

PATHFINDER™

ADVENTURE PATH * PART 2 OF 6



Legacy of Fire HOUSE OF THE BEAST

Adventure by Tim Hitchcock

New Fiction by Elaine Cunningham



hen dragons and genies did battle and the people hid in fear of Rovagug's hordes, their prayers went to Sarenrae, goddess of light, compassion, and healing. A thousand times, the Dawnflower bound their wounds and gave them courage.

But, after a thousand and one answers to the wounded and the dying, Sarenrae ignored their pleas.

Instead, the Dawnflower spoke to the other gods. "Rovagug sinks entire lands and buries cities. No healing can help the dead, and we owe no compassion to the Rough Beast and his endless slaughter. I have a plan."

With her sword of light, Sarenrae cut a shining hole in the world, in a distant region of the Windswept Wastes where even the genies wandered friendless and alone. To that place, the archdevil Asmodeus lured the god of destruction and wrath, promising greater power, greater chaos, and an end to all things.

Asmodeus said, "Behold, a hole in the world. If you examine it, you may learn how the world was unmade here, and then you may unmake it yourself." Rovagug reached forward with worm-like limbs and sightless eyes; his million teeth picked at the ragged edge of the hole.

Sarenrae pushed Rovagug through the hole with the help of the other gods, for none of them alone could hold the beast for long. Asmodeus sealed the rift of light with a key of darkness that only he could hold, and thus was made the Pit of Gormuz.

The gods celebrated their victory over the ravaging madness that might have destroyed creation, but Rovagug yet lived. It is said that the Prince of Hell, Asmodeus, god of slavery, smiled and was content from that day forward. For whatever else might come, he held the only key to Rovagug's eternal prison, and thus, held the fate of the world in his dark, clawed hands.



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ADVENTURE PATH PART 2 of 6



Legacy of Fire

HOUSE OF THE BEAST

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"House of the Beast" is a *Pathfinder* Adventure Path scenario designed for four 5th-level characters. By the end of this adventure, characters should reach 7th level. This adventure is compliant with the Open Game License (OGL) and is suitable for use with the 3.5 edition of the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game. The OGL can be found on page 92 of this product.

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Dungeon Delving

In the beginning, there were dungeons.

And ever since, dungeons have remained a mainstay of the RPG genre. Sure, they didn't always make sense (why would someone ever dig and build a 50-foot-long, 10-foot-wide hallway when it'd be easier to just put the storeroom right next door to the torture chamber), and sometimes dungeon designers would forget the necessities (where do the denizens go to the bathroom or wash their clothes or sleep?), but that didn't stop the most popular adventures of the early days of the game from being just that—a collection of rooms and hallways filled with death traps and monsters and nonsensical stuff. And it was great.

As time went on and the game (and the majority of its players, to be honest) grew and matured, though, a greater demand for realism started to appear in adventures. Today, it's not unusual for the Paizo messageboards to sprout threads where readers voice their concerns about

where the castle guards go to the bathroom, or how much money it must have cost to build an illogically large dungeon, or how much gold an adventurer could make by salvaging trap parts and selling them on the open market. On one hand, I certainly appreciate these requests for realism, and when I develop adventures I do try to shore up areas where an author might have forgotten something like toilets or bedrooms or front doors. But on the other hand, part of me gets frustrated quickly at this added level of realism. I mean, if we can accept that the game models stubbed toes and broken legs with the same basic mechanic of the hit point, is a dungeon that doesn't point out where the orcs go to the bathroom really a failure?

We've done dungeons in *Pathfinder*, of course. For the most part, we try to skew the dungeons relatively small (if numerous) so that they don't completely dominate an adventure. This isn't to say that we never did huge dungeon

crawls, of course, but looking back over the past three Adventure Paths, the really huge dungeons we've published have skewed toward the higher-level end of things. I'm talking about locations like Runeforge, Scarwall, and Jorgenfist. The problem there is that dungeons work best at lower levels, I think, when you don't have to build them with spells like *find the path*, *passwall*, *wind walk*, *scrying*, *teleport*, and the like in mind—it's hard to justify exploring a vast dungeon when the PCs can fast-forward through the encounters with spells.

For *Legacy of Fire*, one of the things I wanted to do was have a good, old-fashioned dungeon crawl relatively early on. This volume's adventure, "House of the Beast," is the result.

Building the Modern Dungeon

One of the most important parts of building a dungeon is the map. It needs to look like somewhere you'd want to explore, and that means that it needs to look uniquely its own. Anyone can sit down with a sheet of graph paper and draw a bunch of squares and lines and connect them and call it done, but that method generally results in dungeons that end up looking the same. For "House of the Beast," I wanted a dungeon map with a lot of variation in the rooms. And the more I thought about it, the more Tim Hitchcock seemed to be the guy to go to.

One of my first tasks at Paizo when I was hired several years ago was to sift through the *Dungeon* magazine slush pile and separate out the stuff that looked publishable from the stuff that did not. That meant going through dozens, if not hundreds of adventure proposals and completed adventures alike. After looking at so many pages and pages of writing, I can tell you this—coming across a set of map turnovers was often a welcome change. Especially when they were artistically rendered.

So when I came to a proposal for an adventure called "The Death of Lashimire," I was particularly intrigued. Here, the author had not only created some beautiful handouts for play, but his maps were in full color and incredibly detailed. They caught my eye long enough that I gave the adventure a more in-depth look than most, and even though it turned out to be a psionics adventure (normally a kiss of death in that era, when *Dungeon* was on shaky footing and we were trying to make sure that each adventure was accessible to the widest range of reader), those maps helped to keep it in my mind, and played a huge part in getting the adventure into print.

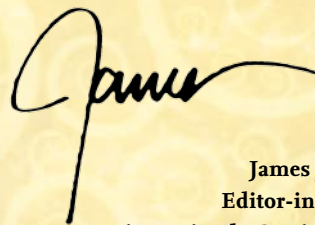
It helped, of course, that Tim Hitchcock, the author and cartographer in question, was a very imaginative guy. I've gotten to know him quite well over the years as he's written more and more adventures and articles, and hanging out with him at Gen Con is always entertaining. (He's one of the few people I know who can go toe-to-toe with Nicolas Logue in the profanity race.) He's had

things published all over the Pathfinder line (Modules, Chronicles, and Pathfinder Society Scenarios alike), and even had a few articles show up in *Pathfinder* itself now and then, but "House of the Beast" is the first Adventure Path installment he's written for us. In fact, you'll be seeing more content inspired by Tim's work in the next few volumes as well—when he found out his adventure was the one where the PCs first find the *Scroll of Kakishon*, he sort of took it on himself to give us a map of the mysterious realm inside of that artifact and a really cool symbol to go along with it. And in the final adventure in *Legacy of Fire*, we'll be sending the PCs back to the House of the Beast to reach the even deeper dungeons below, where they'll ultimately come upon the grave of Xotani the Firebleeder (pictured on the facing page).

The Songs of Shazathared

I forgot to mention it in the first *Legacy of Fire* foreword last month, but you certainly noticed the inside front covers anyway. Since this Adventure Path is so heavily influenced by the traditions of Sinbad and Scheherazade's *One Thousand and One Nights*, it made sense to develop something similar to set up some of the mythology and history behind the backstory of *Legacy of Fire*. We already had quarreling genies, spurned lovers, and armies of man and gnomish alike filling that backstory, and it would seem that creating a set of myths and stories based on that would be easy, and a great way to fill the inside covers with decoration and content. The problem was finding someone to write those stories.

Actually, that's a lie. The problem was tricking Wolfgang Baur into writing them. Swamped with things like putting together the latest *Kobold Quarterly*, working on his latest Open Design project, writing a series of genie-related articles for *Pathfinder* #21–24, and judging for RPG Superstar 2009, to say Wolfgang's busy is a bit of an understatement. Fortunately for us, it didn't take much trickery at all to convince him to write up a series of myths for us to run in *Pathfinder*. In game, they're tales spun by a legendary marid genie named Shazathared (whom player characters will likely encounter before *Legacy of Fire* is over), but in reality, the stories you'll be seeing in the months to come on *Pathfinder's* inside covers are courtesy of Wolfgang Baur.



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Legacy of Fire: Chapter 2

House of the Beast



n the highest reaches of the Brazen Peaks, Pale Mountain rises against the heavens like the crown of a great slumbering beast sheathed in rock and snow. Somewhere within the shadows of its lonely crags stand the ruins of a lone temple. Spires rise sinister around an ancient courtyard and a dark stone dome, and hideous gargoyles and monstrous statues decorate the ruins, greeting the lost explorer with implied threats and promises of danger.

These threats and promises are not hollow, for these ruins mark one of the sites where Rovagug, god of wrath and destruction, touched the world long ago. This ruin is now the home to the notorious Carrion King. This is the House of the Beast.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

When the efreeti prince Jhavhul finally discovered the grave of one of Rovagug's spawn, Xotani the Firebleeder, he knew that he would need a place to house his followers. He ordered the creation of a vast temple complex with several underground levels, and in an attempt to hide himself from his enemies, made those who built his temple the altar's first sacrifices to Rovagug's House of the Beast. From then on, only the ruling priest caste knew that their patron who dwelt in an even deeper complex far below Pale Mountain was not actually a direct servant of the Rough Beast, but merely an efreeti prince. Yet those whom Jhavhul's priests selected from his followers to receive the "Blessings of the Beast" had little care for the true nature of their benefactor—nor did they mind the strange ritual of prayers and unusual requests to bring the "blood of fire into Our Lord Jhavhul," since at the end of the ritual, each of these men was allowed to speak his greatest desire to the shadowy form they served and have that wish granted. Over the weeks and months to follow, the ranks of the House of the Beast's followers grew, with each new addition stepping away from the temple a changed soul.

Of course, what was really happening was that Jhavhul was using his followers to fuel his own wishcraft to enable his transformation into a powerful monster—the new incarnation of Xotani the Firebleeder. Yet to force the transformation, he needed to expend the almost unimaginable power of 1,000 wishes. Unable to directly gain the advantage of his ability to grant wishes, Jhavhul was forced to rely upon the wishes of mortals. The "rituals and prayers" he required of them were designed to apply two of the efreeti's three wishes per day to his own needs, while the third was left to the mortal as a reward for his services. Jhavhul made certain that no single minion ever gained more than one wish for two reasons. First, he knew that what he was doing would send ripples through reality that would alert other genies—enemies who would oppose his desires. By spreading out these "ripples" among dozens, he hoped to keep the ripples small, rather than building them all into one enormous crescendo focused on one being. Second, by preventing his followers from gaining more than one wish each, he kept their power in check. His minions would be granted one fondest desire, but only one—and in so doing, Jhavhul hoped to prevent any of them from growing so powerful that they might decide to oppose him directly.

Yet Jhavhul underestimated how closely his enemies were watching. As he continued to abuse reality, his wishes swiftly caught the attention of another master of wishcraft—the djinni Nefeshti. With the aid of a human lover named Andrathi, her five janni minions, and a

small army of her own, these Templars of the Five Winds sought out Jhavhul and attacked his people. The resulting battles raged across the Pale Mountain region as Jhavhul desperately tried to hold out just long enough to finish his 1,000 wishes. But as fate would have it, he never made it. Andrathi sacrificed himself to capture Jhavhul and his army in a magical dimension held within the legendary *Scroll of Kakishon*, yet before Nefeshti could recover it, one of Jhavhul's only minions to escape the shared doom, a gnoll priestess named Shirak, snatched up the *Scroll of Kakishon* and fled back to the House of the Beast, secreting the item in the deepest part of the temple beyond wards that would hide it from prying eyes for hundreds of years. During those centuries, the House of the Beast served as a home for countless creatures, yet few have garnered as much notoriety as its current lord—an immense gnoll named Ghartok, known to his packs as the Carrion King.

Even before he claimed the House of the Beast as his lair, Ghartok was a legend among the gnoll tribes of Pale Mountain. His disdain for the traditional gnoll goddess Lamashtu was well known—he had long told his packmates that there were better gods deep in the earth. Gods who were not soft and fragile like pregnant bitches—gods that deserved only the strongest and most potent of what the gnoll race had to offer. The gnolls also held the ruins on the north face of Pale Mountain in supernatural fear, but when Ghartok led a group of hand-picked gnolls into the ruins and emerged alone, victorious, armed with a powerful magic axe and nearly twice the size physically as he had been when he'd entered the ruins, his power only grew. As did his fame.

As word spread about the new warlord—a gnoll who worshiped not Lamashtu but Rovagug, who had claimed the haunted House of the Beast as his home, who fought with a howling greataxe, who towered nearly twice the height of most of his kin—more and more tribes forsook tradition to come to Pale Mountain. They learned this new warlord called himself the Carrion King, and those who attempted to challenge him swiftly learned how powerful he was. As time passed and the Pale Mountain tribes grew in number, the Carrion King retired to the depths of the House of the Beast, attended only by his closest allies and slaves. Today, the legend of the Carrion King is known to every gnoll in the Pale Mountain region, and though many of the regional chieftains and leaders claim to be directly descended from their ferocious king, very few have actually seen the Carrion King in person. Ghartok had himself all but become a god in the eyes of his tribes, and the House of the Beast had become his throne.

Adventure Summary

The PCs have had some time to recover from the events of "Howl of the Carrion King," and the town of Kelmarane

Advancement Track

Characters should be 5th level when they begin “House of the Beast,” and should reach 7th level by the adventure’s end. Although “House of the Beast” does not force an alphabetical search of its encounter areas, the challenges that await PCs in the lower levels of the dungeons assume the PCs have reached 6th level; they should certainly be 6th level before they confront the Carrion King himself.

is now well on the road to recovery when a strange visitor arrives in town—a traveling priest named Zayifid who claims to be a prophet of Sarenrae. According to Zayifid’s news, the gnoll tribes are gathering on the far slopes of Pale Mountain, and the Carrion King is preparing to attack Kelmarane and retake it with an army of gnolls.

In order to stop such an event, the PCs must travel to the seat of the Carrion King’s power—the ancient ruin known as the House of the Beast. There, they discover that while the rumors of the Carrion King’s preparation for war appear to have been exaggerated, something strange is going on in the ruins. As the PCs continue to explore, they discover that the Carrion King has uncovered a method for transforming standard gnolls into hulking monstrosities, and that he hopes to spread this transformation through all of the gnolls of the region to create a terrific menace.

When the PCs confront the Carrion King, though, they discover that one of his most trusted servants is in fact a janni disguised as a gnoll—and also the same man who claimed to be the priest Zayifid. This janni is a fallen Templar of the Five Winds, and what he’s searching for in the House of the Beast, the *Scroll of Kakishon*, could be an even greater threat to the region than all of the gnoll tribes combined. If the PCs can find where the scroll is hidden and claim it as their own before Zayifid does, they’ll not only prevent the relic from falling into villainous hands but gain a potent artifact of their own.

PART ONE: WHISPERS OF WAR

It’s up to you to decide when “House of the Beast” begins. At the end of the previous adventure, “Howl of the Carrion King,” the PCs gain a respite—up to a year to spend however they want, be it traveling the world, researching personal secrets, or helping to rebuild the village of Kelmarane. After the defeat of the Kulldis tribe, gnolls haven’t been a big problem in the Kelmarane region, although travelers and merchants are still wise to bring along plenty of guards to defend against the inevitable trouble with tiny pockets of the bestial humanoids. This adventure assumes

about a year has passed since the PCs finished “Howl of the Carrion King,” but the events that play out in “House of the Beast” work just as well if you want to start the adventure the very next day.

As this adventure begins, mention to the PCs that they’ve been hearing rumors of increasing gnoll activity over the past few weeks or months. You could even run a short combat with a group of gnolls that foolishly attempt to attack an outlying region of Kelmarane. In any case, the adventure truly begins as a mysterious figure arrives in town—a soft-spoken but intimidating man who comes at dawn along with several other traveling merchants, although if the PCs ask the merchants later, they say that he only joined them on the road the night before.

This mysterious figure is Zayifid, a towering human who stands nearly 7 feet in height. He travels up to the Kelmarane battle market and takes up a spot at the tavern there, while sending out word that he wishes to speak with the leaders of the village and the heroes who so recently liberated it from the gnolls. How the PCs hear of this news is up to you; they could learn it from Almah Roveshki (the woman who hired them to help liberate Kelmarane), they could hear rumors at the market of the giant of a man who had been asking for them, or if the PCs maintain a presence at the battle market itself they could well be there when Zayifid first arrives.

Almah certainly seeks out the PCs soon, in any event—she’s curious to see what Zayifid has to say, and wants her strongest allies (the PCs) to be there when she arrives at the battle market tavern to speak with him. When the PCs arrive, the mysterious priest bows deeply and graciously, the sun tattoo on his brow almost seeming to glow. He introduces himself as a “traveler of the sand and scrub, a student of all things Sarenrae sees fit to shine upon, and an unwilling bearer of bad news,” then offers to buy each of the PCs a drink from the tavern while he prepares to tell the following tale.

“I do not belong to a single church. I do not mock those priests who choose to remain in one location and tend to one building—not at all, for they provide a needed service. But I am not at ease if I stay in one location. I am a traveler, as I have said, and have walked the billowing sands of Osirion, the westernmost veldt of Nex, and much of our own beloved Katapesh in between. I have seen much in my travels, and have brought the word and redemption of the Dawnflower to many. Yet also have I seen much in the way of cruelty and war in those travels, and it is a warning of such I bring to you today.

“You have distinguished yourselves by defeating the Kulldis. You know that word of the liberation of Kelmarane has reached all the way to the coast by now, and you are enjoying the fruits of that success even as we speak in the form of trade and tax. Yet word spreads not only to friends, but also to enemies. The Carrion King knows of what you’ve done to the Kulldis,

and though he did not reply in kind at once, I have heard dire rumors in my travels. Rumors of gnoll tribes gathering on the far slopes of Pale Mountain, tribes united under one banner—the sign of the Carrion King!

“My path is not one of war. Sarenrae teaches redemption and forgiveness, but I know well that many do not seek these ends, and that war is often inevitable. Yet sometimes, there are other ways. The gnolls are ever a bickering lot, and if the Carrion King has managed to unite these tribes, then his word is mighty indeed. And although I despair to think on the death of any living creature, if the Carrion King’s death would mean that the gnoll tribes would stand down—a war could be averted.

“And so I bring this news to you. I shall not stay long, for I have no desire to be caught up in the folly of battle. But you would do well, heroes, to take my warning to heart. Seek out the Carrion King and bring him low before he raises high the flags of war. You will find him in the House of the Beast, the rumors say, an ancient temple upon the far side of Pale Mountain from which he has long ruled. May your efforts be swift and just, that needless suffering be averted.”

Zayifid has little more to say, and true to his word, he’d like to be on his way within the hour. He has nothing more to add to his warning. If the PCs ask for proof, he merely shrugs and asks them what proof would they seek? Increased attacks on Kelmarane by gnolls? A signed document from the Carrion King himself declaring his intent? Zayifid tells the PCs to look to Pale Mountain, to watch for war fires and listen for the Carrion King’s howl upon the midnight wind. If the PCs ask him how he knows that the Carrion King dwells in the House of the Beast, or even that he’s sure the ruins stand upon the far side of Pale Mountain at all, he simply shrugs and says that it is not his place to question what dreams the Dawnflower places in his sleeping mind as visions.

His warning delivered, Zayifid thanks the PCs for giving him time to speak to them. When he leaves town, he does so on foot, heading north toward the sands of Osirion.

Zayifid’s Secret

Zayifid is more than he claims to be, and his goal in sending the PCs is something more than a simple warning. In truth, Zayifid is a janni, once a member of the Templars of the Five Winds but now a rogue agent seeking his own route to power. Zayifid hopes to find the way into the inmost sanctum of the House of the Beast to claim the ruin’s greatest treasure: the *Scroll of Kakishon*.

With the aid of a magical hat and a knack for deception, Zayifid disguised himself as a gnoll and managed to infiltrate the Carrion King’s court. Over the course of several months, the subversive janni managed to learn much about the temple’s layout, and has several ideas of where the *Scroll of Kakishon* could be hidden, but as of yet has been unable to find it, even though he’s explored much of the region ethereally in search of hidden rooms. While he’s found a few (such as his lair in area H7), his frustration grew when he discovered a sizable region below the House of the Beast that blocked ethereal travel. Yet at the same time, he took this sign as proof that there was something of great interest hidden below.

Zayifid has been forced to spend an increasing amount of time maintaining his disguise as his prominence in the House of the Beast has grown. Worse, he’s discovered that the most likely place to hide the *Scroll of Kakishon* is warded by effects that bar the entrance of genies—certainly a protection erected to prevent

Jhavhul’s genie enemies from finding and claiming the relic, and one that works quite well in this case to prevent genies who seek to aid him. If he hopes to be able to supplant the Carrion King once he’s gained the *Scroll of Kakishon* and take the king’s

followers for his own army, Zayifid sees no real alternative to maintaining his deceptions.

Yet now, with the PCs, just such an alternative may exist. If he can convince the PCs to swoop into the House of the Beast and slay the Carrion King, and can then arrange their own death at his hands, he’ll be all but assured of gaining not only control of the ancient temple but also command of the gnoll tribes of Pale Mountain. A dangerous plan, certainly (especially since a party capable of defeating the Carrion King could just as easily defeat Zayifid), but with just the right amount of deception and surprise, the janni is confident that he’ll be able to engineer the Carrion King’s demise and the PCs’ with little problem. And if things go bad, Zayifid has no shortage of escape plans, after all.

Zayifid’s ruse could be detected as soon as this adventure begins, of course. His disguise is provided by his *hat of disguise*, but he’s careful to make sure that his magical appearance is close to his true appearance in size. And while much of what he says to the PCs is a lie, his skill at bluffing is significant. The one thing Zayifid knows can expose him and reveal that he can’t be a traveling priest of Sarenrae is *detect evil*. If he suspects that the PCs would use



such tactics to examine him, he abandons the “traveling priest of Sarenrae” part of his deception and poses merely as a wandering scholar in an attempt to stave off the urge of the PCs to use such magic on him.

If anyone attempts to follow Zayifid as he leaves town, remember to give the janni a few chances to notice that he’s being followed. If he does notice, he attempts to step behind a rock or bush and use his spell-like abilities to become invisible or ethereal to throw off trackers before heading back to the House of the Beast itself.

If one of the PCs carries the weapon *Tempest* and has become the moldspeaker (see *Pathfinder* #19), Zayifid is noticeably uneasy in that character’s presence, and Sense Motive attempts to see through any of his bluffs gain a +4 circumstance bonus. Zayifid attempts to explain that in some of his vision dreams, he has seen this character confronting the Carrion King—that his actions in battle will carry the day but only at great personal sacrifice. Zayifid asks the PCs to make him say no more, but if pressed he admits that, in his visions, the character who carries *Tempest* is destined to die in the House of the Beast. More lies, of course, but Zayifid hopes they’re enough to cover the real reason this character unnerves him—he sees in the moldspeaker echoes of his one-time companion Vardishal,

and is unsettled by the coincidence. If the Templars of the Five Winds are allied with the PCs, Zayifid knows the chances of his success are less—he likely knows that the PCs have already slain one of the templars, the janni Kardswann, but if he realizes that Vardishal is in play as well, Zayifid grows nervous. His disguise is enough to fool Vardishal, for now at least, so the moldspeaker himself should gain no insight into the situation from his unusual advantages.

If the PCs unmask Zayifid, confront him about being evil, or otherwise don’t seem to be falling for his ruse, the janni knows that the game is far from over. In this case, Zayifid smiles but does not lower his disguise. Instead, he stands to his full 7 feet and bows again to the PCs, speaking the following if they give him the chance.

“It would seem that I have underestimated you. Good. You may have a chance against the Carrion King. Know that even though I have deceived you here, and that my goals are not as I have claimed, one thing I have said is true. You will confront the Carrion King soon, be it before the Maggot Throne in the House of the Beast or here in your cozy little homes. To think the Carrion King would let the loss of the Kuldis tribe pass without revenge is nothing but fools’ fancies. Consider my warning, then, as a challenge. If you can destroy the Carrion King before he destroys you, better for you. Either end works to my advantage.”

With that, Zayifid becomes ethereal, his smoky form fading into the ground as he slips away. It does not matter to the janni if the PCs come to the House of the Beast thinking of him as an ally or enemy—in the end, he can use them either way. He certainly won’t stay around to fight the PCs; if they attack him, he merely becomes ethereal and returns to the Carrion King’s side—yet even if the PCs drive him off, he does not reveal to the Carrion King what he has done. The Carrion King assumes Zayifid is still a gnoll acolyte, and that he spent the last few days seeking out and punishing several suspected Lamashtan cultists that had sprung up among one of the minor tribes of Pale Mountain. Zayifid sees no need to let him think any more than that until the PCs arrive at the House of the Beast.



zayifid's
true form

ZAYIFID

CR 7

Male janni rogue 6 (MM 116)

NE Medium outsider (native)

Init +9; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot +17

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 21

(+5 armor, +1 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 72 (12 HD; 6d8+6d6+24)

Fort +9, **Ref** +15, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; **Resist** fire 10

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 *fire outsider bane frost scimitar* +13/+8 (1d6+3/18–20 plus 1d6 cold)

Ranged dagger +15 (1d4+2/19–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +3d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

At will—*plane shift*

3/day—*invisibility* (self only), *speak with animals*

2/day—*change size* (DC 15)

1/day—*create food and water* (CL 7th), *ethereal jaunt* (for 1 hour)

TACTICS

During Combat If confronted in this initial encounter, Zayifid does not attempt to fight—he simply delivers his message as detailed above and then attempts to flee to the House of the Beast. If the PCs somehow manage to corner him, he fights back as best he can but tries to leave the PCs alive, fighting only so long as it takes to escape—at this point, dead PCs are of no use to him.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 20, **Con** 15, **Int** 16, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +12

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Disarm, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Appraise +18, Bluff +18, Concentration +11, Craft (gem cutting) +18, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +18, Escape Artist +20, Listen +17, Move Silently +20, Ride +14, Sense Motive +17, Spot +17, Tumble +17

Languages Common, Infernal, Terran

SQ elemental endurance, trapfinding

Gear +1 *chain shirt*, +1 *fire outsider bane frost scimitar*, 4 daggers, *hat of disguise*, *ring of protection* +1

Reaching the House of the Beast

For all his deception and trickery, Zayifid does not lead the PCs astray as regards the location of the House of the Beast. A DC 20 Knowledge (geography) or bardic knowledge check confirms this—while the Brazen Peaks are not completely mapped out, the location of the House of the Beast is not a secret. Yet reaching the location might prove some difficulty, for the ruins are in a relatively remote, and relatively dangerous region. The “In the Shadow of Pale Mountain” article that begins on page 50 of this volume describes many of wonders and dangers of the Pale Mountain region, an area that encompasses much of the Brazen Peaks and the lower Uwaga Highlands. Using this article and the wandering monster chart on page 57, you can make the PCs’ journey to the House of the Beast as dangerous as you wish.

PART TWO: THE OUTER TEMPLE

Wedged into a wide precipice along the far slopes of Pale Mountain sits the crumbling ruins of a once massive temple. Passing centuries have weathered its stones, and while some of the outer walls remain standing, they have collapsed in several places, leaving the temple grounds open to any who would approach. The House of the Beast’s fearsome reputation as being a place haunted by the ghosts of genies has been its traditional defense against explorers—that, and its remote location and the angry tribes of Rovagug-worshiping humanoids who still dwell within.

Like a child’s sandcastle carelessly placed before hungry waves that lap against shore, the forgotten temple rests, nestled in the crags of the Pale Mountain. Its crumbling spires and domes bask in the pale grayish glow of the alien twilight of the mountain skies. The scope of such a creation seems implausible in such a remote location, yet it isn’t hard to question why one might choose such a spectacular setting. Indeed, it seems unlikely that there exists another so close to the realm of the gods.

Among the broken stones and empty fountains, dry thorny shrubs poke through packed clay soil sprinkled with shards of bone. The temple would almost appear deserted if not for the ominous feeling of dread and the few dozen gory warnings hung upon the outer walls; headless bodies thick with swarms of black flies.

Most of the aged flagstones in the courtyard lie loose, cracked, and dusted with pebbles and other debris. In several areas indicated on the map of the Outer Temple, the terrain is littered with large chunks of broken walls, while in other areas the ground is completely torn up. Treat these sections as difficult terrain, and add +2 to the DC of all Balance and Tumble checks to creatures within their premises. The remaining soil consists of hard and dusty clay that greedily devours water. Few plants bear the fortitude to survive among the ruins, but a few short trees, shrubs, and plenty of lichen grow on toppled stones or ruined works. The air is remarkably dry and crisp, but the generally comfortable temperatures during the day can drop close to freezing at night.

Despite the extensive structural damage dealt by harsh winters and blazing summer suns, the temple still provides enough shelter to attract all sorts of creatures to lair within. In addition to the Tribe of the Carrion King, the temple hosts a clan of troglodytes, a gang of escaped slaves, a clutch of gargoyles, and all manner of monstrous vermin and beasts. The ruins are presented here as they exist in a neutral state—once the PCs begin their forays into the ruins, the inhabitants may begin changing their routines as indicated in the text. As the PCs explore, they’ll begin to

piece together the House's story, both its ancient past and the intricacies of its current bickering inhabitants—let the PCs explore the place as they will, but remember the House of the Beast is an organic, living dungeon. If the PCs make multiple attacks against the gnolls, they should find the gnolls adapting their defenses as best they can to work against the particular methods the PCs favor. There are quite a few entrances into the temple as well, and no one assumed route to the deepest point below—the adventure concludes when the PCs recover the *Scroll of Kakishon*, but the House of the Beast is vast. Just because the adventure concludes doesn't mean the PCs can't continue to explore the ruins to their hearts' content.

A. The Northwest Tower (EL 4)

Two small minarets guard the entrance of a low stone structure topped with the ruins of a small dome. Centuries of mountain winds have sand-blasted the western faces of the minarets to a smooth, polished finish, while the eastern sides facing the temple walls still bear illegible traces of ancient icons and calligraphy.

A DC 18 Search check of the tower's ground floor reveals a set of partially buried stairs leading down. The lower portion of the staircase has been shored up with timbers and rocks. Trailing down the stairwell hangs a worn, knotted rope neatly tied around a nearby chunk of broken column. The stairwell leads to subterranean chambers that connect to the Warrens, a series of rough-hewn passages that provide covert access to the Great Dome.

Creatures: During a recent troglodyte attack, five human slaves escaped from their gnoll keepers into this section of the temple. The escaped slaves managed to seize and fortify the western gatehouse, but they lack the resources necessary to escape the temple grounds and survive the long trek through the mountains to civilization, especially with the force of mounted Carrion Guards searching for them. They desperately seek alternate methods of escape. Hiding within the ruins near the stairwell, two slaves watch for signs of intruders. If they notice the PCs, they watch them quietly for a few minutes before deciding to make contact.

Most of the slaves wish to leave immediately, and they beg the PCs to lead them back to safety. The slaves know a fair amount about the temple grounds, and can warn the PCs of the denizens of the outbuildings. Their knowledge of the main temple is somewhat limited; they can describe to the PCs the general layout of areas **G1–G3**, **H1**, **H9–H14**, **I1–I2**, **I6**, and **I13**, and tell them that there are more slaves still held below.

The slaves' initial attitude toward the PCs is indifferent, but if they're armed, armored, and made helpful, they

agree to aid the PCs in their efforts against the gnolls. Otherwise, they cower here until they are led to safety.

ESCAPED SLAVES (5)

CR 1

Male human warrior 2

LN Medium humanoid

Init +0; Senses Listen +1, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 11 each (2d8+2)

Fort +4, Ref +0, Will –1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee club +3 (1d6+1)

TACTICS

Before Combat The slaves try to remain concealed and split as soon as they sense trouble coming.

During Combat The slaves fight defensively, seeking the opportunity to escape and usher a warning to their brethren below; though not if doing so would jeopardize the secrecy of their lair.

Morale These ex-slaves value freedom above all else; if given the opportunity to take it, they do so. If badly injured, they flee, unless it means leaving one of their own behind to be enslaved. Tough as nails, they remain determined never to be broken or captured again, and when escape isn't an option, they always fight to the death. If subdued or captured, they become belligerent, even suicidal, and if possible fling themselves off the ruins to their deaths, along with their captors.

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

Base Atk +2; Grp +3

Feats Alertness, Endurance

Skills Climb +6, Handle Animal +4, Jump +6, Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Osiriani

Gear club

Ad Hoc Experience Award: Each slave that the PCs successfully escort back to Kelmarane earns the party experience as if he had been defeated in combat.

B. The North Gate (EL 6 or 8)

A lopsided minaret, its stacked layers sloppy and precarious, casts a long shadow across the courtyard. A weatherworn coil of stairs scrambles about its perimeter, ascending a hundred feet or so. The stairs slope slightly toward the outer edge and no rails exist to prevent an unsteady climber from tumbling off onto the shards of rubble below.

A DC 25 Search check made in the northwestern corner of this ruined building reveals a rubble-filled depression near a wall that looks like a clogged stairwell. These rubble-

The House of the Beast



choked stairs lead down to area **H12** after 30 feet of densely packed debris. If the PCs clear the rubble, they'll have a relatively secure way to enter the House of the Beast itself without being seen by the gnolls who guard and patrol the rest of the complex.

Creatures: This ruined tower has become a favored perch for a family of gargoyles who have laired here for several generations. The gargoyles generally don't bother with the gnolls or troglodytes, but if they spy PCs wandering nearby, a group of two swoops down to attack.

In all, there are currently eight gargoyles living here, but at any one time only half that number are found in this ruin, with the others out scouring the surrounding mountains for food. The gargoyles generally break into pairs when confronting enemies, but all four remaining in the north gate band together to defend their lair if

anyone attempts to pass through it. The gargoyles have little interest in speaking with anyone in any case, and little reason to listen to offers of alliance.

GARGOYLES (2 OR 4)

CR 4

hp 37 each (MM 113)

Treasure: A DC 25 Search of the rubble inside the north gate made over the course of 10 minutes uncovers a small cache of treasure kept by the gargoyles—keepsakes from past victims that caught their eyes. This stash consists of 820 sp, 450 gp, an amethyst worth 90 gp, a cracked turquoise worth 11 gp, a *scroll of obscuring mist* in a silver scroll tube worth 40 gp, and a *wand of bear's endurance* (37 charges).

C. Grundmoch's Lair

Protruding from beyond the safety of the western temple wall stands a fortified gatehouse built around a forty-foot-diameter dome covered in pale blue, flaking mosaic tile. Behind the dome stand a pair of slender spires. The top of the northernmost spire sheers off at a jagged angle about three-quarters of the way up, while the other bears extensive cracks circling its foundation.

A tribe of troglodytes occupies this section of the ruins. For complete descriptions of these ruins, refer to Part Three.

D. The Three Minarets

A trio of towering minarets stands tall at the center of the temple courtyard.

No ground-level entrances exist to the interiors of these minarets. Forty feet above the courtyard floor, a set of open window arches permits access to those able to reach them with flight or a DC 18 Climb check. Within the minarets, spiral stairs offer access to upper and lower levels. Stairs connect to landings set at 50-foot increments correlating with the location of the open arches. They continue upward until they reach the final landing at a dizzying height of 120 feet above the courtyard. The view from any of the top floors provides a full aerial panorama of the temple and its grounds.

The windows in the western minaret are caked with webs. Inside, the stairs leading down are also shrouded with webs—this stairwell is the entrance to a giant spider lair. The sticky floor leading down is treated as difficult terrain and descends to area **H19**. Those who watch the minaret long enough are treated to the nightmare



sight every dusk of the enormous black funnel-web spider squeezing out of one of the larger windows and clambering down the side to silently stalk off into the surrounding hills to hunt. Then, near dawn, the spider returns, clambering back into its den.

The central minaret's stairs lead down to area **I4**, but halfway down an old door sits in the southern wall on a narrow landing. This door opens into area **H6**, a collapsed tunnel—opening it from the stairwell side reveals nothing but densely packed rubble.

The eastern minaret's stairs lead down to the Carrion King's court in area **I2**, although the door there is locked with *arcane lock* (CL 5th).

E. East Gate (EL 7)

Along the east wall stands a thick gatehouse of ancient stone flanked by pale, crumbling minarets. On either side, worn steps burrow into the structure and twist inward, leading up to an open patio of cracked-tile mosaic. Holes in the surrounding brick indicate where wooden beams once spanned the patio, perhaps supporting rows of grape vines. Elsewhere, dry fountains, broken shards of pottery, and a worn stone trough indicate traces of what was once a lush and well-tended garden. Currently, the gatehouse's sole decoration consists of swarms of black flies buzzing above scattered piles of fetid dung.

One of the fountains is filled with cracked bones of various humanoids. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) check identifies them as troglodyte bones—all are marred with numerous teeth marks.

Creatures: A pair of hyaenodon-mounted Carrion Guards patrols this gate, keeping constant watch for trespassers. If they spot intruders approaching they hunker down behind statues or rubble, waiting for them to come within 40 feet before lunging out of hiding to attack. In addition to their scimitars and longbows, each carrion warrior carries a devious and hideous ranged weapon they call a "stingchuck."

CARRION GUARDS (2)

CR 2

Male gnoll ranger 1

CE Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14

(+3 armor, +2 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 19 each (3d8+6)

Fort +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk scimitar +7 (1d6+4/18–20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +6 (1d8+4/x3 plus poison) or

Stingchuck

A stingchuck is a foul bag made of a human's head with the brain removed and the skull heavily scored so that, when the stingchuck is thrown, the whole thing breaks and splits like a ripe melon upon striking a target. The gnolls fill stingchucks with dozens of stinging insects patiently (and often painfully) harvested from nests on the lower slopes of Pale Mountain.

A stingchuck is a grenade-like weapon. When it strikes a target, it douses that target with dozens of ravenous biting and stinging vermin, inflicting 1d6 points of damage and forcing a DC 11 Fortitude save to avoid being nauseated for 1d3 rounds. Each round a victim remains nauseated by a stingchuck, he takes an additional 1 point of damage from the biting vermin. All creatures within 5 feet of a bursting stingchuck take 1 point of damage from the biting insects that pepper them, but need not make Fortitude saves to avoid being nauseated.

stingchuck +4 (1d4 plus nausea)

Special Attacks favored enemy (humans +2)

TACTICS

During Combat A Carrion Guard always opens combat by hurling his stingchuck if he can, then follows up with shots from his longbow, moving between shots as necessary to maintain ranged advantage. When mounted on a hyaenodon, a Carrion Guard usually takes 1 or 2 rounds to attack at range before riding into melee to continue the fight with scimitar and to allow his mount a chance to bite at foes.

Morale Carrion Guards are fiercely loyal to their king and fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 15, **Con** 15, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +6

Feats Mounted Combat, Track, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Listen +4, Ride +4, Spot +4, Survival +3

Languages Gnoll

SQ wild empathy –1

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*; **Other Gear** +1 studded leather armor, masterwork scimitar, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str) with 20 arrows (poisoned with Huge scorpion venom; DC 18 Fort Save, 1d6/1d6 Con damage), stingchuck

HYAENODONS (2)

CR 4

N Large Animal (*Tome of Horrors II* 184)

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15

(+2 Dex, +6 natural, –1 size)

hp 42 each (5d8+20)

Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +5

OFFENSE

Spd 50 ft.

Melee bite +11 (1d8+12)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks trip

TACTICS

During Combat As mounts, hyaenodons follow the lead of their riders; otherwise they charge single opponents and gnash them with their powerful jaws.

