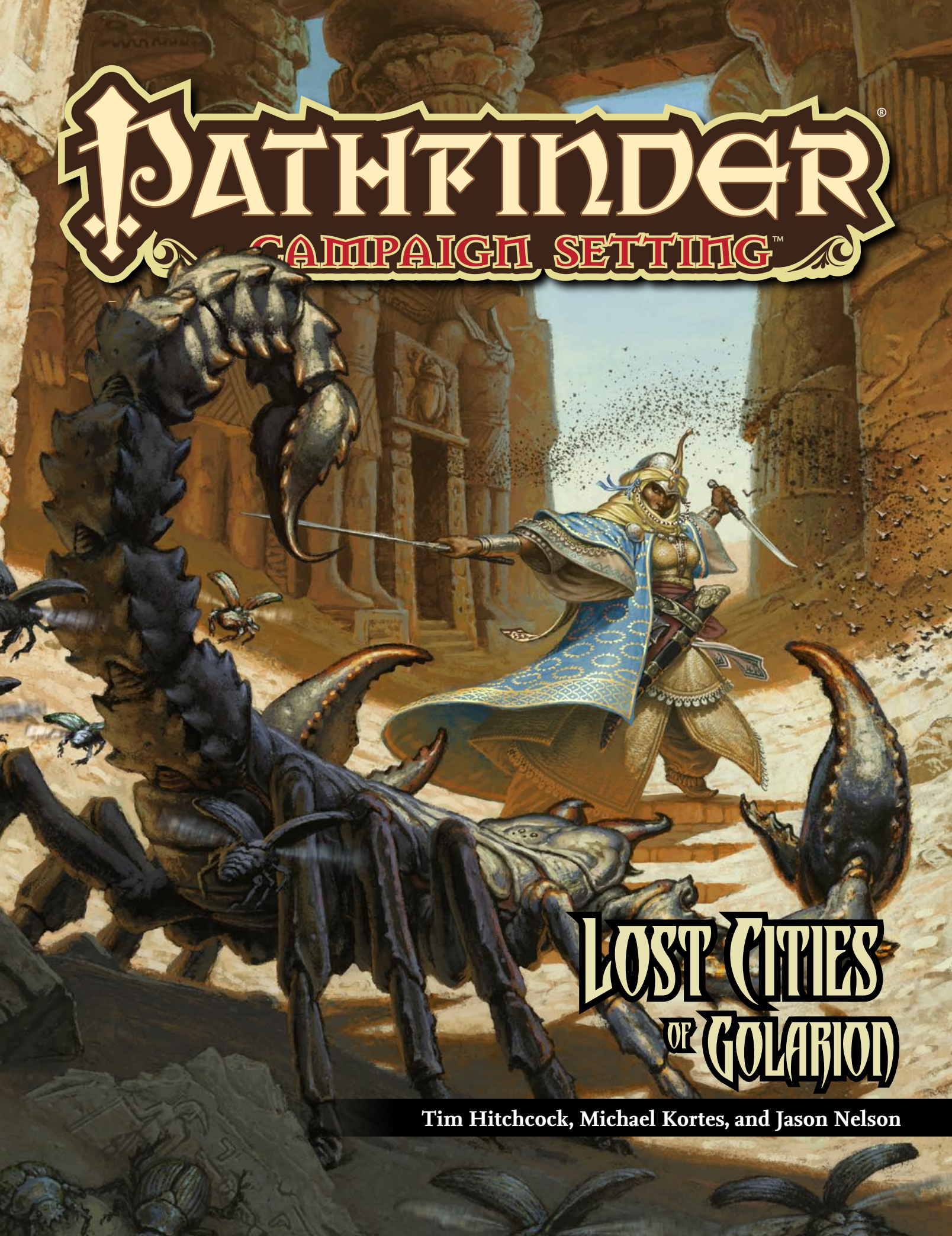


PATHFINDER

CAMPAIGN SETTING™



LOST CITIES OF GOLARION

Tim Hitchcock, Michael Kortes, and Jason Nelson

LOST CITIES OF GOLARION



SUN TEMPLE COLONY

XID-SHALAST

STORASTA

LUVARANDIN

KHO

TUMEN

LOST CITIES OF GOLARION

A Pathfinder Campaign Setting Supplement

This book works best with the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* and the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*. Although it is suitable for play in any fantasy world, it is optimized for use in the Pathfinder campaign setting.



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THAT WHICH IS LOST

Every city is an adventure location.

Given the sheer number of people living and working in a full-fledged city, there's bound to be just about any story you can imagine being told within its walls and buildings. Love and hate, murder, kidnapping, redemption, and falls from grace—it's all just one block over, or in the next apartment. Add in a few fantastical elements, some shadow wizards, secret assassins, or honor-bound crusaders, and the possibilities increase a thousandfold.

At least, that's what we at Paizo thought when we came up with the idea for *Cities of Golarion*, an earlier installment in the Pathfinder Campaign Setting line. By our reckoning, getting six brand-new urban campaign settings in the same book, each full of weird locations and flavorful sidebars, would create an incredible resource for GMs looking for a quick city to set their next adventure in. As it turns out, a lot of the folks who picked up the book agreed, and we began thinking about how we might go about introducing even more such locations in the future.

Yet as we were thinking, we realized something else. While living cities are a lot of fun, there are some stories they can't tell: the stories in which a city falls, and horrors forgotten for a thousand years take root in its ruins. More than just dungeons within a city, we wanted to present entire cities that were themselves dungeons, with huge, bizarre themes that are too big for your average city. Whereas *Cities of Golarion* was designed to let GMs drop their PCs into the world and immediately start adventuring, this new book would put groups through their paces, providing irresistible lures and potentially fatal roadblocks before they ever reach the city walls.

Thus *Lost Cities of Golarion* was born. Within its pages, you'll find six heavily detailed cities drawn straight from the mythology of Golarion itself. These are no generic adventure sites, though they can of course be used as such by GMs in need of a quick adventure setting. Rather, these cities are living, breathing parts of the Pathfinder campaign setting—from the crashed remains of the legendary sky-city of Kho to the crumbling Thassilonian stronghold of Xin-Shalast. The creatures there have become legends, and every idol and artifact speaks of age and abandonment.

Now send in your PCs and shake things up a little.

THE LOST CITIES

Below are summaries of the six cities presented in this book.

Ilvarandin: In the deepest reaches of the Darklands lies a mostly abandoned city of spires and towers, stretching high into the darkness of a gaping vault. Within its shadowed

avenues, humanoids of all shapes and types cavort and indulge in a festival of earthly delights, their secret hideaway a hedonistic utopia. Or is it? For the things in the dark may not be what they seem, and those emissaries who carry word of glorious Ilvarandin may not be who they say they are. Written by Russ Taylor—for additional information on Ilvarandin, see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Into the Darklands*.

Kho: Millennia ago, the Shory possessed a magnificent culture, and were known for their refinement, their art—and most of all, their magic. Through the efforts of their powerful aeromancers, the Shory astonished other nations by lifting entire cities free from the earth and sending them sailing high above the clouds, where they wandered at their residents' command, carrying the Shory far across continents and oceans. Yet despite their power, no empire lasts forever, and eventually the Shory fell from grace, and with them their cities. The first sky city to fall was the legendary city of Kho, which crashed under mysterious circumstances on the northeastern edge of the Mwangi Expanse, where the jungle meets the mountains. Today, the city lies lost and forgotten by many—but not uninhabited. For inside its wreckage, strange energies and engines still fire and pulse, and even stranger residents have claimed them as their own. Written by Jason Nelson—for more information on Kho and the surrounding regions, see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Heart of the Jungle*.

Storasta: Once known for its gardens and groves, Storasta was lost long ago to the ravages of the demonic Worldwound. Its lands, annexed by the Abyss, defy even the greatest Mendevian warriors' attempts to reach and redeem them. Though no more than 70 miles from the gleaming crusader city of Nerosyan, Storasta today is a ruin, all blackened stones and tainted plant life. Even many demons find the place inhospitable, so choked and infested is it with assassin vines, corrupted treants, and worse. Both the landscape and the river are grotesque parodies of their former glory, yet there are still great treasures and opportunities within the demons' garden for those who dare pass beyond its unholy gates. Written by Jason Nelson.

Sun Temple Colony: Azlant, the first bastion of human civilization, is little more than a legend today. From its womb rose gods and demons, and the culture that gave birth and succor to many of the cultures of the Inner Sea. Yet as time's millstone ground on, Azlant fell, destroyed in the cataclysm of the *Starstone's* fall. While most of the great nation sank into the sea, there remain scattered islands and patches still above the waves of the trackless Arcadian Ocean, guarded by the vicious and alien Mordant Spire elves. It was on one such island refuge that intrepid settlers from Avistan attempted to found



a colony, a bold new holding from which the many peoples of Avistan could search for lost knowledge and explore the secrets of their own uncharted past. Yet what they found there was not simply old relics and writings, ancient technology and indecipherable magic. Despite their power, the great Azlanti were not perfect, and not all of their experiments were wise or ethical. It was the result of one such experiment that those first Andoren colonists encountered—and which became their doom. For on the lost and shattered islands of the Sun Temple Colony, an amorphous and gestating godling awaits, ready to secure new worshipers by any means necessary. Written by Brandon Hodge.

Tumen: Amid the drifting sands of Osirion's great deserts hides a city of wonders. Constructed by the legendary Four Pharaohs toward the end of their reign, the cliffside redoubt known as Tumen is four cities in one, each built to the specifications of its patron pharaoh. Yet with the fall of those godlike rulers, Tumen too has fallen into disuse and disrepair, with any roads to its gates hidden completely by the wildly shifting sands. Though the era of pharaonic greatness has passed into the history books, the lost city of Tumen still maintains many of the wonders that made it famous... and even more of the dangers. Written by Michael Kortés—for more information on Tumen and the surrounding region, see the *Pathfinder Player Companion Osirion, Land of Pharaohs*.

Xin-Shalast: Before Earthfall, before the exodus and return of the elves, before Aroden became a god and Azlant was lost to the sea, the great empire of Thassilon dominated the northern coastal region known today as Varisia. Within this nation, seven rulers known as the Runelords presided over seven different fiefdoms, each dominated by one of the Seven Rewards of Rule (values that eventually became known as the Seven Sins of the Soul). Though the sinful empire has long since crumbled, leaving in its wake the shattered tribes that would eventually become Varisia's indigenous peoples, not all of its monuments and relics have gone with it. High in the Kodar Mountains, the city of Xin-Shalast still stands, silent and brooding in the shadow of the great volcano Mhar Massif. Once the capital of Runelord Karzoug the Claimer's empire of greed, Xin-Shalast now waits for bold adventurers to lay their own claim on its riches and awaken that which is best left asleep. Written by Tim Hitchcock—for more information on Xin-Shalast, Karzoug, and the empire of Thassilon, see the *Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path*, particularly "Spire of Xin-Shalast" in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #6*.

Using This Book

Each city in this book is presented using the same format, for greater ease of reference. While some of the categories are obvious in their function—the initial overview, appearance, history, residents, relations and trade, and sites of interest sections—some are a bit more involved.

Perhaps the most unique of these latter sections is the city campaign section. Broken into low, middle, and high level, the campaign sections offer unique adventure hooks and gamemastering advice tailored to parties from all three level bands, as well as handy tips should you decide to run an entire campaign set in the city.

Yet a lost city needs more than just cool locations, irresistible adventure hooks, and a beautiful full-page map. It also needs monsters—lots of monsters. Fortunately, we've got you covered. In addition to random encounter tables (again broken down by level band), we've also got a number of variant monsters for each location, new takes on classic monsters and simple modifications to turn generic creatures into memorable, region-specific horrors. Add on a full stat block for a brand-new monster or villain, plus a new major magical item or valuable artifact for each city, and you've got a whole toolbox of terror to throw at your players.





ILVARANDIN

“OF THE POEMS THE NOTED ALCHEMIST VUMESHKI PUBLISHED IN HIS NOTEWORTHY (IF OBSCURE) TEXT ‘SONGS AT SUN’S EBB,’ NONE HAS FASCINATED READERS MORE THAN ‘ILVARANDIN.’ IN THIS CURIOUS POEM, VUMESHKI DESCRIBES ETERNAL LIFE NOT ON SOME DISTANT PLANE BEYOND DEATH, BUT IN A PHYSICAL UTOPIA HIDDEN IN THE UNREACHABLE DEPTHS BELOW OUR OWN WORLD. NOTE THAT IN THE ORIGINAL EDITION, THE LAST QUATRAIN IS OMITTED. THIS OMISSION, TOGETHER WITH THE OBVIOUSLY INFERIOR TECHNIQUE AND BROKEN METER OF THESE FINAL FOUR LINES, CLEARLY INDICATES THAT THIS STANZA WAS ADDED BY A LATER, LESSER TALENT, WHOSE IDENTITY REMAINS A MYSTERY.”

—MORAKPON OF CHELIAX, REPPED IN EXILE IN MAGNIMAR



Deep below western Avistan, hidden in an ancient cavern the size of a small country in the Darklands of Orv, sprawl the silent streets of Ilvarandin. Hundreds of miles wide, the vast city is perhaps the largest urban sprawl in or under Golarion, yet the endless streets and grand plazas of the so-called Mute Metropolis lie silent, its few inhabitants huddled together in small enclaves. Only in the city's heart does Ilvarandin awaken. Here, dwarves walk side by side with duergar, elves rub shoulders with drow, and humans and derros live together in peace. None grow old here in High Ilvarandin, for it is an unearthly paradise of feasts and pleasure palaces. Yet this utopian vision is a sham: those who walk its streets are already dead, their corpses slave to the whims of intellect devourer masters who wear flesh like clothing, using their victims to indulge their unspeakable depravities.

Isolated settlements of refugees from the upper Darklands eke out a meager existence in Ilvarandin's outer reaches. They live in terror of the city's mysterious heart, for while those who travel to the center of Ilvarandin may return, but they never do so unchanged. In truth, the horror is nearer than any suspect. The intellect devourers watch over these outlying settlements as humans tend ranches, fattening the bodies and minds of their herds until they're ready to use them. And with the development of an eerie new elixir known as the *midnight milk*, a magical drug brewed from the secretions of vast fungal monsters, the intellect devourers are finally expanding their attentions beyond Ilvarandin's borders to the surface world far above.

APPEARANCE

The city of Ilvarandin lies within an immense cavern in Orv, the deepest realm of the Darklands below the Inner Sea region. Known as Vaults, these vast caverns were built and abandoned eons ago by mysterious creatures known today only as the Vault Builders. The city of Ilvarandin fills its vault from wall to wall, a dizzying expanse of towers, domes, arches, avenues, and plazas. The architectural style varies throughout, with buildings showing Azlanti, elven, serpentfolk, and even aboleth influence. Other expanses resemble styles known to the surface only in ancient ruins of uncertain origin, and still others are unlike any construction found elsewhere on Golarion.

Clouds of phosphorescent fungi floating high above keep the city in a perpetual pale green twilight. These fungi also find ready homes in the graceful spires and towers of Ilvarandin, creating glowing landmarks visible for miles around.

The millennia have not been kind to Ilvarandin. Whole districts have fallen into disrepair, and others have been deliberately razed to make way for fungal farms

ILVARANDIN

In deepest dark where corpselight glows,
And love and life eternal flows;
The spiral path of midnight shows:
The route to Ilvarandin.

Bright towers reach from sunless stones,
Strange steeples vie with terraced cones;
A blessed sight for aching bones:
The spires of Ilvarandin.

To live a life on Sunless coast,
To love and lust amid the host,
To seek and feel what pleases most:
The joys of Ilvarandin.

Long life for all and death for none,
The mortal coil at last undone;
Eternal bliss and joy begun:
The gift of Ilvarandin.

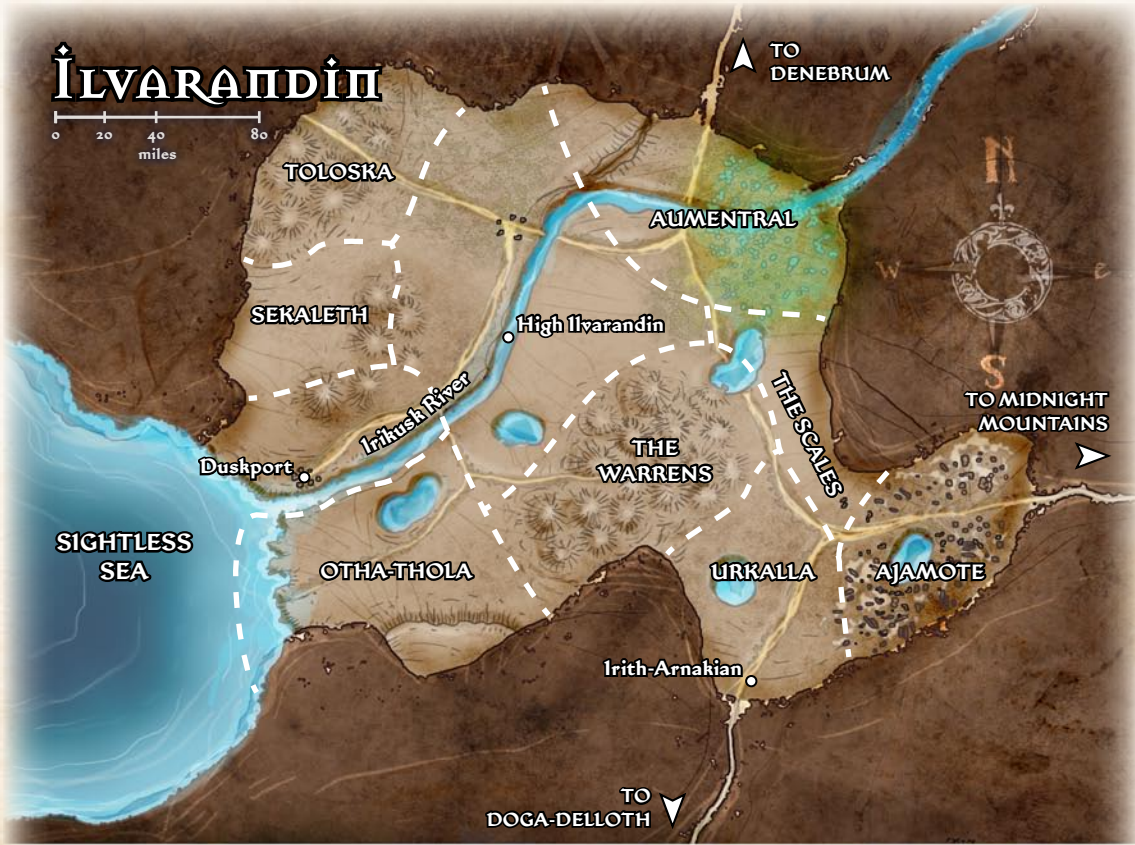
Yet distant lords of dark yesteryear,
Draw plans in caverns steeped in fear—
The worm-kings of Denebrum draw near:
The end of Ilvarandin.

and subterranean herds. Even portions of the cavern ceiling have given way as the ancient magic sustaining the Vault's architecture has faltered. Little trace remains of Ilvarandin's original inhabitants. The rare intact sculpture, relief, or fresco indicates that many different races once called the great city home, but tells nothing of their fate.

HISTORY

The founding of Ilvarandin is lost in the mists of time. That the city was the work of the mysterious Vault Builders seems certain, for only they had mastery over the magic that keeps the dense stone of Golarion's interior from reclaiming Orv's many Vaults. Ilvarandin is ancient almost beyond reckoning, built in the manner of empires long faded from Golarion. The ultimate purpose of the patchwork city remains as mysterious as the fate of the Vault Builders themselves.

When Earthfall reshaped Golarion thousands of years ago, the Vault Builders were already long vanished. When a band of elves seeking refuge from the cataclysm above fled deep into the Darklands, the seemingly abandoned city was an answer to their prayers. Not yet affected by the foul influences that would turn them into drow, the elves settled in the western portion of the city, in an area built





in familiar elven style. But soon the vanishings began. First a few lone elves, then entire families disappeared, as though they had simply abandoned their homes and walked away. The surviving elves stayed, believing the city still safer than the other terrors of the Darklands. A scant year later, the vanished elves returned in force, fighting their kin savagely. Soon the root of their treachery became clear—as the crazed elves fell, horrors burst forth from their skulls. Shaking themselves free of gore were nearly indestructible mockeries of brains, walking on four clawed feet. These brain-creatures fell upon the elves, slaying them and claiming their bodies. Only a handful of the elves escaped Ilvarandin, their harrowing tale becoming the earliest account of the dangers of Ilvarandin.

Frustrated at the loss of so many potential hosts, the intellect devourers never again acted so rashly. They spread agents clad in stolen flesh throughout the Darklands, seeding whispers and rumors of the Mute Metropolis among every society they discovered. Visionaries, malcontents, and refugees were lured to Ilvarandin in search of the promised utopia at its heart. Countless small communities have grown up in Ilvarandin over the centuries, tended by the intellect devourers as surface dwellers tend crops and cattle.

Yet not all in the Darklands were easy prey. In the neighboring Vault of Denebrum, the intellect devourers found their greatest foe: the neothelids, few in number but more than a match for the walking brains. The intellect devourers retreated back to the safety of Ilvarandin, but neothelids have long memories and great patience.

Five hundred years ago, the neothelids shook off the malaise of their ancient near-extinction, and once again sought mastery over all of Orv. For centuries, the two ancient evils have warred by proxy, the neothelids using wriggling minions like seugathi and worms that walk, and the intellect devourers battling with stolen bodies selected specifically for their skills and powers in battle. Countless times Denebrum has neared victory in the field, only to be thwarted by the clever stratagems of High Ilvarandin. Even so, the intellect devourers continue to lose ground, and now the forces of Denebrum are encamped even within Ilvarandin's Vault.

RESIDENTS

Expatriates from all manner of Darklands communities have come to Ilvarandin. Most band together in small communities scattered through the outer edges of the city. Morlocks in particular have taken well to the city, gathering in dens of as many as 200 in the district of Toloska.

A number of derro settlements pepper Ilvarandin, dwelling in tunnels under the buildings themselves. Heretical or exiled drow, having been forced to flee their

homes in Sekamina above, live in the elven boroughs of Otha-Thola to the south of Duskport and Sekaleth to the north. Gargoyles are common in other reaches of the city, lurking amid its countless rooftops.

Several tribes of mongrelfolk, deformed humanoidscorned by others as worthless save for menial labor, also reside in Ilvarandin. Vegepygmies dwell in reaches of the city thick with fungal infestations, while duergar, svirfneblin, and troglodytes rule other areas. The southwestern edge of Ilvarandin borders the immense Darklands ocean known as the Sightless Sea, and along these jagged coastal cliffs and beaches dwell many skum under the influence of hidden aboleth masters.

High Ilvarandin is the most populous of all the boroughs of Ilvarandin, home to about 12,000 intellect devourers, their host bodies, and a few thousand servants of varied races. Intellect devourers are almost never seen outside their hosts, the “skinless” among them made subjects of endless mockery and derision.

RELATIONS AND TRADE

Trade is the lifeblood of any city, even ones in the unimaginable depths of Orv. For the intellect devourers of High Ilvarandin, the lust for luxury competes with the need for secrecy, and they take care that merchants not be seen approaching the city. What cannot be imported by magic is brought up the Irikusk River by the black galleys of Leng. Those who pry into the affairs of the denizens of Leng can find themselves shackled in the hold of a ship bound for High Ilvarandin.

Outside of High Ilvarandin, ships reach the city through the Sightless Sea, sailing up the mouth of the Irikusk to the docks of Duskport. Here, vessels crewed by denizens of Leng, tieflings, and even stranger crews hawk their wares, trade slaves, and organize overland caravans. Travelers within Ilvarandin rely on the Builder's Way, a great marble avenue fully a hundred feet wide that spans the entire length of Ilvarandin. The River Irikusk also spans the Vault, though few dare travel its full length. The burgeoning garrison of Irith-Arnakian in Urkalla draws increasing interest from merchants, and promises to become a new center of trade.

What little trade leaves Ilvarandin by land does so via the southern passage toward the Vault of Doga-Delloth, as Irith-Arnakian allows merchants free passage. Few brave the northern route through war-torn Aumentral, and the passage east to the Midnight Mountains is blocked by fierce gugs who control the collapsed district of Ajamote.

SITES OF INTEREST

Aumentral: The architecture of Aumentral, now claimed by the worm-armies of Denebrum, is more varied than that of most of Ilvarandin's districts. Slender towers and ornate minarets dominate, reminiscent of old Garundi



cities. The eastern fungus swamp has curious primitive stone buildings, half dry, half submerged. To the west, a great chasm splits the Vault floor to dizzying depths. A sizable enclave of svirfneblin dwells in the rift. **Pavvid Nermeshnatesh** (N male svirfneblin illusionist 7), eldest of the tribe and close friend of the chief, ensures their continued survival through clandestine deals with the worms that walk. The depths of the fissure are perilous, yet the few svirfneblin to survive the deep came back with opals, sapphires, and emeralds of unparalleled quality, along with tales of searing heat and blood-drinking, tentacled ghorazaghs (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #29 84).

Travel through Aumentral is perilous indeed. Seugathi patrols deliver strangers who are not outright slain to the worms that walk, ancient minions of the neothelids. These generals of Denebrum are masses of worms and maggots walking upright in a mockery of the form of humans.

Duskport: The Irikusk River widens as it nears the Sightless Sea, where a long stretch of piers and warehouses lines the northern bank. Duskport is home to a fiercely independent assortment of drow, duergar, tieflings, mongrelfolk, and even humans. Duskport's nominal ruler is known only as the Rakehell, a former merchant captain of oddly variable gender. The Rakehell entertains a steady stream of lovers of a variety of races and both sexes. One former paramour, the half-retired smuggler **Laerstrum** (NE male drow rogue 5), suspects the Rakehell's hand in the disappearance of a dear friend and confidant. He would pay handsomely for information or revenge. Storm's Rest is the only temple of note, built along a large dock and dedicated to the demon lord Socothbenoth.

Otha-Thola: Graceful elven architecture dominates the northern half of Otha-Thola, continuing even into the shallows of the Sightless Sea. Here, a beautiful coral city lies beneath dark waters, its only residents strange scaled lacedons. Aboleth and their skum minions claim the coastal waters, while skum freed of aboleth control dwell on land. A plateau rises over a mile in height to the south, almost reaching the roof of the Vault. A substantial tribe of mongrelfolk dwells in the barren stone buildings of its heights.

The Scales: The Scales make up the eastern face of Ilvarandin. Architecture similar to the ancient serpentfolk city of Svermagati gives way to grand ruins of cyclopean make in the southeast. Fearsome gugs dwell among these great spires and toppled buildings, their seemingly random malice guided by four powerful intellect devourers (CE intellect devourer sorcerers 10 with advanced gug host bodies).

The northern expanse of the Scales is ravaged by the plague that gives the region its name, thickening the skin and cracking it into dry, flaky scales. The disease is particularly devastating to reptiles.

THE SCALES

Type disease, contact or injury; **Save** Fort DC 16

Onset 1d4 days; **Frequency** 1/2 days

Effect 1d2 Dex damage and 1d2 Cha damage; **Cure** 2

consecutive saves. Reptiles and creatures with the reptilian subtype receive a –2 penalty on saving throws and require 3 consecutive saves to recover.

Urkalla: The fierce urdefhans of Doga-Delloth have established a beachhead amid the remains of the blocky, primitive buildings built in the long-forgotten fashion of the troglodytes. Much of this borough lies in ruins, scavenged to build their fortress of Irith-Arnakian or razed to deny shelter to their enemies. The feral warlord **Vilthanter** (NE female urdefhan fighter 9) holds undisputed command over more than 1,000 soldiers. She has survived not one but five births, all sired by urdefhans defeated in single combat. New recruits in the fortress prove their worth by traveling alone into the city and returning with not less than five bloody skulls. Most prized of all are skulls pierced by an intellect devourer's passage.

The Warrens: Named for the subterranean city beneath their surface, the mountains of the Warrens are old and weathered, not even a mile in height. The architecture of Ilvarandin varies greatly in this district, but is dominated by a mix of dwarven construction and giant-sized buildings reminiscent of ancient Thassilon. The Warrens are largely deserted save for all manner of crawling beasts. A scattering of svirfneblin and duergar eke out a meager existence in small villages, while derros are encamped in the foothills, desperately searching for a remedy to the blight ravaging their prized cytillesh crop (see page 20 of *Into the Darklands*).

Deep within the Warrens is the Builder's Mark, a crater fully 3 miles across. Great stairs lead to the crater's floor, devoid of the buildings found elsewhere in Ilvarandin. Rumors abound of a secret entrance concealed in the crater's floor that leads to a Vault Builder's personal domain. All manner of oozes live within the Builder's Mark, themselves fodder for titan centipedes. Scattered bands of derros furtively mine the crater floor, hauling away carts of the black sludge that seeps into their mineshafts. The derro savants form this goo into constructs that share many of the abilities of clay golems.

HIGH ILVARANDIN

The heart of Ilvarandin is surrounded by miles of deserted buildings of the Azlanti style. Few venture along these streets. Those who dare return possessed by intellect devourers, and seek to lure others to their doom. Unlike the outer Vault, High Ilvarandin is bustling and full of life, a vibrant city within a city.





The monsters and beasts on the outskirts of High Ilvarandin are rarely what they seem. Vigilant intellect devourers patrol the area in stolen flesh, with giant vermin being a particular favorite. Even the river is guarded by dire cave crocodiles, elasmosauruses, and a pair of water orms—intellect devourers all. Few uninvited ships survive to reach the docks of High Ilvarandin.

