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## ADVENTURE PATH<sup>™</sup>



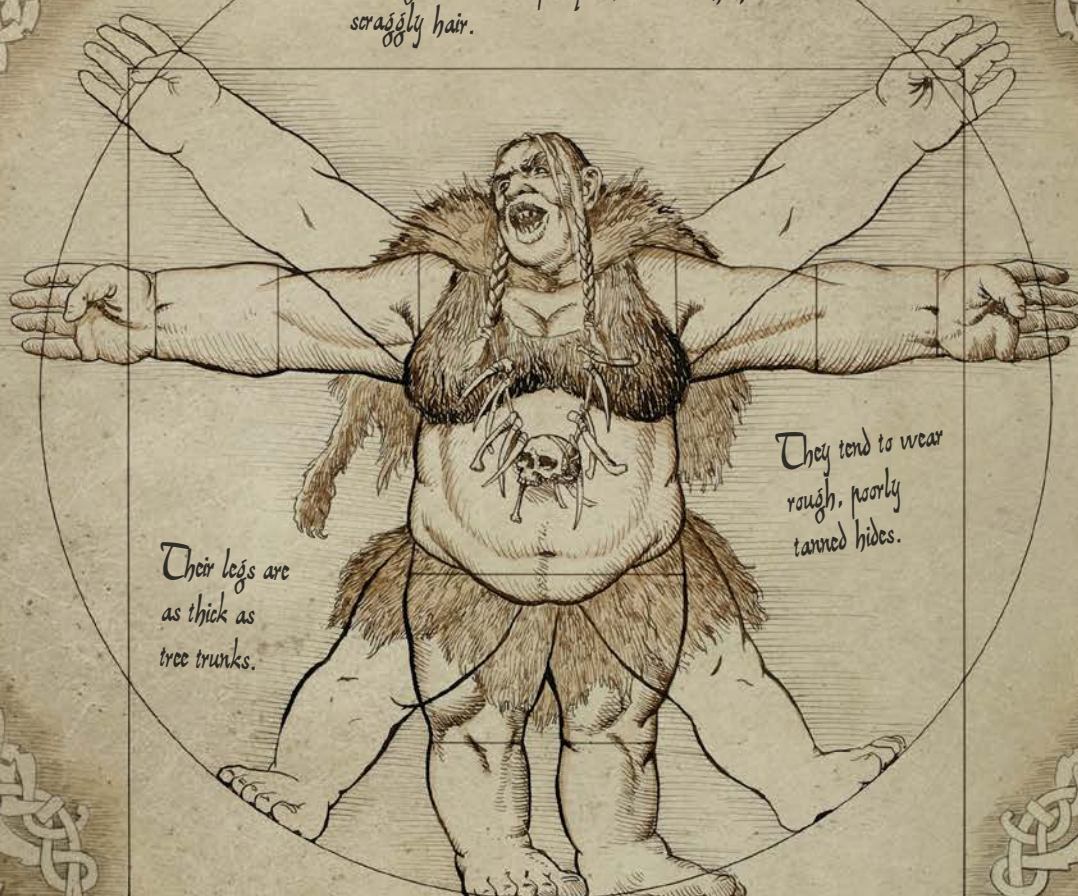
### GIANTSLAYER<sup>™</sup>

## THE HILL GIANT'S PLEDGE

by Larry Wilhelm



Hill giants have sloped foreheads and thin, scraggly hair.



They tend to wear rough, poorly tanned hides.

Their legs are as thick as tree trunks.

2014  
ESRAN


## Hill Giants

Violent, selfish, and more than a little stupid, hill giants are dangerous to any smaller humanoids they happen to live near. Hill giants are eager to raid nearby farms, where they kill and eat livestock, and they even pose a threat to settlements when the giants are unable to obtain enough food from isolated targets. They are unsophisticated and unhygienic, and many other types of giants use them as disposable minions.







ADVENTURE PATH  PART 2 OF 6

# THE HILL GIANT'S PLEDGE





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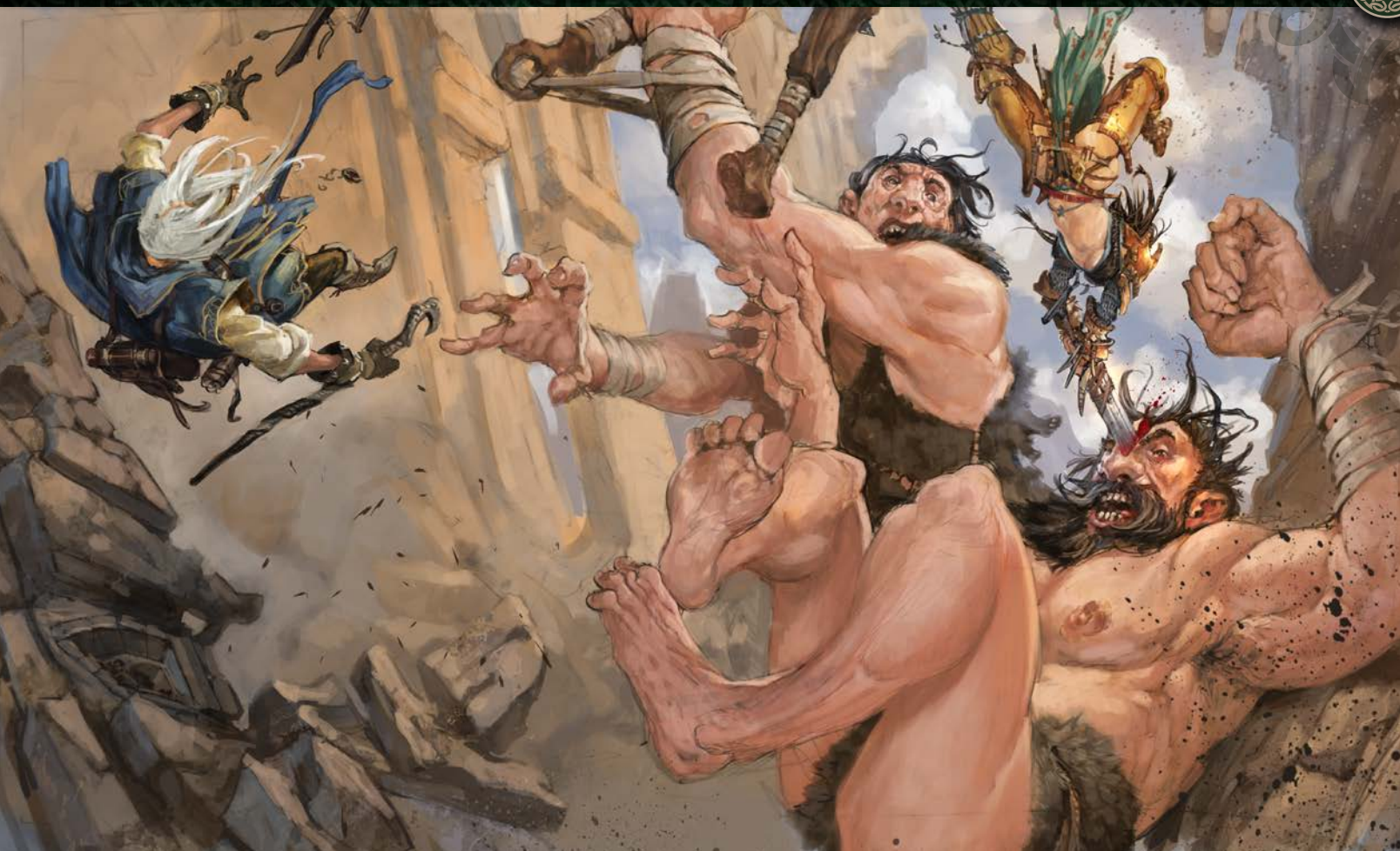
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## A GIANT CHALLENGE

**I**t may not seem like it at first glance, but putting together an Adventure Path like *Giantslayer* was a difficult proposition, due in large part to its tightly focused theme—namely, giants. Fortunately, there's a good selection of giants over a wide range of CRs in the assorted *Pathfinder* bestiaries, but even then, it can be a challenge to create interesting and exciting adventures all dealing with giants.

For one thing, *Pathfinder* Adventure Paths start at 1st level, and giants are just a bit too tough to be a recurring foe so early in the PCs' careers. The weakest giant in the core rules is the ogre at CR 3. That means one ogre is a hard encounter for 1st-level characters, and a group of three is an epic encounter for 3rd-level PCs. And although they're technically giants, ogres don't even have "giant" in their name; we have to wait for *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3*'s CR 6 cave giant for that. Maybe it's just me, but I really wanted

the first giant the PCs faced in *Giantslayer* to be a genuine giant. So what did that mean for the Adventure Path? If you've already read "Battle of Bloodmarch Hill," you know the answer: orcs. We haven't really done an Adventure Path focused on orcs yet (and by the time you get to the next adventure, "Forge of the Giant God," you'll see that we still haven't), and they're a good low-level foe. In addition, the fact that the orc-infested Hold of Belkzen touches the northern edge of the Mindspin Mountains—where the last four volumes of *Giantslayer* all take place—made orcs a solid choice, so orcs it was. Of course, the Adventure Path is called *Giantslayer*, so we still needed a giant in the first adventure—and that's where our CR 6 cave giant came in.

Another problem with giants is that they're humanoids. "But I'm humanoid," you might say, "and that's not a problem!" Oh, but it is. For one thing, humanoids (as a creature type) in the *Pathfinder* RPG are proficient in



simple weapons only. That's just fine if you want your giant to wield a spear or swing a club, but if you want a giant with a sword, an axe, or even a greatclub, you're going to have to give it Martial Weapon Proficiency or class levels.

It's easy to overlook this very simple fact—we here at Paizo have made that mistake ourselves. The *Bestiary's* ogre, for example, is armed with a greatclub, but does not have Martial Weapon Proficiency (greatclub). The hill giant is similarly armed, but does have the feat. Fortunately, it's not that hard to switch out one or two feats to give your giants different weapons, and if you want to use a giant's base statistics but with a different weapon, you can easily do so; just assume that the giant's feats change to match the weapon used. For those giants with martial weapons who were not given the Martial Weapon Proficiency feat, it's not going to break the game to give them a "free" proficiency in one weapon. I wouldn't recommend replacing either of the ogre's two feats, Iron Will and Toughness, with Martial Weapon Proficiency just to make the monster comply 100% with the rules as written, but giants' weapon proficiencies are something to be aware of as you run through this Adventure Path.

From an adventure design perspective, giants pose another challenge as well—one that your players will no doubt make gleeful note of and attempt to use to their advantage. As humanoids, giants are susceptible to a wide variety of enchantments that other monsters are essentially immune to (at least until the PCs reach higher levels), and their Will saves aren't exactly stellar. *Charm person*? Let's call that *charm ogre*. *Hold person*? You must mean *hold hill giant*. *Dominate person*? Sounds like *stone giant footman* to me. *Reduce person*? Allow me to introduce you to *miniature marsh giant*.

So how to deal with this? First of all, you should certainly allow the PCs to make use of these spells against giants. It's always better to let the PCs use their toys, and the fact that the primary enemy of this Adventure Path can be affected by these spells makes the players feel powerful and effective. That being said, however, you probably don't want an adventure's main villain to suddenly become a trusted friend and ally of the PCs with the casting of a single 1st-level spell. There's always Iron Will and Improved Iron Will, of course, and the "Giant's Toolbox" article in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #91* has a few things to help you in this regard as well: the Will of Giants feat and the *iron band of iron mind*, in particular, plus several other mechanical bits that can easily be added to giants of all challenge levels.

But eventually, your PCs are probably going to end up with one or two charmed or dominated giant servants tagging along with them. Again, this is fine as long as it doesn't go too far, but you're certainly not going to want to have a small army of enchanted giants following your PCs around. You're going to have to be creative and proactive

## ON THE COVER

Jesper Ejsing gives us this month's cover of Grenseldek, the lovelorn hill giant chieftain of the Twisted Nails tribe and mistress of Redlake Fort. But even though she's been spurned by the Storm Tyrant, Grenseldek is not about to let the PCs run roughshod over her plans, and she's more than willing to show them just what a jilted giant is capable of.

to mitigate this potential problem. First off, if the PCs are bringing charmed giants along with them in the dungeon, those giants should be attacked as much as the PCs themselves (and you should certainly increase the difficulty of encounters to account for the extra help the PCs have with them). Secondly, keep track of spell durations. *Charm person* lasts for 1 hour per level, and *dominate person* is 1 day per level. Eventually these spells are going to expire; when they do, the PCs will need to use more spells to recharm their giants or else face the angry, no-longer-charmed giants all over again, right in the middle of their camp. Lastly, you can throw a giant spellcaster at the PCs. Just as the PCs can use *charm person* to get a loyal giant friend, an NPC spellcaster can use the same spell against the PCs' giant allies, forcing the PCs to make opposed Charisma checks to retain mental control of their charmed giants. In short, be aware of the potential for abuse, and be ready to address these issues in play so the game remains both challenging and fun.

One last point to mention is giant-sized gear. Giants tend to be at least Large in size, which means their armor and weapons are Large as well. While this treasure can be sold for half value as normal, a PC who wants to use the magic greataxe taken from a fallen frost giant general has a problem. The *Giantslayer Adventure Path* takes this into account with a pair of artifacts; when the magic hammer *Agrimmosh* from "Battle of Bloodmarch Hill" is coupled with the reactivated *Minderhal's Forge* in the next adventure, the PCs will be able to resize the giant weapons and armor they find throughout the campaign. In addition, *Pathfinder Player Companion: Giant Hunter's Handbook* has a few other options, including a spell, a magic item, and armor and weapon special abilities that allow PCs to resize gigantic gear. Of course, a PC can always follow in the iconic barbarian Amiri's footsteps and use an oversized weapon as-is, as long as she's willing to take the –2 penalty on attack rolls with that Large bastard sword.

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# GIANTSLAYER™



## THE HILL GIANT'S PLEDGE

### PART 1: RIVERS OF BELKZEN

PAGE 7

To prevent the possibility of another attack on Trunau, the heroes embark on a riverboat journey through the Hold of Belkzen, facing dangerous river denizens and a saboteur bent on vengeance along the way.

### PART 2: GHOSTLIGHT MARSH

PAGE 24

The heroes venture into Ghostlight Marsh in search of the Vault of Thorns—a hidden druidic demiplane infested with capricious fey creatures—to obtain a cache of weapons that can be used to defeat the giant and orc menace.

### PART 3: REDLAKE FORT

PAGE 33

The heroes infiltrate an abandoned border fort full of orcs, ogres, and hill giants to end the threat against Trunau once and for all, only to learn of a much greater danger: a mysterious warlord amassing an army of giants for some fell purpose.

### ADVANCEMENT TRACK

“The Hill Giant’s Pledge” is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.

4

The PCs begin this adventure at 4th level.

5

The PCs should be 5th level before they reach the druid circle leading into the Vault of Thorns.

6

The PCs should be 6th level before entering Redlake Fort.

The PCs should be 7th level by the end of the adventure.



## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The mysterious storm giant warlord Volstus the Storm Tyrant has issued a call to the giants of western Avistan to gather at a secluded valley in the Mindspin Mountains and form an army to subjugate the smaller and weaker races of the continent. In the Hold of Belkzen, the hill giant Grenseldek, chieftain of the combined tribe of giants, ogres, and orcs called the Twisted Hearts, heard the summons. However, the overconfident hill giant believed her place was not under the Storm Tyrant's banner, but rather beside the mighty giant as his queen. Rather than rush to answer the Storm Tyrant's call to war, Grenseldek instead attacked the village of Trunau. The hill giant planned to amass a dowry from the wealth looted from her ancestor Uskroth's tomb—long forgotten in the hill under Trunau—to win Volstus's affections. Specifically, she sought half of a unique and spectacular geode that when combined with its other half (already in Grenseldek's possession) would form a map that pointed to a far greater trove: the treasure of famed giantslayer Nargrym Steelhand. With the riches claimed from beneath Trunau and the promise of more to come, the naive Grenseldek believed the Storm Tyrant could not refuse her. Unfortunately for Grenseldek, her lofty aspirations came to nothing when her infiltration and subsequent assault on Trunau failed.

Furious at the apparent incompetence of her half-orc spies and her army's recent defeat in "Battle of Bloodmarch Hill," Grenseldek has regrouped the remnants of her tribe within her lair: an abandoned (and haunted) Lastwall border outpost called Redlake Fort, once part of Harchist's Blockade. Now, Grenseldek wallows in self-pity, bemoaning her failed bid to become the Storm Tyrant's bride. Sensing this weakness, the mixed members of her tribe are quickly losing their faith in their chieftain. Their loyalty has begun to fracture, and infighting has begun between the various factions among whispers mocking the hill giant and her absurd aspirations. Now the butt end of jokes, Grenseldek frantically attempts to stop the threads of her ambition from unraveling and seeing her destiny crumble like the walls of the fort she calls home.

## PART 1: RIVERS OF BELKZEN

The adventure begins in the town of Trunau as the player characters emerge from the tomb of the hill giant Uskroth beneath Bloodmarch Hill, following the raid on the town by the orcs of the Twisted Nail tribe. After they have had a few days to rest from their endeavors and wrap up any unfinished business in town, the PCs receive an invitation from Trunau's de facto leader, Chief Defender **Halgra of the Blackened Blades** (CG female old human barbarian 5/ranger 3), asking them to join her in the meeting room at the Ivory Hall, Trunau's government seat.

With the information gleaned from captured orc prisoners and the half-orc saboteur Skreed Gorewillow,

Trunau's Council of Defenders is worried that the town's orc troubles are far from over. Thanks to the PCs, the orcs' hill giant chieftain, Grenseldek, was unable to recover the items she sought from Uskroth's tomb, and the council fears another attack on Trunau in the near future. To that end, Halgra asks the PCs to go to Grenseldek's lair—an abandoned outpost near the River Esk called Redlake Fort—and deal with the giant chieftain and her orc tribe before they can attack Trunau again. Due to the PCs' recent heroism during the orc raid and in Uskroth's tomb, Halgra believes they are best suited to this task, as Trunau's militia and citizenry are needed to rebuild the town's defenses after the orc attack. If the PCs need further enticement, Halgra is willing to offer the party a reward of 1,500 gp to put an end to Grenseldek's aggression.

If the PCs agree, Halgra introduces them to a venerable elf named **Silvermane** (N male elf druid 8), who has watched over Trunau's Hopespring for as long as anyone can remember. The PCs may or may not have rescued Silvermane from the devastated inner quarter of the town during the orc raid in "Battle of Bloodmarch Hill," but regardless, the druid has now recovered from his ordeal. Silvermane is mute, and communicates through a form of sign language that Halgra can understand and translate. With her help, Silvermane tells the PCs about the Vault of Thorns, a demiplane created by the druidic Council of Thorns, of which he was once a member. The entrance to the Vault is located within Ghostlight Marsh, a swamp to the northeast surrounding the confluence of the Kestrel and Esk rivers. Silvermane informs the PCs that the Vault contains a cache of items that can help in their fight against the Twisted Heart menace, though he has no specific details about the items. To find the Vault of Thorns, the PCs should look for a marker in the form of a circle of thorns carved into a stone near the banks of the River Esk. This marker will put them on the right path through the swamp to find the Vault, but the entrance to the demiplane is hidden. At this point, the elf produces an ancient, leaf-embossed brass lantern called a *ghostlight lantern* (see the sidebar on page 9). According to Silvermane, if the husk of a dead will-o'-wisp is placed inside the lantern, the lamp will produce a beacon that points to the circle of standing stones that marks the Vault's entrance. Once the PCs reach the druidic circle, they need only wash the supernaturally fueled lantern's light over the central standing stone to open the portal into the Vault of Thorns.

Halgra informs the PCs that she has already secured passage for them aboard a keelboat that regularly plies the rivers of southern Belkzen. The riverboat's captain, a half-orc named Raag Bloodtusk, has agreed to transport the PCs to Ghostlight Marsh and then up the River Esk to a location near Redlake Fort in exchange for the PCs' efforts in helping sail the boat and defending it from any



dangerous river denizens. Halgra explains that overland travel to Redlake Fort would be foolhardy and dangerous, as it would take the PCs right through the orc-infested Hold of Belkzen. Bloodtusk's riverboat, on the other hand, is well known among the orc tribes along the river, and the gladiator-turned-riverboat-captain enjoys rights of safe passage from these tribes' chieftains, which makes a river journey far safer than traveling overland. Before the PCs leave, Halgra gives them a letter of introduction to give to Bloodtusk, who is waiting for them on the southern bank of the Kestrel River.

## GHOSTLIGHT MARSH INFORMATION

Before the PCs depart Trunau for their river voyage, they can recall information regarding Ghostlight Marsh with successful Knowledge (geography), (history), or (nature) checks. The result of a check determines the information learned, as detailed in the table below. Silvermane or Halgra can fill in any additional details, if needed.

Result	Information
10+	Ghostlight Marsh is a vast tract of swampland along the shores of the River Esk. The current border between the Hold of Belkzen and Lastwall runs through the swamp. Both orcs and humans avoid the marsh due to countless tales of strange, floating lights.
15+	Lastwall's northern border with Belkzen has been pushed back multiple times over the centuries. When the second of these borders, Harchist's Blockade, was overrun by the orcs, some stood resolute, seeing themselves as protectors of the land. The Council of Thorns, a militant druid circle who despised the orcs' defilement of the land and the creatures conquered, attempted to stand their ground. While the druids' fight was valiant, the Council of Thorns was eventually driven back to the swamp and defeated by the orcs.
20+	Faced with sure defeat at the hands of the conquering orcs, the druids of the Council of Thorns made a final stand in the swamp, sacrificing themselves in a bloody ritual. As the druids' dying bodies slumped into the muck, vengeful will-o'-wisps rose from the marsh and drove the orc army out of the swamp. These cruel and capricious aberrations have guarded Ghostlight Marsh from intrusion ever since.
25+	The will-o'-wisps of Ghostlight Marsh are actually the reincarnated druids of the Council of Thorns, who still remember their former lives.

## A. BLOODTUSK'S KEELBOAT

The PCs can leave Trunau whenever they're ready. The Kestrel River, where Raag Bloodtusk's keelboat is waiting

for them, lies approximately 18 miles north of Trunau. The short trip to the river is uneventful, and with Halgra's letter of introduction, the PCs have no trouble boarding the boat. The adventure assumes that the PCs arrive at the boat late in the day or in early evening, and the boat sets sail the following morning (see *The River Journey* on page 15).

Bloodtusk's riverboat is a large, modified keelboat with a sturdy wooden hull. Assembled from the scavenged wrecks of several other vessels, the riverboat looks ungainly, with a wide forecastle and towerlike structure at the bow, and a high aftcastle at the stern. The boat is 120 feet long and 30 feet wide, with a draft of 10 feet. It has a single mast with a large sail as well as rowing banks. To assist in traveling upstream, the riverboat also carries eight horses that can be put ashore to pull the boat upstream. Statistics for a keelboat can be found on page 184 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat*.

Unless otherwise noted, doors on Bloodtusk's keelboat are of good wooden construction (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 16) and unlocked. The boat is cramped, with ceilings only 5 feet high. Cabins and interior cabins are usually unlit during the day, with a single hooded lantern providing illumination at night in inhabited areas.

The boat's various cabins and compartments are described below, along with specific NPCs who are likely to be encountered in those areas, though the riverboat's crew constantly moves about the boat. Those areas that include set encounters are presented as normal encounter locations after the descriptions below. The PCs can explore these locations and interact with these NPCs throughout their river journey in Part 1. Full details on Captain Bloodtusk and his crew can be found after the location descriptions, beginning on page 12.

**A1. Main Deck:** The open deck of Bloodtusk's keelboat sports a single mast, a stowed jolly boat (use the statistics for a rowboat on page 185 of *Ultimate Combat*), and an open stable (area A2). Netting along the rails provides additional storage space. A hatch in the deck aft of the mast opens onto the coxswain's gangway (area A10) below. A short flight of stairs leads up to the forecastle (area A3). Two flights of stairs descend under the forecastle to the cargo hold (area A9). Double doors aft lead to the chart room (area A6) and Bloodtusk's cabin (area A7), flanked by two sets of stairs that climb up to the aftcastle and pilot deck (area A8). A small crow's nest sits atop the 30-foot-tall mast.

**A2. Stable:** This area is described on page 11.

**A3. Forecastle:** This wide platform extends over the gunwales. A tower rises above the bow from the center of this deck, containing the galley (area A4) and the crew cabin (area A5). Two barrels lashed to the bow tower hold 20 javelins and four longspears for the crew to use in defending the boat from river threats or repelling boarders.

**A4. Galley:** The crew prepares meals in this simple but well-stocked kitchen in the base of the bow tower. A small



table in the room can seat six people. Stairs lead up to the crew cabin (area A5) above. Two hammocks can be hung under the stairs to provide additional sleeping areas.

**A5. Crew Cabin:** The boat's eight crew members sleep here in hammocks hung between several posts and the walls. Eight wooden footlockers with simple locks (Disable Device DC 20) containing the crew's personal effects skirt the perimeter of the room. Ten people can sleep comfortably in these quarters, or up to 12 in more cramped conditions.

The PCs share this cabin with the riverboat's crew, with any overflow housed in the galley (area A4) below.

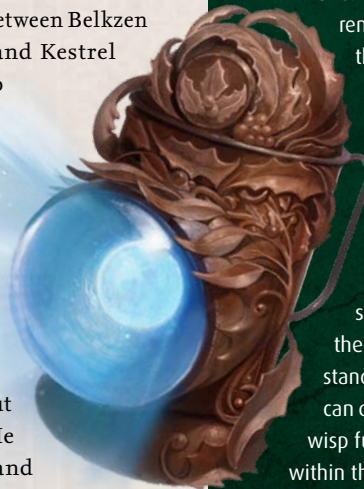
**A6. Chart Room:** A large oval table fills the center of this room. A detailed map of the border region between Belkzen and Lastwall, focusing around the Esk and Kestrel waterways, is spread on the table next to a leather-bound ledger. The ledger is seemingly filled with gibberish, but it is written in a simple cipher detailing the ship's cargo over the last month. A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Linguistics check can decipher the ledger. For the most part, the ship's cargo has been quite mundane, but the most recent (and curious) entry reads, "Bakkara, the horror from the Mwangi Expanse." If asked about this, Raag is both angry and nervous. He is upset that the PCs read his ledger and frustrated that they broke his code, as he did not want anyone knowing about this cargo. He reluctantly (and falsely) informs the PCs that it is an albino gorilla secured within a cage behind iron doors in the ship's armory (see area A12 on page 10).

Coxswain Halrex (see page 13) bunks in the chart room at night. Her rolled-up hammock and the locked wooden footlocker (Disable Device DC 20) where she keeps her personal possessions sit in one corner of the room.

**A7. Bloodtusk's Cabin:** Two large panes of lead-framed stained-glass windows on the far wall, depicting a regal Chelish naval officer atop a crow's nest surrounded by devils, shine a cascade of scintillating light and colors over this otherwise modest bedchamber. A double bed, an ivory-inlaid footlocker, and a chamber pot provide the only furnishings. The footlocker is locked with a good lock (Disable Device DC 30). The footlocker itself is worth 100 gp, and among the captain's personal effects in the locker rests Bloodtusk's *victor's belt* (see the sidebar on page 13).

When not on deck, Captain Raag Bloodtusk can usually be found here, and he sleeps here at night.

**A8. Pilot Deck:** The riverboat is steered via a sturdy tiller atop this raised deck. Behind the tiller, a heavy ballista (*Ultimate Combat* 161) is mounted on a swiveling base that gives the siege engine a 360-degree arc of fire. Three crew members are required to operate the ballista.



## GHOSTLIGHT LANTERN

The Council of Thorns created *ghostlight lanterns* to allow allies to find the hidden entrance to the council's Vault of Thorns and aid them in their battles against the orcs of Belkzen.

### GHOSTLIGHT LANTERN

#### PRICE

7,000 GP

**SLOT** none

**CL** 5th

**WEIGHT** 3 lbs.

**AURA** moderate evocation

This brass bullseye lantern is embossed with dancing orbs flitting amid a leaf-and-holly motif. A *ghostlight lantern* functions as a normal bullseye lantern, but if the remains of a dead will-o'-wisp are placed inside it, the lantern gains additional abilities. The dead will-o'-wisp powers the lantern for a period of 1 week, during which time the lantern sheds a bluish-white light without the need for oil as fuel. Creatures within the 60-foot cone of the lantern's normal light are outlined with a pale, bluish glow, as *faerie fire*. Orcs within the cone are dazzled, as if in bright sunlight, for as long as they remain within the light. Additionally, three times per day as a standard action, the wielder of a *ghostlight lantern* can draw upon the power of the deceased will-o'-wisp fueling it to cast *shocking grasp*. Lastly, while within the bounds of Ghostlight Marsh in the Hold of Belkzen, a *ghostlight lantern* unerringly emits a beacon that illuminates a direct path to the circle of standing stones that form the entrance to the Vault of Thorns. After 1 week, the power of the deceased aberration is exhausted, and the *ghostlight lantern* loses its additional abilities, once again functioning only as a normal bullseye lantern until another dead will-o'-wisp is placed inside.

### CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

**COST** 3,500 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *faerie fire*, *find the path*, *flare*, *shocking grasp*

All three must take full-round actions to load the ballista in 1 round; on the following round, two of the crew aim the ballista with full-round actions, while the third fires the weapon. Two nearby crates each hold 10 ballista bolts, and a barrel containing eight javelins and two longswords is lashed to the rail.

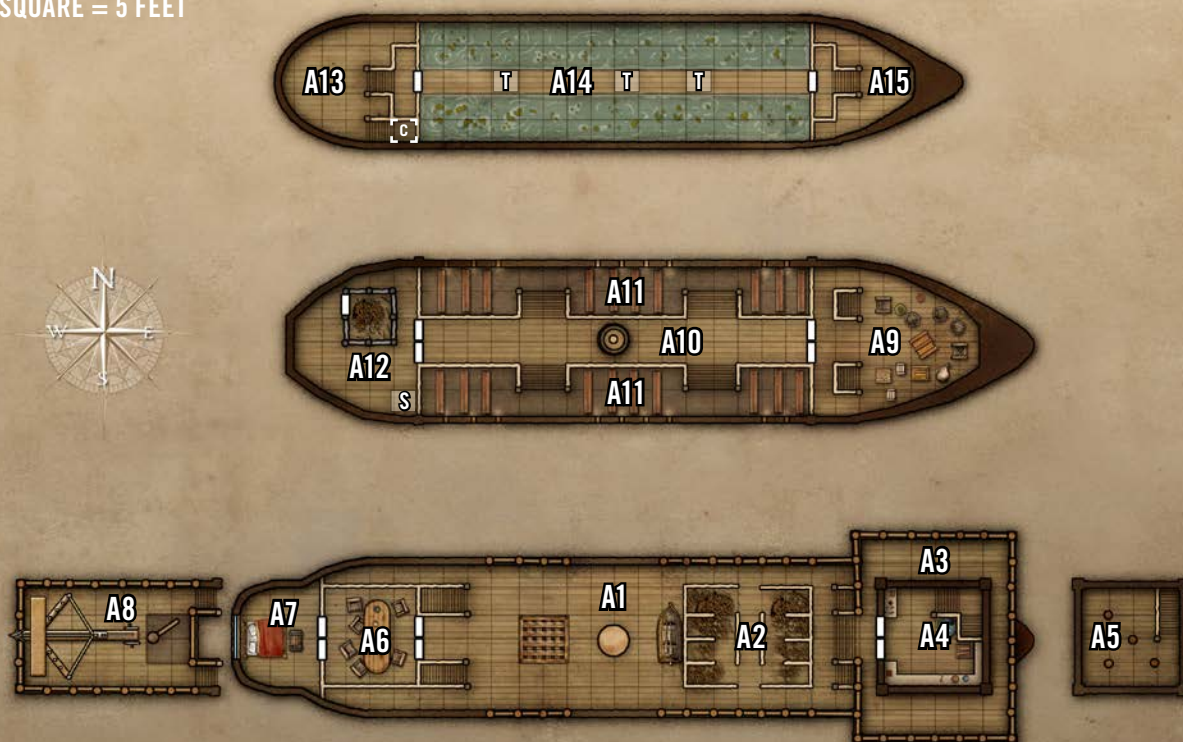
Captain Bloodtusk can usually be found here during the day with his hand on the tiller. If the boat comes under attack, three of the crew not manning the oars take battle stations here, though this leaves the ship undercrewed for sailing and maneuvering.

**A9. Cargo Hold:** Two sets of stairs lead down into this hold from the main deck (area A1), while a set of double doors



## A. BLOODTUSK'S KEELBOAT

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



allows bulkier goods to be transported through the hatch in the deck and along the gangway (area **A10**). All manner of mundane trade goods stuff this chamber, including cloth, flour, dried fruit, horse feed, pickled beef, salt, and exotic spices. There are over 500 pounds of goods within this hold, with a total market value of 550 gold pieces. The ship's larder is found here as well, and contains enough foodstuffs to feed 16 people for 2 weeks.

**A10. Coxswain's Gangway:** This long gangway overlooks the rowing banks on either side of the vessel and connects the cargo hold (area **A9**) to the armory (area **A12**). Coxswain Halrex can be found here 10 hours a day, pacing back and forth and pounding her drum to set the pace for the rowers in the banks below.

**A11. Rowing Banks:** Four short flights of stairs descend from area **A10** into these recessed compartments, where wooden benches provide seating for rowers working the massive oars that propel the riverboat forward. In all, there are 20 benches, 10 to a side, that when fully occupied can seat 40 rowers, two to a bench. The riverboat's current crew rows in shifts of four for 5 hours, providing propulsion for 10 hours each day.

**A12. Armory:** A pair of locked iron doors (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 28, Disable Device DC 25) separates this hold from the rest of the ship; Captain Bloodtusk holds the

only key. Apart from a cargo of six chain shirts, 12 battleaxes, and 20 spears, the armory also contains a locked iron cage (Disable Device DC 20) holding a drugged girallon from the Mwangi Expanse named Bakkara that Bloodtusk hopes to sell to a representative of Urgir's gladiatorial arena. Unless the PCs break into the armory and actively engage or release the creature, the girallon poses no threat at this time, but it becomes a danger later in the journey in **Event 2** (see page 17). In addition, a secret trap door is hidden in the floor near the starboard wall. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices several discolored floorboards that can be removed to reveal a narrow staircase descending into area **A13**.

**A13. Smuggler's Hold:** This secret hold is detailed on page 11.

**A14. Bilges:** This cramped corridor is detailed on page 11.

**A15. Pump Room:** A rotting door from the bilges is the only entrance into this oft-neglected compartment, which holds the pump that drains the brackish water that accumulates in the bilges. A crew member comes down here once a week to operate the pump. Unknown to Bloodtusk and the majority of the crew, a stowaway named Melira currently inhabits the compartment. See *The Saboteur* (page 14) and **Event 4** (page 17) for details on Melira and her actions during the journey.



## A2. Stable

This open stable takes up a large section of the main deck fore of the mast. Its eight stalls are lined with matted hay.

**Creatures:** The stable holds eight heavy horses, which are deployed on shore to pull the riverboat upstream when necessary. Seven of the horses are normal horses with the docile ability, but the eighth is an old, combat-trained warhorse that once belonged to a Knight of Ozem and is quite remarkable. A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Appraise, Handle Animal, or Knowledge (nature) check can identify this beast as special. Any PC who spends time around the war horse (either during his spare time or as part of his duties aboard the keelboat) finds it to be very affectionate. If treated well, the old animal bonds quickly and shows signs of wanting to accompany the PCs after the river voyage. Raag Bloodtusk is unaware of the old warhorse's training, and if asked, is willing to sell it for 200 gp, though he'll accept 150 gp from a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Diplomacy check.

### HEAVY HORSES (7)

CR 2

XP 600 each

Advanced horse (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 177)

hp 19 each

### OLD WARHORSE

CR 2

XP 600

Advanced horse (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 177)

hp 19

SQ combat training, lucky

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Lucky (Ex)** Once per day, when the horse's rider attempts a saving throw, the horse can attempt the same saving throw as if it were subject to the effect instead. The horse's rider can choose to use the horse's saving throw in place of his own. The rider can use this ability after rolling the saving throw, but only before the GM declares whether the roll was a success.

## A13. Smuggler's Hold

Shelves along the walls of this compartment keep the ship's more questionable cargo safely above the water that frequently floods this area. Bloodtusk is currently carrying no contraband, so this compartment is empty. A flight of stairs to starboard climbs to the secret trap door in the armory (area A12) and a shorter set of steps descends into the narrow bilge (area A14) that runs along the boat's keel.

**Trap:** The stowaway Melira (see **Event 4**) has set an alarm snare ranger trap in this compartment, which triggers when the door to the bilges (area A14) is opened. Melira resets the trap every day to prevent its DC from decreasing.

### ALARM SNARE RANGER TRAP

CR —

Type mechanical; Perception DC 13; Disable Device DC 13

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** none

**Effect** When this trap is triggered, it creates a momentary loud noise equivalent to the audible alarm version of *alarm*. The trap also constricts around a limb or other part of the triggering creature's body (DC 13 Reflex negates). The creature cannot move from the location of the trap. The trapped creature can escape as a full-round action with a successful DC 13 Escape Artist check or DC 25 Strength check. The trap has 3 hit points and can hold one Medium creature.

**Development:** If the trap is triggered, the alarm alerts Melira in area A15, who prepares for combat as detailed her statistics in **Event 4** (see page 18).

**Story Award:** Award the PCs 400 XP for encountering the trap, whether they disable or trigger it.

## A14. Bilges

This 5-foot-wide corridor stretches for 80 feet between two doors. The corridor is filled with sludge and muck to a depth of 2 feet, and counts as a shallow bog (costing 2 squares of movement to enter a square). See page 427 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* for details on shallow bogs.

**Traps:** The saboteur Melira has set three ranger snare traps along this narrow hallway at the positions indicated on the map to slow down anyone approaching her hideout in area A15. Like she does with the alarm snare in area A13, Melira resets these traps every day.

### SNARE RANGER TRAPS (3)

CR —

Type mechanical; Perception DC 13; Disable Device DC 13

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** none

**Effect** When triggered, this trap constricts around a limb or other part of the triggering creature's body (DC 13 Reflex negates). The creature cannot move from the location of the trap. The trapped creature can escape as a full-round action with a successful DC 13 Escape Artist check or DC 25 Strength check. The trap has 3 hit points and can hold one Medium creature.

**Development:** If the alarm snare trap in area A13 alerts Melira (in area A15) to the PCs' presence, she comes to the door and bombards would-be attackers with a hail of arrows, counting on her traps and the muck on the floor to slow them down. See page 18 for Melira's statistics.

**Story Award:** Award the PCs 400 XP for each trap they encounter, whether they disable or trigger it.

## THE CREW

Bloodtusk's keelboat requires a minimum crew of eight. Currently, the boat has a crew of 10, consisting of Captain Raag Bloodtusk, Coxswain Halrex, and eight half-orc crew



members for rowing and sailing. While on board, the PCs are considered part of the crew and are expected to partake in daily duties aboard the vessel and defend the boat while in hostile waters. In addition, a stowaway named Melira has come on board as well.

For the most part, the captain and crew leave the fighting to the PCs. Unless the PCs actively attempt to recruit Bloodtusk and his crew to fight, the captain and his crew stay out of the PCs' way, though if the PCs seem to be in over their heads, Bloodtusk does not hesitate to intervene (either personally or by ordering his crew to assist the PCs). To heighten the sense of danger during the journey, feel free to use one or two crew members as examples to remind the PCs that the waters they travel upon are not without peril. An additional river drake flyby absconding with a crew member manning the crow's nest, or a crocodile eating a

crew member who got too close to the river when hauling in the day's catch, can go a long way toward instilling a sense of dread.

## CAPTAIN RAAG BLOODTUSK

A former gladiator in the fighting pits of Urgir, Raag Bloodtusk won his freedom through trials of strength and blood—both his own and that of his enemies. Since earning his freedom several years ago, the hulking half-orc has sailed up and down the Esk and Kestrel rivers, ferrying supplies into and out of Belkzen. Despite his harsh appearance, Raag has a soft spot for the downtrodden (a by-product of his long incarceration). It is this attitude that brought him into contact with Halgra of the Blackened Blades, and the two have shared a friendship (and romance, according to some rumors) over several years. Bloodtusk is a fair captain, and takes an equal share of work when his presence is not needed at the helm. Bloodtusk never abandons his boat or crew (including the PCs) if they are in need.

PCs that spend time around the captain quickly learn of his personality and kinship with his crew. Any PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Knowledge (local) check can recall Bloodtusk's past glories as a former gladiator in Urgir's fighting pits. If questioned about the character of any of his crew members, Bloodtusk strongly defends them and states that they have all served him for several years now. The one thing Bloodtusk does speak poorly of is the river drakes that hunt along the banks of the Kestrel River, referring to the foul creatures as "oversized river vultures."



CAPTAIN RAAG BLOODTUSK

### RAAG BLOODTUSK

CR 3

XP 800

Male half-orc ranger 4

CN Medium humanoid (human, orc)

**Init** +2 (+4 on water); **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8 (+10 on water)

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex)

**hp** 38 (4d10+12)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

**Defensive Abilities** orc ferocity

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk scimitar +7 (1d6+3/18–20), mwk kukri +6 (1d4+1/18–20) or mwk scimitar +9 (1d6+3/18–20)

**Ranged** javelin +6 (1d6+3)

**Special Attacks** combat style (two-weapon), favored enemy (dragons +2)

**Ranger Spells Prepared** (CL 1st; concentration +2)  
1st—resist energy



### TACTICS

**During Combat** Against foes with energy attacks (such as river drakes), Bloodtusk casts *resist energy* before entering combat.

**Morale** Bloodtusk fights to the death to defend his ship and crew. If both are lost, or if he's not on his ship, he attempts to flee if reduced to fewer than 20 hit points.

### STATISTICS

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

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 19

**Feats** Endurance, Quick Draw, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

**Skills** Intimidate +8, Knowledge (geography) +5 (+7 on water), Knowledge (local) +2, Perception +8 (+10 on water), Profession (sailor) +8, Survival +8 (+10 on water), Swim +13

**Languages** Common, Orc

**SQ** favored terrain (water +2), hunter's bond (companions), orc blood, track +2, wild empathy +3

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds*;

**Other Gear** chain shirt, javelins (2), mwk kukri, mwk scimitar, *ring of swimming*, black pearl earring (worth 110 gp), key to footlocker in area **A7**, key to armory (area **A12**), key to cage in area **A12**

**Development:** Bloodtusk's only memento of his former life as a gladiator is the magic belt he won as a prize in a fighting tournament. Due to the painful memories he stills harbors of those days, however, he keeps this *victor's belt* (see the sidebar) hidden in a footlocker in his quarters (area **A7**). If any PC expresses interest in purchasing the belt, Bloodtusk offers it at full market value, though if made helpful with a successful DC 19 Diplomacy check, he's willing to part with it for only 3,500 gp. If a PC does Bloodtusk some great service or saves his life (including treating his poisoning in **Event 3**; see page 17), he gives that PC the *victor's belt* as a reward.

### COXSWAIN HALREX

The only full-blooded orc on Bloodtusk's crew, Coxswain Halrex directs the crew in its day-to-day duties, particularly the rowers propelling the boat. Halrex is strict and gets every last ounce of effort out of those she directs. She is suspicious of newcomers, and if any PCs work as rowers during their time on the riverboat, they find themselves the target of her harsh remarks on several occasions. She has no time for people who don't pull their own weight, and refers to PCs who fail to assist in rowing the boat as "useless."

#### COXSWAIN HALREX

**CR 2**
**XP 600**

Female orc bard 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 222)

CN Medium humanoid (orc)

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

### VICTOR'S BELT

This large magic belt is awarded only to the most respected gladiators who survive the brutal gauntlet of Urgir's gladiatorial fighting pits.

