

# PATHFINDER

## ADVENTURE PATH™



SERPENT'S SKULL

SOULS FOR  
SMUGGLER'S  
SHIV

By James Jacobs

# Mwangi Flora

## Unidentified Fungus

This strange, colorless fungus grows with a disturbing tenacity. Foul-smelling and prone to strange ripples and twitching shudders even when not disturbed by hand or breeze, it is as unpleasant to eat as it is to smell or touch or observe. Indeed, consumption of this strange fungus can bring about a most painful and untimely end. Not recommended for cultivation.



## Viper Nettle

This rare plant grows along riverbanks in tropical regions. Its scarcity would, I suspect, only increase were its properties for treating alcohol withdrawal and recovering from sickness more widely known. And the berries are quite delicious to boot. Just take care while harvesting, for the plant's thorns are painful and cause a lingering rash.



# **PATHFINDER**<sup>®</sup> ADVENTURE PATH

## SERPENT'S SKULL

ADVENTURE PATH PART 1 of 6

# SOULS FOR SMUGGLER'S SHIV



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## ADVENTURE PATH™

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# SERPENT'S SKULL



## A TALE OF A FATEFUL TRIP

**S**tarting up a new campaign is exciting. But it can also be overly complicated by a lot of different factors—not the least of which is the age-old question of “How do all the PCs get together and go on their adventure?” We’ve answered this question several different ways over the years. We’ve had the PCs band together to seek revenge on a common enemy from their childhood. We’ve had them all be hired as caravan guards. We’ve had them be recruited as bodyguards or underground insurgents. We’ve even had them start as childhood friends in a small coastal town.

This time around, as we begin our seventh Pathfinder Adventure Path, we’re stranding them on a tropical island.

The beauty of 1st-level adventures is that the PCs are brand new; what happens before isn’t really part of game play, so you as the GM have more freedom than at any

other time to make assumptions about player character actions, and you can put them in difficult situations, like starting them in prison, or as gladiators—or, as it turns out, stranded on a hostile island.

As a storytelling element, setting up the PCs in situations like these can create a refreshing change from the “you all meet at the tavern” cliché. But you should keep something in mind—some players might resent having their characters placed in a dangerous situation at the very start of the campaign. “Souls for Smuggler’s Shiv” is constructed so that the PCs and their gear (including animal companions, familiars, spellbooks, and similar accessories) remain available to them from the start. But if you think that your players might appreciate a greater challenge, feel free to have them begin with even fewer



items—perhaps a small list of tools, weapons, and armor that have washed up on shore with them. This option makes the start of the adventure even more dangerous and tense, as the PCs must scavenge not only for food but for everything else in order to survive. You know your players better than we do, though. Don't start the adventure with such a dramatic opening if you don't think your players will enjoy the challenge!

## REPLACEMENT CHARACTERS

Another complication of running an adventure in which the PCs are isolated from civilization is what to do in the event of a character's death. If a PC dies, you don't want to force that player to wait for the rest of the party to get rescued before you allow him or her to roll up a new character and join the group, but at the same time, there's not a lot of opportunity for new characters to join up with the PCs during this adventure.

You can, of course, allow a player to assume control of one of the five NPC castaways. In this case, it's best just to let the PC build his own version of the NPC he chooses so he can make his new character how he wants—you don't want to force the PC to have to play the character as statted up later in this book, since that's hardly fun for the player.

Most players will likely want to build their own replacement character from scratch, in which case allowing them to run one of the NPC castaways isn't going to work. In this case, a better solution would be to simply have the new PC be a more recent shipwreck victim. The sight of what could be a rescue ship crashing on a reef and sinking can also serve to help drive home the desperate situation the PCs are in, while at the same time giving the new PC a perfect way to join the fun. If you instead allow the player to build a replacement PC who's been stranded on the Shiv for some time, you can use this opportunity to point the party at some new encounter sites as you wish.

## THE REAL-WORLD MONEY PIT

And now I'd like to talk, briefly, about one of the specific encounters awaiting the PCs on Smuggler's Shiv—area K, the Treasure Pit. This encounter is inspired by the infamous Money Pit found on Oak Island, Nova Scotia. I first heard the story of the Money Pit on an old TV show called *In Search Of...* (itself a formative bit of my childhood entertainment), and I've been intrigued by the pit's history and mystery ever since. Of course, this real-world version wasn't nearly as dangerous (there were far fewer undead guardians involved—although the Money Pit has claimed its share of lives over the many years people have tried to uncover its secrets), but it was quite a bit more complex and devious in its construction. Check it out at an Internet near you if you're interested in learning more!

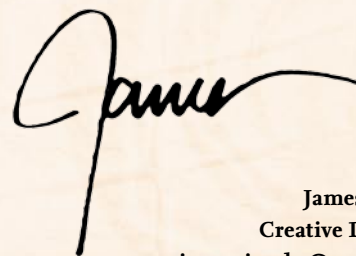
## ON THE COVER

Long-time readers of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* know that the characters who appear on the cover have traditionally been either iconic characters or important NPCs to be found in the adventure. We're changing that up a bit for *Serpent's Skull*—the characters who'll be appearing on these covers are not necessarily going to be appearing in that volume, but are important to the campaign overall. But we know you're curious—so these sidebars will reveal the mystery and put a name to the figure.

This volume's cover character is Kassata Lewynn, a woman destined to lead one of several expeditions to the lost city of Saventh-Yhi in direct competition with the PCs. She may remain a rival, but if the PCs make the right choices, Captain Lewynn could well become an ally in the adventures to come.

As for the *scroll of raise dead* in the pit... yeah, I know it's a really high-priced item to give out to low-level PCs, but I'm pretty sure that no self-respecting group will hold on to it long enough to sell it off. Giving the PCs access to something like this to help fix an unexpected death in the ranks is, in my opinion, a good thing—Adventure Paths are stronger if the characters involved remain alive longer. The scroll also gives the PCs a chance to bring back a dead NPC to learn more about what caused them to become stranded on the Shiv, and perhaps gain a loyal new ally in the form of a resurrected first mate or even captain. And when you get right down to it, giving out a surprisingly expensive bit of treasure to the PCs can really be fun now and then—especially when they've gone through so much to get the treasure in the first place.

And besides, in the hands of a low-level spellcaster, there's a good chance for a mishap—if a PC is up to a challenge, perhaps a miscast *raise dead* causes one of the lingering spirits that haunt the shores of Smuggler's Shiv to hitch a ride back into that character's body...



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# SERPENT'S SKULL



## SOULS FOR SMUGGLER'S SHIV

THEY SAY THE DEAD WALK ON SMUGGLER'S SHIV, AND THAT THOSE WHO HAVE YET TO DIE DINE ON THE FLESH OF THEIR KIN. THEY SAY THAT THE VERY PLANTS AND ANIMALS OF THE ISLAND THIRST FOR BLOOD. AND THEY SAY THAT THOSE WHO SAIL TOO CLOSE TO THE ISLAND'S CUTTING EDGE ARE ALREADY DOOMED, EVEN BEFORE THEIR SHIPS ARE IMPALED AND SLIP BENEATH THE SHARK-HUNGRY WAVES. THE ISLAND ITSELF IS A GRAVE TO ALL MANNER OF FOLK—PIRATE AND SOLDIER, MERCHANT AND SMUGGLER ALIKE. BY DAY, ONE WHO APPROACHES TOO CLOSELY CAN HEAR THEIR SCREAMS FROM THE GREEN THAT CROWNS THE ISLE, AND BY NIGHT ONE CAN WATCH THE WITCLIGHTS DANCE ON ITS SHORE, SAID TO BE GLOWING CANNIBAL GHOSTS EAGER TO LURE NEW MEALS TO THEIR SHORE.

THEY SAY ALL THIS AND MORE ABOUT SMUGGLER'S SHIV.

I CAN THINK OF NO BETTER PLACE TO HIDE MY TREASURE.

—FINAL RECORDED WORDS OF CAPTAIN LORTCH QUELLIG





## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

While the rise of the serpent empire is the primary plotline of the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path, it begins with a much more personal challenge for the PCs—a shipwreck upon the island of Smuggler's Shiv.

The Sargavan merchant vessel *Jenivere* was one of many that make the yearly voyage along the western coasts of Avistan and northern Garund. Its trade route ran from the Sargavan capital city of Eleder all the way up to Magnimar in Varisia, and then back south again. The trip was 3,400 miles long and took just over a hundred days one way. Yet despite its length and sometimes dangerous peril, it was also a trip filled with opportunity for profit. The *Jenivere's* ports of call included (from north to south) Magnimar, Kintargo, Pezzack, Corentyn, Ilizmagorti, Ollo, Quent, Port Peril, Bloodcove, Senghor, and finally Eleder—it was at these cities that the PCs boarded the ship.

One of the *Jenivere's* passengers appeared to be a plain-looking Varisian scholar named Ieana. Although friendly enough, Ieana mostly kept to herself, and whispers among the crew variously claimed that she was really a Chelish agent, the actual owner of the *Jenivere*, or even Captain Alizandru Kovack's secret lover. None of these were true, but Ieana is indeed far more than she appeared—she is in fact a disguised serpentfolk cleric of Ydersius named Yarzoth.

Some time ago, while exploring the dungeons below the ruined serpentfolk fortress of Viperwall in Varisia, Yarzoth discovered something shocking. According to her discovery, an ancient serpentfolk temple hidden on Smuggler's Shiv contains a clue to the location of a legendary city named Saventh-Yhi—the same city in which her deity was defeated eons ago. Eager to learn more and perhaps discover the legendary ruined city (and maybe even relics left behind by her god's ancient decapitation), Yarzoth killed a Varisian scholar, assumed her identity via *disguise self*, and bought passage on the *Jenivere*.

As the voyage progressed, Yarzoth kept to herself and maintained her disguise. Her talent at deception and her periodic and subtle use of *suggestion* on the ship's captain and crew ensured that no one on board suspected the actual truth. As the *Jenivere* began the final stage of her journey across Desperation Bay, Yarzoth made her move. She used *dominate person* to enthrall Captain Kovack and thus ensured that the ship's course veered slightly off its intended route, sending it many miles offcourse into waters known for their dangerous currents, piracy, monsters, and worse. The *Jenivere* was now on a collision course with the notorious island known as Smuggler's Shiv.

With the crew growing increasingly suspicious of the unusual course, Yarzoth knew she had to take drastic action if she was going to reach Smuggler's Shiv before a mutiny

## Advancement Track

Characters should be 1st level when they begin "Souls for Smuggler's Shiv." By the time they are ready to explore the interior of Smuggler's Shiv and confront the Thrunefang cannibals, the PCs should be 2nd level. They should be 3rd level when they are preparing to enter the Azlanti temple, and should finish the adventure at 4th level.

occurred. So, the night before the ship's fateful encounter with the island's northern shore, she slipped into the ship's galley, murdered the cook, and used multiple vials of oil of taggit to poison the evening's meal (excluding the already-dominated captain and the first mate Alton Devers, whom she dominated just before she murdered the cook). After hiding the cook's body and disguising herself as him, she saw to the delivery of the poisoned meal to passengers and crew. Yet soon thereafter, with the majority of the ship (including the PCs) unconscious from the poisoning, Yarzoth's plans finally began to unravel.

First, with so many of the ship's crew unable to aid in manning the ship, the *Jenivere* was quickly snatched up by the notorious currents. Held fast in these currents and hurtling for the sharp rocks of the isle's northern shore, the first mate accomplished something the captain could not—he managed to overcome the domination (by succeeding on a new saving throw when ordered by the captain to aid in the approach to the dangerous shore) and confronted the captain, accusing him of madness and demanding that he turn away from his disastrous course. Captain Kovack didn't take well to the insubordination and, with some mental urging from Yarzoth, attacked Alton. The resulting battle was furious, but before the captain could kill his mate, the *Jenivere* struck Smuggler's Shiv. The ship lurched as it impaled itself and split in half upon the sharp rocks, sending both Captain Kovack and Yarzoth plummeting into the surf.

Still on board the doomed ship, the wounded first mate's concern shifted to the safety of the ship's passengers. The ship's crew, being housed on a lower deck, had drowned in the wreck, but her passengers yet lived. With a heroic effort, he managed to drag the passengers (the PCs plus five others) into the *Jenivere's* lifeboat and made several trips to a nearby beach to offload the survivors. Alton then returned to the ship to make a last attempt to gather supplies, but here his luck finally ran out, for a horrific beast—a sea scorpion—had been washed onto the deck. The creature stung him several times, and although Alton



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## What Happened to Yarzoth?

After being thrown from the *Jenivere* during the wreck, Yarzoth didn't want to abandon Captain Kovack, so they both drank one of her *potions of water breathing* so they could make good their escape. The ocean current swept them up, and they finally made landfall along the cliffs to the east, at area F. They are well on their way into the island's interior by the time the PCs wake and the adventure begins.

managed to take shelter in a small supply room, he soon perished from the venom, leaving the PCs and a few others alone on Desperation Bay's most notorious shore.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The *Serpent's Skull* Adventure Path begins with the PCs being shipwrecked on an inhospitable island, the legendary Smuggler's Shiv. Yet before you begin, you should take a moment to let the PCs introduce themselves to each other in the framework of a long ship voyage. If your players are using the *Serpent's Skull Player's Guide* (available as a free PDF download from [paizo.com](http://paizo.com)), they should be expecting this, for that guide encourages PCs to pick the cities at which they boarded the merchant trader *Jenivere* and introduces them to their fellow passengers and the ship's crew. Although the *Serpent's Skull Player's Guide* doesn't spoil the fact that the first adventure begins just after the *Jenivere's* wreck, you should remind your players that this Adventure Path is not a nautical-themed campaign, and that the *Jenivere* itself won't have a major role to play in it. It's all about managing expectations—you don't want a player creating a character whose goal is to own his own ship and become a pirate when the campaign will never give the player that opportunity. The *Serpent's Skull Player's Guide* does its best to manage these expectations, but you should still guide character creation as appropriate for this campaign.

After the PCs wake on the shores of Smuggler's Shiv, they must contend with carnivorous plants, predatory monsters, vengeful undead, and aggressive cannibals as they scavenge for food and water and hope for rescue. Complicating the situation is the eventual realization that they've been placed in this situation through the design of one of the ship's own passengers—a mysterious Varisian scholar named Ieana who went missing during the ship's wreck just offshore of Smuggler's Shiv.

As the days go by, the strange mysteries and dangers of Smuggler's Shiv make it abundantly clear that the castaways are not welcome on this hostile island—and if

the PCs are to survive long enough to be rescued or to repair their crippled ship, they must take the offensive and stand against the restless spirits and treacherous denizens of the island. The PCs are eventually forced into a final confrontation with the island's cannibals, only to discover that below the cannibals' camp lies an ancient serpentfolk temple to Ydersius. This temple contains clues leading to a hidden Azlanti temple to Zura elsewhere on the island. The PCs use these clues to find the hidden temple, only to learn that the traitorous Ieana, in fact a disguised serpentfolk named Yarzoth, has beaten them to the ruins and will stop at nothing to ensure that only she escapes Smuggler's Shiv alive with the temple's astonishing secret—the way to legendary Saventh-Yhi, a fabled city said to be hidden somewhere in the depths of the Mwangi Expanse.

## PART ONE: SHIPWRECKED ON THE SHIV

The *Serpent's Skull Player's Guide* introduces the crew and passengers of the Sargavan merchant trader *Jenivere*. Make sure your players have read this guide. If they have not, you should give them some details of their journey, and introduce them to the major NPCs on the voyage, including Captain Alizandru Kovack, First Mate Alton Devers, and one of the ship's passengers, the mysterious Varisian scholar Ieana. The ship's other five passengers, Aerys Mavato, Gelik Aberwhinge, Ishirou, Jask Derindi, and Sasha Nevah, are described in detail on pages 58–63. All of these NPCs are destined to play further roles in this adventure, so the PCs should have at least passing familiarity with them.

Once the players have introduced their characters to each other (likely in the context of their shared voyage aboard the *Jenivere*), inform them that they're sitting down in the ship's galley to eat dinner... then have them all make Fortitude saving throws. These saving throws aren't to determine if they succumb to the poisoned meal the "cook" is feeding them (this adventure assumes they all fail their saves, and if you don't reveal why they're saving or what the "DC" is, the PCs will never know the difference anyway), but to determine what order they'll wake up on the beach the next day.

## FEAST ON THE BEACH (CR 1)

As the campaign begins, the PCs lie along a tropical beach at location A on the map of Smuggler's Shiv. The PCs lie sprawled on the beach along with the bodies of five other people—these are the PCs' fellow castaways, and they'll remain unconscious from the poison for the duration of this encounter. It is dawn, the morning after the *Jenivere's* wreck late the previous night.



Describe to the PC who got the highest result on his Fortitude save that everything is dark and silent. Then, sensation begins to creep back in—the feel of sand below and of something wet lapping at his feet, the sound of ocean waves washing against a beach, and a heavy pressure over his legs. Then, suddenly, he feels a searing pain in one foot.

**Creatures:** It's been several hours since the first mate, Alton, left the PCs on the beach and became trapped in the wreck of the *Jenivere*. With the sun's rising came the first of the scavengers—several tan tide-pool denizens that look like a cross between a lobster and a scorpion—ochre eurypterids, also known as sea scorpions. Three of the hungry creatures have clambered out of the surf to pick at the castaways—the pain felt by the first PC to waken was an experimental nip on the foot by one of the braver eurypterids. This attack deals 1 point of damage to that PC and expertly finishes the job of waking him.

As soon as the PC awakens, have him and the eurypterids roll initiative. As he does so, the PC feels a wash of nausea and disorientation as his mind reels from the aftereffects of consuming so many doses of oil of taggit combined with the turmoil of the rescue and the effects of exposure to the elements. All of the PCs are sickened upon waking, and remain so until this initial encounter is over. Each round of combat, the PCs awaken naturally at the rate of one per round, in descending order of their Fortitude saves.

The sea scorpions are normally skittish, and they prefer to clamber and chew on unconscious foes rather than those who are awake and angry, but hunger and the scent of blood is enough to drive them to attack. A PC who takes damage immediately awakens regardless of his initial Fortitude save and should roll initiative at once.

Although the PCs are unarmed when they wake, you can assume that they are wearing armor as appropriate. The rest of their gear lies stacked haphazardly in a pile 10 feet away from the first PC to awaken—some of it is wet but none of it is damaged. It's a standard action to retrieve any single weapon or other piece of gear from the pile, but doing so provokes an attack of opportunity.

**OCHRE EURYPTERIDS (3)****CR 1/3****XP 135 each****hp 4 each** (see page 78)**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Each round, select a random unconscious PC or NPC for one of the three eurypterids to attack—they automatically inflict 1 point of damage with their claws against unconscious targets but do not sting. If a eurypterid is struck for damage, it abandons this tactic and focuses its attacks (sting and all) on the mobile foe.

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

**Fellow Castaways**

The PCs aren't the only survivors of the *Jenivere*'s wreck—the ship's doomed first mate also rescued five other castaways: Aerys, Gelik, Ishirou, Jask, and Sasha. These fellow castaways are presented on pages 58–63 of this book. If you need to, you can use these NPCs to help guide the PCs' progress, either to trigger encounters if things are getting slow, or, if they haven't been treated well, as competitors who attempt to seize leadership roles.

One thing that the castaways are initially unwilling to do, though, is to accompany the PCs on their adventures. This is by design—the adventure should be focused on the PCs, after all, not the NPCs. As the PCs work to earn the other castaways' trust, they'll become more willing to accompany the PCs on dangerous missions, but as the adventure begins, these surviving NPCs simply don't trust the PCs (or each other, for that matter). It's up to you (and how your players treat these NPCs) when and if the castaways join the PCs on their adventures.

**TAKING STOCK**

Once the hungry sea scorpions are defeated and the PCs are awake, they can take stock of their surroundings. Answers to several likely initial questions the players might have are listed below.

**“What happened?”** Each PC's last clear memory is of sitting down to dinner aboard the *Jenivere*. After that, there's nothing but a confusing jumble of images, remembered as if in a dream—feelings of nausea, panic, fear, and drowning. The logical conclusion is that the *Jenivere* sank or wrecked, and the PCs washed up on the shore—although they're not particularly wet, and someone stacked their gear in a pile for them. A DC 15 Survival check made to examine the beach for tracks is enough to find evidence of a set of humanoid footprints leading to and from the water along with a fair number of furrows leading up to where the PCs woke, suggesting that someone dragged them up from the water's edge.

**“Where is the *Jenivere*?”** It should only take a few moments of scanning the northern vista to spot a familiar-looking ship. This is the *Jenivere*, listing to port, partially submerged, and with her hull a gaping ruin as she leans against a jagged cliff side among several sharp rocks. The *Jenivere*'s wreck is detailed in area B.

**“Why do I feel sick?”** While exposure to the elements and the ordeal of surviving a shipwreck can account for some of the sickness the PCs are suffering, a DC 15 Heal



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check confirms that they're also suffering the aftereffects of being poisoned. Poisoning also explains why they have no memories of the last several hours as well. Fortunately, the sickness they feel passes quickly, and within a few minutes of awakening, each PC loses the sickened condition he endured upon first waking on the beach.

**"Who are these other people?"** The five NPCs who remain unconscious during the initial fight against the sea scorpions begin waking soon after the fight ends—if the PCs attempt to administer aid, the NPCs wake in the order they're tended to (no Heal check is necessary). These are the PCs' fellow passengers. One other passenger, the Varisian scholar Ieana, is missing, as are all of the ship's crew.

## SETTING UP CAMP

While setting up a camp isn't required, the benefits of having a campsite should be compelling. If no player brings up the topic within a few hours of their awakening, you can have the PCs and their NPC companions make DC 12 Survival checks—any success is enough to realize that without a campsite, resting characters will be much more exposed to the elements, wildlife, bugs, and other dangerous elements on the isle. Rules for building a camp and maintaining its supplies and defense can be found on pages 57–58 of this book.

## ABOUT THE SHIV

When the PCs wake on the beach, they'll initially have no idea where they are. A few minutes of examination of the sky, the weather, the surrounding scenery, and some common-sense deductions about what the PCs knew of their course, followed by a DC 12 Knowledge (geography) or Profession (sailor) check, is enough to establish that they've likely wrecked upon Smuggler's Shiv. If none of the PCs can attempt this check, one of their fellow castaways might be able to provide the information. Otherwise, they can learn where they are by consulting the sea charts and captain's log awaiting discovery in the wreck of the *Jenivere*, or by interrogating any of the island's other intelligent inhabitants.

Once the PCs realize where they are, they can attempt a Knowledge (geography, history, or local) or Profession (sailor) check to learn more about Smuggler's Shiv, drawing upon their memories of rumors, tall tales, and written reports to fill out their lore. A check reveals all knowledge for any DC result of equal or lower value as shown on the Smuggler's Shiv Lore table. You should give each PC only one check to learn what he knows—at later points in the adventure, the PCs will likely find NPCs or resources that can reveal more about the island.

## SETTING UP THE CLIMAX

The climax of "Souls for Smuggler's Shiv" consists of the exploration of an ancient temple of Zura (see Part Four) and

the discovery of the route to the lost city of Saventh-Yhi within (see area Z8). Yet the PCs have no way of knowing that the most important clue to the remainder of the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path lies in this ancient temple under Red Mountain. Unless the PCs stumble upon this area or seek it out because of curiosity instilled by other clues they've uncovered, you'll need to lure them to the temple using one of several methods.

**Revenge:** As the PCs learn that Ieana was responsible for their wreck upon Smuggler's Shiv, they may wish to track her down and exact revenge—or at the very least, find out why she did what she did. Captain Alizandru Kovack's confession (see area V2o) can spur the PCs into following in her footsteps, but if the PCs manage to capture and successfully interrogate any of the Thrunefang cannibals, they can perhaps learn from them that Ieana visited them for a time, that she entered the Caves of the Mother, and that when she emerged, she immediately set out for Red Mountain.

**Rescue:** If the cannibals capture any of the NPCs, they may well decide that it's time to offer another sacrifice to the Red Mountain Devil. Instead of eating their prisoner, the cannibals march up to Red Mountain (see area X) to sacrifice the prisoner, and in order to rescue this prisoner, the PCs must travel to the site as well, at which point a conflict with the winged chupacabra could lead them to the Tide Stone.

**Special Request:** You can even have one of the friendly NPCs on the island, such as Pezock (see area L) or Aycenia (see area U) ask the PCs to investigate the region around Red Mountain. Perhaps Pezock had strange dreams about the temple, or maybe Aycenia can sense that the epicenter of the "wrongness" on Smuggler's Shiv is located there.

**Return to Smuggler's Shiv:** Finally, if the PCs leave Smuggler's Shiv before they discover the temple of Zura, they may well be hired by one of the factions seeking the location of Saventh-Yhi to return to the isle and seek out the temple. This variant could have the PCs racing against agents of competing factions to reach the site first. Details on the factions who seek Saventh-Yhi are provided in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #38, "Racing to Ruin."

## PART TWO: EXPLORING THE SHIV

Once the PCs have woken on the beach, defeated the hungry eurypterids, and realized what sort of situation they're in, the development of the adventure's storyline falls squarely on their shoulders. With the exception of the five NPC castaways, who each having a personal quest for the PCs to learn (see pages 58–63), no one on Smuggler's Shiv will be giving the PCs direction. What they do on the island is up to them.



## Smuggler's Shiv Lore

DC	Lore
10	Smuggler's Shiv is a notorious island north of Eleder. It's not shown on most maps, but is rightfully feared by those who ply the waters of Desperation Bay. The island is named not only for the knife-like shape of its coastline, but for its uncanny habit of wrecking ships that draw too near—mostly smugglers eager to avoid detection by Sargava's navy.
13	It's commonly believed that the shores of Smuggler's Shiv are haunted by the ghosts and ghouls of the sailors who have died on the jagged rocks and reefs surrounding the island. These rumors are supported by reports of several failed attempts to establish long-lasting colonies on the remote island.
16	When Sargava was first settled, Chelish engineers erected a lighthouse on the Shiv's southwest shore. The light was intended to warn approaching ships of the dangerous waters and, eventually, was to have been the first building in a small colony. The light and all plans for colonization were abandoned just before completion amid rumors of curses, haunts, and cannibalism.
20	Rumors hold that a group of shipwrecked Chelish soldiers, survivors of an attempted Thrune invasion of Sargava some 70 years ago, were stranded on the island. The rumors claim that they degenerated into a cannibalistic society, and that their descendants scour the isle's shores for shipwreck victims to add to their meals.

Of course, the first and foremost thing likely to be on everyone's mind is how they can get rescued from the island or otherwise escape to the mainland. The PCs are brand new characters, and since they lack access to powerful magic like *teleport* or *sending*, they'll need to find another method to escape the island. A likely first place for them to look for such an escape is the nearby wreck of the *Jenivere*, beckoning them from the rocks near the beach on which they've awakened. Certainly, food, fresh water, and supplies can be scavenged from the wreck even if the ship itself can't be salvaged or repaired—likewise, sea charts and navigation tools on the wreck can help the PCs figure out where they are and how they might escape. If no PC considers this option, one of the other castaways (likely Ishirou or Aerys) mentions that investigating the wreck would be a good idea.

A further problem facing the PCs may well be the basic needs of food, water, and shelter. Pages 57–58 of this book present rules and advice on how to survive on the Shiv—if the PCs ignore these needs for long, they'll find that heat exhaustion, disease, and starvation may well put the dangers presented by cannibals and wild animals to shame. If one of the PCs can cast spells like *goodberry*, *endure elements*, or *create water*, some of these problems will be alleviated, of course. Note that while one of their fellow castaways, Jask Derindi, is a cleric and could, hypothetically, cast some of these spells, he'll be unable to cast many spells at all until he's released from his manacles and regains his holy symbol (see area B).

### SINISTER OMENS

As this adventure progresses, you should take time to foreshadow some of the dangers and perils awaiting the PCs. These sinister omens are minor events that should generally have very little in the way of die rolling or actual

combat, and should serve only to build up the island's sense of menace and to set up some of the more dangerous encounters and menaces that the PCs are destined to face. Feel free to use these mini-encounters whenever you see fit to build upon the island's creepy aura.

**Ghosts in the Surf:** Every night, the waves crashing on the shores of Smuggler's Shiv become infused with an eerie greenish radiance, almost as if the surf were glowing. A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check explains that this eerie occurrence is a natural phenomenon caused by phosphorescent algae and plankton in the water. While this explains part of the eerie manifestation, in truth the shores of Smuggler's Shiv *are* haunted by the spirits of the hundreds of shipwrecked sailors who have drowned before ever reaching shore. Now and then, anyone watching the strangely glowing surf at night can spot a brighter glow churning in the water and often moving just under the surface in directions other than the motion of the surf. A character who intently studies the night surf may actually encounter one of these restless spirits—with a successful DC 20 Perception check (characters with low-light vision gain a +4 bonus on this check), the character catches a brief glimpse of a ghostly humanoid shape thrashing in the water (50% of the time), or of a serenely floating humanoid shape beckoning the viewer closer (the other 50% of the time). In both cases, the shape disappears beneath the waves before the character can reach it.

**Relentless Rain:** Rarely does a day on Smuggler's Shiv pass without a few hours of relentless rainfall. Usually, these sudden downpours occur in the afternoon or evening, bringing an end to the day's heat, but they can occur at any point you wish to inflict a little bit of oppressive weather on the PCs. During a rain shower, Perception checks take a –4 penalty.



# SERPENT'S SKULL

**Strange Dreams:** While the PCs might initially not remember much at all of their missing time between their last meal aboard the *Jenivere* and waking up as eurypterid meals, their subconscious minds certainly do. As this adventure continues, you can have the PCs (one chosen randomly each night) experience strange dreams in which their poison-addled memories allow them to begin piecing together what happened during those missing hours. These dreams, combined with investigations of the *Jenivere's* wreck and other areas on Smuggler's Shiv (such as Yarzoth's Landfall at area F), should allow the PCs to start to piece together much of what happened during the ship's wreck, and more importantly, they should help encourage them to seek out more information about the mysterious Varisian scholar they knew as Ieana.

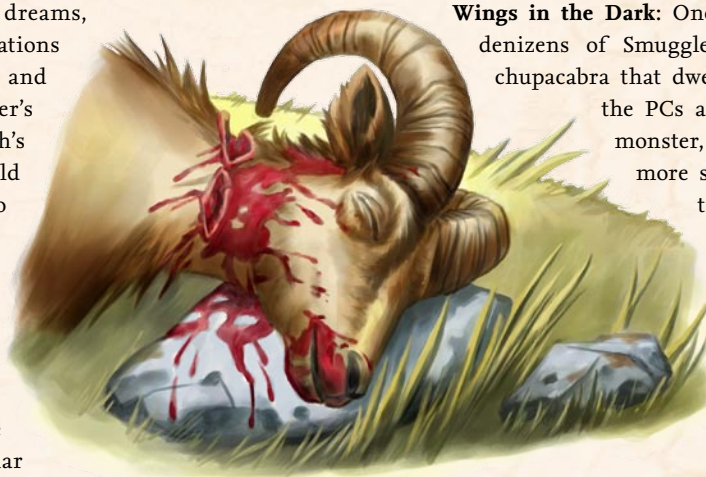
**Nightmare #1:** You're back aboard the *Jenivere*, bent over the railing being seasick. After your latest bout of retching, you slump back and see the rest of the passengers and crew are on deck as well, all of them sick save for the captain and the quiet Varisian scholar Ieana. She whispers in the captain's ear, then gives him a kiss on the cheek. At that point the captain holds up a wooden soup spoon, and you realize that you're holding one as well. Everyone has a spoon. The ship is sinking, and the only way to stop it is to bail out the hold with your spoon! You work feverishly, but the waters keep rushing in. Just before you wake, you can see monstrous things with pincers in the water trying to claw their way into the ship...

**Nightmare #2:** You're sitting down in the galley aboard the *Jenivere*, getting ready for your meal. The ship's cook has given you a steaming bowl of soup, but you drop your spoon. You see that the deck below is covered with seawater up to your ankles, and your dropped spoon has sunk into the water and washed out to sea through a hole. You're forced to lift your delicious bowl of soup to your lips and drink. But something big goes into your mouth as you do so, and you feel a sharp bite on your tongue. You drop the bowl, only to reveal a serpent had hidden in your soup that now dangles from your tongue as it chews furiously. You start awake, biting your own tongue in an attempt to bite through the snake's body.

**Nightmare #3:** This dream shouldn't occur until the PCs find Alton's body in area B. You're in a rowboat on the open ocean at night. Sitting across you, rowing the boat, is First

Mate Alton. He's obviously dead, with the wounds and stings his body displays on the wreck of the *Jenivere*, but still he rows. Eventually, the boat reaches an island covered with snakes. Alton waits as you exit the boat, standing ankle-deep in snakes, and then he turns and rows back out to sea, you assume off to look for more survivors to ferry to shore. But Alton never returns, and you wake up just as the snakes start to bite...

**Wings in the Dark:** One of the most dangerous denizens of Smuggler's Shiv is the winged chupacabra that dwells at area Y2. Although the PCs are destined to fight this monster, the fight will be much more satisfying if you take the time to foreshadow the monster's presence on the island. At first, the PCs might notice its presence at night only by the passing sound of large wings flapping in the night sky. Later, while they're exploring the island, they might find the



blood-drained body of a giant rat or a monkey tangled in the branches of a tree. At one point you can have a PC on guard duty make a Perception check—no matter what the result of the check is, tell him he feels like he's being watched from the nearby jungle. The next morning, tell another PC that he had a frightening dream that something large with blood-red eyes was watching him all night from the jungle's edge and that the dreaming PC couldn't move. If these two PCs compare notes, they'll realize that they both felt as if they were being watched from the same point in the nearby jungle—an investigation of that area and a DC 15 Perception check reveals a pool of blood on the ground and, in the branches above, another blood-drained monkey draped over a branch. Finally, one evening as the PCs are gathered around a fire, the sound of large wings passes overhead—and suddenly the body of a goat, most of the blood drained from its broken body, falls into the middle of their fire with a crash! All of these events are the result of the winged chupacabra's initial curiosity about the PCs, culminating in a blatant threat against them. The winged chupacabra is a dangerous foe, so the PCs shouldn't be forced to fight it until they're at least 2nd level and are prepared for a fight—but using these mini-encounters, you can build tension and anticipation for the eventual confrontation.

## EXPLORING THE ISLAND

Smuggler's Shiv is a relatively small island, but its rugged terrain makes exploration and travel difficult.



As a general rule, the dense jungles, steep hillsides, and trackless swamps all work to make travel through the wilds a difficult and arduous task. It's best to simply assume that the PCs, regardless of their group's actual speed, can move about 1 mile every 2 hours due to the fact that it's never possible to move in a straight line in the wilds of Smuggler's Shiv.

Coastlines and trails allow for much more rapid travel, although both are in relatively short supply on the island (much of its coastlines are rocky cliffs that present little in the way of actual beaches to walk on).

**Rivers:** The rivers on Smuggler's Shiv are relatively narrow (20 feet wide) but deep (averaging 15 feet)—they can be crossed with a DC 10 Swim check.

**Ridges:** Numerous ridges scar Smuggler's Shiv. Each ridge is a 100-foot-tall vertical shift. It's a DC 15 Climb check to scale a ridge.

**Surf:** The island's crashing waves and swift currents make swimming offshore difficult and dangerous. The water is considered stormy, and requires a DC 20 Swim check each round.

**Trails:** The various trails on Smuggler's Shiv are game trails that have been expanded through frequent travel by the cannibals. PCs who follow these trails can move about 2 miles per hour.

## A. CASTAWAY BEACH

To the south, a wall of green rises in the form of a dense jungle filled with a cacophony of life. To the east and west, ragged arms of jagged rocks reach out to embrace a wave-tossed cove, while to the north, the waters of the sea surge and churn between the beach and a line of razor-sharp rocks.

This narrow beach is where the PCs initially waken after being rescued by First Mate Alton. Characters who scan the horizon can spot the wreck of the *Jenivere* at area B with a DC 10 Perception check.

## B. WRECK OF THE *JENIVERE* (CR 1)

Even a cursory glance is enough to confirm that the *Jenivere* will never sail again. Only the fortuitous presence of a sharp ridge of rock near the side of the sheer cliff wall has prevented the wreck from sinking entirely into the sea, for only the ship's stern seems to have survived the wreck. This portion is wedged at an angle between the cliff and the rocks, and each wave shakes and tosses the wreck alarmingly. It won't be long before the constant pounding of the waves dislodges the wreck and allows the hungry sea to claim the last of this once-fine ship.

Reaching the *Jenivere* from land is easiest at low tide, either early in the morning or late in the afternoon. The

exposed rocks are slippery, but even though they count as difficult terrain, they can be navigated, allowing someone to walk all the way up to a ledge on the cliff that overlooks the upper deck of the wreck. At normal or high tide, reaching the wreck requires a 150-foot swim or climb along the cliff side. It's a DC 20 Swim check to navigate the churning surf, and a failure of 5 or greater results in a wave pounding the swimmer against the rocks for 1d4 points of damage unless the swimmer makes a DC 15 Reflex save. Climbing the jagged cliffs is a bit easier, requiring a number of DC 15 Climb checks, with a fall dropping the climber into the surf below.

As mentioned, the *Jenivere* is missing much of her bow, and although it's only noticeable up close and with a DC 15 Perception check, she's also missing much of her lower deck. All that survives are the upper decks, a portion of the captain's cabin, and on the mid-deck, the larder, a supply room, and the brig and galley (both now empty). Although the *Jenivere*'s only lifeboat at first seems to be missing, as the PCs approach the ship, the fate of this smaller boat becomes clear—it was washed up between the ship and the cliff and was crushed by the action of the waves smashing the *Jenivere* against the cliff side. Part of the lifeboat's bow still lolls about in the surf, attached to a protruding timber by a thick rope, as if someone had moored the boat to the wreck. This is indeed the case—first mate Alton moored the lifeboat when he returned to the ship for his last fateful attempt to rescue people and salvage more supplies.

**Creature:** The wreck is not completely abandoned, as a DC 10 Perception check reveals once the PCs draw close—something on the lower deck is making a terrible racket. This is a single eurypterid that has clambered up into the wreck—it can taste the blood coming from the partially collapsed storeroom and is scratching and scabbling at the warped door in a frenzied attempt to get at whatever lies inside. The sea scorpion immediately abandons its obsession once it realizes that the PCs might offer it an easier meal.

Due to the pounding of the waves on the ship and its awkward angle, movement on board the *Jenivere* is treated as difficult terrain, and both the PCs and the eurypterid take a –2 penalty to hit on all attacks.

### EURYPTERID

CR 1

XP 400

hp 11 (see page 78)

**Treasure:** Although the sea has claimed much of the *Jenivere*, there is still a fair amount of useful material and, perhaps, even some answers awaiting discovery in the following locations.

**Captain's Cabin:** The captain's cabin is a wreck—a jagged hole in the side has allowed most of the room's contents to



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## Smuggler's Shiv





spill out into the surf and wash away. Yet even a cursory search reveals some useful supplies, most of which are found in an overturned desk (fortunately, the desk was too large to fit through the hole in the wall). One upper drawer contains several keys—one of these fits Jask's manacles. Another drawer contains several sea charts and maps, along with the captain's log (see sidebar). The maps include one of the west coast of Garund that plots the *Jenivere's* route to and from Sargava—the island of Smuggler's Shiv is not marked on this map, but it is marked on a second map of Desperation Bay, though the map provides no details on the island apart from its general outline and a note warning of danger. A lower desk drawer is locked (Break DC 23, Disable Device DC 25)—it contains a bottle of fine brandy worth 50 gp, a darkwood model of the *Jenivere* in a glass bottle worth 100 gp, and a small coffer containing 350 gp. Also in this lower drawer is a long leather satchel that holds a dozen potions for emergency use: four *potions of cure light wounds*, a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, four *potions of lesser restoration*, a *potion of remove disease*, a *potion of water breathing*, and a *potion of water walking*. Finally, a large footlocker leaning against the desk contains Jask Derindi's confiscated gear, including a masterwork dagger, a suit of leather armor, two *potions of cure light wounds*, a holy symbol of Nethys, and a spell component pouch.

**Larder:** Although the majority of the *Jenivere's* food stores were kept in the now-missing cargo below, enough preserved rations are stored here to supply a single person with food for 24 days. This is also where Yarzoth stashed the cook's body after she poisoned him—a DC 16 Heal check identifies the bites on his neck and shoulders as serpentine in origin, although from a rather large snake.

**Supply Room:** This is the room the eurypterid was so eager to get into—it contains not only a number of supplies, but also the unfortunate first mate, Alton Devers. Trickle of blood run under the door to the supply room, as if something inside has recently been bleeding. The door is stuck, but already damaged (hardness 5, hp 3, Break DC 21). Alton's body lies slumped against the wall, quite dead. An examination of his body reveals two sets of wounds—the first seem to be a bit older and consist of rapier wounds (courtesy of Alton's battle against his mind-controlled captain) while the others are inflamed stings (from the eurypterid). Identifying the likely weapons used for each is a DC 16 Heal check—this check also reveals that it was poison that finished him off. Alton still wears his masterwork studded leather armor and clutches his masterwork short sword in one hand.

A search of the rest of the supply room turns up several tools and lumber that could come in handy in building a secure campsite: a block and tackle, three large canvas sheets, two fishing nets, a grappling hook, two bullseye lanterns, 12 flasks of lantern oil, 150 feet of hemp rope, and five shovels.

