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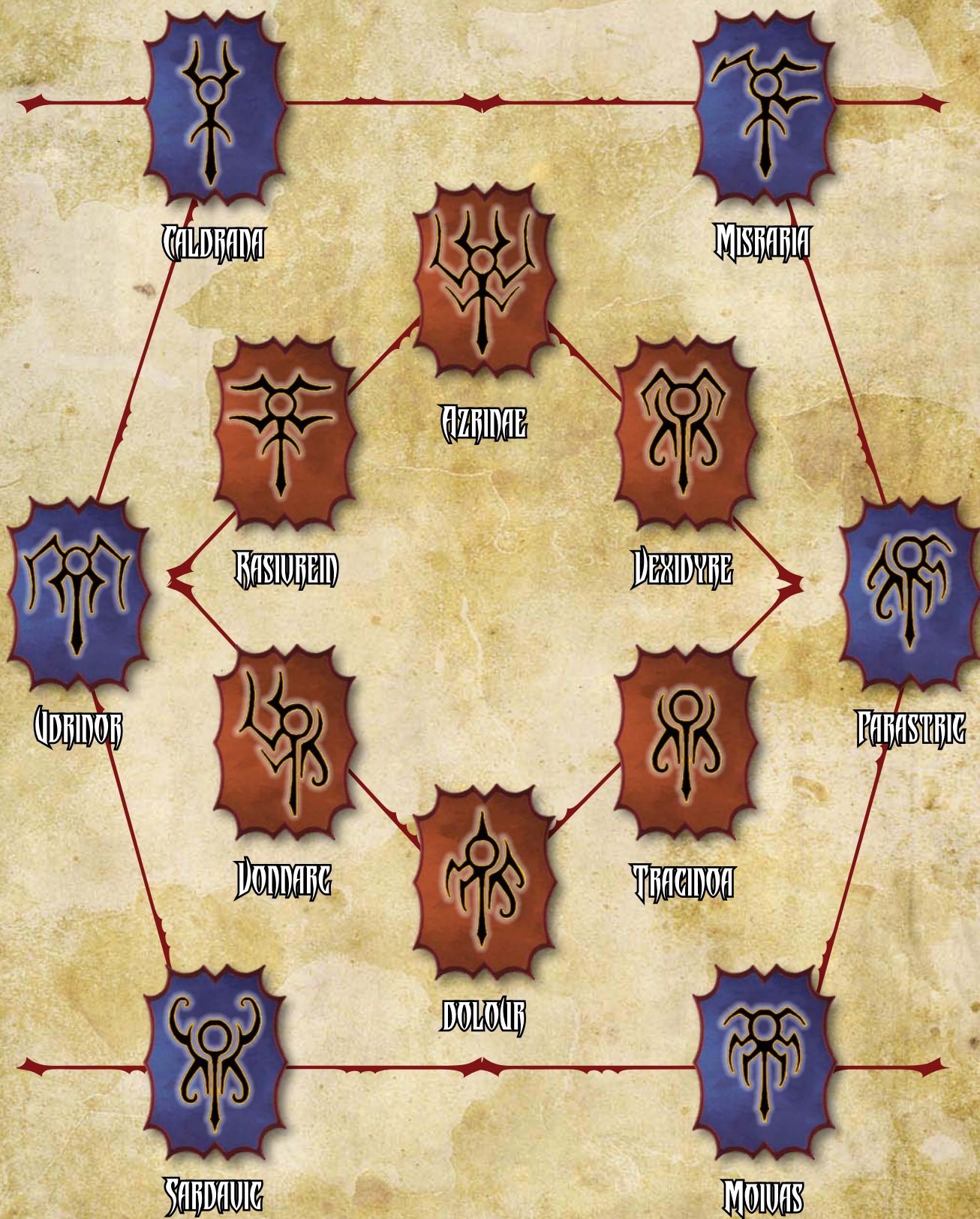


Second Darkness

SHADOW IN THE SKY

By Greg A. Vaughan

DROW RINES



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ADVENTURE PATH  PART 1 of 6

Second Darkness

SHADOW IN THE SKY



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...And I Feel Fine

How often do you get to blow up a world? Now, granted, assuming the new batch of Golarion's latest heroes do their job at the climax of *Second Darkness*, the new *Pathfinder* Adventure Path that kicks off in this very volume, there won't actually be any extinction-level events striking the world. But that doesn't mean we can't ignore the possibility that they might fail! And that means we get to come up with rules for things like tsunamis, and order art like that you see above. We initially ordered this illustration to depict Earthfall, the event that created the Inner Sea 10,000 years ago and brought the powerful *Starstone* into the world, but when Ben Wootten's awesome illustration came in, I realized that what we had here was probably a bit more destructive than even that ancient event.

So let the illustration above be a warning of what could happen to Golarion if your PCs fail to "win" this Adventure Path! No pressure, though!

Speaking of pressure, I've gotta hand it to this installment's author, Greg A. Vaughan. Originally, I had intended on writing "Shadow in the Sky" and its accompanying article on Riddleport myself, but as deadlines drew near and I still hadn't had the chance to start working on it,

I had to admit to myself the painful truth that I wasn't going to be able to write it. As Wes wrote in his Foreword to *Pathfinder* #11, Greg's a trooper. When I contacted him about writing this adventure instead, he seemed to leap at the chance. Never mind that he'd only just finished writing the adventure for *Pathfinder* #11 about 40 minutes before I contacted him with another job.

And now, he's gonna help me out a little more—this time with the foreword! Here's what Greg has to say about the experience, as well as a few words of advice on what to do with the adventure's star location, the Gold Goblin Gaming Hall.

"There are a lot of expectations riding on the opening adventure of an Adventure Path, and Paizo has really delivered in the past with the likes of Chris Perkins, Erik Mona, James Jacobs, and Nicolas Logue taking that all-important first step. Now it's my turn, however, and though I've had a hand in finishing an Adventure Path or two, I've never had the chance to kick one off. It's a tall order.

"With 'Shadow in the Sky,' I've tried to introduce three adventures in one to capture a little bit of everything. Most of the adventure involves the PCs serving as partners to what amounts to a mob boss (although they

might or might not know the extent of their partner's ruthlessness, depending on the temperament of the PCs and the discretion of the GM) in an urban setting that can play like the best of crime classics such as *The Sopranos* or *The Untouchables*. Alongside this hard-boiled thriller is the ever-present mystery of the strange shadow that hovers above the city. This portion, while secondary to the main action, can provide you with opportunities to explore the best of the UFO-style mystique in the vein of Roswell or the Bermuda Triangle. Finally, there is the penultimate climax (it's hard to compete for top billing with a meteor crashing to earth) wherein the PCs get to take part in a classic dungeon crawl and encounter an iconic villain in its first official appearance in the *Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign Setting*. The legendary evil of the drow is very much alive and intertwined in the fate of the unsuspecting surface world. Hopefully it's not a bad way to kick off a new Adventure Path!"

RHYMES WITH BOW

There's more going on in Second Darkness than falling stars, and when we at Paizo were initially casting about for ideas for the plot for our third Adventure Path, the skies above were the furthest things from our minds. We were looking downward, into the depths of our still-developing world's crust, to the endless maze of caves and tunnels below. Other game worlds have their own names for this mysterious and dangerous realm, but in Golarion, it's known as the Darklands. Why would we seek out villains down there? To anyone who's played RPGs for any real length of time, the answer's pretty obvious.

Because that's where the drow live.

There are certain monsters that can be considered "mainstream" these days—creatures that even non-gamers seem immediately to recognize on sight. Dragons fall into that category for sure, as do vampires and goblins and trolls and zombies. Relatively few monsters who were "born" in the game have made this jump. Ask the average man on the street if he prefers ankhegs over bulettes, and you're likely just to get a weird look.

The drow are different, though. Sure, they have roots in Scottish folklore, but their incarnation as evil underground-dwelling elves was first popularized by Gary Gygax back in the early days of the game, in the classic adventure *G3: Hall of the Fire Giant King*. The series of adventures that followed (eventually compiled as *Queen of the Spiders*) became classic adventures, and then with R. A. Salvatore's first novel, *The Crystal Shard*, this popularity exploded, primarily due to one highly popular dual-scimitar-wielding hero. Back when Paizo was publishing *Dragon* and *Dungeon*, we saw that whenever we put a drow on the cover, that issue became one of the best selling issues of the year (which was why I chose a drow for the first *Dungeon* cover I ordered art for).

Of course, with such sudden popularity came the to-be-expected backlash, and today you can hardly mention drow in the presence of gamers without sparking an argument. Some players love playing drow characters, while other players won't play in a game that allows drow PCs. Some GMs love the concept of "renegade" drow who have turned against their sinful ways to become champions of good, while others gag and gnash teeth over the very concept. Even the name riles up gamers—there are at least two ways to pronounce the word, and I wouldn't put it past someone to come up with a third and a fourth. No matter how vocal people get about drow, the fact remains that everyone knows about them and everyone talks about them.

So they seemed like a perfect choice for the villains of *Pathfinder's* third Adventure Path. For those of you worried that the next several volumes are going to descend into angst-ridden misunderstood dark-elf heroes, let me repeat myself.

The drow are villains.

During the course of Second Darkness, you'll meet more drow NPCs than any other race, and I can pretty much guarantee you that they're all going to be bad guys. The drow of Golarion are not to be trusted. They worship demons. They're slavers and sadists. They perform hideous experiments on innocent victims. The drow are back to being evil, in other words.

As a result, you should encourage your players NOT to play drow characters in this campaign. I fully understand the attraction of playing a drow. Hell, two of my own favorite characters that I've played are drow (one of them even ended up in the Shattered City Adventure Path!). Playing a misunderstood hero who's forced to live with the fact that her heritage brands her a villain can be quite fun and rewarding—but Second Darkness isn't the place for drow PCs. If a player wants to play a misunderstood hero here, try to talk them into playing a half-orc. Or a goblin. Or a half-fiend. Or even one of the other evil Darklands-dwelling races, like a duergar or a troglodyte.

Drow can be PCs in all the Adventure Paths after this one. For now, though, give them a chance to be the bad guys again.



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Second Darkness CHAPTER ONE

Shadow in the Sky

It has happened before. A star from the heavens lances down upon an unsuspecting world, devastating and destroying in a storm of fire and ash, making oceans from mountains and graveyards from nations. Today, this event is remembered not for its violent destruction, but for the thousand years of darkness it created—darkness both metaphorical in the descent to barbarism and physical in the blotting out of the sun from the smoke and ash that blanketed Golarion. It was the end of the Azlanti race, yet it was the genesis of another. For as the proud Azlanti fell, new eyes devoid of color and kindness opened in the deep caverns of the Darklands. And as this new race prospered deep below, its number swelling in secret, the seeds for a Second Darkness took root.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Elven elders speak of the Time Before, when the elves waxed supreme before the rise of the barbaric humans. Yet humanity's greatest asset proved to be its adaptability—to the elves, it seemed almost as if the humans became civilized and founded empires overnight, particularly on the continent of Azlant. The Azlanti proved adept at magic, and their skill swiftly approached—and in some cases, even eclipsed—that of the elves. The Mordant Spire was built as a place for elven diplomats and spies in Azlant, and when Azlanti exiles fled to that region to found Thassilon, the elves were forced to swiftly claim and close the borders around the Spire and the Mierani Forest.

Legend holds that the greatest of those elven spies, agents of a secret society called the Winter Council, made a disturbing discovery near the end of the Age Before Ages—the secret of the Azlanti's swift rise to power lay with the aboleths. Whether Azlant had stolen aboleth magic or was merely an aboleth experiment was unclear, but what was obvious was that the aboleths grew weary of the Azlanti ego and elitism, and to end the Azlanti rule, they set into motion a terrifying work of magic. They called down a star from the sky to destroy Azlant.

This cataclysmic event became known as Earthfall—it shattered the continent of Azlant and murdered a race, triggered the fall of Thassilon, created the Inner Sea, and plunged the world into an age of darkness. The aboleths underestimated the true magnitude of this impact and accidentally sent their own race into decline as well during the millennium of hardships that followed. Yet with the intelligence gathered by the Winter Council, the elves at least had a chance to prepare. The call went out to abandon Golarion, and the world's elven nations fled through their network of elf gates, shutting down each one as they gathered in Kyonin around the *Sovyrian Stone*. On the eve of Earthfall, the elves retreated through the portal to the world of Sovyrian, intending to let several millennia pass before returning to Golarion.

Yet some elves did not abandon Golarion. According to some elves, these were political dissidents who saw the elven nations' response to encroaching humanity as too kind and soft, while according to others, these elves were abandoned by the nations due to other reasons. Some even hold that these elves chose to remain behind simply out of loyalty to the world itself. Whatever the reasons, these elves fled Avistan for the remote places of the world: the polar ice caps, the deep jungles, and in the case of those who became trapped in the city of Celwynvian in the Mierani Forest—underground.

The Celwynvian elves knew for sometime of the network of caverns that existed under the nearby Calphiak Mountains—regular battles with the troglodytes that dwelt there taught them that much. Yet as the elves fled,

desperate to escape the coming doom, they found that the caverns themselves were far deeper than they had imagined. And as they reached what they believed to be the deepest point, a nameless vault infested with horrific monsters far below the surface, a final tragedy struck, for this is when the Earthfall occurred.

As this cosmic event unfolded on the surface above, great tremors shook the Darklands. And at the deepest points, these tremors touched upon the presence of a slumbering god—Rovagug, the Rough Beast, god of wrath and destruction. As his presence brushed outward into the Darklands, infusing the vault within which the elves cowered, it mixed with strange radiations and the elves' own bitterness and anger. They were transformed by this event, their hair bleaching white, their skin flushing dark, the cruelty and anger in their souls blossoming and crushing the traditional values of their kind. Thus, steeped in the evil of Rovagug and the dark radiations and sunken magic of the world's deepest pits, were born the first of the drow.

After thousands of years, the elves returned to Golarion to find a world long-since recovered from the devastation of Earthfall. Humanity had become the dominant people of the world, and while their ways were often warlike, they had, for the most part, become a peaceful and civilized people. Yet the first elves to return to Golarion were initially more concerned for those they left behind. As the elves spread out again through the world, reactivating lost elf gates and reclaiming ancient homes, they came at last to Celwynvian and were surprised to find evidence that their kinfolk had retreated beneath the ground with the city's heirlooms and storehouses of knowledge. Scouts were sent into the Darklands to seek traces of these lost elves, and when they did not return, an army was sent. It was then that the elves first met the drow, and that first meeting was one of blood and ruin, for the elves were not prepared. The drow had grown in power and evil, spreading like a foul infection through the middle realm of the Darklands, and when they encountered their kindly cousins, their reaction was swift and brutal.

Thus began a bloody secret war between the elves and drow. The elves were desperate to keep the secret of their fallen race from the rest of the world, while the drow themselves now had a renewed interest in the surface world. Eventually, the elves were forced to retreat to the surface, where the light of the sun returned their advantage, for the drow were blinded by its brilliance and many of their most powerful weapons and armor swiftly decayed under its light. Celwynvian became a no-man's land, an endless battleground between the elves and drow as each struggled to control the other, yet each being unable to fully claim the ruin as their own.

The elves of Golarion are desperate to keep their secret shame safe from the other races of Golarion at all costs,

especially the worst secret of all: for once contact with the drow had been established, their taint seemed to spread through the elven people like a contagion. At first, the spontaneous transformation into drow among the elves was thought to be a drow weapon, yet investigation soon revealed the awful truth. Something had changed during Earthfall, and now, under the right conditions, any elf with enough cruelty and wrath hidden in her soul runs the risk of spontaneously transforming into a drow. Such spontaneous transformations thankfully remained rare, yet the elves were at a loss to predict when they would occur. Certainly, there were plenty of evil and cruel elves in the world who remained untransformed. Until the elves discovered a way to accurately predict the elements that would trigger such a transformation, they kept watch. Policing drow upon the surface world fell to a group of hunters founded by the Winter Council called the *Shin'Rakorath* (elven for "Lantern Bearers"), elven rangers and arcanists who dedicated their lives to tracking down and eliminating drow as they appeared. To date, the *Shin'Rakorath* have been quite successful at handling drow—rumors of the dark-skinned and evil elves remain just rumors due to their actions, and most of Golarion's surface-dwelling races think of the drow as little more than myths and nightmares.

Yet the drow are on the rise. Spontaneous transformation is increasing, but worse, the established drow of the Darklands are growing more bold. In places like the Worldwound, remote parts of Sargava, and particularly Celwynvian, the drow are pushing stronger than ever into the surface world. The true rulers of the *Shin'Rakorath* are the elves of the secret Winter Council, and as they watched the field reports coming in, they realized they were only years, perhaps months, away from the revelation of the drow's awful truth. In true shadow-government fashion, the Winter Council decided to cover up these stories as it developed more permanent methods to stop the drow.

It was one of the council leaders, Allevrah, a time-honored general in the Kyonin army and long-time secret champion in the drow war, who hit upon the solution. Her plan was bold and shocking: she wanted to use the same tool that forced the creation of the drow to destroy them, and revealed to her fellow council members that she had recovered something of incredible power from her own agents stationed in the Mordant Spire. She had sent these agents deep underwater, to the ruined aboleth city of Voshgurvaghhol, and there they found the method by which the aboleths called down a star to destroy Azlant. These methods were fragmentary, but Allevrah was not deterred. She turned increasingly to forbidden magic and the advice of the powerful demon lord of secrets, Abraxus, for ways to decipher the methods and learn how to build such a weapon. As she neared her goal, she took her findings to the Winter Council to present her plan.

Yet the other members of the Winter Council did not approve, and a terrific argument developed. Succumbing to her frustrations and rage, Allevrah murdered her most vocal opponent on the council. That was the trigger—before the shocked eyes of the rest of the Winter Council, Allevrah's skin darkened and she became drow. To her credit, Allevrah recovered first from the shock, and with the aid of additional magic learned while studying the lore of Abraxus, she was able to delay the other members of the Council long enough to flee. Yet she swiftly realized she had nowhere to go—even among her own agents in the Mordant Spire, she was now the enemy. She had only one choice. She was no longer an elf—she would seek support among her new drow sisters in the Darklands below.

As the Winter Council recovered, its new goal became damage control and covering up what had become of Allevrah. Their members explained to Kyonin that they had sent the decorated general on a long and secret mission south to Sargava, and that any attempt at contact with her could break her cover. The government bought the fabrication, and ever since, the Winter Council has desperately tried to develop a way to track down Allevrah before she could do anything drastic with her knowledge.

Yet the Council is too late. Mired in its obsessions with secrecy, it simply couldn't act fast enough. Even as it spun tales of Allevrah's assignment to Sargava, the new drow priestess of Abraxus had made contact with the drow of the city of Zirnakaynin. One of the noble families there, the Azrinaes, were followers of Abraxus, and she managed to claim control of their estate by murdering their matriarch and taking her place. Her mind twisted by her own transformation, by her newfound respect and power as a drow, and by Abraxus's malevolent influence, she now views all of Kyonin as her enemy. The surface elves are weak; they are imposters and cowards who fled in the face of hardship and do not deserve their place of power. They must be punished.

Allevrah Azrinae abandoned Zirnakaynin, and uses her new army of Azrinae drow to mobilize against Kyonin. With their resources, she hopes to develop the aboleth magic into a weapon she can use against Kyonin, to call down a star from the skies above to obliterate the heart of the elven nation. Before she can realize her goal, though, she and her minions must perfect their weapon. As this campaign begins, the weapon is constructed, yet Allevrah worries that it might not work. She has thus decided to "test fire" the magic, calling down a tiny star from the skies above, targeting a single small island far from Kyonin. With her agents in place, the weapon begins searching the sky for a suitable target, and as it does, strange magical manifestations occur nearby. Fish leap from the waters to wriggle madly inland before suffocating. Lightning strikes and black hail fall from clear skies. And in the closest inhabited town, Riddleport, a strange shadow appears in the sky...

Adventure Summary

Strange days are afoot in Riddleport as an inexplicable shadow hovers in the sky over the city, attracting scholars and mystics to divine its meaning. Yet for most of Riddleport's citizens, the shadow's significance, known locally as "The Blot," is fleeting. Life continues on the streets of Riddleport, and at a local game tournament held at the Gold Goblin Gambling Hall, the PCs find themselves thwarting an attempted heist, after which they are offered employment by its owner, Saul Vancaskerkin. Working for their new boss in exchange for an ownership interest in the game hall, the PCs find themselves striving to quash attempts to undermine the Gold Goblin as well as protect its interests as they seek to turn around the struggling establishment financially. This culminates in a massive raid on the game hall, apparently conducted by the corrupt government of Riddleport in order to shut down the building. Throughout these events, phenomena of ever-increasing strangeness occur, seemingly tied somehow to the shadow over Riddleport.

Finally, Vancaskerkin reveals to the party that he uncovered a plot between local crimelords and corrupt government officials to eradicate the Gold Goblin and its owners once and for all. He provides the PCs with the location of a meeting between these conspirators in the city's flooded dumping grounds. The PCs set off to thwart this plot and unmask the individuals behind it only to be warned of the ambush at the last minute by a strange wild elf from a distant land. Turning the attack on the ambushers, the PCs learn that their employer is actually behind the treachery in an attempt to eliminate them from the partnership.

Returning to the Gold Goblin, the PCs find hired mercenaries barring entrance to the building. Inside, the PCs confront Saul Vancaskerkin and learn he is actually in league with a much more sinister force and has been using the PCs as pawns all along. Through a secret door in the basement, they discover tunnels that lead to this new business partner, a wicked drow elf named Depora Azrinae. As they recover from their battles, though, a final event strikes—a falling star streaks across the sky to strike the distant island of Devil's Elbow—a harbinger indeed of worse things to come.

The PCs should be 1st level when they begin this adventure. By the time they're working for Saul and are about to head out to the *Foamrunner*, they should be 2nd level. They should be 3rd level after the ambush in the Boneyard, and by the end of the adventure they should reach 4th level. If at any point during the adventure the PCs are falling behind, you can use the Set Piece adventure "St. Caspieran's Salvation" that begins on page 64 to give them a boost.

Thieves and Thugs

The most commonly encountered enemies in "Shadow in the Sky" are Riddleport's thugs and thieves. While those who

employ these scoundrels vary, the scoundrels themselves do not—you can use these thugs and thieves as streetwalking cutpurses, bandits, employees of any of the city's crimelords, or even as shopkeepers or bystanders as required. Feel free to swap out weapons as you wish.

RIDDLEPORT THIEF

CR 1

Human rogue 1

NE Medium humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12

(+2 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 8 (1d6+2)

Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +0

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee rapier +1 (1d6+1/18–20) or

sap +1 (1d6+1 nonlethal)

Ranged dagger +2 (1d4+1/19–20) or

shortbow +2 (1d6/x3)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

During Combat Thieves work with their allies, attempting to flank foes to maximize sneak attack opportunities.

They fight with their backs to walls or other barriers whenever possible.

Morale A thief flees if brought below 4 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 15, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +0; **Grp** +1

Feats Improved Initiative, Stealthy

Skills Bluff +3, Disable Device +5, Hide +8, Intimidate +3,

Knowledge (local) +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Open

Lock +6, Sleight of Hand +6, Spot +4

Languages Common, Varisian

SQ trapfinding

Gear leather armor, rapier, daggers (4), shortbow with 20 arrows, 2d6 gp

RIDDLEPORT THUG

CR 1/2

Human warrior 1

NE Medium humanoid

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13

(+3 armor)

hp 5 (1d8+1)

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

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee short sword +3 (1d6+1/19–20) or

unarmed strike +2 (1d3+1)

TACTICS

During Combat A thug employs simple tactics in combat, simply rushing up to a foe and slashing away with his sword.

Morale Innately cowardly, a thug attempts to flee as soon as he is wounded.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 11, **Con** 12, **Int** 9, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Feats Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus (short sword)

Skills Intimidate +3

Languages Common

Gear studded leather armor, short sword, 1d10 gp

PART ONE: CHEAT THE DEVIL, TAKE HIS GOLD

“Shadow in the Sky” begins at the Gold Goblin Gambling Hall, where the grand gambling event “Cheat the Devil and Take his Gold” looks to be poised to bring the game hall back in business after a long decline. Yet the gambling tournament is not the only thing going on in Riddleport, for a strange atmospheric phenomenon lately manifested in the sky above the city. The strange blot has hung in the air for several weeks, moving slowly in what appears to be a random pattern in the sky. At first assumed to be a dark cloud, it soon became evident that it often moved at odds with the wind. The blot itself resembles nothing so much as a shadow floating in the sky, almost as if some large but unseen object were partially blocking the sun’s rays.

Riddleport already hosts a large number of scholars, but as word of the blot spread, additional investigators from locations as far as Magnimar came to witness the strange phenomenon, their numbers swelling the city’s population. Arguments over the source, nature, and implications of the shadow rage in areas where scholars congregate, but when it became apparent that the shadow was having little direct impact on the city itself, most of Riddleport’s citizens moved on to other concerns, leaving the matter to the bookish sages in order to get on with the business of doing business. Of course, the majority of the city’s residents find the influx of new marks to be quite welcome, and both pickpocketing and the confidence business is booming.

What no one has yet surmised is that the shadow and all of the strange (but mostly subtle) recent events are tied together. As the drow stationed on the island of Devil’s Elbow several miles south of Riddleport prepare to test fire their magical weapon (which utilizes strange glyphs to store huge amounts of magic), the building arcane energies are affecting the surrounding environment in strange and unusual ways. The drow are taking note of these manifestations as well, and as much of their work under Devil’s Elbow now is spent trying to adjust the weapon’s glyphs to minimize these side-effects (and therefore prevent curiosity) as it is preparing the glyphs for activation.

The Shadow in the Sky

The strange shadow floating over Riddleport has attracted a great deal of scholarly interest and research. Through this study and not a little experimentation, some information has been gleaned. For most of this adventure, the shadow should remain in the background, but just as the visiting scholars have, the PCs themselves are free to seek answers about the blot. Listed below are several Knowledge check results the PCs can attempt. You can use these results to gauge what a PC learns from a scholar or sage if no PC has ranks in a particular skill. Gather Information can be used to learn more general rumors and public knowledge about the blot. Alternatively, Gather Information checks can uncover the information below in the form of rumors about town—simply select one of the bits of information below (at random or otherwise) whose DC matches or is less than the Gather Information check to reward the PC; but keep in mind also that Riddleport’s a dangerous city, and the more people the PCs interact with, the greater their chances of encountering a con artist, pickpocket, or worse. As a general rule, you can assume that 30% of the individuals PCs interact with via Gather Information are dangerous sorts; in this case, you can roll on the wandering monster table on page 79 to determine what sort of criminal the PCs meet. Whether or not the criminal decides to take advantage of the PCs is up to you.

Knowledge checks are not only safer, but more efficient. When a character makes a Knowledge check, he learns the information for the highest DC he achieves in addition to all of the lower DC information, unlike Gather Information checks, which simply provide a random piece of information. These Knowledge checks cannot be retried unless the character seeks out a large library and spends 2d6 hours of study—in Riddleport, only the Cypher Lodge has a large enough library to aid in this regard.

Finally, characters who spend several hours watching the Blot can use Search to make their own observations.

Gather

Information Check Result

DC 10	The darkness in the sky over Riddleport is known locally as Blakely’s Shadow, or simply the Blot.
DC 14	The Blot first appeared over Riddleport about a month ago and has remained in the sky ever since. It has changed size and shape and has even disappeared intermittently, but has always returned after several hours.
DC 18	The overlord has offered a 500 gp reward to anyone who can determine what the Blot is and if it poses a threat to the city. Many have undertaken the challenge but so far there have been no results.



Riddleport



Knowledge

(arcana)

Check Result

DC 12

Riddleport has a long history of mysterious phenomena connected to its infamous Cyphergate Riddle—the long-sought hidden purpose of the stone arch that rises over the harbor. Old accounts tell of strange lights moving in the sky and sounds issuing forth from it without explanation. The manifestation of a shadow in the sky is something new, though.

DC 16

No known magical traditions explain the existence of the hovering shadow, and it does not bear the trappings of any known spell.

DC 20

The wizard Argentus Blakely (a noted Cyphergate scholar) postulated that the Blot is some sort of convergence for focusing arcane energies. He has yet to prove his hypothesis but is running several experiments to test its validity.

Knowledge

(local)

Check Result

DC 10

A local cyphermage and stargazer named Argentus Blakely first noticed the Blot before it was visible to the naked eye. He called it an “atmospheric shadow” and it was subsequently named for him as it became more visible.

DC 14

Blakely flew up to investigate the eerie shadowy Blot a week after it appeared, and reported that the interior was strangely cold but that the blot itself seemed no different than a regular cloud—apart from its unusual color.

DC 18

Blakely’s been out of town recently, on a long journey to Magnimar and thence to Korvosa to research the Blot in the libraries there. In his absence, the Order of Cyphers has been leading the charge on additional localized investigations of the Blot.

Knowledge

(nature)

Check Result

DC 10

The Blot has no known analogy in nature.

DC 15

Birds and flying creatures appear to avoid the air space around the Blot. Although it resembles a dark cloud, the wind seems to have no real effect on it.

DC 21

The movements of the Blot seem to be related to the tides—it is at its largest at high tide and at its smallest at low tide, although periodically, changes in its size seem to occur at random as well.

Search

Check Result

DC 10

The Blot changes shape and size somewhat, but is generally ovoid in shape and hovers alternately

over the harbor and gulf just south of Riddleport.

It is dark like a shadow but does allow some light through, albeit dimly, and flying objects can faintly be seen through its obscuring haze.

It casts a faint shadow on the ground beneath it depending on the angle of the sun.

DC 15

The Blot hangs at a fairly constant altitude of about 2,500 feet and appears to be roughly 250 feet long by 130 feet wide.

DC 18

The Blot seems to move in a pattern that appears erratic until studied closely. It follows an elliptical orbit traveling north over the town and south over the gulf, shifting north and south as the tides shift. It is closest to Riddleport at high tide.

Wild Times at the Gold Goblin

“Shadow in the Sky” begins at a gala held at a local gaming hall called the Gold Goblin. This event kicks off the Second Darkness Adventure Path and provides you a place to have the PCs meet for the first time if some of the characters don’t already know each other. Before you start the campaign, consider having your players consult the *Second Darkness Pathfinder Companion*. This product not only gives players the background they need to know about the city of Riddleport, but also gives them advice on what kinds of characters would be most appropriate for this campaign without spoiling the surprises to come.

More importantly, the *Second Darkness Pathfinder Companion* presents a number of character traits that each player can choose for his character. These traits not only grant each character a minor bonus (roughly equivalent to one half of a full feat), but perhaps more importantly, each gives a built-in reason to attend the “Cheat the Devil and Take his Gold” event. Some PCs could be looking for money to help pay off a loan, some could have taken offense at the devilish themes the gala has adopted, and some might be here to look for a job. Each trait gives the PCs a different reason to be at the Gold Goblin when several thugs attempt a sudden heist to rob the place—and the PCs are the only ones in a position to defend the site.

But before the heist breaks out, give each player a chance to situate himself at the Gold Goblin. You might want to take a few minutes before starting the game to familiarize yourself with each character and ask each player to describe to you how he intends to arrive at the Gold Goblin. You can even have each player make an initiative check to determine in what order he arrives. Characters who already know each other, of course, have the option to arrive together. This initial encounter works best if all the PCs have at least a passing acquaintance with each other, but this is by no means required—soon enough, they all become employees of the Gold Goblin’s owner, Saul Vancaskerkin.

Although the Gold Goblin stands in a much-neglected neighborhood and the building itself has long stood dormant and empty, it makes a comeback as the big day comes. Crowds of participants and spectators mill about on the street or file together through the main doors to sign up for the tournament. Overseeing this gathering is a larger-than-life-size statue of a goblin, apparently cast in glittering gold, that stands atop the entry stairs with a smirking expression of satisfaction on its face, as if personally enjoying the crowds that shuffle past it into the doorway beneath the gambling hall's gilded dome.

Just inside the main doors, two sultry beauties scantily clad and wearing faux bat wings, devil horns, and tails play the part of alluring succubi. Both are employees of the Gold Goblin, and they cheerfully register contestants for the tournament and process entry fees. Armed guards stand nearby to either side of an immense treasure chest into which each patron's entry fee is added. The guards are on hand to not only protect the money, but to prevent any overzealous admirers from trying to dare the infamous touch of a succubus.

Beyond the registration table is the hall's game floor. Dozens of gamblers, waitresses dressed as succubi, and bouncers mill about the room, wandering amid tables offering various games while dealers shuffle cards, roll dice, and spin wheels. Moving through this throng are a dozen more of the barely clad, bat-winged vixens serving drinks and batting coal-black eyelashes flirtatiously for tips. In the center of the chamber is a short podium atop which sits a massive gold chest affixed to the floor by similarly gaudy chains. On either side of it stands a bare-chested bouncer in the exotic garb of some foreign sultan's court. Each stands with muscled arms crossed over his chest and with a naked scimitar of prodigious size tucked through his waistband. High above them, from the hall's cloth-draped ceiling, hangs a brass birdcage within which crouches a small, bat-winged, pointy-tailed devilish creature that sulks as it gazes over the room and occasionally rattles the bars threateningly.

The grand spectacle that is the Cheat the Devil and Take his Gold tournament takes place primarily in area 2 of the gambling hall, which is itself detailed in full starting on page 56. Patrons constantly enter and exit the cashiers' area to obtain chips or order drink and food. A few out-of-town visitors have rented rooms in expectation of sleeping off the effects of the all-night tournament. Details on room rates can be found in "The Gold Goblin." All other areas are off limits to the patrons of the establishment, though employees can move throughout freely except in areas 4–9 and 25–39.

Anyone making a DC 10 Knowledge (the planes) check can identify the caged creature as an imp. Magical detection picks up an aura of abjuration, although this is actually nothing more than the results of a *magic aura* spell that Saul

INTERACTIONS WITH THE BLOT

For all of its sinister implications, the shadow in the sky is nothing more than a side effect. Although the shadow's altitude of 2,500 feet should put it out of range of low level characters, obsessed PCs might spend the money on something like a *potion of fly* to go check it out. In this case, their direct investigation reveals little more than the fact that the rumors of flying magic failing near the Blot are obviously false, but the Blot itself does indeed have some strange qualities. Treat the Blot as a huge dark-colored *fog cloud* that cannot be dispelled or affected by wind effects. A character who enters the Blot finds himself short of breath and strangely cold while inside the cloud, but otherwise receives no ill effects until the next time he sleeps, at which point he is affected by a *nightmare* spell (DC 20) that grants him visions of floating alone and slowly choking and freezing in the dark places beyond the stars.

The Blot radiates faint transmutation magic. Spells like *divination* and *commune* are frustratingly vague in regard to the Blot, beyond confirming its role as a bad omen. Since the Blot itself is unprecedented, even *legend lore* is mostly useless to determine anything about it, revealing only vague and incomplete indications that it is the harbinger of something dangerous.

hired a local wizard to cast on the cage for him. The imp is real—a cantankerous creature named Old Scratch, who is slowly paying off an old debt he owes to Saul Vancaskerkin. By performing in a birdcage for the duration of the gambling tournament, Saul's agreed to knock off the imp's debt several weeks of servitude, leaving the tiny devil only owing Saul 6 more months of service rather than 10.

The PCs' role in the Cheat the Devil and Take his Gold tournament is decided by which traits they selected during character generation. If you aren't using the *Second Darkness Pathfinder Companion* in your game, it's easiest to just assume the PCs came to the tournament to try their luck at winning a little money. Entering the Gold Goblin requires a 1 gp fee. This being Riddleport, there is no ban on armor or weapons—just an unspoken agreement to not cause problems in a public space. Each participant must then sign a mock contract provided by one of the voluptuous succubi, selling his soul to the house's Devil. Saul Vancaskerkin is neither a theologian nor a planar expert and has no knowledge or interest in the finer distinctions of the Lower Planes. As a result, he doesn't care that succubi are actually demons rather than devils and would be considered mortal enemies of the latter. All he knows is that attractive women in succubus costumes garner more entry fees and more tips, and that is all he is concerned with. Some PCs might balk at signing such a sinister-sounding document, but since nothing on the

contract specifically identifies the signatory (no one at the Gold Goblin really cares whose name goes onto the contract), it is nonbinding as a legitimate soul-document, as can be confirmed by a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (local) check. Its only real purpose is to affirm the rules of the tournament, stipulate the entry fee, and add verisimilitude to the event. It is reproduced as Handout 1.

The Gold Goblin's main hall is a very large room, and there are more than a dozen different gaming tables available for contestants to wager, win, and lose. For much of the afternoon, as the registration process continues, the gathering crowd spends time playing cards and other non-sanction games, drinking, or otherwise carousing. By the time dusk approaches and the tournament gears up to begin, there are more than a hundred participants in attendance, along with 17 dealers and croupiers, six succubus-costumed servers, and six burly bouncers crammed into the room.

Introducing Saul Vancaskerkin

As the windows begin darkening with twilight, several gamehall employees enter, carrying torches shaped like pitchforks skewering burning heads made of straw and cloth to light several large braziers, giving the hall a more infernal hue. A hush falls over the gathered crowd as a short man climbs to the central podium, accompanied by two gorgeous "succubi," and stands before the gold, chain-shrouded chest there with a demoness on either side. He wears a formal suit, and his thinning black hair is slicked back. His left arm ends in a stump just above the wrist, and affixed to it is a bronze cap from which protrudes an oddly shaped key. This is Saul Vancaskerkin, the owner of the Gold Goblin and host of the tournament. He bows before the crowd and clears his throat before speaking.

"Welcome, one and all, to the Gold Goblin Gambling Hall and your chance to cheat the Devil and win back not only your soul but all of his gold as well." He says this last as he pats the large chest before which he stands. "I hope you found your reception by the Devil's lovely temptresses suitably entertaining."

This is met by a general murmur of laughter and a few catcalls. "Let's take this moment to thank Old Scratch himself for attending this event. Not only did he loan us these lovely, dark angels, but he also emptied the deepest vaults of Hell itself to provide the gold for this tournament."

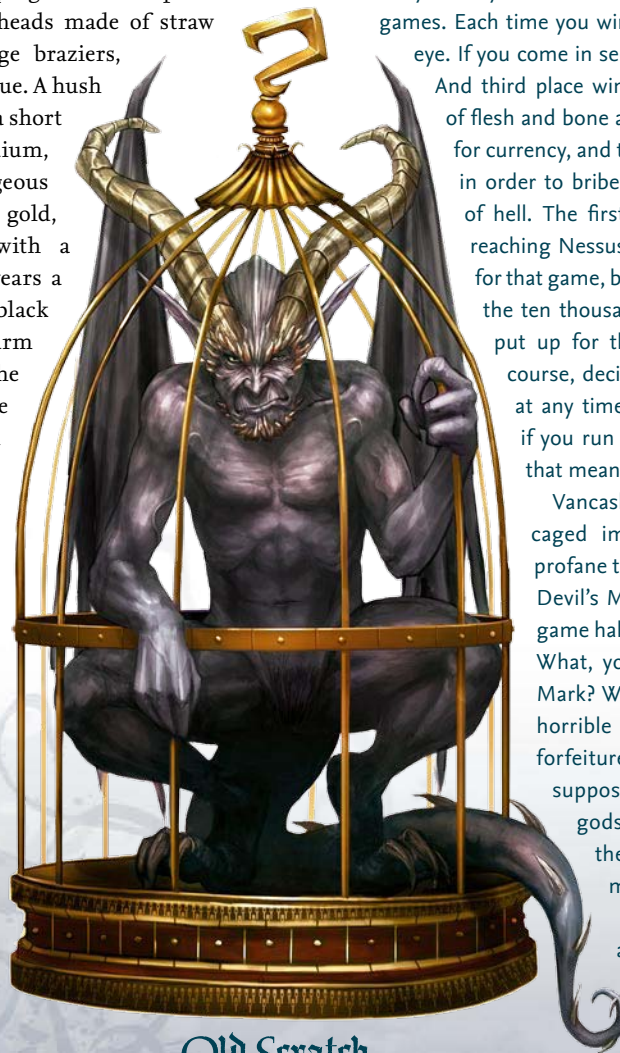
With this, Saul directs the crowd's attention up to the imp in the birdcage. At the sudden attention, Old Scratch flies into a flurry of rage, banging the cage bars, spitting, howling, and screaming vile epithets in Infernal at all assembled. His theatrics are received with guffaws and even a smattering of applause. As the crowd dies down, Vancaskerkin continues.

"Of course, he plans on replacing what he loses in gold with the souls of those of you who don't win. The tournament rules are quite simple—as you play, you'll earn more chips. And with those chips, you'll be able to bribe your way out of the current Hell you're trapped in, working your way down deeper until you get to Old Scratch's treasury. Currently, all of you are Old Scratch's prisoners in the first of the Hells, Avernus. If you want to work your way down to the ninth circle, you need to win games. Each time you win, you'll be awarded a golden eye. If you come in second, you'll get a silver tooth. And third place wins a copper heart. These bits of flesh and bone are what the devils use in Hell for currency, and they're what you'll need to pay in order to bribe your way into the next layer of hell. The first player to win a game after reaching Nessus not only keeps his winnings for that game, but also earns back his soul and the ten thousand silver coins that the Devil put up for this tournament. You can, of course, decide to cash out your winnings at any time you want, but if you do, or if you run out of money entirely... well, that means Old Scratch gets you."

Vancaskerkin grins evilly and the caged imp cuts loose with another profane tirade. "And that earns you the Devil's Mark and an escort out of the game hall until the tournament is over. What, you ask, exactly is this Devil's Mark? Well, it's something too utterly horrible to even contemplate. The forfeiture of your very soul, it is. But I suppose I can show you what it is—

gods know I more than deserve the Devil's Mark. In fact, better make it two, girls!"

With that, the two succubi accompanying him lean over and each firmly plants a



Old Scratch

Handout 1

I, _____, DO HEREBY SACRIFICE MY IMMORTAL SOUL AND THE WORLDLY SUM OF 10 PISCEES OF SILVER TO THE DEVIL TO HOLD IN ESCROW AGAINST HIS OWN STAKES OF 10,000 SILVER COINS IN THE GAMBLING TOURNAMENT BEING HELD AT THE GOLD GOBLIN GAMBLING HALL OF RIDDLESFORD ON THIS OATHDAY, 14TH DAY OF ARODUS, 4708 AR.