#### VICTOR'S BELT

#### PRICE

5,000 GP

#### SLOT

belt

#### CL

5th

#### WEIGHT

1 lb.

#### AURA

faint enchantment

This thick leather belt is adorned with several oversized iron plates and disks depicting images of orc gladiators in battle. The wearer of a *victor's belt* gains a +2 morale bonus on all combat maneuver checks and to Combat Maneuver Defense. In addition, the wearer can enter a *rage* (as the *rage* spell) as a standard action once per day. Whenever the wearer takes an amount of damage equal to at least half his current hit points in a single round, there is a 50% chance that the belt activates its *rage* ability automatically as an immediate action, provided the power has not already been activated that day and the wearer is not already raging. Regardless of how the *rage* is activated, it lasts for 5 rounds.

#### CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

#### COST

2,500 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *bull's strength*, *rage*

### DEFENSE

**AC** 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +2 Dex)

**hp** 20 (3d8+3)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic

**Defensive Abilities** ferocity

**Weaknesses** light sensitivity

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk whip +6 (1d3+3 nonlethal) or short sword +5 (1d6+3/19–20)

**Ranged** javelin +4 (1d6+3)

**Special Attacks** bardic performance 15 rounds/day (countersong, distraction, fascinate [DC 12], inspire competence +2, inspire courage +1)

**Bard Spells Known** (CL 3rd; concentration +4)

1st (4/day)—*animate rope*, *cause fear* (DC 12), *cure light wounds*, *hideous laughter* (DC 12)

0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 11), *flare* (DC 11), *know direction*, *mage hand*, *resistance*, *summon instrument*

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Halrex attempts to disarm or trip opponents with her whip, then switches to her short sword.





**Morale** Although loyal enough to Bloodtusk, Halrex is not willing to lay down her life for his ship or his crew, and she attempts to flee or surrender if the battle looks likely to be lost or if reduced to 10 hit points or fewer.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 6, **Cha** 13

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 17

**Feats** Extra Performance, Great Fortitude

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Perception +4, Perform (percussion) +9, Profession (sailor) +4, Swim +5

**Languages** Common, Orc

**SQ** bardic knowledge +1, versatile performance (percussion), weapon familiarity

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure light wounds*; **Other**

**Gear** +1 leather armor, javelins (2), mwk whip, short sword, mwk drum, spell component pouch, key to the footlocker in area **A6**, 22 gp

## OTHER CREW

In addition to Captain Bloodtusk and Coxswain Halrex, there are eight other crew members, all half-orcs, aboard Bloodtusk's riverboat: Barka, Gashnakh, Ghorza, Krothu, Oorug, Sharg, Taug, and Urul. They are almost all completely loyal to Bloodtusk, but Gashnakh recently discovered the stowaway Melira in the pump room (area **A15**), after setting off her traps the same evening the PCs first came aboard the boat. Seduced and enchanted, Gashnakh is now Melira's pawn, and is more loyal to her than to his captain (see The Saboteur, below). Use the following statistics to represent Bloodtusk's crew members.

## BLOODTUSK'S CREW (8)

**CR 1**

**XP 400 each**

Half-orc rogue (pirate) 1/warrior 1 (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 72)

**N** Medium humanoid (human, orc)

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

## DEFENSE

**AC** 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +2 Dex)

**hp** 15 each (2 HD; 1d8+1d10+2)

**Fort** +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

**Defensive Abilities** orc ferocity

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** handaxe +4 (1d6+3/×3) or dagger +4 (1d4+3/19–20)

**Ranged** javelin +3 (1d6+3) or heavy ballista +3 (4d8/19–20)

**Special Attacks** sneak attack +1d6

## TACTICS

**Morale** A crew member flees or surrenders if reduced to 5 hit points or fewer.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 16

**Feats** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (heavy ballista), Sea Legs<sup>uc</sup>

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Climb +9, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (engineering) +1, Knowledge (local) +4, Perception +5, Profession (sailor) +6, Sleight of Hand +6, Stealth +6, Swim +9

**Languages** Common, Orc

**SQ** orc blood, sea legs

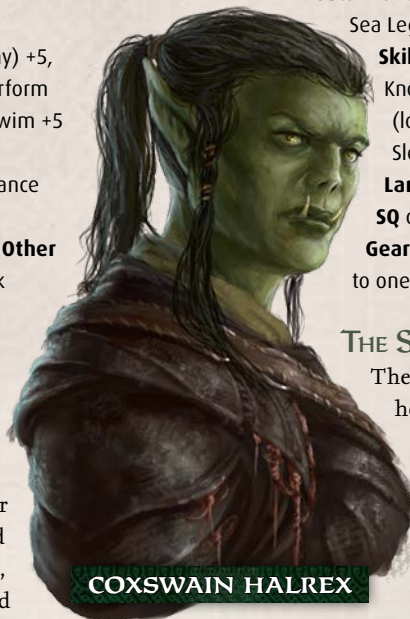
**Gear** leather armor, dagger, handaxe, javelin, key to one of the footlockers in area **A5**, 11 gp

## THE SABOTEUR

The people of Trunau lauded the PCs for their heroics during the battle of Bloodmarch Hill, as the Twisted Nail orc raid on the town came to be known. However, while the PCs' actions benefited the frontier town, the bloody justice doled out to the half-orc infiltrators—particularly to their leader, Skreed Gorewillow—was not appreciated by all. One individual rocked

by the half-orc alchemist's death was Skreed's lover, a human woman from Freedom Town named Melira. When she became aware of Skreed's death (through the lovers' linked pair of magical amulets called *true love locket*s; see page 19), a part of her died as well. Melira immediately traveled to Trunau to learn more about Skreed's fate, and hearing the names of those responsible for her lover's death sung aloud by Trunau's populace sickened her. She began obsessively learning all she could about these killers and plotting her revenge.

When Melira discovered that the PCs were going to leave Trunau and take passage on Bloodtusk's riverboat, she sent a message to one of Skreed's accomplices, a fire-scarred orc named Tark Singeskin, asking him to ambush the boat near Ghostlight Marsh. Wanting to partake in the vengeance upon her lover's killers firsthand, Melira used her *wand of invisibility* to stow away aboard the keelboat, hiding in the pump room (area **A15**). Melira's opportunity for vengeance was almost thwarted when one of the boat's half-orc crew members, Gashnakh, discovered her presence during a routine cleaning. With a combination of seduction and judicious use of *sow thought* spells, Melira managed to enlist the half-orc's aid in her plan. Now, the besotted Gashnakh clandestinely performs Melira's dirty work aboard the boat (**Events 1, 2, and 3**) while she waits for Tark and his orc allies to attack (see area **E**).



COXSWAIN HALREX



Melira's full statistics are presented on page 18 in **Event 4**, which can be run whenever the PCs finally discover her presence and decide to confront her.

### THE RIVER JOURNEY

Bloodtusk's keelboat weighs anchor and sets off on the river journey first thing in the morning after the PCs arrive. Captain Bloodtusk makes it abundantly clear on the first day that the PCs are not idle tourists; Halgra negotiated working passage for the PCs, and they must make themselves useful while aboard. Bloodtusk expects everyone to help row the riverboat as well as perform other duties. In addition to rowing, each of the PCs can choose one of the jobs listed below. The PCs don't have to keep the same job for the entire journey, but they must do something daily. Each day, a PC must succeed at a skill check (or checks) for his or her chosen job to accomplish that day's tasks. If the PCs do well, they are met with camaraderie; if they do not, the rest of Bloodtusk's crew (especially Coxswain Halrex) targets any slacking PCs with contempt, and may reassign them to different jobs on the following day. Any jobs not taken by PCs are filled by crew members.

**Cooking:** PCs can assist the boat's cook, Gashnakh, in preparing meals and cleaning, stocking, and maintaining the galley (area **A4**). A successful DC 10 Profession (cook) check or Intelligence check is enough to cook a palatable meal. If a PC is skilled in cuisine, the crew is happy to let that PC take over cooking duties. A PC who fails this check by 5 or more is banned from the galley.

**Fishing:** PCs can help haul in the day's catch to feed the crew. A successful DC 10 Profession (fisherman) check, DC 18 Survival check, or a successful DC 10 Strength check is required to haul in the boat's fishing nets. Four nets are cast into the river each day, and up to two individuals can haul in each net (one attempts the check, while the other can use aid another) every morning. At least one success indicates there is enough food to feed everyone on board for 1 day.

**Lookout:** PCs can watch for hazards from the crow's nest atop the mast. Three successful DC 10 Climb checks are required to get to the crow's nest. Any PC stationed in the crow's nest gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Perception checks to notice approaching threats.

**Rowing:** PCs can spend 5 hours rowing the keelboat in the rowing banks (area **A11**). This requires a successful DC 5 Profession (sailor) or DC 10 Strength check. The crew views any PC who fails this check as weak, and that character becomes a constant target of Coxswain Halrex's insults. The PC must also succeed at a DC 10 Constitution check or be fatigued at the end of the shift.

**Sounding:** Helping the keelboat's pilot avoid the shallows along the riverbeds requires a successful DC 10 Profession (sailor) check or DC 15 Perception check from the forecastle (area **A3**). If a PC fails this check by 5 or more, the ship runs

### UNCOVERING THE SABOTEUR EARLY

The adventure assumes that the PCs don't encounter the stowaway and saboteur Melira until **Event 4**, after her sabotage attempts in earlier events, but it's possible the PCs might discover her presence early. Even if this happens, remember that her enchanted pawn, Gashnakh, is still able to carry out Melira's desires, and **Events 1, 2, and 3** can still unfold as written. If Gashnakh's treachery is discovered early but Melira remains at large, she simply performs the sabotage herself, probably making use of her *wand of invisibility* to remain unseen. If the PCs do discover both Melira and Gashnakh before **Event 4**, that's fine. In this case, reward the PCs with a story award equal to the XP they would have gained from the missed encounters. The location-based encounters can still be run as written, including their encounter with Tark Singeskin and his orc allies at area **E**.

aground and must be towed free by the horses, adding 1 day of travel to the journey.

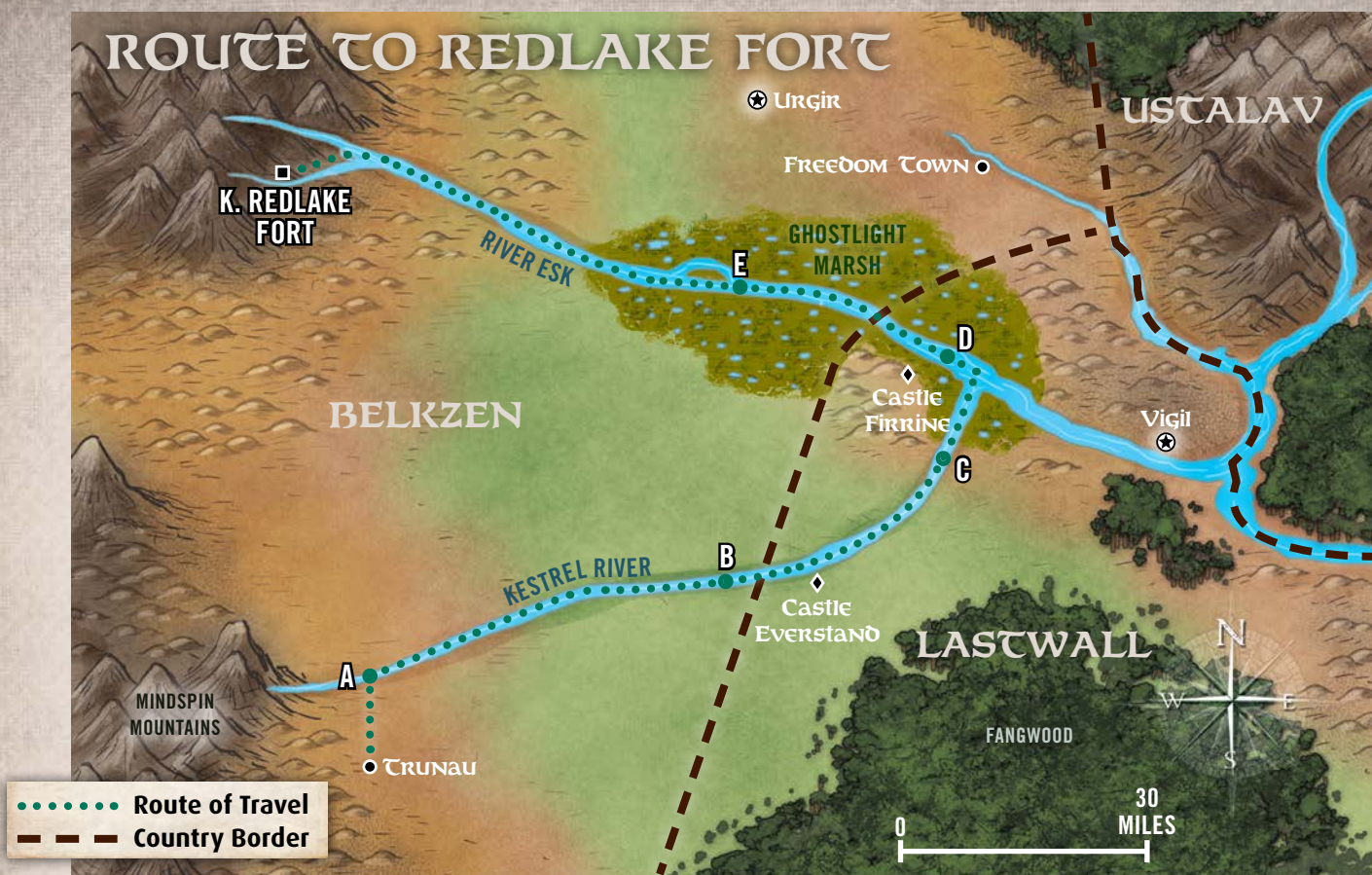
**Stable Mucking:** Maintaining the horses and stable (area **A2**) requires a successful DC 10 Handle Animal check, DC 10 Profession (stable master) check, or DC 15 Ride check. If a PC fails this check by 5 or more on 2 consecutive days, one of the horses becomes sick and is not available for towing. This adds 1 day of travel to the journey, unless the animal is cured, requiring either a successful DC 15 Heal check or magic such as *remove sickness* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 234).

### TRAVEL TIMES AND ENCOUNTERS

The distance along the Esk and Kestrel rivers from the PCs' embarkation point near Trunau to Ghostlight Marsh is approximately 130 miles, a journey of about 6 days if everything goes unhindered. Traveling with the current down the Kestrel River (a distance of approximately 105 miles), Bloodtusk's keelboat has an average speed of 3 miles per hour. With the crew rowing for 10 hours a day, the boat can travel 30 miles per day, meaning the downstream journey along the Kestrel takes approximately 3-1/2 days. To make the more difficult journey against the powerful currents of the River Esk (a distance of about 24 miles), Bloodtusk deploys his horses on shore to pull the keelboat upstream. At a speed of only 1 mile per hour, the riverboat covers only 10 miles per day, and this strenuous upstream journey on the River Esk takes another 2-1/2 days. Bloodtusk anchors the keelboat near the shore every night, setting sail again in the morning.

Even aboard the relative safety of Bloodtusk's riverboat, the journey is fraught with many perils, and the PCs will face several encounters during the voyage. These are presented below as both event-based and location-based encounters.





Each of the events includes a suggested time for the encounter to take place, but feel free to adjust the timing of these events as you see fit, interspersing them with the location-based encounters, each of which is tied to a specific locale marked on the map above. Likewise, if the timeline of the voyage changes, modify the following encounters as necessary.

## EVENT 1: HUNGRY CROCODILES (CR 4)

This event occurs on the first day of the river journey.

After being discovered by Gashnakh in the pump room (area A15), Melira casts *sow thought* on the half-orc, planting the idea that the PCs are a threat to the riverboat, and suggesting that Gashnakh loosen a section of the ship's rail at a location that one or more of the PCs frequent. Due to the subtle nature of the spell, Gashnakh believes that the idea is his own.

Melira knows that several marine predators dwell within the Kestrel River, and she hopes these beasts can take care of the PCs for her. The best time for this to happen is when the day's catch gets hoisted up on the deck first thing in the morning (see The River Journey on page 15). This task requires the PCs to stand on the slippery deck (area A1) and lean over the rail to haul in the nets. As they do so, the

sabotaged deck rail breaks, and any PC bringing in the day's catch must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save or topple overboard into the river below. If all of the affected PCs succeed at the save, Oorug, one of the boat's crew members, falls into the river. Anyone falling in the river must succeed at a DC 15 Swim check to stay afloat (the water is considered rough due to the strength of the current). A successful DC 15 Climb check is required to climb up the side of the keelboat. Alternatively, a character in the water can attempt to swim to shore. PCs still on deck can attempt to aid characters in the water by throwing the nets or ropes to them with a successful ranged touch attack. Use the Event 1: Hungry Crocodiles map on page 20 for this encounter.

**Creatures:** Two crocodiles are following the keelboat, hoping to find an easy meal of discarded fish parts. Once something more substantial splashes into the river, however, they savagely attack their new quarry.

### CROCODILES (2)

CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 22 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 51)

**Development:** A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Craft (carpentry) or Craft (ships) check, or a DC 20 Knowledge



(engineering) check, while inspecting the broken rail discovers signs of sabotage, though there are no clues as to who sabotaged the rail or why.

## EVENT 2: THE BEAST UNLEASHED (CR 5)

This event takes place early in the morning on the third day of the journey, either before the ship weighs anchor or shortly thereafter.

**Creature:** A drugged girallon called Bakkara is locked inside a sturdy cage in the riverboat's armory (area A12). To ensure the beast remains docile, a crew member feeds it several pounds of drugged meat each day. Today, however, Melira picks the lock on the girallon's cage and uses *sow thought* to convince Gashnakh to steal the girallon's drug-laced meal before it has a chance to eat. When the girallon awakens from its heavy, drug-induced slumber, it rattles its cage, causing the now-unlocked door to swing open. In a violent rage, the girallon bursts through the wooden wall into the rowing banks (area A11) and begins rampaging through the panicked and screaming rowers. Due to the beast's steady ingestion of toxins, the girallon has the sickened condition, and it is considered to be squeezing while belowdecks, giving it a -4 penalty to its AC, a -6 penalty on attack rolls, and a -2 penalty on damage rolls and saving throws. Together, these penalties reduce the girallon's CR by 1. The enraged beast attacks anyone it comes across, and fights to the death. Use the map of Bloodtusk's keelboat on page 10 for this encounter.

### BAKKARA

CR 5

XP 1,600

Drugged girallon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 154)

hp 73

**Weaknesses** sickened

**Development:** If none of PCs discovered the signs of sabotage on the broken rail in **Event 1**, after this encounter, they can attempt a DC 15 Perception check to overhear Captain Bloodtusk and Coxswain Halrex speculating about a possible link between the sabotaged rail and the unlocked cage door. (They assume the door was tampered with, as the captain has the only key to the cage.)

## EVENT 3: A MEAL MOST FOUL

This event takes place on the fifth evening of the journey, while the crew enjoys dinner.

At Melira's behest, Gashnakh laces the evening meal with the drug used to make the girallon in area A12 docile. Any PC working as a cook can attempt a Perception check opposed by Gashnakh's Sleight of Hand check to notice the half-orc crew member adding the drug to the meal.

**Hazard:** If Gashnakh succeeds in poisoning the evening's dinner, anyone partaking in the meal is subjected to a dose

of simian tranquilizer. The drug changes the taste and smell of the food ever so slightly, giving the PCs one last chance to notice the presence of the drug in the food (by succeeding at a DC 30 Perception check) before consuming it. Characters with the poison use or poison lore class features (or a similar ability) gain a +10 competence bonus on this check.

### SIMIAN TRANQUILIZER

**Type** poison, ingested; **Save** Fortitude DC 18

**Onset** 10 minutes; **Frequency** 1/minute for 6 minutes

**Initial Effect** 1 Str damage; **Secondary Effect** unconscious 1d4 hours, then sickened for 24 hours; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

**Development:** Due to liver damage and his many years fighting in Urgir's gladiatorial pits, Raag Bloodtusk is particularly vulnerable to the poison. He automatically fails his saving throws against the poison and falls unconscious for 24 hours (instead of the normal 1d4 hours). If the PCs attempt to treat him, either with magic, antitoxin, or the Heal skill, Bloodtusk can attempt saving throws against the poison's secondary effect as normal. If the captain is incapacitated, Coxswain Halrex takes command and pilots the keelboat to Ghostlight Marsh in his stead.

If the PCs catch Gashnakh in the act of poisoning the meal, he is unclear about his motive, but he maintains that it was his idea (thanks to Melira's *sow thought* spell). With further interrogation (or a successful DC 13 Intimidate check), however, the half-orc reveals the presence of the stowaway in the pump room (area A15). Once the PCs decide to confront Melira, go to **Event 4**.

**Story Award:** Award the PCs 1,200 XP for noticing the poison or preventing Gashnakh from poisoning the meal, or for surviving the poison's effects.

## EVENT 4: THE SABOTEUR DISCOVERED (CR 6)

This event takes place whenever the PCs learn about Melira and her attempts to sabotage the journey. If the PCs have not found the secret smuggler's hold that leads to her hideout, either Bloodtusk or Halrex reluctantly reveals its location. If the PCs fail to discover Melira's presence on their own, she eventually reveals herself when she joins the battle with the orc boarding party and her ally Tark Singeskin (see area E).

**Creature:** The saboteur Melira spends the majority of her time hiding with her constrictor snake familiar Chokehold in the pump room (area A15), guarded by her traps in areas A13 and A14, while sending her enchanted pawn Gashnakh to wreak havoc aboard the keelboat. The adventure assumes the PCs encounter her in area A15 when they go to confront her, but this event can transpire virtually anywhere on the boat, depending on the actions of both Melira and the PCs.



## MELIRA

CR 6

XP 2,400

Female human ranger (trapper) 6/sorcerer (wildblooded) 1  
(*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 65, 71)

NE Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +5 (+7 on water); **Senses** Perception +10 (+12 on water)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 23, touch 15, flat-footed 18 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +4 shield)

**hp** 60 (7 HD; 6d10+1d6+20)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk short sword +7/+2 (1d6/19–20)

**Ranged** +1 *longbow* +13/+8 (1d8+1/x3)

**Special Attacks** combat style (archery), fate's retribution 5/day (DC 12), favored enemy (dwarves +2, humans +4)

**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 1st; concentration +3)

1st (4/day)—*shield*, *sow thought*<sup>ARG</sup> (DC 14)

0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 13), *ghost sound* (DC 12),  
*light*, *resistance*

**Bloodline** destined (karmic)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** If her alarm snare trap in area

**A13** is triggered, Melira casts *shield* and uses her *wand of cat's grace* to prepare for combat; she then uses her *wand of invisibility* to hide and ambush intruders.

**During Combat** Melira prefers ranged combat, using her Point-Blank Master feat to fire arrows even in melee combat. She targets humans and dwarves first to take advantage of her favored enemy bonuses, making use of Deadly Aim and Rapid Shot as long as her attacks are hitting. If encountered in areas **A14** and **A15**, Melira first targets those enemies caught in her snare traps in the bilges.

**Morale** If reduced to 15 hit points or fewer, Melira activates her *wand of invisibility*, then uses Acrobatics and Stealth to reposition herself while invisible so she can drink her *potion of cure serious wounds*. Once healed, she casts *ghost sound* to make it seem as if she is running away. Whether or not opponents fall for the ruse, Melira once again tries to avenge her lover. If subsequently reduced to fewer than 8 hit points, Melira reluctantly surrenders, always keeping an eye open for an opportunity to escape.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 20, **Con** 12,

**Int** 8, **Wis** 15,

**Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 21

**Feats** Deadly Aim, Endurance, Eschew Materials, Point-Blank Master<sup>APG</sup> (longbow), Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Spell Focus (enchantment), Toughness, Weapon Focus (longbow)

**Skills** Acrobatics +10, Bluff +12, Climb +6, Disable Device +12, Knowledge (geography) +3 (+5 on water), Knowledge (nature) +3, Linguistics +0, Perception +10 (+12 on water), Stealth +12 (+14 on water), Survival +9 (+11 on water), Swim +6

**Languages** Common, Orc

**SQ** bloodline arcana (make an attack of opportunity against a creature threatening you if you fail a concentration check while casting defensively), favored terrain (water +2), hunter's bond (constrictor snake animal companion named Chokehold), track +3, trapfinding +3, traps 5/day (alarm, snare), wild empathy +8

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure serious wounds*,

*wand of cat's grace* (8 charges), *wand of*

*invisibility* (6 charges), acid (2), tanglefoot bag;

**Other Gear** mithral chain shirt, +1 *longbow* with 20 arrows, mwk short sword, *true love locket* containing a picture of Skreed Gorewillow (see the sidebar on page 19), backpack, rations (2 weeks), thieves' tools, waterskin, 104 gp

## CHOKEHOLD

CR —

Constrictor snake animal companion

N Medium animal

**Init** +4; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +5

### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 Dex, +4 natural)

**hp** 19 (3d8+6)

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

**Defensive Abilities** evasion

### OFFENSE

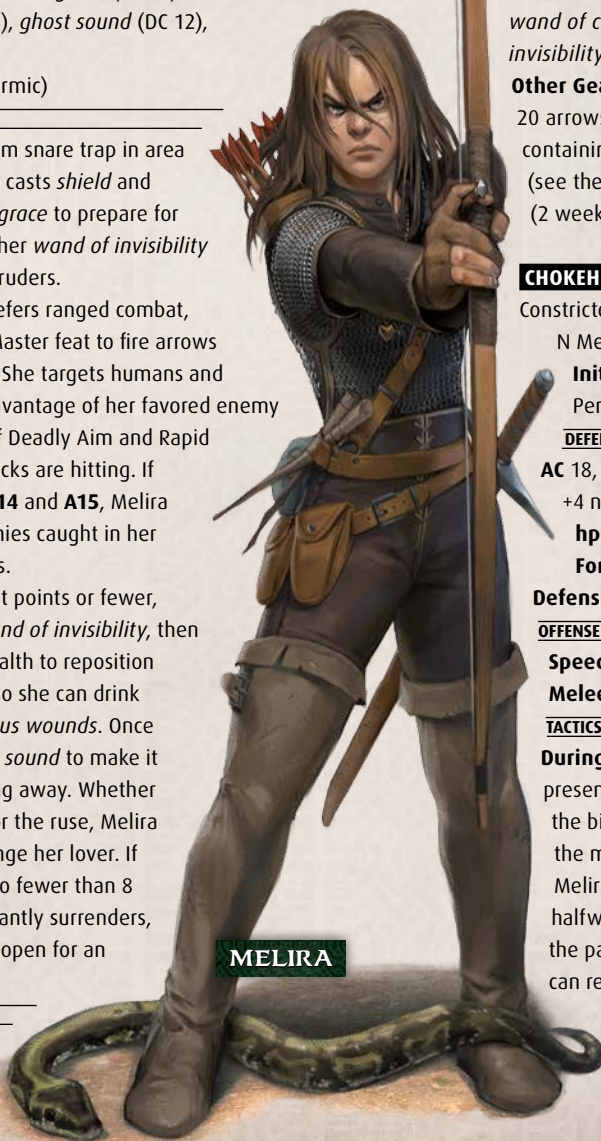
**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

**Melee** bite +5 (1d3+4 plus grab)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** If Melira is alerted to the presence of intruders, she sends Chokehold into the bilges (area **A14**). He can swim through the muck without penalty and knows to avoid Melira's traps. The snake takes a position halfway down the corridor, attempting to block the passage and grapple enemies before they can reach Melira.

**Morale** While Melira lives, Chokehold fights until he is incapacitated. If Melira dies, the snake tries to flee when brought to fewer than 5 hit points.



MELIRA



### STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 18, **Con** 13, **Int** 1, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 2

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +6 (+10 grapple); **CMD** 19 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Agile Maneuvers, Toughness

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Climb +11, Perception +5, Stealth +8, Swim +11

**SQ** link, share spells, tricks (attack, come, defend, down, guard)

**Development:** If the PCs capture and interrogate Melira, she is very open about her hatred of them for murdering her lover, Skreed Gorewillow, in the previous adventure. She knows very little about Skreed's superiors, however; Skreed told her that he was working for a giant named Grenseldek, but told Melira nothing of the giant's plans. Although bitter and angry, Melira feigns cooperation with the PCs while looking for the best opportunity to escape, but she does not reveal her alliance with Gashnakh or the ambush planned by Tark Singeskin (see area E). If possible, Melira casts *sow thought* to convince Gashnakh, another crew member, or even a PC to free her. If the PCs have not yet encountered Tark Singeskin (see area E), Melira stays aboard the riverboat, even if freed, using the chaos during Tark's attack to escape and join the fight against the PCs.

## B. FLIGHT OF THE DRAKES

This encounter occurs around midday on the second day of travel, when the keelboat passes near a river drake nest.

### B1. Flyby Attack (CR 5+)

**Creatures:** As the keelboat sails past the drake nest, three river drakes dive out of the sun and fly over the ship's deck. Any PCs on deck can attempt Perception checks opposed by the drakes' Stealth checks to notice their approach. (The drakes use the blinding sunlight to hide.) Two of the drakes attack characters on the deck with their caustic mucus ability, while the third, an alpha drake, makes a Flyby Attack to grapple the old warhorse in area A2. On subsequent rounds, the two drakes land on deck and pounce to engage the PCs, while the alpha drake flies back to its nest (area B2) with its prize, using its speed surge ability to get away.

#### ALPHA RIVER DRAKE

CR 5

XP 1,600

Advanced variant river drake (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 107)  
NE Large dragon (aquatic, water)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +9

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 16, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)  
**hp** 63 (6d12+24)

## TRUE LOVE LOCKET

Melira wears one of a magic pair of lockets; her lover Skreed Gorewillow wore its linked match (the PCs might now have possession of Skreed's locket following the events of "Battle of Bloodmarch Hill"). Melira's locket contains a tiny portrait of Skreed.

### TRUE LOVE LOCKET

PRICE  
6,000 GP

SLOT neck

CL 3rd

WEIGHT —

AURA faint divination

These gold, heart-shaped pendants, which open to reveal small hollows inside, always come in pairs and must be on the same plane of existence to function. When two people with a strong emotional bond (such as good friends, family members, or lovers) each wear one of the lockets containing a keepsake from the other person (usually a lock of hair or small picture), the lockets' magic becomes evident. After 24 hours of wearing a linked locket, each wearer knows the condition of the other, as a constant *status* spell. In addition, when either wearer uses the aid another action to assist the wearer of the linked locket, the bonus gained is increased by 1. Lastly, once per day, each wearer may use one of the known skills of the wearer of the linked locket, as *borrow skill* (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 207). If either wearer of a linked *true love locket* takes the pendant off, has it forcefully removed, is killed, or travels to another plane, both lockets cease to function until re-attuned after 24 hours.

### CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 3,000 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *borrow skill*<sup>APG</sup>, *status*

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

**Immune** paralysis, sleep; **Resist** acid 20

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (average), swim 30 ft.

**Melee** bite +12 (2d6+7 plus grab), tail slap +7 (1d6+3)

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

**Special Attacks** caustic mucus (DC 17), pounce

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 25, **Dex** 14, **Con** 19, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +14 (+18 grapple); **CMD** 26

**Feats** Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

**Skills** Fly +9, Intimidate +8, Perception +9, Stealth +7, Survival +9, Swim +15

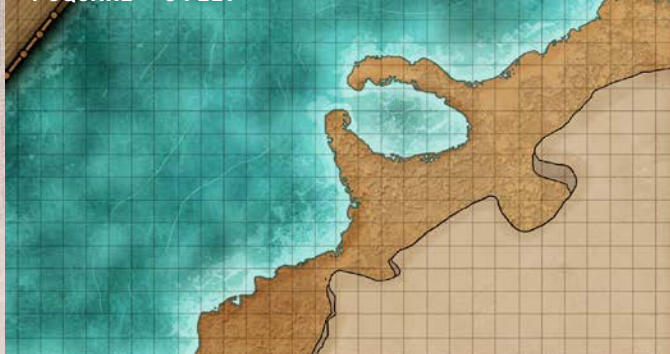
**Languages** Draconic

**SQ** amphibious, speed surge



## EVENT 1: HUNGRY CROCODILES

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



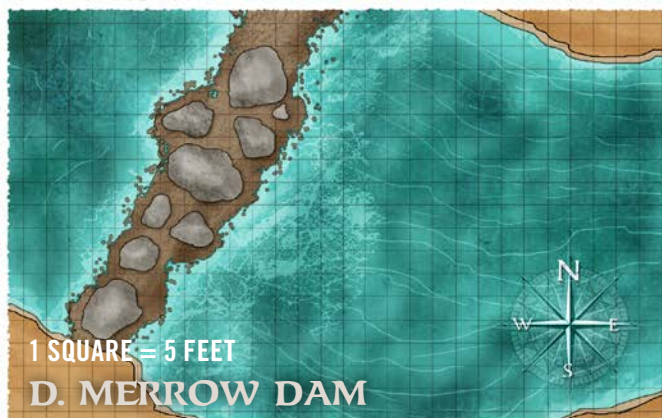
## B2. DRAKE NEST

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

## C. A KNIGHT IN NEED



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

## D. MERROW DAM

### RIVER DRAKES (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 34 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 107)

#### TACTICS

**Morale** If reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, a drake attempts to flee back to its nest (area B2).

**Development:** If the alpha drake escapes with the horse, it can clearly be seen flying downstream toward a cave that serves as the drakes' lair (area B2). Bloodtusk, needing the horse for the keelboat's upstream journey, asks the PCs to go after the river drake to retrieve the animal. If the PCs defeated the alpha drake on the boat, they can find the cave farther downstream with a successful DC 10 Perception check.

## B2. Drake Nest (CR 5)

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs near the drakes' lair. Use the map of area B2 above for this encounter.

The pungent odor of fish entrails permeates the air near an open cave mouth. The beach outside the cave is littered with the remains of several marine animals, including the bleached skeleton of an immense crocodile. The area is eerily quiet and devoid of wildlife.

The cave is divided into two chambers. If the drake absconded with the warhorse, the creature whinnies nervously in the outer cavern (area B2a).

**Creature:** If still alive, the alpha river drake rests on a fetid pile of reeds in the innermost cavern (area B2b), feasting on a rotting cow carcass, but it viciously attacks anyone entering the cave or attempting to steal back its next meal. If any of the river drakes from area B1 fled that combat, they may be found here as well, nursing their wounds in area B2a.

### ALPHA RIVER DRAKE

CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 63 (see page 19)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The drake spits a ball of caustic mucus at anyone approaching it, then pounces to attack any entangled foes with Power Attack.

**Morale** Cornered in its lair, the alpha drake fights to the death.

**Treasure:** Lying among the reeds in area B2b is a mud-caked +1 buckler, a masterwork heavy pick, an *elixir of swimming*, an *oil of flame arrow*, a *potion of resist energy* (electricity), a *scroll of spear of purity*<sup>UM</sup>, 11 pp, 40 gp, 70 sp, and a bloodstone worth 50 gp.



**Story Award:** If the PCs save the old warhorse, award them 600 XP, as if they had defeated the steed in combat.

### C. A KNIGHT IN NEED

This encounter occurs at the end of the third day of travel, when Captain Bloodtusk makes a scheduled stop at a riverside way station in Lastwall. Staffed by the Knights of Ozem, the station services river traffic and provides a disembarkation point for people and supplies heading inland to Castle Firrine. Bloodtusk is supposed to deliver the arsenal of battleaxes, spears, and chain shirts in the keelboat's armory (area A12) to the knight staffing the way station, but as the keelboat sidles up to the crude dock, it is clear the station has come under recent attack.

Hours ago, an orc raiding party targeted the isolated way station as an easy mark, catching the knight inside, Calrianne Blix, off guard. After a bloody fight, the orcs overcame the knight and took her prisoner. A few orc and dire wolf corpses litter the ground outside the way station—a testament to Calrianne's prowess in battle. The surviving orcs are inside, sacking the way station (area C3); they have the captured knight with them.

Use the map of area C on page 20 for this encounter.

### C1. Shattered Dock

A broken pier rises from the gently flowing waters of the river, its pilings blackened by fire and splintered by axe. Only a few waterlogged planks remain, hanging drunkenly from twisted nails. A path leads up from the dock toward a small stone building atop a low hill nearby.

Bloodtusk stopped here 15 days ago and the way station's dock was sturdy and whole. Worried at this sign, the captain asks the PCs to take the jolly boat and row ashore to scout the area and learn what happened to the knight in charge of the station. As the PCs near the bank, they can spot a bloated orc corpse tangled in the nearby reeds with a successful DC 15 Perception check.

### C2. Savaged Stables (CR 5)

A hitching post stands outside a simple stable with two stalls built along the eastern wall of the way station. Two horses are normally housed here for the use of the knights posted to the station, but the attacking orcs slaughtered the steeds, and several black-tipped javelins now pierce the unfortunate beasts' flanks.



CALRIANNE BLIX

**Creatures:** Two dire wolves are feasting upon the freshly slaughtered horse carcasses. Distracted by the fresh meat, the wolves take a –2 penalty on their Perception checks to notice anyone approaching.

#### DIRE WOLVES (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 37 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 278)

**Treasure:** The orcs have so far overlooked the storage shed behind the stable (area C2a). The shed is locked with a simple lock (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 18, Disable Device DC 20) and contains a *horsemaster's saddle* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 304), which belongs to Calrianne.

### C3. Breached Way Station (CR 5)

A flight of steep stairs and a lowered drawbridge lead into the dark interior of the way station. Inside, a single room contains a large fireplace, a table and chairs, a pair of bunks, and stacks of crates and barrels.

The only light inside the way station shines in through the open doorway, providing dim light.

**Creatures:** Three orc raiders are busy ransacking the station's supplies. The knight posted to the station, **Calrianne Blix** (LG female human cavalier 4), is tied up in the northwest corner. The orcs are keeping her alive for now, hoping to torture her for information on Castle Firrine's defenses. Despite being badly beaten, the valiant knight has so far held her composure, and has given the orcs no intelligence.

Allow the orcs to attempt Perception checks to hear the PCs approaching. Keep in mind that the PCs may have already engaged in noisy combat outside. If the orcs detect the PCs, they are prepared for battle. If not, the orcs are busy looting and vandalizing the way station, their weapons still sheathed.

#### ORC RAIDERS (3)

CR 2

XP 600 each

Orc fighter 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 222)

CE Medium humanoid (orc)

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

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +2 Dex)

**hp** 24 each (3d10+3)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1 (+1 vs. fear)

**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1, ferocity

**Weaknesses** light sensitivity



## OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** falchion +7 (2d4+6/18–20) or  
spiked gauntlet +7 (1d4+4)

**Ranged** javelin +5 (1d6+4)

## TACTICS

**Before Combat** If the orcs notice the PCs' approach, they apply shadow essence to their falchions.

**During Combat** On the first round of combat, one of the orcs throws his *goblin skull bomb* while other two engage foes in melee. The orcs use Power Attack and Cleave to maximum efficiency.

**Morale** As long as at least two orcs are still standing, they fight to the death. If the sole surviving orc is reduced to fewer than 5 hit points, he drops his weapons and surrenders, groveling for mercy.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 19, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 6

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 19

**Feats** Cleave, Great Fortitude, Intimidating Prowess,  
Power Attack

**Skills** Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +6, Perception +2, Ride +6

**Languages** Common, Orc

**SQ** armor training 1, weapon familiarity

**Combat Gear** *goblin skull bomb*<sup>UE</sup>, shadow essence (1 dose);

**Other Gear** studded leather, falchion, javelin, spiked gauntlet, antitoxin, 44 gp

**Development:** If the PCs capture and interrogate any of the orcs, they learn that the orcs were planning to sack several of the way stations along the river in preparation for a larger assault against Castle Firrine. If the PCs rescue Calrianne Blix, she heartily thanks them—even more so if she learns of the larger orc threat—and asks if there is anything she can do to repay them. If the PCs share their mission to infiltrate Redlake Fort, Calrianne grows visibly excited and produces a map of the abandoned border fort. The knight informs the PCs that her ancestor, a man named Fabian Blix, was the fort's cleric. Fabian died during the final siege of the fort, but one of his sons (Calrianne's great-grandfather) escaped through a hidden sewer tunnel. Calrianne's map shows the majority of Redlake Fort (see the map on page 36), including the sewer tunnel (area **K6**), which Calrianne believes is submerged, but does not show the dry moat (area **K4**), the dam (area **K8**), or any of the secret doors in the fort. Additionally, the knight says she'd be interested in knowing of her ancestor Fabian's fate, should the PCs learn anything about him while there.

Any PC succeeding at a DC 15 Sense Motive check notices that Calrianne seems to be bothered by something as she talks about her ancestor. If questioned about it, she reluctantly tells the PCs about stories passed down in her family in regard to the fort's original castellan, who was a

despicable, vile man. Her great-grandfather rarely spoke of his time at the fort, and though Calrianne doesn't know any more details, she recalls that mention of the fort or its castellan caused him to go pale and visibly tremble.

Regardless of whether the PCs tell her of their plans, Calrianne gives them the *horsemaster's saddle* in area **C2a** as a reward for her salvation.

**Story Award:** If the PCs rescue Calrianne from the orcs and acquire the map of Redlake Fort, award them 1,200 XP.

## D. MERROW DAM (CR 6)

This encounter occurs on the fourth day of travel, several miles up the River Esk, as the keelboat's draft horses slowly pull the boat upstream. Ahead, a crude dam constructed of large boulders, animal carcasses, and mud blocks the keelboat's route upriver. Use the map on page 20 for this encounter.

**Creatures:** Three freshwater merrows have built a makeshift blockade to prey upon river traffic. A single merrow squats behind the simple dam, while its two kin wait submerged several feet downstream, hoping to ambush the keelboat. As the keelboat approaches the blockade, the two submerged merrows scale the sides of the boat to attack anyone on deck, while the third merrow atop the dam hurls javelins in support. If two of the merrows are killed, the third dives into the water and flees.

## FRESHWATER MERROWS (3)

**CR 3**

**XP 800 each**

**hp 30 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 189)

**Development:** It takes 3 days for Bloodtusk's crew to dismantle the crude merrow dam for the keelboat to continue upstream. If the PCs provide their assistance, reward creative solutions by reducing the time needed to dismantle the dam as you see fit. The more effective the solutions, the quicker the keelboat can continue on its journey.

## E. ORC AMBUSH (CR 6)

Assuming no delays at the merrow dam, this encounter takes place on the sixth day of the journey while the keelboat moves slowly through Ghostlight Marsh. Because the PCs know what to look for, a successful DC 5 Perception check is enough to spot a stone on the riverbank carved with a circle of thorns—the marker Silvermane described that will lead them to the entrance to the Vault of Thorns. In the unlikely event that all of the PCs fail to notice it, one of the keelboat's crew members sees the marker and alerts the PCs. Once the marker is sighted, the keelboat drops anchor, and the PCs can prepare to disembark and head into the swamp in search of the Vault of Thorns.

**Creatures:** Tark Singeskin, a badly burned orc with blotches of discolored and severely scarred flesh, leads a small band of orcs waiting to ambush the PCs as the keelboat



drops anchor. An accomplice of the saboteur Melira, Tark has agreed to lead this boarding party in exchange for the recipe for an ointment that Melira's deceased lover, Skreed, supplied to Tark to soothe his burns.

The orcs attack before the PCs have a chance to disembark from the keelboat. While the orcs hide in the underbrush along the riverbank, Tark stays submerged underwater. He holds his breath and swims up to the side of the boat, attempting to moor it in place with his *anchor feather token*. Allow the PCs to attempt Perception checks. A result of 12 or higher is enough to notice the concealed orcs on the riverbank, but a result of 18 is required to notice the submerged Tark. If the orcs remain undetected, Tark attaches the *anchor feather token* to the boat and climbs aboard, signaling to the orcs on shore to attack. Any PC who succeeds at the Perception check can act in the surprise round when the orcs reveal themselves and attack.