### The Captain's Log

An examination of this log reveals that the *Jenivere's* captain seemed to be suffering from some sort of madness that grew over the course of the ship's final voyage. Earlier entries from previous voyages are precise in recording progress and events along the way, as are entries from the first two-thirds of this last trip. Yet as one reads further, the more recent the entries get, the less common they become—in some cases, several days are missing entries. What entries do appear are strangely short, focusing more and more on one of the passengers—the Varisian scholar leana, with whom the captain seems to have become obsessed. Several entries are nothing more than poorly written love poems to leana, while others bemoan Captain Kovack's inability to please her or catch her attention. Near the end, the entries begin to take on a more ominous tone with the captain starting to complain that other members of the crew are eyeing "his leana." In particular, he suspects his first mate is in love with her, and writes several times about how he wishes Alton would just "have an accident." The final entry is perhaps the most disturbing, for in it the captain writes of how he's changed course for Smuggler's Shiv at leana's request. He hopes that the two of them can make a home on the remote island, but also notes that the crew are growing increasingly agitated at the ship's new course. The captain muses that "something may need to be done about the crew" if their suspicions get any worse.

## C. PREDATOR DENS

A large number of predators dwell on Smuggler's Shiv, but their numbers aren't infinite. In all, there are eight types of wild predators to be found on the island—they generally prey upon the island's indigenous dire rats, birdlife, fish, monkeys, jungle goats, or even each other, but in most cases these predators aren't above seeking out humanoid meals.

Each location marked by the letter C on the map of Smuggler's Shiv indicates the lair of one such predator. If the exploring PCs pass within a half-mile of any of these locations, have them make a DC 20 Survival check—success indicates that they notice signs that a predator's lair is nearby. There's a 50% chance that the predator is home; otherwise it's out hunting elsewhere on the island. If the predator is home, it automatically notices the PCs and moves to attack, unless they use stealth to remain undetected.

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## Shipwrecks of the Shiv

Listed below are the names of 16 of the ships wrecked off the coast of Smuggler's Shiv.

- D1. Tattooed Lady
- D2. Tears of Grog
- D3. Golden Bow
- D4. Bloody Doll
- D5. Scallywag
- D6. Windwar
- D7. Bearded Harpy
- D8. Scarred Maiden
- D9. Crimson Angel
- D10. Volar's Lash
- D11. Wavereaper
- D12. Crow's Tooth
- D13. Bloodwalker
- D14. Alma's Ruin
- D15. Redwake
- D16. Thrune's Fang

Flying or swimming predators eventually repopulate their numbers on the island after a few months, but predators that lack both of those movement types can be hunted to extinction. In any event, if the PCs take out all of the island's lairs belonging to a specific type of predator, treat further wandering encounters with this type of predator as no encounter, unless directed otherwise below.

**C1. Dimorphodon Nest (hp 11 each, see page 82):** A nest of 1d3 dimorphodons sits at the edge of a cliff 1d4+2 × 10 feet in height. Capturing a dimorphodon and giving it to Sasha Nevah completes her quest (see pages 62–63).

**C2. Venomous Snake (hp 13; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 255):** A single venomous snake lairs in a cave under a tree or between some rocks here. The island supports striped fer de lances, blue-black kraits, black mambas, and various cobras (all are statistically the same).

**C3. Giant Spider (hp 16; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 258):** A single giant spider dwells in the trees at this location.

**C4. Constrictor Snake (hp 19; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 255):** A single constrictor snake dwells amid the undergrowth here. All constrictor snakes found on the Shiv are particularly large and dangerous emerald boas.

**C5. Giant Crab (hp 19; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 50):** A single, enormous red giant crab lurks amid the rocks near the shore at this location.

**C6. Shocker Lizards (hp 19 each; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 248):** A mated pair of shocker lizards dwells in the branches of a tree here.

**C7. Shiv Dragon (hp 22; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 194):** The monitor lizards of the island, known locally as shiv dragons, are dark brown beasts, highly aggressive and very territorial. Each shiv dragon lair is home to a single lizard.

**C8. Cave Fishers (hp 22; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 41):** These armored vermin dwell exclusively along the seaside cliffs, feasting on birds, fish, and beachcombers alike. Each lair is home to one cave fisher.

## D. SHIPWRECKS (CR 3)

Countless shipwrecks surround Smuggler's Shiv, but most are deep underwater and difficult to reach. Less than two dozen wrecks are relatively accessible to air-breathing creatures. Three of these wrecks (the *Jenivere* at area **B**, the *Brine Demon* at area **G**, and the fungus-covered *Nightvoice* at area **R**) are unique enough that they have their own entries.

The other wrecks scattered around the island's perimeter are old and rotting. There's a 25% chance each time the PCs explore one that a random PC steps on some weak flooring and plummets 10 feet onto rocks or a lower deck, taking 1d6 points of damage from the fall. None of these derelict ships are even close to being seaworthy.

**Creatures:** Many of the shipwrecks are haunted by the undead remnants of their crews. There's a 25% chance that a shipwreck is haunted by undead—either six human skeletons or four human zombies. At your discretion, other monsters might lurk in a shipwreck, such as a swarm of crabs, several eurypterids, an octopus, or even a pack of lacedons.

**HUMAN SKELETONS (6)** CR 1/3

**XP 135 each**

hp 4 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 250)

**HUMAN ZOMBIES (4)** CR 1/2

**XP 200 each**

hp 12 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 288)

**Treasure:** An unhaunted shipwreck has a 20% chance to contain 4d20 gp in treasure. A haunted shipwreck has a 75% chance to contain 3d100 gp in treasure. The nature of this treasure is unlikely to be solely in coin, though—a mix of coins, weapons, armor, tools, and valuable cargo is more likely.

## E. VIPER NETTLES

A large grove of thorny vines grow on these river banks, presenting a seven-foot-tall wall of green leaves and intimidating six-inch red thorns.

This grove is a patch of poisonous plants called viper nettles—the bright red thorns on the vines can grow up to



6 inches long in places. Moving through the patch counts as difficult terrain, and each round a creature moves through the nettles, it must make a DC 12 Reflex save to avoid taking a point of damage from the nettles—any creature that takes damage from the nettles must then make a DC 14 Fortitude save or develop a painful rash that sickens it for 24 hours. The woodland stride ability negates this hazard entirely.

A large quantity of bright red berries lies at the center of the patch of nettles, but reaching them requires passing through 60 feet of nettles. Harvesting the berries takes 10 minutes (during which the harvester must make four DC 12 Reflex saves to avoid nettle damage—the thorns are much smaller at the center of the patch but still present). Fully harvested, the berries provide a dozen handfuls. These berries, apart from being delicious, have an unusual side effect—they help with recovery from sickness and even addiction, particularly the sickness caused by alcohol withdrawal. Eating a handful of these berries also grants a +4 bonus on saving throws against disease for 24 hours. Collecting these berries completes Aerys Mavato's quest (see pages 58–59).

## F. YARZOTH'S LANDFALL

The remnants of a quickly rigged shelter and evidence of a small campfire sit well above the high-tide line on this narrow, sandy beach.

After the serpentfolk Yarzoth and her dominated minion, Captain Kovack, escaped the sinking *Jenivere*, they made their way southeast along the Shiv's coast until they reached a secluded beach here. By the time the PCs wake and begin exploring the island, these two have long since abandoned their campsite here and moved on into the island's interior.

A casual examination of this area reveals that it's recently been used as a campsite. A DC 15 Perception check is enough to find some discarded refuse, including both Captain Kovack's tricorn hat and a few brightly colored scarves identifiable as once having belonged to the scholar Ieana.

These clues should serve to give the PCs evidence that two others survived the *Jenivere's* wreck. It's possible to track Yarzoth and Captain Kovack with a DC 15 Survival check. This trail leads south to the trail, at which point it becomes a DC 20 Survival check to note that the tracks turned inland—eventually the trail leads all the way to area V.

## G. THE BRINE DEMON (CR 3)

A ninety-foot-long shipwreck leans against the cliff side and

several jagged reefs here, encrusted with salt and moss. Its masts remain intact, but the sails have long since rotted away. At the bow, a leering demonic figurehead of green-caked brass provides an intimidating greeting.

This ship is the *Brine Demon*, once the pride and joy of cruel Captain Avret Kinkarian. The *Brine Demon* sailed Desperation Bay and the southern Arcadian Ocean for many years, taking part in various nefarious deeds and schemes, not the least of which was a protection racket off the coast of Sargava that involved several mid-ranking government officials. Never a highly regarded member of the Free Captains of the Shackles, Captain Kinkarian had a soft side that few of his crew knew about—he was deeply in love with a beautiful half-elven woman named Aeshamara. In fact, on his final fateful voyage, he'd accumulated enough treasure that he could finally present her with the life he wanted to give her, yet in procuring that last bit of treasure he enraged the Sargavan navy. Fleeing their ships, Captain Kinkarian risked everything in a desperate attempt to throw off pursuit by sailing around Smuggler's Shiv. While this tactic did indeed force his pursuers to break off the chase, the dangerous currents seized the *Brine Demon* and drew the ship toward the Shiv's cutting edge. Faced with an imminent wreck, the crew mutinied. Captain Kinkarian fought the fear-maddened crew off as best he could, killing several before he was forced to retreat to his cabin and barricade himself within—but not before he took several mortal wounds. Desperate to gaze upon Aeshamara's beauty one last time before he died, the dying captain struggled across his cabin to retrieve a locket containing her picture from a hidden coffer, yet he died a heartbeat after he laid his hand upon the coffer and a heartbeat before the *Brine Demon* wrecked upon the Shiv. Eager to be free of the ship, the surviving crew looted the hold and then fled onto the island to eventually meet their own grisly fates amid wildlife, disease, and cannibals. Yet Captain Kinkarian did not rest quietly on his wrecked, abandoned ship.

**Creature:** Captain Kinkarian's ghost now haunts the wreck of the *Brine Demon* and the beaches of the surrounding cove, maddened by the loss of his ship, his life, and his love. The ghost wants nothing more than to gaze upon his lost love one last time, but his insubstantial hand (and hook) lack the ability to open his coffer or to manipulate the locket found within. Insane with grief, he walks the Shiv's shores at night, his wails and curses echoing eerily under sound of the surf. During the day, the ghost enjoys oblivion in the water and cannot be encountered.

The PCs can encounter the ghost of Captain Kinkarian anytime they're wandering along the Shiv's northeastern shoreline during the night. In these encounters, the ghost ignores the PCs, content to walk along the waves



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a dozen feet offshore and wail phrases like “Alas my Aeshamara!” intermingled with rages of profanity and hatred against his crew. It’s more likely that the PCs will encounter the ghost at some point after they’ve explored the *Brine Demon*—for if the PCs take the locket containing Aeshamara’s image as treasure, the ghost senses its theft. The next time the PCs camp, the ghost appears at their camp, perhaps rising out of the flames of their campfire or striding in from the surf as he calls them thieves and scoundrels and demands the return of his beloved Aeshamara. In this case, he attacks only if attacked first, or after 3 rounds of the PCs refusing (or not understanding) his request.

Captain Kinkarian appears in undeath as a nearly skeletal form, his bare bones picked clean by the fish and crabs, yet he still wears his dripping coat and tricorne hat. One of his hands is a gleaming metal hook, and his whole insubstantial form constantly drips with cold, brackish seawater.

Take care with this encounter—Captain Kinkarian’s corrupting touch attack can really hurt when it’s used against 1st-level characters. The ghost never initiates attacks, so quick-thinking PCs should have a chance to deduce what he wants before it comes to a fight. It’s worth keeping in mind that the ghost isn’t an evil spirit—merely insane and frustrated. If he drops a PC, he won’t continue to attack that fallen foe. You should also try to avoid forcing a battle with Captain Kinkarian until after the PCs have a chance to explore the *Brine Demon* and find the locket (see *Treasure* on page 19), so that they’ll have a chance to give the ghost what he’s looking for before he kills them all.

**CAPTAIN AVRET KINKARIAN CR 3**

**XP 800**

Male human ghost rogue 1/expert 2

(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 144)

CN Medium undead (augmented humanoid, incorporeal)

**Init** +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.;

**Perception** +15



Captain Kinkarian

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 13, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+2 deflection, +1 Dex)

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

**Fort** +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

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

**Weaknesses** sea-bound

**OFFENSE**

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

**Melee** corrupting touch +2 (3d6, Fort DC 13 half)

**Special Attacks** sneak attack +1d6

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Captain Kinkarian attacks only in response to being attacked himself. In such a case, he sees his tormenters as his crew, and curses and froths at them for turning against him, issuing accusations of “Mutineer!” and “Traitor!” as he claws with his hook-handed corrupting touch. Faced with a woman who bears a passing resemblance to his lost love Aeshamara (any red-haired female human, elf, or half-elf), the ghost becomes fascinated and tearfully reaches toward that PC, whispering, “Aeshamara... is that you? Have you come for me?”

The ghost remains fascinated for 1 round, after which he can he make a DC 20 Will save as a full-round action to recover from the fascination. Presenting the golden locket to him can also fascinate him in this manner. If anything attacks him, the fascination immediately ends. When he recovers from the fascination, he focuses his wrath on the woman he mistook for his love, shrieking, “No... No! You are not her! Damnable harpy!” If his enemies flee, Captain Kinkarian pursues until he loses sight of the sea, at which point he shrieks and returns to the surf to brood.

**Morale** Captain Kinkarian fights until he’s destroyed, but even then he merely rejuvenates back on the *Brine Demon* in 2d4 days. If the PCs have taken his locket for their own, he seeks them out again, following the lure of the locket unerringly—even across the ocean. In order to put Captain Kinkarian to rest, someone must forcefully present the open locket containing Aeshamara’s image to the ghost so that he can see the image of the woman inside. This action causes the ghost to break off his attacks and reach for the

locket—as soon as he touches it, his incorporeal form fades with a melancholy sigh as he finally meets his true death.

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**STATISTICS**


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

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

**Feats** Alertness, Iron Will, Persuasive

**Skills** Climb +6, Diplomacy +10, Fly +9, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (geography) +7, Knowledge (nature) +7, Perception +15, Profession (sailor) +5, Sense Motive +7, Stealth +9, Swim +6

**Languages** Common, Polyglot

**SQ** trapfinding +1

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**SPECIAL ABILITIES**


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**Sea-Bound (Su)** Captain Kinkarian's ghost often appears to walk on water. He can leave the ocean's surface if he wishes, but each round he remains out of contact with the sea and takes more than a single move action, he takes 1d6 points of damage as his ghostly form drips and drains away, as if his very essence were being pulled back to the sea.

**Treasure:** A search of the *Brine Demon* reveals that the vast majority of its booty has long since either rotted away or been lost to the sea—much of the ship's hull is missing, wedged tightly amid the jagged rocks. Yet an investigation of the captain's cabin reveals a skeleton slumped on the floor, its bony hands clutching at a well-made, watertight darkwood coffer sitting in an opened secret compartment in a rotting desk. This coffer is locked, but time has not been kind to the mechanism—it can be opened with a DC 18 Disable Device or Strength check. Inside the coffer are three objects—a gold locket worth 500 gp, a +1 dagger, and several fat ledgers and journals. The locket contains a tiny, incredibly detailed portrait of a beautiful, red-haired half-elf woman, identified along the bottom edge of the portrait as “Aeshamara.” The ledgers and journals contain irrefutable proof of collusion between Captain Kinkarian and half a dozen Sargavan and Bloodcove government officials, who were skimming off the tithes and taxes offered to the Free Captains of the Shackles. These documents, among other things, provide proof of Jask Derindi's innocence, and finding them completes his quest (see page 61–62). Handed over to the proper authorities in either Eleder or Bloodcove, these documents could also secure a 1,000 gp reward.

## H. CREEPER'S CLEARING (CR 3)

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A fifty-foot-diameter clearing in the jungle here allows the sun to beat down upon a field of wilted-looking plants, their leaves a sickly, diseased yellow.

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**Creatures:** A yellow musk creeper grows in the center of this glade, its noxious spores and invasive roots having leached away much of the nutrients in the surrounding

area. The large, bulbous plant and its tall-stalked, twitching yellow flowers loom in the center of the clearing, flanked by a pair of yellow musk zombies created from unfortunate shipwreck survivors.

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**YELLOW MUSK CREEPER**


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**CR 2**

**XP 600**

**hp 22** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 285)

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**YELLOW MUSK ZOMBIES (2)**


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**CR 1/2**

**XP 200 each**

**hp 12 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 285, 288)

## I. ABANDONED CAMPS

The majority of recent shipwrecks have had few survivors make it for long, but in the past years, three ships (the *Bloody Doll*, the *Bearded Harpy*, and the *Crow's Tooth*) proved exceptions to this rule. Unfortunately, the handful of survivors from each of these ships lived only long enough to establish one of these three campsites before they were attacked and captured by the island's cannibals. At each campsite, a DC 12 Perception check reveals old bloodstains or other signs of violence indicating that the campsite was attacked and its denizens either killed or captured.

**1. Bloody Doll Camp:** This campsite consists of several small shelters made from driftwood—all have mostly collapsed. A single yellow musk zombie stands forlornly in the middle of the camp, staring vacantly out to sea (a survivor of the shipwreck, she and her husband fled into the woods to escape cannibal capture and, along with the single cannibal who pursued them, were turned into a zombie once all three stumbled into area H). This zombie wandered away from its creator and, operating on a barely remembered instinct, returned to this campsite. She will eventually collapse and sprout into a new yellow musk creeper. The zombie attacks anyone she notices on sight.

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**YELLOW MUSK ZOMBIE**


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**CR 1/2**

**XP 200**

**hp 12** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 285, 288)

**12. Crow's Tooth Camp:** This campsite looks almost like a series of partially ruined nests made out of palm fronds and driftwood. A large number of broken sawtooth sabres and daggers lie scattered about here. A DC 20 Perception check is enough to uncover a masterwork dagger still in its protective leather scabbard under a mound of toppled driftwood. The dagger's blade is etched with a pair of crossed praying mantis claws—the mark of the Red Mantis.

**13. Bearded Harpy Camp:** This campsite features a partially completed wooden shack—of the three camps, this one seems the most completed. It took the cannibals a bit longer to find it, but the end result was still the same.



# SERPENT'S SKULL

A large pentagram has been carved into one wall of the shack and several human teeth have been hammered into the wood in its center—a grisly bit of graffiti left by the cannibals to celebrate a victory in what, at the time, was a particularly deadly fight.

## J. SPIKED SNARES (CR 1)

The cannibals use the network of trails to move about the island and hunt game when their favored meals run scarce. They often come back to check the three campsites connected by these trails, knowing that shipwreck survivors are often drawn to convenient shelters such as these. They also know that survivors are likely to use these trails to navigate the island, and have set several traps along the length of the trail to try to catch lone wanderers.

**Trap:** Each of these traps is identical—a cleverly hidden vine trip line strung across the pathway. As soon as the trip line is triggered (by the first person walking along the trail), a snare attached to a bent tree branch whips around the target's leg and yanks him up into the trees against a set of sharpened stakes. In addition to possibly taking damage from the stakes, the snare suspends the victim upside down 10 feet off the ground. A caught PC can escape this snare on his own by making a DC 22 Strength or Escape Artist check, or automatically if he has a slashing weapon with which he can cut the snare line (although this action results in a 10-foot fall).

**SPIKED SNARE** **CR 1**

**XP 400**

**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 15

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** manual

**Effects** CMB +10 (vs. target's CMD; target gains grappled condition and is yanked 10 feet into the air); Atk +8 melee (2 spikes for 1d6+2 damage each)

## K. THE TREASURE PIT (CR 3)

The crown of this hill is one of the few areas on the Shiv that's not jungle—the entire hilltop is an open area of tall grass overlooking the island's eastern shoreline.

Without Ishirou's treasure map (see page 61), there's very little chance for the PCs to realize that several decades ago, a cagey pirate captain named Lortch Quellig hid a chest full of treasure under this hilltop. Paranoid that his booty would be found, Captain Quellig spared no expense crafting his treasure's burial, and recruited the aid of a dwarf engineer and three of his most devoted crewmen.

Captain Quellig's plan was to dig a shaft down to the water table, then dig back up to create a J-shaped hook at the end. The combination of shaft and "drain trap" pool

of water, he hoped, would make it incredibly difficult for anyone else to retrieve his treasure. The construction of the 60-foot-deep shaft went exactly as planned, and after Captain Quellig stashed his treasure in the air pocket below, he congratulated his men by abandoning them in the deep pit. He and his dwarven companion then constructed a wooden platform 10 feet from the surface, walling off the three trapped men and sealing them in darkness. When the sturdy wooden plug was in place, Quellig repaid his dwarven ally by stabbing him in the back. He left the dwarf's body sprawled atop the plug and filled the 10-foot-deep hole with earth, then lit the top of the hill on fire to burn off the grass and hide the site even further with a layer of ash.

Back on his ship, Captain Quellig made a precise map of where he'd buried the treasure and hid it in a secret pocket in his coat, hoping to return some day for his treasure once he was sure those he'd stolen it from were long dead. Fate, of course, intervened—Bloodcove privateers captured Quellig's ship on his way back to Quent, and after he was executed, his belongings passed through several hands over the years. By the time his map surfaced again, the fact that it only showed part of a nameless coastline made it all but useless—yet when Ishirou found it, he kept it, hoping someday he'd figure out where the treasure it indicates was hidden.

The map indicates that to find the spot where the treasure is buried, one must to climb to the top of the hill and wait for sunrise. At dawn, one must simply walk to a point atop the hill where the sun seems to be rising directly between the two spike-shaped rocks protruding from the sea to the east (these are the rocks near area D6). This is the correct place to begin digging, but what the map doesn't indicate is the complexity and scope of the treasure pit.

The pit itself is 10 feet wide. After 3d6 hours of work and digging without proper tools (reduced to 1d4 hours if the PCs have tools, like the shovels found in the *Jenivere's* supply room), diggers can excavate down 10 feet and uncover the wooden plug—and the skeleton of the dwarven engineer. An examination of the body (and a DC 20 Heal check) reveals a slash in the rotten back of the dwarf's leather armor and deep grooves on his ribs, indicating he was stabbed through the heart with a blade from behind. The dwarf himself has no treasure (Quellig took it), but the corpse should give the PCs the idea that they're on the right track.

The next step is to get through the wooden plug. The sturdy block can, of course, be destroyed (hardness 5, hp 90, Break DC 30), but doing so causes it (and anyone standing on it) to plummet into the darkness below (a DC 12 Reflex save allows a person to cling to the edges of the pit, after which a DC 10 Climb check is required to quickly scramble to safety). This fall ends after 40 feet in a 10-foot-deep pool of foul, murky water—falling creatures take 2d3 points of nonlethal damage. Furthermore, the falling logs deal 2d6 points of damage to both of the creatures lying



in wait in the water below. A safer method would be to dig around one edge of the wooden block—this approach takes another 1d4 hours as the clay and earth there are much harder, nearly the consistency of soft stone. This route allows for a more controlled entry into the shaft below. The walls of the shaft are shored up by wooden bracing—it's a DC 10 Climb check to use this bracing to descend to the water below.

**Creatures:** After they were sealed into the pit, Quellig's men quickly succumbed to madness and fear. One tried to climb up to the wooden plug above while it was still under construction only to be shot through the eye by Quellig's crossbow. The surviving two men had little choice but to wait for starvation to take them—but as the days wore on, they gave in to their hunger and fed on their dead companion. Whether it was madness, suicide, or disease that finally finished these two off is irrelevant—they died, and soon thereafter rose from death as lacedons. Trapped together for decades, the sodden ghouls have endured starvation but not the embrace of death for what seems to them an eternity—the advent of light and sound into their pit as the PCs draw near threatens to drive them into a frenzy. Yet, for fear of chasing off their meals, the two lacedons manage to remain quiet under the murky water until the first character enters it. At this point, the undead lurch into hungry life, attacking the PC and fighting until destroyed. Once the attack is underway, the lacedons do not abandon their prey—they'll try to climb up the walls of the pit to pursue fleeing foes or to get to anyone else up above whom they can see or hear.

#### LACEDONS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Aquatic ghouls (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146)

hp 13 each

**Treasure:** At the bottom of the shaft, a 5-foot-diameter underwater tunnel turns north from the pit floor, then turns up sharply into a 15-foot-high shaft with a pocket of stale but breathable air at the top. Quellig's treasure sits in this cramped chamber, inside a waterproof and airtight sea chest on a narrow ledge carved just above the water level. The chest is locked (DC 30 Disable Device check to pick the lock), and contains the following loot: 3,500 cp, 2,000 sp, 1,000 gp, 50 pp, a silk pouch of garnets and amethysts worth 500 gp in all, a half-dozen moldered and ruined noble's outfits, a bejeweled masterwork cold iron starknife

worth 650 gp, a +1 darkwood buckler, and a scroll of *raise dead* in a watertight mithral scroll tube worth 500 gp. Finding the treasure (and offering Ishirou a share) completes his quest (see pages 60–61).

#### L. PEZOCK'S CRAB (CR 2)

The waves crash against a narrow beach of white sand, swirling around an immense red and orange crab the size of a small house that crouches on spiny legs.

**Creature:** This crab is in fact the home of an eccentric tengu named Pezock—the last remaining survivor of the *Crow's Tooth*, which lies wrecked at area D12. After surviving the wreck and then, a week later, surviving an attack on the *Crow's Tooth* camp by the island's cannibals, Pezock became somewhat unhinged. In an attempt to hide from further attention, he moved into the shell of this immense crab. At the time, the giant vermin had only been dead for a few days—Pezock helped the local scavengers clean it out, and has since rigged the shell with a number of ropes and pulleys scavenged from shipwrecks. This complex contraption allows Pezock to pull and tug ropes to give his home the semblance of life—the crab's pincers rise and fall, its legs twitch, and its stalked eyes wriggle and shift. The ferocious facade is really rather unsettling to see, especially when Pezock begins making hideous shrieking sounds that the crab's cavernous interior amplifies into low-pitched moans not unlike that of a dying man. Anyone who watches the display and makes a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check will realize that the crab is dead and that something else is going on—alternatively, anyone brave enough to hang around once the 26-foot-wide crab starts to move should soon notice that, no matter how loud and violent the “crab” gets, it never



# Serpent's Skull

moves from its spot high on the beach. Pezock can use the rope and pulley apparatus to make a single attack against anyone within 5 feet of his home as a full-round action—although this isn't a very accurate attack (it's treated as both a non-proficient attack and a secondary attack, imparting –9 penalty in total on attack rolls with it), a hit from a crab slam deals significant damage.

Pezock's initial attitude is unfriendly. He's had a particularly rough time on Smuggler's Shiv over the past few years he's been shipwrecked here, and no longer particularly wants to leave the island—in his madness, he's come to love the island. The PCs can attempt to communicate with Pezock by yelling at him, but unless he's made friendly, he won't emerge from his strange home.

If the PCs can secure Pezock's aid, the tengu invites them into his cramped home for a lunch of poorly smoked sculpin and raw sea urchins. Pezock is grateful for conversation, and points out that talking to real people is so much more rewarding than talking to fish and sea birds and the ghosts in the surf, none of whom are particularly talkative. He has no interest in leaving his home, but at

your discretion (and if he's made helpful), Pezock may well consent to travel with the PCs, especially if they make clear their desire to defeat the cannibals. Pezock doesn't particularly fear the cannibals ("What worry do I have from human cannibals? They eat humans! Even though I bet I taste delicious!"), he does hate them for killing off the rest of his friends and leaving him with no one to talk to.

If asked about his magic *sawtooth sabre*, Pezock waxes nostalgic and almost teary eyed, talking about how he was given the sword by his close friend, the captain of the *Crow's Tooth*. The sabre's all he has to remember poor Captain Eraka Zoventai now, and he periodically stops to pet it and whisper promises of wetting it in cannibal blood some day.

While Pezock did indeed come to Smuggler's Shiv on the *Crow's Tooth*, he was hardly a passenger and Captain Zoventai (now long dead after the cannibals defeated her and the other survivors of the *Crow's Tooth* at their camp at area I2) was hardly his friend. The *Crow's Tooth* was a Mediogaltian ship, her captain a Red Mantis assassin, and Pezock little more than a mascot and jester kept on board for the crew's amusement. In his madness, Pezock's memories of his captain are of a bright red tengu who gave him the sabre as a gift—any attempt to prove otherwise or delve too deeply into his past is likely to enrage him and force him to attack to defend the "honor" of his imaginary past.

At some point (earlier rather than later if the PCs ask about other survivors), Pezock should ask the PCs if they're with the other two new people he's recently seen on the island. If asked for a description, Pezock describes two humans matching the descriptions of Captain Kovack of the *Jenivere* and the Varisian scholar Ieana. Pezock didn't approach the two, but he can confirm that the Varisian was obviously the leader, giving curt orders to the other as they made their way along the jungle trail toward the south.



Pezock

## PEZOCK

CR 2

### XP 600

Male tengu rogue 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 263)

CN Medium humanoid (tengu)

Init +7; Senses low-light vision; Perception +9

### DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 11 (+1 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 23 (3d8+6)

Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +2

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1

### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *sawtooth sabre* +6 (1d8+2/19–20), bite +0 (1d3) or crab slam –6 (2d6)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Pezock sneak attacks the closest flat-footed foe he can on the first round of combat. If he has allies,





he remains mobile and attempts to maximize his sneak attacks, but if on his own, the tengu prefers to take full attack actions—if facing multiple foes, he fights defensively.

**Morale** Pezock attempts to flee if reduced to 10 hit points or fewer. He'll even drop his magic sword if he thinks that'll give him an extra few seconds to flee while his pursuer stops to pick the weapon up, but if he does so and gets away, he obsesses over getting his prize back.

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#### STATISTICS

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

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

**Feats** Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +9, Craft (trapmaking) +7, Disable Device +9, Escape Artist +9, Knowledge (engineering) +4, Linguistics +5, Perception +9, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +11, Survival +4

**Languages** Common, Polyglot, Tengu

**SQ** gifted linguist, rogue talent (finesse rogue), swordtrained, trapfinding +1

**Gear** broken leather armor, +1 *sawtooth sabre*, broken dagger

### M. CANNIBAL AMBUSH (CR 2)

The path winds through a 10-foot-wide gulch here, flanked on either side by steep 50-foot-high slopes. Not quite vertical cliffs, these slopes host numerous scraggly plants and a number of hanging vines—it's a DC 10 Climb check to scramble up or down either steep slope.

**Trap:** The Thrunefang cannibals have placed a spiked snare here, similar to those at area J, save that this one pulls anything it catches halfway up the western slope rather than up into the boughs of a tree.

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#### SPIKED SNARE

CR 1

XP 400

**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 15

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#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** manual

**Effects** CMB +10 (vs. target's CMD; target gains grappled condition and is yanked 25 feet up the western slope); Atk +8 melee (2 spikes for 1d6+2 damage each)

**Creature:** While the cannibals rely on their traps to catch intruders who travel the paths, they do maintain a constant guard at this point. A lone Thrunefang cannibal lurks in a camouflaged blind atop the western ledge at this point. The cannibal keeps a sharp eye out for any intruders on the trail below—his blind grants him a +8 bonus on Stealth checks (don't forget to further modify Perception checks to notice him by –5 for the 50 feet of distance from the upper ledge to the path below). He waits for someone to fall prey to the trap below before acting—if he sees that the PCs have noticed the trap, he can manually trigger the trap from his position against whoever's trying to disable it.

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#### THRNEFANG CANNIBAL

CR 1/2

XP 200

hp 14 (see page 29)

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#### TACTICS

**During Combat** If a PC is caught in the trap, the cannibal can continue pulling him up the slope at the rate of 10 feet per round—while doing so, the cannibal has total cover from those on the path below. If he manages to pull a trapped character up and over the edge, he attacks that character with nonlethal damage, attempting to render him unconscious but taking care not to kill him. Once the victim is unconscious, the cannibal attempts to flee with the captive down the hill to the south to area V, hoping to present his fellows with a new prisoner and eventual meal.

**Morale** The cannibal abandons his plan and flees to area V if he takes more than 6 points of damage.

### N. ABANDONED HUT

An overgrown jungle path leads to a small clearing where a partially collapsed hut stands on the banks of a gurgling stream. The hut itself seems to have been made from a combination of driftwood and tree trunks, with a roof of wide leaves and strips of rotten canvas sail. The front door to the hut hangs partially ajar. Dozens of bones and skulls—quite obviously of human origin—decorate the hut and the surrounding area, each bearing numerous nicks and scratches.

This hut was once the home of Captain Leven Beliker of the *Throne's Fang*. After his ship wrecked on the Shiv and his crew turned to the ship's mad priestess, Nylithati, as leader, Captain Beliker abandoned the survivors in disgust and took up the life of a hermit in this hut. He lived in peace for over 10 years until Nylithati succumbed to ghoul fever and truly started to pervert the other *Throne's Fang* survivors into cannibals, who stormed the hut and overwhelmed their former captain. He was brought back to the campsite and eaten—his brain given over to Nylithati as tribute.

This all took place over 50 years ago, and the jungle would have reclaimed this land as its own had the Thrunefang cannibals not taken to treating this area as a sacred site to commemorate the defeat of an ancient foe. Once a year, the cannibals lead a procession up here and retell the tale of Beliker's Feast, during which they ritually consume the body of a prisoner (or one of their own) after dressing him in the captain's old clothes. They then decorate the area with the prisoner's bones—an inspection of the large amount of bones here reveals that there must be several dozen dead bodies represented. The markings on the bones can be identified with a DC 15 Heal check as having been left by stone knives and, in some cases, human teeth.

**Treasure:** The cannibals do their best on their yearly rituals to repair the hut from the outside, but superstition



# SERPENT'S SKULL

## Handout #1

### Fragmentary Journal Notes

...many survived, the *Throne's Fang* will never sail again. Sargava's assimilation must proceed without...

...fine hunting on the *Shiv*, but the bugs are a constant distraction. Nylithati's skills at healing help fight the sickness, but I fear she has...

...founded. Nylithati has seized control of my crew. They are hers now. And so I have abandoned...

...fine home. Fresh water nearby and I need not endure Nylithati's ceaseless raving about...

...will not be returning to that gray, silent island again. There is nothing there but horror...

...crew lurking about the area. They seem strange, almost feral. It has been almost a decade since the wreck. I wonder what strange beliefs Nylithati has...

...changed. There was no sign of Nylithati in the camp, but the focus of their ceremony was a cauldron they must have salvaged from the *Throne's Fang* at the base of the ruined lighthouse. It was into this they threw the half-eaten body of the still screaming man...

...all around. I can hear them chanting in the green even now. They call Nylithati "Mother *Thronefang*" now, and promise me immortality if I lay down my arms and submit. I know what their immortality consists of, and I'll have no part of that corrupt life after...

prevents them from ever entering the hut itself. Inside, only fragments of Captain Beliker's life remain—bits of an old chair carved from a tree stump, fragments of fabric, and rusted bits of metal. A DC 15 Perception check reveals a thin, leather-bound journal wedged in a sheltered niche. While the journal was quite well made, the years have not been kind to its contents, and now only fragments of Captain Beliker's notes remain. These fragments are presented above as Handout #1.

### O. HIGH TIDAL CAUSEWAY

A 400-foot-long swath of slippery, seaweed-covered rocks lies exposed to the air most of the time, allowing creatures to move from the main island to the smaller island to the northwest with relative safety. Twice a day at high tide, moving through this area becomes difficult due to the crashing waves—a DC 20 Swim check is required to navigate the gap.

### P. LOW TIDAL CAUSEWAY

This causeway is similar to the one located at area O, save that it is only 200 feet across and is only exposed to land travel at low tide. From this distance, the true fungal nature of the vegetation covering the island to the north is unmistakable.

### Q. THE SILENT ISLAND (CR 1)

This bleak island stands out to anyone who casts her gaze to the west, for whereas the rest of *Smuggler's Shiv* is a luscious green and a riot of jungle sounds, this island is a silent gray scar on the horizon. From afar, the island may look as if it is covered with trees, but up close the "trees" are revealed to be foul gray stalks of fibrous fungus, growing up into the air almost like stalagmites in a cave. Between these weird stalks, the "undergrowth" consists of thick wiry tangles of lichens and gray fungus, all growing on a foul-smelling muddy surface. With the exception of the waves crashing along the beaches, the island is eerily silent.

The fungus that grows on this island is difficult to identify. A DC 20 Knowledge (dungeoneering or nature) check recognizes similarities to various strains of fungi and mushrooms that normally grow in the upper reaches of the *Darklands*, yet none of the fungal growths on the *Silent Island* have caps like proper mushrooms. The fungus tends to wriggle and ripple even when there's no breeze to stir its filaments and dangling sheets. The fungus is foul-smelling, and if eaten proves relatively poisonous. Any fungus harvested here and brought more than a half-mile from the *Silent Island's* shores swiftly melts into a foul-smelling but nontoxic sludge.



**SILENT ISLAND FUNGUS**

**Type** poison, ingested; **Save** Fortitude DC 12

**Onset** 10 minutes; **Frequency** 1/hour for 24 hours

**Effect** 1 Con damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

**Creatures:** The Silent Island is ruled by a small tribe of vegepygmies, their twisted, hunched bodies composed of the same colorless fungus that grows over the entire island. These violent creatures patrol the Silent Island in pairs, slowly stalking across the pallid landscape and gathering the odd bulb of fungus that strikes their fancy for transport back to the *Nightvoice*. If the PCs explore the Silent Island, they'll certainly encounter one of these vegepygmy patrols before long—in all, there are three of these groups active on the island.

**VEGEPYGMIES (2)****CR 1/2**

**XP 200 each**

**hp** 5 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 273)

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** The vegepygmies shamble forward quickly to attack as soon as they spy intruders. They do not kill those they defeat, though, and even pause in combat to attempt to stanch the wounds of any who fall unconscious to prevent them from dying. Any unconscious creature left to these vegepygmies is brought to area **R** to take part in the next fungus feast.

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

**R. THE NIGHTVOICE (CR 3)**

An ancient wreck lies wedged between a pair of rocks here, yet despite its age, the ruined sailing ship at first seems in relatively good condition. The ship has no color to its lines, and is completely covered in a layer of soft gray mold. Even its sails appear fully intact, although what hangs from the spars is not canvas but sheets of thick, pale fungus. Several thick ropes of fungus connect the ship's upper deck to the island almost like crude rope bridges.

This derelict is the wreck of the *Nightvoice*, a large Pathfinder Society exploration vessel that originally hailed from Almas. The *Nightvoice* has been wrecked here for decades after it mysteriously vanished on an attempted voyage around the southern coast of Garund. In fact, the explorers were well on their way home to Almas to report their findings to their lodge when a strange leathery pod they'd discovered in a seaside cavern burst open, infecting nearly the entire crew with russet mold spores—only Captain Havner Ames managed to resist the infection. As he watched his friends and crew succumb to the infection, he knew that he couldn't allow the strange bulb (which had closed up on itself and was pulsing with a foul life,

as if replenishing its store of spores) to reach the coast. Yet the *Nightvoice* was now adrift on a current that would swiftly take it to the coast of Sargava. It was all Captain Ames could do to alter the large ship's course on his own so that it instead crashed against the rocks here. Delirious and mad, Captain Ames abandoned the wrecked ship and climbed over the island, hoping to find a place to hide the fungal bulb away where it could do no more damage. His ultimate fate is detailed at area **S**.

The thick fungus ropes that bridge the shore and the ship can be used to make the 60-foot crossing to the wreck with a successful DC 5 Climb check. A fall results in a character landing in the surf below, where it's a DC 20 Swim check to make it back to shore or to the wreck itself.

**Creatures:** The *Nightvoice* is now the main lair of what its crew have become—a tribe of vegepygmies led by a hulking thug that was once the ship's cook. Without a viable source of russet mold spores, this tribe is slowly dying out as they fall prey to accidents while patrolling the Silent Island. Any victims they catch alive are brought back to the *Nightvoice*, tied to soggy chairs around a foul, fungus-caked table in the ship's galley and then force-fed soups and roasts and stews burgeoning with fungus. The vegepygmies hope to transform more living creatures into new vegepygmies with this method, but the fungus on the island lacks this capability—typically, those fed only die and are thrown into the sea. A character bound to a chair by fungus fibers can break free with a DC 19 Strength or Escape Artist check.

While the vegepygmy tribe consists of nine individuals, only three are typically found here on the *Nightvoice*—the boss and his two bodyguards. Once the ship's cook, the now-nameless boss received the brunt of the spore pod's load of russet mold years ago and grew into the largest and most dangerous of the vegepygmies. The three vegepygmies spend most of their time lurking in the ship's galley below deck, but if they notice anyone moving around on the deck above, they quickly shamble up to investigate.

**VEGEPYGMY BOSS****CR 2**

**XP 600**

Male vegepygmy fighter 1 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 273)

N Small plant

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +5

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +3 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 19 (2 HD; 1d8+1d10+10)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +0

**Defensive Abilities** plant traits; **DR** 5/slashing or bludgeoning;

**Immune** electricity

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk longspear +5 (1d6+3/x3) or



# SERPENT'S SKULL

2 claws +4 (1d4+2)

## TACTICS

**During Combat** The boss, like the standard vegepygmies, prefers to capture living victims, and attempts to stabilize fallen foes so that it can try to feed them later in a hopeless attempt to grow more of its kind.

**Morale** The vegepygmy boss fights to the death.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 15, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 9

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 15

**Feats** Power Attack, Toughness

**Skills** Climb +6, Perception +5, Stealth +15 (+23 in vegetation)

**Languages** Undercommon, Vegepygmy (cannot speak)

**Gear** masterwork longspear

## VEGEPYGMIES (2)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 5 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 273)

**Treasure:** The *Nightvoice's* cargo hold is a hideous scene—the skeletal remains of the ship's crew lie enshrined here. In all there are 19 bodies here, each consisting of a mound of bones caked over with mold; each sits amid a small circle of personal objects, teeth, coins, bits of jewelry, and other objects that the crewmember valued in life. The vegepygmies honor these bodies as their "birth corpses" in a crude form of ancestor worship. While many of the objects scattered around the skeletons have long since rotted or rusted away, a search of the hold reveals a total of 432 cp, 284 sp, 123 gp, and jewelry worth 250 gp amid the bones, along with a pair of *bracers of armor +1* and a *wand of mirror image* (5 charges).

