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ADVENTURE PATH

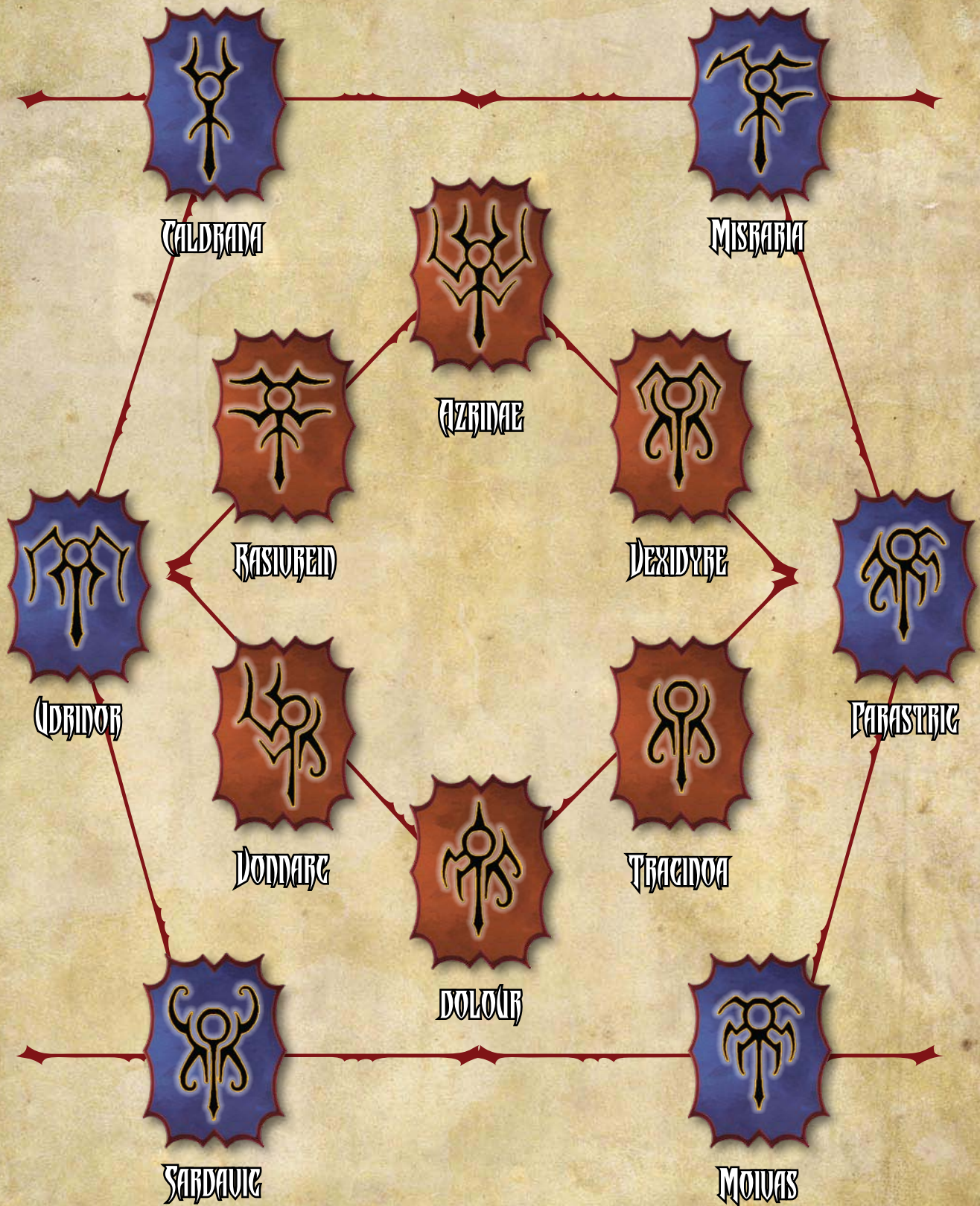


Second Darkness

ENDLESS NIGHT

By F. Wesley Schneider

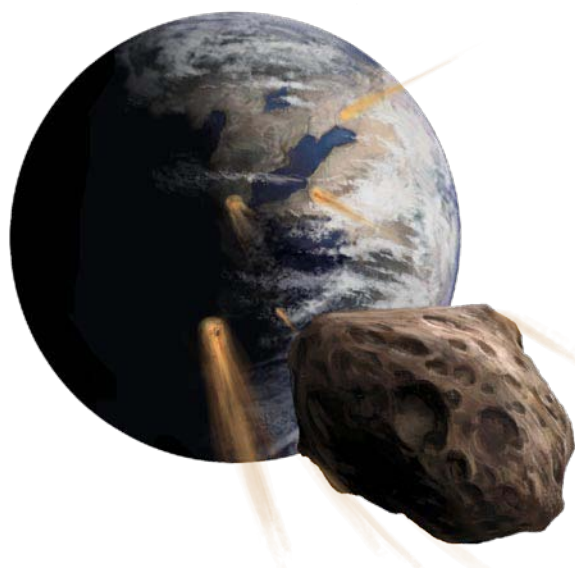
DROW RUINES



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ADVENTURE PATH  PART 4 of 6

Second Darkness **ENDLESS NIGHT**



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To Serve the Matron

We've pulled some strange stunts in *Pathfinder* over the past year. Between the haunts of Foxglove Manor, the rampant sinning in Runeforge, a rooftop chase across Korvosa's Shingles, and several "cinematic" encounters involving execution attempts, reborn dragons, and tsunamis, we've put encounter design through the wringer. But in this volume's adventure, "Endless Night," we're doing something really crazy. We're turning all your PCs into drow. Yup. Spell resistance and all.

We wanted to give players a chance to play as drow at some point during the Second Darkness Adventure Path—in fact, ever since playing through *Baldur's Gate 2* (which had a similar scenario going on), I'd been hoping someone would produce an adventure where the PCs sneak into a drow city and get to experience the decadence and cruelty not as outsiders but as citizens. So Wes Schneider came up with a pretty crazy new spell to disguise the PCs.

It's a relatively powerful and unusual spell, sort of a cross between *simulacrum* and *polymorph*. It's one best used to fuel adventures, in my opinion, since it's a type of magic that can really change things around into a game that you as GM might not be prepared to run. In the context of "Endless Night," its effects set up the conceit of an undercover investigation within a society that has little problem seeing through most magical disguises, and since the spell affects all the PCs at once, balance between the characters themselves is preserved.

Of course, pretending to be part of an evil society can cause some problems at the table. For some PCs, this'll be a therapeutic chance to embrace the dark side and really cut loose with the villainy. For others, it'll be a test of their willpower—particularly for paladins and good clerics, who'll have to swallow their pride and play along with the chaos and evil of the drow for the greater good. As the GM of this adventure, you'll probably need to ease

up on the alignment watch; keep in mind that what faces the world is a pretty catastrophic event if the PCs don't learn what Allevrah Azrinae is up to or where she and her minions have relocated to. A paladin might not approve of working for someone who performs living sacrifices and worships demons, but in order to stop an even greater evil, a paladin sometimes has to bide his time. Don't punish a heroic player by forcing him to do something that would turn him evil, and in the end, don't forget that *atonement* is a pretty handy spell for cleansing the soul. The elves sent the PCs into the Darklands; the least they'll be able to do in the next adventure is provide a few free castings if necessary.

And then there's the other concern—game balance. Drow characters have a higher baseline than other characters; while drow racial ability score modifiers are pretty good, they're the only things your PCs won't be seeing when they don their unusual disguises. Excellent darkvision, spell-like abilities, free weapon proficiencies, and above all else spell resistance lie in the near future for your players' characters. Just remember that the effects aren't actual changes to the characters and the adventure itself expects and understands what the PCs will be able to do—in the end, it doesn't really unbalance this adventure at all to let the PCs be drow. And if the PCs think they're getting away with something, let them!

All Aboard!

The first section of "Endless Night" might feel a bit "rail-road." That's probably because it is. As the GM, your primary task for the first part of the adventure is to get the party through the elf gate and into the drow city of Zirnakaynin—fast! The adventure is all on the other side of the portal and the campaign expects the PCs to leave the Mierani Forest, so it's time to pull out all the stops. Of course, part of any good GM's job is to get the characters to do exactly what you want them to do by making them think it's what they want to do.

While you can cut the PCs a little bit of slack and allow time to heal up and catch their breath, the beginning of the adventure is meant to feel rushed as the elves realize that they, for the first time, have the drop on the drow. If the PCs feel slightly overwhelmed or unprepared to go through the gate, that's fine. You can use Eviana and Kaerishiel to play good cop/bad cop, with the former appealing to the PCs' emotional side, while the latter calls the PCs to act honorably and bravely. Offer the PCs any reward—you probably won't have to actually pay it since the PCs are unlikely to revisit the Mierani Forest—play the emotional card, tempt them with ideas of treasure below, just get them moving!

Of course, once the PCs get into Zirnakaynin, things go from rail-road right into the sandbox. While the PCs

need to retain their cover stories, what they do in this adventure to learn about Allevrah and her plans is up to them. There's very little dungeon crawl or organized series of events in "Endless Night." Use the adventure, the gazetteer of Zirnakaynin, and the random encounters at the start of the Bestiary as tools to handle whatever the PCs come up with and let them have fun exploring their dark sides!

Behind Enemy Lines

Let's hope your group has a fast talker among its ranks, because things might get difficult if they don't. Sure, the PCs look like drow, talk like drow, and can even pull off a few tricks just like drow. But what are their names? And where do they live? What were their roles in drow society before they were sent to Celwynvian? Do they have any "references" among the city's citizens?

As the GM, strike a position between cutting your party some slack and putting them on the spot with their disguises. While a group that forgets to come up with fake names should probably have an awkward encounter the first time they try to introduce themselves, you don't want to discourage them. Every drow in Zirnakaynin won't turn and attack if they come up with a "un-drow" sounding names. Encourage the PCs to learn more about Zirnakaynin and the dark elves so they can come up with convincing covers.

Half the reason the NPC Gadak exists in the adventure is to aid the PCs in developing their covers and to answer any questions the party has about drow. He should spur the characters to talk a bit more about who they are in drow terms and give them the opportunity to test out their covers in a situation with relatively low consequences. Remember not to overwhelm the PCs with impossible-to-answer questions or make them think they'll never be able to pass in the Darklands. It's okay if a fumbled conversation with a guard patrol results in a fight—in Zirnakaynin, fights happen all the time and no one bats an eye unless someone really important is inconvenienced by the scuffle. At the same time, if the PCs get into a situation where only a quick lie, a wild distraction, or all-out flight can prevent them from blowing their cover, feel free to run with it. After all, keeping track of a complex web of lies should just make the PCs feel more like real drow.



James Jacobs
Editor-in-Chief
james.jacobs@paizo.com



Second Darkness

CHAPTER FOUR

Endless Night

There are places not for those of the world of light. The infinite darkness seething in Golarion's depths hides terrors untold, abominations that stalk the realm of legend and depraved races praising foulnesses best left unnamed. Never does the searing sun turn its scouring eye upon the monstrosities of this tenebrous abyss, and for millennia untold horrors too foul to face the day have gathered and flourished below. This place is not for those of the world above, but peril and desperation sometimes force tragic souls to face the bleakness below. Those who pass into the dark rarely return, while those few who do are forever changed, their souls seared by the shadow of an endless night.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Few in Zirnakaynin know how Ilaxdria Azrinae perished. Each of the city's sinister leaders would have benefited in some measure from the 412-year-old matriarch's murder, yet none of them claimed responsibility for her death. With the iniquitous laws of the drow city promising a tortured end to any commoner who strikes out against his betters, no servant, slave, nor ambitious socialite dared to mock or falsely boast of the matron's murder. Even among her own family, no scheming Azrinae scion laid immediate claim to Ilaxdria's blood-soaked throne. And so a silent war began.

For the next four years, ambitious power mongers both within and outside powerful House Azrinae vied for control of the splintered house. While Simovara Azrinae ascended to house matron by her right as heir, her violent, impatient ways alienated many of her mother's former backers among the city's other great houses. Her siblings viewed her as undignified and short-sighted, and in the same breaths that they paid her obeisance they whispered orders to assassins and Abyss-bent mages. Only two factors maintained Simovara's rule: devotion to her house's demonic patron—bat-fanged and serpent-limbed Abraxas—and the whim of a deadly mage.

For all the zealous matron's enemies, she retained one of her mother's oldest collaborators, Alicavniiss Vonnarc, first daughter of House Vonnarc and among Zirnakaynin's most feared wizards. House Azrinae and House Vonnarc had long enjoyed fair dealings, the immoral scholars of Azrinae often trading findings with the dark-robed mages of Vonnarc. Simovara coveted the potent ally she found in the notorious mage, and for her part, Alicavniiss betrayed no desire to usurp the Azrinae throne nor manipulate Simovara's power. Her dealings with the new Azrinae matron remained the same as those she had shared with the matron's predecessor—her wisdom, counsel, and varied prowess in exchange for access to the Azrinaes' vast libraries, records, and vaults (among the most complete collections of ancient lore and artifacts in all Zirnakaynin). As the new Azrinae leader relied on fear of Alicavniiss's divisiveness to maintain her rule, she denied the archmage little. Where her mother had guarded the family's most potent and aged treasures, Simovara granted the elder drow access to the house's deepest vaults and the nameless artifacts and forgotten mysteries within.

Within the shadowed vaults of House Azrinae, Alicavniiss silently gloated, for it was through her secretive dark magic that she had slain Ilaxdria Azrinae from afar. Alicavniiss's murderous intrigue had won her much, and her studies among the Azrinaes' secret hoards advanced her understanding of varied magics not seen upon Golarion for untold centuries.

Yet, while Alicavniiss pored through the drow scholars' greatest finds, an unexpected treasure appeared in

Zirnakaynin: a mysterious, powerful, and hate-filled woman named Allevrah. A potent cleric of Abraxas and well-versed in the ways of the drow's hated elven kin, this mystifying firebrand sought out House Azrinae and was welcomed by its matron. The stranger imparted great secrets of lost elven magic to her new allies, weathering hours of interviews by Simovara, Alicavniiss, and the house's most noteworthy scholars. Most significantly, though, she had much to teach the drow of the habits and desires of the surface elves. Although many remained suspicious of her motives and past, Allevrah's tales fanned the long smoldering embers of drow hatred and rumors spread that the time for revenge grew near.

Allevrah spent years in Zirnakaynin, where she became known as a seer of the world above and a driving force behind the most radical cries for warlike revenge. With the spells of drow mages confirming her every insight, the impressed Matron Simovara granted Allevrah her family's name, adopting the outsider into the ancient noble house. Yet, as Allevrah cemented her place as Matron Azrinae's favored, she displaced another—Simovara's interests in Alicavniiss's studies waned. In quiet fury the archmage withdrew from House Azrinae, preparing plans to painfully oust her new rival.

Alicavniiss's subtle plots would never come to fruition, though. Through her years among the drow of House Azrinae, Allevrah developed a near fanatical following both within and outside the noble house. On the day of a grand sacrifice and feast in honor of Abraxas, Allevrah addressed her assembled sycophants and publicly declared war upon the elves above. Claiming to possess the key to an ancient magic capable of wiping out the hated elves, Allevrah rallied her followers about her. With a small army in tow, she marched upon House Azrinae and was welcomed into its halls. In the house's audience chamber she embraced Simovara as matron and mother one final time, then impaled her mistress upon her surface-forged blade. As her onetime matron gasped at her feet, Allevrah declared herself heir and matron of House Azrinae. Several Azrinae scions fled Zirnakaynin, but most welcomed the coup and the leadership of the fiery, popular leader.

Thus, Allevrah Azrinae's plot to draw a knife from the stars and thrust it into the heart of the elven nation entered its final stages. Soon her machinations led her and much of her new family from Zirnakaynin in preparation for their genocidal plot. Yet, behind them, in the Last Home of the Elves, Allevrah left several enemies: petty nobles jealous of her swift ascent; malicious matrons disgusted that an outsider would taint the throne of a great drow house; and one of the drow's most nefarious wizards, Alicavniiss Vonnarc, whose ambitions hold no place for the meddling of an inelegant upstart. All that these varied rivals need now to find vengeance against Allevrah are the proper pawns.

Adventure Summary

After aiding the elves in scouring the ruins of Celwynvian of drow, the PCs stand in high regard. Desiring to know more of their foul brethrens' plans, yet fearful of further exposing their own members to drow influences, the elves entreat the PCs to use the drow-corrupted elf gate and discover the specifics of their plots in the realms beyond. The mission is daring, but utilizing experimental magics, the elves magically transform the PCs into drow. With these supposedly fool-proof disguises, the party passes through the corrupted elf gate to find themselves in the drow city of Zirnakaynin.

Once in the deadly and decadent Last Home of the Elves, the PCs infiltrate one of the great drow noble families, House Vonnarc. One of the house's leaders, the feared archmage Alicavniiss, holds a personal grudge against the new Azrinae matron, Allevrah, but few of non-noble blood ever see the reclusive mage. Being drawn into the intrigues and deceptions of the foul nobles, the PCs must maintain their disguises to rise among the ranks of the house's servants, becoming ever more embroiled in the cruelty and mercilessness of drow society. As they gain in status, the house's nobles take note and the party's tasks turn from daily drudgery to missions in service to House Vonnarc's glory.

Eventually, First Daughter Alicavniiss herself seeks out the PCs. Long aware of the characters' true identities, the archmage offers to reveal all she knows of Allevrah's plot if the PCs perform a dangerous mission for her first. Upon completing this task, Alicavniiss tells the PCs much of Allevrah's plots, but she also destroys the characters' disguises, forcing them to swiftly flee the city of the drow with their new information safe at hand.

PART ONE: THE FACE OF THE ENEMY

At the end of the previous adventure, the PCs have aided the elves of the Mierani Forest in a tremendous task—the scouring of drow from the ruined elven city of Celwynvian. Their allies among the elves of the town of Crying Leaf and the mercenary company of Shin'Rakorath spend the next several days or even weeks patrolling the ruins and the forest, subduing the final pockets of drow resistance in the city while the PCs are celebrated and rewarded for their recent victories. Yet these celebrations are fated to be short-lived, for the elven leaders still have much they wish to discuss.

Both Eviana (the leader of Crying Leaf) and Kaerishiel (leader of the local band of Shin'Rakorath) prove keenly interested in hearing what the party discovered in their fight against the drow, both having varied questions regarding the dark elves' numbers, activities, reasons for being in the city, and methods. Their greatest interests,

though, fall upon what the drow were doing inside the Armageddon Echo—they encourage the party to tell them all they know of what was going on inside the demiplane. At the same time, elven researchers have determined that the elf gate the PCs discovered in the Academy of Arts has been corrupted by the drow. Divination magic has confirmed their suspicion—this elf gate now leads to the heart of the drow empire, deep in the Darklands. It leads to the drow city of Zirnakaynin itself.

For long years the Shin'Rakorath have battled the drow whenever their taint was discovered—and to this day, their efforts have been successful. Most think of the drow as nothing but a myth or a children's fairy tale. Yet what the PCs have uncovered worries both the Shin'Rakorath and the elves of Crying Leaf—the drow are up to something big, and if indeed they have discovered a method to recreate Earthfall, they can no longer be ignored. Thus, Eviana and Kaerishiel face two options: destroy the elf gate—a rare treasure of their people—and hope that confounds the drow's plots, or pass through the gate and seek to discover more of the drow's intentions beyond. The choice is an obvious one, but one filled with danger.

When this adventure begins, Eviana and Kaerishiel request the PCs to attend breakfast with them. Eviana sits quietly while she lets Kaerishiel, not one for delicacy, lay things out as the meal comes to a close. They explain that even though Celwynvian has been reclaimed, they now have a unique opportunity to send spies into the heart of drow territory via the corrupted elf gate, which should be ready to open quite soon. But such a task would require not only unorthodox disguises, but also brave heroes—heroes like the PCs. Eviana and Kaerishiel ask the PCs to do this, and are willing to answer any questions they may have. Likely questions (and the elves' answers) are listed here.

How do you know the elf gate connects to a drow city? “We’ve used divination magic, including a commune spell, to investigate what lies on the other side of the portal, and have confirmed this research with information gathered from battlefield discoveries of notes. The portal once led to Kyonin, but the drow have somehow rerouted it to one of their cities in the Darklands. A place called Zirnakaynin, to be precise.”

What do you know about Zirnakaynin? “Alas, very little. We can guess at the type of civilization it might be by observing the dark elf mentality and behavior we’ve seen over the past several days, but as for exact details on what to expect in Zirnakaynin—we simply don’t know. Gathering intelligence about the city should be a primary goal of whoever goes through the portal, I suspect.”

We’re not drow, how can we disguise ourselves? “Magically. We have no estimate of how long your efforts beyond the gate might take, and the drow themselves are no strangers to deceptions. Mere illusions or simple

transmutations won't stand up to scrutiny, so our plans call for something with greater longevity and subtlety than most magics. Something more unorthodox. We've called in an expert to handle this."

What about our gear? What about animal companions?

"Most of your equipment should be okay; as drow, you've been stationed here on the surface for a while, so it's not unusual that you might have looted some of your victims up here. You might want to think about cashing in coins for gems, since gems don't have minter's marks on them. And if you've got anything that's obviously sacred or holy, you should keep it hidden. At the very least, be ready with a story about it being a trophy or something. As for animal companions... again, you've been stationed here for some time. If you don't want to leave your animals here, or don't want to secure a more regional Darklands minion, I suggest you prepare a story about how you find the exotic creature amusing or something like that."

Who's this expert? "A Mordant Spire wizard of some repute, and unfortunately, some infamy. A necromancer named Giseil Voslil. He is a friend of the Shin'Rakorath and has proved most useful in the past."

How can we get back through once the gate closes?

"Another concern. Certainly, the portal won't be functional for quite some time after you use it, and we hope to remove the link to Zirnakaynin before then, in any event. I shall see to it that an elven priest contacts one of you via sending for regular updates—if you have similar capabilities, you can use them to keep either of us apprised of your needs. But make no mistake—you may need to improvise a method to escape should things turn sour."

Can't we call on help from the elven homeland? "Alas... things move slowly at the government level. The leaders of Kyonin have been informed of the situation, but it could be some time before they settle on an official plan. It pains me to admit, but sometimes the elven ways are not best. There is no time for long deliberations—we need to act now. We've secured the aid of Giseil Voslil, and that, for now, is all we can expect."

Why can't you or other elves accompany us, or why can't you handle this job on your own? "Many of my best soldiers are wounded and won't be in top shape when the portal activates. More to the point, you are much more experienced than all of my men... I suspect even I wouldn't last long against you if we came to blows. If this is to be done, we need to send our best. And right now, you are our best."

Will we be rewarded for this? "Would you have me set a merchant's price upon my people's survival? The sum would be great. Beyond platinum and emeralds, I'll assure you. While Eviana and all the people of Crying Leaf would surely turn out their last coppers to you, I'm sure Queen Telandia herself would reward you for your efforts in a way few elves and even fewer non-elves have ever seen."

If, after answering all of their questions, the PCs are still unwilling to accept the dangerous mission, Eviana makes a more emotional plea for the PCs' aid, honestly believing that they are Crying Leaf's best hope of avoiding more deaths combating the drow. To encourage them, she offers the party 2,000 gp each, plus another 6,000 gp each from her own estate, and whatever other donations she can gather from the residents of Crying Leaf upon their return. If the PCs still refuse, she turns cold and disappointed before informing the PCs that they are no longer welcome in the Mierani Forest, and that they must leave the woodland's borders by sunset.

Skin of Evil

Giseil Voslil (CN male gray elf necromancer 13) is a decent soul but has a bad attitude, especially when it comes to non-elves. Something of a pariah among his people, the elven necromancer has served as an emissary between Crying Leaf and the mysterious Mordant Spire for centuries. Kaerishiel introduces the PCs to Giseil as a friend of the Shin'Rakorath and the most skilled necromancer in the Mierani Forest. The wizard manages to nod in acknowledgment, but soon after departs without explanation, going to the tent housing the drow bodies chosen for his spell. Kaerishiel sighs in exasperation, then tells the PCs that one of Giseil's areas of mastery concerns the "recycling" of spent flesh, of finding new ways to utilize the bodies of the dead in methods not involving undeath. One such experimental spell Giseil developed is *recorporeal incarnation*, a spell that disguises living creatures with the flesh of the recently dead. Kaerishiel doesn't know much more about the spell, indicating that the PCs should speak to Giseil if they have further questions.

What does your *recorporeal incarnation* spell do?

"Imbricates mortal physicality with a cadaveric corporeity."

What does that mean? "The spell disguises your mortal form, overlaying it with that of a corpse. Do pay attention."

What happens to my body? "Nothing permanent. Your flesh and features are overborne by those of a cadaver. You are still you, but rather than animating your flesh, your bones, muscles, tissues, and mind now support a different, though recently deceased, form."

How long does it last? "The magic possesses limited permanency. It's tied to a focus item that, if compromised, releases the binding incantations, dispelling the effect. Should the focus persevere, it retains the spell's power for approximately thirteen weeks."

Can the drow detect the spell? "Of course. But not by traditional methods. The spell's effects on a subject are momentary and the magic swiftly fades. Instead, the ongoing incarnations linger in the focus item. While these necromantic effects might be detected by any novice, Kaerishiel informs me that the trinkets he's providing as

focus items hold their own magic, which the drow will most likely overlook.”

Most likely overlook? “Squeamish already? Had Kaerishiel none better suited to this task?”

What methods can detect it? “Although nourished and motivated by your body, your flesh is technically a corpse. Spells distinguishing the walking dead will detect you, though all physical examinations will reveal your mortality. It’s a flaw of the arcana that I’m still perfecting.”

What happens when the spell ends? “The spell ends. The corpse flesh loses pliancy and ages rapidly, shedding from your frame as your natural form resolidifies. It’s a quick and painless transition, though somewhat messy. You’ll probably need to bathe once it’s done.”

The corpses Giseil plans to utilize in his *recorporeal incarnation* spell lie in state in a small tent on the edge of the Celwynvian camp. These drow were all stragglers slain by Kaerishiel’s men while the party was on the Plane of Shadow. None of them were particularly important drow—disguising a PC as Nolgeniss would cause more problems than

solve them, after all! If more than 24 hours have passed since this time, the bodies have been preserved for Giseil’s magic with *gentle repose*.

Two hours before the elfgate recharges, Giseil orders the PCs to follow him into the corpse tent. Within the tent are several cots arranged in pairs, one for every character who plans to pass through the elfgate and one for the characters’ new drow body. After the PCs have a moment to examine the dead drow—all chosen for their attractiveness and relatively whole condition—Kaerishiel joins them bearing a simple wooden box. Opening the box, he reveals a number of simple silver amulets, each set with a pale crystal in the center. These *bloodlinks*, he explains, serve a twofold purpose. First, they grant the wearer abilities similar to those many drow possess. Second, the crystals at the amulets’ centers serve as the focus item of Giseil’s *recorporeal incarnation* spell. Kaerishiel gives a *bloodlink* to each PC and bids they don them so Giseil might perform his magic.

Over the next hour, Giseil casts multiple *recorporeal incarnation* spells from several scrolls, one for each PC. The spell is painless, but the sensation of crawling skin as the flesh of a deceased drow subsumes each PC’s appearance is unusual to say the least. Once every party member is transformed into a drow, Giseil again reviews the importance of the *bloodlink*, its role as the focus for his magic, and how destroying the items will dispel the connected disguise. He curtly wishes the PCs luck then departs, leaving Captain Kaerishiel to explain the next step of their dangerous deception.

RECORPOREAL INCARNATION

School necromancy; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 7

CASTING

Casting Time 10 minutes

Components V, S, F (a gem or crystal worth at least 250 gp), XP 500

EFFECT

Range touch

Target one living creature and one corpse

Duration instantaneous (but see text)

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** Yes (harmless)

DESCRIPTION

Recorporeal incarnation replaces the target’s body with that of a recently deceased corpse. The target corpse must be fresh—either dead for no more than 24 hours or preserved by an effect like *gentle repose*. As the spell is cast, the dead body’s flesh unravels like ribbons to sheath the living target, who must be of a similar shape to the corpse and be within one size



Giseil Voslil

category of the corpse's size. While casting the spell you must remain in contact with the corpse while holding the focus item to the living target. At the spell's completion, the living target gains the appearance and any size bonuses or penalties of the new form, along with any of the dead creature's extraordinary abilities or natural abilities (such as natural attacks or senses), but not the creature's racial bonuses or any spell-like or supernatural abilities. The effects of this spell grant a +20 circumstance bonus on attempts to see through the disguise with Spot checks.

The disguise created by *recorporeal incarnation* lasts for a week per caster level (91 days in this case), or until the focus item is destroyed or moves more than 90 feet away from the target. When this time ends, the target returns to his or her normal form, sloughing off the corpse's flesh in a hideous display over the course of 1 round.

The greatest strength of *recorporeal incarnation* is its difficulty to detect as a disguise. The effects are instantaneous, so no magic lingers on the victim. If subjected to *detect magic*, the target sheds no magical aura, though the focus item gives off an aura of strong necromantic magic. *True seeing* does not reveal the target's true form, since the disguise itself, while magically achieved, is a mundane (but masterful) disguise. The spell *detect undead*, however, does note the target as an undead creature with the same number of Hit Dice. The target is not truly undead, though, and is not affected by any other effect that targets undead creatures. *Recorporeal incarnation* does nothing to disguise the target's alignment.

If the target of *recorporeal incarnation* dies while the spell is in effect, the spell continues. Any resurrection or similar spell cast upon the target resurrects the target, not the corpse flesh. Since *recorporeal incarnation* destroys the majority of the body's physical remains, the dead body cannot be restored to life via *raise dead*—only *resurrection*, *true resurrection*, *miracle*, or *wish* can restore such a creature to life.

BLOODLINK

Aura faint divination and transmutation; **CL** 3rd

Slot neck; **Price** 4,800; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

This amulet allows you to utilize the same spells many drow can cast innately. You may cast each of the following spells once per day as spell-like abilities: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, and *faerie fire*. In addition, while wearing this item, the wearer is also granted the ability to speak and understand Undercommon and proficiency with the hand crossbow, the rapier, and the short sword. While worn, the target's alignment registers as chaotic evil for the purposes of spells like *detect chaos* and *detect evil*. A *bloodlink* can serve as the focus for a *recorporeal incarnation* spell.



DROW DISGUISES

The PCs utilize a *recorporeal incarnation* spell to achieve their drow disguises for this adventure. Summarized below are all of the abilities gained by the PCs from this spell—these effects persist until the spell effect ends near the climax of this adventure.

- **Medium Size:** If the character was Small size, recalculate AC, attack rolls, and other size-based modifiers as appropriate. Base land speed becomes 30 feet.
- **Darkvision:** The character gains darkvision out to 120 feet.
- **Immunity:** The character gains immunity to sleep effects.
- **Weapon Proficiency:** The character becomes proficient with the hand crossbow, the rapier, and the short sword.
- **Light Blindness:** Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a daylight spell) blinds the character for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.
- **Spell Resistance:** The character gains spell resistance equal to 11 + class levels.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *detect magic*, *feather fall*, *levitate*; **Cost** 2,400 gp, 192 XP

Wolves In Wolves' Clothing

Once the PCs have been disguised as drow, there's little time left before the Academy of Arts' elf gate opens. Kaerishiel explains the next stage of the plan as he leads the disguised PCs to the Academy of Arts. With Celwynvian retaken, the elves have no ability or intention of hiding the drow's defeat in the city—there's simply no way to know all the methods the dark elves might have used to communicate with their brethren. He offers the PCs the following cover story to explain their sudden "return" to Zirnakaynin should they encounter trouble soon after moving through the portal.

"You are now drow. You were part of the battle here in Celwynvian, but when we elves got the upper hand, you went into hiding to wait for the elf gate to recharge. You watched from afar as we tried, and failed, to cleanse the portal, and when it recharged you stormed our camp, slaughtered the elves you found there, and swiftly moved through the portal to the other side.

"As soon as you're through, a half regiment of my best men will follow in pursuit to further confuse the matter. If there's

any drow on the other side, they'll likely be more concerned with our 'invasion' than a few bloodied stragglers. This should buy you the time you need to lose yourselves amid the chaos, and we should be able to prevent any drow from taking advantage of the portal to return here. Once you're through, my men will return and close the portal. From there, you're on your own—hopefully, you'll be able to assimilate yourselves into drow society soon enough, but if they question you about what happened here, do your best to keep your story simple. Might I suggest telling the truth, but simply leaving out the part where the 'heroes' who helped defeat the drow are now infiltrating their... *your city*?

"We only get one shot at this, so, no matter what confronts you through that gate, remember that we're the enemy and there's no going back."

Once the PCs are prepared, they are led into the Academy of Arts building in central Celwynvian, along with a group of several elven scouts and soldiers. As they approach, the elf gate shimmers with energy—it's keyed to the *shadow key* that Nolgeniss carried, and as the carrier of the key approaches the portal, the stone arch suddenly glows and shimmers. (If no PC possesses the shadow key, Kaerishiel is now in possession of it—or if the key has been destroyed or lost, an elven bard makes use of Use Magic Device to activate the portal blindly.) The stone inside the arch grows smoky, then translucent, revealing a cloudy view of a shadowy cavern beyond. An elven voice shouts "Run dogs!" in Undercommon as the scouts ready their weapons for the PCs' flight through the portal.

PART TWO: THE LAST HOME OF THE ELVES

For untold centuries, an elf gate connected Celwynvian's Academy of Arts with a grove near Greengold in the elven nation of Kyonin. That was before the drow of House Vonnarc tampered with the ancient elven portals. Intervening upon the mysterious ley lines connecting the two gates, the drow discovered a way to redirect the ancient arcane bond between them. Now, the Celwynvian portal connects to a cavern deep below the Fangwood, a cave situated directly under the path of magical ley lines that once connected two magical archways.

The drow maintain a small camp and watch post near their gate to Celwynvian. Manned by a dozen drow warriors and three enslaved driders, the camp has served as little more than a staging ground for supplies headed to Nolgeniss's followers through the portal for the past several years. Unwilling to admit defeat, his pride preventing him from calling for help from his family, Nolgeniss Azrinae waited too long to alert Zirnakaynin of the assault on Celwynvian. Word and rumor of the drow rout is trickling through the city now, but has yet to be treated with any

real serious concern—certainly, these drow, isolated as they are from the city, have heard nothing. As a result, when the elf gate opens this day, spilling battered drow and seemingly vengeful elves into the darkened cavern, the drow are caught completely off guard.

Once the PCs pass through the elf gate, a battle between the drow and the elves ensues. For the next 5 rounds, Kaerishiel's soldiers fire upon the drow—keen to avoid the PCs and clear a way for their flight. What the elves weren't expecting, though, were driders. As soon as it seems that an elven invasion is forcing its way through the gate, three driders rush into battle. Although the spider-legged abominations quickly bear down on the PCs, the sadistic monstrosities fall completely for the disguise and pass them by, rushing to tear into the elves. If the shocked PCs attack the driders, the monsters initially ignore them, their bloodlust bent fully toward the elves. It should be apparent after the first round that the driders don't care about the drow-disguised PCs. Should the PCs persist in attacking the driders, though, the driders stop distinguishing between elf and dark elf and defend themselves. This quickly rouses the suspicion of the entire camp, and the PCs will either have to do some fast talking or fight off the entire drow encampments—a daunting prospect as an EL 13 encounter, even with the aid of a dozen elven soldiers.

If you want to run this battle in a traditional manner, you certainly can do so, though. There are 12 4th-level drow fighters and three driders defending, and a dozen 3rd-level elf fighters on the offensive. Any large cavern map will do for the battle—if you have the Darklands Flip-Mat, the elf gate is in the wall on the side opposite the pool, atop the ledge. Time the length of the combat so that there's time for a few drow and elves to die before having the portal sealed.

The surviving drow are furious and confused, and fall to bickering over who should take command. Some shout commands to clear the dead, some move back from the elf gate to keep alert for another assault. In his ire, one bellowing drow stomps upon the throat of a wounded companion lying nearby—killing him instantly. Preparations then turn toward sending a runner back to Zirnakaynin to alert the guards' leaders at House Vonnarc of the attack. In the chaos, the PCs go unnoticed by all but one.

An Unlikely Ally

A cunning sort, Gadak Simiryn knows all the games his people compete in to survive, and he plays them well. A lowborn drow—little better than a slave in the eyes of most—Gadak has weaseled his way up the social ladder, lying, cheating, stealing, and worse to finally become a footman in the service of House Vonnarc. A much more comfortable and survivable existence than he would face in the slums of Zirnakaynin, Gadak enjoys his life, but his ambitions drive him to greater things. Currently, he seeks

a way to come to the attentions of the nobles he serves, hoping to garner their favor and their rewards. And, in the PCs, he has the notion he might have found just that.

Gadak finds himself at the elf gate today delivering a heavy cart of alchemical reagents requested by Nolgeniss weeks ago. One of the studier looking pieces of equipment in the small drow camp, Gadak's iron cart makes a favorable place to hide from the attacking elves—a fact Gadak demonstrates himself when the PCs arrive. Keen-eyed and alert for opportunities, Gadak took note of the drow to come through the gate in front of the elves. He certainly noticed how the elves seemed to prefer targeting the drow in the cave and not these fleeing few. The sly dark elf doesn't currently have any reason to believe these drow are anything besides lucky, but he remembers their fortune in the days and weeks to come. For now, though, the PCs are the only ones who know what happened on the other side of the elf gate and likely possess details his lieges at House Vonnarc would be keen to possess. Thus, amid the chaos of the drow camp, Gadak decides to make friends.

As the soldiers drag off their dead and eye the elf gate in preparation for another attack, Gadak introduces himself to the PCs. Cutting a cowardly figure hiding beneath his cart, he presents himself as an unassuming, even amusing figure, as he stands and dusts himself off with a half-smile. He's showy and charming, but only as a cover, his experiences having proven that people readily trust a fool. Proudly introducing himself as a servant of the illustrious House Vonnarc, he notes that the PCs don't seem to be guardsmen and have obviously been through quite an ordeal. If they don't wish to be conscripted right back into the ranks of the suicidal drow waiting at the gate for "the next volley of traitor-elf arrows," he's headed back to "the city," as his attempts to make his delivery were foiled. He has plenty of room in his lizard-drawn wagon in exchange for the PCs' story of what happened beyond the portal.

Should the party agree, Gadak shouts out to the improvising commander of the drow soldiers that he'll rush back to the city for reinforcements—a claim that sounds totally unbelievable from Gadak's lips, but that no one questions amid the chaos. That a handful of tattered drow survivors leave with him raises a few eyebrows, but as Gadak is known to be the servant of one of Zirnakaynin's greater drow noble families, and as the soldiers have their own concerns, no one questions it. With that, Gadak whips his hissing cave lizards into motion and the 4-hour trek to Zirnakaynin begins.

If the PCs refuse to accompany Gadak, he shrugs and makes a show of caring little. Regardless, he's headed back to the city—gesturing to the only tunnel leading out of the cavern. In this case, the drow either precedes or follows the PCs on the easy and relatively direct journey to Zirnakaynin, Last Home of the Elves.

GADAK SIMIRYIN

CR 8

Male drow rogue 7

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +7

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14

(+4 armor, +4 Dex)

hp 20 (7d6–7)

Fort +1, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3 (+2 against enchantment, spells, and spell-like abilities)

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; **Immune** sleep; **SR** 18

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +10 (1d4–1/19–20)

Ranged +1 hand crossbow +10 (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th)

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 18, **Con** 8, **Int** 15, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4

Feats Persuasive, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +9, Bluff +15, Diplomacy +17, Disguise +3

(+5 acting), Forgery +5, Gather Information +15, Handle

Animal +5, Hide +13, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (local) +8,

Knowledge (nobility) +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Open

Lock +14, Sense Motive +11, Sleight of Hand +14, Spot +7

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Undercommon

SQ trapfinding

Combat Gear *potion of invisibility*, drow sleep poison (6);

Gear +2 studded leather armor, masterwork dagger, +1 hand crossbow with 10 bolts, 23 gp

City of the Drow

The journey to Zirnakaynin proves relatively short, winding though a maze of winding tunnels and caverns. Take this opportunity to describe the alien nature of the Darklands: caverns capable of fitting whole castles, forests of colorful fungi, eyeless cave beasts, insects of terrible sizes, crevices without bottoms, and other wondrous and deadly sights. GMs who seek more information on the



realms beneath the surface of Golarion should see the related supplement, *Into the Darklands*.

As the PCs travel, they'll likely have further interactions with Gadak whether or not they decided to join the drow for the journey. A random encounter with some Darklands horror—particularly a violet fungus, darkmantle, or other beast that might have been avoided by one more familiar with the deadly environment—might encourage the party to take up with the “helpful” drow. Should the group be traveling with Gadak already, the hours pass uneventfully with the drow spending the time in “friendly” interrogation of the PCs, seeking to learn what happened in Celwynvian and, gradually, more about them. At the same time, he gladly fields any questions they might have about Zirnakaynin. He notes their accents seem a bit strange and asks if they're perhaps from one of the more far-flung drow holdings like Gizratayn or Umberweb. Although Gadak tries not to let on his suspicions and remains friendly, by the end of their discussions it's likely that he believes there's something strange about the PCs. As they draw near the city, he asks if they have any arrangements in the city already and, if not, says he can probably pull a few strings to have them taken in among the servants of House Vonnarc—the slavemother and blademaker having a need for competent sorts. Gadak, of course, hopes that by introducing some competent new servants into the house his own reputation and standing will increase. Being offered a place among the ranks of a drow household should fit in well with the PCs' mission, but even if they refuse, Gadak takes the rejection in stride.

The Walls of Zirnakaynin

Eventually, the PCs reach Zirnakaynin, the city of the drow, Last Home of the Elves. Their first glimpse of the city is a daunting one, as they emerge into a cavern of incredible size and flickering with the red and violet glow of arcane fires. A 30-foot wall of barbed stone and bladed iron stands before them, a closed gate of spiked black iron etched with images of howling demons barring all passage. This is the northern gate of Zirnakaynin, through which only those with business in the cavern of Cocyrdavarin may pass.

The PCs, having no knowledge of the city or its ways, might find it difficult to get into the city on their own. Approaching the gate, they are stopped by four heavily armored drow guardsmen. Those who make a DC 20 Spot check note triple this number watching from the shadows of the battlements above, their crossbows leveled. They'll need to bribe or fast-talk their way into the city. Should the party be traveling with Gadak from the beginning, they face no opposition at the gate. Gadak merely flashes the house brooch he wears and the guards allow his wagon to pass.

DROW SOLDIERS (16)

CR 5

Male drow fighter 4

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15

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

hp 34 (4d10+8)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1 (+2 against spells and spell-like abilities); +2 against enchantment

Immune sleep; **SR** 15

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk rapier +9 (1d6+3/18–20) or

mwk lance +6 (1d8+1/×3)

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

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *detect magic*, *faerie fire*, *feather fall*, *levitate*

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +5

Feats Dark Adept, Mounted Combat, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier)

Skills Climb +8, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +7, Ride +12

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Undercommon

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, drow poison (2);

Other Gear mithral shirt, masterwork buckler, masterwork hand crossbow with 10 +1 bolts, masterwork rapier, masterwork lance (if mounted on cave gecko)

Zirnakaynin

Stretching into the darkened distance, a fearsome city of sculpted stone and bladed iron fills this impossibly sized cavern. Eerie eldritch flames—burning with the colors of dying suns and lightning-furious thunderheads—ripple over spires carved from ancient stalagmites, adorning them with the blaze of ominous, spidery runes. Two steep cliffs jut from the cavern floor, one stacked upon another, creating massive steps over which the city spills like a benighted waterfall. Flickering in the distance rises a single topless tower, a column connecting the cavern floor with the ceiling, its height crawling with runes. Elsewhere grows a tangle of fungal blooms alongside pools of oily cave water. Above, carved into the dome-like ceiling, flickering feyfire illuminates twelve caves, their mouths carved into unsettling and demonic images. And everywhere amid the severe, black city—as menacing as shadows—glide the graceful, deadly forms of drow.