If Bloodtusk fell victim to the poison in **Event 3**, he is unconscious and cannot aid the PCs, and the keelboat's crew takes no part in the battle. Remember that some or all of the PCs might still be sickened from the poison as well. If the PCs have not yet discovered Melira, she reveals herself and joins the battle against the PCs at this time (see **Event 4**). The water here is considered calm. Use the map of Bloodtusk's keelboat on page 10 for this encounter.

**ORCS (6)****CR 1/3****XP 135 each**hp 6 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 222)**TARK SINGESKIN****CR 5****XP 1,600**Male orc barbarian 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 222)

CE Medium humanoid (orc)

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6**DEFENSE****AC** 16, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 natural, -2 rage)**hp** 68 (6d12+24)**Fort** +9, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4; +3 vs. magic**Defensive Abilities** ferocity, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2**Weaknesses** light sensitivity**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft.**Melee** falchion +12/+7 (2d4+9/18-20)**Ranged** javelin +9/+4 (1d6+6)**Special Attacks** rage (16 rounds/day), rage powers (guarded stance [+2 dodge vs. melee], raging swimmer +6, superstition +3)**TACTICS****During Combat** Once on board the keelboat, Tark rages. He concentrates on one foe at a time, activating his guarded

Tark,

Skreed has been murdered and I seek revenge on his killers. Help me with this and I will give you Skreed's alchemical formula for the balm that soothes your burns. I have learned that his killers are traveling to Ghostlight Marsh by riverboat. Don't worry—there is no need for you to set foot in the swamp. There is a marker on the northern bank of the Esk. Look for a stone carved with a circle of thorns—that is where Skreed's killers will dock. Board the boat and unleash your fury upon them. With luck, I will be on board as well and will join you. Together, we shall avenge Skreed. Do this and the formula is yours.

Melira

**HANDOUT #1**



stance rage power and slashing his victim using Power Attack with his mighty falchion. He resorts to throwing his javelins only if he can't close to melee range.

**Morale** Tark fights to the death, but if the fire-scarred orc takes 4 or more points of fire damage from a single attack, his fear of fire takes over. If this happens, Tark's rage immediately ends and he gains the shaken condition (in addition to being fatigued from exiting a rage). If he takes more than 20 points of fire damage in 1 round, Tark immediately jumps into the river and flees in abject terror.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 23, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 6

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 23

**Feats** Ironhide<sup>APG</sup>, Power Attack, Quick Draw

**Skills** Acrobatics +10, Climb +10,

Intimidate +5, Perception +6,

Stealth +8, Survival +5, Swim +16

**Languages** Common, Orc

**SQ** fast movement, weapon familiarity

**Combat Gear** feather token

(anchor), potions of cure light

wounds (2), fire ward gel<sup>UE</sup>;

**Other Gear** mwk chain shirt,

falchion, javelins (4), belt of incredible

dexterity +2, letter from Melira (see

Handout #1 on page 23), 21 gp



INGRAHILD NARGRYMKIN

**Creature:** A five-headed hydra calls these sluggish waterways home. It attacks any living creatures that enter its domain.

## HYDRA

CR 4

XP 1,200

hp 47 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 178)

## G. THE INSANE DWARF (CR 5)

A few weeks ago, a pair of dwarf siblings, Ingrahild and Umlo Nargrymkin, entered Ghostlight Marsh in search of the tomb of their ancestor, the giantslayer Nargrym Steelhand. Unfortunately, they were hundreds of miles away from the real location of their kin's final resting place in the Mindspin Mountains—perhaps confusing stories of the Vault of Thorns with those of Nargrym's tomb. Accompanied by a pair of hired mercenaries, the dwarves stumbled upon the druidic circle of standing stones marking the Vault of Thorns, and were ambushed by a coven of green hags and their marsh giant bodyguard.

Although the two mercenaries were killed and the dwarf siblings were driven insane by a *bestow curse* cast by the coven, the group did manage to kill two of the three green hags, effectively destroying the coven. The surviving hag, Ewigga, retreated into the Vault of Thorns, while the schizophrenic dwarves wandered off into the swamp and became separated. Umlo was captured by an orc raiding party and brought to Redlake Fort's bear pit (see area K2), leaving Ingrahild alone in Ghostlight Marsh, aimlessly searching for her lost brother.

**Creature:** Ingrahild Nargrymkin has set up a ragged tent and made camp at this location. Suffering from schizophrenia (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 251), the filthy dwarf squats near a smoldering fire, constantly mumbling to her absent brother in a confusing mixture of Common and the Dwarven tongue. Unable to separate reality and fantasy, Ingrahild is erratic and unpredictable. Hallucinating as a result of her madness, she mistakes the PCs for an orc raiding party, hurling curses at the "filthy greenskins" as she savagely attacks them. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check realizes that the dwarf is suffering from some sort of mental affliction.

## INGRAHILD NARGRYMKIN

CR 5

XP 1,600

Female dwarf ranger 6

NG Medium humanoid (dwarf)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

## PART 2: GHOSTLIGHT MARSH

Once the PCs have defeated Melira, Tark, and the orc ambushers, they are free to begin their exploration of Ghostlight Marsh in search of the Vault of Thorns. Captain Bloodtusk (or Coxswain Halrex, if she's in command) agrees to wait here for the PCs' return. Silvermane's marker shows that they're in the right place, but to find the hidden entrance to the Vault, the PCs first need to find a will-o'-wisp to place in the *ghostlight lantern* that Silvermane gave them. Once the PCs disembark from Bloodtusk's keelboat, Silvermane's instructions are to head northward from the marker into the swamp. As they search for a will-o'-wisp and the Vault of Thorns, the PCs encounter other denizens of Ghostlight Marsh, as detailed in the following encounters. A map of Ghostlight Marsh and the encounter areas within it appears on page 27.

## F. SCOURGE OF GHOSTLIGHT MARSH (CR 4)

North of the stone marker on the riverbank, Ghostlight Marsh is comprised of slow-moving streams, pools of stagnant water, and scattered hummocks of mud and waterlogged reeds. On average, the water is 4 feet deep and counts as deep bog (*Core Rulebook* 427), requiring 4 squares of movement to enter a square and providing cover to creatures in the bog.



**DEFENSE**

**AC** 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +2 Dex)

**hp** 55 (6d10+18)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

**Defensive Abilities** defensive training

**Weaknesses** schizophrenic

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** +1 *dwarven waraxe* +9/+4 (1d10+4/x3), *mwk handaxe* +8/+3 (1d6+1/x3)

**Ranged** *mwk composite shortbow* +9/+4 (1d6+3/x3)

**Special Attacks** combat style (two-weapon), favored enemy (giants +2, orcs +4), hatred

**Ranger Spells Prepared** (CL 3rd; concentration +4)  
1st—*entangle* (DC 12), *pass without trace*

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** On the first round of combat, Ingrahild must succeed at a DC 16 Will save or become confused for 1d6 rounds. If able to act normally, she charges the closest opponent and attacks, focusing her strikes on that opponent

as much as possible. If other combatants attempt to intervene, she casts *entangle* to slow their approach.

**Morale** Convinced that the orcs have taken her brother, Ingrahild fights to the death, though she falls unconscious and automatically stabilizes if reduced to fewer than 0 hit points due to her Diehard feat.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 21 (25 vs. bull rush, 25 vs. trip)

**Feats** Diehard, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (*dwarven waraxe*)

**Skills** Climb +8, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Knowledge (nature) +7, Perception +10 (+12 to notice unusual stonework), Stealth +7, Survival +10

**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Orc

**SQ** favored terrain (mountain +2), hunter's bond (companions), track +3, wild empathy +4

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of remove curse*; **Other Gear** *mwk chainmail*, +1 *dwarven*



*waraxe*, *mwk handaxe*, *mwk composite shortbow* with 9 arrows, steel hair clasp in the shape of a fist (worth 40 gp)

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Schizophrenic (Ex)** Ingrahild suffers from schizophrenia (*GameMastery Guide* 251). She takes a -4 penalty on all Wisdom and Charisma-based skill checks, cannot take 10 or take 20, and must succeed at a DC 16 Will save when in a stressful situation (such as combat) or become confused for 1d6 rounds.

**Development:** If the PCs recognize Ingrahild's insanity and are able to subdue her, they may attempt to cure her of her malady, but it is a lengthy process unless they have access to powerful magic such as *greater restoration*, *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish*. As her madness is the result of a curse, *remove curse* also restores her sanity. Ironically, Ingrahild has a *potion of remove curse* in her possession, but in her state, it has never occurred to her to drink it. Without magical remedies, Ingrahild can attempt a DC 16 Will save to reduce her insanity's DC by 1 once per week until it reaches 0, at which point she is cured.

If the PCs cure Ingrahild of her insanity, they can gain an ally and a source of valuable information. If they make it known that they are seeking a will-o'-wisp, she can lead the PCs to a particularly eerie portion of the swamp where will-o'-wisps are known to frequent (area H).

If the PCs capture Ingrahild but do not cure her, she attempts to escape at the earliest opportunity, casting *pass without trace* to hinder pursuit.

**Story Award:** If the PCs spare Ingrahild and cure her schizophrenia, award them 1,600 XP, as if they had defeated her in combat.

## H. REMNANT OF THE COUNCIL (CR 6)

When the druids of the Council of Thorns stood against the orc hordes of Belkzen, they made their last stand here in Ghostlight Marsh. Close to death and with the majority of their powers exhausted, the druids knew that defeat was imminent. But if their bodies could not defeat the rampaging orcs, then perhaps their spirits, reborn and rejuvenated, would stem the tide. Feeling they had no other choice, the Council of Thorns decided to sacrifice themselves in a powerful ritual. Reincarnated as vengeful will-o'-wisps, the Council of Thorns managed to drive the orcs from the swamp, feeding on the orcs' terror. Although the reincarnated druids lost their druidic powers when they transformed into evil aberrations, they retained their memories of their former lives, and the will-o'-wisps have remained guardians of Ghostlight Marsh ever since.

As the PCs explore the swamp in search of the Vault of Thorns, they should also be looking for one of Ghostlight Marsh's infamous will-o'-wisps to power their *ghostlight lantern*. If the PCs cured and befriended the dwarf Ingrahild

in area G, she guides them here, where the PCs can make plans and prepare for the encounter ahead of time. Without Ingrahild's assistance, the PCs must stumble upon this area on their own, or perhaps encounter Mossmoon (see Creature, below) as a wandering monster.

**Creature:** A former druid of the Council of Thorns named Mossmoon, now reincarnated as a will-o'-wisp, calls this clearing home. When the PCs arrive in the clearing, Mossmoon invisibly investigates their presence, following them for a time to learn of their motivations. If undetected, the will-o'-wisp eventually grows bored and attacks the PCs, seeking to feed off the intruders' emotions.

However, if any of the PCs is openly carrying the *ghostlight lantern*, Mossmoon frantically launches itself at that character, screaming in Common between its attacks, "Where did you get that?", "Your theft will not go unpunished!", and "Give that back to us!" If anyone answers the will-o'-wisp by mentioning Silvermane, the Council of Thorns, the Vault of Thorns, or something similar, Mossmoon hesitates and momentarily halts its attacks. During this pause, the PCs can attempt to calm the unfriendly will-o'-wisp with a DC 22 Diplomacy check. If the check is successful, the aberration ceases its attacks, and the ghostly image of a venerable human with a bushy beard appears within the creature's glow. The will-o'-wisp introduces itself as Mossmoon, a former member of the Council of Thorns, and asks the PCs the reason for their presence within the swamp. If the PCs reveal their mission, Mossmoon is excited to learn about the PCs' plan to invade a fort filled with orcs. If asked where the entrance to the Vault of Thorns is, the will-o'-wisp states, "Deep in the heart of the marsh, but the lantern will show you the way. Follow me." See Development below if the PCs follow the will-o'-wisp.

If the PCs fail the Diplomacy check, Mossmoon renews its attacks against the intruders, fighting until slain.

#### MOSSMOON

CR 6

XP 2,400

Will-o'-wisp (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 277)

hp 40

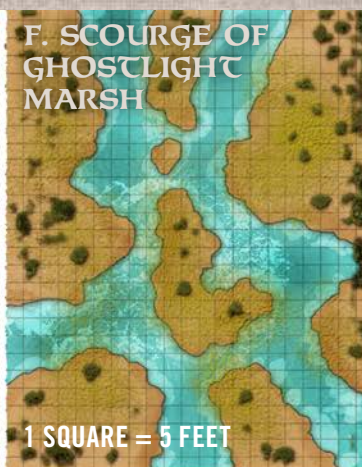
**Development:** If the PCs make peace with Mossmoon and follow the will-o'-wisp into the swamp, it leads them to another clearing in the marsh containing a strange collection of pale, spongy spheres 1 foot in diameter. The spongy globes are dead will-o'-wisps, recognizable as such with a successful DC 16 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check. In a solemn whisper, Mossmoon informs the PCs that this is the resting place of the fallen members of the reincarnated Council of Thorns. The will-o'-wisp then instructs the bearer of the *ghostlight lantern* to gently place one of the spheres into the lantern.



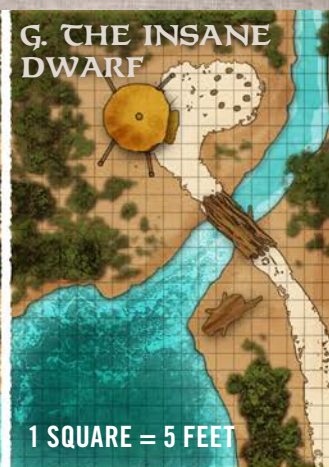
# GHOSTLIGHT MARSH



## F. SCOURGE OF GHOSTLIGHT MARSH



## G. THE INSANE DWARF



## H. REMNANT OF THE COUNCIL

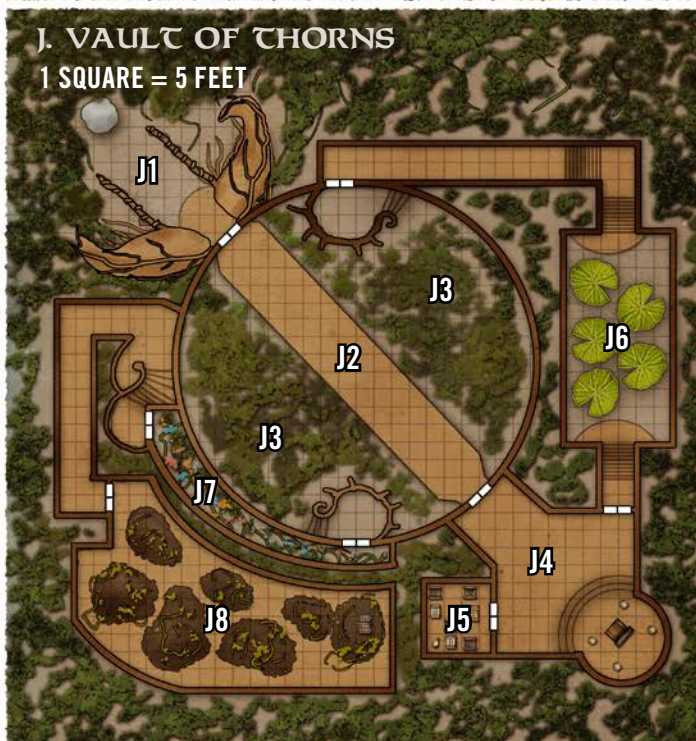


## I. DRUID CIRCLE



## J. VAULT OF THORNS

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET





As soon as a dead will-o'-wisp is placed within the lantern, the lamp emits a beam of light that points to the druid circle at area I that serves as the entrance to the Vault of Thorns. Mossmoon can confirm Silvermane's account of how to open the portal (by washing the lantern's light over the central menhir), and if made friendly, the will-o'-wisp also informs the PCs of the trapped central menhir at area I as well. If asked about the cache of items located in the Vault, Mossmoon does not know what items survived, but he assures the PCs that the hoard includes weapons specifically crafted to combat orcs. The will-o'-wisp has no knowledge of the green hag Ewigga who now inhabits the Vault of Thorns, her former coven, or the marsh giant who now stands guard outside the druid circle.

If the PCs failed to communicate with Mossmoon and instead destroyed the aberration, they may use its body to fuel the *ghostlight lantern* instead.

**Story Award:** If the PCs use Diplomacy to acquire a dead will-o'-wisp globe instead of fighting Mossmoon, award

them 2,400 XP, as if they had defeated the will-o'-wisp in combat.

## I. DRUID CIRCLE (CR 8 AND 5)

A circle of monolithic standing stones surrounds a central menhir covered in a layer of thick, thorny vegetation. In all, eight formations surround the central stone: five intact trilithons and another three that have crumbled and partially sunk into the swamp's soggy floor. A large pool gently bubbles to the northwest of the standing stones.

The standing stones are constructed of rough-hewn granite. The vertical posts are approximately 8 feet tall, and each weighs approximately 15 tons. The horizontal lintels that rest atop the posts weigh upward of 5 tons each. The central menhir stands 12 feet tall, with another 6 feet buried beneath the mud and earth. The menhir has a strong conjuration aura. The bubbling mineral pool to the northwest is a natural hot spring. After 5 feet, the pool's banks quickly drop off to a depth of 75 feet.

Long ago, the Council of Thorns used this stone circle to enter their secret demiplane, the Vault of Thorns (area J). More recently, the green hag Ewigga and her coven discovered the Vault, but before they could fully explore the site, the dwarf siblings Ingrahild and Umlo Nargrymkin interrupted them. When the dwarves and their allies slaughtered the rest of her coven, Ewigga retreated inside the Vault of Thorns, leaving her marsh giant bodyguard Gripwort (see Creature, below) outside in case the dwarves returned.

**Creature:** Ewigga's marsh giant bodyguard Gripwort hides in the swamp near the circle of standing stones, carefully watching for intruders. Having already devoured the bodies of the slain hags and dwarf mercenaries, the giant is hungry, and she eagerly attacks anyone investigating the druid circle or hot spring. With no idea how to follow her mistress inside the Vault of Thorns, Gripwort flees into the swamp if reduced to fewer than 15 hit points.



**GRIPWORT**

**GRIPWORT**

**CR 8**

**XP 4,800**

Female marsh giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 129)

**hp 102**

**Trap:** Any living creature who touches the central menhir feels a strange tugging as he is bombarded with mental images of a lush, vine-choked realm accompanied by a pleasing floral fragrance. Additionally, if a creature touches the menhir without first bathing it in the light from the *ghostlight lantern*, one of the trilithons



surrounding the central stone topples over, crushing anyone beneath it (this has happened three times in the past, hence the three crumbled rock formations). Washing the light of the *ghostlight lantern* over the central menhir before touching it bypasses the trap.

**FALLING BLOCK TRAP****CR 5****XP 1,600****Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20**EFFECTS****Trigger** touch; **Reset** automatic (up to five times); **Bypass** special (*ghostlight lantern*)**Effect** Atk +15 melee (6d6); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft. square)

**Development:** If the PCs shine the *ghostlight lantern*'s light over the menhir, the thick vegetation covering the monolith quickly withers away, revealing a faintly glowing, olive-hued stone. For 24 hours after the lantern's light passes over the menhir, the portal remains active, instantly teleporting anyone who touches the menhir to the Petal Gate (area J1) inside the Vault of Thorns.

Alternatively, the portal can be opened with a successful DC 25 Use Magic Device check to blindly activate it (this is how Ewigga and the green hags' coven entered the Vault of Thorns). Druids gain a +5 circumstance bonus on Use Magic Device checks to activate the portal.

**J. VAULT OF THORNS**

The Council of Thorns created a demiplane lodged between the Material Plane and the First World called the Vault of Thorns. The druids used the Vault as a meeting place and extraplanar greenhouse, and they conducted experiments on strange plant life there. Due to the demiplane's proximity to the First World, several fey creatures also came to inhabit the Vault of Thorns, mingling peacefully, for the most part, with the Council of Thorns.

The Vault of Thorns is a living dungeon. The floor is earth, and the walls and ceilings are constructed of an intertwined mass of living vegetation (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 23). If hacked through, these surfaces regenerate and reseal within 5 rounds. The vegetation is immune to nonmagical fire; when attacked with it, the vegetation only produces a 10-foot-diameter cloud of choking smoke. Unless otherwise noted, ceilings are 8 feet high, doors are made of thick *ironwood* branches that part to allow passage when touched (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 23), and normal light prevails throughout the demiplane (as sunlight shining through a forest canopy). Anyone spending more than an hour inside the Vault of Thorns can attempt a DC 13 Knowledge (nature) check to notice that the "sun" never moves and the realm is stuck in an eternal state of midday.

The demiplane beyond the rooms of the Vault of Thorns is filled with thick vegetation and is virtually impassable. Any attempt to travel outside the confines of the Vault is extraordinarily difficult. Eventually, anyone moving through the demiplane finds herself back at the rooms that compose the actual Vault of Thorns.

While inside the Vault of Thorns, living creatures feel energized and more alive. In game terms, the PCs (and other creatures within the Vault) do not fatigue, do not need to sleep (but still must spend the appropriate amount of time in prayer, study, or meditation to regain spells), and do not feel or suffer from hunger or thirst. Furthermore, spells of the healing subschool cast in the Vault of Thorns are empowered as though using the Empower Spell feat, but without using a higher-level spell slot.

The map on page 27 details all of the encounter locations inside the Vault of Thorns.

**J1. The Petal Gate (CR 5)**

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs pass through the portal at area I.

A lone menhir stands in a clearing in a vibrant forest filled with thick, verdant plant life. Exotic flowers drape the standing stone, which pulses with brilliant chartreuse light. A path lined with rose petals leads from the monolith to a giant floral bloom carved from wood. Two carved wooden stamens stretch out toward the pulsating menhir, extending from either side of a set of ornate doors carved into the giant flower. An overpowering fragrance of flowers and sweet grass permeates the air. The sun above sits at its zenith, basking the area in light and warmth.

After touching the menhir at area I, the PCs arrive next to the monolith here, facing the doors that lead deeper into the Vault of Thorns. A simple warning in Druidic is etched into the wood above the doors: "If you seek peace in nature, welcome. If you seek anything else, beware the wrath of the Vault of Thorns." The carved wooden flower and doors are both made from *ironwood*. The doors are unlocked and swing inward with little effort.

To return to the Material Plane, one must simply touch the menhir here, which immediately teleports the creature to the circle of standing stones at area I.

**Creatures:** Two tiny fey creatures called twigjacks have taken up residence here, though they can use their bramble jump ability to freely move between this room, the greenhouse (area J3), and the bramble mounds (area J8). They attack any creatures coming through the portal, and pursue them anywhere within range of their bramble jumps.

**TWIGJACKS (2)****CR 3****XP 800 each****hp 27 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 274)



## J2. Greenhouse Bridge (CR 7)

An extensive wooden bridge stretches across a wide, high chamber and overlooks an exotic garden far below. The air is hot and humid, and a powerful stench of overripe vegetation wafts throughout the massive, domed chamber. The ceiling overhead is a complex series of star-patterned glass that magnifies the rays of the sun directly above. At the far end of the bridge, interwoven branches form a doorway.

The *ironwood* bridge is 15 feet wide, with no railings or supports, and runs the length of the greenhouse (area J3) between the Petal Gate (area J1) and the Council Chamber (area J4), bisecting the circular chamber. The bridge is 80 feet above the greenhouse floor below, and the glass ceiling is the same distance above the bridge. Because the ceiling magnifies the sun's light, bright light prevails throughout this chamber, and the temperature within this area is much hotter than anywhere else in the Vault. The environment on the bridge itself and in the upper half of the greenhouse dome (between the bridge and the ceiling) is considered to be under very hot conditions (*Core Rulebook* 444).

**Creatures:** A pair of strange fey guardians called lurkers in light inhabits this area. The fey usually flutter through the greenhouse tending to the plant and animal life there, but when faced with intruders, they immediately move to the bridge to defend the Vault. Due to the light conditions here, the lurkers in light are invisible and make sneak attacks against anyone crossing the bridge. The fey prefer to remain mobile, utilizing their Flyby Attack feat to engage opponents with their poisoned daggers.

### LURKERS IN LIGHT (2)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

hp 44 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 180)

## J3. Greenhouse (CR 6)

All manner of exotic flora fills this massive conservatory. A thick mist floats just above the ground, carpeting the area in a perpetual fog. The air is moist, and a thousand smells, both pleasant and pungent, waft throughout the area. Water drips from a bridge high above, falling like rain to the greenhouse's floor. A constant symphony of birdsong and other animal noises fills the air.

Bright light from the "sun" overhead illuminates this chamber. The ceiling is 160 feet high; the *ironwood* bridge above (area J2) is 80 feet high. The mist on the ground is approximately 3 feet deep; Small or smaller creatures, or larger creatures crouching down inside the fog, find that all sight is blocked beyond 5 feet, and creatures 5 feet away have concealment. Two massive, hollow trees provide exits from the greenhouse, accessible via curving, *wood*

*shaped* staircases. If the PCs did not enter the greenhouse through one of these doors, a successful DC 15 Perception check is required to notice them amid the neighboring foliage.

The greenhouse contains a wide variety of plant life, including bamboo from Tian Xia, teak trees from distant Vudra, vines from the Mwangi Expanse, and even stranger, unrecognizable plant life. The entire chamber is considered medium forest (*Core Rulebook* 425).

The animal life in the greenhouse—howling monkeys, chirping birds, and hissing reptiles, among others—shows no fear toward visitors. In fact, some of these docile creatures peacefully approach the PCs with genuine curiosity, becoming quite playful if visitors reciprocate the goodwill. Any PC capable of acquiring an animal companion or familiar may attract a suitable specimen here (available animals are at the GM's discretion, though all the animals living here are Small or smaller). These animals are all of exceptional quality and possess Diehard as a bonus feat.

**Creature:** Without the Council of Thorns overseeing the greenhouse, magical energies from the First World seeped into the Vault and corrupted some of the plant life here, creating a *tendriculos* that dwells near the hollow tree growing in the southern portion of the greenhouse. The carnivorous plant normally feeds off the many small animals that live within the greenhouse, but as soon as it senses larger creatures (such as the PCs) in its territory, it welcomes a change in its diet and moves to intercept and ambush its new prey.

### TENDRICULOS

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 76 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 259)

## J4. Council Chamber (CR 7)

A series of detailed woodcarvings depicting druidic worship decorates the walls of this room. To the southeast, a short flight of stairs leads to a dais, upon which sits a throne crafted of dead, overgrown brambles and thorns. Doors to the north, west, and northwest offer exits from the chamber.

The Council of Thorns held their conclaves, presided over by the High Druid of the Council, in this chamber, including their final meeting in which they made the fateful decision to sacrifice their order to halt the orc advance.

To commemorate and document the Council's final act, a series of 21 scenes were masterfully carved into panels of all types of wood, including alder, ash, birch, fir, maple, oak, and pine, which were then hung upon the council chamber's walls. Starting just northeast of the door to the greenhouse bridge (area J2) and proceeding clockwise around the room, the carved panels depict the tale of the druids' final sacrifice. The initial images portray a horde of



orcs rampaging across a marsh until they are met by a group of druids. The next several carvings show the orcs battling the valiant but vastly outnumbered druids and routing them back to a circle of standing stones. The next panel depicts the druids prostrating themselves before a single large stone menhir, followed by a series of carvings showing the druids—many in animal form and accompanied by all manner of beasts and plant creatures—issuing forth from a giant carved blossom and marching with renewed vigor into the center of the orc horde. The last few images illustrate a solemn scene of sacrifice, wherein the druids slay themselves. As the druids' bodies fall to the ground, strange glowing globes of light rise from the mud of the swamp. The final panel depicts the spheres of light punching through the invaders in murderous retribution, driving the orcs from the marsh in terror.

**Creature:** Following the destruction of her coven by the dwarf siblings Ingrahild and Umlo Nargrymkin, the green hag Ewigga retreated inside the Vault of Thorns, leaving her marsh giant bodyguard Gripwort outside to guard the entrance to the demiplane. Ewigga and her coven had just begun exploring the Vault, and though the hag used *invisibility* to avoid the guardians in areas **J1**, **J2**, and **J6**, Ewigga is unwilling to delve deeper into the Vault by herself. She has set up camp in this area, subsisting on *goodberries*, until she decides what to do.

When she becomes aware of the PCs' presence in the Vault (likely by hearing their battle with the lurkers in light in area **J2**), Ewigga uses *alter self* to appear as an old elven woman and sits upon the thorny throne in this room to await the PCs. When they enter the room, she introduces herself as "Ewigga, guardian of the Vault of Thorns" (a name she deduced from the written warning above the door in area **J1**), and implores the PCs to help her rid the Vault of fey invaders.

If asked about the Vault, Ewigga can provide the PCs with detailed descriptions of areas **J2** through **J5**, the only areas she has visited so far. Beyond that, Ewigga makes things up, blaming the inevitable inconsistencies on fell influence from the First World creatures that have invaded the demiplane. Ewigga doesn't know of any treasures within the Vault, but if any PC mentions the cache of items alluded to by Silvermane, the wily hag catches on and runs with this story. The hag is otherwise reluctant to provide any more information, but uses *Bluff* and *Sense Motive* to trick the PCs while learning about what they are after.

Ewigga is happy to join the PCs in their exploration of the Vault. Of course, this is all a ruse. Ewigga hopes the PCs can defeat the Vault's fey and plant guardians for her, and when they reach the cache of treasure that they're seeking, she plans on turning on the heroes and claiming it for herself.

If the PCs don't accept her help, Ewigga lets them leave, following soon after under the cover of *invisibility*, but she

holds off attacking them until she can ambush them—if she's lucky, that will be when the PCs kill the Vault's final guardian. Likewise, if the PCs pierce her ruse, Ewigga attacks them as soon as possible, preferably when they have been weakened by one of the Vault's defenders.

#### EWIGGA

CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 84 (see page 58)

**Treasure:** The 21 carved wooden panels on the walls display exquisite craftsmanship, and if pieced out individually, each carving is worth 100 gp. If sold as a complete set to a collector interested in druidic magic or the history of Ghostlight Marsh, however, they are worth up to 2,500 gp in total.

### J5. Seed Storage

The Council of Thorns packed this chamber with crates, burlap sacks, and gardening tools—which they used to tend to the flora planted within the Vault—and to conserve various seeds and heirloom specimens (especially those from exotic locales) for the future. The magic of the Vault of Thorns preserves organic material placed within this otherwise unremarkable room against the ravages of time, much like *unguent of timelessness*, and though the gardening tools have rusted and dulled over the years, the seeds and plants here are as vital as the day they were placed here.

**Treasure:** In addition to a pouch containing 13 *goodberries* (they remain fresh for 1 week after being removed from this room), a PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Appraise or Knowledge (nature) check can identify 12 exotic seeds and plants worth 50 gp each.

### J6. Lily Pad Path (CR 5)

An ornate staircase descends to a small platform. Several giant lily pads sway gently in the chamber's air currents, each floating at a different height. Below the lily pads, a sheer drop fades into darkness, where a droning buzz reverberates off the chamber's walls. At the other end of the chamber, a second platform and staircase lead out of the room.

This chamber is essentially a giant compost bin. The floor is 100 feet below the southern platform, and the ceiling is 30 feet above that level. The northern platform is 20 feet lower than the southern platform. The PCs can use whatever means are available to traverse the chamber, including magic or the creative use of gear, but they can also simply jump along the path of floating lily pads to get to the other side. Each lily pad can hold up to 200 pounds; if more weight is placed upon a single lily pad, the lily swiftly descends to the chamber's floor. For every 10 pounds above 200 pounds



placed on a lily pad, the plant falls with a cumulative speed of 20 feet per round. As soon as the weight on a lily pad falls below 200 pounds, the pad once again gently floats up to its starting position. A 5-foot-wide gap separates each lily pad, requiring a successful DC 10 Acrobatics check to jump across. Any creature that falls can attempt a DC 15 Reflex save to grab onto one of the floating lily pads to prevent the fall. Otherwise, the creature falls 100 feet below to the floor, which is covered with soft soil and compost and it is treated as falling on a yielding surface (*Core Rulebook* 443).

**Creature:** A brilliant-blue fey giant dragonfly from the First World known an ultramarine chaser calls this area home, feeding on the many flies attracted to the compost that litters the chamber floor. When the PCs enter the room, the dragonfly uses its vanish ability to cautiously investigate the commotion above. If it finds warm-blooded prey traversing the floating lily pads, the hungry chaser attacks.

## ULTRAMARINE CHASER

CR 5

XP 1,600

Fey giant dragonfly (*Bestiary* 3 116, *Bestiary* 2 105)

N Medium fey

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +8

### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 Dex, +4 natural)

**hp** 52 (7d8+21)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

**Defensive Abilities** evasion; **DR** 5/cold iron; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (perfect)

**Melee** bite +10 (3d8+6 plus grab)

**Special Attacks** darting charge

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

3/day—*dancing lights*

1/day—*deep slumber* (DC 13), *entangle* (DC 11), *faerie fire*, *glitterdust* (DC 12), *major image* (DC 13)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The ultramarine chaser casts *entangle* against multiple opponents, then targets any creatures not entangled with *glitterdust*, before charging and making Flyby Attacks against blinded foes.

**Morale** Hungry for warm-blooded prey, the giant dragonfly fights to the death.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 19, **Dex** 19, **Con** 14, **Int** 3, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +9 (+13 grapple, or +17 grapple on a charge); **CMD** 23 (31 vs. trip)

**Feats** Flyby Attack<sup>®</sup>, Hover, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Skills** Acrobatics +10, Fly +16, Perception +8, Stealth +10

**Languages** Sylvan

**SQ** vanish (7 rounds/day)

**Hazard:** As soon as a creature steps onto one of the floating lily pads in the room, a swarm of bloated flies rises from the floor and fills the chamber in a thick blanket of buzzing insects. While these insects provide no direct threat to the PCs, their distracting presence does. Every round, a creature inside the cloud of flies must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or take a –2 penalty on attack rolls, ability checks, and skill checks. Weapons are ineffective against the insects, but any area-effect spell or effect that deals damage, or spells such as *gust of wind*, disperse the cloud for 1d4 rounds, negating any penalties during that time. The ultramarine chaser is unaffected by the cloud of flies.

## J7. Xtabay Hall (CR 4)

Numerous flowers cling to the myriad vines and creepers growing over every inch of this curving corridor. A powerful bouquet of competing floral fragrances floats throughout the enclosed space.

**Creatures:** Planted here to help protect the Vault's armory and intermixed among the many mundane flowers are six dangerous plants called xtabays. These seemingly innocuous plants emit sleep-inducing pollen. Formerly, when trespassers succumbed to the xtabays' soporific pollen, a patrolling druid would remove the slumbering invaders before the plants could completely drain their victims. Now that the Council of Thorns is no more, the strange plants gorge on their prey until it is fully consumed.

## XTABAYS (6)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

**hp** 8 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 289)

**Treasure:** A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check can identify several of the flowers growing in this hall as components used to make incense and perfume. Every hour a PC spends harvesting the flowers here nets materials worth 200 gp. After 5 hours, all of the valuable flowers are exhausted.

## J8. Bramblemounds (CR 7)

This large, arched chamber provides a grim contrast to the Vault's other life-filled rooms. Instead of lush vegetation, a massive briar patch and layers of thick humus form high mounds throughout the room. Hundreds of varieties of fungi choke out any attempt for healthy plants to root, and the air is heavy with the stench of decay. At the chamber's eastern end, a large, swollen wooden chest sits atop a high mound of compost.

The arched ceiling is 60 feet high in this chamber. Several 30-foot-high mounds of compacted compost and soil, draped with twisting masses of thorny vines, form a complex warren



throughout this chamber. A larger, 50-foot-high mound towers above the others at the eastern end of the room. Harmless rodents live among the rotting mulch and fungi, skittering about in a desperate hunt for food. The tiny animals flee at any sign of movement—a survival instinct honed by encounters with the room's much larger occupant (see Creature, below), who savagely feeds on the vermin.

**Creature:** A malicious plant creature called a brambleblight has slipped through the barriers separating the Vault of Thorns from the First World to take up residence in this chamber, where it has corrupted the natural plant life that once grew here. As soon as living creatures come within range of its plantsense ability, the brambleblight attacks, fighting until destroyed.

**BRAMBLEBLIGHT****CR 7****XP 3,200****hp 85** (see page 84)

**Treasure:** The large wooden chest atop the eastern mound is locked (hardness 3, hp 12, break DC 21, Disable Device DC 30), and any attempts to move it fail, as it is actually built into the hillside. Opening (or destroying) it reveals an empty interior, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices a false bottom in the chest. Beneath the false bottom, a warped wooden ladder descends inside the hill to a 10-foot-square chamber containing the Council of Thorns' hidden armory. Although several of the items once stored here have decayed or rotted away, the cache still contains a +1 *ironwood breastplate*, *Gorum's thorn* (see the sidebar), a +1 *flaming scimitar*, 10 +1 *orc bane arrows*, a single *orc slaying arrow*, a *scroll of barkskin*, a *scroll of call lightning*, a *scroll of summon nature's ally IV*, a *wand of flaming sphere* (9 charges), a *wand of greater magic fang* (12 charges), an *ironwood crown* with a stylized thorn motif (worth 250 gp), a ceremonial gem-encrusted cudgel (worth 150 gp), 3 pp, 178 gp, 605 sp, and 2,125 cp.

**Development:** If the green hag Ewigga (see area J4) is accompanying the PCs and has not already turned on them or been defeated, her greed for the Council of Thorns' treasure causes her to drop her ruse and attack as soon as the armory is discovered.

**Story Award:** If the PCs retrieve the Council of Thorns' cache of treasure, award them 2,400 XP.

**PART 3: REDLAKE FORT**

When the PCs exit the Vault of Thorns, they can return to Bloodtusk's keelboat, which is waiting for them at the riverbank at area E. By the time they get back, Captain Raag Bloodtusk has recovered from his poisoning (see **Event 3**) and is ready to pilot the boat the rest of the way to Redlake Fort, continuing upstream along the River Esk for another

**GORUM'S THORN**

The orcs of Belkzen are no strangers to fighting giants, and orc priests of Gorum created a weapon called *Gorum's Thorn* for their faithful warriors to use against giant-sized foes. The druids of the Council of Thorns captured one of these weapons in a battle with the orcs and placed it within the Vault of Thorns to study in hopes of creating their own version of *Gorum's Thorn* to use against the orcs.

**GORUM'S THORN****PRICE**

12,350 GP

**SLOT** none**CL** 10th**WEIGHT** 8 lbs.**AURA** moderate transmutation

This forge-blackened +1 *keen greatsword* is festooned with religious iconography depicting glorious images of the Lord in Iron. If Gorum is the wielder's patron, *Gorum's Thorn* gains an additional ability: when the wielder confirms a critical hit against any creature with the giant subtype, he can attempt to trip that target as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity and ignoring any size restrictions related to the target. If the trip attempt fails by 10 or more, the wielder is not knocked prone.

**CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS****COST** 6,350 GPCraft Magic Arms and Armor, *keen edge*, *righteous might*

50 miles. Fortunately, Bloodtusk has negotiated safe passage with the orc tribes along the river, and the boat is able to make the journey unmolested. After 5 days, Bloodtusk drops the PCs off on the southern bank of the river. Redlake Fort lies about 10 miles to the west, along a small tributary that feeds into the Esk.

**EVENT 5: TWISTED HEART PATROL (CR 8)**

**Creatures:** Several patrols of giants, ogres, and orcs scour the countryside around Redlake Fort for intruders. As the PCs draw near the fort, they may encounter a mixed patrol of four Twisted Nail orcs led by a savage Heart Eater hill giant named Jort. Coincidentally, this same patrol captured the crazed dwarf Umlo Nargrymkin a few weeks ago and brought him back to the fort; he is now being held in the bear pen (see area K2). If the PCs take no precautions to conceal their advance on the fort, they automatically encounter the patrol. If the PCs attempt to approach the fort clandestinely, have them attempt Stealth checks opposed by the Perception checks of the creatures in the patrol. If the humanoids detect the PCs, they immediately attack. If the patrol fails to notice the intruders, the PCs may either avoid the patrol, or ambush it instead. The orcs are vicious combatants, but



if Jort is defeated, any surviving orcs attempt to flee back to Redlake Fort.

## JORT

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male hill giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

hp 85

## TWISTED NAIL ORCS (4)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Orc fighter 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 222)

CE Medium humanoid (orc)

**Init** +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +1

### DEFENSE

**AC** 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +1 Dex)

**hp** 21 each (2d10+6)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0 (+1 vs. fear)

**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1, ferocity

**Weaknesses** light sensitivity

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** falchion +6 (2d4+6/18–20)

**Ranged** javelin +3 (1d6+4)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 18, **Dex** 13, **Con** 15, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 6

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 17

**Feats** Cleave, Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack

**Skills** Intimidate +6, Perception +1

**Languages** Common, Orc

**SQ** weapon familiarity

**Gear** studded leather, falchion, javelins (4), 1d20 gp

**Treasure:** Among a variety of more useless items, Jort's bag also contains an *agile alpenstock* (*Ultimate Equipment* 276) and a rough brown rock that is actually a mud-caked emerald worth 1,000 gp.

**Development:** If the PCs capture and interrogate one of the orcs, they can gain some intelligence about Redlake Fort. With a successful DC 12 Intimidate check, the PCs learn that morale within the fort is quickly dwindling due to the orcs' recent defeat at Trunau, as well as the failure of their leader Grenseldek's proposed alliance and union with someone or something called the Storm Tyrant. The orc leader, General Karrguk, has already made plans to turn on the other inhabitants of the fort and take the leadership of the tribe back from the giants, as well as claim Grenseldek's treasure for himself. If asked about these other inhabitants, the orc reveals the presence of a vile ogre family at the keep. He states that these degenerates lived in the fort before Grenseldek arrived and are unhappy with her domination. The ogre patriarch, Gutterunch, practices foul magic in the keep's basement. If asked, the orc can also inform the PCs of Umlo Nargrymkin's location in the bear pit (area K2).

**Story Award:** If the PCs successfully sneak past the patrol, award them 4,800 XP, as if they had defeated the patrol in combat.

## K. REDLAKE FORT

Originally part of Harchist's Blockade, the second line of strongholds defending Lastwall's retreating northern border with Belkzen, Redlake Fort (named for a variety of crimson algae that grew within its moat) was abandoned in 4482 AR when the Blockade fell and a new border, the Hordeline, was established farther south. The fall of Redlake Fort was more than just a military defeat, however, for in the face of an orc siege, the human garrison resorted to cannibalism under the influence of their desperate castellan. The acts committed in the fort's final days echo to the present, and several haunts now manifest within its walls. See the Redlake Fort's Secret History sidebar on page 44 for more information.

Many different orc tribes and other creatures have inhabited the abandoned fort over the years, but today it hosts the hill giant Grenseldek's reborn Twisted Hearts tribe: a fractious mix of Heart Eater hill giants, Twisted Nail orcs, and an extended family of ogres and ogrekin called the Gorbs, whom the giants and orcs subjugated.

## FEUDING FACTIONS

Giants, orcs, and ogres don't usually band together in mixed tribes, and only Grenseldek's iron hand has kept the three races united. But after the failure of her raid on Trunau in "Battle of Bloodmarch Hill," Grenseldek has retreated to her private chambers, where she spends her time sulking in abject depression or throwing violent tantrums, all the while ignoring the tribe she brought together. Without her leadership, morale has collapsed. Although the fort's hill giants remain loyal to Grenseldek for now, infighting has begun between the tribe's orc and ogre factions. Throughout Part 3, perceptive PCs can learn about the animosity between these two groups, either by witnessing examples of intratribal violence, overhearing the factions grumbling about the other groups, or learning about the various haunts in the fort, whose corrupting influence is largely responsible for turning the fort's factions against one another. With luck and some effort, the PCs might be able to pit one group against another to reduce the numbers of the fort's defenders, or at least create a distraction to cover their own entry into the fort. If the PCs do manage to manipulate some of the orcs and ogres into killing each other, they should still earn XP in the form of story awards as if they had defeated the creatures themselves.

