

# RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

ANNIVERSARY EDITION





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This game is dedicated to Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>INTRODUCTION</u> .....	4
<u>CHAPTER ONE:</u> <u>BURNT OFFERINGS</u> .....	8
<u>CHAPTER TWO:</u> <u>THE SKINSAW MURDERS</u> .....	66
<u>CHAPTER THREE:</u> <u>THE HOOK MOUNTAIN MASSACRE</u> .....	126
<u>CHAPTER FOUR:</u> <u>FORTRESS OF THE STONE GIANTS</u> .....	182
<u>CHAPTER FIVE:</u> <u>SINS OF THE SAVIORS</u> .....	234
<u>CHAPTER SIX:</u> <u>SPIRES OF XIN-SHALAST</u> .....	298
<u>APPENDICES</u> .....	366



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# INTRODUCTION

## “The town of Sandpoint needs you!”

THOSE WERE THE FIRST WORDS IN THE FOREWORD OF *PATHFINDER ADVENTURE PATH #1*, WHICH PREMIERED THE FIRST RISE OF THE RUNELORDS ADVENTURE, “BURNT OFFERINGS.” THIS CALL TO ARMS WAS FOLLOWED BY TWO PAGES TITLED “WELCOME TO GOLARION,” INTRODUCING THE TOWN OF SANDPOINT, THE INNER SEA REGION, AND THE WORLD OF GOLARION ITSELF. THAT WAS 5 YEARS AGO. SINCE THEN, THE TOWN OF SANDPOINT HAS BECOME ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN LOCATIONS IN THE *PATHFINDER* CAMPAIGN SETTING. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO KNEW ABOUT SANDPOINT WERE A SMALL HANDFUL OF FOLKS HERE AT PAIZO PUBLISHING. TODAY, THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF PLAYER CHARACTER HEROES (AND—LET’S BE HONEST—NOT A SMALL NUMBER OF PC VILLAINS) HAVE STARTED THEIR ADVENTURING CAREERS THERE. SANDPOINT HAS APPEARED IN TWO ADVENTURE PATHS, AND IS THE STARTING LOCATION FOR THE *PATHFINDER RPG BEGINNER BOX*. BUT EVEN AFTER HALF A DECADE AND THE PASSAGE OF UNTOLD NUMBERS OF HEROES, THE TOWN OF SANDPOINT STILL NEEDS YOU!



If you’ve run or played through the Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path, you’ll find the book you’re reading a pleasant homecoming. Much of what you remember has remained the same, but a significant amount has changed as well—for the better. In adapting and updating Rise of the Runelords to the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game from the previous rules edition it utilized, we did more than just revise stat blocks and rules content to fall into line with the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*. Portions that were confusing were clarified, areas that felt too rushed have been bolstered, and entirely new encounters and locations have been added for veteran players to explore. If you’re familiar with the way Runelords looked in volumes 1 through 6 of Pathfinder Adventure Path, you’ll find surprises in each chapter awaiting your discovery, be they relatively small (such as an opportunity to meet Lonjiku Kaijitsu before his doom, or an unexpected giant ally in the hills beyond Fort Rannick) or rather significant (such as the new denizen of the basement below Habe’s Sanitarium, the fully detailed Festering Maze in Runeforge, or the additional encounters in the last half of “Spires of Xin-Shalast”). We also mined the [paizo.com](http://paizo.com) messageboards for feedback from who-knows-how-many people who played through the original six-part adventure (if you posted something in those boards in the last 5 years, chances are good you helped make this book what it is, so thanks!). Throughout all the changes and updates, though, our overriding philosophy was to change as little as possible, to preserve as much of the original tone of the adventures as we could so that people playing Rise

of the Runelords today could compare notes with those who played it 5 years ago and find that they share many of the same experiences.

Of course, if you’re brand new to Rise of the Runelords, now’s your chance to find out how the Pathfinder Adventure Paths got their start. An awful lot of early world development happened during the Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path, and many things that got relatively minor name drops in this AP have gone on to become significant parts of the world of Golarion.