Above, in what remains of the captain's cabin, a DC 20 Perception check turns up a moldy ship's log. The pages are badly damaged by mold, but a DC 20 Linguistics check allows a reader to decipher much of the log—each attempt to do so takes 8 hours. If deciphered, the log identifies the ship as the *Nightvoice*, and relates the cause of the crew's fate and, eventually, the captain's decision to "carry the

blasphemous pod up to the top of a rock spire to the east of this island" in an attempt to hide it away from the prying eyes of humanity. This log is worth a reward of 1,000 gp if returned to a venture-captain in the Pathfinder Society, for it not only allows the Society to enter the crew members' names on the Wall of Names at the Grand Lodge of Absalom, but it also contains some valuable information for explorations of southern Garund. Sharing this information with Gelik Aberwhinge completes his quest (see pages 59–60).

## S. THE FUNGUS GOD (CR 3)

A fifty-foot-high pillar of fungus-covered rock thrusts up from the surf here, angling away from the main body of the larger island to the west. The rock is connected to the main island by thick tangles of fibrous fungus, perhaps providing a way to cross the churning surf below.

As with the fungus strands at area **R**, the fungus ropes can be used to make the 90-foot crossing to the pillar with a successful DC 5 Climb check. A fall results in a character landing in the surf below, where it's a DC 20 Swim check to make it back to shore—there is no beach to speak of around this rocky spire's base.

**Creature:** Near the top of the rocky spire on the northern face, obscured from the sun and 40 feet above the sea below, is a cave mouth. Numerous strange offerings lie around the cave mouth—brightly colored seashells, bits of polished stone, and many bones and skulls. The opening leads 15 feet inside the pillar through several thick curtains of fungus to a 30-foot-diameter cavern—it was to this cavern that Captain Ames took the strange fungal bulb to hide it away from the world, but not long after he arrived at this location, the bulb finally burst and covered him with its spores. Feeling the burning of the sun's rays, the quickly changing captain staggered into this cave, where his fungal transformation became complete.

The captain still lives, after a fashion, although he is now a bloated tower of foul purple fungus growing along the southern wall of the cave, little more than a skeleton covered with a thin layer of violet fungal



Vegepygmy Boss

“flesh” that periodically twitches and writhes and moans. The vegepygmies of the island can hear his moans in the form of dream-like urges, and worship the once-human creature as a sort of god. Their offerings line the cave entrance, but none of the vegepygmies dare venture into the cave to dishonor their god's privacy.

In fact, the vegepygmies aren't far off from treating this creature as a god, for what was once Captain Ames has been transformed into what is essentially a malformed, fiendish violet fungus—a semi-anthropomorphic monstrosity linked to the demon lord Cyth-V'sug, from whom the strange fungal bulb was long ago excreted. The bulb itself is long gone, having fulfilled its purpose by transforming the captain and his crew into fungal monsters. This mindless fungal monstrosity has no memory of its previous existence as a man, and is content to grow in peace unless its lair is intruded upon. In this event, the fungus reacts swiftly to intrusions, ripping free from the cave wall with a hideous, wet tearing sound. It appears as a drooping, vaguely humanoid mass of purple fungus and twitching violet strands, capable of slow movement by pulling itself along with its tendrils.

#### FIENDISH VIOLET FUNGUS

CR 3

XP 800

hp 30 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 274, 294)

**Development:** The fungus that grows upon the island is linked to the life of this monstrous obscenity. If the fiendish violet fungus is slain, the rest of the fungus upon the Silent Island dies as well, quickly withering to inert spores over the course of several days. All remaining vegepygmies on the island die within 1d6 rounds of its death, making an exploration of the *Nightvoice* much safer. It will take less than a year for the jungle to reclaim this island.

## T. PEARL BED

A jungle trail comes to an abrupt end at a fifty-foot-high cliff overlooking the sea below. A number of knotted ropes and vines hang over the edge, leading down to a rocky beach below.

The surf here is remarkably calm due to the underwater topography, and swimming in the waters here is merely a DC 15 Swim check out to 50 feet from shore, unlike the DC 20 checks elsewhere on the island's shores. The water is deep, averaging 20 feet deep even close to shore.

**Treasure:** A bed of oysters covers a relatively large area here, but the Thrunefang cannibals have done a somewhat overzealous job of harvesting the oysters capable of producing the deep red pearls they so love. Every day spent searching the oyster bed for pearls brings a flat 5% chance of recovering a single red pearl worth 50 gp—no more than 10 such pearls can be found at this time.

## U. THE SPIRIT OF THE HILL (CR 4)

A single, immense banyan tree grows atop this hill, surrounded by a smaller grove of trees that seem almost like supplicants gathered around a revered elder to bask in the wisdom of the ages.

**Creature:** This 60-foot-tall tree is the home of an exotic dryad named Aycenia, the only one of her kind on Smuggler's Shiv. The Thrunefang cannibals avoid this region, thinking Aycenia to be an evil spirit, so the PCs are likely to be the first intelligent creatures to visit her in many years. Aycenia appears to the PCs as soon as she notices them, smiling and approaching in a non-threatening manner—if the PCs attack, she fights back, but she hopes to establish friendly communications with them.

If the PCs speak with her, Aycenia does not recall how she came to be on the island, only that she has dwelt here for many ages. She remembers when the *Throne's Fang* castaways first came to the island, when the first Sargavan colonists began building the lighthouse, and even earlier times. Yet she also knows that she is a newcomer to Smuggler's Shiv, for she can feel through her tree's roots that even more ancient secrets and creatures lie under the soil of this island. These sensations come from the denizens and architecture of the ancient Azlanti and serpentfolk ruins hidden on the isle, but Aycenia does not know what or where these areas are.

What she does know is that part of her realm is suffering a hideous blight. She can sense the foul intrusion of the fungus on the Silent Island to the north (area Q), but is relatively powerless to do anything about it, for she fears what the fungal blight might do to her even if she were brave enough to abandon her tree to handle the situation herself. Aycenia offers to aid the PCs if they can travel to the island and rid the place of its colorless curse. In reward for this service, Aycenia not only promises to allow the PCs to rest here as often as they wish, but she also pledges to use her magic to aid them in whatever method they desire. Aycenia knows much about the island's inhabitants, and you can use her to tell the PCs about how the cannibals came to the island 70-some years ago, or to point them to the Tide Stone (area Y) if they seek the strange dark shape in the night (Aycenia knows the winged chupacabra lairs there and that it is a cruel and ravenous blood-drinker, but not what it is or what its capabilities are). In short, if the PCs manage to help Aycenia, she'll be a strong and reliable ally for them—and on Smuggler's Shiv, a reliable ally could well be the greatest treasure of them all.

Aycenia is a beautiful creature with deep green hair and eyes the color of a tropical sunset. Her bond to the natural world goes beyond even what most dryads enjoy, and she not



# SERPENT'S SKULL

only possesses the advanced simple template but also a few additional spell-like abilities (listed below) as a result.

**AYCENIA**

**CR 4**

**XP 1,200**

Advanced female dryad (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 116, 294)

hp 45

**Additional Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 6th;

concentration +12)

3/day—*cure light wounds*, *lesser restoration*

1/day—*commune with nature*

**Story Award:** If the PCs manage to destroy the fungal blight on Silent Island and thus earn Aycenia's friendship, award them 2,400 XP.

## V. THRUNEFANG CAMP

This area is detailed in Part Three.

## W. ROPE BRIDGE

A fifty-foot-wide gorge scars the landscape here; a rapidly flowing river rushes through the gorge, with a rickety-looking rope bridge providing a treacherous-looking way to cross.

This rope bridge is stable, but only as long as no more than one Medium-sized creature crosses it at once. If more creatures attempt to cross at the same time, the bridge creaks ominously, and if the load isn't removed in 1d4 rounds, the bridge snaps, dropping everyone on it 30 feet into the shallows below. The river is only 5 feet deep here, so a fall causes the full 3d6 points of damage. The sides of the gorge can be climbed with a DC 20 Climb check.

## X. RED MOUNTAIN

This low mountain is the highest point on the entire island. Barren of vegetation, the jagged rise of rust-red stones juts from the earth like an immense scar, providing a vertiginous view of the surrounding blue of the seemingly endless ocean.

The entire southeast portion of Smuggler's Shiv is a single mountain, and from its peak, the PCs can get a full view of the island, including the lighthouse to the west (area V; a DC 15 Perception check picks out the smaller structures of the cannibal camp surrounding the larger stone lighthouse), the strangely drab Silent Island to the northwest (area Q), and the large grassy hilltop to the north at area K. The scarlet hue of the stones that crown this summit are the result of its proximity to the temple of Zura, although the

stones don't radiate any magic. The cannibals see the rocks as holy, and provide regular sacrifices atop this hill (usually bound animals, but also a human sacrifice at least once a year) to the "Red Mountain Devil" (the winged chupacabra from area Y2) to prevent it from taking any of them as a meal.

## Y. THE TIDE STONE

This area is detailed in Part Four.

## Z. THE AZLANTI TEMPLE

This area is detailed in Part Four.

# PART THREE: THE CANNIBAL CAMP

Sooner or later, the PCs are going to come into conflict with the ruling tribe on Smuggler's Shiv—the cannibals known as the Thrunefangs. Descended

from the shipwrecked survivors of the Chelish warship *Throne's Fang*, these nearly feral men and women have descended into savagery and are now little better than monsters, for the Thrunefangs are not cannibals by necessity, but by choice. While they view the consumption of human flesh as a method of gaining the power and strength of other men and women, they also feast on the flesh of their own kind out of deference to and in honor of their undead "Mother," who dwells in a series of caves below the camp and whose "gift" of immortality awaits only those members of the tribe who are the most devout and loyal to her.

## THE FATE OF THE THRONE'S FANG

When the Age of Lost Omens began, Sargava was cut off as its mother country Chelias fell into civil war. When the Thrice-Dammed House of Thrune rose to power and seized control of Chelias, 30-some years had passed, and Sargava had all but become its own, self-governed nation. The House of Thrune attempted to regain control of the lost colony, but their navy was defeated due to another sort of deal with the devil—Sargava entered into a pact with the Free Captains of the Shackles, and with their aid was able to defeat the Chelish navy.

Yet one of the ships that sailed south in the ill-advised attempt to regain control of Sargava never made it—this ship was the *Throne's Fang*, captained by a man named Leven Beliker. Cut off from the rest of the fleet by a squall, the *Throne's Fang* was swept up by the currents surrounding Smuggler's Shiv and wrecked upon its shore. With the Chelish fleet's resounding defeat by Sargava, no



one else knew that the *Throne's Fang* hadn't even joined the battle—most assumed she was sunk along with the rest of the fleet.

And so the survivors of the wreck were forced to fend for themselves. They established a small camp near a ruined lighthouse not far from where their ship had run aground, and Captain Beliker did his best to organize the survivors for an attempt to escape, but the ship's priest, driven mad by missing the battle to retake Sargava, organized a mutiny. This priest, a woman named Nylithati, believed that Asmodeus had wrecked the *Throne's Fang* for a purpose, and that if they left the island before that purpose was divined, they would all be doomed. Captain Beliker tried to oppose her, but Nylithati was nothing if not persuasive, and the survivors followed her out of fear. Disgusted with it all, Captain Beliker abandoned the camp and lived the rest of his days out alone as a hermit in the island's interior, while Nylithati's madness drove her and the fellow survivors into an ever-deepening pit of insanity.

Today, the *Throne's Fang* is a mostly collapsed ruin on the southwest coast of the Shiv. The wreck is located at area **D16**, but her survivors have long since stripped the ship of anything of value—only the name carved on her bow, nearly erased by erosion, provides any link to the past.

## FINDING THE CAMP

The exact method by which the PCs come upon the Thrunefang camp (area **V**) can vary. If they're fast explorers, they might discover the camp before the Thrunefangs know there are new "visitors" on the island, and if they're particularly slow, they might end up being ambushed by the cannibals, captured, and brought to the camp as prisoners. You might wish to have the cannibals attack the PCs' campsite while they're out exploring if they're taking their time—in this case, you should have one of the NPCs left behind at the camp escape capture, either by hiding or fleeing, so that when the PCs return to their camp to find it destroyed and abandoned, the surviving NPC can tell the PCs what happened. Fortunately, the cannibals don't immediately kill and eat their prisoners, so the PCs should have time to mount a rescue operation to free their friends—how long they have to make this rescue depends on you.

Of course, the lighthouse that looms over the Thrunefang camp is its own sort of lure—this mostly completed structure was never actually used, but with a little work the PCs can finish the job and use the light to signal the shipping lane. The light represents the greatest opportunity for rescue, so eventually the PCs will need to deal with the cannibals who control the site if they hope to escape Smuggler's Shiv.

Yet there's another, more hidden goal at the camp, for the site is built over an ancient serpentfolk temple to Ydersius.

Currently the lair of the ghoulish minions of Nylithati, this temple contains clues the PCs need to locate and explore the Azlanti temple of Zura. And if their curiosity about such unusual ruins isn't enough to compel the PCs to seek them out, the discovery that the one responsible for wrecking them on the Shiv in the first place can be found at those ruins just might.

## THE CANNIBALS

The Thrunefang tribe is descended from the original crew of the *Throne's Fang*, and consists of 22 cannibals, an old witch named Malikadna, and their chieftain, Klorak the Red. The exact number of cannibals present depends on whether the camp is preparing for a feast (as is the case if they've captured any PCs or NPCs). In the days leading up to a feast, all of the cannibals on the island are present, but at other times, only 12 cannibals are present at the camp, with the remaining cannibals elsewhere on the island gathering water, hunting, or patrolling.

**Cannibals:** The Thrunefang cannibals are deeply tanned and decorate themselves with scars, particularly pentagram-shaped scars. They keep their teeth filed to sharp points and their wild-eyed expressions do much to evoke their mental instability. Deformed children are common, given their incestuous unions, but those who are too malformed are universally offered to the Red Mountain Devil.

### THRUNEFANG CANNIBALS (22)

CR 1/2

#### XP 200 each

Human barbarian 1

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; Senses Perception +5

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#### DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 10, flat-footed 9 (+2 Dex, -2 rage, +1 shield)

hp 14 each (1d12+8)

Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +3

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#### OFFENSE

Speed 45 ft.

Melee broken scimitar +3 (1d6+2)

Ranged javelin +3 (1d6+4)

Special Attacks rage (6 rounds/day)

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#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The cannibals rage on the first round of combat and charge, if possible. They only use their javelins if they are unable to charge any foes or if an opponent is completely surrounded.

**Morale** Fanatic and insane, the cannibals fight to the death if encountered in their camp. If encountered in the wilds, they flee if reduced below 5 hit points or if they run out of rounds of rage.

**Base Statistics** AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; hp 12; Fort +4, Will +1; Melee broken scimitar +1 (1d6+2); Str 14, Con 15;



# Serpent's Skull



**CMB** +3; **Skills** Climb +5, Swim +5

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**STATISTICS**

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**Str** 18, **Dex** 15, **Con** 19, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 15

**Feats** Fleet, Toughness

**Skills** Climb +7, Perception +5, Stealth +2, Survival +5, Swim +7

**Languages** Pidgin Infernal

**SQ** fast movement

**Gear** light wooden shield, 3 javelins, broken scimitar, red pearl amulet worth 50 gp

**Witch:** Malikadna is the oldest of the cannibals, and somewhat deranged in her advanced age. She's held the position of soothsayer and religious advisor for nearly 40 years. Born on the island, yet old enough to remember when Nylithati was still alive, this elderly witch is the tribe's historian as well as the one they go to when they need healing. Of course, the cannibals fear her strange powers and generally don't bother her except under cases of extreme need. Malikadna is content to live alone with her monkey familiar Thaltaki in the isolated hut

southeast of the main camp, spending her time sleeping, communing with spirits while in a drug-induced trance, or brewing potions.

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**MALIKADNA**

**CR 3**

**XP 800**

Female old human witch 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 65)

**CE** Medium humanoid (human)

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

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**DEFENSE**

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

**hp** 22 (4d6+8)

**Fort** +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** +7

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**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** quarterstaff -1 (1d6-3)

**Special Attacks** hexes (cackle, evil eye, misfortune)

**Witch Spells Prepared** (CL 4th; concentration +9)

2nd—*hideous laughter* (DC 17), *lesser restoration*, *summon monster II*





1st—*cause fear* (DC 16), *cure light wounds* (2), *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 16)

o—*dancing lights*, *mending*, *message*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 15)

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#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Malikadna casts *mage armor* before entering into combat.

**During Combat** Malikadna prefers to avoid melee combat, instead using her spells and hexes to support the cannibals in a fight. If confronted on her own, she tries to use *hideous laughter* or *cause fear* to minimize attacks, but as soon as she takes damage, she uses her *wand of vampiric touch* to damage foes and heal her own damage.

**Morale** Malikadna fights to the death.

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#### STATISTICS

**Str** 5, **Dex** 9, **Con** 10, **Int** 20, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** –1; **CMD** 8

**Feats** Brew Potion, Great Fortitude, Toughness

**Skills** Acrobatics +4, Bluff +5, Heal +10, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +7, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +12

**Languages** Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Infernal, Polyglot, Sylvan  
**SQ** witch's familiar (monkey named Thaltaki)

**Combat Gear** *wand of vampiric touch* (8 charges); **Other Gear** quarterstaff

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#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Cackle (Su)** As a move action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, Malikadna can cackle madly. Any creature within 30 feet that is under the effects of her evil eye or misfortune hex has the duration of that effect extended by 1 round.

**Evil Eye (Su)** As a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, Malikadna can use the evil eye to cause a visible foe within 30 feet to take a –2 penalty on one of the following (Malikadna's choice): AC, ability checks, attack rolls, saving throws, or skill checks. This effect lasts for 8 rounds. A DC 17 Will save reduces this duration to 1 round. This is a mind-affecting effect.

**Misfortune (Su)** As a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, Malikadna can cause a creature within 30 feet to suffer grave misfortune for 1 round. Anytime the creature makes an ability check, attack roll, saving throw, or skill check, it must roll twice and take the worse result. A DC 17 Will save negates this effect. A single creature cannot be targeted by this ability more than once per day.

**Witch's Familiar** A witch forms a close bond with a familiar, a creature that teaches her magic and helps to guide her along her path. Instead of a spellbook, Malikadna must commune with her familiar each day to prepare her spells. A witch's familiar otherwise functions like the wizard's arcane bond class feature.

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#### THALTAKI

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#### CR—

Monkey witch's familiar (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 132)

**hp** 11

**Chieftain:** Called Klorak the Red as much for his wild red mane of hair as for his penchant for glorying in the feel of his enemies' blood on his skin, the cannibal chieftain wields a scimitar that remains in remarkably good condition (thanks to its magic) despite the passage of decades. Klorak is the Thrunefangs' seventh chieftain, and one of the longest serving. As chieftain, the duty and honor of fathering the tribe's children are his alone, but he has been unable to sire an undeformed child for several years, something that the rest of the tribe has started to view as an indication that his time to rule them has passed. Klorak spends much of his time sequestered in his den on the second floor of the lighthouse as a result, suffering through countless different herbal and alchemical "cures" provided to him by Malikadna. Unfortunately, unknown to Klorak, these "cures" are the primary cause of his problem—Malikadna wants to see his rule fail (as revenge for a past insult long forgotten by Klorak, but not by the witch), and if she continues sabotaging his lineage for a few more years, such a glorious uprising is all but assured.

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#### KLORAK THE RED

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#### CR 3

**XP** 800

Male human barbarian 3/ranger 1

CE Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +6; **Senses** Perception +7

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#### DEFENSE

**AC** 12, touch 10, flat-footed 10 (+2 Dex, –2 rage, +2 shield)

**hp** 48 (4 HD; 3d12+1d10+23)

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

**Defensive Abilities** trap sense +1, uncanny dodge

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#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 45 ft.

**Melee** +1 scimitar +10 (1d6+6/18–20), bite +4 (1d4+5)

**Ranged** javelin +6 (1d6+5)

**Special Attacks** favored enemy (humans +2), rage (10 rounds/day), rage powers (animal fury)

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#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Klorak rages on the first round of combat and then charges the nearest foe, resorting to javelins only against foes who flee and can outrun him. Klorak is somewhat obsessed with blood, especially since one of Malikadna's many lies to him was that the blood of his enemies can increase his virility. The round after he first damages a foe, he attempts a touch attack (this action provokes an attack of opportunity and forces him to drop or sheath his scimitar) to gather the foe's blood on his palm so he can smear the blood across his chest and face, rolling his eyes and howling maniacally as he does so. He does this the same every round after he drops a foe into negative hit points. This tactic should help to make Klorak a memorable foe against the PCs as well as to give them



# Serpent's Skull

a few moments of respite against the powerful enemy—if you find that the PCs are having little problem handling the dangerous barbarian, feel free to omit this behavior.

**Morale** Klorak fights to the death.

**Base Statistics** When not raging, Klorak's statistics are AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; **hp** 42; **Fort** +7, **Will** +1; **Melee** +1 *scimitar* +8 (1d6+4/18–20), bite +2 (1d4+3); **Str** 16, **Con** 14; **CMB** +7; **Skills** Climb +6, Swim +7

## STATISTICS

**Str** 20, **Dex** 15, **Con** 18, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 19

**Feats** Fleet, Improved Initiative, Toughness

**Skills** Climb +8, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +8, Perception +7, Survival +7, Swim +9

**Languages** Pidgin Infernal

**SQ** fast movement, track +1, wild empathy +2



Klorak the Red

**Gear** heavy wooden shield, +1 *scimitar*, 5 javelins, red pearl amulet worth 500 gp

## YARZOTH'S VISIT

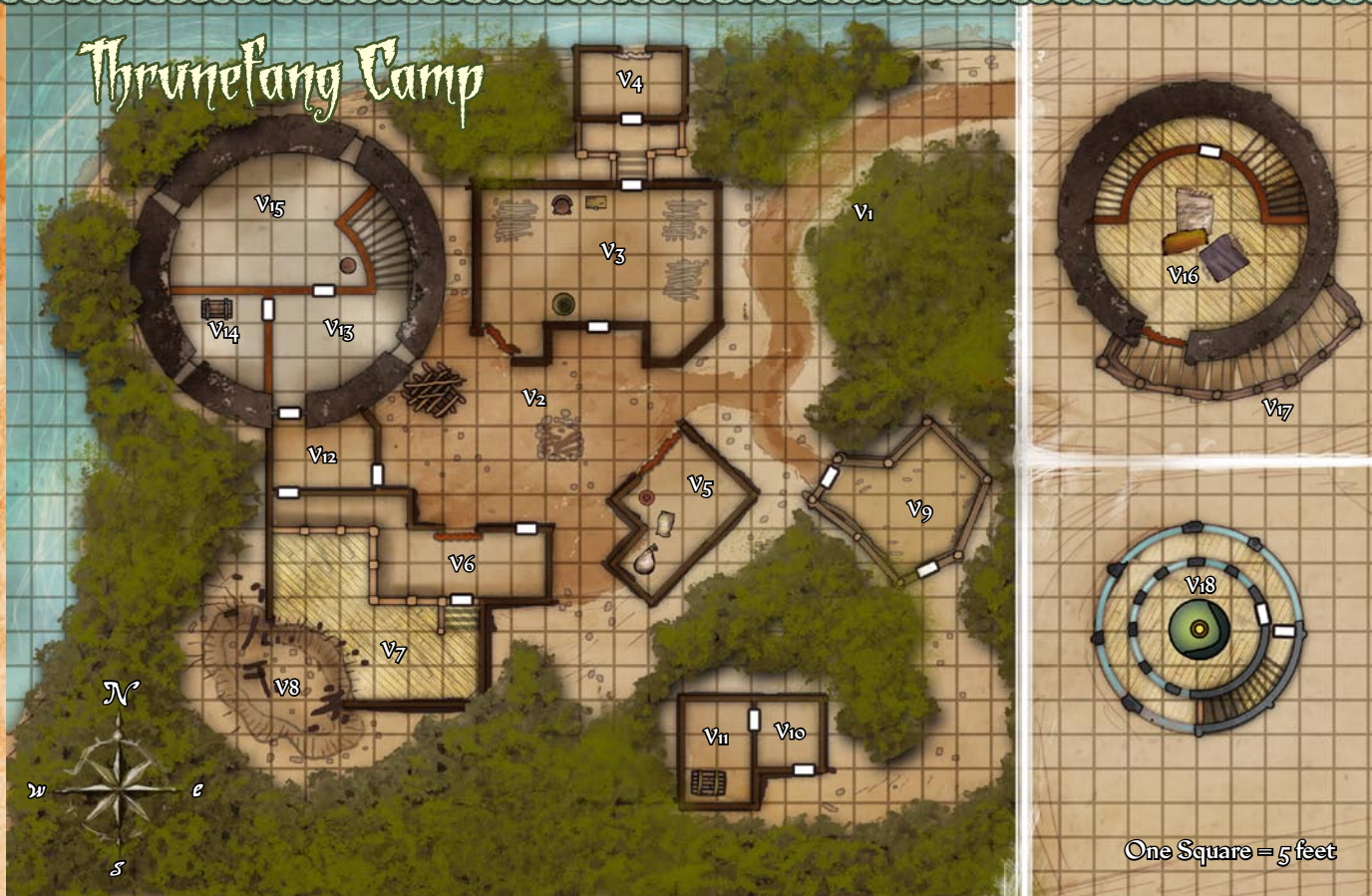
Yarzoth's discovery in Viperwall led her to believe that an ancient temple of Ydersius was located on the southwestern bluffs of Smuggler's Shiv—but she was surprised to learn that this same site now served as the lair of a tribe of cannibals. After she and her dominated ally, Captain Kovack, made landfall on the northeastern shore of the Shiv, they made all haste to the cannibal camp. Once there, Yarzoth was only inconvenienced for a short time when she found the site she had sought to be infested with savages—she waited to ambush a lone cannibal who was out hunting, killed him, assumed his form via *disguise self*, and marched into the camp with Captain Kovack as her prisoner, claiming to have caught a new visitor to the island. When Klorak came to investigate, she used *dominate person* on the chieftain to gain his total cooperation. Yarzoth lived with the cannibals for several days after this, forcing Klorak to give her private quarters in the lighthouse—it was during this time that the Thrunefangs learned about the PCs' presence on the island.

When Yarzoth learned that the ruined temple she sought was certainly the same as the cannibals' holy Caves of the Mother, she used her magic to convince the cannibals that she should be allowed to visit the Mother. She and Captain Kovack descended into the caves, and Yarzoth commanded several lacedons to lead her to "the temple." She met Nylithati there, and in return for releasing command of the lacedons and also handing over Kovack as a new inductee into the undead "family," Yarzoth was given leave to study the carvings on the walls. She learned the secret of the Tide Stone and the Azlanti ruin there and moved on to that location soon thereafter, leaving Kovack to his fate.

## THE THRUNEFANG CAMP

The Thrunefang camp consists of several large wooden huts with palm-frond roofs arranged in a small clearing in the jungle in the shadow of a stone lighthouse. It's unlikely that the PCs will be forced to fight all of the cannibals at once unless they brazenly walk into the camp.

By reducing the cannibals' strength in wandering encounters or by using stealth or trickery on their approach to the camp, the PCs can attack in ways that force the cannibals to react in waves—furthermore, they may be able to recruit additional aid from their fellow castaways when it comes to the final confrontation in the camp itself. Since the campsite is a



dynamic place, the aboveground locations in the camp are summarized below rather than treated as individual encounter areas—the inhabitants of each area can quickly move to others as needed.

**V1. Shiv Dragon (CR 2):** A single Shiv dragon is kept tethered to a tree here via a thick rope. The lizard is foul-tempered, but has been trained not to attack anyone who dresses or smells like one of the cannibals. A human PC who dresses in a cannibal's rags and who doesn't pause as she walks by the tethered lizard won't be attacked, but the creature immediately lunges at anyone else who comes within 10 feet of this point.

#### SHIV DRAGON

CR 2

XP 600

Monitor lizard (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 194)

hp 22

**V2. Firepit:** This is the communal center of the tribe and the site where their great feasts occur. A large iron cauldron salvaged from the *Thrune's Fang* sits atop the fire. During the day, four cannibals mill about this area, repairing tools, talking among themselves, or just relaxing. Near the base of the lighthouse to the northwest of the firepit lies a 10-foot-diameter hole covered by a lid of bamboo and

driftwood. This hole drops 20 feet down into area **V19**. A few stakes driven into the ground serve as anchors for nearby coils of vines that can be used to descend into the pit, although the cannibals rarely do so, as they view the hole as the entrance to their afterlife.

**V3. Communal Hut:** The largest hut in the camp, this is where the male cannibals share living space—the females live in the chieftain's room on the second floor of the lighthouse. During the night, the four cannibals not on guard duty at **V4** or **V12** can be found here.

**V4. Guard Post:** This guard post sits 10 feet above the ground on thick stilts, and grants an excellent view of the sea and the path leading up to the camp—there are always two cannibals on guard here.

**V5. Storage Hut:** This hut is used to store tools, food (including a month's worth of dried human jerky), drinking water, and, if any PCs or NPCs are captured, confiscated gear.

**V6. Butchery:** This wide area has an open wall looking out over the prisoner pen to the south. Two long, horrifically bloodstained slabs of wood serve as butcher's tables. The cannibals delight in the cruel practice of preparing meals for cooking in front of any surviving prisoners.

**V7. Prisoner Pen:** Open to the sky, this muddy yard is fenced in by a bamboo and driftwood fence. Numerous



# Serpent's Skull

stakes driven deep into the ground provide places for prisoners to be tied with their hands behind their backs—prisoners generally aren't kept long enough for the cannibals to worry about this inactivity causing health problems. A person tied to a stake can escape the bonds with a DC 25 Escape Artist check or a DC 23 Strength check to break the ropes. The fence can be clambered over with a DC 10 Climb check, or broken with a DC 23 Strength check.

**V8. Refuse Pit:** This muddy, 10-foot-deep pit is where the cannibals generally dispose of the remains of their meals, along with any other refuse they might have.

The pit walls can be scaled with a DC 15 Climb check.

**V9. Skeleton Pen (CR 2):** Long ago, the witch Malikadna used a *robe of bones* that contained several human skeleton patches on it to create herself a small army of undead minions. Not

only did this give her a group of loyal minions, but it dramatically increased her power and respect in the tribe. Today, only four skeletons remain. She keeps them in a pen of wood and bamboo (similar to the fence surrounding the prisoner pen at area V7), where they stand on guard awaiting her commands. If the skeletons see anyone other than Malikadna approaching their pen, they rattle their broken scimitars and raise a ruckus; anyone who attacks the skeletons or approaches within 5 feet of the fence compels them to attack. It's a DC 10 Climb check to clamber over the 10-foot-high fence, something the skeletons do without hesitation to pursue foes once a fight's on.

**HUMAN SKELETONS (4)** CR 1/3  
**XP 135 each**  
**hp 4 each** (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 250)

**V10. Malikadna's Workshop:** Malikadna uses this room as a workshop to prepare her foul-smelling alchemical mixtures, medicines, balms, meals, and potions. A search of the area turns up three antitoxins, two smokesticks, three tanglefoot bags, a thunderstone, six *potions of cure light wounds*, and two *potions of lesser restoration*. During the day, Malikadna can be found here.

**V11. Malikadna's Bedroom:** This filthy chamber is decorated with hundreds of tiny bones and feathers hanging from twine. The place smells hideous—a combination of body odor, bitter alchemical waste, and monkey. Malikadna can be found sleeping here during the night.

**V12. Guard Post:** Two cannibals always stand guard in this room, watching over the entrance to the lighthouse.

**V13. Lighthouse Foyer:** When necessary, Chief Klorak meets with his cannibals in this empty room.

**V14. Guest Room:** This room, once used for storage, was converted into a guest room after Yarzoth dominated Klorak and demanded a private place to stay for a few days. The room contains a crude (but comfortable) bed made of driftwood and a homemade feather mattress, along with the remains of several meals—many of which are recognizable as rations taken from the *Jenivere*.

**V15. Shrine to Throne:** This cluttered room has been decorated with all manner of relics and remnants taken from the wreck of the *Throne's Fang*, including its Asmodeus-shaped figurehead, which looms to the north as the centerpiece of this temple-like area. The room functions as a shrine to the Thrunefangs' history—an investigation of the fantastic amount of clutter here and a DC 20 Knowledge (history) check is enough to confirm that the items here date from the earliest days of the House of Thrune's rule over Cheliax, and were likely taken from one of several ships that sailed south to Sargava over 70 years ago in the failed attempt to reestablish control over the wayward colony.



Malikadna & Thaltaki

**V16. Chieftain's Den:** Chief Klorak can be found here at any time of day, along with his four consorts. The chamber is decorated with furniture taken from the *Throne's Fang*, most of which is in relatively poor shape. A dented footlocker against the east wall contains the 70-year-old payroll from the ship—treasure kept more out of nostalgia by the cannibals than anything else. The chest contains several rotted bags, along with 4,200 sp and 180 gp.

**V17. Balcony:** This wooden balcony is built onto the side of the lighthouse and supported by a tangled mess of driftwood and bamboo scaffolding. Although it looks rickety, the balcony is quite stable. It's a 20-foot drop to the ground below.

**V18. The Light:** The top of the lighthouse isn't quite finished—the colonists abandoned the project only a few days before they would have completed construction. The massive bronze reflector and other machinery here could be restored to functionality with 2d4 days of work. A DC 20 Knowledge (engineering) or Craft (carpentry, stonemasonry, or even traps) can reduce this time to a mere day of work. Once repaired, the light can be used to efficiently signal the shipping lanes to the southwest—see *Concluding the Adventure*.

## THE CAVES OF THE MOTHER

The chambers below the Thrunefang camp are a combination of natural caverns and ancient ruins—the site was originally built thousands of years ago by a small group of serpentfolk who were using Smuggler's Shiv as a watchpost against the arrival of Azlanti or other enemies. They even created a potent magical defense to manipulate the tides around the island, so that they could wreck ships that approached the Shiv by manipulating one of several magical megaliths known as Tide Stones. But when their Azlanti enemies finally did come, they did so in such force that the serpentfolk were overwhelmed. The Azlanti conquerors repurposed the main serpentfolk temple to the east, but never discovered this more well-hidden shrine.

More recently, a tribe of lacedons used the caves as a lair. When the *Throne's Fang* wrecked, it wasn't long before the ship's priest, Nylithati, discovered these caves and attempted to make contact with the lacedons to force them to obey her commands. She was savaged by the undead, but in the end her attempt worked better than she could have hoped, for after she succumbed to ghoulish fever she became a lacedon herself. Since then, she has served almost as a god for the Thrunefang tribe, and it is her sinister influence that led the tribe down the path to cannibalism. Nylithati, or "Mother Thrunefang" as she's known to the cannibals, is content to dwell in these caves, worship her new deity Ydersius, and accept the delicious offerings her "children" above periodically drop down to her for food or new minions.

## Strange Weather

At some point during this adventure, Yarzoth activates the Tide Stone at area Y1, causing the tide to recede out of Crab Lagoon and expose the entrance to the temple of Zura (area Y10). When she does this, bolts of lightning lance into the sky from the Tide Stone, and a rumbling sound like thunder (actually the sound of the water draining from Crab Lagoon) echoes over the island. Several hours later, the strange sound of thunder comes again (as the waters rush back in).

Handling the timing of this event can be tricky—it should occur before the PCs enter the temple of Zura (so they can confront Yarzoth within) but not too early, since Yarzoth needs time to cross Smuggler's Shiv to the Thrunefang camp, learn how to activate the Tide Stone, and then make her way over to Red Mountain.

The best point at which to have this event occur is not long after the PCs defeat the cannibals—the PCs may feel that they've "finished" the adventure by securing the lighthouse, and the manifestation of strange weather is a great way to tell them that there's still some adventure to be had on Smuggler's Shiv—and seeing the lightning bolts from the Tide Stone can be an important clue to the Azlanti temple's location.

Arrows in cave passageways on the map indicate the direction of downward slopes.

## V19. ENTRANCE CAVERN

The uneven floor of this ten-foot-high cave is stained with blood and scattered with pieces of wood, fallen leaves, broken weapons, and in places, bits of bone. A hole in the ceiling leads out to the surface.

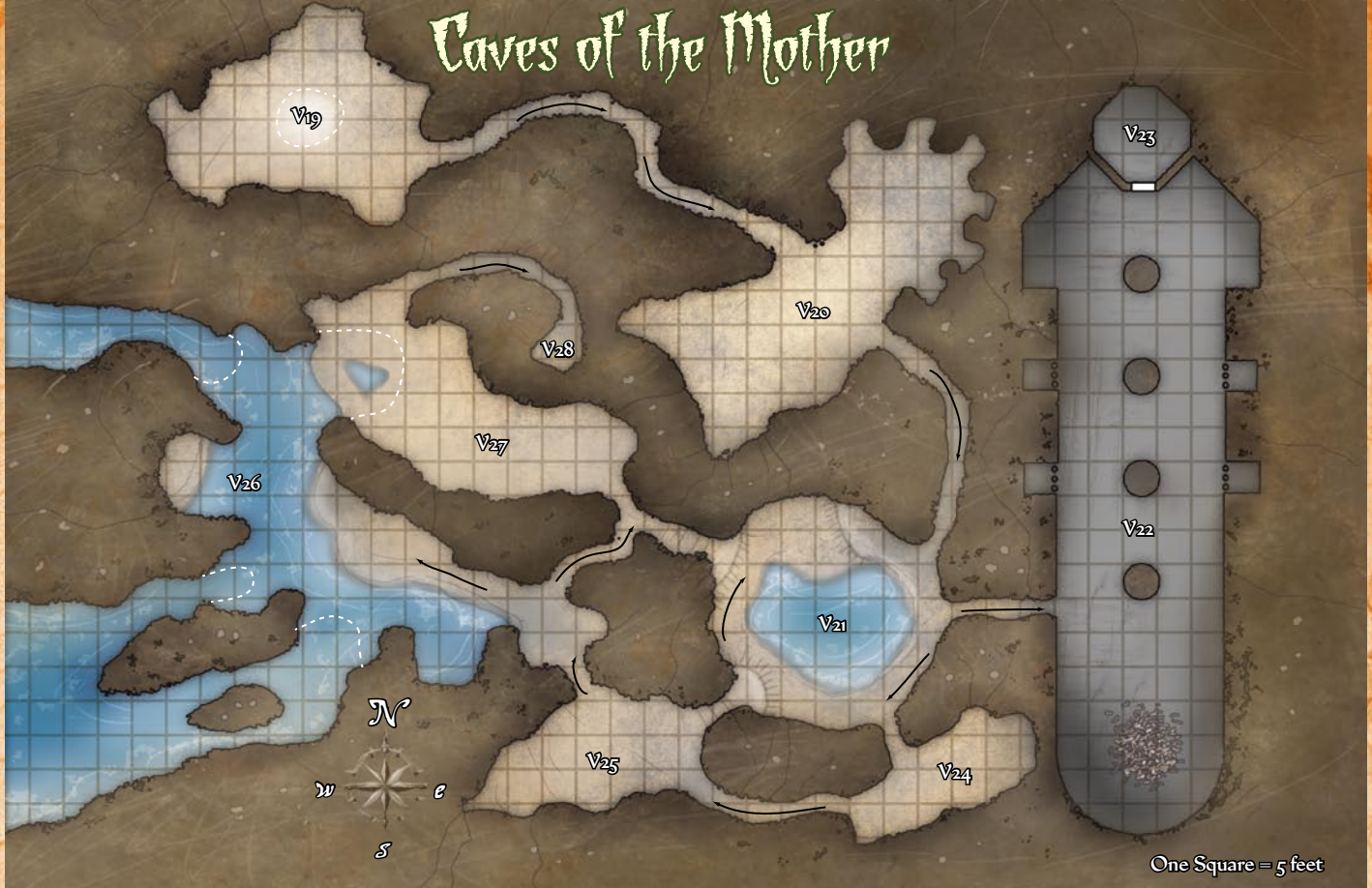
Without a rope or other method to reach the hole above, it should be nearly impossible to climb out of this pit. If the shaft above can be reached, it can be scaled with a DC 20 Climb check.

## V20. CAVERN OF UNBIRTH (CR 3)

The smell of decay is thick in the air of this wide but low-ceilinged cavern. To one side, the ceiling drops down to little more than three feet in height over a region strewn with bones and bits of old flesh, while to the other, the ceiling bulges

# Serpent's Skull

## Caves of the Mother



upward in a dome shape—six circular, pod-like alcoves line the walls of the cave at this side.

This cavern is where those selected by Mother Thrunefang to become new members of the “family” are placed once they’ve been infected with ghoulish fever. Each unfortunate is stuffed into one of the pods and periodically brought bowls of brackish water and rotting flesh if the creature’s sickness lasts long enough for hunger or thirst to become a concern.

**Creatures:** The combination of lingering magic from the temple of Ydersius, ghoulish fever, and the strange, unnatural aura that infuses Smuggler’s Shiv sometimes causes the transformation from humanoid into lacedon to malfunction. Just as the cannibals are plagued by deformed births, victims of ghoulish fever sometimes rise not as lacedons but as more feral creatures known as festrogs. Two of these savage, almost animalistic, undead guard this chamber, ensuring that any creatures placed in unbirthing alcoves remain until they complete their transformations.

**FESTROGS (2)** **CR 1**  
**XP 400 each**  
 NE Medium undead (*Hungry Are the Dead* 30)

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; **Perception** +6

### DEFENSE

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

**hp** 11 each (2d8+2)

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

**Defensive Abilities** diseased pustules; **Immune** undead traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft. (50 ft. on all fours)

**Melee** 2 claws +2 (1d4+1), bite +2 (1d4+1 plus feed and trip)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** These foul undead quickly run forward on all fours to attack any living intruders.