If the PCs kill Grenseldek before defeating the majority of the orcs and ogres, and word of her demise reaches General Karrguk and Gutterunch, chaos is unleashed. The fort



becomes a battleground between the Twisted Nail orcs and the Gorb ogres, each looking to wipe out the other faction in an indiscriminate murderous rampage and claim Grenseldek's dowry as their own. To quickly determine the aftermath of this chaos, roll 2d6 for the ogres and 1d6 for the orcs; then reduce their numbers by that amount every 10 rounds until only one faction remains. Of course, if the PCs are in the thick of things, they're just as likely to be attacked, as both groups mistake them for allies of their enemies, unless the PCs have already forged an alliance with one of the factions.

### OVERHEARD GRUMBLES

As the PCs explore Redlake Fort and its environs, they have ample opportunities to eavesdrop on the two factions and learn about their failing loyalty to Grenseldek and their murderous plans to eliminate one another. Due to the fort's many points of entry, the PCs can hear these tidbits of information in any order. Any PC who speaks Giant or Orc can pick up a few rumors whenever she draws near or enters an area populated by ogres or orcs. An undetected PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check learns one random rumor from either the Ogre Rumors table or Orc Rumors table, depending on who the PC is spying upon. For every 5 by which the check result exceeds the DC, the PC learns another rumor.

### OGRE RUMORS

d6	Rumor
1	"Them orcs is up to sumthin', I can feels it in me bones. I seen 'em playin' with their puny pokers, too, and it looks like they's fixin' to fights us Gorbs!"
2	"Stupid orcs and their stuntyrunt! I don' know why they don' let their bears eats it. I say we go down to the bear pen and eats the stuntyrunt ourselves! Mmmmm, I loves me the taste of stuntyrunt!"
3	"Pappy says that's the fifth orc we caught sneaking around this week—not that I minds, those greenskins taste good if you cooks 'em long enough. If Grenseldek can't keep her little orcs safe anymore, I gots a place for them—in my belly!"
4	"What's that giant up to? She done locked herself up in her tower and ain't no one can gets near her. Maybe she gone crazy, or maybe the ghost finally gots her!"
5	"I heard Grenseldek cryin' like she just lost at Mig-a-Mug-Tug. I'm gonna tell Pappy first chance I gets. I don' wanna follow some blubberin' tub of a giant. I say we takes our home back for Gorbs only!"
6	"We's runnin' out of food, we's is, and Grenseldek ain't let us go hunt. If I don' gets me fresh meat soon, I'm gonna finds me sumthin' to eats in one of those orc tents. The general's gal looks good to gobble."

### ORC RUMORS

d6	Rumor
1	"If those stinkin' ogrekin take any more pot shots at us from that wall, I'm gonna kill 'em all myself. Ain't fair that they get to stay inside the fort while we live down here like rats."
2	"You hear about Grash? Poor bastard met the wrong end of one of them ogre 'ooks. They caught 'im sneakin' into their territory. He said he got lost, but the ogres didn't buy his story. Cooked 'im right up and ate 'im, they did, and they're drinkin' grog out of 'is skull now. If I get my hands on the ogre who did that, I'm gonna use 'is head as a chamber pot."
3	"Our fearless leader ain't so tough after all, I hear. She's holed up in her room crying like a whelp. Something 'bout her true love don't feel the same for her Never thought that oversized beast would be so feeble."
4	"I swear I saw that ghost again last night, up in that bell tower. It ain't those dimwitted ogrekin neither, they leave at sundown. It can fly, and makes a horrible scream that chills yer blood. I wouldn't believe it if I hadn't seen it for myself!"
5	"Ha! Looks like Karrguk's woman has something for our bear bait. Must be her human blood that makes her so kind to that dwarf. I say let the bears eat him. We can always put those stupid ogres in the bear pit instead."
6	"There's a reason we been drilling so much lately. The general wasn't just training us to fight giants for nothing. He's found a secret way into the fort. We're gonna hit those ogres hard, and when we're done, we're gonna take that blubbering giant's stash for ourselves."

### REDLAKE FORT FEATURES

Built from reddish stone (which also contributed to its name), Redlake Fort was originally surrounded by a water-filled moat fed by a nameless tributary of the River Esk, but after the construction of the dam at area **K8**, the water eventually evaporated, leaving the fort sitting atop a rocky outcrop 20 feet above a wide, dry trench. The bottom of this dry moat is 15 feet below the level of the surrounding land, encircled by a 10-foot-high wooden palisade constructed of 2-foot-thick logs lashed together (hardness 5, hp 240, break DC 23). Climbing the palisade requires a successful DC 15 Climb check. The only gaps in the palisade are where a stone bridge leads to the fort's barbican (area **K1**), and where the wall butts up against the old dam that separates the moat from the Esk's side channel (area **K8**).

The outer wall of the fort itself is 15 feet high, and anyone attempting to scale it must succeed at a DC 20 Climb check (except for the crumbling section between areas **K11b** and



## K. REDLAKE FORT

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



UPPER LEVELS



LOWER LEVELS



**K11c**, which requires no Climb checks). Several arrow slits pierce this wall and can be squeezed through with a successful DC 30 Escape Artist check (Small creatures gain a +8 circumstance bonus on this check). Inside the fort, ceiling heights average 10 feet, and rooms are unlit unless otherwise specified. Doors are of good wooden construction (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 18) and are unlocked unless otherwise indicated.

### K1. Barbican (CR 6)

A large stone fortification, perched atop a small rocky island above a deep trench surrounding the entire stronghold, guards the approach to the fort's gatehouse.

This fortified gateway has 1-foot-thick and 10-foot-high stone walls, but it is open to the sky above. Arrow slits at regular intervals allow those within to fire projectiles at attackers. A series of stone bridges and wooden drawbridges separates the barbican from the main body of the fort and the outside terrain. In the fort's heyday, the barbican guards would raise the two drawbridges and seal the building off when under attack, but a lack of maintenance in the time since the fort was abandoned has resulted in the two drawbridges being fixed in their lowered position.

If the PCs approach within 500 feet of the barbican, they can attempt DC 15 Perception checks to hear the fierce roar of a wild animal followed by a battle cry in Dwarven. If Ingrahild Nargrymkin is accompanying the PCs, she immediately identifies the voice as that of her missing brother Umlo (see area K2).

**Creatures:** Six orcs armed with longbows are posted in the barbican, but they are distracted by the spectacle in the bear pit (area K2) in the dry moat below, and take a –5 penalty on their Perception checks to notice the PCs' approach.

Once per day at sundown, the entire orc population in the fort (all 35 of them) squeezes into the barbican to watch the bear-baiting in area K2. Also present is the orc leader General Karrguk (see area K7), who sits upon a makeshift throne on a raised platform that is erected daily, his half-orc concubine Droja (see area K5) kneeling at his side.

#### TWISTED NAIL ORCS (6)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 21 each (see page 34)

Ranged longbow +3 (1d8/x3)

**Treasure:** A weapons rack holding 10 longbows stands against one wall; beside it rests a barrel containing 60 arrows.

### K2. Bear Pit (CR 9)

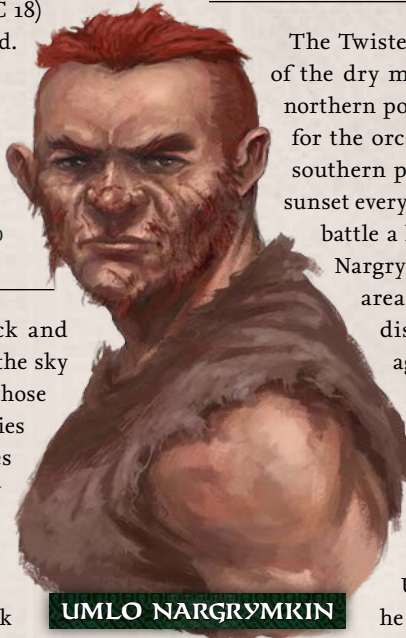
The dry moat wraps around the barbican, creating a U-shaped path that has been partitioned off to create a pen and run area for several large animals. Sun-bleached bones and excrement litter the run amid large swatches of coarse fur.

The Twisted Nail orcs have turned this section of the dry moat into a pit for bear-baiting. The northern portion (area K2a) is walled off as a pen for the orcs' pet bears, leaving the eastern and southern portion (area K2b) as an open run. At sunset every day, the orcs gather to watch the bears battle a lone prisoner—a dwarf named Umlo Nargrymkin, older brother of Ingrahild (see area G). This entertainment is the only distraction preventing an orc revolt against Genseldek.

A reluctant combatant, Umlo retired from adventuring years ago and settled for a simpler life as a cook. When Ingrahild became fascinated with finding their lost ancestor Nargrym Steelhand's tomb, Umlo was unable to dissuade her, so he decided to come along. If he could not keep his sister at home, he'd at least make sure she ate well on the road. Like Ingrahild,

Umlo fell victim to the schizophrenia caused by the hag coven's *bestow curse*. Wandering aimlessly in the throes of his insanity, Umlo became separated from his sister and stumbled out of Ghostlight Marsh, only to cross paths with an orc patrol from the fort. The orcs brought Umlo here, where they have pitted him almost daily against the bears, armed with nothing but his mithral skillet. Still in a state of insanity when he arrived, Umlo fell quickly to the bears' attacks in his first battle. Not wanting the "entertainment" to end so swiftly, the orcs' leader, General Karrguk, ordered his concubine Droja to heal the dwarf so the pit's spectacle could resume. Droja recognized Umlo's affliction and cast *remove curse* on him, restoring his lucidity, and has continued to aid him with healing, though she has been unable to free the captive dwarf.

**Creatures:** Three grizzly bears share the northern pen with a much larger dire bear; Umlo Nargrymkin sits in the southwestern corner of the run, as far from the bear pen as possible. The orcs have taken away all of Umlo's gear except for his mithral skillet, and they crudely hacked off his beard to further humiliate the dwarf. His clothes are little more than torn and bloody rags after repeated bouts with the bears. The orcs keep the bears hungry, and the animals attack anyone entering the pen (or anyone they can reach, if released into the run).



UMLO NARGRYMKIN



## CAPTURED BY ORCS!

If the PCs are captured, the orcs strip them of their gear and take them to the bear pit, dumping them into the run (area **K2b**). If they're lucky, the orcs might leave them each with a single weapon. The orcs release the dire bear from area **K2a** and sit back to watch the show. If the PCs defeat the bear, the orcs set the three grizzlies on them as well. If the PCs manage to emerge from both battles victorious, the orcs fall silent until General Karrguk arrives. If the bears have been killed, this leaves Karrguk with nothing to distract his followers from attacking the fort. Realizing this, Karrguk decides to talk with the PCs in the hopes that another distraction—such as the PCs invading the fort instead of the orcs—might present itself. See the Unexpected Allies sidebar on page 40 for details on parleying with General Karrguk. If the PCs escape the bear pit, the orcs attempt to recapture them, but do not pursue the PCs beyond the palisade or into the fort itself.

### DIRE BEAR CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 95 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 31)

### GRIZZLY BEARS (3) CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 42 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 31)

### UMLO NARGRYMKIN CR 6

XP 2,400

Male dwarf fighter (free hand fighter) 5/rogue 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 105)

NG Medium humanoid (dwarf)

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge)

**hp** 60 (7 HD; 5d10+2d8+19)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

**Defensive Abilities** defensive training, elusive +1, evasion

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** mithral skillet +10/+5 (1d6+4)

**Special Attacks** deceptive strike +1, hatred, singleton +1, sneak attack +1d6

#### STATISTICS

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

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +9 (+12 disarm); **CMD** 22 (26 vs. bull rush, 25 vs. disarm, 26 vs. trip)

**Feats** Catch Off-Guard, Cleave, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Feint, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (warhammer), Weapon Specialization (warhammer)

**Skills** Acrobatics +10, Bluff +8 (+9 to feint), Disable Device +10, Perception +10 (+12 to notice unusual stonework), Profession (cook) +7, Stealth +12

**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Giant

**SQ** rogue talents (combat trick), trapfinding +1 **Gear** mithral skillet<sup>UE</sup>

**Treasure:** To increase Umlo's chances of survival, the oracle Droja has given him four *potions of cure moderate wounds*, which the dwarf has buried near a large rock in the bear run. Besides his mithral skillet, Umlo's remaining possessions are locked away in area **K7**.

**Development:** If the PCs liberate Umlo, he can provide them with the exact number of orcs in the fort (a total of 35), and can describe their leader, General Karrguk (including the weapons he carries), and his unwilling concubine, the half-orc oracle Droja. Umlo goes on to say that Droja has provided him healing many times, and promised to free him when the time was right and the foretold heroes finally arrived (something he doubted would ever happen until now). According to Umlo, Droja is very interested in meeting them and has assured him that she would help their cause.

If Ingrahild is with the PCs, the two siblings are overjoyed to be reunited, visibly sobbing in relief in each other's arms. For saving his "baby sister," Umlo states that he owes the PCs a debt and is willing (as is Ingrahild) to follow them for the time being, at least until the PCs discover the dwarves' ancestor's tomb (an event detailed in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #93: *Forge of the Giant God*).

**Story Award:** If the PCs rescue Umlo, award them 2,400 XP, as if they had defeated him in combat.

## K3. Guarded Bridge (CR 5)

The western bridge connecting the barbican (area **K1**) to the fort's gatehouse (area **K9**) has four wooden ladders propped against its sides that lead down into the dry moat (area **K4**). These ladders provide the only means of entering or exiting the orc-infested dry moat, though characters can instead try to scale the palisade, the dam at area **K8**, or the fort's curtain wall.

**Creatures:** Four orc guards stand under the bridge keeping a constant watch on the ladders. Ironically, due to current tensions at the fort, the orcs are more concerned with an ogre attack from within the keep than an outside invasion. Due to their preoccupation with the ogres and ogrekin inside the fort, the orcs take a –5 penalty on their Perception checks to notice the PCs approaching the bridge from area **K1**.

### TWISTED NAIL ORCS (4) CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 21 each (see page 34)



#### K4. Dry Moat (CR varies)

A deep trench resembling a dried scab runs around the perimeter of the fort. Several brightly dyed animal-skin tents flap vigorously in the harsh breeze blowing across the ditch's dusty floor.

The majority of the Twisted Nail orcs swearing allegiance to Grenseldek call the tents in this dry moat home. To hide the true numbers of her army, Grenseldek ordered the orcs to erect several more tents than needed, in hopes of intimidating anyone seeking to test her claim on the abandoned fort. In fact, of the 21 erected tents, only 13 of them (those on the eastern side of the moat) are actually occupied. The eight tents below the western wall of the fort sit empty. If the PCs spend time watching the area, they may notice that no one ever comes or goes into these tents, and if they spy on the area at night, these tents remain suspiciously dark, while small fires sprout up next to the occupied tents. While most of the tents are functionally identical, a successful DC 20 Perception check allows a PC to identify a single tent with brighter dyes and strange animal fetishes swinging from its frame—the tent of the half-orc oracle Droja (area K5).

**Creatures:** At any one time, 25 Twisted Nail orc warriors live in this encampment, spending their time training, brawling, drinking, or gambling. If the orcs detect the PCs, they raise an alarm and attempt to swarm and subdue the intruders, hoping to capture the PCs alive to use as bear-bait in area K2.

##### TWISTED NAIL ORCS (UP TO 25)

CR 1

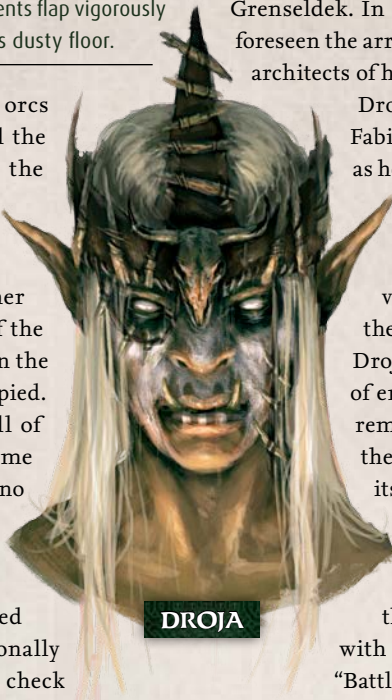
XP 400 each

hp 21 each (see page 34)

**Development:** If the PCs infiltrate the orc encampment and don't draw attention to themselves, they can rest safely within the empty tents, which are mostly ignored by the orcs. While here, the PCs can eavesdrop on the orcs and learn valuable information about the current situation in the fort (see *Overheard Grumbles* and the *Orc Rumors* table on page 35).

#### K5. Droja's Tent (CR 6)

Animal skeletons and mummified entrails dangle from the posts of this large, brightly dyed tent. Pale blue smoke wafts from the tent's smoke hole, carrying with it the strong scent of herbs mixed with sweat.



DROJA

**Creature:** The strange half-orc oracle Droja dwells within this tent. The unwilling concubine of General Karrguk, Droja possess little loyalty to the Twisted Nails or to Grenseldek. In fact, through her divinations, Droja has foreseen the arrival of the PCs, and hopes they may be the architects of her freedom.

Droja has also made contact with the ghost of Fabian Blix in the haunted chapel (area K22), as her tent stands near the chapel's outer wall.

While Droja and Blix are not entirely on amicable terms, the oracle has shared her visions with the ghostly cleric, and he views the half-orc as his only means to end the fort's haunting for now. Blix has asked Droja to point these heroes his way in hopes of enlisting them to retrieve and destroy the remains of the fort's castellan, thus ending the hauntings and freeing his own soul from its undead existence.

When the PCs first meet Droja, she fawns over them like they are celebrities and tells them she has had visions of their past glories (even providing the PCs with specific details of their exploits during "Battle of Bloodmarch Hill" and the earlier parts of this adventure). She goes on to say that their destiny lies in the fort's haunted chapel, should they be brave enough to accept the challenge, and begs the PCs to take her with them so she can witness their future greatness.

If the PCs ask about Grenseldek, Droja says that the hill giant is attempting to amass a large dowry to impress someone called "the Storm Tyrant," and that the orc attack on Trunau was not only to gain the wealth left in the tomb beneath the town, but more importantly, to retrieve half of a strange stone treasure map. The location of the map's other half is unknown to Droja, but she believes that Grenseldek has it. If the PCs ask where Grenseldek is, Droja waves her hand toward the fort and says, "Somewhere inside," but she doesn't know the giant's exact location. If asked about General Karrguk, Droja says, "He is a violent thug. He wants the fort for himself—no giants, unless they kneel to him—but he is afraid to make the first move." Regarding the tension between the orcs and ogres in the fort, Droja shrugs and simply replies, "Those brutes can kill each other, for all that I care." If asked about her loyalties to Grenseldek or General Karrguk, Droja quickly dismisses them, stating, "The giantess is delusional! No one would take her as a bride, and her power is waning." As for Karrguk, the half-orc says, "I have no love for the general. He doesn't treat me well—not like you would, if I came with you."

If the PCs wish, Droja offers to arrange a meeting with General Karrguk, but only if they agree to allow her to



## UNEXPECTED ALLIES

While some groups of players might just slaughter the Twisted Nails down to the last orc, those who prefer more diplomatic solutions can find the opportunity to win a war with words instead of blades. If the PCs attempt a parley with the orcs (arranging a meeting with General Karrguk either through Droja or after they are captured), they may be able to avoid fighting the orcs entirely. Upon first meeting Karrguk, any PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Sense Motive check perceives that though the orc general is too proud to admit it, he is quickly losing control of his tribe. Such a realization grants the PCs a +2 bonus on their Diplomacy checks with Karrguk.

Karrguk's starting attitude is hostile, but if the PCs can change it to at least indifferent with a successful DC 28 Diplomacy check, they can convince the orc general that they are enemies of both Grenseldek and the ogres in the keep, causing Karrguk's already wavering loyalty to collapse completely. In exchange for the PCs' promise to wipe out Gutterunch and his family and to kill Grenseldek, Karrguk agrees to let the PCs enter the fort unhindered. He tells the PCs about both the sewer tunnel (area **K6**) and the secret door to area **K12** at the back of his tent, but warns them about potential traps in area **K12**. In addition, he withdraws the two bodyguards currently guarding Grenseldek in area **K36**, leaving her undefended and alone. If the PCs ask for aid, Karrguk allows Droja and six Twisted Nail orcs to accompany them. If the PCs have not already learned all of the orc rumors, they certainly hear them while allied with the orcs.

Of course, Karrguk has no intention of simply handing over the fort to a bunch of do-good heroes. Once it's clear that the PCs have defeated both the ogres and Grenseldek, Karrguk turns on the PCs, and any remaining orcs (with the exception of Droja) attack them. Likewise, if the PCs fail to change Karrguk's attitude to at least indifferent, his paranoia overtakes his common sense, and he orders his tribe to destroy the invading PCs.

accompany them (or at the very least, safely escort her away from the fort and the orcs). Droja can make no promises about Karrguk's reactions, but if the PCs are clever, she believes they can convince the orc leader to at least allow them to enter the fort without hindrance from the orcs. If the PCs agree to meet with General Karrguk, see the Unexpected Allies sidebar.

### DROJA

CR 6

XP 2,400

Female half-orc oracle 7 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 42)

CN Medium humanoid (human, orc)

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 19, touch 13, flat-footed 19 (+6 armor, +3 deflection)

**hp** 68 (7d8+33)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +7

**Defensive Abilities** orc ferocity

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** +1 *longspear* +5 (1d8/x3)

**Ranged** dart +5 (1d4-1)

**Oracle Spells Known** (CL 7th; concentration +11)

3rd (5/day)—*animate dead*, *bestow curse* (DC 17), *cure serious wounds*, *summon monster III*

2nd (7/day)—*aid*, *augury*, *cure moderate wounds*, *false life*, *hold person* (DC 16)

1st (7/day)—*bane* (DC 15), *bleed*, *cause fear* (DC 15), *cure light wounds*, *deathwatch*, *doom* (DC 15), *shield of faith*

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

**Mystery** bones

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Droja casts *false life* every day. Before combat, she conjures her armor of bones and casts *shield of faith*.

**During Combat** Droja prefers to use her spells to assist her allies. Against foes attacking her directly, Droja summons allies with *summon monster III*, then uses *bestow curse*, *hold person*, or her death's touch ability against foes.

**Morale** Droja attempts to flee or surrender if reduced to fewer than 18 hit points.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 8, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 18

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 17

**Feats** Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Toughness

**Skills** Bluff +10, Heal +10, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (religion) +8, Perception +10, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +8, Stealth +8

**Languages** Common, Giant, Orc

**SQ** oracle's curse (clouded vision), orc blood, revelations (armor of bones, death's touch, voice of the grave)

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of invisibility*, *wand of remove curse* (9 charges), holy water (2); **Other Gear** +1 *longspear*, darts (4), *cloak of resistance* +1, spell component pouch, fortune-telling bones (worth 25 gp), two onyxes (worth 100 gp each), 93 gp

**Story Award:** If the PCs accept Droja's aid and make sure that she can leave the fort safely, award them 2,400 XP, as if they had defeated her in combat.

## K6. Sewer Tunnel (CR 6)

Barred with an iron grate (hardness 10, hp 30, break DC 24), a narrow sewer tunnel only 4 feet in diameter opens into the fort's outer wall. This culvert was originally



submerged, but with the draining of the moat, the grate is now visible, and the sloped tunnel provides access to the cesspool (area **K35**) in the basement of the fort's keep.

If the PCs received the plan of the fort from the knight Calrianne Blix (see area **C3** on page 21), this entrance is marked on the map.

**Creatures:** Two gray oozes feed off the thick crust of waste coating the culvert's walls. While the oozes have grown plump living off the excrement of the fort's occupants, they are just as happy to feed on any organic material—such as the PCs—that enters this tunnel.

#### GRAY OOZES (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 50 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 166)

**Development:** If the PCs open the dam at area **K8** and flood the moat, this culvert once again becomes submerged under 7 feet of water.

### K7. General Karrguk's Tent (CR 6)

Home to the Twisted Nails' leader, a pockmarked orc named General Karrguk, the largest tent in the orc encampment juts out from the southern wall of the fort much like an awning. Accessed by a set of stairs cut into the rocky plateau, the tent sits above the dry moat, which protects it from any flooding that might occur (see area **K8**). A tapestry hanging on the rear wall of the tent conceals a secret door in the fort's wall (successful DC 20 Perception check to notice) that leads to area **K12**. When Karrguk discovered the door, he was curious to see where it led, but a vicious trap quickly convinced him to avoid further exploration after this initial foray into the narrow hall beyond.

**Creature:** When he is not mingling with the orcs under his command in area **K4** (during mealtimes) or watching the bear-baiting in area **K2** (at sundown), General Karrguk is most likely found here in his tent, trying to keep from losing control of his tribe. The orcs are increasingly frustrated and angry at their treatment at the whims of the fort's resident ogre family, and with the absence of Grenseldek's unifying force of will, her army has fallen to violent infighting. Only the daily spectacle in the bear pit has kept Karrguk's tribe from declaring all-out war against their erstwhile allies in the fort. To further complicate matters, Karrguk has sent several orc spies into the fort over the last few days, none of whom has returned. In preparation for what he believes is inevitable conflict with the ogres, Karrguk has begun drilling his troops in tactics against much larger opponents (something the PCs might notice if they spend time secretly watching the dry moat).

If the PCs make an effort to communicate with the general, see the Unexpected Allies sidebar on page 40. Otherwise, General Karrguk attacks the PCs with no hesitation.

#### GENERAL KARRGUK

CR 6

XP 2,400

Male orc cleric of Gorum 3/fighter 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 222)

CE Medium humanoid (orc)

**Init** +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +1

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+9 armor, +1 Dex)

**hp** 71 (7 HD; 3d8+4d10+32)



GENERAL KARRGUK



**Fort** +9, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5; +2 vs. fear  
**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1, ferocity  
**Weaknesses** light sensitivity

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.  
**Melee** +1 *greatsword* +16/+11 (2d6+13/19–20)  
**Ranged** mwk javelin +10 (1d6+7)  
**Special Attacks** channel negative energy 1/day (DC 9, 2d6), destructive smite (+1, 4/day)  
**Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 3rd; concentration +4) 4/day—strength surge (+1)  
**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 3rd; concentration +4)  
 2nd—*aid*, *bull's strength*<sup>o</sup>  
 1st—*divine favor*, *doom* (DC 12), *enlarge person*<sup>o</sup>, *murderous command*<sup>um</sup> (DC 12)  
 0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 11), *detect poison*, *spark*<sup>APG</sup>, *virtue*  
**D** domain spell; **Domains** Destruction, Strength

## TACTICS

**Before Combat** General Karrguk casts *aid*, *bull's strength*, and *divine favor* before entering battle.  
**During Combat** If time permits, the general casts *enlarge person* on the first round of combat. Karrguk makes use of his Lunge and Power Attack feats coupled with his destructive smite ability.  
**Morale** In the presence of any other orcs, General Karrguk fights to the death. If isolated and brought to fewer than 10 hit points, Karrguk attempts to surrender.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 12, **Con** 15, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6  
**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 23  
**Feats** Cleave, Lightning Reflexes, Lunge, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (*greatsword*), Weapon Specialization (*greatsword*)  
**Skills** Intimidate +5, Knowledge (religion) +3, Sense Motive +6  
**Languages** Common, Orc  
**SQ** armor training 1, weapon familiarity  
**Combat Gear** *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of protection from arrows*; **Other Gear** +1 *half-plate*, +1 *greatsword*, mwk javelins (2), spell component pouch, platinum holy symbol of Gorum (worth 100 gp), 148 gp

**Treasure:** Umlo Nargrymkin's captured gear is locked away (Disable Device DC 20) in a chest in General Karrguk's tent. The key lies hidden under a nearby rock (successful DC 15 Perception check to locate). The chest contains Umlo's +2 *breastplate*, a +1 *warhammer*, two light hammers, a *potion of barkskin*, two flasks of alchemist's fire, and a set of thieves' tools.

## K8. Dam (CR 6)

A rickety dam turns away the rushing river water from the dried-up moat. Although the dam appears to have been hastily

constructed from makeshift materials, it has weathered the years remarkably well.

Many years ago, during the final siege of the fort, the orc attackers constructed this dam in an effort to cut off the keep's water supply. While the attempt had no effect on the siege, the dam has kept the river from the replenishing the moat, allowing the moat to evaporate over the years. Two large hatches, one on either side, are built into the dam to control the flow of water through the dam. These hatches can be opened with a successful DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) check or DC 20 Strength check, though opening the riverside hatch requires entering the water.

**Creature:** A giant gar swims near the dam, feeding off the trash generated by the fort's inhabitants. If any creature enters the water (such as to open the riverside hatch), the gar savagely attacks.

## GIANT GAR

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 73 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 128)

**Development:** If the PCs open both of the dam's hatches, a torrent of water gushes into the dry moat, flooding it and eventually refilling it. The gushing torrent is considered stormy water, and any creature within the moat must succeed at a DC 20 Swim check every round or be swept away and possibly drown (see page 432 of the *Core Rulebook* for rules on flowing water). If the moat is flooded, 2d4 orcs drown in the deluge.

## K9. Gatehouse (CR 4)

A lowered drawbridge spans the dry moat, connecting the stone bridge outside to this dark stone gatehouse. To the west, massive double doors lead deeper into the fort.

This gatehouse is poorly lit (treat as dim light). The ceiling contains six murder holes and a raised portcullis 5 feet west of the drawbridge. The western doors are made of strong wood and are locked (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 25, Disable Device DC 20), and are treated with resin to make them resistant to green slime (see Hazard below).

**Hazard:** Three ogrekin are posted on the gatehouse roof (area K23). When the PCs first enter the gatehouse, the ogrekin (if they have not yet been defeated) drop the portcullis (hardness 10, hp 60, lift DC 25), attempting to trap the PCs inside the gatehouse. At the same time, they dump green slime (*Core Rulebook* 416) through the murder holes onto the invaders (enough to fill two 5-foot squares). After the portcullis slams down, the ogrekin raise the drawbridge (hardness 5, hp 40, break DC 23), closing the chamber off completely. The mechanisms needed to operate both the



drawbridge and portcullis are located in upper gate tower (area K24).

**Development:** After trapping invaders in the gatehouse, the ogrekin descend via the stairs in area K25d to confront any intruders who escape into the outer bailey (area K13).

### K10. Gate Tower

Two narrow towers flank the fort's gatehouse. Because they're so cramped, however, the hill giants have stuffed them full with furnishings too small for giants. Whenever a door to either tower is first opened, a cascade of furniture spills out onto the ground outside, creating a loud crash. While the PCs can easily sidestep the falling debris, the noise alerts the ogrekin in area K23 and the hill giant in area K26 who arrive to investigate in 2 rounds. The giants spend only 5 minutes investigating the disturbance before returning to their posts, assuming that either the fort's dilapidated condition or the ghost in the haunted chapel (area K22) is responsible. Unless the PCs remain in the open, they can easily avoid detection, and gain a +4 circumstance bonus on Stealth checks to remain hidden or sneak past the giants, due to the creatures' preoccupation with the fallen furniture.

### K11. Guard Tower (CR 6)

These five sparsely furnished, two-story guard towers are equipped with arrow slits overlooking the dry moat and surrounding area outside the fort's walls. With the exception of the northeast tower (area K11c), which is partially collapsed, stairs in each tower climb up to the upper guardrooms (area K25). The southern guard tower (area K11e) contains a secret door to area K12 that can be found with a successful DC 20 Perception check.

**Creatures:** The Gorb ogre family also includes several ogrekin, the half-human bastard spawn of Pappy Gutterunch. Although the two eastern guard towers (areas K11c and K11d) are unmanned, two of these ogrekin, Poppy and Turgle, regularly visit the remaining three towers (areas K11a, K11b, and K11e) and their upper guardrooms (areas K25a, K25b, and K25c), patrolling the walls connecting the towers. Prone to violence, the ogrekin often grow bored, and there is a cumulative 2% chance each hour that they decide to take pot shots with their bows at the orcs milling around in the dry moat below. After 1d6 rounds of this activity, the hill giant in area K26 shouts at the ogrekin in Giant to "settle down," at which point the "target practice" ends—at least until the next day.

Due to their muddled bloodlines, the Gorb ogrekin are cursed with a variety of deformities, and though all of them are siblings, these degenerate half-breeds bear little resemblance to one another. Poppy, for

example, is frail and emaciated, with a third vestigial arm, while her half-brother Turgle has thick, scaly skin and a misshapen, lumpy head. You can use the statistics below to represent any of the Gorb ogrekin, but feel free to describe their widely differing appearances, or even randomly roll new deformities for each individual using the tables on page 204 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*.

#### GORB OGREKIN (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Human ogrekin fighter 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 204)

CE Medium humanoid (giant)

**Init** +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +4

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+3 armor, +2 Dex, +3 natural)

**hp** 38 each (4d10+12)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3 (+1 vs. fear)

**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1





## REDLAKE FORT'S SECRET HISTORY

When the orcs pushed south against Harchist's Blockade in 4482 AR, they attacked the line of forts stretching along the border, and Redlake Fort was no exception. At first, Redlake's garrison held strong against the orc hordes, but as the siege went on, the fort's food supplies dwindled. Surrounded by orcs and cut off from the rest of the forces manning the Blockade with no hope of resupply, Redlake Fort's defenders soon realized that the fort would not hold—they would either die at the hands of the orcs or slowly waste away from starvation. The fort's castellan, a man named Tamand Varias, was determined that the fort would not fall under his command, and so he turned to a forbidden practice to feed his troops—cannibalism. Keeping the source of the food secret, Varias fed his soldiers the bodies of their own comrades and loved ones. For a time, he was successful; with fresh meat in the garrison's bellies, morale surged, and the defenders redoubled their efforts against the orcs. Eventually, however, the secret got out, and the garrison turned against the castellan, horrified at what Varias had done, and what he had forced them, albeit unknowingly, to do. In a hastily convened tribunal, the soldiers tried and convicted their commander, entombing him alive behind a stone wall in the fort's keep. Once more out of food and their morale shattered, the surviving defenders did not last much longer, and the besieging orcs soon overran the fort.

Varias's grave was discovered during Grenseldek's "renovation" of the keep, and though the orcs and giants (with the exception of Gutterunch Gorb) remain unaware of the castellan's identity or the dark deeds that took place in the fort during its final days, several unexplained events have occurred since the tomb was unearthed, including manifestations of haunts, ghost sightings, increased violence between the various factions in the fort, and other strangeness.

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** ogre hook<sup>UE</sup> +11 (1d10+11/x3)

**Ranged** composite longbow +6 (1d8+6/x3)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 6

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +10 (+14 grapple); **CMD** 22

**Feats** Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (ogre hook), Weapon Specialization (ogre hook)

**Skills** Climb +11, Intimidate +5, Perception +4, Survival +5

**Languages** Giant

**SQ** armor training 1, deformities (fragile, vestigial limb)

**Combat Gear** thunderstones (2); **Other Gear** wooden armor<sup>UE</sup>,

composite longbow (+6 Str) with 20 arrows, ogre hook<sup>UE</sup>, 2d20 gp

**Treasure:** The southern guard tower (area **K11e**) contains a weapons rack holding two composite longbows (+6 Str) and two ogre hooks, alongside a wooden crate containing six quivers of 20 arrows each.

## K12. Coward's Gate (CR 6)

A heavy layer of dust blankets the cold flagstones of this cobweb-filled corridor.

A 5-foot-wide secret corridor runs between the southernmost guard tower and the fort's well, providing a hidden escape route from the fort through the outer wall. Three secret doors (each requiring a successful DC 20 Perception check to notice) lead into the passage from areas **K7**, **K11e**, and **K21**. In addition, iron rungs in the wall just east of the secret door to area **K21** climb up to area **K31** above. Of the forces currently inhabiting the fort, only General Karrguk knows of the tunnel and the secret door in area **K7**, and he keeps this secret to himself, unless the PCs forge an alliance with him.

**Traps:** Originally, three traps protected this corridor from trespassers, but when General Karrguk discovered the secret passage, he triggered the westernmost falling portcullis trap. Rather than test his luck further, Karrguk immediately returned to his tent and sent for Droja to tend to his wounds. The portcullis remains locked in its fallen position (hardness 10, hp 60, lift DC 25), blocking access to area **K21**, but a wall scythe trap (area **K12a**) and a second falling portcullis trap (area **K12b**) at the eastern end of the passage remain fully functional. Hidden bypass locks for all three traps are located in the secret alcove in area **K31** above.

### FALLING PORTCULLIS TRAP

CR 4

**XP** 1,200

**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** manual; **Bypass** hidden lock in area **K31** (Perception DC 25 to locate, Disable Device DC 30 to open)

**Effect** falling portcullis (6d6); Reflex DC 20 negates

### WALL SCYTHE TRAP

CR 4

**XP** 1,200

**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** automatic; **Bypass** hidden lock (Perception DC 25 to locate, Disable Device DC 30 to open)

**Effect** Atk +20 melee (2d4+6/x4)



### K13. Outer Bailey

Once a beautiful green space, this open courtyard is now overgrown with brown weeds and prickly thistles. To the south of the large mess hall (area K15), a lowered portcullis separates the outer bailey from the inner ward (area K20). After years of neglect and exposure to harsh weather, the mechanism that once operated the gate no longer functions, leaving the portcullis frozen in place (hardness 10, hp 60, lift DC 25). Some of the stronger hill giants manually lift the portcullis to pass between the two courtyards, but most of the fort's residents use the doors in the mess hall.

**Development:** Unless they are stealthy, PCs crossing through the outer bailey are likely to attract the attention of the ogrekin in areas K11 and K23 and the hill giant in area K26.

### K14. Kennel (CR 6)

Partially chewed bones litter the straw-strewn floor of this dilapidated outbuilding, which is divided into five wooden stalls.

**Creatures:** The fort's horses were once housed in this stable, which now serves as a kennel for Grenseldek's three pet dire wolves. The wolves attack any non-giant entering their den.

#### DIRE WOLVES (3)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 37 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 278)

### K15. Mess Hall (CR 5)

A giant table spans the entirety of this long room. A headless, fire-blackened horse torso, eviscerated from throat to navel, lies atop the table. The hollow carcass is stuffed with an even more macabre offering of charred humanoid arms, complete with crisp and curled fingers reaching in vain for salvation.

In better times, the fort's guards ate their meals in this mess hall. Now the room is used by the ogres and hill giants, its walls covered in crude graffiti written in Giant and Orc.

**Creature:** One of the several severed hands stuffed into the horse carcass is actually a giant crawling hand brought to unlife by the foul energies emanating from the fort's haunts. The hand scampers off the table to attack any creature entering the room.

#### GIANT CRAWLING HAND

CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 52 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 59)

### K16. Midden

The fort's soldiers would muster in this hall at mealtimes and before going on duty. Now the giants and ogres primarily

use it as a garbage dump and to get to the mess hall (area K15) or outer bailey (area K13). Piles of cracked bones, discarded hides, rotten meat, and other refuse are heaped along the walls, filling the air with an overwhelming stench. To the southeast, a narrow staircase ascends to an open rooftop (area K26) overlooking the inner ward.

### K17. Latrine.

This small chamber contains a simple latrine, but the room is far too cramped for the giants to use, so they ignore it, making it a good temporary hiding place for the PCs, if necessary.

### K18. Kitchen (CR 7)

Carcasses of various humanoids and animals lie in haphazard piles in this room.



MURS



**Creature:** The fort's resident cook—a fat, nearly deaf hill giant named Mubs—works in this area, filleting meat from both humanoid and animal carcasses. Influenced by the haunt in the nearby larder (area **K19**), Mubs now sees himself as more of an artist than a chef. His sadistic and cannibalistic tendencies are often displayed in his culinary creations, the latest of which is on display in the mess hall, a masterpiece he calls “the horse with a hundred hands.” Mubs’s hands are wrapped in filthy, bloodied bandages, as he constantly gnaws on his own plump fingers, chewing them to the bone—another by-product of the haunt in area **K19**. Due to these self-inflicted injuries, the cook takes a –2 penalty on all attack rolls and Dexterity-based skill checks. When Mubs becomes aware of the PCs, he pulls his ragged fingers from his slobber-filled mouth and excitedly shouts, “More hands for my horse!” before attacking with his giant cleaver.

## MUBS CR 7

**XP 3,200**

Male hill giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

**hp** 85

**Melee** cleaver +12/+7 (1d8+7/x3)

## K19. Larder (CR 5)

Assorted foodstuffs were once stored in this large pantry, but its contents were much more macabre during the fort's final days, when the castellan of the fort, Tamand Varias, stocked the larder with the human corpses he had butchered for his troops (see the Redlake Fort's Secret History sidebar on page 44). Today, the room contains several barrels of rendered fat cultivated from the many victims of the fort's current cook, the hill giant Mubs.

**Haunt:** Besides Tamand Varias, the only other person privy to the cannibalism was the fort's cook, a cruel woman with whom the castellan had many romantic liaisons over gluttonous meals. When all of the harvested corpses were exhausted, it did not take long for Varias to turn on his lover and add her to the menu as well. The terror and anguish of those who met their demise on the cook's butcher block have now manifested as a haunt inside this chamber.

## CANNIBALISTIC URGES CR 5

**XP 1,600**

CE haunt (area **K19**)

**Caster Level** 5th

**Notice** Perception DC 20 (to hear the slurping sound of meat being sucked off a bone)

**hp** 10; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 day

**Effect** When this haunt is triggered, every creature within area **K19** must succeed at a DC 16 Will save or be afflicted with an overwhelming hunger for flesh, drooling uncontrollably.

Those affected are compelled to attack the nearest creature, using all their capabilities in an attempt to disable or kill their targets in preparation for eating them. If no suitable targets are within sight, an affected creature instead attempts to eat itself, gnawing on its fingers or limbs or carving off pieces of its own flesh, dealing an amount of damage to itself each round equal to 1d8 + its Strength modifier. These effects last for 5 rounds.

**Destruction** The castellan's bones (from areas **K34** and **K36**) must be destroyed atop Iomedae's altar in area **K22**.

## K20. Inner Ward (CR 7)

Like the outer bailey (area **K13**), this open courtyard is overgrown with thick vegetation. Near the center of the ward, a flight of stone stairs climbs up to the entrance to the fort's keep (area **K29**), located on the building's second floor.

**Creatures:** When the PCs first arrive here, four ogres are tormenting an orc—a spy sent in by General Karrguk—they found sneaking around in the fort. The ogres are in the process of tearing the arms off their plaything amid horrible screams and rowdy laughter. As the ogres are distracted by their game, they take a –5 penalty on their Perception checks to notice creatures entering the ward. However, as soon as they see the PCs, they drop the tortured orc and turn their depraved attention to the newcomers.

## OGRES (4) CR 3

**XP 800 each**

**hp** 30 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 220)

**Development:** Combat here likely attracts the notice of the ogrekin in area **K11**, the hill giant in area **K26**, as well as the ogrekin in the bell tower (area **K28**).

## K21. Well

This circular chamber contains the fort's water supply, a well that connects to the nearby river via an underground stream. A rectangular hole in the ceiling opens to area **K31**, allowing access to the well from the keep above. A secret door in the eastern wall (DC 20 Perception check to find) leads to area **K12**.

## K22. Haunted Chapel (CR 7)

The oaken double doors to this area are barricaded from the outside. It takes a single character 4 rounds to tear down the barricade, revealing a warning painted on the doors in bright red letters in Giant and Orc: “Keep Out! Vengeful Spirit inside!” Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs gain entrance to this chamber.

Faded white paint peels from the dust-coated walls of this grand, vaulted chamber. Several sturdy pews sit in perfect rows facing west, where a simple altar sits upon a marble dais. Opposite the



altar, a statue of a stern woman clad in full plate armor, brandishing a longsword and shield, stands vigil against the eastern wall of the room.

A tangible sense of calm pervades this abandoned chapel; in fact, it has remained untouched since the orcs first sacked the fort long ago. The fort's current occupants sealed off the chapel and avoid it as much as possible, due to the creature now inhabiting it. A successful DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the statue and other iconography in the chapel as representing the goddess Iomedae.