I UNDERSTAND THAT MY SOUL WILL BE PLACED ON DEPOSIT IN THE HELL'S DEEPEST PIT OF NESSUS. FURTHERMORE, I UNDERSTAND THAT ALL WINNINGS SHALL BE CATALOGUED IN CONCORDANCES OF SOULS, TO BE REPRESENTED BY TISHTH, EYES, AND HEARTS OF THE DAMNED. BY PARTICIPATING IN THE GAMBLING TOURNAMENT AND BEGINNING IN THE FIRST PIT OF AVERNUS, MY WINNINGS SHALL EARN MY WAY DEEPER THROUGH THE HELLS ON THE FOLLOWING SCHEDULE:

DIS! GOLD EYES

EREBUS-3 GOLD EYES AND A BADGE OF DIS

PHLEGETHON-5 GOLD EYES AND A BADGE OF EREBUS

STYXIA-10 GOLD EYES AND A BADGE OF PHLEGETHON

MALSBOLG-25 GOLD EYES AND A BADGE OF STYXIA

COCYTUS-50 GOLD EYES AND A BADGE OF MALSBOLG

CAINA-75 GOLD EYES AND A BADGE OF COCYTUS

NESSUS-100 GOLD EYES AND A BADGE OF CAINA

I UNDERSTAND THAT IF I SHOULD LOSE MY STAKES IN THE TOURNAMENT I SHALL RECEIVE THE DEVIL'S MARK AND MY SOUL SHALL BE CAST UPON THE ROCKS ON THE SHORE OF THE RIVER STYX.

I UNDERSTAND THAT IF I ELECT TO CASH IN MY WINNINGS BEFORE REACHING THE PIT OF NESSUS I SHALL FORFEIT MY SOUL AND 50% OF THE CASH VALUE OF MY WINNINGS FOR SAID EARLY DEPARTURE.

IF I AM THE FIRST PLAYER TO REACH NESSUS, THEN I AM GRANTED THE REDEMPTION OF MY SOUL AND THE RIGHT TO CHEAT THE DEVIL AND TAKE HIS GOLD IN ADDITION TO COLLECTING MY WINNINGS. IN SUCH A CIRCUMSTANCE, ALL OTHER PLAYERS SHALL RECEIVE THE DEVIL'S MARK AND FORFEIT THEIR SOULS.

THIS IS I DO SWEAR.

WITNESSED BY: _____ OLD SCRATCH

kiss on Saul's cheek with her ruby-red lips. When they pull away, their lip rouge has left clearly visible prints in the same shocking red on his cheeks. Saul beams as he cries out, "The Devil's Mark, everyone!" which is greeted by a flurry of shouts, catcalls, and hoots. "Now, let's cheat the Devil and take his gold!" which prompts one more rabid flurry from the imprisoned fiend above, and with that, the tournament begins.

Cheat The Devil...

There are numerous games available for the participants to play during the tournament. Some of these games are typical gambling games like poker, but there are four unusual regional games played at the Gold Goblin as well—Bounder, Ghoullette, Golem, and Skiffs. Rules for these four games are presented starting on page 57. As the tournament progresses, feel free to play out some of these games with your PCs as you wish—it's probably best to assume that you as GM play the role of dealer or croupier and that all the PCs end up sitting at the same table, but if each player wants to try his hand at a different game, you could simply go around the table and run a quick single round of each game to determine how much each character wins. Spend as much or as little time as you wish with the tournament, and once one of the players is approaching a win (or once

things start to drag), proceed with "The Gold Goblin Job" on page 16.

If you don't want to take the time at your gaming table to play out several rounds of games, you can always just use the Quick Gambling rules to determine how well a PC does. If you opt for this method, a single game takes about 5 minutes of game time to resolve. Each PC who wishes to gamble must place his bet—an amount anywhere from 1 sp on up. Have each gambling PC make a Charisma check, then compare the results of the check to the following table to determine how well the PC did. Alternatively, a character with ranks in Profession (gambler) can choose to make that check instead of a straight-up Charisma check. Failure to meet the lowest DC result indicates that the gambler lost his entire stake.

Quick Gambling Results

Check DC Result

DC 10	Loss: Lose 50% of stake.
DC 12	Minor Loss: Lose 20% of stake.
DC 14	Break Even: Regain stake.
DC 16	Minor Win: Regain stake plus 20%.
DC 18	Win: Regain stake plus 50%.
DC 20	Big Win: Regain stake plus 100%.
DC 22	Jackpot!: Regain stake plus 100%. For each 2 points

by which your result exceeds DC 22, increase the additional win by another 20% (for example, DC 24 pays 120%, DC 26 pays 140%, and so on).

...Take His Gold!

All of the gambling that occurs in the Gold Goblin utilizes chips—circular bits of wood carved with a symbol and dipped in paint. Anyone can buy any amount of chips from the house, according to the following costs.

Gold Goblin Gambling Chips

Name	Color	Cost
Copper Heart	Dull red	1 cp
Silver Tooth	Dull gray	1 sp
Gold Eye	Dull gold	1 gp

A patron can cash in his chips at any time for money or for badges. If a player opts to cash out his chips for money before the tournament is over, he not only gains the Devil's Mark but can only claim his winnings at 50% of the chips' value. Only by remaining for the duration of the entire tournament can a gambler cash in his chips at 100% value. The Devil's Mark can also be awarded to anyone who Saul or his bouncers decide is being too disruptive or isn't gambling. Once awarded the Devil's Mark (either via a kiss from a shapely succubus or by a hand-delivered smear of red pigment in the case of unruly patrons) a patron is escorted out the back door, which opens out onto the "River Styx" (actually the banks of the Velashu). Despite receiving the Devil's Mark, most folk can re-enter the tournament if they pay the entry fee again, although those the bouncers marked as troublemakers must also make a successful Disguise check to get back inside.

If a patron opts to cash in chips for badges, he can do so according to the rates listed on his contract. Note that all badges cost gold eyes, and most require you to hand in your previous badge. Once a character earns the Badge of Nessus, in theory he becomes a finalist. As soon as several patrons earn Badges of Nessus, they all play in a short round of Golem, with the first player to win five hands being declared the winner of the Tournament and the 10,000 sp grand prize.

Of course, destiny has other things in mind for the Gold Goblin.

The Gold Goblin Job (EL 5)

Although the tournament itself could last until the early morning hours before anyone wins the grand prize, the games are interrupted before reaching their conclusion. When you feel the gambling tournament has gone on long enough, possibly as a player is about to receive the Devil's Mark and be escorted from the tournament or as soon as your players have grown tired of the event, proceed with the heist.

Creatures: The culprits attempting this heist are mostly composed of a gang of out-of-towner ruffians led by a Chelish wizard named Angvar Thestlecrit and his Varisian lover Thuvalia, a woman with only one eye. The two lovers are accompanied by a group of four thugs—all six of them have properly registered and take some time playing games and waiting for Saul Vancaskerkin to take a break from the game floor to transfer money from the register into the counting room and night vault. Knowing that it takes Saul several rounds to return through the several locked doors between the gaming floor and the vault, the thugs hope to strike quickly and be gone from the Gold Goblin before Saul can return.

The plan is simple. When Angvar decides to strike, he steps into one of the public lavatories to cast *shield* on himself and get out his *scroll of pyrotechnics*. He then peeks out the door and casts *message* to indicate to Thuvalia that he's ready to begin the heist. Their four thugs never stray far from Thuvalia's side, so when she gets the message and "accidentally" drops a handful of gambling chips on the ground, the thugs all see the signal. After that, the heist (in theory) unfolds in the following manner:

Surprise Round: The thugs and Thuvalia close their eyes as Angvar uses his *scroll of pyrotechnics*. He has to make a DC 4 caster level check to activate the spell (if he fails and then misses the DC 5 Wisdom check, the scroll bursts into flame and targets only Angvar with the effects). Assuming he succeeds, he causes a blinding explosion of fireworks to erupt out of one of the braziers at the far side of the room. The sudden burst blinds everyone in area 2 of the Gold Goblin (save for Thuvalia and the thugs, who have their eyes closed) who fails a DC 13 Will save; the blindness lasts 1d4+1 rounds. Immediately after the fireworks, the thugs draw their swords and Thuvalia uses her bardic music to inspire courage in her allies by loudly orating, "All right, folks! Drop to the ground and don't try anything stupid and we might let you live!"

Round 1: The four thugs move to intercept any guards who aren't blinded and make unarmed strikes; the thugs deal nonlethal damage, since they'd rather not complicate matters with murder unless absolutely necessary. Angvar gets out his *scroll of shrink item* and starts moving toward the center of the room, while Thuvalia casts *daze* at the closest guard who seems about ready to take action against them. About half of the patrons drop to the ground as ordered, but others begin to panic, convinced they've been permanently blinded. Despite Thuvalia's demand, the thugs take no action against the panicking crowd.

Round 2: The thugs keep moving to intercept guards and using unarmed strikes against them. Angvar reaches the chest containing the 10,000 sp and uses his *scroll of*

shrink item on it. The chest is just under the spell's limits on what it can affect, but Angvar still needs to make a DC 6 Caster Level check to activate the spell (if he fumbles the spell, it simply fails without any dramatic side-effects). Assuming the spell works, the chest and its 10,000 sp shrink down to a Fine-sized clothlike composition. Thuvalia snatches the chest and starts to make her way to the exit.

Round 3: Thuvalia cries out, "Loot what you will, boys!" as she and Angvar fall back toward the exit. Before he moves, though, Angvar casts *open/close* on Old Scratch's cage. The four thugs howl in delight and begin stealing rings, necklaces, and any other obvious pieces of jewelry from any customers who are still blinded.

Round 4: Thugs continue robbing blind patrons. Thuvalia opens the exit door and runs out, followed by Angvar, who slams the double door entrance closed. Old Scratch emerges from his cage with a shriek and begins flapping around the room, casting insults to the crowd and using *suggestion* on one of the thugs to attack one of the guards (or PCs) with lethal force.

Round 5: Angvar casts *hold portal* on the entrance, and then he and Thuvalia flee into Riddleport with their loot. The thugs, seeing that the patrons are recovering from blindness and that their employer has made their escape route more difficult, abandon the heist and attempt to escape by any means possible. Old Scratch turns invisible and attempts to retreat deeper into the building to hide.

Of course, there are plenty of opportunities for this carefully-planned heist to go sour, either after a scroll misfires, too many guards make their saving throw against the *pyrotechnics*, or most likely of all, the PCs get involved.

Just before the criminals begin their heist, allow each PC a DC 10 Spot check—those who make the check have a chance to see something suspicious. Each PC who makes the Spot check can attempt a DC 15 Sense Motive check to realize that Thuvalia and the thugs have suddenly become tense and seemed to all close their eyes at once. Any PC who beats the initial Spot check by 10 or more (scoring at least DC 20) also sees

Angvar through the mostly closed door to the lavatories as he prepares to use his scroll. Regardless of what the PCs see or realize, anyone who makes the DC 10 Spot check is allowed to roll initiative and act on the surprise round. The criminals attempt to follow their heist plan as long as the PCs don't interfere, but if the PCs do, they revert to the combat tactics described in their statistics.

ANGVAR THESTLECRIT

CR 2

Male human wizard 2
NE Medium humanoid
Init +6; Senses Listen +1, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 6
(+1 armor, +2 Dex, +4 shield)

hp 8 (2d4+2)
Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4 (+5 against charm and fear)

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.
Melee sickle +2 (1d4+1)
Spells Prepared (CL 2nd)
1st—*hold portal*, *magic missile*, *shield*
0—*detect magic*, *flare* (DC 12), *ghost sound* (DC 12), *open/close*

TACTICS

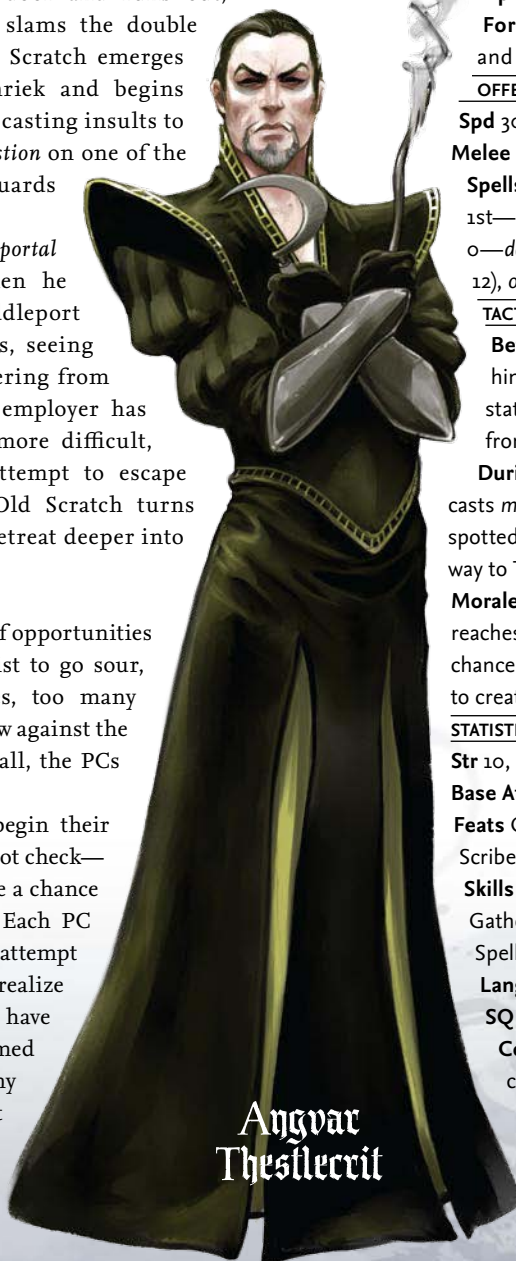
Before Combat Angvar casts *shield* on himself before setting the heist in action. His stats include the bonuses from bardic music from Thuvalia.

During Combat Once things turn sour, Angvar casts *magic missile* at whomever seems to have spotted him, then draws his sickle and fights his way to Thuvalia's side.

Morale If Angvar drops below 5 hp or once he reaches Thuvalia's side he tries to flee. If he gets a chance, he casts *open/close* on Old Scratch's cage to create a distraction to cover his flight.

STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 8
Base Atk +1; Grp +1
Feats Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll
Skills Appraise +3, Bluff +4, Concentration +6, Gather Information +3, Knowledge (local) +7, Spellcraft +7
Languages Common, Infernal, Varisian
SQ summon familiar (snake named Iskish)
Combat Gear *wand of shocking grasp* (9 charges), *scroll of pyrotechnics*, *scroll of shrink item*; Other Gear sickle, bracers of armor +1, spellbook, belt pouch with 33 gp in house chips



Angvar Thestlecrit

Spellbook contains prepared spells and all cantrips plus *grease*, *identify*, *magic aura*, and *true strike*

THUALIA BARABBIO

CR 1

Female human bard 1

CN Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen -1, Spot -1

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12

(+2 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 7 (1d6+1)

Fort +1, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1 (+2 against charm and fear)

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee rapier +1 (1d6+1/19-20)

Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8+1/19-20)

Special Attacks bardic music 1/day (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire courage +1)

Spells Known (CL 1st)

o (2/day)—*daze* (DC 12), *lullaby* (DC 12), *message*, *read magic*

TACTICS

During Combat Thuvalia activates inspire courage as soon as possible; its effects are incorporated into the stats for her and her allies.

Morale Thuvalia flees if she takes any damage or as soon as her lover reaches her side and the two of them abandon the heist.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 13, **Con** 12, **Int** 14, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +0; **Grp** +0

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative

Skills Disguise +6, Escape Artist +5, Gather Information +6, Hide +5, Move Silently +5, Perform (oratory) +6, Sleight of Hand +5, Tumble +5, Use Magic Device +6

Languages Common, Halfling, Varisian

SQ bardic knowledge +3

Gear masterwork leather armor, rapier, light crossbow with 10 bolts, belt pouch with 17 gp in house chips

ANGVAR'S GOONS (4)

CR 1

Riddleport Thieves (see page 9)

hp 8 each

Melee sap +2 (1d6+2 nonlethal)

GOLD GOBLIN BOUNCERS (6)

CR 1/2

Riddleport Thugs (see page 9)

hp 5 each

Melee club +4 (1d6+2) or unarmed strike +3 (1d3+2)

OLD SCRATCH

CR 2

Imp

hp 13 (MM 56)

TACTICS

During Combat Old Scratch was unaware of the impending robbery attempt and is enraged if the lock on his cage is sprung. He assumes Vancaskerkin has double-crossed him and immediately uses *suggestion* to try to make a character (guard or PC) attack a thug (or vice versa) for lethal damage.

Morale Old Scratch knows better than to attack the boss's customers, and on the second round of combat turns invisible and flaps off to hide

Development: By the time Vancaskerkin makes his way back out of the vault area (a procedure slowed by the fact that he must pass through several locked doors), the heist should be over—either because the criminals escaped, or more likely, because the PCs and the guards defeated them. The tournament is a failure as bickering and enraged guests loudly demand refunds as they attempt to cash in chips. Vancaskerkin steps up to the central podium and does his best to calm things down, assuring everyone that he'll let them cash out at 110% chip value. There is much grumbling, but even the staunchest protester realizes this is apt to be a better deal than if they had stayed for the whole tournament. As the surly customers queue up to cash out and begrudgingly depart, most of Vancaskerkin's staff resign on the spot as well, distraught over the whole event and unwilling to work more for the pittance the man was paying them.

As the action dies down, a grateful Vancaskerkin approaches the PCs. Assuming they had a visible role in defeating the criminals and saving the 10,000 sp, Vancaskerkin owes them a debt. To all appearances now on the verge of ruin, he retains a gleam in his eye and says he can detect the taste of success just around the corner. He asks the PCs if they might stay for awhile to discuss the events of the tournament over drinks while his few remaining loyal employees—Larur Feldin (the floor manager), Hans and Beyar (two guards too loyal to Saul's pay to abandon him), and Bojask (Saul's bodyguard—he must first be awakened in his room from a drunken stupor, since he had the night off)—get the place in order. If Angvar was captured or killed, Vancaskerkin recovers the shrunken chest and secures it in area 8. Local gendarmes soon arrive and take any surviving culprits into custody, but not before Vancaskerkin and his men thoroughly loot them (allowing the PCs to do so as well if they so choose).

Questioning Anguar or Thuvalia reveals only that they were hired by an unnamed man on the wharves last month to knock over the upcoming gambling tournament. They were supposed to meet this man later that night on the docks, but anyone who attempts to follow up on this lead is swiftly frustrated since this man doesn't really exist (see "The Real Saul Vancaskerkin" on page 20). Once the gendarmes arrive, they transport any prisoners to the

Overlord's Citadel, leaving Saul with promises of tracking down any other perpetrators that may have escaped.

An Offer You Can't Refuse

If the PCs take up Vancaskerkin on his offer, he invites them up to area 24 and asks them to be seated. He has one of his few remaining employees light a roaring fire and bring up a bottle of fine wine (or even a few potions of *cure light wounds* from a hidden stash if some of the PCs were wounded), after which he toasts the PCs' bravery and resourcefulness before turning over all valuables found on the looted robbers to the PCs as just rewards for their heroics. He also has Larur Feldin refund their entry fees and cashes out any chips they had at 150% of their value. Once the rewards are handled, he dismisses the help and gets down to business.

Saul Vancaskerkin introduces himself as a former, retired gang leader from the old days of Riddleport, but states matter-of-factly that his life of crime was far from lucrative and in fact cost him his health, his fortune, his family, and his left hand. With his wife dead, his sons exiled, and much of his fortune gone, he took what meager funds he could scrape together and was eventually able to purchase the Gold Goblin, a once-famous gambling hall that had fallen on hard times. He presents himself as too old to relocate or return to a life of crime, and has tried to turn the Gold Goblin into a modestly profitable business venture. Here, he sighs, and confesses that although he no longer considers himself a part of Riddleport's crime scene, he still has enemies among the city's criminals who would love to see him ruined. Despite his attempts to "go legit," he still lives under the ever-present shadow of retribution.

Saul goes on to say that he recognized Angvar as the leader of a group of street toughs he has seen around the casino before. He knows that Angvar and his one-eyed trollop have contracted out to most of the other crimelords in the past, mainly for protection rackets and strong-arm jobs. Saul has considered throwing himself at the mercy of Clegg Zincher or one of the other crime bosses for protection, but is loathe to re-enter that world. It is this situation that prompted him to approach the PCs for aid—with their help, he hopes to avoid further backsliding into his old ways.

Vancaskerkin states that he is impressed with the PCs' abilities and believes they are just the folks who can turn around his fortunes. To this end, he offers the PCs a job as specialists and junior partners in the Gold Goblin. He explains that they would work directly for him and assist in the day-to-day running of the establishment, serving as dealers, bouncers, croupiers, or greeters as the roles befit their personalities and skills—but that these roles would in fact be covers for the actual services they'll provide Saul as

TROUBLESHOOTING, PART ONE

This initial encounter is set up to give the PCs a chance to meet, fight, and be hired as employees of the Gold Goblin. But PCs being PCs, there's always a chance that things don't work out this way. Some characters might leave the Gold Goblin before the heist, others might decide not to come to the tournament at all. Or once the heist begins, some or all of the PCs might slip into the background or avoid confronting the criminals. In this particular case, you can attempt to force the PCs into heroics by having one of the thugs approach them directly and attempt to rob them.

If the heist comes and goes and the PCs didn't do anything to attract Saul's attention, you have something of a problem on your hands. The best way to handle this situation is to roll with the situation. Continue your game with the Set Piece adventure on page 64; after the PCs complete this adventure, word of their skills reaches Saul's ears. Still needing some trustworthy and competent adventurers, he contacts the PCs and invites them to the Gold Goblin to offer them a job.

bodyguards, messengers, and consultants. Each PC will be paid a regular salary of 10 gp a week as well as a cut of the gambling hall's weekly profits.

Assuming the PCs agree to the job offer, Vancaskerkin immediately calls his remaining staff together to inform them of the arrangement, then gives the PCs a personal tour of all areas of the facilities except the interior of the vault (area 8) and his rooms (areas 25, 26, and 28). Remember that the secret door in the floor of area 39 is buried under the sand, so there should be no chance for the PCs to find it or suspect its existence at this time, especially since the goblins kept in the pit make it an unsafe place to visit anyway. As part of the deal, Vancaskerkin also provides the PCs with free lodging, turning area 29 over for their personal use, as well as free board—they can dine with him daily in area 27 free of charge.

Saul Vancaskerkin's Story

Despite his convincing song and dance, Saul Vancaskerkin is far more than meets the eye, though he buries his lies in half-truths and makes generous use of his Bluff skill to lend his stories an air of believability.

Vancaskerkin avoids revealing too much of his history in Riddleport, but if the PCs dig, they can learn the following with a DC 15 Knowledge (local) or a DC 20 Gather Information check. Saul's fall from criminal grace is not really as secret as he would like—in his youth, he moved from gang to gang, often selling out an old boss to gain a slightly more favorable position with a new boss. He managed to juggle his complex allegiances between multiple crimelords well, at least until his son Orik was

involved in a scandal involving local prostitute Lavendar Lil and an alchemist named Falk. The alchemist's body turned up in the river, and several witnesses placed Orik in the vicinity at the time. The fact that Orik fled Riddleport for parts unknown did further damage to the Vancaskerkin name, but the major issue was that Falk was the brother of one of Riddleport's crimelords—Clegg Zincher. Saul tried to get his other son Verik to aid him in covering up some key evidence, but Verik had had enough of his father's life of crime and fled Riddleport as well to become a member of the Korvosan Guard.

With no allies left but his third wife Bertrida, Saul decided to abandon Riddleport as well, but Zincher was ready for him and cashed in a favor with the Overlord to have Saul's home surrounded. He hoped to have the gendarmes take Saul into custody, but the plan fell apart when it became apparent that Saul's house was on fire. The gendarmes managed to stop the fire before it spread, but not before it claimed Bertrida's life. They caught Saul in a nearby ally trying to flee, and in the inquest to come it became apparent that he'd murdered his own wife and lit his house on fire in a desperate attempt to fake his death and distract the gendarmes long enough to escape Riddleport. The Overlord was not pleased, but at Zincher's request, Saul's execution was "downgraded" to heavy fines and a hand. Of course, Zincher wasn't arguing for mercy—death would have been just that to Saul. Zincher wanted Saul alive but destitute and maimed—alive so he could live for a long time with the repercussions of his family's role in Falk Zincher's death.

This much is known to anyone who makes the appropriate Knowledge (local) and Gather Information check, in addition to the fact that, over the past several years, Saul has painstakingly rebuilt his fortune and reputation to the point where he was able to purchase and refurbish the crumbling Gold Goblin game hall. To date, rumors hold that Zincher is watching Saul's progress, watching and waiting to strike—Zincher himself has publicly stated that "Saul has paid his dues. I bear him no further ill will and wish the man luck in rebuilding what's left of his life."

If the PCs use *detect evil* on Saul and confront him about his alignment, he appears sheepish, claiming that, "a lifetime of crime isn't so easy to wash away." He claims to be working on his temper and his vices, and might even beg the PCs to help him keep on the "straight and narrow." Of course, the fact that Saul is evil shouldn't really set off too many warning bells, since the vast majority of Riddleport's most successful businessmen are evil as well.

Yet what none beyond Saul knows is exactly how Vancaskerkin managed to rebuild his fortune, and how despicable his soul truly is.

The Real Saul Vancaskerkin

After he lost his fortune and his hand to Riddleport justice, Vancaskerkin laid low for months, eking out a rough existence on the fringes of town and plotting his revenge. Of course, he counted all of Riddleport's crimelords his secret enemies, not just Zincher. Saul realized that his glory days were behind him, and it was then that Saul understood the depths to which he had sunk—ruined, shamed, no longer considered even a minor nuisance by his old enemies—and came to the conclusion that the petty vengeance he had been planning would simply not do. What he required was vengeance upon such a scale that all of Riddleport would suffer. All he needed was the right sort of opportunity.

It was in this position of abject despondency and burning desire for revenge that he encountered something out of the very fables and legends of Golarion—an elf woman with skin of blackest night and hair like silver fire. Scouting for surface agents, this drow had watched Saul for some time from Riddleport's darkest shadows, and deemed that he would be just the tool for her own plots. Too caught up in his own obsession, Saul Vancaskerkin never paused to consider that Depora Azrinae could have been merely using him for her own ends. She fronted him the money with which to purchase an old gambling hall called the Gold Goblin and refurbish it into a profitable business venture. Frightened by his new patron, he eagerly agreed to the stipulation to say nothing of her presence in the city and to avoid unwanted attention. Depora revealed to him that she had made her lair in a series of caverns that can be accessed from an old building near the waterfront, and that she wanted Saul to purchase that building. Whatever he did with it was up to him, but he was to ensure that no one would enter the caves below and thus disturb Depora's work. Whatever profits Saul's new purchase created would then be funneled into financing secret shipments of supplies (food, magical components, and even some slaves) to a small island several miles south of Riddleport, all under Depora's watchful eyes. She allows Saul enough funds to stay comfortable and run the Gold Goblin—this and her promises that his assistance will not be forgotten and that he will soon see all of Riddleport shake under his name have been more than enough to ensure Saul's cooperation.

Saul does not know the specifics of what Depora is up to but he has seen enough of her wrath to believe what she promises. Unfortunately, with her needs eating away at the revenues generated by the Gold Goblin, Vancaskerkin realized that the establishment was not generating sufficient money to meet her strict quota and that the business once again sank toward insolvency. This desperate situation sparked a mad scheme in his head to generate a quick influx of cash in order to get him back in the black with Depora for the short term, after which he pondered an "accidental" fire to liquidate his investment in the game hall and then collect on some

foresighted agreements he made with some local shipping underwriters. In order to get the ball rolling on this scheme, all he needed was some sort of gala event to attract enough folk with full coin purses to the Gold Goblin.

Through several different fences from the Riddleport underworld, Vancaskerkin arranged for a group of thugs to be hired and rob his own gambling tournament without realizing who they were actually working for. All valuables taken from the guests would eventually funnel their way back into Saul's coffers, and the theft would allow him to keep the 10,000 sp he'd promised to pay the tournament winner. When this plot fell apart at the hands of the PCs, it was conveniently largely untraceable back to him. Even better, the PCs provide him with a new band of muscle that he believes he can use to further his plot to bring about the downfall of Riddleport until their usefulness likewise ends and he has them eliminated as well.

SAUL VANCASKERKIN

CR 4

Male middle-aged human rogue 4
CE Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Listen -1, Spot -1

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15
(+3 armor, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 20 (4d6+4)

Fort +2, **Ref** +6, **Will** +0

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 rapier +4 (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison) or key stump -1 (1d4)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Before any actual conflict, Saul is quick to down his *potion of barkskin* +2.

During Combat Saul isn't quite as limber as he used to be, and prefers to avoid combat if possible. Before he lost his hand, he used to be rather accomplished at fighting in the classic rapier/dagger style, but the key on his stump functions in a pinch as an improvised dagger—Saul's not afraid to use it as such. He generally keeps a dose of drow sleep poison on his rapier.

Morale Saul only fights to the death if cornered in the Gold Goblin. Otherwise, he attempts to flee to his home if brought below 10 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 11, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 13, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 14

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

Feats Skill Focus (Bluff), Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

Skills Appraise +8, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +11, Forgery +8, Gather Information +11, Hide +9, Knowledge (local) +8, Open Lock +9, Profession (gambler) +6, Sleight of Hand +9

Languages Common, Varisian

SQ trapfinding

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* +2, drow sleep poison (3);

Other Gear +1 leather armor, +1 rapier, key stump (can be used as an improvised light slashing weapon), ruby earring worth 250 gp, ring of keys for all locks in the Gold Goblin, key ring to all keys in the Gold Goblin (save the secret door in area 39), belt pouch containing 25 gp

PART TWO: ON THE JOB

After the heist at the Gold Goblin is handled by the PCs, and as they begin to make names for themselves as Saul's troubleshooters, they begin to gain a bit of celebrity status in Riddleport. Saul Vancaskerkin increasingly trumpets their ability to stand up to petty criminals and clean up the Gold Goblin, and the word on the street is that even the city crimelords are worried about them. If this notoriety seems sudden and unmerited, that's because it is. Vancaskerkin's got a keen eye, after all, and he suspects that the PCs are the type of adventurers whose light will burn bright but fast, and he wants to capitalize on them as soon as possible before they tackle more than they can handle and end up dead in a monster's den. The PCs should hear inklings of their growing reputation as this part of the adventure begins and experience the public notoriety as their reputations continue to grow around the town.

What do Clegg Zincher, Boss Croat, and the other crimelords, as well as Riddleport's overlord think of these up-and-coming street heroes?



Saul Vancaskerkin



Quite frankly, the PCs are beneath their notice at this time—for all the sound and fury Vancaskerkin puts out, they're still relatively small fish in a big pond—for now, at least!

Strange Days in Riddleport

During this portion of the adventure, the odd phenomena associated with Riddleport's shadow in the sky slowly increases in severity as the drow on Devil's Elbow draw closer and closer to test firing their horrific weapon. As the magic in the hidden glyphs under Devil's Elbow grows in power, the strange side effects in the surrounding region grow as well. There are no specific time frames for these events, so you can space them out as best fits your game play style. The events should unfold in the order listed below, and while each causes a hubbub on the streets, no one has any real idea of what they portend, so no cohesive actions are taken.

In all cases, attempts at Spellcraft or spells such as *detect magic* turn up no conclusive clues apart from suggesting that something big is brewing.

- Small metal items (including weapons and armor) become slightly magnetized. This imposes a -1 penalty on attack rolls with metal weapons and a -1 penalty to AC to those wearing metal armor. The strange magnetism lasts for 2d6 minutes.
- All spells cast during a 79-minute period manifest a strange purple mist that incorporates into the magic of the spell—existing spell effects are not affected. The slight mist remains for 1d6 rounds before rising into the air and evaporating. A DC 20 Spot check is enough to note after several occurrences that the mist rises toward the Blot.
- A sudden tidal surge hits Riddleport's harbor. The uncharacteristically large wave causes minor damage as ships are pushed against the piers and boardwalks strain under the sudden pressure. Water from the wave reaches Wharf Street, and several stevedores and beachcombers are washed out to sea and lost. If the PCs are near the wharves at this time, allow them to use appropriate skills to avoid the danger themselves and assist others by making DC 15 skill checks (Climb to avoid the swell, Balance to maintain footing in the undertow, Swim if swept into the harbor, Use Rope to throw lines to floundering dockworkers, and so on). Failure indicates, at worst, 1d6 points of damage. If the PCs seem to be itching for a fight, feel free to have a reefclaw or swamp barracuda wash up in the tidal surge nearby.
- Flocks of sea gulls suddenly take to the air and begin flying in a growing cacophonous spiral. This continues for several minutes as large flocks wheel above the city in ever-gathering numbers. Eventually their erratic flight brings them into proximity to the Cyphergate,

where they crash into it violently by the hundreds before the few survivors continue their ragged flight out to sea. For the next 2 days, crushed and broken bird carcasses wash up on the beaches around Riddleport and cluster as flotsam beneath the wharves creating a horrible stench over the south portions of the city.

- A minor tremor strikes the city, causing only a little damage but shaking everything pretty well for a few seconds.
- Every weather vane in Riddleport suddenly turns with a screeching of metal heard all across the port to point directly towards the Blot, even resisting the actual currents of the wind. After 10 minutes or so (during which several weather vanes are snapped off by cross winds to tumble to the steet below), they are suddenly released from whatever holds them and return to normal.
- A loud rattling and clatter is heard that proves to be tiny falling objects clattering on the roofs and streets of the city from a clear sky. At first assumed to be hail, examination reveals it to be tiny pieces of porous black rock—looking almost volcanic in nature but defying all identification. This initial storm does no noticeable damage, but after 2 minutes, the rocks increase in size and begin cracking shingles, ripping awnings, and pelting anyone who remains outside. The bronze dome of the Gold Goblin rings like a bell during the onslaught. This larger hail of stones lasts for only 1d10 rounds, and anyone remaining outside must make a DC 10 Reflex save each round to avoid taking 1 point of damage. When all is said and done, there are several dozen casualties and hundreds of gold pieces of damage to property and ships. Saul suffers a -2 penalty on his weekly Profession check to increase the Gold Goblin's profits this week (see the Turning a Profit section). The stones themselves remain for a few more minutes, covering the ground before they suddenly evaporate into nothingness. Attempts to classify the material before it fades meet with failure—the stones feel like granite, but float in water and are strangely cold to the touch.

On the Job at the Gold Goblin

Following the attempted heist, Saul's employee count drops to only a few individuals, including floor manager **Larur Feldin** (LN male dwarf expert 3), two bouncers

named **Hans** and **Beyar** (both CR male human warrior 1), and Saul's bodyguard and beast-wrangler **Bojask** (NE male human ranger 2). After retaining the PCs, Saul tasks Larur with hiring a dozen more men and women to serve as cooks, croupiers, and servers. It takes only a few days to hire back up, at which point the hall is once again staffed and open for business. Larur is also the PCs' primary point of contact, since Saul is often out on business—since Larur is scheduled to disappear relatively soon, you should try to make him friendly and helpful to the PCs so they have some additional motivation to go looking for him when he vanishes.

Although Saul hires the PCs to be his troubleshooters and enforcers, they can also take on other duties at the Gold Goblin as they see fit. Such duties include dealer or croupier (run games for customers), staff manager (oversee the help), and spotter (patrol the catwalks or the floor itself and watch for cheaters). Saul does not give the PCs responsibility over the counting rooms or cashiers' cage, as that falls under the direct supervision of Larur Feldin, the floor manager.

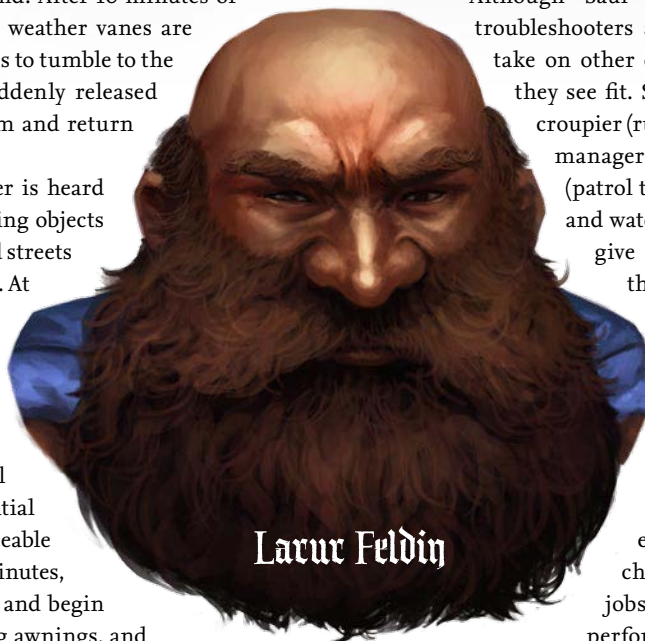
Allow the PCs to roleplay out as much or as little of these duties as they wish. Except for the specific events that follow that might challenge the PCs in their new jobs, the adventure assumes they perform their duties competently and raise no complaints from

Vancaskerkin or the other staffers, unless the PCs choose to try to make trouble, steal from the house, or otherwise cause problems. In such a case, adjudicate their success and the reactions of the Gold Goblin's staff accordingly.

Turning a Profit

During the start of this adventure, the Gold Goblin continues to struggle financially. In addition to their weekly salary, the PCs earn a fraction of the Gold Goblin's total profit each week. Times are lean, and after the Cheat the Devil fiasco, it will be difficult for the Gold Goblin to claw its way back up to profitability. Left to its own devices, the Gold Goblin continues to hemorrhage money until there's none left.

The following rules are intended to simulate the Gold Goblin's profits and debts. For most of this adventure, Saul Vancaskerkin remains the primary beneficiary of the game hall's profits and the one responsible for paying its debts, but once the PCs take over, those responsibilities and



Larur Feldin

GOLD GOBLIN PROFITABILITY

Each Sunday, the Gold Goblin's Profit Rating can change. After Saul makes his weekly Profession check to influence profitability, each PC gains a bonus (or a possible cut in pay) as indicated. Remember, the PCs' weekly pay is 10 gp at the start. As they accomplish missions for Saul, he might give them raises. If a Pay Cut exceeds the PCs' weekly pay, they do not have to pay Saul the difference—they merely don't make any money that week.

Profit Rating	Weekly Bonus/Pay Cut
-4	-20 gp
-3	-10 gp
-2	-5 gp
-1	-2 gp
0	0 gp
1	+5 gp
2	+10 gp
3	+25 gp
4	+50 gp

benefits could well fall to them. Note that these rules aren't intended to be a realistic simulation of how a business operates, merely a fast way to determine the profits and losses of the Gold Goblin itself on a week-to-week basis. The awards for success are intentionally rather low—the PCs should never feel like managing a gaming hall is more profitable than adventuring, after all!

The Gold Goblin's profitability is ranked on a scale of -4 to 4, with -4 indicating failure, 0 indicating break-even, and 4 indicating success. Currently, the Gold Goblin's Profit Rank is at -1; in order to raise it to 5 or above, the PCs must accomplish weekly tasks to shore up the business. In addition, certain key events that occur during the adventure can give the Gold Goblin's Profit Rank a bonus or penalty as well. Every Sunday, Saul (or whomever runs the business after Saul's out of the picture) makes a Profession check (innkeeper, gambler, or tavern keeper), applying the Gold Goblin's current profitability as a modifier to the roll. He also applies any modifiers earned by the PCs during that week to the roll as well. It's a DC 20 check to increase the Gold Goblin's Profit Rating by 1, but if the check fails by 5 or more, the Gold Goblin's Profit Rating drops by 1.

The following skill checks can influence the Gold Goblin's Profit Rating. A character must accomplish that particular skill's requirement at some point during the week, and at the end of that week he makes the appropriate skill check. Granting Saul a +1 bonus on his Profession check requires a different DC for success depending on the skill in question, but if a PC fails this skill check by 5 or more, he actually imparts a -1 penalty on Saul's weekly Profession check.

As a general rule, you can assume that a character can spend 4 hours a day working for the Gold Goblin and still have enough time left in his day to adventure, craft magic items, shop, or relax. If a character wishes to spend more time working for the Gold Goblin, he should run the risk of missing out on adventure!

Bluff (DC 15): Spend 2 hours a day cajoling citizens and tricking them into visiting the Gold Goblin. If this roll is failed three times, the character's spreading reputation makes further Bluff checks automatically fail unless he successfully Disguises himself.

Craft (DC 15): Spend 2 hours a day and 10 gp to create eye-catching advertisements.

Diplomacy (DC 15): Spend 2 hours a day managing the help and greeting customers at the Gold Goblin.

Diplomacy (DC 20): Spend 4 hours a day convincing citizens to stop by the Gold Goblin.

Intimidate (DC 15): Spend 2 hours a day working as a bouncer at the Gold Goblin. Failure by 5 or more indicates a customer at the Gold Goblin picks a fight with the character. The customer is typically a Riddleport Thug or Thief, but can be a more dangerous foe if you wish.

Intimidate (DC 20): Spend 2 hours a day threatening customers of competing game halls that if they don't check out the Gold Goblin, something bad will happen. After 1d4 such weeks of this tactic, the other game halls embark on similar campaigns, at which point this check can no longer increase the Gold Goblin's profitability, but if someone doesn't make the check anyway, the competition imparts a -2 penalty on Saul's Profession check.

Perform (DC 15): Spend 2 hours a day performing for customers at the Gold Goblin.

Profession (gambler) (DC 15): Spend 2 hours a day working as a croupier or dealer at the Gold Goblin.

Spot (DC 15): Spend 2 hours a day looking for cheaters at the Gold Goblin.

Finally, a character can give Saul a bonus to his profitability check by donating gold to the cause. Every 50 gp donated grants Saul a +1 bonus for that week's check, up to a maximum of +5 for 250 gp.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: The first time the Gold Goblin hits a Profit Rank of 1, award the PCs experience points as if they had defeated a CR 1 creature. The first time the Gold Goblin hits Profit Rank 4, award the PCs experience points as if they had defeated a CR 2 creature.

The First Night (EL 2)

The first night after the Gold Goblin re-opens for business, several surly customers who took part in the Cheat the Devil tournament and have been so far unable to cash in their winnings show up belligerent and full of drink. PCs watching for trouble immediately notice the

loud-mouthed individuals as they complain about the tournament and accuse the house of having cheated them. As soon as anyone moves to confront them, four of them suddenly lash out in a drunken brawl.

Creatures: The four drunken brawlers are members of a local ship's crew (the *Vesicant*), and are angry because the Cheat the Devil tournament was interrupted before they could win back their initial stakes. They are mildly drunk (no penalties) and ready to fight, but they can be talked down if their attitude can be changed from hostile to merely unfriendly with a DC 20 Diplomacy check. If the matter can be resolved nonviolently, award full XP as if all four were defeated in battle.

