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ADVENTURE PATH™



SERPENT'S SKULL

SANCTUM OF THE SERPENT GOD

By Neil Spicer

Mwangi Flora

Splintermold

An unusual fungus variety found in the Darklands, splintermold seems innocuous, but it hides a hidden danger. Growing among the stalactites hanging from cavern ceilings, splintermold feeds on minerals dissolved in water, sending tiny tendrils into the rock in search of sustenance. The resulting cracks weaken the stalactites, causing them to fall at the slightest vibration, such as from the footfalls of creatures below.



Slaver Fungus

This disturbing Darklands growth takes on a life of its own, quite literally, in fact. Its spores infect subterranean spiders and other vermin, replacing their living tissue with its own fungal tendrils. Naturally, this kills the creature, but the fungus then animates the lifeless body, propelling it through the Darklands in search of more food for the insidious fungus lurking inside.



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SERPENT'S SKULL

ADVENTURE PATH PART 6 of 6

SANCTUM OF THE SERPENT GOD



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Managing Editor • F. Wesley Schneider
Development Lead • Rob McCreary
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Graphic Designer • Andrew Vallas
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Publisher • Erik Mona

Cover Artist
Kerem Beyit

Cartographer
Rob Lazzaretti

Contributing Artists
Claudio Casini, Gonzalo Flores, Arthur Gimaldinov, Paul Guzenko, Mauricio Herrera, Jon Hodgson, Chuck Lukacs, and Scott Purdy

Contributing Authors
Jesse Benner, James Jacobs, Robin D. Laws, Rob McCreary, and Neil Spicer

Paizo CEO • Lisa Stevens
Vice President of Operations • Jeffrey Alvarez
Finance Manager • Christopher Self
Staff Accountant • Kunji Sedo
Technical Director • Vic Wertz
Marketing Director • Hyrum Savage

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“Sanctum of the Serpent God” is a Pathfinder Adventure Path scenario designed for four 15th-level characters. By the end of this adventure, characters should reach 17th level.

This product makes use of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, and *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*. These rules can be found online as part of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Reference Document at paizo.com/pathfinderRPG/prd.

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7120 185th Ave NE, Ste 120
Redmond, WA 98052-0577
paizo.com

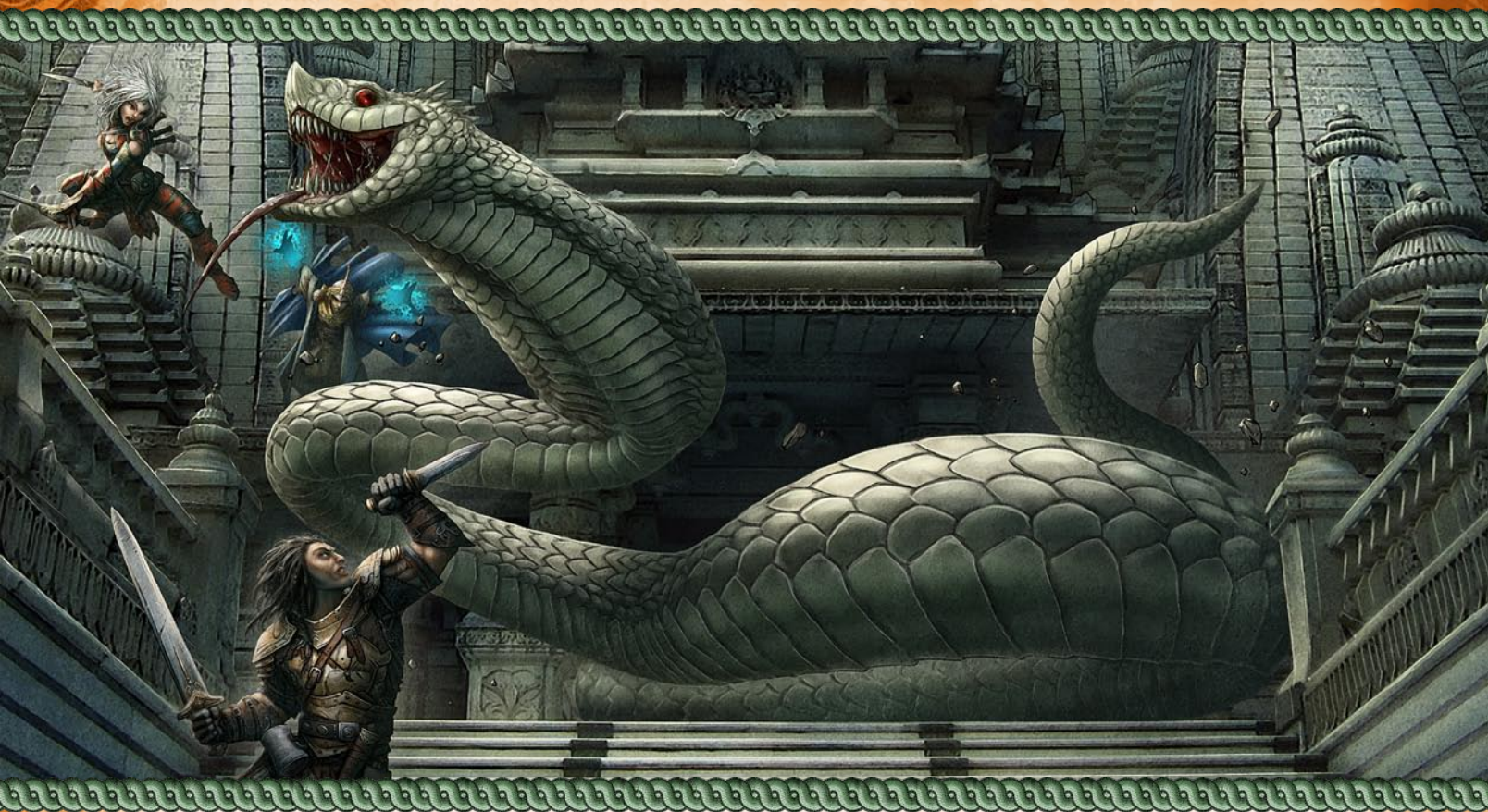


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THE END IS THE BEGINNING

As the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path comes to a close, I thought it might be time for a little reflection. For the previous six Pathfinder Adventure Paths, one person had a direct hand in the development of a wide variety of adventures—Creative Director James Jacobs. His vision and voice infused 36 different adventures, from the return of one of Thassilon's ancient runelords to building your own kingdom in the Stolen Lands. But with the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path, James passed the development reins to me, and suddenly I had the responsibility of matching the expertise in developing Adventure Paths that he has built up over more than 3 years.

Let me assure you that developing an entire Adventure Path is no easy feat. Six different adventures, written by six different authors, have to be tied together into one connected story. Encounters and whole sections have to be rewritten to tie into the adventures before or after. Art and maps have to be ordered for all the major characters

and encounters, and those encounters need to match the final art and maps that we receive from our artists and cartographers. Multiple rounds of editing catch lots of mistakes, but inevitably one or two slip through to be caught on the messageboards. And as soon as one adventure is finished, the next one is waiting to start the whole process over again.

As this volume goes to print, I've been at Paizo for just over a year, and I can honestly say that developing the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path is the hardest thing I've done since joining the company. And yet it's also been one of the most rewarding. I've put in many long nights and more than a few weekends working on this Adventure Path, but I got to help create an early part of Golarion's history that's only been hinted at until now. I got to discover and explore not one, but two ancient lost cities, and I got to play around with one of the coolest races of villains I've think we've seen in an Adventure

Path so far. What's more, I had the pleasure of working with six amazing authors and helping to bring their exciting ideas to print.

I've also learned a lot. James and Wes have been there throughout, answering all of my many questions, helping to develop plotlines, throwing in a suggestion for a monster or an encounter, and brainstorming ideas for art orders. I know a lot more about adventure design and balance now, and I've learned that there's more than one way to get to the CR you want. I've learned that things fall apart, but that they can be put back together again with minimal casualties (though at the time, it seems much more dire). I've learned that sometimes art trumps text, and that no matter how close to word count you are at the end of the development, there's always text to be added or cut after layout. And I've learned that nine times out of 10, my fingers will type "Yderisus" instead of "Ydersius."

I think this Adventure Path has turned out pretty well, but I'm biased (and a little woozy after six nonstop adventures). What really matters is what you think. So how did I do? Hop on the messageboards at paizo.com and let us know. What did you like, and what do you think we can improve? Would you like to see more of one thing, or less of another? Let us know, and we'll do our best to meet, and hopefully even exceed, your expectations.

"Sanctum of the Serpent God" marks the end of the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path, but it also marks a new beginning. For you and your players, the outcome of events in this volume might lead to many more world-shaking adventures. Or you might be gearing up to explore the mist-shrouded lands of Ustalav in our next Adventure Path, Carrion Crown. And it's a new beginning for me, too. As "Sanctum of the Serpent God" works its way through editing and layout, I'm already deep into *Pathfinder Adventure Path #44's* "Trial of the Beast." There are new stories, new monsters, and new challenges. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

THE COMING DREAD

It's no secret that horror has quite a tradition amid these pages, with some of the most popular ("Skeletons of Scarwall") and infamous ("The Hook Mountain Massacre") adventures drawing their inspirations from a wide variety of terror tales. Really, with as many walking corpses, otherworldly evils, and malicious deities as fill our adventures month after month, it's difficult to find any that don't rely on at least a bit of lurking dread. While this obviously speaks to the tastes of our authors and developers, it's long seemed to appeal to our readership as well, with requests for more ancient curses, haunted dungeons, and unnamable evils being some of the most popular suggestions at conventions and online. And for years, we've nodded knowingly and smiled our sinister

ON THE COVER

This month's cover features Vyr-Azul, the High Priest of Ydersius, who plans to restore his god and usher in a new Age of Serpents. The PCs finally meet this insidious villain (and his Huge albino constrictor snake companion) at the heart of the serpent-god's sanctum, and the fate of Golarion hangs in the balance. Vyr-Azul's statistics appear on page 52 of this volume.

smiles, urging patience for something we've had in the works for a long time now. Next month, that something finally takes shape with the start of the Carrion Crown Adventure Path.

For the next 6 months, *Pathfinder Adventure Path* takes a turn for the macabre, embracing tales of dread and classic RPG horrors for a journey across the misty realm of Ustalav, the home of gothic horror in Golarion. Each month, a classic terror takes the limelight in six unsettling stories of mystery, betrayal, curses, murder, and dark magic. We promise ghosts and haunted dungeons, the risk of contracting lycanthropy and feeling a vampire's deadly kiss, and the menace of zombie claws and cosmic horrors, all unleashed as the players fight to prevent a nihilistic genius from releasing the greatest villain Golarion has ever known. It's a tour through a grim land in need of heroes, where allies are few, enemies aren't always what they seem, and a keen mind can prove even more vital than a sharp sword.

Already readers might be thinking about readying their holy symbols and sharpening their silver arrows—and rightly so!—but check out the free *Carrion Crown Player's Guide*, soon to be available on paizo.com, for hints on what new characters should expect beyond werewolves and the walking dead. GMs can also get into the horror mindset with *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Rule of Fear*, the guide to the setting of the Carrion Crown Adventure Path, the mysterious realm of Ustalav.

Night is falling over the Pathfinder world. Find out next month if you're bold enough to face what lurks in the shadows.

ROB

Rob McCreary
Developer
rob.mccreary@paizo.com





SANCTUM OF THE SERPENT GOD

WHILE THE WARRIORS OF AZLANT BATTLED THE SERPENT PEOPLE IN THE DARKNESS OF ILMUREA, SAVITH, ARRAYED IN ARMOR OF SHINING GOLD, WENT FORTH TO FACE THE SNAKE-GOD YDERSIUS HIMSELF IN HIS INNERMOST SANCTUM. AFTER AN EPIC STRUGGLE, SAVITH BEHEADED THE FATHER OF SERPENTS, CASTING HIS MINDLESS BODY INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH AND HURLING HIS STILL-LIVING HEAD INTO A LAKE OF FIRE. BUT EVEN IN DEFEAT, YDERSIUS HAD HIS REVENGE, FOR HIS VIRULENT POISONS RAVAGED SAVITH'S BODY. THE SERPENTFOLK EMPIRE WAS BROKEN FOREVER, BUT AT A TERRIBLE COST, FOR SAVITH, THE GREATEST OF US ALL, WAS DEAD.

—INSCRIPTION ON THE WALLS OF SAVENTH-YHI

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Of all the battles waged between the Azlanti and the serpentfolk—from the heights of Viperwall in ancient Thassilon to the depths of the Mwangi Expanse in Garund—none had a more profound impact on their genocidal war than the titanic struggle that took place in Ilmurea. There, the Azlanti heroine Savith beheaded the snake-god Ydersius, plunging the serpentfolk civilization into an abyss so dark and unyielding that they've struggled to recover ever since. Indeed, as a species, the serpentfolk lost much of their cultural identity after Ydersius's demise, devolving into monstrous brutes challenged by near-constant infighting and forgetting much of their proud history.

But the natural order of evolution sometimes replaces the vagaries of fate with fortune. Even as Earthfall doomed the Azlanti empire, it shielded the remaining serpentfolk from annihilation, granting them one last chance at survival. With almost every generation thereafter, serpentfolk of greater intelligence and ambition emerged in each tribe. Assuming a mantle of leadership over their less-evolved brethren, they invariably aspired to return their species to glory—even as they challenged one another to be the first to do so. Most of these individuals took up magic, rediscovering the arcane lore practiced by their predecessors and using it to reclaim serpentfolk cities and goad their tribes into a frenzy of rage against any who would challenge their supremacy. Others, however, turned to faith, looking for more sibyllic answers in the will of Ydersius, filled with visions of their serpent-god still calling out to his children from the abyss of the Darklands.

THE CONVICTIONS OF VYR-AZUL

Miles away from Ilmurea, in the serpentfolk city of Sverenagati, a serpentfolk noble named Vyr-Azul came to embrace the religious doctrine of his people with a fervor unmatched by any before him. This devotion, as well as his divinely inspired dreams, led Vyr-Azul to believe that Savith had only managed to behead Ydersius, failing to slay the god outright. Even normal snakes seemingly live on when beheaded, and serpentfolk legends often spoke of the astounding regenerative powers of Ydersius. Azlanti manuscripts and murals also cited the horror of the snake-god's still-writhing body as it retreated into the Darklands, and spoke of Ydersius's indestructible skull which Savith cast into a lake of fire after it endured every effort to destroy it. These revelations, as well as Ydersius's continued empowerment of Vyr-Azul's spells, led him to conclude his god lived on—certainly wounded and lessened in power, but alive and fully capable of recovering. Vyr-Azul saw this doctrine as a fitting metaphor for the serpentfolk species and used it to rally

Advancement Track

Characters should be 15th level when they begin "Sanctum of the Serpent God." By the time they lead their rag-tag army against Ilmurea, they should be well into 16th level. Finally, after winning their way through Vyr-Azul's sanctum, they should attain 17th level before a colossal showdown with the avatar of the restored snake-god Ydersius. "Sanctum of the Serpent God" uses the medium XP track.

followers to his cause. For inasmuch as the serpentfolk civilization fell into decline with the defeat of their god, so too might their return to prominence coincide with Ydersius's restoration.

Vyr-Azul quickly established himself as the highest-ranking priest in the snake-god's clergy, leading a spiritual revival among multiple tribes and encouraging them to band together. He used their mutual beliefs and the myths of Ydersius to turn them away from the infighting and ceaseless struggles against the scavengers plaguing their city. Instead, he directed the serpentfolk to explore and reclaim the lore of their ancestors—the original builders of Sverenagati—many of whom had retreated from the war with Azlant to lock themselves within nigh-impregnable vaults, entering into ages-long hibernations. Vyr-Azul hungered to make contact with these scions of his people, desperate to share his message of hope and secure their assistance in bringing about the renewal of Ydersius.

It took years of effort and faith in his cause, but Vyr-Azul's minions finally breached one of the hibernation chambers of his ancient ancestors. Inside, he found four champions of Sverenagati, powerful wizards and generals he cautiously roused from their ageless slumber. At first, these elder serpentfolk resented his intrusion. But, after plying them with information of Azlant's collapse, he convinced them to grudgingly accept him as an equal. Somewhat skeptical of his new theology, these champions listened to Vyr-Azul's theories and agreed to help him find Ydersius's remains if for no other reason than to unify the serpentfolk with his religious movement in preparation for invading the Overburn (as the serpentfolk refer to the surface world) and repaying Azlant's descendants by enslaving all humanity.

Vyr-Azul's newfound allies supplied him with a variety of resources, including the means to reincarnate serpentfolk agents into the flesh of modern humans so they might act as his spies and saboteurs in the Overburn. They also provided him with the location of Ilmurea, sister-city

to Sverenagati, enabling Vyr-Azul to lead an expedition through the Darklands to reclaim the ancient site. Upon his arrival, it took several months to retrace the steps of Savith's battle with Ydersius, but he finally reached the snake-god's ancient temple, buried in the walls of Ilmurea's partially collapsed cavern. Within the inner sanctum of this ancient complex, he also found the Chasm of Retreat, a deep pit through which Ydersius's decapitated body had fallen into the deepest reaches of Orv.

The serpentfolk's arrival in Ilmurea soon brought them into conflict with the urdefhans and morlocks already living in the city. Forced to delay the temple's renewal to deal with these threats, Vyr-Azul's forces ultimately drove the urdefhans and morlocks into the far southern reaches of the city. But one group of urdefhans was split off from the rest of their army, and took refuge in an ancient serpentfolk arena. These urdefhans, under the leadership of a warrior named Valglaunt, discovered a planar portal that allowed them to summon daemons to strengthen their ranks for an eventual counterstrike against the serpentfolk. Unknown to any of the factions in Ilmurea, however, these abandoned ruins also held a secret "weapon" dating back to the days of Savith.

Meanwhile, Vyr-Azul prepared divinations to locate and summon Ydersius's headless body while searching Ilmurea for the god's skull. He eventually discovered the skull trapped within a long-cooled lake of lava outside the snake-god's temple, and shaped the stone to release the fossilized skull and return it to the Sanctum of Ydersius. Mounting the skull on a ceremonial dais before the Chasm of Retreat, Vyr-Azul now attempts to telepathically summon Ydersius's decapitated body from the Darklands, so he can rejoin the snake-god's head and body, restore Ydersius to his full divine power, and carry out his vengeance upon humanity.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Having rescued Eando Kline from the serpentfolk prison in "The Thousand Fangs Below," the PCs have the opportunity to converse at length with the Pathfinder and learn the full extent of the serpentfolk high priest Vyr-Azul's plans to restore Ydersius—courtesy of the prolonged interrogation Eando suffered at the priest's hands. Coupled with the PCs' growing understanding of Saventh-Yhi's history and the age-long battle between the Azlanti and the serpentfolk, this news proves dire indeed. For if Azlant at the pinnacle of its civilization struggled so mightily against the serpents, what chance does humanity stand now if Ydersius returns?

Faced with this grim realization, Eando urges the PCs to form their own army from the tribes and factions occupying Saventh-Yhi and Ilmurea in the hope of duplicating Savith's feat and ending the serpentfolk

threat. By leading these troops against Ilmurea to draw out Vyr-Azul's growing army, they can then sneak into the Sanctum of Ydersius and disrupt the snake-god's restoration. Eando also tells the PCs of an ancient Azlanti weapon still in Ilmurea that they can recover to use against the serpentfolk.

In search of this ancient weapon, the PC once more venture into Ilmurea, delving into an ancient serpentfolk structure called the Hunters' Maze, now inhabited by urdefhans and their daemonic allies. There, the PCs discover that this "weapon" is in fact an ancient cyclops general from Savith's time, preserved through the millennia in *temporal stasis*, who holds the knowledge of how to activate Saventh-Yhi's seven spears as a weapon against Ilmurea.

With this new ally, the PCs return to Saventh-Yhi to gather their army for the final assault on Ilmurea. During these preparations, a group of assassins—sleeper agents known as the Coils of Ydersius—try to kill the PCs and disrupt their plans. After surviving this latest threat, the PCs can finally activate the seven spears, which burrow into the ground, making a path for their army to invade Ilmurea.

As their army clashes with that of the serpentfolk, the PCs infiltrate the temple fortress known as the Sanctum of Ydersius. There, they must win their way past ancient traps and guardians until they finally meet Vyr-Azul in Ydersius's inner sanctum before the Chasm of Retreat. Even as they battle the high priest, Vyr-Azul completes his ritual and calls Ydersius's body, now reunited with his head, from the Darklands. But defeating Vyr-Azul is only a precursor to the arrival of the snake-god. This final confrontation pits the PCs against Ydersius himself as his avatar erupts from the chasm and onto the field of battle, with the fate of both the serpentfolk and humanity hanging in the balance.

PART ONE: THE DANGER BELOW

The adventure begins with the PCs having rescued Eando Kline from the fortress of Thousand Fangs in "The Thousand Fangs Below." Once the PCs and Eando return to the surface, Kline spends the next several days in the PCs' care, recovering from the wounds—both physical and psychological—inflicted during his interrogation by Vyr-Azul. The marvels of Saventh-Yhi do much to spur his improvement, however, as he takes an immediate interest in the Azlanti ruins, architecture, and art commemorating Savith's triumph over the snake-god Ydersius and the serpentfolk of Ilmurea. Wandering the compound of the PCs' faction, Eando pieces together more of Savith's legend and eventually draws the PCs aside for a more complete conversation about the danger looming in Ilmurea.



EANDO'S TALE

Once all the PCs are gathered together, Eando gets straight to the business at hand.

"There's more happening in Ilmurea than you may realize. The serpentfolk are preparing something big, something that's a threat not just to those living here in Saventh-Yhi, but to the whole surface world. It has to do with their god, Ydersius, now called the Headless King. Long ago, in the time of Azlant, the serpentfolk had a huge empire—they controlled almost all of the Darklands known as Sekamina. And Ydersius walked among his people on Golarion, a true living god.

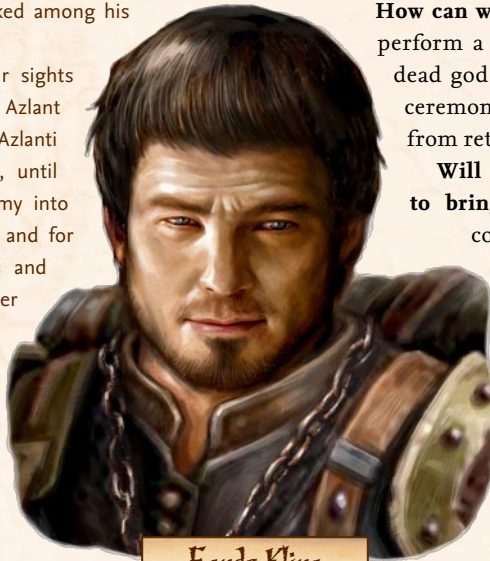
"Eventually the serpentfolk set their sights on the surface world, and challenged Azlant for supremacy over all of Golarion. The Azlanti could only fight them to a standstill, until a great hero named Savith led an army into Ilmurea to crush the serpentfolk once and for all. In Ilmurea, Savith faced Ydersius and beheaded him, finally breaking the power of the serpentfolk empire.

"No doubt you've noticed that there's more than one type of serpentfolk—the big, dumb, degenerate brutes and the smart, conniving ones, with magic. In the old days, most of the serpentfolk were of this more powerful, advanced 'purecaste'—the degenerates were apparently bred only for war. But with Ydersius's defeat, the serpentfolk empire fell into decline. Most of the purecaste serpentfolk went into a sort of magical sleep or hibernation, while the descendents of the rest eventually devolved into the monstrous degenerates.

"Occasionally, though, a purecaste serpentfolk is still born today. And one of them, a priest of Ydersius called Vyr-Azul, plans to resurrect Ydersius. He's actually found the god's skull, and believes that he can reunite the serpent-god's head and body and restore Ydersius to his former power, heralding a new age, restoring and evolving the serpentfolk, and bringing back their empire of old. If true, this could prove disastrous for us all.

"Scholars say the Azlanti, even at the height of their power, struggled to defeat the serpentfolk while Ydersius walked Golarion. But human civilization isn't nearly as advanced today. We're far too fragile and fractured, unprepared for a serpentfolk resurgence. They could wipe out or enslave every living thing in the surface world. At best, we'll become their slaves. At worst, they'll keep us in their larders like livestock until they eat us. That's what happened to the rest of my party when the snakes captured us—all of them, eaten alive.

"But we have an opportunity to avoid that fate. You've already proven yourselves by entering the heart of their domain to rescue me. We've got to go back down there and stop Vyr-Azul before he brings back Ydersius!"



Eando Kline

After hearing Eando's tale, the PCs will no doubt have questions. His answers to their most likely questions are as follows.

How do you know all this? "Some I found out from research. The rest I learned while I was captured. During my imprisonment, Vyr-Azul interrogated me. He believed I was scouting for an army—a human army, perhaps their ancient enemy come to stop them. When he realized I was on my own with no chance of escape, he gloated about the new 'Golden Age' he would bring about."

How can we stop him? "Vyr-Azul must have to perform a major ritual to actually resurrect a dead god. If we can slay him or disrupt that ceremony, we can hopefully stop Ydersius from returning."

Will the ritual even work? Is it possible to bring back a dead god? "Vyr-Azul is convinced it will work. He believes Ydersius was never actually killed, and I'm inclined to believe him. According to the old chronicles, Ydersius wasn't destroyed. Savith just cut off his head and threw it into a pool of lava, and his body disappeared into the Darklands. It takes a lot more than that to kill a god, apparently."

When is the ritual going to take place? "Soon, but I don't know exactly when. I'm guessing that not even Vyr-Azul knows. But especially now the pressure's on him, he'll hold it just as soon as everything's ready. There's no way to know how much time we have, but it's not going to be much.

Where is Vyr-Azul? "In a place called the Sanctum of Ydersius, probably the most well-guarded place in Ilmurea. It's a fortress-temple built into the cavern walls outside the city. They never took me there, but I know there's a whole army inside, and it's well-shielded with serpentfolk magic, practically impenetrable."

Can we just infiltrate the Sanctum and kill Vyr-Azul? We rescued you without too many problems. "You were able to rescue me because the serpentfolk weren't expecting you, and the fortress was staffed at nowhere near full strength. Vyr-Azul knows you're here now, and since you rescued me, he knows his plans have gotten out. The Sanctum is going to be locked tight, and crawling with serpentfolk.

How do you propose we assault the Sanctum and defeat a whole army of serpentfolk? "I don't think you can. Not alone anyway. I think the best plan is to try and draw out their forces with your own army. Even an army may not be able to get into the Sanctum by force, but it might just provide enough of a diversion for us to sneak in and stop the ritual. But first, we need a weapon.



Serpent's Skull

Savith's Legend

Knowledge

(history)

DC

Discovery

15

Savith gathered a multiracial coalition of ancient tribes for her army to battle the serpentfolk, but chose only a handful of trusted companions to accompany her on the mission to slay Ydersius. They included an Azlanti wizard, an Azlanti priest of Desna, a cyclops general, a lizardfolk chieftain, and the king of an ancient tribe of human jungle warriors.

20

To penetrate the snake-god's armored scales and overcome his legendary regenerative powers, Savith wielded a legendary, intelligent magic sword. This blade was eventually destroyed by Ydersius's acidic blood, but not before she took his head.

25

Savith believed the only way to defeat Ydersius was to cut the snake-god's head from his body—a difficult task for a human against a giant serpentfolk. She used magic to enlarge herself and her sword so she would be equal to the task.

30

Even after Savith beheaded Ydersius, it wasn't enough to permanently slay the snake-god. To prevent him from regenerating and returning to his full power, Savith threw his skull into a lake of fire and drove away the god's still-living body.

35

During the battle with Ydersius, Savith was poisoned by the god's threefold venom—his noxious breath, venomous fangs, and even the toxic blood spilling from his wounds. Though she had protected herself with magic against poison, the snake-god's venom eventually claimed her life.

“Before I was captured, I made an alliance with the morlocks in Ilmurea. I think they may actually be the descendants of the original Azlanti that attacked Ilmurea. In any case, I was able to convince them that I was a representative of the Azlanti, their ‘ancestor gods.’

The morlocks told me of a great weapon used against the serpentfolk in the past, which the ancestor gods hid in a place called the Hunters' Maze. I didn't have time to go looking for the weapon myself before I was captured, but the morlocks seemed to think that any attempts to defeat the serpentfolk without this weapon were doomed to failure. Before we go any farther, I think we need to go to the Hunters' Maze and find this ancient weapon. After that, we can see about building an army.” Eando knows that, according to the morlocks, the Hunters' Maze is located in the north of Ilmurea in a choked warren of debris and fallen rock. The Hunters' Maze is described in Part Two.

What if we're too late? “Even if Vyr-Azul manages to restore Ydersius, there has to be a way to put him down again. According to the legends, Savith did it with just a small band of handpicked companions. Saventh-Yhi was built by her surviving followers to commemorate her victory. Perhaps the secret to the snake-god's weakness and how Savith defeated him is recorded somewhere here in the city. You know as well as I do that the walls of these buildings are covered with murals and carvings that tell her story. Perhaps you missed something when you first studied the ruins, or maybe they'll have more meaning now that you know the context.”

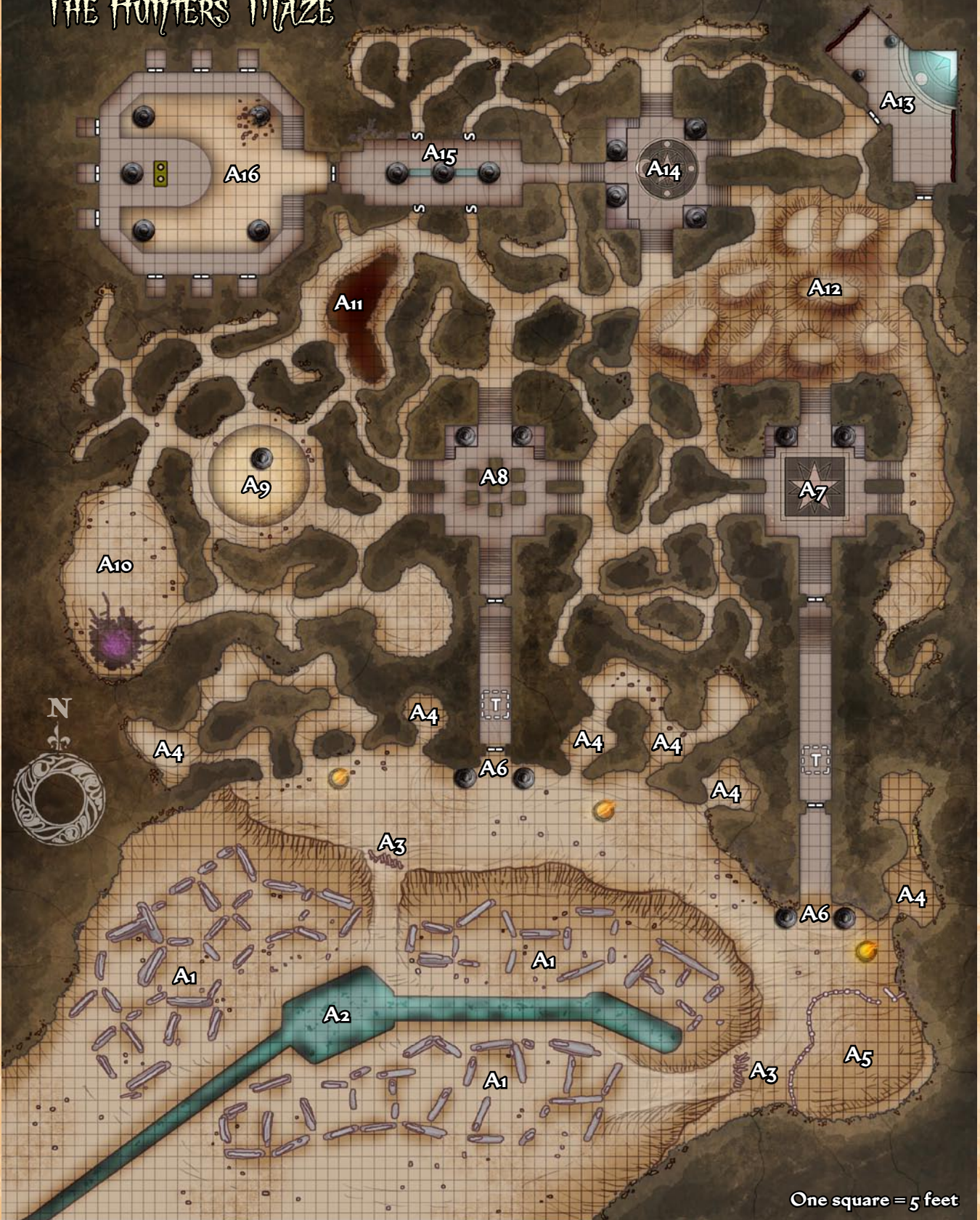
At this point, the PCs can make a DC 40 Knowledge (history) check to recognize the importance of carvings they've already studied in the context of what they know now. If successful, they can remember all of the information presented in the Savith's Legend table based on their previous studies of Saventh-Yhi's carvings. If they fail this check, the PCs can go back into the ruins of Saventh-Yhi to study the carvings and murals again, this time looking for more specific information on Savith and her battle with Ydersius. After a full day of study, the PCs can make another Knowledge (history) check. The result of this check determines which information in the Savith's Legend table they learn (including all information for lower results). Each day of additional research allows a new Knowledge (history) check with a +2 bonus, as the PCs piece together more of Savith's legend.

PART TWO: THE HUNTERS' MAZE

After hearing Eando's story, the PCs will likely want to return to Ilmurea and find the Hunters' Maze and the ancient Azlanti weapon held within it. At this point, the only entrance to Ilmurea is through the magical portal in the Vaults of Madness (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #40) or through teleportation magic and the like.

Once in Ilmurea, the PCs still need to find the Hunters' Maze. If the PCs made friends with the morlocks in the previous adventure, the morlock oracle Udarra can tell them the way, and if he still survives, Thekola can take

THE HUNTERS' MAZE



them there. If the PCs did not make contact with the morlocks, Eando Kline can introduce them to the PCs and learn the maze's exact location. If the PCs killed all the morlocks, feel free to have Eando already know where the maze is located, or reveal its location through divination magic. The Hunters' Maze lies in a deep rift in the area of collapsed rock in the far northwest of Ilmurea's cavern.

The adventure assumes the PCs successfully arrive in Ilmurea and navigate their way to the Hunters' Maze without incident, but feel free to hit them with additional encounters as they move through the city, as Vyr-Azul's forces tighten their hold on the city and prepare for the restoration of Ydersius. These can be encounters taken from "The Thousand Fangs Below" that the PCs did not happen upon during that adventure.

In Ilmurea's heyday, the serpentfolk often cultivated favored slaves for their larders, raising them until they made perfect meals, like aging a fine wine to savor it for a special occasion. They particularly relished games of chance to win away such prizes from their rivals. Thus, they conceived a bloodsport in which as many as nine serpentfolk would compete in a race to catch, claim, and ultimately devour one of several slaves provided by each competitor in a subterranean labyrinth known as the Hunters' Maze—a confusing complex of deadly chambers and twisting passageways, all designed to enhance the game. When the serpentfolk competitors teleported into the arena, the game warden would release the chosen slaves into the maze. Spectators could enjoy the proceedings through scrying at hosted parties throughout Ilmurea.

Today, the Hunters' Maze serves a different purpose. Originally meant to keep competing serpentfolk and their slave-prey locked inside, it now houses a last bastion of urdefhan resistance in the serpentfolk-controlled areas of Ilmurea. When Vyr-Azul first arrived in the city, his followers came into conflict with the urdefhans and morlocks already squatting there. In a series of heated battles, the serpentfolk drove the morlocks and urdefhans out of the more important parts of the city, thereby minimizing disruptions to Vyr-Azul's work. In perhaps the greatest of these skirmishes, the urdefhan forces were split into two. One group, under the half-fiend priest Izon, retreated to the south and dug in around Ilmurea's southern lake, after pushing the morlocks even farther to the southwest. These are the urdefhans that the PCs most likely encountered in "The Thousand Fangs Below."

Izon assumed the second wing of the army was destroyed, but in fact, they simply retreated into Ilmurea's mostly collapsed slums, taking up residence in the Hunters' Maze. Led by an urdefhan warrior named Valglaunt, they use the corridors and rooms of the maze as boltholes and

bottlenecks to continue fighting a guerilla war against the serpentfolk in the city. These urdefhans are all devotees of Trelmarixian, the Horseman of Famine. The urdefhans have also opened a portal within the Hunters' Maze to Trelmarixian's domain on the plane of Abaddon, from which they have summoned meladaemon sorcerers to swell their ranks and help turn the tide against Vyr-Azul's invasion.

The passageways of the Hunters' Maze all share the same characteristics. The serpentfolk shaped the walls, floors, and ceilings from black and green marble tiles resembling serpent scales. Some of them bear runes and sigils in Aklo, explaining the purpose and rules of the game. The builders of the maze also rounded most of the interior passageways like underground pipes, meant to simulate being inside a snake-hole or perhaps a snake itself. Thus, all of the corridors have a proportional diameter, meaning some are only 5 feet in both height and width. The tunnels open into significantly larger chambers, with ceilings as high as 30 feet. The stone doors within the maze (hardness 8, hp 60, Break DC 28) are all unlocked unless otherwise noted.

A1. SLUM RUINS (CR 15)

On the outskirts of Ilmurea, among a vast maze of fallen rock and rubble at the edges of the city's cavern wall, lies a sprawl of ruins. A stagnant aqueduct of putrid water and collected waste runs between several half-collapsed hovels formed from immense slabs of rock, each leaning upon one another to form a chain of habitats. The numerous gaps among these walls appear dark and silent, but rust-red smears of dried blood mark their outer walls, many in the shape of handprints. A large escarpment looms along the northern wall of the cavern, accessed by two steep ramps of loose stone.

This area once served as Ilmurea's slums, originally conceived of by the serpentfolk as a place to house their many slave races, but with typical serpentfolk arrogance, they cared little about the conditions of squalor in the region. They barely set aside time to use spells like *stone shape* to carve giant slabs of rock from the cavern walls for use in the construction, leaving it to the slaves themselves to hoist them into place. As a result, and with the subsequent collapse of much of the ceiling overhead, most of these structures provide little in the way of protection, privacy, or comfort, and are filled with numerous holes and gaps. All of the slabs rest within a "floor" of stone gravel designed to hold the walls in place, which imposes a -4 penalty on Stealth checks made while moving through it. The stone slabs are somewhat unstable, prone to toppling if subjected to sufficient force (hardness 10, 60 hp, Break DC 30).

Creatures: The urdefhans have stationed four skirmishers in the ruins to watch for serpentfolk activity. They remain alert (DC 27 Stealth check to surprise them) and prepare an ambush among the slab walls to capture anyone wandering into their territory. The gaps in the walls serve as arrowslits and provide improved cover for the urdefhan archers inside.

URDEFHAN SKIRMISHERS (4)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Urdefhan fighter 5/rogue 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 276)

NE Medium outsider (native)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.;

Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 17, flat-footed 20 (+6 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)

hp 135 each (13 HD; 8d10+5d8+70)

Fort +14, **Ref** +14, **Will** +4; +1 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +1, evasion, negative energy affinity, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge;

DR 5/good or silver; **Immune** death effects, disease, fear, level drain; **Resist** acid 10; **SR** 14

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *rhoka sword* +20/+15/+10 (1d8+10/18–20), bite +12 (1d4+3 plus 2 Str damage)

Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +16/+11/+6 (1d8+7/x3)

Special Attacks blood drain (1 Con), sneak attack +3d6 (plus 3 bleed), strength damage (DC 15), weapon training (heavy blades +1)

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

At will—*feather fall*

3/day—*align weapon*, *death knell* (DC 15), *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 14)

TACTICS

Before Combat Before springing an ambush, the urdefhans drink their *potions of shield of faith*.

During Combat The urdefhans target opponents with ranged sneak attacks from behind their arrowslits. They rely on Wind Stance and Lightning Stance to avoid ranged attacks as they move among the stone slabs. Once joined in melee, however, they work together, circling around with Spring Attack and Mobility to flank foes and make sneak attacks. Rather than kill intruders, the urdefhans try to take captives and drag them to the holding pens at area A5.

Morale The urdefhans fight to the death, triggering their daemonic pact to escape capture or control in an explosion of negative energy that may also heal their nearby allies.

Base Statistics Without their potions, the urdefhans statistics are AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 18.