When the fort's castellan, Tamand Varias, first pondered cannibalism (see the Redlake Fort's Secret History sidebar on page 44), he sought the counsel of the keep's resident priest, a cleric of Iomedae named Fabian Blix, hoping for assurance that the church would absolve him of wrongdoing on his deathbed. Shocked by this proposal, Blix provided no such guarantee and instead advised the castellan to surrender the fort to the orcs in exchange for the garrison's freedom. Varias argued that surrender was tantamount to suicide and vowed to hold the fort at any cost. When Blix responded that the cost might be his soul, the castellan went insane with rage and struck down the priest with his sword.

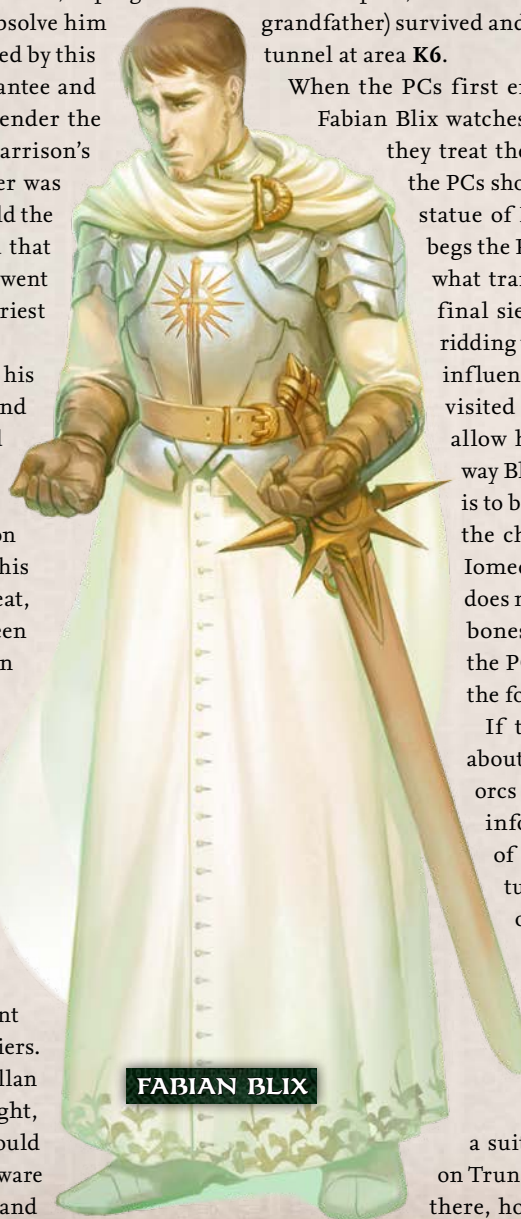
Resolute to what must be done to feed his troops, Varias locked up the chapel and quietly began murdering those deemed unnecessary for the fort's defense—primarily the families of the soldiers—while Fabian Blix became the first person to be fed to the garrison. To explain this newly discovered supply of fresh meat, Varias told his troops that Blix had been hoarding food in the chapel, and when discovered, had fled like a coward into the night, abandoning the garrison to its fate. He also claimed that for their safety, the soldiers' families and the fort's remaining food supply had been barricaded inside the chapel, where Iomedae would watch over and protect them. In reality, of course, the chapel was empty, and the garrison's family members were being slaughtered in the keep's basement to provide sustenance to the fort's soldiers. The garrison's soldiers praised the castellan for his foresight and continued to fight, believing that surrender to the orcs would doom their loved ones—all the time unaware that their families were already dead, and

ignorant to the horror that they had supped on their own flesh and blood.

**Creature:** Horrified by the castellan's plan and wracked with guilt that he could not stop it, Fabian Blix rose as a ghost soon after his murder. Finding himself bound to the chapel, Blix was unable to warn the garrison of the fate their loved ones were to suffer, but he did manage to appear to his own family members in their dreams, telling them of his murder at the castellan's hands and urging them to flee the fort as soon as possible. Blix's wife decided to confront Varias, only to wind up in the stewpot, but the priest's twin sons escaped the castellan's murderous wrath by squeezing through the latrine (area K30). Unfortunately, during their flight, one of the boys fell and broke his neck in the cesspool, but his brother (Calrianne Blix's great-grandfather) survived and escaped the fort via the sewer tunnel at area K6.

When the PCs first enter the chapel, the ghost of Fabian Blix watches them for a while to see how they treat the holy relics in the church. If the PCs show respect toward the altar and statue of Iomedae, Blix manifests and begs the PCs for aid. He can tell the PCs what transpired in the fort during its final siege, and makes no secret that ridding the fort of Tamand Varias's foul influence and cleansing it of the sins visited here so long ago will finally allow him to know peace. The only way Blix knows of to accomplish this is to bring the castellan's remains to the chapel and destroy them upon Iomedae's altar. Unfortunately, he does not know exactly where Varias's bones now lie, though he can tell the PCs that they are somewhere in the fort.

If the PCs don't already know about the antagonism between the orcs and ogres in the fort, Blix can inform them, even to the point of suggesting the possibility of turning the two factions against one another. If asked about Grenseldek, the ghost can tell the PCs about the hill giant's failed plan to wed the Storm Tyrant and the dowry she has been amassing to convince Volstus of her seriousness as a suitor. Because of the failed raid on Trunau and the loss of the treasures there, however, the dowry is nowhere



FABIAN BLIX



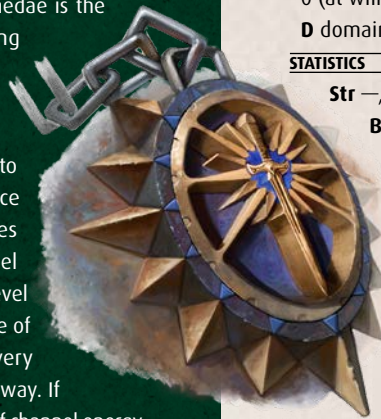
## GLORY MEDALLION

The church of Iomedae created these magic holy symbols for healers and crusaders alike.

GLORY MEDALLION		PRICE 5000 GP
SLOT none	CL 5th	WEIGHT 1 lb.
AURA faint conjuration and necromancy		

This miniature sword emblazoned with a sunburst functions as a holy symbol of Iomedae. If Iomedae is the bearer's patron, when channeling positive energy, the bearer can treat one die roll of a 1 as a 6 when determining the amount of damage healed by living creatures or dealt to undead creatures. In addition, once per day, the bearer can expend uses of his channel energy ability to dispel a darkness spell of lower than 9th level within a 30-foot-radius burst. One use of channel energy is consumed for every level of darkness spell dispelled this way. If the bearer doesn't have enough uses of channel energy to match the level of the spell, the spell is not dispelled.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS	COST 2,500 GP
Craft Wondrous Item, <i>sunburst</i> , creator must be a worshiper of Iomedae	



**Special Attacks** channel positive energy 7/day (DC 15 [17 to damage undead], 2d6), telekinesis (DC 17)

**Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 3rd; concentration +6)  
6/day—battle rage (+1), touch of glory (+1)

**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 3rd; concentration +6)  
2nd—*arrow of law*<sup>UM</sup> (DC 15), *eagle's splendor*,  
*spiritual weapon*<sup>0</sup>  
1st—*bane* (DC 14), *cause fear* (DC 14), *command* (DC 14),  
*shield of faith*<sup>0</sup>  
0 (at will)—*guidance*, *light*, *stabilize*, *virtue*  
**D** domain spell; **Domains** Glory, War

### STATISTICS

**Str** —, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 18

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 22

**Feats** Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness

**Skills** Fly +10, Heal +12, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (religion) +10, Perception +11, Sense

Motive +12, Spellcraft +7, Stealth +10; **Racial**

**Modifiers** +8 Perception, +8 Stealth

**Languages** Common, Orc

**SQ** armor training 1

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Bound to Chapel (Ex)** Blix can't venture more

than 50 feet from the chapel in Redlake Fort, and can't leave its confines for more than 10 rounds at a time.

**Rejuvenation (Su)** Blix can't be permanently put to rest until the remains of Tamand Varias are destroyed on the altar of Iomedae in Redlake Fort's chapel.

near significant enough to gain Volstus's acceptance. Blix knows no other information about the Storm Tyrant.

If the PCs attack Blix, the ghost responds in kind, hoping to eventually find his salvation through some other visitor to the fort.

### FABIAN BLIX

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male human ghost cleric of Iomedae 3/fighter 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 144)

LN Medium undead (augmented humanoid, human, incorporeal)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+4 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)  
**hp** 67 (6 HD; 3d8+3d10+33)

**Fort** +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9 (+1 vs. fear)

**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1, channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits

**Weaknesses** bound to chapel

### OFFENSE

**Speed** fly 30 ft. (perfect)

**Melee** corrupting touch +7 (7d6, Fort DC 17 half)

**Treasure:** The statue of Iomedae contains a secret compartment in the goddess's neck, which can be found with a successful DC 35 Perception check. A magic holy symbol called a *glory medallion* (see the sidebar) rests inside the compartment.

**Development:** If the PCs agree to search for Tamand Varias's remains and destroy them, Blix allows them to use the chapel as a safe haven, where they may rest in safety, unmolested by the inhabitants of the fort.

If the PCs gather up the castellan's scattered remains (both his body in area **K34** and his skull in area **K36**) and destroy them on the altar here (smashing them accomplishes this), this ends the haunts in the fort and releases Blix from undeath. Before passing on to the afterlife, however, the cleric directs the PCs to the statue of Iomedae, rewarding them with the *glory medallion* found in the statue's secret compartment.

**Story Award:** If the PCs put Fabian Blix to rest by destroying Tamand Varias's remains, award them 3,200 XP, as if they had defeated the ghost in combat. If they return to the way station (area **C3**) to inform Calrianne Blix of what transpired during the siege of Redlake Fort and her ancestor's fate, award them an additional 1,600 XP.



**K23. Gatehouse Roof (CR 7)**

The roof of the gatehouse is a large open area ringed with a crenellated parapet. Six trap doors cover the murder holes looking down on the gatehouse (area **K9**; see page 42). Two earthenware jars filled with green slime (*Core Rulebook* 416) stand near the murder holes.

**Creatures:** Three ogrekin stand guard atop this roof, ready to dump green slime on intruders in the gatehouse as described in area **K9**. If encountered here, the ogrekin attempt to kill any intruders in the fort. These ogrekin carry keys to the locked doors in area **K9**.

**GORB OGREKIN (3)****CR 4****XP 1,200 each****hp** 38 each (see page 43)**K24. Upper Gate Tower**

The winch mechanisms that raise and lower the portcullis and drawbridge in area **K9** sit in the upper levels of the gate towers. A single individual can operate each winch.

**K25. Upper Guardroom**

Each of these guardrooms offers a splendid vantage of the surrounding countryside. Stairs in each guardroom (except area **K25c**) connect to them to the levels below (areas **K11a–K11e**).

**Development:** Depending on their movements, the two patrolling ogrekin from area **K11**, Poppy and Turgle Gorb, may be found in any of the three western guardrooms (areas **K25a**, **K25b**, or **K25e**).

**K26. Guard Platform (CR 7)**

Six round boulders, each larger than a human, sit stacked in a precariously balanced pyramid atop this flat roof.

This open rooftop overlooks both the outer bailey (area **K13**) and the fort's inner ward (area **K20**). A narrow stone staircase leads down from the roof to the midden (area **K16**).

**Creature:** A bored and dimwitted hill giant fights off frequent bouts of narcolepsy while straining to stay awake and watch for intruders from this rooftop. Regardless of the time of day, there is a 75% chance that the incompetent guard is asleep against the pile of boulders. Any loud noise, such as triggering the avalanche of debris at the gate tower (area **K10**), combat in areas **K13** or **K20**, or the ringing of the bell in area **K28**, rouses the giant. After 1 round of gathering his bearings and scratching his itchy bits, the giant starts hurling rocks at intruders.

**HILL GIANT****CR 7****XP 3,200****hp** 85 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)**RAISING THE ALARM**

If the ogrekin sentries in area **K28** sound the alarm, the fort's occupants go on full alert, with the effects on specific encounter areas as listed below. If 24 hours pass without further alarm or notice of the invading PCs, the fort's occupants resume their old habits, behaving as detailed in their encounter descriptions.

**Area K1:** The orcs in the barbican are no longer distracted.

**Area K3:** The orcs beneath the bridge are no longer distracted.

**Area K10:** The giants no longer assume any disturbances in the gate towers are happenstance, and the PCs gain no bonuses on Stealth checks.

**Area K20:** The ogres in the inner ward quickly dispatch their orc plaything and are no longer distracted.

**Area K26:** The hill giant stays awake (0% chance of being asleep) and actively watches for intruders.

**K27. Abandoned Barracks**

Several decrepit bunks rot in this neglected room. The tracks of numerous footprints have cleared a visible path between the room's three doors in the thick layer of dust coating the floor.

The door to the west leads to a spiral staircase that climbs up 10 feet to the bell tower above (area **K28**). Due to the haunted chapel directly below, the fort's current occupants avoid this room as much as possible, only passing through when necessary. For the most part, they enter this room only twice per day, at sunrise and sunset, when the guards in the bell tower change shifts.

**K28. Bell Tower (CR 6)**

A massive bell fills this chamber beneath a domed roof. Four open arches provide wide views of the fort and surrounding lands.

Any PC looking up at this tower from the fort's walls, towers, or courtyards can easily notice movement within. The tower is occupied from sunrise to sunset and abandoned when it grows dark.

**Creatures:** During the day, two skittish ogrekin are posted in the bell tower as sentries. Unlike their brothers and sisters, they don't bicker with one another or take pot shots at the orcs in the dry moat below. They are terrified of the ghost in the haunted chapel below (area **K22**) and perform their duties here as quietly as possible to avoid its wrath, abandoning the tower as soon as night falls.

If the ogrekin spot the PCs (likely in one of the courtyards or atop the walls), they ring the bell before engaging the



intruders with ranged attacks if possible. The bell resonates with a deep ring and puts the fort on full alert (see the Raising the Alarm sidebar on page 49).

Due to their unsettled mood, these ogrekin take a –4 penalty on Will saves against fear effects. If the ogrekin become frightened or panicked, they lose all capacity for rational thought and fail to sound the alarm before fleeing.

## GORB OGREKIN (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 38 each (see page 43)

## K29. Entrance Hall (CR 9)

Redlake Fort contains a fortified keep built into its southwestern corner. For defense, the keep's entrance is located on the second floor, with a drawbridge connecting the entrance to a freestanding stone staircase in the inner ward (area K20). This deep into the fort, the giants are less concerned about defense, and the drawbridge is currently lowered.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter this area.

This large, open chamber has been thoroughly gutted. Where smaller rooms once divided this hall, only the remnants of former walls remain, leaving exposed joists jutting from the stone walls like branches.

Redlake Fort was built for humans, so when Grenseldek and her giants moved into the keep, they gutted many of its rooms to make space for the giants' much larger bulk. Most of the furnishings that once decorated these ancient rooms can now be found crammed inside the gate towers at area K10. The fort's hill giants have taken up residence in this hall, and crude pallets and piles of smelly furs and moldy straw lie on the floor where each giant has claimed a bit of personal space. Due to the clutter in the hall, this area is considered difficult terrain for Medium or smaller creatures, but Large or larger creatures can move through the area without penalty. Three sets of doors exit the entrance hall. The southern doors lead to a spiral staircase that descends to the keep's basement outside the storage area (area K33).

**Creatures:** The reason for the keep's most recent renovations is immediately evidenced by the hall's current occupants: a pair of hill giants. Even with 10-foot-high ceilings, the giants can't stand completely upright, and having to stoop for so long has made them grumpier than usual.

## HILL GIANTS (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 85 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

## K30. Latrine

Alternating tiles of pale blue and white, several of which are cracked or missing, cover the walls and floor of this circular chamber. An open hole gapes in the center of the floor.

A rough-hewn stone shaft connects the hole in the floor to the cesspool 10 feet below (area K35). During the fort's original occupation, servants would empty the keep's chamber pots into the hole. A PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Perception check while looking into the hole can see a faded and worn leather boot wedged into a crack in the wall of the shaft. This boot belonged to one of Fabian Blix's twin sons, who tumbled to his death while attempting to escape the fort during its final days.

## K31. Upper Well

A low fence surrounds a rectangular opening in this room's floor. A winch, a frayed rope, several rusted buckets, and three large water jugs sit next to the fence.

The keep's residents used this chamber to haul up water from the fort's well in area K21 without having to go downstairs and outside. After so many years of disuse, however, the fence is now rotted and the floor tiles surrounding the opening are cracked and waterlogged (see Hazard, below).

A secret door in the room's southeastern corner can be found with a successful DC 20 Perception check. In the small alcove behind the door, iron rungs set in the wall of a narrow shaft allow descent to the secret tunnel (area K12) in the fort's outer wall. The alcove also contains the hidden bypass locks for the traps in area K12 (DC 25 Perception to locate, DC 30 Disable Device to open).

**Hazard:** The floor surrounding the opening is in danger of collapse, which can be recognized with a successful DC 20 Perception check (characters with the stonecunning ability receive the bonus from this ability on this check). Creatures weighing more than 200 pounds in total who approach within 5 feet of the opening cause the waterlogged floor tiles to crumble, and must succeed at a DC 20 Reflex save or fall 10 feet into area K21 below, taking 1d6 points of falling damage.

## K32. Treasury (CR 7)

A huge iron cage fills most of this circular chamber, with several crates, chests, statues, paintings, and other art objects crammed between the cage and the walls of the room. Inside the cage, a large piece of furniture sits under a cloth drapery of some sort.

The iron cage (hardness 10, hp 30, break DC 28) has no door, but a thick chain attached to a pulley near the doors



to area K29 allows the entire cage to be raised into the air. The occupied cage (see Creatures, below) weighs 960 pounds, but the pulley effectively doubles the amount of weight a character can lift off the ground, so a character with a Strength score of 17 or higher can use the pulley to hoist the cage 5 feet off the floor (alternatively, multiple characters can combine their Strength scores together to lift the cage). Hoisting the cage in this way is a full-round action; a character pulling on the chain loses her Dexterity bonus to AC and can move only 5 feet per round (as a full-round action). If the chain is released, the cage falls. Anyone adjacent to the cage when it falls takes 3d6 points of damage and is knocked prone. A successful DC 15 Reflex save halves the damage and negates the prone condition.

The crates, chests, and art objects are part of Genseldek's dowry to the Storm Tyrant (see Treasure, below). In addition, six clay-impregnated blankets, each weighing 20 pounds, have been tossed haphazardly in the southern portion of the room. Due to the clutter within the chamber, this area is considered difficult terrain. At the far side of the room, a door opens onto a staircase that climbs up to Genseldek's bedchamber (area K36).

**Creatures:** A mated pair of manticores guards this chamber from within the cage. As part of her failed attempt to impress the Storm Tyrant, Genseldek captured these magical beasts to serve as the crowning piece to her dowry. The manticores are not willing guardians, however; their wings have been clipped so that they cannot fly. They chafe at their confinements and now snap and nip at each other in frustration. Genseldek usually covers the cage in clay-impregnated blankets when receiving visitors, so that the manticores don't harass her guests, but she has neglected to do so in her current melancholy.

When the PCs first enter the room, the crafty manticores see the PCs as a possible means of escape. Although not skilled at bluffing, the manticores beg to be freed, claiming (truthfully) to be prisoners of an evil giant who starves and mistreats them. They'll say or promise anything to be released, but if freed, the evil beasts renege on any promises made and immediately attack, unable to resist the temptation of fresh meat. If the PCs don't release the manticores, or if they attack the beasts, the angry manticores retaliate from inside the cage with their tail spikes.

**MANTICORES (2)****CR 5****XP 1,600 each****hp 57 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 199)**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Within the cage, the manticores attempt to position themselves out of melee range while they launch tail spikes at their foes. If freed from the cage, the manticores each loose one volley of spikes before charging into melee to fight with tooth and claw.

TO THE GREAT STORM TYRANT  
VOLSTUS,

YOU CALL ALL GIANTS TO BRING RUIN  
TO THE SMALL FOLK. I, GRENSELDEK,  
ANSWER YOUR CALL, BUT I AM NOT  
YOUR SOLDIER. I OFFER SOMETHING  
BETTER. I PLEDGE MY HAND IN  
MARRIAGE TO YOU. I BRING A DOWRY  
AND A TRIBE OF GIANTS, OGRES, AND  
ORCS, AND I WILL SERVE AT YOUR  
SIDE AS QUEEN. TAKE ME AND YOU  
WILL NOT REGRET IT.

YOUR FUTURE BRIDE,  
GRENSELDEK,  
GLORIOUS CHIEFTAIN OF THE  
TWISTED HEARTS

**HANDOUT #2**

*Genseldek,*

*I have no interest in your proposed union. Even now, hundreds of giants flock to my banner within Munderhall's Valley. You may bring your trinkets and your tribe and offer them as tribute, and I will consider not killing you outright for your audacity.*

*I give you this one admonition—do not approach me again with such a proposal. You are far below my station, and the very prospect is absurd. If I ever hear such nonsense again, know that I shall take much more than just your "hand." I am the Storm Tyrant—my word thunders with the might of the sky and my justice strikes swift as lightning. You have been warned.*

*Volstus*

**HANDOUT #3**

**Morale** Trapped within the cage and unable to escape, the manticores fight to the death. If freed, however, a manticore attempts to flee if reduced to fewer than 15 hit points, or if its mate is slain.

**Treasure:** Genseldek's discarded wedding dress, a giant-sized, gem-encrusted silk gown, is draped like a tablecloth over a large oaken desk inside the cage. The gown is worth 500 gp in materials alone.

Under the gown are a number of important documents. Several of the papers appear to be drafts of a formal letter addressed to "the Storm Tyrant Volstus"—this is Genseldek's marriage proposal to the Storm Tyrant (see Handout #2). Crumpled into a ball next to Genseldek's final draft is the Storm Tyrant's response to her letter (see Handout #3). There is also a detailed inventory of Genseldek's dowry, and besides cataloging the items



found in this room, the list includes several items from Uskroth's tomb beneath Trunau as future additions to the dowry: most notably, Uskroth's armor, Uskroth's hammer, and something called "Uskroth's rock." This last item is accompanied by a detailed drawing of a geode half surrounded by scribbled notes hinting that the rock fragment forms half of a treasure map. The depicted geode is not among the papers on the desk (Grenseldek has it with her in area **K36**), and though it looks similar to the geode half the PCs found in Uskroth's tomb in "Battle of Bloodmarch Hill," it is clearly a different stone. A final note mentions adding "the stuff in the giantkiller's tomb" to the dowry. Lastly, a parchment map shows the location of a secluded valley in the Mindspin Mountains south of Belkzen. "My future with Volstus starts here" is scrawled on the back of the map in Giant.

Grenseldek's dowry consists of the following, scattered among the chests, crates, and loose piles of coins outside the cage: a book of love poems written in Giant worth 25 gp; a marble bust of a stone giant (actually the giant god Minderhal, recognizable with a successful DC 20 Knowledge [religion] check) worth 100 gp; a woven 25-foot-square carpet depicting two giants making love worth 125 gp; a polished, giant-sized drinking horn made from a mammoth's tusk worth 150 gp; a macabre necklace made from petrified human and elf ears; a series of 12 framed drawings or proportion studies of different giants (cave giant, ogre, hill giant, marsh giant, stone giant, ettin, frost giant, tomb giant [see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #94], fire giant, ash giant, cloud giant, and storm giant), each worth 50 gp; a gem-encrusted scabbard for a Huge falcata worth 200 gp; a bronze statue of a fierce storm giant riding a dragon worth 150 gp; as well as 5 pp, 147 gp, 103 sp, and 976 cp.

### K33. Storage Cellar (CR 7)

Rows of decrepit, mildew-covered wooden shelves line this storeroom. Ancient bloodstains soil the floor beneath piles of filthy bedding. A large cast-iron cauldron lies on its side in the northwest corner of the room under a thick layer of dust, undisturbed except for a single large handprint in the grime. A pungent, sour stench fills the air.

Supplies for the keep were stored in this cellar, but the besieging orcs sacked all of the room's contents save for the iron cauldron. The Gorb family of ogres has now claimed this cellar for their living quarters, and their bedding (the source of the room's stench) lies heaped about the chamber. After one of the ogres disemboweled himself with his own ogre hook after touching the cauldron (see *Haunt*, below), Pappy Gutterunch ordered the rest of his family to leave the pot alone.

**Haunt:** The fort's castellan, Tamand Varias, committed his first major act of cannibalism here, murdering several of his servants and making a stew of their corpses in the cauldron in this storeroom. Later, this room became an abattoir for the noncombatants Varias slaughtered to feed his troops (the source of the bloodstains on the floor). After his heinous acts were discovered, the revulsion, shame, and guilt of all of the soldiers who had partaken of the castellan's meals coalesced within the pot they had supped from, creating a haunt that manifests whenever anyone touches the overturned cauldron.

#### AN UNWHOLESOME MEAL

CR 7

XP 3,200

LE haunt (area **K33**)

Caster Level 7th

**Notice** Perception DC 25 (to smell the rancid odor of a simmering meat stew)

**hp** 14; **Trigger** touch; **Reset** 1 day

**Effect** When this haunt is triggered, the cauldron rights itself and fills with a thick, steaming stew containing recognizable chunks of human flesh (ears, fingers, feet, hands, etc.). All creatures within area **K33** see themselves gorging on the horrific meal and are filled with such profound remorse at the cannibalistic act that they must succeed at a DC 20 Will save or attempt to harm themselves, as if targeted by *terrible remorse* (*Ultimate Magic* 243). These effects last 7 rounds. If a creature successfully saves, it is staggered for 1 round and takes a -2 penalty to AC, but it is no longer affected by the haunt.

**Destruction** The castellan's bones (from areas **K34** and **K36**) must be destroyed atop Iomedae's altar in area **K22**.

### K34. Armory (CR 7)

Rows of barren shelves, empty weapon racks, and vacant armor stands skirt the perimeter of this chamber, lit by numerous candles. In the center of the room, a headless skeleton lies in the middle of a large oval sand pit, surrounded by several arcane symbols and strange, jagged runes etched into the sand. A large, life-sized painting of an obese man hangs on the wall at the far end of the room, its eerily realistic glare boring into the chamber.

The fort's arms and armor were stored in this armory, and the sand pit provided the soldiers stationed here a place to spar and train. The candles provide dim light in the room. The skeleton in the sand pit is missing its skull, but is dressed in the same clothes depicted on the man in the portrait. A successful DC 13 Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility) check can identify the uniform (on the skeleton and in the painting) as that of a commanding officer. The skeleton is the remains of the fort's former castellan, Tamand Varias, who is also depicted in the portrait.



In fact, the painting includes a caption: “Tamand Varias, Castellan of Redlake Fort.” The symbols in the sand can be recognized as Abyssal in nature with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (planes) check. In particular, a successful Knowledge (planes) check identifies the symbol of Zura the Vampire Queen, demon lord of blood and cannibalism.

**Creatures:** Three ogres are conducting a ritual in this room to communicate with the spirit of Tamand Varias. The Gorb family patriarch—“Pappy” Gutterunch Gorb, an obese ogre with an immense, overhanging belly inscribed with Abyssal runes—leads the ritual with a guttural chant. Two of his current favorites, Lurp and Sister Slobber, pregnant females clad in soiled rags far too small for their immense girths, trace symbols in the sand.

When Varias’s remains and portrait were discovered in area **K36**, now Grenseldek’s bedchamber, Gutterunch took possession of them, and has since grown preoccupied with the fort’s history and the haunts currently manifesting within it. With the help of several *speak with dead scrolls* and his Use Magic Device skill, Gutterunch has been trying to make contact with the long-deceased castellan, but without Varias’s skull (overlooked in area **K36**), all of his attempts have failed. Nevertheless, the rituals have enabled some of the castellan’s vile influence to take root in Gutterunch’s mind, further perverting the ogre’s depraved morality. Already devoted to the demon lord of cannibalism, Gutterunch is now obsessed with eating Grenseldek, though the situation in the fort is still too unstable for him to openly turn against her. For the moment, the ogre patriarch contents himself with thinking up new recipes for cooking up Grenseldek when he finally gets the chance.

When the PCs disturb the ritual, the ogres hungrily attack the intruders.

**GUTTERUNCH GORB****CR 5****XP 1,600**Male ogre sorcerer 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 220)

CE Large humanoid (giant)

**Init** +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception -1**DEFENSE****AC** 19, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (+1 Dex, +5 natural, +2 profane, +2 shield, -1 size)**hp** 60 (8 HD; 4d8+4d6+28)**Fort** +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4; +2 vs. poison**Resist** electricity 5**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft.**Melee** 2 claws +10 (1d6+5) or quarterstaff +9 (1d8+7)**Ranged** javelin +5 (1d8+5)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** claws (1d6+5, 5 rounds/day)**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 4th; concentration +6)2nd (4/day)—*scorching ray*1st (7/day)—*cause fear* (DC 13), *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 13), *shock shield*<sup>UC</sup>, *shocking grasp*0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *bleed* (DC 12), *read magic*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 12)**Bloodline** Abyssal**PAPPY GUTTERUNCH**



## TACTICS

**Before Combat** If Gutterunch becomes aware of invaders before they enter the room (such as by triggering the haunt in area **K33**), the ogre patriarch casts *shock shield* and uses his *scroll of mirror image*.

**During Combat** Gutterunch begins combat by using his *wand of summon monster III* to summon a dire bat, while Lurp and Sister Slobber move to engage opponents. Initially, Gutterunch casts spells such as *scorching ray* and *ray of enfeeblement* at foes, but he soon hungers for real combat, casting *shocking grasp* and activating his Abyssal claws before wading into melee combat.

**Morale** Obsessed with the castellan's remains, Gutterunch fights to the death to defend the headless skeleton.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 21, **Dex** 12, **Con** 17, **Int** 8, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 22

**Feats** Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device), Weapon Focus (claw)

**Skills** Intimidate +9, Knowledge (planes) +4, Linguistics +1, Use Magic Device +10

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Giant

**SQ** bloodline arcana (summoned creatures gain DR 2/good), ritual scarification

**Combat Gear** *javelin of lightning*, *scroll of mirror image*, *scrolls of speak with dead* (2), *wand of summon monster III* (9 charges); **Other Gear** javelins (2), quarterstaff, *headband of alluring charisma* +2, unholy symbol of Zura

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Ritual Scarification (Ex)** Gutterunch has etched Abyssal runes paying homage to his patron Zura, demon lord of blood and cannibalism, into his ample flesh. These scarred symbols grant the ogre a +2 profane bonus to AC and a +2 profane bonus on Intimidate checks.

## LURP AND SISTER SLOBBER (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Female ogres (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 220)

hp 30 each

**Treasure:** Tamand Varias's skeleton still wears his uniform—a noble's outfit in surprisingly good condition worth 75 gp—as well as his signet ring and gold chain of office, which together are worth 100 gp.

**Development:** The headless skeleton of Tamand Varias in the sand pit (along with his skull in area **K36**) must be destroyed on Iomedae's altar in area **K22** to put Fabian Blix to rest and end the haunting of the fort.

## K35. Cesspool

A 3-foot-deep pool of foul water fills this circular room, slowly draining through the 4-foot-diameter sewer tunnel (area **K6**) that slopes downward to the north. Ten feet

above the water, a hole in the ceiling opens into the latrine (area **K30**). The roughly hewn stone walls of the cesspool can be climbed with a successful DC 15 Climb check to reach area **K30**.

A skeleton slumps awkwardly against the wall, half-submerged in the cesspool. Its twisted neck and smashed skull hint at its demise. This is the remains of one of Fabian Blix's twin sons. During their escape attempt, one of the boy's feet became wedged in a crack in the stone, and he fell awkwardly to the bottom of the pool, breaking his neck and cracking his skull.

**Hazard:** Anyone submerged in the fetid waters of the cesspool (whether wading or swimming through the pool, between areas **K6** and **K35**, or after falling while attempting to climb the shaft) is subjected to filth fever (*Core Rulebook* 557).

**Treasure:** The skeleton still wears an ornate signet ring on its finger. The symbol on the ring matches the heraldry of Calrianne Blix (Fabian Blix in area **K22** can also identify his family's sigil). The ring is worth 45 gp, but if given to Calrianne, she pays 100 gp for its return.

**Development:** If the PCs open the dam at area **K8** and subsequently flood the moat, the water in the cesspool rises to a depth of 10 feet, and the opening to area **K30** is only 3 feet above the surface of the water.

## K36. Grenseldek's Bedchamber (CR 10+)

As the PCs approach this area, they can attempt DC 15 Perception checks to hear a deep voice sobbing from behind the door, lamenting (in Giant) about unrequited love. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter the room.

This large chamber appears to have recently undergone a renovation. A broken wall partially blocks a dark alcove to the northwest, surrounded by broken bricks and scattered debris. A circular niche on the opposite side of the room to the southeast holds a raised table. In the center of the room, three beds have been crammed together beneath a single huge bearskin bedspread. South of the beds, a massive floor-to-ceiling mirror stands against the wall, and a large dust-covered armoire hunkers between two sets of doors along the northeast wall.

Like other areas within the keep, the hill giants gutted this chamber to accommodate their massive frames. The giants abandoned their renovation, however, after discovering a bricked-up alcove in one wall of the room. When the demolition crew broke through the wall, a great chill blasted into the room, causing the giants to flee in fear, but Grenseldek scoffed at their cowardice and took the area as her personal bedchamber, mocking the giants for being spooked by a cold wind. The giant chieftain couldn't be bothered to finish the renovations herself, so the bricked-up wall remains, albeit with a 3-foot-diameter hole punched through it. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) or



Profession (stonemason) check while inspecting the wall can determine that the bricks are much more recently installed than the fort's original stone. Aside from thick cobwebs and hundreds of harmless spiders, the dark alcove behind the wall appears empty, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check can find a curious human skull lying forgotten beneath the cobwebs and broken masonry (see Hazard and Development on page 56).

**Creatures:** The hill giant Grenseldek resides in this chamber, accompanied by two gigantic orc bodyguards and her pet dire wolves, Nibble and Scar. The once-mighty chieftain of the Twisted Hearts tribe, Grenseldek wallows in depression in the southeastern alcove, staring blankly at a geode that sits upon the table there. Though Grenseldek was truthfully saddened by the news of the Storm Tyrant's rejection, her sorrow has been supernaturally prolonged by the curse of melancholy emanating from Tamand Varias's skull (see Hazard on page 56), causing her to sequester herself here in her chambers while her mixed tribe of giants, ogres, and orcs falls apart without her leadership.

Powerfully built and standing nearly 8 feet tall, Grenseldek's two orc bodyguards, both female, possess hill giant blood somewhere in their ancestry. They tower over their peers, a fact that the other orcs, General Karrguk included, find intimidating. When Grenseldek first took command of the Twisted Nails, Karrguk immediately offered her the services of the giant-blooded orcs as her personal guard, as much to get rid of them as to appease the hill giant chieftain.

Like Grenseldek, the two bodyguards are suffering from the curse of melancholy, and they've lost what little loyalty they had toward their charge. If the PCs allied themselves with General Karrguk (see the Unexpected Allies sidebar on page 40), he has recalled the two bodyguards, leaving Grenseldek alone in her chambers with just her pet dire wolves. (If this is the case, the two giant orcs will reappear to aid General Karrguk in the final battle when the orc leader eventually turns against the PCs.)

Even in the depths of her sadness, however, Grenseldek is still a fearsome foe, and when she realizes that invaders have entered her private chambers, she musters her strength and flies at the PCs with hate-filled eyes, ordering her wolves and her bodyguards (if they are still present) to attack the intruders.

**GRENSELDEK****CR 9****XP 6,400****hp** 118 (see page 60)**GRENSELDEK'S BODYGUARDS (2)****CR 5****XP 1,600 each**Female giant orc fighter 2/rogue 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 295, 222)

CE Large humanoid (orc)

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6**DEFENSE****AC** 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +3 natural, -1 size)**hp** 56 each (5 HD; 2d10+3d8+28)**Fort** +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** -1 (+1 vs. fear)**GRENSELDEK'S BODYGUARD**



**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1, evasion, ferocity, trap sense +1

**Weaknesses** curse of melancholy, light sensitivity

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk greataxe +8 (3d6+5/x3)

**Ranged** throwing axe +3 (1d8+3)

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

**Special Attacks** sneak attack +2d6

## TACTICS

**During Combat** On the first round of combat, one of the bodyguards drinks her *potion of aid* while the other attacks, switching tactics on the following round. Thereafter, the bodyguards make use of their Bodyguard and In Harm's Way feats to defend Grenseldek and each other, while attempting to flank with one another to make sneak attacks. The bodyguards drink their *potions of cure serious wounds* as needed, and if reduced to fewer than 30 hit points, or if one of them falls, a bodyguard drinks her *potion of haste*.

**Morale** The bodyguards defend Grenseldek to the best of their ability, but if Grenseldek is slain, they attempt to flee, or failing that, surrender.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 21, **Dex** 14, **Con** 18, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 22

**Feats** Bodyguard<sup>APG</sup>, Combat Reflexes, In Harm's Way<sup>APG</sup>, Stand Still, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greataxe)

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Disable Device +1, Intimidate +5, Perception +6, Stealth +4

**Languages** Common, Giant, Orc

**SQ** rogue talents (combat trick), trapfinding +1, weapon familiarity

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of haste*, *potion of aid*, thunderstone; **Other Gear** +1 studded leather, mwk greataxe, throwing axes (2), 48 gp

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Curse of Melancholy (Su)** Grenseldek's bodyguards are afflicted with the curse of melancholy, giving them a -2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls.

## NIBBLE AND SCAR (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Dire wolf (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 278)

hp 37 each

**Hazard:** The skull inside the bricked-up alcove to the northwest belonged to fort's former castellan, Tamand Varias. Moments before his death, a shred of humanity returned to the cannibal, and he was filled with crippling sadness at his deeds. This powerful emotion still clings to his skull, and along with Varias's abhorrent acts of cannibalism, fuels the haunts that afflict the fort to

this day. Any creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or greater who comes within 50 feet of the skull must succeed at a DC 16 Will save or be afflicted with a powerful curse of melancholy. Until the skull is destroyed upon Iomedae's altar in area **K22**, only a *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish* spell can end the curse.

## CURSE OF MELANCHOLY

**Type** curse; **Save** Will DC 16 negates

**Effect** target is afflicted with persistent feeling of great sadness and takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls, as *crushing despair*; **Cure** destroying Tamand Varias's skull on the altar of Iomedae in area **K22** immediately ends the curse

**Treasure:** The geode atop the raised table in the southeast alcove is the second half of the treasure map to the tomb of the giantslayer Nargrym Steelhand (the PCs should have found the first half of the map in Uskroth's tomb in "Battle of Bloodmarch Hill"). See Concluding the Adventure on page 57 for details on where the geode treasure map leads.

**Development:** If Grenseldek surrenders or is captured, she hands over her half of the geode treasure map without a fight, and offers to tell the PCs everything she knows about the Storm Tyrant Volstus in return for her life. She is quite bitter at him for spurning her, and no longer cares about a union with the giant warlord. Grenseldek has never personally met Volstus, however, and her impressions of the storm giant are heavily romanticized. She knows little of the Storm Tyrant's plans beyond what's presented in the Adventure Background on page 7.

Tamand Varias's skull (along with the rest of his skeleton in area **K34**) must be destroyed on Iomedae's altar in area **K22** to put Fabian Blix to rest and end the haunting of the fort. This act also puts an end to the crippling curse of melancholy afflicting Grenseldek, and if she still survives, she recovers from her humiliation and rejection and prepares to face the PCs again (see her Campaign Role on page 61 for details on these plans).

## K37. Balcony

A balcony skirted with stone crenellations offers a commanding view of the fort's inner yards and buildings. Two ornate doors, one in the north and one in the east, provide access to the keep's upper floor.

Scaling the walls of the keep to reach this balcony requires a successful DC 20 Climb check, but the keep's exterior is sorely in need of maintenance. There is a 50% chance that any climbing character encounters a loose stone while climbing. A successful DC 20 Perception check is enough to notice and avoid a loose stone; a character who fails this





check must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save or fall 20 feet to the ground below, taking 2d6 points of damage.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs defeat Grenseldek and her reborn Twisted Hearts tribe, Trunau's safety is finally secured. Even if the PCs don't completely clear the entire fort of its inhabitants, without Grenseldek's leadership, the mixed tribe eventually falls apart. The PCs can return to Trunau to report their success to Halgra and Silvermane. Whether they go on foot or book passage on Raag Bloodtusk's riverboat, their return journey should be mostly free of danger.

Of course, the PCs' explorations in Redlake Fort have uncovered a far more dangerous threat—the storm giant warlord Volstus the Storm Tyrant, who is gathering an army of giants in a secluded valley in the Mindspin Mountains that could threaten not only Belkzen (and Trunau), but other nations bordering the mountains as well. This information is contained in the correspondence between Grenseldek and Volstus among the hill giant's dowry in

area K32, along with a map to this hidden valley, but if the PCs overlooked these clues, other allies such as Droja, Fabian Blix, or even Grenseldek herself can make them aware of the threat.

In addition, the PCs should now possess both halves of the geode treasure map. The geodes' crystalline interiors model the topography of the Mindspin Mountains, and a carved groove through the crystals represents a trail through the mountains. If the PCs have not yet figured out the purpose of the strange geodes, a successful DC 20 Knowledge (geography) or DC 24 Knowledge (local) check allows them to do so at this point. Alternatively, either Ingrahild or Umlo Nargrymkin, descendants of Nargrym Steelhand, can identify the map and the location it points to—the tomb of their famous, giant-slaying ancestor Nargrym Steelhand, which likely contains weapons that can be used against the Storm Tyrant and his giant minions. The PCs' search for this tomb and the secluded valley of giants is the focus of the next installment of the Giantslayer Adventure Path, "Forge of the Giant God."



## EWIGGA

The sole survivor of her coven, the green hag Ewigga seeks revenge upon those who killed her hag sisters. Fueled by vengeance, she does not limit her wrath to the actual murderers, but extends her fury to all who would trespass within the Vault of Thorns, which she has claimed as her domain.

## EWIGGA

CR 7

## XP 3,200

Female green hag druid 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 167)

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft.; Perception +20

## DEFENSE

**AC** 22, touch 11, flat-footed 22 (+3 armor, +1 deflection, +8 natural)

**hp** 84 (13 HD; 9d10+4d8+17)

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +14; +4 vs. Fey and plant-targeted effects

**SR** 16

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +18 (1d6+6 plus weakness)

**Special Attacks** lightning arc (1d6+2 electricity, 7/day), weakness (DC 17), wild shape 1/day

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th; concentration +12)

Constant—*pass without trace*, *tongues*, *water breathing*

At will—*alter self*, *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *invisibility*, *pyrotechnics* (DC 15), *tree shape*, *whispering wind*

**Druid Spells Prepared** (CL 4th; concentration +8)

2nd—*heat metal*, *pox pustules*<sup>APG</sup> (DC 16), *tar ball*<sup>UM</sup>, *wind wall*<sup>P</sup>

1st—*entangle* (DC 15), *goodberry*, *obscuring mist*<sup>P</sup>, *produce flame*, *ray of sickening*<sup>UM</sup> (DC 15)

0 (at will)—*create water*, *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 14), *guidance*

**D** domain spell; **Domain** Air

## TACTICS

**During Combat** If her deception is revealed, Ewigga keeps her wits about her and targets her attackers with ranged spells for as long as possible. She casts *entangle* to hinder foes and extended *heat metal* on opponents wearing metal armor (the increased duration makes the metal searingly hot for the third through twelfth rounds), followed by attack spells such as *pox pustules*, *produce flame*, and *tar ball*. If pressed into melee combat, Ewigga casts *obscuring mist* and dismisses her *alter self* spell, resuming her hag form and relying on her Blind-Fight feat to successfully attack opponents in the mist with her claws.