DRUNKEN BRAWLERS (4)

CR 1/2

Riddleport Thugs
hp 5 each (see page 9)

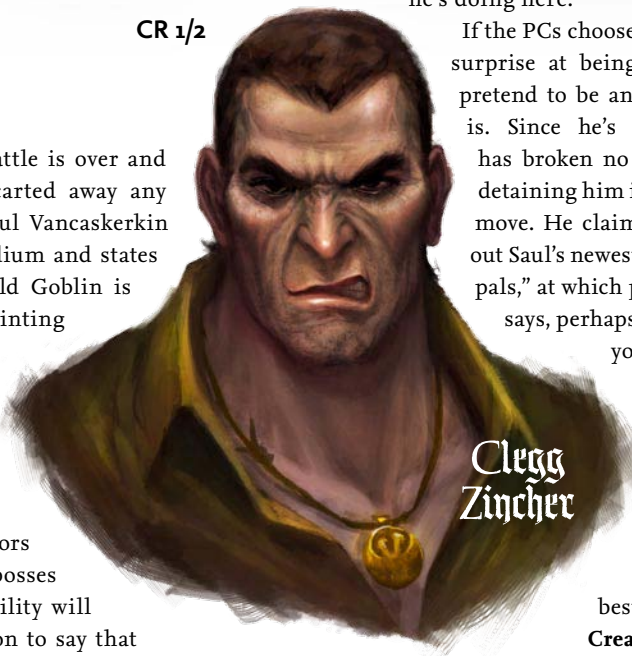
Development: After the battle is over and the local gendarmes have carted away any brawlers (living or dead), Saul Vancaskerkin comes out to the central podium and states in a loud voice that the Gold Goblin is under new management, pointing out the PCs as his "business partners." He states that no more criminal lawlessness is allowed on the premises and challenges any of his patrons who are actually spying on him for competitors to go back and tell their bosses that any further acts of hostility will be met with force. He goes on to say that starting immediately the Gold Goblin will enforce a no-weapons policy. This is met with some grumbling and a smattering of applause.

Afterward, he thanks the PCs again for working for him and giving him the courage to finally stand up to Riddleport's underworld. After this, the security chief PC must see to it that all weapons are checked at the door and locked in the cashiers' cage until the owners depart the gambling hall. This goes smoothly for the most part, but feel free to have a particularly belligerent guest show up once or twice a night who requires PC intervention to either have his attitude changed from hostile to unfriendly or to be physically removed from the premises. In any event, the no-weapons policy certainly doesn't apply to employees of the Gold Goblin.

An Unfriendly Warning (EL 1)

At some point during their first week on the job, Saul gathers the PCs and leads them up onto the catwalks

above the main gaming floor to watch the crowd. He points out a bulky man with short hair playing at a Golem table and tells the PCs to keep their eye on him. Most of the other customers are giving him a wide berth and keeping an eye on him as well, and the man's croupier seems particularly nervous. Saul goes on to explain that the man is none other **Clegg Zincher** (CN male human expert 2/rogue 7), one of Riddleport's crimelords and Saul's greatest competitors. Clegg isn't known as a gambler, so he must be here either to send a message to Saul or for some other reason. Saul has no intention of removing the man from the premises, but wants the PCs to watch him and try to determine what he's doing here.



If the PCs choose to confront Clegg, he feigns surprise at being singled out but does not pretend to be anyone other than he actually is. Since he's carrying no weapons and has broken no laws or rules of the house, detaining him in public would be an unwise move. He claims only to be here to "check out Saul's newest project and meet his newest pals," at which point he nods to the PCs and says, perhaps unnecessarily, "That means you." He stays around to play a few rounds of Golem before leaving—as he does so, he leaves a generous tip with the bouncer at the door, instructing him to split the 20 gp between himself and the PCs "with Clegg's best wishes."

Creature: Of course, there is more to Clegg's presence here than a friendly visit. Zincher's none too fond of Saul, and his presence here is a distraction. Clegg trusts Saul to overreact and ask his staff to focus their attention on him, which gives one of Zincher's men the opportunity to sneak invisibly into area 13, where he hides a poisonous cindersnake under an upturned tub.

Later, when someone goes into the scullery to do some washing and lifts up the tub, the snake lashes out and attacks. It's likely that the PCs first learn of this situation after a terrified and breathless cook seeks them out with the news that a "big red snake's got into the scullery!" In this event, the snake already bit one worker, who is now unconscious in the scullery and, if not rescued soon, might bleed to death (the worker is currently at -1 hit points).

CINDERSNAKE

CR 1

Medium viper (MM 280)
hp 9 (2d8)

Development: A DC 14 Search of the scullery finds a scrap of paper under the tub where the snake was hidden. The scrap simply shows a crude drawing of Saul Vancaskerkin, now with both hands missing and a brief threat scribbled below: “Looking to go two for two, Saul? Pack up, get out of town, and you’ll be fine!” If shown the note, Saul shakes his head but refuses to succumb to the threat.

A New Friend

Of course, not all of the Gold Goblin’s customers are scoundrels and troublemakers. Feel free to introduce other colorful Riddleport locals as the PCs settle in to their new jobs. At one point, you should introduce Samaritha Beldusk in this matter.

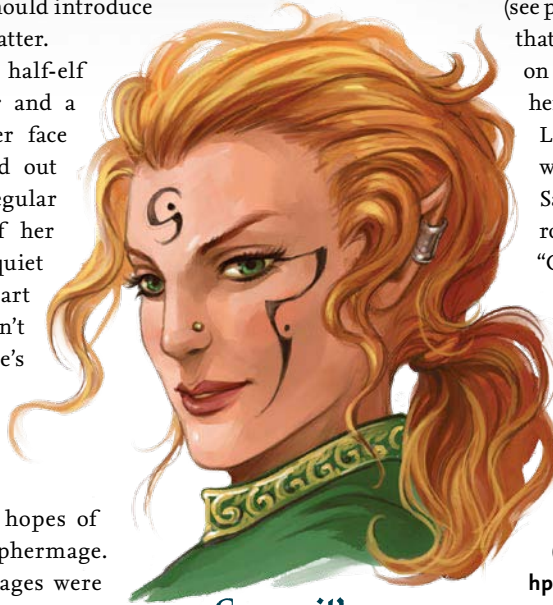
Samaritha is a young half-elf woman with wavy red hair and a few Varisian tattoos on her face and neck. She should stand out among the Gold Goblin’s regular crowd—the combination of her cleanly attire, beauty, and quiet demeanor setting her apart immediately. Samaritha isn’t here to gamble, though—she’s looking for a job.

Samaritha came to Riddleport several weeks ago, intrigued by the Cypher-gate Riddle and harboring hopes of becoming a full-fledged cyphermage. Unfortunately, no cyphermages were taking apprentices when she arrived, and now with the group so distracted by the Blot, she feels she has little hope of finding such a patron. With her funds running low, she resigned herself to a long wait with a mundane job until her prospects brightened. After having a tough time finding a respectable job that didn’t require her to abandon her morals, she came to the Gold Goblin to apply as a waitress. If she can’t get a job here, she has resigned herself to spending the last of her money to return to Magnimar and abandoning her dream of becoming a cyphermage.

Samaritha is not overly enthusiastic about this new job, but her natural friendliness and honest nature shine through if the PCs agree to take her on. She immediately takes a liking to the PCs unless treated poorly, particularly any with magical talent or who are especially kind or handsome, in which case she might develop a romantic interest with one of the PCs. Convincing Saul to hire her is a simple task, and once she’s on staff, her positive attitude, friendliness, and good looks do their work—all Profession checks to determine profitability made while Samaritha’s on staff gain a +1 bonus. She can serve quite well as a

greeter/server and as a spotter in the catwalks, giving the PCs a few additional opportunities to influence the week’s profits with skill checks. Samaritha doesn’t have anywhere to stay in Riddleport, and Saul agrees to let her take one of the guest rooms as her own in return for lowering her weekly pay.

Samaritha doesn’t really enjoy the prospect of “adventuring” (she’s got an aversion to filth and something of a fear of blood), but if you feel that the PCs could use some extra help and if they’re particularly nice to her, she might just learn to put aside her fears to join them in their adventures. At some point before the raid on the Gold Goblin (see page 30), Samaritha should receive word that a cyphermage has agreed to take her on as a student. At that point she’ll quit her job here and move in to the Cypher Lodge, but at that point, her friendship with the PCs should be set. In any event, Samaritha has a relatively important role to play in the next adventure, “Children of the Void.”



Samaritha Beldusk

SAMARITHA BELDUSK CR 3

Female half-elf transmuter 3
CG Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision;
Listen +3, Spot +3 (+6 in shadows)

DEFENSE

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

hp 12 (3d4+3)

Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3; +2 against

enchantment
Immune sleep

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +1 (1d4–1/19–20)

Ranged mwk dagger +3 (1d4–1/19–20)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd)

1/day—*mage hand*

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; CL 4th with transmutation; +2 ranged touch)

2nd—*daze monster* (DC 14), *levitate*, *scorching ray*

1st—*animate rope*, *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *reduce person* (DC 14)

0—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mending*, *message*

TACTICS

During Combat Samaritha’s strengths lie with magic. She prefers to hang back in battle and provide support with her spells rather than risk herself in melee.

Morale Samaritha is loyal to her friends, and never abandons them in battle, no matter what the odds. Left to her own devices, she flees combat if brought below 5 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 13, **Int** 15, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +0

Feats Alertness (as long as Leniloria is in arm's reach), Spell Focus (transmutation), Varisian Tattoo (transmutation)

Skills Concentration +7, Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +4, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Listen +3, Search +1, Spellcraft +10, Spot +3 (+6 in shadows)

Languages Common, Elven, Halfling, Varisian

SQ summon familiar (owl named Leniloria)

Combat Gear *wand of magic missile* (43 charges), *wand of identify* (40 charges); **Other Gear** *bracers of armor* +1, masterwork dagger, belt pouch, black enameled writing set worth 25 gp, silk rope (50 ft.), abacus worth 15 gp, magnifying glass, 12 sp

A Missing Employee

Some time after the first week of the PCs' employment (likely after the PCs have had a few weeks to get used to working at the Gold Goblin), Vancaskerkin approaches them in the morning and states that the floor manager Larur Feldin has apparently gone missing. The last Saul knew, Feldin was going to stop by the office of a local moneylender to pay off a chunk of debt that Saul owed. When Larur didn't show up for work this morning, Saul sent a runner to Larur's apartment only to discover that his one-bedroom flat was empty—the front door hanging open and its contents burgled, with no sign of Larur at all. Saul fears that Larur might have met with some sort of trouble, and suspects that trouble might have something to do with Lymas Smeed, the moneylender Larur was going to visit.

Vancaskerkin reluctantly admits that one of the ways he was able to finance the Gold Goblin's refurbishment was by taking out a loan from Lymas Smeed, using the Gold Goblin itself as collateral. The loan itself, Saul sheepishly explains, was for 2,000 gp, and he's barely been able to pay back any of it. Larur was to pay 500 gp of the loan yesterday evening, the largest payment yet—something Saul's only been able to afford with the PCs' help. He further muses that rumors hold that Smeed works for Clegg Zincher, and wouldn't put it past the man to ask Smeed to do something to Feldin as a warning to Saul.

The truth of the matter is that Vancaskerkin did in fact borrow 2,000 gp to cover some of the costs of rebuilding the Gold Goblin, but he doesn't wish to pay it back. Feldin was aware of the various scams Saul is running, and was coming dangerously close to discovering Saul's secret payments to Depora Azrinae, so Saul felt the floor manager had become a liability and decided he could take care of both problems at once. He sent Bojask early this morning to Larur's house to kill the floor manager, hide the body, and then plant evidence of the crime at Smeed's flat.

THE FLAT ON RAT STREET

The following are descriptions of the areas within Lymas Smeed's home.

A1. Front Door: A slit covered from the inside by a sliding metal plate is set at eye level. Being a moneylender in Riddleport can be lucrative, but it's also a dangerous business. It generally takes Lymas 3d6 rounds to answer knocks at his door.

A2. Entry: This is where Lymas conducts business with customers. Once he and his customer agree on the price, Smeed generally asks for collateral at once. The loan itself is then delivered to the customer via hired courier. Climbing the rickety stairs here imposes a –10 penalty on Move Silently checks.

A3. Kennel: This is where Smeed's pet baboon dwells.

A4. Landing: The window here is boarded over.

A5. Kitchen: This is a simple, but serviceable kitchen.

A6. Bedroom: Smeed's bedroom is filthy—cluttered with discarded bits of food, dirty clothes, and other trash.

A7. Storage: A cluttered room used as short-term storage of collateral before Smeed transfers it to Zincher's care in secret. Smeed's strongbox is hidden here.

His claim of having sent Larur to Smeed to pay him is a total fabrication.

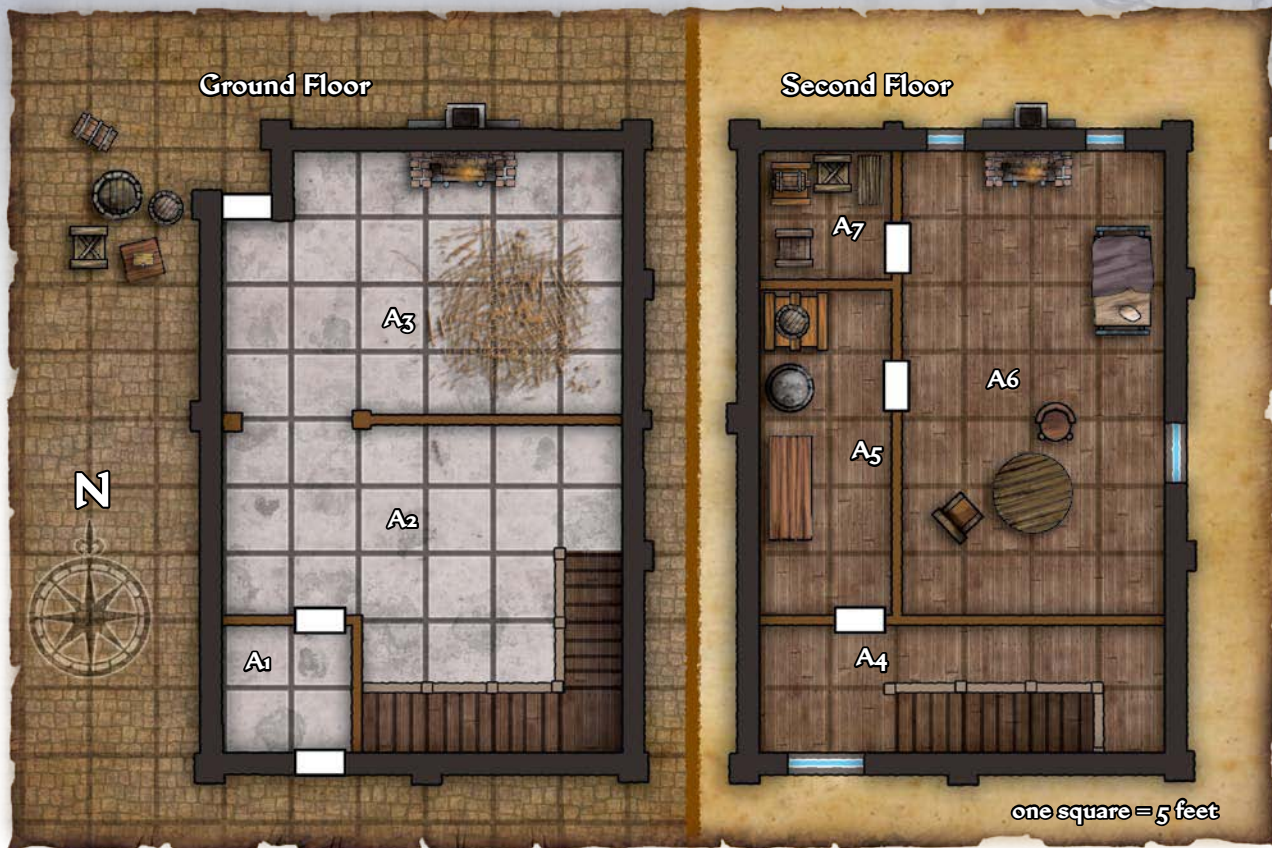
Vancaskerkin gives the PCs directions to Lymas Smeed's townhouse on Rat Street, and advises that they begin their search for Feldin there. If the PCs stops by Feldin's house, they find the place has already been claimed as a home by a drunken squatter—in any event, there are no clues at Lymas's home since Bojask jumped him a few blocks away in the dead of night, then simply left his apartment open for local thieves to pillage.

The Flat on Rat Street (EL 3)

Lymas Smeed occupies a townhouse crammed in among the tenements on Rat Street in a rundown section of Riddleport. There are two entrances to Lymas's home and place of business: the front door from Rat Street opens into the reception room (area A1), while the back door opens into the kennel (area A3). A sign out front of Lymas's front door shows a stack of gold coins above a name: "Rat Street Loans—by appointment only." He keeps both entrances to his home locked (hp 20, Hardness 5; Open Lock DC 25; Break DC 25).

Near the back door is a pile of barrels and old crates containing refuse and garbage. A DC 10 Search check of these barrels uncovers a poorly hidden green cloak trimmed in sable—Larur Feldin's cloak, instantly recognizable by the PCs. The cloak itself is slashed and bloodstained. The blood is still fairly fresh.

Moneylender Lymas Smeed is a disgusting creature; constantly sweating, sporting a patchy beard, and fond of



smoking expensive cigars. The interior of his home is far less glorious than one might expect of a man capable of loaning thousands of gold pieces to other businessmen—this is simply because the money Smeed loans folk is not his to loan. He is, in fact, an agent of Boss Croat, and it's Croat's money that backs the loans he makes.

When the PCs arrive, Lymas automatically recognizes them as agents of Saul Vancaskerkin unless the PCs are disguised. Assuming the PCs have been sent here by Saul to kill him so Saul won't have to pay back the loan, he refuses to let the PCs into his home and warns them "Tell Saul that what he owes me is gonna double if he ever dares send his thugs to my place again!" Lymas doesn't know where Larur is, if confronted with the man's bloody cloak, he denies knowing where it came from, but adds, "If it belonged to one of Saul's cronies, I say good riddance!"

If the PCs disguise themselves and knock on his front door, the metal plate slides open to reveal two piggish eyes, one of which bears a painful-looking sty. Lymas demands to know their business—anything other than a request for a loan is met with profanity and a slammed metal plate. If the PCs ask for a loan, Lymas narrows his eyes and attempts a Sense Motive check against the PCs' Bluff to determine if they're trying to trick him; if he feels safe, he nods, but says that only one person is allowed in at a time. This requirement is non-negotiable. If the PCs attempt to

force their way in when he opens the door for one of them, Lymas curses and falls back into area A2, slamming and locking doors as he flees up to the upper floor.

Lymas doesn't live alone—dwelling in area A3 is Otsk, Lymas Smeed's "guard dog"—a particularly ill-tempered and surly baboon. Originally purchased from an exotic animal salesman who made a long trip north from Garund, Smeed has raised the primate into the foul-mannered guardian it is today. The beast recognizes no one but Smeed as an ally (and even to Smeed his actions are loud and aggressive). Smeed lets the baboon have free reign in this room, but makes sure to chain him to the fireplace whenever he has customers.

LYMAS SMEED

CR 3

Male human expert 4

NE Medium humanoid

Init -1; **Senses** Listen -1, Spot -1

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13

(+4 armor, -1 Dex)

hp 18 (4d6+4)

Fort +2, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk scimitar +8 (1d6+4/18-20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +3(1d8/19–20)

TACTICS

During Combat Lymas shrieks and yells in combat, a mix of shocking profanity and promises to gut enemies with his scimitar. If he can, he tries to lure his enemies into area **A2** or **A3**, where his foul-tempered pet baboon can aid him.

Morale Lymas drops his weapon and begs for his life if reduced below 5 hp, promising the PCs that he'll forget about the money that Saul owes him, observing that his own life is well worth the balance. He continues to plead his innocence as far as Larur is concerned, though, rightfully pointing out that anyone could have stashed the man's bloody cloak in his garbage out back.

Base Statistics Melee mwk scimitar +5 (1d8+1); **Str** 13

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 8, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4

Feats Martial Weapon Prof. (scimitar), Negotiator, Persuasive,

Skills Appraise +7 Bluff +9, Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +9, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (local) +7, Sense Motive +8

Languages Common

Combat Gear *potions of bull's strength* (2), vial of black adder venom; **Other Gear** +1 *studded leather armor*, masterwork scimitar, masterwork light crossbow with 10 bolts, pocket case of 5 Qadiran cigars (worth 5 gp each), garnet necklace worth 200 gp, belt pouch with 25 gp and 5 pp

OTSK

Baboon (MM 268)

hp 5

CR 1/2

Development: With Lymas Smeed dealt with, Vancaskerkin is relieved of a major debt owed against the casino. He also needs a new floor manager. He expresses sorrow over Larur Feldin's apparent death, but is extremely grateful the PCs managed to avenge him. He immediately promotes one of the PCs to the position of floor manager and renegotiates his deal with the PCs to express his gratitude and trust in them. He makes them full partners in the Gold Goblin, increasing their weekly pay from 10 gp to 25 gp, with the promise that if they remain working with him for a full year he plans on retiring and ceding full ownership of the Gold Goblin to them. He states he believes the success of the Gold Goblin rests on their efforts as he is just an old man long past his prime and hopes he can eventually retire and completely turn the day-to-day management of the gambling hall over to them.

Of course, there are plenty of holes in the events encompassing Larur's disappearance and Lymas's involvement. If the PCs begin to be suspicious that there's more going on than what it looks like, let them foster those suspicions. The revelation of Saul's betrayal will be all

the more believable if the PCs begin to suspect their new partner might be hiding things from them.

Attack on the Foamrunner (EL 4)

A week or so after the PCs handle Lymas Smeed, Vancaskerkin receives word that a shipment of exotic liquor has arrived at the docks, destined for the Gold Goblin. Saul placed the order many months ago, hoping that it would arrive in time for the Cheat the Devil tournament, but the shipment was delayed by several storms. It currently awaits offloading aboard the cog *Foamrunner*, which has docked at the wharves and waits for pickup. Saul tasks the PCs with coordinating the transport of the four casks of exotic liquor from the docks to the Gold Goblin—they're welcome to take up to four of the Gold Goblin's six bouncers for protection and labor. Saul urges the PCs to hurry, since once word gets out that the rare liquor is in port, he wouldn't put it past several of the city's other crimelords, or even the Overlord himself, from attempting to claim the shipment for their own use.



Braddihar Faje

Creatures: Unfortunately, Clegg Zincher has already heard of the arrival, and by the time the PCs arrive at the Foamrunner, one of his capps, a burly ex-Korvosan Guard named Braddikar Faje, is in the process of bribing the captain to claim the valuable shipment. **Captain Fizgabon** (CN male dwarf expert 2) is currently overseeing the offloading of the cargo by stevedores while the crew gets drunk at the nearby Coral's Reef Tavern. The timing of when the PCs arrive at the scene is up to you. You can either have the PCs show up at the *Foamrunner* just as Zincher's crew completes the offloading, having presented a healthy 200 gp bribe to the ship's captain in order to take possession of the cargo, or you can have the PCs arrive just ahead of Zincher's crew. In other words, the PCs interaction can be on the offense or on the defense as you see fit. Merely modify the conditions accordingly. Either way, the captain and the stevedores flee at the first sign of trouble, wanting nothing to do with "another ruckus on the Riddleport boardwalk."

Zincher's crew consists of Braddikar Faje and two of Zincher's thugs—the thugs haul a small wagon between them that they intend to load the four casks onto. Braddikar knows full well that the casks belong to Saul, but he's confident in his abilities that this is a case of "might makes right," and as a result he has no interest in retracting his bribe and allowing the PCs to claim the casks. Diplomacy can't help the situation as a result, but if the PCs can successfully Intimidate the burly man and they outnumber his forces by at least two to one, Braddikar steps down and lets the PCs claim what is rightfully their employer's.

Braddikar is a failed Korvosan Guard who was forced to flee that city when the truth of a protection racket he was running came to light. He still owns his armor and weapons issued him from the Guard, and keeps them out of a sense of irony as much as because he can't really afford better replacements. The locals of Riddleport have taken to calling him "Old Korvosa," but never to his face after he fed two such men to a bunyip a few weeks after he first arrived in town.

BRADDIKAR FAJE

CR 3

Male human fighter 3

NE Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19

(+6 armor, +1 Dex, +3 shield)

hp 27 (3d10+6)

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

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee mwk longsword +5 (1d8+4/19–20)

TACTICS

During Combat Braddikar is overly confident in his abilities, mostly because his Korvosan-issued armor and weaponry make him

feel a little invincible. Fond of taking the time to mock and deride his foes, he often wastes move-equivalent actions doing just that in battle as long as he's not yet been wounded. As soon as Braddikar sees his own blood, though, the gloves come off and he fights with a grim-faced determination.

Morale If brought below 8 hit points, Braddikar attempts to flee to Zincher's Arena.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

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

Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Intimidate +7, Jump +2, Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common

Gear banded mail, +1 *heavy steel shield*, masterwork longsword, *cloak of resistance* +1

ZINCHER THUGS (2)

CR 1/2

Human warrior 1

hp 5 each (see page 9)

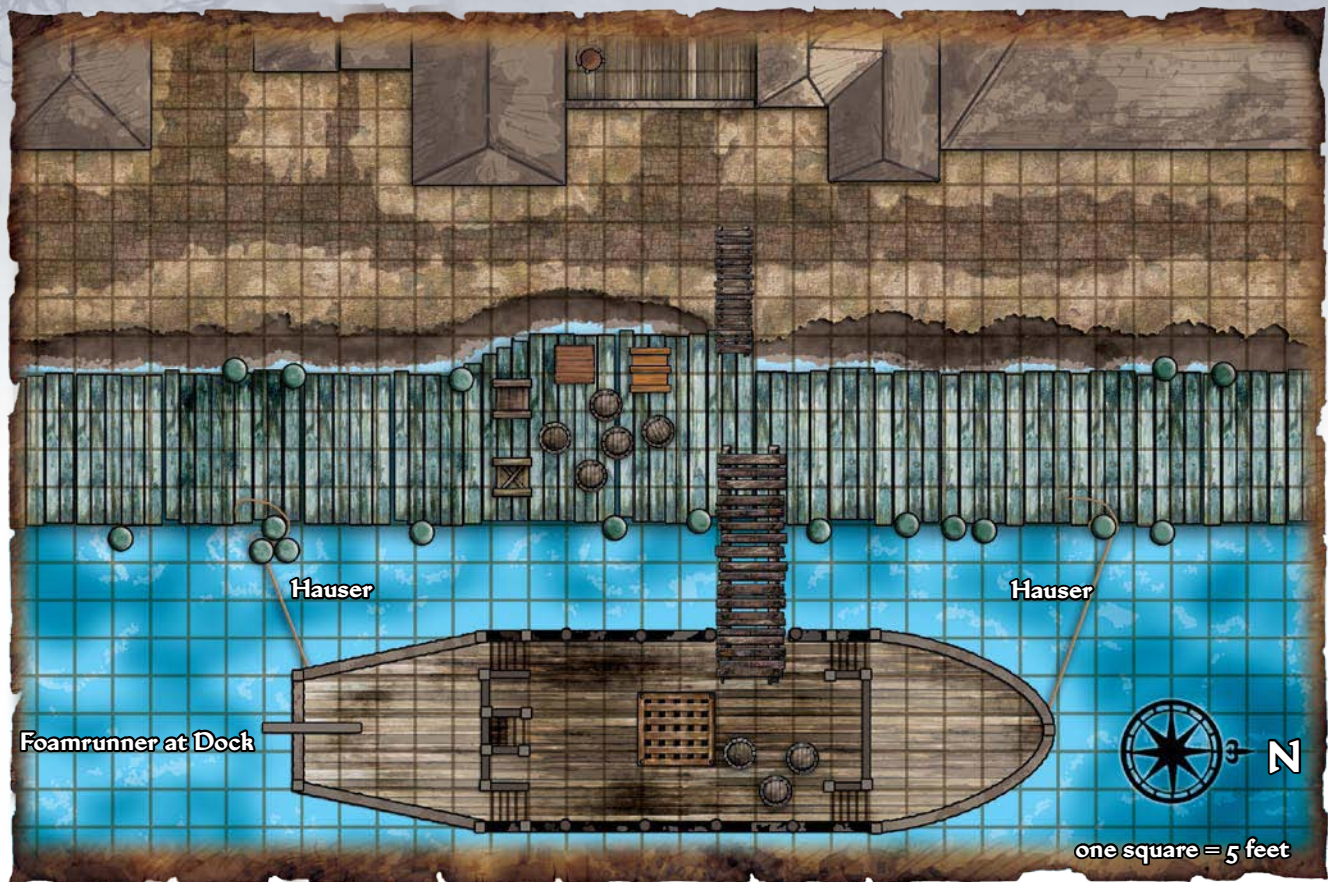
Development: If the PCs successfully deliver the liquor to the Gold Goblin, that week's Profession check for profit gains a one-time +6 bonus to the roll. Conversely, each bouncer slain in securing the casks imparts a cumulative –1 penalty to the roll as new bouncers must be hired to replace those lost.

If the PCs kill Braddikar, Zincher takes notice of them for the first time, but does not yet seek vengeance. He's got plenty of goons left, after all.

The Raid (EL variable)

As the PCs' reputation grows on the streets, so does their notoriety with the city's crimelords and the overlord. By this time, the PCs have likely stung at least two crimelords—what began as annoying gnats have become dangerous yard dogs who could upset the balance of power and start a veritable street war between the gangs. In the end, Boss Croat and Clegg Zincher decide that a raid on the Gold Goblin is the only solution—cut the man down before he takes root any deeper. They manage to impress upon the overlord that Saul Vancaskerkin's imminent return to power could mean more trouble than Saul is worth. While they don't gain official gendarme support for a night raid on the Gold Goblin, the overlord does agree to ensure that on that night, his forces are occupied elsewhere.

This event occurs just after closing hours, after the last customers of the night are ushered out of the building and the help is cleaning up the mess. The PCs don't need to be helping with these tasks, but they should all be on site. How the raid plays out depends on where the PCs are when it occurs and how they react to the attack. Before it begins, you should ask each PC where he is in the Gold Goblin, and



what he is doing. Try to accomplish this as subtly as you can—if you already know what a PC is likely to be doing after hours, you can assume that's what he's doing. Unless the PCs have made it otherwise, the remainder of the Gold Goblin's employees are stationed as detailed in the "PC Allies" sidebar on page 33 when the raid begins.

The raiders consist of a joint effort between Croat's men and Zincher's men. Zincher, being the more publicly powerful and smooth talking of the two, managed to convince Croat to take on the burden of responsibility in committing thugs to the effort. The raid consists of four attack groups. Each is intended to be encountered individually, so each has its own Encounter Level—nevertheless, it's possible for one group to merge with another if the PCs accidentally engage more than one at a time. The ultimate goal of the raid is to see that the Gold Goblin is shut down completely—this means the deaths of Saul Vancaskerkin and his capps (the PCs). The configuration and initial point of attack of each group is detailed below.

- **Group 1 (EL 3):** This group consists of four Riddleport thugs led by one of Croat's thugs. They break into the main hall (area 2) by crashing through windows and immediately attack the four bouncers at work there.
- **Group 2 (EL 4):** This group consists of Jasker Gant and two Riddleport thugs. They attempt entry via the back

door into area 13 (breaking it down if necessary), and then work their way upstairs to try to find and kill Saul, mistakenly believing him to be in his chambers above and not in the counting room on the ground floor.

- **Group 3 (EL 3):** This group consists of three Riddleport thieves. They wait a few rounds before breaking into the hallway via the window near area 21 and use stealth to move through the building as they attempt to rob any valuables Vancaskerkin has hidden in the building.
- **Group 4 (EL 2):** This final group consists of another of Croat's thugs and two Riddleport thugs. They remain in reserve in the alley outside by area 13.

The order of events occurs but can be modified by the actions of the PCs, especially if they have posted guards in hidden locations to watch the perimeter of the Gold Goblin—this could allow the PCs to turn the tables on the raiders quite early. Even if they don't, remember that the PCs have several allies in the building with them, and they should also be very familiar with the building's layout—something the intruders aren't. It's not fair to throw all four groups of raiders at the PCs at once, since that's an EL 7 encounter. Rather, simulate the raider's unfamiliarity with the Gold Goblin's layout by having only one group at a time confront the PCs.



JASKER GANT

Male half-orc monk 3

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +7

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12

(+2 Dex, natural +1, +1 Wis)

hp 20 (3d8+3)

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4; +2 against enchantment

Defensive Abilities evasion, still mind

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +5 (1d6+3) or

flurry of blows +3/+3 (1d6+3)

TACTICS

During Combat Jasker Gant is a lithe but muscular half-orc, a disciple of Zon-Kuthon who pledged his services to Croat after he was rescued from a wrecked ship several years ago. He's since become one of Croat's favored capps. Jasker's primary goal is to kill Saul Vancaskerkin, but when he doesn't find the man on the upper floor, he settles for killing the man's PC heroes. He fights silently and grim-faced, saving his Stunning Fist for use against Saul or healers.

CR 3

Morale Jasker abandons the raid to return to Croat to report failure if he's brought below 5 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Stunning Fist

Skills Jump +15, Spot +7, Tumble +10

Languages Common, Orc

Gear *amulet of natural armor* +1, silver and platinum necklace worth 500 gp, robes

CROAT THUGS (2)

CR 1

Half-orc fighter 1

NE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17

(+5 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield)

hp 12 (1d10+2)

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

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee longsword +5 (1d8+3/19–20)

Ranged shortbow +2 (1d6/x3)

TACTICS

During Combat These thugs prefer to fight in melee, but they've been ordered to use their bows to provide ranged support for the lesser thugs whenever possible. Their patience is quick to vanish, though, and after 1d4 rounds of providing ranged support, they throw down their bows and rush into melee.

Morale These thugs are both loyal to and terrified of Boss Croat—they fight to the death rather than risk his displeasure.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +4

Feats Iron Will, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Intimidate +2

Languages Common, Orc

Gear chainmail, heavy steel shield, longsword, shortbow with 20 arrows, 20 gp

RIDDLEPORT THIEVES (3)

CR 1

hp 8 each (see page 9)

RIDDLEPORT THUGS (8)

CR 1/2

hp 5 each (see page 9)

Development: Although none of the raiders wear anything to identify them as the men of any specific crimelord, the fact that half-orcs and Jasker Gant are involved indicates that Croat is at least partially behind the attack. The presence of non-half-orc raiders indicates the involvement of at least one other crimelord. Unless magically compelled to talk, though, no captured thug or thief gives up Croat's or Zincher's name. Even if the PCs learn this information, though, Vancaskerkin would rather not follow up quite yet on the raid with attacks of his own, explaining that word of its failure is no doubt already spreading through the city, and that should be more than enough to make other crimelords think twice before they try a similar attack anytime soon. Eventually, Croat and Zincher will pay for the audacity of the attack, but for now, Saul councils that the wise move is to simply keep going as if the raid really didn't phase the Gold Goblin at all—to show Riddleport just how strong they've grown. In any event, Saul lets the PCs keep any of the loot taken from the dead.

PART THREE: HIDDEN ENEMIES AND UNEXPECTED ALLIES

As dawn breaks the morning after the raid on the Gold Goblin, Saul's prediction about the spreading rumors prove right on the money. Some of the more outlandish rumors even claim the raiders were disguised gendarme officers, which particularly delights the cypherimages (especially

PC ALLIES DURING THE RAID

During the raid, the PCs have several allies they can call upon for help. These allies include the following characters.

Bojask (page 39): Bojask is feeding the animals in the basement and ensuring that they're locked up securely for the night (area 37).

Beyar, Hans, and the help (page 9): The croupiers and servers have all gone home, leaving cleaning duty (as usual) to the six guards/bouncers to handle. Four of these six are in area 2, one in area 12, and one in area 15.

Old Scratch (page 18): True to his nature, Old Scratch is invisible and lurking in the catwalks (area 30) when the raid occurs, but until Saul orders him to help, the imp simply watches and giggles as the battle unfolds.

Samaritha Beldusk (page 26): Samaritha should have moved out of the Gold Goblin to live in the Cypher Lodge before this raid occurs, and therefore is not present at the Gold Goblin unless visiting one of the PCs.

Saul Vancaskerkin (page 21): Saul is in the counting room (area 7), preparing the day's profits for storage in the vault.

those close to Elias Tammerhawk), who are quick to point out the possibility that some of the raiders might have been direct agents of Overlord Cromarcky, which forces the Overlord to come out and publicly denounce the raid on the Gold Goblin and to assure Riddleport that he has not lent his army to matters best governed by the city's lords. Ironically, the failed raid seems to have only increased the Gold Goblin's visibility and prestige in Riddleport.

Saul would prefer to open the Gold Goblin for business as normal, but if the raid caused enough damage, he's forced to keep it closed for a few days while repairs are made. In any event, the evening after the raid, he calls the PCs into his office for a meeting. Vancaskerkin begins the meeting by saying that he has confirmed through his contacts on the street that, while Overlord Cromarcky did indeed make sure the gendarmes were not involved in the raid, he also adjusted their patrols the previous night so that the raiders would have a better chance. This is a sort of good news/bad news situation—it basically means that Overlord Cromarcky isn't interested in protecting or antagonizing the Gold Goblin, but it also means that Saul and the PCs can expect no aid from him. The fate of the Gold Goblin is in their hands alone.

Vancaskerkin's greatest fear, right now, is that in the light of the failed raid and the embarrassment caused to his enemies by that failure, those same enemies now have little to lose. If they don't wipe out the Gold Goblin soon, their own prestige in Riddleport will be permanently damaged. Of course, with the number of thugs the PCs put down the night before, it'll fortunately be at least several days before their enemies can gather up a new army.

TROUBLESHOOTING, PART TWO

This section of the adventure requires you to trick the PCs, and that's always a slippery slope. If the PCs trust Saul at this point, all is well, but if they realize he's setting them up, they might decide to abandon him—worse, they could simply attack him or seek out Zincher or Croat with an offer to join forces to take Saul down.

In this case, don't panic. Remember: the adventure itself is built to eventually have the PCs throw down against Saul. If this battle happens earlier than you expected, that's fine. Simply skip ahead to the battle against Saul, the meeting with Zincher, or whatever part of the adventure feels like it would logically go next. In this case, the battle against the wererats might never happen (or, perhaps, the PCs could simply be hired to go clean out the Boneyard later on, after the events of this adventure are over). You need to make sure to introduce Kwava at some point, of course (perhaps he can swoop in to save the PCs if they get in over their head attacking Saul too early), but in the end, remember that the whole point of the adventure is that the PCs work for Saul, find out he's double-crossing them, and then go back to get him and discover he's working for the drow. How they get there is up to them.

Saul does have one bit of good news, though—his same contacts informed him that their enemies are planning a meeting to work out the final details of an even larger assault on the Gold Goblin—and the meeting is to be held that very night at an old meeting point in the Boneyard known as the Spar. Vancaskerkin himself has used the Spar before as a drop point in his early days and can provide detailed directions to it. He asks the PCs, for the sake of their partnership and their very future in Riddleport, to go to this meeting and scout it out. Saul's man on the inside is relatively certain that the meeting itself will consist of only a few capps and thugs, since the crimebosses themselves are worried about possible retaliation from Saul and are currently remaining ensconced in their hideouts. Thus, the meeting should be relatively small—the PCs can sneak up on it, listen, and if it seems doable, take out a few more enemies in the process.

Of course, most of this is a complete fabrication by Vancaskerkin—after seeing how well the PCs handled themselves in the raid, he realized that they quite rapidly rose in power, to the point where they could probably take him out if they wanted. And since Depora recently informed him that the time for his revenge on Riddleport draws near, Saul's decided to cut loose the PCs by sending them to the slaughter—the only thing that awaits them at the Spar is an ambush of wererats. As Saul explains the false meeting to the PCs, don't

ask for Sense Motive checks unless the PCs ask if they can make them or otherwise indicate they don't believe what Saul's telling them. If the PCs detect his ruse and press him on it, he feigns shame and "admits" that he lied about there not being any crimebosses there. He's pretty sure that Boss Croat will be at the meeting, and didn't want to tell the PCs for fear of scaring them off the mission. Of course, this too is a lie. If the PCs see through this second Bluff attempt, Saul's temper snaps. He angrily dismisses the PCs, not only from the table, but from their jobs, noting "If you aren't interested in helping protect the place, I'm not interested in having you lay about it like vagabonds and freeloaders. Now, get out!"

This adventure assumes the PCs buy Saul's story. Assuming this is the case, Saul provides them with detailed instructions on how to reach The Spar and encourages them to leave at dusk so they can reach it unseen and catch all of the conspirators gathered together.