**Morale** The festrogs fight until destroyed.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 13, **Dex** 13, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 13

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 13 (17 vs. trip)

**Feats** Improved Initiative, Run

**Skills** Acrobatics +3, Perception +6, Stealth +6, Survival +3

**Languages** Common

**SQ** four-footed run

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Diseased Pustules (Su)** A creature that damages a festrog with a slashing or piercing natural weapon, light weapon, or one-handed weapon is sprayed with foul, diseased pus

from the creature's boils. The target must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d6 rounds from this effect. Anyone who becomes sickened from this effect is also exposed to filth fever (DC 12 Fortitude save negates). The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Feed (Su)** When a festrog inflicts bite damage on a living creature, the festrog feeds on the flesh and gains 5 temporary hit points.

**Four-Footed Run (Ex)** If a festrog doesn't hold or carry anything in its hands, it can run on all fours. This increases its speed to 50 ft. Festrogs gain Run as a bonus feat.

**Treasure:** Yarzoth abandoned Captain Kovack to these caverns, leaving him to be transformed into a lacedon (see area V22). Unfortunately for Kovack, the *dominate person* effect wore off before he completed his transformation into a lacedon. Weakened considerably by the illness and unable to escape through the guardian undead, Kovack spent his last several hours in mind-shattering guilt as memories of what he had done haunted him. He knew he was doomed, but in an attempt to find some form of absolution, he scrawled his confession on a strip of leather armor, using his own blood and a splinter of bone as a pen. This confession is presented as Handout #2.

## V21. THE THROAT

A dark pool of water lies in the center of this silo-shaped cavern. A five-foot-wide ledge of stone winds down to the pool below, passing several cave entrances along the way.

This cave is 50 feet high, and the stagnant pool of water below is another 10 feet deep. The two ledges on the west side of the cave lead further into the complex; each ledge is 10 feet above the circular pathway below. There's a 25% chance that a lacedon is perched on one of these ledges—if it is, the creature shrieks and retreats to area V27 to alert the others of its ilk that lurk there.

## V22. TEMPLE OF YDERSIUS (CR 3)

This long chamber evokes the feel of an ancient, hideous cathedral. The walls are carved with images of serpents walking upright like humans, snakes coiling around and eating hapless women and children, and stranger scenes. Four stone pillars carved like coiling snakes support the vaulted ceiling 30 feet above. Four small cells blocked by rusted bars sit in the walls to the east and west. To the north, an immense carving of a snake's head looms, an ash-caked door clenched in its jaws, while to the south rises a horrific mound of bones and partially decayed bodies in an eight-foot-tall heap arranged almost as if to evoke the imagery of a coiled snake made of corpses.

Once a temple devoted to the serpentfolk god Ydersius (identifiable as such with a DC 25 Knowledge [religion] check) and tended by a sizable clergy of reptilian acolytes, this chamber is now tended solely by the lacedon cleric Nylithati. The heap of bodies to the south is her attempt at creating a new altar in honor of the god she believes granted her life beyond death. The alcoves, once used to hold sacrifices, are empty.

The door to the north was once warded by a dangerous and ancient magical ward. Yarzoth triggered the trap when she opened the door—it nearly killed her, but she survived. A DC 26 Spellcraft check identifies the ashes and damage near the door as the result of a *greater glyph of warding* that blasted the area with fire. The discovery of several empty potion vials nearby is automatic if anyone searches the area, but a DC 20 Perception check allows someone who examines them to note they look very similar to vials they saw the Varisian scholar Ieana carrying once or twice during the *Jenivere's* final voyage. (These vials once contained *potions of cure moderate wounds*.)

**Creatures:** A pair of lacedons guards this chamber, one of which is Alizandru Kovack, the unfortunate captain of the *Jenivere*. Kovack doesn't recognize the PCs, and he



Festrog



# SERPENT'S SKULL

## Handout #2

*I am Captain Alizandru Kovack, betrayer of my crew and destroyer of the good ship Jenivere. Hell would be a welcome escape from what hideous unlife looms before me, but it is no less a punishment than I deserve. That I was enslaved mind and body to a serpentine demon who wore a Varisian's skin does not pardon me. It is my weakness that led the Jenivere, her crew, and her passengers to their doom. That Ieana has abandoned me here is nothing more than the fate I deserve. I do not beg forgiveness, but I despair that she lives still, and that she seeks something dire on this forsaken isle—she seemed particularly interested in Red Mountain. If you read this and you be a kind soul, seek out what I have become and destroy me, and then seek out Ieana and slay her as well. And to those whose lives I have helped destroy, I can only apologize from this, my dark cradle and darker grave.*

and the other lacedon hiss in outrage that their mistress's temple has been intruded upon by the living. They attack on sight, leaping off of the mound of bodies on which they had been clambering, and fight until destroyed.

### LACEDONS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Aquatic ghouls (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146)

hp 13 each

## V23. INNER SANCTUM

A low stone altar, its sides carved like coiling snakes and its top carved to resemble a yawning viper's maw, sits in the center of this room. The walls of the chamber are carved with images of anthropomorphic serpents using strange, pointed megaliths of stone to work great feats of magic—transforming an army of

humans into zombies, calling down flaming bolts of lightning from the stars, or parting the waters of the sea to dash human ships upon the exposed rocks of the seabed below. This final image seems to have been recently cleaned of dust, and several lines of text have been made more legible via the application of inks and perhaps blood.

Long ago, a number of stone megaliths stood on this island, each capable of working impressive feats of magic if the user but knew the secrets of their use. Today, only one of these stones remains—the Tide Stone, located at area Y1.

An investigation of the carvings and a DC 20 Knowledge (geography) check is enough to confirm that the images presented depict scenes here on the island of Smuggler's Shiv. A DC 20 Knowledge (history) check identifies the carvings as ancient indeed, likely contemporary with ancient Azlant. A DC 25 Knowledge (nature) check confirms that the creatures depicted are ancient serpentfolk. Numerous Aklo carvings remain on the walls, but only those near the carving of the receding tides are legible.

The carving itself was restored and cleaned by Yarzoth—she never considered the possibility that the PCs might follow in her footsteps, and wouldn't have been able to bring herself to deface ancient serpentfolk carvings even if she were paranoid enough to try to cover her tracks. As a result, the PCs can study the carving and puzzle out the method of activating the Tide Stone even if they can't read the Aklo inscription (which is reproduced on page 39 as Handout #3).

Smaller carvings nearby depict serpentfolk splashing blood on curved runes carved on upright stones before a red mountain, and then holding venomous snakes against the blood that they might lick the stones, pouring water onto a pyramid-shaped block of red stone from a bowl, and standing before the pyramid of stone with arms upraised and mouths agape as if shouting to the heavens as a bolt of lightning arcs up from the stones into the sky. A DC 15 Knowledge (geography) check is sufficient to recognize the mountain in the carvings as Red Mountain, on the island's southeast shore.

## V24. CAVE SCRAWLINGS

Faint carvings are just visible on the eastern wall of this cavern.

A close inspection of the eastern wall reveals that the carvings there are words written in Aklo. A speaker of that language can decipher the faint words—they read, "All glory to Great Ydersius."

## V25. GHOULISH CAVERN (CR 1)

Bones lie strewn about the floor of this cavern. The grisly remains appear to have been gnawed upon so that they are cracked and jagged.





**To Command the Very Tides to Rise Up and Eschew What Lies Below:  
Empower the Four Sentinel Runes with the Blood of a Thinking  
Creature Tempered by the Kiss of a Serpent's Tongue.**

**Anoint the Tide Stone with Waters Brought from the Sea in a Vessel of  
Purest Metal.**

**Invoke the Lord's Sacred Name to Wrap His Coils around the Sea Itself  
that He Might Lay Bare What Lies Below and Cast Down Your Enemies  
on the Waves above.**

**Creature:** A single lacedon lurks in this cavern, busying itself by trying to slurp or chew bits of flavor out of the bones. It shrieks upon seeing intruders and attempts to flee to area V27 to warn its kin there.

**LACEDON** CR 1  
XP 400  
Aquatic ghoul (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146)  
hp 13

## V26. SEA CAVE

A cavern ledge leads down to a small sandy beach in this large cave, the majority of which is taken up by a sloshing pool of seawater.

The waters in this cavern are connected to the ocean by three submerged tunnels. Each of these tunnels emerges just under sea level at the base of the cliffs west of the Thrunefang camp, just off the edge of the map shown of that area. These tunnels can be navigated with a DC 20 Swim check—at low tide, pockets of air and waves diverted somewhat by rocks farther from the cliffs to the west reduce this to a DC 15 Swim check.

A hole in the ceiling around the far corner allows access to area V27; this hole is 5 feet above the water at high tide and 10 feet above it at low tide.

## V27. FEASTING CAVERN (CR 4)

This long cavern is scattered with bones, body parts, and bits of seaweed. A hole in the floor to the west echoes with the sloshing of waves.

**Creatures:** This cavern is the primary den of the lacedons that dwell in the caves—Mother Thrunefang's "children." In truth, her "family" consists of dozens of lacedons, but most of them are found elsewhere in the surf surrounding Smuggler's Shiv. At the time the PCs enter, there are only three lacedons present (or four if the one from area V25 has fled here). They shriek and howl if they see intruders,

raising enough of a din as they lurch forth to attack to alert Mother Thrunefang in area V28 to the trouble. She arrives in 1d4 rounds to investigate and join the battle.

**LACEDONS (3)** CR 1  
XP 400 each  
Aquatic ghoul (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146)  
hp 13 each

## V28. MOTHER'S CYST (CR 4)

The walls of this small cave are covered with carvings of snakes and skeletons. A hideous mound of bones and dripping seaweed forms what can only be a nest in the middle of the room.

**Creature:** This chamber is the lair of Mother Thrunefang, the lacedon cleric who was Nylithati in life, and who served aboard the *Throne's Fang* as a priest and agent of the House of Thrune so many decades ago. Today, that life is all but forgotten to the hideous creature, who now appears as a gaunt, green-skinned woman with long ears, a pointed tongue, and rotten flesh. She wears tattered rags, and a small snake's skull on a thong of hair about her neck—her holy symbol.

Nylithati does not attack intruders on sight—instead, impressed with their persistence, she offers them life beyond death—she'll bite them and infect them with ghoul fever, and then let them languish in the cavern of unbirth (area V20) until they die and are reborn as her newest children. Any who refuse her hideous offer are only fit for food.

**NYLITHATI (MOTHER THRUNEFANG)** CR 4  
XP 1,200  
Female lacedon cleric of Ydersius 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146)  
CE Medium undead  
Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9  
**DEFENSE**  
AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+2 deflection, +2 Dex, +3 natural)  
hp 45 (5d8+23)



# SERPENT'S SKULL

Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +9

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

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +6 (1d6+3 plus paralysis), bite +6 (1d6+3 plus disease and paralysis)

**Special Attacks** channel negative energy 6/day (DC 14, 2d6), disease (DC 14), paralysis (DC 14)

**Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 3rd; concentration +6) 6/day—inspiring word (1 round), touch of chaos

**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 3rd; concentration +6)

2nd—*darkness*, *enthrall*<sup>P</sup> (DC 14), *spiritual weapon*

1st—*cause fear* (DC 14), *divine favor*<sup>P</sup>, *obscuring mist*, *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *mending*

D Domain spell; **Domains** Chaos, Nobility

## TACTICS

**Before Combat** Nylithati casts *shield of faith* on herself if she can before entering combat or responding to the sounds of battle in area **V27**.

**During Combat** Nylithati opens combat by casting *darkness*. She then lurks in the darkness while she casts *spiritual weapon*, *cause fear*, and finally *divine favor* before attacking. If outnumbered by more than three foes, she channels negative energy—she also uses channeled negative energy to heal her lacedon allies whenever one is damaged.

**Morale** Nylithati fights until destroyed.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 17, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 17, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

**Feats** Combat Casting, Command Undead, Toughness

**Skills** Bluff +6, Climb +8, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana)

+9, Knowledge (engineering) +6, Knowledge (nobility) +9,

Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +9, Stealth +8, Swim +19

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Polyglot

**Gear** *amulet of natural armor* +1, *ring of swimming*



Nylithati

## PART FOUR: TEMPLE OF BLOOD

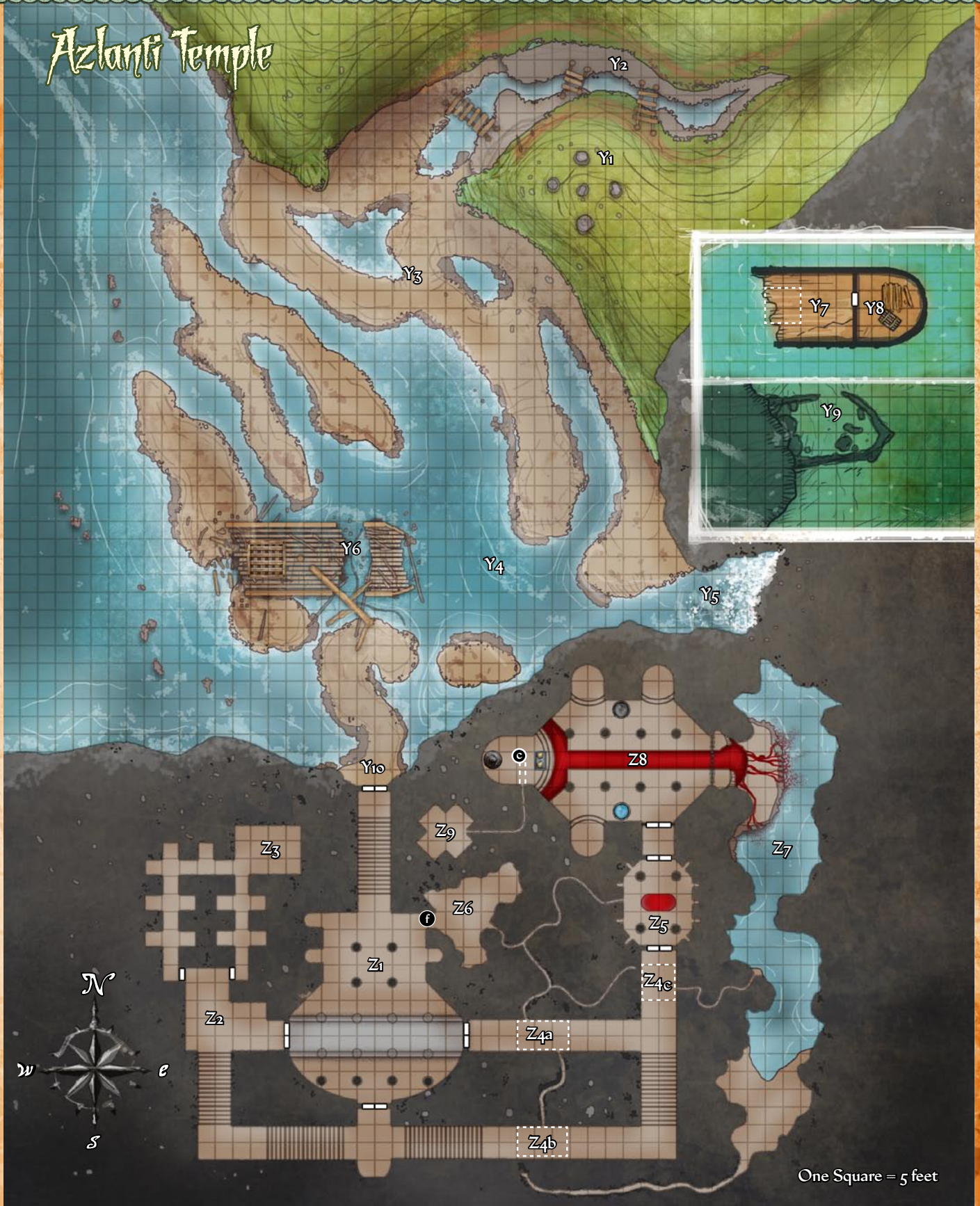
Sailors whisper that a curse haunts Smuggler's Shiv... and in a way, they're right. Yet what causes the spirits of the dead to haunt the surf of Smuggler's Shiv is not a curse as much as it is the lingering influence of what was once a powerful Azlanti cult of Zura who used both serpentfolk and humans as slaves and livestock—for not all of Azlant's people were kindly and civilized. Zura, the demon queen of vampires and cannibalism, had long plagued certain parts of ancient Azlant—rumors held that she herself began life as an Azlanti queen before she became the Vampire Queen.

These outcast Azlanti who came to Smuggler's Shiv and defeated the serpentfolk who had already begun to colonize the island were hardly heroic, and in the 7 decades that the Zura cultists ruled Smuggler's Shiv, they brought more horror and depravity to these shores than did the serpentfolk they displaced, until Earthfall finally put their acts to an end.

Since that time, that wrongness has lingered, and the temple under Red Mountain has slowly spread Zura's influence throughout the stones of the place. It is this malevolence that makes it so common for those who die in shipwrecks off the island's shores to continue haunting the sites of their doom as undead, and that drove the survivors of the *Throne's Fang* to cannibalism. If the PCs can cleanse the temple, they may inadvertently leave a lasting legacy on Smuggler's Shiv—they may free it from its ancient curse.

Part Four serves as the climax to this adventure, but it's important to plan for the events in this section before the PCs ever reach this point. See Setting Up the Climax on page 10 for more information.

# Azlantí Temple



# SERPENT'S SKULL

## Y1. THE TIDE STONE

Four stone monoliths appearing as jagged stalagmites of rock protrude from the grass at the edge of this bluff. A weathered, snakelike rune is carved into the inner face of each of these stones, all facing a three-foot-high pyramid-shaped block of stone at the center of the four surrounding spires. The vegetation and soil surrounding this pyramid has been trimmed back and excavated to expose the strange block fully to view. The peak of the central pyramid has a cup-shaped indentation—channels run down the four sides into empty basins at the base of the pyramid.

At one point long ago, multiple Tide Stones existed on Smuggler's Shiv, and the sea level surrounding the entire island could be manipulated. Today, a single Tide Stone is all that remains, and as a result its effects are limited to Crab Lagoon. The Tide Stone and its four surrounding spires seem to hum and vibrate slightly to the touch and radiate strong transmutation [water] magic.

To trigger the Tide Stone, a relatively simple ritual must be performed. First, the four serpentine runes on the surrounding spires must be splashed with blood from an intelligent creature—this doesn't need to be a lot of blood, and if the PCs wish to use their own blood, they can do so at a cost of 1d3 points of damage per stone. Second, a poisonous snake must be held before each bloody patch so that it licks the blood—there are plenty of poisonous snakes for the PCs to use on Smuggler's Shiv (the size of the snake is irrelevant). *Summon monster I* or *summon nature's ally I* are excellent ways to fulfill this step. Third, sea water must be gathered in a metal container (a helmet, boot, or gauntlet from a suit of metal armor works perfectly for this, as would a pot or other container scavenged from any number of shipwrecks) and then poured onto the central stone pyramid so the water runs down into the four basins around its base. Finally, the word "Ydersius" must be shouted out to the sky by any creature standing within at least 10 feet of the central pyramid. Alternatively, the Tide Stone can simply be activated blindly with a DC 25 Use Magic Device check and 1d4 minutes of tinkering.

Upon being activated, tremendous bolts of lightning arc up into the sky from the surrounding stone monoliths—any creature directly above the stones takes 10d6 points of electricity damage from this discharge (DC 20 Reflex for half), but creatures on the ground are safe from this damage. The sound of the bolts is enough to deafen anyone within 50 feet who fails a DC 15 Fortitude save for 2d6 rounds.

As dramatic as the bolts of lightning are, the rumbling thunder from Crab Lagoon as the waters roil and recede out to sea is even more impressive—this effect is a sort of magnified *control water* that lowers the level of water in the entire lagoon by 20 feet, exposing rocks, flopping fish, and

several sunken ships to the air. Perhaps most interesting of all, though, are the large stone doors at area Y10 that grind slowly and noisily open as the waters recede. These doors remain open for 6 hours, after which they grind shut and the waters of the sea rush back in to normal level once again.

**Development:** The flying chupacabra attacked Yarzoth the first time she came to this location to activate the Tide Stone, but she managed to use a *suggestion* spell to secure its cooperation. The monster has since recovered from the effects of the spell and is both angry and confused by the strange memories. Unless the PCs are particularly stealthy about activating the Tide Stone, the winged chupacabra comes up from its lair at Y2 to attack them not long after they arrive in the area.

## Y2. THE RED MOUNTAIN DEVIL'S DEN (CR 5)

A rocky cleft cuts into the bluff, presenting a hundred-foot drop onto seaweed-covered rocks and tide pools. Several ledges, each connected by rickety-looking rope bridges, lead down into the cleft to the rocky beach below. What appears to be a large nest of driftwood, grass, bits of cloth, and perhaps bones seems to be wedged against the easternmost extent of the cleft.

The rope bridges leading down into the cleft are indeed dangerous—treat them as the bridge at area W. There are three bridges in all; the easternmost one is 100 feet above the ground, the middle one is only 60 feet high, while the western one is a mere 30 feet high. These heights and the description above assume the Tide Stone has been activated; otherwise reduce these heights by 20 feet as the cleft below is filled with seawater.

**Creature:** The nest to the east is the den of the Red Mountain Devil—a winged chupacabra that has likely been harassing and stalking the PCs for much of their time on Smuggler's Shiv. They may have encountered this creature as a wandering monster or as part of another encounter—if they've defeated it, then its nest is unguarded. Otherwise, you can assume that the monster is home when the PCs arrive in the area.

Although most chupacabras are flightless and the size of a large dog, this winged beast has grown to the size of an adult human. It can fly for extended periods on its bat-like wings, and sometimes soars above the surrounding sea or even makes trips to the mainland, but for the most part, the blood-drinking reptile prefers to hunt on Smuggler's Shiv, preying upon the jungle goats and the occasional shipwreck survivor. It used to prey upon the cannibals, but since they've started offering sacrifices to the chupacabra on a semi-regular basis, the monster has limited its predation upon them to lone cannibals—it's not terribly intelligent, but it is smart enough to enjoy the attention.

**THE RED MOUNTAIN DEVIL****CR 5****XP 1,600**Giant winged chupacabra (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #19 78)

CE Medium magical beast

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +7**DEFENSE****AC** 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)**hp** 51 (6d10+18)**Fort** +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)**Melee** bite +9 (1d6+3), 2 claws +9 (1d4+3 plus grab)**Special Attacks** chupar, pounce**TACTICS**

**During Combat** The chupacabra enjoys tormenting and scaring its prey, but once battle begins, it abandons subtlety. It charges the smallest target, attempting to pounce and then pin its foe so it can chupar (although if it's surrounded by foes, it certainly won't use this tactic). The creature is quite agile, and against larger numbers of foes it uses Flyby Attack and Acrobatics to swoop in, attack, and deny attacks of opportunity. If it can, it tries to lure victims away from allies so it can pounce and feed.

**Morale** The chupacabra fights until it is reduced to 25 hit points or fewer before retreating to its nest. Cornered there, the beast fights to the death.

**STATISTICS****Str** 17, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 3, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 16**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 22**Feats** Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative**Skills** Acrobatics +10, Fly +7, Perception +7, Stealth +10 (+14 in tall grass or rocky terrain)**Languages** Aklo (cannot speak)**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Chupar (Ex)** A chupacabra can suck blood from a living victim it has grappled by successfully pinning the foe. If it does so, it drains blood, causing 1 point of Constitution damage each round the pin is maintained. Upon draining blood, a chupacabra becomes

invigorated, as if under the effects of a *haste* spell. This effect lasts for 10 rounds after the chupacabra ceases drinking blood.

**Treasure:** The winged chupacabra has managed to collect a small hoard of incidental treasure in its nest, consisting of 246 sp, 234 gp, 13 pp, a mithral hook designed to be worn on an arm stump (worth 1,000 gp), a fine brass sextant worth 500 gp, a +1 buckler decorated with a skull and crossbones, and an *efficient quiver* containing 20 normal arrows, nine cold iron arrows, seven +1 arrows, two +2 arrows, an *aberration slaying arrow*, a *javelin of lightning*, and a masterwork composite longbow (+3 Strength).

**Y3. EXPOSED ROCKS**

Seaweed, sea urchins of all colors, bright green anemones, scuttling kelp crabs, and bare rock glisten here, laid bare to the sky by the unnaturally low tide.

These rocks are covered with algae, spiny urchins, sheets of seaweed, and coils of kelp, making the rocks quite slippery and treacherous—increase the DC of all Acrobatics checks made on these rocks by 5.

**Y4. TRAPPED SHARK (CR 2)**

The remaining water in the area consists of tide pools ranging from less than a foot deep to just over 15 feet deep, although in this large central pool the depth averages 10 feet. Cut off from the sea, the tide pools are quite calm, with a slight current leading to the northwest, imparted by the waterfall at area **Y5**. The pool itself is thick with sea grass and kelp, providing concealment and a +4 bonus on Stealth checks to all creatures in the water. The channels connecting this main pool to the sea are relatively shallow, never dipping below 12 inches in depth.

**Creature:** A single blue shark has been trapped in this pool by the receding water. Confused by the sudden reduction in its hunting grounds, the shark is quite aggressive. It cruises

**Red Mountain Devil**

# SERPENT'S SKULL

below the surface, but quickly attacks anything that enters the pool. It fights to the death.

**BLUE SHARK**

**CR 2**

**XP 600**

hp 22 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 247)

## Y5. WATERFALL

A fifteen-foot-wide waterfall cascades from the cliff a hundred feet above into the water here.

The pool below this waterfall is 20 feet deep.

## Y6. THE SALTY STRUMPET

The front two-thirds of a wrecked ship lies upon the rocks here, its bow mostly submerged but its ruined midsection propped up on a ridge of slimy rock. The sides of the wreck are thick with seaweed and barnacles, and dozens of crabs clatter around on deck.

This is the wreck of the *Salty Strumpet*, a small ship that sailed into Crab Lagoon several years ago only to sail too close to the rocks. It was caught up by the surf and dashed against these rocks, sinking just under the water. The wreck wasn't deadly enough to kill the crew, but the shark-infested waters certainly were—and those who managed to escape the sharks and waves were picked off by the delighted chupacabra.

The wrecked ship is in poor condition now, held together as much by its own rotting timbers as by the sea life growing on it. The ship's deck lists toward the bow at a steep angle, and the slippery surfaces increase the DC of Acrobatics checks by 5. An open hatch near the ruins of the ship's midsection allows access to the galley below.

## Y7. GALLEY

The furniture in this soggy galley lies in a wet heap against the southern wall of this seaweed-choked room.

Water still drips from the ceiling here—this room was flooded until recently. Movement here is impacted as on the deck above. The door to the west to area **Y8** is propped ajar by the remains of a chair, allowing the denizen therein ample opportunity to hear the approach of possible enemies.

## Y8. FORWARD CABIN (CR 3)

Once a fine cabin, perhaps even the captain's cabin, this chamber is now in ruins. The furniture, including a crushed desk and a bed, lie in a heap near the bow, and seaweed and

other tidal life glistens on the walls. A layer of seawater covers the floor, deeper near the bow than by the door.

**Creature:** The sole survivor of the *Salty Strumpet's* crew now dwells here: a water mephit named Ekubus—or as he prefers to be called these days, “Captain” Ekubus. The mephit was once the familiar of the *Salty Strumpet's* captain, but when his halfling master was carried off and eaten by the chupacabra, Ekubus decided to take up the mantle of command. He's lived in this sunken ship ever since, sometimes wearing his master's jaunty cap and swimming through the wreck, giving orders to his crew of crabs, urchins, and fish.

Ekubus is quite obviously mad—deranged and unsettled after the traumatic loss of his master so many years ago. The mephit bursts out of the water as the PCs enter this room, flaps about in the air, and demands that they “stand tall and report on this damnable low tide!” Ekubus isn't really looking for any specific details in particular—he's just excited to have real people to talk to.

Ekubus's initial attitude is indifferent. If he can be made friendly with a DC 17 Diplomacy check, he'll inform the PCs that they're not the first ones to pass by recently, nor is this the first weirdly low tide he's noticed in the past several days. He'll tell the PCs that a funny-looking person came down from the ledge and swam over to the “scary doors” to the south and went inside. If asked why the person was “funny-looking,” he casually mentions it was because the person had a snake head and a snake tail, and that was funny-looking enough for Captain Ekubus to let the person pass without bothering him or her or it. If asked why the doors to the south are scary, he shrugs and says, “Don't you think that underwater doors with carvings of vampires on them are scary?”

If made helpful with a DC 22 Diplomacy check, Captain Ekubus agrees to come with the PCs if they ask (and if you think they could use a little extra help), although he won't travel more than an hour from the *Salty Strumpet* because he'll start worrying about his crew of fish, crabs, and barnacles.

The mephit captain won't attack the PCs unless he's made hostile—note that attacking him or his ship or any of his crew (including the spear urchin at area **Y9**) is a great way to make him hostile.

**“CAPTAIN” EKUBUS**

**CR 3**

**XP 800**

Water mephit (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 202–203)

hp 19

## Y9. CARGO HOLD (CR 4)

Little remains of this cargo hold to evoke its nature, for the walls



are completely encrusted with barnacles, seaweed, starfish, and other tidal creatures.

Even with the lowered tide, this entire room is flooded with seawater.

**Creature:** A single dangerous creature dwells in this chamber—a bright red spear urchin. The predatory aquatic vermin lives against the rocks in the southwest corner of this area. When the tide is up, the churning of waves and currents keeps a constant supply of food swirling through this area, but the urchin isn't afraid to lance out its spines against anything larger than the tidal fish and periodic eurypterid that wanders by. It fights intruders to the death.

**SPEAR URCHIN CR 4**  
**XP 1,200**  
**hp 42 (see page 84)**

**Treasure:** Most of the cargo once stored here has long since rotted away, but a DC 25 Perception check uncovers a single *rope of climbing* coiled near the spear urchin's nook, its magic sufficient to prevent its decay.

## Y10. TEMPLE DOORS

Two stone doors stand open at the base of this cliff above a curling spur of rock. Seaweed covers the doors, hanging down in thick green and black sheets, just obscuring some sort of carvings on their surface.

These doors have remained closed for thousands of years, but with Yarzoth's (and now the PCs') activation of the Tide Stones, they once again stand open—the triggering of the Tide Stone also causes these stone portals to swing open. Although incredibly ancient, the preservative magic used by the ancients in their important structures has helped maintain the doors' carvings of vampiric demons feasting on Azlanti maidens, though the seaweed must be pulled or scraped away to reveal the carvings in all their hideous glory. With a DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check, these carvings can be identified as being associated with the cult of Zura, the demon lord of cannibalism and vampires, although the style of the carvings is quite ancient and unusual. A DC 25 Knowledge (history) check is enough to identify the carvings as Azlanti in origin.

If the PCs discover these doors before lowering the waters, they remain tightly closed, held in place by weight

and ancient magic. They can be battered down or burst open only by great force (hardness 8, hp 120, Break DC 32). The hallway beyond is flooded to the top of the stairs, so opening these doors while the waters are still up has relatively little impact on the temple beyond, although some waves are likely to wash into area Z1 now and then, and given several months, they would likely flood area Z6.

## THE AZLANTI TEMPLE

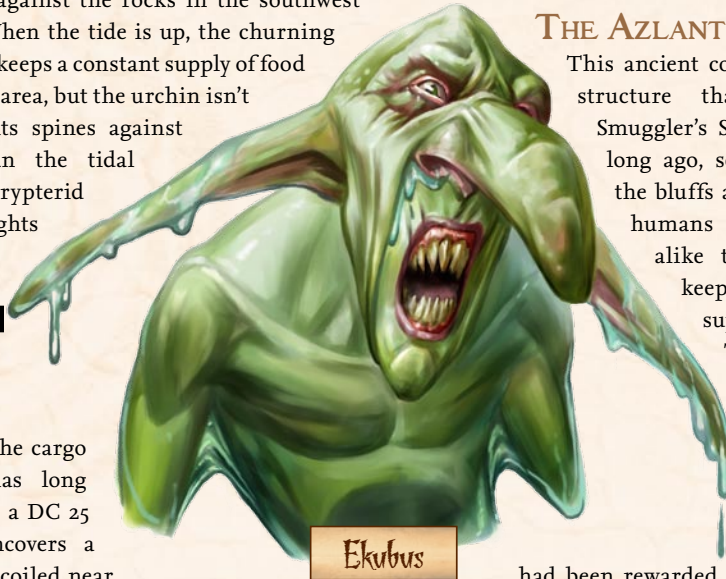
This ancient complex is the only Azlanti structure that remains intact on Smuggler's Shiv, although at one time long ago, several buildings stood on the bluffs above (a village of enslaved humans and captured serpentfolk alike that served the vampiric keepers of this temple as a supply of food and sacrifices).

The cultists who founded this village of slaves were exiles from Saventh-Yhi, and hoped one day to return to that city to find revenge against their kinsfolk after they

had been rewarded for their devotion to Zura with transformation into vampires. In time, the cult actually achieved this vile end, but only weeks before the end of their world. They set out with the full intention of bringing Zura's blessing to the people of Saventh-Yhi, but perished somewhere in the Mwangi Expanse when Earthfall struck, and time has since destroyed every aboveground trace of their existence. The temple below has remained untouched in the thousands of years since, and while Yarzoth has already defeated a few of the place's traps and guardians, she managed to avoid the majority of them. Unfortunately for the PCs, however, the guardians are now fully active.

The temple itself is a remarkable find, identifiable as Azlanti in origin with a DC 25 Knowledge (history) check—although there are hints that this ancient temple may have been built over the site of an even more ancient structure. This same check confirms that the discovery of an Azlanti ruin this far south is a major one—such ruins are quite rare in the Mwangi and Sargava regions of Garund. A complete map of the temple, not to mention knowledge of its location, would likely be of great value to an organization like the Pathfinder Society. A DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check confirms that many of the wall carvings depict the abhorrent worship of the demon lord Zura, Queen of the Vampires.

There are no sources of light in the temple complex. Passageways average 15 feet in height, with most rooms



Ekubus

# Serpent's Skull

averaging 30 feet high unless otherwise noted. With the exception of the front doors at area **Y10**, the doors within the temple are of a strange alloy of bronze that bears eerie runners of red, almost as if the bronze were bleeding. These metal doors (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28) cannot be locked, and make a bone-shuddering shrieking noise as they open on ancient hinges. The air within the temple is strangely cool, musty, and damp—the temple has had a small amount of airflow from vents in area **Z7**, but it wasn't until Yarzoth's recent arrival that the temple had a good airing-out. In places, the air still smells foul and stale, but nowhere is it actually dangerous.

## Z1. SANCTUM (CR 4)

Over a dozen stone pillars support this cavernous chamber's sixty-foot-high vaulted ceiling. To the north, four empty alcoves sit in the walls, their edges carved to resemble yawning, fanged mouths. To the south, a pair of bronze doors that seem to drip with blood sit under a stone bridge that passes through the upper portion of the room from east to west forty feet above. The walls are decorated with unsettling carvings of bats, human sacrifice, and the walking dead. The dismembered, skeletal bodies of three humans lie scattered on the floor of this chamber.

This room was used long ago by the Zura cultists to preach the wonders of their debased demon god to selected slaves—only full priests or doomed sacrifices ever ventured farther into the complex. The wall carvings depict all manner of vile atrocities visited upon humans and serpentfolk alike by tall men and women wearing ragged capes and bearing fanged mouths. Images of bats, bat-like humanoids, and themes of cannibalism and the consumption of still-living victims are common as well.

The northwestern alcove contains a lever to open the doors at **Y10**, if 6 hours have passed and the lagoon outside has refilled. The entrance corridor floods with water in this case, but only to the top of the stairs leading to this room. The PCs must make DC 10 Swim checks to swim out through the flooded passageway to the lagoon beyond.

The northeastern alcove contains a poorly hidden trap door in the floor—it can be located with a DC 15 Perception check, but it's stuck and requires a DC 23 Strength check to pry open. If opened, a gust of foul-smelling, stale (but breathable) air rushes up from a hole that drops 20 feet into area **Z6**—the shaft can be climbed with a DC 25 Climb check, and a DC 15 Perception check is enough to hear a faint rattle, as if of shaken bones, from somewhere down below. A fall into this hole inflicts 3d6 points of damage as the falling creature lands on the jagged, sharp mass of calcified bones below.

**Creatures:** The Zura cultists made significant use of undead slaves, particularly skeletons. Two degenerate

serpentfolk skeletons stand atop the bridge to the south. When Yarzoth first arrived, she used *hide from undead* to move through this area without being attacked by the skeletons, leaving them still active in her wake as guardians since they were too powerful for her to control with her Command Undead feat. From their vantage point atop the bridge, the skeletal serpentfolk attack anyone who enters the room.

### DEGENERATE SERPENTFOLK SKELETONS (2) CR 2

#### XP 600 each

NE Medium undead (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 250, *Into the Darklands* 56–57)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

#### DEFENSE

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

**hp** 22 each (5d8)

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

**DR** 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** bite +8 (1d6+5), 2 claws +8 (1d4+5)

**Ranged** javelin +5 (1d6+5)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The two undead serpentfolk stand on the bridge and hurl javelins at any targets they notice in the room below. Once the skeletons have thrown all of their javelins (or if enemies try to leave the room or take cover in the alcoves to the north), they step off the bridge and fall 40 feet to the ground, taking 4d6 points of damage but rising to continue the fight with foes below using their claws and bites.

**Morale** The serpentfolk skeletons fight until destroyed.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 20, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 20

**Feats** Improved Initiative

**Gear** 4 javelins

## Z2. SCRIPTORIUM

Bits of bone and fragments of wood lie scattered through this room. The walls are carved with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of strange runes interspersed with the periodic image of a stylized rune that looks like a fanged skull.

This room once served the Zura cult as a scriptorium, but all that remains of the writing tables and chairs that once stood here are the fragments on the ground. The bits of bone are from a serpentfolk skeleton that Yarzoth had to destroy.

The stylized rune of the fanged skull is identifiable with a DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check as the symbol of Zura,





while the rest of the writing on the wall seem to mostly be prayers to Zura written in Azlanti. A character who can read Azlanti (or who makes a successful DC 30 Linguistics check) and who takes several minutes studying these runes finds them frustrating to translate because of the missing portions of wall that have cracked and the ancient inscriber's fondness for awkward metaphor, but four key bits of information can be gleaned from the carvings.

- This chamber was once a scriptorium where books and scrolls sacred to the worship of Zura were transcribed and illuminated.
- This temple was built over an even more ancient temple—one that was dedicated to a deity referred to only as the “Beheaded One,” an entity that was apparently an enemy to the ancient Zura cultists.
- Several prayers seem to indicate that the ancients made use of undead slaves created from both “humans culled from the unbelievers and slaves of the Beheaded One.”
- As much hatred as the Zura cultists had for the “slaves of the Beheaded One,” they also seemed to despise their own kind—especially those they called the “misbegotten of Saventh-Yhi.” A DC 25 Knowledge (geography or history) check recognizes the name “Saventh-Yhi” as a legendary but still undiscovered lost city said to lie hidden somewhere in the depths of the Mwangi Expanse. Knowledge of Saventh-Yhi is rare, and these mentions would be of a great value to a scholar interested in the topic.

**Treasure:** Accurate transcriptions or rubbings of the runes on these walls (something that requires 3 days of work and a DC 25 Linguistics check to accomplish—speakers of Azlanti gain a +10 bonus on this check) are worth 600 gp to anyone interested in ancient Azlanti history.

### Z3. PRIEST CELLS (CR 2)

Bare alcoves line the walls of this hallway, each containing a scattering of wood and cloth fragments. A larger empty chamber lies ahead.

These alcoves were used as sleeping and meditation quarters for the priests of the Zura cult. The larger room served as a communal chamber where meals were prepared and eaten.

**Creatures:** Four human skeletons linger here, armed with ancient, broken rapiers and wearing tattered fragments of chain shirts. They immediately attack any intruders.

**HUMAN SKELETONS (4)** CR 1/3  
 XP 135 each  
 hp 4 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 250)

### Z4. PIT TRAPS (CR 1)

**Traps:** Three ancient but still fully functional pit traps guard the temple halls. The outlined area of each pit trap is indicated by dotted lines on the map—when any Small or larger creature steps onto one of these areas, the floor splits open down the middle of the hall, causing the left and the right sides of the hallway to drop down on hinges and thus dumping everything standing on those squares into a pit.

Yarzoth, suspecting there would be traps, was able to locate these traps with the aid of a *find traps* spell. It's a DC 15 Acrobatics check to leap over the larger pits, or DC 10 for **Z4c**, assuming a running start—this is how Yarzoth avoided triggering them. All three pits are 30 feet deep—climbing up or down a pit wall requires a DC 20 Climb check.



Serpentfolk Skeleton

# Serpent's Skull

All three pits are connected via a network of narrow, tube-like tunnels bored through the rock that also connect to areas **Z5**, **Z6**, and **Z7**. These tunnels average 2 feet in diameter—a Medium creature can squeeze down them with a DC 30 Escape Artist check, while a Small creature can wriggle through by squeezing normally. Tiny or smaller creatures can navigate the tunnels without squeezing.

Whenever one of these traps is triggered, there's a 50% chance per round of loud noise that either the soulbound dolls at area **Z6** or the gibbering mouther at area **Z7** hears and arrives in 1d4+6 rounds to investigate the source of the noise—if any victims remain in the pit at that point, the investigating monster or monsters attacks. There's an equal chance of either the soulbound dolls or gibbering mouther responding to a pit's triggering.

## PIT TRAPS (3) CR 1 XP 400 each

**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** manual

**Effect** 30-ft.-deep pit (3d6 falling damage); DC 15 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all targets within dotted area)

## Z5. CLEANSING SHRINE (CR 4)

An oval pool of what looks like softly rippling blood sits at the center of this octagonal room, filling the air with a metallic tang. Four round pillars support a ceiling decorated with crisscrossed supports and grooves, while ten two-foot-wide circular holes decorate the walls at chest level.