Within the three caverns that make up the city of Zirnakaynin live tens of thousands of drow, any of whom

would murder the PCs were their true identities known. Gadak's current errand takes him to the city's upper cavern of Eirdrisseir, home to the majority of the city's noble families. While many drow travel between the two caverns via a breach in the stone ceiling over the city—making the ascent using magic or sticky-footed cave lizards—Gadak's cart of supplies forces him to take the long way. This means he must travel all the way through the city and then into the tunnels winding up into Eirdrisseir to the south, and in so doing, providing the PCs with an impromptu tour of the city. Gadak loves to talk and eagerly goes on about each district and landmark at length, relating well-known facts, tall tales, and personal reminiscences. In short, during the several hours it takes to navigate the city, Gadak can provide the PCs with almost all of the information provided in the "Zirnakaynin" article on page 48.

Infiltrating House Vonnarc

For more than 8 centuries, the drow of the Vonnarc noble family have dominated Zirnakaynin's arcane markets and options for education in the wizardly arts. Misleadingly known as a family of mages, House Vonnarc supports some of the most infamous drow wizards of the modern era—particularly the family's notorious first son, the archmage Alicavniiss. Yet not all members of the family have chosen to walk the paths of the arcane, and foul priestesses, dark-souled thaumaturges, and deadly warriors pervade the house's ranks. Overseen by the seemingly ever-present eye of Matron Pravora—a skilled diviner and adherent of the house's demonic patron, Areshkagal—the scions of House Vonnarc revel in intrigue and sybaritism just as the progeny of any other drow noble family. Within this den of decadence and dark magic the PCs might find a place to carry out their dangerous mission, for nowhere else in the city does loathing for House Azrinae roil more blatantly than within the curving halls and shadowed salons of House Vonnarc.

Following the lead of the scheming house servant Gadak, the PCs eventually reach the corner of the darkened "countryside" known as Eirdrisseir held by the Vonnarc noble family. A palace of warped stone, spidery iron, and towers alight with magical flame, House Vonnarc makes its owners' decadence and arcane prowess obvious in every inch of its hellfire-lit obsidian.

Seemingly grown from the dark stone of this nighted abyss, a sinister palace of unnatural beauty and deadly grace looms. Spires of web-like metal slice through the darkness, their heights illuminated by arcane flame, while the elegant curves of the structure's walls seem to flicker and shift in the dancing shadows. Around the compound, the barely perceptible silhouettes of dark armored shapes glide in soundless patrol upon an arcing barricade of bladed steel. Suddenly, from somewhere within,

FAST TALKING THE DROW

At many times during this adventure, the PCs will need to fast-talk to keep their cover up. There are three routes a PC can take to keep his cover; in the case of multiple PCs in a group, each PC gets a chance to fast-talk once. If all the PCs in a group fail to fast-talk, they'll either need to pay a bribe of 1d20x10 gp to the drow or they'll need to fight or flee from the situation.

Note that male drow are more likely to be swayed by a female (a female PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus on her skill check in this case), while female drow are less likely to be swayed by males (male PCs gain a -2 penalty on their skill checks in this case).

Bluff: The PC makes a Bluff check, opposed by the target's Sense Motive.

Diplomacy: The PC makes a Diplomacy check; generally this is a DC 15 check, with the NPC usually being indifferent and needing to become friendly to be fast-talked.

Intimidate: The PC makes an Intimidate check. Drow are used to this method of negotiation, and generally do not shift their attitude to unfriendly after the Intimidate effect wears off.

risers an otherworldly shriek, a cry half scream, half bestial howl that slowly resonates and dies amid the gloom. A moment later comes the terrible noise's answer, a fluttering peal of mirthless, mocking laughter.

Bearing the name of the family it shelters, House Vonnarc holds three distinct areas: the palace itself, Areshkagal's Staff, and the house's walls and various support buildings. Within the palace the scions of House Vonnarc hold dominion, attended by an army of courtiers, sycophants, servants, and slaves. Just outside rises Areshkagal's Staff, home to the house's wizards and apprentices, the family's arcane laboratories, and the domain of the notorious conjurer, Alicavniiss. Beyond both delicate structures stand the walls, barracks, main stables, storage, and workshops of the house's servants and guards.

Should the PCs still be in Gadak's company, gaining entrance to the noble house proves simple—a quick flash of his ring and the wall guards open the gate. Within, House Vonnarc teems with drow soldiers, though as long as the party remains in Gadak's company, or with another drow bearing a Vonnarc signet ring, the guards pay them little mind. Drawing the wagon up to a large barn-like structure, Gadak unbridles and stables his cave lizard then asks the PCs to stay here while he seeks an audience with the house's slavemother. Undamesta is the house's oldest and most devoted servant, who manages all of House Vonnarc's non-military servitors with an iron fist. Only with her consent might the PCs be accepted



into House Vonnarc's service. If the party doesn't wish to join the house's ranks, Gadak seems disappointed but sees them out. He does ask them, however, where they plan to stay, alluding that he might have future endeavors they might prove helpful with. Otherwise, Gadak departs to find Undamesta.

Audience with the Slavemother

Although a few troglodyte slaves busy themselves in the stable performing menial tasks, the PCs have about 10 minutes to speak freely before Gadak returns. If they've yet to concoct cover stories, now would be a good time to do so as **Slavemother Undamesta** (CE female drow expert 8/rogue 4; Sense Motive +10, Spot +12) will likely have numerous questions for them. If the PCs use this privacy to discuss their covers, grant them no more than 10 minutes of real time to do so, after which Gadak reappears to show them to the slavemother.

The PCs' march to meet with Undamesta grants them their first glimpse of House Vonnarc's interior, a dark place almost devoid of straight angles. The building is a

bustling, living place filled with drow, not a dungeon to explore. Gadak leads them to the rear of the house, taking them to the interrogation chamber (area A22) via the servants' entrance in the noble's stable. During the walk, Gadak answers any questions the PCs might have about the rooms they pass through or how to behave before the slavemother—with self-demeaning respect and silence.

Eventually, the PCs arrive at the interrogation chamber. A dim violet light emanates from some vague point above, while upon the walls hang diaphanous tapestries, delicately embroidered with the Vonnarc symbol and elaborate designs. Flanked by stone statues of fierce drow warriors, a long table of dark stone dominates one end of the room. Three chairs line the table's far side, the centermost occupied by a severe looking drow woman, her hair pulled back tightly, her fingers and sharp nails steepled before her, her gaze impatient.

Gadak gestures to move to the center of the room before stepping forward and bowing low. "Revered Slavemother Undamesta, these are the travelers from beyond the portal of whom I spoke. House Rasivreign's operations at the gate

were confused and disordered and none stood to meet their arrival. With their own masters having forsaken them, I most meekly ask that their obvious skills and experience be considered for inclusion among the ranks of those who dutifully serve the envied house of Vonnarc.”

The slavemother seems unimpressed by Gadak's words, lifting a suspicious eyebrow. “Obvious skills and experience, indeed? Is this not for me to judge?” the matronly drow retorts with a voice like a dagger upon slate. Gadak merely bows low and steps aside.

What follows is an inquisition and a test to see how well the PCs will fit in amid drow noble society. Slavemother Undamesta asks the PCs a number of questions, seeking to test their experience, cunning, usefulness, and potential loyalty. At the same time, her questions will challenge the party's covers. Below are the questions Undamesta poses to the PCs, demanding answers from each character present before moving on to the next question. Undamesta taunts the characters with these questions and in response to their answers, attempting to raise their ire. Getting angry or hostile with the drow slavemother is a dire mistake, though. As the PCs answer these questions, they'll need to take an action, make a skill check, or simply mention (or not mention) a particular topic. Each PC that passes a question's “test” is awarded an interrogation point. At the end of the interrogation, these points will determine if the PCs are accepted as servants of House Vonnarc.

Where do you come from? Undamesta accepts any answer as long as it is given without much hesitation. If the PCs claim to be from Zirnakaynin, Undamesta asks them from what part of the city. If the PCs claim to be from another drow city, she nods and moves on. If a PC claims to be from a location Undamesta hasn't heard of (or if the PC makes up a name for a fictional homeland), she demands a short description of the place, forcing the PC to make a Bluff check to remain convincing. Overall, Undamesta cares little about their answers—drow have many reasons to lie about their past, and she's really just using this opportunity to slight whatever place each PC claims to be his home.

What house do you now serve? The safest answer to this question is “none.” Naming “Azrinae” prompts Undamesta to observe that drow house has all but abandoned Zirnakaynin, giving the PC a chance to amend his claim. Answering “Vonnarc” gets a wry smile from the drow slaver, and a response of, “Not yet, you don't.” Naming another drow house (fictional or real) leads Undamesta to demand why that house seeks the PC's intrusion into her family's home, and unless the PC manages to backpedal

with a Diplomacy check to say that they're no longer with that house, she dismisses all of the PCs as unfit for Vonnarc duty.

Why did you return to Zirnakaynin? Here Undamesta seeks to imply the PCs are cowards and not fit to serve her house. As long as the PCs don't give answers that imply they were cowards, and that they left many elves dead in their wake, she is satisfied.

Why do you seek to serve House Vonnarc? A legitimate question, Undamesta desires to know the PCs' ambitions and gauge if they might one day become threats to her position. Whatever the PC replies, they'll need to make a Diplomacy check to impress her.

Why do you believe you are worthy of serving House Vonnarc?

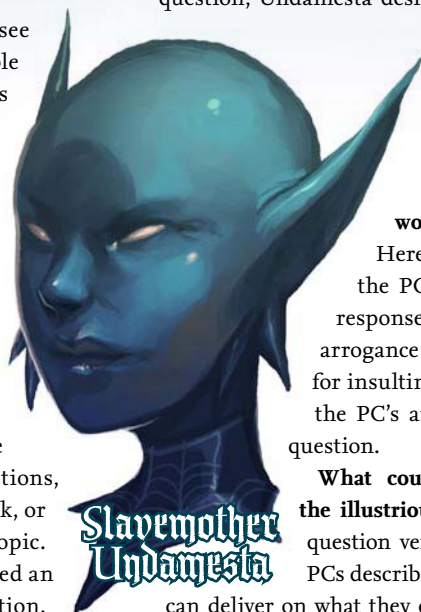
Here Undamesta attempts to test the PCs' humility. Depending on the response she might scold a PC for undue arrogance or threaten him with a whipping for insulting the Vonnarc name. As long as the PC's answer is humble, he passes the question.

What could you possibly have to offer the illustrious house of Vonnarc? A sincere question veiled as an insult. As long as the PCs describe their abilities and look like they can deliver on what they claim, she accepts their answers. Claims of powers that the PCs don't seem to possess require a Bluff check.

What is your relationship to each other? Rarely do groups of drow come seeking service. Suspecting a conspiracy, Undamesta seeks to gauge the PCs' intentions and loyalty to one another. As long as the PCs don't seem to indicate they've got plans for their own rise to power, she accepts most answers they give. A party that presents itself as subservient to a single female PC, or a party that bickers and argues automatically passes this question.

What is your relationship to Gadak? Undamesta has little trust in Gadak, especially with his obvious ambitions to curry favor among the house scions. She has little interest in letting a gang in service to Gadak first and foremost invade her home. Should the PCs insult Gadak, they garner a sly smile and gain a measure of approval.

Would you kill Gadak if I asked you to? Gadak blanches at this question, his eyes widening as he stands motionless. The correct answer here is “yes,” but Undamesta won't ask the PCs to prove it at this time. If they answer “no” she points out that Gadak would certainly kill them if the situation were reversed. A character that lunges at Gadak and attacks him instigates a fight (and a possible alignment shift) that Undamesta watches amusedly as long as she isn't harmed.



Regardless of Undamesta's impressions of the characters after her interview, she curtly dismisses them, ordering Gadak to take them to the servants' quarters (area A24) while she considers the PCs' request. This room will likely serve as the PCs' "base" for much of the rest of the adventure. Leading them from the interview chamber to their bunks, Gadak congratulates the PCs and welcomes them to House Vonnarc—whatever the outcome of the interview, he seems convinced that the PCs passed the interrogation. Leaving the PCs to get settled, he returns a few moments later with several signet rings similar to his own, each bearing the symbol of House Vonnarc. If the party wishes, he offers to give them a tour of the servant-run parts of the palace—the servants' chambers, kitchens, and other areas largely kept from the sight of the house's nobles. After this, he suggests the PCs rest and prepare for the trial of their first day of work as servants.

In fact, the PCs do automatically pass the interview, as long as they didn't attack Undamesta or otherwise do something to irrevocably sabotage their own efforts. They receive word that they are now officially servants of House Vonnarc a few hours later.

Ad Hoc Experience Bonus: Once the interview is over, add up all the interrogation points the PCs received and divide the total by the number of PCs. Drop any fractions. Give the PCs an XP award equal to a CR of this number for navigating the interrogation.

PART THREE: HOUSE VONNARC

Although a place of princely decadence and faux civility, one need not search far to find the cruel, violent, deadly underbelly of the Vonnarc palace. From the performance torture chamber to the Hall of Ancestors, House Vonnarc is a den of evil and monsters every bit as deadly as any haunted castle or dragon's lair.

Vonnarc Residents

More than just a structure, House Vonnarc also denotes

the nefarious family that dwells there. Although dozens of drow in Zirnakaynin bear the Vonnarc name, only those of the purest blood and direct descent from the ruling matron call themselves nobles. Over the course of the PCs' mission they risk meeting several of House Vonnarc's most powerful and notorious members, the most prominent of which are detailed here.

Matron Pravora Vonnarc (CE female drow cleric 13/demonic initiate 5): The eldest member of the Vonnarc clan and both a powerful diviner and priestess of Areshkagal, Matron Vonnarc rules her scions from the shadows. Mysterious and rarely seen, the aged matron possesses one of the most devious minds in all Zirnakaynin, manipulating events throughout the city and beyond from the safety of her hidden laboratories. Fortunately for the PCs, Pravora spends much of her time in a secret extraplanar laboratory and relatively little time within Palace Vonnarc—she leaves much of the day-to-day detail of running her house to her first and second daughters.

First Daughter Alicavniiss Vonnarc (CE female drow wizard 18): Archmage of Zirnakaynin and the city's most feared wizard, Alicavniiss manipulates a vast game of rival families, supposed allies, and extraplanar agents, cultivating one of the most expansive information networks in the Darklands. From Tower Solacas, the Vonnarcs' exclusive school of the arcane arts, the first daughter watches over the city below, greedy for the arcane secrets of far-flung lands and the ancient past. The PCs meet Alicavniiss in Part Five.

Second Daughter Faidaeva Vonnarc (CE female drow cleric 5/demonic initiate 4): A tyrant within her own home, overbearing Faidaeva wields the name of Areshkagal, Demon Lord of Riddles and Portals, like a mace. A fanatic as it serves her lusts for control, suffering, and fear, the second daughter maintains the house's shrine to their demonic patron and commands widespread respect and dread among the fiend's worshipers throughout the city. Faidaeva loathes



Faidaeva Vonnarc

the lowborn, particularly commoners, her family's servants, and her male siblings, lording her superior station over them and taking every opportunity to inflict her wrath upon them.

First Son Erdrinneir Vonnarc (CE male drow wizard 10): Although a skilled wizard in his own right, Erdrinneir lives in the shadow of Alicavnis's power and fearsome reputation. Although subordinate to his sister among the mages of Tower Solacas, Erdrinneir commands greater fear from his house's fledgling mages, abusing his station and power among his lessers while playing the sycophant to Alicavnis's whims.

Second Son Tiryin Vonnarc (CE male drow fighter 4/rogue 4/duelist 3): Tiryin Vonnarc is the youngest acknowledged child of Matron Pravara Vonnarc. He shows little aptitude or interest in arcane studies, instead taking to training in more warlike arts. Having just survived his hundredth year, Tiryin holds little influence among his noble brethren, especially due to his martial prowess that his family finds embarrassingly common. Among the house's guards, though, he is rightly feared, less for his considerable skill and more for his endless, deadly desire to battle. Matron Pravara remains conflicted on how to handle her youngest son; his martial skills are meaningless to her, yet his honed physique could make him a useful commodity in sealing future alliances with the libidinous matriarchy of other noble families. For now she keeps her son close, though her patience wanes in light of rumors of his more scandalous appetites.

Other Residents

Aside from the elder drow nobles, a number of other dark elves make their home within House Vonnarc. As both a reference and an aid, the following list presents a number of House Vonnarc residents you can use when the PCs interact with them.

LESSER NOBLES

Axsimia Vonnarc (CE male drow fighter 5/pain taster 2):

Raving-mad sadist and lover of performance torture. His hair is shaven half off, and he wears several painful-looking ear piercings.

Eskervalla Vonnarc (CE female drow bard 5): Supposed 13th-daughter in line to the Vonnarc throne, she is a decadent drunkard with a love for amethyst jewelry.

Neskeir Vonnarc (CE male drow wizard 3): Wizard of little skill in training at Tower Solacas, he loves dissecting small animals and desperately wants to practice this art on a deep gnome.

Undamesta Vonnarc (CE female drow expert 8/rogue 4):

Undamesta is detailed on page 16.

Xemandrios Vonnarc (CE female drow cleric 4): A pious but timid follower of Areshkagal, frail of frame and possessing a whiny voice.

GUARDS

Paingiver Drovoanis (CE male drow fighter 11): Head of the Vonnarc Guard, Drovoanis is a stern man with a thunderous voice, an acid-scarred jaw, and little patience.

Covakis (CE male drow fighter 4): A skilled archer and braggart, and (rumor holds) the father of at least one of Second Daughter Faideva's lesser-liked sons.

Disakav (NE female drow fighter 4): A beautiful woman with no tongue, Disakav is a master at riding the line between servitude and insubordination.

Imannis (CE male drow fighter 4): A well-muscled career soldier who is obedient and deadly.

Shoyle (CE female drow rogue 4): A stealthy warrior who would rather stab an opponent in the back than actually fight.

SERVANTS

Eronas (CE female drow rogue 3): A cruel woman with delusions of nobility who delights in bossing around and torturing non-drow slaves.

Harado (CE male drow expert 4): An elderly male servant with one sightless eye whose not-so-secret desires for Slavemother Undamesta have earned him the nickname "mother's lad."

Mellios (CE female drow expert 4): A gossipmonger whose skill in the kitchen keeps her from being punished for the wild tales she invents about other servitors to disguise her own thefts from the pantries.

Oparik (CE male drow ranger 4): Stable keeper who adores the house's cave lizards, and who sometimes shares their meals of bloody cave rat flesh.

Shiovom (CE male drow expert 3/sorcerer 4): A quiet and skilled tinkerer who claims to be able to repair anything for the right price but hides his sorcerous power from everyone.

House Vonnarc Features

As much a fortress as a pleasure palace, House Vonnarc is well defended against most forms of attack. Unless otherwise noted, the walls and doors of the drow palace have the following traits.

Walls: The walls of the estate are of magically treated hewn stone (hardness 16, 1,080 hp, Break DC 70).

Iron Doors: The basic entrances and exits of House Vonnarc, these black iron doors are fitted with permanent *arcane locks* (CL 20th) that can only be bypassed by someone wearing a Vonnarc signet ring (hardness 10, 90 hp, Break DC 28).

Noble Doors: Magically strengthened doors, these barriers bar the way to those areas frequented by the noble members of House Vonnarc. These doors are sealed with permanent *arcane locks* that can be opened by the bearer of a Vonnarc amulet, and even then an additional key might be required (hardness 15, 180 hp, Break DC 34).

House Vonnarc

First Floor



One square = 10 feet

House Keys

Rightfully paranoid, the drow of House Vonnarc take their home's security very seriously. Every door in the palace is under the effect of a permanent *arcane lock* spell, and only open to those bearing the official symbol of House Vonnarc. These "keys" are worn by all members of the Vonnarc family and their servants and, as such, most of the house's residents tend to forget the doors are even ensorcelled.

Vonnarc Signet: These simple bands of black steel bear the symbol of House Vonnarc and are given to every slave and servitor with duties inside the palace. All of the iron doors in the house open to those bearing one of these rings. Each Vonnarc signet is slightly different and unique, inscribed with the wearer's name so that if it is lost, it can be recovered more easily via divination magic. A Vonnarc signet is worth 5 gp.

Vonnarc Amulet: Dark metal medallions bearing a gem-encrusted Vonnarc symbol, worn only by nobles of Vonnarc blood and high-ranking servants. All iron doors and noble doors open to the bearers of these amulets. A Vonnarc amulet is worth 500 gp for its material alone, but is worth 10,000 gp to those who might wish to invade the palace.

Matron Ring: An amethyst band etched with the Vonnarc rune, this ring opens all doors in House Vonnarc, even those with additional mechanical or magical locks. It also bypasses all magical traps linked to doors in the palace. A Matron ring is worth 5,000 gp for its material alone, but is priceless to those who might wish to invade the palace.

House Vonnarc Locations

While the PCs won't likely have a chance to systematically explore House Vonnarc, they will be spending a lot of time here. This isn't a dungeon to bash, but a home to live in while they undertake their covert mission. The chambers in House Vonnarc are detailed only briefly as a result, with each location getting a sentence or two of information. This should be enough for you to describe things as the PCs move about in the manor. Note that many locations are off-limits to the PCs, and while notes on their contents, guardians, and treasures are given, you should certainly expand upon them if the PCs take the unexpected route of searching House Vonnarc from top to bottom—and if they do, keep in mind that this is one of the surest ways to mobilize the entire house against them. In this case, you may need to skip ahead to Part Seven and start the escape from Zirnakaynin section of the adventure early.

Common decor within House Vonnarc includes the ubiquitous black iron doors, House Symbols and the sigil of Areshkagal emblazoned on walls or tapestries in purple (often lit by faint violet *continual flames*), complex mosaics of stone, detailed portraits of current drow nobles, small statuettes or images of the demon lord Areshkagal (a faceless female sphinx with strange, shifting rune tattoos,

DROW PUNISHMENT

As Vonnarc servants, the PCs will likely be targeted for punishment at times, sometimes unfairly. There are three levels of punishment in House Vonnarc, each of which is detailed below.

Flogging: For minor crimes or the entertainment of the nobles, servants are flogged. A flogging involves having the servant strip naked and kneel on the ground. A noble then administers a number of lashes with a whip against the servant; typically, 10 lashes are administered, with increases by 5 for repeated infractions. Lashes from pain tasters (a prestige class detailed in *Pathfinder* #15) are particularly dangerous, since they can choose to inflict lethal damage with a whip.

Execution: Execution is generally reserved for servants who have proven more trouble than they're worth. The standard method of execution in House Vonnarc is by becoming a ritual sacrifice to Abraxas, but often the executioner is too impatient and merely performs the deed by hand with whatever weapon is available.

Transformation: The greatest punishment is saved for the greatest crimes—assault on a Vonnarc noble, treachery, trespassing upon forbidden Vonnarc rooms, and the like. Transformation sees the servant brought to House Parastric to be changed into a drider—a grueling experience that shatters the mind and body. See page 58 for more details on drider transformation and what happens if a non-drow (such as a disguised PC) is subjected to the treatment.

huge talons, and black fur), crimson banners trimmed in gold, paintings and carvings of tortured elves, and periodic lanterns lit by faintly glowing, preserved fire beetle glands.

- A1. Entry:** Ten house guards are posted here at all times, along with a single stone golem carved in the image of Areshkagal. The golem obeys the command of anyone who openly wears a Vonnarc amulet, but otherwise attacks only those the house guards attack.
- A2. Reception Hall:** Visitors to the house wait here to meet with Vonnarcs.
- A3. House Barracks:** The rank-and-file Vonnarc guards sleep here. The majority of these guards are 4th-level fighters (see page 14); at any one time, there are 20 Vonnarc guards stationed in the manor, with many more dwelling in outlying barracks.
- A4. Dining Hall:** Lesser members of nobility take their meals here, although it's unusual for more than a couple of drow to feast here at once except during the rare family feast.
- A5. Library:** The books kept here cover a wide range of topics—any Knowledge check made using these books as references gains a +4 bonus on the roll.

- A6. House Records:** This room contains extensive family trees and other similar documents.
- A7. Anteroom:** A small waiting room decorated with hanging tapestries depicting Areshkagal.
- A8. Audience Hall:** This hall serves as Matron Pravora's audience hall. Although she rarely holds court, the room remains well tended, ready for the matriarch's every need—two driders are always on guard here.
- A9. Kitchen & Pantries:** Food is stored and prepared here. At any one time, 1d8–3 drow servants (1st level warriors) work here.
- A10. Salon:** A comfortable study for entertaining guests.
- A11. Shrine to Areshkagal:** This shrine fills to capacity thrice a week during ceremonies to the demon lord Areshkagal—it is during these ceremonies that sacrifices (usually slaves bought in the market or servants scheduled for execution) are offered. Services are led by Second Daughter Faidaeva Vonnarc. The shrine is guarded by four babau demons snared via a *binding* spell.
- A12. Priestesses' Study:** A small personal shrine, well stocked with unholy water, incense, and divine spell components.
- A13. Art Galleries:** Sculptures and paintings, their subjects ranging from the grisly to the erotic, decorate this area.
- A14. Hall of the Ancestors:** This grotesque hall serves as a gathering and display chamber for sizable family events. The Vonnarcs also keep six pieces of living "artwork" here, twin rows of fleshwarped elves—creatures known as irnakurse. Six in all dwell here, and they are swift to lash out at anyone that comes within reach.
- A15. Parlor:** A cozy room to receive guests, particularly those arriving to attend events in the ballroom.
- A16. Ballroom:** A large chamber that is often used for parties, large family gatherings, or orgies.
- A17. Interrogation Chamber:** Slavemother Undamesta's chamber for organizing the servants and punishing them when necessary.
- A18. Slavemother's Quarters:** This is where Slavemother Undamesta sleeps.
- A19. Servant's Quarters:** This is where the PCs likely spend most of their off-duty time. The PCs are provided with a single room exclusive to their group. Furnishings are barely comfortable and there is no real privacy. The PCs share this area with 15 drow warrior 1 servants, all of whom treat the PCs with increasing jealousy.



A20. Slave Quarters: These chambers are inhabited by 14 enslaved troglodytes. One particularly intelligent troglodyte is a scarred patriarch named **Verez** (CN male troglodyte rogue 4). The de facto leader of the troglodytes, he's the longest lived of the troglodytes and knows quite a bit about various goings on in House Vonnarc. His long stay in the house has left him relatively used to drow, and of the group, only Verez talks with the other drow servants. His unusually friendly attitude might make him a great contact for the PCs; certainly, Verez makes it his business to get to know the strange new servants, and through him the PCs can find an unlikely but almost honestly friendly creature to let them know about the layout of the manor and the special needs of its various residents.

A21. Kennels: This kennel houses a dozen run-of-the-mill riding lizards (see page 30).

A22. Noble Stables: The six cave gecko riding lizards kept here are the personal mounts of the more important nobles in the family.

A23. Torture Chamber: This is a functional torture chamber used to punish slaves or extract information from prisoners.

A24. Performance Torture Chamber: Unlike area A23, the torture devices kept here are as much works of art as working devices. This is where the drow hold performance tortures, where new techniques are displayed on servants for the entertainment and education of visitors.

A25. Cells: Servants being punished, prisoners being held for ransom, or sacrifices waiting for their big day are kept here.

A26. Entry Balcony: This large balcony is typically guarded by two relatively well-behaved driders.

A27. Guest Suites: These rooms are reserved for the most important guests of the Vonnarc house.

A28. Office: A small office staffed by a drow clerk, this office is where the various businesses run by the Vonnarcs are tracked.

A29. Mezzanine: The walls of this area are decorated with long violet and silver banners depicting various prayers to Areshkagal.

A30. Shrine Balcony: This small shrine is, in theory, for all family members to worship, but Second Daughter Faidaeva has forbidden others from using it, claiming it as her own personal shrine to the demon lord Areshkagal.

- A31. Family Lobby:** This small lounge is for family members only.
- A32. Vestibule:** A small room with a single chair and desk containing numerous small containers of alcohol.
- A33. Matron Pravora's Chambers:** These austere chambers appear to have never been slept in. In fact, Matron Pravora visits here only once or twice a year, preferring more secure hidaways than her own home for resting.
- A34. Scions' Quarters:** These chambers are the private rooms for Matron Pravora's children, save for Alicavnis, who sleeps in her den in Tower Solacas.
- A35. Private Gallery:** The contents of this gallery mirror the subjects in area **A13**, but are universally more expensive. In all, 25,000 gp in art is displayed here.
- A36. Portico:** This area affords an excellent view of the Vonnarc grounds.

PART FOUR: TO SERVE EVIL

Although there are many ways the PCs can go about learning what the drow are up to, those secrets are carefully guarded. The easiest method for them is to join one of the great noble houses and work their way into a relatively trusted position where they'll be able to access privileged information. If the PCs don't want to follow this route and decide to seek some other route through the politics and dangers of Zirnakaynin, you can use the information in this adventure and the accompanying article on the drow city to create a sandbox for the PCs to explore, but as they do, they should often be met with opportunities to join the Vonnarc servitors. Archmage Alicavnis does want them close at hand, after all, and she might manipulate things here and there to subtly influence the PCs into seeking out employ at House Vonnarc, perhaps by using servants like Gadak to extend additional invitations every once in a while.

Even once accepted into the ranks of House Vonnarc's servants, the PCs can't hope to have the information they seek about the drow and House Azrinae's plots merely fall into their hands. Only with patience, watchfulness, and arduous service can they hope to rise through the ranks of Vonnarc's servitors and gain access to the documents and gossip they require. While at first their days are filled with drudgery, as they rise in station their tasks become more interesting, and deadlier.

Daily Duties

The PCs are put to work within hours of Undamesta's decision to accept them as servants. She visits the PCs in the servant quarters and, with little ceremony, gives each of them a Vonnarc signet ring, explaining that they must wear them at all times. The signet rings mark them as servants of the house, allow them to come and go as their duties demand, and show other drow their allegiance. A servant

HIGH-LEVEL SERVANTS?

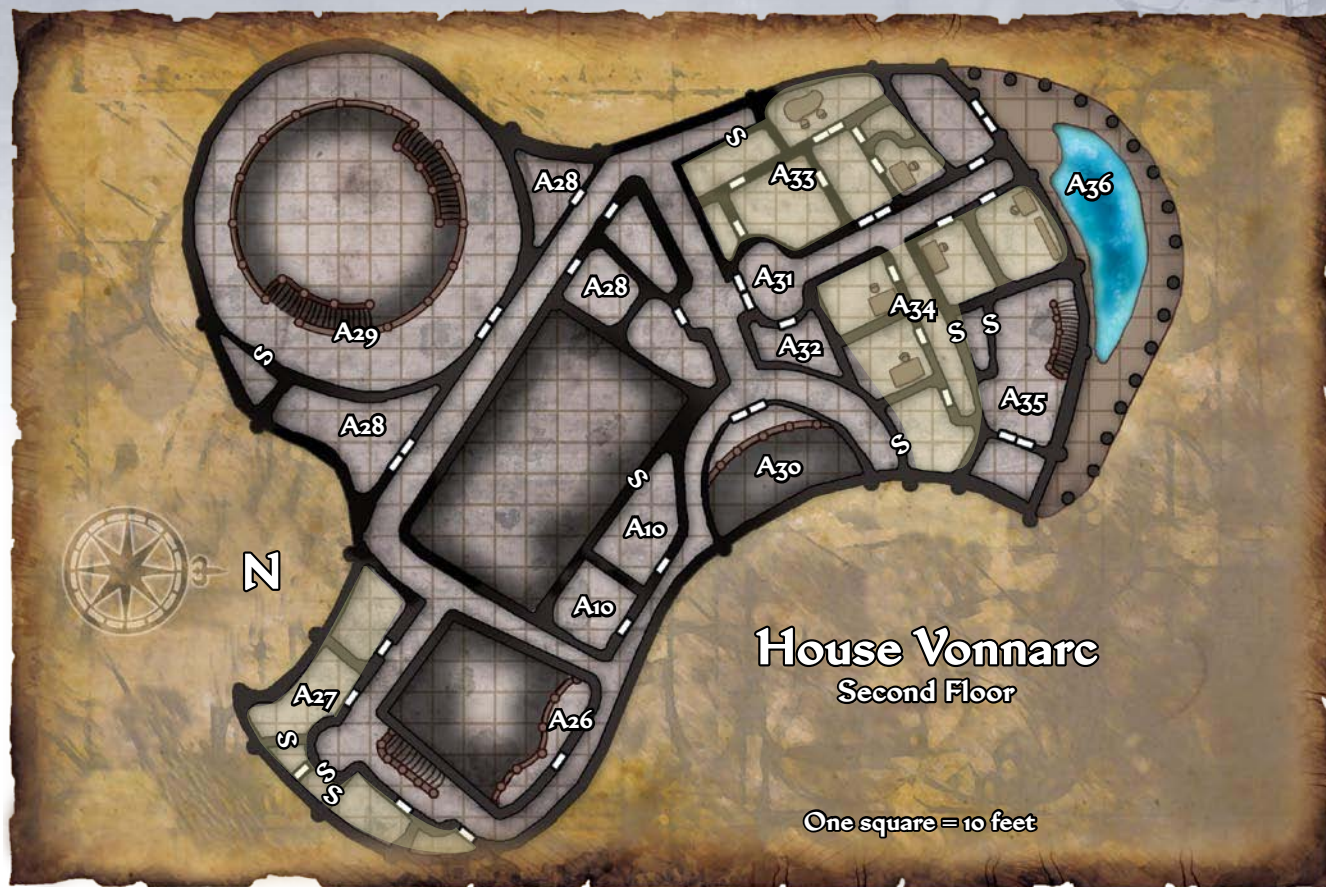
Most drow in the servitude of House Vonnarc are low level; the PCs are exceptions to the rule, but not unusual exceptions. Servitude has more to do with birth rank and the intricacies of drow society than personal power; it's not that unusual to see 10th-level servants in a drow noble house. Typically, higher-level servants like these swiftly rise to the upper echelons among the servants. Servants with spellcasting power or other high-level abilities don't draw undue attention, as long as they use these abilities to fulfill their duties and not to nurture rebellion or insubordination.

Divine casters merit special mention, though. In drow society, clerics are never servants, so a cleric PC should adopt a policy of hiding her spellcasting from her drow masters. This goes for holy symbols as well; drow servants are not generally searched for hidden objects unless they are being brought into the presence of high-ranking nobles, so hiding a small holy symbol on one's person is usually a simple task. Being caught with a non-demonic holy symbol is grounds for a flogging (the symbol is destroyed). Being caught as a cleric of a non-demonic deity (typically by casting spells in a public place with a visible holy symbol) is grounds for execution. As a result, clerics and paladins are faced with an additional level of complexity during this adventure. As a general rule, you should cut such players some slack as long as they aren't openly crusading or flashing their symbols, but you should remind them the first time they try to cast spells in a public place that, unless they plan on leaving no witnesses, discretion is the better part of valor.

These restrictions are less onerous for druids and rangers, since such classes aren't completely unheard of in drow servitude.

caught not wearing a signet once is taken to be flogged; a servant caught twice without a signet is executed. A servant who sells his signet or loans it to anyone else is executed, as is the person to whom the signet was loaned. Altering or changing the inscription on the signet brings a sentence of execution as well. Slavemother Undamesta explains that every morning and at periodic times throughout the day, the PCs are expected to display their signets to their superiors, and in a sweet voice recommends that they never take the rings off.

For the foreseeable future, toil fills the characters' days. During their interview, the slavemother pigeonholes each PC into one of two types: "guard servitor" or "house servitor" (see below for details). The GM should ask the PCs which duty they think they're better suited to, though they should not know the details of what these duties entail. Whatever category a PC chooses corresponds with Undamesta's choice and the duties he is subsequently assigned.



Servitor Tiers

Presented below are several tables you can use to generate what each PC's daily tasks are. At the start of a new day, a PC rolls 1d10 and consults the appropriate chart to see what his task is, then spends 8 hours of the day performing the resulting task. Each task has an ability check, skill check, saving throw, or other challenge associated with it. The PC should make this check or undertake this task to see how successful he was at his day's efforts. If the character succeeds at the check, he gains the number of Servitor Points (SP) listed for the duty. If he succeeds by more than double the check's DC, he gains 1 additional SP as a bonus. A failed check results in no SP for the day. If, over the course of 3 days, a character fails three subsequent challenges in a row, he is flogged. A character unable to perform his daily duties (including those who were flogged to the point of unconsciousness the previous day and who remain unconscious the next day) is flogged as well. A character who is flogged 5 days in a row is executed—PCs would do well to look out for each other to ensure that none of them meet such an ignoble fate!

A handy way to track PC servitor point gains is to track them on a blank calendar. Also on this calendar, mark when the PCs' *recorporeal incarnation* spells come to an end.

Not only does this organize each PC's reputation among the house's servants, it puts a deadline on the adventure and lends a sense of urgency to these everyday tasks. When a PC achieves 25 SP, he is considered trustworthy or competent enough to perform more complicated tasks. At this point, the PC may choose either to continue carrying out services from his current servitor category, or take on Tier 2 tasks. If the PC chooses to take on new tasks, he may choose from any of the Tier 2 servitor categories (attendant, clerk, or warrior). At 75+ SP, the PC may take on a Tier 3 task (noble servitor), becoming a direct servant of a drow noble.

You can create additional, more intricate events for the PCs to experience during their time as servants. A sample event for each tier is detailed after the following tables.

SP Required	Tier
0–24	Tier 1: Guard or House Servitor
25–74	Tier 2: Attendant, Clerk, or Warrior Servitor
75+	Tier 3: Noble Servitor

TIER 1: GUARD SERVITOR

1d10	Duties
1–3	Patrol: The PC takes part in patrols across the Vonnarc estate. No check required, +1 SP.

- 4–5 **Lookout:** The PC keeps watch upon the palace walls. DC 12 Spot check, +1 SP.
- 6–7 **Guardman:** The PC keeps watch at a specific post in the Vonnarc palace. DC 12 Listen check, +1 SP.
- 8–9 **Drill:** The PC takes part in physical conditioning. DC 13 Constitution check, +2 SP.
- 10 **Duel:** As part of a day's drill a PC must provide a Vonnarc guard with a living target to practice his moves on. DC 15 Bluff or Tumble check, +3 SP.

TIER 1: HOUSE SERVITOR

- 1d10 Duties**
- 1–2 **Maid:** The PC cleans common areas of Vonnarc Palace. No check required, +1 SP.
 - 3–4 **Washer:** The PC cleans clothing with other gossiping servants. DC 12 Bluff or Diplomacy check, +1 SP.
 - 5–6 **Assistant:** The PC runs errands for the other house servitors. DC 12 Craft or Profession check (any), +1 SP.
 - 7–8 **Stablekeeper:** The PC attends to the stables and riding lizards. DC 12 Handle Animal or wild empathy check, +2 SP.
 - 9–10 **Cook:** The PC prepares meals for the Vonnarc nobles. DC 15 Profession (cook) or Wisdom check, +3 SP.

TIER 2: ATTENDANT SERVITOR

- 1d10 Duties**
- 1–3 **Driver:** The PC carries or drives a noble on an outing into Zirnakaynin. DC 15 Handle Animal or Ride check, +2 SP.
 - 4–5 **Handmaid:** The PC attends to a noble's quarters. DC 15 Spot or Search check, +2 SP.
 - 6–7 **Porter:** The PC runs errands and makes purchases for a noble. DC 15 Appraise or Gather Information check, +3 SP.
 - 8–9 **Waiter:** The PC attends nobles during their meals. DC 17 Diplomacy or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check, +4 SP.
 - 10 **Entertainer:** The PC must entertain a noble. DC 20 Perform (any) check; +5 SP.

TIER 2: CLERK SERVITOR

- 1d10 Duties**
- 1–3 **Forger:** The PC helps create expansive false documents. DC 15 Forgery check, +2 SP.
 - 4–5 **Librarian:** The PC organizes and searches out documents in the Vonnarc libraries. DC 15 Search check; +2 SP.
 - 6–7 **Acolyte:** The PC aids in preparing a drow religious service. DC 15 Knowledge (religion) or Sense Motive check; SP +3.
 - 8–9 **Notary:** The PC aids in the destruction of house documents. DC 17 Appraise or Decipher Script check; +4 SP.
 - 10 **Messenger:** The PC delivers a verbal message for a noble to another house noble in the city. DC 20 Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Knowledge (local) check; +5 SP.

TIER 2: WARRIOR SERVITOR

- 1d10 Duties**
- 1–3 **Noble Guard:** The PC keeps watch over the Vonnarc noble quarters. DC 15 Listen check, +2 SP.
 - 4–5 **Tortured Slave:** The PC endures torture at the hands of a noble. DC 15 Fortitude save, +2 SP.
 - 6–7 **Treasure Bearer:** The PC protects a treasure or payment to its destination. DC 15 Spot or Hide check, +3 SP.
 - 8–9 **Dress Guard:** The PC attends a prestigious event as a bodyguard. DC 17 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) or Sense Motive check, +4 SP.
 - 10 **Extortionist:** The PC collects a debt from a merchant in the city. DC 20 Bluff or Intimidate, +5 SP.

TIER 3: NOBLE SERVITOR

- 1d10 Duties**
- 1–3 **Bodyguard:** The PC protects a noble throughout her daily routine. DC 18 Sense Motive or Spot check; +4 SP.
 - 4–5 **Attendant:** The PC attends family and social events at a noble's side. DC 20 Concentration or Listen check, +5 SP.
 - 6–7 **Private Entertainer:** The PC entertains a noble. DC 22 Perform (any), Sleight of Hand, or Tumble check; +6 SP.
 - 8–9 **Emissary:** The PC delivers a spoken message for a noble. DC 24 Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check, +7 SP.
 - 10 **Spy:** The PC observes another drow for a noble. DC 26 Listen, Sense Motive, or Spot check; +8 SP.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: When a PC achieves Tier 2, award the group XP as if they had defeated a CR 8 creature. If a PC achieves Tier 3, award the group XP as if they had defeated a CR 11 creature.

Gathering Information

Although the challenges and duties associated with each of the PCs' days as servants forego the need for GMs to roleplay hours of simple chores and debasement, every moment need not be skimmed over. GMs are encouraged to invent and play out situations that fall outside of everyday occurrences or that might prove useful to the PCs, particularly on their first day as servants or the first time a new task is undertaken. This is a great time for PCs to learn about locations in Zirnakaynin or the other houses; learning basic information about either is a DC 15 Gather Information Check.

Drow Purpose in Celwynvian (1 DC 24 Check): Beyond what the PCs can learn via rumors, the only bit of information the PCs can extract about the drow purpose on the surface is that the drow who were stationed in Celwynvian were primarily Azrinae drow, with a small number of allied house members here and there. A DC 25 check made in the pursuit of this specific information reveals that many of the Azrinaes left Zirnakaynin not only for Celwynvian, but

also for another unknown location—the strongest rumors here are that the majority of the Azrinaes have relocated to another site deeper in the Darklands, but no one seems to know exactly where they've gone. Word about their rout from Celwynvian has certainly spread. This check also confirms that there are no major follow up drow assaults on Celwynvian in the planning—that the war on Celwynvian was mostly an Azrinae plot, and the Azrinaes certainly don't seem interested in pursuing it further.

Corrupted Elf Gates (1 DC 26 Check): The drow know about the network of elf gates on the surface, just as they know that at least a few of these gates exist in the Darklands. So far, Zirnakaynin's wizards have managed to redirect only one gate, the nearby one leading to Zirnakaynin, by “bending” the magical ley lines. Rumor holds that there are plans to do a similar redirection to other gates in the region surrounding the city.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs learn about both the drow purpose in Celwynvian or the corrupted elf gates early (and not from sources later in the adventure), award them XP as if they had defeated a CR 9 creature in combat.