Boneyard Ambush (EL 7)

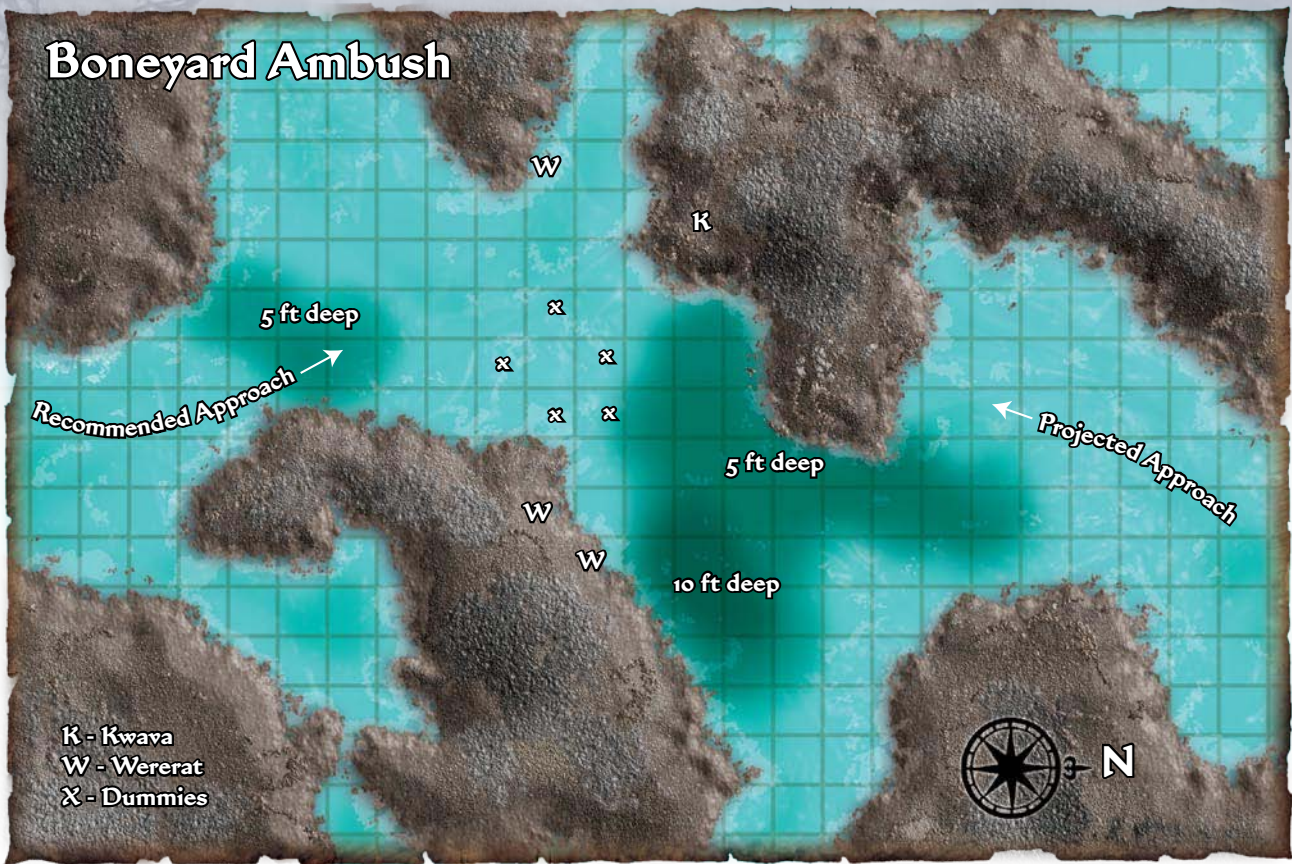
The set-up for this ambush is depicted on the accompanying map, along with the direction from which the ambushers expect the PCs to approach. Of course, the PCs are free to approach the area from any angle they wish—if a character wishes to assess the situation for the "safest" route to approach, a DC 20 Survival check indicates the "Recommended" route shown. The following description applies to either approach.

The night winds have died and a light mist rises from the marsh. Ahead is a flickering globe of light centered around a bit of ship's rigging protruding from the surface of the water. This can only be the Spar. Dangling from this boom is a single lantern providing the illumination for a group of dark-cloaked humanoids huddled together in the muck beneath.

The dark figures are actually cloaked dummies acting as decoys—a DC 15 Spot check (remember to account for distance penalties) reveals the truth.

Much of the salt marsh is flooded with briny water to an average depth of 2 feet. It costs 2 squares of movement to move into a square and Tumble check DCs increase by 2 in these areas of shallow bog. Two deeper pools of water exist in the area as indicated on the map—these pools don't look any deeper than the surrounding water, but a DC 15 Survival check notices them once a character approaches. The piles of debris and decaying ships can be moved upon as if dense rubble (2 squares of movement per square, Balance and Tumble DCs increase by 5, and Move Silently DCs increase by 2).

Creatures: As shown on the map, three wererats have concealed themselves in the surrounding debris and ships'



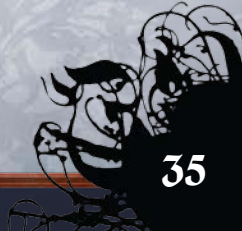
hulks, patiently waiting for the PCs to stumble into the area by the spar before attacking by surprise. These three wererats are recent inductees into Ziphras's gang. All are afflicted wererats eager to please and impress their new boss, while Ziphras himself avoids the ambush entirely (the wererat crimelord isn't interested in risking himself or his favored minions in someone else's grudge, but is perfectly happy to risk new inductees for the right amount of gold).

The wererats have taken the time to scatter bits of rancid food all over the place as well to attract a swarm of hungry flesh-eating cockroaches. The cockroach swarm begins in the area indicated on the map.

Fortunately for the PCs, Saul's dealings with Depora have not gone completely unnoticed. The drow presence in Golarion has long been policed by a wide-reaching society of elven mercenaries called the Shin'Rakorath (elven for "Lanternbearers"). These mercenaries have long kept a presence in the vicinity of Celwynvian, a known drow hot-spot, but recently they became worried that the drow have been stealthily expanding their presence in western Varisia. Unable to spare many scouts and hunters, the Shin'Rakorath sent several of its newest members into the surrounding regions to follow up on these rumors. One such hunter is an exotic elf named Kwava, a well-traveled member of the distant Ekujae tribe of the Mwangi Expanse far, far to the south. Kwava's story is detailed in the next section.

As the PCs approach, Kwava has taken up position, hiding in the area indicated—none of the wererats are aware of the fact that they're not alone. As soon as the approaching PCs are either about to stumble into the deep water or come within 30 feet (and thus sneak attack range) of a wererat, Kwava emerges from his hiding spot to call out a warning, taking a single shot at the closest wererat as he does. His unexpected action startles the wererats and triggers the combat before they were ready—they take a -6 penalty on their initiative score as a result (for a net penalty of -3).

KWAVA	CR 4
Male elf ranger 4	
N Medium humanoid	
Init +3; Senses low-light vision; Listen +10, Spot +10	
<hr/>	
DEFENSE	
AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12	
(+2 armor, +3 Dex)	
hp 25 (4d8+4)	
Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +2	
<hr/>	
OFFENSE	
Spd 30 ft.	
Melee dagger +6 (1d4+2/19–20)	
Ranged +1 composite longbow +8/+8 (1d8+2/x3) or	
Special Attacks favored enemy (human +2)	



Spell Prepared (CL 2nd)
1st—*animal messenger*

TACTICS

During Combat Kwava uses his silver arrows against the wererats, moving to keep them within 30 feet if he can to take advantage of Point Blank Shot. He also tries to pick targets that are the most dangerous to the PCs. He saves his alchemist's fire for use against the cockroach swarm. If a PC seems particularly in trouble, he has his hawk carry over a *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

Morale Kwava wants to recruit the PCs' aid, and does not retreat as long as at least one of them is still standing. If left on his own, he retreats from battle as soon as he's reduced below 8 hit points.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6

Feats Endurance, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Track

Skills Hide +10, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Search +2, Spot +10, Survival +8

Languages Common, Elven

SQ animal companion (hawk named Ganmeed), wild empathy +3

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds* (4), alchemist's fire (2); **Other Gear** +1 leather armor, +1 composite longbow (+2 Str) with 20 arrows and 8 silver arrows, dagger

GANMEED

Hawk animal companion

hp 4 (MM 273)

WERERATS (3)

Male afflicted wererat human rogue 1

LE Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger)

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +8, Spot +8

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 13
(+5 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 12 (2 HD; 1d8+1d6+2)

Fort +1, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

DR 5/silver

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +10 (1d4+3/19–20) and bite +4 (1d6 plus disease [filth fever; DC 12])

Ranged mwk shortbow +6 (1d6/x3)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

During Combat The wererats hope to fire shortbows at foes to get sneak attack damage, but if denied this opportunity they start throwing

tanglefoot bags in an attempt to stick PCs or Kwava to one spot. These tanglefoot bags are seeded with bits of rancid meat, and the one closest to the cockroach swarm quickly attracts its attention to that target. The wererats themselves trust their damage reduction to protect them from the swarm, and aren't afraid of moving through the swarm to hit nauseated PCs with their daggers.

Morale The wererats aren't expecting much of a fight, and any wererat brought below 4 hit points shrieks in terror and tries to escape into the marsh. Once two wererats flee, the third one does as well. A wererat captured alive is quick to beg for his life, and can tell the PCs that they were ordered to ambush the party at their own boss's command, who took that job from Saul Vancaskerkin.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 21, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +0; **Grp** +2

Feats Alertness, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +9, Climb +17, Control Shape +6, Hide +11, Listen +8, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +9, Sleight of Hand +9, Spot +8, Swim +16, Tumble +9

Languages Common, Varisian



CR —

CR 3

SQ alternate form, rat empathy, trapfinding
Combat Gear tanglefoot bag; **Other Gear** masterwork dagger, masterwork shortbow with 20 arrows, thieves' tools, 20 gp

FLESH-EATING COCKROACH SWARM **CR 2**
 hp 26 (see page 84)

Development: One of the wererats carries a stained, folded piece of parchment in a pocket. The contents of this consist of orders from Ziphras, yet it is written in Thieves' Cant. Give the PCs Handout 2 when they recover this cryptic note. If the players have difficulty puzzling out the meaning, a DC 20 Sense Motive check or *comprehend languages* is good enough to secure a translation, in which case you can supply the PCs with Handout 3.

A New Ally

After the PCs defeat the ambush, Kwava approaches them with open arms, offering potions to heal wounded PCs if needed. He introduces himself and his hawk, and apologizes for not contacting them earlier but grimly notes that now they should realize that they share an enemy—Saul Vancaskerkin. Kwava advises against rushing back to confront Saul about the ambush, instead inviting the PCs to accompany him to his camp, which is located on a low hill in the copse of trees just south of the Burying Ground.

Kwava is a wild elf of the Ekujae tribe of the distant Mwangi Expanse far to the south, a tribe whose ancestry dates back to before Earthfall. When that ancient disaster struck, the Ekujae elves were left behind, but they survived the Age of Darkness nevertheless. The oral traditions of today's Ekujae elves preserved the memories of this time as legends and warnings, and fear of a second darkness weighs heavily upon their seers and prophets. Kwava comes from a long line of heroes who have served his tribe's shamans since those ancient times, and it was after one of those shamans received a vision of a lone elf holding aloft a single light against the darkness that Kwava left his home to seek his destiny. As a result, Kwava

traveled Golarion for several years, eventually coming to the small town of Crying Leaf at the edge of the Mierani Forest. Here, he first learned of the Shin'Rakorath. After hearing the company's rhetoric ("to be the light against the coming darkness"), Kwava took it as a sign and joined the mercenary company. His direct superior in the Shin'Rakorath explained that he feared a renegade elf

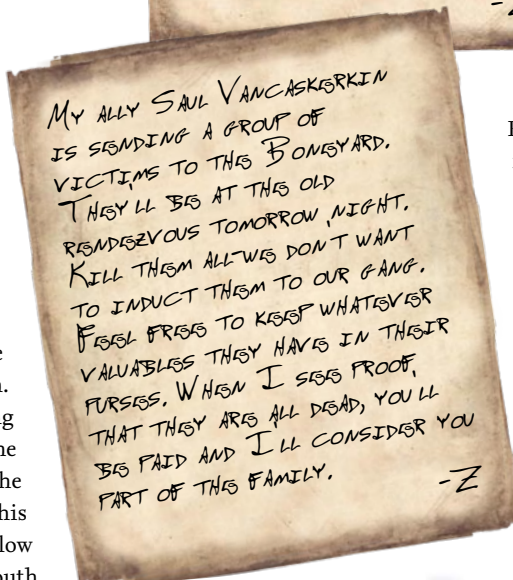
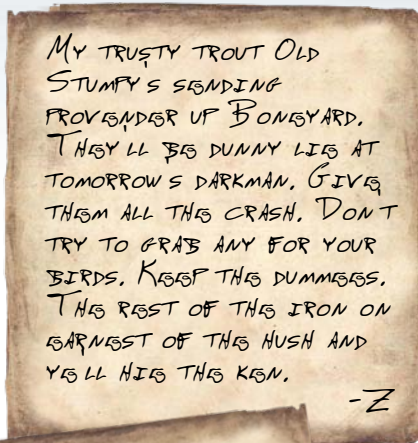
from the Mierani Forest might have fled to the human city of Riddleport, where the renegade might have recruited the aid of one of that city's crimelords. Kwava's first assignment was to scout out the city of Riddleport and the environs and to determine if any of the city's crimelords had indeed taken in a mysterious elven ally of late. What the Shin'Rakorath leaders fear but don't tell Kwava is that this "renegade" is in fact a drow—they hope that their fears are unfounded.

When they reach his camp, Kwava offers the PCs a simple meal of fruits and venison, and over the meal he outlines his proposal. He explains to the PCs how he came to travel to the region, and what his purpose is in Riddleport. Kwava remains wary and unsure around human settlements, but does not want to disappoint the Shin'Rakorath on his first important mission for them. He's been sneaking into Riddleport after dark for months now, listening to conversations on the streets from hidden vantage points, trailing suspicious characters, and in

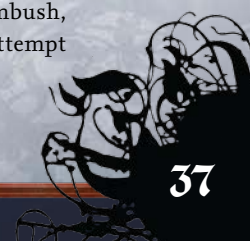
generally keeping an ear out for rumors of elf sightings. Recently, his investigations have begun to bear fruit, and he has come to suspect that Saul Vancaskerkin has allied with a mysterious benefactor. Yet he has no proof, and furthermore, he has such limited experience with human societies that he fears any attempt to interact with the folk of Riddleport would give his hidden quarry plenty of time to escape.

During his observation of Saul, Kwava has of course become familiar with the PCs. When he followed Saul on a late-night trip to meet with Ziphras to arrange this meeting, Kwava knew something was up. He hid near at the site Saul and the wererats had chosen for the ambush, intending to save the PCs when they arrived in an attempt

Handout 2



Handout 3



to secure their aid. He hopes the PCs trust him, and assumes they will return to Riddleport to confront Saul. If they aren't planning to do just that, Kwava encourages them to do so. He hopes they agree to fill him in on any information they learn about any "renegade elves" Saul has been harboring or interacting with.

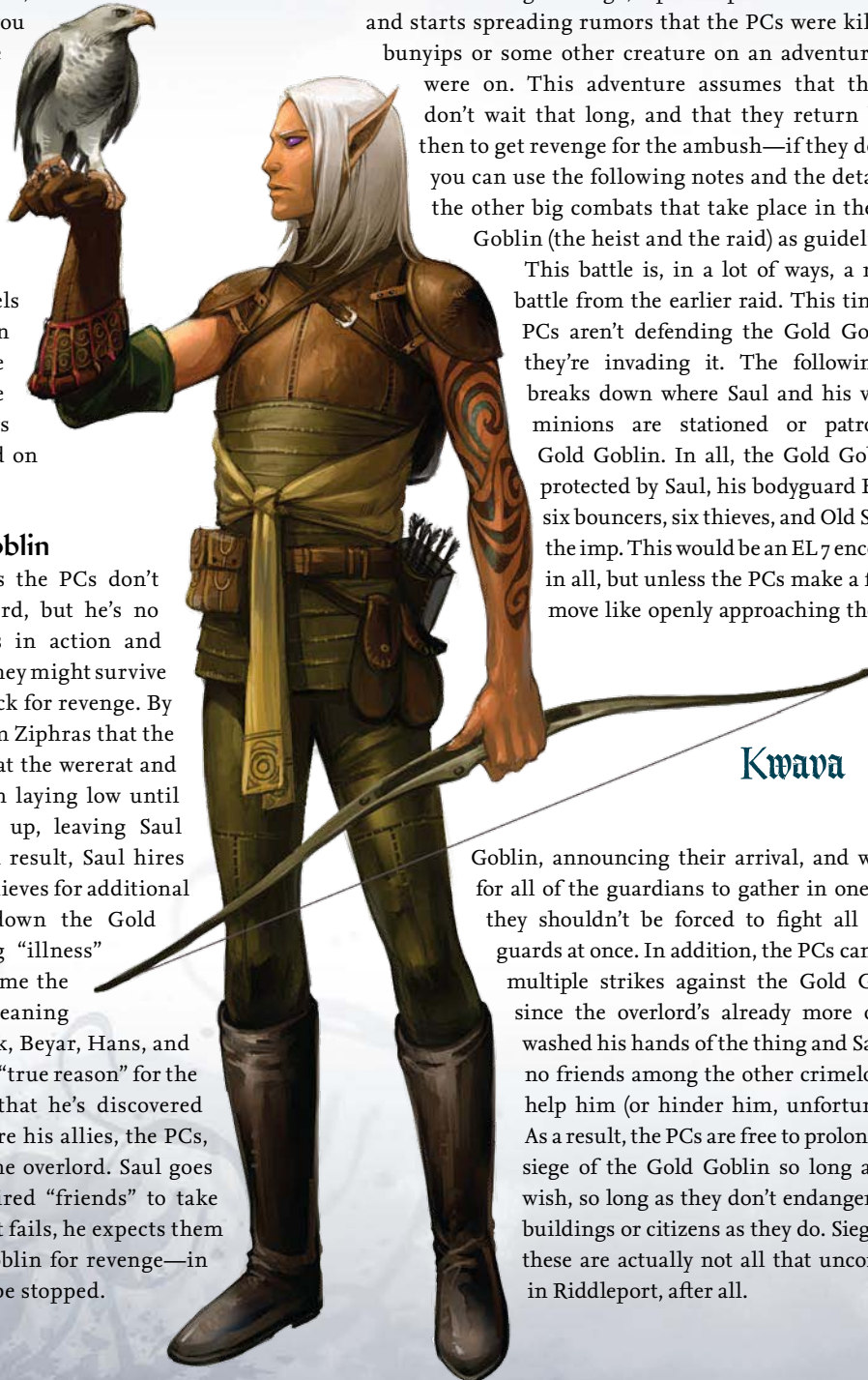
Kwava, like Samaritha Beldusk, is an NPC you can use to encourage and support the PCs. If the PCs aren't keen to return to Saul and confront him, or if they don't realize that he's betrayed them, you can use Kwava to drive home those points. Furthermore, he can join the group if you think they could use the help in the battles to come. At the very least, consider sending Kwava with the PCs when they return to the Gold Goblin to confront their ex-employer. Once they move on to the tunnels below, Kwava should return to his camp to contact the Shin'Rakorath to update them on what the PCs learn after their own raid on the Gold Goblin.

Back to the Gold Goblin

Saul Vancaskerkin hopes the PCs don't return from the Boneyard, but he's no fool. He's seen the PCs in action and realizes there's a chance they might survive the ambush and come back for revenge. By midnight, he's heard from Ziphra that the PCs are still alive and that the wererat and his boys are planning on laying low until this whole thing clears up, leaving Saul to fend for himself. As a result, Saul hires several more thugs and thieves for additional protection and closes down the Gold Goblin for a day, citing "illness" as a reason. He sends home the dealers, croupiers, and cleaning staff, then informs Bojask, Beyar, Hans, and the other bouncers of the "true reason" for the unscheduled closure is that he's discovered that those he thought were his allies, the PCs, are in fact working for the overlord. Saul goes on to explain that he hired "friends" to take care of the PCs, but if that fails, he expects them to return to the Gold Goblin for revenge—in which case, they need to be stopped.

Creatures: To augment the staff of bouncers, Saul hires an additional six thieves to help protect the Gold Goblin. If the PCs are canny and patient, they can remain in hiding (perhaps at Kwava's camp, but certainly not at any of the other crimelords's places, as the bosses still think the PCs work for Saul) and wait Saul out. Saul continues to expect attack for 1d4 days, after which, if the PCs have not been spotted in Riddleport (assume that each time a PC is seen and recognized in town, there's a flat 25% chance Saul finds out within the hour), he lets his additional guards go, opens up the Gold Goblin, and starts spreading rumors that the PCs were killed by bunyips or some other creature on an adventure they were on. This adventure assumes that the PCs don't wait that long, and that they return before then to get revenge for the ambush—if they do wait, you can use the following notes and the details on the other big combats that take place in the Gold Goblin (the heist and the raid) as guidelines.

This battle is, in a lot of ways, a reverse battle from the earlier raid. This time, the PCs aren't defending the Gold Goblin—they're invading it. The following list breaks down where Saul and his various minions are stationed or patrol the Gold Goblin. In all, the Gold Goblin is protected by Saul, his bodyguard Bojask, six bouncers, six thieves, and Old Scratch the imp. This would be an EL 7 encounter in all, but unless the PCs make a foolish move like openly approaching the Gold



Kwava

Goblin, announcing their arrival, and waiting for all of the guardians to gather in one place, they shouldn't be forced to fight all of the guards at once. In addition, the PCs can make multiple strikes against the Gold Goblin, since the overlord's already more or less washed his hands of the thing and Saul has no friends among the other crimelords to help him (or hinder him, unfortunately). As a result, the PCs are free to prolong their siege of the Gold Goblin so long as they wish, so long as they don't endanger other buildings or citizens as they do. Sieges like these are actually not all that uncommon in Riddleport, after all.

All windows into the Gold Goblin are shuttered and locked, as are all doors. The defenders of the Gold Goblin organize into the following groups when they're prepared to defend the building from the PCs.

- **Group 1 (EL 5):** Saul Vancaskerkin keeps Hans and Beyar with him, along with Old Scratch (who starts out invisible) and one of the Riddleport Thieves he's hired. Saul barricades himself into area 27. If he hears a battle break out in area 2, he cracks the door into area 30 to watch. As soon as half the guards in groups 4 and 5 fall, he sends Beyar and the thief out into the catwalks to continue the fight while he retreats with Hans down to area 38 to join Bojask.
- **Group 2 (EL 4):** Bojask has been tasked by Saul to guard the cellars. Bojask doesn't understand why he's not been posted on the upper floor, since he doesn't know about the secret door in area 39 of the Gold Goblin—Saul just asked him to make sure that if the PCs enter the cellar that they die. Bojask released Pigsaw into the fighting pit (area 39) and allows the angry boar to wander the lower area freely. If Bojask hears intruders, he quickly comes to join the fight—otherwise, he remains on guard in the open area that overlooks area 38.
- **Group 3 (EL 3):** Two of the Riddleport Thieves are posted outside. One stands guard in area 1 (using the pillars to hide) while the other crouches on the roof above area 13. If either of these thieves see the PCs approaching, they rattle a nearby window and then wait for the PCs to enter the Gold Goblin before sneaking in after them to try to sneak attack any stragglers.
- **Group 4 (EL 4):** This group consists of the remaining four bouncers—they guard area 2 of the Gold Goblin. Two stand in the alcoves and keep a watch on the street, one stands near the entrance to area 15, and one near the entrance to area 12.
- **Group 5 (EL 2):** This group consists of three Riddleport Thieves. They are armed with shortbows and stand guard in the catwalks (area 30), waiting to provide arrow support to any fights that break out in area 2 below.

The siege of the Gold Goblin should be a dynamic battle, with thieves and thugs and PCs moving throughout the gaming hall from room to room. If the PCs retreat, the thugs do not follow; Saul Vancaskerkin can replace slain thieves and bouncers at the rate of 1d4 each per day.

SAUL VANCASKERKIN

CR 4

hp 20 (see page 21)

TACTICS

During Combat Saul uses the tactics listed on page 21 if attacked. If he's confronted anywhere but area 38, he does his best to retreat to that room as quickly as possible to

join up with Bojask. Once with Bojask, Saul works with his bodyguard to flank foes, which often puts him at odds with Bojask's desire to stand between foes and his boss.

Morale If brought below 10 hit points, Saul attempts to leap into the fighting pit 10 feet below, attempting a DC 15 Jump check to negate the falling damage. If Pigsaw's running loose in the pit, Saul instead launches into a tirade against Bojask—"Why the HELL did you let that damn pig loose down there?"—a tirade that Bojask is at a loss for words to reply to. Bojask attempts a DC 15 Handle Animal check to tell Pigsaw to "Stay!" Saul fights using the full defense option as long as it takes Pigsaw to follow the command, then jumps down into the pit as detailed above. As he does, he orders Bojask to "Hold those bastards off!" Once in the pit, Saul moves to the center of the room, takes a full round thereafter to brush aside the sand and pull aside a piece of wood covering a large keyhole in the floor. The round after that, he uses his key stump to unlock the secret trap door and hauls it open. If the PCs don't stop him by then, he clammers down into area B1 below, closing and locking the trap door behind him.

BOJASK

CR 2

Male human ranger 2

NE Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15

(+5 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 16 (2d8+4)

Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk battleaxe +3 (1d8+2/×3) and
mwk handaxe +3 (1d6+1/×3)

Ranged throwing axe +3 (1d6+2) and

Special Attacks favored enemy (animal +2)

TACTICS

During Combat Bojask uses his throwing axes against PCs at range, but prefers to fight with his battleaxe and handaxe. If Saul joins him here, he tries to stay between Saul and the PCs to protect his boss. Although he provokes attacks of opportunity for doing so, Bojask isn't above attempting to bull rush foes into the pit below (area 39) so that they must contend with Pigsaw.

Morale Bojask fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 13, **Con** 15, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Feats Skill Focus (Handle Animal), Track, Two-Weapon Fighting

Skills Handle Animal +8, Hide +5, Knowledge (nature) +4,

Listen +6, Survival +6

Languages Common, Orc

SQ wild empathy +2

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds (2)*; **Other Gear** *+1 chain shirt, masterwork battleaxe, masterwork handaxe, throwing axes (3), 43 gp*

PIGSAW

Boar (MM 270)

hp 25

TACTICS

During Combat Pigsaw is a foul-tempered boar who attacks anyone—even Bojask, if the half-orc fails a DC 15 Handle Animal check to get the boar to follow his commands (which are limited to Attack, Heel, and Stay). The boar doesn't trust stairs, and doesn't pursue foes up them.

Morale Pigsaw fights to the death.

CR 2

RIDDLEPORT THIEVES (6)

Riddleport Thieves (see page 9)

hp 8 each

CR 1

BOUNCERS (6)

Riddleport Thugs (see page 9)

hp 5 each

Melee club +4 (1d6+2) or

unarmed strike +3 (1d3+2)

CR 1/2

OLD SCRATCH

Imp

hp 13 (MM 56)

CR 2

Incriminating Evidence

Once the PCs defeat Saul, the surviving thieves quickly disperse, leaving the Gold Goblin empty. The PCs should now have the freedom to search the building. You can use the room descriptions in the article that begins on page 56 for most of what the PCs find, but this section lists the five most important discoveries that await them.

Deed to the Goblin: The deed to the Gold Goblin is kept in an iron chest in the night vault. It's a DC 30 Open Lock check to open the chest—but one of Saul's keys works as well. An examination of the deed notes something interesting—the deed specifically states that it does not grant ownership of any smuggler's tunnels that might exist under the property. This is standard boilerplate text for Riddleport deeds—smuggler's tunnels are a sort of secret "public works" owned by no one but utilized by many. Not all of Riddleport's buildings have tunnels below them—but in the case of the Gold Goblin, there are. This clue should help to encourage the PCs to seek out the tunnels if other clues have not. Note also that in Riddleport, possession of a deed is pretty much all that's required to own a business—with this deed in hand, the PCs are officially the owners of the Gold Goblin. See "Concluding

the Adventure" for more information about what this could mean.

Distinctive Stink: The wine cellar has a strange funk to it, identifiable as traces of troglodyte musk with a DC 18 Knowledge (local) check.

Larur's Remains: Saul had Bojask feed Larur Feldin's remains to Pigsaw. A DC 15 Search of Pigsaw's filthy cage uncovers bits of bone and Larur's signet ring (itself worth 50 gp) mixed in with the boar's droppings.

Records: Area 26 contains the Gold Goblin's financial records. Anyone who studies these papers for a few hours notes that the majority of these pages are in Saul's handwriting, and something seems off. A DC 22 Forgery check reveals the truth—most of the profits from the Gold Goblin have been funneled to someone indicated only as "D.A."

Saul's Key: The key on Saul's stump, contrary to popular belief, does not open the night vault or any locks within—in fact, its size makes it useless for opening ANY obvious lock in the Gold Goblin. The key unlocks the secret trap door in area 39.

PART FOUR: UNDER THE GOLD GOBLIN

Hidden beneath the Gold Goblin is a series of tunnels carved through the stone long ago by a combination of long-dead smugglers and erosion from water. The caves themselves have a few underwater connections to the harbor, but the only two non-flooded entrances are via a trap door from the Gold Goblin and a second trap door that opens into an abandoned shack near the western base of the Cyphergate. The tunnels are humid and stink of sea salt and the lingering stench of troglodyte, with water dripping constantly from the walls and collecting in small puddles on the floor here and there. Unless otherwise noted, the caves are unlit. Ceiling height averages at 7 feet in passageways, and 10 in caverns.

After searching the Gold Goblin, the PCs should suspect that there's more going on due to the faint stink of troglodyte in the wine cellar, the cooked books in the records room, the mention of smuggler's tunnels in the deed, and the simple fact that whatever Saul's key stump opens isn't obvious. Of course, if they witnessed Saul's attempt to escape into the tunnels below during a climactic fight at the end of the previous part, the presence of the tunnels should be even more obvious.

Yet if the PCs don't realize that their true enemy is still at large, it doesn't take long before they do. Any character who keeps an eye on the wine cellar should notice that 1d4+2 days after Saul is defeated, 1d6 bottles of wine go missing. After the theft, the stink of troglodytes in the room is much stronger. A DC 15 Search check notices several damp troglodyte prints

Water Tunnels



on the stony floor, and it's a DC 15 Survival check to track them back to area 39. More to the point, with Saul not around to cover the hidden trap door with sand the morning after the troglodytes steal their latest batch of wine, the trap door becomes obvious to anyone who visits area 39.

The day after the troglodytes sneak up to steal wine, Depora Azrinae becomes concerned that she hasn't heard from Saul or received any payments. Frustrated and curious, she orders three troglodyte minions to climb up into the Gold Goblin the next night to find out what's happened—the troglodytes slowly work their way up into the Gold Goblin and should come into conflict with the PCs soon.

If Saul flees to the caves, he makes his way via stealth to the troglodyte caves, and is then escorted to area B12, where he tells Depora what happened and begs her for help. Disgusted by the man, Depora murders him and feeds his body to the grick in area B10, then begins to shut down her operation here. If the PCs don't reach area B12 by 1 day after Saul's "escape," Depora abandons the caves here and returns to the base on Devil's Elbow—the PCs will then have to confront her there in the next adventure. Proceed with "Concluding the Adventure" at that point.

The trap door down to the tunnels can be opened with ease from below, but it automatically locks when closed—the troglodytes take care to leave it open when they sneak up to steal wine. Without Saul's key, the strong wooden trap door can be opened with a DC 30 Open Lock check or by battering it open (hp 50; Hardness 5; Break DC 25). Once opened, the trap door reveals a strong wooden ladder that descends 15 feet into a cave, to area B1.

B1. Entrance to the Water Tunnels

A gaping pit drops away along the eastern wall of this cavern, descending twenty feet to a sloshing pool of water below. The pit's sides are steeply sloped and slick with moss, but are also covered with many rough ledges and protrusions. A series of wooden ladders and ropes descends along these walls to a ledge below, just around the edge of the pool.

This sinkhole descends 20 feet to area B2. The walls are rough and slick—it's a DC 25 Climb check to traverse them. The ladders appear fragile but are actually quite secure. They require a DC 5 Climb check to traverse due to moisture.

B2. Tidal Pool (EL 4)

A sandy ledge sits on the verge of a tidal pool that foams with the surf of the sea. Water marks on the cavern's irregular walls and the collection of flotsam, small shells, and mussels embedded in the sand attest to the flooding that this cave periodically receives. A tunnel exits on the pool's opposite side.

Underwater vents connect this chamber to the harbor, allowing changes of the water level as the tides rise and fall. It's a DC 20 Swim check to navigate the strong currents in the underwater tunnel, which leads south for 300 feet to an exit 20 feet underwater that is masked by a thick patch of seaweed. The pool is roughly 20 feet deep with the vent exiting near the bottom.

Creatures: This chamber is currently occupied by a pair of swamp barracuda that have entered through the pool. One barracuda lurks out of sight in southern alcove, and the other has crawled into the southern passage. When anyone approaches the first, it immediately lunges out to attack. This action alerts the other barracuda below, who likewise attacks. The barracuda loathe the stink of troglodytes, and flee into the water whenever that smell grows strong.

SWAMP BARRACUDA (2) CR 2
hp 12 each (see page 86)

B3. Still Pool (EL 3)

This small cave holds a still pool. A lack of water marks on the walls indicates no tidal action, and the stony shore is unmarked by debris. Slumped against the wall facing the pool is a skeleton garbed in the rotten tatters of a navy coat. Its hollow eyes stair sightlessly into the pool, and its bony knuckles clutch at a rusty sword blade that protrudes from its sternum.

Nearly 2 decades ago, a notorious pirate captain led two of his crewmembers into these caves to hide a treasure chest, then murdered them both to protect the secret of the hiding place. The pirate captain died a short time later in a sea battle with a Chelaxian man-o-war and

never returned to reclaim his treasure. The pool itself is stagnant and 6 feet deep. If a light source is placed below the pool's surface, its stony bottom is revealed as well as the remains of a rotten chest whose seams have burst and reveal the glint of gold.

Creature: The second murdered crewman still lies in the pool, but he does not do so peacefully. In death, his wrath animated him as a wight, and he waits patiently here, prepared to attack anyone who tries to take the treasure, misinterpreting intruders for his treacherous captain. He fights until destroyed to defend his treasure, but he does not abandon his gold to pursue foes from this room. After a close call with a negative level, Depora took to avoiding this room.

WIGHT CR 3
hp 26 (MM 255)

Treasure: The rotten chest holds a total of 380 gp, two large rubies worth 500 gp each, an antique gold idol of an ancient Osirion cat-headed goddess worth 1,500 gp, and a crystal *wand of levitate* (9 charges).

B4. Sentinel Cavern (EL 4)

This twisting tunnel is thick with hanging stalactites that glitter strangely. They seem to have crystalline veins running through them as well as larger nodes of translucent crystal. A musty, foul stench wafts from the darkened passage beyond.

A DC 18 Knowledge (local) check recognizes the stench as that of troglodytes.

Creatures: The strange stalactites are actually a type of creature indigenous to deep subterranean realms. These two Darklands sentinels were brought here months ago by Depora, and the creatures recognize her, the troglodytes, and Saul as allies. They react with their warning flashes against anyone else who enters. These flashes automatically attract the attention of the troglodytes in area B5, who arrive in 3 rounds and attack with javelins while exuding their stench. Note that the sentinels do not breathe, and are thus immune to this stench.

DARKLAND SENTINELS (2) CR 2
hp 16 each (see page 80)





B5. Troglodyte Guardroom (EL 4)

This small, close side cavern is heavy with a reptilian stench. A number of pieces of bone and shiny bits of quartz lie on the floor.

Creatures: Four troglodyte guards sit in this chamber, passing the time gambling with a simple but inane game utilizing bits of bone and crystal. They know that Saul is Depora's only surface contact, and react to any other intruders with barking cries and battle. These cries alert the rest of their tribe members in area B7, who gather up their weapons and come to support battle here in 1d4+2 rounds.

TROGLODYTES (4)
hp 13 each (MM 246)

CR 1

B6. Midden (EL 3)

A foul fishy odor intermingled with the sickly sweet smell of rot fills this small cramped chamber. The floor here is uneven and ankle deep in fish scales, bloated clumps of pallid fungus, and a mixture of sludge and gristly bits of bone.

The troglodytes use this chamber to discard their wastes and feeding remnants. The floor is considered difficult terrain.

Creatures: The troglodytes brought along one of their pets when Depora recruited them several months ago. This pet, an insectoid creature known as a fungal crawler, is well fed on the refuse here. It attacks when the first PC enters the room but pursues foes no further than area B4 or B7.

FUNGAL CRAWLER
hp 26 (see page 82)

CR 3

B7. Troglodyte Den (EL 5)

The rough floor of this cave has been overspread with several strange, pebbly hides to form bedding of a sort. The general detritus of habitation covers the floor as well as a number of heavy (and quite empty) glass wine bottles. The same musty stench that pervades the tunnels fills this area as well.

Like area B6, this chamber's floor is difficult terrain. This chamber serves as the common room for the troglodytes who serve Depora. The bedding is composed of darkmantle hide but is relatively worthless. The bottles are all empty wine bottles stolen from the Gold Goblin's wine cellar.

Creatures: Currently sleeping in here are the remaining five troglodytes of the small tribe Depora recruited when she realized she needed some guards to watch the approach to her work station in area **B12**. The troglodytes take 1d4+2 rounds to get organized enough to respond to calls for help from area **B5**—one of them races south to area **B12** to warn Depora in such an event.

TROGLODYTES (5)

hp 13 each (MM 246)

CR 1

B8. Collapse

The northern portion of this chamber has collapsed in a tumble of rubble and earth. The collapse partially obscures the chamber but does leave room to access the tunnel exiting to the south.

One of the recent tremors caused this cavern to subside. The floor of this chamber is now considered dense rubble. The room is currently stable and will not collapse further unless attempts are made to dig out the cave.

B9. Tunnel

The floor of the passage descends here in a series of gentle terraces. This passage passes directly under the mouth of the Velashu River and then rises into the rocky promontory upon which southwestern Riddleport was built. The rock here is extremely dense, preventing the passage from flooding, but nonetheless the constantly dripping water and puddles seem more prevalent here, gathering in 6-inch-deep pools in many places before draining into tiny cracks in the surrounding rock.

B10. A Piece of Home (EL 4)

This cavern is bathed in a strange orangish-purple glow that seems to reduce visibility rather than increase it, and in fact, seems to inhibit other light sources as well. The glow comes from a number of large rock nodules placed at intervals about the room. The eastern portion of the chamber is occupied by a still, black pool whose surface reflects the strange light.

Many parts of the Darklands are exposed to radiations exuded by minerals and ores unknown on the surface. These particular glowing crystals are one such unusual mineral. Called caphorite, they were brought up from the depths below by Depora in an attempt to make the place homier for her stay here. The crystals provide shadowy illumination that interacts strangely with brighter light, reducing any such brighter illumination down to shadowy levels. Anyone attempting to cast a spell with the light descriptor within 30 feet of a caphorite crystal must make a DC 15 caster level check or the effects of the spell are diluted enough to be

inconsequential. Drow are fond of cultivating large gardens of caphorite in places where enemies are prone to using light to blind them. Actual sunlight (including that created by magic, provided the spell's caster makes his level check) causes caphorite crystals to darken and crumble to sticky ash in only a few seconds.

The pool of water is 80 feet deep, at which point several narrow tunnels no wider than 6 inches at the most connect to the sea.

Creatures: The pool of water has long been the home of a pair of aquatic gricks. The two gricks swam in here many years ago and found it to be a great hunting ground, and have since grown too large to exit. The pool's supply of fish keeps them fed, but they don't hesitate to add something warm-blooded to the menu. Depora's interactions with the gricks have generally ended in them being wounded and forcing them to retreat into the pool's depths to heal. They since learned to avoid the drow, but anything else that passes through the cave is fair game (save troglodytes—the gricks find them to taste a little too funny to bother with). These gricks have the aquatic subtype and a swim speed, but are otherwise identical to normal gricks.

AQUATIC GRICKS (2)

hp 9 each (MM 139)

Spd 20 ft., climb 10 ft., swim 30 ft.

CR 4

B11. Personal Chambers

This cave is illuminated by strangely glowing crystals protruding from two stony outcroppings that rest on either side of a low natural shelf on the southern wall. This shelf has been converted into a bed of sorts, complete with a luxurious white fur blanket lying rumpled on it, a velvet pillow, and a platinum filigreed footrest. A pair of black boots rests beside the small ledge.

This chamber serves as the quarters for Vancaskerkin's secret partner and the leader of the Devil's Elbow drow, Depora of House Azrinae. She spends most of her time working in area **B12**, but leaves her personal effects here, as she feels her quarters are secure from intruders.

Treasure: The platinum coffer is locked (DC 25 Open Lock—Depora has the key) and is itself worth 1,200 gp. Within it are 12 pp, a black onyx worth 100 gp, a small bag of diamond dust worth 200 gp (for her saw—see area **B12**), a small bottle of mundane glue, and a brass perfume vial (worth 5 gp) that holds a strange-smelling, slightly unpleasant aroma. This is a actually a pheromone specially crafted by House Azrinae to allow their servitor creatures to recognize allies rather than attacking. There is one application left in the bottle, which can hold up to six. The pheromone can be reproduced with 3 months of research, 1,200 gp in materials, and a DC 35

Craft (alchemy) check. The boots are of fine quality drow manufacture, and while not magical, they provide a +2 circumstance bonus on Move Silently checks. The boots are worth 400 gp. Depora typically wears her slippers in favor of them unless traveling long distances.

B12. Excavation (EL 7)

This cavern appears to have been recently enlarged at the east end, where a massive, curving stone carving protrudes from the floor, wall, and ceiling. It is covered in runes that appear strangely familiar, and it appears that some of them have been chipped away. A table nearby holds several stoneworking tools and a thin book.

The curving stone symbol-covered wall is a portion of the Cyphergate that soars over the entrance to Riddleport's harbor—the Cyphergate is indeed a ring that passes through the stone at either end of the harbor gate and travels under the Riddleport harbor to complete its circuit. In a small alcove to the southwest, a wooden ladder leans against one wall, leading up to a 30-foot shaft that leads up to a trap door inside the abandoned watchpost just south of the Cyphergate's western "base." It's a DC 30 Search check to notice this secret trap door from the surface.

Allevarez Azrinae's plot to strike Kyonin is a complex matter, since the use of the ancient aboleth glyphs requires extensive research to decipher and rebuild. One method she and her minions are using to aid this research is in and of itself an impressive magical creation—they have managed to build a window into the ancient past in the Shadow Plane's reflection of the ruined city of Celwynvian, allowing the drow to "turn back the clock" to the few days before Earthfall and not only observe an "echo" of the fall, but to observe the magical auras that enveloped the world during that ancient magical armageddon. Ironically, these studies might have inadvertently solved one of Riddleport's greatest mysteries—the drow might have deciphered the Cyphergate's purpose. According to their research, the Cyphergate is an immense ring used by Runelord Karzoug to peer through time—and might even have been the device that allowed the runelords to see and prepare for the end of their empire. In any event, the drow needed a sample of stone from the Cyphergate to complete their own "armageddon echo" in Celwynvian—and the drow sent to gather this sample was Depora Azrinae.



Depora Azrinae

Creatures: Depora's mission in the Riddleport region was threefold. First, she had to find a way to harvest a sizable chunk of the Cyphergate in secret—a difficult task since the Cyphergate is notoriously resistant to erosion and vandalism. Her second mission was to set up a small base of operations where the drow could test fire their weapon. Depora chose a small island several miles south of Riddleport for this site—a place called Devil's Elbow.

Finally, she needed money to finance this base, and that's where Saul came in to play.

Now that the weapon is nearly ready to be fired, Depora told her minions on Devil's Elbow to see to the firing of the weapon while she returned to her secret hideout in Riddleport to study the Cyphergate some more. Of course, Depora's real reason is that she's not sure how much damage will be caused to Devil's Elbow when the weapon is fired, and would rather be far enough away where she can watch it happen but not be endangered by the event. She brought along two dretch minions bound to her service by a powerful Azrinae priestess of Abraxus, the demon lord of forbidden knowledge. The two dretches stand guard near the entrance to the cave.

