



# 6

# SPIRES OF XIN-SHALAST

BY GREG A. VAUGHAN







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## CHAPTER BACKGROUND

AT THE HEADWATERS OF THE SACRED RIVER AVAH ROSE A MIGHTY CITY ON THE SLOPES OF A LEGENDARY MOUNTAIN—A TESTAMENT TO THE GREED OF RUNELORD KARZOUG. THIS IS XIN-SHALAST, FESTOONED WITH THE PLUNDER OF A THOUSAND CAMPAIGNS. IT HAS REMAINED HIDDEN FOR MILLENNIA IN ITS NARROW VALLEY IN THE SHADOW OF M HAR MASSIF—A MOUNTAIN OF MYTHOLOGICAL PROPORTIONS AND SINISTER HISTORY. ATOP THIS PEAK, BEARING THE UNSETTLING CARVEN VISAGE FOR WHICH IT WAS NAMED, STAND THE FABLED SPIRES OF XIN-SHALAST, RISING ABOVE THE CITY LIKE THE PINNACLES OF A CROWN. THUS DID KARZOUG SHOW HIS MASTERY OVER BOTH THE EARTH AND THE REALMS BEYOND.



**M**ore than 10,000 years ago, the empire of Thassilon was ruled by seven tyrannical despots known as runelords, powerful wizards whose magic was aligned on what have become known as the seven mortal sins. When the empire crumbled, these runelords were prepared. They escaped death (or worse) by various methods, entering states of hibernation from which their apprentices and loyal followers would revive them when the right time came. Yet the fall of Thassilon was far more complete and decisive than even the most pessimistic runelords anticipated, and none survived who could free them in the centuries of darkness to follow. In time, they were forgotten by the world and its heirs.

Runelord Karzoug ruled a land called Shalast, and as the lord of greed, his realm was the most decadent. His capital city, Xin-Shalast, lay nestled in a valley in the mountains, a place of golden streets and silver roofs sprawled in the shadow of volcanoes and watched over by one of the tallest peaks in the world—mysterious Mhar Massif. When the end drew near, Karzoug charged his agents in Runeforge with developing a method for him to escape the fall of the empire, and they responded by taking the location of his palace into account. For the Spires of Xin-Shalast, as his palace was known, were perched at the summit of Mhar Massif, where the boundaries between worlds are thin. Karzoug's agents transformed the source of his eldritch power, a device known as a *runewell*, into a portal of sorts into the void between these worlds. When the end came, Karzoug stepped through this portal and into a state of suspended animation in this extradimensional vault, caught between the Mhar Massif in this world and the terrible dimension known as Leng in another. And without surviving apprentices to revive him, Karzoug remained there for millennia.

The tale of Karzoug's awakening, of his slow return to Golarion, has been told over the past five chapters. Karzoug is now nearly ready to step back into this

world, his powers restored and his city resurrected, to raise Thassilon from the ashes. Yet there is still time. Karzoug is awake, but though his mind has been hard at work, he cannot yet physically leave the demiplane hidden between this world and Leng—a place known as the Eye of Avarice. While the stone giant Mokmurian was his primary agent in Varisia, in Xin-Shalast Mokmurian would have been but a captain in his army. The denizens of the ruined city have aligned themselves to Karzoug's banner, and though they bicker and fight among themselves, they are ready to serve him. Among these minions are devils, dragons, tribes of deadly lamias, creatures culled from the madness of Leng, and armies of giants led by powerful rune giants. With his rune giant minions, Karzoug's influence over the giants of Varisia will become complete.

Yet these are not Karzoug's only agents in Xin-Shalast, for he has selected new generals, new champions, and even a new apprentice to serve him. The stage is set for the runelord's return, and only one group of heroes stands between him and Varisia.

### RECURRING VILLAINS

Although *Rise of the Runelords* assumes that the majority of the villainous leaders the PCs confront are slain when they are defeated, if any of them have managed to escape the punishing blades and spells of your party, this chapter is the best and most logical point to reintroduce them. While some villains (notably Mokmurian) have their dooms all but written into the text of their encounters, others (like the lamia matriarch sisters Xanesha and Lucrecia, some of the masters of Runeforge, Barl Breakbones, Arkhyst, or even Nualia) could conceivably survive and harbor long-lasting grudges against the PCs.

If you do wish to have escaped villains come back to vex the party one last time, the best place to use them is in the Pinnacle of Avarice. For some of them, this could simply represent a return to their original home, but





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**CHAPTER BACKGROUND**

**PART ONE: SEEKING XIN-SHALAST**

**PART TWO: WHISPERS IN THE WIND**

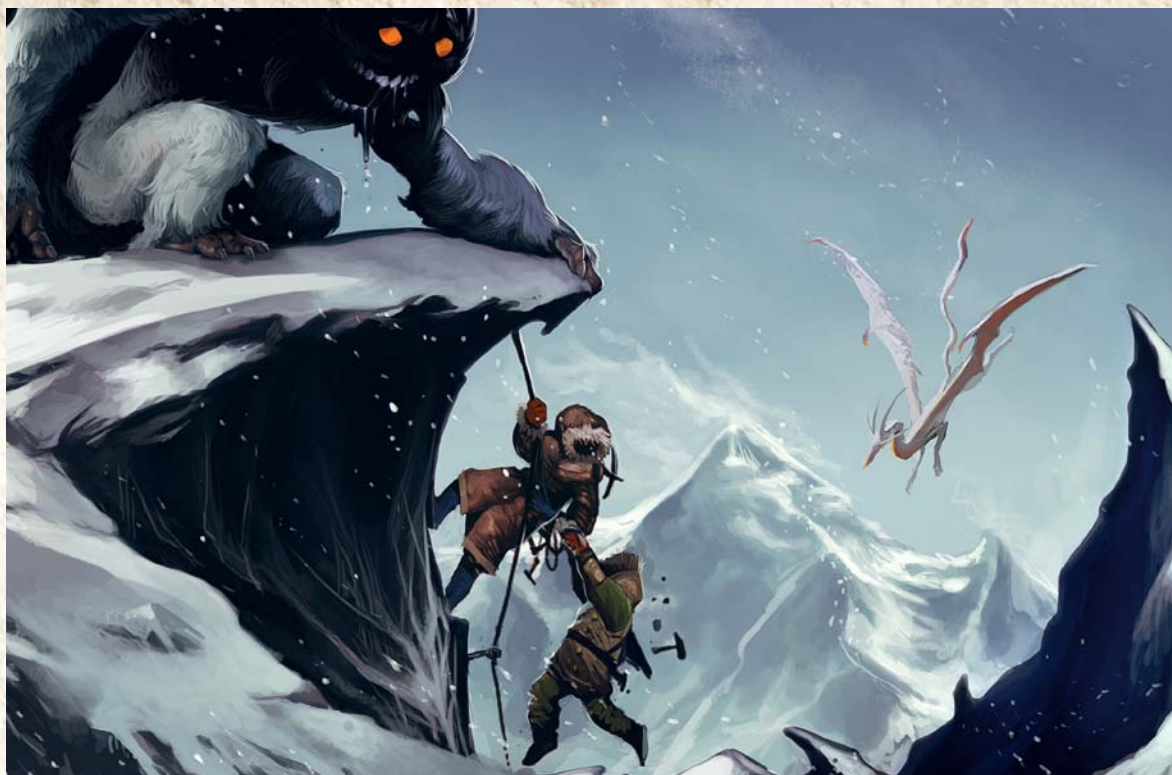
**PART THREE: ON THE WORLD'S ROOF**

**PART FOUR: XIN-SHALAST**

**PART FIVE: SCALING MCHAR MASSIF**

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for others, this could represent a shifting of alliances and goals encouraged by the overwhelming desire for vengeance against the PCs. Nualia, for example, may seethe with such fury that she could seek out the PCs' enemies and volunteer her aid against them, eventually reaching the Spires of Xin-Shalast herself to pledge her support of Karzoug.

In all cases, you should take the time to advance these villains in level to something appropriate to challenge high-level PCs. If you're using them as solo fights, aim for a CR of 2 or 3 points above the average party level—if you're going to have them join forces with other encounters, the total CR of that encounter should be 2 or 3 points above the average party level. You want these rematch fights to be exciting and memorable, after all!

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

With the magic and lore retrieved from Runeforge, the PCs are finally ready to seek out Xin-Shalast and confront the rising runelord. After researching the ancient and legendary city and discovering that Mokmurian deliberately expunged his route to Xin-Shalast from his notes, the best clue the PCs have to go on is a pair of dwarven brothers who claimed to have discovered the city's location and set off into the Kodar Mountains to plunder its riches. In their cabin in the Kodar foothills, the PCs find more than a map to Xin-Shalast—they find the brothers' ghosts, still tormented by the supernatural creature that slew them so many

years ago. By defeating this menace and appeasing the ghosts, the PCs can finally discover the secret route to Xin-Shalast and learn several important secrets that will aid them in their final quest.

Braving the heights of the Kodar Mountains, the PCs face challenges both natural and wholly unnatural in the ruined Lower City, now being slowly reoccupied by Karzoug's army. Finding unexpected allies in the city, the party learns a secret way to surmount the incomparable heights of the face of Mhar Massif, atop which stand the very spires of Karzoug's citadel. Finally, they confront Karzoug himself within the Eye of Avarice, where the fate of the ancient runelord—and Varisia's future—is decided.

### ADVANCEMENT TRACK

**15TH LEVEL:** The PCs should be 15th level when they begin this chapter.

**16TH LEVEL:** The PCs should reach 16th level just after finishing the wendigo siege—they should not attempt to explore Xin-Shalast at a lower level.

**17TH LEVEL:** The PCs should reach 17th level as they begin exploring the Pinnacle of Avarice, or as soon as possible after they reach this site.

**CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE:** The PCs should be close to 18th level by the time they reach the final encounter.





## PART ONE: SEEKING XIN-SHALAST

XIN-SHALAST IS LOCATED HIGH IN THE KODAR MOUNTAINS, CLOAKED IN AGELESS MAGIC THAT PREVENTS ITS APPROACH BY MOST WHO SEEK ITS LEGENDARY STREETS. THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN WORLDS ARE TRANSITORY HERE, A FACET THE CITY'S FOUNDERS SOUGHT PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT SUCH CONDITIONS MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO REACH WITHOUT KNOWING THE WAY. AN IDLE SEEKER OF XIN-SHALAST COULD WALK UP ONE SIDE OF MHAR MASSIF AND DOWN THE OTHER WITHOUT EVER FINDING THE CITY—THOSE WHO SEEK IT ACTIVELY CAN SPEND THEIR ENTIRE LIVES LOOKING WITHOUT SUCCESS.



**M**okmurian discovered Xin-Shalast's location with the aid of books and maps he recovered from the hidden library under Jorgenfist, and he destroyed those sources after committing them to memory. Yet traces remain. A character who researches Xin-Shalast in the library of Thassilon under Jorgenfist and rolls well on his Knowledge check can learn much of the city's location. Likewise, interrogating prisoners from Runeforge or perhaps studying their notes and spellbooks can reveal much. As this chapter begins, the PCs should have learned the following about Xin-Shalast—if they've not yet learned this information have one of the PCs discover the missing clues while studying a recently acquired spellbook, or perhaps after they speak to an expert on Thassilon, such as Sandpoint's own Brodert Quink.

- Xin-Shalast is located on the towering mountain of Mhar Massif, in a valley that lies at the headwaters of the River Avah.
- Mhar Massif itself is said to serve as a bridge to strange realms beyond Golarion.
- Anyone who can find the River Avah can follow it directly into Xin-Shalast.

The problem arises from the fact that this entire region, from the River Avah to the summit of Mhar Massif, lies in a realm where reality has frayed at the edges. In order to reach Xin-Shalast, the PCs need a guide of some sort—or at the very least, detailed notes left behind by someone who has been to Xin-Shalast before.

### CONSULTING BRODERT

The PCs have likely spoken to Brodert Quink, Sandpoint's local expert on all things Thassilonian, about their discoveries. This adventure assumes he's the one they go to for advice again when they seek answers to finding the hidden city of Xin-Shalast, though they could just as easily consult other experts, ranging from Pathfinders in Magnimar to extraplanar oracles to their own sages and scholars within the party.

Assuming the PCs have stayed in contact with Brodert since his help back during “The Skinsaw Murders,” the old sage has begun to see the PCs as his own personal field research team. Certainly, if they share with him confirmation that the Old Light of Sandpoint was once a weapon and thus validate his own educated guesses as to the ruin's original purpose, he is very friendly indeed.

Unfortunately, Xin-Shalast is as much a legend to Brodert as to any other scholar of things Thassilonian. Yet if the PCs ask him about Xin-Shalast, he grows thoughtful for a moment, then snaps his fingers as he remembers an old account of a pair of dwarven brothers who claimed to have discovered the route to the fabled city. After rooting through his books and scrolls for a few minutes, he emerges triumphant with a letter he received from the author of the definitive cyclopedia on the region of Varisia and the Storval Plateau: Cevil “Redwing” Charms's well-known (and well-criticized) volume, *Eidolon*. He allows the PCs to read the letter but won't let them keep it—Redwing is one of his favorite authors, and the letter is a personal treasure. The letter is reproduced as Handout 6-1.

The letter concerns the escapades of two dwarven brothers, Silas and Karivek Vekker, who journeyed into the Kodar Mountains and supposedly discovered the route to Xin-Shalast. Brodert has done his own research and can confirm that Silas and Karivek Vekker did indeed abscond with a fair amount of invested capital into the mountains. The common theory in Janderhoff is that the dwarves used the “discovery of Xin-Shalast” as a cover for a con, but those who knew the Vekkers personally held them in quite high regard. Brodert suspects that they did indeed discover Xin-Shalast, and their secrecy was one born of necessity rather than malice. For if they had discovered the great city, until they could return with proof, it would only be wise to guard the discovery. Brodert theorizes that the Vekkers met some sort of foul end in the Kodars, and that if their base of operations could be found (along the banks of the Kazaron River, according to Redwing's letter), perhaps clues to the city's location could be found therein.



*Salutations, Mr. Gwink!*

*Thank you again for the kind words and drink. It's always a pleasure to speak with readers of my work, especially those well read and civilized enough to know of my writing beyond *Eidolon*. Alas, I was unable to procure a copy of the early draft from my personal files. It would seem that it has gone the way of so much of my early work, lost forever to the gulfs of time and narrow-minded publishers unable to grasp the import of a young Pathfinder's work.*

*Fortunately, my mind is as quick now as it was in those early days of my explorations of your fantastic homeland. I recall the evening I first heard the story of Xin-Shalast, while seated on a log in a Varisian camp, sharing ruby mead with an enchanting young woman. Ah, but that's a story for other times.*

*I was intrigued by the tale, though. All peoples have tales of "cities of gold," yet with Xin-Shalast, the Varisians had no tradition of explorers seeking it. They viewed the place as one of evil, a place to be feared and forsaken. As far as I could tell, none of your indigenous people ever sought out the ruins before the advent of Chelish rule. But there was mention, come to think of it, of two dwarven brothers. Vekker, I think their names were. Claimed to have found the route to Xin-Shalast and convinced several tradesmen in Janderhoff to support and supply their plan to establish a base of operations in the low Kodar Mountains along the Kazaron. Their vanishing into the Kodars bankrupted all but one of their investors, I hear, and even today, the Vekker name is generally accompanied by a litany of rousing dwarven profanity when it comes up in Hoffian taverns.*

*In the stead of enclosing a copy of the early, complete draft of my work, though, please find a signed copy of *Eidolon* with this missive. I trust it will look quite handsome on your shelf.*

*In good health,  
Redwing*

## USING MAGIC

Even if there aren't PCs in the group who can cast divination spells, they can certainly seek out spellcasters or scrolls in Magnimar to use magic to aid in their search for Xin-Shalast. Unfortunately, most divination spells are somewhat reduced in effectiveness due to the reality-altering region in Mhar Massif's shadow. Use the results of spells like *commune* and *contact other plane* to steer the PCs in the right direction, but don't feel bound to answer questions precisely. Spells like *legend lore* reveal all of the bulleted information on page 302, as well as the fact that most recently two dwarven brothers named Vekker claimed to have discovered the route to the city, but after establishing a base of operations in the Kodar Mountains, they were never heard from again.

## A. THE WORLD'S ROOF

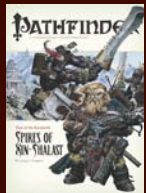
The Kodar Mountains are one of Golarion's most intimidating and massive mountain ranges. Few places in the world are more inhospitable to life than these mountains, yet life endures here. The extremes make for equally powerful monsters and denizens, of course—only the strongest survive for long in this region, known to the Shoanti as the World's Roof.

This adventure assumes the PCs come seeking Xin-Shalast by first traveling up the Kazaron River in search of the vanished Vekker brothers and, possibly, the River

Avah, said to show the route to Xin-Shalast. How the PCs reach the Kodar Mountains is left to them. *Teleport* is unlikely to be useful until the PCs actually reach the Kodars and know where they're going, but spells like *wind walk* and *shadow walk* can make the journey fly by. Certainly, speedy methods of magical travel can come in handy once the PCs reach the cabin or even Xin-Shalast, but on their first trip up into the forbidding mountains, chances are good that they'll have to make that journey the old-fashioned way.

Assuming the PCs are traveling up the Kazaron River, it is at the point labeled "A" on the map on page 318 that they transition between rugged foothills and truly intimidating mountains. As long as the PCs continue to travel along the riverbank, they find the overland journey somewhat easier—but eventually they need to head into the mountains themselves.

Make sure to be familiar with the rules for adventuring in high mountains, as presented on pages 428–430 of the *Core Rulebook*. The physical dangers presented by mountain climbing and high altitudes are, in many cases, as dangerous as the monsters the PCs are destined to face in this adventure, and enforcing these hazards can help to drive home the fact that the heroes are exploring a truly inhospitable range. More to the point, if the players feel the Kodar Mountains are dangerous, they can better understand why Xin-Shalast has remained hidden from the world for so long.



## SPIRES OF XIN-SHALAST

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BACKGROUND

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SEEKING XIN-SHALAST

PART TWO:  
WHISPERS IN THE WIND

PART THREE:  
ON THE WORLD'S ROOF

PART FOUR:  
XIN-SHALAST

PART FIVE:  
SCALING MHAR MASSIF

PART SIX:  
PINNACLE OF AVARICE

PART SEVEN:  
THE EYE OF AVARICE





## PART TWO: WHISPERS IN THE WIND

THE DWARVEN BROTHERS SILAS AND KARIVEK VEKKER CAME TO THE KODAR MOUNTAINS 70 YEARS AGO, FOLLOWING UP ON RUMORS OF AN EXTENSIVE VEIN OF GOLD IN THE HIGH MOUNTAINS. WHEN THEY FOUND GOLD IN SOME NEARBY ALLUVIAL GLACIER DEPOSITS, THEY STAKED THEIR CLAIM AND OPENED A PLACER MINE. AS IS OFTEN THE WAY OF DWARVES, THEY WERE VERY SECRETIVE ABOUT THEIR MINE'S LOCATION, GOING AS FAR AS TO BUILD A CABIN AND MINING HEADQUARTERS SEVERAL MILES FROM THEIR CLAIM. NEITHER COULD IMAGINE HOW CLOSE THEY WERE TO THE RICHEST SITE IN ALL OF VARISIA—XIN-SHALAST.



Silas and Karivek worked their placer mine for several decades but knew it would soon play out, so they scouted deeper into the surrounding mountains, searching the streams and cliff faces for a show of color where they could potentially find new deposits for mining. Their skill at mountaineering and their dwarven stubbornness paid off—they accidentally found the headwaters of the River Avah, and beyond that, Xin-Shalast.

The dwarves only explored the very edge of the city before they were forced to flee from a group of enraged giants. Yet the wealth they saw in the city had done its work—all thoughts of mining for gold had been banished from their minds. Why bother pulling gold out of deep holes in the dirt when you could just pick it up off the ground? Yet Xin-Shalast was far from a safe place, and in order to harvest it properly, the dwarves realized they needed support.

They returned to Janderhoff, where they approached several mining consortiums and quietly secured supplies and financing to begin deeper exploration of Xin-Shalast, proving their claim with the strange relics they'd brought back. The investors asked the Vekkers to keep their discovery quiet and put vast amounts of money at the Vekkers' disposal. The brothers returned to the north with a small army of miners, explorers, and mercenaries, all eager to make a fortune exploring Xin-Shalast.

Yet the Vekkers' army never made it to the City of Greed. Only a day after reaching the glacial site of their first mine, an avalanche struck their convoy and carried off all of their supplies. An attempt to retrieve the supplies resulted in the deaths of seven more dwarves. Their return route blocked, the survivors made their way on, hoping to find solace, shelter, and—above all—more food in the storerooms of the Vekkers' cabin, but upon arriving they found the place had been raided by the abominable snowmen that dwell in the Kodars. No food remained.

It didn't take long for starvation to drive the dwarves to desperation and then to madness, and when Karivek suggested cannibalism as a route to regain their

strength for the journey back out of the mountains, only his brother Silas and a few other dwarves objected. The dissenters were outnumbered, and with a fury born of madness, Karivek and the rest of the starving dwarves fell upon their companions and fed well for the first time in a month.

Then a curious thing happened. The dwarves found the feast strangely invigorating. Their minds cleared and their strength returned, and with it their greed. The dwarves decided not to turn back, but to continue on into the Kodar Mountains to find Xin-Shalast. As they traveled, those who fell behind or complained or merely had the disadvantage of being the largest among them became new meals, and with each meal, the dwarves felt their strength growing. They paid no attention to the strange whispers on the wind, or to feet blackened by frostbite and falling to pieces, or to the fact that they had been wandering the mountains for days without aim. Eventually, only one dwarf remained—Karivek Vekker. With nothing left to eat, he sat down upon a lonely mountain ledge overlooking the Kazaron River, and as starvation set in once more, he noticed for the first time the whispers in the wind. A shape congealed in the mist before his eyes, and as the source of the cannibal cravings took form in the air before him, Karivek looked upon the wendigo that had brought the doom upon them all and attempted to hurl himself off the ledge in despair. The wendigo caught him and dragged him through the sky with such speed that the dwarf's frostbitten feet were blasted away, and at the end, the evil spirit dropped him from a staggering height. Karivek had nearly a minute to despair and regret before he hit the ground.

### VEKKERS' CABIN

Though the placer mine itself was long ago lost in an avalanche, the brothers' cabin still survives to this day. Anyone who travels this far up the Kazaron River can't miss the cabin built of split logs cemented with a rough mortar and a shake shingle roof. The logs and shingles are decades old, and a profusion of lichens growing on







**SPIRES OF XIN-SHALAST**

CHAPTER BACKGROUND

PART ONE: SEEKING XIN-SHALAST

PART TWO: WHISPERS IN THE WIND

MAP ONE: VEKKERS' CABIN & ENVIRONS

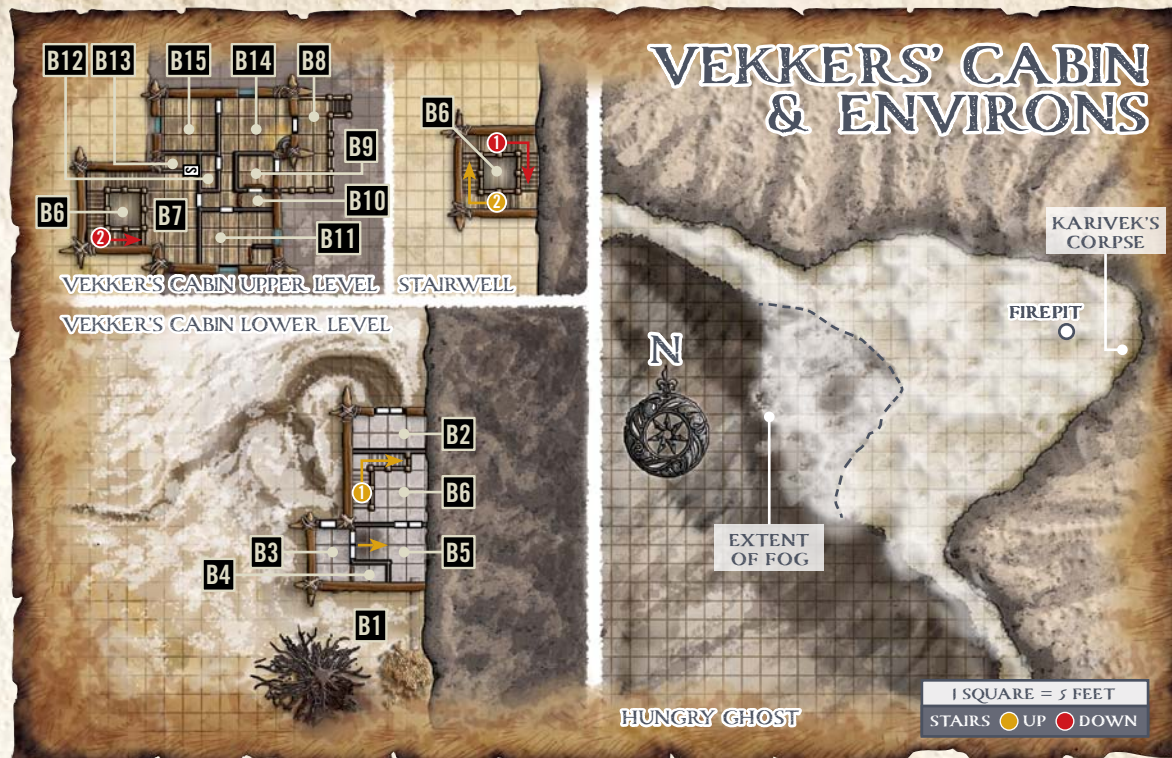
PART THREE: ON THE WORLD'S ROOF

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these walls gives it a strangely organic look. Each window is 2 feet high by 2 feet wide and has double shutters to aid in keeping out the cold. The cabin itself sits low in a valley in the Kodars, at an altitude of merely 4,500 feet.

No strangers to the dangers presented by the local fauna (especially the abominable snowmen, with whom the Vekkers had countless run-ins), the somewhat paranoid brothers constructed their cabin perched defensively at the edge of a 60-foot-high cliff. The dwarves then constructed a spiraling stair and pulley-and-bucket system leading directly up to the cabin from the base of the cliff. This they encased in a wooden shaft made of the same mortared logs, and built a small storage shed and an addition at the base of the stair where the mined ore could be separated from the worthless gangue before going through all the trouble of hauling it up to the cabin.

Today, the abominable snowmen and other regional beasts avoid the cabin for a singular reason: the place is haunted by the spirits of the dwarves eaten by their kin a decade ago. These haunts aren't evil, but neither do they welcome visitors to the cabin. Driven by the pain and horror of their hideous deaths, these haunts lash out at anyone trying to enter the cabin. Only one spirit among them, the shade of Silas Vekker, retains his mind and wits, but to reach him and learn how the haunted cabin can be put to rest, the PCs must brave the wrath of the rest.

Most of the haunts in this section of the adventure don't provide much of a challenge for high-level characters, but that's not really their purpose. These haunts are included more to help build on the themes

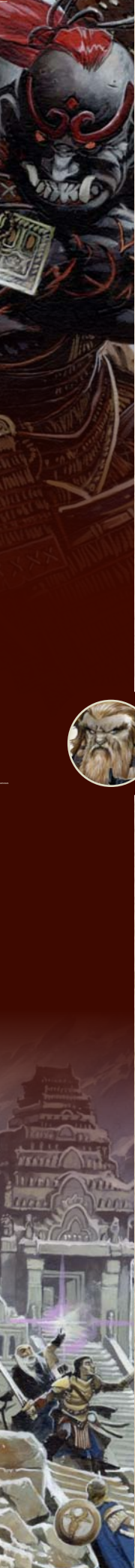
and mood of the adventure, teaching how greed can lead to terrible ends if not kept under control. Further, haunts are an excellent way for an adventure to give the players some backstory to events in the area. By the time the PCs finish their initial exploration of the cabin, they know most of the gruesome details of what happened here, and they learned of those details in an interactive way that, ideally, immerses them more in the adventure's story than would simply reading aloud some text.

Although unlikely to matter initially, the strength of the cabin's walls likely comes into play later in this adventure (see "The Wendigo Siege" on page 315). The cabin's walls have hardness 5, hp 75, and Break DC 25. Doors are hardness 5, hp 20, and Break DC 23 (most doors open easily, but some are stuck and must be forced open—this Break DC is the roll to not only force the door open but to completely smash it from its hinges). The double-shuttered windows are hardness 5, hp 20, and Break DC 18.

### THE WATCHER IN THE WASTES

The wendigo who brought ruin to the Vekkers and destroyed their hopes for fame still dwells in the surrounding region, and it does not suffer intruders into its territory well. Although powerful, the dangerous outsider prefers to wage its war against intruders in more subtle and harrowing methods, saving physical attacks as a last resort. For the duration of this part, the wendigo becomes increasingly aware of the PCs' intrusion into the region, resulting in the following escalation of minor events.





**MYSTERIOUS HOWL:** Soon after the PCs first sight the Vekker's cabin, the wendigo's forlorn howl carries over the region, a mournful, drawn-out shriek not unlike the cry of a dying elk. The monster is farther than a mile away when it makes this initial howl, and thus it has no other effect on any PC who hears the sound with a DC 25 Perception check. Those PCs who hear it can attempt a DC 27 Knowledge (planes) check to identify the sound as supernatural and likely from an outsider (the howl can be correctly identified as a wendigo's howl if this Knowledge (planes) check exceeds the DC by 10 or more).

**RISING STORM:** After the first haunt is activated, the wendigo senses the PCs' intrusion into the area and uses *control weather* to cause a rising snowstorm. For 20 minutes after the first haunt is triggered, the weather steadily worsens, eventually reaching snowstorm status after the 20 minutes. This snowstorm lasts for 4d12 hours—the wendigo “recharges” the snowstorm every 24 hours with a new *control weather* spell as long as it suspects the PCs remain in the area.

**NIGHTMARISH REST:** The wendigo observes the Vekker cabin region from a distance—unless the PCs take particular care to stay stealthy, the monster learns enough about them that it soon retreats to deeper in the mountains to cast *nightmare*, targeting one of the PCs at random with its dream haunting ability. Not only does this infuse a sleeping PC's dreams with nightmares of being a cannibal, it exposes the PC to wendigo psychosis (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 281).

**THE WENDIGO DRAWS NEAR:** As soon as the PCs defeat Karivek Vekker's ghost (see Event 3 on page 313), the wendigo howls again. This time, it's within a mile, and the entire party can hear (and perhaps become shaken as a result). This close, a successful DC 27 Knowledge (planes) check correctly identifies the howl as that of a wendigo.

**BLIZZARD:** After the second howl, the wendigo uses *control weather* to create a blizzard—it maintains this blizzard as constantly as it can for the next several days in an attempt to drive the PCs to seek shelter in the Vekker's Cabin, whereupon it lays siege to the cabin as detailed on page 315 in Event 4. Rules for blizzards appear on page 438 of the *Core Rulebook*.

## B1 THE TAILINGS (CR 14)



A split-log tower abuts the cliff face and rises from a workshop on ground level to a larger cabin perched on the cliff's edge sixty feet above. The rough wooden structure is so overgrown with lichen as to almost appear an extension of the rock face. The ground to the south of the lower structure is a steep embankment, over which a chute protrudes from the structure's southern wall. At the base of the embankment is a large pile of fine, black sand that spreads out in a deposit striated by years of

erosion. The ground surrounding the pile is barren of any plant life, with the exception of a single sagging pine tree. Faint traces of a footpath lead to the workhouse doors, though it is obvious none have come this way in many years.

The mound of sand under the chute is composed of the leavings from the act of processing gold ore in area **B5**. To separate the gold from the rock matrix, the dwarves used an arsenic solution. Over the years, this arsenic-rich debris has leached into the surrounding ground and destroyed all plant life in the region, with the exception of the lichens and fungus that grow so well on the cabin itself. Anyone coming in contact with the fine black dust risks arsenic poisoning (see page 558 of the *Core Rulebook*—if the PCs only handle the stuff and don't actually ingest any of it, they gain a +6 bonus on their saving throw to resist the poison's effects).

**CREATURE:** Two years ago, a guardian and protector of the upper treeline sensed the presence of poison and pollution here as it leached into the Kazaron and flowed downriver. This guardian, an ancient treant, came upon this area and sought to clean up the flora-killing tailings, and while it managed to move many of the contaminants away from where they were leaching into the river, its own exposure to the pollution weakened and eventually killed it—while plants are normally immune to poison, long-term exposure to this particular form of pollution kills plants just as well (only not nearly as quickly).

The death of the noble creature gave the spirits haunting the cabin a convenient corpse to focus upon. This, combined with the corruption and pollution now concentrated in the region, caused the treant to rise the next night as a horrific undead creature. Its once-kindly soul has been replaced with one of eternal hunger and wrath, and it is content now to slaughter any creatures that happen by. After killing them, it flings their shattered carcasses upon the tailings pile and awaits new victims. Now it stands beside the tailings, looking like nothing more than a dead pine tree on the verge of collapse, and does not attack unless PCs come down the embankment to examine the area of the tailings. Later, though, if a lone PC or pair of PCs exits the bottom floor of the cabin, it immediately tries to slay them before they have a chance to escape. It buries its victims shallowly in the tailings pile, where they can be discovered with a successful DC 16 Perception check.

### THE HORROR TREE

XP	CR	HP
38,400	14	199

Unique undead treant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 266)

NE Gargantuan undead

**Init** -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +27

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 28, touch 5, flat-footed 28 (-1 Dex, +23 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 199 (21d8+105)





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**Fort** +12, **Ref** +6, **Will** +15

**DR** 10/slashing; **Immune** cold, undead traits

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to fire

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +27 (4d6+15/19–20 plus fungus)

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

**Special Attacks** double damage against objects, trample (4d6+22, DC 35)

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** The horror tree has an uncanny knack for sensing druids, rangers, gnomes, and other creatures with ties to the natural world. It targets these foes over others. The horror tree pursues foes as long as they remain in sight but does not pursue enemies into the cabin (though if foes remain in reach, it does strike at them through open doors and windows).

**Morale** The horror tree fights until destroyed.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 41, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 21

**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +34; **CMD** 43 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Awesome Blow, Critical Focus, Greater Bull Rush, Greater Sunder, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (slams), Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Staggering Critical, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (slams)

**Skills** Knowledge (nature) +22, Perception +27, Sense Motive +27, Stealth +11 (+27 in forests), Survival +24

**Languages** Sylvan

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Fungus (Ex)** The horror tree's branches are encrusted with a virulent fungus that grows rapidly when in contact with blood, sending filaments ripping through the bodies of any living creatures damaged by its slams and dealing 1d6 points of Dexterity damage in the process. A creature brought to 0 Dexterity by this effect is slain.

**TREASURE:** A hollow in the undead treant's trunk hides some treasures it has gathered over the years. These can be found with a successful DC 20 Perception check of its body and consist of a large black opal worth 2,000 gp, a cracked leather backpack containing a broken rock hammer and 43 gp, 12 +2 crossbow bolts of distance, and a sealed pocket flask holding an *elixir of the peaks*.

**B2 STORAGE ROOM**

This room has a steeply sloping roof. A lock bars the doors, but it is so badly rusted that a DC 12 Strength check or 5 points of damage (hardness 6) shatters it. Within are the dusty remains of a once-thriving mining enterprise. The rotten remnants

of wheelbarrows, shovels, picks, ore sacks, plates for panning, and sluices for separating placer deposits are stacked in a jumble. These are all covered in a thick layer of frost and have deteriorated to the point of uselessness.