**Morale** Having already witnessed the destruction of her coven, Ewigga has no wish to follow her sisters into death. If reduced to fewer than 20 hit points, the hag casts *invisibility* and attempts to flee the Vault of Thorns.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 23, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 17, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 29

**Feats** Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Deceitful, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Bluff)

**Skills** Bluff +26, Disguise +20, Knowledge (nature) +16, Perception +20, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +16, Survival +19, Swim +18, Use Magic Device +15

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Druidic, Giant, Orc

**SQ** mimicry, nature bond (Air domain), nature sense, trackless step, wild empathy +7, woodland stride

**Combat Gear** *goodberries* (5), *lesser extend metamagic rod*, *scroll of call lightning*; **Other Gear** +1 leather armor, *ring of protection* +1, holly and mistletoe, pair of faded leather baby shoes, wooden toy rattle, 1 gp

One hundred years ago, a woman named Ewigga worked a small farm in Lastwall near Ghostlight Marsh with her husband, and while they barely produced enough crops to survive, the couple was content. The only thing missing was a child. Wanting desperately to be a mother, Ewigga prayed to the gods to swell her belly with life, but years passed with no such blessing. In a desperate attempt to bear a child, Ewigga ventured into the swamp in search of a pair of old witches rumored to hold power over such things. The crones agreed to help the woman, but only in exchange for her first-born daughter, whom they would sacrifice to the demon lord Mestama, the Mother of Witches. With seemingly no other option, Ewigga agreed, and 9 months later, she gave birth to a beautiful baby girl.

Once the baby was born, however, Ewigga found herself unwilling to hand over her precious child as promised. She convinced her husband to flee, but before they could pack their last bag, the crones—now revealed as vile green hags—arrived and demanded the baby. Desperately, Ewigga begged to take the child's place, and in a rare display of mercy, the hags agreed, with one condition—Ewigga had to swear herself to the Mother of Witches and join their coven. When Ewigga uttered her last syllable of servitude to the Mother of Witches, she, too, was transformed into a green hag. Loathing her now-monstrous form, Ewigga fled from her husband and



daughter into the murky depths of Ghostlight Marsh to join her new “sisters.”

As the decades passed, Ewigga learned the ways of the swamp, becoming a druid. Her coven has become the only family Ewigga knows, and memories of her former life have faded, to the extent that even the few mementos she has kept from those times—a pair of worn baby shoes, a toy rattle, and a single gold piece that she had managed to save as a poor farmer’s wife—have lost most of their meaning, though she continues to hold on to them. Occasionally, Ewigga remembers her daughter when she sees the baby’s shoes or rattle, but just as often, she thinks they’re from some unfortunate child the coven stole from its family. Likewise, she has forgotten the significance of the gold coin she carries—she now thinks of the well-worn gold piece only as a good luck charm, and often flips it to decide her actions.

With the recent demise of her coven sisters, Ewigga has remembered the loss of her previous family with more clarity than she has had in years, and this second instance of loss has struck her hard. Devastated, the hag fled into the Vault of Thorns, where she now debates whether to take her chances and venture deeper into the Vault, or reenter Ghostlight Marsh to wreak vengeance on her coven’s killers. But before she can let a coin toss decide her next action, fate intervenes with the arrival of the PCs in the Vault of Thorns.

If Ewigga stood upright, she might stand 5-1/2 feet tall, but her transformation into a hag twisted her body, gifting her with a deformed, hunched spine from which jut bony protrusions that resemble a jagged mountain range, and leaving her slightly shorter. A knotted mass of hair crowns her misshapen head, and her face is etched in wrinkles, with skin the shade of rotten asparagus and sunken black pools for eyes.

## CAMPAIGN ROLE

Ewigga’s primary role in this adventure is as an obstacle the PCs must overcome to claim the cache of treasures inside the Vault of Thorns, but she can also provide the PCs with some foreshadowing about the upcoming giant threat as well. If the PCs discuss their mission to seek out a hill giant commanding a tribe of orcs, Ewigga becomes visibly startled at this revelation, as she has noticed firsthand irregular behavior from the swamp’s local marsh giants—in particular, a mass exodus of her bodyguard Gripwort’s tribe from Ghostlight Marsh to join a mysterious figure known only as the Storm Tyrant. She obviously has no interest in actually assisting the PCs, but any additional information she can glean might be of use to her should the sodden borders of Ghostlight Marsh come under threat from a war between giants and civilized folk.

Given the circumstances of Ewigga’s plan to attack the party after claiming the Vault’s riches, the hag’s survival beyond this adventure is doubtful, but if she manages to escape (possibly by using *tree shape* to hide in the Vault’s greenhouse or the marsh outside), she can certainly return to harry the PCs again, particularly if they ally themselves with the dwarves Ingrahild and Umlo Nargrymkin. For example, if the Nargrymkin siblings accompany the PCs to the tomb of their ancestor, the dwarven giantslayer Nargrym Steelhand, in the next adventure, Ewigga could be waiting for the PCs and their allies when they emerge from the crypt.

Even if she is slain by the PCs, this doesn’t mean that Ewigga can’t reappear as a vengeful spirit or undead abomination. If Ewigga is killed, perhaps Mestama is unwilling to release the hag from her servitude, and returns her as a fiendish witchfire later in the campaign to wreak revenge on those who killed her.





## GRENSELDEK

Reeling from her failed attempt to win the Storm Tyrant's affections, the ambitious hill giant chieftain Grenseldek struggles to maintain control over her tribe amid her own self-pity. Her dreams of following in her ancestor Uskroth's massive footsteps have crumbled, much like the decayed walls of the border fort she claims as her home.

**GRENSELDEK****CR 9****XP 6,400**Female hill giant ranger 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

CE Large humanoid (giant)

**Init** -2; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +12**DEFENSE****AC** 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24 (+6 armor, +9 natural, -1 size)**hp** 118 (12 HD; 10d8+2d10+62)**Fort** +13, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2**Defensive Abilities** rock catching**Weaknesses** curse of melancholy**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +2 *handaxe* +16/+11 (1d8+9/19-20/x3), mwk handaxe

+15 (1d8+2/19-20/x3) or

2 slams +15 (1d8+7)

**Ranged** mwk composite longbow +7/+2 (2d6+7/x3) or

rock +7 (1d8+11)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** combat style (two-weapon), favored enemy (humans +2), rock throwing (120 ft.)**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Grenseldek focuses her attacks on human opponents if possible (to take advantage of her favored enemy bonus), wielding her twin handaxes with murderous effect. If able to easily hit her opponent, she makes Power Attacks. Once Grenseldek chooses a foe, she gives no quarter, switching to another target only after the first is rendered unconscious or dead.

**Morale** If reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, Grenseldek attempts to flee. If no escape route is available, she instead offers information in exchange for her freedom (see Development on page 56).

**STATISTICS****Str** 29, **Dex** 10, **Con** 21, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 7**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 29

**Feats** Improved Critical (handaxe), Improved Iron Will, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (handaxe)

**Skills** Climb +10, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (geography) +5, Linguistics -1, Perception +12, Survival +6

**Languages** Common, Giant**SQ** track +1, wild empathy +0**Combat Gear** *potion of cure serious wounds*; **Other Gear**+1 *scale mail*, +2 *handaxe*, mwk handaxe, mwk composite

longbow (+9 Str) with 20 arrows

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Curse of Melancholy (Su)** Grenseldek is afflicted with the curse of melancholy, giving her a -2 penalty on ability checks, attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls.

Every few generations, a creature is born who possesses both a superior intellect and the drive to realize the machinations that dance within its mind. Even when born to a typically dimwitted race, a creature with this combination of traits can prove deadly—such is the case with the hill giant Grenseldek. A descendant of the hill giant Hero Chieftain Uskroth, Grenseldek possesses a family heirloom: a sparkling geode that once belonged to her famous ancestor. For hundreds of years, Grenseldek's family believed this item was nothing more than a pretty rock fragment, but Grenseldek was the first to recognize that the geode was, in fact, a treasure map, albeit incomplete. Realizing that Uskroth must have left the geode fragment behind as a test to find a worthy heir to his pillaged wealth, Grenseldek surmised that the other half must be buried within her forebear's tomb.

Grenseldek resolved to strike out on her own to make her mark on the world, and she traveled the countryside, retracing Uskroth's chronicled triumphs. Visiting the sites where her ancestor's glories took place filled Grenseldek with pride, and she soon discovered the location of his forgotten tomb, identified by massive stones that served as grave markers. However, Grenseldek was horrified to learn that the human settlement of Trunau was now perched upon the hill that formed Uskroth's barrow, and the colossal monuments that once marked his sepulchre were now home to the town's Barterstones market.

During her travels, Grenseldek also heard of the Storm Tyrant Volstus and his call to the giants of the Mindspin Mountains to join his army. Grenseldek saw this as an



opportunity to realize her destiny as a descendant of Hero Chieftain Uskroth. Instead of merely serving under the storm giant's banner, she would rule beside the Storm Tyrant as his wife. To that end, she sought to recover the wealth of Uskroth's tomb (as well as the treasures that Uskroth's map would no doubt lead to) and present it to the Storm Tyrant as a dowry.

Recognizing that she could not take on the defenders of Trunau alone, Grenseldek ventured into Belkzen's hinterlands to raise an army. She managed to convince a few giants from her tribe to join her, and when she stumbled upon a family of ogres squatting in a crumbling Lastwall border stronghold called Redlake Fort, she quickly added the Gorbs to her ranks, followed by the orcs of the Twisted Nail tribe a few months later. With this new combined tribe, modeled after Uskroth's feared Twisted Hearts tribe, Grenseldek set about planning her attack on those who had audaciously built their town over her ancestor's bones.

Unfortunately, Grenseldek's plans quickly unraveled. First, a group of heroes in Trunau thwarted Grenseldek's agents inside the town and defeated her orc raiding party, preventing her from retrieving both Uskroth's riches and the other half of the geode treasure map. But a far more devastating setback was the Storm Tyrant's rejection of her marriage offer as an undesirable and unwelcome match. Jilted and scorned, Grenseldek has shut herself inside her chamber in Redlake Fort's central keep. Her self-imposed exile and severe depression—the latter is exacerbated by the cursed skull of Redlake Fort's former castellan, Tamand Varias—have greatly affected the morale of those who still serve beneath her, and soon the remaining threads of her ambition will snap, leaving the hill giant with nothing.

## CAMPAIGN ROLE

The overambitious giantess responsible for the attack on Trunau in "Battle of Bloodmarch Hill," Grenseldek is the primary antagonist of "The Hill Giant's Pledge." Perhaps more importantly, she is the first concrete link to the campaign's main villain, Volstus the Storm Tyrant. Unfortunately for her, Grenseldek's ambitions to marry far above her station were doomed to fail, and they have reduced her to a laughingstock among the members of her own tribe, making her tale somewhat tragic. After her ill-fated attempt to win the Storm Tyrant's hand in marriage, Grenseldek is seeking anyone but herself to blame for her failure. Although the jilted hill giant is currently wallowing in crippling self-pity, she quickly snaps out of it once she learns of invaders in her home. In a manic rage, she does everything she can to take out her fury on the PCs who thwarted her attack on

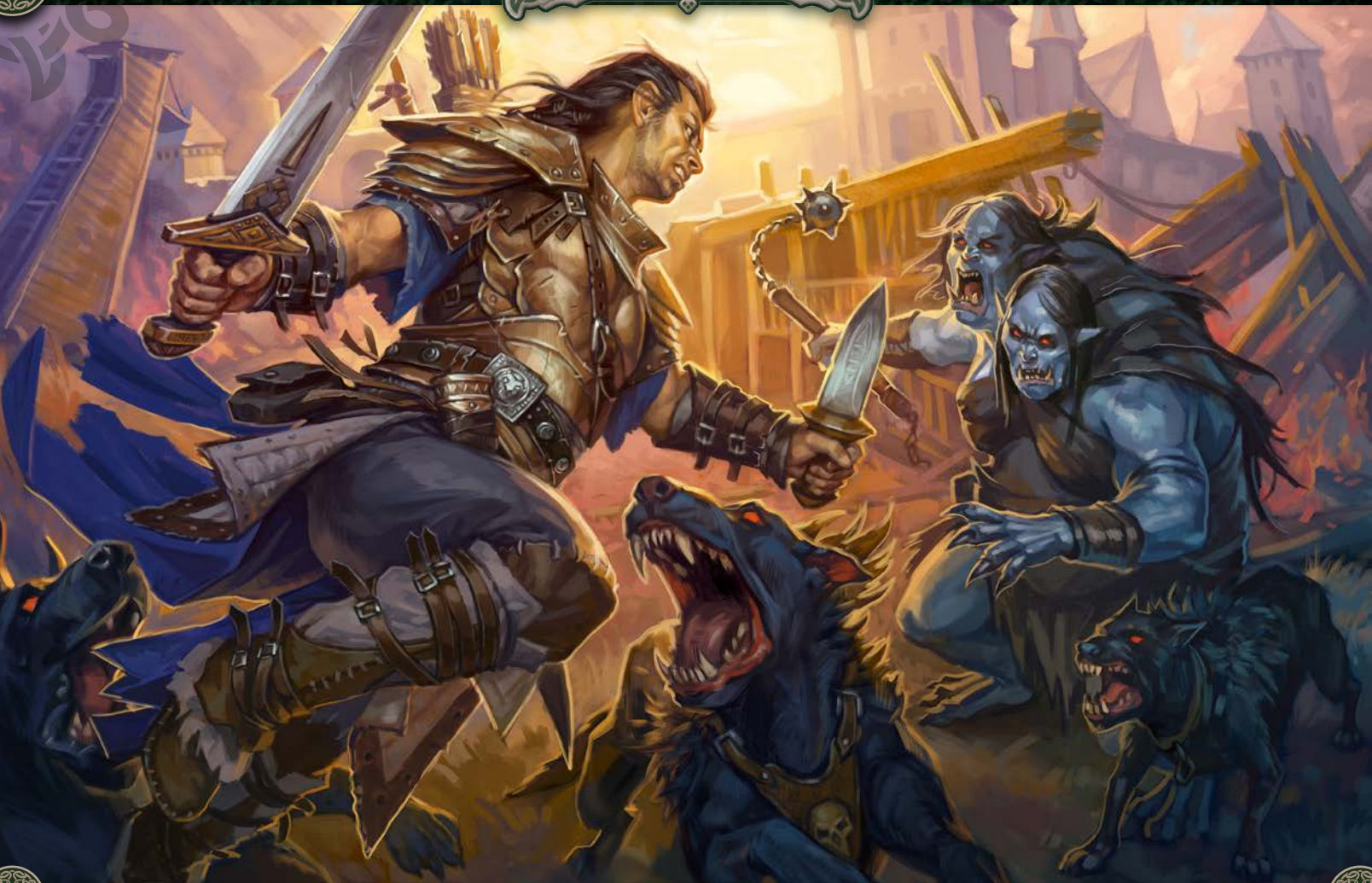
Trunau and mete out revenge for their perceived role in preventing her union with her beloved.

If Grenseldek survives her confrontation with the PCs, she becomes violently bitter. After a short time spiraling through shock, denial, and depression, Grenseldek's obsession with the Storm Tyrant turns toward the PCs, and she seeks to destroy anything the heroes love. As the campaign progresses, the PCs might hear news that their childhood homes have been raided, that an NPC close to them has been kidnapped, or that some other attack has been carried out against something or someone they cherish. Of course, the tragic news is accompanied by reports of the perpetrators of the attacks—a rampaging band of misfit giants led by a familiar hill giant wielding twin axes.

Once Grenseldek is satisfied that she has brought ruin to the PCs' lives, as they have done to hers, she seeks them out for one final confrontation—this time with more class levels, new allies, and new magic items to oppose them.







## MISSIONS IN THE MINDSPINS

**W**e didn't see her coming. A heavy fog covered the village that morning, and somehow no one was awake in time to hear her small band show up in the clearing. When the first rooster crowed the arrival of dawn, that terrible ettin released her dogs on the sheep. Some of the beasts tore through town, snapping at people who opened their doors to investigate the commotion. We heard the crash of walls toppling and the screams of the dying. As far as I could tell, only four other guards had been roused by the time she got to the town square. It's impossible to organize a proper defense when you can't see five paces in front of you, but we tried our best. We stood our ground as long as we could, but she made off with most of the grain in storage... and two barrels of Merwell's mead.

—Marcomb, town guard



**N**amed in part for the dizzying heights of the range's peaks, the Mindspin Mountains run north to south through western Avistan, bordering Varisia, Belkzen, Nirmathas, Nidal, and Molthune. Though for many the mountains represent a bastion against aggressive neighbors or a barrier to lucrative trade, the region is hardly a no-man's-land. The mountains are home to a variety of people and monsters both fair and foul, from dwarves and Hellknights to giants and dragons.

Presented here are several plot hooks and three full encounters that can be altered, expanded, and adapted for this Adventure Path or woven into any campaign set in and around the Mindspin Mountains. Full statistics for all creatures and NPCs used in these encounters are available for free online in the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Reference Document at [paizo.com/prd](http://paizo.com/prd).

## PLOT HOOKS

The following plot hooks can be used whenever the player characters are traveling through the Mindspin Mountains throughout the course of the Adventure Path. Unlike the three encounters on the following pages, a Game Master must do a little work to expand these hooks.

**Claim Jumpers:** Hidden Hollow is one of the gemstone mines owned by the dwarves of Janderhoff. Yet no one has returned from the mine in months, and people are becoming worried. The mine's owners or the miners' families could implore the PCs to investigate, or a convoy heading to the mine might hire the PCs to accompany them for additional security.

Arriving at Hidden Hollow, the PCs discover that the mine is still in operation but has been taken over by a band of evil dwarves from the south. Though few in number, the evil dwarves overwhelmed the mine's security and overseers. The villains enslaved the remaining Janderhoff dwarves (use the statistics for a miner on page 256 of the *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*; for their leader, use the statistics for an expert blacksmith on page 262 of the *NPC Codex*), forcing them to continue mining for the sole benefit of their new masters. The evil dwarves are led by a cave wizard (*NPC Codex* 184) who uses the gems unearthed either as components in his magical research or to fund it. The wizard is assisted by a cave stalker (*NPC Codex* 146) and a mountaineer (*NPC Codex* 131), though the potential for easy riches interests the wizard's cohorts more than his magical discoveries do. The GM can increase the challenge by having the wizard employ some additional spell hunters (*NPC Codex* 83) or sundering axes (*NPC Codex* 13).

**Silver Falls:** A tale told among residents and travelers in the Mindspin Mountains concerns a greedy giant. They say that adventurers slew the giant, but he laughed at them with his last breath, for though they killed him,

they would never have his treasure. The giant had hidden the treasure beneath a waterfall and further warded it with a terrible curse. According to the tale, only some of the adventurers returned—without the treasure and terribly shaken by their experience.

Regardless of whether this tale is truth or myth, its continued popularity may owe something to a fossegrim (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 114) who uses the tale to attract potential victims. The evil fey lives in the pool beneath a waterfall high in the Mindspin Mountains. When potential victims approach, he hides beneath an illusory treasure hoard at the bottom of the pool, ready to use his drowning touch. Should they see through this ruse, the fossegrim next appears before them in the guise of a fey harpist. He attempts to ingratiate himself to the characters, perhaps advising them on nearby dangers and opportunities. If accepted by the party, he starts to lure them away one by one with his enchanting music, until they become wise to his treachery. If attacked, the fossegrim flees to a half-flooded cave behind the waterfall. Within the cave lies not just real treasure, but also the corpses of his previous victims—transformed by a sinister effect of the creepy grotto. The corpses rise up as draugr (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 110) and attack anyone entering the cave other than the fossegrim.

**Sword in the Stone:** History tells of a famous giantslayer who wielded a powerful magic weapon (preferably a kind of weapon used by one of the PCs). After killing many giants, the legendary hero disappeared on a quest to slay a medusa. The giantslayer is presumably dead, but if his weapon were recovered, it could aid the PCs in their current situation.

The medusa's lair in the Mindspin Mountains is deep within a maze of towering rock formations and vast, shadowy valleys. The ruins she claims as her home sit atop one such stone tower, unconnected to its neighbors except by a single artificial bridge. The "bridge" appears to be a 20-foot-tall statue of a warrior holding an immense sword that has fallen horizontally across the gap, and is in fact a cloud giant turned to stone by the medusa's gaze. Because of the statue's awkward pose and the tilt of the stone blade, characters must succeed at a DC 10 Acrobatics check to cross the bridge without falling to the valley below. (The PCs could potentially undo the giant's condition, though whether he's good or evil is left to the GM.)

A wing of gargoyles sit hidden among the ruins' statuary, and rise to attack when they spot intruders. Combat outside the ruins alerts the medusa (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 201), who shoots her bow from the safety of an arrow slit. She moves into a range close enough to use her gaze only when enemies enter the confines of her lair. Displayed among the medusa's treasured possessions are the petrified remains of the giantslayer: his severed head and his weapon, which is still clutched in a stony fist.



## BONEYARD OF BROKEN WEAPONS (CR 7)

An ettin and her pack of vicious dogs have been attacking travelers in southern Belkzen. Though only an annoyance for the orcs, the ettin poses a real threat to the town of Trunau, which relies on supplies brought from outlying farms and by foreign merchants. The PCs are tasked with tracking down the two-headed menace and putting an end to her banditry.

### BACKGROUND

When the orcs made their push into northern Lastwall 2 centuries ago, they toppled human settlements as they went. To aid in their conquest, the orcs built great war machines to surmount walls and topple towers. Though effective for a time, most of these siege engines eventually succumbed to rough use and enemy attacks. Some broken engines were scavenged for parts, while others were abandoned in the rush to conquer more territory. One such siege tower stands in the shadow of the Mindspin Mountains. After a broken wheel rendered it immobile, the orcs simply left it where it stopped.

Over the years, wild animals and humanoid outlaws have taken refuge in the tower. The most recent occupant has been fortifying the structure to serve as a base of operations for her banditry. Originally from the nearby mountains, the ettin Zalla-Kyzah made her way down to the Conquered Lands in search of land unclaimed by other giantkin. Zalla, the dominant and right head, is the more ambitious of the two. She hopes to use the stolen treasure to raise an army of orcs in order to claim a territory among the mountain ettins. Kyzah, the left head, is content to collect baubles and care for her dogs. Kyzah is no less vicious, however, and she enjoys the sight of her “babies” feasting on humanoid flesh.

### INTRODUCTION

When the lone survivor of an ambush on a caravan arrives in Trunau, she’s able to identify the attackers: a two-headed giant and her pack of vicious dogs. While Jagrin Grath, patrol leader of Trunau, believes his warriors could defeat the ettin, he worries that such an action would be too costly and leave Trunau under-defended in light of recent events concerning the hill giant Grenseldek. Instead, he asks the PCs to defeat the creature. The survivor can lead the PCs to the last ambush site, and from there, they can track the ettin and her dogs back to their lair with a successful DC 15 Survival check.

### DESCRIPTION

Standing in the foothills of the Mindspin Mountains, the siege tower might be mistaken for a guard tower or ranger station. As one approaches, however, it becomes obvious that the tower overlooks only a field of broken weaponry. With a

successful DC 10 Knowledge (engineering) or Profession (soldier) check, a character identifies the weapons as orcmade. The siege tower’s wheels are broken or missing, but its walls remain solid. Nearby, the testudo for a battering ram has been converted into some sort of shed.

The abandoned siege tower has ironically survived better than the walled settlement it was built to overcome. A quarter mile from the siege tower, the PCs can find a low-lying circle of worn stones that mark where the walls of a settlement once stood; the rest of the blocks were pillaged along with whatever wealth the settlement possessed.

**A1. Boneyard of Broken Weapons:** The ground here is relatively level. When Zalla-Kyzah discovered the abandoned siege tower, the plain around it was scattered with the broken remnants of weapons large and small. Since claiming the tower, the ettin has piled the fragments, along with dirt and rocks, into crude berms (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 431). The sharp splinters of wood and metal projecting from the berms act similarly to caltrops (*Core Rulebook* 155), but the debris deals 1d4 points of piercing damage instead.

If Zalla-Kyzah is at home, her dogs are lounging in the kennel (see area A2) or the yard. Even if she is away, one dog remains here. If the dogs see, smell, or hear characters moving about the yard (Perception +8), they immediately begin barking and rush in to attack. If Zalla-Kyzah is in the tower or nearby, the barking alerts her to the presence of intruders.

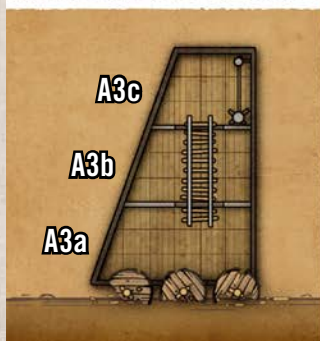
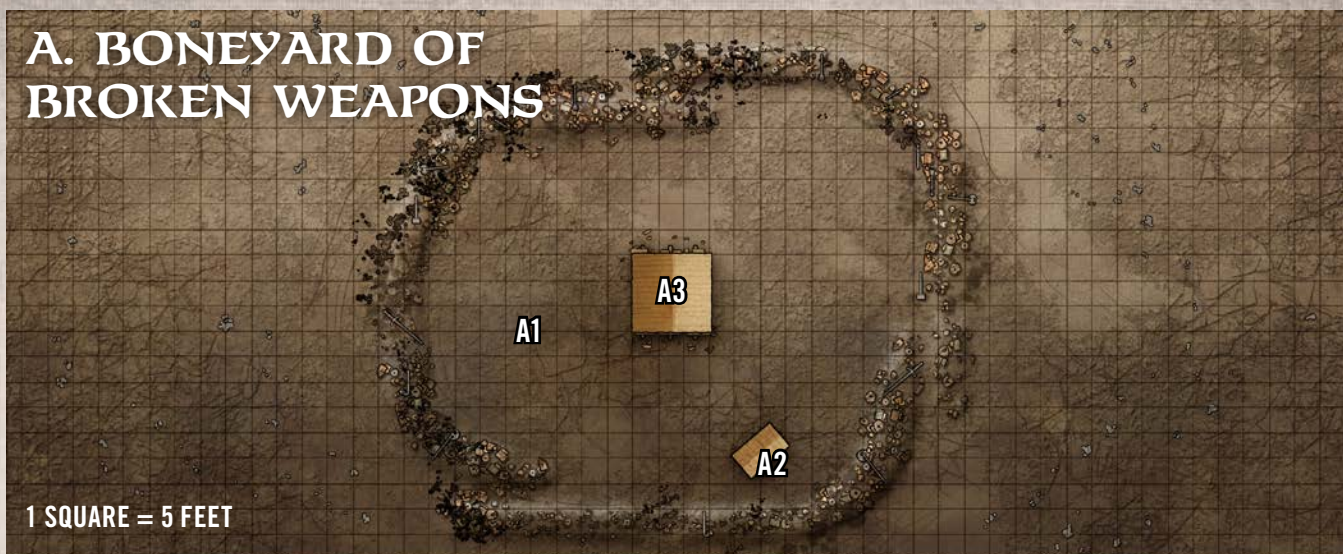
**A2. Kennel:** This wooden hut with a peaked roof is open at both ends. It was originally a testudo to shelter a battering ram and its crew, but Zalla-Kyzah has converted it into a kennel for her dogs. As with the siege tower, the testudo’s wheels have been removed. Inside, rusted chains hang from the rafters, but the battering ram they once held is long gone. Shed fur, paw prints, and chewed bones (some of which are humanoid), not to mention a pungent odor, leave no mistaking the structure’s present use. A character who searches the kennel can attempt a DC 20 Perception check to notice one of the bones is actually a crude ivory scroll tube. Though the tube itself has been gnawed, the contents—a *scroll of remove blindness/deafness* and a *scroll of remove disease*—are undamaged.

**A3. Siege Tower:** The siege tower comprises three levels, each 15 feet in height. The base of the tower is a 30-foot square, but the rear wall slopes inward to a roof only half as wide. The hides that once covered the wooden walls have mostly rotted away. There’s no lighting within the siege tower, though arrow slits on the second and third levels provide dim illumination during the day.

**A3a. First Level:** A 10-foot-tall door is built into the sloping rear wall. Opening the strong wooden door requires a successful DC 23 Strength check. Unless held, the door falls fully open or closed, possibly alerting nearby creatures with the noise. There are no other openings to the outside on this



## A. BONEYARD OF BROKEN WEAPONS



level, but two wide ladders in the ceiling lead up to the next level. Unfortunately, both ladders are broken off 10 feet from the floor. While the ettin can reach the lowest rung easily, smaller creatures must climb or jump to reach it.

**A3b. Second Level:** Zalla-Kyzah makes her lair on this level, where a stack of hides serves as a bed. A nearby chest holds Zalla-Kyzah's accumulated wealth. Inside are two necklaces of amber beads (worth 100 gp each), a silver holy symbol of Iomedae, a masterwork drum (decorated with orc designs), 5 pp, 114 gp, and 28 sp.

If the ettin is at home but not alerted, she's likely to be in here eating or sleeping. If she notices intruders before they reach the tower, when anyone tries to enter it, Zalla-Kyzah leaves the ballista she was using (see area A3c) and descends to this level to face the intruders in melee. She positions herself in the middle of the room, with one set of eyes on each of the openings below, and a flail in each hand ready to beat down anyone who tries to ascend.

**A3c. Third Level:** Zalla-Kyzah uses this smallest room as a larder. A mix of carcasses, some preserved, some rotting, hang from the walls above sacks of grain, most of which are infested with vermin.

Zalla-Kyzah also keeps in this room a masterwork heavy ballista—the last remaining functioning siege weapon

at this site—and 10 bolts. If alerted to the presence of intruders outside, she shoots down at them through one of the arrow slits in the walls. As a Large creature, Zalla-Kyzah takes only a –2 penalty on attack rolls when firing the ballista. Though the PCs may not have much use for a ballista, the council of Trunau will gladly purchase the siege weapon.

The forward wall of this room could be raised and lowered like a drawbridge if the windlasses weren't rusted immobile. If the chains on either side are broken or dislodged from the windlass, the wall falls outward.

### ENCOUNTER

The ettin Zalla-Kyzah (*Bestiary* 130) keeps three large (riding) dogs (*Bestiary* 87). The GM can adjust the number of dogs to increase or decrease the challenge rating of this encounter. The ettin hunts at dusk and dawn, and can be found at the siege tower at other times. Although violence is Zalla-Kyzah's first reaction to any intrusion, clever PCs may be able to calm her with mind-affecting magic or a particularly convincing ruse. The ettin's pidgin language of Giant, Goblin, and Orc makes communication difficult. Even if made friendly, Zalla-Kyzah is at best a violent and unpredictable ally.



## THRONE OF THE SKY-FATHER (CR 10)

A nearly forgotten trail promises a quicker route through the mountains than merely climbing over. Near the peak, the entrance to an underground tunnel is hidden behind a shrine to Gozreh. A lone half-elven druid maintains and guards the shrine. She's slightly mad from her solitude, so the PCs could have a difficult time convincing the druid that they are not her enemies. If successful, however, they may gain a powerful ally, and perhaps the blessing of a god.

### BACKGROUND

The shrine dates back to the days before Thassilon was founded in what is now Varisia, and is dedicated to Gozreh in his sky aspect, who the cloud giants call Ioz'om. Though the Runelords did not approve of his worship, the prehistoric religion was practiced by giants and humans throughout their rule. It took Earthfall and the resulting upheaval to cause this shrine to be abandoned by those who tended it.

The current caretaker of the lost shrine is Lylisia, a half-elven druid caravanner (use the statistics for the mistress of high places on page 70 of the *NPC Codex*). Lylisia was born to a Varisian mother and never knew her elven father. Because of her mixed heritage, she never felt completely at home with her human family, but she stayed with them nonetheless because her innate talents proved so useful to the caravan—she had a special rapport with the horses and other animals, and an instinct for predicting the weather. Her life changed, however, when the caravan was attacked by giants while crossing the Mindspin Mountains. The only survivor, Lylisia was forced to survive on her own in the dangerous mountains, but in doing so she honed her druidic powers. Eventually, the spirits led her to the shrine, where she has lived ever since.

### INTRODUCTION

On an occasion when the PCs are planning to travel over the northern Mindspin Mountains, they learn that they may be able to avoid a long climb by taking a forgotten tunnel that runs through the mountain. This information might be relayed to them by fellow adventurers or by a traveling merchant for the right price. The route might also be mentioned in a tome from ancient Thassilon or scrawled on a map penned by a long-dead explorer.

### DESCRIPTION

The shrine sits on a plateau high in the mountains. Erosion has nearly erased the religious iconography, yet visitors can still sense the site's sacredness, as if every stone and gust of wind were possessed of an elemental spirit. The shrine's altar (area **B2a**) projects a *magic circle against law* that affects all creatures within 50 feet, including the shrine and the adjoining rooms.

**B1. Cliffside Path:** The PCs must travel through scree and scrub to find the base of this trail up the mountains. Once found, the path is clear of major obstructions. It runs between a rock wall and a steep descent, but is in most parts wide enough to accommodate two Medium creatures abreast, or perhaps a single giant. The path is less a road and more a long stairway; the periodic risers are still recognizable, though their once-sharp corners have eroded to natural curves. An eagle-eyed traveler might spot fragments of graffiti scratched into the cliff: pious prayers and "I was here" declarations from forgotten pilgrims.

**B2. Gozren Shrine:** The shrine sits on a plateau shaped roughly like a gibbous moon. Vertical cliffs wall in two-thirds of this plateau, while the other third crumbles into the valley below. Though the projecting edge of the plateau is sturdy, it overlooks a 100-foot fall to the rocks below.

The cliff wall bears faint outlines of carvings that once depicted Gozreh creating storms above humans and giants. Five steles form a semicircle before a massive stone chair (area **B2a**) that is the focal point of the shrine.

An ancient live oak tree leans over the throne, its trunk bent as if it had grown under constant wind. The tree is in fact a treant named Stormbent, animated by Lylisia with the *liveoak* spell. If Lylisia is asleep or out foraging, the treant urges the PCs to leave, warning them that the guardian of the shrine doesn't take kindly to intruders. Stormbent is initially unfriendly, but if his attitude is improved, he may answer questions about the shrine and its surroundings. Stormbent attacks the PCs if they approach any of the side rooms or desecrate the shrine, or if ordered to by Lylisia. If Stormbent had previously been friendly to the PCs, he may make only nonlethal attacks or sunder attempts against their weapons.

**B2a. Throne of the Sky-Father:** The giant throne is in fact an altar dedicated to Gozreh. Despite centuries of neglect, it retains the ability to channel Gozreh's blessing. More information on magic altars can be found on page 246 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Gods*.

THRONE OF THE SKY-FATHER		PRICE 8,000 GP
SLOT none	CL 10th	WEIGHT 1,000 lbs.
AURA moderate abjuration and transmutation		

This altar takes the form of a throne sized for a Large humanoid. It's carved from mountain stone, and its surface is inscribed with prayers to Gozreh in Thassilonian and to Ioz'om in Giant. The *Throne of the Sky-Father* projects a *magic circle against law* that affects creatures within 50 feet of the throne. A character within this area can speak a prayer to Gozreh to gain a temporary blessing from the altar (treat this as speaking a command word to activate a magic item). Praying at the altar grants a +4 resistance bonus on saving throws against weather effects and a +2 circumstance bonus on Acrobatics, Climb,



## B. THRONE OF THE SKY-FATHER

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



and Fly checks. This blessing ends after 24 hours (or earlier, if dispelled or ended by the actions of the worshiper). The altar can provide its blessing only once per creature per day.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS	COST 4,000 GP
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Craft Wondrous Item, *control winds*, *guidance*, *magic circle against law*, *stone shape*, creator must worship Gozreh

**B3. Lylisia's Cell:** This natural grotto has a ceiling roughly 10 feet high. It was once used as a sacristy for the shrine, but Lylisia has converted the cave into snug quarters for herself. A curtain of animal hide over the entrance keeps out the elements. Much of the floor is taken up by a bed of piled furs. A few small crevices in the rock walls serve as sconces for torches to light the room. In a larger niche, Lylisia keeps her personal effects, including a single harrow card—"The Big Sky"—depicting a man in broken manacles beneath a cloudless sky. With a successful DC 20 Perception check, a character discovers a hole under a loose rock, where Lylisia keeps the majority of her accumulated coins.

**B4. Locutory:** The entrance to this cavern has been enlarged to nearly 20 feet high, matching the peak of the ceiling. Inside, away from the weather, signs of giant chisel marks are evident. When the shrine was active, this room served as a temporary shelter for visiting priests

and pilgrims. Since then, various travelers and wild animals have used the cave for shelter, as evidenced by the detritus on the floor. At the rear of the cave, a wall-like column obscures the entrance to the tunnel beneath the peak (area B5).

**B5. Underground Passage:** This passage descends into the mountain. It varies in width, but never narrower than the space a Large creature can squeeze through. The tunnel ends at a hole in the side of a cliff, with a small natural balcony and no obvious way down. A well-worn trail is visible 40 feet below, part of the longer road the PCs avoided.

### ENCOUNTER

Save for regular forays to gather food and water, Lylisia spends most of her time at the shrine communing with the spirits of nature or resting in her room. Lylisia's experiences have made her paranoid, and she assumes that anyone entering the shrine has ill intentions toward her or the altar. She attacks anyone who ignores her warning to leave. Despite her hostility, Lylisia is not evil. If she is magically calmed or physically restrained from violence, the PCs can try to convince her of their good intentions. If made friendly, Lylisia allows the PCs to take sanctuary at the shrine, and may even provide them with magical assistance.



## THE DRAGON OF ANGEL PEAK (CR 13)

A mysterious dragon has been attacking farms and caravans—even small villages—in and around the Mindspin Mountains. It may have already attacked the PCs, taking to the skies before they could defeat it. The PCs may be hired by concerned officials, or perhaps take it upon themselves, as heroes, to defeat the dragon. To do so, they must track the dragon to its lair, a windswept summit with metaphysical links to the Elemental Plane of Air.

### BACKGROUND

With scales that range in color from sky blue to foggy white, the dragon that threatens the region matches no known variety of chromatic dragon. In truth, it's a kind of primal dragon from the Elemental Plane of Air, known prosaically as a cloud dragon. Most often when cloud dragons visit Golarion, they do so as tourists of a sort, content to explore landscapes and cultures. This dragon, however, seems bent on destruction.

The cloud dragon Zanembis was once as carefree as his brethren, until adventurers attacked him in his lair. Perhaps they mistook him for an evil dragon, or perhaps they cared only about stealing his hoard. It was a bitter fight, but Zanembis slew their heavily armored leader and sent the rest fleeing. In the battle the dragon lost two things. One was his eye, gouged out by the fighter's sword. The other was his most prized possession, a *chaos emerald* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 288), stolen by one of the adventurers as they fled.

No longer content to observe humanoids, Zanembis attacks them in retribution for the unjustified assault on his lair. Though this destruction doesn't satisfy him, he hopes that his rampages will uncover or draw out the original adventurers so that he can recover his lost treasure.

### INTRODUCTION

Whether the PCs are hired to slay the dragon or decide to do so on their own initiative, they would be well advised to study their prey before invading its lair.

The PCs can visit sites of the dragon's attacks and see for themselves the destruction it has wrought. If the PCs interview survivors, they encounter widely varying descriptions of the dragon. According to some witnesses, it is an old white dragon able to conjure cold mountain fog. Others claim that it is a blue dragon, for though far from that breed's usual climate, it displays such creatures' infamous lightning breath. One detail all witnesses agree on is that the dragon is missing an eye and a fresh, jagged scar crosses the hollow eyelid.

A character who sees the dragon or hears conflicting reports of its color and abilities can attempt a DC 28 Knowledge (arcana or planes) check to identify it as a

cloud dragon. From eyewitness reports, it's easy to surmise the dragon's lair is on Angel Peak, the summit of which is continuously cloaked in clouds. Even once this location is identified, reaching the summit is easier said than done.

### DESCRIPTION

At the top of Angel Peak in the Mindspin Mountains, Zanembis's lair exhibits some qualities of the Plane of Air. Creatures from the Plane of Air, including Zanembis, are not considered extraplanar while in the area of elemental influence. Spells and spell-like abilities with the air descriptor or that use, manipulate, or create air (including those granted by the Air domain and the elemental [air] bloodline) function as if their caster level were 2 higher than normal. To cast spells and spell-like abilities with the earth descriptor or that use or create earth (including those granted by the Earth domain and the elemental [earth] bloodline), the caster must succeed at a concentration check (DC = 20 + the spell's level). If the caster fails, the spell does not function and is lost. If the caster succeeds, the spell functions normally. Unlike on the Plane of Air, creatures and objects are subject to normal gravity.

**C1. Solid Fog:** The persistent cloud that encircles Angel Peak marks the lower boundary of the area of elemental influence. This unnatural cloud acts as a permanent *solid fog* 40 feet deep and several hundred feet wide. Though it slows characters' approach to the peak, it provides some cushioning should a character fall from above.

**C2. Rock Face:** A moderate to strong wind continually scours the summit of Angel Peak. Except where ledges have formed, the sides of the peak range from steeply inclined to nearly vertical cliffs. Characters attempting to scale these cliffs must succeed at DC 15 Climb checks. A character who falls while adjacent to the peak lands on a rocky outcrop 1d4 × 10 feet below the *solid fog* (area C1).

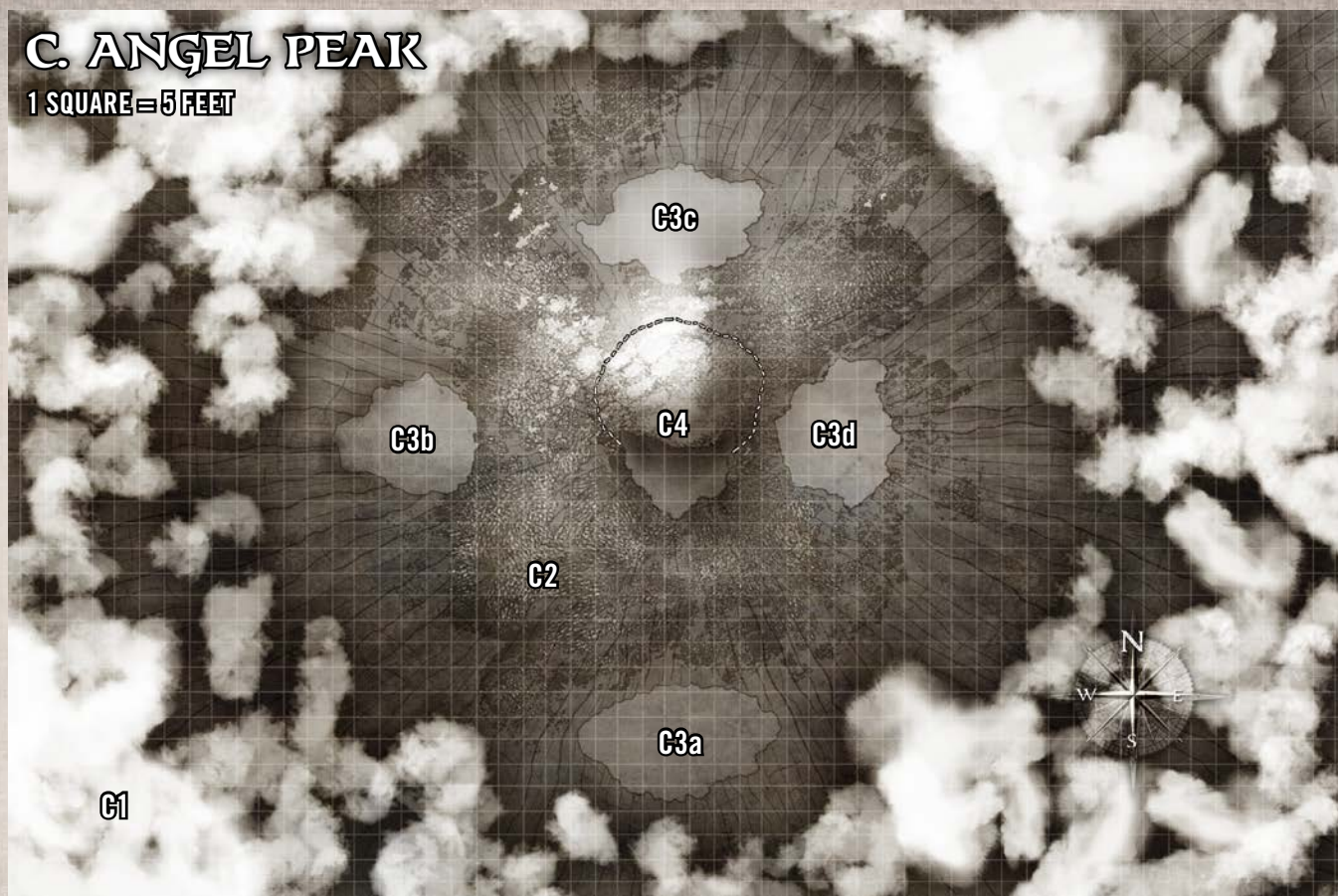
**C3. Cirques:** Several plateaus are eroded into the otherwise steep mountainside. The lowest (area C3a) is situated only 10 feet above the *solid fog*. If the PCs take the easiest climbing route up the mountain, they arrive here once they pass through the cloud. The other plateaus are 50 feet (area C3b), 90 feet (area C3c), and 120 feet (area C3d) above the cloud, respectively. The plateau floors are equivalent to hewn stone (*Core Rulebook* 412), should a character attempt to run or charge across them.