Event 1: Who Watches the Watchers?

A few days after the PCs begin their service to House Vonnarc, Gadak comes to call. This meeting sparks the beginning of a series of encounters that occur after the characters' workdays end and drives home the scheming, backbiting, unjust nature of the world they've become embroiled in. These events are presented as a loose outline, allowing GMs to run them as the PCs have the time and interest in conducting an after-hours investigation. The first event should occur once the PCs have gotten the hang of their daily routines.

As the PCs work, give them periodic Spot checks opposed by Gadak's Hide check. If they spot him, they notice the familiar drow seems to be watching them; if they confront him, he laughs it off, claiming that he was merely passing by and was wondering how the PC was finding servitude to the Vonnarcs.

At some later date, Gadak tries to sneak into the room to search the PCs' belongings. If he finds anything that seems to indicate a PC isn't really a drow, he takes it. If they complain about the theft to Undamesta, she has little interest and warns the PCs not to bother her with such trivial events in the future. If the PCs catch Gadak in the act, he tries to convince the characters that he thought he saw a troglodyte coming out of their room earlier and wanted to check to make sure everything was okay—obviously a weak story. If reported to Undamesta, the slavemother doesn't care to hear the whole story and punishes Gadak with a week of latrine duty. After this week, he tries to break into the PCs' room again.

Eventually, either because of something incriminating Gadak discovers or simply as a result of the scrutiny he's giving the PCs, he grows suspicious of them. He finally decides to slip a note into a shipment to First Daughter Alicavni Vonnarc herself, suggesting that the house's newest servitors are not what they appear to be. He does not report this to Undamesta, knowing the greedy slavemother would claim the discovery as her own. Although Gadak never hears back from the first daughter, she does investigate and through several divinations discovers the PCs' true races. For the time being, though, she simply decides to watch and wait. Alicavni's response to the PCs comes in Part Five.

How the PCs respond to the theft or Gadak's obsession with them is up to them. They might conduct their own investigations into who stole from them, seek to prove Gadak's guilt, or attempt to slay Gadak themselves. Overall, short of finding their possessions in Gadak's room, there is little evidence to actually prove that Gadak stole from them. If the PCs continually pester Slavemother Undamesta about the topic, she quickly loses her temper and has them flogged. If they take matters into their own hands, they can beat a confession out of Gadak—the thief sings like a songbird after taking 10 points of damage. Killing Gadak outright might prove satisfying but provokes a search for the murderer. Should a PC be accused, probably without evidence, he receives a lashing and spends a week in a Vonnarc cell—since no one steps forward to demand further punishment, after this time the PC is allowed to rejoin the servant staff as if nothing had ever happened.

Event 2: Drider Hunt (EL 10)

Upon attaining the second tier of servitor categories Undamesta and several lesser Vonnarc nobles come to trust the PCs' competency. Not long thereafter, the PCs are called upon to undertake a special task.

House Vonnarc keeps a legion of two dozen driders sequestered in shallow caverns in the cliffs near their palace. Several days ago, three Vonnarc driders went missing. Hunters tracked these craven abominations to a cavern complex several miles outside the city. Paingiver Drovoanis has no time to track the driders on his own, and doesn't want to waste too many guards on the duty, so he asks Undamesta if she thinks the new servants could handle the task. Curious herself, she agrees and places the PCs under the command of two drow guards for the day. The group has orders to pursue the driders at once.

The driders themselves have fled to a small cavern about an hour's journey north of Zirnakaynin. The drow guards know the swiftest route to the cave, but if you wish, you can have the PCs encounter a Darklands wandering monster or two (such as a black pudding or a few cloaklers) along the



way. The driders' cave itself is roughly circular, 60 feet in diameter and with a single entrance.

Although the driders attack upon spotting the PCs—correctly believing them to be drow hunters—they are sentient creatures. Characters who attempt to talk to the driders discover that they are merely trying to escape from their one-time brethren's constant abuses. This could put the PCs in an uncomfortable spot, especially considering they likely have two completely merciless drow soldiers with them. If the PCs attempt to let the driders escape, the baffled drow soldiers attack the fleshwarped drow and any PC who aids them.

DRIDERS (3)

hp 45 each (MM 89)

CR 7

Ad Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs slay the driders outright and bring back the heads of the three Vonnarc abandoners, the group receives experience for defeating the abominations, a platinum piece for each head they

return, and +10 SP. If the PCs let the driders escape, grant them experience for a CR 11 creature, but they receive no SP and are all flogged for letting the driders escape. The PCs also receive –2 SP apiece for each drow soldier in the party who does not return with them.

Event 3: Dark Pleasures (EL 11)

Upon reaching the status of noble servitors, the PCs come to the notice of several lesser nobles among House Vonnarc. Where before the characters might have been tasked with simple errands, by this point the nobles have greater uses for such effectual tools. When the latest scandal involving Vonnarc's second son threatens to rear its ugly head and cause the house reputation to suffer, the PCs are in a unique position to help.

Second Son Tiryin Vonnarc has violent tastes, tastes he has found shared by one of Zirnakaynin's more successful cave gecko breeders, a lowborn but successful merchant named Safan Domvesia. The two of them have met several times in secret already, but as Safan is not of noble blood,



Tiryin has taken pains to hide their trysts—even though Safan has assured him she has no intention of using him to bear a scion to House Vonnarc, he knows that his brothers and sisters (and most importantly, his mother) wouldn't approve. Of course, Safan's goal in their trysts is precisely that, although she has yet to conceive a child with Tiryin, and she hopes to soon use it as blackmail to secure a place among the Vonnarcs.

Several hours before this event begins, Safan delivers a new batch of riding lizards to House Vonnarc. It's not unusual for favored merchants to stay a night in a noble house after making a delivery, so she and Tiryin took advantage of the opportunity. To celebrate, Tiryin bought three discreet pleasure slaves from the Poison Key (see page 55) to aid them in the night's secret debauch, but he and Safan got a little carried away and now all three prostitutes lie dead. Tiryin has found himself in situations like this before, and he calls upon his old friend Undamesta to get him out of the situation.

Undamesta, though, had grown tired of being the one to bail out Tiryin, and hoping to teach him a lesson she decides to involve her new favorite servants. She enters the

PCs' room unannounced (give the PCs a DC 5 Listen check to hear her coming 1d3 rounds before she arrives if they're involved in something that might give up their cover), hissing at them to gear up swiftly and follow her. She leads them to the noble's terrace on the second floor of Vonnarc Palace (area A47). There, in the dim light, stand Second Son Tiryin Vonnarc and a female hooded figure wearing bloodstained robes. In the pool float the corpses of three naked drow men. As the PCs arrive, Tiryin hisses angrily to Undamesta in Undercommon, "Why did you bring *them*?" as he nods his head violently toward the PCs.

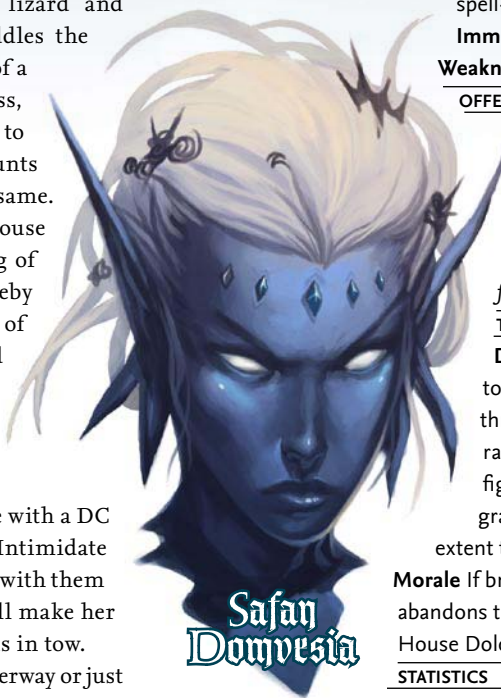
Undamesta ignores him, quickly takes in the scene, then orders Tiryin to drag the bodies out of the pool so that she can dispose of them and clean the mess. The second son nods once, then spares the PCs a brief scowl before getting to work. Undamesta then turns to Safan, whispering fiercely, "I trust these servants. They will escort you home, but don't let me catch you here again." She turns to the PCs and adds a bit more, "Be swift, and let no one see you, especially the house mistresses or other nobles. Your lives depend on this. If you are caught, I'll order your executions. Go!"

As the PCs leave the room, Safan quietly tells them that they'd best be out of here as quickly as possible. Her riding lizard and several other lizards she wasn't able to sell to the Vonnarcs wait in the kennel; she orders the PCs to take her there and ride with her to her home in Arshyvhar. Although Safan isn't noble-born, she is still a female drow and is used to servants taking her orders—if the PCs balk, her voice rises and she threatens to wake everyone in the house.

In the kennel, Safan's riding lizard and the others wait patiently. She saddles the lizards, large cave geckos the size of a small horses, with tack and harness, helping the PCs if they're not used to the gear. In a few minutes, she mounts up and orders the PCs to do the same. She intends on riding out of the house and up along the walls and ceiling of the cavern of Cocyrdavarin, thereby bypassing much of the traffic of the city and avoiding unwanted delays. The PCs may balk at this, especially if none of them have much skill at Ride, but unless they convince her that a more traditional route makes more sense with a DC 30 Diplomacy check or a successful Intimidate check, she quickly grows frustrated with them and orders them to dismount; she'll make her own way back home with her lizards in tow.

In any event, once the PCs are underway or just before a frustrated Safan abandons them, things suddenly get more complicated. Unless the PCs and Safan have taken measures to be stealthy, a group of seven drow guards ride up on lizardback themselves to confront them. These are Vonnarc Guards ordered by Tiryin to sneak out and kill the PCs. He doesn't want to risk them knowing about this recent event. Much to Safan's shock, the guards attack her as well—Tiryin has grown tired of her, and this is his way of breaking off their relationship. The Vonnarc guards have left their signet rings behind so that any who fall in this battle can't be officially linked to House Vonnarc, but a PC can recognize some of them with a DC 15 Spot check.

This fight can quickly turn into a mounted brawl, with the PCs and the drow clashing up the walls or even along the ceiling of the cave. This may shock the PCs, but among the drow riding cave geckos along walls or ceilings is nothing new—the cave geckos are excellent climbers, and the harnesses and saddles they are outfitted with strap tight to the rider to prevent him from falling. Nevertheless, it's a DC 14 Ride check to be able to do anything but hang on for dear life while a cave gecko mount is moving along a vertical wall or a ceiling.



SAFAN DOMVESIA

CR 10

Female drow fighter 9

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 18, flat-footed 17

(+7 armor, +5 dodge, +3 Dex)

hp 49 (9d8+9)

Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +4 (+2 against enchantment, spells, and spell-like abilities)

Immune sleep; **SR** 20

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 rapier +14/+9

(1d6+6/15–20)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

TACTICS

During Combat Safan reacts swiftly to the betrayal, her jaw setting as she throws back her cloak and draws her rapier to aid the PCs in the fight. She fights silently but with tremendous grace, using Combat Expertise to full extent to augment her armor class.

Morale If brought below 15 hit points, Safan abandons the fight and flees on her own back to House Dolour.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +12

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier)

Skills Handle Animal +12, Intimidate +12, Ride +17

Languages Common, Swarven, Elven, Undercommon

Gear +2 mithral chainmail, +1 rapier, 6 mithral and bloodstained flensing knives worth 50 gp each, 25 pp

VONNARC GUARDS (7)

CR 5

hp 34 each (see page 14)

TACTICS

During Combat The guards remain mounted, using this advantage against the PCs if they can. They make sure to use Mounted Combat to negate attacks against their mounts, and when they can't make melee attacks use their hand crossbows against PC mounts, hoping to force the geckos to drop unconscious and perhaps fall.

Morale The guards fight to the death, since if they fail in this mission, their master will surely execute them.

CAVE GECKOS (8+)

CR 4

Advanced giant gecko (*Advanced Bestiary* 36, *Pathfinder* #1 89)
N Large animal

Init +8; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +2, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 13
(+5 natural, -1 size)

hp 68 (8d8+32)

Fort +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.; climb 40 ft.

Melee bite +11 (2d6+6)

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 11, **Con** 18, **Int** 1, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 6

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

Feats Endurance, Improved Initiative, Run

Skills Balance +13, Climb +28, Hide +4 (+8 and stony areas)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Expert Climber (Ex) The unique physiology of gecko feet allows geckos to climb any surface, no matter how slick or sheer. In effect, cave geckos are treated as constantly being under a natural version of the spell *spider climb*. This ability also provides them with an additional +8 bonus on Climb checks, which stacks with their racial bonus.

Skills Cave geckos have a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks. They receive a +4 circumstance bonus to Hide in areas of natural stone. They can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: Should the PCs successfully escort Safan home alive, they gain +15 SP and experience equivalent to a CR 9 monster. Safan says little, but is impressed with the PCs, especially if they helped fend off the guards sent to kill her. Two days later, a +3 *dagger* with a hilt carved to resemble a gecko and a pouch with 10 doses of the *vayav* (see page 40) also appear in the PCs' chamber—gifts from Safan, though she'd never admit it. If Safan is slain within sight of House Vonnarc and her body is found later, or if the PCs aren't swift and stealthy and are seen by other members of the house, they lose 10 SP and are flogged. In typical drow fashion, though, nothing much is said about the whole affair the next day—if the PCs persist in talking about it (especially if they persist in saying that the drow that attacked them were Vonnarc guards), Undamesta has them flogged.

Tiryin remains silent about the whole thing, but the grudge he now bears against the PCs if they helped Safan escape will have repercussions later in the adventure.

PART FIVE: TOWER SOLACAS

A few days after at least one of the PCs reaches the status of revered servitor, they come to First Daughter Alicavni's

attention. By this point, the Vonnarc archmage has followed up on either Gadak's suspicions or her own paranoia—she's relatively certain that whatever House Azrinae's been up to in Celwynvian has been a tremendous failure, and that the PCs are covering it up as best they can. The rest of Zirnakaynin seems content not to pry deeper, but Alicavni spends time researching what happened. Between divination spells and reports from her own minions, she is now convinced that Undamesta's new favorite servants are more than they appear, and she intends to figure them out. Her current theory is that they are somehow spies from the surface, either drow who have been magically dominated or surface dwellers in very clever disguises. Such a development fascinates and delights the archmage, for after centuries of drow politics and familial backbiting, here is something new. Rather than reveal the spies in her family's midst and leave her cousins to mete out a long and torturous end, Alicavni seeks to learn more about these possible surface worlders and turn them toward a useful end.

A few days after Event 4, the PCs are summoned to the interrogation chamber by Undamesta. Obviously irritated, the slavemother informs the characters that First Daughter Alicavni has personally demanded their presence in Tower Solacas. In all of Undamesta's years, she has never set foot within the first daughter's tower, nor can she recall any slave who has—other than those dragged there in chains to endure the wizards' terrible experiments. She views the summons as a personal insult, and as she can't take out her ire on her mistresses, she directs it toward the PCs. Thus, she doesn't bother to offer them any advice on how to present themselves to the tower's fickle occupants. With a scowl and a hiss, the slavemother hurries the PCs on their way.

Within the Tower

Raised by the first archmage of the Vonnarc House, Tower Solacas is a fearful structure of spell-shaped stone and glistening crystal that rises taller than the Vonnarc palace. Within, the nobles' most promising scions train in the wizardly arts at the feet of established mages, most notably the reigning Vonnarc archmage, Alicavni.

Numerous permanent wards protect Tower Solacas, most notably several permanent *dimensional lock* spells that ward the entire structure except for areas **B9**, **B12**, and **B14** and a *private sanctum* ward. Both effects function at CL 20th. A shrine to dark magic, Tower Solacas houses some of the greatest and most perverse arcane minds in Zirnakaynin. Strange crystals and magical fires dimly light every chamber in the tower with shadowy illumination, allowing mages to study and conduct their experiments. Although many of the doors are trapped, they have the same basic statistics as those in the Vonnarc palace.

Upon first arriving at the tower, the PCs are left alone in area **B1** for several minutes, until eventually their guide storms into the hall—none other than Second Son Erdrinneir Vonnarc. A petty mage obsessed with someday deposing his centuries-old sister, Erdrinneir plays the eager servant to the tower's mistress, toadying to her every whim. To the rest of the tower's mages, though, he is master, and lords over his lesser cousins with unreasonable decrees and scathing mockery. Alicavniiss is aware of her brother's scheming, two-faced nature, but the dissension he sows among her conniving underlings serves her purposes for the time being. Although he accepted her command to escort the PCs to her chamber with an oily grace, Erdrinneir loathes being treated as his sister's errand boy. Snapping at the PCs, he orders that they follow him close and keep their eyes to the ground. "The great works of this lordly place are not for worms such as you to see." With a swirl of his robe, he turns and strides back the way he came, leading them to the portal in area **B13**. Erdrinneir's patience is slim; if the PCs tarry or talk back, he snaps and throws an *enervation* at the offending PC. If this starts a fight, Erdrinneir *dimension doors* to his sister's side with stories of insane servants in the tower, forcing the archmage to seek the PCs out personally to attempt to smooth things over.

ERDRINNEIR VONNARC**CR 11**

Male drow wizard 10

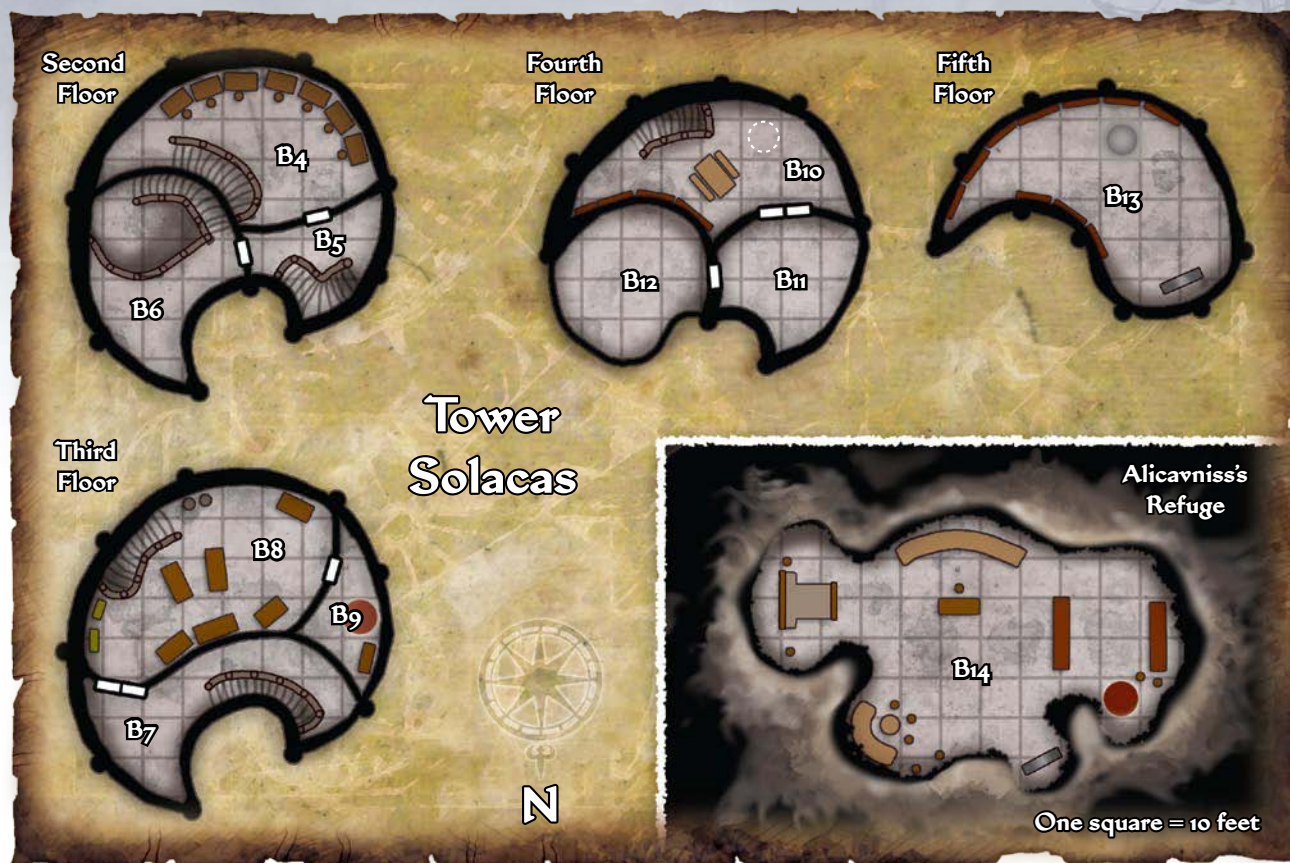
CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +5**DEFENSE****AC** 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15

(+4 armor, +1 deflection, +1 Dex)

hp 49 (9d8+9)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8 (+2 against enchantment, spells, and spell-like abilities)**Immune** sleep; **SR** 21**Weakness** light blindness**OFFENSE****Spd** 30 ft.**Melee** +1 spell-storing quarterstaff +6
(1d6–1)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 10th)1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire***Spells Prepared** (CL 10th)5th—*cloudkill* (DC 19), *silent dimension door*,
shadow evocation (DC 19)4th—*dimension door*, *enervation* (DC 18), *stoneskin*3rd—*dispel magic*, *hold person* (DC 17), *lightning bolt* (DC 17),
*summon monster III*2nd—*invisibility*, *scorching ray* (2), *silent magic missile*, *web*
(DC 16)1st—*alter self*, *feather fall*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*
0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *read magic***STATISTICS****Str** 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 12, **Int** 19, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 15**Base Atk** +5; **Grp** +4**Feats** Alertness (when Diavaul is within arm's reach), Craft
Construct, Craft Wand, Greater Spell Penetration, Improved
Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Penetration**Skills** Bluff +4, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +3, Hide
+5, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (nobility) +10,
Knowledge (the planes) +15, Listen +7, Sense Motive +3,
Spellcraft +19, Spot +5**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven,
Undercommon

Erdrinneir
Vonnarc



SQ summon familiar (snake named Diavaul)

Combat Gear *potion of aid, potion of cure moderate wounds, scroll of fly, wand of magic missile (CL 3rd; 19 charges); Gear* +1 spell-storing quarterstaff (holds a blindness spell), shield guardian amulet, ring of feather fall, ring of protection +1

B1. Entry Hall (EL 11)

Flickering spell-light and glass globes crackling with imprisoned lightning pattern the dark stone walls of this grand, tear-shaped entry chamber. At the room's center, a pool of bubbling water and arcane flame sends bursts of deadly beauty leaping high into the air. Curling around the fountain's dazzling display rises a flight of railingless steps, while two pairs of intimidating, iron double doors bar the way to the east.

This grandiose entry hall serves as the first opportunity for House Vonnarc's mages to impress those who have business with them. The lights studding the walls are overlapping permanent *continual flame*, *faerie fire*, and various illusory effects. The darkly beautiful fountain at the room's center, however, is more than mere decoration.

Creature: The fountain here is no mere decoration, but rather one of Alicavni's more deceptively obvious guardians, a failed attempt at a dual-summoning that

yielded fortuitous results. The fountain is in fact a balor named Jivakhnaka that Alicavni fused and entrapped in the body of a greater water elemental. Now enslaved to the drow archmage's will, the endlessly flailing creature—which merely looks like strangely beautiful jets of glowing water to most—lingers in the pool here, watchful for intruders. He does not lash out at anyone escorted by a drow he recognizes as someone who's supposed to be in the tower.

JIVAKHNAKA

CR 11

Balor-possessed greater water elemental (MM 98, *Advanced Bestiary* 51)

CE Huge elemental (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, water)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see invisibility; **Listen** +31, **Spot** +31

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 17

(+5 Dex, +9 natural, −2 size)

hp 241 (21d8+147)

Fort +19, **Ref** +14, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities elemental traits; **DR** 10/—; **Resist** electricity/20; **SR** 31

Weaknesses spell vulnerability

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.; swim 120 ft.

Melee 2 slams +24 (2d10+11)

Special Attacks demonic attack, drench, profane, vortex, water mastery

TACTICS

During Combat Jivakhnaka makes deadly use of its quench ability and high grapple score in tandem with its demonic attack. Once it sees intruders, it can move from its pool and pursue them anywhere in this chamber or onto the palace's grounds, though it has orders not to enter area **B2** or the palace itself.

Morale Jivakhnaka loathes its enslavement and—although it upholds its agreement to slay intruders—eagerly fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 20, **Con** 25, **Int** 14, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +34

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush,

Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack

Skills Bluff +5, Hide +29, Listen +31, Search +26, Spot +31

Languages Abyssal, Aquan

SQ possessed

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Demonic Attack (Su) When Jivakhnaka is involved in a grapple, flames spring to life all over its body. Any creature grappling with it takes 2d6 points of fire damage per round that the grapple continues.

Profane (Su) All of Jivakhnaka's melee attacks deal +1d6 points of extra damage to creatures of good alignment. Its attacks are treated as magical and evil-aligned for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

Possessed (Su) The balor possessing Jivakhnaka is trapped within a water elemental. Unlike many demon-possessed creatures, the demon cannot leave the water elemental. If Jivakhnaka is slain, the balor returns to the Abyss.

Spell Vulnerability (Ex) If affected by *banishment*, *dispel evil*, or *dispel chaos*, Jivakhnaka is immediately banished to the Abyss. As the water elemental and balor are fused into one being, *antimagic field* and similar effects do not remove the demon-possessed template.

See Invisibility (Su) Jivakhnaka continuously sees invisible creatures and objects as per the spell *see invisibility* (CL 20th).

B2. Mage's Office (EL 8)

Towering cases of black stone, slouching under the burden of countless thick tomes and meticulously organized scrolls line the walls of this room. A large desk, bare except for a lantern of glowing orange crystal, hunches against the far wall, surrounded by posh, high-backed chairs. Iron double doors lead to the north and west.

Here visitors bargain with Vonnarc mages for arcane services. The office belongs to no one in particular, the imposingly crafted furniture and library of thick tomes

largely present to intimidate business partners. Aside from a sheaf of fine parchment, several bone quills, eight vials of expensive ink (worth 10 gp a piece), and a pair of spare Vonnarc signet rings, the desk contains little of interest. As for the books, most are verbose treatises on arcane theory and the Outer Planes of little actual worth.

Trap: The door to the south leads to the private laboratories and libraries of House Vonnarc's infamous mages. Anyone who touches the door without first speaking the word "virashic"—Elven for "one who seeks wisdom"—triggers its trap.

IDIOT'S INFLICTION

CR 8

Type magic (evocation and necromancy)

Search DC 32; **Disable Device** DC 32

EFFECTS

Trigger touch (touching door to area **B3**); **Reset** automatic (after 3 minutes)

Effect spell effects (*chain lighting*, CL 11, 11d6 electricity to target nearest center of trigger area plus 5d6 electricity to each of up to eleven secondary targets, DC 19 Reflex save half damage; *feeblemind*, CL 11, target touching the door, DC 17 Will save resists)

B3. Apprentices' Library

The dusty, sour smell of parchment and old ink pervades this curving library hall. At the center of the room stands a long table strewn with unfurled parchments, open books, and crystalline lanterns shedding dim, eerie light like oversized glowworms. A steep staircase ascends to the floor above.

This library holds basic arcane knowledge and reference cantrips. Any creature who spends a half hour here consulting the tomes—written largely in Draconic and Elven—can employ them to make a Knowledge (arcane) check with a +5 bonus.

Creatures: At any time there is a 40% chance that a Vonnarc mage is studying in here.

B4. Study Hall (EL 6)

Carvings of a faceless sphinx-like demon, some bearing scrolls and others writing with bladed quills on elven flesh, cover the walls of this fang-shaped chamber. Numerous uncomfortable looking writing desks, set with writing implements and parchment, circle the room. A treacherous stairway curves downward, while a prominent door lead to the north.

Vonnarc apprentices suffer through decades of study and depreciating errands before finally being admitted into the ranks of the house's elite mages. A DC 25 Knowledge (the planes) check allows a character to recognize the demons upon the walls as various representations of Areshkagal.

Creatures: At any given time there is a 60% chance that 1d4 Vonnarc mages are studying here. These mages are an ambitious lot. In trade for any scrap of magical treasure, particularly scrolls, they can be bribed to give away the passwords to the trapped doors in this room and in area **B2**.

Trap: Beyond the door here are the workrooms of House Vonnarc's most skilled wizards. Apprentices and visitors are not allowed into the areas unless supervised or after they have completed a rigorous series of arcane tests. Those that attempt to pass without first stating the supposedly secret password "masava," activate the door's trap. If the trap is sprung, in addition to its *acid arrow* effect, the *alarm* facet alerts all creatures in area **B8** that the door has been opened.

AMBITION'S ERROR

CR 6

Type magic (transmutation and necromancy)

Search DC 27; **Disable Device** DC 27

EFFECTS

Trigger touch (touching door to area B5); **Reset** automatic (after 3 minutes)

Effect atk +9 ranged touch; spell effect (*acid arrow*, CL 18, 2d4 acid damage for 7 rounds; and *alarm*)

B5. Stairwell

This dimly lit stairwell leads to area **B7** above.

B6. Guest Lounge

Lavish couches and other delicately crafted furniture fill this elegant balcony overlooking the entry hall below. A tray of strangely colored fungi sits upon a table at the room's center.

Those with business in the tower wait here to be received by House Vonnarc's elite spellcasters. Any drow or other creature who makes a DC 12 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check realizes the fungi upon the table are decorative poison mushrooms related to id moss and dangerous if consumed (Ingested; Fort DC 16; 1d4 Int initial damage, 2d6 Int secondary damage).

B7. Hall of Mages (EL 1)

Spaced between nodules of dimly glowing crystal, shallow alcoves line the wall of this shadowy hall. Within each depression sits a sculpted gemstone bust of a different grim-faced drow. Along the north wall, a flight of stairs slopes away to the floor below, while on to the south stands a large iron door covered in images of skulls and flames.

This hall serves as an antechamber to the laboratories beyond. The busts here each depict a past mistress—or

more rarely, master—of the tower. Each bears a tiny engraved name in Elven, the oldest being "Damyran Vonnarc," with the most recent being "Alicavniiss Vonnarc." To the right of Alicavniiss's bust is that of a crazed-looking male noted as "Fanderic Vonnarc." Alicavniiss uses this sculpture as a personal warning trap.

Trap: The bust of Fanderic Vonnarc serves as an alarm for the archmage of the tower herself.

ALICAVNISS'S EYE

CR 1

Type magic (divination)

Search DC 27; **Disable Device** DC 27

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (30 feet); **Reset** automatic (after 1 minute)

Effect spell effect (*detect good*, *detect law*, *detect undead* emanating from the bust of Fanderic Vonnarc. Should any of the spells detect anything, an *arcane eye* activates, as if cast by Alicavniiss Vonnarc. Alicavniiss can control the *arcane eye* as she pleases.)

B8. Central Laboratory (EL 12)

The stinging scent of chemicals, acrid incenses, and fouler things pervades this hall with a sickly mist. Surrounded by ghostly auras in the choking haze, pulsing crystalline lanterns stud the walls and dangle over long tables crammed full of massive tomes, smoldering braziers, spiraling glassware, beastly dissections, cloudy specimen flasks, and other oddities. Along the southern wall, a severe stairwell curves up to the floor above. To the west stands a thick metal door, braced shut with two heavy beams of dark iron.

This is the communal laboratory and workshop of House Vonnarc's mages. Here, dark wizards undertake all manner of profane work for the greater glory of the Vonnarc name. With the expansive collection of alchemical and arcane agents available here, any attempt to perform a magical or alchemical task—from a simple Knowledge (arcana) check to the creation of any alchemical item, potion, construct, or magic item—that employs this laboratory is made with a +2 bonus.

Among the most noteworthy of the projects currently underway about the room is a half finished *rod of withering*, a dissected but still animate *svirfneblin* zombie, and what appears to be an incomplete iron golem.

Although barred, the door leading to area **B9** can be opened with a DC 14 Strength check.

Creatures: At any time, there are three Vonnarc mages at work here. In addition, when not escorting the PCs, Second Son Erdrinneir Vonnarc spends most of his time here. Known only to Alicavniiss, the "incomplete iron golem" lying in Erdrinneir's workspace at the laboratory's rear is in fact a fully functional shield guardian. The construct

lies in wait for its master's commands. Erdrinneir eagerly awaits the day when one of his underlings snaps and confronts him, finally giving him a chance to reveal his brutal servant.

ERDRINNEIR VONNARC

CR 11

hp 49 (see page 31)

SHEILD GUARDIAN

CR 8

hp 112 (MM 223)

VONNARC MAGE

CR 7

Male drow wizard 6

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15

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

hp 49 (9d8+9)

Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9 (+2 against enchantment, spells, and spell-like abilities)

Immune sleep; **SR** 17

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +1 (1d4–1/19–20)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Spells Prepared (CL 6th)

3rd—*dispel magic*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *ray of exhaustion* (DC 17)

2nd—*detect thoughts*, *minor image*, *scorching ray*, *web* (DC 16)

1st—*burning hands* (DC 15), *feather fall*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*

0—*ghost sound*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *prestidigitation*

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 10, **Int** 18, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +3; **Gp** +2

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Penetration

Skills Concentration +13, Diplomacy +3, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Spellcraft +15

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Undercommon

Combat Gear *potion of invisibility*, *wand of magic missiles* (3rd; 14 charges); **Gear** masterwork dagger, *cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of protection* +1, 50 gp

Treasure: A DC 18 Search check in tandem with a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals a *wand of dispel magic* with 12 charges, a flask of *sovereign glue* with 4 ounces remaining, 6 doses of *salve of slipperiness*, a container with 3 doses of *universal solvent*, and 4,200 gp worth of valuable arcane and alchemical materials like diamond dust and onyx gems.

A DC 24 Spellcraft check also allows a character to identify the half finished *rod of withering* here. If taken, the *rod of withering* can be created by a character with Craft Rod in half the time and at half the cost.

B9. Summoning Chamber

Flickering black candles hang from the walls here, perched upon outthrust sconces shaped like demonic claws. Upon the floor at the chamber's center is a complex circular diagram, a symbol of obviously profane meaning scribed in silvery powders, wax, and glistening blood.

The circle here is a *magic circle against evil* used most often to summon and speak with demons. Aside from the circle, a rack filled with rare alchemical powders, vials of blood, and other arcane components useful in summoning spells stands at the far corner.

Treasure: A DC 14 Search check uncovers 600 gp worth of valuable powdered metals.

B10. Master's Library (EL 10)

Shelves enclosed in crimson-tinted glass fill this room, each rack holding countless tomes given a sanguine tinge within their fragile prisons. Between them, the skins of fiery-scaled lizards cover the dark stone floor. At least fifteen feet above gapes a circular opening in the ceiling, and to the north stands a broad iron double door.

This library holds a wealth of arcane wisdom and secrets of the planes. Anyone who can read Elven and who spends half an hour in study here can make a Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (the planes) check with a +10 bonus.

Creatures: At any given time there is a 40% chance that 1d4 Vonnarc mages are reading through the tomes here.

Trap: The circular opening in the ceiling is not as empty as it appears. Anything that comes within 1 foot of the passage—including inanimate objects—without speaking the word “gitavwyn,” the Elven word for “supreme awe,” triggers a trap that opens a *gate* to the Negative Energy Plane. Any creature that enters the Negative Energy Plane begins slowly falling “up” and away from the portal at a rate of 10 feet per round. Unless the creature can fly or otherwise non-physically direct his motion, he is helpless to change the speed or direction of his movement. In addition, living creatures on the Negative Energy Plane must make a DC 25 Fortitude save every round or gain a negative level. A creature whose negative levels equal its current levels or Hit Dice is slain, becoming a wraith. The *death ward* spell protects a traveler from this energy drain. Once open, the gate remains open for 1 minute, after which the gate closes and requires 1 round to reenergize before the trap resets.

PASSAGE TO THE VOID

Type magic (conjunction)

Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (1 foot); Reset automatic (after 1 round)

Effect spell effect (10-foot-diameter gate to the Negative Energy Plane lasting 1 minute.)

Treasure: A DC 25 Search check made during a 10-minute search of the shelves reveals one of many arcane scrolls stored here. The scrolls are not stored in anything resembling an order, and each ten-minute search uncovers 1d3 random scrolls. The scrolls kept here include the following spells: *animate rope*, *bear's endurance*, *dispel magic*, *false life*, *fireball*, *fog cloud*, *hold portal*, *lesser geas*, *major image*, *obscure object*, *phantasmal killer*, *reduce person*, *suggestion*, *summon monster IV*, *wall of fire*, and *unseen servant*.

CR 10

B11. Master's Lounge

Masterful paintings of grim scenes, demonic figures, and terrifying hellscape adorn the walls of this chamber. Between overstuffed chairs and divans, sturdy iron doors lead to the east and south.

Weary Vonnarc mages relax and collect themselves between projects here. A DC 20 Knowledge (the Planes) check identifies a number of the creatures and locations depicted in the art here: a hezrou demon, Pharama's Boneyard where the dead are judged, the City of Brass on the Elemental Plane of Fire, a layer of the Abyss known as the Enigma of Areshkagal, and a devourer looming huge and hungry over the bed of a sleeping gnome.

B12. Terrace

A sweltering wind whips across the glistening black stones of this lofty, open-air terrace. Beyond shimmers the dark stone and flickering mage fire of the Vonnarc palace and the seemingly endless dark of Zirnakaynin's cavern vaults.

The Vonnarc mages use this terrace both for its incredible view and as a landing spot for winged mounts.

B13. Vonnarc Collection (EL 11)

Racks, shelves, cabinets, scroll cases, and diverse other iron stands, each morbidly sculpted into sepulchral shapes, fill this tear-shaped hall. Upon each rest countless tomes, skulls, scrolls, chests, jars, and other less identifiable curios, though, around many, the air seems to shimmer with barely restrained power. Standing upon a short dais at one end of the hall yawns an archway in the shape of a howling mouth. With the arch roils a sinister crimson mist.

Although the greatest treasures of House Vonnarc hide in secret stores accessible only to Matron Pravora and First Daughter Alicavniss, a not insignificant trove of arcana also rests here. Barred to all but Alicavniss and her few chosen lieutenants, numerous spellbooks, magical devices, and fragments of potent lore wait here for their Vonnarc masters' needs.

The arch here is less sinister than it appears. It is a permanent entryway to a magnificent mansion-like demiplane crafted by Alicavniss herself. Anyone who passes through the arch enters area B14.

The westernmost end of this room is disguised by a permanent *illusory wall*, behind which hides Alicavniss's loyal guardian.

Creature: Posted here by the mistress of the tower, a devourer guards the Vonnarc collection. The fearsome



undead watches all who enter the room, but only attacks obvious intruders and those who attempt to disturb the shelves—Alicavniiss tells the creature when to expect visitors and what they're allowed to take.

DEVOURER

CR 11

hp 78 (MM 46)

Special Attacks trap essence (12 levels)

TACTICS

Before Combat As soon as unexpected creatures enter the chamber, the devourer uses its *spectral hand* ability, followed by *ghoul touch*.

During Combat Should visitors take anything from the shelves without permission, the devourer casts *confusion* and *suggestion* to sow discord among the intruders, trying to force a few back through the pit to area B10. At the same time, it sends its *spectral hand* forth from the wall, first attempting to use its *ghoul touch* spell, then employing its *energy drain* ability. Only if its hiding place is discovered does it wade into melee.

Morale The devourer fights until destroyed.

Treasure: The magical trove here is vast. Dozens of spellbooks line the walls here, containing all of the standard wizard spells from the PH—feel free to seed a few new or obscure spells in here if you wish. In addition, a DC 25 Search check of the shelves reveals a *scroll of binding*, a *golem manual* (stone), an empty *blessed book*, and 1,600 gp worth of rare ink. A search of the various curios here notes that most are simple depictions of fiends and rare creatures, but a DC 25 check discovers a *candle of invocation*, a *stone horse* (destrier), and a cursed *crystal hypnosis ball*, while the other sculptures here are worth a total of 2,200 gp.

B14. Alicavniiss's Refuge (EL 20)

A pleasant perfume wafts through the cool air of this wholly unnatural cavern. Gone is the dark, worked stone and strange crystal of Tower Solacas, replaced by sleek seemingly organic walls—as though the chamber were inside a gigantic, glistening black beetle. Nearby stands a fanged portal, sanguine smoke billowing within. Alcoves divide the chamber, one filled with comfortable pillows and a low table set with familiar looking fruits and water; another dominated by a huge, ornate bed flanked by scandalously sculpted statues; and the largest filled with the sinister tools and devices of an arcane laboratory. At the rear of the hall's heart stands a massive, ornate desk constructed of bone fused with crystal and littered with tomes and curios of obvious antiquity and dark power. Behind the desk presides an imposing throne of black metal and stuffed silks, sculpted to look like several contorted drow slaves.

Archmage Alicavniiss Vonnarc crafted this demiplane to serve as her personal refuge and laboratory. The fanged

portal serves as the only entrance or exit, one she alone can open or close at a whim. When it is closed, only effects like *plane shift* or *gate* allow escape back to the Material Plane. For her current devices, she leaves the portal open.

If the PCs have reached this room, the drow archmage wishes to meet with them. By this point she suspects they are not drow, having had plenty of time to investigate them and cast various divination spells.

As for the wizard's personal laboratory, the equipment is of the finest make, with many pieces being of the archmage's own creation. There lingers no hint as to her current experiments, though.

Creatures: Alicavniiss Vonnarc awaits the PCs here, immersed in the study of a massive tome or distracted by what appears to be an overly complex animated chess-like diversion or game.

There are two meetings the PCs likely have here. In the first, Alicavniiss reveals that she knows the party members are not dark elves, yet rather than exposing them, she'd prefer they help her settle a grudge with a local crime lord, Orvignato. On the PCs' second visit, the archmage provides them with the information they seek on House Azrinae and how to return to the surface. She then dispels their disguises, brutally encouraging them to flee her tower and the city. See Parts Five and Six for details on Alicavniiss's manipulations.

Although she is more than a match for the PCs should they attempt to attack her, Alicavniiss would much prefer to use them to strike at Allevrah Azrinae. In combat, she favors crippling spells to overtly deadly ones. Three obedient devourers also stand silent guard near the chamber's walls—they move to defend Alicavniiss should the archmage require aid. If the PCs require a display of the archmage's power, she can command the devourers to menace a character with a mere nod. Although there are plenty of expensive looking items here, the PCs should have no chance to loot the place. Alicavniiss's treasure is mostly represented by her gear and the holdings of Tower Solacas, in any event.

ALICAVNISS VONNARC

CR 20

Male drow wizard (conjurer) 18

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +4; **Senses** *arcane sight*, darkvision 120 ft., *see invisibility*;

Listen +5, Spot +11

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 17, flat-footed 24

(+5 armor, +4 deflection, +3 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 97 (18d4+51)

Fort +12, **Ref** +13, **Will** +16 (+2 against enchantment, spells, and spell-like abilities)

Immune sleep; **SR** 28

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee Maiden's Caress +12/+7 (1d4+3/19–20)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th)

1/day—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *detect magic*, *discern lie*, *dispel magic*, *faerie fire*, *feather fall*, *levitate*, *suggestion* (DC 16)

Spells Prepared (CL 18; CL 19 with conjuration; +12 ranged touch)

9th—*gate*, *time stop*, *summon monster IX*, *wish*

8th—*quickenened haste*, *horrid wilting* (DC 30), *maze*, *quickenened stonesskin*, *telekinetic sphere*, *temporal stasis* (DC 29)

7th—*banishment* (DC 28), *ethereal jaunt*, *forcecage*, *greater teleport*, *plane shift* (DC 30), *reverse gravity*

6th—*chain lightning* (DC 27), *disintegrate* (DC 27), *greater dispel magic*, *planar binding*, *summon monster VI*, *true seeing*, *wall of iron*

5th—*cloudkill* (DC 28), *cone of cold* (DC 26), *silent dimension door*, *overland flight*, *summon monster V*, *telekinesis* (DC 26), *wall of force*

4th—*arcane eye*, *bestow curse* (DC 26), *black tentacles*, *dimension door*, *enervation*, *fire shield*, *greater invisibility* (2)

3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *dispel magic*, *halt undead* (DC 25), *lightning bolt* (DC 24), *phantom steed*, *ray of exhaustion* (DC 25), *slow* (DC 24), *vampiric touch*

2nd—*blur*, *detect thoughts* (DC 23), *false life*, *glitterdust* (DC 25), *gust of wind* (DC 23), *minor image* (DC 23), *scorching ray*, *web* (DC 25)

1st—*feather fall*, *floating disk*, *grease*, *identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *unseen servant*

0—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation* (2)

Prohibited Schools abjuration, enchantment

TACTICS

Before Combat Alicavniiss casts *false life*, *mage armor*, *overland flight*, and *unseen servant* every day. If she's aware that visitors are coming (particularly the PCs), she also casts *fire shield* (cold flames) and *true seeing*.