The majority of the holes in the wall are only 3 feet deep, and originally served as alcoves to store robes and belongings after cultists stripped naked and bathed in the pool before moving on to attend worship in the temple, clad only in a layer of blood. The pool still contains real blood, kept circulating and at body temperature by an ancient magic that still functions. The blood pool is only 2 feet deep, and apart from being disturbing has little additional function. Blood taken from the pool clots and rots as normal—the pool itself radiates moderate necromantic and evil magic.

One of the holes in the middle of the western wall has no back—it opens directly into one of the narrow tunnels that connect several areas of the temple and are used by the denizens of areas **Z6** and **Z7** to move about the place. If the PCs haven't yet slain the soulbound dolls from area **Z6** or the gibbering mouther from area **Z7** and make a lot of noise in this room, one of the two hears and comes to investigate in 1d4+6 rounds.

**Trap:** This room contains a murderous trap, one that the cultists would normally deactivate by pressing one of four

hidden buttons on the pillars. A DC 30 Perception check is required to notice one of these buttons, all of which face toward the center of the room. If one of these buttons isn't pressed within 3 rounds of a Small or larger creature entering the room, sheets of the strange red-streaked bronze slide down over both doorways with a clang. A creature standing adjacent to either door can jump through to one side or the other by making a DC 15 Reflex save. A creature in the doorway that fails this save is struck by a falling sheet of bronze, takes 3d6 points of damage, and is knocked prone and pinned by the metal. A pinned creature can escape with a DC 30 Escape Artist check, or a DC 25 Strength check to lift the metal sheet. Once these barricades are in place, they function as metal walls (hardness 10, hp 90, Break DC 30) that quite effectively seal off this chamber from the outside.

One round after the bronze walls crash down, the actual trap activates. A pendulum tipped with a razor-sharp axe blade swings down from one of the grooves and ridges in the ceiling, scything across the entire room and attacking a random character before retracting up into the stone above. This continues for 3 rounds, after which the pendulums and the bronze plates retract back up into the ceiling, automatically resetting. If a bypass button isn't depressed within 3 rounds, the trap activates again as long as a creature of Small or larger size is in the room. The trap itself, while composed of mechanical parts, is in fact kept in good repair and powered by ancient magic, so someone who scans the room with *detect magic* sees moderate transmutation magic on the ceilings—doing so also allows an automatic Perception check to see small auras of transmutation magic glowing on the pillars where the bypass buttons are located and grants a +10 circumstance bonus to the Perception check to see them as well.

## FLENSING ROOM CR 4 XP 1,200

**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 25;  
**Bypass** hidden switch (Perception DC 30)

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** proximity (*alarm*); **Onset Delay** 4 rounds; **Duration** 3 rounds; **Reset** automatic (4 rounds)

**Effect** Atk +5 melee (1d6+4/x3); multiple targets (one random target in room each round)

## Z6. SUNKEN CHAMBER (CR 4)

At first glance, this damp cavern seems natural, but here and there the mineral deposits on the walls and ceiling don't quite obscure ancient walls that were carved by hand. The floor is covered with a shallow layer of brackish water from which numerous small mounds of delicate crystals emerge. A large mound of ancient bones caked with thick mineral deposits lies along the west wall under a hole in the ceiling.



This cavern is one of two chambers (the other being area Z7) the Zura cultists didn't incorporate fully into their temple. They used this place to dump the bodies of infidels and heretics not worthy of proper sacrifice. The ceiling here is 10 feet high. The hole in the ceiling leads up 10 feet to area Z1.

**Creatures:** This cave has been the lair of a strange remnant of the Zura cult for thousands of years—a pair of disturbing dolls crafted from bird bones, children's bones, hair, and twine. Both of these soulbound dolls were created by the high priest of Zura, the animating souls provided by serpentfolk priests defeated in their takeover of the region. The transformation into soulbound dolls left the serpentfolk souls completely mad, with only disjointed memory fragments of their lives before. For the past several thousand years, the dolls have busied themselves with the work of maintenance and repair where necessary. With the PCs' arrival in the ruins, the dolls can engage in one of their other responsibilities—defense. They recognized the serpentine shape of Yarzoth as an ally and let her pass uncontested, but the PCs are unlikely to escape the dolls' attentions in this way. Once the dolls become aware of intruders (either from someone opening the trap door in Z1 or from one of the noisy traps triggering at area Z4 or Z5), they quickly spring into motion and seek the PCs out.

#### **SOULBOUND DOLLS (2)** CR 2

**XP 600 each**

NE Tiny construct (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #7 84)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +3

#### **DEFENSE**

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

**hp** 19 each (3d10+3)

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

**DR** 2/magic; **Immune** construct traits

**Weaknesses** mind-affecting effects

#### **OFFENSE**

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** dagger +3 (1d2–2/19–20 plus poison)

**Space** 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 3rd; concentration +2)  
3/day—*light*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*  
1/day—*inflict serious wounds* (DC 12), *levitate*

#### **STATISTICS**

**Str** 7, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 11, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 11

**Feats** Improved Initiative, Toughness

**Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +13

**Languages** Aklo

**SQ** soul focus

#### **SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Mind-Affecting Effect Weakness (Ex)** The weakened conviction of a soulbound doll's soul makes it susceptible to mind-affecting effects, despite its construct traits.

**Soul Focus (Su)** The soul bound to a doll lives within a focus integrated into the doll, a gem hidden in the doll's chest. As long as this soul focus remains intact, it can be built into another doll for the soul to animate, using the same cost as for creating a new construct. Once bound into the soul focus, the soul continues to learn, and so if later put into a new doll body, the soul retains its personality and memories. Regardless of its construction, a soul focus has hardness 8, 12 hit points, and a Break DC of 20.

**Poison (Ex)** The dolls' daggers are constantly poisoned with venom as long as the dolls exist and wield them (Medium spider venom—injury; *save* Fort DC 14; *frequency* 1/round for 4 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Str, *cure* 1 save).



Soulbound Doll

**Treasure:** The ruby gems inside of each doll's chest are worth 2,000 gp apiece, but as they contain the bound souls of creatures (even if said souls are irredeemably evil), selling the gems may cause some PCs concern. The gems themselves radiate moderate necromancy, and can be identified as soulbound doll soul foci with a DC 29 Spellcraft check. You should allow characters who don't want to sell these gems for profit to donate them to a society or religion that will see to their proper destruction (thus freeing the evil souls) to gain a 2,000 gp reward from that organization. Alternatively, if the PCs take it upon themselves to destroy the gems and free the souls, give the party 800 XP as a reward.

## Z7. DARK LAKE (CR 5)

The walls of this long, high-ceilinged cavern seem almost to be ancient worked stone decorated with serpentine carvings or other eerie shapes. Above, the ceiling is a forest of slowly dripping stalactites, while below the floor is taken up by a rippling pool of dark water.

This cavern, like area Z6, is a remnant of the original serpentfolk structure. The water in the pool averages 10 feet deep. The ceiling here is 80 feet high, and numerous narrow

# SERPENT'S SKULL

fissures in the roof lead only another 10 to 20 feet to the bluffs above, allowing fresh air to circulate through much of the complex. To the northwest, smears of blood trickle down the wall from a 15-foot-wide opening on a ledge 60 feet above (this leads to area **Z8**), while to the south lies a slime-encrusted swath of stone, polished smooth by ages of slithering passage by this cavern's denizens. Walking on this southern area is treacherous and slippery—Acrobatics DCs are increased by 5 here. Finally, a 2-foot-diameter hole opens in the southwest wall a few feet above the waterline; this hole leads to the network of tunnels connecting the pit traps (area **Z4**) and areas **Z5** and **Z6**.

**Creature:** Gibbering mouthers have ruled this cavern since the time of Azlant. Originally, the Zura cultists kept a dozen of the monsters here, venerating the blood-drinking things as deformed spawn of their demon god. Today, only one of these monsters remains, a foul mass of eyes and mouths descended from a long line of the same. It spends its life wallowing in the water and clambering around the rocks or through the narrow tunnels, feeding on the blood dripping down the wall from area **Z8**. As it grows old, it enters a self-replicating process where it cysts over and then splits apart into a series of young who fight each other until only the strongest survives—and thus the circle of aberrant life continues.

The gibbering moulder knows that someone new has come to the region, but as it avoids area **Z8** (due to a form of ancestral respect and fear), it has had no contact with Yarzoth yet. The monster quickly moves to investigate the sound of any of the traps in area **Z4** or **Z5** being triggered—otherwise it can be encountered here, splashing in the water or sucking blood off the wall to the northwest. If it encounters tougher opposition than it expects, it flees back to this cavern once reduced to fewer than 15 hit points, but if confronted here, it fights to the death.

## GIBBERING MOUTHER

CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 46 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 153)

## Z8. TEMPLE OF BLOOD (CR 6)

Judging from this cathedral-like chamber's decor, this area must have once been a significant temple dedicated to some vile god. To the west, a few steps lead up to a shrine presided over by a ten-foot-high statue of a beautiful, fanged woman, save that instead of arms she possesses two upraised bat-like wings and instead of feet her legs end in talons. She looms over a glistening altar of blood-red stone that seems to weep blood into a trough below; this trough of blood runs the length of the room before disappearing to the east through a set of bronze bars in front of a wide opening in the wall that drops away into darkness. Stone pillars support the roof 25 feet above,

and two dry fountains sit opposite each other against the walls in the middle of the room. Three large alcoves, one to the south and two to the north, contain complex wall carvings. The entire chamber feels unnaturally cold, and now and then strange disembodied whispers slither through the air.

The blood weeping from the altar and filling the trough is real and at body temperature—it is prevented from overflowing (apart from dripping down the wall into area **Z7**), clotting, or spoiling due to the altar's eldritch influence. A 1-foot-diameter hole in the ceiling just west of the altar can be spotted with a DC 15 Perception check (or automatically by anyone who specifically looks up while near the altar)—this hole leads to area **Z9**, though it is far too narrow for any creatures larger than Diminutive size to traverse.

This chamber was the center of worship for the Zura cult, and although the worshipers are long dead, the potent divine power infused in this area still lingers. It is this vile energy that not only keeps the blood slowly flowing in the troughs and pools found in this temple, but also keeps its undead guardians from decaying. Yet the potent Abyssal influence of Zura's faith has not confined itself to this temple—over the centuries it has suffused the entire island of Smuggler's Shiv. This aura is responsible for the descent into cannibalism of the survivors of the *Throne's Fang*, and more impressively, the aura is responsible for the undead that haunt the island's shores.

The altar here sustains the temple's power and influence over the island by slowly feeding on the souls of those who are "sacrificed" on the Shiv's rocks, and as long as it continues to exist, the waves will continue to carry the ghosts and unquiet dead of the island's victims. The altar can be destroyed through physical damage (hardness 8, hp 60, Break DC 28), but positive energy effects (either channeled or delivered via healing spells) damage the altar more efficiently, bypassing its hardness. Casting *consecrate* on the altar inflicts 30 points of damage and reduces its hardness to 2. If the PCs destroy the altar, it cracks open and is revealed to be hollow—great gouts of blood pour out of it and wash into the cave at area **Z7** as the lingering whispers in the air turn to screams and howls. A ripple of invisible energy washes over the entire island, forcing everything on or below Smuggler's Shiv to make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be staggered for 1 round as the PCs sense a great weight being lifted from the region. All undead on Smuggler's Shiv who fail this DC 15 Fortitude save are instead immediately destroyed—all of the souls caught in the surf rise as a veil of mist and are gone. From this point on, the strange curse over Smuggler's Shiv is no more, and should Sargava or anyone else decide to attempt further colonization on the island, they should find it a much easier task than before.



The bat-winged statue depicts Zura, the demon lord of vampires and cannibals—it can be identified as such with a DC 25 Knowledge (planes) check. The statue radiates moderate transmutation magic, and has the power to affect those who smear blood upon its lips with *gaseous form* (CL 5th). A DC 20 Spellcraft check can deduce this power if the statue is studied with *detect magic*. Back when the temple was operational, the high priest used this as a reward for favored cultists, preaching that with an offering of blood, one could enjoy the freedom of being the mist just as a true vampire could. Of course, becoming gaseous also allowed the high priest himself to easily access the temple's inner sanctum at area Z9.

**Creature:** Yarzoth the serpentfolk, known to the PCs as the Varisian scholar Ieana, can be found in this room along with four human skeletons she's taken control of via her Command Undead feat. Now that she's so close to her goal and doesn't expect much more trouble, Yarzoth has dropped her disguise as Ieana and has spent the last several days studying the various wall carvings located throughout the complex—but primarily those found in the alcoves (see Treasure on page 52). When the PCs finally arrive in this area, she should be only a few days away from finishing her transcriptions and translations regarding her goal—the discovery of Saventh-Yhi's location in the Mwangi Expanse.

By the time the PCs finally confront Yarzoth, they should have already mostly pieced together the events that led to the *Jenivere's* wreck and their confrontation here in this ancient temple, but if the PCs have any last-minute questions, don't be afraid to have Yarzoth explain herself. Like most of her kind, she sees humanity as little more than tools or annoyances, and doesn't believe the PCs can challenge her any more than the crew of the *Jenivere* could. This mix of arrogance and pride in what she's managed to do gives the PCs a great opportunity to obtain some answers from her—the indifference with which she treats them rising out of her assumption that, relatively soon, she'll be able to bend a few of the PCs to her will and murder the rest. In fact, if the PCs give her enough time to talk, she might even try to cast *enthrall* to keep the PCs from attacking her long enough for her to take up a position near the statue of Zura and to array her skeletons before her to defend her during the inevitable fight. Whatever else the PCs learn from speaking to her, the most important piece of information is that she believes that she's on the cusp of making a discovery, one that “your fragile race has not been able to solve since the sky fell so long ago.” Get the PCs curious so that, assuming they win the fight about to begin, they'll be compelled to investigate Yarzoth's copious notes.

**HUMAN SKELETONS (4)****CR 1/3****XP 135 each****hp 4 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 250)**YARZOTH****CR 6****XP 2,400**Female serpentfolk cleric of Ydersius 4 (*Into the Darklands* 56)

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +13**DEFENSE****AC** 20, touch 17, flat-footed 13 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural)**hp** 72 (9 HD; 5d10+4d8+27)**Fort** +8, **Ref** +11, **Will** +13**Immune** mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison; **SR** 19**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** bite +14 (1d6+1 plus poison)**Special Attacks** channel negative energy 7/day (DC 16, 2d6)**Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 4th; concentration +9)

8/day—inspiring word (2 rounds), touch of evil (2 rounds)

**Serpentfolk Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th; concentration +8)At will—*disguise self* (DC 15), *ventriloquism*1/day—*blur*, *dominate person* (DC 18), *major image*, *mirror image*, *suggestion* (DC 17)**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 4th; concentration +9)2nd—*cure moderate wounds*, *enthrall*<sup>D</sup> (DC 17), *sound burst* (DC 17), *summon monster II*1st—*command* (DC 16), *cure light wounds* (2), *divine favor*<sup>D</sup>, *hide from undead* (DC 16), *summon monster I*0 (at will)—*create water*, *detect magic*, *purify food and water*, *read magic***D Domain spell; Domains** Evil, Nobility**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Yarzoth uses *dominate person* to attempt to dominate one of the PCs on the first round of combat while ordering her skeletons to attack. If she dominates a PC, she orders that character to come to her side and defend her from harm. While the dominated PC and skeletons keep the other PCs busy, Yarzoth casts *blur* and then *mirror image*. Next she uses *summon monster II* to summon 1d3 fiendish vipers, then *summon monster I* to summon one more. When combat finally seems inevitable, she casts *divine favor* and then attacks. She uses *inspiring word* on herself or allies if they seem to be having a particularly hard time hitting the PCs, and *touch of evil* on PCs that seem to be hitting her or her allies easily.

**Morale** If Yarzoth is reduced to fewer than 30 hit points, she touches the lips on the statue of Zura with a bloodied hand and gains the benefit of *gaseous form*. She then flees up through the hole in the ceiling to area Z9. Once there, she dismisses the effect, returning to solid form. The next round she casts *disguise self* to assume the form of one of the *Jenivere's* other castaways (preferably a woman, either Aerys or Sasha), and on the third round she uses *major image* to create an illusion of her dead body, throat cut, lying on the floor. Yarzoth hopes that if she can get these deceptions in place by



# Serpent's Skull

the time the PCs arrive, they'll be confronted with the unexpected appearance of an old friend who seems to have just killed the evil serpentfolk. (If all of the castaways are actually with the PCs when Yarzoth fled, she of course disguises herself as someone else.) Yarzoth cries out for help if the PCs don't arrive soon—but also takes the chance to cast healing spells on herself as well. If the PCs fall for the deception, Yarzoth explains that they can exit the inner sanctum by smearing blood on the image of Zura there—she hopes that the PCs will unwittingly take her under their wing and help her escape to the mainland. Of course, by now she also realizes that she's underestimated the PCs, and she remains ready to attack the instant they see through her trickery. This time, if she's reduced to fewer than 15 hit points, she turns gaseous again and attempts to flee the complex altogether via the vents in the roof of area Z7—if she escapes in this manner, she goes into hiding in the jungle and stalks the PCs, hoping to strike at them again to get back her research if she can. In this case, you can use Yarzoth as a recurring villain as you see fit.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 12, **Dex** 23, **Con** 17, **Int** 16, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 18

**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Combat Casting, Command Undead, Dodge, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +11, Bluff +9, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +14, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (religion) +11, Linguistics +10, Perception +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +11, Swim +9, Use Magic Device +13;

### Racial Modifiers

+8 Escape Artist, +4 Use Magic Device

**Languages** Aklo, Azlanti, Common, Draconic, Halfling, Polyglot, Undercommon, Varisian; telepathy 100 ft.

**Combat Gear** *potion of water breathing*, *scrolls of augury* (2), *scroll of comprehend*

*languages*, *scrolls of cure moderate wounds* (2), *scroll of find traps*, *scrolls of lesser restoration* (2), *scroll of remove disease*; **Other Gear** *ring of mind shielding*, spell component pouch, unholy symbol of Ydersius, waterproof scroll tube (worth 250 gp; can hold up to 20 scrolls), 18 pp

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Poison (Ex)** Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 17; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Str; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

**Treasure:** The three large alcoves in this room once served as meditation chambers—the cultists would enter one, pull a curtain for privacy, and recite the complex prayers and parables carved on the walls here. These carvings, all written in Azlanti, tell the history of this particular Zura cult in three stages. The southern alcove tells of the cult's genesis in the city of Saventh-Yhi in the jungle, but is frustratingly vague when it comes to exact details on the legendary city apart from confirming that it was built by Azlanti—this section ends with the cult's exile from Saventh-Yhi and how they made a dangerous overland journey that ended on the shores of a remote island far from their homeland. The northwestern

alcove takes up the story at this point, detailing the cult's exploration of this island (identifiable as Smuggler's Shiv), their discovery and defeat of a large group of serpentfolk who had gone into hiding after the defeat of their

kind many years before at Saventh-Yhi, and the creation of this temple. The northeastern alcove plots the cult's future plans, focusing on how they had hoped to earn the gift of vampirism from Zura by undertaking extensive and vile rituals, and once this gift was theirs, how they planned on making the journey back to Saventh-Yhi to awaken (infect) that city with Zura's blessing (vampirism).

As with the carvings in area Z2, these carvings present a wealth of new information about Azlant's presence in Garund, particularly all of the references to the lost city of Saventh-Yhi. A DC 25 Knowledge (history) check is enough for anyone to know that Saventh-Yhi is one of the



Yarzoth



most sought-after lost cities of Garund, for legends speak that it was built by the Azlanti. Such a discovery could revolutionize what is known about this ancient empire, and that information alone, properly transcribed and recorded, could be worth thousands. Yet hard evidence about the location of Saventh-Yhi could well be priceless.

Fortunately for the PCs, by the time they arrive, Yarzoth has already transcribed the majority of these carvings onto dozens of sheets of parchment (mostly scavenged from the many scrolls she carried and had to use over the course of her journey)—the notes are written in Aklo, but quite complete. In her notes, Yarzoth seems particularly intrigued by the possibility that Saventh-Yhi might be the exact spot where, so long ago, her god Ydersius was beheaded. Yarzoth does not yet suspect that an entire lost serpentfolk city lies below Saventh-Yhi—that fact should remain unknown to the PCs at this time as well, so that they may discover it later in this Adventure Path.

## Z9. INNER SANCTUM (CR 4)

This X-shaped room has a low ceiling and walls dense with ancient carvings and bas-reliefs of a bat-winged demonic woman, including a particularly large one on the northeast wall whose lips are smeared with dried blood. A number of supplies—food, discarded clothes, a few waterskins, and a well-used bedroll—lie in the center of the room.

This chamber was once used by the temple's high priest as a private place to meditate and worship, but is today used by Yarzoth as a bedroom. An examination of the various materials strewn about the room reveals the food to be locally caught or harvested (fillets of fish, shellfish, and strips of meat taken from birds and monkeys—all quite fresh thanks to Yarzoth's daily use of *purify food and water*), while the bedroll and other supplies seem to be from the *Jenivere*—the clothing, in particular, is recognizable as having belonged to Ieana.

The largest carving of Zura on the northeast wall radiates moderate transmutation magic—like the statue in area Z8, smearing blood on this carving's lips affects one with *gaseous form* (CL 5th).

**Trap:** There's a hidden panel in the wall below the carving of Zura that Yarzoth has discovered but knows is trapped—she's not yet had the nerve to risk opening the panel since she nearly succumbed to a similar one back in area V23. This trap is an ancient *glyph of warding* placed ages ago by the high priest of Zura that curses those who would rob the treasury by causing them to be marked by Zura. Victims of this curse transform into deformed, bat-like parodies of their true forms—with fanged mouths and twisted, bat-like ears, arms that look more like wings but function well neither as arm nor wing, twisted legs

that end in malformed talons, and wracking pains as if by a constant gnawing hunger that nothing seems to sate. Not only does this curse deform the target (in theory, making the target easy to recognize and thus punish), but it reduces the victim's Dexterity by 4 and his Charisma by 2. Note that a curse is a tough effect for a 3rd-level character to be hit with—if one of your PCs succumbs to this curse, you could use a promise of its removal as leverage at the start of the next adventure when the PCs are being wooed by various factions for the knowledge they've discovered in this temple. Yet the curse itself won't kill a PC outright if he succumbs, and since it occurs at the end of this adventure, having to endure the curse for a short time should impact actual game play relatively little.

### GLYPH OF WARDING

CR 4

XP 1,200

Type magic; Perception DC 28; Disable Device 28

#### EFFECTS

Trigger spell (opening the hidden panel); Reset none

Effect spell effect (*bestow curse*, CL 8th, –4 decrease to Dex and –2 decrease to Cha, DC 17 Will save negates)

**Treasure:** The hidden panel opens like a drawer. Within are a few ancient but still functional magic items the high priest kept for emergencies but did not feel the need to bring along on his final, ill-fated journey. This treasure consists of a *scroll of divination*, a *scroll of restoration*, a single card from an archaic *deck of illusions* (creates an illusion of a peryton, a rare beast that was more common during Azlant's height—the peryton is detailed in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #19, but if you don't have access to that book, treat the peryton as a harpy), a *candle of truth*, and a block of *incense of meditation*.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Without access to powerful magic like *teleport* (or even spells like *water walk* or *fly*), the PCs' chance of escape from Smuggler's Shiv is remote—their only real hope of rescue is to stay alive, maintain their morale and sanity, and reach the southwestern shore of Smuggler's Shiv (the only shore that faces the Sargavan shipping lanes) to send a signal. The lighthouse at area V is perfect for such a signal, but a smoky fire on the beach or mountaintop has little chance of success, as passing ships often see such fires, assume (correctly) that they were lit by cannibals, and count their blessings that they're not in range of the cooking pot. While some PCs might think that lighting the entire island on fire could make for a truly compelling signal, this is nearly impossible—the frequent rains and constantly waterlogged nature of the jungle that covers most of the Shiv make large-



# SERPENT'S SKULL

scale fires all but impossible to create. Nevertheless, if the PCs are persistent in lighting signal fires all across Smuggler's Shiv, you might wish to allow such a plan to eventually attract the attention of a sailing ship—although if the PCs haven't dealt with the Thrunefang cannibals and their rescuers make landfall near their camp, they may find their would-be rescuers in need of a rescue themselves.

If the PCs have taken control of the old lighthouse and managed to light its beacon, and have discovered the Azlanti temple and defeated Yarzoth, there's no reason to keep them on Smuggler's Shiv any longer, and rescue can arrive soon thereafter. Only if the PCs have not discovered the clues to the lost city of Saventh-Yhi that will lead them to the next adventure in the Adventure Path should you endeavor to keep them on the island and guide them toward those clues.

## ON THE PERILS OF BOATING

Of course, signaling for help is not the only way the PCs might seek to escape Smuggler's Shiv. One obvious plan is the salvage or construction of a raft that the PCs can then use to sail to safety. Although "Souls for Smuggler's Shiv" expects the PCs to use the signal method for rescue, if the PCs are convinced that building a raft is the best way to escape, you should let them try. As they'll soon learn, such methods of escape may well be more deadly than staying on the island!

None of the wrecked ships around Smuggler's Shiv are seaworthy—while the PCs might be able to scavenge a few pieces of lumber or other material for their raft, they should have better luck harvesting wood from the numerous jungle trees. Building a raft requires a number of DC 15 Craft (ships) checks (assume a crude raft has a cost of 20 gp per PC the raft is designed to carry).

Unfortunately, since the currents around Smuggler's Shiv, when combined with the tangled reefs and hidden rocks, make a peril significant enough to ruin even well-made ships manned by highly trained crews, there's little chance of a raft making it far from shore. It requires five consecutive DC 30 Profession (sailor) checks to navigate the current and the reefs—if the PCs fail, you should describe a harrowing encounter with a reef or sharks or eurypterids, perhaps inflict a little damage, but let them wash back up on the Shiv's shore in the end.

Even in the unlikely event the PCs manage to escape the reefs and currents and sharks and make it to the open ocean, Smuggler's Shiv is still 20 miles from the coast, requiring several more DC 20 Profession (sailor) checks and perhaps some DC 25 Knowledge (geography) checks to navigate the correct route back to the mainland.

If after all that the PCs manage to reach the mainland, award them 2,400 XP for the daring escape. Yet once

they reach civilization, they should find themselves commissioned to return to Smuggler's Shiv to investigate rumors of Azlanti ruins on the island. This way, you can still run this adventure (and thus give the PCs a chance to reach 4th level before starting the next adventure)—only now, instead of trying to escape an island they're shipwrecked on, they've been hired to explore the island and discover its secrets.

## ESCAPING THE SHIV

Unless you have other plans for a ship of your own design, the rescue ship that arrives is a whaling vessel bound for Eleder. This is the *Red Gull*, run by the snaggletoothed but friendly Captain **Aulek Tegerten** (LN male human expert 4/rogue 1). The *Red Gull* is not eager to stay for long on or near the shores of Smuggler's Shiv—the ship itself won't approach within 200 yards of shore, and all transport to and from land is via the *Red Gull's* longboat.

Note that the arrival of a rescue ship doesn't necessarily ensure salvation—especially if the cannibals are still active. And even if the PCs secure a rescue ship, they can remain on the island to finish exploring if they can convince Captain Tegerten to stick around (this requires a DC 20 Diplomacy check, but the DC increases by 4 each day the captain is asked to delay leaving the Shiv). Alternatively, the PCs can make arrangements with Captain Tegerten to have a second ship sent to collect the PCs at some point in the future if the PCs want to remain on Smuggler's Shiv and explore it some more. At the very least, Captain Tegerten will allow the PCs to restock from his supplies—as long as they have the coin or barter to offer in trade!

The party's fellow castaways are, if anything, even more delighted at the rescue than the PCs. Furthermore, each of the five castaways who survives to this point and makes it on board the *Red Gull* represents a significant achievement by the PCs. Award the party 600 XP for each NPC castaway who joins them in being rescued (including poor Pezock, if anyone remembers to tell the tengu that a rescue ship has arrived).

Details on how the carvings and discoveries in the Azlanti temple can lead the PCs to the legendary city of Saventh-Yhi (as well as how you might introduce this information on the off chance that the PCs leave Smuggler's Shiv without making this discovery) are not presented in this adventure—it'll take time for the PCs to sort through Yarzoth's notes, after all, and ideally a significant amount of cross-referencing sources in a library. The secrets awaiting discovery in these notes, as well as the complications that arise once the rest of Eleder learns what the PCs may have discovered, are detailed in the next adventure in the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path. If you're not running "Souls for Smuggler's Shiv" as part of this campaign, you can instead use these notes





to lure the PCs into the next adventure you have planned for them—or simply as a reward. Sold to a collector, the recovered lore of the lost Temple of Zura can be worth up to 5,000 gp.

### MORE ADVENTURES ON THE SHIV

“Souls for Smuggler’s Shiv” is a very open-ended adventure. The path your PCs take through this adventure is in large part left to them—there should be enough encounters and dangers to keep any group of castaways busy for several sessions. But if you find your players wanting to extend their stay on this deadly island, you can expand the adventure by adding additional encounter areas. Some suggested additional encounters are given here.

**Typhoon (CR 4):** A powerful tropical storm hits Smuggler’s Shiv, blanketing the island with windstorm-strength winds

and rain for 1d3 days. After the storm, the beaches are strewn with strange dead bodies—undead ningyos (see page 80) waiting for nightfall to animate them.

**Wandering Harpy (CR 5):** Zavileira, a wandering harpy sorcerer 1, has become fascinated with the wreck of the *Bearded Harpy* (area D7) and has made the site her lair. She’s caught a pair of Thrunefang cannibals with a *charm person* spell, but wouldn’t mind adding the PCs to her harem.

**Wererat Cannibal (CR 3):** Narak Voad was a one of the Thrunefangs’ best hunters until he found a strange skeleton aboard a shipwreck. He pricked his finger on the skull’s teeth, and in so doing contracted lycanthropy. Now a wererat, **Narak** (CE male human wererat barbarian 3) has fled from the village to live in the jungle, hoping that he’ll soon recover from his curse but with each passing day, he grows increasingly feral and ever more eager to seek humanoid prey.

# SERPENT'S SKULL



GONZALO  
FLORES

## SHIPWRECKED!

IT'S BEEN NEARLY TWO WEEKS SINCE I WASHED UP ON THE SHORE OF THIS DAMNABLE ISLAND. AT FIRST, I THANKED GOZREH FOR MY LUCK—HERE WAS SOLID GROUND, PLENTY OF FRESH WATER, AND A BOUNTY OF JUNGLE FRUIT AND WILD GAME TO HUNT. YET NOW, I WONDER IF GOZREH WAS IN FACT ANGERED AT ME, AND PLACED THESE BOUNTIES UPON THIS ISLAND AS BUT A TREACHERY TO EXTEND MY SURVIVAL. I HAVE SEEN NO SIGN OF SAIL ON THE HORIZON, AND THE STRANGE NOISES IN THE JUNGLE GROW CLOSER EACH NIGHT. I SHALL LEAVE THIS MESSAGE AT MY CAMPSITE—IF IT IS FOUND BY A WOULD-BE RESCUER, DO NOT SEEK ME OUT IN THE JUNGLE, FOR I WILL HAVE DOUBTLESS FOUND THE SOURCE OF THE STRANGE HOWLING AND WILL BE BEYOND SALVATION.

—MESSAGE FOUND AT AN ABANDONED CAMPSITE

Shipwrecked! It's the sailor's oldest fear, with stories of desert islands, savage natives, and terrifying monsters haunting sailors' imaginations as they sit up late, telling stories over a mug of grog or to help them stay awake on the late watch. Yet fortunately for the player characters, they won't have to face the terror alone.

The following pages contain an overview of the basic rules necessary to run a shipwreck adventure, as well as detailed descriptions of the motley cast of characters the PCs may find themselves washing up beside, designed for use with this adventure yet equally suited to any castaway's oceanic odyssey.

## SURVIVAL

While the following rules and advice are tailored to assist GMs in running "Souls for Smuggler's Shiv," the rules are easy to adapt to any situation where the PCs find themselves stranded and lost in the distant wilderness.

## FOOD AND WATER

A Medium creature requires a gallon of water and a pound of decent food each day to avoid starvation—in hot climates (such as the tropical climate of Smuggler's Shiv), characters need twice as much water each day. Small creatures require half the amount of food and water that Medium creatures do, while Large creatures require twice as much.

Of course, certain spells can vastly ease the search for food and water. *Create water* produces 2 gallons of water per casting—since this cantrip is usable at will, a character with this ability effectively removes the worry about drinking water. Similarly, *purify food and drink* effectively removes the need for water if the PCs have access to the ocean.

Food is a tougher problem to solve with magic—summoned creatures don't persist long enough and vanish when slain, so they aren't a usable source for food. At higher level, spells like *heroes' feast* can solve the food problem, but since high-level casters have access to spells like *teleport* and *wind walk*, *heroes' feast* is unlikely to ever serve as a survival spell. *Goodberry* can keep 2d4 people per casting well fed, but requires fresh berries—fortunately, berries are relatively easy to find on Smuggler's Shiv. The best spell in a survival situation is *create food and water*, but as this spell is 3rd level it's out of reach for lower-level characters, such as those stranded on Smuggler's Shiv.

If there's no magic available to feed and provide water for the stranded PCs, they'll need to rely instead on Survival skill checks. Smuggler's Shiv is relatively hospitable when it comes to game and fresh water, and 4 hours of hunting and foraging allow a character to attempt a Survival check. With a DC 10 success, a character provides enough food and water for himself—every 2 points by which he exceeds this DC provides food and water for an additional character.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Shelter is important on Smuggler's Shiv, if only to give the PCs a place to rest and recover their strength after a day of hunting, exploring, or adventuring. There are two environmental effects on Smuggler's Shiv that shelter can help protect against—disease and heat. Note that these effects are of little concern to natives of the island, as they are well acclimated to the environment.

**Disease:** Smuggler's Shiv is rife with biting flies, mosquitoes, gnats, ants, and other pests—many of which carry disease. Each day at sundown, each PC has a 25% chance of being exposed to mindfire or red ache (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 557). At your discretion, the PCs could be exposed to other diseases (many jungle diseases are introduced in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Heart of the Jungle*), but take care not to overdo this element of the game—disease can get old quickly. Sleeping in a shelter reduces the chance of exposure to any disease to 15%.

**Heat:** "Souls for Smuggler's Shiv" takes place during the height of summer, and despite frequent rainfall, the days can become very hot for 3 hours from 12:00 to 3:00 P.M. (see page 444 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* for rules on hot conditions). A character can avoid having to make Fortitude saving throws against the heat's effects by spending those hours in shade or shelter and not taking part in strenuous activity—but even one combat is enough to trigger a Fortitude save for hot conditions.

## ESTABLISHING A BASE CAMP

Creating a safe camp to sleep, eat, and relax in can make the difference between survival and death. A base camp needs to be located in a safe and stable location, and must adequately provide for shelter from the environment and protection against wildlife. Locating a suitable site and building a shelter requires a DC 12 Survival check and takes 8 hours. Lack of building tools imposes a –5 penalty on this check (the proper tools can be found in the wreck of the *Jenivere* at encounter area B—they are unlikely to be part of any castaway's gear). The time required is reduced by 1 hour for every 2 points by which the Survival check exceeds DC 12, down to a minimum of 1 hour.

Once a campsite is established, it provides a safe place to rest out of the relentless heat of the sun, while the shelter and smoke from a campfire helps to ward off insects (reducing the chance of being exposed to disease to 10% per day). In addition, there are five roles that PCs or (more likely) NPCs can take up as part of their daily duties to further enhance the effects of a campsite, as detailed below. In order to fill one of these roles, the character must spend the entire day pursuing the role.

**Defender:** A defender works to set traps, shore up a shelter's walls, and see to the safety of the campsite. The

# SERPENT'S SKULL

first time in a day that a wandering monster or hostile creature attacks the campsite, the defender's traps inflict 2d6 points of damage—divide the damage done as equally as possible among all attackers. Each additional defender assigned to a campsite increases this damage by 2d6.

**Entertainer:** An entertainer helps to raise hopes for rescue—each entertainer grants NPCs a +2 bonus on Will saves to increase morale (see below).

**Guard:** Each guard reduces the chance of a wandering monster attacking the camp during the day or night by 5% (minimum chance of 5%).

**Hunter:** Each hunter provides enough food and water for eight Medium creatures per day.

**Medic:** Each medic reduces the chance of being exposed to disease by 5% and increases the number of hit points healed naturally during a night's rest in the camp by 2.

## THE OTHER CASTAWAYS

The PCs aren't the only ones stranded on Smuggler's Shiv—five other characters survived the wreck of the *Jenivere* and are stranded on the island with them. These NPCs can live or die as events demand—although since the PCs gain additional XP for keeping these NPCs alive and seeing them safely to Eleder, it's in their best interest to keep them from an untimely end during this adventure.

## ATTITUDE

Each NPC castaway has an initial attitude toward the PCs dependent on the PCs' backgrounds. The PCs can attempt a Diplomacy check to adjust a given NPC castaway's attitude beyond this initial attitude once per day. (The Intimidate skill is a temporary solution that fades after  $1d6 \times 10$  minutes and resets an NPC's attitude back to unfriendly.) Since the management of these NPCs is a key part of the adventure, you should award experience points to the PCs for their successes.

The stress of being shipwrecked makes it difficult to adjust an NPC's attitude to helpful during this adventure—an NPC will become at most friendly until the PCs complete that NPC's personal quest, at which point the PCs can advance her attitude to helpful. Barring abject betrayal or violence from a PC, an NPC who is adjusted to helpful in this manner remains helpful to the end of the adventure. In addition, each helpful NPC castaway reveals a secret to the PCs and grants a boon that can aid them in escaping Smuggler's Shiv.

How the NPCs act and relate to the PCs depends on their current attitude, as outlined below. Specific interactions for each attitude level are listed in each NPC's entry.

**Hostile:** The NPC takes a foolish or aggressive action that may cause problems for the rest of the castaways.

**Unfriendly:** The NPC is standoffish and unfriendly and refuses to help with campsite duties.

**Indifferent:** The NPC is willing serve in one of two campsite roles (see the NPC's entry for specific roles).

**Friendly:** The first time the PCs make an NPC friendly via Diplomacy, gifts, or favors (but not via Intimidate), award the party 100 XP. Making an NPC friendly leads her to reveal her castaway quest.

**Helpful:** Completing an NPC's quest is the only way to make her helpful, but once she reaches this attitude she remains so for the remainder of the adventure. For making an NPC helpful, award the party 200 XP. A helpful NPC will accompany PCs on explorations or other missions on the island if asked. In addition, a helpful NPC offers the PCs a one-time boon that grants a permanent bonus on a type of saving throw, attack roll, or the like—these are untyped bonuses.

## MORALE

The NPC castaways react to their near-death experience in different ways, and if the PCs don't bolster their morale, they could easily fall prey to despair. Although the shock of the wreck is enough to mute their personalities somewhat on the first day, clashes among the NPC castaways can manifest as soon as the first night on the island.

Morale has five categories: hopeful, normal, shaken, frightened, and panicked. All five castaways start with a morale of shaken. Events during play can adjust each castaway's morale in one direction or another—either positively (to normal and eventually hopeful) or negatively (to frightened and eventually panicked). Morale affects only NPC castaways.

**Adjusting Morale:** Every morning, an NPC castaway must make a DC 15 Will save. If successful, the NPC's morale increases to the next category toward hopeful. If the Will save fails, the NPC's morale doesn't change unless the roll failed by 5 or more, in which case her morale moves one step toward panicked. Note that once an NPC reaches hopeful morale, she no longer needs to make these Will saves, but special events can still adjust her morale downward (in which case she'll need to start making her morning Will saves again).

**Effects of Morale:** Each level of morale has different effects on the NPC castaways, as listed below.

**Hopeful:** The NPC functions normally, and does not need to make morning Will saves to adjust morale. Diplomacy checks to adjust the NPC's attitude gain a +2 bonus.

**Normal:** The NPC functions normally.

**Shaken:** The NPC is shaken.

**Frightened:** The NPC is shaken. Diplomacy checks to adjust the NPC's attitude take a –2 penalty.

**Panicked:** The NPC is shaken, and during any attack by hostile forces, she immediately becomes panicked and flees the area, heedless of the danger. Diplomacy checks to adjust the NPC's attitude take a –4 penalty.

## AERYS MAVATO

Aerys Mavato boarded the *Jenivere* at Port Peril, and immediately got in a fight with one of the ship's crewmen when he made an ill-advised suggestion that he and Aerys could share bunks. Aerys soundly humiliated the crewman in the resulting scrap (much to the barely hidden delight of the *Jenivere's* first mate), preventing further trouble during the rest of the voyage but sending the brooding half-elf into a self-imposed isolation in her forward cabin where she spent much of her time half-drunk or passed out, filling the gaps between bouts of work on her secret passion—poetry. Aerys has been crafting an epic poem she calls the *Abendego Cantos* for many years, and worries that she'll not be able to finish it before she gets herself killed.

**Appearance:** Aerys is a trim, athletic woman with short dark hair, tanned skin, and fierce blue eyes. She dresses in tightly fitted leather armor and favors dark clothing and tricorn hats.

**Personality:** Aerys knew from earliest childhood that she wanted to captain her own ship—it didn't matter whether as merchant, navy, or pirate. Yet as she grew into adulthood as a woman of rare beauty, she discovered that achieving her dream in such a male-dominated profession would be more difficult than she'd hoped. She downplays her beauty when she can and is quick to mock or even assault anyone who makes flirtatious overtures toward her. She's recently taken to dulling her anger and frustrations with alcohol.