**B3 LOWER ENTRY**

This room has a bare plank floor. A wide double door stands to the east, and next to it a shabby curtain closes off another opening. The room's dry boards still appear to be stout, having successfully remained sealed from the elements over the years.

The outer door to this room is locked. The lock has corroded but is still strong—in fact, the corrosion has made it even more difficult to pick (DC 33 Disable Device, hardness 8, hp 20, Break DC 25).

This room served as the secure entry where the brothers could bring the ore they recovered from their mine for processing. The doors to the east are also locked, though they are not corroded and can be opened with a successful DC 30 Disable Device.



**THE HORROR TREE**



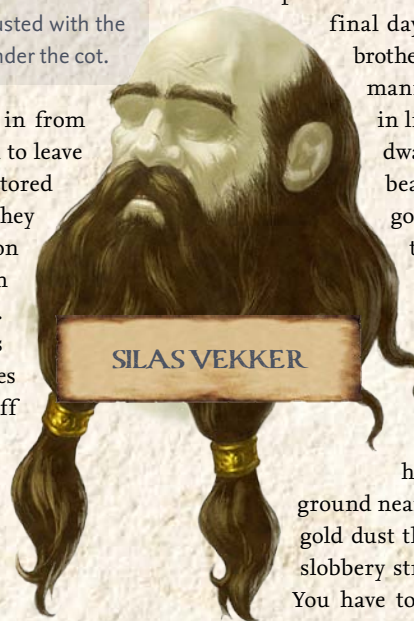
## B4 SACK ROOM



Beyond the curtain is a small, barren chamber. A wood-frame cot rests against the far wall with a rough, straw-tick mattress and a threadbare blanket. A pair of old work boots, crusted with the dried remains of old mud, still sits under the cot.

When a new load of ore was brought in from the mine, the Vekker brothers were loath to leave it unattended until it had been safely stored away in their strong room. To this end, they worked night and day in the separation chamber, but even their hardened dwarven constitutions required occasional breaks. When this occurred, one of the brothers slept in this chamber to ensure that thieves would be unable to break in and make off with the gold.

**TREASURE:** A +3 *punching dagger* is hidden in the left boot. The deathblade poison that once coated the blade has long since dried and flaked away, leaving only a slight (and harmless) discoloration on it.



while in this chamber, is exposed to a high concentration of arsenic poisoning (see area B1).

**HAUNT:** The Vekkers had enough gold to buy food to last them years, but nowhere from which to buy any, a powerful irony that Silas obsessed on in the final days before he was murdered by his brother. His spirit, still driven by hunger, manifests in this room as he appeared in life in healthier times, as a balding dwarf with a few facial scars and a full beard separated into two lengths by gold rings. When the PCs first enter this room, a shadowy form shifts and moves in the room's corner. As the haunt manifests, the shadows fade and Silas appears to be squatting in the southeast corner of the room, his back to the doors as he scoops up handfuls of gold dust from the ground near the chute. As Silas turns around, gold dust thick in his beard and dripping in slobbery strings from his lips, he says, "You! You have to try this! It's so... delicious!" As he says this, he stuffs another handful of gold dust into his mouth and swallows. Of course, the "dust" he's eating is in fact arsenic-tainted grit.

## B5 ORE SEPARATION (CR 8)



The air in this long-sealed chamber is putrid. The back wall is the solid rock of the cliff face. A ramp rises from the western door to a height of five feet, which is the elevation of the rest of the plank floor. Mounds of dust and rocky debris clutter the floor, while rusty mechanical equipment, large copper tanks, and several rock-crushing and chipping tools sit upon sagging wooden tables. The handle of a shovel sticks up from a debris pile immediately below this aperture. Two pairs of elbow-length, thick leather gloves, stained from long use, hang from hooks beside the north doors.

The Vekker brothers carted their placer deposits into this chamber to remove the gold ore from the gangue. They used an arsenic solution to chemically separate the minerals. Raw gold was carted into the next chamber to be stored safely in their cabin. The leftover debris was then shoveled through a grating in the southern wall that opens into a chute that deposits waste near area B1. The grate is latched from this side and can be easily opened (treat as a strong wooden door), but the iron bars cannot be removed from the frame, blocking access from outside.

This entire room is heavily tainted with arsenic deposits, especially the mounded dust and rubble on the floor. Anyone exposed to this material, either from falling prone in it or even by just having an open wound

### GOLD-EATING DWARF

XP	CR	HP
4,800	8	16

LN haunt (all of area B5)

Caster Level 8th

**Notice** Perception DC 10 (to notice the shadowy image of Silas crouching in the corner)

**hp** 16; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 minute

**Effect** Silas's words function as a *mass suggestion* spell; anyone who hears him must succeed at a DC 19 Will save to resist the compulsion to scoop up and eat a handful of the arsenic-tainted dirt on the room's floor. The haunt enhances the already deadly effects of the arsenic in this case—anyone who eats the stuff must make a DC 20 Fortitude save against the effects of arsenic poisoning. Silas watches as anyone eats, and as the victim feels the poison flowing through his system, the haunted character sees Silas suddenly shrink in on himself, grow emaciated, and then fly apart in a red explosion of bite-sized morsels of flesh and bone. An instant later, he is gone—but only for a minute, after which he appears again.

## B6 ORE SHAFT (CR 8)

The description of this area depends on whether the PCs enter from the bottom or from the top. The following description assumes the party has entered from the bottom. Modify it accordingly if they enter from area B7.



The wooden walls of this musty shaft abut the natural stone of the cliff face to the east. A





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sturdy-looking wooden stair and rail starts at the bottom of this shaft and circles up into the heights, running clockwise. Above, its passage is lost in the gloom, like the musty interior of an ancient silo. A thick length of chain hangs down the shaft in loops, its links swaying and clanking softly to the periodic gust of wind that penetrates the walls. No windows pierce the wooden walls. Propped against the east wall near the door is an upended wheelbarrow.

The Vekker brothers built this enclosed stair to create a secure way to access their cabin above. A great ore bucket hangs at area **B7**, which they lowered via chains with a winch to load the gold gleaned from the separation chamber. The wheelbarrow was used to cart the gold to the ore bucket.

The stairs rise 60 feet to area **B7** and are sturdy and in good repair despite their age. A trap is set 50 feet up the stairs. The Vekker brothers deactivated this trap in area **B11** or just jumped over the trigger steps whenever necessary.

**CREATURE:** As soon as the tipping stairs are triggered (or just before the PCs are about to exit the room), the spirits haunting the cabin manifest by animating the chain hanging from the ceiling here. The chain twists like an immense snake as it animates, coiling over and across itself and swinging the metal ore bucket with deadly effect. Though the chain only takes up a 5-foot square, its reach accounts for much of its size.

<b>HAUNTED CHAIN</b>	<b>XP</b> 3,200	<b>CR</b> 7	<b>HP</b> 52
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Advanced animated object (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 14, 294)

N Large construct

**Init** +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception -3

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (+1 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 52 (4d10+30)

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

**Defensive Abilities** hardness 10; **Immune** construct traits

**Weaknesses** haunted

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +11 (1d8+8 plus grab)

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 60 ft.

**Special Attacks** constrict (1d8+12)

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** The haunted chain lifts anyone it constricts to the top of the shaft and on the next round drops him after attempting (and possibly succeeding at) a second round of constriction damage.

**Morale** The haunted chain fights until destroyed.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 26, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 5, **Cha** 5

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +13 (+17 grapple); **CMD** 24 (can't be tripped)

**SQ** construction points (additional attack, constrict, faster, grab, haunted, metal)

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Haunted (Ex)** The chain is haunted, and as a result takes damage from positive energy as if it were an undead creature. It can be detected by *detect undead*.

**TRAP:** A section of trapped stair stands 50 feet above the floor of area **B6**. Placing any amount of weight on one of these three steps causes that section of the step and rail to collapse outward, dumping anyone on them into the central shaft of the stairwell. The collapsed steps and rail can be reset by a lever hidden in area **B11**.

<b>TIPPING STAIRS</b>	<b>XP</b> 1,600	<b>CR</b> 5
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**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 27; **Disable Device** DC 25

**EFFECTS**

**Trigger** location; **Bypass** (hidden lever in area **B11**); **Reset** manual

**Effect** 50-ft. fall (5d6 falling damage); DC 20 Reflex save avoids

**B7 TOWER LOFT**



No windows open into this dark, plummeting shaft. A heavy winch bolted to the balcony supports a rusty chain that runs up through a pulley mounted in the roof of the shaft and from which hangs a heavy iron bucket. Heavy wooden chocks have been nailed to the floor at the edge of the balcony, and the front wheel of a wheelbarrow rests against them.

Here, the Vekkers hauled up the gold from their mine for safe storage. The winch is still functional, though extremely rusty, and can be used to raise or lower the ore bucket between here and the floor of area **B6**—provided that the haunted chain itself has not been destroyed yet (raising or lowering the bucket does not activate the haunted chain). A full bucket can be raised at a rate of 10 feet per move action with a successful DC 15 Strength check for each 10 feet—the empty bucket requires no Strength check). Lying nearby is a 10-foot pole with an iron hook at the tip. This was used by the dwarves both to open and close the shuttered windows and to drag the ore bucket over to the balcony, where its contents could be dumped into a wheelbarrow. The windows, unlike most of those in the rest of the cabin, are shuttered from the inside.

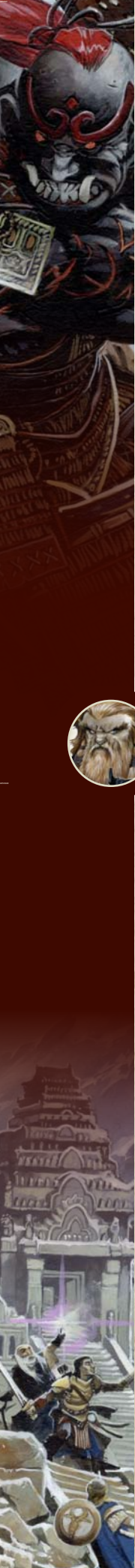
A successful DC 30 Perception check reveals the skillfully disguised secret door to area **B13**.

**B8 FRONT PORCH (CR 5)**



A rough porch with crudely crafted handrails extends from the front of this cabin. A short stair descends to the ground at its north end. The eaves





of the overhanging roof are festooned with dozens of animal skulls, including bears, deer, aurochs, and various other animals. The posts supporting the overhang and the outside edge of the handrail itself are hung with racks of antlers. A stone chimney rises next to a door on the porch, and a couple of split logs have been set on the raised porch as furniture.

The Vekker brothers supplemented their carefully hoarded supplies with whatever game they could hunt. There is nothing of note among the many trophies here. A signboard mounted above the front door bears faded but still legible print in Dwarven naming this the “Vekker Mining Co. Headquarters.” The front door is not locked but is stuck in its frame, requiring a successful DC 18 Strength check to open.

**HAUNT:** Have each PC make a Perception check when the group reaches this area. No matter what the results are, tell the player who had the highest result that he feels strange here, as if he were being watched by something or someone. You can even tell this player he might have seen a humanoid shape in the distance, staggering in the snow just at the edge of vision to the east. This is a manifestation of Silas Vekker as he attempted to escape his hunger-mad kin by racing into the snow. One round after this brief glimpse, the haunt manifests in force as Silas notices the characters.

### PARTIALLY EATEN DWARF

XP	CR	HP
1,600	5	10

LN haunt (northern 15 feet of area **B8**)

**Caster Level** 5th

**Notice** Perception DC 25 (to notice the distant humanoid shape turn to face the party);

**hp** 10; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 day

**Effect** A dwarven man (recognizable as the same one from the haunt in area **B5**) staggers out of the snow. His eyes are wild with fear, his clothes in tatters, and blood drips from several cuts on his exposed flesh. When he sees the PCs, he cries out, “Run! Run for your lives! They’re going to eat you!” With that, the dwarf flees into the snow. All PCs in the area must make a successful DC 20 Will save to avoid being overcome with the conviction that the other members of the party are cannibals and are about to attack them—those who fail this save become panicked for 1d6 rounds, dropping all held items and attempting to flee from their allies at top speed. Characters who race blindly into the snow in this manner have a flat 50% chance each round of running off the edge of the cliff, in which case they fall 60 feet to the ground below.

### B9 ENTRY



This simple chamber has a worn hide rug covered with muddy stains before the door, next to a rickety chair. A thick blanket covers the opening to the south.

The door can be locked and has brackets for a bar, though no bar is present.

### B10 COATROOM



This tiny chamber is stuffy and lightless. Heavy blankets hang as curtains across two archways. A wooden bench rests against the south wall under which is arrayed an assortment of shabby foot gear. Above it is a row of hooks, a number of which hold dusty garments.

The dwarven miners removed their dirty clothing here to create some modicum of cleanliness in their cabin. Beneath the bench are six pairs of dried and cracked leather boots of various types, all sized for dwarves. They include everything from rough-soled climbing boots to hip-high waders for panning cold mountain streams. The various garments include oiled leather raincoats, fur-lined winter coats, and mud-stained dungarees and coveralls. These are likewise all proportioned for a dwarf and are largely ruined from moths and dry rot.

**TREASURE:** Concealed beneath the raincoats (DC 10 Perception check), a +2 *construct bane earth breaker* leans against the wall, purchased from the Shoanti long ago.

### B11 BUNKROOM



A large, worn elk hide is spread across the floor of this bunkroom. Another old, moth-eaten hide covers the entry into a small closet. A window looks out to the south. A crack runs through the thick panes of the southern window. A set of rough-made bunk beds stands against the north wall next to the door, an old coat with holes in its elbows hanging from one post. The bunks themselves have flat straw mattresses and layers of heavy blankets piled at their feet. An old metal coal box rests on one for use as a foot warmer. A rack on the west wall holds a crossbow, two axes, and a light wooden shield. Beneath it is a large leather chest. A hooded lantern hangs unlit from a rafter.

The Vekker brothers shared this bunkroom. Nothing in it is of any value, and the weapons and shield are warped and useless. The leather trunk holds only mundane articles of rough clothing, a few grooming items, and various small trinkets of Shoanti manufacture. One of the unoccupied pegs on the weapons rack is actually a lever that resets and deactivates the trap in area **B6**. It can be discovered with a successful DC 20 Perception check. The cracked window has only 2 hit points remaining. The curtained closet is actually a privy with a wooden bench and an old rusty bucket. Hanging from a small hook are a number of torn papers. If examined, these





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turn out to be broadsheets from Korvosa, dated about 70 years ago. The Vekker brothers were not avid readers, but they saved every scrap of paper they could find to serve other purposes.

**B12 STORAGE CLOSET**



This chamber contains heavy shelving and still holds the detritus and debris accumulated over decades of habitation.

All manner of odds and ends for the maintenance and upkeep of the cabin and the mining venture can be found herein under a thick layer of dust and ancient rodent droppings. There is nothing of particular value, but feel free to throw in any mundane items you see fit, such as a pair of snowshoes or a tinder box.

**B13 STRONG ROOM**

The walls and door of this chamber are reinforced with double thickness. The secret door is locked and requires a successful DC 35 Disable Device to open. Otherwise, the walls around this room have hardness 5, 150 hit points, and Break DC 35.



Seven large burlap sacks sit against the northern wall of this small room, while to the west sits a small desk and chair. A leather-bound ledger lies atop the desk.

The ledger on the desk contains several detailed maps of the regions the brothers were mining, and locates all of their assay points and mines. Notes on the payout of each mine are listed—it appears that all of them have played out without imparting any particularly rich lodes. Several pages near the end of the ledger have been torn out—these once contained the brothers' notes on the location of Xin-Shalast. Silas tore them out when he realized how important the discovery was, committed them to memory, then burned the pages.

**TREASURE:** Here, the Vekkers stored the gold from their mine after the ore was separated in the building below and hauled up through the shaft. The door creaks loudly when opened (by design to alert the Vekkers to thieves). Within are seven burlap sacks. Five are stuffed with gold dust and are worth 1,000 gp each. The last two actually hold gold nuggets and are worth 2,500 gp each. Each sack weighs 40 pounds. Hidden behind one of the sacks is a small coffer holding 14 uncut gems the brothers found, worth 50 gp each.

**B14 LIVING AREA (CR 8)**



This room obviously doubled as the main living quarters and kitchen for the inhabitants of the cabin. A stone hearth and chimney occupy the

southeast corner, with an iron hook holding a cauldron above the grate. The rest of the room is in a horrific state—firewood, cooking utensils, pots and pans, and even the furniture lie in scattered heaps. A painting of two dour-looking dwarves standing in front of an enormous elk hangs askew on the northern wall. Ancient bloodstains mar the walls and floor and bits of overturned furniture here and there, but there are no bodies.

This is where the Vekker brothers took their meals and spent most of what little leisure time they had. The painting clearly depicts two dwarves with a family resemblance; they are Silas and Karivek Vekker. The painting was made years ago in Janderhoff, where the brothers posed with a stuffed elk to commemorate their hunting prowess in the Kodar Mountains. Characters who've seen Silas's manifestation in the various haunts in the cabin will recognize the dwarf immediately.

The disarray and blood are all that remains of the terrible fight that broke out in this room when Karivek and his dwarves decided cannibalism was the only solution. The fight spread out onto the porch and surrounding ledge relatively quickly, but scavengers have long since removed the results of that fight.

**HAUNT:** As the PCs investigate this room, they begin experiencing subtle twinges of hunger. Without much more warning, those twinges erupt into full-blown pangs of painful starvation and unholy urges to feast on their companions. While these hunger pangs pass quickly, the damage to the mind is more persistent.

<b>CANNIBAL URGINGS</b>	<b>XP</b> 4,800	<b>CR</b> 8	<b>HP</b> 16
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CE haunt (all of area B14)

**Caster Level** 8th

**Notice** Wisdom check DC 18 (to notice sudden twinges of unnatural hunger)

**hp** 16; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 day

**Effect** When the hunger pangs strike, all characters in the room must make DC 20 Fortitude saves to resist taking 10d6 points of nonlethal starvation damage from the sudden phantom hunger. Accompanying this ravenous sensation is the conviction that only the flesh of the other PCs can sate the hunger. Any character who took starvation damage must then make a DC 20 Will save to resist taking 2d6 points of Wisdom drain as the cannibal urgings overwhelm the PC and drive him to the brink of madness.

**B15 LARDER (CR 14)**

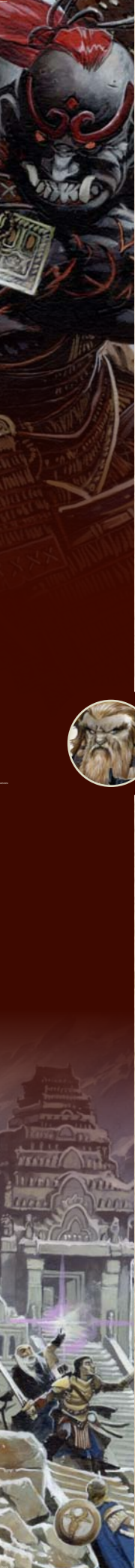
The door to this room is heavy and seals with the surrounding frame, requiring a DC 15 Strength check to open.



This bare-floored room has a series of iron hooks suspended from the rafters. The window in the far







wall looks out over the edge of the cliff and, unlike others in the cabin, has no glass or shutters—only a tight lattice of iron bars. Against the far wall sits a four-foot-tall mound of bones—dwarven bones, by the look of them.

The dwarves used this room for their cold storage. In all but high summer it remained cooler than the rest of the cabin and allowed their meats and foodstuffs to last a little while without spoilage. The close-set bars on the windows likewise kept out vermin, except for flies and mosquitoes in the warmest months, and the toughened dwarves were not overly picky about the condition of their meals.

The bones are the remains of the four dwarves, including Silas Vekker, who were killed and eaten a decade ago. An investigation of the remains followed by a successful DC 20 Heal check reveals that the bones have been picked clean and are, in many places, scraped and gnawed by what would appear to be dwarven teeth.

**HAUNT:** The first person to examine the bones is in for a rough surprise—on one of the bones, he recognizes his own jewelry: a ring on a skeletal finger, a necklace draped over a ribcage, or a belt dangling over ivory hips. With this discovery comes the conviction that the gnawed bones are, in fact, that character's own. An instant later, that character becomes surrounded by a whirling storm of shadowy forms as the ghosts of the cannibalized dead attempt to add that PC to their number.

### THE HUNGRY DEAD

XP	CR	HP
38,400	14	20

CE haunt (all of area **B15**)

**Notice** Perception DC 25 (to hear the rising whispers and slobbering grunts of the hungry dead)

**hp** 20; **Trigger** touch; **Reset** 1 minute

**Effect** To observers, the haunted character suddenly begins thrashing wildly, as if dozens of invisible hands were tugging and pushing him about the room. At the same time, bloody wounds from invisible teeth appear across the victim's body. The haunted character perceives that he has suddenly been surrounded by a dozen emaciated but fantastically strong dwarves, all of whom are attempting to eat him alive. The ghosts make 10 attack rolls against the PC at a +15 bonus; each hit deals 2d6+7 points of damage and threatens a critical hit on a roll of 19–20. A character reduced to –10 hit points by these bites is torn apart so that nothing remains but a red, well-gnawed skeleton draped in his gear.

### EVENT 1: CANNIBAL FURY (CR 15)

As the PCs finish exploring the cabin, they should be able to piece together some of what occurred here more than a decade ago, but unfortunately find the place to be devoid of any real clues as to Xin-Shalast's location. The true source of this information, the ghost of Silas Vekker, has yet to properly show itself—but before it

does, the unquiet spirits haunting the cabin have one final cacophonous assault in mind. By the time you have this haunt begin, the weather outside should have grown progressively worse—if the PCs bother to look outside at any point while exploring the cabin, explain to them that it's started to snow softly. When you start this event, the snowfall has increased to heavy snow, as detailed on page 438 of the *Core Rulebook*.

This final haunting event is more complex than the haunts keyed to specific rooms—this is a multistage haunt that should play out, to a certain extent, like a highly scripted combat. It can begin at any point you wish—preferably after the PCs have already experienced most or all of the other haunts the cabin has to offer, but before they feel that they have exhausted all of the possibilities in the cabin. If the PCs decide to spend the night in the cabin, this event plays out not long after they bed down. High-level PCs have access to teleportation and other effects, though, and chances are good you won't get the opportunity to have this final event occur in the dead of night. In that case, try to time the haunt so that it occurs at a natural climax to the exploration of the Vekkers' cabin, perhaps just after the PCs have experienced the last haunt, or just after they discover the secret strong room in area **B13**.

**HAUNT:** This haunt starts innocently enough, with strange sounds from elsewhere in the cabin indicating that the PCs aren't the only ones here. These sounds rapidly grow in power, until it seems as if an entire army of invisible, shrieking lunatics is on the loose. This persistent haunt plays out over 11 rounds, following a scripted series of actions. Allow the PCs to take their own actions as they wish each round; the haunt's actions always occur on initiative count 10.

### CANNIBAL FURY

XP	CR	HP
51,200	15	67

CE persistent haunt (Vekker Cabin and environs to a radius of 30 feet from cabin's outer walls)

**Caster Level** 15th

**Notice** Perception DC 25 (to hear the sound of knocking somewhere in the cabin)

**hp** 67; **Trigger** timed; **Reset** none

**Effect** This persistent haunt adheres to the following round-by-round schedule. Note that until the haunt begins to act in force on the fifth round, it cannot be dismissed or damaged. These first four rounds are, in effect, an extended warning of what's about to occur.

**Rounds 1–3:** Allow the PCs to each make a DC 25 Perception check. Anyone who succeeds hears a faint knocking coming from the lower portion of the cabin, probably the outer door at area **B3**, as if some lost traveler were seeking shelter from the storm. PCs in the lower rooms of the cabin or the stair shaft need only succeed at a DC 10 Perception check to hear this knocking. The knocking continues for 3 rounds, during which time PCs might head down to see whom it might be.



Attempts to see the ground outside the cabin are fruitless due to the whirling snow flurries, unless the PCs are within 5 feet, and then they still see nothing present that could have caused the knocking.

**Round 4:** The strange knocking grows silent for 1 round.

**Round 5:** A loud crack followed by a mighty hammering sound suddenly fills the cabin as its walls begin to shake and groan, almost as if the structure were giving up its purchase on the cliff edge and sliding off. On each turn that a PC remains in the haunt's area, he must make a DC 15 Acrobatics check; failure indicates he cannot move for that round, while failure by 5 or more indicates he falls prone. A character in area **B6** at this time falls off the stairs if he falls prone.

**Round 6:** The hammering continues, but now the faint images of starving dwarven ghosts can be glimpsed out of the corner of the eye. Each character suddenly experiences painful hunger pangs and must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save to resist taking 4d6 points of nonlethal damage and 1d4 points of Constitution damage from the horrific hunger.

**Round 7:** Voices can now be heard, in most cases wordless cries of pain, but now and then snatches of sentences like "eating us..." or "don't let him..." or "so hungry..." The hammering continues, but now the starving ghosts seem to notice the PCs for the first time. Each PC must make a DC 18 Will save—failure indicates that the haunt possesses him as the ghosts themselves seem to flow into the PC's body. Possession inflicts 1d6 points of Wisdom drain, and has additional implications in rounds 8–10.

**Round 8–10:** For the last 3 rounds of this complex haunt, the shaking and hammering continues. Characters possessed by the haunt do not need to make Acrobatics checks to move and take whatever actions they can to render non-possessed characters unconscious or helpless, using whatever tools they have at their disposal. If a possessed character is adjacent to a helpless, non-possessed character and is not threatened by any other non-possessed character, he attempts a coup de grace action against the helpless character with the best weapon option he has. If a possessed character is adjacent to a dead character, he feeds on the body and takes no other actions unless he is attacked by someone else.

**Round 11:** With a sudden lurch, the haunting stops. Possessed characters immediately regain control of their faculties. Any character who successfully fed on an ally must make a DC 20 Will save upon realizing what he's done—failure results in an additional 2d4 points of Wisdom drain from the supernaturally fueled revelation. At your option, characters subjected to extreme Wisdom drain from this haunt could develop various insanities (see page 250 of the *GameMastery Guide*). The cabin itself shows no signs of damage from the violence aside from anything the PCs themselves have done to it. A few rounds later, Silas Vekker finally manifests before the PCs as detailed in Event 2, below.

## EVENT 2: A GHOST'S PLEA

The Cannibal Fury haunt ends abruptly not because the unquiet spirits have had their say, but because

one among them retains fragments of sanity. This is the spirit of Silas Vekker, and just as it takes the angry ghosts of his kin several rounds to ramp up to the fury evidenced at the height of the climactic haunting, it takes him about a minute to finally gather the energy to quell these spirits. When he does, the ghosts vanish in an instant, save for one.

Silas Vekker is the same spirit the PCs might have encountered elsewhere in the cabin—a balding dwarf with a dark brown beard. His facial features are curiously indistinct—he has no eyes, for example, and when he speaks, his lips barely even move. Maintaining this manifestation is tremendously draining for the spirit, and he can do so only for a short amount of time. As he speaks, bite-sized bits and pieces of him tear loose and fade, leaving him a growing patchwork of red, until finally, not enough of him remains and the entire thing fades away.



"You... you are alive? You do not hunger? Ah... that is what I sense in your blood. Greed. You seek the City of Greed. You should abandon your quest, lest you end up like me. Cold. Dead. Eaten. But I suspect you cannot be swayed. Know then that I know the way to Xin-Shalast. I can show you the way, but only if you bring me my brother. He died on a ledge in the mountains a mile's walk north from this cabin. I can feel his soul out there, still hungry, still insane. Bring his bones to me so that I might reconcile with him. Once he is at rest, I will show you the way so that I might rest as well..."

Silas's spirit doesn't have enough energy to maintain rational discourse for long—certainly not long enough to speak much more than his tale above. After delivering his message to the PCs, the ghostly dwarf is gone—eaten away to nothing. He and the other haunts in the cabin remain quiet for a full week thereafter. If after that time Karivek's bones have not been returned, the haunts resume their normal patterns of haunting.

## EVENT 3: HUNGRY GHOST (CR 16)

Karivek's body lies on a high mountain ledge overlooking the final mine the brothers worked before they discovered Xin-Shalast. Discovering this location via divination spells is certainly one option, but PCs lacking these resources need to recover the ledger from area **B13**. The location of the final Vekker mine is indicated in that book—at the base of a 2,000-foot-tall cliff in the mountains, a mile north of the cabin. The remnants of what was once a well-worn trail between this mine and the cabin still exist—this trail can be followed with a DC 25 Survival check. Otherwise, the journey to Karivek's body is one through trackless, rugged mountains.

The cliff itself is relatively sheer, and for the purposes of searching for the proper ledge, thankfully free of many



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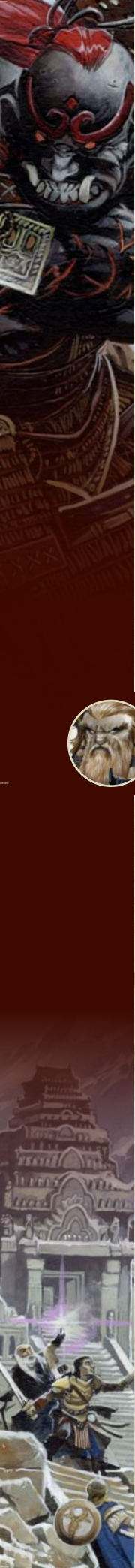
PART FOUR:  
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areas that would qualify. Unfortunately, this means that the sheer cliff face also presents a difficult obstacle for characters unable to fly, teleport, or otherwise bypass the climb. The wind around the cliff is strong and the cliff face icy, and would take numerous DC 30 Climb checks to scale.

The ledge in question is near the mountain's peak above. Trailing to a 5-foot-wide shelf to the northwest and southeast, the ledge deepens into a large flat area in the middle. The ground here is rough and uneven, covered with rubble and rocks and counting as difficult terrain. Further, the presence of Karivek's unquiet spirit causes a layer of thick fog to obscure the ground to a depth of 1 foot. This fog extends out over the cliff and down 30 feet from the edge, so that a character unable to see through the fog who moves through a square adjacent to the edge must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid stumbling and falling into a 2,000-foot fall into the mine digs below.

Near the eastern end of the ledge, a small number of gravestones protrude from the mist. As Karivek neared the end, guilt and remorse for his heinous acts of murder and cannibalism faded in the stark face of starvation, and the gravestones, each marked with dwarven names (including that of his brother, Silas), were a last-minute attempt to atone for his deeds. Despite the dozen or so grave markers, there's only one body here, and it's not even buried.

**CREATURES:** Karivek's body lies near a long-dead fire pit in the eastern portion of the ledge, frozen solid and preserved by the cold mountain air. The corpse still wears its padded armor, but is itself in frightful shape. Not only is it broken and mangled, as if it had fallen from a great height, but the body's legs end in charred, blackened stumps where the feet had been burnt off.

In life, Karivek was a gifted and adventurous miner—he and his brother were something of a legend in Janderhoff for their eagerness to seek out incredibly dangerous places to mine. Karivek could have had a quite comfortable life plying his skills closer to home, but his adventurous spirit would never let him settle down. Now that same spirit remains here, transformed by his hunger and guilt and fear into a powerful ghost.

Among the various powers Karivek gained upon becoming a ghost is an ability to attract and manipulate certain creatures with the cold subtype. Currently, an enormous frost worm, attracted by Karivek's supernatural control over cold, dwells in the area and serves the ghost as a guardian. The huge beast lies in wait under the packed ice and snow in the middle of the ledge, and erupts from hiding to attack with its breath weapon as soon as it notices any creatures approaching the ledge.

Karivek's ghost remains hidden until his corpse is touched or the frost worm attacks, at which point he flies up out of the mist to attack. In death, Karivek's mouth is filled with fangs that drip streamers of blood that fade

away to mist before they strike the ground. Although he's incorporeal, his freezing temperature leaves a rime of ice across any surface he travels near—such as by leaving frosty hand prints on walls as he passes through them.

## KARIVEK VEKKER

XP	CR	HP
51,200	15	161

Male ghost dwarf expert 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 144)

NE Medium undead (cold, incorporeal)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +26

### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, touch 17, flat-footed 20 (+5 armor, +5 deflection, +2 Dex)

**hp** 161 (15d8++90); fast healing 10

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +7, **Will** +13; +2 vs. spells and spell-like abilities

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; **Immune** cold, undead traits

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to fire

### OFFENSE

**Speed** fly 30 ft. (perfect)

**Melee** corrupting touch +13 touch (15d6 plus 2d6 cold), vicious bite +13 touch (3d6+7/18–20 plus 1d8 bleed and 1d6 Cha and 1d6 Con)

**Special Attacks** command the frozen, eater of flesh, telekinesis (DC 22)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 15th; concentration +20)

At will—*dominate monster* (DC 24; can only affect non-outsiders with the cold subtype)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Karivek uses his frightful moan on the first round of combat, then uses *telekinesis* to hurl non-flying foes off of his ledge. He focuses his melee attacks on larger foes—victims with the most meat on their bones. If he sees that the frost worm is nearly dead and surrounded by enemies, he'll attempt to kill the worm with his corrupting touch in order to trigger its death throes, knowing that only the supernatural piercing damage can hurt him (and even then, at best, he'll only take half damage from that, due to his incorporeal nature).

**Morale** Once Karivek engages in battle, he fights until destroyed, knowing he will just rejuvenate in a few days.

### STATISTICS

**Str** —, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 20

**Base Atk** +11; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 28 (32 vs. bull rush, 32 vs. trip)

**Feats** Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Profession [miner]), Toughness

**Skills** Climb +18, Craft (armorsmith) +19, Craft (blacksmith) +19, Fly +10, Knowledge (geography) +19, Knowledge (nature) +19, Perception +26 (+28 unusual stonework), Profession (miner) +26, Survival +17

**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Giant

**SQ** frozen dead

**Gear** +4 improved cold resistance padded armor

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Command the Frozen (Su)** Karivek's death at the hands of a supernaturally cold malevolence (the wendigo) has given him





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ghost power over non-outsider creatures who possess the cold subtype. The ghost can use *dominate monster* at will on any non-outsider with the cold subtype as a spell-like ability, but can only maintain control in this manner over one creature at a time.

**Eater of Flesh (Su)** As a victim of the wendigo's insidious disease prior to his death, Karivek retains a portion of that sickness within his very being. On a successful critical hit with his vicious bite attack, the ghost tears away a chunk of flesh and consumes it (the flesh becoming ghostly and vanishing as he does so)—this deals 1d6 points of Constitution and Charisma drain to the victim (DC 22 Fortitude save negates).

**Frozen Dead (Su)** Karivek gains the cold subtype, thanks to his death in this frozen landscape. As long as he's in an area where the temperature is below freezing (as it is on this ledge), he gains fast healing 10.

**Rejuvenation (Su)** Until his bones are returned to the Vekkers' cabin, Karivek's ghost rejuvenates 2d4 days after it is destroyed.

**Vicious Bite (Su)** Karivek threatens a critical hit with his bite on a natural roll of 18–20. His fangs become solid and razor sharp as they cut through flesh but ignore armor, allowing him to attack with his bite as a touch attack. Karivek adds 1-1/2 times his Charisma modifier as damage to his vicious bite attack. Wounds caused by his vicious bite are deep and gory, causing 1d8 points of bleed damage.

and quiet. As soon as the PCs bring the bones to area B14 (or wherever Silas manifested to them to ask this favor), Silas Vekker appears again, an expression of sadness and forgiveness on his face. Yet Karivek is not yet quite ready to accept his brother. The cannibal ghost manifests as well, his bones crumbling to dust and reforming his ghostly incarnation. The two ghosts silently face off against each other, seemingly caught in a struggle of wills as wispy strings of ectoplasm and wafts of ghostly presence lash out and coil about one another.