Depora herself appears to be an elven woman with dark purple skin and silvery white hair. Her eyes are white, pupilless voids. She wears an intricately crafted chain shirt and equally exotic weapons, including a hand crossbow fitted with a pair of slender blades that she can wield as a dagger.

DEPORA AZRINAE

CR 6

Female drow fighter 5

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 17

(+6 armor, +4 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 37 (5d10+5)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +0 (+2 against spells and spell-like abilities)

Immune sleep; **SR** 16

Weaknesses light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk hand crossbow bayonet +7 (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison)

Ranged +1 hand crossbow +11 (1d4+3/19–20 plus poison)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

1/day—dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire

TACTICS

During Combat As soon as intruders are detected (none of Depora's servitors are allowed to enter this chamber), her dretch guardians gibber and howl to alert Depora, who takes cover behind her table. When the PCs enter, the two dretches attack and she fires poison bolts at the PCs.

Morale If she's brought below 20 hit points, Depora creates *darkness* and uses the cover provided to flee along the wall using her slippers to reach the shaft leading up. She continues to fire crossbow bolts at PCs as she retreats up the shaft. Once she emerges from the shaft, she sees that a ship is about to sail under the Cyphergate. She scrambles up the Cyphergate arch, continuing to fire at the PCs if they pursue. Pursuing PCs can attempt to follow by clambering up the first 140 feet of the Cyphergate by making DC 10 Climb checks, but after that, the arch slopes gently enough that Climb checks are not necessary. It takes 2d4 minutes for the ship to pass under the Cyphergate, at which point Depora steps off, feather falling down to the deck below. She swiftly murders the captain and takes command of the ship, intending to sail to shore somewhere west of Riddleport, wreck the ship, and escape into the Calphiak Mountains. If she escapes, she waits for the falling star to strike Devil's Elbow and then makes her way back to the island to rejoin the drow there—the PCs meet her again in the next adventure in this case.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +5; Grp +6

Feats Diehard, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (hand crossbow), Weapon Specialization (hand crossbow)

Skills Concentration +5, Craft (alchemy) +9, Intimidate +10

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Undercommon

Combat Gear drow poison (5 vials); **Other Gear** +1 mithral chainmail, buckler, +1 hand crossbow with 20 bolts, masterwork short sword, *ring of feather falling*, *slippers of spider climbing*

DRETCHES

hp 13 each (MM 42)

Treasure: The table is Depora's workbench. It was here that she worked to prepare her tools to harvest a section of the Cyphergate. The adamantine chisel is worth 1,000 gp—it ignores hardness of up to 20 and is an excellent tool for the use of breaking down objects. Using it increases the time needed to make a break check by 1 round, but grants a +2 circumstance bonus on the roll.

The book is written in Undercommon and is Depora's journal. Some of the book seems to be a ledger of sorts that lists all of the money Saul had been funneling to her, along with several notes of what that money was spent on (mostly alchemical supplies, spell components, and exotic food to be shipped to Devil's Elbow—these shipments were always

made at night and by different sailors from whom Depora was careful to hide her true nature). Most of the book seems to be a list of all of the strange and exotic weather effects and other unusual phenomena that have occurred in Riddleport over the past several months. All of these, including the Blot itself, are indicated in the journal as "strange and eldritch side-effects from the charging of the glyphs on Devil's Elbow," and that "It would do to further refine the glyphs to minimize such blatant displays lest the enemy receive further warning of the impending apocalypse than we wish to reveal." The journal goes on to theorize that as soon as the "glyphs are activated and the star is plucked," the strange side effects such as the shadow in the sky should vanish immediately. The last journal entry indicates that Depora suspects that this event could occur as soon as tonight.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Whether or not the PCs read Depora's journal, phase one of the Azrinae plan comes to fruition not long after the PCs emerge from the caves below Riddleport. The first thing they should notice is that the strange shadow in the sky is gone—if it is night, they learn of the shadow's disappearance soon enough from idle chatter on the street. At some point, preferably at night while the PCs are outdoors (perhaps even as they make their way back to the Gold Goblin from a climactic battle on the Cyphergate against Depora), a flash in the sky attracts their (and everyone else in Riddleport's) attention. A streak of light arcs down from the sky, a falling star traveling a southward course. Yet the star does not burn out—indeed, the streak lengthens and soon seems almost as if it were hurtling directly at Riddleport. As the streaming light draws near, panic grips the streets, but a moment later the falling star arcs over the city and out to sea, trailing behind it a smoky scar and the sound of thunder.

The star streaks out to the south, reflected by the sea below, and then a moment later it strikes the island of Devil's Elbow out to sea. Assuming the event occurs at night, a strange false dawn seems to rise to the south as a brilliant blast of light fills the horizon. Several moments later, a tremendous explosion rolls through Riddleport as a powerful earth tremor strikes. All creatures standing on the ground must make a DC 13 Reflex save or be knocked prone by the earthquake. The quake isn't enough to destroy buildings, but it is enough to knock some shingles from roofs, shake objects off of shelves, or crack the Sandpoint glass windows in several of the city's more affluent structures. As the tremor continues, an angry orange ball of fire rises into the sky on the horizon over Devil's Elbow, spreading in an ominous mushroom-shaped cloud.

By this time, much of Riddleport has gathered at the wharves and southern points of town for a better view of the distant holocaust. A few minutes later, the water of Riddleport Bay suddenly retreats into a bizarre and sudden



low tide, revealing several sunken wrecks and flopping fish and more than a few stranded sharks. A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check is enough to know that this is an indication of an approaching tsunami from the impact. Fortunately, the shape of Riddleport's harbor minimizes the impact of the tsunami, but still, only 2d6 rounds later, the water comes rushing back in toward Riddleport, a 7-foot-high wall of churning froth that slams into the waterfront with incredible power. Anyone within 70 feet of the shore is struck by the wave, and must make a DC 20 Fortitude save to avoid being carried inland by the wave's power. These victims are pushed 1d6×10 feet inland, and take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per 10 feet pushed for the first 20 feet, and then 1d6 points of lethal damage for every additional 10 feet they are pushed. The next round, anyone in the area must either make a DC 25 Swim check or a DC 20 Fortitude save to avoid being pulled out into the harbor as the water recedes. Several smaller tsunamis strike Riddleport in the surrounding rounds, but these are not severe enough to do much more damage.

In the end, the tsunami deals more damage to Riddleport than the tremor. Dozens of ships are damaged, a few are

sunk, but more are left stranded as far inland as Wharf Street. Many of Riddleport's piers are ruined or damaged, and several of the smaller buildings along the waterfront are destroyed or partially collapse. Over the next several hours, the crimelords and overlord of Riddleport mobilize in a way rarely seen in the lawless city, working together to put out fires, save citizens who have been swept out into the harbor, or kill angry and disoriented reefclaws, sharks, bunyips, and other dangerous sea creatures that have suddenly become stranded in the city streets. Feel free to include the PCs in as much or as little of these events as you wish—if the PCs haven't yet earned enough experience points to reach 4th level, this can be a great time to throw a few monsters their way to get them there.

Yet perhaps more importantly, the PCs have stumbled upon a disturbing discovery—the drow exist! What soon comes to be known as the Great Skymetal Rush (as various factions scramble to be the first to Devil's Elbow to claim the rare metals brought by the event) should be tempered by the ominous knowledge that the drow might have actually pulled down a star from the skies above.



Riddleport: City of Cyphers

Once a secret pirate haven, Riddleport has grown over the last three centuries into a port city in its own right. At first it served as a secure base from which to conduct raids against Chelish merchant vessels bound for Korvosa, but over time the city has expanded into a true settlement, the frontier's frontier, the northernmost outpost on the lonely strip known as the Lost Coast. Yet while Riddleport has grown into a proper city, it remains true to its roots—you can get rich quick in Riddleport if you've got skill and a bit of luck, though for every Riddleport success story there are a dozen nameless bodies buried in potters' fields or tossed to the hungry denizens of the sea.

Riddleport is located in a secluded, rocky harbor situated at the easternmost reaches of the Calphiak Mountains, where the meandering Velashu River meets the sea. Although the site was partially chosen for ease of

defense (either from Chelish privateers or raiders from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings), the original settlers picked the site as much for its singular Thassilonian monument: the mysterious and intriguing arch known as the Cyphergate.

The city proper is tucked in between two rocky ridges, the easternmost rising just over 300 feet in elevation and blocking the city from a tidal swamp of hillocks and mires that serves today as a dumping ground for refuse, derelict ships, bodies, and undesirables. The western ridge ascends swiftly into the Calphiak Mountains themselves. To the north, the Velashu River threads its way between these ridges, leading up into the Velashu Uplands. While roads from the east and north exist, they are not well-maintained—the most notable access to the city is its harbor. No one who sails into Riddleport by sea can avoid passing beneath the Cyphergate.

Many sailors have favorite private signs or rituals for good luck they perform as their ships pass under the storied arch, for one can never be too careful around Varisia's storied monuments.

Riddleport today bears an air of legitimacy that eluded it in earlier times when it was little more than a haven for those seeking shelter but not necessarily law. This legitimacy arises from a growing influx of scholars and experts, for of all Varisia's monuments, the Cyphergate may be the best preserved. It's certainly one of the most enigmatic. An entire tradition of arcane study has risen in the Cyphergate's shadow—the growing Order of Cyphers has become one of Riddleport's most powerful factions—quite the feat in a settlement known for traditional values of piracy and bullying. This newest faction of Riddleport's already complicated administration may just be what it takes to force the growing city into a stable government—or it may be the final load that causes it all to come crumbling down.

RIDDLEPORT

Large City nonstandard (titular overlord with multiple crimelords);

AL CN

GP Limit 40,000 gp; **Assets** 26,600,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 13,300

Type mixed (77% human, 7% dwarf, 5% half-elf, 4% half-orc, 3% tiefling, 2% halfling, 1% gnome, 1% other)

AUTHORITY FIGURE

Gaston Cromarcky, NE male human fighter 7/expert 5 (Overlord of Riddleport)

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CRIMELORDS

The titular head of the Riddleport government is the self-appointed Overlord of Riddleport, a position traditionally held for life. Riddleport's current overlord is a former pirate captain named Gaston Cromarcky. Since the city's founding, Riddleport has been ruled by a series of pirate lords, buccaneers, and other unsavory sailors in a bloody cycle of betrayal and violent coups. Overlord Cromarcky has maintained his rule over Riddleport for three decades by entrenching himself in a wholly new manner. Rather than rely on the loyalty of pirate crews and fellow captains, Overlord Cromarcky opened the coffers of his deceased predecessor and hired mercenaries and enforcers from land-bound groups with no connection to piracy. Calling this new breed of enforcers the Riddleport Gendarmes ("gentlemen-at-arms"), he created a military force loyal to his coin.

Under Cromarcky's rule, life in Riddleport has become more stable than ever before. Open street-warfare between rival gangs is a rarity now, and the gendarmes have made

it safe enough for brave or desperate merchants from Magnimar to bring in trade. By Overlord Cromarcky's decree, any ship that flies the flag of Riddleport at full mast is under his protection and is not to be raided by any pirate who wishes to call Riddleport home. That Cromarcky charges scandalously high prices for this protection of visiting ships ensures that there are always enough ships plying the Lost Coast or the southern waters for Riddleport's traditional pirates to prey upon as well. The stability and semi-regular influx of imported goods has begun to spoil the citizens of Riddleport, but these days may be numbered. Rumors abound that Cromarcky's coffers might finally be running low (despite his protection racket), and the rise in power of Cromarcky's most vocal public enemy, Elias Tammerhawk, has many of Riddleport's citizens expecting a shift in leadership soon, an eventuality that many Riddleport traditionalists would greet with relief.

Despite the unheard-of political stability that Riddleport currently enjoys, only a longtime Riddleport native would ever think of the city as truly civilized. The overlord rules with a light touch and with the consent of several powerful individuals who likewise shape the direction of Riddleport's future. These individuals are the various crime bosses who hold sway in the city. Pirates may have founded the city, but many more bandits and scoundrels soon saw the value of having a place to call home, the wilds of Varisia hardly being a safe place to camp. The crimelords each have their own particular speciality and focus, and they play the role that noble families take in most other cities: they are the movers and shakers, the leaders whom the average citizen idolizes and fears. When an overlord dies, the new overlord invariably rises from the ranks of the city's crimelords.

Traditionally, eight crimelords rule Riddleport under the overlord. Like the overlord, these crimelords form affiliations with various pirate captains to further secure their positions, though such alliances are unreliable and subject to the vagaries of the pirate lifestyle. Each crimelord maintains his own small army of contacts, snitches, foot soldiers, fences, loan sharks, specialists, and favored lieutenants (called "capps" in local parlance). The current eight crimelords include the following characters:

- **Avery Slyeg** has ties to the overlord, the extent of which are yet to be determined. He handles most of the major smuggling operations into and out of port and has a wide network of fences and black marketeers to move stolen goods and contraband. He operates out of the River Runner Inn.
- **Varnal "Split Face" Knoemar** is a beggar master who runs a number of small-time cons, street gangs, and pickpockets, as well as some information brokering. He has several hideouts throughout the seediest alleys and slums of the Wharf and Rotgut Districts. He's particularly sensitive about his cleft

- palette and goes to great lengths to disguise it.
- **Boss Croat** is an immensely fat half-orc who runs several street gangs and controls most of the trade in illicit substances on the street. He is well known for his habit of employing only half-orc enforcers and has a reputation as a primary contact for the hiring of professional assassinations through his network of hushmen (hired killers). His fortified compound stands at the end of Silk Street in northern Riddleport.
 - **Clegg Zincher** runs Zincher's Arena, numerous other fighting venues, and all of the gambling associated with such bouts. He also runs most of the organized labor in town and wields great power through his ability to call for strikes or ruin competitors through industrial sabotage.
 - **Elias Tammerhawk**, Speaker of the Order of Cyphers and the most unlikely crimelord in town, is as much a scholar as he is a scoundrel. He's maintained his position of power in Riddleport through cutthroat manipulation and disposing of rivals, and over time has become the most powerful crimelord in Riddleport—and the most likely candidate for overlord should Cromarck fall.
 - **Saul Vancaskerkin** was formerly a major player who incurred the wrath of too many rivals. That he survived is a testament to his tenacity and luck. Now seen as a small-time operator, his recent acquisition and rebuilding of the Gold Goblin Gambling Hall has been interpreted as a last-ditch attempt to reclaim his former glory.
 - **Shorafá Pamodae** is the high priestess of the temple of Calistria, the House of the Silken Veil. Madam to all of the temple prostitutes and patron of the “hospitality industry” throughout the city, she is also the city's major information broker due to the persuasive skills of her employees and their extensive clientele.
 - **Ziphras** may just be the leader of a small street gang, but his methods and nature make him uniquely formidable. As a wererat, he and his boys are always on the lookout to recruit willing (or unwilling) members into his gang of lycanthropes. His people patrol the entire Rotgut District in rat form, seeking potential opportunities and marks.

RIDDLEPORT AT A GLANCE

Most of Riddleport's buildings are composed of wood—logs or planks—with multiple floors and steep, high-peaked roofs of wooden shingles. They are built in close quarters, and in some cases their wooden upper floors sag and lean together from the constantly sodden conditions. Stone fireplaces ward off the bitter winter cold and the chill that lingers in the fog-laden streets for much of the year, save for in high summer. During this two-month period, warmer air currents from the south bring a muggy, oppressive heat along with great black mosquitoes that breed in the nearby marshes. Many burn peat treated with

incense in their hearths during these months to ward off the vermin with their thick smoke.

The major streets of Riddleport are cobbled, often becoming rain-slick cataracts during the wet seasons. Cobbles are often missing or crushed by the incessant traffic, leaving gaping holes and ruts in even the most well-tended thoroughfares. Side streets tend to be relegated to muddy tracks that are swift to turn into stinking morasses of sucking mud and filth. Riddleport doesn't have much of a sewage system, and relies mainly on gutters along street edges to carry refuse to the river and harbor. One feature unique to the major streets is the frequent oil lamps mounted on iron poles that provide beacons of light in the benighted mists. These are set in sturdy hurricane lamps and burn thick, rancid oil from barrel-shaped reservoirs at the lamppost base—a byproduct and innovation of the Gas Works. These wavering lights give off illumination equal to a torch in even the foulest weather but are not well-tended—just over a third of them are out on any given night, in need of repairs or refueling.

The following locations correspond to the map on page 11.

1. The Cyphergate

The enigmatic Cyphergate looms large over Riddleport's harbor, a constant reminder of the transience of life and even civilization, since few can even imagine what society might have raised this architectural wonder. The arch rises 350 feet above the water below at high tide, rising from the rocky crags on either side of the harbor mouth—its diameter is exactly 700 feet. Rectangular in cross section and 35 feet wide, the sides bear massive runes and glyphs. It is of an unidentifiable stone of almost supernatural hardness that resists most efforts at defacing or marking, and has weathered countless years amazingly well. There is speculation that the arch is actually the upper portion of a great stone ring, the bottom of which lies buried beneath the harbor, and long-abandoned excavations have shown that it descends deeply into the bedrock, but how far down it goes and how it could have been implanted in the natural stone remains a mystery, as do the meanings of the runes on its sides. Some researchers note that these runes are similar to those that comprise the Thassilonian language, yet each bears subtle differences that make translation difficult, if not impossible. Most scholars believe that the runes have no meaning, and are simply decorative. Magical attempts to decipher the runes have supported this theory, yet the Order of Cyphers believes that this simply points to the runes' mystic nature, that even magic cannot decipher their meaning or the Cyphergate's true purpose. Cracking this code has become the primary goal of the Order, yet they are no closer to solving it today than they were when their order was founded.

2. Riddleport Harbor

Riddleport's harbor is a somewhat crowded natural cove grown increasingly dense with piers and ship traffic. Runoff from the city's sewage gutters and silt from the ever-muddy Velashu River sometimes transforms the water into a nasty brown, but for the most part ocean currents keep the harbor relatively fresh and filled with fish, which in turn draws numerous, more dangerous predators to the harbor. Sharks, reefclaws, bunyips, devilfish, and barracuda (both the standard and the regional amphibious variety) have all been spotted in the harbor waters, creating a dangerous environment to swim in. Men who fall overboard from ships in Riddleport's harbor generally have only a few minutes to reach safety before one of these predators finds them.

3. Inner Harbor

A smaller harbor at the river's mouth, the Inner Harbor's pricier berths provide more direct access to the mills and mercantile buildings. Unfortunately, the number of pollutants in the slow-flowing river from the city's sewage gutters and mills makes water drawn from the inner harbor undrinkable at best—fortunately, it also makes it less predator-infested than the main harbor.

4. Velashu Ferry

When Riddleport was founded, it often had difficulty with the goblins, ogres, and trolls that dwelt in the Calphiak Mountains. While these creatures have dwindled in number since then, the traditional ban on building bridges over the Velashu remains. Those seeking to cross the river can either pay local fishermen for passage, or they can engage the services of the Velashu Ferry here. The ferry runs regularly throughout the night and day. **Grimas Oltedler** (CN male human commoner 3) works steadily through the evening and night but must be summoned from his bed by ringing the ferry bell if one is seeking passage before midday. Prices range from 2 to 6 cp per traveller, depending on the length of the journey up or downriver.

5. River District

This section of the town runs along both banks of the Velashu River. It consists primarily of shops and fulling mills that turn out the few trade items manufactured in Riddleport, mainly finished metal goods, lumber, fulling cloth, tanned hides, and cured furs taken by hunters

from the nearby mountains or the Uplands. Two fish-packing houses operate in this stretch as well. All of these operations dump their wastes directly into the river, as do several sewage drains from the streets of the city, providing a particularly pungent odor for which the district is infamous and has earned the unofficial name of "Reek District."

6. Publican House (Temple of Cayden Cailean)

This building of clapboard and shingles appears to be a large, rough-and-tumble tavern.

Great bay windows of leaded glass look out over the river, often lit by the revel ongoing through most hours of the evening and night. A sign bearing the symbol of a dented ale mug hangs above the door, and written discreetly beneath

it in gold letters are the words "Publican House."

This raucous place is actually a temple to Cayden Cailean, god of adventurers and drink, and is a favorite among the ships' crews and travelers that visit Riddleport for its fair prices and wide selection. It is overseen by High

Publican **Arnando Rolf** (CG male human fighter 3/cleric 5), a bear of a

man who is rarely seen without a notched sword swinging at his hip. The temple-tavern

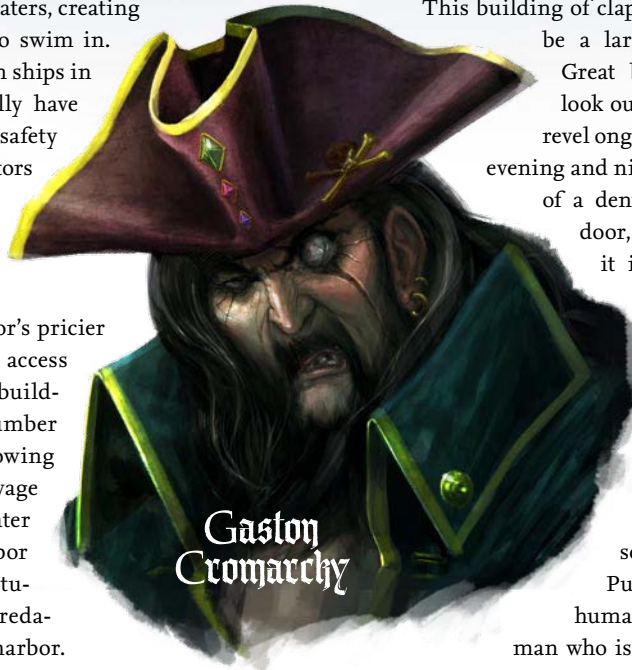
is open to all, with the one exception painted in bright red letters in several languages directly above the bar: "No Cypherimages," a policy enacted several years ago after numerous problems between Rolf and some of the more egotistical and stuffy members of the Order of the Cypher.

7. Windward District

This affluent section of Riddleport consists of sturdy timber structures built upon the slopes of the city's western ridgeline. It gains its name from the warm summer breezes that come in off of the gulf. Winding paths with steps cut into the bare stone provide egress through this steep district, and most buildings are several stories high with numerous balconies, many connected by narrow bridges. This district houses most of the city's scholars and sages, and about 80% of the cypherimages make their homes here among these wind-blown tenements.

8. Cypher Lodge

This grand structure of stone and timber sits perched upon a lonely crag nestled against the very slope of the



mountain, and provides a panoramic view of both the gulf and the city. More importantly, its three wings look directly out over the Cyphergate. This lodge is the headquarters of the vaunted Order of Cyphers, a society of skilled wizards and sages who have dedicated themselves to unraveling the secrets of ancient arcana—in particular, the purpose of the Cyphergate. The lodge is open to all cypherimages for a monthly room-and-board fee of 5 gp, a fee that grants access to its extensive libraries as well as a host of learned scholars on the subject. To non-cypherimages, a day's room and board (and access to the libraries) is a much heavier 20 gp. Nevertheless, its guest rooms are almost always full. Today the cypherimages toil under their current leader **Elias Tammerhawk** (CE male human diviner 9), an accomplished wizard who has been elected as speaker of the order for two consecutive 8-year terms. Many whisper that Elias has his eye set on the position of overlord, and Riddleport's other crimelords worry about the nature of the changes to their beloved city should this event occur.

Rules further detailing the Order of Cyphers can be found in *Pathfinder Companion: Second Darkness*.

9. Wharf District

This raucous district lies hard on the edge of the very docks of the city and is where much of the city's day-to-day action of commerce and thievery occurs. Nearest the docks are a series of warehouses and cheap grog shops where merchant and pirate crews mingle in a haze of rum-soaked debauchery and blood. Once the most commercially successful portion of the city, its aged facade and Riddleport's slow slide toward legitimacy have seen much of the action move northward to the Free-Coin District, leaving the Wharf District a tattered shadow of its former self. Inns and shops have grimed windows and peeling paint hinting at a prosperity that no longer exists, which is just fine for the run-of-the-mill pirate crew.

10. Gold Goblin Gambling Hall

Once a high profile venue and shining diamond of the bustling Wharf District, this run-down gambling hall currently run by **Saul Vancaskerkin** (CN male human rogue 4) has seen better days and a half-dozen changes in ownership over the years. Despite financial setbacks, it continues to put up a good face and even provides beast fighting to bet on in competition with the nearby Zincher's Arena. The Gold Goblin is featured prominently in the adventure "Shadow in the Sky" and is fully detailed starting on page 56.

11. Zincher's Arena

This massive stone structure dominates the Wharf District. Brutal contests of strength and combat prowess between slaves, criminals, professional gladiators, and captured

wild beasts and monsters are held here for the public's entertainment, but so are formal duels by members of the city's elite who wish to settle feuds in a public spectacle. The latter are much rarer, as such duel challenges are seldom issued—assassinations and poisonings are so much more efficient—and even more rarely accepted for the same reasons. However, such events draw by far the largest crowds. The last such duel was between Speaker Tammerhawk of the cypherimages and a visiting evoker who was denied entry to the Cypher Lodge after one too many insults levied at the school of divination. Tammerhawk won in short order in a spectacularly bloody bout that involved a swarm of rats devouring the still-living rival mage. Local crime boss **Clegg Zincher** (CN male human expert 2/rogue 7) runs the arena, and his booming voice and flair for melodrama make him uniquely suited to run such events as the establishment has become regionally famous for. While not the most powerful crimelord in Riddleport, he is certainly one to be feared and respected.

12. Gas Forges

The Cyphergate is not the only unique local feature, merely the most obvious. The second, more subtle peculiarity is also the primary reason for Riddleport's prosperity, for the location sits above a large deposit of carbaxine, a rare gas normally found deep in the Darklands. Dwarven smiths have long known of the properties of carbaxine, of how flames fueled by the gas run hotter than most other forges and allow for the smelting and forging of many rare and difficult metals like adamantine. When this unusual deposit was discovered beneath Riddleport over a century ago, the dwarves were quick to capitalize and constructed the Gas Forges above the site.

Carbaxine is a poisonous, heavier-than-air gas that is difficult to work with, but carbaxine forges are immensely valuable in metalcrafting. The Gas Forges are the only forges in Varisia capable of smelting adamantine and other high-hardness metals, and despite the rarity of such ore, the Gas Forges never seem to be without custom. The Gas Forges are an immense structure of brick and iron with dozens of foul, smoke-belching stacks built over the forges. The actual workings beneath the structure are populated by dwarven laborers who don crude breathing devices as they work to maintain proper gas flow for the forges by removing the huge deposits of carbon and poisonous heavy metals that develop from their usage. The facial bellows they wear are inefficient and must be hand-pumped, forcing workers to hold their breath as they work, pausing as infrequently as possible to work the bellow filters to provide fresh air. The work is taxing even for the hardy dwarves, but those who survive a few years of such labor retire wealthy—usually to die shortly thereafter of black lung or liver failure. The anonymous consortium of dwarves that own the Gas Forges

are some of the richest residents of Varisia, although they live in distant Janderhoff and trust the daily maintenance and running of the Gas Forges to **Tromard Roldheim** (LN male dwarf fighter 2, expert 5), their embittered but relatively well-paid proxy.

13. Rotgut District

This district of disheveled businesses and collapsing tenements is crammed up against the city's protective ridge. Easily the poorest section in the city proper, Rotgut also hosts the highest crime rate and the most brothels and alehouses per capita. Every crimelord seems to have a finger in the Rotgut District, though few actually dwell within its dubious environs.

14. St. Caspieran's Mission

This small mission church and almshouse was founded several decades ago by a starry-eyed follower of Sarenrae who dedicated the mission to the care of crippled sailors and those widowed or orphaned by the sea. Things didn't turn out so well for the missionary, and today, the almshouse serves as the headquarters for a beggarmaster and petty conman known as the **Splithog Pauper** (NE male human rogue 4).

15. Riddleport Light

Built on a lonely crag at the terminus of Riddleport's eastern ridge, this beacon tower provides guidance to the safety of the harbor and away from the treacherous rocks just to the east of the harbor mouth. It can only be reached by a narrow winding stairway. It has been occupied over the years by a number of different groups and individuals, but is currently the home of a reclusive sorcerer named **Gebediah Krix** (NE male human sorcerer 10) who, rumor holds, consorts with fiends from the Great Beyond. Krix is courteous enough to make sure the beacon is lit each night, so the powers-that-be elect not to try and dislodge his occupation of the tower.

16. Leeward District

Riddleport's largest district, Leeward is built into the protecting curve of the city's eastern ridge, where it is sheltered from the worst of the winter winds. The majority of the city's population resides in the tall tenements of this district, and most buildings have a shop at street level where standard goods and services can be obtained. From the central

well and market to the temples and the walled compounds of the various bosses that run the crime in Riddleport, almost anything can be found on the streets of Leeward District.

17. House of the Silken Veil

This octagonal pyramid is topped by a blood-red steeple. The walls were once of white marble but are now grimed and stained by years of exposure to the salt air and the pollutants of the Gas Forges, giving it a dreary, unhealthy look. But the silken curtains that cover its three wide, inviting entrances are always freshly laundered and do little to mask the scent of exotic incenses that waft from within.

This structure is the headquarters for Riddleport's "hospitality industry," an industry that includes prostitutes, alehouses, escorts, dancers, and even (it is rumored) exotic assassins. The House of the Silken Veil serves another purpose as well: it is a temple of Calistria in addition to being a high-class brothel. Temple

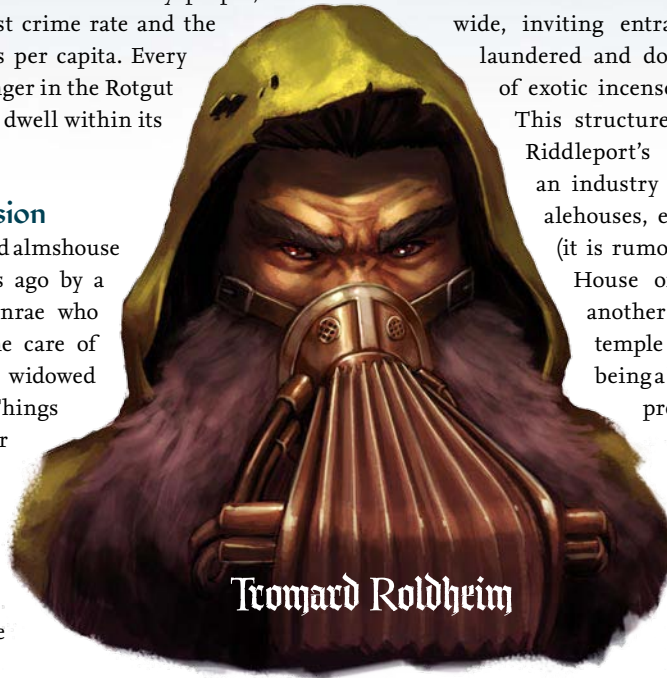
prostitutes work the streets and squares of Leeward and send criers and samples down to Wharf District to bring in the "pigeons." The high priestess of this temple is **Shorafa Pamodae** (CN female tiefling cleric 10), a leather-clad mistress seldom

seen without her snakeskin whip coiled about a shoulder. She is also one of the city's minor crimelords and rules the hospitality industry, from pimps to liquor sales.

Currently working within the confines of the temple and never venturing forth is a call girl called **Lavender Lil** (NE female tiefling rogue 4). A faithful follower of Calistria, Lavender has been granted asylum by Shorafa to escape the wrath of Clegg Zincher after her involvement in the death of his brother more than a year ago. She chafes at her confinement and would be only too willing to manipulate a heroic "pigeon" into helping her escape Zincher's retribution.

18. The Fish Bowl

This bowl-shaped structure is open to the air and has a saltwater pool at its center, earning it its common nickname. In fact, this site is the city's temple of a relatively minor goddess called Besmara, goddess of piracy, strife, and sea monsters. Various sorts of aquatic predators are kept within this deep pool by the small staff of sea-priests that man this temple—from swamp barracuda to



reefclaws to the occasional giant octopus. The clergy has been careful to keep such “guests” under control ever since a number of reefclaws plagued the eastern portion of the city for more than a week a few years back. Rumor has it that on certain special nights, sacrifices are given to these creatures to placate Besmara’s more sinister aspects. The temple is currently headed by a wizened, old, one-legged man named **Ruben Carfay** (CN male human rogue 1/cleric 7). Most of Riddleport’s merchants and sea captains make at least occasional visits to this temple to leave tithes and request the favor of the Pirate Queen, but like most of her worshippers, they aren’t a very faithful or particularly devout lot.

19. Mystery of the Gate

This grandiose structure is the inn and tavern most favored by visiting scholars who come to study the Cyphergate. Its walls are decorated with etchings of glyphs, diagrams, and sketches showing the various dimensions and angles of the monument, and twice a week a cyphermage visits from the lodge and hosts a short lecture. In recent years, the inn has become a watering hole for adventurers as well, as the concentration of sages and scholars is a bountiful resource for researching quests throughout Varisia and beyond.

20. Lymas Smeed’s Townhouse

Fronting on Rat Street, this townhouse is the abode of the loan shark Lymas Smeed—it is detailed in full on page 27.

21. Zincher’s Tenement

Clegg Zincher owns this five-story tenement and takes the entire top floor as his abode and headquarters. The lower levels are occupied by his loyal soldiers and capps, as well as gladiators and mercenaries in his employ. The entire building is fortified from within and virtual suicide for anyone who might suppose to openly confront Zincher here.

22. Boss Croat’s Compound

Several buildings of the Leeward District here have been connected by a 15-foot wall topped with a spiked parapet. **Boss Croat** (NE male half-orc fighter 5/rogue 4) operates from inside this fortress, where wagonloads of the illicit drugs and contraband he sells are carted in under heavy guard for eventual disbursement among various street vendors. All of the windows are shuttered and barred, and at least two dozen half-orc men-at-arms are known to reside within.

23. The River Runner

This large establishment is perched on a bluff overlooking the Velashu. Once grandiose, now its paint peels and the shingles of its roof are missing in several places.

Though still a functional, if somewhat pricey, inn, the River Runner’s true purpose (as revealed by the double entendre of its name) is to serve as a clearing house for the smuggling and black market operations of crimelord **Avery Slyeg** (CN male half-elf wizard 3/rogue 4). The fact that it is operated directly under the nose of the gendarmes at the Devil’s Fork merely reveals the extent to which his bribery has infiltrated their ranks.

24. The Devil’s Fork

Riddleport’s military district is nestled into the draws formed by the rocky ridgeline that guards the city’s east and north sides. The Fork guards the northern approach to the city. Within the draws have been constructed a stableyard and barracks for the city’s 250 gendarmes and a small force of light cavalry. In the southern draw is Shoreleave, the city’s fortress-prison compound backed up against the rocky ridge and said to extend underneath in tunnels mined out by prisoners sentenced to hard labor. General **Anton Mescher** (N male human fighter 8), Overlord Cromarcky’s right-hand man, oversees Shoreleave efficiently and fairly, and is one of the few people in power in Riddleport who isn’t seeking to gain more.

25. Maskyr’s Island

Named for Cabriem Maskyr, the pirate captain who became the first overlord of Riddleport, this islet in the center of the Velashu River holds the current overlord’s citadel and estate as well as many of the city’s various administration buildings. Several docks provide access to the island, but all are heavily guarded by gendarmes—Overlord Cromarcky does not accept visitors lightly. The citadel was built with the idea in mind that should the city fall (likely to internal turmoil), the residents of Maskyr’s Island would be able to weather the tumult for some time.

26. Free-Coin District

In recent years, the gambling hall business in Riddleport has seen a sudden surge in popularity—game halls are now among the city’s greatest sources of revenue. This recent expansion to the city serves as the demesne of three of Riddleport’s newest and grandest gamehalls—the Dragon’s Hoard, the Watercress, and the House of Nabin. All three, incidentally, are at least partially owned by Overlord Cromarcky, which likely explains the district’s exclusivity from competition and unique tax-free status. Of course, all three establishments are rigged for the house, but this has as of yet not dampened their popularity among locals and visitors alike.

27. Lubbertown

Reflecting Riddleport’s early days as a purely nautical destination, this shanty town of tents and simple dwellings

sprung up outside the gates and beyond the official reach of the overlord's taxes. Known derisively as Lubbertown for the fact that most of its inhabitants arrive at the city by land rather than by sea, the district is not patrolled by the gendarmes and has developed its own social order, informal system of laws, and distribution of goods and employment. Many of the city's criminal organizations train (and recruit) their lowliest operatives among the vice of Lubbertown.

28. City Mortuary

This large, nondenominational chapel is maintained by the churches of Cayden Cailean, Calistria, and Besmara, and is used for funeral services and burial rites. It features its own attached mausoleums for those who can afford interment there rather than in the common graves of the Burying Ground. The building is locked up tight when not in use.

29. The Burying Ground

The land in and around Riddleport is either low-lying and saturated by the high water table or consists of rocky peaks and ridges—neither of which make ideal conditions for the interment of the deceased. As a result, this low hill conveniently located just outside of town has been the predominant burial ground for generations of those unwilling or unable to afford the expense necessary to have a rock-cut tomb in the surrounding ridges, or a private vault in the city mortuary. Graves are spaced closely together to maximize the limited hill space and burials typically involve interring bodies two and three deep. Stone tombs—anywhere from crude cairns to ornate vaults—surround the hill on the lower ground where the earth is too soggy to make burials practical.

30. Boneyard Cut

Climbing over Riddleport's eastern ridge, this pass ascends almost 200 feet at a near-45-degree angle. Garbage is carried over this pass on mule-drawn carts in well-worn ruts and then down at a shallower angle to a ledge 40 feet above the salt marsh. At the terminus of this path is a sheer cliff and the caretaker's hut. The caretaker, **Hyrarn Crooge** (CE male bugbear rogue 5), maintains a constant bonfire

for the burning of some trash and dumps the rest over the cliff edge into the marsh below. Crooge uses his isolation and ranks in Disguise to hide his identity as anything other than a heavily cowed half-orc hermit of peculiar posture and questionable hygiene. This false front serves his murderous instincts well as he sometimes descends the Cut on certain nights to brutally murder derelicts and drunks in the fog-wrapped streets of the city—his work has long been known as the doings of a killer named the “Rotgut Ripper.”

31. The Boneyard

This deceptively named place actually serves as the city's dump and ship's graveyard rather than the intended final resting place for the once-living, though there are certainly enough corpses that end up concealed here to give most city graveyards a run for their money. Its name is derived from the many old hulks and collections of ships' ribs that protrude from the swampy ground. The whole area is a partially flooded salt marsh that is generally 2 or 3 feet deep, although some hidden patches of quicksand are much deeper. The tidal influx keeps a mild current swirling through the marsh that stirs the garbage around until it collects in various clumps of decomposing

compost that eventually form stable isles—some supporting considerable vegetation—within the swamp. Abandoned ships are towed up into the swamp from the bay during high tide by flat-bottomed skiffs and then set adrift. They quickly settle into the shallow waters, and the pull of the tide here is too weak to float any of them back out, though some of them do slowly change position over time due to the inexorable tidal forces. Several scavenging creatures are known to inhabit the fertile scavenging fields of the Boneyard, including the dangerous swamp barracuda and immense cockroaches.

In several places, numerous ship hulks have clumped together, forming tangled warrens of chambers interconnected by plank bridges, ropes, and crude ladders. Many of these are inhabited by packs of wererats, all of whom belong to a larger family run by a charismatic but still horrifically filthy killer named **Ziphras** (LE male wererat human rogue 4). Ziphras and his boys periodically venture into Riddleport in rat form to search for new opportunities for robbery, smuggling, and other high-paying crimes.



Shorafa Pamodae



The Gold Goblin

The Gold Goblin Gambling Hall stands as a reminder of better times in one of the slummier sections of Riddleport, just off its wharves and within bowshot of the Velashu River.

The Goblin, as it is often called, was one of the first and finest gambling halls established in Riddleport many years ago. At the time, its brass-plated dome attracted the attention of sailors as they first made port and offered them a fine venue where they could relax and wile away the time at games of chance. As time and mismanagement tarnished its splendid veneer, the Goblin fell from prestige, going from attracting the captains and officer corps of incoming ships to their surly and questionably groomed crews, and finally becoming a haunt for deserters, ne'er-do-wells, and worse. As its clientele deteriorated, so did its fortunes.

Most recently, the Goblin was purchased by one of Riddleport's former crime bosses, a washed-up one-

handed swindler named Saul Vancaskerkin. Vancaskerkin refurbished the place in hopes of recapturing its upscale origins, even as newer and grander game halls opened on the northern edge of the city. Saul has had some success and has regained a portion of the Goblin's more respectable clientele, but he knows that if he's going to make a go of this business venture, he needs something more dramatic. To this end, he decided to hold a gambling tournament called "Cheat the Devil and Take His Gold."

GAMBLING WITH THE GOBLIN

Presented here are four of the games catering to the Gold Goblin Gambling Hall's diverse clientele. Each game is presented in a format that allows you to run it at your game table—and remember, these games shouldn't necessarily be limited to Riddleport. Feel free to use them whenever your PCs find themselves bored at a local tavern!

Welcome to the Gold Goblin, handsome, the hot spot for turning fortunes and winning wagers beneath the arch. Looking for the squarest games, most honest dealers, and prettiest blamed barmaids anywhere in the port? Well, you found 'em, sugar! Ready to be a rich man? Hope so, 'cause tonight's your night. Belly up to a table and get to winnin'; we've got the gold to make your dreams glitter. Good drink, fine food, and warm company's extra, but we've got all that too—at prices so cheap we might as well be giving it away. So find a spot, honey, order a pint, and leave it all to us, 'cause here, even a goblin could win his weight in gold!

—Mirri Salassa, head barmaid and greeter at the Gold Goblin Gambling Hall

Bounder

“Bounder, bounder, bounder! No doubles, no doubles!”

What You'll Need: 3d6 for the dealer and 2d20 for each player, plus coins to track bets.

How to Play: Bounder is unique among gambling games in that both the players and dealer use dice. The dealer gets three 6-sided dice, and each player gets two 20-siders.

To start, each player bets a stake (minimum 1 sp). Each player rolls his first d20, making his “point.” After all players have rolled their points, each player may double his stake if desired.

Then the dealer rolls 3d6. Anyone whose point the dealer matches loses his stake.

Then each player rolls his second d20. If the player's two dice results are on either side of the dealer's result—one greater than and one less than the dealer's number—he “bounds” the dealer and wins an amount equal to the amount he bet. Otherwise, he loses his stake.

