

PATHFINDER[®] ADVENTURE PATH[™]

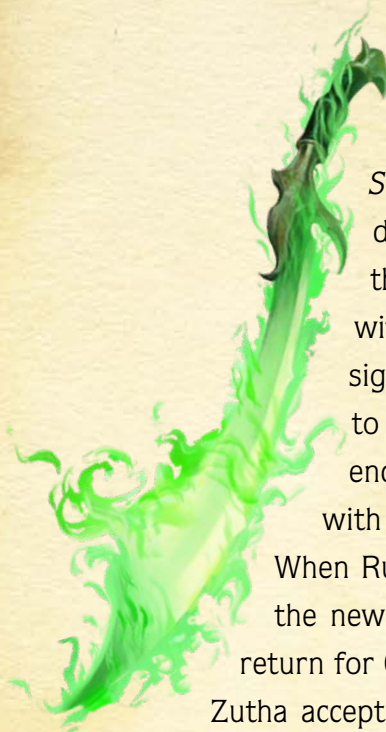


RETURN OF THE RUNELORDS

RUNEPLAGUE

By Richard Pett

UNGARATO, SWORD OF GLUTTONY



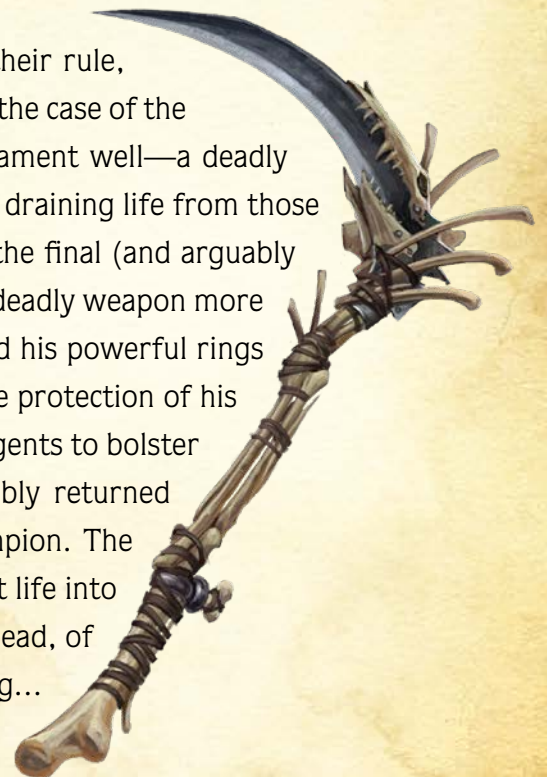
The *Sword of Gluttony* spent the centuries not in the hands of a runelord's champion but in the clutches of the enemy. Runelord Goparlis was enraged to learn that his necromancers lost the *Sword of Gluttony* to, of all creatures, a pack of barbarians led by a so-called dragon master named Ungarato. Time and time again, Goparlis tried to reclaim the sword from Ungarato, and time and time again, he failed. His obsession with the blade's recovery siphoned his attentions and resources, and was a significant factor in his eventual defeat. But while Goparlis never managed to defeat Ungarato, the sinister influence of necromancy would win in the end. For the longer Ungarato kept the weapon, the more it infused him with unlife, and in time he became an undead horror himself—a graveknight.

When Runelord Zutha claimed control of Gastash, Ungarato sought to meet with the new runelord. He offered to trade the *Sword of Gluttony* back to Zutha in return for Goparlis's body to serve the northlanders as a trophy of their enemy's fall.

Zutha accepted, but also offered Ungarato a position as his personal champion. The graveknight took the offer, and when, centuries later, he finally fell in combat, his essence and devotion to the regime he once fought against lived on, passing into the foul blade that now bears his name.

ZUTHA'S SCYTHE

The runelords all carried powerful weapons as symbols of their rule, icons of their power known collectively as the *Alara'quin*. In the case of the Runelords of Gluttony, this weapon matched their temperament well—a deadly scythe made of magically strengthened bones and sinew capable of draining life from those it struck. The weapon served its wielders well, but in the case of the final (and arguably most powerful) Runelord of Gluttony, Runelord Zutha treated the deadly weapon more as an affectation and symbol than a tool of destruction. He favored his powerful rings and magical stones in battle when not relying upon his magic or the protection of his undead minions, and he was known to loan the scythe to favored agents to bolster their odds in battle. When such an agent fell, the scythe invariably returned to Zutha's corpulent hands, ready to be wielded by his next champion. The scythe not only drinks life from those it harms, but transforms that life into negative energy that heals its wielder—provided the wielder is undead, of course! Living wielders of the scythe tend not to remain so for long...



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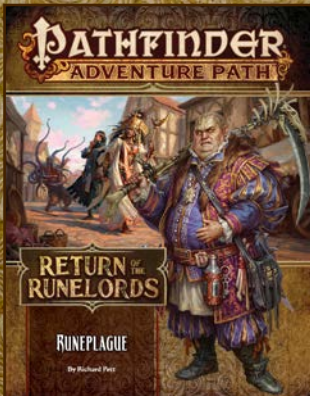
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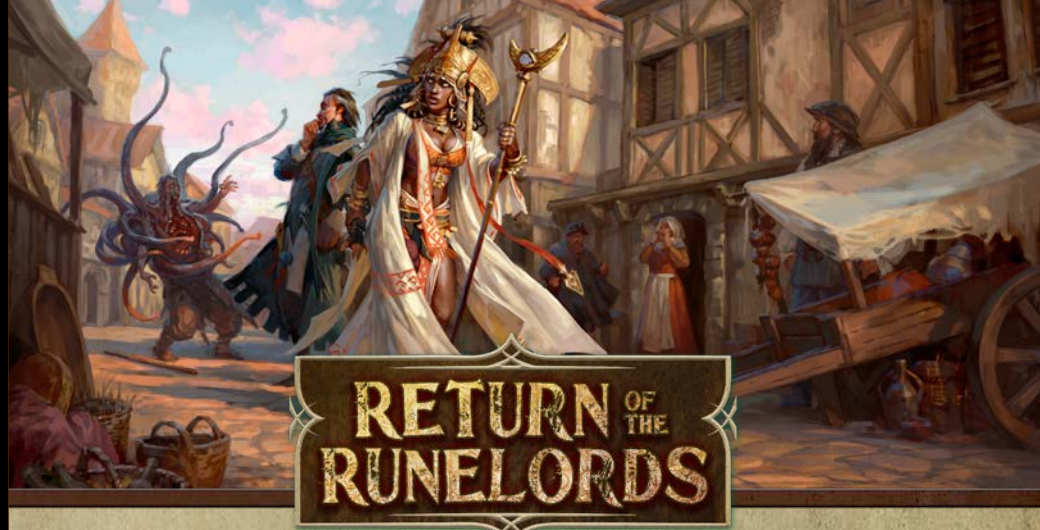
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ON THE COVER



Artist Ekaterina Burmak shows us Runelord Zutha in all his gluttonous glory, along with an image of what horrors our heroes might face in the streets if the polymorph plague spreads!



ADVENTURE PATH 3 OF 6

RUNEPLAGUE

Runeplague

by Richard Pett

2

NPC Gallery

by Richard Pett

62

Yamasoth, the Polymorph Plague

by Jason Keeley

70

Magic Pools

by Eleanor Ferron

76

Bestiary

by Mike Kimmel, Andrew Mullen, Richard Pett, and Jeffrey Swank

82

REFERENCE

This book refers to several other Pathfinder Roleplaying Game products using the following abbreviations, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Pathfinder RPG hardcovers can find the complete rules of these books available online for free at pfrd.info.

<i>Advanced Class Guide</i>	ACG	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Horror Adventures</i>	HA	<i>Ultimate Intrigue</i>	UI
<i>Inner Sea World Guide</i>	ISWG	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM



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RUNEPLAGUE

PART 1: POLYMORPH PLAGUE..... 7

The PCs confront the cult of Yamasoth in its hidden headquarters within the Irespan and hopefully prevent an outbreak of the polymorph plague before it begins.

PART 2: THE ZINCHER SIEGE 23

After learning of a plot to resurrect Krune, the PCs travel to Riddleport to defend one of the town's crime lords, whose scrolls of *true resurrection* have put him in peril.

PART 3: A NIGHT ON THE TOWN 34

When the PCs answer a mysterious dream invitation from Sorshen herself, they meet up with the risen runelord in Korvosa during a celebration of the overthrow of Queen Ileosa. Trouble and antics ensue!

PART 4: THE SUNDERED SEAL 50

News that agents of the Whispering Way have secured a third of Runelord Zutha's infamous *Gluttonous Tome* compels the PCs to intervene before the undead runelord can rise again.

PART 5: DEATH RISING 60

Armed with the *Bone Grimoire*, the PCs travel to the isle of Xin and perform a dangerous ritual to manifest Runelord Zutha—so they can destroy him for all time!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Runeplague" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.



The PCs should begin this adventure well into 8th level.



The PCs should be 9th level before traveling to Riddleport or Korvosa.



The PCs should be 10th level before they begin their adventures below Kaer Maga.



The PCs should be 11th level before confronting Runelord Zutha.

The PCs should reach 12th level by the end of this adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For many thousands of years after the fall of Thassilon, Runelord Zutha's magnum opus, the *Gluttonous Tome*, lay scattered across the world, sundered into three smaller but still dangerous volumes: the *Kardosian Codex*, the *Black Book*, and the *Bone Grimoire*. As long as the three remained apart, Zutha remained in limbo, but when the three tomes were recently brought together in the depths of Zutha's tomb, the Cenotaph, the undead runelord was able to rise once again for a brief moment before heroes defeated him. The *Gluttonous Tome* once again split apart, and the heroes decided to hide the three copies far from one another until a method of destroying them could be discovered.

But Zutha's momentary return was enough for the runelord to establish a foothold in the world, and now his presence slowly festers within all three fragments of the *Gluttonous Tome*. In time, he will be able to emerge from any one of the three books—somewhat reduced in power, yet still a dangerous foe, especially since he could then become an active factor in rebuilding the tome himself.

Two of the tome's portions, the *Black Book* and the *Kardosian Codex*, remain safely hidden away, but the third, the *Bone Grimoire*, has once again fallen into sinister hands. After being passed among nearly a dozen different thieves, the *Bone Grimoire* was acquired by a half-drow named Leptonia, herself a powerful cleric of Yamasoth (also known as the Polymorph Plague) and the leader of a cult based in the city of Kaer Maga. She recognized the book for what it was and took care not to read too much of it. She took it with her after she received visions from Yamasoth that compelled her to uproot her cult and move west to Magnimar—visions of the populations of entire cities being transformed into hideous monsters as they succumbed to a virulent contagion that Leptonia knew she must research and create.

Once the cult arrived in Magnimar, Leptonia continued to heed her visions and led her followers to one of the many pilings supporting the massive bridge known as the Irespan. Therein she discovered both an ancient complex once used as a military compound by ancient soldiers loyal to Runelord Karzoug, and the source of her visions—a gongorinan qliphoth named Og-Zeugus who had been imprisoned in the Irespan for thousands of years.

With Og-Zeugus's advice (secured after Leptonia promised to release him once her plans to craft the polymorph plague were complete), the half-drow began work on crafting the polymorph plague, only to run into immediate complications. While her zeal and magical skills were more than a match for the task, her

knowledge of necromancy was sorely lacking. Frustrated, she used a *sending* spell to reach a contact she knew had the skills she needed—an agent of the Whispering Way named Erigantus whom she'd maintained a complex relationship with over the years back in Kaer Maga. When she promised him the *Bone Grimoire* in payment for his services crafting a plague and bolstering her headquarters' defenses, he eagerly agreed to help.

With Erigantus's help, the polymorph plague was soon perfected. He returned to Kaer Maga with the *Bone Grimoire* and quickly put it to use (see his NPC entry on page 64 for more details), but while Leptonia and Erigantus had cracked the formula for crafting the plague, the process resulted in only small amounts of the stuff, and it could not be transmitted via exhalation of the sick. It took several more months of research and exploration before Leptonia discovered potential solutions to her problems—both requiring potent sources of Abyssal energy. She sent several of her tougher minions, led by the alchemist Maga Szuul, off to Hollow Mountain to secure an item her research suggested would be perfect for infusing the polymorph plague and increasing the amount each ritual could create. Had the PCs not defeated Maga Szuul in the prior adventure, his return to Leptonia with an *Abyssal runestone* would have given her the reagent she needed to increase production of the plague from a few drops at a time to gallons of the rancid stuff.

Yet even then, these gallons would not spread through the air, and this is what Leptonia wanted most of all—a plague that, once unleashed, could ride on the breath of the sick and propagate with swift and cruel efficiency. Here, her research suggested that she required the aid of an ally with absolute mastery over conjuration magic. Who better than the Runelord of Sloth for such a task, Leptonia reasoned, but she also knew that Runelord Krune had recently been slain after his own cult failed to restore him to the world.

And so Leptonia turned her attention to the task of bringing the slain runelord back to life. Due to the nature of Krune's death, nothing less than *true resurrection* would do, a feat of magic far beyond Leptonia or any of her cultists. Unable to afford buying such a spell from an outside source, Leptonia decided instead to track down and steal a *scroll of true resurrection* to use on Runelord Krune. After exhaustive research, she narrowed several potential targets down to one man—Clegg Zincher, a crime lord in Riddleport who had grown so obsessed with his own mortality that he'd invested much of his personal resources into securing three such scrolls for himself. In Clegg Zincher, Leptonia had found the perfect combination of someone who owned three *scrolls of true resurrection* but wasn't so well protected and powerful that

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

The Cities of Runeplague

City	Base Value	Purchase Limit	Primary Source
Kaer Maga	7,600 gp	55,000 gp	<i>Pathfinder Campaign Setting: City of Strangers</i>
Korvosa	12,800 gp	85,000 gp	<i>Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Guide to Korvosa</i>
Magnimar	12,800 gp	75,000 gp	<i>Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Magnimar, City of Monuments</i>
Riddleport	13,600 gp	100,000 gp	<i>Pathfinder Adventure Path #13: Shadow in the Sky</i>

she and her agents stood no chance against them. Yet even then, the half-drow knows that Clegg's defenses are formidable, and she's planned her raid against him for a time in the near future when she knows Clegg (as well as many of his guards) will be off-site, in theory leaving the scrolls of true resurrection relatively unprotected.

It is into this arena the PCs are thrust, with peril quickening in different cities scattered across Varisia. How they handle this plague of runelord-associated danger is left to them, but if they fail in their missions, the resurrection of a runelord will be only the first of their problems!

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

"Runeplague" is split into four smaller adventures, each of which is located in a different Varisian city. These four adventures can take place in any order, depending on the PCs' decisions. In all likelihood, given the timing of the clues the PCs receive, they'll tackle these adventures in the order presented, and the escalating danger of each chapter should map well to the PCs' levels. If the PCs attempt these adventures in another sequence, they may find that some of the encounters are too difficult—you as the GM should decide if you want to adjust encounters as needed to provide a fairer challenge, or if you want to maintain the encounters as written.

The adventure's climax, in which the PCs travel to the risen isle of Xin and confront Runelord Zutha, is the only part of "Runeplague" scripted to occur at the adventure's end—it's meant to be a proper climactic fight and requires elements in prior chapters to be completed before it can take place.

This adventure features encounters and events that take place in Varisia's four most significant cities, yet it doesn't have the space to present much information about those locations beyond the context necessary for the encounters and events presented. If you want to expand the events and encounters in "Runeplague," perhaps allowing the PCs to roleplay a bit in each city, you can find additional information on the cities in previously published Paizo products (including maps). Each city's base value and purchase limit for shopping purposes, as well as the primary reference book that provides more information on the city in question, is summarized in the table above.

ABOUT TIME

Traveling through time is a dangerous prospect, and as this adventure gets underway, the PCs come face to face with those dangers. Although they don't yet know it, when the PCs begin to manipulate and change the ancient past in the final adventure of Return of the Runelords, their actions send ripples back along their own personal time streams, marking them as prey for certain temporal predators, labeled dangers by those who guard the sanctity of the flow of time itself, and singling them out to potential (if dubious) allies. Fortunately for the PCs, the extent of their manipulation of time is not so dire that they wipe themselves out via a devastating paradox. While these ripples can cause significant concern or peril to the PCs, they have two equally significant benefits. First, as a result of actions the PCs take in the final adventure while they are in the Dimension of Time, they are able to hide their identities and actions from Alaznist, which gives them the cover they need in the present to build their power before the Runelord of Wrath has a chance to turn her attention to them. Second, if the PCs can endure the dangers created by these ripples, they'll be able to master them and receive a potent infusion of power sent back in time by their own future selves (see **Event 3**).

EVENT 1: THE DREAM

The first indication that something has gone awry appears in the form of a strange and vivid dream. While the PCs won't realize this at first, this dream is a fragmentary memory from their future selves reflected back in time to their own slumbering thoughts. This dream should occur the first time the PCs sleep during this adventure, preferably while they are on board *Tyalee's Whim* en route back to Magnimar to report their findings in Hollow Mountain to the Sihedron Council. When the dream occurs, explain to the dreaming PCs that the imagery feels strangely familiar and carries with it a strong sense of déjà vu. The same dream is shared by all of the PCs—feel free to run the dream as an encounter if you wish, but keep in mind that no lasting harm can occur as a result of the dream.

In the dream, the PCs have a vision of standing in a pleasant green meadow. Before them stretches a vast ocean, while behind them rises an ominous forest that the PCs instinctively feel contains great dangers. A moment later, a complicated-looking scepter appears in the air before the

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

PCs, apparently pointing out to sea toward a distant city on the ocean's far horizon. The PCs feel compelled to reach for the scepter, but as they do so, the scepter warps and twists back on itself, distorting into an infinity symbol before it suddenly snaps and flies apart into glowing fragments, causing the green meadow, forest, and ocean to distort and transform as well.

The new scene the dream settles on is of the PCs standing together on the Irespan in Magnimar. As they look upon each other, they see their fellow companions twist and transform into hideous monsters that then clamber down the sides of the Irespan to enter a piling carved with reptilian figures. This metaphorical vision is an additional hint from future memories that should help steer the PCs toward this location once they reach Magnimar.

Upon waking, a PC can attempt a DC 40 Knowledge (arcana) check to recognize the twisted scepter as the *Scepter of Ages*. With a successful DC 45 Knowledge (planes) check, a PC identifies the strange green meadow, forest, and ocean as what is reputed to lie at the heart of the Dimension of Time, which means that the distantly glimpsed city on the horizon is the legendary city of Stethelos. (It's unlikely that the PCs will be able to succeed at these Knowledge checks at this time, due to the high DCs, but as they continue the campaign, feel free to allow them to try again as their skills increase.)

At your discretion, if the PCs hit an investigative dead end and need guidance as to where to go next at any point in the remainder of this campaign, you can have them experience additional metaphorical dreams like these. In any event, once the first dream takes place at the start of this adventure, the PCs have officially entered a period of time where their future actions have begun to manipulate their present selves. As a result, the PCs will find now and then that minor and relatively inconsequential memories don't match up with those of NPCs, as the PCs are remembering things from their past that have changed for the rest of reality. These changes are never enough to cause significant ripples—while the PCs might remember that a favorite tavern always serves spicy salmon curry, for example, NPC patrons of the tavern might remember it as serving a spicy clam chowder—but they should be enough to give the PCs pause.

The only game effect of these disconnects between the PCs' knowledge of the past and the rest of reality is that from this point forward until the PCs near the end of the final adventure in the Return of the Runelords Adventure Path, they take a –2 penalty on Knowledge (history) checks.

EVENT 2: THE INVADERS (CR 7 TO CR 12)

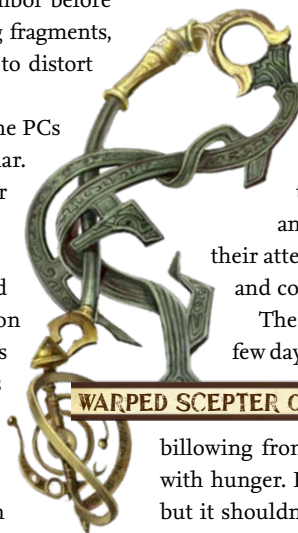
The memory-dream of **Event 1** may be disturbing and off-putting, but it is ultimately harmless. This is not the case for the second time distortion event. The PCs' time traveling sends ripples much farther back than the present, and in the distant shadowy past, predators known as the hounds of Tindalos are attracted by these ripples. Capable of traveling through time and emerging from physical angles to attack those who have attracted their attention, the hounds of Tindalos can seek out and confront the PCs nearly anywhere.

The first attack on a PC should occur within a few days of their first dream in **Event 1**. This initial invasion is by a single hound, its intrusion presaged by smoke

billowing from a nearby angle and an alien howl filled with hunger. Feel free to stage this encounter anywhere, but it shouldn't take place while the PCs are exploring a dungeon or otherwise adventuring. The point of this first encounter with the hounds of Tindalos is to let the PCs know that they can be attacked at any time. Since it's only one hound, a single CR 7 threat shouldn't pose too much of a problem for 8th-level PCs.

Not so with the second attack. This time, two hounds of Tindalos seek out the PCs, manifesting in a CR 9 encounter. A third attack should include three hounds (a CR 10 encounter). Be sure to space these encounters out so that the PCs never quite know when to expect hounds to arrive. After the third encounter, feel free to continue sending hounds as often as you wish, but avoid having more than three hounds attack at once, for the climactic encounter in this event should be the most dangerous.

This final encounter in **Event 2** should take place soon after the PCs reach 10th level, and like the first encounter with the hounds, it should take place at an unexpected moment. At this point, the PCs have attracted the attention of something not from the distant past, but a sinister creature spawned in the future. This is a misery siktempora (see page 90)—a manifestation of the PCs' own dark and painful emotions during their journey to the Dimension of Time in the final Return of the Runelords adventure. As with all misery siktemporas, this one is from a specific source. By this point, you know your players and their characters well—choose the PC who has the most dour, sullen, or nihilistic attitude or personality as this siktempora's miserable source. That PC becomes the primary focus of the siktempora's attack. As a CR 12 monster, and as a significant and unusual creature, you should plan for the time-traveling outsider's attack to take place at a point where all of the PCs can take part in the encounter.



WARPED SCEPTER OF AGES

HOUNDS OF TINDALOS (1, 2, OR 3)**CR 7****XP 3,200 each****hp 85 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 158)**MISERY SIKTEMPORA****CR 12****XP 19,320****hp 168** (see page 90)**EVENT 3: THE STEWARD**

Once the PCs complete two of the adventure's chapters, they receive a strange visit from a mysterious woman known only as the Steward of Stethelos. A powerful oracle of Yog-Sothoth and a servant of the chaotic vortices of time, the Steward should remain a mysterious figure for the time being. The PCs will encounter her again periodically throughout the campaign, and in the final adventure will have a chance to truly meet her in person for the first time and decide if she is friend or foe.

It is that final meeting that draws the Steward's attention to the PCs, and the contact she makes with the PCs in the past, starting with this event, is also a direct result of that meeting. The Steward appears as a 25-year-old human woman clad in armor, wielding a curved blade in one hand and carrying a complex, cracked hourglass in the other. This hourglass is a potent artifact called the *Glass of Stethelos*, which (among other things) allows the Steward to manifest at different points in the past to contact the PCs. When she contacts the PCs in the adventures that follow, her appearance becomes progressively more aged the closer in time the PCs approach, while the *Glass of Stethelos* grows less damaged and more full of sand.

This first meeting is relatively brief but has significant ramifications. This event occurs when all the PCs are in close proximity. Each PC hears the sound of ocean waves rising to an almost deafening tumult, and then time simply stands still. The PCs can move and speak to each other but cannot interact with the world

around them, as if they had all come under the effects of a shared *time stop*. The Steward is there as well, having appeared out of nowhere the instant time stopped.

In this form, the Steward is immaterial, akin to a projected image. She regards the PCs impassively, and then speaks.

"You have questions, but I shall not answer them today. You will ask them in time, and I shall reveal what I can. Know for now that you have caused great turmoil in the Dimension of Time, and you have been marked by Time's guardians and predators. I am but Time's Steward, and I bring you gifts from yourselves. Use these gifts well. I have spoken to you twice more in the tomorrows to come, and should you be destined to survive at all, I shall await you in Stethelos."

As the Steward speaks, her form starts to flicker and waver. By the time her words draw to a close, she fades away entirely, her presence returning to the Dimension of Time. After she vanishes, time returns to normal for the PCs—if they moved about during the period of stopped time, any others nearby when they return may be startled but will simply assume that the PCs, being powerful adventures, used some sort of teleportation effect to vanish and reappear elsewhere in what appears to them to be only an instant.

The "gifts" the Steward promised are infusions of power from the PCs' future selves, shed from their minds and souls in the act of traveling through time and rippling backward into the past to settle in their present forms in this adventure. These fragments of memory, inspiration, and power manifest as experience points and boosts to ability scores. In effect, the PCs are absorbing shards of their own future knowledge.

Their minds cannot make sense of events that haven't yet occurred, but now and then during the rest of the campaign, feel free to tell a PC now and then that they're experiencing a sense of *déjà vu*, particularly when a lucky roll of the dice results in a fortunate escape from peril or a particularly rewarding result—almost as if they knew the outcome of that event a split second before it took

**THE STEWARD OF STETHelos**

place and were able to adjust their tactics to ensure the best result.

Ability Score Boosts: Each PC gains a permanent +2 bonus to one of two ability scores. The two scores they can apply this bonus to are determined by the campaign trait the PC selected at character creation, as summarized on the table below. A character with the Time Lost feat instead gains a +1 bonus to any two ability scores of her choice (but cannot put both of these bonuses on the same ability score).

Gifts from the Future

Campaign Trait	Ability Score Options
Accidental Clone	+2 Charisma or +2 Constitution
Audrahni's Ally	+2 Strength or +2 Wisdom
Close Allies	+2 Charisma or +2 Strength
Intrigued by Thassilon	+2 Constitution or +2 Intelligence
Scion of Legend	+2 Dexterity or +2 Intelligence
Spirit Touched	+2 Dexterity or +2 Wisdom
Time Lost	+1 to any two ability scores

Experience Award: Each PC gains 19,200 XP for receiving these future memories.

Trait Enhancement: Each PC can now use the "once per adventure" power granted by her Campaign Trait twice per adventure.

PART 1: POLYMORPH PLAGUE

The cult of Yamasoth has long lurked in Varisia's shadows, but it wasn't until Alaznist emerged that one of its most ambitious members, Leptonia, began her plot to spread the polymorph plague. She took her worshipers with her on the journey from Kaer Maga to Magnimar in 4716 AR, following visions and her own research to resettle in a location that was both close to Hollow Mountain and populated enough to give the plague a fertile realm to grow within. She followed those visions to the Gecko, one of the pilings of the Irespan, and claimed it as the new home for her cult. Within, she made contact with an ancient minion of Yamasoth who had, for thousands of years, wasted away in a magical prison. This minion was Og-Zeugus, a gongorinan qliphoth more than willing to give Leptonia a few short years of service in return for finally being freed from its magical bindings. With



the aid of a mercenary necromancer of the Whispering Way, a man named Erigantus, Leptonia bolstered the chambers of the Gecko with undead guardians, transforming what was once Og-Zeugus's prison into a suitable, well-defended cult headquarters.

With Erigantus's aid and using horrific eggs extruded by Og-Zeugus, Leptonia recently managed to develop a contagion to her liking—a true polymorph plague that not only transforms those who endure it into ravenous monsters, but also allows these transformed monsters to spread the plague to their victims. Yet even this wasn't enough for Leptonia. Eager to develop a version of the plague that could be borne upon the wind itself, so that the exhalations of its victims would be enough to spread its gifts, she's relocated her cult once again—this time to Riddleport, in the hope of securing a scroll of true resurrection to restore Runelord Krune to life. In return, she hopes Krune will aid her in finishing the polymorph plague, but she's prepared to torment him into cooperating if he doesn't comply. In any event, the cultists' absence provides an excellent opportunity to attack the hideout, learn more of their plans, and defeat Og-Zeugus.

EVENT 4: REPORTING TO THE COUNCIL

Once the PCs return to Magnimar, the Sihedron Council expects a report from them (if the players don't realize this or forget, you can have a friendly NPC like Captain Sursha remind them or suggest it). If the PCs tarry, they might hear rumors about a strange new affliction that's been striking vagrants in Underbridge—a sinister sickness that turns ordinary people into monsters. Others whisper that someone should do something, and grouse that the Sihedron Council hasn't done anything to help. This should instill a sense of urgency in the PCs.

When the PCs arrive at Heidmarch Manor, they're eagerly welcomed and ushered into the council room where Sheila Heidmarch waits for them, along with Koriah Azmeren and a dark-haired woman with pointed ears and goatlike horns. This third woman is **Ayavah** (CN intersex demon-spawn tiefling sorcerer 8), a sculptor and sorcerer from Magnimar's Underbridge district, but she remains silent and observant until later in the meeting.

Sheila welcomes the PCs and asks them to report what they've learned, expressing relief for those who survived and grief (if appropriate) for those whose lives were lost in Hollow Mountain. This is a good chance for the PCs to not only roleplay a bit and show off, but also to

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

help focus their attention on what they should do next. Sheila and Koriah can both help the PCs sort out their priorities and—if the PCs discovered that the cult of Yamasoth keeps its base of operations in the Gecko—the Sihedron Council urges the PCs to investigate that site as soon as they are able. Mention of a dream message from Sorshen and her invitation to Korvosa worries the council but doesn't seem to surprise them (as a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check can determine). They suggest the PCs take precautions before following up on this invitation but note that if Sorshen truly does wish to help, having her as an ally could be invaluable—assuming, they hasten to add, that it's not merely someone posing as the runelord!

As the PCs finish their report to the council, Koriah introduces the third woman as a talented local artist who recently came to the council claiming to have dire news for “the council's heroes.” At first, the council thought Ayavah meant the Sihedron Heroes and were debating how to handle the request, but when Ayavah clarified her statement to indicate she was seeking the PCs, the council was intrigued. Ayavah claims to be not just a sculptor but also a sorcerer whose gift of magic comes from something more than study—she says she is destined for something more. She claims to receive visions now and then, and in one such vision she saw something of great importance to the PCs.

The truth about Ayavah is a bit more complex. She did indeed receive a vision of a sort concerning the PCs, but visions are not something normal for her, and although she is a sorcerer, Ayavah is also deeply religious and a member of a heretical order of Noctacula worshipers known as the Cult of the Redeemer Queen. This group has long believed that Noctacula, the demon lord of assassins, darkness, and lust, has been on the cusp of transcending her nature and rising as a nonevil goddess of artists, midnight, and outcasts—an event that, should signs and portents from clerics in the cult be accurate, may be in the process of unfolding at this very moment.

Ayavah's vision was of the PCs standing side by side with Runelord Sorshen before a vast, churning portal. The vision was maddeningly vague, but she's certain it represents something in the future, and if the PCs and Sorshen are not present before this vast portal, wherever it may be, something dire will befall Varisia—for beyond the portal Ayavah had a glimpse of a towering elephantine behemoth thundering through reality toward this world.

The Sihedron Council trusts Ayavah's report of the vision (bolstered by the use of falsehood-detecting magic), even if its members aren't quite convinced of the vision's source. Ayavah has kept her faith in the Redeemer Queen quiet, but she believes in her heart that

the vision was sent by none other than Noctacula herself, whom she believes sees in Runelord Sorshen a perfect proxy for her new role as a goddess of outcasts.

In addition, Ayavah can potentially help in one other way—if the PCs haven't learned the location of the cult, she suggests they investigate the Gecko. Ayavah lives in a small complex in the piling opposite the Gecko, and this has given her a perfect vantage point to notice strange comings and goings through a hexagonal window at the Gecko's upper heights—including a serpentine ghost that she fears is the undead spirit of one of Underbridge's most notorious monsters, a lamia matriarch named Xanesha. Even if the PCs know about the cult's use of the Gecko, Ayavah can warn them that the cult seems to have secured the aid of the undead lamia.

At some point, likely just after the PCs finish their meeting with the Sihedron Council, Ayavah takes the PCs aside to quietly reveal one more thing—her faith. She reveals the holy symbol of the Redeemer Queen she carries (a moon with midnight-blue lips and a seven-pointed crown) and explains the nature of the heresy she follows. She then explains that she knows where her vision came from—that Noctacula wants the PCs to ally with Sorshen, and that Sorshen, like the Redeemer Queen, is working to abandon her past and rebuild herself into something new, something greater, and something unhindered by clichéd obsessions and physical gratifications. If one of the PCs is a worshiper of Noctacula as the Redeemer Queen, Ayavah recognizes her fellow heretic and approaches that PC first and foremost with this lore.

Ayavah has no interest in joining with the PCs, as she's preparing a pilgrimage of her own to a remote site in northwestern Varisia where other worshipers of the Cult of the Redeemer Queen hope to establish the first monastery to their faith. She's at peace now with her heritage, has allowed her horns to grow out, and no longer tries to hide what she is. At your discretion, however, and if you think the PCs could use some aid, Ayavah might accompany them for a time in their investigations in the Gecko. Her statistics appear on page 100 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #100: A Song of Silver*.

THE POLYMORPH PLAGUE

At various points in this adventure, the PCs likely find themselves exposed to the polymorph plague, either by being bitten by a creature transformed by the affliction or coming into contact with contaminated traps or other hazards while adventuring. The disease manifests in painful lesions and goiters that form at the victim's joints and increasingly limit mobility, while simultaneously clouding the mind and reverting intellect to baser and feral thoughts. If the plague is left untreated, it's only a matter of time before a victim either becomes paralyzed

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

and dies of thirst or, perhaps even worse, transforms wholly into a monster.

While the effects of the polymorph plague are ravaging a victim, it can be cured through the traditional magical methods, but once a victim's Charisma score reaches 0 and he transforms, only *break enchantment* or a more powerful effect can restore him to his previous form. A creature suffering from the polymorph plague reverts to his true form upon his death (and if thereafter restored to life, reverts to his true form and is no longer afflicted by the polymorph plague).

POLYMORPH PLAGUE

Type disease, ingestion or injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 18

Frequency 1/day

Effect 1d4 Dex damage and 1d4 Cha drain plus transformation (see below); **Cure** the polymorph plague can be cured only by magic such as *remove disease* or *heal*.

Special Once its Charisma is reduced to 0 while suffering from the polymorph plague, the victim immediately transforms into a nongood- and nonlawful-aligned animal, aberration, magical beast, or vermin with an Intelligence score no higher than 5 (the exact creature transformed into should be selected by the GM). Its mind changes as well, as it loses all previous memories and behaves as a typical member of its new shape—it remembers its previous life only in vague glimpses and snatches endured as mocking nightmares during sleep. A *true seeing* spell reveals the creature's previous form, and a successful *break enchantment* (against the plague's save DC of 18) can restore a creature to its previous form.

A. THE GECKO

The Irespan is Magnimar's most impressive landmark, an immense span of ruined Thassilonian bridge that once ran all the way to Hollow Mountain. (See *Magnimar, City of Monuments* for more details on the Irespan.) Today, only a fragment of the bridge remains, held aloft by several thick stone pilings, decorated with images and carvings of different creatures. That these pilings contain chambers is no secret, and in some cases the people of Magnimar have colonized or settled in them. This is not the case with the piling known as the Gecko.

Gecko Features

From the outside, the Gecko appears to have no entrance, as the original hexagonal access point on its southern face has been sealed via *stone shape*. A secret door near the southwestern gargoyle (see area A8) is the route that the cultists normally used to come and go in secret from the hideout. But today no human cultists remain, and those who do still come and go from within are either ghosts (as in the case of Xanesha) or can become gaseous and drift

through tiny vents in the walls (left for air circulation throughout the complex, these 2-inch-diameter vents provide access to areas A2–A5, A7, and A9, and can be located with a successful DC 20 Perception check).

The two potential entrances to the Gecko are detailed further in areas A1 and A8, respectively, but both of these points lie 220 feet above the ground and 30 feet away from the underside of the Irespan above. The Gecko's walls have plenty of handholds, but slippery lichen, bird droppings, and not a few crumbling portions make climbing up to either location tricky—the DC of Climb checks to scale the walls is 15. At your discretion, if the PCs don't have their own methods of safely reaching either area A1 or A8, the Sihedron Council can provide each of the PCs with two *potions of levitate*—one to ascend to the entrance, and one to descend later.

The Gecko's interior is damp and cool. Doors are made of moisture-swollen wood with rusty metal hinges that squeal loudly when opened, but nonetheless remain stout and functional (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 23). Secret doors are made of wood and can be spotted with a successful DC 25 Perception check.

The chambers within the Gecko are unlit and dark. Ceiling heights in hallways average 10 feet, while in most chambers the ceiling rises up to a height of 15 feet unless otherwise noted in the text.

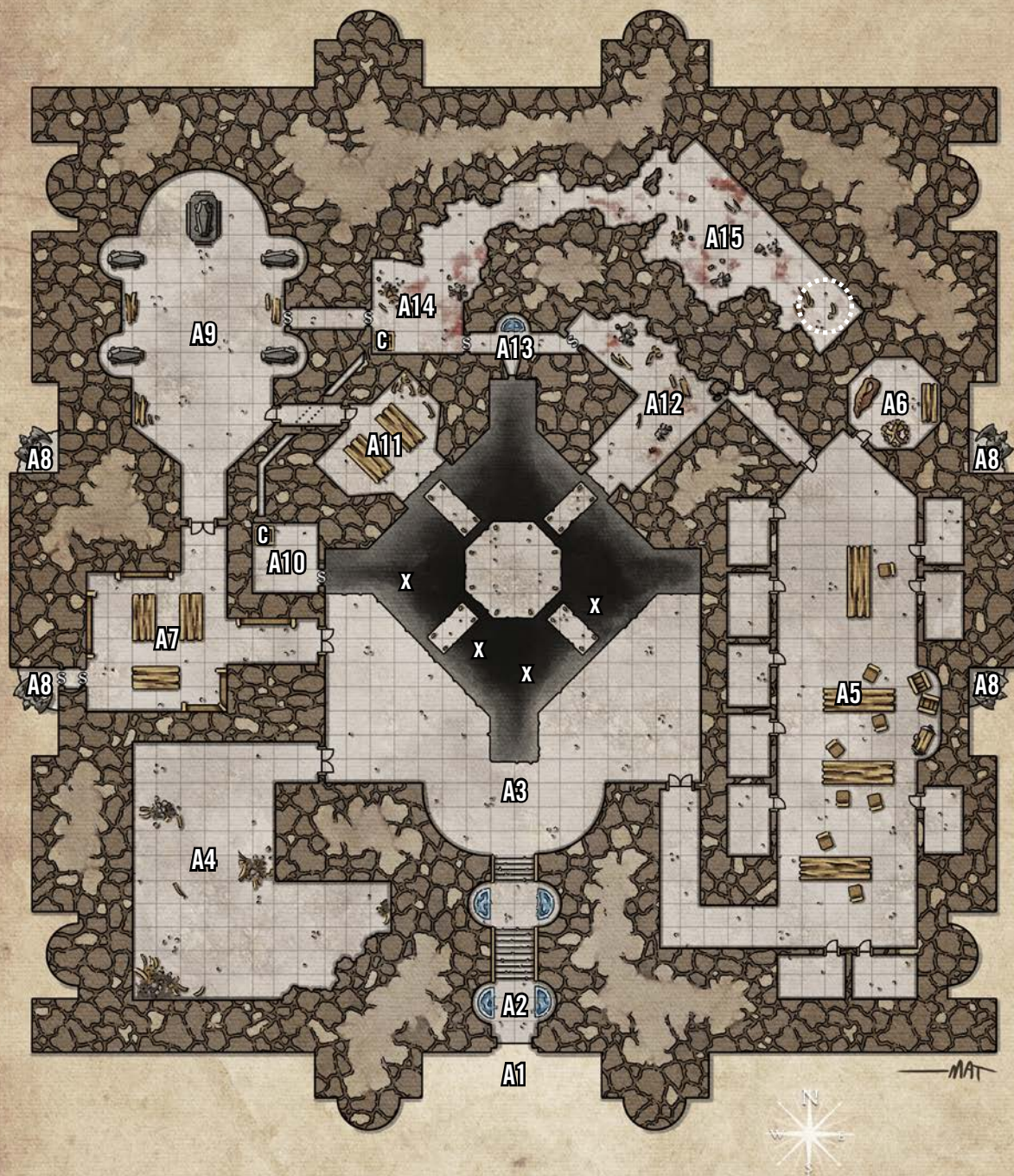
EVENT 5: THE GECKO'S GUARDIAN (CR 10)

This event occurs each time the PCs approach or exit the Gecko, as long as Xanesha is active—remember that it takes her 2d4 days to rejuvenate if she's destroyed.

Creature: Regardless of how the PCs approach the Gecko, they will be observed by its first guardian unless they take pains to be stealthy. This guardian is the ghost of the lamia matriarch Xanesha, one of the primary antagonists of the second Rise of the Runelords adventure, "The Skinsaw Murders." Xanesha was slain in that adventure, but her spirit did not rest. For some time, she haunted the vicinity of the Shadow Clock (a towering, rickety clock tower in Underbridge), but when the necromancer Erigantus lent his services to the cult of Yamasoth, he was able to use a combination of necromantic controls over Xanesha to shift the site of her haunting. This required the recovery of her remains—notably her skull, dug out of the ruins below the fallen bell inside of the Shadow Clock's collapsed interior. As long as Xanesha's skull remains in area A11, the lamia's ghost continues to serve as the Gecko's guardian. Although she can hide within the walls of the Gecko, the nature of Erigantus's necromancy forbids her from entering any of the rooms within.

Xanesha resents her fate, but she is powerless to resist it and unleashes her wrath on intruders. Until someone attempts to scale the Gecko's walls or enter the building,

A. THE GECKO
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

she remains hidden within the piling's facade, constantly circling at a height of 200 feet and periodically peeking out of the stone to check for anyone approaching. Her brooding anger at being slain by heroes makes her particularly eager to attack similar groups, given the chance. Until then, she remains in hiding, as Erigantus did not want to draw undue attention to the Gecko by giving citizens of Underbridge something to notice and spread rumors about.

If Xanesha notices the PCs, she moves through the stone walls of the piling to confront them. As the PCs draw near, roll a Stealth check for Xanesha to determine how subtle her peeks out of the stony facade are, but remember to account for distance when you attempt this check. Against a PC at ground level, Xanesha gains a +20 bonus on Stealth checks opposed by Perception checks from those on the ground 200 feet below.

Note that Xanesha is a dangerous foe, but Ayavah should warn the PCs of the ghost's presence near the Gecko so they should know to come prepared for a fight against such an enemy.