All Silas needs to calm his brother's spirit is time—10 minutes is enough. Unfortunately, the wendigo can sense the reconciliation and the impending loss of its masterpiece, and it quickly takes action against the cabin and the PCs inside.

**CREATURE:** The wendigo does not initially attack the PCs directly, preferring to wage a psychological war of fear and terror against them. If they're caught outside in the blizzard, it follows them while wind walking, turning solid

**ADVANCED FROST WORM**

XP	CR	HP
25,600	13	200

hp 200 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 126, 292)

**TREASURE:** Karivek's corpse still wears his +4 *improved cold resistance padded armor*, but his other gear has long since gone missing.

**DEVELOPMENT:** As soon as the PCs defeat the ghost, the wendigo howls and starts a blizzard, as detailed in "The Watcher in the Wastes."

**EVENT 4: THE WENDIGO SIEGE (CR 17)**

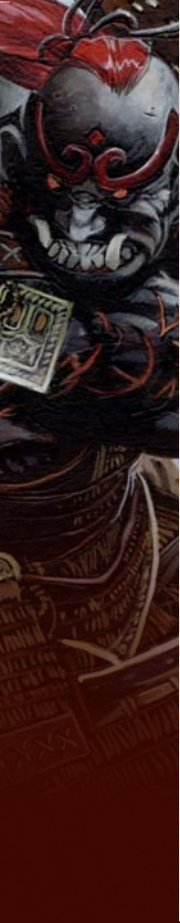
Once the PCs defeat Karivek's ghost and secure his remains, they need only return the bones to the Vekkers' Cabin. Unfortunately, doing so is made more complicated by the wendigo's mounting wrath. The horrific outsider is displeased with the PCs' meddling in its cannibal tableaux and steps in to punish them and, ideally, induct them into its monstrous ways. The PCs have already heard its howl at least once as they approached the cabin the first time, and one of them might even be haunted by the monster's dreams. As they return to the cabin, the wendigo howls once again, then creates a blizzard to hinder movement and ideally catch the PCs in an open area on their way back to the cabin with Karivek's remains.

When the PCs return to the cabin with Karivek's bones, a strange sense of calm seems to fill the structure. Even the howling sounds of the blizzard outside seem muted



**KARIVEK VEKKER**





now and then to make flyby attacks against stragglers or anyone who becomes separated from the group.

Once the PCs return to the cabin, though, the wendigo's tactics become more physical. The monster lays siege to the cabin, smashing its walls and roofs with its powerful claws in an attempt to tear the place apart and to get to the victims inside. Left to its own, the wendigo can use its *dream haunting* ability against the reconciling brothers, infusing them both again with cannibal urges and madness. This overwhelms Silas over the course of 10 minutes, transforming him into a cannibal ghost as well (use the same stats as Karivek)—if this occurs, the PCs must slay the wendigo and then defeat both rejuvenated ghosts before Silas can attempt to heal the rift between himself and his brother.

## WENDIGO

XP	CR	HP
102,400	17	279

hp 279 (*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 281)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The wendigo prefers to attack lone targets, but it doesn't shrink from multiple foes. It focuses its attacks on the weakest-looking or most lightly armored foes at first, and if it manages to establish a hold on a creature, flies at least 200 feet into the air before dropping its foe onto the rocky ground below, after which it returns to the cabin to finish off anyone still within. If it finds that the PCs are strong melee combatants, it starts using bite attacks with its Flyby Attack feat to limit melee attacks made against it. Characters who use fire, though, receive the brunt of the wendigo's attacks if possible.

**Morale** If reduced below 40 hit points, the wendigo uses *wind walk* to flee into the mountains (snatching a PC if it has the chance)—it does not return to reassert its dominance over the region anytime soon.

**DEVELOPMENT:** If the wendigo is defeated or driven off, Silas wins the silent confrontation with his brother in 10 minutes, at which point Karivek's ghost suddenly relaxes and sighs. His teeth return to normal and his feet grow back before he fades away into nothingness. Silas turns to face the PCs, his expression now at peace but not without an element of sadness. His final words to the PCs before he fades are a warning.



"You have saved my brother. You have saved me. I should reward you by simply taking the path to Xin-Shalast with me into the beyond, yet I sense that you still harbor a desire to see those golden ruins. Very well. Look to the pages of my ledger for the way, and may Torag watch over you in the darkness to come..."

As he finishes speaking, Silas fades away as well. As he does, several parchment pages appear and float lazily to the ground. These are the missing five pages from Silas's ledger from area B13, and they provide exacting details on the route to Xin-Shalast.

**DEVELOPMENT:** If the party puts the Vekkers to rest before the wendigo can transform Silas, award the PCs 51,200 XP.





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## PART THREE: ON THE WORLD'S ROOF

ONCE THE PCs HAVE SECURED ALL OF THE MISSING PAGES OF THE VEKKER BROTHERS' LEDGER, THEY HAVE IN THEIR HANDS AN INCREDIBLE TREASURE. THE ROUTE TO XIN-SHALAST WOULD BE A PHYSICAL TRIAL EVEN WITHOUT THE INFLUENCE OF INTRUDING REALITIES AND THE DISORIENTING EFFECTS OF LENG'S PROXIMITY TO THE WORLD—WITH THOSE IN PLAY, ONLY BY SHEEREST LUCK COULD ANYONE HOPE TO FIND THE LOST CITY OF GREED. SUCH WAS THE VEKKERS' LUCK A DECADE AGO WHEN THEY FIRST FOUND THE RUINS WHILE SEARCHING FOR MINING LOCATIONS.



The first step for the PCs, according to the Vekkers' directions, is to continue traveling up the Kazaron River until they reach the second tributary. The ledger identifies this river as the legendary River Avah, yet it also says the winding route between the Kodar Mountains is not one for the faint of heart. There are no banks to walk along and the river itself often rises in cataracts of up to 300 feet in height as it climbs ever higher into the mountains. The waters of the River Avah are freezing cold, yet they themselves never freeze. As the PCs follow the river upstream, the air grows thin and the sky a deep blue. From leaving the Kazaron to the point just south of the Icemists (where the PCs move onto the smaller scale "Xin-Shalast Environs" map), they climb thousands of feet to a height of just over 15,000 feet above sea level—consult the section on mountain travel and altitude zones on page 430 of the *Core Rulebook* for rules and guidelines on how to handle adventuring in this hostile environment.

Eventually, the PCs reach the River Avah's source—a frozen swampland shrouded in glittering clouds of ice crystals known as the Fen of the Icemists. Yet even then they find no indication of the ruined spires of Xin-Shalast. Here, the ledger tells the PCs they must fast and wait for a night with a full moon, whereupon the remainder of the route is made clear to them, for here is the edge of Leng's otherworldly influence upon Golarion. Natural creatures are skittish in this region, and with the exception of magically compelled animals, animal companions, and familiars, no animal willingly travels into the region depicted on the Xin-Shalast Environs map. Particularly sensitive intelligent creatures can sense the inherent "wrongness" of the region as well—any character who succeeds at a DC 20 Wisdom check feels distinctly unwelcome in the region and suffers nameless feelings of dread and worry. These sensations have no game effects but should serve to keep the PCs on their toes nonetheless.

Anyone attempting to enter this region must make a successful DC 25 Will save or unknowingly and

unintentionally wander out of the region after following a curving path that takes him back into a region of the Kodar Mountains not influenced by Leng. This warping of reality affects even attempts that use ropes or other methods of marking progress, shifting things subtly so that an explorer who fails the Will save simply emerges on the opposite side of the region without actually ever traversing the realm within. A character who succeeds at the Will save after entering this region suffers no additional penalties until he tries to leave—the feeling of wrongness from Leng's proximity persists the whole time.

A character under the effects of *protection from chaos* gains a +2 bonus on this Will save. *True seeing* allows the character to come and go as he wills as well, bypassing the save. Once inside the zone, he need not maintain *true seeing* until he wishes to leave the area, in which case he must succeed at the DC 25 Will save to avoid finding that the distortion works in reverse and that, no matter what route he takes, he constantly finds himself returning to the region's heart. A character who attempts to *teleport* into this region from outside (or out from within) must succeed at a DC 30 caster level check or the spell fails.

A nonmagical method to cleanse the body and mind and ease the journey into Xin-Shalast exists as well—this is the method the Vekkers accidentally stumbled upon when they camped at the region's boundary at the current source of the River Avah while searching for a new mine. They had extended their assaying trip an additional week and were forced to ration their food supplies. Anyone taking nonlethal damage from starvation who stands at the source of the River Avah during a full moon can make a DC 15 Perception check to notice what appears to be a ghostly afterimage of the River Avah continuing up into the mountains to its original source from before geologic activity in the region altered it. Once this ghostly river is spotted, a character can follow it with ease as long as he continues to suffer from starvation; following the ghostly river (shown as a dotted line on the Xin-Shalast Environs map) eventually leads the PCs to the lower city of





Xin-Shalast—but not before passing through one of the region’s more dangerous areas.

### **C** QUEEN OF THE ICEMISTS (CR 16)

The phantom River Avah leads through a partially frozen wetland—the Fen of the Icemists. Once a lake, this region was clogged with silt by several volcanic eruptions at the time of Thassilon’s fall, creating this treacherous and unique high-altitude fen. The waters of the Icemists are in a constant state of freezing and thawing, with the mix of high altitude and latent volcanism creating a mist-shrouded frozen region of water and swaths of icy mud. No plants exist in the Icemists apart from the ever-present stalks of strange pale fungi and clots of floating lichens that cover and hide deep tarns of freezing water—the entire region has about it a chilling aura of frozen menace.

The Fen of the Icemists is riddled with hummocks of solid ground and protruding rocks. Careful travelers can move through the fen without falling into the water, but doing so requires someone in the party to make a successful DC 25 Survival check once per hour. If the check fails, a random member of the party falls through a patch of thin ice into the freezing waters of a 1d10 × 10-foot-deep tarn. A creature so submerged takes 3d6 points of cold damage per round—the hole through which she fell through refreezes in only 1d4 rounds. A character who attempts to extract someone through the hole must succeed at a DC 15 Acrobatics check to avoid breaking through the ice herself. A lone victim can attempt to climb out of the hole by making a DC 20

Climb check followed by the DC 15 Acrobatics check to avoid falling back in before reaching more solid ground.

The Fen is about 2 miles wide, but due to the treacherous nature of the path, travelers on foot move at 10% their normal speed.

**CREATURE:** Aside from the occasional flying creature (such as a dragon or roc), few beings dwell in the freezing waters of the Icemists. One notable exception is a capricious nature spirit—an icy nymph named Svevenka. She makes her presence known to the PCs at some point as they pass through her fen, appearing as a beautiful elven woman with long dark hair, pale purple skin, and exaggerated ears and limbs. She watches them carefully while disguised as an otter in the water and attacks them only if they disrespect the swamp. If one of the PCs is particularly loud or obnoxious, she attempts to tease that character a little by casting *baleful polymorph* on him. She only attacks the PCs if they’re blatantly disrespecting her swamp or if they take her *baleful polymorph* joke poorly.

If, on the other hand, there are any PCs in the party who helped put Myriana’s troubled spirit to rest in “The Hook Mountain Massacre,” Svevenka recognizes them—especially if a PC still carries Myriana’s inspiration. Myriana was Svevenka’s cousin, and she felt her kin’s death as a stab in her own heart. Svevenka learned of the PCs role in putting Myriana’s spirit to rest through her various fey contacts, and when she recognizes them here in her home, she is moved to reveal herself and her relationship with Myriana to them. In thanks for what they did, Svevenka warns the PCs that all is not right in





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the region, and that they would do best to avoid traveling farther north.

If the PCs reveal to the nymph their plans to reach Xin-Shalast and confront Karzoug, she grows thoughtful and perhaps a bit excited. While she does not wish to leave her beloved Icemists unprotected, she volunteers her aid, telling the PCs that this place can be a safe harbor for them if they wish. She'll even put her spells at their disposal. Ssevenka knows quite a bit about the region, and if the PCs ask for advice, she can warn them about the giants, lamias, and abominable snowmen that dwell in Xin-Shalast. She can also warn them about the region's proximity to Leng, and the occluding field around Mhar Massif's peak. She suspects that the denizens of Xin-Shalast created the field to protect it and that they must have some magical method of protecting themselves from the field, but these are merely guesses on her part.

Finally, she'll tell the PCs about Xin-Shalast's skulks—descendants of the city's original citizens, they live still in the city's ruins. Ssevenka knows there are two factions among the skulks—the relatively peaceful (and less powerful) "Spared" and the vampiric minions of the Hidden Beast, a creature with whom Ssevenka has fought before. She suggests the PCs seek out a member of the Spared for further information about the city once they enter the place, for few other factions within Xin-Shalast are likely to be as willing to help them.



**SSEVENKA**

<b>SSEVENKA</b>	<b>XP</b> 76,800	<b>CR</b> 16	<b>HP</b> 256
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Female icy nymph druid 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 217, *Advanced Bestiary* 150)

CG Medium outsider (augmented fey, cold, elemental, extraplanar, water)

**Init** +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +25

**Aura** blinding beauty (30 ft., DC 27), cold aura (10 ft., DC 28),

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 35, touch 28, flat-footed 26 (+9 deflection, +8 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, +2 shield)

**hp** 256 (16 HD; 8d8+8d8+184)

**Fort** +27, **Ref** +25, **Will** +27; +4 vs. fey and plant-targeted effects

**Defensive Abilities** resist nature's lure; **DR** 10/cold iron;

**Immune** cold, elemental traits; **Resist** fire 20

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to fire

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

**Melee** +3 dagger +21/+16 (1d4+2/19-20 plus 1d6 cold and paralysis)

**Special Attacks** body of ice 15 rounds/day, exude ice, icy touch, stunning glance, wild shape 3/day

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 8th; concentration +14)  
1/day—*dimension door*

**Spells Prepared** (CL 15th; concentration +21)

8th—*finger of death* (DC 24), *whirlwind* (DC 24)

7th—*freezing sphere* (DC 23), *heal*, quickened *poison* (DC 20)

6th—*antilife shell*, quickened *barkskin*, *control winds*<sup>0</sup>, *greater dispel magic*, *transport via plants*

5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 21), *call lightning storm* (DC 21), *commune with nature*, *cure critical wounds* (2), *ice storm*<sup>0</sup>

4th—*air walk*, *control water*, *cure serious wounds* (3), *sleet storm*<sup>0</sup>

3rd—*call lightning*<sup>0</sup> (DC 19), *cure moderate wounds* (2), *dominate animal* (DC 19), *quench*, *water walk*

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, *chill metal* (DC 18), *fog cloud*<sup>0</sup>, *gust of wind*, *lesser restoration*, *resist energy*

1st—*charm animal* (DC 17), *cure light wounds* (4), *obscuring mist*<sup>0</sup>, *speak with animals*

0 (at will)—*flare* (DC 16), *guidance*, *mending*, *stabilize*

**D** Domain spell; **Domain** Ice

**TACTICS**

**Before Combat** Ssevenka casts *barkskin*, *bear's endurance*, and *cat's grace* on herself before revealing herself to the PCs.

**During Combat** Ssevenka's first action in combat is to cast *antilife shell*. She relies on this spell to keep enemies from engaging her in melee while she summons creatures and uses ranged spells against foes. If her foes manage to engage her in melee, she wild shapes into a dire bear to continue the battle.

**Morale** Ssevenka fights until brought below 25 hit points, at which point she flees using *transport via plants* to escape to the opposite side of the Icemists; she does not seek another confrontation with the PCs.



**STATISTICS**

**Str** 8, **Dex** 26, **Con** 30, **Int** 16, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 28

**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 37

**Feats** Ability Focus (blinding beauty), Dodge, Mobility, Natural Spell, Quicken Spell, Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Wind Stance

**Skills** Acrobatics +32, Climb +12, Escape Artist +27, Handle Animal +28, Knowledge (nature) +24, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +27, Survival +8, Swim +18

**Languages** Common, Sylvan

**SQ** ice mastery, inspiration, nature bond (Ice domain), nature sense, trackless step, unearthly grace, wild empathy +31, wild empathy +21, woodland stride

**Gear** +3 dagger, headband of inspired wisdom +2, ring of force shield, ring of major fire resistance

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Cold Aura (Su)** Svevenka emits an aura of cold in a 10-foot radius. Any creature in this range takes 2d6 points of cold damage per round (DC 28 Fort for half). Svevenka can suppress or resume her cold aura as a free action. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Exude Ice (Su)** At will as a full-round action, Svevenka can exude a circle of slippery ice in a 20-foot-diameter spread centered on her. This ice remains in the affected area, melting away as normal for the ambient temperature. Moving into a square of ice costs two squares of movement, and the DC for Acrobatics and Climb checks in the area increases by +5.

**Ice Mastery (Ex)** Svevenka gains a +1 morale bonus on attack and damage rolls if her foe is touching ice. She never slips or slides on ice unless she wishes, and can climb icy surfaces as though affected by a *spider climb* spell.

**Icy Touch (Su)** Svevenka's touch deals 1d6 points of cold damage. Attacks she makes with metallic weapons deal +1d6 points of cold damage as well. Anyone who takes this additional cold damage must succeed at a DC 28 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**STORY AWARD:** If the PCs befriend Svevenka and earn her aid and advice, award them XP as if they had defeated her in combat.

**D GIANT SENTINELS (CR 16)**

At this point along the ghostly river's route, the phantom waters are joined by an ancient road paved with flat stones that have a faint sheen of gold to them. This road continues north to Xin-Shalast—from this point on, the PCs have a physical route to follow and need no longer depend upon the phantom waters of the Avah. The road itself is 100 feet wide, its surface patchy here with swaths of ice but providing a welcome flat surface upon which to travel.

**CREATURES:** A small group of neutral evil cloud giants led by a one-eyed brutish frost giant named Bjormundal has been ordered by their rune giant masters to guard this approach to Xin-Shalast. The giants dwell in a cave overlooking the road—the 60-foot climb up to the cave requires a successful DC 20 Climb check. Two of the four giants stand guard at the cave entrance at all times, hiding behind several immense boulders.

**BJORMUNDAL**

<b>XP</b> 25,600	<b>CR</b> 13	<b>HP</b> 215
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Male frost giant fighter 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 149)

CE Large humanoid (cold, giant)

**Init** +6; Senses low-light vision; Perception +22

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 28, touch 11, flat-footed 26 (+8 armor, +2 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 215 (18 HD; 14d8+4d10+130)

**Fort** +19, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8; +1 vs. fear

**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1, rock catching; **Immune** cold

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to fire

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** +3 greataxe +28/+23/+18 (3d6+21/19-20/x3)

**Ranged** rock +16/+11/+6 (1d8+11)

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

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Bjormundal, perhaps feeling a need to compensate for his shorter sized compared to his minions, leaps down to confront the PCs in melee as soon as he spots them, leaving the cloud giants to make attacks at range. Bjormundal fights with Power Attack. Faced with a foe using a powerful weapon, he'll try to sunder it with a Vital Strike.

**Morale** Bjormundal flees if reduced to fewer than 30 hit points.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 33, **Dex** 14, **Con** 22, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 13

**Base Atk** +14; **CMB** +26; **CMD** 38

**Feats** Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe)

**Skills** Intimidate +22, Perception +22, Stealth -4 (0 in snow)

**Languages** Common, Giant

**SQ** armor training 1

**Combat Gear** *potions of cure serious wounds* (3); **Other Gear** +2 breastplate, +3 greataxe, ring of feather falling

**CLOUD GIANTS (4)**

<b>XP</b> 12,800 each	<b>CR</b> 11	<b>HP</b> 168 each
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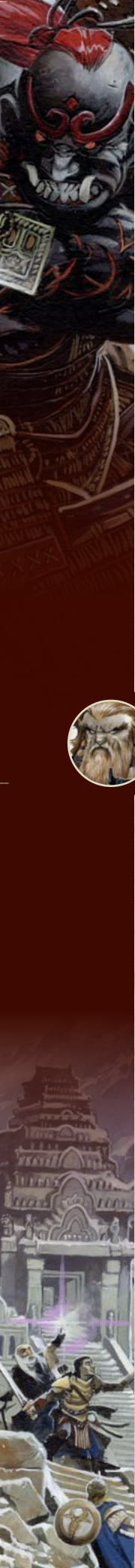
**hp** 168 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 147)

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** When the first two giants spot intruders, they start throwing rocks on the surprise round. The sound of the rocks smashing into the ancient road below is enough to draw the other two giants from the cave's depths in only 2 rounds. The four giants gain cover against attacks from below from their positions behind boulders, and continue attacking with hurled boulders until foes confront them in melee. If foes flee to the north toward Xin-Shalast, the cloud giants levitate down to the road and give chase.

**Morale** The giants fight to the death unless freed of their slavery to the rune giants.

**TREASURE:** The giants have gathered a total of 1,265 gp in coins, a chest of copper bars worth a total of 500 gp, and a fine cave bear cloak worth 2,000 gp.







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# PART FOUR: XIN-SHALAST

XIN-SHALAST. FABLED CITY AT THE EDGE OF REALITY. A STEPPING STONE BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THAT WHICH IS BEYOND. DOORWAY TO THE PLATEAU OF LENG. THE SPIRED CITY OF XIN-SHALAST HAS STIRRED THE IMAGINATIONS OF POETS AND MADMEN FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS—QUITE A FEAT FOR A CITY THAT, NESTLED AGAINST THE SLOPES OF ONE OF THE TALLEST MOUNTAINS ON GOLARION, HAS BEEN LOST TO EXPLORATION IN ALL THAT TIME. LEGENDS HAVE CALLED XIN-SHALAST THE CRADLE OF LIFE, CLAIM IT WAS BUILT BY THE FIRST RACE, AND HOLD ITS STREETS TO BE OF GOLD AND TOWERS TO BE OF RUBY AND DIAMOND.



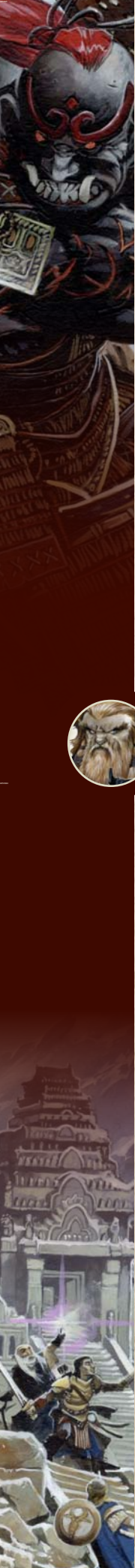
Time and legend have a way of making such distortions seem like fact, yet Xin-Shalast is indeed a place of wonder, mystery, and danger. Once the crown jewel of the nation of Shalast, and arguably the greatest of all Thassilon's capitals, Xin-Shalast has remained hidden from prying eyes for ages, standing strong against the steady march of decay due to its proximity to other worlds, where the very rules of existence are twisted and wrong. Today, high in its mystical mountain valley, when the wind cuts just right between the jagged peaks, listeners can still sometimes hear the otherworldly voice of the Ancients piping, "Tekeli-li... Tekeli-li..."

Despite its legendary status among explorers and scholars (most of whom argue that, if indeed the place ever existed, it is certainly gone now), Xin-Shalast is a very real place. The former capital of Shalast, Domain of Greed, and one of the seven rune-cities of Thassilon, the city actually comprises two distinct entities. Xin-Shalast Major, known more commonly by its inhabitants as the Lower City, occupies a long valley at the foot of the great mountain of Mhar Massif. Xin-Shalast Proper, also known as the fabled Spires of Xin-Shalast, sits high upon the southern slope of Mhar Massif, just below its demon-haunted summit. This was the personal palace and fortified citadel of the Runelords of Greed, a line of eight archmagi that ended in the reign of Karzoug the Claimer. From this perch, the current runelord could survey his city in the valley below.

The ancient citadel of the Spires of Xin-Shalast is further explored in Part Five—Part Four is concerned with the Lower City itself. In its heyday, the Lower City was a booming metropolis unnaturally sustained in one of the most forbidding environments of Golarion, high in the Kodar Range, by the will and magical might of the Runelord of Greed. The citizens believed that the runelord's magic was all that kept the three ever-simmering volcanoes of the nearby peaks quiescent, though even in the years after Thassilon's fall, only one major eruption occurred (see area I).

The population of Xin-Shalast at its height consisted of a varied mix of races. The bulk of the legendary city's citizens were humans, yet they could not be called the movers and shakers of the metropolis. At the top of the city's hierarchy were the bestial lamia-kin, Karzoug's favored servants, valued for their ability to erode the will of dissenters and magically compel their victims. As with the other six runelords, giants of all types answered the Runelord of Greed's call as well, serving as shock troops and enforcing his will across the length and breadth of Shalast. The giantkind were controlled by a relatively small tribe of rune giants, unnatural creations whose sole purpose was to dominate the lesser giant races in the runelord's service. Below these groups came the various humanoid races who composed the majority of the city's population and filled the provider caste, performing the roles of artisans, entertainers, and merchants to keep the economy and infrastructure of the empire alive. Beneath all of these was the slave caste, almost always humanoids from neighboring nations (particularly from Bakrakhlan to the west), segregated into a fortified district of the city when not going about their daily labors. Upon their backs lay the task of maintaining the empire, and their lot in life was a hard one indeed, rarely allowing survival past middle age. Apart from all of these groups within the city were the many dragons who owed allegiance to Karzoug. These great beasts laired mainly in the Teeth of Karzoug's mountain citadel or in caves along the slopes of the mountain. Some few chose to dwell in the Lower City itself. The dragons answered to none save Karzoug and the most highly placed Harridans of the Mountain, as well as the occasional rune giant assigned to oversee a flight of (usually young) dragons. Finally, there were the strange monstrosities and alien entities the lords of Xin-Shalast called upon to serve strange tasks—denizens from Leng, the eerie shining children, the horrific scarlet walkers, and other monsters used as guardians, advisors, or both—depending upon their individual and monstrous natures.





Today, very few humans remain in the city of Xin-Shalast. The bulk of the city is uninhabited, yet over the past 10,000 years, the giants and lamias have retained their presence here. Now that Karzoug is waking, they are eager to see the ancient tales handed down by their ancestors once again come to life.

## CITY OVERVIEW

What was once a vibrant, cosmopolitan city built miraculously above the 15,000-foot mark is now a desolate ruin of cyclopean proportions. Still mind-boggling in its scope and grandeur at first glance, on closer inspection it is a mere shadow of its original glory—a sterile, forsaken shell. Only with recent events have the ruins of Xin-Shalast begun to come to life once again. With the stirring of its former master in the spires upon the mountain above, this haven of evil has begun to attract the descendants of those who once owed him fealty. Though the city is still vastly underpopulated and largely deserted, new dangers roam its echoing streets and forgotten passages in addition to the natural hazards to be found in this bleak locale at the edge of the world.

Even today, the most striking aspect of the Lower City is its epic size. Everything about Xin-Shalast is massive, designed as it was to house hundreds of thousands of citizens in close quarters, a sizable portion of them giants. Buildings tower to great heights, byways are wide and lined by massive columns, doorways are cavernous openings, and building interiors are composed of great hollow chambers like the naves of primeval cathedrals. When first viewed from the entrance pass into the valley, the city seems much smaller than it really is. Only when the viewer realizes the distances and scale involved does she grasp the true scope of this monstrous place. Read or paraphrase the following description when the Lower City is first viewed from its southern entrance.



This tableau defies belief. A narrow mountain pass opens into a glacial valley extending north and then turning to the west at the base of the vast mountain at the far end. Filling this valley is an ice-capped city of enormous proportions. The near end is mostly blocked by a huge fortress of smooth black stone, with multiple towers rising from its high walls. Exiting the bailey of this fortress is a massive causeway of gold that dominates the city as it travels down the center of the vale. Enormous towers and spires of many-colored stone pack both sides of the central thoroughfare, rising to prodigious heights and giving the illusion that the road itself is a valley. The eastern slope of the valley has been partially subsumed by an ancient volcanic flow,—nearly a quarter of the city appears to have been so buried. That section is now little more

than a great mass of ice, with the jagged angles and peaks of ruined structures poking through its topmost layer here and there. Where the valley curves slightly to the west, the structures, if anything, grow even larger, becoming truly gigantic as they climb up and over the rocky spur. At the far end of the valley, the city abuts the lower slope of a truly massive peak. Yet the city builders appear to have taken no heed of this change in slope, for the great causeway merely elevates at a steep angle and continues to climb the incline in a nearly straight line, transforming into an immense stairway. Additional buildings cling precariously to the mountain face alongside the causeway, growing even larger and more impressive as they ascend. The gigantic buildings finally give way a few thousand feet above, but the mighty road continues to wend its treacherous way to just below the mountain's peak. There, a spired citadel looms, its size and proportions truly magnificent. It, too, fails to summit the mountain—instead, its topmost spires end just below the dominant face of a stern man, carved into the peak of the mountain and surveying the city below. The otherworldly quality of this strange panorama is further reinforced by the sound of the cold winds slicing across the high peaks, making strange cries and shrieks in the thin mountain air.

As mentioned, the structures are universally of massive proportion with multiple levels, usually in the form of towers of various shapes, and are mostly covered in a thin rime of hoarfrost. Strong winds and the lurking presence of Leng work to prevent much in the way of actual snowfall in Xin-Shalast, but here and there small drifts lie against buildings or mounds of stone. Built as they were by giants, the buildings are incredibly durable, with thick walls and roofs, and have largely remained intact through the ages. Many have holed roofs or crumbled sections but remain structurally sound; very few beyond specific areas of the city mentioned below have crumbled into true ruin. The structures of the Lower City are reminiscent of the ancient architecture of vast proportions that can still be found in other parts of Varisia, such as the Storval Stair or the Irespan of Magnimar. Other than these similarities and a propensity for multi-balconied spires, the actual buildings of Xin-Shalast are extremely dissimilar, built in a great variety of exotic styles reflecting the various giant races, multiple cultures of the subjugated peoples, and magnificent architectural skill and magic once available to the empire of Thassilon.

The Lower City of Xin-Shalast is divided into seven districts, each of which had its own consul appointed by the Harridans of the Mountain (the ruling caste of





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# XIN-SHALAST: LOWER CITY

1 SQUARE = 750 FEET

FACE OF  
MCHAR MASSIF



lamias) during the city's height. These consuls led their districts and made sure they were run in a manner consistent with the principles of greed and dictates of the runelord. Six of the districts are the Artisan District, the Slave District, the Entertainment District, Temple Row, Jotunburg, and the Rising District. The seventh district actually existed in the twisted maze of tunnels and catacombs below the city and was called the Hypogeum.

The building materials are several varieties of stone quarried from the rock faces of the Kodar Range, including a hard green marble similar in appearance to emerald. Walls, especially outer walls, tend to be extremely thick, sometimes 20 feet or more, and the principle of the arch and vaulted ceilings are used repeatedly to support the massive weight of the structures above. To lessen the weight of the building materials, many rooms in the buildings have vast open spaces with multiple columns and high ceilings. Most of the wooden doors and accoutrements within the city still exist today, having been essentially freeze-dried to a silvery finish and stony hardness.

The valley walls are extremely steep—cliffs of sheer, gray rock rise from 100 to 300 feet above the tops of the buildings before angling away into mountainous peaks. Unless otherwise mentioned, they are devoid of flora other than simple lichens and the occasional high-altitude nightshade or waterleaf eking out a harsh existence in a crack or fissure.

**ALTITUDE DANGERS:** The entirety of the lower city of Xin-Shalast is above 15,000 feet in altitude. As such, creatures are subject to altitude fatigue and sickness, as detailed on page 430 of the *Core Rulebook*. All of the creatures found in Xin-Shalast have acclimated to these conditions, and need not worry about these effects.

## EXPLORING XIN-SHALAST

Although the PCs are now in Karzoug's direct shadow, the exploration of Xin-Shalast is not on a timetable. There is no rush for the PCs to complete this portion of the adventure, so you can allow them to spend some time exploring the ruins at their leisure. A certain amount of exploration is necessary, in fact, before the PCs can even approach the Spires of Xin-Shalast above, as Karzoug's *runewell* creates an immense occluding field that prevents any but his most trusted minions from entering with ease. In order to survive within this hostile zone, the PCs need not only powerful magic, but also magic items called *Sihedron rings* that prevent the occluding field from utilizing its potent transmutation magic on the wearer. Several creatures encountered in Xin-Shalast wear *Sihedron rings*—they can be found in three locations (areas I, K, and Q), while many more are to be had in the Pinnacle of Avarice. There are intentionally fewer rings than there are expected PCs, since this forces them to be creative in their initial entrance into

the occluding field, but if you'd rather hand out more rings so the PCs aren't forced to use other forms of magic to protect against the field's effects, feel free to do so. It's possible the PCs could attempt to explore the Spires and the Pinnacle of Avarice before securing the proper gear—if they try this, let them. Assuming they survive, there's no real penalty for having to head back down into Xin-Shalast to gather more rings, apart from wasting their resources. Ultimately, PCs who take their time exploring Xin-Shalast not only find themselves better prepared for what awaits them in the Pinnacle of Avarice, but they can also learn more about Karzoug, the city's history, and the methods by which he can be defeated. Not everyone in Xin-Shalast is an enemy.

## WEARING SIHEDRONS

Throughout the Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path, the PCs have likely been collecting *Sihedron medallions* from their vanquished foes. Once they enter Xin-Shalast, these medallions add a new level of tactical complexity, for Karzoug can sense the world through a Sihedron wearer's senses and can speak through the wearer's voice. As long as at least one PC wears a *Sihedron medallion* while in Xin-Shalast, Karzoug knows where that PC is. The chance of wandering monster encounters occurring doubles, and you should make encounter checks twice as often. Karzoug might, at times, taunt the PCs using the wearer's voice. He might even attempt to disrupt spells with verbal components or call out warnings to monsters the PCs are about to ambush. A PC can attempt to resist this effect by making a DC 25 Will save.

A *Sihedron medallion* can substitute for a *Sihedron ring* in protecting its wearer in the occluding field, so if the PCs can't find enough rings, the medallions can be less desirable and more dangerous replacements.

## EVENT 5: EMERGENCE OF THE SPARED

This event can occur at any time after the PCs enter the ruins of Xin-Shalast, ideally not long after they first run afoul of some of the city's hostile inhabitants and have secured a safe place to rest and recover. As the PCs do so, the rattle of falling rock should attract their attention to an opening in a nearby building.

**CREATURE:** The source of the sound is a strange humanoid creature known as a skulk. After Thassilon's collapse and the volcanic eruption that destroyed nearly a quarter of the city, many of Xin-Shalast's slaves found themselves suddenly freed, yet without the gear or experience to make escaping the city possible. Instead, they retreated to the deep caves below Xin-Shalast, where they found themselves safe within cysts that formed among the ruined buildings. Led by a woman named Mesmina, a powerful cleric of Lissala who had abandoned her loyalty to Karzoug with the empire's fall, they remained beneath the notice of the remaining





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inhabitants of the ruined city above, and over the course of hundreds of generations, they evolved into something beyond humanity—a race of chameleon-like humanoids called skulks.

