

# THE RUNE OF HOPE

A 5th level adventure set in the world of Rhune: Dawn of Twilight

By Will Cooper, Joshua Kitchens, & Jaye Sonia



7.99

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# THE RUNE OF HOPE

By Will Cooper, Joshua Kitchens, & Jaye Sonia  
(Additional design Mike Myler)

An adventure for 5<sup>th</sup> level characters set in **Rhune: Dawn of Twilight**



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# SUMMARY

With Northgard under siege by a swelling army of barbarians, the City-States of Vallinar scramble to mount a military response. If Northgard falls, thousands of barbarians will flock to their banners, heralding a third Fel Horde and imperiling Union City itself.

The fortress is well defended and provisioned for months; but its strong appearance hides the rot at its core. Commander Drothgar and many of his officers were infected with the dreaded rage fever and are slowly succumbing to its effects – none dare to take the field lest they succumb to its curse even quicker. Meanwhile, Commander Drothgar’s daughter Issadora strives to hold the failing fort together, martialing its troops and organizing all of its resources – both civilian and military. Even if she manages to hold back the gathering hordes, one thing is certain, a cure must be found before Northgard crumbles from the inside.

Facing a horde that clearly outnumbers their small group, the players must journey in search of a cure for the unnatural disease.

**Act 1** After saving *The White Jarl* from Fel Barbarians on the southern coast, they quickly set off for Union City, where they meet with Knight-Commander Erik Ullsteinnr. After receiving the PCs’ dire

news, he sends them to the Mikill Bókasafnið. After exploring the library, they learn of another potential source of hope that lies with a mysterious Glitterfane missionary – an elder of the church that knows of a fabled healing chalice reputed to alleviate any ill.

**Act 2** After an airship journey over storm-wracked mountains, the PCs must face mystical trials on the Glitterfane’s Blessed Isle. There, they learn more about the Glitterfane, their ways, and their own inner factions.

**Act 3** The PCs make a deadly delve into a drowned dwarven keep overrun with dark aberrations, discovering the darkness within. After an epic battle with the drowned city’s former jarl, the PCs return to the Glittering Isle.

**Act 4** The PCs return bearing gifts of hope and healing, but they find Northgard on the verge of defeat; with over half of its defending troops in disarray. Those who haven’t succumbed to rage fever have boarded themselves into their barracks or workshops, leaving the infected to roam the streets of Northgard in mindless mobs. Can they win through barbarian siege lines, the zombie-choked streets of Northgard, and conduct Alnara’s ritual atop the fortress tower in time to stave off the barbarian horde and save the cities of men and dwarves from a tide of blood and ice?

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# BACKGROUND

With the fall of Fort Blitzkrieg, things have gone from bad to worse for the people of Northgard. Using the strange lights of the Pale Tower as a visible sign from the Thrall Lords, the shamans and blood skalds of Icewall have rallied their tribes and besieged the people of Northgard. For the men and women therein, there is little hope of breaking out, especially in light of a simple fact – rage fever has spread into Northgard itself. Tasked with containing its spread and saving as many lives as possible, Commander Drothgar has taken leave of his duties, commissioning his daughter, Issadora, to lead in his stead. She's done a decent job all things considered, but even she is feeling the stress of the siege. Short a whole company of men and lacking immediate reinforcements, Northgard has tried – unsuccessfully – to break the siege that is forming around it. Knowing this could be the end of Northgard, Issadora sent scouts southward, all with but a single mission – get word of the siege to Union City. Meanwhile, she's been using what magic she and her allies have at their disposal to hold back the gathering hordes, although she knows that Northgard only has a few weeks before those hordes reach critical mass and descend on them.

All of this, unbeknownst to Issadora and those ill fated to be in Northgard, is little more than a deadly distraction.

Far to the North, the Pale Tower is alight with activity. To the west, barges carrying the plague-dead from Ælveheim (the major event taking place in *The Ælven Agenda*) are being unloaded and shipped north to Icewall. From there, they are being shipped to the Pale Tower, where agents of the Black Hand, working in tandem with the priesthood of Mhamnoch and House Scrae, are raising them as Frigus Zombies –

undead monstrosities they are using to unearth a powerful servant of the Thrall Lords in Niflaeheim.

With Union City's naval powers redirected to the growing threat of Northgard (its dragonships tasked with stopping all of the vessels headed toward the city, not toward the North), these barges have landed on the northern shores completely unhindered, supplying Icewall with an ample supply of new bodies.

The PCs, however, have a much more immediate threat on their hands, and it is with this in mind that they are sent to the Glittering Isle, to seek out the aid of the Glitterfane and their merciful goddess, Alnara.



## THE RUNE OF HOPE



# RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

As the second adventure in the *Beyond the Glittering Fane* adventure arc, this story follows the events that occurred in both *The Ælven Agenda* and *Into the Pale Tower* – which, if the PCs aren't aware, are connected (the events of both adventures are resolved in the next adventure, *Frigid Reflections*). If the PCs begin this adventure after completing *Into the Pale Tower*, they will be familiar with the background.

If, however, the PCs are beginning play after playing through *The Ælven Agenda*, GMs will need to connect the two in a more directed manner (see below). In this case, GMs may have the ælves gift the PCs with advanced *Aodain Shrouds*, allowing them to maintain their perspective disguises for an extended period of time (30 to 60 days should suffice). Armed with these new magical items, the PCs are directed to return to their local Sil, where they learn several of the barges carrying the human corpses escaped the attack on Aberwyth. PCs are immediately ordered to track one of the barges, traveling by bat to the northern shores of Icewall Bay. Once there, the PCs pick up the tracks and learn that large troops of marauding barbarians are headed east, toward the Pale Tower (many of which are following the coast toward Northgard, first).

If the PCs are not quite level 5 yet, GMs could easily have them battle several patrols of barbarians as they head east, discovering the siege in the process. Alternately, the PCs might encounter Næfr and his refugees right off, proceeding directly to encounter 1. From there, they proceed through the adventure as normal, being introduced to Knight-Commander's Ullsteinnr through either Næfr or one of the soldiers on *The White Jarl*.

With all of this happening, many players are bound to start trying to uncover the mysteries at hand, especially those who entered the Pale Tower in the previous adventure, *Into the Pale Tower*. This

requires some finesse on the GM's part, but isn't impossible. GMs just need to keep several things in mind.

First, none of the leaders of the siege- including the priests of Mhamnoch - realize that the siege is a distraction. So, if the PCs elect to isolate and manage to successfully capture some of the barbarians early on, none of them have any of this information.

Secondly, most of the factions that appeared in *Into the Pale Tower* remain quiet during this portion of the adventure arc (they approach the PCs again at the beginning of *Frigid Reflections*). This is, primarily, because all of the concerned parties have more pressing matters - namely, the growing horde of barbarians that threatens to overrun Northgard and, if left unchallenged, move south to Union City. So, while crafty agents of the Black Hand would certainly love to take this opportunity to sew more discord among their enemies (and some do, even without the PCs help), even they have their limits. Additionally, it is worth noting that not everyone within the Black Hand knows what's going on, and several factions exist within the organization itself. Those working with House Scrae in the Pale Tower, for instance, do not necessarily know what's going on at Northgard, or even that one of the PCs may have been recruited.

If players did join one of the factions and seek them out, most of their contacts should either be preoccupied with other affairs or should, logically, redirect them to the matter at hand - saving Northgard.

**One final note;** though this adventure is not timed (there are no checkpoints that PCs need to make), GMs are encouraged to maintain a higher than normal tempo. PCs need to remember that Northgard (or Ælveheim) is in relying on them.





# ACT 1: BAD NEWS, WORSE NEWS



In **Act 1** of the *Rune of Hope*, the PCs discover that Northgard is under siege and sure to fall as the garrison succumbs to *rage fever*, a debilitating disease with no known cure. Arriving back at Union City the PCs find a city under quarantine as agents of the Black Hand - led by Grey Navash - stoke fear, unrest and panic. Against this backdrop the PCs are tasked by Knight-Commander Erik Ullsteinnr to bring hope to Northgard by discovering a cure for the dreaded disease. Braving the restless streets, the PCs uncover evidence that the distant glitterfane, beloved of Alnara the Goddess of Healing, possess an artifact that may accomplish their mission. As they embark on a perilous journey, Grey Navash has one final surprise.

## Bad News Travels Fast

While traveling to Northgard (either after returning from the Pale Tower or from some other location), the PCs quickly discover that a horde of northern barbarians, accompanied by hundreds of their thralls, have laid siege to Northgard in their absence - cutting off any hope of getting into or out of the military fort. Worse, the priests and shamans of the Thrall Lords have set up a perimeter of wicked looking rune stones. PCs that make a successful

Knowledge (arcana) skill check (DC 23) determine that these rune stones banish invisibility, making travel into the fort even more dangerous. With few options, the PCs are forced to head south.

### ENCOUNTER 1 REFUGEES CR 3

*As you round the bend, you notice a band of humans wrapped in winter blankets, headed south. A man in a uniform leads them.*

About two hours south of the siege, the PCs encounter a group of eight refugees (human experts 1)

led by a military scout named **Næfr** (bard 1/fighter 2) from Northgard. The group is several hundred feet south of the PCs and should easily notice that the scout is pushing the refugees. The scout frequently looks back and if he notices the PCs, he starts to push the group harder. Once the PCs approach the group (or makes it evident they are not barbarians), the refugees stop for a moment to rest. Næfr starts the encounter stressed and in a hurry (treat him as indifferent), but if the PCs make him friendly with a DC 18 Diplomacy skill check, he recounts the last few days to the PCs.

*I don't know what happened. One moment, I was sleeping. The next, captain Engill comes bursting into the hall, screaming for us to get up. We had only minutes. Men were shouting at the walls, shooting down at enemies on the other side. A few of us were paired up with those who couldn't fight, like these folks here, and sent west to hide. We fought a few barbarians, hid from a few more in an old hunter's cabin and then headed south. Captain Engill said The White Jarl was due in and we had to get to her before they did - warn the folks to the south. He gave me a note for the Knight-Commander himself.*

Næfr knows little more of what happened - he was woken in the middle of the night and paired up with his group of refugees. He knows several other groups left, each headed in different directions (south, southwest, and west) to maximize their chances of slipping past the line of forming barbarians. He doesn't know how many barbarians lay siege to the city, only that all of them on duty had been mustered to the walls. Only the scouts had been dispatched. He also knows that some of the guards were sick, but he refuses to speculate further about this.

Most of the refugees are cold, starved, and close to death (each refugee has only 2 hit points remaining). If the PCs make Næfr friendly, heal and feed the NPCs, and keep all of them alive until they reach *The White Jarl*, award them experience as if



they had overcome a CR 3 encounter. Additionally, award each PC a single point of honor.

## ENCOUNTER 2 THE WAR TRIBE CR 6

*Suddenly, someone screams! You see a small band of barbarians, with men in chains. They cry out wildly and release their chained thralls, sending them charging toward you!*

While escorting the refugees back to *The White Jarl*, the PCs encounter a large group of barbarians – members of the Huurre Tribe – who are patrolling the surrounding areas, looking for anyone that might have slipped past the siege in the night. The barbarians, however, are also training a group of thralls, humans taken in past raids that have been trained to obey the barbarians, but who have not yet been infected with *rage fever*. The barbarians treat their thralls much like they would their tribal war beasts, keeping them chained and submissive. The thralls, after months of mistreatment and fear, are eager to impress their new masters. When the barbarians (or their thralls) spot the PCs, they cry out. The barbarians immediately release the thralls, sending them bounding through the snow at the PCs.

As soon as the barbarians release the thralls, Næfr commands the refugees to retreat and starts to move them south as fast as he can, hoping to put as much distance between his group and the barbarians. He forces the refugees to move quickly (treat as a forced march) for thirty minutes. He leaves a trail that is easy for the PCs to follow.

Exceptionally perceptive PCs (Perception skill check, DC 17) notice that these thralls are ill equipped for battle. They wear only padded armor and wield only long spears. PCs that make a Heal skill check (DC 17) also notice these men show no signs of *rage fever*.

Sadly, because of their mistreatment, these thralls are hostile. PCs need to make a Diplomacy skill check (DC 23) to convince the thralls to lie down their weapons and join the refugees. If the PCs manage to subdue the thralls (instead of killing them) and defeat the barbarians, the thralls – now

faced with a freedom they never dreamed they'd see again – join the PCs' band of refugees. The refugees, however, will remain unfriendly toward the thralls unless the PCs can prove to them that the thralls are free of *rage fever*, which the PCs will be able to do with the aforementioned Heal skill check (DC 17).

### Huurre Tribe Barbarians (4) CR 1

XP 400

Male human barbarian 2

CE Medium Humanoid (human)

Init +1; Senses Perception +6

#### DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 11

(+3 armor, +1 Dex, -2 rage)

hp 31 (2d12+12)

Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +3

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge

#### OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee heavy mace +6 (1d8+4/x2) or spiked gauntlet +6 (1d4+4/x2)

Ranged javelin +3 (1d6+4/x2)

Special Attacks rage (9 rounds/day), rage power (brawler)

#### TACTICS

**Base Statistics** When not raging, the Huurre Barbarian's statistics are AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; hp 27; Fort +6, Will +1; Melee heavy mace +4 or spiked gauntlet +4; Ranged javelin +3; Str 14, Con 17; CMB +4; Climb +6, Swim +1

**Before Combat** Before combat, the Huurre Barbarians release the thralls, sending them into battle with the PCs. If the thralls fall (or the PCs otherwise eliminate them as a threat), the barbarians rage, throw their javelins, and then charge into combat.

**During Combat** If the PCs appear heavily armored or are easily hitting the barbarians, they take turns withdrawing from combat, one each round, to drink their *potions of barkskin* +2.

**Morale** The Huurre Tribe has a penalty for failure – death. The barbarians will not retreat or surrender.

#### STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Base Atk +2; CMB +6; CMD 16

Feats Dodge, Step Up

Skills Acrobatics +5, Climb +8, Heal +1, Intimidate +4, Perception +6, Sense Motive +1, Survival +6, Swim +3

Languages Low Common; Honor 3

SQ fast movement, infected

Combat Gear heavy mace, (3) javelins, spiked gauntlet, *potion of barksin* +2





**Other Gear** hide armor, (3) torches, heavy winter clothing, snowshoes, flint and steel, (2) flask of oil, and 14 gp

### Huure Thralls (4)

CR 1/2

XP 200

Male human expert 2

CN Medium Humanoid (human)

**Init** +1; **Senses** Perception +7

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 12, **touch** 11, **flat-footed** 11 (+1 armor, +1 Dex)

**hp** 15 (2d8+2)

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

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** dagger +2 (1d4+1/19-20) and longspear +2 (1d8+1/×3)

**Ranged** dagger +2 (1d4+1/19-20)

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Desperate to avoid punishment from their barbarian masters, the thralls charge into combat.

**During Combat** Unless the PCs can convince the thralls to stand down, the thralls use their long spears to target enemy clerics and spell casters. They attempt to keep the PCs at range, using their reach to their advantage.

**Morale** If two or more thralls fall, they withdraw, calling for their barbarian masters to aid them.

#### STATISTICS

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

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 13

**Feats** Alertness, Endurance

**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Climb +6, Craft (traps) +5, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +4, Perception +7, Ride +5, Sense Motive +2, Survival +5

**Languages** Low Common; **Honor** 4

**Combat Gear** longspear, (2) daggers

**Other Gear** light winter clothing, snowshoes, (1) torch, padded armor, masterwork tools (trap-makers), 9 gp

If the PCs defeat the barbarians, spare the thralls, and convince the refugees to let the thralls join their group, give the PCs an additional 1,600 XP and 2 points of honor. If the PCs kill the barbarians and the thralls, give them 3 points of honor for this battle instead.



## THE RUNE OF HOPE

### ENCOUNTER 3 CLEARING THE PIER CR 8

After marching south for another hour, the PCs and their band of refugees finally reach the southern pier. How this encounter plays out is up to the GM, but GMs wishing to maintain tension might consider having the PCs arrive just in time to witness the following, terrible scene.

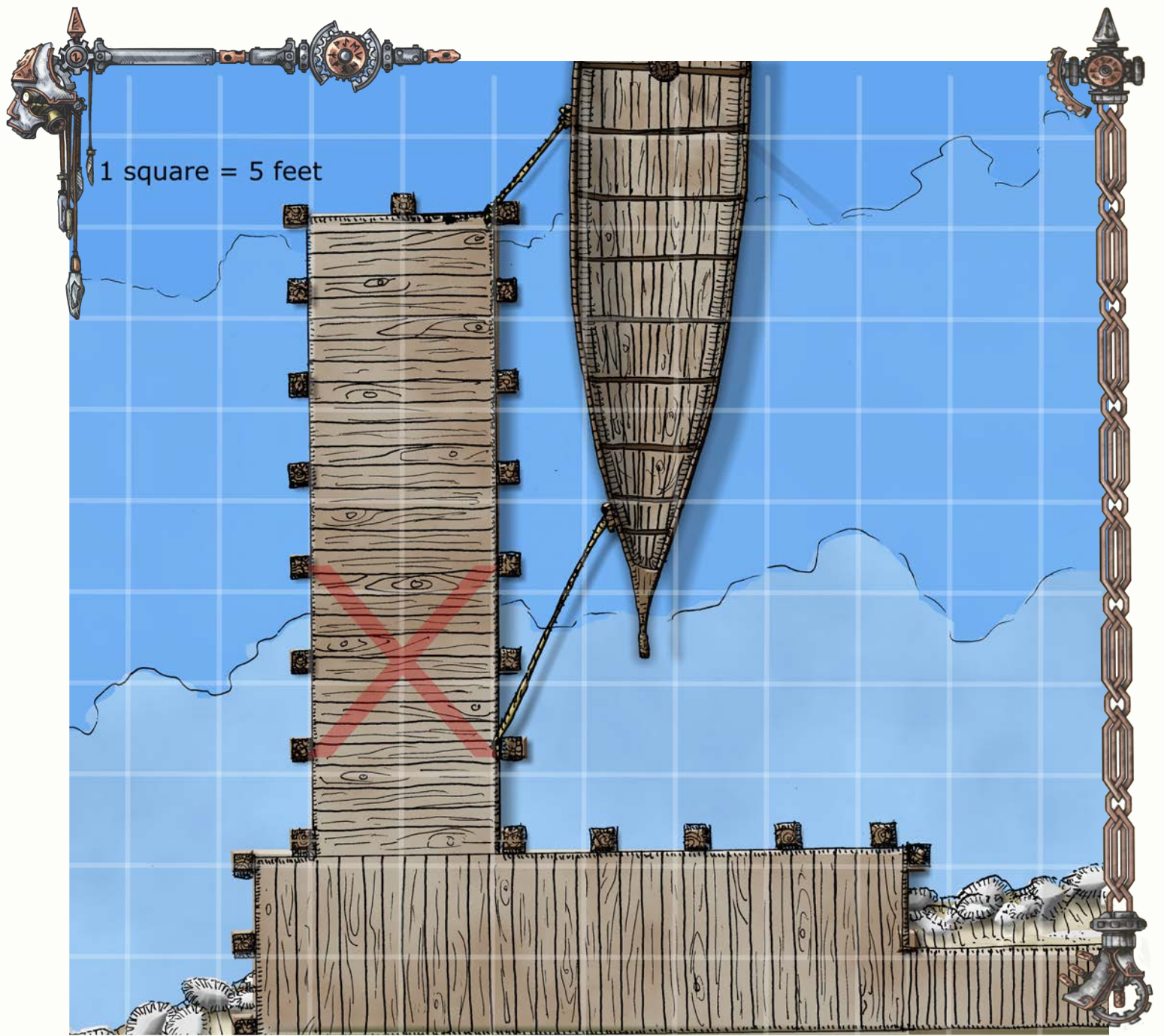
*Finally, your group reaches the path leading down to the pier. As it comes into view, you see several sailors battling ice-covered figures, the ship's mooring lines tight. The White Jarl is trying to pull away!*

The White Jarl has arrived and its sailors quickly disembark and moor it. Immediately afterward, they lay the gangplank in place. As they finish, a single frigus zombie pulls its frozen rotting body up from under the pier. The zombie immediately assault the sailors, who quickly retreat onto the dragonship. Two sailors, armed with long pikes, fight desperately to clear the gangplank as the ship tries to pull away. Several other sailors, axes in hand, try to cut the mooring lines to release the ship.

PCs should quickly realize that if the sailors fall and the zombie makes it onto the ship, their transportation south might be compromised. However, if the sailors are successful and cut the ship free (which they will do in approximately six rounds), the ship will pull away, leaving the PCs and their refugees stranded.

What the PCs do not realize is that this trap was laid several days ago by one of Mhamnoch's clerics, who suspected the next ship arriving would likely have troops. The cleric, with the help of thrall minions skilled in carpentry, weakened several of the planks on the pier, about midway, to ensure that anyone passing over the midsection would fall through and into the icy water below. To make matters worse, the cleric and his thrall minion lined the area below the weakened planks with spikes – just below the water. Before departing, the cleric sacrificed his thrall minions in a bloody ritual which summoned a powerful undead frigus zombie from Niflæhem. He commanded the undead to wait for the next ship and devour everyone aboard.





### The Damaged Pier

CR 3

XP 800

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20;

Disable Device DC 25

#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** repair

**Effect** 10 ft. fall (1d6 falling damage); sea-spikes (attack +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+1 damage each); **Reflex** DC 20 avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10 ft. square area). PCs that fall into the icy waters below (below -20° F) immediately take 1d6 points of cold damage. They must make Fort save (DC 17) or gain the fatigued condition.

### Frigus Zombie

CR 7

hp 52

#### TACTICS

**During Combat:** When the PCs arrive, the zombie is already on the dock, mindlessly assaulting the sailors on the gangplank that connects the dock to *The White Jarl*. The frigus zombie focuses on the sailors until the PCs attack, at which point it turns its full attention toward the PCs.

**Morale** The zombie, commanded by a cleric of Mhamnoch, fights until destroyed.

See page 80 for details on the Frigus Zombie.





Once the PCs clear the pier, *The White Jarl* pulls back up to the dock (if six rounds passed and the sailors managed to cut the mooring lines, that is) and the sailors help the PCs and refugees quickly board. As soon as *The White Jarl* pulls away, Captain Ellegard approaches the PCs and asks them what happened. The dwarf is obviously distraught at the terrible news and informs the PCs they must leave at once. If the PCs tell Captain Ellegard about the other refugees, she is saddened but informs them that she cannot risk waiting. PCs that make a successful Diplomacy check (DC 24) can convince her to wait out at sea, but only until dusk. If the PCs convince Captain Ellegard to wait, award them 800 xp and 1 point of honor. Regardless of whether or not the ship waits, no other survivors arrive.

**ENCOUNTER 4**  
**THE PLAGUE BLOCKADE CR 3**

Spurred by Næfr's requests that they make haste to deliver his urgent message, Captain Ellegard sails quickly back to Union City by the most direct route. Conditions on the ship are crowded and uncomfortable, particularly with the refugees aboard. Throughout the voyage small disagreements escalate and flare into outraged arguments and occasionally even violence between passengers. The ship's crew keeps the peace, though Captain Ellegard welcomes the PC's help if they decide to intervene.

With rumors of *rage fever* loose in Northgard, *The White Jarl* cannot dock directly in Union City for fear of spreading the plague. Before reaching the city a dragonship flying the flag of House Hammerfall pulls alongside and boards them. The dragonship bears automata soldiers accompanied by a priestess of Alnara who remains aboard their ship. Players who succeed on a DC 12 Knowledge (history) check or a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check recall that automata soldiers were key to fighting off the second Fel Horde, as they are immune to disease.



**Challenge**

The leader of the automata, a Skuld model named Orthan, questions the PCs and Captain Ellegard about their experiences in the North.

Orthan asks questions such as:

“Did you, or any of the refugees, travel further north than Fort Northgard?”

“Did you, or any of the refugees, come into contact with any of the barbarian tribes?”

“Did you, or any of the refugees, participate in violent conflict while in the North?”

Orthan listens courteously, and asks careful follow-up questions aimed at understanding the degree of risk that *The White Jarl* poses to Union City as a vector for *rage fever*. During the questions the scout Næfr becomes increasingly agitated. He constantly interrupts Orthan, demanding to be taken to Knight-Commander Ullsteinnr immediately. Næfr calls the plague blockade a waste of time, and shouts that every wasted minute will cost lives. Orthan patiently repeats that all messages must wait until the ship is checked for infection.

If the PCs choose not to intervene Næfr quickly becomes enraged by the unfailingly polite Orthan. The situation escalates until the scout strikes the automata, and is quickly held and restrained by two large Sigrún model automata.

**Plague Blockade CR 3**

**Skill Challenge** The PCs can attempt to calm the situation by convincing Næfr to be patient, such as by suggesting that answering Orthan's questions is the quickest way to get his urgent message to the Knight-Commander. Næfr seems irrationally angry, and it requires a DC 21 Diplomacy check to change his attitude.

**Reward** PCs who manage to avoid violence gain 800 XP, one honor point, and gain Orthan's confidence. Orthan confides in the PCs that Næfr may be suffering from the deadly disease.

Orthan's cool metal and glass eyes take everything in, and finally - inevitably - he declares that the ship poses risk of *rage fever* infection, and all passengers and crew will be quarantined on Northdown Island.

When it is clear that they will not dock at Union City, Næfr presses a scroll on Orthan, begging that it is delivered directly to Ullsteinnr. While Orthan takes the scroll, he is unable to guarantee when it will reach the Knight-Commander.

### ENCOUNTER 5 GREY'S REGARDS CR 6

Once *The White Jarl* arrives at Northdown Island the PCs escorted to a hurriedly built camp, huddled against the walls of a small fort, filled with soldiers and refugees from the North. The camp is guarded by more watchful automata. There is plenty of food and hot water, and acolytes of Alnara move amongst the crowded refugees healing wounds and speaking words of comfort.

The scout Næfr continues to ask to see Knight-Commander Ullsteinnr as soon as possible, claiming to bear dire news from Northgard. The camp guards repeat that his message has been relayed and ask for his patience. The sound of fights and raised voices swells and fades around the camp throughout the time the PCs stay there.

Thugs loyal to Grey Navash, a master assassin who despises Union City, have already infiltrated the quarantine camp, seeking to stir up unrest. When they see the PCs they realise quickly see an opportunity to eliminate their leader's enemies. Improvising, they incite Næfr's growing disease-spawned rage and paranoia and use him as a distraction to ambush the PCs.

Over the next day Næfr grows increasingly angry with conditions in the camp and the delay in delivering his message. He becomes surly

#### Questioning Orthan about *rage fever*.

The PCs can glean the following facts about *rage fever* by speaking to Orthan or an acolyte of Alnara in the quarantine camp.

- *Rage fever* is both a curse and a disease, one that slowly drives its sufferers mad, eventually turning those who succumb into raving cannibalistic barbarians.
- *Rage fever* is most often caught by those who fight existing sufferers, and is widespread among the Fel Hordes of the northern wastes.
- Only the automata are immune to the disease, which has no known cure. This makes the automata crucial in defending the City-States from the barbarian threat.

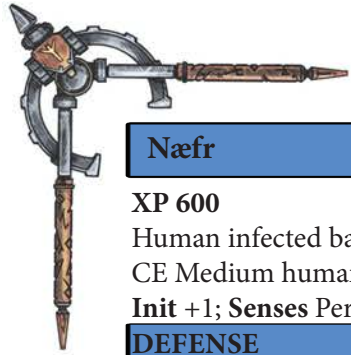
with PCs, and those who keep an eye on him may see him conferring with shady looking figures in dark corners of the camp. PCs who succeed on a DC 15 Sense Motive check notice that these whispered conversations involve numerous glances and at the PCs, and almost audible curses.

Eventually Næfr returns to confront the PCs. He is suddenly convinced that they are the cause of this quarantine. He demands they set him free, and accuses them of conspiracy and of being in league with the Fel Horde. As he rants, working himself up to a violent rage, three assassins ambush the PCs.



"Grey Navash sends his regards."





## Næfr

CR 2

XP 600

Human infected bard 1/fighter 1

CE Medium humanoid (augmented, human)

**Init** +1; **Senses** Perception +4

### DEFENSE

**AC** 16, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 15 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +1 natural)

**hp** 22 (2 HD+9)

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

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** improvised weapon +3 (1d6+3)

**Special Attacks** bardic performance 5 rounds/day

[countersong, distraction, fascinate (DC 11)],

inspire courage +1, *rage fever*

**Bard Spells Known** (CL 1<sup>st</sup>; concentration +2)

1st (2/day)—*charm person* (DC 12), *expeditious retreat*

0 (at will)—*ghost sound* (DC 11), *know direction*, *message*, *summon instrument*

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Næfr has no thought of tactics, he is irrationally enraged by what he sees as the PC's betrayal of his duty to deliver his message. His rage fever is included in his combat statistics above.

**During Combat** Næfr picks up a camp issued folding chair and charges the PCs wielding it as an improvised weapon. He focusses on the PC with whom he has had the friendliest interactions since they met.

**Morale** Næfr fights until killed or incapacitated.

### STATISTICS

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

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 12

**Feats** Catch off guard, Run, Toughness

**Skills** Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +5, Perception +4, Survival +4

**Languages** Low Common;

**Honor** 3

**SQ** bardic knowledge +1

**Combat Gear** *potion of endure elements*, *potion of hide from animals*, *boots of the winterlands*

**Other Gear** winter clothing, snowshoes, (3) torches, chain shirt, masterwork horn, 19 gp



## Grey's Rogues (3)

CR 2

XP 600

Male human rogue 3

CE Medium Humanoid (human)

**Init** +3; **Senses** Perception +5

### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 14 (+4 armor, +3 Dex)

**hp** 29 (3d8+11)

**Fort** +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

**Defensive Abilities** blade sense, evasion

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** frost-forged steel dagger +6 (1d4+1/19-20) or mas-

terwork cold iron dagger +6 (1d4+1/19-20)

**Ranged** dagger +5 (1d4+1/19-20)

**Special Attacks** +2d8 with daggers (+2d4 with other weapons)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The rogues ambush the PCs from behind nearby tents, waiting for Næfr to distract them then throwing daggers before wading into combat.

**During Combat** The rogues attempt to flank and sneak attack as many of the PCs as possible, focusing specifically on spell casters and clerics.

**Morale** If two of the rogues fall, the third flees, using his *oil of darkness* to try and cover his tracks.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 13, **Dex** 17 **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 16

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Step Up, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +9, Appraise +3, Bluff +5, Climb +7, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +5, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +7, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +3, Linguistics +3, Perception +5, Sense Motive +5,

Sleight of Hand +7 (+8 to conceal a light blade), Stealth +9, Swim +5, Use Magic Device +4

**Languages** Low Common, High Common; **Honor** 2

**SQ** hidden blade, rogue talents (finesse rogue)

**Combat Gear** mwk cold iron dagger, mwk cold-forged dagger, *oil of darkness*, *potion of cure light wounds*

**Other Gear** +1 studded leather armor, (5) daggers, 50 ft. of silk rope, black clothing, and 33 gp



If Næfr survives he is restrained, healed, and taken away by the acolytes of Alnara.

# THE RUNE OF HOPE

## Bringing Bad News...

Nearly a day and a half passes before Næfr's pleas are heeded, and time stretches long amid the constant squabbles of the quarantine camp. Eventually Orthan appears and summons the PCs to follow him, leading them to a tower in the nearby fort.

*As you enter a sparsely furnished room atop the tower, Knight-Commander's Ullsteinnr rises right away and shakes each of your hands. He listens as you tell your tale and thanks you for your support, his face stern but pleased. Then the Knight-Commander produces Næfr's scroll, his demeanor instantly changing.*

*"Dire news from Northgard. Commander Drothgar has been infected with rage fever, the cursed disease of the North, as have many of his officers. His daughter, Ice Keeper Issadora, defends the fort as best she can. I'll mobilize support to break the siege, but we need time to gather our troops and allies. If we don't contain the disease, and fast, we might lose more than just Northgard."*

Ullsteinnr explains that Union City is in a state of panic fueled by rumors and dire prophecies. His men are stretched manning the quarantine and keeping the peace. Lacking better options, Knight-Commander Erik Ullsteinnr offers to release the PCs out of quarantine to look for anything they can find out about *rage fever* and how it might be cured. He acknowledges that he is taking a terrible risk by allowing them into the city when they may be infected, and asks them to take special care not to get in any fights while among the populace. If he's worked with the PCs before, he instantly doubles their reward and pays them on the spot, telling them the city will be in their debt for such a great, honorable service. If he hasn't worked with the PCs before, he offers them 250 gp each for their service and gives them three days time to complete his request. They should report to the emergency headquarters in Union City's docks when they have something to report.