XANESHA

CR 10

XP 9,600

Lamia matriarch ghost rogue 1 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 175, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 144)

CE Large undead (augmented monstrous humanoid, incorporeal, shapechanger)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 24, flat-footed 18 (+9 deflection, +6 Dex, -1 size)

hp 176 (13d8+118)

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

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits; **SR** 19

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee corrupting touch +17 (10d6 [Fort DC 25 half] plus 1d4 Wis drain)

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

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6, tolling tumult, wisdom drain (DC 25), wrathful wail

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +21)

At will—*charm monster* (DC 23), *ventriloquism* (DC 20)

3/day—*deep slumber* (DC 22), *dream*, *major image* (DC 22), *mirror image*, *suggestion* (DC 22)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 6th; concentration +15)

3rd (5/day)—*inflict serious wounds* (DC 22)

2nd (7/day)—*invisibility*, *scorching ray*

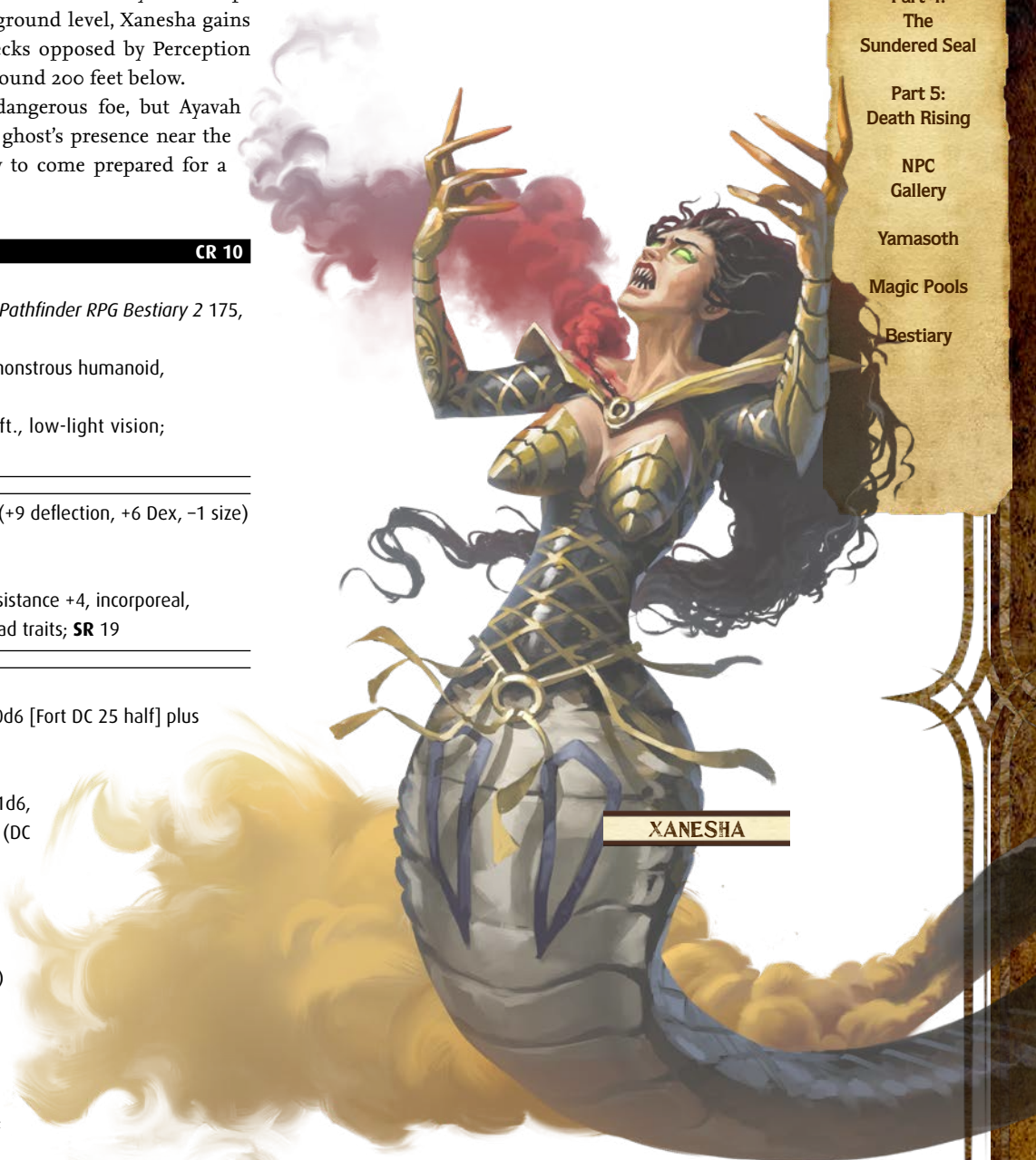
1st (9/day)—*feather fall*, *inflict light wounds* (DC 20), *magic missile*, *sanctuary* (DC 20)

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 19), *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*

TACTICS

Before Combat Xanesha casts *invisibility* and *mirror image* as soon as she notices the PCs approaching.

During Combat Xanesha starts combat by flying toward the PCs, charging if necessary, to trigger her tolling tumult to affect as many PCs as possible. If she can,



XANESHA

she attacks with her corrupting touch at the end of that movement, or otherwise uses her wrathful wail if there are no adjacent targets. She continues to make melee attacks until she is reduced to fewer than 100 hit points, at which point she retreats into the wall of the Gecko for cover, casts *inflict wounds* spells on herself to heal, and then emerges at range to use her spells against foes. She's particularly fond of casting *deep slumber* on climbing characters. She continues to use her wrathful wail as often as possible, enjoying the sight of foes fighting each other, and stays mobile to trigger her tolling tumult each round she can while she continues to cast spells.

Morale Xanesha fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 23, **Con** —, **Int** 18, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 29

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 38 (can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Extend Spell, Improved Critical (spear), Power Attack, Silent Spell, Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +23, Bluff +25, Climb +30, Diplomacy +16, Fly +12, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (local) +20, Perception +20, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +10, Swim +30

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Thassilonian

SQ change shape (fixed Medium humanoid form; *alter self*), trapfinding +1, undersized weapons

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Rejuvenation (Su) If the PCs recover Xanesha's skull from area **A11** and either destroy it or sanctify it by casting *consecrate* or *hallow* in the skull's vicinity, Xanesha is put to rest permanently. Simply removing the skull from the Gecko frees her to go where she wishes, in which case she returns to haunting the Shadow Clock.

Tolling Tumult (Su) Whenever Xanesha moves at least 30 feet in a round, once she ceases her movement for that round, a 30-foot-spread area around her fills with the deafening sound of immense bells tolling. Each living creature in this area must succeed at a DC 25 Will saving throw or become staggered by the overwhelming sound for the following round. The sound of the tolling tumult does not extend beyond this 30-foot reach at all. This is a mind-affecting sonic effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Wrathful Wail (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds as a standard action, Xanesha can unleash a wail of anguished wrath. All creatures in a 30-foot burst must succeed at a DC 25 Will save or become consumed with rage. An affected creature can take no action on its turn other than to physically attack an adjacent target with a melee weapon (or an unarmed strike, if no melee weapon is available). If there are no adjacent targets, the enraged creature must charge the nearest available target. This effect lasts for 1d4 rounds. This is a sonic, mind-affecting, emotion effect; the save DC is Charisma-based.

Development: If, in your personal campaign history, Xanesha was either never slain or the PCs took pains to ensure her spirit would never rise as undead, you have two options. The least satisfying would be to say Xanesha died after the PCs spared her, or that other circumstances undid their actions in attempting to prevent her rising as an undead creature. A more satisfying solution would be to replace Xanesha's ghost with a ghost of some other memorable foe PCs faced and defeated earlier—in this case, you'll need to stat that ghost up by hand, tailoring the ghost's abilities to account for the way in which it died.

A1. The Hexagonal Window

The carvings and sculptures of geckos give way here to an eight-foot-wide expanse of smooth stone in the shape of a hexagon. The stone itself has a softly rippled surface, giving it the impression of a swiftly solidified wall of mud.

Once the only obvious entrance into the Gecko, this window has been sealed and opened several times via *stone shape*—an effect that can be recognized with a successful DC 23 Knowledge (arcana) check. The stone is only 1 foot thick (hardness 8, hp 180, break DC 30), but if magic is not used to bypass it, it must be destroyed to allow access to area **A2**. Note that excessive noise generated by smashing the wall automatically alerts the creatures waiting in area **A3**.

A2. Gecko Entrance

A pair of shallow alcoves to the east and west contain what appear to be long-dried water fonts, each of which seems to have been scraped numerous times by sharp objects. A flight of steps leads down to the north.

During Thassilon's height, the southern end of the Irespan stood on the border between two runelords' domains: Bakrakhan and Shalast. Even as tensions rose between the two nations and they went to war, the Irespan and its pilings maintained a role as a sort of neutral zone where agents of the two nations could meet under a tenuous armistice. Nonetheless, both nations maintained a heavy military presence here, and the Gecko was used by Shalast to house that presence. Much of the barracks for soldiers existed at ground level, with this uppermost reach being reserved for commanders. The lower level is now completely collapsed (see area **A3** for more details).

The fonts themselves were once gilded, one of many displays of wealth Karzoug enjoyed, but the gold has long since been scraped away by looters.

A3. Marshaling Chamber (CR 9)

The sound of chains grating on chains and the steady drip of water fills this large chamber. The air is cool and damp, with the ceiling rising to a height of thirty feet above. The northern portion of the room is taken up by a vast pit of darkness, over which five platforms dangle from immense, rusting chains. Each platform is made of old, soaking-wet wood bound in strips of rusty iron. Doors provide exits—two to the west and one to the southeast, while arched openings provide access to other chambers on the far side of the massive pit.

This room was once used as a marshaling area where officers received orders from commanders before returning below to distribute tasks to the soldiers stationed in the barracks. The five hanging platforms were once controlled by a set of clockworks connected to machinery in area A10 that allowed each platform to be independently raised or lowered from this level to the barracks on the ground level below. Today, the machinery for all but the central platform has seized up. The platforms are stable and in no danger of collapsing, but they sway ominously if anyone moves on them. A character who takes more than a move action while on one of these platforms must succeed at a DC 10 Acrobatics check or fall prone—if the character fails this check by 5 or more and he is adjacent to an edge, he falls off the platform into the pit below.

The pit itself drops 200 feet into cold, brackish water—all that remains of the lower level, which collapsed into a rough cavern during the Age of Darkness. No creatures dwell in this vast chamber, and there are no easy exits. The damp, slippery walls of the pit can be scaled with a successful DC 20 Climb check. The water is 30 feet deep.

Creatures: With the living cultists of Yamasoth having temporarily relocated to Riddleport, control of the Gecko has reverted to the undead. In particular, a vampiric gargoyle named Sumsarru has been charged with keeping the complex secure. He's stationed his four minions, derro rogues he harvested from Magnimar's sewers and transformed into vampire spawn, in this chamber to serve as guardians.

As vampires, the derros and their master require blood, but rather than allow his spawn to rove the streets of Magnimar and attract undue attention, Sumsarru takes pains to snatch up victims from Magnimar's seedier back alleys that he suspects none would miss—vagrants, derelicts, and drunks. These poor souls are then dangled from the network of chains and pulleys affixed to the ceiling above the pit so that each hangs, feet down and body bound in coils of chain, over the pit below. A drunkard dangles at a level just below the floor of area A3 (so that their line of sight is about even

with the floor) at each location marked with an "X" on the map. When a vampire hungers for blood, he hooks a dangling victim with an aklys, reels the victim in, and drinks enough to sate his bloodlust but not enough to kill the victim outright. This allows the vampires to keep their feeding stock viable for weeks at a time before they need replacement—if they remember to provide the victims with food and water. The groans and cries of pain and terror from the dangling victims fills the pit with an ominous chorus. The four terrified drunkards have each taken 7 points of Constitution damage from blood drain, and their hit points are reduced as a result.

These victims give Sumsarru an additional benefit, as he knows they are likely to distract "do-gooder" adventurers. Knowing the value "certain fools" are apt to put on lives, and that such adventurers are likely to risk themselves to save such victims, Sumsarru has ordered his derro minions to play upon that trait. The chains binding all four victims are rigged so that, as a move action, they can be set to slowly unravel. To set this in motion, a derro must hit a dangling drunkard with a hurled aklys (against the helpless drunkard's touch AC of 5), then "reel in" the drunkard with a move action. The derro can then release the chains with a move action on the next round, leaving the derro a standard action to use as it wishes. Loosened chains release a drunkard at the end of the 2nd round, giving the PCs 2 full rounds to save him—rounds during which the derro vampires are likely to continue their attacks as the victim screams for a PC to save him.

All four derro vampires use their spider climb ability to cling tirelessly to the upper walls of the pit, just below the edge and out of sight. They clamber up and over the edge to attack as soon as anyone approaches.

DERRO VAMPIRE SPAWN (4)	CR 5
XP 1,600 each	
Derro vampire spawn rogue 1 (<i>Pathfinder RPG Bestiary</i> 70, <i>Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex</i> 244)	
CE Small undead (augmented humanoid, derro)	
Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7	
DEFENSE	
AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+2 armor, +2 Dex, +4 natural, +1 size)	
hp 34 each (4d8+17); fast healing 2	
Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +7	
Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2; DR 5/silver;	
Immune undead traits; Resist cold 10, electricity 10; SR 14	
Weaknesses resurrection vulnerability, vampire weaknesses, vulnerability to sunlight	
OFFENSE	
Speed 20 ft.; spider climb	
Melee slam +5 (1d3 plus energy drain)	

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

Ranged +1 *aklys* +6 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks blood drain, dominate (DC 16), energy drain (1 level, DC 16), sneak attack +2d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +7)

At will—*darkness*, *ghost sound* (DC 14)

1/day—*daze* (DC 14), *sound burst* (DC 16)

TACTICS

During Combat Each round, one of the four derro vampires attempts to hook a drunkard and start the process of unraveling his chains, as detailed on page 13. The other three derros focus their attacks on other PCs, ganging up as they can to flank foes. A PC in the process of pulling a dangling drunkard to safety is considered to be flat-footed against a derro's sneak attack.

Morale The derro vampires fight until destroyed. If destroyed, a derro vampire reverts to gaseous form and retreats to its coffin in area A9.

STATISTICS

Str 11, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 5, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 13

Feats Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +17, Intimidate +9, Perception +7, Stealth +21

Languages Aklo, Undercommon

SQ gaseous form, madness, poison use, shadowless, trapfinding +1

Gear mwk leather armor, +1 *aklys*^{UC}

DRUNKARDS (4)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 23 each (currently 2; *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 303)

Treasure: A search of the murky, 30-foot-deep waters at the bottom of the pit reveals a layer of rubble and silt along the bottom, along with two dozen blood-drained bodies in various states of decay. These bodies are left over from the vampires above—remains of hapless drunkards past. A few of these drunkards carried items of value that went with them to their watery graves, including a masterwork mithral dagger; a +1 *breastplate* adorned with a carving of a whale being eaten by a living ship crewed by skeletons; a silver-and-bronze hip flask carved with an image of a romantic couple being stalked by a werewolf (worth 100 gp); and a pair of gold-and-horn-rimmed *lenses of figment piercing*^{UE}.

Development: Any drunkards who are rescued are, of course, delirious with thanks and completely sober after several days spent dangling and feeding the dead with their blood. They want nothing more than to be escorted to safety (none of them can manage the climb back down to Underbridge alone), and have little to offer the PCs in return for their rescue

save for information. All were snatched up from the streets by a “frightening winged demon” (they can all describe the gargoyle vampire well enough that a PC can identify the attacker as a gargoyle with a successful DC 14 Knowledge [nature] check and a vampire with a successful DC 18 Knowledge [religion] check—if either result exceeds the DC by 10 or more, the character recognizes the attacker as a gargoyle vampire without need for the other skill check). The drunkards can describe how they were fed upon by the derro vampires in grisly detail, but they were even more frightened of a half-transformed wretch the winged demon showed them, threatening that any attempt to escape would find them not being fed to vampires but inflicted with the polymorph plague and turned into a monster. This half-transformed creature is kept in area A4, which the drunks can point out to the PCs.

Story Award: For each drunkard rescued from death, award the PCs 400 XP.

A4. The Testing Room (CR 6)

The smell in this room is cloying, enough to make the eyes water and the throat close up involuntarily. Drifts of rubble, refuse, and waste lie scattered about the room's floor. The southeast corner of the room has partially collapsed, leaving a hollow in the space above.

Creature: Once used as a training hall for commanders in the Shalast armies, this room more recently housed the initial experiments by the cult of Yamasoth as they developed the polymorph plague. Only one unfortunate victim remains here today, one of the first to be afflicted with the supernatural sickness. In a previous life, this was a local smuggler named Isiah Kalynn, but now he's a shambling half-transformed monstrosity. The polymorph plague only partially changed him into an otyugh, and the result is a nauseating conglomeration that somehow manages to be worse than if the change had taken him completely. The cult kept Isiah around out of a twisted combination of amusement and nostalgia, for while his transformation failed, observing the way in which it failed was what allowed Leptonia and her minions to finally perfect the ritual for crafting the polymorph plague.

When the cult moved on a few days before the PCs arrived, they left Isiah to fend for himself here, and the distraught mockery is starving. He's long since eaten the rotting remnants of prior failed experiments left to flop and writhe in this room, and as the PCs step in, he shambles forward, eager and hungry. Yet even as his body works to attack, his mind manages to retain control over his voice. As he grabs and bites at the PCs, he begs in a

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamaso

Magic P

Bestia

guttural voice, "Save me! Feed me! I'm sorry! So hungry! Save me! Help me! Kill me! I'm so hungry!"

Few would blame the PCs for putting this wretch out of his misery, and certainly his violent attempts to eat the PCs could result in his death, but if the PCs manage to defeat Isiah without killing him, he can potentially give them some important clues and information (see Development below). Apart from subduing him with nonlethal damage or restraining him via grapples or magic, the simplest method to get Isiah to cease attacking is to give him something to eat. Isiah isn't picky; he eats even rotten flesh or garbage, but he certainly won't turn up his twisted nose at trail rations or other foodstuffs. He gobbles the offered food down quickly, at which point he remains sated for 10 minutes before his hunger returns and he attacks once more.

ISIAH KALYNN CR 6

XP 2,400

Male mutant human rogue 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 180)

CN Medium aberration (humanoid, human)

Init +7; Senses Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10 (+3 Dex)

hp 66 (6d8+36)

Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +5

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; **DR** 5/—; **Immune** disease

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d6+4), 3 tentacles +3 (1d3+2)

Special Attacks sneak attack +3d6

TACTICS

During Combat Isiah lurches up to attack the closest creature at the start of combat, and he doesn't switch targets. If he knocks out or kills someone, he stops fighting to try to eat the corpse, automatically dealing 1d6 points of slashing damage with his jagged teeth each round to an unconscious victim.

Morale While he otherwise fights to the death, Isiah stops fighting as soon as he gets something to eat. If attacked while feeding, he fights to the death to defend his meal.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 16, **Con** 19, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 21

Feats Deceitful, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +11, Disguise +7, Escape Artist +10,

Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +6, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +10, Stealth +10, Swim +11

Languages Common, Varisian

SQ deformities (lame), mutations (otyugh limbs, rugged), rogue talents (fast stealth, surprise attacks, weapon training), trapfinding +3

Development: If the PCs spare Isiah, they can't coherently converse with him unless they give him some food (which, after he feeds, gives him 10 minutes of lucidity before he lapses back into delirium for a minimum of 24 hours) or cure him of his transformed condition. As the effects of the polymorph plague on him were only partial, the DC of a *break enchantment* spell



to restore him to his former self is only 15. If killed, he reverts to human form, at which point *Speak with Dead* can be used to glean some of the following information—and of course, if restored from death, he's only too eager to reward his saviors with everything he can remember.

Isiah was ambushed in a back alley in Underbridge by the cult, knocked unconscious from behind. He woke some time later, strapped to a table in a long room, the walls of which were painted in disorienting swirling patterns of green and red (this was area A5). A frightening woman (Leptonia) welcomed him and thanked him for “volunteering” to become one of the Polymorph Plague’s children, explaining that she preferred her experimental stock to be awake during procedures. She then force-fed him a foul, black concoction of slime—he once again blacked out, only to awaken later to have a new dose of the stuff fed to him. He’s not sure how many times he endured the procedure; the stuff made him sick in various ways each time, until finally a dose made him so violently ill that he blacked out once again. He woke in this room, trapped in his horrible new body with memories of endless hunger. Now and then, the frightening woman and her companions stopped by to admire him, compliment his twisted shapes, and feed him other mutated creatures. Isiah has very few clear memories of his time spent in area A4, but he knows that the woman hasn’t visited him in days and that he was forced to eat the remains of the others they experimented on; he has no idea where Leptonia and the other cultists have gone, but he is eager to flee the city and put some distance between himself and Magnimar so that if they return, he’ll be long gone.

Of the time he spent strapped to the table and was experimented on, though, his memories are clearer. He can report the following important pieces of information, learned from listening while the others thought he was passed out or delirious.

- The frightening woman was named Leptonia, and she was the leader of a cult that worshiped something they called the Polymorph Plague at times, and Yamasoth at other times.
- Leptonia was served by a dozen simpering cultists, but she spoke occasionally of someone named Erigantus, who apparently had not only helped her perfect the foul sludge that she’d infected him with, but also helped bind a ghost named Xanesha and a vampiric gargoyle named Sumsarru to this structure as guardians.
- He heard Leptonia voice a peculiar lament to the gargoyle at one point. “The loss of the runelord’s tome as payment for Erigantus’s aid may have been too dear a price to pay, but now that we’ve mastered the polymorph plague, perhaps it was worth it.”

- At another point, Leptonia flew into a rage and killed one of her cultists after he reported something to her she didn’t want to hear—Isiah heard only a brief fragment of that report, enough to know that some sort of rival cult had apparently slaughtered several of Leptonia’s distant allies in Korvosa.

Isiah is eager to escape the Gecko, and if the PCs help him return to Magnimar, he promises a reward as soon as he can arrange it. The smuggler is true to his word—2d4 days after the PCs return him to the city, a delivery of gems worth a total of 3,000 gp arrives for them with a single note: “From your starving friend, thank you again!” Isiah leaves Varisia for a life elsewhere, though, at your discretion, he can instead become an ally or even a cohort.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to speak to Isiah, grant them 2,400 XP for defeating him and an additional 2,400 XP for learning what he knows.

A5. Cult Headquarters (CR 7)

The walls of this long hall have been decorated in a tangle of red-and-green swirling patterns. To the south, these patterns end in fanged mouths, while to the north they all converge into a single gaping fanged mouth within which leers a single bloated eye. Doors line the walls of the room, with one in the north set directly under the eye’s glare. Tables fitted with straps to restrain those lying atop them stand here and there in the room, while several empty crates and boxes rest stacked in an alcove to the east.

This room served the cult of Yamasoth as a place to work on the polymorph plague, a communal area to worship and fraternize, and in the 11 smaller rooms adjoining the central hall, a place to sleep, relax, and pray. The painting on the wall depicts Yamasoth itself (identifiable with a successful DC 25 Knowledge [religion] check). It was here that the cult experimented on dozens of hapless victims, but for now, the place lies empty, the cultists having accompanied their leader north to Riddleport. All of the smaller rooms off this chamber save for A6 contain two beds, suggesting (accurately) the number of cultists to be 20 in all.

Trap: Leptonia hasn’t abandoned this site—she and the cultists intend to return here once they’ve secured Zincher’s *scroll of true resurrection*. While she trusts the undead guardians of the place to keep things secure, she’s taken an additional step in protecting her own chambers. The door to area A6 is warded with a *greater glyph of warding* that summons 1d3 babau demons if the door is opened.

GREATER GLYPH OF WARDING
XP 3,200

CR 7

Type magic; **Perception** DC 31; **Disable Device** DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger opening the door to **A6**; **Reset** none

Effect spell effect (*summon monster VI*, CL 11th, summons 1d3 babau demons)

BABAUS (1 TO 3)

CR 6

hp 73 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 57)

A6. Leptonia's Retreat

A simple table stands in this room next to a bedroll on the floor. The walls are painted with horrific images of distorted, tentacled shapes feasting on hapless humans, although a closer inspection makes it apparent that many of the feasters are themselves partially transformed humans. A campfire, its ashes cold, once burned near the southern wall.

This simple room served Leptonia as a private place to rest and pray.

Treasure: While Leptonia took her wealth and magical gear with her on her journey north to Riddleport, she left behind several items that will allow the PCs to follow in her wake. On the table are several ledgers and journals filled with notes recounting numerous failed attempts to craft the polymorph plague. A character who can read Abyssal can spend an hour looking through these notes to learn that Leptonia managed to master the plague, although she seems to be disappointed that the affliction can be transmitted only via injury or ingestion. More importantly, the notes indicate that the most important ingredients for new doses of the plague are “eggs harvested from the Gecko’s prisoner, Og-Zeugus.” Anyone who skims the notes also understands that with them, an expert in necromancy could, in theory, develop a cure for the polymorph plague.

Amid the scattered notes on the polymorph plague are three other noteworthy pieces of information. The first is a report from an unsigned investigator who confirms to Leptonia that Clegg Zincher did indeed purchase three *scrolls of true resurrection* in the year prior, and that said scrolls are believed to be kept under lock and key somewhere in his tenement in Riddleport.

The second is a parchment bearing a list of prices offered by ships for passage for 21 people north to Riddleport. Leptonia underlined the least expensive option—passage on a ship called *Sea Moth*, which, according to the notes, was scheduled to depart for Riddleport the day before the PCs first entered the Gecko. Leptonia also jotted a date on the sheet, circled it, and labeled it “ZINCHER’S AUCTION.” Although there’s no additional context given, this is the date on which she intends to attack Zincher’s stronghold.

The third is a copy of a report from Pathfinder Society agents ripped from a volume of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* that details the results of a dangerous mission undertaken to defeat the return of Runelord Krune. Near the section that details the death of a newly arisen Runelord Krune, Leptonia has penned a disturbing gloss: “Dead for now, but if we can return him to life, a thankful Runelord of Sloth may just give us the support needed to bring the polymorph plague to the breath of every city it touches!”

Development: This room is the location Leptonia has designated as her sanctuary for *word of recall*. If she learns that the PCs have defeated the guardians she left behind here, she avoids using this spell, but otherwise, she ends up here if she uses the spell to flee from battle later in the campaign. See page 33 for more information.

Story Award: If the PCs deliver Leptonia’s notes to the Sihedron Council, its agents can use the notes to develop a cure for the polymorph plague. This process takes 2d6 weeks of research, after which point they can produce variant *potions of remove disease* that automatically cure the affliction and restore those who have been transformed by the plague to their true forms. The Sihedron Council can deliver six of these potions to the PCs if they wish. In any event, delivering the notes to the Sihedron Council (or, at your discretion, using the notes themselves to develop a cure) earns the party 6,400 XP.

A7. Guardroom (CR 8)

A few tables fitted with straps sit in this room, but they, like the shelves along the walls, are empty.

Creature: In return for the *Bone Grimoire* Leptonia had secured, the necromancer Erigantus supplied the cult of Yamasoth with numerous undead guardians. Not only a master at creating undead via his own magic, Erigantus is also a student of the conditions by which undead can rise on their own, and he has had some success engineering situations that result in the rising of the dead. In the case of this room’s guardian, Erigantus arranged for the capture and public execution of a murderous criminal here in Magnimar, then made sure that the man’s body was buried in unhallowed ground. The result was a mohrg that Erigantus commanded long enough to smuggle back into the city, installing it here as a guardian for the Gecko’s primary entrance.

The mohrg has been taught to allow passage to those who carry the symbol of Yamasoth, but it attacks all others on sight, pursuing them throughout the Gecko if needed and fighting until destroyed.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

XP 4,800

hp 91 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 208)

A8. Gargoyle Geckos

These four balconies are located in the open air, each decorated with a human-sized gargoyle with a horned gecko's head. The gargoyle occupying the southwestern balcony appears to be cleaner than the other three, as a result of additional traffic through the area, for this balcony served as the cult of Yamasoth's primary means of entry and exit. The exterior secret door near this southwestern gargoyle is more difficult to notice from the outside than the inside, and it requires a successful DC 30 Perception check (rather than a DC 25 check) to locate.

A9. Sumsarru's Crypt (CR 8)

This long room has a vaulted ceiling rising to thirty feet. Scrapes on the floor suggest that other furnishings once adorned the chamber, but now the only decorations here are five coffins—four child-sized ones in alcoves to the east and west, and one for a much larger creature to the north. Several strange but valuable-looking objects have been arranged in a semicircle on the floor just north of the largest coffin.

Creature: Of the various undead Erigantus gifted to the Gecko, one of them agreed to serve of his own free will. The gargoyle vampire Sumsarru hopes to gain the favor of the Whispering Way to gain additional power over necromancy, and so he approached Erigantus several years ago to offer his services as an assassin, bodyguard, and scout in return for a promise of necromantic power.

Sumsarru sees his service to the cult of Yamasoth as an extension of his service to Erigantus and thus the Whispering Way, but he has taken advantage of his current location to periodically raid shops and warehouses in Magnimar. Although Sumsarru is an imposing figure, nearly 7 feet in height, he is incredibly stealthy and uses his skills to seek out the strange curiosities he enjoys collecting. Sumsarru is a picky collector, but he can't really explain why he chooses to keep the strange oddities he gathers on his raids.

Among his favorite additions to this growing collection are four derros he transformed into spawn. Sumsarru typically selects a few victims from new cities he finds himself in to transform into servants, then leaves them behind to wreak havoc when he moves on, but he's quite delighted with these four derros and intends to bring them with him once his servitude to the cult of Yamasoth is over. Leptonia has promised the vampire that once she's managed to fully empower the polymorph plague, he can return to Erigantus, and the vampire knows that

her mission to Riddleport is all that stands between him and that promise. He hopes to gift his "pet derros" to Erigantus as a final offering to the dhampir necromancer in return for being allowed to study the *Bone Grimoire*.

In the meantime, Sumsarru spends his time here, obsessing over his slowly growing collection of strange items he's found while prowling Magnimar. At your discretion, when the PCs first arrive in the Gecko, Sumsarru might be out on one of his 1- to 2-hour-long excursions into the Magnimarian night, but he should return while the PCs are present in this room. He won't begrudge the PCs having destroyed his derro pets, since they'll simply rejuvenate in their coffins in time—but if he sees that the PCs have damaged any of the coffins, he flies into a rage and attacks.

Alternatively, if the PCs encounter Sumsarru here, they may initially be put off by the vampire's strange welcome—he fully intends to slaughter the PCs in time, but before then he's eager to chat with them. The vampire rarely gets the chance to speak to fellow collectors of the strange, and he knows that adventurers tend to collect strange things indeed. His greeting to the PCs is one with arms (and wings) spread wide; in a deep voice he says, "Welcome, visitors! You seem like discerning folk. Tell me, in your travels, have you happened to collect anything... strange?"

Sumsarru is eager to speak to the PCs and does not attack or use his supernatural powers as long as they leave his collection alone and remain calm. If the PCs question him, especially about the cult of Yamasoth, the vampire chuckles, then proposes a series of trades. For each oddity that they can offer him as a gift, he'll agree to answer one question—he asks only that the PCs fully describe what their gifts are. Sumsarru isn't worried about giving up too much information, since he intends to kill the PCs in short order anyway, and if they can save him the time of experimenting to figure out the treasures he suspects he'll soon be looting from their blood-drained corpses, so much the better.

To appeal to Sumsarru, an offered gift must be either particularly unusual or worth at least 5,000 gp. Certain items in excess of this price still might not interest the vampire. A plain weapon with only a +1 enhancement bonus is of no value to him, but if a PC can spin a compelling tale about the weapon's history or legacy, he might change his mind. To convince Sumsarru of an item's worth, a PC must either succeed at a Bluff check opposed by Sumsarru's Sense Motive to "upsell" the item (if the PC wishes to lie), or offer an item worth at least 5,000 gp and truthfully tell the vampire what properties the item has.

For each gift the PCs manage to tempt Sumsarru with, he will answer a single question. Use this opportunity

to help steer the PCs toward one of the next chapters. Sumsarru knows that a cult of Yamasoth worshipers was recently slain in Korvosa by agents of the Peacock Spirit and that Leptonia is eager to travel to that city and unleash an enhanced version of the polymorph plague in retribution. He also knows that she's taken all 20 of her cultists north to Riddleport to steal "some crime lord's" scrolls of true resurrection. He does know this crime lord is Clegg Zincher but angles for that to be a second question and thus require a second gift. He further knows when she plans to launch this assault and that she hopes to resurrect Runelord Krune, something that Sumsarru thinks is a bad idea, but since he plans on being far from both Magnimar and Riddleport when that happens, he's not too worried about repercussions.

Remember, the point of this conversation is not to completely spoil the rest of the adventure, but to compel the PCs forward into the next chapters. Give them enough information to whet their appetites or spur them onward, but once you feel that you've given them enough, Sumsarru tires of the game. He huffs, then says, "Enough of this. I think instead I'll just take your treasures from you." At your discretion, he might promise a particularly eloquent PC the potential of becoming a vampire thrall as he attacks.

SUMSARRU

CR 8

XP 4,800

Gargoyle vampire rogue 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 137, 270)

CE Medium undead (augmented monstrous humanoid, earth)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 17, flat-footed 20 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural)

hp 80 (9d8+40); fast healing 5

Fort +5, **Ref** +16, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, evasion, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; **DR** 10/magic and silver;

Immune undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses vampire weaknesses

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee bite +13 (1d4+5), claw +13 (1d6+5), gore +13 (1d4+5), slam +13 (1d4+5 plus energy drain)

Ranged +1 composite shortbow +15/+10 (1d6+6/x3)

Special Attacks blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, energy drain (2 levels, DC 17), sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

During Combat Sumsarru opens combat by staying at range, using his bow against anyone he suspects can use positive energy or carries silver weapons. In melee, he abandons

one claw attack for an energy draining slam attack each round, and on the first hit with a claw or slam uses his *poisoner's glove* to inject a dose of polymorph plague into the victim as well. Unlike most vampires, Sumsarru doesn't have a dominating gaze ability—a curious side effect of his legacy, perhaps, but this lack of offense is bolstered by the fact that he isn't bothered by the scent of garlic or the sight of a mirror, nor is he inconvenienced by running water.

Morale Sumsarru fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 22, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 30

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Hover,

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sunken Seal

Part 5:
Rising



Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Fly), Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +18, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +10, Disable Device +18, Fly +21, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (local) +8, Perception +22, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +23 (+29 in stony areas), Survival +7

Languages Abyssal, Common, Terran

SQ change shape (dire bat or wolf, *beast shape II*), freeze, gaseous form, rogue talents (offensive defense^{APG}, positioning attack^{APG}), shadowless, spider climb, trapfinding +2

Combat Gear *poisoner's gloves*^{UE}; **Other Gear** +1 composite shortbow (+5 Str) with 20 arrows

Treasure: Sumsarru's small but intriguing collection of oddities sits in a semicircular array just to the north of his coffin. This collection of treasures consists of the following strange items.

- A long smoking pipe decorated with a fine carving of a swan landing in a crocodile's open mouth (worth 150 gp).
- A goblet made of black glass that enhances the flavor of any red wine or blood placed within it but that sours any other liquid placed in it as though affected by a *putrefy food and drink spell* (worth 250 gp).
- A lamp in the form of a bloated courtesan with three faces, each of which clutches a dead rat in the mouth. The lamp is worth 250 gp, but it rattles if shaken—inside is a *key of lock jamming*^{UE}.
- A polished wood-and-iron coat stand carved to resemble three angels back to back, with their upraised wings forming the hooks (worth 500 gp); on one of these hooks hangs a black leather coat lined with red velvet (worth 100 gp), holding in one pocket a jar with a brass stopper containing a shriveled-up tarantula (gross and worthless).
- A small, beautifully made taxidermic “catbird”—a crow with a kitten's head (worth 50 gp).
- A 2-foot-square magical painting that depicts a shadowy figure in an alley that seems to move about occasionally, but never when looked at. This is a minor and harmless (if unsettling) illusion worth 500 gp.

A10. Platform Controls

The walls of this room are fitted with rusty gears and cables attached to a series of five levers protruding from a panel in the middle of the floor.

These levers once allowed for the raising and lowering of the platforms in area A3. Today, most of these levers have seized up, but the central one still functions. If the lever is pulled, the large octagonal platform in area A3 slowly and noisily descends into the waters below, lowering at a rate of

5 feet per round. Pulling the lever back causes the platform to halt, and then rise back up at the same rate. Of course, the sound of this machinery echoes throughout the Gecko, informing all creatures within that intruders have arrived. A hidden trap door in the ceiling in the northwest corner (Perception DC 25) leads to a tunnel to area A14.

A11. Erigantus's Laboratory (CR 8)

This room contains dark curtains draping the walls and two workbenches covered with grisly looking tools, bits of bone and decaying flesh, some alchemical equipment, and a few scattered scrolls. A skull covered with runes written in what looks like dried blood sits on one table within a softly glowing circle of magical sigils. A pile of bones, stacked as if discarded, lies in one corner. To the southeast, a wide opening in the wall leads to a huge dark pit.

This room served as both temporary lodgings and a laboratory for Erigantus, a dhampir necromancer who offered his aid to the cult of Yamasoth in return for a valuable payment indeed—Zutha's *Bone Grimoire*. His service to the cult ended once the Gecko was properly protected by undead and the polymorph plague had been completed. Erigantus took his belongings with him when he left for Kaer Maga to study the *Bone Grimoire* and, eventually, to lead the invasion of the Shrine of the Seal.

The rune-inscribed skull resting in the circle of glowing sigils on the table once belonged to Xanesha. The skull is slightly larger than a human's skull, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (nature) check identifies it as belonging to a lamia matriarch. If the skull is destroyed or buried in hallowed ground, Xanesha's ghost can no longer rejuvenate (see page 9 for details). A character who succeeds at a DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check while studying the runes on the skull and the surrounding circle can identify it as a necromantic ritual designed to bind a ghost to the area surrounding the Gecko while also barring the ghost from entering the Gecko.

Creature: Erigantus left the most powerful of the totemmasks that served him here as a parting gift to Leptonia. He endured the creature's fleshdrinking for a round to give it the ability to appear as himself, and it remains in Erigantus's shape to this day. While Leptonia was delighted by the perversely touching gift, she opted not to bring the surrogate Erigantus with her when she headed north to Riddleport. The totemmaske has spent the last few days waiting patiently here for her return, but it immediately attacks anyone else who dares enter the room, fighting until it is destroyed.

ADVANCED TOTENMASKE

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 105 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 292, 269)

A12. The Scarred Gears (CR 8)

A tumbled mass of large blocks of stone and a bewildering tangle of gears and clockworks blocks the northern portion of what once was apparently a much larger chamber.

The clockwork machinery housed in this room survived the violence of Earthfall, but not undamaged. Over the course of the ages that followed, this section of the Gecko has slowly been collapsing in on itself, and the machinery here—once a somewhat automated clockwork repair facility—no longer functions. Given a few hundred more years, the slow collapse will eventually cause a subsidence on the Irespan's deck above, but for now the chamber remains stable—at least physically.

Haunt: While the rubble in this room is stable, the magic that once infused the clockworks here is far from it. The distorted magical energies that still linger in these ruined clockworks are the source of the rumors of thunderous footsteps or strange grinding gears that folks have long whispered about the Gecko, in the form of a haunt formed by magical scars. After stumbling into this haunt and triggering its effects, Leptonia forbade her cultists from entering the room. If the PCs trigger the haunt, the resulting cacophony is more than enough to put the all cultists residing in the complex on alert.

GRINDING GEARS OF THE PAST

CR 8

XP 4,800

N haunt (5-ft.-by-20-ft. corridor between machinery)

Caster Level 8th

Notice Perception DC 25 (to notice the softly growing sound of grinding gears)

hp 16; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 day

Effect The collapsed gears appear to suddenly rise up and fill the room, grinding away with the deafening sound of clangorous clockwork and pounding thunder. Those affected by the haunt are filled with the conviction that something enormous and massive is stirring deep below the Gecko. Each creature in area **A12** must attempt a DC 19 Will save to avoid a sudden, morbid compulsion to step forward into the gears and lubricate the grinding cogs with flesh and blood. Those who fail their saves imagine themselves doing just this, and feel the gears tear their bodies apart, taking 8d6 points of slashing damage. Those outside the area of effect or who resist the haunt do not see the grinding gears, but they certainly see the grisly effect of the gears tearing their allies apart!

Destruction A successful casting of *dispel magic* (or similar effect) against this magical scar destroys the haunt.

A13. The Arcanum Optica

A narrow gap in the wall allows one to peer out over a pit in the room to the south, while to the north, in a shallow alcove, sits what appears to be a flickering, ghostly image of the city of Magnimar.

The generals of Shalast once used this room as a place to observe the surrounding lands, using a still-functioning magical display known as an *arcanum optica*. This obscure wonderment captures the surrounding region and displays it as a visible illusory image, so the viewer can keep track of the surrounding environs from a bird's-eye view. Alas, time has not been kind to the *arcanum optica*, and the image it now produces is hazy and indistinct, leaving it more an ancient Thassilonian curiosity than a truly useful tool.

A14. Collapsed Guardroom

The northeastern corner of this otherwise empty room has collapsed, resulting in a jagged tunnel winding to the east.

This room once served as a guardroom for the approach to the prison (area **A15**); the collapse of the gears didn't quite seal off the approach. A hidden trap door in the ceiling in the southwest corner leads to a tunnel to area **A10**; a character can locate the trap door with a successful DC 25 Perception check.

A15. Prison of Og-Zeugus (CR 10)

The southern portion of this room has collapsed, leaving only the northeastern portion intact. The collapse has shattered and cracked the floor, breaking up several magical circles that had been carved into the floor. Only one circle, located in the room's easternmost corner, remains intact, its runes still flickering and glowing.

Creature: During Thassilon's age, wizards stationed at the Gecko used this room as a conjuration prison, keeping outsiders called from various planes imprisoned in specially prepared magic circles inscribed in the floor here. When the southern wall collapsed, most of these circles were fractured and their prisoners, left behind after the Gecko was abandoned, finally managed to escape.

Only one remains—a crab-like qlippoth known as a gongorinan. This monster, named Og-Zeugus, was originally conjured into this room by a wizard who sought insights into the nature of Alaznist's qlippoth allies, and it was mercilessly tormented and tortured before the Gecko fell into ruin. While Og-Zeugus has not weathered the past several thousand years well and has degenerated

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

somewhat, it remains a dangerous foe to those foolish enough to cross the boundary of its circular prison. It cannot attack anyone beyond the reach of the circular area indicated on the map, nor can it travel beyond that area, even via *dimension door*. Og-Zeugus can speak freely though, and it doesn't hesitate to do so when it sees the PCs approach. Although the gongorinan has arranged a deal with Leptonia for her to release it once she's completed her quest to perfect the polymorph plague, the qlippoth doesn't trust her to keep her word, and sees in the PCs another chance to escape.

When it notices the PCs approach, Og-Zeugus rises up on its crab-like legs and greets the PCs in an imperious telepathic voice, demanding that the PCs free it and promising to leave them alone and in peace if they do so.

To release the qlippoth, all that needs be done is to damage the circle surrounding it or to deactivate the magic. The effect functions at caster level 15th, and a successful *dispel magic* will do the trick. Otherwise, dealing at least 5 points of damage to the stone bearing the inscribed circle (hardness 8) is enough to create a crack large enough to end the effect. Merely "breaking" the circle by placing an object over the ring won't suffice, nor will having a creature enter the circle—and anyone foolish enough to do so is immediately attacked by Og-Zeugus, despite any prior agreement that may have been reached. The qlippoth hopes

to infect a PC with one of its eggs, so that when the victim eventually transforms into a monster, it can command this new pet to break its cage.

Og-Zeugus knows that Leptonia has taken her cult north to Riddleport and hopes to resurrect Runelord Krune after stealing *scrolls of true resurrection* from some crime lord, and even that she intends to launch her assault on the crime lord's domain on a specific date (see Part 2 for how to determine this date). You can use Og-Zeugus's answers to the PCs' questions to direct the party toward Part 2 or perhaps answer other questions that the PCs may have regarding the other aspects or inhabitants of the Gecko. How many questions Og-Zeugus agrees to answer is left for you to determine—it will certainly agree to answer at least one if the PCs promise to release it.

If the PCs wish to simply kill the qlippoth, they can do so with little retaliation as long as they don't cross into its prison. If attacked in this manner, Og-Zeugus retreats to the far side of its circle, so that only characters with reach weapons or ranged attacks can harm it. Its only defense in this case is its horrific appearance, which can affect those beyond the border of the magic circle, should the qlippoth choose to activate this ability.