During Combat Alicavniiss's first act in combat is always to cast *time stop*. She uses her *time stop* rounds to call in extraplanar aid—*gate* (to call a marilith that owes her a few favors), *summon monster IX*, *summon monster VI*, and *summon monster V*. She also throws in a couple quickened spells; *stonesskin* and *haste*. Once battle begins, she lets her summoned minions and devourers engage foes while she hangs back and uses magic as necessary and appropriate (*maze* against large armored fighters, *temporal stasis* against the first foe to approach in melee, *reverse gravity* against foes who can't fly, etc.).

Morale Alicavniiss is quick to flee battle by *plane shifting* to the Abyss if the battle turns against her (such as if she's reduced to less than 30 hit points).

STATISTICS

Str 11, **Dex** 17, **Con** 15, **Int** 33, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +8

Feats Alertness (when Vhage is in arm's reach), Craft

Wondrous Item, Dark Adept, Greater Spell Focus

(conjuration), Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Scribe

Scroll, Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Focus (necromancy),

Spell Penetration, Silent Spell, Umbral Scion

Skills Concentration +23, Decipher Script +14, Diplomacy +5,

Gather Information +5, Knowledge (arcana) +32, Knowledge

(dungeoneering) +32, Knowledge (local) +32, Knowledge

(nobility) +32, Knowledge (the planes) +32, Listen +5, Sense

Motive +7, Spellcraft +34 (+36 deciphering scrolls), Spot +11

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven,

Ignan, Terran, Undercommon

SQ exceptional stats, inherent bonuses, permanent spells,

summon familiar (bat named Vhage)

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

bolt (10th; 28 charges); **Gear** *robe of the archmagi* (black),

Maiden's Caress (+3 keen spell storing adamantite spiked

gantlet, also functions as a *glove of storing*), *staff of conjuration*

(41 charges), *amulet of natural armor* +5, *ring of protection* +4,

boots of teleportation, *headband of intellect* +6, *bag of holding*

IV, Vonnarc amulet, platinum ring worth 2,500 gp, star

sapphire earrings worth 2,000 gp, diamond dust worth 750

gp, gemstone dust for *temporal stasis* worth 5,000 gp, ruby

dust worth 1,500 gp, *true seeing* ointment worth 500 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Contingency If Alicavniiss is reduced to 32 or fewer hit points, a *mislead* spell affects her.

Exceptional Stats (Ex) Alicavniiss is an extraordinary character.

Her ability scores were generated using 30 points, rather

than the standard 25-point elite array. Additionally, her gear

was determined as if she were a PC rather than an NPC to

account for her vast and varied resources. These advantages

increase her total CR by 1.

Inherent Bonuses Alicavniiss has used magic to gain a +3

inherent bonus to all six of her ability scores.

Permanent Spells Alicavniiss has made the following spells

permanent on herself: *arcane sight*, *read magic*, *see*

invisibility, and *tongues*.

DEVOURERS (3)

CR 11

hp 78 each (MM 58)

PART SIX: HAND OF THE DROW

This part of the adventure begins upon first meeting the Vonnarc archmage Alicavniiss. Upon reaching her refuge through Tower Solacas, the PCs' charade as dark elves comes to an end. The archmage suspects what they are and, with a word, could turn an entire city of murderous drow upon them.

The Archmage's Revelation

Across the perfumed chamber from the PCs when they first visit area B14 stands a dark elven woman like no

other—a nightmare in a dream. Her cheeks high and imperious, her eyes blank and soulless, she strikes the very vision of dark elven beauty, familiar, yet alien and cold. Without a word she examines the PCs, looking them over as she takes a seat in the throne-like chair behind her desk. With a graceful wave of her steel hand she bids the characters be seated across from her. Spread out on a low table before the chairs she indicates is a light repast of obviously surface world fruits and cheeses—Alicavniiss hopes that the sight of familiar food might evoke reactions from the PCs that could trick them into betraying their nature. If none of the players catches the significance, a DC 20 Sense Motive check should clue the PCs in to why such a meal seems out of place.

Alicavniiss waits to see how the PCs react to the food, then decides to act on her hunch. Like a thunderhead roiling across an empty summer sky, her expression darkens. “You are not what you say you are,” she accuses. “You reek of sunlight, rain, and the lies of things that dare to call themselves elves. You mock your betters with your parodies of our ways and high art. Your mere presence is a slight to all my people have suffered. Worse, you have chosen to inflict your taint upon the most noble and revered family Vonnarc. You are invaders, intruders, parasites, spies, and worse, and all Zirnakaynin would echo with my praises were I to roll your heads upon her most hollowed stones.”

She pauses for a moment as she gives the PCs a chance to react. Every PC must make a Disguise check at this point (remember the +20 bonus their disguises grant them, though), and every PC who speaks must also make a Bluff check. If they succeed on all these checks, Alicavniiss remains unconvinced of their drow nature, but the successful checks combined with the fact that her *true seeing* doesn’t reveal their true forms causes her to hesitate. If the PCs maintain their believability, she shrugs and says “For now, whether you are disguised or not doesn’t really matter to me. You have your uses to me, drow or not. I shall keep my suspicions to myself, but if you aren’t really drow, you know better than me how dangerous your situation is. I can help you achieve your goals here if you help me—in fact, I suspect our goals might be the same.” Slowly, her sly smile returns. “So my little drow, what tiresome paths bring you to my simple home, and how might the kind people of Zirnakaynin welcome you?”



The wizard takes a quid pro quo approach to this interview, offering information the PCs seek in return for answers to her own questions. Alicavniiss willingly relates any information in the adventure background, except for details on where Allevarez and the Azrinaes went after they set things up in Celwynvian and that they intend on destroying Kyonin (she’s holding this information to herself for now), but can confirm that the

Azrinaes seem to have recovered ancient aboleth magic that allows them to pull down stars from the sky—as she admits this, she asks with a smile, “Is your surface world really so fragile?” She doesn’t immediately confront the PCs with her suspicions about their actual races, focusing her interview upon the following topics (skip those that directly concern their disguises if the PCs manage to maintain the charade this long with successful Disguise and Bluff checks).

- What are the PCs’ names, races, and homelands?
- Why are they in Zirnakaynin?
- Who sent them, and why now?
- How are they disguised as drow?
- Can these disguises be undone?
- What further plans do their masters have for this disguise magic?
- Do they have allies in the city? How many?
- Why did they come to House Vonnarc?
- What have they learned? How long do they intend to stay?

Alicavniiss’s questioning can go on for as long as the GM and PCs enjoy the exchange. In the end, though, the wizard determines that their interests in Allevarez Azrinae are particularly intriguing. Before the conversation ends, she has already decided to aid them. But even though her goals parallel the PCs’, nothing comes for free from a drow. The archmage admits that she’s intrigued by the characters’ predicament and confesses she has no love for the current Azrinae matron, an upstart by the name of Allevarez.

In fact, Alicavniiss knows full well that the Azrinaes are preparing their star-snaring magics far to the east, deep below the Elven country of Kyonin in an ancient vault known as the Land of Black Blood. She delays revealing this to the PCs because she has another delicate political matter she wishes them to handle for her, as finding skilled but wholly expendable agents with no attachments to other drow noble houses makes for a rare commodity. She presents her offer to the PCs as follows:

VAYAV

Created from dried mushrooms harvested from the lower slopes of the Midnight Mountains of Orv, deep under Sekamina, vayav is traditionally cut with a number of drow poisons to make a pulpy violet clump that is smoked. The overall effect gives the imbiber a sense of warmth and invincibility, while heightening both painful and pleasurable sensations. One who smokes vayav must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or take 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. A minute later he must make a second save or take 1d4 points of Wisdom and 1d4 points of Constitution damage. Each additional dose of vayav taken within a 24 hour period increases the DC to resist its effects by +1.

Vayav also affects those merely in close proximity to a smoker. Anyone who inhales vayav smoke for more than a minute must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or take a –2 penalty on all Wisdom-based checks for as long as he remains in the secondhand smoke plus an additional hour.

Both forms of exposure to vayav are highly addictive. The morning after failing a save against the effects, one must make a DC 12 Fortitude save to resist addiction. An addicted character must make a DC 16 Fortitude save every week he doesn't use vayav to avoid taking 1d10 points of Wisdom and Constitution damage. A character who makes two of these saves in a row recovers from his addiction—*remove disease* or similar effects can also end addiction.

A dose of vayav costs 10 gp in the Darklands, but costs 200 gp per dose on the surface.

Alicavniiss slowly strokes the fingertips of her dark steel gauntlet as she speaks. “I believe there’s much we can do for one another. You seek the Azrinae secrets, and in Zirnakaynin, secrets hide better than anywhere in your surface world. What you want to know of the Azrinae plot against your world will surely take time to uncover, but I am confident that I have agents capable of revealing what you seek.

“While we wait, I know of a diversion you’d be particularly well suited to. In the city, on the plateau of Arshyrvhar near the Pale Market, lies an unseemly den of debauchees known as ‘Venom Kiss.’ The place is a charnel house for souls, and I regret to admit that even my students are from time to time not immune to its temptations. One of my most promising apprentices has proven himself quite susceptible.

“Go there. Seek out the owner, a petty mercenary who calls himself Orvignato, and see that his corruptions never foul another noble soul. Do this for me, and I assure you that by the time you return I’ll possess the information you seek. The place has a passphrase for entry—my sources tell me the current one is ‘Sh’blu sent me. The phrase changes often—you might wish to make haste to Venom Kiss as soon as we are done here as a result.

“Oh... and bring me back any maps you should find. Such a spider as Orvignato surely has a vast web, and I’d personally ensure that no others become ensnared.”

Alicavniiss tells half of the truth here. One of her apprentices was a frequent patron of Venom Kiss, lured there by Orvignato’s men and piled with narcotics to reveal information about the archmage and Tower Solacas. The apprentice knew little of importance and Alicavniiss has long since flensed the drugs from his body, but she has not forgotten the slight. Even more importantly, Orvignato is no petty criminal, but rather an esteemed mercenary lord who commands a band called the Razor Crown and uses Venom Kiss as his base. Currently, a sizable retinue of his men holds a cavern far to the south, near the drow trading post at Blackstrand, guarding the interests of the Vexidyre family. Vexidyre agents recently discovered an elf gate there similar to the one the PCs used to reach Zirnakaynin, but have denied all but their own mages’ access to the site. Alicavniiss wishes to investigate the portal herself, but even she dares not risk damaging the relic or sparking hostilities in Zirnakaynin in a brazen attack. Rather, she seeks to undermine Orvignato’s mercenaries, and as they abandon their posts, hopes to move her own spies and loyal agents into place. She doesn’t care to share all of this information with the PCs, though. Her only real interests are in seeing Orvignato dead and obtaining any maps of the Blackstrand site he might possess.

After ordering the PCs to kill Orvignato, Alicavniiss has little further she wishes to discuss. If the party has any other questions for her she tolerates two or three, becoming increasingly impatient, before dismissing them outright. There will be plenty of time for banter when the PCs return from the wizard’s request. One of the archmage’s apprentices waits for the PCs on the other side of the fanged portal and escorts them back to area B1. From there, it is up to them to decide how to prepare and travel to Venom Kiss.

Venom Kiss

Situated on the western edge of Ovessia, Zirnakaynin’s lavish Pale Market, Venom Kiss caters to every vice. A tavern, drug den, brothel, torture hall, and worse, in Venom Kiss a patron can buy any debauchery he wishes if he has the coin.

Arching blades form a crown around the crimson domed heights of this gaudy, glistening festhall. Arcane flames flare to life and dim to embers across its stone surfaces, runes and sinister symbols flashing with profane intent. Bordered by reliefs of unclad drow dancers, a single simple door with two narrow sliding windows serves as the only obvious entryway.



Venom Kiss holds itself to a loose membership policy: anyone who knows the password can get in, as can anyone who flashes a platinum piece. This serves to keep out most of the riff-raff and foreigners. Outside the door stand two drow bouncers—mercenaries in Orvignato's employ—while a third inside keeps the door barred. PCs who make a DC 15 Gather Information check can learn a bit about Venom Kiss, largely that it's a drug den and brothel with a particularly dangerous reputation, while a result of DC 22 or higher reveals the password, "Sh'blu sent me," must be spoken in Undercommon. Those who approach the door get stared down by the bouncers, two Razor Crown mercenaries, but are allowed to knock. If they look like trouble, don't know the password, or fail to flash a platinum piece—even after some not-so-subtle urging—the bouncers attempt to forcibly remove them. The door (hardness 8, 30 hp, Break DC 26) has two windows in it, one at eye height, and one at waist level, allowing the bouncer within to fire his crossbow into the bellies of those directly in front of the door. If a fight starts here and the PCs force their way in, every combatant in areas C1 and C2 is alerted and moves to attack. If the PCs get in without a fight, though, they can explore and indulge as they please.

RAZOR CROWN MERCENARIES (2)
hp 34 each (see page 14—drow soldiers)

CR 5

C1. Showroom (EL 10 or 11)

A choking, acrid haze pervades this noisy taproom, forming dreamy auras around its strangely colored lantern. In alcoved booths, pillow strewn corners, and along a polished iron bar, drow of all social walks and in all states of undress avail themselves decadences too numerous and perverse to list. From a second floor balcony—accessible by a flight of sparkling metal stairs—comes a chorus of pleasure and pain filled shrieks.

The haze in the air is more than mere smoke—it's a potent stimulant the drow call *vayav*, or "demon gasp." Aside from being for sale from a number of dealers here, the smoke itself encourages patrons to partake. Those who spend more than a minute in this area must make a DC 12 Fortitude save against the drug's smoke (see sidebar).

Creatures: More than 40 drow currently cram this busy den. Of them, only half are actual patrons, with the rest being servers, dancers, prostitutes, dealers, and mercenaries of the Razor Crown. If the PCs enter the den peacefully, they are accosted at every turn by aggressive servers, rowdy patrons, recreational druggists, and dancers eager for tips and more.

While the bouncer by the door seems to be the only guard, five other sellswords loyal to Orvignato relax throughout the room. If combat breaks out—as it often

does at the Venom Kiss—the mercenaries move to dispose of the troublemakers, while the patrons do their best to stay out of the way. If fighting persists for more than 3 rounds, the guards in area C2 take note and fire upon the PCs from above.

RAZOR CROWN MERCENARIES (6)

CR 5

hp 34 each (see page 14—drow soldiers)

Treasure: Behind the counter are keys to each of the pleasure dens as well as a coffer filled with the day's take of 533 gp.

Orvignato



C2. Balcony (EL 7)

Moans and sobs echo through the noxious haze, emanating from a half-dozen closed doors that surround a circular balcony overlooking the main room below. A seventh, ironclad door stands away from the others, as does an alcove strewn with oversized pillows.

Vayav smoke pervades this entire balcony just as it does in area C1.

Creatures: Two Razor Crown guards armed with hand crossbows guard the entrance to Orvignato's personal chamber, keeping intoxicated and amorous patrons from disturbing their boss.

RAZOR CROWN MERCENARIES (2)

CR 5

hp 34 each (see page 14—drow soldiers)

C3. Pleasure Dens

Venom Kiss rents six pleasure dens at a rate of 30 gp per hour, plus an additional 30 gp to hire each male drow companion or 200 additional gp for each female drow companion. There is a 100 gp deposit for companionship, just in case the slave doesn't survive the encounter. The doors to each of the occupied rooms (C, D, and F) are locked, requiring either the keys from behind the bar or a DC 22 Open Locks check to open. Inside each of these languish 1d4 drow customers in a semi-conscious drug-induced haze.

C4. Orvignato's Apartment (EL 13)

Relatively clean air fills this handsomely appointed apartment. The smell of oiled leather pervades the room, and adorns several large chairs surrounding an imposing desk and a cruelly decorated bed. Several bookcases and cabinets of dark stone line the walls, their shelves lined with grim trophies—drow hands, dwarf skulls, fleshwarped limbs, and less identifiable appendages. Overlooking the bed, oily black eyes stare from the mounted head of a gigantic centipede, its oversized visage easily the size of an ox's skull.

These are the personal quarters of mercenary captain Orvignato. Enjoying his twilight years, the paunchy drow spends most of his time enjoying the fruits of a life of murder and betrayal while remaining watchful for those who might seek to end his retirement early. Evidence of a brutal life in the Darklands adorns the room, each of the mercenary captain's trophies holding some bloody story. Behind his desk, Orvignato keeps a heavy

iron safe. The safe can only be opened with the key he holds or a DC 40 Open Locks check.

On the eastern wall, next to the leather-covered bed, is a secret door that drops onto the street out in front of Venom Kiss. Anyone who makes a DC 22 Search check notices the stone colored trapdoor.

Creatures: Orvignato currently lounges here with his pet, Faithless (a Tiny monstrous spider). Two of his mercenaries stand silent guard by the door, and a drider looms in the southeast corner of the room, a gift from a noble from House Parastric who was quite satisfied with Orvignato's wares.

ORVIGNATO

CR 12

Male drow fighter 4/rogue 7

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +10

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 16, flat-footed 26

(+6 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +5 natural, +3 shield)

hp 95 (11 HD; 4d10+7d6+44)

Fort +10, **Ref** +10, **Will** +3 (+2 against enchantment, spells, and spell-like abilities)

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge;

Immune sleep; **SR** 22

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 *flail* +13/+8 (1d8+3/19–20)

Ranged +1 *hand crossbow* +14 (1d4 plus poison)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *detect magic*, *faerie fire*, *feather fall*, *levitate*

TACTICS

Before Combat If the sound of combat in the showroom has been ongoing for more than a minute, or it sounds like the guards outside the door have gotten into trouble, the mercenaries have their weapons drawn and Orvignato has imbibed a *potion of barkskin* +5 and his *potion of invisibility*. Otherwise, the three dark elves surround the desk, drinking drow bloodshot—a potent liquor made from an underground-growing water berry crushed along with a living slave.

During Combat If battle breaks out, Orvignato lets his men and drider engage the PCs while he stays back, firing poisoned bolts from his hand crossbow. On the first round of combat, though, he throws Faithless at the nearest PC (this effectively gives the bloated spider a charge attack).

Morale If one of his men falls, or he takes even a point of damage, Orvignato breaks for the secret door in an attempt to flee the battle. Once on the street, he throws down his elemental gem, releasing a Large fire elemental to distract his pursuers while he makes his escape. If cornered, he

fights until reduced to 10 hit points, then attempts to bargain for his life

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +11

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dark Adept, Improved Critical, Improved Initiative, Improved Disarm, Weapon Focus (flail)

Skills Climb +9, Diplomacy +10, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (local) +17, Knowledge (nobility) +5, Listen +9, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +12, Ride +11, Sense Motive +9, Spot +10

Languages Common, Elven, Undercommon

SQ trapfinding

Combat Gear drow poison (4 doses), *potion of barkskin* +5 (2), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of invisibility*, *screaming bolts* (6); **Gear** +2 *chain shirt*, +2 *buckler*, +1 *flail*, +1 *hand crossbow*, *hat of disguise*, *amulet of health* +6, *ring of protection* +2, 4 pp

RAZOR CROWN MERCENARIES (2)

CR 5

hp 34 each (see page 14—drow soldiers)

FAITHLESS

CR 1/4

Tiny monstrous spider

hp 2 (MM 288)

DRIDER

CR 7

hp 45 (MM 89)

Treasure: Orvignato keeps a wide variety of files, contact sheets, and treasures here, the most important of which are held in his safe. Within the safe are an open lockbox containing 38 pp, 1,700 gp, and 8 rubies worth 80 gp a piece, a House Moivas signet ring, 15 doses of *vayav*, a sizable emerald worth 6,000 gp that has been used as the material component for a *trap the soul* spell (the soul of one of Orvignato's unfaithful lovers has resided within for 24 years), and, most importantly, several ledgers detailing the complete dealings of the Razor Crown mercenary company (a treasure for which any drow noble family would pay up to 8,000 gp). Within these ledgers are the maps and details Alicavniiss desires.

Bittersweet Betrayal

Upon returning to House Vonnarc, one of Alicavniiss's lesser apprentices meets the PCs to escort them back through Tower Solacas to the archmage's refuge. Passing through the mages' redoubt is uneventful and the characters soon find themselves in the presence of First Daughter Alicavniiss again.

When the party enters, Alicavniiss is seated at her desk, holding a sheet of parchment before her as she reads. She lets the PCs wait nearly a minute before looking up at them,

ignoring all but the rudest interruptions. When final she does choose to address the PCs, she cuts to the chase, coldly asking for Orvignato's notes. Until the characters hand them over, she refuses to have any further dealings with them, nodding for her devourers to make their presences known if the PCs require encouragement. Once she has the mercenary captain's ledgers, she pages through them briefly before depositing them in a desk drawer—those machinations are for another time. She then bids the PCs make themselves comfortable.

A look of disinterest settles over Alicavniiss Vonnarc's nighted features, her gaze elsewhere and unconcerned. "The Azrinaes departed our fair home for a realm far to the east, even deeper below your surface home in the deepest reaches underground known as Orv. There, they conspire in a somewhat legendary cavern known as the Land of Black Blood. The Azrinaes were led there by their new matron, that mad snake Allevrah. It is she who seeks to call down the very heavens, to scour the lands of light of our frail kindred with the ancient aboleth glyph magic. Our legends of that time, of Earthfall, are quite vivid, and judging from what you have experienced this is a very real threat. Yet you do not know Allevrah's target. I do, and it is that target I share with you now.

"She's ambitiously chosen to stab at our foe's very heart. The Land of Black Blood lies beneath the hateful surface elf realm Kyonin, you see. Unlike in the days before Earthfall, millennia ago, this time there will be no sages spouting prophecies, no mages offering warnings. There will be no time for cowardice, abandonment, and retreat. The elves will not escape this second darkness when it comes down upon them. That is, unless someone were to warn them.

"I bear no love for House Azrinae and their fanatic mistress. Where dear Allevrah sees vengeance and glory, I see calamity and the impulses of the lowborn. A strike powerful enough to destroy Kyonin would certainly cause upheaval down below as well, and I am too comfortable with my current situation to let a lowborn trollop like Allevrah ruin that. And so I've told you what I know, and where these vipers nest. Even further, I know of a gap back to the world of light, a still functioning elf gate two days journey from here, that provides a connection to Kyonin—a connection, I might add, that my kin have known about for some time but are hesitant to use for various reasons all amounting, I suspect, to cowardice." She produces a pale scroll from her desk. "This map follows a plain route, which will lead you swiftly from our realm."

Knitting her long, thin fingers—both of flesh and of iron—the dark elf's voice takes on a dread seriousness. "Our bargain is completed, yes, and I have granted you the further boon of your return path home. Should you manage to ever see your noxious sun again, in your short remaining years when you speak of your time here in the soothing dark, let your people know the might and splendor of the drow, and that first among them, Alicavniiss Vonnarc, is generous."

Alicavniiss has revealed to the PCs all they were sent to seek, and as a bonus has given them a route to escape from the Darklands. Those who examine the scroll find it to be a quite detailed map of the caverns and passageways surrounding Zirnakaynin, over which a delicate line of bloodred ink traces a path to a small cavern some 28 miles to the southeast.

Should the party have any additional questions, Alicavniiss humors two or three inquires before growing impatient. When either she or the characters decide it is time to depart, the archmage pauses and offers them one more thing to hasten them along their way and begins casting a spell—*wish*. Unless the PCs attempt to stop her, the resulting *wish* removes every trace of the disguises granted by *recorporeal incarnation*, revealing the PCs in their true forms. This abrupt betrayal is a calculated choice on the archmage's behalf. Should the PCs be discovered as they leave Zirnakaynin, or if the Azrinaes are already watching them, Alicavniiss has no wish to appear linked to agents of the surface world—even the accusation could shatter her influence among her people. Better to make it look like she discovered the intruders and unmasked them, and only through their own canniness did they manage to escape. The archmage realizes this potentially fatal gambit gambles her chance at using the PCs to strike at Allevrah, as well as risking casualties among her family as they flee. Yet, both dangers are chances she willingly makes—pawns and apprentices can be replaced, and Alicavniiss can only gain from either outcome.

Alicavniiss has no wish to further parlay with the characters after revealing them, and nods toward the portal leading back to Tower Solacas with an icy, challenging glare and a single sentence to explain her actions: "To speed you along, my puppets." If this doesn't get the PCs moving, then her spells and devourers should. Now more than any other time the PCs might be tempted to attack Alicavniiss, but the wizard's undead allies and summoned monsters should send them packing.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: For learning about Allevrah's goals and her current location, award the PCs experience as if they had defeated a CR 12 creature in combat.

PART SEVEN: FLIGHT FROM DARKNESS

Once the PCs escape from Alicavniiss, they still have all of Tower Solacas to navigate, and likely the rest of House Vonnarc and Zirnakaynin itself. This final section of the adventure is a two day chase through enemy territory. The sudden change to their situation might have caught the PCs at a tough time, limiting their resources. As the GM, try to take this into account and adjust any encounters that feel overwhelming. At

the same time, reward ingenuity and don't be afraid to thrash characters expecting the drow to be pushovers. Parties that make clever use of magic to flee might skip the sections detailing the escape from House Vonnarc and Zirnakaynin almost entirely—*teleport*, *word of recall*, and *plane shift* all work wonderfully in effecting a swift and (relatively) safe escape from the Darklands (although remember that Tower Solacas itself is under the effects of a permanent *dimensional lock*).

Assuming the PCs lack teleportation magic or other methods of directly fleeing to the surface world above, this part provides many details on how to handle their escape.

Escaping House Vonnarc

Fleeing Tower Solacas casts the PCs out of the frying pan and into the fire. Although the spells guarding the mages' tower have thus far prevented the alarm from being raised on the estate grounds, the characters must work hard to keep themselves from being noticed. Unless disguised, magically or otherwise, there is a 20% chance every round the PCs are in the open on the Vonnarc grounds that a passing sentinel, wall guard, or passerby notices the intruders and rushes away shouting warnings. Once this happens, the party has only 2d4 rounds before the house guards go on full alert and begin hunting them down. If the PCs act foolhardily and expose their locations, three Vonnarc guard patrols (see below) set on them almost immediately.

As described earlier in the adventure, aside from Vonnarc Palace and Tower Solacas, there are a number of other lesser structures on the estate's grounds. Some of these stables, barracks, dorms, and, especially, the front gate, might play a role in the party's escape. It's also possible that the PCs might wish to reenter House Vonnarc itself—possibly to get misplaced gear, steal a mount, free a friend, or get revenge. In either case, feel free to use the encounters presented in Part Two and adjust those presented here to suit the PCs' escape.

Once the Vonnarc guards are aware of intruders on the premises, patrols of six drow soldiers mounted on cave geckos begin hustling about the estate and through the palace. Checking in shadows and throwing open closets, the guards remain on alert for 1 hour after intruders are first spotted.

Escaping Zirnakaynin

The second stage of the escape is from the city of Zirnakaynin itself. Should the PCs stick to the cavern of Eirdrisseir, a swift and obvious rush across the cavernous countryside to the eastern caverns meets with the least resistance. Parties that for any reason decide to head into the city proper, however, likely won't survive without excellent disguises—surface folk are rare in the city, and surfacefolk not escorted by drow or not in slave's chains are cause for riots. GMs faced with such brash parties can extrapolate any encounters they

wish using the stats presented herein and information on the city presented on page 58.

Meanwhile, back at House Vonnarc, an enraged Alicavniiss gathers her family to tell them what has happened. To show her displeasure, she executes half of the house's servants and slaves, starting with Undamesta. When Second Son Tiryin Vonnarc asks Alicavniiss what she plans to do to track down and slay the fleeing PCs, she coldly replies, "I am doing nothing. You, on the other hand, sweet brother, had best make sure they are dead before Matron Pravora next returns." Alicavniiss expects that even if Tiryin does catch up to the PCs, they'll be able to handle him easily, which removes one of her least favorite brothers from the family. At the same time, entrusting the task to Tiryin allows Alicavniiss to save face and retain her position of power.

Escaping the Darklands

The PCs' flight through the Darklands should be the most harrowing part of their escape. As the labyrinth of caverns and deadly underground hazards around Zirnakaynin proves far too expansive for a single adventure to detail, GMs could prepare a number of deadly caverns and drow-haunted passages for their PCs to navigate if they wish to extend this section of the adventure significantly. Underground the terrain often proves as deadly as the beasts that live there, and cliffs, crevasses, and dangerous slopes regularly appear to slow the PCs and aid their attackers. GMs who wish to expand upon this section's encounters might utilize this volume's Set Piece adventure or the Pathfinder Chronicles supplement on all things subterranean, *Into the Darklands*.

The Deep Gate (EL 14)

Following's Alicavniiss's map, it should take the PCs about 16 hours of exhausting travel to reach the cavern holding the elf gate to Kyonin. The ancient gate stands as it did millennia ago, upon a platform of elf-crafted marble and lit by eternal flames to keep the darkness at bay.

Flickering light and a hot wind fill this sizable cavern with dancing shadows and eerie moans. Opposite the tight gap leading back toward Zirnakaynin rises an ancient, temple-like series of stepped platforms and wide, pale marble steps. Upon the cracked rocky ground and atop each of the worked tiers stand a pair of huge braziers, crackling with tall, wind-swept flames. Crowning the platform rises a familiar looking archway—an elf gate.

Complicating the path to the elf gate, a vast crevasse shears this chamber in twain, its inky depths splitting both the walls and ground with a fissure that falls away into eternity. Yet a single path remains, a treacherous-looking land bridge of wind-whipped stone, a tenacious arch stretching between shattered cliffs in defiance of the unfathomable abyss below.

Despite its untrustworthy appearance, the land bridge here is quite strong and is at no risk of collapse from wind or weight—although a well-placed *stone shape* or *rock to mud* spell could easily change that. Below, the jagged-walled fissure falls away more than 900 feet to a rubble-strewn field infested with several ravenous centipede swarms.

Alicavniiss has spent some time studying the gate and has even managed to activate it, but has yet to send any minions through to investigate the other side—she doesn't want to overplay her hand against the elves surely waiting on the other side quite yet. She left a retriever at the portal site to guard the place and ensure that none come or go without a fight. The portal itself is difficult for the drow to activate, but it is sensitive to the presence of elven magic and begins glowing if any PC brings a *bloodlink* within 30 feet; the *bloodlink* itself glows with the same yellow radiance as well. Touching a *bloodlink* to the elf gate causes it to glow brighter, and after a minute of buildup, the portal itself opens to reveal a wooded glen beyond. Alternatively, a DC 25 Use Magic Device check can activate the elf gate.

Creatures: Although the PCs may move quickly, Tiryin Vonnarc and his allies move even more so. Alicavniiss teleports him and several guards to set up an ambush here. These guards join the retriever she's already left to defend the site. The archmage orders Tiryin to return to House Vonnarc only once he's collected the PCs' heads before she teleports back, leaving him to make his plans.

When the PCs enter the chamber, Tiryin and his men wait upon the cliff opposite the passage back to Zirnakaynin. While the Vonnarc guards fire upon the characters with their crossbows as soon as they are sighted, the second son waits on the western side of the bridge, ready to rush into melee once it begins. The retriever currently lurks amid the shadows around the corner from the gate. It has orders from Alicavniiss to wait until the PCs come within 10 feet of the gate or it is spotted before attacking.

TIRYIN VONNARC

CR 12

Male drow fighter 4/rogue 4/duelist 3

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +8

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 24, flat-footed 14

(+2 armor, +1 deflection, +1 dodge, +7 Dex, +1 haste, +3 Int)

hp 63 (11 HD; 7d10+4d6+11)

Fort +7, **Ref** +15, **Will** +3 (+2 against enchantment, spells, and spell-like abilities)

Defensive Abilities canny defense, enhanced mobility, evasion, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge

Immune sleep; **SR** 22

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 60 ft.

Melee +1 keen double shortsword +17/+17/+12 (1d6+1 plus poison/17–20)

Ranged mwk throwing wedge +17 (1d4/x3)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

TACTICS

Before Combat Tiryin always downs a *potion of haste* and *potion of cat's grace* when expecting combat.

During Combat Tiryin frequently makes full use of his Combat Expertise feat to the full +5 extent.

Morale Tiryin fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 11, **Dex** 25, **Con** 12, **Int** 16, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +11

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (double short sword), Mobility, Spring Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse



Tiryin Vonnarc



Skills Balance +16, Climb +7, Escape Artist +9, Handle Animal +7, Hide +7, Intimidate +7, Jump +28, Knowledge (nobility) +4, Listen +9, Move Silently +12, Perform (dance) +3, Ride +18, Search +5, Sleight of Hand +15, Spot +8, Tumble +21

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Undercommon

SQ improved reaction, trapfinding

Combat Gear *potion of cat's grace*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of haste*, *potion of invisibility*, drow poison (4); **Gear** +1 keen double shortsword*, masterwork throwing wedge (treat as a starknife), bracers of armor +2, ring of protection +1, gloves of Dexterity +2, 232 gp

*A double shortsword is a weapon from *Plot & Poison*. The weapon is an exotic two-handed weapon. A proficient user can attack with it as a double weapon, and may use Weapon Finesse with the weapon even though it's not a light weapon.

RETRIVER

hp 135 each (MM 46)

VONNARC GUARDS (6)

hp 34 each (see page 14)

CR 11

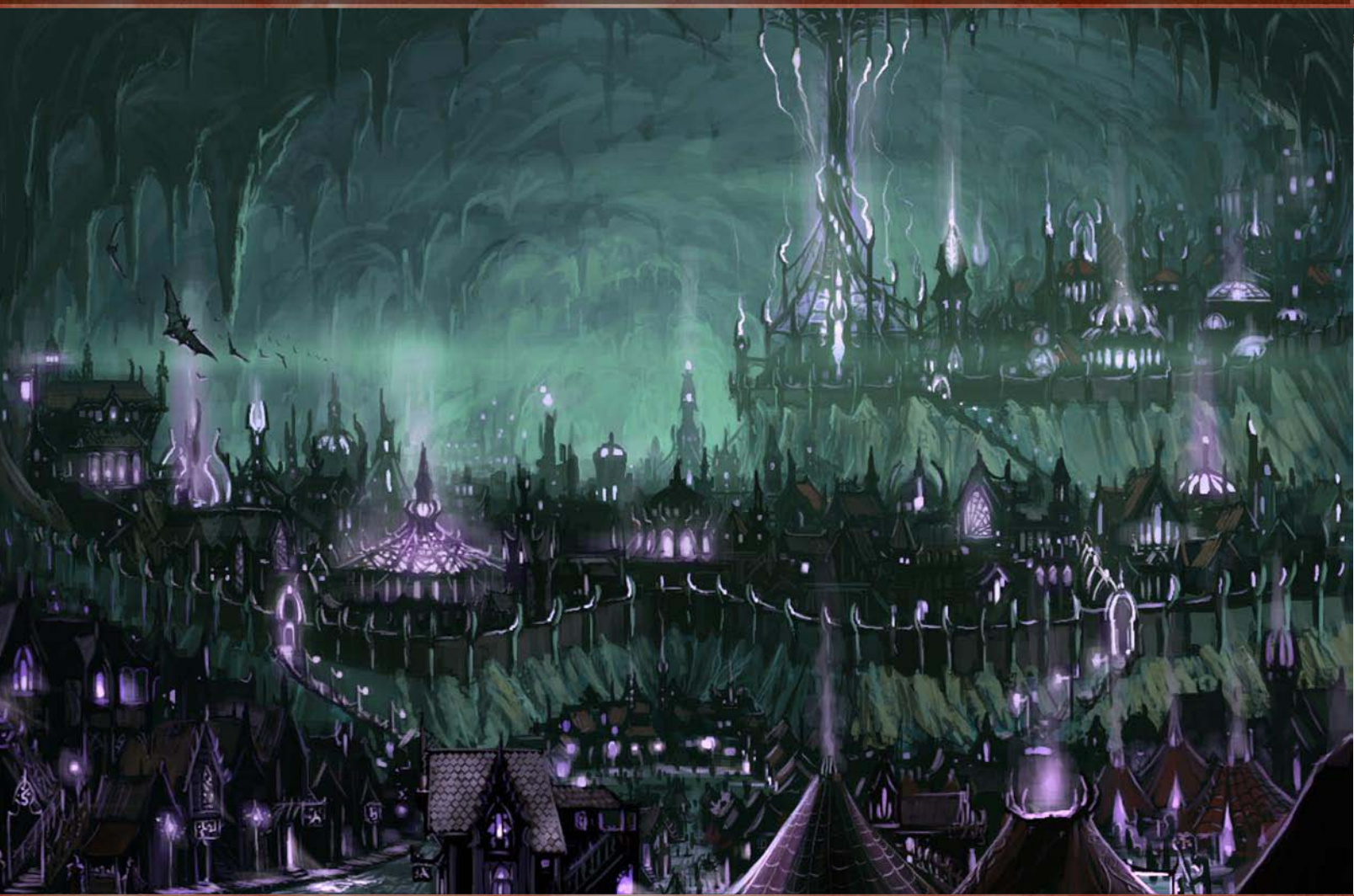
CR 5

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

More so than any other adventure in the Second Darkness Adventure Path, “Endless Night” ends on a complete cliff-hanger. The adventure concludes as soon as the PCs pass through the elf gate that supposedly leads to Kyonin. Of course, the elves of Kyonin have long known that the supposedly non-functioning elf gate leads to the Darklands, and they might not react kindly to things that stagger out of the long dormant (but still well-guarded) portal.

Of course, if the PCs effect another escape from the Darklands, where they end up is largely up to them. They could teleport to Crying Leaf, Riddleport, or anywhere else—but soon thereafter logic dictates that they should take what they've learned about Allevrah and the drow to the elves, for if anyone can provide aid in facing Allevrah in the Land of Black Blood, certainly the ages-old enemies of the drow in Kyonin can help.

Unfortunately, as the characters will soon learn, treachery and conspiracy are not traits limited to the elves who dwell below—for the true genesis of the second darkness lies with the surface elves themselves.



Zirnakaynin

When the shadow of the *Starstone* loomed in the sky and the seers of every race foresaw a calamity that would change the shape of the world, the elves proved that they held no love for Golarion, and along the mystical paths of their elf gates retreated back to their fabled homeland of Sovyrian. Yet not all elves turned traitor to the lands that had sheltered them, nurtured them, and granted them lordship over races far less civil than they. Out of respect for that world, out of allegiance and due honor, and out of a need to make things right and assure that all their people had wrought would survive even an age of annihilation, a faction of dutiful elves remained. And in the wake of catastrophe, when what seemed the very wrath of the gods rained down, these elves took shelter within Golarion, among her endless veins and unshakable bones. Wandering the endless night, with no friends among the fear-crazed

natives nor their cowardly brethren, these elves who stayed behind suffered unspeakable hardships and for an unknown score died and lived as vagabonds and the prey of terrible things. Yet, after traveling ever deeper into the pulsing earth, they finally discovered the womb of the world, a shelter where they could rest and multiply and recover. There they raised a great city, a testament to the tenacity of their spirits, the nobility of their suffering, and the memory of their one-time brethren's desertion. Bitter and graceful, beautiful and deadly, for countless years these elves, these outcasts, these drow, have struggled, spread, and grown fierce in the darkness. Their city reflects their centuries of suffering, all they have accomplished, and all they will be avenged for. Its very name testifies to their tragic past even as it swears oath to the coming age: Zirnakaynin, Last Home of the Elves.

Look well upon her, slaves! Engrave her piercing towers and shadowed heights upon your memory. Scorch her every ghost-lit emblem and winding passage upon your soul. Gaze upon the topless tower of Ileccinoc, her heart and beacon to your steps. Fear the pits of Rygirnan and the eyes of Eirdrisseir, the dominions of your masters below and mistresses above. Look to her bladed walls, patrolled by an army the very darkness has tried and failed to slay a thousand thousand times, and know there is no escape.

This is Zirnakaynin, slaves—your home, your mistress, your grave. Once you might have been mothers, warrioresses, queens, but now, you belong to her.

—Embralya Rasivrein, First Daughter of House Rasivrein

ZIRNAKAYNIN

Size metropolis (conventional); **AL** CE

GP Limit 100,000 gp; **Assets** 276,700,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 55,340

Type mixed (77% drow, 6% duergar, 5% troglodyte, 3% dark folk, 3% ghoul, 2% tiefling, 2% derro, 2% other races)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Matrons Azrinae, Dolour, Rasivrein, Tracinoa, Vexidyre, and Vonnarc, CE female drow of various levels and classes (Rulers of the Six Great Houses of Zirnakaynin); **Alicavniss Vonnarc**, NE female drow conjurer 18 (archmage of Zirnakaynin); **Patron Zov Caldrana**, CE male drow fighter 17 (leader of House Caldrana); **Breathless**, CE female flesh-warped drow bard 8/rogue 4 (artist of webs); **Varmirhias**, CE female marilith fighter 2 (daughter of Shax); **Xomos Fain**, NE male dark stalker rogue 9 (Boss of the Gray Market); **Letiandeil Dirvond**, CE female tiefling bard 14 (cognoscenti of Ovessia).

ZIRNAKAYNIN AT A GLANCE

Deep beneath the Fangwood of Nirmathas, buried by a maze of tunnels and miles of impenetrable rock, lies Zirnakaynin. A marvel of construction and tenacity, the city proper occupies three massive caverns layered one over another, but its holdings include countless grottos, lightless tunnels, and black-bladed fortresses throughout the nearby Darklands. Within the city's three central caverns—Cocyrdavarin, Eirdrisseir, and Rygirnan—live the city's drow population, nobles and commoners alike, all vying for power and influence in a city built on treachery and pain.

THE TWELVE HOUSES

On the streets of the Last Home, in the chambers of Ileccinoc, and across the vault of Eirdrisseir, the 12 most powerful families of Zirnakaynin wage a silent war. Each offering sacrifices to their own demonic patrons, these conniving noble houses hold unrivaled control over the city, checked only by the endless workings of their own cruel ambitions and the watchful threat of retaliation from their equally scheming peers. Every house provides some vital service to the city, whether it be providing water, facilitating trade, capturing and selling slaves, or numerous other specialties. Thus, all 12 houses have a unique ability to strike against

their enemies or severely worsen the state of the entire city should they be directly offended, locking the fractious nobles into a frustrating but lasting stalemate.

Of the 12 ruling families, six claim the most widespread influence, the members of these greater houses merely the latest entrenched generation of dynasties stretching back untold centuries. Lower than these greater families socially but no less scheming and no less influential are the lesser families, clans whose ascendancy to power can be counted in decades. These lesser families claim nobility not by blood but by gold, by blade, and by virtue of the secrets they alone possess.