Calling themselves the Spared, these survivors believed in a divine mandate handed down from Mesmina that they were meant to survive, no matter the cost, and find freedom in the city that once oppressed them. Over the years, the Spared excavated a series of tunnels through the earth and grew to know the tangle of caverns connecting various cysts and partially intact buildings buried in the flow. They scavenge vermin and what plants and fungi are able to grow in their humid tunnels and only rarely make use of their hidden surface entrance at area I.

After centuries of undisturbed isolation, trouble has come to the tunnels of the Spared. Recent diggings to expand their warrens broke through into the passages of the Hypogeum. Though the breach was quickly repaired and camouflaged to avoid the notice of the savage tribes occupying those subterranean quarters, it was not done quickly enough, and something passed undetected into the tunnels of the Spared. With this creature, a hideous abnormality known as the Hidden Beast, the Spared find themselves once again enslaved. It is ensconced within the inner chambers of these tunnels, surrounded by dominated skulks who do its bidding.

The ancient prophecies of Mesmina say that when the Spared become enslaved once more, strangers like their ancestors pictured in their tunnel murals will come to free them. These strangers are the PCs, and though their appearance in Xin-Shalast is little more than a coincidence (if they were truly prophesied saviors, certainly the PCs would have arrived to deliver the Spared to freedom 30 years ago when the Hidden Beast first established its rule over the tribe), one skulk in particular becomes convinced the PCs are the skulks' saviors as soon as he notices them in a battle with one of Xin-Shalast's other monsters.

This skulk, a quietly observant creature named Morgiv, hopes the PCs might be able to save his tribe from the Hidden Beast's control. Though the skulks of the Spared appear doughy and blubbery (an evolutionary result of life in this cold, harsh environment), they are in fact quite quick on their feet and agile. Skulks can change the color of their skin with ease to match the environment around them—perhaps the single greatest reason their tribe has survived this long in a city inhabited by bickering groups of lamia-kin and giants.

Morgiv has come to talk, not fight. He speaks only Thassilonian, so the PCs may need to devise some

means of communication or else resort to pantomime. If communication can be established, Morgiv explains the history of his tribe quickly, ending with the recent developments of his people falling under the control of an invisible monster known as the Hidden Beast. Many skulks have disappeared, and others clearly serve this unknown being—those who aren't enslaved call the entity the Hidden Beast because none of them have seen it. All who have sought it out disappear or end up as undead vampiric slaves.

Morgiv notes that his tribe was once enslaved by the rulers of this city, and that their leader, beloved Mesmina, delivered them out of that bondage. She prophesized that should the tribe ever again fall victim to slavery, strangers will come to the people's aid. At this point, Morgiv excitedly tells the PCs that they are those strangers, that their appearance and raiments are similar to those pictured on the walls of his home in the depictions of Mesmina herself.

If the PCs agree to help Morgiv by slaying the Hidden Beast, he excitedly leads them to area I and thence down through a network of tunnels that leads directly to the Hidden Beast's deep underground lair, bypassing all of the monster's guardians above with ease. See the description of area I for more details.



**MORGIV**

<b>MORGIV</b>	<b>XP</b> 400	<b>CR</b> 1	<b>HP</b> 16
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CN male skulk (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 248)

**hp** 16

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Morgiv, like most skulks, lives by avoiding combat; he fights only if cornered, but does so while sobbing and begging for mercy.

**Morale** Morgiv flees if confronted with combat.

**STORY AWARD:** If the PCs befriend Morgiv and learn what he knows of the history of his tribe and Xin-Shalast, award them 12,800 XP.

**E KRAK NARATHA (CR 15)**



The ruined road branches here, a narrower route leading around to the west while the main thoroughfare passes through a looming stone wall flanked by glossy black towers. It seems to be some sort of ancient gateway to the city proper. A dark mass of gritty, rocky ice presses up against the fortress's northern face, the



ancient lava flow apparently stopped (but only just) by the stone walls.

This is Krak Naratha, a huge fortress that guards the entrance to the valley of Xin-Shalast. Its walls are 50 feet thick and rise to a height of 75 feet. The square towers extend as high as 200 feet. Krak Naratha is composed of volcanic glass harvested from the caldera east of the valley, its roof and edges once gilt in gold but now only retaining splashes of color. Its joint seams are very fine and almost invisible in the dark stone. Climbing the walls requires a successful DC 40 Climb check.

The gates of Krak Naratha fell long ago, leaving an empty gatehouse to provide entry to its bailey. The former garrison blockhouse has partially collapsed, as has much of the northeastern wall. The ancient volcanic eruption did significant damage to these structures, but not enough to completely destroy them. A smaller gate to the east of the ruined blockhouse once opened into the Slave District, but this is now blocked by a mass of ice. Anyone climbing the tower stairs up to the fortress's rear wall can easily descend onto the surface of the lava flow (which lies only 8 feet below the ramps).

**CREATURES:** Krak Naratha currently serves as the home of a particularly enterprising group of harpy-like lamias known as kuchrimas. These kuchrimas have transformed Krak Naratha's bailey into an enormous paddock for the keeping of a vast herd of high-altitude mountain aurochs as food sources. While many of Xin-Shalast's inhabitants hunt within the city itself for food, quite a few have taken to the convenience of Krak Naratha's farm and paid the kuchrimas handsomely for access to their herd. With Karzoug's wakening, the burgeoning lamia matriarchs have decreed that the kuchrimas are no longer to charge for access to the aurochs—that any of Xin-Shalast's growing army can visit here for food as they wish. Worse, the lamia rulers have seized Krak Naratha's treasury. The kuchrimas are foul-tempered about this recent turn of events, but when three previous rebellions resulted in quick and painful punishment from the lamias and their rune giant allies, the kuchrimas swallowed their pride and accepted the new order bitterly.

Unless the PCs are particularly stealthy, one of the four Krak Naratha soldiers always on duty on the walls notices their approach and uses a thunderstone to sound the alarm. A few moments later, three soldiers fly down to confront the PCs. If the characters can produce Sihedrons and can bluff the kuchrimas, they might be able to convince the lamia-kin that they are new recruits of Karzoug's growing army and be allowed to pass into the city. Otherwise, the lamia-kin shriek in anger, detonate another thunderstone to raise the alarm again, and attack.

If the PCs attempt to enter Krak Naratha, several soldiers use thunderstones to whip the aurochs into a stampede. The stampede consists of 24 aurochs running at full speed (160 feet) from the entrance of the fortress.

In all, there are only a dozen kuchrimas left in Krak Naratha—a shadow of their former strength, and a testament to the decisive punishment inflicted upon them after their previous rebellions against Xin-Shalast's new leaders.

### KRAK NARATHA SOLDIERS (12)

XP	CR	HP
4,800 each	8	104

Kuchrima (see page 411)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The kuchrimas avoid melee combat, hovering within 30 feet in order to gain the Point-Blank Shot attack and damage bonuses. Creatures successfully climbing the sides of the ravine or who separate themselves out are singled out for Snatch attempts, allowing the lamia-kin to carry them up high and drop them.

**Morale** The kuchrimas fight to the death, for they are unwilling to give their leaders an excuse to punish them.

### MOUNTAIN AUROCHS

XP	CR	HP
1,200	4	34

Advanced giant aurochs (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 174, 294, 295)  
hp 34 each

### F GOLDEN ROAD

This elevated stone causeway is 75 feet wide and runs nearly a hundred feet off the ground in places. This elevation is not immediately obvious, though, as huge buildings and towering structures constructed along the road's entire length give the illusion that the causeway remains at ground level. This illusion is broken somewhat where small “feeder alleys” branch off from the main course of the causeway to descend into the various districts of the city below. Though the bricks of the road are of basalt, they do in many places retain gold plating that might once have covered the entire run.

The Golden Road remains sound, though here and there stretches of up to 200 feet in length have collapsed into rubble. In areas abutting the Slave District, the Golden Road is often bordered to the east by the lava flow and in many places has been destroyed or overflowed by it. Other sections actually open into the deeps of the Hypogeum and the lairs of creatures dwelling there.

The Golden Road is so named for its course that leads through the center of the city and up the side of the mountain, supposedly directly to the feet of Mhar Massif. It was indeed plated in thin sheets of gold for its length at Xin-Shalast's height, but time has not been so kind to these sheets. The thoroughfare remains the most heavily traveled route in Xin-Shalast today—check for wandering monster encounters twice per day and twice per night here, with the chance of an encounter 20% of the time.



## G GIANT ENCAMPMENT



This section of the ruined city has been cleared of rubble, leaving a roughly circular courtyard about a quarter-mile in diameter. Many oversized tents and crude shelters have been erected in the clearing, turning it into what looks like a giant-sized refugee camp.

Although Karzoug was pleased to find that giants still dwelt in Xin-Shalast when he awoke 5 years ago, the total number was but a fraction of what he needs to rebuild the city. When he revived his rune giants, they were able to subjugate the cloud, frost, and storm giants that dwelt here in the ruins, after which rune giant scouts slowly expanded their explorations into the surrounding mountains. When they find a tribe, they dominate its leaders and move on, trusting their minions to handle the heavy work of relocating the tribe to Xin-Shalast.

New arrivals to Xin-Shalast generally congregate here, in a large swath cleared of rubble. Hundreds of giants dwell in the yurts, tents, and surrounding ruins, awaiting assignments by the giants of Shahlaria (area R). The giants living here spend long hours toiling at rebuilding the northern section of Xin-Shalast, returning here only to grab a few hours of sleep and food.

There are more than 500 hill giants, frost giants, and stone giants currently encamped in this area. Most come from lower elevations and require time to acclimate to Xin-Shalast's thin air, but once they're ready, they're put to work to the north. There's little of interest for PCs here but a fight—fortunately, these giants aren't too aggressive (either because they're acclimating to the elevation or because they're recovering from a hard day's work) and only attack those who are overly aggressive or openly attempt to walk among the larger folk. The giants hold the rune giants in awe, especially given the larger giants' size and swift action when punishment is required, and have little interest in talking with (or being seen talking with) obvious intruders.

**CREATURE:** Not all of the denizens here are cowed by their new masters. One stone giant mercenary, a heavily tattooed creature named Gyukak, has begun secret talks with several giants here in an attempt to organize a rebellion and escape what he sees as an accursed city. His giants keep their true allegiances secret, but are completely loyal to Gyukak.

Gyukak's motivations aren't entirely selfless. In truth, he is an ogre mage who maintains a stone



GYUKAK

giant disguise. Gyukak hopes to build himself a private army large enough to lead out of Xin-Shalast so he can claim several now-abandoned giant homelands on the Storval Plateau as his own holdings. Despite the fact that his intentions for the giants have marked similarities to those of Karzoug, his plans for fomenting a rebellion run counter to the will of the runelord. When enough giants are properly indoctrinated into the runelord's service, they might provoke a pogrom of annihilation upon the resistant hill giants loyal to Gyukak. A party could find itself on either side of this conflict or stuck in the middle as scapegoats.

Gyukak pays attention, and if the PCs' presence becomes known to the giants of this encampment, he attempts to contact them, introducing himself as a rebel and

the leader of giants who want to escape Xin-Shalast. Gyukak hopes to convince the PCs to create a big distraction to the north, such as attacking the blue dragon Ghlorofaex or even attempting to scale Mhar Massif, so he can lead his giants south and out of Xin-Shalast without attracting the attention of the rune giants. You can use Gyukak to answer PC questions about Xin-Shalast (the ogre mage has spent some time exploring the place and knows most of its dangers). He can certainly warn the PCs about the occlusion field near the peak of Mhar Massif, and he suspects that certain leaders among the giants have items that allow them to enter the field unharmed. Gyukak encourages the PCs to attempt to assassinate these leaders, for such an attempt would certainly create the distraction he craves.

<b>GYUKAK</b>	<b>XP</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>HP</b>
	4,800	8	92

Male ogre mage (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 221)

**hp** 92

### TACTICS

**Morale** Gyukak is a swift judge of character and knows he's no match for the PCs. If he gets the feeling they might be about to attack him, he decides to cut his losses and turns invisible to aid his attempt to escape.

**STORY AWARD:** If the PCs manage to get important information about Xin-Shalast from Gyukak, grant them 12,800 XP.

## H ABOMINABLE DOME (CR 15)



An immense dome of stone rises at the end of an elevated road here. The structure towers



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five hundred feet in height and is capped by a smaller dome that brings its total height to nearly seven hundred feet in all. Numerous arches and openings decorate the building's sides, all allowing access to its cavernous interior.

The interior of this building is mostly open, creating a truly impressive enclosed area once used as a place for the most gifted stone giants of ancient Xin-Shalast to practice the art of monument construction. All that remains of their final project is a heap of rubble 100 feet high in the center of the area. The stone giant architects themselves dwelt in chambers built into the walls of the dome, accessed by spiraling ramps and each with its own private exit into the city.

**CREATURES:** Although no giants have dwelt here for thousands of years, its current tenants are no less huge. A tribe of particularly violent and loathsome yetis took up residence here 6 decades ago and were more than capable of holding their own against the giants and lamias of the city. Until only a few weeks ago, the tribe was led by an immense chieftain named Voorgoor, a monster who maintained his rule through brutality and force. When Karzoug awoke and his rune giants returned to Xin-Shalast, they knew the abominable snowmen were a tremendous resource for their armies. Yet not being giants, they were more resistant to traditional methods of rune giant control. For many months, the giants left the yetis to their own devices, but recently, with Karzoug's release nearing, the giants have initiated a plan to subvert the yetis. The giants made an open and public invitation to Voorgoor, acknowledging his strength and power before the other yetis under his command and inviting the behemoth to join them as a co-ruler of Xin-Shalast. The abominable snowmen remaining here assume that Voorgoor remains there, for their leader pays visits to the tribe on a weekly basis to check up on them and punish those who have strayed too far from his leadership, yet there is no more day-to-day leadership in the tribe.

In fact, Voorgoor was slain and fed to the dragon Ghlorofaex, and his periodic "visits" back here are made by none other than Khalib (Karzoug's current apprentice), disguised as Voorgoor via a *monstrous physique II* spell (*Ultimate Magic* 229). In this way, the abominable snowmen are kept under control with a minimum of effort and fuss, ready for a time when their savagery might be needed.

The tribe itself dwells in hollows and chambers within the central pile of rubble. Voorgoor once dwelt in a spacious cave near the top of the pile, but that cave now stands empty. At the peak of the rubble pile, the snowmen maintain a 30-foot-tall altar to Voorgoor in the form of hundreds of bones tied together with lengths of sinew to form a rough approximation of a humanoid shape. The tribe numbers 26 in all, but at any one

time, only six are present here, with the remaining 20 scouring Xin-Shalast or the surrounding mountains for smaller things to torment and eventually eat.

### ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN (6)

XP	CR	HP
9,600	10	156

Yeti barbarian 2/fighter 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 287)

CE Large monstrous humanoid (cold)

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +11

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 24, touch 10, flat-footed 21 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +14 natural, -2 rage, -1 size)

**hp** 156 (12 HD; 10d10+2d12+88)

**Fort** +18, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10; +1 vs. fear

**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1, uncanny dodge; **Immune** cold;

**DR** 10/piercing

**Weaknesses** vulnerability to fire

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft., climb 30 ft.

**Melee** bite +14 (1d6+4), 2 claws +20 (1d8+10/19-20 plus 1d6 cold)

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

**Special Attacks** cold, frightful gaze (DC 13), rage (11 rounds/day), rage powers (animal fury), rend (2 claws, 1d6+6 plus 1d6 cold)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The abominable snowmen lack subtlety in combat—their roars and bellowing charges are as close as they get to organized tactics. Each snowman picks one target to attack, doubling up only if there aren't enough victims to go around.

**Morale** The snowmen fight to the death to protect their lair but do not pursue foes farther than 500 feet from its edge.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 27, **Dex** 14, **Con** 24, **Int** 7, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 32

**Feats** Cleave, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (claws), Improved Natural Attack (claws), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Climb), Weapon Focus (claws), Weapon Specialization (claws)

**Skills** Climb +28, Perception +11, Stealth +13 (+21 in snow)

**Languages** Aklo

**SQ** thick hide, fast movement, armor training 1

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Thick Hide (Ex)** The abominable snowmen of the Kodars have thicker fur and hides than most yetis—their base natural armor bonus is +14 and they possess damage reduction 10/piercing as a result.

**TREASURE:** Scattered among their lairs, the abominable snowmen have collected several pieces of treasure—all of which have been left behind by those unfortunate enough to be caught by the snowmen and eaten. Each of the following items can be discovered with a successful DC 20 Perception check and 10 minutes of work picking through the refuse- and rubble-filled dens: a mithral breastplate, a cobra-shaped platinum armband with





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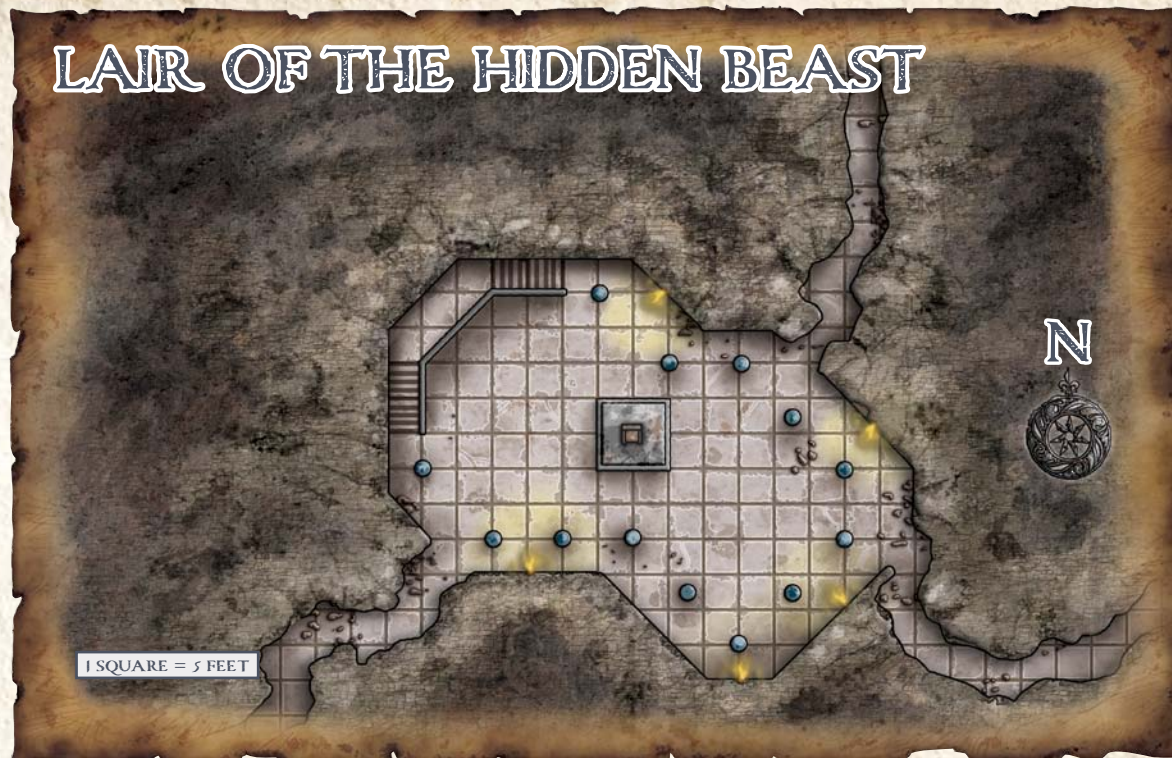
PART FOUR: XIN-SHALAST

MAP FOUR: LAIR OF THE HIDDEN BEAST

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rubies for eyes worth 2,000 gp, a *ring of the ram* with only 5 charges left, a +2 *vicious kukri* that bears the unholy symbol of Lamashtu etched on its blade, and a *bronze griffon figurine of wondrous power*.

### 1 LAIR OF THE HIDDEN BEAST (CR 16)

Buried under the lava flow, the majority of the Slave District buildings are hidden completely from view. Most of them were destroyed when a nearby volcano exploded, sending a pyroclastic flow into the city, but those that were built strong survived, and their interiors remain open and navigable where natural tunnels in the ice connect them. The region is, as a result, a tangled network of caves and chambers. Explorers could spend weeks, if not months, wandering these tunnels and never see them all. For thousands of years, these tunnels were the primary home of the Spared.

The Spared slowly expanded their tunnels as their population grew, but on a fateful day 5 decades ago, skulk tunnelers broke into an ancient crypt deep below the surface at this location, inadvertently releasing an immortal monstrosity that had been trapped therein since the fall of Thassilon. This creature was the Hidden Beast, and it took less than a month for it to seize control of the Spared. Ever since, the skulks have lived only to serve the Hidden Beast's whims, with only a handful brave enough to escape into the outlying reaches of Xin-Shalast.

Although the PCs could find their way into the lair of the Hidden Beast accidentally, it's more likely they are directed here by Morgiv, a brave but simple skulk

who wants to see his people freed from the tyranny of the Hidden Beast, which treats the Spared as a farm for its gluttonous hunger. Morgiv knows the tunnels under the Slave District well and can lead the PCs to the very doorstep of the Hidden Beast's lair, bypassing its lax security with ease. The defenses of the lair itself, unfortunately, are not so easily surmounted.

Read or paraphrase the following to the PCs as they reach the Hidden Beast's lair.



The tunnel opens into a large room, a cyst in the earth under the weight of the buried city formed by some ancient basement gallery. A raised balcony to the northwest is accessed by two stairs and has a low stone balustrade. Pillars along the room's perimeter rise to a vaulted ceiling, while in the center of the room sits a dais holding an ornate throne. Seated upon the throne is a skeletal figure shrouded in musty robes bearing arcane symbols.

A silent mental *alarm* wards each of the three tunnel entrances to this chamber, placed there by the Hidden Beast itself. The central throne and dais sit above a large hollow area created by the Hidden Beast to serve as a "coffin"—this area can be reached with ease by creatures in gaseous form, but other creatures must move aside or destroy the 9-1/2-ton slab of basalt (hardness 8, hp 540, Break DC 50) to get to this chamber.

**CREATURES:** The ancients of Xin-Shalast often explored other realms and realities, ever seeking new discoveries



of magic and wealth to use to leverage more favor from Karzoug. One such sect of astral travelers came upon a strange leathery sphere floating inert in the void and brought it back here to investigate. Unfortunately for them, that sphere was a slumbering monstrosity—an undead tentacled sorcerer from a distant realm, cast into the Astral Plane by its enemies. When the travelers returned to the Material Plane with the sphere, the monster awoke and slew all but one of them. This last Thassilonian escaped only by sealing the chamber with *walls of force*, then later by collapsing the tunnels that accessed the chamber. The creature itself, ever patient and potent, returned to its slumber after realizing it couldn't escape. It slept through the fall of Thassilon and the following millennia, only to be awakened again by the Spared.

The Spared have taken to calling this creature the Hidden Beast, but the monster is actually a vampiric decapus—an undead octopoid creature with 10 tentacles protruding from its body surrounding a maw with large yellow fangs. Its cruel red eyes and slimy skin augment its monstrous visage, and its voice is a chilling whisper. The Hidden Beast has no real goals or desires beyond feasting on the blood of the living—its mind works in ways alien to most life on the Material Plane. It keeps the Spared under its control by dominating them or by transforming their leaders into enslaved vampires who then, in turn, dominate the living for their master. The Hidden Beast has no real desire to leave this area (feeding has been great over the past few decades), nor does it care that some of its flock escape its dominion now and then. Karzoug's agents discovered the Hidden Beast not long after Mokmurian's visit and managed to establish peaceful contact with it, but haven't quite managed to convince it to accept Karzoug as lord. The runelord himself plans to visit the Hidden Beast to make an offer it can't refuse after he emerges from the Eye of Avarice, but until then, the Hidden Beast is allowed to maintain its tiny empire under the Slave District.

The Hidden Beast spends its time invisible. The skeleton atop the throne in the middle of the room is actually the monster's public "face"—an illusion it maintains. When the Hidden Beast needs to speak to visitors, it uses a silent *ventriloquism* spell to do so through the illusion. As soon as it notices the PCs, it does exactly this, causing the desiccated and dead skeleton to sit up and take notice before addressing them in Abyssal: "Which of you would offer your blood to me? Step forward and feel the embrace of your new lord!"

The Hidden Beast isn't interested in visitors other than as a source of blood—if no PC steps forward to offer himself to the illusion, it attacks as detailed below. If a PC does offer himself, the beast slithers up to that character and attempts to grapple him so it may use its blood drain ability.

The Hidden Beast is not alone in this chamber—four vampire skulls hide in the shadows around the room's perimeter. Absolutely loyal to their master, they wait until combat begins before joining the fight, attacking first only if they're noticed beforehand.

## THE HIDDEN BEAST

XP	CR	HP
51,200	15	267

Male vampire decapus sorcerer 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 77)

CE Large undead (augmented aberration)

**Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +45

### DEFENSE

**AC** 33, touch 18, flat-footed 27 (+3 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, +4 shield, -1 size)

**hp** 267 (24 HD; 14d8+10d6+169); fast healing 5

**Fort** +17, **Ref** +17, **Will** +23

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +4; **DR** 10/magic and silver; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

**Weaknesses** vampire weaknesses

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 10 ft., climb 30 ft.

**Melee** bite +22 (1d8+8), tentacles +22 (3d6+8/19-20 plus grab), slam +22 (1d6+8 plus energy drain)

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

**Special Attacks** blood drain (1d4 Con), children of the night, constrict (3d6+12), create spawn, dominate (DC 27), energy drain (2 levels, DC 22)

**Decapus Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 6th; concentration +11)

At will—*minor image* (DC 16)

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

8/day—grave touch (5 rounds)

1/day—grasp of the dead (10d6 slashing, DC 20)

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

5th (4/day)—*telekinesis* (DC 20)

4th (6/day)—*animate dead*, *dimension door*, *phantasmal killer* (DC 21)

3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *vampiric touch*

2nd (7/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *false life*, *minor image* (DC 19), *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

1st (8/day)—*alarm*, *chill touch* (DC 16), *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 16), *shield*, *ventriloquism*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 17), *mage hand*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

**Bloodline** undead

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The Hidden Beast casts extended *false life* on itself every day and places a silent mental *alarm* at each of the room entrances. It uses its *ring of invisibility* to remain invisible at all times.

**During Combat** The Hidden Beast concentrates on maintaining the illusion of the undead speaker, hoping the PCs waste at least a round fighting it while its vampire minions move into position around them. The creature uses *ventriloquism*





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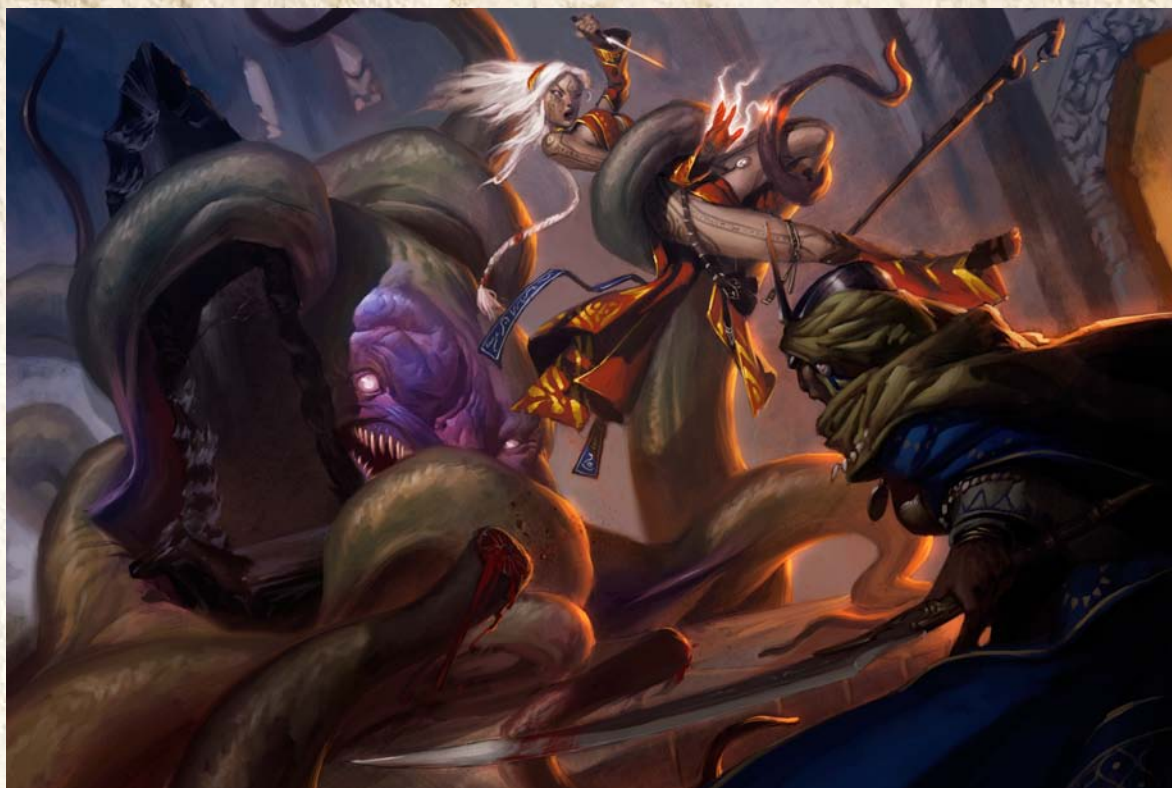
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to disguise its actual location, taking the first few rounds of combat to cast *displacement*, *mirror image*, and *shield* on itself. The Hidden Beast is fond of using *telekinesis* to disarm foes, but it generally starts its offense by casting *phantasmal killer* or *lightning bolt*. It avoids melee combat unless it can engage a foe one-on-one.

**Morale** If reduced to 0 hit points, the Hidden Beast automatically assumes gaseous form and attempts to escape through the fissures in and around the dais in the center of this room. These narrow fissures lead down 30 feet to a circular cavern, 20 feet in diameter, that serves as the Hidden Beast's "coffin." Once at rest here, it rematerializes and is helpless. It regains 1 hit point after 1 hour, then it is no longer helpless and resumes healing at the rate of 5 hit points per round from its fast healing. Once fully healed, it seeks out the PCs for swift and brutal revenge, losing sight of all other tasks until it succeeds at this quest.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 26, **Dex** 21, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 20  
**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +24 (+28 grapple); **CMD** 43 (can't be tripped)  
**Feats** Alertness, Arcane Strike, Bleeding Critical, Combat Reflexes Critical Focus, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Extend Spell, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus (illusion), Improved Critical (tentacles), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (tentacles), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (illusion), Still Spell, Toughness  
**Skills** Bluff +40, Climb +33, Perception +45, Sense Motive +28, Stealth +36  
**Languages** Aklo  
**SQ** bloodline arcana (corporeal undead affected by humanoid-

affecting spells), change shape (dire bat or wolf, *beast shape II*), gaseous form, shadowless, sound mimicry (voices), spider climb, tentacles

**Gear** ring of invisibility, Sihedron ring

<b>VAMPIRE SKULKS (4)</b>	<b>XP</b> 6,400 each	<b>CR</b> 9	<b>HP</b> 82 each
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Vampire skulk rogue 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 248)

CE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, skulk)

**Init** +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +25

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 26, touch 18, flat-footed 19 (+1 armor, +1 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural, +1 shield)

**hp** 82 each (9d8+42); fast healing 5

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +16, **Will** +6

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +4, evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; **DR** 10/magic and silver; **Immune** undead traits;

**Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

**Weaknesses** vampire weaknesses

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 35 ft.

**Melee** +1 *vicious dagger* +14/+9 (1d4+5/19-20 plus 2d6), slam +7 (1d4+2 plus energy drain)

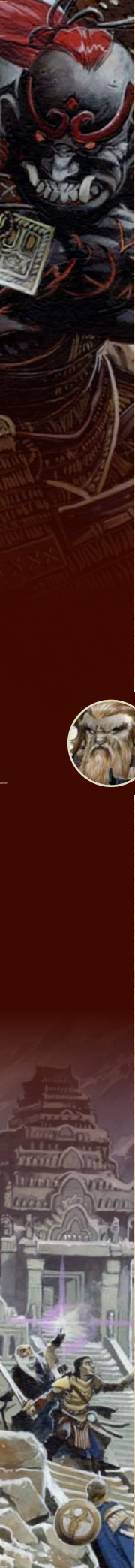
**Ranged** +1 *composite shortbow* +13/+8 (1d6+5/x3)

**Special Attacks** blood drain (1d4 Con), children of the night, create spawn, dominate (DC 17), sneak attack +4d6, energy drain (2 levels, DC 17)

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Once combat begins, the hidden skulks move





along the walls of the room and attempt to take up positions where they can move as pairs to flank foes. They continue to fight two-on-one as long as possible to maximize their sneak attacks. They prefer to fight foes who do not possess silver weapons, breaking off combat with those who use such weapons to seek easier prey if possible.

**Morale** The vampire skulls fight until reduced to 0 hit points, at which point they turn gaseous and drift toward the balcony to the northwest. Once there, they seep through cracks in the wall into a room under the balcony in which their coffins (actually nothing more than narrow niches in the floor) wait for them to rest and recover.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 19, **Dex** 22, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 28

**Feats** Alertness, Altitude Affinity, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Fleet, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (dagger), Wind Stance

**Skills** Acrobatics +18, Bluff +23, Climb +16, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Sleight of Hand +18, Stealth +34, Survival +15

**Languages** Aklo, Thassilonian, Undercommon

**SQ** camouflaged step, chameleon skin, change shape (dire bat or wolf, beast shape II), gaseous form, shadowless, spider climb, rogue talents (bleeding attack +4, combat trick, finesse rogue), trapfinding +3

**Gear** +1 vicious dagger, +1 composite shortbow with 20 arrows, ring of protection +1

**DEVELOPMENT:** If the PCs destroy the Hidden Beast completely, the remaining vampiric skulls that haunt the region become free-willed and flee deep into the substructure of the district. The surviving Spared will eventually band together to hunt them down, yet for now, the skulls prefer to remain hidden as well. Yet their gratitude to the PCs for their deliverance from this latest overlord does not go unrewarded. If he's nearby, Morgiv promises the PCs a reward once he and the other Spared can orchestrate it—in the meantime, the skulls themselves follow and watch over the PCs' progress through the Lower City from afar. When this unseen but ever-present escort senses danger, they give cry to a series of hoots and warning howls—as a result, the PCs are able to react to danger much more quickly, and gain a +4 bonus on all Initiative checks made while in the Lower City. In any event, the skulls offer the den of the Hidden Beast to the PCs as a safe place for them to rest if they wish.

One day after the Hidden Beast's defeat, Morgiv tracks the PCs down to give them some good news—his brethren have already managed to reclaim one of their old shrines, and they've decided that the treasures they had hidden there (treasures warded by powerful magic that prevented vampires from looting them) should be given to the PCs. The skulk hands the PCs a leather bag of holding II, but the true treasures lie within—a staff

of healing, a scroll of greater restoration, two scrolls of heal, a scroll of true resurrection, and a silk pouch containing eight elixirs of the peaks.