If the PCs ask Ullsteinnr where to start looking for a cure, the Knight-Commander is brusque. *"If I knew that I wouldn't need you. Try a library?"*

## Meeting the Knight-Commander

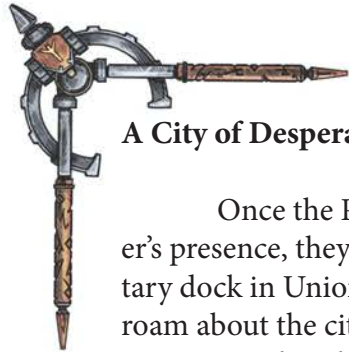
If GMs are running this adventure immediately following *Into the Pale Tower*, the PCs are no strangers to the Knight-Commander and meeting him, even if Næfr has been killed, is a fairly straight forward affair. He'll be saddened by the loss, but otherwise understanding, especially with Orthan recounting Næfr's behavior. If Næfr still lives, Orthan will have the PCs accompany him to ensure the Knight-Commander's safety, with Næfr in shackles.

If GMs are running this adventure following *The Ælven Agenda* (or as a stand alone adventure), this is probably the PCs first chance to meet the hardened cavalier, who regards them as heroes - especially if they saved the refugees in the first encounter.

## Honorable Acts

One of the central theme in *Rhune: Dawn of Twilight* is the concept of honor and, because of this, certain assumptions are made - notably that PCs will help NPCs and, in general, fight the good fight. Some, however, will not. In this case, it's advisable to leave it to the more honorable PCs in the party to convince the less honorable members to take up this task. If the whole group, however, feels forced, look for other ways to involve them. Consider, for instance, skipping the library encounter altogether and several days later, having a family member who is currently working with one of the Glitterfane missionaries contact the PCs, inviting the PCs to visit with them. Or, if you're using the faction missions from the previous adventure, have one of the PCs' factions contact them and request help, instead.





## A City of Desperation

Once the PCs leave the Knight-Commander's presence, they are taken by fast boat to a military dock in Union City's harbor, and set free to roam about the city. There is a good chance, having just returned to the city, they'll want to upgrade and repair their gear, as well as spend some of their treasure.

A DC 10 Diplomacy skill check to gather information reveals that the **Mikill Bókafnið** – Union City's oldest library – holds gathered information from many famous explorers of the north. It's easy enough to learn where the Mikill Bókafnið is located.

A DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that the glitterfane, beloved of Alnara, are famed for their healing abilities. A further DC 20 Diplomacy skill check to gather information allows the PCs to learn of a notable glitterfane missionary who lives in Union City tending to the poor.

### Exploring the Library

The Mikill Bókafnið is a massive, three-winged structure that stands two stories high. The base of the building is constructed of large, white and grey stones. An old, iron-wrought fence surrounds the whole affair. Two runestones, each stained a deep blue color, flank the main gate.

The Mikill Bókafnið is one of Union City's older structures, a gift from the dwarves of Redwall to the people of the city. It houses most of the city's important documents, including nearly all of its official records. As a result, the whole structure is guarded by special detachment of soldiers who are known as the Brennagard. A small circle of dwarven and human archivists manage the library, which is open daily from dawn until dusk. Although any of these archivists will offer to help the PCs, odd requests (such as information on *rage fever*) are



## Union City, the Struggle Within

As the PCs travel through Union City they notice that the whole city is shrouded in fear and dismay. Rumors from Northgard mingle with the lies of Black Hand provocateurs and hollow official reassurances. New tales are spun wherever veterans, merchants and artisans huddle round dwindling supplies of food and ale in the city's inns and taverns.

### Alert PCs might notice:

- Tense guards stand watch outside the tightly shuttered windows and doors of graceful mansions in the Golden District.
- Streets leading to the Underforge blocked by makeshift barricades of carts and furniture
- Workers throughout the city scurry home with eyes down and cloaks drawn round faces
- The markets sell little fresh food now, and prices for a meal in an inn have doubled
- There are no cure potions for sale at any price without a personal connection to a priest or alchemist

### In addition they might hear the following rumors:

- Northgard has fallen and a horde of Fel Barbarians heads for the city on ships of carved ice - **FALSE**
- Clan Hammerfall has abandoned the city and fled to Redwall - **FALSE** (though some of the younger members have travelled to Redwall, as they do every year)
- Northgard still stands, but under siege, and could fall at any time - **TRUE**
- Automata squads are snatching people from the streets for dire sacrifice in the city harbor - **FALSE**
- Automata squads are holding all returning soldiers and civilians from Northgard - **TRUE**
- The engineers and clockwork elves of the Underforge have blockaded their district and are stockpiling weapons and food - **TRUE**
- The Black Hand have assassinated the Knight-Commander and thrown the military into disarray - **FALSE**
- The glitterfane cannot be trusted; they have been spreading disease to drive up the demand for their healing abilities - **FALSE**

directed to the lead librarian, **Herr Sieggir** (male dwarven bard 2/expert 5).

Herr Sieggir is an affable old dwarf whose face has started to go grey, a clear indicator that the stone-touch has started to set in. Still, he's very mobile and happily climbs the countless ladders that are found throughout the whole place. When the PCs approach him, he's on such a ladder, carefully pushing in a large, leather bound book.

"Ah, yes, good day. How can I help you?" He asks as he quickly descends the ladder and turns to face your group.

Unless the PCs are particularly rude or obnoxious, he listens intently to their story and, when they're done, he nods.

*"We have very little information on the more, shall we say, odd aspects of the North, I'm afraid. What little information we do have comes from expeditionary journals we've locked away in the basement. You're welcome to venture down and look through them, but you'll need a key-ward, otherwise the guardians might attempt to – restrain you."*

## ENCOUNTER 6 LOOKING FOR A CURE CR 6

After speaking with the PCs, Herr Sieggir fetches the aforementioned key-wards and gives one to each pair of PCs. The key-ward is a small, bronze disk with runic engravings. If PCs examine the key-ward or cast *detect magic*, they discover that it radiates moderate abjuration magic. PCs that make a successful Spellcraft skill check (DC 18) identify the spell *nondetection*, which is the principle spell component for the item. Before departing, Herr Sieggir warns the PCs to stay in pairs, as the key-wards can only protect the bearer of the ward and someone who is close by. If a PC wanders off to far without a ward, the library's guardians will activate.

If questioned about the guardians, Herr Siegger remarks, *'Oh, you'll know them when you see them. They are hard to miss.'*

The PCs are then directed to the northern

wing's basement, a massive cellar that is thirty feet wide and double that in length.

*After descending a musty, damp spiral stairwell, you enter a massive underground library. Like much of Union City, the library enjoys electric lighting and those lights, in the cool darkness of the basement, flicker here and there, forcing the shadows to dance. The smell of cinnamon mixes with the smell of old paper.*

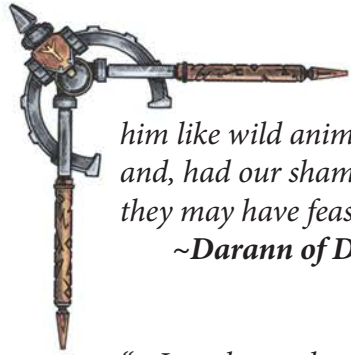
The basement contains shelves that run from floor to ceiling on all of its walls, as well as a single shelving unit that bisects the room down its length. Every fifteen feet, statues of dwarven heroes, each of which holds a massive maul, guard the bookshelves. Although this wing is lit, the electric lights do not put off much light (consider the lighting to be dim. Unless the PCs use their own light source, they suffer a -2 penalty to all Perception checks (due to the poor lighting).

### Searching the Library

Searching the library takes approximately an hour, per person, per 10 ft. section. Each time a PC searches a new section, have them make a Perception skill check (DC 25) to see if they discover the expeditionary journals that Herr Sieggir mentioned. Initially, there is only a 5% chance that the individual PC discovers the correct title they need, but this percentage increases by 4% for each additional 10 ft. section they search. As the PCs near the end of the wing, they should easily discover the missing journals. PCs that elect to take a 20 immediately find the journals, but doing so takes them collectively 2d4 hours. With the journals in hand (there are approximately a dozen small journals), each PC may make Knowledge (history), Knowledge (geography), or Knowledge (arcana) roll, adding a +4 competence bonus to the appropriate check. A successful skill check (DC 20) in any of the above areas reveals the following references:

*"...Sir Nickolas had fought well, but they had overcome him, circling him and stabbing at him with their long, wicked spears. They appeared to be toying with him, and when he finally fell, they fell on him, tearing away at*





him like wild animals. We could do nothing for him and, had our shaman not shielded us with his magic, they may have feasted on us, too.”

~Darann of Daraheim, *The 2nd of Waldma*, 223 YUR

“...It took two days, but we were finally able to recover and burn Sir Nickolas’s remains. Our priest of Alnara, the glitterfane Alexia, stated that she believed the diseases affecting the barbarians was reversible, but only if they swore off their cannibalistic ways.”

~Darann of Daraheim, *The 4th of Waldma*, 223 YUR

“... We managed to capture one of the barbarians. It snarled and swore and spat at us, and while we had it in captivity, it never rested. We finally had to put it down. Alexia had remarked that, were we in the west, we might have submersed it in Alnara’s Chalice and reversed the process. Sadly, the risk of transporting such a creature would be too great. Still, I suspect the regenerative magic of Alnara’s beloved may hold some secret to halting such a odd and deadly affliction.”

~Darann of Daraheim, *The 9th of Waldma*, 223 YUR

The rest of the journal details the areas of flora, fauna, weather patterns, and notable landmarks. Unless the PCs need any nudging, it should be fairly obvious that seeking out the glitterfane is probably the best course of action.



At any point while exploring the subterranean library the PCs pass by two of the guardian statues, which activate and attack them.

Unlike the other statues, which honor the PCs’ key-wards, these statues are malfunctioning and treat the PCs as threats.



## Malfunctioning Caryatid Columns (2) CR 3

XP 800

N Medium construct

Init -1; Senses darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision; Perception +0

### DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 8, flat-footed 14 (-1 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 36 (3d10+20)

Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +1

DR 5/-; Immune construct traits, magic

Defensive Abilities shatter weapons

### OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk heavy maul +8 (1d10+6/x2)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The statue waits until a PC steps within range, then attacks.

**During Combat** Each round of combat, immediately preceding its action, roll percentile dice for each dwarven statue. On a roll of 01-25%, the statue acts normally; on a roll of 26-50%, the statue stops and readjusts its grip on its maul; on a roll of 51-75%, the statue attacks itself, dealing 1d10+6 points of damage to

it; on a roll of 76%-100%, the statue attacks the nearest creature (including the other statue).

**Morale** The statues fight until disabled.

### STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 9, Con

-, Int -, Wis 11,

Cha 1

Base Atk +3;

CMB +7; CMD

16 (cannot be

disarmed)

SQ statue, malfunctioning

ing

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

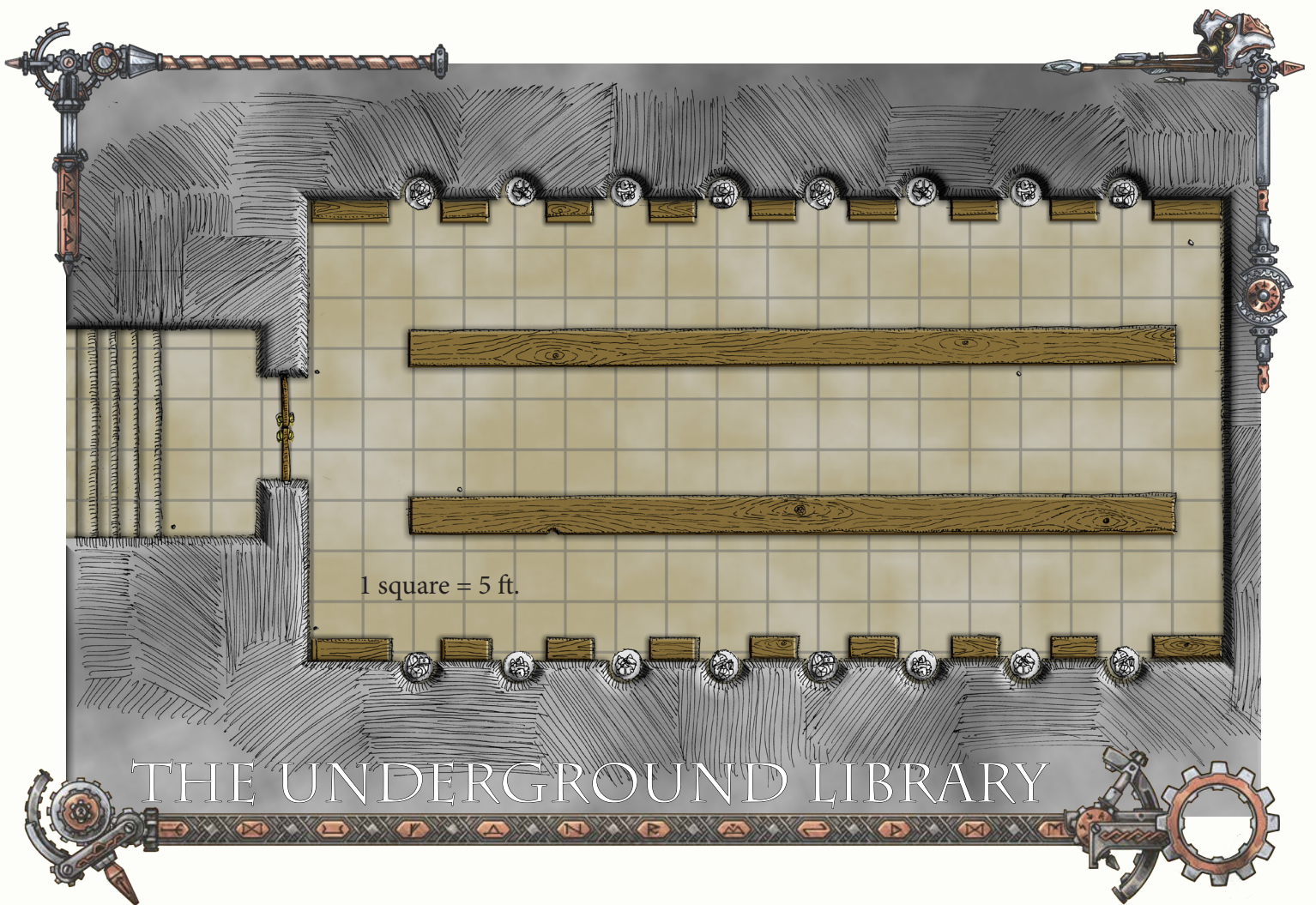
**Organization**

solitary, pair, or colonnade (6-11)

**Treasure** standard

(plus a masterwork heavy maul)





## THE UNDERGROUND LIBRARY

### Special Conditions

Because of the location, GMs should pay particular attention to the PCs use of area effect spells, specifically spells that do fire damage (it is a library, after all). PCs that wantonly damage the library or the books within will earn Herr Sieggir's ill will, although he begrudgingly accepts such losses. However, PCs that take care to destroy or disable the malfunctioning guardians without damaging the library or its contents earn his favor, gaining a single point of honor as a result. Because of this limitation, the CR of this encounter has been adjusted upward by 1.

Darann's journal should provide sufficient clues that the next step in the PCs investigation involves speaking directly with a glitterfane. If the PCs do not realise this, then Ullsteinnr suggests it when they report back to him at the Docks. At this point a DC 10 Diplomacy skill check to gather information reveals the residence of **Bri the Forgiven**, a glitterfane missionary.


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### ENCOUNTER 7 MEETING THE MISSIONARY CR 3

While a small population of glitterfane dwell in Union City, few are missionaries. **Bri** is believed to be the first to witness to the the city; to many, he is a single star in an otherwise dark sky. Bri resides in a simple house in the Shambles, a poverty stricken district of stone tenements in the south of the city. Known as **Bri the Forgiven**, his home is often surrounded by scores of the city's poorest citizens, begging him for aid and healing.

When the PCs reach his house, the usual crowd of poor supplicants are riled up, pushing and shouting. Someone screams "*He's dead! Bri's been murdered*" and suddenly people flee in all directions. Witnesses, if questioned, describe a group of three hooded figures who pushed past the crowd, entered the missionary's home, and then left moments later at a dead run.






In fact, Bri has just survived an assassination attempt by agents of the Black Hand. An accomplished illusionist, the glitterfane is hiding, invisible, within his home.

*The glitterfane missionary's house is small and simple. Plain white walls hold no treasures or icons, only a small picture of a chalice surrounded by stars. The floor holds only a bed, a large wooden chest, and the corpse of a glitterfane in rent white robes, pale blood spreading across the floor.*

Bri is small even for a glitterfane, at only 4 ft. tall. He wears grey homespun clothes and his wings glitter in colors of the sea - aqua and blue and hints of emerald. PCs who interact with the corpse, perhaps looking to provide healing or investigate the murder, gain a DC 16 Will save to disbelieve the illusion. PCs who investigate using magic may detect a moderate aura of illusion, and this gives a +4 bonus to their saving throw. Finally, PCs can hear the sound of Bri's wings as he hovers invisible near the ceiling with a DC 20 Perception check.

If the PCs do not discover him, Bri listens to their conversation before deciding whether to reveal himself. He is encouraged by talk of help, healing, or concern for his safety. He is discouraged by raised voices and talk of violence or revenge. However, if he feels safe he reveals himself and asks the PCs to help him seek out safety. The PCs might suggest the watch, but ultimately the watch should send them back to Knight-Commander Ullsteinnr for protection.



If asked about healing diseases, he reveals that the glitterfane do possess Alnara's Chalice, is a great relic said to cure any disease or remove any ailment. While he has never seen it, he believes it can be found in the capital city of Caol, which lies many weeks travel to the west on the Glittering Isle. Bri believes, with simple faith in Alnara's mercy, that the Chalice can cure *rage fever* and save Northgard.

Alternatively, if the PCs seem violent Bri does not reveal himself. The PCs can still find useful



### Chasing Rogues...

The main thread of this adventure assumes that PCs rush to heal or save the glitterfane missionary, in line with their primary objectives. If the PCs decide to chase the fleeing figures, they find the presumed murderers are already out of sight. However, if the GM wishes, dedicated PCs may eventually track down the trio, via magic or a series of appropriate Diplomacy and Survival skill checks, to a hideout in the Underforge. If confronted, the trio (use the stats for Grey's Rogues on page 11) fight fiercely, but surrender before being killed; ultimately, they know nothing other than their orders were to kill the glitterfane missionary, which they believe they did. They assume the purpose of the assassination is to stop him tending to the needy and to increase panic among the poor of Union City.



information by searching Bri's house. A DC 10 Perception check discovers a glitterfane holy text - *The Three Fold Path* - on the chest by Bri's bed. This text mentions the relics of great healing and purity held in Caol for the sake of all glitterfane.

If the PCs discover Bri and escort him safely to Knight-Commander Ullsteinnr they gain 1 point of honor and 400 story XP each, in addition to 200 XP for discovering the whereabouts of the glitterfane's healing artifacts.

## ENCOUNTER 8 BATTLE AT THE DOCKS CR 7

Knight-Commander Ullsteinnr congratulates the PCs on their discoveries, but on learning that their only hope is several weeks voyage away in Caol, his face grows grim.

*There is only one hope. To travel so far and so fast, we must use every tool at our disposal. I have sent to Damas for transport - their airship is our best hope now. You have two days, I suggest you prepare well. In the meantime my men will try and maintain order in the city.*

Two increasingly tense days later, as violence and fear spread throughout the streets, the PCs are escorted to a dragon tower near the docks to meet the airship - *The Sun's Gem*. Ullsteinnr bids them good luck and farewell at the base of the tower, explaining that *The Sun's Gem* is loaded and the crew are waiting.

A narrow rope bridge leads from the top of the tower to the tethered airship. As the PCs cross, Gæric "Dreadgear" Gorem - sent by Grey Navash - strikes from ambush. He immediately unleashes several spells against the PCs, while two thugs disguised as crewmen start trying to untether the airship. Sounds of fighting rise from further aboard the ship, as loyal crew fight to stop the saboteurs from sabotaging the main balloon.

### Gæric "Dreadgear" Gorrem CR 4

XP 1200

Male clockwork elven wizard 5

NE Medium humanoid (ash elf)

**Init** +5; **Senses** Perception +7

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 19

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

**hp** 20 (5d6-2)

**Fort** +0, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5

**Weakness** light sensitivity

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** Mwk rapier +6 (1d6+1/18-20) or dagger +5 (1d4+1/19-20)

**Ranged** dagger +5 (1d4+1/19-20)

**Special Attacks** ancient enemies

(+1 to hit and damage ælves)

**Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5<sup>th</sup>; concentration +8); 6/day— *create gear*

**Wizard Spells Prepared** (CL 5<sup>th</sup>; concentration +8)

3<sup>rd</sup> — *disruptive glitterdust* (DC 15), *spiked pit*<sup>APG</sup> (DC 16), *summon monster III*

2<sup>nd</sup> — *anti-summoning shield*<sup>DHH</sup>, *familiar figment*<sup>AA</sup>, *glitterdust* (DC 15), *levitate*

1<sup>st</sup> — *burning disarm* (DC 14), *color spray* (DC 14), *mage armor*, *shield*, *sleep* (DC 14)

**0 (at will)** — *daze* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *open/close* (DC 13)

**Opposition schools** evocation, necromancy

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Dreadgear casts *mage armor* and *shield* (from his wand) before entering melee combat.

**During Combat** Dreadgear delights in disarming foes in combat, casting *burning disarm* to accomplish his goal.

He also targets heavily armored targets with *color spray* and *sleep*, hoping to take them out of combat. He targets casters with his *disruptive glitterdust* early in combat if possible. He keeps his familiar out of combat.

**Morale** Dreadgear flees if reduced to 5 hit points or less, sending his familiar away in the opposite direction (hopefully distracting attackers to give him more time to escape).

#### STATISTICS

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

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 17

**Feats** Disruptive Spell, Craft Magic Arms & Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Martial Weapon Proficiency, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +3, Appraise +7, Bluff +3, Climb +1, Craft (clockworks) +13, Escape Artist +3, Fly +8, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (clockworks, planes) +9, Knowledge (local) +7, Linguistics +7, Perception +7, Ride +3, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +11, Stealth +3, Survival +1, Swim +1

**Languages** Clockspeak, Giant, High Common, Low Common, Low Dwarven, Low Elven; **Honor** 8

**SQ** arcane bond (iron cobra), keen senses, nature's curse, shadowed blood (10 hit points), summoner's charm

**Combat Gear** *flask of alchemist fire* (x2), dagger, mwk rapier.

**Other Gear** *boots of the cat*, *ring of protection* +1, *wand of haunting mists* (9 charges), *wand of shield* (11 charges), *scroll of darkness*, *scroll of true strike*, *scroll of summon monster II*, spellbook, spell component pouch, traveler's outfit, 84 gp.





## Grey's Elite Saboteurs (3)

CR 2

XP 600

Human slayer (sniper) 3

NE Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +2; **Senses** Perception +5

### DEFENSE

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

**hp** 25 (3d10+3)

**Fort** +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +0

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** dagger +4 (1d4+1/19-20) or

handaxe +4 (1d6+1/×3)

**Ranged** dwarven stinger (pistol) +5 (1d4/×3)

**Special Attacks** sneak attack +1d6, studied target +1

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Two of the elite saboteurs, working in tandem, study the PCs from the very top of the Dragon Tower (in the sniper's nest). When they attack, they gain a +2 to hit on the first attack (and possibly gain sneak attack damage, as well). The third saboteur, aboard *The Sun's Gem*, tries to cut the mooring line.

**During Combat** The saboteurs focus on lightly armored PCs, immediately firing on anyone who attacks either Dreadgear or their compatriot cutting the mooring lines.

**Moral** The saboteurs fight until below 5 hit points, at which point they surrender.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 12, **Dex** 15, **Con** 10, **Int** 11, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 16

**Feats** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms)<sup>UC</sup>,

Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot

**Traits** armor expert, criminal

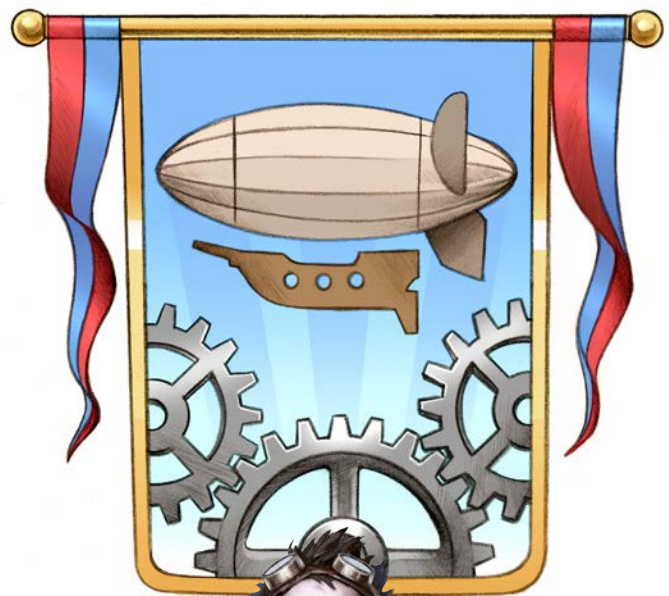
**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Bluff +3, Climb +6, Disguise +3, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (local) +4, Perception +5, Sense Motive +4, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +8, Survival +3, Swim +5

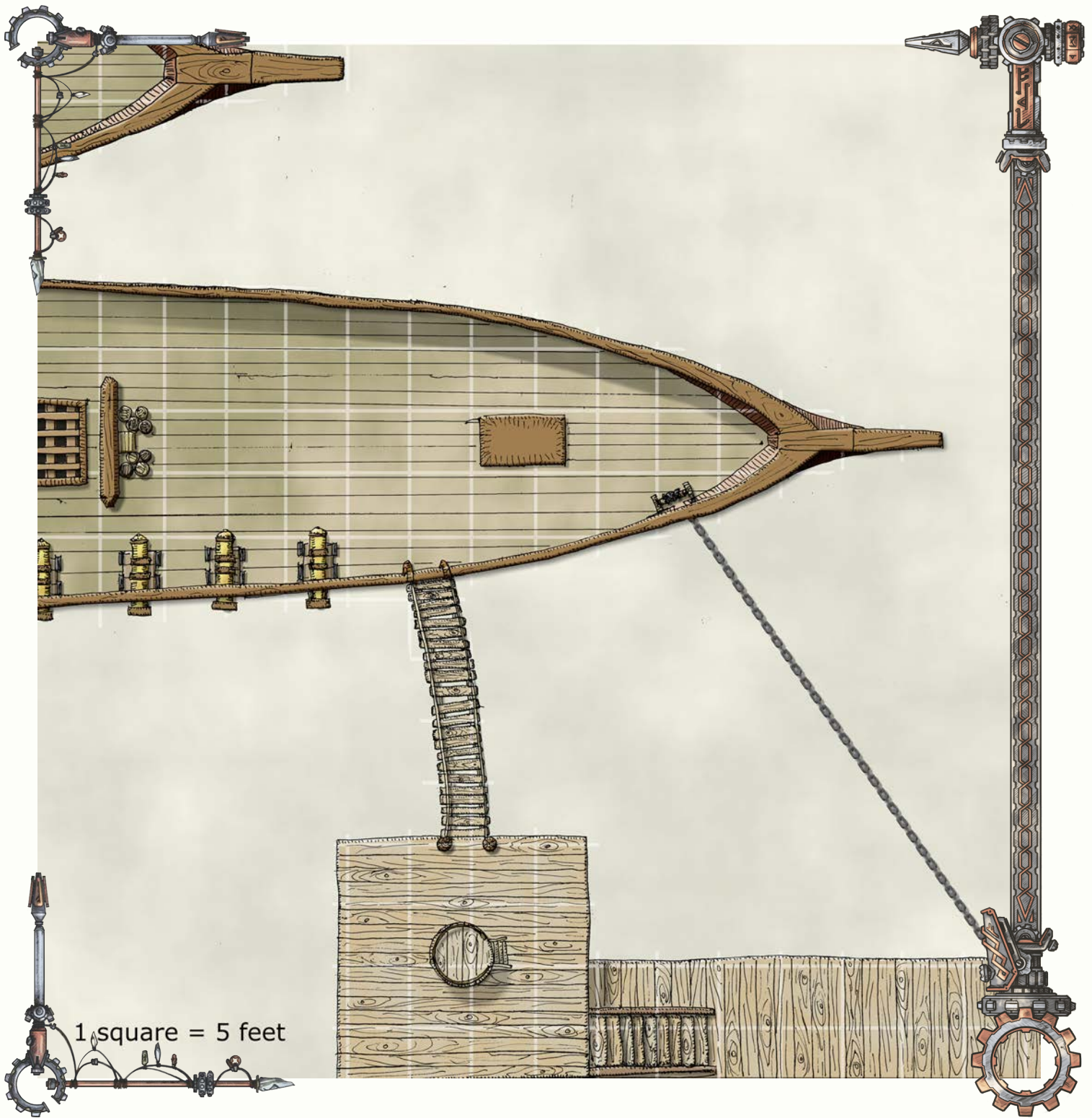
**Languages** Low Common; **Honor** 6

**SQ** accuracy, deadly sniper +3

**Other Gear** studded leather, (2) daggers, handaxe, dwarven stinger (pistol)

<sup>RCG</sup> with 12 normal rounds, belt pouch, flint and steel, masterwork backpack<sup>APG</sup>, trail rations (5), waterskin, 7 gp





### Special Conditions

The rope bridge is only 20 ft. long, but it is narrow, unstable, and very high (about 300 ft. above the ground). Creatures can advance at a rate of 5 ft. per round safely, but to move faster than that requires an Acrobatics check to avoid risk of falling. The DC is 15 +5 per additional 5 ft. moved, and failure requires a DC 12 Reflex save to grab hold of the bridge, falling prone.

20

### Aftermath

The battle aboard the ship ends after 6 rounds, as the loyal crew overcome Grey's thugs. At this point Dreadgear flees if he has not already done so.

When the players defeat Grey Navash's ambush and board the ship, they find the deck in disarray, with many of the





# INTERMISSION

## ONWARD TO THE BLESSED ISLE



### ABOARD THE SUN'S GEM

*The pride of Damas city's finest engineering, The Sun's Gem is a magnificent sight. The prototype airship hangs under a dirigible balloon over 160 ft. in length, and boasts accommodations for both a robust crew and well over 60 passengers, all of whom enjoy enclosed, and even private, quarters.*

*Large brass and steel rotors - fixed outside of the main balloon - drive the ship relentlessly through the sky, powered by a large stormtech engine below the deck. Although primarily used as for reconnaissance and courier tasks, large deck mounted firearms stand on both the starboard and port sides, ready to protect the ship; it commonly carries a complement of alchemical bombs to support ground operations, as well.*

*The deck and cabins are plain but finely crafted, with the sigil of Damas worked into subtle decorations on the railings and doors.*

### HISTORY

*After nearly four years of steady work, the Clockwork Accord launched The Gem of Damas, Midgard's very first airship in early 391 YUR. Its triumph was short-lived, as two ballast tanks ruptured, causing it to crash after barely a month of service.*

*Ten years later, after seven years of construction, the engineers of Damas launched The Sun's Gem. Massive and sporting a unique, three-hulled design, observers agreed it exceeded its predecessor in grace, beauty, and buoyancy. In 359 YUR, it was outfitted with almost twenty dwarven*

*cannons, and now, after 292 years of service, The Sun's Gem has become an iconic symbol of the city, and an indomitable force in its foreign policy. The vigilance of the Damassian Air Marshals has prevented sabotage, and the crew has kept the airship flying through numerous engagements and actions.*

*It is the only airship in Midgard, as the Clockwork Accord has been unable to replicate its early success. They keep this particular fact a secret, and claim they have needed no other airship.*

## The Gem of Damas

Colossal Air vehicle

**Squares** 144 (Three hulls, each 20 ft. by 60 ft.);

**Cost** 150,000 gp

### DEFENSE

**AC** 2; **Hardness** 5

**hp** 1440 (720)

**Base Save** +0

### OFFENSE

**Maximum Speed** 150 ft.; **Acceleration** 30 ft.

**Weapons** Up to 18 Large direct-fire cannons in banks of 6 positioned on the port and starboard sides of the airship, and 3 Large direct-fire siege engines at the forward

and aft sides of the ship. The cannons may only fire out the sides of the ship

they are positioned on, but may fire down.

