Combat

Earthdelvers tend to focus on a single foe, attacking with claws and bites until it's dead. They're heedless of their own safety.

Earth Mastery (Ex): An earthdelver gains a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls if both it and its foe are touching the ground. If an opponent is airborne, the earthdelver takes a -4 penalty on attack and damage rolls. (These modifiers are not included in the statistics block.)

Earth Glide (Ex): An earthdelver can glide through stone, dirt, or almost any other sort of earth except metal as easily as a fish swims through water. Its burrowing leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripple or other signs of its presence. A *move earth* spell cast on an area containing a burrowing earthdelver flings the earthdelver back 30 feet, stunning the creature for 1 round unless it succeeds on a DC 15 Fortitude save.

Erdlu

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Armor Class: 17 (+4 Dex, +3 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+4

Attack: Beak +4 melee (1d6+2)

Full Attack: Beak +4 melee (1d6+2) and 1 claw -1 melee (1d4+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: —

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, sprint

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +4

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 2, Wis 16, Cha 4

Skills: Listen +11, Spot +11

Feats: Alertness, Endurance

Environment: Warm deserts

Organization: Solitary, pack (2-5), or herd (6-30)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 4-5 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: —

This big, flightless bird has scaly skin and armor plates on its non-functional wings. It has a sharp beak and two powerful legs ending in claws.

Erdlus are prized for their skin, their meat, and their ability to lay eggs that provide a day's worth of nutrients and water. In the wild, they congregate in vast herds that use speed and dispersion to avoid predators.

An adult erdlu is 7 feet tall and weighs 200 pounds.

Combat

Herbivores that subsist on a wide array of plant life, erdlus would rather run than fight. When faced with a predator, erdlu herds scatter, running in different directions and reuniting only when the danger is past. If cornered, erdlus strike with their beaks and kick with a clawed foot, always seeking to open a path to escape.

Sprint (Ex): Once per hour, an erdlu can move ten times its normal speed (500 feet) for one round. Most erdlus use this ability to escape a combat situation.

Firesnake

Small Elemental (Fire)

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft.

Armor Class: 16 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-5

Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d3-1)

Full Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d3-1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Burn

Special Qualities: Elemental traits, provides shadowy illumination

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

Skills: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +6, Listen +6, Spot +6

Feats: Dodge, Weapon Finesse^B

Environment: Elemental Plane of Fire

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —

Level Adjustment: —

This snake appears to be made of living flame and glows with a reddish light.

Firesnakes, natives of the Elemental Plane of Fire, are commonly summoned by elemental clerics.

A firesnake is 3 feet long and weighs 10 pounds.

Combat

Firesnake bites don't do much damage directly, but they sometimes light the target on fire.

Burn (Ex): Those bitten by a firesnake must succeed at a DC 10 Reflex save or catch fire. The flame burns for 1d4 rounds, as described in the Catching on Fire section of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* (page 303).

Skills: Firesnakes have a +4 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks. They use their Dexterity modifier for Climb checks.

Fordorran

Large Magical Beast (Psionic)

Hit Dice: 6d10+18 (51 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 17 (-1 size, +8 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+17

Attack: Claw +8 melee (1d8+4)

Full Attack: 2 claws +8 melee (1d6+4) and gore +3 melee (1d8+2)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Psi-like abilities, stench

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +3

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 13

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +7

Feats: Ability Focus (stench), Combat Manifestation, Multi-attack

Environment: Warm deserts
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 7–10 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

This massive, gray-green quadruped is covered in armor plating from its stubby tail to its horned head. It exudes a foul odor.

The fordorran is a marauding beast that attacks and consumes anything in its path. It'll start a fight even if it isn't hungry because its instinct to fight is so strong.

A fordorran is 8 feet long and 5 feet high at the shoulder. It weighs 1,800 pounds.

Combat

The fordorran lashes out more or less randomly at every creature it meets. It has a base level of animal cunning, but elaborate strategies are beyond it. Even its psionic powers and attacks are more a matter of instinct than refined prowess.