Morale Fearless almost to the point of stupidity, a hyaenodon fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 26, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Base Atk +3; Grp +15

Feats Alertness, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Hide +0 (+4 in undergrowth), Listen +5, Spot +3, Survival +5 (+9 when tracking by scent)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Trip (Ex) A hyaenodon that hits with its bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+12 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the hyaenodon.

F. Spire of the Serpent (EL 5)

In the southwest section of the temple rises a large, bronze-plated dome set atop a raised stone foundation. The dome is badly cracked and a gaping hole mars the southwest wall. Several human-sized, brownish-black, egg-shaped objects lie about the yard surrounding the dome.

Creature: A massive serpent resides in the dome—an ancient rock python that is preparing to shed its skin. The snake is particularly ill-tempered as a result. His brown-flecked patterning and bumpy scales allow him to blend in perfectly with his surroundings, despite his immense form. The strange egg-shaped objects are serpent droppings.

ROCK PYTHON

CR5

Giant constrictor snake (MM 280)

hp 63

Treasure: One of the larger serpent droppings contains the mostly digested remains of a human. A DC 25 Search of this foul mass turns up a bony finger still adorned with a blue crystal *minor ring of fire resistance*.

G. The Great Dome

Rising from the center of the temple grounds is a tremendous dome of stone, brass, and crumbling plaster. The great dome sits on a octagonal base, inlaid in intricate geometric patterns with thousands of colored glass tiles. Time and the elements have reduced their once bright colors to faded pastel hues of blue, green, and yellow. In several places, the tiles have been completely worn away, exposing plaster and brickwork beneath.

The Great Dome is occupied by the Carrion King and his tribe—for a complete description of these ruins, consult Part Four: The Great Dome.

PART THREE: GRUNDMOCH'S LAIR

Until recently, the tribe of troglodytes that dwells in this ruined building held a tentative alliance with the



carrion
guard

Carrion King and his gnolls. In particular, Grundmoch and the gnoll assassin Rokova, the Carrion King's Keeper of Secrets, held what could even be called a friendship. When Zayifid arrived several months ago and chose Rokova as his victim to impersonate in order to secure his infiltration of the Temple, he never considered the priest's friendship with the troglodyte. So when Rokova suddenly disappeared for a few days, Grundmoch became suspicious. The troglodyte investigated and discovered evidence of a grisly murder, but when he returned to inform the other priests of his suspicions of Rokova's death, he discovered the high priest alive and well. Grundmoch confronted the priest, demanding an explanation for where he'd been for the past few days, and Zayifid panicked and tried to kill the troglodyte. Grundmoch barely escaped with his life, but before he fled he caught a glimpse of the imposter's true form. Unfortunately, before he could bring this news to the Carrion King, Zayifid called council and gave testament that the troglodytes had attempted to murder him and seize the House of the Beast for themselves. As soon as the Carrion King heard this tale, he banished Grundmoch and his people and commanded that all troglodytes be sacrificed to Rovagug.

The Outer Gatehouse

The doors blocking the west gate are of recent construction, crudely fabricated from wood salvaged within the temple and stolen from caravan raids. The hinges have long since rusted out, so the doors are wedged in place and barred from the inside. To open the doors, they must be physically dragged aside with a DC 20 Strength check or broken down. At all times, troglodyte javelin throwers guard the entrance, watching through the arrow slits from area C2. As soon as the PCs come within 40 feet of the gatehouse, the javelin throwers launch a warning volley (intended not to damage but to land javelins within 10 feet of the PCs) and demand (in Draconic) that the PCs identify themselves and their purpose before approaching further. Make an attack roll anyway, and on a natural 1, one of the javelins accidentally strikes a random PC anyway. If this happens, a troglodyte croaks out a loud "Sorry!" followed by the sounds of other troglodytes berating the thrower. This turns into a fistfight between the guards in one of the sniper rooms that occupies the troglodytes for 1d4+4 rounds. Regardless, the remaining troglodyte guards in the adjacent room remain alert and ready.

If the PCs understand and parlay with the guards, the troglodytes draw straws and send an emissary to greet them at the door. They allow the PCs into the entry chamber but tell them to keep their weapons sheathed and their hands visible and motionless. The remaining troglodytes ready javelins, taking cover behind the adjacent doors while one of them goes to get backup. A few

minutes later, PCs are led to area C4 where, surrounded by guards, adepts, and monitor lizards, they can speak with Grundmoch.

C1. Strange Warnings (EL varies)

Faded tiles have cracked and crumbled into small piles at the foot of mud-brick walls. Once colorful mosaics are painted with sloppy, blood-scribed warnings written in Draconic and punctuated with gnoll scalps spiked into the walls.

The writing on the wall is in Draconic, and consists of multiple anti-gnoll sentiments like "Death to the hyena infidels!" or "All hail Grundmoch the redeemer!" or "Rovagug claims the stink of hyena flesh!"

If the troglodyte guards in area C2 observe the PCs approaching this room, they open the doors on the adjacent walls just a crack so it's easier to swarm into this room to attack them if the PCs make it this far.

C2. Sniper Boxes (EL 4)

Narrow archer slits open along the slightly curved outer wall. Propped near each of the slits leans a handful of javelins. The remainder of the room is stripped bare.

The floor in the southern room is scrawled with strange chalk marks that form some sort of grid of four 5-foot-wide squares, and littered with smooth, polished stones. The grid and stones are used in a primitive gambling game the troglodytes play to pass the time.

Creatures: If the PCs manage to creep up on the building undetected, they find all four of the troglodytes stationed here in the southern room gathered around the grid and gambling on the fates of several mice they drop into the center of the grid. Each other grid has a large scorpion, one leg tied to a spike driven into the center of each grid by a length of twine, so that each scorpion can reach just to the edge of its square. One troglodyte stands at each corner, and any mouse fortunate enough to make it out of the grid earns the troglodyte guarding its square a polished rock, while the mouse gets rewarded by being placed back in the center to await the next round of the game.

TROGLODYTES (4)

CR 1

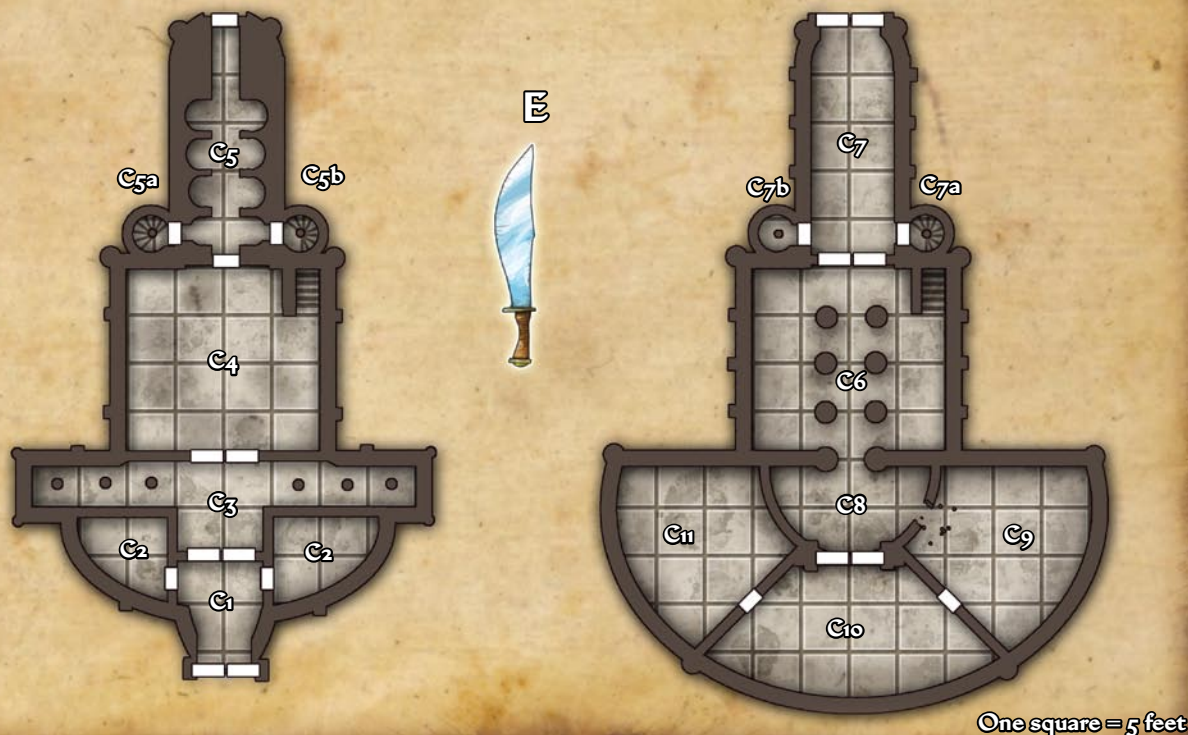
hp 13 (MM 246)

TACTICS

During Combat The troglodytes prefer hit-and-run attacks, seeking cover whenever possible, attacking then fleeing as they try to draw pursuers into the fire of their allies.

Morale The troglodytes fear Grundmoch more than death, and in his presence they fight until slain. Otherwise, they try to flee into the surrounding mountains if brought below 4 hit points.

Grundmoch's Lair



HISSING SCORPIONS (4)

Tiny monstrous scorpion (MM 287)

hp 4 each

CR 1/4

C3. Courtyard (EL 4)

Two sets of double doors sit along opposite walls of an open-air court. On either side, narrow wings extend for fifteen feet. Three large pillars run down the center of each of the wings. Swept against the walls lie piles of rubble from a collapsed ceiling.

The walls hold faint traces of calligraphy written in Ignan, though the writing style is antiquated and the engravings are barely legible, and judging from the surviving fragments, they are short prayers to Rovagug.

Creature: A troglodyte hides on the roof above the door leading to area C4. If anyone approaches without proper accompaniment, he triggers the trap as they attempt to open the doors.

TROGLODYTE

hp 13 (MM 246)

CR 1

Trap: The troglodytes have piled a large stack of bricks above the doors to area C4. A lever and wedge behind

them allows a single troglodyte to topple the entire stack into the doorway, smashing whoever stands beneath.

FALLING BRICKS

CR 3

Type mechanical; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger manual; Reset manual

Effect falling bricks (all targets within 10 feet of the double doors to area C3); 4d6 damage (DC 20 Reflex half)

C4. The Astronomer's Dome (EL 6)

The broad dome crests twenty feet above the floor, supported by stone arches inlaid with glittering fragments of rock crystal. The dome itself is damaged, missing several sections that have been crudely repaired with stretched hides. Beyond the arches, tiled walls square off the outer perimeter of the dome. Set into the floor beneath the dome is an elaborate mosaic of an intertwining sun and moon. The once stunning inlay is badly chipped. Chained to several of the arches hang the half-devoured remains of slain gnolls, their corpses crawling with flies. Most of the bodies are missing the majority of their legs and feet. A single word has been crudely carved into their chests.

At either end of the dome, double doors provide exits, while a small staircase in the southeast corner of the chamber leads down to area C6. The word carved into the chests of the dead gnolls is “infidel,” written in Draconic.

Creatures: A cabal of troglodyte clerics uses this chamber to perform sacrifices, in which they release pet monitor lizards to devour tied and hobbled interlopers in the name of Rovagug. Currently, only three adepts occupy the dome, happily tending to their pets with scraps of raw gnoll meat. The missing gnoll feet are evidence of the work of the monitors whenever they’re left alone here.

TROGLODYTE SHAMANS (3)

CR 2

Male troglodyte cleric 1 (Rovagug) (MM 246)

CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19

(+3 armor, +1 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 22 (3d8+9)

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk greataxe +4 (1d12+1/x3) and

bite +0 (1d4)

Ranged javelin +2 (1d6+1)

Special Attacks rebuke undead 2/day (–1, 2d6), smite 1/day (+4 attack, +1 damage), stench

Spells Prepared (CL 1st)

1st—*cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *magic weapon*^D

o—*create water*, *cure minor wounds*, *mending*

D domain spell; **Domains** Destruction, War

TACTICS

During Combat The clerics throw their currently held meat scraps at their attackers, then step back, allowing the monitor lizard to take the front line. While the PCs handle the lizards, the clerics cast *magic weapon* and *divine favor* before stepping into melee.

Morale The clerics fight until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 12, **Con** 16, **Int** 8, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Feats Combat Casting, Lightning Reflexes, Martial Weapon

Proficiency (greataxe), Multiattack, Weapon Focus (greataxe)

Skills Hide +5 (+9 in rocky or underground areas), Knowledge (religion) +0, Listen +7

Languages Draconic

SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Gear studded leather armor, masterwork greataxe, 6 javelins, necklace of bone fragments and teeth

MONITOR LIZARDS (3)

CR 2

hp 22 (MM 275)

The Carrion Tribe

The Carrion King’s gnolls all dwell within the actual House of the Beast, although not all of them can be found within its walls at any one time. Some of the tribe’s members patrol the outer temple grounds, while even more patrol the surrounding terrain or travel to other tribes to gather tribute for their king. Three categories of gnoll comprise this tribe—standard gnolls, the tougher Carrion Guards, and the Carrion Initiates.

When this adventure begins, there are 43 gnolls in all stationed within the House of the Beast (23 gnolls, 12 Carrion Guards, and 8 Carrion Initiates). Every day that passes, gnolls slain by the PCs can be replenished as additional gnolls return from outlying areas, at a rate of 1d6 gnolls per day (maximum of 40 reinforcements), 1d4 Carrion Guards every 2 days (maximum of 10 reinforcements), and 1d3 Carrion Initiates every 3 days (maximum of 3 reinforcements).

TACTICS

During Combat As soon as the adepts throw the meat scraps at interlopers, the monitors turn aggressive and attack.

Morale The monitor lizards fight to the death.

C5. The Hall of Mamluks (EL 8)

Several ten-foot-wide, C-shaped alcoves stand to either side of this forty-foot-long hallway. Pillars run down the center of the hall, and scattered in several of the alcoves lie the remains of ancient offerings, most of which consists of tiny cracked perfume bottles and crumbling wads of burnt incense.

The western door opens into area C4, while the eastern door leads out to an open pathway that runs through the courtyards of the main temple. Close inspection of the door to the east reveals that it has been sealed shut via a *stone shape* spell—Grundmoch did this to prevent gnolls from getting into their complex. The door no longer opens as a result—beyond them lies area H8 of the middle temple of the House of the Beast.

C5a: This door opens to a spiral staircase within the southern minaret. The stairs climb upward to a small platform in the minaret 60 feet above, but are quite rickety-looking and riddled with cracks. Each round a Medium or larger creature stands on the stairs, there’s a 25% chance the stairs collapse into area C7b 20 feet below. Creatures in the stairwell take falling damage as appropriate, and could be buried as well (see page 66 of the DMG).

C5b: This door opens to a spiral staircase within the northern minaret—it is safe to traverse.



C6. Hatchery (EL 6)

The air in this large, dark hall is acerbic, infused with the scent of the smoky braziers that provide dim lighting. Archaic frescos fade beneath layers of graffiti on the chamber's walls, which are marred in several places by brutal axe marks. Three pairs of columns line a single walkway that cuts through the center of the room. Along the perimeter stand small semi-circular mounds formed from reddish clay soil. A pair of double doors hangs on the center of the east wall, while to the west an arch opens to a large alcove. In the southeast corner, a small flight of stairs leads up.

There are 14 soil mounds in all. Buried in each are small clutches of sand-colored, speckled eggs, each about the size of a grapefruit—troglodyte eggs.

Creatures: A pack of 5 well-trained guardian monitor lizards protects the troglodyte hatchery. Though they won't attack troglodytes, the great lizards are quite aggressive and immediately attack anything else that enters this room.

MONITOR LIZARDS (5)
hp 22 each (MM 275)

CR 2

C7. Bunker (EL 5)

This long hall ends at a curved wall to the east where a brace of heavily barricaded double doors blocks further passage. Before the door stands a haphazardly constructed bunker of rubble and mud brick.

The heavily barricaded double doorway leads to area H8. The exit can only be forced open with a DC 28 or greater Strength check. Area C7b is a small circular storage area that contains several broken weapons and bits of scavenged armor awaiting repairs that will likely never happen. Area C7a is a flight of stairs that leads up to area C5b; though they appear rickety, the stairs between here and the ground floor above are solid, and will not collapse.

Creatures: More than a half-dozen troglodytes guard the eastern door to prevent an incursion of gnolls from the east. Upon spotting adventurers, the troglodytes are confused (especially if adventurers come from the west or above). If the PCs make no attempt at peaceful negotiations, these seven troglodytes attack after a round of confusion.

TROGLODYTES

hp 13 each (MM 246)

TACTICS

During Combat Four of the troglodytes rush to attack in melee while the others hang back and throw javelins.

Morale The troglodytes fear Grundmoch more than death, and in his presence they fight until slain. Otherwise, they try to flee into the surrounding mountains if brought below 4 hit points.

C8. The Foyer

An archway opens into a small semi-circular chamber with a low, curved ceiling. A mix of rubbish and dried mud seals a doorway in the western wall, though something has smashed a sizable hole through the wall just south of the doorway.

The foyer serves as the entrance to Grundmoch's abode. Unless accompanied by troglodytes, anyone trespassing within this section (areas C8–C11) is considered a potential threat and immediately attacked without question.

C9. The Gargler's Den (EL 5)

Mosaics covering the walls of this room depict armored men fighting dragons and other mythological creatures with long spears and curved swords. They are scarred in several locations where the plaster and brick face has torn free. A pile of dirty hides rests in the corner next to a large wooden cask filled with bones.

Creatures: Grundmoch's most trustworthy ally isn't actually a troglodyte—rather, this is a creature the troglodytes have taken to calling the Gargler for the strange, fluidic noises it makes when angered. The Gargler is a gibbering moulder that Grundmoch discovered living in the region when the troglodytes first arrived in this area years ago. Grundmoch's triumph of earning the gibbering moulder's trust and even friendship has given the troglodytes a unique ally, but as of yet Grundmoch has been unwilling to risk the Gargler on an attack against the gnolls.

Nonetheless, the gargler is almost useless in guard duty, as it tends to lose track of its allies and has killed more troglodytes than enemies the few times it served such duty. As a result, Grundmoch keeps it close by as a personal guardian.

THE GARGLER

Gibbering moulder (MM 126)

hp 42

C10. The Roaster

A blackened hole in the center of the floor serves as a fire-pit. Within are charred bones and bits of boards. Suspended from

CR 1

the walls, several soot-smeared chains create a webbed design that hangs above the pit. The ceiling is similarly soot-stained.

Grundmoch occasionally uses this primitive contraption to roast live sacrifices, combining religious observances with meals. The majority of the bones in the pit belonged to gnolls.

C11. Grundmoch's Home (EL 6)

The room is garishly decorated with all sorts of dingy bangles and miscellaneous bric-a-brac, the bulk of which sits ploughed into a pile in the corner like a cheap dragon's horde. Threadbare tapestries, woven from faded knots of muslin, hang on the walls, their once marvelous patterns painted over with bloody smears in the symbol of Rovagug.

Creatures: This room serves as the lair of the troglodyte's leader, Grundmoch. If PCs can reach Grundmoch without wreaking too much havoc upon his tribe, the confused and angry troglodyte can be reasoned with, especially if he feels he can gain an advantage over the imposter who turned on him and usurped his temple. If made friendly or better, he'll even explain the strangeness of recent events—how his friend Rokova went missing several months ago, his discovery of a badly savaged body that seemed to match his friend's remains, and the results of his confrontation with the imposter who now wears Rokova's skin. Grundmoch remains unaware of the imposter's true nature and motives, but suspects that he plans on supplanting the Carrion King and twisting the House of the Beast to his own ends. Grundmoch's greatest fear is that the imposter is an agent of a rival church, perhaps even the church of Lamashtu, and that he seeks to rebuild the sacred House of the Beast into a shrine to another god.

Grundmoch isn't interested in aiding the PCs in a direct confrontation with the gnolls, but if the PCs establish a friendly relationship with the troglodyte, he agrees to let the PCs stay in area C3 if they're looking for a relatively safe place to rest.

GRUNDMOCH

CR 6

Male troglodyte cleric 6 (Rovagug) (MM 246)

CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +4; Senses darkvision 90 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 25

(+6 armor, +3 deflection, +6 natural)

hp 68 (8d8+32)

Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +8

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Legacy of Fire

Melee +1 greataxe +9 (1d12+4/x3)

Special Attacks rebuke undead 2/day (–1, 2d6+5), smite 1/day (+4 attack, +6 damage), stench

Spells Prepared (CL 6th)

3rd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 16), *contagion*^D (DC 16), *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*

2nd—*cure moderate wounds* (2), *hold person* (DC 15), *resist energy*, *shatter*^D (DC 15)

1st—*command* (DC 14), *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *inflict light wounds*^D (DC 14), *obscuring mist*, *shield of faith*

0—*create water*, *cure minor wounds* (2), *guidance*, *mending*

D domain spell; **Domains** Destruction, War

TACTICS

Before Combat Grundmoch casts *shield of faith* if he suspects combat is drawing near.

During Combat Grundmoch knows he is heavily armored, and takes the first several rounds of combat to arrogantly cast his offensive spells at foes, even in melee. He saves his wand to use against enemies who prefer to fight at range. If the PCs

seem to be able to hit him, he casts *hold person* and *blindness/deafness* on those PCs, then casts *divine favor* and switches to his +1 greataxe.

Morale Grundmoch fights to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Martial Weapon Proficiency (greataxe), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe)

Skills Concentration +8, Hide +6 (+10 in rocky or underground areas), Knowledge (religion) +1, Listen +4

Languages Common, Draconic

SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Combat Gear *wand of spiritual weapon* (37 charges); **Other Gear** +1 breastplate, +1 greataxe

Treasure: Grundmoch's collection of "treasures" consists primarily of dented brass and tin objects such as cups, plates, old incense holders, candelabras, and other such bric-a-brac, most of it badly tarnished, dented, and in poor condition. A careful DC 20 Search check reveals a few more valuable pieces including a dented brass canteen inlaid with silver trimming worth 200 gp, a gold bracelet inlaid with turquoise stone worth 500 gp, and a decorative golden helmet inlaid with a few small pieces of quartz worth 900 gp.

grundmoch



PART FOUR: COURT OF CARRION

The remainder of this adventure is focused on the central structure of the House of the Beast itself, the ancient temple of Rovagug built at the command of the efreeti Jhavhul and now the lair of the Carrion King and his favored gnolls. The majority of the chambers within the House of the Beast are unlit—but in some areas (as indicated in the text) the gnolls maintain old lanterns to provide light to slaves or allies who can't see in the dark.

The House of the Beast can be split into five distinct sections, each with its own use and theme, as detailed below. In all cases, the structure is incredibly old, with cracks decorating the walls, filth and rubble and vermin cluttering the floor, and thick dusty cobwebs hanging from ceiling corners.

The Great Dome (area G): The only aboveground portion of the House of the Beast is this structure. The gnolls patrol here periodically, but for the most part have left this area to the elements.

The Middle Temple (area H): The most extensive level is the first underground level; the area below the Great Dome being where the bulk of the gnolls dwell. Several outlying underground basements below the northern buildings are connected by a network of tunnels the

gnolls call the “Warrens,” an area the gnolls have lost control of and which is now controlled by a band of brutish escaped slaves. The air here is somewhat foul, smelling of carrion.

The Lower Temple (area I): The realm of the Carrion King and the core of his power is this deep level, once the main temple of the House of the Beast and where Jhavhul met with his petitioners and granted their wishes. The air in the Lower Temple is almost unbearably putrid due to the carrion pit in area **I2**. Upon first visiting the Lower Temple, each character must make a DC 12 Fortitude save to avoid being nauseated for 1d10 rounds and then sickened for 2d4 hours. A successful save negates both effects—characters need make new saves only if they leave the Lower Temple for more than a day before returning. The inhabitants of the House of the Beast are accustomed to the reek and need not make these saving throws.

The Deep Vaults (areas J and K): Under the temple itself lie two additional sub-levels; the chambers of the Stone Speakers and the Pit of Screaming Ghosts. These were once the hidden homes of Jhavhul’s agents and the efreeti himself when he visited the temple, and used to serve as the entrance to the chambers much deeper under Pale Mountain where Xotani’s corpse lies. This route is closed now, but in the last adventure in *Legacy of Fire* the route is reopened.

G1. Southern Atrium

Along the southern side of the great dome curves a set of crumbling marble stairs that climbs to a forty-foot-wide stage and a pair of rust-encrusted doors.

The doors are so rusty that their once exquisitely carved facade is now indecipherable and their hinges have corroded into the doors themselves. It’s only a DC 20 Strength check to bash down the huge doors as a result. Beneath the alcoves, along the western floor and in the northeast corner are a pair of holes that narrow into tunnels that lead down to area **H2** below. A Small or smaller creature can navigate these tunnels easily, but a Medium creature must succeed in a DC 25 Escape Artist check to wriggle through them.

G2. The Western Atrium (EL 6)

Upon a slightly raised dais stand six wide stone columns inlaid with tiles made from bits of colored glass. On either side, stairs twist inward, leading up to a large atrium. Heaps of yellowed skulls lie piled about in the alcoves to the north and south of the central walk that approaches a large pair of doors to the east.

Creatures: The western atrium serves as the gnolls’ main entrance. They keep it both trapped and heavily guarded at all times. A half-dozen guards hide within the shadows of the alcoves. When trespassers approach, they hold their attacks until the trap on the stairs springs. If trespassers happen to take the time to search for traps, they attack as soon as the trespassers become preoccupied with disabling it.

GNOLLS (6)

CR 1

hp 11 each (MM 136)

TACTICS

During Combat The gnolls initiate combat with a volley of arrows, then charge in swinging their axes. They use the higher ground to their advantage and attempt to push advancing attackers back into the toxic stair spikes whenever possible.

Morale Until they lose more than half their number, the gnolls fight until slain. Once their ranks deplete, the remaining gnolls break for the temple doors, retreating to area **G3** and down the stairs into area **H1** while yelping for reinforcements.

Trap: The short flight of stairs leading up to the atrium is trapped, but the trap is easily bypassed by stepping over every other step (a stunt the long-legged gnolls accomplish easily). The even-numbered steps have been hollowed out and covered with a thin layer of stretched leather painted to look like weathered stone. Anyone attempting to step on a false riser finds his foot tearing through into a bed of poisoned spikes hidden within the step.

TOXIC STAIR SPIKES

CR 2

Type mechanical; Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 15

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset manual

Effect caltrop spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1 point of damage [as caltrop, see PH 126] plus poison); poison (Huge scorpion venom, Fort DC 18, damage 1d6 Con/1d6 Con)

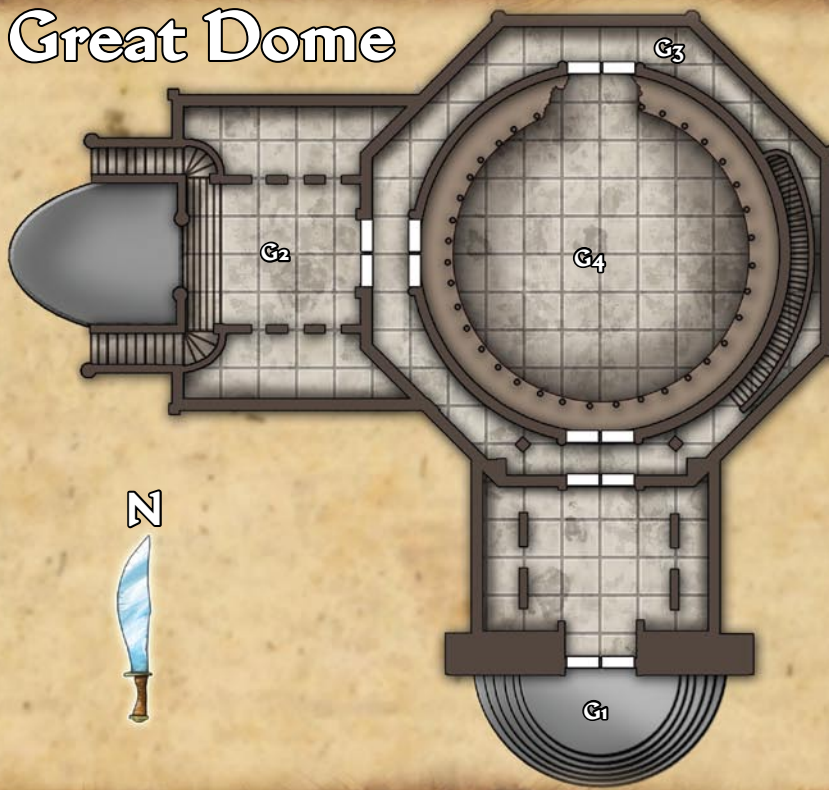
G3. Outer Ring

A narrow hallway circles the inside of the dome, its walls crawling with beetles. Loose chunks of plaster and bits of rubble clutter the floor, and old smears of blood stain it brown.

A flight of stairs winds down around the outer wall of the inner dome to the east, leading to area **H1** below. The three doors leading into area **G4** are quite stout, all barred from the **G3** side.

Several coils of thick rope and a few bloodstained grappling hooks lie in a heap near the western door; the gnolls use these ropes and hooks to drag back creatures that have been poisoned by the scorpion trapped in area **G4** while the giant vermin is busy eating other food—the

The Great Dome



venom they harvest from the bodies is their primary source of poison for traps and other uses.

G4. Central Dome (EL 7)

The dome climbs high overhead. Long ago, the inner ceiling collapsed, leaving its timbers and skeletal framework exposed beneath its brass-plated shingles. The ground below is cluttered with rubble, heaps of animal skeletons, and countless bloodstains.

Creature: An enormous 22-foot-long deathstalker scorpion is trapped in this dome, a feat that cost the Carrion King six of his warriors in luring and trapping the beast within. The gnolls keep the scorpion as a poison source, although as a general rule only the Carrion Guards and some of the traps in the complex use the poison regularly, as after too many fatal mishaps, most of the gnolls have developed a healthy fear of poisoning their weapons.

The scorpion itself doesn't know the difference between gnolls and any other potential meal, but generally focuses on only one target at a time, leaving other creatures alone as long as nothing else attacks it while it attempts to poison and eat its chosen victim.

DEATHSTALKER SCORPION

Huge monstrous scorpion (MM 287)

hp 75

CR 7

H1. Lower Dome (EL 8)

In the center of the large chamber are five dens of scattered bones and matted fur. A curving flight of stone stairs descends from above to the northeast, supported by a dense colonnade, while to the southwest a second flight descends deeper into the earth. To the north, a crude wooden barricade has been erected over the mouth of a tunnel, while to the east a larger path through the mounds of sediment leads into a large, dark hall. The southern wall appears to have partially collapsed, but glimpses of another large space can be had through gaps in the fallen masonry.

Zayifid's initial research led him to believe Shirak (and thus the *Scroll of Kakishon*) was buried along with her kin in a series of crypts located to the north of the temple. He convinced the Carrion King that expanding the Middle Temple into the northern catacombs would be a good idea. While Zayifid's speculations failed to locate Shirak's tomb, the digging did indeed expand the size of the middle temple by connecting it to several other building basements.

The northeastern stairs lead up to area **G3**, while the southwestern ones lead down to area **I1**. The cracks in the pile of rubble to the south can be navigated easily by Small or smaller creatures, but a Medium creature must make a DC 25 Escape Artist check to squeeze through into area **H2** beyond. The five dens in the middle of the room are where the gnolls keep their five hyaenodons when they're not on duty in area **E** above.

Creatures: Although the Carrion King initially wanted to use the northern tunnels to expand his domain, the slaves his gnolls were using recently rebelled and seized control of the warrens. The Carrion King has already lost several gnolls to the savage and desperate slaves—worse, the slaves have joined forces with a small group of pugwampis, tiny gremlins the gnolls loathe, yet who venerate gnolls as gods. For now, the Carrion King has ordered the northern passage boarded up, and has posted three Carrion Guards here to make sure the slaves and pugwampis stay out—the king hasn't quite decided how to kill off the problem, but if his guards capture the PCs, he's not above seizing their gear, giving the PC prisoners crude weapons, then sealing them into the warrens in hopes that the slaves and PCs will kill each other.

Unless the PCs have already depleted the tribe's supply of hyaenodons after multiple fights in area **E**, three of the slaving beasts sleep here. They lunge to their feet and run to the Carrion Guards when called, but if they notice the PCs first, they charge in frenzy, eager to attack the intruders.

CARRION GUARDS (3)

CR 2

hp 19 each (see page 15)

TACTICS

During Combat The Carrion Guards use their stingchucks and call the hyaenodons to their side in the first round of combat, mounting up and then moving around the perimeter of the chamber to keep as much distance between themselves and the PCs as they can. They favor using their poison arrows, but if that tactic isn't working they charge in to batter the PCs with axe and mount.

Morale Although brave, these Carrion Guards also understand the value of retreat. As soon as one of them dies, the others split up. One attempts to race downstairs to warn the Carrion King while the other heads to the west to alert the main body of gnolls dwelling there.

HYAENODONS (3)

CR 4

hp 42 each (see page 15)

H2. The Whispering Stalker (EL 6)

The floor appears badly damaged, scarred with cracks and huge gaping holes. Pieces of old wood and rusted metal bars

cover some of the damaged areas, though they hardly seem safe. Along the north wall, loose rock and other debris neatly fills a wide arch, blocking the passage save for a few narrow gaps; likewise, in places the ceiling of the chamber has fallen, exposing small gaps to reveal the sky above.

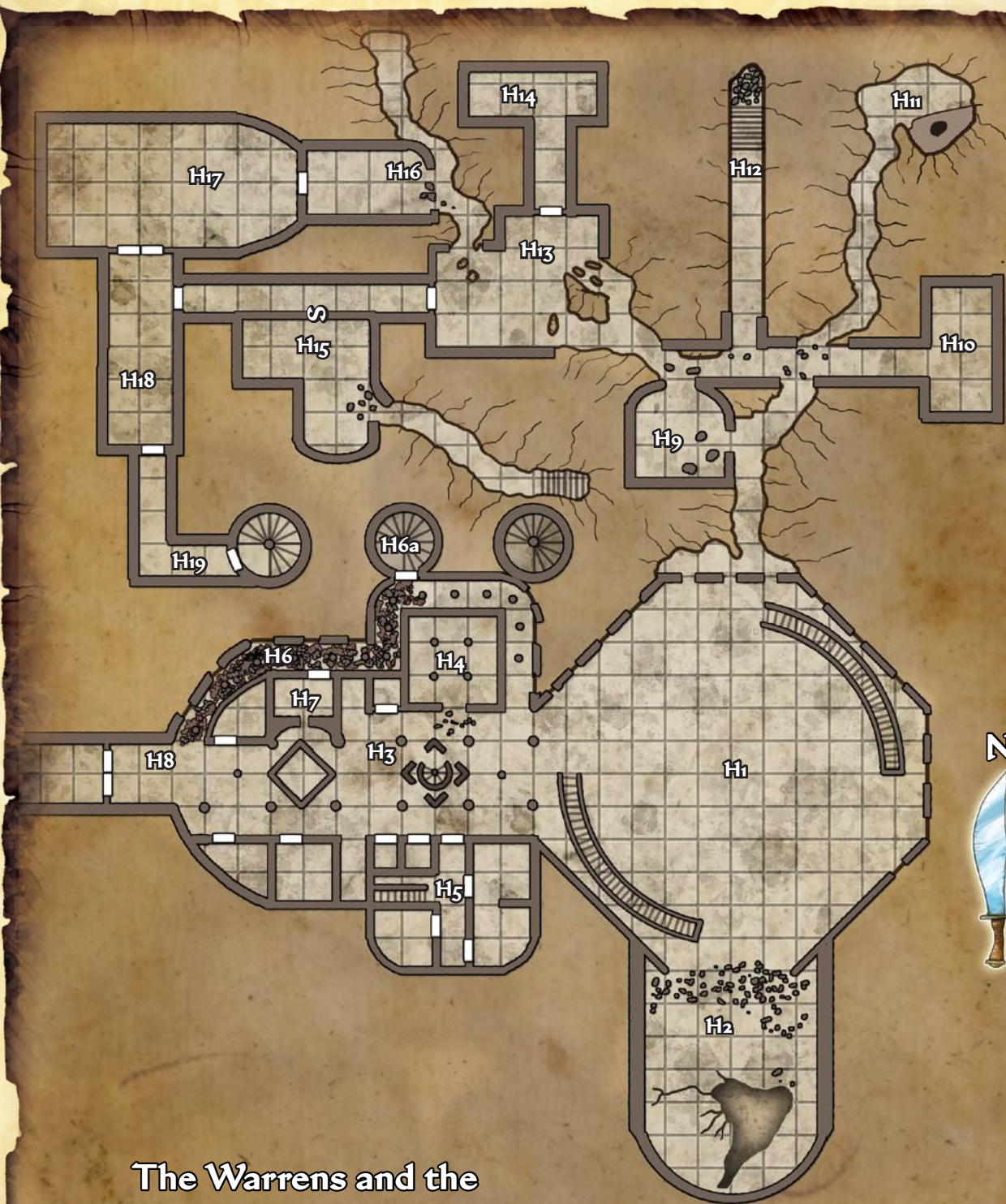
The floor of this room has suffered extensive damage, and a considerable portion in the center is missing. A DC 15 Knowledge (architecture or dungeoneering) check determines the entire room is unstable. The entire floor is difficult terrain, and a Medium creature runs a 20% chance per round of causing a 5-foot-square section of the floor to cave in, dropping him 30 feet into area **I8** below. For each size category larger than Medium, the chance to fall through the floor doubles (40% for Large, 80% for Huge, automatic for Gargantuan or Colossal). Small and smaller creatures have no chance of falling through the floor.

The holes in the north wall lead to area **H1**; those in the ceiling to area **G1**. A Medium creature can wriggle through with a DC 25 Escape Artist check while a Small or smaller creature can do so automatically.

The large hole in the floor opens directly into area **I8** below. If the unchosen in that area still live, the shuffling sounds of their movement and the occasional low growl and bark wafts up from the hole; if combat or loud noise erupts in this chamber, the unchosen below set up a cacophonous din, and their roars and howls are sure to alert the entire Lower Temple.

Creatures: Although this room hasn't been used by the gnolls ever, it is far from unoccupied. A single crazed goblin named Blobog dwells here, a mad cleric of Lamashtu from across the Inner Sea who received strange visions of heretics who were using some of the Demon Queen's most secret rituals for their own needs. Blobog was not the only priest Lamashtu contacted through dreams in this manner, but he is the only one to have survived the journey to Pale Mountain—Lamashtu's disappointment in her more regional worshipers is the main reason she turned to more distant minions to correct the travesty that has been brought to the sacred trepanation rituals practiced by many of her faithful.

Unfortunately, Blobog surviving the journey to Pale Mountain amounted as much to luck and stealth as anything else. The goblin has been forced to concede, even in his madness, that the Carrion King and his brutish minions (particularly the hulking unchosen) are more than he can handle. He's been waiting here, hiding in this room and sneaking out only to scrounge food and water, for several months, watching the gnolls and praying for Lamashtu to give him the opportunity to finish the task she's set him on. While Lamashtu has more or less forgotten Blobog and the slight of the unchosen



The Warrens and the Middle Temple

One square = 10 feet

(demon lords are nothing if not easily distracted), this won't prevent Blobog from interpreting the PCs as divine sendings from the Mother of Monsters come to aid him in his time of need. That Blobog's needs and the PCs' goals match relatively well means that, if the PCs can stomach an alliance with the disgusting and cruel goblin, they could have a relatively strong ally if they play their cards right.