**Attack** ram 8d8

**CMB** +8; **CMD** 18

### DRIVE

**Propulsion** current (air; 120 squares of dirigible, hp 450) and magic

**Driving Check** none (magic)

**Forward** Facing the ship's forward

**Driving Device** magic item

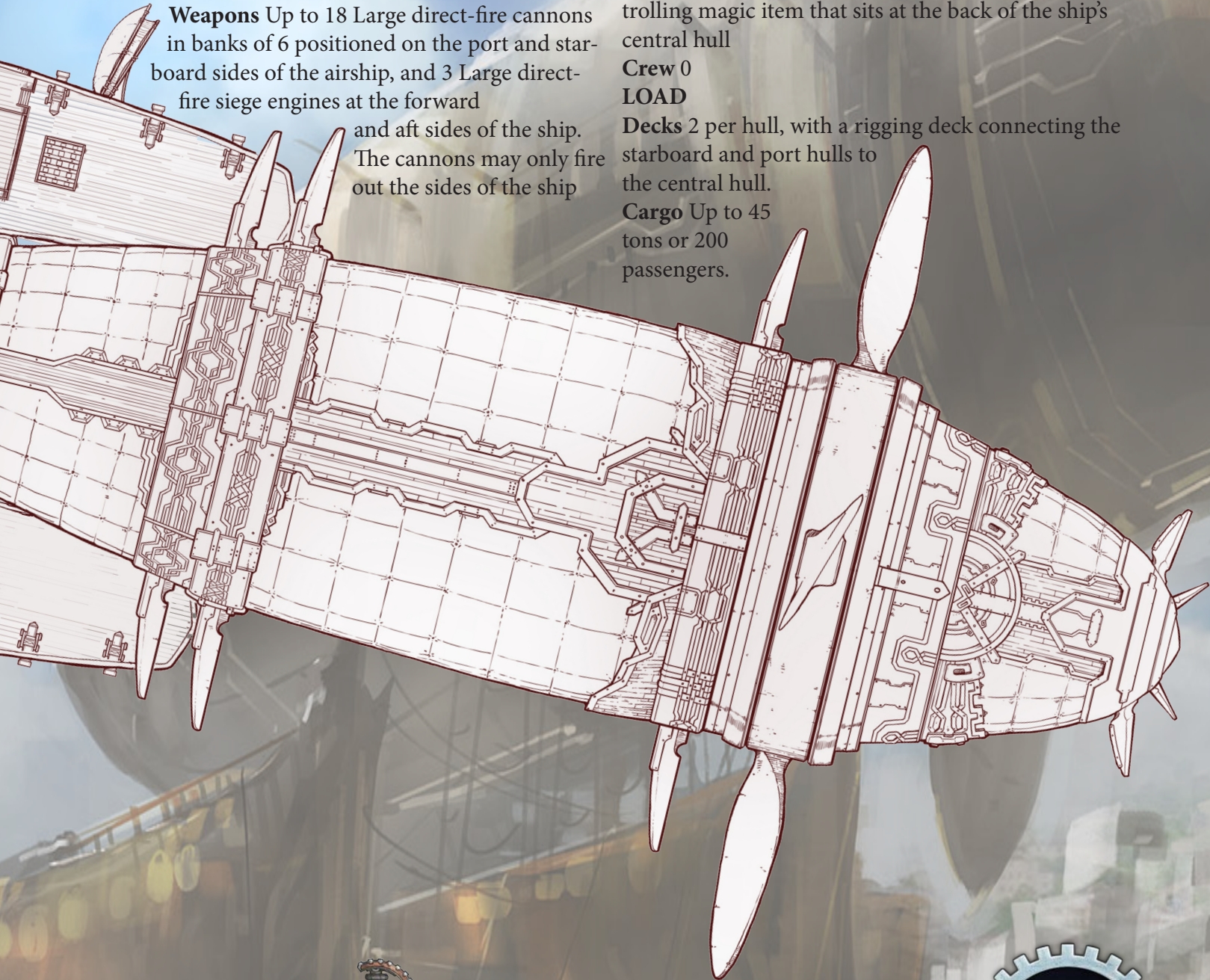
**Driving Space** the nine squares around the controlling magic item that sits at the back of the ship's central hull

**Crew** 0

### LOAD

**Decks** 2 per hull, with a rigging deck connecting the starboard and port hulls to the central hull.

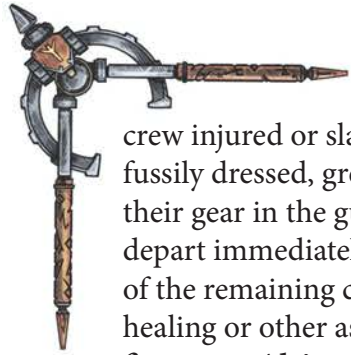
**Cargo** Up to 45 tons or 200 passengers.



# THE SUN'S GEM

THE JEWEL OF DAMAS





crew injured or slain. **Captain Ferruc**, tall, pale, and fussily dressed, greets them and directs them to stow their gear in the guest quarters. He explains that they depart immediately, and asks them to please stay out of the remaining crew's way until then. PCs that offer healing or other assistance are directed to speak with **first mate Alric**, who organizes a makeshift infirmary in the depleted crew quarters.

### Remaining Crew

The crew is down to less than half strength but Ferruc spares no time to take on more men and is wary of lingering in Union City and facing another attack.

**Captain Ferruc Khalent** (clockwork elf wizard 5/ aristocrat 3)

**First mate Alric Stonnar** (human fighter 5)

**Chief Engineer Uttar Briggsdottir** (dwarven alchemist 4/ expert 2)

8 x **Riggers** (clockwork elven warrior 3/ expert 1)

8 x **Gunners** (dwarven warrior 4)

## ENCOUNTER 9 GREY'S FINAL SURPRISE CR 6

The thugs disguised as crew also smuggled some extra supplies onto the airship, in the form of two small barrels, each containing a clockwork swarm. The PCs may discover this sabotage early if they capture and interrogate one of Grey's Thugs, or if they think to thoroughly search the cargo hold at any point. The extra barrels can be spotted as out of place with a DC 20 Perception check. Alric, who knows where every last item should be stowed, grants a +4 competence bonus to discover them if he accompanies the searchers. When discovered the swarms activate immediately and attack the closest living creatures.

If not discovered the swarms activate one day into the journey. Their barrels have been carefully placed in the hold directly next to the engines, and they begin chewing through the wooden wall with single

minded construct determination. The first notice the ship gets is when a junior crewmember dashes out of the engine room, yelling "*Bugs! Bugs in the walls! Bugs are eating the engine!*"

The swarms deal 1 point of sabotage to the ship every round from discovery until they are destroyed.

### Clockwork Swarm (2)

CR 4

hp 42

### TACTICS

**During Combat:** The clockwork swarms focus on destroying the engines, but stop to fight any PCs who attack them. If provided more than one target, the clockwork swarms focus on automata or other constructs.

**Morale** The clockwork swarms fight until destroyed.

### Aftermath

For each turn that a swarm's area includes the engine it inflicts 1 point of sabotage damage. Each point of sabotage can be repaired with a DC 15 Craft (clockworks) or Craft (engineering) skill check, each taking approximately 4 hours. For every 5 points by which the DC is beaten the time decreases by 1 hour. While Engineer Uttar is capable of repairing the engine, she appreciates any assistance from capable PCs. See the Sabotage sidebar on page 27 for more info.

### The Journey

At its average speed of 50 miles per day, *The Sun's Gem* should reach The Glittering Isle in just under a week. Captain Ferruc is confident that there will be no delays - though observant characters see Alric make a small wry smile at this optimistic asser-

## ENCOUNTER 10 BATTLE FOR THE SUN'S GEM CR 10

More trouble arrives after two days of clear skies and fair flight. A dark shape rises towards *The Sun's Gem* from the south. As it draws closer keen eyes perceive that it is a large dark bird, flapping steadily and on course to intercept the airship in the next few minutes. Players who are actively keeping lookout may spot the approaching bird with a DC 20 Perception check, and give five minutes warning.





Otherwise the lookout calls an alert just one minute before the giant bird arrives.

When the players or the lookout alert Alric, he takes a long look at the bird and then curses fluently, *“By Oridynn’s weeping eye — it’s a Ghulsvann flown north from the Ghoul Stone blight! Gunners to your stations. We need to drive the cursed thing off — it could rip this ship apart.”*

## Creatures

The **ghulsvann** is a huge black swan gorged on necromantic magic, usually found far to the south around Witch Hill and the Ghoul Stone. Dark humanoid shapes cling to it like fleas. As the ghulsvann closes with the airship the figures launch themselves at the ship on gliders made from bone and giant black feathers.

The ghulsvann starts 200 ft. away and closes by 20 ft. per round. The characters and airship crew have 10 rounds to drive the ghulsvann off, by dealing 60 hp of damage. Both of the deck mounted cannons can fire on it in any one turn. PCs can take over one or both of the guns, but receive a -4 penalty if they are not proficient with siege weapons.

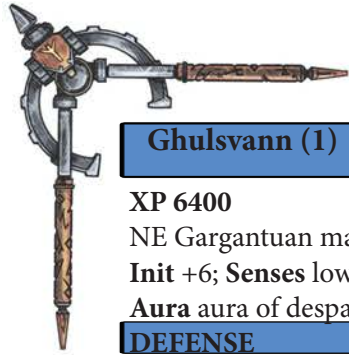
On round 3 and round 6, a flight of 3 **whisper ghouls** launches from the ghulsvann on gliders. They can be shot out of the air in the turn they launch, with a -2 penalty to hit due to their speed.

Otherwise they land on deck - the first wave lands near the deck-mounted guns, while the second wave targets the engine.

Obeying standing orders, Captain Ferruc barricades himself inside the wheelhouse using *arcane lock* and takes evasive measures.

If the PCs successfully drive off the ghulsvann, award them experience as if they defeated a CR 7 enemy (3200 XP). Award experience for defeated ghouls as normal.





## Ghulsvann (1)

CR 9

XP 6400

NE Gargantuan magical animal

**Init** +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +15

**Aura** aura of despair

### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, **touch** 8, **flat-footed** 20 (+2 Dex,+10 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 120 (16d8+48)

**Fort** +13, **Ref** +14, **Will** +8

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft. fly 80 ft (average)

**Melee** bite +17 (2d8+9/19-20)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The ghulsvann takes no special actions before combat.

**During Combat** The ghulsvann flies toward the airship, making passes to deposit the whispering ghouls clinging to it. Once all of the ghouls are gone, it closes to attack anyone doing it serious damage.

**Morale** The ghulsvann is accustomed to reigning terror on others, and as a result, is rarely challenged. If the ghulsvann suffers more than 60 points of damage, it flees immediately, diving toward the earth to gain speed before leveling off and flying away.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 28, **Dex** 15, **Con** 17, **Int** 6, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +25; **CMD** 37

**Feats** Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (talon)

**Skills** Fly +7, Perception +15

**Languages** understands low common and Val; doesn't speak. **Honor** —

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Aura of Despair (Su)** The ghulsvann constantly radiates a palpable aura of desolation. All living creatures within 30 ft. of the creature must make a DC 21 Will save to avoid being shaken. A successful save means the character is immune to this effect for 24 hours.

**Screaming Curse (Su)** Once per day the ghulsvann can scream a curse at an enemy within 100 ft. The target feels a crushing sense of apathy and despair and takes a -4 penalty on

attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls. This effect lasts for 1 minute. A successful DC 21 Will save reduces the duration to 1 round.

**Deathgorged (Su)** The ghulsvann feeds on death. Each time it strikes a killing blow against a creature with at least 8 HD, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and saving throws, and 2d8 temporary hit points. These effects last 1 hour and stack without limit. In addition the ghulsvann is affected by channeled negative and positive energy as if it were undead, though it does not have any other undead traits.

The Order of the Black Word, a cabal of dark mages responsible for raising the Ghoulish Stone, bred the ghulsvannir. They are raised in darkness and glutted on necromantic energy, then unleashed as a weapon of war and a twisted mockery of the noble valkyrie.

## Whispering Ghoul (3)

CR 1

XP 400

CE Medium undead

**Init** +3; **Senses** lifesense 30 ft.; Perception +7

### DEFENSE

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

**hp** 13 (2d8+4) **fast healing** 1

**Fort** +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +2; **Immune** undead traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** bite +3 (1d6+1 plus disease plus blindness)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The whispering ghouls wait until they are within 60 ft. of *The Sun's Gem* before launching from the ghulsvann toward it.

**During Combat** The whispering ghouls attack spellcasters and clerics first; if targets move close to the edge of *The Sun's Gem*, the whispering ghouls charge them, attempting to push them overboard.

**Morale** The whispering ghouls fight until destroyed.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 13, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 4, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 14

**Feats** Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +4, Climb +6, Perception +7, Stealth +7, Swim +3

**Languages** Val; **Honor** —

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary, gang (2-4), or pack (7-12)

**Treasure** standard



## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Blinding Strike (Su)** Whenever a whisper ghoul deals damage to living foe, its attack stands the chance of causing temporary blindness. On a successful attack the target must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d4+1 rounds.

### Disease (Su) Whispering Dreams

**Bite**—injury; **save** Fort DC 13; **onset** 1 day; **frequency** 1/day; **effect** darkly disturbing nightmares leave the victim fatigued; **cure** 2 consecutive saves.

The save DC is Charisma-based.

## DESIGN NOTE

This encounter is the second to last in Act 1 and is, compared to others, fairly difficult (or can be). That said, smart PCs who go on the offensive can easily drive off the ghulsvann, especially if they have advanced range weapons (rifles, *wands of fireball*, etc). If they do not, or they are otherwise having a hard time with this encounter GMs should feel free to allow NPCs to act to help drive off the ghulsvann, especially if the PCs have their hands full with the whispering ghoul.

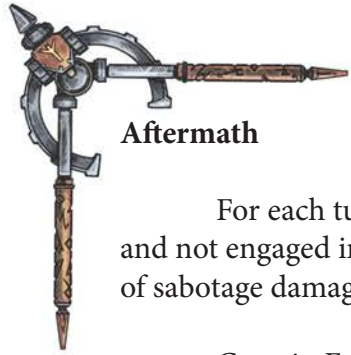
For this reason, the CR of this encounter has been lowered from 12 to 10.

If the group is using the mythic rules from the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Mythic Adventures*, than this encounter could easily represent a mythic trial, especially if the PCs are below 7<sup>th</sup> level.

Additionally, it is important to note that the Order of the Black Word — the individuals responsible for the ghulsvann, are not featured in this or *Frigid Reflections*. GMs may, however, wish to introduce them as a reoccurring group of villains, especially if this encounter impacts the PCs in a significant way.

~Jaye





## Aftermath

For each turn that a ghoul is aboard the ship and not engaged in melee combat, it inflicts 1 point of sabotage damage.

Captain Ferruc thanks the PCs sincerely for their assistance in driving off the ghulsvann and ghouls. If necessary he holds a brief ceremony for any crew that fell in the battle, dedicating their souls to Oridynn. If PCs ask what will happen to the dead, he informs them that their remains will return with the airship to Damas for their families to burn and then inter in the halls of their ancestors. There, like all interred, their bones will slowly turn to stone during their final sleep.

### ENCOUNTER 11 AN ÆLVEN ASSAULT CR 8

While the ship is grounded for repairs an ælven warparty aligned to the **Greengard** attack the ship under cover of darkness. With the crew busy making repairs, it is up to the PCs to drive off the attack.

This ælven patrol is composed of three, highly skilled scouts, led by a druid. All of the ælves hail from the same line (all are “blessed by Velluna-Akka” and gain additional advantages under starlight (see the sidebar on additional ælven abilities). The CR of this encounter has been adjusted upward to account for this.

**GMs should take note:** If the PCs are playing through this adventure as ælves (likely because they played through *The Ælven Agenda* instead of *Into the Pale Tower*), allow them a round or two to identify themselves. Ælven patrols understand that some ælves often act as spies and will willingly turn away and leave the airship unmolested.

The ælves are:

**Ahlanna U’Fellwynn** - 5<sup>th</sup> level ælven druid.

**Tevrynn A’quilla** - 6<sup>th</sup> level ælven warrior.

## Sabotage!

A number of encounters can result in sabotage damage to *The Sun’s Gem*. Each point of sabotage can be repaired with a DC 15 Craft Clockwork check taking 4 hours. Every additional 5 points above 15 reduces the time taken by 1 hour, to a minimum of 1 hour. While Engineer Uttar is capable of repairing the engine (she has Craft (clockwork) +11), she appreciates any assistance from skilled PCs.

The crew and chief engineer can make minor repairs while in flight (up to 5 sabotage points). Above that level of damage the ship must make an emergency landing until repairs are complete.

**Fynnic A’Shaiaa** - 6<sup>th</sup> level ælven warrior.  
**Theyinnic E’llanna** - 6<sup>th</sup> level ælven warrior.

### Ahlanna U’Fellwynn CR 4

XP 1,200

Ælven druid 5

CN Medium humanoid (ælf)

**Init** +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

#### DEFENSE

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

**hp** 38 (5d8+10)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6;

**Defensive Abilities** Veiled by Starlight (50% miss chance when the stars are visible; see sidebar)

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** armor spikes -2 (1d6-1) or club +2 (1d6-1) or mwk sickle +3 (1d6-1)

**Ranged** longbow +4 (1d8-1/×3)

**Special Attacks** wild shape 1/day

**Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5<sup>th</sup>; concentration +7)

5/day—*storm burst* (1d6+2 nonlethal)

**Racial Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5<sup>th</sup>; concentration+7)

**At will** — *pass without trace*

1/day— *faerie fire* (DC 13), *obscuring mist*, and



sanctuary (DC 13).

**Druid Spells Prepared** (CL 5<sup>th</sup>; concentration +7)

**3rd**—*call lightning*<sup>D</sup> (DC 15), *cure moderate wounds*

**2nd**—*bull's strength*, *flame blade*, *fog cloud*<sup>D</sup>,  
*greensight*

**1st**—*alter winds*<sup>APG</sup> (DC 13), *detect snares and pits*, *endure elements*, *entangle* (DC 13), *obscuring mist*<sup>D</sup>

**0** (at will)—*create water*, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *know direction*

**D** Domain spell; **Domain** Weather domain

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Ahlanna readies her potion of shield of faith. As soon as combat is joined, she drinks it and leaps into battle.

**During Combat** Ahlanna directs her warriors against spellcasters, only redirecting their attacks if the captain of the airship appears. Ahlanna and her warriors make good use of precise strike, flanking enemies whenever possible.

**Morale** Ahlanna orders a retreat once two of warriors fall.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 8, **Dex** 13, **Con** 10, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 9

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 13

**Feats** Improved Initiative, Precise Strike<sup>APG</sup>, Run, Toughness

**Skills** Climb +4, Handle Animal +6, Heal +9, Knowledge (geography) +5, Perception +12, Ride +5, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +3 (+5 to identify magic item properties), Survival +11, Swim +4;

**Languages** Dulamu, Druidic, Low Ælve, and Low Common; **Honor** 15

**SQ** nature's bond (Weather domain), nature sense, spiritual protector<sup>RCG</sup>, trackless step, veiled by starlight<sup>RCG</sup>, Velluna-Akka's determination<sup>RCG</sup>, wild empathy +4, and woodland stride

**Combat Gear** *potion of shield of faith* +4; **Other Gear** +1 *armor spikes rosewood armor*, club, longbow, mwk sickle, belt pouch, flint and steel, holly and mistletoe, masterwork backpack<sup>APG</sup>, soap, spell component pouch, 160 gp, 21 sp, 5 cp

### Tevrynn, Fynnic, and Theyinnic

CR 4

XP 1,200

Ælven warriors 6

NE Medium humanoid (ælf)

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3

### DEFENSE

**AC** 16, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 13 (+3 armor, +3 Dex)

**hp** 48 (6d10+12)

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

**Defensive Abilities** Veiled by Starlight (50% miss chance when the stars are visible; see sidebar)

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

28

**Melee** armor spikes +9/+4 (1d6) or

mwk obsidian short sword +10/+5 (1d6/19-20) or quarterstaff +6/+1 (1d6)

**Ranged** shortbow +9/+4 (1d6/×3)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Each ælven warrior drink his *potion of barkskin* +3, followed by their *potion of heroism*.

**During Combat** The ælven warriors follow Ahlanna's commands.

**Morale** The ælven warriors retreat if Ahlanna falls or she commands them to, otherwise they fight to the death.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 11, **Dex** 16, **Con** 10, **Int** 12, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 19

**Feats** Precise Strike<sup>APG</sup>, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Climb +8, Craft (weapons) +5, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +4, Perception +5, Ride +7, Swim +5

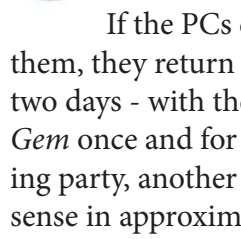
**Languages** Dulamu, Druidic, Low Ælve, and Low Common; **Honor** 15

**SQ** spiritual protector<sup>RCG</sup>, veiled by starlight<sup>RCG</sup>, and Velluna-Akka's determination<sup>RCG</sup>

**Combat Gear** *acolyte ale* (5), *potion of barkskin* +3, *potion of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of heroism*

**Other Gear** +1 *armor spikes rosewood armor*, mwk obsidian short sword, quarterstaff, shortbow, belt pouch, flint and steel, masterwork backpack<sup>APG</sup>, trail rations (5), waterskin, 159 gp, 12 sp





If the PCs drive off the ælves, but do not kill them, they return with a larger force in just under two days - with the intent of taking down *The Sun's Gem* once and for all. If the PCs kill the ælven scouting party, another one comes to investigate their absence in approximately a week - likely after *The Sun's Gem* has been repaired and taken off.

The rest of the journey passes peacefully, and eventually The Glittering Isle comes into sight on the Western horizon.



### Ælven Abilities

The ælves of Rhune enjoy a host of abilities that, when exercised in the right conditions, make them deadly opponents. All of these abilities are listed in the *Rhune: Dawn of Twilight Campaign Guide* (see pages 28-30). The ability Veiled by Starlight is reprinted here to simplify the GM's job.

**Veiled by Starlight (Su)** Ælves enjoy additional protection from the natural shadows that surround them. While they are within areas open to the stars, with dim, natural light, ælves enjoy a 50% miss chance (instead of the normal 20% miss chance). This trait does not grant total concealment; it just increase the miss chance. This is a supernatural ability.



## ACT 2: THE TESTS OF THE CHALICE



Just after dawn on the final day of the journey, first mate Alric wakes the PCs and suggests they meet him at the front of the ship.

*Your first sight of the glitterfane's island home lives up to its name. Rays from the dawn sun rising behind the airship strike the Glittering Isle and shatter into a thousand reflected sparks of every color. Red and orange, blue and amethyst, sparks leap from jewel-like facets in the cliffs, and from boulders in the forests. The dazzling blaze of constantly shifting colors is beautiful and almost too bright to look at for long.*

"Aye," chuckles Alric, "worth an early morning to see that." He tells the PCs that there is no docking tower for *The Sun's Gem* in the glitterfane's chief city of Caol, so the airship will put them down in a clearing about two hours walk from Caol. If the PCs

ask him about the Isle and what they might find, he has a few words of advice for them.

**What are the glitterfane like?** — *"They're a bit of a mystery to all of us really. Got some funny views on the right and wrong of standing up for yourself in a fight. Think twice before you draw a blade on this island."*

**Are there any dangers on the Isle?** — "Well, I've heard of some nasty undead critters, but if you stick to the paths the glitterfane made then you should be alright. Follow the runestones if you're in doubt."

**How can we get the glitterfane to help us?** — *"The glitterfane aren't bad sorts, but they'll not all take kindly to helping with battles and war. Maybe focus on who you're trying to help over who you're trying to fight."*

**Can you wait for us here?** — *"We've orders to deliver you and then get back. The cities need good scouting,*



## THE RUNE OF HOPE

now more than ever. If Northgard falls, we'll all be at war."

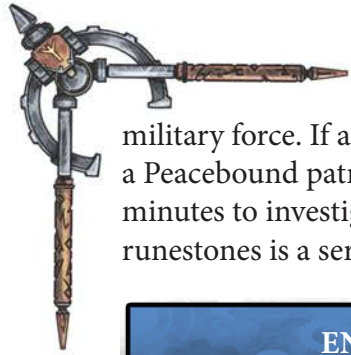
The crew lower the PCs and their gear on ropes while the pilot holds the airship steady over the clearing.

After touching down, the PCs head inland, headed for the glitterfane city Caol. The general direction of Caol is easy to ascertain, as the gleaming spire of Alnara's Crystal Temple is easily visible from the path wherever the vegetation grows less dense. However the track itself is rough and barely visible as it winds amid the trees and crystalline boulders of the forest - unsurprising as most glitterfane prefer to fly rather than walk. The trail requires a DC 15 Survival check every 30 minutes to follow, but those who

succeed on a DC 15 Perception check notice that the small runestones stand every 30-50 ft. along the track. PCs who examine these runestones and make a successful Knowledge (arcana) skill check (DC 15) identify the runes of sun, protection, and warning, and in each case the stem of the final rune points in the direction of the next runestone. PCs who observe this can avoid making survival checks.

If the PCs lose the trail, or decide to leave it, they may encounter **Foul Ones** as soon as they are more than 50 ft. away from the track's protective runestones (see the bestiary section for statistics). In addition to keeping the Foul Ones away from the trail the runestones form part of a complex network of divination foci linked to the central hall of the Peacebound — the glitterfane's equivalent of a





military force. If a runestone is moved or destroyed, a Peacebound patrol arrives at the location in 3d6x10 minutes to investigate. Interfering with the warding runestones is a serious offence to the glitterfane.

**ENCOUNTER 12  
ALNARA'S GUARDIANS CR 7**

Assuming the PCs follow Alric's suggestion and stick to the trail, after about 90 minutes of travel they come across two larger runestones, one on each side of the path. Each stone is about 6 ft. high and made of polished and faceted crystal - quartz on the left hand side of the trail and amethyst on the right. Runes circle the unpolished base of each stone at about 1 ft. from the ground. The runes, as with the smaller runestones that mark the trail, relate to protection, warning, and light or sun. The runestones have a strong aura of conjuration.

Lines of sunlight refract and reflect from the crystal runestones, drawing criss-crossing paths and points of rainbow light across the trail. As the PCs draw closer, a humming sound fills the air and two **glitterswarms** coalesce out of the light - summoned by the runestones in response to the presence of strangers.

The glitterswarms, summoned from Alnara's realm of Briglæss, attempt to deter outsiders from approaching Caol. While the PCs can certainly kill these creatures, doing so costs them honor and worsens the glitterfan's overall starting attitude by one step. Instead, the PCs can either use diplomacy to prove their intent on the Glittering Isle is noble and true, or simply wait peacefully in which case the glitterswarms do not attack, though they remain on guard for PCs trying to sneak past the runestones. After 30 minutes if the PCs elect to wait, or if the glitterswarms overcome the PCs, a Peacebound patrol arrives and escorts the group to Caol.



Peacebound patrols normally consist of 4-12 glitterfane, their ranks evenly split between clerics of Alnara (2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> level), glitterfane oracles (3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> level), and glitterfane illusionists (5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> level). As with all they do, the glitterfane focus on subduing targets using nonlethal tactics — unless they are dealing with the undead, which they will destroy outright.

Peacebound patrols are fond of using the following spells to subdue potential enemies:

**Cleric/Oracle** — *admonishing ray*<sup>TEoG</sup>, *burst of radiance*<sup>FoP</sup>, *command*, *enthrall*, *forbid action*<sup>UM</sup>, *haze of dreams*<sup>FoP</sup>, *hold person*, *sacred space*<sup>ARG</sup>, and similar spells.

**Wizard/Sorcerer** — *bungle*<sup>UM</sup>, *break*<sup>APG</sup>, *cause fear*, *charm person*, *grease*, *hypnotism*, *miserable pity*<sup>UM</sup>, *peacebond*<sup>UC</sup>, *ray of sickening*<sup>UM</sup>, *sleep*, and similar spells.





**Glitterswarms (2)****CR 5**

XP 1,600

NG Diminutive fey (swarm)

**Init** +7; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +17**Aura** fascination (DC 16)**DEFENSE****AC** 18, **touch** 18, **flat-footed** 14

(+3 Dex, +4 size, +1 dodge)

**hp** 60 (11d6+22)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8**Defensive Abilities** swarm traits; DR 2/cold iron**Weakness** vulnerability to area effects**OFFENSE****Speed** 10 ft., fly 20 ft. (average)**Melee** swarm (3d6 non-lethal)**Space** 1 ft.; Reach 0 ft.**Special Attacks** distraction (DC 16)**TACTICS****Before Combat** The glitterswarms do not prepare for or otherwise provoke combat.**During Combat** The glitterswarms swarm around violent targets, trying to calm them.**Morale** When reduced to 20 or less hit points, the glitterswarms fly up into the air, trying to avoid further attacks.

At 10 hit points or less, they flee.

**STATISTICS****Str** 1, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 14, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** —; **CMD** —**Feats** Alertness, Dodge, Hover, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Toughness**Skills** Diplomacy +15, Fly +23, Knowledge (nature) +16, Knowledge (planes) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Perception +17, Sense Motive +17, Stealth +29**Languages** Celestial, Glittertongue; **Honor** 20**SQ** peaceful swarm**ECOLOGY****Environment** the Glittering Isle, Temples to Alnara**Organization** swarms (2-4)**Treasure** standard**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Aura of Fascination (DC 16) (Su)** The glitterswarm emits a soothing hum that vibrates gently in rhythm with the pulsing waves of colored light that travel through the swarm. Creatures within 30 ft. of the swarm with line of sight must pass a DC 16 Will save or be fascinated for 1d4+1 rounds. A creature that passes the save is staggered for 1 round instead. A glitterswarm's nonlethal swarm attack does not break the fascination. Once a creature saves against the glitterswarm's aura of fascination, it cannot be affected by it for another 24 hours.

**Peaceful Swarm (Su)** A glitterswarm's purpose is defense and protection, not war, and its swarm attack calms nega-

tive emotions and quiets violent impulses. The swarm attack deals nonlethal damage, but rather than falling unconscious when the nonlethal damage is equal to its current hit points, the target becomes affected by a calm emotions effect with no saving throw.

**ENCOUNTER 13****MEETING THE GLITERFANE CR 4**

The PCs can reach Caol in one of two ways — on foot, or collected from the woods by a patrol if they fell victim to the perils of the Glitter Woods. Either way, shortly after arriving, they are interviewed by **Vella Lightwing** (glitterfane cleric of Alnara 5), a senior missionary in Alnara's temple, seeking to understand their reason for being on the island. She conducts the interview in a peaceful room near the edge of Caol; the stone walls sparkle with tiny quartz inclusions and a banner embroidered with Alnara's stars hangs behind her. The furniture is plain wood and comfortably sized for dwarves and humans.

Vella starts the conversation Indifferent to the PCs and their quest (unless they PCs disturbed a warding runestone or harmed a glitterswarm), in which case she starts Unfriendly. Vella does not start out as hostile.

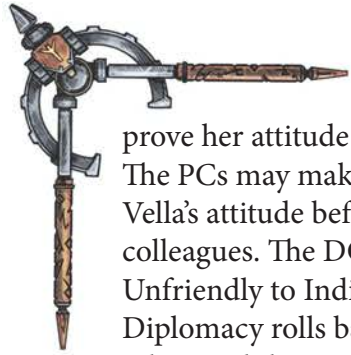
*"I am called to work with Alnara's mission, welcoming visitors to Caol. It is my task to understand you, and to determine whether there is a place for you here."*

*"I assume, like most visitors, you have come here to learn Alnara's path of peace? We always welcome seekers of truth — yet you seem somewhat over-equipped to become initiates."*

*"The chalice of Alnara? There are outsiders who have studied with us for many years without entering that sacred room. Why should you, armed and armored for violence, be granted such an honor?"*

The PCs may make Diplomacy skill checks to improve her attitude toward them and gain the assistance of the glitterfane in their quest. Vella has a Charisma modifier of +2, so the DC to im-





prove her attitude from Indifferent to Friendly is 17. The PCs may make up to three attempts to improve Vella's attitude before she retires to consult with her colleagues. The DC to improve her attitude from Unfriendly to Indifferent is 22. Modify the player's Diplomacy rolls based on how they present themselves and their quest. The following are suggested modifications, although GMs should not feel limited to these alone:

- Grant a +2 circumstance bonus if the PCs emphasize that their quest is to save lives and heal those afflicted by *rage fever*.
- Grant a +2 circumstance bonus if one of the PCs is a glitterfane, an ælf, or a cleric of Alnara.
- Impose a -2 circumstance penalty if the PCs emphasize the war in Northgard, the desire to defeat the Fel Barbarians, or the desire for personal glory.
- Impose a -2 circumstance penalty if the PCs are overtly rude or hostile in their speech.