If a player rolls a 1 and a 20 (or a 20 and a 1), he wins double his bet.

Odds: The house edge in this game is 18% without any doubling. A player over time will get about 7/17 of his money back. Extreme points (1, 2, 19 and 20) are as good as 47.5%, so doubling is wiser there (but still not wise).

Ghoulette

“What a mighty hero! Ready to rescue the ale from any mug!”

Background: Ghoulette is a roulette-like game invented by a strange rogue named Lixy Parmenter. She got the idea for the game after making an unusual discovery while robbing a grave—she found the decapitated head of Dungo the Savage. Dungo was a disillusioned bard and priest of Calistria known far and wide for his withering insults, capable of reducing the most confident lord to a shaking

mass. Things did not end swimmingly for Dungo, as he was fatally munched by a ghou. Before he succumbed to ghou fever, he spat out one last curse: that the citizens of Riddleport would be haunted by his sharp tongue for all time. Unfortunately, his curse attracted Calistria's attention, who was at the time in a particularly playful mood. She answered Dungo's curse by transforming his head into a magic item. (The ghouls ate the rest of him.)

Dungo retains a vestigial ability to hurl insults, even with the lack of lungs (or the need to breathe, for that matter). Lixy Parmenter found his insults to be rather amusing, and decided to turn the strange talking head into a gambling game. She mounted Dungo on a wheel and surrounded it with various categories, and players bet on the category that his head will face after each spin.

What You'll Need: A spinner or a d12, plus markers and coins to track bets.

How to Play: To play, each player puts a marker and any number of coins on one or more of the spaces on the ghoulette wheel (minimum 10 cp per space). The croupier then spins Dungo until he comes to a stop. Dungo then issues an enraged insult at someone based on the particular topic he is looking at on the wheel. Any player who has coins on the subject matter of this insult is paid the amount of coins he bet in the next highest denomination—copper gets paid in silver (e.g., a 15 cp bet gets 15 sp), silver in gold, gold in platinum, and platinum in ten times the amount. If Dungo says “something nice,” each player gets a consolation prize of the amount of coins he bet in the next lowest denomination, rounded down (e.g., a 15 cp bet gets back 1 cp). Then the croupier presses a button that tilts the edges of the wheel slightly inward, and all original bets (regardless of



SAVAGE-TONGUED GHOUL HEAD

Aura Strong necromancy; **CL** 3rd

Slot—; **Price** 1,000 gp

STATISTICS

Alignment CE; **Ego** 3

Senses 30 ft. vision and hearing

Int 11, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

Communication speech

DESCRIPTION

Dungo possesses only one power: the ability to insult. To determine an insult, roll 1d12 and apply the results to the following chart.

1d12 Insult

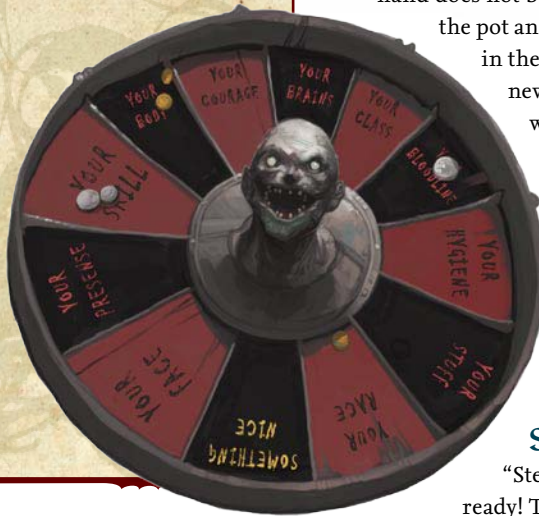
- 1 Appearance
- 2 Bloodline
- 3 Demeanor/Presence
- 4 Hygiene
- 5 Skill
- 6 Clothes/Equipment
- 7 Body
- 8 Race
- 9 Courage
- 10 Profession
- 11 Brains
- 12 "Something Nice"

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft

Wondrous Item, *magic mouth*;

Cost 500 gp, 40 XP



win or loss) slide into slots under Dungo's head and into the coffer under the table.

Odds: The house edge in this game is 8.33%. Over time, a player earns back 11/12 of his money, or very slightly less if he bets in anything other than increments of 10 due to rounding down on "something nice."

Golem

"It's you verses the greedy golem! Test your skill and take the monster's pot!"

What You'll Need: A deck of cards, plus an amulet and coins to track bets. A golem deck is identical to a real-world poker deck, except the cards go from 1 to 13 in four suits: flesh (hearts), clay (spades), stone (diamonds), and iron (clubs).

How to Play: Golem is a player-vs.-player card game similar to five-card draw poker, but with a "golem hand." Golem is played in a series of games; one game must be completely resolved before the next begins. The player to the right of the dealer gets the amulet to start the night.

The dealer deals five cards to each player. Starting at the amulet, each player can bet, raise one coin, or fold. Anyone

who folds is out of the game, and can't come back in until a new game begins.

Next, each player may discard up to two cards and receive that many back from the dealer. These discarded cards go facedown on the center of the table. Another round of betting occurs, starting at the amulet.

If, at any point, only one player hasn't folded, he wins the pot—the house taking 5 percent—and the game is over.

If at least two players are still in after all bets are called, those players reveal their hands. Then the dealer "ups the golem." The golem hand—those cards discarded when players had the chance to draw new cards—is revealed, and if the player with the best hand beats the golem, he wins the pot, and the game is over. But if the player with the best hand does not beat the golem, that player must put into

the pot an amount of coins equal to what's already in the pot, and all cards are collected so that a new hand can be dealt for the players who were still in at the end. This continues until someone wins the pot. The house takes 5 percent of the final pot, and then the amulet moves one position to the right and a new game is dealt.

Odds: The house takes 5 percent of each final pot; otherwise, the odds of winning are determined by the other players.

Skiffs

"Step up to the lake and get your racers ready! There's a storm a'comin'!"

What You'll Need: A three-by-three grid (or a set of nine small boxes of the same size), a large bowl, and a different-colored set of 25 identical tokens, beads, cubes, or chips for up to eight players.

How to Play: Skiffs is a halfling gambling game played on a three-by-three board or set of boxes (the "lake"). Each player puts up in 25 tokens ("skiffs"). The dealer takes one skiff (the "racer") from each player and then places the rest in a bowl called the "storm." The storm is flipped over the lake in one smooth motion, so each of the skiffs falls into one of the 9 boxes. (If a skiff falls between parts of the lake, the dealer places it where more than half of it lies, choosing randomly between the two boxes if it isn't clear.)

The dealer places the racers in the bowl. Then the dealer pulls out one racer at a time, and that player takes a turn.

On your turn you must do exactly one of the following, if you can:

- Remove any one skiff.
- Remove one of your skiffs and any one skiff from anywhere on the board.
- Remove one of your skiffs and any two skiffs from the same box.

- Move one skiff to an adjacent box.

When a box contains exactly one skiff, that skiff is “anchored.” An anchored skiff can’t be removed except by its owner, and no one can move a skiff into that box except the anchored skiff’s owner.

In all cases, each skiff you remove is worth one coin, regardless of whose it is.

After everyone has taken a turn, the dealer puts the racers back in the bowl, and starts a new round of turns.

The game can end in two ways. The first way is if anyone has the only skiffs in a straight line vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. In this case, that player wins all the skiffs still on the board. The house keeps the racers.

The second way is if each box contains skiffs of just one color, or none at all. In that case, the game ends, the house keeps the racers, and points are counted. You get one point for each skiff on the board, and one point for every box in which you have the only skiff(s). Whoever has the most points on the board takes all the remaining skiffs. In the case of a tie, those skiffs are split evenly between the tied players.

Odds: This is mostly a skill game, so there are no precise odds. It’s also not a fair game, meaning others can pick on you if you tick them off. But the house doesn’t care, since it takes the racers (one coin per player).

INSIDE THE GOLD GOBLIN

This grand establishment has seen better days. A wide veranda runs along the front between two short wings of the building. A massive, brass half-dome tops the building, but it is now tarnished and marred by the impact of years of weathering and bears a patina of greenish brown.

1. Grand Entrance

Standing before the main doors of the building is an 8-foot-tall statue cast in shining gold to resemble a larger-than-life goblin. It balances a golden dogslicer on a pile of gold as it smiles smugly down on all customers who pass beneath its gaze. A DC 12 Appraise check is sufficient to note that the statue is made of shining brass rather than actual gold.

The doors themselves are of a strong dark wood imported from southern lands and are decorated with multiple panels depicting signs of luck and good fortune (four-leaf clovers, crossed fingers, and so on). They can be locked (Open Lock DC 20) and barred from the inside.

2. Casino Floor

The casino floor is a wide room carpeted in rich red that has been recently patched in many places. Spread throughout the chamber are tables where different games are run. The floor hours are usually 12:00 pm to 3:00 am, though these are extended during the “Cheat the Devil and Take His Gold” tournament.

Silken banners hang from floor to ceiling along the walls, and wide vertical blinds are drawn over the windows when morning light begins to peer in from the east. The chamber has a false ceiling 20 feet above, draped in layers of horizontally hung, gauzy beige curtains (in actuality there is no ceiling directly above these curtains—see area 30). Light is provided by numerous chandeliers hanging below this false ceiling as well as several large copper braziers spaced around the room with live coals to give the chamber a more hellish light for the tournament. At the back of the chamber between the kitchen doors is a small dais bearing a bust of Desna, goddess of luck.

3. Cashier

This foyer provides access to the cashiers’ counter, which is secured by a row of vertical bars set firmly into the stone floor.

4. Cashiers’ Cage

Two cashiers work here during operating hours. There are chips in various denominations totaling 10,000 gp stored in here at any one time.

5. Guardroom

Two full-time guards, Hans and Beyar, reside in this chamber and guard access to the cashiers and vaults. They have keys to the guardroom and daily cash storage. One usually guards the cashier while the other watches over the daily cash storage during operating hours, taking only occasional breaks one at a time.

6. Daily Cash Storage

This locked room holds the daily chips and monetary fund. Vancaskerkin likes to open the vault only once a day—usually early in the morning before the casino floor opens. There are another 10,000 gp in chips stored in this room. As with all of the other chips at the Gold Goblin, these are unique to the establishment and worthless outside its doors. One cashier and Beyar are usually here during operating hours.

7. Counting Room

After closing, several of the guards and trusted staff members retire here with Vancaskerkin to count the day’s receipts and secure them in the night vault. At all other times, this room holds only a table with a few chairs and some slates with pieces of chalk. It is otherwise kept meticulously clean.

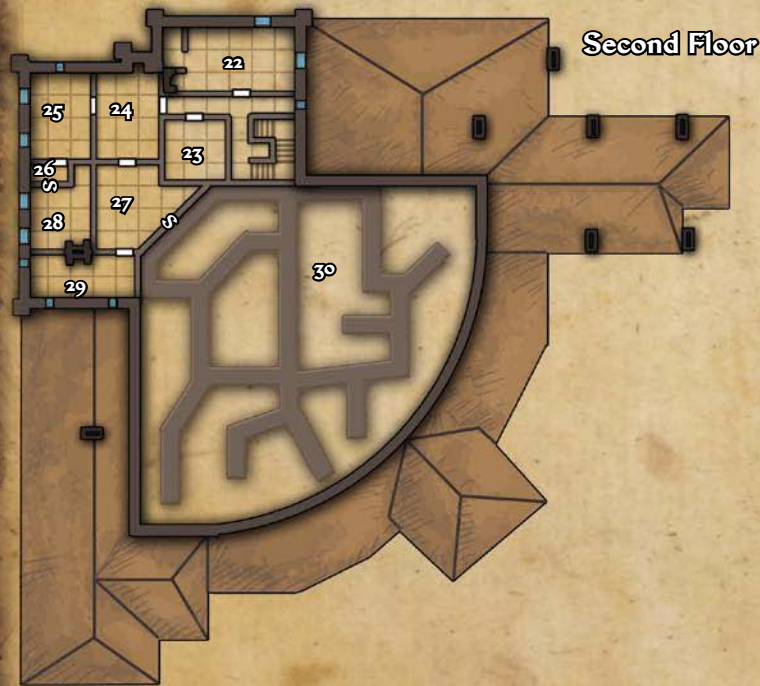
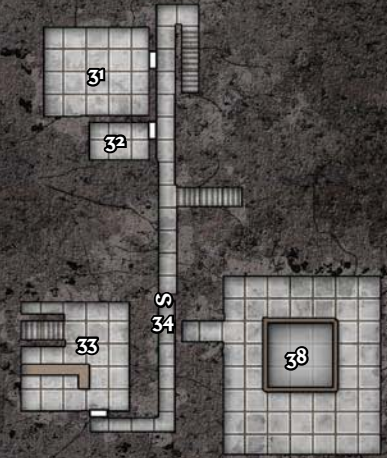
8. Night Vault

The door to this reinforced chamber is composed of 6 inches of solid steel. Its hinges are securely nested in the stone wall. Seven keyholes and a locking wheel are set in

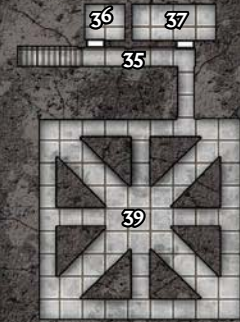
Gold Goblin Gambling Hall



Sublevel One



Sublevel Two



N



one square = 5 feet

the center of the door (Lock DC 40 each). All the locks respond to a single key (although the duplication thwarts overly easy access through *knock* spells), which is believed to be the key mounted on Vancaskerkin's wrist stump. In truth it is actually a nondescript key that he wears on the ring of keys at his belt. He never opens this door when anyone is in room 7, ushering out all employees before doing so. Although the cash boxes sitting on the shelves of this chamber should hold many thousands of gold pieces based on the casino's take, in truth there are only 1d6 × 100 gp here at any given time due to the heavy skimming that Vancaskerkin is involved in.

9. Floor Manager's Office

This office is outfitted with an elaborate mahogany desk and a comfortable chair. Before the desk sit two more chairs of less-comfortable design with manacles set into their arms. The walls are painted a flat black, and a single candelabra provides only a dim light. The desk is covered in records and receipts from the day-to-day running of the establishment, and this chamber is likewise where Larur Feldin and a few of the guards sweat anyone caught or suspected of cheating the house. Hidden under the desk is a loaded +1 *light crossbow* and a vial holding one dose of blue whinnis.

10. Private Dining Rooms

These rooms are comfortably appointed and hold two or three tables and a dozen or more chairs. Normally they are rented out for private parties at a rate of 5 sp per hour. During the tournament they are open to the public and are where games of poker and golem are held. When rented privately, all food and drink prices are triple what is charged elsewhere in the casino.

11. Cellar Entrance

A lone guard normally monitors those entering this chamber. Within is only a simple wooden staircase descending into the cellar. During the tournament, this chamber is kept locked.

12. Kitchen

This massive chamber houses the true heart of the gambling hall—its kitchen. Staffed by a dozen cooks, it remains open from 11 am to 11 pm, serving all manner of dishes and snacks. Side pantries hold dry goods and serve as cold storage for sides of meat and fresh vegetables.

While open, the kitchen serves meals and standard fare at one-half PH prices.

13. Scullery

A wooden tub holds grimy water and a smattering of soapsuds for cleaning the multitude of platters, trenchers, jacks, and cutlery used in the Gold Goblin. Firewood is stored just outside the back door and is distributed to the hall's various fireplaces once per day.

14. Staff Lounge

This simple chamber holds a few battered chairs and cushions for tired employees to use when on the short breaks that Vancaskerkin allows them. A stair rises to the second floor. A spittoon in one corner is about half full of foul-smelling remnants.

15. The Goblin's Tankard

This bar serves the entire house with a constant line of serving wenches taking orders and carrying trays of drinks between the bar and the casino floor. Two bartenders work the bar during the casino's hours, serving drinks and occasionally picking a sot's pocket. A long bar of polished wood extends along the back wall of the room and curves around at the end. Behind are mirrored shelves holding all manner of glassware as well as kegs of ale, beer, and mead and bottles of wine and liquor. At each end of the bar is a large tip jar.

16. Public Privies

Each of these rooms is a simple privy that can accommodate four people at once with a modicum of privacy. The door of one is marked with a sword and the other a cup (sometimes leading to considerable confusion as to which serves what gender and creating the occasional embarrassing situation). Vancaskerkin is aware of the confusion this antiquated symbolism causes, but finds humor in the faux pas that sometimes occur.

17. Atrium

This chamber serves as the entrance to the guest wing. It is floored in white marble, although the hallway and rooms themselves have only thin, somewhat worn carpet over wooden planks. In the center of the chamber stands a marble statue that once depicted a robed maiden holding a harp, although its head and one arm are now broken away and missing. Vancaskerkin passes this off as an ancient piece of art, but actually got it cheap from a shipment of art that was damaged in transit.



Liry
Parmenter

18. Master Suite

This suite consists of a large anteroom with a chaise longue and two chairs as well as a master bedroom with a king-sized feather bed and modest furnishings. It is rented for 3 gp per night.

19. Guest Rooms

These rooms are simply yet comfortably furnished with a double bed, table and chairs, and a fireplace. They are let for 5 sp per night.

20. Guest Suite

This room is basically identical to the other guest rooms, save it has a small side room with two cots that can be used for manservants or storage. Its nightly rate is 1 gp.

21. Linens

This closet holds the linens for the guest wing. They are replaced by a laundry service once a week.

22. Staff Quarters

This cold, sparsely appointed chamber has a small fireplace, a threadbare rug, and 12 simple cots with thin mattresses. A curtained-off section holds a privy bucket and a window for emptying it. Those hirelings of the house that don't live elsewhere reside here. Currently, only six hired guards make their residence here. Between them they have personal effects with a total value of 35 gp.

23. Dressing Room

This large chamber has numerous closet rods and a clothesline strung across it that hold the costumes and uniforms worn by the gambling hall's employees. All servers, bartenders, cashiers, and floor personnel have a uniform. In addition, sometimes costumes are utilized by the Goblin's employees, such as for the tournament, or on the occasions when dancers or entertainers are hired. Among the articles hanging here are enough clothing to piece together 1d3 of each of the clothing outfits listed in the PH except for the cold weather outfit and the royal outfit.

24. Waiting Area

Two plush-but-worn suede couches sit before a roaring fire and low end table here. Guests who have business with Saul Vancaskerkin wait here, and he and his chief employees sometimes take their ease here as well. A bell pull in the southwest corner summons a server from area 15 to take complimentary drink orders.

25. Owner's Office

This large chamber holds a massive desk with a chair covered in the hide of a wyvern. Numerous paintings hang

on the walls, including one that shows a group of canine therianthropes gathered around a table playing a game of golem. A humidor on the desk holds a number of fine cigars (15 gp total) next to a mother-of-pearl snuffbox (30 gp). Several cushioned chairs sit before the desk itself for visitors. This chamber is Saul Vancaskerkin's office and the nerve center of the Gold Goblin. Only his most trusted colleagues or most distinguished guests are ever invited in here.

26. Records

This locked room holds cabinets stuffed with reams of paperwork. These are the accounting records for the Gold Goblin. Perusal reveals a struggle in recent years that picks up in profitability just a few months ago. A DC 22 Forgery check reveals that Vancaskerkin has cooked his books and actually, despite a constant influx of often-unexplainable revenue, the gambling hall is in a desperate spiral toward ruin. A secret door in the back can be found with a DC 22 Search check.

27. Dining Room

A fine table marred by a few nicks and scratches stands surrounded by eight chairs and surmounted by a trio of gold candlesticks (10 gp each). The walls of the chamber are covered in thick purple tapestries depicting gold-threaded nymphs frolicking in a silver-threaded forest (total value 200 gp). The tapestries completely cover the door to area 30 (DC 20 Spot or DC 10 Search check to locate) to prevent light from shining through into that chamber. Vancaskerkin and his management team take their meals here. PCs might be invited to join in these repasts if they become partners in the Gold Goblin.

28. Owner's Room

Despite his pretense of growing prosperity, Vancaskerkin's room is quite austere furnished with only a small cot, washstand with basin and razor, and a dull bronze mirror. The secret door can be found with a DC 22 Search check.

29. Private Apartment

Used alternatively by managers, important guests, and business partners, this comfortably furnished chamber is currently unoccupied. Three bunk beds are shoved against the walls next to a pair of wide wardrobes. A small table with three chairs is pushed into one corner, and two overstuffed chairs sit on a wolfskin rug before the hearth. The entrance to a small privy is covered by a thin curtain. PCs might be given these quarters as their own during "Shadow in the Sky." Vancaskerkin can provide up to four keys for the room's door.

30. Security Catwalks

These narrow, swaying, railed catwalks hang suspended by chains hooked to the ceiling 10 feet above. Immediately

below them is a layer of gauzy curtains serving as the false ceiling of area 2 below. Security personnel typically patrol these walks watching for cheaters.

31. Wine Cellar

This chamber holds large barrels of common port and rows of bottles holding wines and various other alcohols. The floor manager and head bartender hold keys to the door of this chamber along with Vancaskerkin (and, unbeknownst to them, Bojask). The room bears a subtle, musty odor underlying the spoiled, sweet stench of wine. Anyone making a DC 18 Knowledge (dungeoneering) recognizes it as the tell-tale stench of troglodytes.

32. Wrangler's Chamber

Bojask the beast-wrangler occupies this chamber when not overseeing the Octahedron fights. A portcullis controls access to the hallway beyond, and a small covered eye slit provides a view as well. The portcullis is kept in the down position.

33. The Red Room

This rough chamber has a short bar and a number of battered tables and chairs squeezed into it. The walls and floors are crudely painted a rusty red. This is the Gold Goblin's "underground" bar that services the Octahedron. A bartender and guard handle the crowds when the fighting pit is open. Drinks here cost double what they cost at the Goblin's Tankard.

34. Guard Alcove

Seemingly nothing more than a guard alcove when the pit fights are in session, there is actually a crudely disguised secret door at the back (DC 17 Search check).

35. Armory

Hanging from the walls of this hall are weapons used by Octahedron combatants intelligent enough to make use of them, as well as a variety of chains, harnesses, spiked collars, leashes, and other animal training equipment.

36. Infirmary

The room has sand and old bloodstains on the floor and a rough wooden table. A cabinet holds dirty bandages, needle and thread, and splinting materials. At the back is a single *potion of cure light wounds*, to be used only in emergencies when expensive animals are dying.

THE GOLD GOBLIN STAFF

In addition to the characters named in "Shadow in the Sky," a number of characters staff the Gold Goblin Gambling Hall. Aside from the named individuals, stats are suggested for the gaming hall's staff.

Saul Vancaskerkin: The mismanaging owner and proprietor of the Gold Goblin Gambling Hall. (NE male human rogue 4)

Larur Feldin: Floor manager and aide to Vancaskerkin. (LN male dwarf expert 3)

Bojask: Vancaskerkin's personal bodyguard, drunkard, and beast-keeper for the Octahedron fighting pit. (NE male human ranger 2)

Lixy Parmenter: An opportunistic girl who runs the hall's ghoullette game. (N female human rogue 2)

Beyar and Hans: Vancaskerkin's two most trusted guards, who keep watch over the vault and cashier's cage. (CN male human warrior 2)

Barmaids, Cooks, Other Staff: male or female human commoner 1.

Bartenders, Cashiers, Croupiers, and Dealers: Male or female human expert 1.

Guards: Use the Riddleport thug stats on page 9.



Bojask

37. Kennel

Five mangy dogs, two angry monkeys, and the house's current champion a fat, broken-tusked boar named Pigsaw are kept here in cramped cages filled with filthy straw. They serve as pit fighters in the Octahedron, the Gold Goblin's hidden blood sport arena. On rare occasions, actual monsters or intelligent creatures are chained here for use in special events, like goblins, zombies, or—rumors say—penniless gamblers.

38. Arena

Steeplly inclined bleachers and narrow stairs make up this crude arena that looks down into the Octahedron fighting pit 10 feet below. A short stone rail and iron bars running from the rail to the ceiling prevent any accidental entries into the contests. Two nights a week, this arena hosts a crowd of about 30 spectators with a 1 sp cover charge.

39. The Octahedron

This sand-floored fighting pit is known as the "The Octahedron." Buried beneath the sand at the center of the pit is a secret door set into the stone floor (DC 28 Search check to locate). In its center is a keyhole that fits the key worn on Vancaskerkin's arm stump (Open Lock DC 32). The caves beyond are described in Part Three of "Shadow in the Sky."



St. Caspieran's Salvation

Poverty is a pox that weaves disparity into crime and binds its would-be saviors to endless toil. Such is the way of things in Riddleport's notorious Splithog Alley, a piss-n-crumpets little neighborhood of crumbling stone tenements and gutter shanties. Beltias Kreun, better known as the Splithog Pauper, oversees the alley's criminal activities. He runs his operation out of St. Caspieran's Salvation, a paltry mission dedicated to Sarenrae filled with orphans, derelicts, and—through his own criminal efforts—his gang of swindlers and thugs. Beltias keeps a low profile—in fact, few would even recognize his face—though he remains ever present, disguised as a crippled beggar regularly seated in the mission chapel's last pew. Father Padrik, an ailing priest, runs the mission with the aid of his young caretaker Jhonas. Funded by an anonymous donor (secretly Beltias), the mission remains open 24 hours a day to better provide aid and services to the impoverished community.

“St. Caspieran's Salvation” is an urban adventure for four 1st-level characters. In addition to working as a stand-alone adventure, this Set Piece can be used to supplement this month's adventure path installment, “Shadow in the Sky,” or any other urban campaign.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

GMs who plan to involve their PCs in the misdeeds at St. Caspieran's might use any of the following plot hooks.

*Adventure hooks marked with asterisks might be especially useful to GMs running “Shadow in the Sky.”

Culling the Competition: Avery Slyeg controls most of Riddleport's black market and smuggling operations. Over the past month, his couriers have been getting jumped in the ghetto known as Splithog Alley. Rumor has it a gang led by a mysterious man known only as the Splithog Pauper runs the neighborhood's criminal operations. Slyeg hires the PCs

*Open your arms to the spark of morning, and in each dawn find renewed strength to carry the Light.
Open your arms to the fire of the noon, and in its brilliance cast all shadows from your soul.
Open your arms to the embers of the dusk, and let their warmth steel you through the cold of evening.
Open your arms in the ashes of night, and let the light of others fill your heart—yet even in darkness
know who you would embrace, lest vipers come to nest amid your arms.*

—From the *Book of Ashes*, autumnal holy text of Sarenrae

to dispose of these thugs, though he wants the mysterious Pauper alive as he intends to use the gang leader as an example to others considering muscling in on his turf.

The Goblin's Gold*: Larur Feldin, floor manager of the Gold Goblin, recently caught a two-bit thug, one Beltias Kreun, cheating at the hall's boulder tables. Larur had two of the gaming den's guards apprehend the man, but the slippery con managed to slither away before Feldin's men could give him the thrashing he deserves. Feldin asks the PCs to track Beltias to his den in Splithog Alley, get back the more than 100 gp in chips he managed to swindle, and make it clear that he's no longer welcome at the Gold Goblin.

Keelhaul's Revenge: Cap'n "Keelhaul" Kellion has offered a sizable bounty for the head of his former first mate, a mutinous bastard by the name of Beltias Kreun. According to the captain, Beltias made off with several of his prized sea maps. According to the crew, Beltias made off with Kellion's favorite Varisian dancing girl. Rumors have reached Kellion that Beltias hides out at a mission in Splithog Alley. The captain tells the PCs that although Beltias is a master of disguises, they can identify him by a prominent skull and crossbones branded on the inside of his left wrist.

Patricide*: Marzielle Ajuela, a fiery part-time barmaid at the Gold Goblin, grew up a bastard. Mocked as a child, she spent much of her youth training at swordplay. Now a grown woman, she seeks the father she never knew, knowing only the name: Beltias Kreun. Using her job to make several connections, she's recently heard that Beltias is destitute and lives in a flophouse in Splithog Alley. She seeks to hire adventures to flush him out, for she bears no love for the man and intends to gut him publicly.

ST. CASPIERIAN'S MISSION

Squatting halfway down this muck-smeared alley, sandwiched between a derelict wainwright's shop and a bakery, stands a dilapidated tenement. A crooked belltower rises from the building's rear, and a half-dozen grease-smeared, cracked, and boarded-over windows gaze out from walls that might have once been white. A small sign hangs over the building's battered oak front doors: "St. Caspieran's Salvation—All Welcome."

In one of the most downtrodden, crime-infested sections of Riddleport stands a small beacon of salvation for the



WHAT IS A SET PIECE?

This volume marks a new addition to the pages of *Pathfinder*: the Set Piece adventure. Set Pieces offer flexible, location-based adventures written to give you, the GM, everything you need to run a short adventure without the sprawling plots and backstory of an Adventure Path adventure. Should you ever need a specific locale to fill out a gray spot on Golarion's map or a gap in your own world, Set Pieces detail classic fantasy locations and are self-contained enough to easily insert into any campaign. Optionally, should you ever need a few more encounters, either to continue an awesome adventure or just to give your PCs a little more experience, each Set Piece shares a similar theme and setting with the month's adventure path entry and includes plot hooks to fit it into the ongoing campaign.

As Set Pieces give you a single location, GMs who enjoy indulging their own creativity, coming up with their own plots, and changing elements to suit their own campaigns have wide options to do so. And if you ever just want to roleplay without a huge investment, grab a few friends, flip to the characters in the back of the volume, read the Set Piece, and you're ready to go!

Modular, flexible, useful, and deadly, these Set Pieces are for you to use any way you want. We're excited to hear what you come up with, and hope you enjoy!

—Wes Schneider

beggars and drunks who line its gutters. Throughout the evening, candles light its grease-smeared windows as all manner of lost souls filter in and out of its faded doors.

In addition to the main entrance (area 1), along the north side arched double doors open into the chapel (area 5). Around back, a set of garden doors faces a small courtyard (area 2). While monks boarded the back doors in the garden years ago, the oak in the corner of the courtyard provides climbers easy access to the second-floor balcony.

Unless otherwise noted, rooms in St. Caspieran's Mission share several common features. The interior doors are soggy pinewood hung on simple iron hinges, having hardness 5 and 7 hit points. The exterior doors are solid oak, with hardness 5 and 15 hit points. Unless noted, all doors are unlocked. During the day, sunlight spills in through the mission's windows, providing bright illumination. At night, small hanging copper and glass candle lamps provide dim illumination.

Knuckles Redbone monitors the streets from the large windows in area 8. As soon as he notices armed strangers, he departs to alert his allies by ringing the mission bell in area 16. Any character who makes a DC 15 Spot check notes the watchman's suspicious departure.

WHERE'S BELTIAS?

Where the PCs encounter Beltias is largely up to the GM, depending on how he wants the adventure to unfold. The crime boss is perpetually disguised as a crippled beggar, so even if the PCs have a description of him, they have to make an opposed Spot check to see through the thief's disguise. If they don't know what Beltias looks like, they likely need to coax the information out of one of his thugs.

During the day, Beltias spends the majority of his time wandering the neighborhood or hanging out in area 5. If his men sound the alarm bell while he's out, he quickly returns to the mission to help deal with interlopers. At night, Beltias spends most of his time in his room (area 14) or conspiring with his men on the second floor.

Beltias takes note of strangers who don't seem to be beggars, constantly on the lookout for easy marks and potential rivals. If he realizes his enemies are on to him, he moves upstairs to command his thugs to take care of the intruders. Should the resulting fight go poorly and time allows, he retreats to his room to gather up his incriminating documents before escaping through the bell tower (area 17).

BELTIAS KREUN, THE SPLITHOG PAUPER CR 4

Male human rogue 4

NE Medium humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +7

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 15

(+2 armor, +3 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 24 (4d6+8)

Fort +3, **Ref** +8, **Will** +1

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 dagger +6 (1d4+1)

Ranged +1 dagger +8 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Upon spotting opponents, Beltias tries to get one of his gang members to lead them upstairs where his men can take care of them. If a battle where he's outnumbered seems inevitable, he drinks his *potion of shield of faith* +3.

During Combat If forced into battle, Beltias fights defensively and calls for his men to back him up.

Morale If reduced to less than 6 hit points, Beltias throws his thunderstones and flees for the front door or bell tower.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +11, Bluff +9, Climb +6, Disguise +11*, Hide +9, Knowledge (local) +8, Move Silently +9, Sleight of Hand +11, Spot +7, Tumble +9

Languages Common, Varisian

SQ trapfinding

Combat Gear *potion of shield of faith* +3, thunderstones (×4);

Other Gear +1 dagger, leather armor, *potion of spider climb*, masterwork thieves' tools, 178 gp, key to area 14

* Beltias receives a +2 circumstance bonus to his Disguise check when using his disguise kit in area 14.

1. Main Entrance

Flagstone steps climb to an open foyer hung with a pair of weather-beaten double doors. Two smaller doors flank the main entrance, both covered with graffiti. The southern door has a sign that reads "Flophouse: upstairs and take a left." The word "left" is crossed out, and scrawled next to it is the word "hike." The other door has a homemade sign that reads, "All rooms taken."

The double doors open into the lobby (area 3) while the side doors open to staircases leading to the flophouse. The signs refer to the rooms the mission offers to those in need of a safe place to crash. A mission layman named Geezer Pidge used to deal out rooms on a first-come, first-serve basis. Since going blind, he turned over the responsibility to a former mission orphan named Balston who's fallen in with the Pauper's Hands. Balston has filled the flophouse with guild members and hasn't given out a room in months. Instead, he posted the signs downstairs to dissuade room seekers. Locals refer anyone asking about a room to Balston (see area 9), who curtly turns them away or tells them to crash in the lobby. Persistent individuals pique the rogue's curiosity and at first opportunity, he relays his suspicions to Beltias.

2. Courtyard

Behind the mission sits an overgrown courtyard surrounded by a low stone wall. A path leads through a rusted iron gate and up to a pair of boarded doors. A lone oak stands in the corner.

The gate is rusted shut and those entering the courtyard do so by hopping over the wall. A DC 14 Search check reveals several footprints. A DC 18 Search check also notes that many lead toward the tree. Anyone inspecting the oak with a DC 18 Search check finds a hollow in its trunk, which local thieves use for drop-offs. Inside, three sacks contain an assortment of recently pilfered items. While most of them consist of pewter tableware and small



bric-a-brac, one sack holds a carefully wrapped spyglass. PCs can reach area 11 from here, scaling the tree with a DC 15 Climb check.

Development: Should anyone attempt to climb the tree, Garspheal Elstrice, Beltias's sniper, has a chance to notice them from area 12. He sends his companion Brandy to alert the rest of the gang while he takes potshots at strangers.

3. Lobby

The stench of mud and sweat mingles with the odor of vinegar and cabbage soup to pervade this entire lobby. Scratched tables and benches provide seating for resting vagrants, conversation, or eating simple meals. In the corner stagnates an old font with a dented tin cup tied to it by a frayed length of twine.

Long ago, missionaries gutted this lobby to accommodate the daily needs of running a large, open-door mission. At all hours, the mission swarms with an assortment of beggars, parishioners, orphans, and derelicts. They come for numerous reasons, both sincere and unscrupulous—searching for a hot meal, a bed, comfort, salvation, or maybe even a chance to turn a quick coin.

Use the table on page 68 to determine random encounters anywhere on the mission's first floor.

4. Soup Kitchen (EL 1)

Two stained rectory tables dominate this gutted hall, crowded around with a collection of mismatched and poorly repaired chairs. Large steel pots filled with thin gray stew weigh upon both tables, along with stacks of cracked wooden bowls.

Creatures: The haggish Mumsy Garrison runs the soup kitchen. While the poor come to eat her vile gruel, she's most notorious for brewing a potent hootch called "catblind." Mumsy is missing two front teeth and has fists like a gorilla, one of which she keeps clenched in a perpetual death-grip around a rolling pin. She knows little about any criminal goings on in the mission and cares even less, telling anyone who gives her sass to "Sod off!"

MUMSY GARRISON

CR 1/2

hp 5 (use the stats for a Riddleport thug on page 9)

OFFENSE

Melee rolling pin +2 (1d4+1 bludgeoning)

5. Chapel

The modest chapel has a high-arched ceiling, a plain wooden pulpit, and less than a dozen worn-out pews. Several tapestries hang along

UNFORTUNATES OF ST. CASPIERAN

d8 Mission Encounters

- 1 **Ukka the Fierce:** Once a raging warrior, Ukka's legs were crushed in a cart accident and had to be amputated when they turned gangrenous. Now he sits in a small cart and pushes himself about with his calloused hands.
- 2 **Sylee:** This orphan girl stares silently with fearful eyes, desperately clutching a dirty rag doll with a missing arm.
- 3 **Lil' Lirt:** A young boy tries to slit one of the PCs' pouches or pockets with a razor and make off with whatever's inside. If caught, he bawls for mercy.
- 4 **Father Padrick:** Father Padrick performs services in the chapel and consoles those who come to the mission for counsel. Except when Padrick rests or wishes to be alone in the cloisters, Jhonas accompanies him.
- 5 **Jhonas:** When away from Father Padrick's side, Jhonas walks the mission, talking to different parishioners and vagrants, trying to learn from their perspective as much as offer them his blessings.
- 6 **Pauper's Hand:** These troublesome thieves are always milling about. If one spots a PC, he hurries to alert the other guild members.
- 7 **Maydean:** Wrapped in a dull yellow blanket, a tired young woman with a bruised cheek sits in the front pew. The woman is a former prostitute who very recently escaped from an abusive pimp. She sits nervously attempting to blend in.
- 8 **Mika the Fallen:** This poor mad fellow walks around barefoot wearing nothing but old sackcloth. He believes he's a fallen angel sent to redeem himself by offering comfort to lost souls. To those he feels suffer most, he offers true salvation—walking with them up to a high rooftop and pushing them off.

the back walls, collages that depict a modest, hardworking life in a slum similar to the one just outside the mission's doors. At the rear of the chapel, high on the wall, hangs a large wooden holy symbol of Sarenrae studded with yellow and orange flecks of glass.

The chapel is dedicated to St. Caspieran, a former priest of Sarenrae who founded the mission decades ago as a home for decrepit sailors and those orphaned by pirates. For his efforts, locals recognize him as the patron of drunks and small children. Despite meager accommodations, scores of downtrodden folk occupy the pews here, all seemingly searching for salvation. Father Padrick spends much of his time running services or offering soul-saving advice. The remainder of the time he spends resting, leaving his faithful to spend their time sleeping, eating, or doing whatever helps to get them by.

For individual encounters, use the table above.

6. Foyer

This hallway separates the cloisters from the chapel. These doors require a DC 16 Open Lock check to open. Anyone breaking in trips Father Padrick's homemade alarm, a bucket of soured wine placed above the doorway that stains trespassers from head to toe and makes them reek of vinegar. Such trespassers are easily identified and must answer to Padrick and Jhonas's questioning or be banned from the mission.

PADRICK'S ALARM

CR 1/4

Type mechanical; Search DC 14; Disable Device DC 12

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset manual

Effect doused by falling bucket filled with reeking wine (Reflex DC 16 avoids).

7. Cloisters

A simple timber partition splits this room into two bedrooms, each furnished with a modest bed, a plain writing desk and chair, a wardrobe, and a bookcase. The room to the west hosts a collection of empty wine bottles, while the one to the east is fastidiously organized.

In the cloisters live Father Padrick (NG male human cleric 2), an elderly man with a hacking cough and arthritic joints, and his handsome young caretaker Jhonas Astreson (N male human expert 1). To ease his joint-pains, the old priest has taken to the bottle. Jhonas respects and loves the old man like a father, but—to his great disappointment—has proved unable to get his aging mentor to give up his addiction. As such, between Padrick declining health and Jhonas's frustration, both men fail to realize they're fostering Beltias's nest of hornets.

Padrick sleeps in the room to the west, and Jhonas to the east. Aside from a few holy texts dedicated to Sarenrae, two wooden holy symbols, and a book of Taldan poetry, there is little of any obvious interest here. A DC 16 Search check reveals a pouch of 16 silver pieces hidden under Padrick's bed—the priest's drinking money.

8. The Flophouse (EL 1)

The second floor of St. Caspieran's is now overrun by the petty gang of thieves known as the Pauper's Hand. For the most part, Beltias tries to keep his mens' activities covert. Therefore, anyone poking around places themselves at serious risk.

Creatures: Knuckles, the gang lookout, overlooks area 1 from the door-sized windows in this hall. If he hasn't already noticed the PCs, he's staring outside, bored.

In addition, Beltias's pet guard dog Fetch, a three-legged mutt with matted yellow fur and slight case of the mange, scampers about the flophouse hallways. Unfamiliar people and scents quickly set him off. Every round the dog spends barking, there's a 25% chance that one of Beltias's men comes to angrily silence the dog, possibly noticing the PCs.

KNUCKLES REDBONE

CR 1

hp 8 (use the stats for a Riddleport thief on page 9)

TACTICS

During Combat Knuckles fights defensively, looking for openings and opportunities to make sneak attacks. If he realizes he can't finish an opponent quickly, he immediately looks to escape.

Morale Knuckles flees if reduced to less than 3 hp.

FETCH

CR 1/3

hp 6 (MM 271)

9. The Dispatch and the Snitch (EL 1)

A copper lantern hangs from the ceiling of this windowless room. Aside from peeling paint, a worn pallet, and some threadbare woolen blankets, there is little of interest.

Two thugs, Balston Ungles and Madrat Mank, share occupation of this room. Balston has worked for the guild since he was a street orphan and is hardened far beyond his 20 years. Currently, he serves as the guild's information broker, obtaining information through a network of spies using Geezer Pidge's trained carrier pigeons (see area 9).

Madrat is the guild newbie and Balston makes him sleep on the floor. Unbeknownst to the weak-jawed thief, Beltias knows he's a snitch who sold him out to Avery Slyeg, and his days at St. Caspieran's are numbered.

BALSTON AND MADRAT

CR 1/2

hp 5 each (use the stats for a Riddleport thug on page 9)

TACTICS

During Combat Balston fights aggressively. Conversely, anyone making a DC 11 Sense Motive check observes that Madrat deliberately fights poorly, trying not to injure opponents.

Morale Balston flees if injured. If Madrat is injured, he pretends to die, though his overly dramatic performance is hardly believable.