Blobog frequently whispers prayers to Lamashtu aloud in Goblin. Several of the gnolls have heard these whispers, and more than a few have fallen to his sudden attacks. None who have survived have had a good look at the goblin, and they know him only to be a swift killer. Among the gnolls, the goblin has come to be known as the whispering stalker, and the Carrion King has grown increasingly annoyed at his gnolls not being able to handle the situation. After a close call with several Carrion Guards a month ago, Blobog has held off any further slayings, hoping to let the heat die down before resuming his attacks. The gnolls have only now started to accept the fact that the whispering stalker has moved on, but the memories of Blobog's swift strikes linger.

Blobog is a consummate liar and obviously mad, but still knows many of the Temple's ins and outs. He hides if he hears the PCs approaching, but as soon as he realizes that the PCs aren't gnolls he climbs up on a rock and hails them in Common, asking them if the Mother sent them to help with the heretics. As long as the PCs avoid crass comments about Lamashtu and don't attack, Blobog accepts any story they give him—in his mind, the PCs were sent by Lamashtu to aid him. It shouldn't take much talking to get Blobog to report what he knows, although his madness makes some of his reports difficult to understand. The What Blobog Knows sidebar lists the information he's able to share with the PCs.

Although Blobog and the PCs have much the same goal, the goblin still doesn't wholly trust them—they're not goblins, after all, and it's unlikely that any of the PCs bear deformities that mark them as "touched by the Mother." He won't agree to accompany the PCs in their crusade against the gnolls unless made helpful (his initial attitude is indifferent), but he will continue to skulk about the complex as the PCs explore. Once the PCs have met Blobog, you can use him to save the PCs if they get in over their heads by having the goblin leap out

What Blobog Knows

In addition to the following, Blobog knows a fair amount about the layout of the House of the Beast. He can sketch a map of the Middle Temple for the PCs and areas **11**, **12**, and **18** of the Lower Temple, and can warn the PCs about what kinds of foes and dangers they can expect in these areas. Of course, Blobog's madness makes him unreliable—feel free to sprinkle his advice with errors as you wish, using the following bits of information as examples.

The Gnolls: "The gnolls have turned their backs on the Mother. They think Bug in Ground better, but Bug in Ground is just a Bug in Ground. Good for eating, maybe, if you're tall enough. But that ends now you're here! You kill gnolls and Carrion King, yeah? Show them Bug in Ground not matter!"

The Troglodytes: "When I first get here, lizards and gnolls friendly. But they get in fight, and gnolls kill many lizards. Lizards now live in building over that way." He points west. "They maybe help us kill gnolls? They worship Bug in Ground too, and smell plenty bad, so I not ask them yet. You go ask them!"

The Unchosen: "The Growing of the Third Eye is sacred lore of the Mother, and one of her sons has given it to the gnolls. He is a heretic, and he uses it to make his own monsters. This is for the Mother!

He would think himself the Mother, when the Mother is the Mother! Is it really that complicated? Anyway, he does it wrong, and gnolls he pokes holes in turn big and mean and even more stupid. Big like Carrion King. But Carrion King not stupid, so be careful there!"

The Maggot Throne: "Carrion King sits on Maggot Throne. Sacrifices to Bug in Ground get thrown into pit nearby his throne. A smaller bug lives down there, but still plenty big enough to eat all of us! Don't get fed to the bug!"

The Heretic: "He calls himself Madfang. He lives down below, and you can tell it's him because of all the knives and metal pokers he has in his pockets. Oh. Also? Death is too easy for heretic. He need die bad. You cut him open and show him inside ropes and then maybe let bugs eat his inside ropes while he watches?"

The Carrion King: "Carrion King is the worst. You kill him, other gnolls maybe give up and run away, yes? He down below usually, on throne. Kill him quick. He have friend Rokova that I think might want to kill him too, you know. Maybe you get Rokova to help you kill the King?"



blobog

of the shadows in the middle of a fight to attack the PCs' enemies, or even have the goblin attack an enemy first and thus warn the PCs of an upcoming ambush.

BLOBOG

Male goblin cleric (Lamashtu) 3/rogue 3

NE Small goblinoid

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16

(+5 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)

hp 33 (6 HD; 3d8+3d6+6)

Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk kukri +7 (1d3/18–20) and

mwk kukri +7 (1d3/18–20)

Ranged light crossbow +8 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)

Special Attacks rebuke undead 1/day (–2, 2d6+1), sneak attack +2d6

Spells Known (CL 3rd)

2nd—*hold person* (DC 15), *invisibility*^P, *sound burst* (DC 15)

1st—*cause fear* (DC 14), *cure light wounds*, *lesser confusion*^P (DC 14), *obscuring mist*

0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *guidance* (2)

D domain spell; **Domains** Madness, Trickery

TACTICS

During Combat Blobog prefers hit-and-run tactics, hiding whenever enemies approach and attacking only if he's sure he'll be able to take down his foe with a sneak attack. He casts *invisibility* if his first attack fails, then uses his invisibility to gain a second sneak attack the next round. His offensive spells are for cases where an enemy doesn't quickly succumb to a few sneak attacks, delaying pursuit long enough for him to scurry back into the shadows and eventually back to this room to hide and wait for things to quiet back down.

Morale Blobog is insane, not fearless. If brought below 8 hp and unable to flee, he cries and begs for mercy, only to seize the first chance to escape he gets.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +0

Feats Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (kukri)

Skills Concentration +6, Hide +16, Knowledge (religion) +1, Listen +9, Move Silently +16, Ride +7, Spot +9

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells), trapfinding

Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (28 charges); **Other**

Gear +1 chain shirt, masterwork kukris (2), light crossbow with 10 bolts poisoned with blue whinnis (DC 14, 1 Con/Unconsciousness), *cloak of protection* +1, onyx unholy symbol of Lamashtu worth 40 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Madness Domain Once per day, Blobog may add +4 to any one Will save, Wisdom-based skill check, or Wisdom check; he must choose to use this ability before he rolls.

H3. Main Hall (EL 5)

Thick pillars of stone line this oversized hall, draped in cobwebby ropes strung with tattered prayer flags. Along the north and south walls, various doors, arches, and stairwells offer exit. In the center of the room a pair of elaborately tiled, diamond-shaped columns etched with coils of twisting vermin rise up; the column to the east is hollow and contains an ancient iron staircase that spirals down into darkness.

The stairs in the eastern pillar descend to area I6. The second column appears solid, but a DC 20 Search check reveals a secret door that opens to a small room inside the pillar. Holes in the room allow anyone inside to hear and see things occurring within the rest of the hallway, seemingly without being detected. The chamber amplifies words spoken within the exterior chamber, granting listeners a +4 circumstance bonus to Listen checks made while enclosed within.

The unlabeled rooms that open off the sides of the main hall are all storerooms containing poorly preserved meat, barrels of water, poorly maintained weapons and armor, and other supplies like clothing, rope, nails, tools, and in a few foul-smelling barrels, a revolting “drink” made from fermented hyaenodon milk. It should be noted that gnolls (like hyenas) possess rather caustic stomach acids capable of digesting all manner of organic materials, even bones. While they can easily stomach this drink, any non-gnoll foolish enough to sample it must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or become nauseated for 1d10 rounds and then be sickened for an additional 1d6 hours.

A DC 20 Search made of the wall between this area and H7 reveals several small vents in the wall 9 feet off the ground that ensure at least some flow of fresh air between this room and the smaller one. These vents are only a few inches across—too small to navigate, but enough to hint to a chamber beyond the wall.

Creature: A single Carrion Guard is always posted in this watch chamber, with particular orders to keep an eye to the west for intruders. If he sees intruders, he raises the alarm by throwing a single *air elemental gem* into the main hall and ordering the Large air elemental to attack the PCs. The resulting din is enough to alert the area.

If the alarm is raised, the PCs face the elemental for 2 rounds. On round three, the gnolls from area H5 join the battle. If the battle's still going on by round seven, the gnolls mounted on hyaenodons from area H1 arrive to join the battle as well.

CARRION GUARD

hp 19 (see page 15)

LARGE AIR ELEMENTAL

hp 60 (MM 96)

CR 2

CR 5

H4. The Sickening Pool

A wide archway opens into a large square room. Along the room's outer walls, statues of robed, morbidly obese humans sit cross-legged, perhaps in some sort of praying position. The heads of all the statues have been smashed off. In their place rest small piles of humanoid skulls. In the center of the room four iron braziers surround a marble font half full of brownish, stagnant-looking water.

This room was used by the cult of Rovagug to anoint new high priests, but the gnolls of the Carrion King have no real use for the chamber. The water in the font carries blinding sickness (see DMG 292), a contagion the gnolls are particularly good at maintaining by adding new water and corruption to the font to maintain the level. The gnolls mostly use the font to torture prisoners; dunking their heads in the befouled water and forcing victims to swallow it, or holding their heads below the surface until they drown. Most of the skulls resting on the statues came from drowning victims. Still, gnolls are stupid, and sometimes dare each other to drink from it to prove their courage.

H5. Gnoll Barracks (EL 5)

The three rooms in this wing are all identical—each contains six or so cramped, nest-like beds cluttered with bits of rotten meat, bone, and matted gnoll fur. These rooms reek particularly strongly of gnoll urine. The stairs in the central hall lead down to area I10.

Creatures: These are the barracks for the standard gnolls who dwell in the Carrion King's court—the Carrion Guard and Initiates dwell elsewhere. Gnolls found here are off duty, and spend their time lounging about, bickering, play fighting, gambling, and sleeping. During the day, each of these rooms contains four gnolls, while at night there are only two gnolls per room. The gnolls often fight among themselves over the rooms, with the strongest seizing the choicest sleeping areas, and the weaker ones left to sleep in the common areas and hallways—simply counting the nests won't give an accurate tally of the gnolls that dwell here. There are no weaklings, elderly, or young among the gnolls of the Carrion King's court—they recruit their numbers from the outlying tribes, selecting the strongest. Very few gnolls die of old age in the House of the Beast.

GNOLLS (6)

hp 11 each (MM 136)

CR 1

H6. Clogged Passage

This hallway has mostly collapsed—the gnolls never bothered to clear out the tunnels. Manually clearing the earth from this tunnel takes 1d4 hours of work per 10 feet. Burrowing creatures can move through the rubble with ease. The door to area H7 and the stairs in the central minaret at area H6a won't open until the passage is cleared.

H7. Secret Study

This room is difficult to reach, requiring either hours of back-breaking effort to clear the hall in area H6, bashing through a wall from area H3, or magic to access.

This chamber is quite clean and has been converted into a well-organized study. In the center of the room, two long, wooden tables are arranged into an L-shaped work area. Atop one table sits a collection of measuring tools, a small hourglass, a compass, and an abacus. The other holds a wooden stand fitted with an oversized magnifying lens suspended above several pieces of yellowed parchment with tiny calligraphic writing. Nearby, a small handwritten notebook lies open face-down on the table.

Zayifid uses this room as a secret study, entering and exiting by using *ethereal jaunt* or a *potion of gaseous form*. He generally spends 1 day of the week here—time the Carrion King assumes he spends on one of his many walkabouts in the surrounding area. Much of Zayifid's time here is passed deciphering numerous writings and legends surrounding the history of the House of the Beast, its creation many centuries ago by a mysterious “spirit of fire” to serve as a place for mortals to worship him, and the likely existence of the Pit of Screaming Ghosts somewhere deeper under the temple's lower level.

If the PCs confront Zayifid elsewhere in the House of the Beast, he retreats here to recover. If the PCs discover this room before encountering him, they should not have their first encounter with him here.

This room contains several of Zayifid's personal belongings, clothing, journals, and additional notes which incriminate him as an imposter. Among these belongings are the clothes worn by Zayifid on his journey to Kelmarane at the start of this adventure, along with a heavily annotated copy of *The Birth of Light and Truth*, the holy book of the church of Sarenrae. The last several pages of this copy, normally blank for the owner to record his own experiences, are filled with notes and page references to elsewhere in the book. Written in Terran, anyone who studies these pages for a few minutes can quickly deduce that they are notes written by a person who was preparing to pose as a priest of Sarenrae in order to trick a band of heroes into raiding the House of the Beast so that the unnamed author can step in and take control of the place once the Carrion King is dead.

The handwritten notebook contains page after page of prayers written (in Terran) to Rovagug. Closer examination reveals that these prayers have apparently been transcribed from another source (see area **I10**) and then heavily analyzed, dissected, and examined. The focus of this analysis seems to be a search for an entrance to a place called “The Pit of Screaming Ghosts,” a location the unnamed author believes to be the crypts of the House of the Beast and the resting place of someone named Shirak. The last page of the notebook mentions something called the *Scroll of Kakishon*, said to be a great treasure worth a fortune that was buried with the gnoll Shirak ages ago, yet no further information about this scroll can be found in the notes.

Treasure: The abacus is a masterwork of lush exotic woods and precision balance worth 350 gp. A small box holds a stash of 150 gold coins, seven tiny garnets worth 35 gp each, and a block of *incense of meditation*.

H18. Western Exit

Piles of broken stone partially block this archway. Several hideous scarecrows made from the headless corpses of slain troglodytes stand propped against the walls here.

The doorway to the west leads to area **C5**.

H19. Redoubt (EL 6)

This chamber reeks of wild beasts. About the room, wooden stakes pounded into the mud-brick walls secure several dangling ropes with leather collars. A mosaic of a huge, snarling, insect-like beast with bulging eyes and yellow mandibles covers the floor. Its many arms clutch falchions, gemstones, and screaming women.

The image on the floor here is of Rovagug, identifiable with a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check, although the depiction of him wielding falchions is unusual (this was an embellishment Jhavhul had added).

Creatures: The first time the PCs enter the northern warrens (areas **H9–H19**), the gnolls are making a strong push into the warrens to recapture or exterminate the escaped slaves that have holed up here. A pair of Carrion Guards stands watch here with six slaves who remain loyal to them, having just released one of the hulking unchosen into the tunnels to the northwest. If the PCs have not yet dealt with the denizen of area **H13**, they’ll hear the immense gnoll roaring and howling in that direction just before the Carrion Guards order their slaves here to attack the PCs.

CARRION GUARDS (2)

hp 19 (see page 15)

CR 2

SLAVES (6)

hp 11 each (see page 12)

CR 1

Treasure: One of the Carrion Guards carries a spear with a strange, hollow, metal head. This injection spear is one of Madfang’s (see page **I7**) more clever inventions. While the device works fine on its own as a spear, the hollow head can be filled with a dose of poison or a potion. If the spearhead’s reservoir is filled, it immediately empties into the bloodstream of any creature that is forcibly stabbed with the weapon, instantly subjecting it to the effects. Currently, the spear contains a dose of a *potion of calm emotions*. The Carrion Guards use injection spears so prepared to keep the unchosen under control—the hulking brutes are too large to carry while unconscious, but a dose of *calm emotions* makes them docile enough that they can be led back to their pen in area **I8** below without much fuss. An injection spear is a nonmagical weapon worth 100 gp.

H10. Looted Tomb

At one end of the room, a great stone sarcophagus engraved with arabesques and calligraphy sits, displayed upon a tiered dais. The top of the sarcophagus lies broken in several pieces on the floor.

Gnolls looted this tomb long ago. Nothing remains inside the sarcophagus but dust and a few crumbled bits of yellow bone.

H11. Entrance to Fire

The rough-hewn passage widens, emptying into a larger excavation site in which the upper corner of another, older structure protrudes from the surrounding earth about a yard above the floor. A sizable hole has been cracked out of its ceiling, from which protrudes a ladder of lashed sticks.

This area was the focus of Zayifid’s original attempt to locate the Pit of Screaming Ghosts and Shirak’s Tomb, a focus the janni abandoned exploration of once his exploratory shaft penetrated into a cavern ruled by salamanders deep below. The shaft itself is 200 feet deep and ends in a long tunnel that leads northward for a half mile before reaching a small complex of chambers ruled by a number of salamanders. If the PCs wish to explore these caves, consult the Set-Piece adventure that appears on page 64—once they discover these caves, they can use this route as a relatively secret way to come and go from the underground levels of the House of the Beast, for the northern salamander caves have their own exit onto the slopes of Pale Mountain.

H12. Collapsed Staircase

The corridor slopes slightly upward, leading to a collapsed staircase buried beneath tons of rock and rubble.

As with area H6, clearing this collapsed staircase takes several hours of work (or magic, or a creature with a burrow speed). The stairs continue up for another 30 feet beyond the collapse, eventually emerging into area B above.

H13. Antechamber of the Beast (EL 7)

A battle has recently taken place here—the walls are spattered with fresh blood, and the bodies of what look like three men lie scattered in pieces on the floor.

Creatures: The gnolls released one of the unchosen into these passages, hoping to flush out and kill any of the slaves in the western warrens and trigger any traps the escaped slaves have put up. The furious beast encountered several escaped slaves here and killed them all, but for the past hour has refused to move on until it's finished playing with and eating its kills. Rather than risk triggering its anger, the Carrion Guards who released it in the first place have opted instead to wait out the lull in area H9, hoping the unchosen continues deeper into the warren before they are forced to move in and pacify it for return to the lower temple.

Of course, if the PCs wander into the room, the immense hulk of a gnoll roars in delight and attacks them at once.

UNCHOSEN

hp 42 (see page 88)

CR 4

H14. Old Tomb

The door leading into this tomb is locked tight with an ancient *arcane lock* (CL 12th). The gnolls have not yet managed to breach the door, the slaves having taken over the tunnels before they could investigate what lies beyond.

At one end of the room, a great stone sarcophagus covered with arabesques and calligraphy sits, displayed upon a tiered dais. Opposite the sarcophagus stands an ancient shrine consisting of an upright wooden box, its faded colors also covered with ancient scribbles in black and gold. The shrine is flanked by short rows of badly tarnished candleholders holding naught but clumps of dried tallow.

Treasure: Inside the sarcophagus lies a mummified body wrapped in tar-soaked strips of muslin. The mummy is not undead—it is simply the long-dead body of an ancient priestess of Rovagug who still wears copper armbands worth 150 gp each and a *ring of minor fire resistance*.

H15. Escape Route (EL 4)

Thick mats of what must be dried roots or other vegetable matter lie heaped against the walls of this room. To the east, a wide tunnel descends at a gentle slope into the dark, while to the north, the outline of a stone door sits in the wall.

This room is part of an ancient escape route—one that the Carrion King knows about but hasn't really bothered to maintain. The tunnel to the east leads down to the pit below the Maggot Throne in area I2. The secret door in the north wall is obvious from this side, but from the passageway on the opposite wall, it's a DC 30 Search check to notice the cleverly hidden door. The door itself hasn't been opened in ages, and the first time it is opened, it requires a DC 20 Strength check.

Creatures: A swarm of pale orange centipedes has taken up residence in this chamber, drawn perhaps by the proximity of their enormous, unnatural cousin that dwells down below in area I2. The centipedes furiously attack anything, gnoll or otherwise, that enters this room, excepting anything that obviously wears the unholy symbol of Rovagug.

CENTIPEDE SWARM

hp 31 (MM 238)

CR 4

H16. Foyer (EL 6)

A recently repaired hole in the eastern wall of this otherwise empty room stands partially blocked by three boulders cemented together with dried clay.

Trap: The ex-slaves set a trap that targets creatures entering this room from the east. The boulders block only part of the entrance from the tunnel into this room; it's easy enough for anyone to clamber over the 2-foot-high rocks. Of course, anyone who attempts to do so (or who tries to move the boulders or chip away at the mud) strikes a hidden trip line that releases a sharpened iron gate that hangs near the ceiling above. This sharpened gate swings down like a primitive guillotine, striking everyone in its path. The trap is plainly obvious to anyone who approaches from the west.

PRIMITIVE GUILLOTINE

Type mechanical; Search DC 18; Disable Device DC 22

CR 6

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect sharpened iron gate (Atk +20 melee, 6d6 damage); multiple targets (all creatures in entrance, plus all adjacent creatures in hallway beyond)

H17. Lazrul's Kingdom (EL 6)

Pale blue ceramic censers dangle from copper chains mounted into the ceiling along the edges of this room, filling the chamber with a faint, flickering light. To the west, a mound of rocks has been stacked to form a crude throne. A collection of mismatched boxes and clay urns lines the northern wall, while to the south, numerous rocks have been stacked in front of a pair of doors.

Creatures: This room was once used as a secret meeting chamber for high priests, but now serves as the lair of a cruel escaped slave named Lazrul. Son of a rapacious ogre and an unlucky traveler, Lazrul is a hulking, deformed hybrid known as an ogrekin, half ogre and half human. Sold into slavery as a child, Lazrul has known nothing else for all his years, but when his master was murdered by a band of gnolls on a caravan trail, he was captured and brought to the House of the Beast. Over the course of the next few months, Lazrul learned that not all masters are equal, and the cruelties he's endured at gnoll hands far outshine those he thought were cruel before. Lazrul's patience finally broke several days ago, and in a blind rage he single-handedly killed two Carrion Guards. Shocked that the killing was so easy, Lazrul had an epiphany—he was the strong one, not the gnolls.

Yet he was not foolish. His act of murder also freed over a dozen other slaves, all of whom were being led upstairs on what would doubtless have been a suicide run against the troglodytes to the west. Of these, five broke for the surface and now hide out in area A above. The other slaves, too cowardly to brave the surface, followed Lazrul and fled into the tunnels they'd helped dig, eventually ending up here. Lazrul, giddy with delight at being his own master and knowing little more than slave hierarchy, has turned on his fellow escapees, making them his own slaves. A few tried to resist, and he punished them with his club. Others have fallen to the gnoll attacks (such as the three who were recently slain by the unchosen in area H13). The remaining four slaves are as terrified of their new ogrekin master as they were of the gnolls—to them, nothing has changed, save that now they don't have to dig as much.

Lazrul is cruel and sadistic, and too stupid to realize that the PCs can help him. He orders his slaves to kill the PCs when they enter the room—he remains seated on his homemade throne, chewing thoughtfully on a raw lizard,

the latest feast provided him by his scavenging slaves. Only if his slaves fall or if he's attacked directly does he stand up with his oversized club (an uprooted sapling), roar, and enter the attack himself.

LAZRUL

CR 5

Male ogrekin human fighter 4 (*Pathfinder* #3)

CE Medium giant (augmented human)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19

(+4 armor, +1 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 42 (4d10+16)

Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee Large greatclub +12 (2d8+10)

TACTICS

During Combat Lazrul is an uncreative combatant—he attacks the largest foe, focusing all his anger on that one target. Each round he hits a target, he grows progressively wilder with his swings, increasing his Power Attack by 1 point each round.

Morale Lazrul fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 13, **Con** 18, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +11

Feats Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub), Weapon Specialization (greatclub)

Skills Intimidate +7

Languages Common

SQ deformities

Gear +1 studded leather armor, Large greatclub

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Deformities (Ex) Lazrul's right arm is exceptionally large and muscular, allowing him to wield a Large greatclub without additional penalty, but his legs are stunted and short and his left foot deformed into a club foot, resulting in a reduced base speed.

ESCAPED SLAVES (4)

CR 1

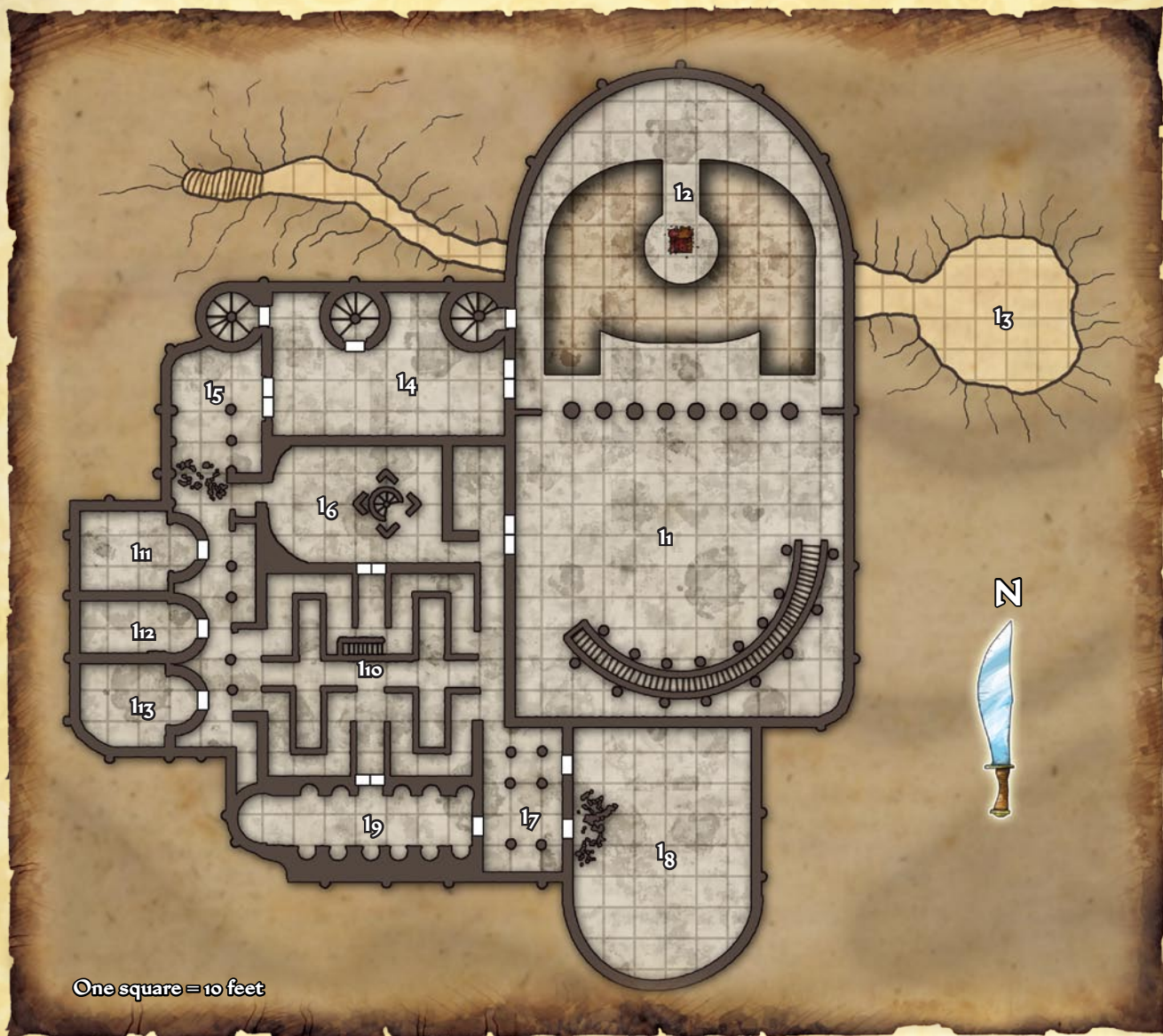
hp 11 each (see page 12)

TACTICS

During Combat The slaves follow Lazrul's orders at the start of combat, but as soon as Lazrul is damaged, the slaves rebel and join the PCs, attacking the ogre instead.

Morale As long as Lazrul isn't wounded, the slaves fight to the death. Once the slaves turn against him, though, they shriek in fear and flee if wounded, running into the warrens to hide (likely retreating to the wells in area H11).





Treasure: Most of the ceramic censers are cracked, half-shattered, or otherwise damaged, but one remains untouched. It is worth 500 gp to the proper collector.

H18. Abandoned Hall (EL 5)

The walls of this twenty-foot-wide hall are completely obscured by thick sheets of webbing, transforming it into a cloying, musty tube where sounds are eerily muffled. To the south, the web tube cinches down to a ten-foot-wide tunnel. Here and there, large shapes encased in thick webs hang from the walls.

The northern doors are covered with webs on this side, and blocked by rubble on the other—if one side is cleared, the doors can be opened with a DC 24 Strength check

(either pushing against the rubble or pulling free from the webbing).

Creature: An enormous funnel-web spider has converted this hallway into its lair. During the day, the creature lurks in here, while at night it clambers up to hunt the surrounding region. The sticky webbing on the floor is treated as difficult terrain for creatures other than spiders. If the spider is present, it immediately moves to defend its lair, fighting to the death.

GIANT FUNNEL-WEB SPIDER

CR 5

Huge monstrous spider (MM 289)

hp 52

Treasure: Most of the web-wrapped meals are animals, but one of them near the northern end of the hall is a

desiccated human bandit still wearing his +1 *chain shirt* and an *amulet of health* +2.

H19. Stairwell

These web-choked stairs wind up to the westernmost minaret in area D. Several wide windows up there allow access to the outside. The ground here is difficult terrain, and the walls are a nasty mix of webs and spider hair from the creature's nightly passage through the stairs to and from its lair. About 10 feet down, the stairs seem to end in a wall of dense webbing. If it is burned away or hacked apart (hp 14, DR 5/—) or torn open (Strength DC 20), the stairs are revealed to continue down to areas I4.

I1. Hall of Whispers (EL 6)

The air in this tremendous hall is thick and hot, clotted with a repugnant charnel stench. A foul plaster of clay, dung, and blood smears the walls, stamped with repeated patterns of paw-prints, crude symbols, and skulls. A row of thick stone columns divides the large room from an equally large adjacent chamber. Double doors lead east, and a curved staircase along the southern end of the room leads up.

The Hall of Whispers has long served as the primary temple of the House of the Beast. It was here that Jhavhul appeared before his supplicants and granted wishes (two for him, one for the supplicant). And it is here that Ghartok the Carrion King holds court. The immense gnoll spends much of his time seated to the north on the Maggot Throne (area I2), but sometimes relocates to this large chamber, especially on the sacred days and nights of carrion feasts, when the worshipers of Rovagug gather here to celebrate in violent, gluttonous orgies.

Creatures: This adventure assumes that when the PCs first reach the Hall of Whispers, no major ceremonies are taking place. In this case, the hall is nearly empty, guarded by a group of six gnolls led by a pair of Carrion Initiates, gnoll clerics who watch over the northern arcade of pillars and prevent the riff-raff from pestering the Carrion King. They immediately cry out in alarm if they see intruders here or in area I2 to the north. If he still lives, the Carrion King comes to join any battle that begins here, arriving in 1d4+1 rounds with a delighted roar.

If you want to have the PCs encounter a larger force here, you can add in additional gnolls and Carrion Initiates and even a few Carrion Guards to make the encounter as difficult as you wish. Certainly, the sounds and sights of a mass feast of carrion here should be enough to make even the bravest parties hesitate before entering.

CARRION INITIATES (2)

Male gnoll cleric 1

CR 2

CE Medium humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17

(+6 armor, +1 natural)

hp 22 (3d8+9)

Fort +8, **Ref** +0, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee mwk greataxe +6 (1d12+4/x3)

Special Attacks rebuke undead 3/day (+0; 2d6+1), smite 1/day (+4 attack, +1 damage)

Spells Prepared (CL 1st)

1st—*divine favor*, *magic weapon*^D, *shield of faith*

0—*cure minor wounds*, *guidance*, *resistance*

D domain spell; **Domains** Destruction, War

TACTICS

During Combat Initiates attack with their axes as they seek out badly wounded foes with deathwatch. Opponents that fall close to death are struck with *inflict light wounds* spells.

Morale Initiates fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 10, **Con** 16, **Int** 6, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +4

Feats Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon

Proficiency (greataxe), Weapon Focus (greataxe)

Skills Concentration +4, Listen +5, Spot +4

Languages Gnoll

SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (10 charges); **Other Gear** splint mail, masterwork greataxe

GNOLLS (6)

CR 1

hp 11 each (MM 136)

TACTICS

During Combat The guards attack the nearest opponents, fighting to move them toward the southern portion of the chamber, away from the Maggot Throne.

Morale These guards fight to the death.

I2. The Maggot Throne (EL 8)

A gargantuan but shallow pit filled with broken, rotting carcasses crawling with larvae and vermin dominates this area, leaving a ten-foot-wide walkway to the east and west. The bodies in the pit, mostly the remains of goats, cattle, and other animals, turn the pit into a roughly bowl-shaped depression, ten feet deep in the middle and nearly even with the floor along the edge. A twenty-foot-wide gap in the pit wall to the east opens into a carcass-lined tunnel.

To the south, the ledge widens into a balcony overlooking the pit, while to the north the room curves inward around a concave ledge that supports a gigantic framework of bone and sinew in the shape of a nine-legged spider with a gaping maw. Much of its surface is

stretched with the dried skins of dozens of different creatures. Extending from the spider's maw is a stone walkway that connects to the top of a twenty-foot-wide pillar rising from the center of the pit. Atop this pillar sits a tremendous and gory throne made of shattered bodies, stitched together with rope and lengths of bent metal to form a throne of bones and maggot-writhing carrion.

The dead animals in the pit are augmented here and there by the tribe's own dead and a few sacrifices of slaves and troglodytes. The pit is 5 feet deep, but the mass of bodies within turn it into a bowl-shaped depression. It is from this pit that the lower temple's hideous reek comes. A Medium or smaller character who wishes to move among the tangled reeking bodies can do so by climbing over the bodies—the surface is too uneven to walk over. Large or larger creatures can move through the pit as if it were difficult terrain if they wish. A character who enters the pit must make a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw to avoid becoming nauseated for 1d10 rounds and then sickened for 2d4 hours, even if they're already accustomed to the lower temple's foul air.

A forgotten opening in the western wall of the pit is almost completely buried in carrion. A DC 25 Search check notes a slight gap between top of the arch and its festering contents. A grisly 2d6 rounds of work is enough to pull aside enough bodies to expose the tunnel entrance—it leads to area H15.

The Maggot Throne itself is the Carrion King's favored haunt, and it also serves as a hidden entrance into the lower chambers of the House of the Beast. A DC 22 Search check of the Maggot Throne reveals a trigger at its base that, when pulled clockwise halfway around the throne's base as a standard action, causes the throne itself to slide back along the stone bridge to the north and exposes a flight of spiral stairs that winds down the inside of the pillar below to area J1.

Creatures: This chamber is the favored haunt of the Carrion King himself—a monstrous brute of a gnoll descended from a line of ancient priest-kings. Ghartok (a name few in the tribe know—most know him only as the Carrion King) is now something more than gnoll. When he and his fellow tribesmen first came to the House of the Beast, they fought several of the vermin denizens that had taken up residence in the ruins. With each chamber searched, Ghartok grew more and more impressed with what he found, and quickly realized that here was a god he could respect. Everything he had found wanting in Lamashtu was present in force with Rovagug. When he and his minions finally reached this room and were confronted by an immense beast of a hundred legs, Ghartok stood enraptured by the sight as the enormous creature slew and consumed every one of his followers.

When Ghartok was all that remained, he fell to his knees before the beast, and a voice exploded in his head. He knelt before one of the many chosen of Rovagug, a stegocentipede named Thkot Tal who possessed an unnatural and unholy intelligence. Not quite an avatar of the Rough Beast, Thkot Tal told Ghartok it had been waiting for one worthy to waken the House of the Beast anew. With lightning speed, the creature struck, lancing Ghartok square in the forehead with its poisonous sting.

Ghartok died there, yet he was also reborn. When his eyes opened again, he beheld his new body—powerful, muscular, and half again the size of the largest gnoll he'd ever seen. And as he rubbed at a strange ache between his eyes, he could feel the scabrous welt the sting had left behind. The unholy intelligence within Thkot Tal had passed to him, leaving the stegocentipede a mindless but nevertheless loyal minion in the pit below. Atop a throne of carrion, Ghartok

ghartok



The King Is Dead!

On one level, the climax of this adventure is the battle against the Carrion King. Yet that battle is unlikely to occur at the end of the adventure, since the true goal of “House of the Beast” isn’t just to kill Ghartok, but to recover the *Scroll of Kakishon*. When the PCs encounter the Carrion King, play up the battle for all it’s worth. You can even adjust his morale and let him escape to recover and rebuild his allies, turning the confrontation into a multi-encounter battle that moves throughout the House of the Beast.

But once the Carrion King is dead, things in the House of the Beast change. Deprived of a leader, the gnolls start to bicker and fight each other. For a few days after the Carrion King’s death, things are chaotic in the House of the Beast—gnolls encountered are as interested in fighting each other as they are the PCs, with the named NPCs retreating to their lairs to ride out the storm. This condition lasts for 1d4 days, after which the majority of the gnolls, Carrion Guards, and Carrion Initiates are dead or gone. The House of the Beast becomes much easier and safer to explore as a result—although the lower two levels (areas J and K) are relatively unchanged by the development.

On the other hand, if Zayifid still lives after the Carrion King is slain, he swiftly takes up control of the tribe, reducing the period of infighting to a mere 2d6 hours, after which the House of the Beast stabilizes. Yet now, rather than using the gnolls to further his own decadence, the new king puts the gnolls to work at an exhaustive search of the complex. They find the hidden entrance to the Stone Speakers under the Maggot Throne in a day, and Zayifid immediately begins sending wave after wave of gnolls down into the lower dungeons to test for traps and guardians. In this case, the adventure turns into a race, as the PCs must recover the *Scroll of Kakishon* before Zayifid. Alternatively, Zayifid could even recruit the PCs to take on this exploratory role. More details on how to handle this development appear on page 44.

found a powerful magic greataxe named *Goreshred*, one built especially for the slaughter of humanity. Ghartok had become the first of a new race of gnolls—the unchosen. And with this transformation, armed with *Goreshred*, he emerged from the House of the Beast as the Carrion King.

The Carrion King spends the majority of his time with his wives in area I4, but once the alarm spreads news of intruders, he demands his warriors capture them and bring them before him at the Maggot Throne. Next, he gleefully heads to his throne room and waits in anticipation of the opportunity to watch his followers throw them into the Carrion Pit as sacrifices to Thkot Tal. Any PCs captured during this adventure suffer this fate—stripped of armor

and weapons, they are cast into the pit and quickly attract the attention of the beast that lairs in area I3.

If the PCs reach this far without raising alarms, they find this room empty—the Carrion King is still in area I4 with his wives. If Ghartok waits for them here, though, the PCs find him arrogantly slumped upon his throne with his favorite advisor “Rokova” at his side. Rokova, in fact, is the janni Zayifid, and remains silent during the scene to follow. The Carrion King berates the PCs for being foolish enough to try to break into his temple, shrugging off any attacks as if they were trivial (regardless of whether or not they actually hurt him—after all, the Carrion King must maintain his appearance). Instead, he commands the PCs to save him the effort and sacrifice themselves to Rovagug by casting aside their weapons and armor and flinging themselves into the pit. Only if they refuse does Ghartok rise from his throne to do the job himself. In the battle to follow, “Rokova” steps back into the shadows to hide, something that Ghartok assumes indicates a setup for a death attack against the PCs, so he thinks nothing of it. In fact, Zayifid is biding his time; if the PCs seem to get the upper hand over Ghartok, he’ll step in and aid them in destroying the Carrion King. If this occurs, see page 44 for the next moves “Rokova” makes.

GHARTOK, THE CARRION KING

CR 8

Male unchosen unholy warrior 4 (*Book of Fiends* 205)

CE Large humanoid (gnoll)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., deathwatch, scent; **Listen** +5, **Spot** +5

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21

(+6 armor, +1 deflection, –1 Dex, +2 insight, +6 natural, –2 rage, –1 size)

hp 116 (9 HD; 5d8+4d10+72)

Fort +16, **Ref** +1, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities fearsome resolve, foresighted; **Immune** mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Spd 35 ft.

Melee *Goreshred* +15/+10 (2d6+16/x3) and bite +11 (2d6+5)

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

Special Attacks ferocity, loathsome strike, rage 1/day, rebuke undead 4/day (1st level, +1, 2d6+2), roaring fury

Spell Prepared (CL 2nd)
1st—*divine favor*

TACTICS

During Combat The Carrion King casts divine favor on the first round of combat, then enters his rage before attacking foes. A loyal creature to the Rough Beast, he hates the priesthood of Sarenrae with a passion and attacks obvious clerics and paladins in her service first. He saves his roaring fury to use if he gets surrounded by foes, and his loathsome strike for any foe that



strikes him as particularly clean and dainty, taking great glee in “messing up the pretty faces of the world.”