OG-ZEUGUS

CR 11

XP 12,800

Gongorinan qlippoth (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 226)

hp 115

Melee +1 vicious handaxe +18/+13/+8 (1d6+7/19–20/×3), claw +15 (1d6+3 plus bleed), pincer +15 (1d6+3 plus grab), sting +5 (1d4+3 plus poison)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (handaxe), Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack



OG-ZEUGUS

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

Development: If the PCs leave Og-Zeugus imprisoned, the qliphoth adds them to the ever-growing list of foes it hopes to someday destroy. Whether or not it eventually escapes its prison and seeks the PCs out is left for you to determine. One way it could escape is if Leptonia returns to the Gecko, perhaps via a *word of recall* after fleeing the PCs. In this event, she seeks out Og-Zeugus, and once she realizes the PCs have enraged the qliphoth as well, she decides to free it. The two then join forces, united by their common hatred of the PCs long enough to work together to seek out the PCs in Korvosa, Kaer Maga, or wherever they might be.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to learn important information from Og-Zeugus, award them experience points as if they'd defeated it in combat (although the PCs shouldn't earn this XP twice if they thereafter slay the gongorinan). If the PCs slay the qliphoth using ranged or reach weapons without allowing it to fight back save via its horrific appearance, they earn only 6,400 XP for the victory.

CONCLUDING PART 1

While several evil and dangerous foes dwell in the Gecko, none of them are actively working against Magnimar, and the city won't suffer for it if the PCs don't defeat them. That said, any creature that remains within the Gecko should Leptonia later retreat here via *word of recall* can and will face the PCs later in the adventure, traveling at the half-drow cultist's side, so the PCs would be well advised to defeat as many of the Gecko's denizens as possible.

Of greater import is the recovery of Leptonia's notes on the polymorph plague and other key pieces of information regarding her relocation to Riddleport. The most important thing the PCs should learn from this chapter is that Leptonia intends to resurrect Runelord Krune, that she's traveled to Riddleport to secure three scrolls from Clegg Zincher to do so, and the date on which she intends to launch her attack. Whether or not the PCs learn the exact date Leptonia intends to make this move, they should be compelled to travel to Riddleport to stop her.

PART 2: THE ZINCER SIEGE

Clegg Zincher is one of the crime lords who jointly influence the city of Riddleport, yet Clegg has fallen on hard times ever since a disastrous attempt several years back to harvest a fallen star from a nearby isle. Today, Clegg is haunted by his own mortality and has spent most of his money on securing the cooperation of the church of Besmara, buying three *scrolls of true resurrection*

to be used in the event of his death, and fortifying the defenses of his home.

But maintaining these defenses and paying for the loyalty of his guards costs money. In growing desperation, Clegg recently made the decision to auction off his control over Riddleport's arena. Arranging such a complex transfer of ownership is a complicated affair, particularly in a lawless city like Riddleport, but the time for the auction to take place draws near. As the auction itself will be held on-site at the arena, this marks the first time Clegg will leave his fortified home for an extended period of time in well over a year.

Leptonia knows this, and she plans to strike at that moment, expecting that the paranoid Clegg will bring most of his guards with him to stay overnight at the arena as the auction and associated bureaucratic steps for transferring control of the arena to its new owners (whomever they end up being) take place. If the PCs don't convince Clegg of their trustworthiness and get his permission to protect the tenement from the attack, the cult of Yamasoth will have no problems whatsoever in securing his *scrolls of true resurrection* for their own nefarious ends.

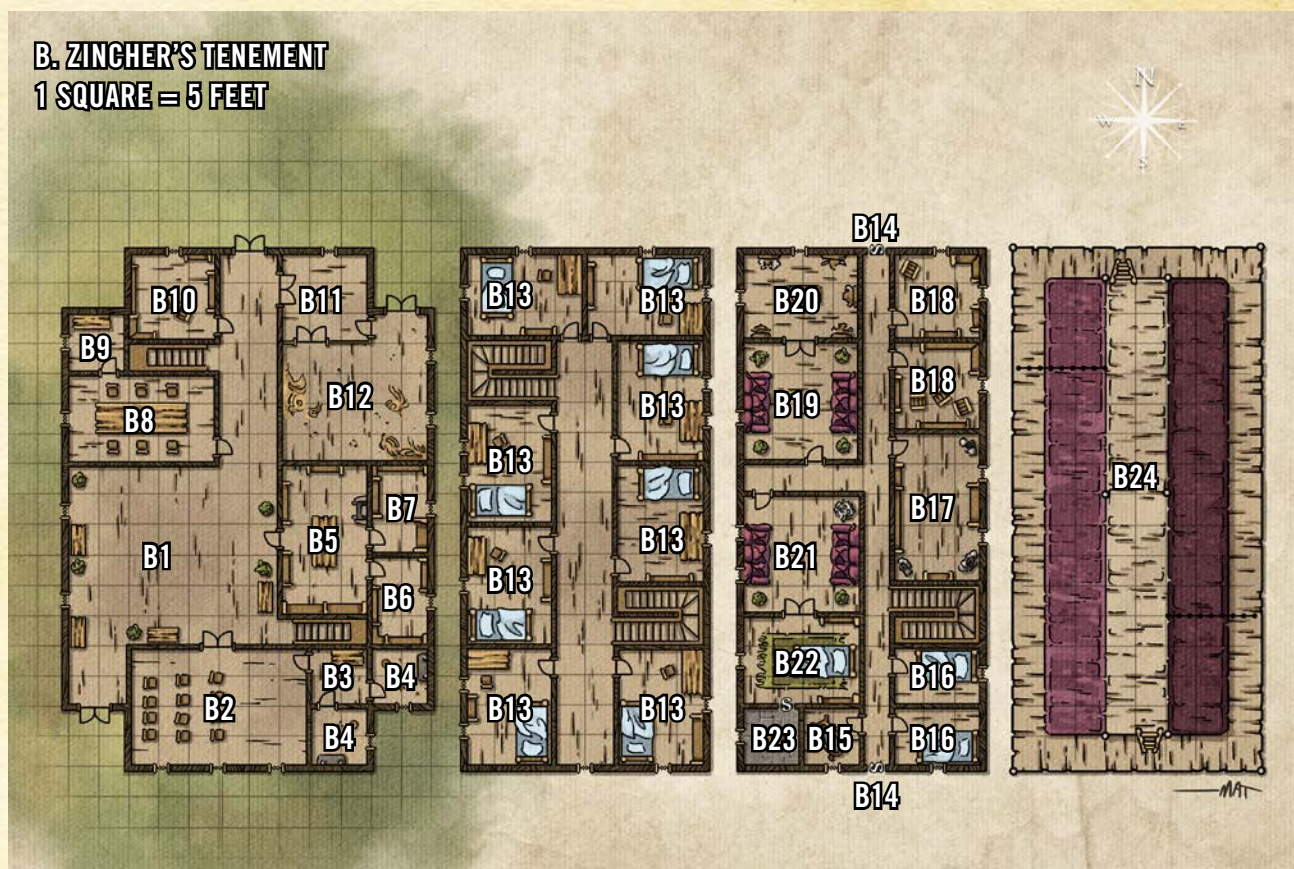
SETTING THE SIEGE'S DATE

The exact date on which the auction for Zincher's Arena takes place (and thus the night that Leptonia chooses to assault his tenement) is variable, allowing you to adjust the pace of your adventure as you see fit. "Runeplague" assumes that Leptonia leaves the Gecko with her cultists the day before the PCs first arrive in that complex, and she travels north from Magnimar on a ship called the *Sea Moth*. It's an 8-day voyage from Magnimar to Riddleport, so Leptonia and the cultists should arrive in Riddleport 7 days after the PCs first enter the Gecko. The cultists need a few days to prepare for their attack once they reach Riddleport, so the actual date of the auction (and thus the attack on Clegg's tenement) should be scheduled to take place 9 days after the PCs first enter the Gecko.

The goal here is that the PCs should be able to reach Riddleport just in time to meet with Clegg and prepare a defense of his tenement. The cultists shouldn't be expecting the PCs' presence, and fighting from a fortified position will give the PCs the advantage they'll need to persevere against the cult's otherwise superior numbers. If the PCs need to take their own ship to Riddleport (*Tyalee's Whim*, from "It Came from Hollow Mountain," is the assumed mode of transport here), they should have a day to spare to finish exploring the Gecko. Of course, they can always leave the complex half-explored and travel north to Riddleport early—there's no reason why Part 1 needs to be completed before starting Part 2!

B. ZINCER'S TENEMENT

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



If the party gets delayed, you can always have the Sihedron Council intervene, in which case Sheila Heidmarch can arrange for an allied spellcaster to cast *shadow walk* or *wind walk* on the party to speed their journey north, but you shouldn't use this option unless you've backed yourself into a corner schedule-wise, and the PCs otherwise have no way to reach Riddleport in time. PCs benefitting from *shadow walk* must take a land route to Riddleport—a 325-mile journey that takes 6-1/2 hours to complete under the effects of that spell. PCs who benefit from *wind walk* can instead move directly across the Varisian Gulf to Riddleport—a distance of only 200 miles that will take 3 hours and 20 minutes to complete.

Of course, if the PCs don't learn the date of the attack beforehand, you have a bit more flexibility. In this case, you should set the date of the arena's auction for the day after the PCs reach Riddleport, so they have just enough time to meet with Clegg and secure his cooperation before he heads out to the auction that night.

B. ZINCER'S TENEMENT

Clegg Zincer's tenement is a fortified, five-story building located in Riddleport's Leeward District on the city's

eastern side. The location of the building is no secret, and the PCs should have no trouble traveling to it. Securing an audience with Clegg is the more difficult task, for the man remains more paranoid about threats to his livelihood than he has ever been.

The building itself is a grand, lonely, place—a foreboding townhouse made of stone and hefty timbers with a steeply gabled rooftop featuring a widow's walk. Dozens of metal-grilled windows, many with closed shutters, provide a well-defended view over Riddleport. All exterior doors are made of iron and feature a fancy bellpull to announce arrivals.

Originally, the middle three floors of the tenement were set aside as housing for various guards and gladiators in Clegg's employment. Today, no gladiators dwell in the building, and very few guards remain, as Clegg has been forced to let most of them go due to declining funds. Many of the rooms on the second, third, and fourth floors are empty, and given its size, the tenement feels almost abandoned. The serving staff dwell on the ground floor, but today even they operate with a skeleton crew. Clegg and his bodyguard, the enigmatic Mister Magenta, are the sole occupants of the top floor.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

Walls: The building's walls are made of reinforced timber (hardness 8, hp 90 per 5-foot square, break DC 24), carefully treated with fire-resistant alchemical resins that grant the walls fire resistance 20. The outer walls have scarcely any handholds—as a result, scaling the outside walls requires a successful DC 20 Climb check, or a successful DC 25 climb check for interior walls.

Doors: The exterior doors on the ground floor are made of iron (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 28) and feature narrow sliding slats allowing those within to peek out without opening the door. The interior doors are strong wooden doors (hardness 8, hp 20, break DC 25). All doors can be locked (Disable Device DC 30 to open). Clegg carries a skeleton key that unlocks any door in the building, and Mister Magenta has one that opens every door save for those leading to areas B21–B23.

Windows: None of the windows in the tenement have glass, but each can be closed from inside with wooden shutters. While these shutters are made of thin wood and thus provide little physical protection (they can be latched, but it takes only a successful DC 10 Strength check to wrench them open), the shutters seal tightly enough to prevent creatures from entering a window via *gaseous form*. A set of exterior iron bars (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 25) over each window provides much more defense.

Ceilings: The ceilings on the four lower floors are 8 feet high, while rooms on the top floor feature vaulted ceilings that rise from 8 feet along the building's edge to 15 feet along the central line from north to south.

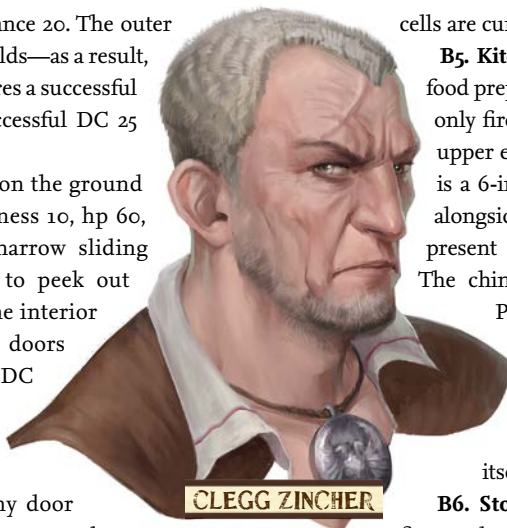
Inside the Tenement

The rooms within the tenement are detailed in brief below, with a focus on things of particular note that could be useful (or dangerous) during the cult's attack on the building. Clegg has sold off the majority of the paintings, decorations, and even furnishings on the lower four floors to help pay for salaries or upkeep on the building's traps and defenses. The building itself tends to be cold, with little heating but without a single draft.

B1. Lobby: This room is largely empty—a few benches along the walls and a few sickly potted plants are the only concessions toward comfort.

B2. Lecture Hall: The tenement staff uses this room for meetings and other group functions.

B3. Guard Post: When prisoners are kept in the cells, a guard is posted here.



B4. Cells: The doors to these two cells are made of iron. Prisoners Clegg keeps here are those he wishes to punish on his own without involving the authorities, but both cells are currently empty.

B5. Kitchen: This kitchen features a table for food prep, several cupboards, and the building's only fireplace (actually a stove), located in the upper east portion of the room. The chimney is a 6-inch-square, brick-lined vent that runs alongside the building's outer wall and doesn't present an easy entrance into the building. The chimney's flue is kept open unless the PCs specifically close it. A dumbwaiter between the fireplace and the door to area B7 allows staff to transport food between this room and area B17 above—the dumbwaiter shaft itself is only a foot wide.

B6. Storage: This large storeroom contains firewood and tools.

B7. Pantry: This pantry stores food supplies, but it is somewhat barren at the moment. Guards get bored and hungry, so this room is frequently raided. It tends to be most full after staff make a trip to the market to stock up at the start of the week; however, even then the food available is pretty bland, with lots of rice, flour, salted meat, and poor bread.

B8. Meeting Room: Clegg uses this room to meet with important clients, including the PCs, once they secure a meeting with him (see Event 6).

B9. Tenement Office: This room was once the domain of Clegg's accountant, a man he fired a year ago after a paranoid fit. The room is now empty, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check while searching the desk uncovers a hidden drawer Clegg didn't know about. Within, the prior accountant stashed the funds he'd skimmed over the years. When Clegg fired him (nearly killing him in the process), the man didn't have a chance to take the stash with him. This stash of money includes 130 sp, 221 gp, and 98 pp. If the PCs return it to Clegg, they earn 1 Reward Point.

B10. Common Armory: Extra weapons and armor for the tenements' guards are stored here. At one point, this armory also kept more exotic weapons for use by house gladiators in Zincher's Arena, but those weapons have been sold off. Today, all that remains are three halberds, some dented metal helmets, a half dozen battered small metal shields, a few rolls of bandages, some used whetstones, and half a tin of metal polish.

B11. Stable Storage: This area is used to store feed, tack, and exotic saddles for the axe beaks in the stable (area B12).

B12. Stable: Clegg keeps his beloved and loyal axe beaks in this dirt-floored stable. The birds grow agitated

REWARD POINTS

As the PCs play through this chapter, they'll have many opportunities to earn Reward Points. The total they earn by the end of the chapter not only determines what sort of reward Clegg gives them for their service, but also sets the amount of XP they earn as a bonus story award for this chapter, as summarized below.

Reward

Points Earned	XP Award	Reward from Clegg
1 or fewer	0 XP	—
2	4,800 XP	Grudging thanks and a pouch of 100 pp
3	9,600 XP	Joyful thanks and a <i>scroll of true resurrection</i>
4+	19,200 XP	Overwhelming thanks, <i>scroll of true resurrection</i> , and choice of two weapons from area B20

and noisy in the presence of anyone other than their master, and they attack anyone who enters their stable if Clegg isn't present. If both axe beaks survive the night, the PCs earn 1 Reward Point. If both perish, the PCs lose 1 Reward Point.

AXE BEAKS (2)

CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 22 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 29*)

B13. Tenement Bedrooms: At the height of Clegg's glory, the second, third, and fourth floor of his tenement housed guards, servants, gladiators, and friends, but as his star faded and his paranoia grew, the inhabitants of these rooms left, were fired, or simply went missing. Today, only two servants (a female cook named Genna Vearaven and a male butler named Hortus Hanch, both 2nd-level human experts) dwell on the second floor, while only eight guards dwell on the third and fourth floors. Feel free to determine which rooms are occupied by whom. Unoccupied rooms are musty but clean. As all three floors share an identical layout, only one of these floors appears on the map on page 24.

TENEMENT GUARDS (8)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Guards (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex 267*)

hp 22 each

B14. Emergency Exits: Barred windows allow light in at both ends of the fifth floor's central hall, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check realizes that

each is also a cleverly hidden secret door. As with all other doors in the tenement, they are locked. Neither door opens onto a balcony—there is no obvious visual cue from outside that the doors exist. Those who wish to use either of these exits from the building must be skilled at climbing, capable of flight, or willing to simply take the damage from the 50-foot drop to the ground below.

B15. Washroom: This room contains a tub, a latrine, and a washbasin.

B16. Captains' Rooms: These two rooms are neatly ordered, clean, and spartan in their decor, each containing nothing more than a simple bed with a footlocker pushed under it. Each room is occupied by one of Clegg's two guard captains—soldiers who have remained loyal to Clegg for many years, yet see his sale of the arena as a last straw. The two have conspired together to abandon Clegg the night of the auction, so any tasks the PCs assign them will go untended to unless a PC succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check to notice hints of their imminent flight. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Diplomacy check can convince both guard captains to remain on site.

HOUSE CAPTAINS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Charlatans (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex 145*)

hp 21 each

B17. Lounge: A fine portrait of Clegg—smiling benevolently—hangs on the north wall of this elegant lounge, a chamber decorated with fine sofas and small tables for intimate dining experiences. Three large landscapes hang on the south wall, each depicting the same family of Varisian travelers in peril, but featuring Clegg Zincher in heroic poses as he saves them from the packs of wolves, gangs of murderers, and marauding giants that besiege them. A dumbwaiter connects to the kitchen on the ground floor below.

B18. Guest Rooms: Both of these guest bedrooms are currently empty—in fact, neither has been used for many months.

B19. Mister Magenta's Lounge: This lounge is decorated with paintings depicting landscapes from distant Vudra. Clegg's bodyguard, Mister Magenta, stays in this lounge. He prefers not to sleep in a bed, believing that such comforts would only "soften" him.

B20. Upper Armory: Clegg has held on to many of the potent weapons he's accumulated over the years, although he's sold off more than he's kept. This armory once featured weapons to outfit his favorite gladiators, but today the room looks sparse. What remains includes a teak potion case containing seven potions with labels

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

indicating they are *potions of cure moderate wounds* (one is mislabeled and is in fact a *potion of rage*, though a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check notes this potion is slightly murkier in color than the others), a +1 *returning trident*, a +1 *thundering cold iron scizore*^{UE}, a matched pair of +1 *flaming kerambits*^{UE}, a dozen screaming bolts, a +1 *clangorous*^{UE} steel shield cast in the shape of the face of an angry dwarf, a suit of +1 *moderate fortification hide armor*, and a monkeyskin pouch containing three *fire elemental gems*. Zincher is willing to let the PCs use any of these items they might need to help defend the tenement.

B21. Library: This room was once a well-stocked library. Clegg was never much for reading, but all the best people apparently have libraries, so he wanted one as well. Of course, the books were among the first things he sold when the going got rough. The empty shelves leave the room stark and barren. A lonely statue of Clegg stands in a corner.

B22. Clegg's Bedroom: The door to this room is made of iron. This exceptional bedroom features a superbly carved four-poster bed depicting axe beaks fighting each other. A long mirror hangs nearby, with a similar one on the ceiling above the bed. Paintings of Clegg's gladiatorial fights adorn the walls, with the one exception being an enormous painting of the island of Devil's Elbow about to be struck by a falling star. This painting is 4 feet wide and 8 feet tall, and it is in fact the secret door to area **B23**.

Clegg's paranoia is on hidden display in this room, for three different traps protect the chamber from intrusion. The first is a guillotine blade hidden in the doorframe; it drops down on anyone who enters the room without first bypassing the trap by pressing a hidden button just to the left of the door's handle. The second is triggered by a hidden switch on the bed's headboard, launching a hail of poisoned arrows that targets all creatures in the room save for anyone on the bed itself. The third and final trap is a magical one associated with the entrance to area **B23**; anyone who attempts to open the secret door without first pressing two additional hidden switches causes the image of the falling star in the painting to shoot out of the painting, striking the 10-foot-radius area immediately in front of the door. This effect damages only living creatures, not the building itself or Clegg's belongings.

GUILLOTINE DOOR FRAME

CR 5

XP 1,600

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual, Bypass hidden switch (Perception DC 25)

Effect Atk +20 melee (2d6+4/18-20 slashing)

HAIL OF POISON ARROWS

CR 7

XP 3,200

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger manual; Reset manual

Effect Atk +20 ranged (1d8+6 plus blue whinnis poison); multiple targets (all targets in area **B22** save those on the bed)

FALLING STAR TRAP

CR 8

XP 4,800

Type magic; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset none, Bypass 2 hidden switches (Perception DC 25)

Effect Atk +20 touch (3d6 bludgeoning, then explodes in a 10-foot-radius burst that deals 4d6 fire damage); Reflex DC 15 halves the fire damage

B23. Treasury: The walls, floor, and ceiling of Clegg's treasury are all reinforced with iron and lead plates. The treasury contains a mostly empty shelf holding 10 bags of platinum coins with 100 pp in each (the shelf once held many more bags than this), the deed to this tenement, a set of child's rags (in fact the rags Clegg wore as a child beggar), 10 adamantite ingots worth 500 gp each, and, each bound in own leather-and-bone scroll case, the primary cause of Clegg's destitution: three *scrolls of true resurrection*. Each leather case has been liberally coated in a dose of tears of death^{UE}—handling the case with thick gloves is enough to prevent exposure to this contact poison.

B24. Rooftop: From atop this dizzying summit, the whole of Riddleport seems to squat and lurk, the view dominated by the vast arch of the Cyphergate to the south. The facade of (what will soon no longer be) Zincher's Arena looms to the southwest, while acrid plumes from the gas forges churn nearby. The roof's edge features a 5-foot-wide walkway, while a 10-foot-wide widow's walk, about 10 feet above the lower ledge, can be accessed from the north and south via iron ladders. A character can scramble along the steeply sloped roof with a successful DC 10 Climb check. Iron lightning rods rise from the corners of the building and from the sides of the widows' walk, while two iron gratings run down the shingles to prevent anyone from being able to easily navigate the lower walkway. Note that there is no direct roof access; Zincher took this out years ago to limit the points of entrance into the complex.

EVENT 6: MEETING CLEGG ZINCHER

Clegg Zincher is a paranoid man these days, and he generally seeks to avoid unexpected encounters, including visits from strangers who claim to have news of imminent attacks on his tenement. Wise PCs seek a way to let him

know in advance that they need to speak to him, perhaps via magic like *dream* or *sending*, and at your discretion, such preparations can give the PCs a +5 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks to secure Clegg's time.

When the PCs arrive at his tenement, they find the place locked up tight. A tug on a bellpull in front of any of the exterior doors results in Hortus Hanch, the tenement's nervous-looking butler, answering the door in 2d6 rounds. He slides open the door's peephole and says in a shrill voice, "Master Zincher is seeing no guests at this time."

With a successful DC 20 Diplomacy check or a successful Bluff check opposed by Hortus's Sense Motive check (+10), a PC can convince Hortus that perhaps what the party has to say is important enough to run up the chain of command. He asks the PCs to wait outside while he "announces their arrival" and then scurries off to alert Mister Magenta. Any attempt to threaten him (whether via Intimidate or acts of violence) make him shriek, slam the peephole, and call for Mister Magenta.

Mister Magenta, Zincher's current bodyguard, arrives at the door 1d4 minutes later. A braver man, he opens the door to confront the PCs, hands crossed over his ample chest as he demands to know their business with the "Boss." He listens quietly while the PCs make their case, after which one PC must attempt a DC 25 Diplomacy check (other PCs can use the aid another action). Alternatively, the PCs can attempt a Bluff check to make Magenta think Clegg already expects them (although Magenta gets a +5 bonus on his Sense Motive check to see through such a bluff, since he knows the Boss's habits quite well).

If the PCs fail to convince Mister Magenta to have a meeting with Zincher, he tells them, "The Boss isn't seeing anyone today, but I'll let him know you've got something to talk about and will get back to you in a few days—where can you be reached?" This should make it obvious that the PCs won't be able to talk to Zincher before the planned attack—they can try one more Diplomacy check at this point to convince Magenta of the urgency of the situation, but this time the DC of the check is 30.

If the PCs mention Clegg's *scrolls of true resurrection* (or even something vaguely related, like "Zincher's scrolls are in danger!"), Mister Magenta's facade falters and he gasps in surprise. The scrolls are a secret, as far as Mister Magenta knows, and the fact that the PCs are aware of them lends weight to their claims. This automatically grants them an immediate audience with Clegg.

Magenta does not share Clegg's paranoia and is seen from time to time walking the streets on some task. Magenta is enormous, nearly 7 feet tall and built like a tree, but he never sways. The muscles on the man are powerful but disguised by a layer of fat, and he is astonishingly taciturn in nature. The Vudrani has a faraway stare that

could almost be mistaken for rudeness or disinterest, but in truth everything interests him.

Once the PCs secure an audience with the boss of the house, Mister Magenta leads the PCs into area **B8**, the meeting room, and informs them Zincher will be down presently. He closes the door but has Hortus Hanch remain nearby, listening at the door with orders to run and fetch Magenta if he hears the PCs do anything suspicious. Mister Magenta returns with Clegg in a few minutes—he enters area **B8** first to announce the Boss's arrival, then steps aside and remains quiet but watchful during the meeting that follows. During this meeting, the eight guards and both house captains marshal in area **B1**, ready to come to Zincher's aid if the PCs prove belligerent.

Clegg Zincher strides confidently into the room, doing his best to command attention and appear calm and collected, but observant PCs will note the truth with a successful DC 20 Sense Motive check: Clegg seems a bit jittery and nervous, his eyes never standing still as they dart from character to character, from weapon to weapon. With a successful DC 20 Perception check, a PC notes that the edges of Zincher's clothing is frayed and his armor a bit dented and rusty. Clegg is a man who's used to having power but hasn't felt in control of his fate for several years, starting with a disastrous expedition to the island of Devil's Elbow some time back. At your option, if the PCs manage to earn Clegg's trust, he may divulge some of his past (as expanded upon in his NPC entry on page 62), but for the moment he seeks to focus on what brings the PCs to him.

During the meeting, Clegg is cordial but gets right to the point. He greets the PCs, then says, "The esteemed Mister Magenta has informed me that you come bearing warnings of an imminent attack on my home—a home that is well defended by guards, traps, and political connections. All in town know that to move against me is to move against the government of Riddleport, and to do so is to incur the wrath of more lords than myself. So tell me, strangers—who is it you believe to be so foolish as to plot against me, and why do you care?"

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check in reaction to Clegg's initial speech gets a hunch that Clegg is overstating his political standing and his house's defenses, but not to what extent. Regardless, give the PCs time to state their case. Clegg starts visibly if the PCs mention his scrolls, unless they've already played this card by revealing that knowledge to Magenta, but otherwise he has no reaction as the PCs speak. Once the PCs finish, he lowers his gaze and appears to be deep in thought.

If the PCs mentioned his scrolls, Clegg's paranoia and fear compel him to take a risk and trust that the PCs are who they claim to be, and he asks for their aid without further persuasion. Otherwise, the PCs must succeed at a

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary



DC 30 Diplomacy check (only one PC rolls, but others can use the aid another action) to convince him they speak the truth.

If the PCs are unable to convince Clegg his property is in peril, he asks them politely but firmly to leave. If the PCs resist, he orders Mister Magenta to escort them out. Combat results if the PCs stubbornly refuse to leave. A battle with Clegg and his minions shouldn't be significantly difficult for the PCs, and as detailed in the Alternate Methods sidebar on page 31, wiping them out and claiming the *scrolls of true resurrection* for themselves is certainly one way to solve the situation, but ultimately this solution earns the PCs fewer experience points and leaves the cult of Yamasoth active.

The remainder of this chapter assumes the PCs convince Clegg to allow them to provide aid and defense for the tenement. The decision made, Clegg claps his hands and asks Mister Magenta to "prepare the brandy so we can seal the deal." The brandy is good, but supplies are limited—Clegg's down to his last bottle (something he certainly won't admit out loud). After the PCs and Clegg toast to good fortunes, he gives the PCs a tour of the building, starting at the ground floor and working his way up. He warns the PCs about the traps in his bedroom

(area B22) and tells them how to avoid and activate them. He also admits that the scrolls are kept in his treasury, and that he'd prefer they stay there rather than risk them getting pickpocketed or otherwise lost or damaged. He doesn't mention that the cases containing the scrolls are coated with contact poison, reasoning that if the PCs decide to betray him, this is one surprise they deserve to discover on their own.

Clegg largely leaves the planning of the tenement's defense up to the PCs. He plans to bring Mister Magenta and four of his eight house guards with him to the auction, leaving both house captains (who themselves are destined to skip out of any defense, their morale broken), the two servants (cook and butler), and the remaining four guards at the PC's disposal. Encourage the PCs to take their time setting up defenses and make notes on how they prepare, for when the cult attacks, they do so in several waves from several directions. If the PCs come up with unusual plans for the defense, Clegg generally approves, warming to their creativity unless a plan is particularly foolish or risky. For example, if the PCs suggest that they arrange for a duplicate to take Clegg's place at the auction so he and Mister Magenta can stay at the tenement to aid in its defense, Clegg may applaud

the creativity and could even allow for Magenta's aid in this way, but he wants to be far away from his home if, indeed, the cult is about to attack.

One element that Clegg makes abundantly clear from the start, though, is that he doesn't want either of his prize axe beaks put at risk, and he will be displeased if either of them come to harm.

Finally, Clegg agrees to help finance additional defenses, but he notes sullenly that "money is tight—otherwise I wouldn't be selling off my control of the arena." He agrees to contribute up to half the bags of platinum coins and half the adamantine ingots in his treasury as additional funds to purchase whatever the PCs might need to bolster the tenement's defense, but not a copper piece more.



MISTER MAGENTA

CLEGG ZINCHER

CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 76 (see page 62)

MISTER MAGENTA

CR 5

XP 1,600

Human fighter (unbreakable) 5/rogue 1 (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 49)

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 53 (6 HD; 1d8+5d10+17)

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4 (+1 vs. mind-affecting effects)

Defensive Abilities unflinching +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *greatsword* +10 (2d6+7/19–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

During Combat Cautious but deadly, Mister Magenta knows it's best not to fight alone. If that is the only possible solution, he prefers to fight with his back against the wall or from the edges of combat. He uses one *potion of invisibility* if he needs to set up an opportune flanking attack, but he saves the second for emergencies.

Morale Magenta has no wish to die, but he has a reputation to protect. As a result, he fights until reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, at which point he tries to drink a *potion of invisibility* and flee. In this event, he flees Riddleport entirely and starts over in a new city, rather than suffer the humiliation of rumors he fled from a fight.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 20

Feats Alertness, Diehard, Endurance, Heroic Recovery^{APG}, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (local) +7, Perception +10, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +9

Languages Common

SQ armor training 1, trapfinding +1

Combat Gear *potions of invisibility* (2); **Other Gear** +1 *chainmail*, +1 *greatsword*, 40 pp

Story Award: If the PCs convince Clegg of the danger and get his permission to defend his home, grant them 9,600 XP.

EVENT 7: THE CULT ATTACKS (CR 14)

The amount of time the PCs have to prepare for the cult's attack varies based on their own actions, but on the set date, the cult strikes 2 hours after sunset. Clegg Zincher leaves for the auction at the arena, along with however many guards he's been convinced to bring with him, a few hours before sunset, giving the PCs at least 4 hours to prepare on their own. The cult has, of course, been watching the tenement from nearby alleys and rooftops, and unless the PCs have taken care to hide their presence, the cultists know that Clegg has hired help. Regardless, this doesn't change Leptonia's tactics for the attack on the tenement.

The cultists number 21 in all, including their leader Leptonia. In addition, the night before the attack, Leptonia casts *planar ally* and *lesser planar ally* spells to conjure monstrous aid from the Abyss in the form of a half dozen cythnigot qlipphoth and a single nyogoth qlipphoth. The cultists approach the tenement from all directions, but they stagger their attacks and attempts to infiltrate the building as detailed below.

Note that if the PCs were to face the cultists and qlipphoth all at once, the resulting fight is a CR 14 encounter. Fortunately, the PCs have the advantage of knowing the terrain they're defending and, potentially, have traps and additional help on their side. This, combined with the fact that the cultists make their attacks from multiple directions over the course of several minutes, should spread the battle out over numerous rounds and numerous locations. This should be a long and dynamic fight.

First Wave (CR 7): The first wave of the attack consists of a stealthy infiltration of the building by the six cythnigots. Their first task is to cast *soften earth and stone* on the ground under one of the three entrances onto the ground floor; the cultists favor this approach on the northernmost door. If they're successful, the spell causes a bit of subsidence so that the door and its supports are slightly damaged—if the effect isn't reversed by magic, the DC to break this door open is reduced to 15. As Tiny creatures, the cythnigots can squeeze into the building through the chimney (if the flue is left open), and their ability to fly lets them peek in windows and investigate the roof with ease. Their commands are not to attack, but to do what they can to spy and observe. If they're able to creep into the building via the chimney, they cast *warp wood* on as many doors as they can (one each) before retreating to report their findings to Leptonia. If discovered, they eagerly attack, but they flee any battle as soon as at least three of their number are slain.

Second Wave (CR 10): Leptonia uses her cultists indiscriminately, and the cult's members, zealous and blind as they are in their faith and adoration for her, follow her orders eagerly. The second wave of attacks consists of a group of a dozen cultists, augmented by any cythnigots that survived the first wave, attempting to force entry into the tenement. If the cythnigots managed to weaken the ground below a door, that's where the cultists strike first; otherwise, they focus their attacks on all three doors at ground level (splitting into equal groups) as they attempt to smash through them with their halberds. These 12 cultists are under orders to continue their assault to the death. Leptonia hopes to draw the PCs out with this tactic, get them to waste resources, and distract them. As this tactic goes on, she casts *air walk* to approach the building from the southeast, trying to remain out of sight of the hopefully distracted PCs. She doesn't know the exact layout of the building other than that the most important occupants live on the top floor. She casts *stone shape* on the wall to open a 10-foot-diameter hole into one of the two house captain's quarters (area B16), then retreats. If spotted, she flees immediately and calls for the third wave to begin at once.

Third Wave (CR 11): If all goes according to plan, the PCs end up wasting resources taking out the dozen cultists in the second wave but don't notice that Leptonia has opened a hole in the building's top floor. The minute the PCs defeat the final cultist of the second wave (or as soon as the PCs notice her), Leptonia orders the start of the third wave. In this attack, six of the eight remaining cultists begin their attack on the building. If a door's been smashed open, they invade the building from that route and do what damage they can to keep the PCs distracted. At the same moment, Leptonia sends

ALTERNATE METHODS

This chapter's goal is to present the PCs with a unique challenge of defending a large building from attack, but that doesn't mean that's the only way to prevent the cult from securing the *scrolls of true resurrection*. The PCs might be more interested in seeking out the cult and making a preemptive strike against them, but another simple solution that might come to mind is that the cult can't steal what's not there. If the PCs simply take the scrolls away, either claiming them for themselves, destroying them, or hiding them where the cult can't find them, they prevent Leptonia from using the scrolls to resurrect Runelord Krune. Note that this solution likely puts the party at odds with Clegg Zincher, in which case the PCs might find themselves fighting him and all his guards at once in the tenement rather than fighting Leptonia's forces. While it's true that Clegg and his guards are less dangerous than the cult, this route won't particularly impact Leptonia. If the PCs make off with the scrolls (whether or not Clegg dies in the process), she simply switches her focus from the crime lord to the PCs. As long as the PCs retain control of the scrolls and as long as she still lives, Leptonia becomes a dangerous recurring villain who will stop at nothing to get what she wants—and as long as she lives, the threat of the polymorph plague will continue.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

the nyogoth to carry the two remaining cultists (casting *silence* on one of them to help mask the approach) through the hole into area B16, and thereafter to attack anyone on the roof. (Once deposited in area B16, the two cultists hide, waiting patiently for the fourth wave to begin.) If there are no targets on the roof, the nyogoth casts *dimension door* to blindly teleport into the building. It prefers to teleport into an area where it suspects the PCs are located, but otherwise it appears in the central hall of the third floor. There's unlikely to be much in the way to attack there, but the monster's roars are meant to further distract the PCs, drawing them into the center of the building.

Fourth Wave (CR 10): Leptonia waits 3 rounds after the third wave begins before she moves to enter the upper floor via the entrance she created in area B16, attended by the two cultists who have been waiting there for her arrival. She then begins to quickly and quietly explore, seeking out the room most likely to hold the scrolls. Left to her own devices and with no opposition, she narrows her search down to the southwest corner after 2d6 rounds of quick exploration. The traps located in area B22 might slow her down, but she is not at risk of being poisoned by the scroll cases since she orders one of her cultists to pick the scroll tubes up—once it's apparent the things

are poisoned, she takes care to avoid exposing herself as she leaves the site. As she emerges from the building, she casts *sound burst* (targeting a PC if she can). This spell is the signal for the rest of the cultists to retreat—they scatter into the alleys and must make their own way back to Magnimar at this point. This spell is also the signal that releases the qliphoth from their duties and allows them to return to the Abyss. Leptonia's next action is to cast *word of recall* to return to area A6 back in the Gecko—mission accomplished.

CYTHNIGOTS (6)

CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 16 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 221)



LEPTONIA

NYOGOTH

CR 10

XP 9,600

hp 125 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 224)

YAMASOTH CULTISTS (20)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Human cleric of Yamasoth 3/rogue 1

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; Senses Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 32 each (4d8+11)

Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk halberd +5

(1d10+3/×3 plus polymorph plague)

Ranged mwk dagger +4

(1d4+2/19–20 plus polymorph plague)

Special Attacks channel negative energy

3/day (DC 11, 2d6), sneak attack +1d6

Cleric Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +6)

At will—*mending*

6/day—acid dart (1d6+1 acid), artificer's touch (1d6+1, bypasses DR and hardness 3)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; concentration +6)

2nd—*cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (DC 15), *wood shape*⁰ (DC 15)

1st—*animate rope*⁰, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *light*, *resistance*

D domain spell; Domains Artifice, Earth

TACTICS

Before Combat The cultists have coated their halberds and daggers with polymorph plague, so the first creature they strike with these weapons is exposed to the affliction.

During Combat The cultists each cast *divine favor* before they begin smashing at doors so they'll be able to do a bit more damage, and then cast *shield of faith* on the first round they are attacked. A cultist reduced to 15 or fewer hit points uses healing magic on himself. Each cultist carries a length of rope for use with *animate rope* to entangle PCs as needed.

Morale These cultists fight to the death until they hear Leptonia's *sound burst*, at which point the survivors flee.

STATISTICS

Str 15, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 10

Base Atk +2; CMB +4; CMD 15

Feats Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Disable Device), Stealthy

Skills Disable Device +14, Escape Artist +3, Knowledge (religion) +5, Perception +9, Stealth +10

Languages Common

SQ trapfinding +1

Combat Gear *potion of fly*; **Other Gear** +1 studded leather, mwk halberd, dagger, iron holy symbol of Yamasoth, masterwork thieves' tools, silk rope (50 ft.)

LEPTONIA

CR 10

XP 9,600

Female half-elf cleric of Yamasoth 11

CE Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 23 (+9 armor, +3 deflection, +1 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 108 (11d8+55)

Fort +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +11; +2 vs. enchantments

Immune sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee +3 *anarchic halberd* +11/+6 (1d10+3/×3 plus 2d6 vs. lawful plus polymorph plague)

Ranged mwk dagger +10 (1d4/19–20 plus polymorph plague)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 5/day (DC 17, 6d6), chaos blade (5 rounds, 1/day)

Cleric Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +15) 7/day—acid dart (1d6+5 acid), touch of chaos

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 11th; concentration +15)

6th—*hungry pit*^{0, APG} (DC 20), *word of recall*

5th—*mass cure light wounds*, *quicken shield of faith*, *wall of stone*⁰

4th—*air walk*, *chaos hammer*⁰ (DC 18), *cure critical wounds*, *greater magic weapon*, *unholy blight* (DC 18)

3rd—*dispel magic*, *magic vestment*, *meld into stone*, *speak with dead* (DC 17), *spiked pit*^{0, APG} (DC 17), *stone shape*

2nd—*create pit*^{0, APG} (DC 16), *cure moderate wounds* (2), *hold person* (DC 16), *silence* (DC 16), *sound burst* (DC 16)

1st—*command* (DC 15), *cure light wounds* (3), *protection from law*⁰, *sanctuary* (DC 15)

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *mending*, *read magic*

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

TACTICS

Before Combat Leptonia casts *magic vestment* on her breastplate and *greater magic weapon* on her +1 *anarchic halberd*. She casts *air walk* on herself as the second wave begins and *silence* on a cultist at the start of the third wave.

During Combat On the first round of combat, Leptonia casts *quicken shield of faith* and *hungry pit* to control the battlefield. She follows this up on the next 2 rounds with *spiked pit* and *create pit*. Since she cast *air walk*, she doesn't have to worry too much about her own navigation around these spells. If the PCs are able to navigate pits as

ONE MORE RUNELORD?

While this adventure assumes Leptonia never gets her hands on the *scrolls of true resurrection*, if she does, the role Runelord Krune plays in your campaign is left up to you. It's probably best to keep him off stage and in hiding, though—after having already been killed by adventurers once, he's unlikely to broadcast his return. Ever the pragmatist, once he learns what Runelord Alaznist has accomplished, he seeks her out to offer himself to her as something of a second-in-command. Alaznist is intrigued by this offer, and when the PCs finally confront her in the last adventure, they may well find themselves facing Runelord Krune, fully recovered as a 17th-level Thassilonian conjurer, at her side. Statistics for Runelord Krune appear in *Pathfinder Society Scenario 4–26: The Waking Rune*, available online at paizo.com.

well, she switches to casting *chaos hammer*, *unholy blight*, and perhaps *dispel magic*. She stays as mobile as possible to avoid full attacks against herself. Once confronted, she moves to fight alongside the cultists or the nyogoth. If she's reduced to 50 hit points or fewer, she casts *sanctuary* on herself, or perhaps *meld into stone*, then heals herself as best she can before returning to the fight, entering melee only once foes are either scattered or softened up or she's out of offensive spells. Note that she's treated the blade of her halberd and all four of her daggers with doses of polymorph plague, so the first foe she wounds with each is exposed to the affliction (see page 9). She channels negative energy whenever she's surrounded.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 25 hit points, or if it becomes obvious to Leptonia that she has no chance of securing the scrolls for herself, she casts *word of recall* to return to area A6 in the Gecko. There, she recovers what allies and equipment she can from the site, leaving Og-Zeugus imprisoned if it still lives, and turns her attention to the long task of rebuilding her cult and the shorter task of securing revenge against the PCs. Her most likely plot is to travel to Kaer Maga and join up with Erigantus, in which case the PCs can encounter her again in the Shrine of the Seal. In this case, feel free to augment the shrine's defenses with a few more qliphoth called in via *planar ally* spells.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** 16, **Int** 8, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 22

Feats Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Selective Channeling, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Toughness

Skills Intimidate +9, Knowledge (religion) +5, Perception +10

Languages Common, Elven

SQ elf blood, tunnel runner

Combat Gear *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2);

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

Other Gear +1 breastplate, +1 anarchic halberd, mwk daggers (4), amulet of natural armor +1, belt of mighty constitution +2, iron holy symbol of Yamasoth, 25 gp

Story Award: Award the PCs 3 Reward Points for defeating the cultists.