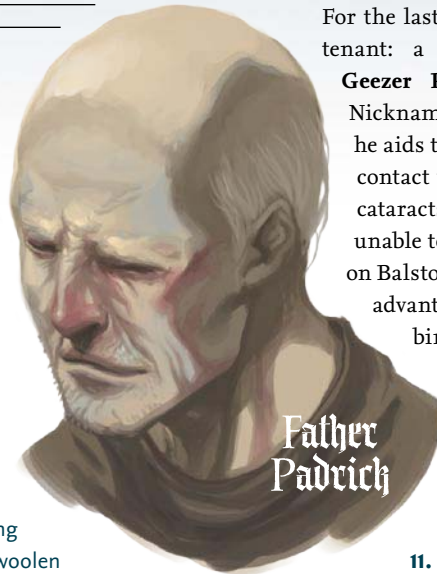
Developments: If captured, and confident that all other gang members are out of earshot, Madrat attempts to suck up to the PCs, offering them information in exchange for a chance to escape.

10. Geezer Pidge

This dank room stinks of mildew, and the only light creeps through a single grease-stained window. The room's simple furnishings include a worn mattress, some crate-furniture, and three rusted birdcages. Atop a makeshift desk sit some calligraphy pens, a ream of fine parchment, and a stand holding an oversized magnifying lens. A sack of birdseed rests beneath the cages.

For the last decade, this room has only had one tenant: a decrepit ex-longshoreman named **Geezer Pidge** (N male human expert 4). Nicknamed for the carrier pigeons he raises, he aids the mission by using his birds to keep contact with other churches. In recent years, cataracts have robbed Pidge of his vision. Now unable to read or write precise notes, he relies on Balston's aid. The manipulative rogue takes advantage of Pidge's friendship, using the birds to run messages for Beltias and allowing his fellow thieves access to the deck (area 11).

Pidge spends almost all his time here or on the back deck tending his pigeons.



11. Back Deck

A broad deck fenced in by rickety stiles badly in need of paint overlooks the surrounding city. Atop the deck stands a small shack-like structure caged with wooden slats and stained with white splotches of bird droppings. The sound of pigeons comes from the shack.

Above the chapel lies a deck accessible by Pidge's room where he keeps his birds. The courtyard oak's branches overhang the deck, allowing climbers access to the courtyard 16 feet below.

12. The Sadist and the Sniper (EL 2)

If this room's occupants are within, they keep the door jammed shut with a propped chair, requiring a DC 15 Strength check to force it open. Allow the room's occupants a Listen check to hear anyone fiddling with the door.

Kicked into one corner of this room is a pile of bedding and a lopsided chair covered with blood-spattered sheets. A disturbing collection of small blood-encrusted tools dangles from pegs on the nearby wall, including pliers, rusted garden shears, some chisels, a hammer, a corkscrew, a barber's straight razor, a fireplace poker, and three branding irons. A dull, slightly foggy mirror hangs mounted on the adjacent wall.

Creatures: Garspheel Elstrice and Brandy Nurrus share this room. Gars, the elf, serves as the gang's sniper. At Beltias's order, he watches the courtyard, handling problems before they occur. Brandy appeases his sadistic appetites as the guild's resident appearance changer. He breaks and resets noses, burns off scars with red-hot pokers, files teeth, and even cuts hair—all for the sake of helping infamous gang members alter their appearances. On the side, he poses as the mission's resident physician, gleefully stitching up light injuries, treating gangrene with amputation, applying leeches, and prescribing Mumsy Garrison's potent hooch as a pain medication.

BRANDY NURRUS

CR 1

hp 8 each (use the stats for a Riddleport thief on page 9)

TACTICS

Before Combat If he detects anyone fiddling with the doorknob, Brandy hides behind the door and prepares to sneak attack the first person who enters.

During Combat Brandy fights aggressively, doing his best to flank opponents and take sneak attacks.

Morale Brandy fights until his partner attempts to flee, then screams at him for being a coward while trying to flee himself. Otherwise, he fights to the death.

GARSPHEAL ELSTRICE

CR 1/2

NE male elf warrior 1

hp 6 (MM 102)

TACTICS

During Combat Since Gars favors his bow, he waits for Brandy to close on opponents and takes shots from behind.

Morale As soon as he takes damages, Gars attempts to flee.

13. The Scorpion Duel (EL 4)

Old mattresses stand propped against the walls, making room for a wide chalk circle smeared with black ichor. Around it, empty wine bottles and a half-eaten goose carcass litter the floor. In a corner at the back of the room, a rack of shelves holds four wooden boxes labeled "Spiker," "Jabs," "Bugsy," and "Pedros."

If Beltias hasn't called all his men to deal with the intruders, loud whoops rise from a pair of thugs crouched at the center of this room. Cursing and hooting, they place bets upon a pair of monstrous scorpions battling within the chalk circle.

Creatures: An unlikely pair of ruffians shares this room—a jumpy runt named Rasper Ellias and Badeye Rumblefist, a hulking lug of a half-orc with a hideously swollen left eye. When not running guild errands, these knuckleheaded crooks pass the time running bets on small fighting animals. Their latest acquisitions are four monstrous scorpions, which they store in the labeled boxes.

BADEYE RUMBLEFIST

CR 2

Male half-orc fighter 2

NE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +5; Senses Listen 0, Spot 0

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13

(+3 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 19 (2d10+4)

Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk morningstar +7 (1d8+4)

TACTICS

During Combat If intruded on by armed strangers, Badeye grabs one of the boxes in the back (holding either the scorpion Bugsy or Pedro) and hurls them at opponents. Next, he draws his morningstar and starts bashing. He begins using Power Attack, but scales back if he misses more than twice.

Morale Badeye fights to the death. If PCs are foolish enough to let him live, once he recuperates, he tries to hunt them down and kill them.

STATISTICS

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 11

Base Atk +2; Grp +5

Feats Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar)

Skills Intimidate +5

Languages Common, Orc

Gear mwk morningstar, studded leather, 8 sp

RASPER ELLIAS

CR 1

hp 8 (use the stats for a Riddleport thief on page 9)

TACTICS

During Combat Rasper attempts to Bluff his way into a sneak attack, acting like an inoffensive visitor.

Morale At the first opportunity, Rasper attempts to flee.

TINY MONSTROUS SCORPIONS (4)

CR 1/4

hp 1 each (MM 286)

TACTICS

During Combat Once free and not coerced into fighting one another, the scorpions sting any nearby creatures, whether they be criminals, PCs, or other scorpions. Randomly determine who the scorpions attack each turn.

14. The Pauper's Palace

A relatively new padlock keeps this room secure. It requires either the key held by Beltias or a DC 25 Open Lock check to bypass.

This room is remarkably clean for a flophouse, and the bed actually looks comfortable—or at least free of lice. Three wardrobe cases lie pushed beneath the bed.

Beltias, the Splithog Pauper, claims this room. He maintains several apartments throughout Splithog Alley, and only uses this one when he's trying to lay low. Of the cases beneath the bed, two hold plain street clothing, while the third contains a masterwork disguise kit, a mirror, and sealing wax. A DC 20 Search check reveals a secret compartment in the bottom hiding dozens of papers written in shorthand, two *potions of spider climb*, a *wand of shocking grasp* with 32 charges—a treasure recently pilfered from a local sorcerer he's yet to decide what to do with—and a pouch of flayleaf with a street value of 12 gp (a drug described in *Guide to Korvosa*). A DC 20 Decipher Script check identifies the papers as paid and unpaid IOUs made out to Beltias Kruen from various petty criminals and smugglers throughout Riddleport, effectively documenting his recent criminal doings.

15. Unused Rooms

These two rooms are empty except for stained mattresses and burnt-out candles. They are used by members of Beltias's gang currently out running rackets.

16. Lower Bell Tower

A sign on the door to this room reads "Mission Bell."

This small, octagonal room has open beams, unfinished walls, and raw floorboards. The room is quite drafty, with scatterings of rat droppings about the corners. Set into the studs of the west wall a crudely spaced ladder leads up to the belfry.

This drafty chamber rises 18 feet to a loft. High above, the mission's copper bell hangs from a thick beam. A rope pull cord allows the bell to be rung from here.

Treasure: A DC 20 Search check reveals a secret cache in the east wall where the guild hides a sizable store of stolen goods and money. The cache contains 32 gp, 256 sp, 400 cp, a quartz short sword pommel (30 gp), a silver anklet chain (22 gp), a signet ring of Korvosa's Ornelos family (5 gp), an ornate brass candelabra (15 gp), a bronze knocker in the shape of a dolphin (10 gp), a folding marlin spike (2 gp), a set of sailing charts in a leather tube (250 gp), and an *anchor feather token*. If the PCs are searching for something Beltias stole—whether it be sea charts or gambling chits—they find it here.

15. The Upper Bell Tower

A bell riddled with faint cracks hangs within this drafty loft, a rope pull cord dangling through a hole in the floor allowing the bell to be rung from below. Slatted arches in the tower's walls allow sound to escape, while keeping most of the harsh weather out. The waxy stumps of several candles, a coil of rope, and a metal grapnel lie discarded upon the floor.

Beltias leaves a 50-foot coil of rope and grappling hook here in case of emergencies. A DC 12 Strength check shatters the wooden slats covering the arches. Once removed, someone can easily use the rope to descend into the courtyard below.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure wraps up when the PCs have dealt with Beltias Kreun, either by slaying the gang leader, running he and his men out of the mission, or stealing back his pilfered goods. If the PCs just dispatch Beltias, over the next week his men gradually drift away, leaving the mission in peace. If questioned on the matter, both Father Padrick and Jhonas are shocked to hear about the vipers in their midst, but prove most thankful to the PCs for running them out. Although they can't reward the PCs monetarily, Father Padrick offers to heal and shelter them to the best of his ability should they ever have need.

Beltias
Kreun





FEAR IN A HANDFUL OF RUST

22 Lamashan, 4707 AR

Never let it be said that we Pathfinders are an impractical lot. Charmed and cursed, often at the same stroke—yes. Dropped time and again into unfortunate situations—sure. But if I were to write my own epitaph (and this journal might be just that), it would read, *He followed his luck, and did what he had to.*

The streets thickened with midday crowds as I approached the gates of Grask Uldeth's palace. After that confusing moment in which my wayfinder had spun free in the Plaza of the Sky, only to end up pointing straight down, I had quickly concluded that my course now required me to find a way beneath the city proper, perhaps into the Darklands themselves. The rumor mill might grind slow, but it grinds fine, and after a few days of asking questions I got what might be the best tip and the worst news of this whole adventure—that, in all of Urgir, the only known remaining entrance to the Darklands opened beneath the orc chieftain's palace itself. It had taken several barrels of pricey rotgut and a few favors for a wealthy orc war-machine

supplier to glean even that much. (The favors I'll leave out for the time being, save to say that stealing from the worshipers of Rovagug is not something I'd recommend for those who value their skins.)

Uldeth's palace still showed its dwarven origin. Its vaulting walls, with barred windows and arrow-notch defense points, rose above the filthy chattering throng of orcs, humans and slaves in the creeping half-light of Urgir. Its torch-burnt facade and its ragged banners, fastened by brass rings to the palace's turrets with war-rhino horns, spoke to its new ownership, and suggested an orc's idea of grandeur. The orc weapon-monger had told me that I should arrive at midday, and that an escort would announce itself.

Was that ever an understatement! I had stood by the palace gate for no more than a minute when the great doors cracked apart and brought me face to face with an immense, hideous half-orc wearing the trappings of the sadistic engineers known as Steel Eaters, his nose and

ears scarred down to nubs and his one remaining eye as big as the palm of my hand. I'd met friendlier faces in the killing fields of the orc kresk.

"In the name of His Gruesomeness and His Benevolence, the Great Chieftain Grask Uldeth," rumbled the massive orc, somewhat mechanically, "whose nails run red with gore, whose boots we are not worthy of being trod beneath, whose piss is our wine, I bid you welcome."

He paused. My bones were still rattling from the depth and rumble of his voice; my hair was still curling from his breath. The huge orc was flanked by two others. With a mostly steady hand, I drew out my token.

"Pinkskin!" the huge orc boomed. "Urgir is a welcoming city." The words must have sounded strange, even to him. Uldeth was clearly ordering his soldiers to try their best. "Uldeth hears all, and knows of your coming."

"—Yes?" I managed.

"I bid you *welcome*. Follow."

He followed his luck, and did what he had to. A surreptitious glance told me my wayfinder still pointed straight down.

How had I gotten here? Orcs as a race are not exactly known for observation of decorum, but I still could hardly believe the good fortune provided by my bad manners. I was getting an audience simply by showing up.

As we followed a wide torchlit corridor into the palace, I studied the architecture. The dwarves who had built this palace and fought to the death to defend it knew what they were doing, no question. The masonry—even where smeared with filth or blackened with lamp oil—was faultless, the vaults worked with intricate designs only half-effaced by the chisels of the latest residents. Scrawled upon the walls, at something closer to orc height, were pictographs of great orc victories and slaughters, done with cave-painting energy and crudeness. The earth under the palace trembled once in one of the brief tremors I was already growing used to, a grind and rattle at the edge of hearing, but the masonry didn't budge. Where torches and lamps had sputtered out in the long palace corridors, the big orc steered us through passages of treacherous darkness, where I knew which way to step only by the puffing and gurgling of the guards' breath. I was briefly sorry I'd left Brunoe behind, but the timid merchant was undoubtedly happier this way.

A noise I first took for my pulse slowly mounted, until I realized I was hearing drums. One more sharp turn and I saw we had arrived at Uldeth's throne room.

A dank smell of burning peat filled my lungs. A vaulted ceiling covered with a dwarven mosaic soared over the hall; smoke-fogged bay windows admitted a weak, milky light, gleaming over a hall of crude gold and iron statues of massive orc warriors. In the room's corners, torches burnt against the daylight, and orcs beat wide drums slowly

with mallets made from awfully human-sized femurs. A straight row of hulking orc guards, all bearing the black fist emblem of the Empty Hand tribe, stood at attention.

Before me stood a tremendous orc clad in black and violet, his smile a knife wound across his face.

I gaped. Next to him was a tall, severe man, well dressed and with straight black hair that hung to his shoulders. At his belt hung an ornate rapier, and a large leather-bound tome under one arm identified him as easily as the ink staining his fingers

The Pathfinder.

The orc captain growled and knelt, like a tree bending. His two guards knelt beside him with a scrape of armor. The regal orc motioned, and with a perfect smile, the human stepped forward and bowed. "On behalf of the benevolent chieftain of Urgir, Grask Uldeth, and borne forward by the honorable Will of the Ten, I, Arnois Belzig, Pathfinder and humble advisor and historian to the Lord of Urgir, welcome you."

It's been a long time. I struggled for a moment to remember the formal greetings between Pathfinders. The three orcs around me remained stooped in a bow. "For the glory of the Pathfinders, the Will of Ten, and the memory of Durvin Gest," I said, "I, Eando Kline, thank you for your welcome."

I turned to the huge orc that must be Grask Uldeth and gave my deepest bow. "Benevolent Lord of Urgir, I thank you for your welcome."

Uldeth nodded. He gave another wave. As silently as they could manage, the three guards rose and withdrew, shuffling backward out the door of the throne room. It shut with a disturbingly final boom.

I rose. How to proceed? Belzig watched me, his expression cool.

"My lord," I said to Uldeth, "thank you for sparing the time to see a Pathfinder."

The orc smiled. I could see his teeth were white—the first white teeth I'd ever seen in an orc's head. "I have found my relationships with your society... immensely beneficial," he said in a growl. Then he turned suddenly and walked away, stopping at an elaborately patterned table with legs made of worked bone. He mounted two steps to a chair set on a dais before it, leaving me standing there below him. Belzig stood beside his chieftain. They waited. After a long moment I broke the silence.

"My lord," I began. "Might I ask that our audience—" I looked around the chamber, then at Belzig, who smiled faintly, "be private? For my situation—"

The orc lifted his hand, cutting me off. He rumbled, "Grask Uldeth strives to make this city welcoming to all. Secrets among its members benefit no one." I winced. "In the last week, several of Rovagug's faithful who opposed

an arrangement with the Steel Eaters were robbed. Now a strange human asks for an audience, through one of the weaponsmiths' key traders." Uldeth looked at me. "Perhaps this new human is capable of more than he appears. I don't know. But," and here his voice lowered, "I know he has a secret." Uldeth's teeth sparkled in the torchlight. "Urgir does not care for secrets."

Uldeth waved, indicating his throne-room guards, still at attention with a discipline alien to their race. "Secrets are the privilege of rule, and Grask Uldeth confers with only one human alone." Belzig bowed again. With our great stores of knowledge and our gift for unlocking secrets, Pathfinders make great assets to kings, chieftains, and lords—but to be kept as a pet has always seemed to me completely at odds with the heart of our trade. I despised this sycophant already.

"Now," the orc lord said, settling back in his chair, "what does this human ask of the Empty Hand?"

I took a deep breath. "Lord Uldeth," I began. "I have been tasked with following certain visions granted to me by unknown forces, forces which have guided me here, and now direct me to descend beneath the city. As the only remaining entrance to the world below lies under your palace, I must fall on your benevolence. I ask no assistance, only a lack of hindrance. In the interest of discovery and the friendship of the Pathfinder Society, will you grant me passage?"

Neither Belzig nor the orc chieftain budged for a moment. The only sound was the crackle of the burning torches. In their absolute stillness, I sensed a communication I couldn't decipher. Then the orc, without turning to his advisor, shook his head slightly. "My chronicler and I," the orc lord growled, "will discuss this." Belzig nodded, smooth as butter. "And you, Pathfinder, will wait here."

He stepped down from his dais and swept out of the room to a small antechamber, Belzig at his side. At his exit, the drummers in the corner beat out a flourish with their bone mallets. Two of the unsettlingly silent guards suddenly appeared on either side of me.

I waited.

Suddenly the door to the antechamber banged open. "Eando Kline!" Belzig called out. I turned to look. A smile, all simple generosity, covered the Taldane's face. "Great news."

Grask Uldeth lumbered back into the room. The drummers beat and the orc guards behind me stiffened.

"Pathfinder Eando Kline," he grunted, "what is it that you expect to find in the Darklands?"

I answered honestly. "I have no idea, Lord."

He laughed—a sound like a millwheel grinding sand—and said, "You're wiser not to speak. Even if you knew, you would keep your own counsel."

"As you say, Lord."

"Very well." He clapped his hands together, an unsettlingly human gesture. "My shamans of the Rough Beast will open the way to the city's foundations, and you'll have your admittance. The condition is thus: Grask Uldeth leads an open city, one welcoming to all. You enter this portal *only* because of this generosity. Spread word of my gesture."

I bowed my assent, and he chuckled again.

"Pray you find what you seek quickly, pinkskin. The ways beneath were sealed with good reason, and by those who once called them home. I expect you to return shortly, or not at all." He waved to Belzig.

"Take him there."

Like the lees spilling from a tipped wine cask, the bricks of the chamber's floor slid back into place over my head. I murmured a few words of a light spell, and a globular glow gathered a few feet before me and shone down the mildewed steps—frail light at first, then rising as the torchlight from the chamber above was blocked out. I heard Belzig call out, "Farewell, comrade!" and the grim voices of the Rovagug shamans completing their spell, but I was already hurrying down the steps, the glow following me and my wayfinder pointing east once more.

The steps went on and on. I felt—and most assuredly was—hundreds of miles from anything safe, or familiar. My stomach rose as I descended: the air here was horrible, a suffocatingly close, sweaty smell of mold, dank water, and years. Condensation sweated from the dwarven runes carved into the stone walls, slick with fungus and dotted here and there with unfamiliar little clawed footprints. On the surface, the noises and quakes of the city settling were faint and occasional, but in the dungeons it was a near-continuous groan and rumble, sometimes terrifyingly amplified by chambers out of sight, punctuated by squeaks and scrapes like someone shaking rusty chainmail.

Then, abruptly, I was out of stairs. The passage below my feet was blocked by a rough stretch of gray-brown mortar, much newer than what it sealed and covered in dust and rubble.

A dwarven defensive move? An attempt by the orcs to prevent the ascendance of further subterranean denizens? Only the gods know, I suppose. With a wave of my hand, I called my globe of light forward and slid it over the surface. Near the ceiling, a tunnel two and a half feet wide opened out. The detritus on the floor had undoubtedly been deposited there when the tunnel above was excavated—though by what, I tried not to guess.

I looked back the way I came. Stairs up into darkness. I tested the walls—plenty of space to get a hold between the blocks of stone. I looked up once more. My globe of light

cast a glow deep into the tunnel's arc. Fortunately, I'm no stranger to tight squeezes.

It takes an awfully proud Pathfinder not to talk to himself at certain lonely stretches of his journeys. "Eando," I said softly to myself, dragging ahead on my elbows, doing my best to arch my body over the droppings scattered across the tunnel floor, my light always a few feet ahead of me, my back half feeling horribly exposed. "Eando," I said, "when you find what this wayfinder is leading you to, you'll take a little break. Perhaps your next adventure will be someplace warm. Warm and flat. Warm and flat and sunny."

After minutes—or hours?—I tried another deal. "Eando, if this tunnel doesn't end in five hundred breaths, you'll turn around and shuffle backward and—"

And then I was tumbling headfirst through the air, my globe of light spilling after me, skidding down a long earthen wall. Foul air whistled by me and I reached for purchase, any purchase, my heart thudding in my mouth, beginning the words of the same levitation spell that had saved me and Joskan at the dragon mountain.

I didn't finish them. My plunge through the air stopped abruptly—I bounced hard on nothing, struck the wall, then swung, head down, as if at the limit of a rope. My globe of light shot ahead, and I saw for a moment forty feet beneath me a long winding platform carved out of living rock, facing into the measureless vault's hungry black.

Then I turned around, twisting in the air, to see what had caught me.

Thrust out from a crack in the wall, an orange, insectile monster as big as a man was gently sniffing the toes of my boots. Its ropy, red-furred antennae and front legs wound tight around my ankles, its hind limbs and strange, fan-shaped tail braced in the crack of the wall from which it had lunged. Wet eyes looked me over; foul fly-like mandibles worked the air.

To catch me, the beast must have been incredibly fast—must, indeed, have smelled me approaching this vault through the tunnel many paces before I tumbled in.

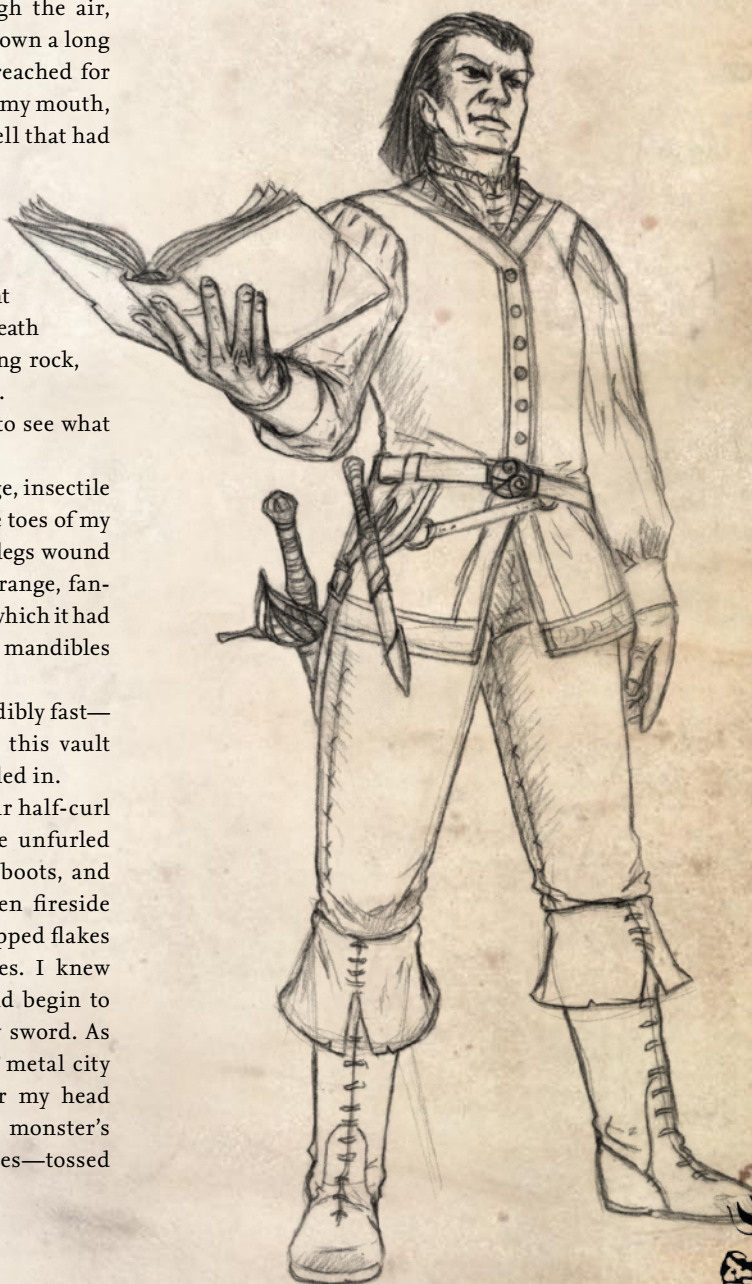
My stomach muscles began to cramp in their half-curl as the monster's coiling prehensile antennae unfurled and brushed the steel-reinforced toes of my boots, and suddenly I recognized the beast from a dozen fireside tales. The metal hissed and sputtered and dropped flakes of burnt rust. Its mouth closed over my toes. I knew I only had a second before the creature would begin to sniff along the rest of my body and smell my sword. As carefully and smoothly as I could, I drew my metal city token from around my throat, lifted it over my head and—just as the scorching secretion of the monster's antennae ate through the steel of my boot-toes—tossed

the token down my body, up into the air, and directly in front of the monster's face.

With a snuffle, front legs still fast around my ankles, it lunged its head forward, the armor plating down its back shifting, exposing the bare length of its neck just for a moment. It was all I needed. With a flash, I drew my sword and, just as its proboscises caught my token in mid-air, cut its head cleanly off. Its grip went slack, and I fell.

Plummeting through the dark, I shouted my levitation spell and was arrested in my plunge once again as the corpse tumbled past. Below, the rust monster's corpse missed the platform and spun off into the dark; its

What kind of Pathfinder plays lapdog to an orc?



head struck the stone beneath and rolled into a corner. Swimming through the air slightly, I guided myself to the wide ledge. As my feet touched the solidity of the living stone, I shut my eyes.

It took me a minute to get my pounding heart under control. When I stood, pulling myself up on the fence of short stone columns along the platform's edge, my toes scraped the bare ground where the monster had eaten through my boots' steel and gnawed the leather.

Where was I? Clearly, over an immense chasm. Who knew how far down it went, or what waited at the bottom? Golarion has many secret places, a few of which I'm unashamed to leave unexplored.

I looked up. I knew I was still on Urgir's side of this chasm, but as far as I could see above me rose walls of damp earth and stone. Down the length of the platform squatted hulking dwarf monuments, much abused by time. Every scrap of decorative metal fixed in the statuary on this side of the rift had been eaten clean out, and in places the features of the statues were corroded and scraped away as if by a serrated knife. Arching above me, huge columns and buttresses of masonry that looked to have once been steel-reinforced cracked and strained, and in a few places great steel supports hung like stalactites, rusted completely away at head height, no doubt by a rust monster who didn't bother thinking ahead. Suddenly everything clicked into place—the tremors, the sealing of the tunnels—and I wondered how much longer Urgir had before its final supports were consumed and the great city sank into the earth. The dead eyes in the head of the rust monster I'd slain glowed with a mischievous light.

A faint repetitive chittering filled the air above me, then, far off, a long rumble that shook the stones. Another joist, somewhere, sagging at its base. I suddenly wondered how close the closest rust monster was, and whether they all smelled the sword I thought momentarily of drawing. I thought of the scraped-out faces and decorations of the statues, and concluded that it might be the last bit of scavenge-worthy metal anywhere close by.

I was only half-right. Opposite me, perhaps eighty feet across the measureless depth of the chasm and shining in the glow of my light, there was another long platform of worked stone. On and around this one, however, the dwarf statues were untouched. Gold belts, oversized steel weapons, and ornate ceremonial armor were still set in the living rock and reflecting the feeble glow of my light. And in the center, directly across from me, stood two massive metal doors.

Of course. It must have been an easy thing for a rust monster to burrow through loose mortar and earth that formed the walls of this chasm and the sections above, but digging out dwarven stonework or crawling headfirst down the sheer walls must be another matter.

I hope I never know what it's like to be that hungry, that close to a meal you can never touch.

Feeling that the doors' position across from me was too convenient, I studied the wall behind me and my suspicions were immediately rewarded. Next to the hole I'd emerged from, the stone of the wall changed shape, becoming one long, narrow slab that stretched into the darkness above, flanked by two similarly thick and boxy pillars. Across its surface, in dwarven runes several inches high that glowed faintly, a verse was scrawled. Though the stout folks' tongue has never been my strongest, I set to work immediately, and after a grueling hour sat back and read the poem aloud.

*The way is barred, the way is barred,
But dwarven folk have traveled hard,
And ask assistance, door, of you,
That you might let these travelers through.*

The stones heard. With a deep rumble and a squeal of protest, the long slab shuddered and began to descend out from the wall, an entire chunk of the ledge rotating to become a curved support structure for the emerging drawbridge. As I scrambled out of the way, I noted that the thick chains guiding the bridge were fed out from a previously concealed opening in the boxy pillars. Even if the rust monsters had smelled them, they must not have been able to break through their monolithic stone housings. The great drawbridge drew down slowly, parting the dark of the chasm like the hand of a clock, then settled with a heavy boom on the far side before the great steel doors.

I have to admit, I almost skipped across.

The ancient double doors loomed over me, twenty feet high and fifteen wide. In the flicker of my light, I saw magnificent figures decorating the ornate steel: mighty-limbed dwarven warriors doing battle with orcs while dwarven laborers erected towering halls and keeps in vast caverns. Strange locking mechanisms stood to either side of the vault doors, and at the doors' center, a clockwork mechanism of tiny gears encased in some sort of clear crystal barred the portal from opening.

I checked the wayfinder once more. Sure enough, it pointed straight through the doors.

I looked again at the mechanism, which I now saw was covered with concentric rings of tiny runes. I sighed and prepared myself for another long translation session. Then, on a whim, I recited the poem from the drawbridge.

Nothing happened at first. Then one tiny gear spun in a tight circle inside the mechanism, faster and faster. Another followed it, and another. Hairline cracks ran across the case, and, with a crunch, the whole mechanism collapsed on itself. To either side, the massive bolts still held the portal firm.

Oops.

I admit, I probably shouldn't have been so hasty: it's only common sense that the key to one passage might bar another. But, common sense or not, it meant I was out of ideas.

Or was I? As if on cue, the whole cavern rumbled again. And suddenly, I knew who could help me.

I always say, until you're hanging upside down over an infinite chasm thanks to the good graces of a savage orc lord, being stalked by monsters who want to eat your only weapon, you're not really having an adventure.

Dangling by a rope harness around my waist, I was lucky that the drawbridge chain gave a scream of tearing metal before giving way completely, allowing me time to jerk my battered metal file back from the long cut I'd made. As I kicked off and swung out of the way, the last link of the mighty chain snapped. The linked iron plunged through the dark, limp as a dead serpent, whizzing down the rope I'd already threaded through it until, with an ear-splitting clatter, it came to rest on the platform below. The second chain still fixed on the bridge groaned once like a wounded aurochs but held.

I waited just a second, then rappelled down the wall, touching down softly on the balcony-turned-bridge, and I recovered my rope. With a massive effort, I hauled at the chain until it stretched straight down the bridge's length,

a trail leading from the base near where I'd entered to the doors, reflecting all the while that this—more than treasure, more even than glory—was why I'd rather be a Pathfinder than a merchant. A merchant pays his bills and stocks his shelves. A Pathfinder crosses chasms and wrangles monsters, and does it with no one but maybe Desna looking out for him. Any day you outsmart a rival, you honor yourself. Any day you outsmart nature, you honor your profession. The chain in place, I scampered back across the bridge, used rope and pitons to haul myself up to a perch above the doors, and settled in to watch.

"Suppertime!" I hollered out into the dark. "Come and get it."

I didn't wait long. It may have taken the rust monsters a century to figure out that they couldn't cross the chasm, but it took perhaps five minutes for one creature to smell metal on the balcony and creep out to see what it could find. Delicately, almost reverently, the creature brushed the farthest link with its feathered antennae, trembling with excitement. Then it pounced, and with the scuttling of tiny feet raced forward, following the ferrous buffet toward me and the doors at top speed. I worried momentarily if I were in danger.

I needn't have worried. For the creature, it was as if I had never existed. In my frail light, the vault doors with their snapped mechanism glowed, as friendly as a campfire. Gibbering, the thing sprang, tenacious claws digging into the frame, feathered antennae working in a blur as it cavorted and gobbled. Below me, the dwarven metalwork gave way as the grand graven images of warriors and monsters sighed and bubbled. The carved runes blurred into illegibility, the rust spread, and then, with a clang, the doors collapsed open, kicking up white dust and pitching the creature, in its throes of appetite, forward face-first into its meal.

As lightly as I could, I dropped down behind it, sword drawn. "Thank you very much, friend," I said politely, then chopped its head off. Call me unsentimental, but I think rust monsters have played their part in this journey.

Beyond the doors' corroded frame, the stygian mouth of the tunnel yawned open. *This just keeps getting better*, I thought. Waving my light a few feet ahead of me, I took my first step into the Darklands.



The source of Urgan's strange tremors.



Bestiary

It's back to low-level adventuring in this month's entry for the *Pathfinder* Bestiary. Levels 1 to 3 don't need to be all about fighting kobolds and stomping dire rats, as several of these low-CR menaces prove. PCs who wander off the beaten path in Riddleport or venture into (or under) the Varisian wildernesses might learn from creatures like swamp barracuda, monstrous cockroaches, and fungal crawlers just how deadly starting an adventuring career can be.

WANDERING MONSTERS

Riddleport isn't a place for the unwary. Thieves, thugs, pickpockets, prostitutes, con artists, card sharks, pirates, press gangs, cyphermages, cultists, beggars, bullies, shysters, schemers, lepers, outcasts, addicts, exiles, and evildoers of all sorts infest the lawless city, and those who don't work hard to guard their life all too often lose it.

And that's typically just at the hands of the city's so-called civilized occupants. All manner of beasts and monsters scrape a savage life among the shadows and beneath the city's stone. As any Riddleport resident can tell you, freedom and opportunity don't come without a price.

The following descriptions present encounters in Riddleport in more detail. Several of these encounters might or might not require stats for the NPCs involved. Should you require them, in the cases of the con artist, leper, pickpocket, prostitute, and zealous merchant, use the Riddleport thief stat block on page 9. For drunkards, pirates, press gangs, and thugs, use the Riddleport thug stat block, also on page 9.

Con Artist: A scoundrel selling fake magic items, an honest-looking "father" hoping to buy back his enslaved, fictitious daughter, or a gambler running a fixed game targets the PCs, seeking to scam them out of some gold.

"It was right there, by the well. It sounded like a 'Splorch.'"

"More of a 'Blomph,' actually."

"Are you sure it wasn't just water?"

"Yes! Water doesn't go 'Splorch.'"

"Blomph."

"Whatever! It didn't sound like water."

"Well, what else could it be... Think somebody fell down there?"

"Hum. No, not really. But we should check."

"How? I can't see down that far. This ol' well goes pretty deep."

"Oh, I know!—Ahem—HULLOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!"

—Verniya Klamer, Maix Vivermer, Jasmine Tunhold, First Victims of the Dunholme Doom

Should they get involved, they'll have to make a few high Sense Motive or Spot checks to avoid getting taken for a few coins. This is the perfect chance for quick-handed and theatrically minded GMs to run a game of Three-Card Monte or Find the Pea.

Drunkards: A raucously singing group of stumbling pirates, an angry wino looking for a brawl, or a jovial but down-on-his-luck drunk just looking for a free drink stumbles into the PCs. This encounter could be anything from a one-sided fight to a lesson in how annoying and persistent alcohol can make an NPC.

Leper: An outcast begging for alms, a Korvosan plague victim spreading his terrible illness, or a leper hiding in the shadows, this encounter tests the PCs' charity and Fortitude saves. See *Pathfinder* #8 for details on Leprosy, Korvosan's recent blood veil outbreak, and a number of other diseases.

Pickpocket: A single thief, criminal team, or gang of waifs make a Sleight of Hand check to nab something off a PC while he's distracted. Although catching the cutpurse might save the PC a few gold or a favorite item, in Riddleport it's wholly possible the thief needs the object much more than the PC.

Pirates: A single rowdy scallywag or whole crew on shore leave notice the PCs. Whether they're looking for a brawl, a drinking buddy, or a new addition to their crew is up to the GM. While encountering a raucous gang of pirates might play out little differently than a battle with a gang of thugs, things could totally change when the sea rats' captain shows up with the rest of his cut-throat crew.

Press Gangers: A gang of burly sailors decides the PCs would make perfect additions to their captain's crew and attempts to drag one or two of them back to their ship by force. Should a lone PC get caught unaware, it's entirely possible that he wakes up in the brig or, even worse, on a ship already put out to sea!

Prostitute: One of the PCs catches a persistent streetwalker's eye. The slums of Riddleport are an unlikely place to find beauty, though, and gallant ideals rarely sit well with greedy pimps. As many in the city's

RIDDLEPORT RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d%	Creature	Avg. EL	Source
1–3	1 monkey	1/6	MM 276
4–7	1 con artist	1/2	see description
8–9	1 leper	1/2	see description
10–15	1 pickpocket	1/2	see description
16–22	1 prostitute	1/2	see description
23–27	1 zealous merchant	1/2	see description
28–35	1d4 drunkards	1	see description
36–37	1 goblin snake	1	<i>Pathfinder</i> #1
38–39	1 reefclaw	1	<i>Pathfinder</i> #7
40–44	1 Small viper	1	MM 279
45–50	1d4 Small monstrous centipedes	1	MM 276
51–56	1d4 stirges	1	MM 276
57–64	1d6 stray dogs	1	MM 271
65–72	1d4 thugs	1	see description
73–74	1d4 goblin dogs	2	<i>Pathfinder</i> #1
75–78	1d6 monstrous cockroaches	2	<i>Pathfinder</i> #13
79–84	1d8 pirates	2	see description
85–88	1d8 press gangers	2	see description
89–91	1 rat swarm	2	MM 239
92–94	1 swamp barracuda	2	<i>Pathfinder</i> #13
95–96	1 wererat	2	MM 171
97–100	1d4 cockroach swarms	3	<i>Pathfinder</i> #13

"hospitality" industry directly serve the House of the Silken Veil, Riddleport's temple of Calistria, such an encounter might also be a conflict between opposing faiths, or a way for the temple's criminal leader, Shorafa Pamodae, to find out more about the PCs.

Thugs: A lone tough or group of mashers attempts to kidnap or shake down a PC. Only brute force can drive the brute off.

Zealous Merchant: A fast-talking vendor or an excessively persistent foreign haggler latches onto a PC, eager to sell his wares and unwilling to take no for an answer.



DARKLANDS SENTINEL

A small stalactite hangs from the cavern ceiling, seemingly suffused with strange crystalline veins and nodules. Without warning, its crystalline elements begin glowing faintly and crackling with barely restrained energy.

DARKLANDS SENTINEL

CR 2

Always N Small magical beast

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15
(+1 Dex, +4 natural, +1 size)

hp 16 (3d10)

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

Defensive Abilities no breath; **Immune** electricity

OFFENSE

Spd 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee bite +5 (1d4+1)

Ranged shocking arc +4 (1d6 electricity)

Special Attacks flare, shocking arc

TACTICS

During Combat When a Darklands sentinel detects the presence of a creature not of its species, it uses its flare as an alarm. It then uses its shocking arc attack against the closest interloper.

Morale Darklands sentinels fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 10, **Con** 11, **Int** 4, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +3; **Grp** 0

Feats Alertness

Skills Climb +9, Hide +4 (+12 in caverns), Listen +5, Spot +5

ECOLOGY

Environment any underground

Organization solitary or cluster (2–8)

Treasure none

Advancement 3–4 HD (Small), 5–6 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Flare (Su) As a standard action once every 1d4 rounds, a Darklands sentinel can release a flare of dazzling light. This burst of light illuminates a 30-foot radius area for a split second. Any creature within this area must make a DC 11 Fortitude save or be dazzled for 1d6 rounds. Sightless creatures, as well as creatures already dazzled, are not affected by the light burst. Darklands sentinels are immune to the flares of their own kind. The save DC is Constitution-based.

No Breath (Ex) While a Darklands sentinel does actually breathe, it uses little oxygen and is capable of storing an adequate supply in its body to last it for months at a time. As a result, a Darklands sentinel is immune to the effects of harmful vapors (such as *cloudkill* spells) and cannot suffocate or drown.

Shocking Arc (Su) As a standard action, a Darklands sentinel can launch an arc of electricity up to 30 feet long as a ranged touch attack. Any creature struck by this attack takes 1d6 points of electricity damage. A Darklands sentinel receives a +3 circumstance bonus on attack roll against targets wearing metal armor, made out of metal, or carrying a large amount of metal.

While underwater, a Darklands sentinel's shocking arc acts instead as a burst of electricity. All creatures within 5 feet of the creature must make a DC 11 Reflex save or take 1d6 points of electricity damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills Darklands sentinels have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. They also gain a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks when in cavernous terrains.

In the depths of the Darklands, where light is an alien intrusion if not actually inimical, exist strange creatures of the world's voidlike spaces that have adapted and thrived in such surroundings. One such creature is the Darklands sentinel, used for generations by sentient races as alarm systems and defenders, much like the more mundane and less hardy shrieker species of fungus. A Darklands sentinel resembles nothing so much as an

ordinary stalactite with a strange crystalline mineral content. It has a rocky exterior that completely covers its body except at its base, which is fleshy and covered with hundreds of cilia that allow it limited locomotion and the ability to cling tenaciously to almost any surface—even while upside down. Beneath the stony exterior is a soft, flesh-colored, sluglike creature, though extracting one from its stony shell without killing it is virtually impossible.