Morale The Carrion King is arrogant—he cannot conceive of losing a battle once it is joined, and fights to the death as a result.

Base Statistics AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 23; **hp** 98; **Fort** +14, **Will** +3; **Melee** +1 *greataxe* +15/+10 (3d6+13/x3) and bite +9 (2d6+4); **Str** 26, **Con** 22; **Skills** Climb +9, Jump +9

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 8, **Con** 26, **Int** 8, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +19

Feats Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Skills Climb +9, Intimidate +5, Jump +11

Languages Common, Gnoll

SQ fast, unholy warrior domains (hate, wrath)

Gear +1 *breastplate*, *Goreshred* (Medium +1 *human bane greataxe*), *amulet of health* +2, *ring of protection* +1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fast (Ex) The Carrion King gains a +5 foot bonus to his base land speed.

Fearsome Resolve (Su) Once per day when his hit points are at 58 or less, the Carrion King can attempt a Fortitude save (DC = 10 + the HD of the last opponent that struck him) to heal 2d8+5 points of damage as a free action.

Frenzy (Su) The Carrion King is too angry to die. He may continue to fight until his negative hit points exceed his Constitution core.

Loathsome Strike (Ex) Once per day, the Carrion King may add his Charisma bonus to his attack roll—on a successful hit, in lieu of normal damage, he deals 1d8 points of temporary Charisma damage.

Rage (Ex) The Carrion King can enter a rage (as a barbarian) once per day.

Roaring Fury (Su) Once per day, as a move-equivalent action, the Carrion King may emit a fierce roar that forces all living opponents within 30 feet to make a DC 13 Will save or become panicked. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

ZAYIFID

hp 72 (see page 10)

CR 7

13. The Carrion Pit (EL 8)

The floor of this foul-smelling cave is carpeted with an uneven layer of trampled carcasses and flesh and fur and bones.

Creature: This cavern is the lair of an immense beast—an armor-plated stegocentipede known as Thkot Tal (The Little God) to the gnolls. Its duty as the mouth of Rovagug completed with the transformation of Ghartok into the

Carrion King, the creature is now content to feed on the plentiful sacrifices and carrion the gnolls provide it. The beast is a gigantic, 30-foot-long centipede covered with chitinous plates of hardened bone that run along its back in double rows. Its rear portion ends in a long, scorpion-like stinger.

THKOT TAL

CR 8

Advanced stegocentipede (*Tome of Horrors Revised* 330)

N Gargantuan vermin

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 17

(+3 Dex, +11 natural, -4 size)

hp 110 (13d8+52)

Fort +12, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities spines; **Immune** mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee bite +13 (3d6+8 plus poison) and

tail +8 (3d6+4 plus poison)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

TACTICS

During Combat Although mindless, Thkot Tal does recognize gnolls as allies and won't attack them—characters disguised as gnolls can move among the immense many-legged vermin safely as long as they don't attack it. All other creatures are food, and it attacks the closest such target each round.

Morale Thkot Tal fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +29

Skills Climb +12, Hide -1, Spot +4

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Injury (bite or tail)—Fortitude DC 22; initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dexterity. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

Spines (Ex) A stegocentipede raises its dorsal spine plates during combat and moves rapidly back and forth. Creatures adjacent to a stegocentipede must succeed on a DC 20 Reflex save each round or take 3d8+4 points of damage from the spine-plates each time they attack whether the attack is successful or not. The save DC is Constitution-based.

14. King's Chambers

Ancient plaster frescos of serpentine beasts line the walls. An assortment of weapons hangs from spikes pounded into the wall, including a chipped iron greataxe, a blood-red leather whip, bladed leather gauntlets, and an assortment of battleaxes and throwing cleavers. Along the north wall, huge semi-circular columns, twenty feet across, intrude into the room, creating wide alcoves, while in the middle of the room rests a pile of

mildewed bearskins. A set of battered double doors stands ajar to the west.

A door in the central column allows access to the middle minaret (leading up to area D), while the door to the northwest is jammed shut. It's a DC 24 Strength check to open it; beyond is a staircase that leads up to area H19 before becoming clogged with webs.

This room is where the Carrion King sleeps, eats, and cavorts with his wives. If he hasn't already been encountered in area I2, he can be caught here with 1d4 of the gnolls from area I5.

Treasure: While most of the weapons on the wall are mundane or badly damaged, the blood-red whip is actually a +1 vicious whip.

15. Carrion Harem (EL 4)

This room is garishly decorated with weathered bits of junk, faded threadbare tapestries, and broken mosaics—all once rich and lavish items that time has robbed of beauty and value. Now dark stains smear the walls and waste and excrement litter the corners. A pile of rubble and broken furniture seals an archway in the southern wall. Along the northern wall, a fountain carved with intricate geometric patterns trickles a hint of brown, dirty water.

Creatures: Lounging about in various drunken and drugged states are the Carrion King's wives, a ragged collection of gnoll bitches who fancy themselves the luckiest in the tribe, yet who are universally battered and jittery. When not attending to the Carrion King, these skittish gnolls pass their time in a haze, puffing from exotically shaped hookahs or sipping bitter wine from filthy brass cups.

GNOLL WIVES (5)

CR 1/2

hp 11 each (MM 136)

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 10, flat-footed 10

(+1 natural)

OFFENSE

Melee club +1 (1d6)

Ranged thrown hookah or rock -3 (1d4)

TACTICS

During Combat Despite their sorry shape, the gnoll wives are fiercely loyal to the Carrion King, and anyone who enters this room finds the five gnolls to be a shrieking frenzy of howls and improvised weapons (thrown hookahs, rocks, and jagged clubs from broken furniture). In their drug-addled state, the gnoll wives are effectively sickened—this penalty has been incorporated into the Offense stats above.

Morale The gnoll wives fight to the death.

Treasure: There are five hookahs in all, each worth 50 gp. Other valuables in the room include a beautifully crafted book of erotic poetry worth 135 gp inside of a *handy haversack*, a small fancy box carved from alabaster and inset with colorful rock crystal worth 50 gp, and a rock crystal urn decorated with a detailed etching of a flock of doves worth 265 gp. Finally there are six long-stem gallon bottles of bitter wine, their bases wound with a hempen baskets, worth 5 gp each.

16. Lower Hall

An extended hall stretches between various chambers and arches. In the center of the hall a hollow diamond-shaped column decorated with elaborate tile mosaics frames a spiral staircase. Strewn about the dusty floor lie a dozen or so humanoid bones, cracked and gnawed with teeth marks.

The stairs lead up to area H3.

17. Ascension Chamber

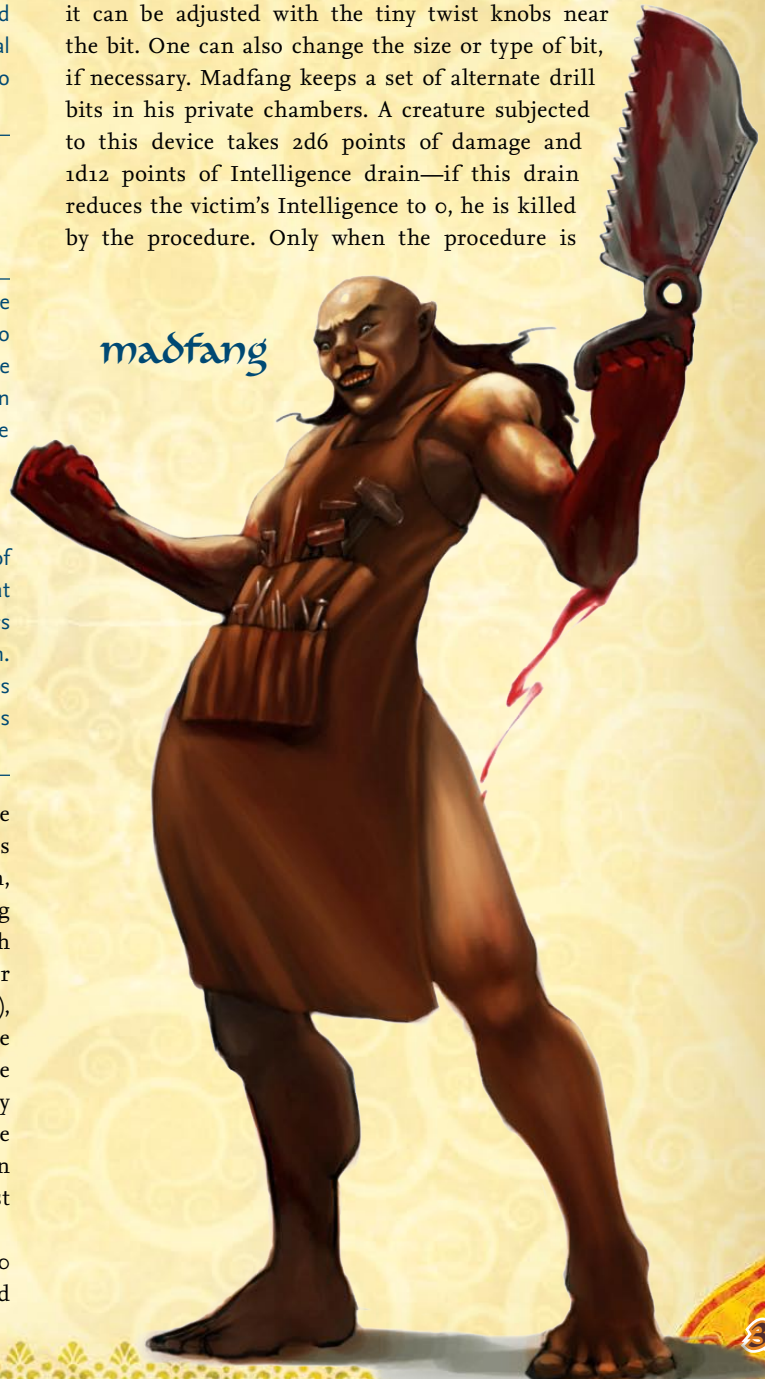
Six granite columns, badly chipped and damaged, encircle a large room swept clean of debris and dust. Metal rungs riveted into the columns suspend a humanoid-shaped, cage-like structure from fitted iron chains. Before the cage, a complex device set in a weighted metal base extends a swiveling, jointed appendage of unfinished iron inscribed with jagged runes. Mounted to the end of the appendage is a burnished steel facemask with clamps and bands that appear as if they were meant to be strapped over someone's head. Centered in the forehead of the mask, a half-inch-wide drill bit faces inward toward what would be the wearer's face. The bladed bit connects to gears and spindles that lead to a crank halfway down the metal arm. To the east, a large stone door sealed with chains and iron bars stands in the wall. A smaller door with no obvious lock stands to the southwest.

When the Carrion King's tribe first moved into the House of the Beast, one of Ghartok's greatest hopes was to discover a method to duplicate his transformation, to change his tribe of gnolls into a tribe of towering champions of Rovagug. After several false starts with the aid of gnoll adepts and wizards (all of whom paid for their failure by becoming the Carrion King's dinner), Ghartok turned to other sources. He sent out word to the tribes of Pale Mountain that any tribe who could capture a talented alchemist and miracle-worker would be greatly rewarded—the result of this challenge was delivered to the House of the Beast a month later in the form of a madman named Falgrass Numrat, a brilliant but deranged ex-priest of Lamashtu known to the gnolls today as Madfang.

The large door to the east is quite secure—a DC 30 Strength check is required to bash down the reinforced

stone. There are six locks on the door, each requiring a DC 25 Open Lock check to pick. A DC 30 Search check of the door reveals a hidden switch, however, that if pulled, unlocks all six locks at once and causes the door to swing open.

The hideous mechanical apparatus and cage is the end result of Madfang's work—a trepanning machine employed as part of the Ascension Ceremonies. The candidate is locked into the cage and fitted with the mask, and once secured, the drill is used to remove a small circular chunk of bone from the center of the candidate's skull. The depth of the drill is currently set to the appropriate measurement for a gnoll (just slightly thicker than a human's), but it can be adjusted with the tiny twist knobs near the bit. One can also change the size or type of bit, if necessary. Madfang keeps a set of alternate drill bits in his private chambers. A creature subjected to this device takes 2d6 points of damage and 1d12 points of Intelligence drain—if this drain reduces the victim's Intelligence to 0, he is killed by the procedure. Only when the procedure is



accompanied by the prayers and administration of unholy water and foul concoctions (kept in area **I9**), and only when the victim is a gnoll, is there a chance of transformation into one of the unchosen.

Creature: The king's most disturbing ally, the mad priest–surgeon Madfang the Holy Ascensioner, claims this section of the lower temple. Madfang cares little for alarms—he'll be encountered here no matter what condition the temple alert is at. He spends most of his waking hours tinkering with his cruel device here or in area **I9** brewing new concoctions, constantly seeking ways to make the process more painful and more efficient in his search to develop just the right procedure to create unchosen that retain their intellect in the way the Carrion King has. To date, he's been singularly unsuccessful—the results of his experiments are kept in area **I8** beyond the locked door. There's an equal chance that Madfang is encountered here or in area **I9**; if he's in area **I9**, the door to that room from this one is open so he can hear if anything requires his attention in this room.

Grotesque beyond reproach, Madfang is a wiry man with a slight stoop and bald pate. He dresses in a thick, leather work-smock, heavy gloves, and covers the lower half of his face with a leather doctor's mask. He also carries a tool belt filled with chisels, scalpels, and other sharp quasi-surgical implements, which he wears draped over his shoulder like a bandoleer. Born both poor and ugly, his drunken mother lost him in a Solku bazaar when he was about 5 or 6 years old. He spent the next few years wandering the streets and survived by following about the local stray dogs, earning their trust by stealing food for them and huddling up with them for warmth during the colder months. Eventually the beast-boy caught the attention of a haggish old woman named Mariggah. As it turned out, Mariggah was secretly a priestess of Lamashtu and thought the beast-boy might be an omen. She taught him her ways and beliefs, and he became rudimentarily versed as a cleric, and eventually murdered her for her troubles and took on her mantle.

When the Carrion King ordered his tribes to seek out an alchemist, it took only a month for them to find and capture Madfang. Presented to the Carrion King, the spineless Falgrass converted instantly, promising Ghartok great power in exchange for his life. Using the secrets of Lamashtu's sacred trepanation ritual of Growing the Third Eye and his curious knowledge of forbidden alchemy, he immediately began developing a technique to duplicate Ghartok's own transformation.

These days, Falgrass has embraced his new name, and even claims to be half-gnoll. Despite his knowledge of Lamashtu's mysteries, Falgrass is barely a priest and even less of a surgeon, yet in his madness he can still be extremely dangerous.

MADFANG THE HOLY ASCENSIONER

CR 4

Male human ranger 1/ex-cleric 2 (Lamashtu)/expert 3

NE Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14

(+4 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 45 (6 HD; 3d8+3d6+18)

Fort +9, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +5 (1d4/19–20)

Special Attacks favored enemy (humans +2)

TACTICS

During Combat Desperate to defend his works, Madfang howls at opponents and lashes at them with his dagger.

Morale Craven as ever, Madfang immediately moves to the door to area **I8** as soon as he is wounded and attempts to pull the release. He hopes to escape to area **I2** in the resulting chaos as the unchosen burst out of the area beyond.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 13, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +4

Feats Diehard, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Heal), Track

Skills Craft (alchemy) +11, Handle Animal +6, Heal +15, Knowledge (nature) +9, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Search +9, Survival +8, Spot +8

Languages Abyssal, Common, Gnoll

SQ mad alchemist, wild empathy +2

Gear +2 *leather armor*, masterwork dagger, masterwork surgical tools

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Mad Alchemist (Su) Although he lacks the ability to cast spells, Madfang's lunacy and unholy practices allow him to craft potions as if he were a 7th-level cleric, although it takes him twice as long as normal to brew potions as a result of his unorthodox methods.

I8. Vault of the Unchosen (EL 8)

Jagged chunks of stonework and rotten carcasses smeared with putrid slime and excrement create a vile terrain and a pungent stench in this cavernous but otherwise empty chamber. A large hole in the ceiling thirty feet above opens into what appears to be another chamber.

The hole in the ceiling leads to area **H2**.

Creatures: Gnolls who undergo the transformation ritual and survive become hulking monstrosities—the unchosen. While the gnolls value these creatures as shock troopers, they're difficult to control. They use injection spears filled with *potions of calm emotions* to control the unchosen when they need them, but for the

most part leave the violent creatures locked up in the dark in this room, where they pass the time fighting, sleeping, and tormenting each other. There are currently five unchosen kept in here—each is somewhat wounded from fighting (hence the slightly lower EL than normal listed above), but they race to attack any non-unchosen they see (gnolls included, although they always attack gnolls last if given a choice) if their chamber is opened.

UNCHOSEN (5)

hp 30 each (normally 42 each; see page 88)

CR 4

19. Surgeon-Priest's Quarters

The walls of this long vault are lined with wide alcoves. In several are stored numerous crates, barrels, and containers. At the western end, three alcoves contain workbenches and tables strewn with complex alchemical equipment, while a fourth at this end contains a crude cot, several ratty blankets, and a chest. At the far west end of the room is an immense mound of bones and empty carapaces from enormous insects and spiders.

This was once a series of sleeping cells for priests, but the Carrion King has given the entire vault over to Madfang to use as he will. The vault is spacious, far larger than the lunatic needs to work his magic, and he doesn't use the eastern portion of the chamber at all.

Treasure: Two of the three alcoves containing alchemical equipment are nothing special, but the third contains a fully functional alchemist's lab. Under a table in this third alcove lie six injection spears (see page 30), and a small leather satchel containing nine *potions of calm emotions*.

The chest in Madfang's sleeping alcove is unlocked and holds a collection of anatomy scrolls containing detailed diagrams of a brain pictured in quarters, the inside of an eye, a bisected heart, and a bisected kidney, all labeled in Qadiran. The entire collection is worth 250 gp. Under these papers lie a score of crystal vials containing various astringents and antiseptics. They can be used to aid Heal checks, each providing a +2 circumstance bonus to a single treatment provided to a single individual. The chest also contains a *potion of remove disease*, a *potion of neutralize poison*, and a *potion of tongues*.



110. Hall of Contemplation (EL7)

An arch opens into a geometric maze of hand-carved passages. Ancient writing covers the extent of the tunnels from floor to ceiling for as far as the eye can see.

A DC 20 Decipher Script check reveals the writing as an ancient form of Qadiran, though reading the hallways with any accuracy would require extensive time and study.

Written in chronological order, these hallways create a walking pathway of unholy scripture. Spanning centuries, the language evolves slowly, marking the passage of time.

These halls have been the most helpful to Zayifid in his search for the hiding place of the *Scroll of Kakishon*, although the scripture carved on these walls is so dense and prolific it's been slow going making any sense of the carvings. He has, nevertheless, uncovered a series of cryptic icons that concern a mysterious part of the temple called the Pit of Screaming Ghosts. Its location remains undiscovered by Zayifid, though evidence within the runes suggests it is for good reason. In ancient times, the Pit was used to imprison the damnable souls of wicked genies for all eternity.

Creature: If the PCs haven't yet caused a serious disturbance, then Zayifid is to be found here studying the extensive knowledge hidden in the walls, where he's drawn closer than ever to discovering the true entrance to the Pit of Screaming Ghosts—he no longer suspects that the entrance is via the wells in area **W12**, but rather that there is a hidden passageway somewhere in area **I2** or **I3**. As long as the Carrion King remains in control, though, he doesn't want to risk letting the powerful unchosen know what he's up to—nor does he want to risk an open revolt. Zayifid's hope is that the PCs will slay Ghartok, at which point he intends to rally the remaining gnolls to his cause, capture the PCs, and use them to explore the chambers he believes exist even deeper in the complex under the Carrion Throne. See page 44 for more details on how Zayifid uses the PCs in this situation.

If the PCs encounter Zayifid here, he's in his disguise as the gnoll assassin Rokova and he feigns cowardice and begs for his life, promising the PCs that he can secure them an audience with the Carrion King. If the PCs agree, he leads them to area **I2** where he hopes the PCs and the

Carrion King will fight. If the PCs inform him that the Carrion King is already dead, Rokova smiles and attempts to recruit their aid in exploring the deeper chambers below, as detailed on page 44.

If the PCs have already raised the alarm in the temple, “Rokova” relocates to area I2 to be with the Carrion King when the PCs arrive.

ZAYIFID

hp 72 (see page 10)

CR 7

111. Carrion Guard Barracks (EL 5)

Well over a dozen nests of tattered blankets, straw, and furs cover the floor of this chamber. A pair of tables surrounded by rickety chairs stands in the middle of the room; each table is littered with half-empty bottles of wine and ale.

Creatures: The Carrion Guards barrack in this chamber, sleeping and drinking and otherwise whiling away the few hours each day they’re off guard duty. The first time the PCs enter this chamber, they find four off-duty Carrion Guards resting here; these guards quickly rise to attack if their rest is disturbed, but as they’re off duty, they don’t bother responding to larger alarms unless directly roused by others in the tribe. One of these nests is technically that of Rokova, although since he’s replaced the dead assassin, Zayifid has not slept here, preferring to sleep outside under the stars or in his hidden study in area H7 when he needs privacy.

CARRION GUARDS (4)

hp 19 each (see page 15)

CR 2

112. Initiate Barracks (EL 6)

The walls of this room are densely decorated with lines of scripture written in red, decorated here and there with images of fanged mouths ringed by nine spidery legs. Eight mounds of sleeping furs line the walls, and in the center of the room sits a low circular stone table with a slightly convex surface. Rancid-looking candles line the edges of this table, and its center is caked with dried blood and heaped with bones.

Creatures: This chamber is the barracks for the 11 Carrion Initiates stationed at the House of the Beast.

With the exception of three currently on duty in the outlying region, the remaining eight are encountered on this level of the temple. At any one time, a pair of these eight serves in area I1 as guards, while the other six rest, meditate, feed, and offer gory minor sacrifices in the shared altar to Rovagug at the room’s center. The sacrifices here are mostly of small animals like lizards, jackals, and birds.

If the alarm is raised, these initiates fall into prayer for several minutes before they move out as a group to patrol the lower temple. If encountered here, they fight to the death to defend their den.

CARRION INITIATES (6)

hp 22 each (see page 34)

CR 2

113. Slave Pen

The door to this area is barred from the outside.

This filthy, reeking room is without decor—only a thick layer of vermin-infested moldy straw and lumpy sand covers the floor.

Creatures: This chamber is where the slaves of the House of the Beast are penned when they aren’t needed. The number of slaves possessed by the temple is at a low now, with many of their number lost to the recent revolt. Currently, only one slave languishes here, the others all being utilized elsewhere in the temple.

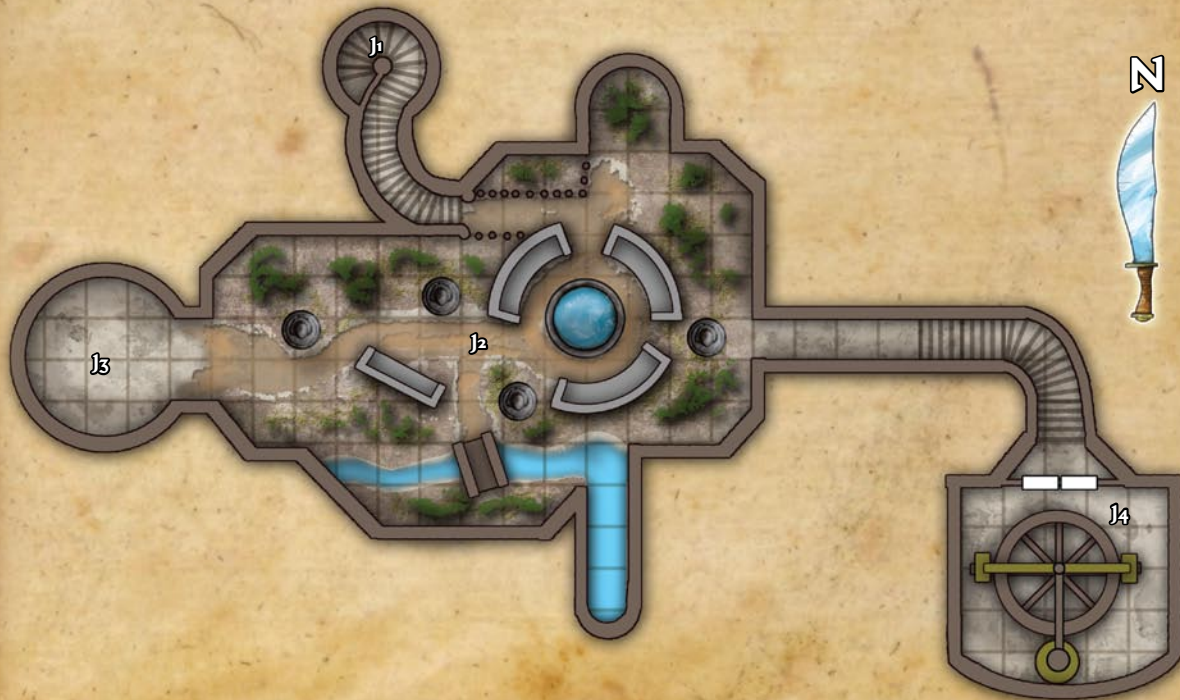
This one slave is a broken old man with barely any teeth left in his mouth—ironically, a Qadiran slave-trader named **Amwyr Yuseifah** (LE old male human expert 5). A purveyor of exotic concubines, Yuseifah, upon hearing tales of the Carrion King’s extensive harem and voracious sexual appetites, was foolish enough to attempt to bargain with him. Ghartok’s interests did not extend to humans, though, and he had Yuseifah’s girls sacrificed and enslaved the old man more out of spite than for any real desire to keep him around.

Yuseifah has spent months locked in this room, routinely left behind by the gnolls when they need slaves for other purposes. Often left without food or water, he is badly starved, filthy, and sickly. During the darkest moment of his sentence, he murdered and ate another of the slaves, hiding the bones within the straw. Since then, he contracted several painful rashes, and among other things, leprosy (Fortitude DC 12/20; Incubation 2d4 weeks; 1d2 Cha; see page 63 of *Pathfinder* #8).



amwyr
yuseifah

The Stone Speakers



One square = 5 feet

If the PCs encounter Yuseifah, he begs for freedom, sincerely promising his saviors anything they desire. Although reprehensible and vile, he's actually worth quite a lot back in Katapesh, as he was a member of the Duskwalker guild in Katapesh's Nightstalls. If he's escorted back to Katapesh, the PCs can collect a reward of 1,000 gp from the Duskwalker guild for the slaver's return, and Yuseifah himself rewards each PC with a beautiful slave of his own. Of course, good-aligned characters should rightly balk at such rewards.

PART FIVE: THE PIT OF SCREAMING GHOSTS

The Carrion Tribe occupies the top three levels of the House of the Beast, yet there exist two additional levels even deeper than the site's Lower Temple, the presence of which is unguessed at by any in the upper works save for Zayifid himself. And while Zayifid suspects these levels exist, the PCs might not. In fact, it's somewhat possible that PCs who aren't curious or attentive might even miss out on these last two levels entirely—especially if they focus on killing the Carrion King as their primary or only goal in the House of the Beast. Since what comes next in the Legacy of Fire Adventure Path depends on the PCs

exploring the Stone Speakers and the Pit of Screaming Ghosts, it's important that they do find their way down there eventually.

Both of these lower levels, the Stone Speakers and the Pit of Screaming Ghosts, are still warded by several ancient *forbiddance* spells placed there by Jhavhul's followers. Unlike standard *forbiddance* spells, which hedge out specific alignments, these variants hedged out only genies (and, of course, all forms of teleportation and similar magic travel). The efreeti knew that this made it difficult for him to escape the chambers should he ever be cornered there, but felt that was a small price to pay for the added security—especially since his genie enemies would be equally prevented from using methods like *teleport*, *ethereal jaunt*, and the like to invade his sanctum. This effect is both what prevented Zayifid from using such methods to seek out the lower levels and what convinced him that such levels must exist—why else would someone go through the trouble to block *ethereal travel* to such a large area? In addition, the contents of these chambers are under the effects of a permanent *screen* effect as well; anyone who attempts to scry within these chambers sees only solid stone. Both of these effects served to create a potent blind to hide the location of the *Scroll of Kakishon* from its enemies. When the gnoll priestess Shirak retreated here

(and soon thereafter died) with the scroll, she inadvertently and unknowingly doomed her lord Jhavhul to centuries of obscurity, hidden in a tomb of his own making. Both of these effects function at CL 16th, but can only be dispelled by a caster of equal or greater level.

This section summarizes the methods you can use to reveal to the PCs the existence of these lower levels and how to encourage them to continue the adventure.

Chance: The only conventional entrance to these lower levels is via the hidden passageway under the Maggot Throne in area **I2**. While this entrance is hidden, it's not an insanely difficult task to discover the mechanism for anyone more attentive than the Carrion King (who doesn't suspect that his favorite haunt is in fact a doorway). If the PCs discover this entrance on their own, curiosity may well simply do the trick and encourage them to continue down into area **J1**; in this case, if Zayifid still lives, he soon learns of the discovery. Still disguised as a gnoll, he follows along behind the PCs, hoping to let them take all the risks and then ambush them when they discover the *Scroll of Kakishon* in an attempt to win the priceless artifact for himself.

Clues: Area **H7** is itself relatively well hidden, but if the PCs find their way in there, Zayifid's notes should be enough to tell them that something more exists below, and that the Maggot Throne is likely a point of interest.

Deception: If the PCs defeat the Carrion King but haven't yet encountered Zayifid in his disguised form as Rokova, the false gnoll quickly seeks them out if he wasn't at the scene of the fight with the Carrion King. He may try to hire the PCs to investigate the lower levels, and is even willing to promise them he'll disband the Carrion Tribe entirely if they go along with his desire to explore the lower levels. He says only that rumors held that a powerful gnoll priest was buried in the House of the Beast's vaults, and that he believes those vaults are below. The forbiddance prevents Zayifid from accompanying the PCs, but he agrees to send along several Carrion Guards as "help." He also agrees to split any treasures found there with the PCs, but of course once the group emerges with the scroll, Zayifid quickly turns on the PCs and attempts to claim the *Scroll of Kakishon* as his own.

Servitude: If the PCs are captured, Zayifid uses the disruptions they've created to stage a coup and assassinates the Carrion King. Still disguised as a gnoll, he then informs the PCs that he's decided to give them a chance at freedom. They are to accompany several Carrion Guards down into the chambers below and to locate what he seeks—a scroll buried with a gnoll named Shirak. If the PCs do this, he promises to let them go. He'll grant the PCs some of their equipment to increase their chances, but holds back on fully returning confiscated gear (to a point you feel comfortable with the PCs' chances). Of

course, when the PCs recover the scroll, Zayifid plans on killing them anyway, but there are plenty of opportunities and treasures along the way for the PCs to claim to bolster their chances against Zayifid when they return.

Moldspeaker: Finally, if all else fails to prod the PCs onward, you can use the spirit of the janni templar Vardishal to urge the PCs via the moldspeaker if one of the characters gained this title in the previous adventure. In this case, Vardishal can sense the close proximity of the *Scroll of Kakishon* and Zayifid, and knows that allowing Zayifid to claim control of the *Scroll of Kakishon* would be a bad move. Unfortunately, in its current state, Vardishal can't convey this information directly to the PCs. What he can do, though, is fill the moldspeaker with suspicion whenever Zayifid is around (granting a +5 circumstance bonus on all Sense Motive checks made against Zayifid's Bluffs) and an urge to examine the Maggot Throne for secret doors once the moldspeaker first sets eyes on it. In his strange new form as part of the moldspeaker, Vardishal is no longer considered a genie and can come and go into the area's *forbiddance* with ease.

J1. Secret Stairs

A set of granite-hewn stairs spirals down into the darkness.

When the secret lever on the Maggot Throne in area **I2** is triggered, this spiral staircase is revealed. Halfway down, the stairs veer off to the east and the air grows both humid and strangely full of the smells of decaying vegetation.

J2. The Stone Speakers (EL 9)

This chamber is an unexpected sight—an elaborate underground garden lit by softly glowing crystals in the ceiling twenty feet above. Gravel walkways wind between verdant trees and shrubs that rustle softly in a gentle breeze that seems to come from nowhere. As the garden's centerpiece, cracked granite benches surround a cobblestone fountain filled with crystal-clear water. To the south, a gently flowing creek runs across a pebbly streambed that passes through a rock garden and into an iron grill drain along a passageway to the south. To the north, a lone almond tree stands in alcove, while to the west, a double arch leads to a small circular room. Four sandstone sculptures chiseled into the forms of huge angry faces stand throughout the room.

Sustained still by powerful magic, the contents of this garden are quite real. The water is pure and drinkable, the almonds from the trees are delicious and always ripe, and the stone benches are unusually comfortable. Anyone who rests in this chamber finds that the period of relaxation is quite invigorating—a rest of 1 hour provides the same rejuvenation as a full night's sleep, and

Within the Pit of Screaming Ghosts



the almonds from the tree function as *goodberries* when picked (the tree produces 30 almonds a day—an almond lasts for 24 hours after being picked before rotting away). A creature may benefit from these qualities no more than once per day.

Creatures: Elemental forces lie in wait within the four monolithic heads that guard the chamber. One round after the first PC enters the room, the mouths of these four heads yawn open to belch gouts of fire and smoke, summoning four rasts (as if by *summon monster V*, CL 10th) from the Elemental Plane of Fire to confront the intruders. These rasts pursue intruders and fight to the death, vanishing after 10 rounds have passed. The monolithic heads can summon rasts only once per day.

RASTS (4)

hp 25 each (MM 213)

CR 5

J3. Jhavhul's Doorstep (EL 5)

This empty room has a tall ceiling, rising up thirty feet to a dome thick with cobwebs.

This chamber once served as a portal to even deeper chambers far below Pale Mountain—it was these chambers

that Jhavhul kept as his own lair, and which leads eventually to the Firebleeder's Grave deep underground. This portal has long since fallen dormant, and currently no clues exist to indicate what purpose the room once served. The PCs will be returning to this chamber later, in the last installment of *Legacy of Fire*, when they will confront Jhavhul in his hidden chambers below—for now, this room should be played off as simply an empty, uninteresting chamber.

J4. Pit Entrance (EL 7)

In the center of the room stands a complex metal-and-stone frame that forms a strange bell-shaped cage over the central section of the ground. Eight stone bars arch down to encircle a fifteen-foot-wide section of the room—these bars are five feet apart where they connect to the floor, and around each bar's foot rise strange rune-like projections and what seem to be screaming faces trying to emerge from the stone.

The “cage” is in fact the upper section of a magical stairwell powered by elemental forces; the bars themselves are bound earth elementals that serve as the way to the crypts below known as the Pit of Screaming Ghosts. The elementals remain dormant until any part of the cage



or the nearby pillar is touched, at which point the entire device grinds and begins to shift and move, almost as if it were waking up and animating, but the structure doesn't actually do much more until someone steps through the bars into the circular area underneath. At this point, the stone floor begins to gently ripple and swell, almost like the surface of a wind-tossed lake, yet creatures can walk on the surface as if it were difficult terrain. Runes written in Terran rise up from the floor, only to sink back down and rise again elsewhere. Anyone who can read Terran can understand these runes, which read: "By your command shall the Pit of Screaming Ghosts be opened."

The magical stairwell can be triggered in two ways. By speaking aloud, in Terran, a character can command the elementals to "open the way" or otherwise open the doorway to the Pit of Screaming Ghosts. The elementals aren't completely stupid, and as long as what the speaker asks seems to indicate their desire to travel to the Pit of Screaming Ghosts, the elementals comply, even if the request is spoken by someone not inside the room. Alternatively, any spell with the earth descriptor that is cast in this room triggers the opening of the way, as does casting any spell with the air descriptor.

If the PCs command the elementals in Terran or cast an earth spell, the bound elementals reshape the stone between this room and area **K1** below, transforming it into a spiral staircase that winds down for 100 feet. If the PCs trigger this transformation with an air spell, the transformation is much more abrupt and instantaneous—in this case, any creature standing inside the cage must make a DC 20 Reflex save to avoid falling into the sudden opening, tumbling down the stairs to area **K1** and taking 10d6 points of damage along the way.

K1. All the King's Gold (EL 8)

This vast, natural cavern glitters and shines from what appears to be a king's ransom. Well over a hundred feet across and fifty feet high, the floor of the cavern is a sea of gold coins, lush carpets and tapestries, statues, weapons, armor, immense gemstones, and glittering artifacts. At the center of the cavern, a stone pillar rises forty feet from the treasure-strewn floor, and a stone spiral stairway rises up from the top of this pillar to the roof twenty feet above. A curving flight of stairs winds down from the top of this pillar into the sea of treasure below.

Of course, this chamber is not actually the vast hoard of treasure it seems to be, but rather a dangerous deathtrap. The only clue to the trap lies on the bottommost step leading down from the stairs. Carved onto this step in Ignan is a short phrase: “So Shall You Be Devoured.”

The treasure pile is in fact several *permanent images* (DC 18) placed here long ago by Jhavhul (CL 12th) to mask the floor of the cavern as well as an open archway along the southern wall. The floor beneath the glittering illusion is covered by 6 inches of water beneath a layer of green slime. Anyone who interacts with the “treasure” without standing on it has a 50% chance of brushing against a patch of green slime, and anyone who moves through the treasure automatically contacts the stuff. Interacting with the treasure allows a DC 18 Will save each round to disbelieve the illusion. The illusion is powerful enough to mask the sensation and sound of sloshing through the water, but once someone falls victim to green slime, the additional clue grants a +4 bonus on saving throws to disbelieve the illusion. The slime itself subsists on the vast host of bugs and subterranean wall-crawlers that live their entire lives on the walls and ceiling of this cavern, but offers no danger to characters who don’t attempt to walk through the stuff. In all, there are dozens of patches of green slime here—a single *remove disease* effect removes only one 5-foot square, while cold, fire, and sunlight destroy any slime in its area (but not beyond its reach). Green slime is detailed further on page 76 of the DMG.

A dozen or so flat-topped, cylindrical stone posts rise from the caustic sludge, each spaced 5 feet apart and presenting a dangerous hopping route that provides a clue to the position of the hidden archway to the south. Hopping from one post to the next takes a DC 10 Jump check since there’s not really enough room to get a running start. Failure indicates the jumper lands in the green slime. Embedded into the top of each post is a mosaic-covered stone lid etched with complex runes. A DC 20 Knowledge (arcana or religion) check is enough to recognize these runes as symbols meant to imprison undead spirits.

Creatures: Each of the stone posts is in fact hollow, containing a 10-foot-deep cylindrical chamber in which lie the desiccated bones of a long-dead genie who in some way wronged Jhavhul. These oubliettes were designed not only to imprison live victims, but to trap their animating spirits as well in a state of eternal awareness and helpless imprisonment. These spirits are evil ghost-like undead genies called edimmus, and in most of the cases, they are safely locked away in their graves. Yet four of the posts have cracked over the ages, allowing the angry spirits within to escape. These four edimmus now haunt the cavern—unable to travel far from their physical remains, they have long since succumbed to madness and rage. The undead genies don’t notice intruders into their cavern

immediately, but as soon as someone flies, sets foot on a stone plug, or stumbles into a patch of green slime, the undead genies do so and, shrieking in rage, rise up from their plug graves to attack.

EDIMMUS (4)

CR 3

hp 32 (see page 82)

K2. Temple of the Waiting Beast (EL 8)

This chamber seems to be a temple with a sand-covered floor. The room shows signs of damage, with cracks running across the floors, walls, and ceiling. In the center looms a huge and horrific many-tentacled creature apparently frozen in a shell of translucent minerals. A single line of runes is carved into the northern face of a low stone pedestal on which this immense monster seems to have been frozen.