## J THE TANGLE

This southern portion of the Entertainment District was once the hub of brothels, gambling dens, small arenas and fighting pits, and less savory venues such as recreational torture chambers and drug parlors. Often informally referred to as the Eurythian Quarter, after Runelord Sorshen's realm to the south (although never called such when Karzoug or his agents were in earshot), this portion of the city was ruined by the fall of Thassilon and the attendant volcanic eruption. While the pyroclastic flow that buried the Slave District didn't hit this section of the city, lava bombs and a devastating mudslide did, reducing much of this region to tangled rubble. The nutrient-rich mud cascaded into the edge of this quarter and buried dozens of public baths built around thermal springs. The combination of nutrients, mineral-laden waters, and a favorable environment caused by the warming and humidifying influence of the hot springs resulted in a burst of strange plant and fungal growth. This ecosystem flourished, expanding across much of the area and covering it in an enveloping tangle of pallid vines and sheets of lichen. This overgrowth ground the buildings beneath into rubble and then into soil, creating more opportunities for growth and leaving a strange high-altitude fungus jungle filled with hidden ruins and unexpected flora and fauna. The flora was never able to expand farther south onto the mud field because of the lack of necessary moisture and warmth provided by proximity to the thermal springs.

While the combination of fertile soil, plentiful water, and artificially warm climate did cause the beginning of the Tangle's spread, it has since far outgrown and outlasted those natural resources. Not only is this plant life unnaturally healthy, it is also unnaturally large and has begun to mutate, in some cases creating wholly unnatural species. Strange fauna sometimes emerges from the tangled depths of this quarter, and at night, weird and mournful cries can be heard from deep within. Whether these are creatures somehow transplanted here or monstrous plant forms resulting from continuing mutation is unclear to the giants and lamias, who take pains to avoid this portion of the city, as giants who wandered too close have gone missing. A lamia-led search party of giants sent in recently to determine the source of the strange growth has yet to return.

Extensive details on the Tangle's depths are beyond the scope of this adventure, but should the PCs decide to explore this dangerous section of Xin-Shalast, they soon find there is a malign intelligence to the Tangle. Anyone exploring here is attacked by strange and





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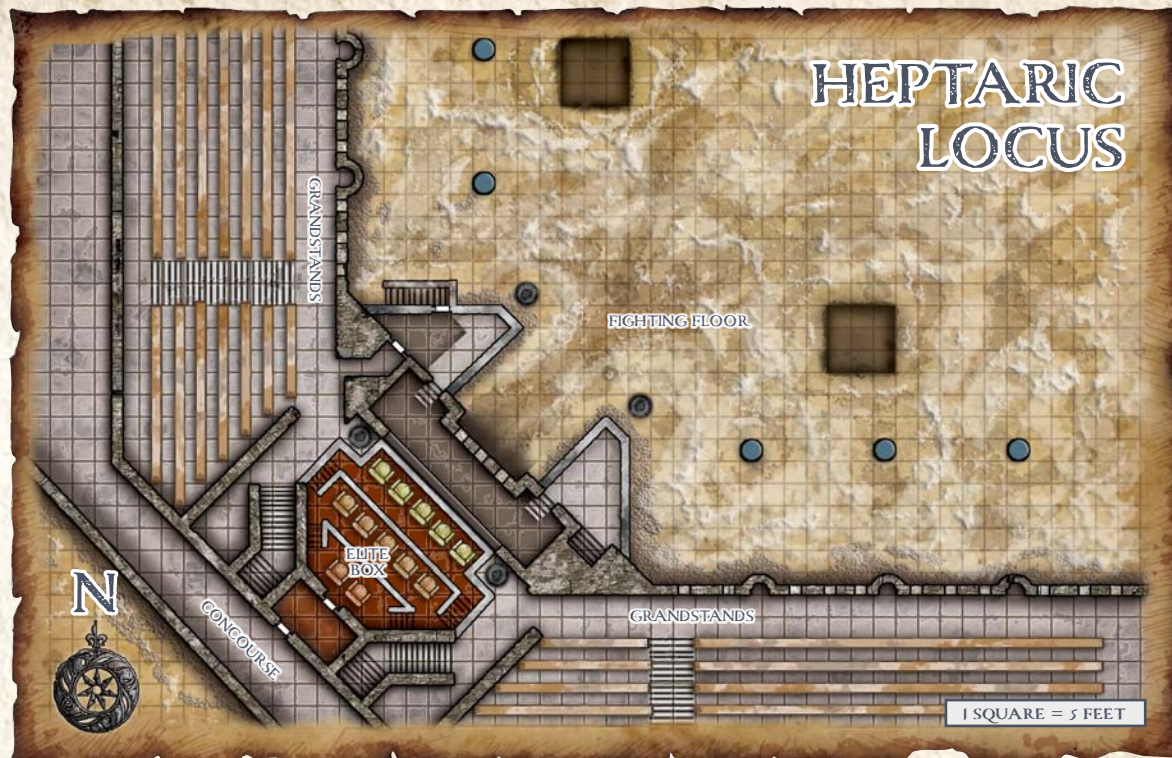
PART FOUR: XIN-SHALAST

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terrifying forms of sentient plant life and creatures that exist in a symbiotic relationship with them, with shambling mounds, immense tendriculoses, yellow musk zombie giants, and vegepygmies being the primary denizens of the deep Tangle. Those captured alive are taken to the original hot springs beneath a cathedral of greenery, where the malevolent Root of the Tangle dwells. There they are suspended alive above this water, where their bodies are then slowly drained of nutrients to feed the plant host. The Root of the Tangle is, in fact, an enormous and unusually intelligent yellow musk creeper—this plant has an Intelligence of 20, 26 Hit Dice, and is Colossal in size. The creeper’s eventual goal is nothing less lofty than to grow over the entirety of Golarion—but in the thousands of years it has already been growing, it’s only managed to take over this portion of Xin-Shalast. Still, the creeper is patient and immortal—a good combination for those with world domination on the mind.

**K HEPTARIC LOCUS (CR 17)**

The greatest architectural feat of the Lower City was (and remains) the magnificent Heptaric Locus, a massive covered arena and amphitheater of unsurpassed grandeur composed on a foundation shaped as a vast Sihedron Rune to represent the might and resplendence of Thassilon. To the average citizen of the city, this coliseum represented the heart of the entire nation of Shalast. This magnificent edifice rises more than 500 feet to an elaborate seven-paneled dome of crystal, from which a slender spire extends another

200 feet into the air. Seven towers surround the dome, one dedicated to each of the Thassilonian schools of magic (with the tower of Greed aimed directly at the Spires of Xin-Shalast above). Though the building shows signs of the years, with parts of the facade having fallen away and some of the lesser domes fallen in, the great central dome and spire remain intact and alive with the multiple permanent *daylight* spells that circumscribe their interiors, creating a shining beacon in the sky above. Inside, the Heptaric Locus is a ring-shaped maze of access tunnels and gates surrounding a vast arena floor. The arena seats surrounding this heptagonal battleground can accommodate up to 150,000 spectators. Below lie even more chambers—gladiator cells, training rooms, and endless storage chambers necessary to put on the spectacles for which the arena was justly famous.

Despite the excellent condition of the facilities, Karzoug’s minions have not yet attempted to reclaim this structure for use. They have not cited reasons when the giants and lesser lamia, eager to see the grand building restored to its proper glory, ask about the subject, instead pushing the topic aside in favor of more pressing matters. The truth is the lamia-kin secretly fear the arena. The thousands of blood-soaked spectacles held in its confines to sate the lust of the bloodthirsty observers left their mark on the battlefield. In fact, following the fall of the empire so long ago, the emotional resonance that remained created a locus not of the glories of Thassilon as intended, but rather a locus of death that suited well the





tastes of a particularly cruel gelugon named Gamigin and a small cluster of hideous extradimensional blood-drinkers known as scarlet walkers.

**CREATURES:** Long held as a bound guardian and advisor by one of Karzoug's many apprentices, Gamigin escaped his prison when Thassilon fell. The powerful ice devil landed atop the central dome of the Heptaric Locus and watched as Xin-Shalast fell into ruin, torn apart from outside by volcanic eruptions and inside by rioting giants and wizards gone mad with terror. Eventually, even the skies above grew dark, and for an age after Thassilon's fall the darkness remained. In that time, Gamigin traveled Golarion, adding to the suffering and despair wherever he went. When the Great Darkness finally passed, Gamigin returned to Xin-Shalast and claimed the Heptaric Locus as his lair.

Since then, the ice devil has periodically left Xin-Shalast to search for "entertainment" on Golarion, often spending hundreds of years at a time in roles as diverse as mass murderer, mercenary, warlord, the power behind several thrones, and even a god worshiped by several humanoid tribes. Typically, Gamigin disguised his appearance as a towering tiefling or other outsider via *disguise self*, but sometimes he chose to play these roles without disguises. Each time, outraged and righteous adventurers eventually rose against the devil, but he always escaped via teleportation and returned here to rest, relax, and plot his next move. He maintains his presence in the arena with the clever use of illusions and the scarlet walkers whom he has befriended—even though he only spends about a decade each century in

Xin-Shalast, his efforts have been strong enough to secure a lasting pall over the place.

The PCs might decide to explore the Heptaric Locus on their own. An exploration of the locus should involve encounters with summoned bone devils, ancient traps, and periodic encounters with the scarlet walkers that haunt the place—these monsters are drawn to the lingering psychic pain that suffuses the arena, as well as to the legacy of bloodshed that has indelibly stained the grounds. Content to feed on these lingering emotions, they particularly relish the days Gamigin offers them living treats to torment.

As in the case of the Hidden Beast, Karzoug noted Gamigin's presence and sent his agents to contact the ice devil, asking him to ally with the runelord when he rose to his full power. Gamigin, intrigued by what would happen if Thassilon returned, agreed, and was given a Sihedron ring as a token of Karzoug's thanks. If the PCs come to the attention of Karzoug's minions (perhaps after spending several days in Xin-Shalast and killing many lamias and giants, or maybe after they first attempt to climb Mhar Massif), Khalib contacts Gamigin and asks the devil to assassinate the PCs. Gamigin's attack on the PCs can happen at any time after this order is given; the devil prefers to locate the PCs as they rest or wait until they're fighting other monsters in the ruins before launching his attack.

One section of the Heptaric Locus is shown on the nearby map; the elite box shown serves as Gamigin's main lair, so if he attacks the PCs and retreats, it's to here he flees. This chamber is guarded at all times by a pair





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of scarlet walkers allied with Gamigin. You can use the section of the Heptaric Locus as a guide for generating additional maps for this large building as necessary.

<b>GAMIGIN</b>	<b>XP</b> 76,800	<b>CR</b> 16	<b>HP</b> 243
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Male ice devil sorcerer 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 77)

LE Large outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

**Init** +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +27

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 34, touch 16, flat-footed 30 (+3 deflection, +4 Dex, +18 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 243 (17 HD; 14d10+3d6+156); regeneration 5 (good weapons or good spells)

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

**DR** 10/good; **Immune** cold, fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10; **SR** 24

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

**Melee** +1 *returning frost spear* +22/+17/+12 (2d6+10/19-20/x3 plus 1d6 cold and slow), bite +15 (2d6+3), tail +15 (3d6+3 plus slow)

**Ranged** +1 *returning frost spear* +20 (2d6+10/19-20/x3 plus 1d6 cold and slow)

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

**Ice Devil Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 13th; concentration +20)

Constant—*fly*

At will—*cone of cold* (DC 22), *ice storm*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *persistent image* (DC 22), *wall of ice* (DC 21)

1/day—*summon* (level 4, 2 bone devils 50%)

**Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 3rd; concentration +10)

10/day—*corrupting touch* (1 rounds)

**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 3rd; concentration +10)

1st (7/day)—*charm person* (DC 20), *disguise self* (DC 18), *obscuring mist*, *protection from good*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 17), *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

**Bloodline** infernal

**TACTICS**

**Before Combat** Just before he starts a fight, Gamigin attempts to summon 2d4 bone devils to aid him.

**During Combat** Gamigin lets summoned devils engage foes in melee while he wreaks havoc with mobility, using *wall of ice* to break up enemy tactics. *Cone of cold*, *ice storm*, and *charm person* are favorites to use at range, but once he's engaged in melee he abandons his spell-like abilities and focuses his anger on obvious healers before moving on to other enemies.

**Morale** Gamigin has lived for thousands of years by knowing when he's outclassed, but he's never been confronted here in Xin-Shalast. He cuts it close to the edge as a result, fleeing to a distant hideout via *greater teleport* only if reduced to fewer than 20 hit points. He does not return to Xin-Shalast anytime soon if he escapes in this manner.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 23, **Dex** 19, **Con** 26, **Int** 27, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 24

**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 39

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Empower Spell-Like Ability (*ice storm*),

Eschew Materials, Improved Critical (spear), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (spear)

**Skills** Acrobatics +24 (+28 when jumping), Bluff +27, Diplomacy +27, Disguise +24, Fly +20, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (history) +28, Knowledge (local) +28, Knowledge (planes) +28, Knowledge (religion) +28, Perception +27, Sense Motive +27, Stealth +20, Use Magic Device +27

**Languages** Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

**SQ** bloodline arcana (+2 DC for charm spells), infernal resistances

**Gear** +1 *returning frost spear*, *Sihedron ring*

<b>SCARLET WALKERS (2)</b>	<b>XP</b> 19,200 each	<b>CR</b> 12	<b>HP</b> 168 each
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**hp** 168 each (see page 414)

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** While there are a dozen scarlet walkers in the Heptaric Locus in all, only two of them are present the first time the PCs reach the area. They consider Gamigin an ally, if not a friend, and focus their attacks on foes who in turn attack the ice devil. Additional scarlet walkers can join the fight if you wish as these two are slain.

**Morale** A scarlet walker flees if brought below 20 hit points.

**TREASURE:** Apart from the gear he carries, Gamigin keeps his treasure split among dozens of caches scattered across the face of Golarion, nest eggs for starting up new projects as the urge seizes him. One such cache is kept in the elite box that serves as his lair. This consists of three darkwood chests (themselves worth 300 gp apiece) containing 4,500 gp, 220 pp, and 8,000 gp in assorted gems and jewelry.

**L VOMARCK'S CIRCUS**

For events too large even to be held in the Heptaric Locus, Vomarck's Circus had to suffice in ancient times. Named for the stone giant champion who won the first Mastodon Chariot Races, only to die moments after victory on the goring tusks of his own blood-crazed mastodon team, this venue held everything from the aforementioned races to wizard duels, siege weapon demonstrations, and even standard horse and horse-drawn chariot races. Regardless of the event, most of the competitions were to the death. Events were talked about throughout Shalast, and the seating could hold a quarter-million spectators. Much of the southern portion of the circus has been enveloped and ruined by the Tangle, which extends a bit farther every year. Barely visible among this layer of vegetation is a stone colossus depicting the ancient hero Vomarck, complete with mastodons in the process of goring him to death. The effect is that at first glance the whole appears to be some hideous multi-headed beast emerging from the overgrowth.



## M SPOLARIUM

This long, low series of buildings is situated strategically near the Heptaric Locus and Vomarck's Circus. Its primary purpose was disposal of the dead contestants from those two venues, but it quickly came to serve as the city morgue and crematorium. Deceased combatants were brought here and stripped of goods and equipment, which were then reused or sent to the Artisan District for repair and refitting. The morbid attendants were not above absconding with jewelry, personal effects, gold teeth, and even ornate tattoos on flayed swatches of flesh. The great ovens that then consumed the remnants are located at the back of the building and remain functional—if someone took the time to refuel and relight them—though there is a considerable layer of soot and charred humanoid remains to dig or chip through to gain access to them.

Intrepid adventurers might search these chambers to find one of the many caches of valuables gathered by the morticians and secretly hoarded to prevent nosy relatives or slave owners from gaining proof that the bodies had been looted. Several such hoards still exist under loose flagstones, in hollow pillars, and in at least one oven. Unfortunately, spontaneously generated undead are a problem in this place, and searchers must contend with spectres, dread wraiths, ghosts, and worse during their scavenging. In addition to these standard varieties of undead, strange undead beings composed of burning corpses roam the halls as well, and more than one centuries-unused furnace has sprung to sudden, searing flames while an intrepid looter explored its interior for hidden gold.

## N HIDDEN PATH (CR 15)

Although this relatively small tower might seem uninteresting at first glance, particularly due to the looming presence of the Heptaric Locus and Vomarck's Circus, the basement contains a long, winding tunnel that leads up a gently rising slope inside Mhar Massif. This path bypasses a fair portion of the lower route and allows characters to avoid the chance of being spotted by guardians in the lower city entirely. The passageway exits onto a high mountain ledge in the upper portion of the Rising District at an elevation of 22,000 feet.

**CREATURE:** Unfortunately, the reason the tunnel is so free of monsters despite its wide-open upper entrance is due to the presence of a 28-foot-tall predator that dwells on the ledge overlooking the mountainside. This is an immense mountain roper, a creature adapted to the high mountain environs.

### MOUNTAIN ROPER

XP	CR	HP
51,200	15	232

Variant roper (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 237*)

CE Huge aberration (cold)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +27

### DEFENSE

**AC** 28, touch 8, flat-footed 28 (+20 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 232 (15d8+165)

**Fort** +16, **Ref** +5, **Will** +14

**Immune** cold, electricity; **SR** 30

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to fire

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 10 ft.

**Melee** bite +25 (6d8+24/19-20)

**Ranged** strands +10 (1d6 Strength)

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

**Special Attacks** pull (strand, 5 ft.), strands

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The mountain roper lashes out at the closest foes, but isn't unintelligent. It knows to focus its first attacks on heavily armored foes.

**Morale** The mountain roper is usually hungry, but it's not foolish—it won't fight to the death if it can help it. If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, the monster attempts to break off combat and bargain for its life. If the PCs can communicate and agree to parley, the mountain roper becomes an unlikely source of information—it knows much about the region, and you can use it to guide the PCs toward creatures that possess *Sihedron rings* or otherwise encourage them along whatever track of exploration you wish.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 42, **Dex** 11, **Con** 33, **Int** 13, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +11; **CMB** +29; **CMD** 39 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Bleeding Critical, Critical Focus, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Focus (strands)

**Skills** Climb +34, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +16, Knowledge (religion) +16, Perception +27, Stealth +16 (+24 mountainous areas)

**Languages** Aklo, Thassilonian

## O HOUSE OF DIVINE CONSUMPTION

This mighty structure is walled off from the road by a row of corrugated towers ending in fluted prominences and onion-shaped domes. Multiple balconies open off of these towers and overlook the ruined compound below. Beyond gates of beaten bronze, a huge temple constructed upon a raised platform dominates the compound itself. Thassilonian runes and the seven-pointed Sihedron are prominent motifs engraved in the stone of the temple walls. Double pagodas, both of which are hollow and open onto the temple nave below, top the temple itself. One holds a massive statue of Karzoug rising from the floor of the temple, his head brushing the top of the pagoda. The other is empty, and the floor beneath is set with a gold engraving of the ever-present, clawed hand grasping a gem—the rune of greed.

The House of Divine Consumption served as the focal point for the official church of Shalast, invented by Kaladurnae, the first Runelord of Greed, and revering the philosophical and esoteric tenets





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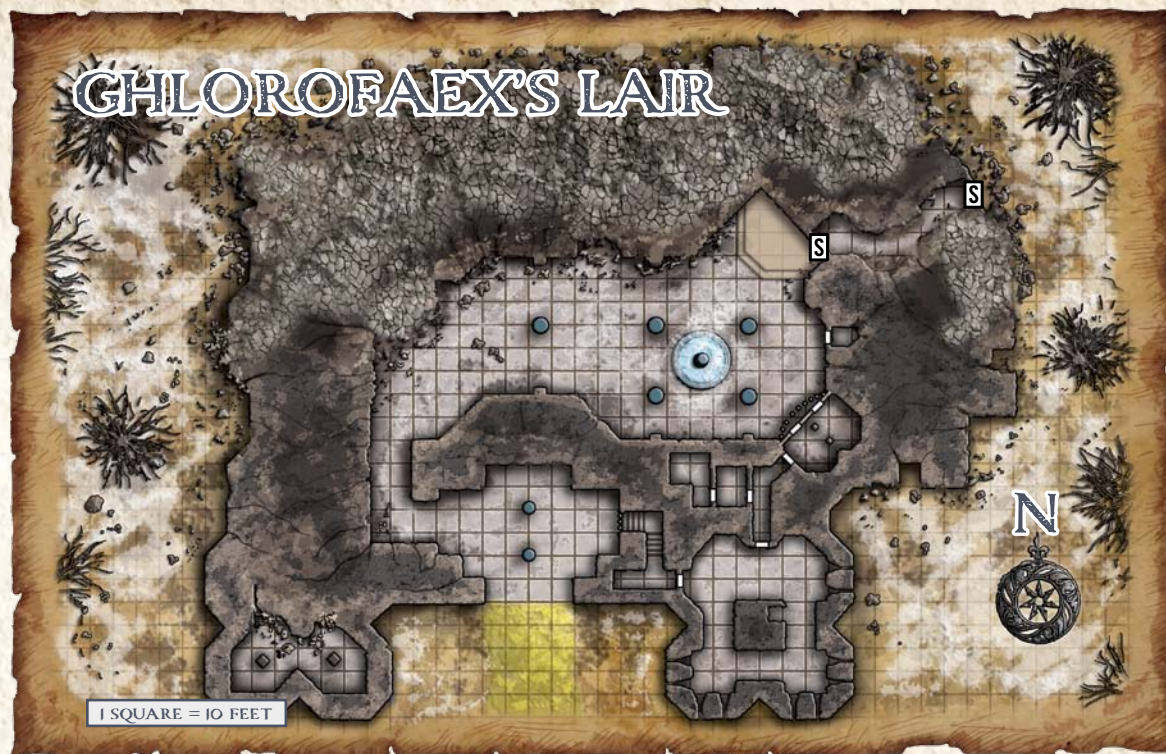
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of greed. Traditionally, the high priestess of the temple has always been an immense creature known as a lamia harridan (see page 404) referred to by the title of Most High. This position also served as the highest authority in the Lower City, answering only to the officials who actually received the right to dwell in the Spires of Xin-Shalast. Edicts coming from the mouth of the Most High were considered law unless countermanded by Karzoug or one of his representatives from the citadel above.

The current high priestess is Most High Ceoptra, a powerful lamia harridan who serves Karzoug faithfully as she works to reestablish his following and rebuild the ruins of the Lower City into the capital of his new empire. She has not lived within the walls of this immense temple for years, now dwelling in the Pinnacle of Avarice above so she can be at hand to speak with Karzoug as necessary. Many of Xin-Shalast's lamias—harridans, hungerers, matriarchs, and normal lamias alike—dwell in this building or in the surrounding ruins; as a result, 50% of the encounters within 1,000 feet of this area are with lamias of various types.

**P TEMPLE OF THE SIHEDRON**

This gargantuan edifice has not fared as well with the passage of the years. Built as one bulky ziggurat-like mass with multiple towers, it has collapsed somewhat under its own weight and sections have caved in. Exploring the interior is a dangerous prospect due to the threat of additional collapses, though anyone

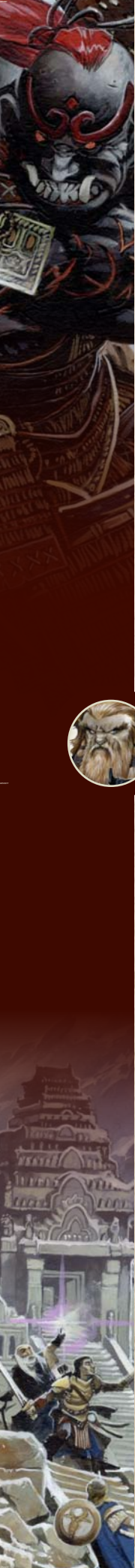
doing so can quickly determine that this was a temple dedicated to Lissala, the Thassilonian goddess of runes and fate. Her worship was a demanding one, as can be inferred from the carvings of priests engaged in flagellations, mortifications of the flesh, and other ritualized depictions of self-abuse that are so commonly carved into this building's surviving walls. No one has attempted to reoccupy this structure, but the few to have explored it and emerged alive speak of bestial shadows moving around corners just out of view, echoed rumbling growls, and the very real sensation that something was stalking them. Explorers who did not return were later found as bloody smears of mangled flesh, recognizable only by their tattered gear.

**Q GHLOROFAEX'S LAIR (CR 17)**

This structure was once a massive blockhouse of stone and steel with a single well-protected gate providing the only obvious entrance. In a city of greed, the most important consideration was that the rulers received their share. Thus, this fortress housed the offices of a veritable army of tax collectors—agents in the upper levels and brutish enforcers billeted in the bowels of the building. In addition, the city's mint and treasury were located here as well, as were the offices of the city's commissar, who oversaw all of these operations.

When Thassilon collapsed, these tax collectors and the commissar were among the first to flee. Those few who simply fled survived, for the most part, but those who attempted to rob the treasury before they left





Xin-Shalast only slowed their escape long enough to doom them when a pyroclastic flow from the volcanic eruption swept through this portion of the city. The stolen treasure was scattered and over the years decayed or was claimed by other survivors, leaving the fortress itself empty. But not forever.

The building today is mostly collapsed, but a few rooms remain clear. The central audience chamber is partially fallen in, but enough of it remains to serve as a spacious lair for the current denizen. A lone tower remains standing just south of this room, but its halls are empty. A single secret tunnel leads into the central chamber from the east—these doors can be discovered with a DC 25 Perception check, but they (as well as the main entrance to the building to the south) are warded by *alarm* spells cast by the ruin's occupant.

**CREATURE:** A powerful blue dragon named Ghlorofaex, one of the strongest dragons in the Kodar region, discovered Xin-Shalast 150 years ago and was impressed, even then, with the city's glory and extravagance. Himself a creature of greed and far-reaching knowledge about Thassilonian ruins, he chose this building as his lair as soon as he recognized its original purpose. Ghlorofaex spent the last century studying Xin-Shalast and building his treasure hoard—mostly from objects stolen from lowlanders, as he views most of Xin-Shalast's treasures as better placed now than in his personal treasury.

After Karzoug awoke, one of the first commands he issued his newly awakened rune giant minions was to contact all local dragons and recruit them to the runelord's cause. In ancient times, Karzoug counted dozens of dragons as his allies (he even keeps a draconic slave within the Eye of Avarice to this day), and he is eager to rebuild these ties. Most of the dragons recruited so far still dwell in the surrounding mountains (and can be encountered as wandering monsters), while only Ghlorofaex lives inside the city itself. Of the dragons, this blue was dangerous enough that, as in the case of the Hidden Beast and Gamigin, the rune giants opted for a diplomatic approach. Fortunately for all concerned, Ghlorofaex was honored to have been chosen by Karzoug. A student of Thassilon's architecture, the blue dragon is eager to ally himself with the rising runelord, knowing full well from his studies of the city's carved walls that favored dragon allies were well rewarded by the rulers of Xin-Shalast in the past.

For now, Ghlorofaex has been spending his time waiting patiently here in his lair, emerging now and then to make token fly-overs of the city to appraise its condition. He does not react well to intruders unless they can convince him they are Karzoug's minions as well, in which case Ghlorofaex demands to know when Karzoug will be fully returned to the world so he might benefit from the runelord's alliance. The

dragon has little patience for visitors, though, be they giants or lamia-kin or PCs, and if visitors remain too long (5 minutes should be the maximum), the dragon's impatience gets the better of him and he attacks.

## GHLOOROFAEX

XP	CR	HP
102,400	17	149

Very old blue dragon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 94)

LE Gargantuan dragon (earth)

**Init** +3; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., dragon senses; Perception +29

**Aura** electricity aura (10 ft., 1d6 electricity), frightful presence (270 ft., DC 25),

### DEFENSE

**AC** 37, touch 6, flat-footed 37 (+3 deflection, -1 Dex, +29 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 275 (22d12+132)

**Fort** +19, **Ref** +12, **Will** +17

**DR** 15/magic; **Immune** electricity, magic paralysis and sleep, dragon traits; **Resist** cold 30; **SR** 28

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)

**Melee** bite +29 (6d6+11/19-20), 2 claws +29 (2d8+11), tail slap +24 (2d8+5), 2 wings +24 (2d6+5)

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

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (120-ft. line, 18d8 electricity, Reflex DC 27 for half, usable every 1d4 rounds), crush (4d6+16, Reflex DC 27 for half), desert thirst (DC 25), mirage, tail sweep (2d6+16, Reflex DC 27 for half)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 22th; concentration +26)

At will—*hallucinatory terrain* (DC 18), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *minor image* (DC 16), *ventriloquism* (DC 15)

**Spells Known** (CL 11th; concentration +15)

5th (4/day)—*baleful polymorph* (DC 19), *wall of force*

4th (7/day)—*arcane eye*, *charm monster* (DC 18), *dimension door*

3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *haste*, *slow* (DC 17)

2nd (7/day)—*acid arrow*, *hideous laughter* (DC 16), *invisibility*, *resist energy*, *scorching ray*

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *charm person* (DC 15), *grease* (DC 15), *magic missile*, *reduce person* (DC 15)

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Ghlorofaex first attempts a breath weapon pass if two or more opponents are in a line. He then casts *displacement* and *haste* before he attempts to crush as many enemies as possible and fights in melee until reduced below 150 hit points, at which point he takes to the air again to use his breath weapon and ranged spells.

**Morale** If reduced below 100 hit points, Ghlorofaex flees the area—he may come back to attack the PCs again in the future at your discretion.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 33, **Dex** 8, **Con** 23, **Int** 18, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 18





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**Base Atk** +22; **CMB** +37; **CMD** 46 (50 vs. trip)

**Feats** Altitude Affinity, Critical Focus, Endurance, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Staggering Critical, Vital Strike

**Skills** Bluff +29, Fly +10, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (engineering) +29, Perception +29, Sense Motive +29, Spellcraft +29, Survival +29, Use Magic Device +29

**Languages** Auran, Common, Draconic, Giant, Thassilonian

**SQ** sound imitation

**Gear** ring of greater cold resistance, Sihedron ring

**TREASURE:** Ghlorofaex keeps his treasure in a highly organized state behind a large stone door in the eastern area—beyond is a 10-foot-square chamber, the far wall of which is collapsed. There's more than enough room left for the dragon's treasure, though, which consists of 64,000 sp, 21,000 gp, 520 pp, a gold coffer worth 1,400 gp that contains 35 assorted gemstones worth a total of 12,000 gp, a silver bracelet worth 25 gp, a jade comb worth 300 gp, a pair of red silk gloves embroidered with gold thread worth 800 gp for the pair (in a glass display box itself worth 100 gp), a suit of masterwork mithral half-plate, a masterwork breastplate, a suit of +2 banded mail, a wand of lightning bolt (CL 6th, 23 charges), a leather bag containing 4 frozen potions of cure light wounds, a frozen potion of owl's wisdom, a flask of oil of magic vestment +4, a bejeweled ivory scroll tube worth 300 gp that contains a scroll of foresight and a scroll of mass heal, a ring of evasion, and a rod of extend magic.

**R SHAHLARIA**

Situated on a low rise overlooking the northern edge of Jotunburg is a ponderous fortress that served as the pride and joy of Shalast's military. This was the Shahlaria, the military training and indoctrination academy that turned out the hordes of loyal giant soldiers that served as the front line of Karzoug's fighting forces. Under the direct tutelage of the Grand Polemarch, the supreme military leader of Shalast who answered only to the runelord himself, the commandant of the academy gave the giant conscripts and volunteers the premiere martial and tactical training available in that age, and probably any age since. It was here that the rune giants of Xin-Shalast dwelt, in massive chambers carved into the rock below the fortress above.

The majority of the cloud giants and storm giants who live in Xin-Shalast dwell in Shahlaria. They are led by powerful individuals—advanced members of each race known as wardens. The cloud giants are led by the Wardens of Wind, while the storm giants are led by the Wardens of Thunder. Many of these leaders have been taken away to serve in the Pinnacle of Avarice, leaving behind a fortress with no clear ruler. Yet chaos does not reign in Shahlaria, for the cloud and storm giants that dwell here live in fear of their rune giant overlords.

An attempt to explore this immense structure could well entail an adventure in itself. Unfortunately, apart from incidental treasure and experience points, there's little in here for the PCs to aid them in their current conflict against Runelord Karzoug.





## PART FIVE: SCALING MHAR MASSIF

MHAR MASSIF PROVIDES THE VERY BACKBONE OF THE WORLD'S ROOF AND SUPPORTS ONE OF GOLARION'S TALLEST PEAKS. REACHING A STAGGERING ELEVATION OF 31,565 FEET, THE PEAK SHARES ITS NAME WITH THE ENTIRE MASSIF, WHOSE EPONYM IS DERIVED FROM THE GIGANTIC CARVING OF KARZOUG'S VISAGE THAT GRACES THE SOUTH FACE OF THE MOUNTAIN. THIS FEATURE IS ITSELF 1,500 FEET HIGH AND REACHES THE CROWN OF THE MOUNTAIN. JUST BELOW THIS CARVING SOAR THE MIGHTY TOWERS OF THE SPIRES OF XIN-SHALAST, THOUGH EVEN THE HIGHEST OF THESE DARE NOT INTRUDE UPON THE ELEVATION THAT IS THE FACE'S ALONE.



The name Mhar is itself from a legend, as can be recalled with a successful DC 30 Knowledge (history, planes, or religion) check. This legend tells of a powerful entity called Mhar who attempted to enter Golarion from some alien realm, only to be caught and petrified midway through its emergence from the mountain. What Mhar might have been and what power might have been great enough to stop him is unknown, but none dared contemplate the consequences had Mhar been successful in his transition. The entity's face was all that remained, frozen at the mountain's peak in stone. Runelord Kaladurnae (the original Runelord of Greed) chose this site to build his city partially due to these legends, and now, thousands of years after Thassilon's fall, tales of Mhar can still be read in moldering tomes. With each new runelord, arcane sculptors changed and altered the features of the face to match the new lord, yet still, even the runelords themselves couldn't completely shake the feeling that something else, something far older than Thassilon itself, looked out from those cold stony eyes in the World's Roof.

Mhar's failed attempt to come to Golarion scarred the region in other ways—most notably, in the thinning of the boundary between this world and the nightmare realm of Leng. The influence of Leng grows ever more powerful the higher one climbs along the slopes of Mhar Massif, almost as if the mountain's sheer height were piercing the firmament and allowing this other world to leak in around its crown. Scaling the Face of Mhar is extremely dangerous, with even the most direct route (the ascending Golden Road) posing numerous difficulties along the way.

Ascending the mountain via the Golden Road is the easiest climb, requiring only a dozen successful DC 15 Climb checks in total along its face, where the road becomes particularly steep or has crumbled away for short stretches. Attempts to climb the mountain along any other route require DC 25 Climb checks, made round-by-round, along with a dozen areas that require

DC 30 Climb checks to bypass particularly harrowing obstacles. Magical flight is a much safer option, as is teleportation. Even then, the winds, thin air, and cold present deadly hazards.

As the PCs climb up from the Lower City, there's a 15% chance per hour that someone notices and attacks—possibly dragons, flying patrols of lamias, or frost giants—the most likely things to notice the PCs are the Leng spiders that infest the region (see page 341). Once the PCs climb above 26,000 feet and enter the death zone (see below), these leng spiders become the only creatures they'll encounter until they reach the Pinnacle of Avarice.

### THE DEATH ZONE

From the Lower City's elevation of just above 15,000 feet to the upper slopes of Mhar Massif, the PCs will need to endure the effects of high peak altitudes, as detailed on page 430 of the *Core Rulebook*. But once the PCs near the spires, they pass above 26,000 feet and enter what is known as the "death zone," the point at which the air itself grows too thin to breathe. In the time of Thassilon, the interiors of all the buildings here maintained breathable atmospheres, and certain outdoor areas (primarily courtyards and walkways between structures) had zones where portals to the Plane of Air and churning elementals worked to maintain rivers of breathable air, but today only the uppermost reaches of the Pinnacle of Avarice itself maintains these effects. Creatures who come and go from the region today (mostly giants, Ceoptra, and Khalib) generally resort to magic or speed (or a combination of both) to limit their exposure to the death zone's effects. The following rules for the death zone supplement those presented for high altitudes in the *Core Rulebook*.