Greater Houses

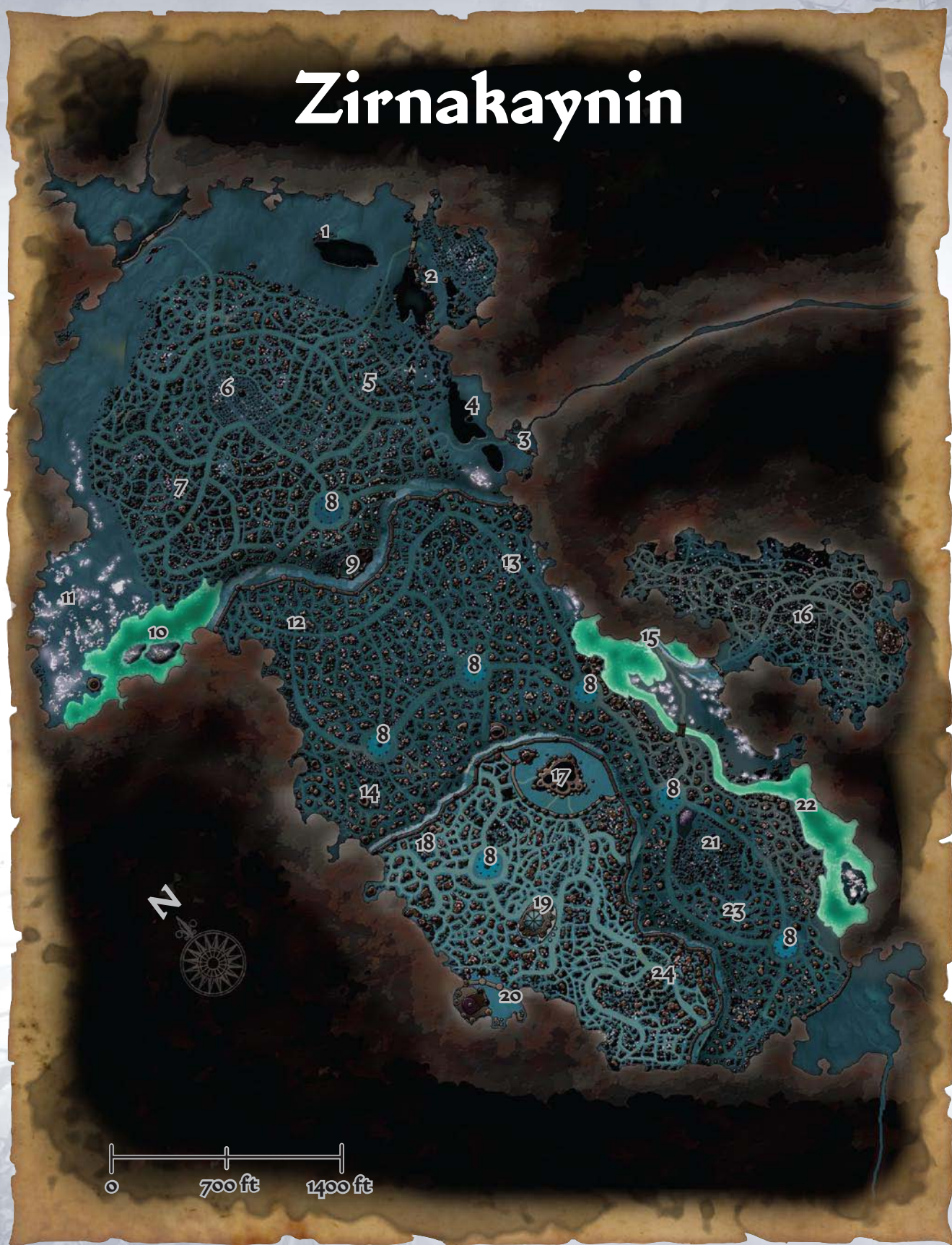
All six greater houses make their homes in Eirdrisseir, manipulating the city and their slaves from above.

Azrinae: Although the majority of the Azrinaes recently left Zirnakaynin to pursue the whims of their mysterious new matron Allevrah Azrinae, this ancient house of collectors and dark scholars retains its holdings in the city. From their Eirdrisseir palace, First Son Kardinnyr and an army of his most devoted servants defends the family's concerns against the covetous schemes of the city's remaining nobles. To aid in their son's defense, the Azrinaes have opened their fearfully rumored vaults, releasing ancient and powerful treasures and secrets long gleaned from the demon lord Abraxas, all but assuring their holdings' survival until their matron's triumphant return.

Dolour: No house better understands the savagery that lurks beyond the caverns of Cocyrdavarin than the shadowy hunters of House Dolour. From the cramped maze of Nirzevren, their trap riddled palace home, and an unknown number of hidden redoubts throughout the Darklands, the scions of House Dolour hone their skills as trackers, hunters, man-catchers, explorers, and guides. Playing sacrifices in the name of the demon lord Andirifku, the house knows many secrets and has carved great wealth from the endless darkness. The majority of the house's deals are conducted by Matron Eirenion, a patient leader who endlessly quivers with the effects of a rare spider venom, a debilitation that causes many to foolishly underestimate her.

Rasivrein: House Rasivrein directs the commerce and industry of Zirnakaynin through fear and control.

Zirnakaynin



Miles of chains bind the slaves of Rasivrein as they toil over the forges of Rygirnan, populate the work houses of Ghenavoc, and mine the depth surrounding the city. Ironclad Rasivrein warriors regularly strike at non-drow communities, dragging slaves by the hundreds back to feed the city's ravenous hunger, and to serve as sacrifices for their bloody patron, Zura. The daughters of impatient and wrathful Matron Vulissakra, Embralya and Xirrathiem, oversee the prison of Vostrac, keeping the feared house's sentient livestock culled, complacent, and ready for sale.

Tracinoa: Subtle and guarded, the lightly spoken intimates of House Tracinoa have supplied Zirnakaynin with water for centuries. Coaxing vital fluids from the rocks themselves and controlling the flow of the Endless Tear, Tracinoa provides the whole city with limited liquid rations. Those who seek to cheat the water bringers or steal the house's precious commodity often find themselves dead with their next drink, killed either by the family's master poisoners or by assassins in the service of their faceless demonic patron, Jubilex. Matron Valisava has a reputation for being one of the most mercenary leaders of the city, willing to sell her family's services as water bringers and poisoners to any who can pay her exorbitant prices.

Vexidyre: It's said that gold-palmed House Vexidyre has a hand in every pocket of Zirnakaynin. Master traders and silken-tongued orators, the house of beauteous Matron Ulavakasa excels at half-truths, falsehoods, and honing lying into an art form. Agents of Vexidyre regulate the trade of Ovessia, damning those merchants who don't have prior arrangements with the family or pay their hefty bribes to the trash market of Drashes. Worshipers of the bloody demon lord Shax, the tenacious house wages business and politics like war, and their skirmishes upon the council floors of Illeccinoc prove no less deadly than actual battlefield combat.

Vonnarc: The black-cloaked mages of House Vonnarc are a mystery even unto themselves. The house's mages ambitiously seek ever greater and more depraved mystical secrets, often keeping their discoveries from their own family. With the aid of house Azrinae and Vonnarc's patron demon Areshkagal, House Vonnarc has recently discovered how to open and pervert the magic of their ancestor's mysterious elf gates, bending these fantastic portals to their will. Ancient Matron Pravora, renowned as a master of divination, has long obsessed with her research and the manipulation of her children, yet is rarely seen outside her demon-guarded laboratories. In her obsessed absence, the house's eldest scion, First Daughter Alicavniiss, orchestrates most of Vonnarc's dealings within the city and beyond.

Lesser Houses

The lesser houses hold bastions throughout the city, in Eirdrisseir, on the streets of Cocyrdavarin, and even in the pit of Rygirnan.

Caldrana: From their iron fortress amid the fires of Rygirnan, House Caldrana stokes the forge flames of Zirnakaynin, supplying the city with an endless supply of worked goods and masterfully crafted weapons. Occupying a position of dubious honor as the city's only male leader, Patron Zov is a monster of an elf, a powerfully muscled master smith who many say is possessed by Caldrana's demonic master, Flauros himself. Zov wields a gigantic greataxe called Char, an atrocity of black steel and fiery crystal that few other drow could even hope to heft.

Misraria: Few know the streets and shadows of Zirnakaynin better than House Misraria, the worshipers of Noctacula, Demon Queen of Darkness. Fleet-footed messengers, keepers of confidences, and silencers of loose tongues, the house of spies and assassins has eyes everywhere and barter secrets like gemstones. Matron Zoveinia furiously seeks to give birth to a female heir, yet her past seven pregnancies yielded males. Supposedly, none of these children—nor their sires—have survived.

Moivas: These verminlords control the beasts of Zirnakaynin, the creatures of the fields, the steeds of the elite, and the monstrosities that lurk in the surrounding wilds. Matron Paphagehia receives widespread mockery for doting on her deformed, blind daughter, Yagonol, keeping the malformed youth close like a favored pet. Paphagehia murderously rebukes such attacks, though, claiming the girl possess strange insights into the will of the house's disgusting patron demon lord, Mazmezz.

Parastric: The only noble house not to keep a palace within Zirnakaynin, House Parastric is quietly reviled by the other nobles, yet far too useful and deadly to be shunned. From the Moaning Vault, south of Cocyrdavarin, insane alchemists of Parastric hone the perverse art of fleshwarping. In their profane laboratories they merge mad alchemy and the abyssal energies of their patron demon lord, Haagenti, to sculpt and transform living beings. From their terrifying halls skitter driders and other horrific fleshwarps. Yet the house's unhinged geniuses don't restrict their experiments to outsiders alone; nearly every scion of House Parastric bears the mark of fleshwarping, either from a single augmented limb to an entirely, monstrously reshaped body. The unnaturally beautiful Matron Astranovidova leads Parastric and is often seen within Zirnakaynin attended by her drider daughter Mardeis, promoting their house's obscene powers with offers both repellent and perversely tempting.

Sardavic: The Cyclic Sublime serves as both Zirnakaynin's center of artistic debauchery and the palace of House Sardavic, the city's foremost patrons and critics of art and the avant-garde. Matron Sarlottia—a prima donna in her own right—and her retinue of currently favored offspring organize daily spectacles upon the opera house's public stages, dedicating each display to the boundless vice and imagination of their demonic patron Socothbenoth.



Udrinor: More than simple farmers, the drow of House Udrinor control the spread of edible fungi in Zirnakaynin and the numerous surrounding caverns. In addition to filling the city's storehouses and dominating the efforts of independent harvesters, Udrinor disposes of bodies for the city, composting most to feed their treasured crops and sacrificing others to the verminous brood of their patron demon Cyth-V'sug. Matron Holtavoma frequently tours her family's holdings outside the city, and it's said that she and her daughters cultivate a strange control over their moldering forests.

COCYRDAVARIN

The largest of the three caverns bearing Zirnakaynin's weight, Cocyrdayarin holds the city proper. From this vast central chamber thousands of drow live and die amid the magically lit streets of the bladed city. Cascading across the shadowed plateaus from Illeccinoc at its heart, three districts comprise Zirnakaynin: The Last City, the oldest and most extravagant ward at the cavern's height; Arshyvar, the middle market district; and Ghenavoc upon the cavern floor, where the city's poorest toil to survive. Within these districts and beyond lie hundreds of locales, a few of the most noteworthy being summarized here.

1. The Broken Chain: A curious sort of drow, **Pharnis Xharn** (LE male drow ranger 7) touts his out-of-the-way inn as a welcoming resting place for non-drow visitors to Zirnakaynin. Xharn also runs a side business selling information about his guests to Garrien Eztereim in Rygirnan.

2. Vostrac: Occupying a cavernous corner of Cocyrdayarin, the slum of Vostrac serves as prison and showroom for Zirnakaynin's slave population. Overseen by the scions and merciless guards of House Rasivrein, hundreds of slaves march from the fortress daily, directed to fill the workhouses, toil in the fungal fields, mine unyielding metals, and perform dozens of other unforgiving tasks in and around the city. Emissaries of the city's rich and noble families also frequently visit Vostrac, touring the slums looking for the most comely, fit, or skilled to serve as servants—a fate far more desirably than one endlessly under the lash of Vostrac's sadistic guards.

3. Citadel Toraiyor: Guarding the passage to Zirnakaynin's outlying settlements and farmlands, Zirnakaynin's largest population of enslaved driders reside here and within caves in the surrounding walls. **Gharhaz** (CE male drider fighter 9) currently reigns as the most skilled veteran among the fleshwarps' ranks.

4. Flauros's Eyes: Several deep crags perforate the northeastern reach of Cocyrdayarin, steep pits that fall all the way into the lava-filled cavern of Rygirnan below. While some flying travelers use the gaps as passages between the two layers, the constant seep of noxious steam deters most airborne or wall-walking traffic.

5. Reek: A warehouse converted into a flophouse, the Reek gains its name from its most common patrons: troglodyte travelers. **Slumlord "Face Eater" Ragot** (CE troglodyte barbarian 4/fighter 4) sells hammocks or flea-ridden pallets for a mere silver piece, but few non-troglodytes can stand the place's pervasive stench or deadly nightly brawls for food and space. Regardless of the stinking, dangerous occupants that crowd the warehouse nightly, it is widely known that few drow would ever set foot in the filthy slum, making it a last resort for all manner of wanted refugees.

6. Drashes: Amid the tenements and workhouses of Ghenavoc sprawl the filthy paths and dangerous alleys of Drashes, the Gray Market. Where perfumed officials strictly regulate the commerce of Ovessia, in Drashes anyone or anything can sell anyone or anything. Thugs for hire, second-hand slaves, questionable alchemy, drugs, poisons, dark magic, and untold other wares that even the unscrupulous merchants of Ovessia would balk at selling are found in ready supply. Unsurprisingly, crime runs rampant here, with theft, arson, murder, and all manner of double-dealing taking place in the perpetual twilight. City guardsmen rarely bother to enter the market, preferring to let the foreigners, the poor, and the desperate sort out their own squabbles. In light of an absent government, the dark stalker **Xomos Fain** (NE male dark stalker rogue 9) and his gang of drow and dark folk assassins command the market's only protection racket.

7. The Scree: Within this abandoned and half-collapsed workhouse toils **Vi'Ing** (CE female derro fighter 6) and her band of derro slavers. The maniacal flesh peddlers run a risky game, capturing the poor and sick of Ghenavoc and selling them to derro outside the city for all manner of perverse experiments. Although widely hidden from public view, many of the city's matriarchs and information mongers know of the insane conspirators, yet let them run their deadly game, sometimes secretly utilizing the derro to disappear their own enemies.

8. Plazas of Travail: In numerous places throughout the city, winding streets end in broad circular plazas, places of dark beauty decorated with linthcrafted rock gardens or mosaics of heatless mage fire. These Plazas of Travail seek to remind the drow of the Abandonment—the dark days after Earthfall—and the descent into the Darklands that almost eradicated the catastrophe's survivors.

9. The Garden of Chayt: Supposedly the last daughter of some unnamed, extinct noble family, the so-called **Matron Chayt** (LE female drow aristocrat 4/rogue 6) touts herself as a beneficiary of the common drow. From her estate amid linthcrafted obsidian gardens, the decadent moneylender provides capital for any venture, employing a gang of loan sharks and thugs to terrorize debtors wherever they might flee.

10. Cythvahei: Fed by a trickling supply of runoff from the stone above, the fungus-lined lake of Cythvahei is widely held as being unhealthy to drink from. Possessed of an oily sheen, the lake's waters encourage the growth of fungus and seem to attract numerous breeds of fat cave beetles. Rumors regularly tell of poor or foolish drinkers being yanked below the waters by insectile pinchers, causing most of the city's residents to avoid the waters. Two fungus-covered islands float near the lake's center, the larger serving as the refuge of the vindictive druid **Bhorvora** (CE female drow druid 11).

11. Yagasfanas: Within a massive hollow along Cocyrdavarin's northwestern edges a forest of gigantic fungi sprouts from beds of rampant mold. A strangely beautiful garden in the midst of a city of blades and stone, the forest provides a variety of rare ingredients for local mages and alchemists. Numerous outcasts seek sanctuary in the rotting cavern, living as unsuccessful beggars and pickpockets preying off the lowest rung of drow society.

12. The Blind Eye: Run by the serious duergar **Ranbhor Gost** (LE male duergar fighter 5) and **Vorjans Gost** (LE female duergar rogue 7), the Blind Eye serves a variety of bland dwarven fare and well-mixed drinks for high prices. The tavern makes most of its money off of the Gosts' promise of privacy and their hatred of snitches. Vorjans keeps a mason jar of eyes behind the bar and carries a long poker with her, with which she's become quite skilled at thrusting into the eyes of suspected spies and busybodies.

13. The Diamond Coffer: Offering questionable sanctuary to all with the coin to afford it, **Carvein Loaxorin** (NE male drow vampire rogue 8) operates a number of safe houses in and around Zirnakaynin. He assures the safety and survival of any who hire him and his associates, offering concealment and escape rather than bodyguarding services. His prices vary depending on the customer's desperation, from several platinum coins to several pints of blood.

14. The Blind Serpent: Hidden beneath a shroud of illusions and delicate veils, the beauteous, boil-covered Mistress of Venoms, **Siyis** (LE female drow sorcerer 14), maintains a vast collection of poisons and toxins for sale. Aside from actual poisons, numerous venomous animals fill her collections, some having undergone fleshwarping to make their

natural weapons more toxic. Siyis keeps her past well hidden, but it's rumored that she collects and sells her poisons in preparation for some elaborate vengeance.

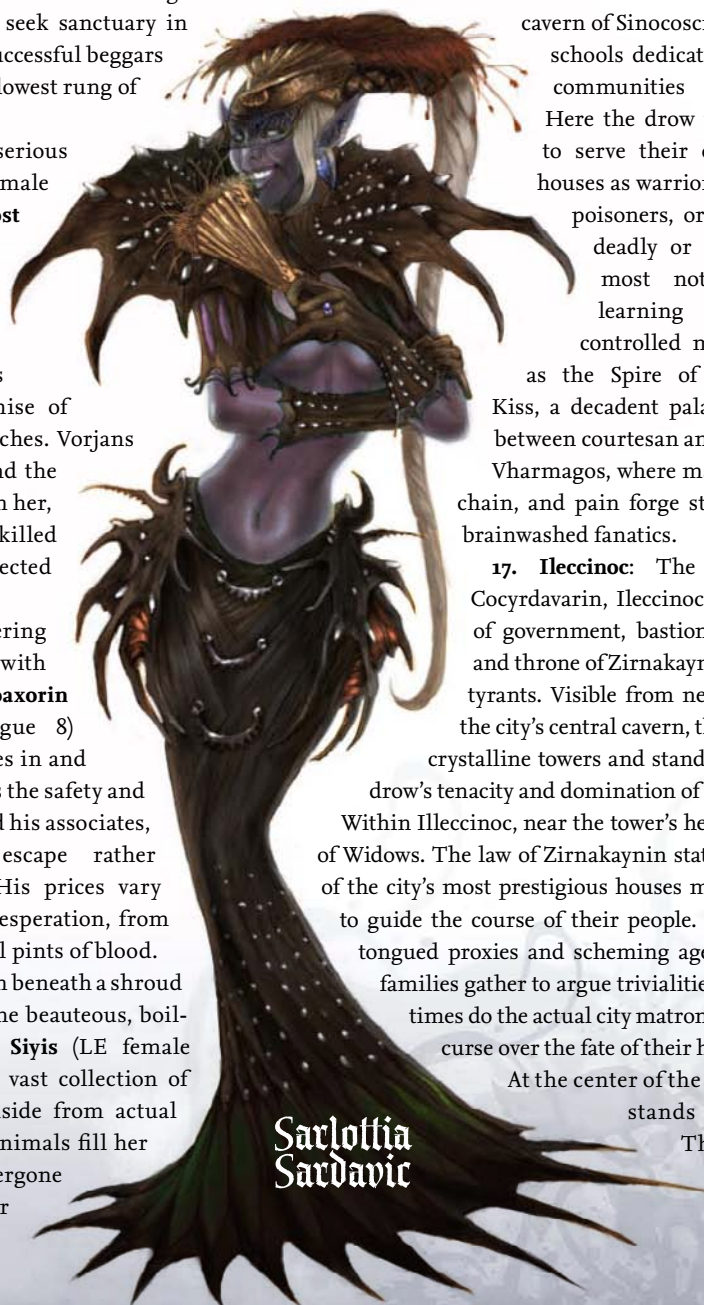
15. Mysia Falls: Running untold miles through the black depths, the natural spring known as the Endless Tear provides Zirnakaynin with the vast majority of its potable water, crashing from the stone in a series of falls feeding Lake Tymisgana below. These numerous cascades of dark water together form Mysia Falls. Tended and protected by House Tracinoa, their daily drownings in sacrifice to Jubilex assure the city's lifeblood continues to flow. It's rumored that within and behind the falls' waters lurk horrors of animate water and deadly poison.

16. Sinocoscreil: The largest side cavern of Cocyrdavarin and a distinct district of Zirnakaynin, the cavern of Sinocoscreil hosts numerous schools dedicated to dark arts and communities of mad scholars. Here the drow rich and elite train to serve their city and the noble houses as warriors, mages, assassins, poisoners, or in countless other deadly or debased ways. The most noteworthy halls of learning are the Vonnarc-controlled mage school known as the Spire of Avnac; the White Kiss, a decadent palace where the lines between courtesan and assassin blur; and Vharmagos, where masters of bow, blade, chain, and pain forge students into deadly, brainwashed fanatics.

17. Ileccinoc: The topless tower of Cocyrdavarin, Ileccinoc serves as the heart of government, bastion of the city guard, and throne of Zirnakaynin's once and future tyrants. Visible from nearly any location in the city's central cavern, the tower sparks with crystalline towers and stands as a symbol of the drow's tenacity and domination of the dark.

Within Ileccinoc, near the tower's heart, lies the Council of Widows. The law of Zirnakaynin states that the matrons of the city's most prestigious houses must meet here daily to guide the course of their people. In practice, poison-tongued proxies and scheming agents of the 12 noble families gather to argue trivialities. Only in the direst times do the actual city matrons meet to shriek and curse over the fate of their homeland.

At the center of the Council of Widows stands the Soulwrought Throne, the ultimate seat of rulership over



Zirnakaynin. Crafted of black diamond and said to contain the tortured spirits of a thousand betrayers, the vaulted throne stands in reserve for the Tyrant of Zirnakaynin. At any time, the Council of Widows may, through unanimous vote, elect an individual to lead the city, a ruler whose word all drow must obey. Due to the council's fractious nature, though, only in times of the direst need—thrice in all recorded drow history—have the matriarchs managed to agree upon a tyrant. Even should a tyrant be chosen, though, her rule is limited to a single year of omnipotence. Believing that even a deposed tyrant would be a danger to the city's stability, drow law states that after the tyrant's year ends she must abdicate the throne and meet execution by the Council of Widows. Thus, like much in drow life, the Soulwrought Throne promises incredible power, but ultimate death.

18. The Sire: Zirnakaynin's only gentlemen's club, the Sire provides an escape for subjugated male members of the drow elite, granting respite, diversion, and a place for men to meet away from their mothers' and sisters' matriarchal scrutiny. For centuries the posh estate has served as a hotbed of social unrest and faces constant threat of matronly retribution, but owner Master **Jhondron Hois** (CN male drow bard 4/fighter 6) retains the support of numerous wealthy noble sons and maintains a legion of all-male guards who deter regular attacks.

19. The Cyclic Sublime: One of the largest structures in Zirnakaynin, this dual opera house and arena hosts nightly performances ranging from the avant-garde to the obscene. Boasting a massive dome of patterned crimson glass and the names of the city's currently favored performers, gladiators, and torturers blazing in illusory flames, the Cyclic Sublime regularly draws massive crowds, with many of the city's most potent personalities attending regularly. Currently, crowds flock to the Cyclic Sublime to witness a number of popular performances including: weekly Bloodbouts, gladiatorial events typically featuring uneven matches between slaves and various captured or summoned beasts; the music of the twin castratos Rovomos and Somovor; and the gallery showings of the fleshwarped artist of webs known as **Breathless** (CE female fleshwarped drow bard 8/rogue 4).

20. House Rasivrein: The imperious Rasivrein family distains the soft decadences of Eirdrisseir, choosing long ago to live among the city's people in the heart of Zirnakaynin. From their walled palace, the city's flesh-mongers keep a close eye on their ventures in Ileccinoc and across the plateaus behind the iron fortification of their slave city Vostrac.

21. Ovessia: Locally known as the Pale Market, Ovessia draws ambitious and audacious traders from throughout the Darklands. Those who would do business there must first apply for permission and have their wares inspected for quality and suitability at the Commission, a massive

silver-domed warehouse at the market's northwestern edge. Here, **Cognoscenti Letiandeil Dirvond** (CE female tiefling bard 14)—a greedy drow-tiefling in service to House Vexidyre—and her legion of exacting inspectors oversee the market's smooth and profitable operation. Those who they reject are denied space in the market, while those accepted must pay a variety of ludicrous daily fees. Shoppers in Ovessia find crowded booths, tents, carts, and stalls of sizes and varieties, manned by haggling traders of dozens of races—primarily drow, but duergar, derro, dark folk, and even merchants from other planes find their way to the city. A determined buyer can find nearly anything he desires here, from magic, to drugs, to any other treasure or vice imaginable.

22. Lake Tymisgana: Two bodies connected by a sizable river, Cocydavarin's northern waters are together known as Lake Tymisgana. Groves of gigantic mushrooms line the darkened waters' shores, favorite spots for varied clandestine meetings. Numerous rumors hold that deep within the lake hide trenches with no bottoms, stories reinforced by records of strange creatures emerging to wreak havoc upon the city.

23. Venom Kiss: A pleasure den catering to lesser drown nobles and rich merchants, Venom Kiss offers a wide menu of depraved diversions, from music and alcohol to drugs and pleasure slaves. Venom Kiss is fully detailed on page 40.

24. Enigma: An odd sort of boutique, the heavily cloaked trader **Iyrnadine** (NE male urdefhan sorcerer 8) deals in curios from throughout the Darklands and mysteries forgotten to both the world above and below. Although his crowded showroom holds vast and varied oddities—some quite dangerous—the one objet d'art he refuses to part with for any price is some manner of sarcophagus shaped like a golem bound in iron bands.

25. Vivirnis, The Chapel of Sovereigns (above area 6): High above the floor of Ghenavoc the ancient stone of Cocydavarin's ceiling bubbles into a gigantic dome. Into the walls of this dome the drow have constructed 12 cavernous shrines, dedicating one to each of the city's demonic patrons. Each chapel supports a cult of fanatics who make daily sacrifices to their respective demon lords and ever seek to divine their dark wills. Currently, the most potent cults are those dedicated to Andirifku and Noctula, led by the masochistic priest **Kaivhoniell Roggas** (CE male drow cleric 8/rogue 4) and the darkly beautiful **Iyron Vashan** (CE female drow cleric 10/demonic initiate 5), respectively.

EIRDRISEIR

Those who pass through Nirvestas's Crucible, the great gaps in the ceiling of Cocydavarin, or ascend through the winding tunnels south of the city eventually reach Eirdrisseir, the realm of Zirnakaynin's noble families. A vast, cavern dotted by groves of eerie fungus and broken by rugged cliffs, here the palatial homes of the majority of Zirnakaynin's noble families and most influential



socialites loom over the largely barren landscape. Dominating the western cavern, the stalagmite-tower of Ileccinoc's protrudes from the caverns below, while elsewhere lie the scattered boutiques of the city's most stylish merchants and the holds of rich mercenaries, spies, and other nefarious sorts.

26. House Dolour: The death-trap citadel of Nirzevren houses the sly stalkers of House Dolour. Half decadent palace and half labyrinthine training ground, House Dolour always appears deserted from a distance, though in truth hidden assassins and invisible monstrosities guard the house well. Aside from the occasional healer, alchemist, or herbalist, few are ever seen visiting Nirzevren and even fewer are witnessed leaving.

27. House Vexidyre: Veins of silver, jade, malachite, mithral, and more exotic materials trace the spires of many-towered House Vexidyre. Easily the most extravagant palace of the drow nobles, the house employs no soldiers, trusting to various constructs hidden within the lavish architecture to defend the family should need arise.

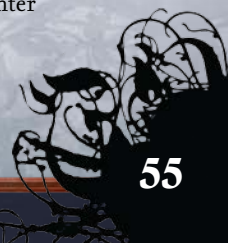
28. House Azrinae: A legion of demons and drow warriors heavily armed with ancient drow magic guard the largely deserted Azrinae compound. First Son Kardinnyr guards his familial home tenaciously, keeping his men on constant alert and having emptied the house's vaults of

arcane weaponry—several pieces of which he doesn't fully understand how to control.

29. The Irresistible: A boutique and meeting ground for wealthy drow, the vast halls of this pleasure palace are available to arrange a variety of grandiose events, from finely catered galas, presentations by skilled and exotic merchants, and elaborate funerals. In addition to a network of professional servants, **House Master Ghandirrik Fesh** (NE male drow bard 9) employs his own troupe of skilled actors and assassins, The Double Dagger Players. Daring nobles delight in the Double Dagger's performances, as every performance holds the risk of a climatic assassination.

30. House Moivas: The citadel of Zirnakaynin's vermin keepers crawls the walls of Eirdrissier like the towers of giant exotic ants. In addition to the house's carapace-armored guardsmen, a number of Colossal centipedes enthralled by the family's worshipers of Mazmezz aid in protecting the palace.

31. Ileccinoc: Linthicrafted from a single gigantic stalagmite, this grandiose tower connects with the tower of Ileccinoc situated in Cocyrdavrin directly below. Within this expanse lie the offices and salons of emissaries from outlying drow communities, as well as redoubt of the city's scouts and spies under the command of Second Daughter **Tiris Dolour** (CE female drow rogue 11/assassin 4).



32. The Shimmerdeeps: A myriad of multicolored algae and floating fungi cover the pools of tainted water at Eirdrisseir's heart. Regardless of their noxious quality, the swirls of toxic runoffs and waving fungi give the shadowed pools an ominous, otherworldly beauty.

33. The Poison Key: Situated at the center of a land bridge between the Shimmerdeeps, this lavish festhall caters to wealthy drow women. The house employs a retinue of blind drider slaves, allowing Madam **Eimirrine Tirdranoir** (LE female drow bard 8/rogue 6) to maintain her establishment's promise of absolute confidence.

34. Nirvestas's Crucible: These deep pits connect Eirdrisseir and Cocyrdavrin. Drow with the ability to fly or levitate as well as caravans of wall-crawling creatures often forgo the typical tunnels connecting the two great caverns in favor of these vertical shortcuts.

35. House Vonnarc: The grounds of House Vonnarc hold both the Vonnarc palace and the arcane Tower Solacas. Both are detailed in this month's adventure, "Endless Night."

36. The Darkling Eye: This is the showroom of prestigious jeweler **Vheinso Unisva** (CE male drow bard 5), a vindictive perfectionist and favorite customer of Matron Sarlottia Sardavic. He constantly competes with the silverwork of rival Garrien Eztereim.

37. House Misraria: The cavernous ceiling of Eirdrisseir hangs close over the obsidian minarets of House Misraria. Rumors hold that the house guards ancient and forgotten passages into the Darklands and Cocyrdavrin below, long used by stealthy Misraria spies.

38. House Udrinor: Cultivating the spread of fungal growth around their home, the Pallid Palace, numerous breeds of moldering monstrosities lurk near the bastion of the Udrinor nobles. Named for a rare spore known only to grow upon their fortress's walls, Udrinor palace tends to sicken visitors who remain within for too long.

39. House Tracinoa: The unvalled palace of House Tracinoa welcomes all who would call, offering crystalline water and exotic refreshments. Those who visit often face a deadly paradox: deny the hospitality of one of Zirnakynin's most powerful families, or drink from the cup of some of the most skilled poisoners in the Darklands.

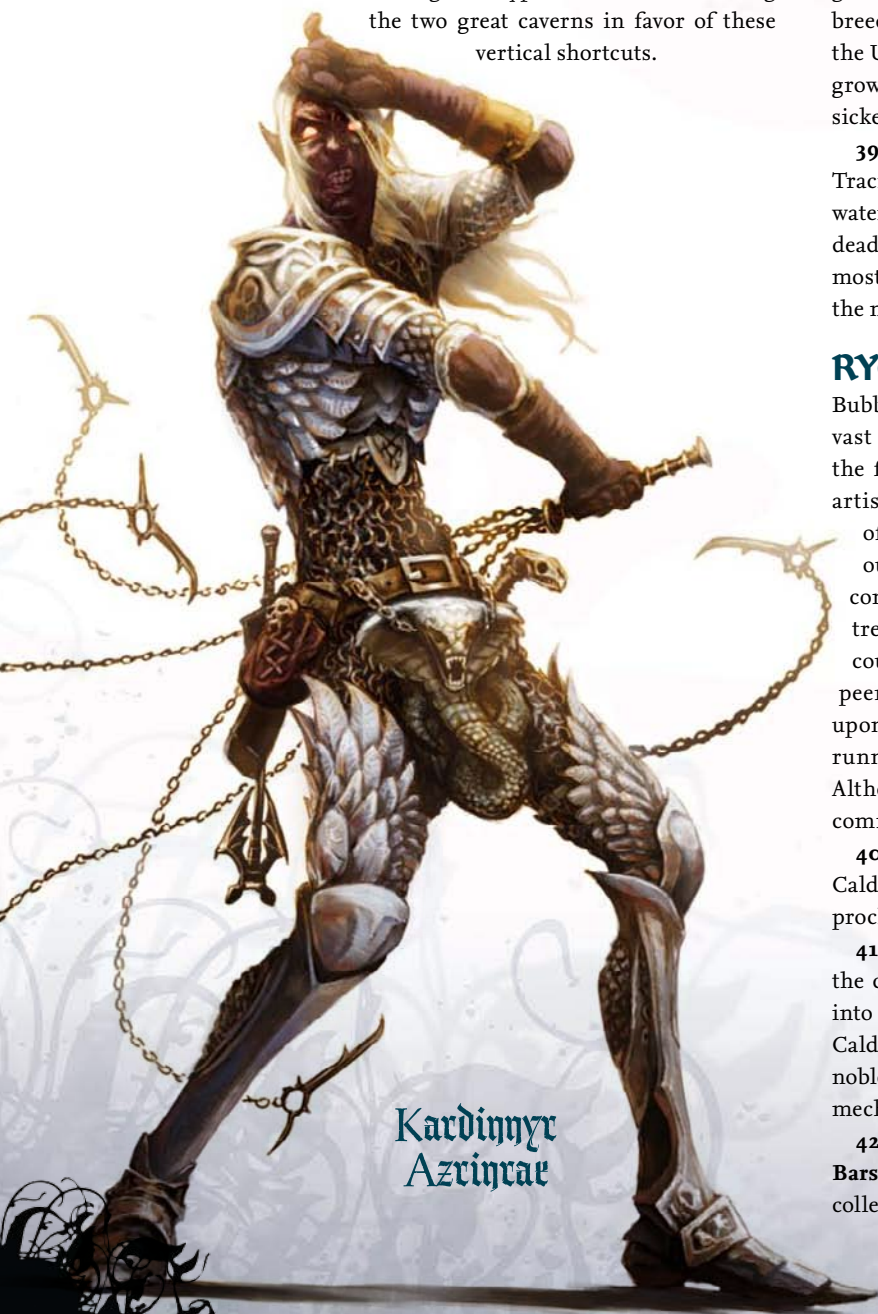
RYGIRNAN

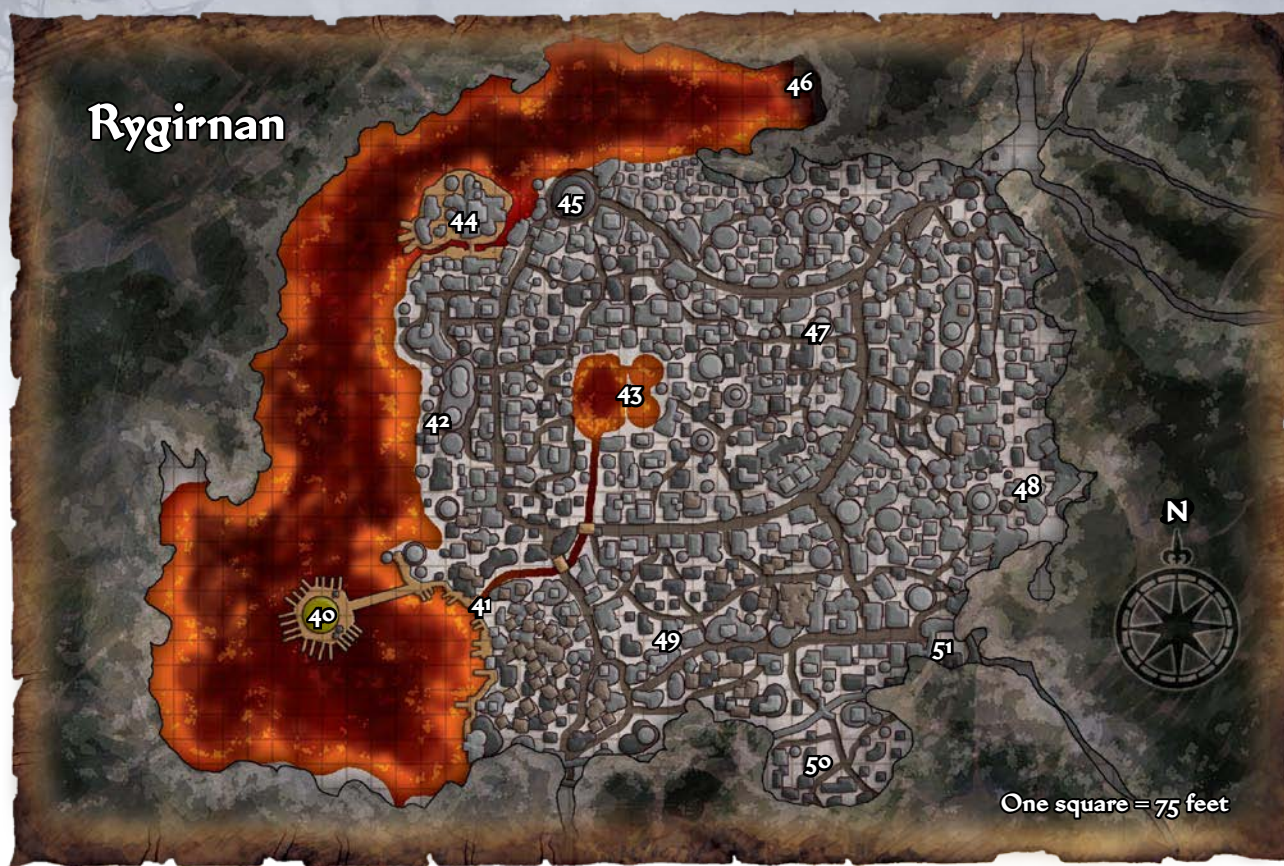
Bubbling beneath the deepest pits of Cocyrdavrin lies the vast lava lake of Rygirnan, the forge of Zirnakaynin and the foundry where the deadly craft of drow smiths and artisans take shape. Drawing upon the molten lifeblood of the earth, hundreds of workshops endlessly churn out weapons of peerless lethality and masterful construction, paying for such wonders with the mineral treasures of the surrounding mines and the blood of countless slaves. Forgoing the deadly company of their peers, the drow of House Caldrana make their home upon the lake of fire, overseeing the control and smooth running of the city's forges from their iron palace. Although a lesser family, in Rygirnan, the merciless commands of House Caldrana are law.

40. House Caldrana: The fortress-like palace of the Caldrana noble family rises above the lake of molten rock, proclaiming the family's dominance over Rygirnan.

41. The Hell Locks: A series of locks that maintain the constant temperature and motion of magma flowing into the heart of Rygirnan. Several members of the Caldrana family and the brood of **Virnixsheir** (NE male noble salamander sorcerer 4) keep the gigantic and vital mechanisms in working order.

42. The Black House: Caked in centuries of soot, **Barsonil Soamir** (CE male drow fighter 3/expert 5) runs this collective of free smiths, working in an ongoing contract





with House Razivrein to supply all manner of bindings and restraints. Soamir has long made his furnaces available to nobles seeking to disappear political foes for a price.

43. The Ashen Bath: These three interlocked pools of magma fuel the diverse workings of Rygirnan's central forges. A brood of dominated thoqqas aid in keeping the fiery rock molten and moving.

44. Citadel Solsear: A fortress and massive factory, here the House Caldrana works hundreds of slaves to exhaustion, forging weapons, armor, and other special projects for the soldiers of Zirnakeynin. The mad drow and adopted Caldrana, Third Son **Luaxis Caldrana** (CE male drow expert 14/rogue 4) maintains a workshop here, indulging his gift for creating brilliant war machines and elegant torture devices.

45. Blisterfont: The largest of several waterfountains maintained by House Tracinoa, **Ioam Tracinoa** (CE female drow cleric 7) and her demonic guardians assure that the smiths of Rygirnan pay high prices for the cool liquids they require.

46. The Flamefall: A massive rent in the earth, through which the Lake of Fire empties into untold burning depths deep within the earth below. A gang of rowdy fire mephits often loiter about the falls, while somewhere below lies the lair of the balor Arn the Embersoul, an ally of the first Tyrant of Zirnakeynin.

47. The Silver Tongue: Here the silversmith **Garrien Eztereim** (NE female drow rogue 6) creates some of the finest jewelry in Zirnakeynin and manipulates a vast web of informants. She constantly wars with Vheinso Unisva, both publicly and between their oft-shared sheets.

48. The Scraphouse: The hulking former Black House smith **Diarnis Vhis** (CE female tiefling ranger 8) pays well for scrap metal. Already unnerving her neighbors by keeping her rust monster pet, Ironhide, her seemingly canny mind and lust for such worthless trash has baffled locals for years.

49. Drin's: A simple, low class tool shop run by the dark creeper **Drin** (CN male dark creeper rogue 4). The paranoid dark creeper seeks to find his sister, a slave of House Caldrana, and keeps a hidden basement under his shop.

50. Voltharm: This is House Razivrein's largest slave camp in Rygirnan, where slaves too untrustworthy or monstrous are housed between exhausting bouts in the nearby mines or local forges.

51. Citadel Cionis: A barrier between Rygirnan's forges and tunnels that stretch deep into the Darklands, several legions of veteran drow warriors under the command of **Miakarva Udrinor** (NE female drow fighter 8/cleric 3) guard the city from the horrors of Sekamina and Orv below. (See *Into the Darklands* for further details on these subterranean realms and beyond.)



Abominations of the Drow

During the Time of Darkness, after the aboleths called down devastation upon Azlant, the surface elves who did not flee to Sovyrian took shelter in the depths of the earth. With the myriad challenges of life in the Darklands, those that would come to be known as drow were forced to seek succor from any divinities who would listen. As long as they could, they held fast to their faiths from the surface world, but as starvation and madness took its toll, the forsaken children of light answered the call of entities offering them salvation: the demon lords of the Abyss.

Formerly a bright and peace-loving race, the elves' corruption hastened under their new masters. Among the fiendish lords, one—Haagenti—schemed to use these elves as his playthings and lead them to ruin, but over time they grew stronger, crueler, and utterly unconcerned with the sanctity of life. As they became more like demonkind, the Lord of Alchemy and Change began to value the drow

for their utility. One of the most horrific secrets Haagenti gifted to his new servants was the secret of fleshwarping, the disturbing practice of permanently twisting an individual's bodily form, often merging it with parts of other creatures.

Fleshwarping is used as a general term to refer to two separate practices. The first, true fleshwarping, is a violent and painful practice wherein an entire body is transformed into a new form. The second type is fleshcrafting. This is the art of making permanent physical modifications by mutating or replacing body parts with features inspired by vermin. The use of a magically enhanced poison is required to complete the process of fleshcrafting, which always brings with it the risk of death. It's possible to ingest this poison without making the physical modifications permanent, causing the body part to temporarily transform into the desired form, but it still carries with it the often long-term affects associated with drinking poison.