Over the course of thousands of years, the intellect devourers have spun countless dweomers over the city to free their homeland from decay. No corpse rots in High Ilvarandin, nor do the bodies stolen by the intellect devourers. Some favored bodies have been worn for decades or even centuries. As a consequence, an aura of moderate necromancy radiates throughout High Ilvarandin.

The rising threat of Denebrum moved the intellect devourers to raze the buildings south of High Ilvarandin. A wall 30 feet tall stands in their place, overlooking more than a thousand yards of cleared ground and rubble. The northern side of the city is unwallled, as the river Irikusk is trusted as a final bastion against assaults from the north.

HIGH ILVARANDIN

CE large city

Corruption +1; **Crime** +3; **Economy** +4; **Law** +2; **Lore** +4;

Society +2

Qualities insular, notorious, prosperous, racially intolerant (all but intellect devourers), strategic location

Danger +20

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government magical

Population 15,500 (12,000 intellect devourers, 2,000 vegepygmies, 1,500 other) plus 11,500 host bodies (2,500 humans, 2,000 drow, 1,500 duergar, 1,000 elves, 1,000 morlocks, 1,000 skum, 500 derros, 500 dwarves, 500 orcs, 1,000 other)

Notable NPCs

Arena Master Dakreyos (CE intellect devourer fighter 8 with male advanced gug host body)

Bereshkhani (CE male ghastr alchemist 15)

Furnace-Keeper Laerxniyzon (CE intellect devourer rogue 8 with male azer* fighter 7 host body)

Historian Caerilant (CE intellect devourer sorcerer 10 with female elf monk 9 host body)

Lens-Keeper Tiluatchek (CE intellect devourer sorcerer 12 with male human fighter 5/barbarian 5 host body)

Lord Feaster Ralnisham (CE intellect devourer sorcerer 12 with various host bodies)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 13,600 gp; **Purchase Limit** 100,000 gp;

Spellcasting 8th

Minor Items 4d4; **Medium Items** 3d4; **Major Items** 2d4

* See *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2.

Archive of Ages: Part museum and part mausoleum, the Archive of Ages was built as a monument to the glory of the intellect devourers. Its labyrinthine rooms and halls are filled with the art, writings, and relics of their conquests. Countless stuffed and preserved bodies grace its galleries, including many from species now extinct. The upper reaches store moldering tomes and scrolls, knowledge gleaned by 10,000 years of body-thieving. Many are long lost to the surface; some date back to before the Age of Darkness. The curator and chief historian of the museum, Caerilant, has lost favor in Ilvarandin, and may soon be stripped of its status.

Bathhouse: Each bath in this grand marble building features a unique blend of perfumes and minerals. Temperatures range from scalding hot to icy cold. Outside are grand pavilions, outdoor springs, and a beautiful sculpture garden. Vegepygmies and enslaved salamanders staff the bathhouse, overseen by furnace-keeper Laerxniyzon. The bathhouse hosts regular bacchanals, often degenerating into ribald debauchery and brawls once the drink runs low.

Coliseum: In better days, the blood-soaked sands of the coliseum held all manner of lethal games, with intellect devourers both as spectators and participants. The shortage of slaves has put an end to most games, with would-be victims of the arena now destined for the feasting hall or the battle against Denebrum instead. Arena master Dakreyos schemes to claim the feasting hall's slaves for his own, and seeks to eliminate his hated rival, Ralnisham.

Feasting Hall: Always redolent of spices and roast meat, the feasting hall of High Ilvarandin holds more than 500 guests. The proprietor Ralnisham changes bodies like clothing, favoring gorgeous specimens and stunning garb. The fare of the feasting hall varies daily. Sapient creatures are a particular favorite, strapped to the tables and consumed organ by organ, their suffering prolonged by the intellect devourers' healing powers. The hall's extensive underground rooms are more dungeon than larder.

Grand Spire: This graceful obelisk of pink-veined marble towers over High Ilvarandin, perhaps the tallest such structure in the entire city. No windows or doors pierce its exterior, but from inside the city can be seen as though through glass. Mounted inside at the spire's apex is a potent artifact known as a *dream lens*—a device capable of capturing a dreaming mortal's mind and providing a gateway through which an intellect devourer may enter a drugged host's skull from a vast distance. Tiluatchek is often found at work in his laboratory near the spire's apex.

Ossuary: An unimaginable tangle of bones fills this charnel pit, which is home to more than a hundred ghouls and ghastrs. Strong resistance sends them cowering,





yapping back to their warrens. One particularly ancient ghastr named Bereshkhani, exiled a century ago from Nemret Noktoria, knows much of the secret ways of Ilvarandin. It was with his aid that the intellect devourers perfected the sinister drug known as (see page 11).

THE ILVARANDIN CAMPAIGN

High Ilvarandin faces extermination. The neothelids have encroached on outer Ilvarandin for centuries, and their control now stretches across the banks of the Irikusk. More than anything, the intellect devourers need bodies to triumph against the worms, the stronger and more capable the better. Centuries of war have stretched the intellect devourers' capacity to replace bodies to the breaking point. But the ruling caste draws close to their greatest triumph, a plan to swell their ranks with tens of thousands of newborn intellect devourers. With artifacts called *dream lenses* and a magical drug called *midnight milk*, they have developed a way to harvest new bodies from the surface world with harrowing efficiency.

Spread by spies and allies on the surface, *midnight milk* is taking root among the intellectuals and upper crust of Cheliax, Nisroch, and Varisia. *Midnight milk* brings euphoric dreams of subterranean vistas and impossible places. With repeated exposure, the dreamer's roaming mind reaches the lost city of Ilvarandin. Here, an intellect devourer may insinuate itself into the dreaming mind. In time, this psychic parasite consumes the victim's brain, allowing the intellect devourer to transport itself from the depths below directly into the addict's skull. These intellect devourers then use their new bodies to spread *midnight milk* to new hosts, eventually sending new soldiers with their intellect devourer hosts back into the dark below to join the war.

LOW-LEVEL ADVENTURES

Ilvarandin is no place for low-level characters, but the introduction of *midnight milk* into a surface society provides an excellent way to introduce new adventures to the intellect devourers and the Mute Metropolis. Rumors may reach the PCs of a new drug on the streets called *midnight milk*. As they investigate drug dens and crime syndicates, it becomes clear that the drug is becoming a favorite among not only the nobles, but among soldiers as well. Eventually, the PCs should uncover Vumeshki's poem "Ilvarandin." One of the drug's earliest victims, Vumeshki spent many years convinced that Ilvarandin

was a true paradise where one could seek immortality and perpetual youth. His consumption by the intellect devourer Tiluatchek (who has since moved on to other bodies) was a slow and gradual process that laid much of the groundwork for this magical invasion of dreams. Eventually, the PCs should discover that those who take the *midnight milk* have similar dreams of strange subterranean cities, and after defeating a guild of thieves or ghouls responsible for spreading the stuff through their home town, should realize that the drug's source lies deep below the earth.

MEDIUM-LEVEL ADVENTURES

A mid-level Ilvarandin campaign may focus on the journey to the Mute Metropolis itself. The passage to Ilvarandin may well take several months to uncover and traverse. The intellect devourers themselves travel down through the three Darklands realms via various routes, but keep a secret base of operations in the city of Umberweb. The PCs may uncover one such route, or they may find their own path through Darklands.

Once the PCs reach Ilvarandin, they can select any one of the countless buildings in the city's outskirts as a base of operations, but will likely need to first clear it out of whatever monstrous denizens dwell within. The best hope of long-term security is one of the many small settlements in Ilvarandin. The mongrelfolk and svirfneblin are most inclined to take in friendly strangers, but duergar or drow might consider harboring a capable band in hopes of gaining assistance in their own plots and schemes.

The demands of adventuring may lead the PCs to Duskport in search of trade; its seedy docks provide resources not readily available elsewhere, such as capable spellcasters and markets where PCs might acquire expensive goods and magic items.

HIGH-LEVEL ADVENTURES

Only seasoned adventurers should dare to venture into High Ilvarandin itself. The streets around High Ilvarandin are patrolled by intellect devourers clad in monstrous flesh, as are the waters of the River Irikusk. Travel beneath the ground or through the sky above offers the safest approach to the intellect devourer stronghold.

Venturing into High Ilvarandin is perilous, and even carefully disguised parties won't remain undiscovered for long. While in the inner city, the PCs should uncover the full scope of the intellect devourer's plot to convert





thousands of surface dwellers into unwilling host soldiers for the war against the worms of Denebrum.

To truly end the threat of Ilvarandin, the PCs must remove or destroy the *dream lens*, the artifact allowing the invasion into Golarion's dreaming minds. The lens is mounted in a tall spire at the center of High Ilvarandin, with strange golems and arcane countermeasures guarding the way. It is watched over by Tiluatchek himself, the intellect devourer most responsible for the spread of *midnight milk*. The exact method for destroying the *dream lens* is left to the GM to devise.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

LOW LEVEL

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–5	2d4 duergar	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 117
6–10	1 cockroach swarm	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 58
11–18	2d6 drow	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 114–115
19–23	1 gelatinous cube	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 138
24–30	1d4 svirfneblin scouts	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 261
31–39	1d6 vegepygmies	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 273
40–46	1d3 morlock scavengers	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 209
47–53	1d6 jinkins or vexgits	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 142, 145
54–61	1d4 derro scouts	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 70
62–69	2d4 ghouls	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 146
70–74	1 ochre jelly	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 218
75–83	2d4 troglodyte raiders plus d3–1 monitor lizards	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 267, 194
84–88	1d2 basidironds	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 28
89–94	1d4 id oozes (see gray ooze)	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 166
95–100	1 lurker above	7	<i>MMR</i> * 50

* See *Misfit Monsters Redeemed*.

MEDIUM LEVEL

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–6	1 black pudding	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 35
7–14	2d4 drow warrior 1 and 1d3 drow noble cleric 3	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 114–115
15–22	2d4 morlocks	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 209
23–30	3d4 derros*	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 70
31–36	1 giant slug	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 254
37–46	1 intellect devourer in host body	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 180
47–54	4d3 skum	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 253
55–60	1 titan centipede	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 53
61–68	1d4+1 urdefhans on skavelings	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 276, 42
69–74	1d6 fungal mounds**	10	page 12
75–80	3d4 gargoyles	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 137
81–88	1 young roper	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 237, 295
89–94	2d4 seugathi	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 243
95–100	1 purple worm	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 230

* Including 1 derro sorcerer 4.

** Variant or new monster detailed in this chapter.

HIGH LEVEL

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–12	1 purple worm	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 230
13–20	1d4 elder earth elementals	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 123
21–28	2d4 vrocks	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 69
29–38	1 adult umbral dragon	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 102
39–53	2d6 intellect devourers in host bodies*	14+	<i>Bestiary</i> 180
54–63	1 worm that walks	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 286
64–73	1d10 gugs	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 151
74–83	1d6 ropers	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 237
84–95	4d3 advanced seugathi led by 1 neothelid	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 243 and <i>Bestiary</i> 214
96–100	1 shoggoth	19	<i>Bestiary</i> 249

* Host bodies of CR 2–8, 25% chance leader is an 8th-level sorcerer.

MIDNIGHT MILK

The strange and powerful drug known as *midnight milk* is the cornerstone of Ilvarandin's most recent attempt to bolster its armies against the worms of Denebrum. Distilled from the excretions and seepings of vast mu spores that float in the skies above the Midnight Mountains, *midnight milk* has a strange connection to the powerful and alien dreams these immense slumbering monsters spend the majority of their time pursuing. By distilling the fluids and mixing them with other alchemical elixirs and catalysts, the intellect devourers and their ghastr ally Bereshkhani have concocted an elixir capable of allowing an intellect devourer to use its body thief ability at great range. The only tricky part—getting the targets addicted to the stuff, for it takes time for *midnight milk* to work its unwelcome magic upon the dreaming mind.

Midnight milk is imbibed through the mouth. A single dose is enough to send most drinkers into a deep sleep, during which the user experiences very vivid dreams. All of these dreams are superficially similar, starting with a sensation of an endless fall into what seems a bottomless pit that eventually reveals itself to be a fall downward toward a vast range of subterranean mountains lit by strange moon-like shapes floating near the vast cavern roof.

If the dreaming victim dreams long enough (with successive doses of *midnight milk*, each dream lasts longer and allows the dreamer to travel farther), they travel ghostlike to the west and eventually reach Ilvarandin, at which point the dreaming mind “lands” in the body of a creature that dwells there—typically a troglodyte, drow, duergar, derro, mongrelman, or morlock, but sometimes stranger things like driders or gugs or ropers, or even black puddings or purple worms. The “dreamer” experiences his explorations of Ilvarandin unaware of the fact that he's in a strange new body,



but has no control over his actions since he's basically just watching and experiencing the actions of his host body, and when he finally wakes remembers the dreams as vague memories. The addictive quality of the drug colors these memories and makes his stay in Ilvarandin feel like a visit to paradise.

Yet the truth is far more insidious, for these experiences are not just dreams. The user's slumbering mind actually leaves his body, seeks out a denizen of Ilvarandin, and enjoys that body's experiences for a time. The *dream lens* acts as a strange spiritual magnet, drawing the dreamer deep into Ilvarandin where, it becomes increasingly likely on successive visits that the dreamer's mind inhabits a body already inhabited by an intellect devourer.

An intellect devourer automatically notices the arrival of a dreaming mind in its already shared body. If the intellect devourer can reach the *dream lens* before the dreamer awakens, it can abandon its current host body to merge with the dreaming creature's mind—when the dreamer awakens, the intellect devourer travels with it and immediately devours the dreamer's brain, proceeding from that point forward as if it had successfully used its body thief ability on the victim. At this point, the intellect devourer is free to use its new body on the surface as it wills—most quickly seek out other cells of intellect devourers active in the area to secure *gentle repose* spells to keep their new host bodies fresh, or to volunteer their aid in spreading the *midnight milk* further into society.

The following rules for *midnight milk* follow those presented for drugs, as detailed on pages 236–237 of the *GameMastery Guide*.

MIDNIGHT MILK

Type drug, ingested; **Addiction** moderate, Fortitude DC 16

Price 50 gp

Effects 1 hour; fatigue, plus the user takes a –4 penalty on all saving throws made to resist sleep effects. If the user falls asleep while under the effects of *midnight milk*, he dreams vividly; these dreams last for 1 hour per dose of *midnight milk* taken in the past month (including this one). Upon awakening, the user is revitalized as if he had enjoyed a full 8 hours of sleep.

Damage 1d2 Wis damage. While the *dream lens* is active in Ilvarandin, there's a 1% chance each time a user takes the drug that he ends up in a body already used by an intellect devourer—this chance increases by 1% for each previous dose of *midnight milk* the user has taken. If the dreamer is unfortunate enough to end up sharing a host body with an intellect devourer, the intellect devourer immediately makes its way toward the *dream lens*—this takes 1d10 hours. If the dream ends before the intellect devourer reaches the *dream lens*, the dreamer awakens

with no ill effect. If the intellect devourer reaches the *dream lens* in time, the intellect devourer can attempt to use its body thief ability on the dreamer—see page 180 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* for rules. If the attempt fails, the dreamer awakes with a start with blood pouring from eyes, mouth, nostrils, and ears, but no real memories of what caused the incredible pain.

VARIANT MONSTERS

The Mute Metropolis is a veritable menagerie of strange monsters and bizarre creatures, for the intellect devourers are fond of importing exotic bodies to raise as hosts. Yet one strange variant is a native of the region. The fungal swamps of Ilvarandin that cake the shores of the Irikusk River are home to a variety of shambling mound composed of mold and mushroom rather than actual plant matter. Many of these shambling mounds carry symbiotic masses of dangerous fungi such as yellow mold or even green slime that has adapted to not feed on the fungus itself.

RULERS OF ILVARANDIN

The rulers of High Ilvarandin are powerful intellect devourers—most of which are arcane spellcasters. Status as a ruler of Ilvarandin is achieved when no less than 400 intellect devourers cede their authority to another in a process they call melding. As many as 20 intellect devourers rule in Ilvarandin at any given time. One of the most powerful in the city, Lens-Keeper Tiluatchek, oversees the harvest and production of *midnight milk* and currently favors wearing the Ulfen warrior **Sigmar** (human fighter 5/barbarian 5, *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 263), but has hidden away numerous other bodies for specialty needs, including those of a storm giant, an umbral dragon, a succubus assassin, and the surfer poet Vumeshki, author of *Songs at Sun's Ebb* and one of the first to succumb to *midnight milk*.

LENS-KEEPER TILUATCHEK

CR 15

XP 51,200

Intellect devourer sorcerer 12

CE Small aberration

Init +11; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., *detect magic*; Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 18, flat-footed 20 (+7 Dex, +5 natural, +4 shield, +1 size)

hp 233 (20 HD; 8d8+12d6+140+15 temporary)

Fort +12, **Ref** +13, **Will** +16

Defensive Abilities *invisibility*, *mirror image*; **DR** 10/adamantine and magic; **Immune** fire; **Resist** cold 20, electricity 20, sonic 20; **SR** 23

Weaknesses vulnerability to *protection from evil*



OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 4 claws +20 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks acidic ray (1d6+6 acid, 12/day), body thief, sneak attack +3d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +17)

Constant—detect magic

At will—*confusion* (DC 23, single target only), *daze monster* (DC 21, no HD limit), *inflict serious wounds* (DC 22), *invisibility*, *reduce size* (as reduce person but self only)

3/day—*cure moderate wounds*, *globe of invulnerability*

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 12th; concentration +21)

6th (4/day)—*mass suggestion* (DC 27)

5th (6/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 24), *feeblemind* (DC 26), *teleport*

4th (7/day)—*black tentacles*, *charm monster* (DC 25), *fire shield*, *phantasmal killer* (DC 23)

3rd (8/day)—*fireball* (DC 22), *fly*, *gentle repose*, *hold person* (DC 24), *nondetection*, *tongues*

2nd (8/day)—*bear's endurance*, *eagle's splendor*, *false life*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*, see *invisibility*

1st (8/day)—*charm person* (DC 22), *disguise self* (DC 20), *enlarge person*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *unseen servant*

o (at will)—*arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound* (DC 19), *mage hand*, *mending*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *resistance*

Bloodline Aberrant

TACTICS

Before Combat Tiluatchek keeps *false life* active at all times.

If expecting a fight, it casts *bear's endurance*, *eagle's splendor*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *resistance*, and *shield*. It always prefers to fight in a host body rather than its natural form.

During Combat If not already in a host, it tries to use its body thief ability. It favors neutralizing threats with enchantments over direct conflict. In its natural form, Tiluatchek cannot speak, and must use Silent Spell to cast.

Morale If reduced below 50 hit points, Tiluatchek teleports away and devises a new plan of attack.

Base Statistics If not given time to cast the spells listed in its Before Combat section, Tiluatchek's stats are:

AC 23, flat-footed 16; **hp** 178; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +12, **Will** +16; acidic ray 10/day; concentration and save DCs reduced by 2; **Con** 19, **Cha** 24; Bluff +38, Diplomacy +20, Disguise +27, Use Magic Device +23

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 25, **Con** 23, **Int** 18, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 28

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 29

Feats Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Extend Spell, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Improved Initiative, Quicken

Spell, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (enchantment), Still Spell, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +40, Craft (alchemy) +17, Diplomacy +22, Disguise +29, Fly +20, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (local) +12, Perception +21, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +22, Stealth +23, Use Magic Device +25

Languages Orvian, Undercommon (cannot speak); telepathy 100 ft.

SQ bloodline arcana, long limbs (+10 ft.), unusual anatomy (25%)

Gear (only if encountered in a host body) *ring of protection* +2, *rod of splendor*, *unguent of timelessness* (2), 5,000 gp of luxury goods





KHO

"IN THE TIME BEFORE OUR FATHERS, BEFORE KUTA WRESTLED THE LION, THE PEOPLE OF THE LOWER HILLS WERE VISITED BY PEOPLE FROM THE SKY. THEY WERE NOT THE SKY PEOPLE OF THE DOORWAY—FOR YOU KNOW THAT STORY, AND HOW OLD-MAGE JATEMBE DEFEATED THE KING OF THE BITING ANTS—BUT REAL PEOPLE, HUMANS WHO FLEW IN A GREAT CITY TORN FROM THE EARTH. THE HILL PEOPLE RUSHED TO MEET THEM, YET THE FLYING CITY CONTINUED ON BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS.

"AND THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED. THE SKY ROARED, AND LIT LIKE FIRE. WHEN NEXT THE CITY APPEARED, IT WAS AS A FALLING STAR, CRASHING DOWN AMONG THE GREAT PEAKS. OUR PEOPLE WERE FRIGHTENED, BUT IN OUR HEARTS WE KNEW THE TRUTH: THE SKY PEOPLE HAD STOLEN THEIR CITY FROM THE EARTH. AND THE EARTH HAD RECLAIMED IT."

—M'DELO, VOMOTO STORYTELLER

The glory of the world, a magical marvel still spoken of in hushed whispers, Kho was at once the master and the envy of every place it roamed. Its gleaming crystal towers and domes sparkled and shone in the light of sun and moon, a beacon signaling the power and ambition of humanity and its magic at the dawning of the great empires. The crown jewel in the Shory Empire, the city of Kho rose to heights undreamed of, but for all of its majesty and pride, it is remembered less for its rise than for its fall. More than 6,000 years ago, the Soaring City fell to earth and smote its ruin upon the unforgiving land beneath. The light of Kho was extinguished, and its name became a byword against hubris, an object lesson on how great a fall could be.

Millennia later, the ruins of Kho lie shattered, with much of the city pulverized, half-buried, and overgrown in the Barrier Wall mountains northeast of the Mwangi Expanse. Their location long since forgotten save in the secret histories of the wise or among the few tribes and treasure-hunters who comb the nearby mountains, the tumbledown remains of Kho and its shattered crystal structures retain their power to amaze. Even broken, cracked, askew, and cloaked in verdant greenery, their beauty is weathered but undimmed, accented by a verdant wildness. Yet few brave the Mwangi Expanse or Osirion's scorching deserts for mere beauty. It is magic that draws explorers to Kho, the mysteries and relics of a bygone civilization, and the eldritch secrets of its fraying but enduring enchantments. And for these things, explorers risk all.

APPEARANCE

At first glance, the ruined city of Kho hardly looks like a city at all. Its high, cleft valley is overgrown with verdant foliage more characteristic of the lower jungles, though broken in places by patches of scrub meadow. Damp breezes carry a hint of plumeria and hanging orchid, and a narrow river meanders across the valley floor, tumbling over a cascading fall from a high shelf at the valley's eastern end and dancing amid rocks and rapids along the valley floor. When shrouded in mist or low cloud, Kho is indistinguishable from a hundred other jungle valleys, but in the bright light of the sun or stars, the city comes alive. The meadows dance with sparkling rainbows from countless faceted fragments, while hummocks and ridges across the valley floor glow with captured light, revealing immense cracked domes and fallen towers of lambent crystal worn smooth with the ages. Monolithic towers lean drunkenly against the valley walls at its eastern end, pockmarked with fractures and long-vanished windows hung with curtains of clinging creepers, while fallen spires serve as natural bridges across the river. In a few places, weathered fragments of the ancient city remain, broken and canted against the valley wall but still showing traces of the masterful architecture of ancient Shory.

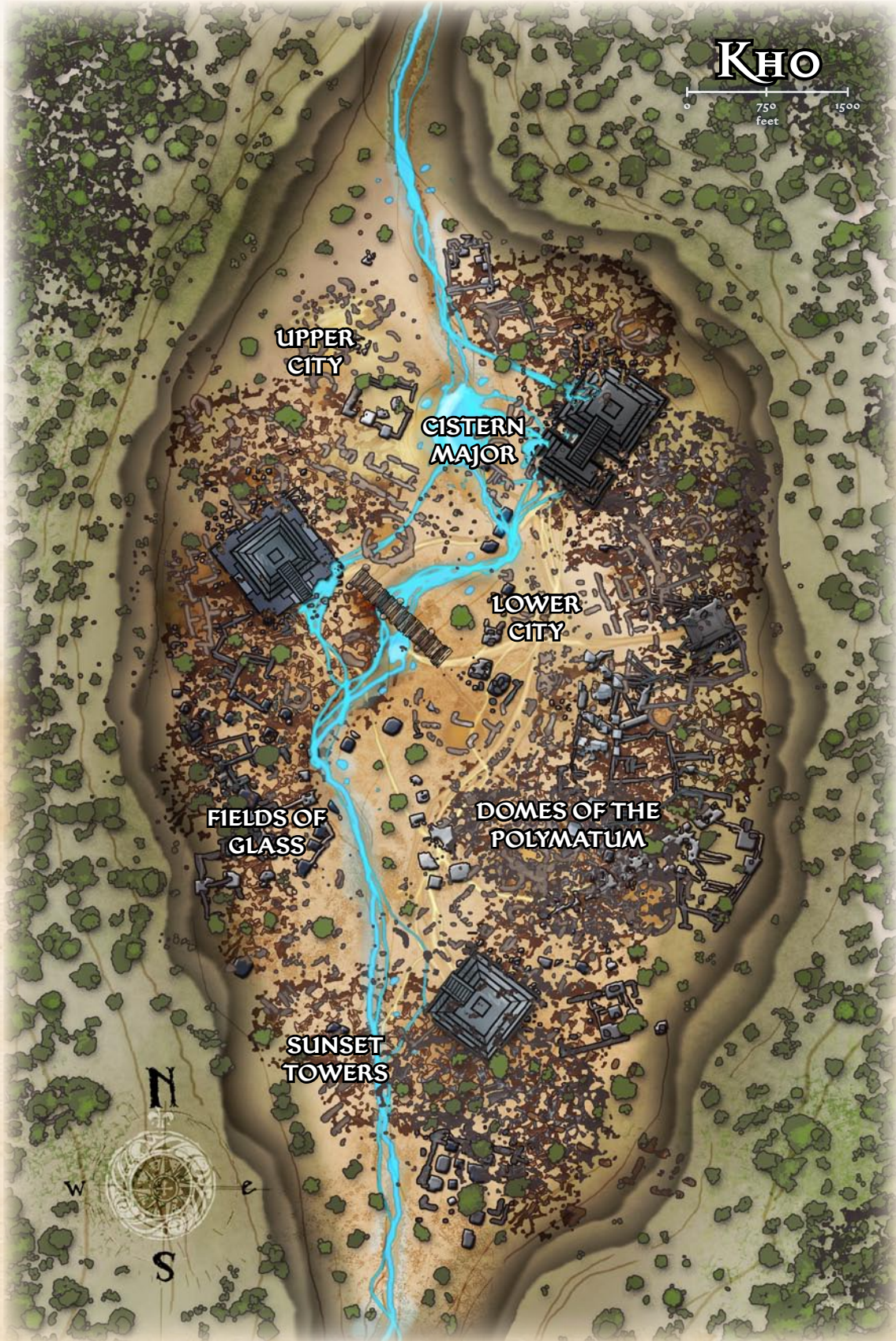
HISTORY

Kho was founded roughly 7,000 years ago by the Shory Empire, and in its heyday was the greatest of Shory cities and the first of their legendary flying sky citadels. Through magic lost to modern mages, they lifted their great city and its foundations from the rock beneath it and sent it soaring into the air, climbing even above the clouds. This magnificent magic was duplicated in cities across Shory, until they had created an aerial empire that looked down upon all others. Removing themselves from the concerns of land-bound nations, and considering themselves both literally and figuratively above the concerns of the "crawlers" beneath them, the Shory grew mighty and haughty. They explored across oceans and far continents, defying those who would deny them passage, conducting their magical experiments with impunity.

The cause of Kho's downfall is a mystery to sages. Some suspect rebellion or civil war among the Shory archmages, or between them and the lower classes, perhaps resulting in an act of magical sabotage. Others maintain it was an importune summoning or planar exploration that resulted in some sort of invasion or spatial rupture. The general consensus is that Kho's fall occurred sometime during the Age of Destiny, with the most popular theory claiming that the city's fall coincided with the terrible march of the Tarrasque, which destroyed Ninshabur and left a scar of desolation across the world. Regardless of what was ultimately responsible, it seems likely that the arrogant Shory, unused to being overmatched and unable to escape to the lower stratosphere, were caught by surprise.

Whatever the cause, one thing is certain: the mighty city of Kho plummeted to earth amid the lower peaks of the Barrier Wall, near a natural break in the range that in later years would come to be called the Kho-Rarne Pass. Many were killed in the disaster, and when the dust settled, only a few were left alive. Those aeromancers who were left sought succor from their Shory brethren, using their magic to call to the other sky cities. Yet only a few managed to retain their status; the majority were permanently disgraced by the city's fall, forced by their adopted sky citadels to perform public and menial labor as penance for shattering the myth of Shory invincibility. The lesser Shory of Kho, those without significant magic of their own, were mostly left to fend for themselves, and assimilated into the nearby Osirian and Mwangi populaces. Their names and histories were lost or discarded, and within scant generations, the displaced Shory of Kho ceased to exist.

The Shory Empire as a whole fared little better—one by one the other cities were overcome by threats internal and external, succumbing to plagues and rebellion, crushed by strange beings released in the relentless quest for power, or simply disappearing into parts unknown. Ulduvai, the last Shory city on record, is rumored to have met its



end in the depths of central Garund, perhaps searching for information in the ruins of Kho that might have held clues to the empire's salvation. The star of the Shory shone bright indeed, but less than a thousand years after Kho first soared across the sky, the Shory civilization was no more than a memory.

RESIDENTS

The Uomoto tribes of the foothills below the ruins of Kho represent the nearest humanoid settlement to the ancient city, whose former residents and culture have long since gone to dust. As nature has reclaimed much of the city, animals and plants common to the Mwangi highland and lowland jungles have flourished, but they are not alone.