The words carved on the pillar are in Terran, and read as follows: “And lo, those who speak not the truths of Rovagug shall be the first to be consumed by the Waiting Beast,” a warning to those who would seek to travel farther into the room.

Creature: The creature atop the pedestal is a mighty sand kraken, one of many horrific predators held in high regard by the cult of Rovagug. Normally immobile, this sand kraken is a more active hunter that can crawl and burrow to seek out prey. It appears as a 10-tentacled squid-like monstrosity with huge eyes and a fang-filled mouth. This particular sand kraken is the guardian of the vaults to the south, a creature known during the cult’s height under Jhavhul’s rule as the Waiting Beast. Preserved in stasis (with an effect similar to a long-lasting *statue* spell), the Waiting Beast is patient and potent here, fully aware of its surroundings. The creature remains motionless as long as no one travels more than 5 feet into the room. The command to “speak the truths of Rovagug” is a warning to address the Waiting Beast, in Terran, by reciting any prayer to Rovagug as proof that the visitor is a true follower. It’s a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check for a non-worshiper of Rovagug to recall a prayer or invocation to the Rough Beast. If such a prayer is offered, the Waiting Beast allows the speaker only to pass unmolested through the room.

THE WAITING BEAST

CR 8

Elite variant sand kraken (*Tome of Horrors II* 136)

CE Large aberration

Init +6; Senses tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 18

(+2 Dex, +9 natural, –1 size)

hp 92 (8d8+56)

Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +9

Defensive Abilities camouflage

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

Melee 10 tentacles +9 (1d6+4) and bite +4 (2d6+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (30 ft. with tentacles)

Special Attacks constrict 1d6+4, improved grab

TACTICS

During Combat Anyone who does not offer a prayer to the Waiting Beast and moves farther than 5 feet into this room immediately awakens the sand kraken. With the sound of hundreds of shattering crystals, the creature shakes off its calcite coating and comes to life, immediately attacking the transgressor. It does not attack anyone who offered a proper prayer unless that creature attacks first. If possible, it splits its tentacle attacks among as many different targets as it can.

Morale The Waiting Beast fights to the death, but does not pursue foes out of this room. If attacked from beyond at range, it simply closes the doors or slides to the north or south of the door to get out of line of sight. If this tactic doesn't protect it, the monster begrudgingly thunders forth from the room to attack foes beyond.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 25, **Int** 7, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 3

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +18

Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will

Skills Hide –2 (+14 while buried), Listen +12

Languages Terran

SQ tentacle regeneration

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Camouflage (Ex) A sand kraken can bury itself with great skill in sand or loose soil—doing so takes the sand kraken a minute, but grants it a +16 racial bonus on Hide checks.

Constrict (Ex) A sand kraken deals 1d6+4 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a sand kraken must hit an opponent of any size with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt a grapple check as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the check, it establishes a hold and can either constrict or bite the foe. A sand kraken has a +4 racial bonus on grapple checks.

Tentacle Regeneration (Ex) A foe can attack a sand kraken's tentacles individually; each has 15 hit points. The loss of a tentacle does not harm the sand kraken's hit point total, and lost tentacles regrow in 1d4 days.

K3. Shirak's Crypt

This large crypt contains three vaulted alcoves that form a clover-shaped room centered upon a dais. Atop the dais rests a single massive block of deep black stone. Carvings in each alcove and on the sarcophagus itself depict the terrifying image of a nine-legged spider with a gaping maw.

The block of stone is Shirak's sarcophagus, and can be opened with a DC 20 Strength check. Of course, the ancient gnoll priestess was much favored by Rovagug, and anyone who tampers with her burial site runs the risk of being struck with Shirak's Curse. The person most directly responsible for opening the sarcophagus must make a DC 20 Will save to resist the curse—failure indicates that the victim feels a cold chill as his body temperature drops. From this point on, until the curse is lifted, all spells of the subschool of healing cannot aid the PC. Instead of providing healing, such effects force the cursed character into a fit of sickness, nauseating him for 1d4 rounds. This curse functions at CL 10th, and lasts until removed or until the contents of Shirak's crypt are restored to their rightful place and his sarcophagus is closed.

If the moldspeaker is among the party, he feels a sudden upswelling of excitement and dread at what could be in the sarcophagus. If he opens the crypt, he feels the curse attempt to settle on him but Vardishal's influence blocks the effect, rendering the curse useless.

Treasure: Within the sarcophagus lie the bones of an ancient gnoll priestess—Shirak. Beyond the effects of her curse, she is herself harmless. She wears a glistening suit of +3 mithral chainmail, a *periapt of Wisdom* +4, and grasps in her bony hands the shaft of an immense *greataxe of life stealing*, its wide and serrated blades covering her skeletal feet. This weapon is identical to a *sword of life stealing*, save that it is a greataxe instead of a sword. Yet should the moldspeaker peer into the sarcophagus, he knows instinctively that only one item within is of any real value—the *Scroll of Kakishon*. This ancient relic is rolled up and tucked into a plain-looking bone scroll tube hidden under the wide blade of the greataxe between Shirak's ankles.

K4. Vaults of the Beast

Beyond Shirak's crypt lies a tangled network of twisting tunnels. Many of these tunnels are lined with burial niches, some of which contain strange bodies that seem something more than human. Some bodies are twice as large as a man, some have additional arms and bestial features, or are strangely undecayed and remain beautiful or handsome even in death. These bodies are the remains of Jhavhul's cult, and those bearing unusual transformations are those who wished for things like great strength, eternal youth, or other physical transformations.

The bodies themselves were not buried with anything of value, and there are no monstrous guardians waiting here to ambush the PCs. You can use these tunnels to foreshadow the strange wish-powered minions the PCs are destined to face in the final adventure in this campaign: "The Final Wish."



CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Although the PCs may initially travel to the House of the Beast to destroy the Carrion King, the adventure itself doesn't truly end until they discover the *Scroll of Kakishon* hidden in Shirak's tomb. The full ramifications of this ancient item are explored in the next adventure, "The Jackal's Price." For now, the scroll itself should be something of a mystery to the PCs. The scroll is a rectangular sheet of pale parchment, 16 inches by 22 inches in size. On one side, the parchment is blank and rough—bits of hair still cling to it. On the other side, the parchment is smooth as glass and depicts only a single huge and relatively complex rune. This is the Mark of Kakishon, and until it can be properly deciphered and awakened, the scroll cannot be used. Unfortunately, the methods for waking the ancient artifact are quite obscure, and the quest to decipher this method is what drives the next adventure. Attempts to detect magic on the scroll reveal only that it radiates overwhelming Conjunction (creation and calling)

magic, while attempts to damage the scroll should be universally met with failure. It can't be torn, folded, burnt, dissolved, or otherwise harmed by anything the PCs might possess at this time. "The Jackal's Price" details the ramifications of the scroll, including Almah's reaction to the PCs' return to Kelmarane with what would appear to be a potent and powerful artifact in their possession.

Of course, before the PCs can turn their attentions to deciphering this mystery, they'll need to escape the House of the Beast. Depending on what guardians remain alive and mobile on the levels above, this may be a simple task or it could be a harrowing gantlet. Certainly, if Zayifid still lives, he immediately attempts to claim the *Scroll of Kakishon* as his own as soon as the PCs emerge from area J1 into I2. If the PCs manage to sneak out without Zayifid noticing, he can become a recurring villain that follows the PCs and attempts again and again to steal the scroll—see "The Jackal's Price" for advice on how to handle this. In any event, life is destined to swiftly become quite complex for the new keepers of the *Scroll of Kakishon*!



IN THE SHADOW OF PALE MOUNTAIN

The northwestern highlands of Katapesh form a natural barrier between the nation's heartland and its neighbors, Osirion to the north and the Mwangi Expanse to the west. The Brazen Peaks also cut Katapesh off from much of the western rainfall that makes the Mwangi Expanse so lush, trapping it in mountain lakes and on snow-capped peaks only to run down deep-cut canyons during the spring thaw and cross the dry plains and grasslands.

The highlands are a wilder place than the great cities of the coast, a frontier land inhabited by hardy folk who subsist off the land, often near life-giving sources of water. It is also a region filled with untamed wilderness and savage creatures, not the least of which are barbaric tribes of gnolls dwelling in the peaks. The laws of Katapesh, such as they are, apply equally to the highlands, but the reach of the mysterious lords of the land rarely extends so far. So the highland folk are used to handling their own problems, and fully expect to be on their own when they arise. By the same token, they are used to being left alone

and forging their own way, making them independent to the point of stubbornness.

Presented here are a number of the locations found in the vicinity of Pale Mountain, deep in the Uwaga Highlands, as well as an exploration of the beasts that make these treacherous reaches their home.

HIGHLANDS GAZETTEER

Although Pale Mountain towers over its surroundings in both height and infamy, the lands around the ghostly spire hold dangers and wonders all their own. Noted here are just a few of the best-known locales within a few days' travel of Kelmarane and Pale Mountain.

Bronze Hook: This trading town nestled in the foothills of the Brazen Peaks was once along a caravan route from Ipeq to Solku in the south, and earned a healthy living ferrying goods and passengers across the Pale River, charging tolls for the use of the Hook Ford Bridge. As the trade route has fallen into disuse, so too have Bronze Hook's fortunes slid. The town subsists off of what little

in the shadow of pale mountain

Up the Pale River, past Bronze Hook and Kelmarane, you are deep into the Uwaga Highlands, and there even the so-called laws of the Pactmasters don't hold any weight. They are a wild, savage place. Many eyes watch the mountain passes and canyons, all of them looking for new prey. I'm sure you've heard of the tribes of gnolls in the Brazen Peaks—slavers, the lot of them—but there are worse things in the highlands, things even the gnolls tread carefully around: haunted and howling old dwarf-holds, stones that speak and move, and chasms so deep even those down in the Darklands cannot see the bottom. They say the Pactmasters and their underlings leave the highlands because the gnolls fatten their coffers with fresh slaves. That may be so, but if you ask me, it's more because you could lose an army in the broken lands around Pale Mountain and never see a single one of them again.

—Aris Moon, merchant and spice trader



trade trickles along the old road, but desperate times call for desperate measures, so Bronze Hook increasingly asks no questions about “trade” passing through the town or across (or along) the river. This includes slavers of various sorts and their miserable cargoes, exotic creatures, and things coming out of the Bronze Peaks. The constabulary is hard-pressed to keep order in town whenever a substantial number of visitors passes through, bringing with them coin and opportunities to drink and brawl in the local taprooms. That the authorities are often on the take and more likely to be found starting brawls than breaking them up doesn't help, either.

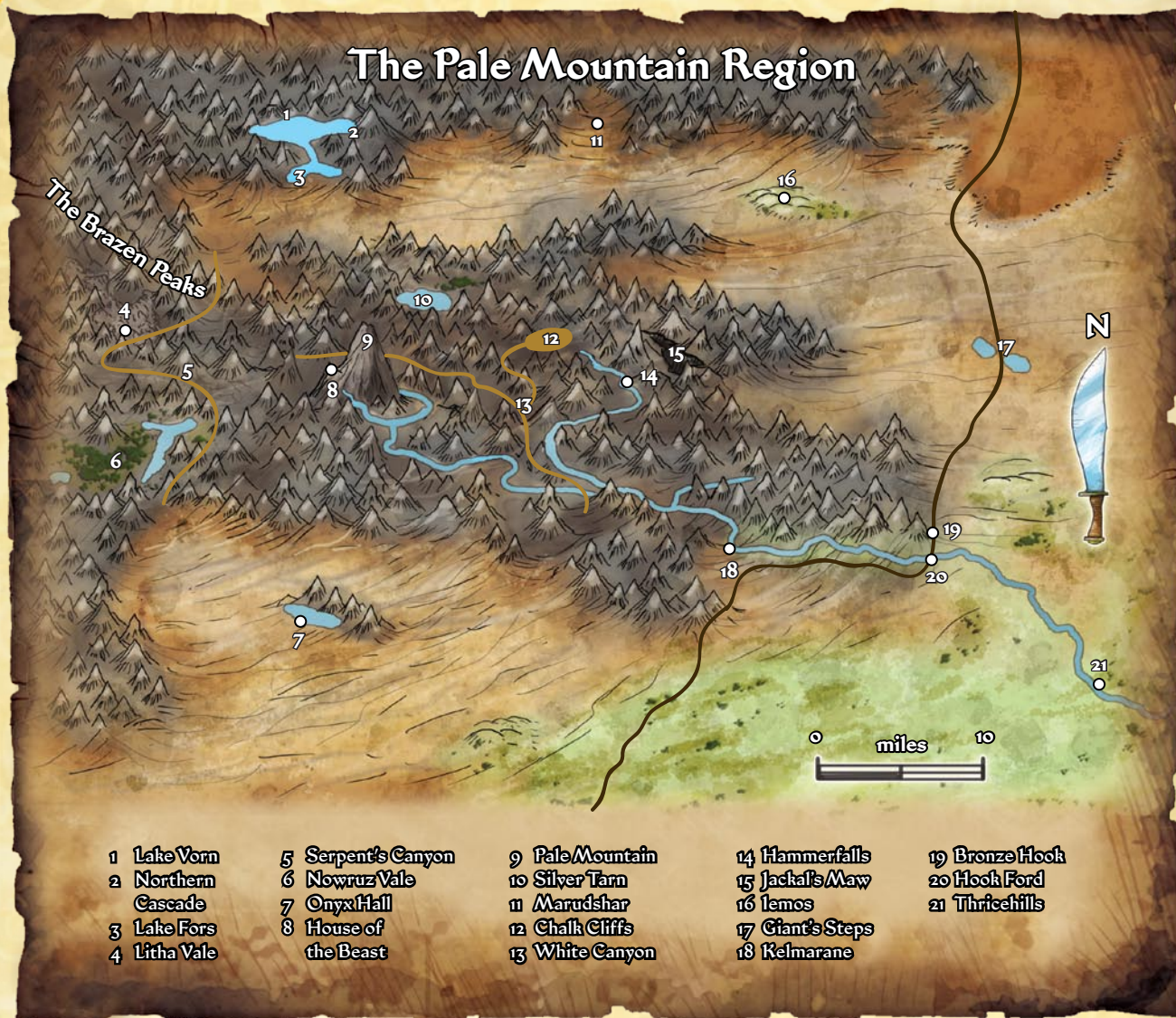
The Chalk Cliffs: A deep box canyon near the headwaters of the Hammerfalls, the Chalk Cliffs are actually primarily limestone, cut by ancient water flows and centuries of wind. The pale stone hosts only hardy scrub plants able to cling and dig into small cracks and crevasses seeking collected rainwater. The Chalk Cliffs are also honeycombed with small caves and openings, now home to a pale-skinned flock of gargoyles, their chalky hides blending into the color of the cliffs. The gargoyles hunt in the surrounding mountains and nest in the high places of the cliffs, accessible only by ancient, worn trails perhaps once used by mountain dwarves. There's some evidence the dwarves of the Hammerfalls once quarried stone from the Chalk Cliffs, and perhaps dug other mines, now used as lairs by the gargoyles and other creatures.

The Giant's Steps: The two small freshwater lakes to either side of the old trade route became known as the “Giant's Steps” for their resemblance to a pair of footprints in muddy ground, filled in with water. Various local legends claim they were actually made by a giant or titan in ages past, and their water is especially potent because of it. All anyone knows now is the Steps are some of the first relief Osirion caravans headed south encounter upon entering the highlands. Indeed, that is how they came to be named the “Left Step” and the “Right Step,” as if the giant were walking south-southeast (and where but Osirion would such

a colossus originate, the namers thought). The lakes still serve to water the occasional caravan or group of traders and travelers, but as the watering hole in the savannah draws predator to lie in wait for prey, so have the Steps become a favorite place for brigands and bandits to ambush the unsuspecting. Travelers have increasingly found the clear waters of the lakes fouled with discarded bodies, and none of the distant cities of Katapesh can be bothered to deal with the threat, particularly since it has yet to pose a serious danger to trade in the region (less than war and rumors of war, certainly). Tavern tales in Bronze Hook and Thricehill speak of treasures buried along the shores of the Giant's Steps, or even hidden in the depths of the lakes themselves, but few are foolish enough to go looking, especially if they stop to wonder whether such stories are spread by someone baiting the hook for yet more prey.

The Hammerfalls: The Hammerfalls, fed by melting snow high in the Brazen Peaks, cascade down from the mountains, roaring over tall cliffs and foaming through tiers of rapids down toward the Pale River, where the swirling white waters calm somewhat before flowing past Kelmarane and the open plains. The distant roaring of the falls is audible day and night in the nearby passes and canyons, and the rapids are all but impossible to navigate by boat, except for extremely small and nimble craft; even then, frequent portages are necessary to avoid the falls and jagged rocks able to rend hulls and flesh with equal ease.

The largest of the falls is known as the Anvil, near the river's headwaters deep in the mountains, cascading over a plunge more than 150 feet to a broad pool below. Long ago, the rock-face behind and around the Anvil was riddled with natural caves worn by millennia of water, expanded and enlarged by dwarven stonemasons. The Hammerfall community of dwarves has not been heard from in well over a century, making them all but legend to the shorter-lived races of the highlands. Many tales try to explain their fate, whether falling to a mysterious ailment or dying upon the blades of cruel gnolls. Perhaps they delved too deep,



and struck something other than a vein of ore, running afoul of the dangers of the Darklands.

The Halls of Hammerfall have remained lost and sealed for generations, and no one can claim to have found them or their treasures. In their cups, old dwarves of Katapesh speak wistfully of the wonders of the Hammerfall workshops, with waterwheel-driven forges and gates, of the rich veins in the roots of the mountains. They also mourn their loss and relate tales of how the dying dwarves built their own cunning tombs in the depths of the rock, filling them with mechanical traps and defenses, so the savage humanoid of the peaks would never defile them. From time to time, a daring prospector brags of maps showing a hidden trail or secret entrance, or even claims to have been there and back, perhaps with a small bauble to prove the tale, but if anyone has truly found the old dwarven halls or learned their fate, they have successfully kept it to themselves.

Hook Ford: Although the Pale River's flow past the foothills of the Brazen Peaks is nowhere near as vigorous as the cascades and rapids upstream, it remains cold and deep, with few places to ford or cross it. Hook Ford, near the town of Bronze Hook, is the only shallow point across the river for miles, situated in an area where the river slows as it winds out across the plains westward. Tolls levied on caravans crossing north-south along the old trade route once brought significant wealth to the nearby town, but those monies have since dried up as the old trade route has fallen into disuse. The watchtower guarding the ford remains, though, and the shallows still see occasional use by travelers making their way through the highlands. Dasharn, the veteran guardsman who has watched over the ford for over 40 years, still maintains his post. An honorable but perpetually bored man, he thoroughly questions anyone who would make use of "his" ford.

He has also made peaceful contact with the dragonnes that live in the nearby hills, and when possible leaves the corpses of freshly killed gazelles on a tall outcropping of rock upstream from his home.

The House of the Beast: Resting in the shadow of Pale Mountain, the House of the Beast features prominently in this month's adventure. See page 6 for more details.

Iemos: A small plain of tall, soft grasses amid the dusty hills of the Brazen Peaks, Iemos is the name of both the grassland and the 40-foot-tall date tree that stands at the plain's heart. It is said that this is where the hero Jonnaphar Ahallt fell after slaying the blue wyrm Daghov, and that the tree sprang from the dragonslayer's corpse. Those with the ability to speak with plants find the tree most willing to converse. Iemos shares the noble heart of the hero Jonnaphar and seeks to protect all peaceful creatures who would rest near it. It does this by animating the grasses into lashing vines and controlling the weather to drive off any creature it perceives as a foe.

The Jackal's Maw: Although the Brazen Peaks are filled with deep canyons and crevasses, the Jackal's Maw makes them all seem like little more than furrows. It is a deep chasm with sheer sides, said to be virtually bottomless. In truth, the bottom of the Maw—such as it is—lies in the Darklands. Hidden trails cut into the cliff faces by inhuman hands long ago provide secret access to the depths of the Maw, permitting furtive forays from the Darklands onto the surface.

The gnoll tribes of the peaks consider the Maw sacred to the Mother of Monsters, likening it to both her mouth and her womb, consuming and spawning terrible creatures from the terrifying lands below. Sacrifices and offerings are sometimes cast into the Maw in the goddess's name, but the gnolls do not venture into it themselves any more than they would walk into a lion's den. Tales tell of the offerings of countless years carpeting the floor of the chasm with their bones, picked clean by the scavengers of the darkness and mixed with gleaming coins, jewelry, and other trinkets. Those foolhardy enough to seek the fortune in the depths have rarely ever returned to tell of it, the few who have scarred physically, mentally, or both by the horrors below.

Kelmarane: The town of Kelmarane is detailed thoroughly in "Howl of the Carrion King" in *Pathfinder* #19.

Litha Vale: West of Pale Mountain, the Serpent's Canyon winds its way through the Brazen Peaks. Travelers who wander from the main canyon trail find themselves emerging into a strangely silent realm of towering gray trees with translucent leaves and grass that crunches curiously underfoot. Upon closer examination, the trees, plants, and all living things of the valley are formed out of the same slate-like stone, and the thin, translucent stone leaves sometimes sound like the tinkling of faint bells in the rare breeze.

Once, the valley was lush and full of life. A small sect of druids tended it and the surrounding valleys, protecting their charge against outside exploitation. A beautiful and gifted druid priestess named Orlaas became particularly obsessed with shielding the valley. She came to prominence within her sect, and a number of other druids followed her guidance. When a particularly harsh drought caused the life in the vale to suffer, she sought a way to alter the vale and all within, unfettering them from their dependence on the region's fickle rains. She and her followers delved into forbidden magic and blood sacrifices to ancient powers of earth and wind, and in so doing brought a curse down upon both the vale and herself. Orlaas was transformed into a medusa and her valley into a realm of stone.

Unaging and unchanging, Orlaas has been content to keep the vale "safe" from all intruders, but a sufficient threat from the outside world might stir her and her "children"—strange creatures of living stone—to strike out from their bizarre garden.

Marudshar: No one goes to the canyon of Marudshar. There, perpetually shadowed by the surrounding mountains, stand the ruins of a great temple complex, its proud columns toppled and statues of strange beings disfigured by scouring winds. At the heart of the ruins stands the Path of the Traveller, a great, crumbling gateway bearing the images of sphinx-like creatures, and the Sacrament of the Faithless, a 63-foot-tall pillar sculpted to appear as petrified humans. The nomads of the region refuse to even speak of Marudshar, and none know what strange faith once worshiped there. The studies of outsiders have even been deterred by the canyon's residents, a sizable, all-male pride of ravening, unnatural lions, each bearing black, soulless eyes and the ability to speak a strange, guttural tongue.

The Northern Cascade: In the northern arm of the Brazen Peaks, melting snows feed into the broad Lake Vorn, which cascades down a series of falls known as the Viper's Tongue—for the way it forks in two a little more than halfway down—to reach Lake Fors in the foothills. The Northern Cascade, as it is known, is a natural wonder, but of little interest to the inhabitants of the Brazen Peaks beyond that, since the land around the lakes is rocky and rugged, the peaks high, and the trails difficult even in good weather. The falls make Lake Vorn impossible to navigate except by portage, so few bother to try and float vessels larger than small canoes on it. Furthering the upper lake's isolation is the tale of the lake monster Vorndra, a creature that supposedly dwells in the lake's depths and seizes and devours intruders who linger too long in its territory. Skeptics claim no waterborne creature of any great size could live in Lake Vorn, as there is not enough food in the lake to sustain it, nor any means for it to leave



to hunt elsewhere, but the tale persists, with descriptions of Vorndra ranging from draconic and serpentine to tentacled and beaked. Some have even found what appear to be the remains of crude altars and offerings on the pebbled lakeshore, perhaps indicating some mysterious worship of the lake monster itself.

Nowruz Vale: Nestled in a deep valley in the Brazen Peaks west of Serpent's Canyon is a small area of lush greenery and wildlife, watered and sustained by mountain lakes, called Nowruz Vale. It is difficult to reach, the few passes being narrow, treacherous, and carefully watched, for Nowruz Vale is home to many eyes, and they pass all that they see on to the vale's guardians. A small circle of druids, descendants of those who once tended the sacred sites in Nowruz and Litha Vale, still lives in harmony with the plants and animals here. The curse upon Litha Vale has long haunted their order, leading them to both defend their own vale and seek a means to break the curse and destroy the betrayer Orlaas, hopefully thus restoring Litha Vale to its natural state. Unfortunately, the druids' numbers have steadily dwindled over the years, and much

of their lore has been lost along with their elders. There are scarcely enough of them to tend to Nowruz and keep it safe from outsiders, including Orlaas and the barbaric gnoll tribes of the peaks.

Onyx Hall: Tucked away on the shore of Shadis Meer at the base of a spur of the Brazen Peaks is the old manor Onyx Hall, sheltered by overgrown poplar and hemlock and surrounded by brambles. The hall—of slate, dark granite, and marble—was once owned by a wealthy Solku family as a retreat house, situated far from the bustle and intrigue of city life. Much of the family's wealth was accumulated through the slave trade, and legend has it that a woman in the highlands placed a curse upon the family after she, her husband, and their children were sold to separate owners in distant lands, never to see each other again. So would all inhabitants of Onyx Hall "dwell in bondage until the stones themselves burn like a pyre." Ever since that time, over 200 years ago, Onyx Hall has stood abandoned—but not uninhabited, they say. Those lured to the manor by tales of the fabulous heirlooms accumulated there (just a fraction of the family's true fortune) have never returned,

and treasure-seekers have become increasingly rare, as tales of the accursed hall have spread.

Pale Mountain: Among the tallest mountains of the Brazen Peaks, the severely sloped Pale Mountain rises to a height of over 13,500 feet. Holding a place of reverence and fear in the legends of those inhabiting the surrounding lands—particularly tribes of gnolls—the mountain's composition of speckled granite gives it a distinctly lighter color than the surrounding peaks. Although the rock that comprises the peak can be found throughout the area, the unusual upthrust concentration found in Pale Mountain has long baffled miners. The folklore of the superstitious gnolls and nomads of the region explain the mystery in a variety of ways, some claiming that the mountain is comprised of the bones of a titanic monstrosity that once ravaged the area, while others believe that some terrible beast dwells beneath the peak, draining it of its life and color. In keeping with such ominous tales, the mountain holds a long history as a place of dark deeds, strange worship, and sacrifice, leading in part to the reluctance of civilization to encroach upon the lands that fall beneath the pallid mountain's baleful shadow.

Pale River: Flowing from the high snowmelts around Pale Mountain, the Pale River runs down through deep canyons and cascades toward the lowlands, meeting with the Hammerfalls before flowing out of the mountains near Kelmarane, passing Bronze Hook and cutting across the plains. While the river is not overly wide, it is fast flowing and sometimes surprisingly deep and cold, especially in the springtime, when it swells with fresh-melted snows from the peaks, giving it foamy whitecaps and leading some to nickname it the "Ale River."

Serpent's Canyon: This wide canyon runs from one side of the Brazen Peaks in the south to the other side in the north. It is deep and winding, with steep, rocky sides towering over the sandy floor. The wind howls and moans through the jagged fissures, particularly in the late spring and early fall, when the remnants of storms from the west break upon the Brazen Peaks. It can grow hot in the canyon at midday, when the sun shines down directly, and at night the temperatures plunge, but for much of the day it is cloaked in shadows and relatively cool. Once it formed a significant pass through the mountains, allowing travelers to avoid having to go eastward around Bronze Hook or to ford the Pale River, but with the decline in settlement and mining efforts in the region and the growth of gnoll activity the canyon has become decreasingly used by civilized travelers. Now the nomads of the region make the most frequent use of the pass, but even they tread swiftly, wary of attacks by beastmen or stranger creatures.

Silver Tarn: This high mountain lake is named for both its still, reflective waters and for the old silver mines in the surrounding area, leaving several abandoned tunnels

cut into the mountains around the tarn. The original excavations look dwarven, and were likely the work of miners from the Hammerfalls. The deeper portions of the mines might even still be viable, but few prospectors dare brave the hazards of the Brazen Peaks to investigate. The mine tunnels might reach into the depths of the Darklands, which would make sense given tales of stunted, shadowy figures spotted around the outskirts of the lake.

Thricehill: The young farming and trading town of Thricehill nestles in a shallow valley between its three namesake hills on the edge of the Katapeshi plain where the flow of the Pale River waters the grasslands to the east and south. Thricehill is home to fewer than 70 humans and halflings, and is known for its olives, which flourish in groves along the hills. The small community grows much of its own produce, shipping the rest along the Pale River to buyers, mainly eastward toward the heartland of Katapesh. The town's humble successes in the 12 years since its founding have made it a soft and potentially tempting target to raiders, and its people are becoming more aware of it. The town has a central palisade, which is defensible, but it's small, outdated, and poorly maintained, manned only by a few untested guardsmen. The people of Thricehill seek competent defenders, knowing its only a matter of time before they must defend all they've created.

White Canyon: Snaking through the heart of the Bronze Peaks, this deep canyon was cut by ancient mountain streams that have since changed their courses or dried up altogether, leaving a deep channel surrounded by high, windswept cliffs. Only small scrub and spiky grass grow in the clefts of the rocks, the base of the canyon covered with rocky, glittering sand. The shadows are deep in the canyon, which suits its various inhabitants quite well. Gnoll tribes have controlled White Canyon for some time, largely keeping to their domain and the surrounding areas just south of the mountains. Even now travelers and nomads of the highlands alike know that going to White Canyon means almost certain capture and enslavement. Only those unscrupulous sorts who would treat with the gnolls dare venture into the canyon, and even many of those shady merchants never return.

HIGHLANDS INHABITANTS

In addition to the inhabitants of nearby settlements like Bronze Hook and Kelmarane, the Uwaga Highlands are home to a variety of rough and often rocky creatures living in the deep canyons and valleys as well as the high mountain peaks.

Behirs: These powerful predators are known to dwell in the foothills and canyons of the highlands, where they often sun themselves, their hides appearing much like the blue shale sometimes found in this region. Fortunately, behirs

tend to be solitary, though occasionally one might encounter a mated pair. Naturalists also believe the presence of behirs in and around the peaks have kept many dragons from settling in the area, as the two creatures are fierce enemies. Prospectors and scouts in the highlands tell tavern tales of behirs that are skilled mimics, using a variety of voices and distant calls for help to lure prey into box canyons and gulleys where they spring out in ambush.

Derro: Too many tales of encounters with these mad degenerates circulate about the Brazen Peaks to dismiss them entirely, although some folk in the surrounding areas still consider the derro nothing more than a myth. Stories of derro living deep beneath the peaks are true, though, with the cunning kidnappers finding their way to the surface at night through mineshafts, natural caves, and old dwarf tunnels. Derro are known to hunt in the mountains, and to fixate upon intelligent creatures they encounter, stalking them by night until they see an opportunity to steal from them or to attack, usually dragging off one or more hapless souls into the blackness beneath the earth.

Dragonnes: Ferocious, winged dragon-lions, several prides of dragonnes inhabit secluded aeries among the Brazen Peaks. Within their inapproachable territories these proud predators face few threats aside from the occasional mountain storm. Hunters regularly sweep down from the peaks to hunt among the hills and outlying savannahs, often returning with prey for the entire pride.

While wary of the temperamental beasts, the nomads of the region take spotting a dragonne as a sign of coming good fortune and often follow the paths of the dragon-like hunters toward herds of gazelles and mountain goats. Among the religious traditions of some nomads the daughters of holy men learn the “beast tongue,” which is in fact Draconic, allowing them to parley with dragonnes, behirs, and the mountains’ rare true dragons.

Gargoyles: Tribes of sandy-colored gargoyles haunt the heights of the Brazen Peaks, nesting on mountain crags and in natural caves where they find them. They are particularly prevalent in the Chalk Cliffs, but might be found elsewhere, including the Jackal’s Maw and stretches along the river, where they hunt fish, animals visiting the water, and even the occasion boat or raft that comes upriver. A favorite tactic is to carry off smaller creatures, dropping them onto the rocks below before descending upon them to feast.

Griffons: Fierce, proud griffons soar over the Brazen Peaks, often at so great a height they are mistaken for large eagles or the like. They hunt through the lowland valleys, particularly Nowruz Vale and the surrounding hills, and nest in the nearby peaks. Hunting griffons frequently attack horses and mountain ponies (one of their favorite meals), making them a menace for small bands traveling through the highlands. They also hunt mountain goats and even gazelle and Nexian buffalo from the plains that wander into the highlands. The other inhabitants of the peaks give griffons a wide berth, but the soaring hunters rarely attack humanoids unless they have suitable livestock, and they disdain the carrion that draws hyenas and gnolls.

Gnolls: Savage tribes of gnolls number among the greatest threats of the Uwaga Highlands. Fiercely territorial, the gnolls see themselves as masters of the areas surrounding the highlands. Further details on the gnolls of the region and some of their most noteworthy tribes can be found in “Tribes of the Carrion King” in *Pathfinder* #19.

Sphinxes: Old Osirian tales speak of sphinxes in the northern Brazen Peaks, in particular of a gynosphinx dwelling near the old trade route, who would occasionally swoop down upon a caravan, or simply appear out of the shadows of the night, demanding answers to a riddle or challenging travelers with some intellectual puzzle, and promptly eating those unable to offer a satisfactory response. The lack of recent tales involving sphinxes in the area might owe to the lack of traffic along the old trade route, or it could well be travelers have become less cunning, and no one has provided a satisfactory answer for some time.



in the shadow of pale mountain

Katapesh Highlands Encounters

Most of the Katapeshi Highlands are dangerous wilderness and travelers might encounter a variety of creatures and hazards there.

Desert	Hills/Valley	Lake/River	Mountains	Savannah	Monster	Avg. EL	Source
01–07	01–06	01–04	01–08	01–10	1d2 eagles	1	MM 272
08–11	07–09	05–08	09–12	—	1 viper, medium	1	MM 270
12–16	10–12	—	13–14	—	2d6 blink dogs	2	MM 28
17–18	13	—	15–17	—	1 dire bat	2	MM 62
—	14–15	—	18–20	—	1 div, doru	2	Pathfinder #19
19–21	—	—	—	11–15	1 ankheg	3	MM 14
—	16	—	21–22	—	1d6 gremlins, jinkin	3	Pathfinder #19
22–25	17–18	—	23–28	—	1 endimmu	3	Pathfinder #20
26–29	19	—	29–31	16–20	1 scorpion, large	3	MM 287
—	20–21	—	32–33	—	1 unicorn	3	MM 249
30–32	22–24	—	34–35	21–30	1d2 lions	4	MM 274
—	—	09–14	—	—	1 boalisk	4	ToHR 40*
33–37	25–29	15–20	36–38	—	1d2 griffons	4	MM 139
38–39	30	—	39	—	1 buraq	5	Pathfinder #20
—	31	—	40–43	—	1d4 chupacabras	5	Pathfinder #19
40–44	32–35	21–28	44–45	31–39	1d2 giant eagles	5	MM 93
45–48	—	—	46–47	—	1d4 derro	5	MM 49
49–55	36–42	29–34	48–52	—	2d6 gnolls	5	MM 130
—	43–44	—	53–55	—	1 troll	5	MM 247
56–59	45–49	—	56–59	40–50	2d8 hyenas	6	MM 274
60–62	—	—	60	51–55	1 lamia	6	MM 165
63–65	50–55	—	61–63	56–58	2d6 worgs	6	MM 256
—	—	35–39	64	—	1 will-o'-wisp	6	MM 255
66–68	56–61	—	65–67	—	2d8 wolves	6	MM 283
69–71	—	—	—	59–61	1 bulette	7	MM 30
72–73	—	—	68	—	1 criosphinx	7	MM 233
74–75	62–64	—	69	62–67	1 dragonne	7	MM 89
—	65–66	40–49	70–73	—	1d4 gargoyles	7	MM 113
76–77	68–71	50–58	74–75	68–70	1d4 harpies	7	MM 150
—	—	59–64	—	—	1 nymph	7	MM 197
78–80	—	—	76–78	—	1 div, pairaka	7	Pathfinder #20
—	—	65–71	—	—	1d4 scrags	7	MM 247
—	72	—	79–80	—	1 shedu	7	ToHR 312*
81–82	73–79	—	81–85	—	1 behir	8	MM 25
83–84	—	—	86–88	71–75	1d6 dire lions	8	MM 63
85–86	—	—	89	—	1 gynosphinx	8	MM 233
—	—	72–80	—	—	1 aurumvorax	9	ToHR 24*
87	80	—	90	—	1 phoenix	9	Test 140**
88–91	81–85	81–91	91–92	76–85	1 roc	9	MM 215
92–96	86–89	92–100	93–94	86–97	1d4 wyverns	9	MM 259
97–98	90–94	—	—	—	1d4 lamassu	10	MM 165
—	95–98	—	95–98	—	1 ziz	11	Test 130**
99	—	—	—	98–100	1 purple worm	12	MM 211
100	99–100	—	99–100	—	1 dragon***	variable	MM 68

* Tome of Horrors Revised

** Testament: Roleplaying in the Biblical Era

*** Commonly an adult blue, brass, or red dragon.



Sarenrae

Sarenrae (SAIR-in-ray) is one of the most popular deities on Golarion, and even those of other faiths respect her power, dedication, and generosity. Worshiped originally by Keleshite humans, her faith spread to the Garundi in ancient Osirion and into other human and nonhuman civilizations as well. Like the sun in the sky, she shines upon the entire world as a symbol of good, healing, and redemption.

Eons ago, Sarenrae was not a goddess, but a powerful angel, guiding the energies of the sun and smiting agents of darkness that would quench the day's light and plunge the newborn world of Golarion and its sister planets into eternal darkness. Her skill and success at these tasks led other angels to lend her their support, and eventually gods as well, making her one of the mighty empyreal lords. When Rovagug sought to unmake Golarion, it was Sarenrae who was first on the battlefield, and she who faced the Rough Beast personally when the other forces of creation were engaged with his hideous spawn. Though the exact timeline is unclear, her willingness to sacrifice

herself in this battle so that all could be saved inspired great hope in all of her comrades, and this gave her the boost necessary to elevate her from one of the greatest angels to a full goddess, and with this influx of power she smote him and hurled his broken body deep into the earth. As the gods mended the scars in the world and intelligent life appeared on its surface, mortals turned their eyes upward to thank the life-giving sun, and her faith grew roots in the early primitive peoples.

Sarenrae is a kind and loving goddess, a caring mother and sister to all in need. She joys in healing the sick, lifting up the fallen, and shining a guiding light into the darkest hearts and lands. She brushes off insults and deflects attacks, patiently trying to convince those who perceive her as an enemy that their belief is false. She is no victim, and once it is clear that her words and power are wasted on those who refuse to listen and believe, she responds to violence in kind with swift metal and scorching light. She dislikes cruelty, lies, quenching darkness, needless suffering, and thoughtless destruction. Ancient, timeless,

"Let the healing light of the sun burn out the darkness within you. Let your inner light be a guide for others, and a searing flame against unrepentant evil."

—The Birth of Light and Truth



and renewed every day, she has seen much suffering in the world but is bolstered by the inevitable appearance of hope, truth, and kindness.

Religious art depicts the sun goddess as a strong woman with bronze skin and a mane of dancing flame; in some cases this flame trails behind her for a dozen or more yards. While one of her hands holds the light of the sun, the other grasps a scimitar, so that she might smite those who do not change their ways. The church does not teach that Sarenrae is the sun itself; she is its guardian and conduit for its power, not a direct manifestation of the actual orb, and while fanciful art may show her face in place of the sun, the mainstream faithful recognize the difference between the sun and the goddess.