In those first darkened days, there was a choice of fates: starvation, plague, enslavement, madness. The weakest among them proved burdensome on the strong, the hungry starved the hearty, the feeble sickened the healthy. They were on the verge of extinction.

Then they heard the calls of the shadows, the whispers in the dark. The demons, terrible and mighty, spoke to them, saying "Venerate us, and you shall have all you need to survive. Praise us, and you shall have all you need to conquer." And they listened, and built their first temple to the powers of the Abyss.

They sacrificed their starved. They offered up their sick. They laid their slaves upon the altar for the demons to place their immortal touch. And when they pulled their slaves down from the altars, they were as abominations.

—The Lightless Scrolls, Volume I: The Scroll of Screaming

FLESHWARPING SUBJECTS

Fleshwarping subjects come primarily from drow stock. While the drow often capture members of other races and choose fleshwarping as a means of eliminating the threat they pose without actually killing them, they find far more candidates for these alterations among their own kind. A drow who instigates a rebellion against an established matron is sure to become a drider. Other candidates include any drow who are born with birth defects or mental deficiencies, caught after committing a vicious crime against another drow who is politically in favor at the time, or who simply find themselves on the outskirts of drow society and run afoul of the wrong house.

The candidates for fleshcrafting are slightly different. While this is still largely reserved for the undesirables in drow society, a fair number are simply warriors who find themselves disfigured through combat. A drow who loses an arm in battle might have that arm replaced with a burrowing claw, or a drow who was born without a hand might be willing to submit to having an arachnid as a substitute. Drow who willingly agree to these partial metamorphoses are still considered freaks of society, but they are also accorded grudging respect and encouraged to fight alongside ordinary drow warriors.

TRUE FLESHWARPING

True fleshwarping is the practice of completely altering a creature's physical and mental form by submerging them in strange reagents. The formula for the mixture was one of the first things imparted to the drow when they agreed to receive aid from Haagenti, the better to survive and adapt to their harsh environment. It was preserved in their holy texts so that it would be distributed to all drow, regardless of which region of Golarion they ultimately migrated to.

The process for fleshwarping is part magical and part alchemical. It is performed by a team including an alchemist, a devotee of Haagenti, and occasionally a torturer. While incantations are offered to Haagenti, a fleshwarper makes incisions in the restrained subject's flesh into which he inserts tubes; the other ends of all but one of these tubes are connected to pots of bubbling

alchemical substances. These substances act to break down the subject's corporeal form and make it more malleable.

Assuming the subject survives the alchemical infusion, fleshwarpers monitor the subject's condition while forcing a breathing tube into the subject's throat. Unable to speak, the subject is at best able to make strangled screams as assistants lower the center portion of the table, revealing a tub filled with searing alchemical goo into which the subject is lowered. A fleshwarper then introduces a sizeable quantity of live insects or other vermin as well, the better to devour dying tissue and make way for the new flesh that springs forth. Subjects are generally kept awake during these procedures so as to experience the full horror and pain of their warping. Once immersed in the compound, the subject's body goes through a rapid series of transformations. During the entire process, the subject is wracked with the agony of the change, suffering 2d6 points of Constitution damage (DC 15 Fortitude save for half).

Once the transformation concludes, the subject is expected to climb out of the alchemical bath under his own power. If he does not emerge within 3 rounds, the fleshcrafter immerses the breathing tube in the alchemical bath, and the subject begins to drown.

The alchemical solution is expensive, difficult to create, and expended after a single use. The actual ingredients of the alchemical solution include a number of rare components combining various types of fungus, several fully pulverized and destroyed oozes, the poison from various breeds of giant spider. Overall, such true fleshwarping brews cost upward of 10,000 gp. Rarely can all the necessary components be found in one market, often requiring fleshwarpers to make special reagent gathering excursions.

FLESHWARPERS

"Fleshwarper" is a term that refers to the alchemist-butchers and Haagenti worshipers who perform fleshwarping rituals. Haagenti's fascination with magical concoctions and unnatural experimentation upon living creatures is legendary, and he imparted his knowledge to the drow so

they can both aid in his research and reap the benefits of his work. Fleshwarpers have very little regard for life outside of their twisted curiosity and perverse need to experiment.

Fleshwarping laboratories are filled with all manner of surgical devices, some of which bear more resemblance to torture implements. Scalpels, forceps, spreaders, and other, more specialized equipment can be found throughout a typical laboratory. All are meticulously sterilized before slicing, poking, or otherwise exploring the skin of a subject—though they care little for their patients, they'd hardly want infection to set in after they were done and destroy their work.

Fleshwarpers are craftsmen at heart. They see themselves as drow who specialize in taking inferior individuals and modifying them until they become useful again. In cases where the modified creatures fulfill no purpose when they are done, such as the gomnits, they view these transformations as holy artwork devoted to Haagenti—or, for the more pragmatic fleshwarpers, simply the disposal of an enemy in a way that brings amusement to all.

In Zirnakaynin, the Haagenti worshiping drow of House Parastric perform the majority of the city's fleshwarping and fleshcrafting. While members of their own house often take on fleshwarped augmentations, they also offer these services to all with the wealth to pay. As such, an untold number of slaves, soldiers, and horrific guardians throughout the city bear the shocking results of House Parastric's perverse alterations.

DRIDERS AND OTHER HORRORS

The alchemical process that creates driders has always fascinated fleshwarpers and matrons alike, as the same process achieves wildly different results when applied to other races. This discovery led to a great deal of experimentation, some of which produced results so dangerous and uncontrollable that the drow were forced to destroy them. One law seems to apply to fleshwarping different creatures, however: those creatures who are inherently evil tend to transform into forms that are changed, yet useful to the drow, while primarily good creatures tend to transform into useless, tormented things that spend the rest of their natural existence in a state of tortured helplessness. Half-breeds, such as half-orcs or half-elves, usually transform into creatures that reflect their non-human side.

For all of these transformed creatures, there exist only two ways to escape: magic as powerful as a *wish* or *miracle* spell can undo the physical transformation, or the release of death—and most fleshwarpers are careful to ensure that release does not come soon. Several of the abominations created by subjecting different races to this procedure follow.

Driders (drow): With these creatures, the upper body remains much the same as its original drow form, but the

lower body undergoes a radical alteration, taking on the shape of an enormous spider. The lower torso extends, and the drow's legs merge and bloat into an engorged thorax which tapers to web-producing spinnerets. Eight spindly legs sprout from the body and grow until proportional with the new form.

An oddity among fleshwarped creatures, drow males and females yield different drider forms. While females emerge as centaur-like drow-spider hybrids, retaining much of their minds and their darkly beautiful elven forms, male driders become more spider-like, their faces taking on an insectile quality with fanged mandibles and multiple spidery eyes in addition to their arachnid lower bodies. Male driders also tend toward savagery and the patient, bloody hunting tactics of staking spiders, though their reason is otherwise little impacted. Regardless, both drider genders are outcasts, unfit for drow society.

The vast majority of driders are male. As females hold an elevated position in drow culture, few submit to such a horrifying process as fleshwarping. Those women who do become driders typically either do so for their own insane purposes, or as punishment for some terrible crime against their people.

Despite the rarity of drider females, the fleshwarps also possess a potentially unique quality that still baffles fleshwarpers: Driders breed true, and are capable of producing offspring with either other driders or drow males. In all other frequently fleshwarped races, the trauma of fleshwarping leaves the victim unable to spawn. Though not common, 1 in 3 drider pregnancies result in an actual, healthy drider child. This has led to the appearance of several small communities of life-long driders either dwelling on the fringes of drow civilization or purposefully broken from their elven ancestors to pursue lives of their own.

Dwarves: For millennia drow have attempted and failed to fleshwarp dwarves. The results, despite endless permutations of varied fleshwarping formulae, always produces a useless, quivering, deformed flesh mass that never survives more than a few moments. While a mad fleshwarper of Far Parathra, Giobsod of the Fumes, claims to have created a many-legged burrowing beast from dwarven stock, the outcast's reports are widely dismissed.

Ghonhatine (troglodytes): Ghonhatines result when a troglodyte is subject to the fleshwarping procedure. The basic form of the troglodyte changes very little during the fleshwarping procedure, but the size of the creature increases dramatically. Troglodytes begin the process as man-sized reptilian humanoids; by the time it's done, they're twice as big, slightly slouched, and extremely vicious. See page 84 for more details on ghonhatines.

Gomnits (gnomes): Gnomes subjected to the process are reduced to a mockery of their former state. Arms and legs

disappear into bodies, heads flatten downwards, and faces are reduced to featureless holes. The end result resembles a strange fleshy mushroom. Gonnits suffer a terrible curse as their newly fleshy, porous, and constantly moist and warm bodies make their forms ideal breeding grounds for all manner of dangerous slimes and funguses. Yellow mold in particular flourishes upon the fleshwarps' bodies. Although gonnits prove immune to the disgusting parasites, those who take pity on the pathetic beings often come to regret their charity.

Grothlut (humans): Humans are more fortunate than most in that most of their self-awareness is lost in their transformation. Once submerged, a human's body changes into a white, formless mass. Legs disappear completely, and though arms still exist, they become rubbery and lack strength. Facial features smooth out—the nose sinks in, the cheeks widen and flatten, and the eyes become pale and seem to meld in with the surrounding skin. All body hair melts away, and what is left is a pale, sexless creature that resembles a slug in many ways, except that the new creature still retains some remnant of its head and arms.

Halsora (vegepygmies): Halsora result when a vegepygmy is subject to the fleshwarping procedure. The creatures' physical forms are changed very little, the major exception being that the area where their eyes once were is transformed to a continually flowing water duct, earning them the moniker "the weeping beasts."

Irnakurse (elves): When elves are subjected to the transformation, arms and legs disappear into the core of their being and the elf elongates to nearly 8 feet tall. The base of these creatures is stump-like, capped with numerous branch-like protrusions that inhale and exhale, constantly emitting a ghostly, reedy howl which pervades any area where they have been placed. Their former faces are stretched along the upper portion of the pillar, distorted into a permanently preserved scream. The drow enjoy seeing this fate befall their hated enemies, so they often place these creatures on display in places of prestige. See page 86 for more details on irnakurse.

Jashoi (halfling): Transformed into unsettling quadrupedal beasts by the fleshwarping process, halflings become insane, scampering jashoi. With faces given constant, cannibal grins and their spines protruding through tight skin in a arched arch, jashoi screech and scream, bite and curse in uncontrollable mania. Finding the beastly things annoying and unmanageable, only good for the cruelest entertainments, dark elves rarely fleshwarp halflings. Those that do exist are usually kept as pets or loosed like stray dogs on the streets. Most unsettling, jashoi are usually recognizable for the halflings they once were, and though their minds are reduced to ape-like

intelligence, they often retain a few words, meaningless sounds that they parrot in jumbled sentences.

Oronci (orcs): Orcs put through the fleshwarping procedure result in oronci. Upon submersion in the alchemical ichor, the subject's legs merge and the lower body turns black and elongates to a length of approximately 15 feet, slimming to the width of the creature's head and becoming round. Once it has reached its full length, it segments into smaller portions, each of which sprouts a pair of short, thin legs. When the process is complete, the creature has the upper body of an orc and the lower body of a centipede, complete with poisonous spittle.

FLESHCRAFTING

While the average drow is too vain to submit to permanent body modification, their inclusion of Haagenti in their pantheon means that some are willing, under the right circumstances, to make a few adjustments. The claw of a scorpion, the fangs of a spider, the chitinous shell of a centipede—all come in useful, from time to time.



For most drow, temporary physical alterations via a fleshcrafting poison provide enough of an advantage for most short-term goals. More permanent alterations involve the terror of fleshwarping and offer larger benefits, but come with numerous drawbacks. All permanent alterations run the risk that the procedure will result in death.

Whether a transformation is permanent or only temporary, the “malformed” are not well treated in drow society. Any character who is currently under the effects of a fleshcrafting poison suffers a –5 penalty on Charisma-based checks to influence drow. Those who undergo a permanent alteration must face extreme pain in addition to the social stigma. This pain lingers long after the procedure has been completed, and often leaves its recipient mentally scarred. Some (those who miss their Fortitude save by 10 or more at the time of the procedure) suffer from chronic pain for the rest of their lives, which translates to a –3 penalty on all Fortitude saves.

Each body slot can have one modification via fleshcrafting; any additional fleshcrafting that affects the same

body slot replaces the previous modification. Fleshcrafting transformations do not prevent the character from using magic items that occupy the same body slot, unless the modification alters the body slot in such a way as to prevent the item from being worn or manipulated.

Using Fleshcrafting Poisons

For those not interested in undergoing the full transformation offered by fleshcrafting surgery, merely drinking the prepared poisons can provoke the desired changes for a limited amount of time. Imbibing a fleshcrafting poison is like activating any other magic potion, except that the changes require a full round to take effect. However, in addition to the awful taste and disturbing texture of these alchemical brews, the changes they cause are painful and can even be fatal.

Whenever a character uses a fleshcrafting poison to make a temporary change, he must make a Fortitude save. The DC for this save varies based on the poison imbibed. If the save succeeds, the poison has its listed effect, including penalties, for the duration of the fleshcrafting. If the save fails, the penalty listed with each fleshcrafting lasts twice the duration of the fleshcrafting. On any result of a natural 1 on this Fortitude save, the fleshcrafting poison fails to properly react with the creature’s body, and the acquired characteristic is cosmetic only, rendering full penalties but no benefits for the duration of the poison. In addition, the imbiber is immediately reduced to 0 hit points.

Fleshcrafting Descriptions

In addition to its name, body slot, and effect, each fleshcraft is presented in a standard format, which presents information for both the potion version and the full procedure. Each category of information is explained and defined below:

Temporary Duration: This is the length of time that the fleshcraft lasts if the recipient is merely imbibing the fleshcrafting poison for its limited effects. This does not apply to a permanent fleshcraft. If the permanent fleshcraft has a limited number of uses per day, the drinker of the poison may use the ability that many times during the duration of the poison.

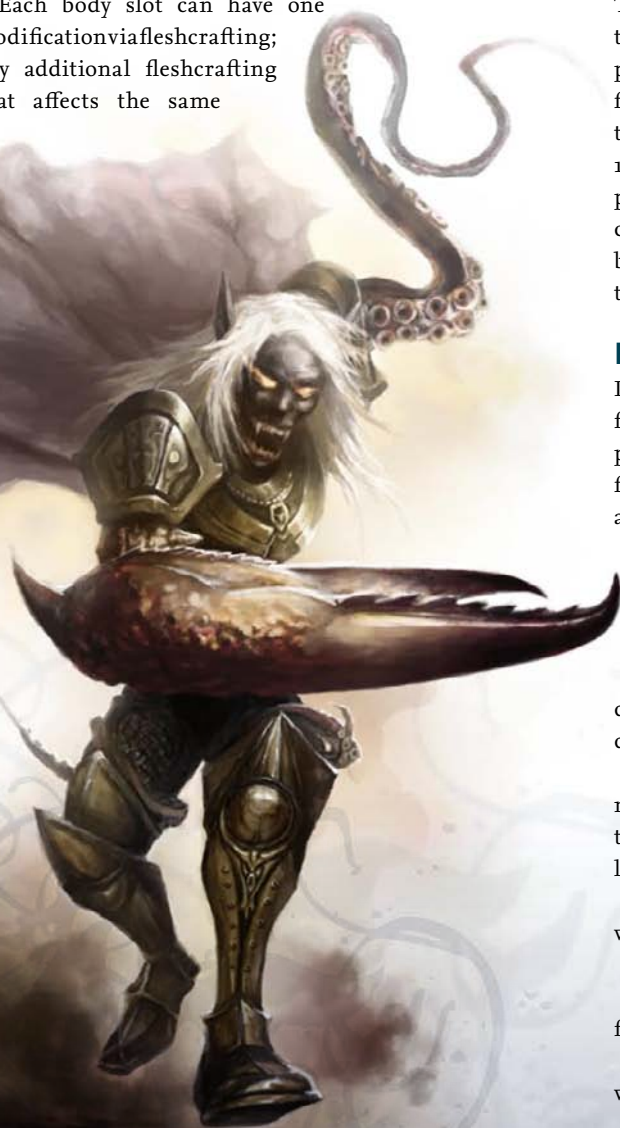
Saving Throw: This is the Fortitude save the creature must succeed at to avoid prolonging the penalty from using the fleshcrafting poison. Failure results in the penalty lasting for twice the fleshcrafting’s duration.

Penalty: This defines the penalty a creature suffers while reaping the benefits of the fleshcrafting.

Effect: The actual benefit of the fleshcrafting effect.

Fleshcrafting Cost: This is the cost of the permanent fleshcrafting procedure.

Poison Cost: This is the cost of making a poison which will mimic the fleshcrafting procedure for a limited time.



ANTENNAE (HEAD)

Temporary Duration 5 minutes

Saving Throw DC 15; **Penalty** –2 hp per Hit Dice

EFFECT

You sprout antennae from your eye sockets, gaining blindsight out to a range of 30 ft. and normal (human-level) vision.

COST

Fleshcrafting Cost 20,000 gp, 800 XP; **Poison Cost** 750 gp, 30 XP

BLINDING SPITTLE (HEAD)

Temporary Duration 10 minutes

Saving Throw DC 15; **Penalty** –4 to Charisma

EFFECT

You produce viscous black spittle that can temporarily block vision. To use it, you make a ranged touch attack at a –5 penalty, since this is always a secondary attack. If you hit, the target is blinded for 1d6 rounds. You can use this ability 3 times per day.

COST

Fleshcrafting Cost 6,480 gp, 259 XP; **Poison Cost** 900 gp, 36 XP

BURROWING CLAWS (HANDS)

Temporary Duration 10 minutes

Saving Throw DC 15; **Penalty** –4 to Dexterity

EFFECT

Your hands are replaced with small hooked claws that are secondary natural weapons that deal 1d6 points of slashing damage. You can still wield weapons with them. These claws also allow you to burrow through loose earth or sand at a speed of 5 ft.

COST

Fleshcrafting Cost 20,000 gp, 800 XP (affects both hands);

Poison Cost 1,000 gp, 40 XP

CHITINOUS SKIN (TORSO)

Temporary Duration 30 minutes

Saving Throw DC 20; **Penalty** –10 ft. movement

EFFECT

A chitinous shell grants you gain a +3 natural armor bonus.

COST

Fleshcrafting Cost 36,000 gp, 1,440 XP; **Poison Cost** 1,200 gp, 48 XP

POISON FANGS (HEAD)

Temporary Duration 10 minutes

Saving Throw DC 20; **Penalty** –2 to Constitution

EFFECT

You may make a bite attack that deals 1d3 hit points of piercing damage plus poison (Fortitude DC 15 + your Con modifier, 1d6 Str/1d6 Str). This bite attack is a secondary natural weapon. You may use the poisonous bite up to three times per day; you decide when you bite whether or not to inject poison, and there is no limit to how many nonpoisonous bites you can make per day.

COST

Fleshcrafting Cost 18,000 gp, 720 XP; **Poison Cost** 2,250 gp, 90 XP

BREW FLESHCRAFTING POISON (ITEM CREATION)

In addition to the several fleshcrafting procedures listed, it's encouraged in drow society for characters experienced with fleshcrafting to constantly experiment and invent new ways of twisting flesh. The following feat is required to successfully brew a fleshcrafting potion.

Prerequisite: Caster level 10th, 8 or more ranks in Craft (alchemy).

Benefit: You can create a fleshcrafting poison capable of mimicking one monster ability. Brewing a poison takes 1 day. When you create a fleshcrafting poison, you set the caster level, which can be no higher than your own level. The base price of a temporary fleshcrafting poison is its caster level × the CR of the creature used in the fleshcrafting × 50 gp. To brew a poison, you must spend 1/25 of this base price in XP and use up raw materials costing 1/2 this base price.

The base price of a permanent fleshcrafting poison is its caster level × the CR of the creature used in the fleshcrafting × 1000 gp. To brew a poison, you must spend 1/25 of this base price in XP and use up raw materials costing 1/2 this base price.

Note: If the fleshcrafting is an original creation, use the nearest equivalent monster that possesses a similar body part or ability.

RETRACTABLE SPINES (ARMS)

Temporary Duration 1 minutes

Saving Throw DC 15; **Penalty** –2 to Constitution

EFFECT

Serrated reptilian spines grow along portions of your arms. As a standard action, you can extend or retract a spine in one or both of your forearms. You can use these spines as two secondary natural weapons that deal 1d6 hit points of piercing damage each. You gains a +4 bonus on all grapple checks when the spines are extended.

COST

Fleshcrafting Cost 15,000 gp, 600 XP; **Poison Cost** 600 gp, 24 XP

STINGING TAIL (WAIST)

Temporary Duration 10 min.

Saving Throw DC 25; **Penalty** –2 to Dexterity

EFFECT

A scorpion-like tail sprouts from your lower back. You may make a secondary natural attack that deals 1d6 points of piercing damage plus poison. Your poison has a Fortitude save DC of 15 + your Constitution modifier, and does 1d6 points of Constitution damage as primary and secondary damage. This tail sting attack is a natural weapon. You may use the poisonous sting up to three times per day; you decide when you sting whether or not to inject poison, and there is no limit to how many nonpoisonous stings you can make per day.

COST

Fleshcrafting Cost 25,000 gp, 1,000 XP; **Poison Cost** 3,500 gp, 140 XP



The Blood Below

Through the Darklands layer of Sekamina writhes an expansive series of tunnels known as the Worming Way. Facilitating trade between numerous subterranean communities, the several-hundred-miles-long route can hardly be called safe, but it is one of the better-traveled paths through the darkness. Near the drow capital of Zirnakaynin, the Worming Way passes through the Blood Pools, a series of leaking caverns spotted with pools of unnerving crimson liquid. Recently, something has taken up residence among the Blood Pools, something with a taste for flesh.

“The Blood Below” is a subterranean wilderness adventure for four 9th-level characters. In addition to working as a stand-alone adventure, this Set Piece can supplement this month’s Adventure Path installment, “Endless Night,” or any other campaign headed underground.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

GMs who plan to send their PCs to or through the Blood Pools might wish to employ any of the following plot

hooks. Adventure hooks marked with asterisks might be especially useful to GMs running “Endless Night.”

Blind Pursuit*: At any point the PCs travel through the Darklands, especially as part of their flight from Zirnakaynin, they might pass through the Blood Pools and find themselves set upon by the resident morlocks.

Lost in the Darkness: Two weeks ago, noted adventure seeker, explorer, author, and Pathfinder Kean Vesandil delved into a local cavern system, intent on finding evidence of the mythic singing crystals spoken of in Volume 44 of the *Pathfinder Chronicles*. Three days ago, one of his assistants was found near the entrance to the caves, blathering about the hungry darkness before finally succumbing to his wounds. Numerous parties now seek to discover what happened to Vesandil’s expedition, some willing to pay up to 4,500 gp for information on his whereabouts.

Taint in the Blood*: The mages of the drow noble house Vonnarc have long relied on rare components shipped to them from throughout the Darklands. Over the past months, though, four of their caravans have been savagely

I've seen it the world over. Every holy day, some starry-eyed evangelist steps up to his podium, raises his arms, and starts belting out promises about the next world, who's headed there, and who's not. I've talked to wizards, Pathfinders, pesh addicts, and other unsavory sorts who all swear they've seen Heaven. That's nothing I know about. But I have seen another world, one that hides in the dark right below our feet. There's amazing treasures, jaw-dropping sights, and wonders aplenty in that other world to be sure, but everyday I envy those holy day preachers, because the world I'm going to tell you about is about as far from Heaven as anyone can imagine.

—Kean Vesandil, opening lines to his Darklands journal, *Beneath Hell*

raided passing through an area of the Worming Way known simply as the Blood Pools. The Vonnarcs send the PCs to discover what lurks in the Blood Pools and assure that it never troubles them again.

Unholy Portents: Sieera Windervim, a priestess of Desna known for her uncanny sensitivity and strange visions, has been visited by dark dreams over the past weeks. In her dreams, she sees monsters deep in the nearby caves, a presence of evil born of the most unholy magic, and a scarred beast in stone. Although vague, local Desnans trust Sieera's portents and have pooled their gold (4,500 gp worth) to finance an exploration of caverns and root out what profane taint now lurks there.

THE BLOOD POOLS

Although known locally as the Blood Pools (or the *sikharakai* among the drow), how the crimson-tinged waters of this stretch of the Worming Way gained their morbid color varies from tale to tale. Although stories of spilled god's blood and unholy curses swirl around the place, in truth the fetid pools bear no ominous history or insidious arcane taint. Rather, the sanguine fluids gain their coloring from an overabundance of rare bacteria that flourish in the stagnant pond, nourished by rare minerals in the rocks and rivulets of seepage through the layers of porous stone 15 feet above. This taint manifests as a concentrated form of the disease blinding sickness. Any creature that comes into contact with the waters of the diseased pools by entering any square of red liquid on the map (for the most part restricted to areas 2, 4, 5, and 6) must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or risk contracting blinding sickness (incubation 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Str), just as if they had drank from the water. An additional save is required after every minute the character spends in the water, or after leaving and reentering. A DC 20 Knowledge (dungeoneering) or Knowledge (nature) check allows a character to note that—more than it merely being inadvisable to drink—these waters might be dangerous even to touch.

1. The Span (EL 8)

A breath of warm air and the echoing trickle of slow moving liquid resounds through this humid chasm—a moist,



WHEN TO CHECK?

Disease runs rampant in the Blood Pools, so much so that any character who even sets foot in the unwholesome red muck risks contracting blinding sickness. In situations like this, when performing an action comes with a hidden peril, GMs might want to hold off calling for saving throws so not to taint the decisions of the entire party. I guarantee that in nine out of ten groups, if PC 1 steps into the water and the GM pounces with "Roll a Fort save!" that PC 2 probably isn't going to plunge in right after. In general, when it comes to things like disease—just as in real life—a person or PC likely doesn't know when he's picked something up. While it varies from game to game whether or not it's cheating for a player to act on knowledge his character shouldn't possess, it's best to avoid giving PCs the temptation to do so. In the same way, it's not cheating for a GM to wait until all the characters have made their choices before springing the ramifications on them later.

—Wes Schneider

uncomfortable ulcer that feels less like a cave and more like the bowels of some impossibly sized beast. Between steep, mold-covered cliffs hangs a natural bridge of slick stone, while at least twenty feet below ripples what appears to be an underground pond filled with countless gallons of thick, semi-coagulated blood.

The bridge hangs over a shallow pool of tainted water 20 feet below. Any creature that falls from the span takes 2d6 points of damage, as the 1-foot-deep pool beneath does little to soften any impact. Although it looks slick, the bridge itself is only slightly damp and has a few patches of mold, which don't significantly hinder those moving across.

To the west, the cliff there gradually curves and slopes down to a shore in area 2 below.

Creatures: The morlocks that inhabit these caves use this stone bridge as an ambush site. Currently, there are eight morlocks hiding beneath the span, four at either end. As soon as a creature ventures onto the bridge, the monsters skitter from below and attack.

MORLOCKS (8)

CR 2

CE Medium monstrous humanoid (*Into the Darklands* 54)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., scent; Listen +8, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14

(+4 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 19 (3d8+6)

Fort +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** +5

Immune disease, poison

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee club +5 (1d6+2) and

bite +0 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks leap attack, sneak attack +1d6, swarming

TACTICS

Before Combat The morlocks wait beneath the bridge, hiding until they hear prey crossing above.

During Combat Four morlocks attack anyone currently on the bridge, while the other four attempt to keep any of their prey's allies at bay. Utilizing their climb speeds and swarming abilities on the tight bridge, the monsters attempt to overwhelm a lone opponent. Crazed as they are, a morlock might even attempt to grapple an opponent and fling both itself and its opponent from the span into the waters below.

Morale The morlocks fight until there is only one left. The final morlock retreats to area 4 if reduced to fewer than 5 hit points, shrieking all the while.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 19, **Con** 15, **Int** 5, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Climb +18, Hide +8 (+12 in caverns), Listen +8, Move Silently +8

Languages Undercommon

SQ expert climber

Gear club

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Expert Climber (Ex) A morlock can cling to cave walls and even ceilings as long as the surface has hand and footholds. In effect, a morlock is treated as constantly being under a nonmagical version of the spell *spider climb*, save that they cannot cling to smooth surfaces. This ability doubles the normal +8 racial bonus to Climb checks normally afforded creatures with a climb speed to a +16 racial bonus.

Light Blindness (Ex) When exposed to sudden bright light, a morlock is blinded for 1 round. When operating in an area of continual bright light, the morlock takes a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, all saving throws, and all ability and skill checks.

Leap Attack (Ex) As a standard action, a morlock may make a single attack during a leap. It can make this attack at any point along the course of the leap, either at the start, the end, or while in mid-air. While jumping, a morlock does not provoke attacks of opportunity when it leaves a threatened square.

Sneak Attack (Ex) A morlock can make a sneak attack like a rogue, dealing an extra 1d6 points of damage whenever a foe is denied a Dexterity bonus, or when the morlock is flanking.

Swarming (Ex) Morlocks dwell and fight in cramped quarters every day of their lives, and as such are quite adept at swarming foes. Up to two morlocks can share the same space at the same time. If two morlocks in the same square attack the same foe, they are considered to be flanking that foe as if they were in two opposite squares.

Skills A morlock gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. In caverns, its racial bonus on Hide checks increases to +8. It also has a +16 racial bonus on Climb and Jump checks. A morlock can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks even if rushed or threatened.

2. Blood Pool

Black and crimson molds grow along the walls of this disgusting oubliette, forming what look like crusty scabs at the edges of an expansive pool of hemorrhaging earth-blood. Stalagmite spears jut from the thick fluid—tiny mountains upon which vampiric insects fat themselves on a sea of gore.

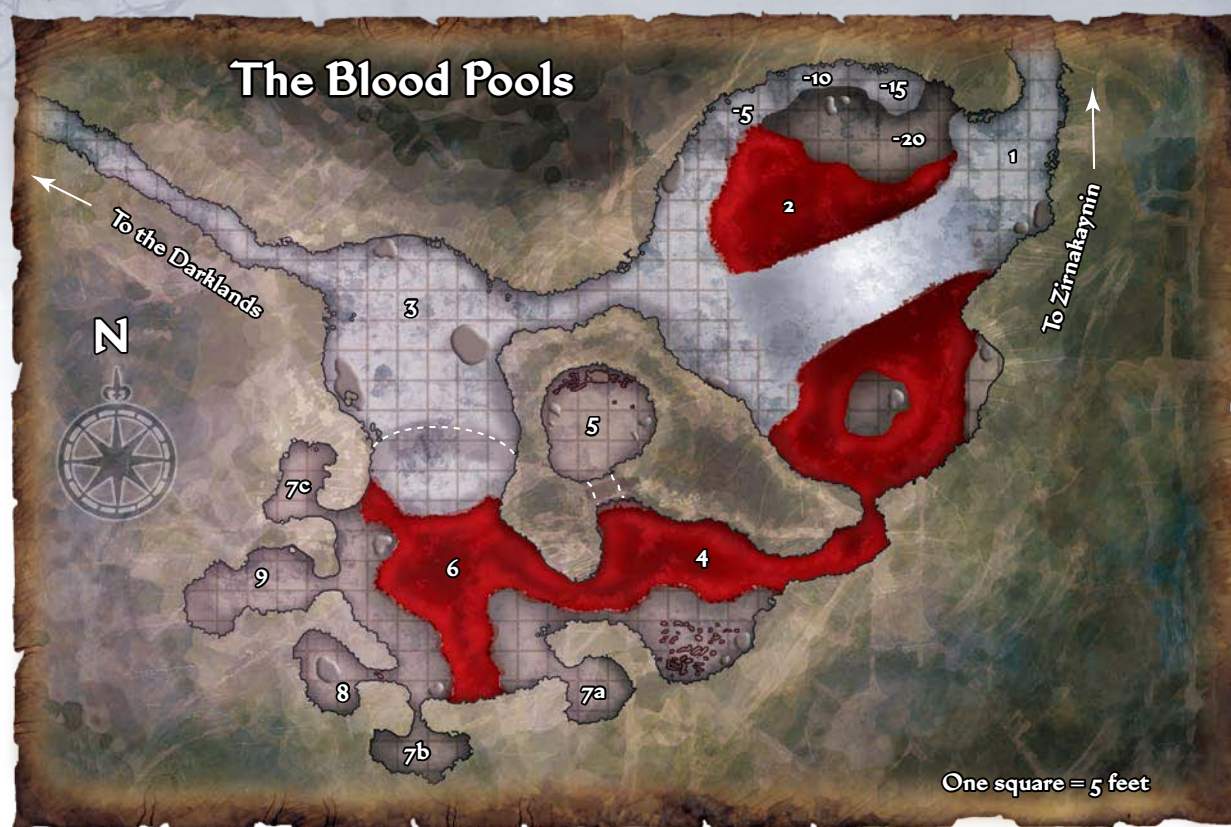
Dominated by a pool of rusty, diseased-tainted water, this wretched pit runs beneath the whole of area 1. Although only about a foot deep, the murky liquid still hinders movement as per a shallow bog (see page 71). To the south, a tall fissure in the stone leads to area 4, but requires a DC 15 Spot check to even notice (those on the northern shore take a –5 penalty to this check due to the distance). This crack hides a narrow passage that Medium creatures must squeeze to get through and that Large beings cannot pass.

Numerous varieties of disgusting, blind cave insects skitter upon the shores and walls of the pool here. They are harmless, but unnerving.

Creatures: If the PCs were particularly stealthy crossing the bridge and the morlocks remain unaware of their presence, the eight degenerates noted in area 1 are hiding here, clinging to the underside of the span. Any PC who makes a DC 22 Spot check notices the creatures crouched amid the overhanging stone. If the morlocks are still here, they make use of their leap attack upon noticing the PCs.

3. Hunting Caves (EL 4)

Tumorous protuberances of flesh-colored rock protrude from the walls of this ovular cavern, while numerous knobby stalagmites futilely reach for an inverse maze of stalactites above. Rivulets of filthy fluid give the walls an organic sheen, like the half-formed flesh of something unnaturally born, and dribble steady drips that echo like the footfalls of unseen lurkers.



This chamber has long served as the hunting ground of several generations of darkmantles. Any PC who makes a DC 20 Spot check notices the bony remains of several recent darkmantle meals—the skeletons of oversized cave lizards—scattered about the room.

A sizable crack splits the chamber's southern floor, an area where the earth collapsed into area 6 20 feet below. The dotted line on the map shows the extent of the area's overlap above the Morlock Warrens below.

Creatures: Currently, four hungry darkmantles lurk amid the stalactites 15 feet above. Anyone who makes a DC 20 Spot checks notices the deceptive creatures shifting amid the shadows.

DARKMANTLES (4)

CR 1

hp 6 each (MM 38)

TACTICS

Before Combat The darkmantles lurk in this chamber, waiting for any creature of Small size or larger to pass through.

During Combat Upon noticing prey or one of their brethren attacking, the darkmantles use their darkness ability, then flutter down from the ceiling to attack.

Morale Any darkmantle who takes damage attempts to flee, either back into the ceiling or down the crevice into area 6.

Alternate Encounter: The Hunting Caves make an optimal location for GMs to ambush their players with

pretty much any Darklands horror they've been itching to use. GMs with access to the *Tome of Horrors Revised* might want to add a few piercers into the existing encounter to give it a more classic feel. Four darkmantles and five piercers make for a CR 5 encounter. Alternatively, *Into the Darklands* discusses host of new monsters aside from morlock, and this area might make a perfect place to use the Sekamina portion of the Darklands Wandering Monsters chart found within.

4. Bone Collection (EL 5)

A stagnant river of blood worms its way through this claustrophobic, low-ceilinged passage. To the south, upon a gore-soaked shore, lies heaped a pile of cracked bones and shattered skulls, the remains of countless deformed beasts and murdered wanderers. With bone splinters and empty eye sockets piled high enough to stare a man in the face, the charnel mound shudders with the movements of carrion insects and hungry cave lizards—vermin slinking their way among a morbid feast.

The morlocks discard the leftovers of their meals here, piling marrowless bones and cleanly licked skulls in an unceremonious mass. The tainted water here deepens to about 4 feet, and the ceiling rises a mere 2 and a half feet above that, potentially forcing short characters to Swim

through the calm water (DC 10) and taller creatures to stoop, which alone doesn't impact Medium creature's movement. This area is also treated as a deep bog, with every square costing walking creatures 4 squares of movement and providing a variety of cover effects (see page 71).

Those who investigate the bones might discover two details: a DC 15 Spot check noting that all the bones bear the scratches of powerful teeth; and a DC 22 Search turning up a few discarded valuables (see below). A DC 20 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check also reveals that the majority of the remains are skeletal drow, derro, and morlock. The bugs and lizards that lurk in the pile are gross, but harmless.

Opposite the bone pile, a depression in the northern wall hides a small gap leading to area 5. It requires a DC 22 Spot check to even note that the low vertical crack in the wall hides a tunnel, though the room beyond is not visible. Any character who wishes to move through the passage must submerge and pull himself through, a simple process, but one that forces the character to make an additional save versus blinding sickness. Only one character can navigate the submerged tunnel at a time and moving through the 5-foot-long passage costs 4 squares of movement.

Creatures: Four hungry morlocks linger in this room, gnawing on the pile of remains. Although they are supposed to be guarding the semi-secret entrance to area 5 (and listening for the cries of the creature within) they are less than attentive. As soon as the PCs enter, the beasts climb along the ceiling to attack.

MORLOCKS (4)

CR 2

hp 19 each (see page 66)

TACTICS

Morale Morlocks always fight to the death in groups, but if reduced to 5 or fewer hit points, the final survivor attempts to flee.

Treasure: Those who successfully root through the pile of bones discover two mithral shirts of drow design and a steel box that has spilled 13 platinum pieces and 7 gold pieces throughout the pile.

5. Mother's Altar (EL 1)

The choking reek of burnt flesh, filth, and exotic herbs overwhelms every gasp in this chamber. Along the far wall stands a savage altar on which embers from a dented brazier casting weak, flickering shadows over a crude yet obscene idol of an impossibly pregnant humanoid with a vaguely dog-like

head. Before the figure lie many grotesque offerings: bits of fetid meat, bones, piles of mold, and something more that squirms in the shadows.



Following in the savage traditions of her ancestors, the morlock mother, Magnamaga, keeps a shrine here to the half-remembered deity of their people. Praising the scarred fertility idol with regular sacrifices of meat, blood, and less speakable offerings, all the morlocks go through the superstitious motions of an actual religion, but only Magnamaga holds actual belief in the profane power of their goddess.

Any PC who enters this dimly lit room can make a DC 16 Knowledge (religion) check to recognize the idol here as a very crude statue of Lamashtu, the Mother of Monsters (see *Pathfinder* #5). They'll also likely investigate the horrifying miracle mewling in the shadows.

Creatures: After years of unanswered prayers and perverse sacrifices, Magnamaga and her brood finally attracted the notice of Lamashtu or one of her despicable servants. In profane whimsy, the evil deity granted her servants a sign of her pleasure at their murderousness and bloody offerings. Collecting together the heaps of rotting meat, spilt fluids, underdeveloped flesh, and worse, the fiend granted Magnamaga's sacrifices life, spontaneously creating a mewling, homunculus-like child. Delighted, Magnamaga protects and nurtures the unholy child-thing here, though she is a poor mother and the thing spends most of its time gibbering and shrieking. The morlock leader cares little, though, hearing in each scream praises to her foul goddess.

Should the PCs approach the Importune, the horrible babe starts shrieking and bites at them if it can. Aside from its poison, it's largely harmless, but its screams might bring down the wrath of the entire morlock tribe lairing in the nearby chambers. If the homunculus's screams persist for more than 3 rounds, Magnamaga finally takes notice and—shrieking—leads her entire tribe to discover what's wrong with her miraculous baby.

THE IMPORTUNE**CR 1**

Same stats as a homunculus (with the following changes; MM 154)

hp 11**Speed** 10 ft.; fly 0**TACTICS**

During Combat: The Importune shrieks and writhes as soon as any non-morlock comes in sight. If something gets close enough, it tries to bites it.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Posion (Ex) Rather than a normal homunculus's poison, the Importune's bite is laced with a toxin similar to greenblood oil. Injury; Fortitude DC 13; initial damage 1 Con, secondary damage 1d2 Con.

Treasure: A DC 16 Search of the altar reveals several of the morlock tribe's most valuable heirlooms: a masterwork kukri with a blade shaped like a demon skull, three vials containing a dose of drow poison, and six candles made out of morlock fat. Anyone who makes a DC 20 Search check also notices that one of the remaining grisly sacrifices has a thong of leather threaded through it: a *hand of the mage*. In addition, the Importune rests upon a bed of rocks and rags, cradled within a dwarven-made, +3 *mithral heavy shield*.

6. Morlock Warrens (EL 9)

Shallow caves, dark crevices, and shadowed cavities pock the walls of this naturally formed cavern. A gore-colored stew laps against two stony shores, while pillars of eroded stone summarize millennia of dripping fluid filth. Upon the rocky beaches jut evidence of foul life: skulls impaled upon sharpened stalagmites, crude hand axes, and the litter of a thousand cannibalistic meals.

Within the shallow caves and upon the dry shores of this cavern, the Blood Pools' morlock tribe makes its home. The waters here are only 1 foot deep, having the traits of a shallow bog (see page 71). The savage stone tools and debris on the shores are largely useless, being improvised weapons at best.

Approximately 20 feet above, a large crevasse in the ceiling leads to area 3, which overlaps the warrens. The dotted line on the map marks the boundaries of the cavern above.

In addition, several of the depressions in the warren walls lead into other chambers. Anyone who makes a DC 20 Spot check can pick out a few tight tunnels through the rock, leading into areas 7, 8, and 9. Tight fits, Medium creatures must squeeze to enter these areas. In several cases characters might also have to scale the stone walls to reach the entrances.

Creatures: A dozen morlocks linger in this room, most sleeping or sluggishly relaxing after a recent meal.

Preferring to keep to the walls, all of the morlocks are considered to be hiding, requiring a DC 22 Spot check to notice among the shadows and similarly colored stone. As soon as any one of the morlocks notices the PCs, it shrieks and leaps to attack, alerting all of its brethren in the chamber to do the same. If a battle here persists for 6 or more rounds, the morlocks in the dens and in area 9—including Magnamaga—come to investigate.

Treasure: A DC 25 Search check of the waters of this chamber reveals a number of morlock bones, several discarded stone tools, a bronze amulet bearing the symbol of Desna worth 50 gp, and a masterwork spiked gauntlet.



MORLOCKS (12)

CR 1

hp 19 each (see page 66)

TACTICS

During Combat The morlocks make use of their leap attack and swarming special abilities to attack those who invade their home, positioning themselves to also make sneak attacks.

Morale The morlocks never flee this room as long as Magnamaga survives, fighting to the death to defend her. If the morlock mother is obviously slain, though, the last three surviving monsters attempt to flee the area into the Darklands.

7. Dens (EL Varies)

Several crevices in the walls of area 6 are deeper than mere indentations, leading into their own side caves.

7a: The entrance to this den is 10 feet from the floor of area 6. Within four morlocks slurp out the insides of fat cave beetles. They attack any non-morlock that enters (EL 6). A DC 18 Search check uncovers a crude stone knife with an opal still embedded in the hilt. Although the knife is dull and chipped, the opal is worth 300 gp.

7b: The passage leading into this filthy chamber is 4 feet off the ground. Within lie piles of soiled rags and skins, around which creep five anemic morlock children. Treat these as morlocks with 1 hit point and with a bite that deals only 1 point of damage. The children do not immediately attack, looking at any PCs who enter with almost comically oversized eyes, their jaws working as if trying to speak intelligibly. As soon as anyone nears, though, the little savages attack like a swarm of piranha and fight to the death.