CONCLUDING PART 2

With Leptonia's defeat, the rest of the cult of Yamasoth loses its focus. While remaining qliploth or cultists might stick around to fight a few more rounds, their will shatters once they know their leader is gone. Survivors, if there are any, slink into the shadows of Riddleport and are no longer an issue for this campaign.

Clegg's reaction to the PCs' success depends on how many Reward Points they've managed to accumulate. The reward he pays them (as well as the bonus XP the PCs earn) is determined by this total, as detailed in the sidebar on page 26.

Unless Leptonia escaped (in which case, wise PCs might return to Magnimar to track her down back in the Gecko, particularly if they recognized her *word of recall* spell as she cast it), there are no direct links from this chapter to the next, but their open invitation to travel to Korvosa from Sorshen should leave their next destination obvious.

PART 3: A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

While Part 2 of this adventure presented an unorthodox reversal of the standard dungeon crawl, the third part of "Runeplague" dispenses with dungeons completely. While a few fights still wait to test the PCs' mettle in Korvosa, their primary goal in this part of the adventure is not combat but a combination of investigation and roleplay that should give them numerous clues and hints about the nature and scale of the threat facing Varisia, while also laying the foundations for an unexpected alliance that will make the difference between life and death in the adventures to come. After thousands of years of soul-searching and reflection on the past, Runelord Sorshen has come to the conclusion that there must be a better way to rule a nation.

There are two potential links to this portion of the adventure from other parts of Return of the Runelords. First, the PCs were likely contacted by Runelord Sorshen via a *dream* spell in the prior adventure, and her invitation to teach what she knows should be compelling. Second, the tiefling sorcerer Ayavah informs the PCs that she believes there's a link between Sorshen and her own patron, Noctacula as the

Redeemer Queen—she believes that Sorshen wants something more from life, just as Noctacula does. You can use Ayavah and her vision of the PCs allying with Sorshen to assuage player concerns that Sorshen, being a runelord, cannot be trusted, and hopefully compel them to seek out Sorshen and at least hear what she has to say.

You can also use the results of spells like *divination* and *commune* to encourage players to travel to Korvosa and meet with Sorshen, should they seek the advice of powerful magic. After all, the PCs stand to gain much from an evening in the runelord's company, for not only is the simulacrum able to divulge information about the adventure, but she can also give out gifts as she sees fit. Though Sorshen (and her simulacra) are unpredictable, they are no longer evil, and while the PCs are unlikely to realize this change in Sorshen's nature at the outset, they ultimately won't have to decide whether to ally with an evil foe.

The PCs may be suspicious of the runelord's motives, but ignoring her request is also risky. Even if the PCs suspect a trap or worse, dare they risk the wrath of a runelord? If the PCs seem to be dragging their feet or seeking excuses to avoid meeting Sorshen, it's worth reminding them that runelords are duplicitous, not just to others, but to each other. At the end of the day, however, the PCs have the freedom to ignore the invitation to Korvosa. In this case, Sorshen is frustrated but still wishes to aid the PCs. She contacts the PCs once more via *dream*—simply telling them that a man named Erigantus has used the *Bone Grimoire* to destroy the Brotherhood of the Seal, and that if the PCs wish to prevent Zutha's return, they must travel to Kaer Maga to defeat Erigantus and claim the *Bone Grimoire* themselves. Once the PCs do this, Sorshen invites the PCs once again to meet with her in Korvosa, at which point, if the PCs finally agree, the events of this chapter play out more or less the same. If the PCs still refuse, Sorshen can always send them a new *dream* telling them how to destroy the *Bone Grimoire* at the tarnished temple on the Isle of Xin. In the long run, skipping this part of the adventure doesn't directly impact the overall flow of the campaign's story, but it does deprive the PCs of some roleplaying opportunities and the chance to earn unique rewards and additional experience points.

This adventure assumes that the events of Curse of the Crimson Throne have occurred in the past, and that Queen Ileosa is long dead. The monarch who has taken the Crimson Throne in her place should be determined by the events of your prior game. Otherwise, Korvosa is now ruled by Queen Cressida Kroft, an eminently capable woman selected to rule by the city's seneschal, as Queen Ileosa left no heirs to the throne. In any event, whoever

sits upon the Crimson Throne does not have a direct role to play in this adventure.

THE CRIMSON FESTIVAL

This chapter of “Runeplague” is intended to take place over the course of a single day, from the time the PCs arrive in town to midnight. As it happens, this day and night coincide with the height of the Crimson Festival, which is an annual celebration of the anniversary of the death of Queen Ileosa. If in your game the timing of Queen Ileosa’s defeat doesn’t quite match the date on which the PCs visit Korvosa in this adventure, the Crimson Festival could instead mark the anniversary of another event linked to Ileosa’s defeat, or it could mark the date on which Ileosa’s successor took the throne.

The Crimson Festival has grown in scope every year and now consists of a weeklong celebration of not only Queen Ileosa’s defeat but Korvosa’s recovery from a particularly dark time. Wooden statues of the dead queen are raised in each of Korvosa’s squares, with a different one being burned in effigy each night, while depictions of the heroes who defeated her grace tapestries, statues, and all manner of commemorative bric-a-brac and mementos for sale in the numerous festival stalls. (If any of your players took part in a Curse of the Crimson Throne campaign, this is a chance for you to feature their previous PCs in a sort of cameo role. Those PCs should not be present in the city at this time, though, and they may even be among the Sihedron Heroes.)

Gaudy banners and oddly dressed characters throng the streets as countless citizens celebrate the festival—red mantis assassins, plague victims and the bird-masked plague doctors, the heroes, and even the queen herself. False guillotines behead scarecrow royals who are then burned on bonfires as fireworks are loosed. Throughout the evening, the PCs find themselves bustling through noisy crowds, periodically spattered with brightly colored powder paint (often crimson), and experiencing all manner of strange sights and sounds. Yet little can compare with the strangeness of their host—the blood simulacrum of Runelord Sorshen. (Note that for the remainder of this adventure, the name “Sorshen” is used when referring to either the blood simulacrum or the runelord herself.)



TRAVELING TO KORVOSA

In “It Came from Hollow Mountain,” Sorshen sent the PCs a dream inviting them to “seek me in Korvosa.” Sorshen has been deliberately vague here, for even as powerful as her simulacrum is, she knows the value of subtlety. She knows that agents of the Peacock Spirit are active in Korvosa and does not wish to tip her hand that she is similarly active. By the time the PCs arrive in Korvosa, though, the blood simulacrum is a bit stir-crazy from not being able to gallivant in the town, experience the sights, and take part in the festivities. While Sorshen (and thus her simulacrum) has changed many of her attitudes, she still very much enjoys a good party, and by the time she meets the PCs, she’s more than ready to see the festival sights and throw caution to the wind.

The exact dates of the Crimson Festival are left nebulous. It is in full swing whenever the PCs first arrive in Korvosa, allowing them to take their time on a leisurely ocean voyage to the city, courtesy of *Tyalee’s Whim* or another ship—there is no real need for haste. Sorshen continues to periodically watch the PCs via *greater scrying* (assuming PCs periodically fail the DC 32 Will save to resist the spell), so not long after the PCs make the decision to travel to Korvosa, she has her blood simulacrum contact the PCs via *sending* with the following message: “I see you travel to Korvosa. Meet me at the Gatefoot near Kendall Plaza. You shall know me by the sign of the Redeemer Queen.”

MEETING SORSHEN

Sorshen chose Gatefoot as the place to meet with the PCs out of nostalgia, for during the height of Thassilon, this site boasted a massive statue of the runelord that stood watch over her capital city. Today, only that statue’s foot remains—a relic of the past known to locals as “Gatefoot.” Sorshen waits for the PCs to arrive, patient in the way that someone who’s spent thousands of years waiting can be. Unless the PCs strive to arrive at a specific time, it’s best to assume they approach Gatefoot an hour or so before sunset.

Sorshen has playfully used her *dance of seven veils* to assume the appearance of someone known to the PCs. Choose an NPC who has appeared since the beginning of “It Came from Hollow Mountain,” and with whom they’ve established a friendly relationship, but who is not with

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

them at this time. She's incorporated Nocticula's holy symbol as the Redeemer Queen into her illusory outfit, to ensure that the PCs recognize her. There are no bystanders nearby as the PCs approach. Sorshen smiles radiantly, overjoyed to finally meet them. She off-handedly explains that there was a time when the statue, which was of her, stood "a thousand feet high and surveyed all of Eurthynia, my domain, my passion, my legacy." If the PCs ask about her familiar appearance, she smirks and assumes her true form, explaining that she felt a familiar face would appeal to them and that even now, her enemies stalk the streets of Korvosa. She explains further: "I don't fear the cult of the Peacock Spirit, but I'd rather focus my time here on entertainment and delights than clashing and combat—wouldn't you agree?"

The PCs are likely eager to interrogate Sorshen, whether to learn what she knows or to find out why she's not more violent, more aggressive... more "runelordy." She waves her hand dismissively as she steps away from the Gatefoot, once again disguising herself in some other mundane appearance as she leads the PCs toward nearby Kendall Plaza, where an effigy of Queen Ileosa awaits burning much later that night. As Sorshen goes, she beckons the PCs to accompany her, saying the following as she heads toward the nearby plaza.

"In any event, the festival's not waiting for us. Let us dip our toes into the shenanigans, mingle with the citizens, and see what this celebration of a tyrant's downfall has to offer us. Business is always so much more enjoyable when it's mixed with entertainment, I think. I'll answer some of your questions through the night, but I doubt I'll answer anywhere close to all of them. In particular, I have information that will be of great use to you when you face our common enemies. But at the same time, I'd very much like it if you did some favors for me in return—it's been so long since I've seen the sun and haggled for souvenirs, after all!"

As the evening plays out, the PCs have several opportunities to impress Sorshen, do minor favors for her, or merely provide her some entertainment. In return, she doles out her own rewards, both in the form of information and, now and then, physical gifts that she's hidden about Kendall Plaza for the PCs to find. The method by which she intends to hand out these rewards is in and of itself a game of Sorshen's design, meant first to amuse her and only second to test the PCs' ability to handle themselves in something other than a fight.

Sorshen has one primary challenge for the PCs (tracking down the ingredients for a rare perfume whose scent she hasn't enjoyed since the fall of Thassilon) and several secondary ones. As she and the PCs make their way to Kendall Plaza, she describes what she needs for

the perfume. She then asks to be escorted through the plaza at all times by at least half the PCs, during which her idle fancies and whims give the party additional opportunities to earn her favor. The evening's events last from 6:00 P.M. until just after midnight, with the time broken into six 1-hour intervals (followed by a major event at midnight, when the burning of Ileosa's effigy is scheduled). During each hour of the festival, the PCs can each seek out perfume ingredients, entertain Sorshen, or undertake other activities. In addition to rewards of information and treasure, the PCs also earn Festival Points that determine their experience point story award at the end of this part.

Be careful when running this part that it does not come across as a list of one roleplaying challenge after another. Allow the PCs to feel they are leading events and let things flow organically from hour to hour. If you wish to use information from *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Guide to Korvosa* or *Curse of the Crimson Throne* to expand the PCs' exploration of Korvosa beyond Kendall Plaza, it's probably best to keep things confined in the southern half of the Height, so that the PCs don't end up spending most of their time walking from place to place. Furthermore, keeping the action focused in Kendall Plaza helps to keep the PCs all within relatively close proximity to each other, so that even when they split up, they're never too far apart. This is particularly useful for **Event 14**, when time stops and the PCs face a foe from another dimension.

SORSHEN'S REWARDS

The PCs have numerous opportunities to please Sorshen during the evening, and when they do, she helps them. Sorshen's favor takes the form of important information or physical rewards listed below. Each time the PCs earn a reward, they gain the next reward on the list, along with the XP associated with that reward. Each reward can be gained only once. It's possible that the PCs won't earn any of these rewards, but they must fail to please Sorshen at every opportunity to achieve this outcome. In this case, note that rewards indicated as "required" are necessary to progress to the rest of the adventure. If at the end of the evening the PCs haven't earned these rewards, Sorshen gives them to the PCs for free, but in this case the PCs don't earn the associated XP award.

1. Erigantus (required; 2,400 XP): Sorshen asks if the PCs know of a man named Erigantus. (If they don't, she reveals to them that he is a dhampir necromancer in the service of the Whispering Way who allied, for a time, with the cult of Yamasoth in Magnimar). She goes on to tell them that Erigantus is unknowingly paving the way for the return of one of Sorshen's enemies—Runelord Zutha.

2. The Bone Grimoire (required; 3,200 XP): Sorshen reveals that, as payment for aiding the cult of Yamasoth,

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

Erigantus was given a powerful artifact called the *Bone Grimoire*—a third of Runelord Zutha's phylactery. The dhampir's use of this item has allowed him to wreak great havoc deep below Kaer Maga among a group called the Brotherhood of the Seal, but in using the book's secrets, he has unwittingly infected his own soul with Zutha's influence.

3. Ancient Stone (3,200 XP): Sorshen brings the PCs back to the Gatefoot, then steps around to the heel. A tiny smile on her lips, she runs her fingers across the stone, then pauses as those fingers trigger a hidden catch. She informs the PCs that her memory was not wrong as she opens a small hidden panel in the side of the foot, then invites the PCs to claim the treasure within the small hollow space: a *scarlet and blue sphere ioun stone* in a lacquered darkwood box worth 500 gp.

4. Shrine of the Seal (required; 4,800 XP): Erigantus besieged the Shrine of the Seal below Kaer Maga, and he has taken the site as his own lair while he further studies the *Bone Grimoire*—and unwittingly further saturates his own soul with Zutha's influence. But if the PCs can secure the *Bone Grimoire* for themselves, Sorshen knows a way that the artifact can be used to force Zutha's hand and, perhaps, put an end to him once and for all.

5. A Promise of New Thassilon (4,800 XP): Sorshen reveals that she intends to found a new realm called New Thassilon once the other runelords are dealt with, and that she hopes to rule this nation peacefully and favorably, in a manner more in tune with Xin's original vision for Thassilon and that invites cooperation and not war with her neighbors.

6. Runewaking Ritual (required; 6,400 XP): In the final years of Thassilon, Sorshen developed a ritual called runewaking as a method to undo Zutha's machinations. Sorshen never needed to call upon the ritual herself, as Earthfall removed Zutha first. With the runewaking ritual, the PCs can use the *Bone Grimoire* to draw upon latent power within the foundations of Thassilon itself on the risen Isle of Xin to force Zutha's hidden undead soul to manifest physically. Doing so forces him to manifest at just over a third of his true power, and if he can be destroyed in this form, that portion of the *Gluttonous Tome* itself will be destroyed—thus releasing Zutha's spirit from the grip of undeath and into the River of Souls so he may be judged. Doing so, of course, prevents Zutha's return to life and undeath alike. With this reward, Sorshen imparts into the minds of the PCs all the knowledge needed to perform the ritual (see page 60 for details).

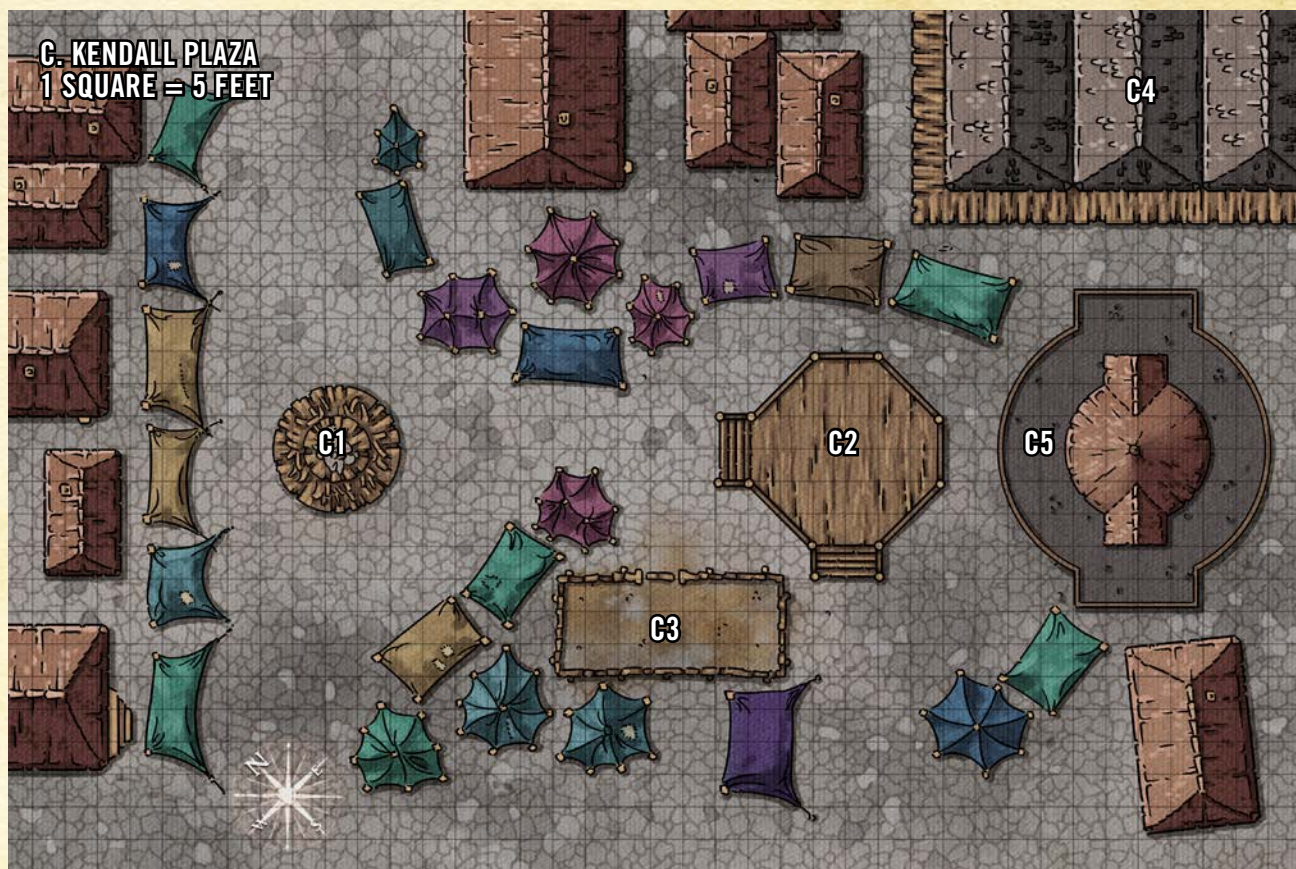
7. A Gargoyle's Gift (6,400 XP): Sorshen looks up toward several crows nesting atop one of the taller stone buildings, then points to a line of stunted stone gargoyles adorning the building's upper edge. With a mysterious smile, she wonders aloud if she just saw something

sparkling in the centermost gargoyle's mouth and invites the PCs to investigate. The gargoyle is 30 feet up; a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Climb check can clamber up the side of the building. Held in the statue's open mouth is a *ring of minor spell storing* (currently containing *heroism*) Sorshen stashed there earlier in the day.

8. Other Runelords (6,400 XP): Zutha is not the only danger facing the PCs. Runelords Xanderghul and Alaznist are also active, and in time the PCs will need to face them. Sorshen promises to help in those confrontations but cautions against moving against these powerful foes too soon. Of Runelord Belimarius, the PCs have little to fear—Sorshen knows Belimarius remains trapped, but the PCs may eventually need to confront her as well.

9. The Pig's Dinner (9,600 XP): With a giggle, Sorshen notes that one of the smaller pigs from the pig pen seems to have escaped, and she says she just saw the pig gulp down something valuable. If the PCs can catch the pig and find out what it ate, surely they'll be rewarded? Sorshen has arranged this event as a fun (for her, at least) little distraction. The pig itself is fast and agile, and catching it may involve a merry chase through the crowds. Once captured, the method by which the PCs secure the valuable that the pig ate is up to them—*detect magic* reveals something magic in its belly. Patient PCs can simply wait for the pig to pass the meal (an unsavory plan that rewards the PCs early in the morning but spares the pig's life and dignity). Impatient ones can sicken the pig, either via magic or alchemically (any effect that imparts the sickened condition to the pig works), to get the pig to vomit up its prior meal. Impatient or cruel PCs can simply cut the pig's belly open, but if they do so publicly, they lose half their accumulated Festival Points. If they allow the pig to die, they lose the other half of those Festival Points. Creative PCs may think of other methods of retrieving the *stone of good luck* Sorshen fed to the pig without hurting the creature—feel free to adjudicate these efforts as you see fit. (Remember that as long as the pig continues to "carry" the *stone of good luck* in its belly, it gains the magic item's effects.)

10. A Kiss (9,600 XP): Although Sorshen has largely grown tired of physical pleasure after so many centuries spent wallowing in salacious pursuits, she still understands the power intrinsic in such sensation. As this reward, she gives one of the PCs (preferably one who has ranks in Knowledge [arcana] or Spellcraft) a kiss. The kissed character gains a +10 morale bonus on all skill checks to perform the runewaking ritual, but otherwise the kiss has no game effects and should be taken as proof of Sorshen's friendship with the party. This reward can be earned multiple times, with a new PC earning a kiss with each reward.



EVENT 8: A WHIMSICAL CHALLENGE

As the PCs approach Kendall Plaza, Sorshen pauses a moment, turns to face an alley, and takes a deep breath, holding it for a moment before exhaling slowly, a smile on her lips. Just within the alleyway, a patch of honeysuckle grows around an old rusty sign fallen into the gutter. Sorshen speaks.

"This is a new world to me, but there are hints of the familiar in it. I'm sure you didn't catch that brief whiff of honeysuckle, but it reminded me of a fine perfume that was quite common back in my day before the world ended. It was named after me, in fact—Sorshen's Whisper. I suspect the ingredients are still readily available, particularly in an environment like this, with these myriad merchant's stalls. If you can gather the ingredients for me, I can not only prepare the scent to share with you, but perhaps give you a special reward."

Assuming the PCs are interested, Sorshen lists off the ingredients for the PCs, describing that the scent requires equal parts of all its six components. These six ingredients, and the difficulty the PCs might have in tracking them down, are summarized below. (Note that

most of these ingredients involve taking the Shopping festival activity, which is detailed further on page 41.)

A Dozen Black Spider Orchid Petals: This task is easier said than done, for a black spider orchid has only three petals. These black-colored flowers are much sought after for their scent, and are typically not sold in bulk. Finding a single black spider orchid requires a successful DC 16 Diplomacy or Perception check while shopping, as one flower costs 500 gp. This shopping trip must be repeated once per flower (four times in all to secure the dozen petals required).

Crypt Flower Pollen: Crypt flowers grow in the Mushfens and damp forests throughout remote parts of Varisia. A dose of crypt flower pollen can be purchased for 100 gp (requiring a successful DC 15 Diplomacy or Perception check to locate while shopping).

Dried Honeysuckle: Fresh honeysuckle won't do, but if the PCs come up with a creative way to quickly dry a handful of honeysuckle (such as by casting *blight* or *horrid wilting* on the plant, perhaps), then feel free to let this solution provide the required amount. Otherwise, a dose of dried honeysuckle can be purchased for 5 gp as part of a shopping festival activity.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

Golden Ambergris: Normal ambergris wasn't good enough for the production of Sorshen's Whisper. Only golden ambergris (which is produced via alchemical enhancement of regular ambergris) is fit for the task. Golden ambergris is very rare these days, and a dose will cost a shopper 4,000 gp (and thus requires a successful DC 23 Diplomacy or Perception check to locate while shopping).

Ground Ember Cloves: Ground cloves are simple to locate at any number of merchant's stalls in Kendall Plaza, but ground ember cloves are a trickier task. These rare and exotic cloves, which are traditionally harvested after a grass fire in the Cinderlands, cost 200 gp for a dose (requiring a successful DC 15 Diplomacy or Perception check to locate while shopping).

Pure Water: The simplest way to get this ingredient is to simply cast *create water*. Water harvested from the environment or purchased at a stall (this requires no check or expenditure of time) must be purified via a spell like *purify food and drink*. Finding a spellcaster to cast *create water* for 10 gp is simple enough to do when undertaking the shopping festival activity. Holy or unholy water can also serve as this ingredient.

Treasure: Once the PCs gather all of the ingredients, they need only deliver them to Sorshen. She gleefully accepts the components, placing them in her *handy haversack* for safekeeping. She explains that it will take her a few days to brew up the perfume, but if the PCs return to Korvosa (or are willing to wait for the brewing to be completed), she gives the PCs 3 doses of Sorshen's Whisper as a reward for gathering the ingredients for her. A single dose of this rare perfume functions as a *potion of heroism* at caster level 20th (and is worth 3,000 gp per dose).

Story Award: If the PCs manage to gather all the ingredients before midnight, they earn 9,600 XP. They also earn the next two rewards from Sorshen (see page 36).

C. KENDALL PLAZA

Known also as the Plaza of Scions, Kendall Plaza is located in the southwestern corner of Korvosa's Heights district, in the shadow of Kendall Arena and adjacent to Field Marshal Way. The plaza, as with most of the town's open areas, serves as a local marketplace and a venue for street performers. Statues of famous adventurers, including one of Mina Kendall (leader of an adventuring group called the Scions of Puris who saved the neighborhood from an ankheg infestation), grace the central area of the plaza, but it is the northern portion that this adventure focuses upon, and which is depicted in the map on page 38. Here, a new statue has been erected—a wooden likeness of Queen Ileosa scheduled to be burned in effigy at midnight.

For the duration of the Crimson Festival, Kendall Plaza is choked with crowds. Dozens of brightly colored stalls and tents for merchants and entertainers alike turn the plaza into a maze, while shop fronts facing the plaza open their doors and expand their wares out onto the streets.

Some specific areas of particular interest are detailed in brief below.

C1. Ileosa's Effigy: A 20-foot-tall statue of Queen Ileosa stands atop a wooden platform here. Strips of red cloth hang down from the statue to drape across the platform below, while several house drakes (a local variant of the pseudodragon) perch and fly about above, periodically spattering the wooden statue with dragon droppings. The statue is exquisitely carved, and the red cloth has been alchemically treated to catch fire quickly and burn brightly—at midnight, these strips are lit on fire and the entire statue burns to the delight of the crowd. Until then, passers by are encouraged to hurl insults and rotten fruit at the statue—the house drakes are only too eager to gobble up the fruit offerings so that, once digestion has done its work, they can make offerings of their own.

C2. Pavilion: This large wooden pavilion is open to the air and forms an upraised platform for performers to show their stuff. Performances here are meant to last a maximum of 15 minutes so there's a constant cycle of new and entertaining acts.

C3. Pig Pen: A 15-foot-by-35-foot area of mud has been sectioned off here by a low but well-reinforced wooden fence. Inside several sizable hogs mill about splashed with crimson paint. These pigs are part of the night's festivities, with the largest of the pigs representing Ileosa herself. A "Crown of Hams" game, in which eager contestants chase pigs and try to alternately crown or de-crown queens gives participants and observers alike an irreverent and filthy bit of fun at 9:00 in the evening.

C4. Ye Reel Catch: This eatery has ample outdoor seating and specializes in seafood dishes. As their establishment is relatively new, the owners of Ye Reel Catch are eager to use the festival to "reel in" new customers, and for the duration of the evening, all of their offerings are half price. Simple meals at Ye Reel Catch thus cost a mere 2 sp, while a special banquet offering of lemon-poached salmon, seaweed salad, raw oysters, and strips of particularly spicy lemmichum (deep-fried clams), paired with delicious house wine, can be had at the affordable price of 20 gp per feaster.

C5. Sorshen's Retreat: The top of this five-story stone tower has a partially secluded walkway overlooking the plaza. The tower itself is used as overflow storage and supplies for the nearby Kendall Arena, but for the evening it remains empty and its rooftop unvisited, save by Sorshen when she wishes to have a moment to herself.

EARNING FESTIVAL POINTS

The PCs can earn Festival Points by aiding or entertaining Sorshen, as detailed in each of the following hourly events, and also by taking part in festival activities. Each hour, a PC can earn Festival Points for the party by doing one of the following.

Eating: A character who gains a +2 morale bonus on skill checks as a result of eating and drinking earns the party 1 Festival Point.

Entertainment: A character who performs for the festival crowd can earn the party Festival Points as follows, depending on the level of success of the performance (as defined by the Perform skill on page 103 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*): great performance (1 Festival Point); memorable performance (2 Festival Points); extraordinary performance (3 Festival Points). No points are earned for routine or enjoyable performances.

Games: A character who wins back twice the money she spent on games earns the party 1 Festival Point.

Mingling: A character who earns a skill bonus by mingling earns the party 1 Festival Point.

Resting: Resting does not earn Festival Points.

Shopping: A character who purchases at least one item worth more than 2,500 gp during the hour earns the party 1 Festival Point.

She's used a combination of gold and magic to ensure that, for this evening, no one will bother her here.

Festival Activities

The festival runs without pause, but to keep things somewhat organized when running this chapter, the hours between 6:00 P.M. and midnight have been broken into six separate sections. As each hour begins, ask the players how their characters wish to spend that hour at the festival, choosing from among the six options detailed below. (Optionally, a character can take part in an activity beyond those mentioned below, but you'll need to determine the effects and impact of that activity yourself.) Each hour, Sorshen has a different need, desire, or interest, and she expects to be accompanied at all times by at least half of the party. Characters can earn Festival Points for taking part in activities and for impressing Sorshen as they accompany her, with the number of points they earn determining their total experience point story award for this roleplay-focused session.

Note that if an hour goes by without Sorshen being accompanied by her minimum requirement of PC attendants, no Festival Points are earned for that hour.

Eating: There are several places in the plaza to enjoy festival food and drink, including barbecued Ailkan oysters, strips of spicy, deep-fried clam meat called "lemchum,"

butter-rich fried pastries called "Oliphant ears" that can easily feed three people apiece, tiny and chewy sweets called "pullers," and a wide variety of ales, ciders, lambics, meads, and punches. In addition, several restaurants line the plaza's sides, providing a slightly more relaxed venue for those who wish to sit down as they eat. A character who wishes to spend the hour eating and drinking must pay 1d10 gp and then attempt a DC 15 Fortitude save to avoid overindulging. On a successful save, the character gains a +2 morale bonus on all skill checks for the next hour. On a failed save, the character feels sick and takes a -2 penalty on all skill checks until he spends an hour resting or the night is over. Penalties for multiple episodes of overindulging stack.

Entertainment: Whether it's the antics of a street performer, the performance of minstrels or actors on the pavilion, or a ribald puppet show performed in a stall, there is no shortage of opportunities for entertainment in the plaza. A character who spends an hour watching these various forms of entertainment gains a +2 morale bonus on all saving throws for the rest of the night. Alternatively, a character can provide entertainment by attempting a Perform check to determine how many coins he earns for that hour. Due to the exuberant (and oft-inebriated) nature of the crowd, earnings for Perform checks in Kendall Plaza are double those listed on page 103 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*. If a character performs, he must succeed at a DC 10 Fortitude save or become fatigued by the performance.

Games: Several games of chance have been set up throughout the plaza. A character who wishes to spend the hour gaming must spend money to do so, but can choose any amount between 1 sp and 10 gp. At the end of the hour, the character must attempt a DC 20 check chosen from one of the following skills: Acrobatics, Appraise, Bluff, Disable Device, Intimidate, or Sleight of Hand. On a failure by 5 or more, the character becomes fatigued with frustration at the poor result. On a success, the character wins back twice the money she spent gaming; this reward becomes 10 times the money wagered if the result of the check is 10 or more above the target DC. Note that a special game called Crown of Hams takes place at 9:00 P.M.

Mingling: If the PC chooses simply to mingle for the hour, he spends that time people watching, window shopping, and otherwise simply strolling at a leisurely pace through the stalls. A character who spends the hour doing this can attempt a DC 20 Perception check. On a success, he gains a +4 bonus on all skill checks attempted in the following hour to resolve the effects of any festival activities.

Resting: A character who spends an hour in a secluded, semiquiet corner of the festival resting and relaxing can negate all penalties accrued from overindulgent eating,

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary



or can negate the effects of fatigue caused by overexertion during a performance or a game.

Shopping: A PC who spends an hour shopping can attempt up to four purchases. Kendall Plaza's base value is 50 gp—finding something for this price or less requires no check, just an expenditure of 15 minutes of time spent navigating the crowds and examining wares. Anything beyond this value, up to Korvosa's actual base value of 12,800 gp, requires a successful Diplomacy or Perception check to locate the item for sale. The DC of this check is equal to $15 + 1$ per 500 gp of the price of the object being sought (minimum DC 15 for items worth more than 50 gp but less than 500 gp). (At your discretion, particularly unusual items, such as obscure magic items, can have a DC of 5 or 10 higher than this.) A failed check can be repeated, but it still counts as one of that hour's four attempted purchases.

EVENT 9: THE EVENING BEGINS

Sorshen and the PCs arrive at Kendall Plaza at 6:00 in the evening, a few hours before sunset. The sight of the thronging crowds and sound of revelry is almost overwhelming, but Sorshen appears excited and eager to dive in. She asks that at least half the PCs accompany her

each hour on whatever entertainment she seeks, leaving the other PCs to find their own way for the hour. She'd prefer if a different combination of PCs accompany her each hour. She may chat idly with the PCs, answering minor questions with smirks and hints as you wish. She doesn't have much to say about Thassilon—as a simulacrum, she has no solid memories of that ancient era, but she doesn't want to reveal this to the PCs, and so to questions about what the world was like long ago she simply shrugs and says, "Much the same, but from what I've seen so far, today is a nicer place than yesterday, even if tomorrow might be the worst of all. Best to focus on what's happening now, I say!"

Take this moment to describe the various festival options each PC can take, and at the start of each hour repeat the process.

Sorshen's Choice—Entertainment: Sorshen asks one of the PCs who has ranks in a Perform skill to be among those attending her. For this first hour, Sorshen wants to observe an impromptu performance of "The Crimson Treason" at the pagoda. This short play is performed by a group of several talented but amateur actors, and takes artistic license with Queen Ileosa's famed poisoning of her husband, King Eodred. The play interprets the event as one

that was much more action-packed, much to the crowd's delight. As the play concludes, with dead Eodred on the floor, covered with made-up lesions and Ileosa putting on a fake Crown of Fangs, Sorshen wryly notes, "It's good to know traditions of succession have remained largely unchanged over the years!"

After the play concludes, Sorshen suggests that one of the PCs take the stage to perform. If no PC takes her up on the offer, she's disappointed but doesn't push. She cheers loudly, however, if someone agrees to take the stage. If the PC manages to give at least a great performance with a successful DC 20 Perform check, her cheers only increase in volume, and at the end of the hour she grants the PCs a reward. If the PC instead manages to succeed at a DC 30 Perform check, Sorshen is overwhelmed with emotion and grants the PCs two rewards instead.

Festival Points: The PCs earn 1 Festival Point if one of their number takes the stage to perform, regardless of the results of that performance.

EVENT 10: THE CURIOUS MOTH

This event takes place during the second hour, at 7:00 P.M.

Sorshen's Choice—Mingling: Sorshen wants to spend this hour people watching and window shopping. She has no preference for who accompanies her. At some point during the hour, a death's head moth flutters from a nearby lamp to land on Sorshen's hand. She watches it, a momentary smile on her face, and then it flies off. Sorshen quickly turns to the PCs and says, "Fetch me that moth, but don't kill it! I wish to examine it further."

The simplest way to catch the moth is to catch it by hand with a successful unarmed attack against a creature with an AC of 15. If the PCs don't catch the moth on the first round, on all succeeding rounds it gains cover from the crowd and its effective AC increases to 19. After 4 rounds, the moth flies up into the air, out of reach unless the PCs can fly. If 2 rounds pass in which no one is able to catch the moth, it escapes and is gone. (If you prefer, statistics for moths appear on page 192 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Wilderness*.)

If the PCs catch the creature and bring it to Sorshen, she smiles as she examines it, then poses a question to the PCs: "I wonder, if you were to know that such a creature as this moth was the reincarnation of a hated enemy, what would you do with it?" Regardless of their answers, she shrugs and lets the moth go free.

If the PCs catch and deliver the moth to Sorshen, she gives the PCs a reward.

EVENT 11: DINNER AT SUNSET

As 8:00 P.M. rolls around, the sun sets.

Sorshen's Choice—Eating: As the sun dips below the horizon, Sorshen announces that she is famished. She asks all of the PCs to attend to her at a nearby eatery called Ye Reel Catch, where she eagerly announces that she and her companions shall partake of the banquet offering. Sorshen expects the PCs to pay for her plate, of course. As the meal gets underway, Sorshen eats ravenously and yet with a curious etiquette, stumbling a bit as she looks for additional cutlery not used in ages, mint-scented silks to wipe her fingers and the corners of her mouth, and a crystal goblet to drink her wine from. None of these are available at this establishment, alas, and she grows

frustrated as the meal progresses. She asks each of her PC companions to distract her from the mediocrity of the meal with a rousing tale of adventure. While recounting his or her story, each PC should attempt a DC 30 Bluff check (if the story is intended to carry a hidden meaning), a Diplomacy check (if the story is meant to be comforting), an Intimidate check (if they intend for the story to be frightening), a Sense Motive check (if the story is meant to cozen to the listener's preferences), or a Perform (act or oratory) check. As long as at least one PC succeeds at this check, Sorshen is distracted enough to forget her disappointment over the meal.

If the PCs manage to distract Sorshen from her disappointments with a well-told tale, she gives the PCs a reward. If more than half the PCs manage to succeed at the checks to distract her, she gives the PCs two rewards.

Festival Points: If all of the PCs take part in the invitation to dine with Sorshen, the party earns a Festival Point.

EVENT 12: CROWN OF HAMS

At 9:00 in the evening, crowds begin gathering around the pig pen, and the pagoda cedes its role as a pulpit for entertainers and becomes an improvised battle arena in which the Crown of Hams will be awarded.

Sorshen's Choice—Games: Sorshen is intrigued by the Crown of Hams and selects the proudest PC (or barring that, the best melee combatant) as one of her attendants. For the duration of this hour, pigs from the pig pen (area C3) are led up to the pavilion, which has improvised barriers set up around its edges to contain the pigs within. The pigs are slathered with grease, and then eager



RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

contestants are given a tin replica of the notorious Crown of Fangs and take turns attempting to crown one of the pigs, to the delight of watchers. To crown a pig with the Crown of Hams, a character must attach the crown via two clips to the pig's ears, which is normally accomplished with a successful grapple check once a contestant has successfully pinned the pig. The grease covering the pig makes this prospect much more difficult (this functions as if the pig were affected by a *grease* spell, effectively giving it an Escape Artist bonus of +11), as does the fact that a contestant has only a few rounds to successfully crown a pig; the timer is a brightly burning sparkler that takes 6 rounds to completely burn out.

If a PC manages to crown a pig, Sorshen is delighted and gives the PCs a reward.

PIG

CR 1/3

XP 135

hp 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 113)

Festival Points: The party earns 1 Festival Point if one of their number takes part in the Crown of Hams, regardless of whether they win or not.

EVENT 13: SIPPING FROM THE LYING CUP

At 10:00 P.M., night has truly fallen, but the plaza's dozens of lanterns keep the place well lit.

Sorshen's Choice—Eating: Just after 10:00, a gnome with bright orange hair trundles through the crowd, pushing before him a wheelbarrow containing a keg nestled in a bed of straw. The gnome's name is Lord Malt, and he's offering free swigs of his newest concoction—a terribly potent grain-and-apple spirit he calls “fire,” and which he promises was brewed to exacting specifications from a recipe he purchased from an adventurer, who in turn claimed to have found it in a Thassilonian ruin. Sorshen is intrigued by the scent wafting from the amber-colored drink and suspects it is an old Thassilonian drink called miheesh. She tries to bring as many PCs as possible over to the gnome's wheelbarrow, but as they arrive, she stops short, her attention shifting to one of the goblets the gnome uses to pass out samples.

This goblet appears as a hemisphere of glass held in a seven-pointed frame of cold iron with a long stem that descends to a spike, so that rather than being set gently on a table, the drinker stabs the goblet into the wooden surface. Sorshen says this goblet is something from Thassilon's time known as a “lying cup,” and she eagerly asks the PCs to “get it” from the gnome.

Lord Malt has several goblets on his belt that he alternates handing out samples in, and a PC could certainly pickpocket the goblet from the gnome if she wishes, or even mug him for it, but he's not a pushover

himself, and doing so causes a scene to erupt. At best, if caught, the PCs lose half their Festival Points unless they cover up their faux pas with a successful DC 30 Diplomacy check.

A better plan would be to offer to purchase the goblet from him. Lord Malt isn't expecting such an offer but is always looking to turn a profit, and if the PCs look like able adventurers, he asks for a payment of 500 gp. Otherwise, he invites the PCs to make their best offer (in this case he accepts any payment of at least 50 gp, which is the cup's actual value). If he asks for 500 gp, a PC can get him to lower the asking price by 100 gp (to his minimum of 50 gp) for every 5 points by which the result of a Diplomacy check exceeds a DC of 10.

If a PC wishes to sample the drink, treat that one swig as if she spent the entire hour eating for the purpose of determining how she is affected by the potent libation.

The lying cup itself is not magical, so the fact that it's survived thousands of years undamaged is something of a minor miracle. If the PCs secure the cup, Sorshen explains that cups like these were part of a traditional game played by aristocrats. The goal was to fill the cup with alcohol, put a coin in a pot, hold it up before you, take a drink, and answer a question posed by your opponent. You can choose to lie or tell the truth, but if an opponent catches you in a lie that the opponent can prove was a lie, you have to put another coin in the pot, refill the cup, take another drink, and answer another question. If no one contests your answer, you stab the cup down into the tabletop. If none of the drink sloshes out, you pick the next person to play. That person then picks up the cup, fills it, puts a coin in the pot, and answers one of your questions. If any drink sloshes out, you refill the cup and must pay another coin and answer another question from the previous player. The game proceeds until only one person remains conscious, at which point that person wins the money in the pot and keeps ownership of the cup (thus determining who starts the next game).

If the PCs agree to play a round of lying cup with Sorshen, play begins with the cup's owner (the character who purchased the cup, in this case) selecting who will take the first drink. Any number of people can take part, but in any single bout, only two of those people are directly engaged—the judge (the character who selects who will drink and who must judge if the drinker is lying or not) and the drinker (the character who drinks from the cup and must pay at least one coin into the pot). Play then proceeds as follows.

Step 1. Select a Drinker: The judge selects a drinker.

Step 2. Fill Up and Ante: The drinker fills the lying cup with alcohol and puts a coin into the pot. On the first turn, the drinker picks what type of coin to put in the pot, and all coins to follow must always be of value

equal to or greater than the previous coin. If a drinker doesn't have any coins of the appropriate value to put in the pot, that drinker is removed from the game. Likewise, if a drinker decides not to continue, she is removed from the game.