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 18, **Con** 19, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 34

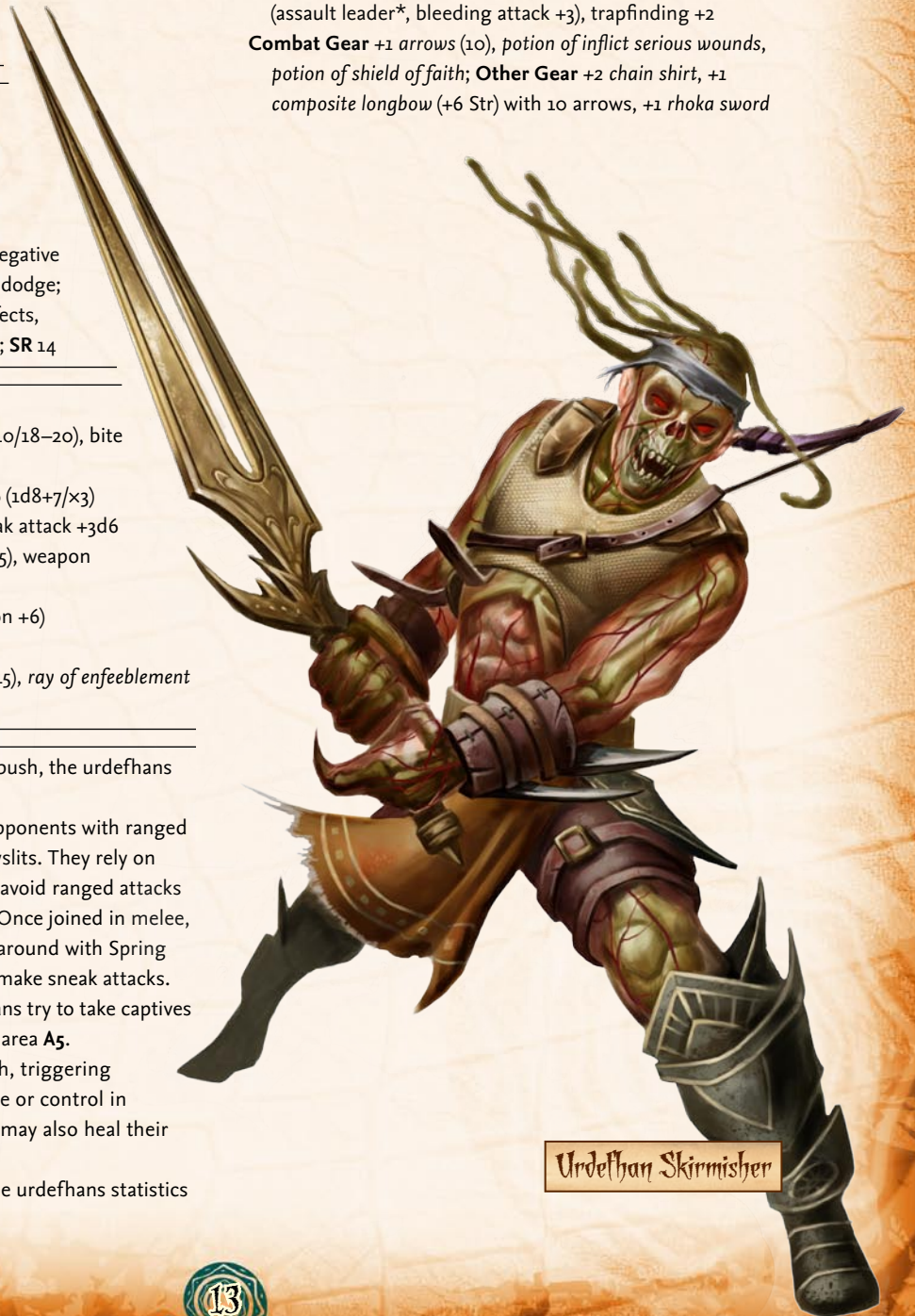
Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Lightning Reflexes, Lightning Stance, Mobility, Spring Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (rhoka sword), Weapon Specialization (rhoka sword), Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +15, Climb +15, Escape Artist +15, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +9, Perception +17, Ride +17, Stealth +20, Use Magic Device +16

Languages Aklo, Orvian, Undercommon

SQ armor training 1, daemonic pact (DC 15), rogue talents (assault leader*, bleeding attack +3), trapfinding +2

Combat Gear +1 arrows (10), *potion of inflict serious wounds*, *potion of shield of faith*; **Other Gear** +2 chain shirt, +1 composite longbow (+6 Str) with 10 arrows, +1 rhoka sword



Urdefhan Skirmisher

Serpent's Skull

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Daemonic Pact (Su) Urdefhans are infused with daemonic energy; as an immediate action, an urdefhan can attempt to allow this energy to consume its soul (50% chance of success per attempt). If it succeeds, the urdefhan dies and releases a 5-foot-radius burst of negative energy that deals 2d6 points of damage (DC 15 Reflex half). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Negative Energy Affinity (Ex) An urdefhan is alive, but it reacts to positive and negative energy as if it were undead—positive energy harms it, while negative energy heals it.

Strength Damage (Su) An urdefhan's bite drains vitality, turning the skin and muscle around the wound transparent and causing 2 points of Strength damage unless the target succeeds on a DC 15 Fortitude save. The flesh remains transparent until the Strength damage is healed, but this transparency does not have any other effects. The save DC is Constitution-based.

* See *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*.

A2. SEWER AQUEDUCT (CR 16)

The dark water in this aqueduct lies still, choked with reeking sewage.

The aqueduct is 10 feet deep, with water and sewage filling it almost to the brim. It eventually empties into Ilmurea's northern lake.

Creature: When the urdefhans retreated into the Hunters' Maze, they discovered a proto-shoggoth, a less intelligent and more primitive precursor to normal shoggoths, living in the sewer aqueduct. Rather than fight it, the urdefhans befriended the beast, after a fashion, feeding it the bodies of their slain victims. Now the proto-shoggoth guards the approach to their lair—a major factor in Vyr-Azul's decision to cede Ilmurea's slums to the urdefhans rather than throw away more of his followers assaulting the creature. The proto-shoggoth lurks beneath the surface of the water, and attacks any living creature that wanders too close to the aqueduct's edge, even its erstwhile "masters," the urdefhans.

PROTO-SHOGGOTH

CR 16

XP 76,800

CN Huge ooze (aquatic)

Init +9; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent, tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +32

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 13, flat-footed 26 (+5 Dex, +18 natural, -2 size)

hp 228 (24d8+120); fast healing 10

Fort +15, **Ref** +13, **Will** +14

DR 10/—; **Immune** blindness, charm effects, cold, deafness, ooze traits, sonic; **Resist** acid 20, electricity 20, fire 20; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 50 ft.

Melee 4 slam +26 (2d6+10/19–20 plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks absorb (4d6+15 bludgeoning damage plus 6d6 acid damage, AC 19, 22 hp), constrict (3d6+10), maddening cacophony, trample (2d6+15, DC 32)

TACTICS

During Combat The proto-shoggoth attacks any creatures that approach the aqueduct, attempting to drag them over the edge to absorb or constrict them underwater while they drown. If wounded, it quickly climbs out of the aqueduct and uses its maddening cacophony before trampling and absorbing any remaining opponents.

Morale The proto-shoggoth pursues potential meals throughout the slums and as far as the ramps leading to area A3—even collapsing some of the slab hovels at area A1, if necessary, in an attempt to trap prey before it can escape. The proto-shoggoth flees back into the water if reduced to 60 hit points or fewer.



Proto-Shoggoth



STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 20, **Con** 21, **Int** 3, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 11
Base Atk +18; **CMB** +30 (+34 grapple); **CMD** 45 (can't be tripped)
Feats Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Stunning Critical
Skills Climb +18, Perception +32, Swim +18
Languages Aklo
SQ amphibious

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Absorb (Ex) To use this ability, the proto-shoggoth must begin its turn grappling a creature or must trample. The proto-shoggoth may attempt to absorb as many creatures as it grapples or tramples in a round. This ability otherwise functions as swallow whole, save that a creature that cuts its way out of a proto-shoggoth leaves no hole in the protoplasmic creature's body.
All-Around Vision (Ex) A proto-shoggoth sees in all directions at once. It cannot be flanked.
Maddening Cacophony (Su) As a free action, a proto-shoggoth can give voice to sounds and words sane life was not meant to hear. All creatures in a 60-foot radius must make a DC 22 Will save or be confused for 1d6 rounds. Each round a creature is affected, it takes 1d6 points of Wisdom damage. A creature that saves cannot be affected by the same proto-shoggoth's maddening cacophony for 24 hours. This is a sonic mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

A3. OUTER TERRACE (CR 16)

Great piles of loose rock create sloping ramps leading up to this high terrace. At the top, barricades of sharpened stone block the approach. Three large fire pits are spread across the terrace, the glow of their smoky embers reflecting off the mineral deposits of the north wall. Several small cave entrances lead into the north wall, while giant serpentfolk statues flank two larger entrances. To the east, a holding pen corrals several huddled figures inside.

The terrace is 40 feet above the main floor of the cavern, and a DC 25 Climb check is required to climb its sides if the ramps are not used. The barricades at the top of the ramps are about 4 feet high (hardness 8, hp 90, Break DC 35), and provide cover to the guards behind them.

Creatures: Three urdefhan skirmishers are stationed on the terrace, led by a meladaemon shock trooper, one of several daemoniac sorcerers summoned from the Abaddon Vortex (area A10). The meladaemon looks like an emaciated humanoid jackal with green skin and filthy green robes. These guards attack anyone attempting to breach the barricades or approach the terrace.

MELADAEMON SHOCK TROOPER

CR 14

XP 38,400

Male meladaemon sorcerer 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 69)
 NE Large outsider (daemon, evil, extraplanar)
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect good*, *detect magic*, *see invisibility*; Perception +27
Aura consumptive aura (20 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 17, flat-footed 23 (+7 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural, +4 shield, -1 size)
hp 244 (20 HD; 14d10+6d6+146)
Fort +15, **Ref** +18, **Will** +20;
DR 10/good; **Immune** acid, critical hits, death effects, disease, poison, sneak attacks; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10;
SR 22

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)
Melee bite +24 (2d8+5/19-20 plus disease), 2 claws +23 (2d6+5 plus hunger)
Ranged ray +23 touch (by spell)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with melee touch attacks)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +18)
 Constant—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *fly*, *see invisibility*
 At will—*fear* (DC 21), *deeper darkness*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)
 3/day—*blight* (DC 22), *diminish plants*, quickened *magic missile*
 1/day—*horrid wilting* (DC 25), *waves of fatigue*
Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +13)
 10/day—acidic ray (1d6+3 acid)
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 6th; concentration +13)
 3rd (5/day)—*lightning bolt* (DC 20)
 2nd (7/day)—*blur*, *ghoul touch* (DC 19), *see invisibility*
 1st (8/day)—*enlarge person*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *shocking grasp*, *true strike*
 o (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 17), *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 17), *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 17)
Bloodline Aberrant

TACTICS

Before Combat If alerted to combat with the urdefhan raiders in area A1 or the proto-shoggoth in area A2, the meladaemon shock trooper casts *blur* and *shield* before combat.

During Combat The meladaemon opens battle by casting *waves of fatigue* on groups of PCs trying to storm the ramps, followed by *rays of exhaustion* from his wand. While the urdefhans fire on attackers from behind the barricades, the meladaemon takes to the air and targets foes with *horrid wilting*, *lightning bolt*, and quickened *magic missile*. If the PCs seem about to break through a barricade, the meladaemon attempts to repel them with *fear*. If forced into melee, he uses his long limbs to deliver touch spells, followed by attacks with his bite and claws.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 80 hit points, the meladaemon teleports to areas A7 and A8 to sound the

Serpent's Skull

alarm before returning to the fight 3 rounds later, at which point he fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without shield, the meladaemon's statistics are AC 27, touch 17, flat-footed 19.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 25, **Con** 24, **Int** 20, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 41

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (bite), Iron Will, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (magic missile), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Bluff +26, Fly +20, Heal +11, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (planes) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +27, Sense Motive +23, Spellcraft +24, Stealth +22, Survival +23, Use Magic Device +26

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Draconic, Infernal, Orvian, Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ bloodline arcana

Combat Gear wand of ray of exhaustion (20 charges)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Consumptive Aura (Su) A meladaemon radiates an aura of hunger to a radius of 20 feet. Every round a creature begins its turn within this aura, it must succeed on a DC 24 Fortitude save or take 1d6 nonlethal damage and become fatigued from extreme hunger. Creatures that do not need to eat are immune to this effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Disease (Ex) *Daemonic wasting*: Bite—injury; save Fort DC 24; onset 1 day; frequency 1/day; effect 1d4 Con and 1d4 Cha damage; cure 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Hunger (Su) A meladaemon's claw attacks deal an additional 1d6 points of nonlethal damage as it causes sudden pangs of horrific hunger in its foe. Creatures that do not need to eat are immune to this effect.

URDEFHAN SKIRMISHERS (3)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 135 each (see page 13)

TACTICS

During Combat The urdefhans fire their bows from behind the barricades on anyone using the ramps or flight to approach the terrace. If necessary, they leap down and use *feather fall* to circle behind their foes to make sneak attacks.

Morale The urdefhans fight to the death, even committing suicide with their daemonic pact to injure surviving foes.

A4. URDEFHAN BARRACKS

The rank smell of unwashed bodies, stale urine, and half-eaten bones permeates these caves, illuminated by small patches of glowing lichen. Several sleeping pallets cover the floor.

The urdefhans use these caves as living quarters. After repeated skirmishes with the serpentfolk, however, their numbers are dwindling (one of the reasons for summoning meladaemons to aid them), and currently all of the urdefhans in the Hunters' Maze are on duty.

A5. HOLDING PEN (CR 10)

A stockade of serpentstone posts and mithral wire encloses this open-air holding pen. Each post is carved to simulate a snake's scales and is topped by a fanged viper's head. A single gate stands in the northern stretch of the fence.

The ancient serpentfolk used this pen as a larder holding the slaves that were to be released

Meladaemon Shock Trooper



into the Hunters' Maze. Today, the urdefhans use the stockade to hold their sacrificial victims, mainly morlocks taken from the city, until they are ready to offer the victims to the archdaemon Trelmarixian. The fence is 10 feet tall (DC 15 Climb check to scale). The gate into the pen is made of mithral (hardness 15, hp 60), but is unlocked.

Creatures: Fifteen morlocks sit inside the holding pen, vacant-eyed and seemingly oblivious to their surroundings, all victims of a *symbol of persuasion* on the gate. The morlocks make no efforts to escape or resist. If the charm effect of the *symbol* is dispelled, they immediately flee.

MORLOCKS (15) **CR 2**
XP 600 each
 hp 22 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 209)

Trap: The inside of the pen's mithral door bears an insidiously crafted *symbol of persuasion* made permanent by the serpentfolk who built the holding pen. Anyone passing through the door triggers the *symbol*, which makes prisoners more docile and accepting of their fate as prey for the games hosted in the Hunters' Maze. The trap can be bypassed with a password (the word "hunter" in Aklo), which the urdefhans learned through divination.

HEIGHTENED SYMBOL OF PERSUASION **CR 10**
Type magic; Perception DC 34; Disable Device DC 34

EFFECTS
Trigger location; **Reset** automatic (10 minutes); **Bypass** password
Effect spell effect (permanent heightened *symbol of persuasion* [9th level, CL 18th]; targets are charmed as *charm monster* for 18 hours, DC 24 Will save negates, charmed targets are compelled to remain docile and wait within the holding pen until claimed by a hunter and taken into the maze); multiple targets (all targets passing through the holding pen's door)

A6. MAZE ENTRANCE (CR 10)

Two colossal statues of hooded serpentfolk look out over the cavern, flanking a perfectly round passageway in the northern wall. The statues wear scaled armor and carry hunting spears, and their deep-socketed eyes glitter with a violet hue. Beyond the entrance, sigils and runes mark the inner walls of the passageway.

The serpentfolk built two tunnels into the Hunters' Maze, one serving as an entrance and the other as an exit. Each tunnel contains two sets of stone doors. Any slaves who could survive the game for 3 full hours and make their way to the exit would find the *arcane lock* on the inner door disabled so they could rejoin their master's stock. The urdefhans dispelled the locks on both doors when they moved in, but they keep the inner doors barred (Break DC 30).

Trap: Each tunnel's outermost doors bear a permanent heightened *symbol of fear* on their inside panels. When visitors pass over the designated area, the outer doors automatically shut and the symbol activates. Originally, this mechanism forced reluctant slaves to participate in the game by compelling them to flee the entrance and run deeper into the warren of tunnels. As the urdefhans are immune to fear, they left these traps in place. This affords them no great advantage against potential serpentfolk invaders (who are also immune to mind-affecting magic), but does provide some protection against other denizens of the city and ensures that sacrificial victims don't escape once led inside.

HEIGHTENED SYMBOL OF FEAR **CR 10**
Type magic; Perception DC 34; Disable Device DC 34

EFFECTS
Trigger location; **Reset** automatic (10 minutes)
Effect spell effect (permanent heightened *symbol of fear* [9th level, CL 18th]; targets are panicked for 18 rounds, DC 24 Will save negates), multiple targets (all creatures within 60 feet).

Treasure: The eyes of the statues are amethysts the size of fists, worth 500 gp each. Reaching the stones requires flying or climbing to the top of the 25-foot-tall statues (a DC 25 Climb check). A DC 22 Strength check is required to pry the stones loose.

A7. EASTERN CROSSING (CR 15)

Multiple stairways exit this room, most leading deeper underground. In the middle of the floor, a pattern of gold-inlaid tiles forms a square; each tile is etched with a strange rune. To the north, twin statues of defaced serpentfolk warriors stand upon five-foot-high platforms, their arms stretching to the thirty-foot ceiling overhead.

This chamber contains a permanent *magic mouth* that activates to announce the purpose of the Hunters' Maze in Aklo to any who stand within the square of rune-etched tiles. The urdefhans have grown tired of hearing the speech and usually avoid stepping into the square when possible.

Creatures: Four urdefhan skirmishers are stationed here. They attack anyone who breaks through the barred doors in the southern passage or enters the room.

URDEFHAN SKIRMISHERS (4) **CR 11**
XP 12,800 each
 hp 135 each (see page 13)

Development: If alerted to the PCs' presence or attacked, the urdefhans send one of their number to summon reinforcements from area A12. In this event, one of the meladaemon shock troopers from that room

teleports into the center of the chamber to join the fight on the fifth round of combat.

A8. WESTERN CROSSING (CR 15)

Seven four-foot-high, square pedestals fill the interior of this chamber. Atop each pedestal stands a single serpentfolk warrior at parade rest facing south, dressed in snakescale armor, wearing a fanged helm, and wielding a glaive. Behind them on elevated platforms to the north stand two statues of robed serpentfolk, whose staves cross above a large stairway leading deeper underground. Several more exits line the east and west walls.

This chamber once served as the exit to the Hunters' Maze. The figures on the pedestals are incredibly lifelike *permanent images*, created as a symbolic honor guard for any slaves who actually survived the game.

Creatures: Four urdefhan skirmishers watch over this entrance to their lair. They attack any intruders entering the room. If alerted to the PCs' presence, they prepare an ambush by hiding within the *permanent images* on top of the pedestals, using the illusions to hide their own bodies (granting them a +2 circumstance bonus on their Stealth checks).

URDEFHAN SKIRMISHERS (4) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 135 each (see page 13)

TACTICS

During Combat The urdefhans cast *ray of enfeeblement* before joining battle. Thereafter, they use their Mobility and Spring Attack feats to move among the room's pedestals, using them for cover. When possible, they climb atop the pedestals to flank opponents and make sneak attacks.

A9. THE PIT OF FAMINE (CR 15)

Several tunnels enter this perfectly spherical chamber, opening onto an eight-foot-wide ledge running along the room's circumference at the center of the sphere. The domed ceiling rises twenty feet overhead, and the floor lies at a similar depth below. A crudely shaped statue of a jackal-headed man with crystal teeth stands at the bottom of the pit.

This chamber originally offered a unique terrain challenge for the purposes of the game within the maze. Serpentfolk hunters often chased their prey into the pit or forced them into it with magic while levitating above. For victims in the bowl-shaped pit 20 feet below, the sloped edges prove especially difficult to climb (Climb DC 30), but anyone falling into it takes damage as if falling 10 fewer feet than normal. The statue at the bottom of the pit is a shrine to Trelmarixian, the Horseman of Famine, patron

archdaemon of these urdefhans, and can be recognized as such with a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check.

Creatures: Four famished mohrgs, former urdefhans that were tainted with daemonic blood before rising as undead, have been summoned here from Abaddon to assist with rebuilding the urdefhans' army. Valglant plans on having them slaughter every serpentfolk they capture so the mohrgs can transform them into controllable fast zombies. The mohrgs attack any intruders entering the room.

FAMISHED MOHRGS (4) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Half-fiend mohrgs (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 171, 208)

NE Medium undead (extraplanar)

Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +24

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 17, flat-footed 19 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 natural)

hp 147 each (14d8+84)

Fort +10, Ref +14, Will +12

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, DR 10/magic;

Immune undead traits, **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee 2 slams +19 (2d8+9 plus grab), bite +19 (1d6+9), tongue +14 melee touch (paralysis)

Special Attacks create spawn, paralysis (1d4 minutes, DC 23), smite good 1/day

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +18)

3/day—*darkness*, *poison* (DC 18), *unholy aura* (DC 22)

1/day—*blasphemy* (DC 21), *contagion* (DC 18), *desecrate*, *unhallow*, *unholy blight* (DC 18)

TACTICS

Before Combat One of the mohrgs casts *desecrate* on the statue of Trelmarixian every day, which grants the mohrgs +2 hit points per HD and a +2 profane bonus on all attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws (already included in the stat block).

During Combat On the first round of combat, one of the mohrgs casts *unholy aura* on its companions. The mohrgs initially attack from the ledge, seeking to bull rush opponents or paralyze them so the mohrgs can topple them into the pit below. They especially target PCs wearing obvious religious symbols with their smite good attacks, assuming them to be clerics or paladins that should be put down first. If any creatures fall into the pit, two of the mohrgs fly down to devour them.

Morale The mohrgs fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 23, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +17 (+19 bull rush, +21 grapple); **CMD** 34 (36 vs. grapple)

Feats Ability Focus (paralysis), Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Climb +24, Fly +27, Perception +24, Stealth +23, Swim +21

Languages Aklo, Undercommon

A10. ABADDON VORTEX (CR 16)

A crackling sphere of dark energy fills the southern half of this thirty-foot-high cavern. Half-distorted images of figures seemingly writhe and dance within its weave.

A permanent planar portal has existed in this natural cavern since the maze was constructed, and was used by the serpentfolk to summon powerful outsiders to join the hunts for the entertainment of Ilmurea's elite. The serpentfolk could manipulate the portal to connect to any plane, thus summoning demons, devils, elementals, or even the Herald of Ydersius itself to partake in the games.

When the urdefhans moved into the maze, the portal was inactive, but Valglaut immediately recognized its value to his forces if he could connect it to Abaddon and then use it to summon daemons to strengthen his army, aiding in the effort to retake Ilmurea from the serpentfolk. After much trial and error, Valglaut was finally able to activate the portal and attune it to Abaddon, but it only functions haphazardly. Each time he wishes to summon a daemon, Valglaut must re-attune the portal—as a result, he's only managed to summon a few daemons through the gate. Currently open and attuned to Abaddon, the portal functions as a permanent *gate*, providing travel between the Hunters' Maze and the blasted wastes of that plane.

Creatures: Two meladaemon shock troopers live in this cavern, guarding the gateway to their plane. They immediately attack anyone who enters.

MELADAEMON SHOCK TROOPERS (2) CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 244 each (see page 15)

TACTICS

During Combat The meladaemons begin combat by casting quickened *magic missiles* along with *horrid wilting* and *waves of fatigue*. If PCs attempt to flee through the corridors of the maze, the meladaemons promptly pursue, using their superior knowledge of the maze to teleport into rooms ahead of the PCs and cut off retreat.

Morale If reduced below 60 hit points, the meladaemons retreat into Abaddon via the portal, causing the portal to go dormant as they do so.

Development: The magical portal in this room is similar to a *well of many worlds*, but is immovable and can be focused to connect to different planes. The portal is currently attuned to Abaddon. Anytime the portal is used, however, it goes dormant, and must be reactivated and re-attuned before it can be used again. When dormant, the portal can be activated blindly with a DC 25 Use Magic Device check, but this transports anyone passing through the portal to a random plane. A DC 30 Knowledge (planes) check is enough to realize that the portal can be attuned to different planes, but re-attuning the portal requires 12 hours of work and a DC 35 Use Magic Device check because of the portal's great age and complexity. Each time the portal is used, however, it goes dormant again.

If the PCs successfully attune the portal to a plane of their choosing, they can use the *gate* thus created to call an extraplanar creature such as an angel or archon to aid them. This functions as the calling creature effect of the *gate* spell, using the caster level of the character activating the portal, but requiring no material component. Using



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the portal in this way causes it to go dormant immediately after the called creature is transported through. The PCs may be able to use such extraplanar allies in their army for the upcoming assault on Ilmurea (see page 25).

If the PCs decide to pass through the portal to Abaddon, or attune it to another plane that they wish to visit, such exploration is beyond the scope of this adventure. If you want to expand the adventure in this direction, however, see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Great Beyond* and the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* for details on the plane of Abaddon and planar adventuring in general.

A11. SINKHOLE CHASM (CR 15)

A large chasm takes up most of this cavern, dropping out of sight into the impenetrable gloom of a dark abyss. A narrow ledge skirts the chasm to the east while a wider ledge runs around the fissure to the north and west. Several tunnels exit the cavern in all directions.

The Hunters' Maze is a combination of magic-carved tunnels and chambers in conjunction with preexisting cave systems. This natural cavern contains a deep chasm that drops into an underground lake, which the urdefhans now use as a water source. The lake lies 150 feet below and the water is 30 feet deep. Creatures that fall into the lake take 1d6 points of lethal falling damage plus 2d3 points of nonlethal damage. Climbing the unworked stone back to the top requires a DC 15 Climb check.

Creatures: Four advanced hydrodaemons inhabit the lake and chasm, having been summoned along with the other daemons through the Abaddon Vortex. They look like giant humanoid frogs with milky white eyes; clawed hands; and wide, fanged mouths. These hydrodaemons attack any creature entering the cavern.

ADVANCED HYDRODAEMONS (4) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

NE Large outsider (aquatic, daemon, evil, extraplanar)

(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 67)

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., *detect magic*; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+3 Dex, +13 natural, -1 size)

hp 147 each (14d10+70)

Fort +14, Ref +14, Will +4

DR 10/cold iron or silver; Immune acid, death effects, disease, poison, waters of the River Styx; Resist cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; SR 22

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (average; see glide, below), swim 60 ft.

Melee bite +18 (1d8+5 plus grab), 2 claws +18 (1d6+5)

Ranged sleep spittle +16 ranged touch (sleep)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks rake (2 claws +8, 1d6+5)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +11)

Constant—*detect magic*, *water walk*

At will—*acid arrow*, *deeper darkness*

3/day—*control water*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *summon monster V* (Large water elemental only)

1/day—*deseccrate*, *summon* (level 3, 1 hydrodaemon 50%)

TACTICS

During Combat The hydrodaemons cling to the sides of the chasm and use their sleep spittle to attack intruders by surprise. Any opponents who succumb to the spittle are pushed over the edge, soon followed by a hydrodaemon gliding down into the chasm to feed on the fallen foe. The rest leap forward to attack with bite, claw, and rake attacks.

Morale The hydrodaemons jump into the chasm to seek refuge in the subterranean lake if reduced to 50 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 14

Base Atk +14; CMB +20 (+22 bull rush, +24 grapple); CMD 33 (35 vs. bull rush)

Feats Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Lightning Reflexes, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Fly +14, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (planes) +12, Perception +23, Sense Motive +13, Stealth +10, Swim +26

Languages Abyssal, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ amphibious, glide

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Glide (Ex) A hydrodaemon can launch itself into the air and glide along for 1 minute, gaining a fly speed of 40 feet with average maneuverability. While gliding, the hydrodaemon gains the pounce ability.

Sleep Spittle (Su) A hydrodaemon can spit at a single target within 20 feet, making a ranged touch attack as a standard action. A target hit by this spittle must succeed on a DC 22 Will save or fall asleep for 6 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based.

A12. OVERLOOK (CR 17)

Numerous tunnels open into this massive cavern whose 60-foot-high ceiling arches high overhead. Several small plateaus stand in the center of the cavern floor with narrow crevices running between them.

Originally, this section of the maze served as a killing field designed to separate and disperse the slave-prey hunted by the serpentfolk, who would station themselves high upon the plateaus. The urdefhans and their daemoniac allies use the cavern for a similar purpose, but also make their beds upon the plateaus, turning the chamber into a makeshift barracks. The plateaus are 15

feet high, and require DC 15 Climb checks to scale. The Acrobatics DC to jump from one to another varies from 5 to 15, depending on the distance between them.

Creatures: Currently, two urdefhan skirmishers and two meladaemon shock troopers reside here. If alerted to the PCs' presence, they hide atop the plateaus, leaping or flying from one to another to track the PCs' progress before eventually setting up an ambush.

MELADAEMON SHOCK TROOPERS (2) CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 244 each (see page 15)

TACTICS

During Combat The meladaemons target opponents at the base of the plateaus with quickened *magic missile*, *horrid wilting*, and *lightning bolt*. If engaged atop the plateaus, they fly into the air and continue making ranged attacks.

Morale When reduced to 70 hit points or fewer, one of the meladaemons teleports to area A16 to warn Valglaunt. The other remains behind and fights to the death.

URDEFHAN SKIRMISHERS (2) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 135 each (see page 15)

TACTICS

During Combat The urdefhans snipe at intruders with bows, bull rushing anyone who attempts to climb up after them. They drop down into the crevices between the plateaus to flank opponents and make sneak attacks, if possible.

Morale The urdefhans fight to the death.

Development: If alerted by one of the urdefhan skirmishers in area A7, one of the meladaemon shock troopers teleports there to join the fight.

A13. HIBERNATION CHAMBER (CR 17)

A raised dais surrounded by golden rune-tiles stands in the corner where this room turns to the northwest. Atop the dais, a translucent wall of blue energy rises to the ceiling, encasing the unmoving figure of a cyclops warrior, his greatsword thrust into the body of a human woman. Timeworn tapestries hang along the east and northwest walls, their original patterns and colors long ago faded. Two statues of serpentfolk stand facing one another in the northwest portion of the room. The statues' arms, once outstretched before them, now lie shattered on the dusty floor.

Aside from their own participation in the games of the Hunters' Maze, the serpentfolk sometimes chose to introduce other hunters for added sport and variety. To this end, they constructed a hibernation chamber into which they could teleport various monsters before releasing them into the maze to hunt slaves or prisoners

for the serpentfolk's entertainment. The raised dais in the northeast corner served this purpose by acting as a one-way *teleportation circle* with a built-in *temporal stasis* field. The serpentfolk statues to the northwest were damaged in the battle between the room's current occupants. The ceiling is 20 feet high in this chamber.

Creature: When Savith's army assaulted Ilmurea, one of her greatest allies—a cyclops general named Aveshai—discovered a Coil of Ydersius masquerading as a human wizard among their ranks. After divining her true nature and learning she planned to betray Savith, he chased the wizard into the Hunters' Maze. Fearing for her life, she lured the cyclops into this chamber, where they did battle. Aveshai mortally wounded her, but the Coil of Ydersius managed to trigger the *temporal stasis* effect generated by the hibernation chamber, trapping and preserving them both in suspended animation.

The PCs can end the *temporal stasis* effect with a targeted *dispel magic* (DC 29 dispel check), thus freeing Aveshai, but the cyclops is momentarily disoriented as he rejoins normal time. As the dead Coil of Ydersius slides off his blade, he turns and roars in Azlanti, "Come, snakes, and meet the same fate as your deceiving sister! I'll skin the scales from your backs and pluck the fangs from your lying mouths!" Initially unaware of the passage of time, it takes Aveshai a moment to realize the PCs are not serpentfolk or their slaves—he is disturbed by the presence of humans in Ilmurea he does not recognize. While Aveshai does not immediately threaten the PCs, he does not trust them either. If the PCs speak with him (he does not speak Common, as that language did not exist in his time), they can convince him of their good intentions with a DC 17 Diplomacy check.

Once made friendly, General Aveshai can share a wealth of knowledge about the ancient serpentfolk and Savith's quest to defeat the snake-god, Ydersius. Aveshai was a great general in his time, and a veteran of countless battles against the serpentfolk. At first, comprehending the vast passage of time proves difficult for Aveshai, and he asks just as many questions about the PCs and the modern world as they do about him. Aveshai has no knowledge of Saventh-Yhi, however, as the city was built after Savith's death. Aveshai is unaware of both Savith's demise and her defeat of Ydersius, as well. He grows quiet and subdued if informed of her fate, but is pleased to hear of her success in defeating the serpent god.

If asked, Aveshai has no knowledge of the ancient weapon once used against the serpentfolk that Eando Kline spoke of. His own sword, *Eroeme*, is magical, but certainly not a legendary relic. In fact, Aveshai himself is the "weapon," though even he does not realize this fact.

If he's told of the current serpentfolk threat or the PCs' plans to gather an army to attack, Aveshai's military

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training takes over. Though Saventh-Yhi did not yet exist in his time, plans for the city were already underway, including plans for building seven “spears” as a weapon against the serpentfolk should they ever try to reclaim Ilmurea. Aveshai remembers enough of the plans for the spears that he thinks he can activate them in preparation for an invasion. This is likely the PCs’ first hint that the seven great spires of Saventh-Yhi have more than just a decorative use, and may prove invaluable in their own plans to invade Ilmurea. Aveshai asks to accompany the PCs back to Saventh-Yhi—not only can he help them with their own plans, but he also wishes to see the city and look upon Savith’s grave with his own eyes. Details on activating Saventh-Yhi’s seven spears may be found in Part Three.

General Aveshai is a bronzed-skin cyclops who stands almost 10 feet tall. He wears red-and-gold plate armor in an archaic style, and wields a giant greatsword.



General Aveshai

GENERAL AVESHAI

CR 17

XP 102,400

Male advanced cyclops fighter 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 52, 294)

LN Large humanoid (giant)

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +31

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 14, flat-footed 30 (+10 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dex, +9 natural, –1 size)

hp 263 (21 HD; 10d8+11d10+158)

Fort +22, **Ref** +11, **Will** +10; +3 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +3, ferocity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *Eroeme* +33/+28/+23/+18 (3d6+21/17–20)

Ranged +1 *Large heavy crossbow* +22 (2d8+2/19–20)

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

Special Attacks weapon training (heavy blades +2, crossbows +1)

TACTICS

During Combat In combat, General Aveshai focuses on the most dangerous-looking opponent, delivering Awesome Blows and Bleeding Criticals with his greatsword, and using his flash of insight ability to ensure success against powerful foes. Against spellcasters, he relies on his Disruptive and Spellbreaker feats to keep them in check whenever possible.

Morale Having missed Savith’s last battle with Ydersius, Aveshai will not be left out this time. He fights to the death in any battle with the serpentfolk.

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 16, **Con** 22, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +29 (+33 bull rush); **CMD** 44 (46 vs. bull rush)

Feats Awesome Blow, Bleeding Critical, Cleave, Critical Focus, Disruptive, Great Cleave, Greater Bull Rush, Greater Weapon Focus (greatsword), Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack, Spellbreaker, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword)

Skills Intimidate +25, Knowledge (engineering) +26, Perception +31, Profession (soothsayer) +15, Sense Motive +14, Survival +15

Languages Aklo, Azlanti, Cyclops, Draconic, Giant

SQ armor training 3, flash of insight

Combat Gear *elixir of vision*, *potions of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of resist energy* (fire); **Other Gear** +2 half-plate, *Eroeme* (+2 mithral monstrous humanoid bane greatsword; see sidebar), +1 *Large heavy crossbow* with 10 bolts, *cloak of resistance* +2, *ring of protection* +2

Story Award: If the PCs free Aveshai and learn about Saventh-Yhi’s seven “spears,” award them XP as if they had defeated him in combat.

A14. NORTHERN CROSSING (CR 17)

Five separate stairways climb into this large thirty-foot-high chamber. Two serpentfolk statues stand atop pedestals in the eastern corners of the room, while two more stand on elevated platforms flanking the western exit. Each statue holds a stone tablet in one hand; the other hand reaches out toward an engraved circle of golden tiles scribed upon the chamber's floor.

The serpentfolk designed this room to act as an emergency *teleportation circle* that hunters could use to evacuate the maze if endangered by the game's slave-prey. It could also deliver outside guards to quell unruly slaves who refused to exit the maze upon the game's completion. Originally keyed to another location in Ilmurea, the circle no longer works correctly, having become damaged over the intervening span of years.

PCs who examine the stone tablets held by the serpentfolk statues can make a DC 35 Knowledge (arcana) check to deduce the purpose of the circle and its activation method. This requires a standard action and a DC 25 Use Magic Device check to blindly activate the device. Unfortunately, anyone attempting to use the *teleportation circle* triggers the trap that it has become.

Creatures: Six urdefhan skirmishers guard this chamber, defending the western exit leading to area A15. They are well aware of the malfunctioning *teleportation circle* and use it to their tactical advantage by activating it when anyone stands within its boundaries. The urdefhans receive a +2 circumstance bonus on Use Magic Device checks to activate the circle because of their familiarity with the malfunctioning trap.

URDEFHAN SKIRMISHERS (6) CR 11
XP 12,800 each
hp 135 each (see page 13)
TACTICS

During Combat The urdefhans intentionally try to lure opponents into the *teleportation circle* so one of them can activate it while the others press the attack. They also grapple PCs in order to bodily throw them into the circle, even sacrificing themselves, if necessary.

Morale Once reduced to half their number, one of the urdefhans breaks away to warn Valglaunt in area A16. Otherwise, the urdefhans all fight to the death, committing suicide with their daemonic pact to further damage any remaining adversaries.

Trap: The *teleportation circle* no longer teleports creatures that stand within it. Instead, when activated, the malfunctioning circle explodes with dangerous arcane feedback, affecting anyone inside its bounds.

EROEME

Aura strong divination; **CL** 12th
Slot none; **Price** 180,350 gp **Weight** 4 lbs.

CONSTRUCTION

Alignment LN; **Ego** 19
Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12
Int 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 16
Communication telepathy
Languages Aklo, Azlanti
Powers fly 30 ft., 10 ranks in Perception
Special Purpose defeat/slay serpentfolk; **Dedicated Power** *true seeing* at will

DESCRIPTION

Eroeme is a lawful-aligned intelligent +2 *mithral monstrous humanoid bane greatsword* that can resize to fit the hands of its wielder. In the days when Azlant battled the serpentfolk empire, five lesser replicas of Savith's legendary magical sword were crafted for her closest allies. One of these weapons was *Eroeme*, made for the cyclops general Aveshai with the specific purpose of slaying the serpentfolk and their agents wherever they might be found on or beneath Golarion. The sword's knowledge and experience was invaluable to General Aveshai as he faced the serpentfolk in Ilmurea, and its disappearance (along with the general) somewhere beneath the Mwangi jungles was a blow to Azlanti morale.

MALFUNCTIONING TELEPORTATION CIRCLE CR 13
Type magic; **Perception** DC 34; **Disable Device** DC 34
EFFECTS
Trigger location; **Reset** automatic
Effect arcane feedback (18d6 damage, DC 23 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets in 5-foot-radius burst inside circle)

A15. TROPHY HALL

This long hallway contains the remains of three statues on raised pedestals, each smashed and thoroughly defaced, with heaps of stone rubble piled around their feet. Between them stand two large display cases filled with ancient artifacts and weapons. A ten-foot-deep alcove to the west ends before two stone doors engraved with the likeness of a fanged serpent's head.

The ancient serpentfolk used this hall to display their trophies—primarily comprised of ancient weapons used in the hunt. The urdefhans were unable to loot the display cases because they are actually permanent *forcecages*. The serpentfolk statues didn't fare as well. Originally, the

serpentfolk used *fabricate* spells to reshape the statues into the most recent winners of the game. Now the urdefhans have nearly demolished them into unrecognizable lumps of stone. The secret doors along the north and south walls of the chamber served to speed the progress of serpentfolk competitors into the Hunters' Maze. Each one requires a DC 30 Perception check to locate.

Treasure: If the PCs destroy the *forcecage* display cases, they may loot the ancient artifacts and weapons contained within. These relics are all mundane in nature, but are so well-preserved that they would be worth a total of 5,000 gp to collectors of antiquities.

A16. SACRIFICIAL CHAMBER (CR 18)

Giant snake statues coiled into pillars support the fifty-foot-high ceiling of this massive chamber, looking down upon a ten-foot-high elevated platform along the western wall. One of the statues lies shattered on the chamber floor, reduced to a pile of rubble. Stairs flank the eastern entrance, providing access to an elevated walkway that runs past several doors to the north, south, and west before joining the platform itself, where a crystalline altar stands before a smaller statue of a jackal-headed man with spiked gauntlets on each fist.

Originally, this chamber served as the entry point for serpentfolk joining the game in the Hunters' Maze. The hunters teleported into the small rooms along the elevated walkway, where various suits of armor and weapons awaited them before venturing into the maze. The rooms also served as personal spaces where the hunters could consume their captured prey, with each chamber under a permanent *mage's private sanctum* effect (caster level 12th).

The urdefhans have repurposed this room into a temple dedicated to the archdaemon Trelmarixian, the Horseman of Famine. They relocated the crystal altar from a previous lair and built the jackal-headed statue of Trelmarixian (recognizable with a DC 20 Knowledge [religion] check) from the rubble of the toppled pillar in the northern half of the room. The small chambers along the walkway are used to confine sacrificial victims, but the rooms currently stand empty, their former occupants already sacrificed to the astradaemon here.