ECOLOGY

Darklands sentinels are thought to be related to a variety of camouflaged Darklands hazard known as piercers, also slug-like creatures existing in a naturally forming stony shell that are possibly a separate evolutionary offshoot of the darkmantle. However, unlike piercers or darkmantles, which drop down upon prey to feed, the Darklands sentinel draws sustenance directly from the mineral content of the stone around it as well as the radiations that suffuse many of the deep places of Golarion. The absorbed mineral content is distributed in the creature's stony carapace in highly conductive veins of crystalline material that gather into nodules at various places on the surface of the carapace. This leeching of minerals is a slow process, and it would require many decades for a cluster of Darklands sentinels to exhaust a typical cavern chamber. In addition, the subtle radiations, both magical and mundane, that exist in the Darklands are channeled into these crystalline nodules and stored as luminous energy. This luminous energy can be released in small bursts through the nodules in the form of a sudden flare of light, or it can be channeled through the super-conductive crystalline veins to build up an electrical charge that is then released in an arc of electricity. The flares require much more of the stored energy and can only be released occasionally, while the electrical bursts actually help to generate further charges, allowing repeated use with little effort.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Darklands sentinels universally dwell in Golarion's Darklands and typically hang from cavern or tunnel ceilings where they are less susceptible to predation. They can exist on very little oxygen so that even a sealed cavern could support many generations of Darklands sentinels successfully. In addition, they can survive underwater for months at a time due to the air trapped in thousands of tiny pores in their rough-textured carapaces. They are extremely sedentary, and though capable of limited locomotion, they rarely if ever move more than once a year or so. In combat they are so accustomed to maintaining their position that they have no real instinct for a flight response to threats

DARKLANDS FUNGI

Aside from dangerous, animate fungal growths like fungal crawlers, shriekers, phantom fungi, and others, a number of more mundane spores, mushrooms, molds, and growths flourish in the shadowed vaults of the Darklands.

Shade Berry: Densely clustered knots of these tiny, black mushrooms grow high on dank cavern walls. Although bitter tasting, a handful of these meaty fungi are just as nutritious as blueberries.

Malhars: Also known as “misfortune masses,” malhars are fungal colonies capable of growing to several miles in size, though even those as large as an acre are rare and most are mere feet across. The dense, spongy fungus sprouts scaly, poisonous, yellow-brown mushrooms, which often emerge upon the surface or on cavern walls. Several tribes of vegepygmyies carve tunnels and shelters into titanic malhars, revering the massive fungi as living demigods. Dwarves universally despise malhars, as the spongy masses can cause devastating cave-ins when weighed upon by construction.

Sweet Mold: Named for its distinctively sugary taste, this sweet, pale blue mold is a favorite food of several Darklands creatures, notably cavefishers, mobats, and ropers. Although a poor source of nutrition and mildly poisonous to many humanoid races, several Darklands societies caramelize the mold to use as flavoring in cooking.

White Rot: Puffball mushrooms the size of a child's head, white rot mushrooms are notorious for spreading the unusual disease fungal flu. Disturbing or popping a white rot ball fills the area within 30 feet of the mushroom with light, powdery dust, easily inhaled by nearby creatures.

Fungal Flu—inhaled, Fortitude DC 12, incubation period 3d6 days, damage 1d4 Con. Rolling a 1 on any Fortitude save to resist taking damage from fungal flu results in blindness. The blindness persists—even resisting spells like *remove blindness/deafness*—until the disease is cured.

and almost always continue to fight until left alone or slain. Because of this, they make excellent guardian creatures, as implied by their name, and are used as such by drow and various other races of the Darklands. They can be trained to recognize and not react to certain individuals or kinds of creatures, unlike the completely mindless shriekers, and prove to be much hardier and easier to maintain than those traditional fungus sentinels. In addition, their blinding flashes of light prove particularly crippling to the dark-loving races of the Darklands, though the Darklands sentinels' masters must beware being too close when the sentinels unleash their flare attacks, or risk being affected by them as well. Drow are particularly susceptible in that a Darklands sentinel's flare will activate their light blindness as surely as a daylight spell.



Str 14, **Dex** 18, **Con** 14, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +1
Feats Alertness, Multiattack
Skills Climb +10, Balance +7, Listen +7, Spot +3

ECOLOGY

Environment any underground
Organization solitary or swarm (3–12)
Treasure none
Advancement 5–7 HD (Small), 8–11 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Leap (Ex) As a move action, a fungal crawler can leap through unobstructed spaces in a straight line up to 40 feet. The squares it passes through must be empty of both barriers and other creatures, otherwise the fungal crawler's leap ends in the space in front of

the obstruction and its turn ends. A leap counts as a charge attack for the fungal crawler. The fungal crawler does not provoke attacks of opportunity as it passes through these spaces (although a creature with an action readied to strike a leaping fungal crawler may do so).

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d3 Str and 1d3 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Plant Traits (Ex) Fungal crawlers are partially composed of plant material in the form of fungus. As such, they enjoy the benefits of the immunities common to plant creatures. These include immunity to all mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), immunity to poison, *sleep* effects, paralysis, polymorph, and stunning, and they are not subject to critical hits. In addition, any spell that would affect a plant creature also affects a fungal crawler.

Skills Fungal crawlers have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. Fungal crawlers use either their Strength or Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is higher.

FUNGAL CRAWLER

This strange creature appears to be a cross of insect and fungus. About three feet long, its cricket-like frame bears a large spongy head split by a gaping mandible-flanked maw filled with needle-like teeth. It moves about its segmented, chitinous exoskeleton—pocked by pitted, fibroid growths—on three pairs of barbed, insect-like legs.

FUNGAL CRAWLER

CR 3

Always N Small aberration

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 11
 (+4 Dex, +1 size)

hp 26 (4d8+8)

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

Defensive Abilities plant traits

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +6 (1d6+2 plus poison) and
 2 claws +4 (1d6+1)

Special Attacks leap

TACTICS

Before Combat Fungal crawlers care little for tactics or trying to take their opponents unawares. Instead, upon catching sight of potential prey, they rush into combat, racing their brethren to the meal.

During Combat Fungal crawlers usually charge into combat using their leap ability. Unaware of their poisonous abilities or plant traits, they never purposefully exploit these benefits.

Morale Fungal crawlers are unintelligent and attack as long as they face any moving opponents.

STATISTICS

Fungal crawlers are wholly unnatural creatures born of the strange radiations and magical emanations that pervade many regions of Nar-Voth, the layer of the Darklands closest to the surface. They resemble an unhealthy combination of cave cricket and bulbous fungus. Chitinous exoskeletons overlap with large fungal growths on the creatures' bodies, giving them the appearances of having large heads that resemble pebbly mushroom caps in shades of brown, green, and gray. The undersides of their bodies are covered in a layer of pale white gills like those located on the underside of a toadstool.

Fungal crawlers are about 3 feet tall and weigh approximately 30 pounds.

ECOLOGY

The unusual biology of fungal crawlers is typically blamed on the strange energies that suffuse portions of the Darklands. Considering the number of subterranean insects that feed among the fungus growths that often thrive in these radiations, mutations are not uncommon in these lightless reaches. While most such abominations prove short lived, occasionally an altered creature flourishes.

Fungal crawlers feed on carrion and organic debris, but they also gain necessary nutrients directly from the pulsing energies of the Darklands themselves. This serves them well in barren tunnels, where other living organisms are few and far between and so do not supply sufficient provender to support most life forms of the crawler's size. Fungal crawlers share features of both aberrations as well as the plant-like fungus growths that infest their bodies and comprise a portion of their anatomy. Their needle-like teeth are not good for chewing or tearing flesh but make terrible wounds in their prey. In addition, these teeth are hollow and inject a digestive enzyme into their victims that breaks down the flesh and creates a soupy mass much more suitable for the crawler's palate.

Fungal crawlers reproduce by laying thousands of tiny spores from the fungal flutes covering the lower portions of their bodies. Spores that land in decaying organic material begin to germinate. In a few weeks, tiny, pale white creatures, similar to larval crickets, appear. These tiny spawn grow to full size in about a month if there is sufficient carrion to feed upon, at which point they can begin hunting and feeding upon Darklands radiations if food is absent. Spores that do not land in a suitable matrix remain dormant for up to a century before finally dying off. More than one adventurer has returned from the Darklands unknowingly carrying such spores on their boots and soon find strange white insect larva in their gardens. Those who don't take care of the menace are often faced with a swarm of swiftly grown, deadly fungal crawlers quite literally on their doorstep.

On the surface, in some areas where trenches and caves cut deep into the Darklands, hungry swarms of fungal crawlers have been known to swarm into the lands above, devastating local ecologies and leaving behind little more than mushy piles of partially dissolved organic matter. Fortunately, if true, these rumored occurrences appear to be exceedingly rare and only take place when some underground event causes an explosion in the crawlers' population or deprives existing crawlers of their natural food sources.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Fungal crawlers are scavengers that fill a role in the Darklands much as rats do on the surface. Although the creatures' appearances vary widely from region to region—their caps taking on a wide range of colors reflecting local fungi—they are generally feared for their poisonous bite and leaping attack. Despite this, many Darklands communities domesticate them to a certain extent and use them as guard beasts as well as a method of garbage disposal, but not without risk. As the creatures bear the traits of plants as well as aberrations, they are notoriously difficult to control, ignoring most attempts at magical enchantment. They can be trained with a constant source of food that allows them to subvert their natural, predatory instincts and remain in a localized area where they do not attack creatures that they recognize as being providers of the food they eat. Despite their trainability, fungal crawlers are unintelligent and will turn on their masters or even each other at times when food is in short supply and insufficient Darklands energies are present.

In addition, well known to many Darklands predators and sentient races, the mushroom-like caps of fungal crawlers—despite their unwholesome appearances—are exceedingly nutritious. Although bland, with a taste like slightly bitter gravel, several races survive off the fungal beasts, either hunting them in the wild or raising herds of the swiftly propagating creatures. Duergar are especially well known for raising fungal crawlers, training them to serve double duty as both guardians of their communities and food sources.

VARIANTS

Some fungal crawlers, particularly those that inhabit regions of the Darklands characterized by deep chasms and bottomless abysses, possess gossamer, grasshopper-like wings, and the ability to fly. Resembling giant subterranean locusts, such fungal flyers have a fly speed of 60 feet and poor maneuverability. Typically using their wings to make extended leaps and controlled falls along the sides of vertical caves, the high-speed flapping of a fungal flyer's wings creates a deep buzzing like that of a giant wasp. In caverns infested with numerous such beasts, the vibrations caused by their flights and spasmodic wing twitches can be felt through the stone up to a half-mile away.

Some Darklands explorers have also reported seeing a strange variety of fungal crawler similar to waterbugs, which hop and skim over the surface of subterranean lakes. Although the existence of such creatures has yet to be confirmed, it's easy to imagine the fluctuating energies of the Darklands altering such mutable creatures in a myriad of unbelievable ways.



Advancement 2–5 HD (Small), 6–10 HD (Medium), 11–20 HD (Large), 21–34 HD (Huge), 36–51 HD (Gargantuan)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hold Breath (Ex) A monstrous cockroach can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to four times its Constitution score before it risks drowning (see page 304 of the DMG).

Light Sensitivity (Ex) A monstrous cockroach is dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Skills A monstrous cockroach has a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks. It uses its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength modifier for Climb checks. It can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

MONSTROUS COCKROACH

A cockroach the size of a dog skitters forward on spine-covered legs, its whip-like antennae lashing the air before it as its filth-slick mandibles clack hungrily.

MONSTROUS COCKROACH

CR 1/2

Always N Small vermin

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +0,

Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13

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

hp 8 (1d8+4)

Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

Defensive Abilities vermin traits

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +1 (1d4)

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** 19, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +0; **Grp** –4

Feats Diehard*, Endurance*

Skills Climb +9, Hide +9, Spot +4

SQ hold breath, light sensitivity

* bonus feats

ECOLOGY

Environment any temperate, warm, or urban

Organization solitary, intrusion (2–40)

Treasure none

FLESH-EATING COCKROACH SWARM

As if a shadow had come to life, a dark mass rolls across the ground, washing over all in its path. Clicking and snapping in a terrible cacophony of thousands upon thousands of tiny bodies, several scuttling forms identify the unstoppable throng as a terrible, hungry host of cockroaches.

FLESH-EATING COCKROACH SWARM

CR 2

Always N Diminutive vermin

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft.; Listen +0,

Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 14

(+2 Dex, +4 size)

hp 26 (4d8+8)

Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

Defensive Abilities swarm traits, vermin traits

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor)

Melee swarm (1d6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks distraction

STATISTICS

Str 1, **Dex** 15, **Con** 14, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 2

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

Skills Climb +10, Hide +18, Spot +4

SQ light sensitivity

ECOLOGY

Environment any temperate, warm, or urban

Organization solitary, intrusion (2–8 swarms)

Treasure none

Advancement none

Level Adjustment —**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with a cockroach swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Light Sensitivity (Ex) Cockroach swarms are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Skills A cockroach swarm has a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks. It uses its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength modifier for Climb checks. It can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

Monstrous cockroaches come in a wide variety of sizes and colors, ranging from dark brown or black to lighter shades such as red or yellow, sometimes with multicolored banding across their abdomens. They have six legs and antennae and many varieties have wings. Their exoskeletons tend to have a shiny, oily appearance, though it is dry. Monstrous cockroaches vary widely in size, growing from mere inches long to the size of small buildings.

Aside from the threat presented by overgrown cockroaches, occasionally when enjoying limitless supplies of food and few local predators, an area's population of normal cockroaches can grow to number in the millions. In such cases, the typically docile creatures can amass into dangerous swarms to protect their territories. Benefiting from their species' collective intelligence, hundreds of thousands of otherwise common cockroaches might amass in such swarms to defend their fertile territories or prey upon interlopers.

ECOLOGY

Called monstrous blattoptera in some scholarly circles, monstrous cockroaches have existed unchanged for millions of years, feeding upon the refuse of larger creatures and preying upon plants and pests weaker than themselves. Monstrous cockroaches are typically omnivores, though some varieties are strict herbivores. Even the most docile strains, however, do not hesitate to attack other organisms that invade their territory or simply look tasty. Monstrous cockroaches breed in great numbers, but most roach nymphs are cannibalized by their siblings, preventing them from becoming widespread scourges like their smaller cousins.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Monstrous cockroaches live in almost all warm environments, typically near sources of water, where they subsist off dead organic matter. They prefer densely wooded areas that provide cover in which to hide. Cockroach swarms are more likely to locate themselves

near inhabited regions where they can lurk within abandoned buildings, ruins, and heaps of trash. Garbage dumps, open gravesites, sewers, and other such filthy locations—especially when part of a large city—typically attract masses of cockroaches and those of monstrous size. Urban dwellers that live near such sites often suffer invasions from the hungry vermin. Even if driven off time and time again, the cockroaches' disturbing fecundity assures future trespasses unless their local breeding grounds are destroyed.

Monstrous cockroaches exhibit traits of group thinking when encountered in numbers, allowing slightly more complex decision making than is exhibited by most vermin, including the location of shelter, acquisition of food sources, and both unified attacks and retreats when facing prey. Among their natural predators are monstrous centipedes, which eagerly prey upon roaches smaller than themselves. Monstrous cockroaches usually flee if confronted by even modestly sized monstrous centipedes.

VARIANTS

Monstrous cockroaches and cockroach swarms can be found throughout Golarion with dozens of different appearances. In several cases, these regional variations have adapted unique abilities.

Mwangi Hissing Cockroach: A fist-sized insect found throughout the Kaava Lands, the Mwangi Expanse, and the Sodden Lands, these inoffensive roaches hiss when threatened. When encountered in large swarms or grown to monstrous size, though, the insect's noises take on a fearsome quality.

Fighting Hiss (Ex) As a free action, a monstrous cockroach or cockroach swarm can make a loud hissing noise by forcing air through the breathing pores on its abdomen. This sound can be extremely disconcerting, and any creature within 20 feet with Hit Dice equal to or lower than the cockroach's must make a DC 14 Will save or be shaken until outside the hiss's area of effect. This is a sonic attack. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Keleshite Venomroach: Found throughout Casmarron and in eastern Avistan, the Keleshite venomroach bears three broad yellow stripes across its inky carapace. The everyday varieties are known for their painful sting, the annoying result of the creature's mild poison. In the monstrous varieties and when the pests collect in swarms this irritating poison can be deadly. The cult of Ghlaunder has discovered the use of swarms of these poisonous pests in recent years, seeding them amid cities to spread the taint of their parasitic deity.

Poison (Ex) Injury—bite, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d2 Dexterity. The save DC is Constitution-based.



SWAMP BARRACUDA

This elongated fish has a large, pointed head with powerful jaws—the lower of which juts out past the upper—and possesses fang-like teeth. It has two pairs of strong fins along its serpent-like body, which haul it like spiny, swamp-slick feet. Its coloration is dark green above its lateral line and chalky gray below, with a few dark spots on the sides.

SWAMP BARRACUDA

CR 2

Always N Medium animal (aquatic)

Init +6; Senses keen scent, low-light vision; Listen +5, Spot +6

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12

(+2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 18 (4d8)

Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2

OFFENSE

Spd 10 ft., swim 60 ft.

Melee claws +6 (1d6+4)

TACTICS

Before Combat Swamp barracuda tend to lie in wait and try to take prey by surprise by darting out from clusters of swamp vegetation or murky bodies of water to attack.

During Combat Swamp barracuda are aggressive predators that attack the first creature they see, though they are likely to switch targets to attack badly injured or unconscious creatures (possibly even other swamp barracuda).

Morale A swamp barracuda flees if reduced to 4 hp or less.

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

Base Atk +3; Grp +6

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative

Skills Hide +4 (+8 in water), Listen +5, Spot +6

SQ amphibious

ECOLOGY

Environment warm marshes

Organization solitary, pair, or school (6–11)

Treasure none

Advancement 5–8 HD (Medium), 9–12 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Amphibious (Ex) Although swamp barracuda are aquatic, they can survive indefinitely on land.

Keen Scent (Ex) A swamp barracuda can notice creatures by scent in a 180-foot radius and detect blood in the water at ranges of up to a mile.

Skills A swamp barracuda gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks when in the water. In addition, a swamp barracuda has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

Swamp barracuda have elongated bodies and pointed heads, similar in appearance to pikes with large, powerful jaws. They have two widely separated dorsal fins and overdeveloped pectoral fins, an evolutionary development that gives them limited locomotion out of water, where they can drag themselves about by using these fins and flopping their tails.

These dangerous fish grow to a fairly large size, some exceptional specimens topping out at more than 12 feet in length, though most are about 6 feet long and weigh upwards of 60 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Swamp barracuda are saltwater fish that often hunt singly but can be found in small groups as well, especially around reefs and areas where food is plentiful. They prefer to hide in shallow waters and take their prey by surprise when they slither on shore, but they have been known to exhibit more organized behavior such as herding shoals of fish together and guarding them until hungry enough to feed. Swamp barracuda can exist out of water for long periods of time and can often be found

in tidewater marshes along coastlines where they crawl forth from the brine and hunt the terrestrial scavengers to be found in such places.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Swamp barracuda thrive in the tropical and semi-tropical waters around the continent of Garund and are a recognized scourge to coastal fishermen and drunken sailors, particularly throughout the Shackles and in the Sodden Lands. In the trading port of Bloodcove, the guards offer a bounty for the heads of swamp barracuda, as the species seems to thrive in the warm, silt-laden waters among the massive mangrove roots of the Mwangi Coast. Rumors persist that the barracuda of these areas have a taste for humanoid flesh due to the methods of disposing of rivals used by some of the region's less-than-savory characters. More than one old sea dog in these rough-and-tumble ports ascribes a missing finger or two to close encounters with an "awlhead" as they are sometimes known. In addition, these fish are found as far north as the Mushfens and the Varisian Gulf in the warmer months, heading south as the icy currents from the north make their way down during the winter.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Large swamp barracuda usually hunt alone, but on occasion the deadly fish have been known to cooperate and even become trained by sentient races such as lizardfolk, locathah, and boggards. Here are three likely encounters swamp barracuda might become involved in.

Lone Hunter (EL 3): A solitary 7-HD swamp barracuda has occupied a tidal pool on a stretch of beach not far from a small coastal hamlet. It has partially buried itself in the silt of the pool bottom and waits for prey to come within range for it to lunge forth and strike. It usually satisfies itself with seagulls but would not turn down the opportunity to feast upon a fisherman or villager out gathering shellfish.

Schooling Behavior (EL 4): Two swamp barracuda have trapped a lone tortoise atop a reef not far from shore. They are not currently hungry but are keeping it from leaving until they have worked up an appetite. Anyone boating nearby or walking along the shore might see the tortoise and choose to investigate, perhaps to capture it or just to learn the reason for its strange behavior. Those stepping into the shallow water atop the reef find themselves the target of simultaneous attacks as the barracuda streak forward to protect their dinner and perhaps gain a second course as well.

Guard Fish (EL 8): A colony of lizardfolk have established a lair in a muddy mound at the center of a coastal salt marsh. The reeds growing atop the mound mask its presence as a lair, but the lizardfolk take no

SLEEPING WITH THE FISHES

The Sczarni, several families of criminal Varisians, have a long working history with swamp barracuda.

The Fish Tank: Owned by Jaster Frallino, the head of the Magnimarian Sczarni gang known as the Gallowed, images of glassy-eyed sea serpents and scandalously clad mermaids stare stupidly from the timbers of this peeling sea-blue caravan wagon. Within, the roomy wagon holds a single battered stool and a four-foot-tall glass aquarium filled with murky water. Inside the glass tank laze Frallino's three fat pet swamp barracudas: Verna, Argarno, and Big Mal. In Frallino's displeasure, several lazy thugs and untrustworthy business partners have lost a toe, a nose, or a whole hand to "The Boss's Fish," and more than one of the crime lord's enemies have gone into the tank headfirst. It's also rumored that the Sczarni boss keeps a collection of mysterious, rusted keys at the bottom of his chummy aquarium, guarded by his beloved pets.

Dinner is Served: In Erastus 2706, Korvosan Senior Arbiter Zenobia Zenderholm sentenced Maloda Cadabrani, daughter of the Sczarni boss Fummos Cadabrani, to death by hanging for selling qat packed in fish along the Old Korvosa docks. Two days before the Varisian's execution, though, the girl disappeared from her holding cell and has not been seen in the city since. That night, the arbiter was attacked in her home in South Shore when her evening's meal of Nidal pomfret was uncovered, revealing a starved swamp barracuda. Although the frightened arbiter escaped with only minor injuries, it is said that since that night Zenderholm has hired a personal food taster and never orders seafood.

Fish Fights: Although exceedingly difficult to train, swamp barracuda have often attracted Sczarni to gather under docks, in flooded warehouses, and around swampy tide pools to watch and bet on the voracious creatures. Running such blood sports outside the walls of cities that frown on such brutal pastimes, the greedy thugs find the creatures' scintillating scales, the wild splashes of chummy water, and the commonality of seeing rows of dead fish draw the attendance of gamblers who would not normally involve themselves in dog or cock fighting matches.

chances. Three swamp barracuda swim in the waters surrounding the mound, fed chum by the lizardfolk in order to keep them in the area. They have learned to not attack reptilian creatures but see any other creature as fair game. If the swamp barracuda become involved in a battle, eight lizardfolk warriors emerge from the mound's underwater entrance and join in the defense of their home. Within the mound are 12 noncombatant lizardfolk, including children, as well as a clutch of unhatched eggs.

The Darkness Has Come

OUTLINING THE SECOND DARKNESS ADVENTURE PATH

As the city of Korvosa picks up the pieces after its queen's brush with madness, a new evil begins to take shape far to the east, in the raucous pirate's den of Riddleport. Here, in the shadow of the quixotic Cyphergate, a sinister enemy long banished from the world of light sets its schemes upon the surface, and plots an unthinkable revenge. All the world beware, for the drow have returned to Golarion.

Spoiler Warning: If you intend to play Second Darkness, be warned! The contents of these pages spoil the plots of upcoming adventures about as thoroughly as possible!

SHADOW IN THE SKY

by Greg A. Vaughan

Pathfinder #13, Levels 1–3

The PCs are recruited by semi-retired crimelord Saul Vancaskerkin to help run the Gold Goblin, a relatively popular gaming hall that has fallen on hard times. During this adventure, the PCs work for Vancaskerkin, using the Gold Goblin as a home base. Slowly, they realize that their boss is a pretty bad guy. The turning point occurs in the Riddleport dump/ship's graveyard, where Vancaskerkin sends a group of wererats to ambush and kill the PCs. This plan falls apart when an exotic elven ranger warns the PCs, giving them the advantage they need to deal with the wererats.

The PCs return to the Gold Goblin and confront Saul, then discover a secret dungeon under the Gold Goblin to confront his mysterious new ally, who is revealed as a drow! In her effects, the PCs find notes indicating that a larger colony of drow lies hidden somewhere on Devil's Elbow, and that the dark elves are planning on hitting the island with something drawn from the heavens above. Sure enough, the adventure ends as a falling star strikes the island, and Riddleport is hit by the resulting earthquake and tsunami.

CHILDREN OF THE VOID

by Mike McArtor

Pathfinder #14, Levels 4–6

The PCs are contacted by their elven ally and his mysterious mercenary group, and are asked to investigate the island of Devil's Elbow in the hopes of putting an end to the drow's plots in the region. When the PCs arrive on the island, they discover that while small traces of skymetal have been found, something else may have been brought down from the sky as well—something deadly.

In actuality, the star that struck Devil's Elbow carried with it a clutch of tough, murderous aliens. The drow have remained on the island, intrigued by the aliens and are studying how they are killing off the prospectors. They want to use the aliens as minions. Clegg Zincher does too; he wants them for his arena, and he's made allegiances with the drow to aid their efforts. Eventually, the PCs discover the location of the drow hideout, where they learn the drow are members of the Azrinae family and worshipers of the demon lord Abraxus. They also learn that the Azrinaes here are but a small fraction of the main outpost in Celwynvian. A long tunnel has been bored to a second installation under the impact site, but this second one was obliterated. It's unclear what was there, but it should be obvious that it was key in bringing down the star.

THE ARMAGEDDON ECHO

by Jason Bulmahn

Pathfinder #15, Levels 7–9

The PCs travel to the town of Crying Leaf at the edge of the Mierani Forest and meet their new elven allies. Joining the elves, they make the journey through the Mierani to an army encampment at the edge of Celwynvian. There they are assigned various missions infiltrating the city. The war for control over Celwynvian has been at a stalemate for some time, but information the PCs recovered from Devil's Elbow could be just the thing to finally tip things in favor of the elves.

Soon the PCs discover that the drow have created a portal to the Plane of Shadow, and in that realm's version of the city, the drow have created a "window" in time, allowing them to observe the effects of Earthfall 10,000 years ago and refine their own doomsday magic. The adventure ends with the PCs defeating the wizard who leads the drow of Celwynvian, but the question remains—now that the drow can rain down devastation from the heavens, who is their target?

ENDLESS NIGHT

by F. Wesley Schneider

Pathfinder #16, Levels 10–11

In Celwynvian, the PCs discover a warped elfgate, a powerful portal created by the drow that leads back to their home city of Zirnakaynin. The PCs are asked by the elves of Celwynvian to don drow disguises and infiltrate the city to find out more about the drow plot.

In doing so, the PCs come to serve a house of drow nobles and learn that the drow of House Azrinae were recently taken over by a powerful outlander drow named Allevrah. This powerful cleric of Abraxus is the one who rediscovered the ancient aboleth magic of plucking stars from the sky, and is in fact a recently transformed drow herself. Once a leader of a secret society of elves called the Winter Council, an organization that intended to blow up much of Golarion to destroy the drow, Allevrah now wishes to use that same magic to destroy the elven empire of Kyonin. Some time before the PCs arrive in Zirnakaynin, Allevrah and the rest of House Azrinae left for unknown locations to pursue this goal.

Eventually, the PCs are discovered to be intruders and are forced to flee Zirnakaynin. Pursued by drow, the PCs may retreat through the Darklands to a functioning elfgate several days' travel away. Passing through the portal, the PCs find themselves in Kyonin, the ancestral home of the elves.

A MEMORY OF DARKNESS

by J.D. Wiker

Pathfinder #17, Levels 12–13

When the PCs confront the elves with their information about drow, ancient magics, and elven conspirators, the rulers of Kyonin don't believe them. No one seems to know about a "Winter Council," and soon, the PCs are attacked by insulted elven extremists. In order to protect them and to give Kyonin time to decide what to do with these developments, the PCs are placed in a magical sanctuary, only to find that the "sanctuary" is in fact a prison. They meet a mysterious woman within, and with her aid, escape. This woman claims to know where the Winter Council's hidden fortress is located and promises to lead the PCs there, to the demon-haunted forest of Tanglebriar. Unknown to the PCs, their new ally is in fact a succubus who hopes to use the PCs to destroy the Winter Council and thus remove a troublesome elven intruder in her master's forest—so even if the PCs determine her true nature, their goals remain aligned.

With the succubus's aid, the PCs flee Kyonin, chased all the way by agents of the Winter Council. Upon reaching the Winter Council's fortress, they must invade it and confront the leaders of the secretive shadow government. In so doing, the PCs also discover the council's greatest secret: dark-souled elves can transform into drow, and Allevrah, the new leader of House Azrinae, was a member of the Winter Council. Armed with this revelation, the PCs might be able to persuade Kyonin's leaders into striking against the drow before they bring their terrible magic to bear. But is it too late?

DESCENT INTO MIDNIGHT

by Owen K. C. Stephens

Pathfinder #18, Levels 14–15

The PCs learn that Allevrah has chosen a mysterious realm deep underground—the Land of Black Blood. Created by a mysterious vanished race, this subterranean realm is now the lair of all manner of horrific monsters. The drow have established several magical glyphs here, key to calling a massive star down upon Kyonin's capital, Iadara. All of the glyphs must be destroyed before the magical pull on the star is cancelled and the meteoroid can revert to its normal orbit. The PCs must race across this strange lost world and do battle with the drow mastermind Allevrah Azrinae to have any chance of halting the Second Darkness.



SAJAN



MALE HUMAN MONK 1

ALIGN LN INIT +2 SPEED 30 ft.

DEITY: Irori

HOMELAND: Vudra

ABILITIES

13	STR
15	DEX
14	CON
10	INT
12	WIS
8	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 10
AC 12
touch 12, flat-footed 10
Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3

OFFENSE

Melee unarmed strike +1 (1d6+1) or flurry of blows -1/-1 (1d6+1) or temple sword -3 (1d8+1)
Base Atk +0; Grp +1
Special Attacks stunning fist 1/day (DC 11)

SKILLS

Climb	+5
Escape Artist	+6
Jump	+5
Sense Motive	+5
Tumble	+6

FEATS

Dodge, Mobility, Stunning Fist



Gear temple sword, wooden holy symbol, belt pouch

Sajjan Gadadvara and his twin sister Sajjni were separated when the lord they served was shamed and forced to cede half his army to the victor—among them Sajjan's sister. Sajjni was taken away from Vudra by her new master, and Sajjan abandoned his own responsibilities to follow. He spent years trying in vain to find her, but has not yet given up. Sajjan knows he cannot return to Vudra, for the padapranja there would execute him as a deserter. He cares not for his home country, however, and continues to seek out any clue that might point him toward his sister.

LINI



FEMALE GNOME DRUID 1

ALIGN N INIT +1 SPEED 20 ft.

DEITY: Green Faith

HOMELAND: Land of the Linnorm Kings

ABILITIES

6	STR
12	DEX
16	CON
10	INT
15	WIS
13	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 11
AC 14
touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+4 bonus against giants)
Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +4 (+2 against illusions)

OFFENSE

Melee sickle -1 (1d4-2)
Ranged sling +2 (1d3-2)
Base Atk +0; Grp -6
Special Attacks +1 on attack rolls against goblins and kobolds
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st)
1/day—*dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 11), *prestidigitation*, *speak with burrowing mammals*
Spells Prepared (CL 1st; +2 ranged)
1st—*entangle* (DC 12), *produce flame*
0—*create water*, *light*, *mending*
Special Qualities low-light vision, nature sense

SKILLS

Concentration	+7
Craft (alchemy)	+2
Handle Animal	+5
Knowledge (nature)	+6
Listen	+4
Ride	+5
Survival	+4
Wild Empathy	+2

FEATS

Spell Focus (conjuration)

ANIMAL COMPANION

Ismadi (hawk; MM 273)



Combat Gear scroll of cure light wounds (2); Other Gear leather armor, sickle, sling with 10 bullets, belt pouch, mistletoe, spell component pouch, sunrods (2), rations (2 days), collection of special de-barked sticks, 5 gp

Lini always seemed to possess a certain affinity with various creatures of the woodlands near where she grew up—particularly with larger predators like bears and snow leopards. More than once, Lini's enclave came under threat from some great bear or razor-clawed cat, but with a series of soothing noises and precise motions she always soothed the beast and sent it on its way. In the years since her departure from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Lini has collected more than a dozen sticks—one from each forest or wood she visits. These sticks are to Lini a roadmap of her experiences, and while they may look indistinguishable to others, each holds a wealth of memories to the gnome druid.

SELTYIEL

MALE HALF-ELF FIGHTER 1

ALIGN LE INIT +2 SPEED 30 ft.

DEITY: Asmodeus

HOMELAND: Cheliah

ABILITIES

12	STR
15	DEX
13	CON
14	INT
8	WIS
10	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 11
AC 14
touch 12, flat-footed 12
Fort +3, Ref +2, Will -1;
+2 against enchantment;
immune to sleep effects

OFFENSE

Melee longsword +3 (1d8+1/19-20)
Ranged shortbow +3 (1d6/x3)
Base Atk +1; Grp +2
Special Qualities low-light vision

SKILLS

Craft (alchemy)	+6
Diplomacy	+2
Gather Information	+2
Intimidate	+4
Knowledge (arcana)	+4
Listen	+0
Search	+3
Spellcraft	+4
Spot	+0

FEATS

Combat Expertise, Weapon Focus (longsword)



Combat Gear acid, alchemist's fire (2); **Other Gear** leather armor, longsword, dagger, shortbow with 20 arrows, flask of fine absinthe worth 50 gp, gold holy symbol worth 75 gp, mysterious spellbook, 8 gp

Born from a dead mother amid screams and disgrace, Seltiel grew up surrounded by shame and abuse. Before he came of age, his stepfather attempted to murder him, but after Seltiel turned the tables, he fled into the wild. Since then, his life has been a cruel series of betrayals and pain. His brief reunion with his true father (a notorious bandit) ended with the half-elf being betrayed and imprisoned. Recently released, Seltiel longs for revenge against both his fathers for his stolen childhood.

AMIRI

FEMALE HUMAN BARBARIAN 1

ALIGN CN INIT +1 SPEED 30 ft.

DEITY: Gorum

HOMELAND: Realm of the Mammoth Lords

ABILITIES

15	STR
13	DEX
14	CON
10	INT
12	WIS
8	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 14
AC 14
touch 11, flat-footed 13
Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0

OFFENSE

Melee Large bastard sword +2 (2d8+3/19-20)
Ranged longbow +2 (1d8/x3)
Base Atk +1; Grp +2
Special Attacks rage 1/day
Special Qualities fast movement, illiteracy

SKILLS

Intimidate	+3
Jump	+6
Listen	+5
Spot	+3
Survival	+5

FEATS

Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Weapon Focus (bastard sword)

BARBARIAN RAGE

HP 16
AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 11
Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +2
Melee Large bastard sword +4 (2d8+6/19-20)
Str 19, Con 18



Gear hide armor, Large bastard sword, longbow, javelins (2), throwing axe, spiked gauntlet, 20 gp

Amiri never quite fit in to the expected gender roles of her tribe, and when the tribe attempted to send her on a suicide mission, she returned with an enormous trophy—a frost giant's sword. She has since abandoned her people, and has come to value her oversized sword (even though she can only truly wield it properly when her blood rage takes her). She never speaks of the circumstances that forced her to flee her homeland. Some things are better left unsaid.



Next Month in PATHFINDER™

CHILDREN OF THE VOID

by Mike McArtor

Witness to a falling star, the people of Riddleport look to the devastated island of Devil's Elbow with apprehension and greed. Where there's a fallen star there's sure to be skymetal. But strange things are afoot on Devil's Elbow, and the heavens' fallen treasure has disappeared. Soon factions of Riddleport's wily prospectors begin vanishing as well. Can the PCs discover the secret of Devil's Elbow and unravel the mystery of the fallen star before whatever menace has come to Golarion can spread?

CAYDEN CAILEAN

by Sean K Reynolds

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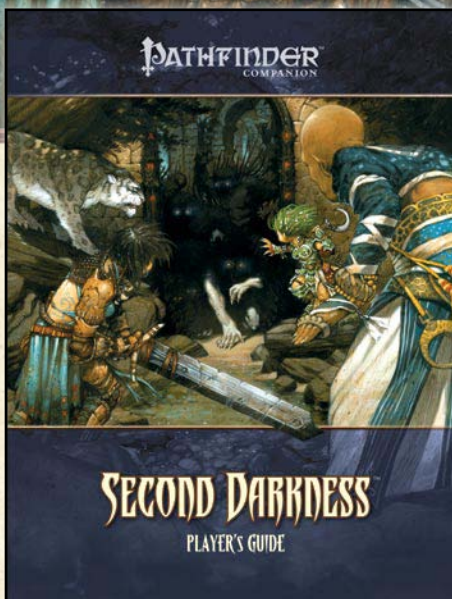
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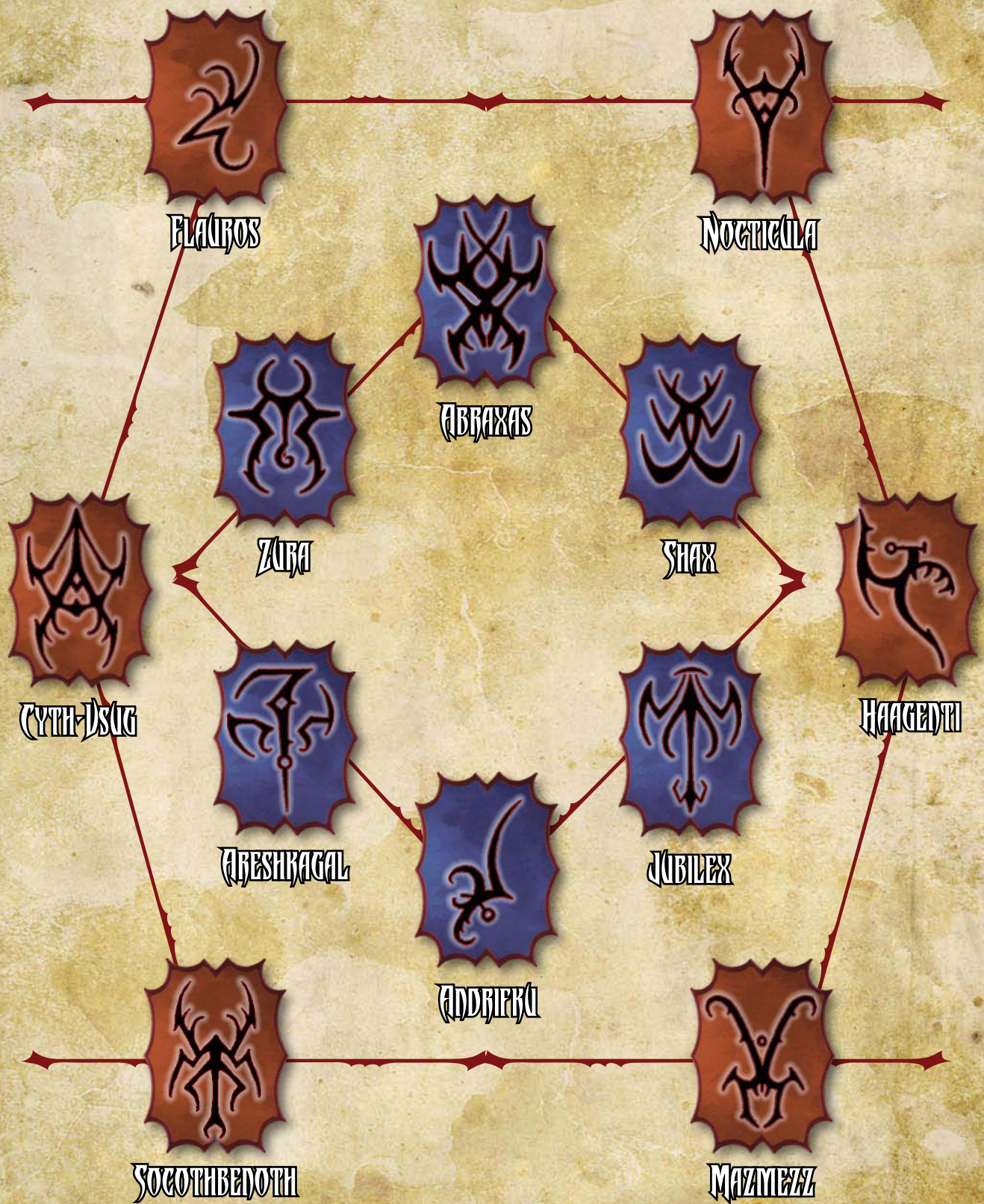
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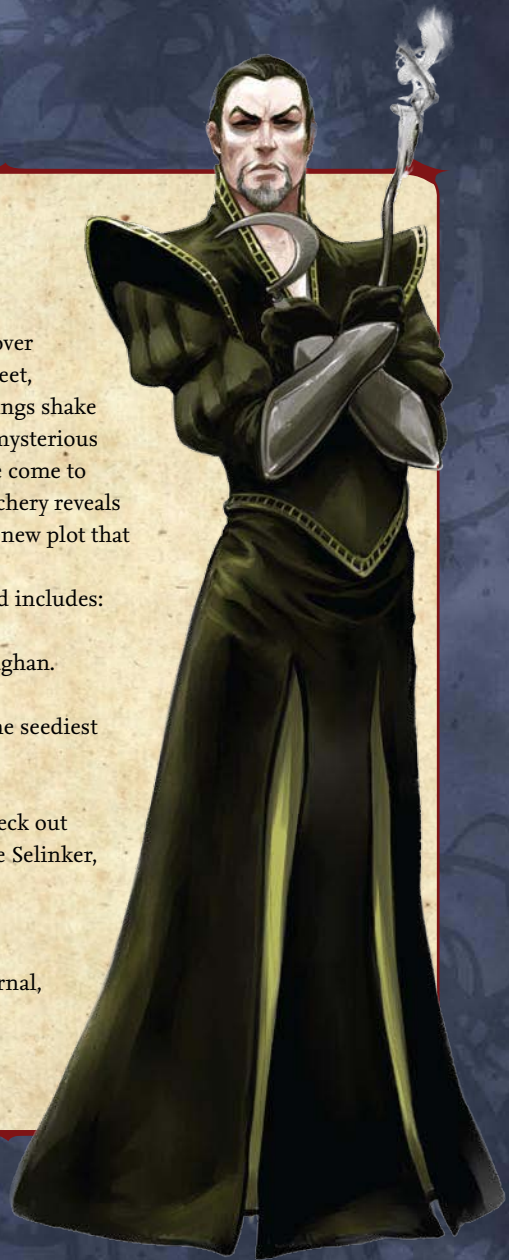


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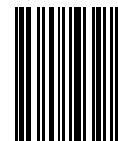
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