In either case, new or old, break out your Sihedrons and sharpen your swords, because the threats are greater, the monsters are deadlier, and the stakes are higher in this quintessential edition of the Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path.

## USING THIS BOOK

Rise of the Runelords is a complete campaign designed to take a group of four PCs from 1st level all the way to 17th or 18th level. During this campaign, the party will face an ever-escalating (both in power and size) cast of enemies, starting with goblins and working up to ghouls, ogres, and stone giants, and finally reaching dragons, sinister undead masterminds, eldritch invaders from other dimensions, and an ancient wizard-king.

The campaign itself is presented in the six chapters that make up the bulk of the book. GMs should make sure they’re familiar with an entire chapter before running it, as parts of each adventure may be attempted in an order quite different than the one in which they’re presented on the page! The end of this book contains eight appendices





## RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

INTRODUCTION



designed to help expand the adventures herein or present new rules elements including monsters, magic items, and spells that players encounter along the way.

Rise of the Runelords relies primarily on content from the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* and the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, but many monsters from *Bestiary 2* and *Bestiary 3* have significant roles to play in the campaign as well. GMs should have easy access to all four of these books' contents while running this Adventure Path. In addition, a few NPCs in this campaign utilize material found in the *Advanced Player's Guide* (particularly the oracle and witch classes and the rules for character traits), but in these cases we've provided full stat blocks for those NPCs—familiarity with those base classes is really all that's needed from that book. Some of the elements from the *GameMastery Guide* (particularly the rules for haunts, which play important roles in Chapters Two and Six of this book) are significant parts of the campaign as well. The above rules can be found online for free as part of the Pathfinder Reference Document at [paizo.com/pathfinder/prd](http://paizo.com/pathfinder/prd). Finally, Rise of the Runelords assumes you're familiar with the world of Golarion, as detailed in *The Inner Sea World Guide*, and in particular with the region of Varisia, where this campaign takes place.

### TEN FUN FACTS ABOUT GOBLINS

That original foreword for *Pathfinder Adventure Path #1* contained more than just an introduction to the town of Sandpoint and the world of Golarion—it also reinvented the goblin for our setting. Much of the mayhem and madness that inspired the goblins in Chapter One: Burnt Offerings came from the following list James Jacobs wrote

up one night not long after Wayne Reynolds finished his now-infamous design for the Pathfinder goblin. The list is reprinted here, both for your entertainment and to aid you in capturing the specific kind of frantic evil that goblins exhibit so well.

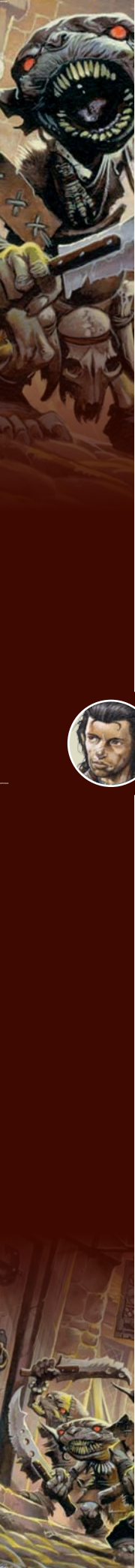
**1. HORSE HATE:** Goblins excel at riding animals, but they don't quite get horses. In fact, their hatred of all things horse is matched only by their fear of horses, who tend to step on goblins who get too close.

**2. DOG HATE:** Although goblins raise horrible rat-faced creatures called (creatively enough) goblin dogs to use as mounts, and ride wolves or worgs if they can get them—goblins are quick to explain that wolves are NOT dogs—their hatred of plain old dogs nearly matches their hatred of horses. The feeling is mutual. If your dog's barking at the woodpile for no reason, chances are he smells a frightened goblin hiding in there somewhere.

**3. GOBLINS RAID JUNKYARDS:** Garbage pits, gutters, sewers—anywhere there's garbage, you can bet goblins are nearby. Goblins are weirdly adept at crafting weapons and armor from refuse, and are fond of killing people with what they throw away.