Creatures: The urdefhans' leader, Valglaut, presides over the sacrificial altar, offering the souls of their captives to Trelmarixian in exchange for more minions to build an army capable of retaking Ilmurea. In addition to the hydrodaemons and meladaemons in the complex, the Horseman of Famine has provided an astradaemon, a gaunt fiend with long limbs, lashing tendrils, and a hideous, vaguely fishlike face and jaws. The astradaemon takes an active role in the sacrifices, stealing the souls of the victims for Abaddon. Valglaut, the astradaemon,

and two urdefhan skirmishers stand atop the platform to the west. They attack any invaders entering the room, eager to sacrifice more souls to Trelmarixian.

ASTRADAEMON

CR 16

XP 76,800

hp 212 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 63)

TACTICS

During Combat The astradaemon first targets one of its opponents with *finger of death*, then attempts to grapple enemy spellcasters so it can devour their souls. Next, it focuses its attacks on melee warriors that close in around it, taking to the air if necessary so it can make Flyby Attacks.

Morale The astradaemon fights to the death.

VALGLAUT

CR 15

XP 51,200

Male urdefhan ranger 12 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 276)

NE Medium outsider (native)

Init +7 (+11 underground); **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +21 (+25 underground)

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 13, flat-footed 29 (+8 armor, +3 Dex, +6 natural, +5 shield)

hp 184 (15d10+102)

Fort +18, **Ref** +18, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities evasion, negative energy affinity; **DR** 5/good or silver; **Immune** death effects, disease, fear, level drain; **Resist** acid 10; **SR** 14

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 vicious spiked gauntlet +24/+19/+14 (1d4+8/19–20 plus 2d6 vicious), bite +19 (1d4+5 plus 2 Str damage)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +19/+14/+9 (1d8+7/x3)

Special Attacks combat style (weapon and shield*), strength damage (DC 16), favored enemy (monstrous humanoids +6, humans +4, chaotic outsiders +2), blood drain (1 Con)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd, concentration +4)

At will—*feather fall*

3/day—*align weapon*, *death knell* (DC 13), *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 12)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 9th; concentration +12)

3rd—*greater magic fang*, *neutralize poison*

2nd—*barkskin* (2), *protection from energy*

1st—*jump*, *longstrider*, *resist energy*

TACTICS

Before Combat Valglaut casts *barkskin*, *longstrider*, and *greater magic fang* (on his bite) before combat. If he has been alerted to the PCs' presence and their tactics, he casts *protection from energy* and *resist energy* against energy types they have been seen to use.

During Combat Valglaut prefers to attack human opponents

to get his favored enemy bonuses, and selects a human warrior as his quarry if possible, focusing all of his attacks on that foe.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 90 hit points, Valglaunt retreats to heal himself with his wand and Use Magic Device skill. If cornered or otherwise unable to retreat, Valglaunt fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without his spells, Valglaunt's statistics are AC 28, touch 13, flat-footed 25; **Speed** 20 ft.; **Melee** bite +17 (1d4+3 plus 2 Str damage).

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 16, **Con** 20, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 35

Feats Bloody Assault*, Endurance, Greater Shield Focus, Improved Critical (spiked gauntlet), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Shield Master, Toughness, Weapon Focus (spiked gauntlet)

Skills Intimidate +18, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Knowledge (planes) +20, Knowledge (religion) +12, Perception +21 (+25 underground), Ride +10, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +18 (+22 underground), Survival +10 (+14 underground), Use Magic Device +19

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Infernal, Orvian, Undercommon
SQ camouflage, daemonic pact (DC 16), evasion, favored terrain (underground +4, urban +2), hunter's bond (companions), quarry, swift tracker, track +6, wild empathy +13, woodland stride

Combat Gear wand of inflict moderate wounds (22 charges);
Other Gear +2 breastplate, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 vicious spiked gauntlet, masterwork composite longbow (+7 Str) with 20 arrows, cloak of resistance +2, unholy symbol of Trelmarixian, 100 gp

* See *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*.

URDEFHAN SKIRMISHERS (2)

XP 12,800 each

hp 135 each (see page 13)

TACTICS

During Combat The urdefhans try to prevent enemies from surrounding Valglaunt. They attempt to sneak attack opponents grappled by the astradaemon or flank with one another for the same purpose.

Morale The urdefhans fight to the death.

PART THREE: FORGING THE ALLIANCE

Once they have recovered the Azlanti "weapon" (either General Aveshai or the sword *Eroeme*) from the Hunters' Maze, the PCs' next move should be to raise an army to lead against the serpentfolk. If they don't think of this themselves, Eando Kline recommends they reach out to the factions and tribes of Saventh-Yhi and persuade them of the danger posed by the serpentfolk presence growing in Ilmurea. Eando believes the tribes should have a vested

interest in stopping the serpentfolk for their own survival, if nothing else. Before the PCs can do so, however, a new threat arises.

THE COILS OF YDERSIUS

One of the most insidious deceptions ever perpetrated by the serpentfolk was disguising themselves as humans and members of other races, thereby allowing them to infiltrate and manipulate unsuspecting cultures. Through the use of alchemical oils and specially prepared incubation tanks, serpentfolk volunteers committed ritual suicide and were reincarnated into the flesh of humans or members of other races, granting them impenetrable physical disguises while retaining their own personalities, memories, and intellects. This irreversible process required an advanced, purecaste serpentfolk and functioned much like a *reincarnate* spell,



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except that the form of the new body could be chosen, rather than left to the whims of fate. The serpentfolk named these sleeper agents the Coils of Ydersius, charging them with crushing Azlant from within.

With the defeat of Ydersius and the fall of the serpentfolk empire, the Coils of Ydersius died out as well. But the ancient serpentfolk woken by Vyr-Azul in Sverenagati shared these secrets with him, and Vyr-Azul lost no time in creating his own secret operatives cloaked in human flesh, agents he has thus far had no use for, until now.

A serpentfolk reincarnated as a Coil of Ydersius retains her serpentfolk intellect, including her racial bonuses to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma, as well as her spell-like abilities, telepathy, and immunity to mind-affecting effects, but her Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores depend on her new body. Her class, base attack bonus, base save bonuses, and hit points are unchanged,

and she retains any class abilities, feats, or skills she possessed in her old body.

SNAKES AMONG US

As the PCs begin mustering their army and preparing for the descent back into Ilmurea, Vyr-Azul does not remain idle. To keep himself apprised of the PCs' actions and other developments in the Overburn, Vyr-Azul has teleported four well-trained spies and assassins—members of the Coils of Ydersius—to the surface world to infiltrate the various factions inhabiting Saventh-Yhi that might prove a threat to his plans.

As the adventure progresses, the Coils of Ydersius attempt to assassinate each of the PCs. They do so with four coordinated events, each designed to appeal to a different type of PC, and all timed to happen simultaneously while the PCs are separated from one another. These events do not follow a set timetable, but should occur concurrently at a time and location of your choosing. The best time for this is likely while the PCs are gathering their army, but before they begin their final assault on Ilmurea and the Sanctum of Ydersius. The events below suggest possible circumstances for the assassination attempts, but these should be modified to reflect the realities of your own campaign. Likewise, exactly which factions the assassins have infiltrated will depend on how your campaign has developed.



Coil of Ydersius

COILS OF YDESIUS (4)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Male or female human sorcerer 10/assassin 4

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +10; Senses Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 18, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural, +4 shield)

hp 133 each (14 HD; 10d6+4d8+80)

Fort +11, Ref +14, Will +13; +4 vs. poison

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge; DR 10/adamantine;

Immune mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *human bane assassin's dagger* +19/+14 (1d4+3/17–20 plus purple worm poison), bite +11 (1d4 plus poison)

Ranged *mwk composite shortbow* +17/+12 (1d6+1/x3)

Special Attacks death attack (DC 18), poison, serpent's fang* (8 rounds/day), sneak attack +2d6, true death (DC 19)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +9)

At will—*disguise self* (DC 16), *ventriloquism*

1/day—*blur*, *dominate person* (DC 20), *major image* (DC 18), *mass suggestion* (DC 21), *mirror image*, *suggestion* (DC 18), *teleport*

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

At will—*speak with animals* (reptilian animals only)

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

- 5th (4/day)—*beast shape III*
- 4th (6/day)—*greater invisibility*, *poison* (DC 19), *stoneskin*
- 3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *haste*, *summon monster III* (reptiles only), *vampiric touch*
- 2nd (7/day)—*acid arrow*, *cat's grace*, *delay poison*, *ghoul touch* (DC 17), *levitate*
- 1st (8/day)—*hypnotism* (DC 16), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *shocking grasp*, *true strike*
- o (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 15), *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 15), *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Bloodline serpentine*

TACTICS

Before Combat The assassins cast *mage armor*, *stoneskin*, *cat's grace*, and *shield*, and drink their *potions of bear's endurance*. They also cast *heroism* and *nondetection* from their scrolls. Before meeting the PCs, they apply purple worm poison to their daggers.

During Combat A Coil of Ydersius takes the time to study her target for at least 3 rounds while interacting with him before making a death attack. If the death attack is unsuccessful, the assassin then casts *greater invisibility*, silent *haste*, and silent *true strike* to continue making sneak attacks.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 35 hit points, a Coil of Ydersius uses *teleport* to escape to a prearranged rendezvous point in the jungle, relying on her *scroll of nondetection* to ensure the PCs can't locate her with divination magic. Thereafter, the Coils conduct further assassination attempts by employing their spells to get close enough to strike again, persuading intermediaries with *suggestion* to poison the PCs or lure them into another ambush, or targeting human PCs from range with *true strike* and their *greater slaying arrows*.

Base Statistics Without their spells, potions, and scrolls, the Coils of Ydersius's statistics are **Init** +8; **AC** 18, touch 16, flat-footed 13; **hp** 105; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11; **no DR**; **Melee** *human bane assassin's dagger* +15/+10 (1d4+3/17–20), bite +7 (1d4 plus poison); **Ranged** mwk composite shortbow +13/+8 (1d6+1/x3); **Dex** 19, **Con** 14; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 25; **Skills** Acrobatics +13, Disable Device +11, Escape Artist +13, Sleight of Hand +11 (+15 to conceal weapons), Stealth +21, –2 to all other skills; poison save DC 17.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 23, **Con** 18, **Int** 16, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 27

Feats Deceitful, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Improved Critical (dagger), Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Silent Spell, Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (dagger)

Skills Acrobatics +17, Bluff +31, Climb +12, Disable Device +15, Disguise +28 (+38 with *disguise self*), Escape Artist +17, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Perception +15, Sense Motive +12, Sleight of Hand +15 (+19 to conceal weapons), Stealth +25, Use Magic Device +15

Splitting Up the Party

When the Coils of Ydersius make their move against the PCs, they don't attack when their victims are all together, choosing instead to lure them away from each other and deprive them of one another's support. In these encounters, don't be afraid to divide the party. Such battles take on a whole new meaning when the wizard doesn't have the fighter to protect him, or the other characters lack someone with ready healing like a cleric. High-level characters should be able to handle themselves in a stand-alone fight, and these encounters offer unique opportunities for increased drama and tension just when the PCs think they're succeeding. Even if one or two PCs die, the others should have the resources to bring them back without too much difficulty. Resist pulling punches—it serves to drive home the true threat represented by the serpentfolk. That being said, if you think such solo combats would be too difficult, or if you'd prefer a group encounter, feel free to have all of the assassins attack the PCs together (this is a CR 17 encounter). You can even run the separate encounters as a single, coordinated combat scene, even though they take place in different locations.

Languages Aklo, Azlanti, Common, Polyglot; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ bloodline arcana, hidden weapons, poison use, serpentfriend* (viper familiar), snakeskin*

Combat Gear *greater slaying arrow* (human), *potion of bear's endurance*, *potions of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *scrolls of heroism* (2), *scrolls of nondetection* (2); **Other Gear** *human bane assassin's dagger*, masterwork composite shortbow (+1 Str) with 20 arrows, *belt of the snake king* (see sidebar), *cloak of resistance* +1, *dust of tracelessness*, *elixir of hiding*, *ring of protection* +1, serpentine brooch (worth 500 gp), oil of taggit (2 doses), purple worm poison (1 dose), thieves' tools, 186 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; save Fort DC 19; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Con; cure 2 consecutive saves.

* See *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*.

SPARRING SESSION (CR 13)

One of the Coils of Ydersius uses *mass suggestion* to convince a group of warriors from the newly formed army to request a late-night sparring session with the most martial PC. Each of them requests this honor to improve their readiness for the upcoming battle against the serpentfolk, unwittingly drawing the targeted PC into a trap.

The sparring session takes place in an out-of-the-way section of the city's ruins, prepared with a fighting circle

BELT OF THE SNAKE KING

Aura faint transmutation; **CL** 5th
Slot belt; **Price** 2,600 gp; **Weight** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This belt writhes like a living snake, even hissing and blinking; it clasps by holding its tail in its mouth. You gain a +1 enhancement bonus on your natural armor.

If Ydersius is your patron, once per day, you may use *magic fang* on one of your own natural weapons.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *barkskin*, *magic fang*, *summon monster I*; **Cost** 1,300 gp

The *belt of the snake king* originally appeared in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Gods and Magic*, page 54.

lit by torches. The assassin uses *disguise self* to hide among the other warriors. As the PC spars with the warriors, all of whom take pride in training with her, have the PC make three attack rolls at her highest attack bonus against AC 30 to represent the combats. For each roll that misses, the PC takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from the exertions of the bouts. Just before the last sparring match, the assassin withdraws to prepare himself with his spells, potions, and scrolls. Once the PC has exerted herself against everyone else, the assassin brings a drink to the PC while she rests after the bouts, studying the PC for 3 rounds before attempting a death attack.

CURIOSITY KILLING (CR 13)

One of the Coils of Ydersius visits the most studious PC in the guise of a Saventh-Yhi native. The “native” carries a curious Azlanti artifact (really just a piece of one of the many wall-carvings found throughout the ruins) that she claims holds the spirit of one of the city’s original inhabitants. She says the spirit spoke to her while she was exploring an area of the city believed to be haunted. The assassin uses her own innate telepathy to converse with the PC, pretending to be a benevolent Azlanti ghost within the artifact who wants to aid the PCs in their war against Ilmurea. The “ghost” offers to show the PC one of the city’s most closely guarded secrets—a magical inscription that only those with Azlanti blood can access.

The assassin then lures the PC into the ruins, where she uses *major image* to create a new mural on one of the walls. Still pretending to telepathically speak as the ghost, she informs the PC that the mural will only appear once and he must record all he sees there before it’s lost. Have the PC make three DC 35 Linguistics, Knowledge (history), or even Perception checks to decipher this illusory information.

Meanwhile, the assassin casts silent *greater invisibility* on her viper familiar before sending it to deliver a silent *poison touch* spell against the PC. The assassin pretends to help the PC defend himself against this unseen attacker (suggesting the serpentfolk are behind it) while actually studying the PC for a death attack.

DRESSED TO KILL (CR 13)

One of the Coils of Ydersius approaches the most charismatic or attractive PC to lure him or her away for a tryst in the ruins or jungle. To minimize suspicion, the assassin initially avoids using magic, preferring instead to rely on simple Diplomacy or Bluff skills to win the PC over. If rebuffed, however, she quickly employs *suggestion* or *dominate person* to compel the target’s interest.

If the PC already has a love interest among the natives or one of the factions, the assassin uses *disguise self* to adopt that NPC’s form. The disguise lasts for 40 minutes and requires a DC 48 Perception check to pierce. The PC may also gain a familiarity bonus based on how well he or she knows the impersonated NPC. Close contact grants a DC 16 Will save to see through the glamor, but the assassin takes steps to limit this kind of contact until they’re alone in the dark. The assassin then plies the target PC with alcohol—laced with oil of taggit—while she studies the PC for at least 3 rounds. Once in the throes of passion, the assassin either uses Sleight of Hand to produce a poisoned dagger (DC 29 Perception check to notice) and make a death attack, or casts *beast shape III* to transform into a Huge constrictor snake, crushing the PC in her coils with a constrict attack that deals 1d8+6 points of damage per round.

WARTIME CONVERSION (CR 13)

A Coil of Ydersius, in the guise of a “heathen” native of Saventh-Yhi, approaches the most religious PC, expressing a desire to convert to the PC’s faith and privately discuss theology prior to marching on Ilmurea. When they are alone, the “native” shares a sad tale of persecution among his own people for not adhering to their faith, trying to evoke sympathy from the PC. The lies prove very convincing and require a DC 41 Sense Motive check or divination magic to see through his Bluff. If the PC falls for the assassin’s ruse, he feigns an elaborate ceremony to purify himself of his old ways first. During this time, he prepares his remaining spells, potions, and scrolls out of sight. Then, he returns for prayer as guided by the PC, studying her for the next 3 rounds before trying a death attack.

AFTERMATH

Following the assassination attempts, the PCs can use divination magic or consult with General Aveshai to identify the assassins as reincarnated serpentfolk. The demeanor of the tribes and factions in Saventh-

Yhi becomes grimmer and less certain soon thereafter. Even if all of the PCs survive relatively unscathed, the serpentfolk's ability to mingle among the gathering army sends shockwaves of paranoia through everyone. Even worse, if the assassins actually succeed in slaying any of the PCs, it causes a loss of 1 Achievement Point (see below) for each slain party member as some in their army start to abandon the cause, fearful of what might await them in Ilmurea. Returning a slain PC to life does not recover the lost Achievement Point.

CONVINCING THE NATIVES

There are several different groups that the PCs can approach to muster an army to invade Ilmurea. Whether or not these groups agree to join the PCs will depend to some extent on how your campaign has developed so far. The following sections detail the actions necessary for the PCs to recruit these groups to their cause. Some PCs might also want to try to employ the Gorilla King Ruthazek and his army. Regardless of the outcome of events in "Vaults of Madness," however, the Gorilla King and his retinue have already moved on from Saventh-Yhi, and are not available to join the PCs' alliance.

Each ally the PCs gain earns them additional XP and Achievement Points, as described below. Achievement Points reduce the number of serpentfolk defenders still inside the Sanctum of Ydersius in Part Four of the adventure.

THE FIVE FACTIONS

Depending on who is still in Saventh-Yhi, the PCs may try to convince any of the five competing factions involved in the discovery and exploration of Saventh-Yhi to join their army, providing their skills and expertise as commanders and specialists in the upcoming battle. Groups like the well-equipped Aspis Consortium, Free Captains, or Sargavan Government have larger numbers and can form the backbone of a small army themselves, but the Pathfinders and Red Mantis could also contribute their considerable experience, magic, and stealth by conducting precision strikes in Ilmurea.

The PCs' own faction automatically joins them. Convincing one of the other factions to join requires meeting with the leader of that faction and making a single DC 35 Diplomacy check. Modify the DC of this check by +/−5 if the PCs have had an especially hostile or friendly relationship with a particular faction. In addition, if the PCs have maintained friendly relationships with any of the NPC castaways from Smuggler's Shiv, those NPCs each provide a +5 circumstance bonus on the Diplomacy check with their respective factions.

The PCs gain 1 Achievement Point and 51,200 XP for each faction they win over (with the exception of their own faction).

TRIBES OF SAVENTH-YHI

Depending on how they conducted their initial explorations in Saventh-Yhi, the PCs can also approach any of the surviving tribes inhabiting the city—the boggards of the farming district, the charau-ka of the military district, the human Tribe of the Sacred Serpent in the artisan district, the troglodytes of the temple district, and the vegepygmies of the residential district. Obviously, if the PCs have conquered a district and driven out or killed most of that district's inhabitants, that tribe will not be available now to join the PCs' army. If the PCs already have an alliance with any of the tribes because of their actions in "City of Seven Spears," convincing an allied tribe to join the war effort only requires a single DC 30 Diplomacy check. Such alliances garner no additional XP for the PCs, but they do gain Achievement Points for that tribe as listed below. Otherwise, each tribe has its own unique reaction to this news and requires a different approach if the PCs want to convince them to form an alliance and strike preemptively against the serpentfolk.

Boggards: The boggards of the farming district have little interest in going underground, particularly if that would leave their swampy lands open to attack from their human and troglodyte enemies. To gain the boggards' aid, the PCs must make a series of DC 35 Diplomacy checks, accumulating five successes before accruing three failures.

Alternatively, the PCs can try to bully the boggards into joining their army by threatening and cajoling the craven frog-people with a series of DC 30 Intimidate checks. The PCs must accumulate three successes on these checks before they accrue two failures.

Successfully recruiting the boggards earns the PCs 1 Achievement Point and 51,200 XP.

Charau-ka: The violent ape-men of the military district initially think the PCs' warning about the serpentfolk is just a ruse to frighten them away so they can claim everything for themselves. To convince the charau-ka of their sincerity, the PCs must make a series of DC 35 Diplomacy checks, accumulating five successes before accruing three failures. Displays of fearlessness and aggressive posturing—a tactic that greatly impresses the charau-ka—provide a +2 circumstance bonus on a check if one of the PCs succeeds on a DC 40 Intimidate check.

Alternatively, the PCs may try to appeal to the savage beasts with a series of DC 35 Perform (act or oratory) checks, entertaining and stirring the warrior spirits of the charau-ka with a theatrical recitation of the legend of Savith, her battle against Ydersius, and her army's routing of the serpentfolk. The PCs must accumulate three successes on these checks before they accrue two failures.

Convincing the charau-ka to join their army earns the PCs 1 Achievement Point and 76,800 XP.

Tribe of the Sacred Serpent: The humans of the artisan district agree to nothing without the blessing of their “god,” the mad lillend known as the Radiant Muse. If the PCs have not already met her, they must convince the tribe to grant them an audience with the lillend with a DC 30 Diplomacy check. Once the PCs have secured an audience, they must demonstrate their artistic skill to the Radiant Muse. Each of the PCs must make a DC 35 Craft or Perform check to impress her with their artistic ability. A PC who exceeds the DC may include one other PC under the aegis of his talent for every 5 points by which he exceeds the DC. If all of the PCs are successful, the Radiant Muse gladly pledges her tribe to the war effort.

If the Radiant Muse has been slain, the PCs must convince the human leadership of the tribe of the danger the serpentfolk present with a series of DC 35 Diplomacy checks, accumulating three successes before accruing two failures. Alternatively, the PCs can hire the Tribe of the Sacred Serpent for a payment of 25,000 gp worth of jewelry, gems, or magical art objects.

Gaining the aid of the Tribe of the Sacred Serpent earns the PCs 1 Achievement Point and 76,800 XP.

Troglodytes: The reptilian troglodytes of the temple district were once a powerful race in their own right, who regressed over the ages much like the serpentfolk. The troglodytes actually represent an attractive ally to the PCs because of their advanced darkvision, natural camouflage in underground caverns, and experience with the Darklands, but they have more in common with the serpentfolk than with mammals like the PCs, and are inherently chaotic and difficult to organize. The PCs must make a series of DC 40 Diplomacy checks, accumulating five successes before accruing three failures. A successful DC 35 Knowledge (religion) check demonstrates the PCs’ knowledge and respect of the troglodytes’ religion, however, and grants a +2 circumstance bonus on all their Diplomacy checks. If the PCs are members of the Red Mantis faction, their shared religion allows them to recruit the troglodytes to their cause with just a single DC 35 Diplomacy check.

Alternatively, the PCs can convince the troglodytes to join them with a bribe of no less than 20,000 gp worth of magical weapons.

Securing an alliance with the troglodytes earns the PCs 1 Achievement Point and 51,200 XP.

Vegepygmies: The fungal plant-men of the residential district have little interest in joining an army to oppose the serpentfolk, and their alien minds prove exceptionally difficult to comprehend and sway. To succeed, the PCs must succeed on a DC 45 Diplomacy check five times before accruing three failures. PCs may also further convince the vegepygmies by demonstrating their skill and understanding of natural matters with a

DC 35 Knowledge (nature) check, thereby providing a +2 circumstance bonus on all their Diplomacy checks.

Alternatively, the PCs may offer to relocate the vegepygmies to a subterranean home more suitable to their kind, especially if they realize that the activation of the Spear of Rest will almost certainly destroy the vegepygmies’ russet mold colony. The Vaults of Madness beneath the city are far too small to house Saventh-Yhi’s entire population of vegepygmies, but Ilmurea should have space to spare. If the PCs offer to cede a portion of Ilmurea to the vegepygmies, they can convince the strange plant creatures to join them with three successful DC 40 Diplomacy checks before they accrue two failures.

Convincing the vegepygmies to join their army in this manner earns the PCs 1 Achievement Point and 51,200 XP.

DENIZENS OF ILMUREA

The PCs might also have potential allies in Ilmurea, based on their actions in “The Thousand Fangs Below.” If the PCs rescued the morlock oracle Udarra from the intellect-devourer-controlled morlock rebels and freed Eando Kline, the morlocks automatically join their army. If the PCs did not meet the morlocks in that adventure, Eando informs the PCs that he made contact with the morlocks before his imprisonment and that they would likely make a ready-made army to send against the serpentfolk. In this case, Eando can arrange a meeting with Udarra. This is mostly a formality, as the morlocks believe Eando was sent by their ancestor gods and will follow him almost without question. The PCs gain no XP for allying with the morlocks, but they do earn 1 Achievement Point.

Likewise, if the PCs killed the urdefhan defector Belkor in “The Thousand Fangs Below” and brought back proof of his death to the urdefhan leader Izon, the urdefhans are willing to join the alliance, but for an additional price—Izon requires a gift of 100 slaves to torture and kill before he will pledge his warriors to the cause. If the PCs did not kill Belkor, or are unwilling to pay such a high (and morally questionable) price for the urdefhans’ aid, then Izon refuses to help them, preferring to sit out the upcoming battle and save his troops for the inevitable (in his eyes) fight with the victor of that conflict. The PCs earn 1 Achievement Point for securing the urdefhans’ cooperation, but gain no additional XP.

Finally, the PCs might have acquired other powerful allies in Ilmurea. Rescuing the cyclops General Aveshai from the Hibernation Chamber (area A13) earns the PCs 2 Achievement Points. If the PCs used the Abaddon Vortex (area A10) to summon an extraplanar ally, adding such a powerful outsider to their forces earns them 1 Achievement Point.

ASSAULTING ILMUREA

Having gathered their forces to attack the serpentfolk in Ilmurea, the question becomes how to move an entire army into the Darklands without tipping off the serpentfolk prematurely. While the PCs likely have teleportation magic and access to the magical portal in the Vaults of Madness, neither of these can be used to transport so many people to Ilmurea at one time. The answer lies with the seven spears of Saventh-Yhi. As General Aveshai can inform the PCs, Savith's followers built Saventh-Yhi not only to commemorate her decisive battle against the serpentfolk, but also to guard against another serpentfolk uprising. The tall obelisks atop the city's seven ziggurats, one to each district, are weapons themselves, and contain powerful Azlanti magic enabling them to tunnel through the earth and into Ilmurea like seven spears thrust directly into the heart of the Darklands. The tunnels they leave behind will provide a path down which the army can travel to reach Ilmurea. But the PCs must first activate the seven spears, which comes with its own set of challenges.

ACTIVATING THE SPEARS

In "City of Seven Spears," the PCs likely learned how to activate many of Saventh-Yhi's monoliths, providing a variety of benefits to the inhabitants of the spears' associated districts. However, only one spear at a time could be activated in this manner. To use the spears as a weapon, the PCs will have to activate each of them in a precise way and in a specific sequence until all seven spears are active at once.

The activation sequence represents the stages in mustering and mobilizing an army for war. First, the Spear of Honest Pride in the government district must be activated, representing the city leaders' approval of the war. Next comes the Spear of Fertility in the temple district, symbolizing the blessing of the gods for this endeavor. The third spear to be activated is the Spear of Wealth in the mercantile district, signifying the funding necessary to raise an army and support a war. After this, the Spear of Rest in the residential district must be activated, representing the people who will serve as soldiers in the army. The Spear of Abundance in the farming district must be activated next, symbolizing the provisions needed by the army, followed by the Spear of Eager Striving in the artisan district, alluding to the craft and supplies needed to equip and arm the army. Lastly, the Spear of Righteous Anger in the military district must be activated. This spear embodies the motivation for the entire undertaking, the forging of a cohesive army from the seven disparate districts and their seven virtues of rule, the leadership of the military's generals, and the final decision to go to war.

Once the PCs know this, they must go about the task of activating the spears. If the PCs did not deal with the

What If Aveshai Is Killed?

The adventure assumes that the PCs awaken and rescue General Aveshai from the Hibernation Chamber in the Hunters' Maze (area A13) and learn from him the secret of activating the seven spears of Saventh-Yhi. But it is possible that the PCs might kill Aveshai before they realize he is friendly, or that he might be slain in Ilmurea before he can impart this information. In this case, it is General Aveshai's magical sword *Eroeme* that can give the PCs the knowledge they need. The PCs went into the Hunters' maze in search of an ancient Azlanti weapon, and they will likely assume *Eroeme* is that weapon. If General Aveshai does not survive, the intelligent blade knows as much about the plans for Saventh-Yhi as did the general. Using its telepathy, *Eroeme* can inform its new wielder of the powers of Saventh-Yhi's seven spears and the secret of their activation.

inhabitants of a particular district's spear in "City of Seven Spears," they will have to do so now in order to successfully activate all of the spears. Each spear can be activated by performing any of the tasks listed as activation triggers in "City of Seven Spears," causing the spear to momentarily glow with energy. (If you are not using that volume, each spear requires a specific 1-hour ritual to activate.)

Once a spear has been activated, it must be "locked" to keep it active while the other spears are triggered. Normally, the spears can only be locked into place by one of Azlanti blood. The PCs can overcome this requirement, however, with a piece of Azlanti technology—an *ioun stone*—which must be used to trace the rune of the spear's associated virtue of rule, located at the base of the spear. If the PCs do not have an *ioun stone*, Eando Kline has a mysterious *ioun stone* of his own that he will lend to the cause. As a last resort (such as if Eando and his *ioun stone* are not available), the PCs can attempt to lock a spear by emulating the Azlanti race with a DC 25 Use Magic Device check, followed by another DC 35 Use Magic Device check to blindly activate the monolith's locking mechanism.

Locking an active spear causes the rune at its base to glow steadily, while the spear itself flares brightly and thrums with arcane energy. Failing to "lock" an active spear causes it to deactivate as soon as the next spear is activated. Likewise, attempting to activate the spears in a different order causes all of the spears activated so far to deactivate, whether locked or not.

When the final spear is activated and locked, read or paraphrase the following.

SERPENT'S SKULL

As the Spear of Righteous Anger is activated, a deep rumbling sound echoes across Saventh-Yhi, originating beneath the city's seven spears—the pillars of Azlanti virtue. Stone blocks slide outward from the base of each ziggurat, forming large gaps that issue forth long-dead air and billowing clouds of dust and debris. As one, the spears begin slowly turning and descending into the earth. Violent tremors shake the city, causing some buildings to collapse into rubble, and birds to rise noisily into the air in huge flocks, fleeing the devastation. The spears rotate faster as they disappear beneath the earth, but the sound and fury of their descent continue to shake the foundations of the city.

THE DESCENT

The spears bore into the ground like giant drills. As they burrow into the earth, the spears leave behind corkscrew ledges formed from the excavated earth and stone using a combination of Azlanti technology and *stone shape* magics. These 40-foot-wide ledges spiral down the sides of the resulting pits, creating paths down which the armies of Saventh-Yhi can march to Ilmurea.

The spears take 30 minutes to descend the 2,000 feet between Saventh-Yhi and Ilmurea. If the PCs' armies are mustered and ready, they can follow the spears down into Ilmurea immediately. The PCs can decide the general makeup of their armies and which forces go down which tunnel, but these choices have no bearing on the outcome of this adventure, as long as the armies can get to Ilmurea and distract the serpentfolk forces while the PCs try to stop Vyr-Azul from restoring Ydersius.

General Aveshai, Eando Kline, Juliver, and other major NPCs (such as friendly tribal and faction leaders or even NPC castaways from Smuggler's Shiv) each volunteer to coordinate and lead one of the armies while the PCs infiltrate the Sanctum of Ydersius. If the PCs have not already claimed or asked to borrow Aveshai's sword, *Erome*, the cyclops general offers the magical blade to one of the PCs now, knowing that they may face some avatar of a reborn Ydersius in the sanctum.

How the PCs get to Ilmurea is up to them. They could descend down one of the tunnels created by the burrowing spears, but that will likely leave them in the thick of the battle to retake Ilmurea. A better solution would be to use the magical portal in the Vaults of Madness or teleport directly to a location near the entrance to the serpentfolk temple.

ARRIVAL IN ILMUREA

If the PCs are present in Ilmurea when the spears arrive, read or paraphrase the following.

With a resounding crack, the seven spears burst through the ceiling of Ilmurea's cavern, emerging in explosions of rocky debris that rain down upon the city, crushing several structures

below. A powerful flare of energy engulfs the spears, and each one glows as brightly as a miniature star, piercing the dark to cast long shadows over the landscape below.

The spears bury themselves in seven of Ilmurea's most strategic locations—the fortress of Thousand Fangs and the city's six serpent gates. When they finally come to rest, the spears have pierced the central serpentfolk fortress and now plug Ilmurea's six Darklands gateways, blocking the escape of any of the city's inhabitants. Once the spears are in place, spiraling ramps form on the exteriors of the spears, connecting to the corkscrew tunnel ledges and providing a means for troops to descend from the ceiling to the floor of Ilmurea's cavern.

The arrival of the spears sets off an immediate reaction by the serpentfolk defenders of Ilmurea. Warned by the mighty tremors above, Vyr-Azul has stationed his forces throughout the city, emptying much of the Sanctum of Ydersius to occupy the PCs' army within the city streets to slow them down, hoping to buy time so he can complete the ritual to restore Ydersius as his forces defend every inch of terrain before falling back to the temple walls.

PART FOUR: RISE OF YDERSIUS

As their army invades Ilmurea from above and faces the serpentfolk forces in the streets of the city, the PCs move to strike at the heart of serpentfolk-controlled territory—the Sanctum of Ydersius. As the armies clash in the distance, the PCs must traverse an unstable region of rock and arcane wards gone awry and bypass a number of outer guardians before penetrating the gates of the temple itself in search of Vyr-Azul.

The Sanctum of Ydersius lies on the outskirts of Ilmurea. Just east of the city's northernmost serpent gate, two passages open in the northern wall of Ilmurea's cavern. These lead to smaller caverns, one of which contains a wide, circular plaza. At the center of this plaza stands a giant, 50-foot-tall stone statue of Ydersius atop a pedestal made from the coils of his long tail. Beyond these caverns, a solitary tunnel winds its way through solid rock to the collapsed warrens before the Sanctum of Ydersius itself.

The adventure assumes that the PCs use their army as a distraction to draw out the serpentfolk forces from the Sanctum of Ydersius so they can sneak in and stop Vyr-Azul's ritual. If the PCs attempt to directly attack the temple without an army behind them, or if they use *scrying* or other magic and then teleport directly into the Inner Sanctum (area **C8**) to face Vyr-Azul without facing the temple's other defenders, they will soon find themselves in over their heads. Vyr-Azul can telepathically call on all of his top-ranking allies for assistance, who quickly come to his aid. Ydersius's herald, the Emperor of Scales (area **B15**), and the elder serpentfolk Nazith-Yol (area **B11**) and



Nylla-Jas (area **B14**), immediately teleport into the Inner Sanctum, followed soon after by the troglodyte champion Khorak (area **B13**) and Vyr-Azul's bodyguard Khestath (area **C7**), quickly making the PCs' battle with the high priest almost impossible to win. In short, PCs who hope to avoid all of the encounters in the temple should find themselves facing an even greater challenge when the entire might of the Sanctum of Ydersius can be brought to bear against them. Eando Kline (or another trusted NPC) should speak up before the PCs' take such action, cautioning them that removing the temple's defenders before facing Vyr-Azul will leave the high priest alone and more vulnerable.

At the same time, the players should realize that they probably will not be able to clear out the Sanctum of Ydersius in one go, even if their army pulls away some of the temple's defenders. The battle for Ilmurea should take a few days, giving the PCs time to retreat and recuperate between forays into the sanctum. How the forces in the temple respond to the repeated PC incursions is left to the GM, but the sanctum gains no more reinforcements, as Vyr-Azul cannot afford to pull any troops from the field to bolster the temple's defenses. While there is a

time limit to the mission, it should be made clear to the players that if they attempt to take the temple in one try, they will most likely end up facing Vyr-Azul, and possibly Ydersius himself, when they have used up most of their resources. They will have a better chance of defeating the high priest and the restored god if they can do so when they are at full health.

ACHIEVEMENT POINTS

The PCs gain Achievement Points for gathering the disparate factions and tribes of Saventh-Yhi and Ilmurea under the banner to attack the serpentfolk. The number of Achievement Points (AP) accumulated determines how many of Vyr-Azul's forces leave the Sanctum of Ydersius to occupy Ilmurea. The following table details the resulting impact this has on the temple's defenses, primarily reflected in the frequency and chance of random encounters, as presented on page 78. In addition, individual encounter areas within the Sanctum of Ydersius contain details of the temple at full strength in case the PCs do not accrue enough Achievement Points to reduce the number of defenders within the temple.

AP	Result
0	The PCs failed to muster a viable army. There is double the chance of a random encounter occurring between every encounter location in the Sanctum of Ydersius.
1–4	The PCs have an army, but just barely. There is double the chance of a random encounter occurring, but at the normal frequency.
5–10	The PCs have mobilized an army strong enough to hold its own against the serpentfolk. There is a normal chance for random encounters within the temple.
11–14	The PCs have forged a strong alliance that presents a real threat to the serpentfolk. There is no chance of random encounters inside the Sanctum of Ydersius. In addition, a powerful NPC from earlier in the campaign (such as the Radiant Muse, Eando Kline, or Udarra) agrees to accompany the PCs into the temple.

THE SANCTUM OF YDERSIUS

Long before the coming of Savith and her army, the serpentfolk of Ilmurea constructed a magnificent temple dedicated to their god Ydersius. Given their longstanding war against Azlant, the serpentfolk anticipated a need to eventually defend it. Thus, the snake-god's followers used arcane spells to carve an elaborate fortress into the cavern wall behind a lake of fire, complete with adamantine gates, serpentine watchtowers, and a multitude of deadly traps and wards inside. It took Vyr-Azul many months to circumvent the hazards and defenses of the ruined temple. Even now, portions still lie unclaimed and unexplored, choked with rubble too impervious to move by hand or spell, for the ancient serpentfolk hardened the stone surrounding the temple against magic meant to breach the walls of the sanctum.

The inner walls, floors, and ceilings of the sanctum have all been lined with serpentstone, the ancient magical stone used in the construction of Ilmurea, which is considered magically treated stone (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 411). The serpentstone has been programmed to glow with colored, flickering light, similar to *continual flame*, providing a greenish cast to everything inside. In addition, the walls constantly emit susurrant whispers, just within the range of human hearing, extolling the virtues and glories of Ydersius in the Aklo tongue. See page 63 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #41 for more details on this magical serpentfolk construction material.

Most of the wide hallways within the temple are 15 feet high. The ceilings rise to 30 feet in most chambers, and higher still in some, as noted in each room's description. The serpentfolk crafted the doors and gates throughout the complex from adamantine (hardness 20, hp 80, Break DC 45).

THE COLLAPSED WARRENS

An unstable region of rubble and giant slabs of stone blocks the way between the city's outskirts and the serpentfolk temple.

A wall of rubble blocks the way ahead, formed mostly of rock that appears to have fallen from the cavern roof hundreds of feet above. The fallen rock pulses with a chaotic riot of flickering colors. Dark, irregular passages open in this wall, leading into deep crevices beneath the precariously layered stones.

In the age of Azlant, Savith's army invaded Ilmurea and met Ydersius on the battlefield of this same cavern floor. The potency of their ensuing struggle shattered the roof overhead, dropping several tons of magically reinforced serpentstone onto the rocky plain below, creating an unnatural hazard and obstacle for would-be travelers. Many tunnels and warrens exist beneath these slabs of rock, and their residual magic—which once held together and reinforced the cavern's roof to shelter Ilmurea—makes the entire region unstable for spellcasters and those using magic to traverse it.

Individuals attempting to teleport or use other extradimensional movement to cross the warrens automatically find themselves shunted away from their expected destination and into a random pocket cavern instead. In addition, the leaking magical residue from the fallen rock forces anyone attempting to cast a spell while within the warrens to make a DC 30 concentration check or lose the spell. These effects end once a creature enters the Lake of Petrified Fire (area B5).

The safest way to traverse the Collapsed Warrens is on foot, although the entire region is considered difficult terrain for the purposes of combat movement. The tunnel ceilings only reach 8 feet high, but the larger caverns sometimes rise as high as 20 feet, as indicated in each location's description. Most passageways vary between 5 and 10 feet wide. The flickering glow of the serpentstone provides only dim light (equivalent to that of candlelight) in the caverns and tunnels.