Psi-Like Abilities (Sp): 3/day—*dissipating touch*, *energy burst* (DC 14), *id insinuation* (DC 13). Manifesters level 6th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Stench (Ex): The fordorran continually produces a foul-smelling odor as its digests its varied diet. Any living creature (even another fordorran) within 10 feet must succeed on a DC 18 Fortitude save or be sickened for as long as it

remains in the affected area and for 1d4 rounds afterward. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same fordorran's stench for 24 hours. *Delay poison* or *neutralize poison* removes the sickened condition from one creature. Creatures that have immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on saving throws against this effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Gaj

Large Aberration (Psionic)
Hit Dice: 11d8+77 (126 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)
Armor Class: 26 (–1 size, +17 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 24
Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+21
Attack: Mandibles +16 melee (2d6+13)
Full Attack: Mandibles +16 melee (2d6+13)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Psi-like abilities, improved grab, probe drain
Special Qualities: Psionic resistance 22, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +14
Abilities: Str 28, Dex 11, Con 25, Int 14, Wis 21, Cha 20
Skills: Concentration +21, Intimidate +12, Psicraft +16, Spot +22, Survival +19
Feats: Focused Sunder, Iron Will^B, Power Attack, Psionic Fist, Improved Sunder
Environment: Warm deserts
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating: 11

Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: 12–18 HD (Medium); 19–33 HD (Huge)
This strange cross between a reptile and a giant beetle has a spongy white globe for a head, with six compound eyes and a pair of barbed mandibles as thick as a man's arms. Three feathery antennae wave from atop its head.

The psionic horror known as the gaj is among the most dangerous predators of the deserts, because they hunt only intelligent foes. They draw sustenance both from their victims' corpses and the psionic agony they produce when they die.

A gaj is 10 feet long and weighs from 400 to 600 pounds.

Combat

The gaj uses its array of psionic attacks first, preferably from a distance, then moves into melee to consume any incapacitated foes. In melee, it tries to sunder the weapons of those who attack it, and it takes great joy in draining their intelligence while tearing them apart with its mandibles.

At the beginning of a fight, the gaj has its psionic focus. It prefers to expend its psionic focus during a sunder attack.



Gajs are confident creatures, and they sometimes play with their food when they don't think they're in danger. Even in the middle of combat, some gajs grapple foes and use their *power leech* psi-like ability or *probe drain* special ability to gain power or learn more about their foes. Gajs aren't stupid and deal with dangerous enemies before playing with their food.

Psi-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*detect psionics*, *id insinuation* (5 targets, DC 21*), *mindlink*, *read thoughts* (DC 17), *power leech* (DC 19), *psionic blast* (4 rounds, DC 18); 3/day—*psionic dominate* (can affect aberrations, animals, dragons, elementals, fey, giants, humanoids, magical beasts, monstrous humanoids, or outsiders, DC 21*), *psychic crush* (4d6 damage on a successful save, DC 20*). Manifest level 11th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

*Includes augmentation for the gaj's manifest level.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a gaj must hit a Medium or smaller creature with its mandibles. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can automatically make a *probe drain* attack.

Probe Drain (Su): A gaj can use its feathery antennae to attack the mind of grappled victims. If a gaj takes an attack action and wins a grapple check, it can probe its adversary's mind (as the *mind probe* power, DC 20), and then automatically deal 1d4 points of Wisdom drain. Creatures who succeed at their Will saves resist the gaj's mental interrogation for a round, but they still take the Wisdom drain.

Skills: Gajs have a +10 racial bonus on Spot checks due to their multiple keen eyes.

Gaj Society

Gajs are solitary hunters who only congregate in Highsun for breeding purposes. They make their lairs in rocky areas or sandy burrows, and there they keep the treasure they've accumulated from previous meals.

Jhakar

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+15 (28 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armor Class: 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+4

Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d6+2)

Full Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d6+2) and 2 claws -1 melee (1d4+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Trip



Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10
Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6
Feats: Alertness, Toughness, Track^h
Environment: Warm deserts
Organization: Solitary or pack (2-8)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 4-5 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

This squat lizard has wicked claws, a purple sailback fin running down its back, and a wide mouth that seems to grin.

The "jokers of the sands," jhakars are ferocious predators known to play with their food before consuming it.

A jhakar is 4 feet long and weighs from 70 to 90 pounds.

Combat

The favorite tactic of a pack of jhakars is for the pack leader to clamp its jaws on the prey and drag it down. Then the rest of the pack either attacks immediately or forms a ring around the unfortunate foe to prevent escape.

Trip (Ex): A jhakar that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+2 check bonus) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the jhakar.