Step 3. Drink: The drinker must either sip or drink deeply from the lying cup (but she cannot drain the cup dry), and must then succeed at a DC 10 Fortitude save or become affected by the drink. If the drinker chose to drink deeply, she takes a –5 penalty on this Fortitude save. The first time the drinker becomes affected by a drink, she becomes tipsy and takes a –1 penalty on all skill checks. The second time the drinker becomes affected, she becomes drunk and takes a –4 penalty on all skill checks and saving throws. The third time the drinker becomes affected, she becomes soused and takes a –10 penalty on all skill checks and saving throws. The fourth time the drinker becomes affected, she passes out and is removed from the game. This is a poison effect; characters who are immune to poison are considered to be cheating if they play this game!

Step 4. Answer a Question: The judge asks the drinker a question, which the drinker must answer. The judge must then decide if the answer is true or false. If the judge decides it is true, play proceeds to Step 5. If the judge decides the answer is a lie, the drinker attempts a Diplomacy check (if she told the truth) or a Bluff check (if she lied), opposed by the judge's Sense Motive check. If the drinker lied and the judge's Sense Motive check beats the drinker's Bluff check result, the drinker must go back to Step 2 and start over. If the judge decided the drinker was lying but the drinker was instead telling the truth, the judge pays a coin to the pot and the drinker proceeds with Step 5. Otherwise, the drinker simply proceeds with Step 5.

Step 5. Stab the Table: The drinker stabs the cup into a wooden surface (traditionally a table top) with enough force that the cup's spiked stem keeps the cup upright, but not forcefully enough to spill any drink remaining in the cup. Doing so requires a successful Dexterity or Sleight of Hand check (drinker's choice). If the drinker took only a sip from the cup during Step 3, she takes a –5 penalty on this check. On a success, no drink is spilled, and play proceeds with Step 6. On a failed check, drink is spilled and the drinker must start over at Step 2.

Step 6. Select a New Drinker: The drinker now becomes the judge, and must select a new drinker. If more than two are playing lying cup, then the drinker must choose someone other than the previous judge to become the new drinker. The new drinker picks up the lying cup and starts over with Step 2.

Winners and Losers: Play continues until only one player remains in the game. A player is removed from the

game if he passes out, cannot afford to pay a coin of the appropriate value into the pot, or decides not to answer a question. Once only one player remains in the game, she wins all of the coins in the pot and claims ownership of the lying cup.

Sorshen's Tactics: Sorshen watches quietly as the PCs play, a slight smirk on her lips as she takes in their truths and lies. When she is selected as the drinker, she always pays a coin if she can, and always drinks deep from the cup. Whether or not she tells the truth or lies is up to you—decide based on the nature of the question if a truth will help the story line progress, and use these as opportunities to drop hints to the PCs. If a PC asks a question you aren't ready to answer or that you feel will spoil an upcoming story line element, Sorshen lies. She plays until she becomes soused but quits the game rather than risk passing out. When she's the judge, Sorshen enjoys asking complicated questions that put the drinker on the spot. Some sample questions she asks are listed below. Use these as guides and inspiration for coming up with questions of your own design, but keep in mind the comfort levels of the players at your table and avoid asking any questions that would make any players (be they the drinker or just an observer) uncomfortable.

- What is the most wicked act you've done?
- Have you committed a sin against any of your friends?
- If you were a runelord, how would you rule?
- Have you ever been in love?
- What do you want from me?
- If you could kill me this instant, would you?

Once the game is over, Sorshen claps in delight and hands out a potion of *lesser restoration* from her *handy haversack* to each player (drinking one removes all inebriation effects from playing the game), and also grants the next of her rewards. If she won the game, she's delighted enough instead to give the PCs the next two rewards.

LORD MALT

CR 7

XP 3,200

CG male gnome rogue 8 (use the statistics for a trapsmith on page 147 of the *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*)

hp 63

Festival Points: The PCs earn 1 Festival Point if they avoid violence in this encounter.

EVENT 14: THE ASSASSIN OUT OF TIME (CR 12)

At 11:00 P.M., the festival is still going strong as the statue of Queen Ileosa is inspected and prepared for its burning at midnight.

Sorshen's Choice—Resting: With the big event of the burning of Queen Ileosa only an hour away, Sorshen

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

decides to take some time to rest and relax after the previous 5 hours of shenanigans, choosing a PC who has accompanied her the least overall through the night to be one of her companions. She chooses the upper walkway of the storage tower (area C5) as her place to rest, as it is away from the crowd but affords an excellent view of the effigy once the burning begins. Sorshen lets the PCs find their own way up to the top to join her if they wish—she uses her *dance of seven veils* to levitate up.

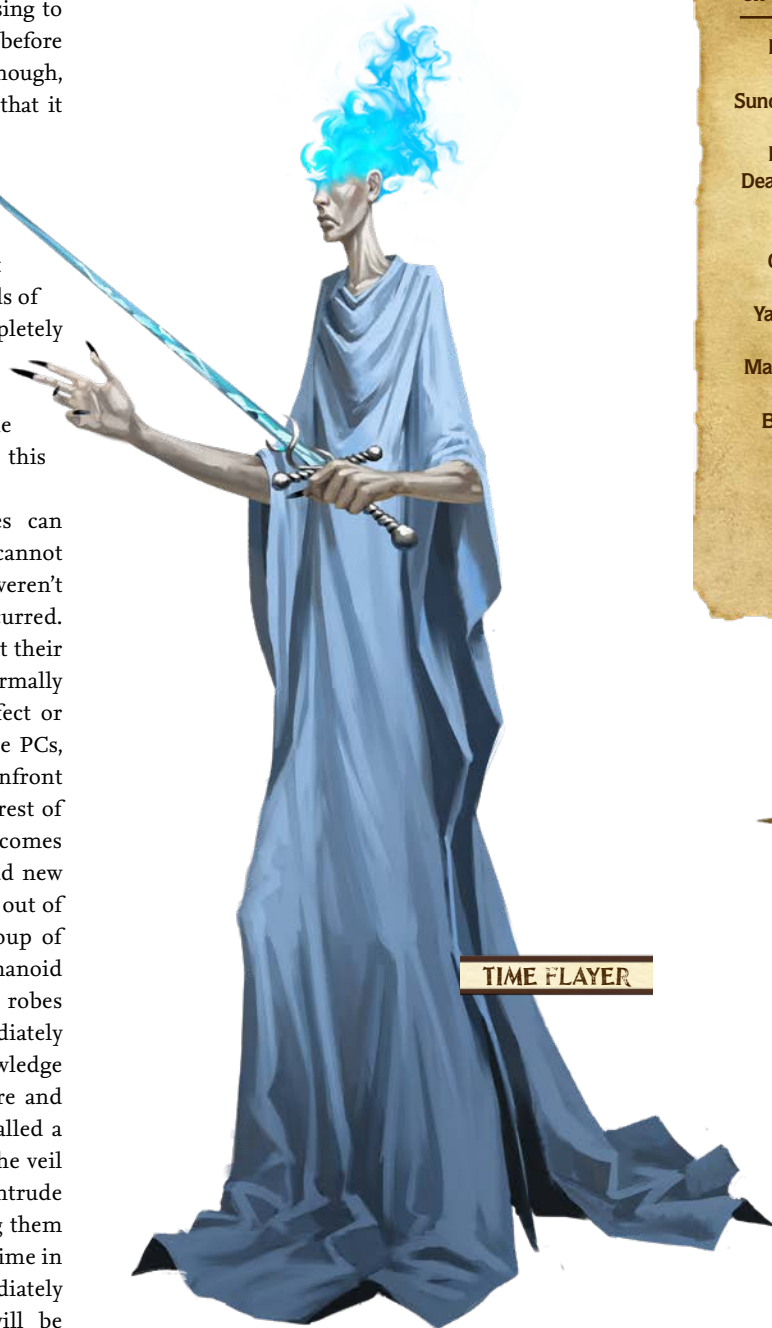
Once atop the tower, Sorshen sits down on the edge and engages in idle chat with the PCs who join her, thanking them for accompanying her and promising to give them some final support and words of advice before they set out on their next mission. It's not long, though, before something occurs that is strange enough that it catches even the runelord's simulacrum by surprise.

Creature: At some point during the hour, you should determine where each PC is located on the map of the plaza (see page 38). At this point, time suddenly and simply stops. Crowds of people are frozen in mid-step, fires become completely motionless, house drakes in flight hover still in the air. A fluctuation in time has struck the PCs, yet another potent side effect from the time traveling they are destined to undertake in this campaign's final adventure.

While time is stopped, the PCs themselves can continue to move about with ease, but they cannot interact with anything else in the world that they weren't carrying at the time the time fluctuation occurred. Spell effects they had in place continue to run out their durations as normal, and new effects work normally as well (although no spell effect can directly affect or manipulate any creature or object other than the PCs, their gear, or the creature that soon arrives to confront them). Sorshen is frozen in time along with the rest of reality, leaving the PCs alone to deal with what comes next. The PCs have 2 rounds to adjust to this odd new condition, after which a strange creature appears out of nothingness, manifesting next to the largest group of PCs. This creature appears to be a tall, thin humanoid with a face and crown of blue fire. Clad in blue robes and wielding a frozen sword, this creature immediately attacks the PCs. A PC who succeeds at a DC 32 Knowledge (planes) check can identify this monster as a rare and dangerous denizen of the Dimension of Time called a time flayer. These monsters often step through the veil of time to attack those destined to damage or intrude upon the Dimension of Time in hopes of slaying them before they ever have the opportunity to damage time in the first place. It's unlikely the PCs will be immediately able to identify this creature, but as they will be

confronted with time flayers again in the adventure, you should allow them the opportunity to research the strange creatures at a later point if they wish.

The time flayer is silent as it strikes. As soon as it is defeated, the time flayer and its gear vanish back into the future as time immediately reverts to normal. Any existing spell effects in place that the PCs created during the battle (such as *wall of fire*, *blade barrier*, or *grease*) are immediately and automatically cancelled, though effects on themselves remain. To those not affected by the time distortion, it should seem that the PCs simply



TIME FLAYER

DISPLEASED SORSHEN

Sorshen won't become displeased by the PCs merely as a result of failed skill checks or blunders during the festival, but if they directly insult her or fail to accompany her with at least half the party in any given hour, she becomes displeased. If the PCs displease her three times, she becomes furious, and she automatically becomes furious if any PC attempts to harm her. Each time Sorshen becomes displeased, the party loses a number of Festival Points equal to the number of PCs. If she becomes furious, she coldly wishes the PCs the best of luck in their likely short futures and vanishes into the night via *dimension door*. In this event, the PCs are free to enjoy the rest of the festival on their own, but they must face the events during the burning of Ileosa's effigy without Sorshen's aid. Sorshen approaches the PCs early the next morning and gives them a chance to apologize to her—if she feels the apology is heartfelt, she tells the PCs the bare minimum they need to know to move on to Kaer Maga. If the PCs end up burning this bridge entirely, whether or not they can learn enough about Erigantus to pursue him into Kaer Maga depends on you and what the PCs managed to discover in the Gecko. In a worst-case scenario, they miss out entirely on Parts 4 and 5 of this adventure—see Concluding the Adventure on page 61 for what to do in this case.

vanished and reappeared elsewhere, perhaps suddenly bearing unexplained wounds. If this happens anywhere in view of the public, those who witness the PCs' sudden vanishing and appearance are startled, but not outlandishly so—there is much magic in the air tonight, and the assumption is that the PC simply teleported in from elsewhere. Certainly no one notices the coming and going of the time flayer, and the festival proceeds to its climax as if this battle never happened at all.

TIME FLAYER

CR 12

XP 19,200

Time flayer (*Tome of Horrors Complete* 603)

NE Medium outsider (extraplanar)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 17, flat-footed 25 (+2 Dex, +10 natural, +5 Wis)
hp 162 (13d10+91)

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

Defensive Abilities foresight, immunity to temporal magic, reality bend; **DR** 10/magic

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., time jaunt

Melee +2 *frost bastard sword* +20/+15/+10 (1d10+6/17-20 plus 1d6 cold)

Special Attacks temporal displacement

TACTICS

During Combat The time flayer targets PCs exclusively, silently striking with its sword. It uses its temporal displacement ability on any character that seems particularly dangerous, doing its best to keep that PC locked out of time for as much of the battle as possible.

Morale The time flayer fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 15, **Con** 23, **Int** 20, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 34

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +19, Climb +10, Diplomacy +19, Escape Artist +16, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (history) +21, Knowledge (planes) +21, Perception +21, Sense Motive +21, Stealth +18, Survival +21

Languages Aklo

Gear +2 *frost bastard sword*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Foresight (Su) A time flayer can see a few seconds into the future. This ability prevents a time flayer from being surprised, caught flat-footed, or flanked. It also grants the time flayer an insight bonus to AC equal to its Wisdom bonus. This ability can be negated, but the time flayer can restart it as a free action on its next turn.

Immunity to Temporal Magic (Ex) A time flayer is immune to all time-related spells and effects (including *time stop*, *temporal stasis*, and the like).

Reality Bend (Su) As a swift action, a time flayer can fold the dimensional space surrounding it so its true location is hard to discern. The time flayer can activate this ability after it is hit in battle to suddenly not be where it was the moment before, giving it a 50% miss chance it can apply to successful strikes after they occur (but before damage is rolled). This is similar to the miss chance granted by a *displacement* spell. *See invisibility* does not reveal the creature's location, but *true seeing* does.

Temporal Displacement (Su) As a +12 melee touch attack up to three times per day, a time flayer can attempt to send a creature a few seconds into the future. The creature touched can resist being temporally displaced with a successful DC 20 Fortitude save. On a failed save, the creature vanishes in a flash of white light, only to reappear in the same space 1d4 rounds later. If that space is occupied when the creature returns, it is shunted harmlessly aside to the closest unoccupied space. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Time Jaunt (Su) A time flayer normally has the ability to travel through time and space, but in this encounter, the nature of the stopped time prevents the time flayer from using this power entirely.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

Story Award: Once time returns to normal, a startled Sorshen demands to know what happened. If the PCs tell the truth, she is astounded and further convinced that the PCs are the ones she should ally with, and she gives them the next reward in gratitude for their truthfulness.

EVENT 15: THE BURNING OF ILEOSA (CR 14)

At midnight, bells ring across the city as the burning of another of Queen Ileosa's effigies gets underway. This night, the effigy here in Kendall Plaza is scheduled for immolation. The plaza's crowd grows quiet as it gathers around the effigy, leaving a 20-foot-radius area between the people and the effigy's platform. The honor of lighting the statue's crimson cloth drapery falls, as is tradition, to a woman who survived servitude as one of Ileosa's Gray Maidens (if you ran *Curse of the Crimson Throne*, feel free to select someone from that campaign if the PCs made alliances with such a character).

As the crowd gathers and the ex-Gray Maiden steps up to light the pyre, have each PC attempt a Perception check. The character with the highest result automatically notices something suspicious—an elegantly dressed and beautiful woman standing nearby seems to be praying to a softly glowing symbol clutched in her hand. If that PC has encountered agents of the Peacock Spirit before (as they should have if they took part in "It Came from Hollow Mountain"), they automatically recognize the symbol as being that of the Peacock Spirit.

A cheer goes up from the crowd as the statue's drapery ignites, and within a few moments, the entire wooden effigy is burning brightly. Yet the crowd's cheers will soon turn to cries of fear and panic, for the Cult of the Peacock Spirit has chosen this moment to make a public appearance.

Creatures: A total of eight cultists of the Peacock Spirit are scattered through the crowd. You should place most of them in the crowd surrounding the effigy of Ileosa, but at least one should be relatively near the PC with the highest Perception check result.

Despite Sorshen's precautions to avoid discovery, the cultists of the Peacock Spirit have been watchful and have correctly identified the PCs' runelord companion (although they don't realize that she is just a blood simulacrum). Invoking one of several ancient

rituals taught them by their patron, these cultists have linked the effigy of Ileosa to the Plane of Fire so that when the statue is ignited, it unleashes a dangerous minion of the cult—a fiery thunderbird they refer to as a peacock phoenix. The cult's plan is to order the phoenix to attack Sorshen and then aid in the attack themselves. They fully expect to perish in this attack, as they think Sorshen is the real thing, but they want to send the runelord a message: the Peacock Spirit is watching.

If the PCs act before the cultists in combat, they gain a momentary advantage to use as they see fit. The cultists shriek in rage if they're attacked first, and they immediately separate from the crowd to converge on the PCs. If the PCs allow the cultists to act first (or if they act first simply by rolling the highest initiative), they throw aside their drab cloaks to reveal their elegant peacock-themed outfits. With a shriek, they converge on Sorshen, saying, "All runelords must burn before the fires of the Peacock Spirit!" as they attack.

At the start of the second round of combat, the effigy of Ileosa flashes with a blast of blue-green fire, and a tremendous, burning, peacock-like creature emerges from the flames with a thunderous cry. This is a peacock phoenix, a specialized agent of Xanderghul and the Peacock Spirit conjured from a remote corner of the Plane of Fire. The peacock phoenix's primary target is Sorshen, but it won't hesitate to attack PCs who get in its way.

As combat between the PCs, the cultists, and the giant burning bird begin, the crowd gathered in the plaza panics. For the first 4 rounds of



PEACOCK SPIRIT CULTIST



PEACOCK PHOENIX

combat, treat all squares in the area as difficult terrain due to the mass of fleeing people. If the PCs manage to keep the peacock phoenix's attention by attacking it, they prevent it from slaying revelers or causing additional collateral damage.

PEACOCK SPIRIT CULTISTS (8)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Human monk 6

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; **Senses** Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 monk, +3 Wis)

hp each 48 (6d8+18)

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +8; +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities evasion, viridian escape; **Immune** disease

OFFENSE

Speed 55 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +7 (1d8+3) or

unarmed strike flurry of blows +7/+7/+2 (1d8+3)

Special Attacks flurry of blows, stunning fist (6/day, DC 16)

TACTICS

During Combat A cultist's primary goal is to attack Sorshen and deliver the message that the Peacock Spirit knows she is awake. The cultists switch targets to the PCs only if a PC

manages to significantly harm a cultist or prevents them from reaching Sorshen.

Morale A cultist reduced to fewer than 10 hit points (or at the first opportunity if captured), uses the viridian escape to flee.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 8,

Wis 16, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 24

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Fleet, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Stunning Fist, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +11, Knowledge (religion) +8, Linguistics +0, Perception +12, Sense Motive +11

Languages Common, Thassilonian

SQ fast movement, high jump, ki pool (6 points, magic), maneuver training, slow fall 30 ft.

Gear *belt of giant strength* +2, bejeweled holy symbol of the Peacock Spirit worth 250 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Viridian Escape (Sp) Each cultist has been subjected to an ancient ritual called the viridian transcendence, granting her the ability to use *word of recall* as a swift action once. When a cultist activates this ability, she vanishes in a puff of bright blue-green smoke, reappearing in the Temple of the Peacock Spirit far to the north (this cultist has no further role to play in this adventure, but optionally, the PCs might recognize some of the cultists they encounter in the next adventure).

PEACOCK PHOENIX

CR 13

XP 25,600

Fire-infused thunderbird (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Planes of Power* 56) (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 264)

LE Gargantuan outsider (fire, magical beast, native)

Init +12; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, stormsight; Perception +21

Aura storm aura (100 ft., DC 24)

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 12, flat-footed 21 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +15 natural, -4 size)

hp 175 (14d10+98)

Fort +16, **Ref** +14, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities evasion, fiery blood; **Immune** electricity, fire, sonic

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 120 ft. (good)

Melee bite +19 (2d8+9/19-20), 2 claws +19 (2d6+9/19-20 plus grab)

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

Ranged thunderbolt +15 touch (6d6 electricity and 6d6 sonic)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (60-ft. line, 5d6 fire, Reflex DC 24 half, usable every minute), thunderbolt (6d6 electricity and 6d6 sonic)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +11)

At will—*control weather*

TACTICS

During Combat The peacock phoenix seeks out Sorshen and tries to attack her at first, using its breath weapon or thunderbolt ability before closing to attack in melee. If a PC attacks the creature, it instead focuses its wrath on that target.

Morale The peacock phoenix fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 21, **Con** 25, **Int** 12, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +27 (+31 grapple); **CMD** 43

Feats Critical Focus, Dodge, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Acrobatics +22, Fly +20, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (planes) +15, Perception +21, Perform (sing) +14, Sense Motive +18

Languages Auran, Ignan, Thassilonian

SQ element-infused abilities (breath weapon, evasion, fiery blood, quickness)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Su) The peacock phoenix can exhale a 60-foot line of fire as a standard action once every minute. This breath weapon inflicts 5d6 points of fire damage to all creatures in the area of effect—a successful DC 24 Reflex save halves the damage.

Element-Infused Abilities As an element-infused creature, the peacock phoenix possesses several potent abilities—its fiery breath weapon, its evasion defensive ability, its fiery blood (see below), and a supernatural quickness that increases its speed and grants it a bonus to its initiative checks (these adjustments have been built in to the stat block above).

Fiery Blood (Ex) Any creature that damages the peacock phoenix with a slashing or piercing melee weapon is sprayed with boiling blood that deals 3d4 points of fire damage. Creatures using reach weapons are not subject to this damage.

Development: The reaction of Korvosa's citizens to this combat can be as significant or minor as you wish. If you want to let the PCs feel that the residents of Korvosa appreciate them and you're comfortable giving the players the opportunity to explore and relax in town, then you can have the queen invite them to Castle Korvosa to receive royal thanks and be granted a voucher that awards each character 6,000 gp in credit for use at any shop in the city. If, on the other hand, the

PCs wish to remain anonymous and move on quickly to their next mission, you can simply move on. Sorshen certainly prefers to remain hidden and anonymous, regardless of the PCs' choice.

It's possible that Sorshen's simulacrum could be slain in this fight. If this occurs, she melts into a puddle of blood. A PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Knowledge (arcana) check recognizes that she was a simulacrum, while someone who succeeds at a DC 32 Knowledge (history or local) check recalls that Queen Ileosa used a similar defense. In this case, Sorshen simply sends another of her simulacra out to contact the PCs and help send them on their way (see Concluding Part 3 below).

Story Award: If the PCs defended her in this last fight, Sorshen gives them her next two rewards.

Festival Points: The PCs earn 2 Festival Points if they manage to keep collateral damage in the fight to a minimum (subject to the GM's discretion).

FESTIVAL POINT REWARDS

At the end of the night, total up the number of Festival Points the PCs have accumulated, then divide that total by 6 (which is the number of hours the festival played out over) to determine their overall Festival Score and commensurate XP award.

Festival Score	XP Award
0	4,800 XP
1–2	9,600 XP
3–4	19,200 XP
4+	25,600 XP

CONCLUDING PART 3

The violence of the cult's attack disperses the crowd, leaving the PCs alone with Sorshen to decide what to do next. At this point, Sorshen ushers the PCs back to the Gatefoot to thank them once more for being so friendly and helpful in showing her the sights. It's at this point that she reveals any of the required information from rewards she hasn't yet given the PCs.

If the simulacrum was slain, a new simulacrum approaches the PCs before dawn. If confronted about her apparent survival, this new simulacrum of Sorshen admits that neither are the real thing, and that Sorshen did not live for thousands of years by needlessly risking herself. She's out there, hidden and watching, the simulacrum assures, and will continue to aid the PCs now and then as she can via her simulacra.

In any event, Sorshen urges the PCs onward at this point, telling them that their most important goal for the moment is to prevent Zutha from returning. In time, she will aid them when they face the other runelords, but Zutha is the most pressing issue. As they part, though, she

has one final gift for the PCs—her *dance of seven veils*. If the previous simulacrum melted, Sorshen asks for the return of her gear save for the *dance of seven veils*. Should the PCs refuse, Sorshen shrugs, says, “best of luck against the rest of us” and leaves. For the rest of the adventure, Sorshen is annoyed enough with the PCs to let them handle the rest on their own, but at some point between this adventure and the next, she should give the PCs one last chance to return her stolen items. The ramifications of a group that continues to annoy Sorshen are left to you to develop as you see fit.

PART 4: THE SUNDERED SEAL

The PCs are unlikely to know about the events in this part of “Runeplague” until they learn of them from Sorshen in Part 3. This is by design, since the combats and confrontations that await them under Kaer Maga are dangerous indeed. By the end of the Crimson Festival, the PCs should have learned the required information from Sorshen’s awards, including the knowledge that Erigantus now dwells in the Shrine of the Seal below Kaer Maga, that he owns the *Bone Grimoire*, and that if the PCs can secure that tome, they can then take it to the Isle of Xin to perform the runewaking ritual and force Zutha to manifest in a weakened state, all in the hope of defeating him before he can return to full power. The runewaking ritual itself is detailed in Part 5 of this adventure, but the PCs should be familiar with how it functions by the time this part of the adventure begins, since Sorshen magically imparted this lore to them during the Crimson Festival.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Knowledge (local) check or Diplomacy check (to gather information) knows that Kaer Maga’s primary connection to the lowlands below the Storval Rise is an underground route known as the Halfflight Path. At the base of the cliff, the entrance to the Halfflight Path is guarded by the Twisted Door, while travel along the path itself is regulated by a group called the Duskwardens. The most direct way to reach the Shrine of the Seal is to speak to the Duskwardens and secure an escort to the shrine’s entrance, which connects to the Halfflight Path partway up the cliffside.

INTO THE HALFFLIGHT PATH

The PCs should have learned a pair of valuable facts from Sorshen: that Erigantus can be found in the Shrine of the Seal below Kaer Maga, and that he has with him the *Bone Grimoire*. Kaer Maga itself is located about 150 miles to the north of Korvosa, but how the PCs reach the city is

not detailed here. You can play out the journey if you wish (in which case a copy of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: City of Strangers* will be useful), or you can simply gloss over the trip and start as the PCs reach the base of the Storval Rise below the city.

While the Duskwardens maintain a guildhall in Kaer Maga, PCs coming from the direction of Korvosa are more likely to approach the Twisted Door at the base of the Storval Rise. This large bronze gate opens into a wide, climbing path that provides direct (if sometimes dangerous) access to the city above. The Twisted Door itself opens at dawn each day, disgorging several Duskwardens who set about the task of collecting fees and organizing those who seek to use the Halfflight Path to enter the city.

Anyone who wishes to use the Halfflight Path is charged 2 gp and issued a small magic charm to provide light. As soon as a dozen travelers gather, a Duskwarden escorts the group along the Halfflight Path. Normally, travelers along the path do not stop along the way, but the Duskwardens know that sometimes adventurers seek to enter the Undercity.

The entrance to the Shrine of the Seal is hidden by a secret door, but the Duskwardens know where this entrance lies. A PC can recall this information with a successful DC 30 Knowledge (local) check, but a PC who asks a Duskwarden at the Twisted Door about this secret entrance will need to succeed at a DC 25 Diplomacy check or provide a bribe worth no less than 100 gp. (The Duskwarden doesn’t hesitate to ask for this bribe, although he calls it a “service fee.”)

The Shrine of the Seal is tended by the Brotherhood of the Seal, and the group’s inner schisms and troubles are known to others in Kaer Maga—but none outside of the Shrine yet suspect that the Whispering Way has destroyed the Brotherhood and taken over the shrine. In truth, Kaer Maga’s residents as a whole would have little reaction to this news even if they did know it, for the city welcomes all sorts. This ambivalence also works in the PCs’ favor, however, for the Whispering Way cannot rely upon backup or aid from Kaer Maga once the PCs confront it.

If the PCs make plain their desire to visit the Shrine of the Seal, a Duskwarden named **Crottle** (N male dwarf ranger 4) agrees to escort them up to the secret door, but he won’t take a step beyond into the shrine itself. “Those who live within are a bit too closed-minded for me, but I’ve got no issue with them,” he says as he opens the secret door for the PCs. Beyond, a 10-foot-wide tunnel extends east into the darkness. Traveling the tunnel’s length for 200 feet brings the PCs to area **D1**.

D. SHRINE OF THE SEAL

The Brotherhood of the Seal has long shrouded its shrine in secrecy, disguising the front portion as a shrine to

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

Erastil tended by a forgetful and unassuming man. This secrecy worked in the Whispering Way's favor, because when its agents invaded the shrine and murdered the brothers there, they were able to quietly assume control without the rest of the city catching wind of the change.

Today, the shrine is populated by necromantic agents of the Whispering Way, both living and undead. Their leader, the necromancer Erigantus, has also managed to seize control of some of the shrine's construct guardians. The shrine itself is cold and damp, lit by softly flickering *everburning torches* here and there. Doors are made of wood but cannot be locked unless otherwise noted. Ceiling height averages 8 feet in most rooms, with a few exceptions as indicated in the text.

Following the Brotherhood's defeat, the agents of the Whispering Way have respected the shrine's architecture and haven't gone out of their way to deface or destroy the works here (with the obvious exception of the seal itself—see area **D13**). The shrine is a work of incredible art, a penance the brothers worked on over endless days. Throughout the place, images of animals and beasts are carved into the walls, but the carvings of men and women command the most attention, for where they appear, these bas-reliefs are depicted with such loving and intense detail that they almost appear to be real people turned to stone and embedded in the walls.

The clay golem in area **D3a** has been programmed to obey those who bear an amulet of the Brotherhood's symbol. All three living Whispering Way agents carry this symbol with them, though the symbol itself has no magical nature. The surviving clay golem won't attack anyone who carries the symbol or anyone a symbol carrier has indicated as an ally (and thus none of the undead in the shrine are in danger of attack from the golem). A carrier of a symbol can issue new orders to the clay golem by forcefully presenting the symbol, but the Whispering Way agents avoid doing this in front of the PCs so they don't show invaders how to control the clay golem.

D1. Shrine Entrance

An iron door etched with the image of a bow made of antlers with an arrow nocked to it brings an end to a long, ten-foot-wide hallway. A tiny alcove in the wall just south of the door holds a small silver offering cup.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check recognizes the bow and arrow on the door as the symbol of Erastil.

Unlike most of the other doors in the shrine, this iron door is kept locked. It can be opened with a successful DC 30 Disable Device check, but Sister Woaerym (see area **D3**) has warded the door with a mental *alarm* spell (unless

the PCs approach between the hours of 4:00 A.M. and 8:00 A.M., when the door is unwarded). If the PCs knock on the door, she answers in the guise of a male human, as detailed in area **D3**.

The peepholes in the wall to the north are cleverly hidden, but can be noticed from this side with a successful DC 25 Perception check.

Treasure: The silver offering cup is worth 100 gp, and contains 3 sp and 2 cp.

D2. Observation Chamber

The Brotherhood of the Seal once used this room to observe visitors to the shrine, but the Whispering Way has not used this room at all. It is empty and dusty.

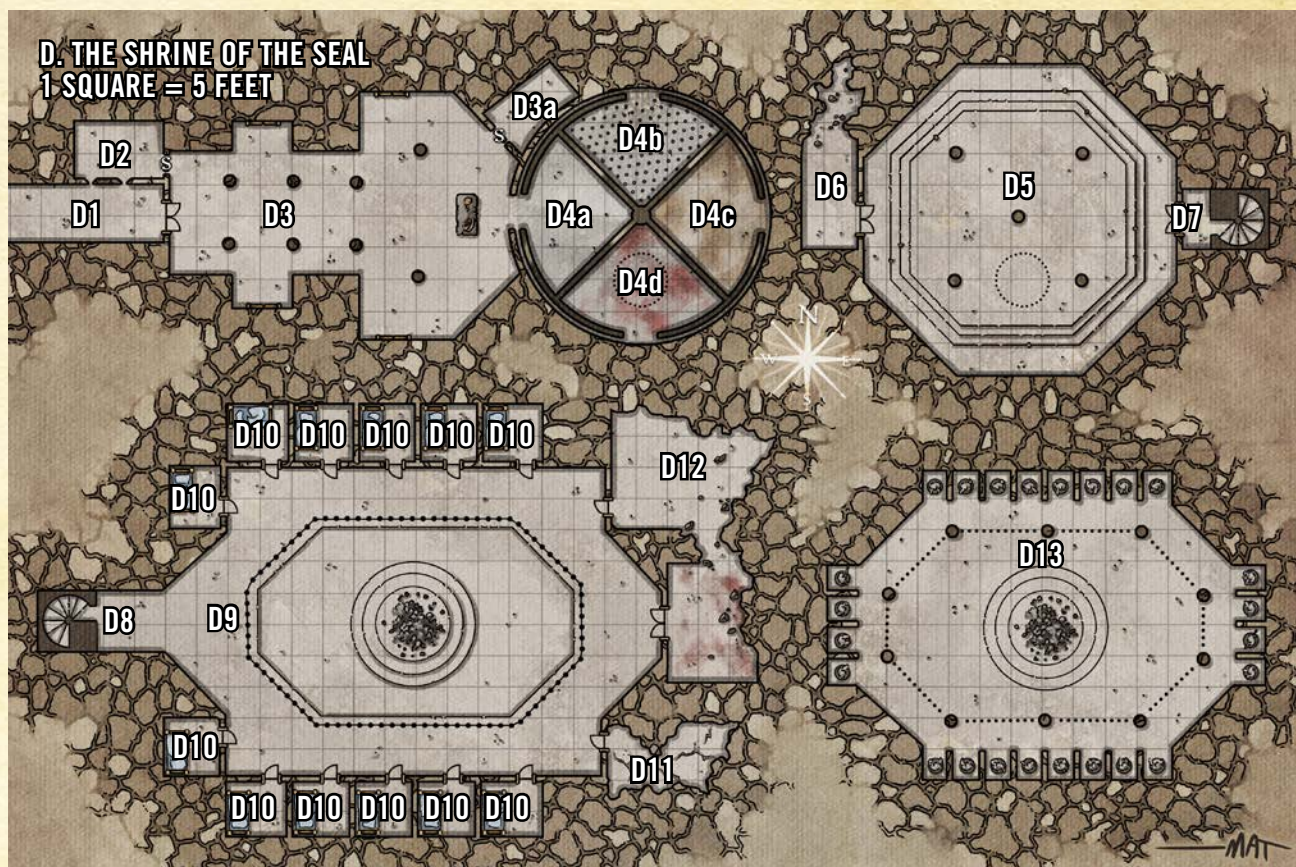
D3. False Shrine (CR 11)

The thirty-foot-high vaulted ceiling of this large room is supported by twin rows of pillars. A pair of double doors stands to the north and another pair to the south, while a stone altar to the east holds a bronze offering tray before an inscribed archway. The wall to the south are decorated with images of wild animals, while the wall to the north depicts ripe fields of produce.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check identifies this as a temple to Erastil, but it appears empty and abandoned to even a cursory investigation. The secret doors to areas **D2** and **D3a** can each be discovered with successful DC 25 Perception checks. The double doors on the north and south walls are false doors that were constructed to give the impression that there's much more to this temple than there actually is. The Brotherhood of the Seal once used this room to deflect visitors and make them think this temple was an out-of-the-way shrine to Erastil, and today the Whispering Way maintains that tradition.

Creature: While most of the Whispering Way agents who helped murder the Brotherhood and seize its shrine have long since returned to Ustalav, three of them remain active here as caretakers of the place. One of those three is the drider sorcerer Woaerym, who casts *greater assume appearance*^{HA} to take the shape of the shrine's prior attendant, a plain-looking man dressed in simple brown robes. In this guise, Woaerym plays the role of Javrin, the man she murdered many months ago. Since then, she's needed to turn aside only a small handful of visitors to the shrine—the PCs are the first full group of adventurers to test her deceptions.

Woaerym tries to turn the PCs away if they knock on the door, telling them that the shrine is closed. If the PCs persist, she claims the brothers are enduring an outbreak of filth fever, and that the doors are sealed



until they can recover, so as to prevent the spread of the sickness. If the PCs continue to request entry, perhaps offering their aid, she opens the doors to them but does everything in her power to convince them there is nothing to see here and they should return to the Halflight Path. The longer the discussion goes on, the more Woerym realizes the PCs might need to be put down; she prefers taking the lead on this if it comes to it, reverting to her true form by dismissing her *greater assume appearance* spell and then attacking, eager for the chance to murder a few more living souls after spending so many months without victims.

WOERYM

CR 11

XP 12,800

Female drider sorcerer 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 113)

CE Large aberration

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., *detect good*, *detect law*, *detect magic*; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 15, flat-footed 22 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 136 (13 HD; 4d6+9d8+82)

Fort +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +14

DR 5/— (nonlethal); **Immune** sleep; **Resist** cold 5; **SR** 18

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee +1 *vampiric dagger* +10/+5 (1d6+3/19–20), bite +6 (1d4+1 plus poison)

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

Special Attacks web (+11 ranged, DC 20, 13 hp)

Drider Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +14)

Constant—*detect good*, *detect law*, *detect magic*

At will—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

1/day—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *deeper darkness*, *dispel magic*, *levitate*, *suggestion* (DC 18)

Sorcerer Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +15)

8/day—grave touch (2 rounds)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 10th; concentration +15)

5th (4/day)—*feblemind* (DC 20)

4th (6/day)—*dimension door*, *greater assume appearance*^{HA}

3rd (7/day)—*fly*, *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *nondetection*

2nd (7/day)—*acid arrow*, *alter self*, *eagle's splendor*, *mirror image*

1st (8/day)—*alarm*, *chill touch* (DC 16), *grease* (DC 16),

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Inventory

Yama

Magic Pools

Bestiary

mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement (DC 16) 0 (at will)—*acid splash, arcane mark, bleed* (DC 15), *detect magic, mage hand, mending, open/close* (DC 15), *prestidigitation, read magic*

Bloodline undead

TACTICS

Before Combat Woaerym casts *alarm* on the door to area **D1** every day, and she casts *mage armor* on herself as soon as she hears anyone at the door or if the *alarm* there is triggered in her head.

During Combat Woaerym's first act in combat is to cast *mirror image*, followed by *fly* the next round. After that, she takes to the air to avoid melee attacks and use her ranged spells. If reduced to fewer than 75 hit points, she flies down to the secret door to area **D3a** and opens it, releasing the clay golem there to attack the intruders (she knows that if the PCs destroy the golem, they'll have a harder time navigating area **D4**, after all).

Morale Woaerym casts *dimension door* to escape to area **D12** if reduced to fewer than 30 hit points, whereupon she warns Erigantus of the PCs' attack. If encountered deeper in the dungeon, she instead casts *dimension door* to escape to area **D1** and abandons the Shrine of the Seal entirely (although, at your discretion, she may come back at a later date to seek vengeance on the PCs).

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 18, **Con** 22, **Int** 13, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 27 (39 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Arcane Strike, Combat Casting, Deceitful, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Extend Spell, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +28, Climb +10, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +25, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Perception +16, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +11, Stealth +4

Languages Common, Elven, Undercommon

SQ bloodline arcana (corporeal undead affected by humanoid-affecting spells), undersized weapons

Combat Gear *potions of cure serious wounds* (2); **Other Gear** +1 vampiric^{HA} dagger, circlet of persuasion, ring of protection +1, detailed sketch of Brother Javrin made while he lived

D3a. Quadrille Controls (CR 10)

Creature: This chamber is empty save for a clay golem tasked with moving the large circular chamber to the southeast (see area **D4** for details). The southeast wall of this room is curved and fitted with regular handholds, so that the golem can grab the wall and rotate area **D4** in a

clockwise rotation. Although quite large, the mechanism within the walls is balanced such that any creature capable of pushing what is effectively 5,000 pounds (the stone walls' weight being offset by the mechanism itself) can move the quadrille chamber in a clockwise formation, as detailed in area **D4**.

The Whispering Way agents have also commanded the golem to attack anyone it sees and doesn't recognize, and it immediately does so if any PC opens the door to its room, fighting until destroyed.



WOAERYM

CLAY GOLEM**CR 10****XP 9,600****hp** 101 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 159)**D4. The Quadrille (CR 11)**

One of this triangular chamber's walls is curved. Its two other walls are straight and meet at a one-foot-wide, floor-to-ceiling column with a bas relief of weeping angels standing atop each other's shoulders.

This chamber is a complex rotating gate that allows access into the Shrine of the Seal below. When the Brotherhood ran the place, it used this room regularly, but the three Whispering Way agents avoid it entirely by casting *dimension door* or similar spells when they need to come and go from the chambers below.

Erigantus maintains a mental *alarm* spell in area **D4a**, since only intruders would ever enter this area.

This entire area (areas **D4a–D4d**) is a cylindrical chamber balanced upon rows of stone balls set in circular grooves. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices a narrow gap between the walls and the floor, the presence of the grooves, and the spheres rolling inside them between the walls and the floor. The floor of the chamber remains stationary, allowing a creature within to push against the walls separating the four wedge-shaped rooms and rotate them in either direction like a massive stone turnstile. A character must be able to push 5,000 pounds to move the turnstile, at which point it takes 5 rounds of pushing to rotate a wedge completely from one of the four orientations to the next. Up to five Small or Medium (or up to two Large) creatures can cooperate when pushing the wall. A single Small or Medium creature can push the wall on its own if it has a Strength score of 27 or higher (a solitary Large creature requires a Strength score of 22 or higher). To determine if larger groups can push the wall, add together the maximum loads for each character; since someone can push five times her maximum load, as long as the total combined maximum load of all pushing characters is above 1,000 pounds, they can move the wall at a rate of 5 feet per round. For example, two Small or Medium characters with Strength scores of 22 can push the wall (their combined maximum load being 1,040 pounds), as could four Small or Medium characters with Strength scores of 17 (also with a combined maximum load of 1,040 pounds).

Each time a wall is pushed into a new configuration so that the wedges align in the formation shown on the map, the mechanism issues a loud "clunk" and locks for 1 round, during which the walls cannot be rotated, and (in the case of areas **D4b–D4d**) mechanical effects

are triggered. After this round passes, the walls can be rotated again.

If the golem remains active in area **D3a**, it automatically starts to rotate the chambers in a clockwise formation, taking 5 rounds to move the chamber one-quarter of a full revolution. (Before the Whispering Way took over, the Brotherhood could command the golem to rotate the room multiple times, but now Erigantus has commanded it to rotate the chamber only once if intruders step into area **D4a**, in an attempt to trap them in area **D4b**.)

The gap along the floor is wide enough to allow access to those using effects like *gaseous form*, and of course the superior masonry walls themselves can be magically altered via spells like *stone shape* or smashed through (hardness 8, hp 90, break DC 35).

The results of each room's trigger (which activates whenever the walls complete a quarter rotation in either direction) are summarized below. Note that the sounds of the traps going off in areas **D4b–D4d** are audible but muffled to characters in other areas, as well as to the denizens of area **D5** below.

Area D4a: While this room has no mechanical trigger, Erigantus maintains a mental *alarm* spell here that is triggered as soon as any creature enters the area without speaking the password "Tar-Baphon."

Area D4b: When this room's trigger activates, a trap in this area's ceiling suddenly thrusts dozens of iron spikes down into the room below.

Area D4c: When this room's trigger activates, a magical rune etched on the eastern wall flashes with orange light before unleashing a *fireball* into the chamber.

Area D4d: When this room's trigger activates, a concealed pit opens in the floor. The pit allows access to area **D5** below and closes automatically once the walls begin to rotate again.

Traps: Areas **D4b–D4d** are all warded by different traps, as detailed below.

CEILING OF PIERCING SPINES (AREA D4B)**CR 10****XP 9,600****Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 28**EFFECTS****Trigger** touch; **Reset** automatic**Effect** Atk +20 melee (3d6+10 piercing); multiple targets (all targets in area **D4b**)**FIREBALL RUNE (AREA D4C)****CR 5****XP 1,600****Type** magic; **Perception** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 28**EFFECTS****Trigger** touch; **Reset** automatic**Effect** spell effect (*fireball*, 6d6 fire damage, DC 14 Reflex save half); multiple targets (all targets in area **D4c**)

CONCEALED PIT (AREA D4D)

CR 5

XP 1,600

Type mechanical; Perception DC 28; Disable Device DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset automatic

Effect 20-ft.-deep pit (2d6 falling damage); DC 20 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all creatures in a 5-ft. radius in the center of area D4d)

Story Award: As long as they manage to enter area D5, award the PCs experience points for all three traps even if they manage to avoid some of them (in this case, they shouldn't earn XP again for the traps if they return and disable them).