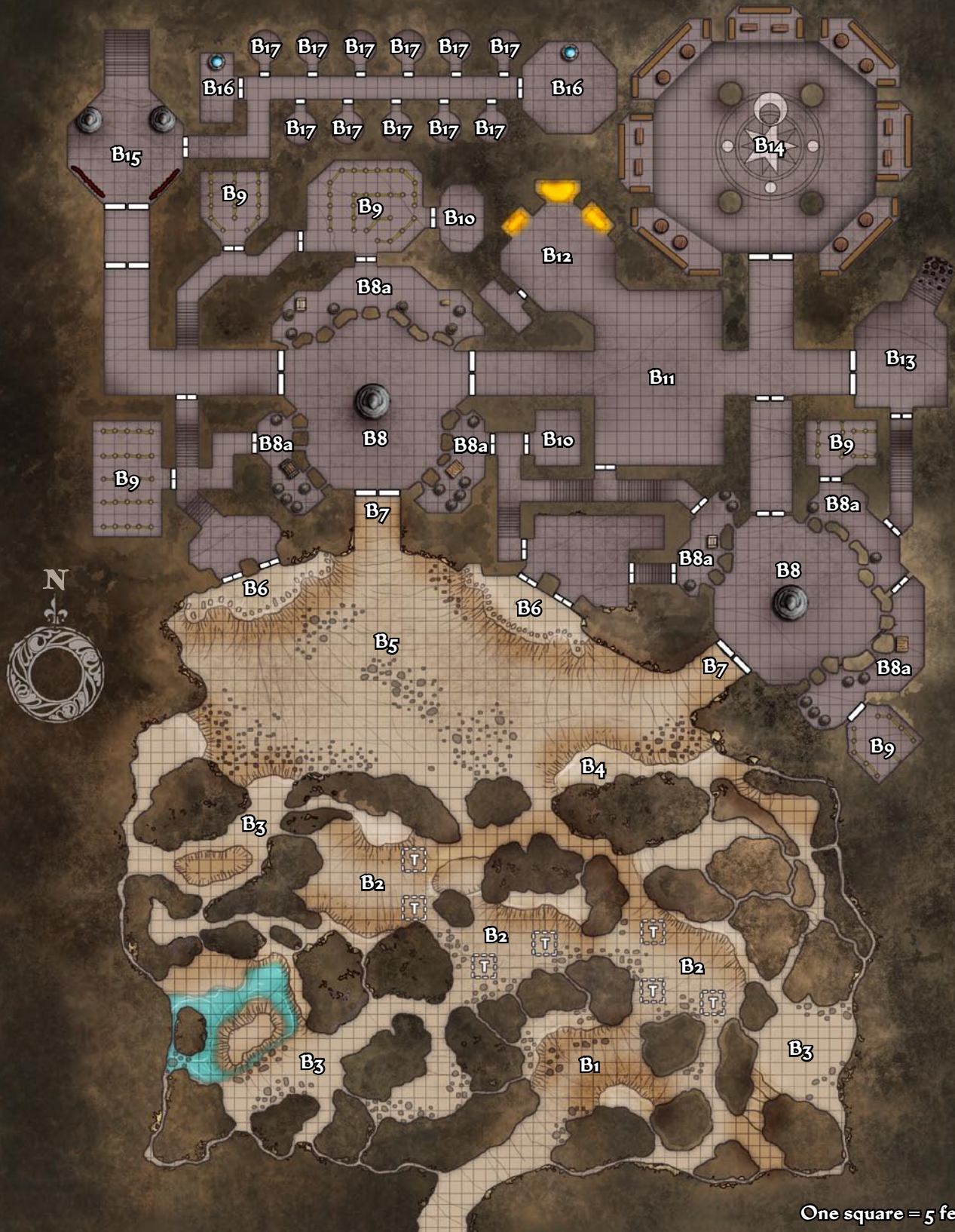
B1. POCKET CAVERN (CR 10)

The cramped tunnel finally gives way to a larger hollow in the fallen rock. A rubble-choked ledge extends along the northwest wall, bearing signs of rune-carved stones among the debris. Another smaller ledge rises to the south. Other than the cave's entrance, tunnels also lead farther north and east.

The ceiling is 20 feet high in this cavern, while the ledges are 10 feet above the level of the floor.

Hazard: The rune-carved stones in this cavern once comprised immense serpentine archways leading to Ydersius's temple. Crushed beneath the falling debris,

THE SANCTUM OF YDERSIUS



SERPENT'S SKULL

they now leak arcane energy that plays havoc with the minds of unprotected spellcasters. This energy is a mind-affecting effect, but an *antimagic field* blocks the radiation. Spellcasters suffer the effects of the arcane energy leak every round they stay within the chamber. Non-spellcasters are unaffected by the hazard.

ARCANE ENERGY LEAK

CR 10

XP 9,600

Frequency 1/round

Effect 3d6 nonlethal damage; 1d6 Int, Wis, and Cha damage (DC 20 Fort save negates ability damage but not nonlethal damage); multiple targets (all spellcasters in the room)

B2. MORLOCK HUNTING GROUNDS (CR 16)

Stark-white bones litter this cavern's floor, dimly illuminated by the flickering stone walls and ceiling. A single skull sits atop a pile of bones at each entrance and exit, like silent sentinels keeping watch.

These three linked caverns each have a 15-foot-high ceiling. The ledges in these chambers vary in height from 5 to 10 feet off the cavern floor.

Hazard: The morlocks inhabiting these caves have covered the cavern floor with sharpened spikes of bone from their past kills in the areas marked **T** on the map. These spikes function as caltrops (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 155).

Creatures: Bands of feral morlocks inhabit these caves. Slaves of the serpentfolk, the morlocks have been forced to live within the Collapsed Warrens as additional guardians because of their natural climbing skills and ability to navigate and defend tight quarters. Ravenously hungry, the morlocks scabble over the ceilings and walls to silently stalk their prey. Noticing them among the roof's stalactites requires a DC 32 Perception check.

MORLOCK SLAVES (8)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Morlock barbarian 5/rogue 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 209)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +11; Senses darkvision 120 ft., scent; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural, -2 rage)

hp 143 each (11 HD; 3d10+5d12+3d8+82)

Fort +12, Ref +16, Will +8

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2, Immune disease, poison

Weaknesses light blindness

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee +1 club +17/+12 (1d6+7), bite +11 (1d4+3)

Ranged javelin +17 (1d6+6)

Special Attacks leap attack, rage (16 rounds/day), rage powers (no escape, raging leaper +5), sneak attack +3d6, swarming

TACTICS

During Combat The morlocks rage and ambush travelers with leaping attacks first, followed by a swarming advance to sneak attack foes. They use their no escape rage power to cut off retreat, and try to herd opponents into areas filled with bony caltrops.

Morale Fearful of their serpentfolk masters, the morlocks fight to the death unless faced with a prominent source of light such as a *daylight* spell. If blinded by such a light source and reduced to half their numbers, they retreat into the nooks and crannies of the Collapsed Warrens, stealthily following along the walls and ceilings to execute hit-and-run attacks from cover with their javelins thereafter.

Base Statistics When not raging, the morlocks' statistics are AC 22, touch 17, flat-footed

15; hp 127; Fort +10, Will +6; Melee +1 club +15/+10 (1d6+5), bite +9 (1d4+2); Ranged javelin +17 (1d6+4); Str 18, Con 18; CMB +14; Skills Acrobatics +24 (+32 jump), Climb +29

STATISTICS

Str 22, Dex 24, Con 22, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 6

Base Atk +10; CMB +16; CMD 32

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +24 (+37 jump), Climb +31, Escape Artist +16, Perception +12, Stealth +18 (+22 in caverns)

Languages Undercommon

SQ expert climber, fast movement, rogue talents (fast stealth), trapfinding +1

Other Gear +1 leather armor, +1 club, javelins (3)

B3. MORLOCK HABITATS (CR 16)

The strong smell of unwashed bodies and waste permeates these elevated caverns. The ceilings are 10 feet high in these chambers.

Creatures: Morlock slaves make their homes in these caves. If the PCs have accumulated at least 5 Achievement Points, these caves are empty, as the serpentfolk have pressed the morlocks into service as foot soldiers against the PCs' invading army. Otherwise, eight morlocks may be found in each of these caverns, busy preparing themselves for war.



Morlock Slave

MORLOCK SLAVES (8) **CR 10**
XP 9,600 each
hp 143 each (see page 36)

B4. LEDGE OVERLOOK

A winding stone path rises to this ledge overlooking a rubble-strewn cavern floor forty feet below. A variety of mushrooms, bracket fungi, and spindle fungi dot the surface of the ledge, some growing nearly as tall as a halfling.

Hazard: Eight shriekers (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 416) grow among the patches of fungus on this ledge. Their shrieks automatically alert the thessalhydras in area **B5** and the watchtower guards in area **B6**.

B5. LAKE OF PETRIFIED FIRE (CR 17)

The cramped tunnels finally give way to an open field of jagged, rubble-strewn rock. The carved likenesses of two immense serpent heads loom on the northern wall as if ready to strike. Fangs and serrated teeth create sharp, crenellated battlements within their open mouths, and huge watchfires illuminate their baleful, unblinking eyes. Between these two behemoths runs a twenty-foot-wide passageway barred by an immense gate, while another identical entrance lies farther to the east.

When Ilmurea was a living, vibrant city, the floor of this cavern was a lake of burning lava that extended to the very gates of the temple. In those days, arched bridges in the shape of gigantic serpents crossed the lake to temple's twin gates, but they fell into the lake of fire when the cavern's ceiling caved in long ago, creating the collapsed warrens.

When Savith cut off Ydersius's head, she threw it into the lake, trusting the fire to burn the snake-god's head to ashes. But Ydersius's skull sank to the bottom, and over the years, the lava cooled and solidified. It was from deep beneath the floor of this cavern that Vyr-Azul finally managed to extract his god's skull.

The giant snakes' heads at area **B6** project dual *invisibility purge* effects that cover the entire cavern floor in this area (CL 20th).

Creatures: The raging battle in the streets of Ilmurea helps pull away some of the temple's guardians from this location. A thessalhydra, a huge beast with a fringe of eight serpentine heads surrounding a large mouth on a reptilian body, lairs in this cavern. This behemoth is a living experiment created by the elder serpentfolk long ago, trained to guard the temple and placed in hibernation for millennia. Vyr-Azul freed it from hibernation and charged it with defending the Sanctum of Ydersius once again. In addition, two serpentfolk temple guards are

stationed on each watchtower (area **B6**) overlooking the cavern, supporting the thessalhydra in the cavern below with ranged attacks.

ADVANCED THESSALHYDRA **CR 15**
XP 51,200

N Huge magical beast (*Tome of Horrors Revised* 408)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent;
 Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 11, flat-footed 25 (+3 Dex, +17 natural, -2 size)
hp 210 (20d10+100); fast healing 5
Fort +19, **Ref** +17, **Will** +8
Immune acid

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., swim 20 ft.
Melee bite +24 (2d6+6/19-20 plus 2d6 acid), 8 serpentine bites
 +19 (1d8+3 plus 1 acid), sting +19 (1d8+3 plus 1d6 acid)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Special Attacks breath weapon (40 ft. line, 4d6 acid damage,
 Reflex DC 25 half, usable once per day)

TACTICS

During Combat The thessalhydra spits acid with its breath weapon, then strikes with its many serpentine bites at opponents within reach, using its Snatch feat to grab victims. It flings those caught in the fangs of its many mouths into the rubble of the collapsed warrens or onto the battlements of area **B6**. The thessalhydra uses its Combat Reflexes and Stand Still feats to prevent anyone from moving toward the gates.

Morale The thessalhydra fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 16, **Con** 20, **Int** 2, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 9
Base Atk +20; **CMB** +28; **CMD** 41 (45 vs. trip)
Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude,
 Improved Critical (bite), Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will,
 Lightning Reflexes, Lunge, Snatch, Stand Still
Skills Perception +22, Swim +22; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception

Full Strength: If the PCs accumulated fewer than 5 Achievement Points, there are two thessalhydras in this cavern. In addition, each of the watchtowers (area **B6**) holds four serpentfolk temple guards, making this a CR 19 encounter.

B6. WATCHTOWERS (CR 14)

This watchtower takes the shape of a rearing snake's head with a flaring hood curving outward along the cavern wall. Its open maw includes jutting fangs amid a number of serrated teeth that act as battlements. Orange watchfires illuminate its menacing eyes.

Each of these watchtowers stands 50 feet above the floor of the cavern at area **B5**. The chambers beyond the towers

Serpent's Skull

are guardrooms for the guards posted in the towers, and contain only a few simple furnishings, weapon racks, and barrels of extra arrows.

Creatures: Four serpentfolk temple guards defend the battlements, two in each tower, keeping watch over the cavern at area **B5**. They are extra vigilant since the arrival of the PCs' army in Ilmurea, and react to any alarm raised by the shriekers in area **B4** or the thessalhydra in area **B5** by sending a runner to alert the guards in areas **B9** and **B10**. The remaining soldiers attack anyone approaching the gates with arrows and spells.

SERPENTFOLK TEMPLE GUARDS (2) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

Degenerate serpentfolk cleric of Ydersius 8/fighter 2

(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 242)

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 10, flat-footed 27 (+10 armor, +7 natural)

hp 157 each (15 HD; 7d10+8d8+83)

Fort +16, **Ref** +6, **Will** +14; +1 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +1, **Immune** mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison; **SR** 25

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 *heavy flail* +21/+16/+11 (1d10+10/17–20), bite +16 (1d6+5 plus poison)

Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +14/+9/+4 (1d8+7/x3)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 5/day (DC 16, 4d6), scythe of evil (4 rounds, 1/day)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +12) 7/day—touch of evil (4 rounds), venomous stare (1d6+4 nonlethal damage plus fascinated for 1 round, DC 18 Will save negates)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 8th; concentration +12)

4th—*divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *poison*^D (DC 18), *unholy blight* (DC 18)

3rd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *dispel magic*, *greater magic fang*^D (2), *protection from energy*

2nd—*align weapon*^D, *hold person* (DC 16), *silence* (DC 16), *sound burst* (2, DC 16)

1st—*bane* (DC 15), *command* (DC 15), *divine favor* (2), *entropic shield*, *protection from good*^D

o (at will)—*bleed* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *resistance*

D Domain spell; **Domains** Evil, Scalykind (see page 69 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #37)

TACTICS

Before Combat The temple guards cast *greater magic fang* on themselves and their serpent companions every day. If alerted to enemies, they cast *freedom of movement* and *entropic shield* before combat.

During Combat The temple guards use their *wands of*

venomous bolt to fire poisoned arrows from range, as well as spells such as *blindness/deafness*, *hold person*, and *unholy blight*. They target spellcasters with *silence* and cast *sound burst* on warriors to leave them vulnerable to the thessalhydra's attacks. In melee, they cast *divine power* before attacking with their flails and poisonous bites.

They cast *poison* on foes within reach and send their viper serpent companions to flank opponents and attempt to poison them with their bites.

Morale The temple guards fight to the death.

Base Statistics Without *greater magic fang*, the serpentfolk temple guards have **Melee** bite +14 (1d6+3 plus poison).

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 10, **Con** 18, **Int** 8, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 29

Feats Cleave, Combat Casting, Extra Channel, Great Fortitude, Improved Channel, Improved Critical (heavy flail), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (heavy flail)

Skills Knowledge (engineering) +4, Knowledge (religion) +5, Perception +21, Spellcraft +12; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception

Languages Aklo; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ serpent companion (viper snake)

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *wand of venomous bolt** (8 charges); **Other Gear** +2 *half-plate*, +1 *heavy flail*, +1 *composite longbow* (+6 Str) with 20 arrows, spell component pouch, unholy symbol of Ydersius

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; save Fort DC 21; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Str; cure 2 consecutive saves.

* See *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*.

SERPENT COMPANIONS (2) CR —

Viper snake serpent companion

N Medium animal

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural)

hp 33 each (6d8+6)

Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3; +4 on Will saves vs. enchantment

Defensive Abilities devotion, evasion

OFFENSE

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

Melee bite +8 (1d4+5 plus poison)

TACTICS

Base Statistics Without *greater magic fang*, the serpent companions have **Melee** bite +6 (1d4+3 plus poison).

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 17, **Con** 13, **Int** 1, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20 (can't be tripped)

Feats Ability Focus (poison), Combat Reflexes, Dodge

Skills Climb +10, Perception +10, Swim +10

SQ link, share spells



SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 16; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1 Con; *cure* 1 save.

Full Strength: If the PCs accumulated fewer than 5 Achievement Points, there are four serpentfolk temple guards in each watchtower, making each location a CR 16 encounter.

B7. ADAMANTINE GATES (CR 14)

A pair of adamantine doors stands beneath a snake's head archway, engraved with a scaled motif and bearing carvings of robed serpentfolk offering gifts and sacrifices to a giant serpentfolk with an elongated tail. Serpentine locks run along the doors' outer edges where they join with the cavern stone.

Visitors approaching within 10 feet of the gates trigger a permanent *magic mouth*, which addresses them in Aklo: "To the hallowed halls of Ydersius, you come. Speak now the liturgy for solace in the snake-god's embrace and you may enter unbiten and unscathed."

Trap: Those who fail to give the proper password in Aklo before opening the doors trigger a terrible trap as translucent snakes of arcane energy lash out of the doors at intruders. The password is, "Sanctum sought, the Primal Coil praised."

HARM TRAP CR 14

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

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** automatic; **Bypass** password
Effect spell effect (*harm*, +6 melee touch, 130 damage, DC 19
 Will save for half, cannot be reduced to less than 1 hit point)

B8. ENTRANCE COURTYARD (CR 17)

Several arrow-slits pierce the walls of this irregularly shaped courtyard. A green stone statue of a huge serpentfolk warrior stands at the center of the room, staring down at the main gate from a height of nearly thirty feet. Adamantine doors mark the room's exits.

These two courtyards are the primary entrances into the sanctum. The surrounding rooms (area **B8a**) are guardrooms, with clear views over the entrance courtyards. Stone barrels and lockers in these guardrooms are filled with spare arrows.

Creatures: Three serpentfolk temple guards from area **B8a** (one in each guardroom) keep watch over this inner courtyard, ready to fire on intruders at a moment's notice. Vyr-Azul also gave them command of the serpentstone statue in the center of the chamber, which activates as

Serpentfolk Armor

Serpentfolk generally favor enhanced scale mail and banded mail for their heavier armor, decorating and customizing each suit with the striated patterns common to all manner of snakes and serpents. The serpentfolk use these colors to identify different units within their armies, wearing them as a source of pride.

The serpentfolk also manufacture an even more highly prized armor called *snakescale*. Crafted from the strengthened skin of giant snakes, each suit is magically empowered to enhance the natural climbing ability and stealth of serpentfolk scouts and warriors.

SNAKESCALE ARMOR

Aura faint illusion; **CL** 5th

Slot armor; **Price** 8,900 gp; **Weight** 20 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This +1 *scale mail* is made from hardened, reinforced snakeskin scales. The armor has an arcane spell failure chance of 15%, a maximum Dexterity bonus of +5, and a -2 armor check penalty. It also grants its wearer a +5 competence bonus on Climb and Stealth checks. *Snakescale armor* is considered light armor.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *invisibility*, *silence*, *spider climb*; **Cost** 4,450 gp

a stone golem when directed. Together, they defend the fortress with the golem engaging in melee while the serpentfolk pick off anyone keeping out of its reach with arrows and spells.

SERPENTFOLK TEMPLE GUARDS (3) CR 12

XP 19,200 each
hp 157 each (see page 38)

SERPENT COMPANIONS (3) CR —

hp 33 each (see page 38)

SERPENTSTONE SENTINEL CR 15

XP 51,200

Advanced variant stone golem (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 163)

N Huge construct

Init -2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +0

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 6, flat-footed 30 (-2 Dex, +24 natural, -2 size)

hp 150 (20d10+40)

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

DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic

SERPENT'S SKULL

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee 2 slams +27 (4d8+9)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (60-foot cone, turn to stone, Fortitude DC 20 negates)

TACTICS

During Combat Upon activation, the sentinel attacks anyone present in the courtyard, petrifying opponents with its breath weapon. The sentinel is confined to this area and does not pursue anyone beyond the gates or farther into the fortress.

Morale The sentinel fights until destroyed or commanded to stop.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 7, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +31; **CMD** 39

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Su) A serpentstone sentinel can use its breath weapon once every 1d4+1 rounds to create a 60-foot cone of green gas. Those caught in the area of the gas can attempt a DC 20 Fortitude save to resist the effects, but those who fail the save are immediately petrified. This petrification is temporary—each round, a petrified creature can attempt a new DC 20 Fortitude save to recover from the petrification as long as it is not caught within the area of effect of the golem's breath weapon a second time while petrified. A creature exposed to the golem's breath a second time while already petrified becomes permanently petrified, and can no longer attempt to make additional Fortitude saves to recover naturally. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Full Strength: If the PCs accumulated fewer than 5 Achievement Points, there are eight serpentfolk temple guards in area **B8a**, making this a CR 19 encounter.

B9. BARRACKS (CR 16)

Stone posts rise from the floor of this room. Strung between them are multiple levels of hammocks made from snakeskin leather. Below the hammocks rest a number of darkwood chests.

The temple fortress includes a number of these rooms to house the temple's serpentfolk defenders. Each one can accommodate 25 to 50 warriors. The footlockers under the hammocks contain a variety of garments, weapon harnesses, and other equipment used by the soldiers, but nothing of exceptional value or craftsmanship.

Creatures: Four serpentfolk temple guards remain in each of these barracks as reserve forces against the PCs' army and extra defenders for the temple fortress. Vyr-Azul held them back because he knows they hold a greater reverence for Ydersius and the sanctity of their

ancestors' history. He counts on their religious zeal to keep them battle-ready and more fervent in their defense of the sanctum.

SERPENTFOLK TEMPLE GUARDS (4)

CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 157 each (see page 38)

SERPENT COMPANIONS (4)

CR —

hp 33 each (see page 38)

B10. ARMORY

The smell of well-oiled leather and steel permeates this room. All along the walls hang suits of armor, shields, spears, swords, bows, and other weapons.

The serpentfolk soldiers store their weapons and other gear in these rooms, in preparation for an eventual invasion of Saventh-Yhi and the Overburn above. Much of the collections once housed here have already been used to arm the serpentfolk forces before sending them to do battle in the streets of Ilmurea against the PCs' army.

Treasure: The armories still contain a few valuable items (divided between both rooms), including an adamantite breastplate, +1 *banded mail*, +2 *half-plate*, three suits of *snakescale armor* (see sidebar), and a +1 *spined shield*. In addition, there are two +1 *heavy flails*, two +1 *composite longbows* (+6 Str), a +2 *speed scimitar*, 60 +1 *arrows*, three masterwork composite longbows (+5 Str), five masterwork daggers, three greatswords, three masterwork longswords, four masterwork longspears, and 400 arrows.

B11. MECHANIZED ARMORY (CR 18)

The ceiling of this large rectangular chamber rises forty feet overhead. Underfoot, the stone tiles lie pitted and scratched from centuries of heavy abuse. Twenty-foot-wide hallways exit to the east and west, while an open archway leads to another chamber to the northwest. A pair of double doors occupies the southwest corner.

The ancient serpentfolk of Ilmurea used this chamber to house war machines manufactured for their epic struggle against the Azlanti. Most of the deadliest golems and automatons left this holding area long ago, either falling in the struggle against Savith's army or, more recently, pressed into service by Vyr-Azul to guard the fortress and defend Ilmurea.

Creatures: Two war machines still wait in this chamber—giant, two-headed serpentine constructs called siege serpents. These golemlike siege engines are under the control of an advanced elder serpentfolk wizard named Nazith-Yol.

After receiving word of Vyr-Azul's increasing success here, a pair of ancient serpentfolk, recently awakened from hibernation, have journeyed from Sverenagati to Ilmurea to check on the priest's progress. These two wizards, named Nazith-Yol and Nylla-Jas, belong to an ancient pact of serpentfolk transmuters known as the Amphisbaenian Rite. Each member of the rite bonds with another serpentfolk (both physically and telepathically) in an arcane process to become life-mates—a rare and unusual occurrence in serpentfolk society, pursued only by those wishing to leverage such partnerships as a means of gaining further power through passionless cooperation.

Privately scornful of Vyr-Azul's less-than-pure bloodline and overzealous religious convictions, the two elder serpentfolk now grow concerned the priest's plan to restore Ydersius just might work—and if it does, that the snake-god might favor him over the purecaste serpentfolk like themselves still in hibernation. Nazith-Yol and Nylla-Jas have endeared themselves to Vyr-Azul by researching and cataloguing the lost lore of Ilmurea so he can add it to his growing army, while secretly making plans to slay him so they can use his death to both elevate the high priest as a martyr and remove him from the equation if and when Ydersius finally returns.

For now, Nazith-Yol and Nylla-Jas have separated to better examine the collected lore stored throughout the temple. While Nylla-Jas busies herself in the arcane libraries of the Tower of Preservation (area B14), Nazith-Yol pursues the reactivation of more war machines for Vyr-Azul's army.

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +22)

At will—change shape (*beast shape III/elemental body II*, 13 rounds/day)

12/day—telekinetic fist (1d4+6 bludgeoning)

Serpentfolk Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th; concentration +20)

At will—disguise self (humanoid only, DC 13), ventriloquism (DC 13)

1/day—blur, dominate person (DC 17), major image (DC 15), mass suggestion (DC 18), mirror image, suggestion (DC 15), teleport

Spells Prepared (CL 13th; concentration +22)

7th—empowered *cone of cold* (DC 26), *form of the dragon II*, *prismatic spray* (DC 26)

6th—*chain lightning* (DC 25), *disintegrate* (DC 25), *globe of invulnerability*, *quicken spectral hand*

5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 24), empowered *fireball* (DC 24), *fire snake** (DC 24), *hold monster* (DC 24), *quicken magic missile*, *extended stonemin*

4th—*dimension door*, *enervation* (2), *extended protection from energy*, *resilient sphere* (DC 23), empowered *scorching ray*, *extended slow* (DC 23)

3rd—*dispel magic* (2), *extended false life*, *fly*, *lightning bolt* (DC 22), *ray of exhaustion* (DC 22), *vampiric touch*

2nd—*acid arrow*, *alter self*, *extended mage armor*, *ghoul touch* (DC 21), *glitterdust* (DC 21), *touch of idiocy* (2)

1st—*chill touch* (DC 20), *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile* (2),

NAZITH-YOL

CR 16

XP 76,800

Elder serpentfolk of the Amphisbaenian Rite

Male advanced serpentfolk transmuter 13

(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 242)

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect magic*, scent; **Perception** +25

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 23, flat-footed 23 (+4 armor, +5 deflection, +7 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 229 (18 HD; 5d10+13d6+157)

Fort +17, **Ref** +21, **Will** +20

DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** fire (120 points), mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison; **SR** 28

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *rod of the viper* +13/+8/+3 (1d8+2 plus poison), bite +9 (1d6+3 plus poison) or +1 *dagger* +12/+7/+2 (1d4+1/19–20), bite +9 (1d6+3 plus poison)

Ranged ray +19 ranged touch (by spell) or +1 *dagger* +19 (1d4+1/19–20)



Serpentfolk of the Amphisbaenian Rite

Serpent's Skull

shield, shocking grasp (2), unseen servant
o (at will)—*acid splash, mage hand, message, ray of frost, touch of fatigue* (DC 19)

Opposition Schools Divination, Illusion

TACTICS

Before Combat An Amphisbaenian Rite serpentfolk applies his physical enhancement to his Constitution score and casts extended *false life* and extended *mage armor* on himself everyday. If alerted to intruders in the temple, he casts extended *protection from energy* (fire) and extended *stoneskin*. If he has enough time before combat, he also casts *fly* and *shield*.

During Combat On the first round of combat, Nazith-Yol casts quickened *magic missile* and *globe of invulnerability*. He then casts extended *slow* on his opponents and commands the siege serpents to close ranks and defend against anyone trying to reach him. From this position of safety, he uses area effect spells against grouped enemies and rays against individual foes, as well as quickened *spectral hand* to deliver touch spells at range. If opponents engage him in melee combat, he protects himself with a *resilient sphere*, casting *blur* and *mirror image* before emerging to fight with his *rod of the viper*.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 115 hit points, Nazith-Yol uses his *telepathic bond* with his partner Nylla-Jas in area **B14** and requests that she activate her *ring of friend shield*. Nazith-Yol fights until he has fewer than 60 hit points remaining, at which point he uses his change shape ability to take the form of a Medium earth elemental, earth gliding to area **B14** to join Nylla-Jas. Thereafter, he makes a last stand by her side, teleporting with her back to Svernegati if all seems lost.

Base Statistics Without his spells, an Amphisbaenian Rite serpentfolk's statistics are **AC** 27, touch 23, flat-footed 19; **hp** 211; no DR or fire immunity.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 24, **Con** 22, **Int** 28, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 34

F feats Combat Casting, Craft Rod, Dodge, Empower Spell, Extend Spell, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Toughness, Weapon Focus (ray)

Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +20, Disguise +20 (+30 with *disguise self*), Escape Artist +27, Fly +22, Knowledge (arcana) +30, Knowledge (history) +30, Knowledge (nobility) +30, Knowledge (planes) +30, Knowledge (religion) +30, Perception +25, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +30, Stealth +28, Use Magic Device +24

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Azlanti, Celestial, Cyclops, Draconic, Infernal, Necril, Polyglot, Undercommon; *read magic*; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ arcane bond (*rod of the viper*), physical enhancement +3

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

Other Gear +1 dagger, *rod of the viper, amulet of natural armor* +1, *cloak of resistance* +4, *headband of vast intelligence* +4

(Knowledge [religion] and Sense Motive), *deep red sphere ioun stone, ring of friend shield* (Nazith-Yol and Nylla-Jas each have one ring of the pair), *ring of protection* +5, spellbook (contains all prepared spells, all 0-level spells, plus *permanency* and 1d6 additional spells of 1st through 6th level), spell component pouch, diamond dust (worth 1,000 gp), 98 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Exceptional Resources (Ex) As an elder from the height of their glorious empire, an Amphisbaenian Rite serpentfolk has the wealth of a PC rather than an NPC. This equipment increases his CR by 1.

Permanent Spells (Ex) Through the arcane rituals of the ancient serpentfolk empire, an Amphisbaenian Rite serpentfolk has had the following spells made permanent on himself: *detect magic, greater magic fang, read magic, and telepathic bond* (between Nazith-Yol and Nylla-Jas).

Poison (Ex) Bite—*injury*; *save* Fort DC 25; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Str; *cure* 2 saves.

* See *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*.

SIEGE SERPENTS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

Advanced war machine amphisbaena (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 225, *Advanced Bestiary* 250)

N Huge construct

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent, all-around vision; **Perception** +14

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 13, flat-footed 24 (+5 Dex, +16 natural, -2 size)

hp 128 each (16d10+40)

Fort +10, **Ref** +15, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities split; **DR** 10/—; **Immune** construct traits, electricity, petrification; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10

Weaknesses metal body

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 40 ft.

Melee 2 bites +24 (4d6+10 plus poison)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks body blades, enlarged attacks, poison

TACTICS

During Combat The siege serpents move to protect Nazith-Yol, lashing out at anyone attempting to move past them to attack the wizard. They employ bite and grapple attacks whenever possible to bring their body blades to bear.

Morale The siege serpents fight until commanded to stop or until they are destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +28; **CMD** 43 (can't be tripped)

F feats Ability Focus (poison)^B

Skills Acrobatics +15 (+19 jump), Climb +28, Perception +14, Stealth +1, Swim +18; **Racial Modifiers** +10 Acrobatics, +10 Climb, +10 Perception, +4 Stealth



SQ sprint

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Body Blades (Ex) Spikes and blades cover the siege serpent's body. When another creature attacks it with handheld or natural weapons, the attacker takes 1d8 points of slashing and piercing damage. Incorporeal creatures and creatures using weapons with exceptional reach do not take this damage. A siege serpent also deals 1d8 points of piercing and slashing damage to a grabbed opponent with each successful grapple check.

Enlarged Attacks (Ex) Each of the siege serpent's bite attacks deal damage as if it were two size categories larger.

Metal Body (Ex) Beneath its skin, a siege serpent is largely composed of metal. It counts as a ferrous creature for the purposes of *rusting grasp* and other spells that have special effects on metal.

Sprint (Ex) Once per hour, a siege serpent can move up to 10 times its normal speed when it charges.

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 20; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Con; *cure* 1 save.

Full Strength: If the PCs accumulated fewer than 5 Achievement Points, there are four amphisbaena war machines with Nazith-Yol in this room, making this a CR 19 encounter.

B12. ARCANE FORGE

Three fiery, hot furnaces illuminate and heat this large chamber. Throughout the room lie several unusually shaped anvils and forging tools, with bits and pieces of various metals scattered across them.

Serpentfolk wizards used this forge to craft all manner of weapons and engineered marvels in the past, including the siege serpents in area B11 activated by Nazith-Yol, who has spent time here reclaiming the secrets of the forging process to take back with him to Sverenagati. The door to the southwest leads to a storeroom containing coal, extra tools, and over a ton of iron in large, 10-pound ingots.

B13. COMMAND ROOM (CR 16)

Massive double doors take up the western wall of this irregularly shaped room. Rubble-choked stairs climb a short way before a complete cave-in blocks their progress to the northeast. To the south, a smaller set of doors provides the room's only other exit.

This chamber once connected the temple's ground floor to the upper floors of the sanctum. Although the room's southern exit provides access to the barracks and guardrooms overlooking the

eastern entrance courtyard, the stair to the upper reaches lies completely blocked. Attempts to dig or otherwise disturb the rubble only results in further collapse of the stone overhead. Vyr-Azul has not yet had the time to clear out the upper reaches of the temple, but it is not a high priority, as his divinations have revealed the space was only used to house refugees if Ilmurea came under attack and the inhabitants needed sanctuary inside the temple.

Creatures: The only non-serpentfolk member of Vyr-Azul's inner circle is a troglodyte champion named Khorak. A devout follower of Ydersius, Khorak heard of Vyr-Azul's mission and took it upon himself to join the effort to restore his god. Upon arriving in Ilmurea, Khorak offered his services to the priest, who was impressed with the troglodyte's unshakable faith and placed him in command of the fortress's outermost defenders. But for all his religious zeal, Khorak is not a serpentfolk, and Vyr-Azul has no plans to elevate the troglodyte any higher. For now, he serves a purpose, but the high priest fully expects Khorak to fall should the sanctum be attacked. Khorak is a muscular troglodyte with splotchy scales and a frill pierced with gold rings. He directs the temple's defense from this chamber,



Siege Serpent

Serpent's Skull

accompanied by two serpentfolk temple guards, his bodyguards. They attack anyone entering this chamber.

KHORAK

CR 14

XP 38,400

Male troglodyte fighter 13 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 267)

CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft.; Perception +8

Aura stench (30 ft., DC 15, 10 rounds)

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 11, flat-footed 30 (+8 armor, +1 Dex, +6 natural, +6 shield)

hp 168 (15 HD; 2d8+13d10+88)

Fort +17, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6; +3 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *shock bastard sword* +25/+20/+15 (1d10+13/17–20 plus 1d6 electricity), *snakehead shield* +14/+9/+4 (2d6), bite +16 (1d4+4) or

bite +16 (1d4+4), 2 claws +21 (1d4+7)

Ranged mwk javelin +17 (1d6+6)

Special Attacks weapon training (heavy blades +3, natural +2, thrown +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Khorak activates his *snakehead shield* immediately upon entering battle so it can attack independently while he attacks with his sword, using Power Attack to inflict as much damage as possible. If he can only make a single attack, he employs Improved Vital Strike to mete out further damage.

Morale Khorak zealously fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 12, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 30

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Great Fortitude, Greater Shield Focus, Greater Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Greater Weapon Specialization (bastard sword), Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Iron Will, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword)

Skills Climb +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (religion) +3, Perception +8, Stealth +12 (+16 in rocky areas)

Languages Draconic

SQ armor training 3

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*; **Other Gear** +2 *breastplate*, *snakehead shield* (as *lion's shield*, but with a fanged serpent's head), +1 *shock bastard sword*, masterwork javelin, *belt of giant strength* +2, unholy symbol of Ydersius, 94 gp

SERPENTFOLK TEMPLE GUARDS (2)

CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 157 each (see page 38)

SERPENT COMPANIONS (2)

CR —

hp 33 each (see page 38)

B14. TOWER OF PRESERVATION (CR 18)

A large, golden-tiled summoning circle dominates the floor of this massive octagonal chamber, set between four solid stone pillars supporting the tall ceiling overhead. Seven alcoves lined with bookshelves are set within the room's walls high above the floor, but with no apparent means to reach them.

In the days of the serpentfolk empire's titanic struggle with Azlant, the Sanctum of Ydersius in Ilmurea became a sacred repository for much of the serpentfolk's accumulated lore and knowledge, collected in books and on serpentstone tablets in the alcoves of this archive. All of the texts within the alcoves were treated with *unguent of timelessness*, preserving them in pristine condition over



Khorak

the passing millennia, and they enjoy resistance 30 against acid, cold, electricity, and fire while inside the alcoves.

The chamber itself also serves another purpose, however, since the magic circle on the floor acts as both a summoning circle for conjuring and binding extraplanar allies and also as a permanent *teleportation circle* (caster level 18th) capable of transporting anything inside the circle to one of three separate hibernation chambers (area C13). A DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) check to is enough to realize this latter function, and a DC 35 Use Magic Device check activates the circle.

The ceiling in this room is 100 feet high, and the library alcoves are 40 feet above the floor. The magic of the chamber allows any creature within the room to *levitate* at will to access the shelves (caster level 10th). Visitors can identify this effect with a DC 25 Spellcraft check.

Creatures: Another serpentfolk transmuter of the Amphisbaenian Rite named Nylla-Jas, the bonded life-mate of Nazith-Yol (area B11), currently occupies this chamber. The invasion of the PCs' army has convinced her that Vyr-Azul's efforts to restore Ydersius are doomed to fail. As a result, she has taken a contingent of four serpentfolk temple guards to watch over her while she finishes rescuing the artifacts, scrolls, and ancient lore stored among the library stacks above, planning to teleport back to Sverenagati with the spoils. When the PCs arrive, she tenaciously defends these treasures while telepathically calling her partner to come to her aid.

NYLLA-JAS CR 16

XP 76,800

Elder serpentfolk of the Amphisbaenian Rite (see page 41)

Female advanced serpentfolk transmuter 13

hp 229

TACTICS

During Combat On the first round of combat, Nylla-Jas casts *quicken magic missile* and *fly* to take cover in the alcoves above while her serpentfolk guards fight on the ground. From there, she casts *globe of invulnerability* and attacks targets with ranged spells or touch spells via her *quicken spectral hand*. If she manages to hinder the more dangerous melee foes—either by enclosing them in a *resilient sphere*, hampering them with a *slow* spell, or turning them into allies with *dominate person* or *mass suggestion*—she gives in to her own battle lust and enters melee to strike with her *rod of the viper*, after casting *blur* and *mirror image*.

Morale Nylla-Jas fights to protect the reclaimed lore she's gathered from Ilmurea, desperate to return with it to Sverenagati. Once reduced to fewer than 115 hit points, Nylla-Jas uses her *telepathic bond* with her partner Nazith-Yol in area B14 and requests that he activate his *ring of friend shield*. Once she has fewer than 60 hit points remaining, Nylla-Jas snatches her *bags of holding* (see Treasure below) and abandons Vyr-Azul, teleporting home to Sverenagati.

SERPENTFOLK TEMPLE GUARDS (4) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 157 each (see page 38)

SERPENT COMPANIONS (4) CR —

hp 33 each (see page 38)

Treasure: The serpentfolk view themselves as the absolute masters of all arcane matters. And though some might attribute such claims to their exceeding arrogance, the truth lies in the absolute completeness of the collected scrolls, tomes, and artifacts kept within the elevated alcoves. This library contains all wizard/sorcerer spells from the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, but the GM should also feel free to include variant spells from other classes as well as completely new spells never before seen by the surface races, signifying the depth of serpentfolk research. In addition, the repository also contains a *blessed book*, three *golem manuals* (iron, stone, and stone guardian), a *manual of quickness of action* (+2), a *tome of clear thought* (+4), and a *tome of understanding* (+2).

Nylla-Jas has also placed three *bags of holding* (all type III) in the northernmost alcove containing historical texts related to the serpentfolk empire and its struggle with ancient Azlant. The collected volumes stuffed within them would fetch up to 10,000 gp per bag from a wealthy sage, historian, or collector.

B15. THE SCALED DESCENT (CR 17)

Two serpentfolk statues made of iron dominate this octagonal chamber, standing guard next to a wide staircase descending to the north. The stairway appears to be lined with iridescent snake scales, pulsing and moving with eerie life of their own. Along the south walls, twin tapestries made of the same iridescent snakeskin shift and billow with the same rhythm. Double doors exit the chamber to the south and east.

The ancient serpentfolk segregated the Sanctum of Ydersius to keep the temple's warriors focused on defending the sanctum above, while the priests administered to Ydersius in the caverns below. This chamber acts as a central hub, connecting both areas to the larders and private eating rooms to the east, and serving as the main approach to the holiest area of the snake-god's temple, the inner sanctum of Ydersius himself. The undulating stairway to the north pulses with an unholy life much like the stretching movements of a constrictor snake gorging itself on prey. The serpentfolk refer to this downward tunnel as the Scaled Descent.