**Interactions:** Diplomacy checks that incorporate flirtatious overtones take a  $-4$  penalty against Aerys. Offering her a bottle of alcohol while she's still an alcoholic imparts a  $+4$  bonus on Diplomacy checks, or a  $-4$  penalty if she's been cured.

**Hostile:** Aerys abandons the PCs and sets off into the jungle to find her own way back to the mainland. In this event, she is captured by the cannibals at area V and may be eaten if the PCs don't rescue her within 1d4 days—rescuing her shifts her attitude to friendly.

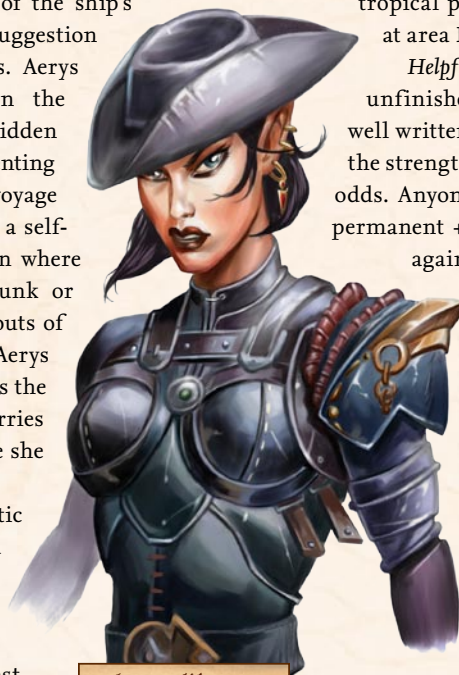
**Unfriendly:** Aerys begins with this attitude if no PCs are from Port Peril.

**Indifferent:** Aerys begins with this attitude if at least one PC is from Port Peril. She can now serve as an entertainer or a guard at camp.

**Friendly:** Aerys confesses that she wants to kick her drinking habit and asks for help in doing so. A *remove disease* spell will cure her, but the PCs are unlikely to

have access to this magic. She's heard that viper nettle berries can help to hasten recovery, though, and asks the PCs to scour Smuggler's Shiv to find a supply of this rare tropical plant. This quest may be completed at area E.

**Helpful:** Aerys allows the PCs to read her unfinished epic—the *Abendego Cantos* are very well written and contain compelling themes of the strength of personality against incalculable odds. Anyone who reads it for 8 hours gains a permanent  $+1$  bonus on all Will saving throws against compulsion effects.



AERYS MAVATO

**AERYS MAVATO** CR 1

XP 400

Female half-elf fighter 2

N Medium humanoid (elf)

**Init** +2; **Senses** low-light vision;

Perception +1

### DEFENSE

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

**hp** 17 (2d10+2)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +2, **Will**  $-1$ ; +2 vs. enchantments, +1 vs. fear

**Immune** sleep

**Weaknesses** alcoholic

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** unarmed strike +5 (1d3+2)

**Ranged** composite longbow +4 (1d8/x3)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Aerys prefers to fight with her fists—a tactic at which she's remarkably talented, using Power Attack unless faced by a foe that's particularly hard to hit.

**Morale** Aerys flees if reduced to 4 hit points or less, unless she's helpful and a PC is in peril, in which case she'll defend the PC with her life.

### STATISTICS

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

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 16

**Feats** Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Craft [poetry]), Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

**Skills** Craft (poetry) +9, Linguistics +3, Perception +1, Profession (sailor) +4, Swim +7

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Elven, Infernal, Polyglot

**SQ** bravery +1, elf blood

**Gear** masterwork studded leather, composite longbow with 20 arrows, ink and quills, partially completed *Abendego Cantos*, tricorn hat, 45 gp

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Alcoholic (Ex)** Aerys is an alcoholic—each day she's forced to go without a drink, she is sickened.

# SERPENT'S SKULL

## GELIK ABERWHINGE

Gelik boarded the *Jenivere* at Magnimar in something of a rush—when a local merchant discovered that Gelik had sold him a fake Thassilonian relic (a practice that has resulted in his poor standing in the Pathfinder Society), things quickly got out of hand and the Magnimar city guard became involved. After losing his pursuers in a market, Gelik found himself at the docks and, knowing that his welcome in Magnimar was over, secured passage on the first ship out of town he could—the *Jenivere*.

**Appearance:** Gelik is a spry, energetic gnome with blond hair and a neat goatee. He dresses like a noble at all times (“If you can’t take the time to dress properly, no one will take what you have to say seriously—and they’d be right not to!”). With liberal use of *prestidigitation*, his fine clothes always seem freshly cleaned. Only the ink stains on his fingers break the illusion of a proper gnome nobleman (“If you don’t have ink stains on your fingers, no one will take your writing seriously—and they’d be right not to!”).

**Personality:** Gelik is quick-witted and a talented speaker. Unfortunately, he has a mean streak when it comes to the misfortunes of others—he often simply can’t help himself from making a snide comment or a scathing remark at another’s expense.

**Interactions:** Anyone who openly complains about Gelik’s sense of humor takes a –4 penalty on Diplomacy checks against him.

**Hostile:** Gelik’s jokes are particularly mean against anyone who makes him hostile—he doesn’t attack, but uses his spells and cruel wit to make life miserable for the PC. A particularly well-worded retort against one of his insults from a hostile PC (requiring a successful Perform [comedy] check opposed by Gelik’s Perform [comedy] skill) impresses the gnome and shifts his attitude to friendly.

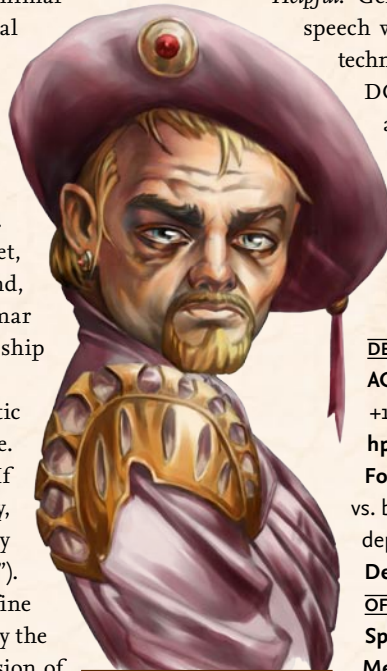
**Unfriendly:** Gelik begins with this attitude if no PCs are from Magnimar.

**Indifferent:** Gelik starts out indifferent if any PC is from Magnimar. Gelik can serve as an entertainer or medic.

**Friendly:** Gelik knows of an old story about a Pathfinder Society ship called the *Nightvoice* that went missing in these waters, and the most popular theory as to what happened is that the ship ran aground on Smuggler’s Shiv or sank near the island. He admits that he’s currently “on probation” with the Pathfinders, and that finding out what happened to the *Nightvoice* could go a long way toward

clearing his record with the organization. This quest may be completed at area R.

**Helpful:** Gelik shares several secrets of comedy and speech with the PCs—after a day of practice, these techniques grant a permanent +1 bonus to the save DC of any charm or language-dependent effect a PC uses.



GELIK ABERWHINGE

### GELIK ABERWHINGE CR 1

XP 400

Male gnome bard 2

CN Small humanoid (gnome)

**Init** +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +1

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +1 size, +1 shield)

**hp** 16 (2d8+4)

**Fort** +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2; +2 vs. illusions, +4 vs. bardic performance, sonic, and language-dependent effects

**Defensive Abilities** defensive training

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 25 ft.

**Melee** longsword +2 (1d6/19–20)

**Ranged** mwk shortbow +4 (1d4/x3)

**Special Attacks** bardic performance 9 rounds/day

(countersong, distraction, fascinate, inspire courage +1), hatred

**Gnome Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 2nd; concentration +5)

1/day—*dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *prestidigitation*, *speak with animals*

**Bard Spells Known** (CL 2nd; concentration +5)

1st (3/day)—*comprehend languages*, *cure light wounds*, *identify*

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *know direction*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Gelik prefers to hang back in a fight, supporting allies with inspire courage and *cure light wounds*. He favors the shortbow if forced to fight.

**Morale** If wounded at all, Gelik shrieks in pain and flees, seeking a safe vantage point from which he can use his bow or (even better) a good hiding spot.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 17

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 12

**Feats** Fleet

**Skills** Appraise +5, Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Linguistics +5, Perception +1, Perform (comedy) +8, Use Magic Device +8

**Languages** Azlanti, Common, Gnome, Polyglot

**SQ** bardic knowledge +1, versatile performance (comedy)

**Gear** buckler, longsword, masterwork shortbow with 20 arrows, fine noble’s clothes worth 100 gp, journal and ink, spell component pouch, 20 gp



## ISHIROU

Ishirou grew up on his father's ship, but grew to resent what he felt was a stolen childhood—he saw how those who stayed in one location set down roots, grew rich, and established empires. In a foolish attempt to force his family to settle down, young Ishirou stole down to the waterfront and lit his father's ship on fire, only to watch in horror and shame as his father heroically leapt aboard the ship and tried to save it. His father died in the fire, and Ishirou's secret drove him to stow away on an Aspis Consortium ship bound for Bloodcove. Ten years have passed since then, and Ishirou has worked as a sailor, thug, messenger, soldier, and guard for the Aspis Consortium the entire time. He boarded the *Jenivere* at Bloodcove, having finally paid off his debt to the Consortium, and is eager to seek a new life in Sargava.

**Appearance:** Ishirou is a rugged Tian man who appears much older than he is, with graying hair worn in a ponytail and a perpetual scruffy beard. His clothing and armor are well kept and clean, but obviously of low quality. Only his sword, a beautiful katana given to him by a member of the Aspis Consortium to ensure his loyalty (and to increase the perceived debt he owes the group), has any real value. Ishirou is rightfully protective of it, as it is his only material link to his cultural heritage.

**Personality:** Taciturn and dour, Ishirou has no sense of humor and little reason to smile. He has little patience for those who strike him as wasteful or spoiled, and is easily flustered by the attention of an attractive woman.

**Interactions:** Ishirou is intrigued by Aerys Mavato—but not for her beauty. Her boundless love for ships and the sea fascinates him—in Ishirou's experience, those who love the sea tend to be crass, crude, foolish, or all three. Diplomacy checks made against Ishirou by anyone he thinks can put in a good word with Aerys for him gain a +4 bonus.

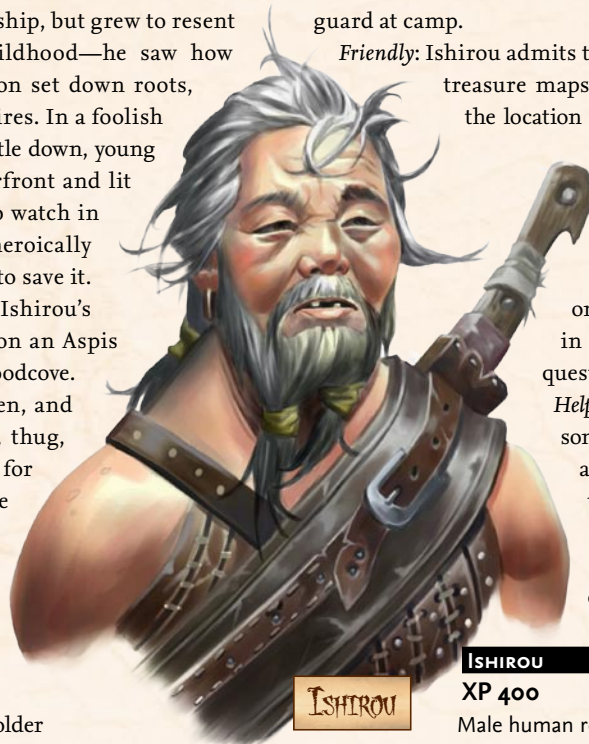
**Hostile:** If Ishirou becomes hostile, he challenges the insulting character to a duel to the death. If beaten in this duel but granted mercy, Ishirou abandons the group out of shame. He then tries to follow up on his treasure map on his own but falls victim to one of the traps at area J, soon to be discovered by Thrunefang cannibals and taken away to their camp. If the PCs rescue Ishirou from the cannibals, his attitude shifts to friendly.

**Unfriendly:** Ishirou begins with this attitude if no PCs are from Bloodcove.

**Indifferent:** Ishirou begins with this attitude if at least one PC is from Bloodcove. He can serve as a defender or a guard at camp.

**Friendly:** Ishirou admits that he owns several promising treasure maps, and that one of them shows the location of an old pirate's stash here on Smuggler's Shiv. Alas, the notes on the map indicate that recovering the treasure will take several people. Since they're already here on the Shiv, what's the harm in looking for a bit of loot? This quest may be completed at area K.

**Helpful:** Ishirou teaches the PCs some of his swordfighting styles and tricks. After a day of practice, these simple but effective tricks grant a +1 bonus to CMB and CMD while wielding a sword or similar weapon.



ISHIROU

ISHIROU

CR 1

XP 400

Male human rogue 2

N Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +2; **Senses** Perception +4

### DEFENSE

**AC** 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex)

**hp** 14 (2d8+2)

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

**Defensive Abilities** evasion

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk katana +5 (1d10+3/19-20)

**Special Attacks** sneak attack +1d6

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Ishirou moves quickly to attack when a fight seems inevitable. He fights with Combat Expertise whenever he's not making a sneak attack.

**Morale** Ishirou feels has little to live for, and fights to the death.

### STATISTICS

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

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 16

**Feats** Combat Expertise, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (katana), Quick Draw

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Bluff +5, Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +5, Disguise +5, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +6, Linguistics +6, Perception +4, Profession (sailor) +4, Stealth +5

**Languages** Common, Elven, Polyglot, Tien

**SQ** rogue talent (combat trick), trapfinding +1

**Gear** chain shirt, masterwork katana (as bastard sword), treasure maps

# SERPENT'S SKULL

## JASK DERINDI

Jask was once employed by the Sargavan government, but when he uncovered evidence of corruption involving illicit deals with the Free Captains of the Shackles, Jask confronted his superior, only to be betrayed and framed for the same crimes. Faced with imprisonment, Jask fled all the way to Corentyn, where he lived a modest life as a scribe for a decade. He'd thought his enemies in Sargava had forgotten him, but then a Sargavan agent caught up with him and put him in irons. The agent handed Jask over to the captain of the *Jenivere* with instructions to return Jask to Sargava for trial, but the captain disappeared during the shipwreck, leaving Jask alive but bound.

**Appearance:** Jask is a middle-aged, plain-looking Garundi man with hair starting to gray and watery eyes. When the PCs first meet him on the beach, all he has are ragged clothes and manacles that bind his wrists behind his back. As far as Jask knows, the keys to his bonds were lost in the shipwreck—a DC 30 Disable Device check is required to pick the lock. However, the keys remain in the captain's cabin on the wreck of the *Jenivere* (area B), along with Jask's equipment. Freeing Jask makes Jask friendly, at which point he mentions the wreck of the *Brine Demon* (see below).

**Personality:** Jask is curious and eager, especially when presented with new knowledge, and honest to a fault. He is relieved to have been granted a reprieve from returning to Sargava—this, combined with the fact that he survived the wreck, has made him giddy with delight. Yet as time wears on and the difficulties of life on the Shiv progress, Jask grows increasingly depressed and desperate to escape back to civilization—even if it means going to jail.

**Interactions:** Jask's manacles mark him as a criminal, despite his claims of innocence. As long as he remains manacled, all Diplomacy checks against him take an additional -4 penalty. If he's released, Diplomacy checks against him by those who argued in his favor (or anyone who believes his claims of innocence) gain a +4 bonus.

**Hostile:** If made hostile, Jask sulks quietly if still manacled, or flees into the wilderness if not. If he escapes, his wandering eventually brings him to area Q, where he becomes a prisoner of the vegepygmies—at the GM's discretion, he can be rescued later, at which point he becomes friendly.

**Unfriendly:** Jask begins with this attitude if no PCs are from Corentyn.



JASK DERINDI

**Indifferent:** Jask begins with this attitude if at least one PC is from Corentyn. He can serve as a hunter or a medic at camp (but only if he's not manacled).

**Friendly:** One of the incriminating papers he found so long ago indicated that one of his superior's contacts in the Shackles was a man named Avret Kinkarian. Kinkarian's ship, the *Brine Demon*, reputedly wrecked here on Smuggler's Shiv. He knows it's a long shot, but Jask would love to track the ship down and explore the wreck on the off chance there could be more evidence somewhere aboard to prove his innocence.

This quest may be completed at area G.

**Helpful:** Jask shares a number of mantras and focusing chants—with a day of practice, these chants grant a +2 bonus on concentration checks.

**JASK DERINDI** CR 1

XP 400

Male middle-aged human cleric of Nethys 2

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; Senses Perception +3

**DEFENSE**

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 8 (2d8-4)

Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +8

**OFFENSE**

Speed 30 ft.

**Melee** unarmed strike +0 (1d3-1 nonlethal)

**Special Attacks** channel positive energy 8/day (DC 14, 1d6), hand of the acolyte (6/day)

**Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 2nd; concentration +5)

At will—lore keeper

**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 2nd; concentration +5)

1st—*comprehend languages*<sup>D</sup>, *endure elements*, *sanctuary* (DC 14), *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*detect poison*, *light*, *mending*, *read magic*

D Domain spell; **Domains** Knowledge, Magic

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** If unbound, Jask supports allies in combat by using healing magic. If attacked, he fights defensively.

**Morale** Jask fights to the death, figuring death in the wild is better than life in prison.

**STATISTICS**

Str 9, Dex 11, Con 7, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 15

Base Atk +1; CMB +0; CMD 10

Feats Extra Channel, Iron Will

Skills Heal +8, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Spellcraft +8, Survival +5

Languages Azlanti, Common, Osiriani, Polyglot

Gear ragged clothes, masterwork manacles





## SASHA NEVAH

Sasha Nevah is a daughter of the Red Mantis, yet while she shows great promise—she's a natural fighter, takes pride in her grace, and delights in violence—she'll never make it as an assassin because of her insatiable curiosity and rebellious streak. Had her mother not been a highly regarded member of the Red Mantis, Sasha would have doubtless met with a tragic accident years ago. Sasha has little interest in joining the Mantis, as she rankles at even the thought of following orders. Impulsive and reckless, she's caused plenty of awkward problems for her mother—and while being sent to Sargava to assist with Mantis interests in Eleder is not technically exile, her mother has certainly made it clear that if she returns to Ilizmagorti, she'll never leave it again. Sasha understood what her mother meant (especially after she severed one of Sasha's fingers to drive home the warning), but rather than dwell on the fact that her mother threatened her life, she sees this as a great opportunity for adventure.

**Appearance:** Sasha has tousled red hair and mischievous green eyes, and is missing the pinky finger of her left hand. She bears a tattoo between her shoulder blades—the symbol of the Red Mantis, a “gift” from her mother before Sasha's personality made it apparent she could never belong. Slender and athletic, Sasha never stands still or stays quiet for long.

**Personality:** Sasha's optimism and easy laugh border on the manic. Certainly she never stays angry or sad for long, no matter what the circumstances—a trait that tends to unnerve and frighten anyone who gets too close. Sasha is rather lonely as a result, but hides this well with a thirst for adventure and violence.

**Interactions:** Sasha doesn't react well to orders—if she perceives a PC as bossy or judgmental, that character takes a –4 penalty on Diplomacy checks against her. The topics of her homeland, the Red Mantis, and her mother cause her to exhibit a rare moment of bitter anger—while she recovers swiftly, anyone who insists on speaking of such topics takes a –4 penalty on Diplomacy checks with her.

**Hostile:** If made hostile, Sasha blithely says, “You all are probably going to starve or die here anyway—best of luck!” She then abandons the PCs and sets out to explore the island—she ends up attempting to catch a pet dimorphodon at area C1 and becomes overwhelmed—at the GM's discretion, she can be rescued before she's eaten, at which point she'll become friendly.



**Unfriendly:** Sasha begins with this attitude if any PCs are from Ilizmagorti.

**Indifferent:** Sasha begins with this attitude if no PCs are from Ilizmagorti. She can serve as a hunter or a defender at camp.

**Friendly:** Sasha finds much of the local wildlife adorable—particularly the flying dimorphodons, once she finds out they're poisonous. She would dearly love to have a baby dimorphodon as a pet, and promises to keep it under control if the PCs can find one for her. This quest may be completed at the areas marked C1.

**Helpful:** Sasha reveals that her mother is an infamous Red Mantis Assassin, and that she's learned some combat secrets from her that she can share with the PCs. Anyone who spends a day practicing her techniques gains a permanent +1 bonus on Initiative checks.

**SASHA NEVAH**

**CR 1**

**XP 400**

Female human ranger 2

CN Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +3; **Senses** Perception +6

### DEFENSE

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

**hp** 19 (2d10+4)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** –1

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk rapier +6 (1d6+1/18–20) or

mwk rapier +4 (1d6+1/18–20), kukri +3 (1d4/18–20)

**Special Attacks** favored enemy (human +2)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Sasha fights with a manic smile on her face, giggling at the violence she creates. She prefers to attack with both blades at the same time, but against a foe that's hard to hit, she switches to using her rapier one-handed.

**Morale** If brought below 5 hit points, Sasha flees and seeks out a hiding place where she waits for combat to pass.

### STATISTICS

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

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

**Feats** Alertness, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +3, Bluff +3, Handle Animal +6, Knowledge (geography) +5, Linguistics +2, Perception +6, Stealth +6, Survival +4, Swim +4

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Polyglot

**SQ** track +1, wild empathy +3

**Gear** chain shirt, kukri, masterwork rapier, 24 gp



# SERPENT'S SKULL



## ECOLOGY OF THE SERPENTFOLK

**B**EFORE THE RISE OF AZLANT, BEFORE THE COMING OF THE STARSTONE AND THE SALVATION OF MAN FROM THE CHILDREN OF THE COLD-HEARTED, SHIFTING LORD OF COILING-POISON, BEFORE THE CONTINENTS WE KNOW HAD TAKEN SHAPE, WHEN THE MOUNTAINS AND WATERS HAD NAMES LONG FORGOTTEN, THE MASTERS RULED EMPIRES OUTSIDE THE WILDEST IMAGININGS OF HUMBLE, FRAIL HUMANITY.

IN THE DARK BELOW THE EARTH, THEY SLEEP IN DREAMLESS HOLDS. **WAITING.**

THEY WERE ONCE THE UNDISPUTED MASTERS OF GOLARION... AND IN THE COMING OF UNKNOWN EPOCHS, THEY WILL RULE AGAIN.

—FROM THE UNEXPURGATED JOURNALS OF DARKLANDS EXPLORER KRIMALDI BLAKE

The ancient creatures called “serpentfolk” by modern scholars are among the eldest of all sentient beings, and their vast empire held total dominance across continents, far-flung planetoids, and even the realms beyond in the days before Azlant’s late awakening. Records of their grim exploits and grotesque experiments are carved in coiled temples sunk beneath the waves in the time before Earthfall, and recounted in hushed whispers by morlock tribes huddled in remote reaches of the Darklands. The glory of their power echoes still: eerily smooth obelisks raised by their many slave-races can be found dotted across the globe from the frozen Crown of the World to sweltering Sarusan in the southern oceans. Practitioners of eldritch magics, inventors of the precursor alchemies, worshipers of a potent god, and emperors of ages long since past, these timeworn creatures lurk still below the surface of the world, asleep in mystic chambers forged to withstand the onrush of eons and crush of falling heavens. The broods of their aberrant keepers grow, there in the shadows under the earth, while pacts and plots set into motion in the ancient past come slowly to fruition.

## HISTORY

Few solid facts are known about the reign of the serpentfolk in the lost ages before the ascendancy of the Azlanti, yet what little can be said with certainty is enough to chill the hearts of modern mortals, and takes on deeply nightmarish aspects upon deeper introspection and calculation.

It is accepted by those knowledgeable about such things that the serpentfolk once ruled Sekamina in the Darklands, as well as large reaches of the surface world, during an age before the first appearance of humanity. How long this domination might have lasted is subject to heavy debate in scholarly circles, but even the most conservative estimations tentatively place the length of their reign in the thousands or perhaps tens of thousands of years, while high-ranking archivists within the Aspis Consortium quietly hint that their organization is in possession of serpentfolk records dating back several ages before Earthfall. What other creatures and cultures may have been crushed within their coils in those incomprehensible days cannot even be guessed, although serpentfolk art shows entire sentient races hunted to extinction for sheer pleasure.

Serpentfolk were early adopters of the Aklo language, still spoken in many places throughout the Darklands and even in secret places upon the surface world, and in this ancient tongue they are known to have altered the courses of rivers and raised mountains into the sky for their own inscrutable reasons. Regardless, their mastery of the planet seems to have gone into a sharp decline with the arrival of an epoch and ice age concurrent with the establishment of the earliest Azlanti citadels; some records surviving from that ancient era describe entire cities, universities,

and more mysterious structures simply abandoned by the serpents as their population receded. With the coming of further centuries, the growing Azlanti kingdoms came into violent conflict with the fading serpentfolk, and bitter wars waged; a partially-translated treatise from that time, entitled *The Alaberos Analects*, makes mention of the “abundant slavemen shoeshod/chainhanded rising in breakingwave-ever-breaking against [we]. Deprivation abound/shall abound.”

The text goes further, making a philosophical point apparently in argument against the premise of a still-lost text referred to as *The Typhonian Proposals*: “In victory, great-loss. In retreat, proposed, perhaps... less-loss. Query: Better to burnsphere sunworld with plague/storm, or to sleep-and-in-sleep-replenish while poor masters of slaves these slaves foresee making, and falter? The stars [shall turn] right again.”

It is believed that, in the end, a war raged between the races, escalating for more than a century as the serpentfolk committed more and more resources to the task. That the war finally came to an end with a serpentfolk loss is apparent today by their scarcity, yet details of how this conflict resolved remain obscure. Legend holds that an Azlanti hero decapitated the serpentfolk god, Ydersius, and in so doing cast the serpent empire into a lasting chaos. It may seem curious that so few records from this conflict have been found and that the hero’s identity has remained a mystery, but Earthfall shattered entire civilizations, so perhaps the loss of a single champion’s name is not so surprising after all. In short, by means not fully understood, this Azlanti hero successfully defeated Ydersius, severing the epic serpent-god’s power and spelling the beginning of the end for the serpentfolk empire. Though headless and reduced to the status of mere demigod, Ydersius still lives on and grants the fulfillment of some prayers, yet the mighty miracles and divinations ascribed to him in the days before this severing have all but vanished.

Though crippled by the sudden silence of their patron deity, the serpentfolk were far from destroyed. Further bloody struggles against their enemies are well recorded by the ascendant Azlanti, wherein nations clashed with weapons of divine fire and incomprehensible spell-engines, including one improbable account of a single desperate serpent-mage laying waste to himself and an area “greater than two hundred and thirty leagues across.” Finally outnumbered, survivors among the serpentfolk abandoned the last of their holdings and took refuge underneath the earth in the Darklands, in bunkers veiled from the sight of magic and unassailable by humanity.

For the space of a hundred centuries, in the wake of the armageddon that wiped the Azlanti from the world, the great mass of the serpentfolk lay dormant.

Yet now they stir once more.



# SERPENT'S SKULL

## ECOLOGY

It is vitally important, in discussing the biology and ecology of the serpentfolk, to note the sharp distinction between the “purecaste” bloodline and the much more base, bestial creatures commonly called “degenerate” serpentfolk. In the muttering tongue of the ghouls, the former are universally defined as noble, in the same sense that a high lord of ghouls might define himself, while the latter are often referred to as *aapoph*, meaning “chaos made flesh.” These two lines of the species cross, intertwine, and intersect: elegant and cunning wizards of the race, born with neither deformity nor derangement, have spawned from a pairing of thrashing, barely sentient snake-hulks. Without question, however, the two sub-races are heavily divergent in morphology, development, psychology, and physiological properties. Yet, within the individualized ranks of these two separate biological strata, further divergences from so-called physical norms are still abundant; appearance, comportment, function of preternatural abilities, and other measurable characteristics vary wildly from individual to individual.

In general terms, the average purecaste serpentfolk stands between 5 and 7 feet in height, weighing between 100 and 140 pounds. Their scales are marked in an intense variety of colors and patterns, and the cold delicacy of their features has been noted by many races, especially the drow. Vastly more supple and exact in build than the rude designs that mark younger races, the serpentfolk possess extraordinary command over their bodies; this includes most especially their mouths and dual larynxes, as members of the species are frequently able to converse in several languages which their biology would seem, from the outside, to make impossible. This often comes as quite a shock to humans unused to dealings with serpentfolk: younger races expecting to identify a disguised member of the race by listening for hisses or other subvocal, subconscious sibilance are often taken aback by the ease with which serpentfolk adopt complex accents and inflections.

At the other end of the spectrum, the thick-built degenerate serpentfolk are little better than brute animals, marked primarily by severe devolution of higher brain functions regarding language, craftsmanship, magical ability, and basic hygiene. Still, some remarkable attribute, universal to even the most savage members of the species, prevents the loss of their racial telepathy, and these creatures retain a glimmer of subhuman intellect even in the most extreme of mutations. Hunched and powerfully built, degenerate serpentfolk demonstrate far greater deviation from a common form than their ancestors, though the “average” member of the caste stands 4 to 6 feet in height and weighs between 180 to 220 pounds. Heavily armored, these freakish

monstrosities have also been observed with more or lesser limbs, including vestigial heads, dual tails, and other abnormalities. These beasts are often trained by their betters in the arts of war.

As has been noted by many unfortunate adventurers, serpentfolk are remarkably hardy, with lightweight but iron-hard bone structures and a plethora of redundant organs. Serpentfolk have keen senses, particularly their sense of smell. While their darkvision does not match the potency of their modern drow or duergar neighbors, they are unaffected by the curse of light-sensitivity. Utterly immune to poisons either natural or alchemical in nature, gifted with exceptional resistances to extremes in environment, and wrapped in scales incongruously more elastic than human skin yet more resilient than that of a pseudodragon, even the most refined and sedentary wizard of the race is more than a match physically for the average human.

In terms of reproduction and population growth, serpentfolk are hampered by—and some might say cursed with—several limiting factors which all but ensure that their numbers will not soon reach anything approaching the massive human population of the surface world or the race’s own long-ago apex. Serpentfolk procreation is extremely slow, and in human terms, inefficient: while females of the species give birth to squirming masses of children in broods up to and including a dozen young, birthrates for purecaste serpentfolk are low. Gestation periods last nearly a decade, and few members of the species breed more than once or twice during their lifetimes. Heavy use of mind-controlled slaves to wage war or to handle dangerous tasks such as mining or defending remote fortifications helps the serpents to avoid death by accident or misadventure—a necessary step to prevent their already slim numbers from dipping even more dangerously low.

Most members of the species are interested in procreation only after heavily gorging on flesh. Combined with a slow maturation process—a full 50 years is required for serpentfolk to reach adulthood—plus a societal stigma against large families and the dangers of the hostile Darklands, serpentfolk population growth proceeds at a truly glacial pace.

Conservative estimates hold that fewer than a thousand purecaste serpentfolk remain active on or beneath the surface of Golarion, while even the most outrageous claims of conspiracy enthusiasts estimate no more than 10,000 members currently awake. Of course, many times that number may still dreamlessly sleep in yet-undiscovered vaults hidden in black corners of the Darklands, and untold numbers of *aapoph*-caste serpentfolk writhe and hunt just within the ruins of Sverenagati, beneath the Kodar Mountains.

## SOCIETY

A race of megalomaniacal, cold-hearted geniuses, some born in blackness and some emerging only now from a sleep which began in an age long predating Absalom's rise, purecast serpentfolk are doted upon by the flapping, inbred results of a civilization's 10-millennium-long withdrawal beneath the world. Every purecaste serpentfolk is an island unto itself, a singular creature of unique abilities, affinities, and power; a noble without a court except the one it builds. Each exalts in a different set of arts, from music and poetry to sorcery and warfare, living a solitary existence of research and acquisition, with only the telepathic company of their meals—prisoners paralyzed by toxins or even rendered into consensual, living feasts via potent compulsion magic.

According to the serpentfolk themselves, the mark of their "ascendancy" over other creatures is their innate telepathy. Beings not possessed of this gift are lesser and thus defined as property. A hallmark of serpentfolk society is the near-silence between members, broken only to make exceptionally emphatic statements or quote speech from others.

Familial units and lines of pedigree within serpentfolk culture are fundamentally and radically different from those of their mammalian counterparts: serpentfolk do not organize into pairs except to breed, and even then only briefly. They feel no love or other attachment to their kin except something akin to muted pride, envy, admiration, or disappointment. Likewise, they form no bonds with the animals and slaves they keep, except as brute instruments or expensive, beautiful playthings.

Highly sensual creatures, serpentfolk are happiest when surrounded by sycophants bearing gifts of sweet incense, live meals, and massage; an appreciation of complex rhythm and high-frequency sounds adds deeply to a species-wide love of music. Draped in silks and carried on a palanquin while digesting a favored and intelligent servant which once belonged to a rival, serpentfolk can achieve a sort of quiet joy all but incomprehensible to humans.

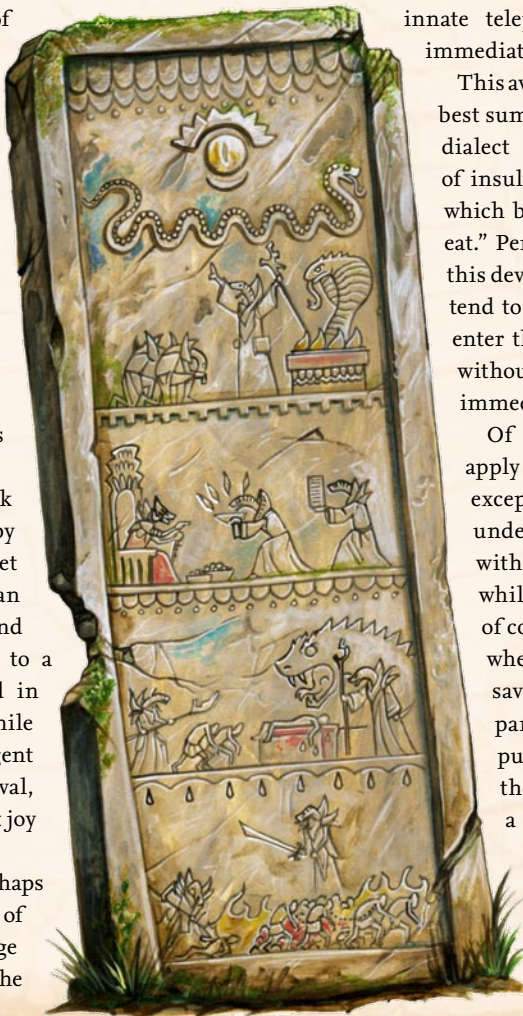
The social life of the serpent can perhaps best be understood within the context of their feeding habits. Serpentfolk gorge when they feed, and more than 80% of the

food consumed by serpentfolk is comprised of meat, sinew, and bone, supplemented primarily with strange fruits from subterranean plants. Their jaws are designed with elastic ligaments in such a way that most adult members of the species can successfully swallow a creature the size of a cat or monkey in a single gulp, or larger creatures if given time. The average serpentfolk eats once a month, gorging on 80 to 100 pounds of food and then taking 24 to 48 hours of rest to digest the meal. However, serpentfolk can go as long as 4 months without eating. Given the resources to feed at their pleasure, many serpentfolk gorge more often, sometimes going so far as to consume a meal as large as themselves every 4 to 5 days.

Serpentfolk generally eat alone. Consumption of a meal is considered a private affair, although the taboo of breaking this restriction and eating in front of others is apparently also quite thrilling, and the rare communal meals carry the same debauched air of an orgy. Often hosted by a particularly powerful priest or wizard, these gatherings are hedonistic affairs in celebration of the flesh and its delights. In such situations, a form of crazed bloodlust is common, and any creature without innate telepathy is in danger of being immediately devoured.

This aversion to public meals is perhaps best summarized within the serpentfolk dialect of Aklo, wherein the greatest of insults might be translated as "that which bothers me while I am trying to eat." Perhaps as a natural outgrowth of this devotion to privacy, serpentfolk also tend to drink, sleep, and live alone. To enter the home of another serpentfolk without an invitation is grounds for immediate execution.

Of course, none of these rules apply to the degenerate serpentfolk except a bare, borderline-instinctual understanding that creatures without telepathy are food. Sleeping while curled in huge, writhing pits of cold and slithering flesh, feeding when and where they are able, the savage ones are crude, lumbering parodies of the refined and revered purecaste which bring order to their lives. Anything approaching a society among these creatures could only be compared to the worst excesses of ogres, gugs, and Rovagug-worshiping orcs—among them, strength and violence are the rule.



# SERPENT'S SKULL

## RELIGION

It is a common oversimplification for outsiders to interpret the religious mindset of the serpentfolk as monolithic and universal. In truth, their faith is a mutable, complex, and ever-evolving belief system fractured and fraught with innumerable heresies, splinter sects, and cults of personality. Their supreme deity, the serpentine and now-beheaded demigod Ydersius, is venerated in many ways, some of them quite contradictory. To some, he is a brutal god of thunder and blood, unrestrained by thought. To others, he is a calculating creature of guile, charm, and

subtlety cut free from the needs of the flesh. Still others see him as a master of the occult, or a typhoon of rage. All that can be said with certainty is that all serpentfolk bow before him—and him alone—as their progenitor and lord. From him came the great civilization of the snake, and through him will it return to power.

Ydersius does not speak to his faithful, but rather prefers to send—or is only capable of sending—strange dreams. Those among his people blessed to receive these incoherent visions act on them in a variety of ways, many of them at odds with one another. Some adherents to his faith search after his ashen, broken skull, seeking to reunite it with the flailing, still-spurting titan-form of his body, wandering mindlessly somewhere in the Darklands. Others perform esoteric rituals designed to conjure forth the memories held within that bone-cage and then to regenerate their god a dozen new heads, hydra-like, each one a new aspect of horror. Still others despise the broken body and severed mind of their progenitor, worshiping their deity in a new aspect as an emerging god-lich: only when the thrashing body has finally exhausted itself, they say, will the phylactery of Ydersius's Fang be filled with his undead spirit and the Material Plane be made his throne.

A further distinction must be made, within the orders of the Headless King, to differentiate between the faithful who see their god as master of the bestial and those who define him as a master over beasts. This is not merely an academic query, but a point of great contention. In all ways, the ancient faith of Ydersius is exalted as the catalyst which brought forth the serpentfolk from barbarism and into magical supremacy over all others, yet their god is also one of chaos, wrath, and unprovoked assaults against the unwary. As such, it is hotly debated between surviving adherents as to what form the violent celebrations of his power should take: elegant, debased, or some combination thereof? Among many priests, the truest sign of favor from

the Headless King is the appearance of two great, venomous snakes sent to do the bidding of the cleric, yet others within the faith preach that mastery of more intelligent creatures, including legions of willing slaves, demonstrates greater power. Others contend that Ydersius wishes for his servants to learn mastery over the undead or demonic legions.

Whatever the case, some accounts of the Azlanti speak of a "highest-caste" of the serpentfolk, which has not been seen by modern eyes: beings with blood intermingled between the mortal and immortal. These mythical beings, which are never depicted but are most terribly suggested within the serpentfolk art, are said to have been geniuses even by the



standards of their purecaste kin, gifted with supernatural quickness, skin like steel, and terrible innate magics capable of poisoning the very earth. It is hoped by sages that these creatures are merely myth, or were perhaps driven extinct by the slaying of their god or the racial exodus beneath the earth. Yet more horrible scenarios suggest that these beasts might sleep in chambers below the deepest cities occupied by their subjects, to be awakened only when the new empire of Ydersius has begun to blossom.

## REMAINS OF EMPIRE

Few places known to scholars are still marked as serpentfolk ruins. The majority of their most famous holdings upon the surface were sacked and destroyed by the victorious Azlanti in the wake of the final war, or were toppled in Earthfall's aftermath, and those cities still standing in remote places like the Mwangi Expanse have been slowly adapted for human use or overtaken with other life, monstrous creatures turning once mighty temples and castles into lairs and dens. However, the serpentfolk are best known for their skill in subterfuge, and many of their greatest constructs are still hidden from humanity—waiting beneath Golarion's surface to be discovered by foolhardy explorers, perhaps, or already stirring to life in the dark as ancient clocks begin to turn with the wheel of ages, jaws opening to bring forth the old emperors of the world once more.

The cities of the serpentfolk are elaborate, sprawling affairs. One Pathfinder described them thus: "Conical buildings encircled snake-headed central chimneys, spiked ziggurats and arches twisted toward the ceiling, and every surface—street, wall, roof—was covered in swirling designs and serpentine pictograms."

Regarding the few surviving ruins positively identified as having belonged to the serpentfolk in pre-human days, many questions abound, primarily regarding their leisure activities and the scope of such acts. It is known that the empire delighted in pitting slaves against slaves for entertainment, but what is to be made of the complex, roofed, maze-like structures designed without room for spectators? Some sages theorize that these were the equivalent of human taverns: dark, private places established for meals, the prey still on the run, to be hunted and subsequently devoured by wealthy, idle serpentfolk yearning for some small physical challenge.

More curious still are the great, elevated public and private lenses established in parts of old cities, in many cases now little more than crumbling piles of well-worn stone. It is thought that these might once have been communication devices between distant serpentfolk enclaves, used to tremendously focus their telepathic ability for broadcast over great distances between the various holds. If this is the case, such magic is beyond modern

## Scalykind Domain

The following section details the Scalykind domain, updating it for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game in accordance with other domains in the *Core Rulebook*. More details on the domains and deities of Golarion can be found in *Gods and Magic*.

**Deities:** Dahak, Ydersius

**Granted Powers:** You are a true lord of reptiles, able to induce pain, panic, and confusion with a mere glance, and your mesmerizing eyes can even drive weak creatures into unconsciousness.