Sarenrae is a popular goddess and worshiped by people of many interests, from the obvious farmers and healers to governors, honest jailors, redeemed evil-doers, and those who wish to make the world a better place. City-folk who have no particular interest in fate, farming, magic, or esoteric philosophy make up the bulk of her worshipers, regular people who believe in honest work, relief from suffering, and the idea that each new day brings hope and new opportunity. Her faith attracts those with kind hearts, but only those willing to harden them when kindness is a dangerous weakness.

Sarenrae indicates her favor with sightings of doves, or through the shapes of ankhs appearing in unexpected places. Other signs of her favor are rays of dawn or dusk sunlight lasting far longer than they should, the discovery of yellow stones or gems, or the sudden soothing of aches and pains. Her displeasure is most often made apparent through unexplained sunburns or periods of blindness that can last anywhere from only a few moments for minor transgressions to a lifetime for mortal sins. She has been known to befuddle the tongues of habitual liars and slow the healing of the unkind and unrepentant. Sunflowers may bloom around the faithful to show her favor, or a dead enemy may sprout them from its mouth.

Formal raiment for priests of Sarenrae includes a long white chasuble and tunic decorated with red and gold thread depicting images of the sun, and officiating priests usually wear a golden crown with a red-gold sunburst device on top. Scimitars inlaid with gold sunbursts or golden gems are common ceremonial implements. This



costume has changed over time and varies by region; older illustrated copies of her holy text show priests wearing pointed caps, decorative long-sleeved open-front coats over normal clothing, and even elaborate wings made of wood and feathers.

Rose gold (a mix of copper and gold) is very popular among the faithful for its color, which reminds them of the dawn's light. Any church items made of gold may actually be rose gold. Marriage ceremonies, dowries, and other events sanctified by the church may contain one or more finger rings made of rose gold, and in some desert cultures a man is not ready to ask a bride for her hand unless he has a rose gold ring to give her.

Sarenrae is neutral good and her portfolio is the sun, redemption, honesty, and healing. Her favored weapon is the scimitar. Her holy symbol is an ankh, though more stylized versions are a winged ankh or a winged female figure, arms outstretched, with a halo of flame. Her domains are Fire, Glory, Good, Healing, and Sun. Most of her priests are clerics, though there are many paladins and rangers and a smattering of sun-druids and sun-bards. Her titles include the Dawnflower and the Cleansing Light. To her enemies she is the Warrior of Fire.

The church has passive and active elements, and a priest of either flavor can usually find like-minded worshipers at any temple. Sarenrae's paladins tend to be adventure-seekers, many of them questing in search of penance for past failures or perceived flaws. The more relaxed clergy tend to the sick and injured, though even these are ready to brandish a scimitar in the face of evil that steps within reach of the temple.

Religious ceremonies for the Dawnflower always involve singing (or sometimes ululation or even speaking in tongues) and usually include vigorous dancing, with participants spinning or moving in great circles representing the sun's path through the sky. Cymbals, bells, and drums are popular instruments, accented by hand-clapping.

The church is very supportive of marriage and a wedding in a temple is always cause for celebration. Because of their stance of forgiveness and redemption, there is no stigma for divorce, and the delight over a second or third marriage is just as joyful as a person's first. Worshipers reconsecrate their vows every 10 years, though this doesn't involve an elaborate ceremony with guests.

Holy Text

The one book common to all churches of Sarenrae is *The Birth of Light and Truth*. This text is unusual because it includes stories from times before Sarenrae was a true goddess, describing the creatures she faced and including a long list of names of fiends and horrors she destroyed long before mortals learned writing. The rest of the book is more practical than historical, explaining the beliefs of the church, offering advice on dealing with sin and temptation, and many parables of evil creatures seeing the light of the Dawnflower and turning to good, productive lives thereafter. The book also contains simple folk remedies for common illnesses and injuries, as well as helpful hints for dealing with common supernatural or monstrous evils, such as that vampires are vulnerable to garlic.

Most copies contain extra pages for the owner to record uplifting stories he experiences or hears in order to repeat them to others, and any copy containing a firsthand anecdote from a great priest or paladin is especially prized as a family or church heirloom. It is customary for a hero of the church who performs some great deed for a person or temple to write a brief account in or at least sign a local's copy of *Light and Truth* (as it is commonly known) as a memento and historical record.

In Katapesh, Osirion, and nearby lands the harsh sun beats down upon mortals, and the line between survival and extinction is much finer. Thus, it is no surprise that even benign Sarenrae emerges as a more steely, dangerous force. As tribal nomads say, "there are no second chances in the desert," and here the Cult of the Dawnflower has taken that to heart. These hard-edged priests offer mercy once and only once to their opponents, and if refused they are ruthless in battle, ignoring offers to parley or surrender, unafraid to judge neutral opponents as if they were black-hearted evildoers. This severe stance only applies to enemies of the faith and sinful folk—among their friends, family, and other respectable members of the community, the people of the Desert Dawnflower are kind, generous, and forgiving. As a whole this subset of the main faith tends to fall much closer to true neutral than neutral good, though never to actual evil.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

Temples are open-air buildings (with satellite buildings having ceilings) open to the sky, sometimes with large brass or gold mirrors on high points to reflect more light toward the altar (always in such a way as not to blind anyone present, though older priests tend to develop a squint and crow's feet from the bright light). Sun-motifs are common

decorations, as are white or metallic wings and images of doves. Most temples have a sundial and markings tracking the solstices.

Sarenrae's sanctuaries are surrounded by sunflowers or other plants with large golden flowers. These may be flower gardens or simply wildflowers that flourish because of the goddess' will. In poorer communities, sunflower seeds are eaten, either whole, as a nutritious paste, or dried into powder and used like flour to make bread. "Dawnflower bread" is small loaves of sunflower bread marked with an ankh on top, distributed to the needy by the church.

Sarenrae has many shrines, typically a single stone marker with a sun-ankh, though trios of carved standing stones may mark the summer and winter solstices. Shrines may have niches for candles or small handwritten prayers, and visiting pilgrims typically scatter sunflowers or seeds at the base. In hotter lands, the stone might be part of a small shelter or have an overhang to create a bit of shade for a weary traveler.

A CLERIC'S ROLE

The clergy of Sarenrae are usually peaceful, administering to their flock with a gentle hand and wise words. Such kindness vanishes, however, when the church is stirred to action against an evil that cannot be redeemed—particularly against the cult of Rovagug. At such times, Sarenrae's priests become dervishes, dancing among foes while allowing their scimitars to give their opponents final redemption. Even commonfolk aid in these endeavors, though their contribution is more in terms of supplies and emotional support than taking up arms against evil, though even that has happened in extreme times.

Priests are responsible for blessing farmland, organizing planting and harvest celebrations, tending to the sick and injured, guarding or rehabilitating criminals, or simply preaching to others using simple parables. Like their goddess, priests of the Dawnflower tend to be caring and understanding, which makes them naturally suitable for working out disputes between neighbors or family members. Swordplay, particularly with the scimitar, is held to be a form of art by her followers. Martial-minded priests seek out evil in the hopes of redeeming it or destroying it if redemption fails. They understand that undead, mindless beasts, and fiends are essentially beyond redemption and don't bother wasting words on such creatures. The church is not averse to using spells like lesser geas and mark of justice to help guide malcontents toward goodness. Priests of Sarenrae never seem to sunburn; those of middle or dark complexion just get darker, while those with fair features tend to become lighter as if sun-bleached.

Most non-adventuring priests live on donations from their congregation, as do those who work in church

temples. Wealthier folk or nobles might hire a priest as a personal healer to deal with a particular problem or as a long-term retainer, likewise some receive a stipend from the city guard or army to take care of peacekeepers and soldiers. By tradition they normally do not refuse someone in need of healing even if the person cannot pay, but they are quick to assess who urgently needs medical attention and who will recover naturally, which prevents most exploitation and allows them to focus their magic on those who really need it.

The Dawnflower's church is extremely flexible and allows its priest much mobility between temples—a legacy of its early popularity among the nomadic tribes. This practice helps diffuse pressure from personal feuds, as one priest can relocate to another temple until tempers cool. Individual temples are organized much like a family, with parental and sibling-like interactions between various groups. The head of a particular temple is called the Dawnfather or Dawnmother, and is usually an older person skilled at healing and diplomacy; members of the temple are expected to follow the decisions of the leader, though normally he or she encourages input from junior members before a decision is made.

Priests of Sarenrae are usually skilled at Diplomacy and Heal. Many also learn Knowledge (nature) or Profession (herbalist) to better understand medicinal plants. Those who make a habit of confronting evil usually learn Intimidate, as they prefer a foe that surrenders to one that must be beaten into submission.

A priest normally wakes around dawn and makes a thankful prayer toward the rising sun. A quick meal (preferably warm) follows, as does a short time of introspective prayer, no longer than an hour, after which the priest goes about his work. It is customary to utter a quick prayer upon exiting a building through a door that faces the sun, and another any time the sun breaks through the clouds (much as you might bless someone if they sneeze). They pause to pray a few minutes at the sun's highest point in the day and shortly before sundown (priests who cannot see the sun, such as those in a dungeon or cave, estimate the appropriate time for these prayers).

Two Myths

Sarenrae's followers record many myths in their holy books; these two are among the most popular.

Darkness and Light: When the primal forces created Golarion, Asmodeus planted a malignant evil upon the world under cover of perpetual darkness. The doctrine of Sarenrae's faith tells how the Dawnflower brought light to the world, and with it came truth and honesty. All who had turned to evil in the darkness saw their wickedness illuminated in Sarenrae's light; shocked at



Customized Summon List

Sarenrae's priests can use *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* spells to summon the following creature in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spells.

Summon Monster VI

Janni (genie) (NG)

Summon Monster/Nature's Ally VII

Djinni (genie) (NG)

Summon Monster/Nature's Ally VIII

Redeemed efreeti (LG)*

*This creature does not have the *wish* spell-like ability.

the ugliness within them, they asked for forgiveness and were cleansed of their evil by the goddess. The church uses this to explain its policy of redemption—it is there for anyone who asks for it with an open heart. Note that the church believes that divine forgiveness for evil does not excuse mortal punishment; a thief who asks the church for forgiveness finds his soul elevated, but must still compensate his victim according to local law.

The Punishment of Ninshabur: Legend holds that the Pit of Gormuz was once the great city of Ninshabur. Long had it been a city of wickedness and sin, and long had her priesthood tried to convince the people there to abandon their ways and turn to the healing power of the light. Their efforts failed time and again, and despite her warnings in the form of an earthquake and a night that burned bright as day, they still rejoiced in their evil. Finally, when her followers found cultists of Rovagug preaching openly in the streets, she decided that the taint was too deep and they must be destroyed like any other fiend. Sarenrae smote the earth with a scimitar of fire, creating a rent to the center of the world, and the city tumbled out of the light they had so fervently rejected.

HOLIDAYS

Sarenrae is the patron goddess of summer, and its month of Sarenith is named for her. The church has two universal holidays, though regional temples may hold additional holidays to celebrate local events, such as the appearance of a saint. Services are happy events incorporating singing, dancing, bells, cymbals, and flutes; they always take place outside and during daylight hours.

Burning Blades: This takes place on Sarenith 10th, although technically it is the apex of a summer-long celebration in the Dawnflower's name. The holiday represents the light of Sarenrae and its power to heal,

both physically and spiritually. It is named for the dance of the burning blade, where the faithful coat ceremonial weapons in slow-burning pitch and dance with flaming blades. Church legend says that on this day the blades of the zealous will ignite with Sarenrae's fire should their wielder be in mortal peril, and this miracle has happened often enough that evil folk avoid the faithful on this day.

Sunwrought Festival: Celebrated on the summer solstice, this holiday honors the longest day of the year as the day when Sarenrae pays extra attention to the people in the mortal world. Worshipers dance, give each other small gifts, light fireworks, and sell or trade their finest crafts in a market-like gathering. Fireworks, paper streamers, and simple kites are popular amusements. Many feature a reenactment of the battle between Sarenrae and Rovagug, with the goddess represented by a young woman and the evil god represented as a large frame-and-cloth costume that can exceed 20 feet in length and require four or more people to move.

APHORISMS

The people of Katapesh and Osirion always swear oaths on Sarenrae's name to prove their honesty. Among the faithful, there are certain phrases in common use.

The Dawn Brings New Light: Often used as a litany against evil and despair, the faithful use this phrase to mean that each new day is an opportunity, a promise from Sarenrae that things will get better, even if that means the afterlife (records from Osirion during the purging of the Cult of the Dawnflower cult indicate several martyrs of the faith chanted this as they were executed for their beliefs). It is also used to welcome good things in life, whether blessing the birth of a child, an unexpected monetary gain, or a delicious meal.

For the Sun and the Fury: This battle calls upon the light of Sarenrae and her righteous anger at unrepentant evil. Paladins like to shout it when they smite, clerics when they invoke holy fire. Traditionally this is painted or carved on the cornerstone of every temple to Sarenrae.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

The goddess welcomes all non-evil deities and treats most of the evil ones pleasantly in the hopes of convincing them to abandon their evil. Similar to how all gods love Shelyn in their own way, they understand that Sarenrae honestly wants their friendship, whether or not that feeling is reciprocated. She hates Asmodeus passionately, and though it is rarely spoken of, they share a deeper rivalry than merely their constant battle over souls. Likewise, despite her disgust at Urgathoa's undead followers and disease, the Dawnflower tries to find some way to "help" the other goddess become whole again, though the Pallid Princess has no interest in her help. Rovagug is particularly loathed,

for his mindless destruction opposes her generous nature and she still remembers the sting of his attacks in the battle where she imprisoned him ages ago. She gets along very well with the Empyrean Lords and often lends them support in their causes (in some lands, these beings are worshiped as saints of the Dawnflower's church, though Sarenrae makes no such claims).

NPC PRIESTS OF SARENRAE

Though her greatest temples are in the southern lands, Sarenrae's faith is welcome in all non-evil countries, and her followers may be found anywhere. In places where evil holds sway, they travel incognito and help other good folk against oppression and misery. The following are two notable priests the PCs might meet on their travels.

Fayar the Swift-Foot (LG male human paladin 6) fancies himself a dervish crusader, having survived many battles with gnolls, undead, and even a hellcat. He has used his nickname exclusively ever since acquiring a pair of *boots of striding and springing*. His real patronymic is unknown, and he reveals little about his past, leading most to speculate that he is atoning for some great shame or perhaps trying to redeem his family name. Fayar is meticulous in his religious observations, praying each dawn for at least an hour and fasting for a day if he ever misses part of his regimen. In hot climates he wears loose white silks over his armor (patching them himself in between battles). He has a large winged ankh branded on his left pectoral and several Sarenrite prayers tattooed under it in flowing Kelish script.

Sahba al-Waaj (NG female human cleric 9): Born into a low-status family, Sahba's father planned to give her to a warlord as a peace offering. Not relishing the idea of life as a harem girl, she prayed to Sarenrae and was given a vision of her fleeing her father's tent to the safety of a nearby pilgrimage. She obeyed, and the pilgrims took her in and trained her to be a priestess. Now she balances her roles of healer and redeemer, tending to the poor and underprivileged some days, seeking evil and oppressors on others. She is resentful toward belligerent or controlling men and has been known to pick fights with them in order to give them a good beating. She is an excellent cook but only does it for close friends or in response to witnessing a great act of charity or generosity.

PLANAR ALLIES

The following creatures are well-known supernatural servitors of Sarenrae, suitable for conjuring with *planar ally* or similar spells. Her herald is her friend and advisor,

Holy Sunlord Thalachos (see page 86), and in times of great need she sends him to Golarion to aid her cause.

Charlabu: This golden-haired hound archon prefers a friendly dog form when interacting with mortals, and has been known to masquerade as a regular dog to look after people in need of help (though his alignment spoils the ruse for those who can detect such things).

Mystmorning: Religious scholars debate whether this servant is a celestial unicorn in the shape of a sword or a sword with the powers of a celestial unicorn. She always looks like a fine sword or scimitar, inlaid with rose gold markings on the blade and with two gray gems set on the pommel. She rarely speaks and prefers to take a passive role as a weapon in the hands of a hero.



fayar



Coils of Flame

High in the Pale Mountains, the wind whistles through a deep fissure scarring a lonely slope of Pale Mountain, stirring the ashen smoke that constantly leaks from the ominous caverns within. Many ages have passed since the first nomadic humans practiced dark rites within these tunnels known as the Mountain's Maw, but this smoking crevice is far from abandoned. Centuries ago, when the legions of the efreeti Jhavhul commanded the region, the construction of his accursed stronghold came to connect with these natural tunnels. As they seethed with the volcanic blood of the horror resting deep beneath the mountain, they made a comfortable lair for the genie's elemental allies. When Jhavhul's legions were defeated in the surrounding region, not all of the fiery general's servants were lost. A contingent of salamanders, summoned forth from the Elemental Plane of Fire, fled deep into the depths of the House of the Beast, entrenching themselves for an attack that would never come. And so the fire snakes have lingered for ages, guarded in their smoldering domain, enjoying the offerings of superstitious

gnolls and fearful local nomads. Yet with war drums again echoing upon Pale Mountain, the denizens of the Inferno grow agitated, their flames rising in anticipation of new victims to consume.

"Coils of Flame" is a subterranean adventure designed for four 4th-level characters. In addition to working as a stand-alone adventure, this Set Piece can supplement this month's Adventure Path installment, "House of the Beast," or any other campaign headed into the wilds or underground.

IN THE ADVENTURE PATH

"Coils of Flame" integrates easily into this month's Adventure Path entry, "House of the Beast." Gnolls, nomads, and other natives of the region around Pale Mountain have long told stories of the Mountain's Maw and the dark dealings that once took place there. Even now, many claim that the poison breath of a great evil seeps from the mouth of these fuming caves, while others speak of deadly oracles that can immolate a man with a touch.

Thus, the caves are given a wide berth and only the most desperate or mad enter the caverns to seek the truth.

What few know, though, is that the caves within the Mountain's Maw connect with the deepest layers of the House of the Beast, forming a secret back door that not even the stronghold's current ruler knows about. While the salamanders that call the caverns home know of the passage into the fortress's depths, they've had little reason to make use of it in the past centuries.

GMs who wish to use this location as part of "House of the Beast" might employ it in one of two ways, either as a secret entrance into the citadel's depths or as another dungeon level where the PCs might glean further insight into the fortress's history and what treasure lurk within.

Back Door: Should PCs prove wary about making a frontal assault on the keep of the most powerful gnoll warlord in the region, they might be able to uncover some tempting information about the Mountain's Maw. After Zayifid directs the PCs toward the House of the Beast, a DC 18 Gather Information or Knowledge (local) check reveals stories about supposedly demon-haunted caverns on the slopes nearby. Although no direct connection between the Mountain's Maw is revealed, the caves might be worth checking out due to proximity alone. If the PCs do choose to take this route, the passage into the House of the Beast in area 2) is sealed, but Lesaar knows of it and might open it for the PCs if they aid him in deposing Thratnias.

Lost Level: Alternatively, should the PCs already be exploring the House of the Beast, area H11 connects to a passage leading to area 2 within the Mountain's Maw. In this version, the path between the two dungeons lies open. The PCs may explore the salamander caves at their leisure and, should they ally with Lesaar, might learn much first hand of Jhavhul, the House of the Beast, and of a great treasure spirited away to the fortress by the gnoll priestess Shirak after the efreeti's defeat. While Lesaar's information is relatively spotty—he was only a lesser member of Jhavhul's army after all—he can give the PCs the gist of the story of the genie lord's fall.

WITHIN THE MOUNTAIN'S MAW

The mountain caverns housing the salamanders' lair is something of a geological anomaly. Little volcanic activity takes place in the Brazen Peaks, largely due to the vast networks of Darklands tunnels that wind below them. Regardless, pools of glowing magma bubble up from the depths here and deadly fumes taint the air, making the caves an ideal home for its fiery inhabitants. Yet even the salamanders don't realize that the source of their realm's ever-flowing flames stems not from the earth, but from the still-beating heart of Xotani the Firebleeder, the terrible spawn of Rovagug whose remains lie deep beneath the mountains. Although slain long ago, the heart of the

living firestorm perseveres, pumping its endless flames into the land as flows of superheated rock and burning blood. Where the flames come from matter little to the salamanders, though, who remain content for as long as the fires burn.

Despite the salamanders' relative disinterest in the outside world, their lair proves easy to find. What would typically be little more than an unremarkable gap in the mountain cliffs fumes with eerie gases escaping from within. Those with directions to the Mountain's Maw have little problem spotting the cavern's entrance upon a steep ridge. A DC 18 Climb check allows characters to ascend to the entry way with little problem, while a DC 20 Spot check reveals a steep, overgrown path—typically used by daring nomads and gnoll shamans—that winds up to the entrance. Once the PCs near the Mountain's Maw, read or paraphrase the following:

A cleft like a fanged maw cuts horizontally through the pale cliff side, a dark fissure lined with stony outcroppings. Black streaks stain the earth outside the opening, sooty residue as if from some great heat. In uneven blasts faint smoke exhales from the crack like the noxious breath of the mountain itself.

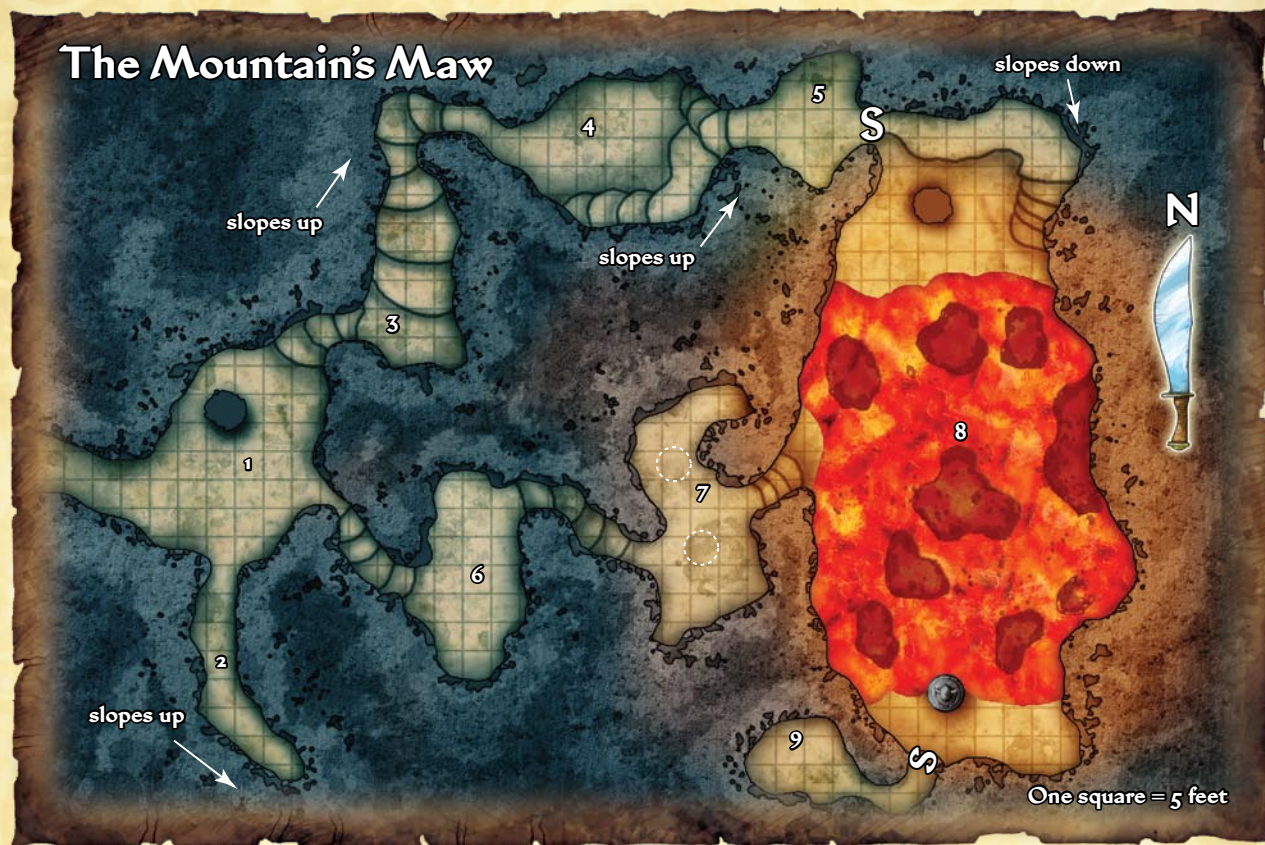
No guards protect the entrance to the salamander's lair, as the outsiders have faced few intruders and fear little. In addition, the caverns' environs prove hostile to most life (see the Volcanic Hazards sidebar). Surprisingly, many areas of the cavern's interior are well lit. Natural gas jets set ablaze by the fiery emissions of the salamanders illuminate areas 1, 3, 4, and 5, while the blazing lava pool blindingly lights area 8. All other rooms are dark and descriptions take into account PCs using a light source. The use of open flame can be dangerous in the caverns, most dramatically in area 2, though they pop, fizzle, and burn brightly in most of the chambers as well.

Once inside, loud noises such as combat do not raise an alarm among the cavern's residents—the chaotic nature of the volcanic activity and the salamanders themselves making noisy outbursts common.

1. Entryway (EL 3)

The howling winds outside do little to cool the oppressive heat within this sweltering cavern. Reeking trails of steam and acrid smoke eddy in the eerie light shed by flickering bluish flame that pops and whistles erratically from a crack in the cavern floor. In the middle of the room, a table made of ancient oak supports a few woven baskets and a decrepit clay bowl.

The sturdy table here was once a place to bring tribute to the gods ancient nomads believed laired within the cavern. Although these supposed deities are no longer



remembered, the salamanders who now occupy the caves collect similar sacrifices. Occasionally desperate nomads or gnolls venture to the Mountain's Maw, seeking guidance or strange weapons from the beasts within and leaving sacrifices of skewered meat and precious metals here.

Creatures: This chamber is home to the precocious earth mephit Andgronakraks. He has long served the salamanders and fancies himself their seneschal, meeting all who would seek out his masters and judging who is worthy to gain audiences—typically those who bribe him with coins and crunchy crystals. He lounges in one of the many ashy rock piles scattered about the room, watching to see what the PCs have brought. If they attempt to travel deeper into the cavern, Andgronakraks indignantly demands what they think they're doing and, if they have nothing to offer him or his masters, demands the party leave. If offered a gift of precious metal or rock worth more than 10 gp to snack on, Andgronakraks's attitude becomes friendly and he can tell the PCs much about the salamanders or go fetch them if they so wish. He might even follow the party, though only if he thinks he might be able to coax more delicious coins or gems from them.

ANDGRONAKRAKS
Earth mephit (MM 182)
hp 19

CR 3

TACTICS

Before Combat Andgronakraks hides amid the rocks, watching intruders before confronting them.

During Combat Andgronakraks attempts to stay out of reach of any danger, making use of his breath weapon and soften earth and stone ability. He thinks himself above direct combat and only changes size and attacks directly if forced to.

Morale If Andgronakraks takes any damage he retreats, flying to area 3 to alert the salamanders of danger.

Treasure: The baskets and jar on the table are grease stained and unremarkable, though one holds a strange utensil: a ceramic rod with a chicken's foot tied to one end. This is actually a wand of *summon monster II* with 17 charges.

In addition, a DC 18 Search check reveals a crack in the floor near the natural flame that contains Andgronakraks's hoard: 3 flasks worth of flammable oil, a Small stone dagger, an ancient bronze ring worth 30 gp, and 8 bite-sized pieces of lapis lazuli worth 8 gp each.

2. Explosive Stair (EL 3)

This uneven, narrow passage slopes slowly upward, growing steeper into a rugged natural ladder. Amid the jagged ledges and crumbling handholds the passage constricts and dead-ends in a rough alcove.

This natural chimney collects gases from the volcanic activity of the mountain. Those who make a DC 15 Climb check can scale to the alcove at the chimney's top 20 feet above. What's not immediately apparent from the vent's base, though, is that the air above is tainted with two squares' worth of explosive gas (see the Volcanic Hazards sidebar). Anyone who scales more than 10 feet must begin making Fortitude saves to resist the deadly invisible gas. Those who bring an open flame into the area also cause an explosion that deals 1d6+2 points of fire damage and destroys the alcove's treasure. The explosion does, however, remove the gas from the area.

If the PCs enter the caves through this slope—see the In the Adventure Path section—the chimney ends in an ancient trapdoor that opens with a DC 18 Strength check. Opening the door here unleashes a wave of the explosive gas, which may cause it to explode if the PCs carry exposed flames.

If the PCs have not yet battled their way through the House of the Beast, the trapdoor leading to area **H11** is still here, but it is obscured by a *stoneshape* spell. A DC 25 Search check reveals that the stone here seems unnaturally smooth, but does not hint at the passage beyond.

Treasure: A halfling skeleton lies in the alcove at the chimney's top. Fleeing the salamanders, this explorer met an unfortunate end here. Along with his bones remain a masterwork owlbear pelt cloak worth 40 gp, a quiver containing 15 +1 arrows, and a single *sleep* arrow wrapped in vellum. A broken masterwork composite shortbow lies near the corpse. All of the halfling's other equipment is shredded or missing.

3. Guard Post (EL 5)

This curving, gravel-strewn passage widens as it slopes upward. Several jets of orange flame light the rocky hall with hellish color and dancing shadows, revealing a flat landing near the slope's middle. The contents of several scorched cauldrons bubble and hiss upon the platform, each balanced on ironwork stands. Beyond the cauldrons, the passage continues.

This chamber serves as the outer defense of the salamanders' lair. The fire jets upon the walls raise the temperature to severe heat. On the higher of the two landings bubble four heavy black cauldrons, each filled with either boiling water or thin vulture soup.

Creatures: Two flamebrother salamanders are normally on guard duty on the landing here. One of the 6-foot-long creatures wraps around the base of a small iron cauldron—its blackened humanoid upper body dips into the steaming contents as it drinks deeply. Another swings an iron spear with precision, attacking

Volcanic Hazards

A number of volcanic dangers make the Mountain's Maw dangerous for life non-native to the Elemental Plane of Fire. While the majority of the dangers PCs might face within the salamanders' lair are summarized here, see page 303 of the DMG for complete details on heat dangers.

Explosive Gas (CR 3): Is a poisonous gas that violently combusts if exposed to flame. Those in an area of explosive gas must save every round to resist the poison's effects. In addition, explosive gas fills a number of squares. Should an open flame be brought into the area the gas combusts, burning all creatures in the gas and within 10 feet of the area it fills. This explosion deals 1d6 points of damage +1 for every square filled with the gas.

Inhaled, Fortitude DC 14, initial damage 1d4 points of damage, secondary damage unconsciousness.

Extreme Heat: Several areas in this adventure are subject to extreme temperatures. A character in very hot conditions (above 90° F) must make a Fortitude saving throw each hour (DC 15, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. In severe heat (above 110° F), a character must make a Fortitude save once every 10 minutes (DC 15, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. On either case, characters wearing heavy clothing or armor of any sort take a -4 penalty on their saves.

Lava: Lava or magma deals 2d6 points of damage per round of exposure, except in the case of total immersion, which deals 20d6 points of damage per round. Damage from magma continues for 1d3 rounds after exposure ceases, but this additional damage is only half of that dealt during actual contact (that is, 1d6 or 10d6 points per round).

and defending against an imaginary opponent near the landing's western edge.

FLAMEBROTHER SALAMANDERS (2)

CR 3

hp 26 each (MM 218)

TACTICS

During Combat One salamander flings the small cauldrons full of boiling water into melee with little care of accuracy as the other charges in to fight. The cauldron-flinging salamander takes a -4 penalty on attacks with the improvised grenades—which have a range increment of 10 feet. The cauldrons function as splash weapons, dealing 1d6 points of fire damage on a direct hit and 1 point of fire damage to creatures in adjacent squares. The other salamander attempts to keep the PCs from ascending to the landing.

Morale The salamanders here fight to the death.

4. Living Quarters (EL 6)

This two-tiered chamber glows with red-hot rocks that jut from the ground in angry spears. Several large, worked pieces of stone form giant fist shapes that project out from the walls forming stylized braziers, orange flames licking upward from between the fingers. Two rocky ramps coil up to a higher platform, where a brilliant curtain of strung purple crystals nearly conceals a passage leading deeper into the mountain.

This chamber is where the flamebrothers reside. Most of the salamanders' daily activities—cooking, eating, bickering, and lazing among the hot stones—take place here. The superheated stones here keep the chamber's temperature at severe heat. The GM should mark three 5-foot squares in the room as containing the superheated rock. These squares are rough terrain. Any character knocked down or otherwise forced into one of the squares takes 2d6 points of fire damage from the burning rocks.

Creatures: Three flamebrothers recline among the hot rocks here. Unless the PCs were especially noisy in one of the adjacent rooms, two of the salamanders are sleeping.

FLAMEBROTHER SALAMANDERS (2)

CR 3

hp 26 each (MM 218)

Treasure: The flamebrothers keep most of their possessions out in the open: a supply of six spears, two plump jugs full of alchemists fire (the equivalent of eight flasks), several well-used iron cooking implements, and two thoroughly blackened mountain goats. In addition, a DC 20 Search check reveals a statuette of a demonic snake made out of carnelian worth 200 gp.

5. Lair of the Sorcerer (EL 6)

The sound of escaping steam hisses through this chamber, the walls broken with thick cracks radiating flickering firelight. A stone table scattered with coal, ember colored stones, and elaborate patterns drawn in ash fills an alcove to the north, while opposite that lies a pallet of cinders and dark iron shavings.

This room serves as the personal chamber of Lesaar, a flamebrother salamander with considerable sorcerous ability. He begrudgingly serves Thratnias as second-in-command of the salamander community. The stones and symbols on the desk are colorful, but largely useless.

A DC 20 Search check reveals a tight crack in the back wall that a Small creature can squeeze through. Lesaar uses the crack to spy on Thratnias's invisibly.

Creatures: Lesaar fumes invisibly while lying upon his uncomfortable-looking bed. He does not want to stay in these caves under Tharatnias's slothful command any longer, but has long ago discounted any chance of his abilities advancing to the point where he might be able to open a portal to another plane. Instead, he now seeks to turn the other flamebrothers in caverns against Thratnias and rule himself, at least until another way to return home presents itself. Upon spotting the PCs, Lesaar hopes he might be able to use them either to find a way home or to depose Thratnias. After watching them for 2 or 3 rounds, he drops his invisibility and attempts to bargain with the PCs. After gleaning their intentions in the cave, he offers them a route into the House of the Beast or information on the fortress and a great treasure hidden within its lowest level—a magical map known as the *Scroll of Kakishon*. He knows little of the map's working or that it currently holds Jhavul and his army, but knows the efreeti coveted it.

LESAAR

CR 6

Male flamebrother salamander cleric 5

LE Small outsider (extraplanar, fire)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Listen +13, Spot +15

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 20



(+2 armor, +2 Dex, +7 natural, +1 size)

hp 58 (9d8+18)

Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Immune fire

Weakness vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee staff +9 melee (1d6+1 plus 1d6 fire) and tail slap +5 melee (1d6 plus 1d6 fire)

Special Attacks constrict 1d4 plus 1d6 fire, heat, improved grab, spells

Spells Prepared (CL 5th)

3—*resist energy*^D, *stone shape*, *summon monster III*

2—*enthrall* (DC 16), *produce flame*^D (2), *spiritual weapon*

1—*burning hands*^D (DC 15), *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *obscuring mist*, *shield of faith*

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

D domain spell; **Domains** Fire, Destruction

TACTICS

During Combat If threatened, Lesaar summons lemures to fight the PCs while he stays out of reach and casts spells

Morale Lesaar begs for his life if forced into direct combat.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 17, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +5

Feats Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Natural Attack (tail)

Skills Bluff +7, Diplomacy +15, Hide +14, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (religion) +13, Listen +13, Move Silently +10, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +13, Spot +15

Languages Common, Ignan

Combat Gear *potion of invisibility* attached to a bronze necklace with two other potion containers (70 gp); **Other Gear** *bracers of armor* +2, iron staff, masterwork silk robe (40 gp)

6. Serpent Den (EL 4)

This chamber smells of sulfur and is covered in serpentine trails burnt into the very rock. Deep holes pock the stone walls, several bearing the wavering glow of natural flame.

Three interconnected tunnels, barely large enough for a Small creature to squeeze through, run within the porous walls of this chamber. From the openings marked on the map, the room's resident fire snakes can slither through the passages either to hide or attack by surprise.

Creatures: This room is the den of several fire snakes, burning serpents native to the Elemental Plane of Fire and pets to the cavern's resident salamanders. These fiery-scaled serpents slither quickly through the holes riddling every wall. It's been some time since the salamanders last bothered to feed their pets, making

them viciously hungry. When the PCs enter the room two of the fire snakes lie coiled near small flames burning in the walls. The third and fourth lie within the wall tunnels and come to investigate the sound of battle after 1d4 rounds.

FIRE SNAKES (4)

CR 1

N Small outsider (extraplanar, fire) (*Tome of Horrors Revised* 196)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Listen +8, Spot +8

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14

(+3 Dex, +3 natural, +1 size)

hp 11 (2d8+2)

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

Immune fire

Weakness vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +6 (1d4 plus paralysis)

Special Attacks paralysis

STATISTICS

Str 10 **Dex** 17 **Con** 12 **Int** 1 **Wis** 12 **Cha** 7

Base Atk +2; **Grp** -2

Feats Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +14, Climb +14, Hide +10, Listen +8, Spot +8

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Paralysis (Ex) A creature hit by a fire snake's bite must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d6 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills Fire snakes have a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks. A fire snake can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened. Fire snakes use either their Strength modifier or Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is higher.

7. Steam Vent (EL 5)

Clouds of swirling steam make it difficult to see the details of this chamber. The oppressive, sulfurous-smelling vapor quickly flows from two thick, bubbling pools of mud upon the floor, rising to the cracked ceiling, filling the cavern with a roiling, ghostly haze.

Volcanic vents heat the mud filling two roughly circular 5-foot pools upon the floor of this room—marked by circles on the map—causing them to bubble and spurt with the severe heat. Nearly a foot of viscous muck covers the area, making it difficult terrain for movement purposes. The humidity and steam rising from the mud also cause open flames to flicker and produce only half as much light as they would normally. Spells like *gust of wind* can blow the steam away, but it reforms in 5 rounds.

Creatures: Two fire snakes hide in the mud near the center of the room. They lie in wait for prey to come near before striking.

FIRE SNAKES

CR 1

hp 11 each (see page 69)

8. The Lava Shrine (EL 7)

A broad pool of sputtering lava laps against the walls of this vast cavern. Through the distorting waves of heat and smoke, several rocky islands of various sizes are visible, bobbing on the steaming surface. At the southern edge of the searing pool rises an intimidating metal construct: the coiled shape of a winding snake topped with a strong humanoid torso holding a spear. Pieces of the craggy roof frequently drop into the lava pool, splashing the liquefied rock.

A 30-foot-deep pool of lava dominates this chamber, increasing the temperature of the chamber to severe heat. Although the ceiling appears unstable, rocks only fall occasionally and don't create dangerous splashes. The real danger in the chamber is the lava and the seemingly simple jumps offered by the rocky islands floating upon its surface (GMs should familiarize themselves with the details of the Jump skill). While these islands prove quite solid, they are unfettered. Any creature in the lava can make a DC 22 Strength check to rock any of the islands, forcing any creatures upon them to make DC 15 Balance checks. Those who fail cannot move for 1 round, while those who fail by 5 or more are knocked prone.