Unless the PCs worsen Vella's attitude, she brings their case before the Daoyne.

### Vella Lightwing

CR 4

XP 1,200

Female glitterfane cleric of Alnara 5

LG Small humanoid (glitterfane)

Init +2; Senses Perception +4

#### DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12

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

hp 21 (5d8-5)

Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +9; +2 bonus vs. illusions

#### OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

**Special Attacks** channel positive energy 5/day (DC 16, 3d6 [+5 vs. undead]), sun's blessing

**Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5<sup>th</sup>; concentration +9)

7/day — *touch of good* (+2)

**Glitterfane Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5<sup>th</sup>; concentration +9)

1/day — *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *resistance*, and *stabilize*

**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 5<sup>th</sup>; concentration +9)

3rd — *daylight*, *magic circle against evil*<sup>D</sup>, *prayer*

2nd — *aid*, *align weapon*<sup>D</sup> (good

only), *ghostbane dirge* (DC 16), *resist energy*

1st — *bless*, *detect undead*, *protection from evil*<sup>D</sup>, *remove fear*, *shield of faith*

0 (at will) — *create water*, *guidance*, *light*, *read magic*

D Domain spell; **Domains** Good, Sun

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Vella does not plan to fight anyone.

**During Combat** If combat occurs, Vella calls for the patrol. If she must, she defends herself, but she fights defensively at every opportunity.

**Morale** Vella flees from combat immediately.

#### STATISTICS

Str 8, Dex 15, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 14

Base Atk +3; CMB +1; CMD 13

**Feats** Extra Channel, Improved Channel, Turn Undead

**Skills** Acrobatics +2 (-2 to jump), Fly +6, Heal +12, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (history) +5, Knowledge (planes) +5, Knowledge (religion) +9, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +9

**Languages** Celestial, Glittertongue, Low Common;

**Honor** 16

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *wand of cure light wounds* (45 charges), and a staff.

**Other Gear** *bracers of armor* +1, *cloak of resistance* +1



# THE RUNE OF HOPE

## Locations in Caol

Although most PCs will be in a rush to proceed with their mission, there is a lot to explore in Caol. Should PCs find the time (in between their trials, for instance), all of the following locations are worth exploring.

**Overview** The glitterfane city of Caol shelters within the walls of a long dormant volcanic caldera, still visible as a curved cliff protecting the eastern side of the city. Only the spire of the tallest building - Alnara's Temple - rises above the rim of the cauldron. Beside the temple stand a few small buildings and sacred sites, though Caol is sparsely populated compared to even the smallest of the City States of Vallinar. Visitors often struggle with the scattered rocks strewn across every street - unheeded by the fluttering glitterfane - and the dazzle of sunlight reflected from countless gemlike facets embedded in every surface.

**Crystal Spire of the Temple of Alnara** The tallest building in Caol was grown with ælven help as a single pale crystal, which refracts rainbows of light over the surrounding buildings. The ground floor boasts four large chambers, each dedicated to a different aspect of Alnara's nature - the stars, the natural world, healing, and peace. Higher levels hold small meeting rooms for the Daoyne - the glitterfane's council of elders - as well as teaching halls, rooms of healing, and a small religious library. Atop the spire, reachable only by flight, a small chamber is dedicated to observation of the stars, from which the wise among the glitterfane discern many matters of great import to both Midgard and all the realms of the World Tree.

**Pools of Rebirth and Geode Gardens** Sparkling clear waters well from an underground spring, heated by the earth and infused with healing minerals. They emerge into a large open geode, a great hemisphere of natural crystal formed by the volcano eons ago, and now cracked open. The glitterfane tend the crystals around this geode, using them as sites for both social events and sacred rituals. The pool itself, where the water is almost too hot to endure, is known as the Pool of Rebirth. When a glitterfane dies, this is where Alnara incarnates a new adult body for their soul.

**Visitors Longhouse** This low simply built wooden structure serves as shelter and storage area for non-glitterfane visitors to Caol. Comfortably furnished with chairs, beds and cooking facilities the building also houses those foreign traders who do business with the glitterfane. As such it is a good place to stock up on needful items as well as a safe place to rest.

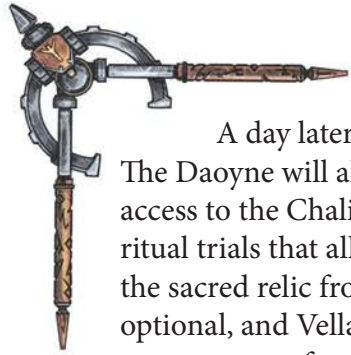
**Harbor** The harbor, on the west of Caol where the volcanic cliffs have long since fallen into the sea, is somewhat shallow and not well protected from the fury of winter storms blowing in from the western ocean. As such only small trading and courier boats visit, and only in the summer months.

**Missionary Longhouse** The Daoyne provides temporary housing for those glitterfane who return briefly from missionary work and do not have a dwelling of their own. Simple and sparsely furnished but very clean, the building is a good place to speak with glitterfane returned from all corners of Midgard.

**Sunset Amphitheatre** Facing north, this is the venue for sermons, lectures, and entertainments. Curved rows of stone benches provide seating for several hundred glitterfane, or somewhat fewer of the larger races. The view out west to the horizon is particularly spectacular at the end of the day, when traditionally one of the Daoyne gives a reading on Alnara's Path lit only by the setting sun.

**Lava Tunnels** A twisting network of natural tunnels created by ancient lava flows, long since cooled, riddle the ground beneath Caol. These served as shelter for the glitterfane in the early years of their migration to the Glittering Isle. Some have been smoothed and widened into caverns or storerooms, but many remain full of jagged sharp rocks and narrow passages. Not all of the tunnels have been mapped even today, and a constant watch is kept on the deepest areas, or those that lead further across the island.





A day later, Vella returns with good news. The Daoyne will allow the PCs a chance to gain access to the Chalice, if they can pass through the ritual trials that all outsiders must endure to protect the sacred relic from ill use. These rituals are not optional, and Vella warns that there can be severe consequences for the unready or unworthy.

### Gaining Favor & The Trials of the Chalice

PCs that undergo the *Trials of the Chalice* gain, as a reward, **favor points**. These points represent Alnara's favor and, by the end of the trials, stands as a measure of Alnara's willingness to allow the PCs to enter her sacred temple and partake of the chalice. The PCs must, as a group, acquire at least 30 favor points in order to access the temple and make use of the chalice. **GMs should take note:** While the various challenges offer favor points, PCs' conduct, as well as their interaction with Mistra and her acolytes, also account for a bigger part of those points. If PCs do not immediately recognize this, GMs might consider granting the PCs favor points for other actions, up to and including social encounters in and around Caol.

Before the PCs begin the trials, they also have a chance to earn some favor points, depending on how they conducted themselves with Vella. PCs that raise Vella's attitude to Helpful gain **5 favor points** toward their group's total. Likewise, PCs that show interest in Caol and try to learn about the Threefold Path gain an additional **3 favor points** toward their group's total. PCs that pray to Alnara in the grand temple gain **2 favor points** toward their group's total.

PCs can also lose favor points, as well. Any PCs that provoke a glitterfane to violence (the encounter with Mistra notwithstanding), attack someone in Caol, or otherwise try to push others around (using the Intimidate skill) automatically **penalize their group 3 favor points**, which they subtract from the group's total. If the PCs conduct themselves in such a manner over time, they could easily lose all of the points they've acquired.



## THE RUNE OF HOPE

### ENCOUNTER 14 THE TRIAL OF HARMONY CR 7

The first trial — **The Trial of Harmony** — take place in an underground cavern with a large pool of deep water surrounding a small island. The water steams gently and smells strongly of sulphur and minerals. On the island, 40 ft. away, a row of candles burn brightly.

Five glitterfane stand in silent judgement as Vella instructs the PCs.

*"Each of you must return with a candle, keeping it lit. The water is not deep, but take care."*

The water of the pool is enchanted to react to movement. A creature that floats, relaxed and motionless, and allows the water to carry them will gently float to the island and back over the course of five peaceful minutes. PCs can successfully float over with a successful DC 10 Swim check, although they must wear no armor and take no weapons when they do so.

However a creature that attempts to wade or swim through the pool must fight against treacherous currents that grow stronger as the creature struggles. For every 10 ft. of progress, the creature must pass a Reflex save (if wading) or a Swim check (if swimming) or be pulled back 10 ft. instead and dunked under water. The DC of the save or skill check escalates as the creature struggles on — the first 10 ft. is DC 15; the second 10 ft. is DC 20; the third 10 ft. is DC 30 and so on. The DC only reverts back to DC 10 when the creature is pushed all the way back to their starting point. The same magic operates on the return trip, this time the currents drag the creature back to the island, and any dunking means that the candle goes out and must be relit.

PCs who fail a check and get dunked under water notice that the current lets up as soon as they stop struggling.

Clever PCs might find unexpected ways to overcome this challenge. Those who use spells like *fly*, *levitate*, *spider climb*, or who build elaborately

constructed from 10ft. poles receive a disapproving glance from the watching glitterfane, but are still considered to have passed the test.

## Rewards

PCs who understand the lesson of the pool and succeed by surrendering earn **4 favor points** each toward their group's total. PCs who find other ways around earn half as much, gaining only **2 favor points** each toward their group's total. Award each PC that passes this trial by surrendering and floating XP as if they had overcome a CR 7 encounter. Award each PC that passes this trial using alternative methods XP as if they had overcome a CR 3 encounter.

### ENCOUNTER 14 THE TRIAL OF COMPASSION CR 5

After the PCs complete **The Trial of Harmony**, the PCs are taken to a large dining hall — filled with races of all sorts. Here, they find jötunfolk, ælves, glitterfane, and even automata sitting side by side, dining, talking, and otherwise engaging one another in peaceful activities. The table is stacked with piles of grains, fruits, vegetables, cheeses, and other foods; no meat is present (the glitterfane here on the isle are vegetarians). Afterwards, Vella gives the PCs a tour of Caol and takes them to **The Pool of Rebirth**.

Twisting tunnels lead down into the earth below the Crystal Spire. Vella flits easily ahead, while Medium PCs must struggle over loose rocks, duck under low ceilings and squeeze through narrow gaps in the passage. They emerge into a large cavern, filled with steam rising from the sacred pool. This pool is four feet deep and the water is almost too hot to stand. The pool fills the hollow core of an enormous amethyst geode more than 30 ft. in diameter, set in the rough cavern floor. Above the ceiling is masked by a permanent illusion of the heavens, showing Alnara's stars in stately progression, accompanied by ethereal music.

There, the PCs partake of one of Alnara's traditional religious ceremonies, **The Trial of Compassion**. The PCs watch as refugees from the North, most of which are goblins and similar crea-

tures, all of whom are seeking Alnara's mercy, gather around her sacred pool, bathe in its sacred waters, and either die or exit as glitterfane.

As the PCs arrive, two newly reborn glitterfane emerge from the pool to triumphant singing and ecstatic welcome from waiting glitterfane. Behind them a twisted shrivelled corpse is retrieved from the water and shrouded in simple grey cloth.

PCs are then escorted to the pool, where they can bathe in its waters.

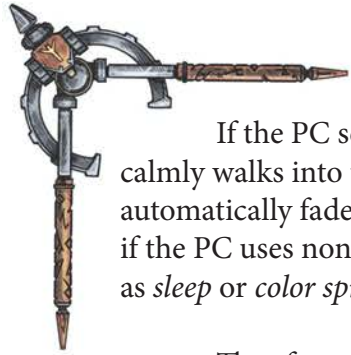
Vella instructs them with the ritual words, *"Step into the pool. Confront what you see. Return."*

While bathing in the hot pool and breathing the steam that rises from the water, the PCs enter a trance-like state. Each PC finds himself alone in a star speckled darkness, standing on a glimmering bridge made of all the colors of the rainbow. Ahead of them is a shining light that radiates an aura of safety and peace. But between them and this blessed safety is a shadowy form. This is a twisted doppelganger of the PC, features twisted with rage and anger, eyes blank with mad hatred. The double blocks their way, interrupts any advance, and all the while taunts the PC with their deepest shames and secret fears, goading them to attack. PCs who choose to attack this darker version of themselves with blade or spell find that their attacks are reflected back on themselves (see below for details). PCs who damage their double enough to destroy it render themselves unconscious then they wake back at the start of the vision, with the doppelganger unharmed and still enraged.

## Attack effects

- Martial attacks inflict nonlethal damage to the PC equal to 1.5 times the damage dealt.
- Direct damage spells and abilities: inflict nonlethal damage to the PC equal to 1.5 times the damage dealt.
- Spells and abilities that inflict a harmful condition: inflict the same condition on the PC unless they pass the same saving throw with a +2 modifier to the DC.





If the PC seeks peace, and embraces or calmly walks into their double then the doppelganger automatically fades and they are victorious. Similarly if the PC uses non-harmful spells and abilities such as *sleep* or *color spray* then the double fades.

The aftermath of the vision has an effect based on alignment.

**Good PCs** are unharmed and feel a sense of hope, peace, and wellbeing. Good PCs gain 3 points of honor, earn **2 favor points** each toward their group's total, and XP as if they had overcome a CR 5 encounter.

**Neutral PCs** have a chance to change their alignment on the spot, but if they remain neutral, nothing befalls them. If they do, they gain 2 points of honor, earn **3 favor points** each toward their group's total, and XP as if they had overcome a CR 5 encounter.

**Evil PCs** instantly have a chance to redeem themselves, changing alignment with no penalties. If they do, they gain 3 points of honor earn **4 favor points** each toward their group's total, and XP as if they had overcome a CR 6 encounter. If they refuse (and remain evil), they suffer 5d4 points of damage and must make a Fort save. If they fail, they are **marked** (and cannot enter the **Trial of the Chalice**). If they pass the save, they are not marked, but the glitterfane still refuse them entry into the next trial — their friends must proceed without them.

PCs that choose the path of goodness also gain **Alnara's Favor**. This represents the Goddess of Mercy's satisfaction with the PC's performance (in the case of this trial, their willingness to step out of darkness and into the light by aligning to goodness) and can be used any way the GM sees fit. If the PCs are using **Wyrd Points**, this favor could easily represent one of those points, but without it being spent and it automatically succeeding on whatever task it is directed towards. Likewise, GMs might use this favor to save a PC at a critical point in the adventure, either by healing them or having the goddess act on their behalf at just the right time.



## THE RUNE OF HOPE

### ENCOUNTER 15 FOR THE GREATER GOOD CR 7

Vella greets the PCs very early the next morning, before much of the city is awake. She tells them that the glitterfane elders have instructed her to bring them to one final trial, after which they will be given Alnara's Chalice. In fact, she has been misled by a hidden faction within the glitterfane. This faction is preparing for the world after Ragnarök by kidnapping chosen people and putting them into stasis in specially constructed crystal coffins. The glitterfane faction hopes these people - now including the PCs - will survive Ragnarök and repopulate Midgard afterwards.

Vella leads the PCs deep into the lava tunnels beneath Caol. The tunnels twist and turn, in places almost blocked by stalactites so that Medium PCs must squeeze through. Vella is uncharacteristically anxious, and PCs can notice this with a DC 15 Sense Motive check. If they ask her about the challenge, she tells them that it is not one she's heard of before (if pressed, she admits that the mysteries of the Goddess of Mercy are many). Still, she is clearly uncomfortable but refuses to say more.

Eventually the rough walled lava tunnels emerge into a large cavern whose walls are lined with square panels of translucent colorless crystal, some lit from behind. The cavern is 30 ft. high with a balcony all around the outside at 15 ft. In the center of the floor are a number of crystal cases, one for each PC. Glitterfane acolytes wave small wands over the cases in a complex pattern.

The glitterfane acolytes finish whatever arcane preparations they are making and one of them snaps at Vella, "*Come on. We need the subjects in before Mistra arrives or she won't be happy.*"

Vella gestures the PCs forwards, saying uncertainly, "*I suppose ... you should get into the crystal ... um ... things?*" She is clearly out of her depth and has no ritual words to offer for this Trial. Then, she departs.

PCs who inspect the crystal sarcophagi find



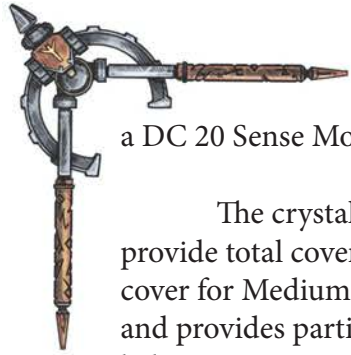
1. Mistra's Workshop
2. Chamber of the Crystal Coffins
3. Chamber of the Sleepers (west)
4. Chamber of the Sleepers (east)
5. Hidden supply cache.
6. Lava Tunnels

1 square = 5 ft.

them cold to the touch and lined with a thin, barely comfortable material that appears to be black silk. They are just large enough to let a Medium humanoid lie down inside. The sarcophagi radiate a strong aura of enchantment and necromancy. Creatures that lie down in a crystal sarcophagus must succeed on a DC 20 Will save each round or fall into a deep sleep. While asleep in the sarcophagus they do not age, due to an enhanced version of *gentle repose*.

If the PCs willingly get into the sarcophagi then this encounter ends here; they will be woken at the start of the next encounter.

If the PCs refuse, or ask more than one or two questions, then the lead acolyte says in glittertongue, “Enough! Time wastes. Put them to sleep, that they may wake beyond time.” Then the acolytes attack. PCs that speak Glittertongue or that succeed on



a DC 20 Sense Motive check are not surprised.

The crystal sarcophagi are about 5 ft. tall and provide total cover for the Small glitterfane or partial cover for Medium PCs. The balcony has a low rail and provides partial cover from anyone on the floor below.

## Creatures

The three acolytes are fanatical followers of **Mistra Lightborn**, a renegade oracle of Alnara who has been kidnapping senior foreign students and preserving them to repopulate the world after Ragnarök. They attempt to subdue the PCs and place them in the crystal sarcophagi for storage.

### Lightborn Acolyte (4)

CR 3

XP 800

Glitterfane magus 4

NG Small humanoid (glitterfane)

**Init** +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +6

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 15

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

**hp** 31 (4d8+8)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6; +2 bonus vs. illusions

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** sparkrod +8 (1d4 electrical nonlethal /19-20)

**Special Attacks** arcane pool (+1, 4 points), spell combat, spell recall, spellstrike

**Magus Spells Prepared** (CL 4<sup>th</sup>; concentration +6)

**2nd** — *frigid touch*<sup>UM</sup>, *glitterdust* (DC 14)

**1st** — *mage armor*, *shocking grasp* (x2), *vanish* (DC 13)

**0** (at will) — *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *light*, *read magic*

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The acolytes ready their sparkrods and move into flanking positions.

**During Combat** The acolytes focus on heavily armored or otherwise dangerous foes, using *glitterdust* in an attempt to blind them.

**Morale** The acolytes fight until reduced to 10 or less, at which point they call on Mistra and retreat to heal themselves.

They do not surrender.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 8, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 14

**Feats** Toughness, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +3 (-1 to jump), Fly +12, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (religion) +6, Perception +6, Ride +5, Spellcraft +9

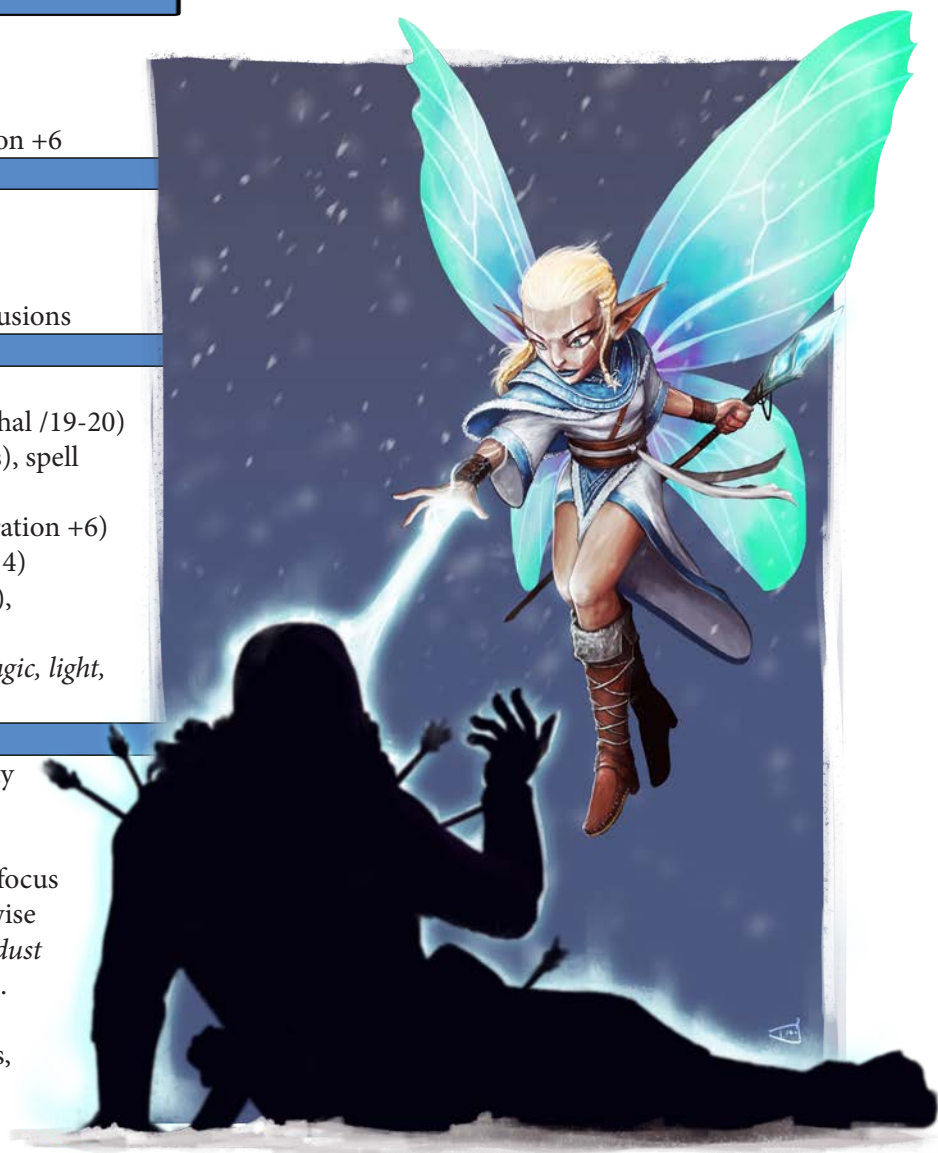
**Languages** Common, Glittertongue; **Honor** 9

**Combat Gear** sparkrod

**Other Gear** (2) *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of invisibility*, 120 gp in gems

#### Aftermath

This encounter ends in one of two ways — either the PCs are sleeping peacefully (willing or forced) in their crystal sarcophagi, or they stand over the defeated glitterfane acolytes.





## ENCOUNTER 16 THE WRATH OF HEAVEN CR 8

If the PCs defeated the acolytes then Mistra arrives two rounds later, alerted by the sounds of combat. She arrives flanked by three more of her acolytes, in addition to any acolytes who survived the previous encounter.

If the PCs ended the previous encounter in the crystal sarcophagi, then Vella returns later that night to wake them and help them escape. She apologizes for leading them into what she fears may be a trap— she was misled by Mistra’s acolytes— and warns them that Mistra herself is pursuing her. She begs the PCs protect her, but also suggests the PCs find a peaceful way, if possible, to overcome Mistra. The players have a 4 rounds to prepare once Vella awakens the first PC. Getting out of the sarcophagi is a full round action.

In either case, Mistra arrives through a doorway in the balcony above the cavern. She calls out in common, “*How dare you disturb our great work? We prepare for a new dawn!*” If possible, she tries to convince the PCs that they should be honored and should volunteer to be preserved until after Ragnarök. If this fails, or if the PCs immediately attack, she cries, “*Fools! This is your future in this world!*” and casts vision of hell, turning the crystal walls of the cavern into a great panorama showing prophetic images of death, violence and destruction on each side (see the sidebar, **Visions of the Final Days**).

### Mistra Lightborn

CR 6

XP 2,400

Glitterfane oracle 7

Small humanoid (glitterfane)

**Init** +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +1

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 23, **touch** 17, **flat-footed** 20 (+6 armor, +3 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 size)

**hp** 56 (7d8+21)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8; +2 bonus vs. illusions

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Special Attacks** calming presence (DC 18)

**Oracle Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 7<sup>th</sup>; concentration +12)

### Visions of the Final Days

*Giants, bedecked in the corpses of those they have conquered, crush Union City under stone and fire while ashen clouds devour the sun. The moon, rent asunder by black wolves in service to the Lords of Ash, falls into the sea, bringing tidal waves that wash over the cities, drowning everyone and everything. Armies of men and dwarves, desperate and outmatched, fight blood-crazed berserkers and grave spawned ghouls.*

*A glowing celestial figure falls from the heavens, pierced by blackened wounds, smashing fields and cities in his fall. All the while, a strange, almost mechanic humming drones on, driving everyone who hears it mad.*

*All is ruin.*

**1/day** — *star chart*

**Oracle Spells Known** (CL 7<sup>th</sup>; concentration +12)

**3rd** (5/day) — *cure serious wounds, daylight, searing light, vision of hell* (DC 19)

**2nd** (7/day) — *calm emotions* (DC 17), *compassionate ally* (DC 17), *cure moderate wounds, eagle’s splendor, hypnotic pattern* (DC 18)

**1st** (8/day) — *bless, color spray* (DC 17), *cure light wounds, detect undead, entropic shield, obscuring mist, shield of faith*

**0** (at will) — *create water, guidance, light, purify food and drink* (DC 15), *read magic, spark* (DC 15), *virtue*

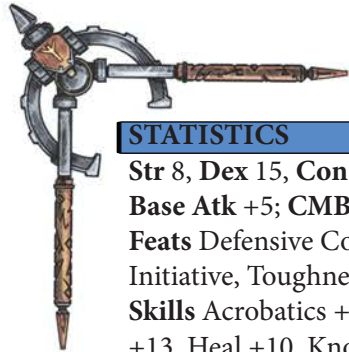
#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Before revealing herself Mistra prepares by casting *eagle’s splendor*, drinking a potion of *bear’s endurance* and activating her *Coat of Stars* ability (all included in statistics).

**During Combat** Mistra focuses on supporting her acolytes, encouraging them with tales of Alnara’s mercy and absolving them of their violence. She casts *hypnotic pattern* against heavily armored foes to attempt to take them out of combat, as well.

**Morale** Mistra attempts to flee if all of her acolytes fall and she is reduced to 10 hit points or less. Otherwise, she presses the fight.





## STATISTICS

**Str** 8, **Dex** 15, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 20

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 21

**Feats** Defensive Combat Training, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Toughness

**Skills** Acrobatics +2 (-2 to jump), Diplomacy +14, Fly +13, Heal +10, Knowledge (planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +10

**Languages** Celestial, Glittertongue, Low Common;

**Honor** 18

**SQ** oracle's curse (tongues), revelations (awesome display, coat of many stars, star chart)

**Combat Gear** *potion of barkskin* +2, *potion of bear's endurance*, *potion of invisibility*

**Other Gear** *cloak of resistance* +2

## Lightborn Acolytes (3)

CR 3

XP 800

hp 31

## TACTICS

**Before Combat** The acolytes ready their sparkrods and move into flanking positions.

**During Combat** The acolytes focus on heavily armored or otherwise dangerous foes, using *glitterdust* in an attempt to blind them. Otherwise, the acolytes follow Mistra's directions, attacking the foes she designates.

**Morale** The acolytes fight to the death.

## The Aftermath

If the PCs manage to subdue Mistra without killing her, Vella encourages them to bring her before the Daoyne, the council of elders that guide the glitterfane. If they do, Mistra becomes increasingly outraged at her treatment and at the lack of gratitude shown by the rest of the glitterfane elders. She rants, "My work was important, it was necessary, I was building a new world, working Alnara's will..." The other elders look on sadly as she rants, and slowly Mistra's features warp and shift to reflect more and more of the hatred and bitterness she feels. Her eyes grow small and red, her teeth become sharp and her voice becomes harsh. Slowly her gossamer wings shrivel. Eventually the Peacebound guards lead away an incoherent screeching goblin. The glitterfane have truly lost one of their own, a fate beyond death and beyond all hope of rebirth.



After the PCs unmask Mistra, they are invited to return to the dining hall, where they can rest and relax. Afterwards, Vella brings them back before the Daoyne. The glitterfane elders are chagrined that their visitors were assaulted and that Mistra perverted voluntary submission to Alnara into coerced imprisonment. With Vella's testimony supporting the PCs they quickly discover the full truth — upwards of 30 'volunteers' of all races were taken and stored in Mistra's crystal cavern, some willingly, some by deception, and some by force. The acolytes will be counselled, and those that see the error of Mistra's ways may find another path.

## Rewards

How the Daoyne react to the PCs depends on their actions, both through the first two trials and their overall response to Mistra. Apply the following rewards to the PCs, based on their actions.

- If the PCs seek out the council without Vella's influence (if it's their idea), award the group **10 favor points**.
- Additionally, award the group **PC 2 favor points** for every Lightborn Acolyte who survives the two encounters.
- Award the group **20 favor points** if they find a nonviolent way to deliver Mistra to the council to face judgement.
- Award the group **10 favor points** if they bring Mistra to the Daoyne for justice, but do so using force (even nonlethal force).

Assuming the group acquires at least **30 favor points**, the Daoyne grant them access to the Crystal Spire, where they can see and interact with *Alnara's Chalice*. If the group acquires more points, the Daoyne present them with the following:

**31-35 favor points** A *sparkrod*, a *potion of remove disease*, and two *potions of cure light wounds*

**36-40 favor points** Three *potions of cure serious wounds*, a *ring of protection* +1, and a *cloak of resistance* +1.

**41-45 favor points** Three *potions of cure serious wounds*, a *ring of protection* +2 and a *cloak of resistance* +2.

**45+ favor points** A *glitterstaff*.

# THE RUNE OF HOPE

# ACT 3: DESCENT INTO DROWNED KARTHÆN



## At Alnara's Chalice

In gratitude for uncovering Mistra's crimes and in recognition of the trials the PCs overcame, the glitterfane elders promise their aid. They show the PCs to *Alnara's Chalice*, a perfect crystal goblet that emerges from the unbroken floor of the top level of the Crystal Spire above Alnara's Temple. It is part of the building and cannot be moved or taken to Northgard.

However, the glitterfane believe that with the assistance of **Laguz, The Rune of Water**, the chalice's power may still be able to help. The glitterfane explain that the rune, which was lost in ancient Karthæn centuries ago, was said to have numerous powers; some even believed that when exposed to certain magic, it could absorb a portion of that magic. Although none have seen it in a very long time, they believe it might — if cleansed and immersed in the healing waters of the chalice — take on those properties.

The PCs are led back to Caol to rest and recover. While there, they can use the glitterfane libraries to learn more about both the rune and **Drowned Karthæn**. Several older dwarves also live in Caol and PCs that make successful Diplomacy skill checks (DC 20) learn where to find these great sages. After meeting with several of them, the PCs learn the location of the lost city and how to get there. Without an airship, however, the PCs need a boat. After several more days of work, they learn of an old, ruined Dragonship on the north end of the island — in an abandoned part of the island that is haunted by the spirits of the dead goblins that invaded the island centuries ago. If the PCs can get to the boat and repair it, they can travel to Drowned Karthæn.

## Learning the history of Drowned Karthæn

Whether the PCs use the local libraries, consult some of the sages on the Glittering Isle, or

employ a combination of both methods, they gradually learn the following:

### DC Knowledge (history)

**10** Karthæn was an ancient dwarven city.

**15** Karthæn was originally a great trade city, the only of its kind to support an extensive underground city built under a river. The city made Clan Sænegard wealthy and powerful.