**C4. High Cave:** The last and highest plateau sits 150 feet above the cloud. It extends from the mouth of a hollow beneath the peak. Within the cave, Zanembis keeps his hoard spread out so he can rest upon it. His treasures include a suit of red dragonhide plate armor, a +2 *bastard sword* (stained with the dragon's own blood), a *helm of the mammoth lord* (*Ultimate Equipment* 244), a *potion of cure serious wounds*, a *scroll of raise dead*, a *wand of beast shape II* (12 charges remaining), assorted gems worth a total of



## C. ANGEL PEAK

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



650 gp, a gold-lidded chalice (worth 600 gp), 42 pp, 155 gp, 3,600 sp, and 15,000 cp.

### ENCOUNTER

Zanembis is an adult cloud dragon (*Bestiary* 296), and though he's missing one eye, that doesn't impair his abilities. When at his lair, Zanembis spends his time resting on his hoard or surveying his territory from one of the plateaus. The dragon's mist vision means he can potentially spot approaching creatures even through the *solid fog*. If Zanembis detects intruders, he casts his defensive spells but waits for the intruders to pass the *solid fog* before attacking. Unwilling to see his lair defiled again, Zanembis fights to the death if confronted there.

With successful Knowledge checks or by way of divination magic, the PCs can learn that cloud dragons in general (and Zanembis in particular) aren't innately evil. With that knowledge, the PCs may attempt to reason with the dragon. Zanembis is initially hostile, but PCs with enchantment magic or extraordinary social skills may be able to temporarily allay his anger. If Zanembis is made at least indifferent and the PCs don't further antagonize him, the dragon is willing to explain the incident that incited his attacks. Though the PCs might convince the

dragon (through Diplomacy or Intimidation) not to take his anger out on them or the community they represent, Zanembis refuses to stop his rampages even if made helpful. By the dragon's own admission, if the PCs want to end the dragon's reign of terror, they will have to either kill him or else recover (or replace) the stolen *chaos emerald*.

### ADDITIONAL PLOT HOOKS

The PCs may decide to appease Zanembis by recovering the *chaos emerald*, which is an adventure in itself. After the disastrous attack on the cloud dragon's lair, the party that stole the gem has been reduced to only three members: a bard (use the statistics for a celebrity bard; *GameMastery Guide* 273), a cleric (use the statistics for a priest; *GameMastery Guide* 305), and a rogue (use the statistics for a guild master; *GameMastery Guide* 267). Oblivious to the terror they unleashed, the dragonslayers are taking time off to enjoy their accumulated wealth and spread the legend of their adventures while they search for a replacement fighter. The trio knows the emerald is a powerful tool of chaos and are unwilling to relinquish it to just anyone—especially someone who is going to return it to a destructive and untrustworthy dragon. If the PCs don't want to fight the adventurers, they will need to use guile to recover the gem.





## ECOLOGY OF THE DRAKE

As he surveyed the mutilated corpse of the sheep, Ambrose puffed on his pipe. He poked the still-smoking haunch of the ewe with his walking stick. 'No, sir, that's no dragon. See those splashes? Blacks spew a great gout of acid; their spittle would've coated the whole body. 'Sides, one'd never range that far from its swamp. Too much of her left for a big green; she'd melt it down to bones or less. And, of course, no wyrmlings could tear apart a full-grown sheep like this.' Ambrose paused for dramatic effect. He puffed another cloud of smoke as the mayor looked on impatiently. 'What you have here is a drake. More properly—drakes. Only a rampage wastes so much food from pure spite. These are forest drakes, and I'll stake half my fee on that.' Ambrose tapped out his pipe and turned to the mayor's half-elven aide. 'So, how do you feel about being bait?'

—From *My Life as a Monster Hunter*, by Tilian Ree



**D**rakes are degenerate relations of dragons that closely resemble wyverns in physiology and size. They have hind legs and wings but lack the forelegs of true dragons, and their smaller bodies never match the majestic stature of aged dragons. Drakes' strongest claim to kinship with true dragons comes from their elemental nature—a supernatural connection most obviously expressed through their deadly breath attacks.

Petty and cruel, drakes share the temperament of chromatic dragons. They resent any creatures stronger or more intelligent than they, and they ruthlessly bully and prey on the weak. Though a drake's breath attack shares aspects with a dragon's, there's a distinct difference: drake breath travels outward in a ball then explodes, damaging creatures near the point of detonation. Drakes can control this detonation with precision instead of covering a large area like a dragon's breath weapon—only impact with an intervening barrier causes drake breath to detonate prematurely. In addition to their breath attacks, all drakes possess a reservoir of energy they can call upon to hasten themselves in battle. Usually, the drake uses this speed surge to close with unwary prey and savage the victim with its teeth and claws. Beyond this, drakes have in common a foul disposition, a mild intellect (drakes are rarely brighter than the average human), and the capacity for flight.

The various types of drakes differ greatly in their elemental affinities, effects of their breath attacks, alignments, and social structures. Though generalizations can be made for each type of drake in these areas, few apply across all drake species.

Taxonomists debate the family tree of the drake. It seems clear they claim no kinship with the wingless linnorms, who display a reversal of the drake's body type, with forelimbs but no hind limbs. Even so, more than one fanciful tale pins the intriguing reversal of limbs between drakes and linnorms on arcane bargains gone awry or the machinations of divine tricksters.

However, scholars are uncertain whether drakes are descended directly from dragons or from some ancient ancestor of all draconic species, and whether wyverns predate the drake or represent a further departure from a draconic forbear. The commonly held supposition that drakes are degenerate dragons, each type descended from a different true dragon type, is flawed. Most conspicuously, it seems improbable that every draconic species would independently degenerate to the same wyvernlike form.

Perhaps the most compelling theory of drake heritage holds that drakes descended from mingling between dragons and wyverns. This theory purports that on occasion, a young dragon who cannot find a mate finds itself overwhelmed by the instinct to reproduce and mates with a wyvern as a substitute. Whether laid by a dragon or wyvern mother, the resulting eggs hatch into

half-breeds with a portion of a true dragon's might but bodies that resemble wyverns'. For their part, dragons find this purported lineage not just improbable but outright insulting. Clandestine attempts to get captive wyverns and dragons to breed have as yet failed to produce viable eggs.

The drake's nomenclature is also muddled. For example, although some call pseudodragons "house drakes," these small creatures have only a distant kinship with drakes. Pseudodragons take no offense at being called drakes, although they bear considerable ill will toward their dim-witted and malicious cousins. Also, some speakers treat the terms "drake" and "dragon" as interchangeable, despite the significant differences between the species. Careless nomenclature can imperil the speaker, as true dragons take the appellation "drake" as a slur on their noble lineage.

## ECOLOGY

Most drakes lead short, brutal lives. In comparison to dragons, drakes are relatively fertile, typically laying a clutch of eggs once per year. The size of the clutch varies by species. For the most part, eggs incubate for 3 months before hatching. Drakes typically take 5 years to reach physical and sexual maturity, but young drakes are far from helpless creatures, and many fend for themselves for much or all of their juvenile lives. Violent death claims many within 1 to 2 decades, but those who are able to avoid that fate can live as long as 2 centuries.

Drakes show little sexual dimorphism. For those outside their species, distinguishing males from females requires close examination. Males and females are equally aggressive and physically capable. In drake species that pair up for extended periods, both sexes nest and raise the young; in those that don't, the female tends to her eggs and young on her own.

Drakes possess voracious appetites. They require large amounts of meat to fuel their bodies and copious violence to feed their sadistic instincts. An adult drake needs to consume at least 200 pounds of meat per day to stay in good health. Drakes lack the magical metabolism of true dragons, and can't subsist off of plants or minerals. Hunger or boredom maddens drakes into taking risks that they might otherwise avoid, such as directly attacking humanoid strongholds or challenging prey much stronger than themselves.

Local populations of drakes rarely remain stable—their numbers rise and fall in dramatic peaks and valleys. When prey is plentiful, drakes breed rapidly. However, their rising numbers quickly exhaust the local food supply, or the group of drakes creates such a menace that local humanoids organize hunting parties to eliminate the threat. The resulting population crash leaves drakes relatively rare in the area until their food supply recovers



and those hunting them become lax and complacent. Despite this constant flux, drakes are at no risk of ever going completely extinct; their fertility and widespread range thwart natural or forced extinction.

## SOCIETY

Social structure varies widely across the varieties of drakes. All types of drakes mate and lay eggs, and most tend to their eggs at least until they hatch. Some drake species segregate by sex in independent groupings, mingling only during mating seasons. Most types cohabit in mated pairs, either permanently or for only a single hatching before separating. Some species raise their young to maturity, while others abandon them immediately after hatching. Though these behaviors vary widely across all drake species, drakes of the same type form packs, mate, and raise young in a similar fashion.

Solitary and paired drakes instinctively distrust other drakes and jealously guard their territories, but all varieties of drake share a common social grouping called a rampage. While on the surface a rampage merely appears to be a pack of drakes, the creatures' behavior changes drastically when they're in a rampage. Drakes in a rampage still quarrel and jockey for dominance—in fact, their aggression is dramatically heightened—but they also work together, regardless of whether they're of shared blood. Rampages lay waste to whole regions, destroying what they can't devour or carry away after their sudden assaults. Rampages quickly lose any trace of discretion, growing into menaces that can have lasting effects on the land and animal population.

Though all drake species form rampages, the purposes for these groupings vary. Flame, forest, and river drakes instinctively form into packs for hunting and possibly even camaraderie. Attacking an isolated member of such a rampage risks provoking the wrath of their entire pack. Frost drakes form into rampages while young, but leave the pack once they find a suitable mate. Sea and mist drakes prefer solitary lives, forming transitory rampages only to stalk dangerous prey or in response to a threat in their hunting grounds. Other drake species form rampages when prey is plentiful or in response to threats, but as often live alone or in mated pairs.

Rampages remain stable up to about a dozen drakes. Past that point and absent a particularly strong and ruthless pack leader, aggression rips the rampage apart. When a rampage disintegrates, the fittest half-dozen or so drakes retain their territory, driving the rest away. Occasionally, the exiled drakes then form a new rampage of their own.

Naturally foul-tempered, drakes rarely form alliances with other races. Rather, they terrorize weaker creatures into doing their bidding. In particular, drakes crave attention and tribute—a legacy of draconic pride and greed.

For tribute, drakes demand more than just simple meat and treasure. Some drakes even require self-mutilation as proof of fealty, claiming an ear or finger from each subject. Lacking sophistication, drakes judge the worth of material tributes on superficial merits. Gold, gems, and other gewgaws meet their approval, but ugly or functional goods are often disdained and cast aside. A mundane but bejeweled blade impresses drakes more than a magic sword that doesn't appear to be special. Thus, clever supplicants can placate a drake with showy items of minimal value. Drakes prefer their sacrificial offerings healthy and able to flee—the better to toy with their prey.

Attempts to domesticate drakes as guardians or mounts rarely meet with success. A drake captured while young can sometimes be broken to the saddle, but as often as not, the beast turns on its rider when given an opportunity. Most drakes used as guards are untrained and simply chained to their posts, their keepers relying on the beasts' foul tempers to deter intruders. Large-scale successes at domesticating drakes, such as the racing drakes of Goka, carefully keep the drakes from establishing any social connections of their own and rely on lavish feeding and comfortable pens to keep the drakes satiated. Any hint of initiative gets beaten out of captive drakes at a young age so they can perform for their human masters. Those whose rebellious spirits prove difficult to break are put down in front of their kin as a warning.

## DRAKE VARIETIES

As far as modern scholars are aware, drakes come in eleven known species, taxonomically grouped either by elemental subtype or by purported draconic descent, though one type of drake lacks a subtype and its draconic relation is unknown.

**Drakes of Air:** Drakes in this category have the air subtype, and scholars know of only one current member—mist drakes (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 79).

The frail mist drakes show remarkable discretion for their kind. They favor ambushes and precision strikes even when rampaging. Mist drakes who are hunting in rampages stagger the timing of their breath attacks and flit between the resulting cloud of mists to better exploit their misty camouflage and fogvision abilities.

**Drakes of Cold:** Drakes in this category have the cold subtype. The most notable are frost drakes (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 108) and shadow drakes (*Bestiary* 4 80).

Frost drakes spend their adolescence hunting prey in sex-segregated packs. Those that live to maturity pair off with the opposite sex to lay eggs and raise young. Some frost drakes burrow into snowbanks to ambush prey. They lie in wait for hours, alternating between dozing and wakefulness, until something passes by that is large enough to pique their interest.



Shadow drakes, the smallest of drakes, rarely exceed the size of a true dragon wyrmling. Shadow drakes seldom form rampages, and when they do, their packs are much less numerous than those of other drakes. Evil spellcasters have been known to coerce the service of shadow drakes as familiars, with the drakes enjoying a relatively comfortable lifestyle while serving their masters' whims. Shadow drakes thrive in decaying urban environments, where they lair in derelict buildings and neglected attics. In such locales, they thrive by using their talents for thievery.

**Drakes of Earth:** Drakes in this category have the earth subtype. The most notable are desert drakes (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 105), forest drakes (*Bestiary* 2 107), and rift drakes (*Bestiary* 3 106).

Desert drakes usually hunt their arid territories alone as ambush predators. They're solitary by nature; even mated pairs of desert drakes lair together only while raising their young. The prospect of loot and mayhem can draw a rampage of desert drakes together, but only long enough to wreak havoc and divide the spoils. Despite their hermitlike ways and draconic tempers, desert drakes save their wrath for their prey and rarely squabble among themselves.

Forest drakes, also known as caustic drakes by denizens of Darkmoon Vale, incapacitate foes with their noxious breath before bringing their powerful jaws into play. Petty and spiteful to the core, they corrode or rip apart any spoils they can't take with them. Forest drakes obsess over slights and grudges. For instance, a forest drake harmed or tricked by a dwarf will from that time on bear a special antipathy toward all dwarves, even if it has already slain the original offender. Since they tend to share the same territory, forest drakes despise elves and fey creatures, and revel in slaughtering them. Forest drake mothers roost on their nests until their eggs hatch, but then immediately turn their fledgling young out to fend for themselves. Clutch mates band together for better odds at survival. Because they lack opportunities to socialize with adults, forest drakes reach maturity with only the barest knowledge of the draconic language, speaking what words they know in a distinct dialect. Forest drake rampages always consist exclusively of adults, leaving the juveniles to hunt alone.

The cruel and powerful rift drakes lair in blighted and desolate lands. Lust for violence drives them to constant conflict, even among themselves, making rift drake pairings and rampages

transitory at best. Despite their elemental ties to earth, rift drakes love the sky. They spend most of their waking hours in flight; when not airborne, they can be found in high caves or atop spires and mountain peaks.

**Drakes of Fire:** Drakes in this category have the fire subtype. The most notable are flame drakes (*Bestiary* 2 106) and lava drakes (*Bestiary* 4 78).

Highly chaotic, flame drakes can master their rage and jealousy long enough to hunt, but squabble endlessly over meat and other spoils once the hunt is over. Some fire drakes collect tribute from nearby towns rather than savage them with brute force. In these arrangements, the drakes often secretly hope for late or missed payments as a pretext for destruction. Male and female



FOREST DRAKE





FLAME DRAKE

fire drakes hunt in separate packs, coming together only long enough to breed.

Destructive and arrogant, lava drakes make their lairs near active volcanoes and magma vents, where they can be found swimming through lava with ease. These drakes thirst for the respect and worship of humanoids, commanded through acts of shocking brutality. Lava drakes often cooperate with evil humanoids, particularly kobolds (whom they rule over in their underground lairs) and fire giants (whom they consider equals—though the giants certainly don't share this view).

**Drakes of Water:** Drakes of this category have the water or aquatic subtype. The most notable are river drakes (*Bestiary* 3 107) and sea drakes (*Bestiary* 2 109). Though sea drakes live most of their lives in the water, both of these species are amphibious and can survive on land indefinitely.

Smaller than most drakes, river drakes prefer hunting in groups. Cruel in the extreme, they revel in letting prey think it has escaped before they close in for the kill. River drakes primarily hunt fishermen and barge passengers, dragging prey into their watery lairs to age for a future meal. River drakes like to play with their victims, harassing them with intermittent attacks, sometimes over the course of several days. These drakes are somewhat easily intimidated, however, fleeing into the water at the first hint of a fair fight.

Sea drakes resemble winged sea serpents. They haunt shallow coastal waters, primarily subsisting on animals and beasts that stray too close to shore. They favor humanoid prey above all others—particularly humanoids on boats small enough to capsize. Once they have their prey struggling in the water, the drakes electrocute their victims with breath attacks before dragging their prey beneath the waves.

**Spire Drakes:** The enigmatic spire drakes (*Bestiary* 4 81) lack any ties to the elements. Instead, they thrive in tainted lands ravaged by unspeakable curses or primal magic. Spire drakes obsess over magical trinkets and have some small talent at activating such devices. A spire drake may even break off an attack to bargain for a particularly interesting device that was just used against it.

Spire drakes vary widely in appearance, and scholars suspect that spire drake ancestry derives from the mutated genes of other drake species, and are thus even more distantly related to true dragons than are other drakes.

## LAIRS

By and large, drakes prefer the cavernous lairs typical of dragonkind. Their lairs can often be identified by the accumulation of bones, debris, and droppings outside, as drakes lack the prudence to hide their presence to any great degree. Each drake in a lair builds its own nest—an amalgam of bones, branches, and favored treasures. They line the insides of their nests with softer materials such as clothing, sails, and even tapestries, though uncured hides from prey can serve if they have yet to acquire finer spoils. When multiple drakes share the same lair, the youngest live closest to the cave mouth in the crudest nests. In the deeper reaches dwell the toughest and oldest drakes, their nests lined with tribute claimed from weaker fellows.



Since they leave their lairs unguarded to hunt, most drakes favor caves that are either primarily accessible by flight or remote from other threats. Depending on the particular type of drake, these out-of-reach lairs may be in trackless forests, treacherous hillsides, forbidding mountain peaks, or desolate wastelands. Aquatic drakes favor caves with underwater entrances, but often choose lairs with air pockets to better keep their treasures safe and their meat alive in their larders.

Drakes lack the intellect to construct traps on their own, but they take sadistic delight in using natural features against intruders. Those who don't dwell near natural hazards may round up dangerous plants to better protect their lairs, or encourage dangerous creatures to lair among them. They pick as guardians vicious animals or unintelligent monsters, such as vermin, that can be fed carrion and pose little threat to the drakes themselves. Many drakes also try to attract minions not only for the additional help in guarding their lairs, but also for the adoration and tribute that comes with having subservient intelligent creatures around.

## DRAKES ON GOLARION

Though drakes can be found across Avistan, Garund, and Tian Xia, few have risen to heights of infamy. Below are the locations of some of the more notable drakes and drake populations on Golarion.

**Absalom:** A number of shadow drakes lair in the Puddles district of Absalom, living off petty theft and plump rats. When **Kalaria** (CN female human rogue 6/shadowdancer 2) found a mated pair lairing in the attic of a safe house, she hatched a plan. Promising the drakes a life of leisure, she trained them (and later other drakes) in the art of thievery. Kalaria now employs 14 shadow drakes—including rogues and shadow dancers—in her “thieves’ guild” known as Night’s Talon. Under cover of night, they ply their skills across the Coins, the Docks, and the Foreign Quarter.

**Bloodsworn Vale:** Years ago, adventurers nearly exterminated the fire drakes of the Bloodsworn Vale in southeastern Varisia. Now grown to adulthood, the hatchlings who survived the culling seek revenge. The drakes have ranged high into the Mindspin Mountains, seeking alliance with malevolent fey, giants, and worse. Now their rampage stands ready to raze Fort Thorn in an orgy of blood and vengeance.

**Darkmoon Vale:** Forest and flame drakes plague Darkmoon Vale. The forest drakes bear particular animus toward Cheliah, owing to that empire’s efforts to exterminate them. They attack on sight any travelers who bear the red-and-black circled cross on their banners or clothing.

**Five Kings Mountains:** So rarely sighted that they are thought to be a single grouping rather than a new variety

of drake, thunder drakes live high in the Five Kings Mountains. Scholars say that the thunder drakes owe allegiance to the red dragon Daralathylx, the so-called Sixth King of the Mountains. It’s unclear whether the drakes ravage trade routes under the dragon’s orders or of their own volition. A bounty placed on thunder drake heads has sharply reduced the drakes’ numbers at the risk of rousing the dragon’s wrath. Thunder drakes favor ambushes, often triggering avalanches with their breath attacks to bury their prey.

**Mierani Forest:** More than a century old, **Devilshrike** (LE male advanced forest drake ranger 4) has learned much about hunting from his elven enemies. Now he stalks the elven hunters, along with a rampage hand-picked from the most fearsome drakes of the Mierani Forest. Though loathe to admit a mere drake has bested them, the rangers of Crying Leaf have proven unable to locate Devilshrike’s lair, much less defeat the cunning drake.

**Sodden Lands:** The enterprising sea drake **Irith** (NE female sea drake rogue 5) abandoned coastal waters for the swamps of the Sodden Lands. There, she slew an ancient mobogo and supplanted it as the god of several resident tribes of boggards, who refer to her as the Marsh Queen. Her thralls tend her every whim and conquer other swamp denizens in her name. She has tasked her boggards with bringing back salt as tribute to brine her bathing pools. Though boggards are naturally tolerant of brackish water, the intensely salty water their queen favors withers their skin and opens lesions in their flesh. Their queen attributes these wounds to wavering faith and punishes any affected boggards. Of late, she craves a mate and offspring to share her divine destiny.

**Spellscar Desert:** When the war between Geb and Nex shattered the rules of magic and gave rise to the Mana Wastes, the region’s native drakes were mutated and transformed like all survivors in that blighted land. Gone were the traces of their draconic ancestors, and a new species of drake arose: the spire drakes, creatures of corruption and decay. Because spire drakes are instinctively drawn to regions with strong primal magic, travelers who spot the creatures can use them as beacons to find their way out of the magic-dead zones of the Mana Wastes.

**Worldwound:** The demons of the Worldwound sometimes use drakes as mounts, in particular the rift drakes that thrive in that blighted land. While most drakes serve the demons only out of fear or magical compulsion, the rift drakes are willing partners—they eagerly allow the energies of the Worldwound to envelop and empower them. The unholy Abyss calls to the rift drakes, and its whispers have awakened sorcerous powers in the eldest of their kind. Elder rift drakes affected in this way have the advanced simple template and sorcerer or bloodrager levels with the Abyssal bloodline.



## GOING DÖRAK

## PATHFINDER'S JOURNAL: TALL TALES 2 OF 6

"Now it's someone else's turn. What's your best giant-hunting story, Angriss?"

The dwarf, who had been mid-swig from her canteen, sputtered and coughed. She suddenly regretted sitting next to Silas—apparently, the gnome wanted to waste their last night alive trading stories about dead giants, and Angriss was next in line. She closed her canteen and mustered her surliest scowl. Her talents were in killing giants, not in chin-wagging about them. She was about to say as much when she caught the expressions on the faces of her five companions. Just minutes ago, the adventurers had been at each others' throats; only Silas's tale had halted their bickering. Now, Angriss saw anticipation, maybe even hope, in her comrades' eyes.

So this was the point—distracting from the dread task that awaited them in the morning. She looked back to Silas, whose smug grin said it all: there would be no getting out of this. Angriss sighed. As a self-respecting dwarf, she was loath to shirk responsibility, even for something as frivolous as this. She was no storyteller, but she'd done harder things in the name of duty.

"I was the bait," she began abruptly, stoking the camp's dying fire with a broken branch. "I was staring into the cave, knowing that an ugly, two-headed bastard was about to come barreling out at me. In fact, my whole job was to make sure of it."

"Hold a second," Kilig interrupted from the opposite side of the fire. "What do you mean, the bait?"

"The bait for the trap," answered Angriss. "I'll explain. No, better yet, I'll show ya." The dwarf dug in her pack and retrieved a leather-bound notebook. She checked the tip of her pencil and began to sketch a diagram. She might not be a storyteller, but battle plans were something she knew well.

A few years ago in the month of Rova, one of the scouts of my clan returned with important news. The far-ranger had spotted the notorious ettin known as the Chief-Shaman trekking up through a hidden pass in the Five Kings Mountains—and the giant was alone. For some time we had been aware that the ettin's wild faith required him to undertake a spiritual retreat each year to commune with his evil gods or spirits, whoever they might be. Where he went, though, no one had any idea—until now. He had just been tracked to a cave tucked into the Curseridge Cliffs in the Five Kings Mountains.

This was a big deal. Normally the Chief-Shaman was surrounded by his host. Ogres, maybe bugbears, and sometimes even other ettins—the combined force made him untouchable by our clan. You see, the Chief-Shaman wasn't like other two-headed giants. One head, Chief Vrogo, was that of a cunning warrior; the other, Shaman Tefti, was a spiritual leader. With input from both heads, the ettin had the talent to draw dark hordes to his banner: hordes that frequently raided my people, the Ebonvault

Clan, as well as everyone else who tried to carve out a living in that region of the Five Kings Mountains.

If his past pattern held true this time, we had only a short window of five days to wipe out that double-headed bastard. After that, he would emerge from his sacred grotto and return home. Once there, he would whip his followers into a frenzy and launch another bloody raid. So my clan dispatched what warriors it could spare with orders to lay an ambush.

With me came three others. There was Cherk: young, but still smart enough to know when to listen. Second was Ghorjawk, who hasn't spoken since his seventh birthday. Nobody knows why, but he's a good dwarf, which means he's a good soldier. And the third was Yeti. If you'd seen his beard, you'd know why he got that name. I was the fourth.

Like all proper dwarves, we made ourselves a plan. Once we surveyed the mouth of the cave and the surrounding cliffs, I sketched it all out with a charcoal stick on a piece of parchment. Gathering around the parchment, memorizing our proper places and timings, the four of



us intuitively understood we would live or die by the plan. If we went *dörak*, we would all be dead.

I should explain. *Dörak*'s a Dwarven word—in the Common tongue, it translates roughly to “off-plan.” For elves, *dörak* can be a good thing, an opportunity for creativity, inspiration, all that fluffy stuff. But for us dwarves, who know better, *dörak* is a dirty word—mostly one used for cussing, really. We work hard to keep the unknowns and variables under control. We work to anticipate possible faults in a plan. Dwarves know that the side that does that the best is the side that wins the battle. Once the plan was committed to memory, we went to work making preparations.

The following morning, the plan unfolded. Like I said, I was the bait. I stood alone, just me and my spear-axe. In front of me was the ettin's lair, the gaping mouth less than forty feet away. Behind me, stretching to either side, was a yawning cliff edge, far too close for my liking. I stood there waiting. Waiting, and every so often calling the Chief-Shaman out. I don't know if he understood my words, but I did what I could to lure him out of his cave. If we had to go in to get him, the plan wouldn't work. I repeatedly insulted his courage. I questioned his ancestry. In between, though, I whispered prayers to Angradd, the Forge-Fire, the dwarven god my own clan-father named me after. I prayed that the Chief-Shaman wouldn't hear my bones rattle inside my armor. Fear had gotten the best of me, and I couldn't quite control the tremors. But in the end, I think it was the shaking that actually drew the bastard out. They say that the Chief-Shaman could always smell when he had the advantage. I guess I just had to show him one.

So I stood there, cussing and clattering, and out the ettin came. The Chief-Shaman was all you would expect and more. He towered over me—stood fourteen feet tall, easy. He was unusually thin for a giant; his muscles were taut, especially on the right, which I took to be his warrior side. The right head was shaved bare, decorated with some sort of ritualized scarring. The left head wore a warped helm of bone, carved from the skull of a dinosaur, maybe, or possibly a landshark. Below the waist he was dressed in an armored kilt surrounded by a tattered leather belt to hold his medicinal pouches or gods-know-what.

In any event, it took all of a single second to realize the plan had fallen apart before it had even begun—for the Chief-Shaman was not truly alone. He had brought with him two dire wolves. They were big, mangy beasts that seemed to be acting like his pet doggies. That was bad. I feared that the wolves would sniff out Cherk and Yeti in their hiding places and the jig would be up.

I couldn't let that happen. Afraid or not, I screamed and charged straight at the trio—so much for baiting



*The chief-shaman was certainly ugly, but what made him (them?) dangerous was that he (they?) was clever. I wonder if the two heads argued much?*

the Chief-Shaman up to the cliff behind me. My boys and I had just gone *dörak*.

The wolves came at me. For the moment, I had their full attention. That much was good. Behind them, the ettin just watched greedily and slowly gathered his weapons—two giant wooden staves, each as thick as a tree. Both were carved into sections, with each partition shaped like an animal head stacked on top of the one below it. It looked to me like the ettin was wielding two totem poles.

To get back on plan, we had to get rid of those wolves, and fast. Now that I had the wolves' attention, I halted my charge. Instead, I swung the axe head of my spear-axe into the earth, grounding my weapon. I then tilted the spear point upward at an angle, gripping it with both hands. When the first wolf dove at me, I crouched low, dug in my heels, and caught his belly with the spear. The beast impaled himself, dying instantly, but the sheer force of his charge bowled me over and sent me rolling backward until I finally skidded to a stop.

The dead's wolf's sister, though—she was the smarter of the two. She learned from her brother's mistake. The bitch stopped her run and began to stalk slowly, looking to pin me against the edge of the cliff before attacking.

I hazarded a glance up at Ghorjawk, off to my right. He was hidden up high in a spruce tree. It was a decent vantage point for sniping with his crossbow, but it was still close enough that the wolf might sniff him out.

Somehow, Ghorjawk understood my signal. He fired his crossbow—he never missed. The bolt hit the wolf in



the head, punching through its skull and stopping the animal in its tracks. At the same time, I snapped forward and swung at the freshly fallen wolf, swiping the bolt from its head. I tossed it aside, hoping that the ettin wouldn't notice my ruse. I wanted him to think I dropped the second wolf so he wouldn't search for a sniper up in the trees.

It seemed to work. The Chief-Shaman gave a roar with both of his heads and closed the distance between us in just a few lumbering strides. I think the wolves meant something special to him, as he was clearly pissed. Only problem was that Ghorjawk couldn't use his crank to reload his crossbow while he was up in that tree—that shot had been meant for the Chief-Shaman. For the next few moments, then, I was on my own. More dörak.

The Chief-Shaman came closer. My job was not to fight him, but to keep him occupied and in the right position. And, as an additional option that I was quite fond of, my job was to stay alive. Most folk know two things about ettins: they're strong and they're dumb. But there's much more to them than that. For one thing, they're fast—real fast. You can't tire them out, either. You only end up ticking them off more, which makes them fight harder. Worst of all, though, they're surprisingly coordinated. With one brain focused solely on each arm, their precision and timing can actually be superior to us single-headed folk. Timing ducks and rolls to dodge a giant's swinging club is something all the warriors in my clan train to do from the earliest of ages, but I'll tell you, when the Chief-Shaman started using swipes with one of those totem pole staves to line me up for an overhand smash with the other, I knew I didn't have a lot of time.

Fortunately, the plan—or what was left of it at this point—didn't call for me to entertain the Chief-Shaman for too long. Once he and I danced to the edge of the cliff, Ghorjawk blew his horn and signaled Cherk and Yeti. Those two, and the sleds they had carried up the

mountain, were positioned on either side of the mouth of the cave, way up high on top of the shale bed where they could hide.

When Ghorjawk gave the signal, they pushed their sleds free and came speeding down the loose mountain scree as fast as a boulder tumbling down the peak. Twin cascades of rock came flying down the slope with them. A handful of loose rocks wouldn't have been enough to move a giant of that girth, though. The real threat was the iron chain that Cherk and Yeti had strung between their sleds.

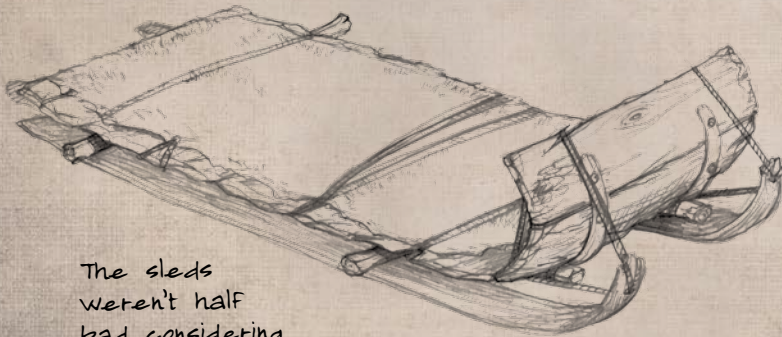
I knew they were coming, so I had just enough time to dive to the ground, hug the earth, and duck under the chain as it swept overhead. The Chief-Shaman, though, was caught right behind the knees, and the chain swept him off the cliff.

There was, of course, a flaw in the plan. With that much speed and force, there's no way Cherk and Yeti could sweep the ettin and still have enough time to bail out of their sleds before flying right off the cliff themselves. We never did come up with a solution for that, really. Yeti proposed they just sail off the cliff alongside the Chief-Shaman. I still can't quite believe I let Cherk go along with it.

The drop was near eighty feet, I reckon. While staking out the cave mouth, two of us worked in shifts digging catching pits at the cliff bottom, one for each of the sledders. We dug them deep and filled them with stacks of pine boughs. It wasn't exactly safe, but better than landing on solid ground from that height. The Chief-Shaman, of course, got to land in between the catching pits, right in the kill zone. Nothing there but compacted dirt and the sharpened stakes and stones we laced the ground with.

Still, it was no easy jump. Cherk dislocated his shoulder right proper. Yeti shattered his ankle. Both were out of the fight. But they had done their job. Now I had to do mine. My task was to make sure the ettin was dead by lopping his heads off with my spear-axe.

Having ducked under the sweeping chain, I was already at the edge of the cliff. Soon as the ettin went over, I pulled out my mallet and hammered a spike into the top of the cliff, one with an eye at the end wide enough to thread a rope through. I next grabbed the big coil of rope we had stashed in a bush at the base of Ghorjawk's tree and sprinted back to the spike. Once back at the cliff's edge, I tied off one end of the rope and dropped the coil all the way to the bottom of the cliff. Then I slid down fast. Too fast, actually. The rope burned through the leather of my gloves, and I lost a few layers of skin on my hands. But that was going to have to be a problem for another time. For right about then was when I discovered that I had a much bigger problem.



The sleds weren't half bad considering they took only a few hours' work.



Not only was the Chief-Shaman still alive after the fall, but he was using magic to mend his broken bones. I mean, who'd have known the Chief-Shaman was an actual shaman?

That was bad. Real bad. I grabbed the trailing end of the rope I had just slid down and ran over to Cherk. He had just finished rolling himself out of the pit and was grimacing in pain. I helped him to his feet and hooked him to the rope with the metal clip on his harness. Then the two of us ran over to Yeti, who was howling like a banshee. I clipped him to the rope, too, right to his belt. Last to clip in was me. Meanwhile, the Chief-Shaman had somehow knit his shattered body back together. He was up and ready to smash us to bits.

It was time to get out of there. That's what Ghorjawk at the top of the cliff was for. While I descended, he rolled a boulder to the edge of the cliff. We'd picked the rock out earlier. It was big but smooth. Once I landed, Ghorjawk had lashed the boulder to the top end of the rope with a net. As soon as we were all clipped in, Ghorjawk pushed the boulder off the cliff, and it crashed straight to the bottom. It would've been a bonus if the boulder had landed on the Chief-Shaman, but that was only a secondary goal. Since the rope was still fed through the eye spiked into the cliff top, when the boulder dropped, it acted as a counterweight. Our end of the rope flew up the cliff wall as the boulder descended.

I have to tell you, this kind of setup doesn't work as well in practice as it sounds. Cherk and Yeti kept smashing into the cliff most of the way up, but the metal clips held and they stayed on the rope. Mark my words, when a dwarf decides he's going to do something, he goes and does it. Once they reached the top, Ghorjawk was able to help them up over the lip of the cliff.

I, unfortunately, didn't make it. The Chief-Shaman reached out and grabbed me just as the three of us started to shoot upward. He ripped me right off the rope, tearing the clip off my belt like the leather was linen. Then he threw me into the cliff wall. I ricocheted hard and crashed down into the center of the kill zone, right where the Chief-Shaman had lain just a half minute earlier. Payback, I gathered. Worst of it was, the Chief-Shaman picked up his weapons and started casting another spell. Before I knew it, his two clubs were bathed in a light of dark green and all of the animal heads' eyes were suddenly glowing with fire. Their wooden jaws dropped open, and they began snarling and howling.

Somehow I found that I could still move. I think it might have been the sheer terror of seeing the ettin and his magic totems so close up that gave me the strength to find my feet. As he closed, I backpedaled to the opposite side of one of the catching pits, trying to keep some distance between us. The Chief-Shaman wasn't dumb



*Those screaming clubs were as frightening as the Chief-Shaman. His accuracy was uncanny.*

enough to just step in the pit, though. He circled around. I countered, keeping him on the opposite side as best I could, the pit becoming the main reason I was still alive. By watching his eyes, I could tell he was picking his moment to simply jump straight over it and end the chase. It was an impossible leap for me, but it wasn't such a big deal for him. In the meantime, we circled 'round and 'round the pit—me hurt and getting slower, the ettin getting more and more confident, and those clubs screaming for my blood.

I thought to myself that if I could buy a little more time, Ghorjawk should be able to reload his crossbow and maybe get back into this fight. Maybe Cherk or Yeti might find their feet and be able to hurl some larger stones down from above. Anything would've helped.

On cue, Ghorjawk leaned over the lip, took aim, and fired. But the shot missed. He never missed! And the Chief-Shaman wasn't exactly a small target either. I knew what it was, though. He couldn't get a clear shot with me circling, and he was trying to make damn sure he didn't impale me by accident. I called up to Ghorjawk and ordered him to keep firing. Forget about the risk of hitting me; if he didn't hit the ettin soon, I'd be dead quick enough anyway. What I really wanted to do was bolt for it—put as much distance between the Chief-Shaman and me as possible. If I cleared out, the boys above could get the best shots they were ever



going to get and maybe, just maybe, I could get away from those horrid, screaming totems.

But my clan taught me better than that. You never run from a giant. Never. With their long legs, they can cover more ground than you ever could. Soon as you turn your back, they chase you down and squash you like a bug. I've even seen it happen, one time too many. You always run toward a giant, as crazy as it sounds. If you have to run, always run toward them.

It was decided, then.

I waited until the Chief-Shaman and I had circled around the catching pit one more time so that my back was to the cliff face, then stopped and planted my feet, letting the ettin know his hunt was over. "C'mon, you yellow-belly!" I screamed, hoping to be heard over the howl of the animal heads on his clubs. "Let's see what you got in that swing!"

He swung.

One backhand, one forehand. Two huge clubs flying toward me.

I dove forward into the catching pit, using what tension was left in the boughs to bounce me back up to the lip on the other side.

The ettin's clubs smashed into the cliff with a thunderous crack, loosening rocks and debris. The cliff itself even seemed to shudder.

That was my moment. Always run toward a giant.

I got up and raced around the pit, charging straight at the Chief-Shaman, getting as tight in as I could, inside the minimum range of his swing. He had no leverage to beat me with his sticks, but I knew that wouldn't last. In a second the surprise would wear off, and he'd drop his clubs to tear me apart with his bare hands. Or just step on me.

I sliced a tendon in his left leg and smashed the kneecap in his right. Unable to support his own weight, he collapsed in a heap. I scrambled out of the way, but I knew I couldn't stop the attack—if he got the chance to heal again, none of us would escape the mountain alive. I figured he might have two heads, but he still only had one heart. I jumped back towards him, flipped my spear-axe around, and skewered him in the chest with the spear end. The screaming animal heads on his totems fell silent.

I reached out and slowly closed his four lifeless eyes with my fingers. He deserved that much. The bastard was brave, at least.

Angriss sucked in a deep breath and exhaled. Her heart was racing. She realized that she was standing—at some point in the tale she had jumped to her feet in excitement. She sat back down, a bit embarrassed; it was time to wrap this up. "Yeti never quite walked the same. He retired and became a mead maker. Ever heard of Yeti's Brew? That's him. Ghorjawk got himself a wife, and they made a big brood of babies. All of them talk just fine, and some of them even sing. As for Cherk? Last I heard, he's still fighting the good fight. Word was, the Ebonvault made him a clan captain. He's got his own squad to command now."

"And me?" she said, "That day I finally came up with a name for my spear-axe. I had it inscribed with the Dwarven rune for *dörak*, so I would never forget how that day unfolded."

Angriss looked each member of her fellowship in the eye. "Seems to me that every now and again, I get myself into a scrape that's more than I bargained for. Much as I hate to admit it, my plans don't always work. Kinda like this expedition. Things have gone wrong for us, I won't deny it. This unnatural weather near well got us stuck, and some of us are already injured before the real fight's even started. But I think... I think just maybe we can still find a way to make this work. Nothing's over until it's over. On the morrow, we'll find a way." Angriss held her spear-axe up in front of her, letting it glint in the light of the campfire. "We'll go *dörak*."

Her comrades sat in silence, drinking the idea in. "Nothing's over until it's over," she repeated. Looking at them in the glow of the ailing campfire, Angriss realized there was a certain nobility to their determined desperation. She truly liked this unusual band of giant hunters—every one of them.