**Venomous Stare (Sp):** As a standard action, you can activate a gaze attack with a 30-foot range (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 300). This is an active gaze attack that can target a single creature within range. The target must make a Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 your cleric level + your Wisdom modifier). Those who fail take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage + 1 point for every two cleric levels you possess and are fascinated until the beginning of your next turn. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier. This is a mind-affecting effect.

**Serpent Companion (Ex):** At 4th level, you gain the service of an animal companion. Your effective druid level for this animal companion is equal to your cleric level –2. You may choose either a viper or a constrictor snake (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 54) as your companion.

**Domain Spells:** 1st—*magic fang*, 2nd—*animal trance*, 3rd—*greater magic fang*, 4th—*poison*, 5th—*animal growth\**, 6th—*eyebite*, 7th—*creeping doom* (takes the form of Diminutive-sized snakes), 8th—*animal shapes\**, 9th—*shapechange*.

\* Includes only viper and constrictor snakes.

scholars to replicate or refine. Few of the intact lenses have been discovered, but these are generally between 10 and 15 feet in diameter and composed of a strangely transparent alloy of mithral and glass.

And then, of course, there are the sealed, obsidian standing-circles that abound in places abandoned by the serpentfolk, seemingly plugged with brick. Were these once gates to distant places, perhaps even beyond Golarion? The world may not know until it is too late, ignoring the warnings until that black day when the most revered elders of the serpentfolk, those survivors in the deepest tombs beneath the earth, are brought forth by their progeny or some twist of fate, and the second million-year Age of Serpents begins.

# SERPENT'S SKULL



## PLAGUE OF LIGHT: 1 of 6

### On Glowing Wing

**W**hen the jungle speaks, it never tells all. Others may hear its words, or sense its wants. I read its signs. These are present in the hooting and clucking of monkey troops in the treetops. I find them in the scurrying of insects across the forest's hard dirt floor. In the chattering of parrots, the crack of woodpecker bills plunging into the trunks of trees. In the shifts of billowing heat in the pressing, humid air. The smells of rotting fruit and crumbling bark.

Dawn comes, trading darkness for morning shadow. Scant light penetrates the jungle canopy a hundred feet above.

There is danger here, the jungle tells me. Whether I determine its nature in time—that is my test. To prosper amid its hunger, I must demonstrate my capacity to sense and survive. To again prove myself the eater, not the eaten.

My eyes seek prowling beasts. As expected, there are none. Only scattered scrub bushes dwell in the blanket of shade laid down by the great sky-seeking trees. They offer poor hiding places for ambushing leopards. A boar or hyena pack would easily yield itself to view. At worst, a dangling liana might conceal a young viper, wrapped around it and sharing its woody coloration.

It is what I can't hear that alarms: the sound of people. Though faint, I should be able to make it out by now. I am on my way to my adopted village, Ngali. There should be the low murmur of dawn-time conversation. The grinding of pestle against bowl, as the women make pasteroot into flour. Children should be laughing. From the direction of the village I hear only its chickens, and the distressed bark of a dog. And a distant hum.





Flies. It is the buzzing of flies.

Heart quickening, I speed my pace toward the clearing where the Ngali huts and storehouses stand. I overleap an outcrop of rain-smoothed rock, dash through cottony webbing strung between lianas by a fist-sized spider.

When I was exiled from my own tribe, the Ngali gave me shelter. Their great father, M'patika, served me palm wine and told me both their outer and inner myths. Their great mother, Nawapo, ladled out boar soup, and told me my bearing reminded her of her son, before the foreign fever took him. With the Ngali's senior hunters, Shokamb, Wabara, and Bibaang, I tracked duikers, speared crocodiles, and faced a demon-heart jaguar. Once M'patika offered to perform the ritual of rebirth, and make me new again as a Ngali. Though honored, I could not turn my back on who I had been and what I had done. He said to me, "You are of the wandering tribe now, Xhasi, but later, you will be ready, and we will claim you then." Then he smiled and placed his rough, firm hand on my shoulder.

And now I rush from beneath the canopy into the clearing and see the Ngali slaughtered. Their bodies lie strewn as if they were taken unawares while performing their morning tasks. Fresh corpses dangle from the thresholds of huts, and from the communal storehouse.

All have been taken. Children, women, and men. No defense was mounted. Spears hang in their racks, shields propped beneath them. M'patika lies face down on the porch of his talking hut; I recognize him by the width of his shoulders and his deep green skirt. Nawapo slumps inside. I see her eyeless face and shudder.

No weapon, Mwangi or foreign, performed this act. This is not the predation of beasts. The bodies of my friends have not been bitten, clawed, or trampled. What was flesh is now red pulp, hanging from the bone. Only magic could have done this—and strange magic, too.

I see the magician step out from behind M'patika's hut. He carries a wizard's artifact, a complicated instrument of yellow-brown metal. It is a wheel filled with other wheels, which turn upon and inside one another. Their action confuses the eye.

The man is an outlander, his pale northern skin reddened and flaked by the heat of our nearer sun. He is new to the Expanse: he has yet to abandon his steel armor. Sweat darkens his straw-colored hair, pasting it to his forehead. Hair like the husk of a grobfruit ashamedly hides the lower portion of his face.

When he sees me I have already sprung into the air. He reaches for a blade at his hip, but before sword can clear scabbard, I am on top of him. His device falls into blood-muddied dirt, and my knees pin his elbows. He thrashes his legs, but I am well positioned and strong, and he cannot throw me off.

Through a haze of fury, I behold his protesting face. It sputters pleading words. He babbles in the so-called "common language." The foreigners credit its words to themselves, even though it was the river otter who invented it, and we Zenj of the jungles the first two-legged beasts to learn it. I could understand him, but do not bother. The thunder of rushing blood is all that I can hear.

The rage is in me, and I raise up my spear, ready for the killing blow. In my mind's-eye, the act of righteous butchery performs itself. I envision the tip of my blade piercing his winter-born throat. Beneath me, the spell-maker will shudder and die. He will die on Ngali land, and will go to the Ngali ghostlands, to serve the spirits of my friends as a wretched slave, until that nether-realm day when all spirits fade forever.

I tighten fist around spear haft. But the thought of Ngali ways brings to mind the code I was raised with. Despite my exile, I still cling to it. In this adherence lies my last remaining link to my own tribe, the Ara.

A life taken is a debt incurred. This is what Ara, the first hero, taught his descendants, who took his name. When a person takes another's life, he accepts all of his obligations, and must discharge them until the end of his days. He must live his victims' lives for them.

The killing price weighs heavily on me already. Twice have I incurred it. Two sets of obligations I must shoulder. The first cost me my place in my tribe. The second forces me to dictate detailed reports and have them sent to people I will never meet, in a dimly imagined land I will never see. Such is the price of taking a Pathfinder's life.

Of this spotty outland wizard, whose throat I now stand ready to pierce, I know nothing. Of the debts I would bear, I can only guess. I stay my hand.

I'll find a punishment for him that costs him more than it does me.

Wrath draining from shaking limbs, I find the meaning in his heavily accented jabbering.

"I didn't do this!" he cries.

I pin him tighter. The buzzing of carrion flies grows louder, more insistent. "If I spare you, it isn't because I trust the words of foreign sorcerers."

The northerner grunts in disbelief. "Sorcerer? You spout nonsense, jungle man."

He follows my gaze to the mysterious instrument.

"That? That was given me by our prophet-for-hire, to figure out what's causing this."

"Causing this?"

The northerner stops struggling, letting his head wearily fall back into the mud. "The firefly plague."

I parrot his words, to be sure I heard them right.

"Yes, firefly plague. That's what killed these people—a swarm of carnivorous, glowing bugs."

"Continue," I say.



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"This attack is but one of many. The plague has hit us in Free Station, three times now. I am Thorold of Ulfven. I work for the Aspis Consortium. Let me up and I'll tell you the rest."

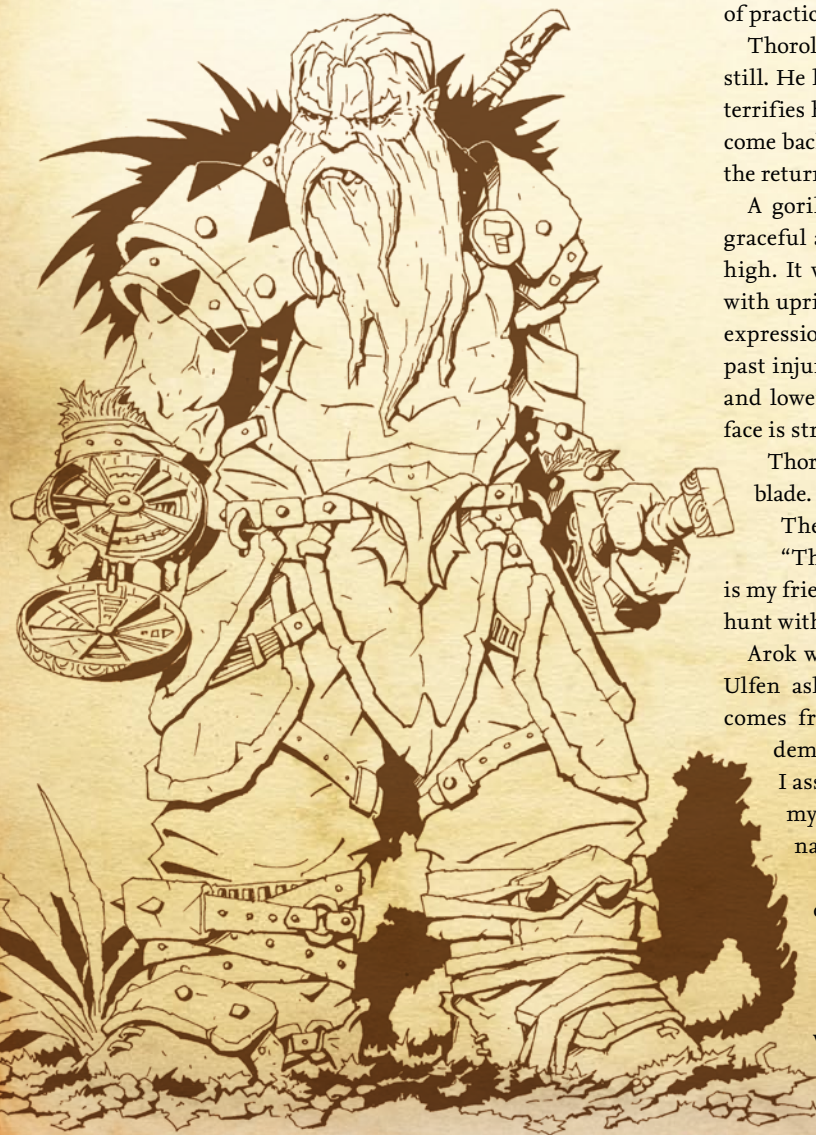
The name of the Consortium grants me little ease. That organization's greed has done much to harm the Mwangi Expanse and its peoples. Yet in these words rings the possibility of truth. I remove the sword from his belt and slowly stand. He keeps his hands in view as he weaves to his feet.

"You are up," I say. "Now tell me of this firefly plague."

"The insects come from the dark of night, in glowing swarms. They feast on flesh, tearing it from the bone, as you see with these poor souls here. They were your people?"

"No. Yes."

***"In the jungle, heat can be more dangerous than blades."***



The foreigner reaches out a consoling hand, then thinks better and withdraws it. "I came here from Ulfven with two shield-friends, Svadi and Hildir. When the glow-flies first descended on Free Station, Svadi was devoured. Hildir, strong of thew and with sea-hardened flesh, lingered for a horrible day ere he died. Had I not been in Bloodcove at the time, overseeing a shipment, I might now be feasting beside them in the halls of the gods."

His sadness, I decide, is genuine. "What brought you to this spot, then?"

"Plagues impede the smooth conduct of business. My employers sent a number of us into the jungles, armed with these devices." He picks up the instrument, to rub the muck from its surfaces. Now accepting his tale, I let him do it. "They're paying a god-speaker to solve the mystery. She gave them to us in hopes of tracking disruptions in the cosmic balance, or some such. Do not ask me to decode her mystical maunderings. I am a trader and explorer, a man of practical gifts."

Thorold freezes. His milk-weak complexion turns paler still. He looks over my shoulder, behind me. What he sees terrifies him. I imagine the cloud of flesh-eating fireflies, come back in daytime to finish their meal. He gestures for the return of his sword. I turn to face this soundless threat.

A gorilla shambles from the forest into the clearing, graceful and silent. It is large for its kind, over eight feet high. It walks not on its knuckles, as great apes do, but with upright spine, as a man. It wears a lopsided snarling expression. The left side of his muzzle bears the signs of past injury, partly torn away to expose the gorilla's upper and lower fangs. The hair around the ruined side of his face is streaked white, as if bleached.

Thorold speaks without moving his lips. "Toss me the blade. I'll draw him this way; you hit him from the back."

The great ape pauses. Resigned, but annoyed, too.

"That won't be necessary," I tell the outlander. "This is my friend, Arok. We had arranged to meet up at Ngali to hunt with the people there, and share a feast."

Arok waits while I explain him to the northerner. The Ulfen asks the expected questions. He fears that Arok comes from the city of Usaro and worships the dread demon-ape there. Arok is no ally of the Gorilla King, I assure him, and certainly no demon. I tell him that my friend was born an animal and awakened by a nature-priest.

"As I said," the outlander repeats, "I am a man of practical gifts. The ways of druids are beyond me." He stares at Arok for a moment, then at me, then at his empty scabbard. His shoulders slump in grudging trust. Only then does the ape venture close.

Thorold has not inquired about Arok's scars. That is a question only children dare ask.



Then Arok sees the bodies. Though he came here less often than I, the Ngali were his friends, too. He doubles over in grief. He screams at the sky. He sniffs around the encampment. Falling back to animal habits, he briefly knuckle-walks, then resumes his sky-screaming.

Thorold wants his sword back, I can tell. Arok's bereaved shrieking damps the fires of my anger, but only a little.

When Arok has finished, I have Thorold tell Arok what he told me. For the first time since his arrival, Arok speaks human words.

"I feel it when coming here," he says. "Very bad feeling." His deep voice purrs, like a distant waterfall.

"Evil magic?"

He shakes his worried snout. "Bigger than magic."

I wait for him to say more. Unlike men, Arok does not speak before he has finished thinking. When he does, he uses an ape word. The apes don't have many of them. Like any animal word, they are hard to write and impossible to say. Let's say the word is "urunr." Urunr means the world, but it also means nature. We humans, along with the dwarves and elves and others of the mortal races, aren't of urunr. We have stepped outside it.

"Urunr is not right," Arok says.

I nod.

Thorold is confused. I wonder how I will explain this to an outlander. The Mwangi peoples are closer to being of urunr than others, or so Arok has hinted. But if the word was a fruit, I would only understand the outside peel of it.

"Urunr is angry," Arok says.

"Urunr killed our friends?" I ask.

Arok unhappily tips forward his crested head. No, that's not it, he's saying.

While Thorold watches, the two of us set about digging a pit. It is large enough only for M'patika and Nawapo. Only the great father and great mother are to be buried. They will dig to the ghostlands, and the other spirits will follow in the tunnel they make. It is harmful to the spirit if its body is buried, the Ngali say. The king and queen are strong enough to make it unscathed. Or perhaps their spirits will be extinguished by the effort, as a final sacrifice for their people. One never knows for sure what happens in the ghostlands.

The rest of my friends will be left where they fell, to be eaten as carrion. Hyenas huddle on the forest fringes, snorting impatiently. Vultures wait in the sky above us.

"Urunr didn't kill our friends," Arok finally says. "But it is wrong. Part of it is wrong, and must be righted. Until then, urunr doesn't know what enemy to strike. Blindly it lashes."

It is decided, without the need for speaking. Arok and I will go with the outlander. It may help this company prophet to hear what Arok's animal senses have revealed. With spear and fang and claw we may aid them. We will see what can be done to stop this plague.

Gently Arok and I carry M'patika and Nawapo to the grave and lay them in it.

As we push the dirt over our friends with wooden spades, I realize what we are doing. We hold the last Ngali funeral.

We are not far from the village when the hyenas bound in, snarling.

The sound of water calls us north, to the bank of the Little Vanji. The northerner wears his fear like a cloak. He leaps into the air, grabbing at his sword, when a shellfruit drops from the canopy above. It lands with a crack on the hard earth. Ants disgorge from the ground in the thousands, as if suddenly born. They swarm across the broken shell of the fallen fruit, carrying its meat away in wet red chunks.

Half a league on we find a beached reed boat. A corpse lies inside, sprawled across a set of jagged fishing gaffs. Fat crocodiles encircle the boat, ready to fight for the carcass. A few yards away, their brethren tear into the remains of three other fishermen. It is not the crocs that killed them. All, including the dead man in the boat, bear the wounds of the firefly plague.

Distracted by the easy feed, the crocodiles pay us no mind. We retreat back into the bordering jungle nonetheless, circling around. Arok curls his lip—the unbroken part of it—anxiously. The two of us are well equipped to fight most hostile creatures we might find out here. Against a cloud of carnivorous insects, we have no defense.

Thorold speeds his pace as the Little Vanji draws nearer its mother river. At the confluence between the two lies the town of Free Station. Its sunburned founders built it to squeeze themselves free of the Consortium's iron hand. It would be better than Bloodcove, they said, as if there is a difference between one foreign trade post and another. To judge from the Ulfen's words, the Aspis has burrowed its way in there, too. They are like termites. There is no good trunk on which they will not dine. Yet they might prove useful allies against this plague. Termites are determined, and industrious, and many.

Free Station comes into view. Arok stops and lopes back into the trees, for the ape refuses to set foot in outlander settlements. He will find us when we are done.

The Ulfen grows taller and straighter as we approach his adopted village. Free Station has grown since the last time I saw it. It is half a foreign town, half a Mwangi village. Houses in both styles ring the meeting point of river and tributary. The foreign buildings are made from Mwangi woods—cypress, ironwood, and kiati. Their shingled roofs already rot and buckle, victims of the rainy season. The thatched coverings of the platformed huts, replaced each year, are new and fresh. They are made like those of my people—the jungle Zenj, of which both the Ara and the Ngali are subtribes—but inhabited mostly by ocean-going Bonuwat.



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A hush of terror smothers the town. Free Station's traders and workers stride quickly through Free Station's sodden, winding streets. They dart from building to building, reading the sky for insect clouds.

"The fireflies come at night," Thorold says, "Or have so far. This gives us no great courage, not even with the sun high overhead."

"How many dead in all?"

"Several score. My employers fear Bloodcove will be next."

We cross a small wooden bridge into the town. At first I am ready: even when accompanied by one of their own, a Zenj man carrying a spear and wearing a boar-fur headdress might not always expect a welcome in such a place. But the furtive traders pay us no mind.

I ask my next question having already guessed the answer. "And this prophet of yours?"

"She communes with a two-faced god." He pats his pack, where the strange instrument is stored. "Her services are costly, but she is reputed to enjoy strong divine favor."

I am about to say more when I see someone I do not wish to be seen by. I shrink back behind an abandoned foreign-style hut. Built on a poor foundation, it sinks already into the Mwangi earth.

The undesirable quickly traverses the town's wide main laneway. His wary gaze travels from side to side, not skywards, as if he has more to fear from his fellow man than from flesh-stripping fireflies. A Bekyar headdress of flowing linen covers his head. Its simple cord headband has been stripped of clan symbols. His white tunic and leggings are dirtied and worn, but he wears a new pair of northern boots. He mutters as if rehearsing a grudge.

Thorold proves himself wise; he waits until the man has passed to inquire. "Who is that?"

"A non-person. Take me to your Nethys priestess."

It is no surprise that the Consortium counting house is the largest of Free Station's buildings. Thorold escorts me inside, past nervous Bonuwat guardsmen in Aspis livery. We creak up a cocked staircase to a third-floor room. Incense colors the air: sandalwood, burnt nutmeg, cockatrice oil. Hesitantly he knocks on a battered door, its paint peeled by humidity.

"Enter," commands the voice inside.

Thorold steps in, head half-bowed. "Milady priestess, I met someone in the jungle, who—"

"Look who the cat dragged in," says the woman inside.

"Obai," I say.

She perches, posture arrow-straight, on the edge of a padded wooden chair. She is of the weird and ancient Mauxi people. Her cheekbones are high, her complexion tinted with ash. Draped and interfolded robes enlarge her skeletal frame, wrapping it in deep-dyed reds and purples. Around her mouth are raised ritual scars, a series of dots, each the size of a delicate fingertip. Those on the

left side of her lips curve up, extending her mouth into a smile. Those on the right curve down, giving that side of her face a frown. The scars declare her oneness with the great god Nethys—distant and inscrutable guardian of arcane secrets, maintainer of cosmic balance. Her frown-smile says that she is, like him, always her own opposite. "Where's the ape?" she asks.

"In the forest, waiting."

"Of course."

"You know each other," Thorold says.

He has allowed himself to give voice to the obvious. Obai judges him for it. The left side of her face is amused, the right side condemning.

Thorold continues. "Then the two of you—you are both of the Scarred Ones."

"There is no such group," I say.

Obai smiles and frowns.

The Ulfen can't help himself. "And the man-ape as well." With his finger in front of his face, he traces the pattern of Arok's scars. "You are all Scarred Ones."

"Have you the sextant?" she asks him.

He removes the instrument from his pack. She places it in a stand on a wide table, among five identical objects. The devices whirl and click, and Obai studies them intently. With a distracted wave, she dismisses the northerner from her presence. He meekly withdraws.

I tell her what Arok sensed, about the urunr.

Obai nods. "His perceptions align with the sextant readings. Thorold got closest to the imbalance. Its resonance partakes of both the divine and the natural realms."

"A nature god, then."

The tilt of her head suggests agreement. "Local, but powerful, and angry. We must do what must be done when gods are displeased."

"And what is that?"

"Appease them, naturally." Her words lilt with the usual amused contempt.

"Your god does not mind you pleasing another?"

Obai stares at the instruments again. She neatly inscribes a line of Mauxi hieroglyphics across the surface of an unfurled papyrus scroll.

"Nethys, in his totality, contains and circumscribes all other gods, which are but contesting manifestations of his sublime balance. To please the displeased, or to distress the contented, is to pay my twin-faced master homage."

From her robe she produces a folded booklet, its pages dark and brown. "A codex of the Kembe," she says. "Made from the pressed bark of a fig tree, which has not grown there for a thousand years."

The Kembe are a long-departed people. Their ruined civilization lies in the jungles to the east.

"By Nethys' grace, I have decoded its odd pictographs and rendered them into speech." She holds up the booklet.



A drawing shows a firefly hovering over a stepped pyramid. Hunters sometimes stumble across such structures, buried under mounds of choking vine. They are to be avoided, as wells of bad magic.

"This is Kitumu," she says, "the firefly goddess. Quite carnivorous, when awakened. Like many of the jungle godlings once known to the Kembe, a voracious demander of human sacrifice."

I shiver; she turns her smiling side my way.

"If we are detecting unstable mystic energy of a divine and natural resonance, and our problem consists of devouring firefly swarms, it is reasonable to conclude that Kitumu, mother of fireflies, has awakened and is hungry."

"We must find the goddess and feed it?"

"Dicey work, certainly. Local gods are trouble. They let you get so close to them."

I don't like where this is going. "And have you chosen an adequate meal?" I ask.

Her face grows grave; only her scars lend it expression. "I'd hoped the readings would lead me elsewhere. There's a boy who lives in the jungle outside town. A member of an orphan band."

Such child-tribes are too common now. Their parents interfered unwisely with foreign trade, and were extirpated.

"He comes occasionally to beg for scraps," Obai says. "The other children mistreat him. They say he's cursed. Apparently the curse's sign is a birthmark over his heart, in the shape of a fly."

"A firefly?"

"We will need to see it more closely. It's been several days since he was last in town—when the first of the attacks began. The other orphans don't share with him, so he'll grow hungry soon, and come in."

"And his name?"

"The orphans call him Mwonduk."

It is a Zenj word I know all too well. It means "accursed one."

For two days, the priestess and I, along with Thorold and his fellow Aspis traders, fan out through the town, waiting to catch this Mwonduk. We know him only by description, and accost many orphans, none of whom bear his mark.

On the third day, Obai and I hear a boy-child's screams of protest.

They come from the patch of scrubland west of town, and I bound forward, the priestess lithely following.

Bekyar slavers surround the boy. Other children rush from the scene, unpursued. The slave-takers want only this single scrawny orphan.

There are seven strong-shouldered men, and a fat captain, armed with a whip. Without warning or preamble, Obai corrects the imbalance of forces, scourging them with divine fire. The men shriek, their clothes and flesh consumed by Nethys's ire. The men holding the boy stand outside the bursting flame, and one of them hoists the child high on his hip as the others turn to fight. I plunge among them, my weapon striking high and low. They fall, squealing and groaning, like the cowards slavers so often are. I am not a cruel man, but their pain is one I exult in. They flee my hateful spear.

The boy is running, too. Obai faces the fat, whip-wielding one, and I leave her to it, veering to intercept the boy. He stops, stunned, as he watches the priestess lay hands on the fat man. The heavens howl as the big-bellied slaver is reduced to dust and bone.

On the boy's chest, I see the insect birthmark. It is a firefly.

"You are Mwonduk?" I ask.

He nods.

"We've rescued you," I tell him. This is not the same as saying that we are his rescuers, and so is not quite a lie.

Obai and I dash him to the Consortium counting house, before more slavers appear. Once there, we sequester the boy in a room and converse privately.

"The Bekyar are involved," she says.

"I know."

"They were interested only in the boy."

"Yes."

"If the Bekyar are involved..."

I shake my head.

"He's in town."

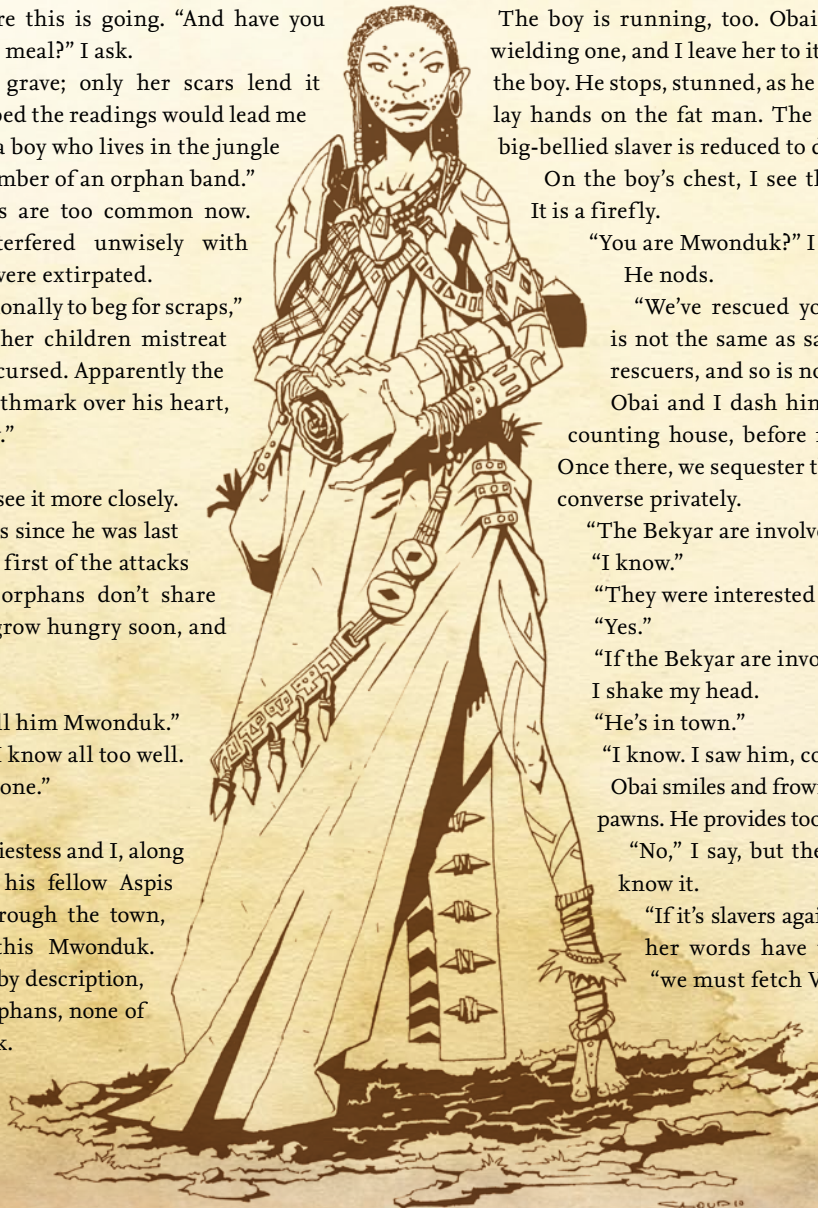
"I know. I saw him, coming in."

Obai smiles and frowns. "Nethys moves his pawns. He provides tools to restore balance."

"No," I say, but the battle is lost, and I know it.

"If it's slavers against us," she says, and her words have the ring of finality, "we must fetch Verkusht."

**"Obai seeks only balance."**



# SERPENT'S SKULL



## BESTIARY

ALONG THE COASTS OF THE KAAVA LANDS, SARGAVA, AND NUMEROUS ISLES OF THE SHACKLES NESTS A PARTICULARLY ORNERY BREED OF DIMORPHODON, OFTEN KNOWN AS SCARP SCREECHERS OR BLAISMAN'S WYVERNS. FORMERLY NATIVE TO THE COASTS OF YAMASA, THESE VOCAL REPTILES FLED THE STORMS OF ABENDEGO, HAGGARD SURVIVORS COLLAPSING AMONG THE ROCKIER SOUTHERN COASTS. FLOURISHING IN THEIR NEW ENVIRONS, MOST OF THESE DISTINCT, YELLOW-STRIPED FLYERS SATE THEMSELVES UPON FISH, LARGE INSECTS, AND THE OCCASIONAL MONKEY DARTING OUT FROM THE LEAFY CANOPY. FEW CARE TO INTERFERE WITH THE DOINGS OF LARGER RACES, THOUGH EXPLORERS WHO CLIMB AMONG JUNGLE CLIFFS OR FOOLISHLY VENTURE TOO CLOSE TO THE LIZARDS' NESTS FIND DIMORPHODON MOTHERS PERSISTENT FOES, WITH A MURDEROUS GRASP OF WHICH CREATURES CAN TAKE WING, AND WHICH CANNOT.

—AMILOS H. VALK, NATURALIST AND EXPLORER

**F**auna native to the lands and waves near the island of Smuggler's Shiv comprise this month's entry into the Pathfinder Bestiary. While most feature, at least in passing, in this month's adventure, some might be used to expand the encounters therein, or bedevil those with half-baked schemes to escape the infamous coast. While all of these creatures can be found on or around Smuggler's Shiv, they can also be found elsewhere in Sargava and near or within the Kaava Lands, and might return to harry PCs even if they aren't encountered during the course of "Souls for Smuggler's Shiv."

To make sure GMs are well prepared to run adventures in and around Smuggler's Shiv, this Bestiary includes more stat blocks than any previous Pathfinder Bestiary, with 14 complete monsters, from CR 1/3 to 12, not counting numerous variations. While many of these creatures are far too dangerous for low-level characters to confront face to face, GMs might return to this Bestiary while running later volumes of this Adventure Path, revisiting encounters the PCs faced at low levels with far more potent challenges. Additionally, just because some of these creatures are too powerful to face in combat doesn't mean that an occasional sighting or other evidence of a creature's existence couldn't make for a frightening encounter.

GMs looking for details on the icons included with each monster should see page 5 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*.

## IT'S A JUNGLE THING

Starting this month and though most of the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path's course, the PCs explore some of the wildest and most fecund wilderness in all of Garund. The animals in the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, while providing a wide variety of creatures and creepy crawlers, represent only the most miniscule percentage of the creatures that make this tropical tangle their home. Just as it is in the real world, where hundreds of different species of snake (or innumerable other creatures) exist with few differences except for in their descriptions, so it is in the jungles of Golarion. Thus, the three types of snake stats presented on page 133 or 255 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* might cover literally hundreds of different breeds of reptile, dozens of which might make their homes on Smuggler's Shiv or in the surrounding lands. How the GM chooses to describe and differentiate such creatures is up to her, though storytellers interested in making the wilds of the Mwangi Expanse feel significantly different from the woodlands of the north might want to pay special attention to the flora and fauna of the region. This doesn't necessarily mean throwing additional deadly encounters at the players, but even finding a non-dangerous snake in a pack or falling into a swarm of insects that don't deal damage can go far to impress the PCs with the land's unsettling wildlife.

## Random Encounters on Smuggler's Shiv

d%	roll	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–5	1d6	dire rats	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 232
6–8	1	ghoul	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 146
9–12	1d4	giant centipedes	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 43
13–18	1	giant spider	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 258
19–21	1d6	human skeletons	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 250
22–33	1d6	jungle goats*	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 87
34–45	2d4	monkeys	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 132
46–49	1	spider swarm	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 258
50–59	1d4	Thrunefang cannibals	1	See page 29
60–64	1d4	vipers	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 133
65–68	1	bat swarm	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 30
69–72	1	constrictor snake	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 255
73–78	1d4	dimorphodons	2	See page 82
79–81	1d6	human zombies	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 288
82–84		Pezock	2	See page 22
85–89	1	Shiv dragon**	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 194
90–96	1d4	venomous snakes	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 255
97–99	1d4	shocker lizards	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 248
100	1	winged chupacabra***	5	See page 43

\* Treat as dogs with a gore attack instead of a bite attack.

\*\* Same stats as monitor lizard.

\*\*\* Encounters with the winged chupacabra should not be combat encounters, only brief glimpses or sightings to build tension for the creature's mysterious presence on the island.

GMs can also find more details on running encounters in the jungle and on the denizens of the Mwangi Expanse in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Heart of the Jungle*.

## WANDERING MONSTERS

Smuggler's Shiv is a relatively small island, covering just over 30 square miles of land, but those 30 square miles are quite dangerous indeed. Wild animals, undead, giant bugs, cannibals, and worse all vie for survival on the island, often in violent ways. As the adventure progresses, the PCs will certainly attract the attention of these denizens, either by wandering into their territories, building a campsite, or sleeping in a tree.

You should check for wandering monsters four times per day—once at dawn, once at noon, once at dusk, and once at midnight. There's a 15% chance of an encounter occurring each time. Note that many of the wandering monsters on Smuggler's Shiv are in limited supply—the island's not big enough to support an infinite number of monsters, after all. If an encounter roll results in something that the PCs have already exhausted the island's supply of, you should treat that encounter as no encounter—such are the rewards for survival in the face of dangerous odds!



# SERPENT'S SKULL

## EURYPTERID

Two large pincers grasp at the air before this sleek creature, while a finned tail bristling with a long, thin stinger rises from behind.

### OCBRE EURYPTERID

CR 1/3



XP 135

N Small vermin (aquatic)

**Init** +5; **Senses** low-light vision, tremorsense 30 ft.; **Perception** +1

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 4 (1d8)

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

**Immune** mind-affecting effects

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +0 (1d2–1), sting +0 (1d2–1 plus poison)

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with sting)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 8, **Dex** 13, **Con** 10, **Int** —, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 2

**Base Atk** +0; **CMB** –2; **CMD** 9

**Feats** Improved Initiative<sup>B</sup>

**Skills** Swim +9 (uses Dexterity on Climb and Swim checks)

**SQ** amphibious

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** warm ocean

**Organization** solitary, pair, or swarm (3–12)

**Treasure** none

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Poison (Ex)** Sting—injury; save Fort DC 10; frequency 1/round for 4 rounds; effect 1 Dex; cure 1 save.

### COMMON EURYPTERID

CR 1



XP 400

N Medium vermin (aquatic)

**Init** +4; **Senses** low-light vision, tremorsense 30 ft.; **Perception** +1

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14 (+4 natural)

**hp** 11 (2d8+2)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +1

**Immune** mind-affecting effects

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +1 (1d3), sting +1 (1d3 plus poison)

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with sting)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 11, **Con** 12, **Int** —, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 2

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 11

**Feats** Improved Initiative<sup>B</sup>

**Skills** Swim +8

**SQ** amphibious

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** temperate or warm ocean

**Organization** solitary, pair, or swarm (3–12)

**Treasure** none

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Poison (Ex)** Sting—injury; save Fort DC 12; frequency 1/round for 4 rounds; effect 1d2 Con; cure 1 save.

### BLUETIP EURYPTERID

CR 5



XP 1,600

N Large vermin (aquatic)

**Init** +7; **Senses** low-light vision, tremorsense 30 ft.; **Perception** +1

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 19, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +7 natural, –1 size)

**hp** 52 (7d8+21)

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

**Immune** mind-affecting effects

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., swim 60 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +8 (1d6+4), sting +8 (1d4+4 plus poison)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with sting)

**Special Attacks** pounce

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 18, **Dex** 17, **Con** 16, **Int** —, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 2

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23

**Feats** Improved Initiative<sup>B</sup>, Lightning Reflexes<sup>B</sup>

**Skills** Swim +12

**SQ** amphibious

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** temperate or warm ocean

**Organization** solitary or pair

**Treasure** none

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Poison (Ex)** Sting—injury; save Fort DC 16; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d4 Con; cure 2 consecutive saves.

### SPINY EURYPTERID

CR 9



XP 6,400

N Huge vermin (aquatic)

**Init** +3; **Senses** low-light vision, tremorsense 30 ft.; **Perception** +1

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, touch 7, flat-footed 22 (–1 Dex, +15 natural, –2 size)

**hp** 114 (12d8+60)

**Fort** +13, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

**Immune** mind-affecting effects

**Defensive Abilities** spiny carapace

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +15 (1d8+8/19–20), sting +15 (1d6+8 plus poison)

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

**Special Attacks** rend (2 claws, 1d6+12)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 26, **Dex** 9, **Con** 20, **Int** —, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 2

**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 28

**Feats** Improved Critical (claw)<sup>B</sup>, Improved Initiative<sup>B</sup>

**Skills** Swim +16





**SQ** amphibious

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**ECOLOGY**

**Environment** warm ocean

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** none

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**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Poison (Ex)** Sting—injury; *save* Fort DC 21; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Con and 1d2 Dex; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

**Spiny Carapace (Ex)** The spiny eurypterid's carapace is covered with thousands of razor-sharp spines. Any creature that attacks a spiny eurypterid with a light weapon, unarmed strike, or natural attack takes 1d6 points of piercing damage. Any creature that grapples or is grappled by a spiny eurypterid automatically takes 2d6 points of piercing damage per round the grapple is maintained.

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**SPITTING EURYPTERID**

**CR 12**



**XP 19,200**

**N** Gargantuan vermin (aquatic)

**Init** +4; **Senses** low-light vision, tremorsense 30 ft.; **Perception** +1

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**DEFENSE**

**AC** 26, touch 6, flat-footed 26 (+20 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 184 (16d8+112)

**Fort** +17, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6

**Immune** mind-affecting effects

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**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +20 (1d8+12), sting +20 (2d6+12 plus poison)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (30 ft. with sting)

**Special Attacks** spit

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**STATISTICS**

**Str** 34, **Dex** 10, **Con** 24, **Int** —, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 2

**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +28; **CMD** 38

**Feats** Improved Initiative<sup>B</sup>

**Skills** Swim +20

**SQ** amphibious

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**ECOLOGY**

**Environment** temperate or warm ocean

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** none

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**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Poison (Ex)** Sting—injury; *save* Fort DC 25; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d6 Con and 1d4 Dex; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

**Spit (Ex)** A spitting eurypterid can expel a high-pressure jet of water from a vent just below its mouth with startling accuracy and force. This spit attack is equally effective above or below water, creating a 40-foot line that inflicts 10d6 points of nonlethal damage to all creatures in the area of effect. In addition, creatures that take damage from this jet of water are stunned


for 1 round. A DC 25 Fortitude save halves the damage and negates the stun effect. Once a spitting eurypterid uses this ability, it cannot use it again until it takes a full-round action while completely submerged to draw more water into its body. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Known to some as sea scorpions, eurypterids are aquatic crustaceans that blur the line between their terrestrial cousins and lobsters. Primeval and voracious, these vermin range in size from relatively harmless ochre eurypterids the size of a dog up to the truly immense spitting eurypterids. There are even rumors of yet larger beasts, called whale-eating eurypterids by sailors. Regardless of their size, all share one thing in common—an aggressive attitude. Eurypterids lash out at anything that might be food, and once they've tasted prey, are single-minded in their pursuit. Although quite at home in the open sea, most eurypterids are capable of scuttling around on land and can exist out of water indefinitely. Unlike rats, eurypterids don't spread disease or cause much damage to most cargos—traits that have led some captains to experiment with seeding colonies of ochre eurypterids in their holds to keep rodent populations under control. Alas, one can often tell the ships that use this tactic by the unusually high number of crewmen with missing fingers.



## NINGYO

This hideous sea monstrosity combines the most ferocious features of simian and carp, its fish-like tail sprouting a grotesquely primitive humanoid torso, head, and limbs. Although little more than 2 feet long, the nasty thing gibbers wildly as it gnashes its curling fangs and swipes at prey with webbed claws.

**NINGYO** CR 1 

**XP 400**

NE Small monstrous humanoid (aquatic)

**Init** +1; **Senses** Perception +2

### DEFENSE

**AC** 13, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 13 (2d10+2)

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

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +2 (1d3-1), bite +2 (1d4-1)

**Special Attacks** group grapplers

### STATISTICS

**Str** 8, **Dex** 13, **Con** 12, **Int** 6, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 11

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 11

**Feats** Agile Maneuvers

**Skills** Stealth +10, Swim +12

**SQ** nocturnal undeath, poison flesh

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** warm oceans

**Organization** solitary, pair, or shoal (3-22)

**Treasure** standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES


**Group Grapplers (Ex)** Ningyos excel at swarming over foes, dragging them down to drown or tearing them to bits with their tiny claws and jaws. Ningyos gain a +2 bonus on checks to aid other ningyos. In addition, when a ningyo aids another ningyo in a grapple, it adds +2 on its ally's grapple check and increases the amount of damage dealt by the grapple by +2. These bonuses on grapple checks and grapple damage stack when multiple ningyos aid in a grapple, up to a maximum of five ningyos.