Across the lava, the 9-foot-tall statue here once depicted the snake-headed deity of the cult that occupied the caves long ago. Over time, the lava pool grew and the harsh conditions of the area warped the details of the statue and destroyed most of the surrounding shrine. With the salamander's coming, their leader, Thratnias, further corrupted the statue by shaping lava into the crude snake-like base of coils now covering the figure's legs.

On the southern wall, behind the statue, lies a secret door built into the rock wall. A lever worked into the spines of the stone statue opens the door. The secret passage requires a DC 22 Search check to reveal, though a DC 18 Search check on the statue uncovers the lever.

Creatures: Thratnias, once a lesser commander of the salamanders in Jhavhul's army, has led her kindred to take up residence in the mountain's maw for centuries now. Theirs is a largely sedentary, petty lifestyle, but as none know a way back to the Elemental Plane of Fire nor care to risk themselves wandering the uncomfortably cold mountains and deserts outside, they linger here, waiting for Lesaar to find a way to return them home magically. They've been waiting for centuries now.

Thratnias spends most of her days here, distracting herself with her shield bearer Kitil. The pair make few demands of their underlings, but also hold few ambitions for escape. Thus they spend most of their time dozing in the lava, dreaming of their return to their elemental homeland or the return of their departed general.

KITIL

CR 3

Male flamebrother salamander

hp 29 (MM 218)

THRATNIAS

CR 6

Female average salamander

hp 56 (MM 218)

Melee +1 *shocking spear* +12/+6 (1d8+4 plus 1d6 fire plus 1d6 shock/x3) and
tail slap +9 (2d6+1 plus 1d6 fire)

TACTICS

Before Combat Both Thratnias and Kitil lie beneath the surface of the lava dozing. Any sound or disruption of the pool—such as a body leaping upon the rocky islands—causes them to rise together to investigate.

During Combat Thratnias relishes the opportunity for actual combat and attacks with her magical spear while Kitil moves to flank enemies or aids her attacks.

Morale Together, both salamanders fight to the death. Should one of the pair be killed, the other breaks off its direct attack, opting for a hit-and-run style of attack. If reduced to fewer than 10 hit points, the survivor hides within in the depths of the lava pool for an hour before reemerging to investigate.

Treasure: Those who make a DC 12 Search check on the southern bank of the chamber find a beaten bronze disk. Once part of a shield, this disk was gifted to Thratnias by emissaries of the Carrion King. It presents a brief invitation to hear an offer by the Carrion King at his stronghold, the House of the Beast, as well as a crude map. Anyone who makes a DC 16 Intelligence check can glean general directions to the House of the Beast from this plate, while the crude symbols and scratches are obvious to anyone speaking gnoll. Thratnias has no intention of allying with the gnoll leader and so discarded the scrap of metal here.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: If a player thinks of other solutions for overcoming this obstacle, such as using the pews in area 5 to bridge over the gaps after killing the salamanders; reward the PC with overcoming an additional CR 4 encounter.

9. Secret Cache (EL 6)

Dust and stale air billows from this chamber as if no one has trod within for ages. The far wall incorporates a number of small alcoves, each flanked by crude images of jackal-fanged

humanoids and snake-headed demons. Within each lies a pile of stained and tattered linens draped over neglected remains caked in volcanic dust.

The salamanders never discovered this secret room, which remains in nearly the same condition as the ancient cultist of the Mountain's Maw left it long centuries ago. This chamber once served as a burial place for sacrificial victims and treasures purified for offering to dark, forgotten powers of darkness. Through the centuries, though, the majority of the cult's crude riches have rotted away. Now each of the 8 alcoves holds only old and mildewed burial lines over piles of decay and bone fragments, though a few scattered treasures remain.

Creature: A belker was bound to this chamber long ago by the original inhabitants of the caverns. Having existed in a torpor within its smoke form for centuries, any intrusion wakes it. The belker has ancient orders to attack any being that enters the chamber who doesn't wear the serpent headdress of the ancient cult.

BELKER

hp 36 (MM 27)

TACTICS

Before Combat The belker draws near to the first character to enter the room, drifting slowly amid the dust and ash kicked up by the chamber's disturbance, readying to ambush intruders using its smoke claws ability.

During Combat As soon as its close enough, the belker engulfs an opponent and attacks using its smoke claws.

It focuses on attacking one opponent at a time.

Morale The belker fights to the death.

Treasure: A number of simple treasures are obvious scattered about the room and fallen from rotten hangers: two ornate masks made out of skulls and ram horns (worth 40 gp each), 4 rusty masterwork scimitars (that can be restored with a DC 10 Craft [weaponsmithing] check), a pair of wax covered stone candelabras studded with bloodstones (worth 60 gp each), and a +1 *spiked light wooden shield* with the image of a striking snake painted on its surface.

In addition, a DC 18 Search check of the alcoves reveals two black *beads of force*, a necklace of strung together pieces of jet (worth 240 gp), and a petrified monkey's hand that functions as a *hand of the mage*.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

While the PCs may choose how involved they wish to become with the salamanders of the Mountain's Maw, most of the threats to the

party end if Thratnias is killed and Lesaar takes control of the caves. Although doubtlessly an evil creature, Lesaar is indebted to the PCs and welcomes them in his lair—ordering Andgronakraks and any surviving salamanders to leave them alone (the fire snakes in areas 6 and 7 remain a threat through). With the caverns under his control, Lesaar uses *stone shape* to open the passage into the House of the Beast (if needs be) and allows the PCs to come and go as they please.

Should the GM wish to use the salamanders further, Lesaar might entreat the party to help him find a way to return to the Elemental Plane of Fire in exchange for some treasure he's kept hidden through the centuries. Alternatively, GMs might wish to keep the salamanders and their minions in mind, as they may have opportunity to return as useful allies or familiar foes by the end of this Adventure Path.

thratnias

CR 6





Justice Done, Betrayal, Repaid

I have never been troubled by the lure of gold. If a stray temptation of that sort were to wander in my direction, my memories would rise up like an angry mob and club it to death. Anyone who has watched a few-score treasure hunters purchase a senseless death will understand what I mean. Anyone whose life has been bartered for a handful of coins.

Even so, every now and again I cannot deny that money has its uses. The priest Vanir Shornish was afloat with it, and the fee he gave me to find a relic of one of his people's many gods was almost obscene in its generosity. I'd sent much of that fee on ahead by trusted carriers and paid for passage on a northbound ship, yet I could still feel the weight of coin in the purse stitched to my stout leather baldric, cunningly hidden behind the sheath that held a newly purchased knife.

Also hidden in that purse was an ancient map written on parchment fashioned from whale skin and evil magic. If the seaman who called me "mistress"

and "lady"—because money also buys fine clothes and misguided respect—knew I carried such a thing, they would throw me overboard in a heartbeat, preferably with an anchor chained to my neck. In their position, I would do the same.

A small, sun-browned man came toward me with a wide smile and a sailor's rolling gait. I was leaning against the ship's rail, watching twilight awaken the stars and taking in the salty spray like a cat soaks up sunlight. I'd spent most of the short journey topside, and not just for the joy I found in the sight and smell and feel of the sea. There were but two cabins below decks. One belonged to the captain, the other to the ship's whore. Since it was not deemed proper for a lady to share sleeping quarters with the sailors, I was bunking with the whey-faced chit who serviced them.

"A fine evening to you, Mistress," he said cheerfully, "and a fine one it is indeed! If the winds hold, we'll be making port in Chiron harbor before midnight."

That did not seem right. My nature is bound to water; most druids would get turned around in a forest glade before I'd lose my bearings at sea.

I pushed away from the rail and turned to face the sailor. "So soon? We were not expected to land until daybreak."

"Aye, but the new bosun? The captain's nephew? He read the quadrant and corrected our course."

A familiar prickling sensation began to gather at the nape of my neck, like tiny ice-cold spiders skittering down the back of my tunic and up under my head-wrap. I'd met the bosun: a prideful young man who knew just enough to be dangerous. I'd seen his sort among the would-be scholars who flocked to study with my venture-captain, their heads so full of themselves there was no room for their vaunted book-knowledge to mill around and form up into anything resembling good sense.

"He changed our course? By what measure?"

The sailor thrust one finger under his headscarf and scratched as he thought that over. He examined the flea struggling free of the dirt beneath a grimy fingernail, then flicked it into the sea. "Well now, you've heard tell of the Flood Star."

What person in Osirion had not? A pale pink star, it appeared in the sky shortly before the spring rains. The night it rose was celebrated by festivals and rituals to the gods. This year, those rites would be particularly fervent. Last year the river's annual rising had fallen far short of the Floodmark obelisk. The drought was not yet severe, but another dry year could be ruinous. The Flood Star was considered a good omen, and its appearance was anxiously awaited, even though this year—

Suddenly I understood the source of my unease. I seized the sailor's wrist before he could resume his flea hunting.

"Did you see the bosun take this measure? Where did he get his bearings?"

He frowned, puzzled by the urgency in my voice. "The pink star, right over—"

His hand froze in the act of pointing and his face fell slack with astonishment and fear.

The sky was nearly black now, and the fainter stars in the springtime Crocodile constellation had winked into view. The sole pink star in sight was the third from the end of the crocodile's snout. Lower, where the Flood Star should have been, was nothing but darkness.

"Drought and damnation," he swore softly. "The captain won't thank me for carrying this news. He sets great store by that nephew of his."

"He's a great deal fonder of his ship. Is he in his cabin?"

The sailor cleared his throat. "In yours, more likely."

I hurried to the ladder leading below decks and down into the hold. The door to the whore's cabin was locked. I pounded on it until the bolt shot open and the captain stood in the doorway, buttoning his trousers and glaring.

He looked surprised to see me, as if I hadn't paid good coin for the use of that room.

"We're off course," I said bluntly. "The bosun took quadrant readings from the wrong star."

The captain hissed a sigh through clenched teeth.

"With respect, Mistress Channa, Bosun Mozar knows his trade. What makes you think—"

"Not think. *Know*."

There was no time for argument or explanation. My gaze skimmed along a row of barrels, passing over the beer and drinking water and settling on an open barrel filled with salt water and the small, fleet fish used for swordfish bait. I took a tin drinking cup off its hook and dipped up some of the water, then poured a little through the fingers of my free hand as I murmured a three-word spell. I gulped down about half of the remaining the water and held the cup out to the captain.

His eyes widened as he understood what I had done. Just to be sure, he sniffed at the cup and then took a tentative sip.

"Sweet as a mountain stream," he marveled, cradling the cup of fresh water in both hands. He looked up at me with a mixture of awe and avarice. "If you'd told me you were a water witch, I would have offered you free passage."

I managed, just barely, to suppress a snort of derision. If I'd told him I was a "water witch," I might have ended up with a chain to match the whore's.

"We're off course," I repeated. "We're heading toward the Mermaid Rocks."

That finally stirred him to action. He went roaring up the ladder, demanding to be brought the star charts, the sextant, and his nephew's ass in a sling.

The first jolt of impact sent me staggering. The ship screamed as her wooden keel scraped against hidden rock.

Running footsteps thundered across the deck, followed by the creak of a swinging boom and flap of canvas gone suddenly slack. Then came the thunderous snap as the sails caught the wind. I braced myself in the open doorway as the ship turned hard astern.

Several frantic moments passed before we were safely away from the Mermaid Rocks, one of the worst ship graveyards off the coasts of Osirion and Katapesh. When I came topside, the sailors were grim-faced and pale, muttering among themselves about bad omens. To my surprise, they seemed more concerned about the "disappearance" of the Flood Star than the near-shipwreck.

To my mind, this was a mystery easily solved. Every fifty years or so, the world scholars call Aucturn comes into alignment with our Golarion. Very rarely—perhaps six or seven times in recorded history—the paths of the worlds and stars is such that Aucturn obscures the rising Flood Star. Gham Banni, my venture-captain, told me

these things. Since he is considered a learned man and, more importantly, since he has never lied to me, I'm inclined to believe this tale.

I will never be a scholar, but this I know: talk of omens and portents is ridiculous. Star charts are fine for navigation, but not prognostication. Perhaps someday people will accept that the time of prophecy has passed and take upon themselves the responsibility of their own decisions.

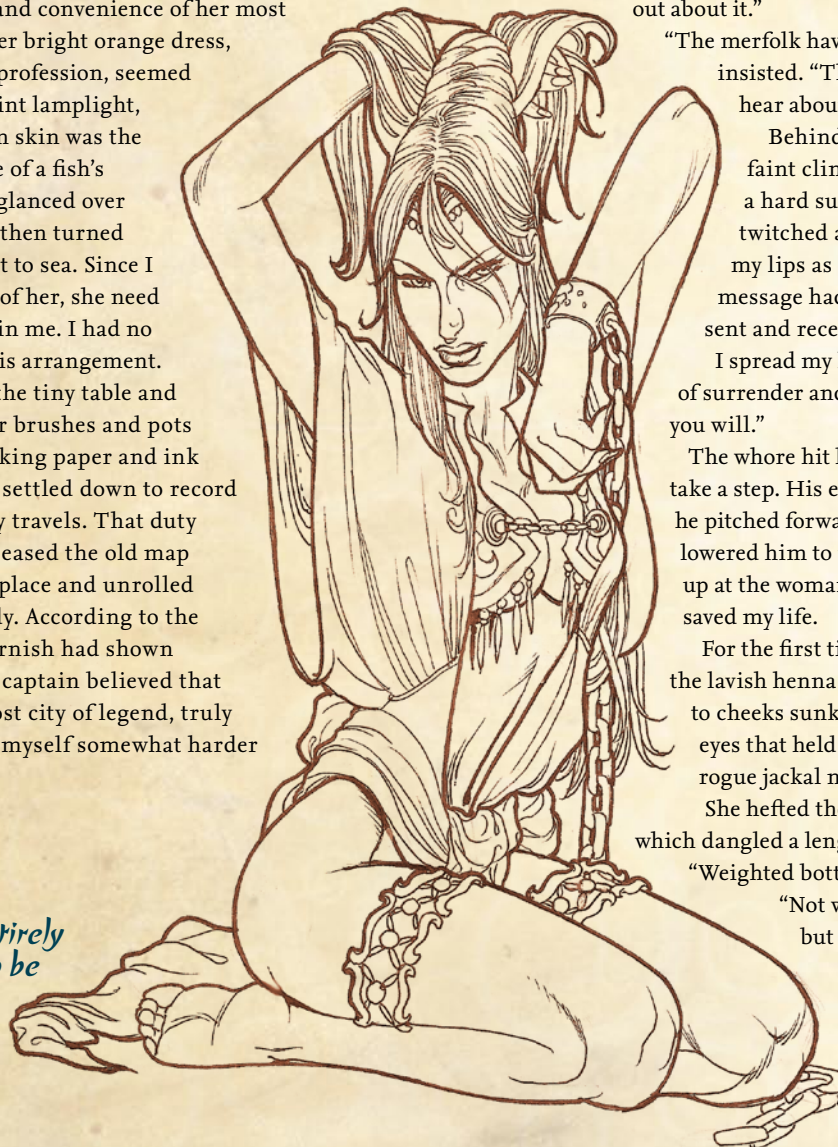
Right. And that will come to pass the day after mermaids become creatures of light and virtue.

Disgusted with the sailors' superstition and my own momentary lapse into optimism, I retreated to the women's cabin.

The whore was standing by the porthole, sipping from a pottery wine bottle and staring out into the darkness. No doubt she was enjoying a rare moment of freedom; a pile of fine-linked chain lay on the bed, removed for the comfort and convenience of her most recent visitor. Her bright orange dress, the mark of her profession, seemed to glow in the faint lamplight, and her northern skin was the approximate hue of a fish's underbelly. She glanced over as I entered and then turned her gaze back out to sea. Since I wanted nothing of her, she need take no interest in me. I had no quarrels with this arrangement.

I sat down at the tiny table and pushed aside her brushes and pots of face paint. Taking paper and ink from my pack, I settled down to record the details of my travels. That duty accomplished, I eased the old map from its hiding place and unrolled it for closer study. According to the letter Vanir Shornish had shown me, my venture-captain believed that Xanchara, the lost city of legend, truly existed. I found myself somewhat harder to convince.

"Rees is entirely too smart to be trusted."



A sharp intake of breath drew my gaze to the door. I hadn't heard it open over the sounds of the quickening sea.

The flea-ridden sailor who'd greeted me earlier stood staring at me, his bulging eyes giving him the look of a landed carp. He pointed at the map with a shaking finger.

"That... that's not what I think it is. It couldn't be."

"If you say so."

He dug both hands into his hair and looked as if he might shriek in panic. "That parchment's mermaid-crafted, mermaid-cursed. And here we are, barely clear of the Mermaid Rocks. It's an evil thing. It's an evil omen!"

"It's an old map."

He stormed into the room and wagged an accusing finger at me. "It's a promissory note to the merfolk, and what if they come collecting?"

I rose to face him, moving so that I stood between him and the door. "Unless someone in this room drops them a message in a weighted bottle, I don't see how they'd find out about it."

"The merfolk have their ways," he insisted. "The captain needs to hear about this."

Behind him, I heard the faint clink of chain against a hard surface. A smile twitched at one corner of my lips as I realized another message had been inadvertently sent and received.

I spread my hands in a gesture of surrender and stepped aside. "As you will."

The whore hit him before he could take a step. His eyes rolled back and he pitched forward into my arms. I lowered him to the floor and looked up at the woman who'd probably just saved my life.

For the first time I looked past the lavish henna and kohl face paint to cheeks sunken with hunger and eyes that held the sort of cunning a rogue jackal might recognize.

She hefted the wine jug, from which dangled a length of her chain.

"Weighted bottle. Good thinking."

"Not what I had in mind, but I've no complaints."

"Is he dead?"

She sounded only slightly curious. I tipped the sailor's head and thrust

exploring fingers into his blood-sodden hair. After a few moments of prodding, I assured her he'd live and murmured the spell that could put him into a healing sleep—a state that, conveniently enough, would last until the ship made port.

When his breathing evened out and deepened, I looked up and met the northern woman's gaze. It held, in nearly equal measure, a plea for help and the threat of blackmail.

"Get me off this ship," she said softly.

I sat back on my heels and considered my options. After a moment I shrugged and said, "Take off your dress."

She peeled it off without hesitation. It took both of us to undress the sailor and wrestle his limp body into the orange gown. After we rolled him onto the bed, she quickly dressed in his clothing. The two of them were as thin as twin vipers and about the same height, but her pale skin would undo her at a glance.

Once again, the northerner's thinking was running apace with mine. She sat down at the table and reached for a jar of henna. Into this she tipped some of the dull-yellow lamp oil and a drop of ink from my bottle, mixing in more ink drop by drop until the result was a shade of brown somewhere between the sailor's skin and mine.

"His name was Rees," she said as she smoothed the ointment over her face. "You might as well call me that."

I watched her transformation with narrowed eyes. After a moment, I glanced at her discarded chain. It ended in a bracelet that locked with a key. With the toe of one boot I eased the bracelet free of the last link. *Blue Narwhal*—the name of the ship—was engraved inside. When "Rees" was preoccupied with tucking her hair into the sailor's headscarf, I picked the bracelet up and dropped it into my pack.

"Chiron is a small island," I observed. "They'll find you."

The mirror reflected a bitter smile. "Not if I find 'them' first."

"Oh?"

Rees spun around to face me. "My mistress sold me to this ship when she caught me abed with her favorite servant. I intend to strangle her with the chains she forced me to wear."

"And after?"

"I don't care what comes after! If you'd been a slave, you would understand," she said in a low, passionate voice. "You would do the same."

"Do you hear me arguing with you?"

Rees blinked. "Well. All right, then."

"But don't use the chain, not unless you want her to hear you coming from two streets away." I unwound the bright silk scarf that covered my short black hair and long elven ears.

Her eyes bulged. "Gods above! You're—"

"Half-elven," I supplied wearily, well accustomed to her reaction.

Half-elves were rare in Osirion, and I fit no one's idea of a half-elf. My mother had been a woman of Geb, and I had the height and the strong, proud features common to that nation's darkest people. My elven father's blood had lightened my skin to a warm brown common to humans from the northern Mwangi Expanse. That's what most people thought I was.

A smile broke over Rees's darkened face and she reached out as if she would touch one of my ears. The look on my face changed her mind, but not her mood.

"Brilliant," she said happily. "Every man on this ship will react to you just as I did, and none will give me a second look."

She was quick. It was almost a pleasure to deal with someone who was able to keep abreast of my thinking.

"And surely someone saw first you and then this sailor enter the cabin. They'll assume the three of us spent the night abed, and will not be surprised to see 'Rees' leave the ship with you. He likes to drink, after," she added by way of explanation. "A night with the two of us would send him running to the nearest tavern, thirsty enough to drain a wine barrel to the lees."

Maybe, I noted silently, where Rees was concerned I might do well to think a bit faster than usual.

My newfound appreciation for money died shortly after Rees and I parted ways in Chiron's harbor.

To any person of sense, much less a druid, excess is more likely to inspire disgust than envy. A thousand gluttons gorging themselves at tables heaped with food, stuffing themselves with both hands and demanding more and still more—that's what I saw when I beheld Chiron.

The deepwater harbor was well enough, cleaner and more efficiently run than most ports, and the market beyond the docks lavish but not too unfamiliar. But beyond that lay walled estates and marbled palaces, the homes of wealthy merchants and sea captains, each one bigger and more obscenely extravagant than the last.

I had no trouble finding the home of Bezaloo Hinder, the merchant who'd sold Vanir Shornish his "charming little pet"—a miniature blue elephant that was, in reality, a particularly nasty imp-like creature. I wanted to know why this Bezaloo considered the relic Vanir sought to be worth the risk of consorting with imps.

Wine merchants, it would seem, did very well for themselves. His home was massive, built of gray stone on the edge of a steep, rocky cliff. For all its size, it was strangely devoid of servants. I had no problem entering the front gate with the merchants who brought supplies to the outlying buildings, no trouble lingering behind and finding an unlocked door in the inner wall. Climbing

the rough stone wall to the second story and slipping through an open window was simplicity itself.

I was halfway down the unlit hall when I came across the first body. A chambermaid, not much more than a girl, sat on the floor, her thin legs splayed and her body slumped against an oversized vase. Her braided hair and white clothes were neat and orderly, but her head canted at an impossible angle. She'd died quickly, without a chance to fight back.

I crouched beside her and saw the thin trickles of dried blood running down one side of her neck. There were four small puncture marks just under her jaw, tiny crescents that dug deep. Something with strong, small hands had hit her hard enough to snap her neck. Judging from the shape and placement of those crescents, the creature had faced her when it attacked, and killed with a single backhanded blow. And judging by the size and span of those hands, the creature was small—too small to reach the girl's face unless it had wings.

Another servant lay sprawled on the nearby stairs, but my gaze went to the bald, richly dressed man on the marble floor below.

The creature had taken its time with Bezaloo Hinder. His garments had been shredded by small claws, his flesh torn by small, sharp teeth. Small gobbets of flesh littered the floor, as if they had been torn free and then spit out, playfully, like urchins spitting melon seeds for distance.

The imp, it would appear, had beat me here.

I rose slowly to my feet, trying to make sense of this new development. Perhaps Bezaloo had sold the miniature "elephant" to Vanir Shornish in good faith, not understanding its true nature. More likely, some other party, someone who'd observed Vanir drinking lavishly of the wine merchant's wares, had sent the imp after him.

Yes, that was probably what had happened. Vanir had mentioned that he had noticed no great sum missing from his purse, nothing that would explain the purchase of such an exotic pet.

What was certain is that *someone* else was involved. Imps and demons did not wander the Material Plane at will; they had to be summoned.

I left the house by a side door and started for the gate closest to the harbor. I'd have to find passage on another ship. By now the captain and crew of the *Blue Narwhal* would have learned of my part in freeing their ship's whore. They were unlikely to welcome me back. I would not trust them if they did.

The tolling of bells rolled up from the harbor, the signal of a coming hue and cry. A crime had been committed, and everyone was required by law to listen to the coming proclamation and spread it until the criminal was captured. On an island, this was no doubt highly effective. I paused to listen, though I had a pretty good idea what was to come.

A low, distant murmur spread through the streets like a sandstorm, swiftly gaining in power as the message worked its way toward Bezaloo's cliff-side mansion. Clearly, people responded with alacrity when the victim was a wealthy woman.

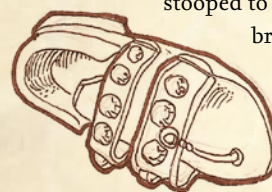
"Channa Ti," howled a voice from the street beyond Bezaloo's outer walls. "Half-elf, looks to be a woman of the Mwangi Expanse. Murdered the Lady Pizante Ross. Detain or slay."

I nodded as I retraced my steps into the mansion. There was a risk that "Rees," with her darkened skin and bright turban—my turban in truth, or another like mine—would let herself be seen near the home of her former mistress. And most likely she'd left my scarf behind. No one would raise an alarm for an escaped slave, so she might even find a way to get away altogether.

It wasn't a bad plan, I admitted as I stooped to leave her slave bracelet beside Bezaloo's body. No one would raise an alarm for



"It seems I'm not the first to come looking for the wine merchant."



an escaped slave—unless they had reason to suspect that slave of a vicious murder.

Justice assured, treachery repaid.

And now, to find my escape.

There was water under the house, a grotto. I could feel the shape of it, and beyond, the long narrow passage that led to the open sea. I followed my senses down a series of halls, then down a winding stair into a vast stone-walled wine cellar. In a far corner I found a barrel, wide and low. A thick layer of dust covered it. I brushed some of it away. Putting my ear to the cover, I listened for the distant murmur of water.

What I heard was a faint, eerie chanting, a sound that chilled my blood and made my heart forget its business for a beat or two.

I am a druid, what Vanir Shornish poetically termed a “priestess of nature,” but I have no patience with those who toss about talk of “good” and “evil” as a way of sorting things that suit their purposes from things that do not. It seems to me that the mountain cat is no worse than the rodent it hunts. A paladin’s noble steed must eat, but so must a shark. People, in my experience, are much the same. They will survive if they can, however they can. “Good” and “evil” are human creations, words meant to excuse and explain and justify. But when all’s said and done, these words mean nothing more than “us” and “them.”

I have always believed this to be true. But there was something in that distant chant—a dark energy, a cold and deadly weight—that made certainty shift beneath my feet.

My natural curiosity—not to mention my Pathfinder mission—quickly came to the fore. I pushed aside my fear along with the barrel lid. Inside I found a long shaft, and a rope ladder leading down into the darkness.

The chanting grew louder as I descended, and the darkness gave way to a faint glow. I crept through jagged rock formations, following the light, the sound, and my own sense of water.

Candles ringed a small deep pool and chased weird shadows across the faces of the men gathered there.

I knew at once what they were. The Pathfinders had long heard rumors of the Night Heralds, a cult devoted to the Dominions of the Black. They had no god, not as most people understood deities. Their devotion was given to the Dark Tapestry—the deep cold spaces between worlds. No one I knew had ever seen these Night Heralds, but the symbolism of their ceremonial robes could not be clearer. The hems sweeping the rocky floor were the pink and gold shades of sunset clouds, and the robes’ colors darkened around knee level to a sunset shade of sapphire, and finally to a dark, faintly

luminous purple. The deep hood drawn over each head was midnight black.

I know I made no sound, but one of the Night Heralds looked up, sharply, his shadowed face turned in my direction.

The change came over me suddenly, more by instinct than choice. I dropped to all fours as thick, scaly hide swept over my body. Fast as a cat I darted forward, moving on four short, powerful legs.

Chanting gave way to shouts of surprise. The priests nearest me fell back, suddenly more human than fiend. I slipped into the water, diving deep and fast.

The sea passage was long; fear quickened my heart and shortened my breath. But no creature on this world, except perhaps the hardest of scarab beetles, had a stronger survival instinct than the crocodile. Somehow I made it through; somehow I burst free of the water and gulped in sweet, salty air.

Swimming to the mainland seemed easy in comparison. I followed the sound of voices raised in the singsong rhythm of a short-haul fishing shanty. A half-dozen peasants stood knee-deep in the surf, working in pairs to toss out small nets and haul them back.

I reared up in the water, lashing my tail and letting out a long, guttural roar.

The fishermen dropped their nets and fled, leaving their tackle and clothing behind. I gave chase to make sure there would be no witnesses to my transformation.

The crocodile mind is strong and slow to retreat. Several moments passed before I realized that I was running on two legs rather than four. I retraced my steps to where the fishermen had left their gear and changed into the rough tunic and trousers one of the men had left behind. After burying my “Lady Channa” clothes in the sand, I left a coin as payment and set off for the nearby town.

Until I cleansed my name of the stain Rees had put upon it, I would have to stay clear of the sea. Chiron was a busy port; many northbound ships stopped there. The risk that a captain of any ship I might approach might have heard the accusation against me was larger than I wanted to take.

So it was dry land for me. Familiar land, certainly. Just twenty days ago, I’d been hired to guide a band of adventurers through the gnoll-infested nightmare known as the Brazen Peaks. Every man and woman in that band and under my protection was dead, and I was... more than a little annoyed.

A wry smile twisted my lips. My old friend Ratsheek and her clan were out there waiting, and suddenly that was fine with me.

Justice would be done, betrayal repaid.

I lifted my face to the midday heat. Suddenly it seemed a very fine day for a walk.



Bestiary: Creatures of Katapesh

The lore of the desert takes deadly shape in this month's entry into the *Pathfinder* Bestiary. From centuries-old tales of the Middle East come Golarion's take on such mythical beasts as the buraq, endimmu, and pairaka, three storied beings of fundamental benevolence and pure evil. Brought to us this month by Rob McCreary, Tim Hitchcock, and Adam Daigle respectively, each author put in serious time researching the fascinating tales of Ancient Arabia to present new interpretations of these incredible creatures. Although not exact replicas of their real-world counterparts, these versions try to remain faithful to their mythical roots even as they make a place for themselves in the sands and savannahs of wild Katapesh. Anyone interested in learning more about these creatures can find varied descriptions and stories including such creatures online or at the local library.

In addition to beasts of actual myth, the legends of Sarenrae's faith also take form this month in Sean K Reynolds' luminous vision of Sunlord Thalachos, divine herald to the goddess of the Sun. And featured in this month's adventure,

"House of the Beast," the unchosen burst forth from the brain of Tim Hitchcock, brutal gnoll behemoths that strike fear into even the hearts of their own merciless brethren.

With such legendary creatures to test your characters' mettle, it should be easy to separate the pretenders from the true heroes.

WANDERING MONSTERS

The above-ground portion of the House of the Beast consists of a relatively large, walled complex, now mostly crumbled to ruins. The gnolls of the Carrion Tribes inhabit the largest ruined building here, along with several subterranean levels below, but the outlying buildings and temple grounds are mostly left to the elements. The gnolls patrol these grounds, but not relentlessly so. Escaped slaves, rebellious troglodytes, and all sorts of monsters are common sights and encounters in the temple's ruined grounds.

Escaped Slaves: These slaves, as with those in area A of the House of the Beast, have recently escaped from

The first, she was tall, with the bearing of a noblewoman, skin the color of sea foam, and lips that parted the vanilla-scented smoke with long, yearning breaths. The second was like an untamed beast, with quills for hair and long nails that promised scars well worth remembering. The third and last, though, she was their queen, a far-traveled goddess of the East, dripping with jewels and gold that cascaded across her perfect curves as if they'd been melted by the same heat rising in Avadieb's breast. Their words were soft coos, promising him all he had never dared speak in words he would never remember, and where they touched his bare flesh lingered a fire hotter than any lust he had ever felt. And as he leaned back upon the piles of silk and feathers, he felt his blade lifted away and put aside, as he would never need it again.

—Shazathared, *The Tale of Avadieb's Last Smile*

their gnoll oppressors. Timid and frightened, they have found a small hiding spot in the ruins, and when the PCs approach they might step out and ask for help. If you want, you can roll again on the encounter table to have a monster that was lying in wait attack just as the escaped slaves emerge from hiding.

Centipedes: This encounter with monstrous centipedes is with 1d8 Medium centipedes, 1d4 Large ones, or a single Huge one (equal chances of each).

Carrion Patrol: A single Carrion Guard mounted on a hyaenodon encounters the PCs.

Spiders: This encounter with monstrous spiders is with 1d6+6 Medium scorpions, 1d8 Large ones, or a single Huge one (equal chances of each).

Unchosen Patrol: A group of 1d4 gnolls led by a Carrion Initiate are out training with an unchosen. The Carrion Initiate is armed with an injection spear filled with a *potion of calm emotions* in case the unchosen gets out of control.

Scorpions: This encounter with monstrous scorpions is with 1d8 Medium scorpions, 1d4 Large ones, or a single Huge one (equal chances of each).

Pale Mountain Encounter: Roll on the Mountains column on the Katapesh highlands encounter table on page 57 instead.

THE GNOLL LEGACY

As gnolls play such a vital role in *Legacy of Fire*, GMs should make themselves familiar with the intricacies of gnoll society. At a glance, the term “gnoll” refers not just to a single creature, but a race of hyena-like humanoids with at least three different breeds (and likely more). While the most common of these beastmen are referred to simply as gnolls, two more powerful strains exist, the cunning and martial flind and the physically augmented unchosen.

Leaner, stronger, and smarter than common gnolls, flinds often serve as leaders and elite warriors of gnoll tribes. They tend to favor distinctive weapons called

Random Encounters in the House of the Beast

1d20	Encounter	Avg. EL	Source
01–05	1d2 eagles	1	MM 272
06–08	1d4 escaped slaves	2	See page 12
09–18	Centipedes	2	MM 238
19–21	1d6 pugwampis	2	Pathfinder #19
22–26	1 dire bat	2	MM 62
27–32	1d6 troglodytes	3	MM 246
33–42	1d6 gnolls	3	MM 136
43–47	1d6 Medium vipers	3	MM 270
48–52	1d4 monitor lizards	4	MM 275
53–55	1 gibbering moulder	5	MM 126
56–60	Carrion patrol	5	See text
61–65	2d6 baboons	5	MM 268
66–72	Spiders	5	MM 288
73–77	1d4 gargoyles	6	MM 113
78–82	1d4 hyaenodons	6	ToH II 184*
83–85	Unchosen patrol	6	See text
86–90	2d6 hyenas	6	MM 274
91–95	Scorpions	7	MM 287
96–100	Pale Mountain Encounter	Variable	See page 55

* *Tome of Horrors II*

flindbars, a nunchaku-like weapon few common gnolls have the discipline to master. Unchosen, on the other hand, are a purposeful throwback to a more bestial gnoll breed, relying on surgical and magical alteration. Not a true gnoll breed, and thus found only in the rare tribes that know of these obscure rites, unchosen epitomize the race's savage and destructive nature.

GMs seeking further information on gnolls should check out “Tribes of the Carrion King” in *Pathfinder #19*, *Pathfinder Chronicles's Classic Monsters Revisited*, and the flind entry in *Tome of Horrors Revised*.



BURAQ

Before you stands a noble mount with a proud and regal bearing. It has the strong body of a mule, pure white in color, with shining black hooves and the glittering, iridescent wings and tail of a peacock. With a dignified bow of its richly adorned human head, it spreads its powerful wings wide in a fan of shimmering colors.

BURAQ

CR 5

Always NG Large magical beast

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +10, Spot +8

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 15
(+2 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 51 (6d10+18)

Fort +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities static field; **Immune** electricity

OFFENSE

Spd 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (average)

Melee 2 hooves +9 (1d4+4)

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

Special Attacks drink the wind, shimmering wings

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)

At will—*call lightning* (DC 15), *create food and water*, *bless water*, *magic circle against evil*, *purify food and drink*, *shocking grasp*

TACTICS

During Combat A buraq first uses its shimmering wings to avoid physical combat if possible, then takes to the air where it can *call lightning* upon its land-bound foes and use *drink the wind* against airborne opponents. If forced into melee, a buraq attacks with its hooves, often charging them with *shocking grasp*.

Morale A buraq fights to the death if fighting for a worthy cause or defending an ally. Otherwise, it flees using *fold the earth* if reduced to below 15 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 15, **Con** 17, **Int** 12, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +14

Feats Endurance, Flyby Attack, Lightning Reflexes[®], Run

Skills Balance +9, Diplomacy +8, Heal +8, Knowledge (any one) +7, Listen +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8

Languages Common, Celestial, Draconic

SQ fold the earth

ECOLOGY

Environment warm mountains

Organization solitary, pair, or wisdom (2–4)

Treasure standard

Advancement 7–10 HD (Large), 11–18 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment +4 (cohort)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Drink the Wind (Su) Once per day, a buraq may fill its lungs with air and release an explosive gust of wind in a line 150 feet long. Any creature caught by the wind takes 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage and is affected by windstorm-strength winds, possibly suffering other effects (see page 95 of the DMG). A DC 18 Reflex save negates both the damage and the effects of the wind. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Shimmering Wings (Su) A buraq can flutter its iridescent wings to create a pattern of subtle, shifting colors around its body. Any creature within 60 feet who can see the buraq must make a DC 17 Will save or be fascinated for 2d4 rounds. A creature that makes the save is immune to the shimmering wings of that buraq for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting pattern and affects up to 24 HD of creatures. The save DC is Charisma-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

Static Field (Su) Three times per day, a buraq can surround itself (and its rider, if any) with a coruscating aura of static electricity that deflects Medium or smaller ranged attacks. This ability functions like an *entropic shield* and lasts for 1 minute.

Fold the Earth (Su) Once per day, a buraq can transport itself over great distances. This functions as a *teleport* spell (caster level 6th) with the usual chances of success or mishap. However, a buraq can teleport itself to any location that it can see (usually as far as the horizon, or approximately 200 miles) as if that location were “studied carefully.”

Skills Buraqs have a +2 racial bonus on Listen checks, and a +4 racial bonus on Balance checks.

Buraqs are a race of good and noble creatures that sometimes serve as steeds to devout servants of the celestial realms. Related to lammasus, buraqs are also known for their great wisdom. Those seeking divine insight often climb high mountains to petition buraqs to impart their great knowledge, while pious warriors in search of a companion as pure in heart as themselves might endeavor to claim a buraq as a mount.

A buraq has an equine body with a pure white coat, but instead of a horse's head and neck it has a human head with bronzed skin and thick black hair. Male buraqs have a man's face and favor full beards, while female buraqs have a woman's face and often wear silken veils. Buraqs of both sexes have the brightly colored tail and wings of a peacock, with a 20-foot wingspan. A typical adult buraq is the size of a mule or light horse, about 5 feet high at the shoulder and 8 feet long, and weighs between 1,000 and 1,200 pounds. Females are slightly smaller and slimmer than males. The average lifespan of a buraq is about 200 years, although some particularly wise specimens have lived over 500 years.

Ecology

Buraqs are creatures of good, with a strong respect for dignity and life. They are dedicated to helping others, although they embrace freedom over authority. They keep their word, but give it carefully, and can become resentful of those who try to compel them. Buraqs have a kindly disposition, and are welcoming to those who approach them with honor and respect. They are willing to share their knowledge, and though they do not ask for compensation for their assistance, they gladly accept that which is freely given.

Buraqs live high in the mountains, preferring warm desert climes, and make their homes on sheer cliff ledges or in secluded alpine meadows. They enjoy the freedom of the skies, and can be found soaring high in the clouds, reveling in the power and majesty of strong winds and thunderstorms. Buraqs prefer human food, but can subsist on horse fodder, if necessary. In times of hardship, they rely on their *create food and water* ability.