The self-proclaimed ruler of Kho is **Khurram abol Ghasem** (CN male advanced noble marid ranger 6), the shahzada and patriarch of a marid clan that migrated here after the city's fall through the ruptured elemental seals upon the planar portals that delivered an endless supply of fresh water to Kho's Cistern Major. The cistern is located in the largest fragment of the city to remain substantially intact; its waters empty through a myriad of cracked reservoirs and fractured aqueducts to form the headwaters of the Uomoto River, which flows through and out of the valley. The marids claim this fragment and the river as their own and tend it as a fabulous garden and palace, enhanced and shaped by their powers of illusion.

Not all of the city's residents arrived after its fall, however. Chief among these are the derhii (see page 23), winged ape-soldiers that once served the Shory. Those away from the city or able to escape its fall found their erstwhile masters fled or slain (with some derhii hastening the demise of any survivors), and when the wrecked city had settled, they claimed the highest surviving monoliths as their aeries. More than 400 derhii now hunt the surrounding mountains. Most ignore the imperious genies, though some have taken up their ancestral vocation of servant-soldiers in exchange for the rewards the genies can offer.

The shattered crystal towers contain hidden dangers of their own. Not only are the razor-sharp Fields of Glass already perilous, but the malfunctioning magic of Kho has caused the glassy shards to sprout underground into filaments and veins of crystal, discovered centuries past by a clan of xorns. The Vokthavaravat Cluster now numbers more than 50 xorns and has taken up residence in the Sunset Towers. Consuming these replicating crystal fibers, however, has gradually transformed the xorns into crystal themselves, and they now hunger to afflict others with their vitrifying virus and then devour the glassy remains. Fatal to most beings, the strange plague turns earth elementals and other earth-based creatures into infectious crystal-spawn, which are either adopted into the cluster or destroyed as rivals to it. The xorns roam the surface in

daylight but otherwise lurk below ground, skirmishing with degenerate clans of morlocks—perhaps descendants of Shory refugees from Kho—led by the mad priestess **Xiuli Cachu** (CE female morlock cleric of Lamashtu 11).

The most sinister inhabitants of Kho dwell in the Domes of the Polymatum. From here, a cabal of 10 leukodaemons (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 68) ranges across the Mwangi, harvesting and spreading myriad exotic pestilences. They are served by a small army of corrupted but deviously intelligent rat-slaves bred from ancient Shory experimental stock. The leukodaemons are led by **Thanyachani** and **Shanesja**, a pair of astradaemons (*Bestiary* 2 63), soul devourers who have ensured that these ruins where thousands perished are little haunted by restless spirits of the dead.

RELATIONS AND TRADE

The ruins of Kho bear little resemblance—either physically or in regard to its inhabitants—to the utopian aerial enclave of its past, yet the legacies of the Shory still linger in the creatures that call this place their home. The human population of Kho has long since fled into the surrounding mountains and jungle, mostly to their doom, but their legacy remains in the nearby Uomoto villages of Jianguji, Tsutai, Tafi, and Abjit in the form of a surprising number of sorcerers, especially of the arcane, destined, and elemental bloodlines. The Uomoto consider the valley a sacred site, taboo for them and dangerous to outsiders. The Uomoto do not trade in relics from Kho, warning strangers of curses should they be foolish enough to take anything, but do not raise a hand against treasure-hunters unless they bring recovered items back to the Uomoto villages. The Uomoto's belief is mostly superstition, but it has proven true often enough that the taboo persists.

The Uomoto can sometimes be persuaded to lead adventurers within sight of the city's resting place, though even the bravest of them usually only venture this far for the purposes of making sacrifices. Among the closest villages, outlaws and oathbreakers (including violators of the taboo against entering the city) are sometimes taken by the tribe and bound to the Stone of Sacrifice, offered up upon a fallen monolith to appease the denizens of the valley. For the right price, the Uomoto sometimes guide strangers as far as the Stone, but no farther. Fearful of the "shining stones that walk" and other strange denizens, they venture into the valley only by night, and always travel with torches in hand to ward off lurking morlocks, which they call *tuitele* ("the light-haters").

While the xorns and marids of Kho have little interest in commerce with the outside world (though the marids do trade with allies on the Plane of Water), the derhii of Kho sometimes visit trade-fairs along the pass or in lowland villages beyond the Uomoto's lands, bartering



looted artifacts, magical trinkets, or even choice bits of Shory craftsmanship, though they usually mislead buyers as to the origin of their treasures. Travelers coming from the east may encounter these derhii at the Osirian fort of Aboul-Nasar (“the vulture’s roost”) at the crest of Kho-Rarne Pass, where **Akfirat Zouhair** (N male human rogue 6) maintains a small lodge for Osirian Pathfinders venturing into the Mwangi Expanse. The derhii usually trade for fine-quality weapons and armor, leather goods, or sometimes wines or drugs such as pesh.

The leukodaemons of Kho also secretly trade their plagueborn creations all over Golarion. These are carried by their rats and wererats to their malign customers, congealed and distilled in pots and vials or incubated within living hosts. Their prime patrons are cultists of Urgathoa, Ghlauder, Apollyon, or Cyth-V’sug looking for new strains of infectious misery to unleash, but the daemons are happy to sell to anyone willing to pay.

SITES OF INTEREST

The Shory were famous for their love of crystal and glass, which they crafted stronger than stone. Many structures in Kho remain partially intact, though most of the city’s substructure collapsed and the surviving upper buildings were often wholly or partly sheared off, tumbling down the valley amid rubble from the crumbled city and scored hillsides; they lie now half-buried beneath the eroded detritus of 6,000 years.

The Upper City: The domain of the Ghasem marid clan, this is the largest semi-intact section of Kho’s cityscape, and even it lies along the hillside at a 30-degree angle. Vines, trees, and fragrant blossoms grow from hanging gardens tended by ooze mephits around the Plaza of Cesaire and its cracked midnight blue tiles, while genie-bound derhii nest in the broken towers. The lower levels are a bewildering maze of slanting passages shrouded in *permanent images* that change according to the genies’ whims. Water flows through many passages and through carved aqueducts or even simple cracks and fissures, arising in a perpetual flow from the planar gates within the vast Cistern Major at the heart of the upper city.

The seat of the marids’ domain, the Cistern Major is bedecked in fabulous illusory trappings celebrating the glory of the shahzada and his court: his wife **Zahra**, daughter **Shireesha**, and son-in-law **Juqua** (all CN noble marids), as well as his personal priest **Kaila** (CN marid cleric 9 of Gozreh) and more than a dozen of their common cousins who come and go to the Plane of Water, as do a

large retinue of water mephits and elementals of all sizes, the smaller as servitors and the larger as battle companions or even mounts. The arrogant marids claim all of Kho, but their rule stretches only as far as Iouri’s Cascade, where the Cistern Major’s waters spill into the Lower City. There, the marids create ever-changing liquid sculptures, vying to shape and caress the flowing water into the most elaborate and fantastical patterns and even seemingly solid shapes, thereby winning boasting rights over their fellows.

The marids share the Upper City with the derhii aeries of the Monoliths, a set of high towers that survived Kho’s fall mostly intact, though they were uprooted from their foundations and settled vertically against the valley’s southeastern wall, stretching beyond the tops of the encircling cliffs. Many monoliths are not wholly solid, but rather consist of level upon level of chambers and halls stretching up hundreds of paces, their windows long shattered and swathed with encroaching vines for much of their height. Perhaps most interesting to scholars are those towers that bear enormous striations along their lengths, deep furrows like claw marks from some titanic predator.

Derhii family groups, usually led by a 5th-level barbarian or ranger, claim adjacent layers of the towers and defend their turf against rival derhii, but the various groups unite against menaces that threaten all derhii. The tribes have no true leader, instead meeting in tribal council to decide matters of mutual interest, but the most powerful leaders are **Shanaca Anisoara** (N female derhii ranger 9) and **Tonoyan Balasu** (N female derhii barbarian 8).

The Domes of the Polymatum: The central valley is dominated by the cracked remnants of Kho’s arcane academies, now haunted by daemons who were once bound but who broke free during the city’s fall. Here, these deacons of disease brew and refine toxic sludges and slurries in their vile fleshpots, crafting ever more virulent strains of common ills or inventing new ones.

The daemons also specialize in the warping and manipulation of life, having long ago spawned experimental rats kept by the Shory and turned them into a slave race of sentient dire rats called the hadi (see page 23). While most hadi are simple minions, the inbred siblings **Teffera** and **Yilmaz** (NE male and female hadi transmuter 8) are striving to cultivate a master caste of their kind. The daemons’ army of sinister rat-soldiers is led by **Naheed** and **Nahush** (NE male hadi rajwan barbarian 6), while their subtler operations of smuggling and infiltration are orchestrated by **Uzma Desferal** (NE female hadi tafen bard 7).



The Lower City: The river is spanned to the north by the Obelisk Bridge, a cracked and moss-covered fallen monolith engraved with faded runes. This tower was once full of residential chambers, and creatures walking across what were once its vertical walls may fall through weakened sections into the jagged rubble within (treat as spiked pit traps or camouflaged spiked pit traps; see pages 420–421 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*). Beyond the river is another semi-intact cityscape that slid down and across the valley floor in the city's fall. Called the Shadow Hill by the valley's other residents, this area is shunned because of a ruptured planar gate that continues to sputter within its heart—an unreliable portal to the Plane of Shadow. Those daring it may lose their lives and souls, and be reborn as shadows. While the dark spirits that dwell here fear the soul-devouring astradaemons and binding by morlock cult-clerics, few dare challenge them in their shadowy lair.

Most sinister and mysterious is the Pit of Endless Night. Surrounded by the broken base of an ancient dome that resembles a yawning maw with fangs of blackened glass, the pit was created when one of Kho's broken towers thrust straight into the ground like an enormous spear, piercing the valley's bedrock and breaching a natural fissure into an extensive cavern complex. Some of the river's waters trickle down this bore, which is still uncannily smooth where the tower's shell has endured, though its inner stonework has largely gone to dust and ruin. Some visitors seeking the Well of Axuma mistake this dark pit for the well—much to their sorrow when they discover what lies in its depths.

Though not attached to the vast network known as the Darklands, the fissures and cysts in the shattered rock under the valley lead ever downward in a dizzying corkscrew, intersected by countless maze-like tunnels infested with morlocks descended from Kho's survivors, and even stranger beasts. The morlocks prowl the city's surviving under-warrens, skirmishing at times with the daemon-bound hadi and the crystal xorns, though they live a curious alternate existence with the latter; the xorns haunt the ruins above by day while the morlocks cower in darkness, but when the xorns retreat to their crystal caves at night, the morlocks emerge aboveground.

The Fields of Glass: The western half of the valley was not part of Kho's impact crater, but the city's fall produced a slide zone that obliterated the former terrain. Erosion and accretion have since built up a layer of fertile soil and a loose, open cloud forest, teeming with life amid trees and fruited meadows. In bright light, these glades are ablaze with reflected light, as shards of crystal embedded in the ground (and growing filaments beneath, harvested by hungry xorns) dazzle any creature traversing the area, also acting as caltrops to those treading the ground. Uomoto guides can show the PCs safe pathways, while others can find them with a DC 20 Survival check per hour of travel.

The Stone of Sacrifice lies at the edge of the Lower City, and is as far as the Uomoto will come to punish their criminals or lead foolhardy outsiders into the valley.

At the far western end of the valley lie the Sunset Towers, the once-proud Towers of the Sun sheared off their bases and sent tumbling across the valley. Here they lie askew like an immense pile of driftwood, heaped together at radical angles and heavily draped with verdant greenery, yet beneath the foliage, these tubular husks glow in the light of the sun. The crystal xorns call this place Vokthavaravat; here **Arzoo Mandilawi** (NE male elder crystal xorn rogue 4) rules the cluster from a honeycombed crystalline cyst where five shattered towers ground together an age ago.

THE KHO CAMPAIGN

Visitors to Kho must traverse the Mwangi Expanse to the west or the deserts and mountains of Osirion to the east just to reach it. Legendary even among scholars, relics and tales of Kho can draw adventurers gradually toward it, so that novices aren't overwhelmed by its challenges.

LOW-LEVEL ADVENTURES

Early use of Kho in a campaign requires laying a foundation for later adventure. Fragmentary maps or mysterious relics from its ancient civilization can draw parties to the city, perhaps provided by allies or patrons such as the Pathfinder Society or Aspis Consortium, who could facilitate travel across Osirion to Aboul-Nasar or through the Mwangi Expanse to the Uomoto villages.

For a hook that relies less on a simple lust for exploration, the diseased minions of the leukodaemons provide an excellent introduction. When plague or disease erupts near the PCs' base of operations, they might be enlisted to discover the source of this sickness. Heal or Profession (herbalist) checks can confirm the disease's exotic origins, and Knowledge (local) or Diplomacy checks to gather information may locate similar outbreaks in other communities. Investigation might then lead PCs to black-market dealers who also trade in Shory antiquities. One path here could lead to **Luana Sipress** (LE female human natural wererat rogue 3), a local wererat with a nest of hadi underlings (see page 23), who are spreading the tainted produce of their leukodaemon masters, and from there to her suppliers in Sargava and eventually to Kho itself.

Alternatively, the trail could lead back to **Baddour** (NG male derhii), a trader who frequents Aboul-Nasar. He is simply dealing in Shory relics without being aware that they have been secretly laced with infectious toxins by the daemons and their minions. There is no conspiracy to crack here, simply a common association that all victims of the tainted goods have recently acquired Shory artifacts. The PCs must trace these relics back to their source to discover whether there is a nefarious plot at work, or perhaps even



a curse. When the PCs confront Baddour, he is remorseful that his trade has resulted in such harm, and could guide them to Kho and secure a friendly audience with his clan.

MEDIUM-LEVEL ADVENTURES

PCs arriving near Kho from the Mwangi Jungle first encounter the Uomoto villages—and indeed, studying that obscure culture may be an adventure hook of its own for PC scholars. Once there, parties may have to bargain with the chiefs for the right to visit the sacred city. A chief might demand a difficult-to-acquire gift that requires a side adventure into the jungle, or a service like hunting down a dangerous local monster or renegade Uomoto sorcerer.

Alternatively, the PCs might arrive in Aboul-Nasar after being sent there to investigate an ominous lapse in communication. PCs coming to Kho from Aboul-Nasar with a derhii guide might arrange aerial transport back there to rest and resupply in between expeditions into the lost city. The derhii can provide safe haven, but they might also be ambushed by rival derhii who resent their intrusion, and who are likely to try to kill the PCs or capture and sell them to the marids as slaves.

Once within Kho, the PCs are likely to be intrigued by the various factions of the city. They find the marids aloof and the leukodaemons homicidal, but the derhii may accompany them to choice scavenging grounds, leading to a confrontation with crystal xorns by day or morlocks by night. The PCs may have to skirmish with raiding parties from both as they search out troves of still-viable magic items or hidden cysts where the leukodaemons and hadi concoct their tainted treasures.

PCs seeking a permanent solution to Kho's viral output may decide to cleanse the under-warrens of the Domes of the Polymatum of the leukodaemons and their filth, but constant interference by morlocks and crystal xorns may necessitate a truce with one or both groups, which can also allow underground access to the well-warded Domes through secret ways. However, in this situation a high-ranking cleric from whichever group is friendly might betray the PCs, leading them into an ambush of daemons, oozes, hadi, and worse.

HIGH-LEVEL ADVENTURES

Daemons are always a dangerous unknown, and any number of good-aligned outsiders or religious officials might dispatch the PCs to cleanse Kho of its daemoniac taint, should they learn of it. Even if the PCs don't set off to the city for that purpose, continued exploration and skirmishing in the city eventually draws the astradaemons into the fray, and destroying them and the horrid laboratories of the leukodaemons erases their blight from Kho forever. Should the PCs eradicate the daemons, the marids welcome the heroes, inviting them to their pleasure

palaces and healing pools on the Plane of Water as their guests. There, the PCs might be caught up in a contest of succession manipulated by **Markish Aghayare** (NE male devourer), a marid shahzada risen in undeath as a devourer and now sowing corruption among his living kin.

PCs who vanquish the daemons might also discover that shadows have boiled forth from their "shadow city" under **Sarra Skepekaris** (CE female greater shadow sorcerer 7), the Shadow Princess. Now that the astradaemons are gone, the shadows have laid siege to the other dwellers of Kho, picking off any living creatures they can find and swelling their shadow host to trigger an umbral apocalypse. In order to stop them, the PCs must destroy the shadow host and seal the gate to the Plane of Shadow, destroying the Mwangi necromancer-lich **Trexima Butoi** (NE human male lich necromancer 16), who raised the shadow host.

Another menace worthy of drawing high-level PCs to the city is that of **Vehanezhad** (LE female blue dragon wyrm), a blue dragon transformed into living crystal by the xorns' strange curse. The dragon tracked the crystal xorn that infected her to Kho and then assumed leadership of the Vokthavaravat Cluster, claiming all of Kho as her domain. The marids are being crushed in her ascension to power, and most of the derhii and morlocks flee or submit to her. Worst of all, using a hidden laboratory left behind by the daemons, Vehanezhad soon discovers a way to make her brilliant pestilence affect creatures that don't have the earth subtype. Whether summoned by rumors of her rise or impacted directly by the strange new plague, PCs who want to defeat Vehanezhad may need to rally the surviving marids and derhii to destroy the crystal dragon, her newly bound servants, and her crystalline minions before she unleashes a transmuting pandemic.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

LOW LEVEL

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–7	1 venomous snake	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 255
8–14	1d4 hadi*	1	page 23
15–21	1 bat swarm	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 30
22–28	1 constrictor snake	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 255
29–34	1 Small animated object	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 14
35–40	1 hadi tafen*	2	page 23
41–46	1 shadow	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 245
47–58	1d4 boars	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 36
59–64	1 army ant swarm	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 16
65–70	1 derhii*	5	page 23
71–76	1d4 dire apes	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 17
77–82	1 frothing ooze*	5	page 23
83–88	1d4 water mephitis	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 203
89–94	1 girallon	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 154
95–100	1 wyvern	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 282

MEDIUM LEVEL

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1-6	1 hadi tafen* and 1d6 rat swarms	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 232
7-12	1 umber jelly*	6	page 23
13-18	1d6 monitor lizards	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 194
19-24	1d6 morlocks	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 209
25-30	1d6 shadows	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 245
31-36	2d6 hadi rajwans*	7	page 23
37-42	1 crystal xorn*	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 284
43-48	1d4 manticores	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 199
49-54	1d4 Large animated objects	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 14
55-60	1d8 centipede swarms	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 43
61-66	1 deadfall scorpion	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 242
67-72	3-12 Medium animated objects	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 14
73-78	1 leukodaemon	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 68
79-84	1 marid and 1d6 water mephitis	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 142, 203
85-90	1 marid and 2 derhii*	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 142
91-100	1 greater shadow and 3d6 shadows	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 245

HIGH LEVEL

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1-14	2 leukodaemons and 2d6 hadi rajwans*	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 68
15-26	1 giant stone golem	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 163, 295
27-39	1 crystal elder xorn and 1d8 crystal xorns*	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 284
40-52	1 legion of 3d6 army ant swarms	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 16
53-64	1 morlock war party**	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 209
65-76	2 marids and 2 elder water elementals	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 142, 127
77-88	1 marid hunting party***	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 142
89-100	1 astradaemon	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 63

* Variant or new monster detailed in this chapter.

** 1 morlock cleric 8, 1d4 morlock barbarians 5, and 3d6 morlocks.

*** 1 noble marid, 1d4 marids, and 3d4 derhii guards.

THE WELL OF AXUMA

The greatest treasure of Kho is one that cannot be looted. The Well of Axuma, named for its creator, is not a physical object but a self-renewing vessel of magical energy developed by the ancient Shory, a lacework of magical energies that permeates the entire city. Enchantments laid upon the city were cast into the Well of Axuma and were diffused throughout the entire city, uplifting and sustaining the life energies of every citizen and fulfilling their physical needs, while allowing them to tap into its power to perform minor acts of everyday magic.

Within the Well of Axuma, which covers the entire valley of Kho and extends a half-mile in every direction, all creatures enjoy the effects of *endure elements* and heal naturally at twice the normal rate. Gravity is subtly altered as well, and creatures reduce falling damage by half and gain a +10 bonus on Acrobatics checks made to jump or reduce

falling damage. Natural plant and animal life grows with abandon, and creatures that spend more than 1 consecutive week within the Well of Axuma begin to perceive the flow of life energy around them. Those with a Wisdom score of 11 or greater may use *detect animals and plants*, *detect undead*, and *deathwatch* at will as spell-like abilities within the Well of Axuma. Those with Intelligence 11 or above can bend reality slightly, enabling them to use *detect magic*, *mage hand*, or *prestidigitation* at will. Those with a Charisma score of 11 or above can attempt to recharge spell-trigger items. This attempt requires 1 minute of concentration and a Use Magic Device check with a DC of 20 plus the item's caster level. The DC increases by 5 for each recharge attempt made by a given creature or upon a given item (regardless of who tries to recharge it) within a given day. If the check succeeds, the item regains 1 charge. If it fails, the character takes 1d4 points of Charisma damage from magical feedback and the item loses 1d4 charges.

Since the city's fall, the Well of Axuma does not function as it once did. While its mystic matrix was not destroyed, it was disrupted, and sometimes flares discordantly. Animated objects crawl to life at random intervals, driven by residual magical fluctuations and spiritual energy. In addition, every 24 hours disruptive fluctuations within the matrix deal 1d4 points of damage to a random ability score of any creatures in Kho's valley that fail a Fortitude save (DC 15 negates). Creatures that fail this saving throw do not benefit from the Well of Axuma's accelerated healing property for the next 24 hours. Creatures that remain within the Well's bounds for 1 uninterrupted month become acclimated to these fluctuations and do not risk harm; however, when they exit the well, their minds and bodies must reorient themselves to the unbent contours of normal reality. The effects of this are identical to the potential ability damage of entering (or reentering) the Well of Axuma, except they occur once per day for the first 1d6 days after leaving.

These sputtering irruptions of raw magical energy may be harmless, but at points where the tendrils of magic decay to utter ruin, they can unravel the very substance of reality, creating short-lived holes in the fabric of the universe. These "rogue spheres" are rare, generally arising from conjunctions between powerful and overlapping magical fields in the city's broken magical engines and devices, and they rarely last more than a few hours, often floating motionless or drifting aimlessly until they dissolve. Yet on those occasions when they interact with solid objects or creatures, the results are catastrophic. Treat rogue spheres as a CR 15 hazard similar to *spheres of annihilation*, but attracted to spellcasting; magic used within 120 feet causes a rogue sphere to move toward the caster at a speed of 5 plus 5 feet per level of the spell being cast. A rogue sphere within 30 feet of an ongoing magical aura of caster level 5th or higher (including magic items and active spells) drifts



CRYSTAL CREATURE TEMPLATE

“Crystal creature” is an acquired template that can be added to any creature with the earth subtype. A crystal creature retains all the base creature’s statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as the base creature +1.

Senses: A crystal creature gains low-light vision.

Armor Class: Natural armor improves by +4.

Defensive Abilities: A crystal creature gains resistance 10 to acid, cold, electricity, and fire, and DR 5/— unless the base creature’s DR is better. A crystal creature is immune to the harmful effects of bright light (including effects that blind with light); effects with the light descriptor; and other light-based attacks such as *color spray*, *prismatic spray*, and *searing light*. If the creature is hit with such an effect, the DC for its dazzling form attack increases by +2.

Weakness: A crystal creature gains vulnerability to sonic damage.

Special Attacks: A crystal creature gains the following special attacks.

Brilliant Pestilence (Su): The creature’s natural attacks inflict a supernatural disease. Bite or claw—injury; save Fort DC 23; onset 1 day; frequency 1 day; effect 1d6 Dex damage; cure 2 consecutive saves. A creature whose Dexterity is reduced to 0 by the disease is petrified and transformed into lifeless crystal. A creature with the earth subtype that is petrified by this disease revives 24 hours later and gains the crystal creature template. Once transformed, only *miracle*, *polymorph any object*, or *wish* restores the transformed earth creature.

Dazzling Form (Ex): A crystalline creature refracts and reflects a dazzling cascade of light when illuminated. In normal light, this radiance extends 30 feet; in bright light, it extends 60 feet. Within this area, all sighted creatures are dazzled for 1 minute if they fail a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 the creature’s racial Hit Dice + the creature’s Charisma modifier). Creatures within this radius that are looking at the crystal xorn must save every round or become permanently blind (Fortitude negates); this is a gaze attack. The DC of these abilities increases by +2 in bright light.

Special Qualities: A crystal creature gains the following special quality.

Light Amplification (Ex): A crystal creature’s body naturally captures and magnifies light that strikes it. When in normal light, it sheds normal light in a 30-foot radius. In bright light, it sheds normal light in a 60-foot radius.

Abilities: Str +2, Dex +4, Con +2, Int –4. If this reduces the creature’s Int to 0 or less, it becomes mindless.

toward the highest-level aura at a speed equal to that aura’s caster level (rounded down to the nearest multiple of 5). *Nondetection* and similar effects hide passive auras but not active spellcasting from a rogue sphere’s detection.

Rogue spheres are not always easily visible, sometimes appearing more as a ripple or whorl in midair than as a sphere of blackness. The DC to spot one is 15 in bright light, 20 in normal light, 25 in dim light, and 30 in darkness. *Detect magic* does not detect rogue spheres, but *true seeing* shows them for what they are. A DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check also identifies their true nature once they are noticed. Rogue spheres are not quite as destructive as true *spheres of annihilation*, instead affecting creatures or spell effects they touch as a simultaneous *disintegrate* spell (DC 20) and *greater dispel magic* spell (caster level 20th). Depending on how a rogue sphere is encountered, it might make a +15 melee touch attack against a magical effect or magic-using creature, or creatures moving into its space unaware might need to make a DC 25 Reflex save to avoid contacting it. In a combat situation, treat a rogue sphere as a creature with a +5 initiative modifier.



VARIANT MONSTERS

The ruins of Kho are home to many strange beings. Some are misshapen constructs or bound outsiders lingering on from a forgotten age, but more are scions of the city in the long ages since its fall. While most of Kho's derhii fly free, some cleave to their ancient tradition of service, binding themselves to the marids who claim lordship of Kho. These derhii do not serve for free, accepting gifts and even *wishes* in trade and receiving the blessings of their masters (see *invisibility* 3/day [CL 7th, concentration +7] and cold resistance 20). The valley's opposite end is home to the crystal xorns of the Vokthavaravat Cluster, transformed by their diet of Shory glass into living crystals. They have the crystal creature template (see sidebar), save that their form of brilliant pestilence converts only creatures with the earth subtype into creatures with this template. Other creatures afflicted with this disease are turned to lifeless crystal statues, which are swiftly devoured by the hungry crystal xorns.

Some of Kho's most unpleasant residents are oozes, the results of magical radiation or half-sentient muck escaped from cracked alchemical engines. Some were even created by the leukodaemons who have made the city their home, half-failed experiments in the arts of illness, dumped miserably from their curdled fleshpots and now creeping through the city. Frothing oozes are foamy, grayish-white masses that constantly bubble and froth, splattering those nearby with their filth. These variant gray oozes deal acid damage and spread blinding sickness to all creatures adjacent to them at the start of the creature's turn; a DC 20 Reflex save negates both damage and exposure, but any creature that the ooze hits with its slam attack or that strikes it with a natural weapon or unarmed attack automatically both takes damage and suffers from exposure. The loathsome umber jelly is a mass of infectious protoplasm identical to an ochre jelly, except that it deals slimy doom (DC 14 Fortitude save negates) with its slam attack or upon creatures that touch or strike it with their bodies, and its putrescent odor acts as a continuous *stinking cloud* (DC 19 Fortitude save negates) centered on and moving with the jelly. (Both variants add +1 CR to the base creature.)

The leukodaemons also have spawned a servitor race from the unnaturally cunning experimental rats and their descendants left behind by the Shory. The hadi are awakened dire rats with the advanced creature simple template. With an average Intelligence of 14 and prehensile paws, fluent and literate in Abyssal like their masters, they are capable assistants in the daemons' sinister experiments. Some hadi have been warped still further. Bred for battle, the hadi rajwan are like their cunning rat brethren but are also 2nd-level barbarians with the giant creature simple template. Most insidious of all, the hadi tafan are shapeshifters, with statistics identical to advanced wererats. They often command one or more rat swarms.

DERHII

This black-furred creature looks like a common gorilla, save for the enormous gray wings sprouting from behind its shoulders.

DERHII

CR 5



XP 1,600

N Large monstrous humanoid

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +6 natural, -1 size)

hp 59 (7d10+21)

Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +8

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor)

Melee mwk falchion +12/+7 (2d6+7/18-20), 2 slams +11 (1d6+5)

Ranged javelin +9/+4 (1d8+5)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks aerial charge, knockdown

STATISTICS

Str 21, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 10

Base Atk +7; CMB +13; CMD 26

Feats Acrobatic, Combat Reflexes, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Acrobatics +12, Climb +13, Fly +9, Perception +14

Languages Polyglot

SQ booming voice

Gear masterwork falchion, 6 javelins

ECOLOGY

Environment warm forests and mountains

Organization solitary, pair company (3-5), or tribe (8-48)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aerial Charge (Ex) When airborne, a derhii can dive at twice its normal flying speed. This is the equivalent of a charge, gaining a +2 bonus on the attack roll and a -2 penalty to AC.

Booming Voice (Ex) A derhii can use its powerful voice as a signal, making booming, wordless calls. The sound can be heard up to 12 miles away as a thrumming in the air that conveys 20 words of information over 5 minutes.