7c: The way into this den lies right off the shore in area 6. Within sleep five morlocks. Two more of the monsters lie on the ground, dead, their bellies half eaten away by their ravenous kin. The morlocks attack if roused (EL 6).

8. Live Food Storage

A barrier of sharpened bones blocks the passage to this cramped cave, just off the shore in area 6. Anyone who makes a DC 16 Strength check can move the barrier, but doing so causes the splintered bones to scrape upon the walls and floor with a noise like nails on slate. An additional DC 16 Dexterity check is required to prevent the barrier from scraping.

Scattered skeletons and soiled debris pile along the edges and against the stone central pillar of this cramped cave. Irregular scratches cover the floor and walls in numerous places.

On rare occasions when the morlocks feed well they capture intruders rather than murdering them outright. They bring such prisoners here, condemning them to a horrifying wait until the tribe grows hungry again.

Scratched into the walls linger the filth-stained last words of numerous past prisoners. Along with the broken fingernails

of more than one writer, the most legible scrawls read as follows: "Clavonna Misraria Ended Here" (in Elven); "The snakes in the pit. They must be warned!" (in Undercommon); and "Glycon preserve us!" in Common.

If the PCs have come to this place searching for Kean Vesandil, they find him here—unconscious and with a broken leg.

Treasure: A DC 18 Search of the debris throughout the room uncovers a filthy silver bracelet worth 250 gold, a masterwork stone flute, and, hidden beneath a tattered cloak, the hilt of a +2 *cold iron shortsword*. The sword bears the emblem of a stylized warrior on its pommel and is thrust a foot into the rocky floor, where it is stuck fast. It requires a DC 20 Strength check to yank the weapon free.

9. Magnamaga's Den (EL 10)

The entrance to Magnamaga's Den lies 10 feet off the floor of area 6.

The smell of sweat pervades this nauseating stone chamber. In a palette of bodily grotesqueness, crude and unnerving paintings of violent morlock hunts, fat Darklands animals, and obscene caricatures cover nearly every surface. Near the back of the den lies a heap of piled lizards skins and tattered clothes, among which numerous bones and the half-eaten remnants of forgotten meals attempt to hide.

This is the chamber of Magnamaga, the eldest female of the Blood Pools morlock tribe and mother to more than half of its members.

Creatures: Magnamaga spends most of her time here, sleeping, howling for food, abusing her children, and rutting with the tribe's eldest males. She's performing some combination of those activities when the PCs enter. As soon as a non-morlock invades her chamber, Magnamaga and her four attendants attack. A wrathful mother, the elder morlock begins to rage as soon as she or any of her paramours take damage.

MAGNAMAGA

CR 9

Female morlock barbarian 7 (*Into the Darklands* 54)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., scent; Listen +15, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 16, flat-footed 12

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

hp 109 (10 HD; 3d8+7d12+50)

Fort +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge, trap sense +2; **DR** 1/—;

Immune disease, poison

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 50 ft., climb 40 ft.

Melee +1 *vicious greataxe* +15/+10 (3d6+6 plus 1d6 to self) and bite +9 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks leap attack, rage 2/day, sneak attack +1d6, swarming

TACTICS

During Combat Magnamaga fights like a rabid dog; she chooses a target and wails away on it until she dies. She takes no note of damage she takes—either from enemies or her own vicious weapon—relying on her rage and Diehard feat to keep her fighting long after she should be dead.

Morale Truly insane, Magnamaga fights to the death.

Base Statistics AC 17, touch 16, flat-footed 12; **hp** 81; **Fort** +8, **Will** +3;

Melee +1 *vicious greataxe* +12/+7 (3d6+3 plus 1d6 to self) and bite +7 (1d4+1); **Str** 16, **Con** 16; **Grp** +12; **Skills** Climb +19, Jump +15

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 20, **Con** 20, **Int** 4, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +14

Feats Diehard, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Climb +29, Hide +13 (+17 in caverns), Jump +17, Listen +4, Move Silently +12

Languages Undercommon

SQ expert climber, fast movement, illiteracy

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds* (2); **Gear** +1 *vicious greataxe*, *ring of protection* +1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Expert Climber (Ex) Magnamaga can cling to cave walls and even ceilings as long as the surface has hand and footholds. In effect, she is treated as constantly being under a nonmagical version of the spell *spider climb*, save that she cannot cling to smooth surfaces. This ability doubles the normal +8 racial bonus to Climb checks normally afforded creatures with a climb speed to a +16 racial bonus.

Light Blindness (Ex) When exposed to sudden bright light, Magnamaga is blinded for 1 round. When operating in an area of continual bright light, she takes a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, all saving throws, and all ability and skill checks.

Leap Attack (Ex) As a standard action, Magnamaga may make a single attack during a leap. She can make this attack at any point along the course of the leap, either at the start, the end, or while in mid-air. While jumping, Magnamaga does not provoke attacks of opportunity when she leaves a threatened square.

Sneak Attack (Ex) Magnamaga can make a sneak attack like a rogue, dealing an extra 1d6 points of damage whenever a foe is denied his or her Dexterity bonus, or when the morlock is flanking.

Swarming (Ex) Morlocks dwell and fight in cramped quarters every day of their lives, and as such are quite adept at swarming foes. Up to two morlocks can share the same space at the same time. If two morlocks in the same square attack the same foe, they are considered to be flanking that foe as if they were in two opposite squares.

Skills Magnamaga gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. In caverns, her racial bonus on Hide checks increases to +8. She also has a +16 racial bonus on Climb and Jump checks. Magnamaga can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks even if rushed or threatened.

OF BLOOD AND BOGS

The partially submerged areas of the Blood Pools have environmental traits similar to shallow and deep bogs. The rules for these terrains are summarized here from page 88 of the DMG for ease of reference.

Shallow Bogs: These squares have standing water of about 1 foot in depth. It costs 2 squares of movement to move into a square with a shallow bog, and the DC of Move Silently and Tumble checks in such a square increases by 2.

Deep Bog: These squares have roughly 4 feet of standing water. It costs Medium or larger creatures 4 squares of movement to move into a square with a deep bog, or characters can swim if they wish. Small or smaller creatures must swim to move through a deep bog. Tumbling is impossible in a deep bog and the DC of Move Silently checks increases by 2.

The water in a deep bog provides cover for Medium or larger creatures. Smaller creatures gain improved cover (+8 bonus to AC, +4 bonus on Reflex saves). Medium or larger creatures can crouch as a move action to gain this improved cover. Creatures with this improved cover take a –10 penalty on attacks against creatures that aren't underwater.

MORLOCKS (4)

CR 2

hp 19 each (see page 66)

Treasure: An investigation of Magnamaga's chambers reveals a number of disturbing treasures, most too disgusting to note. Among the more useful and valuable, though, are: a small morlock fertility idol—a miniature replica of the statue in area 5, which serves as an unholy symbol of Lamashtu and is worth up to 50 gp to any worshiper or dark arcanist; "personal effects" in the form of a necklace of shiny beetle carcasses, a collection of rare skulls from various Darklands beasts, glistening pebbles, and five pieces of onyx, all together worth 250 gp; and a bone-shaped *wand of invisibility* with 41 charges left.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

All things considered, the adventure ends when Magnamaga is slain and her children are run off. The PCs' additional recovery of Kean Vesandil or destruction of Lamashtu's spawn in the area—the Importune—should wrap up any other loose ends the PCs might have been sent into the Blood Pools to deal with. Even with the larger tribe's extermination, though, it's possible that any surviving morlocks that fled into the Darklands did so not out of fear, but rather to seek reinforcements, and perhaps Magnamaga was merely the daughter of an older and even more wretchedly fertile morlock matron. Regardless of such dark possibilities, for now the Blood Pools have been cleared and secured for travelers—but in the Darklands, no place ever remains safe for long.



CITY OF SERPENTS

06 Neth, 4707 AR

I've snuffed Belzig's lantern, and paused for a moment with my back to a cave wall to write by candlelight. Forgive the rough scrawl and drops of wax: my palm and shoulder still burn from that miserable sycophant's wounds. His lantern's fuel was nearly spent anyway. I only have my three sunrods left—eighteen hours' illumination. Who knows how long I've been under Urgir and in the Darklands by now, or how much longer I'll remain beneath the earth? A candle does the trick for now anyway: the stone all around me holds a faint fluctuating glow, and I'm not eager for a too-bright light to summon unanticipated company when my eyes are on the page.

"Learn quickly, or your school will be your tomb."

Venture-Captain Shevala told me that years ago, when I was new to the Pathfinders, and I'd like to think that it'd make her proud to see me now. On this journey, I've learned—quickly—that the enemy of my enemy isn't my friend.

Belzig, to have tracked me all this way, must have outwitted every sort of foe I've faced. But before I fed

him to the snake-mouth trap, he was inches away from cutting me down. And as for other potential allies... Well, I'll bet the degenerate dwarves I slipped past welcome any orc in the Darklands with an axe in the belly. Fair enough. But if I hadn't called up that immense worm outside their city, they'd have done the same for me, or for any other Pathfinder that crossed their path. So much for dwarven hospitality.

And the enemy of those dwarves?

In the massive limestone-dusted bas-relief I'm sitting in front of, men with serpentine heads and tails sit atop ziggurat-shaped thrones, lines of men and dwarves kneeling and cowering before them. Atop ceremonial altars, men are flayed alive beneath twisting, slithering runes, or driven in like cattle past mountains of skulls by more snakemen bearing strangely shaped pikes which they use to punish the downtrodden figures drawing their chariots. Countless frescoes and mosaics, and all variations on the same themes: Dominance. Fear. Control.

One thing's for sure: whoever inhabited this immaculate ruin of a city was nobody's friend.

From the overlook where I first emerged, I saw that the city sprawled out without a readily apparent design. Conical buildings encircled snake-headed central chimneys, spiked ziggurats and arches twisted toward the ceiling, and every surface—street, wall, roof—was covered in swirling designs and serpentine pictograms. The streets wound forward in ramps, smooth with the polish of once-regular use. In the furtive illumination of my sunrod, the white dust and the gleaming stone beneath it glowed as if from some pale internal flame. In a ring in the city's center, barely visible in my light, I saw identical necropoli—or temples?—built in long, wicked spikes, like a compass rose or a mace.

Feeling tiny, I whistled once sharply and waited for movement.

Nothing. Even the air felt deserted, as it muffled my sound into silence.

In my first adventure-thirsty years, before I sought treasure and served the Will of the Ten, I'd made spare cash as a guide for Taldan big-game hunters. I hadn't been much of a tracker, but considering most of my employers were the type who hunted from sedan chairs, it didn't matter much. Still, I don't have to look too close now at these silent boulevards to see no foot—or tail—has ventured through here in hundreds of years. Or is it thousands?

My wayfinder points me dead ahead.

Here where I pause at the city's entrance, I feel how, after days underground, time begins to fold and melt in on itself. After waking from sleep into the pitch-blackness of a cold camp, after turning a corner and finding chambers you'd seemingly just left, even the stone-soberest Pathfinder might wonder—*Is this the cavern I just crossed? Where does this corridor end? Haven't I been in here before?*

My wayfinder has been an easy guide, from the dwarven gates of the Darklands down to the first gruesome bas-relief at the entrance to this city. It's my mind and instincts whose guidance I've begun to doubt. My skin is crawling, and I believe I can almost *feel* on my body the sheer weight of stone overhead, of time and menace around me. Every alien detail of this city is immaculate—there are no flaws on the bizarre statues of armor-clad snakemen in every plaza, only dust; the barred domes of oubliettes are unbent; even the glass of the houses' round windows is unbroken.

And perhaps some sort of treasure is hidden in chests in every building. But until I see where my wayfinder leads, I'm not about to poke around. Call it an uncharacteristic lack of curiosity if you must, but experience teaches Pathfinders that good and bad fortune are like two folded hands, and pressing your luck is the surest way to see it

turn on you. I'll have plenty of time to explore on my way out. If the city of these snakemen is the end of the line for my wayfinder, I'm not about to let it be the end of the line for me as well.

o8 Neth, 4707 AR

Looming before me, the gate of the necropolis yawned like an unhinged jaw. The whole structure throbbed with the same unsteady light that illuminated the city, but it seemed brighter to me somehow. The alkaline smell of the cavern's omnipresent white dust, too, seemed more potent and harsh. Did the magic that imbued the stones weave a stronger spell here? Or perhaps the necropolis seemed brighter only in my mind: this was the building my wayfinder drew me toward—my goal, perhaps the culmination of my quest.

In the mouth of the building, there was the same white dust, blown by who knows what wind into perfect miniature drifts and dunes. The air now was perfectly still. Along the building's floor were forking designs in dense red tile mosaic, engulfed just inside by deep black shadow. The gate I approached, set in the half-morning-star shape of the necropolis, was ringed with fangs.

I walked twenty paces into the bare entryway, my feet grating over the dust of the floor. Suddenly my wayfinder trembled, then began to spin wildly, swinging from one side to another. Something was confusing its orientation. Or, not confusing—redirecting.

Along each wall stood imposing oval portals, easily as wide as three men. I took a step toward the nearest and my wayfinder swung toward it. I took two steps to the left and the needle twirled, settling on the second portal I was now approaching. No single artifact, but something in *each* of these chambers, was attracting the wayfinder's ioun stone. This, I hadn't counted on.

I stepped through this second portal and tossed in my sunrod. The room flooded with light, and my heart skipped a beat.

The circular ceiling was plated with gold, with an embossed onyx inset spanning the forty feet of the room in a long tapering slit. Set in the ceiling's gold I could see smatterings of green and red, roughened patches of color and fainter iris-colored glows made by hundreds of painstakingly placed green and red tiles. I was standing, a single baffled human, beneath the image of an unblinking serpent's eye.

And ringing the room, what I'd been pursuing for thousands of miles, what my ioun stone must have been created for, what had cost me all my sacrifices and brought me all my adventures: dozens of identical stone cylinders, each carved to be scaly-smooth like a reptile's belly and set upright into the stone of the floor.

I was here. And something—I felt the intuition in me like a sliver—something wasn't quite right.



Other than the obelisks, the room was bare. So why was every muscle in my body going tense? I had lost my dagger, but I still had a long vicious-looking knife I'd bought from the Steel Eaters in Urgir. My heart in my mouth, I clenched the knife hilt with one hand, and with the other, rapped the first sarcophagus lightly. *Dum dum dum*: a muffled sound.

So the casket wasn't empty. But I heard no response or answering noise—from within, or from anywhere.

If I was a little cautious, blame it on my mental image of the cylinder springing open and a crumbling mummified snakeman tumbling out onto the floor: a cosmic *gotcha* by the ioun stone.

I ran my hand over the cylinder's surface. My damp palms came away faintly dusty. The stone was cut into scales, but felt perfectly unyielding.

It was then that something caught my eye. The necropolis's zigzagging floor mosaic branched, in another radial design, to the foot (or tail?) of each sarcophagus, including this one. But, with my sunrod glowing on the floor, I could see that at each radial arm's tip was a familiar shape made of tiny green stones, with a curious fingernail-sized gap in its exact center.

Heavy with foreboding, I set down my pack and crouched, studying my wayfinder. As I suspected, the gap matched the device's ioun stone perfectly. I pulled the stone loose from its setting and pressed it into place in the floor.

For a long second, there was nothing.

Then, with a whisper, as if only curtains were parting, the cylinder's front surface split. I found myself face-to-face with a stone-dead but perfectly preserved snakeman clutching a staff, sitting on a bundle of scrolls and a heap of loose gems and gold three feet high. His features were those of a snake, his torso was a man's, and beneath his waist was a tail whose coils he rested upon. No weapons: only a staff, and a rich and unbelievably new-seeming red robe that hung to his feet. With the front of the cylinder gone, the gems he stood on sagged an inch and a few gold coins bounced out onto the tile floor.

I stepped back. Was this an ordinary soldier, or royalty—perhaps even a priest? Did every tomb in every spire like this have a snakeman in it? Was each as full of treasure? What was written on those scrolls? Was there a single gem, or a single scroll, my ioun stone was guiding me to? And how heavy would a snakeman corpse be to move anyway?

Then, in a moment, such questions became entirely academic.

The snakeman's tail began to curl.

It might have been the wind, except there wasn't a breath of wind. There was only my breath. And this tail curling.

Then before I was fully aware of what I was doing, I leapt back, knife at the ready. With one thrash the snakeman leapt to life, its two wiry man-arms heaving it bodily up from the sepulcher. I stumbled as it raised its

staff toward me and I lifted one arm to block a blow, then realized that it wasn't my body the creature was reaching for. The staff struck my knife-arm and my vision flooded with cancerous green light as the snakeman reached into my mind.

!Man man shoeshod kneel man servant of the truepeople kneel you kneel before.

I swung my knife at him and even as I leapt I felt my arm losing its strength, my knife slipping in nerveless fingers, legs growing heavy. His staff pressed into my arm as if sealed in place.

He stepped toward me. My feet carried me back. His tail scraped over the floor; it coiled and he rose over me.

!Thousand thousand upon years waiting long years we dreamt we dreamt for you shoeshod man all men grow strong ready serve men serve you kneel you KNEEL you kneel.

His voice was a whisper in both of my ears. My knees buckled, then righted themselves. I pressed one palm to my forehead—his staff remained tight against me—and screamed, the loudest sound my lungs could make.

!Big breath shoeshod big breath. Our stone led you dullblade under the thousand-years-we-waited earth our stone led you our stone found YOU. Found you in the sunworld. Kind apart. One of many one of many one welcome we welcome we awaken. Our stone our stone.

My wayfinder. My mind fogged then cleared. I hung against the wall like a marionette. My ioun stone glowed in the floor. My weakness was infinite. The stone was theirs; its purpose had been to draw me here. I could feel the snakeman as surely as if he had pinned me down.

!Sleepers ready and strong here are many sleepers many of us sleepstrong and ready. We are a kind apart. So close we were, not long it would be in the old days been—sunworld OURS the truepeople's ours ours ours.

I listened. I couldn't have moved if I'd tried.

!The sunworld so nearly the sunworld so nearly ours. But came darkness then with the fall of the fall of the star then night and more than night an age. Withdrew ourselves withdrew drew ourselves apart and we waited.

!Strong are we strong were we and so remain we numerous.

I nodded, my head nodded. The stone—it was all I could think of.

!One enough deepdown one enough to awaken us all us all us all in the deepdown deepdown I am HE he who will awaken others.

!Long down many the downdeep you have followed your stone down dim and hollow.

I nodded. Of course. Somewhere, some part of me reached out a hand to strike at the creature. Somewhere else, another part of me—the stone—lay glowing in the tiles of the floor. The snakeman slid toward me.

!Shoeshod mildtongue dullblade dimlight man you lay you lay your weapons down your dear devices down.

The words wrapped around me. Where I needed breath, there were the snakeman's words. Some part of me struggled. My reply felt pushed out far away by tremendous pressure—like a grinding millwheel.

"Get. Out. Of my mind. You—are not—my master."

!Stonemaster the stone is your masterstone you are the stone. Many the stones of ours there are but the first the first to come was YOU. Shoeshod mildtongue man it led you it led it brought you. The stone your master we the stone's master we ARE we ARE.

My body stood weakly. Yes: I was led. The snakeman was absolutely right. Some part of me struggled to say a word. My feet stepped once, twice, to the next shut sepulcher. Somewhere, I glowed in the tiles of the floor. The snakeman watched my body. I watched my body.

!But but but you have come you are here the chambers open you are ours you HAVE come you have COME you are the stone. You shoeshod must the gap touch of the second tomb. Must touch! And the next. And tomb shall open. And the next. OPEN.

I watched some strange hand—my hand—reaching across the floor. I was the stone. All I had to do was touch where a second ioun stone would fit. The staff led the arm. The room was lit the color of the stone. The snakemen would be freed from their sleep. And some part of me, with a last bit of strength, sought a word.

"Desna!"

Startled, the snakeman stepped back.

There was a blue light in the tomb.

The snakeman's whisper broke its rhythm, the staff broke its contact, only for a moment. Like a man cut down, I felt my muscles give way and I crumpled to the floor.

Moths, luminescent and blue, were suddenly swarming around the snakeman, the babble and susurrs of their voices overpowering his. My hand swept over the floor, closed on the handle of my knife. More moths poured in through the doorway, the same creatures that had found me clinging for dear life days ago in the caverns above. The snakeman, his mind pulled away from mine with a yank, struck out again and again with his staff.

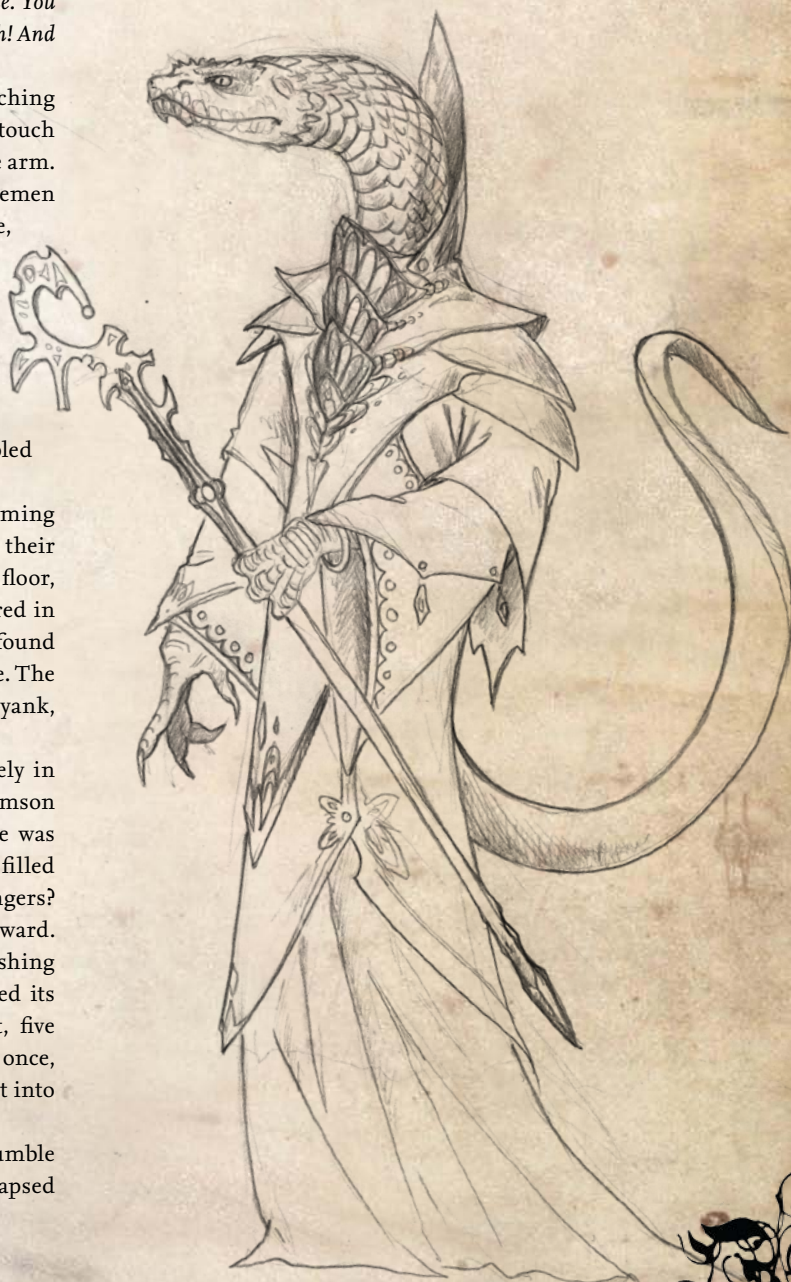
In another moment, I would have been completely in his sway. Now each moth he struck flared into a crimson cinder, but it didn't matter: he was surrounded, he was swarmed. Some new strength, airy and unforeseen, filled my limbs, and I stood. Could these be Desna's messengers? My mind full of the din of the creatures, I lurched forward. My eyes saw—I saw—the snakeman's silhouette thrashing in the moths' throng. I lifted the knife and watched its blade waver. For every moth the snakeman burnt, five more seemed to come. I moved my arm up and down once, staring at it. Then I drove the knife forward, straight into the snakeman's throat.

He died with a shriek and a gargle, his tumble wrenching the knife out of my hands as his body collapsed

onto the tomb floor. As if the sun were coming out, I felt the snakeman's spell fully cast out of my mind. The moths rose as he fell, withdrawing as they had come, flapping out the mouth of the tomb.

I sat against the wall, counted fifty breaths, and at each gave thanks to Desna. A year of burnt offerings every day. A thousand candles lit. Forty nights fasting under the north star. The moths were gone now, but I counted fifty breaths more, shut my eyes, opened them. My sunrod still lit the room weakly where it had fallen.

*Why is it that everyone I meet
down here wants to kill me?*



Possession is mercifully rare: wizards strong enough to master a mind are not my usual line of work. *Double* possession—and how else but by a second intervention could I have broken the snakeman's spell?—is about as common as a goblin at a wine-tasting. Of all the Pathfinders whose exploits were ever chronicled, only Durvin Gest had the misfortune to find his mind such a battleground.

I sat back up, crawled carefully over the bloodstained robes and corpse of the snakeman, and looked into his strange sepulcher.

I hadn't been imagining. Good and bad fortune are like two folded hands: in the base of the open cylinder of the sepulcher were heaps of gems and gold. Uncut diamonds, gold rings, platinum, topaz, jade-carved snakes, and more complex scenes—grim reliefs like those cut into the city walls, but here etched in silver and rubies. Looking back at the corpse of my would-be assassin, I saw his long tail was ringed in silver circlets, his wiry fingers adorned with crystal rings.

I stirred the heap and collected a few choice gems, emeralds and rubies, stuffing them into my pockets and the hidden compartment of my poor beaten-up pack. Nothing's as strong as habit, I guess. After all, if I ever made it back to the surface (and here I said another quick prayer), I knew I'd have expenses to pay and bribes to hand out.

And I'd do it without a guide. Tentatively, I removed the ioun stone from its niche in the floor, and instead of socketing it into its usual setting, thrust both stone and wayfinder into my pocket. All this time, the symbol of my calling has been leading me (and others? had it hinted that I was only the first?) to this mummified city, a sleeping giant prepared to emerge and reclaim its throne once humanity had advanced far enough to come looking for them, proving with our tenacity that we were competent to serve. From here on out, the thing wasn't going to be of much use, but I wasn't about to leave the key resting in the lock of a slumbering serpent army for the next explorer to come along.

The next explorer.

The certainty came on like a spear to the chest. Counter to all my Pathfinder duties—to report, to cooperate, to explore—I knew no news of this place could be allowed to reach the treasure-hunters of the surface.

The Decemvirate had sealed certain secrets before. The site of the treasures of Ammelon VI, the contents of the recalled *Fifth Pathfinder Chronicle*: both of these the Decemvirate had deemed better kept secret. Surely, if the way to this dark city were made known, the cost to all the peoples of Golarion would be vastly too great. I would return to Absalom immediately (it meant only a jog across orc battlefields and a few chartered boats—child's play, considering what I'd been through) and I would make my case to Shevala, then to the Decemvirate itself if need be. The city must remain hidden.

I turned to leave the chamber—

—and stepped straight into a familiar figure.

Belzig. Alive. My rival shoved me hard and I fell to the floor, still weak. There was blood caked onto his ear, but otherwise he looked the same as when I'd seen him just days before. He stood with his feet apart, ready to leap at me, but smirked like a schoolboy. He held a starkknife lightly in one hand, ready to stab or throw.

"Belzig," I gasped. "You're alive."

"Very astute, Kline."

I started to rise, but his foot lashed out and caught me in the chin, sending a spray of blood across the stone floor. The starkknife flashed through the air and caught my arm as I fell. I screamed. He was kneeling on my chest.

My mind raced. How had he escaped?

"You're—a better Pathfinder—than I—thought, Belzig." I could scarcely breathe with his weight on my ribs and the blood and broken teeth filling my mouth.

"And you, Kline, are a disappointment."

"We have to get out of this city."

He smiled. "But you worked so hard to get us here."

"*Didn't you see the carvings?* The snakemen are waiting for someone to open their tomb!"

"Just one?"

"Just—one." He pulled out his starkknife, and I stifled a cry. My arm was bleeding into my tunic.

"You think I'm afraid of wormfolk?"

"These *aren't* wormfolk."

He scratched my chin with his blade. "That dead one looks like wormfolk enough to me."

"They're telepaths. They control others."

"And you're weak-minded."

He stretched out one leg and kicked the corpse with his boot.

"Belzig, we can't touch anything in here."

"Of all the sentences I thought I'd never hear a Pathfinder say."

"*Anything.*"

"Except the jewels in that open sepulcher, I suppose."

I glared. "*Anything else.*"

He smiled sweetly. "You left me pinned and bleeding in that trap to die."

"You're a stooge."

He cut a gash into my cheek with a swift gesture, and I cried out in pain. "No," he said, leaning over me, "I'm about to be famous. *You're* a Pathfinder who walks away from knowledge."

He set down his starkknife, reached behind him into his pack, and pulled out a length of climbing rope.

"You're a Pathfinder who serves an orc," I spat.

"I think we can safely say that phase of my career has come to a close. Once the Grand Lodge publishes my findings, I think I'll spend a few decades enjoying my fame

in Absalom. Maybe get asked to join the Decemvirate. You never know."

"Belzig, listen to me. Looters and Pathfinders are exactly what the snakemen want."

"Well, that's something they and I have in common." He tied my hands behind me.

"Listen. It was only by sheer luck that I survived. A human who opens another sepulcher, any other sepulcher here, will unleash a horror no one can contain."

"Which will explain your disappearance."

"The next treasure seeker who disturbs a tomb in this city won't be able to stop these things from awakening! I'm sure of it!"

"That falls under the category of not—my—problem." He tugged hard on the ropes. My arms were bound behind me; I kicked up hard but he grabbed my ankle, threw his weight down, and tied one length of rope around my calves. He shoved my pack across the floor of the tomb. He didn't even seem to break a sweat.

"Besides, Kline." He smirked. "You're losing your nerve." He counted off on his fingers with a grin: "Pathfinders report, explore, and cooperate. *We share information.*"

He caught my head between his hands, tore a strip of fabric off my tunic, and gagged me with it. Then he stood up.

"Which one of us is keeping the faith," he said, "and which one of us is keeping secrets?"

He walked over to the open sarcophagus, dug through it, and drew out a jade-carved snake, a sapphire, and a diamond the size of a robin's egg.

"I'm afraid I'll miss you, Kline. Kline the not-so-curious." He picked me up and dragged me, and I flopped like a caught fish, scrabbling and dragging my feet over the floor. It was no contest: he tossed me into the sepulcher on top of the snakeman's jewels. "Kline the faint-hearted." He held up his diamond. "Certainly not Kline the Pathfinder. I'll tell them to leave that off your epitaph."

He turned and sauntered up the ramp and out of the chamber. I panted for breath to plead, call out, curse. No breath came—nothing but the taste of the gag cinched between my lips. He turned around from the antechamber to yell, "This really is a magnificent tomb, Kline!" Then he was gone.

Here's another choice bit of Pathfinder wisdom: when someone's got you in a tight spot, just keep them talking.

The whole time he was hauling me across the floor and telling me I wasn't keeping the faith, Belzig hadn't bothered to watch where he was walking. Why should he? He'd arrived after I'd dropped my knife, and the light was poor. As he left, maybe he had surveyed the

floor of the tomb once more and, not seeing anything of his, had walked away.

But he had let me drag my feet as he carried me. And after I fought, he'd let me land in the sepulcher with my legs under me.

A little divine intervention had saved me before. A little of my own good sense would save me now.

I squirmed onto my back, and felt the blade of the knife clenched between my worn-out boot heels. A little flexing of the muscles and the blade began to dig into my rope wrappings. There was a pop, and my legs were free. I arched my back, picked the blade up between the free tips of my fingers, and went to work. Another rope cut—then another—and another. I stretched my legs and my arms and stood. I grabbed another good-sized ruby for luck.

I had a new mission: word of this city must never be allowed out.

I would have to track Belzig more slyly than he had tracked me. I'd have to be quicker and smarter than he was. I'd probably have to put him out of commission more definitively than he had with me. And I didn't have a moment to spare.

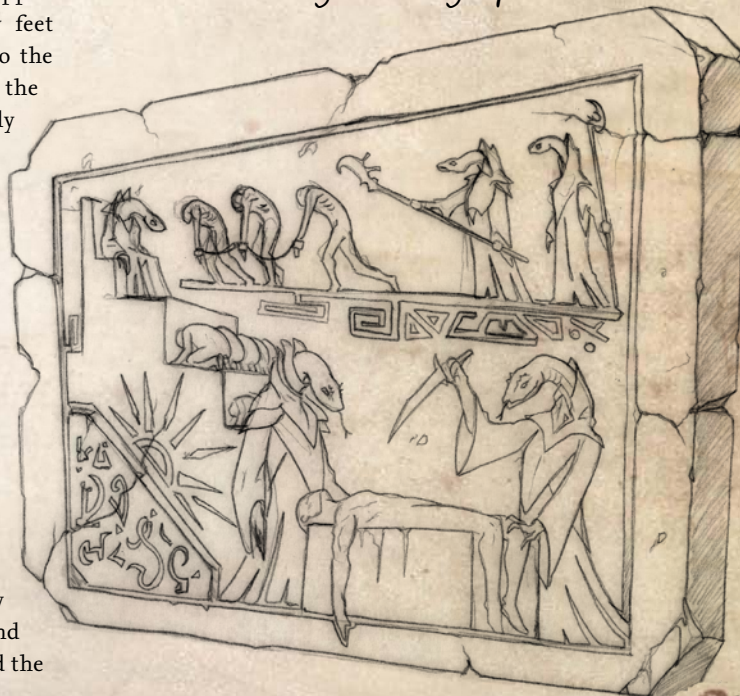
But when had I lost to a coward before?

When, cast aside, had I ever stayed down?

And when do I *ever* have a moment to spare?

I snatched up my pack and bolted out the temple door.

*Call me crazy, but I
don't think we want
these things waking up.*





Bestiary

Horrors to fill night's gloom and the Darklands' endless shadows lurk within this month's *Pathfinder* Bestiary. Haunting an unknowable subterranean nightmare, dark drow magic and the remnants of epochs too ancient to fathom take shape in the forms of terrifying fleshwarped abominations and lurid amalgams. All the while, in the world above, dusk opens the door to nighted mysteries, and on tenebrous wings the secrets of unknowable things take terrifying shape. While wise explorers have always known not to tarry long amid the shadows, here lies even more proof that monsters do indeed prowl the dark.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The drow city of Zirnakaynin confronts travelers with many strange sights, weird creatures, and atrocities to haunt the soul. On numerous occasions throughout "Endless Night" the PCs have opportunities to explore the nefarious city. Any time the PCs must venture into the city, the GM might roll on the following table to determine what wonders and

horrors pass their way. Although many of these sights are commonplace for drow, some might prove particularly difficult for characters—particularly good-aligned ones—to ignore.

Abused Slave: Amid the passing traffic, a wealthy drow violently beats her slave for some petty or imaginary slight. The drow mistress has the same stats as the standard drow on page 103 of the MM, and can be deterred from her wrath with a DC 18 Diplomacy or Intimidate check. Attacking her swiftly attracts a guard patrol (see next page). Should the PCs manage to end the beating peaceably, award them experience for a EL 8 encounter.

Darklands Trader: A drow, derro, ghoul, or extraplanar trader hocks his exotic wares at the PCs. The merchant might be pushy or clandestine about his merchandise, be it roast cave lizard skewers, phony mold-based "heal" salve, slaves, or nearly any other good imaginable.

Demon: Citizens grant a demon a wide berth as it passes through the city. While high-CR fiends are uncommon, demons like dretches, quasits, babaus, succubi, and even

On a chilly, autumn night in 4584, two young couples wandered into the downs area east of Bronze Bridge when they realized they were not alone. What they saw that night has evolved into one of the greatest mysteries in all Taldor. Though D. and L. Arberry and S. Macheet would never be seen again, the tale of Merise Fost's phantom-haunted flight and the unexplainable events visited upon the town in the days before the Bronze Bridge's tragic collapse haunt these lands still. Even a century later questions remain: What happened upon that starless night? What did those lost children see? And what is the secret of Bronze Bridge's mysterious Mothman?

—Pathfinder Reeve Vaterhal, “In Search of Prophecy”

the rare vrock or glabrezu might stalk the streets on some nefarious mission.

Exotic Encounter: The PCs encounter some unusual being from the depths of the Darklands. Perhaps a seugathi slithers past, a flight of hungry mobats clash overhead, or a purple worm explodes from the earth. Roll 1d100 on the Sekamina section of the Darklands Wandering Monsters table in *Into the Darklands* to find out. If you don't have *Into the Darklands*, roll again on this chart.

Fleshwarp: A drow with blatantly fleshwarped features, a drider, or a ghonhatine takes insult from one of the PCs as it passes by. See the article “Abominations of the Drow” for more details on fleshwarped creatures.

Giant Vermin: One of the city's notoriously bold gigantic pests—typically centipedes, spiders, or cave beetles—skitters by. The vermin are strangely socialized, much like pigeons in surface world cities, and typically avoid humanoids, though the shocked PCs might not know that. See Chapter 3 of the MM for these insects' stats.

Greater Drow Noble: An important drow figure passes by, carried on an elaborate litter, attended by an entourage of lesser family members, slaves, and exotic beasts. See “Zirnakaynin” for suggestions on who this personage might be. There's a 30% chance that, as the noble passes by, she takes note of a PC. Perhaps she's attracted to him, maybe she wants something he possesses, or maybe he's just in the way.

Lesser Drow Noble: A member of a lesser drow noble family passes by with a retinue of bodyguards. This noble (same stats as Gadak on page 13) travels with 4 drow soldiers (see page 14), making a EL 10 encounter. There's a 40% chance that the lesser noble takes some sort of perceived offence from a PC or, alternatively, notes him as being particularly useful in some scheme as she passes.

Murder: A drow or member of another underground-dwelling race is tortured and brutally murdered in public view by a band of 1d4+1 drow thugs (same stats as drow soldiers, see page 14). The average EL of this encounter is 8, but increase the experience award by one encounter level if the party manages to save the would-be murder victim.

Patrol: A patrol of black-armored drow guards stalk the streets, harassing citizens, bullying traders, and

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN ZIRNAKAYNIN

d%	Encounter	Avg. EL
1–12	Darklands Trader	—
13–20	Performance Art	—
21–30	Thieves	7
31–38	Abused Slave	8
39–44	Murder	8
45–52	Street Sacrifice	9
53–57	Lesser Drow Noble	10
58–65	Patrol	10
66–71	Giant Vermin	Varies
72–79	Fleshwarp	Varies
80–85	Demon	Varies
86–90	Greater Drow Noble	Varies
91–100	Exotic Encounter	Varies

beating whatever non-drow they meet. A typical drow patrol consists of 2d4 drow soldiers (see page 14 and has an average EL of 10.

Performance Art: A drow performs some feat of self-mutilation, vermin handling, or performance torture upon a slave as a perverse form of advertising for a local fleshpit or the city's grand theater: the Cyclic Sublime. The display should shock or unnerve the PCs, but those who muster the gall to inquire about the drow's performance can learn much about one of the entertainment-related locations detailed in the “Zirnakaynin” article.

Street Sacrifice: A demon cultist performs an elaborate, disgusting sacrifice in public view. The victim is willing and the cultist (drow cleric 7) shouts praises to her demonic patron, begging for his wrath upon her enemies. Should the PCs manage to disrupt the sacrifice, grant them experience for an EL 9 encounter.

Thieves: A pair of drow thieves (drow rogue 5, Bluff +8, Sleight of Hand +9) attempt to run a con game on the PCs. While one thief poses as a diseased beggar, the other “rescues” the targeted PC, yanking him away from the tramp's supposedly diseased touch—and thus taking the chance to pick the PC's pocket. The two thieves are an EL 7 encounter.



DEEP CROW

Stone shrieks and shears to ribbons beneath the razor-taloned step of a cyclopean shadow come to terrifying life. From the darkness looms a breath-stealing horror, a creature combining the most frightening aspects of night-stalking panther, carrion-gorged crow, and massive demon-eyed arachnid. Skulking with the terrible grace of some caliginous dragon, oily feathers rise into wings evocative of an abyssal nightscape devoid of all stars or familiar spheres. From a quadripartite maw—combining insectal mandibles and a slashing beak—the abomination unleashes a shrill, chattering screech, the forsaken scream of a creature born of nightmare and truly ancient madness.

DEEP CROW

CR 14

Always N Huge magical beast

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +11, **Spot** +17

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 13, flat-footed 27
(+5 Dex, +19 natural, -2 size)

hp 200 (16d10+112)

Fort +17, **Ref** +15, **Will** +8

Immune disease, poison

Weaknesses fear of magic, light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.; fly 150 ft. (average)

Melee bite +23 (2d6+9) and

2 claws +21 (2d8+4) and
2 wings +21 (1d8+4)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks ancient caw, rake (2d8+2)

TACTICS

Before Combat A deep crow typically uses its shadow blend ability to watch its prey from the shadows for several rounds before attacking, keenly gauging prowess and danger. Most avoid enemies that obviously use magic.

During Combat Whenever possible a deep crow attacks from the air, unleashing its fear-inspiring ancient caw as it flies overhead. On its return pass, it attempts

to snatch the weakest or lightest looking opponent and fly away before its foes recover from their panic. While flying it continues to use its bite to grapple and damage its prey. Should it be harmed while flying, though, a deep crow typically drops whatever it's holding.

Morale Deep crows are arrogant combatants and resist leaving a battle without a meal, fighting until reduced to one-tenth of their hit points or less. Opponents that repeatedly use magic might also spook one into fleeing.

STATISTICS

Str 29, **Dex** 20, **Con** 24, **Int** 2, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +33

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Multiattack, Improved Initiative, Wingover

Skills Hide -3 (+5 underground), Listen +11, Move Silently +12 (+20 underground), Spot +17

SQ shadow blend

ECOLOGY

Environment underground

Organization solitary

Treasure double standard

Advancement 17–32 HD (Huge), 33–48 HD (Gargantuan)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ancient Caw (Su) A deep crow can unleash a high-pitched squawk, a predatory shriek that plays upon primal fears deeply rooted in all creatures' subconscious minds. All except deep crows within 120 feet must succeed on a DC 22 Will save or be frightened for 2d6 rounds. Those within 30 feet who fail their saves instead become panicked for 2d6 rounds. A deep crow can unleash an ancient caw once every 1d4 rounds. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Fear of Magic (Ex) Deep crows are highly unnerved by magic (or seemingly magical) effects. Should a spell or spell-like ability with a visible, obviously magical effect be cast within 10 feet of a deep crow, it must make a Will save or be shaken for 1 round. The DC of this Will save equals 10 + the spell level. Not all spells force a deep crow to make a save, with the GM ultimately deciding what effects trigger a deep crow's fear. In addition

to magic, well-performed feats of legerdemain—tricks that exceed a DC 15 Sleight of Hand check—force a deep crow to make a DC 11 Will save to avoid being shaken for 1 round.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a deep crow must hit with either its bite or both claw attacks. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it establishes a hold it can make two rake attacks. It can also take flight while grappling with any creature two or more sizes smaller than itself.

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds a deep crow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

Rake (Ex) Attack bonus +23, damage 2d8+2.

Shadow Blend (Su) In any condition of illumination other than full daylight, a deep crow can disappear into the shadows as a standard action, giving it total concealment until it takes another standard action. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability. A *daylight* spell, however, will.

Skills Deep crows have a +6 racial bonus on Spot checks. They have a +8 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks when underground.

Few explorers survive their first encounter with a deep crow. Where mundane crows content themselves on scraps and carrion, these fearsome giants of the subterranean realms hunt larger, living, and often sentient prey. Combining the most terrifying traits of crow, feline, and spider, deep crows reign over vast underground territories, nocturnal hunters in an endless night.