**4. GOBLINS LOVE TO SING:** Unfortunately, as catchy as their lyrics can be, goblin songs tend to be a bit too creepy and disturbing to catch on in polite society.





**5. THEY'RE SNEAKY:** An excited or angry goblin is a noisy, chattering, toothy menace, but even then, he can drop into an unsettling silence in a heartbeat. This, matched with their diminutive size, makes goblins unnervingly adept at hiding in places you'd never expect: stacks of firewood, rain barrels, under logs, under chicken coops, in ovens....

**6. THEY'RE A LITTLE CRAZY:** The fact that goblins think of things like ovens as good hiding places reveals much about their inability to think plans through to the most likely outcome. That, and they tend to be easily distracted, particularly by shiny things and animals smaller than them that might make good eating.

**7. THEY'RE VORACIOUS:** Given enough supplies, a goblin generally takes nearly a dozen meals a day. Most goblin tribes don't have enough supplies to accommodate such ravenous appetites, which is why the little menaces are so prone to going on raids.

**8. THEY LIKE FIRE:** Burning things is one of the great goblin pastimes, although they're generally pretty careful about lighting fires in their own lairs, especially since goblins tend to live in large tangled thistle patches and sleep in beds of dried leaves and grass. But give a goblin a torch and someone else's home and you've got trouble.

**9. THEY GET STUCK EASILY:** Goblins have wiry frames but wide heads. They live in cramped warrens. Sometimes too cramped.

**10. GOBLINS BELIEVE WRITING STEALS YOUR SOUL:** The walls of goblin lairs and the ruins of towns goblins have raided are littered with pictures of their exploits. They never use writing, though. That's not lucky. Writing steals words out of your head. You can't get them back.

## CAMPAIGN SYNOPSIS

The Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path begins as the PCs take part in the Swallowtail Festival in the town of Sandpoint, yet as the celebration draws to a close, a band of goblins attacks! The PCs fight off the invaders and establish themselves as heroes, so when local bartender Ameiko Kajitsu goes missing, the town turns to the PCs for help. Rescuing Ameiko reveals a conspiracy: her estranged brother is involved with a group that has gathered the goblin tribes for an even greater raid on Sandpoint, intent on offering the town up in sacrifice to the goddess Lamashtu. After tracking the goblins to their lair in Thistletop, the PCs confront the conspirators and defeat their leader, a bitter aasimar named Nualia who carries a curious amulet depicting a seven-pointed star.

Soon thereafter, a murderer terrorizes Sandpoint. Victims are left mutilated, and carved into their chests is

a familiar seven-pointed star—a clue left by a madman calling himself “the Skinsaw Man.” The PCs eventually confront the murderer, an old acquaintance named Aldern Foxglove, in a haunted mansion near Sandpoint. There, they learn that he is but an agent of a larger cult based in the city of Magnimar. The investigation moves to that city, where the PCs confront the Skinsaw Cult before learning a related danger has taken up residence in an old clock tower. Here, the PCs encounter the true leader of the cult, a sadistic lamia matriarch. Unknown to the PCs, this lamia matriarch has been charged with harvesting “souls of greed” to aid in the reawakening of an ancient wizard-tyrant known as Runelord Karzoug. The lamia's use of the Sihedron Rune—the same seven-pointed star both Nualia and the Skinsaw Man employed—hints at a larger threat.

The heroic PCs are next sent into central Varisia to investigate why the rangers of remote Fort Rannick have gone silent. They arrive to find the fort overrun by ogres and the surviving rangers held prisoner by degenerate ogrekin. By rescuing the rangers, the PCs liberate Fort Rannick and start to piece together what's really going on in the region. After dealing with a flooding town, a failing Thassilonian dam, and a haunted swamp, they finally arrive on the upper slopes of the infamous Hook Mountain where they confront and defeat the ogres, and learn that a powerful stone giant named Mokmurian is planning a raid on their hometown.