Knockdown (Ex) When a derhii confirms a critical hit with a two-handed weapon, it can knock an opponent prone, in addition to the damage dealt by the critical hit. If the derhii's conformation roll exceeds its opponent's CMD, the opponent is knocked prone as if from the trip combat maneuver. This does not provoke an attack of opportunity. If the derhii is tripped during its own trip attack, it can drop its weapon to avoid being tripped.

The flying apes known as derhii resemble more intelligent versions of common gorillas, and live in primitive jungle tribes whose territories may range for hundreds of miles. Though capable of surviving on fruits and insects, they prefer to hunt, employing surprisingly well-forged weapons. A typical derhii weighs 400 pounds and stands 8 feet tall.



STORASTA

IN OUR FINAL HOURS, THERE IS LITTLE LEFT TO SAY. THOSE WHO WORSHIP THE GODS TAKE TO THEIR KNEES, HEEDLESS OF THE OBVIOUS EVIDENCE OF THEIR OWN ABANDONMENT. THE SKY IS RED AND BLACK, SWARMING WITH THE DARK FLIES OF THE LORD OF THE LOCUST HOST. THE LAND IS BARE AND TWISTED, ITS STONES HEAVING LIKE A GASPING CREATURE. CAN THERE BE ANY QUESTION?

MIGHTY STORASTA IS NO MORE. ITS WARRIORS LIE IN GREAT LINES BEYOND THE CITY WALLS, THEIR GUTS SPLAYED TO THE SKY, SOME STILL SCREAMING. YET THE TRUE VICTIMS ARE THE GARDENS AND GROVES, THE SIMPLE CHILDREN OF THE EARTH. ALREADY THEY TWIST FROM MY HAND, AND I WEEP TO HEAR THEIR CRIES.

REVENGE IS A BITTER FRUIT. BUT I WILL TASTE ITS JUICE BEFORE I FALL.
—TREESPEAKER SALMUS ACHYON, LAST LETTER TO A FRIEND

When the shattering eruption of the Worldwound swallowed old Sarkoris, its painted warriors and spirit-shamans were no match for the ravening hordes of unfettered chaos and insensate evil. While the capital city of Iz was the first to fall, its outlying settlements were not long in following. The southern river-port of Storasta was the last holdout of Sarkoris's cities. Here the anointed groves and sacred circles were strongest, and tribal witches and shamans joined with druids of old Mendev and Numerian war-clans, swearing blood oaths that if this was to be their end, they would make such an end as to be worthy of remembrance. Their wish was granted, as the bloody annihilation of Storasta and the last remnants of the kingdom were immortalized in the "Song of Sarkoris." Though hardly complimentary of Sarkoris as a nation, its ringing refrains of their desperate bravery when all hope was lost helped spur the call for the Mendevian crusade.

While Storasta lives in song and memory, the city died in those bloody days, its buildings shattered, its walls crumbled, its proud bridges blackened by abyssal fires. So strong were the primal magics of nature unleashed there that witchcraft and idolatry merged with the raw essence of chaos, and nature itself overtook the devastated city. As though every drop of blood, from defender and demonic alike, formed a tainted seed, deformed and corrupted vegetation erupted all over the city. Nests and pits of vermin boiled up across a city swiftly overtaken with putrescent moss and thorny tangles. Storasta, once known for its gardens and groves, became so blight-racked that even the demon-hordes found it inhospitable, save for along the weed-choked riverbanks and crossings, where they wait and watch along the river to menace any who would dare to pass.

APPEARANCE

For a city fallen for less than a century, Storasta is nevertheless the very picture of a ruin. Perched at the confluence of the Sarkora River with the mighty West Sellen, much of the city is a tumbledown heap of rubble crawling with thick yet sickly foliage, as though it were flogged to an unnatural growth by the twisted energies of the Worldwound and swollen to bursting with an unnatural, bilious vitality it can barely contain. A partially demolished hill-fort still guards Stormont Isle and the passage of the West Sellen, though the great eastern wall and keep sag lazily inward. An overgrown dike shields Storasta's northern side from the turbid creeks of the Sarkora, entering the northern flow just above Barraza Island. The once-broken bridges of stone spanning to the island from either bank are once again whole, after a fashion, as the sturdy stone has been replaced with massive, creaking log-bridges suspended from fibrous hawsers of living vine. Tainted herds still

graze numbly amid the scrub to the west of the city, while the city proper sometimes glistens with floodwaters that rise up inexplicably and without warning to inundate its low-lying wards. Above it all, a titanic mound rises in the city's heart, crowned with great trees and shrouded with sickly flowers.

HISTORY

Before Sarkoris or Numeria had names, clans and tribes along the Sellen and Sarkora would meet at Storasta to trade or to settle disputes. The first permanent building here was a stone circle, which over the centuries evolved into the never-finished patchwork cathedral of Nekrasof Tower. Dedicated to Pharasma, great funerals conducted there ended with the dead being cast into the rivers to be carried beyond. Eventually other circles were erected on Barraza Island and Basseri Green, and the city slowly grew in around these sacred sites, becoming a center of learning and music.

In 3845 AR, Adyson Stormont and his company arrived in Storasta after the Shining Crusade. He and his company sought adventure from Storasta for years, but he also used his riverboats to ferry passengers across the West Sellen River, and as he approached retirement, he bargained with the city's leaders to trade him the rights to the island in the Sellen in perpetuity in return for bringing engineers from Lastwall to construct bridges. Construction on the Bridges of Barraza was finished in 3865 AR, but Stormont and his family were murdered and their fortune stolen before they saw the bridges completed. In his honor, the rulers of Storasta continued to operate the ferry, memorializing it and Stormont Isle with his name.

The bridges and ferry boosted trade with ranchers to the west and the river folk up and down the Sellen. Storasta remained a free city for centuries, respected by all but controlled by none, but rifts divided it between traditionalists and those who craved the fruits of modernity. The priesthood resisted expansion, railing against "southlander influences" and proclaiming that Storasta must remain the wild and pure spiritual heart of the northlands, but though Storasta's growth was slow, it could not be denied. The priesthood continued to hold sway, but strife intensified until the Burning of the Bridges in 4000 AR. In retaliation, the ranchers of the west mobilized their allies in Sarkoris to annex Storasta to the kingdom once and for all. Warlord Uloric Dziergas and his army arrived in the fall of that year with the high witch-wardens of Iz, Undarin, and Dyinglight, who challenged and overthrew the shaman-rulers of Storasta. Taare Trathen was named Warlord of Storasta and held the post for 47 years, rebuilding the bridges and constructing the great eastern wall and gate of city, as well as building up businesses along the river. While he lived in the newly



constructed Riverkeep, his nightly excursions—even into old age—to the entertainment establishments along the narrow strip of land bordering the Sarkora gave it the mocking nickname of Trathen’s Finger. The power of the shamans waned but did not disappear, as little by little over a period of 600 years, the gardens of the city were squeezed and cut to make room for the city’s growth, until the three great circles were all that remained. When the demon onslaught came to Storasta, desperate refugees and warriors filled the circles, finding courage and faith once more to sacrifice to the bitter end.

RESIDENTS

Storasta’s inhabitants form a curious balance, as tainted sentient plants and darkling fey—vitalized by the lingering spirits of Storasta’s last defenders but warped by the Worldwound’s emanations—control most of the city. The waterways and marshes around the city are largely controlled by aquatic demons and their cultic followers: hags, trolls, and boggards in the main, as well as primitive tribes of grindylows—water-dwelling goblinoid aberrations who unquestioningly serve their demonic masters. The demons’ servants are able to travel beyond the *Wardstones* that prevent the demons from venturing southward past the river.

Mightiest of Storasta’s inhabitants is the mad treant **Carrock** (NE male giant fiendish treant druid 15), ruling from the cyclopean mound of Carrock’s How at the city’s heart. He has cultivated an entire grove of fiendish treants that serve him, as well as enlisted a network of evil dryad spies and cruel nymphs which often keep harems of enslaved satyrs and werewolves to serve and fight at their pleasure. Assassin vines, shambling mounds, and plant-zombies also roam the city, some under Carrock’s thumb and others not, but the treelord’s tendriculoses (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 260) wait at the bottom of his Hungry Pits to consume any flesh or fiber that displeases him.

His chief rival for power is **Lalizarzadeh** (CE female hezrou fighter 7), a cunning brute who lairs in the repaired keep on Stormont Isle. She dares not challenge the treelord but truly has no reason to; her mandate is to watch the river and destroy any who try to use it. She keeps to the waters and guards them well, and it is largely because of her depredations that most Mendevian crusaders take the long way around through Numeria, Brevoy, and the River Kingdoms, rather than daring the direct route to Nerosyan up the West Sellen. Her merrow, scrag, and grindylow minions range across the frontier marauding and ambushing as they can, sometimes even crawling up under the walls of Nerosyan itself. Meanwhile, in Storasta, her green hag covens help balance the magical power at Carrock’s disposal, and she also has a trump card of her own in her unholy spawn, **Kulkarni** (CE advanced giant

THE SONG OF SARKORIS

The famed skald epic “The Song of Sarkoris” was written over countless generations, passed from master to apprentice for hundreds of years. With the passing of each decade, new verses appended to the traditional lyrics extended the chronicle to include recent events. The final lines of the work detail the last Sarkorian stand in Storasta.

Green trees bending stand with us,
Carrock enduring, valorous,
But will he be left alone?
Naught but blood and shattered bone
Left of all he hoped to save.
Where are the warriors once called brave?
The men we once called brother,
Children of a common mother,
Brothers far and brothers near,
Are you overcome with fear?
Soon comes your time now to be brave
For your own lives you must save.
But these words, our last to say
As we face our final day,
Ponder deeply, ponder well,
It matters not, Abyss or Hell,
When you face an open grave
Who among you shall be brave?
When hope is dead and hope is gone
Who among you will fight on?
No victory, no sweet reward,
No lover’s kiss, no sweet love’s bliss,
Our bodies die, our corpses hung,
And when destroyed are we all
Our clutching hate may still their jaws.
Devour’d we, our foes’ bowels pause,
As we torment them as their very dung.

half-fiend froghemoth), an abomination even the dark treants challenge at their peril.

Of uncertain allegiance is **Briktawite** (CE green hag witch 11), who visits with both camps but is beholden to neither. She comes and goes from Storasta as she pleases, often bringing information to both leaders, sometimes in the company of common hags or lesser witches.

Allied to none are the roaming herds of plague steeds and plague aurochs that wander the prairie between Storasta and Undarin. Servants only to those with the necromantic power to command them, they exist for no other purpose but to spread their taint wherever they roam. Likewise, the ubiquitous vermin of Storasta live only to eat or be eaten themselves, endlessly respawning in the Worldwound’s fecundity.



RELATIONS AND TRADE

Storasta was once a holy place, and many surviving Sarkorians keep with them a relic or token from the sacred groves that once grew here. Ironically, those same sacred trees and stones appear precious to Carrock, who has offered rewards to any who bring to him, whole or in pieces, standing stones or sacred trees from any of the ancient circles that can be found across the Worldwound, as well as druid circles from across Avistan. It is said he uses them to construct his great mound, and the larger the intact pieces, the greater his reward. Those who attempt to cheat him typically find themselves savagely beaten before being deposited in his Hungry Pits.

As a center of the priesthood, however, Storasta was also a center of magical manufacture, though the shamans of Sarkoris were apt to craft their scrolls as rune-carved sticks and their potions in the form of magical fruits or herbal tinctures. Still, many caches of such devices, as well as a few rare, more powerful items, can be unearthed in the city. Raiders occasionally venture into Storasta by stealth, following treasure maps that purport to lead to such stores of magical treasure; most are never heard from again, many having bought or found spurious maps planted by cunning green hags to lure them to their doom.

Since the Third Mendevian Crusade, a hidden fort was established 2 miles south of the river. Fort Amerine is guarded by a cadre of rangers and inquisitors who use stealth to keep the location of their base a secret. The commander, **Trudean Delashaw** (NG female human abjurer 9), supervises the care of the *Wardstones* along this section of the river and also coordinates counterstrikes against demon raids. She can create and sell magic scrolls, and at urgent need could provide high-level casting for adventurers in her good graces, perhaps even conveying them to Nerosyan by *teleport* if the need is great and they have proved their worth.

Within the city, the only real currency is blood and fear, though the material greed of some of its lesser inhabitants can sometimes be played upon through bluffs or bribes. The grindylows, merrow, and scraggs all thirst for gold and their loyalty can be bought, however briefly, and they can prove useful sources of information on the whereabouts and intentions of their betters. The pitiless plants of Carrock's host, however, have no such appetites, though his fey can be persuaded with gifts when the mood strikes them. Most in Storasta respect only power, and only when it is nearby.

SITES OF INTEREST

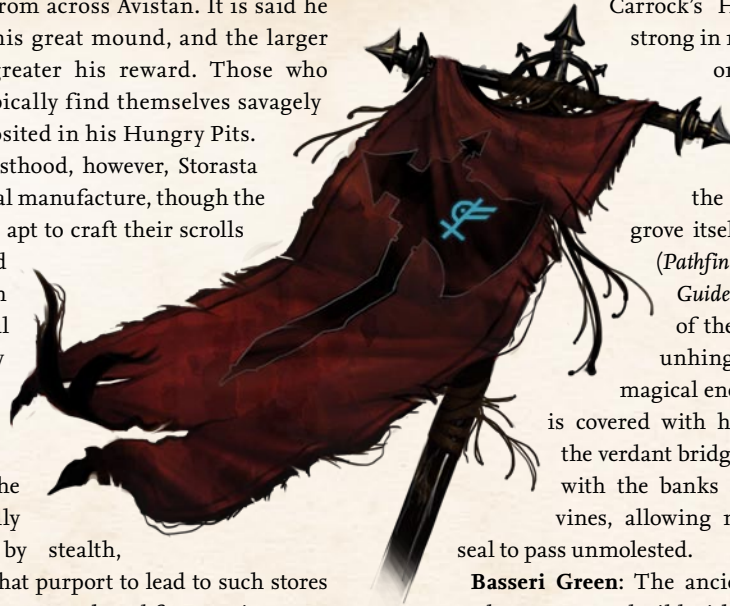
Storasta contains many sites of interest (and danger) to those who visit its tainted streets. Most of the city is covered in light or heavy undergrowth (except the Rushwaters, where light and dense rubble are found instead).

Barraza Island: This small island near the west bank of the Sarkora was once a sacred druid circle, though its standing stones and grove were long ago pillaged for Carrock's How. The site remains strong in nature magic, and druid or ranger spells cast on Barraza take effect at +1 caster level on most of the island. However, the razed stone circle and grove itself act as a *dweomersink* (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 244), as the violation of the ancient site has partly unhinged the flow of natural magical energies. The entire island is covered with heavy undergrowth, and the verdant bridges connecting the island with the banks are laced with assassin vines, allowing none without Carrock's seal to pass unmolested.

Basseri Green: The ancient heart of the city, a space kept green and wild with groves and circles even as the city grew up around it, Basseri Green was the seat of spirit worship, where fey danced and bards declaimed the epics of old. The Green is a nearly impassable thicket guarded by treants and *awakened* trees, and still roamed by fey, albeit fey of a decidedly darker countenance who dally with Abyss-tainted satyrs and werewolves alike.

Creekside: North of Storasta, the vale between the twisted Serpent Creek to the north and Aemmer's Creek to the south is a frequent flood zone, the reason for the building of Aemmer's Dike, a long earthen rampart holding back those waters. The marshy area between the creeks is a breeding ground for vermin of all types.

Eastwall: Stretching from Aemmer's Dike in the north to Riverkeep on the West Sellen, this mighty wall proved only a minor inconvenience to the demon hordes. Breached in many places by enslaved giants and trolls, it was never wholly pulled down. The battered barbican of Trathen's Gate gives mute testimony to the brave futility of ordinary defenses, and the triangular Riverkeep yet stands a silent watch over the West Sellen, its great river-chain long rusted. The demons gave up defending the keep from the tireless encroachment of trees and vines for the simpler safety of Stormont Isle, but in the under-chambers, choked with the discarded bones of the dead, **Ploscaru the Hungry** (CE fiendish



lacedon ghastr sorcerer [undead bloodline] 9) rules a twisted court over his lesser kin.

The Rushwaters: The western section of Storasta proper lies between the two mighty rivers, and its shoreline has now subsided to the point that even minor flood surges wash over the entire district, filling streets and plazas with eddying, knee-deep currents, while heavy rains can inundate the area (treat as rough flowing water; see page 432 of *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*). The largest intact building here is the ramshackle cathedral called Nekrasof Tower, surrounded by empty pits where its stone circle once stood before adding its strength to Carrock's How. The witch **Muslera** (CE green hag witch 8), apprentice to Briktawite, rules the tower when her mistress is absent. Grindyloes and merrow camp in the Rushwaters, though hezrous and their favored scrag servants claim the best riverbank locations.

Stormont Isle: This rocky outcrop in the West Sellen, nearly 100 feet high, has long been a strategic bottleneck, and Adyson Stormont long ago built a fort and his family villa upon it, though the Stormonts did not live to enjoy it for long. Later rulers maintained both the fort and villa for years, using it to host grand balls and to help defend the city's approaches from the river. The fort was of no help against the demon host; while conventional troops sacked the city, an elite demonic strike team simply teleported inside and slaughtered the defenders. Lalizarzadeh led that assault and thereafter made it her base of operations overlooking the city for nearly a century. Her majordomo, **Govostes the Torturer** (CE babau enchanter 8), questions prisoners brought before his mistress or in her absence.

The West Yards: The lands west of the Sarkora River were once dominated by stockyards and tanneries between the twin forks of the Alathusa River. An army of nabasus slaughtered Storasta's cavalry here, and most of the buildings were razed. The same men who fought to defend Storasta now walk this marshy wasteland as ghouls, ghastrs, and lacedons. The doomed steeds and stock of Storasta succumbed to zombie rot and were left to wander, spreading their corrupting blight as they went.

North and west of the fork of the Alathusa River lie the closest of the countless barrow-downs of Storasta's ancient heroes, which surround the settlement. Most of these gravesites have long since been pillaged and desecrated, though lone cairn wights yet lair amid their former graves. Some of the region's less social denizens use the isolated cairns as lairs, and explorers of the mounds may encounter monstrous vermin, rogue demons, and deadly oozes.

Trathen's Finger: This sliver of land, separated from Carrock's How by a narrow, backwater slough, was at one time a center of bawdy entertainment, gambling, and all manner of vices favored by the rivermen of Sarkoris (and

old Taare Trathen himself). Today **Nanisivik** (CE male grindyloer fighter 12) vies with **Siukim** (NE shambling mound cleric 6) for control of the district, with both sides recruiting green hags and lacedons to battle in the ruined streets.

THE STORASTA CAMPAIGN

As with much of the demon-blasted Worldwound, the ruins of Storasta present an unceasing source of danger and adventure. The city's position on the edge of the twisted land, however, makes it both a great introduction to the region at large and one of the most threatening areas, since its denizens have shorter to travel to encroach on the civilized world beyond the *Wardstones*. The relatively recent fall of the city and its cataclysmic demise provide countless reasons for modern adventurers to venture into its heart for secrets and mysteries rooted in the memories of still-living elders.

LOW-LEVEL ADVENTURES

As dangerous as Storasta is for the inexperienced, there are still plenty of adventures for low-level PCs in and around the ruined metropolis. The city's proximity to Nerosyan, a major city consecrated to and protected by the powers of good, allows more vulnerable parties to engage in short raids or reconnaissance missions without risking long-term entrenchment in the Worldwound. Both the demonic forces of Storasta and the city's corrupted plants and fey employ a variety of lesser minions whose actions can spread beyond the city proper and hook PCs into greater challenges in the ruin's core.

For such low-level hooks, the fey, werewolf, and grindyloer servants of Storasta's more powerful forces make excellent foes, as do the region's lingering undead. Unhindered by the restraints of the *Wardstones*, raiding parties with allegiances to both Carrock and Lalizarzadeh may venture into northern Numeria or southwestern Mendev collecting treasure, natural resources, or even human sacrifices for their superiors, prompting a retaliatory mission or rescue attempt by the PCs. Parties affiliated with the Mendevian Crusades may be sent into the Storastan hinterlands by **Jade Surcinelli** (LG female human cavalier 8), a crusader captain in Nerosyan, to strike at a grindyloer encampment on the banks of the West Sellen several miles east of Storasta proper where a squadron of crusaders are rumored to be held captive.

In campaigns destined to focus more on the twisted plants and fey who call Storasta home, PCs may encounter **Variskala**, a green hag allied with Carrock. Under the guise of a simple peasant or merchant in Nerosyan, the hag feeds the party rumors, hoping to lure them into the Worldwound and within reach of her arboreal master's fiendish grasp. PCs may be directed to nearby druid circles



or magical locations to collect relics to add to Carrock's How, or to obtain components for an experimental weapon effective against demons for the treant to use in gaining control of the city.

PCs easily tempted by the promise of treasure may hear of the long-abandoned burial mounds surrounding the city and the treasures none have yet plundered because of the difficulty of traversing the Worldwound's hazards to attain them. While exploring the haunted barrows, they encounter **Khistian Yadranko**, a frost wight mounted on a plague steed sent by Lalizardadeh beyond the *Wardstones* to harry outlying crusader villages. Investigation and astute tracking leads the PCs into the heart of Storasta and into the green hag's nefarious plans.

MEDIUM-LEVEL ADVENTURES

As PCs enter the mid-level range, exploration and adventure in central Storasta begin to look less like a suicidal endeavor. There are a number of reasons PCs may venture into the deadly ruin, including following up on plots begun in the low-level adventures above.

As PCs near Storasta, they may encounter a demonic cult of Sarkorian barbarians who now venerate their Abyssal tormentors. The PCs find the cult in civil strife, with shaman **Jarjees** (CE male human cleric of Deskari 9) attempting to win the tribe away from chieftain **Ranganath** (CN male human barbarian 5/ranger 5), whose faction follows Cyth-V'sug above all other demon lords and feels that they should ally with Carrock's forces in Storasta. The PCs may use the cultists as tools in their own assault on Storasta or as sources of information on the goings on in the city proper.

Trudean Delashaw at Fort Amerine may send the PCs into the West Yards to destroy the undead hosts of mindless plague steeds and plague aurochs housed there, eradicating them as a major threat to the outlying areas where Storasta's higher powers send them to wreak havoc beyond the *Wardstones*. Once there, the PCs are but a short distance from Carrock's How and Stormont Isle, and could easily become entangled in the ongoing struggle for overall control of Storasta.

Especially daring parties may wish to wage an ongoing assault on Storasta, declaring war on the entire befouled city. Fort Amerine makes an excellent base of operations for such an endeavor, and Trudean's alliance with the Mendevian Crusaders may provide the PCs with a source of cohorts or other followers. A southern approach is easiest for a party based in Numeria, and it takes many weeks of fighting through scouts and sentinels along the West Sellen's banks and neighboring marshlands before they can even think of breaching the city itself. Weakening Storasta's defenses and depleting the number of shock troops available to both Carrock and Lalizarzadah lays a

solid foundation for the final push into their respective bastions at higher levels.

HIGH-LEVEL ADVENTURES

Stormont Isle and Carrock's How provide worthy challenges for high-level parties; after working their way up from Lalizarzadah's and Carrock's minions and making their way into the city's heart, the PCs should now be on track to face one of Storasta's feuding masters. Depending on which foe the PCs set their sights on, they may wish to make a tenuous alliance with the other faction for aid in defeating their rival. The green hag Briktawite makes an excellent envoy to either camp and approaches any party that shows potential in the region for taking out one or the other of Storasta's highest powers. Whichever side the PCs ally with, once their primary foe is defeated, they must face the now-unopposed might of their former friend, who holds no loyalty to the PCs for their assistance in bringing about the rival's demise.

Parties not open to the idea of allying with demons or maniacal fiendish treants can be drawn into Storasta's heart when both powers threaten the fragile balance of the region. In his ever-desperate quest to build his How higher, Carrock focuses all his resources on obtaining one of the *Wardstones* that keep Storasta's Abyssal armies contained. As the treant's forces excavate one such stone, a gap forms in the invisible barrier fencing in the demons, and they swarm out into northern Numeria and Mendev. Facing a complete collapse of their defensive measures, the Mendevian Crusaders send the PCs into Storasta to cut off Lalizarzadah's forces or to retrieve the captured *Wardstone* from Carrock's How.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

LOW LEVEL

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1-5	1 lacedon ghoul	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 146
6-10	1d3 mining beetles	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 33
11-15	1 plague steed*	1	Page 32
16-20	1d3 yellow musk zombies	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 285
21-25	1 abyssal tick swarm*	1	Page 32
26-30	1d6 grindylows	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 2148
31-40	1 dretch	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 60
41-45	2d3 stirges	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 260
46-50	1 fiendish werewolf	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 198, 294
51-55	1 lacedon ghast	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 146
56-60	1 cairn wight	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 276
61-65	1 centipede swarm	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 43
66-70	1 advanced freshwater merrow	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 2189, 292
71-75	1 fiendish dryad	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 116, 294
76-80	1 leech swarm	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 187

81–85	1d3 assassin vines	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 22
86–90	1 giant river (moray) eel	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 119
91–95	1 green hag	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 167
96–100	1 scrag	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 268

MEDIUM LEVEL

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–8	1 swamp skulker**	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 60, 294, 286
9–14	2d3 fiendish giant frogs	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 135, 294
15–19	1 shambling mound	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 246
20–26	1 wood golem	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 164
27–35	2 half-fiend dryads	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 116, 171
36–43	1 chuul	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 46
44–49	2 fiendish dire wolverines	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 279, 294
50–56	1 freshwater merrow rogue 4	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 2189
57–61	2d3 frost wights	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 276
62–66	1 giant slug	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 254
67–71	2d3 giant stag beetles	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 33
72–79	2d3 plague aurochs*	8	Page 32
80–87	1 fiendish treant	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 266, 294
88–92	1d4+1 will-o'-wisps	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 277
93–100	2 fiendish nymphs	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 217, 294

HIGH LEVEL

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–11	1 hezrou	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 62
12–23	1 fiendish giant flytrap	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 134, 294
24–35	1 hezrou and 1d6 scraggs	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 62, 268
36–47	1 fiendish elder water elemental	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 127, 294
48–59	2d3 chuuls, 1 advanced giant chuul	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 46, 294, 295
60–71	1d3+1 giant fiendish treants	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 266, 294, 295
72–83	1 green hag witch II	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 167
84–93	1 ancient black dragon	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 93
94–100	Kulkarni*	18	See page 27

* Variant or new monster detailed in this chapter.

** Advanced dretch ranger 2 on yeth hound

CARROCK'S HOW

Dominating the skyline of Storasta, rising to twice the height of the hill-keep of Stormont Isle, is the massive edifice known as Carrock's How. It rises almost as a living thing itself, and in part it is, as still-living trees, roots, vines, and cascades are woven with great slabs of rock to form an unusual monolithic structure. Beneath the How stands the ancient Spirit Mound of Storasta, greatest of its primal places of power, linking idol priests and spirit circles across Sarkoris. Storasta's defenders drew deeply from its power to defend their city, calling nature to life and empowering its green wardens. Greatest of the defenders was the mighty treant Carrock, who stood indomitable even as his allies fell beside him and the shamans redirected their failing energies into their champion. However, as the channel of primal energies became a raging cataract, so too did the frozen

SHADES OF THE FALLEN

There is a strong psychic and spiritual residue of Storasta's slaughtered defenders, the unquiet remains of the last stalwart host of Sarkoris. Haunts (see page 242 of *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*) are commonplace in Storasta, especially when exploring or unearthing a building long undisturbed. The spirits of the lost are even known to rise when the call of battle sounds. A *horn of Valhalla* sounded in Storasta automatically brings double the normal number of berserkers. When a summoning or calling spell is cast within Storasta, roll 1d20 and add the level of the summoning or calling effect to see if such shades are attracted.

d20	Result
1–15	no additional effect
16–17	1–3 celestial or fiendish horses
18–19	2–5 barbarians as <i>iron horn of Valhalla</i>
20–21	3–8 barbarians as <i>bronze horn of Valhalla</i>
22–23	3–8 barbarians as <i>brass horn of Valhalla</i>
24–25	4–9 barbarians as <i>silver horn of Valhalla</i>
26+	unique summons (this could be a celestial or fiendish mast-odon, barbarian chieftain [<i>GameMastery Guide</i> 307], or 1–3 raiders or vikings [<i>GameMastery Guide</i> 280–281])

Shades of the fallen awoken in this fashion are constructs, and they and their gear vanish when slain or 1 hour after being awoken. The shades have a 50% chance to attack any obviously evil creatures they find, and a 50% chance to be completely mad and attack the nearest creatures (other than themselves).

filth of the Worldwound's taint. Drunk on its wild power, Carrock drew more and more, too much for the shamans to control, as they were sundered body and soul, burned to frozen cinders by the overwhelming flow. Once the city was taken, the exhausted demon armies were content to allow the mad treant to rampage, even taking dark satisfaction as he blindly devastated the city he once protected.

With the shamans dead, the mound's power flowed uncontrolled, seeping into the very earth of Storasta and causing it to erupt in a welter of blighted fecundity, regurgitating chaos-warped fey spirits consumed elsewhere in the Worldwound to dance amid the corrupted glades, groves, and fungus fields that engulfed the shattered city. Carrock, the voices of the shaman-spirits echoing within him, returned to the Spirit Mound and bent its power to his will, building his might, and before long the demons who thought they had conquered Storasta were besieged by nature itself—a nature as dark and twisted as they. Platoons of demons were swallowed up, while their enemies, once



slain, simply grew anew, sprouting and multiplying. The demons abandoned the core of Storasta to Carrock as not worth the struggle, maintaining only a foothold and a careful watch on the surround.