Lirr

Large Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 5d10+10 (37 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class: 16 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+14
Attack: Bite +10 melee (1d8+5)
Full Attack: Bite +10 melee (1d8+5) and 2 claws +4 melee (1d4+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Pounce, improved grab, rake, stunning roar
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +2
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills: Balance +7, Hide -1, Listen +5, Move Silently +11, Spot +5
Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (bite)
Environment: Warm desert
Organization: Solitary, pair, or pack (3-12)
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: —
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 6-8 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

This giant lizard is notable for its rainbow-colored fanlike head crest, and a wide tail fan that matches these colors. By contrast, the creature's body is a sleek gray with dull red stripes across the back.

Packs of lirrs are tough foes, not only because of their ill-tempered nature and prowess in melee combat, but also due to their fearsome roar, which can temporarily disable an unlucky foe.

A lirr is 7 feet long and weighs from 400 to 500 pounds.

Combat

A pack of lirrs spreads out when it hunts since the creatures aren't immune to the stunning roars of other lirrs. They are wary of stunning each other, so they often circle around an enemy, roar in unison during the surprise round, and then pounce on their quarry.

Pounce (Ex): If a lirr charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability a lirr must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +7 melee, damage 2d4+2.



Stunning Roar (Su): A lirr can loose a devastating roar once every 1d4+1 rounds. All creatures (including other lirrs) within a 20-foot cone must succeed on a DC 14 Will save or be stunned for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills: Lirrs have a +4 racial bonus on Balance and Move Silently checks.

Mastyrial

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 12d8+48 (102 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), burrow 15 ft.

Armor Class: 22 (-1 size, +13 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 22

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+19

Attack: Claw +14 melee (1d8+6)

Full Attack: 2 claws +14 melee (1d8+6) and bite +9 melee (1d8+3) and tail +9 melee (1d6+3 plus poison)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Poison, rend 2d6+9

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, tremorsense

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +4

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 7

Skills: Listen +7, Move Silently +5, Spot +7

Feats: Alertness, Power Attack

Environment: Warm desert

Organization: Solitary or pair

Challenge Rating: 8

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 13–24 HD (Large), 25–36 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: —

This six-legged creature has an armor-plated hide, two massive pincers, and a beak-shaped maw. Its tail has a crescent shaped stinger that oozes a sticky fluid.



Mastyrials ordinarily eat the giant vermin of Athas's deserts, but they aren't particular and attack anything that looks even remotely like food.

A mastyrial is 9 feet long and weighs 800 pounds.

Combat

Mastyrials are unsubtle creatures, simply wading into melee to make a full attack as often as possible.

Rend (Ex): A mastyrial that hits with both claw attacks latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an extra 2d6+9 points of damage.

Poison (Ex): A mastyrial's tail stinger has a venom that is mildly paralytic and gives its victims muscle tremors. It deals initial and secondary damage of 1d8 Dex (Fort DC 20 negates). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Rainrunner

Small Elemental (Water)

Hit Dice: 1d8+2 (6 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), swim 40 ft.

Armor Class: 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-3

Attack: Slam +1 melee (1d4+1)

Full Attack: Slam +1 melee (1d4+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Drench

Special Qualities: Elemental traits

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Jump +9, Listen +5, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness

Environment: Elemental Plane of Water

Organization: Solitary or pack (5–12)

Challenge Rating: 1/3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —

Level Adjustment: —

This creature looks like a blob of silty water, but its form has a great degree of solidity. It extrudes limbs in front of it to drag itself along the ground with surprising speed.

Rainrunners congregate in packs on the Elemental Plane of Water, where they swim through the endless sea and draw sustenance from the elemental power of the plane. Elemental clerics of water often summon them.

A rainrunner is 3 feet long and weighs 50 pounds.

Combat

Rainrunners like to surround their foes, attacking their flanks.

Drench (Ex): The rainrunner's touch puts out torches, campfires, exposed lanterns, and other open flames of nonmagical origin if these are of Large size or smaller. The creature dispels magical fire it touches as *dispel magic* (caster level equals rainrunner's HD).

Skills: Rainrunners have a +4 racial bonus on Jump checks.