The PCs return to Sandpoint to help defend against Mokmurian's raiders, then take the fight to Jorgenfist, the fortress of the stone giants. By infiltrating this citadel and defeating Mokmurian, they not only end the threat of the massing army of giants but also discover that Mokmurian was but another agent of Runelord Karzoug, and that the Sihedron Rune is a symbol he is utilizing to aid in his return to this world. Yet, there's still time before Karzoug can fully regain his powers. Using Mokmurian's library of Thassilonian lore, the PCs learn that the key to Karzoug's defeat may be hidden in a lost dungeon called Runeforge, and that the route to that dungeon is hidden in a dungeon below Sandpoint.

The PCs return to Sandpoint in search of that information, finding it in a recently opened shrine to Lamashtu guarded by an ancient lunatic from the time of Thassilon itself. Following the clues they find there, the PCs head north and enter the dungeon of Runeforge. After gathering components, they utilize the magical pool at Runeforge's heart, transforming their weapons into potent *runeforged* weapons capable of providing them significant advantages in the final battle to come.

Armed with the weaponry they need, the PCs make the journey into the Kodar Mountains to confront Karzoug in his ancient city of Xin-Shalast. The PCs will need all of their wits, magic, and might to prevail, for Karzoug has drawn his most powerful allies to his side to defend him from any and all who would try to stop his return!





## RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

INTRODUCTION

MAP ONE:  
VARISIA



## CAMPAIGN PACING

One thing to keep in mind as you run *Rise of the Runelords* is the campaign's overall pacing. While you can certainly run the adventure as a non-stop marathon over the course of many game sessions, it's important to give the players time now and then for their characters to stop and rest. After all, they need time to craft magic items, catch up with old friends, or simply relax and recover from their ordeals between various harrowing adventures. It's easy to get caught up in the rush of ever-greater threats as the PCs uncover additional layers of the dangerous conspiracy that threatens Varisia, but in the end, the actual timetable on which Karzoug's rise is scheduled to occur is kept deliberately vague.

## BEYOND THIS BOOK

The land of Varisia is among the most heavily detailed regions in the *Pathfinder Campaign Setting*. GMs seeking more information on the area to enrich their *Rise of the Runelords* campaign, as well as players who want to tie their characters more closely to the people and places of this rugged frontier, have a wealth of options beyond the pages of this book.

Aside from the *Inner Sea World Guide* and other *Adventure Paths* set in this region—*Curse of the Crimson Throne*, *Second Darkness*, *Jade Regent*, and *Shattered Star*—the city of Magnimar, one of the major settings of *Chapter Two: The Skinsaw Murders*, is thoroughly detailed in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Magnimar, City of Monuments* and *Pathfinder Tales: Blood of*

*the City*. *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Lost Cities of Golarion* thoroughly explores the ruins of Xin-Shalast, the site of the campaign's climax. *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Lost Kingdoms* and *Giants Revisited* also take an expansive look at the ancient secrets and soldiers of the Thassilonian empire. GMs can also find numerous official game aids to heighten their experience, such as the *Rise of the Runelords Face Cards*, *Rise of the Runelords Item Cards*, *Rise of the Runelords Pawn Collection*, *Pathfinder Dice Set: Rise of the Runelords*, and *Pathfinder Battles: Rise of the Runelords Miniatures*. But the greatest tools available to any GM running *Rise of the Runelords* are the messageboards at [paizo.com](http://paizo.com), where the collected experiences, suggestions, and embellishments of hundreds of GMs await, with discussions continuing every day.

Players interested in learning more should also check out [paizo.com](http://paizo.com) for the free *Rise of the Runelords Anniversary Edition Player's Guide* PDF, packed full of class-related suggestions, local details, and new traits to help tie characters to Sandpoint and prepare them for the challenges of this *Adventure Path*. *Pathfinder Player Companion: Varisia, Birthplace of Legends* also includes a player-friendly overview of the region, details on its unique cultures, and options for characters of every class. Finally, the character traits on pages 330–331 of the *Advanced Player's Guide* are specifically tailored to appeal to players who start their adventuring careers in Sandpoint, and having characters who are tied to the town from the start will only increase their desires to protect it from goblins, giants, dragons, and ancient unfathomably powerful runelords!