Carrock's thirst for power was not slaked. He bid his servants drag the sacred stones from across Storasta to the mound, and sang to the trees to life-shape them first into a grove, then a bower, and finally to weave them with the standing stones into the foundation of the How. The spirit-power in every tree and sacred stone resonated with the Spirit Mound, and Carrock's power grew greater. He sent creeping servants far and wide to drag whole and broken monoliths, dolmens, and standing stones from across the Worldwound, until Carrock's How now rises in a great pile over 200 feet tall, an artificial hill enclosing a warren of twisting passages and roots and vines fashioned into strange twisting sigils, the Spirit Mound itself buried deep within.

Game Effects: Carrock's How is a fount of natural energies and power that spreads its influence throughout Storasta and the vicinity, linking itself to the life energy of every creature within this radius. Its powers are strongest within the city but extend up to 5 miles distant; however, its powers are blocked by the *Wardstones* and the River Sellen.

Druidic magic is enhanced by Carrock's How, with all druid and ranger spells taking effect at +1 caster level. Magic that specifically affects plants, vermin, fey, or creatures with the chaotic subtype (including any spells or spell-like abilities gained from the Chaos or Plant domains or the abyssal, fey, or verdant sorcerer bloodlines) also takes effect at +1 caster level and as if enhanced with the *Enlarge Spell* and *Extend Spell* feats; these effects stack with the caster level bonus to druidic magic.

Creatures of other types often feel flushed and queasy amid the torrent of corrupted life energy radiating from Carrock's How. They take a -2 penalty on saving throws against becoming diseased, nauseated, or sickened, and if slain, their remains have a 50% chance per day to animate as plant-like zombies (treat as free-willed yellow musk zombies but with neither a creator plant nor seeds for yellow musk creepers). Creatures whose remains rise in this way cannot be raised but can be returned to life by a *reincarnation* or *resurrection* spell.

The spirits of the dead are also at risk in Storasta. The entire city is haunted with the restless shades of Storasta's fallen defenders, and they clamor for the newly dead to join their eternal lament. Infused with the spirit-energies continually flowing from the How, these shades surge toward the departing spirits of the slain, binding them as the *rest eternal* spell (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 238). The caster level check to overcome this effect is DC 30 inside of Carrock's How and DC 25 elsewhere in Storasta. The DC is reduced by 5 for each mile of distance between

the caster and the How. This effect can be negated with *break enchantment*, *remove curse*, or *dispel chaos* against the same DC.

VARIANT MONSTERS

Even on the fringes of the Worldwound, nature itself is corrupted under the malign influence spewing forth across the land. Vermin are exceptionally common in Storasta; many have adapted or simply made a home in their corrupted surroundings. An abyssal tick swarm is a tick swarm (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 265) with the fiendish simple template. As an agglomeration of typical blood-sucking arthropods that carry with them the chaostainted plagues of the Worldwound, they pose significant threats (CR 10); instead of bubonic plague, the swarm carries demon fever (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 557).

Storasta was once a market center for ranchers and herders of lost Sarkoris, with sprawling tanneries west of the city, whose tainted efflux swept downriver, away from the city's heart. Those ancient herds have not been spared the Worldwound's taint; the scrublands around Storasta are roamed by plague steeds (CR 1), light horses with the plague zombie template. These scabrous stallions and putrefied mares attack with a single slam attack (slam +7, 1d8+6 plus disease [zombie rot]). Far more terrifying, however, are the plague aurochs (CR 5), the malformed stock of bison and musk ox herds. They gain the plague zombie template but retain their trample and stampede special attacks. Plague aurochs possess an unearthly putrescence which grants them the stench special quality (30-foot radius, Fort DC 13 negates, sickened for 1d6 minutes); creatures with the scent special quality save at -4 against this effect.

CARROCK

Looming as a weathered and battle-scarred titan, his bark blackened and carved with runes of hate and vengeance, Carrock remembers well the downfall of his city and his role in it, as more of the city was demolished by his power-drunk rampage than by the invaders. Even so, his self-loathing has long since turned to hatred, not only of the invaders but of all who failed him and his land.

CARROCK

CR 20

XP 307,200

Male advanced fiendish treant druid (blight druid) 15

(*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 98, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 266, 294)

NE Gargantuan plant

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

Perception +40

DEFENSE

AC 34, touch 7, flat-footed 34 (+4 armor, +1 insight, +23 natural, -4 size)



hp 445 (27d8+324)

Fort +34, Ref +14, Will +26

Immune disease, plant traits; Resist cold 15, electricity 20, fire 15; SR 25

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slam +31 (2d8+15), Carrock's Maul +35/+30/+25/+20 (4d8+25/19–20 plus 2d6 vicious)

Ranged rock +19 (2d8+15)

Space 20 ft.; Reach 20 ft.

Special Attacks rock throwing (180 ft.), smite good (+3 attack, +27 damage, 1/day), trample (2d8+22, DC 31), wild shape 15 hours/day, wooden fist (+7, 11 rounds/day)

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 15th; concentration +23)

8th—control plants^D, finger of death (DC 26), whirlwind (DC 26)

7th—animate plants^D, creeping doom, fire storm (DC 25), heal

6th—antilife shell, greater dispel magic, mass cure light wounds, move earth, repel wood^D

5th—animal growth, awaken, call lightning storm, insect plague, rest eternal*, wall of thorns^D

4th—air walk, command plants^D, flame strike, freedom of movement, giant vermin, ice storm, thorn body*

3rd—call lightning, cure serious wounds, plant growth^D, protection from energy (already cast), quench, speak with plants, stone shape

2nd—barkskin^D (already cast), cure moderate wounds, heat metal, owl's wisdom, resist energy, stone call, wood shape

1st—ant haul* (already cast), bristle*, entangle^D (DC 19), faerie fire, longstrider, obscuring mist, produce flame

o (at will)—detect magic, guidance, resistance, stabilize

D Domain spell; Domain Plant

STATISTICS

Str 40, Dex 10, Con 34, Int 12, Wis 26, Cha 16

Base Atk +20; CMB +39; CMD 49

Feats Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring, Greater Sunder, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Critical (greatclub), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Improved Vital Strike, Persistent Spell*, Power Attack, Stunning Assault*, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (greatclub)

Skills Climb +20, Diplomacy +16, Handle Animal +14, Knowledge (history) +18, Knowledge (nature) +23, Knowledge (religion) +18, Linguistics +3, Perception +40, Sense Motive +17, Spellcraft +20, Stealth –8 (+8 in forests), Survival +10; Racial Modifiers +16 Stealth in forests

Languages Abyssal, Common, Druidic, Hallit, Sylvan, Treant

SQ animate trees, blightblooded, bramble armor (1d6+7, 15 rounds/day), double damage against objects, miasma*, nature bond (Plant domain), nature sense, plaguebearer* (DC 25), timeless body, treespeech, vermin empathy* +18, woodland stride

Combat Gear scroll of word of recall; Other Gear Carrock's

Maul (+3 ghost touch vicious darkwood maul of the titans), belt of physical might (Str, Con) +4, bracers of armor +4, cloak of resistance +5, eyes of the eagle, headband of inspired wisdom +6, ioun stone (dusty rose prism), ring of blinking, ring of spell turning

* See Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide.

Still possessed of mighty gifts of natural power, Carrock draws upon the spirit-well of Carrock's How (see page 31 for more information) to fuel his complex plots for the destruction of any in his way. Those who venture into his place of power find it a harrowing labyrinth, well guarded by Carrock's minions, and they are far more likely to find their deaths than the spirit-well at its heart.





SUN TEMPLE COLONY

THE INNER EYE SHALL OPEN,
AND IN THE GLORY OF THE WEEPING GATE
THE LIGHT SHALL FLOW, AND WITH BLISTERING PURITY
BURST FROM US THE SINS OF THE WORLD.

WE WHO BEAR THE LIGHT ARE THE KEEPERS,
RAGING A TORRENT WITHIN OUR FLESH
AND BLISTERED WITH THE PROMISE OF NEW WORLDS TO COME.

IN THE CONSUMPTION OF FLAME,
WE ARE REBORN IN THE IMAGE OF DIVINITY.

—EXCERPT FROM THE SO-CALLED “BLESSING OF THE SUN,”
LAST VERIFIED COMMUNICATION FROM THE SUN TEMPLE COLONY

Far across the Arcadian Ocean, the shattered remains of Azlant ascend from the sea like drowning skeletons, broken lands desperately gasping for breath in mockery of the fallen civilization. Beyond a maze of jagged cliffs, the decayed remains of the sacred city of Nal-Vashkin rise high above the water, its churches and spires still resonating with perversions of divine glory. The once-holy shrines hold irresistible riches and dangerous guardians, tempting foolhardy explorers to trespass on these forbidden grounds. Horrible abominations lurk among the island's ruins—slithering oozes of searing flame that seek to usurp the minds and bodies of treasure-seekers toward worship of an unseen master. The strange, alien architecture of the buildings traps the souls of restless dead and attracts horrors from incomprehensible dimensions. Everywhere, weird lights flicker and things of primordial fire roam, birthed from a reawakened Azlanti experiment—a godling entrapped by mortal man, long slumbering in the Sun Temple.

The island's crumbling structures also host an age-old conflict, as the descendants of a lost Andoren colony wage holy war with those whose minds have been tainted by the awakened godling opposed by those who reject the fearsome horror. Orbiting high overhead, a mysterious artifact focuses the rays of the sun into a searing column of divine fire, bringing life to the unnatural being that rests within the temple and fiery destruction to those who oppose it. But hope lies hidden among the towering spires of Old Azlant, and scorched paths of burned earth reveal mysterious treasures and powerful magics for the adventurous to rediscover. These secrets and more await reclamation, and may yet undo the horrific errors of the island's lost progenitors to bring rest to the tumultuous conflicts that rage within the ruins.

APPEARANCE

High above a bleached boneyard of wave-ravaged shipwrecks perch the decayed temples of the Azlanti city of Nal-Vashkin. Strange lights flicker among the fragmented shrines and beckon the unwary deeper into the tangled undergrowth of the island. Smoldering auroras halo the ruins even in the bright of day, and the burn of ozone permeates the air. Towering spires and copulas penetrate the island's thick canopy, dwarfing more recent human habitations built among the once-glorious edifices of the old empire. An enormous, bronze-mounted lens transits the island in a lazy and wandering orbit, its focused beam setting vegetation alight and carving trails like cauterized wounds through the dense foliage. Everywhere are the crumbling walls of a ruined civilization—some built in strange, sharp angles, others curved like sections of spheres. Above all looms the imposing edifice of the Sun Temple, perched on high, rocky ground scorched black by the searing beams of the gigantic lens. Occasionally, the mysterious device pauses in its orbit,

bringing its light to bear on the cracked crystalline dome of the grand temple, which causes the halo of its smoldering aurora to flare menacingly as magma-like oozes flow forth from the temple's yawning, eye-shaped gate, like tears of living flame.

HISTORY

Of all the ways in which the ancient Azlanti revolted against their aboleth mentors, perhaps no insult was more stinging than their deification of divine beings—pure anathema to the atheistic aboleths. But even beyond their discovery of faith, it was Azlant's unprecedented advances in arcana—and the treacherous pride that accompanied it—that set Azlant up for its legendary fall.

In one such experiment, ancient priests constructed an enormous, floating, magical lens that orbited the central Sun Temple dedicated to their half-dozen solar deities, focusing the sacred light of celestial conjunctions on the temple's crystal dome. Their original intentions are long lost, and whether they intended to call down an aspect of a benevolent solar deity or at last remove the negative influence of the demon lord Nurgal from Golarion's mother star is unknown. Whatever their purpose, the priests succeeded in cultivating a raw, earthly incarnation of a protoplasmic sun god, before the cataclysm of Earthfall brought their foul experiment to an end.

For thousands of years, the Sun Temple's crystal dome lay collapsed and the *celestial lens* was knocked out of alignment. Eventually, colonists from Andoran arrived and settled the island, generations living and dying among the unforgiving environment and crumbling shrines. Then, some 3 centuries ago, after a series of devastating raids by Mordant Spire elves, a few dozen surviving colonists desperately prayed for protection within the Sun Temple, pleading for deliverance. The thick, golden substance that oozed forth in response from the temple's central tiled pool was interpreted as a gift from the gods, and exposing this "gift" to sunlight for the first time in thousands of years, the colonists unknowingly awakened the Sun Temple's long-starved godling. Its pitifully shrunken form charged by the sun's warming rays, the incarnation named itself Nuruu'gal, telepathically promising protection in exchange for sustenance and supplication, appearing as a comforting "inner eye" of serenity in the minds of the colonists.

Under their protector's guidance, the colonists rebuilt the Sun Temple and rediscovered the *flame of guidance*—the means of controlling the orbiting *celestial lens*—using it to refocus the device to nurture the embryonic godling and ward off further attack by the Mordant Spire elves. For decades the primordial deity grew in power and desire within its opulent tiled pool, but not all trusted the whispered mental urgings of the ever-growing ooze. Soon a schism developed



between those loyal to their savior and those who recognized this false god as sacrilege to Abadar. As the colony tore itself asunder, the godling became threatened by those who would attempt to undermine its worship, and thus labored toward the creation of the first tears of Nuruu'gal: sentient oozes able to inhabit human bodies, which it sent forth to subvert those who would not worship willingly.

With the godling's true intentions exposed, the division between the factions was complete. For 300 years, holy war has raged between those loyal to Nuruu'gal and those who reject the unholy abomination. The few outcasts who retained their sanity attempted scattered communications with their homeland, but rescue has never arrived, and the stalemate continues.

RESIDENTS

While many dangerous creatures call this place home, the most prevalent inhabitants of Nal-Vashkin are the white-robed cultists who control most of the island. Roughly 400 followers of Nuruu'gal inhabit a commune among the spherical domes of the old temples, with the most devout living on the Sun Temple grounds. Outsiders in conversation with these residents find them exceedingly polite but intrusively inquisitive, the acolytes' speech punctuated by long pauses as they try to use their symbiote-granted *detect thoughts* ability to pry for information. The presence of the parasitic oozes among the cultists means even innocent-looking villagers may be capable of obliterating blasphemers with fiery rays. Over time, the few islanders not given over to the godling's control have given up trying to identify which villagers are uninhabited "breeders" and which are sterile host symbiotes, giving all acolytes a wide berth.

Over time, the parasitic oozes tend to warp their hosts' bodies, with extra digits, useless vestigial limbs, second mouths, or extra eyes common among inhabited cultists. After years serving their primordial god, the most powerful infested adepts sometimes undergo a startling change when the fiery seed within them germinates fully, transforming them into shining beacons of searing fire. From then on they refer to themselves collectively as "Nuruu'gal's shining one," but scholars across Golarion recognize such creatures as shining children, strange and unknowable entities often associated with ancient Thassilon (see page 245 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*). Such creatures serve Nuruu'gal on the Sun Temple's parched grounds, though in many ways more like advisors than worshipers, and occasionally inflict blazing destruction upon blasphemers.

Farther west, banished to broken slivers of islands and under constant siege, are the 200 huddled outcasts who still follow the old ways of Abadar. Nuruu'gal's cult sees these blasphemers as cattle to be harvested in the service of symbiotes or pests to be incinerated. While the villagers are well defended by powerful weapons salvaged from the

PURGAL AND ANCIENT AZLANTI

Azlanti mythology is complex and often vexing to scholars. Priests of the ancient empire assigned confusing contradictions to gods of their pantheon, and the role of one deity was often inexorably bound to the portfolio of another. Such is the case of the demon lord Nurgal, who the Azlanti believed emerged from the underworld during the summer months to climb the shoulders of those deities who represented the sun's nurturing aspects. Once perched upon their backs, Nurgal would whisper great evils, distracting the gods and causing an inadvertent unleashing of the full fury of the sun upon Golarion, causing scorching summers and devastating droughts. In this way, Nurgal represented the negative aspects of the sun's power, and came to be known as the Shining Scourge.

Whether the Azlanti Sun Temple experiments with the *celestial lens* were intended to harvest the raw power of the sun, prevent drought by averting Nurgal's influence, or summon an earthly incarnation for worship is now unknown, but the Azlanti did succeed in capturing a corrupted simulacrum of *something* in the mortal realm, in the form of an insatiable protoplasmic godling. The fact that the insane creature now residing within the Sun Temple refers to itself by the derivative name "Nuruu'gal" only bolsters the theory that the Azlanti priest brought forth some maddened incarnation of the demon lord to the Material Plane.

Nurgal's domains are Chaos, Evil, Fire, and Sun, and his favored weapon is the heavy mace—treat worshipers of Nuruu'gal as worshipers of Nurgal.

ruins, the items unfortunately do not provide food or water, and finding sustenance is a constant struggle, as scouts and spies from the colony make such simple activities as fishing and farming dangerous ventures.

Other creatures thrive among the ruins as well. In addition to the normal dangers of an oceanic island—from reefclaws and sharks to less common horrors like chuuls—the intense divine fires created by the temple's floating lens sometimes attracts the attention of fire elementals and magma mephits, who slip through the thin planar fabric at the beam's termination. Occasionally cultists of Nuruu'gal tame these fearsome elementals, but more often than not the creatures roam about in wild rampages. Not all tears of Nuruu'gal are able to bond with a host, either, and these creatures sometimes grow to terrible size and are renamed "fire puddings" by the inhabitants. Some cultists suffer a horrific fate when the warping effect of symbiotic bonding goes awry, and wander the island as fiery amoebas known as gibbering hosts. Ghosts, will-o'-wisps, and even the occasional demon can be found among certain temple districts.



RELATIONS AND TRADE

With the nearest civilization a thousand miles away, and the cult warding off pirates and elven raiders with the *celestial lens*, normal comforts and commodities are rare among the colonies. While silver, gold, and more mysterious precious metals are commonplace, food not harvested from the sea is priceless. Salvaging items and supplies from sunken vessels in Bone Cove is a popular, if dangerous, endeavor. Desperate excavations of Azlanti ruins within each village's territory have created something of an arms race between the opposed forces, and both sides are fortified with ancient weapons and powerful technology that craftsmen from each contingent work frantically to restore, ever seeking that item or lost secret that might tip the balance of power. Colonial reactions to outsiders are mixed, as any new person could be a spy from the opposing camp, and while both sides are eager to gain new allies, most residents would rather see newcomers dead than in the hands of the enemy, and anyone attempting to obtain knowledge or possession of their fabulous discoveries must be dealt with swiftly and permanently.

SITES OF INTEREST

The ruins of the city of Nal-Vashkin are rife with danger, monsters, and intrigue, and that's just the civilized districts. Below are several areas for PCs to explore.

Bone Cove: The bleached ribs of numerous sunken ships that are exposed during low tide give this cove its name. It is one of the few sea-level entry points onto the island, and wave-delivered flotsam litters its beach, with villagers often fighting over claims of particularly choice treasures that wash up here. The dunes are dangerous—the area is lousy with giant crabs and dangerous swarms of their smaller brood eager for an easy meal. Particularly keen observers may notice many ships of elven construction whose remains exhibit evidence of burning, a shocking display of the power of the island's orbiting defenses.

The Cult Colony: Built after the abandonment of the original settlement, the cultists here are currently led by **Olibrax Muulenaar** (CE male human cleric of Nurgal 10), and tend to more secular matters than do those who directly attend the Sun Temple, although most still host tears of Nuruu'gal. Tamed fire puddings and worse patrol the perimeter of their claimed lands.

Worship is the heart of village life within the glow of Nuruu'gal's temple. Ceremonies for new ooze symbiosis are elaborate affairs, taking place in the heat of the day upon ancient black altars of scorched stone; the potential host is bathed in the searing flames of the *celestial lens*, which is brought into orbit above the village for the occasion. Not all adepts survive this baptism by fire, but those who do are afforded great respect and gain the full rights of citizenship within the church. Well aware of the curse of sterility

brought about by ooze possession, the cult does not allow all villagers such bonds, no matter how fanatically devoted to Nuruu'gal they are. The gifted consider these families little more than breeding stock for future ooze hosts.

This arrangement does not satisfy all of Nuruu'gal's villagers. Some have grown resentful after decades of faithful worship fail to reward them with their god's ultimate gift. Others simply grow tired of the oppressive treatment of the lower caste. Unless something changes soon, it's possible that a schism may result in an exodus of untainted refugees from the village, either joining with their hereditary enemies or forming a third camp on the island. The current mouthpiece for these discontented citizens is **Xiola Chelman** (CN female human sorcerer 5), who represents the "fertile families" and clashes often with Olibrax. Any such defectors would be valuable informants if their loyalty to Nuruu'gal could be overcome, and well-timed diplomacy could even reveal the whereabouts of the *flame of guidance*, secrets to the lens's destruction, or hidden means of infiltrating the Sun Temple.

Haunted Azlanti Ruins: Once crowded with archives and libraries, these bizarre ruins have strangely angled, alien architecture that occasionally captures the souls of those who die here, and the unfortunates denied eternal rest haunt this cursed area. Telekinetic outbursts of haunts and poltergeist are common, and full ectoplasmic manifestations occur regularly. Many of these visible specters show signs of burn trauma, and are unable to enter certain areas or cross roads leading out of this district. Many of the ghosts are hostile, driven insane by their souls' capture, but some are more sympathetic, providing aid and even important knowledge gathered among these ruins by long-dead generations. The strange angles of these ruins also attract dangerous hounds of Tindalos (see page 158 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*), which are known to stalk trespassers.

The Outcast Village: Roofs of shining silver dotting the jagged crags of the eastern isles mark the domain of those colonists not swayed into the worship of Nuruu'gal. Now led by **Kjel Vanderholt** (LN male human cleric of Abadar 9), these villagers struggle to maintain civilization and freedom under the cult's constant assaults. Living under the protective wards of highly polished silver roofs and in underground bunkers carved over centuries on interconnected islands, these villagers subsist on fish and seafood gathered in long-lined nets and crab traps dangled from the tall cliffs of the village. Fresh water is scarce, so the recent discovery by hunt-captain **Theodan Rijn** (NG male human ranger 5) of an Azlanti water purification device was a major cause for celebration, as it makes the refugees less vulnerable to siege.

Long ago, investigations among the mainland ruins discovered a weakness of the *celestial lens*, and the villagers constructed reflective roofs out of beaten silver salvaged

from the Azlanti relics. While the primitive mirrored roofs do not truly threaten the artifact's destruction, the masters of the *celestial lens* know that the ray's reflection poses some threat to the item, so the continuous searing attacks suffered by previous generations have largely subsided.

The threat of infiltration by tear-possessed hunters is serious, and many village elders, such as **Adara Smeest** (LN female human sorcerer 3), conduct occasional tests of fire to root out those enthralled by tears of Nuruu'gal. Some do escape notice, such as Adara's own son, **Narbus Smeest** (LN male human expert 3). Overpowered by a parasitic ooze, Narbus is forced to relay important information to the cult. Narbus struggles daily with his loyalty to his community and the threat of destruction should villagers discover his treachery. Narbus' right hand is missing, lopped off by the boy to disguise the extra digits growing from the influence of his symbiote. His claim to have lost it to a giant crab is believed by all, but the multiple gaping mouths sprouting low on his neck is a problem he will soon have to deal with lest his sinister devotions be revealed.

The Parched Lands: The main grounds that hold the Sun Temple and its satellite shrines are a bleak, desolate landscape, scorched by the focused rays of the *celestial lens*. Spiral paths of blackened earth reminiscent of an alien script wind throughout the area with no discernible destination, and the searing presence of Nuruu'gal emanating from the Sun Temple does little to encourage vegetation. Cultists bearing their god's gift wander the grounds here, tending to their master and restoring the ruined observatories to their former glory, while others leave on secret missions to recover long-lost items of power from the mainland or even from undersea ruins. Led by the high priest and *flame of guidance* bearer **Iocebus Kurtwieg** (CE male human cleric of Nurgal 14), the loyal adepts of Nuruu'gal tirelessly erect scaffolds along buildings in efforts to repair them, but for every standing one, three burned scaffolds lie in ruins. Tears of Nuruu'gal occasionally weep forth from the eye-shaped gate of the nearby Sun Temple and wander the grounds, leaving more blackened paths in their wake, along with magma mephits tending to the proto-deity. Most disturbingly, a dozen high priests who have fully evolved into shining children wander these observatories, fearsome guardians who suffer no intrusion or blasphemy on these grounds, and whose actions are frequently incomprehensible even to Iocebus himself.



Ruined Village: Perched atop sheer cliffs overlooking the jumbled remains of ships and galleys littering Bone Cove are the houses of the original island colony. Here, the first settlers struggled to survive, but with time they came to prosper and even flourish among the ruins of their ancient forefathers. Overgrown with foliage, these decaying stone and thatch cottages are unmistakably mundane in structure compared to the imposing ruins around them. It is here that the original inhabitants lived until the upheaval 3 centuries ago, and many of the remaining foundations and walls show signs of destruction—primarily old scorch marks and melted stones. The schizophrenic **Selsaro Muulenaar** (CN male human rogue 4), brother of Olibrax, is the sole occupant of this abandoned village, and the only person among the colonists outright rejected as a host by the tears of Nuruu'gal. His secret collection of recovered Azlanti

items rivals even that of the Sun Temple's high priests, and in rare lucid moments he might barter with patient PCs. His most valuable possession is a stone golem shield guardian (see pages 158 and 163 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*) that always lurks nearby.

Will-o'-Wisp Gardens:

The ancient Azlanti in this area cultivated will-o'-

wisps like tulips, capturing the enraged and immortal specimens in fragile glass globes to provide unnatural lighting for their urban avenues. While few globes have survived intact, their inhabitants have, and now these freed will-o'-wisps roam the island in search of dying creatures on which to feed. Even now, gangs or "strings" of the creatures still gather here nightly. The allegiance and loyalty of each string differs according to the whim of its leader, but if properly coerced, the ancient and mysterious beings know much of the island's current and former inhabitants, and may provide important information to adventurers.

THE SUN TEMPLE CAMPAIGN

The lost Sun Temple colony is a perfect opportunity for characters to explore the magical ruins of an advanced society, or be quickly swept up in the dramatic intrigue of an ages-old religious conflict. Some residents might enthrall or subvert PCs into the worship of their profane deity, while others might recruit them to the underground resistance.

LOW-LEVEL ADVENTURES

The Sun Temple Colony is a legend throughout much of the Inner Sea, especially in Andoran, and there are any number of reasons for players to want to go—fame, treasure, ancient knowledge, and more. While low-level characters can quickly



find themselves in over their heads, enterprising GMs who want to make the lost colony a focus for adventures can start laying plans well before PCs arrive, providing tantalizing clues or fragmentary evidence of the location of the colony. The journey is arduous, and the Mordant Spire elves that guard the drowned continent are a major threat. GMs may have low-level characters undergo a quest for magical transportation to circumvent these dangers, or allow the battles with (and potential capture by) Mordant Spire elves to provide the first few levels of adventure.

GMs with low-level parties should be careful to facilitate character survival. While Nuruu'gal's followers undoubtedly seek to assimilate any new party on their shores, the outcast colony can provide support when it's most needed, potentially enlisting the PCs or hiding them among their secret bunkers. The GM can demonstrate the overwhelming power of the *celestial lens* via indirect aerial attacks on the village, allowing the PCs to see its power firsthand while still running for cover. Such an obviously powerful weapon is likely itself a significant hook for many players.

Along with the island's central conflict, other adventures also await. The PCs could explore the exposed wrecks of Bone Cove. They may wish to recover a rumored cargo said to be lost in the hold of a particular ship and now guarded by aquatic monsters, or perhaps the PCs witness the destruction of an elven ship by the *celestial lens*, and must decide between rescuing the few survivors from the burning vessel or leaving the xenophobic elves to their fate (and perhaps claiming their cargo). Of course, haunted corridors and magically trapped passages below the Azlanti ruins could host several dungeons' worth of adventures and wonders. Hazards, traps, and creatures both living and undead have long awaited the breaking of arcane seals that might afford them freedom.

MEDIUM-LEVEL ADVENTURES

By 7th level, adventurers can hold their own against most cultists without being immediately overcome, and may have more freedom to explore the area while the cult plans new ways to destroy them. Experienced adventurers are attractive hosts for Nuruu'gal's offspring, and cultists may raid the adventurers' camp or wait in ambush to capture party members for the symbiotic oozes—it's possible that the PCs are even lured to the island under false pretenses by someone who's made a bargain with the cult. Alternatively, the horrific creatures may infiltrate a PC camp to possess them or those important to the party. NPCs held captive by the internal parasites could be forced to betray the party, and releasing possessed villagers before the symbiotes destroy them from within can be a high-drama challenge.

Many parties reaching the island will no doubt be captivated by the threat of the *celestial lens*, and seek to discover the secret to its control. Perhaps rumors of this

“great sun weapon” brings them to the colony in the first place. The existence of the *flame of guidance* might remain secret for many levels as PCs investigate decaying shrines and tombs to discover the relationship of the companion artifact to the *celestial lens*. However, only at the highest of these levels should the PCs' path take them into the upper temple grounds surrounding the Sun Temple, for fearsome guardians in the form of shining children reside there. The majority of the cultists, however, do not live on the main temple grounds, and the outcasts may encourage small raids on significant religious sites, chipping away at the cult.

While the cult is no doubt the most pervasive threat on the island, other dangerous creatures lurk among the ruins. Will-o'-wisps typically avoid attacks on well-equipped adventuring parties, preferring to feed on the fear that follows such groups, but isolated individuals can attract the attention of the enigmatic creatures, and explorers might find the bodies of colonists in the vicinity of the will-o'-wisp gardens, their dead faces frozen in fear. Certain bargains might be struck with these creatures in exchange for information on events they have silently witnessed throughout their long centuries. In addition, ghosts haunt the linear architecture of the island and can prove dangerous adversaries, but need not all be murderous. The souls of important colonists may be trapped here, willing to aid those who side with their descendants, while others may even present puzzles to be solved and mysteries to be uncovered. The presence of the Sun Temple's corrupt inhabitant draws demons to the island as well, and their presence may clue the PCs in to the true nature and origins of Nuruu'gal.