An adult deep crow towers nearly 20 feet tall, with a body of sleek black fur and night-black feathers carried aloft by a wingspan often exceeding 30 feet. Powerfully muscled but light of bone, most deep crows weigh approximately 7,000 pounds.

Ecology

Deep crows begin life by hatching from massive black eggs laid by great elders of their kind. Within carefully placed nests perched high atop rocky outcroppings, ancient pillars, or great stalactites in vast underground caverns or deep subterranean vaults, mother deep crows guard broods of two to five hatchlings. Solitary parents, these mothers hunt for their offspring even before they hatch, returning a steady supply of captive prey both for food and to familiarize their young with how to kill prey. Once hatched, deep crow chicks typically stay with their parent for just over a year before striking out into the lightless depths on their own.

Like dragons, deep crows grow larger and more voracious with age. Where a hatchling might hunt men as a cat hunts mice, the most powerful of the subterranean avians can



RETURN TO THE FANGSPIRE!

Chances are you recognize the deep crow. That's because this beastie hails from the virtual pages of gamer-go-to webcomic Penny Arcade. First referenced in the October 2007 strip entitled "As Seen In Modern Lair," Gabe is warned away from purchasing an abandoned missile silo because a "truly ancient Deep Crow" has taken up residence within. The deep crow actually appeared in March 2008 with "The Crevice," where a rat exterminator stumbles upon the creature in Gabe's garage. Both exterminator and deep crow returned in May's three-part series "The Fangspire," wherein the secret to defeating the terrible monster is revealed.

The webcomics reveal numerous details on these night-winged terrors that struck us as reminiscent of some of the greatest creatures in RPG lore, and the guys at Penny Arcade were cool enough to let us present their deep-dwelling nightmare in all its d20 deadliness. Special thanks to Jonathan Drain for being the first to write up deep crow stats, and Jerry Holkins, Mike Krahulik, Mike Fehlaue, and everyone else at Penny Arcade for letting us put this together. Be sure to check out all of Penny Arcade's gamer-related goings-on at penny-arcade.com, pennyarcadeexpo.com, and childsplaycharity.org!

—Wes Schneider

consume an army in a week. The need for ever more food sometimes drives deep crows upward, where they eventually creep into deep mines, ancient dungeons, and other reaches just below the world of light.

Habitat & Society

Deep crow nests always rest in high and hard-to-reach places, lest an intruder catch them asleep. A loose kind of pecking order is established between deep crows, where the most powerful crows claim the rights to the best nesting spots and hunting grounds. The most ancient of the species lurk in unknown caverns deep beneath the civilizations of men, feasting on purple worms and heating their nests atop volcanic spires.

Although fearsome in appearance, deep crows are in many ways similar to the beasts of the world above and prove surprisingly social. Thus, a brave and particularly skilled explorer might interact with the terrifying beasts similarly to how they would with any other animal. Characters with wild empathy can communicate with a deep crow just as any other magical beast—often finding them to possess surprisingly imperious personalities. Regardless of how friendly a deep crow ever becomes, though, they are proud creatures and never submit to learning tricks or being treated like common beasts, only allowing the most respected beings to take flight with them.



DEMON, OMOX

Endlessly crashing and undulating over itself, a wave of roiling ooze heaves forward. Amid a spray of liquid filth, the crest of the nauseating surge solidifies into thick, heavy arms while a terrible visage like a fleshless, demonic skull emerges amid a spray of sickening slime.

DEMON, OMOX

Always CE Medium outsider (aquatic, chaotic, demon, extraplanar, evil)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +27, Spot +27

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 17, flat-footed 21

(+7 Dex, +11 natural)

hp 138 (12d8+84)

Fort +16, **Ref** +15, **Will** +12

DR 10/good; **Immune** critical hits, disease, electricity, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep effects, stunning; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 22

CR 12

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 80 ft.

Melee 2 slams +18 (1d6+6)

Ranged slime +19 (1d6+6 plus slime)

Special Attacks invasive grapple, summon demon

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

At will—*create water*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only)

3/day—*gaseous form*, *control water*, *poison* (DC 18), *stinking cloud* (DC 16)

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 25, **Con** 24, **Int** 15, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +18

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack

Skills Bluff +19, Climb +14, Hide +22 (+32 submerged), Knowledge (dungeoneering) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Listen +27, Move Silently +22, Search +17, Sense Motive +19, Spot +27, Swim +14, Tumble +22

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ amphibious, fluid form, liquid leap

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure standard coins; double goods; standard items

Advancement 13–18 HD (Medium), 19–26 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Amphibious (Ex) Omoxes can breathe both air and water and travel widely amid both mediums.

Fluid Form (Ex) Omoxes are comprised of living ooze and can contract their disgusting mass as they please. As such, they never need to squeeze to fit into an area and can pass through any space as if they were Tiny creatures. Omoxes cannot pass through any area a Tiny creature could not pass and never gain the benefits or penalties of smaller sizes.

Invasive Grapple (Ex) Any creature an omox successfully grapples begins to suffocate as the demon smothers it. Every round the omox maintains its grapple a creature must make a DC 10 Constitution check to avoid suffocating, with the DC increasing by +1 for each previous check. If the victim fails this check it falls unconscious (0 hit points). In the following round, if the omox is still grappling him, the victim drops to –1 hit points and is dying. If the demon continues to grapple the victim for an additional round he suffocates and dies.

Liquid Leap (Su) An omox can instantly travel between bodies of water similarly to the spell *dimension door*. It can only use this ability while in contact with 10 or more gallons of any fluid and must end its magical transport elsewhere in the same liquid or in another area comprised of 10 or more gallons of fluid. An omox can use this ability to travel no more than 200 feet at a time, and is aware of all available exit points within range, thus requiring no prior knowledge of where it wishes

to reappear. Omoxes can use this ability at will, but no more than once per minute.

Slime (Su) Omoxes can throw compacted balls of ooze. These blasts of slime have a range increment of 20 feet and deal 1d6+6 points of damage. In addition, any creature struck by an omox's slime must make a DC 23 Reflex save or be entangled, effectively adhered to the ground by the demon's ooze. Entangled creatures take a –2 penalty on attack rolls and a –4 penalty to Dexterity and are unable to move. A creature entangled by an omox's slime can break free by making a DC 17 Strength check or by attacking the goo, just as if escaping from a tanglefoot bag. The save DC and Strength check are both Constitution-based (omoxes do not add their HD to determine the Strength check DC).

Summon Demon (Sp) Once per day an omox can attempt to summon 1d4 babaus with a 60% chance of success or another omox with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 4th-level spell.

Skills Omoxes have a +8 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks, and on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. They can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. They have an additional +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened. They can use the run action while swimming, provided they swim in a straight line. An omoxe can also change its color to match that of any liquid it is in contact with, granting it a +10 bonus on Hide checks when submerged.

Formed from the half-congealed slime shed by the demon lord Jubilex, omoxes serve the every mad wish of the Demon Prince of Ooze. Amorphous beings of living slime, these repulsive demons lurk in fetid pools and lakes of filth, eager to drown the unwary who venture by and drag such suffocated souls gasping to their Abyssal lord. Either unleashed upon the Material Plane by their formless master or summoned by his mad servants, omoxes typically guard places of sacred filth or waters watched over by their master's cults.

A typical omox stands 7 feet tall, though being creatures of living, ever-changing liquid such measurements prove deceptive. Rather, omoxes typically appear to be comprised of 200 gallons of fluid and weigh approximately 1,200 pounds.

Ecology

As part of their unholy physiologies, omoxes bear a minuscule but mobile portal to Jubilex's realm deep in the Abyss. Although unable to pass themselves or any possessions through this planar scratch, a small but constant leak of foulness perpetually seeps from their bodies. Any areas inhabited by omoxes swiftly become disgusting, tainted places, encrusted with filth and slick with ooze.

Although not restricted to the water, omoxes are aquatic creatures and prefer to lurk amid polluted depths. While they suffer no ill effects from being out of water for long periods of times, the already foul-tempered demons grow even more irritable and vindictive in dry areas. When not directly compelled to obey, many omoxes demand special offerings to even leave their repulsive pools.

Habitat & Society

Born amid the reeking bowels of the Abyss, omoxes prefer to lair in the most disgusting waters and polluted channels they can find. Knowing most sane beings cringe at the very thought of entering the sewers, oubliettes, and cesspools they favor, the wretched demons delight in forcing their enemies to follow them into such places. Given the opportunity, omoxes take sadistic pleasure in dragging prey back to their revolting lairs and letting them steep in their own nausea and fear before exacting some horrifying, suffocating end.

Omoxes in Golarion

As crazed Jubilex cares little for the doings of mortals, omoxes rarely appear on Golarion except at the summons of cultists in service to the Faceless Lord.

Ilvek: Called the King in the Pit by the gnolls of the Stained Claw—a ferocious tribe of raiders in eastern Qadira—this cunning omox has long manipulated the bestial humanoids, driving them to battle endlessly while its “priests” shower it with treasures and sacrifices. All the gnolls know to fear the Hellhole, where the voice of their cruel lord, and his occasionally expelled reeking wrath, emanates from.

Jobox: Known as the Corruption Contained, this demon haunts the legends and war stories of the Shining Crusade. In the early years of the thirty-ninth century a powerful and vindictive omox in league with servants of the Whispering Tyrant confounded ships of virtuous warriors sailing Lake Encarthan, sinking numerous vessels and sending dozens of heroes to ignominious, drowning deaths. After numerous failed attempts, the priest Nidevis managed to draw the demon ashore and trap it in an ensorcelled bier of glass and red iron. The horror remains engaged today, secreted away within the vaults of Pharasma's Chapel of Voices in Caliphas.

Zocal: The Demon Draught lurks deep within the trenches of Zirnakaynin's Lake Tymisgana and serves the whims of the foul, Jubilex-worshipping drow nobles of House Tracinoa. Contradictory to his nature, he protects the clean water of the cavernous lake, though on numerous occasions his masters have called him to assassinate enemies or taint the drow's drinking supply to show their wrath. Few outside the drow house know of Zocal, but all within the city fear Tracinoa's mysterious killer.



GHONHATINE

Even hunched and creeping upon all fours, this reptilian behemoth towers over ten feet tall. Thick scales straining over overdeveloped muscles, the thing looks like a remnant from a primeval epoch, its jaw underslung and filled with protruding teeth while a spiked crest runs from its low forehead down its bent back and out to the tip of its powerful tail. Raising its heavy head, the brute's nostrils flare wide and—blank white eyes narrowing—it shudders with a deep, reptilian sound, a noise somewhere between a growl and a hiss.

GHONHATINE

CR 10

Always CE Large aberration

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

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 7, flat-footed 24
(-2 Dex, +17 natural, -1 size)

hp 150 (12d8+96)

Fort +12, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Immune critical hits, disease, poison

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee 2 claws +16 (1d6+8) and

bite +14 (2d6+4) and

tail slam +14 (1d8+4)

Ranged regurgitate +6 (2d6 plus disease)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with tail)

Special Attacks feed, disease, powerful stench

TACTICS

Before Combat Although not terribly alert, ghonhatines are skilled trackers and often scent potential meals long before spotting them. The mere anticipation of a meal triggers most ghonhatines' powerful stench.

During Combat Ghonhatines enter combat using their powerful stench and regurgitate abilities to weaken and nauseate foes from a range. They then bull rush into battle, making frequent use of Power Attack to smash their enemies. Once a ghonhatine slays a creature, it stops to feed, usually regardless of any dangers nearby.

Morale Simple and brutal beasts, a ghonhatine never flees combat due to its own wounds. Blinding or otherwise crippling one, however, typically causes it to flee.

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 7, **Con** 26, **Int** 4, **Wis** 7, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +21

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack, Track^B

Skills Climb +12, Hide +0 (+4 underground), Listen +2, Spot +2, Survival +6 (+10 using scent)

Languages Draconic

ECOLOGY

Environment underground

Organization solitary or squad (2–8)

Treasure none

Advancement 13–18 HD (Large), 19–26 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment +6

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease filth fever—regurgitate, Fortitude DC 24, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Feed (Su) Insatiable predators, ghonhatines are invigorated immediately after feeding. By spending a round devouring the body of a dead or unconscious creature, a ghonhatine gains 1d8+8 temporary hit points and a +2 bonus on attack and damage rolls for 8 rounds. The bonus to hit points and duration of this effect are Constitution-based.

Powerful Stench (Ex) When a ghonhatine is enraged, it secretes a tarry, musk-like chemical similar to that of troglodytes, but much more offensive. Any living creature (except other ghonhatines) within 10 feet must succeed on a DC 24 Fortitude save or be nauseated for as long as it remains within the affected area and for 1d4 rounds afterward. Creatures that successfully save are sickened for as long as they remain in the area. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same ghonhatine's stench for 24 hours. A *delay*

poison or *neutralize poison* spell removes either condition from one creature. Creatures that have immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Regurgitate (Ex) A ghonhatine can expel the reeking, tightly compacted contents of its stomach with great force. This powerful vomit is treated as a ranged attack with a splash weapon, has a range increment of 20 feet, and deals 2d6 points of damage to the target and splashes all adjacent creatures. In addition to taking damage, targets directly hit by a ghonhatine's regurgitation must make two DC 24 Fortitude saves, the first to resist contracting filth fever, the second to avoid being nauseated for 10 rounds. A nauseated creature can end its nausea early by dousing itself in at least a gallon of water. All creatures adjacent to the target must also make DC 24 Fortitude saves to avoid being sickened for 10 rounds. Once a ghonhatine uses this ability it cannot use it again until it feeds. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

Skills The skin of a ghonhatine changes color somewhat, allowing it to blend in with its surroundings like a chameleon and providing a +6 racial bonus on Hide checks. In rocky or underground settings, this bonus improves to +10. Ghonhatines also receive a +4 racial bonus on Climb checks and on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

The barbaric result of troglodytes forced to undergo the torture of drow fleshwarping, ghonhatines rank among the most useful and feared slaves of the dark elven legions. Like throwbacks to what troglodytes might have been in some savage prehistory, the towering brutes possess overdeveloped musculature and armor, making them both useful laborers and terrors of the battlefield. The already primitive troglodyte intelligence suffers in the fleshwarping process, though, making the beasts exceedingly simple-minded. What they lack in intelligence, though, they make up for with ravenous hunger, which the drow readily channel toward their enemies.

Ghonhatines stand between 10 and 12 feet tall, though their hunched posture makes most appear closer to 8 feet. Possessing dense, muscular frames beneath thick reptilian armor, even the most malnourished ghonhatine weighs upward of 5,000 pounds. Their partially prehensile tails are also thick with muscle and stretch as long as 14 feet.

Ecology

Ghonatines appear to be a fleshwarping success on par with driders, the troglodyte form altered into a beast with far greater utility and use to drow society. Such is not the case, however. Although exemplars of terrifying strength and ability, the fleshwarps' internal workings cannot long support their aberrant physicality. As such, all ghonatines

are dying. Upon emerging from the fleshwarping process, a ghonatine typically lasts no more than two years. During that time the creature becomes steadily more voracious, with the eldest fleshwarps requiring nearly half their weight in meat on a daily basis merely to sustain their great strength. Typically, after a year, the drow find ghonhatines too costly to feed and either exterminate them or send the aging beasts on suicidal attacks against their enemies. In some rare cases, though, ghonhatines cast into the wilds and capable of sustaining their consuming hunger with truly vast quantities of food might live longer, growing to tremendous size and strength in the process. As a benefit of the fleshwarps' altered physiology, though, their vital organs shift and become encased in thick, tumorous sheaths, allowing them to survive wounds that would slay any equal sized creature outright.

Habitat & Society

What passes for ghonatine society is merely a series of fierce battles over food, territory, and mating rights. Even compared to the brutish troglodytes they once were, the fleshwarps possess only the most primitive culture, their interactions more closely resembling those of crocodiles or monitor lizards than any sentient race. Ghonatines rarely have reason or freedom to interact with one another, however, as their closest associations are more likely to be with drow slavers and beast masters than with others of their kind. Created by dark elves to serve as laborers, beasts of burden, and living war machines, the hulking reptilians face harsh conditions and endless toil from the day of their creation to the hour of their physical forms' inevitable collapse. Drow favor transforming troglodytes with a predisposition for stupidity and docility into ghonatines, hoping that such manageability might make the even more simplistic fleshwarps incapable of even conceiving notions like freedom or vengeance for their mistreatment. Occasionally, a fleshwarp manages to retain a semblance of memory and becomes difficult for its keepers to manage and must be destroyed. Though rare, the dangers of rebellious ghonatines are widely feared, and drow slave masters remain vigilant for even the slightest evidence of defiance.

Although obviously skilled in battle, ghonatines see more regular use in drow society as laborers, miners, and guardians. As the troglodyte fleshwarps lack much of the stealth drow favor when traveling through the Darklands, the dark elves tend to keep them in reserve, ready to unleash should foes attack or need to be hunted down. Numerous drow noble families and dark elven bastions throughout the Darklands keep ghonatines, either shackled outside their gates or wandering free in the surround lands, letting the beasts serve as guard dogs and defenses against intruders without the canniness to avoid them.



IRNAKURSE

Halfcrawling, halfassaulting the earth, a mad-eyed amalgamation of deformed limbs, misplaced features, and jutting bone shards pulls itself forward amid a nauseating cacophony of slapping flesh and overworked digestive organs. All the characteristics of a humanoid project from the thing's quivering trunk, but each feature is malformed, worked into a shape of absolute grotesqueness, and set above a wave of muscular tendrils. Its smashed, stretched visage rising to ponder something only it can see, a crazed glimmer lights in its uneven eyes and, letting the fanged gash that serves as its mouth fall open, the abomination looses a terrible gurgling scream.

IRNAKURSE

Usually CE Large aberration

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +8

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20
(+3 Dex, +11 natural, -1 size)

hp 105 (10d8+60)

Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

CR 9

OFFENSE

Spd 10 ft.

Melee 4 tentacles +13 (1d6+7 plus mind lash) and bite +8 (1d8+3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with tentacles)

Special Attacks rend, soul scream

TACTICS

During Combat An irnakurse begins screaming as soon as it engages opponents, flailing at as many targets as it can in blind rage. Utterly insane, the aberration attacks with a mind to make use of its rend ability when only a single opponent is in range.

Morale Hate-filled and fearless, irnakurse fight until they are no longer able.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 17, **Con** 22 **Int** 6, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +18

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows^B, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Listen +9, Spot +8

Languages Elven (cannot speak)

ECOLOGY

Environment underground

Organization solitary

Treasure none

Advancement 11–18 HD (Large), 19–26 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Mind Lash (Su) Those struck by an irnakurse are overwhelmed with corrupted images of a ruined life and dark emotions. Any non-evil creature hit by an irnakurse's tentacle must make a DC 19 Will save or be stunned for 1 round. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same irnakurse's mind lash for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Rend (Ex) If an irnakurse hits with two or more tentacle attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. The damage this rend deals increases depending on the number of tentacles attacks that hit a single opponent. Two tentacles automatically deal an additional 2d6+10 points of damage, while three deal 3d6+10 points of damage, and four deal 4d6+10 points of damage.

Soul Scream (Su) Capable of channeling all of its rage and terror into a single unnatural noise, an irnakurse can unleash a sound of alien horror. Any non-evil creature within 30 feet of a screaming irnakurse must make a DC 19 Will save or take 1d4 points of Wisdom drain. Once it begins screaming, an irnakurse can continue for 6 rounds but cannot scream again for 5 minutes afterward. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Irnakurse, meaning “perfect ones” in the Elven language, represent the sum outpouring of drow hatred for their surface world brethren. Not just mockeries of the dark elves' one-time kin, these brainwashed, rage-filled abominations

are the result of elves subjected to fleshwarping—and were the drow to have their way, embodiments of the elven race's future. More than just perverted and transformed, each irnakurse suffers long under the knife of the dark elves' most practiced pain givers, until both body and mind lie in complete ruin. When the weeks-long torture and transformation process completes, what was once elf emerges as a shrieking mockery of its lost grace, a horror of reworked flesh and broken bones, a "perfect" elf to the drow but a sin against life to all others.

Although no two irnakurse appear exactly the same—drow torturers taking profane pride in sculpting their elven victims into unique masterpieces of agony—most share similar features. The overall effect is something like a ravenously hungry tumor or a flesh golem created by a bind madman. Yet, as perverse as the creatures appear, only the cruelest souls can't pity them, for within their crazed eyes hides a glimmer of confusion and pain, and in their constant screams rings the sound of absolute horror.

Irnakurse usually stand between 8 and 9 feet tall and weigh upward of 300 pounds. Through the process of fleshwarping, the elven victim's body undergoes explosive swelling and cancerous growth, easily doubling their previous mass. The drow delight in this growth, as the new flesh proves soft and sensitive—easily reshaped, and more to hurt.

Ecology

Unnatural creations, irnakurse have no place in nature and likely wouldn't survive long in a natural setting. As deadly works of art and guardians, however, they excel. Through the blasphemous tortures that create them, irnakurse are magically and mentally coerced, the most significant effects of which are complete madness and—more usefully—an inability to directly harm drow. All non-drow, however, they view as outlets for their terror and rage, seeking to rend them asunder and inflict a portion of the atrocities inflicted upon them on another. Elves especially provoke irnakurses' ire. Thus, through the exaction of their foulest magics and cruelest torments, the drow remake their most hated enemies as some of their most fanatical guardians.

Like all fleshwarps, the proper application of powerful magic might remake even an irnakurse's shattered body. However, even spells as powerful as *miracle* or *wish* cannot wholly restore a fleshwarped elf. Even with its body repaired, a second casting of such a potent spell must be used to restore the traumatized elf's mind.

Habitat & Society

Mad captives imprisoned within their own bodies, irnakurse loathe themselves and all like them. Although far too wrath-filled to even consider harming themselves,

a measure of their madness and ingrained fanaticism drives them to seek violent ends.

Although mad with confusion, rage, and horror and potentially dangerous to even be near, irnakurses rank among the highest status symbols a drow can possess. The dual feats of finding and subduing a surface elf make even the opportunity to create one of the terrible things incredibly rare, and even then the process of fleshwarping is not cheap. Should drow even go through the cost and trouble of such a terrible torture—an end usually only meted out by the most decadent of noble drow families—many of the fleshwarps don't survive long, either slowly dying from the poisonous creation process or simply withering physically or mentally from the shock of the change. Those irnakurse that survive, however, often receive honored places among the galleries, torture chambers, and entry halls of dissolute dark elven families, where they serve as both guardians and expressions of wealth, power, and cruelty.

Irnakurse in Zirnakaynin

While exceedingly rare, the largest population of irnakurse lies in the city of their creation, the drow refuge of Zirnakaynin.

Sovoneil Rirnovies: Captured near the ruins of Celwynvian soon after the dark elves appeared there, Sovoneil was among the first elves to lay eyes upon a drow. The fledgling fleshwarper of House Parastric experimented long on the unsuspecting elven traveler, killing him numerous times and restoring him through alchemy and dark magic again and again. Sovoneil gradually became the first irnakurse, but also an anomaly, as he retained his mind and sanity. Trapped within House Parastric even to this day, Sovoneil knows he can never return home and seeks revenge against those who ruined him.

Cossiel and Guries Sheynil: Sibling explorers captured by the duergar of Hagegraf in the Five Kings Mountains, these elves had the poor fortune of being sold to drow slavers. Facing terrible tortures and endless interrogations about their people's ways, life, and defenses, they were finally purchased by House Vonnarc. Fleshwarped, the symmetrically sculpted irnakurse are the perpetually displayed prides of Vonnarc Palace's Hall of Ancestors.

Tyislyveen Fainomier: Believed dead, the longtime companion of the leader of Celwynvian's defenders, Kaerishiel Neirenar, was captured nearly 3 years ago. For long years the brave ranger has suffered as a prisoner of House Dolour, yet has refused to break or tell the drow of the Mierani Forest's defenses. Although not an irnakurse yet, she has suffered much of the prerequisite tortures, and it's only a matter of time before her captors finally run out of patience.



MOTHMAN

Shaped like a man, but bigger, the form of this ominous being hints at both humanoid and insectile heritages. Wavering wings of every color and none protrude from its lean, almost frail form. Spindly limbs end in long-clawed digits and from an indistinct visage twitch foot-long antennae. Yet most shocking are the thing's eyes, hell-red orbs that blaze with fiery light and alien knowledge.

MOTHMAN

Usually CN Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +16, Spot +16

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16

(+4 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 59 (9d8+19)

Fort +5, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities blurred; **SR** 18

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee 2 claws +13 (1d6+1)

Special Attacks mind-warping gaze

CR 6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 16), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *misdirection* (DC 16), *scare* (DC 16)

3/day—*greater invisibility*, *major image* (DC 17), *moment of prescience*, *nightmare* (DC 16), *phantasmal killer* (DC 15), *project image* (DC 18), *shadow walk* (DC 17), *suggestion* (DC 14), *vision*

1/day—*false vision*, *mind fog* (DC 16), *mislead* (DC 17)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 19, **Con** 14, **Int** 17, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +10

Feats Blind-Fight, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Hide +16, Knowledge (any two) +9, Listen +16, Sense

Motive +16, Spot +16

Languages understands Common, Sylvan, Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ agent of fate, seer speak

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure none

Advancement by character class; **Favored Class** sorcerer

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Agent of Fate (Sp) A mothman may recreate the effects of any spell of 5th-level or lower once per day, but only if doing so steers the flow of fate in its proper course. What the proper flow of fate entails is determined by the GM. Mothmen typically use this ability to provoke an important event circumvented by some extraordinary intrusion. Mothmen cannot use this ability in their own defense or to directly harm another creature. Typical uses of this ability include casting *major image* to coax someone to a portentous location, casting *raise dead* to return someone with an important fate to life, or using *rusting grasp* to weaken a structure and cause some necessary calamity. Save DCs for spells recreated in this manner are Charisma-based.

Blurred (Su) Although they often don't appear indistinct, mothmen are constantly affected as per the spell *blur*, granting them constant concealment and a 20% chance that any attack misses.

Mind-Warping Gaze (Su) A mothman's gaze fascinates all creatures within 30 feet (Will DC 18 negates). The save DC is Charisma-based. By using its gaze as an attack action, a mothman can lock minds with a creature already fascinated by its gaze (the creature receives no additional save). A mothman can only lock minds with one creature per round. Every round the mothman maintains its gaze it can affect a target as per the spell *modify memory*. Unlike a normal *modify memory* spell, a mothman can change 5 minutes of memories each round, potentially altering a significant amount of time in moments. Before releasing a victim from its gaze, a mothman typically alters its target's memory of the past several moments, preventing it from remembering that it was ever there.

Seer Speak (Su) Mothmen are either unwilling or incapable of communicating verbally. Even when one uses its telepathy,

the messages conveyed are not perceived as speech, but rather as cryptic images. A mothman cannot use the sights it communicates with as an attack, and whomever a mothman communicates with can choose to ignore the images. These images can be sent to sleeping creatures, who typically perceive them as strange dreams. When a mothman seeks more direct or urgent communication it uses its mind-warping gaze.

Creatures known to tragic legends and darkest folklore, where mothmen appear mystery and calamity follow. Scant information exists regarding these shadow-winged creatures, so little that scholars still widely debate whether the name applies to an entire race or but a single being. Regardless, witnesses of the sinisterly-shaped night-stalkers share tales of midnight chases, terrible flaming eyes, and inexplicable visions of terrible events. Decades have passed with no reports of mothmen, but always, whenever the ominous beings do inexplicably reappear, some unexplainable miracle or soul-wrenching catastrophe inevitably follows.

Accounts describe mothmen as shadowy, 6-to-7-foot-tall humanoids with slight frames, likely weighing little more than 100 pounds. Their wings, which perpetually change shape and color, typically measure from 10 to 12 feet across.

Ecology

Due to the varied and contradictory reports of mothmen and no evidence of even a deceased member of the race, little can be said about their bodily workings or baser tendencies. Their skill at avoiding hunters, though—even in light of divination magics—seems to speak toward some race-wide need for isolation. In rare and impossible to substantiate reports where a mothman is slain, witnesses often claim the creature dissipates into shadow and smoke, leaving behind nothing of its terrestrial form.

Habitat & Society

Although mothmen primarily appear in temperate, rural areas this might speak more to the high populations of such regions—and thus potential for more witness—than any sort of favoritism. Keeping to the fringes of civilization when they do appear, mothmen haunt dense forested areas, cavern complexes, and abandoned structures. No credible tales about the creatures ever suggests the appearance of more than one mothman, suggesting a race of largely solitary individuals and raising the theory that only one of these beings exists.

A typically recounted encounter with a mothman goes as such: A solitary traveler or small group passing through a darkened area spots a pair of strange lights ahead of them. Investigating, the wanderers find the lights to be the fearsome glowing eyes of a tall, shadowy, perhaps winged beast. The travelers flee and the creature takes to the air in pursuit. Only through luck or guile do the travelers escape, shaken but unharmed. Variations of this account infuse the folklore

"FACTS" ABOUT MOTHMEN

Contradictory tales of mothmen and the dire implications of their appearances have filled the folklore of rural communities for decades. Here are but a few of the most commonly held and widely spread details.

Before the Fall: People often claim to see mothmen before great calamities. Such tales lead many to debate the creatures' roles in such catastrophes, questioning whether they merely presage the events, actually cause them, or gain some sort of psychic sustenance from the tragic results.

The Chase: Upon being spotted, a mothman typically flies after those who happened upon it. Despite claims of their great speed, though, few tales tell of the monsters actually catching their quarry.

Impossible Motion: Mothmen fly at incredible speeds, easily outpacing the fastest hawks or dragons, yet their wings never appear to move.

Song of Sorrows: Those who repeatedly see mothmen often tell of their terrible voices or songs, like a woman screaming, a high-pitched screech, or a raptor-like cry.

Transfixing Eyes: Nearly all accounts of mothmen speak of their terrible burning eyes, fiery orbs that seem to shed hellish light. In some accounts, a witness happens upon someone gazing directly into the eyes of a nearby mothman, yet afterward the transfixed victim has no memory of even seeing the creature.

Unwanted Visitor: Mothmen often revisit those who see them, appearing near witnesses' homes and being seen by family members. This leads to speculation regarding the creatures' intentions: Are sightings chance happenings? Or do mothmen choose their observers for some mysterious purpose?

Unseen Hands: Some who sight mothmen later report unexplained, poltergeist-like phenomenon and strange noises—shattering windows, banging doors, toppling furniture, and similar occurrences.

of small communities from Qadira to Ustlav, though the original tale seems to have appeared in the Taldan town of Bronze Bridge, southeast of Yanmass, nearly 130 years ago.

Perhaps the most unnerving aspect of mothman sightings are the strange events that follow in their wake. Often the creatures' appearance presage some significant tragedy, though other wondrous events, such as spontaneous resurrections, diverted forest fires, and impossible births, have been noted. Locals in close proximity to such events—both mothman witnesses and others—sometimes claim inexplicable prior knowledge of the event, asserting they witnessed some related detail in a dream or vision. In the case of Bronze Bridge, two visitors to the town claimed to have had dreams of the bridge's collapse several days before the community's namesake span crashed into the swift-moving water during the height of a local holiday, killing several dozen people.

SAJAN

MALE HUMAN MONK 10

ALIGN LN INIT +3 SPEED 60 ft.

DEITY: Irori

HOMELAND: Vudra

ABILITIES

14	STR
16	DEX
16	CON
10	INT
12	WIS
8	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 78
AC 24
touch 20, flat-footed 21
Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +8
(+2 against enchantment)
Special Defenses
improved evasion, slow
fall 50 ft., still mind;
Immune nonmagical
disease

OFFENSE

Melee unarmed strike +10/+5
(2d6+2) or
flurry of blows +10/+10/+5
(2d6+1) or
+1 temple sword +10 (1d8+3/19–20)
Base Atk +7; Grp +9
Special Attacks ki strike (lawful and
magic), stunning fist 11/day (DC
16), wholeness of body (20 hp/day)

SKILLS

Climb +15
Escape Artist +16
Jump +29
Sense Motive +14
Tumble +18

FEATS

Deflect Arrows, Dodge,
Exotic Weapon Proficiency
(temple sword), Improved
Trip, Mobility, Spring
Attack, Stunning Fist,
Weapon Finesse



Combat Gear *potion of fly* (2); Other Gear +1 temple sword, amulet of health +2, bracers of armor +4, dusty rose ioun stone (+1 insight bonus to AC), ring of protection +2, monk's belt, wooden holy symbol, belt pouch

Sajan Gadadvara and his twin sister Sajni were separated when the lord they served was shamed and forced to cede half his army to the victor—among them Sajan's sister. Sajni was taken away from Vudra by her new master, and Sajan abandoned his own responsibilities to follow. He spent years trying in vain to find her, but has not yet given up. Sajan knows he cannot return to Vudra, for the padapranja there would execute him as a deserter. He cares not for his home country, however, and continues to seek out any clue that might point him toward his sister.

LINI

FEMALE GNOME DRUID 10

ALIGN N INIT +1 SPEED 20 ft.

DEITY: Green Faith

HOMELAND: Land of the Linnorm Kings

ABILITIES

6	STR
12	DEX
16	CON
10	INT
19	WIS
13	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 78
AC 18
touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+4
bonus against giants)
Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +12
(+2 against illusions)
Special Qualities immune
to poison, low-light
vision, nature sense,
woodland stride

OFFENSE

Melee sickle +6 (1d4–2)
Ranged +1 sling +10 (1d3–2)
Base Atk +7; Grp +1
Special Attacks +1 vs goblins
and kobolds, gnome spell-like
abilities, wild shape (Large) 4/day
Spells Prepared (CL 7th; +9 ranged)
5th—death ward, wall of thorns
4th—air walk, dispel magic, flame
strike (DC 18), freedom of
movement
3rd—call lightning (DC 17), neutralize
poison (DC 17), remove disease,
quench (DC 17)
2nd—barkskin (2), cat's grace, lesser
restoration, resist energy
1st—entangle (2, DC 15), longstrider,
produce flame (2)
0—cure minor wounds (3), guidance,
light, mending

SKILLS

Concentration +16
Craft (alchemy) +2
Handle Animal +14
Knowledge (nature) +15
Listen +6
Ride +14
Survival +6
Wild Empathy +11

FEATS

Augment Summoning,
Mounted Combat,
Natural Spell, Spell Focus
(conjuration)

ANIMAL COMPANION

Droogami (snow leopard;
MM 274)



Combat Gear *wand of flame blade* (50 charges), *wand of cure moderate wounds* (50 charges); Other Gear +2 wild leather armor, sickle, +1 sling with 10 bullets, cloak of resistance +1, ring of protection +2, periapt of wisdom +2, belt pouch, mistletoe, spell component pouch, rations (2 days), collection of special de-barked sticks, 5 gp

Lini always seemed to possess a certain affinity with various creatures of the woodlands near where she grew up—particularly with larger predators like bears and snow leopards. In the years since her departure from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Lini has collected more than a dozen sticks—one from each forest or wood she visits.

SELTYIEL

MALE HALF-ELF

FIGHTER 1/EVOKER 5/ELDRITCH KNIGHT 4

ALIGN LE INIT +3 SPEED 30 ft.

DEITY: Asmodeus

HOMELAND: Cheliax

ABILITIES

12	STR
17	DEX
16	CON
15	INT
8	WIS
10	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 66

AC 20

touch 16, flat-footed 17

Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +4;
+2 against enchantment;
immune to sleep effectsSpecial Qualities low-
light vision

OFFENSE

Melee +2 spell storing longsword
+11/+6 (1d8+3/19–20)Ranged +1 comp. longbow +11/+6
(1d8+2/×3)

Base Atk +7; Grp +8

Spells Prepared (CL 8th, +10
ranged touch, 10% spell failure)
4th—*dimension door*, *fire shield*,
still *lightning bolt* (DC 17)
3rd—*dispel magic*, *fireball* (DC 17),
fly, still *scorching ray*2nd—*bull's strength*, *glitterdust* (DC
14), still *magic missile* (2), *mirror image*1st—*enlarge person*, *burning hands*
(DC 15), *magic missile* (3), *shield*
(DC 14), *light*, *mage hand*,
ray of frost, *prestidigitation*

Prohibited Schools enchant., necro.

SKILLS

Concentration	+13
Craft (alchemy)	+13
Diplomacy	+2
Gather Information	+2
Intimidate	+4
Knowledge (arcana)	+13
Listen	+0
Search	+3
Spellcraft	+13
Spot	+0

FEATS

Combat Expertise, Dodge,
Greater Spell Focus (evocation),
Mobility, Scribe Scroll, Spell
Focus (evocation), Still Spell,
Weapon Focus (longsword)

FAMILIAR

Dargenti (bat)



Combat Gear *potion of barksin* +4 (2); **Other Gear** +3 leather armor, +2 spell storing longsword (contains vampiric touch), dagger, +1 composite longbow (+1 Str) with 20 arrows and 1 human slaying arrow, amulet of health +2, gloves of Dexterity +2, ring of protection +2, flask of fine absinthe worth 50 gp, gold holy symbol worth 75 gp, spellbook, 8 gp

Born from a dead mother amid screams and disgrace, Seltiel grew up surrounded by shame and abuse. Before he came of age, his stepfather attempted to murder him, but after Seltiel turned the tables, he fled into the wild. Since then, his life has been a cruel series of betrayals and pain. His brief reunion with his true father (a notorious bandit) ended with the half-elf being betrayed and imprisoned. Recently released, Seltiel longs for revenge against both his fathers for his stolen childhood.

AMIRI

FEMALE HUMAN BARBARIAN 10

ALIGN CN INIT +1 SPEED 30 ft.

DEITY: Gorum

HOMELAND: Realm of the Mammoth Lords

ABILITIES

21	STR
13	DEX
18	CON
10	INT
12	WIS
8	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 110

AC 17

touch 12, flat-footed 16

Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +4

Special Defenses trap
sense +3, improved
uncanny dodge; DR 2/—

OFFENSE

Melee Large +2 bastard sword
+16/+11 (2d8+9/17–20)Ranged +1 comp. longbow +12/+7
(1d8+6/×3)

Base Atk +10; Grp +15

Special Attacks rage 3/day

Special Qualities fast movement,
illiteracy

BARBARIAN RAGE

HP 130

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 14

Fort +13, Ref +4, Will +6

Melee Large +2 bastard sword

+18/+13 (2d8+12/17–20)

Str 25, Con 22

RAGING POWER ATTACK

Melee Large +2 bastard sword

+8/+3 (2d8+32/17–20)

SKILLS

Climb	+16
Intimidate	+12
Jump	+16
Listen	+14
Spot	+3
Survival	+14

FEATS

Exotic Weapon Proficiency
(bastard sword), Improved
Bull Rush, Improved Critical
(bastard sword), Power
Attack, Weapon Focus
(bastard sword)

Combat Gear *potion of barksin* +3 (2), *potion of fly*; **Gear** +2 hide armor, Large +2 bastard sword, +1 composite longbow (+5 Str), javelins (2), throwing axe, belt of giant strength +4, amulet of health +4, ring of protection +1, 20 gp

Amiri never quite fit in to the expected gender roles of her tribe, and when the tribe attempted to send her on a suicide mission, she returned with an enormous trophy—a frost giant's sword. She has since abandoned her people, and has come to value her oversized sword (even though she can only truly wield it properly when her blood rage takes her). She never speaks of the circumstances that forced her to flee her homeland. Some things are better left unsaid.

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by J. D. Wiker

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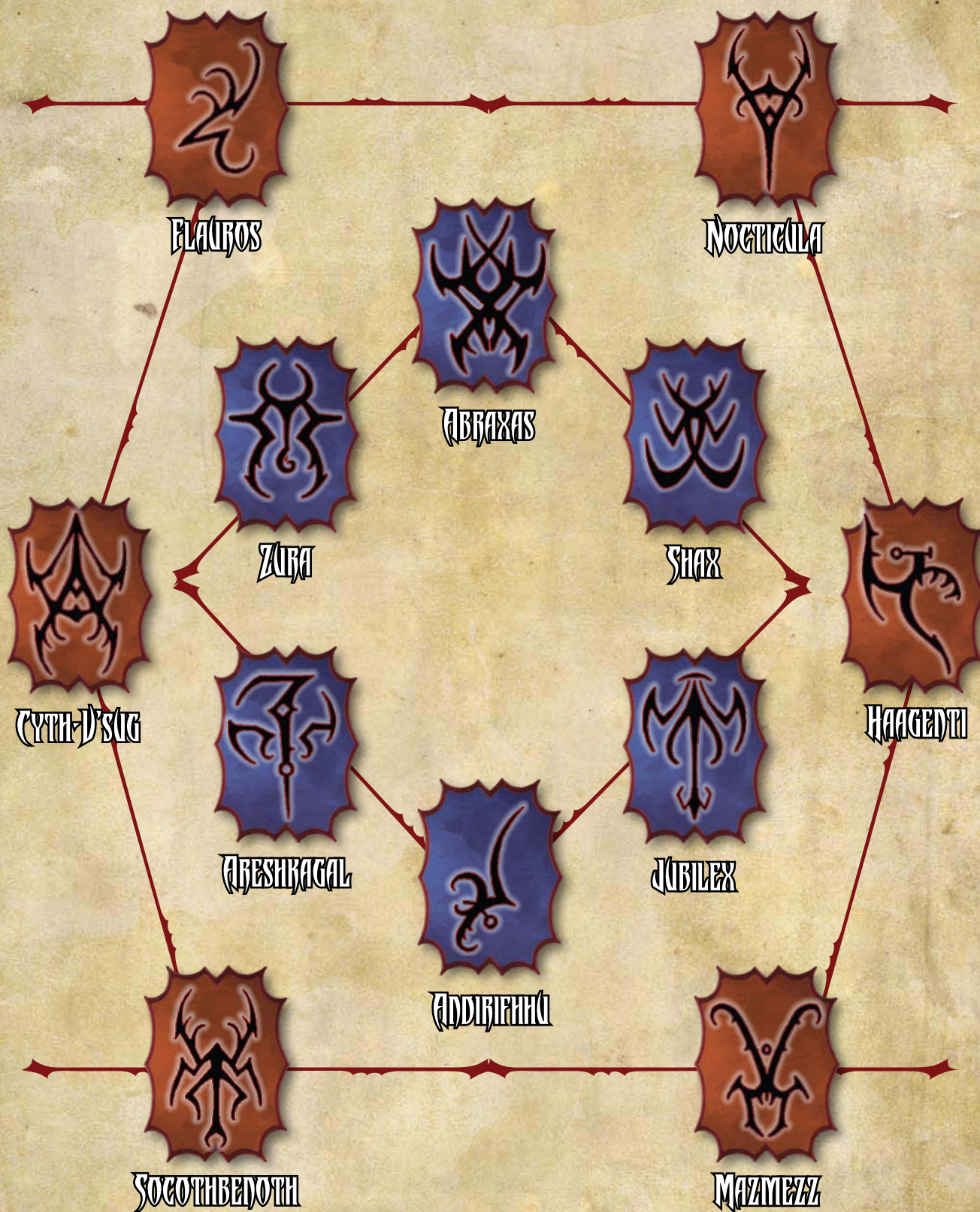
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DEMON LORD RINES



THE UNDERWORLD AWAITS!

Far below the world of light, a cavity of unspeakable evil spreads an ancient hatred through the darkness. From their city of Zirnakaynin the dark elves rule an empire of lies and dark magic. Already their foul ambitions grasp for the world above, threatening a cataclysm beyond reckoning and the advent of a second Age of Darkness. Only by taking on the disguises of dark elves themselves and invading the capital of the drow can the PCs discover their enemies' true faces and put an end to their world-shattering plot. But what hope for survival can natives of the surface have in a merciless realm of endless night?

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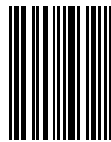
Printed in China. PZO9016

US \$19.99

ISBN 978-1-60125-129-9



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