**DEATH ZONE (MORE THAN 2,600 FEET):** Normal life is not possible at this altitude; there is simply not sufficient atmospheric pressure to allow enough oxygen to be inhaled by breathing creatures. Altitude sickness







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manifests almost immediately at these heights. After each 10-minute period a character spends in the death zone, he must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1 point of damage to all ability scores. Acclimation to high altitude (such as that granted by the Altitude Affinity feat, or to creatures who have adapted to such regions) offers no protection at all. Perhaps even more dangerous—as soon as any creature fails three consecutive saving throws against this effect, it begins to slowly suffocate—until that creature returns to more hospitable terrain, it suffers the effects of slow suffocation, as detailed on page 445 of the *Core Rulebook*. Temperatures in the death zone are always severely cold.

### INVADERS FROM LENG (CR 18)

**CREATURES:** The Runelords of Greed often used the proximity of Leng for their own plots, but it wasn't until Karzoug rose to power that the rulers of Shalast formally entered an alliance of sorts with that realm's denizens. It was with the aid of the denizens of Leng that Karzoug built the tower known as Guiltspur, and the massive Cyphergate that looms today over the city of Riddleport. His final project with these otherworldly entities is known only as the *Leng Device*—a machine capable of bending time itself (see area X12).

But far more monsters dwell in Leng than its eponymous denizens, and few of these monsters share alliances among themselves. The enormous spiders of Leng are chief among the ancient enemies of the not-quite-humanoid denizens, and after the fall of Thassilon, several Leng spiders were able to pierce the boundary between worlds here, once Mhar Massif's defenses crumbled. The spiders found a dead world under a black sky, and swiftly slaughtered those denizens of Leng that they found still stationed here.

When Karzoug woke recently, he called a new group of denizens to aid in repairing and activating the *Leng Device*, and the spiders of Leng took note. A group of three particularly powerful spiders have recently arrived in the region—their proximity to Leng protects them from the effects of the occluding field, and their *ioun stones* help sustain them in the thin atmosphere, but the spiders have been unsuccessful in infiltrating the region protected by the occluding field.

Eager to find out more about what their enemies are up to, the Leng spiders do not initially see the PCs as enemies but rather as tools. The three mastodon-sized spiders (each bearing an odd number of legs—seven or nine or 11, but not eight, like one might expect of a spider)

approach the PCs warily when they notice them. The spiders are powerful, yet also quite intelligent—they realize humanoids capable of reaching this part of the world are likely not pushovers. The lead spider, a bloated creature that keeps web bolas ready, addresses the party using its tongues ability, informing them that they are required to perform a service rather than merely serve as sustenance for their bellies.

Assuming the PCs don't immediately attack the monsters, the spiders keep their distance (approaching no closer than 40 feet) during the conversation. They explain with swiftly mounting impatience: "Our enemies, those from Leng who play at aping your vexingly symmetrical appearances, have returned to this world to honor an ancient alliance with the recrudescient lord." The spiders go on to half-request, half-demand that the PCs act as their executioners—enter the pinnacle above and destroy the denizens of Leng they find within. If they can, they must also destroy the *Leng Device*. The spiders know little about what the device is, aside from the fact that the denizens were called upon by Karzoug to aid in its creation over 10,000 years ago, and that its destruction will distress their enemies in a way the spiders anticipate to be quite pleasing.



**LENG SPIDER**



If the PCs think to ask for a reward, the spiders are amused and the palpitations of their pedipalps and nightmarish mouths might be interpretable as laughter. If the PCs press for a reward, the spiders grow tired and attack the PCs and feast on them after all.

<b>ADVANCED LENG SPIDERS (3)</b>	<b>XP</b> 51,200 each	<b>CR</b> 15	<b>HP</b> 232 each
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hp 232 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 176, 292)

**TREASURE:** The Leng spiders have come prepared for the hostile environment—immunity to cold and the ability to walk on the air helps them somewhat, but each of them also uses an *iridescent spindle ioun stone* to cope with the thin air.

**DEVELOPMENT:** Although they share some of the PCs' enemies, the Leng spiders are not safe allies. Once the PCs defeat the denizens of Leng, the spiders no longer have any real use for them. The spiders have no easy way to return to Leng immediately, though, and thus remain in the region even after the PCs have carried out their mission. The occluding field continues to bar their entrance into the spires region itself, but if the PCs return to the spiders after completing the task, the spiders don't thank them at all—they merely attack them. In fact, even if the PCs don't intentionally return to interact with these treacherous arachnids, you can use them as an additional encounter against the PCs at some point in the future—the creatures certainly aren't bound to remain in this area, and may eventually clamber down the mountainside to investigate the Lower City itself.

**STORY AWARD:** If the PCs manage to negotiate a truce with the Leng spiders, or otherwise manage to learn about the situation in the Pinnacle of Avarice (such as via mind control), award them XP as if they had defeated these three Leng spiders in combat.

## THE OCCLUDING FIELD

To keep the Spires of Xin-Shalast a secret through the millennia, the entire complex lies within a vast effect called an occluding field, centered upon the Pinnacle of Avarice (area W). The occluding field renders the entire area shown on the Spires of Xin-Shalast map on page 343 impenetrable to divination or scrying of any sort (though use of the Eye of Avarice to scry upon the outside world is not similarly barred).

Furthermore, the occluding field sheds a powerful effect that spurns and rejects those not attuned to the region. This field feels like an invisible force, almost like gravity, that seems to push against intruders. Teleportation effects simply do not function in this area (with the notable exception of the portal in area X14), and it creates a completely impassable barrier to creatures that are astrally projecting or who attempt to enter the region while ethereal or shadow walking. The sensation

also causes intense vertigo, as if gravity's direction had suddenly changed to be behind the character attempting to approach the Spires of Xin-Shalast. Worse, once a minute, the field pulses with invisible force that creates wracking, blinding pain. When such a pulse occurs, any non-attuned creature in the occluding field must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save to avoid taking 8d6 points of damage (this damage bypasses all forms of damage reduction and energy resistance) and a DC 20 Will save to avoid taking 1d4 points of Wisdom drain as flashes of an alien world rip through his mind, leaving madness and fear in their wake (this is a mind-affecting effect). A character who fails both saving throws in the same round is permanently blinded by the pain.

A character who wears a *Sihedron medallion* or *Sihedron ring* can ignore the effects of the occluding field. (Other magic items with powerful links to Thassilon or Shalast may work as well, at your discretion.) Mindless creatures like constructs and vermin are also immune to these effects, as are all attuned creatures (this includes all of the denizens of Leng in area X12 and all outsiders conjured directly into the field via calling effects like *greater planar binding* with the aid of the *anima focus* in area X17). Characters who wield *domineering weapons* (see page 423) gain a +4 bonus on saving throws to resist the effects and do not go blind if they miss both saves.

If the PCs have not yet learned about the aid the *Sihedron rings* can grant them, once they are exposed to the occluding field's power they can certainly learn about these items' value via spells like *commune* or *divination*.

## THE SPIRES

The Spires of Xin-Shalast, the fabled citadel on the World's Roof, house the end of the party's quest. Situated on the steep face of the mountain, deep in the death zone, these fantastic spires served as the administrative heart of the Satrapy of Greed and the seat of power of Karzoug and his runelord predecessors. Composed of multiple towers clinging to the side of the mountain, surrounding the central Pinnacle of Avarice, this vast citadel was once a city in and of itself, with each tower soaring hundreds of feet in height and containing countless passages, chambers, and battlements. Despite the size of this fortress, it is all but abandoned—only the highest level of the Pinnacle of Avarice, the chambers where Karzoug spent the last minutes of Thassilon's height and the chambers where he will once again emerge into this world, is inhabited. Its residents are Karzoug's elite—his champions, his apprentices, and his generals—and to defeat the runelord and prevent his return, the PCs must first best these powerful minions.

The outlying areas of the Spires are detailed in brief here, however, for you to expand upon in your campaign as you see fit.





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**S THE TEETH**

These structures of cut alabaster rise on squat bases to pyramidal peaks 400 feet high. Their interiors are largely hollow, composed of a few cavernous chambers. In days of old, these towers served as the guarded gateway into the domicile of the Runelords of Greed. Blue dragons outfitted with *necklaces of adaptation* once dwelt in these towers, serving as guardians for the approach to the Spires. In time, Karzoug hopes to repopulate his draconic guards, starting with Ghlorofaex. For now, though, these ivory teeth stand silent and empty.

**T HARRIDANS' COMPOUND**

These three spires have intricate facades with hundreds of arches and balconies. Each stands 1,300 feet high, and the three surround a walled compound. Lamia harridans who served in the runelord's highest echelon and saw to most of the administration of his empire—freeing him to pursue his magical research and plot the downfall of his rivals—became known as the Harridans of the Mountain, for their place of prominence at the feet of the runelord's own abode. The three towers of this compound were the Ambassadors' Spire, where envoys to the court of the Runelord of Greed were welcomed and housed; the Rune Spire, where Xin-Shalast's giant servitors were subjected to the will-sapping and mind-controlling talents of the lamias to indoctrinate them as absolutely loyal slaves; and the Harridans' Spire, where the Harridans of the Mountain themselves resided and held court with their

own secret councils. The descendants of these lamia-kin have spread throughout Xin-Shalast and await a time when their leaders return to these towers—but currently, only one harridan dwells in Xin-Shalast—the dangerous and deadly oracle known as Most High Ceoptra (see area X17). For now, this compound lies abandoned of life.

**U MALIGN ASCENSION**

This winding path climbs from the harridans' compound to the runelord's citadel. It rises 1,000 feet over its meandering course, providing the only direct land access from the city below that doesn't involve mountain climbing.

**V FUGUE TOWERS**

This triangular fortress comprises three slender towers rising 800 feet, each connected by thick walls to create a deep pit of a courtyard in the center. A single stair spirals within the south tower, connecting all of the levels, which consist of hall upon hall of cell blocks built within the thick fortress walls. On this desolate precipice, enemies too valuable to kill whiled away the years in squalor and isolation. Today, the cells stand empty but for the souls of the restless dead left to rot within them, but the halls themselves are still patrolled by powerful golems.

**W PINNACLE OF AVARICE**

This immense tower is the lair of Karzoug himself. It is detailed in full in Part Six.





## PART SIX: PINNACLE OF AVARICE

THE TRUE HEART OF THE DOMAIN OF SHALAST, THIS MASSIVE ICE-SHROUDED TOWER OF WHITE GRANITE SERVED AS THE SEAT OF EVERY RUNELORD OF GREED UP TO AND INCLUDING KARZOUG. THE 2,200-FOOT-TALL TOWER TOPS OUT RESPECTFULLY JUST BELOW THE CARVED FACE AT THE MOUNTAIN'S PEAK, YET THE PINNACLE ITSELF IS MOSTLY HOLLOW. THE INSIDE OF THE IMMENSE STRUCTURE SOARS LIKE A CAVERNOUS SILO, SUPPORTED BY AN INTRICATE INTERNAL ARCHITECTURAL WONDER OF DOZENS OF STONE FLYING BUTTRESSES AND ARCHES.



**H**undreds of 50-foot-tall arches around the Pinnacle's base allow access to its ground floor, which is a huge circular room that once held the *runewell* at its center. The *runewell* has shifted into a small dimension between the Material Plane and Leng called the Eye of Avarice, leaving only a 200-foot-diameter polished stone circle on the floor surrounded by 16 immense pillars that rise up like the legs of a spider to support a central column that itself extends all the way up to Karzoug's personal chambers more than 2,000 feet above. A spiraling ramp wraps around the outer circumference of the lower 16 pillars up to the central column, continuing up its length and giving the central column a look akin to an immense screw. This ramp leads up to area X1 of the Pinnacle of Avarice.

The entire edifice looks impossible—a successful DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) check reveals that the immense size of the structure should have resulted in its immediate collapse, yet still it stands. The stone of the Pinnacle of Avarice is infused with powerful magic, and it is this that has protected the tower from the elements and collapse over the last 100 centuries.

No encounters occur in this cavernous space below—Karzoug and his final minions await the PCs on the Pinnacle's only inhabited floor, 2,000 feet above.

### KARZOUG'S STORY

During the reign of Runelord Haphrama, Karzoug was born in a slave den in the city of Malistoke. What horrors he endured through the early years of his life in the city's flesh pits are unknown, for they were later stricken from history at his command. One thing is for certain, though: when Karzoug walked from the dark gates of that city 27 years later, his path was soaked in blood and his soul charred as black as night's void.

With gold teeth plucked from the head of his last master, Karzoug was able to buy an apprenticeship with a traveling demon binder named Thurbel. For 7 years he followed Thurbel, serving as both a lure for summoned fiends and a slave to the wizard. He died

more than once during these years at the overzealous claws and fangs of demons, but each time his master—who had grown wealthy through the sale of his demonic services—saw fit to have Karzoug resurrected. Karzoug's suffering was perhaps as great during this time as it had been in Malistoke, but during these years he rose in magical power, learning the finer points of rulership and exercise of power at the hands of amoral demon tutors.

Thus, when Karzoug heard of Runelord Haphrama's call for new apprentices, he scuffed a summoning circle during one of Thurbel's conjurations and idly looted his master's belongings as the freed daemon devoured the wizard's body. With several potent magic items in tow and enough gold to impress even a Runelord of Greed, Karzoug was easily selected to serve as one of Haphrama's new devotees.

At the feet of the runelord, Karzoug learned much of the art of transmutation and the magic of greed. He found himself enthralled by the thinning of reality that occurred near the slopes of Mhar Massif. With secret alliances between himself and denizens from Leng, Karzoug began to master strange, eldritch powers in secret. His pacts promised a twisting of reality, providing his inscrutable tutors greater access to the lands of men. When, in the 206th year of his reign, Haphrama finally caught wind of Karzoug's plotting, he was too late to stop his upstart apprentice. A virulent spell provided to Karzoug by new allies from Leng consumed both Haphrama and his other apprentice, Vhage, stripping their souls from their bodies and hurling them into the void between the planes.

Karzoug took up the burning glaive—the Runelord of Greed's symbol of rule—at the age of 77 and began his reign as Runelord of Greed. His reign saw the rise of Shalast to new heights, as his cunning and manipulative nature wended countless paths to power. Despite his people's dread, Karzoug's capital at Xin-Shalast rose in prominence, becoming one of the age's most breathtaking cities—though its grandeur existed only to delight the





runelord and the nobles and slaves he gathered around him. In his 466-year reign, Karzoug surpassed all of the previous Runelords of Greed in power and, it could be argued, several fellow runelords as well. Like his peers, though, he was forced at the height of his influence to retreat from the world to avoid the cataclysm that befell it. He took with him into this self-imposed exile 35 rune giants and his favorite apprentice, Khalib. The plan was for the stasis to persist for some time after Earthfall, with Karzoug securely hidden between worlds in a demiplane of his own construction—the Eye of Avarice—where he would be protected long enough for the apocalypse to run its course. Unwilling to take any chances, Karzoug elected to have his protections so overwhelming within the Eye of Avarice that nothing could harm him, yet this also required what he planned on being nothing more than a temporary suspension of his ability to exist. The plan was to have the stasis effect on his apprentice Khalib (or failing that, one of his 35 rune giants, or failing *that*, an intervention of one of a dozen other minions and apprentices who rode out the apocalypse elsewhere throughout Shalast) automatically end after a period of 100 years, at which point Karzoug's minions would awaken and go about the process of charging his *runewell* to restore him fully to life.

Yet Karzoug's plans, as with the plans of the other six runelords, vastly underestimated the nature of Thassilon's fall. The various betrayals by those the seven runelords counted as allies, combined with the utter and unanticipated scale of the devastation caused by Earthfall, completely disrupted not only Karzoug's complex multi-layered plans for his revival, but also those of all the runelords. And so time passed, and Karzoug remained in stasis deep in the Eye of Avarice. Dormant, his mind exploring realms beyond, Karzoug waited for millennia, anticipating the time when the runelords would once again rise over Golarion.

A time, it seems, that has finally come.

## PINNACLE OF AVARICE FEATURES

The Pinnacle of Avarice is composed of massive stone blocks hewn from the mountain's surface. Its outer face is smooth, with only small mortared seams between the masonry blocks. The whole construction is considered magically treated reinforced masonry ranging from a few feet to hundreds of feet thick, depending on the location. Rooms and passages are at least 50 feet high and often rise as high as 100 feet to accommodate its gigantic inhabitants. The walls of the rooms are carved in all manner of detailed murals depicting life in ancient Xin-Shalast and are still painted in vibrant color. The floor is of highly polished gold and onyx in a checkerboard pattern. Doors are made of solid stone, plated in gold and silver and studded with gemstones. They are unlocked, unless otherwise noted, and despite their

immense size swing open silently at the lightest touch—opening a door in the Pinnacle of Avarice is a free action. Ancient *everburning torches* still light the halls and rooms at irregular intervals, providing shadowy illumination throughout. These torches are made of ivory and inlaid with rubies and glow with a vibrant light. Even the sconces in which the torches sit are made of silver with jade inlay.

Once, these chambers were equally opulently decorated, and the temperature and air were maintained at a comfortable level for creatures more used to life in the Lower City. While the magical enhancements that keep the air in here breathable and at a chilly but not deadly temperature of 40° F still function, over the centuries the majority of the decorations and furnishings within have decayed and crumbled, leaving behind only the stone walls. The new denizens of these chambers have brought along their own rough furnishings to make life here comfortable while they wait for Karzoug to complete his return from the Eye of Avarice. Nevertheless, with 2d4 hours of work, a dedicated looter can scavenge 2d6 × 100 gp worth of gold, gems, and other baubles from any of the Pinnacle's 23 encounter areas over and above any of the treasure listed for the specific areas—once an area has been stripped of this incidental gold, though, it cannot be so harvested again.

Note that all of the Pinnacle's inhabitants know who the PCs are and are familiar with their basic strengths and weaknesses. Karzoug has learned from speaking to the souls the PCs sent to his *runewell* as much as from reports from his numerous agents in the world. As such, unless the PCs are well disguised and have a really good story, the chances for diplomacy and nonviolent resolutions to encounters in the Pinnacle of Avarice are unlikely at best.

Although there's no wandering monster chart for the Pinnacle, the sound of combat here quickly attracts the attention of those who dwell within. How long it takes creatures in neighboring rooms to respond to combat and join in is mostly just a factor of their speed—as a result, fights here should have a tendency to spiral out of control fast, as more and more reinforcements arrive. It's likely the PCs need to mount multiple forays into the Pinnacle before they can secure an entrance into the Eye of Avarice where Karzoug waits. Overall, exploration of this complex shouldn't feel like a dungeon crawl as much as it does a long, drawn-out battle that spans multiple rooms and opponents. Nevertheless, there are nearly two dozen encounter areas in the Pinnacle, and if the PCs take the time to visit and explore before they rush ahead to confront Karzoug, they'll find that their discoveries and accomplishments may just save their lives. Conversely, PCs who ignore things like the opportunity to defeat Karzoug's key minions, destroy the *Leng Device* (see area X12), rescue Viorian (see area X3), or otherwise chip away at Karzoug's defenses could



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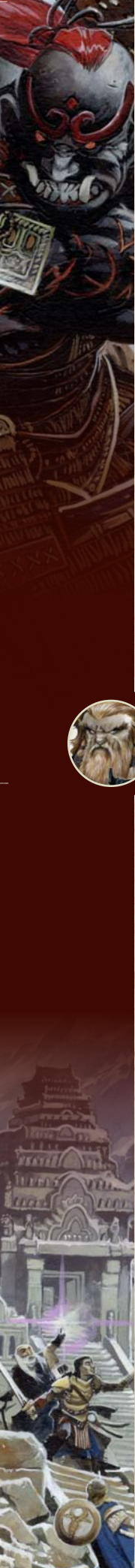
PART FOUR:  
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easily find themselves facing not just a runelord and his pet dragon in the end game, but a small army of giants and high-level minions as well!

**DOORS AND WALLS:** All of the doors and walls in the Pinnacle are magically treated stone, and thus have hardness 16 and twice the normal number of hit points. Break DCs are +20 higher than normal (*Core Rulebook* 411). Any attempt to physically bypass a wall or door by an effect like *passwall* or *transmute rock to mud* that doesn't deal hit point damage is prone to failure—unless a spellcaster attempting such an effect can succeed at a Caster Level check (DC = 30 + twice the spell's level), such spell effects automatically fail when cast.

## PINNACLE RESOURCES

While the PCs are free to tackle the encounter areas in the Pinnacle of Avarice in any order they wish, once a fight begins, word spreads fast. If the PCs don't handle their fights quickly and decisively, they swiftly find themselves being overwhelmed by lamias, giants, and worse. For sake of ease, the total numbers of opponents in the Pinnacle are summarized here, so you can more easily keep track of the area's reinforcements.

**LESSER WARDENS:** Numerous cloud and storm giants dominated by their rune giant masters patrol the halls or guard key areas. This includes a total of 10 wardens of wind (advanced cloud giants) and three wardens of thunder (advanced storm giants). As long as at least one rune giant remains active in the Pinnacle, slain wardens are replenished at the rate of two wardens of wind and one warden of thunder per day.

**DENIZENS OF LENG:** The 12 denizens of Leng remain in area X12 and do not emerge under any circumstances.

**LAMIAS:** The most dangerous lamia in the pinnacle is the last harridan, Most High Ceoptra. She remains in area X17 as the guardian of the *anima focus*, yet the hungerers who dwell in area X7 are quick to move to defend the Pinnacle as needed. As long as Ceoptra lives, new hungerers can be brought in from Xin-Shalast to replace slain ones at the rate of one replacement per day.

**RUNE GIANTS:** There are two rune giants in all: one in area X4 and another in area X13. The one in area X13 responds to alarms immediately, but the one in area X4 doesn't mobilize unless an alarm continues for at least 5 rounds. Each time a rune giant is defeated, one warden of thunder and two wardens of wind (chosen randomly) are released from domination and attempt to escape Xin-Shalast.

**KHALIB:** Karzoug's only surviving apprentice, Khalib, is in area X15. He responds to alarms after casting his preparatory spells as detailed in that encounter area. As long as Khalib lives, he can replenish one conjured guardian a day via *greater planar binding*.

**VIORIAN:** Karzoug's current champion and wielder of the sword of greed, Viorian serves as Karzoug's word of law until the runelord emerges fully from the *runewell*.

She spends most of her time in area X3, patiently awaiting the will of her master. She and her three giant guardians remain here unless an alarm persists for 5 rounds, at which point they move to provide aid.

**CONJURED GUARDIANS:** Additional monsters exist in the Pinnacle, although these creatures, such as the shemhazian demon in area X16, do not venture far from their assigned areas of guardianship.

## X1 ENTRANCE RAMP (CR 16)



The seemingly infinite stone ramp finally comes to an end here. A massive pair of golden double doors stands to the north, while a smaller golden door to the west allows an alternative route onward. Intricate carvings on the walls evoke images of Xin-Shalast in its heyday, accented with vibrant paint and inlaid gems here and there. The highly polished floor consists of a checkerboard pattern of gold and black tiles, while the entire place is brilliantly lit by what appear to be dozens of bejeweled everburning torches in equally decadent sconces.

The larger doors that lead into area X2 can be locked via a lever on the opposite side, although unless the alarm is raised, the inhabitants of the Pinnacle leave the doors open for convenience. Once they're locked, a successful DC 40 Disable Device check can force the doors open from this side. The smaller door leads into a room that was once used as an office, but is now empty.

**CREATURES:** A group of four wardens of wind are posted to this hall as guards. Dominated by rune giants, these cloud giants remain watchful and alert, patient, and silent. All of these giants prominently bear the mark of the Sihedron as a brand on their brows.

WARDENS OF WIND (4)	XP	CR	HP
	19,200 each	12	200 each

Advanced cloud giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 147, 294)

AC 35, touch 12, flat-footed 34 (+11 armor, +3 deflection, +1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)

hp 200 each

Fort +21, Ref +11, Will +15

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The cloud giants' primary goal is to prevent the PCs from using this area to enter the Pinnacle; they take up defensive positions near the doors to do so. Each has a stash of six boulders to hurl at foes who choose to fight at range.

**Morale** These giants fight to the death.

### STATISTICS

**Gear** +2 full plate, Sihedron ring

## X2 VISION OF KARZOUG (CR 15)



The ceiling of this curving hallway rises to an arch some fifty feet above. Curving to the west, the





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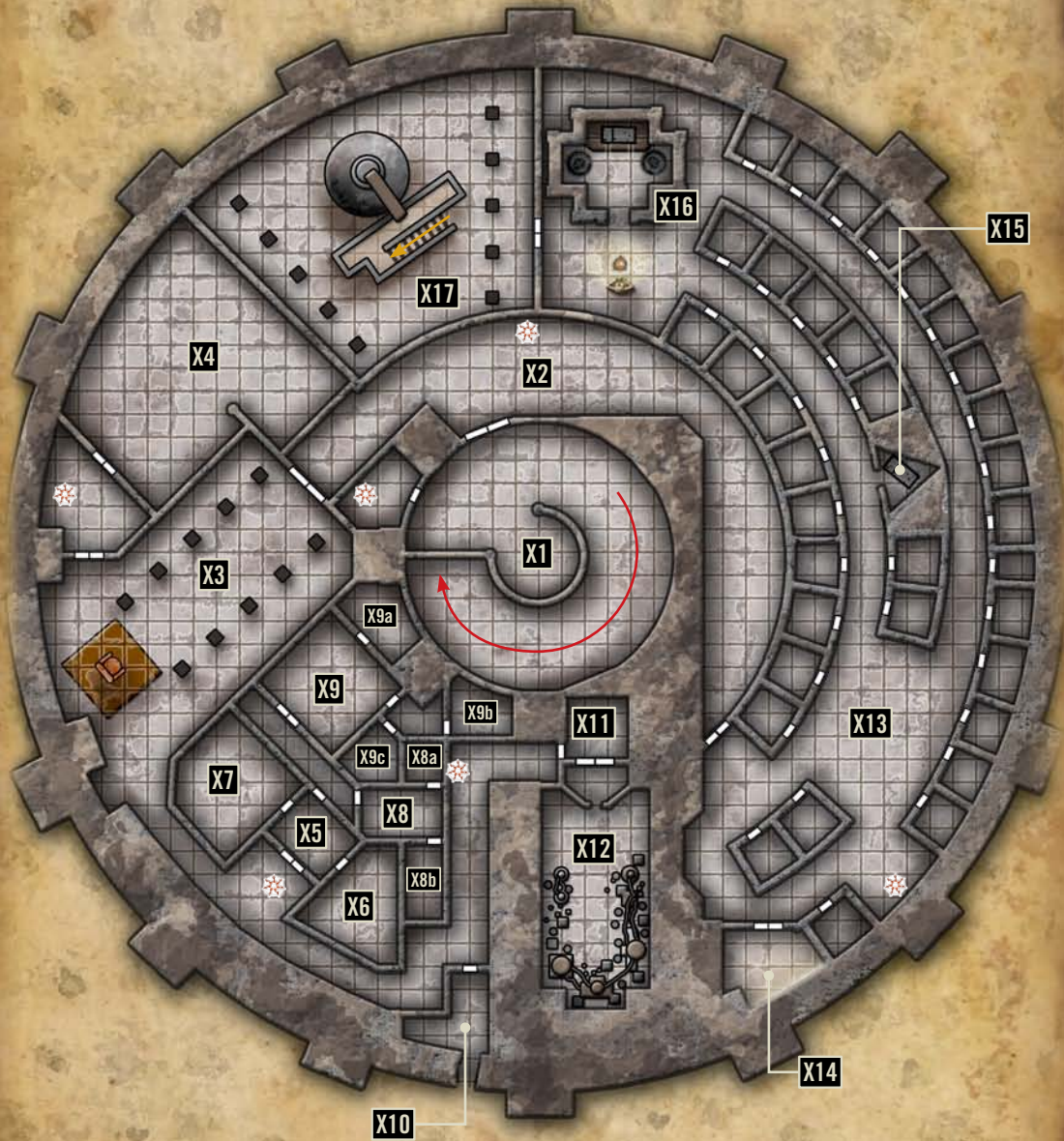
PART FIVE: SCALING MHAR MASSIF

PART SIX: PINNACLE OF AVARICE

MAP EIGHT: THE PINNACLE OF AVARICE

PART SEVEN: THE EYE OF AVARICE

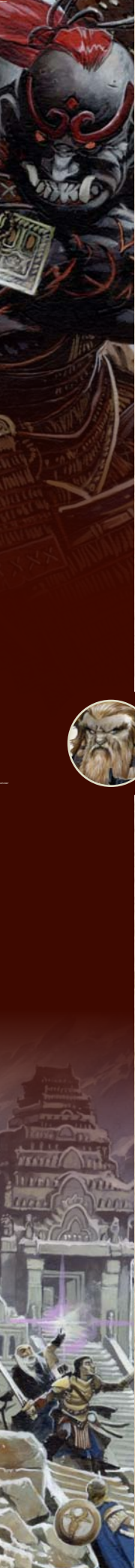
# THE PINNACLE OF AVARICE



1 SQUARE = 10 FEET  
 STAIRS ● UP ● DOWN  
 ✨ KARZOUG IMAGE







hall ends at a particularly immense pair of double doors that appear to be made of gold.

In several places throughout the Pinnacle of Avarice, the boundary between Golarion and Leng is particularly thin—these locations allow Karzoug to directly observe and, to a certain extent, interact with objects in the vicinity. Six of these points exist within the Pinnacle of Avarice, such as the one in this hallway. These locations are marked on the map by Sihedrons. Whenever the PCs enter into view of one of these locations, Karzoug can notice the approach as if he were there in person and immediately manifests a slightly transparent image of himself at the location marked.

Treat this as if Karzoug were using a *project image* spell—he cannot move his projected image from this spot (although he can rotate in place), but can continue to sense the area around him as if he were there in person. Likewise, he can use this projected image to cast spells against targets in range of the image. The image has a cumulative 20% chance of vanishing each time he casts a spell through it, the magic having disrupted the tenuous connection. An image can also be dispelled (CL 20th) as normal.

A character who owns a *dominant weapon* (even if that weapon is not currently held by the character) automatically feels a strong sense of antipathy toward any such projected image, and realizes that by plunging the weapon into such a projected image (treat this as if the PC were making a touch attack against Karzoug's touch AC of 22), she can automatically dispel the effect. Dispelling an image of Karzoug in this way sends a powerful backlash of magic back through the link into the Eye of Avarice, forcing the runelord to make a DC 28 Fortitude save to avoid gaining 1 negative level.

In all, there are six areas in the Pinnacle where Karzoug can manifest, but once an image vanishes or is dispelled in any way, that thin spot between this world and the Eye of Avarice closes forever. In time, new spots may manifest in the area, but for now, these six areas not only give Karzoug a chance to finish the PCs off before they can reach his domain, but also give the PCs an opportunity to strike at the runelord as well, either directly via the threat of negative levels, or indirectly by forcing the runelord to begin depleting his magical resources before the PCs confront him. Of course, the longer the PCs wait between dealing with these manifestations and attacking Karzoug directly, the less impactful these temporary setbacks will be for the runelord.

The first time Karzoug manifests before the PCs in this manner, his attitude is one of condescension and mockery aimed at the PCs. A typical introduction might be as follows.



“And so the fools have found me. I must applaud your tenacity. You are much more persistent than

the worms I thought you to be. You are more like hungry maggots in your endless squirming and writhing to get to the death that awaits you at the core of your fate. I am that fate, maggots. I am your death!”

Karzoug saves his really powerful spells for the inevitable final confrontation, preferring to hit the PCs with 6th-level and lower spells through these images.

In future encounters against the PCs through these thin spots, Karzoug grows increasingly aware of how powerful his foes are and spends less and less time on mockery. By the time the PCs encounter and survive five of his manifestations, Karzoug actually begins to grow nervous, although he tries not to show it. If he suffers more than three negative levels at any one time from backlash caused by *dominant weapons*, he'll even avoid activating these thin spots—but even then, a successful DC35 Perception check or the use of *detect magic* or similar effects that can observe the strong conjuration magic these thin spots shed) is enough for a person wielding a *dominant weapon* to notice the almost imperceptible thin spot—even when Karzoug's not using it to manifest a link, a *dominant weapon* thrust into the spot can close it and inflict negative levels on the runelord.

Karzoug's stats, and thus all the spells he has available for use through these images, appear on page 363.

**STORY AWARD:** Defeating each of these projections of the Runelord of Greed earns the party 51,200 XP.

### X3 THRONE ROOM (CR 19)



The interior of this dazzling chamber is awash in golden light—it shines from every gem, every strip of gold, and every silver-inlaid wall carving, creating a kaleidoscope of color and riches. The checkerboard pattern on the floor is interrupted in a twenty-foot-wide path from the northeastern doors to a throne on a dais of onyx to the southwest by a path of what appear to be countless rubies, forming a “red carpet” of sorts to the throne itself. This throne, if possible, makes the rest of the chamber's extravagance seem pale and poor, for it is made of shining gold, diamonds, rubies, and sapphires, and draped with shimmering, glowing furs from unrecognizable creatures.

This was Karzoug's throne room—the place where he would hear the needs of his nobles and pass down judgment on crimes against his nation. He very rarely held court here, though, preferring to spend his time in other endeavors (usually in one of his many transmutation labs, located elsewhere in the secret corners of Shalast). When he wasn't in court, this throne was typically occupied by his current champion—a soldier handpicked to wield one of the *Alara'hai*, the legendary sword of greed.





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**CREATURES:** When Thassilon fell and the runelords went into hiding, the seven weapons known collectively as the *Alara'hai* likewise went dormant, leaving their champions to their fates. For thousands of years, these weapons circulated among treasure hoards, collections, and owners, and while their magic remained minimal, their legends did not. They became known as the *Seven Swords of Sin*, and until recently, were little more than obscure reminders of the power the runelords once wielded. The sword of greed is a golden scimitar named *Chellan* (see page 420), and most recently was the property of a particularly greedy mercenary guildmaster from Riddleport named Viorian Dekanti. When Mokmurian wakened Karzoug 5 years ago, *Chellan* awoke as well, flaring to golden life. Woken from sleep by a strange keening, Viorian investigated her collection to find the sword shining in its display. As she removed the sword from its case to examine it, the powerful weapon seized control of her. She murdered everyone in her manor, help and mercenary alike, and then set off for Xin-Shalast. The sword kept her alive on the journey, and when she arrived she was met with open arms by its inhabitants. She has been baptized in the *runewell* and spent the past 5 years training and honing her skill under *Chellan's* command, so that now Viorian is little more than a vessel for the sword's power.

Viorian is a beautiful woman, yet her years under *Chellan's* command have erased any remnants of her soul and personality. She is now little more than a mindless shell controlled by the *sword of greed*, with little to interest her apart from basking in the glory of this throne room. She has become yet another of Karzoug's treasures, and one of his most deadly, for she does not hesitate to attack any who dare enter this sacred vault. She is attended by three wardens of thunder who serve her (in theory) as bodyguards, although the giants fear what she has become to the extent that they avoid approaching within 10 feet of her unless absolutely necessary.