Rasclinn

Medium Magical Beast (Psionic)

Hit Dice: 3d10+9 (25 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Armor Class: 18 (+8 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+4

Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Psi-like abilities, rage

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +3

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 11

Skills: Listen +13, Spot +3

Feats: Run, Toughness

Environment: Warm deserts

Organization: Solitary or pack (5–12)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 4–5 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: —

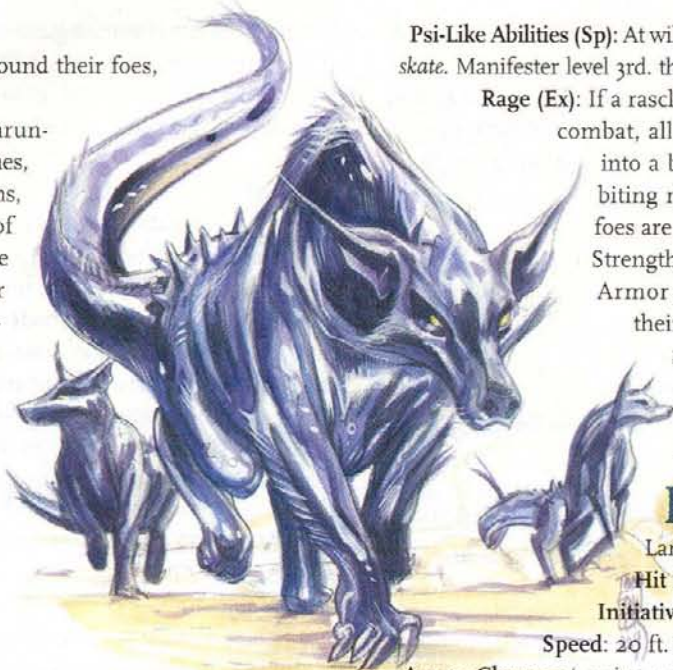
These sleek, four-legged mammals have powerful jaws and silvery fur.

Rasclinns are root-eating herbivores that run in packs for protection. They are noted for their cunning, and their metallic hides make them a favorite, though challenging, target for hunters.

A rasclinn is 3 feet long and weighs from 50 to 60 pounds.

Combat

A rasclinn only fights if its young are threatened; in other situations it leads its pursuers on wild chases across the desert wasteland.



Psi-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*befuddle* (DC 11); 3/day—*burst, skate*. Manifest level 3rd. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Rage (Ex): If a rasclinn falls unconscious or dies in combat, all other rasclinn in the fight fly into a berserk rage on their next turn, biting madly until either they or their foes are dead. Each rasclinn gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and –2 to Armor Class. Rasclinns cannot end their rage voluntarily.

Skills: Rasclinns have exceptionally keen hearing, which gives them a +8 racial bonus on Listen checks.

Razorwing

Large Animal (Psionic)

Hit Dice: 4d8+20 (38 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 40 ft. (average)

Armor Class: 17 (–1 size, +4 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+10

Attack: Wing +5 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: 2 wings +5 melee (1d6+3) and bite +0 melee (1d8+1)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Psi-like abilities



Special Qualities: Psionic flight, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 18, Con 20, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 12
Skills: Hide +10, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Flyby Attack
Environment: Warm deserts
Organization: Solitary or flock (2–8)
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 5–12 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

Gliding on warm air currents above the desert surface, this creature has leathery wings that stretch between its forelimbs and rear legs. Its long tail has a vertical fin, and its head is almost all toothy maw. The leading edges of its wings are a glossy bone-white.

One of the desert's larger aerial predators, the razorwing hides in the sand or rock formations until it hears a potential meal approaching. Then it takes to the air, hoping to catch its prey unawares.

A razorwing has a 15-foot wingspan and weighs 200 pounds.

Combat

True to their names, razorwings dive at their prey and slash them with the sharp bones on their wings.

Psi-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*create sound, detect psionics*; 3/day—*conceal thoughts*. Manifest level 4th.

Psionic Flight (Ex): Razorwings use psionic energy to assist the lift provided by their wings. If a razorwing can't use its psionics (because it's in a null psionics field or similar effect), it can no longer ascend and must descend by at least 5 feet per round.

Skills: Razorwing skin changes color to match the surroundings, giving them a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks.

Seskarran

Medium Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class: 18 (+1 Dex, +7 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+3
Attack: Claw +3 melee (1d4+4)
Full Attack: 2 claws +3 melee (1d4+1) and gore +4 melee (1d6)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Low-light vision
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +4
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills: Listen +8, Spot +8
Feats: Iron Will, Multiattack
Environment: Warm deserts
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 4–5 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment: —

This four-legged creature has a series of interlocking armor plates reminiscent of an insect's carapace. Its horned head is likewise armored, and it boasts four thick claws on each foot.