**20** Survivors report that Jarl Kolfinnur, of Clan Sænegard, flooded the city in -712 YUR, after discovering something horrible deep within its depths.

**25** After discovering his family had been affected by the Dark Whisper and had turned to cannibalism, Jarl Kolfinnur descended into madness and flooded the city, killing everyone inside.

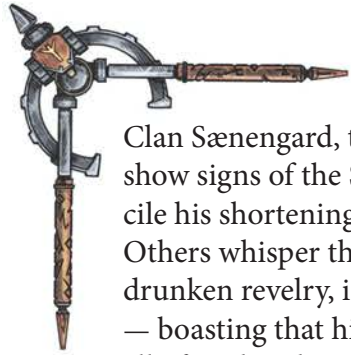
## Drowned Karthæn

Originally a seaside city that straddled the **Sær River**, **Karthæn** was an innovative city whose unique use of flood gates, dikes, and pumping stations attracted traders and scholars alike. For years, it was the northern gem of Rhuneheim, a gate to a continent the dwarves had yet to explore. Under the careful guidance of **Clan Sænegard**, it grew from a simple outpost to a complex, multi-tiered subterranean city. Traders visited it for its fine silverware, and scholars flocked to study its innovative use of waterpower in the days before Stormtech. The symbol of Clan Sænegard (a midnight blue field bisected by a diagonal silver stripe with a silver hammer upper left and a silver star lower right), Karthæn's royal family, was soon known to many in the South. But peaceful and prosperous Karthæn was not to remain a dwarven haven in the North forever.

While some dispute its downfall, what is known about Drowned Karthæn is this:

Sometime in the year **712**, shortly after the **Dark Whisper**, chaos descended on the city when the **Grand Jarl Kolfinnur**, leader of





Clan Sænegard, took ill. Some say he had begun to show signs of the Stone Touch, and unable to reconcile his shortening life, grew morose and desperate. Others whisper that the Grand Jarl, in a night of drunken revelry, insulted the Old Gods themselves — boasting that his city would be the greatest on all of Midgard and, when his will was finally done, would rival even the celestial cities of the Old Gods themselves. Regardless of the validity of such stories, many dwarves departed the city suddenly. The departing dwarves, homeless and grieving, renounced the city and the Jarl accursed before before travelling to rebuild new lives in the South.

As if to fulfill some dark prophecy, servants of the Thrall Lords soon arrived outside the city. And with them, these servants brought a supernatural plague of unnatural knowledge and terrible desires to the remainder of the deep-delving dwarves. While some of the dwarves tried to drive these servants off, they were too great in number. Instead, they laid a siege on the city, silently watching and whispering, waiting for those within to eventually succumb to their dark rituals.

At first Kolfinurr's elite **Silver Guard** and the **Watch Golems** kept order against a wave of inexplicable murders. The remaining priests researched possible cures for each new madness, but even with the powers of the Old Gods at their disposal, they could not keep up with the countless acts of cruelty that endowed these afflicted dwarves with strange arcane powers. Many of these afflicted were locked away in the temple, which became a sanitarium for the mad. Others were killed, much to the grief of their kin. Still more escaped into the lowest levels of the city, where they practiced fell rites and dire new sorceries. They grew strong on shadows, secrets, and stolen blood, but in the city above, what remained of a fragile peace was quickly eroding.

When the end came, it was swift. The watch-golems, bleeding black ichor from their metal skin, turned on the Silver Guard and slew them. Labor automatons rampaged through the city, destroying waterwheels and factories. Foul creatures, no

longer dwarves even in appearance, attacked from the depths. Facing a war on two fronts, Jarl Kolfinurr ordered his remaining troops to evacuate the city and save his clan. He himself returned to the royal chambers to escort his family to safety. What he found drove away the remnants of Jarl Kolfinurr's sanity.

Crouched over the corpses of their loyal servants, his wife and children leered at him, their mouths filled with offal. The heartbroken jarl forgot his oaths of protection and thought only to destroy the monstrous remnants of his family. After slaying his own kin, he set off charges, long laid against desperate need, and destroyed the dams preserving the city. Seawater flooded in and within minutes, the city was no more.

### Northbound from Caol

After the PCs have learned all of this (whether in great detail or just small, essential tidbits), they are free to leave Caol. The glitterfane make sure they are provisioned and, if need be, safely escorted to their borders to the north. From there, it is on to the **Forbidden Fields**.

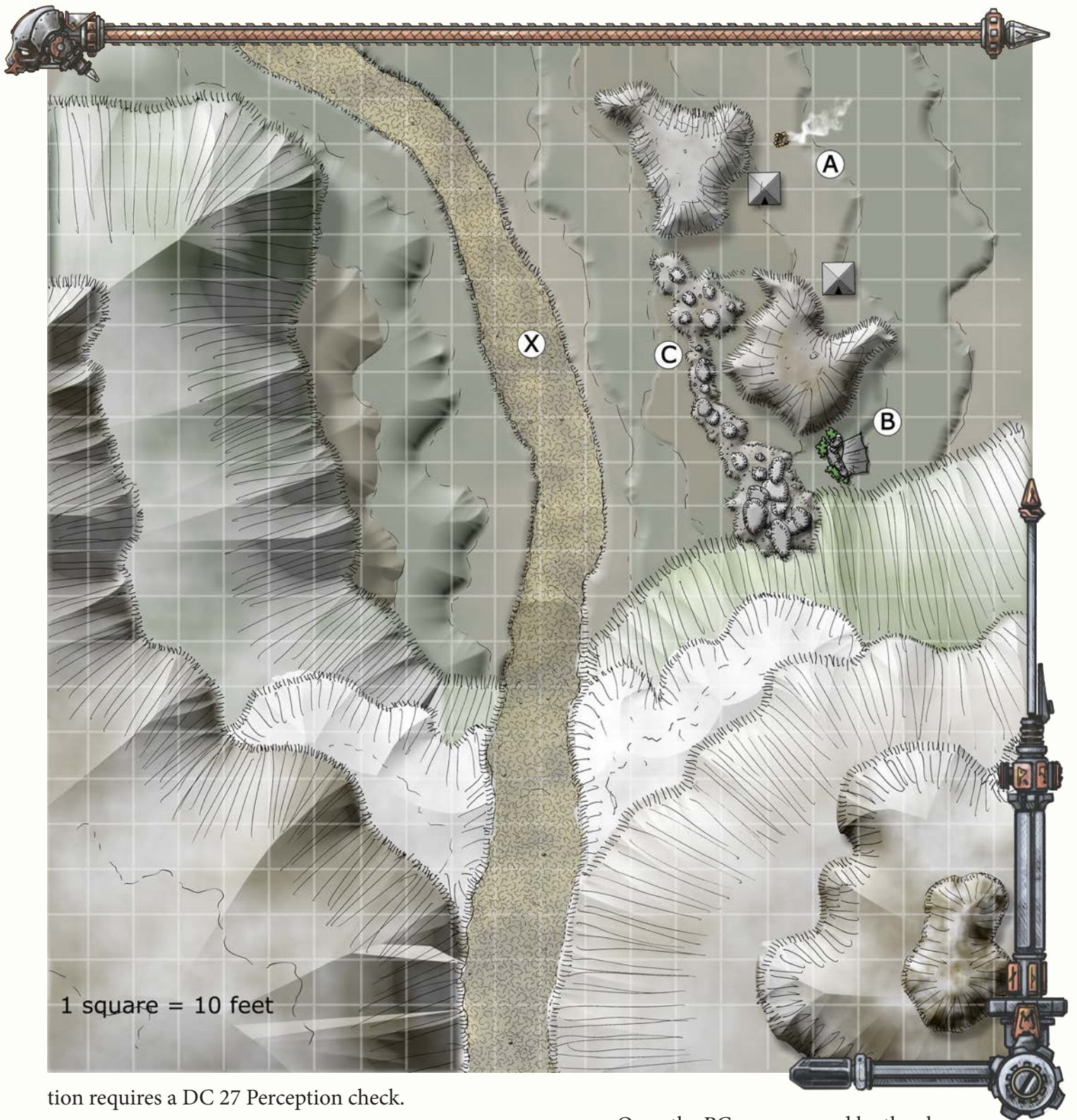
## ENCOUNTER 17 INTO THE FORBIDDEN FIELDS CR 6

**Krivik, a goblin cleric of Felashurann** has descended from the Northern Wastes intending to spy on the glitterfane and return with a larger force in the future. He currently studies the greater keystones of the outer ring of wardstones, hoping to discover how to overcome their abilities and bypass the wardstones entirely.

While peace served the heroes in Caol, this is a deadly place where only the strongest survive. As the PCs enter the Forbidden Fields, they are attacked by **Krivik**, his scout **Nibba**, and their band of goblins.

The goblins have set camp at the top of a steep hill, screened from the trail behind two large crystal boulders. Nibba constructed a hide facing towards the Outer Wardstones, and from where he keeps watch. Spotting his carefully camouflaged posi-





tion requires a DC 27 Perception check.

When travellers approach, Nibba gives warning but does not attack until they reach the closest point on the trail. At this point Krivik casts *summon monster III* to summon 1d3 Small fire elementals in the midst of the PCs. Simultaneously the four goblin warriors dash forward from behind the boulders. They've been here long enough to know good routes through the difficult terrain, and can charge freely.

Once the PCs are engaged by the elementals and the goblins, Nibba emerges from his hiding spot and begins picking off soft targets with his *flaming arrows*. Krivik, ecstatic at the chaos, sends a *fireball* into the midst of the fray - he's happy to kill his own troops for the chance to toast a dwarf or two - before using his *fire bolts* and other spells.



**Krivik, Cleric of Felashurann**

CR 4

XP 1,200

Goblin cleric 5

CE Small humanoid (goblinoid)

**Init** +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3**DEFENSE**AC 21, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 20

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

**hp** 41 (5d8+15)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)**Melee** heavy mace +3 (1d6-1)**Special Attacks** channel negative energy 1/day (DC 10, 3d6), destructive smite (+2, 6/day)**Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5<sup>th</sup>; concentration +8) 6/day — *fire bolt* (1d6+2 fire)**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 5<sup>th</sup>; concentration +8)**3rd** — *bestow curse* (DC 16), *fireball*<sup>D</sup> (DC 16), *summon monster III***2nd** — *bull's strength*, *hold person* (DC 15), *shatter*<sup>D</sup> (DC 15), *spiritual weapon***1st** — *command* (DC 14), *detect good*, *hide from undead* (DC 14), *shield of faith*, *true strike*<sup>D</sup>**D** Domain spell; **Domains** Destruction, Fire**TACTICS****Before Combat** If he has time, Krivik casts *bull's strength* on Nibba, following up with *shield of faith*.**During Combat** Krivik directs the goblins each round, casting *command*, *hold person*, and *bestow curse* to supplement their attacks. If the goblins start to fall, Krivik casts *fireball* and *firebolts* to supplement their attacks.**Morale** Krivik fights to the death.**STATISTICS****Str** 8, **Dex** 18, **Con** 13, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 6**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 15**Feats** Heavy Armor Proficiency, Improved Initiative, Toughness**Skills** Acrobatics -2, Knowledge (religion) +9, Ride +2, Sense Motive +11, Stealth +14;**Racial Modifiers** +4 Ride, +4 Stealth**Languages** Goblin; **Honor** 5**Combat Gear** *scroll of cure serious wounds* (in caster's shield);**Other Gear** banded mail, *caster's shield*, heavy mace**Nibba Humanhunter**

CR 2

XP 600

Goblin ranger 3

CE Small humanoid (goblinoid)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7**DEFENSE**AC 19, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 15

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

**hp** 27 (3d10+6)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)**Melee** boar spear +5 (1d6+1)**Ranged** mwk composite shortbow +8/+8 (1d4+2+1d6 fire/x3)**Special Attacks** combat style (archery), favored enemy (humans +2)**TACTICS****Before Combat** Nibba sets her arrows and climbs up on a boulder so she can shoot down at enemies.**During Combat** Nibba takes orders from Krivik, but focuses her attacks against humans, unless Krivik directs her elsewhere. If her preferred enemies aren't potential targets, she focuses on clerics or paladins.**Morale** Nibba fights to the death.**STATISTICS****Str** 12, **Dex** 19, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 17**Feats** Endurance, Point-blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot**Skills** Acrobatics +1, Climb +4, Knowledge (geography) +5, Perception +7, Ride +5, Stealth +15, Survival +7;**Racial Modifiers** +4 Ride, +4 Stealth**Languages** Goblin; **Honor** 3**SQ** favored terrain (cold +2), track +1, wild empathy +2**Combat Gear** *potion of cure light wounds***Other Gear** hide armor, boar spear, mwk composite shortbow (+1 Str) with 10 +1 *flaming arrows***Goblins (3)**

CR 1/3

XP 135

**hp** 6**TACTICS****Before Combat** The goblins wait in hiding, working themselves up into a fury.**During Combat** The goblins focus on a single target unless Nibba or Krivik direct them against a specific target.**Morale** The goblins fight to the death.

## ENCOUNTER 18 GHOSTS OF THE FOUL ONES CR 6

Fighting the goblins attracts nearby **Foul Ones**, as ever they are drawn to violence and bloodshed. They drift in from the surrounding area within 2d4 rounds of the first time lethal damage is dealt, and immediately attack.

### Foul Ones (3)

CR 3

**XP 800**

CE Medium undead (incorporeal)

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

### DEFENSE

**AC** 15, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 12  
(+2 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)

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

**Fort** +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4; +2 bonus vs. channeled energy

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +2, incorporeal;

**Immune** undead traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** fly 40 ft. (good)

**Melee** foul touch +5 (1d2 Wisdom damage)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The foul ones rush into attack.

**During Combat** The foul ones attack the closest living beings.

**Morale** The foul ones fight until destroyed.

### STATISTICS

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

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 17

**Feats** Dodge, Skill Focus (Perception)

**Skills** Fly +11, Perception +8, Stealth +8 (+12 in dim light, -4 in bright light)

**SQ** violence spawn, wisdom damage

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary, pods (3-6)

**Treasure** standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Battlelust (Su)** A creature who is affected by a foul one's Wisdom damage ability becomes irrationally angry and violent. They must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or attempt to physically attack the foul one on their next turn. The DC for this ability is Charisma based.

**Spawned by Violence (Su)** A foul one slain by violence spawns two new foul ones at dusk on the following day. Foul ones destroyed by positive energy do not spawn more of their kind.

**Weak Willed (Ex)** Unlike most undead, foul ones are extremely susceptible to mind affecting magic. They automatically fail their saving throw against any

enchantment or illusion spells.

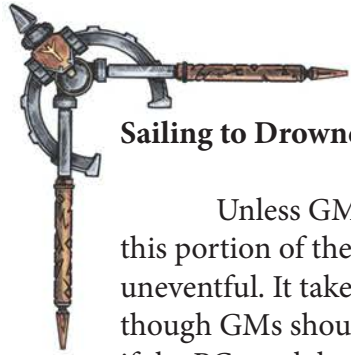
**Wisdom Damage (Su)** A foul one's touch deals 1d2 points of Wisdom damage to a living creature. This is a negative energy effect. A creature dies if this Wisdom damage equals or exceeds its Wisdom score.

## ENCOUNTER 19 THIS SHIP NEEDS WORK CR 6

The PCs can recover the Dragonship, but it needs work, as it's barely seaworthy. The PCs can pilot it down the coast, however, to Caol, and secure some of the parts they need to fix it. There can be several, small social encounters that allow them to get the parts they need. Once the ship is ready (and if they gained a lot of trust, the glitterfane help repair it), they can sail for **Drowned Karthæn**.

PCs can use the following skills to repair the ship: Craft (carpentry), Craft (cloth), Craft (ships), Knowledge (engineering), and Profession (sailor). If the PCs lack these skills, GMs can have them make Intelligence checks to gather the correct materials and repair the Dragonship. In general, a series of 4-5 skill checks, DC 15, are enough to get the ship seaworthy. If the PCs sail the ship south to Caol afterwards, the glitterfane offer (for free) to comb over the ship and ensure it is ready for the trip to Drowned Karthæn.





## Sailing to Drowned Karthæn

Unless GMs are looking to add encounters to this portion of the adventure, the trip to Karthæn is uneventful. It takes the PCs 3-4 days to sail there, although GMs should feel free to expediate the journey if the PCs took longer than normal on the Glittering Isle. Likewise, if PCs are stalling some, GMs can increase their sense of urgency by having a dispatch arrive from either Northgard (if the PCs started with *Into the Pale Tower*) or Ælveheim (if the PCs started with *The Ælven Agenda*).

## Approaching Drowned Karthæn

PCs should be level 6 (or very close to it) before entering Drowned Karthæn.

There are two primary ways into the city. If the PCs want to dock inside the ruins, they need only sail into the ruins and attempt to sail directly to one of the ruined beaches close to the various towers (locations 9 through 12 on the map). Doing this is dangerous, however, since the water is murky and there is a heavy mist hanging over it, making it nearly impossible to navigate. Each round that the PCs attempt to sail through this heavy mist, they need to make a DC 20 Profession (sailor) or driving check each round or suffer 6d6 points of damage as the ship scrapes across the tops of ruined towers, ancient poles, and other hidden debris.

Alternately, the PCs can take the safe route. Doing so requires they activate the locks and pumps in a specific order, as follows.

First, the PCs need to close the **Riverside Locks** (location 5 on the map). This can be done either at the **Southern Lock Station** (which controls both locks), at the **Northern Pump Station** (location 1 on the map) or at the lock itself. Activating the lock requires either a DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) skill check at the Southern Lock Station (locations 2 on the map), a DC 10 Knowledge (engineering) skill check at the Northern Pump Sta-

tion, or a DC 20 Knowledge (engineering) skill check at the lock itself.

Once the inner lock is closed, the PCs must travel to the **Outer Docks** (location 3 on the map) and go to the Northern Pump Station and start the pumps to drain the city of its excess water. This is a relatively easy task, as all of the machinery — although ancient — is labeled in dwarven. PCs need only make a DC 10 Knowledge (engineering) skill check to start the city pumps.

Once these start, the PCs can return to their ship and sail past the **Seaside Lock** (location 4 on the map), closing it manually with a DC 20 Knowledge (engineering) skill check. Alternately, a single character can operate the locks from the **Southern Lock Station** (although doing so may be dangerous if all of this activity alerts the wandering dead or other monsters to the PCs presence).

Once the outer lock is closed, the inner (riverside) will remain inoperable while the city's pumps drain the water, a feat that will take 2d4 hours. Once the pumps stop, the inner lock automatically opens, allowing the PCs to safely dock at either the **Northern** or **Southern Piers** (locations 6 and 7 on the map, respectively).

This adventure assumes the PCs investigate the various pumping stations. If they elect not to and try to march overland to one of the towers, GMs can easily incorporate these encounters along the way.

### THE NORTHERN PUMPING STATION CR 6

*Three-dozen massive pumps, each twice the height of a man and pointed out to the sea, penetrate the wet earth here. A single stone building, its windows long ago broken, stands before them. Crushed skulls, covered in old wax, rest on poles surrounding the building.*

Although the dead have overrun much of this ancient dwarven site, a single **Sea Hag** named **Vrái** has started to explore these ruins, killing the local wildlife in an attempt to better master her understanding of blood magic. Having watched the PCs





arrive, she lies in wait, hidden in the back of her new home, eager to kill them.

### Vrái the Bloodied

CR 6

XP 2,400

Sea hag bloodrager 2

CE Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

**Aura** horrific appearance (DC 16)

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 21, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 17 (+5 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +3 natural, -2 raging penalty)

**hp** 66 (6d10+32)

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10

**Defensive Abilities** uncanny dodge; **SR** 15

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft., swim 40 ft.

**Melee** +2 sea-knife +13/+8 (1d4+9/19-20) or

2 claws +8 (1d6+3), 2 claws +8 (1d6+3)

**Special Attacks** bloodrage (9 rounds/day), claws

#### TACTICS

**Before combat** Vrái takes a 10 on a stealth check, hiding

in a shadowy corner of the building. She attacks the first PC that enters, raging as she does, hoping to catch them unaware.

**During combat** Vrái focuses on her initial target, unless a weaker one presents itself.

**Morale** Vrái fights to the death.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 25, **Dex** 19, **Con** 20, **Int** 12, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 19

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Mad Magic<sup>ACO</sup>, Skill Focus (Bluff),

Skill Focus (Perception)

**Skills** Acrobatics +7 (+11 to jump), Bluff +11, Climb +11,

Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Perception +15,

Spellcraft +5, Stealth +11, Survival +8, Swim +22

**Languages** Giant, Low Common; **Honor** 6

**SQ** amphibious, evil eye, fast movement

**Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, +2 sea-knife, ring of protection +1, 442 gp





## THE SOUTHERN LOCK STATION CR 3

*A small pier juts out from a wet, sloped hill. A path, cut out of the hill itself, leads up to a single building, itself sunken into the hill. The air here is damp and tidewater marks paint the inside walls of the path. Seagulls circle above, crying out.*

Originally built higher on the hill, years of erosion have caused this station to settle and sink slowly into the surrounding hill. Although it still functions, a bunyip has taken up residence on the lower level of the building. Incredibly territorial, it attacks anyone that tries to enter the building.

### Bunyip CR 3

XP 800

hp 32 (see *Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game: Bestiary 2*)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The bunyip roars and charges the first PC that tries to enter the building.

**Morale** The bunyip fights to the death.

## INTO THE DROWNED DOCKS CR 6

*As you approach the docks, a wave of eerie silence, broken only by the call of distant gulls, rolls over you. The city appears to be resting in the center of a mist-covered lake. The smell of seawater and rusting iron welcomes you.*

Lying deep below the murky waters, a monster of unknown origin and power lies half awake, caught in a cursed slumber. Although it is quite healthy at the core, its sedentary nature has given rise to a slow spreading decay that has spread to its countless tentacles. Regardless of the route the PCs take entering the city, they disturb this ancient evil. Once the PCs begin to disembark from their Dragonship, they are attacked by a massive, alien-abomination, something old and sinister. This monster attacks as soon as they dock.

Although a series of tentacles erupt from the dark waters around the PCs and their ship, only a single

tentacle presses the attack. The PCs can fight from the docks (or beach, if they opted to leave the locks open), but staying close to the water is likely dangerous.

### Decaying Tentacle (1) CR 6

XP 2,400

NE Huge aberration

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

**Aura** undulating decay (20 ft., DC 18, 1d4 rounds)

#### DEFENSE

AC 18, **touch** 8, **flat-footed** 18 (+10 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 66 (7d8+35)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +10

**Defensive Abilities** DR 5/slashing; **Immune** inhaled effects, mind-affecting effects, poison; **Resist** cold 10

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** tentacle +11 (2d6+12 plus grab)

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.

**Special Attacks** constrict (2d6+12)

#### TACTICS

**During combat** The decaying tentacle's attack the nearest target, switching between targets to defend itself as necessary.

**Morale** Once the decaying tentacle is reduced to 0 hit points, it drops and stops moving. It slowly retracts 1d4 hours later.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 26, **Dex** 11, **Con** 20, **Int** –, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 25

**SQ** Mindless, no breath, undulating decay.

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any aquatic

**Organization** solitary, pods (3-6)

**Treasure** standard

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Undulating Decay (Ex)** The stench of the rot that emanates from this decaying tentacle is both potent and powerful. Any creature that fails its Fortitude save gains the *sickened* condition while it remains within its aura (20 ft.), and for an additional 1d4 rounds after it leaves.

**Mindless (Ex)** This tentacle is treated as if it was distinct unto itself, and as a result, is effectively mindless, and thus immune to mind-affecting attacks.

## ENCOUNTER 20 THE HORRID ONES CR 6

At any point after the PCs start the pumps to either clear a way to the entrance of Drowned Karthæn, they disturb a group of **Horrid Leshies**,

creatures that – after decades of corruption and evil – have shed all semblance of playfulness and joy, becoming fiendish servants of the Thrall Lords. While they normally delight in tormenting the decaying beast that dwells on the bed of the river, the arrival of the PCs have offered them new, more exciting targets to stalk and kill. Although a dozen of these horrible creatures live in the river, only two break off to attack the PCs.

*Two small, greenish-black creatures, their bodies a horrid amalgam of rot, seaweed, filth, and hate, start to sprint toward you.*

### Horrid Leshy (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200

Unseelie fiendish seaweed leshy  
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3*)  
CE Small plant  
(aquatic, extraplanar, leshy, shapechanger)  
**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, unseelie sight; Perception +9

### DEFENSE

**AC** 19, **touch** 16, **flat-footed** 14  
(+1 armor, +5 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)  
**hp** 30 (4d8+12)  
**Fort** +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4  
**Defensive Abilities** DR 5/cold iron or silver;  
**Immune** electricity, sonic, plant traits;  
**Resist** cold 5, fire 5; **SR** 9

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., swim 20 ft.  
**Melee** slam +5 (1d6+1 plus unseelie taint)  
**Special Attacks** smite good, sneak attack +1d6, unseelie taint, water jet  
**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 8<sup>th</sup>; concentration +7)  
**Constant**— *pass without trace*, *speak with plants* (related species only)  
**At will** — *invisibility*  
**3/day** — *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 9), *silent image* (DC 10)  
**1/day** — *alter self*, *darkness*, *entangle* (in water only) (DC 10), *magic mouth* (DC 11), *plane shift* (to and from Nachtland only) (DC 16), *sleep* (DC 10)

### TACTICS

**Before combat** The two leshy cast *invisibility* as they move towards the PCs. They position themselves to flank a relatively lightly armored PC.

**During combat** The leshy use their smite good ability on obvious clerics and paladins, but otherwise use a combination of water jet and *entangle* to try and drown the PCs.

**Morale** If one of the leshies drop, the other immediately *plane shifts* away, traveling to Nachtland.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 12, **Dex** 20, **Con** 14, **Int** 11, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 9  
**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 18  
**Feats** Ability Focus (water jet), Toughness  
**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Bluff +1, Perception +9, Stealth +19 (+23 in water), Survival +8 (+12 in water), Swim +13;  
**Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth (+8 in water), +4 Survival (+8 in water).  
**Languages** Sylvan; plantspeech; **Honor** 3  
SQ air cyst, amphibious, faerie walk, fey blood, leshy change shape, unseelie pact, verdant burst  
**Other Gear** padded armor

### The Roaming Dead

PCs that elect to explore the now exposed ruins are likely to encounter any number of ancient dwarven treasures, as well as plenty of the dead that, once trapped under the floodwaters, are now free to roam about, feasting on the living. The following monsters roam the now exposed ruins.

d%	Encounter	CR	Source
01–20	1d6 skeletons	1/3	<i>Bestiary</i>
21–25	1d4 grindylows	1/2	<i>Bestiary 2</i>
26–30	1d3 ghouls	1	<i>Bestiary</i>
31–35	1d3 giant frogs	1	<i>Bestiary</i>
36–45	1d2 flood trolls	2	<i>Battle of Blood-march Hill</i>
46–55	1d2 bunyips	3	<i>Bestiary 2</i>
46–55	1d4+2 shadows	3	<i>Bestiary</i>
56–65	1d2 haunted dwarves	3	pg xx
66–75	1d4 horrid leshies	4	pg 50
76–85	1d2 sea cats	4	<i>Bestiary 4</i>
86–95	1 large mud elemental	5	<i>Bestiary 2</i>
96–00	1 undead ooze	6	<i>Tome of Horrors Complete</i>





# ACT 3a: INTO THE ROYAL QUARTER...



## ENCOUNTER 20 INTO THE DEPTHS CR 5

When the Thrall Lords' servants first laid siege to Drowned Karthæn, the dwarves set a series of traps at the mouths of their access towers to ensure that anyone pushing past their defenses would be in for a nasty surprise. Even before the Mad Jarl flooded the city, those very servants set off several of these traps, collapsing the entrances in three of the four watchtowers.

PCs searching the city for a way into the depths will quickly discover that only the North Watchtower (location 10 on the map) — which was heavily defended, as evidenced by the pilboxes and old bunkers that ring the ancient tower — still allows for ingress into the depths below. However, the trap the dwarves laid against these forgotten invaders still stands.

About midway down the stairs, in the North Watchtower (10 on the map). The first trap is located approximately 50 feet above the royal quarter (some 250 ft. down). When triggered, part of the stairs collapse, bringing everyone and everything on them down into a pile of rubble.

### Collapsing Stairs Trap CR 5

XP 1,600

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 20;

**Disable Device** DC 25

#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** repair

**Effect** A section of the stairway collapses, dropping the PCs 50 ft. (5d6 falling damage) plus 1d6 damage from falling debris; DC 20 Reflex avoids.



## The Royal Quarters

The subterranean levels of Drowned Karthæn were the foundation of the city and, as was intended in their design, supposed to withstand all manner of attack, including the siege that eventually ushered in their doom. The finest masons built this section of the city, using the best stone and stout, iron supports. The average height throughout the quarter is 18 ft., although the jarl's chamber is much larger. There is no natural illumination anywhere in the quarter, although sconces do line the walls. All of the doors are wooden with iron bands, although the flooding has softened the wood (reducing hardness from 5 to 2). That same flooding has caused many of the doors to bloat and swell in their frames. Unless otherwise noted, opening a door in the royal quarter requires a DC 20 Strength check.

PCs entering the royal quarter for the first time (after it has been drained of seawater) encounter an overwhelming stench, the result of years of brackish build up, decay, and death. When the PCs first enter the royal quarter, they must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or gain the *sickened* condition. This lasts for one minute, at which point they may save again. Once the PCs save, they are considered to have 'adjusted' to the smell and remain unaffected by the prevalent stench for the next 24 hours. Creatures that cannot smell are immune to this effect. Creatures with a very sensitive sense of smell (such as creatures with the Scent ability) suffer a -4 penalty to this save.

## GM Note

If the PCs do not close the locks and pump the seawater from the city, remove the stench listed above. *If this is the case, all of the encounters in this section of the adventure occur underwater.* This section of the adventure assumes the PCs remove the

## ROOM 1 THE HALL OF WELCOMING

*This chamber stinks of seawater, decay, and death. Old banners, long ago rotted, drip onto the wet floor. Several silver fish, easily the size of your legs, lie dead in brackish pools of water. There is a single wooden door, flanked by coral encrusted sconces, on the north wall.*

This room was originally a royal reception hall, the place where the jarl's trusted warriors received visitors from aboveground to determine their intent, as well as to remove potential threats. Today, the room is empty, the furniture long ago rotted away. PCs who carefully search this room and succeed on a DC 20 Perception check discover a pitted, corroded, dwarven torque made of silver (worth 120 gp). There is nothing else of value in this room.

## ROOM 2 THE WESTERN CHECKPOINT CR 5

*Stones, stacked the height of a dwarf, run the length of this room, dividing it north from south, forming a coral encrusted wall. A hallway runs south along the eastern wall, but the debris here blocks it.*

Fearing invasion, the jarl's guards set up barricades throughout the city and this is one of them. When the city flooded, the men here died, their heads smashed against the stones when the wall of water rushed through the hallways. Now, the former guards lie piled in the corner of the room, just out of the PCs sight. When the PCs enter, they animate and attempt to defend the room. PCs trying to climb over the wall may easily do so (with a DC 10 Climb check), although each must make an Acrobatics skill check (DC 15) to avoid cutting themselves on the sharp coral that has since grown over the wall. PCs who fail this check suffer 1d4 points of slashing damage and must make a Fortitude save (DC 13) or contract Cholera.

### Cholera

**Type** disease (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 13

**Onset** 1d3 days; **Frequency** 1/day

**Effect** 1d2 Con damage; as long as a character suffers Con damage from Cholera, he is fatigued.

Once the PCs clear the barricade, two undead dwarves rise to attack the PCs.

### Haunted Dwarves (2)

CR 3

#### XP 800

Advanced dwarf skeletal champion warrior 1 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*)

CE Medium undead

**Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 17

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

**hp** 23 (3 HD; 2d8+1d10+7)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities, +4 bonus vs. channeled energy

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +4, defensive training; **DR** 5/bludgeoning; Immune cold, undead traits

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** heavy mace +7 (1d8+5) or 2 claws +7 (1d4+7)

**Special Attacks** hatred

#### TACTICS

**Before combat** The haunted dwarves take no special actions before combat begins.

**During combat** The haunted dwarves advance to the top of the barricade (gaining a +1 to hit targets below them), but otherwise to not advance out of the room.