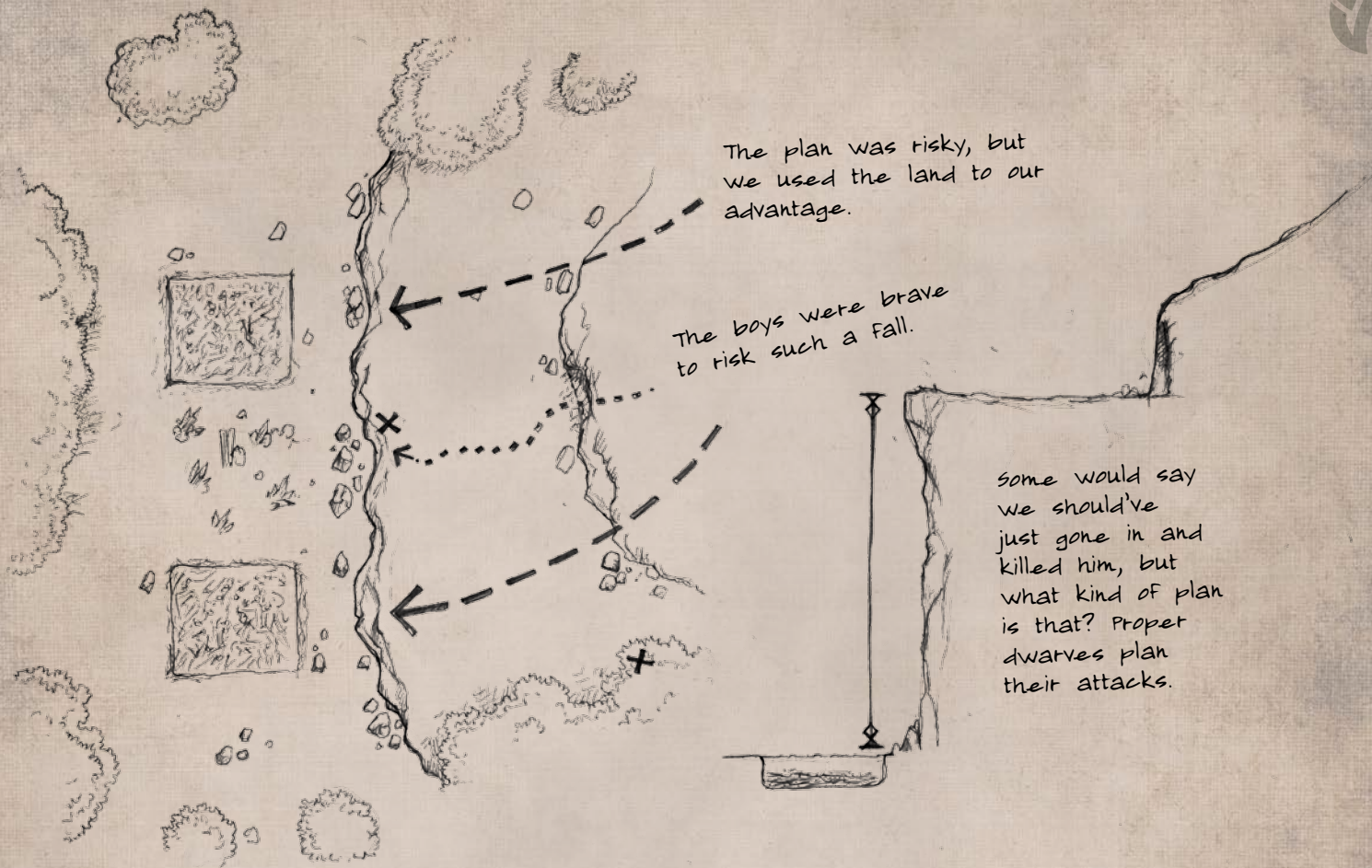
It was a damn shame that tomorrow they might all be dead.



*I don't go anywhere without my spear-axe.*

*After my mother was done campaigning, she gifted me with her helmet and spear-axe. I just had to name the weapon.*





## A TIME TO PLAN

I never go into a fight without a plan if I can help it. Knowing where everyone will be, what they have to do, and when they have to do it is essential. Just knowing there's a strategy in place keeps my clan steady when the storm of a battle rolls over them. Terror tends to lose its effect when you can remind yourself that it's all supposed to happen. You don't need to write a plan down, but I like to. That way there's no confusion on the details. And sometimes putting it to paper helps me think of things I might otherwise have missed. When planning an ambush on a giant, the first rule is you can't let them hit you—ever. Chances are, you take one blow and you're down. So you either have to take them at deep range or disable them on your first hit. That's easier said than done, so give it some thought. The only true advantage you have is that you get to decide where and when the fight will take place, and, if you do it right, how it goes down. So make sure your choices count enough to be decisive. Write it all down, check it thrice, and then you have yourself a plan.





## BESTIARY

**A**fter leaving the foothills, we got into the Mindspin Mountains proper. We found enough cart trails that the ascent was easy at first, but on the third day we had to break out the climbing gear. The trails were steep, but traversable—we had to use our gear only here and there to scale a cliff face to save ourselves an extra day of hiking around these obstacles.

It was after one of these climbs that we encountered our first real threat. These strange, goatlike creatures I'd never seen before triggered a small landslide and then laid into us with a hail of arrows from their horn bows. We fought back, but couldn't do much damage from lower ground. Some thrown bombs finally scattered the creatures, but they just retreated higher up the mountain. I pray our next encounter with them will be on more even terms.

—Sarathel Dieomos, adventurer



Welcome to the Giantslayer Adventure Path Bestiary. This volume of the Giantslayer Adventure Path features a race of mountain-dwelling goat people, a new protean, a shapeshifting feline beast, and an animated tangle of thorny vines.

## MONSTERS IN THE MARSH

The random encounter table presented here features a number of typical threats the player characters could encounter while adventuring in Ghostlight Marsh. During the course of the adventure, the PCs have a 30% chance of a random encounter every 2 hours they spend exploring the region, but should have no more than three random encounters per day.

Since this adventure spans a range of levels, some random encounters might be too simple or too difficult for the PCs, depending on where they are in the course of the adventure. If the result rolled is outside the challenge rating range appropriate for the PCs, roll again on the table or choose a different encounter.

GMs who wish to learn more about the region or want inspiration for other encounters should check out *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Belkzen, Hold of the Orc Hordes*.

**Ingrahild Nargrymkin (CR 5):** Driven insane by a curse from a hag's coven, Ingrahild now wanders Ghostlight Marsh looking for her brother. There is a chance the PCs could encounter Ingrahild outside of her encounter location in the adventure. If this result is rolled, see page 24 for details on how Ingrahild reacts to the PCs. If Ingrahild has already been encountered, reroll this result or choose a different one from the table.

**Mossmoon (CR 7):** Formerly a member of the Council of Thorns, Mossmoon is now a sinister will-o'-wisp. Even though he appears in a specific encounter in the adventure, there is a chance that the PCs could run into Mossmoon outside of that location, as he tends to patrol Ghostlight Marsh. If this result is rolled, see page 26 for details on his reactions to the PCs. If Mossmoon has already been encountered and defeated, reroll this result. If he has already been encountered and the PCs left him alive, run this encounter as if Mossmoon had a change of heart and reverted to his evil ways.

**Orc Patrol (CR 7):** Giants, ogres, and orcs often venture into Ghostlight Marsh to hunt, and the PCs could easily stumble across one of these patrols. This particular patrol is mainly made up of six Twisted Nail orcs (see page 34) who brought with them a single ogre (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 220). These orcs are from the same tribe that captured the dwarf Umlo Nargrymkin and brought him back to the fort. If the PCs don't take care to avoid the orcs' notice when passing through the marsh, the orcs make sure that the ogre stays quiet while they prepare an ambush.

## GHOSTLIGHT MARSH ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
01-03	1 forest drake	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 107
04-09	1 gray ooze	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 166
10-13	1d12 lizardfolk	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 195
14-18	1 skeltercat	4	See page 90
19-23	Ingrahild Nargrymkin	5	See below
24-29	1 spider eater	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 255
30-36	1 scrag	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 268
37-41	1 ahvizotl	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 10
42-49	1d8 boggards	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 37
50-58	1 giant mosquito	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 193
59-63	1 hodag	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 148
64-70	Mossmoon	6	See below
71-74	1 shambling mound	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 246
75-83	1d6 twigjacks	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 274
84-89	1 chuul	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 46
90-92	1 Huge mud elemental	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 120
93-97	Orc Patrol	7	See below
98-100	1 pukwudgie	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 223

## HILL GIANT BAGS

The following list of random treasure provides a GM with flavorful suggestions for the types of things a hill giant might have in its lair, among its equipment, or stowed in enormous bags. Anytime the PCs encounter a hill giant, consider rolling on this table instead of or in addition to awarding the treasure listed for the giant.

d%	Result
01-06	One dozen snake eggs, wrapped in moist burlap
07-12	Keg of alchemist's fire (6 flasks' worth)
13-19	Collection of cracked porcelain (worth 100 gp if repaired with <i>mending</i> )
20-23	Tiny +1 <i>greataxe</i> with a hole bored into the pommel and hung on a silver chain as a pendant
24-28	Set of ivory dominoes (only 17 remain)
29-32	<i>Oil of shillelagh</i> in a bamboo tube
33-41	Bear trap
42-46	35 feet of spider's silk rope <sup>UE</sup>
47-52	Leather satchel filled with shards of broken mirrors
53-56	Two chunks of obsidian the size of a human's fist (worth 75 gp each)
57-63	Bronze helmet used as a drinking cup
64-71	Three pigs
72-76	Small +2 <i>buckler</i> made into an earring
77-85	Bundle of uncured hides
86-91	Amber comb (worth 125 gp)
92-96	Hide scraper made from the head of a battleaxe
97-100	Six pressed, dried hands



## BRAMBLEBLIGHT

Two long vines covered in sharp thorns protrude from what appears to be a massive rotting bundle of barbs that's topped with a heap of berry-red eyes.

### BRAMBLEBLIGHT

CR 7



XP 3,200

N Large plant

**Init** +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, plantsense 120 ft.; Perception +10

**Aura** blight (40 ft., DC 19)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 20, touch 12, flat-footed 17 (+3 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 85 (10d8+40)

**Fort** +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +5

**Defensive Abilities** thorny; **Immune** plant traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +13 (2d6+7)

**Ranged** 4 thorns +10 (1d6+7)

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

**Special Attacks** animate brambles, rain of thorns

### STATISTICS

**Str** 25, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 6, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 28 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Stand Still, Weapon Focus (thorns)

**Skills** Perception +10, Stealth +7 (+19 in forests); **Racial**

**Modifiers** +12 Stealth in forests

**Languages** Sylvan

**SQ** bramble infestation, improved woodland stride

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** temperate or warm forests or underground

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** incidental

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Animate Brambles (Su)** As a standard action, a brambleblight can animate any of the dead, thorny brambles created by its bramble infestation ability. For 1 minute, the animated bramble (see page 85) then attacks as though it were a Large animated object. The animated bramble is under the control of the brambleblight, which can change the animated bramble's target as a move action. The brambleblight can instead cause the brambles to entwine around creatures as if by the *entangle* spell (the brambles are considered to be covered in thorns). This effect lasts for 1 hour.

**Blight Aura (Su)** A brambleblight radiates a palpable aura of rot and decay in a 40-foot radius. Living creatures entering the aura must succeed at a DC 19 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1 round. A creature of the animal, fey, or plant type that fails its save is nauseated for 1 round and sickened for 1 minute thereafter. If a creature succeeds at this saving throw, it is immune to this effect for 24 hours. In addition,

any plant creature entering this aura takes 1d6 points of damage each round it is within the area (Fortitude DC 19 half). Creatures that are immune to disease are immune to this aura, and the resist nature's lure class feature applies to the aura's effects. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Bramble Infestation (Su)** A brambleblight can devastate its surroundings, creating an area of dead, thorny brambles. To do so, the brambleblight must root itself in the ground and remain motionless for 24 hours. Over the next day, all plants that are not creatures in a 40-foot radius around the brambleblight sprout thorny brambles, then wither and die. This infestation of brambles persists and nothing grows in this area for as long as the brambleblight remains in the area. If the brambleblight leaves the area, normal growth returns after 1 week.

**Improved Woodland Stride (Ex)** A brambleblight can move through any sort of undergrowth (such as natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain) at its normal speed without taking damage or suffering other impairments. However, it can also move without harm or impediment through thorns, briars, and overgrown areas that are magically manipulated to impede motion.

**Plantsense (Ex)** A brambleblight can automatically pinpoint the location of anything within 120 feet that is in contact with vegetation.

**Rain of Thorns (Ex)** With a snap of its thorny vines, a brambleblight can loose a volley of four thorns as a standard action (make an attack roll for each thorn). This attack has a range of 120 feet with no range increment. All targets must be within 30 feet of each other. A brambleblight can launch up to 36 thorns in any 24-hour period.

**Thorny (Ex)** A brambleblight's surface is covered in a host of thorns. A creature that strikes a brambleblight with a natural weapon, a melee weapon without reach, or an unarmed strike takes 1d6 points of piercing damage. Creatures that grapple a brambleblight automatically take 1d6 points of piercing damage each round they maintain the grapple.

A stain on the land it infests, a brambleblight slowly alters its environment, infecting the local vegetation with sickness through its blight aura. When the native vegetation dies, the area becomes choked with slashing plants tangled together much like a giant briar patch. It is within this prickly terrain that the brambleblight dwells. Where most would find themselves at the mercy of the hungry barbs found within this thorn-filled region, the brambleblight traverses this area with ease. A brambleblight is a deviant thing of decay, a tangle of rotting vegetation rising in a roughly pyramidal heap, crowned with an asymmetrical cluster of berry-red eyes. Its main body resembles a bundle of fetid mulch with several thorn-covered branches spilling forth like the intestines of a gutted pig. These branches provide the plant with locomotion akin to that of a slithering serpent.



A brambleblight typically covers an area about 10 feet in diameter. From the creature's base to its crown of crimson eyes, it piles upon itself to a height of no more than 10 feet. A brambleblight weighs about 500 pounds.

### ECOLOGY

Brambleblights are not native to Golarion. They're believed by some scholars to be a terrible amalgamation of elements from the First World whose sole purpose is to spread decay and rot. The brambleblight attacks with its two primary vines, both covered in thousands of pricking barbs that shred exposed flesh. While the creature prefers to savor the decay of those who close in and succumb to its blight aura, it does have the means to defeat enemies who keep a safe distance. Besides the ability to fling dagger-sized thorns, the plant can also control the many barbed branches that make up its briar patch. While the brambleblight can animate only one branch at a time, that branch attacks independently until either it is destroyed, the brambleblight is slain, or the brambleblight moves out of controlling range.

Thankfully, brambleblights are not long-lived creatures. Brambleblights tend to live no longer than 5 years; if they survive long enough to reach this age, they attempt to spread up to a dozen seeds in the hope that at least a few of them take root and grow to maturity. The last 6 months of a brambleblight's life are spent feeding on as much prey as possible in order to store up the energy needed to form seeds. These seeds grow along a specialized tendril that allows the brambleblight to fling its seeds hundreds of feet away in a manner similar to its rain of thorns special attack, though with a much greater range. A brambleblight dies shortly after releasing its seeds.

### HABITAT & SOCIETY

While brambleblights prosper in the mutable realm of the First World where they originated, they fare well in only a few environments on the Material Plane. They seem to shun brightly lit places and thrive in dim and dank locations such as deep forests, where the thick canopy shields the forest floor from the sun's rays. They also tend to lair near caves and other underground locations. They are rarely found in open plains or forests with thin canopies because these areas tend to spend long periods exposed to sunlight.

Brambleblights have no interest in others of their kind, and they must continually maintain their altered environments. They are thus reluctant to move to a new area unless their current location is completely depleted of prey. If a brambleblight uproots itself and moves on to another area, the region it blighted soon returns to its previous state. Likewise, when a brambleblight is killed, its tended patch withers and dies within days, eventually giving way once again to native vegetation.

### ANIMATED BRAMBLE

The following is an example of the animated vegetation that a brambleblight uses to help protect its rotting and thorny domain.

#### ANIMATED BRAMBLE

CR —

N Large construct

**Init** -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** -5

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 15, touch 8, flat-footed 15 (-1 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 52 (4d10+30)

**Fort** +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** -4

**Defensive Abilities** hardness 5; **Immune** construct traits

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** slam +9 (1d6+9 plus grab)

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

**Special Attacks** constrict (1d6+9), pull (slam, 5 ft.)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 8, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 20 (can't be tripped)





## PROTEAN, OURDIVAR

The upper body of this creature is that of a multicolored bestial humanoid, while its lower section ends in a serpentine tail.

### OURDIVAR

CR 4



XP 1,200

CN Large outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, protean, shapechanger)

**Init** +5; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +10

### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, **touch** 10, **flat-footed** 16 (+1 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 42 (5d10+15)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6

**Defensive Abilities** amorphous anatomy, freedom of movement;

**Immune** acid; **Resist** electricity 10, sonic 10; **SR** 15

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect), swim 30 ft.



**Melee** slam +8 (1d6+4), tail slap +3 (1d8+2 plus grab)

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

**Special Attacks** adaptive strike, constrict (1d8+4), warpwave exit

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5th; concentration +7)

3/day—*color spray* (DC 13)

1/day—*dispel magic*, *rage*

### STATISTICS

**Str** 18, **Dex** 13, **Con** 16, **Int** 11, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 21

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

**Skills** Bluff +10, Fly +14, Intimidate +10, Perception +10, Sense

Motive +10, Stealth +5, Swim +13

**Languages** Abyssal, Protean

**SQ** change shape (any humanoid or monstrous humanoid; *polymorph*)

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any (Maelstrom)

**Organization** solitary, pair, or breach (3–5)

**Treasure** none

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Adaptive Strike (Su)** An ourdivar's natural weapons count as magical and chaotic for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. Once per round as a free action, an ourdivar can change the damage type of its natural weapons to bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing, thereby allowing it to overcome damage reduction of those types as well.

**Warpwave Exit (Su)** An ourdivar that is killed or that lives out the length of its summoned time on the Material Plane erupts in a wave of chaotic energy. Upon the death of an ourdivar or when any spell or effect summoning or calling an ourdivar ends, 1d4+1 corporeal creatures within 15 feet of the ourdivar are affected by a minor warpwave (see the sidebar on page 87). Targets can resist the warpwave's effects with a successful DC 15 Fortitude save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Considered lesser proteans (though greater than voidworms), ourdivars are spontaneously formed from and given sentience by the chaotic energies of the Maelstrom when spellcasters call them forth. Ourdivars toil at the behest of their summoners, acting as tools of chaos across the planes. At the end of an ourdivar's brief existence, it departs in a furor of riotous energies, warping the area around it as its energy is reabsorbed into the Maelstrom.

Sitting upon a powerful serpentine tail instead of legs, an ourdivar's upper body looks akin to that of a bestial humanoid, but its iridescent skin constantly changes hue. The ends of both arms shift frequently between different weaponlike forms and basic hands that permit the protean to inflict a variety of terrible wounds on its opponents. An ourdivar is 12 feet long and weighs 700 pounds.



## ECOLOGY

Ourdivars are a common form of lesser proteans, brought into existence as a vessel of chaotic life energies bound into a stable yet temporary form. Only powerful spellcasters can summon greater proteans from the Maelstrom, so neophyte magic users instead bring forth these temporary creatures.

Ourdivars' humanoid upper bodies differ from the more serpentine outlines common to other proteans. Tusked facial features along with strong musculature give these proteans an intimidating countenance reminiscent of an orc with the build of an ogre. Using its inherent magical abilities, an ourdivar can take on the shape of humanoids of various races, often doing so to blend in with the allies or enemies of its creator.

The lower arms of an ourdivar mutate in shape, switching from blunt fists to razor-sharp blades and giving it the ability to bypass enemy defenses in combat. The shape of these weapons changes according to the ourdivar's whim to keep opponents off balance and wondering what sort of attack the ourdivar will make next.

Of all their powers, the barely contained anarchic energies that infuse ourdivars are the most deadly. Upon the destruction of an ourdivar—or at the end of the spell or effect that gave it form—the protean detonates in a surge of energy known as a minor warpwave. The chaotic outburst of an ourdivar is still able to wreak havoc, be that after the ourdivar falls to enemies on the battlefield or after it reports back to the peaceful home of the one who summoned it.

## HABITAT & SOCIETY

The life of an ourdivar is a solitary and often brief affair, as its entire existence is based on the whims of those who call it. Unless summoned as part of a larger group, ourdivars have little relationship with others of their kind, working together with other proteans only if their summoners wish it. Unbound greater proteans tend to regard ourdivars and other lesser proteans with a mixture of disdain and pity, albeit in their typically erratic and unpredictable manners.

Even though they are creatures of pure chaos, ourdivars obey the wishes of their creators. Even ourdivars brought into existence by potentially long-lasting spells such as *planar binding* seem content to serve the whims of their masters. Perhaps the only divergence from this odd loyalty is that of an ourdivar near the end of its lifespan; ourdivars on the verge of death move to ensure that their warpwave exit ability affects the greatest possible number of targets. Some believe that the fact that ourdivars' willingness to serve spellcasters, coupled with the fact that they're easily summoned, protects the Maelstrom and its greater inhabitants from the interference of spellcasters, and that these outsiders thus serve as an immune system of sorts for the Maelstrom.

## MINOR WARPWAVE

Lesser proteans, such as ourdivars, can create and manipulate ripples in reality known as warpwaves. Not as powerful as the warpwaves caused by greater proteans, minor warpwaves are nevertheless just as unpredictable. When a creature is affected by a minor warpwave, roll 1d10 and consult the table below to see what effect the entropic energies have.

### 1d10 Minor Warpwave Effect

1	Target takes 2 points of Constitution, Dexterity, or Strength damage (determine randomly).
2	Target takes 2 points of Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom damage (determine randomly).
3	Target is blinded or deafened (determine randomly) for 1d4 rounds.
4	Target is fatigued (or exhausted if already fatigued).
5	Target is slowed as the <i>slow</i> spell. (CL = protean's CR)
6	Target gains a +2 enhancement bonus to Constitution, Dexterity, or Strength (determine randomly) for the next 24 hours.
7	Target gains a +2 enhancement bonus to Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom (determine randomly) for the next 24 hours.
8	Target is affected by a <i>protection from law</i> spell. (CL = protean's CR)
9	Target gains 3d6 temporary hit points.
10	Target is hastened as the <i>haste</i> spell. (CL = protean's CR)

## BINDING & SUMMONING




Ourdivars can be found on any plane of existence where spellcasters can call them. Most summoners bring forth ourdivars onto the Material Plane to serve their immediate needs. When called forth through a *planar ally* spell, ourdivars eagerly negotiate with spellcasters. As the first true action of its life, an ourdivar enthusiastically acquiesces to its potential master's demands and often accepts reduced payments (but never less than 75% of the normal required amount by the spell) in order to continue its existence. When an ourdivar does accept a smaller offering, it makes sure to return to its master upon the completion of its mission, ensuring that the summoner is within range when its task is officially complete so the spellcaster will be struck by its departing warpwave.

Chaotic neutral spellcasters able to cast *summon monster V* can add the ourdivar to the list of creatures they can summon with this spell; when casting *summon monster V* in this way, the spell is chaotic.



## SKAPRAUN

*This dark-furred creature wielding a horn bow looks like a burly humanoid with the head and hooves of a mountain goat.*

<b>SKAPRAUN</b>	<b>CR 1</b>	  
<b>XP 400</b>		
<b>LN</b> Small fey		
<b>Init</b> +1; <b>Senses</b> low-light vision; Perception +7		
<b>DEFENSE</b>		
<b>AC</b> 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex, +1 size)		
<b>hp</b> 16 (3d6+6)		
<b>Fort</b> +3, <b>Ref</b> +4, <b>Will</b> +4		
<b>DR</b> 2/cold iron; <b>Resist</b> cold 5		
<b>OFFENSE</b>		
<b>Speed</b> 30 ft.		
<b>Melee</b> gore +3 (1d4+1)		
<b>Ranged</b> composite longbow +3 (1d6+1/×3)		
<b>Special Attacks</b> nature's traps		
<b>STATISTICS</b>		
<b>Str</b> 12, <b>Dex</b> 13, <b>Con</b> 15, <b>Int</b> 10, <b>Wis</b> 12, <b>Cha</b> 11		
<b>Base Atk</b> +1; <b>CMB</b> +1; <b>CMD</b> 12		
<b>Feats</b> Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Shot		
<b>Skills</b> Acrobatics +11, Climb +11, Craft (bows) +8, Craft (traps) +8, Knowledge (nature) +4, Perception +7, Stealth +11, Survival +4;		
<b>Racial Modifiers</b> +4 Acrobatics, +4 Climb, +4 Craft (bows), +4 Craft (traps)		
<b>Languages</b> Sylvan		
<b>SQ</b> effortless leap, mountain stride		
<b>ECOLOGY</b>		
<b>Environment</b> temperate or cold mountains		
<b>Organization</b> solitary, pair, patrol (3–5), band (6–12), or tribe (13–32 plus 1 chieftain of 3rd–4th level)		
<b>Treasure</b> standard		
<b>SPECIAL ABILITIES</b>		
<b>Effortless Leap (Ex)</b> A skapraun attempts Acrobatics checks to jump as though it had a running start.		
<b>Mountain Stride (Ex)</b> A skapraun takes no penalty to speed or on Acrobatics checks when moving on steep slopes or through rubble or scree.		
<b>Nature's Traps (Ex)</b> A skapraun is particularly skilled at crafting traps that mimic natural hazards. A skapraun doesn't require gold to build its traps, merely time. Rules for crafting traps can be found in Chapter 13 of the <i>Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook</i> , and examples of traps typically built by skaprauns are provided on page 89.		

Because of their mighty horns, cloven hooves, and aggressively territorial behavior, skaprauns are often mistaken for hellspawn or other minions of evil. Although these fey actually have a deep sense of honor, even those who know them for what they are generally view them with suspicion—their stubbornness and isolationist traditions leave little room for alliances or friendships

with other creatures. Skaprauns stand 3-1/2 feet tall and weigh 60 pounds.

## ECOLOGY

Much like the animals that they resemble, skaprauns have beards, short tails, and long, curved horns. Their fur has a fine, woolly layer and a longer layer of hollow guard hairs, offering protection against wind and cold temperatures. Their feet have inner pads and sharp dewclaws to prevent slipping, and their cloven hooves can spread apart to ensure a better grip on uneven surfaces.

Skaprauns are mainly herbivorous, but they supplement their diet with meat from animals they hunt and with clay to obtain minerals. They eat animals primarily for ritualistic purposes rather than out of necessity. Their main purposes for hunting are to maintain balanced animal populations within their territory, to obtain raw materials such as bone and sinew for building tools and weapons, and to hone their combat tactics.

Although skaprauns have mortal lifespans averaging 18 years, they are in a sense immortal. The death of a skapraun triggers a form of reincarnation that occurs inside the body of the dead skapraun. The new skapraun leeches proteins and other nutrients from its precursor's body to build its own. When the newborn skapraun crawls out—a process that takes roughly 4 weeks—only a withered, fragile husk remains of the precursor's body. The horns of the precursor remain fully intact, however.

A newborn skapraun is hairless, hornless, and nearly helpless, but it learns to walk within 5 minutes of its birth. The skapraun remembers nothing of its former life, but it instinctively knows to collect the horns of its precursor and protect them at all costs so it can later build a bow from them. A skapraun usually reaches full maturity within 2 months of its birth, but it may take longer if the precursor's body was badly damaged.

A skapraun is not identical to the one from which it was born, but its psyche and physique are always shaped in some way by the decisions its precursor made—and particularly by how the precursor met its end.

## HABITAT & SOCIETY

Skaprauns make their homes in rocky, mountainous areas where their physique gives them a distinct advantage over less agile beings. They live almost exclusively above the treeline, where their enemies have less of a chance to find shelter from their arrows. However, the territory of a skapraun tribe extends far below the treeline; the creatures hunt and gather plants and other resources in these lower regions.

To skaprauns, the concept of holding the higher ground is a central cultural aspect and a matter of great pride, and it also makes them fiercely territorial. They often do not allow



any other intelligent beings to inhabit a higher location on the same mountain and do not tolerate intruders near their homes, even travelers who just passing through. However, skaprauns do not usually resort to violence unless stern warnings fail to remove the threat.

While the inhospitable terrain skaprauns live in is enough to keep most intruders away, they take great care to fortify the slopes of their mountain homes against attacks. They build traps in natural choke points and prepare many defensive fighting positions from which they can shower any attacker with a rain of arrows. The defensive positions have rocks piled as low walls, camouflaged to look like naturally occurring piles of rubble. These are usually difficult to reach from below, but if the enemies are particularly mobile, the skapraun sentries retreat into another defensive position farther up the mountain rather than risking a melee that may go against them.

When a tribe of skaprauns ends up in a prolonged conflict, the fey also employ offensive tactics that mostly involve quick hit-and-run attacks or feigned retreats in order to lead the enemy into an ambush. They also study weather patterns and use the treacherous mists of the mountains to their advantage, advancing when the mists rise and retreating when they recede.

Skapraun chieftains are born from the deaths of heroic individuals. The chieftains often have unusual physical traits that marks their births, such as very large horns, snow-white fur, or a greater stature. Skapraun leaders often take class levels in barbarian, druid, hunter, oracle, ranger, or shaman.

The birth of twins is considered a very auspicious sign in skapraun society. It is the only way in which a skapraun tribe can grow, and the twins are often uniquely gifted with oracular powers. Each inherits one of the precursor's horns and builds a spear instead of the usual recurve bow. These twin-oracles often speak in unison and seem to share a single mind. Any later generations born of the twin-oracles are usually normal skaprauns, however.

On the bottom rung of skapraun society are arkas—outcasts who are allowed to perform only the most menial tasks within a tribe. A skapraun becomes an arka if it loses and cannot recover its weapon. Similarly, a skapraun who for some reason cannot extract its precursor's horns or make a weapon out of them is marked an arka. Rather than facing the shame of not being considered a warrior, it is common for an arka to go on a self-imposed exile. Over time, these lone skaprauns lose their supernatural connection to nature, including their ability to reincarnate. They may find themselves in the company of humanoid creatures, getting along best with dwarves, perhaps because of dwarves' similarly dour dispositions and love of mountains.

## SKAPRAUN TRAPS

The following are examples of traps favored by skaprauns.

### SCREE SLIDE TRAP

CR 1

**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** repair

**Effect** CMB +10 check (vs. target's CMD; target falls prone); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area); for every 5 by which the attack exceeds the CMD, the target also slides 5 ft. down the slope

### ROCKFALL TRAP

CR 2

**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** repair




**Effect** Atk +10 melee (2d6); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area); affected squares are treated as dense rubble (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 412)





## SKELTERCAT

The tawny coat of this snarling feline resembles that of a mountain lion, though this creature is much more muscular and carries itself with a strange posture.

<b>SKELTERCAT</b>	<b>CR 4</b>			
<b>XP 1,200</b>				
<b>CE</b> Medium magical beast (shapechanger)				
<b>Init</b> +4; <b>Senses</b> darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +5				
<b>DEFENSE</b>				
<b>AC</b> 17, touch 15, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)				
<b>hp</b> 37 (5d10+10)				
<b>Fort</b> +6, <b>Ref</b> +8, <b>Will</b> +4				
<b>Defensive Abilities</b> mixed mind				
<b>OFFENSE</b>				
<b>Speed</b> 40 ft.				
<b>Melee</b> bite +9 (1d6+4 plus grab), 2 claws +9 (1d4+4)				
<b>Special Attacks</b> musk, scream				
<b>STATISTICS</b>				
<b>Str</b> 19, <b>Dex</b> 18, <b>Con</b> 15, <b>Int</b> 6, <b>Wis</b> 13, <b>Cha</b> 12				
<b>Base Atk</b> +5; <b>CMB</b> +9; <b>CMD</b> 24				
<b>Feats</b> Dodge, Iron Will, Run				
<b>Skills</b> Acrobatics +12 (+16 when jumping), Climb +8, Perception +5, Stealth +12, Survival +2; <b>Racial Modifiers</b> +4 Acrobatics (+8 when jumping), +4 Stealth				
<b>Languages</b> Common (can't speak)				
<b>SQ</b> partial transformation				
<b>ECOLOGY</b>				
<b>Environment</b> temperate forests, hills, or mountains				
<b>Organization</b> solitary, pair, or clan (3–8)				
<b>Treasure</b> none				
<b>SPECIAL ABILITIES</b>				
<b>Mixed Mind (Ex)</b> A skeltercat's mind is a bizarre combination of animal instinct and human intellect. This disordered consciousness grants the creature immunity to confusion effects. Additionally, any creature that attempts to read a skeltercat's mind or communicate with it telepathically must succeed at a DC 13 Will save or be shaken for 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.				
<b>Musk (Ex)</b> A skeltercat has glands that produce a noxious musk. Any living creature within 10 feet must succeed at a DC 14 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1d4 rounds and sickened for 1 minute afterward. A creature that successfully saves is instead sickened for 1d4 rounds and can't be affected again by the same skeltercat's musk for 24 hours. This is a poison effect, and other skeltercats are immune to this effect. A skeltercat can suppress this effect as a free action. The save DC is Constitution-based.				
<b>Partial Transformation (Su)</b> A skeltercat can alter portions of its body in order to give itself access to certain abilities. As a standard action three times per day, a skeltercat can gain one of the abilities listed below. A partial transformation				

lasts for 10 minutes. As a swift action, a skeltercat that has already activated a partial transformation can spend an additional use of this ability to switch which benefit it receives. Only one such benefit can be in effect at a time.

**Climb:** The skeltercat's claws extend, granting it a climb speed equal to half its base land speed. Additionally, when falling within arm's reach of a wall, ledge, or something else it could grab on to for stability, it can slow its descent, taking damage as if the fall were 20 feet shorter.

**Hide:** The skeltercat's hide bristles like that of an angry cat and grows thicker, increasing its natural armor bonus by 2.

**Legs:** The skeltercat grows an additional pair of legs, bringing its total to six, increasing its base land speed to 60 feet, and granting it the rake special ability. The rake attacks use the same damage and critical threat range as the skeltercat's normal claw attacks.

**Swim:** The skeltercat grows webbing between its toes and whale-like flukes on its tail, granting it a swim speed equal to its base land speed. Additionally, it gains the hold breath universal monster ability.

**Tail:** The skeltercat's tail grows thick and clublike. It gains a tail slap as a primary attack that deals 1d6 points of damage plus trip on a successful hit.

**Scream (Su)** A skeltercat can release a terrifying cry that affects all creatures within a 300-foot spread. All creatures in that area must succeed at a DC 13 Will save or become panicked for 1d4 rounds. This is a sonic, mind-affecting fear effect. A creature that successfully saves against this effect can't be affected by the same skeltercat's scream for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

For a long time, many experts believed the creature now known as the skeltercat existed only in the folklore of the Shoanti tribes or in the far-fetched tales of a few wild-eyed travelers. Only with the recent reopening of the Bloodsworn Vale have rumors of the skeltercat's existence been taken seriously. As traffic through the vale increases, reports of attacks by strange, shapeshifting cats are growing startlingly commonplace. Such tales are told most frequently in the fortress city of Skelt, a common stopover for merchants traveling through the Bloodsworn Vale. The stories out of Skelt gave these creatures their name.

The skeltercat resembles a heavily muscled cougar or mountain lion, having a tawny coat, powerful paws with retractable claws, and strong hind legs that allow it to jump great distances. It primarily walks about on all fours, adopting an oddly hunched posture that distinguishes it from normal cats. When faced with a threat, a skeltercat rises onto its hind legs, walking upright in a disturbingly human fashion. An adult skeltercat stands just shy of 8 feet tall when fully upright, and weighs up to 300 pounds.



## ECOLOGY

Many generations ago, a small band of Shoanti warriors lived high in the Mindspin Mountains near the headwaters of the Yondabakari River. This band, whose name is now long lost, were the first to feel the bite of Chelish steel as the southerners began their push into Varisia. These Shoanti fought back against the invaders as best they could, but they had no shaman in their group, and soon found they were no match for Chelish magic. Though they begged the clans of the lowlands to train them in such arts, they were repeatedly refused. No clan wanted to share its secrets with the notorious raiders of the mountain tribe, and none yet realized the threat the Chelish invasion would soon pose.

As a desperate ploy, members of the mountain tribe stole down into the lowlands to spy on the druids and shamans of the other tribes, hoping to steal the secrets of the magic they had been denied. These spies observed a druid from the lowlands wildshaping herself into a mountain lion, and having listened carefully to the magic incantations she used, they returned to tell the tribe what they had found. Whether by chance or fate, the incantations worked, and soon the whole tribe had become fearsome cougars, just as the druid had. Only too late did they realize their spies had not learned how to reverse the transformation. Try as they might, they were able to become only partly human. Trapped somewhere between human and cat forms, the members of this reclusive mountain tribe were cursed to become the first skeltercats.

Though created by a magical accident, skeltercats breed true, and a skeltercat that mates with a normal cougar invariably produces skeltercat offspring. Much like mountain lions, skeltercats are carnivores, though unlike mundane cats, they display a distinct preference for humanoid prey. Though skeltercats will attack any humanoid, they appear to prefer Chelish flesh to any other, perhaps due to some ancestral memory of the original skeltercats' conflicts with Chelish invaders. Skeltercats live slightly longer than normal cougars, having an average lifespan of 30 to 40 years.

## HABITAT & SOCIETY

Although skeltercats live throughout the Mindspin Mountains, they are especially concentrated in the Bloodsworn Vale. Outside of the vale, skeltercats are most often found in and around hill giant camps. The brutish giants admire the skeltercats' savage ferocity, and often share their food with the cats to

encourage them to remain in the area. For their part, the cats keep the area surrounding the giants' camp free from lesser predators and pick off any creatures attempting to escape the giants' clutches. Skeltercats may also serve as guards for the giants as they sleep through the night, and the last thing a group of adventurers may hear when attempting to ambush a band of giants is the yowl of a pouncing skeltercat.

The Shoanti have a complicated relationship with skeltercats. Though many Shoanti tribespeople have lost their lives to the shapeshifters' claws, the Shoanti nonetheless insist that skeltercats act as guardians for their people. An obscure Shoanti myth holds that the first skeltercat was once a Shoanti warrior who wished to defend her tribe from a demon that inflicted terrible madness upon its foes. Seeking a way to protect herself from the demon's insanity-inducing gaze, the warrior donned a magical cougar mask created by the shaman of her tribe. The mask worked, and the warrior was able to drive the demon away. However, she discovered too late that she could not remove the mask, and she was cursed to forever roam the land in the form of a fearsome mountain lion.

Though this myth is just a mangled retelling of the skeltercat's true origins, there may be some truth to it.

Skeltercats are inherently immune to madness and confusion effects, and some claim that those who wear the hide of a skeltercat can gain some measure of this immunity for themselves.





## FORGE OF THE GIANT GOD

By Tim Hitchcock

With the map found in the hill giant Grenseldek's lair, the heroes explore the tomb of a legendary giantslayer before venturing into the Mindspin Mountains in search of the valley where the Storm Tyrant is recruiting giants for his army. The adventurers must confront the numerous giants inhabiting the winding valley before making their way to the giants' headquarters: an ancient temple to the giant god Minderhal that contains a powerful artifact. But the giant threat is not ended, for even after facing the cathedral's master, a powerful stone giant inquisitor, the heroes learn that the Storm Tyrant is training his most promising recruits deeper in the mountains.

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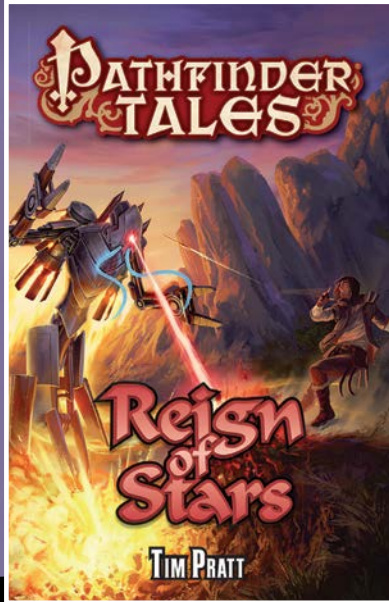


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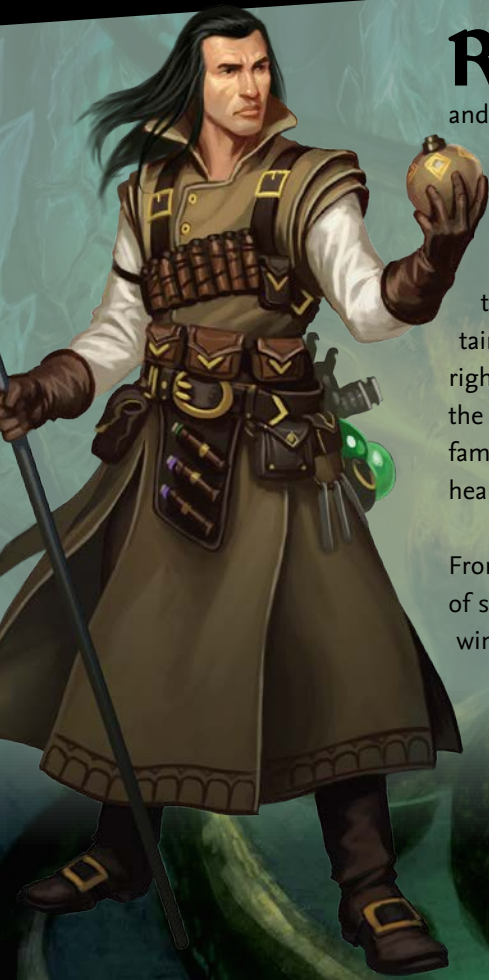
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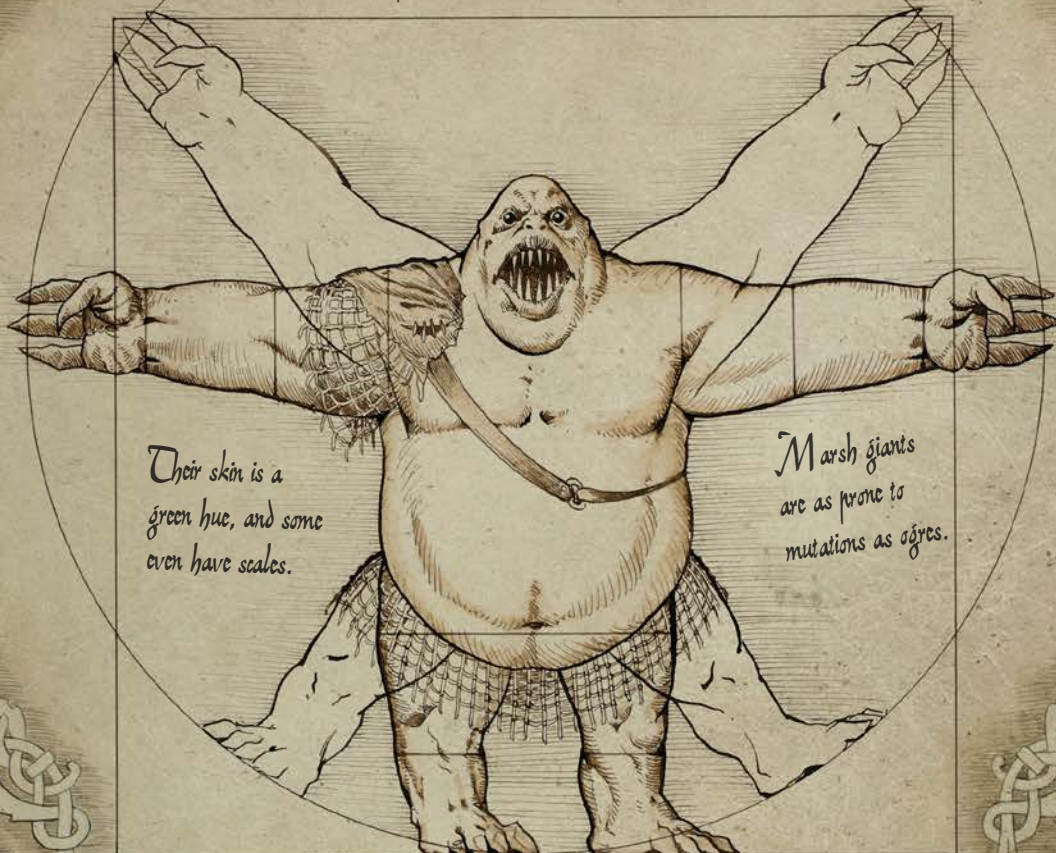
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*Marsh giants have black, glassy eyes, and small openings that serve as ears.*



*Their skin is a green hue, and some even have scales.*

*Marsh giants are as prone to mutations as ogres.*

2014  
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# Marsh Giants

Many scholars didn't initially categorize marsh giants as true giants, instead seeing them as deformed humanoids more akin to fish-people. Marsh giants are lazy hunters—instead of stalking their prey, they tend to set numerous traps in their swampy territories or find spots to lay ambushes. They are adept swimmers, and their coloration allows them to easily hide in their favored terrain.





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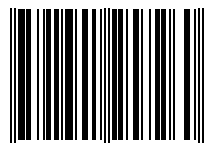
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