Habitat & Society

Buraqs are solitary creatures, usually living alone in high mountain retreats. Buraqs mate for life, but a mated pair normally lives separately, only visiting each other once every year or two. The exception to this is when a couple has a child. Both parents raise the child together until it is old enough to care for itself at about 5 years of age. At that time, the entire family goes its separate ways. Occasionally, up to four buraqs will join together to form a "wisdom," a conclave to share knowledge, discuss matters of import, or respond to a threat or great evil, but these

The Buraq in Legend

The buraq (Arabic for "lightning") is a creature from Islamic tradition. It features in the story of the Isra and Mi'raj (also called the Night Journey), mentioned briefly in the Qu'ran, and in more detail in the supplemental hadiths. The first part of the journey, the Isra, begins in Mecca, where the archangel Gabriel appears to Muhammad.

"...Then he [Gabriel] brought the Buraq, handsome-faced and bridled, a tall, white beast, bigger than the donkey but smaller than the mule. He could place his hooves at the farthest boundary of his gaze. He had long ears. Whenever he faced a mountain his hind legs would extend, and whenever he went downhill his front legs would extend. He had two wings on his thighs which lent strength to his legs."

—Muhammad al-Alawi al-Maliki

In some traditions, the buraq had the head of a woman and the tail of a peacock. The buraq carries the Prophet to the "farthest mosque," believed by some to be the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where Muhammad tethers Buraq to the Western Wall (also called the al-Buraq Wall and the Wailing Wall). In the second part of the journey, the Mi'raj, the buraq takes the prophet on a tour of heaven, where Muhammad speaks with earlier prophets and Allah, after which the buraq returns him to Mecca.

are temporary gatherings at best, and dissolve when the business is finished.

Some buraqs serve the celestial powers of good as mounts and allies, making regular journeys between the Material Plane and the Outer Sphere. These buraqs have coats of pure silver and golden hair, and often wear modest but colorful veils, bits of jewelry, or other ornaments. They gain the celestial template and the ability to *plane shift* once per day as a spell-like ability, and are believed to be so devout and pure that they have achieved immortality.

Buraqs as Mounts

Although they can carry a rider, buraqs cannot be trained as mounts. They are intelligent beings who choose for themselves whether to accept a rider. This is usually a particularly devout and pure person of good alignment who the buraq feels is worthy of its companionship and protection. Often a petitioner must prove himself on some holy quest before the buraq consents to serve as a steed. A buraq is considered a special cohort, not a normal mount.



EDIMMU

A flickering ghostly form soaring upon a front of roiling storm clouds, its skeletal torso lies cloaked in tattered wrappings. Powerful winds seem to lash about the spectre, and malevolent embers flare within its eye sockets as its claw-like fingerbones reach forth.

EDIMMU

CE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 12
(+2 deflection, +3 Dex)

hp 32 (5d12)

Fort +1, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Spd fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee frigid touch +5 (1d6 cold)

Special Attacks frigid touch, life-implosion, moan, storm mastery

Spell-like Abilities (CL 6th)

CR 3

At will—fog cloud, silent image (DC 13), unseen servant, whispering wind

TACTICS

During Combat As soon as it detects a living creature, an edimmu uses its moan special ability to sow discord before attacking with its frigid touch. If foes prove they are able to harm the edimmu, it lies out of reach and makes use of its storm mastery ability.

Morale Edimmu are fearless and fight until destroyed or dismissed (see weaknesses).

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Hide +11, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +9, Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Auran, Qadiran

SQ incorporeal, rejuvenation

ECOLOGY

Environment any desert

Organization solitary or clan (2–12)

Treasure standard

Alignment always chaotic evil

Advancement 6–12 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Frigid Touch (Su) An edimmu's frigid touch deals 1d6 points of cold damage.

Life Implosion (Su) Once an edimmu reaches 0 hit points it collapses upon itself, imploding with a final shriek that rips the life force from nearby creatures. Any living being within 20 feet of the edimmu at the time of its destruction must succeed a DC 14 Fortitude save or take 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The save is Charisma-based.

Moan (Su) An edimmu's sorrowful moans force every living creature within 30 feet to make a DC 14 Will save to avoid becoming shaken. This is a sonic mind-affecting fear effect. Whether or not the save is successful, an affected creature is immune to the same edimmu's moan for 24 hours. The save is Charisma-based.

Rejuvenation (Su) Upon an edimmu's destruction, the magics that bind it to the mortal world linger on. Thus, 1d4+1 days after an edimmu's destruction, the creature reforms with full hit points. The only way to destroy an edimmu is with an *atonement* spell. The *atonement* absolves the creature of its sins and sorrows, allowing it to finally return to its native plane.

Storm Mastery (Su) Once per day, an edimmu can spend a full-round action to control the winds within 50 feet of it. It may change the speed and strength of the wind within this area, raising wind force to as strong as severe (see page 95 of the DMG for details on wind effects). It may control such winds for up to 1 minute, but can perform no other action while doing so. At the end of this minute, or when the edimmu takes

another action, the force of the winds reduces by one level of strength per round until returning to normal.

Weaknesses If *dismissal* is cast upon an edimmu, it is immediately destroyed without its life implosion ability taking effect.

Edimmus rise from the corpses of slain genies unable to return to their elemental homelands. Whether through powerful magics or as part of bargains made with mortal spellcasters, genies occasionally find themselves tied to the Material Plane for a specific term or until they complete a set task. As the conditions of some such magics remain binding even in death, genies that perish before the terms of their service are fulfilled sometimes manifest as creatures of uncontrolled fury. Even in their undead state, these genies still possess a measure of their mastery over the elements, using their powers to seek revenge upon those who led them to be trapped to their horrifying forms.

Edimmus are ghostly, with ancient-looking, hunched skeletal frames that make them appear shorter than their average 6-foot heights.

Ecology

The origins of the edimmu trace back to ancient times, when evil genies sought to entice mortals into worshiping them as gods. Fearful of such powerful beings with control of fate itself, human wizards developed ways to gain mastery over genies and force them to serve mortal whims. Some of the most hateful genies were punished for their cruelty, magically bound to the mortal world for all time, eternally denied the comforts and wonders of their native planes. When through murder or misfortune these genies perished, the early genie binders realized the potential danger within their magics as the angry souls of trapped genies rose from their corpses. Ever since, most who practice the magic of genie binding (see *Pathfinder* #21) have actively sought to avoid trapping the souls of their servants on the Material Plane, but still the enraged spirits of genies arise from ancient ruins or as the results of miscast magic.

Habitat & Society

Edimmus are rare, even in those areas surrounding Katapesh, Osirion, and Qadira, where genies historically tread. While not fundamentally tied to specific locations, they infrequently wander, preferring to haunt locations that were meaningful to them in life—though the eldest souls rarely remember what significance such places once held for them. The homes of long-dead masters, favored places of long-despoiled luxury, or the sites of their death are the most common places for such souls to linger. Typically shunned and fraught with rumors of curses and dark magic, the lairs of edimmus often howl with unexplained winds and strange groans.

As victims of binding magics gone awry, many edimmus lie entrapped within forgotten prisons. More than one tale of fantastical discovery and ancient ruins ends with explorers disturbing some ancient magical symbol and unleashing the crazed spirit of a long-dead genie. As incorporeal creatures, it's wholly possible for someone to not realize that an edimmu lies imprisoned within an item or structure and accidentally set it free. Some good-natured explorers have sought to free edimmus from their captivity, but as the stipulations placed upon bound genies in ancient times often proved outlandish or obscure, few edimmus actually possess any lingering hope of freedom.

Treasure

As genies were often summoned in ancient times to serve as guardians, edimmus are typically found in the treasure vaults, harems, and audience chambers of their former masters. Although such places might have once harbored great wealth, few retain their splendor in modern times. Thus, only in the cases where an edimmu's lair has been lost or forgotten—often being reclaimed by the desert—do the riches of the past typically remain. Even in the cases where such fineries have faded, edimmus typically use their illusion abilities to recreate elaborate images recalling the wealth of times past. They often use such illusions to disguise traps and other dangers, so as to punish those who would attempt to steal from the spirits. In rare cases, though, an edimmu—or more likely a group of such creatures—has actually managed to defend the treasures of old and still guard vast troves of brass, gold, and jewels. Edimmus guard their treasures viciously, though, as such trinkets are all they have to remind them of the lives they've long since lost.

Edimmu Wards

Katapeshi and Qadiran folklore is filled with stories of pitiless edimmus who roam the earth seeking living creatures, spreading suffering and preying upon innocents. These tales often teach a moral lesson, usually revealed by a character who knows the spiritual wards that force a wicked edimmu to pass him by. Any character who succeeds on a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check can recall these wards, which have the following effects:

- Edimmus cannot pass over a circle of ox blood.
- Edimmus will not harm a genie or other elemental creature.
- Edimmus will not harm anyone who covers his or her body with funerary runes.
- Edimmus will not harm anyone wearing a burial shroud or similar funerary garb.
- Edimmus cannot stand the sound of a dirge and will flee anyone playing such somber music.



DIV, PAIRAKA

An inviting and wicked grin, lips barely concealing bestial fangs, splits the face of this fiend, making it both gorgeous and unnerving at the same time. Touched with an androgynous beauty, this fiend floats low in the air, monstrous taloned feet hanging limp mere inches from the ground. Its sultry gaze seems to suggest all manner of debased pleasures and exquisite torments.

DIV, PAIRAKA

Always NE Medium outsider (div, evil, extraplanar)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., telepathy 100 ft.; **Listen** +11, **Spot** +11

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 18

(+5 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 60 (8d8+24)

Fort +9, **Ref** +11 **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities DR 10/good; **Immune** disease, fire, poison;

Resistance acid 10, electricity 10; **SR** 22

CR 7

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)

Melee 2 claws +11 (1d6+3 plus disease)

Spell-like Abilities (CL 12th)

At will—*charm monster* (DC 21), *detect good*, *detect magic*, *dimension door*, *misdirection*

TACTICS

Before Combat Pairakas always attempt an ambush, relying on their change shape ability. They walk among humanoids in the form of small harmless animals or appear as needy young women to win the trust of their potential victims. Sometimes they maintain this ruse for weeks, using their lustful dreams ability to weaken their companions until the perfect moment to strike.

During Combat As pairakas shun direct battle, on the first round of combat they attempt to charm their strongest opponent. In following rounds, they fly out of their enemies' reach and attempt to summon dorus to aid them. If this tactic fails, they use their summon swarm ability to confuse and distract their opponents. After weakening their foes in this manner, pairakas make hit-and-run attacks from the air, ever trying to stay out of their foes' reach.

Morale Content with damaging their foes and subjecting them to disease, pairakas use *dimension door* to escape combat if reduced to fewer than half their hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 20, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11

Feats Flyby Attack, Hover, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +18, Diplomacy +19, Disguise +18 (+20 acting), Gather Information +20, Hide +13, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +12, Move Silently +16, Sense Motive +12, Spot +15

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, telepathy 100 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment Abaddon

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

Advancement 9–14 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment +6

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Change Shape (Su) A pairaka can assume the form of any Small or Medium animal or humanoid.

Disease (Su) Pairakas carry two diseases: bubonic plague, which they inflict with their claws, and the shakes, which can infect any creature that comes into contact with them (via a grapple or willing contact). The save DCs of both diseases are Constitution-based.

Bubonic Plague—claws, Fortitude DC 17 resists, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d4 Con and Cha.

The Shakes—contact, Fortitude DC 17 resists, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d8 Dex.

Lustful Dreams (Su) Pairakas can torment sleeping creatures. While intelligent creatures sleep, pairakas can slip into their minds and twist their dreams to lusty nocturnal visions. The

victim must be asleep for the pairaka to use this ability and the pairaka must be within 100 feet. If the victim fails a DC 21 Will save, it experiences vivid hallucinations of a lurid nature that leave it breathless and fatigued upon waking. The victim, even a depraved soul, rarely considers the sexual nature of these dreams enjoyable and the images exploit any number of taboos the pairaka suspects he might harbor. The save is Charisma-based. Creatures that do not sleep or dream are immune to this effect.

See in Darkness (Su) A pairaka can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, even that created by a *deeper darkness* spell.

Summon Div (Sp) A pairaka can summon 1d4 dorus with a 50% chance of success. This ability is equivalent to a 3rd-level spell.

Summon Swarm (Su) Once per day a pairaka can summon a swarm of biting flies. This ability is identical to *insect plague* except the swarm is composed of buzzing flies instead of locusts.

Pairakas, in their natural form, appear as lithe humanoids with unnatural, coolly colored skin and sharp monstrous features. Their glossy black hair cascades down their backs and their always-grinning mouths house an array of pointed teeth. Vicious claws sprout from their hands at the end of long thin arms. Pairakas normally fly winglessly just above the ground, letting their legs dangle so their clawed feet barely keep from dragging against the earth. To terrify and disgust victims they can reveal their smooth skin as the foul landscape of scarred pustules, pulsing blisters, and blazing rashes it actually is—these evident diseases congregating around their stomach and upper thighs. Few mortals ever see pairakas in their true form, though. More often, pairakas observe, or even accompany, their victims in the shape of a benign animal such as a dog or bird.

Pairakas prefer to assume lean, attractive bodies, with most standing just over 6 feet tall and weighing little more 150 pounds.

Ecology

Although relatively minor in the sphere of the divs, pairakas maintain a certain amount of autonomy. These fiends serve greater powers, but many often make themselves the center of their own destructive plots. Corruption burns deep at the core of pairakas and they enjoy nothing more than twisting the path of a man's life towards ruin. Pairakas act to further the inevitable entropy inherent in the world and find particular delight in breaking down personal relationships and the bonds of community. They use their subterfuge to insinuate themselves into groups of mortals, be they homes, royal courts, or adventuring groups, and slowly attempt to turn friend against friend and lover against lover.

Pairakas operate with a certain restrained fury. They are careful to keep this inclination in check as they patiently await the fruition of their goals, but all too

often, a perfectly vile plan unravels as the pairaka strikes too soon or accidentally allows detection. In addition, in their natural form, pairakas attract swarms of flies that come to pick and feed on their oozing blisters. Careful pairakas maintain another shape to keep these buzzing pests at bay, as use of another form lessens the flies' presence.

Pairakas use lust and sexuality as their main tool. They draw the taboo appetites of mortals to the surface and use these inclinations as a wedge hammered into the bonds of relationships. A pairaka might seduce a married man in his sleep for weeks with lustful dreams and then present itself to him in a form straight from those nocturnal visions. Paired with sexuality and corruption, pairakas make great use of disease, spreading plagues and sicknesses that cause insanity or the wasting away of the mortal body. They often spread these diseases through intercourse with their targets. This method, despite all the other wickedness natural to pairakas, makes them an especially dangerous scourge upon the world.

As all divs possess some manner of esoteric weakness in their personality, pairakas despise the color red. Through all accounts of pairakas, not a single reported case places them in a home or building painted red. Some scholars even go so far as to suggest that the reason brothels use red-filtered lighting is to ward off the disease-ridden, lustful pairakas. Despite their worth, pairakas keep no red gemstones and refuse or even repaint powerful items of a crimson hue. It seems the only red that pairakas tolerate is the ruby tint of warm, flowing blood.

Habitat & Society

Pairakas rarely associate with their own kind when visiting the mortal world, yet in their home on Abaddon they operate differently. There they form small factions, sometimes aligned with the daemon Apollyon, the Archdaemon of Pestilence. Usually located near the Plaguemere, those factions of pairakas see themselves above the leukodaemons as the true servants of the Throne of Flies and work to usurp and embarrass the daemons often.

On the Material Plane, pairakas work their way into normal society and live out their lives spreading disease and discord. Pairakas even enjoy a manner of open worship among some hateful mortal cabals. Known as Usij, such false priests form small cults dedicated to the worship of divs and their lord Ahriman. They issue vain calls to divs for aid in their desires for revenge and destruction—typically entreating pairakas for retribution against past lovers. In ages past, holy warriors of Sarenrae hunted down and exterminated many of these cabals, but evidence of the occasional Usij still surfaces from time to time. Recently, tendrils of this foul seed have crept westward, with rumors of Usij existing in Qadira and even Katapesh.



SUNLORD THALACHOS

This platinum-skinned, four-armed humanoid glows with the power of the sun. Two of his hands hold flaming scimitars, while the other two wield a mighty longbow. Wings that look like those of hawk, but sculpted from silver, extend from his back. A comfortable warmth exudes from his metallic skin, and eleven white doves circle him like a living halo.

SUNLORD THALACHOS

CR 15

NG Medium outsider (angel, extraplanar, good)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +23, **Spot** +23

Aura protective aura

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 25

(+4 Dex, +15 natural)

hp 110 (13d8+52); regeneration 10 (evil weapons, effects with the evil descriptor)

Fort +14 (+18 against poison), **Ref** +12, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge; **DR** 10/evil; **Immune** acid, cold, petrification; **Resist** electricity 10, fire 60; **SR** 30

OFFENSE

Spd 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (good)

Melee +2 flaming holy scimitar +21/+16/+11 (1d8+11 plus 1d6 fire plus stun) or

+2 flaming holy scimitar +17/+12/+7/+17/+12 (1d8+11 plus 1d6 fire plus stun) or

slam +18 (1d8+9)

Ranged +2 flaming holy composite longbow (+5 Str) +19/+14/+9 (1d8+7 plus 1d6 fire)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th):

At will—*aid*, *continual flame*, *detect evil*, *discern lies* (DC 19), *dispel evil* (DC 20), *dispel magic*, *holy aura* (DC 23), *holy smite* (DC 19), *holy word* (DC 22), *invisibility* (self only), *plane shift* (DC 22), *remove curse* (DC 18), *remove disease* (DC 18), *remove fear* (DC 16)

7/day—*cure light wounds* (DC 16), *daylight*, *see invisibility*

1/day—*blade barrier* (DC 21), *fire shield*, *flame strike* (DC 20), *heal* (DC 21), *sunburst* (DC 23)

TACTICS

Before Combat Thalachos casts *fire shield* (hot flames), *aid*, and *see invisibility* before a battle. If facing an evil outsider, he casts *dispel evil*. If he has allies, he casts *aid* on all of them and *see invisibility* on leaders, then casts *holy aura* on himself to further protect them. He only uses *invisibility* if he thinks his foe is too great to deal with in open combat, otherwise he prefers to charge into battle to inspire allies and witnesses.

During Combat Thalachos always tries to engage the most powerful opponent on the battlefield, especially if that opponent could easily defeat or kill his allies. If faced with a dangerous foe who cannot fly, Thalachos takes to the air and uses his bow and ranged abilities, closing to melee if others are threatened or to deliver a killing blow. If he has a free round or has to move to another foe, he renews his *dispel evil*. If he sees good allies are swarmed by weaker evil creatures, he casts *holy smite*. He uses *blade barrier* to shield vulnerable allies or divert enemies. The angel saves his *heal* spell for friendly leaders, though he is not averse to healing himself if he believes his own survival will do more good in the course of a battle.

Morale Immortal and renewed every day, Thalachos never surrenders and fights to the death if doing so can save others. If the battle has turned against his allies, he tries to rescue as many as he can with *plane shift*, transporting them to a safe place in Sarenrae's realm, often making several such trips if there is time.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +19

Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved

Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Fighting
Skills Concentration +20, Diplomacy +23, Escape Artist +20, Hide +20, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (history) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +20, Knowledge (religion) +20, Listen +24, Move Silently +20, Sense Motive +20, Spot +24, Use Rope +5 (+6 with bindings)

Languages Common, Kelish, Osiriani; *tongues*

SQ change shape, divine trigger, good weapons

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Change Shape (Su) Thalachos can assume the form of any Small or Medium humanoid or fire elemental.

Divine Trigger (Su) Thalachos can operate any cleric, druid, ranger, or paladin spell trigger item as if he were a 13th-level caster.

Good Weapons (Su) Thalachos's natural weapons and any weapon he is wielding is treated as good-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Protective Aura (Su) Against attacks or effects from evil creatures, Thalachos's aura grants a +4 deflection bonus to AC and a +4 resistance bonus on saving throws to all creatures within 20 feet of him. The aura also acts as a *magic circle against evil* and a *lesser globe of invulnerability*. The aura is recognizable as a tangible feeling of warmth, and protects all within it against cold environments as if under the effects of *endure elements*. While it is not harmful, even to cold-based creatures, it tends to melt snow and ice in the vicinity, like a spring thaw. The aura can be dispelled (caster level 13) but Thalachos can recreate it on his turn as a free action. The benefits of this aura are not included in his stat block.

Stun (Su) If Thalachos strikes a creature twice in 1 round with his scimitars (whether two strikes with one scimitar or one strike with each), that creature must succeed on a DC 22 Fortitude save or be stunned for 1d6 rounds. The save DC is Strength-based.

Tongues (Su) Thalachos can speak with any creature that has a language, as though using a *tongues* spell (caster level 13). This ability is always active.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex) Thalachos retains his Dexterity bonus to AC when flat-footed, and he cannot be flanked except by a rogue of at least 17th level. He can flank characters with the uncanny dodge ability as if he were a 13th-level rogue.

Sunlord Thalachos is Sarenrae's favorite angel, liaison to the mortal world, the hosts of astral devas, and the ranks of superior angels (including the Empyrean Lords). At 8 feet tall and 300 pounds, he is an impressive figure with a rich baritone voice, always speaking with clarity and precision. His metallic skin is as hard as steel to any that wish to do him harm, but as soft as velvet to anyone kind, merciful, and good. He is the champion of the Dawnflower in Golarion and her favorite weapon against the spawn of Rovagug (though she only calls upon him for this when no mortal heroes are available). Before the death of Aroden he often delivered prophecies on behalf of the goddess, and several stories in *The Birth of Light*

and *Truth* were penned by oracles whom he personally escorted through Sarenrae's realm. Now the only similar duty he bears is appearing at auspicious births. This is by no means the extent of his duties, though, as the goddess of the sun has tasked him with standing orders to guard her realm against fiendish—particularly infernal—incursions, keep watch for those who would free the imprisoned god Rovagug, and defend against those who would tamper with the sun itself.

Ecology

Thalachos does not need to eat or sleep, though he has been spotted drifting high in the sky on hot summer days, absorbing the sun's light. He can eat in the mortal fashion, but usually only does so when hospitality requires it, and limits himself to a small portion of bread and water or wine. In his true form he is a sexless masculine figure, and he is always described as Sarenrae's herald and advisor, never her consort. When he takes humanoid form he prefers that of a middle-aged Keleshite male, but even then he has no interest in the pleasures of the body, and there are no known lines of half-celestials or aasimars descended from him. The doves that accompany him are usually white but sometimes have golden feathers at their wingtips; in his humanoid form these doves usually appear as fireflies in a lantern, though sometimes they remain nearby in bird form. The doves never attack, and while Thalachos is alive they instantly recover from any injury.

Habitat & Society

The angel is a dangerous force in battle, but prefers activities relating to the more peaceful aspects of Sarenrae's faith. In times of peace he wanders the world disguised as a humble priest of the Dawnflower, using his spell-like abilities to cure sickness and injuries. He dislikes lies and riddles, but enjoys long, truthful stories, especially if they illustrate a moral point. In communities struggling to harvest enough food, he uses *daylight* and *continual flame* to illuminate their fields and granaries to give them extra time. When confronting evildoers he likes to stun them, tie them up, and drag them to town for an appropriate punishment—and a chance to atone for their sins.

Some chapters of Sarenrae's faith claim that Thalachos is reborn every day. Certainly he has died in battle and appeared unharmed at a later time, though there is insufficient evidence to answer whether he actually rises again at the dawn. Some sects call him Saint Thalachos and explain that he was the first human priest of Sarenrae, though again there is no historical evidence for this and the angel has never said he was ever anything other than an angel. He is on friendly terms with the heralds of Shelyn, Cayden Cailean, and Iomedae, and several sources show that he knew Arazni, herald-goddess of Aroden.



UNCHOSEN GNOLL

A hulking monstrosity lumbers forth, its canine jaws snapping ferociously. Its matted, speckled hide and hyena-like cackle hint at its animalistic nature, yet it walks like a man, even though its grotesque proportions seem wholly unnatural. A circular patch of thickened, gray scar tissue nestles in the filthy fur in the center of its forehead.

UNCHOSEN

CR 4

Usually CE Large humanoid (gnoll)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., deathwatch, scent; Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 17

(+2 insight, +6 natural, -1 size)

hp 42 (5d8+20)

Fort +8, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Defensive Abilities foresighted; **Immune** charm, fear

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee 2 claws +8 (1d6+6) and bite +3 (1d8+3)

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

Special Attacks ferocity

TACTICS

During Combat Although relatively unintelligent, an unchosen can still use rudimentary tactics—they're smarter than animals, if only barely. They combine ferocious pack-hunting techniques (in which multiple unchosen focus their attacks on one creature) with cruelty—they enjoy attacking helpless or smaller foes not because of the increased chance at success, but because they enjoy the sound of fear and panic such victims often reward them with. If an unchosen hits its foe, it generally uses a full Power Attack on all rounds to follow.

Morale An unchosen typically fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 10, **Con** 19, **Int** 4, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +13

Feats Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Skills Climb +10, Jump +14

Languages Gnoll

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or pack (6–12)

Treasure standard

Advancement by character class; **Favored Class** barbarian

Level Adjustment +3

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Deathwatch (Ex) The tampering with the unchosen's brain has granted the creature the ability to "scent life." As long as targets are in range of the unchosen's scent ability, it instantly knows whether each creature in the area is dead, fragile (alive and wounded with 3 or fewer hit points left), fighting off death (alive with 4 or more hit points), undead, or neither alive nor dead (such as a construct).

Ferocity (Ex) An unchosen becomes enraged if mortally wounded. It continues to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying, and as long as it has less than 0 hit points, it gains a +2 bonus on attack rolls and all weapon damage rolls.

Foresighted (Su) An unchosen's trepanation has partially unlocked an almost psychic ability to sense peril. It gains a +2 insight bonus on Initiative checks and to its armor class.

Skills Unchosen gain a +4 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

Unchosen stand between 10 and 12 feet tall. Masses of bloated muscle and matted fur, they possess insatiable instincts for acts of violence upon other living creatures, including their own kind. They are highly territorial as well as voracious predators, which one might infer by their thick, arrowhead-shaped teeth.

Ecology

The unchosen live short lives, and die approximately a decade after undergoing the crude surgery that births

them. Unchosen born naturally to unchosen parents could, theoretically, live for 30 years or more, but in reality they often die much sooner, either from violence or deformity. Throughout an unchosen's life, its body continues its horrid devolution, slowly twisting and mutating until these deformities become crippling and ultimately result in death.

Habitat & Society

Although the unchosen have, to date, only appeared among the Carrion Tribe gnolls of the House of the Beast, these hulking gnoll mutants are poised to become a new and terrible menace in the Pale Mountain region and beyond. Although the first unchosen were artificially induced from the bodies and minds of gnoll sacrifices (sometimes willing, sometimes not so much), the unchosen breed true, and even now two small tribes of the ogrish gnolls escaped from the House of the Beast have settled into small tribes in isolated caves on Pale Mountain's lower slopes.

Creation

The process of unchosen creation is based on the sacred and dangerous Lamashtu ritual known as the Growing of the Third Eye. A worshiper of Lamashtu uses this ritual to drill or cut a hole into a creature's brow, just between his eyes. The trepanation is said to grant a third eye, just like that possessed by the Mother of Monsters, and indeed when done properly with the appropriate rituals, gnolls who undergo the painful ritual seem to gain strange insights.

The first unchosen was created from a gnoll named Ghartok after he was infused by raw unholy power from a stegocentipede sacred to the faith of Rovagug. Impressed with his newfound power, Ghartok (now the Carrion King) captured a mad alchemist, whom he forced to discover a method of duplicating this transformation. By combining the Growing of the Third Eye and a number of vile alchemical concoctions, the alchemist managed to duplicate most of the unchosen transformation, but the process invariably results in the destruction of the gnoll's mind. They emerge as strong and powerful as intended, but are little more than difficult-to-control beasts, nearly as dangerous to their allies as they are to their enemies. Of course, the results of the transformation embody the teachings of the Rough Beast, for he is a god of wrath and destruction, and as long as prayers to Rovagug remain a part of the transformation process, it is unlikely that any alchemist will be able to create an unchosen that retains its reason and intelligence.

The actual process is grisly and painful, and takes 2d4 hours to properly perform. At the end of this procedure, the gnoll must make a DC 15 Fortitude save. Success indicates that the procedure merely causes 2d6 points of damage and 1d12 points of Intelligence drain—if this drain reduces the gnoll's Intelligence to 0, he is killed by the procedure. If

Trepanation

The ancient practice of trepanation—the removal of a portion of the skull from a living patient—is real. It was once believed that the risky operation could cure epileptic seizures, headaches, and even madness. Evidence exists that suggests that the practice dates back even to prehistory, with the bone excised during the procedure kept and used as charms to ward off evil spirits. While the operation sounds like it should be fatal, ancient skulls with trepanation holes that have partially healed over offer proof that not all who underwent this surgery died.

Although simple trepanation lacks any true healing ability, in Golarion it is frequently practiced by the cult of Lamashtu as a way to honor their three-eyed goddess. In most cases, those who undergo this treatment suffer greatly from the process. Known as the Ritual of the Third Eye, this trepanation ritual takes 3 hours to perform, and no magical healing is allowed. The priest performing the ritual must make a DC 25 Heal check. Failure indicates that the subject takes 2d6 points of damage and 1d12 points of Intelligence drain—if this drain reduces the victim's Intelligence to 0, he is killed by the procedure.

If the Heal check is successful, the subject receives a blessing of enlightenment from the Mother of Monsters. For the rest of the subject's life, he hears strange whispers and perceives glimpses of the past and future coiling around the present. This limited foresight grants the creature a +2 insight bonus on Initiative checks and to its armor class, but at a cost—the subject's personality becomes more erratic and insane, permanently reducing his Charisma score by 4 points.

the gnoll fails the saving throw, he undergoes a 24-hour transformation into one of the hulking unchosen—during this period of change, the gnoll lies in a fevered state and is effectively helpless, but when he awakens, his transformation is complete.

The Chosen

Although the process that creates them encourages unchosen that are nearly mindless and feral, no procedure is perfect. It hasn't happened yet in the House of the Beast, but there's a 1% chance that a newly created unchosen retains its mind and reason. These unchosen would be even more dangerous than their kin, as they would combine their physical strength with intelligence and the will to be more than merely a monster. A chosen gnoll has all the stats of an unchosen, save that its Intelligence score rises to 12, granting it additional skill points. A chosen gnoll's class skills are Climb, Jump, Listen, Spot, and Survival.

VALEROS



MALE HUMAN FIGHTER 5

ALIGN NG INIT +7 SPEED 20 ft.

DEITY: Cayden Cailean

HOMELAND: Andoran

ABILITIES

14	STR
16	DEX
12	CON
13	INT
8	WIS
10	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 37
AC 20
touch 16, flat-footed 17
Fort +5, **Ref** +4,
Will +0

OFFENSE

Melee +1 longsword +9
(1d8+5/19–20)
Dual Wielding +1 longsword +7
(1d8+5/19–20) and
mwk short sword +6 (1d6+1/19–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow
+9 (1d8+2/x3)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +7

SKILLS

Climb +7
Intimidate +8
Ride +11
Swim +4

FEATS

Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)



Combat Gear *elixir of fire breath*, *potion of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of shield of faith* +3; **Other Gear** +1 breastplate, +1 longsword, masterwork short sword, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str) with 20 arrows, backpack, lucky tankard, rations (2), silk rope, 50 gp

Born a farmer's son in the quiet Andoren countryside, Valeros spent his youth dreaming of adventure and exploring the world. For the past several years, he's been a mercenary with the Band of the Mauler, a guard for the Aspis Consortium, a freelance bounty hunter, and hired muscle for a dozen different employers. Gone is his youthful naivete, replaced by scars and the resolve of a veteran warrior. While noble at heart, Valeros hides this beneath a jaded, sometimes crass demeanor, often claiming that there's no better way to end a day's adventuring than with "an evening of hard drinking and a night of soft company."

KYRA



FEMALE HUMAN CLERIC 5

ALIGN NG INIT –1 SPEED 20 ft.

DEITY: Sarenrae

HOMELAND: Qadira

ABILITIES

13	STR
8	DEX
14	CON
10	INT
16	WIS
12	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 36
AC 18
touch 9, flat-footed 18
Fort +7, **Ref** +1
Will +10

OFFENSE

Melee +1 scimitar +6 (1d6+2/18–20)
Ranged light crossbow +2
(1d8/19–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4

SKILLS

Concentration +10
Heal +11
Knowledge (religion) +8

FEATS

Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scimitar), Weapon Focus (scimitar)



Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (25 charges); **Other Gear** +1 chainmail, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 scimitar, light crossbow with 10 bolts, *cloak of resistance* +1, backpack, rations (6), gold holy symbol (with *continual flame*) worth 300 gp, 5 gp

Kyra was one of the few survivors of a brutal raid on her hometown, and on the smoking ruins of her village she swore her life and sword arm to Sarenrae. Possessed of a fierce will, pride in her faith, and skill with the scimitar, Kyra has traveled far since her trial by fire. She lost her family and home that fateful day, yet where another might be consumed by anger and a thirst for revenge, Kyra has found peace in the Dawnflower, and in the belief that, if she can prevent even one death at evil hands, her own losses will not have been in vain.

pre-generated characters

MERISIEL



FEMALE ELF ROGUE 5

ALIGN CN **INIT** +4 **SPEED** 30 ft.

DEITY: Calistria

HOMELAND: Varisia

ABILITIES

12	STR
18	DEX
12	CON
8	INT
13	WIS
10	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 25

AC 18

touch 14, flat-footed 14

Fort +2, **Ref** +8,
Will +2; +2 against
enchantment

Special Qualities low-
light vision, trapfind-
ing; **Defense** evasion,
trap sense +1, uncanny
dodge; **Immune** sleep

OFFENSE

Melee +1 rapier +8 (1d6+1/18–20)

Ranged dagger +7 (1d4+1/19–20)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4

Special Attacks sneak attack +3d6

SKILLS

Disable Device	+7
Hide	+12
Listen	+12
Jump	+8
Move Silently	+12
Search	+9
Spot	+11
Tumble	+11

FEATS

Dodge, Weapon Finesse



Combat Gear acid, alchemist's fire (2), thunderstone; **Other Gear** +1 studded leather armor, +1 rapier, daggers (12), ring of jumping, backpack, grappling hook, hooded lantern, oil (5), rations (3), silk rope, masterwork thieves' tools, polished jade worth 50 gp, 25 gp

Merisiel's life experiences have taught her to enjoy things to their fullest as they occur, since it's impossible to tell when the good times might end. Never the sharpest knife in the drawer, Merisiel makes up for this by carrying at least a dozen of them on her person. She hasn't met a problem yet that can't, in one way or another, be solved with things that slice. While she's always on the move and working on her latest batch of plots for easy money, in the end it comes down to being faster than everyone else—either on her feet, or with her beloved blades. She wouldn't have it any other way.

EZREN



MALE HUMAN WIZARD 5

ALIGN NG **INIT** +3 **SPEED** 30 ft.

DEITY: Atheist

HOMELAND: Absalom

ABILITIES

11	STR
9	DEX
12	CON
17	INT
15	WIS
9	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 19

AC 10

touch 9, flat-footed 10

Fort +5, **Ref** +1,
Will +7

OFFENSE

Melee cane +2 (1d6)

Ranged light crossbow +1
(1d8/19–20)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2

Spells Prepared (CL 5th)

3rd—fly, fireball (DC 16)

2nd—invisibility, scorching ray, web
(DC 15)

1st—endure elements, mage armor,
sleep (DC 14), shield

0—daze (DC 13), detect magic (2),
light

SKILLS

Appraise	+11
Concentration	+9
Knowledge (arcana)	+11
Knowledge (geography)	+11
Knowledge (history)	+11
Spellcraft	+13

FEATS

Combat Casting,
Empower Spell, Great
Fortitude, Improved
Initiative, Scribe Scroll

FAMILIAR

Sneak (weasel, MM 282)



Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds, wand of magic missile (50 charges), alchemist's fire (2); **Other Gear** cane (as club), dagger, light crossbow with 20 bolts, bracers of armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, pearl of power (1st level), backpack, rations (6), scroll case, spellbook, spell component pouch, 100 gp pearls (2), 35 gp

Born to a successful spice merchant in one of Absalom's more affluent districts, Ezren's childhood was pleasantly safe. This changed when his father was charged with heresy. Ezren spent much of his adult life attempting to prove his father's innocence, only to discover his father was guilty. The revelation shook Ezren's faith in family and church to the core and he abandoned both, setting out into the world to find a new life. Ezren fell naturally into the ways of wizardry, and swiftly became a gifted spellcaster.

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by Darren Drader

Newly made masters of an ancient and mysterious relic, the PCs find themselves with many questions, and the only place they can hope to find answers lies amid the crowded streets and exotic bazaars of the city of Katapesh. But a treasure as famed and wondrous as Kakishon can't stay hidden for long, and soon strange merchants, immortal genies, and one of the most notorious criminals in all of Katapesh are on their trail. Can the PCs keep a hold on their treasure long enough to discover the answers they seek? And will the artifact's secrets prove deadlier than any of the parties who seek to possess it?

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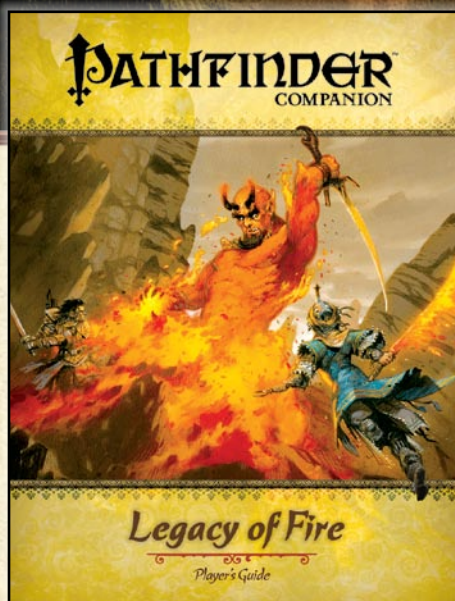
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After Sarenrae laid Rovagug in his prison and Asmodeus locked it shut, many of the spawn of Rovagug yet remained in the world, and the Rough Beast's many followers and cultists and servants carried on his work. They built hidden fortresses to practice their vile rites, gathering what strength they could to seek the Black Key and unlock their lord's prison. And they hoarded great treasures—for a broken chalice is still golden—and practiced magic that could shatter adamant and cast castles down into dust.

Every hand was turned against Rovagug's minions, and his surviving servants grew clever. One such was Ulumanesh, the hidden priest of Rovagug.

Once a dwarven priest heard him preach of the glories of destruction and the wealth found in slaughter. The Hidden Priest saw the dwarf's heart was greedy. "Sirrah Dwarf," said the priest. "You follow me to the great treasure."

"I seek your temple, to tear it down."

"Ah, Rovagug speaks to your wrath. My temple and my treasure are the same, a place worth mountains of gold to gladden your dwarven heart. Come and see it for yourself."

The dwarf could not resist, and the longer he thought on it, the greater the treasure gleamed in his mind's eye. At last the priest said, "Come with me below the mountain, where the treasure lies." And the dwarf did not hesitate, but followed past stalactites, and tunnels filled with searing heat, to a chamber whose walls gleamed with golden acid.

"Now dwarf, you know my treasure, for you stand in the maw and gaping belly of Rovagug's servant, the great worm Narthrax. My treasure has teeth, and it will devour you."

"But surely you will be devoured as well, priest!" shouted the dwarven priest. "You will die with me!"

"I die happily, taking a false god's slave with me, and let destruction be your reward and mine."



where evil sleeps

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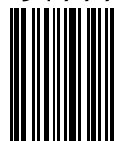
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