**Morale** The haunted dwarves fight until they are destroyed.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 20, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 22 (26 vs. bull rush, 26 vs. trip)

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Eater Of The Dead<sup>DM</sup>, Improved Initiative

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Appraise +2, Climb +11, Intimidate +8, Perception +7, Stealth +6, Swim +11

**Languages** High Common, High Dwarven, Low Common, Low Dwarven, Val; **Honor** –

**Other Gear** mwk studded leather, heavy mace

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary, pstrols (4-6)

**Treasure** standard





### ROOM 3 WESTERN SERVANTS' HALL

*This room houses several smaller chambers within. Several beds lie crushed on the northern wall. Pools of black water dot the cold, stone floor.*

Originally dedicated to the royal servants that accompanied visiting dignitaries, this room has long since seen any use. Those who used it fled long before the flood. A careful search of this room (requiring a successful Perception skill check, DC 25) reveals an old lockbox, hidden behind a loose stone on the eastern wall. It contains a leather satchel, sealed with wax, which contains several ancient dwarven deeds for halls in Rhuneheim, made out to Clan Völsung. An additional scroll contains the following spells: *cure light wounds*, *remove disease*, and *find traps*. PCs that make a DC 20 Perception check discover a secret door on the north wall (that leads to 3a). Although this door is not locked or trapped, the coral on the other side has made opening it difficult. PCs need to make a DC 25 Strength check to force the door open.

### ROOM 3a THE NORTHWESTERN PASSAGE CR 2

*This long, dark hall stinks of dead fish. Coral encrusts most of the walls, forming a strange, sharp tunnel.*

A single dwarf, trapped when the complex flooded, died here, rising again as a ghoul. Once the PCs enter the passageway, he attacks.

#### Ghoul

CR 2

XP 400

hp 13 (see *Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game: Bestiary*)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The ghoul focuses on the first PC that enters.

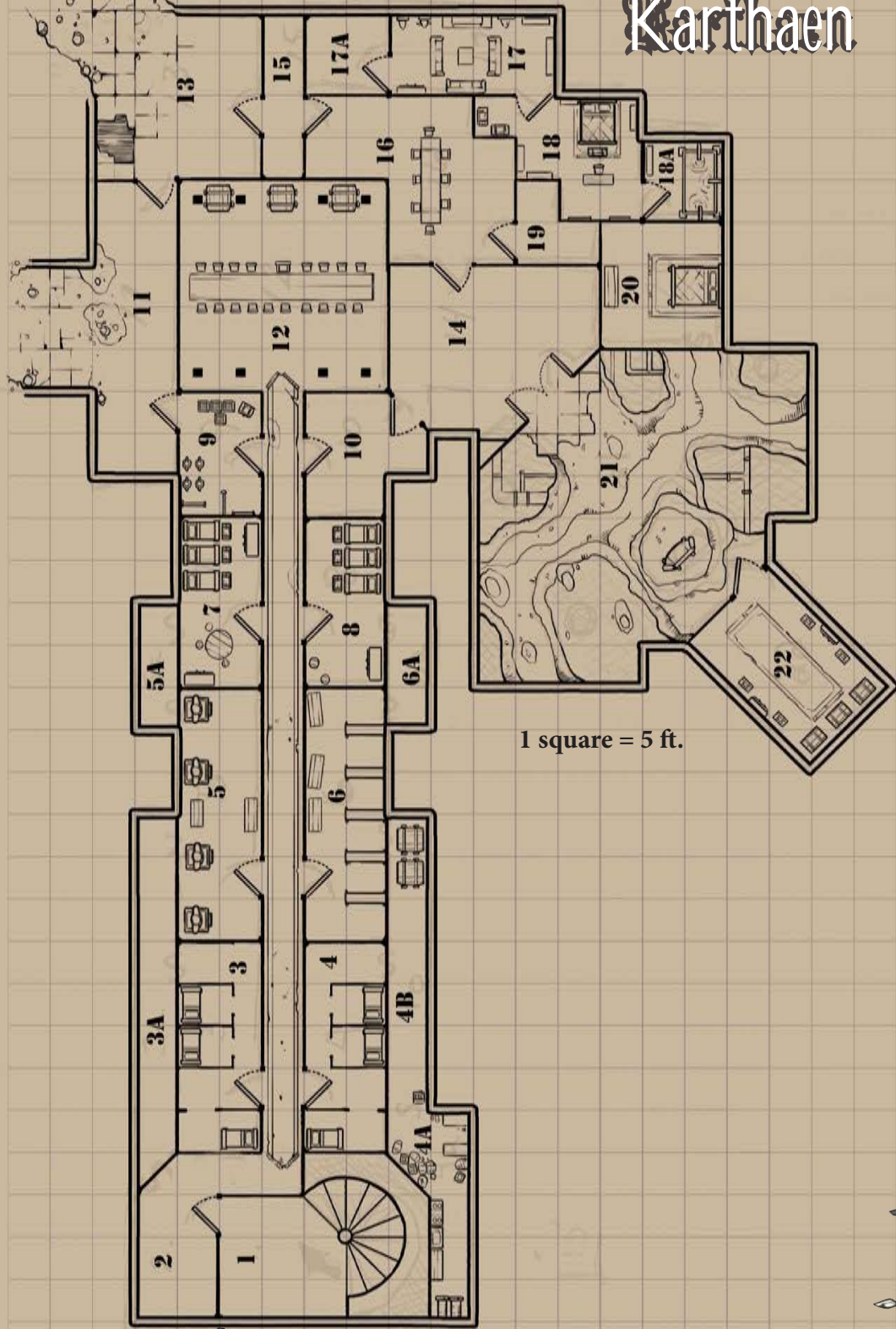
**Morale** The ghoul fights to the death.

The dwarf had nothing of value on him when he died, although PCs that succeed on a Perception check (DC 20) discover a small cluster of black-tipped oysters in a corner of the hall, 5 of which contain small black pearls (worth 50 gp each).

### MAP LOCATIONS

1. **The Hall of Welcoming** Originally the room where the royal guard met outside diplomats, this room became a security checkpoint before the flood.
2. **The Western Checkpoint** This was the official checkpoint for outside visitors.
3. **The Western Servants' Quarters** A room for the servants of esteemed guests and diplomats.
- 3a. **The Northwestern Passage** A passage for servants that allowed them to work out of sight.
4. **The Western Guests' Hall** Accommodations for visiting diplomats and guests.
- 4a. **The Storage Hall** A storage place for guests' goods, as well as a modified coat room of sorts.
- 4b. **The Southwestern Passage** A mirror of the northern passage, this let servants travel out of sight.
5. **The War Hall** A ceremonial hall for military commanders and important nobles.
- 5a. **The Northern Passage** A secret passage for guards and soldiers.
6. **The Royal Library** The clan's official library.
- 6a. **The Southern Passage** A passage for guards and soldiers.
7. **The Royal Guardroom** The official duty quarters for the Silver Guard.
8. **The Scribes' Quarters** The clan scribes' quarters.
9. **The Forward Armory** The armory.
10. **The Central Checkpoint** A secondary checkpoint established to segment and defend the royal quarter.
11. **The Northern Hall** A reception hall.
12. **The Grand Feasting Hall** A feasting hall.
13. **The Broken Hall** A destroyed reception hall.
14. **The Reception Hall** A reception hall.
15. **The Royal Blockade** A checkpoint designed to protect the ruling clan.
16. **The Family Hall** The clan's private hall.
17. **The Fire Hall** The clan's den.
- 17a. **The Hidden Hall** A hidden playroom for the Jarl's children.
18. **The Childrens' Room** The childrens' bedroom.
- 18a. **The Family Lavatory** The royal lavatory.
19. **The Royal Kitchen** The royal kitchens and larder.
20. **The Royal Bed** The royal bedroom.
21. **The High Hall** The jarl's official throneroom.
22. **The Jarl's Treasury** The jarl's treasury.

# The Royal Quarter of Drowned Karthæn



1 square = 5 ft.



## ROOM 4 THE WESTERN GUESTS' HALL

*This room houses several smaller chambers within. While most of the beds are still intact, several are broken and smashed. The room smells strongly of rot.*

Like the room opposite it on the north side of the main passageway, this room was dedicated to the royal guests of the jarl. Unlike the room to the north, it is far more opulent — or was at one time. A careful search of this room (requiring a successful Perception skill check, DC 10) reveals that each of the beds in this room have unique bedposts, each of which are capped with ornate silver and gold fixtures (each worth 25 gp). A total of 12 of these fixtures may be recovered from this room. PCs that make a DC 20 Perception check discover a secret door on the south wall (that leads to 4b). This door is not locked or trapped.

## ROOM 4a THE STORAGE HALL CR 3

*This room is stacked with old crates and barrels, all which are covered in a fine layer of coral and seaweed.*

This room was originally a storeroom that held everything from linens to dried goods, but all of that was destroyed when the jarl flooded the city. PCs that make a successful Perception skill check (DC 22) discover a cache of simple weapons, nearly all of which have long ago corroded. Two of the weapons in the cache have not. A masterwork cold iron long sword and +1 mithral buckler lie buried beneath the rest of the cache. A single shadow haunts this room, attacking the first PC that enters.

### Shadow CR 3

XP 800

hp 19 (see *Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game: Bestiary*)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The shadow attacks the first PC that enters the room, but immediately attacks any character that

wields divine powers, screaming curses as it does.  
**Morale** The shadow fights until it is destroyed.

## ROOM 4b THE SOUTHWESTERN PASSAGE

*This long, narrow hall stinks of the sea. A curtain of seaweed covers the western wall. Two massive casks dominate the eastern wall.*

Similar to the northern passageway, this passageway once allowed the royal servants access to the storerooms (in 4a), as well as to the guests in room 4. The passageway has long since fallen out of use. The two casks on the east wall were once filled with ale, but the seawater that flooded this quarter seeped through the cask's walls, spoiling anything inside. Although the ale smells fine, a DC 20 Perception check reveals the taint of something foul. PCs that drink from the casks must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or be *sickened* for 1d4 hours.

## ROOM 5 THE WAR HALL CR 4

*Four massive stone statues, each depicting a dwarven warrior in full battle dress, stand guard in front of the northern wall. Clusters of oysters cover the old stone floor.*

This room once served as a ceremonial hall, where visiting military commanders could bestow honors upon one another. After the city flooded, a whole bed of sea life sprung up in this room, feeding off of the flesh of the dead. Today, the floor is covered in a bed of oysters, which the PCs must carefully navigate in order to avoid cutting up their feet and legs. The whole floor in this room is treated as if it were covered in caltrops. PCs with bludgeoning weapons can clear a 5 ft. square of these oysters with little effort, but doing so takes 1 minute per square.

When the horrors that befell Karthæn reached their climax, two dwarven soldiers – mad with blood lust – took a dozen of the jarl's servants, accused them of treason, and slaughtered them to the man. Then, they turned on one another. Their combined deaths formed a powerful haunt here.



*Mad with bloodlust, two dwarven knights — sworn to protect their fellows — broke their oaths and slaughtered a dozen of their kith and kin in this room. The power of their betrayal, mixed with the grief and fear of the fallen, still echo in this room.*

### The Grim Ceremony of Betrayal CR 4

XP 1,200

CE haunt (30 ft. radius, around the remains of the dead)

Caster Level 4<sup>th</sup>

Notice Perception DC 20 (the faint odor of wet blood)

hp 8; Trigger proximity; Weakness tricked by invisibility;

Reset 1 hour

#### EFFECT

A sudden cacophony of dwarven pleas for help is cut short by the sudden sound of a hammer crushing a skull. The pleas then manifest as a single dwarven face that cries out in anger, filling the space with a rolling cloud of black thunder that mimics the effects of *chaos hammer* (DC 16). **Destruction** The bodies of the two dwarven knights must be removed and *bless* must be cast on the remains of those they slaughtered.

PCs searching this room can easily identify over a dozen bodies, two of which are the dwarven knights who killed their fellows here. The two knights still wear their scaled mail armor and grip ancient, cold iron hammers (both have the broken condition) — all of which is covered in a thick layer of pink and yellow coral. PCs that succeed at a DC 25 Perception check notice that one of the bodies is wearing an ornate silver and mithral ring on its left hand. When identified, it is a *ring of protection* +2. PCs searching the room who succeed on a Perception check (DC 20) discover hidden doors behind each of the statues (which lead to 3a and 5a, respectively).

### ROOM 5a THE NORTHERN PASSAGE

*This short passageway is filled with brightly colored coral. Two massive pipes, with thick iron grates that block any sort of egress, are located in the center of the ceiling.*

When the engineers originally built the city and installed the piping designed to flood it, they did so in remote locations. This was one of those locations. The two pipes in the ceiling have thick iron grates in place to block escape, requiring a DC

30 Strength check to remove. If they were removed, a PC would need to make a DC 20 Climb check to scale them. Both pipes run vertically for 80 ft. before making a sharp, 90-degree turn. They run horizontally for over a mile, exiting at the Southern Lock Station. There is nothing else of value in this room.

### ROOM 6 THE ROYAL LIBRARY CR 7

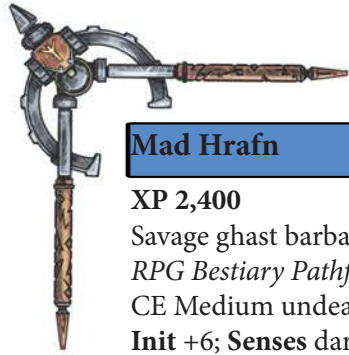
*This room is a pulpy mess. From the look of the bookshelves that stand, bloated, along the south wall, this was once a library or archive. The flooding has since left this room coated in black seaweed, with pockets of mold in the recesses on the ceiling. The smell of rot is almost overwhelming.*

When Jarl Kolfinnur flooded Karthæn, a dwarf named **Hrafn** was trapped alongside two of the jarl's guards in the archives. Sealed against the water, Hrafn and the guards hoped to wait out the flood, or at least, rescue. Sadly, it did not come and hunger soon set in. Unlike the guards around him, Hrafn wore a blessed ring — a gift from Jarl Kolfinnur — that sustained him. Eventually, the four guards with Hrafn died of starvation, rising again as ghosts. They fell upon Hrafn, and although he was able to slay them, the infection, powered by the magic of the ring, eventually took him — body and mind. A few nights later, Hrafn rose as the new keeper of the archives, his mind already turned to the eternal night.

Although this room eventually gave way to the floodwaters (which seeped in through cracks in the hidden doors that leads to 6a and 4b), the main door that led into this room from the main hall was exceptionally well constructed. Worse, the floodwaters caused it to swell into the frame, making it exceptionally hard to push open. Fortunately, those same floodwaters softened the wood some. PCs trying to enter this room must either make a successful Strength check (DC 27) or batter down

the door (hardness 3, 15 hit points). Doing either alerts **Mad Hrafn** to the presence of the intruders, who hides between two of the bookcases opposite of the door. He charges the first PC to open the door.





## Mad Hrafn

CR 7/MR 1

XP 2,400

Savage ghost barbarian (raging cannibal) 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary Pathfinder RPG Mythic Adventures*)

CE Medium undead

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13

**Aura** stench (10 ft., DC 18, 1d6+ 4 minutes or 20 ft., DC 20, 1d6+4 minutes)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 27, **touch** 17, **flat-footed** 22 (+4 armor, +2 deflection, +5 dexterity, +6 natural)

**hp** 64 (3d12+2d8+34)

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9; +2 bonus vs. channeled energy

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +2; **DR** 5/epic;

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

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +10 (1d6+6 plus bleed), 2 claws +10 (1d6+6 plus bleed)

**Special Attacks** bleed 1, disease, feral savagery, paralysis (1 rounds, DC 16), rage (13 rounds/day), rage power (animal fury)

### TACTICS

**Before combat** Mad Hrafn rages as soon as he sees his first foe, but otherwise takes no special actions.

**During combat** Mad Hrafn focuses on a single enemy at a time, shifting to a new foe only if they wield divine power or are otherwise dealing significant damage to him.

**Morale** Mad Hrafn fights until he's destroyed.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 23, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 20

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 28

**Feats** Ability Focus (stench), Combat Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +14, Climb +14, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +13, Perception +13, Stealth +14, Survival +9, Swim +14

**Languages** High Dwarven, Val; **Honor** —

**SQ** consume vigor (+1 round of rage), fast movement, intimidating gouge

**Other Gear** +1 studded leather, cannibal ring, ring of protection +2

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Ghoul Fever** injury; **save** Fort DC 15; **onset** 1 day; **frequency** 1/day; **effect** 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex damage; cure 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Charisma-based. An individual who dies while infected with ghoulish fever rises as a ghoulish the following evening.

**Raging Stench** While enraged, Mad

Hrafn gains the following benefits: +4 Str, +2 to Will saves, and -2 to AC. While raging, Mad Hrafn does not gain additional hit points or a Con bonus, but instead increases the range and potency of his stench. While raging, anyone within 20 ft. of Mad Hrafn must make a DC 20 Fort save or gain the *sickened* condition for 1d6+4 minutes. The save for this effect is Charisma-based.

PCs that succeed on a DC 20 Perception check discover two hidden doors, one on the southeastern corner (which leads to 6a) and one in the southwestern corner (which leads to 4b).

## ROOM 6a THE SOUTHERN PASSAGE

*This short passageway is filled with brightly colored coral. Two massive pipes, coated in rust and blocked with thick iron grates, are located in the center of the ceiling. Several silver fish lie limp in the pools of black water that dot the floor.*

When the engineers originally built the city and installed the piping designed to flood it, they did so in remote locations. This was one of those locations. The two pipes in the ceiling have thick iron grates in place to block escape, requiring a DC 30 Strength check to remove. If they were removed, a PC would need to make a DC 20 Climb check to scale them. Both pipes run vertically for 80 ft. before making a sharp, 90-degree turn. They run horizontally for over a mile, exiting at the southern lock station. Unlike the northern passage, this passage has several beds of oysters, clustered into corners by the doors. PCs that succeed on a DC 20 Perception check find 6 exceptionally large black pearls inside the oysters.

## ROOM 7 THE ROYAL GUARDROOM CR 7

*This chamber is filled with coral-encrusted beds and the floor is slick with a bed of green-black seaweed. Patches of rose-colored coral climb the eastern wall, covering a row of bunks in the corner. Several bodies lie inert on the bunks.*

Jarl Kolfinnur's royal guard lived all over the city, both above and belowground. When they were on duty, either guarding the Jarl or patrolling



the royal quarter, they slept here. Though most of his guard died elsewhere, several were in this room when it flooded. They died instantly, but rose soon after as ghosts. Unless the PCs were exceptionally stealthy when entering this room, the **ghosts** are “playing dead” on the tops of the bunks, waiting for the PCs to come close. They attack as soon as the first PC comes into range of their stench.

### The Tarnished Guard (4)

CR 3

XP 800

Ghast barbarian (raging cannibal) 2

NE Medium undead

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +12

**Aura** stench (10 ft., DC 16, 1d6+ 4 minutes or 20 ft., DC 18, for 1d6+4 minutes)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 17

(+3 armor, +5 dexterity, +4 natural)

**hp** 44 (2d12+2d8+21)

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8; +2 bonus vs. channeled energy

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +2;

**Immune** undead traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +9 (1d6+6), 2 claws +9 (1d6+6)

**Special Attacks** disease, paralysis (1 rounds, DC 15), rage (11 rounds/day), rage power (animal fury)

### TACTICS

**Before combat** The guard rage as soon as they see their first foe, but otherwise takes no special actions.

**During combat** The guard attack the closest enemies, making use of their stench ability to keep natural creatures sickened when and where possible.

**Morale** The guard fight until destroyed.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 23, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 20

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 25

**Feats** Deepsight, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Climb +13, Intimidate +12, Perception +12, Stealth +13, Survival +9, Swim +13

**Languages** High Dwarven, Low Dwarven, Low Common. Val;

**Honor** 3

**SQ** consume vigor (+1 round of rage), fast movement

**Combat Gear** *potion of cause light wounds*

**Other Gear** masterwork studded

leather

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary, pstrols (4-6)

**Treasure** standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Ghoul Fever** Bite-injury; **save** Fort DC 15; **onset** 1 day; **frequency** 1/day; **effect** 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex damage; **cure** 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Charisma-based. A humanoid that dies of ghoulish fever rises as a ghoulish at the next midnight.

**Raging Stench** While enraged, Tarnished Guards gain the following benefits: +4 Str, +2 to Will saves, and -2 to AC. Tarnished Guards do not, however, gain additional hit points or a Con bonus, but instead increases the range and potency of their stench. While raging, anyone within 20 ft. of the Tainted Guard must make a DC 18 Fort save or gain the sickened condition for 1d6+4 minutes. The save for this effect is Charisma-based.

This room is filled with the belongings of those who perished in the floods, but nearly all of those lie ruined in the chests at the foot of each of the bunks (which a DC 10 Perception check easily reveals). Searching these bunks and the chests is largely a useless endeavor, although PCs that make a successful Perception check (DC 20) discover a hidden compartment in the bottom of the last locker that contains a wax-sealed, waterproof satchel, lined with lead mesh. The satchel contains set of masterwork thieves' tools, two large pieces of amethyst (worth 150 gp each), a vial of acid, and a *potion of cat's grace*. One of the guards carries a small key that fits the southern door in **Room 15**.

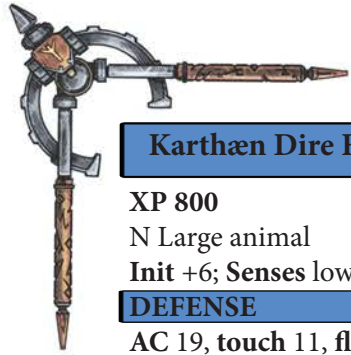
## ROOM 8

### THE SCRIBES' QUARTERS CR 6

*Seaweed covers nearly all of the furniture in this room. The unmistakable smell of rot emanates from the southeastern corner.*

Anything of value in this room was destroyed long ago. Today, **Karthæn Dire Frogs** call this chamber their home. When the PCs enter this room, they immediately attack.





## Karthæn Dire Frogs (2)

CR 5

XP 800

N Large animal

**Init** +6; **Senses** low-light vision, scent.; **Perception** +6

### DEFENSE

**AC** 19, **touch** 11, **flat-footed** 17

(+2 dexterity, +8 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 50 (4d8+28)

**Fort** +11, **Ref** +8, **Will** +2

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.; swim 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +8 (1d8+6 plus grab) or tongue +8 touch (grab)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (20 ft. with tongue)

**Special Attacks** pull (tongue, 10 ft.), swallow whole (1d8+6 bludgeoning damage, AC 12, 2 hp) tongue

### TACTICS

**Before combat** This mated pair of Karthæn dire frogs do nothing to prepare for combat.

**During combat** Karthæn dire frogs attempt to flank smaller foes, grabbing and swallowing them.

**Morale** The Karthæn dire frogs fight to the death.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 23, **Dex** 15, **Con** 24, **Int** 1, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +10 (+14 grapple); **CMD** 22 (26 vs. trip)

**Feats** Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

**Skills** Acrobatics +11 (+15 jumping), **Perception** +6, **Stealth** +2, **Swim** +14; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics (+8 jumping), +4 Stealth

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any aquatic

**Organization** solitary, mated pairs (2)

**Treasure** standard

## ROOM 9 THE FORWARD ARMORY

*This room is filled with racks of weapons and suits of dwarven armor, all of which are covered in a fine layer of yellow paste. Hundreds of yellow flowers sprout from a bed of bluish-green vines, which weave in and out of the racks.*

*There is an empty hole in the northern wall.*

Most of the armor and weapons in this room are useless. PCs who succeed on a **Perception** check (DC 24) find a +1 frost seaborne ironwood bardiche under a pile of ancient, corroded chainmail. PCs trying to identify

the flowers who succeed on a **Knowledge** (nature) skill check (DC 23), realize they are a harmless, underwater variety of the yellow-musk creeper. PCs who fail this check by five or more identify them as their more harmful cousin.

## ROOM 10 THE CENTRAL CHECKPOINT

*A wall of stones, about the height of a dwarf and covered in brightly colored coral, bisects this otherwise plain room. A door on the south wall lies broken on the floor. A hole in the center of the floor disappears, turning northward.*

When the foul murders that plagued Karthæn before its flood started to make their way into the royal chamber, Jarl Kolfinnur ordered his Silver Guard to clear this room and erect a checkpoint, ensuring anyone coming from the other wings had to pass through here before they could reach his chambers. They did so, holding it to the end. When the jarl ordered his men out, the sane dwarves maintaining it followed orders and fled. The room has since become one of the various exit points the skergrafa in room 13 has tunneled into (PCs following the tunnel discover it runs under room 9 and 11, exiting in room 13 in the northwest corner).

## ROOM 11 THE NORTHERN HALL CR 3

*This room was obviously the beginning to a great tunnel that ran to another wing like this one. Today, the floors are pitted and cracked, with seaweeds and plant life growing up between them. The northern tunnel lies choked with rubble.*

This chamber originally held visitors waiting to enter the jarl's family quarters. The skergrafa that once cleaned this area, however, has been malfunctioning for years and has dug several tunnels underneath the adjacent rooms, including this one. As a result, the floor here is very sensitive and the smallest amount of weight (about 50lbs) causes the center of the room to collapse. Worse, most of this damage is hidden under a bed of kelp. Clever PCs that make a successful DC 15 **Knowledge** (engineering) or **Knowledge** (dungeoneering) check immediately note the sloping floor (where it meets the walls), indicating a lack of support at the central floor.



# THE RUNE OF HOPE

### Camouflaged Pit Trap

CR 3

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25;  
Disable Device DC 20

#### EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset none  
Effect 30-ft. deep pit (3d6 falling damage); DC 20 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

There is nothing of value in this room.

## ROOM 12 THE GRAND FEASTING HALL CR 7

*A massive table, choked with seaweed, runs the length of this grand hall. Three massive kegs, each dripping something that resembles seawater, lie bloated on the eastern wall. Stone columns, carved to resemble heroes, line the opposite wall.*

Jarl Kolfinnur's family once dined in this hall, and it was herein that one of his most trusted lieutenants — a dwarf named **Suikku** — betrayed him by poisoning his family, turning them into the cannibals they became. His crime hidden from all, he continued to serve the jarl up until he went mad and flooded the city. Suikku perished in the flood, but rose as a wight soon after. Unlike most of the royal quarter, this room was not completely flooded and Suikku built a small alcove in the ceiling where he continues to brew foul poisons (he fancies himself an alchemist, even if that is far from the truth), testing them on whatever entered the flooded dungeon, and when lacking more intelligent specimens, what sea life he can catch. Unless the PCs are exceptionally quiet, Suikku hears the PCs fighting in one of the adjacent rooms and climbs up to his makeshift lab. When the PCs enter, he rains down alchemist on them. Suikku's makeshift lab is approximately 20 feet up, built among the rafters in the southeastern corner of the room. Because the stonework is broken and covered in coral, a DC 15 Climb check is sufficient to reach the small alchemical alcove.

### Suikku the Betrayer

CR 7

XP 3,200

Wight rogue (underground chemist) 5 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Class Guide*)

LE Medium undead

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12

#### DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 18  
(+4 armor, +4 dexterity, +1 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 60 (9d8+12)

Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +7

Defensive Abilities trap sense +1, uncanny dodge;

Immune undead traits

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee shortsword +8/+3 (1d6+2/19-20) or slam +3 (1d4+1)

Ranged mwk underwater light crossbow +11 (1d8/19-20)

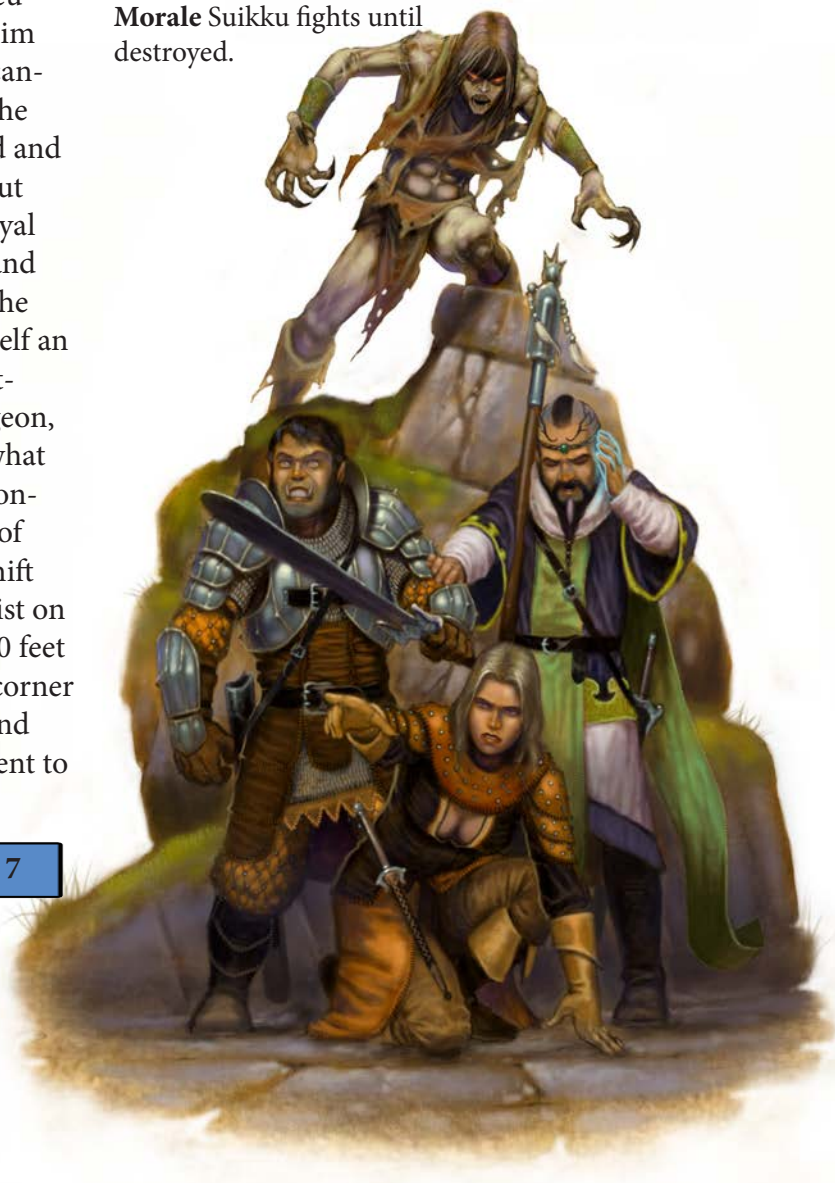
Special Attacks energy drain (1 level, DC 13), sneak attack +3d6

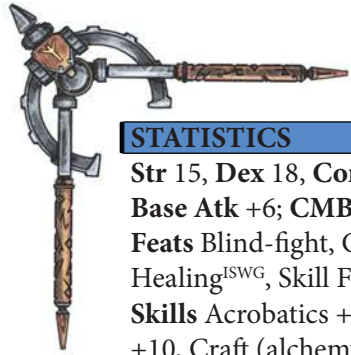
#### TACTICS

**Before combat** Suikku hides, preparing the sneak attack the PCs with alchemist fire.

**During combat** Suikku attacks the PCs with alchemist fire and his light crossbow. If forced into melee, he tries to Feint in Combat, followed by sneak attacks against the PCs.

**Morale** Suikku fights until destroyed.





### STATISTICS

**Str** 15, **Dex** 18, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 13

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 23

**Feats** Blind-fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Godless Healing<sup>ISWG</sup>, Skill Focus (Perception)

**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Appraise +6, Bluff +7, Climb +10, Craft (alchemy) +10, Craft (clockworks) +10, Craft (traps) +10, Diplomacy +7, Disable Device +16, Escape Artist +12, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +8, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +12, Sense Motive +10, Sleight of Hand +10, Spellcraft +8, Stealth +20, Swim +6, Use Magic Device +7; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth

**Languages** High Dwarven, Low Dwarven, Val; **Honor** — SQ chemical weapons, create spawn, godless healing, precise splash weapons, resurrection vulnerability, rogue talent (bleeding attack), trapfinding +2

**Combat Gear** alchemist's fire (4)

**Other Gear** +1 *hide shirt*, mwk underwater light crossbow, shortsword, mwk artisan's tools, mwk artisan's tools, crowbar, mwk thieves' tools, 120 pp

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Create Spawn (Su)** Any humanoid creature that is slain by a wight becomes a wight itself in only 1d4 rounds. Spawn so created are less powerful than typical wights, and suffer a -2 penalty on all d20 rolls and checks, as well as -2 hp per HD. Spawn are under the command of the wight.