D5. The Hexward Guard (CR 11)

The walls of this bare chamber are decorated with defaced images of men and women wearing blindfolds in various poses of meditation. In many cases, the faces have been smashed to rubble, while in others, dark stains of old blood and violence mar the carvings. Five stone pillars support the ceiling twenty feet above. A few short steps lead up to a walkway surrounding the room, with double doors set into opposite walls. A single hole opens in the southern portion of the ceiling's roof.

Creatures: Once used by the Brotherhood of the Seal as a dojo for practice and sparring, this large open chamber has been converted into a guardroom by the Whispering Way. A pair of baykoks has been posted here with orders to attack anyone they don't recognize. Their first action in combat is to unleash their dread howl (which is loud enough to put the complex on alert), after which they use their bows as they attempt to keep at range, attacking from opposite sides of the room.

BAYKOKS (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 97 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 35)

D6. Collapsed Tunnel

This tunnel was once used by the Brotherhood of the Seal, and it was the primary entrance to the shrine from the city of Kaer Maga above. But the Whispering Way collapsed the tunnel after they attacked the shrine and defeated the monks; digging it out and restoring it would take many months of work.

D7. Eastern Stairs (CR 10)

This flight of spiral stairs leads down to area D8.

Trap: The Whispering Way agents don't use these stairs to come and go and have taken advantage of this to place

another trap to antagonize intruders. In this case, the trap is a *glyph of warding* placed by a Whispering Way oracle who has since returned to Ustalav. This glyph activates as soon as someone steps on the fifth step leading down.

GREATER GLYPH OF WARDING

CR 10

XP 9,600

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect spell effect (*greater glyph of warding*, 10d8 sonic damage, DC 19 Reflex half); multiple targets (triggering creature plus all targets within 5 feet)

D8. Western Stairs

This flight of stairs leads up to area D7.

D9. The Overshrine

A ten-foot-wide balcony encircles a wide, open chamber below, the edge adorned with a decorative wooden railing that has suffered damage in several places. Splashes of long-dried blood mar the floor here and there. Doors line the balcony's north and south walls, with a few more exits to the east. Below, a large stone dais supports a mound of blood-soaked rubble.

This gallery, known as the overshrine due to its position over the shrine itself, once also served as a common area for the Brotherhood of the Seal. It was a place for its members to socialize, exercise, and meditate while looking out over the seal they had devoted their lives to protecting. Today, it is a reminder of the furious battle the monks waged (and lost) against the Whispering Way many months ago.

The shrine itself (area D13) has only one entrance and exit—stepping off the balcony. It's a 20-foot drop to the floor below from the balcony, a distance the monks negated with their slow fall ability when they needed to descend to the lower chamber. (When they needed to return to the overshrine, they simply used their high jump ability, with a point spent from their ki pool, to leap from the uppermost step of the dais to the balcony 10 feet above.)

Development: If the PCs manage to get this far without alerting the complex of their approach, they find the overshrine empty. If they've alerted the complex to their presence, though, the four undead monks from area D10 have cracked open their doors and are ready to spring out and attack as soon as the PCs make their way into the room. Erigantus and his two totenmasks watch from area D12 as the battle begins, preparing for a fight before emerging into the overshrine to join the

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

attack after a few rounds. Encountered all at once, the ghouls, necromancer, and totemmasks constitute a CR 14 encounter—a deadly battle indeed for PCs even if they’ve reached 11th level. If the PCs are forced to flee this fight, the ghouls give chase while the necromancer remains behind to recover and regroup with any remaining Whispering Way allies.

D10. Monk Cells (CR 10)

This room is a barren-looking monk’s cell, featuring a single, uncomfortable-looking bedroll and a small basin for washing one’s hands.

Creatures: The Whispering Way slaughtered the monks who once guarded the shrine. The leaders they left dead, but they chose four of the brothers themselves as targets for their necromantic spells. These monks have risen as ghoulish creatures and are now loyal to the Whispering Way. The ghouls generally remain in their cells (select four of these areas to each house one of the four ghouls) but emerge out into area **D9** to attack intruders as soon as they’re aware of them.

REBORN BROTHERS (4)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Ghoulish human ex-Brother of the Seal 1/ex-monk 5
(*Pathfinder RPG Horror Adventures* 248, *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Paths of Prestige* 14)

CE Medium undead

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 monk, +1 natural, +2 Wis)

hp 59 each (6d8+29)

Fort +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9; +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities evasion;

Immune undead traits



OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +6 (1d6+3 plus paralysis and disease) or flurry of blows +8/+8/+3 (1d8+3), bite +1 (1d6+1 plus paralysis and disease), 2 claws +1 (1d4+1 plus paralysis)

Special Attacks flurry of blows, ghoulish fever, paralysis (1d4+1 rounds, elves are immune, DC 16), stunning fist (5/day, DC 15)

TACTICS

During Combat A reborn brother attacks with his bite if he can make only a standard attack. When making a full attack, he uses flurry of blows, attempting to use stunning fist with the first of these attacks, then makes his bite and two claw attacks as secondary attacks.

Morale A reborn brother fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 22

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Acrobatics), Stunning Fist, Toughness, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +14, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Perception +11, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +8

Languages Common

SQ fast movement, high jump, ki pool (4 points, magic), maneuver training, slow fall 20 ft., water splitting stone

D11. Collapsed Library (CR 11)

This room may have once been a library, but the walls have recently collapsed, leaving the room in ruins and most of its books destroyed.

Creature: Damage during the fight against the Whispering Way resulted in the devastation of what was once a well-stocked (if small) library. In the months since the fight, one of the Whispering Way agents has spent most of its time here, sifting through the remains and doing what it can to salvage arcane lore preserved within the tattered books. This cultist is a hideous creature named Ysyr, a native of Kaer Maga and the one responsible for alerting the Whispering Way to the possibility that the Brotherhood guarded one of the three seals. A creature known as a caulborn, Ysyr has little interest in leaving Kaer Maga’s underworld, and it has arranged to become the keeper of this site once Erigantus and Woerym eventually move on. Ysyr is more interested in the mysteries of history than contemporary battles, and it won’t attack the PCs unless they disrupt the work in here, where the creature sits on the bare ground painstakingly piecing together torn-up pages from thousands of different ruined books. Ysyr is content to let the PCs

completely pass by, figuring that if the reborn brothers and Erigantus can't handle them, its own assistance wouldn't have mattered anyway.

That said, if the PCs do dare to interrupt Ysyyr's studies here (even just by opening the door to this room), the caulborn reacts with swift violence.

YSYYR

CR 11

XP 12,800

Caulborn investigator 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 48, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 30)

NE Medium outsider (extraplanar)

Init +11; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., *detect magic*, premonition, thoughtsense; Perception +24

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 22, flat-footed 19 (+3 armor, +5 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural)

hp 144 (17 HD; 8d8+9d10+59)

Fort +10, **Ref** +16, **Will** +18; +6 bonus vs. poison

Defensive Abilities psychic deflection, trap sense +2; **Immune** visual effects

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *corrosive kukri* +21/+16/+11 (1d4+6/18-20 plus 1d6 acid), bite +16 (2d6+2), claw +15 (1d6+2)

Special Attacks consume thoughts, studied combat (+4, 9 rounds), studied strike +3d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +12)

Constant—*detect magic*, *read magic*

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 17)

3/day—*charm monster* (DC 19), *daze monster* (DC 17), *hold monster* (DC 20), *hypnotic pattern* (DC 17), *vampiric touch*

1/week—*plane shift* (willing targets only, DC 22)

Investigator Extracts Prepared (CL 8th; concentration +17)

3rd—*cure serious wounds*, *displacement*, *haste*, *undead anatomy* ^{1UM}

2nd—*cure moderate wounds* (4), *invisibility*, *spider climb*

1st—*cure light wounds* (4), *heightened awareness* ^{ACG}, *jump*, *true strike*

TACTICS

During Combat Ysyyr drinks an extract of *invisibility* on the first round of combat, followed by extracts of *displacement* and *haste*. He then enters combat, using studied strike when possible.

Morale Ysyyr fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 24, **Con** 16, **Int** 28, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 43

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Acrobatics +27, Appraise +17, Bluff +18, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +19, Knowledge (engineering) +29, Knowledge (geography) +29, Knowledge (history) +29, Knowledge (local) +19, Knowledge (nature) +19, Knowledge (nobility) +19, Knowledge (planes) +29, Knowledge (religion) +29, Perception +24, Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +27, Use Magic Device +25



RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

THE TARNISHED TEMPLE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Giant, Infernal, Necril, Thassilonian; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +8), cooperative scrying, hive mind, inspiration (13/day), investigator talents (device talent, lasting poison, quick study), keen recollection, poison lore, swift alchemy, trapfinding +4

Combat Gear purple worm poison (5); **Other Gear** +1 *stanching*^{UE} leather armor; +1 *corrosive* kukri; formula book; traveling carpetbag with sumptuous, hand-painted canvas maps of Kaer Maga's Undercity worth 1,200 gp; a leather purse made from a pig's mouth with 200 pp inside; a delightfully carved wooden fox wearing a fez worth 50 gp; a Tian ceramic snuff bottle with a motif showing death's head moths devouring babies in cribs—the bottle is set with 6 garnets and is worth 1,400 gp

Treasure: Of the books that have been mostly restored, most are relatively mundane accounts of philosophy. There is very little here of interest to anyone seeking the remaining seal imprisoning Tar-Baphon. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check, however, picks out the one book that appears to have survived the room's damage quite well—this is a *book of the loremaster*^{APG}.

D12. Chapter Hall (CR 12)

This once much larger chamber seems to have originally been a communal banquet hall, but now the large tables, elegant chairs, and chandeliers lie in rubble on the floor, and the north and east walls have collapsed into ruin. A small but relatively comfortable looking campsite has been erected to the east.

This is where the brothers once ate and conversed and argued, but today it bears the scars of the fight in which they perished. The damage to this portion of the shrine was significant, caused by a berserk clay golem that buried itself in the same frenzy that brought down much of the eastern chambers of the complex.

Creatures: Today, this room serves the necromancer Erigantus as a bedroom and study. He doesn't need much in the way of comfort, especially when he spends so many waking hours immersed in the study of his new prized possession, the *Bone Grimoire*. If alerted to the PCs' presence in the shrine, Erigantus puts aside the tome and prepares for battle. Otherwise, the PCs are likely to find him here, poring over the text and muttering to himself

as he seeks to plunder its secrets. He is attended by a pair of totenmaskes who have each taken on the forms of Brothers of the Seal. They fight to the death to protect their necromancer master.

ERIGANTUS **CR 12**

XP 19,200

hp 89 (see page 64)

TOTENMASKES (2) **CR 7**

XP 3,200 each

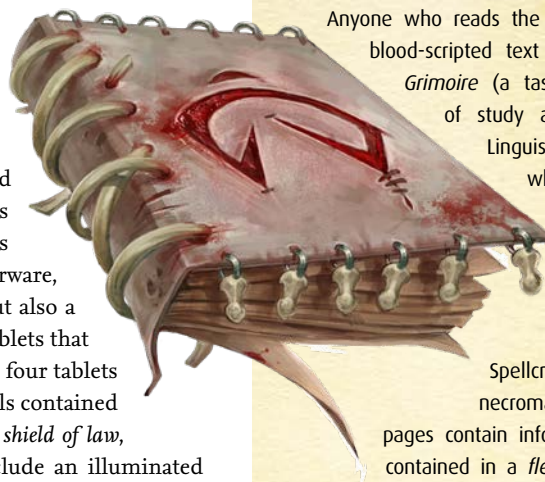
hp 85 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 269)

Treasure: Erigantus has gathered what treasures he could from the shrine, and has now organized these prizes in his campsite. This collection of valuables includes 2,500 gp in minor trinkets (silverware, jewelry, gemstones, and the like), but also a partial collection of ancient stone tablets that weigh 15 pounds each. Each of these four tablets functions as a divine scroll. The spells contained on the tablets are *blade barrier*, *heal*, *shield of law*, and *wind walk*. Other treasures include an illuminated manuscript describing in excruciating detail the culinary habits of a bloatmage named Chundakus—a disturbing, oversized text almost a foot thick and 3 feet wide that weighs 45 pounds and is worth 3,000 gp; a marble-and-obsidian sweetmeat dish with a rim decorated with silver-encrusted imp canines worth 600 gp; a superb mandolin-lyre (a *lyre of building*) painted with an astonishingly vivid urban scene; a rolled-up Minkaian rug depicting dragons feasting on laughing monkeys worth 750 gp; and a lectern of wood and iron that depicts a wolf devouring lambs with angelic faces.

The lectern is deep enough to hold several books and also contains a secret latch which can be noticed with a successful DC 25 Perception check. If triggered, this latch causes the top of the lectern to spring open and reveal a hollow that contains a *divine scroll of symbol of pain*, a *divine scroll of create undead*, and an *arcane scroll of horrid wilting*. If Erigantus knows the PCs are near, he hides the *Bone Grimoire* in this lectern as well.

D13. The Sundered Seal

A great object once sat here, atop a three-tiered stone dais, commanding a place of prominence in the middle of a chamber whose walls are lined with statues of kneeling stone monks. Now, all that remains of what was once on display is a pile of blood-soaked gravel and chunks of decaying flesh and shattered bone.



THE BONE GRIMOIRE

One-third of Zutha's dangerous *Gluttonous Tome*, the *Bone Grimoire* has become infused with Zutha's influence. In time, the runelord can emerge from its pages, but if the PCs secure the tome first, they will be able to not only destroy it but destroy Zutha once and for all as well.

BONE GRIMOIRE		MAJOR ARTIFACT
SLOT none	CL 20th	WEIGHT 3 lbs.
AURA strong necromancy		

Anyone who reads the entire hundred pages of blood-scripted text bound within the *Bone Grimoire* (a task that requires 1 week of study and a successful DC 25 Linguistics check by someone who can read Thassilonian) gains a +2 inherent bonus to Intelligence as well as a permanent +4 insight bonus on Knowledge (arcana) and Spellcraft checks associated with necromancy. In addition, the pages contain information identical to that contained in a *flesh golem manual*—these pages restore themselves and can be used once per year.

A character who reads the *Bone Grimoire* becomes somewhat separated from the living. His flesh takes on a pallid cast, and he is now affected by positive and negative energy as if he were undead. If the reader previously had the ability to channel positive energy, he now channels negative energy. A *miracle* or *wish* can remove the effects of the *Bone Grimoire*, both beneficial and otherwise.

DESTRUCTION

If the *Bone Grimoire* is subjected to the runewaking ritual, it is destroyed.

The destruction of the seal once kept here left nothing but necromantic gore and rubble in its wake. A *detect magic* spell reveals a lingering aura of abjuration magic, but the seal itself is beyond repair. Nothing remains to indicate that whatever was kept here was once part of something more. (The ramifications of the seal's destruction are explored in detail in the next adventure, "Tyrant's Grasp," and are beyond the scope of this adventure.)

CONCLUDING PART 4

The goal of this part of the adventure is simple—the recovery of the *Bone Grimoire*. Once the PCs secure this ancient text from Erigantus, they can proceed to Part 5 and, hopefully, put an end to Runelord Zutha forever.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

PART 5: DEATH RISING

With the *Bone Grimoire* in hand, the PCs can make the journey to the risen isle of Xin to put an end to Runelord Zutha. Sorshen knows the secret of the phylactery's destruction and imparted this knowledge to the PCs at the end of Part 3. Now they must bring the *Bone Grimoire* to a site of great power just off the shore of Xin, a small islet atop which lie the ruins of a tarnished temple once devoted to the seven convictions of rule—convictions that the runelords perverted through their descent into sin and excess. Through the use of the runewaking ritual at this site, the PCs can force the *Bone Grimoire* to transform into an approximation of its undead author, prompting an early manifestation of Zutha's body even though the entirety of the *Gluttonous Tome* is not at hand. If this reduced but still quite dangerous manifestation of Runelord Zutha can then be destroyed, the remaining fragments of his phylactery will crumble to dust, and one of Golarion's most dangerous necromancers will be forevermore dead.

The isle of Xin is located about 100 miles west of Magnimar. This adventure does not detail the journey the PCs take to the Tarnished Temple (the assumption is that Captain Sursha, their ally from "It Came from Hollow Mountain," brings them to the site on her ship *Tyalee's Whim*), nor does it assume the PCs explore the rest of the isle of Xin. If you want to expand the adventure, *Pathfinder Adventure Path #66: The Dead Heart of Xin* presents additional information about this dangerous site.

THE RUNEWAKING RITUAL

When Sorshen imparts the knowledge of this ritual into the PCs' minds, provide them with the full text of this potent but specialized ritual. Full details on rituals and how they function can be found beginning on page 208 of *Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures*.

RUNEWAKING

School illusion (shadow); **Level** 7

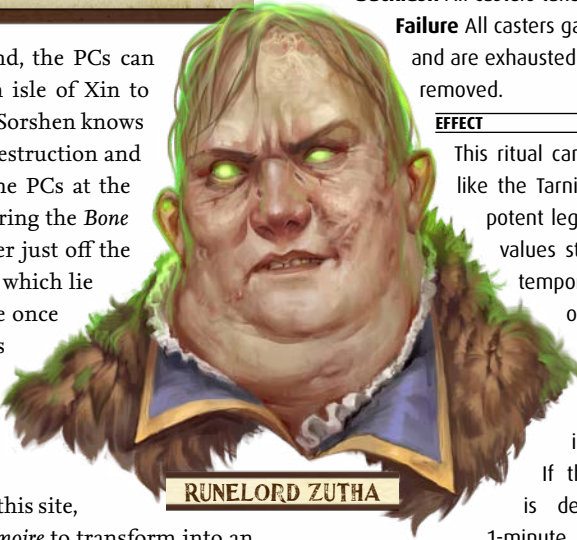
Casting Time 70 minutes

Components V, S, F (a portion of the *Gluttonous Tome*), SC (up to 8)

Skill Checks Bluff DC 28, 3 successes; Knowledge (arcana) DC 28, 2 successes; Spellcraft DC 28, 2 successes

Range touch

Effect a shadowy simulacrum of Runelord Zutha



Duration 1 minute

Saving Throw none; **SR** no

Backlash All casters take 2d6 points of damage.

Failure All casters gain 1 permanent negative level and are exhausted until that negative level is removed.

EFFECT

This ritual can be performed only at a site like the Tarnished Temple of Xin, where a potent legacy of Thassilon's pre-runelord values still exists. The ritual creates a temporary and weakened version of Zutha from a portion of his phylactery, drawing power from the Shadow Plane to manifest a simulacrum-like incarnation of the runelord.

If this manifestation of the lich is destroyed before the ritual's 1-minute duration expires, all three portions of the *Gluttonous Tome* crumble to dust and Runelord Zutha is forever slain; otherwise, as the ritual expires, Zutha's temporary manifestation melts away into a heap of corrupted flesh and the portion of his phylactery used in the ritual emerges unscathed.

THE TARNISHED TEMPLE

The small islet on which the Tarnished Temple is located is along the southwestern coast of the Isle of Xin. As the PCs approach the isle, read or paraphrase the following.

The green kiss of rotting seaweed clings to the shores of this small isle, its shoreline made complex by dozens of protruding islets and jagged sea stacks. The strange and jagged architecture adorning the isle itself seems devoured in many places by the passage of time or hidden by growths of strange fungus, but the ruins stubbornly refuse to give up their glory. Fragmented statues, once-magnificent temples, and gracefully curved streets remain to give hints of what was once a glorious city. From atop one of the smaller isles to the southwest, the massive columns of the Tarnished Temple beckon.

The above-water portion of the Tarnished Temple, as shown on the map on page 58, is covered with gravel and dried seaweed. The ruins of three massive statues that floated around the temple in a lazy orbit during the months after Xin rose have crashed into the waters just offshore. Below the waves, the immensity of the temple sprawls. Submerged chambers and unguessed dangers likely lie within, but these horrors are beyond the scope of this adventure. The PCs' goal rests at the temple's apex, for it is only here that Sorshen's ritual will function.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary



Zutha Reborn (CR 14)

In performing the runewaking ritual, the PCs draw upon their knowledge of magical traditions (represented by Knowledge [arcana] and Spellcraft checks) while they cajole Zutha's lurking undead spirit into taking the bait and manifesting a physical form (represented by Bluff checks). If the PCs successfully complete the ritual, the sky darkens and clouds roil menacingly. The *Bone Grimoire* shudders, its pages bulging outward until the ancient text splits open like an infected wound. A deadly simulacrum of Runelord Zutha spills out of the wound and then rises to his feet with a cry of pain and freedom, but he will exist for only 10 rounds. If the PCs can't defeat the simulacrum in this time, it melts away and the *Bone Grimoire* is restored. There is no limit to the number of times the PCs can perform the runewaking ritual, other than their own resources, but at your discretion if the PCs take several days, undead monsters may be lured to the isle's shores, drawn by the manipulation of Zutha's spirit and eager to attack the PCs who would destroy him.

ZUTHA'S FRAGMENT

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 193 (see page 68)

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs fail to complete the runewaking ritual and Erigantus still lives, at some time later in the campaign he succeeds at gathering together the *Gluttonous Tome*, and Runelord Zutha will return. If, on the other hand, the PCs defeat the polymorph plague, prevent Krune's resurrection, secure an alliance with Sorshen, and defeat Zutha, they will have accomplished some astonishing feats. From this point on, their goals shift from scrambling to catch up with their enemies to a more active agenda, confronting runelords in their domains and, eventually, shattering the bonds of time itself to set right the damage Runelord Alaznist has inflicted. This next phase of the campaign begins when the PCs are once again contacted by Runelord Sorshen, who reveals to them that Runelord Xanderghul, once the most powerful of all the runelords, has been much reduced in power. The time is now right to strike against the Runelord of Pride, but as the PCs will soon learn, Xanderghul is more than a mere mortal wizard. He is the Peacock Spirit. He is a god.

CLEGG ZINCHER

Once one of Riddleport's most confident and public crime lords, Clegg Zincher has had a hard time in recent years—though he maintains his facade of clenched confidence, in truth he's only a few steps away from destitution.

CLEGG ZINCHER

CR 9

XP 6,400

Male middle-aged human expert 2/fighter 1/rogue 7

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; Senses Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +1 natural)

hp 76 (10 HD; 9d8+1d10+30)

Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +4

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 mattock +12/+7 (2d4+5/x4)

Ranged mwk throwing axe +9/+4 (1d6+3)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

TACTICS

During Combat If he has to fight, Zincher likes to have allies nearby to take blows for him, be they one of his beloved axe beaks, his bodyguard Mister Magenta, or even one of the PCs. He often tries to demoralize foes by yelling profanities and curses at them before attacking at range with his alchemical weapons or throwing axes. In melee, he prefers to fight defensively.

Morale Even with his arrangement with the church of Besmara, Clegg doesn't want to die. If reduced to fewer than 30 hit points, he flees, preferably by drinking his *potion of gaseous form* to aid his escape. However, he's careful to not appear cowardly, so he tends to bluff and bluster his way out of trouble by maneuvering his employees between himself and his foes before he makes a strategic withdrawal.

STATISTICS

Str 17, Dex 11, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 15

Base Atk +7; CMB +10; CMD 20

Feats Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Intimidating Prowess, Persuasive, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Toughness, Weapon Focus (mattock, throwing axe)

Skills Acrobatics +12, Bluff +15, Diplomacy +11, Handle Animal +15, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (local) +13, Linguistics +11, Perception +12, Sense Motive +12, Swim +10

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Goblin, Halfling, Shoanti, Skald, Varisian, Vudrani

SQ rogue talents (combat trick, strong impression^{APG}, weapon training), trapfinding +3

Combat Gear acid (2), alchemist's fire (12), *potion of gaseous form*; **Other Gear** +2 glimmered chain shirt, +1 mattock^{UC}, mwk throwing axes (3), *amulet of natural armor* +1, *belt of giant strength* +2, skeleton key to locks in his tenement

Riddleport is a city run by crime, and the ones who "govern" this crime are its lords. These crime lords wax and wane in power as time goes by, and in the case of Clegg Zincher, his power is very much on the wane. Clegg's decline began only a few short years ago, when a star fell on the island of Devil's Elbow just south of Riddleport. Hoping to get there first and claim a lode of skymetal for himself, Clegg fell under the magical control of a drow priestess and nearly lost his life. The loss of the money and resources he'd invested in the gambit paled in comparison to his loss of self-confidence. Things have only gotten worse for Clegg since then, for Riddleport is no place for someone in power to show weakness.

While his assets steadily leached away, Clegg survived several assassination attempts by rivals he was never quite able to pin blame on. He has since grown increasingly paranoid; certain that his death is near, he has begun to take precautions. As quietly as possible, he has liquidated most of his remaining assets and used the money to secure three *scrolls of true resurrection* as well as an agreement with several local clerics of Besmara that, should he be killed, he'll be brought back to life using one of the scrolls (the multiple copies serve as insurance against multiple deaths and any failures to activate the powerful spells). Unfortunately, this expensive precaution has so crippled his finances that he has been forced to put his control of Zincher Arena up for auction.

While Clegg has done his best to keep his situation quiet and the purchase of his scrolls hidden, word has nevertheless leaked, and the other crime lords whisper

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

and gossip. It was from these sources that Leptonia learned of Zincher's scrolls, and his fall from power has been so visible that she feels confident that she and her cultists can secure the scrolls from his home with little worry—especially if they strike at a time when they know he'll be away from his tenement and unable to defend the prize.

While Zincher does his best to maintain a public facade of confidence, in private he grows damnably nervous, his dark eyes darting from side to side as sweat hangs on his twitching upper lip. His anxious air is at odds with his big and burly frame, with broad shoulders, great heaving muscles, and gray hair shaved tight to his troubled brow. Having recently crossed over into middle age, with new aches in his joints and the awareness that most of his life lies behind him, Clegg has lived in a dark place for the past few years.

Clegg Zincher first appeared in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #13: Shadow in the Sky* and again in the subsequent adventure, *Children of the Void*. His traditional role as one of Riddleport's crime lords saw him managing all the manual labor in Riddleport, which gave him considerable influence among the city's working class, but many now whisper that his time has passed. If Clegg survives this adventure, his future is anything but certain.

Clegg is tough and without conscience, but he would argue that life has made him that way—after all, what did honesty and hard work get his dear old dad but an early grave? He always wanted to honor his father's memory (and perhaps even show him up) by living the high life and being successful, and so far, his legacy and his tough reputation have kept his enemies at a distance.

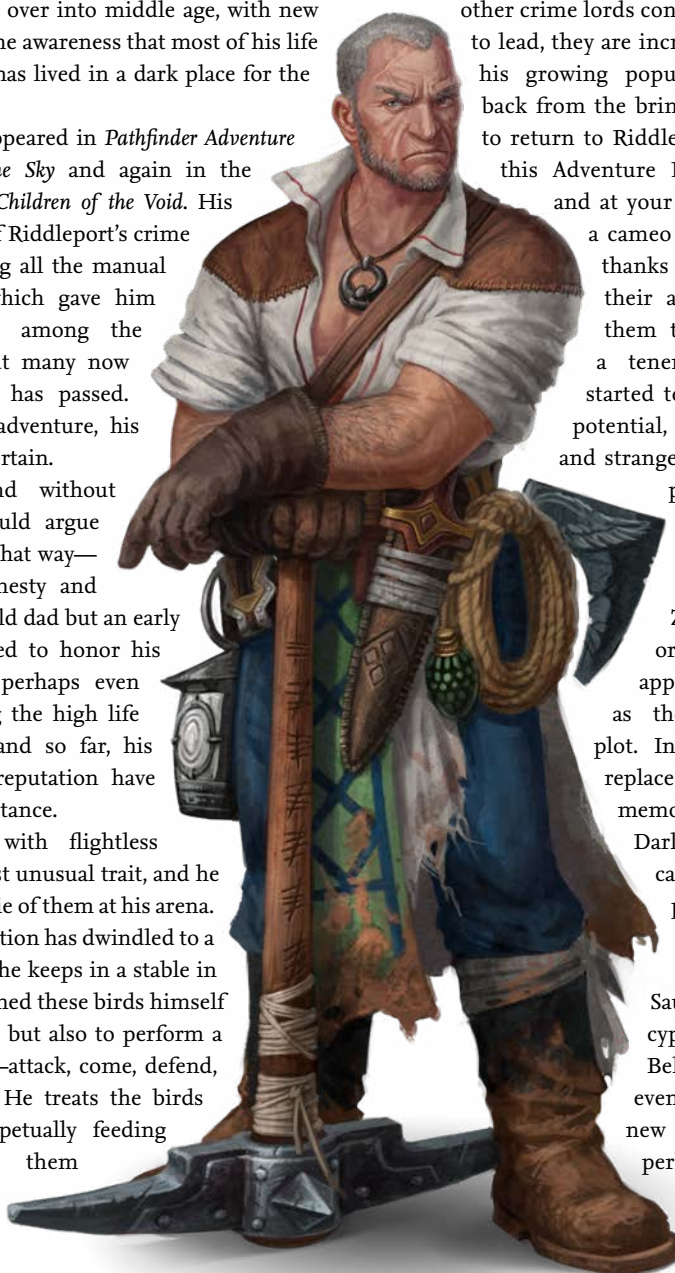
Clegg's fascination with flightless birds is perhaps his most unusual trait, and he has long kept a menagerie of them at his arena. Today, though, his collection has dwindled to a single pair of axe beaks he keeps in a stable in his tenement. Clegg trained these birds himself to not only defend him, but also to perform a number of commands—attack, come, defend, fetch, guard, and heel. He treats the birds like beloved pets, perpetually feeding them treats, calling them by nicknames (Picky and Flatface being favorites), and generally

gushing uncharacteristically over them whenever the subject comes up.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Clegg's future is largely in the hands of the PCs—if they manage to defend his home and his investments, this small bit of compassion and aid from individuals who were otherwise total strangers not only opens his eyes but also helps restore his confidence. He has no specific role to play in the remainder of the campaign, but in the months to follow, Clegg slowly builds his confidence again, starting small and reestablishing a rapport with the laborers and dockworkers of Riddleport. While the other crime lords continue to doubt his ability to lead, they are increasingly forced to admit his growing popularity is bringing him back from the brink. The PCs are destined to return to Riddleport for a short time in this Adventure Path's final installment, and at your option, Clegg can make a cameo appearance in which he thanks the PCs once again for their aid, perhaps by inviting them to a banquet hosted in a tenement that has finally started to gain new life and new potential, complete with eccentric and strange new occupants eager to please their new landlord.

If you have already run the Second Darkness Adventure Path, Clegg Zincher may be deceased or otherwise unable to appear in this adventure as the target of Leptonia's plot. In this case, you should replace Clegg with an equally memorable NPC from Second Darkness who did survive the campaign and who your players would remember. Two possible candidates for this role include Saul Vancaskerkin and the cyphermage Samaritha Beldusk. The role could even be played by someone new of your own design—perhaps Clegg had a younger sibling who has just inherited his tenement (and his debts).



ERIGANTUS

A wan cruelty festers about this frail yet elegant figure, and the gaunt pride in his stance is utterly torn to shreds when glimpsing his eyes, which are dead, hollow, and devoid of hope or joy.

ERIGANTUS

CR 12

XP 19,200

Dhampir necromancer 13 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 89)

NE Medium humanoid (dhampir)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., life sight (20 feet, 13 rounds/day), low-light vision; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 89 (13d6+41)

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9; +2 vs. disease and mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities negative energy affinity; **Resist** undead resistance

Weaknesses light sensitivity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *wounding war razor* +12/+7 (1d4+2/19–20 plus 1 bleed)

Dhampir Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st; concentration +1)
3/day—*detect undead*

Necromancer School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +17)
7/day—grave touch (6 rounds)

Necromancer Spells Prepared (CL 13th; concentration +17)
7th—*finger of death* (DC 21), *grasping hand*
6th—*greater dispel magic*, *phantasmal putrefaction*^{HA} (DC 20), *wither limb*^{HA} (DC 20)
5th—*cone of cold* (DC 19), *suffocation*^{APG} (2, DC 19), *waves of fatigue*
4th—*black tentacles*, *dimension door*, *enervation*, *fear* (DC 18), *phantasmal killer* (2, DC 18)
3rd—*dispel magic* (2), *fireball* (2, DC 17), *ray of exhaustion* (DC 17), *vampiric touch*
2nd—*acid arrow* (2), *false life*, *invisibility* (2), *mirror image*
1st—*alarm*, *grease* (DC 15), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 15), *shield*
0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 14), *light*, *prestidigitation*

Opposition Schools enchantment, transmutation

TACTICS

Before Combat Erigantus casts *false life* and *mage armor*.

During Combat Erigantus begins combat by casting *invisibility*, followed by *shield* and *mirror image*. He's careful to cast first, then move, using *Stealth* to prevent foes from easily targeting his location. Once his defensive spells are in effect, he begins casting his most powerful spells on choice targets—*finger of death* on a healer, *grasping hand* against an arcane spellcaster or rogue—followed by his area spells on those who remain.

Morale Erigantus fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** 11, **Int** 18, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 21

Feats Arcane Strike, Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand, Dodge, Martial Weapon Proficiency (war razor), Scribe Scroll, Toughness, Turn Undead, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (war razor)

Skills Bluff +2, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (religion) +20, Linguistics +10, Perception +16, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +16

Languages Abyssal, Common, Elven, Infernal, Necril, Thassilonian, Undercommon, Varisian

SQ arcane bond (+2 *wounding war razor*), power over undead, resist level drain

Combat Gear *wand of contagion* (15 charges), *wand of dispel magic* (CL 10th, 20 charges); **Other Gear** +2 *wounding war razor*^{ISWG}, *ring of protection* +1, *Bone Grimoire*, spellbook, 84 pp, 4 gp, 8 sp, 3 cp

Erigantus was a frail lad, adopted into a down-to-earth Lastwall family after he was rescued from a dire situation on the Ustalav border involving his birth parents, and he long admired his brother Ilaar's active lifestyle and zest for adventure. After their parents perished during an orc raid, Ilaar moved on to Vigil to petition to join the Knights of Ozem, taking his younger stepbrother with him. Erigantus was duly impressed with the knights' armor, but their refusal to allow Ilaar membership in the order tarnished Erigantus' view of Vigil. After this rejection, things didn't get better—limited funds, bad luck, and poor choices resulted in destitution for the

two brothers within 9 months of their arrival in Vigil. Come spring, a group of criminals tricked Ilaar into serving as a patsy for their crimes. Erigantus could do nothing but watch and wail as the Knights of Ozem took Ilaar away in chains, found him guilty of a crime he didn't commit, and hanged him by the neck until dead.

Erigantus fled Vigil the night his brother was executed, and eventually found his way back to Ustalav. It was not mere chance that he approached agents of the Whispering Way to join their cause, for he wanted nothing more than to see Vigil's death and decay. And with the Whispering Way, Erigantus felt he finally had allies who could aid him in his cause.

The dhampir rose swiftly through the Whispering Way's ranks. When the time came to lead an expedition west to Varisia, spurred by rumors that one of the seals imprisoning the Whispering Tyrant might be located somewhere in that frontier expanse, Erigantus was the right choice. Eager to find a way to bring Vigil one step closer to its doom, he began investigating those rumors, eventually following them to Kaer Maga and the Brotherhood of the Seal.

While he eventually learned that the seal he sought was the same one the brotherhood guarded, he knew he lacked the knowledge needed to carry out its destruction. But when a woman named Leptonia—an on-again, off-again lover during Erigantus's time in Kaer Maga—contacted him from Magnimar with an astounding offer, he felt the final pieces of the puzzle falling into place. In return for his aid in bolstering a hideout in Magnimar, Leptonia promised Erigantus an astounding gift: the *Bone Grimoire* of Runelord Zutha.

Erigantus spent months helping Leptonia, and she honored her promise when his service was done. Within a week of his return to Kaer Maga, Erigantus had the answer to his own quandary, for within the *Bone Grimoire's* pages, he had made a discovery—a means to destroy the seal guarded by the Brotherhood. Erigantus led his agents on a devastating assault into the Shrine of the Seal, slaughtered the brotherhood, and enacted the ritual he had discovered in the *Bone Grimoire*. By dawn, only one seal remained active on Golarion to keep the Whispering Tyrant imprisoned.

Unfortunately for the Whispering Way, the method Erigantus used to destroy the seal kept in the Shrine of the Seal would not work on the seal that remained. The other Whispering Way agents returned to the east, but Erigantus and two others (both natives of Kaer Maga) remained. He then set to studying the *Bone Grimoire* more deeply. The necromancer's constant study of the *Bone Grimoire* has since had its effect. Zutha's influence has grown within the pages of the tome, and it is now only a matter of time before the undead runelord can emerge from its pages.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Erigantus's deep association with necromancy, undeath, and the Whispering Way make him an excellent candidate for unholy vengeance from beyond the grave. If he's slain by the PCs in this adventure, he could, at your option, return from death as a revenant to track the PCs down at any point during the next two adventures—in which case you should advance him as necessary to make him a challenging foe when he eventually finds the PCs, perhaps allowing him to retain some or all of his necromancer levels.



RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

SORSHEN'S SIMULACRUM

This enigmatic woman bears the figure and face of Runelord Sorshen, yet for all her considerable power, she is but a physical shadow, a magical reflection of the runelord's true form.

BLOOD SIMULACRUM OF SORSHEN

CR 11

XP 12,800

Female human enchanter 10

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +10

Aura despair (30 ft., 10 rounds/day)

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 17, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +3 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)

hp 107 (10d6+70)

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

Immune bleed

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +4 (1d3–1 nonlethal)

Enchanter Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +15)
8/day—dazing touch

Enchanter Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +15)

5th—*dominate person* (2, DC 21), *dream*, *mind fog* (DC 21), *sending*

4th—*charm monster* (2, DC 20), *dimension door* (3), *phantasmal killer* (DC 19)

3rd—*fireball* (DC 18), *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *nondetection*, *reckless infatuation*^{UM} (2, DC 19), *spiked pit*^{APG} (DC 18)

2nd—*create pit*^{APG} (DC 17), *mirror image*, *misdirection*, *scorching ray*, *touch of idiocy* (2), *web* (DC 17)

1st—*charm person* (2, DC 17), *grease* (DC 16), *lock gaze*^{UC} (DC 17), *mage armor*, *magic missile* (2), *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Thassilonian Specialization enchantment; **Opposition Schools** necromancy, transmutation

TACTICS

Before Combat Sorshen casts *nondetection*, *unseen servant*, and *mage armor* on herself just before meeting the PCs.

During Combat Sorshen's first action in combat is to use her *ring of invisibility* to avoid the conflict if possible. If directly confronted, she casts *dominate person* and *charm monster* to secure temporary bodyguards before becoming invisible so she can safely cast *mirror image* and then relocate to a more advantageous position.

Morale This simulacrum loses interest in any fight in which she's reduced to 50 or fewer hit points, whereupon she casts *dimension door* to return to the hidden domain deep under Korvosa where the real Sorshen can repair her.

STATISTICS

Str 9, **Dex** 17, **Con** 17, **Int** 21, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 21

Feats Combat Expertise, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (enchantment), Toughness

Skills Bluff +23, Diplomacy +23, Disguise +11, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (local, nobility, planes, and religion) +9, Perception +10, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +18

Languages Abyssal, Azlanti, Common, Shoanti, Thassilonian, Varisian

SQ arcane bond (*ring of protection* +3), blood simulacrum, enchanting smile, everdawn infusion, exceptional statistics

Combat Gear *potions of lesser restoration* (8), *ring of invisibility* **Other Gear** *amulet of natural armor* +2, *dance of seven veils*, *handy haversack*, *ring of protection* +3, 12 pp, 42 gp, 39 sp, 18 cp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blood Simulacrum (Su) Any divination spell that attempts to locate or otherwise target the real Sorshen is instead redirected to target this simulacrum. The caster of the divination spell can notice the redirection with a successful DC 40 Spellcraft check as the divination spell is cast, but even if the redirection is noted, it is impossible to tell where the effect was redirected from. This effect also affects long-distance spells like *demand*, *dream*, *nightmare*, and *sending*, but not mental communication such as telepathy.

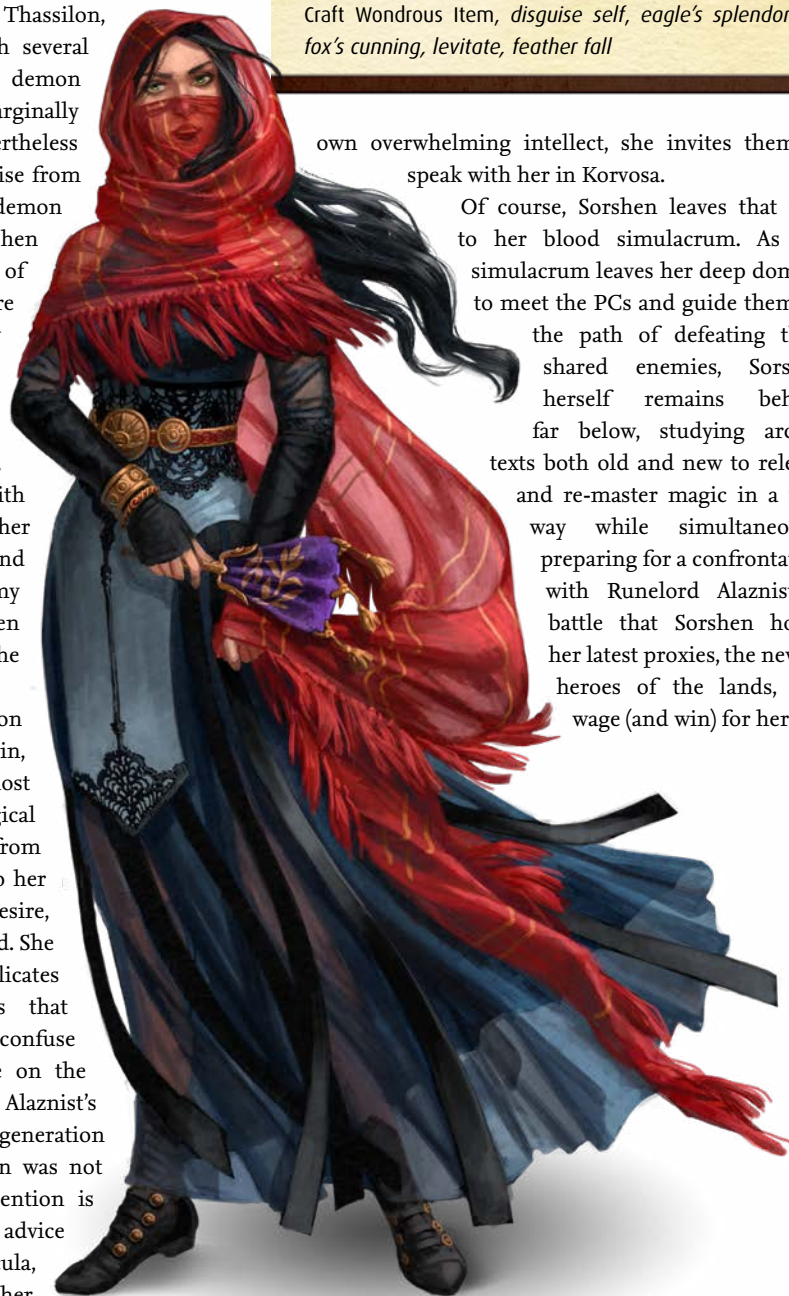
Everdawn Infusion (Ex) Sorshen calculates her hit points using her Charisma modifier rather than her Constitution modifier, and she is immune to bleed effects.