Creatures: After freeing Ydersius's skull from the Lake of Petrified Fire, Vyr-Azul attempted to contact his deity through spells such as *commune* and *greater planar ally*.

Soon thereafter, the snake-god sent his herald to aid and guide the high priest in his efforts to complete the ritual of restoration, one of the first signs Vyr-Azul received of Ydersius's favor. Known as the Emperor of Scales, the herald of Ydersius is a giant severed snake's head with blind, milky eyes and a mantle of smaller, thrashing, tentaclelike fanged serpents trailing the head where a body would be. With the encroachment of the PCs and their allies, Vyr-Azul has sent this powerful entity to defend the entrance to the Scaled Descent.

In addition, two iron golems also guard the stairway. These holy relics are under the command of the Emperor of Scales, and are charged with slaying any non-worshippers of Ydersius who attempt to enter the sacred vaults below.

EMPEROR OF SCALES

CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 225 (see page 82)

TACTICS

During Combat The Emperor of Scales attacks the closest foes with his bites, attempting to poison them while also subjecting them to his acidic gore. He tries to grab and swallow the most dangerous opponents, and targets enemies who keep their distance with his ranged spell-like abilities.

Morale The Emperor of Scales fights to the death.

IRON GOLEMS (2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 129 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 162)

B16. LARDER

A chill dampens the air in this room, rising from a well in the center of the floor. Several bodies—some of livestock and others disturbingly humanoid—hang from iron hooks set in the ceiling overhead.

These rooms serve as larders for the serpentfolk. They don't have to feed very often, but when they do, the serpentfolk gorge themselves on creatures sometimes twice as large as themselves. Vyr-Azul's forces don't particularly enjoy this food, far preferring warm-blooded, still-living prey to the half-frozen corpses kept here. The serpentfolk view the food stored here much like preserved rations—unappetizing but convenient.

B17. EATING ROOM

A short hallway leads to a perfectly round chamber, completely empty but for unidentifiable stains on the floor.

Each of these rooms provides a space for a single serpentfolk to take his meals, an embarrassingly sensuous

act the temple's warriors and priests prefer to practice in privacy. They rotate use of the rooms on an infrequent basis, as serpentfolk physiology allows them to go for long periods without eating after consuming a single large meal.

THE SACRED VAULTS

The lower level of the Sanctum of Ydersius contains the temple's holiest areas, including the snake-god's inner sanctum. Except for the temple guards defending the sanctum's upper level, Vyr-Azul has sent his lesser clerics to command the forces defending Ilmurea from the PCs' army. In their place, he has summoned other allies to help defend the lower halls. Vyr-Azul remains in the temple's inner sanctum (area C8), working to complete the ritual to restore Ydersius.

C1. STOREROOM

Boxes, crates, and racks fill this room, mostly undisturbed under a fine layer of dust.

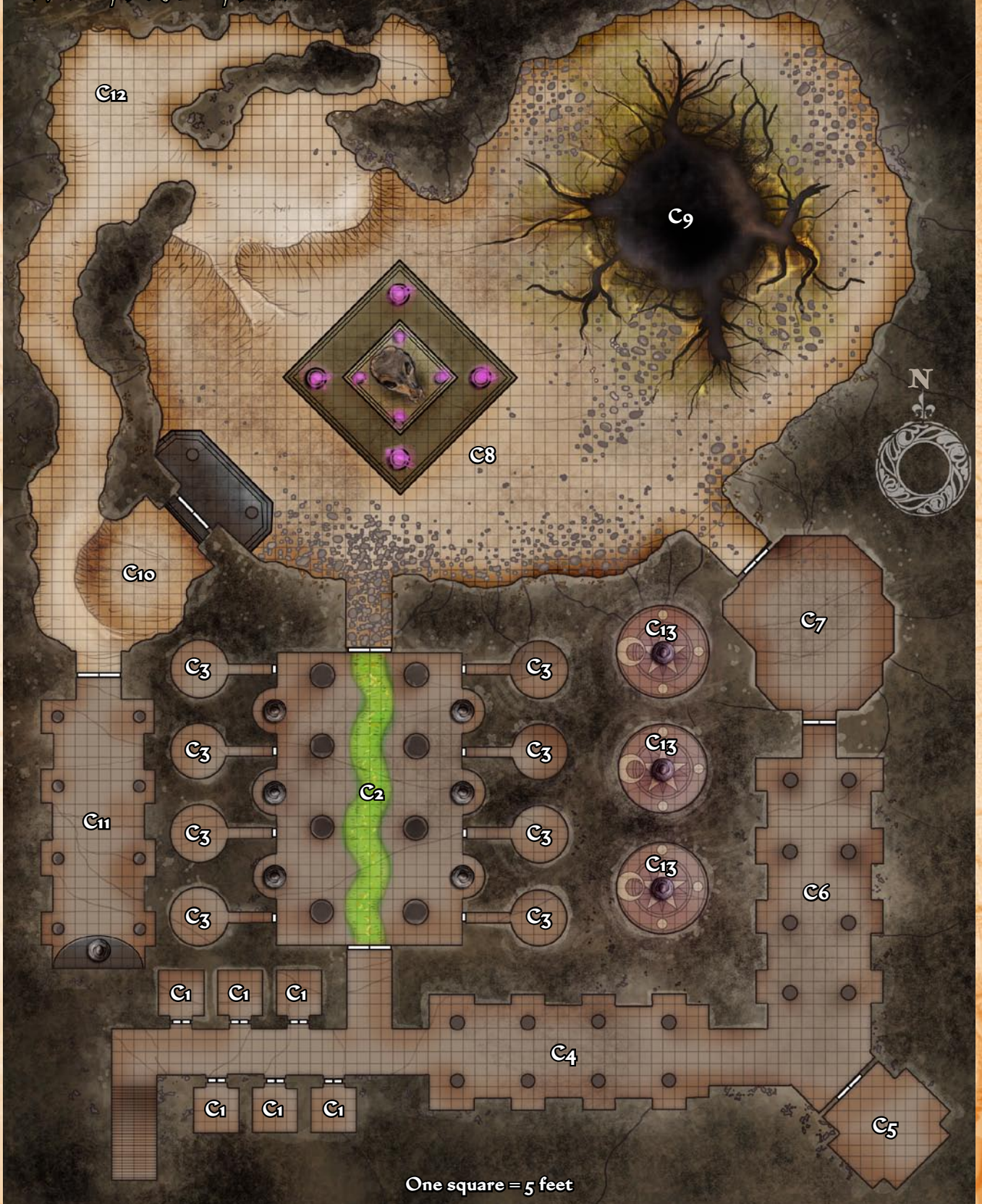
In the ancient days of Ilmurea, the serpentfolk realized their best opportunity to beat the Azlanti lay with infiltrating human society. To this end, they gathered all manner of human dress and historical artifacts to enhance the disguises they wore to blend in with their hated enemy. The racks and boxes of clothing here contain a variety of ancient human garb and decoration dating back thousands of years prior to Earthfall and the Age of Darkness. Sadly, most of these relics have not weathered the passing millennia, and crumble to dust if disturbed.

C2. HALL OF MEDITATION (CR 10)

The vaulted ceiling of this immense chamber rises nearly fifty feet overhead. A five-foot-deep, concave depression of iridescent green tiles runs in a slithering pattern down the middle of the room between two rows of columns, similar to the trail a giant snake would make. Each column bears a painted script of runes and glyphs around its base. Large adamantine doors stand in the north and south walls at either end of the path. To the east and west, several smaller doors stand between alcoves holding towering statues of robed serpentfolk, each crafted into a different likeness.

In the temple's heyday, this chamber served as a meditation and training hall for the snake-god's priests. Each day, they would walk the penitent path provided by their slithering god to reach his inner sanctum to the north. Now, rubble has blocked that exit, sealing the doors shut. The statues along the east and west walls represent time-honored saints and champions of the serpentfolk faith, most having fallen long ago in the war with Azlant.

THE SACRED VAULTS



One square = 5 feet

SERPENT'S SKULL

Trap: The writing inscribed on the hallway's columns are prayers to Ydersius, written in Aklo, and contain an insidious trap designed to capture and restrain intruders until the temple defenders can overwhelm them. Anyone reading one of the inscriptions activates the *sepia snake sigil* hidden in the text.

HEIGHTENED SEPIA SNAKE SIGIL TRAPS (8) CR 10

Type magic; Perception DC 34; Disable Device DC 34

EFFECTS

Trigger spell (*sepia snake sigil*); **Duration** 20 days; **Reset** none
Effect spell effect (*sepia snake sigil* and *alarm*); single target (anyone reading the script of glyphs and runes inscribed on the hallway's columns, DC 25 Reflex save negates)

Development: If any of the traps are triggered, they also set off an audible *alarm* spell that alerts the marilith Raviaza in area C4. She uses *project image* to investigate before teleporting into the room to attack any intruders.

C3. PRIEST QUARTERS

A bare stone sleeping platform, opulently carved with serpentine designs, occupies this perfectly round room. The ceiling arches overhead into an oval-shaped dome, which when mirrored by the polished marble floor below gives the room's interior a disturbing egglike quality.

These rooms once sheltered the eight high priests who traditionally served in the Sanctum of Ydersius. More recently, Vyr-Azul has quartered his own priests in these chambers. All of these lesser priests have been sent from the temple to bolster the serpentfolk forces against the PCs' invading army, and the chambers contain nothing of real value, only a few personal effects.

C4. THE WRITHING HALL (CR 17)

Thousands of vipers and serpents writhe across the floor of this hall, filling the air with the sound of hissing snakes. Eight columns bearing carved images of coiled serpents wrapped around them stand before alcoves in the walls and support the thirty-foot-high ceiling above. More snakes wiggle free of the gaps in the carvings' eyes and mouths to fall and join the squirming mass below.

The giant snake swarm here is actually a *permanent image*, requiring a DC 23 Will save to disbelieve if the PCs interact with the writhing mass. Other than the disconcerting noise and sensation of snakes sliding over one's feet, however, the illusion poses no real threat.

Creatures: A marilith demon named Raviaza, whom Vyr-Azul summoned with a *greater planar ally* spell, actually represents the true danger in this hall. If alerted to the PCs' approach, Raviaza withdraws just out of sight—either within one of the alcoves or at the far end of the hall near areas C5 and C6. From there, she uses *project image* to make herself appear among the illusion of snakes to challenge the PCs, barring their way with *blade barrier* while she teleports to warn Vyr-Azul before returning to attack.



Raviaza

RAVIAZA

CR 17

XP 102,400

Female marilith demon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 63)

CE Large outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Perception +31**Aura** *unholy aura* (DC 25)

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 17, flat-footed 28 (+4 deflection, +4 Dex, +15 natural, -1 size)**hp** 264 (16d10+176)**Fort** +25, **Ref** +18, **Will** +13**DR** 10/cold iron and good; **Immune** electricity, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 28

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.**Melee** +1 *flaming dagger* +24/+19/+14/+9 (1d6+8/17-20 plus 1d6 fire), 3 +1 *flaming daggers* +24 (1d6+8/17-20 plus 1d6 fire), 2 +1 *flaming unholy whips* +23 (1d4+8 plus 1d6 fire), tail slap +17 (2d6+3 plus grab)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with whips)**Special Attacks** constrict (2d6+10 plus crushing coils), infuse weapons, multiweapon mastery**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th; concentration +23)Constant—*true seeing*, *unholy aura* (DC 25)At will—*greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *project image* (DC 24), *telekinesis* (DC 22)3/day—*blade barrier* (DC 23), *fly*1/day—*summon* (level 5, 1 marilith 20%, 1 nalfeshnee at 35%, or 1d4 hezrous at 60%)

TACTICS

During Combat Raviaza summons 1d4 hezrou demons to attack enemies while she grapples opposing spellcasters from a safe distance with *telekinesis*. She tries to constrict powerful warriors with her crushing coils while attacking other foes with her weapons, using her whips to disarm and trip.**Morale** Raviaza fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 19, **Con** 32, **Int** 18, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 25**Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +24 (+28 grapple); **CMD** 42 (can't be tripped)**Feats** Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Improved Critical (dagger), Improved Disarm, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (dagger)**Skills** Acrobatics +23, Bluff +26, Diplomacy +26, Fly +18, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (engineering) +20, Perception +31, Sense Motive +23, Stealth +19, Use Magic Device +26; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Perception**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 ft.**Gear** +1 *flaming daggers* (4), +1 *flaming unholy whips* (2)

C5. CHAMBER OF GATES

Large adamantine doors open onto a nearly square chamber with a floor covered in arcane symbols and runes. Wide, shallow

alcoves are recessed in the northeast, southeast, and southwest walls, all framed by more carved symbols and glyphs, but the alcoves and the walls behind them are empty of ornamentation.

The serpentfolk priests of ancient Ilmurea used this chamber to create three magical portals connected to places of vital importance to them, but these gateways have now ceased functioning. A DC 29 Knowledge (arcana) check or DC 35 Spellcraft check recognizes the function of these portals, but activating them would be a much more difficult task.

The northeast portal once led to a wide portico of a hidden temple overlooking the serpentfolk city of Sverenagati from high upon its cavern wall, one of the larger hibernation strongholds for purecaste serpentfolk nobles. The southeast portal connected to a hidden shrine of Ydersius high in the central mountains of Azlant itself, now sunk beneath the Arcadian Ocean, from which the serpentfolk routinely spied upon their ancient enemies. Finally, the southwest portal once provided access to a sister temple on the far-off green planet of Castrovell. This temple was never completed, but the serpentfolk intended to support it from the Sanctum of Ydersius until Savith's arrival derailed their plans for expansion.

Development: The activation and use of this chamber's portals is beyond the scope of this adventure. If your players are interested in reactivating them and exploring the strange lands beyond, however, you may develop these areas on your own. Repairing and activating the portals should be a time-consuming and difficult process, likely requiring research and several skill checks. Even once the portals are fixed, the temples and shrines once linked to this chamber have fallen into disrepair over the passage of so many years, and contain their own guardians, traps, and challenges, but also their own treasures. PCs who use the portals here soon discover they work in only one direction. The PCs must use their own teleportation magic to return, or locate a similar Chamber of Gates at each site, where a similar portal (possibly deactivated as well) leads back to the Lake of Petrified Fire at area B5.

C6. HALL OF HUSKS (CR 16)

Several pieces of dry, translucent snakeskin litter the floor of this long hallway. Farther back from the main thoroughfare, larger, intact snakeskins lie piled in alcoves behind the eight columns supporting the thirty-foot-high ceiling overhead. A pair of adamantine doors seals off the north end of the hall, while a similar doorway lies to the southeast.

This hall contains several 20-foot-long snakeskin husks, the remains of lesser hollow serpents (see page 86), hideously animated undead snakeskins left behind by the

Serpent's Skull

serpentfolk priests of ancient Ilmurea. Unable to command them all, Vyr-Azul had to destroy these guardians when he first explored the Sanctum of Ydersius.

Creature: After slaying the lesser hollow serpents, Vyr-Azul became curious about their construction. He believed that if he could craft such powerful undead under the guidance of Ydersius, they would make perfect guardians and allies to watch over him while he prepared the restoration ritual. To say he succeeded beyond his wildest dreams would be an understatement. In the ancient temple archives (area C11), he found the means of crafting not only lesser hollow serpents, but also a larger and more deadly version. Vyr-Azul eventually created two of the undead monstrosities, using them to guard the inner sanctum, though one of has been sent to bolster his forces in the defense of Ilmurea.

HOLLOW SERPENT

CR 16

XP 76,800

hp 230 (see page 86)



Khestath

TACTICS

During Combat The hollow serpent initially attacks with *horrid wilting* and by channeling negative energy, before grappling them and constricting remaining opponents while subjecting them to its desiccation aura and energy drain ability.

Morale The hollow serpent fights until destroyed.

Full Strength: If the PCs accumulated fewer than 5 Achievement Points, two hollow serpents guard this chamber, making it a CR 18 encounter.

C7. ANTECHAMBER (CR 17)

Two adamantine gates open into this irregularly shaped chamber, one to the south and another to the northwest. Overhead, the ceiling rises to thirty feet, glowing with an angry red hue.

Creatures: One of Vyr-Azul's most trustworthy captains, a degenerate serpentfolk named Khestath occupies this room with three temple guards. Vyr-Azul has known Khestath since childhood, when the degenerate warrior was assigned to be the young priest's personal bodyguard. In the years since, Vyr-Azul has done much to educate Khestath, fully indoctrinating him in the faith of Ydersius. In fact, the priest hopes the return of Ydersius may somehow elevate Khestath's self-awareness, enabling the brute to become a true holy warrior of the faith. Khestath and his guards attack anyone attempting to enter the inner sanctum.

KHESTATH

CR 15

XP 51,200

Male degenerate serpentfolk fighter 6/ranger 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 242)

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +3 (+5 underground); **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +15 (+17 underground)

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 14, flat-footed 26 (+8 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 natural, +1 shield)

hp 205 (16d10+118)

Fort +18, **Ref** +13, **Will** +7; +2 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +2, **Immune** mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison; **SR** 26

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *flaming dire flail* +25/+20/+15/+10 (2d6+12/19–20 plus 1d6 fire), +1 *flaming dire flail* +25/+20 (2d6+12/19–20 plus 1d6 fire), bite +19 (1d6+4 plus poison)

Special Attacks favored enemy (humans +4, native outsiders +2), weapon training (flails +1)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 2nd; concentration +2)
1st—*lead blades**

TACTICS

Before Combat Once alerted to intruders, Khestath casts *lead blades* on his weapon.

During Combat Khestath strikes with both ends of his +1 *flaming dire flail* against any opponent in reach. When possible, he uses a move action to inspire his fellow guards with his hunters' bond against any human PCs.

Morale Khestath fights to the death for Vyr-Azul and Ydersius.

Base Statistics Without his spell, Khestath has **Melee** +1 *flaming dire flail* +25/+20/+15/+10 (1d8+12/19–20 plus 1d6 fire), +1 *flaming dire flail* +25/+20 (1d8+12/19–20 plus 1d6 fire), bite +19 (1d6+4 plus poison).

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 16, **Con** 22, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +24; **CMD** 37

Feats Critical Focus, Dodge, Double Slice, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dire flail), Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (dire flail), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Staggering Critical, Toughness, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (dire flail), Weapon Specialization (dire flail)

Skills Acrobatics +10, Escape Artist +10, Intimidate +6, Perception +15 (+17 underground), Stealth +12 (+14 underground), Survival +8 (+10 underground)

Languages Aklo; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ armor training 1, favored terrain (underground +2), hunter's bond (companions), track +2, wild empathy +3

Gear +2 *breastplate*, +1 *flaming*/+1 *flaming dire flail*, unholy symbol of Ydersius

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 24; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Str; *cure* 2 saves.

* See *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*.

SERPENTFOLK TEMPLE GUARDS (3) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 157 each (see page 38)

SERPENT COMPANIONS (3) CR —

hp 33 each (see page 38)

C8. THE INNER SANCTUM (CR 19)

A huge serpent's skull of bleached, fossilized stone sits within this vast cavern, mounted upon a two-tiered stone dais surrounded by golden cauldrons lit with purple fire. Rubble and debris litter the cavern floor in several areas, providing evidence of rockfalls from the ceiling overhead. Cracks and crevices lead to a gaping hole in the floor of the cavern to the east. To the northwest, a narrow slope rises to a ledge providing access to a pair of tunnels in the cavern wall, while an elevated stone portico lies along the wall to the southwest, topped with an arched roof held aloft by two golden columns bearing engravings of serpents. A gate of

adamantine stands within the portico, carved with the likeness of a viper's head staring outward, its curved fangs joining to make handles for the doors.

This cavern was once the inner sanctum of the god Ydersius himself. While he resided in Ilmurea, serpentfolk priests paid him homage and gave him offerings. The snake-god's divine guidance helped inspire and direct the serpentfolk's wars against the Azlanti, ultimately culminating in the final defense of Ilmurea against the Azlanti army led by Savith. But Ydersius didn't anticipate the human ingenuity that drove Savith to sacrifice herself in an attempt to slay him, just as serpentfolk arrogance and hubris presumed that no mortal could ever harm Ydersius given his impervious scales and legendary regenerative powers. They never imagined an Azlanti champion strong enough or bold enough to injure their god, much less behead him.

The ceiling of the cavern is 100 feet high, while the ledge to the northwest is 40 feet above the cavern floor. The large dais in the center of the chamber has a 10-foot-high base, topped by a smaller, 5-foot-high upper tier. In the past, Ydersius sat atop the raised dais to receive petitioners and dispense his divine guidance. Now, Vyr-Azul has placed the remains of the fossilized skull he removed from the Lake of Petrified Fire atop the dais in preparation for uniting Ydersius's head and body once more. Unknown to all except Vyr-Azul himself, however, the priest has already completed the restoration ritual, pulling forth the remaining bits of original bone from the fossilized minerals surrounding the snake-god's skull and casting them into the Chasm of Retreat (area C9) to call Ydersius's headless body from the depths of Orv. Far below, the skull of Ydersius has already reunited with his body, and the rejoined god is already making his way through the Chasm of Retreat to enter his sanctum once more.

Creatures: The serpentfolk high priest Vyr-Azul stands atop the dais in front of the skull, one final deterrent to the PCs' attempt to stop Ydersius's return. Vyr-Azul battles the PCs in an effort to buy time so Ydersius can regain his strength and complete as much of the regenerative process as possible while still inside the Chasm of Retreat. Vyr-Azul also intentionally misleads the PCs into thinking the outer shell of fossilized stone sitting on the dais is Ydersius's actual skull, moving to defend it as if they have just interrupted the ritual. His lifelong companion, a Huge albino constrictor snake named Qestl, slithers forth from the tunnels on the northwest ledge to aid Vyr-Azul, attacking those who dare to strike his master and flanking opponents. Together, they make a formidable pair, inflamed by religious zeal and willing to martyr themselves for Ydersius's return.

Serpent's Skull

VYR-AZUL, HIGH PRIEST OF YDESIUS

CR 19

XP 204,800

Male advanced serpentfolk cleric of Ydersius 16 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 242)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent, *true seeing*; Perception +26

DEFENSE

AC 39, touch 21, flat-footed 32 (+7 armor, +4 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 natural, +4 shield)

hp 299 (21 HD; 5d10+16d8+200)

Fort +23, **Ref** +20, **Will** +25

Immune mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison; **Resist** cold 10; SR 31

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *staff of abjuration* +28/+28/+23/+18/+13 (1d6+12), bite +23 (1d6+1 plus poison)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 8/day (DC 25, 8d6)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +21)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +24)

11/day—inspiring word (8 rounds), venomous stare (1d6+8 nonlethal plus fascinated for 1 round, DC 26)

Serpentfolk Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +25)

At will—*disguise self* (humanoid only, DC 16), *ventriloquism* (DC 16)

1/day—*blur*, *dominate person* (DC 20), *major image* (DC 18), *mass suggestion* (DC 21), *mirror image*, *suggestion* (DC 18), quickened *teleport*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 16th; concentration +24)

8th—*demand*^D (DC 26), *earthquake* (DC 26), *stormbolts** (DC 26), *summon monster VIII*

7th—*creeping doom*^D (DC 25), *destruction* (DC 25), *greater scrying* (DC 25), *repulsion* (DC 25), *summon monster VII*

6th—*blade barrier* (DC 24), *eyebite*^D (DC 24), *greater dispel magic*, *harm* (DC 24), *heal*

5th—*animal growth*^D (DC 23), *cleanse**, *constricting coils* (DC 23; new spell, see page 71), *flame strike* (DC 23), *greater command* (DC 23), *true seeing*

4th—*chaos hammer* (DC 22), *cure critical wounds*, *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *greater magic weapon*, *poison*^D (DC 22), *unholy blight* (DC 22)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 21), *blindness/deafness* (DC 21), *dispel magic*, *greater magic fang*^D (DC 21), *invisibility purge*, *protection from energy*, *wind wall*

2nd—*death knell* (DC 20), *enthrall*^D (DC 20), *grace**, *hold person* (DC 20), *lesser restoration*, *silence* (2, DC 20)

1st—*bane* (DC 19), *command* (DC 19), *comprehend languages*, *divine favor*^D, *entropic shield*, *protection from good*, *sanctuary* (DC 19)

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 18), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *read magic*

D Domain spell; **Domains** Nobility, Scalykind (see page 69 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #37)

TACTICS

Before Combat Vyr-Azul casts *greater magic weapon* on himself and *greater magic fang* on his serpent companion Qestl every day. If alerted to the PCs' presence in the Sacred Vaults, he uses *greater scrying* to observe their approach so he can cast *freedom of movement*, *protection from energy* (fire), *true seeing*, and *divine power*, and *shield* from his staff, before they enter the inner sanctum. He also casts *animal growth* and *divine favor* on Qestl. If he has time, Vyr-Azul also casts *blur* and *mirror image* on himself.

During Combat Vyr-Azul takes to the air using his *winged boots* and casts *lesser globe of invulnerability* from his staff on the first round of combat. He casts *blade barrier* or *repulsion* to prevent opponents from closing with him, then calls additional allies with *summon monster VIII* and *summon monster VII*, sending 1d3 tyrannosauruses to occupy dangerous warriors and 1d3 invisible stalkers to grapple spellcasters. He targets groups with area-affecting spells, and channels negative energy using Selective Channeling to exclude his summoned allies. Vyr-Azul implies the PCs' efforts are wasted, using *mass suggestion* to convince them to flee before the snake-god consumes them as his first meal upon his return. Vyr-Azul saves potent spells like *destruction* and *harm* until his allies have fallen or someone finally reaches him. If forced into melee combat, Vyr-Azul uses *dominate person* to gain a protector from among his enemies, then attacks with his staff and poison bite while directing his serpent companion to flank and grapple foes.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 150 hit points, Vyr-Azul takes a parting shot with a spell like *destruction* or *stormbolts*, then uses quickened *teleport* to seek safety among the rubble on the far side of the Chasm of Retreat (area C9) or in his private temple (area C11). There he casts *heal* or *cleanse* before renewing the fight. Thereafter, he battles to the death, even collapsing part of the cavern roof with *earthquake* to take as many of the PCs with him as possible.

Base Statistics Without his spells, Vyr-Azul's statistics are **AC** 35, touch 21, flat-footed 28; **hp** 283; **Melee** *staff of abjuration* +20/+15/+10/+5 (1d6+3), bite +18 (1d6+1 plus poison).

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 22, **Con** 24, **Int** 18, **Wis** 26, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 40

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Channel, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*teleport*), Selective Channeling, Spell Penetration, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +18, Diplomacy +18, Disguise +15 (+25 with *disguise self*), Escape Artist +20, Knowledge (nobility) +22, Knowledge (religion) +27, Perception +26, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +20, Use Magic Device +25

Languages Aklo, Azlanti, Common, Draconic, Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ serpent companion (albino constrictor snake named Qestl)

Combat Gear scroll of gate, wand of cure serious wounds (30 charges); **Other Gear** +3 mithral chain shirt, amulet of natural armor +4, belt of physical perfection +4, cloak of resistance +3, headband of inspired wisdom +4, pale lavender ellipsoid ioun stone (5 spell levels), minor ring of energy resistance (cold), ring of protection +4, staff of abjuration (10 charges), winged boots, silver mirror (worth 1,000 gp, focus for greater scrying), spell component pouch, unholy symbol of Ydersius, 175 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Exceptional Resources (Ex) Due to his position as Ydersius's high priest as well as his connections with the elder serpentfolk of Sverenagati, Vyr-Azul has the wealth of a PC rather than an NPC. This equipment increases his CR by 1.

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 27; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Str; cure 2 saves.

* See *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*.

QUESTL CR —

Constrictor snake animal companion

N Huge animal

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 13, flat-footed 22 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +14 natural, -2 size)

hp 138 (12d8+84)

Fort +14, **Ref** +12, **Will** +5; +4 on Will saves vs. enchantment

Defensive Abilities devotion, evasion

OFFENSE

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

Melee bite +28/+23 (1d8+26 plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (1d8+19), multiattack

STATISTICS

Str 36, **Dex** 18, **Con** 22, **Int** 1, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +24 (+28 grapple); **CMD** 39 (can't be tripped)

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Acrobatics +19 (+15 jump), Climb +21, Perception +12, Stealth +7, Swim +21; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Acrobatics, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth

SQ link, share spells

Development: As the PCs battle Vyr-Azul, the floor occasionally trembles, and mighty roars issue from the Chasm of Retreat (area C9), making it clear that something is making its way to the Inner Sanctum from far below. Once the PCs defeat Vyr-Azul, they have 5 rounds to prepare before the avatar of Ydersius climbs from the chasm.

C9. THE CHASM OF RETREAT (CR 19)

A vast, 60-foot-diameter hole drops straight through this part

of the cavern floor into unimaginable depths below. Cracks and fissures line the edges of the pit where acid burns pock and scar the natural stone. Occasionally, small tremors shake the ground underfoot, causing small pieces of rock to fracture and fall away into the darkness. No sound of their impact can be heard.

When Savith faced Ydersius at the height of his power on the battlefield, she drove him to this inner sanctum and finally beheaded the snake-god. The geyser-like spray of acidic blood from Ydersius's decapitated body landed here on the cavern floor, burning through the stone. Ydersius's headless body retreated into the Darklands through the resulting chasm, as far from Savith's blade as the god's burrowing body could take him.

The pit itself actually reaches from Sekamina into the subterranean depths of Orv, a place even Savith declined to follow. Instead, Savith turned her attention to the head of Ydersius, but before she could destroy it, she fell victim to the snake-god's threefold venom. Too sickly to do anything more than cast Ydersius's skull into Ilmurea's lake of lava, she asked only to see the light of day again. Her companions fought their way through the remnants of the routed serpentfolk, to carry her back to the surface, where she finally died. They laid her to rest and eventually founded the city of Saventh-Yhi in her honor.

Since that time, the Chasm of Retreat has seen little use. Even the creatures of Orv who find the vertical shaft leading into their realm avoid using it, as the taint of Ydersius's blood still poisons the very rock. Anyone touching the rock within the chasm is exposed to a weakened version of the god's toxic blood, which has soaked into the stone (touch—contact; *save* Fort DC 25; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Dex; *cure* 1 save). Anyone falling into the chasm with no means to arrest her fall takes 20d6 points of lethal falling damage when she eventually reaches the bottom, over 6,000 feet below. To get back up requires some means of flight or miles of travel through the Darklands to reach Ilmurea once again.

Creature: Since Vyr-Azul completed the restoration ritual and cast the fragments of Ydersius's skull into the Chasm of Retreat, the pieces have slowly reassembled and attached themselves to the god's headless body, where his regeneration has allowed flesh and tissue to grow once more over the skeletal structure. This is not the Ydersius that Savith fought and defeated so long ago, however. The god has not yet completed his restoration, and has only recovered enough of his strength to manifest an avatar standing 20 feet tall and weighing over 10 tons. Five rounds after the PCs' battle with Vyr-Azul, this avatar of Ydersius climbs out of the chasm to attack those who would dare defile his sanctum, bellowing with rage and pain as his head continues to regrow its flesh and scales.

SERPENT'S SKULL

AVATAR OF YDERSIUS

CR 19

XP 204,800

CE Huge outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Init +13; **Senses** blindsight 120 ft., darkvision 120 ft., scent, true seeing; Perception +34

Aura frightful presence (300 ft., DC 32), unholy aura (DC 26)

DEFENSE

AC 35, touch 21, flat-footed 26 (+4 deflection, +9 Dex, +14 natural, -2 size)

hp 322 (28d10+168); regeneration 30

Fort +28, **Ref** +22, **Will** +28

DR 15/lawful and silver; **Immune** acid, fire, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, petrification, poison; **Resist** electricity 20;

SR 30

Weaknesses vulnerable to decapitation

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., climb 40 ft.

Melee bite +36/+36 (2d6+20/19-20 plus poison), 2 claws +36 (2d6+10), tail slap +31 (2d8+5 plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with tail)

Special Attacks constrict (2d8+10), fast strike, noxious breath, poison, powerful bite, toxic blood

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +28)

Constant—true seeing, unholy aura (DC 26)

At will—dream, geas/quest, greater dispel magic, permanent image (DC 24),

poison (DC 22), unhallow

3/day—baleful polymorph (viper only, DC 23), demand (DC 26), dominate monster (DC 27), maximized flame strike (DC 23), freedom of movement, mass suggestion (DC 24)

1/day—blasphemy (DC 25)

TACTICS

Before Combat Ydersius casts *freedom of movement* before climbing from the chasm.

During Combat Ydersius attacks with the savagery of a constrictor and the speed of a viper. He attempts to subject as many foes as possible to his poisonous attacks, using Awesome Blow to knock opponents into the Chasm of Retreat, if possible. He uses his tail to constrict spellcasters, and casts *baleful polymorph* on dangerous warriors to take them out of the fight.

Morale Ydersius fights until his head is severed from his body, at which point his headless body thrashes mindlessly around the cavern before once more fleeing into the Chasm of Retreat.

STATISTICS

Str 31, **Dex** 29, **Con** 24, **Int** 10, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 26

Base Atk +28; **CMB** +40 (+46 grapple); **CMD** 59

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Great Fortitude, Greater Grapple, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Power Attack, Sickening Critical, Stand Still

Skills Acrobatics +23 (+31 jump), Bluff +25, Climb +32, Escape Artist +34, Intimidate +35, Knowledge (nobility) +17, Knowledge (planes) +17, Knowledge (religion) +17, Perception +34, Sense Motive +23, Stealth +29; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Escape Artist, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth

Languages Aklo; telepathy 200 ft.

SQ bound to Material Plane

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bound to Material Plane (Ex) Although he is an extraplanar creature, Ydersius is bound to the Material Plane until he has fully regenerated and is completely restored. As a result, spells such as *banishment*, *dismissal*, and the like have no effect on him.

Fast Strike (Ex) Ydersius strikes with unnatural speed and precision, allowing him one extra bite attack at his full base attack bonus. This effect is not cumulative with similar effects such as *haste*, and does not actually grant a second action.

Noxious Breath (Su) Ydersius can exhale a venomous cloud of mind-numbing pheromones in a 30-foot spread every 1d4 rounds. Breath—inhaled; *save* Fort DC 30; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Wis; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 30; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d6 Con; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Powerful Bite (Ex) Ydersius applies twice his Strength modifier to bite damage.

Regeneration (Ex) No form of attack can suppress Ydersius's regeneration—the snake-god regenerates even if disintegrated or slain by a death effect. If Ydersius fails a save against an effect that would kill him instantly, he rises from death 3 rounds later with 1 hit point if no further damage is inflicted upon his remains.

Toxic Blood (Ex) Ydersius's blood is both acidic and poisonous to those it contacts. A creature that strikes Ydersius with a slashing or piercing melee weapon, an unarmed strike, or a natural weapon takes 2d8 points of acid damage and exposes itself to a contact poison. Touch—contact; *save* Fort DC 30; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Dex; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Vulnerable to Decapitation (Ex) Ydersius can only be defeated by severing his head from his body, either with a *vorp*al weapon or by reducing him to fewer than 0 hit points,



Skull of Ydersius

then decapitating him with a coup de grace attack. Even then, both Ydersius's head and body live on. His head immediately decays into an inert skull, while his body is blind, deaf, mindless, and limited to claw and tail slap attacks. If the head is held to the body, it reattaches, eventually restoring the snake-god.

C10. HALL OF COMMUNION

Long, snakelike tendrils of decorative iron hang from the ceiling of this cavern. To the west, a wide slope leads upward to a ledge and perfectly round tunnel heading north. A second set of viper-headed gates stands at the south end of the room.

The ceiling in this room rises 80 feet high. The ledge and tunnel to the north are 40 feet above the level of the floor. Vyr-Azul used this chamber to meet with his priests and give them instructions. Currently, the room is empty, as all of the lesser priests are out in Ilmurea defending against the PCs' army.

C11. PRIVATE TEMPLE AND ARCHIVES

A long cathedral stretches south from the adamantine doors marking this chamber's only entrance. Past eight slender columns of polished onyx, a giant statue depicting a mighty serpentfolk with a regal bearing looms at the far end of the room, its eyes gleaming gold. Several stone tablets bearing a strange, runic script lie between the columns approaching the statue.

This shrine served both as a temple to Ydersius (when the god was not resident in Ilmurea) and as an archive of the holy speech of Ydersius himself. Rather than store the serpentstone tablets bearing this information in the Tower of Preservation (area **B14**), the priests of Ydersius kept them here, preserving the words of the snake-god for their eyes only. The 50-foot-tall statue represents Ydersius, recognizable with a DC 15 Perception check. A simple sleeping pallet lies on the floor in front of the statue.

Vyr-Azul claimed this chamber as his private temple and living quarters, barring entry to all save himself. Here he prayed to Ydersius, studied the god's ancient words, and completed his final preparations for the restoration ritual.

Treasure: The serpentstone tablets here contain a complete recording of the divine words of Ydersius during his time in Ilmurea. These ancient holy texts are written in Aklo and would be worth a total of 20,000 gp to religious scholars and historians on the surface, but each of the 20 tablets is bulky and weighs 30 pounds. In addition, the eyes of the statue are giant jacinths, worth 5,000 gp each.

C12. CAVERN OF BROKEN EGGS

Hundreds of broken eggshells lie scattered about this cavern, each one easily the size of a horse. A large tunnel leads to the south, while smaller ones lie to the east.

The serpentfolk priests of ancient Ilmurea used this cavern as a birthing room for giant snakes sacred to the faith of Ydersius, which they raised and nurtured as their own serpent companions. After Savith defeated Ydersius, her companions smashed the eggs they found here before bearing her back to the surface. The residual magic used to maintain the sanctum also preserved the eggshells, many of which became fossilized over the passage of time. Vyr-Azul hasn't yet found time to clear the cavern, but should he succeed in restoring Ydersius and the temple, he fully intends to revive the practice, breeding more serpent companions for what he hopes will become a reinvigorated priesthood.

C13. HIBERNATION CHAMBERS

Golden, rune-inscribed tiles ring the walls of this circular, domed room. The floor is black onyx, shot through with veins of gold reaching inward toward the center of the room, where a cylindrical, green-scaled sarcophagus stands upright atop a raised dais.

The teleportation circle in area **B14** provides the only means of reaching these three hidden rooms. All of them lie buried nearly a mile under the Sanctum of Ydersius, warded by permanent *mage's private sanctum* effects. Each room contains a sarcophagus capable of holding a single serpentfolk in magical stasis. In the days of ancient Ilmurea, the serpentfolk had little need for these hibernation chambers unless directed by Ydersius to forgo the passage of time until called for a specific service in his name. As their struggle with Azlant intensified, such short-term hibernations became increasingly necessary. Ydersius's high priests used the chambers to extend the duration of their lives and leadership, waiting for their fellow clergy to awaken them when seeking guidance or planning a new offensive against humanity. With the coming of Savith and her army, however, these chambers became an emergency escape for the ancient priests of the Sanctum of Ydersius.

Three of Ydersius's high priests survived the final confrontation against Savith's army, only to find their temple in ruins following Savith's battle with Ydersius. The loss of their god hit them especially hard, and their divinations failed to pierce the depths of Orv to locate Ydersius's decapitated body. Demoralized, the purecaste elders agreed to use the hibernation chambers and wait for Ydersius's return, convinced he would eventually recover from his wounds and that reinforcements would

Using the Faction Guide

If you're using the *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Faction Guide* in your *Serpent's Skull* game, your PCs can also gain Prestige Awards (PA) from their faction for meeting certain milestones in the adventure. This PA can then be spent on special resources and rewards offered by that faction. The Sargavan Government is not covered in the *Faction Guide*, but PCs working for that faction can still spend PA on the standard boons available to all factions, as outlined on pages 54–55. The PCs can earn PA for completing the following tasks:

- Recruiting a faction to join their army (Part Two):
1 PA per faction
- Rescuing General Aveshai (area **A13**): 1 PA
- Defeating Valglaunt (area **A13**): 1 PA
- Recovering the lost lore of the serpentfolk empire (area **B14**): 1 PA
- Defeating the Emperor of Scales (area **B15**): 1 PA
- Defeating Vyr-Azul (area **C8**): 2 PA
- Slaying the avatar of Ydersius (area **C9**): 3 PA

surely arrive from other serpentfolk cities to strike back at humanity. They counted on their brothers and sisters to wake them, but ended up waiting for over 10,000 years.

Unfortunately for the long-slumbering priests, it was Vyr-Azul who finally discovered them. Vyr-Azul feared the elder serpentfolk might try to usurp his position as Ydersius's newest high priest if awoken, and the glory he would receive for finally restoring Ydersius would go to them instead. Vyr-Azul carefully awoke each of the three priests, then slew them as they came out of hibernation disoriented. He stripped them of their gear (dividing it among himself and his most trusted lieutenants) and placed their bodies back in the sarcophagi.

In front of each sarcophagus is an inlaid mosaic pattern containing a gap in the center that is the exact size of an *ioun stone*; if an *ioun stone* is placed in the gap, the sarcophagus immediately opens. Alternatively, the sarcophagi can be forced open (hardness 15, hp 60, Break DC 38, Disable Device DC 35). Inside each sarcophagus is the decaying corpse of one of the ancient serpentfolk priests.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Assuming the PCs defeat Vyr-Azul and behead the avatar of Ydersius, his body flees once more into the Darklands, leaving behind only a trail of blood and his nigh-impervious skull. Yet even if the PCs are initially unable to behead Ydersius, all is not yet lost. The resurgent god needs time within his inner sanctum to regain all of his lost power before transcending

to his full divine form, a process that takes a few days at most. The PCs have a little time to retreat and regroup before venturing back into the Sanctum of Ydersius to attempt to defeat the snake-god once and for all.