**Melee** *Chellan* +34/+29/+24/+19 (1d8+22/15-20), heavy shield +31 (1d4+12 plus bull rush)

**Ranged** +1 *composite longbow* +21/+16/+11/+6 (1d8+11/×3)

**Special Attacks** weapon training (heavy blades +4, close +3, light blades +2, bows +1)

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** On the first round of combat, Viorian drinks her *potion of haste*. After this, her tactics are simple—she selects the strongest-looking foe and focuses her wrath upon him, moving to other foes only when her current target is defeated. She uses Power Attack and Vital Strike when she isn't making a full attack, but abandons this tactic when making a full attack with *Chellan* and a shield bash.

**Morale** Viorian fights to the death.



**VIORIAN DEKANTI**

**VIORIAN DEKANTI**

XP	CR	HP
153,600	18	283

Female human fighter 18  
NE Medium humanoid (human)  
**Init** +7; **Senses** Perception +7

**DEFENSE**

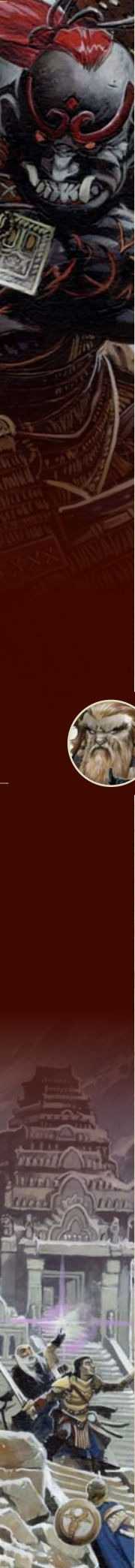
**AC** 37, touch 16, flat-footed 34 (+14 armor, +3 deflection, +3 Dex, +7 shield); 20% miss chance  
**hp** 283 (18d10+180)  
**Fort** +22, **Ref** +14, **Will** +18; +5 vs. fear  
**Defensive Abilities** bravery +5, runelord champion, **SR** 32 (vs. transmutation only); **Immune** mind-affecting effects;  
**SR** 20

**Weaknesses** susceptible to *dominant* weapons

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft.





**STATISTICS**

**Str** 29, **Dex** 17, **Con** 26, **Int** 10, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +18; **CMB** +28; **CMD** 44

**Feats** Altitude Affinity, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Endurance, Greater Weapon Focus (scimitar), Greater Weapon Specialization (scimitar), Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Improved Shield Bash, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Shield Master, Shield Slam, Staggering Critical, Toughness, Two-Weapon Fighting, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar)

**Skills** Acrobatics +19, Intimidate +20, Ride +22

**Languages** Common, Thassilonian

**SQ** armor training 4, exceptional wealth, inherent bonuses, permanent spells

**Combat Gear** *potion of haste, potions of cure serious wounds (5); Other Gear* +5 full plate, +5 heavy steel shield, Chellan, +1 composite longbow (+10 Str) with 20 arrows, belt of physical might +6 (Str, Con), boots of teleportation, cloak of minor displacement, headband of inspired wisdom +6, ring of freedom of movement, scarab of protection (10 charges), Sihedron ring, vibrant purple ioun stone (contains a fly spell)

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Exceptional Wealth** Viorian has gear equal to a 17th level PC, and as such her CR is +1 higher than normal.

**Inherent Bonuses** In order to ensure his champion is as powerful as possible, Karzoug has used *wish* spells to grant Viorian a +5 inherent bonus to Strength and Dexterity and +4 inherent bonuses to Constitution and Wisdom.

**Permanent Spells** Viorian has *telepathic bond* as a permanent spell effect at CL 20th (placed by Karzoug).

**Runelord Champion (Ex)** Viorian bears the rune of greed upon her left shoulder, a physical manifestation of her role as Karzoug's champion. She has pledged herself to his service, body and soul, and as long as Karzoug lives (even while that life is confined to the far side of the *runewell*), she gains complete immunity to mind-affecting effects. In addition, she possesses SR 32 against spells from the school of transmutation. Unfortunately, being the champion of greed also brings with it an associated weakness against domineering *runeforged* weapons—she qualifies as a transmuter for that weapon's bane effects, and critical hits made against her with such weapons automatically confirm.

**WARDENS OF THUNDER (3)**

<b>XP</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>HP</b>
38,400 each	14	237 each

Advanced storm giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 152, 294)

**AC** 37, touch 12, flat-footed 36 (+13 armor, +3 deflection, +1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 237 each

**Fort** +22, **Ref** +13, **Will** +18

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** The wardens of thunder use *chain lightning* and *call lightning* during the first 2 rounds of combat, after which one moves to flank foes with Viorian and the other two hang back to use their longbows against healers.

**Morale** These giants fight to the death.

**STATISTICS**

**Gear** +4 full plate, Sihedron ring

**TREASURE:** Beyond the significant amount of treasure carried by Viorian herself, the value of the gemstones and precious metals in this room is significant. A single dedicated looter can spend an hour prying up gems, scraping gold plating, and otherwise scavenging wealth to the amount of 1d6 × 1,000 gp per hour spent working in this room, to a maximum amount of looted wealth equal to 60,000 gp.

**DEVELOPMENT:** Although the influence of Karzoug and Chellan have completely rebuilt Viorian's personality and destroyed her memories (to the extent that if she loses the sword, she continues functioning as a single-minded runelord's champion), it's possible to restore the woman to her previous personality. Doing so first requires separating Viorian from Chellan for a minimum of 24 hours. After this point, Viorian's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores each drop to 1 and remain at that level until Chellan is returned to her (at which point these scores return to normal and she resumes her role as Karzoug's champion) or she is targeted by a *greater restoration* spell, at which point her ability scores are restored and her previous personality—as a neutral evil leader of a now disbanded Riddleport gang that she is significantly overqualified to lead—is restored. Despite her evil nature, she remembers her time as Karzoug's thrall, and the kindness the PCs show her can set her swiftly down the path of redemption. Whatever her new fate, she retains the skills and experience she gained during the past several years as Karzoug's champion-to-be, and if left to her own devices becomes increasingly obsessed with finding out more about the other six runelords so that she can prevent what Karzoug did to her from happening to anyone else. In the meantime, she'll absolutely aid the PCs in facing Karzoug in the Eye of Avarice, giving them a powerful ally in the fight to come.

**STORY AWARD:** If the PCs manage to rescue and recruit Viorian, grant them XP as if they had defeated her in combat, as well as an additional 51,200 XP.

**X4 RUNE GIANT LAIR (CR 17)**



A pair of outrageously sized beds, each over forty feet long, lie against the far wall of this enormous chamber. A towering stone table flanked by equally oversized chairs sits in the center of the room.

**CREATURE:** Although each of the stasis cells in area X13 once held a rune giant, most of these towering monsters relocated to Xin-Shalast to aid in reclaiming the city for Karzoug. Only a few remain here in the Pinnacle, and they generally rest in shifts. The first time the PCs





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enter this room, a single rune giant is doing just that—slumbering in one of the enormous beds here (unless combat in a nearby room woke him, of course!)

**WARDEN OF RUNES**

<b>XP</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>HP</b>
102,400	17	270

Rune giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 130)

**AC** 38, touch 9, flat-footed 38 (+14 armor, +3 deflection, +15 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 270

**Gear** +5 full plate, *Sihedron ring*

**X5 LAMIA-KIN QUARTERS**



This exquisitely decorated chamber contains thick carpeting on the floor, a flickering fireplace along the northern wall, and several large nests of fine furs and cushions.

As with the rune giants and Khalib, Karzoug saw the need for a small army of lamias in the earliest days of his waking, and as such arranged for the chambers within this subsection of the Pinnacle to provide for the needs of several lamia minions, led by the harridan Ceoptra. All of the lamias in this wing have spent the last several thousands of years in stasis, waking only after Karzoug was roused from sleep. The matriarchs Xanasha and Lucrecia were among those who dwelt in this complex—while they have gone far beyond Xin-Shalast on their masters' orders, several remain within the area to this day. This central chamber serves as a small shared lounge for the matriarchs to relax in—the fireplace is real, but magical (the smokeless flames within give off heat but do not actually burn objects placed within).

**TREASURE:** Many of the furs on the floors here are quite fine examples of exotic pelts, ranging from snow leopard to yeti. In all, there are 20 pelts, each being worth 250 gp. Amid one of the pelts lies a forgotten *periapt of proof against poison* fitted into a short hair pin, left here by a lamia matriarch who has since moved out of the Pinnacle. A successful DC 30 Perception check allows this hidden bauble to be discovered during the looting of the room; otherwise, it may go unnoticed tangled amid the fibers of a particularly large yeti fur blanket.

**X6 PRIESTESS'S CELLS (CR 15)**



The decor of this large room is quite comfortable—thick carpeting covers the floor, while delicate chandeliers hang from the ceiling. Several large nests of furs and cushions lie about the room.

**CREATURES:** While some of the lamia priestess who serve Ceoptra have been deployed elsewhere (such as to Jorgenfist), four of them remain stationed here, waiting

to serve their mistress as needed. The priestesses have spent much of the last several months relatively idle, with thrice-weekly trips down the mountain to catch food for the hungerers in area X7 being their only real distractions of late. They look upon the arrival of the PCs as not only an opportunity to earn approval from Ceoptra, but as a much needed break from boredom. Note that while Ceoptra herself is in fact an oracle of the House of Divine Consumption, these priestesses are clerics of Lamashtu—for now, Ceoptra suffers the worship of the Demon Queen by these clerics, but the harridan plans someday to enforce a conversion of these lamias to the official religion of Xin-Shalast. Since such a conversion would result in the loss of the lamias' clerical powers and spellcasting ability, Ceoptra has been forced to constantly delay these plans for conversion until Karzoug has returned and she has time to retrain them.

**LAMIA PRIESTESSES (4)**

<b>XP</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>HP</b>
12,800 each	11	161 each

**hp** 161 each (see page 220)

**Gear** as detailed on page 220, but replace *rings of protection +2* with *Sihedron rings*

**X7 HUNGERERS' DEN (CR 17)**



This foul-smelling abattoir of a room is empty of furniture—it would appear that whatever lives here prefers to use the half-gnawed bodies of previous meals as bedding.

**CREATURES:** Whereas most lamia-kin prefer to bask in luxury and surround themselves with beauty, the bloated monstrosities known as hungerers have no such interests. Anything that could be interpreted as a distraction from gluttony holds little interest for the hungerer. Many of these obese lamia-kin dwell in Xin-Shalast, with the two that dwell herein being Ceoptra's pets. Both of these hungerers were once lamia matriarchs who displeased Ceoptra. Her lamia-kin followers won't easily forget this, since transformation into a hungerer is one of the greatest punishments a normally vain lamia can be subjected to.

**HUNGERERS (2)**

<b>XP</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>HP</b>
51,200 each	15	220 each

**hp** 220 each (see page 410)

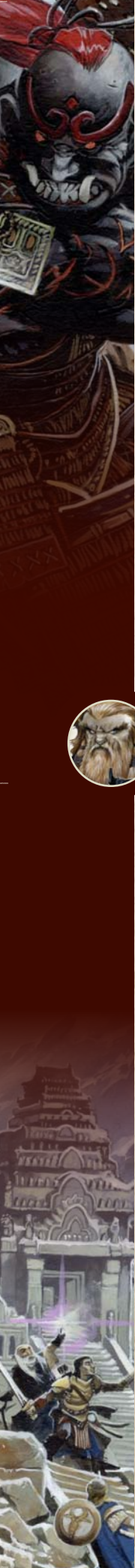
**Gear** *Sihedron ring*

**X8 PRISON (CR 16)**



The stone walls of this chamber are stark and undecorated—even the floor is merely functional in appearance. Two iron doors face each other across the room to the west.





This barren chamber is nothing more than a guard room that allows observance of the two prison cells to the north and south (areas **X8a** and **X8b**). These cells are themselves used only for the most important and hated of Karzoug's prisoners, but are currently empty. If during the course of the adventure, a significant NPC escaped from the PCs (such as Barl Breakbones, or even an ally who vanished at some point), feel free to place that character in one of the two prison cells here.

One of the cells is twice as large as the other (cell **X8b** is generally used to house larger prisoners like giants and dragons), but both contain the same set of wards: incredibly difficult to pick locks (it's a DC 40 Disable Device to unlock either door—Ceoptra keeps the keys in her shrine at area **X9a**), while the interior of each cell is bathed in persistent *antimagick fields* (CL 20th).

**CREATURE:** While the lamias in the exterior rooms of this portion of the spire are all expected to help guard these cells, the primary duties of guardian fall to an astradaemon Khalib "recruited" with a *greater planar binding* spell. Although there's unlikely to be any prisoners to guard here, the astradaemon remains at its post with orders to slaughter anyone it doesn't recognize who dares to enter this chamber unescorted by a known ally.

### ASTRADAEMON

XP	CR	HP
76,880	16	212

hp 212 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 63)

## X9 CEOPTRA'S CHAMBERS



The thickly carpeted floor of this grand chamber is further strewn with expensive-looking throw-rugs and exotic furs. A nest of the same lies heaped in the center of the room, under a rotunda-like construction atop which a canopy of silks and gauzy veils adds to the chamber's mystique.

The leader of the lamias of Xin-Shalast and the high priestess of the cult of Lissala in the region is the lamia harridan known as Most High Ceoptra. This room and the nearby chambers consist of her personal suite here in the Pinnacle, although she spends the majority of her time in area **X17** now, guarding the *anima focus*. An investigation of this room reveals that whatever sort of creature that dwells here is the size of an elephant, yet is also exceptionally fastidious—the silks and furs in here are impeccably clean.

Area **X9a** is a personal shrine dedicated to the esoteric and philosophies of greed—the northern wall is decorated with an enormous golden Sihedron, before which sits a rune-carved altar. Area **X9b** and **X9c** are smaller chambers once used by two of Ceoptra's favorite minions, the lamia matriarch sisters Xanesha and Lucrecia. Both of these still-quite-well-decorated bedrooms are empty, unless

one of those two lamia matriarchs escaped the PCs and returned here.

**TREASURE:** A successful DC 30 Perception check of the altar in area **X9a** reveals a hidden panel in which Ceoptra keeps three *scrolls of resurrection*, a *scroll of commune*, and a single enormous platinum key worth 2,500 gp. This key unlocks the doors to the cells in area **X8**. The gold of the Sihedron on the wall can be scraped away with an hour's work, resulting in 1,250 gp worth of gold.

## X10 MOKMURIAN'S DOOR (CR 16)

This small room, once a storeroom, is the chamber into which Mokmurian entered when he first visited the region several years ago. At that time, the magical wards that protected the Pinnacle kept the entire structure sealed tight—the ramp leading to area **X1** being as impenetrable as anything else. The stone giant studied the external walls of the Pinnacle, and was delighted to find a small flaw in the magic here caused by an even smaller flaw in the stonework beneath—despite the minor nature of these flaws, they were enough for Mokmurian to burrow through into the interior with the application of *disintegrate* spells.

**CREATURE:** The hole carved into the wall remains today—with so few visitors, the creatures of the pinnacle haven't bothered with the relatively significant work of repairing the damage. In the meantime, as a temporary measure, Khalib has simply placed a planetar, conjured via *greater planar binding*, as a guardian here. The choice of planetar appeals to Khalib's sense of irony and is a rather clever ploy to trick any good-aligned intruders into believing that what lies within the chambers should, in fact, be avoided. At the very least, Khalib delights in the likely mental trauma caused to kindhearted heroes forced to fight an angel.

The planetar, named Ayruzi, is an androgynous creature with pale green skin and tear-stained eyes. Khalib has compelled Ayruzi via the *greater planar binding* to guard this entrance for 16 days, a length of servitude that began the first day the PCs arrived in Xin-Shalast. While so bound, Ayruzi must silently guard this room from intruders, and must attack any who attempt to enter, fighting to the death.

### AYRUZI

XP	CR	HP
76,800	16	229

Planetar (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 11*)

hp 229

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Khalib's command to Ayruzi to fight silently prevents her from speaking, and also from casting spells—she's free to use her spell-like abilities, though. While Khalib's *greater planar binding* compels Ayruzi to fight, she desperately wishes to communicate with the PCs. If the PCs don't establish telepathic communication with the angel, though, she has no real option but to fight as best she can.





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She continues to attack intruders at range from this room as long as she can, but is not allowed to leave the area to pursue foes.

**Morale** Khalib has commanded Ayruzi to fight to the death, but his command has a fatal flaw—if the PCs deal enough damage to kill Ayruzi and she goes down, the wording of his command causes the effects of the *greater planar binding* to cease—even if she’s still regenerating. If allowed to heal back to consciousness via regeneration, the angel wakes no longer under the *greater planar binding’s* effects and offers her aid to the PCs, as detailed under development below.

**DEVELOPMENT:** If the PCs can establish nonverbal communication with the angel (such as via telepathy, or simply by asking her questions she can answer with nods of the head or other simple pantomime while she’s attacking), she tries to get them to banish her—once sent back to Nirvana, the strictures of the *greater planar binding* end, and she arranges to return to the Material Plane to seek revenge against Khalib. Her inability to use *plane shift* or *teleport*, unfortunately, means that it will be many days before she can return to Xin-Shalast to aid the PCs—in this case, you can have her return whenever you wish. If, on the other hand, the PCs manage to help her escape from the *greater planar binding* effect without banishing her (such as by temporarily killing her, as detailed above under **Morale**), Ayruzi immediately joins the PCs and vows to aid them in their fight against Karzoug—all she asks in return is the opportunity to deliver the killing blow to Khalib for the humiliation he inflicted upon her pride.

**X11 THE AKLO DOORS (CR 16)**



Two vast double doors, each ten feet in width, stand in the southern wall of this barren chamber. The face of each black stone door is covered with tens of thousands of tiny runes carved in an eerie, spidery script. The runes seem to writhe and slither about when not under direct observation.

These doors lead into the eldritch laboratory in which Karzoug’s denizen of Leng minions toiled on the construction of the *Leng Device*, and as such, he wanted to ensure that only a few could safely come and go from the room beyond these doors. Each of the doors is covered with magical runes, written in Aklo, that describe in florid detail the horrors of Leng. In effect, the runes consist of a warning to any who would enter and trespass on the land of Leng beyond the doors. Anyone who can read Aklo, takes an hour to study them, then succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (planes) or Linguistics check can deduce the nature of these warnings. Unfortunately, anyone who reads any of the runes for as short a time as a single round (or who dares to attempt to open the doors) triggers a deadly magical trap.

**TRAP:** The runes on the Aklo doors do far more than merely warn about Leng’s eldritch horrors. Any who read the runes or attempt to open the doors subject their minds to the labyrinthine network of tunnels that wind through the depths of the underworld below Leng—a nightmare maze of horrors and things best left unseen. So realistic are these visions that the victims are physically transported into the phantasm, vanishing entirely from reality for as long as it takes them to find their way back. Creatures native to Leng, Karzoug himself, and any chaotic evil outsider of CR 10 or higher are immune to the effects of the Aklo doors. Merely reading the runes is enough to trigger the trap, but so is any attempt to open the doors—once the trap is triggered, all targets other than those mentioned above as being immune who are within a 30-foot spread of the doors are whisked away into the extradimensional nightmare maze.

**THE AKLO DOORS**

XP 76,800 CR 16

Type magic; Perception DC 35; Disable Device DC 35

**EFFECTS**

**Trigger** touch or proximity; **Reset** automatic

**Effect** spell effect (*maze*; each round all creatures trapped within the *maze* are subjected to a *phantasmal killer* effect [save DC 16], but once any one trapped creature succeeds at the DC 20 Intelligence check to escape the maze, all currently entrapped victims escape at once, reappearing on the north side of the now-once-again closed Aklo doors); multiple targets (all valid targets within 30 feet).

**X12 THE LENG DEVICE (CR 17)**



The plain stone walls of this long room are lined by a variety of tables, boxes, crates, and cylinders. Some are made of stone, but others appear to be composed of metal. Strange winding cables protrude from some to connect to others. All of this clutter seems to focus upon a large metal framework constructed at the southern end of the room, where strange currents of energy dance and shimmer within a strange ring of stone. Now and then, these currents coalesce into shapes—images startling for their familiarity and yet totally alien. The image revealed is of a massive city of towers and gigantic monuments set in a mountain valley at the foot of a huge peak—Xin-Shalast, as it would appear from this high mountain vista. The city beyond the energy curtain is very different, however, in that its towers and buildings are ablaze with light both magical and mundane and the great central road and surrounding streets teem with tens of thousands of giants and humanoids of all descriptions. The sounds and even the smells of this strange metropolis waft through the image—an image that is, perhaps, trying to be an open window.



This chamber holds an ancient experiment begun by Karzoug and his allies from Leng, one he abandoned and sealed away just before he entered hibernation. The strange apparatus splayed about the room and culminating in the energy field at the far end is an otherworldly experiment known as the *Leng Device*. Using the warped technologies of the outer realms, Karzoug and his associates from Leng attempted to create a fixed portal in time—one that would allow travel to a specific day from any point in the future. That day is one when Xin-Shalast was at its height—Karzoug knew he would need an army when he awoke, and with this device he hoped to bring forth the ancient armies already gathered to reign terror anew upon the world, transporting them wholly from the past to the present. While this device was nowhere near completion when Thassilon fell, if Karzoug wakens fully, he can have it ready to transport the armies of Xin-Shalast from the ancient past to the modern day—perhaps his greatest magical feat ever.

Yet there are others who have an interest in the device. That same nameless patron from Leng who once helped Karzoug build the device has finally managed to send minions to Golarion recently. While these denizens of Leng have deluded the remaining inhabitants of the spire into believing they seek merely to prepare the *Leng Device* for Karzoug's return, in truth the original goal of the device, and the actual reason those from beyond in Leng agreed to work with Karzoug in the first place, is to waken the Great Old One Mhar who dwells beneath the mountain that bears that entity's name.

Dozens of denizens of Leng now dwell in Xin-Shalast and the surrounding mountains, sent here to scout the place, observe, and gather topographical data that they then report to the denizens toiling in here so they can make proper adjustments. The work is long and grueling, made more so by the necessity of hiding their work's results so that Karzoug doesn't realize what the alien technicians are actually up to. Indeed, to someone viewing the results of the denizens' tinkering from afar (such as the *runewell*) it seems their work is merely tuning the device and preparing it for the portal to ancient Xin-Shalast. Yet once Karzoug's *runewell* triggers and returns him to this realm, the denizens of Leng are ready to siphon that power into the *Leng Device* and to awaken Mhar from its eons of slumber. No other beings in the region know what the denizens of Leng are truly up to here, including their ancient foes, the spiders of Leng (see page 341). The spiders know only that they wish to see their enemies fail at whatever efforts they are attempting.

The *Leng Device's* portal cannot yet allow physical travel or even communication—the portal does not exist in ancient times at this point. Yet it does allow an observer in this chamber to see Xin-Shalast at its height 10,000 years ago, only a few years before the empire's fall. Contact with the energy field has no effect other than a slight tingling, and spells cannot be cast through it.

Anyone examining the panels or consoles of the device must succeed at a DC 45 Knowledge (arcana) check to understand the *Leng Device's* general purpose—it takes a successful DC 55 check to realize it's slowly being repurposed to a point in time eons before Thassilon's height. A successful DC 40 Knowledge (geography or local) check reveals numerous similarities between the stone ring at the center of the *Leng Device* and the much larger ring of stone located in the Varisian city of Magnimar—as if both devices were built by similar hands. Anyone who attempts to damage or manipulate the *Leng Device* has a 30% chance of creating a small explosion affecting all within 5 feet and dealing 6d6 points of force damage (no save). This causes no noticeable damage to the device and has no effect on the portal—the device itself is a major artifact and cannot be destroyed without traveling to Leng, where its unknowable foundations lie shrouded in secret monasteries.

**CREATURES:** The 12 denizens of Leng working here are in the process of fine-tuning the device. Vaguely human shaped, these monsters appear to wear twitching yellow robes, turbans, and veils. When they attack, these robes part to reveal horned heads, hooved feet, and monstrously toothy maws. The denizens do not interact with any of the other inhabitants of the Pinnacle, but are prepared to defend their work if necessary.

Unknown to the PCs, the denizens of Leng themselves are inexorably tied to the device. Each time a denizen is slain, the *Leng Device* flashes with light and emits a strange high-pitched whine. With each death, the image in the window shifts, growing distorted and warped. With the last denizen slain, the image vanishes altogether, transforming into a gut-churning vortex of spinning lights and sheets of energy. Unfortunately for the PCs, this disruption in the fabric of time quickly draws the attention of an ancient and powerful monstrosity from the dawn of time itself—an advanced hound of Tindalos. The hound manifests in this chamber only 2d6 rounds after the last denizen of Leng is slain, pouring from the southern corners of the room with a blast of noxious mist and a blood-curdling howl. Only by defeating at least one of the denizens of Leng without slaying him can the PCs prevent the arrival of this hound (banishing denizens to another plane has the same effect as killing them).

If the hound appears after the PCs have left the room, its howl can still be heard throughout the Pinnacle. It emerges from the room and begins stalking the complex, killing anything (PC, giant, or lamia alike) it comes across. Particularly cagey PCs can actually use this Thing from Beyond Time as a dangerous ally, since the beast focuses its wrath on larger foes before smaller ones.

In any event, the hound's manifestation has one positive effect: it overloads the *Leng Device*. While not destroying it, the portal energy built up in its conduits is dispersed and the device becomes inert. Future denizens of Leng might return here someday to begin







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the decades-long process of activation again, but for now, this dangerous device's threat is stymied. The Thing from Beyond Time itself is a 14-foot-long creature capable of shifting in and out of reality. The creature is only vaguely shaped like a hound; its feet end in large razor-sharp talons and the enormous maw set under its bulging black eyes is filled not only with weirdly transparent teeth, but a long bladed tongue capable of lapping away the minds of those it cuts.

ADVANCED DENIZENS OF LENG (12)	XP	CR	HP
	6,400 each	9	115 each

**hp** 115 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 82, 294)

**TACTICS**

**Before Combat** The denizens ignore the PCs unless they become hostile or try to damage the machine.

**During Combat** The denizens of Leng attempt to flank the PCs and use sneak attacks with their claws and bites.

**Morale** These denizens fight to the death to protect the secret of their project.

THE THING FROM BEYOND TIME	XP	CR	HP
	76,800	16	256

Unique hound of Tindalos (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 158, 292)

NE Large outsider (evil, extraplanar)

**Init** +11; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +29

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 31, touch 17, flat-footed 23 (+7 Dex, +1 dodge, +14 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 256 (19d10+152)

**Fort** +18, **Ref** +20, **Will** +13

**DR** 10/magic and piercing; **Immune** poison, mind-affecting effects

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +28 (4d6+10/19-20), 2 claws +28 (2d6+10/19-20), tongue +23 (2d8+5 plus 1d4 Wisdom drain)

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

**Special Attacks** ripping gaze (DC 24)

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

Constant—*air walk*

At will—*fog cloud*, *invisibility*, *locate creature*

3/day—*dimensional anchor*, *discern location*, *greater scrying* (DC 22), *haste*, *slow* (DC 18)

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** The Thing from Beyond Time is not immune to the effects of the occluding field—in fact, its presence causes the monster extreme discomfort and pain. Beyond its first manifestation in the room (made possible only by the *Leng Device's* fluctuation of energy), this hound of Tindalos cannot use its angled entry ability at all. The feeling of being trapped and cut off from the angles of time enrages the monster, driving it into a blind frenzy.

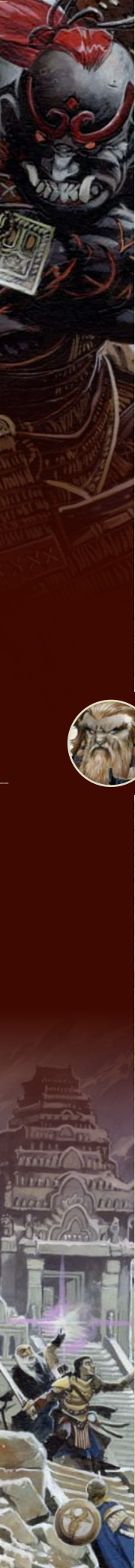
**Morale** If the occluding field is brought down, the hound immediately uses *plane shift* to flee, never to return.

Otherwise, it fights to the death.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 30, **Dex** 24, **Con** 24, **Int** 20, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 20





**Base Atk** +19; **CMB** +30; **CMD** 48 (52 vs. trip)

**Feats** Ability Focus (ripping gaze), Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Critical (claws), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Lightning Reflexes, Toughness

**Skills** Acrobatics +29 (+33 when jumping), Escape Artist +26, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (engineering) +24, Knowledge (geography) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowledge (planes) +27, Perception +29, Sense Motive +29, Stealth +25, Survival +26

**Languages** Aklo

**SQ** angled entry, otherworldly mind

### X13 RUNE GIANT CELLS (CR 18)

Each of these empty chambers radiates lingering transmutation magic. A character who studies these auras and makes a successful DC 38 Spellcraft check can tell that these rooms once served as stasis chambers, utilizing an effect similar to that created by *temporal stasis*. In fact, each chamber once held a single rune giant in stasis, placed there by Karzoug in the twilight days of Thassilon so he'd have a small army of them at his disposal when he woke. Karzoug was able to release these giants from stasis and now uses them as a key component in the rebuilding of Shalast's power.

**CREATURES:** Most of the rune giants who once stood in stasis here are now spread out through Xin-Shalast, but two remain here in the Pinnacle—one in area X4, and one here in this large room, where it commands three wardens of wind on reserve, ready to come to the aid of any alarms raised elsewhere in the complex.

WARDEN OF RUNES	XP	CR	HP
	102,400	17	270

Rune giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 130)

**AC** 38, touch 9, flat-footed 38 (+14 armor, +3 deflection, +15 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 270

**Gear** +5 full plate, *Sihedron ring*

WARDENS OF WIND (3)	XP	CR	HP
	19,200 each	12	200 each

Advanced cloud giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 147*, 294)

**AC** 35, touch 12, flat-footed 34 (+11 armor, +3 deflection, +1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 200 each

**Fort** +21, **Ref** +11, **Will** +15

**Gear** +2 full plate, *Sihedron ring*

### X14 PORTAL ROOM

The southern wall of this otherwise empty chamber shimmers and glows, a wall of swirling golden mist rather than the polished stone seen elsewhere in the complex. Now and then strange shapes can be half-seen through the mist.

The swirling golden mist on this wall is a stationary, one-way portal that transports any who step into the mist down into Xin-Shalast. Those who traverse this portal appear before the fortress of Shahlaria (area R), preceded by a blast of golden mist. There is no method to return to the Pinnacle of Avarice from Shahlaria—this portal was used by the majority of the rune giants to disperse into the city below, and functions more as an escape route than anything else.

### X15 KHALIB'S QUARTERS (CR 15)



This triangular room is empty, save for a golden bed strewn with exotic furs and silk sheets. A long shelf above the bed holds nearly two dozen leather-bound books.

This room alone among the rune giant cells is sized for a human occupant, for it once served as a stasis chamber for a man named Khalib—one of Karzoug's most powerful apprentices and, in theory, the man who was originally destined to waken a few years after Thassilon's fall to rouse Karzoug. Unfortunately, Karzoug's other apprentices didn't necessarily want their runelord to return—they harbored secret jealousies and envied Karzoug's power. They thought that by preventing Khalib's return they could thus prevent Karzoug's, and therefore one among them could take up the mantle of greed. Their plan half-worked—after Karzoug and Khalib entered stasis, they did manage to alter the "timer" on Khalib's stasis chamber so he would never emerge (barring external tampering). That done, the remaining apprentices turned on each other, the focus of their envy having shifted to themselves. It took them less than a month to kill each other off. It would be 10,000 years before Mokmurian would finally come to the Pinnacle of Avarice to finish the job Khalib was never able to complete.

**CREATURE:** When Karzoug wakened his rune giants, he considered not wakening Khalib, so disappointed was he in his apprentice's failure. The runelord has only recently reversed this petty decision, and wakened Khalib a few months ago, after Karzoug realized he was going to require all the help he could muster against the PCs. Since then, Khalib has spent much of his time searching his soul for a way to repay Karzoug for his failure to waken him. Helping to gain new allies (such as aiding in the subjugation of the yetis in area H) is a step in the right direction, but Khalib knows he needs to do more. Destroying the PCs strikes him as the perfect solution—once he realizes the PCs are in the Pinnacle, he searches them out immediately and confronts them. Only if the PCs are particularly stealthy in their invasion do they find Khalib here, deep in study and meditation.

First of his school in power and magical skill, Khalib was a natural choice as an apprentice aspirant for Karzoug





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and quickly rose through the competition on his own raw power and ambition. Seeing the other apprentices as beings of lesser power, Khalib took to calling himself First Apprentice in Karzoug's court and in the presence of the others. Khalib saw his rise as the next Runelord of Greed to be a natural progression, waiting patiently for Karzoug's power to wane so he could convince the rune giants to support his bid for power. At least, that was his mindset before his long period in stasis—now, he fears that Karzoug will cast him aside before he has a chance to wrest control. Khalib hasn't even fully comprehended the fact that 10,000 years have come and gone, and that Thassilon is no more—he understands the passage of time on an intellectual level, but emotionally hasn't yet started to come to terms with the fact that the world he once knew is no more.

**Thassilonian Specialization** transmutation; **Opposition Schools** enchantment, illusion

**TACTICS**

**Before Combat** Khalib casts *false life*, *overland flight*, and *nondetection* on himself every day. Once an alarm is raised, he also casts *stoneskin*, quickened *shield*, and *cat's grace* on himself before entering battle. He casts *greater magic weapon* on his masterwork dagger as well, even though he's long believed that if he's been forced to resort to using his dagger in combat, something has gone horribly wrong.

**During Combat** Khalib begins his battles by casting *summon monster* spells, augmenting them with quickened spells at the same time, as appropriate. He's not all that concerned

<b>KHALIB</b>	<b>XP</b> 51,200	<b>CR</b> 15	<b>HP</b> 185
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Male Azlanti human transmuter 16  
LE Medium humanoid (human)  
**Init** +5; **Senses** *arcane sight*, darkvision 60 ft., *see invisibility*; Perception +18

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 29, touch 18, flat-footed 24 (+5 armor, +3 deflection, +5 Dex, +2 natural, +4 shield)

**hp** 185 (16d6+127)

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

**DR** 10/adamantine

**OFFENSE**

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

**Melee** +4 *dagger* +12/+7 (1d4+4/19-20)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th; concentration +23)

At will—change shape (*beast shape III/elemental body II*, 16 rounds/day)

10/day—telekinetic fist (1d4+8 bludgeoning)

**Spells Prepared** (CL 16th; concentration +23)

8th—*greater planar binding*, quickened maximized *magic missile*, *temporal stasis* (DC 27, 2)

7th—*delayed blast fireball* (DC 24), *ethereal jaunt*, *reverse gravity* (2), *statue*, *summon monster VII*

6th—*disintegrate* (DC 25, 2), *flesh to stone* (DC 25), *greater dispel magic*, quickened *resist energy*, *summon monster VI*

5th—*dismissal* (DC 22), *overland flight* (2), quickened *shield*, *summon monster V*, *telekinesis*, *wall of force*

4th—*arcane eye*, *dimension door*, maximized *magic missile*, *mnemonic enhancer* (2), *stoneskin*, *wall of ice*

3rd—*dispel magic* (2), *lightning bolt* (DC 20), *greater magic weapon*, *haste*, *nondetection*, *slow* (DC 22, 2)

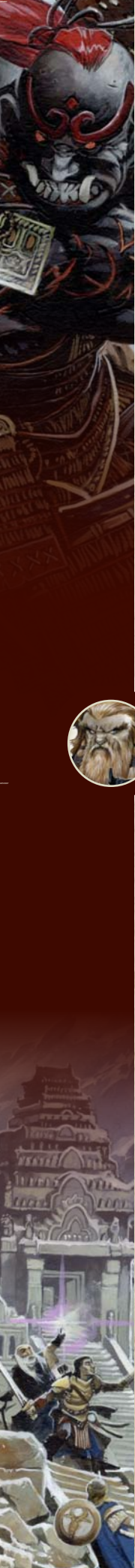
2nd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 20, 3), *cat's grace* (2), *false life*, *glitterdust* (DC 20, 2)

1st—*alarm*, *expeditious retreat* (2), *feather fall*, *magic missile* (2), *obscuring mist*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 19)

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *light*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*







that these monsters aren't attuned to the occluding field—since if they're cut down early by the zone's damaging pulses, he can always summon more. He saves *temporal stasis* for particularly troublesome enemy spellcasters. He prefers to fight alongside giants and lamias, and if he finds the PCs before they're already in a fight, he attempts to rally the nearest group of monstrous allies to attack before he confronts them.