After years of security provided by the *celestial lens*, colonists of both factions have grown used to the artifact's protection from offshore threats, although the elves of the Mordant Spire may be waiting patiently for a breach in this defense, and any measures the PCs take to disable the lens may well draw a terrible coastal raid from waiting elven vessels. These aggressive elves suffer no excuse for trespass on the lands of lost Azlant, and believers, blasphemers, and adventurers alike can expect no quarter from the hostile raiders. Diplomatic PCs may find themselves in a position to broker temporary truces between two sides of the conflict in order to combat the third.

HIGH-LEVEL ADVENTURES

As players reach 14th level and beyond, they pose a very real threat to the cult and Nuruu'gal itself, and those of good alignment likely seek the destruction of the godling. Indeed, it may be that parties who encounter the island colony for the first time at high level do so at the behest of religious authorities, specifically charged with rooting out or harnessing the ancient heresy. The presence of the shining children is also an enigma, given that the strange



creatures historically have little to do with demons, and much could be learned about their bizarre motives if a PC could capture one or supplant Nuruu'gal. PCs of high level can no doubt devise a means to detect the presence of the symbiotic ooze and effective ways to separate them from their hosts, leaving them free to explore the outlying ruins of the island with little interference. If they go up against the cult directly, however, Nuruu'gal's high priests can use the *celestial lens* to great effect in combat. If the PCs can gain control of the *flame of guidance* and learn to manipulate the lens, they may be able to destroy the cult and starve the godling until it leaves the safety of its temple to hunt the PCs on a battlefield of their choosing—or they may choose a frontal assault on the Sun Temple.

Even as events escalate on the island, there are always hidden chambers to explore and secret tombs to investigate, all of which promise powerful magic and lost Azlanti knowledge. And if the PCs control the lens, it may be that the island itself is the greatest treasure of all: a new stronghold defended by a powerful artifact and inhabited by grateful subjects. A perfect place for a new headquarters for the PCs—at least until the Mordant Spire elves come calling.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

LOW LEVEL

d%	Result	Average CR	Source
1-11	1 reefclaw	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 2234
12-19	2d4 fire beetles	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 33
20-34	1d4 Small fire elementals	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 124
35-46	1d4 giant crabs	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 50
47-56	2d4 burning skeletons	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 250
57-72	1 cult raiding party*	5	see page 43
73-78	1 phase spider	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 226
79-91	1d6 Medium fire elementals	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 124
92-100	1 tear of Nuruu'gal	6	see page 43

MEDIUM LEVEL

d%	Result	Average CR	Source
1-12	1 ghost	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 144
13-26	1 cult inquisition**	7	see page 43
27-39	1d6 gibbering hosts	8	see page 42
40-51	1d4 chuuls	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 46
52-62	1d4 fire puddings	9	see page 42
63-74	1d4 greater fire elementals	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 124
75-87	1 shining child	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 2245
88-100	3d6 will-o'-wisps	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 277

HIGH LEVEL

d%	Result	Average CR	Source
1-16	2d6 vrocks	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 69
17-34	1d4 shining children	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 2245
35-54	1d4 cult high priests***	14	see page 43

55-71	2d6 salamanders and 1d6 elder fire elementals	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 124, 240
72-88	1d4 nalfeshnees	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 65
89-100	Nuruu'gal	21	see page 42

* 1d6 ooze-possessed human adepts 3

** 2d6 ooze-possessed human adepts 3, with 1 tear of Nuruu'gal

*** Ooze-possessed clerics 12

THE CELESTIAL LENS

The scorched and blackened Sun Temple grounds stand in stark, barren contrast to the gleaming, white coral buildings of the area. Each domed observatory is built along a radiant curve in an orrery-like arrangement, and their structure and placement highlight significant celestial alignments. Perched on the highest bluff, the Sun Temple glows even in daylight, and radiates extreme heat (see page 444 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*) throughout the area. Constructed in classic Azlanti style, the high-domed shrines here are seamlessly grown from a coral-like structure by some lost arcane method. The spiraling columns of the main temple support a massive crystal dome, and lens-like windows allow as much light as possible into the grand central hall. A symbolic eye-shaped portal grants supplicants entrance into the holy site, and allows the egress of the tears of Nuruu'gal, who ooze forth from this “weeping gate” in search of victims to bend to the service of their master. Within, the godling undulates restlessly in a massive tiled pool, bathed in the searing rays of the crystal dome that focuses the light of the *celestial lens*. High above, that gigantic artifact orbits these grounds in a slow elliptical transit, the air below it shimmering as a vertical column of focused energy feeds the voracious proto-god resting within. Everywhere wander the most powerful cult members, supervised by shining children constantly working to maintain the opulence and grandeur of their master's abode.

CELESTIAL LENS (MAJOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong evocation; **CL** 20th

Slot none; **Weight** 2,400 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

The *celestial lens* is a 12-foot-diameter lens mounted in a rune-covered circular frame of strange, alien metal, floating in a permanent orbit around the Sun Temple. Several smaller lenses of similar design hover around the primary lens like a bizarre orrery, moving into place to focus the arcane rays of the device. The ancient Azlanti created the *celestial lens* to capture the light of sacred eclipses and solar conjunctions, as well as the refracted darkness found between stars.

Celestial rays can be directed in an extremely powerful beam of energy that manifests as a vertical column of searing energy blasts focused directly below the *celestial lens*. Depending on the will of the controller and GM adjudication





for inclement weather, such blasts deal between 5d6 and 20d6 points of damage in a 5-foot-radius cylinder extending from the lens to the ground or target. During the day, half the damage is fire damage, but the other half results directly from divine power and is therefore not reduced by resistance to fire-based attacks. At night, the device focuses distant starlight, and the maximum damage is only 10d6, although the lens does not function at all for 1 hour before sunrise and 1 hour after sunset. The lens moves with a constant speed of 20 feet and damages everything caught in the affected areas each round. Victims may make a DC 25 Reflex save for half damage.

The lens orbits at a static height of 100 feet from the ground and moves at a speed of 20 feet per round. It cannot be stopped or accelerated, although the path of the transit can be altered by a user in possession of the *flame of guidance*. When not directed, the lens maintains its last commanded path, eventually curving into a new elliptical orbit around the sun temple, scorching a path through whatever lies below. The user can alter both the damage (up to the maximum for the current lighting conditions) and the orbit in any direction, but the lens must move 20 feet each round, and cannot travel more than 3 miles from the temple in any direction before it curves back around and begins returning.

DESTRUCTION

The light of a full moon must be focused through the *celestial lens* at maximum intensity on a flawless silver mirror no less than 10 feet in diameter (DC 20 Craft [glass] to cast). The doubly reflected light shatters the otherwise indestructible glass of the *celestial lens*, causing the whole lens to tumble to the ground.

FLAME OF GUIDANCE (MAJOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong transmutation; **CL** 20th

Slot none; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

This charm resembles an orrery composed of small, freely orbiting orbs circling a candle-sized flame. The device functions as an *ioun stone*, and when released, the flame perches above the user's head, remaining stationary relative to the user as the smaller planetary orbs take up elliptical transit around it. When in use, the flame grants the user a natural armor bonus of +4, the fire subtype, immunity to fire, and vulnerability to cold. If within 3 miles of the *celestial lens*, the user can control the horizontal orbital direction of the item, but cannot make the lens stop or move it vertically from its standard position of 100 feet from the ground. The wearer takes a -4 penalty on all saves against the special abilities of the godling Nuruu'gal and possession attempts by tears of Nuruu'gal.

DESTRUCTION

Holding the item in a maximum-intensity blast of the *celestial lens* for 3 rounds destroys it.

VARIANT MONSTERS

While Nuruu'gal is treated an exceptional variation of a shoggoth (*Bestiary* 249), the presence of the primordial

deity and the alien angles of the Azlanti ruins have also created a few other unique strains of monsters.

Fire Puddings (CR 7): These black pudding variants are rare tears of Nuruu'gal that failed to find hosts. Over time, the small oozes grow to huge proportions after feeding voraciously on wild game and lost outcasts. Such specimens are no longer capable of possessing humanoids and lose most special abilities; use the statistics of a black pudding, remove its acid and corrosion abilities, and add the fire subtype and the burn ability (2d6, DC 20).

Gibbering Hosts (CR 5): Not all hosts of a tear of Nuruu'gal undergo metamorphosis into shining children. In those rare cases in which the symbiotic relationship sours, a somewhat more horrific transformation takes place. The host begins to lose solidity, form, and sanity as the two creatures fuse into a single horrible monstrosity bereft of humanity. These pathetic creatures wander the island wailing in a bizarre cacophony in the ancient Azlanti tongue. Such monsters use the statistics for gibbering moutherers, although they lack the ground manipulation special ability and instead have the fire subtype and burn ability (1d6, DC 19)

Nuruu'gal (CR 21): The corrupted earthly aspect of Nurgal housed within the Sun Temple is a warped monstrosity, an insane proto-god that has no place in the mortal realm. Should adventurers seek the creature's destruction, use the variant abilities for a shoggoth that follow for the mad godling. Rather than an enormous bulk of black slime and gaping maws, the aspect of Nuruu'gal is a glowing, burning mass of raw solar protoplasm, losing the aquatic subtype but gaining the fire subtype. The amoeba-like form of Nuruu'gal gains the giant creature simple template, swelling from Huge to Gargantuan, and is able to communicate telepathically at a range of 100 feet. The creature's maddening cacophony ability buzzes with repetitious prayers in Azlanti. The shoggoth's engulf ability deals fire damage rather than acid, and the proto-god gains the abilities listed below. Should the PCs deny the godling its normal diet of the nurturing rays of the *celestial lens* for days or weeks, the GM may elect to remove the giant template to display this malnourishment and reward PCs for their foresight before Nuruu'gal oozes forth from the Sun Temple to destroy its tormentors.

Shroud of Flame (Su): Nuruu'gal burns with the energy of a dying star, giving it the burn ability (2d10, DC 33). All creatures within 20 feet of it must make a DC 33 Reflex save at the start of their turns to avoid taking 2d10 points of fire damage. Creatures attacking Nuruu'gal with natural or non-reach melee weapons take 2d10 points of fire damage with each successful hit. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Weep Spawn (Su): Nuruu'gal's amorphous form is able to undergo a sort of mitosis, shedding small bits of its protoplasmic body to create up to 1d4 tears of Nuruu'gal each day, which creep forth to absorb new supplicants into the mad creature's flock.

TEAR OF NURUU'GAL

A slithering blob of amoeba-like protoplasm shines with flame, warping the air around it in a searing mirage.

TEAR OF NURUU'GAL

CR 6



XP 2,400

CN Small ooze (fire)

Init -5; Senses blindsight 60 ft.; Perception -3

DEFENSE

AC 6, touch 6, flat-footed 6 (-5 Dex, +1 size)

hp 62 (5d8+40)

Fort +8, Ref -4, Will -2

DR 5/—; Immune fire, ooze traits; SR 17

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee slam +7 (1d6+3 plus burn and grab)

Ranged ranged touch -1 (by spell)

Special Attacks burn (1d6, DC 19), constrict (1d6+3), symbiosis

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +0)

At will—detect thoughts (DC 7), produce flame

3/day—searing light

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 1, Con 24, Int 4, Wis 5, Cha 1

Base Atk +3; CMB +4 (+8 grapple); CMD 9 (can't be tripped)

Feats Ability Focus (symbiosis), Toughness, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Climb +12, Stealth +2

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment any land

Organization solitary or pack (2-6)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Symbiosis (Ex) As part of a constrict attack, a tear of Nuruu'gal can attempt to forcefully inhabit a humanoid victim's body. A DC 21 Fortitude save resists this intrusion and renders immunity to that ooze's symbiosis ability for 24 hours; failure means the ooze spends a full-round action inhabiting its new host. Once absorbed, the ooze grants incredible boons to willing hosts, or slowly incinerates unwilling victims. A willing host ceases aging, is sustained as if wearing a ring of sustenance, and becomes sterile. He or she also gains the fire subtype, spell resistance, and telepathic abilities of the tear of Nuruu'gal. A host can use the creature's spell-like abilities, with save DCs calculated using the host's Hit Dice and Charisma score, although daily limits of powers still apply. Damage dealt to the host body does not harm the ooze.

Unwilling victims are granted no abilities, and are instead tortured with searing pain. Victims take automatic burn damage each round, and must succeed on a DC 21 Fortitude save or become nauseated for 1d4 rounds. While this occurs, the ooze may telepathically appeal to the host for control of the body to prevent further pain (treat control as *magic jar*, with no receptacle required). The ooze may vacate the body of a host as a full-round action, bursting forth in a protoplasmic expulsion, dealing double burn damage.

A victim may attempt to expel the creature from his or her body as a full-round action with a DC 21 Fortitude save, but each attempt results in automatic burn damage from the ooze, and damage from the creature's violent exit if successful (as if the ooze had left voluntarily). *Remove curse* expels the creature, if the caster succeeds on a DC 21 caster level check. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

First spawned by the primordial godling Nuruu'gal in the lost Azlanti city of Nal-Vashkin, these fiery, parasitic oozes contain a portion of the creature's essence and foul sentience. The oozes hunt ceaselessly, seeking to force their amoebic protoplasm into the bodies of humanoids to turn their hosts to the service of their master, whether the hosts are willing or not. After many years of possession, the host and the symbiote may undergo a strange metamorphosis, exploding into a horrible light that catalyzes into a being known as a shining child.





TUMEN

IN THE LAST DAYS OF THEIR RULE, A NEW SORT OF MADNESS CONSUMED THE FOUR PHaraohs. IN THE DEEPEST DESERTS, MILES FROM ANY SPRING, THEY COMMANDED WATER. FROM THE DUNES AND FURROWS, THEY RAISED A TOWERING MONUMENT. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE EVER-SHIFTING SANDS, THEY DEMANDED PERMANENCE.

IN THEIR POWER, THE PHaraohs REALIZED THIS DREAM, A CITY BUILT ON THE CORPSES OF A HUNDRED THOUSAND SLAVES. WHEN IT WAS FINISHED, TUMEN STOOD AS A MONUMENT TO HUMAN WILL—BUT ALSO TO HUBRIS. FOR THE PHaraohs' GREAT SIN WAS NOT IN THE CITY'S CONSTRUCTION, BUT IN TREATING THEIR WONDER LIKE A TRIFLE.

FOR ALL THEIR POWER, THE PHaraohs HAD FORGOTTEN ONE THING: THE DESERT IS A LIVING CREATURE. AND SHE WILL NOT BE MOCKED.

—ANAK MUBARA, *THE FALL OF THE FOUR*

Of all the fabulous works commissioned during the reigns of the great Osirian pharaohs, none claimed the lives of more slaves during its construction than the city of Tumen. When a conclave of four pharaohs set out to relocate their empire's capital on a whim, they agreed upon the Heavenscape, an impressive vertical cliff in the middle of a trackless desert, to house their nation's newest wonder. At the height of their arrogance, the sheer impracticality of building a city on vertical perches appealed to the Four Pharaohs of Ascension. Determined to rival the majesty of the very heavens with their creation, each pharaoh designed his or her own community and set it upon a separate ledge resting on the side of the mountainous cliff. But in order for their plans to be viable, the four ledges had to be interconnected by an underground complex of cavernous stairs so that goods could be transported from the outside world. As such, an entire generation of slaves labored in darkness to drill deep into the mountain rock and hand-carve the thousands of required steps. Finally, when the city was ready, the pharaohs unveiled a dark source of magic to supply their civic creation with life-giving water.

Today, Tumen lies in ruins. Impractical since the moment of its conception, the city collapsed as soon as the Four Pharaohs departed in death, yet rumors of its ancient secrets persist to this day. Whenever the desert sandstorms see fit to unearth the ruins of Tumen, invariably at least one group of treasure-hunters mounts an expedition to the Heavenscape—a voyage from which few return.

APPEARANCE

At first glance, Tumen is four cities in one, each of them set upon a massive ledge jutting from the titanic face of a cliff. By careful design, each ledge bulges out of the cliff face in such a manner that its walls and underside form an enormous eye staring down at the desert below. Today, while the ledges themselves remain, time and erosion have reduced the once-mighty buildings upon them to ruins. While there are notable exceptions, typically only the foundations of the strongest buildings have survived.

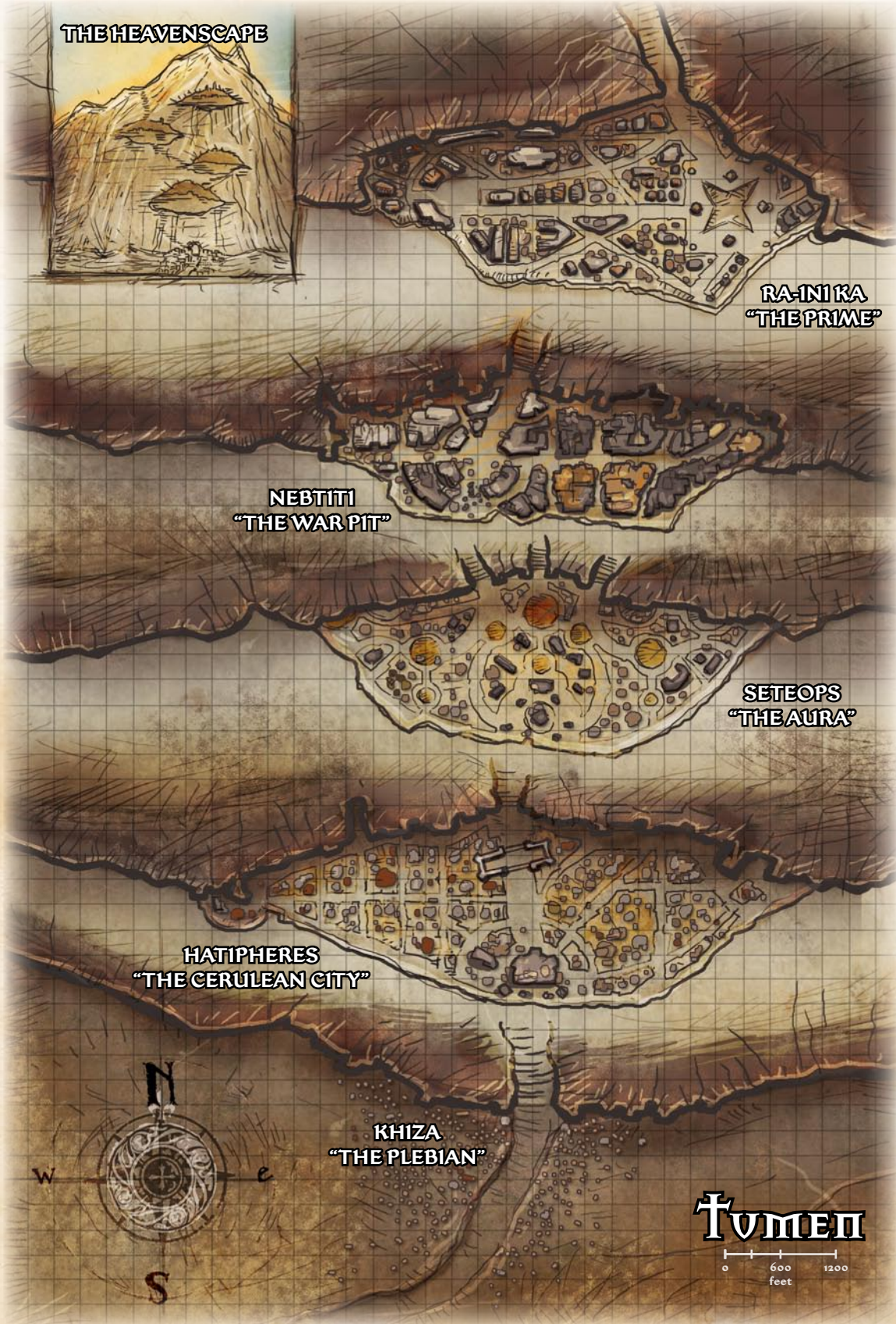
Tumen's single most omnipresent attribute is its endless volume of sand. While the Heavenscape is enormous, its presence in a natural sort of gully and the strange winds of the desert cause it to be periodically buried almost to its peak. For years or centuries, the city may be truly lost, only to reappear almost overnight due to the capricious nature of the wind and local elementals. The bones of those adventurers who have ignored or underestimated the speed with which the glorious city may disappear into the dunes lie bleached and blasted in sand-choked chambers.

History

The Four Pharaohs of Ascension originally consisted of four feuding despots each contending for supremacy over Osirion: the Fiend Pharaoh, the Radiant Pharaoh, the Cerulean Pharaoh, and the Pharaoh of Numbers. While the details remain uncertain, in -1498 AR, the Four Pharaohs formed an improbable alliance in which they used powerful magic to bind their fates together. If one grew stronger, so would the others. And if any one among them died, that fate too would be shared. In this way, the pharaohs immunized themselves against the possibility of internal treachery or assassination. With Osirion's rulers united, the nation prospered both militarily and culturally. The pharaohs carefully guarded the source of their pact magic, sealing it in an ancient pyramid known as Ahn'Selohta. Rightly or wrongly, the pharaohs were eternally suspicious that would-be usurpers were seeking to steal the power of their pact magic in order to replicate the pharaohs' success for themselves. As their paranoia grew, the Four Pharaohs quickly became discontent with how far away the capital of Sothis was from the pyramid that housed the foundation of their power. In -1476 AR, the Four Pharaohs decided to build a new capital, one closer to Ahn'Selohta, in order to better watch over it. As was typical for their dynamic, the Four Pharaohs were unable to agree upon a thousand details, but the quartet at last reached an accord when they hit upon the idea of having four interconnected sub-cities—one for each of them to design as he or she saw fit.

The construction required a truly mammoth and costly undertaking. Unable to afford the decades and generations such a project would normally require, the pharaohs supplied Tumen's overseers with legions of slaves sourced from their constant military victories to the south and to the west. They also began with magic: the initial tunnels within the Heavenscape were carefully bored using charmed bulettes—giant land sharks capable of grinding through the mountain—as well as other burrowing monstrosities. Then followed the slaves. Typically, the slave masters would drug their slave armies or brainwash them with religious fervor so that the workers could toil well past the point of natural exhaustion. When possible, the pharaohs' sorcerers hastened the slaves with magic and summoned bound elementals to spearhead the labor.

Tumen's completion inspired a nationwide celebration, but the new capital's reign was appallingly short. One pharaoh steadily grew ill from an unknown disease, and the magic of their pact slowly dragged down the health of the other three pharaohs. Indeed, although each had suspicions, the Four Pharaohs never learned which among them had truly succumbed to sickness and which three were simply sharing in the fate. Legends state that the pharaohs eventually accepted that their end was near and



ended their quarrel, arranging to entomb themselves in a separate pyramid of veinstone nearby.

With the loss of the Four Pharaohs of Ascension, the magic that powered Tumen's eldritch aquifer disappeared, and the city's days became numbered as its water supply was gradually depleted. For a time, laborers transported water up to the individual sub-cities by hand or pack beast, but such measures only forestalled the inevitable. The price of survival spiked beyond reason, and the people fled, leaving Tumen to the mercies of raiders and beasts.

RESIDENTS

Although the desert sands sometimes bury Tumen for years at a time, the city has never truly been deserted.

The Carvesmen and the Voice: Deep within the darkness of the heart of the Heavenscape, the descendants of the ancient slaves who once carved its steps still struggle to survive. Now regressed into emaciated morlocks of neutral alignment, the "Carvesmen" still patrol their creation, barely subsisting off the mountain's internal ecosystem. The savage survival of the Carvesmen is even more miraculous now that an unseen creature known as **The Voice** (NE advanced cloaker) has begun to hunt them. The Voice deploys a small team of elite dark stalker rangers, who call themselves "His Word." The Voice seeks to exterminate every last Carvesman, holding them responsible for their ancestors' invasion of the mountainous rock so many centuries ago. The Carvesmen have an unusual ally, however, in a lantern archon named Syara. Syara has made it her mission to protect the vulnerable Carvesmen from the predations of the Voice while she attempts to lead them out of their meager existence and into the light. While the Carvesmen appreciate their glowing sister's aid, they so far have refused to leave their ancestral home.

The Finless: Overhanging each cave entrance to the Heavenscape are several armored bulette fins, mummified trophies from the enormous land sharks that once used to bore the mountain's tunnels. The bulettes' handlers eventually slew and reanimated the beasts with necromancy in order to direct their efforts more accurately, and once the bulettes finished the last of their tunneling, their handlers removed the creatures' fins as artwork and buried their discarded remains under the sands. Recently, as a result of some unknown magical disturbance, the "Finless" have again risen, this time as fast zombies. The creatures now stalk the ruins of Tumen, surfacing only at night, to take their revenge on whoever they find.

The Cult of the Last Theorem: Tumen's newest faction is an insidious cabal that seeks to unlock the dark powers of lost mathematics. The Cult of the Last Theorem is aware that one of the Four Pharaohs of Ascension was an unparalleled genius known only as the Pharaoh of Numbers—a figure of great interest to them. For the last

several years, the cult has based itself on the outskirts of Tumen in order to plunder whatever secrets the Pharaoh of Numbers might have left behind. For reasons not yet fully understood, the integers 56 and 11 held deep spiritual and mathematical significance for the Pharaoh of Numbers—and now provide great importance for the cult as well. The cult incorporates these numbers into its daily activities whenever possible, hoping to unlock the associated power. Originally, the Cult bivouacked 56 members within each sub-city, and combed through the ruins in five groups of 11 with a single high priest as a leader. Recent losses, particularly from the predations of the Finless, have made it more challenging for the cult to maintain the necessary numeric patterns.

The cult's current mission leader is **Theorex Khai** (see pages 52–53). The Theorex has recently divined the presence of the *Aqualinth* deep below the mountain, and has made recovering the dark artifact the cult's new goal. Unfortunately, between the Carvesmen and the Voice, the cultists he has sent down the dark stairwells below the sub-cities have returned battered and bloody, if they return at all.

RELATIONS AND TRADE

Although it was only a brief flash in history many millennia ago, Tumen was the focal point of a vast amount of commerce and trade within Osirion's empire, stretching well beyond what is now Thuvia and Geb. Camel trains spread from the great City of Slaves like a spider's web, and local merchants were well versed in managing the inherent dangers of traversing Osirion's eastern desert. In particular, Tumen lies close to the Underdunes: canyon-sized ridges of sand that shift and collapse in the irregular khamsin storms (powerful storms augmented by battling elementals). Those skilled in navigating the maze-like trenches could extend the reach of their caravans, requiring far less water per mile once in the protective shade of the Underdunes. But just as today, inexperienced travelers needed to beware, as the risk of a sand slide was omnipresent.

More significantly, historical writings corroborate that Tumen once had its own seaport. Even though the city itself was more than 30 miles inland from the Inner Sea, camel trains would head east to the coastline of the Burning Cape where Tumen had its own commercial and military launch point known as Shotep-Kara. According to those same texts, Shotep-Kara boasted secret sea-lanes: routes that would magically contract the distance required to travel to the far corners of Osirion's empire and abroad. Many have gone in search of these secret sea lanes, but thus far, would-be explorers have yet to find even the port itself.

After Tumen collapsed, commercial evolution took hold and all aspects of trade migrated back to Sothis and its associated communities along the banks of the River



Sphinx. Adventurers in Tumen seeking to buy supplies or sell their treasures would do well to journey to the West to Osirion's modern-day capital.

SITES OF INTEREST

Each of Tumen's sub-districts is as unique as the pharaoh that oversaw its construction.

Nebtiti, "The War Pit": The locals of the Fiend Pharaoh's sub-city quickly nicknamed this district Nebtiti—"the War Pit"—a name that suited the deadly general just fine. Much of the district was comprised of barracks and armories, and in its prime, it hosted innumerable parades of the pharaoh's armies.

A single structure towers above the rest, a titanic, panther-headed statue resting in a form-fitting niche carved into the mountainside itself. Almost 100 feet tall, the creature is actually the **Pantheon Ultima** (N Colossal advanced shield guardian clay golem). Osirion's greatest golem-crafters constructed the Pantheon Ultima to defend Tumen against the rampage of the next Spawn of Rovagug, an event that the Pharaoh of Numbers had predicted would be Tumen's most significant threat. Tumen, however, fell well before any such attack ever came, and the Ultima never proved to be anything more than an impressive statue. Many archaeologists and explorers have gone searching for the Ultima's missing control amulet in order to seize command of the legendary creature. In particular, the Cult of the Last Theorem believes the Fiend Pharaoh embedded the amulet within his double crown, and that the pharaoh's lost headgear now lies somewhere within the ruins of Nebtiti. As a result, the cult expends significant resources combing the ruins for it.

Seteops, "The Aura": Once the most aesthetically appealing of the four districts, Tumen's engineers constructed the Aura under the direction of the Radiant Pharaoh, a ruler whose beauty was surpassed only by her insatiable need to be worshiped by the masses. Those traveling within the Aura need to take special care when they rest. Anyone sleeping while inside this district has a 10% chance of experiencing an after-echo of the Radiant Pharaoh's hold over her slaves. Sleepers who fail a DC 21 Will save rise in their sleep as somnambulists. The after-echo then forces the sleepwalkers to labor in the impossible task of restoring the dilapidated ruins of Seteops to their former glory. Assuming victims of the after-echo do not fall prey to a wandering monster, anyone sleepwalking awakes at dawn with his free will returned, though he

gains the fatigued condition as a result of his exhausting nighttime labor.