Exceptional Statistics (Ex) Sorshen's ability scores were generated using 25 points rather than using the standard 15. In addition, the simulacrum has much more gear than a PC of her level would normally have. These modifications increase her total CR by 1.

When Karzoug's *runewell* activated in 4702 AR, Runelord Sorshen was among the runelords who took note. She did not rush headlong toward a return to the world but instead bided her time, during which she had a number of epiphanies. She realized that the method of rule in ancient Thassilon was old, outdated, and no longer viable, and she had also grown weary of the pleasures of the flesh and the amusement of idle cruelty. The world had evolved and become a better place over the past several thousand years, and Sorshen has no wish to be left behind.

Sorshen was further influenced by changes in the nature of an entity she had admired and respected during her time as a ruler in old Thassilon, and whom she had spoken with several times via magical visions—the demon lord Nocticula. Though only marginally religious herself, Sorshen nevertheless found inspiration in Nocticula's rise from the Abyss, and in honor of the demon lord's change of heart, Sorshen released from service the cabal of vampires who had served her before Earthfall and had waited patiently over the centuries to continue doing so upon her return. The loss of these potent minions was more than acceptable to Sorshen, who knew that consorting with vampires would only incense her enemies and compel retaliation. And so, as the souls of her vampiric army drifted away to be judged, Sorshen took yet another step away from the sins of her past.

By the time she made the decision to step into the world once again, Sorshen did so quietly. Her most significant act to date, the magical relocation of the *Everdawn Pool* from a remote ruin in the Mushfens to her personal demiplane, the Eye of Desire, went largely unnoticed by the world. She used the *Everdawn Pool* to craft duplicates of herself—blood simulacra that would further confound and confuse her foes. And she kept her eye on the events of the world, knowing that Alaznist's actions would antagonize a new generation of Golarion's champions. Sorshen was not disappointed, and when her attention is drawn to the PCs as a result of advice from extraplanar allies like Nocticula, powerful divination magic, and her



DANCE OF SEVEN VEILS

PRICE
27,000 GP

SLOT head or neck

CL 9th

WEIGHT —

AURA moderate illusion and transmutation

This scarf is crafted from fine, almost transparent silk of a deep red hue. When worn about the head as a veil or the neck as a scarf, the *dance of seven veils* disguises the wearer in a different shape, as per *disguise self*. The wearer can cast *levitate* at will, gains a +4 competence bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks, and gains a +2 enhancement bonus to Intelligence and Charisma.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 13,500 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *disguise self*, *eagle's splendor*, *fox's cunning*, *levitate*, *feather fall*

own overwhelming intellect, she invites them to speak with her in Korvosa.

Of course, Sorshen leaves that task to her blood simulacrum. As the simulacrum leaves her deep domain to meet the PCs and guide them on the path of defeating their shared enemies, Sorshen herself remains behind far below, studying arcane texts both old and new to relearn and re-master magic in a new way while simultaneously preparing for a confrontation with Runelord Alaznist—a battle that Sorshen hopes her latest proxies, the newest heroes of the lands, will wage (and win) for her.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

ZUTHA'S FRAGMENT

A festering travesty of bloated flesh and fury, this fragment of Runelord Zutha exudes unmistakable necromantic potential—but it is a mere glimpse into the nightmare reality of what the Runelord of Gluttony was capable of at his peak.

ZUTHA'S FRAGMENT

CR 14

XP 38,400

Male human lich necromancer 13 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 188)

CE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, human)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., life sight (20 ft., 13 rounds/day); Perception +29

Aura fear (60 ft., DC 24)

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 19, flat-footed 25 (+4 armor, +5 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 insight, +5 natural)

hp 193 (13d6+145)

Fort +15, **Ref** +10, **Will** +16

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, *contingency*;

DR 15/bludgeoning and magic; **Immune** cold, electricity, polymorph, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *conductive scythe* +11/+6 (2d4+7/x4 plus paralyzing touch) or touch +10 (1d8+6 negative energy plus paralyzing touch)

Special Attacks paralyzing touch (DC 24)

Necromancer Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +20) 10/day—grave touch (6 rounds)

Necromancer Spells Prepared (CL 13th; concentration +20) 7th—quickened *displacement*, *finger of death* (2, DC 26), *grasping hand*

6th—quickened *blindness/deafness* (DC 21), *disintegrate* (DC 23), quickened *mirror image*, *wither limb* (2, DC 25)

5th—*cone of cold* (DC 22), empowered *fireball* (DC 20), *suffocation*^{APG} (2, DC 24), *telekinesis* (DC 22), quickened *vanish*^{APG} (DC 18)

4th—*black tentacles*, *enervation* (3), *phantasmal killer* (2, DC 21), empowered *scorching ray*

3rd—*fireball* (2, DC 20), *fly*, *ray of exhaustion* (2, DC 22), *slow* (DC 20), *vampiric touch* (2)

2nd—*blindness/deafness* (2, DC 21), *create pit*^{APG} (DC 19), *false life*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray* (2), *web* (DC 19)

1st—*chill touch* (DC 20), *mage armor*, *magic missile* (3), *ray of enfeeblement* (2, DC 20), *vanish*^{APG} (DC 18)

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 19), *mage hand*, *ray of frost*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 19)

TACTICS

Before Combat As Zutha's fragment manifests, some of his prepared spells (those he casts most often when preparing for battle) are automatically cast on him. This takes no action from Zutha but expends the spells from his list as if he had cast them normally. The spells cast in this fashion are *false life*, *fly*, and *mage armor*.

During Combat Zutha's fragment has full knowledge of the runelord's combat tactics and spellcasting but little concept of the world beyond the Tarnished Temple. This allows him to fight the PCs effectively but prevents him from attempting to simply flee a fight to try to establish himself elsewhere in the world (something he'd not be able to do anyway, considering the 1-minute duration of his manifestation).

His first act in combat is to fly into the air to put some distance between himself and his foes, after which he casts quickened *displacement* and then *finger of death* on the primary caster of the runewaking ritual. During the second round, Zutha casts quickened *mirror image* and another *finger of death* on the character that posed the greatest threat to him on the previous round. During the third round, he casts quickened *blindness/deafness* on a ranged combatant, along with *disintegrate*. He continues to rely on range or invisibility to protect himself in following rounds, resorting to attacks with his +1 *conductive scythe* only if he faces a single foe or hopes to paralyze someone who is particularly vexing.

Morale Zutha's fragment fights until destroyed, or until it fades away after the runewaking ritual's 1-minute duration ends.

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 24, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 26

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 29

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scythe), Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (necromancy), Toughness, Turn Undead

Skills Fly +19, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (nobility) +23, Knowledge (planes) +23,

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

Part 6:
The
Lichery

Part 7:
Damasoth

Part 8:
Magic Pools

Part 9:
Bestiary

Knowledge (religion) +23, Perception +29, Sense Motive +29, Spellcraft +23, Stealth +11, Use Magic Device +21

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Azlanti, Draconic, Giant, Shoanti, Varisian

SQ arcane bond (+1 *conductive scythe*), enhanced ability scores, power over undead, shadowy remnants

Gear shadow gear

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Contingency (Sp) Zutha's fragment has the benefit of a *contingency* spell in effect whenever he is manifested by the runewaking ritual. This *contingency* spell causes a *greater invisibility* spell to activate on Zutha if he takes damage. Both the *contingency* and the *greater invisibility* spell function at CL 20th.

Enhanced Ability Scores (Ex) As with the other runelords, Zutha used *wish* spells to increase his ability scores. This fragment retains an echo of those effects and has a +4 inherent bonus to its Strength, Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores.

Shadow Gear (Ex) When completed, the runewaking ritual equips Zutha's fragment with shadowy reflections of his favored magic items—his scythe and his rings. In this form, Zutha's scythe functions as a +1 *conductive^{UE} scythe* (which also functions as his arcane bond), while the combination of his rings gives him a +5 deflection bonus to his Armor Class, a +1 insight bonus to his Armor Class, a +3 resistance bonus on saving throws, and a +2 enhancement bonus to his Charisma score. These effects are intrinsic parts of his being—if one of his rings or his scythe is lost, dropped, or removed, it turns to shadows and vanishes at the end of the round only to instantly reappear on Zutha's person.

Shadowy Remnants (Su) Zutha's fragment does not have the standard lich ability of rejuvenation. When destroyed, Zutha and his shadow gear collapse into a pile of decay and ruin that, over the course of several minutes, wafts away into shadows before fading entirely from the physical world. During that time, though, any living creatures within 300 feet of the runelord feel raw necromantic power metaphysically caressing their souls. All creatures in this area of effect gain a +2 bonus on saving throws against attacks from undead creatures. This bonus persists until the creature is slain by a death effect—when this occurs, the +2 bonus is expended and the death effect that would have otherwise slain the creature is negated. A creature that becomes enhanced by these shadowy remnants instinctively understands the benefit and knows how this protection functions. Note that if the fragment's existence ends

as a result of the expiration of the runewaking ritual's 1-minute duration, he and his shadow gear disappear but nearby creatures do not gain the necromantic power.

This fragment of Zutha is a corpulent reflection of the runelord's power infused into the pages of his phylactery. Only a morsel of the runelord's former power, the fragment is nevertheless a deadly foe. The fragment is revolting to look upon, a body constantly dripping with maggots and bits of decaying flesh. His voice is like an ode to gluttony, his words coming in retching gulps that carry hunger in every syllable. His poisonous breath reeks of the rot of every morsel Zutha has ingested, and while he moves with a lurching gait, those lurches are calculated and almost graceful in their execution.

If the fragment manages to overpower the PCs entirely, he spends what time he has remaining from the runewaking ritual to feed on their corpses.





YAMASOTH THE POLYMORPH PLAGUE

War has raged between qliploth and demons for countless millennia. Ever since the creation of mortal sin, which allowed demons to supplant qliploth as the dominant force within the Abyss, the qliploth have lurked in the darkest reaches of that plane, waiting for their time of resurgence. The exception is Yamasoth, the Polymorph Plague, who holds his own territory within a prominent area of the Abyss. Constantly fighting back balor lords and other powerful demons, Yamasoth does not slink or cower—he works tirelessly to see the qliploth rise again. He is aided in this task by his sizable army, created from transformed mortal flesh and commanded by loyal qliploth generals. Yamasoth views death as a waste, and transmutes both his enemies and his allies into monstrous forms that suit his far-ranging plans.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

Other qliploth seek the destruction of the Material Plane as a way to gain the upper hand in their war against the demons, yet this objective is difficult to achieve from their hiding places in the deepest recesses of the Abyss. Qliploth can worm their way through portals to wreak havoc, but useful portals are few and far between, and valorous mortals work to seal these rifts when they are discovered. Qliploth can whisper to the minds of unsuspecting mortals, encouraging foolish souls to call them forth, but there are few who are both powerful enough and gullible enough to actually perform these rituals. Qliploth lords can answer the prayers of mortal cults that engage in destruction to earn the qliploth's favor, but such interactions pose ironic risk, as the qliploth lord can become infected by the sins of the mortals who worship it, possibly transforming into a demon lord. While this hasn't occurred often, qliploth are prepared to rise up and destroy any qliploth lord who begins to show signs of this metamorphosis.

Yamasoth has devised his own way to battle demons from his redoubt in the Abyss. Instead of focusing his efforts on destroying all mortal life, he believes that the best solution is to transform humanoids (and other sinners) into mindless beasts and wild creatures, thereby depriving the Abyss of their souls. By tapping into the chaotic nature of the universe's raw material, Yamasoth is able to polymorph his foes with but a glance—an ability he bestows on his most faithful of followers.

The Polymorph Plague has a fascination with other methods of transformation, from alchemical mutagens to the vile act of fleshwarping practiced (and, some would argue, perfected) by the drow of the Darklands. Yamasoth has experimented with them all; one of his more successful efforts resulted in the creation of the human-sized crab-like qliploth known as gongorinans. These scuttling monstrosities have six stumpy legs and a stony carapace, from which protrude four other appendages that can each inflict a different type of pain: a claw, a pincer, a stinger, and a humanoid arm wielding a weapon. Despite their appearance, gongorinans are industrious and intelligent, using their many tools of pain to further their lord's aims. The gongorinans have remained Yamasoth's favored minions since their creation, receiving a special

place in his domain and even dominion over squadrons of Yamasoth's army.

Yamasoth isn't above allying with powerful mortals if the potential reward is significant. For instance, it is rumored that Yamasoth and Alaznist, the Thassilonian Runelord of Wrath, worked together for centuries. Alaznist provided the qliploth lord with subjects for his experimentations, while Yamasoth bolstered the runelord's armies with his deadliest creations. Many believe the Polymorph Plague was gradually working toward a massive qliploth invasion of Golarion that would have seen the transformation and subsequent death of millions of the planet's inhabitants. The devastation of Earthfall curtailed this particular plan, as the ensuing turmoil forced Yamasoth to return to the Abyss.

A handful of religious scholars claim that the similarity of Yamasoth's experiments to those of the daemons that created the first demons belies a deeper truth—that Yamasoth is no qliploth lord, but rather the very first demon. These sages have no real evidence to substantiate these theories and are deemed blasphemers or worse by followers of the

Polymorph Plague. Although these scholars can't explain why Yamasoth—if truly a demon—would masquerade as a qliploth whose realm is under constant siege from demonic enemies, they hold fast to their theories, believing that time will eventually prove them right.

PERSONIFICATION AND REALM

The qliploth are among the oldest examples of life in the universe, and their strange, squirming forms are multitudinous. Some fringe biologists insist that the most revolting creatures on the Material Plane, such as certain insects and deep-sea crustaceans, take their shapes from qliploth. However, none would confuse Yamasoth for a mortal creature. His body is a stony sphere from which emerge a multitude of tentacles with tips that constantly shift into different instruments of pain, from blades to claws to serpentine fangs dripping with poison. Within Yamasoth's maw, past sharp teeth and probing tongues, is a giant red eye that can unleash a transformative gaze that turns his foes into crazed beasts. Few mortals can look upon Yamasoth without succumbing to the chaos in their own souls and welcoming the amoral bliss of instinct unfettered by conscious thought.



“One must be transformed—both inside and out—to know true power.”

—The Flesh Flows Like Water



Yamasoth's realm is the Kingdom of New Flesh, an immense region within the most active and populous area of the Abyss. While the kingdom is constantly under siege by demonic forces, Yamasoth controls hundreds of thousands of subjects within its borders. These subjects aren't crafted from the souls of the deceased, as many of the non-demon inhabitants of the Abyss are, but are in fact living beings that Yamasoth has collected from various worlds and made immortal through fleshcraft and magic. They have long forgotten their original names and personalities, their forms now twisted into monsters and beasts that serve the qliploth lord in all manner of vile ways. A selection of other qliploth, including Yamasoth's favored gongorinans, serve as functionaries in Yamasoth's kingdom and aid in the realm's defense.

The Kingdom of New Flesh appears similar to a vast city-state, though the buildings are twisted mockeries of those a mortal would recognize. Some are composed of stone and steel, while others are made of stranger substances, from glass to frozen mercury to a flesh-like material that bleeds when cut. As Yamasoth soars through his domain, paths ripple and buckle where his shadow falls on them, often knocking aside any of his subjects unfortunate enough to be in their lord's wake, and anything touched by one of his tentacles transforms with heaving, shuddering mutation. Sections of the Kingdom of New Flesh sometimes remain stable long enough to be used for a single purpose and earn a name, such as the Laboratories of Hate and the Repository of Vulgar Insights. However, such areas are swiftly unmade by a visit from Yamasoth and his qliploth generals.

DOGMA AND WORSHIPERS

Yamasoth's greatest goal is to starve the sin-based machine that fuels the fecundity of demons before he eventually surges forth with his army of beasts and qliploth to retake the Abyss. Yamasoth would make his preparations alone, if necessary, but as he has attracted a number of insane cults to his cause, he is willing to share the work. Yamasoth is patient; though mortals continue to reproduce and sin, the qliploth lord is confident that he can grow his forces within the Kingdom of New Flesh at a still greater rate. As such, the Polymorph Plague instructs his worshipers to push the envelope of medical and arcane research, to seek out ever more perfect ways to mutate and transform sentient creatures.

Followers of Yamasoth often delude themselves into believing they have the power to definitively tip the balance in the pending planar war. Most cultists don't understand that they are destined to lose regardless of the war's victor, as both demons and qliploth ultimately see mortals as either chattel or expendable tools. The cultists nevertheless continue their foul experiments,

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

inflicting pain and terror on those around them. Some believe they are serving a greater good, whether it is an alchemist who is attempting to forcibly evolve his race to be the “perfect organism” or a priest who believes she can free her people from sin by transforming them into beasts; however, their cruel and bizarre methods belie any claim of noble intent.

Other Yamasoth worshipers have no such illusions regarding their actions, instead enjoying the power over life that their devotion grants. These disciples include serial killers who receive visceral thrills from disemboweling their kin, and members of secret societies who use their transformative magic to enact revenge on their political enemies. The motives of these cultists are more rooted in personal ambition, and they often know nothing of Yamasoth’s travails deep within the Abyss. Of course, the qliploth lord is not slighted, as these agents still advance his schemes.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

Worshippers of Yamasoth don’t keep obvious temples or shrines to their deity, as their worship is generally seen as vile by the rest of society. A lone fleshworker devotee might hide a small altar to the Polymorph Plague in her laboratory, where she can secretly offer prayers to him and leave scraps of transformed flesh to deteriorate. Such shrines are often crafted from bones salvaged from failed experiments, though they are rarely recognizable as such, being malformed and contorted in hideous ways.

A kind of holy site to Yamasoth is hidden far below Hollow Mountain in Varisia. Known as Gongorina, these subterranean caverns were used long ago by the Polymorph Plague to test hundreds of methods of modifying mortal flesh. Yamasoth drew test subjects from nearby drow enclaves and troglodyte tribes in the Darklands, as well as from the streets of Xin-Bakrakhan, the now-ruined city at the base of the mountain. Some believe this is where Yamasoth created the first gongorinan qliploth; many gongorinans dwell in the ruins still, though Yamasoth has since abandoned these vaults. Some worshipers of the qliploth lord make pilgrimages to Gongorina to learn more about these ancient transformation techniques or to find a Yamasoth-blessed ally, but few return. Those that do speak very little of their experiences except to occasionally whisper “Gongorina stirs” with a vacant, faraway look in their eyes.

A PRIEST’S ROLE

Priests of Yamasoth are usually quiet, unassuming members of society, leading small cults of like-minded individuals in secret, late-night services. On occasions when the congregation wants to secure the Polymorph Plague’s favor, the priest is responsible for securing

sacrifices for abhorrent rituals that result in the sacrifice’s mutilation and vivisection. When the cult needs to conceal its activities from public scrutiny, these sacrifices are normally animals, but when a sentient sacrifice is needed, it could be drawn from the homeless, desperate, or ill. A cult bold enough to openly kidnap its sacrifices or lure victims with promises of wealth or secrets is almost certainly preparing for a significant or powerful sacrifice.

Instead of clerics, many priests of Yamasoth are alchemists, sorcerers, or wizards, with wide access to the polymorph subschool of transmutation magic. No matter their class, priests of the Polymorph Plague are trained in Craft (alchemy) and Heal, to better understand the mysteries of the flesh and how to alter it. Priests might also be trained in Knowledge (arcana) and Spellcraft in order to fully comprehend the magic of transformation.

HOLIDAYS

Though Yamasoth devotees celebrate no real holidays, they undertake moments of private introspection on the equinoxes and solstices. By looking at how they have changed since their last introspection—and how they haven’t—worshippers of the Polymorph Plague can devise new methods of self-transformation. Some cultists undertake their most audacious experiments on these days, hoping their insights might even make their way into the unholy work, *The Flesh Flows Like Water*, but most of these procedures merely end in disease, disfigurement, or death.

APHORISMS

The following phrases, and dozens of similar sayings with slight differences, are common among worshipers of the Polymorph Plague.

Be Like the Vermin: Yamasoth inflicts lowly forms on his foes not only out of a perverse pleasure, but primarily to wash their souls of the sin that increases the ranks of demonkind. Yamasoth’s followers know that their own souls are laden in this same sin, and this phrase is spoken to remind each other that they need to act without hate, greed, or lust, and to be more like mindless beasts that have no souls to sully. This admonishment is considered neutral advice devoid of criticism (particularly when phrased in the collective, such as “we must all be like the vermin”), and so is appropriate even when delivered from an initiate to a senior cult member. However, this exhortation is not solely used between cult members; some evil spellcasters who worship the Polymorph Plague also whisper these words to their victims as they transform them into cockroaches or beetles.

I Am Made Anew: Not only do followers of Yamasoth utter this phrase after undergoing a major transformation

(whether from a polymorph spell or the effects of an alchemical mutagen); they also say it to acknowledge receiving new, important information about a situation, especially when those facts are presented by another one of the faithful. This aphorism reflects worshipers' belief that their brains can be physically changed by something even as ephemeral as thought.

HOLY TEXT

Very little actual text appears in the slim tome *The Flesh Flows Like Water*. Instead, most of its pages are filled with detailed diagrams of foul experiments performed on beasts, humanoids, and other



creatures. These images are disturbing to behold, though followers of Yamasoth who regularly study them gain profane insight into ways to physically alter a creature's appearance or abilities using barbarous surgical methods. If the surgery is performed correctly, the subject survives but often ends up in constant, nearly unbearable pain. Other sections of the book include alchemical formulae for potions and elixirs that can alter the drinker's internal physiology, granting such abilities as the intestinal fortitude to eat garbage or the power to spit poison. Some of these recipes mention ingredients that aren't found anywhere on Golarion, and have yet to be tested by any of the devoted. Finally, in addition to several sermons that rail against demonkind and praise physical change, the book contains a handful of occult rituals that replicate aspects of certain polymorph spells for the faithful who lack skill with magic.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

As a qlippoth lord, Yamasoth despises almost all other deities and their worshipers. He holds a grudging form of respect for Lamashtu, the Mother of Monsters, for her creation of terrifying beasts and hideous brutes, though his feelings toward her are tainted with disdain because of her connection to demonkind. Lamashtans and followers of Yamasoth who both practice foul experiments on unwilling subjects might find their goals temporarily aligned, but such a partnership is always short-lived and inevitably ends with the two battling over any secrets of the flesh they may have uncovered together.

Similar alliances might seem possible between worshipers of the Polymorph Plague and drow fleshwarpers who follow the demon lord Haagenti, but nothing could be further from the truth. The two groups abhor one other, each claiming that their deity invented the practice of fleshwarping and that the other stole it. Although this rivalry is fierce, the groups rarely clash in practice: Haagenti-worshipping drow are mostly confined to the Darklands, while followers of Yamasoth typically inhabit the surface world.

SPELLCASTING

Clerics of Yamasoth can cast *baleful polymorph* and *polymorph* as 5th-level spells and *greater polymorph* as a 7th-level spell. In addition, worshipers of the Polymorph Plague have access to the following spell.

QLIPPOTH APPEARANCE

School transmutation (polymorph) [mind-affecting]; **Level**

alchemist 3, antipaladin 2, cleric 3, shaman 3, witch 3

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range personal

Target you

Duration 10 minutes/level (see text)

Saving Throw Will negates (see text); **Spell Resistance** yes
When under the effects of this spell, your face and body appear subtly wrong, though you are still recognizable as yourself. You gain a +4 circumstance bonus on Intimidate checks but take a -4 penalty on Diplomacy checks. As long as this spell's effects persist, you can reveal the face under your face as a standard action, assaulting the senses of a single living creature within 30 feet that can see you. A targeted creature must succeed at a Will save against the DC of this spell or be subject to one of the following effects (your choice). Every time you use this ability, you reduce the remaining duration of this spell by 10 minutes.

- The affected creature takes 1 point of Wisdom damage.
- The affected creature is paralyzed with revulsion for 1 round.
- The affected creature is sickened with disgust for 1d6 rounds.
- The affected creature takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage as its senses are overwhelmed.

OBEDIENCE

The following describes the daily rite Yamasoth's followers must perform to take full advantage of the Deific Obedience feat, as well as the boons for the prestige classes found in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Gods*.

OBEDIENCE (YAMASOTH)

Work the flesh of your own body or the body of another creature into a strange new shape, then meditate upon the sensations this new shape affords. You gain a +4 profane bonus on saving throws against polymorph and petrification effects.

EVANGELIST BOONS

- 1: Maledictions (Sp)** *bane* 3/day, *blindness/deafness* 2/day, or *bestow curse* 1/day
- 2: Ill Luck (Su)** As a swift action, you can activate or deactivate a 5-foot-radius aura of unluck. A creature in the area when the aura is active must roll attack rolls and skill checks twice and take the worse result. A creature benefiting from a luck bonus is immune to this aura. You can use this aura for a total number of rounds per day equal to your Charisma modifier.
- 3: Transfer Curse (Su)** Once per day, you can touch a creature that is affected by a curse effect or a spell with the curse descriptor and attempt to remove a single curse as the *remove curse* spell (treat your total Hit Dice as your caster level). You then hold the energy of that curse in your hand, as if you were holding the charge on a spell. With a successful touch attack, you can place that curse on another creature. The new target attempts the same saving throw as the original curse effect; if it fails, it is subject to the curse and the curse's duration (if any) resets. Attempts to remove this transferred curse with a *remove curse* spell use your total Hit Dice as the new caster level.

CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

Yamasoth's priests can use these *summon monster* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the respective spells.

SUMMON MONSTER VII

Qlippoth, gorgoros (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 228)

SUMMON MONSTER VIII

Qlippoth, gongorinan (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 226)

EXALTED BOONS

- 1: Transformations (Sp)** *enlarge person* 3/day, *alter self* 2/day, or *undead anatomy* ^{1UM} 1/day
- 2: Shriveled Limbs (Su)** Three times per day, you can make a touch attack to cause a living creature's arms and legs to temporarily wither unless it succeeds at a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 10 + half your total Hit Dice + your Charisma modifier). An affected creature counts as one size category smaller for the purpose of determining the size of weapons it can wield. If the creature is capable of making natural attacks with its arms, hands, or claws, the damage dealt by those attacks decreases as though the target were one size category smaller than its actual size. In addition, the creature's base speed decreases by 10 feet (to a minimum of 5 feet) and its Strength score counts as 4 lower for the purpose of determining its carrying capacity. After 24 hours, the creature's limbs return to normal. This is a curse effect.
- 3: Contagious Curse (Sp)** You can cast *conditional curse* ^{III} as a spell-like ability once per day. The condition you dictate to remove the curse must involve the target manipulating the flesh of two other creatures in some manner (such as removing a limb or organ, or grafting on an additional facial feature). Each creature whose flesh the target manipulates in this manner must also succeed at a saving throw at the same DC as your *conditional curse* or be affected in the same way as the first target, with the same condition to remove the curse.

SENTINEL BOONS

- 1: Adaptations (Sp)** *ant haul* ^{APG} 3/day, *spider climb* 2/day, or *water breathing* 1/day
- 2: Corrupted Nature (Sp)** You can cast *animal aspect* ^{UC} as a spell-like ability three times per day. The body parts you chose to alter are twisted and horrific to behold, though they provide the normal benefits of the spell.
- 3: Monstrous Form (Su)** Once per day as a standard action, you can will your body to reshape itself, though this metamorphosis is incredibly taxing. You gain a +2 profane bonus to any two of your Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores and gain DR 5/— for 10 minutes. After this ends, you are fatigued for 1 minute.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary



MAGIC POOLS

“Oh yes, the queen. That’s a bit of a funny story. You see, every year on the spring solstice, the whole village comes down and throws a coin in the old wishing well to try their luck. Back when I was young, I was convinced it was all bunk, but the more I got into my training, the more I began to think there might just be some magic to that wishing well after all. So I brought a big stack of shiny coins and was tossing them in one at a time, when up came Mrs. Happlevain’s little tabby cat familiar. I swear she looked me straight in the eye while knocking my whole stack of coins into the well. Anyway, there’s your lesson: never try to be clever around a cat. But I will say, she’s a much better leader than our last mayor.”

—Fenlen Yudalla, court wizard of
Queen Mittens the Magnificent

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

An adventurer at a tavern spreads tales of a fountain in the shattered lands of Azlant that can grant eternal youth. Merchants in Druma joke, with just a little too much credulity in their voices, of a pool that turns anything submerged in it into gold. Gnomes gleefully aid each other in the search for a magical fountain said to never have the same effect twice. Clerics of Lamashtu speak in hushed whispers of a muddy crater near the Pit of Gormuz where unique monsters can be birthed from the flesh of the unwilling. Legends abound across Golarion of pools that have magical waters; such legends seem too good to be true, and yet are enticing or frightening enough to lure the curious or desperate to seek them out.

Much as water can become infused with minerals from the surrounding earth, so too can it become infused with magic from nearby sources. The reason why water and other liquids serve as natural conductors for magic eludes modern scholars, but once a source of magic has diffused into a body of water, that magic can become concentrated in a way that offers potent powers. The origins of magic pools and fountains are many and varied—one pool might have leached energy from the mystic footprint of a deity who once walked nearby, while another might simply rest over an auspicious intersection of ley lines. Other magic pools aren't merely infused with magic, but are themselves raw magic in a liquefied form. Regardless of the method, once a pool has become enchanted, it easily grants its powers to those who stumble upon it: typically, a creature need only drink from or dip an object into its waters to gain a pool's mystic effects. Water removed from a fountain typically fails to retain the pool's magical properties; much as water removed from a thermal spring quickly becomes cold, water removed from a magic pool quickly becomes nonmagical. Fountains that defy this rule are highly sought after by alchemists, spellcasters, and treasure-hunters.

A magic pool's ease of access can spell doom for the pool itself, as very few of these fountains are inexhaustible. While it is very difficult to destroy a magic pool once it is created, rampant and careless use of a pool's power can cause it to become empty or dormant. A dormant pool might be recharged merely by refilling it with water, but could also require rare magical conjunctions or rituals lost to time. Still other pools have a finite supply of magic that, once spent, can never be restored.

These risks mean that magic pools are often jealously guarded by those who discover them and recognize their worth. Although such guardians might be mortal druids, cultists, or wizards, magic pools often attract more unusual protectors such as dragons, magical beasts, or holy guardians. These guardians' motives can be as

varied as the powers of the pools themselves; some may seek to hoard a pool's powers for themselves and slay any would-be competitors, while others might seek to preserve the pool, allowing only those deemed worthy to approach and utilize it. A few instead plan to capitalize on the nonmagical opportunities presented by a magic pool, exacting a price in treasure or favors for information about or access to the pool. This last group is perhaps the reason tales of magic pools are so pervasive: any charlatan can offer the location of a purportedly magical pool in exchange for a few coins or a stiff drink. The rare few tales with a kernel of truth fuel the fires of hope in anyone hearing of a remote magic pool.

MYSTERIOUS POOLS

The following are a few ancient magic fountains that have recently experienced a resurgence in their magical powers, and can be used by those who find them.

Everdawn Pool: A mystic pool that predates the founding of Thassilon, the *Everdawn Pool* inspired the runelords to create their signature *runewells*. Fueled by the blood of living beings, either stolen or freely given, the *Everdawn Pool* converts life force into magical power, bestowing strength on those who bathe in its bloody waters, stealing the vitality from creatures to grant its user eternal youth, and even returning the dead to life. For more information on the *Everdawn Pool*, see the page 433 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path: Curse of the Crimson Throne*.

Runeforge Pool: Though the runelords of Thassilon were not well known for their cooperation with each another, in a rare moment of humility, they recognized the failings of their specializations and envisioned a solution. They created a magical laboratory called Runeforge for their wizards to work together and further their magical research. The namesake of this laboratory, known as the *runeforge pool*, still sits at the center of Runeforge to this day. The *runeforge pool's* major function was to temper newly forged magic weapons, and it is currently the only known means of creating *runeforged weapons*. For more information on the *runeforge pool*, see page 254 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path: Rise of the Runelords Anniversary Edition*.

Runewells: Created by the runelords of Thassilon, *runewells* are magical pools capable of extracting specific spiritual traits from creatures and converting them into magical power. Once a *runewell* is glutted with the psychic vestiges of its corresponding emotions, that power can be harnessed to fuel powerful magical effects. The most well known of these powers is the ability to create *sinspawn* (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 246), but *runewells* often have a number of other uses, which usually involve spreading their accumulated psychic energy to nearby creatures. For more information on *runewells*, see page 424 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path: Rise of the Runelords Anniversary Edition*.

MAGIC POOLS ON GOLARION

The following magic pools can be found across Golarion. Some are hidden in distant locales, while others lie in plain sight for any passing creature to try their luck. Four entries are unique pools; three others are types of pools that may have several instances across Golarion. While the rumored powers of these pools can be heard in taverns and trading posts, few travelers can honestly separate fact from fiction—in some cases, even among those who have encountered the pools themselves.

THE GOD POOL

Created by Karzoug the Claimer to divine the future and evade a calamity, this twisted divination pool overflows with the wrath of a dozen gods.

Location: The *God Pool* lies under the city of Kaer Maga, near workshops once used by Karzoug, the Runelord of Greed, but now long abandoned.

Appearance: The *God Pool* is a partially flooded cavern, within which floats a conjoined circle of 12 human men and women—all of them blinded priests with a high rank in the church they once served. Karzoug kidnapped these clerics, blinded them, and magically stitched them together as his personal “prophecy engine.” The magical waters of the pool keep these priests both ageless and pliable, and their clothing intermingles to form an intricate circle of holy colors and patterns.



Guardians: In addition to multiple magical wards left behind by Karzoug himself, the priests trapped within the *God Pool* attack any creature that directly attempts to harm them—they have been quiescent for thousands of years, but they remember their terrible treatment by Karzoug and are resolved to suffer no further abuses. The conjoined nature of these priests allows them to combine their power, resulting in their ability to cast spells as a single 20th-level cleric, including any domain spell listed in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*.

Rumored Powers: Rumors abound that the *God Pool* is the only remaining artifact capable of offering true prophecy in the Age of Lost Omens, though more suspicious souls believe that reactivating the *God Pool* will transfer some of its divine power to Karzoug, possibly allowing for his return.

True Nature: After 10,000 years of lying dormant in the darkness, the conjoined consciousness of the *God Pool*'s priests has transformed into something akin to a divine power of its own. Though the amalgam retains its connection to multiple deities, it has developed a nature and ethos separate from any of the gods its component priests once served. Unfortunately, much of this ethos has been informed by the unconscious, unanswered prayers of the trapped clerics and the stewing frustration of their divine patrons.

Though Aroden's death ended reliable prophecy across Golarion, even for the consciousness within the *God Pool*, the fountain has formed its own malevolent alternative. Those who learn the proper rituals (likely gleaned from Karzoug's notes hidden away or trapped within nearby chambers) can ask the *God Pool* about the future and receive a definitive answer spoken in unison from the mouths of the clerics. Although the *God Pool*'s answers do not stem from genuine foreknowledge of the future, they are delivered with such assurance and gravitas that they take on the semblance of absolute fact in the minds of listeners. Any creature that hears a prophecy uttered by the *God Pool*—either directly from the pool itself or indirectly from any other creature who has heard of it—takes a –6 penalty on attack rolls, ability checks, and skill checks for any actions that directly impede that prophecy from coming true. This applies only to listeners who hear the substance of a prophecy spoken aloud, not to anyone who reads a writing about the prophecy or learns of it any way other than orally. This is a curse effect that can be removed only by a *miracle* or *wish*.

For more information on the *God Pool*, see page 55 of *Pathfinder Chronicles: City of Strangers*.

THE GOLDEN OASIS

The sole remaining oasis in the city of Katapesh, the Golden Oasis hosts schools of fish within its waters and lures pilgrims to sit beneath the shade of its trees.

Location: The *Golden Oasis* lies within the city of Katapesh, fed by the River Scorpius.

Appearance: This pool of clear water is flanked by shops, homes, and inns, all of which enjoy the shade of the oasis's many palm trees.

Guardians: The *Golden Oasis* has no mystical guardians, but is tended by dedicated groundskeepers and watched by the city guard.

Rumored Powers: Legends claim that those who sit in the shade near the pool gain divine inspiration, if their purpose is true and their patience is up to the task. Pilgrims who lean against the palm trees around the oasis are most likely to gain this inspiration.

True Nature: The palm trees around the *Golden Oasis* are only tangentially related to the visions some pilgrims experience. Instead, the visions often are the result of pilgrims inadvertently ingesting spirit moss, a foul-tasting gray-green moss that grows on ill or dying palm trees. Only the most desperate pilgrims do so intentionally; most inadvertently inhale or consume spores from the spirit moss that drift onto their clothing or food. In any case, the moss resonates with the psychic energy around the *Golden Oasis*, granting these pilgrims hallucinations of what appear to be spiritual beings. Some scholars therefore believe that the moss is the true source of the pool's many legends, and its legends of divine inspiration spring from mundane hallucinations.

In truth, the *Golden Oasis* also provides divine blessings, exactly as legends claim. Every full day that a pilgrim sits by the water of the *Golden Oasis*, there is a 1% chance that a random pilgrim at the oasis's edge receives a divine sign. No mortal magic can alter this chance or affect this roll, and how long a pilgrim has waited by the pool has no bearing on whether she receives a sign—a pilgrim may sit by the pool for a year only to see a recent arrival gain this divine contact instead. A pilgrim lucky enough to receive a divine sign gains a blessing from her deity, or from the deity that corresponds most closely with the pilgrim's beliefs. This blessing functions as the second exalted boon granted by the deity, as though the pilgrim had the Deific Obedience feat and 16 Hit Dice (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Gods* 210). At the GM's discretion, or if the pilgrim's deity doesn't grant an exalted boon to believers, the pilgrim instead gains the effects of *endure elements* and fire resistance equal to 5 plus the pilgrim's Hit Dice. This blessing lasts for 1 year, although the pilgrim loses it immediately if she performs an action that violates the deity's tenets or teachings. Once a divine blessing is granted to a

character, she can not ever gain a blessing from the *Golden Oasis* again.

For more information about the *Golden Oasis*, see page 35 of *Pathfinder Chronicles: Dark Markets, A Guide to Katapesh*.

GOZREH'S POOL

Hidden in the depths of the Mwangi Expanse, Gozreh's Pool offers succor to those suffering from jungle maladies, but holds another secret for those who know where to look.

Location: *Gozreh's Pool* lies in the Mwangi Jungle, between the Jasut Flow and the Ocota River.

Appearance: Surrounded by rocky cliffs, this pool is a cenote nearly 15 feet across. The pool's waters are cool and perfectly clear, distinctly unlike the murky and silt-choked jungle rivers that flow nearby, and are 12 feet below the lip of the circular pit.

Guardians: Two water elementals reside within the pool's waters, deterring those who fail to offer an earnest prayer, a small sacrifice, or another token to show respect to the pool. These water elementals wax and wane in size based on the season, but are most often Medium in size. No matter their size, the elementals are watchful but not particularly intelligent; even a fake show of respect, if delivered convincingly, placates them. The pool replaces any slain water elementals after 30 days.

Rumored Powers: Local inhabitants and explorers alike share tales of how the pool can remove the effects of illnesses and parasites, though a few nearby tribes believe the pool carries a curse or a slow-acting poison, as the clear water is suspiciously free of fish or algae.

True Nature: *Gozreh's Pool* does indeed heal the physical ailments of creatures bathing in the water, as per *remove disease* (CL 20th). However, another secret lies at the bottom of the pool, some 50 feet below the surface. The rocks at the bottom of the pool forms a perfect representation of the terrain within 60 miles of *Gozreh's Pool*, including tiny channels for all of the local rivers and small depressions for each of the local lakes. A follower of Gozreh who physically manipulates the water in the miniature lakes and rivers can affect the actual bodies of water represented by the miniature landscape. A creature can choose to change a river or lake to be either still water, rough water, or stormy water, or raise or lower the water level as if using *control water* (CL 20th). Alterations made by *Gozreh's Pool* last for 30 days and can alter only one body of water at a time. Any alteration enrages the pool's water elemental guardians. Even if a visitor had previously placated the elementals, they attack anyone who touches the miniature landscape at the pool's bottom.

For more information about *Gozreh's Pool*, see page 25 of *Pathfinder Chronicles: Heart of the Jungle*.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

HEALING FONTS

The pure waters of these mystic pools can mend the wounds of weary travelers who drink from them.

Location: Varies, but *healing fonts* are only rarely found in well-trafficked areas.

Appearance: Usually a stone basin with religious inscriptions, a *healing font* might occasionally appear as a naturally occurring pool. In any case, it contains clear, clean water regardless of the surrounding conditions.

Guardians: Varies. Many *healing fonts* are located in temples guarded by holy servants. *Healing fonts* located in sacred glades may be defended by druids or unicorns.

Rumored Powers: *Healing fonts* are believed to heal the injuries of those who drink their waters.

True Nature: Though most magical pools have vague legends and wild stories told about them, *healing fonts* are a case where the legends and facts coincide. A sip of water from a *healing font* provides the benefits of *cure light wounds* or a more powerful cure spell; each *healing font* has a caster level, and the font's effects replicate the most powerful cure spell that a cleric of that caster level could cast. Some fonts instead replicate a *regenerate* or *heal* spell, although these more powerful effects are rare. Waters from a *healing font* lose their potency if taken more than a few feet away from the well.

Most *healing fonts* are limited in the amount of healing they can provide. The most common limitations are that a font can heal a specific creature only once per day, can provide healing only a few times each day, or both. Most *healing fonts* recharge their healing waters automatically over time, but a few require a specific condition (such as 8 hours of exposure to direct moonlight) to replenish their healing magic. Rare *healing fonts* offer unlimited healing, but instead require an individual to offer a specific token or perform a ritual to receive their healing properties, such as a well-spoken prayer to the font's patron deity (requiring a successful DC 20 Knowledge [religion] check). Failure at this check typically renders the *healing font's* magic dormant for 24 hours.

INFUSION POOLS

A weapon dipped into the colored waters of an infusion pool is imbued with magical energy for a time.

Location: Varies, but often found in arcane laboratories or temples to militant religions.

Appearance: Varies based on the specific magic weapon special ability granted by the pool; for example, *infusion pools* that grant the *flaming* special ability have red waters that froth and bubble, while those that grant the *holy* special ability glow with bright light.

Guardians: None.

Rumored Powers: Tales of *infusion pools* often become entangled with legends of the *runeforge pool*, leading to

wild rumors of pools that can craft weapons out of a creature's own sins and claims that weapons quenched in an *infusion pool* have the power to slay immortals or even gods.

True Nature: Though *infusion pools* with magic as powerful as the legends claim may well exist, most *infusion pools* are far more humble in scope. Each *infusion pool* is attuned to a specific magic weapon special ability, such as *frost* or *ghost touch*, and grants that special ability to a masterwork or magical weapon dipped in the pool (as well as granting a +1 enhancement bonus, if the weapon doesn't already have it). Most *infusion pools* provide this benefit for an hour or a day; a few rare pools grant this special ability permanently, but these often require that the weapon steep in the pool's magic for days or weeks. Nearly all *infusion pools* cause affected weapons to glow as brightly as a torch for the duration of the effect. An *infusion pool* must adhere to normal magic weapon requirements; for example, it can't grant a weapon special ability that would provide a modified bonus higher than +10, and it can't grant the *keen* weapon special ability to a bludgeoning weapon or a ranged weapon.

STARBREATH POOL

This magical pool is illuminated by a shining ray of light in a dark and frozen wasteland.

Location: When the Tashen Yakuta ice shelf at the Crown of the World extends south during the region's long, cold winters, *Starbreath Pool* appears in the center of the temporary ice.