It's also possible that the PCs might find some way to defeat the avatar of Ydersius without severing his head, perhaps by trapping him with an *imprisonment* spell, sending him to another plane, or even throwing him back into the Chasm of Retreat. Such actions do not truly defeat the returned snake-god, however, and only buy the PCs a little more time, until Ydersius can escape and find some place imbued with his power (such as his inner sanctum, a similar location in Sverenagati, or his divine realm within the Maelstrom) to fully restore himself. If the PCs somehow trap or banish Ydersius, he will eventually win his freedom, either through dominated proxies, loyal worshipers, or on his own, and return to complete his restoration. Likewise, he will climb back out of the chasm in only a few days.

If the PCs fully defeat Ydersius by decapitating him, award them additional XP equal to a CR 19 encounter as a story award. If they contrive to temporarily banish or imprison him, award them additional XP equal to a CR 15 encounter. If they only manage to delay him in Orv, award them XP equal to a CR 11 encounter.

Once Ydersius is finally defeated, his rapid departure sends a psychic shockwave through the remaining serpentfolk in Ilmurea and across Golarion, helping the PCs' army turn the tide against the demoralized snake-men and chase the serpentfolk out of Ilmurea. Though some serpentfolk remain in isolated pockets of the ruined city, infighting and skirmishes with the vengeful urdefhans and ravenous morlocks take their toll, keeping them well in check. Ilmurea, and Saventh-Yhi above, are finally free of the serpentfolk threat.

Ydersius's defeat also heralds changes in Saventh-Yhi above. The city's seven spears are gone, piercing the heart of Ilmurea and opening the subterranean city to the surface. Unfortunately for Saventh-Yhi, however, the spears' descent also removes many of the city's magical defenses—the *mirage arcana* and *nondetection* effects that have long cloaked the city end with the removal of the spears, as does the anti-entropic magic that has preserved the city for so long. Coupled with the damage inflicted on the city by the earthquakes and tremors created by the spears as they bored into the earth, Saventh-Yhi becomes much like any other lost city in the Mwangi Expanse, and will likely succumb to the encroaching jungle and ravages of sun and weather before too long.

Nevertheless, the sponsors of the expeditions to Saventh-Yhi take a more active interest in the famous Azlanti ruins. An influx of settlers, treasure-seekers, and merchants soon descends on the city, eager to



rebuild and reclaim it, and Saventh-Yhi seems destined to become another diverse metropolis in the Mwangi Expanse. The city could well become a hotbed of intrigue and political gamesmanship for years to come. In addition, the serpentfolk have always harbored a tremendous hatred for humanity, and this latest episode only magnifies their desire to avenge themselves on mankind. Back in Sverenagati, the serpentfolk elders make their own plans, regardless of whether Vyr-Azul succeeded in restoring Ydersius. Some may follow in the high priest's footsteps to seek out the decapitated snake-god and restore him again, while others might seek to unleash arcane horrors from the timeless vaults of serpentfolk lore, triggering other surprises from the depths below the Azlanti ruins.

WHAT IF YDESIUS WINS?

If the PCs fail to defeat the avatar of Ydersius, the snake-god is able to regain his full divine power in just a few days. If allowed to fully restore himself, the PCs and their allies no longer pose a serious threat to the newly reborn

god who now walks Golarion. This is the Ydersius whom Savith fought, and she was a heroic champion of the Age of Legend, the likes of which have not been seen since. Even so, Savith was unable to slay the divine Ydersius, and she did not survive the battle herself.

Ydersius's restoration soon energizes all serpentfolk, not just those in Ilmurea. A psychic transformation awakens the degenerate descendants of the entire species, creating a whole new generation of advanced serpentfolk ready to carry out his will. Ydersius resurrects his high priest Vyr-Azul and travels to Sverenagati and other ancient serpentfolk strongholds to rouse more elder serpentfolk from hibernation so they can rebuild the serpentfolk empire. This poses a serious threat to the other races of the Darklands, and though it might take several years for the serpentfolk to reestablish a strong enough presence in Sekamina, they soon focus their attention on the surface world again, hatching further plots to undermine, weaken, and enslave humanity. And now they have a living god among them again to inspire their success and lead them to victory.



Beyond Serpent's Skull

FEW EVEN KNEW THE THREAT EXISTED BEFORE THEY WERE UPON US, SEEMING TO SLITHER UP FROM EVERY VAULT AND WELL AND CRACK IN THE EARTH. LIKE ALL THE FOULNESS OF THE PIT UNLEASHED, THE DEVILS IN SCALES TEEMED FORTH IN NUMBERS THAT SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE, ENDLESS. THOSE WHO DIED FELL NOT JUST TO STEEL, BUT WERE WRACKED BY VENOM AND CRUSHED BY COILS. WE WHO FLED DID SO FOR OUR VERY LIVES, DOUBTING WHAT WE HAD NEVER QUESTIONED: OUR VERY PLACE AND DOMINANCE OF THE WORLD. EVEN NOW, YEARS AFTER THAT NIGHT OF FANGS, I CAN'T BEAR TO LOOK INTO THE DARK OF THE EARTH, EVEN A CELLAR OR POSTHOLE. TO ME, THE SHADOWS WITHIN ALWAYS SEEM TO SLITHER.

—FROM A TABLET DISCOVERED IN SAVENTH-YHI

Although “Sanctum of the Serpent God” marks the official end of the Serpent’s Skull Adventure Path, this adventure need not be the end of your campaign. The threat posed by the serpentfolk does not end simply because the plot to awaken their god failed—after all, the serpent empire has lain quietly beneath the feet of the Inner Sea for thousands of years, and it remains a potent force. This close to realizing ultimate success, perhaps the failed resurrection of Ydersius is merely a temporary setback. In addition, the discovery of the lost city of Saventh-Yhi is bound to send ripples of excitement throughout the Inner Sea, increasing the interest in the mysterious Mwangi Expanse even more—and with it, the dangers that could be unleashed from such interest.

The following pages present a variety of options GMs might choose to employ to continue their Serpent’s Skull campaigns beyond 17th level. Whether the PCs continue to explore Saventh-Yhi or perhaps return to civilization to spread the news of their incredible discoveries, the serpentfolk empire will not lay quiet in the wake of its most recent defeat. Indeed, the need for vengeance against humanity may have finally reached intolerable levels for the ancient race.

ENDLESS ADVENTURES

Once the PCs defeat Vyr-Azul and the rising avatar of Ydersius, control of Ilmurea falls from the serpentfolk empire once again, plunging the ruined city into chaos. At the same time, the task of exploring Saventh-Yhi may still require further adventures, and beyond these two ancient cities, many others lie in wait elsewhere in the Mwangi Expanse, ripe for exploration. While books like *Pathfinder Chronicles: Heart of the Jungle* and past articles included in this Adventure Path provide GMs with a wealth of options to help detail adventures beyond Serpent’s Skull, noted here are several specific plots and adventure hooks that might naturally grow from seeds planted in the past six adventures. While developing each of these adventures will require a significant amount of creativity and refinement, the tools on the following pages should aid in the crafting of these new tales. You can even use the artifacts, stat blocks, and other resources on the following pages to expand campaigns entirely of your own creation that have no actual connection to the Serpent’s Skull Adventure Path.

Faction’s Vengeance: Even if the PCs completely destroyed the expedition of a faction with which they had become enemies, the faction’s actual leadership and the bulk of its resources are barely harmed by the loss of its agents and interests in Saventh-Yhi. Yet while the faction itself survives with ease, its failure to achieve its goals in Saventh-Yhi doubtless sting, and its leaders doubtless

know that the PCs are responsible for the setback. Each faction that has been involved in this campaign is a more than ample antagonist with which to hound high-level PCs—especially if the PCs have made enemies of multiple factions which might just put aside their own petty differences in order to pool their resources against the PCs.

The Fate of Saventh-Yhi: With the activation of the seven spears of Saventh-Yhi, the ancient city suffers the loss of its most iconic landmarks and the protective magic offered by them. If the PCs have allied with some of Saventh-Yhi’s tribes, they may feel responsible for destroying some or all of the city, and might want to help their allies find new homes if this destruction was great enough to render the allies’ previous homes unusable or unsafe. Of greater import, perhaps, is the fact that now that Saventh-Yhi has been found, word of the discovery of an unlooted ruin in the Mwangi Expanse will spread quickly. New groups of adventurers will flock to the site—many to their doom, but certainly a few to great success. How the PCs wish to react to what they may see as “claim jumping” is up to them. If the PCs decide that Saventh-Yhi should remain a secret, they’ll need to track down numerous faction members and other important movers and shakers to secure their cooperation—or seek other, more violent methods of ensuring their silence. Of course, the most likely resolution is the PCs will gain significantly increased fame as the discoverers of the legendary city. Canny parties can play upon their newfound reputations to secure all manner of new jobs, prestige, and rewards as you see fit. Certainly they’ll have attracted the attention of their allied faction, which may have new and even more dangerous jobs for them in the future.

Savith’s Crypt: Standing tall in the eastern reach of Saventh-Yhi is Savith’s Crypt, a series of magnificent towers that marks the site of an extensive underground dungeon complex. As described in “City of Seven Spears,” Savith’s Crypt is left to each individual GM to detail—a blank slate of dungeons to serve as needed. These dungeons could easily represent a great challenge for high-level characters to explore—after all, Savith was a powerful Azlanti general who slew a god, and was practically a demigod herself. The guardians of her crypt must be fearsome indeed. And for groups who don’t relish the prospect of exploring and looting what is essentially a hero’s tomb, you can introduce rumors that remnants of Vyr-Azul’s serpentfolk army have tunneled up and into the crypt’s lower levels in search of the ancient artifacts and treasures hidden within, presenting the PCs with a race against time to navigate a deadly dungeon and prevent these ancient weapons from falling into the wrong hands.

FINISHING SAVITH'S JOB

The skull of Ydersius is a potent artifact, but not one that the PCs directly interact with during the course of the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path—by the time the PCs encounter it, the skull has already been reunited with Ydersius's body. Yet at this Adventure Path's conclusion, the deity has been beheaded once again; its body has been cast back into the deepest Darklands, mindless and blind, while the fate of the skull itself has now found its way into the party's hands.

Merely being in the skull's vicinity can be dangerous for those who are not worshipers of Ydersius, but allowing the skull to fall into the cult's hands once again would be much worse. Although Vyr-Azul's plot to restore his deity

has failed, the skull itself continues to exist—and as long as it does, the threat remains.

Yet what can be done? How can mere mortals destroy a god?

Such a question can lead into a significant extension to the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path—one that need not remain confined within the area of Saventh-Yhi or Ilmurea. Fortunately for the PCs, the process of destroying Ydersius is already well on its way—Savith's remarkable defeat of the god over 10,000 years ago and his quiescence in those intervening years has resulted in much of Ydersius's power atrophying. While he remains a god, his second defeat at the PCs' hands puts them in the unique position of potentially being able to finish the job that Savith started.

Of course, before the PCs can destroy the skull, they must first learn *how* they can achieve such a task. Delving into Savith's tomb to consult with the long-dead hero's spirit, which may still linger on the lowest levels of that dungeon, could be one way to learn how to destroy the skull. Alternatively, the PCs might need to mount an expedition to a remote ruin on Azlant where Savith once dwelt to track down ancient, forgotten lore. The exact method by which the skull could be destroyed should be equally epic in nature, with a few examples of some appropriately extraordinary destruction methods noted below.

Naturally, the cult of Ydersius won't rest quietly while the PCs seek the destruction of their god. Many powerful agents of the Beheaded King remain active—in fact, you can combine this campaign with the Serpentwar campaign outlined below, save that the serpentfolk in this scenario are attempting to reclaim not their empire but their god. The PCs must stay on the run at all times lest the serpentfolk armies catch up to them and reclaim their god!



SAVITH

SKULL OF YDERSIUS

Aura overwhelming all; **CL** 30th

Slot none; **Weight** 150 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

The skull of Ydersius is far more than just a powerful artifact—it is the actual skull of a god. The skull itself is all but indestructible, and while it can observe the world around it, its capacity to interact with that world is limited. Ydersius's clerics still receive spells from their prayers, granted by this very skull regardless of its location or who might claim the skull as their own—there is no way a mortal can block this effect.

Relatively bulky, the skull itself measures nearly 5 feet long. The skull's greatest power is that it contains a god, and if reunited with the god's missing body, it can restore Ydersius to full potency as a deity.

Beyond this staggering power, though, possession

of the skull of Ydersius grants several powerful abilities, as outlined below.

- The skull treats the 80-foot-radius area around it as though an *unhallow* spell had been cast with the skull as the touched point of origin. This effect carries with it two linked spells that affect only worshipers of Ydersius (*death ward* and *freedom of movement*), and two linked spells that affect all non-worshipers of Ydersius (*dimensional anchor* and *bane*).
- Once per day, a creature that touches the skull may cast *commune* to speak with Ydersius. A non-worshiper of Ydersius who uses this power must make a DC 25 Will save each time the power is used to avoid succumbing to a *feeblemind* spell.
- All reptilian creatures (including all worshipers of Ydersius, sorcerers with the serpentine or draconic bloodline, and druids currently wildshaped into reptilian forms) within 160 feet of the skull of Ydersius gain spell resistance 25 and fast healing 10.

Any good-aligned creature that carries the *skull of Ydersius*, even via an extradimensional space such as a *portable hole*, gains three negative levels. These negative levels remain as long as the skull is carried and disappear when the skull is released. These negative levels never result in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while the skull is carried. A creature that suffers from these negative levels has a 50% spell failure chance on all divine spellcasting attempts.

DESTRUCTION

Destroying the *skull of Ydersius* is a near-impossible task tantamount to killing a god, though methods exist by which such a feat might be achieved. For example, should the *skull* be reunited with Ydersius's body, the god returns to life, though in a weakened state. This manifestation, though powerful, can be combated and even slain, though it regenerates from nearly any wound short of re-decapitation. For an instant, before the whole body begins to regenerate, Ydersius's spirit is untethered from his form. If Ydersius is dragged bodily before the throne of the goddess Pharasma in the Boneyard and slain in her presence, the death deity can judge the serpent god's momentarily freed essence in that instance, causing his body and skull to disintegrate into dust. Some suspect that a manifestation of Ydersius in the Great Beyond would prove far more powerful than one forced to manifest on the Material Plane.

RISE OF THE GORILLA GOD

Although the presence of Gorilla King Ruthazek is a subplot in the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path, that encounter does not need to be the extent of the PCs' involvement with the latest Gorilla King to rule in the Mwangi Expanse.

In the Rise of the Gorilla God campaign, Ruthazek returns as a significant menace when he achieves an unholy transformation from mere mortal to immortal,

becoming a powerful unique outsider known as a nascent demon lord—a demon only a few steps away from becoming one of the new rulers of the Abyss. Exactly how Ruthazek makes this transformation is left to you—he could have absorbed latent power stored in the totem of Angazhan located at Usaro, or perhaps he was slain by the PCs earlier in the adventure and transformed into a powerful demon upon reaching the Abyss. Ruthazek's sudden rise in power creates a schism in Angazhan's cult, with many of the Gorilla King's charau-ka abandoning the old ways to worship a god that walks among them in the flesh.

This could create an unusual element for the PCs to capitalize upon, for the enmity between Angazhan and this new threat to his power (for it should become obvious that Ruthazek hopes to gain enough power to confront and slay Angazhan and thus become the new demon lord of the jungle) may result in an unusual opportunity for the PCs to ally with the cult of the Ravenous King. Joining forces with Angazhan's loyal followers to defeat a risen Ruthazek may seem like a bad idea, but when one is facing a living god eager to claim as many resources in this world as he can in order to bring a war to the Abyss, tough choices must be made.

If the PCs killed Ruthazek earlier in the campaign, his transformation could be a particularly exciting way to bring back this enemy to confront the PCs again. In this case, you should run one or two other adventures before springing this surprise on your party. A nascent demon lord is a powerful foe, and shouldn't be thrown at the PCs until they're 19th or perhaps 20th level.

As a nascent demon lord, Ruthazek can grant spells to his followers. Many of his minions are converted priests who have abandoned the worship of Angazhan. Ruthazek's areas of concern are somewhat different than those of Angazhan—the nascent demon lord is associated with jungle madness and bestial transformations, and as such grants slightly different domains. Ruthazek grants access to the domains of Animal, Chaos, Evil, and Madness. His favored weapon is the falchion, and his unholy symbol is a snarling set of bloody gorilla teeth. If you use *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Book of the Damned Vol. 2, Lords of Chaos* in your campaign, Ruthazek's obedience requires his followers to consume strange jungle plants that cause violent hallucinations—the follower must then chase down, kill, and eat a primate raw, preferably a charau-ka worshiper of Angazhan. Doing so grants a +4 profane bonus against diseases and madness. Ruthazek's boons are as follows: 1 *alter self*; 2 *polymorph*; 3 *insanity*.

TOTEM OF ANGAZHAN (MINOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong necromancy and transmutation; **CL** 20th
Slot none; **Weight** 150 lbs.



DESCRIPTION

A *totem of Angazhan* is a dangerous and sinister artifact created by the demon lord Angazhan—originally, only one such totem existed, but as the reach of the Gorilla King expanded, additional totems began to appear in various hidden parts of the Mwangi Expanse, especially to the south of the Screaming Jungle in the deep, unexplored center of Garund.

Each *totem of Angazhan* possesses a crude intelligence and can observe the world around it via *true seeing*. It can also hear and possesses tremorsense. All three of these senses extend to a range of 30 feet; the totem cannot detect anything beyond this range. A *totem of Angazhan* constantly radiates an aura of fear that fills the minds of any creatures within 30 feet with cruel memories of past lives in which they were consumed alive by apes—whether or not these past deaths are accurate is irrelevant to the sensation of horror they invoke in victims. All non-worshippers of Angazhan within this area must make a DC 15 Will save each round to avoid becoming panicked for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Once per round, a *totem of Angazhan* can cast *weird*. This is its primary means of defense, and it can target all creatures within 30 feet that it can sense. The effect manifests at caster level 20th, and has a save DC of 23.

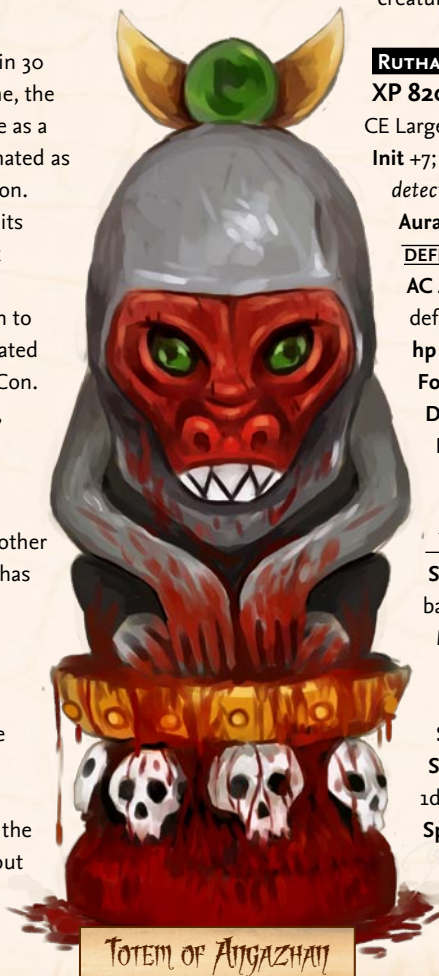
Once per day, a *totem of Angazhan* can *reincarnate* a single creature that dies within 30 feet of it. Unlike the spell of the same name, the reincarnated creature always returns to life as a Chaotic Evil charau-ka. A creature reincarnated as a charau-ka gains +4 Str, +2 Dex, and +4 Con. Once per year, the totem may instead use its *reincarnate* ability to bring a creature back to life as a Chaotic Evil dire ape—it is this ability that creates the creatures that go on to become Gorilla Kings. A creature reincarnated as a dire ape gains +8 Str, +4 Dex, and +6 Con. When a new dire ape champion is created, it becomes infused with a desire to seek out the current Gorilla King and challenge him to a fight to the death—the survivor continues ruling as the Gorilla King for another year. In this fashion, the Mwangi Expanse has never gone for more than several months without a Gorilla King for the past several hundred years. As with all *reincarnate* effects, the creature being restored to life must be willing for the effect to work—the creature to be reincarnated knows that accepting the offer to come back to life enslaves its soul to Angazhan (resulting in the shift to Chaotic Evil and the drive to seek out and replace the current Gorilla King).

If a *totem of Angazhan* is placed upon or adjacent to an altar of Angazhan that

is under the effect of an *unhallow* spell cast by a worshiper of Angazhan, the *totem of Angazhan*'s sensory range extends to 300 feet, and it can use its abilities in this extended range as long as it has line of sight to its target.

DESTRUCTION

A *totem of Angazhan* can be destroyed only by a Gorilla King (either acting on his own volition or while under the effects of magical control), who can damage the totem as if it were a normal item with hardness 8 and 100 hp (or with a DC 30 Strength check to break the totem in half). Of course, once a Gorilla King makes his first attack upon one of these totems, the blasphemy against Angazhan causes that Gorilla King to no longer count as a worshiper of Angazhan, and he can now be affected by the totem's fear aura. Worse, the affront allows the *totem of Angazhan* to attempt once per round to revoke that Gorilla King's reincarnated body. Each round the blasphemous Gorilla King remains within reach of the totem's senses, the Gorilla King must make a DC 25 Fortitude save to avoid being transformed back into whatever race the creature was before he was reincarnated. Once this occurs, the target is no longer a Gorilla King and can no longer damage the totem, but the totem continues to use *weird* to attempt to slay the creature as long as it is able.



TOTEM OF ANGAZHAN

RUTHAZEK, NASCENT DEMON LORD CR 23

XP 820,000

CE Large outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect good*, *detect law*, *true seeing*; Perception +35

Aura rage (60 ft., DC 28), *unholy aura* (DC 23)

DEFENSE

AC 41, touch 16, flat-footed 38 (+11 armor, +4 deflection, +3 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size)

hp 481 (26d10+338)

Fort +32, **Ref** +17, **Will** +25

Defensive Abilities *freedom of movement*;

Immune charm and compulsion effects, death effects, electricity, poison; **Resist** acid 30, cold 30, fire 30; **SR** 34

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); base speed 60 ft. without armor

Melee +3 *unholy falchion* +40/+35/+30/+25 (2d6+21/15-20), bite +32 (1d8+6), 2 claws +32 (1d6+6)

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

Special Attacks abyssal roar, rend (2 claws, 1d6+12)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +25)

Constant—*detect good*, *detect law*, *freedom of movement*, *true seeing*, *unholy aura* (DC 23)

At will—*desecrate, dominate animal* (DC 18),
greater dispel magic, greater teleport, telekinesis (DC 20),
unholy blight (DC 19)
 3/day—*baleful polymorph* (DC 20), *bestow curse* (DC 19),
insanity (DC 22), *reincarnate* (into charau-ka only)
 1/day—*awaken, animal shapes, summon demons, symbol of
 insanity* (DC 23)

TACTICS

During Combat Ruthazek never enters combat without a small army of demons at his side; he prefers to fight alongside nalfeshnees, rocks, and glabrezus, in a combination that equals a CR 20 threat—usually, these are demons he's conjured with his ability to summon demons. If he can, he summons demonic aid several rounds before he fears a fight is imminent. Otherwise, it is his first action in combat. Once he has allies, Ruthazek opens with a roar, then moves so that his aura of rage can affect as many targets as possible. Ruthazek tends to rely upon his spell-like abilities in combat until enemies move up to him, at which point he makes full attacks with his weapons. His hatred of good-aligned divine spellcasters is exceeded only by his loathing of worshipers of Angazhan—faced with a choice, he attacks these foes to the exclusion of others unless faced with an obviously overwhelming danger.

Morale Ruthazek flees combat if reduced to fewer than 100 hit points by teleporting to safety—he only fights to the death if confronted in Usaro, his deep Mwangi lair.

STATISTICS

Str 34, **Dex** 17, **Con** 36, **Int** 18, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +26; **CMB** +39; **CMD** 56

Feats Bleeding Critical, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Flyby Attack, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (falchion), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Improved Vital Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Vital Strike

Skills Climb +17, Fly +31, Handle Animal +34, Intimidate +34, Knowledge (nature) +33, Knowledge (planes) +33, Perception +35, Sense Motive +35, Stealth +25, Swim +35, Use Magic Device +34

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic; telepathy 300 ft.

SQ nascent demon lord traits

Gear *heavy fortification +5 breastplate, +3 unholy falchion*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Abyssal Roar (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds as a standard action, Ruthazek can unleash a thunderous roar. This blast of unholy sound fills a 90-foot radius burst centered on Ruthazek. Demons within this area (including Ruthazek) are healed of 6d6 points of damage. All other creatures in the area take 20d6 points of sonic damage and are staggered and deafened for 1 round. A DC 36 Reflex save halves the sonic damage and negates the staggered and deafened effects. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Aura of Rage (Su) Ruthazek exudes an aura of jungle madness that has different effects on allies or enemies within 60 feet of the nascent demon lord. Any creature within this area must make a DC 28 Will save each round to avoid being overwhelmed with rage for 1 round. While under the effects of this aura of rage, a creature can take no action other than to physically attack the closest creature—spellcasting, the use of supernatural abilities, and any other act other than assault with a melee or ranged weapon is not possible; the creature also gains a +4 unholy bonus on all damage done with weapons and is immune to further mind-affecting effects other than the aura of rage. If Ruthazek is aware of an ally in this area, he can reflexively alter the effects of his aura of rage for that creature so that the aura instead grants a +4 unholy bonus to Strength and Constitution. This is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Nascent Demon Lord Traits A nascent demon lord is a powerful demon that has not yet made the full transition from unique demon to full demon lord of an Abyssal realm. Their traits are summarized here.

- Immunity to death effects, electricity, charm and compulsion effects, and poison.
- Resistance to acid 30, cold 30, and fire 30.
- *Summon (Sp)* Nascent demon lords can summon any demon or combination of demons whose total combined CR is 20 or lower once per day. This ability always works, and is equivalent to a 9th-level spell.
- Telepathy 300 ft.
- A nascent demon lord's natural weapons, as well as any weapons it wields, are treated as chaotic, epic, and evil for the purpose of resolving damage reduction.
- Nascent demon lords can grant spells to their worshipers. Granting spells does not require any specific action on the nascent demon lord's behalf. All nascent demon lords grant access to the domains of Chaos and Evil—in addition, they grant access to two other domains and a favored weapon that vary according to the nascent demon lords' themes and interests.

THE SERPENTWAR

The defeat of Vyr-Azul may prevent the return of Ydersius and the rise of the serpentfolk empire, but this doesn't change the fact that throughout the Darklands there exist large numbers of slumbering serpentfolk. Indeed, the close call the PCs prevented may have a significant ripple effect, for as they defeat Ydersius, his rage and frustration could well echo like an alarm throughout the slumbering minds of the world's remaining serpentfolk. This would have two effects—it would expend a vast amount of Ydersius's divine energy, forcing him into an even deeper slumber and cutting him off from his faithful for a time, but would also result in the awakening of vast numbers of

serpentfolk spread throughout the Darklands. In effect, Ydersius would exchange his own awareness for the awakened awareness of his followers.

The loss of their clerics' power would be a powerful blow to this newly wakened race of serpentfolk, but it would also be a rallying point that could well unite them in a new war against the surface. Their society would shift from worship of Ydersius to being a secular society, with powerful arcanists or soldiers seizing control from the crippled clerics. As time wears on, the serpentfolk increasingly turn to the worship of Szuriel, the Horseman of War, adopting him as their new patron.

In Ilmurea, the slumbering serpentfolk below the Fortress of Thousand Fangs waken, giving the PCs yet another danger to handle as they emerge from the Sanctum of Ydersius. Yet this new danger is only the beginning, for all over the world, armies of serpentfolk are rising from below in a furious tide to wage war against the surface because of their mistaken belief in their god's death. These serpentfolk armies strike throughout the Inner Sea region, and the PCs should hear word of these assaults before long via magical communication from their allied factions or friends and family back home.

The serpentfolk forces consist of not only standard and degenerate serpentfolk (most of whom have several class levels), but also of large numbers of enslaved and recruited monsters from the Darklands, such as morlocks, gugs, driders, and worse. Most major cities in the Inner Sea are attacked by the serpentfolk at various points—this campaign should include a fair amount of world travel as the PCs race to save areas like Westcrown, Magnimar, Elidir, and even Absalom from the invasion. It is Varisia that is hit the hardest, for the Mobhad Leigh provides the most direct access to the serpentfolk capital city of Sverenagati. Eventually, the PCs must lead an invasion of this eldritch ruin if they wish to defeat the current leader of the risen serpentfolk empire—a powerful general named Sargogen, who vividly remembers his army's previous defeat at Azlant's hands and seethes for a chance at revenge.



SARGOGEN

SARGOGEN, LORD OF COILS CR 25

XP 1,640,400

Male advanced serpentfolk fighter 20

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; **Perception** +33

DEFENSE

AC 42, touch 21, flat-footed 36 (+14 armor, +5 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 natural)

hp 507 (25 HD; 5d10+20d10+370)

Fort +31, **Ref** +25, **Will** +20

Defensive Abilities bravery +5, **Immune** mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison; **DR** 5/—; **SR** 15

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee +4 *humanbane vorpal halberd* +43/+38/+33/+28 (1d10+24/19–20/x4), bite +31 (1d6+15 plus poison)

Ranged +5 *unholy speed composite longbow* +43/+43/+38/+33/+28 (1d8+17/19–20/x3)

Special Attacks weapon mastery (halberd), weapon training (pole arms +4, natural +3, bows +2, heavy blades +1)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 25th; concentration +31)

At will—*disguise self* (DC 17), *ventriloquism*
 1/day—*blur*, *dominate person* (DC 20), *major image* (DC 19), *mass suggestion* (DC 22), *mirror image*, *suggestion* (DC 19), *quicken teleport*

TACTICS

Before Combat Although these effects are not calculated into this stat block, Sargogen rarely enters combat without having one of his allied spellcasters cast numerous preparatory spells on him.

During Combat Sargogen prefers to close to melee with foes as soon as possible, relying upon his spell-like abilities to force foes to approach if necessary. He always uses Power Attack unless he misses all of his attacks in any given round against a foe, in which case he abandons that tactic and focuses all of his attacks on that target. If reduced to fewer than 200 hit points by a single foe in melee combat, Sargogen attempts to minimize his foe's ability to make full attacks by making single attacks (using Greater Vital Strike) and then moving away from the foe so that enemies have difficulty remaining adjacent to him.

Morale Sargogen generally saves his quickened *teleport* as an escape route—using it whenever he is reduced to fewer than 80 hit points to retreat to a safe area (his fortress in Sverenagati if he is within range) so he can recuperate and plan his revenge. Only when he feels that he is within reach of a significant goal does he fight to the death, entrusting that if he is killed, one of his subservient spellcasters will restore him to life via a *resurrection* or similar spell.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 31, **Con** 36, **Int** 20, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +25; **CMB** +33; **CMD** 59

Feats Bleeding Critical, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Critical Mastery, Diehard, Dodge, Endurance, Greater Vital Strike, Greater Weapon Focus (halberd), Greater Weapon Specialization (halberd), Improved Critical (halberd), Improved Vital Strike, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Quickened Spell-Like Ability (*teleport*), Stunning Critical, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (halberd), Weapon Focus (composite longbow), Weapon Specialization (halberd), Weapon Specialization (composite longbow)

Skills Acrobatics +34, Fly +13, Intimidate +34, Knowledge (engineering) +33, Knowledge (religion) +15, Perception +33, Sense Motive +30, Stealth +37, Use Magic Device +31

Languages Aklo, Common, Draconic, Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ armor mastery, armor training 4

Gear +5 full plate, +4 humanbane vorpal halberd, +5 unholy speed composite longbow with 10 greater arrows of human slaying and 40 adamantine arrows, amulet of natural armor +4, belt of physical perfection +6, manual of bodily health (+4, used), efficient quiver, ring of protection +5, wings of flying

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—Injury; save Fort DC 25; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Str; cure 2 saves.

EXAMPLE SERPENTWAR ARMIES

Pathfinder Adventure Path #35 presents quick-play rules for mass combat—if you wish to incorporate a few battles against serpentfolk armies, you can use the following stats in these conflicts. The armies the PCs use must be built and recruited by them, but both *Pathfinder Adventure Paths* #35 and #36 have numerous example armies for such use.

MORLOCK HORDE **CR 12**

XP 19,200

CE Gargantuan army of morlock barbarians 4

COMBAT

hp 66; **DV** 23; **OM** +13

Tactics Dirty Fighters, False Retreat; **Resources** none

Special Abilities morlock swarming, significant defense (+10 DV vs. armies that rely on poison)

LOGISTICS

Speed 3; **Morale** +4; **Consumption** 6

Leader serpentfolk cleric 12 (Cha 18)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Morlock Swarming The morlocks' use of sneak attack and swarming tactics grant a +1 bonus to DV and on OM checks.

SERPENTFOLK ARMY **CR 13**

XP 25,600

NE Huge army of serpentfolk fighter 5

COMBAT

hp 71; **DV** 29; **OM** +19, ranged

Tactics Expert Flankers, Relentless Brutality, Sniper Support;

Resources Improved Armor (magic), Improved Weapons (magic), Ranged Weapons

Special Abilities poison, significant defense (+10 DV vs. armies that rely on mind-affecting attacks or poison), spell resistance, spellcasting

LOGISTICS

Speed 2; **Morale** +4; **Consumption** 73

Leader serpentfolk fighter 13 (Cha 18)

SERPENTFOLK MOB **CR 12**

XP 19,200

NE Colossal army of degenerate serpentfolk

COMBAT

hp 66; **DV** 23; **OM** +13

Tactics Dirty Fighters, Relentless Brutality; **Resources**

Improved Armor (mwk), Improved Weapons (mwk)

Special Abilities poison, significant defense (+10 DV vs. armies that rely on mind-affecting attacks or poison), spell resistance

LOGISTICS

Speed 2; **Morale** +4; **Consumption** 14

Leader serpentfolk cleric 12 (Cha 18)



Ydersius

YDERSIUS (YEH-DER-SEE-UHS) WAS ONCE THE DIVINE LEADER OF THE GREAT SERPENTFOLK EMPIRE THAT EXISTED ON GOLARION BEFORE THE AGE OF DARKNESS. HIS ORIGINS ARE LOST TO TIME, BUT WHEN MIGHTY AZLANT FIRST ENCOUNTERED THE INSIDIOUS SERPENTFOLK OF SEKAMINA IN THE AGE OF LEGEND, YDERSIUS WAS ALREADY WELL ESTABLISHED AS THEIR PATRON GOD. THROUGH ALL THE MILLENNIA SINCE EARTHFALL, THE SERPENTFOLK HAVE NEVER ABANDONED THEIR PATRON, AND HIS WORSHIP REMAINS STRONG AMONG THE SERPENTS THAT STILL BROOD AND SKULK IN THE DARKNESS BELOW. YDERSIUS REPRESENTS THE POWER OF THE ANCIENT SERPENTFOLK, AND THE DECLINE OF THEIR EMPIRE ECHOED THEIR GOD'S DOWNFALL. LIKEWISE, HIS SUNDERED BODY AND DECAPITATED HEAD MIRROR THE DESTINY OF THE SNAKE PEOPLE—FOR SHOULD YDERSIUS'S HEAD AND BODY EVER BE REJOINED, SO TOO WILL THE SERPENTFOLK EMPIRE RISE AGAIN TO RULE OVER GOLARION.

Long ago, Ydersius took an active role in the affairs of his people. He was the embodiment of the might and power of the serpentfolk empire, a living god who walked among his worshipers and led them to great victories. He commanded serpentfolk armies, raised great cities, and bred with mortal serpentfolk females to produce semidivine offspring that led and ruled the far-flung outposts of the serpentfolk empire in his stead.

But in the waning days of the Age of Legend, Ydersius was brought low by a mortal champion—the Azlanti heroine Savith led an army into the trackless jungles of Garund, and while her followers battled the serpentfolk armies in the subterranean city of Ilmurea, she faced Ydersius himself in his hallowed sanctum and defeated him. But though she was a paragon of Azlanti warrior spirit whose likes have never been seen since, Savith was still mortal, and no mortal may truly slay a god. Savith cleaved Ydersius's head from his body, but she was unable to kill him. To prevent Ydersius's legendary powers of regeneration from restoring him to full power, Savith banished the god's headless, thrashing body into the depths of the Darklands, and cast his decapitated, still-living head into a lake of fire. But even thus sundered, Ydersius had his final revenge on his vanquisher, for Savith soon succumbed to her wounds, poisoned by the snake-god's virulent threefold venom.

Although he still lived, after a fashion, Ydersius's defeat spelled the end for the serpentfolk empire. Azlant eventually triumphed over its hated foes, forcing the serpentfolk to abandon their cities on the surface and driving them into their deepest holds in the Darklands. Ydersius's semidivine children were driven mad by their father's defeat or slaughtered by the armies of Azlant. The once-mighty masters of Golarion had become little more than tales to scare wayward children by the time Earthfall ended Azlant as well. Yet the serpentfolk survived, and vowed to someday restore the Headless King.

Since that time, Ydersius's headless body has mindlessly wandered the endless caverns and tunnels of the Darklands, while his severed head has lain trapped in an uneasy slumber beneath the solidified lake of lava where it was entombed. Now reduced to just a skull, Ydersius continues to send out visions and thoughts to his mortal worshipers, whispering sibilantly in their dreams to rejoin his separated head and body, and in so doing to restore the shattered serpentfolk empire to its former world-spanning glory.

Ydersius's main concern is the restoration of both his own power and that of the long-fallen empire of his people, the serpentfolk. He cares little for anything not directly related to these goals, though his hatred for Azlant (and its current human descendants) knows no bounds. Yet after existing for so long as two lesser parts of a greater whole, his role is much more passive now than it was in the past.

Ydersius is scarcely conscious, and is only barely aware of his followers. For the most part, his worshipers and priests must rely on themselves, and can expect little aid from their god in his present state. Ydersius's head still grants spells to his priests, however, and spells such as *commune* and *divination* can still communicate with the Headless King, though his answers are a cryptic jumble of confusing thoughts and often conflicting information.

Ydersius is chaotic evil and his portfolio is immortality, poison, and the serpentfolk. His weapon is a dagger, sometimes portrayed as a poisonous, fanged viper rather than an actual weapon. His holy symbol is a serpent's skull, circled by a skeletal snake devouring its own tail.

His domains are Chaos, Evil, Nobility, Scalykind, and War. His clergy is primarily composed of clerics and, increasingly in modern times, oracles who receive dream-visions from their god's slumbering skull. Some druids, almost universally cave druids or serpent shamans, also embrace his faith, with a few rangers filling out the ranks. In addition, a handful of antipaladins and inquisitors fight against heresy and war with the agents of other deities opposed to the snake-god. His faithful call Ydersius the Lord of Coiling Poison, the Father of Serpents, and the Primal Coil, but since his defeat at the hands of Savith, he has also become known as the Headless King and the Sundered God. Those oracles who hear his whispers in their dreams sometimes refer to him as the Slumbering Speaker Below.

Ydersius's avatar is a giant, scaled, powerfully muscled humanoid with a snake's head and an impossibly long tail thrashing behind him. His scales are as hard as adamantite and his fangs are like iron, dripping poisonous venom that burns like acid wherever it lands. His regenerative powers can repair almost any damage to his body, and he is known for the threefold venom of his fangs, his toxic blood, and the miasma of noxious poison that he constantly exudes. In statues, Ydersius often stands upon a pedestal formed from the coils of his mighty tail. He is frequently shown wearing a crown or an elaborate headdress of bone and feathers, though his clothing is simple—usually little more than



“The truepeople were born to rule, and to lord their dominion over the lesser races of the world. We ruled the land when the world was young, and when the Headless King is restored, we will reign again.”

—*The Sekamina Destinies*

a loincloth. Occasionally, Ydersius is portrayed as a giant monstrous snake with crushing coils and venomous fangs.

Ydersius's worshipers include scattered pockets of lizardfolk, troglodytes, and heretical bogbards, who revere him as a god that will restore the long-lost glories of their peoples. Some nagas venerate Ydersius as a god of snakes and serpents, as do sorcerers with the serpentine bloodline. Human snake-cults revere him as a god of immortality, and fringe sects of assassins worship him as a god of poison and patron of murderers.

By far the majority of Ydersius's followers, however, come from his chosen race, the serpentfolk. In the Age of Serpents, when Ydersius was whole and the serpentfolk empire was at its height, most of his worshipers were advanced, aristocratic serpentfolk, who revered him as the paragon of their noble race and the personification of their "immortal" empire. Following his decapitation, the serpentfolk race devolved into degenerate brutes far removed from their civilized forebears. These *aapoph*-caste serpentfolk worship Ydersius as a god of war and poison, and the progenitor of the serpentfolk race. The few advanced serpentfolk alive today venerate him as the exemplar of their own exalted status over the much more numerous degenerates, and as a god of immortality and rebirth who will bring about a revival of the serpentfolk empire of old.