It was within Seteops that Tumen's artisans built what would soon become one of the Four Pharaohs' most important monuments: the Radiant Call. Built in the shape of a giant open cauldron supported atop four great ankh, the Radiant Call comprises thousands of colored stones, each enchanted with *continual flame*. When the cauldron's mirrored lid was uncovered and positioned upright, the Radiant Call focused the stones' flames into a sparkling beacon of light. Osirion's subjects could spy the flickering of the Radiant Call from as far as Sothis and the River Sphinx to the west, and to the east from as far as the banks of the Obari Ocean. By raising and lowering the Radiant Call's cover, Tumen could send signals to the cities and armies under its command using coded messages. Only those who spoke the "flash-language" could decipher the pharaohs' golden commands. Today, the Radiant Call has lost its radiance, thieves having long ago stolen its fiery stones, but the mirrored plate remains in place, hinting that someone might one day resurrect the device.



Hatipheres, "The Cerulean City": Formerly the heart of Tumen's commerce and taxation, this once opulent district has suffered worst from sandstorms, and now lies in near-total ruin. One structure, however, has defied both sandstorms and the onslaught of time: the Palace of Blades. When the ailing Cerulean Pharaoh abandoned Tumen and prepared to inter his body in the fabled veinstone pyramid to the south, he locked the gates of his palace behind him and ordered his priests to mine the palace with overlapping *blade barrier* glyphs. Consequently, it is impossible to walk within the palace without the individual rooms exploding into cascades of whirling, blue-tinged scimitars. One of the Palace of Blades' guardians remains, the mummified **Te Hapsu** (LE male human lich cleric 14). If awakened, the lich stalks the corridors of the palace in safety, courtesy of his perpetual castings of *air walk* and *spell immunity* to *blade barrier*.

Sages hold that within the Palace of Blades, the Cerulean Pharaoh kept detailed records of the genealogy of all of Osirion's nobility. Impossibly, the records are said to set out not only the history of the empire's noble ancestors, but also the names of their unborn descendants eternally going forward. Many genealogists have come to Hatipheres in search of these legendary family trees, not only to see who can trace their lineage to noble blood of the Osirian

Empire, but also to see what secrets the pharaoh's magical lists might reveal as to the fate of the current ruler's line.

Ra-Ini Ka, "The Prime": The most elevated of the sub-cities, this was the district in which the Pharaoh of Numbers constructed Tumen's greatest places of learning. In its center is a small, unnatural wasteland, the result of a failed magical experiment that sought to manipulate both the power of electrical storms and the matrix of time. A series of 56 frozen bolts of lightning rip up from the ground, stabbing 30 feet toward the sky in a jigsaw pattern. Rather than dispel the experiment, the Pharaoh of Numbers commanded his numerancers to leave the frozen storm in place as a magnificent reminder of his dangerous and beautiful power. Thus, Tumen's builders carefully walled off the so-called Lightning Fields. Anyone coming into contact with a frozen lightning bolt takes 10d6 points of electrical damage (no save). Forty years ago, a free-willed flesh golem named **Barome the Spasmic** (N male giant flesh golem) learned of Tumen's fabled Lightning Fields and set out to make the Prime his new home. Whenever Barome is injured (or otherwise low on power), the golem simply wanders through the frozen bolts. Barome has made a makeshift home in one of the nearby ruins, and while he is suspicious of visitors, he is not overtly hostile. The golem has learned to evacuate from Tumen and take shelter at the top of the Heavenscape whenever the storms or elemental clans come to bury the city.

Khiza, "The Plebian": Unlike the four sub-cities above it that the pharaohs carefully engineered, Tumen's plebian district evolved naturally over time as housing for the slaves and paid laborers, expanding in order to meet the city's day-to-day needs. Khiza consisted of masses of dwellings and slave markets for the lower classes that sprung up at the base of the Heavenscape once Tumen was constructed.

THE TUMEN CAMPAIGN

For treasure-hunters, Tumen is a locale of legend. There are as many reasons for PCs to come to Tumen as there are rumors of long-lost treasures and artifacts. As just one example, many Osirionologists would pay significant coin to locate one of the mysterious relic-clocks that began their hieroglyphic countdown during the time of the Four Pharaohs of Ascension (see *Pathfinder Module: Entombed with the Pharaohs* for more information). If it is still possible to find these relics anywhere, Tumen is the best place to start. Similarly, sages largely agree that the art of Osirian mummification reached its apex during the time of Tumen's rule. If one intends to recover these lost nuances of necromancy, the answers again lie in Tumen's ruins.

But these days Tumen also holds promise of causes nobler than the plundering trinkets and secrets. Many

organizations might have good reason to keep an eye on the dangerous Cult of the Last Theorem. Now that the cult has deployed itself in Tumen, someone needs to ensure they don't complete their goals—goals that might include the end of civilization.

LOW-LEVEL ADVENTURES

As with many legendary locations, Tumen is a tough place for beginning adventurers to cut their teeth. Early on, traveling to the city through the dangerous surrounding deserts can provide plenty of challenges for parties—perhaps the PCs are part of a caravan attacked by cultists for supplies, or they become lost in a desert storm only to stumble upon the dubious safety of the city. If the PCs struggle at low levels, GMs might make them lucky enough to befriend Barome the Spasmic, who can teach them much about how to circumvent obvious dangers in the ruins.

As the PCs make their first forays into Tumen, they are likely to encounter patrols of the cult of the Last Theorem, eager to evict the PCs from the ruins with extreme prejudice. However, as adventurers are not entirely unknown in the region, low-level PCs are unlikely to garner the attention of the cult's higher-level leadership. The PCs might also uncover an alien duplicate from the *Aqualinth* (see page 51) as it attempts to infiltrate the Cult of the Last Theorem, and be drawn in by the mystery of the doppelganger-like creatures serving a dark and ancient artifact deep beneath the city.

By levels 4–6, as the PCs grow in strength, they should be ready to face The Voice and His Word. The lantern archon Syara may take notice of the PCs and attempt to recruit them to rescue the Carvesmen, perhaps traveling all the way to whatever Osirian settlement the PCs happen to be in at the time in order to find aid. While the PCs may never be able to draw the morlocks from their self-imposed imprisonment, they might at least drive the Voice from the Heavenscape.

MEDIUM-LEVEL ADVENTURES

At levels 7–13, the PCs should be able to move more freely through Tumen and face most of its challenges. Now might be an appropriate time for the PCs to stand against the Finess and establish a proper base of operations within the city—perhaps this is precisely why they've come, recruited as hired muscle by a team of archaeologists terrorized by the undead bulettes. At this point, the cult of the Last Theorem may also decide to expunge any meddling outsiders—unless, of course, they were the ones who orchestrated the PCs' arrival as part of their bizarre schemes. If the PCs expect to be free from the cult, they'll eventually need to track down Khai's lair (the Principium) and destroy the cult's leadership. As they get closer to their



goal, the PCs should learn that the cult is actually rotting from within; the *Aqualinth* is slowly creating more and more replacements for the original cultists.

In the meantime, if the PCs spend significant time in Tumen, they risk stepping into the ancient war between the elemental tribes of the Aisi and the Goanron Triumvirate (see the sidebar). At some point the Goanron will return to Tumen and seek to restore the region to what the clan sees as its natural state: a ruined city buried under an avalanche of sand. If the PCs are not prepared to pack up and leave, they may have to fight off the Goanron—a nigh-impossible task unless the PCs are first able to join forces with the Aisi, or perhaps one of the Vosh Dune Prides. It may be precisely these elemental politics and their influence on surrounding settlements that first draw the PCs to the region, with the city of Tumen all but irrelevant—at least at first.

Finally, PCs campaigning in Tumen might also uncover clues that the fabled pyramid Ahn'Selota is just to the south, buried under a thousand tons of sand. It was in this pyramid that the Four Pharaohs of Ascension hid the secret behind the powerful pact magic that leads to their historic rise to power. For more information, see *Pathfinder Module: The Pact Stone Pyramid*.

HIGH-LEVEL ADVENTURES

High-level PCs have their own unique challenges within Tumen. Though many Cultists of the Last Theorem would be easy marks for the PCs, perhaps the cult has at last managed to gain control of the Panthereon Ultima, and the PCs are hired by a rival organization or government to stop them before the cultists can use the weapon to its full potential. (Conversely, perhaps the PCs' home community faces some threat so great that only finding and controlling the Ultima can give them the strength to win the day.) Things can become even more complicated if either the PCs or one of the Tumen factions accidentally awakens Te Hapsu. The mummy-lich might even overthrow Theorex Khai and take control of the cult, using it as a source of minions to throw at the PCs and reanimating them as necessary. If so, the presence of a second usurper conflicts with the plans of the *Aqualinth*. The dark artifact might seek to use the PCs as a tool to remove this newest threat to its expansion, and the PCs could find themselves with a disturbing ally (one that may be the shadowy puppet-master responsible for their arrival in the city).

Regardless of whether the PCs discover the location of the *Aqualinth* by invitation or through their own investigation, once they are at the peak of their powers, the PCs should be given the chance to uncover the secret of Tumen's original source of water deep below the Heavenscape. Their discovery comes with a price, however, as the *Aqualinth* does not hesitate to use its power to create watery duplicates

of the PCs, and the party may find themselves facing assassins with their own powers and abilities. Finding the means to obliterate the *Aqualinth* could become a capstone achievement to the PCs' careers.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

LOW LEVEL

d%	Result	Average CR	Source
1–6	1d6 fire beetles	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 33
7–12	1 venomous snake	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 255
13–18	1 skeletal champion	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 252
19–24	1 vargouille	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 272
25–30	1 giant mantis	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 200
31–36	1 shadow	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 245
37–42	1 an-hetkoshu*	3	page 52
43–48	1 mithral cobra	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 182
49–60	1d6 gnoll raiders	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 155
61–66	1 Finless (fast zombie bulette)	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 39, 289
67–72	1 mummy	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 210
73–78	1d6 Carvesmen (morlocks)	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 209
79–84	1 basilisk	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 29
85–90	1d6 Cultists of the Last Theorem (LE human cultists)	5	GMC** 278
91–95	1 will-o'-wisp	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 277
96–100	1 wyvern	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 282

MEDIUM LEVEL

d%	Result	Average CR	Source
1–10	1d4 army ant swarms	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 16
11–19	1 chimera	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 44
20–28	1d6 Finless (fast zombie bulettes)	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 39, 289
29–37	The Word (dark stalker ranger 4)	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 54
38–46	1 behir	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 34
47–55	2d8 Priests of the Last Theorem (LE human clerics 3)	8	—
56–64	1d4 medusas	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 201
65–73	1 couatl	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 49
74–82	2 dark nagas	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 211
83–91	1 Aisi disciple (elder air elemental)	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 121
92–100	1 Goanron elemental (elder earth elemental)	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 123

HIGH LEVEL

d%	Result	Average CR	Source
1–17	1d6 panthereons*	11	page 52
18–34	The Enumerator*	13	pages 52–53
35–51	1 phoenix	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 227
52–68	1 xacarba	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 288
69–84	2 black scorpions	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 240
85–100	1 ancient blue dragon	18	<i>Bestiary</i> 95

* Variant or new monsters detailed in this chapter.

** See the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*.

THE AQUALINTH

It would not have been possible for Tumen's original inhabitants to settle in the first place were it not for the existence of a desert aquifer deep below the base of the Heavenscape. Although it was originally little more than a small, naturally occurring subterranean lake, the Four Pharaohs were able to augment the aquifer with an ancient, squat statue known as the *Aqualinth*. The *Aqualinth* was one of 11 unnatural gifts the pharaohs received at the start of their reign from an emissary of the Dark Tapestry, one of the lightless places that lurks between and beyond the stars.

Each time the pharaohs or sorcerers under their command infused the *Aqualinth* with magic, the artifact responded by causing the central pool beneath the city to produce a massive geyser of water. The geyser would blast up through a vertical bore carved into the Heavenscape and then, as gravity took over, descend through a network of aqueducts into each of Tumen's four districts.

Now devoid of empowering magic, the *Aqualinth* lies fallow, and with the passing millennia the aquifer has gradually evaporated down to a shadow of what it once was, though if the *Aqualinth* were to be discovered and reignited with magic, Tumen might once again become capable of sustaining a life-bearing ecosystem.

The *Aqualinth*, however, is more than just a powerful artifact that creates and distributes life-sustaining water. It is also a malevolent entity, one gifted with its own alien sentience. Any pool it inhabits acts as a *Mirror of Opposition*. Anyone who spies her own reflection on the water's surface spawns a duplicate that is fanatically loyal to the Four Pharaohs of Ascension. With their masters no longer among the living, however, any duplicate doppelgangers instead work to further the baleful agenda of the *Aqualinth*. These duplicates might seek to replace their originals quietly, acting as the *Aqualinth's* spies, or might violently assassinate anyone they perceive as a threat to the *Aqualinth*.

THE AQUALINTH (MAJOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong (all schools) [evil]; **CL** 18

Slot none; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

A strange statue of some unknown dark material resembling unnaturally slippery stone, this idol is carved in the shape of something at once unrecognizable and terrifyingly organic, and possesses a number of unique abilities when touching liquid.

Geyser: If four or more levels' worth of spells are cast upon the *Aqualinth*, the artifact is capable of causing the water surrounding it to purify and multiply, generating thousands of gallons of water. At the same time, it creates an effect mimicking *reverse gravity* upon the water, causing it to shoot up in a geyser capable of reaching a thousand feet high. Moments later, the effect passes; the water comes crashing

ELEMENTAL CLANS OF TUMEN

Human politics are not the only kind shaping the deserts around Tumen. The barrens of Osirion are also the battleground of clashing elemental clans, and several have a particular interest in the fate of Tumen.

The Goanron Triumvirate: This ageless union of earth, fire, and air elementals acts as the self-appointed caretaker of the history and geo-lore of the desert shelf. Although the order behind their movements is often imperceptible, the Goanron constantly labor on carefully coordinated projects to slowly restore Osirion's wasteland to a specific and sacred topography. Accordingly, the Goanron periodically return to Tumen to ensure that it remains deeply buried under thousands of tons of carefully arranged sand. Their leader is the powerful **Ini-Kherit** (LN advanced giant elder earth elemental), one of the oldest earth elementals to ever stalk Osirion's sands. Ini-Kherit methodically times the Triumvirate's more active campaigns so that they coincide with the seasonal khamsins, Osirion's powerful sandstorms.

The Aisi: These destructive air elementals splintered from the Goanron Triumvirate back in a time now forgotten. Their leader, the charismatic prophet **Aridiea** (CN advanced elder air elemental), zealously believes that the desert has a hidden physical destiny that has been deliberately restrained by Ini-Kherit for millennia to further a secret agenda that he hides from the rest of elemental-kind. Aridiea has decreed that for the desert to advance to its true glory, Tumen must be uncovered and exposed, and every few years the Aisi return and uncover Tumen in all its lost majesty.

The Vosh Dune Prides: This loose federation of elemental tribes has no true agenda other than the exercise of their individual free will. Most individual prides are homogenous, consisting of a single type of elemental. However, when the Vosh Dune Prides successfully combine their membership, they are the largest and most powerful of the factions around Tumen. Nevertheless, as they lack true universal leadership, the prides are only able to muster themselves on an episodic basis. They typically converge for short periods in a self-defensive pact in response to threatening maneuvers by the Goanron Triumvirate.

down, and can be captured or diverted in the process, though the water level of the original supply remains unchanged.

Bath of the God-Kings: Bathing in a pool infested by the *Aqualinth* instantly refreshes the bather, removing any fatigued or exhausted conditions. In addition, the bather is treated as though he were wearing a *ring of sustenance* for the next 4 months. Regular bathing for 56 days results in a +1 increase to a single ability score of the bather's choice—a



creature can receive this bonus only once, but can continue to receive the other benefits of bathing in the pool.

Liquid Ones: Anyone who spies her own reflection in a pool infested by the *Aqualinth* and who is not completely loyal to the Four Pharaohs of Ascension is treated as though she had gazed into the reflective surface of a *mirror of opposition*. The duplicates created by the *Aqualinth* are not truly identical to their originals. A duplicate has vulnerability to fire, losing any fire resistance or immunity the original may have, and also gains the water subtype. A duplicate can be distinguished from the original with a DC 30 Perception check, as the duplicate has a faint watery texture to its skin.

Whispering Water: Possessed of a malign and alien intellect, the *Aqualinth* has an unknown agenda of its own, and is capable of casting *suggestion* (save DC 31) upon anyone who drinks at least half a gallon of water it has touched or produced.

DESTRUCTION

The *Aqualinth* may be evaporated into nothingness by transporting it to the heart of a sun or star.

VARIANT MONSTERS

Many of the monsters that lurk within Tumen are variations upon classic creatures found in Osirion's deserts.

An-Hetkoshu: While the Hetkoshu, Osirion's deadly black crocodiles, are native to the banks of the River Sphinx, many of the largest were imported to Tumen millennia ago as gladiatorial opponents. Those few that survive today live in subterranean aquifers deep under the Heavenscape, where they hunt the Carvesmen and other creatures. To create an An-Hetkoshu, use the statistics for an advanced crocodile (see page 51 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*) with a climb speed of 20, and the compression universal monster ability (it can move through an area as small as one-quarter its space without squeezing or one-eighth its space when squeezing).

Panthereons: Tumen is also home to the panthereons, cat-headed golems which were once built in Tumen's workshops to act as guardians of the city. Smaller versions of the Panthereon Ultima, most now stand frozen as eroded statues, their ancient orders having been long exhausted, but a few continue to guard the ruins. To create a Panthereon, modify a clay golem as follows: CR 11, add bite +19 (4d6+7 plus cursed wound), speed 30 ft., add Improved Initiative as a bonus feat, change initiative modifier to +3. Some of the golems may have suffered from significant erosion over the years, in which case they may be at below average hit points.

THE ENUMERATOR

While the true force behind the machinations of the Cult of the Last Theorem is unknown, when it comes to the cult's recent activities in Tumen, its leader is unquestionably the Enumerator, Theorex Khai. A mathematical genius, Khai

is obsessed with the discoveries of the Pharaoh of Numbers. He zealously believes that only by first retrieving the pharaoh's lost numerical revelations can Osirion's empire be restored to its previous glory. The Enumerator sees the current age as an era of barbarism in which civilization has declined into hedonism and ignorance, viewing most of his fellow humans as little more than cattle unless and until they can prove themselves his intellectual equal.

Despite his meticulous organizational talents, Khai is notoriously reclusive, more likely to micromanage his members through *screaming* and *message* spells than to permit them to report directly. By casting *mage's magnificent mansion* daily on the outskirts of Tumen, he has created a mobile extradimensional fortress of study, which he reserves for himself and the higher-ranking members of the cult. Khai's traveling library has become known to the cult as "the Principium," and it is from here that the Enumerator calculates how to best deploy the cult's degrading resources as they slowly comb over every last corner of Tumen. Every few days, Khai reluctantly emerges from the Principium to fly up to the top of the Heavenscape in order to cast *control weather*. He knows the window of opportunity for his minions to search through Tumen is limited, and hopes to forestall the inevitably returning sandstorms as long as possible.

Should he become aware of adventurers in Tumen, the Enumerator quickly calculates whether they are pawns that he can manipulate or a threat that must be eliminated.

THEOREX KHAI, "THE ENUMERATOR"

CR 13

XP 25,600

Male middle-aged human abjurer 7/lorekeeper 7

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** *arcane sight* 120 ft.; Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13 (+4 armor, -1 Dex)

hp 76 (14 HD; 7d6+7d6+28)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities energy absorption (21/day), *contingency*,

DR 10/magic against ranged weapons

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee khopesh +4/-1 (1d8-2/19-20)

Abjurer Spells Prepared (CL 14th; concentration +20)

7th—*control weather*, *mage's magnificent mansion* (already cast), *spell turning*

6th—*disintegrate* (DC 23), *greater dispel magic*, *permanent image*, *quicken invisibility*, *true seeing*

5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 22), *dismissal* (DC 21), *nightmare* (DC 21), *overland flight*, *teleport*

4th—*arcane eye*, *black tentacles*, *dimension door*, *lesser globe of invulnerability* (2), *screaming* (DC 20)

3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *fireball* (2, DC 19), *haste*, *nondetection*, *protection from energy*

2nd—*detect thoughts* (DC 18), *invisibility* (2), *mirror image*, *protection from arrows* (already cast), *stilled grease* (DC 18), *stilled magic missile*, *web* (DC 18)

1st—*comprehend languages*, *endure elements* (already cast), *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor* (already cast), *obscuring mist*, *silent image* (DC 17)

o (at will)—*detect magic*, *message*, *read magic*, *prestidigitation*

Opposition Schools Enchantment, Necromancy

TACTICS

Before Combat The Enumerator always casts the following spells every day (the effects of which are noted in his stat block): *endure elements*, *mage armor*, *mage's magnificent mansion*, *overland flight*, and *protection from arrows*. If he anticipates combat, he casts *lesser globe of invulnerability*, *true seeing*, *mirror image*, *protection from energy* (usually against fire), and *expeditious retreat* (in that order). If the opportunity presents, he casts *invisibility* on himself and *haste* on himself and his cultist minions.

During Combat The Enumerator likes to lead off by targeting an enemy spellcaster with *disintegrate*, and uses *dispel magic* or *greater dispel magic* to counter enemy spellcasting (relying on his *ring of counterspells* to protect him against similar tactics). He uses *baleful polymorph* against dangerous foes, *dismissal* against conjured creatures, and *fireball* on weak groups.

Morale The Enumerator does not see the percentage in valor. Where the odds of victory are poor, he flies or teleports away, using cultists or *black tentacles* as cover. Once back at the Principium, he uses *nightmare* the next night to weaken his opponents for their next meeting, and observes them using *scrying* to learn their weaknesses and strengths, using *nondetection* to prevent them from doing the same to him.

STATISTICS

Str 7, **Dex** 9, **Con** 12, **Int** 23, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 13

Feats Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (khopesh), Greater Spell Focus (transmutation), Improved Initiative^B, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Shield Focus (transmutation), Skill Focus (Knowledge [arcana]), Still Spell, Toughness^B

Skills Appraise +23, Fly +27, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (engineering) +23, Knowledge (history) +23, Knowledge (planes) +23, Linguistics +23, Perception +21, Profession (mathematician) +19, Spellcraft +23

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Ancient Osiriani, Auran, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnome, Goblin, Halfling, Ignan, Infernal, Sylvan, Terran, Undercommon

SQ bonus language (Aklo), greater lore, lore +3, loremaster secrets (applicable knowledge, more newfound arcana, secret health), permanent spell (*arcane sight*), arcane bond (ring), protective ward (6 rounds, +2 deflection, 9/day)

Combat Gear *amulet of natural armor* +1, *potions of cure serious*

wounds (3), *ring of counterspells* (*dispel magic*), *scroll of chain lightning*, *scroll of limited wish*, *scroll of remove curse*, *wand of dispel magic* (CL 10th, 10 charges), *wand of magic missile* (CL 9th, 20 charges), *wand of mnemonic enhancer* (CL 7th, 5 charges);

Other Gear *khopesh*, *bag of holding* type I, *chime of opening* (4 charges), *cloak of resistance* +2, *eyes of the eagle*, *headband of vast intelligence* +2, 350 gp of diamond dust (for *nondetection* spell), focus for *mage's magnificent mansion*, 1,442 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Contingency If the Enumerator ever takes damage, he gains *improved invisibility*.

Permanent Spell The Enumerator has used *permanency* to give himself *arcane sight*.





XIN-SHALAST

FROM WITHIN THE MISTS EMERGES A TREMENDOUS FORTRESS OF BLACK STONE. BEYOND, HUNDREDS OF COLOSSAL, ICE-COVERED BUILDINGS RISE SKYWARD, PIERCING THE HEAVENS. THE GOLDEN ROAD CONTINUES, EDGING ALONG THE MOUNTAIN FACE. ALONGSIDE THE ROAD, GREAT STRUCTURES CLING AT PRECARIOUS HEIGHTS, THEIR ROOTS NESTLED INTO THE RUINS OF YET EVEN OLDER RUINS, ICE, AND THE MOUNTAIN'S ROCKY SOIL. XIN-SHALAST'S GREATEST IRONY IS, OF COURSE, THAT EVEN AFTER THE FALL OF THE RYNELORD OF GREED, THE CITY PULSES WITH A MULTITUDE OF DIVERSE FACTIONS ALL WILLING TO KILL EACH OTHER OVER THE TREASURES THAT REMAIN.

— BRODERT QUINN, THASSILOPIAN SCHOLAR

It was not so long ago that Xin-Shalast was thought no more than a fable of a past age, an impossibility built on the exaggerations of poets, dreamers, and madmen. That an advanced and cosmopolitan city of such magnitude, with unimaginably vast stores of wealth, hid atop the highest peaks of the icy Kodar Mountains, seemed an utter impossibility. Only after the brief second coming of Xin-Shalast's former ruler, Karzoug, Runelord of Greed, did Varisia suddenly tremble beneath its ominous shadows. Its rediscovery shocked scholars and common folk alike, and quickly attracted scores of eager, and often foolish, adventurers to plumb its frozen spires seeking to line their pockets with the promise of its gold-paved streets.

Following Karzoug's destruction in 4708 AR, Xin-Shalast transformed from myth into one of the most dangerous and violence-driven cities in the world. Monstrous lamias and towering rune giants gather their forces and battle to claim the remnants of the city as their own, while humanoids from the surrounding lowlands rush to the lure of infinite wealth. Life expectancy is short, and many come only to grab what treasures they can before fleeing. However, the temptations of endless wealth seem to seduce even the most cautious into prolonging their stays. To date, Xin-Shalast remains an anarchic warzone, with ever-changing fronts. Wards, districts, and strategic structures shift as various groups struggle for power.

APPEARANCE

Mhar Massif, the great mountain upon which Xin-Shalast rests, grimaces down upon the city, its stony face still carved with the leering countenance of the Runelord of Greed. In its ominous shadow rise hundreds of titanic towers gouged from the sheer-faced ledges that climb the sides of the mountain. Even from a distance, the city's magnitude is astonishing; as one draws closer, its truly incredible proportions, with the largest of the cyclopean structures built to accommodate giants, become visible. Eerily, Xin-Shalast has suffered few of the ravages of time and weather. Its rooftops gleam with colorful metals, and its streets are leafed with gold.

HISTORY

Xin-Shalast is but one of seven tremendous cities erected over 10,000 years ago, at the height of the Thassilonian empire. Each city honored one of the seven runelords, cruel dictators whose singular devotion to each of the seven sins allowed them to conquer much of northwestern Avistan. The kingdom of greed was known as Shalast, and at its heart stood the legendary pinnacle of Mhar Massif. Atop its highest peaks, the avaricious lord Karzoug built his throne. It was whispered that Mhar Massif was so tall it stabbed a rift into mysterious and potent otherworlds, which the runelord siphoned to attain his terrible powers.

SPOILER ALERT!

This chapter contains spoilers for "Spires of Xin-Shalast," the final installment of the Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path. This book describes the city following events in the Adventure Path, and assumes both the rediscovery of the fabled lost city and the defeat of the runelord Karzoug. For information on the city as it exists during Rise of the Runelords, see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #6.

On the steppes below his spire throne, he raised a terrible city, built upon the backs of hundreds of thousands of slaves who answered to the sadistic will of his lamia servitors and giant enforcers. At its height, Xin-Shalast's population soared above a quarter million, and the lure of its decadence drew all types beneath its gold-gleaming rooftops. But it was not to last.

The great cataclysm of Earthfall tore apart and scattered the Thassilonian empire as easily as a wind blows through a field of dandelions gone to seed. The runelords fled to safety, abandoning their cities and leaving them to fate. Xin-Shalast was shattered by avalanches and volcanic eruptions, which pelted large sections of the city with pyroclastic debris and bathed others in ash. Survivors fled into the ruins or darker places beneath the city for shelter. Some devolved into wild, primitive things, and struggled to keep their cultures alive along with the promise of Karzoug's prophesied return. For 10 millennia after Shalast's fall, its Runelord slept, dreaming in stasis in the dark and twisted demiplane known as the Plateau of Leng. But return he did, and his disciples flocked to him with righteous fervor. Soon after his return, however, Karzoug was besieged by a small group of adventurers, who defeated him before he could usher in his new age.

The second fall of Karzoug again tore Xin-Shalast apart. Those who'd dedicated their lives to the Runelord's return felt betrayed and immediately vowed retribution. Throughout the city, violence erupted spontaneously. Dozens of would-be lords rose to claim the throne of Xin-Shalast, as if roused to some epic gladiatorial call. The resultant anarchic frenzy left hundreds dead, further dividing the city. Karzoug's most devoted followers split into small, warring tribes, desperate to claim whatever resources and riches they could. Other survivors banded together by race, creed, and mutualism, creating violently defended territories and throwing the city into a tumultuous civil war—one that shows no immediate signs of stopping.

Most recently, after news spread confirming Xin-Shalast's existence and its remarkable wealth, governments throughout the region quickly organized teams of explorers, soldiers, and colonists and then sent them to salvage what riches they can. Success in any of these projects may well tip the scales of power in Varisia.



RESIDENTS

Xin-Shalast's populace is a menagerie of aberrant beastings, occult horrors, and greed-stricken humanoids, all engaged in an anarchic dance for dominance. Shifting powers and duplicitous alliances prevent the territorial boundaries between various factions from remaining static. A single giant incursion can displace three or four settlements of lesser dwellers, in turn forcing them into the territories of other creatures, while the influx of otherworldly beings of the strange Plateau of Leng and the subterranean Hypogeum create further territorial shifts.