Appearance: When *Starbreath Pool* is seen during daylight hours—a rarity during winter at the Crown of the World—it merely resembles an unusually circular hole in the ice open to the ocean water beneath. At night, however, the pool emits a pillar of cool light that reaches all the way up through the sky toward a single star that hovers permanently over the pool.

Guardians: A herd of several hundred celestial megaloceroses (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 187, 292) lingers near the pool. These creatures slowly surround any who approach the waters. They do not interfere with those who seek to drink from the pool or dive into the waters, but they become hostile if anyone attempts to hunt creatures in the pool or take its water away.

Rumored Powers: Explorers in the Crown of the World sometimes spread tales of a cursed pool that lures lost travelers with its light and then transforms them into animals. The Erutaki—the hardy people native to the area around *Starbreath Pool*—have their own legends, claiming the light between the pool and the sky above it is a trail of animal souls traveling to paradise, and that those touched by the spirit world can follow these souls into the heavens.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

True Nature: Any humanoid or animal that drinks from *Starbreath Pool* at night falls under its effects for the next 7 days. During this time, the creature is protected from the cold, as per *endure elements*. If the creature dies while under the pool's effects, it is automatically returned to life in a new body after one day. Humanoids returned to life in this manner are returned in the body of an animal; this functions as *reincarnate*, except that the creature does not gain negative levels and does not roll on the *reincarnate* table to determine its new form. Instead, the creature randomly takes on the form of either an arctic hare, an arctic fox, an arctic tern, a caribou, a polar bear, or a seal. Animals returned to life by *Starbreath Pool* take on a humanoid form and sentience; this functions as both *awaken* and *reincarnate*, except the creature does not gain negative levels. These abilities function at caster level 17th. A creature transformed by *Starbreath Pool* can be returned to its original form only by a *miracle* or *wish*.

WISHING WELLS

Some rare wishing wells really do have the power to make dreams come true.

Location: Varies, and can even be found in or near a large settlement.

Appearance: Varies, from gold-plated holy fountains of Abadar to crumbling, moss-covered wells at the edge of a village.

Guardians: Varies; a *wishing well* might be guarded by magical creatures, such as fey or dragons, or might be protected by nothing more than a shabby appearance that deters close inspection.

Rumored Powers: One of the best-known types of magic pools, *wishing wells* are rumored to grant a *wish* to those who toss a coin or other object of value into their waters. Rumors of *wishing wells* far outstrip the number of legitimate *wishing wells*; humble villages and ostentatious churches alike proudly attribute miraculous powers to fountains and wells that have none.

True Nature: True *wishing wells* come in all shapes and sizes, and acquire their fabulous powers seemingly at random. *Wishing wells* cannot be detected as magical without a successful DC 30 caster level check, which leaves most of these wells hidden among mundane wells. *Wishing wells* function only when a precise number of

coins—usually 25,000 gp—has been thrown into their waters. When a creature throws in a coin or trinket that brings the total value of coins thrown into a *wishing well* to exactly 25,000 gp (an item thrown into the well counts as a number of coins equal to its value) and makes a wish, the *wishing well* grants the requested wish as per the *wish* spell, with the most generous interpretation possible. At the same time, all coins and valuables in the *wishing well* vanish. If the creature doesn't make a wish, or throws in coins or items that cause the value to exceed 25,000 gp, the *wishing well* resets and another 25,000 gp in coins is required. A creature can benefit from only one *wish* from a specific *wishing well*.

Valuables removed from the well before the wish is granted still count for the purposes of determining when a wish is granted, so merely counting the coins in a *wishing well* might not give a true prediction of when a wish is due. In addition, some *wishing wells* have different monetary requirements. As a result, predicting an upcoming wish is extremely difficult, and even those rare few scholars with knowledge of how *wishing wells* work are usually forced to throw in a single coin and try their luck alongside everyone else.





BESTIARY

One would expect a cave-in to be a cacophonous affair. Yet when our caravan passed the collapsed wall in the subterranean Halflight Path, the dust was still swirling in the air, as though the tumbled brick and stone had silently collapsed only moments before. I peered into the new opening as I passed and beheld a vast cave covered with crude cave paintings. And, oh, the images! I saw a drawing of myself, my home, my old mentor Hamarayana, and even you, in regal profile! How could images from my own life be here? I stepped over the rubble to examine them closer; if my companions warned me back, I didn't hear them. Only a few paces in, I saw the retreating figure with a bone crown hovering above his head. He didn't turn around, but only gestured for me to follow him. Wisely, however, I fled.

—from Methalda Ver Narelto's "Letters from Kaer Maga"

The Return of the Runelords Adventure Path continues with a series of travels to Varisia's largest cities on the heels of wicked cultists. This bestiary presents several creatures found in Kaer Maga and more exotic realms, including a construction automaton built by one of Kaer Maga's preeminent families, an aquatic master of alien arts, silent shapechangers who utter words of cataclysmic power, and a warped harbinger of misery.

CELEBRATION IN KORVOSA

In "Runeplague," the PCs visit the city of Korvosa at the height of a festival celebrating the defeat of Queen Ileosa. The Korvosa Festival Encounters table presented here features challenges the PCs might face beyond those in the adventure. The PCs have a 20% chance of a random encounter every hour during the day or every night of rest. If a random encounter occurs, roll d% and run the encounter listed for the result. If the result rolled is outside the Challenge Rating range appropriate for the PCs, roll again on the table or choose a different encounter. The PCs should have at most three random encounters in a 24-hour period. Feel free to adjust this rate as necessary to allow the PCs to recover from a particularly harrowing encounter or to provide the PCs with additional experience points.

Cultists of Yamasoth have unknowingly created the following new haunts in the city with their murders and transmutations. Haunts are described on pages 242–243 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*.

Reckless Revelry Haunt (CR 11): Cultists took advantage of the distraction of the festival to ambush and murder a group of revelers dancing through a short alley. The psychic energy from the slain dancers remains here.

RECKLESS REVELRY

CR 11

XP 12,800

NE haunt (10-ft.-by-30-ft. alley)

Caster Level 11th

Notice Perception DC 20 (to hear faint music and tapping feet)

hp 22; **Weakness** sonic spells and effects (these effects damage the haunt); **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

Effect The spectral forms of costumed dancers coalesce around the creature in the alley with the highest Charisma score. That creature is affected by *irresistible dance* and must also attempt a DC 22 Fortitude save each round it is dancing or suffer muscle cramps that deal 1d4 points of Strength damage. This dance is contagious; any creature that touches a dancing creature must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or join in the dance, dancing for as long as the target creature dances and attempting its own Fortitude save each round to avoid taking 1d4 points of Strength damage.

Destruction The haunt is destroyed if the alley is placed under the effects of *hallow* and *silence* simultaneously.

KORVOSA FESTIVAL ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–4	1d12 Yamasoth cultists	8	See page 32
5–8	1 prankster illusionist	9	<i>NPC Codex</i> 185
9–13	1 vampire	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 270
14–18	Yamasoth's Touch Haunt	9	See below
19–22	1 alp*	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 7
23–28	1d8 freelance thieves	10	<i>NPC Codex</i> 147
29–36	1d6 hounds of Tindalos	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 158
37–41	1d3 ogre mages	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 221
42–46	2d6 Peacock Spirit cultists	10	See page 48
47–51	1 barbed devil	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 72
52–56	Reckless Revelry Haunt	11	See below
57–61	1d3 spirit nagas*	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 213
62–67	1d6 xenopterids*	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 283
68–72	2 giant flytraps*	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 134
73–77	1 gravesludge*	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 145
78–82	1 misery siktempora	12	See page 90
83–86	1 night hag and 1 cauchemar	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 215, 216
87–92	1d4 rakshasas	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 231
93–96	1 devilbound sorcerer	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 56
97–100	1 psoglav*	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 215

* These creatures could be people subjected to the polymorph plague; if so, the PCs can restore them as described on pages 8–9.

Yamasoth's Touch Haunt (CR 9): The Polymorph Plague infected a small city park with mutating forces. Citizens might ask the PCs to investigate local disappearances and an infestation of odd, aggressive rodents.

YAMASOTH'S TOUCH

CR 9

XP 6,400

CE haunt (50-ft.-by-50-ft. park)

Caster Level 9th

Notice Perception DC 20 (to feel faint tugs on muscle and bone, as if being massaged by a spectral hand)

hp 18; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

Effect A ghostly, pale tentacle erupts from the ground and lashes out at a random creature, affecting it as per *baneful polymorph* (Fortitude DC 17 negates, Will DC 17 partial) and transforming it into a hairless weasel with an eellike mouth (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 133). If the target creature fails the Will saving throw, it gains the effects of a *rage* spell and attacks the nearest creature to the best of its ability for 1 minute, or until it is killed or incapacitated.

Destruction The haunt is destroyed if any animal or magical beast within the park is subject to *calm emotions* for at least 1 minute.

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

ARDOC MOILANT

This massive metallic biped stands on thick legs. A wide, serrated shovel serves as the brute's head, and iron pincers at the ends of its powerful arms snap open and shut.

ARDOC MOILANT

CR 10



XP 9,600

N Huge construct

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 8, flat-footed 24 (+16 natural, -2 size)

hp 124 (13d10+53)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities loyal servant; **DR** 10/adamantine;

Immune construct traits; **SR** 26

Weaknesses thaumaturgical field

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee gore +21 (2d6+15/19-20), 2 vise-pincers +21 (1d8+10 plus grab)

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

Special Attacks constrict (1d8+11), resounding burst, shovelhead, trample (2d6+15, DC 26), vise-pincers

STATISTICS

Str 31, **Dex** 11, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +25 (+29 grapple, +27 sunder); **CMD** 35 (37 vs. bull rush, reposition, sunder)

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Lunge, Power Attack, Toughness, Vital Strike

Skills Knowledge (engineering) +13, Perception +17

Languages Common

SQ death throes, stable footing

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or fleet (3-8)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Death Throes (Ex) An Ardoc moilant explodes when it is destroyed, unless its master is within 30 feet at the moment of its destruction. When it explodes, creatures within 30 feet of it take 13d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 16 half). Half of this damage is fire and half is piercing. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Loyal Servant (Su) The Spellcraft DC to wrest or maintain control of an Ardoc moilant using *control construct*^{UM} or similar magic is increased by 10 for anyone other than the moilant's master. Whenever an attempt to wrest control of the moilant fails, the moilant gains 10 temporary hit points for 1 hour, to a maximum of 30 temporary hit points.

Resounding Burst (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds as a full-round action, an Ardoc moilant can snap its vise-pincers closed

with enough force to produce a shock wave of sound and disruptive magic in a 30-foot radius centered on itself.

The moilant attempts a single bull rush combat maneuver check and applies the result to each creature in the affected area. A creature pushed by the shock wave takes 2d6 points of sonic damage for every 5 feet it is pushed. In addition, the wave dispels magic in the area as per *greater dispel magic* (CL 13th). An Ardoc moilant cannot use this ability if it is grappling a creature with its vise-pincers.

Shovelhead (Ex) The serrated edge of an Ardoc moilant's shovel-like head is viciously sharp. It applies 1-1/2 times its Strength modifier to damage dealt by its gore attack, and it threatens a critical hit on a 19-20. As a full-round action, an Ardoc moilant can use its head to excavate and move earth, dust, or sand up to the size of a 5-foot cube (as per the spell *expeditious excavation*^{APG}).

Stable Footing (Ex) The weight and sturdiness of its form grants an Ardoc moilant a +2 racial bonus to its CMD versus bull rush and reposition combat maneuver checks.

Thaumaturgical Field (Su) An Ardoc moilant's spell resistance is powerful but fragile. If a spell of at least 3rd level fails to penetrate the moilant's spell resistance, it loses its spell resistance for 1d4 rounds.

Vise-Pincers (Ex) An Ardoc moilant's vise-pincers are primary natural attacks that deal bludgeoning and piercing damage. Attacks that the moilant makes with its vise-pincers ignore the hardness of objects with a hardness of 15 or less. When an Ardoc moilant successfully establishes or maintains a pin, it applies its constrict damage to both the target and the target's armor or shield (Ardoc moilant's choice).

Ardoc moilants are hulking thaumaturgical workhorses created to move earth or perform other heavy labor. Efficient and powerful in their movements, Ardoc moilants carry out instructions with determination and a keen awareness that betrays a higher intelligence. The Ardoc family of Kaer Maga has achieved great success by mass-producing these constructs, which sell quickly due to their adaptability, durability, and ability to work for long periods with little need for oversight.

Ardoc moilants are roughly humanoid in shape, with strong arms that end in massive gripping pincers. Moilants have large, shovel-shaped heads that they can lower to push aside dirt and stone. Of course, these tools that make the moilants so suited for heavy labor can also be used to make devastating attacks against those who interfere with their tasks.

An Ardoc moilant is 25 feet tall and weighs 10 tons.

ECOLOGY

Every component of an Ardoc moilant's form is designed for labor, from its low, squat shape with wide feet to prevent destruction of valuable terrain, to its rune-

engraved pincers that can both bore through stone and lift delicate cargo. Although not built with combat as a primary function, Ardoc moilants can be used in battle with no additional modification. They are sometimes employed as secondary enforcers or guards to watch over valuable mines, factories, or palaces under construction. An Ardoc moilant's impressive size is often sufficient to dissuade any potential threats, but persistent trespassers soon find that a moilant's gripping pincers and shovel-shaped head are formidable weapons. Although every component of an Ardoc moilant is created by or enhanced with magic, its magical nature is most apparent in its rune-carved pincers, which can create powerful magical shock waves.

Ardoc moilants are particularly clever, able to evaluate outcomes and approach assigned tasks with a keen understanding of engineering principles. One of the many secrets the Ardoks keep about the construction process is that this sophisticated programming relies on patterning from a human soul. Though this patterning is vital to the moilants' utility and popularity, the patterning ritual is exceptionally painful and sometimes fatal to the human source.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

As constructs built by the Ardoks' arcane masters, moilants have no society in the traditional sense—at least according to the Ardoc family. Customers have noted, however, that Ardoc moilants seem to exhibit patterns of behavior that hint at a deeper level of consciousness and an inner drive for companionship.

Unless presented with constant activity, the labor-constructs tend to gather in small groups, or even with other machines or constructs. Most Ardoc moilants are created with the ability to speak a language selected by the buyer. They speak only rarely, and their deep, gravelly voices sound like metal scraping on metal. All moilants acquire distinctive personalities and notable quirks over time, such as collecting certain types of small items or pushing rubble into shapes that mimic the runes on their pincers. Diligent owners might demand a readjustment or refund from the Ardoc family when their moilants start to demonstrate too much individual initiative, but some moilants leave their masters and strike out on their own before this readjustment can occur.

CONSTRUCTION

Crafting an Ardoc moilant requires 20,000 pounds of steel smelt with rare compounds costing 7,500 gp. The precise process is jealously guarded by the Ardoc family.

ARDOC MOILANT

CL 13th **Price** 87,500 gp

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Construct, *geas/quest, limited wish, make whole, move earth*, creator must be caster level 13th; **Skill** Craft (armor) or Craft (weapons) DC 20;

Cost 47,500 gp

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
allery

both
pols



ASHULLIAN

This enormous, eyeless eel-person has a round head atop its long neck and a thick torso with four hand-like tentacles and two long tails. Its skin is translucent, displaying colorful fluids rippling within, and embedded with strange objects.

ASHULLIAN

CR 11



XP 12,800

CE Large outsider (native, water)

Init +11; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft., scent; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 16, flat-footed 19 (+7 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

hp 137 (11d10+77)

Fort +9, **Ref** +14, **Will** +11

Immune gaze attacks, illusions, visual effects, and other attack forms that rely on sight; **Resist** cold 30; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 60 ft.

Melee 4 tentacles +17 (1d6+3), 2 tail slaps +12 (1d8+1)

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

Special Attacks powerful tentacles, synesthetic masterpiece (DC 20)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +16)

At will—*hydraulic push*^{APG}, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

3/day—*aqueous orb*^{APG} (DC 18), quickened *hydraulic push*, *hydraulic torrent*^{APG} (DC 18)

1/day—*cone of cold* (DC 20), *major creation*, *telekinesis* (DC 20)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 25, **Con** 23, **Int** 18, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 32

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*hydraulic push*), Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Craft (any 3) +18, Disable Device +16, Knowledge (planes) +12, Perception +16, Sleight of Hand +21, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +17, Swim +25, Use Magic Device +19

Languages Aklo, Aquan

SQ bower

ECOLOGY

Environment any water (Kaer Maga)

Organization solitary or collective (2-4)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bower (Su) By spending 1 hour in intense concentration, an ashullian can designate a 50-foot-radius area within 200 feet as its bower. An ashullian's senses permeate its bower, allowing it to perceive the entire area with its blindsight and to touch, taste, smell, and hear everything within it. An ashullian always has line of effect to any area of its bower, and can cause any of its spell-like or supernatural abilities to originate from any point within its bower instead of from

its own space. While inside its bower, the ashullian can use its *telekinesis* and *major creation* spell-like abilities at will to affect any creatures and objects located within. The ashullian's bower remains in place until the ashullian dies, moves more than 200 feet from the bower, or creates a new bower. A *dispel magic* spell or effect cannot dispel an ashullian's bower, although it can suppress the bower as though it were a magic item.

Powerful Tentacles (Ex) An ashullian treats its tentacle attacks as primary natural attacks.

Synesthetic Masterpiece (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, an ashullian can briefly channel its artistic mastery to flood its bower with an overwhelming multisensory experience. Non-ashullians within its bower must each succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude saving throw or take 5d8 points of sonic damage and be staggered for 1 round, and must also succeed at a DC 20 Will save or take 5d8 points of damage and be fascinated for 1 round (during this round, the creature does not view anything within the bower that does not attack the affected creature as a potential threat). A creature that fails both saving throws is stunned for 1d4 rounds, rather than staggered or fascinated for 1 round. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Blind, contemplative artists from the lightless depths of the Elemental Plane of Water, ashullians coaxed sounds, tastes, and other diverse stimuli into miles-wide galleries among the plane's freezing currents. A powerful race of subterranean humanoids beneath Kaer Maga coveted the ashullians' abilities and tore open a planar rift that captured several ashullians but also flooded the humanoids' underground chambers with icy water. The humanoids vanished, and their ashullian prisoners now haunt the Kaer Magan caves known as the Drowned Levels. For generations, these creatures have prowled the chambers of their vanished captors. Ashullians seek objects that realize their eclectic and unpredictable aesthetic sense and showcase whatever oddities they find—which could include anything from a sodden scroll or a jeweled brooch to a severed foot—by wearing them in their flesh or displaying them in their magical bowers.

Ashullians are not inherently aggressive, but they demand that strangers contribute curios for their art. An ashullian's sense of a "curio" is utterly alien to most creatures, and can range from a bauble or scarf to a moist lump of bread or a long strip of newly flayed skin. Denying an ashullian is likely to provoke its rage.

A typical ashullian's lithe form measures 16 feet from head to tails and weighs only 200 pounds.

ECOLOGY

An ashullian's eyeless, eellike head has a small, lipless mouth full of unsettling humanlike teeth. Its elongated

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

cranium sits above a supple neck and four sharp-tipped tentacles. Its torso splits into two thick tails as long as the rest of its body. An ashullian's transparent, leathery skin reveals a body cavity with swirling iridescent ribbons of fluid in place of organs. Ciliated clefts and soft, flexible spines—the ashullian's sensory apparatuses—run along its back and arms.

Although their ancestors lived in the Plane of Water, the ashullians beneath Kaer Maga are now native outsiders. Their artistic abilities are stunted, degenerate versions of those of their progenitors, who may still swim within enormous sensory galleries in the Elemental Plane of Water. Ashullians on Golarion can realize their grand visions only within their bowers, exercising incredible control in pursuit of their inscrutable artistry. Within a bower, the diverse contents' own sensory elements—such as the coarse texture of rusted mail, the sour taste of reagents, and the stink of decaying flesh—are combined with whorls of scent, sounds, and other minor manifestations injected by the ashullian. An ashullian can create and move objects within its bower by thought alone, and can even suspend basic physical laws there; if an ashullian chooses, an object remains eternally suspended in the water in defiance of gravity, or remains dry despite being submerged. An ashullian revels in the synesthetic glory of its bower, but other creatures find the multisensory experience overwhelming.

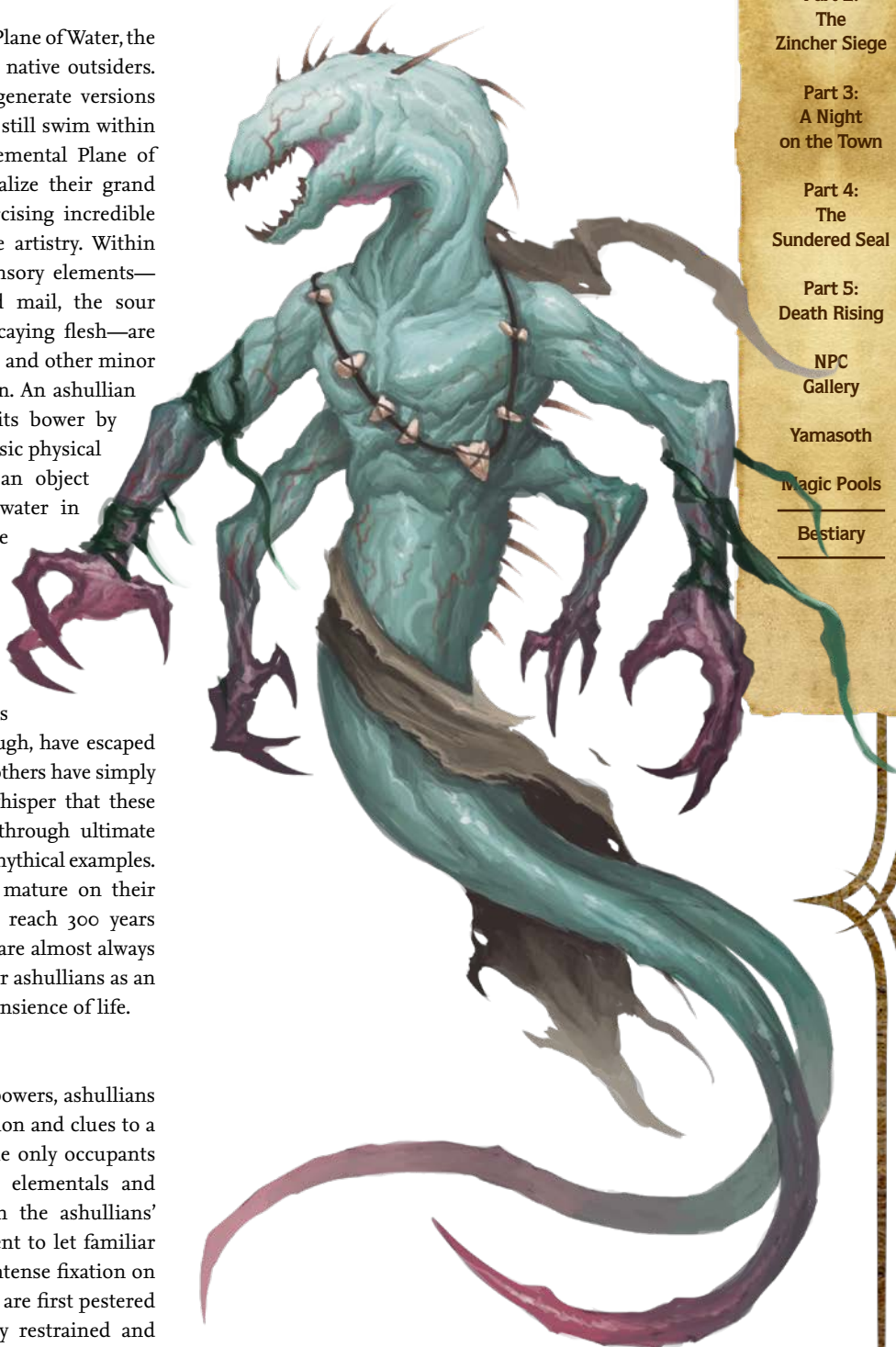
The ancient magic that brought ashullians to the Drowned Levels keeps most of them trapped there. A few, though, have escaped their prison via purloined magic, while others have simply vanished without a trace. Ashullians whisper that these paragons transcended their existence through ultimate artistic mastery and seek to follow these mythical examples.

Ashullians are spawned singly and mature on their own. Ashullians grow slowly and can reach 300 years old. The bodies of deceased ashullians are almost always incorporated into the bowers of younger ashullians as an artistic statement about aging or the transience of life.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

When not tending to their individual bowers, ashullians search the Drowned Levels for inspiration and clues to a means of escape. Ashullians are not the only occupants of these dismal, sodden halls; water elementals and other aquatic creatures swim through the ashullians' domain. Ashullians are generally content to let familiar creatures pass, although they have an intense fixation on visitors from the surface. These visitors are first pestered for trinkets and curios, but eventually restrained and stripped layer by layer so the ashullian can experience

their full sensory measure. Occasionally, visitors escape an ashullian's attention by presenting a novel artistic display and fleeing while the creature is occupied. Ashullians are rarely welcome within another ashullian's bower, as each considers its own artistic experiments to be superior to those of its kin and is unabashedly critical of others.



KASTHEZVI

Cracked skin stretches across the body of this gangly humanoid creature. A crown of bone floats above its grotesque, misshapen head and its mouth is open in a silent scream.

KASTHEZVI

CR 12



XP 19,200

LE Medium aberration (shapechanger)

Init +8; **Senses** blindsense 120 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 15, flat-footed 22 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +12 natural)

hp 152 (16d8+80)

Fort +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +15; +8 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities *mind blank*; **DR** 15/magic;

Immune sonic; **SR** 23

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee subsonic touch +14 (1d8 plus 12d6 sonic)

Special Attacks word of sundering

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +19)

Constant—*mind blank*

3/day—*shatter* (DC 15)

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 19, **Con** 20, **Int** 17, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 29

Feats Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lunge, Mobility, Nimble Moves, Spring Attack

Skills Climb +21, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +19, Perception +22, Spellcraft +22, Stealth +31, Survival +22; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth

Languages Common, Kasthezvi, Thassilonian (can't speak)

SQ change shape (any humanoid; *alter self*), death throes, soundless

ECOLOGY

Environment any underground (Kaer Maga)

Organization solitary, pair, or cabal (3–6)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Change Shape (Su) While in an alternate form, a kasthezvi retains its special abilities. A kasthezvi can remain in an alternate form for up to 8 hours each day.

Death Throes (Su) When killed, a kasthezvi explodes in a 100-foot-radius burst of long-suppressed sound. This burst deals 16d6 points of sonic damage and permanently deafens creatures in the area. Affected creatures can attempt a DC 21 Fortitude save to reduce the damage by half and negate the deafness. This is a sonic effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Soundless (Ex) A kasthezvi never causes sound through its actions, whether mundane or magical, except when it uses its word of sundering ability. This includes its movement,

abilities, contact with other creatures or objects, attempts at vocalization, spell effects, and any other possible sources of sound. This does not prevent sounds made by the victims of its attacks. A kasthezvi that can cast spells does so as if its spells were modified by the Silent Spell feat, but without increasing the spell's level or casting time.

Subsonic Touch (Su) A kasthezvi's touch is a touch attack that deals 1d8 points of damage that bypasses damage reduction, plus 12d6 sonic damage. Though this additional damage is sonic damage, it makes no audible noise.

Word of Sundering (Su) Once per minute, a kasthezvi can speak a silent word of sundering; this takes 1 full round. When it finishes speaking the word at the beginning of its next turn, the kasthezvi targets a 40-foot-radius spread within 800 feet. This area is targeted by an *earthquake* spell. In addition, creatures in the area take 8d6 points of sonic damage (Fortitude DC 21 half) and unattended nonmagical objects of ceramic, crystal, glass, or porcelain in the area silently break into dozens of pieces, as if affected by a *shatter* spell. The kasthezvi's caster level for these effects is equal to its racial Hit Dice (CL 16th for most kasthezvis). If the kasthezvi is killed, stunned, or otherwise prevented from vocalizing while uttering its word of sundering, the word ends with no effect. If a kasthezvi speaks a word of sundering while it has changed its shape, it immediately reverts to its true form. This is a sonic effect, though it is not blocked by spells or effects that create silence. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Malicious and immortal, kasthezvis are among the most ancient creatures inhabiting the deep places beneath Kaer Maga. Their long-dead creators crafted these abominations to be utterly incapable of causing sound, as their very bones are vessels for primal words of power.

If a kasthezvi could fully speak the primordial words etched into its bones, it could cause catastrophic devastation with a simple phrase. However, kasthezvis' creators intended kasthezvis to contain and conceal the words, not use them, and etched primordial silence onto the kasthezvis' souls. This suppressive magic has slowly deteriorated with each passing century, and as it has, kasthezvis have drawn strength from the ancient words contained within. They are now capable of issuing powerful, silent utterances that can level entire buildings. Given time, there is no telling the extent of their power.

A kasthezvi's body is roughly humanoid in shape, though otherwise alien in appearance. Its dry, cracked skin stretches across misshapen bones. Its skull is typically at an unnatural angle to its body, and its silently screaming face is asymmetrical. A crown of bone floats above its head, vibrating erratically. A kasthezvi's every movement appears deceptively lurching and uncoordinated.

A kasthezvi is 6 feet tall but weighs only 100 pounds.

ECOLOGY

The origin of the kasthezvis, whose existence is unknown to virtually everyone except the enigmatic caulborn (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 48) beneath Kaer Maga, is long forgotten. Some caulborn speculate that the kasthezvis are living weapons, while others claim that the creatures were originally benign, and that the death of their masters caused them untold suffering, corrupting their true purpose. Most caulborn agree that the kasthezvis' bone crowns act as magical dampeners and allow the kasthezvis to speak powerful words without imploding, but no one has ever managed to acquire an intact crown for study.

As the creations of ancient beings, kasthezvis cannot procreate. They frequently band together in small cabals and rarely feud with one another. Learning the process to create more kasthezvis may be their greatest desire, beyond harnessing the primordial power they contain.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Kasthezvis have complete contempt for all living things and show only the barest respect for those more powerful than themselves. Yet theirs is a patient, meticulous evil. Kasthezvis are extremely cautious when speaking words of sundering or making their clandestine trips to spy on the surface world, knowing that their power is greater if no one knows they exist. When kasthezvi visit the city above, they disguise themselves as mute beggars or pious, quiet Sweettalkers. Few notice that they make no sound, and those who discover these spies' unnatural silence typically vanish in fatal "accidents" beneath the city. The purpose of kasthezvis' espionage is unknown. Some caulborn speculate that the kasthezvis are preparing to collapse the entire city in a single, silent cataclysm; others believe they seek to refine the ancient words that give them power or to discover a process by which they can procreate among the fecund surface dwellers.

Kaladurnae, Thassilon's first Runelord of Greed, had a tenuous arrangement with the kasthezvis. In exchange for knowledge of the ancient city and snippets of powerful words and phrases, Runelord Kaladurnae trained a select few kasthezvis in wizardry. These powerful runespeakers still live, but are cursed with greed. They hoard their arcane knowledge and venture from their lairs only when enticed by the prospect of learning new secrets. Kaladurnae also taught the kasthezvis to write. Kasthezvis cover their austere lairs with runes, scratches, and ancient Thassilonian letters, occasionally mixed with silent *explosive runes* inscribed by their runespeakers. These writings would be the greatest source of knowledge

about the kasthezvis' history, culture, and motivations—if anyone could locate and decipher them. Aside from these writings, Kasthezvis communicate using a unique sign language known only to their kind, in which they use their entire bodies in an inhuman display of contortions and jerking limbs.

All kasthezvi can speak words of terrible, sundering power, but some caulborn claim to have witnessed kasthezvi speak other words with different destructive effects: storms of hail and fire, endless swarms of insects, and the reversal of gravity or even time.

Frustrated by their inability to understand kasthezvis, some caulborn hire adventuring scholars to try to infiltrate and study kasthezvi lairs. No such mission has yet succeeded.



RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Sundered Seal

Part 5:
Death Rising

NPC
Gallery

Yamasoth

Magic Pools

Bestiary

SIKTEMPORA MISERY

This armless creature has a woman's torso supported by six spidery legs. It lacks a mouth or nose, and its gaze conveys a furious misery.

MISERY SIKTEMPORA

CR 12



XP 19,200

CE Large outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Init +13; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +24

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 19, flat-footed 22 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 insight, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 168 (16d10+80); fast healing 10

Fort +10, **Ref** +16, **Will** +15

Defensive Abilities evasion, temporal sense; **Immune** disease, mind-affecting effects, pain effects, poison

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.; *air walk*

Melee 2 claws +21 (2d6+6/19-20 plus misery)

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

Special Attacks burst of uncanny speed, savage the suffering, sneak attack +4d6, telepathic wail

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +16)

Constant—*air walk*

At will—temporal jaunt

3/day—*displacement*, quickened *vanish*^{APG}

1/day—*plane shift* (DC 21)

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 19, **Con** 20, **Int** 15, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 43 (51 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (claws), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*vanish*), Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack^B

Skills Acrobatics +23, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (history) +21, Knowledge (planes) +21, Perception +24, Sense Motive +24, Stealth +19

Languages Aklo (cannot speak); telepathy 300 ft.

SQ miserable source

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Dimension of Time)

Organization solitary, pair, or desperation (3-6)

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Burst of Uncanny Speed (Su) On the first round of combat, a misery siktempora moves as if it were affected by a *haste* spell. It can use Whirlwind Attack on this first round of combat as a standard action, making one melee attack at its highest base attack bonus against each opponent within reach.

Miserable Source (Ex) A misery siktempora created by a creature that has damaged the time stream is no more powerful than others of its kind, but its creator takes

a -4 penalty on saving throws against that particular siktempora's misery and telepathic wail abilities.

Misery (Sp) Those struck by a misery siktempora's claws are infused with the misery and despair the creature is made of. A creature that takes damage from a misery siktempora's claw must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or it becomes struck with despair and takes a -4 penalty on attack rolls, Will saving throws, and skill checks for 1 minute. If a creature is already affected by misery, failing an additional save resets the duration and restores 5 hit points to the misery siktempora. This is a mind-affecting emotion effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Savage the Suffering (Su) A misery siktempora has a supernatural knack for striking those suffering from misery and confusion. It treats confused foes and those affected by its misery attack as flat-footed.

Telepathic Wail (Su) Once per round as a swift action, a misery siktempora can fill the mind of a single living creature within 100 feet with the perception of a wail filled with horror and despair. A creature subjected to this telepathic wail must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or become confused for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Temporal Jaunt (Sp) As a standard action, a misery siktempora can vanish into the time stream, reappearing in another location. This ability functions as *dimension door* (so a typical misery siktempora can jaunt up to 880 feet), but the siktempora can take other actions that round after reappearing, and the destination must be in a location the siktempora could reach normally by walking. Temporal jaunts are not true teleportation—the misery siktempora simply travels to a later point in the time stream—so the ability can be used in areas that bar teleportation effects; however, in such areas a siktempora can travel only a distance equal to its speed.

Temporal Sense (Ex) A misery siktempora can sense all the possible futures of the coming seconds. This grants it an insight bonus on its Initiative checks and to its Armor Class equal to its Wisdom bonus (+5 for most misery siktemporas). A misery siktempora born from someone who damaged the time stream can use *discern location* at will as a spell-like ability to pinpoint its progenitor's location.

All emotion goes somewhere; that energy does not simply vanish, sent into the void to be lost. Feelings lurch between places and congeal in the endless corners of time. The things they birth have many names, but are collectively known as siktemporas. Most siktemporas never leave the Dimension of Time, dwelling forever in their own isolated mindscape-like fugues, where they bask in the emotions that created them. Yet among the siktemporas, one variety has a penchant for traveling beyond the eerie borders of its home dimension—those born of misery.

Misery siktemporas are personifications of silent suffering. Hideous to behold, wracked in such constant pain that they can endure any agony, and with alien minds incapable of forming any other thought apart from various forms of self-loathing and despair, misery siktemporas find themselves drawn out of the Dimension of Time to seek out those who spawned them and inflict miserable vengeance.

A misery siktempora vaguely resembles a slender human with a body wrapped in black rags and scarfs. It has no arms, and its six exceptionally long spiderlike legs each end in a nearly skeletal looking claw. It has only empty black eye sockets in its narrow faces—no mouth, ears, or nose—and from those empty sockets trail constant rivers of black tears.

ECOLOGY

Just as physical evidence of rot and decay can remain, staining the landscape, after a creature rises from death as undead, so to can its thoughts and emotions. These mental energies, not bound by physicality, can instead stain the time of death.

Siktemporas can form in another way as well—when a mortal creature interferes with the flow of time, either by traveling back in time to create paradoxes or manipulate past events, or by attempting to move forward in time to eras yet unknown, the creature's passage can stain time with the full breadth of its emotional history. This causes the source creature no harm, but can result in the formation of dozens of siktemporas elsewhere on the Dimension of Time.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

On the Demiplane of Time, when enough of these “emotional stains” accumulate at one point in space and time, a siktempora can form. Those born of misery are the most common, for not only do misery and death often travel hand in hand, but alone among the siktemporas, miseries enjoy exiting their home dimension to travel the Material Plane. They have no intrinsic way of returning to the dimension of time, so for them this journey is one-way, but once they arrive, they seek only to spread their own misery.

OTHER SIKTEMPORAS

Other types of siktemporas exist, but they are rare outside of the depths of the Dimension of Time and are almost always encountered when obscure spells or ancient rituals conjure them to other planes.

Siktempora Traits: Each siktempora is different in shape, alignment, and power, but they all share a few similar traits.

- Immunity to disease, mind-affecting effects, and poison, plus one additional condition thematic to the siktempora's emotional genesis
- Fast healing
- Evasion
- Temporal jaunt spell-like ability
- An emotion-based effect linked to their physical attacks
- Temporal sense ability

RUNEPLAGUE

Part 1:
Polymorph
Plague

Part 2:
The
Zincher Siege

Part 3:
A Night
on the Town

Part 4:
The
Undead Seal

Part 5:
The
Sinking

NPC
Gallery

Yasoth

Magi Pools

Bestiary



NEXT MONTH

TEMPLE OF THE PEACOCK SPIRIT

By Jason Keeley

The Return of the Runelords Adventure Path continues as the heroes turn their attention to the cult of the Peacock Spirit, a mysterious group whose remote mountain temple holds shocking secrets and terrible dangers. By braving the perils of the Temple of the Peacock Spirit, the heroes might just be able to prevent a truly mythic foe from emerging into the world.

RITUALS OF THE RUNELORDS

By Luis Loza

The ancient runelords were masters of magic, and their expertise did not end with mere spells and items. Determined to foil any obstacles that magic or matter placed in their paths to power, the runelords designed several mighty rituals powered by the blind loyalty of their followers or the life force of their slaves. This article reveals the rituals the runelords used to steal vaults full of treasure, engineer terrifying new servants, empower their legendary *runewells*, and more.

ECOLOGY OF THE ASURA

By John Compton

Divine accidents made manifest, asuras are filled with hatred and spite for the gods and all their followers. Asuras thrive in destruction and desecration, particularly of holy sites and pious worshipers. Learn of asuras' insidious wickedness, from lowly tripasuras—tempters formed from stolen soul-matter—to the mighty asura ranas. Theirs is a patient, endless evil, for asuras are born again when slain, retaining their thirst for vengeance over many lifetimes. This article also reveals asura plots all across Golarion, from the fallen temples of Jalmeray to the shattered islands of Tian Xia.

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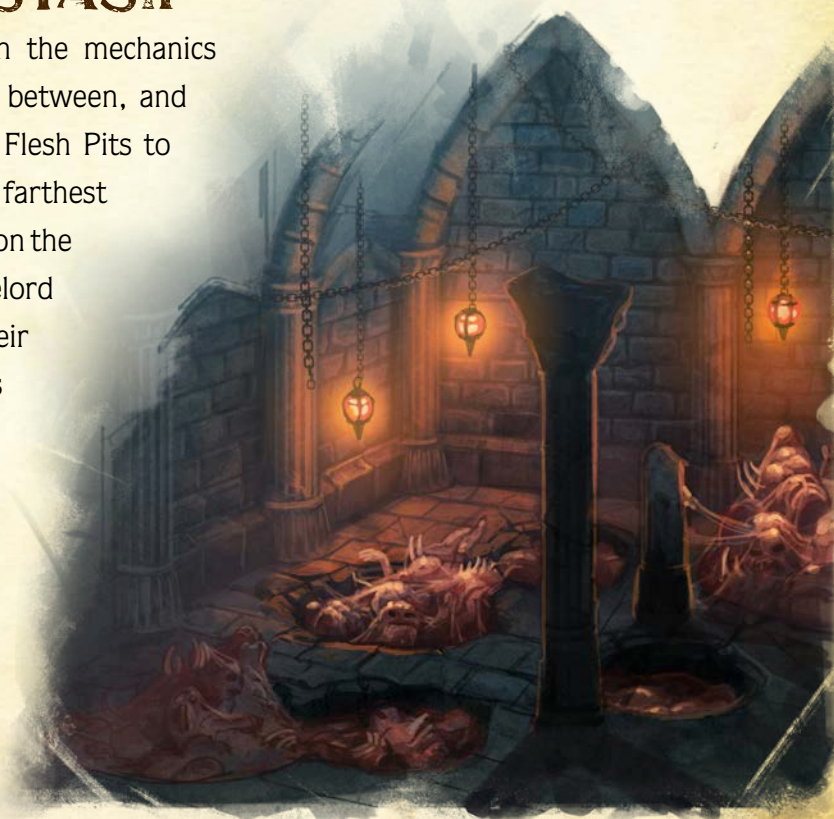


CENOTAPH

The Cenotaph towers over a cliff near the border between Ustalav and the Hold of Belkzen, at the edge of the old realm of Gastash. This ominous, immense tower marks not only the site where Runelord Zutha first made the transition from life to undeath, but also the site of his retreat on Earthfall's eve. In the thousands of years that followed, the powerful necromantic legacy of the Cenotaph attracted many ambitious necromancers, none more so than Tar-Baphon himself. What he found within would change him forever, for he emerged not as a mortal but as the mythic terror who would be known forevermore as the Whispering Tyrant. Dangerous traps, potent undead guardians, and all manner of cursed treasures still remain in the Cenotaph, but only the bravest, or perhaps most foolhardy, would dare explore within.

FLESH PITS OF GASTASH

Runelord Zutha was obsessed with the mechanics of life, death, and all that lurked between, and used a horrific site known as the Flesh Pits to perform countless explorations into the farthest reaches of necromancy. Originally modeled on the fleshwarping techniques pioneered by Runelord Alaznist, the Flesh Pits quickly developed their own awful legacy. Shuddering mountains of unliving, animated flesh from which the runelord could feed or carve new minions soon filled the gaping gulfs of this underground laboratory, and since the fall of Thassilon, these horrors have only grown more horrific—and more powerful—with time.





RUNELORDS RISING!

Varisia has long survived in the footprint of the ancient nation of Thassilon, but now the powerful runelords who once ruled that realm are waking from their centuries-long slumber, hurtling this frontier nation—and the entire world—toward great danger. The latest manifestation of peril facing Varisia's newest group of heroes is a hideous plague that threatens to spill into the streets of Magnimar and spread to the other major cities of the region, transforming beggar and prince alike into slaving monsters. Which of the runelords might rise next, and are all of them equally dangerous? Could some of them even become the heroes' allies? And what is causing a series of strange visions and otherworldly invaders to haunt and harry the heroes?

This volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path continues the Return of the Runelords Adventure Path and includes:

- "Runeplague," a Pathfinder adventure for 8th-level characters, by Richard Pett.
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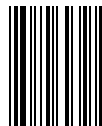
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