In his current state, Ydersius shows little favor or displeasure to his followers, but signs of his passive approval are the sounds of hissing snakes or the susurrus of scales over rock, the appearance of swarms of poisonous vipers, dreams of powerful serpents, or venom with increased toxicity for those of his faithful with poisonous bites. Signs of Ydersius's disfavor include being watched by silent serpents, the feeling of a multitude of tiny snakebites, or sickness and nausea akin to being poisoned. Those serpentfolk who have incurred his wrath may suffer a hardening of their scales or a lack of flexibility, a dulling of the senses and the intellect, a searing pain around their necks, a weakening of their innate poison, or even a drying up of their venom glands.

With Ydersius's defeat and the fall of the serpentfolk empire, there is little official dogma regarding priestly vestments or worship ceremonies, and different temples and sects have varying customs and requirements. Most priests of Ydersius wear elaborate robes in archaic styles that have not been seen on the surface of Golarion for ages, when the serpentfolk openly walked the world. These robes are usually brightly colored (reds, blues, and greens are popular) and often trimmed with gold, and sometimes display a scaled or snakeskin pattern. Priests of Ydersius also dye or color their scales in vivid patterns. For formal ceremonies, priests often don ornate headdresses with skull or serpentine motifs, and always carry ceremonial sacrificial daggers, frequently crafted of gold.

Worship services usually involve the living sacrifice of some intelligent humanoid victim, preferably human, though most subterranean communities use morlocks—the degenerate descendants of the Azlanti—as sacrificial victims. The blood of these sacrifices is often consecrated with powdered silver to function as unholy water. Those temples or sects without access to living, sentient victims sometimes substitute freshly killed prey animals or, failing that, physical riches and art objects with serpentine motifs.

Among serpentfolk, worship services are eerily silent affairs, as the majority of ceremonies are held telepathically. This unsettling silence is broken only by hypnotic, hissing chants and the screams of sacrificial victims atop the altar. The ceremonies of other races are louder affairs, with prayers in Aklo accompanied with hissing chants. Maracas and rattles are frequent musical accompaniments. Poisonous snakes are often present at such services, both as living symbols of the god, and as centerpieces of ceremonies to extract their venom for the use of the church. For those races not immune to poison, the presence of such venomous creatures is used as an indication of Ydersius's favor—those who make it through a service without being bitten, or those who survive a poisonous bite, are said to be blessed. Those who succumb to the snakes' venom, on the other hand, were clearly not worthy.

Ydersius has no views on marriage, which is an unknown custom among serpentfolk, who pair only briefly to breed and then go their separate ways. Love is likewise an alien concept to Ydersius and serpentfolk, who at most display only detached admiration, pride, or envy toward their fellows. In ages past, serpentfolk priests would sometimes mate with giant serpents believed to be the offspring of Ydersius himself in sacred mystery rites, but that practice has now vanished along with the decadent serpentfolk empire.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

In the heyday of the great serpentfolk empire, Ydersius's temples were huge, imposing edifices, and often served as the centerpieces of serpentfolk cities and communities. In a few locations, such as in the Garundi outpost of Ilmurea, temples were built as fortresses as well. Magically treated serpentstone (see page 63 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #41) was heavily used in such constructions, programmed to emit a wide variety of lights, colors, sounds, and smells. Most of these grand structures were destroyed in the fall of the serpentfolk empire or by the tremors that later shook Golarion during Earthfall, but a few still remain, standing in abandoned caverns as mute monuments to the majesty of the serpentfolk of old, now inhabited only by the dust of ages.

These days, temples or shrines to Ydersius are usually located underground in remote caverns far from well-traveled

tunnels. Some temples are even built to resemble giant snakes, and have their sanctuary in the serpent's head, which features glowing eyes and carved stone fangs. All temples, both old and new, are heavily decorated with serpentine themes—columns carved to resemble giant snakes, wall carvings or inlaid floor tiles crafted in scaled patterns, and numerous coil or spiral motifs. Representations of Ydersius himself are not uncommon, though by no means widespread. These may take the form of statues of the god, busts of giant snake heads or skulls, or even collections of actual skulls from serpents of all sizes. Altars in Ydersian temples are often carved to resemble the coils of giant snakes, and frequently incorporate shackles or other bonds to hold sacrificial victims in place and receptacles to collect their blood. Temples usually include an open area in front of the altar for worshippers. This space is empty of chairs, benches, or other seating, leaving room to spread out prayer rugs made from the flayed skins of sacrificial victims—again, humans and morlocks are the preferred source for such materials.

Shrines to Ydersius are rare and, in contrast to full temples, usually very simple and spartan. Located in out-of-the-way subterranean tunnels, secluded niches in cavern walls, or even overgrown jungle clearings aboveground, these shrines often contain little more than a flat, bloodstained rock beneath a simple carving of a spiral or serpent's skull, where the faithful may dedicate a sacrifice to Ydersius to seek the god's favor or blessing when away from their home temple.

A PRIEST'S ROLE

Priests of the church of Ydersius have one primary goal—to find their god's decapitated skull and headless body and reunite them, thus restoring Ydersius to his former glory. Such a lofty goal is not easily achieved, however, and many priests lack the resources or the wherewithal for such an epic task. Failing that, priests of Ydersius work to promote the interests and influence of the serpentfolk (or other reptilian races) over the non-reptilian races that now rule Golarion. Priests usually have ranks in Disguise, Escape Artist, and Use Magic Device, and many priests take ranks in Knowledge (arcana) and Knowledge (history) as well.

Though any character with divine powers may join the church, only clerics and oracles may ascend to the highest orders of the priesthood. Druids, rangers, anti-paladins, and inquisitors may be considered members of the clergy, but they serve secondary roles under the guidance of Ydersius's true priests. In the rare cases where serpentfolk clergy mingle with priests of other reptilian races, the serpentfolk enjoy greater status and prestige than their fellows.

Adventuring priests are rare in the church of Ydersius, as the faithful are few and far apart, and most priests feel the necessity of personally leading their followers to keep the faith strong and growing. Occasionally, however, a particularly ambitious cleric might ally with others not of the faith to explore some ancient ruins or venture into the uncharted reaches of the Darklands if the priest believes it will enable her to uncover forgotten lore or lost treasures of the ancient serpentfolk empire, or will bring her closer to achieving her goal of restoring Ydersius to his former glory. Such priests almost always travel in magical disguise, changing their appearance to resemble that of their companions and keeping their true natures hidden.



Over the millennia since Ydersius's defeat, the hierarchy and dogma of the church of Ydersius have splintered, leaving little clear direction or leadership. There is no central leadership, and high priests of different cities often come into conflict with their counterparts, as each struggles to impose his dominance over the other. Likewise, there is no consensus on religious titles between sects—one church may have a rigid and clearly defined hierarchy with different levels and varying responsibilities, while another may simply have a single high priest and several acolytes or disciples with ill-defined roles.

HOLIDAYS

Since the fall of the ancient serpentfolk empire, much of the lore surrounding Ydersius's faith has been lost.

Fragmented texts such as the *Alaberos Analects* mention hundreds of religious festivals and holy days in honor of Ydersius at the pinnacle of the empire's power, but these have now been forgotten. Only one religious holiday is now widely practiced by the far-flung remnants of Ydersius's faith.



Day of Sundering: The actual date of Ydersius's defeat at the hands of Savith is now lost to history, but modern worshipers traditionally commemorate the event on 29 Rova. On this day, priests retell the tale of how glorious Ydersius was brought low by the savage and barbaric Savith. Sacrificial victims are dressed to resemble Savith, then poisoned and beheaded, their blood drained and doled out to the congregation, who drink it in honor of the snake-god. In some churches, the blood is spiked with hallucinogenic chemicals, in order to make the faithful more receptive to the visions of Ydersius in their dreams. More than just a memorial to the past, however, the Day of Sundering is also a celebration of the future, in which priests and worshipers alike renew their dedication to the great task of restoring their god, who will once again walk Golarion and usher in a new Age of Serpents.

APHORISMS

Many of the faith's aphorisms reflect the sundered nature of Ydersius himself, and provide guidance on how best to organize cults and promote the snake-god's interests on Golarion.

Show me your scales: This saying highlights the inherent superiority of reptiles (especially serpentfolk) over inferior non-scaled or mammalian races. It is used to motivate and inspire comrades or followers, or to denigrate or imply cowardice in a rival. This phrase is often used by members of the Coils of Ydersius to identify one another as true serpentfolk in their human guises.

A poisoned kiss is better than a naked blade: This adage refers to the advantage of subtle cunning over brute force. Armies and wars have their place, but assassins and deceit can often accomplish more with less work.

A serpent without a head cannot bite, but a head without a body has no coils: This phrase teaches that any group needs a strong leader, whether it be an isolated snake-cult or a subterranean serpentfolk city. An army without a general or a nation without a king has no drive or direction, but at the same time, a leader needs followers to enact his will and turn his thoughts into deeds. This saying also reflects the serpentfolk's current state of affairs—they have fallen far since Ydersius's defeat, but they shall rise again, as mighty as ever, if and when the god is ever restored.

A body without legs can slip through even the smallest cracks: A corollary to the sentiment expressed above, this saying teaches that a smaller group is easier to manage and can often achieve more than a large army, which quickly becomes unwieldy. As a result, most Ydersian cults or serpentfolk sects tend to be composed of a few select members, who rely more on stealth and cunning than raw strength and power.

HOLY TEXT

Whatever texts were once sacred to the church of Ydersius were lost in the fall of the great serpentfolk empire. Recently, however, a book called *The Sekamina Destinies* has been adopted by many Ydersian cults. A compilation of dream-visions received by notable priests and saints in recent centuries, *The Sekamina Destinies* focuses not on the past history of the faith, but on its prophesied future once Ydersius is restored and once more takes his rightful place as the living god of the serpentfolk on Golarion. It is a call to arms, a guide for action, and a disturbing vision of what the future might hold should Ydersius ever rise again.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Following Ydersius's decapitation, with his head buried beneath a lake of fire and his thrashing body wandering mindlessly through the Darklands, no other deities have had anything to do with the snake-god. Prior to his downfall, however, the old gods of Azlant were arrayed as one against him and his followers. Of the gods worshiped in those ancient days, Abadar, Desna, and Shelyn remain Ydersius's fiercest opponents, and would still step forth to oppose Ydersius again, should he ever be restored.

While Ydersius sometimes collaborated with various demon lords, he has always been at odds with Abraxas, the demon lord of snakes and magic, and followers of the snake-god often clash with devotees of the demon lord. In many ruined Darklands cities of the fallen serpentfolk empire, degenerate serpentfolk have moved away from their traditional religion and adopted that of Abraxas, and Ydersian inquisitors work tirelessly to root out heretics and return their savage brethren to their ancestral faith.

NEW SPELL

Clerics of Ydersius may prepare *accelerate poison** as a 2nd-level spell. In addition, they can prepare *beast shape I* as a 3rd-level spell, *beast shape II* as 4th-level spell, and *beast shape III* as a 5th-level spell, but only to take the form of a snake or serpent. Clerics and druids of Ydersius may prepare *venomous bolt** as a 4th-level spell. An arrow or bolt affected by this spell appears to be a rigid viper that bites its target with poisoned fangs. The spell otherwise functions as normal. Spells marked with an asterisk (*) may be found in the *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*. In addition, priests of Ydersius have access to the following spell.

CONSTRICTING COILS

School enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level** cleric 5, sorcerer/wizard 5
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M/DF (a snakeskin)
Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Target one living creature

CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

Priests of Ydersius can use *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spells.

Summon monster II

Venomous snake*

Summon monster IV

Amphisbaena

Summon monster V

Emperor cobra*

Summon monster VII

Giant anaconda*

* This creature is summoned with the celestial template if you are good, or with the fiendish template if you are evil; you may choose either if you are neutral.

Duration 1 round/level (D); see text

Saving Throw Will negates; see text; **Spell Resistance** yes

This spell functions like *hold monster*, except that the target is constricted as if by the coils of a large snake, taking 1d6+6 points of bludgeoning damage each round that it fails its save. A successful save ends both the paralyzing and constriction effects.

PLANAR ALLIES

All of Ydersius's divine servants are ophidian in some respect, and since the god's defeat long ago, many of them mirror the sundering of his head and body in their own appearance. The herald of Ydersius is the Emperor of Scales (see page 82), a giant, severed snake's head trailing numerous serpent-headed tentacles in lieu of a body.

The following are well-known servitors of Ydersius, suitable for conjuring with *planar ally* or similar spells.

Azal-tash: This chaotic evil fiendish couatl has the brightly colored bands of a coral snake and batlike wings. When Ydersius was defeated, he is said to have severed his own head in honor of his lord, replacing it with a head of carved stone that breathes lightning.

Jitajaya: Echoing the current form of Ydersius himself, the cobra-hooded head of this giant spirit naga is decapitated, and floats above her serpentine body. She is a master of both arcane and divine magic, and can constrict multiple opponents in the iron grip of her slithering coils.

Lixiriltha: This emerald-scaled marilith demon has a medusa-like head of snakes, and her tail ends in the head of a hissing, fanged serpent. All of her weapons are poisoned with virulent venoms, and her gaze turns victims into jade statues.



PLAGUE OF LIGHT: 6 OF 6

Sacrificial Rights

We limp through humid jungle air. Brachantes, who can draw on the powers of any number of great beasts and mortal slaves, held captive on his distant island, may be pursuing us. Planning to hit us before we are fully healed. Or he may wait, to ambush us at our destination. He knows that the boy is cursed—god-touched, he calls it—so we must assume that he can also find the pyramid of Kitumu. His ability to track the boy, Obai muses, must be a stolen power, too, taken from an enslaved seer or prophet.

She and Sunasuka have healed as many of our wounds as their magic will allow. The halfling nature-talker is the worst off of any of us. We ache, and still bear the cuts and bruises of our battle with the outlander, but our open wounds have been healed, our burned and melted skin restored. We consider stopping, to rest and regain the healing favors of Nethys and nature. Instead we forge on.

The best way to defeat Brachantes will be to beat him to the temple. To deliver the boy to his destined sacrifice, as we have intended since the beginning. Robbed of his quarry, Brachantes might resign himself to the loss and depart. Or he may still try to kill us. If he does, and if we die, it is better to do so having completed our mission and saved the people of the Expanse from the firefly plague.

As we plunge closer to the reputed site of the firefly temple, I look to the boy and to the others. Anger still flushes Arok's face. He has worn a resentful silence ever since we pulled him away from Brachantes. The outlander killed the trees. He told Arok he belonged in a menagerie, as if offering him a gift. I have seen this look on the ape's scarred face before. My friend does not easily give himself to murderous rage, but when it seizes him, it does not let go.

Katiiwa seems at peace, her task accomplished. Tarood the Bekyar is slain, the demon in her blood content with its meal.

Obai, as unreadable as ever, both happy and sad.

Verkusht watches me watching the others. He had the chance to betray us and did not take it. I tell him I am proud. He waves my words away, for once not wanting the praise he typically seeks.

Sunasuka, who has been warmest toward the boy, proceeds with features bleak and haunted. She won't look at him now. I guess that she has resigned herself to his fate.

I wonder who among us is most likely to falter. To balk at the last moment and try to rescue him from his appointment with the divine.

As if struck again by a bolt of Brachantes' lightning, I realize who it is.

Me.

I, Xhasi, who take pride in my acceptance of the jungle's demands, cannot abide the thought of what must unfold. The boy has been brave. Has assured us that he is ready to do what is asked of him. He will step into the goddess's maw, so that many others might live. It is this that cannot be borne. Were he petulant, if he sought to thwart fate's decrees, I could reluctantly usher him to the bloody altar.

Would I go so readily? Would any of these others? No, we would scream and scheme and kick and find a way out. Were Arok god-doomed, I would risk anything to save him.

I will think of something, I decide. But what this might be, I cannot envision. And now the temple heaves into view.

In my mind's eye I had pictured it in a clearing, proudly jutting to the sky, the forest gathered around it at a fearful distance. Instead we find it amid the trees, choked entirely by bushes, trees, and vines. The temple appears as a conical mound of vegetation. Only a stifling tranquility marks this nameless patch of jungle as different from any other. Bird song is absent. So is the screeching of canopy monkeys. I scan the trees for signs of animal life and see none: no snakes, no mice. I drop a crumb from my ration pack on the hard forest floor, waiting for ants or termites to swarm around it. It stays unclaimed.

In other circumstances Obai might lecture us on the hidden ruins. She would tell us what extinct people built them, and when. Today she respects the weird hush that blankets this place.

It is Verkusht who speaks. "Are you sure this is it?"

Obai ponders, but the jungle-priestess and the ape both nod. Nature is strong here.

As if to confirm it, a glow arises from the mantle of trees obscuring the goddess's pyramid. It is soft and green. A cloud of fireflies.

This is why there are no other creatures here. This place belongs to them, and them alone.

Verkusht is the first to freeze. The rest of us do the same.

Is this how it will happen? Will the fireflies descend and devour the boy, as they took my friends the Ngali, and so many other innocents?

The beating of my heart becomes a pounding drum. Will they eat his deliverers, too?

And if they do, will it not be fitting?

As the glowing cloud of fireflies drifts slowly toward us, I see no course of action. No way to save the child.

"Mwonduk..." I begin.

The boy steps forward, shushing me with a gesture.

The fireflies float toward us. They settle first on Verkusht. They land on his forehead and drink from the sweat pooling in its furrows. Others cloak the priestesses, then Katiiwa, then Arok and me. I lose my caution and slowly move my arm. They follow it, forming a glowing garment.

Rejecting us, they swarm onto the boy. I wait, ashamed of my inability to prevent this, for the devouring to begin. I feel like the giant builders of Kembe, falling between worlds.

The moment extends agonizingly as the luminous veil lingers over the boy.

As one, the fireflies glide back to the pyramid, leaving Mwonduk unscathed.

"That can't be it, can it?" Verkusht asks.

The ground rumbles. There is movement at the pyramid's apex. Trees topple from it. Clouds of soil dislodge from their exposed roots as they tumble down the sides. A fissure appears in the topmost blocks. The fireflies swarm into it.

Comprehension dawns: the insects came to see if we had the sacrifice designated by the goddess, who dwells inside. Now she will come out to devour the boy herself.

I have heard spirit-talkers say that none may look on the face of a god and survive. Depending on the story, the foolish watcher may be struck dead, or driven mad. But of course I have never met anyone who has beheld a god, except in dreams and visions. The wise action will be to turn my head, and wait until it is over. The sounds of the devouring will be bad enough. I decide otherwise. I will force myself to look, even if it courts destruction. If I cannot save him, I will at least bear witness.

Like a pair of separating hands, the top of the pyramid parts into two.

A voice bellows out to shatter the scene's solemnity.

"No, you mindless, petty godling," it booms, "this one you cannot have."

An immense, distorted creature that speaks with Brachantes' voice breaks through the underbrush to charge at Mwonduk. He is as tall as a giant, as grotesque as a demon, as ponderous as a mokele-mbembe. The features of his face swirl and scud across the front of a misshapen skull. His flesh is in places furred, or scaled, or plated, or dripping and gelatinous.

Verkusht gasps. "What in the name of...?"

SERPENT'S SKULL

"He has overtaxed his powers," Obai says. "Before he drew on only one creature at a time. He has mixed them, and is lost."

Brachantes' monstrous eyes bloat into one, then separate into several, obliterating the rest of his face. A spray of brilliant color blasts from them, raking the ground at our feet, then striking us down. Obai is lifted from the ground and hurled into the pyramid. Verkusht is stopped in mid-stride, encased suddenly in stone. A thundering blast sends Katiwa and Sunasuka sprawling, the azure



***"Brachantes' passion is all-consuming.
And consume him it has."***

harpoon and screaming monkey club flying from their grasps. Arok yips, seized by madness, and bounds away into the shadows.

I am inside a column of flame, groaning as it licks away my flesh.

Fire follows me as I leap toward the monstrous interloper. He lunges at Mwonduk, grabbing him in a giant's grasp. The boy wriggles partially free, and Brachantes lifts him further up, leaving him dangling by one leg. I reach the monster's nearest foot and plunge my spear into it. It roots him to the ground. I throw myself onto his thigh. Suddenly it is covered with hairy spines like those of an enormous insect. They jab and scrape at my blistered skin. Wracking pain tells me to stop, to drop away and lie in a heap in the dirt. I ignore it, until suddenly I feel no pain at all. The loss of sensation tells me that I am gravely injured, but this thought I also dismiss. I keep climbing up as Brachantes bucks and weaves to throw me off.

Knives thunk into his chest above me, where he is covered in coarse brown fur. Hanging with one arm from the ripped remnants of clothing wrapped around Brachantes' waist, I seek his kidneys and plunge my daggers in deep. Blood gouts from the wound, black and bubbly. It sprays into my face, blinding me. My grip on him turns slippery.

He flings me away. The trunk of a tree ends my flight. Mwonduk is on the ground again, running for shelter behind the priestesses, who themselves have found cover behind the foot of the pyramid. Brachantes has either dropped the boy or let him down, realizing he needs both hands for the fight.

Sunasuka wills a thorn wall into being, arraying it around Brachantes like a hedge. He pulls both foot and spear clear of the ground and steps over it easily, but this action leaves him off balance.

Katiwa pops up to point her harpoon at him. A bolt of blue lightning arcs from it to strike him in the chest. The electric bolt zigs between the metal dagger hilts jutting from his pectorals.

The force of the strike knocks him down and into the jabbing thorns ringed behind him. He brays in protest and for an instant seems to be down for good.

Moments later, he rises again, his body encased in gleaming steel. He laughs, until the transformation of his head into a serpentine shape muffles the sound. He blows a cloud of choking gas at us. I run forward and grab Mwonduk, tumbling with him into the woods.

The spellcasters reel as the gas surrounds them.

Verkusht, broken free of his prison by the women, has run up the side of the pyramid. He shouts down into the fissure. I realize that my ears are ringing, and wonder

which of Brachantes' assaults has stolen my hearing. From his gestures and the few words I can make out, the Bekyar seems to be exhorting the goddess supposedly lurking inside the pyramid. He demands, or so I imagine, that the goddess come out and smite the one trying to steal her sacrifice from her.

If she intends to intervene on our behalf, Kitumu gives no sign of it. It is the way of gods, to stand distant while mortals act for them. Were I to ask Obai about it, she would give a long explanation, one of balance and the turning of the cosmic wheels. What is clear is that, with Brachantes, we are on our own.

Verkusht reaches the same conclusion, and with unusual bravery leaps onto the monster's head, knife outthrust. It lands in the back of his skull, which is now elongated and has sprouted a spiraling horn. Verkusht swings from the hilt until swatted down by a jellied, fingerless limb. He lands on his back, howling, as a soapy residue left from Brachantes' strike attempts to crawl down his throat and choke him.

I feel small hands on me; it is Sunasuka, healing my wounds.

She sees that I've left my spear behind, and hands me her double monkey club. Its wooden faces yowl. They seem afraid.

"We're running out of spells to throw," she says.

Brachantes has a spear in his foot, and knives sticking from his chest and the back of his head. As he looms over Verkusht, I watch for signs that these injuries have left him vulnerable. When fighting an animal, or sometimes an unnatural beast, it is possible to judge the harm you've done. Observing this ever-shifting monstrosity tells me nothing.

With Sunasuka following close behind, I scuttle to the pyramid, to Katiwa and Obai. We need a plan.

But then, we must also help the Bekyar.

Verkusht rolls away from a stomping foot, planting a serrated skewer in Brachantes' ankle. The monster kicks Verkusht like a man shooing aside an annoying dog. Verkusht lies dazed on his back, a line of blood creeping from his nostril.

I'm ready to charge over to assist him when Arok, recovered from the fear ray, leaps down from the canopy. He plots his point of impact expertly, so that Brachantes topples face-first to the forest floor. Arok pounds percussively on the back of his neck, then yanks out a Bekyar dagger. He uses it to saw at the veins of Brachantes' neck.

Brachantes responds by changing again. The slashed jugular reseals itself as his form shifts to something fishy and hellish. He slams Arok. The crunch of shattered bone echoes through the trees.

Obai's thin lips purse together. Her tattooed frown-smile lends her an air of deranged detachment. "He draws power from the creatures of his faraway menagerie, yes?"

"That is what he claimed."

"Then there must be unseen channels of arcane force, spanning the miles between himself and his island. They are the source of his might."

"You are the one who knows such things." But already I am following her logic. "Your globes, from the Bloodletting Aerie."

She nods. "It is not how the magics are supposed to work. But perhaps, with Nethys's favor, the conflicting energies may sever the bond between Brachantes and his menagerie. When I do this, all of you must hit him hard and fast."

"Will it cut him down to size?"

"So I hope."

I dash into the fray, swinging Sunasuka's monkey club, rallying my allies' attentions. The strange, carved weapon yammers in panicked ape speech. Arok and Verkusht array themselves around Brachantes, forcing him to defend against blows from all sides. Katiwa orbits from a remove, firing arcane darts from her harpoon. They materialize as orbs of acid, each bearing a demon's grinning face. Where they land, they scourge and pucker his writhing hide.

Obai's twin circles shimmer into being around him—the light first, then the dark. Unlike the perfect orb summoned at the Aerie, this one buckles and is instantly malformed.

Brachantes' features become recognizable again. Four eyes resolve into two. A set of yellow-brown tentacles retracts into his jaw. Annoyance gives way to dread as he seems to understand Obai's scheme. He lashes out at the combined globes of light and dark, and they lose their shape, threaten to dissipate.

Obai cries out to Nethys. "Maintain the balance, O greatest god!"

The circles reform and stabilize. Brachantes seems to fold in on himself, rapidly losing height and heft. Within moments, he has shrunk from a giant's size to that of an ogre. He is still bigger by far than any of us, even Arok, but for the first time I believe we can beat him.

No longer does his form change. Where before he took on the traits of creatures I know or have heard of, now he is at once all and none of them. He is a colorless, misshapen mockery of a man, his muscles puffy, the skeleton beneath them warped and improbable.

Arok tears at him. Verkusht sticks a long knife into his spine.

With a great glob of a fist, Brachantes strikes me. I feel my teeth rattle in their sockets. Backward I spin, landing on my shoulder in the hardened dirt. The club goes flying. I try to get up, but my feet won't go where I tell them.

There is still fight in our enemy yet. Arok rears back, surprised by a similar blow.

Verkusht kicks at Brachantes' back, hitting the hilt of his dagger, driving it further in. He ducks a swiping return clout, yelling in disbelieving protest: "Don't you realize, you Taldan excrement, that I've severed your stinking spine?"

I wobble up, head still ringing, to wade back in. Arok does the same, his jaw hanging at an alarming angle. Katiwi, out of spells, staggers to join us.

Brachantes spots my abandoned spear, its head and haft still wet with his tarry blood, and seizes it, parrying jabs from the sorceress's harpoon.

Behind us, Sunasuka mouths the familiar chant to summon a swarm of stinging wasps. Her call to nature yields no result. As I bash at Brachantes' rearing, unstable form, I realize why it has failed: Kitumu allows only fireflies here.

Then the leaves and vines reflect a soft green glow.

In a teeming mass, Kitumu's insect hordes reemerge from the pyramid. They surround Brachantes, tearing into his flesh as they did to my friends in the Ngali village, to the traders of Free Station, to the Latari tribesmen of Rechiend's Plains. The firefly plague now visits itself on Brachantes. The luminous bugs find the parts of him that are fleshy and human. They burrow deep, boring through him like termites through wood, ants through the pulp of fallen fruit. A blood rain falls as his flesh is torn from him. He opens his throat to scream out his agony, but no sound comes.

He staggers, falling to one knee. Brachantes is smaller again now, perhaps returned to his native shape. It is hard to say for sure, with so much meat pulled away from his bones. I can see rib cage, and a patch of exposed skull above his left eye.

"You are beaten, Brachantes," I tell him.

"Yes," he says.

The spear is still in his hand. He drops to the ground, mustering one last reserve of strength, and hurls it. The shaft sails through the air. I dive at it, meaning to deflect it from its course, but the gesture has surprised me, and I strike only empty air.

I hit the ground, roll, and look up to its destination.

Mwonduk stands staring dully at the spear that has pierced his chest. The head protrudes from his back, gobbets of heart muscle hanging from its sharpened tip. The color drains from him as he collapses. Sunasuka runs to his side. The slump of her shoulders confirms it: he is dead, and nothing can be done.

Then I am on Brachantes, knees digging into his ruined chest. I shout at him, stupidly, uselessly repeating the one question that never has an answer. I am asking him why. Why did he have to kill the child?

Blood foams from the outlander's ruined mouth. "If I can't have him, no one can." He says it simply, as if no statement could make more sense. There is no mockery, no gloating in it. He has acted according to his code. Defeat for Brachantes must be defeat for all.

Time stops. There is no one in the world except for me and this creature helpless beneath me. I think of how close we have come to reaching our goal. Of the deaths to come

from the firefly plague, which we have lost the means to end. Of the boy, and how he was willing to die for the good of others, but not like this, not pointlessly.

My hands close around the gore-slicked neck.

His wounds could easily prove fatal, even without my intervention. But I want to be the one who kills him. Who squeezes the last breaths from his lungs. Presses shut his windpipe, until his soul flutters from him and departs for whatever hell awaits it.

I consider my own code, which forces upon me the obligations of those I slay. What debts does this man carry, that allowed him to construct his island of cages, to collect so many captive creatures? At this moment, they do not seem so unbearable, not compared to the two life-prices I already pay each day of my life. I will go to his island, I decide. In discharge of his responsibilities I will fling open his cages. Grant freedom to his slaves.

My fingers tighten.

Then relax.

I rise and step back. The Code of Ara is not a trader's ledger sheet, with costs weighted against gains. The life-price is a punishment for a crime, for breaking the holiest of ancestral edicts.

"Let him die on his own," I mutter.

Sunasuka calls my name. I turn to see the boy's body convulsing from within. At first, my heart leaps, as I think him miraculously saved. Then I see that he is coming apart. Brachantes killed him with more than a thrown spear. Some baneful magic now destroys his remains. The sight of it numbs me. Limbs wizen and shrivel. A fissure opens in his chest. The head lolls off.

The pyramid, which stood on the verge of opening before Brachantes appeared, resumes its rumbling. The gap, arrested before, widens. A crimson glow escapes from it, bathing first the canopy directly overhead, then the entire jungle.

From the opening, a vast, blood-red form arises. It is shaped like a firefly, its beetle wings spanning hundreds of feet. The goddess has come to punish our failure.

She hovers above us, the buffeting force of her wings throwing up a cloud of dirt and leaf-dust.

A creature stirs inside Mwonduk's corpse. It crawls from his torso, leaving the remainder emptied out and hollow.

It too is a crimson firefly, a reduced counterpart to Kitumu, overhead. The insect is at most three feet long, from the tip of its searching feelers to the glowing bulb at the end of its body. It opens up its hard outer shell to reveal the wings hidden beneath. Tentatively, it buzzes them back and forth. It lifts itself into the air and circles around us. The creature stops in front of each of us, starting first with Verkusht. It waves its antennae gently, almost caressingly, at each of us, as if making a farewell. Its circuit ends with me and finally Sunasuka.

Then it spirals down to Brachantes. Now he laughs, but the joke is rueful and aimed at himself. "This is why... wanted him. Not cursed," he gasps. "A god. A young god. I could have had the power of a..."

With red, segmented legs, the insect that was once a boy seizes Brachantes, piercing down into the outlander's remaining flesh. Brachantes registers the pain as a soft exhalation. The Mwenduk bug tugs his squirming body up into the air. Straining at his weight, it buzzes up to its mother, Kitumu, who circles above. It flies over her beetle face. Kitumu clicks her mandibles and opens her gullet. Her child drops in the sacrificial offering. Brachantes musters one last wail as he is consumed.

The Mwenduk bug circles its mother as she retreats into the pyramid. Without a gesture of divine gratitude, or the merest acknowledgment of our presence, she vanishes into the temple depths. The smaller insect seems to pause, to flutter wings at us, before following the goddess inside.

The ground rumbles as the temple seals itself up.

As mortals, we have done what was expected of us. We served the goddess. That she slew hundreds of people simply to attract our obedience is of no consequence to her. Mortals are disposable, especially to nature's devouring gods. Despite my wounds, my still-spinning head, the sickly feeling of having come too close to an ancient and indifferent divinity, I feel a lightness.

In my marrow, I know it: the plague has ended, and will not return.

Verkusht claps his hands together. "My, my. That went better than expected." Seeing that no one else shares his jollity, he tries harder. "For example, none of us tried to kill any of the others. Surely that's a first."

Without warning, Sunasuka hurls herself at Obai, spitting unintelligible accusations. Arok comes at her from the left and I from the right. We wrest the recovered double monkey club from her grasp. Obai interrupts the spell she'd been preparing.

"Why fight now?" I say. "All is for the best!"

Sunasuka, still struggling to free herself of our combined grip, shouts: "You said the child was accursed!"

"I was not wrong," Obai says, the contradictory scars on the sides of her mouth frowning and smiling. "The child was accursed."

Sunasuka looses a stream of profanities, both foreign and Mwangi.

"I grant," Obai says, "that I was imprecisely informed as to the curse's true nature."

Hot tears stream Sunasuka's cheeks. She can see only the balance priestess. "You had us thinking we'd have to murder the child!"

"Of all of us here, nature priestess, you know that great forces speak to us, but never reveal all. And clearly, the boy was cursed. Rather than a mortal cursed to be devoured, he was a deific being, cursed to eke his first miserable years in mortal form. Much like an actual lightning bug, spending its earliest days as a glowing, toxic worm."

Sunasuka takes a fresh lunge at the Nethys priestess; the ape and I tighten our hold on her. "The entire journey, my heart has been a cold fist in my chest!"

"We were never going to kill the boy. We were merely instruments of cosmic balance, allowing a god to work her will. And this she did."

Sunasuka calms herself. We let her storm to a nearby brook, where she splashes water on her face.

A pensive look crosses Katiwa's face. "Do you think Mwenduk was born mortal, so that he would understand our fears and cares?"

Obai chuckles, musical and cold. "Nothing so romantic, I'm sure. What does a godling of fireflies care about mortal existence?"

I gaze upon the pyramid of Kitumu, now closed, and wonder.

"Who can say whether a newborn god remembers his friends?"





BESTIARY

HELD HIGH ON A LITTER OF ITS WRITHING FLESH-BROOD, THE HERALD OF OUR LORD IN VENOM WILL EMERGE FROM THE STONE OF THE ETERNAL NIGHT, CRACKING THE EARTH LIKE A SERPENT BIRTHED FROM MANY SHELLS. ITS RAVENOUS EYES BEAR NOT THE SLITS OF THEIR OWN WILL BUT SHINE WITH HIS DREADFUL GAZE, FOR IT IS BUT A SCALE OF HIS IMMORTAL BODY, ITS COILS THE CRUSH OF HIS INESCAPABLE GRASP, ITS FANGS THE GATES TO HIS WELL OF INFINITE POISONS, ALL EVER APART, BUT NEVER SEPARATE.

—THE SEKAMINA DESTINIES

With the venomous powers of the serpent god waxing amid the darkened spires of Ilmurea and the threat of bloody-fanged Ydersius's restoration, foul beings of scale and sorcery slither amid the depths once more. This month's entry into the Pathfinder Bestiary reveals a host of cold-blooded horrors, both servants of the dreaded god of snakes and reptilian menaces of the jungles' darkest legends.

WANDERING MONSTERS

During two distinct parts of "Sanctum of the Serpent God," the PCs face the threat of ambush from local menaces, first in the Hunters' Maze (see page 10) and later during their assault on the Sanctum of Ydersius (see page 34). While GMs may add challenges from the Encounters in the Hunters' Maze table as they please, in the latter part of the adventure the PCs' actions and choices directly affect the number of dangers they'll face in the Adventure Path's final dungeon.

ARMIES AND AMBUSHES

During the course of this month's adventure, the PCs have the opportunity to raise a wild army of temporary allies and lead them in an attack against the serpentfolk hordes slithering in the dark. Uniting the various factions of Saventh-Yhi earns the party Achievement Points (AP) that influence the frequency with which they'll face random encounters during the Adventure Path's climax in the Sanctum of Ydersius.

Typically, there is a 20% chance of the PCs encountering a randomly determined group of defenders for every 10 minutes they explore the Sanctum of Ydersius. Should the PCs fail to muster an army potent enough to draw out the fastness's defenders, this chance for random encounters might rise to as much as 40% in every room. Alternatively, the serpentfolk might commit nearly all their resources to hold off invaders they view as a significant threat, and should they do so, the chance for random encounters in the Sanctum can drop to 0%. See pages 29 and 33 for details on gaining AP and the full effects of doing so.

PILE IT ON!

"Sanctum of the Serpent God" is the last adventure in this entire Adventure Path, so if you have spent the last five volumes pulling your punches, now's the time to get mean and really go all out. The climax of a campaign should feel deadly and run the risk of fatally ending the PCs' adventuring careers—after all, there's no sense of accomplishment without an honest challenge. Try throwing some of the following creature combinations at the PCs if you're looking to add a few more encounters to the campaign's endgame to really make them fear for their lives.

Encounters in the Hunters' Maze

d% roll	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–5	1 famished mohrg	11	see page 18
6–12	1 adv. hydrodaemon	11	see page 20
13–28	1 urdefhan skirmisher	11	see page 13
29–37	1 derghodaemon	12	Bestiary 2 66
38–46	1 roper	12	Bestiary 237
47–56	1d4 adv. hydrodaemons	13	see page 20
57–68	1d4 urdefhan skirmishers	13	see page 13
69–75	1 meladaemon trooper	14	see page 15
76–81	1d4 ropers	14	Bestiary 237
82–91	1d6 urdefhan skirmishers	14	see page 13
92–100	2d4 urdefhan skirmishers	15	see page 13

Encounters in the Sanctum

d% roll	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–6	1d6 lesser hollow serpents	9	see page 86
7–13	1 morlock slave	10	see page 36
14–20	1d4 morlock slaves	12	see page 36
21–26	1 serpentfolk temple guard	12	see page 38
27–32	1d6 morlock slaves	13	see page 36
33–35	1 viper vine	13	Bestiary 2 279
36–42	1d4 serpentfolk temple guards	14	see page 38
43–48	1d4 siege serpents	14	see page
49–55	1d4 iron golems	15	Bestiary 162
56–66	2d6 morlock slaves	15	see page 36
67–78	1d6 serpentfolk temple guards	15	see page 38
79–86	1 serpentstone sentinel	15	see page 39
87–90	1d4 viper vines	15	Bestiary 2 279
91–93	1 grootslang	16	see page 84
94–98	1 hollow serpent	16	see page 86
99–100	1 marilith	17	Bestiary 63

Serpent Watchers: Two serpentstone sentinels guard a restricted passage in the sanctum. They attack any non-serpentfolk that comes within sight. The two sentinels are together a CR 17 encounter.

Siege Serpent Wranglers: Two serpentfolk temple guards are relocating a siege serpent when the PCs encounter them. The guards direct the construct to attack, while they harass the characters from a distance. This is a CR 16 encounter.

Slave Tenders: A serpentfolk temple guard uses a mob of morlock slaves as fodder, driving them out of the temple and into the face of danger. When the serpentfolk encounters the PCs, he directs his minions to attack. The serpentfolk has no compunctions about doing harm to his slaves if that aids in defeating the PCs. One serpentfolk temple guard and 5 morlocks is a CR 16 encounter.

SERPENT'S SKULL

BAREGARA

A hulking form shreds a path through the jungle foliage with hands the size of shields. A massive ape caped in blood-colored fur, the creature bears crooked horns and glowing eyes that reveal its demonic origins. Across its barrel chest, a gruesome web of ligaments and sinews leaves ribs and muscles exposed. In the center of the monster's open rib cage, a faceless mouth of sharp teeth snaps hungrily.

BAREGARA

CR 12



XP 19,200

CE Large outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent, *see invisibility*;
Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 21 (+4 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size)

hp 168 (16d10+80)

Fort +15; **Ref** +14; **Will** +10

DR 10/good; **Immune** electricity, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 23

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 40 ft.

Melee bite +22 (1d8+4), 2 claws +21 (1d10+8 plus grab), gore +24 (1d8+8)

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

Special Attacks devouring grapple, monstrous challenge, one-armed hold

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

Constant—*see invisibility*

At will—*dispel magic*, *teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)

3/day—quicken *hold person* (DC 15)

1/day—*summon* (level 5, 1d4 dire apes 50% or 1d2 girallon 35%), *unholy blight* (DC 17)

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 19, **Con** 20, **Int** 15, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +25(+29 grapple); **CMD** 39

Feats Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*hold person*), Step Up, Throw Anything

Skills Acrobatics +14, Bluff +12, Climb +26, Diplomacy +9, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (nature) +10, Knowledge (planes) +13, Perception +20, Sense Motive +16, Stealth +19, Survival +19, Swim +16

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Polyglot, telepathy 100 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment warm forests (Abyss)

Organization solitary, pair, or troop (3–5)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Devouring Grapple (Ex) The mouth at the center of a baregara's chest automatically deals 2d8+4 points of damage per round to any creature the demon successfully grapples.