The city's mighty rune giants (*Bestiary* 2 130) dominate Xin-Shalast's naturally established social hierarchy. Once acting to enforce Karzoug's will, they've retired to Rising District, a lone region high in the Spires that looks down upon the entire city. Internal struggles keep them distracted, impeding their ability to maintain the totalitarian influence upon the lower city that is their ultimate goal.

The most prominent occupants of the lower city are the giants and the lamyros (lamia-kin). Both former servitors of the runelords, they have fractured beneath their own banners. The giants hold most of western Jotunburg, as well as a few structures in the Entertainment District, including the fortress Shahlaria. The lamyros are chiefly situated in the eastern Entertainment District.

Primitive and barbarous, the city's yetis have little need or desire for Xin-Shalast's treasures. Instead, predatory instincts draw them to the ruins in search of humanoid prey. After adventurers drove them from their lairs in the Artisan District, they scaled the glaciers above the Slave District and sculpted impregnable shelters deep within the ice and rock. From this location they launch ruthless raids into humanoid settlements, hunting down stray and straggling humans for food.

The volcanic eruptions that ushered the fall of Xin-Shalast drove the descendants of its slave populace beneath the surface. Hunted and fearful, they adapted to their conditions, transforming into pale, hairless creatures known as the Spared.

A growing number of humanoid colonists make up the remainder of the city's inhabitants. All are recent arrivals, funded by the governments of Varisia's most prominent city-states, hoping to claim Xin-Shalast's fabulous treasures for their own gain. At present, the most notable colonial factions in Xin-Shalast are contingents from Janderhoff, Magnimar, and Riddleport.

RELATIONS AND TRADE

Despite its rediscovery, Xin-Shalast remains one of the most isolated locations in the world. Extreme conditions make the journey extremely difficult and casual visitation nearly impossible. Outside trade, at least in the traditional

THE RIDDLEPORT CONTINGENT

The Riddleport colonists are entirely funded by the city's thieves' guild under the guise of a formal government operation. Over all, they're less intrusive than other operations, a deliberate tactic intended to get their competitors to overlook them. To gain ground, they lend support to some of the city's darker residents, supplying them with food, arms, and other more esoteric or taboo supplies. They are interested in establishing lucrative trade operations to sell goods that elsewhere would only reach the black markets, as even black markets fail to reach the exorbitant profits attainable in the City of Greed. The contingent's most recent endeavors involve supplying skulls with blood and feeder bodies. Those seeking shelter or aid from the Riddleport block should be wary, as outsiders often disappear, and are sold as slaves or sacrifices.

sense, is nonexistent. Even those merchants intrepid and lucky enough to reach the city quickly find themselves at the mercy of warring factions who simply seize what they desire rather than trade or barter for it. Instead, most imports are purchased in advance through merchants with contacts outside the city. Purchased goods then arrive with the next influx of new troops or colonists.

Food supplies are the most crucial resource. The near-arctic weather conditions make growing crops difficult, and getting livestock into the area is next to impossible given the city's proximity to the demiplane of Leng. Scarce and sporadic supply shipments have created an extensive black market for food, controlled almost entirely by the Riddleport contingent, who rely on banditry to acquire the bulk of their supplies, supplement them with fish and fungus, and hunt frost drakes and yetis for meat. Trading between rival factions is negligible, particularly between the newer settlers and giants, lamias, and other denizens born from lineages whose ancestry traces back to the height of Thassilonian rule.

Many arrive under false assumptions that the city's gold-lined streets make for simple salvage. And in fact, for most of the newcomers, looting remains the dominant means of earning a living. But despite the opulence of its architecture, the display is mostly ornamental and consists of leafing and facade work that uses a relatively small amount of actual wealth. Thassilonians were driven by greed, not decadence, and stored the bulk of their riches in well-guarded, heavily warded and trapped treasure vaults secreted away in the darkest depths of the Hypogeum. Still, Xin-Shalast's hidden treasures are innumerable, and those willing to risk such delves reap the reward of unimaginable wealth. Ironically, however, there is little to do with one's spoils, at least until one returns to civilization with an ample haul.



SITES OF INTEREST

Lower Xin-Shalast is comprised of four main districts. The Artisan District serves as the city's gateway, bridging the lower city to the gigantic structures of Jotunburg, the broad arenas of the Entertainment District, and the staggering temples of Temple Row. The rest of the lower city, once the Slave District, now lies buried beneath sheets of rock and glacial ice. Above the Lower City, the Rising District climbs the walls of the valley between the Entertainment District and the Pinnacle of Avarice at the top of Mhar Massif.

Artisan District: This is the southernmost of Xin-Shalast's districts, and in the city's heyday was home to Shalast's most esteemed craftsmen and merchants. Countless shops and bazaars line the Golden Road here, culminating around Massif Square, where Magnimar's ill-fated forces now hold fast in the surrounding ruins, desperately low on supplies and eagerly hoping for an alliance. Weakened after a yeti attack, they operate under the loose direction of **Sadric Plemnt** (LG male human cleric of Sarenrae 4).

The dwarven contingent from Janderhoff occupies a less vulnerable position within the fortress of Krak Naratha, whose sheer stone walls protect the dwarves from the dangers of the city. Under the ambitious leadership of **Nordin Stonehands** (LN male dwarf fighter 8), they eagerly seek to reclaim wealth stolen from their ancestors in centuries past, which the dwarves blame on the murderous giants who controlled much of Varisia in the Age of Darkness, after the runelords' fall.

Tunnels beneath the structure connect with the Shattered Cistern, where Riddleport's agents have nestled themselves amid the labyrinthine network of sewers and subterranean aqueducts, which in turn lead to higher levels in the Rising District. Under the leadership of **Fira Elmsran** (LE female human fighter 6/rogue 4), the agents use the passages to traverse the city, though it's only a matter of time before some horror living in the dark waters notices them.

Entertainment District: Once home to Xin-Shalast's most extravagant displays of wealth, the Entertainment District remains one of the most exotic locales in the ruined city. Among the crumbling theaters, pleasure palaces, and galleries that originally gave the district its name, a number of monstrous factions vie for power.

The Heptaric Lotus, a towering, 500-foot-tall domed arena, can seat upward of 90,000 spectators, and employs

permanent *daylight* spells to support entertainment around the clock. Most recently held by a powerful ice devil, this prize now stands vacant for the taking. The district's largest arena, known as Vomarck's Circus, once treated 150,000 spectators to a steady stream of blood sport, but now, under the unyielding command of **Aog Bloodspitter** (CE male orc barbarian 10) and a brigade of several hundred battle-seasoned warriors of varying races, it puts on bloody performances for much smaller crowds, if any at all.

Between these two temples to bloodsport lies the Spolarium, or House of Cinders, so named for the piles of ash left behind by the thousands of corpses burned within its furnaces. **Eerymis** (LE female lamia matriarch necromancer 8) mixes this ash with distilled fat to create an arcane unguent for her rune giant liege lord.

The ponderous fortress of Shahlaria formerly housed the city's military. At present, a mixed colony of storm and cloud giants holds the fortress. Having broken away from the domination of Karzoug's rune giants, they have undergone great pains to secure this block, more so against their former masters than the newer settlers.

In the Entertainment District's western half, the aptly named Temple Row remains a heavily contested borough of the city. The House of Divine Consumption, Karzoug's fabled temple of greed, is rumored

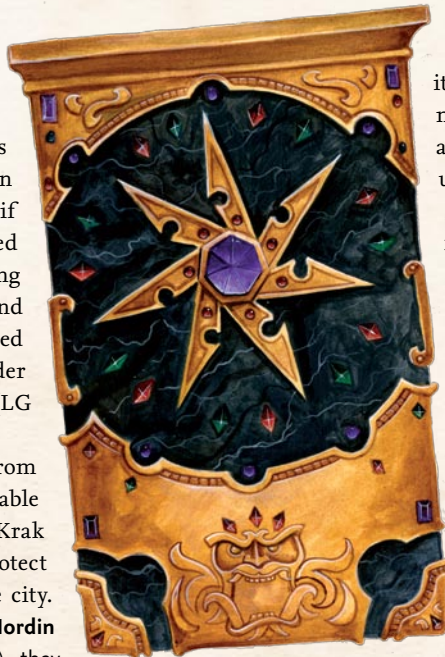
to house endless treasures in its cellars, luring almost every faction to attempt to claim it. It remains an active and bloody war zone, and merely approaching the church provokes attack by rival treasure-seekers.

Jotunburg: The buildings of Jotunburg stand apart from those in the rest of the Lower City because of their colossal scale. Originally housing most of Xin-Shalast's giant population, Jotunburg still serves as home to warring tribes of cloud, frost, stone, storm, and taiga giants.

Among the cyclopean structures, a mass of monstrous plants and fungi known as the Tangle springs from a geothermal rift. Sentient plant-creatures subservient to a deific yellow musk creeper of epic proportion and otherworldly intelligence live here, some of the few non-giant residents of Jotunburg.

Perhaps the most notable single structure in Jotunburg is the Observatory, a half-collapsed dome inside which the mad stone giant **Agmaat Granitejaw** (NE male stone giant druid 4) breeds frost drakes as war pets.

Rising District: The Rising District gets its name from the steep incline that dominates the district, causing the



Golden Road to climb in great vertical tiers up the side of Mhar Massif. The great Rune Gates mark the entrance to the Rising District, separating it from Lower Shalast. Here lived the city's nobility—its monstrous lamias, giants, and others with enough power and wealth to stand among them. Massive towers cling to the mountain's sheer face, though unlike those of the Lower City, time has torn them apart, and they occasionally collapse and spill down the steep incline.

Slave District: The most heavily damaged of the Xin-Shalast's districts is the Slave District, where countless lives were lost when an avalanche of ash and pyroclastic flows from a nearby volcanic eruption buried the poor, overpopulated masses of the district in mere minutes. Today, the district is further marred by the Great Glacier, which pushes ever forward, slowly devouring the ruins in its path. The doleful descendents of the ancient Thassilonians known as the Spered make their homes in a miles-long network of snaking warrens carved into the ice and earth.

High atop the Great Glacier, hundreds of yetis inhabit Agrok Maol, a terrible stronghold carved into the living ice. Though barbaric, their recent raids display a great degree of calculation and strategy thanks to the commanding efforts of their new chieftain, a hulking yeti with elaborately braided fur known as Agrok. Though the yetis are unaware of it, their new chieftain, **Gyukak** (LE male ogre mage), is an impostor who now tries a new tactic for obtaining power after previously failing to stir the giants into uprising.

THE XIN-SHALAST CAMPAIGN

While many venture to the City of Greed seeking to snatch what riches they can before fleeing with their lives, Xin-Shalast's scope is so extensive that a GM who desires to do so can easily construct an entire campaign around its exploration. Xin-Shalast holds unimaginable wealth, and those first to seize it can attain power beyond imagining.

GMs who are preparing a Xin-Shalast campaign should first consider an overarching theme to tie their ideas together. The most obvious themes concern ways in which the PCs might shape Xin-Shalast's enduring destiny. This may mean freeing Xin-Shalast from the supernatural influence of Leng, releasing some epic creature trapped within Mhar Massif, or simply working one's way up the food chain to become Shalast's new rulers. A GM may even develop a combination of these themes or introduce her own elements. In this manner, themes develop as characters advance and shift from those affected by the strange and mythical city to the ones affecting it.

Xin-Shalast is not for the faint of heart. In fact, little prevents the city from being an all-out deathtrap. The journey alone, with its extreme altitude, avalanches, freezing temperatures, and blinding snowstorms, can kill even the most stalwart explorers even without a single

ABSENT KORVOSANS

Unlike the other Varisian city-states of Magnimar and Riddleport, Korvosa has yet to dispatch a full expedition to the newly discovered City of Greed. Entangled in internal political struggles, the city's monarchy has formed a tenuous alliance with the Janderhoff Dwarves to represent them in Xin-Shalast's exploration. To date, the dwarves seem primarily focused on their own interests, angering Korvosa's lone representative, **Elasias Tamberlin** (LN male human conjurer 7), who has begun devoting his time and energy to convincing his city's government that time is of the essence. Further delay in colonizing Xin-Shalast, he argues, could shut Korvosa out of the power struggle entirely.

encounter. Local fauna have adapted to these conditions, making them even more dangerous. The city is hemmed by sheer cliffs and glaciers, threatened by volcanic activity, and rests precariously upon miles of ancient ruins that threaten to collapse—or worse, release unimaginable monstrosities. The Rising District and upper spires above the city provide a home to giants, dragons, and similarly high-CR creatures, and lastly, the entire city is hedged by the maddening, occult energies of the Plateau of Leng.

LOW-LEVEL ADVENTURES

Now free from the threat of its tyrannical runelord, the establishment of mainstream colonies within the lower city creates a demand for skilled and talented explorers willing to risk life and limb in the race to locate the city's riches and bleed them dry. The campaign likely starts in the lowlands where PCs answer a call to serve as agents for one of several small colonies attempting to establish a foothold in the fabled city of greed. Initial adventures should probably take place outside the city and involve acquiring elements necessary to make the journey to Xin-Shalast a success, such as lost lore, copies of the infamous Vekker brothers' journals, artifacts from Leng, or items that allow the PCs to survive in extreme climates. It's probably a good idea to allow the PCs to build up to at least 3rd level before attempting the journey. At this point, they can take on a contract to help lead the expedition, or perhaps serve as expert guides and guardians to a party of colonists. It is important that the PCs enter Xin-Shalast with a solid foundation of contacts and a settlement to serve as a home base; otherwise, they will be without a safe place to rest and resupply.

Upon reaching Xin-Shalast, the PCs entrench themselves in the needs of their colony, for without the colony, it's likely they too will perish. At this stage, adventures may concern fortifying the settlement or finding sources of water and other supplies to ensure self-

RUNESCARRED TEMPLATE

A group of renegade warriors who have broken with the traditions of their ancestors now serve as the Janderhoff dwarves' primary offense against the giants of the upper spires. Calling themselves the Runescarred, these dwarves fight fire with fire, scarring their skin during taboo rituals to become much like the rune giants they seek to defeat.

Runescarred is a simple template that can be added to any humanoid creature. The runescarred template hardens the base creature's skin, granting it a +2 natural armor bonus and the rune spark special ability. Increase a runescarred creature's base CR by +1.

Rune Spark (Su) 3 times per day, a runescarred creature can focus energy from its runes and discharge it through a metal weapon as a ranged touch attack. Upon a successful melee attack, the weapon releases a blast of arcane sparks that daze the target for 1 round and deal 1d6 points of damage (half fire and half electricity). The runescarred must declare that he is preparing his rune spark ability prior to the attack. If the attack misses, the rune spark is discharged and the creature must wait 1d4+1 rounds for his runic energies to build before attempting to use his rune spark ability again.

sufficiency. As the PCs advance, their sponsors contract them for increasingly risky missions. These can include plumbing the Hypogeum for treasures or clearing and seizing territory in the name of their patrons, engaging in subterfuge against rival settlements, defending against various creatures or forces of rival exploration operations, surviving destructive natural or supernatural forces, or warring with strange and ancient denizens now displaced and forced into the lower city by more powerful creatures. Still, try to limit the PCs' activities to those territories surrounding their settlements in the Artisan District, and stress the horrors that lurk beyond. As they press toward the boundaries, they should spot patrols of giants striding through the ruins and frost drakes winging overhead. They might also witness the brutal savaging of neighboring encampments by a horde of yetis. Such tactics help GMs build a continually growing sense of the city's dangers as well as of the challenges PCs might be expected to face. Use NPCs to contribute by pointing out and naming various iconic creatures, such as a hill giant living in a nearby territory or a tribe of Spared with whom they occasionally trade.

MEDIUM-LEVEL ADVENTURES

By mid-level, the PCs should develop a feel for the city and may decide how they hope to influence it. The PCs are now likely strong enough to withstand more trying adventures. To keep things varied, in addition to exploring more of the

upper districts, adventures should make use of territories both outside and beneath the city. At this stage (if you haven't done so already), begin introducing the minions and machinations of major villains to establish those campaign themes needed to pull the PCs together when they enter their high levels. The PCs should start exploring farther afield from the Artisan District, venturing into the northern districts, the glacier, and the Hypogeum, as well as the grueling wilderness that surrounds the city.

One possible hook begins as the frost drake population makes a dramatic increase. The skies over the Lower City thrum with the beating wings of these great, degenerate dragons as they hunt indiscriminately, feasting on whatever prey they can find. The PCs must venture into Jotunburg to investigate Aagmaat Granitejaw's drake-breeding operation.

Alternatively, after a Janderhoff delver discovers an ancient shrine, he suddenly turns rogue, murders his allies, and absconds with an alchemical fire-gouter, which he uses to blast through the glacier, fleeing into the cellars of the Slave District. The PCs are contracted to hunt him down, retrieve the device, and determine the cause of his insanity.

If you wish to lead the PCs closer to the Rising District, they may catch wind that one of their rivals has recently unearthed new information concerning the location of the *Book of Ebidwar*, a fabled text of ancient martial strategies said to lie in a dungeon beneath Shahlaria. The PCs' rival has already assembled a strike team of able delvers to lead an expedition into the depths beneath the fortress to recover the text. The PCs must race them and seize the book before the opposing faction gains a potent advantage in their fight to control the City of Greed.

HIGH-LEVEL ADVENTURES

Once PCs reach 14th level, they should be capable of surviving every part of the city. This hardly guarantees them safety, however, as Xin-Shalast is geared for high-level adventuring. New areas of the city are now open to PC exploration. The PCs can even venture into the territories above the city, such as the Rising District or the dizzying spires of the Pinnacle of Avarice, where the remains of Karzoug's fortress stand.

At this point, the objectives of the adventures should shift again, consolidating even more toward the climax of your campaign, and adventures might center on the iconic geography that defines Xin-Shalast.

If you wish to explore the mysteries of Mhar Massif in your campaign, the PCs may discover pre-Thassilonian runes hinting that Mhar Massif serves an even older, more cryptic purpose. The interpretations are deliberately misleading. Some hint that the mountain imprisons a supernatural entity, while others speculate it holds something else, like a powerful artifact or a supernatural

rune of unmaking capable of triggering vast entropy. The PCs must delve deep into the Hypogeum to recover further runes, but they soon discover a race of powerful supernatural beings whose sole purpose is to protect these runes. Once these beings awake, they set to work on their destiny, undoing cryptic seals and releasing what lies inside the mysterious mountain.

Similarly, you could focus a high-level campaign on the nearby Plateau of Leng. Twisted outsiders may attempt to steal Xin-Shalast in its entirety by sucking it into the demiplane. Alternatively, they could seek to perform the inverse, breaching the Material Plane in an attempt to extend the mysterious mists of Leng down the mountain to create a race of mindless servitor humans or turn thousands of innocents into chattel.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

LOW LEVEL

d%	Result	Average CR	Source
1-7	1 ghoul (ancient Thassilonian)	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 146
8-13	1 skulk	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 248
14-18	1 cave fisher	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 41
19-23	1 rat swarm	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 232
24-29	1d4 yellow musk zombies	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 285
30-34	2d3 dire rats	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 232
35-40	1 ice mephit	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 202
41-46	2d4 raiders (human rogue 2)	3	—
47-51	2d3 stirges	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 260
52-57	1 yeth hound	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 286
58-62	1 decapus	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 77
63-67	1d4 giant spiders	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 258
68-72	1 ogre	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 220
73-77	1 yeti	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 287
78-81	1 Huge plague zombie	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 288
82-87	1anderhoff miners*	5	—
88-93	Avaricious colonists**	5	—
94-100	1 polar bear (advanced grizzly bear)	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 31, 294

* 1 runscarred axeman (LN dwarf runscarred fighter 2) with 1d4 dwarf warriors 1.

** 1 NE human transmuter 3 with 2d3 warriors 1.

MEDIUM LEVEL

d%	Result	Average CR	Source
1-7	1 dire polar bear (dire bear)	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 31
8-13	1 hill giant	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 150
14-18	1 remorhaz	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 233
19-23	1 crag spider (giant tarantula)	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 256
24-29	1 denizen of Leng	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 82
30-34	2d3 harpies	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 172
35-40	2d4 Riddleport raiders*	8	—
41-46	2 shambling mounds	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 246
47-51	Avaricious colonists**	9	—

52-57	3 xorns	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 284
58-62	2d4 lamias	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 186
63-67	1 roc	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 236
68-72	3d4 ogres	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 220
73-77	2 stone giants	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 151
78-81	2d4 winter wolves	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 280
82-87	3 frost drakes	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 108
88-93	Skulk natives (N skulk cleric 5 and 2d6 skulks)	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 248
94-100	Yeti tribe***	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 287

* CN human rogues 4.

** NE human transmuter 6 with 2d3 fighters 3.

*** CE yeti barbarian 8 and 2d4 yetis.

HIGH LEVEL

d%	Result	Average CR	Source
1-7	2d3 frost giants	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 149
8-13	2d3 crag spiders (giant tarantula)	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 256
14-18	2d4 denizens of Leng	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 82
19-23	2 cloud giants	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 147
24-29	2d6 hill giants	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 150
30-35	1 storm giant	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 152
36-41	2d4 stone giants	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 151
42-47	1 lamia matriarch sorcerer 5	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 175
48-52	1 mountain roper (advanced roper)	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 237, 294
53-58	1 advanced ice devil	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 77, 294
59-63	3d4 advanced frost drakes	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 108, 292
64-69	1 ancient white dragon	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 101
70-76	1d4 taiga giants	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 131
77-82	1 rune giant	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 130
83-86	1 ice linnorm	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 191
87-92	1 wendigo	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 281
93-100	Acolyte of Greed*	18	—

* CE human transmuter 19

THE PLATEAU OF LENG

It is said that the path to Xin-Shalast rests at the head of the River Avah which winds high into the Kodar Mountains and up the terrible face of Mhar Massif. Simply finding the Avah's riverhead hardly guarantees locating the fabled Golden Road which leads to the City of Greed, however. The riverhead sits on the edge of a mystic realm of warped reality under the profound influence of the dark and twisted demiplane known as the Plateau of Leng. The runelords tapped Leng's ominous power to protect the city, sheltering it from sight by tearing the fabric of existence.

To see the Golden Road, one must fast at the riverhead and wait until the full moon becomes properly aligned with Leng; only then do its alien effects become apparent. The precise nature of Leng's effects remains immeasurable and unpredictable, yet they are immediate and often severe. As if the plane itself can sense sentience, those entering its



influence are filled with an unnatural dread. All living creatures perceive this influence as a strange, unsettling change they cannot quite identify. Those who succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom check experience flashes of insight, and understand that the uneasiness is caused by their unnatural proximity to the cold and foreboding realm of alien twilight. Not long after entering, all intelligent life begins to suffer from dire dreams of alien horrors and nightmares of being transformed into maggots or bled dry by great cephalopods. Similarly, animals immediately become shaken and attempt to flee, even attacking each other or their masters in the attempt to escape; no animal willingly travels into the region. The effect on animals does not apply to animal companions, familiars, or other creatures similarly compelled to the PCs' service. At this time, those brave or foolhardy enough to walk the Golden Road may attempt to do so.

Those attempting the first step immediately fall victim to Leng's influence. They must succeed on a DC 25 Will save or fall prey to disorienting delusions that cause the individual to stray from the road (*protection from chaos* grants a +2 bonus against this Will save). Days later, after the deluded individual finally wanders out of those regions under Leng's reality-warping influence, she discovers herself to be at an unknown location—lost high in the Kodar Mountains. Leng's strange influence also affects any attempts to mark one's passage. The effect is so subtle that an explorer who fails the Will save simply emerges on the opposite slope of Mhar Massif without ever setting foot near Xin-Shalast. Those able to save against the effect may follow the road freely, though they remain susceptible to any of the realm's other effects.

Certain magic can be employed to lessen Leng's reality-warping effects. *True seeing* bypasses the effect entirely. The Golden Road becomes clear, but should the individual on which *true seeing* was cast attempt to stray from the road, she soon discovers the distortion works in reverse, and regardless of how the character proceeds, she always finds herself back on the Golden Road facing Leng. This effect may be broken with a DC 25 Will save. A character who attempts to *teleport* into this region from outside (or out from within) must make a DC 30 Caster Level check or the spell fails.

The corrupting influences of Leng interact strangely with the minds of those suffering from insanity. Similarly, creatures teetering on the brink of death due to age, starvation, or hypothermia may peer into the desolate realm as their minds flicker. Thus, insane or dying creatures may see the Golden Road as though under the effects of a *true seeing* spell.

Recently, seekers of the city have begun practicing a disturbing method of finding the Golden Road. Purchasing the insane from asylums, they force them to serve them as

slave-guides. Some of these individuals even seem innately drawn to the locale. Their handlers, many now serving as specialist guides, leash these unfortunates with ropes like wild dogs, and let the slaves lead them up the mountains.

Those unwilling or unable to procure insane guides employ a foul, arcane toxin called *nightmare tears*, which when applied directly to the eyes induces blindness and mental derangement, enough so that the Golden Road becomes clear. While it is said that those using *nightmare tears* to find the Golden Road cannot avoid seeing its path, and are almost drawn into it, its use remains risky, as the negative effects can sometimes become permanent.

NIGHTMARE TEARS

Aura faint divination; **CL** 5th

Slot none; **Price** 250 gp; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

Nightmare tears are a toxic alchemical solution that, when applied to the eyes, allows the individual to see past certain supernatural effects, as the spell *true seeing*. These include reality-warping effects such as those caused by the Plateau of Leng and spells or supernatural powers that create phantasms such as *weird*, *nightmare*, and *phantasmal killer*. The effect of the tears lasts for 1 hour.

Nightmare tears have horrific side effects—users suffer both temporary blindness and insanity. Immediately after applying the tears, the user goes blind for 1d4 rounds and loses 1d4 points of Wisdom until the tears wear off. However, if the user fails a DC 11 Will save, both effects become permanent.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *blindness*, *true seeing*

Cost 125 gp

LAMYROS

During the golden age of Xin-Shalast, lamyros (or lamia-kin, as they are more often called) flocked to the City of Greed and quickly swore their allegiance to the runelords, embracing their values and transforming into noble lords and enforcers. In turn, the runelords used their extensive powers to modify these creatures, creating new aberrant and perverse monstrosities of great cunning, wisdom, and power. For more information on lamia-kin, see *Pathfinder Adventure Path #6*, available at paizo.com.

Harridan: The most powerful of the lamyros are the gigantic harridans. Ambitious, capricious, and sadistic, these towering lamia-kin inspire dread even among their own kind, and often serve as the spiritual leaders of the lamyros' dark faith.

Hungerer: Warped in Karzoug's fleshlabs, these hideously deformed, bloated harridans believe the runelord bestowed upon them his special blessings. Among their many abilities, they are especially effective at terrorizing and disgusting those upon whom their forces descend.

Kuchrima: These vile and filthy creatures most resemble vulture-headed harpies. They are notorious spreaders of disease and skilled archers.

Lamia Matriarch: Lamia matriarchs possess long, serpentine bodies, instead of the feline bodies of their lesser kin, and cast spells as sorcerers. They often take the form of ordinary humans, infiltrating society and manipulating weak souls to their wills. For more information, see page 175 of the *Pathfinder Bestiary 2*.

GRAITHZOG EBONRUNES

Among the most powerful of Xin-Shalast's rune giants, Graithzog Ebonrunes stands the best chance of filling the power void left after Karzoug's defeat. Graithzog has had unparalleled success in forming alliances with the most influential lamyros in the city, and hopes to bring the many feuding tribes of lesser giants under his command as well. If approached by one of the competing exploratory contingents from lower Varisia with a reasonable offer, Graithzog could easily tip the balance of power among the warring city-states, though he is hardly a trustworthy ally.

GRAITHZOG EBONRUNES

CR 19

XP 204,800

Male rune giant fighter 2 (*Bestiary 2* 130)

LE Gargantuan humanoid (giant)

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +31

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 6, flat-footed 30 (+9 armor, +15 natural, -4 size)**hp** 302 (20d8+2d10+200)**Fort** +18, **Ref** +6, **Will** +20; +1 vs. fear**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1; **Immune** cold, electricity, fire

OFFENSE

Speed 35 ft.**Melee** mwk cold iron greatsword +30/+25/+20/+15 (4d6+22/17-20), 2 slams +28 (2d6+15)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.**Special Attacks** command giants, runes, spark shower**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 20th; concentration +24)Constant—*air walk*At will—*charm person* (DC 15), *suggestion* (DC 17)3/day—*dominate person* (DC 19), *mass charm monster* (DC 22)1/day—*demand* (DC 22), *true seeing*

STATISTICS

Str 41, **Dex** 11, **Con** 28, **Int** 14, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 18**Base Atk** +17; **CMB** +36; **CMD** 46**Feats** Awesome Blow, Cleave, Critical Focus, Great Cleave, Greater Bull Rush, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Staggering Critical, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (greatsword)**Skills** Acrobatics +17, Craft (weapons) +27, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (nobility) +13, Perception +31**Languages** Common, Giant, Terran, Thassilonian**Gear** masterwork full plate, masterwork cold iron greatsword

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Command Giant (Su) A rune giant gains a +4 racial bonus on the save DC of charm or compulsion effects used against giants.

Runes (Ex) As a free action, whenever a rune giant uses its spark shower or spell-like abilities, it can cause the runes on its body to flash with light. All creatures within 10 feet of the giant must make a DC 24 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1 round. The saving throw is Charisma-based.

Spark Shower (Su) As a standard action, a rune giant can cause a shower of sparks to erupt out of one of the runes on its body. These sparks function as a breath weapon (30-ft. cone; 10d6 fire and 10d6 electricity damage; Reflex DC 29 half; usable once every 1d4 rounds). The save DC is Constitution-based.



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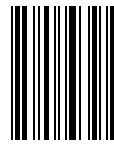
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