**Morale** Khalib fights to the death.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 10, **Dex** 20, **Con** 20, **Int** 24, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Altitude Affinity, Augment Summoning, Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item, Endurance, Greater Spell Focus (transmutation), Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (conjuration, necromancy, transmutation), Toughness

**Skills** Craft (alchemy) +26, Diplomacy +17, Fly +17, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowledge (engineering) +26, Knowledge (nobility) +26, Knowledge (planes) +26, Perception +18, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +26, Use Magic Device +17

**Languages** Abyssal, Aklo, Azlanti, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Thassilonian; *tongues*

**SQ** arcane bond (*Sihedron ring*), contingency, permanent spells, physical enhancement +4 Con

**Combat Gear** *staff of size alteration*; **Other Gear** masterwork dagger, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *evil robe of the archmagi* (variant, +4 resist to saves replaced by +4 Int enhancement), *Sihedron ring*, gold-and-ivory contingency statuette worth 2,000 gp, spellbooks (contain all spells from the *Core Rulebook* plus *monstrous physique* spells from the *Advanced Player's Guide*, save for any enchantment and illusion spells), gemstone dust worth 15,000 gp (for *temporal stasis*)

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Contingency** When Khalib snaps his fingers (a free action), *stoneskin* activates on him.

**Permanent Spells** Khalib has made the following spells permanent on himself: *arcane sight*, *darkvision*, *see invisibility*, and *tongues*.

**X16 RELIQUARY (CR 16)**



A 20-foot-tall golden statue of Karzoug, Runelord of Greed, stands in the southern portion of this chamber, his hands before him as if they may have once held an object between them. A brazier stands before the statue, plumes of smokeless fire churning inside of it. North of the statue stands a stone pagoda-like structure, a single opening in its southern face revealing two smaller statues of Karzoug within, on either side of a twenty-foot-long sarcophagus bearing the likeness of the runelord on its golden lid. To the west, a massive pair of golden double doors shimmers behind a hazy screen of golden energy.

It was inside this structure that Karzoug prepared for his entrance into the half-world of the Eye of Avarice between Golarion and Leng, the hideout intended to keep him safe from his enemies and the fall of his empire just long enough for his followers to release him, yet it became his tomb for 10,000 years. The contents of the pagoda are mostly symbolic; opening the sarcophagus reveals it to be empty. An examination of the statue confirms that it once seemed to hold a large object in its hands, perhaps something that was aimed directly at the sarcophagus. This was where the *soul lens* was kept, before it was moved into the Eye of Avarice (see Part Seven).

The doors to the west lead into the chamber of the *anima focus*—the only way to enter and exit the Eye of Avarice. The golden field that covers the doors is a permanent *wall of force* (hardness 30, hp 400, CL 20th) that repairs damage to itself at the rate of 10 hit points per round. Each time an effect damages this wall or attempts to destroy it, a golden bolt of energy rebounds back to strike the source of the damage (and the creature responsible), dealing 10d6 points of force damage (Reflex DC 20 for half). Damage inflicted on the wall of force by *dominant weapons* not only ignores the wall's hardness, but also cannot be self-repaired by the wall—furthermore, attacks with these weapons do not trigger reactive force bolts. This *wall of force* may seem to only shimmer before the doors, but in fact it extends through all the walls, ceilings, and floors surrounding area X17—any attempts to enter the room physically will find their efforts stymied by this effect.

**CREATURE:** Although the *anima focus* itself is quite well defended (see area X17), Khalib has placed a lumbering demon here to act as a guard, conjured via *greater planar binding* and commanded to prevent all trespassers from either entering the chamber of the *anima focus* or even from leaving the reliquary alive. This shemhazian demon (a multi-eyed, bearlike monster with a serrated tail and additional insectoid claws protruding from its back like bristly wings) is eager to prove its worth by attacking such intruders as the PCs—it provides Ceoptra in area X17 with a constant telepathic update on the battle, not only warning her that the PCs are near, but advising her on the best tactics to use against them.

**SHEMHAZIAN DEMON**

<b>XP</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>HP</b>
76,800	16	246

hp 246 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 80)

**X17 CHAMBER OF THE ANIMA FOCUS (CR 19)**



Pillars of gold support the arching ceiling of this room. The northern wall bears a particularly detailed mural that shows Xin-Shalast at its height, with the face atop Mhar Massif appearing to address its citizens as magical runes and spirals of energy emerge from its open mouth. Yet even





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this impressive work of art is overwhelmed by what towers in the center of the room—an immense, slowly rotating, thirty-foot-diameter sphere of gold, its surface shimmering with strangely sluggish flames. A stone walkway with a set of stairs leads up to the side of the sphere, where a five-foot-wide ramp leads up to a ten-foot-wide platform balanced precariously atop of the globe, from which a shimmering pillar of golden light shines up to the ceiling above.

The immense gold globe is a powerful magical artifact known as an *anima focus*—the magical link between this world and the *runewell* hidden within the Eye of Avarice. As long as the *soul lens* remains inside the Eye of Avarice, the *anima focus* cannot be damaged or moved from its location. It functions as an anchor and window into the Material Plane for the *soul lens*, and it is through it that souls of greed have been siphoned into the *runewell* as this Adventure Path has progressed. Whenever such a soul perishes, the beam of light emitted from the top of the *anima focus* glows green and siphons a portion of that soul's greed into the *soul lens* in the Eye of Avarice, and thence into the *runewell*, which in turn amplifies the siphoned soul fragment so it can be used by the *runewell* to energize Karzoug's return to Golarion.

The *anima focus* also serves as the only route into the Eye of Avarice. Any character who steps onto the glowing platform atop the *anima focus* becomes overwhelmed by a sudden sense of vertigo and double vision, as the view of the Eye of Avarice appears to overlay his current field of view. The character cannot visually make out any figures inside the Eye of Avarice, but he can certainly sense the presence of both Karzoug and the *soul lens* inside. This disorientation lasts as long as the character remains atop the *anima focus*, and for 1 minute after he vacates the area, during which time everything appears blurry and indistinct to the character (incidentally providing concealment and a 50% miss chance to all creatures the character attacks). Only fire (such as the flames that surround the gold sphere below) remains crisp and in focus to the character while so affected (creatures with the fire subtype are not effectively concealed due to the disorientation)—the only real clue as to how to transition completely into the Eye of Avarice.

If, while under the disorienting effects of the Eye, a character touches flame to himself or reaches out to touch any of the flames licking up from the gold sphere, the fire immediately and instantly consumes him, even if he's normally resistant to or immune to fire. To observers, it appears that the character has been burnt to nothingness in the span of an instant, when in fact the user has merely transported into the Eye of Avarice. This journey is not without pain—the traveler must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save

to avoid being stunned by this transportation. While immunity or resistance to fire doesn't prevent this planar transportation, it does prevent the chance of being stunned by it.

A character who strikes the *anima focus* with a *dominant weapon* can also effect entrance into the Eye of Avarice, for in so doing, the disruptive clash of opposing magic tears a hole in reality before the statue. This opening functions as a gate into the Eye of Avarice, but one infused with dominant magic such that Karzoug cannot use the gate to escape (although he can certainly cast spells through it into this area). The *gate* remains open for 10 minutes before closing.

Apart from general experimentation, spells like *legend lore* and *vision* can reveal the method and function of the *anima focus*—this was how Mokmurian learned how to enter the Eye of Avarice and, subsequently, it was what doomed him.

The *anima focus* also has two other qualities the denizens of the Pinnacle enjoy. First, it is the source of the wall of force that surrounds area X17—a creature can activate or deactivate this wall by touching the *anima focus* and taking a standard action to concentrate. Secondly, the *anima focus* automatically attunes any creatures conjured in area X17 via a calling effect to the occluding field, allowing such creatures to exist comfortably within the region as if they wore a Sihedron.

**CREATURES:** Before the PCs can take the time to tinker with the *anima focus*, they need to deal with the Pinnacle's final guardians: several wardens of wind who attend to their mistress, Most High Ceoptra. This lamia, like the long line of her ancestors back to Xin-Shalast's heyday, is a devoted servant of the concept of greed and Shalastian tradition—she doesn't worship a specific deity. The closest approximation to a deity for her is Karzoug, although she gains her spells from her blind faith in greed and her ancestors and not from the runelord. Her slavish devotion made her the obvious choice for the runelord when he decided he needed a guardian to watch over the only entrance to his prison. Ceoptra takes the charge quite seriously and never abandons her post, sending one of her giant attendants as a proxy whenever she needs to conduct business elsewhere.

<b>MOST HIGH CEOPTRA</b>	<b>XP</b> 153,600	<b>CR</b> 18	<b>HP</b> 287
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Female lamia harridan oracle 14 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 186, *Advanced Player's Guide* 42, plus see page 404)

CE Huge monstrous humanoid

**Init** +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +29

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 37, touch 19, flat-footed 29 (+6 armor, +3 deflection, +7 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural, +2 shield, -2 size)

**hp** 287 (23 HD; 9d10+14d8+175)

**Fort** +16, **Ref** +20, **Will** +21

**DR** 10/magic; **SR** 29



**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 60 ft.

**Melee** +3 *unholy dagger* +29/+24/+19/+14 (1d6+12/17-20), 2 claws +26 (1d6+4), touch +21 (1d8 wisdom)

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

**Special Attacks** 1d8 Wis drain, pounce, rake (2 claws +26, 1d6+4)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 14th; concentration +21)

At will—*disguise self*, *ventriloquism*

3/day—*charm monster* (DC 21), *major image* (DC 20), *mirror image*, *suggestion* (DC 21)

1/day—*deep slumber* (DC 20)

**Spells Known** (CL 14th; concentration +21)

7th (4/day)—*destruction* (DC 24), *ethereal jaunt*, *mass cure serious wounds*

6th (6/day)—*blade barrier* (DC 23), *greater heroism*, *heal*, *mass cure moderate wounds*

5th (7/day)—*greater command* (DC 22), *flame strike*, *mass cure light wounds*, *telekinesis*, *wall of stone*

4th (7/day)—*air walk*, *cure critical wounds*, *death ward*, *greater magic weapon*, *sending*, *spiritual ally*\*

3rd (8/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 20), *contagion* (DC 20), *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *heroism*, *searing light*

2nd (8/day)—*cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (DC 19), *levitate*, *minor image* (DC 19),

*resist energy*, *shatter* (DC 19), *silence* (DC 19), *sound burst* (DC 19), *spiritual weapon*

1st (8/day)—*cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *endure elements*, *obscuring mist*, *protection from good*, *sanctuary* (DC 18), *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 17), *create water*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *guidance*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *stabilize*

**Mystery** ancestor\*

\*See *Ultimate Magic*.

**TACTICS**

**Before Combat** Ceoptra activates her spirit shield and casts *greater magic weapon* on her dagger. She also casts *endure elements* on herself every morning. Once she realizes the PCs are in the Pinnacle, she casts *air walk* and *death ward* on herself. If possible, just before combat begins, she casts *sending* to warn Karzoug his enemies are near.

**During Combat** Ceoptra prefers to let her giant minions engage the PCs at first while she hangs back and uses her attack spells at range. As soon as one warden of wind dies, she abandons this tactic and enters melee as well. She is fond of using *Quicken Spell* to augment her melee attacks, adding quickened *blindness/deafness*, *contagion*, *hold person*, and *sound burst* to full attacks. She uses quickened healing spells on herself each round she has fewer than 150 hit points. Remember that quickened spells do not provoke attacks of opportunity, so she doesn't need to cast defensively when utilizing this tactic in combat.

**Morale** Ceoptra fights to the death.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 28, **Dex** 24, **Con** 22, **Int** 13, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 24

**Base Atk** +19; **CMB** +30; **CMD** 51 (55 vs. trip)

**Feats** Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Forge Ring, Improved Critical (dagger), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Quicken Spell, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (suggestion), Spring Attack, Toughness

**Skills** Bluff +34, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (religion) +27, Perception +29, Spellcraft +27, Stealth +3

**SQ** oracle's curse (haunted), revelations (spirit shield [+6 AC, 50% ranged miss chance, 14 hours/day], storm of souls [7d8, Fort DC 24 for half, 2/day], undersized weapons, voice of the grave [14 rounds/day, -4 save penalty], wisdom of the ancestors [*commune*, 1/day])

**Gear** +1 *unholy dagger*, *headband of alluring charisma* +4, *necklace of adaptation*, *ring of force shield*, *Sihedron ring*, 4 golden ankle bands worth 2,000 gp each, gold and sapphire choker worth 6,000 gp

**WARDENS OF WIND (3)**

XP	CR	HP
19,200 each	12	200 each

Advanced cloud giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 147, 294)

**AC** 35, touch 12, flat-footed 34 (+11 armor, +3 deflection, +1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 200 each

**Fort** +21, **Ref** +11, **Will** +15

**Gear** +2 *full plate*, *Sihedron ring*

**MOST HIGH  
CEOPTRA**




**SPIRES OF  
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# PART SEVEN: THE EYE OF AVARICE

SHELTERED FROM THE APOCALYPSE OF EARTHFALL, THE FALL OF THE EMPIRE OF THASSILON, AND FROM THE VERY ADVANCE OF TIME ITSELF, THE POCKET DIMENSION KNOWN AS THE EYE OF AVARICE FLOATS IN A SPHERE OF REALITY WEDGED BETWEEN THE MATERIAL PLANE AND THE NIGHTMARE REALM OF LENG. THIS DEMIPLANE FEATURES AN ENDLESS HURRICANE OF CHURNING FIRE, WITH A RELATIVELY TINY SPHERE OF SAFETY LODGED IN ITS CENTER—THIS IS THE EYE ITSELF, AND IS WHERE KARZOUG HAS SPENT 10,000 YEARS IN STASIS, WAITING TO RISE AGAIN.

The Eye of Avarice has normal gravity and time. The small stone island at the center of this realm bears a cavelike opening in its side, the extent of which is shown on the map. Within this area the air and temperatures are breathable and comfortable, but outside of this area conditions are identical to those on the Plane of Fire (see page 190 of the *GameMastery Guide* if the PCs foolishly venture into this inferno). Specific areas of note in the Eye of Avarice are summarized below.

**Y1 ARRIVAL PLATFORM:** When the PCs first appear within the Eye of Avarice, they manifest in area Y1, stepping out between two immense pylons between which ripples what appears to be a window looking out over the city of Xin-Shalast. A moment's study confirms that this view closely duplicates the one that might be enjoyed by looking out of the face carved into Mhar Massif's peak. This is not a two-way portal, and once a character activates the *anima focus* (either as intended, or with a *dominant weapon*, as detailed in area X17), there is no returning to the Material Plane save via methods like *plane shift*, *gate*, or those detailed in Concluding the Campaign on page 365.

Numerous red-hot pillars of gold rise from the fires below in the Eye of Avarice. A character who ends her turn in a square adjacent to one of these pillars takes 1d6 points of fire damage—contact with a pillar deals 3d6 points of fire damage. The pillars themselves cannot be harmed by mortal means.

The stone surfaces upon which the PCs and other denizens of the Eye of Avarice stand upon extend down into the fires 100 feet below. Climbing the glassy sides of these sheer surfaces requires a successful DC 40 Climb check, while a fall into the fire inflicts damage as if falling into water from that height—once in the fire, the PCs effectively pass into a sea of lava and take damage as appropriate (*Core Rulebook* 444) until they escape.

**Y2 OBSERVATION BALCONIES:** These balconies are supported by chains attached to the pillars—no walls

extend down to the fires below from these balconies. Despite their precarious appearance, they can support any weight upon them. Each balcony is 150 feet above the fires below.

**Y3 THE RUNEWELL:** This pool of what appears to be molten gold is in fact Karzoug's *runewell*—see page 424 for rules on this powerful artifact. The *soul lens* itself is mounted on an articulated adamantine frame above, set to focus and magnify soul fragments of all those slain over the past several months in preparation for Karzoug's release. By the time the PCs arrive, Karzoug's *runewell* should be almost fully charged—once it becomes completely charged (at a point you should feel free to determine yourself, should the PCs not defeat Karzoug on their first visit to the Eye of Avarice), Karzoug can step into the *runewell* and emerge in area X16 of the Pinnacle of Avarice, once again free to spread his evil across the world. The surrounding platform is 140 feet above the fires below.

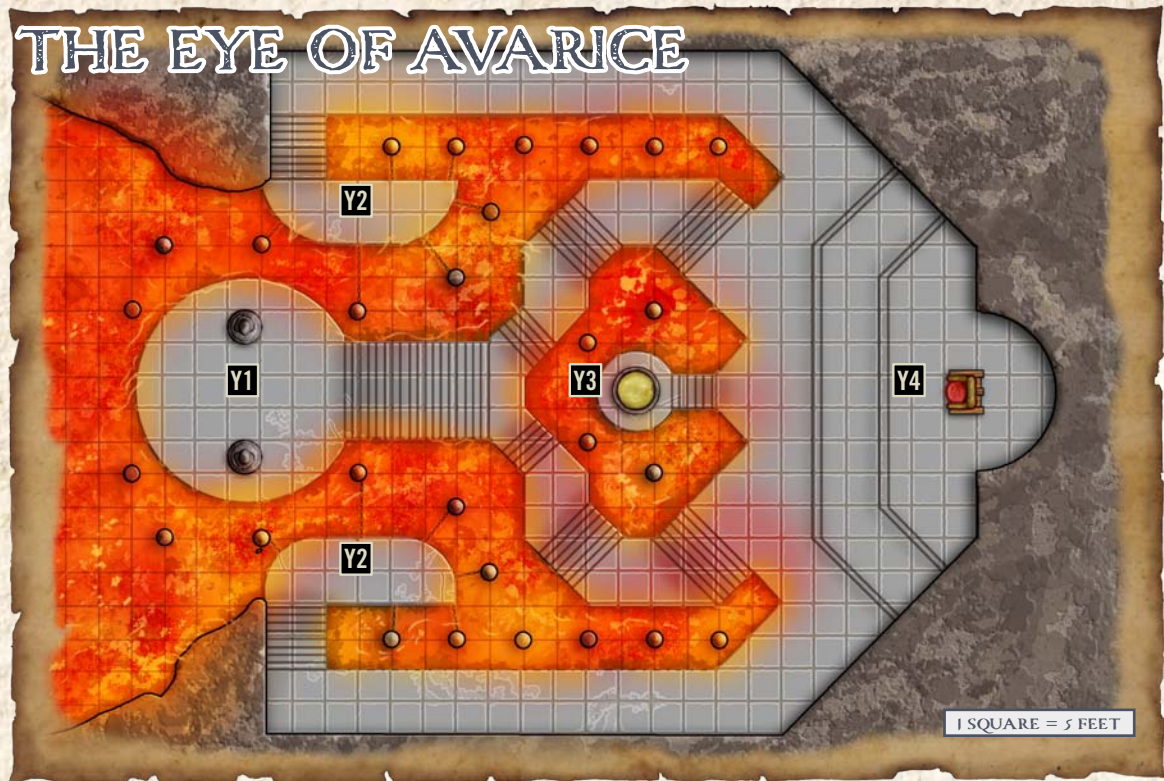
**Y4 KARZOUG'S THRONE:** The walls surrounding this extravagant throne are decorated with countless books and workspaces. Although Karzoug spent the bulk of the last 10,000 years in stasis, he's been able to spend some time reading and studying the tomes here since Mokmurian woke him from his slumber. An investigation of these tomes reveals a wide selection of books across multiple topics—all containing information about the world's history since Earthfall. These books have been the primary way in which Karzoug has prepared himself to emerge into a new world he has been apart from for so long. This level is 130 feet above the fires below.

## THE FINAL BATTLE (CR 22)

**CREATURES:** For most of the previous 10,000 years, Karzoug had been seated upon his throne in a unique form of temporal stasis that kept the wizard trapped within the *runewell* itself without a body at all. When Mokmurian came to this place, Karzoug was able to



# THE EYE OF AVARICE



reach out and, through sheer force of will augmented by thousands of years of pent-up magic, made the stone giant wizard into his puppet. Since then, the souls of those properly anointed with the Sihedron and steeped in greed have been suffusing the *runewell* at the heart of this realm, each one allowing Karzoug's physical body to manifest more and more. At first, only his vague ghostly outline could appear, and for only a few moments at a time, but now that the *runewell* is full, Karzoug has truly returned to flesh and blood—at least, as long as he remains within the Eye of Avarice.

That Karzoug can manifest images of himself in places in the Pinnacle of Avarice shows how close he is to emerging back into the Material Plane. He has enough souls stored (particularly after the PCs went on a rampage against the stone giants of Jorgenfist), yet still they take time to process and be fully “digested” by the *runewell*. Until the last soul is consumed, the *runewell* isn't fully charged and Karzoug cannot physically leave this realm. How long that takes is left to you—if you want to put this adventure on a timer, you can set the event of Karzoug's release for a specific time (although to do so most effectively, you'll need to somehow let your PCs know when the timer is up). A better choice might be to tie the event of his release to the point at which the PCs first enter this realm. If the PCs are forced to flee (via *plane shift* or *gate*, most likely), it won't be much longer before the runelord emerges from the Eye of Avarice—2 days is a suggestion, although you can certainly adjust this length as you wish.

Karzoug is a powerful foe, and the PCs should be at the top of their game when they confront him. In addition, he is not alone in the Eye of Avarice—with the aid of a blue dragon, two wardens of thunder, and a rune giant, this final battle should test the mettle of the PCs in every way. Note that while the rune giant and the dragon are loyal to Karzoug, the wardens of thunder are not—they are under the effects of a *dominate person* spell cast by the rune giant, and if they can be freed from this effect, the wardens of thunder immediately join with the PCs to fight Karzoug.

If the PCs time their assault well, they can strike against Karzoug after he's depleted some of his magic and perhaps suffers from negative levels gained from the PCs' defeat of his projected images in the Eye of Avarice. The use of *dominant weapons* also grants the PCs an edge. Yet their greatest advantage is the fact that, for now, Karzoug has nowhere to go. The PCs can prepare for their attack on him, only bringing the fight when they feel they are ready. Karzoug cannot easily replace defeated foes—replacements can only be brought in at the rate of one per day.

Slaying Karzoug is the best way to defeat the runelord. A spell like *imprisonment* or *temporal stasis* likely only delays the inevitable, but would certainly count as a victory as far as this campaign is concerned. Yet there is another way to defeat Karzoug—destroying the *soul lens* mounted over the *runewell*. Destroying this device traps the runelord inside this realm forever without the ability to return to the Material Plane. Destroying the *soul lens*, alas, is not much easier than simply killing





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MAP NINE: THE EYE OF AVARICE

Karzoug. As a minor artifact, a *mage's disjunction* has a chance to destroy it, of course, but otherwise only a *dominant weapon* has any hope of damaging the artifact. Damage from any other source is ignored by the *soul lens*, and even against *dominant weapons* it retains its hardness 20. Of course, Karzoug immediately moves to destroy anyone who attempts to harm the *soul lens*. If the *soul lens* is destroyed, Karzoug roars in frustration and rage. In that case, he is trapped forever inside the Eye of Avarice, but as long as the PCs remain in here with him, he does his best to destroy them.

**KARZOUG THE CLAIMER**

XP	CR	HP
409,600	21	382

Male Azlanti human transmuter 20  
NE Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +7; **Senses** *arcane sight*, darkvision 60 ft., *see invisibility*; Perception +22

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 37, touch 22, flat-footed 30 (+6 armor, +5 deflection, +7 Dex, +5 natural, +4 shield) **hp** 382 (20d6+310); fast healing 10

**Fort** +20, **Ref** +18, **Will** +19; +8 vs. mind affecting

**Defensive Abilities** *freedom of movement*; **Immune** disease, confusion effects, *feeblemind*; **SR** 24

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

**Melee** *Karzoug's burning glaive* +22/+17 (1d10+15/×3 plus 1d6 fire) or *talons of leng* +20/+15 (1d4+13/×3)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 20th; concentration +33)

At will—change shape (*beast shape III/elemental body II*, 20 rounds/day)

16/day—telekinetic fist (1d4+10 bludgeoning)

**Spells Prepared** (CL 20th; concentration +33)

9th—quickened *baleful polymorph* (DC 30), *crushing hand*, *meteor swarm* (DC 32), *time stop* (2), *wail of the banshee* (DC 33), *wish* (2)

8th—quickened *dimension door* (2), *horrid wilting* (DC 32), *maze*, *mind blank*, *polymorph any object* (DC 33), *prismatic wall* (DC 31), *temporal stasis* (DC 33, 2)

7th—*finger of death* (DC 31), *forcecage* (DC 30), quickened *haste*, quickened *lightning bolt* (DC 26), *limited wish* (2), *reverse gravity* (2), *spell turning*

6th—*disintegrate* (DC 31, 2), *flesh to stone* (DC 31), *globe of invulnerability*, *greater dispel magic*, *repulsion* (DC 29), quickened *resist energy*, *sign of wrath* (DC 29), *true seeing*

5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 30), *cloudkill*, *cone of cold* (DC 28), quickened *magic missile* (2), quickened *shield*, *telekinesis* (DC 30, 2), *wall of force*

4th—*bestow curse* (DC 28), *black tentacles*, *enervation* (2), *ice storm* (2), *mass reduce person* (DC 29, 2), *screaming*, *solid fog*

3rd—*blink*, *dispel magic*, *fireball* (DC 26), *keen edge*, *greater magic weapon*, *protection from energy*, *slow* (DC 28, 2), *stinking cloud* (DC 27), *vampiric touch*

2nd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 26), *false life*, *glitterdust* (DC 26), *protection from arrows*, *pyrotechnics* (DC 27, 2), *resist energy*, *scorching ray* (2), *shatter* (DC 25)

1st—*alarm*, *enlarge person*, *expeditious retreat*, *grease* (DC 25), *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 25, 4), *reduce person* (DC 26, 2)

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *flare* (DC 23), *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 24)

**Thassilonian Specialization** transmutation; **Opposition Schools** enchantment, illusion

**TACTICS**

**Before Combat** Karzoug casts *mind blank* and *false life* at the start of every day.

**During Combat** Karzoug starts combat seated upon his immense throne, and strives to remain out of melee as long as possible. On the first round of combat, he casts *meteor swarm* on the party, then uses his *rod of greater quicken metamagic* to cast *time stop* as a quickened spell. During the 1d4+1 rounds he gains, he casts spells like *prismatic wall*, *wall of force*, and *cloudkill* among the PCs to disrupt their tactics, and casts defensive spells on himself like *spell turning*, *true seeing*, and



KARZOUG



## ROUND-BY-ROUND TACTICS

This final battle against Runelord Karzoug and his minions is one of the most complex in the entire campaign. The following round-by-round notes can help you track the actions and tactics used by the denizens of the Eye of Avarice—of course, PC actions can quickly disrupt these tactics, so be ready to make adjustments as needed as the battle plays out!

<b>ROUND 1:</b>	Karzoug casts <i>meteor swarm</i> and quickened <i>time stop</i> . The blue dragon begins the fight next to Karzoug's throne, and flies out toward the PCs to breathe lightning on them. The rune giant begins between the <i>runewell</i> and the throne—he closes the distance to the PCs and casts <i>true seeing</i> . A warden of thunder stands atop each of the balconies at area Y2—each of them casts <i>chain lightning</i> .
<b>ROUND 2:</b>	Karzoug casts <i>horrid wilting</i> and a second quickened <i>time stop</i> spell. The blue dragon flies back to Karzoug's side and casts <i>mage armor</i> . The rune giant attempts to cast <i>dominate person</i> on one of the party's heavily armored characters or rogues, ordering a successfully dominated PC to turn on his allies and fight them. The wardens of thunder fire arrows and use <i>call lightning</i> for the rest of the battle.
<b>ROUND 3:</b>	Karzoug casts quickened <i>haste</i> and <i>finger of death</i> . The rune giant uses spark shower on the largest concentration of PCs he can. The blue dragon casts <i>shield</i> .
<b>REMAINDER OF COMBAT:</b>	Karzoug continues casting offensive spells, resorting to his glaive and talons as a last resort. The rune giant enters melee combat. The blue dragon makes physical attacks and breathes lightning as he can.

*globe of invulnerability*. He'll also use his *wand of stoneskin* on himself during this time. He'll repeat this tactic on the second round (pairing a quickened *time stop* with *horrid wilting* this time) to finish casting any spells he didn't get a chance to cast the first time. On following rounds, Karzoug hits the PCs with area-affecting spells like *wail of the banshee* and *finger of death*, saving spells like *temporal stasis* and *maze* to use against anyone who seems to be particularly dangerous. Karzoug's glaive takes actions on its own as well, unleashing *fireballs* on non-spellcasters and curing Karzoug of wounds whenever he drops below 220 hit points. If it comes down to melee, Karzoug releases his glaive to dance as soon as possible, fighting with his talons and using quickened spells like *lightning bolt* and *magic missile* to support his attacks. Whenever he drops below 200 hit points (or otherwise suffers a crippling effect) he casts *wish* to restore himself and his living allies to full health.

**Morale** Karzoug has nowhere to flee to—he fights to the death.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 24, **Dex** 24, **Con** 28, **Int** 36, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 22

**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 39

**Feats** Arcane Strike, Combat Expertise, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Eschew Materials, Greater Spell Focus (transmutation), Inscribe Rune, Martial Weapon Proficiency, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (conjuration, necromancy, transmutation), Toughness

**Skills** Bluff +26, Craft (alchemy) +36, Diplomacy +26, Fly +38, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (arcana, engineering, history, nature, nobility, planes, religion) +36, Perception +22, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +42, Use Magic Device +26

**Languages** Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Auran, Azlanti, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Ignan, Infernal, Necril, Sylvan, Terran, Thassilonian; *tongues*

**SQ** arcane bond (glaive), contingency, exceptional stats, immortal, inherent bonuses, permanent spells, physical enhancement +5 Con

**Combat Gear** *rod of greater quicken metamagic*, *wand of blood money* (33 charges), *wand of dispel magic* (CL 10th, 40 charges), *wand of magic missile* (CL 9th, 24 charges), *wand of stoneskin* (CL 10th, 17 charges); **Other Gear** *Karzoug's burning glaive*, *talons of Leng*, *belt of physical might +6* (Str, Dex), implanted *ioun stones* (3 *crimson spheres*, 12 *emerald ellipsoids*, 3 *onyx rhomboids*, 5 *amber spindles*), *ring of protection +5*, *ring of freedom of movement*, *robes of Xin-Shalast*, *runewell amulet*, *Sihedron tome*, ruby inscribed with the rune of wrath worth 1,000 gp (focus for *sign of wrath*), ruby dust worth 1,500 gp (for *forcecage*), vial of powdered gemstones worth 10,000 gp (for *temporal stasis*), eye ointment worth 500 gp (for *true seeing*), 75,000 gp in diamonds (for *wish* and *limited wish*)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Contingency (Sp)** If Karzoug ever becomes affected by a hostile spell effect that prevents him from acting on his own, that spell effect is targeted by a *greater dispel magic* spell.

**Exceptional Stats (Ex)** Karzoug was destined from birth to become one of the greatest wizards of his age. As a result, his ability scores were generated using 25 points, rather than using the standard 15 point buy used to create most NPCs. Additionally, Karzoug has much more gear than an NPC of his level would normally have. These modifications increase his total CR by +2.

**Immortal (Ex)** Secrets from ancient Thassilon and the realm of Leng have allowed Karzoug to sustain his life indefinitely. Unless slain by violent means, he is immortal. He gains the +3 bonus to his Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores for having lived beyond venerable age, yet retains the youth of a young man and does not gain the penalties to Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution. This immortality also grants Karzoug complete immunity to disease and to all forms of madness (including confusion effects and *feblemind*).





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**Inherent Bonuses (Ex)** Karzoug has used *wish* spells to increase his stats. He has a +5 inherent bonus to his Intelligence, and a +4 inherent bonus to his other five ability scores.

**Permanent Spells (Sp)** Karzoug has made the following spells permanent on himself: *arcane sight*, *darkvision*, *see invisibility*, and *tongues*.

<b>ADULT BLUE DRAGON</b>	<b>XP</b> 25,600	<b>CR</b> 13	<b>HP</b> 184
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hp 184 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 94)

<b>WARDEN OF RUNES</b>	<b>XP</b> 102,400	<b>CR</b> 17	<b>HP</b> 270
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Rune giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 130)

**AC** 38, touch 9, flat-footed 38 (+14 armor, +3 deflection, +15 natural, -4 size)

hp 270

### STATISTICS

**Gear** +5 full plate, *Sihedron Ring*

<b>WARDENS OF THUNDER (2)</b>	<b>XP</b> 38,400 each	<b>CR</b> 14	<b>HP</b> 237 each
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Advanced storm giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 152, 294)

**AC** 37, touch 12, flat-footed 36 (+13 armor, +3 deflection, +1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)

hp 237 each

**Fort** +22, **Ref** +13, **Will** +18

### STATISTICS

**Gear** +4 full plate, *Sihedron ring*

## CONCLUDING THE CAMPAIGN

Once the *soul lens* is destroyed or Karzoug is dealt a fatal blow, the energy of the greedy souls the runelord's mortal form has used to return are unleashed in a blinding flash of light. All creatures in the Eye of Avarice must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude save to avoid being permanently blinded. Yet this blast of soul energy is not completely destructive—the energy immediately heals all damage and cures all debilitating conditions (including death) suffered by any creature in the *runewell*. Only possible blindness caused by the explosion (and, of course, Karzoug's own death) are untouched by this cleansing wave of positive energy. While this effect also restores giants and dragons, the other creatures in the Eye of Avarice immediately surrender upon witnessing the PCs' defeat of their ancient lord.

When the brilliant flash of strange light clears, the air seems to grow thin and cold and the smoky walls of the place vanish. The *runewell* has returned to its place at the base of the Pinnacle of Avarice, and its golden waters quickly freeze—whatever magic the *runewell* might have once contained has been consumed in this final catastrophic turn of events. This event also brings down the occluding field that surrounded the Spires, restoring the order of nature to the region.

The repercussions of Karzoug's defeat are much greater than the destruction of the occluding field and the *runewell's* return to reality—consult Appendix One, “Continuing the Campaign” to determine where things might go from here!