Monstrous Challenge (Su) As a standard action, a baregara can make an Intimidate check to demoralize an opponent. If this check is successful, the baregara surges with power and gains the effects of *bull's strength* and *bear's endurance*. The caster level is equal to the baregara's Hit Dice. This ability is usable 3 times per day.

One-Armed Hold (Ex) A baregara's huge arms allow it to initiate and maintain a grapple without the standard -4 penalty for not having both hands free.

Baregaras are the cruel minions of the demon lord Angazhan. Although native to the Abyssal realm of Ahvoth-Kor, these brutish demons also prowl the deep jungles of the world, most notably the Mwangi Expanse, usually serving the evolved or "high" girallons and other races that revere Angazhan.

All baregaras are male and resemble enormous gorillas with the horns of a waterbuck and a filthy, crimson-colored pelt. This thick and matted hair grows sparse toward the chest, where a grisly patchwork of ligaments and sinew leaves the creature's rib cage visible. A spherical growth resembling a many-fanged heart protrudes from the chest cavity. Whenever the baregara turns its head, the maw, while not exceptionally mobile, turns accordingly, as if following the demon's gaze.

Even when knuckle-walking on their enormous hands, baregaras stand over 12 feet high, when measured to the top of their horns, and their dense bodies can weigh up to 1,500 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Baregaras are Angazhan's elite troopers, enforcers, and messengers. Unlike demons that are formed from humanoid souls awaiting Abyssal judgment, baregaras are chosen by the demon lord Angazhan himself and formed when a girallon, charau-ka, or even awakened ape that has shown exceptional cruelty dies. Angazhan watches such mortals closely and—at the time of death—dispatches a baregara to snare the deceased soul and return it to the Abyss. The strange heart-maw at the center of each baregara's chest acts as a repository for the damned soul as it is transported; the grisly mouth glows with a dirty purple light when full. Mwangi natives and explorers alike tell stories of strange floating lights that seem to glide through the treetops on moonless nights. Often mistaken for will-o'-wisps or miscast spells, these displays actually mark baregaras returning home with their prize. Then, in the nightmare jungles of Ahvoth-Kor, a new howling minion of Angazhan is made.

Aggressive and domineering, all baregaras are bullies that delight in fear and intimidation. Like true gorillas, baregaras can pound their chests in a show of dominance and power. However, this display is more than just a

display of strength—baregaras feed off of the fear of their enemies, and cowing foes in such a fashion sends a surge of power through the creatures that makes them nearly unstoppable. Celestials and other good outsiders that have fought in the Abyss tell of entire legions of baregaras pounding their chests as they marched into battle, causing a din that shook the courage of even the greatest of solars.

In combat, baregaras gore with their long horns while striking and grabbing with their enormous hands. Their overlong forelimbs allow them to grip creatures of even their own size with only one arm. Baregaras enjoy using this ability on human-sized opponents, crushing their foes to them as living shields in the midst of melee, while the grizzly maw at the center of the demon's chest gnaws at the helpless victim.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

In the Abyss, baregaras form small troops just like the apes of the Material Plane, but as baregaras are made, not born, and there are no children to rear or females to fight for, such troops are little more than roving hunting parties. Troops are led by the strongest fighter or by the baregara that Angazhan has dispatched to do his bidding the most times. Rivalries between troops are part of a complex hierarchy that is all but incomprehensible to non-baregaras, but planar scholars have observed that all baregaras take trophies from notable kills, and that these grisly mementos play some role in establishing the convoluted social standing of each troop leader and his followers. But all troop rivalries are dissolved in the face of a common enemy, especially good outsiders, or in the face of any order from the revered Angazhan.

When encountered on the Material Plane, baregaras are invariably there to do the bidding of their lord. Most often this entails service to Angazhan's most favored mortal servants. While the demon-apes will heed counsel from the mortals they have come to aid, all baregaras make it well known that ultimately they answer to Angazhan and Angazhan alone. Such an arrangement caters to baregaras' bullying nature but also allows them

great freedom, since their noted intelligence and cunning enables them to act on Angazhan's behalf without always needing precise orders.

Baregaras enjoy their time on the Material Plane as their errands also allow them to kill and harvest trophies from powerful foes to improve the standing of their Abyssal troop. Such missions, however, are not without danger as Angazhan's worshipers often dwell in the same regions of the Material Plane as couatls. The feathered serpents loathe baregaras with a righteous anger and will attack the demon apes on sight. Baregaras return the couatls' hatred and nothing but the most pressing of missions from their lord can stop them from hunting and doing battle with them. Both couatls and baregaras have been known to greatly reduce or even waive the offerings required for their services when called via *planar ally* spells if there is a chance to battle each other.



EMPEROR OF SCALES

The air fills with the sound of hissing snakes as a giant, severed snake's head floats into view, with a gaping mouth and twin fangs dripping virulent poison. Its eyes are milky and blind, but its forked tongue constantly tests the air for fresh scents. Below the head, where a body should be, numerous hissing serpents thrash like tendrils of torn flesh. Blood drips from the severed head, sizzling as it burns like acid through anything it touches.

EMPEROR OF SCALES

CR 15



XP 51,200

CE Huge outsider (chaotic, evil, native)

Init +11; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +26

Aura frightful presence (60 ft., DC 25), maddening hiss (100 ft., DC 25)

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 15, flat-footed 23 (+7 Dex, +15 natural, -2 size)

hp 225 (18d10+126); regeneration 5 (electricity)

Fort +19, **Ref** +13, **Will** +15

DR 15/good and silver; **Immune** acid, fire, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, *vorpal* weapons; **SR** 26

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee bite +24 (2d8+8/19-20 plus poison and grab), 8 snakebites +22 (1d6+4 plus poison)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with snakebites)

Special Attacks acidic gore, poison, swallow whole (2d8+12 plus poison, AC 17, 22 hp)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +21)

Constant—fly

At will—poison (DC 20), teleport

3/day—accelerate poison* (DC 18), blindness/deafness (DC 18), blur, dominate person (DC 21), major image (DC 19), mirror image, suggestion (DC 19)

1/day—chaos hammer (DC 20), dream, mass suggestion (DC 22), nightmare (DC 21), unholy blight (DC 20)

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 24, **Con** 23, **Int** 13, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +28 (+32 grapple); **CMD** 45 (can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch, Toughness

Skills Bluff +27, Climb +16, Escape Artist +22, Fly +20, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (planes) +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Perception +26, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +16, Use Magic Device +21; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Escape Artist, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth, +4 Use Magic Device

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Azlanti (does not speak), telepathy 100 ft.

SQ command snakes

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Acidic Gore (Su) The Emperor of Scales' giant severed head continually drips blood and gore that burn like acid. Any creature within 10 feet of the Emperor of Scales must make a DC 25 Reflex save or be sprayed by droplets of acidic blood, taking 2d6 points of acid damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Command Snakes (Ex) As a free action, the Emperor of Scales can command any snake or serpent with the animal or magical beast type, as the *dominate animal* spell. The target can resist the command with a DC 25 Will save.

Immunity to Vorpal Weapons (Ex) The Emperor of Scales is essentially a giant head with no body. As a result, its head cannot be severed, and *vorpal* weapons have no additional effect on it.

Maddening Hiss (Su) The Emperor of Scales' numerous snake heads constantly hiss in a maddening cacophony as a free action. Any creature within 100 feet of the Emperor of Scales must make a DC 25 Will save or be confused for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting compulsion insanity effect. A creature that saves cannot be affected by the Emperor of Scales' maddening hiss for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex) Bite or swallow—injury; *save* Fort DC 25; *frequency* 1/round for 10 rounds; *effect* 2d6 acid and 1d4 Str; *cure* 2 consecutive saves; snakebite—injury; *save* Fort DC 20; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Con; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

* See *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*.

In the earliest days of the Age of Serpents, when the great serpentfolk empire was young, the serpentfolk were ruled by a single, powerful priest-king. When Ydersius took his rightful place as god of the serpentfolk, he exalted this priest-king above all others, raising the king up to become his foremost servant and herald. With his original name long lost to memory, the first king of the serpentfolk empire became known as the Emperor of Scales.

With Ydersius's still-living head entombed beneath the earth and his mindless body endlessly wandering the Darklands, the Emperor of Scales is the snake-god's primary representative on Golarion. Unable to take direct action on his own, Ydersius relies upon his herald to enact his will on the Material Plane. The Emperor of Scales embodies the fall of the mighty serpentfolk empire from its previous heights, and personifies the rage of Ydersius himself, trapped and sundered into two lesser parts. But he also represents the god's immortality, for even in defeat Ydersius was not slain, and even without a body, the Emperor of Scales still serves.

The Emperor of Scales does not speak, but it can communicate telepathically. Snakes and serpents of all kinds and sizes flock to the Emperor of Scales, who can enslave them to his will. The Emperor of Scales appears as a giant snake's head about 20 feet long, and weighs close to 5 tons. His serpentine tendrils extend another 15 feet behind and around his head.

ECOLOGY

When Ydersius was whole and walked Golarion as the god of the serpentfolk empire, the Emperor of Scales appeared as a giant serpentfolk warrior clad in golden scale armor who strode across ancient battlefields wielding spells and blade with equal precision. When Ydersius was beheaded by the Azlanti heroine Savith and cast down, the Emperor of Scales suffered his own mutilation. In a sympathetic reflection of his master's fate, the Emperor's head tore itself free from his body, growing to monstrous size while his humanoid body quickly withered away. His eyes clouded over, blinding the herald, but the tendrils of flesh that once attached his head to his body transformed into a multitude of hissing, poisonous vipers. The Emperor of Scales has kept that form since, but the faithful of Ydersius believe that when the snake-god is restored, so too will his herald return to his original form and once more lead the serpentfolk armies to victory.

Originally born on Golarion, the Emperor of Scales is a native outsider. He sleeps like any normal creature, and when not called upon to serve, spends most of his time in a dream-filled torpor, much like the severed head of Ydersius himself. Unlike other native outsiders, however, the Emperor of Scales does not need to eat. As he no longer has a body to process and digest food, he gains sustenance from his divine link with Ydersius. On other planes, the Emperor of Scales gains the extraplanar subtype, and requires neither food nor sleep.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

At the height of Ydersius's power, the Emperor of Scales divided his time between Golarion and Ydersius's planar realm, the pocket plane of Sydrilus deep in the unending chaos of the Maelstrom. Since Ydersius's defeat, that realm has been closed to both the god and his servants, and like Ydersius, the Emperor of Scales has been confined to the Material Plane. In the millennia since, the Emperor of Scales has traveled throughout the Material Plane, alternately searching the Darklands of Golarion for the sundered skull and body of Ydersius, or sleeping for centuries, dreaming of his master's restoration and return.

The Emperor of Scales has been encountered numerous times over the ages in various abandoned cities of the ancient serpentfolk, both on Golarion, and some say, on



other worlds as well. Powerful priests of Ydersius have been known to wake the Emperor of Scales when they find him and request his aid. Such alliances are usually short-lived, however, as the herald inevitably moves on in search of his lost master.

The Emperor of Scales is known to work with demons on occasion, though those fiends serving Abraxas are viewed as enemies, and the herald does not hesitate to attack and destroy them, returning them to their Abyssal realm.

In his original form, the Emperor of Scales frequently mated with mortal serpentfolk and left behind countless semidivine progeny. What happened to these paragons of the serpentfolk race after the fall of the serpentfolk empire is unknown, although many powerful serpentfolk priests claim descent from the herald to bolster their own influence. These days, exceptionally large or particularly strong snakes are said to be the brood of the Emperor of Scales, remnants of his serpentine tendrils that were severed in battle and took on a life of their own. Whether or not these claims are true is of little importance—certainly the Emperor of Scales himself seems unconcerned with such potential offspring.

SERPENT'S SKULL

GROOTSLANG

This enormous creature has the broad chest and massive forelimbs of a bull elephant, but its hindquarters bleed seamlessly into a serpentine body thicker than an oak tree. Its viperlike head is flanked by a thicket of sharp tusks, between which an eerily nimble tongue flicks back and forth.

GROOTSLANG

CR 16



XP 76,800

CE Gargantuan magical beast

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., scent; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 11, flat-footed 28 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +22 natural, -4 size)

hp 283 (21d10+168)

Fort +20; **Ref** +16; **Will** +12

DR 10/magic; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee gore +31 (2d8+13/19-20/x3), 2 slams +30 (2d6+13), tail slap +28 (2d6+6 plus grab)

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

Special Attacks defenseless impale, thunderous stomp (DC 28), trample (2d6+19, DC 33)

STATISTICS

Str 36, **Dex** 19, **Con** 26, **Int** 15, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +21; **CMB** +38; **CMD** 53(55 vs trip)

Feats Awesome Blow, Bleeding Critical, Cleave, Critical Focus, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (gore), Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack, Spring Attack

Skills Acrobatics +10 (+14 jump), Bluff +4, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10, Perception +23, Sense Motive +13, Stealth +10, Swim +39

Languages Aquan, Common, Draconic

SQ aquatic elusion, hold breath, scissor tusks

ECOLOGY

Environment tropical lakes and rivers or underground

Organization solitary

Treasure standard plus double gems

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aquatic Elusion (Su) As a standard action, a grootslang can enter any adjacent body of water and teleport to another, without error. This ability functions like *tree stride*, but the grootslang can exit from any body of water within 1 mile so long as both the entry and exit are wide enough for the creature to enter. This ability is usable at will.

Defenseless Impale (Ex) A grootslang can make a gore attack against any creature it is grappling with its tail. If this attack is successful, it is treated as a critical threat.

Hold Breath (Ex) A grootslang can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to 4 times its Constitution score before it risks drowning or suffocating.

Thunderous Stomp (Ex) As a full-round action, a grootslang can rear up on its serpentine body and bring its massive forelimbs down with awesome force. The grootslang chooses one adjacent target to be affected as though the target had been trampled. In addition, all creatures within 10 feet must make a DC 28 Reflex save or be knocked prone. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Grootslangs are cruel, deadly creatures that inhabit tropical waters and deep caves. They have the broad chest and front legs of an elephant, but their lower half tapers to a long, snakelike tail. A grootslang's head has the diamond shape of a viper's, but three adjacent pairs of tusks sprout from either side of its jaws and small, leaf-shaped ears crown its skull. The grootslang's leathery hide has a metallic sheen and a dull copper color, with green veins



throughout. Males and females grow to a length of 60 feet, standing 20 feet tall. Little differentiation exists between sexes save for a lighter green hue to the female's hide. Grootslangs can weigh 20 tons and live up to 500 years.

ECOLOGY

Legends claim that the grootslang is a primordial creature as old as the world itself. Such tales state that in those days the gods—new to the crafting of things—made a terrible mistake in the grootslang's creation, for they had given it tremendous strength, cunning, and intellect. Upon realizing their mistake, the gods split the grootslang into separate creatures and thus created the first elephants and the first snakes. But one of their original creations escaped, and from this first sire all other grootslangs have come. Scholars debate the veracity of such stories, and have looked to either biological or magical explanations of the creature's origins, but nevertheless bards and sages alike agree that the grootslang's fearsome reputation is well deserved.

All grootslangs are carnivorous and require hundreds of pounds of meat per meal to sustain themselves. At home on land or in water, they feed on large herd animals like zebras and elephants or on hippos and even small whales. Grootslangs' ability to travel large distances at great speed prevents them from over-hunting any one region; their metabolism being more reptilian than mammalian, they feed roughly once a week.

Although intelligent humanoids are too small to provide adequate nourishment, grootslangs delight in eating such creatures as it satisfies their appetite for cruelty. Stories are told throughout the Mwangi Expanse of grootslangs that ambush boats, small and large, offering to spare the vessels only if the passengers vote to throw one of their own to the creature as a meal. The grootslangs then watch as the agonizing decision is made. In rare instances, the grootslangs do not even eat the victims but let the entire crew go to live with the burden of their choice.

All grootslangs covet gems, particularly diamonds, and despite the creatures' lust for cruelty, victims can sometimes bargain for their freedom in exchange for large quantities of precious stones. Such deals must be carefully negotiated, however, as grootslangs have no compunctions about honoring their word and are just as likely to take the offered gems and then still eat those who offered them.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Grootslangs are solitary creatures and do not join with other members of their kind, even for mating. A grootslang's famous love of gems is actually tied to the creature's reproduction and not its avaricious nature. A

Grootslangs in Mythology

The grootslang, meaning "great snake" in the Afrikaans language, is a legendary cryptid of South Africa. Although descriptions vary, most accounts portray the beast as a strange combination of an elephant and a snake, either an elephant's head on a snake's body, or simply an elephant with a snake's tail. Regardless of the physical characteristics, all legends depict the grootslang as large and dangerous, capable of growing to a length of over 40 feet and of devouring entire elephants. Despite this danger, locals and foreign explorers alike have quested for the grootslang's home, a cave that mysteriously connects to the faraway sea and that is supposedly littered with diamonds. In 1917 Peter Grayson, a wealthy English businessman, tried to find the grootslang's lair and the fabled wealth within. After a series of injuries forced the rest of his party to turn back, Grayson vowed to continue alone. He was never seen again. To this day, the legend of Grayson's disappearance and the monster's own enduring folklore make even the most seasoned guides reluctant to approach the suspected lair of the grootslang.

female lays a single egg once every 50 years. When the female is ready to produce her egg, she ingests all of the gemstones she has amassed since producing her last egg. The digestion of the stones couples with the production of the egg, creating an egg that is slightly translucent, but as hard as stone. She then deposits it in a deep, dark corner of a body of water where it awaits fertilization. The egg emits a strong scent that diffuses into the water and alerts any passing males to its presence. Once a male detects the egg, the male also ingests a portion of its own cache of gemstones and then returns to fertilize the egg. As with the female, the male's consumption of the gems interacts with his reproductive system, and once the male has fertilized the egg, a second translucent and durable coating encases the now-gestating offspring within. Over a 2-year period, the embryonic grootslang develops, while the crystalline surface of the egg lets light and sound filter through to orient the embryo to its surroundings even before it hatches. Once sufficiently grown, the young grootslang begins to punch its way through the egg, sometimes needing a month or more to crack the egg's hardened surface. A hatchling grootslang is roughly the size of an adult crocodile, but needs another decade to reach full physical maturity. Reproductive maturity is achieved roughly 1 century after hatching.

HOLLOW SERPENT

An unseen breeze stirs the desiccated scales of this immense snakeskin, causing the shedding's frayed, dried edges to flutter with a semblance of life. Pinpoints of unholy green light flare behind the intact eye lenses as the head starts to rise. The same glow behind those long-dead eyes illuminates a gaping mouth and bony fangs. Then a terrifying, painful hiss assaults your mind as the serpent slithers forward with a silent, unearthly grace.

HOLLOW SERPENT

CR 16



XP 76,800

NE Large undead (reptilian)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., lifesense; Perception +17

Aura desiccation (30 ft., 1d4 Cha damage, Fort DC 26 negates)

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 19, flat-footed 21 (+9 Dex, +1 dodge, +12 natural, -1 size)

hp 230 (20d8+140); fast healing 10

Fort +14, **Ref** +17, **Will** +18

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 10/magic and silver; **Immune** undead traits; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., climb 50 ft.

Melee bite +23 (4d10+10 plus grab)

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

Special Attacks channel negative energy (8d6, DC 24, 9/day), constrict (4d10+10 plus energy drain), dissonant hiss, energy drain (1 level, DC 26), life-stealing coils

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +22)

Constant—*deathwatch*, *freedom of movement*

1/day—*horrid wilting* (DC 24), *waves of exhaustion*

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 29, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +25 (+29 grapple); **CMD** 43 (can't be tripped)

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Channel Smite, Dodge, Great

Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Lunge, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Finesse

Skills Climb +28, Escape Artist +19, Perception +17, Stealth +18

Languages Aklo; telepathy 100 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment underground

Organization solitary, pair, or nest (3–8)

Treasure Value double standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Channel Negative Energy (Su) As a standard action, a hollow serpent can channel negative energy in a 30-foot burst just like a 16th-level cleric of an evil deity. This ability requires no divine focus. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Desiccation Aura (Su) A cloud of negatively charged dust fills the air in a 30-foot radius around the body of a hollow serpent, causing living creatures within the area to make a DC 26 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of Charisma damage. Whether or not the save is successful, a creature cannot be

affected again by the same hollow serpent's desiccation aura for 24 hours. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Life-Draining Coils (Su) A hollow serpent seethes with negative energy capable of draining the life force of creatures trapped within its coils. While holding such victims, the hollow serpent's constrict ability bestows one negative level per round. The hollow serpent also gains 5 temporary hit points for each negative level it bestows.

Lifesense (Su) A hollow serpent notices and locates living creatures within 60 feet, just as if it possessed the blindsight ability.

LESSER HOLLOW SERPENT

CR 6



XP 2,400

NE Medium undead (reptilian)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., lifesense; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 71 (11d8+22); fast healing 5

Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2; **DR** 5/magic and silver; **Immune** undead traits; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +12 (2d8+4 plus grab)

Special Attacks constrict (2d8+4 plus 2d6 negative energy), negatively charged coils

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 19, **Con** —, **Int** 2, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +11 (+15 grapple); **CMD** 26 (can't be tripped)

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Climb +16, Escape Artist +7, Perception +6, Stealth +10

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Lifesense (Su) A hollow serpent notices and locates living creatures within 60 feet, just as if it possessed the blindsight ability.

Negatively Charged Coils (Su) A hollow serpent deals an additional 2d6 points of damage caused by negative energy to victims trapped within its coils. A successful DC 16 Will save reduces the damage by half. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Among the many manifestations of serpentfolk faith, the hollow serpent represents one of the most horrific harbingers of doom. Serpentfolk legend suggests Ydersius created the first hollow serpents as protectors and guardians for their underground enclaves. But serpentfolk priests soon learned how to make more, worshiping and cultivating the skin sheddings of monstrosly giant snakes with rituals to turn them into engines of destruction. Capable of laying waste to entire regions, the hollow serpents used their life-draining coils to slay the enemies of the serpentfolk, proving particularly effective against the Azlanti empire

in the early years of the serpentfolk's age-long struggle against humanity. Eventually, however, the Azlanti learned to combat these skins with positive energy and fire. With the retreat of the mighty snake-god and his people into the shadows of the Darklands, serpentfolk priests have hoarded the most potent of these defenders as guardians of the hibernation chambers of the serpentfolk elite.

A typical hollow serpent measures a little over 15 feet long and weighs 500 pounds. A lesser hollow serpent is 7 feet long and weighs just 90 pounds.

ECOLOGY

As undead creatures, hollow serpents require nothing in the way of sustenance, but their voracious appetite for the life-energy of living creatures is well documented in the annals of Azlanti and serpentfolk lore. The temporary energy derived from their life-draining coils sends most hollow serpents into a feeding frenzy. And their lifesense ability helps them search out even the most well-hidden prey. Much like the predator snakes they mimic, hollow serpents enjoy the hunt and may stalk living creatures for days through the subterranean passageways of the Darklands or the ruined cities of the serpentfolk.

Only the high priests of Ydersius know the proper rituals and ceremonies to infuse a shedding with enough divine magic to awaken it into a hollow serpent. However, a hollow serpent also possesses the means to create lesser offspring from its own desiccated flesh. These lesser hollow serpents are much smaller and limited in power, but their undersized nature allows them to venture into passageways a larger hollow serpent could never reach. Serpentfolk priests have also learned how to create these lesser hollow serpents using snakeskin sheddings from normal constrictor snakes, imbuing them with unlife as temple guardians.

To spawn a lesser hollow serpent, a hollow serpent must undergo a molting cycle that lasts 3 months. Prior to this hibernation, it must also inflict no less than nine negative levels on living creatures, storing up the temporary energy from these life-draining attacks to pass onto its new offspring. Thereafter, the hollow serpent sheds a piece of its own skin, which then grows into a lesser hollow serpent.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Hollow serpents have little in the way of society or culture of their own. Beholden to the snake-god, who grants their existence, they exist only to serve and defend the serpentfolk species. Lesser hollow serpents spawned by a hollow serpent intuitively stay near their progenitor—somehow interconnected through the negative energy and siphoned life forces shared between them. Spellcasters who create a lesser hollow serpent on their own may only command its loyalty if capable of commanding undead.

CREATING A HOLLOW SERPENT

While the first hollow serpents were supposedly created from scales shed by beasts favored by the Serpent King himself, and those unholy snakeskins can even shed their own lesser offspring over time, serpentfolk priests can also create their own lesser hollow serpents. A lesser hollow serpent created by a serpentfolk priest requires a more involved process. The priest must fill a clay pot with dirt taken from a serpentfolk grave, the skin and bones of a giant constrictor snake, an onyx gem worth at least 250 gp, and a sprinkling of unholy water. Thereafter, a 15th-level caster must cast *create undead* on the skin stuffed with the other assembled reagents.



SERPENT'S SKULL

KONGAMATO

A reptilian creature dives from the sky with a piercing scream. As it hits the ground, wings the width of sails throw up dirt and leaves. The creature's draconic body tapers to an unmistakably birdlike head with a backward sweeping crest and a beak that resembles a giant military pick. As it moves, the air around it thrums with a high-pitched wail.

KONGAMATO

CR 15



XP 51,200

N Huge dragon

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 11, flat-footed 26 (+3 Dex, +18 natural, -2 size)

hp 261 (18d12+141)

Fort +19; **Ref** +16; **Will** +13

DR 10/magic; **Immune** dragon traits, magic paralysis, sleep, sonic; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 26

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 160 ft. (average)

Melee bite +28 (2d6+18), 2 claws +26 (1d8+6), tail slap +26 (2d6+6), 2 wings +26 (1d8+6)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft

Special Attacks breath weapon (50-foot cone, 1d6 sonic, Reflex DC 20 half, usable once every 1d4 rounds), wailing dive

STATISTICS

Str 34, **Dex** 17, **Con** 26, **Int** 9, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +32; **CMD** 45 (49 vs. trip)

Feats Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch, Wingover

Skills Climb +19, Fly +20, Intimidate +16, Perception +23, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +13, Survival +20

Languages Draconic

SQ narrow flight, piercing beak

ECOLOGY

Environment tropical forests

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Narrow Flight (Ex) When airborne, kongamatos can fold their wings around their bodies to fit through tight spaces. While flying, kongamatos can fit through areas up to half their width without suffering the penalties to movement and Armor Class and on attack rolls usually incurred for squeezing.

Piercing Beak (Ex) A kongamato's beak is extremely hard and adept at breaking objects. When attempting to sunder an item, a kongamato's beak attack does double damage and is treated as if it were adamantite for the purposes of overcoming the object's hardness.



Wailing Dive (Su) When a kongamato makes a charge while flying or uses its Flyby Attack feat, the creature's body becomes infused with energy, causing its bite to do an extra +1d6 points of sonic damage on that attack.

Kongamatos are primeval dragons that still hunt the deep jungles of the world. Although not as intelligent or magically adept as their "true" cousins, kongamatos are respected and feared for their resilience and awesome strength. While the kongamato's body is clearly draconic—squat and dense with sharp claws capping each of its four limbs—the creature's head is distinctly avian, with a long, toothless beak and a pronounced crest. A kongamato's hide is a rich emerald hue, with an ash-colored underbelly, and crimson webbing of its broad wings. Females have smaller head-crests than males, and both the undersides of their wings and their underbellies have a rosy hue.

Both males and females grow to a length of almost 30 feet, with an equally broad wingspan, and can weigh up to 7 tons. Kongamatos live between 500 and 600 years.

ECOLOGY

Kongamatos are an ancient race of dragon, thought to be either a progenitor species to modern dragon-kind or the result of crossbreeding between dragons and pterosaurs. Now found only in the deepest and hottest jungles, legends say that their numbers once darkened the skies. Such tales often go on to hail kongamatos as "pure" dragons, claiming that exposure to arcane magic caused the split between the original kongamato and what evolved into their chromatic and metallic cousins. Some even point to kongamatos as a missing link of sorts between dragons and the shrieking reptiles known as yrthaks.

Regardless of their origins, kongamatos are apex predators that make their lairs in the tops of the oldest and strongest trees, or in caves and ruins. Kongamatos are carnivorous and prey on large herd animals. Although they do not have teeth, their beaks are sharp and strong, allowing them to carve their kills with precision and to punch through wood, rock, and even metal. When possible, kongamatos hunt on the perimeter of their territories, their ability to fly through impossibly small places allowing them to hunt in even the thickest foliage.

The crest atop a kongamato's head houses a muscular labyrinth of valves and chambers that store and pressurize air. When the creature descends or draws in successive deep breaths, the valves fill and the muscles within condense the air into an almost solid state. When its crest is full, a kongamato can unleash the trapped air in a wave that travels over bones in the back of the creature's throat, vibrating them to generate an ear-splitting pitch. The resultant blast can shatter stone, strip branches from trees, and crush bone with ease.

Kongamatos in Mythology

The kongamato is a creature of southern African folklore. Said to inhabit the Jiundu swamps in western Zambia, most legends describe it as a flying lizard with red wings and an oversized beak filled with sharp teeth. The creature's name translates to "the breaker of boats"—fishermen claim that the creature will attack any vessels that approach it, and some legends say that even looking upon the kongamato causes death. The first reported sighting was by Frank Melland, a Western writer, in 1923. Since then, more than six other kongamato sightings have been made. In all cases, observers have noted the kongamato's prehistoric look, leading some to believe the creature is not a mythical beast but a lost dinosaur that has survived to the present day. Skeptics note that no photographic evidence exists and claim the creature is most likely a misclassified bird or bat. Others argue that western Tanzania's hazardous terrain, impregnable jungle canopy, and poisonous wildlife are a disincentive to explorers and that if any place on earth could hide a lost dinosaur, it would be the swamps of Jiundu.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Kongamatos are predominantly solitary as even a small group could risk overhunting an entire region. Females lay a single egg once per century, and during this mating season, males and females form a hunting pair until the egg is laid. After the male fertilizes the egg, the female curls her body around it for protection. Kongamato eggs can take up to a year to hatch. During this time, the male brings food to the incubating mother and greatly expands the range of his hunting territory in order to satisfy the needs of both parents. When the egg hatches, the father departs, returning to his own lair and leaving the mother to rear the hatchling. Hatchling kongamatos reach half of their adult size within the first 3 years of life—when the mother also departs to find or reclaim her own territory—and achieve reproductive maturity at 10 years.

Although kongamatos do not traditionally prey on humanoids, no creature is safe during the incubation season if a kongamato's food becomes scarce. In the Mwangi Expanse, some villages keep detailed, elaborate calendars dating back a hundred generations aimed solely at predicting when a nearby kongamato will reproduce. In such years, all members of the community set aside a portion of their harvest or livestock as an offering to the "pure dragons."

SERPENT'S SKULL



MALE HUMAN

DEITY Atheist
HOMELAND Absalom

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Wizard 15
ALIGNMENT Neutral Good
INITIATIVE +3
SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 11
DEXTERITY 9
CONSTITUTION 12
INTELLIGENCE 27
WISDOM 15
CHARISMA 9

DEFENSE

HP 89
AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor, -1 Dex, +1 insight)
Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +18

SKILLS

Appraise +26, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowledge (geography) +26, Knowledge (history) +26, Knowledge (local) +26, Knowledge (planes) +26, Linguistics +26, Perception +17, Spellcraft +26, Swim +18

FEATS

Arcane Strike, Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus, Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Penetration

OFFENSE

Melee staff of evocation +7/+2 (1d6)
Ranged +4 light crossbow +10 (1d8+4/19-20)
Base Atk +7; CMB +7; CMD 16
Special Abilities arcane bond, hand of the apprentice (11/day), metamagic master

Spells Prepared (CL 15th; concentration +23)

8th—iron body, polar ray
7th—delayed blast fireball (DC 27), forcecage (DC 27), greater teleport
6th—chain lightning (2; DC 26), disintegrate (DC 24), true seeing
5th—cone of cold (2; DC 25), telekinesis (2; DC 23), wall of force
4th—d. door, ice storm (2), stonkskin, wall of fire
3rd—dis. magic (2), fireball (2; DC 23), haste (2)
2nd—bull str., invis., scorch. ray (3), web (2; DC 20)
1st—mage armor, magic missile (4), shield
o (at will)—detect magic (2), light, read magic

Familiar weasel named Sneak

Combat Gear potion of cure serious wounds (2), scroll of dismissal, wand of lightning bolt (CL 7th, 50 charges), alchemist's fire (2); **Other Gear** +4 light crossbow with 20 bolts, staff of evocation (10 charges), dagger, bracers of armor +7, cloak of resistance +5, headband of vast intelligence +6 (Knowledge [planes]), dusty rose ioun stone, ring of minor energy resistance (fire), backpack, scroll case, spell component pouch, rations (4), spellbook, 90 gp

Ezren's childhood changed when his father was charged with heresy. Ezren spent much of his adult life attempting to prove his father's innocence, only to discover his father was in fact guilty. The revelation shook his faith in family and church, and he abandoned both, setting out to find a new life. Ezren fell naturally into the ways of wizardry, and swiftly became a gifted spellcaster.



FEMALE HUMAN

DEITY Sarenrae
HOMELAND Qadira

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Cleric 15
ALIGNMENT Neutral Good
INITIATIVE -1
SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 13
DEXTERITY 8
CONSTITUTION 14
INTELLIGENCE 10
WISDOM 26
CHARISMA 12

DEFENSE

HP 104
AC 31, touch 14, flat-footed 31 (+11 armor, +5 deflection, -1 Dex, +6 shield)
Fort +16, Ref +9, Will +24

SKILLS

Diplomacy +19, Heal +26, Knowledge (religion) +18, Perception +23, Swim -3

FEATS

Channel Smite, Combat Casting, Extra Channel, Improved Channel, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Selective Channel, Turn Undead, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

OFFENSE

Melee +4 scimitar +17/+12/+7 (1d6+5/18-20)
Ranged +3 light crossbow +13 (1d8+3/19-20)
Base Atk +11; CMB +12; CMD 26

Special Abilities channel positive energy 6/day (DC 18, 8d6 [+13 vs. undead]), healer's blessing, nimbus of light (15 rounds), sun's blessing

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; conc. +23)
11/day—rebuke death (1d4+7)

Spells Prepared (CL 15th; concentration +23)

8th—earthquake, holy aura, sunburst^D (DC 26)
7th—resurrection (2), sun beam^D (DC 25; 2)
6th—banishment (DC 24), heal^D (3), heroes' f.
5th—cure crit. w. (2), f. strike^D (DC 23), n. poison. (2)
4th—dismissal (2; DC 22), divine power (3), fire shield^D
3rd—dispel magic (3), prayer, searing light^D (3)
2nd—aid (4), bull's str. (2), heat metal^D (DC 20)
1st—bless, endure elements^D (3), shield of faith (4)
o (at will)—c. water, d. magic, light, mending
D Domain spell; Domains Healing, Sun

Combat Gear potion of c. serious wounds (2), scroll of break enchantment, scroll of resurrection, wand of cure serious wounds (CL 5th, 50 charges); **Gear** +5 moderate fortification chainmail, +4 heavy wooden shield, +3 light crossbow with 20 bolts, +4 scimitar, cloak of resistance +5, headband of inspired wisdom +6, ring of protection +5, backpack, silver holy symbol, rations (6), 343 gp

On the smoking ruins of her village, Kyra swore her life to Sarenrae. She lost her family that fateful day, yet where another might be consumed by anger, Kyra found peace in the Dawnflower, and in the belief that if she can prevent even one death at evil hands, her loss will not have been in vain.





FEMALE ELF

DEITY Calistria
HOMELAND Varisia

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Rogue 15
ALIGNMENT Chaotic Neutral
INITIATIVE +12
SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 14
DEXTERITY 26
CONSTITUTION 14
INTELLIGENCE 10
WISDOM 13
CHARISMA 10

DEFENSE

HP 119
AC 32, touch 20, flat-footed 26 (+7 armor, +4 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural)
Fort +13, Ref +23, Will +12; +2 vs. enchantments
Senses low-light vision
Defensive Abilities improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge

SKILLS

Acrobatics +27 (+37 on jumps), Bluff +19, Climb +21, Disable Device +27, Perception +22, Sleight of Hand +27, Stealth +37, Swim +31

FEATS

Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Wind Stance

OFFENSE

Melee +4 keen rapier +23/+18/+13 (1d6+6/15-20)
Ranged mwk dagger +20/+15/+10 (1d4+4/19-20)
Base Atk +11; CMB +13; CMD 36
Special Abilities sneak attack +8d6, trap sense +5, trapfinding +7

Rogue Talents bleeding attack, combat trick, fast stealth, improved evasion, opportunist, surprise attack, trap spotter

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of invisibility*, acid, alchemist's fire (2); **Other Gear** +4 *imp. shadow studded leather armor*, +4 *keen rapier*, mwk. daggers (8), *amulet of natural armor* +5, *bag of holding* (type 1), *belt of incredible Dexterity* +6, *cloak of resistance* +5, *goggles of night*, *ring of improved jumping*, *ring of protection* +4, *stone of good luck*, *winged boots*, backpack, grappling hook, hooded lantern, oil (5), rations (3), silk rope, thieves' tools, 104 gp

Merisiel's life experiences have taught her to enjoy things to their fullest as they occur, since it's impossible to tell when the good times might end. Never the sharpest knife in the drawer, Merisiel makes up for this by carrying at least a dozen of them on her person. She hasn't met a problem yet that can't, in one way or another, be solved with things that slice. While she's always on the move and working on her latest batch of plots for easy money, in the end it comes down to being faster than everyone else—either on her feet, or with her beloved blades. She wouldn't have it any other way.



MALE HUMAN

DEITY Cayden Cailean
HOMELAND Andoran

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Fighter 15
ALIGNMENT Neutral Good
INITIATIVE +8
SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 20
DEXTERITY 19
CONSTITUTION 16
INTELLIGENCE 13
WISDOM 8
CHARISMA 10

DEFENSE

HP 164
AC 33, touch 20, flat-footed 28 (+11 armor, +5 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 Dodge, +2 shield)
Fort +16, Ref +13, Will +8; +4 vs. fear

SKILLS

Climb +23, Intimidate +18, Perception -1, Survival +17, Swim +23

FEATS

Combat Expertise, Critical Focus, Disruptive, Dodge, Double Slice, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Spellbreaker, Staggering Critical, Step Up, Toughness, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

OFFENSE

Melee +4 icy burst longsword +28/+23/+18 (1d8+14 plus 1d6 cold/17-20) or
Dual Wielding +4 icy burst longsword +26/+22/+16 (1d8+14 plus 1d6 cold/17-20) and +3 short sword +22/+16 (1d6+4/19-20)
Ranged +3 composite longbow +23/+18/+13 (1d8+9/x3)
Base Atk +15; CMB +20; CMD 40
Special Abilities armor training 4, bravery +4, weapon training (heavy blades +3, light blades +2, bows +1)

Combat Gear *potions of cure serious wounds* (3); **Other Gear** +5 *breastplate*, +3 *composite longbow* (+4 Str) with 20 arrows, +4 *icy burst longsword*, +3 *short sword*, *belt of physical might* (Str and Con) +4, *boots of levitation*, *cloak of resistance* +4, *ring of force shield*, *ring of protection* +5, backpack, rations (2), silk rope, 25 gp

Born a farmer's son in the quiet Andoren countryside, Valeros spent his youth dreaming of adventure and exploring the world. For the past several years, he's been a mercenary, a freelance bounty hunter, and hired muscle for a dozen different employers. Gone is his youthful naivete, replaced by scars and the resolve of a veteran warrior. While noble at heart, Valeros hides this virtue beneath a jaded, sometimes crass demeanor, often claiming that there's no better way to end a day's adventuring than with "an evening of hard drinking and soft company."

THE HAUNTING OF HARROWSTONE

by Michael Kortez

A mysterious death heralds the coming of strange days to the sleepy Ustalavic town of Ravengro. Soon the night trembles with the moans of the unquiet dead as the greatest villains ever imprisoned within the walls of nearby Harrowstone—a prison consumed by flames that none survived—tread the land once more. When a friend's burial throws the PCs into the midst of the terror stalking Ravengro, it's up to them to discover what dark forces stirred the sleeping spirits and what power might imprison Harrowstone's ghostly escapees once more.

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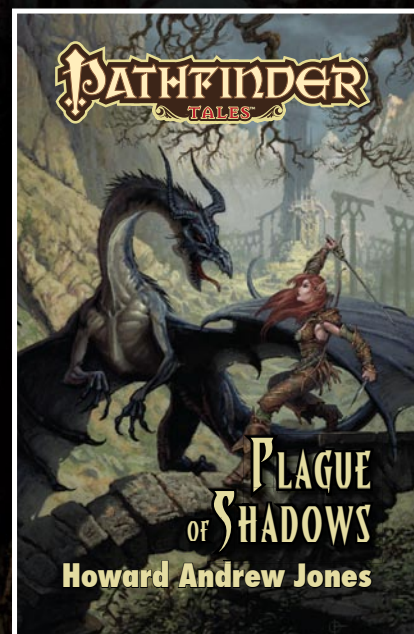


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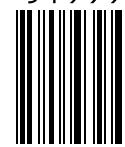
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