This smaller relative of the fordorran tempers its great appetite for destruction with a caution borne of the knowledge that it's far from the toughest thing in the desert. Nonetheless, it attacks anything that isn't bigger than it is, eating as it wanders the desert sands.

A seskarran is 5 feet long and weighs from 500 to 800 pounds.

Combat

Seskarrans simply wade into melee with anything they meet, ripping their prey with claws as they spear it with their head-horns.

Skills: Seskarrans have a +4 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks, because their senses are keen.

Windraptor

Tiny Elemental (Air)
Hit Dice: 1d8+1 (5 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: Fly 90 ft. (18 squares) (perfect)
Armor Class: 19 (+2 size, +5 Dex, +2 natural), touch 17, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +0/–10
Attack: Talons +7 melee (1d4–2)
Full Attack: Talons +7 melee (1d4–2)
Space/Reach: 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: Air mastery
Special Qualities: Elemental traits
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +2
Abilities: Str 6, Dex 21, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6
Skills: Spot +14
Feats: Fly-By Attack, Weapon Finesse^B
Environment: Elemental Plane of Air
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 1/2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

This wispy creature looks like a bird with oversized talons and a glowing spark where its head should be.

Windraptors are common on the Elemental Plane of Air, where they soar endlessly and cavort in the clouds. Elemental clerics summon them to the Material Plane to act as scouts or combatants.

A windraptor has a 5-foot wingspan and weighs less than a pound.

Combat

Windraptors are agile but tiny combatants, scratching their foes to death.

Air Mastery (Ex): Airborne creatures take a -1 penalty on attack and damage rolls against a windraptor.

Skills: Windraptors have a +8 racial bonus on Spot checks.

Yallix

Small Animal

Hit Dice: 1d8+2 (6 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 10 ft. (2 squares), fly 80 ft. (average)

Armor Class: 14 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +1 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-4

Attack: Claws +3 melee (1d4)

Full Attack: Claws +3 melee (1d4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: —

Special Qualities: All-around vision, low-light vision

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +6, Search +0, Spot +10

Feats: Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse^B

Environment: Warm deserts

Organization: Solitary or pair

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 2-3 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: —

This strange creature looks like a cross between a giant dragonfly and a bird of prey. Its sleek, feathered body tapers to a head with protruding compound eyes and wriggling mandibles. From its back extend four nearly transparent wings. Its four other limbs end in small sharp claws.

The yallix is a desert predator that likes to ambush its prey, waiting in the shadows for its next meal.

A yallix is 3 feet long with a wingspan of 5 feet, and weighs from 5 to 10 pounds.

Combat

Yallixes dive from their hiding places toward any creature that looks like it might make a good meal. They use their claws to tear apart their prey, then chew it with their mandibles.

All-Around Vision (Ex): The compound eyes of a yallix give it a +4 racial bonus on Spot and Search checks, and it can't be flanked.

Skills: The yallix's dusky feathers give it a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks.

Zhackal

Small Magical Beast (Psionic)

Hit Dice: 1d10+1 (6 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armor Class: 15 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple:

+1/+0

Attack: Bite +7 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: Bite +7 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Psi-like abilities

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 15

Skills: Survival +5

Feats: Track, Weapon

Finesse (bite)^B

Environment: Warm desert

Organization: Solitary, pair, or pack (7-16)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 2 HD (Small); 3 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: —

This small quadruped has short brown fur and a perpetual snarl. Its eyes are an eerie blue and seem to glow faintly.

The zhackal is a pack scavenger that seeks out dying creatures and finishes them off psionically before devouring the carcass.

A zhackal is 3 feet long and weighs 50 pounds.

Combat

Because Zhackals are scavengers, they prefer food that's already helpless or dead. If a pack finds a creature in the desert that looks vulnerable, they manifest *cloud mind* to hide themselves, then circle their prey and try to render it helpless with *ego whips* before consuming it.

When they aren't actively hunting, zhackals run rather than fight, even if their lairs or young are threatened.

Psi-like Abilities (Sp): 3/day—*cloud mind* (DC 14); 1/day—*ego whip* (DC 14). Manifest level 3rd; the save DCs are Charisma-based. Ω