In addition to his gear, Suikku has an extensive library of waterproof journals, alchemical inks, pens, and several boxes of coins (approximately 500 gp in assorted gold coins, all minted in Rhuneheim) he's collected while searching the surrounding ruins.

Although he's

positive his crime continues to go unnoticed, Suikku avoids meeting with his former jarl, out of fear of what the jarl is becoming (although his own guilt drives some of that, as well).



### ROOM 13 THE BROKEN HALL CR 7

*This room could have been anything, but appears to be little more than a massive pile of rubble, itself covered with coral and seaweed. A single, algae covered automaton – the shape of a large centipede with fiery eyes – turns to you as soon as you enter.*

Drowned Karthæn was once serviced by hundreds of these skergrafa, engineering wonders that maintained their tunnels, cleared rubble, processed ore and gems, and otherwise aided the dwarves in expanding their subterranean realms. Since the fall of Karthæn, however, most of these automatons have ceased functioning correctly. This is one of them.



**Skergrafa (1)****CR 7****XP 3,200**

N Large construct (clockwork)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.;

Perception +1

**DEFENSE**AC 21, **touch** 9, **flat-footed** 21 (+12 natural, -1 size)**hp** 80 (9d10+30)**Fort** +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4**Defensive Abilities** DR 5/adamantine;**Immune** construct traits**Weaknesses** vulnerable to electricity**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.**Melee** 2 claws +15 (1d6+7/19-20 plus grab), bite +15 (1d8+10 plus grab)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Special Attacks** grit cloud, swallow whole (3d8+10 bludgeoning and slashing damage, AC 16, hardness 5, 20 hp)**TACTICS****Before Combat** The skergrafa does not prepare for combat.**During Combat** The skergrafa expels its cloud against spellcasters and heavily armored foes as often as possible.**Morale** The skergrafa fights until destroyed.**ECOLOGY****Environment** any underground**Organization** solitary**Treasure incidental** (2,000 gp worth of raw red mithral ore)**STATISTICS****Str** 24, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 1**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 27**Feats** Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Grit Cloud (Ex)** The skergrafa can expel a 10-foot-radius cloud of hot dirt from vents along its body as a free action which fills the air surrounding it with a thick layer of grit that obscures vision and makes breathing or speaking arduous. This cloud acts like *obscuring mist* except it cannot be burned away by fire spells but instead can be counteracted by spells with the cold or water descriptors. In addition, any creature inside the cloud that tries to speak or cast a spell with a verbal component must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or become nauseated for 1 round. The skergrafa can only use this ability every 1d4+1 rounds.

**ROOM 14****THE RECEPTION HALL CR 4**

*Banners, wet with rot and refuse, stick to the slime-covered walls of this chamber. Lumps of pulpy wood, resembling furniture, dot the partially flooded floor.*

Before Drowned Karthæn fell, this room was Jarl Kolfinnur's reception hall – the place he received dignitaries, relaxed with friends, or offered “unofficial” council to those he favored. Unlike the rest of the rooms, the floor of this room is recessed a full foot, so that anyone entering effectively “steps down to the same level” to the once seated jarl, a tradition the Jarl brought forward from Rhuneheim. Now, the room is filled with murky, black water. Today, a **gray ooze** calls this chamber home.

**Gray Ooze****CR 4****XP 1,200****hp** 50 (see *Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game: Bestiary*)**TACTICS****During Combat** The gray ooze attacks the first PC to enter the center of the room.**Morale** The gray ooze fights until it is destroyed.**ROOM 15****THE ROYAL BLOCKADE CR 2**

*A large pile of coral-encrusted rocks, the height of a dwarf, bisects this otherwise narrow room.*

This was a blockade the jarl's loyal guard built to protect his family and their chambers. Climbing over this blockade is somewhat dangerous, but the room is otherwise empty. The southern door is locked with a good lock (DC 30), although PCs who searched the royal guards (in F7) may have found the key. PCs trying to climb over the wall may easily do so (with a DC 10 Climb check), although each must make an Acrobatics skill check (DC 15) to avoid cutting themselves on the sharp coral that has since grown over the wall. PCs who fail this check suffer 1d4 points of slashing damage and must make a Fortitude save (DC 13) or contract Cholera.

GMs will find the stats for Cholera on page 52 of this adventure.





## ROOM 16 THE FAMILY HALL CR 6

*A large wooden table dominates this otherwise intimate chamber. Black seaweed lies in clumps on the floor, and several crabs skitter into dark corners as soon as you enter.*

Originally, this is where Jarl Kolfinnur's family dined. Only the jarl's most trusted servants entered this room. A single clockwork soldier, made from hammered bronze and mithral, stands watch in the northwest corner. It attacks any non-dwarf that enters the room.

### The Clockwork Soldier CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 64 (see *Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game: Bestiary 3*)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The clockwork soldier targets non-dwarves first, but will attack anyone that attacks it. If any dwarf commands it to stop (in High Dwarven), it does so for a single round before renewing its attacks.

**Morale** The clockwork soldier attacks until destroyed.

PCs who succeed on a Perception check (DC 25) find a small, ancient chest under one of the clumps of seaweed in the center of the room. The box contains 600 gold coins (minted in Rhuneheim), each with the likeness of the jarl's wife.

## ROOM 17 THE FIRE HALL CR 5

*Clumps of decaying furniture form a half-circle around a fireplace on the eastern wall. Crabs skitter about the room, darting between pools of black, brackish water and clumps of dull, gray-colored oysters. The room smells sweet, but hints of rot waft in from a door to the north.*

When the jarl discovered his family feasting on their former servants, it was in this room. Confronted with monsters, he cut them down instantly, but failed to do much about the bodies of those they were in the midst of consuming. Those servants have since risen as ghouls.



# THE RUNE OF HOPE

## Ghouls (4)

CR 1

XP 400

hp 13 (see *Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game: Bestiary*)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** As soon as the PCs start to explore, the ghouls silently rise and attack.

**Morale** Although intelligent, years of hunger have driven these ghouls to fight to the death.

There is a secret door in the north wall of this room, which requires a DC 20 Perception check to locate. Otherwise, there is nothing of value in this room.

## ROOM 17a THE HIDDEN HALL CR 3

*The floor of this chamber is covered in seaweed, clusters of dull, grey oysters, and small toys. Several beds of coral, each pink and bone-white, grow in the northeastern corner.*

This room was once a nursery. As the jarl's children grew, they desired a 'hideaway' in which to play and the jarl, as a gift, had his engineers install a door that would hide the room from outsiders. After the jarl slew his family, he was mad with grief and couldn't bear to look at them. Shortly before flooding the city, he dragged their bodies here.

The **guardian doll** that now occupies this place was not originally one of the young dwarves' toys; Vrái the Bloodied created it and sent it into the ruins to explore. When the PCs started the pumps to empty the city, the guardian doll took refuge here. The guardian doll will not attack PCs unless it suspects they are weak, or clearly has an advantage (if the PCs use this room to rest, for instance). PCs who succeed on a DC 25 Perception skill check discover the guardian doll. If the guardian doll is destroyed, the PCs can recover three black sapphires, each worth 1,000 gp.

### The Guardian Doll

CR 3

XP 800

NE Tiny construct (cold)

**Init** +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +5

#### DEFENSE

AC 16, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 13  
(+3 Dex, +1 natural, +2 size)



hp 22 (4d10)

Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2

Defensive Abilities DR 5/magic; Immune construct traits; SR 14

Weaknesses susceptible to mind-affecting effects, vulnerable to fire

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee doll's dagger +10 (1d2-1/19-20 plus 1d6 and paralysis)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4<sup>th</sup>; concentration +4)

At Will — ray of frost

3/day — alarm, charm person (DC 11), light, mage hand, open/close, prestidigitation

1/day — frost fall (DC 12), levitate

#### STATISTICS

Str 8, Dex 17, Con —, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10

Base Atk +4; CMB +5; CMD 11

Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Escape Artist +5, Linguistics +3, Perception +5, Stealth +15

Languages High Dwarven, Low Common, High Common; Honor —

SQ Soul Focus

#### ECOLOGY

Environment any cold

Organization solitary, pair, or coven (3–8)

Treasure standard

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Doll's Dagger (Su)** The dagger wielded by a guardian doll is treated as a masterwork weapon and delivers 1d6 points of cold damage in addition to its normal damage. Those struck by the dagger must succeed at a DC 12 Fortitude save or be paralyzed by the supernatural cold of the weapon for 1d4 rounds. If the guardian doll is destroyed, its weapon becomes a useless child's toy. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Soul Focus (Su)** The soul bound to the doll lives within a focus integrated into the doll or its apparel, typically one of the doll's eyes or a gem embedded into its neck or chest. As long as this soul focus remains intact, it can be used to animate another doll, using the same cost as creating a new construct. Once bound into the soul focus, the soul continues to learn. If it is put into a new doll body, the soul retains its personality and memories from its previous bodies. A soul focus has hardness 8, 12 hit points, and a break DC of 20.

**Susceptible to Mind-Affecting Effects (Ex)** Like a soulbound doll, a guardian doll is susceptible to mind-affecting effects. However, due to the singular purpose with which it is imbued, its saves against such effects are made with a +1 racial bonus.

## ROOM 18 THE CHILDREN'S ROOM

*A single bed, now covered in mold and slimy weeds, is all that is left of this room. Lumps of sodden furniture line the rest of the walls, but clumps of oysters and other crustaceans cover everything else.*

This was once the children's bedroom. There is nothing of value in it now.

## ROOM 18a THE FAMILY LAVATORY

*A large basin of black ichor, thick with sediment and smelling of sulfur, dominates this room. The rest of this room is thick with small, sharp shells.*

This was the family lavatory. A secret door (DC 20) on the western wall grants access to 18. There is nothing else of value in this room.

## ROOM 19 THE ROYAL KITCHEN CR 5

*Cupboards, pots, pans, and similar items line the walls of this small chamber.*

This was originally the royal kitchen where Suikku the Betrayer worked. While the jarl dismissed most of his staff before he went mad and flooded the city, a few elected to remain. Those who did die in the watery doom that befell the city, rising days later as ghouls.

### Ghouls (4)

CR 1

XP 400

hp 13 (see *Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game: Bestiary*)

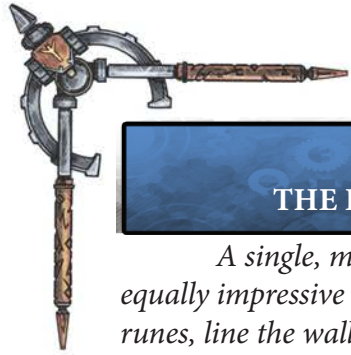
#### TACTICS

**During Combat** As soon as the PCs start to explore, the ghouls silently rise and attack.

**Morale** Although intelligent, years of hunger have driven these ghouls to fight to the death.

PCs who succeed on a DC 20 Perception check discover a beautiful, silver dwarven torc that functions as an *amulet of natural armor* +2 on one of the ghouls.





## ROOM 20 THE ROYAL BED CR 6

*A single, massive chest stands opposite of an equally impressive bed. Iron sconces, inlaid with silver runes, line the walls. Unlike the rest of this dungeon, this room is dry.*

When the jarl flooded the city, the Thrall Lords saw fit to empower his act, cursing him in the process. Once per day, the jarl's spirit is forced from its throne and brought into this room, where it relives its death — drowning all over again. Worse, many of the spirits that didn't rise again as undead have come here, forming a powerful haunt to torment the jarl for his selfish act.

*Suddenly, the air gets cold and thick, clinging to your nose and mouth like watery claws. Every time you try to take a breath, water fills your lungs.*

### The Drowning Room

CR 6

XP 3,200

CE haunt (30 ft. radius, focused on the jarl's bed)

Caster Level 5<sup>th</sup>

Notice Perception DC 20 (the sound of someone gurgling and choking)

hp 12; Trigger proximity; Weakness —; Reset 1 day

#### EFFECT

The room suddenly fills with water, filling the space with the desperate cries of those who died at the hands of the mad jarl. If the target can't breathe water, it's unable hold its breath and immediately begins to drown.

At the start of its next turn, the target must succeed at a DC Fortitude save (DC 17) to cough up this haunted water or it falls unconscious and is instantly brought to 0 hit points. On the next round, the target must save successfully again or drop to -1 hit point and start dying; on the third round it must save successfully again or die. While the victim is drowning, the haunt is considered active and can be damaged. If the haunt is destroyed before the victim drowns, they immediately cough up the haunted water and stabilize at their current condition.

**Destruction** The jarl's body must be dragged into the room and doused in holy water.

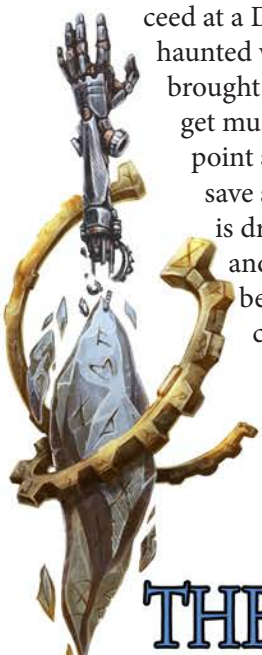
All of Jarl Kolfinnur's personal items remain in this room, covered in a fine layer of muck. These items include a +1 *singing heavy steel shield* (that bears the name Læsa), +2 *vital guard breastplate* (that bears the name Hraustr), and a +2 *thundering cold iron warhammer* (that bears the name Ófrithr) — all of which are proudly displayed next to his bed. A careful search of the room also reveals several additional items. A PC that succeeds on a Perception check (DC 20) finds a *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of remove disease*, *potion of owl's wisdom*, and a *wand of cure light wounds*, all of which are stored in a locked (DC 30) iron box under the stones beneath his bed.

## ROOM 21 THE HIGH HALL CR 10

*A massive column made of brightly colored coral encases the throne of this hall, its tentacles reaching out in a strange, almost alien pattern; bonding with the chamber's walls, floor, and ceiling. A single figure, cloaked in decay and wearing a mantle of seaweed, sits on the throne, its eyes bright with malice.*

Once the jarl's throne room, this room now serves as his prison. Powered by **the rune Laguz**, which the jarl used to dominate the river and build his city, it now amplifies the curse the Thrall Lords whispered onto the city, and here, it acts as the city's living heart. Encased in the base of the throne, a giant colony of coral has grown up and around both the rune and the throne, its tentacles reaching out and fusing with the floor, ceiling, and walls. Parts of the coral have grown down into the floors below, revealing the piping system that once kept the city safe and dry. The coral, much like the mad jarl, serves to protect the rune, perpetuating the dark curse that holds the city in its sway. Although it is not active at all times, the recent removal of the water that gave it life has awoken it, putting it (and the jarl) on the defensive.

This encounter is split into three parts; the coral, the jarl, and the minions who serve him in death. While the jarl and his minions are active enemies, the coral is a more insidious enemy, changing the terrain and altering the battlefield each round. Once the PCs enter the room, the mad jarl begins the



process of rising from the throne, a process that takes 1d3 rounds (he has to pull away the coral that encases him) for the regular encounter or 1 round for the mythic encounter. While he does this, 3 **medium water elementals** rise up from the waters below the room to attack the PCs. Once free, the jarl engages the PCs as well, targeting fellow dwarves or anyone that threatens the rune — which is encased in the base of his throne. When the coral acts, it does one of the following:

### D10 Action

**1-2** Pulls a tentacle free from a wall, raining stone and other debris on the PCs below. PCs within 10 ft. of the tentacle's point of origin (regardless of its height) must make a Reflex save (DC 16) to avoid the falling debris, which deals 3d6 points of damage. PCs who save halve the damage.

**3-4** A single polyp explodes outward, dealing 5d4 points of piercing damage to everyone in a 15 ft. cone. PCs that succeed on a DC 16 Reflex save avoid the damage entirely. PCs struck by the exploding polyp must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d4 rounds.

**5-6** A single tentacle attacks a PC (+11, dealing 2d6+12 damage). If it hits the PC, it makes free combat maneuver check (CMB +15) to bull rush the PC, moving it toward the closest pit.

**7-8** A single tentacle retracts from the floor, creating a pit where it once was. This pit is 10 ft. in diameter and 30 ft. deep. PCs adjacent to the pit when it is created must make a DC 16 Reflex save to avoid falling in.

**9-10** Summon another water elemental. If less than three water elementals are on the field, the coral draws on the rune's power to call another water elemental to the battle.

Although the rune-cursed coral colony was once a normal, living animal, the magic of the Laguz rune has twisted it, creating an abomination that has the following statistics:

### Rune-Cursed Coral Colony

CR 5

**XP 1,200**

NE Huge aberration

**Init** +2; **Senses** tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +7

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, **touch** 8, **flat-footed** 18

(-2 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 88 (5d8+60)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** -1 **Will** +4

**Defensive Abilities** DR 10/bludgeoning;

**Immune** mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, and death effects

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** — ft.

**Melee** slam +10 (2d6+8)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The rune-cursed colony does nothing to prepare for combat.

**During Combat** The rune-cursed colony acts randomly throughout combat, unless someone attacks (tries to retrieve) the rune Laguz. At the point, it directs its attacks against them.

**Morale** The rune-cursed colony fights to the death.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 26, **Dex** 6, **Con** 18, **Int** 2, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 11

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 21 (cannot be tripped)

**Feats** Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

**Skills** Perception +7

**Languages** — ; **Honor** —

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any aquatic

**Organization** colony (but acts as a single entity)

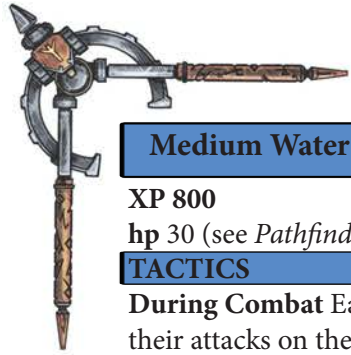
**Treasure** standard

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**SQ Calcified Armor (Ex)** A rune-cursed coral grows exceptionally fast, cannibalizing parts of the colony to strengthen its armor and fortify its overall body. A rune-cursed coral colony receives bonus hit points based on its size.

**Summon Elemental (Su)** Calling on the power of the rune Laguz, the rune-cursed coral colony has gained the ability to summon a medium water elemental once per minute. It can only maintain three of these elementals at a time.





### Medium Water Elementals (3) CR 3

XP 800

hp 30 (see *Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game: Bestiary*)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Each round, the water elemental focus their attacks on the PC closest to the rune.

**Morale** The water elementals fight until destroyed.

### Kolfinnur, Fallen Jarl of Sænegard CR 7

XP 3,200

Runscarred dwarf wight fighter 6

NE Medium undead (humanoid, dwarf)

**Init** +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 27, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 24

(+8 armor, +3 Dex, +6 natural)

**hp** 58 (6d10+18)

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7 (+2 vs. fear); +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

**Defensive Abilities** defensive training;

**Immune** undead traits

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** +2 *human-bane battleaxe* +13/+8 (1d8+6/×3 plus 2d6 vs. human) or dagger +9/+4 (1d4+3/19-20)

or slam +4 (1d4+1 plus energy drain)

**Special Attacks** create spawn, energy drain (1 level, DC 12), hatred, rune spark, weapon training (axes +1)

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Kolfinnur spends the first 1d3 rounds freeing himself from the throne.

**During Combat** Kolfinnur defends the rune, standing close to his throne and targeting anyone who tries to take the rune. Otherwise, he targets dwarves, clerics, and other divine characters, in that order.

**Morale** Kolfinnur fights until he's destroyed.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 17, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 8, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 22 (30 vs. bull rush, 30 vs. trip)

**Feats** Cleave, Disruptive, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Step Up, Weapon Focus (battleaxe)

**Skills** Acrobatics +0, Climb +4, Intimidate +6, Perception +3, Stealth +8, Survival +7, Swim +6; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth

**Languages** High Dwarven, Low Dwarven; **Honor** —

SQ armor training 1, resurrection vulnerability

**Combat Gear** *potion of blur*, *potion of levitate*, *potion of resist fire 20*

**Other Gear** +2 *chainmail*, +2 *human-bane battleaxe*, (2) daggers, *cloak of quick reflexes* +2/+3, *stagger-proof boots*, 86 gp

### Kolfinnur, Fallen Jarl of Sænegard CR 8/MR 1

XP 4,800

Runscarred dwarf wight fighter 6/Guardian 1

NE Medium undead (humanoid, dwarf)

**Init** +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 27, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 24

(+8 armor, +3 Dex, +6 natural)

**hp** 63 (6d10+23)

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7 (+2 vs. fear); +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

**Defensive Abilities** defensive training, hard to kill;

**Immune** undead traits

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** +2 *human-bane battleaxe* +13/+8 (1d8+6/×3 plus 2d6 vs. human) or dagger +9/+4 (1d4+3/19-20)

or slam +4 (1d4+1 plus energy drain)

**Special Attacks** create spawn, energy drain (1 level, DC 12), hatred, mythic power (5/day, surge +1d6), rune spark, weapon training (axes +1)

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Kolfinnur spends the first 1 round freeing himself from the throne.

**During Combat** Kolfinnur defends the rune, standing close to his throne and targeting anyone who tries to take the rune. Otherwise, he targets dwarves, clerics, and other divine characters, in that order. **Morale** Kolfinnur fights until he's destroyed.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 17, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 8, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 22 (30 vs. bull rush, 30 vs. trip)

**Feats** Cleave<sup>M</sup>, Disruptive, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Step Up, Weapon Focus (battleaxe)

**Skills** Acrobatics +0, Climb +4, Intimidate +6, Perception +3, Stealth +8, Survival +7, Swim +6;

**Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth

**Languages** High Dwarven, Low Dwarven; **Honor** —

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

SQ armor training 1, resurrection vulnerability

**Combat Gear** *potion of blur*, *potion of levitate*, *potion of resist fire 20*

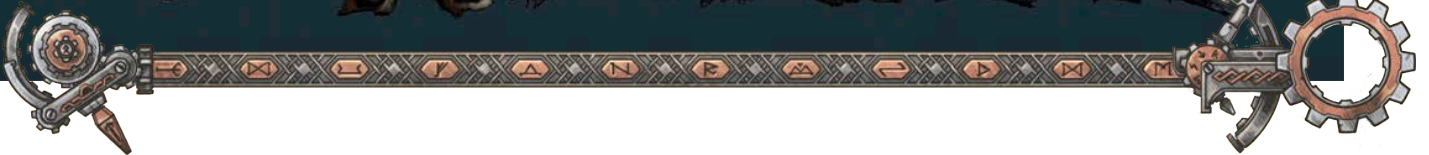
**Other Gear** +2 *chainmail*, +2 *human-bane battleaxe*, (2) daggers, *cloak of quick reflexes* +2/+3, *stagger-proof boots*, 86 gp



# THE RUNE OF HOPE

Kolfrunor, Fallen Barf of

Clan Sönengard





## ROOM 22 THE JARL'S TREASURY

Sealed against time and the elements alike, this room is dry and dusty. Mounds of coins, gems, and works of art line the walls. A massive white fur rug runs the length of the room, leading up to a series of three chests.

This room contains Jarl Kolfinnur's treasures: 10,000 gp, 15,000 sp, and 5,000 gp in assorted gems. It also contains 5,000 gp in assorted art. It also contains a set of +1 *platemail*, +2 *chainmail*, +1 *studded leather*, (2) +1 *heavy steel shields*, and (3) +1 *heavy crossbows*.

## AFTERMATH CR 8

Once the jarl is dispatched and the coral colony has been destroyed, recovering the rune **Laguz** is relatively straight forward. PCs need only make a DC 15 Disable Device, Knowledge (engineering), or Sleight of Hand skill check. Alternately, they can carefully chip away at the coral (Hardness 5, 30 hit points) until they free the rune.

After recovering the rune, the PCs are relatively free to explore the ruins, especially if they haven't explored all the rooms. However, because Northgard (or Ælveheim) is in danger, most PCs will probably want to return with haste.

When the PCs return to Caol, they discover that the glitterfane elders have devised a ritual that enables the PCs to wield the power of the chalice and Laguz combined. This ritual projects their spirits to Northgard and allows them to cleanse the fortress of *rage fever*. The

PCs have a day to rest and resupply in Caol before Vella tells them that the elders are ready to perform the ritual.

Ranks of glitterfane acolytes stand and hover around the main hall of the Grand Temple of Alnara. As the first stars of evening appear overhead the glitterfane start singing a high hymn of praise to Alnara and thanks for her mercy. On an altar in the centre of the hall Alnara's chalice stands next to the carved rune of Laguz that you rescued from the dark depths. As the singing grows to crescendo both the chalice and the rune begin to glow with captured starlight. The hall and the glitterfane fade into the light which suffuses you, making your clothes and weapons, skin and eyes glow with holy light. You feel yourselves pulled upwards along a radiant path into the depths of the chalice, or perhaps into the starlit skies.



# THE RUNE OF HOPE



## ACT 4: NORTHGARD IN FLAMES



The PCs fly effortlessly along a path made from starlight above Alnara's realm of Briglaess — a peaceful land of glades, valleys and meadows unmarked by war or sorrow. In the far distance they see a shining Celestial Court, but their path bends away from that glorious sight and down, back towards the darkness of Midgard. Along the path they are joined by a bright valkyrie who introduces herself as a servant of Alnara. She explains that the power of the chalice is sending them to Nachtland, a demi-plane, the double of Northgard where they can combat the evil of *rage fever* directly. Alnara, channeling power through the chalice, has created this realm in answer to the thrall lord's wiles, while the power of Laguz protects the PCs and gives them the ability to strike down the spiritual evil that has nearly overtaken the fortress.

The valkyrie reveals that the PCs can channel Laguz's power in one of three ways, and as each PC chooses their boon she touches them with her longspear in blessing.

**Blessed Blades** — for the duration of the fight in Shadow Northgard all of the character's weapons glow with golden light and gain the *bane* ability against elementals and creatures of Neinferth.

**Blessed Lore** — for the duration of the fight in Shadow Northgard the character's spells gain +2 caster levels and half of any damage inflicted counts as positive energy.

**Blessed Souls** — for the duration of the fight in Shadow Northgard the character gains the ability to protect their companions. Whenever they affect an ally within 30 ft. with a spell or ability, that ally also gains +2 sacred bonus to AC and all saving throws, and is protected by a *death ward* effect.

The Valkyrie bids the PCs farewell as they continue along the starlit path towards the demi-realm between Briglaess, Midgard, and Neinferth.

### ENCOUNTER 20 SKIRTING THE SIEGE CR 9

*In the far distance a shadow looms over the borders of Briglaess — a mass of land, scooped up as if by the hand of a giant or a god, hangs in the air at the end of your starlit pass. Before your destination a monstrous black swan flies in tight patrolling loops.*

Before reaching the demi-realm the PCs must defeat or evade a sentry drawn there by the Thrall Lord's evil. A ghulsvann flies in their path and quickly descends to attack.

#### Ghulsvann (1)

CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 120 (see pg 25)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** As soon as the PCs appear, the ghulsvann swoops down to attack.

**Morale** Summoned by the Thrall Lords to defend their efforts in Northgard, the Ghulsvann fights to the death.





## ENCOUNTER 21 INTO SHADOW & FLAME CR 8

*The demi-realm of Shadow Northgard rests on a large floating hemisphere of land. The flat upper surface bears a fort — recognizable as Northgard from the layout— but seemingly constructed of obsidian and shadow rather than honest wood and packed earth as with its counterpart on Midgard. Black surfaces composed of the stuff of the void reflect Alnara's stars. Above the black fort a dark and evil runestone rotates ponderously in the void. Intermittent bolts of purple and black lightning lance down into the fort.*

Shadow Northgard is populated by elementals of void and flame, the spiritual representation of the *rage fever* that infects the Northgard garrison on Midgard. For the PCs to cleanse the disease from those still suffering on Midgard, they need to seek out and defeat these patrols. They are represented as below:

### In Midgard

- Four squads of infected guards with a veteran sergeant
- Commander Drothgar and honor guard

### In Shadow Northgard

- Four groups of voidflame elementals with a Large leader
- Valrik the Devourer (mythic giant)

Each group of voidflame elementals destroyed in Shadow Northgard cures the corresponding squad of soldiers in Midgard, and defeating Valrik frees the Fort Commander and his honor guard.

Isabella, uninflected by *rage fever*, commands the remaining guards from the tower of Northgard's fort. In the demi-realm this tower glows with a pure golden aura, and is impenetrable to Valrik and the voidflame elementals.

### Encounter set up

- Valrik the Devourer beats on the walls of the Great Hall, waiting for Isabella to succumb to disease or despair.
- The four voidflame groups are spread around Shadow Northgard (see map), held in position by their spiritual connection to the infected guards in Midgard

**Special condition** — rage feeds rage. Just as in Midgard, rage and anger feed themselves in a mutually reinforcing cycle of mob violence, so in Shadow Northgard the voidflame elementals feed each other.

- Within the voidflame groups, each surviving Medium elemental grants the Large elemental fast healing 5
- Each surviving Large elemental grants Valrik fast healing 10
- This effect is visible as a network of fine black threads running between the elementals, pulsing with dark energy
- PCs can cut the threads directly (AC 10, 0 hardness, 5 hp). This disrupts the fast healing effect until the thread reforms 1d4 rounds later.

### Encounter progression

- The PCs will quickly discover that Valrik is very hard to kill while the voidflame elementals survive, and eliminating the elementals is vital to victory
- The elementals cannot move more than 40 ft. from their initial locations
- When the PC attack an elemental group the thrill of combat draws Valrik towards that squad and away from Isabella. Valrik moves at 20 ft. per round, roaring and shaking the ground with every step
- The PCs are most likely to succeed by staging a series of hit-and-run battles against the elementals, retreating before Valrik arrives.
- Note that the range of motion of the two southeastern groups of elementals overlaps. Unwary PCs could find themselves trapped between both groups and Valrik.



- When the PCs destroy all of the voidflame elementals, Valrik becomes vulnerable, though he will still pose a large challenge to most groups.
- PCs can retreat beyond the walls or into Isabella's tower to regroup and recover.

## Voidflame Groups

Each voidflame group consists of four Medium voidflame elementals (CR 3) and a single Large voidflame elemental (CR 5) for a total encounter of CR 8.

*This creature of living darkness twists and churns with hatred for all life. Roughly humanoid, its shadowy face contorts with a constant scream of rage.*

### Medium Voidflame Elemental (4) CR 3

XP 800

NE Medium outsider (elemental, extraplanar, fire, void)

**Init** +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +7

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 13

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

**hp** 30 (4d10+8); **fast healing** 1

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +1

**Weaknesses** light blindness

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** slam +7 (1d6+1 plus energy drain)

**Special Attacks** energy drain (1 level, DC 14)

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Voidflame elementals remain on active watch, taking a 10 on their Perception skill checks.

**During Combat** Voidflame elementals move to flank and attack single targets, focusing on draining their life force before moving on to another target.

**Morale** Voidflame elementals fight until they're destroyed.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 12, **Dex** 17, **Con** 14, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 19

**Feats** Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Climb +5, Escape Artist +8, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +7

**Languages** Ashtongue, Giant; **Honor** —

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any, but especially Neinferth

**Organization** single or patrol (3-6)

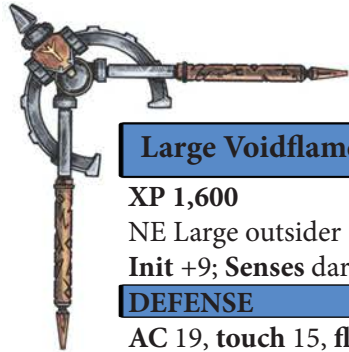
**Treasure** standard

## The Ticking Clock

Creating tension in this adventure is a little tricky, since most of that happens takes days, if not weeks to complete (especially in "real time." GMs are thus tasked with creating a degree of tension that requires time limits, all of which should appear in this session of the adventure. GMs should describe the following as PCs explore Northgard.

- As Isabella succumbs to despair over the fate of Northgard, the halo of light protecting her tower pulses.
- The demi-plane slowly starts to fall apart.
- As the Fel Barbarians come close to finishing their ritual, Valrik begins to fade from the demi-plane, phasing into Midgard and dealing damage there.





## Large Voidflame Elemental

CR 5

XP 1,600

NE Large outsider (elemental, extraplanar, fire, void)

**Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

### DEFENSE

**AC** 19, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 13

(+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 60 (8d10+16); fast healing 1

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +11, **Will** +4

**Defensive Abilities** DR 5/ —

**Weaknesses** light blindness

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 slam +12 (1d8+2 plus energy drain)

**Special Attacks** energy drain (1 level, DC 16)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Voidflame elementals remain on active watch, taking a 10 on their Perception skill checks.

**During Combat** Voidflame elementals move to flank and attack single targets, focusing on draining their lifeforce before moving on to another target.

**Morale** Voidflame elementals fight until they're destroyed.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 14, **Dex** 21, **Con** 14, **Int** 6, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

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

**Feats** Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +14, Climb +9, Escape Artist +12, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (planes) +5, Perception +11

**Languages** Ashtongue, Giant; **Honor** —

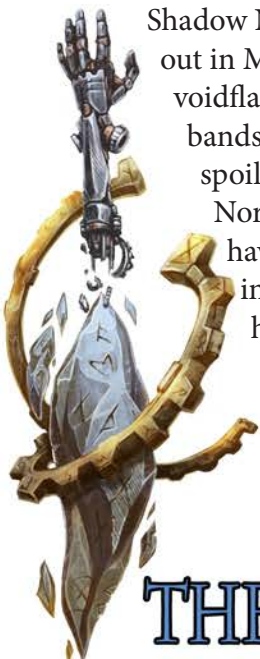
### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any, but especially Neinferth

**Organization** single or patrol (3-6)

**Treasure** standard

Although this encounter takes place in Shadow Northgard for the PCs, it also plays out in Midgard, as well. There, the groups of voidflame elementals are replaced with roving bands of maddened, *rage-touched* soldiers spoiling for a fight. Most of the survivors in Northgard know something is wrong and have locked themselves into various buildings throughout the small settlement, hoping for reinforcements from Union City to break the siege.



## Reinforcements?

While reinforcements from Union City have been dispatched, when they arrive, and if they break the siege, is entirely up to the GM. Unless GMs feel the need to deviate from this model, it is assumed that a dozen companies of Union City's finest soldiers, supported by troops of berserkers from the various battle halls, as well as three companies of automata, have arrived and have engaged the barbarians besieging Northgard. How this battle plays out is up to the GM, but unless the GM is looking to paint a much more grim outcome or otherwise extend the adventure for the PCs (forcing them to fight their way through the siege once they return to Midgard), the coalition from Union City — alongside the destruction of Valrik — breaks the siege.

The PCs, trapped in Shadow Northgard, have no way to see this. Some crafty PCs may, through the creative use of magic, attempt to contact or otherwise spy on those reinforcements. If they do, read the following.

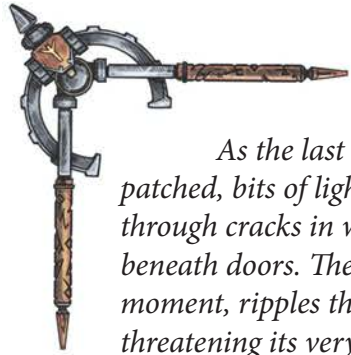
*Outside the walls of Northgard, groups of barbarians have broken away from the siege to engage the reinforcements arriving from Union City. In the distance, great banners dominate the southern horizon, the sounds of war horns and gunfire sounding over the rage-filled howls of those who follow the wicked call of the Thrall Lords.*

## The Veil Between the Worlds

As the PCs destroy the voidflame elementals, GMs should describe the effect their actions on not just them, but also on both Valrik and Shadow Northgard. Each time the PCs destroy a large voidflame elemental (and presumably, the rest of that patrol), the directly damage the network of shadow energy that empowers Valrick, as well as the rest of this realm. Although the mechanical benefits of these threads of shadow are linked directly to Valrik, some GMs may wish — especially if the PCs are having a hard time with this encounter — to link them to the overall realm itself. GMs might read the following each time the PCs destroy a group of these voidflame elementals:

# NORTHGARD





*As the last of the shadow creatures is dispatched, bits of light pierce the darkness, creaking through cracks in walls, broken windows, and from beneath doors. The light that shimmers, for a brief moment, ripples through the rest of this shadowy place, threatening its very existence.*

When these moments happen, let the PCs make a DC 20 Perception check. PCs who succeed momentarily see Northgard as it appears on Midgard. These PCs notice the bodies of barbarians that where the voidflame elementals were dispatched, as well as other familiar elements — the blue of Midgard’s sky, the bite of cold, northern winds, and the sounds of snow crunching under foot as the PCs move.

**THE FINAL ENCOUNTER**  
**VALRIK THE DEVOURER CR 11**

*This giant towers above the battlefield, its blue-black bestial face twisted and howling. Long clawed fingers reach for new flesh to rend and consume; its mighty arms and shoulders flex, the knotted muscles bulging with barely contained strength. Around its waist hangs a belt made from the scoured skulls of lesser giants, the victims of Valrik’s long ages of struggle in the courts of the Thrall Lords.*

**Valrik the Devourer** **CR 11**

**XP 12,800**

NE Huge humanoid (giant)

**Init** +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +17

**Aura** fear aura (20 ft., DC 19)

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 21, **touch** 9, **flat-footed** 24 (+1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 168 (16d8+96); **fast healing** 10\*

**Fort** +16, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +22 (1d8+12)

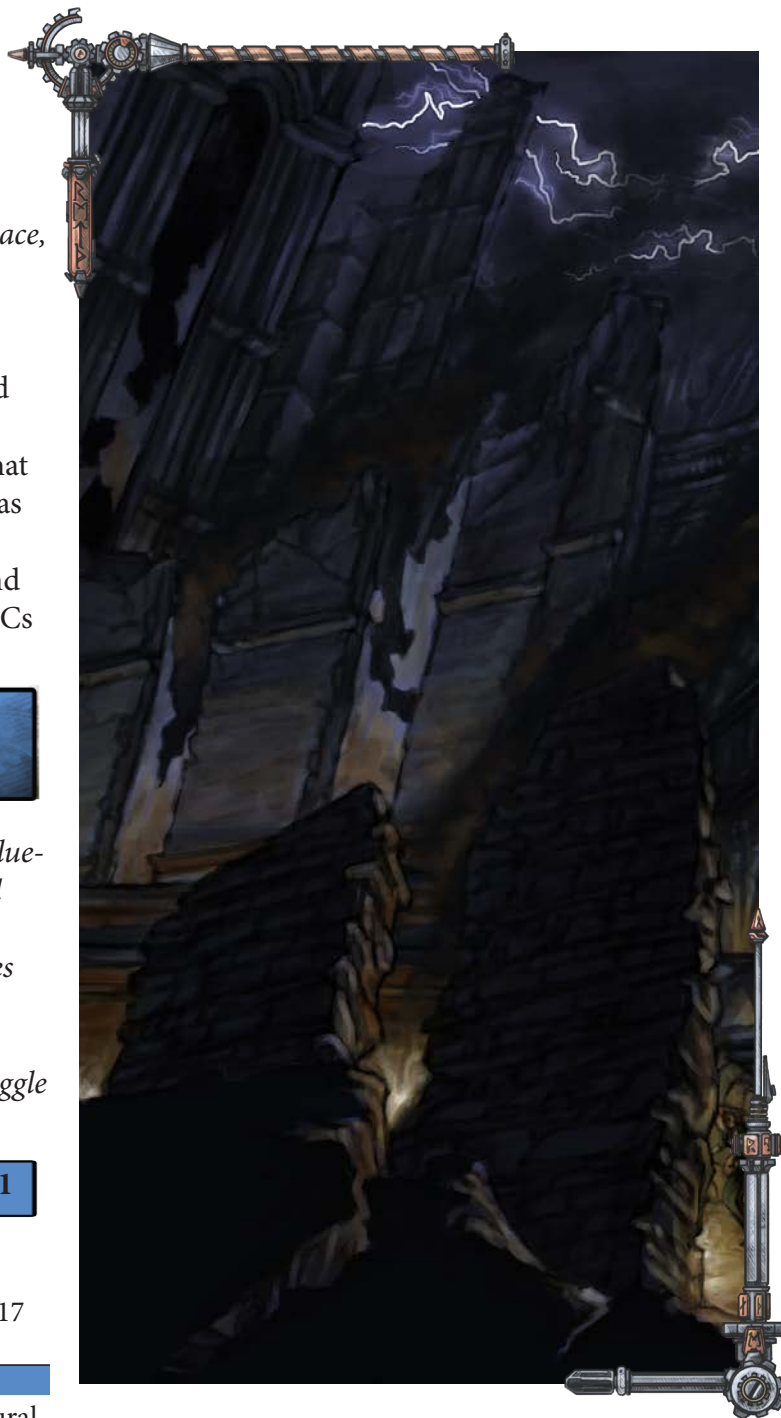
**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 35, **Dex** 13, **Con** 23, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +26; **CMD** 37

**Feats** Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave,



Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Power Attack

**Skills** Climb +19, Craft (any one) +10, Diplomacy +9, Intimidate +26, Perception +17, Perform (string instruments) +8

**Languages** Common, Giant; **Honor** 11

**ECOLOGY**

**Environment** Neinferth, but is actively trying to step over into Midgard.

**Organization** single

**Treasure** double



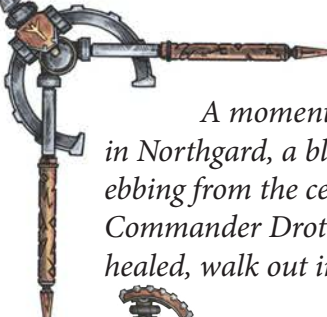


Valrik the Devourer, while in Shadow Northgard, is a regular — albeit difficult — encounter. Powered by the voidflame elementals, he enjoys fast healing 10, drawing power from the very plane itself. That said, he is not impossible to defeat (and this is especially true if your PCs are mythic). Should he destroy the PCs and return later on, he arrives on Midgard as a fully mythic threat, one that will tear Northgard apart and leave a scar in the North that Union City — as well as the rest of the City-States of Vallinar — won't be quick to forget.

When the PCs finally defeat Valrik, read the following:

*As Valrik falls, a wave of divine energy rips through the whole of Shadow Northgard, utterly laying waste to any remaining void elementals and blanketing the realm in warm, yellow — blinding all those who still serve the Thrall Lords.*

This effect shatters Shadow Northgard and gently deposits the PCs into Northgard. Continue reading:




A moment later, you find yourselves standing in Northgard, a blanket of calm, healing light slowly ebbing from the center of the fort. A moment later, Commander Drothgar and all of his officers, obviously healed, walk out into the light of day.

Northgard falls, although GMs are free to determine if the forces arriving from Union City, who very well may include their own heroes, are able to turn the tide against the darkness and reclaim the decimated fort.



## THE AFTERMATH

Valrik, and the servants of the Thrall Lords, have done a great deal of damage to Northgard and as PCs explore it in the aftermath, this should be evident. While GMs need to be vulgar in their descriptions, there are plenty of opportunities to continue to describe the horrors of this siege, especially in subtle ways. PCs might discover half-eaten body parts, random pieces of hair or broken teeth, blood-stained weapons, broken windows stained with ichor, or random claw marks scratched into the wood of sealed rooms. While GMs are encouraged to be creative in describing these horrors, they should be mindful of their audience – Northgard has just suffered a horrible siege that will scar its residents for the rest of their days. There is no need to use this as a vulgar display of gore and horror, especially if your group isn't into that sort of thing. Plus, it's often the small details that really paint the picture for the PCs, and smart GMs should keep that in mind at all times.



Regardless of their scars, the PCs are truly heroes to the people of Northgard. Roughly a week after the siege is broken, Commander Drothgar makes a point of honoring the PCs with a massive feast. At the height of the feast, he awards each PC the title *Dróttin* – an honorific title that translates roughly to “Lord of War” or “Lady of War” for their success against Valrik and those who besieged Northgard. GMs should also award PCs **6 points of honor each**. Finally, if GMs are using the mythic rules in their games, defeating Valrik and reclaiming Northgard against the darkness should be treated as a single mythic trial.

If the PCs fail to defeat Valrik,

## THE RUNE OF HOPE

PCs (likely disguised aelves) who began this adventure by playing through *The Aelven Agenda* soon learn that saving Northgard does little to

aid Aelvehheim, but exploring the exterior perimeter of the broken siege does yield information. While the defeated barbarian hordes leave natural enough remains, several of the undead do not, leaving only unnaturally hard shards of ice. These shards of ice, when examined, match those of the frigus zombie they discovered in the previous adventure (see page 37 of *The Aelven Agenda*). PCs who ask around quickly discover that shards like this were also discovered, decades ago, in the mining village of **Utvilke**, far to the north.

### NEW ITEMS

The following items are found in this adventure.

#### **Sparkrod**

**Aura** faint evocation; **CL** 1<sup>st</sup>

**Slot** none; **Price** 2,305 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

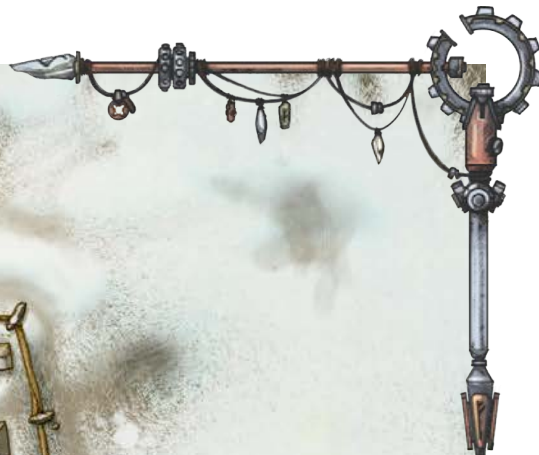
#### **DESCRIPTION**

This 1 ft. long rod of inscribed brass bears a small quartz gem at the tip. Its hilt is wrapped in insulating cloth and leather. The rod is treated as a masterwork light mace, dealing 1d6 points of non-lethal damage plus 1d6 points of electricity damage with each strike. This damage is multiplied as normal on a critical hit. The damage is not affected by the wielder's Strength.

#### **CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS**

Craft Rod, Merciful Spell, *shocking grasp*; **Cost** 1,153 gp.

# NORTHGARD





### Glitterstaff

**Aura** faint evocation; **CL** 7<sup>th</sup>

**Slot** none; **Price** 16,000 gp; **Weight** 5 lbs.

#### DESCRIPTION

Crafted from the bound body and breath of Caol, this staff is a 5 ft. length of smooth volcanic stone, topped with a faceted amethyst crystal. It is given to light the way of the most favored glitterfane missionaries, and to protect them from the woes of the world. The staff allows use of the following spells:

*Light* (1 charge)

*Glitterdust* (2 charges)

*Searing light* - merciful (3 charges)

#### CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

Craft Staff, Merciful Spell, *glitterdust*, *light*, *searing light*; **Cost** 8,000 gp.

### Crystal Helm

**Aura** moderate transmutation; **CL** 7<sup>th</sup>

**Slot** head; **Price** 50,500 gp; **Weight** 3 lbs.

#### DESCRIPTION

This full knights helm of colorless crystal is almost invisible in dim light, and takes on a smoky grey hue in bright daylight. The helm protects and enhances the wearer's vision, granting darkvision 60 ft., immunity to the dazzled condition and a +4 bonus to save against blindness effects. In addition the wearer sees all undead outlined in a pale blue liminal glow, so undead gain no benefit from concealment or *invisibility*.

#### CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

Craft Wondrous Item, *darkvision*, *detect undead*; **Cost** 25,250 gp.

### Ring of Unclean Hunger

**Aura** faint necromancy; **CL** 6<sup>th</sup>

**Slot** ring; **Price** 19,250 gp; **Weight** --

#### DESCRIPTION

This ring of tarnished silver is set with a single blood red garnet. It acts as a ring of sustenance, except that the wearer still feels hunger despite not needing to eat to survive. Normal food no longer satisfies them. After a week of hunger the wearer becomes fatigued, and after a month of hunger they become exhausted while their companions notice them becoming skeletally thin.

Once per day the wearer can drain vitality from a target creature, dealing 3d6 damage to on a successful touch attack and gaining temporary hit points equal to the damage dealt. After using this ability the wearer's hunger briefly abates and they feel satisfied for one day before the hunger begins again. Every time this ability is used the wearer must make a Will save against a DC equal to the damage dealt or become a wraith.

The ring of unclean hunger is a cursed item and can only be removed with the help of *remove curse* or other similar magic.

#### CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

Forge Ring, *create food and water*, *bestow curse*, *vampiric touch*; **Cost** 9,625 gp.

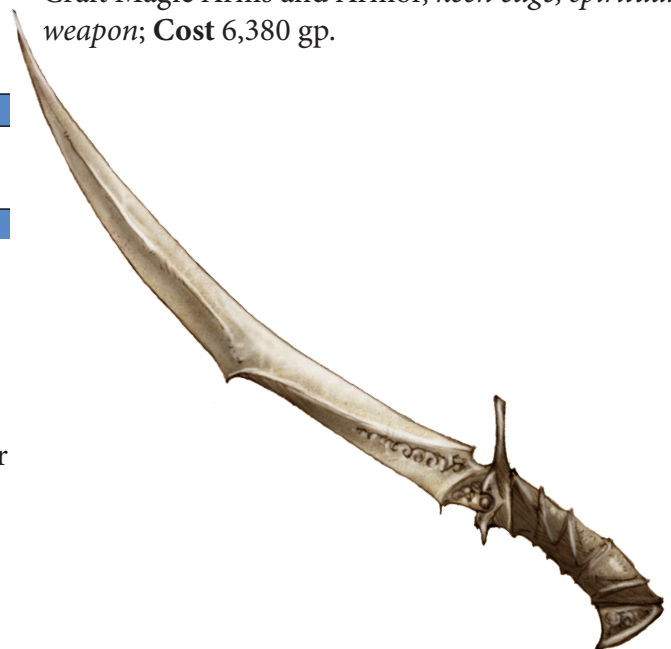
### Unforged - The Last Blade of Karthæn

**Aura** moderate transmutation; **CL** 7<sup>th</sup>; **Weight** 5 lbs; **Price** 12,760 gp.

The hilt of this blade is black stone bound with fine silver wire. The unmarked blade shines silver dances like liquid mercury, lengthening and shifting from one form to another. As a swift action the wielder can transform the blade into any one-handed bladed weapon. Whichever form the blade takes it is a +1 *keen silver weapon*. Once per day the wielder, as a full round action, can make a single attack at their full bonus against all enemies within 15 ft.

#### CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *keen edge*, *spiritual weapon*; **Cost** 6,380 gp.





## THE FRIGUS ZOMBIE

*This creature appears is coated in a fine layer of ice, death, and ichor. Its cold, dead eyes gaze right through you as it shambles forward.*

### Frigus Zombie

CR 7

CE Medium undead (cold)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +2 (+10 in cold terrain)

**Aura** frigid desiccation 10 ft. (1d6 cold; see text)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 23, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 20 (+6 armor, +2 Dex, +1 deflection, +1 dodge, +3 natural)

**hp** 52 (8d8+16) **regeneration** 2 (fire)

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

**Immune** cold, undead traits; channel resistance +6

**Weakness** fire vulnerability

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** slam +10 (1d6+6 plus 2d6 cold)

**Special Attacks** freezing breath 4d6 (15 ft.-cone, Reflex DC 15)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Frigus zombies are mindless and either follow the last direction of a glacies vampire or attack any living creature it can find, sucking the moisture and warmth from their bodies with their slam attacks and the aura of frigid desiccation. It uses its freezing breath attack as soon as an enemy is in range before moving into attack.

**Morale** A frigus zombie attacks until destroyed or commanded to retreat by its master.

### STATISTICS

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

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23

**Feats** Dodge, Improved Initiative, Toughness

**Skills** Perception +2 (+10 in cold terrain), Stealth +2 (+10 in cold terrain); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Perception and +8 Stealth in cold terrain; **Armor Check Penalty** -3

**Languages** —; **Honor** —

**SQ** cold walk, frigid desiccation

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** cold

**Organization** any

**Treasure** standard

## The Frigus Zombie Template

“Frigus Zombie” is an acquired template that can be added to any living creature that has a 3 or more hit dice and a Charisma score of at least 8. A frigus zombie retains all the base creature’s statistics and special abilities as noted here.

**Challenge Rating** Same as the base creature +2.

**Type** The creature’s type changes to undead and they gain the cold subtype. Do not recalculate the creature’s base attack bonus, saves, or skill points.

**Alignment** The creature’s alignment changes to chaotic evil.

**Armor Class** A frigus zombie gains a deflection bonus equal to half its Charisma modifier (minimum 1) and +3 natural armor.





**Hit Dice** Change all of the creature's racial hit dice to d8s. All hit dice derived from class levels remain unchanged. Frigus zombies use their Charisma modifiers to determine bonus hit points (instead of Constitution).

**Defensive Abilities** A frigus zombie retains all of the defensive abilities of the base creature, as well as channel resistance +6, darkvision 120 ft., immunity to cold, regeneration 2 (fire), and all of the immunities granted by its undead traits.

**Weakness** Frigus zombies are vulnerable to fire.

**Melee and Ranged Attacks** A frigus zombie loses all of the base creature's attacks and gains a slam attack (1d6) that deals an additional +2d6 cold damage. If it could wield weapons in life, it can do so as a frigus zombie, imbuing any melee or ranged weapon with its frigid chill and adding +1d6 cold damage.

**Special Attacks** A frigus zombie retains all the special attacks of the base creature, and gains a 15-ft. cone freezing breath attack usable once every 1d6 rounds that deals 1d6 cold damage per two hit dice (Reflex DC = 10 + ½ hit dice + Charisma modifier). Cold Walk (Su) Frigus zombies are immune to all difficult cold terrain.

**Frigid Dessication (Su)** Frigus zombies emanate a 10-ft. aura of intense cold that sucks away the heat and moisture from around them, dealing 1d6 cold damage to any creature within it to feed their essence and animate the undead. Any square within the aura of a frigus zombie becomes covered in a sheen of ice that melts as soon as the frigus zombie moves away. Squares affected by freezing aura are considered to be difficult terrain and any creature standing on them must make a DC 14 Acrobatics check at the end of every turn or go prone.

**Abilities** Strength +4, Dexterity +2, Charisma +2; as an undead creature, a typical frigus zombie has no Intelligence score.

**Skills** Frigus zombies gain a +8 racial bonus on Perception and

Stealth skill checks made in cold terrain. Otherwise, its skills are the same as the base creature.

**Feats** Frigus zombies gain the Dodge, Improved Initiative, and Toughness feats, but loses all of the base creature's other feats.

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Version 1.0a

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## Thomas's Story

by Jaye Sonia

Thomas sat back, took a sip from his Mint Julep, and let the cool, October air wash over him. There was something about New Orleans, especially in the fall, that spoke to him; there was a quality, an almost imperceptible quality that kept calling him back, even after years of life in the Pacific Northwest. For years he had assumed it was the spirit of the place, but as he got older, he started to examine the finer details. Like most natives, he could list off the observable details: the sweetness of the air after a heavy rainstorm, the chaotic bustle of the expanding mass of people, the richness of every single Creole dish, the rich, dark coffee – hell the whole environmental package – that informed his need to be in this city.

But there was something else, too. There was something subtle, almost alchemical about New Orleans that turned it into more than just the Babylon of the Bible Belt. There was something that made him feel that he needed to be here. While he was still struggling to put his finger on just what it was about New Orleans that brought him back time and time again, he knew could sense that current. He was tuned in enough to know that.

Thinking about his journey, Thomas touched the book in his lap. He lifted it for a moment and stole a bit of that new book smell, inhaling deeply and crystalizing, for just a brief second, the moment.

He opened it to the first page. Inside, written in bright, black cursive, was the phrase *On Alignment*. Thomas mused at its meaning, his mind racing to his tabletop days, when alignment meant picking one of nine philosophical outlooks for his ranger and trying, as best as he could, to stick to it. That thought alone brought a smile to his face. But he also knew there was something else about this book, something that he needed to explore.

Thomas flipped through the small, black journal, watching the crisp, black words race across the vanilla colored pages, noting here and there the footnotes, all in red, and the strange diagrams that accompanied them. While he expected a series of personal footnotes, he withheld judgment. He knew better, almost ironically, not to judge a book by its cover. Or in this case, by the random and apparently chaotic notes littered throughout.

Thomas leaned back in the iron bench, closed his eyes, and leaned back to think. Why had he picked up the journal? To be honest, he wasn't entirely sure. Kristin, a longtime friend and local witch, a native of the city with ebon hair and a gregarious nature, had picked it up from a young man she said smelled nothing short of horrid.

Thomas's mind sped back to the conversation.

Kristin sat on a wooden stool behind the glass counter, all but hiding behind stand-up displays of occult jewelry, jars of rare incense, and the other accretions of occult practice. She had waved when Thomas walked in, letting him browse before she offered up the book. Thomas took it and asked, "What's this?"

"A journal I picked up yesterday." She replied, smiling.

"Why did you pick it up?" Thomas asked as he turned it over in his hands, examining it.

"I had a feeling about it. When the kid walked in, I almost kicked him out. He smelled horrible, like Bourbon Street at about 9 AM in the morning in the middle of June."

Thomas instinctively wrinkled his nose.

"But I'll tell you, Tom, there was something clear in his eyes, a sobriety that outshined his rivets, bad tattoos, and Skinny Puppy tee. He was hard up for cash and well, I had you in mind, so I picked it up." Kristin plucked a lighter from behind the counter and lit a stick of incense. Thomas immediately smiled in response.

"Banishing his smelly ghost?" Thomas quipped, his smile widening.

"Yeah." Kristin said as she waved the stick around the counter.

"Well, I do collect the odd book now and again, so thanks. What's it about?" He continued.

"I don't know. Looks like an occultist's journal, although I'm guessing you're going to get a little bit of that chaotic darkness you occasionally indulge. He had that gutterpunk-industrial-goth thing going on, so I'd expect some Peter Carroll mixed with some old school LaVey." She said.

"Sounds like an interesting read. How much?" Thomas asked.

"Give me twenty and we'll call it fair." Kristin replied.

Thomas picked up the book, slipped it into his leather satchel, and after the normal pleasantries were finished, stepped out onto Decatur Street. He had the day to himself, and he'd get to the book later after some coffee and a beignet.

That brought Thomas to his bench. He leaned forward and opened his eyes, opening the small journal to its first page. The writing was disjointed, but passionate. He began to read.

*July 29th, 2010.*

*It's all a lie.*

*The world I thought I knew is a pale shade, a facade dreamed up to support binary politics, Hollywood agents, international bankers, and the slow stupefaction of 6.9 billion people. It's all bullshit, stories sold to keep me chained to the rest of the herd, to make sure I don't think for myself, much less dream. It's why they don't*

*teach critical thinking in schools anymore, why we live on Facebook, while the whole world burns.*

*Halifax, New Hampshire. Professor Tribeaux. The Black Gate. The San Francisco Chronicles. Black Hill, Wisconsin. The Secret Sovereigns of Savannah. The Black Alchemy Experiments of the 1990s. All of it is true.*

*Seriously, I can't believe it. I thought I was just dreaming up these places, these people. But now I'm discovering they're real? How are these places and people not online? I mean, who hides a whole town from the Internet? And who needs a gun that 'makes holes in monsters?'*

*I know my path is an odd one, but this has to stay out in the system. They can't cover all of this up. I need to share this. I'll make copies. I'll sell them. Others have to see this. I can't just put it online, though. Servers can be hacked. PDFs can be deleted. I don't care how big we think the Internet is, they have the power to change how we think, feel, and believe. Can some off the grid shitty webserver really change things?*

*No. I need to write this down.*

*Hence, why you're reading this. This is my message, my little war against the Archons. My break with stasis.*

Thomas snapped the journal closed, slipped it into his satchel, and stood. The writing on the page was hurried, and when he contrasted it against how he wrote, how he painstakingly drew each character, he was tempted to toss it in the garbage and write it off as drug-addled art, the sort of thing he saw too often when he lived in California.

But he couldn't. He needed to read more. There was something here. And if anything, he could share it with Amy.

She loved a good mystery.

# BLOODLINES & BLACK MAGIC

A new, dark, Pathfinder Compatible campaign setting from the minds of Clinton J. Boomer and Jaye Sonia.



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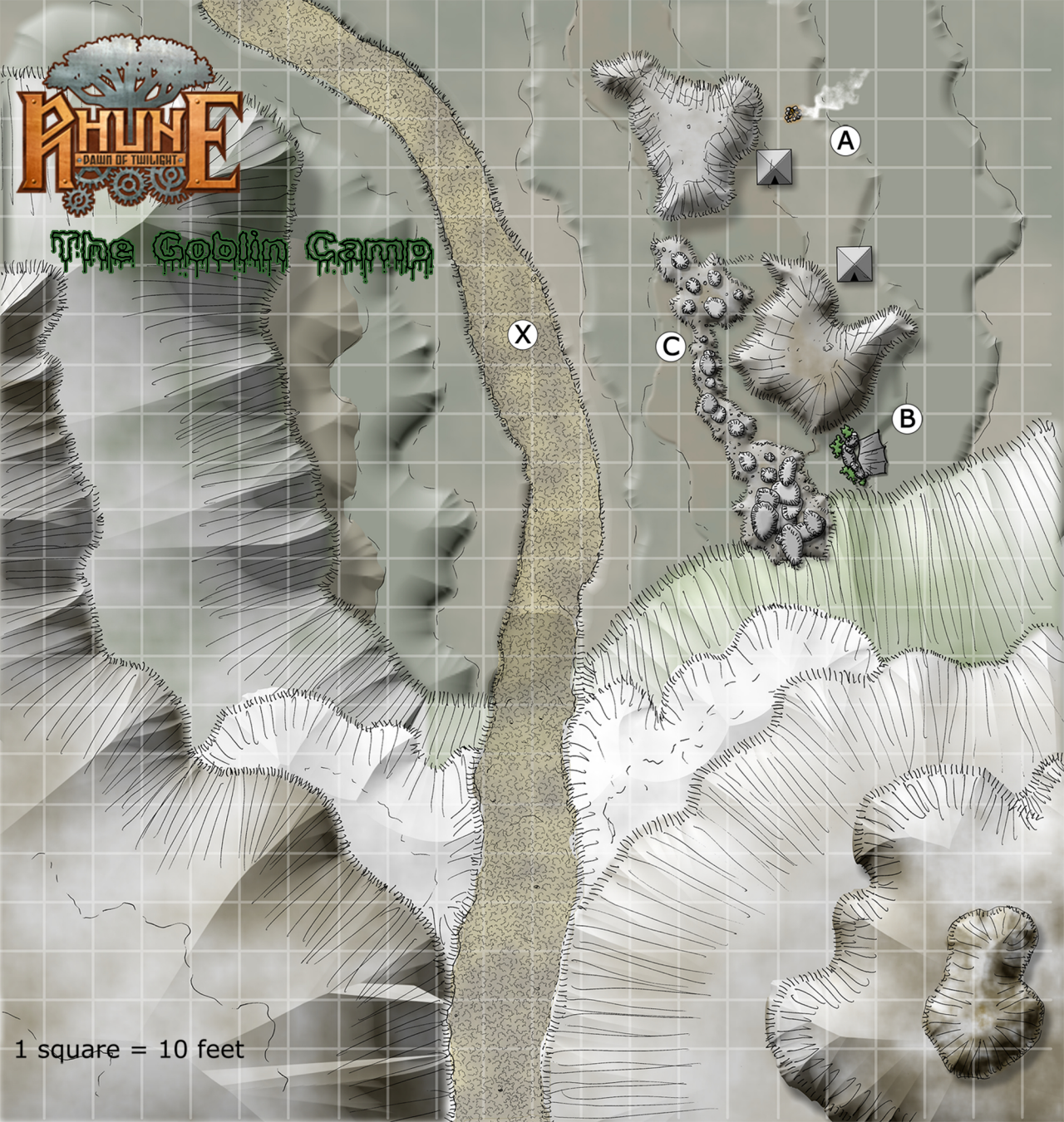
They can't save you.

# NORTHGARD





# The Goblin Camp



1 square = 10 feet



# THE RUNE OF HOPE...

The siege around Northgard has reached its pinnacle and now, with the PCs racing to find a cure for *rage fever*, the Thrall Lords play their hand. Deep in Ælvenheim, the curse that eats at its trees continues to spread, while in Union City, the fires of distrust continue to burn brightly. With troops massing for a northern campaign, most of the City-States fear that winter may come early this year, and with it, an invasion none of them may survive...



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