**Nocturnal Undeath (Su)** The body of a ningyo never rests peacefully. One hour after dusk, an intact ningyo corpse reanimates, becoming an undead creature (its statistics changing from a ningyo to an undead ningyo). At dawn, the undead ningyo returns to a state of true death until the next night. Undead-affecting effects like channel energy and *detect undead* have no effect on a ningyo corpse during the day. An undead ningyo always knows when the dawn is coming and uses the 15 minutes before daybreak to shelter itself as best it can. A ningyo missing any significant part of its body—a limb or more—does not animate at night, though it will if the missing body part is ever placed back in contact with its body. A ningyo corpse that is burned or torn apart to an extent that its pieces never meet again does not rise as an undead.

**Poison Flesh (Ex)** Any creature that uses a bite attack against a ningyo, swallows a ningyo whole, or otherwise consumes part of a ningyo exposes itself to the creature's toxic flesh.

*Ningyo Flesh:* Ingested; save Fort DC 12; frequency 1 minutes; effect 1d2 Int damage; cure 2 saves.

The repulsively fused features of a dried fish and desiccated humanoid combine in these monstrous remains. The crackle of tiny grinding bones and the hiss of parched scales whisper with every motion as the snarling miniature mummy drags its shriveled corpse forward.

**UNDEAD NINGYO** CR 1 

**XP 400**

NE Small undead (aquatic)

**Init** +1; **Senses** Perception +2

### DEFENSE

**AC** 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 15 (2d8+6)

**Fort** +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** +5

**Immune** undead traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 10 ft., swim 20 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +3 (1d3+1), bite +3 (1d4+1)

**Special Attacks** group grapplers, startle

### STATISTICS

**Str** 12, **Dex** 13, **Con** —, **Int** 5, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 16

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

**Feats** Step Up

**Skills** Stealth +9, Swim +10

**SQ** nocturnal undeath, poison flesh

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any aquatic or land

**Organization** solitary, pair, or exhibit (3-15)

**Treasure** none

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Startle (Su)** Any creature of 5 Hit Dice or fewer that is attacked by an undead ningyo in a surprise round must make a DC 14 Will save or be frightened for 1d4 rounds. If the subject succeeds on a Will save, it is shaken for 1 round. Whether or not the save is successful, the affected creature is immune to the same undead ningyo's startle attack for 24 hours. Creatures with 6 or more HD are immune to this effect. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

The bane of fishermen and divers, ningyos lurk in tropical waters, gorging themselves on fish and attacking anything they can sink their tiny fangs into. Nasty little things, these primitive, miniature mer-monsters are bogeymen of the sea, often attacking seagoers, ships, and fishing tackle out of both blind ravenousness and blunt stupidity. With little more organization or society than a school of sharks, these

cannibalistic half-simian, half-fish terrors swarm by night and can easily drag those caught on moonlit waters down to drown amid a sea of tiny claws and needling teeth.

Yet for all their animal ferocity, ningyos are most notorious for their unquiet deaths. Said by natives to be too mean and stupid to die, a slain ningyo always returns to life by night, obliviously adopting old habits or dragging itself forth from the water to find its killer. By day, though, undead ningyos turn back into normal corpses, sometimes washing up on shore as gruesome and fascinating—but potentially deadly—curiosities. While the knowledgeable burn the eerie corpses they find along the coast, more than one foolhardy beachcomber has collected such an oddity, only to later awake in terror, the tiny withered claws and broken teeth of his weird curio savaging him in the dark.

Ningyos measure approximately 2 to 2-1/2 feet long from head to tail, and weigh 6 to 9 pounds.

### NINGYOS ON GOLARION

Ningyos have harassed and terrorized those dwelling along warm coasts for ages, proving most common along the west coast of Garund and the eastern shores of Arcadia. Well informed by the native folklore of those areas, most locals easily avoid and deal with the nasty mer-creatures. Visitors and invaders of such areas, though, are rarely so well informed.

**The Fetching Fishwife:** This salt-encrusted beach house-turned-inn teeters on a rocky beach a short ride north of Eleder. Popular with visitors and those seeking to escape the city's rough-and-tumble confusion, the Fishwife offers fine rooms, good food, and a collection of eclectic decor—from bestial trophies and wall mountings to native artistry. It also bears a curse. Four guests and two owners have met gruesome deaths in the inn, and the most recent landlord quietly fled Sargava, leaving the keys to the house and a tiny, withered claw to his estranged brother. Kimbal Pall, the current owner, now runs the tavern, having no idea he holds a piece of an undead ningyo lurking in his collection.

**Treasure at Bloodcove:** The treacherous inlets southwest of Bloodcove have long been

### The Feejee Mermaid

Ningyos take their inspiration from a most unusual pair of sources: Japanese tales of fish with monkey- or human-like features, and the grotesque artistry of sideshow hucksters. In folklore, ningyos are described in a variety of ways, though always blending the features of simian, human, and carp. Beginning prominently in the 18th century, Japanese sideshows, carnivals, and even temples displayed the mummified remains of strange creatures, among them the withered mummies of “mermaids” like the ningyo. For the most part, such strange creatures were the work of fishermen and showmen, artfully stitching together the bodies of monkeys and fish. Such displays proved striking enough that in 1842 American entertainer and trickster P. T. Barnum purchased and began exhibiting his own gruesome gestalt under the famous banner of the “Feejee Mermaid.” Although Barnum’s original mermaid was lost in a fire in the 1860s, such disturbing but fascinating mummified monsters remain a staple of sideshows, cabinets of curiosities, and gruesome art even today.



a favorite stop for Shackles pirates, those with both booty to bury and plots to pillage the Kaava Lands' coastal tribes. Recently, a masked shaman has been sighted wandering between these coves, attended by a large, murderous swarm of ningyos. Although the witch doctor seems to only feed the nasty sea monsters fish heads and bird carcasses, they obey her every command, driving off the curious as they endlessly scour the sea floor, as if for some unknown treasure.

# SERPENT'S SKULL

## PTEROSAUR

A brightly colored creature swoops down to land on the branch above. Its head is overly large, with a mouth full of sharp teeth and bright, shiny eyes. The thing chirps, lashes its long thin tail, and then with a flap of leathery wings is in the air once again.

### RHAMPHORHYNCHUS

CR 1/3



XP 135

N Tiny animal

Init +3; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +6

#### DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +2 size)

hp 4 (1d8)

Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +2

Defensive Abilities evasion

#### OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee bite +0 (1d3-2)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; Reach 2-1/2 ft.

Special Attacks sudden swoop

#### STATISTICS

Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 11

Base Atk +0; CMB +1; CMD 9

Feats Lightning Reflexes

Skills Fly +11, Perception +6, Stealth +11

#### ECOLOGY

Environment warm coastline or forest

Organization solitary, pair, or flock (3-16)

Treasure none

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Sudden Swoop (Ex)** If a rhamphorhynchus makes a charge attack while flying, it does not provoke attacks of opportunity when it enters an opponent's space to make a melee attack. It also gains a +2 bonus on damage rolls with its bite attack when it makes a sudden swoop.

### DIMORPHODON

CR 1



XP 400

N Medium animal

Init +3; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +5

#### DEFENSE

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

hp 11 (2d8+2)

Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +1

#### OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., fly 30 ft. (average)

Melee bite +3 (1d6+3 plus poison)

#### STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 12

Base Atk +1; CMB +3; CMD 16

Feats Flyby Attack

Skills Fly +7, Perception +5

#### ECOLOGY

Environment warm coastline or forest

Organization solitary, pair, or flock (3-9)

Treasure none

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Poison (Ex)** Bite—injury; save Fort DC 12; frequency 1/round for 4 rounds; effect 1d2 Str; cure 1 save.

### QUETZALCOATLUS

CR 7



XP 3,200

N Huge animal

Init +7; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +13

#### DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 natural, -2 size)

hp 82 (11d8+33)

Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +5

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (clumsy)

Melee bite +13 (2d8+7/x3), 2 wings +8 (1d6+3)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

#### STATISTICS

Str 25, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 12

Base Atk +8; CMB +17; CMD 31

Feats Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Lunge, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Fly -6, Perception +13

SQ razor-sharp beak

#### ECOLOGY

Environment warm coastline, swamps, or plains

Organization solitary, pair, or flock (3-6)

Treasure none

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Razor-Sharp Beak (Ex)** A quetzalcoatlus's razor-sharp beak has a critical modifier of x3.

Pterosaurs are often found in regions where dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures are commonly encountered, yet they are not dinosaurs themselves. The pteranodon is the most well known and widespread of these flying reptiles, but numerous other species exist, such as the relatively small rhamphorhynchus, the venomous dimorphodon, and the lumbering, giraffe-sized quetzalcoatlus. While the larger pterosaurs are awkward fliers, the smaller ones can be quite agile and quick. Pterosaurs generally dwell on coastlines, along rivers, or near swamps or lakes, for the majority of their diet consists of fish snatched from the water in daring dives. Pterosaurs are quite territorial, though, and most won't hesitate to swoop down and hiss, shriek, and attack things their size or larger.

## RHAMPHORHYNCHUS

This pterosaur is a quick-moving reptile with a 5-foot wingspan, a narrow snout filled with dozens of needle-like



teeth, and a long tail tipped with an arrowhead-shaped ridge. Males are generally quite brightly colored, displaying brilliant reds, greens, and bright blues, often bearing complex patterns like stripes; females tend to be more drably colored. Although tiny, the rhamphorhynchus is swift and aggressive, and its attack method of swooping down suddenly to attack creatures allows it to bite with increased damage and ferocity. At the end of a sudden swoop, a rhamphorhynchus is typically at a disadvantage, and most won't stick around to keep fighting in melee, instead taking to the air once more to gain enough height to swoop again in a few rounds. Their tiny size, erratic flight patterns, and swift reflexes make them difficult to affect with area effects. A pterosaur on the ground walks in a quadrupedal gait; the tips of its wings arc up alongside its body, while its lower torso remains closer to the ground than its shoulders and head as it moves.

### RHAMPHORHYNCHUS FAMILIARS

Rhamphorhynchuses (also called swoop lizards) make excellent familiars for spellcasters who are looking for a quick and nimble minion. A rhamphorhynchus familiar grants its master all of the typical benefits familiars grant, but their jittery and quick reactions also impart a +2 bonus on the master's Initiative checks. A rhamphorhynchus is generally too small to serve well as an animal companion—if a character wishes to take one as a companion anyway, they have the same statistics as bird animal companions.

### DIMORPHODON

The dimorphodon is a robust pterosaur with a distinctively large skull—yet numerous hollows in the skull keep the creature's weight rather low and allow it greater agility. The dimorphodon's jaws contain two separate rows of differently shaped teeth: several larger fangs near the front (which are used to grip prey and inject poison) and a much larger number of smaller, sharp teeth along the rest of the jaw (used to cut through flesh). This unusual combination of different teeth is why in some areas the dimorphodon

is known as the “fangbird” or the “vampire lizard,” although they don't actually drink blood. Dimorphodons normally feed on fish, small reptiles, and birds, but when particularly hungry, flocks of these creatures have been known to gang up on larger prey, swooping in to bite and then retreating to watch from nearby cliff ledges or tree branches while the victim slowly succumbs to the poison. Once the creature is rendered helpless, the flock descends to eat its victim alive.

Dimorphodons are particularly easy to train, and they're often used as guardians by local tribes or kept as exotic pets in larger cities. A Handle Animal check to train a dimorphodon is made with a +4 bonus, and a dimorphodon can know one bonus trick of its trainer's choice once it is fully domesticated.

### DIMORPHODON COMPANIONS

**Starting Statistics:** Size Small; AC +1 natural armor; Speed 10 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); Attack bite (1d4); Ability Scores Str 10, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 12; Special Qualities low-light vision, scent.

**7th-level Advancement:** Size Medium; Attack bite (1d6); Ability Scores Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12; Special Qualities poison.

### QUETZALCOATLUS

Perhaps the largest of the pterosaurs, the quetzalcoatlus (known to some as the “swamp stalker” and others by the misnomer of “dragonling”) is truly an awe-inspiring sight in the air, with its impressive 40-foot wingspan. On the ground, this creature's profile bears an uncanny resemblance to that of a giraffe, save for the fact that the folded wings arch up to either side of its lightly feathered body, and its head bears a horrific, razor-sharp beak.

Unlike dimorphodons, quetzalcoatluses are difficult to train. Handle Animal checks made to train one of these looming pterosaurs take a –4 penalty.

### QUETZALCOATLUS COMPANIONS

**Starting Statistics:** Size Medium; AC +2 natural armor; Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (clumsy); Attack bite (1d8); Ability Scores Str 9, Dex 21, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 12; Special Qualities low-light vision, scent.

**9th-level Advancement:** Size Large; AC +3 natural armor; Attack bite (2d6/×3), 2 wings (1d4); Ability Scores Str +8, Dex –2, Con +4; Special Qualities razor-sharp beak.



## SEA URCHIN, GIANT

This strange-looking creature has a spherical body covered with hundreds or thousands of two-foot-long bright purple spines that darken to ominous black tips.

### HUNTER URCHIN CR 1

XP 400

N Medium vermin (aquatic)

**Init** -4; **Senses** all-around vision, low-light vision, scent, tremorsense 30 ft.; **Perception** +4

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 12, touch 6, flat-footed 12 (-4 Dex, +6 natural)

**hp** 13 (2d8+4)

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

**Defensive Abilities** stability; **Immune** mind-affecting effects

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 15 ft.

**Melee** tongue +3 (1d3+3 plus pull)

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.; 20 ft. with tongue

**Special Attacks** spines (+3, 1d4+2 plus poison), pull (tongue, 5 feet)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 15, **Dex** 3, **Con** 14, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 2

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 9 (17 vs. bull rush or trip)

**Skills** Perception +4; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception

**SQ** amphibious

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** temperate or warm ocean or coastline

**Organization** solitary, pair, or cluster (3–10)

**Treasure** none

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**All-Around Vision (Ex)** All giant sea urchins can see in all directions. They gain a +4 racial bonus on Perception checks and cannot be flanked.

**Poison (Ex)** Hunter urchin venom causes intense pain that staggers those who suffer its effects, but does not actually inflict ability damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spines—*injury*; *save* Fort DC 13; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* staggered for 1 round; *cure* 1 save.

**Spines (Ex)** A hunter urchin's spines can swivel to face any approaching creature. Any creature that attacks a hunter urchin with an unarmed strike or a natural attack, or any Medium or smaller creature that attacks with a one-handed weapon or light weapon, is automatically attacked by the hunter urchin's spines as an immediate action. If the spines hit, they can poison the target as well.

**Stability (Ex)** All giant sea urchins receive a +8 bonus to CMD when resisting a bull rush or trip attempt.

### SPEAR URCHIN CR 4

XP 1,200

N Large vermin (aquatic)

**Init** -4; **Senses** all-around vision, low-light vision, scent, tremorsense 30 ft.; **Perception** +4

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, touch 5, flat-footed 17 (-4 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 42 (5d8+20)

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

**Defensive Abilities** stability; **Immune** mind-affecting effects

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 5 ft.

**Melee** 2 spines +8 (1d6+6 plus poison)

**Ranged** 2 spines +3 (1d6+6 plus poison)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

**Special Attacks** spines (+8, 1d6+6 plus poison)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 23, **Dex** 3, **Con** 18, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 2

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 16 (24 vs. bull rush or trip)

**Skills** Perception +4; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception

**SQ** amphibious

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** temperate or warm ocean or coastline

**Organization** solitary, pair, or cluster (3–6)

**Treasure** none

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Poison (Ex)** Spear urchin venom causes horrific pain that weakens the muscles and causes intense nausea. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spines—*injury*; *save* Fort DC 16; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Str and nauseated for 1 round; *cure* 1 save.

**Spines (Ex)** A spear urchin's spines can swivel and rotate to face any approaching creature that attacks it. Any creature that attacks a spear urchin with an unarmed strike or a natural attack, or any Large or smaller creature that attacks with a one-handed weapon or light weapon, is automatically attacked by the spear urchin's spines as an immediate action. If the spines hit, they can poison the target as well.

In addition, a spear urchin can fire up to two spines each round as if they were javelins with a range increment of 30 feet. As long as its target is within range of its tremorsense (30 feet), a spear urchin ignores its Dexterity penalty on ranged attack rolls, but beyond this range the penalty functions normally, effectively increasing a spear urchin's penalty to hit by -4 over its standard penalty for range. A spear urchin's spines function equally well underwater as they do above water.

### GLASS URCHIN CR 9

XP 6,400

N Huge vermin (aquatic)

**Init** -4; **Senses** all-around vision, low-light vision, scent, tremorsense 30 ft.; **Perception** +6

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, touch 4, flat-footed 22 (-4 Dex, +18 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 126 (12d8+72)

**Fort** +14, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

**Defensive Abilities** stability, transparency; **Immune** mind-affecting effects

**OFFENSE****Speed** 5 ft.**Melee** 3 spines +17 (1d8+10 plus poison)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Special Attacks** poison spray, spines**STATISTICS****Str** 31, **Dex** 3, **Con** 22, **Int** —, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 2**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 27 (35 vs. bull rush or trip)**Skills** Perception +6; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception**SQ** amphibious**ECOLOGY****Environment** warm ocean or coastline**Organization** solitary, pair, or cluster (3–4)**Treasure** none**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Poison (Ex)** Glass urchin venom causes the senses to become clouded and creates vivid hallucinations and confusion in the victim's mind. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spines—contact or injury; *save* Fort DC 16; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Wis and confused for 1 round; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

**Poison Spray (Ex)** As a standard action, once every 5 rounds, a spear urchin can spray poison from numerous smaller spines across its body. This poison fills a 20-foot-radius spread around the urchin—all creatures within this area are exposed to the urchin's venom and must make Fortitude saves as detailed above to resist Wisdom damage and confusion. This attack is even more effective underwater, as the poison spray creates a cloud that lingers in the area around the urchin for 5 rounds—creatures must save each round they begin a turn in the area of the poison cloud in addition to when the urchin creates the effect.

**Spines (Ex)** A glass urchin's spines can swivel and rotate to face any approaching creature that attacks it. Any creature that attacks a glass urchin with an unarmed strike or a natural attack, or any Huge or smaller creature that attacks with a one-handed weapon or light weapon, is automatically attacked by the glass urchin's spines as an immediate action. If the spines hit, they can poison the target as well.

**Transparency (Ex)** A glass urchin's spines and body

are transparent when underwater, granting the creature concealment and a constant 20% miss chance.

Much more dangerous than their smaller kin, giant sea urchins are dangerous predators of opportunity. With the exception of the hunter urchin, giant sea urchins lie in wait for food to come to them, typically carried within reach of their attacks via ocean currents or, more commonly, tides.

**Hunter Urchins:** These urchins can adjust their spines to effect an awkward method of locomotion on land. They actively seek prey, and possess long, rasp-like tongues that can whip out and pull food to them.

**Spear Urchins:** These brightly colored creatures can fire spines like javelins, relying upon poison to slow down prey or eventually immobilize it so they can crawl over to feed.

**Glass Urchins:** So named for their transparency, these beautiful creatures shimmer like delicate crystals. Yet for all the damage their spines can inflict, victims of glass urchins generally do more damage to themselves or their allies due to the potent hallucinatory effects of this urchin's venom.

**SEA URCHINS AS DIFFICULT TERRAIN**

The giant sea urchins presented here are fantastic evolutions of their much more common, smaller, and less offensive kin.

Yet even the smaller common urchins can pose a problem for unwary adventurers. Sea urchins live in vast colonies on tidal rocks, and moving across a field of urchins can be quite awkward and painful. Their thousands of spines are just as sharp as those possessed by their larger kin, and they function as caltrops to anyone that walks over them. Worse, these spines are venomous, and can poison those who take damage from them. Those who succumb to the poison suffer searing pain that can sicken them for several minutes. Though uncomfortable, fortunately this venom doesn't actually inflict either ability damage or ability drain.

**Sea Urchin Venom:**

Spines—injury; *save* Fort 11; *frequency* 1/minute for 6 minutes; *effect* victim is sickened for 1 minute; *cure* 1 save.



## TUYEWERA

The figure that crawls up from the grave may have once been a living man, but it is now wholly a monster. Its flesh crawls with worms and seeps with decay, allowing bones and internal organs to slip through hideous tears here and there. Its jaw distends and a long tongue whips out, almost like a tentacle. Its legs have been severed at the knee, forcing it to scabble forward on all fours like some deranged beast.

### TUYEWERA

CR 4



XP 1,200

CE Medium undead

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

### DEFENSE

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

**hp** 39 (6d8+12)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6

**Defensive Abilities** daylight invisibility; **DR** 5/magic; **Immune** undead traits

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to sunlight

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** slam +7 (1d6+4), tongue +8 (1d4+4 plus grab)

**Special Attacks** constrict (1d4+4), lure, steal tongue, suffocation

### STATISTICS

**Str** 17, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 8, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 15

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 20

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (tongue)

**Skills** Bluff +8, Perception +10, Stealth +12

**Languages** Common (but see steal tongue below)

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Daytime Invisibility (Su)** During the day, a tuyewera is invisible as long as it doesn't attack. This effect functions as the *invisibility* spell, but lasts for the entire day. If a tuyewera takes any action that would negate its invisibility (such as attacking), it remains visible until it takes a full-round action to reactivate its invisibility.

**Lure (Su)** If a tuyewera possesses a stolen tongue (see steal tongue ability), it can lure creatures into a trancelike state and compel them to approach as a standard action. When a tuyewera uses its lure, it must target an intelligent creature within 120 feet to which it has line of effect (but not necessarily line of sight). The tuyewera must concentrate to maintain the lure's effects. It then calls out to the creature, beckoning it to approach. The target can resist this lure by making a successful DC 15 Will save, after which that target is immune to that tuyewera's lure ability until the tuyewera gains a different tongue. If the tuyewera uses the target's

name during the lure, the target suffers a –2 penalty on the Will save. If the target fails, she becomes fascinated and attempts to approach the tuyewera by the shortest, safest route possible. Once the target is adjacent to the tuyewera, she remains motionless and offers no resistance to the undead's attacks (although once the tuyewera attacks, it ceases concentration and the victim is free to act, assuming she survives the monster's attack). This is a sonic mind-affecting charm effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Suffocation (Su)** A tuyewera does not breathe itself, but it can attempt to steal the breath of a helpless, fascinated, or stunned adjacent creature as a standard action. When the tuyewera attempts this, it moves its mouth next to the victim's mouth and inhales, drawing the victim's breath out of her body. The victim can attempt to resist this attack by making a DC 15 Fortitude save. If she fails, the victim is stunned for 1 round and begins to suffocate. The victim falls unconscious on the second round, drops to –1 hit points on the third, and dies of suffocation on the fourth. Each round, the victim may attempt a new DC 15 Fortitude save to end the suffocation effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Steal Tongue (Su)** A tuyewera does not possess a tongue of its own when it is created—it must steal a tongue from a recently slain (no more than 1 day ago) creature before it can speak, attack with its tongue, or use its lure or constrict attacks. Stealing a tongue is a full-round action, after which the stolen tongue merges with the tuyewera's jaw. The tuyewera gains the ability to speak and understand all of the languages known by the dead body from which the tongue was harvested, and its voice sounds exactly like that of the dead creature while it still lived. The monster's new tongue is a dangerous weapon as well, and can extend to a length of nearly 5 feet to attack and constrict foes. A stolen tongue only lasts until the next sunrise, after which it rots away to corruption in a single round, forcing the tuyewera to seek out a replacement before it regains its speech and attacks.

The tuyewera is a hideous creation designed to serve not only as a stealthy minion but also as a monstrous assassin. Invisible during the day, a tuyewera can be sent into an enemy's lair to perform any number of missions desired by its creator or master. A tuyewera that lacks a master is a free-willed undead—in wilderness regions, it wanders aimlessly, constantly searching for signs of civilization. If it finds such signs, it invariably seeks out a graveyard and lurks in hiding, waiting for a new body to be buried so that it can burrow into the grave and steal the corpse's tongue at the first opportunity. The tuyewera then stalks the region, looking for mourners of the dead person to lure into a secluded area and suffocate, before stealing their tongues to repeat the process.



## VARIANT TUYEWERAS

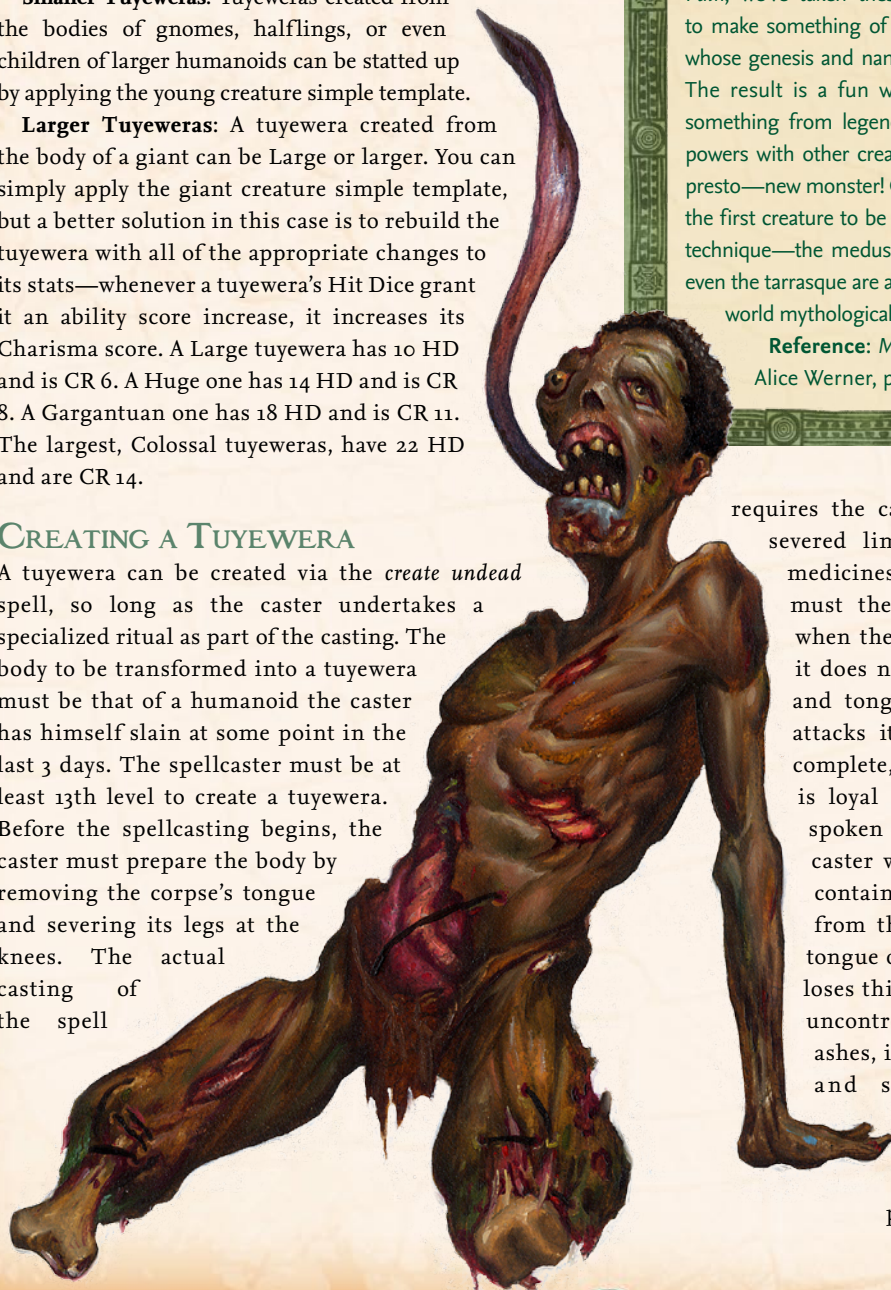
The statistics presented on the facing page are for a typical tuyewera created from the body of a Medium humanoid creature, but there are methods by which tuyeweras can be created from the bodies of smaller or larger humanoids as well. While in theory, one should be able to create a tuyewera from a non-humanoid creature, so far necromancers have been unable to achieve this feat. Something to do with the preparation method and the medicines used simply doesn't translate to non-humanoid bodies—although the unique undead created by such methods could have a variety of powers, they are not truly tuyeweras. Guidelines for statting up smaller and larger tuyeweras appear below.

**Smaller Tuyeweras:** Tuyeweras created from the bodies of gnomes, halflings, or even children of larger humanoids can be statted up by applying the young creature simple template.

**Larger Tuyeweras:** A tuyewera created from the body of a giant can be Large or larger. You can simply apply the giant creature simple template, but a better solution in this case is to rebuild the tuyewera with all of the appropriate changes to its stats—whenever a tuyewera's Hit Dice grant it an ability score increase, it increases its Charisma score. A Large tuyewera has 10 HD and is CR 6. A Huge one has 14 HD and is CR 8. A Gargantuan one has 18 HD and is CR 11. The largest, Colossal tuyeweras, have 22 HD and are CR 14.

## CREATING A TUYEWERA

A tuyewera can be created via the *create undead* spell, so long as the caster undertakes a specialized ritual as part of the casting. The body to be transformed into a tuyewera must be that of a humanoid the caster has himself slain at some point in the last 3 days. The spellcaster must be at least 13th level to create a tuyewera. Before the spellcasting begins, the caster must prepare the body by removing the corpse's tongue and severing its legs at the knees. The actual casting of the spell



## Compound Monstrosity

The tuyewera is based very loosely upon several African myths. Alice Werner, in her book *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*, describes tuyeweras as invisibleimps that kill by sucking the breath out of their victims. She also mentions several other strange sorcerer's minions, including the wachawi (who could lure you into danger with their voices) and the ndondocho (zombie-like undead who crawl like beasts due to their missing lower legs).

In creating the tuyewera for *Pathfinder Adventure Path*, we've taken these myths and combined them to make something of a brand new creature, but one whose genesis and name come from real-world myth. The result is a fun way to make a monster—take something from legend and adjust it or combine its powers with other creatures from similar legends and presto—new monster! Of course, the tuyewera is hardly the first creature to be created for the game using this technique—the medusa, the gorgon, the basilisk, and even the tarrasque are all quite different from their real-world mythological inspirations, after all!

**Reference:** *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*, Alice Werner, pub. 1933

requires the caster to anoint the tuyewera's severed limbs and tongue with special medicines. These discarded body parts must then be burnt to ashes so that when the tuyewera rises from the dead, it does not recognize its missing limbs and tongue (if it does, it immediately attacks its creator). When the spell is complete, the newly created tuyewera is loyal to its creator and follows his spoken commands as long as the caster wears or carries a small pouch containing a handful of the ashes from the tuyewera's burnt limbs and tongue on his person. If the caster ever loses this pouch, the tuyewera becomes uncontrolled. If a tuyewera ever sees the ashes, it immediately recognizes them and seeks out its creator unerringly (as if via *locate creature*, but with no range limitation) and attempts to kill him—preferably as the creator sleeps.

## RETURN OF THE SERPENT EMPIRE

LEGENDS OF THE POWER AND SCOPE OF ANCIENT AZLANT FILL THE TALES OF HUMANITY TODAY, YET AS POWERFUL AS AZLANT WAS ON GOLARION'S SURFACE, IT HAD AN EQUALLY POWERFUL ENEMY IN THE DARKLANDS BELOW. THIS WAS THE SERPENT EMPIRE, A VAST NATION THAT STRETCHED THROUGH THE DARKLANDS REGION OF SEKAMINA FROM BELOW AZLANT TO AVISTAN, GARUND, AND BEYOND. TODAY, SEKAMINA IS A WILDERNESS INHABITED BY MANY DIVERSE RACES, BUT WHEN AZLANT WAS STILL A BURGEONING POWER, THE SERPENT EMPIRE IN SEKAMINA WAS AT ITS HEIGHT. THE SERPENTFOLK LOOKED TO THE SURFACE ABOVE AS A BREEDING GROUND FOR SLAVES AND FOOD, AND AS AZLANT GREW IN POWER, IT CAME INTO INEVITABLE CONFLICT WITH THE HEINOUS DENIZENS BELOW ITS VERY FEET.

### Spoiler Warning!

What follows is both the background and outline for the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path. If you intend to play in this campaign, be warned! The contents of these pages spoil the plots of the upcoming adventures as thoroughly as possible!

The war between Azlant and the serpent empire lasted for centuries. While the serpents had ancient traditions of magic and monstrous resources on their side, the humans of Azlant proved ever more inventive and fecund in their growth. Furthermore, on the surface there were few constraints to this growth—but below in Sekamina, the serpents could only expand along existing caverns and tunnels. Whenever the serpents sent their armies against the surface world, Azlant was able to hold its ground and force a serpentfolk retreat. And so they turned to the east. To the northeast, the serpents came from the deep city of Sverenagati only to find that Azlant's scions had already arrived, and the ancient war continued there between the serpents and the mighty empire of Thassilon. Yet in the southeast, under the lands of Garund, the serpents of Sverenagati's sister city of Ilmurea found little resistance when they emerged into the jungles above.

Azlant's oracles and prophets had foreseen a great disaster in their future. Their perceptions colored by their nation's long war against the serpents, the Azlanti saw this disaster as one wrought by the serpent empire, so they redoubled their efforts to end the centuries-long war they had waged. Azlant learned of the rise of the serpent empire to the east, and while they saw that the exiles of Thassilon had the uprising checked in the north, they discovered the serpents spreading like a blight in the southern jungles.

Led by the Azlanti hero Savith, a vast army sailed across the Arcadian Ocean, reaching the continent of Garund and finding the strange nations there already beleaguered by

the expanding serpent armies. Eventually, Savith's army discovered Ilmurea and launched a final assault. At the height of this battle, Savith confronted the serpentfolk god Ydersius and decapitated the deity. But such a grievous wound was not enough to slay the serpent god, even after Savith sent the god's still-living but mindless body hurtling into a bottomless sacrificial pit and cast his raging, hateful head into a pool of bubbling lava. These acts did, however, spell the end of the serpent empire. With the back of their empire broken, the serpents scattered and were hunted to near extinction by Azlanti heroes over the centuries.

Savith, alas, soon perished from the wounds she suffered in her final battle. Her followers built a city in the jungle above Ilmurea to honor her, calling it Saventh-Yhi ("Savith's Grave") and, over the course of decades, developed it into a remarkable city of magic and beauty. Yet the doom foretold had little to do with the serpentfolk. When Earthfall struck and changed Golarion forever, Saventh-Yhi fell as well, though its magical wards kept it hidden and safe in the millennia to come.

Yet when Ydersius was decapitated, he did not die. His body wandered mindlessly through the Darklands for ages, but his severed head, now entombed within a cooled lake of lava, has called to the few surviving serpentfolk over the ages following Earthfall. In dreams, the more receptive of these surviving serpents see visions of their god's skull calling upon his children to release him. And if the Serpent's Skull is recovered, his vengeance upon the world above will be legendary indeed.

GMs seeking to expand their adventures during the course of the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path can find more information, tools, and inspiration in *Into the Darklands*, *Heart of the Jungle*, *Sargava: The Lost Colony*, the *Serpent's Skull Item Cards*, and the free *Serpent's Skull Player's Guide* (available at [paizo.com](http://paizo.com)).

## SOULS FOR SMUGGLER'S SHIV

By James Jacobs

*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #37, Levels 1–3

The PCs' journey to Eleder comes to a sudden end as they are shipwrecked on the notorious island of Smuggler's Shiv. After encountering dangerous wildlife, vengeful undead, and a tribe of cannibals, the PCs learn that the cause of the shipwreck may well have been one of the ship's own passengers. In pursuing this mystery, they make an even more incredible discovery—the presence of Azlanti ruins on the island that provide not only proof that the legendary lost city of Saventh-Yhi exists, but also a method to find it. Once they are rescued from the island, the PCs' discovery could make them rich—or mark them for death.



## RACING TO RUIN

By Tim Hitchcock

*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #38, Levels 4–6

The PCs finally arrive in Eleder, and word of their discovery is already spreading. Several competing factions—the Free Captains, the Red Mantis, the Pathfinders, the Aspis Consortium, and the Sargavan government all seek Saventh-Yhi as well, and the PCs must decide which of these are enemies and which might be allies. The PCs then hire a strange guide and make the journey through Sargava and into the Mwangi Expanse, racing the competition to be the first to arrive at a ruin in the Screaming Jungle that holds the final key to Saventh-Yhi's location.

## THE CITY OF SEVEN SPEARS

By Kevin Kulp

*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #39, Levels 7–9

At last, the legendary city of Saventh-Yhi! The PCs must begin the monumental task of exploring a city that has been hidden from outside eyes since the advent of the Age of Darkness. Deadly monsters and harrowing traps await them, and the continuing competition with other factions heightens the dangers they face as the PCs strive to be the first to learn the secrets of the “City of Seven Spears” (so called for the seven towering spires that dominate the city's skyline). Yet when they rescue an adventurer and restore her shattered mind, she warns them that Saventh-Yhi was built above an even greater secret city from time's abyss, a

serpentfolk ruin called Ilmurea. Her mentor, the disgraced Pathfinder Eando Kline, remains trapped in Ilmurea, and even worse, the serpentfolk are gathering in unprecedented numbers in the city for an unknown reason.

## VAULTS OF MADNESS

By Greg A. Vaughan

*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #40, Levels 10–12

The PCs explore the tangle of dungeons and caverns below Saventh-Yhi—a region feared by the city's natives as the “Vaults of Madness.” Conflict with the other competing factions comes to a head, complicated by the untimely arrival of the Gorilla King himself! While handling growing tensions above, the PCs learn that the Vaults of Madness are indeed linked to Ilmurea. If they hope to rescue Eando Kline and discover what the serpentfolk are up to, they must rebuild an ancient portal and repair the mystic link between the two lost cities.

## THE THOUSAND FANGS BELOW

By Graeme Davis

*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #41, Levels 13–15

The PCs arrive in the Darklands ruin of Ilmurea to find it far from deserted. Tribes of deformed morlocks, daemon-worshipping monstrosities, and body-stealing intellect devourers control much of the ruins, along with a growing population of serpentfolk. As the PCs explore Ilmurea, they learn that the serpentfolk have recovered Ydersius's head and intend to reunite their god's mind with his body, and in so doing, restore the glory of their empire and seek a return to their ancient rule over humanity. After they rescue Eando Kline, the PCs learn that Saventh-Yhi is not just an Azlanti city—it's a weapon the ancients built to use against Ilmurea should the serpentfolk ever return.

## SANCTUM OF THE SERPENT GOD

By Neil Spicer

*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #42, Levels 16–18

The PCs return to Saventh-Yhi and must arrange a truce among the tribes above so that when they trigger the city's seven spears and send the monoliths lancing down into the heart of Ilmurea below, they'll have an army they can lead into the serpentfolk city. While their army clashes with the serpents, the PCs invade the deadly serpentfolk fortress, where the serpents' monstrous leader makes ready to awaken his slumbering god. If the PCs are swift and sure, they may only face the rising avatar of a deity. But if they take too long, what awaits them may well be their doom.

# SERPENT'S SKULL



**EZREN**

## MALE HUMAN

DEITY Atheist  
HOMELAND Absalom

## CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Wizard 1  
ALIGNMENT Neutral Good  
INITIATIVE -1  
SPEED 30 ft.

## ABILITIES

STRENGTH 11  
DEXTERITY 9  
CONSTITUTION 12  
INTELLIGENCE 18  
WISDOM 15  
CHARISMA 9

## DEFENSE

HP 7  
AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9 (-1 Dex)  
Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +4

## SKILLS

Appraise +8, Diplomacy +0, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Linguistics +8, Perception +2, Spellcraft +8, Swim +0

## FEATS

Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Scribe Scroll

## OFFENSE

Melee cane +0 (1d6)  
Ranged light crossbow -1 (1d8/19-20)  
Base Atk +0; CMB +0; CMD 9  
Special Abilities arcane bond, hand of the apprentice (7/day)

Spells Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +5)  
1st—*mage armor*, *sleep* (DC 15)  
o (at will)—*daze* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *light*

Familiar weasel named Sneak

**Combat Gear** *scroll of burning hands*, alchemist's fire (2); **Other Gear** cane (as club), light crossbow with 20 bolts, dagger, backpack, rations (4), scroll case, spell component pouch, spellbook, 35 gp

Born to a successful spice merchant in one of Absalom's more affluent districts, Ezren's childhood was pleasantly safe. This changed when his father was charged with heresy. Ezren spent much of his adult life attempting to prove his father's innocence, only to discover his father was guilty. The revelation shook to the core Ezren's faith in family and church and he abandoned both, setting out into the world to find a new life. Ezren fell naturally into the ways of wizardry, and swiftly became a gifted spellcaster.



**KYRA**

## FEMALE HUMAN

DEITY Sarenrae  
HOMELAND Qadira

## CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Cleric 1  
ALIGNMENT Neutral Good  
INITIATIVE -1  
SPEED 30 ft.

## ABILITIES

STRENGTH 13  
DEXTERITY 8  
CONSTITUTION 14  
INTELLIGENCE 10  
WISDOM 17  
CHARISMA 12

## DEFENSE

HP 10  
AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, -1 Dex, +2 shield)  
Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +7

## SKILLS

Diplomacy +5, Heal +7, Knowledge (religion) +4, Perception +4, Swim -3

## FEATS

Channel Smite, Iron Will

## OFFENSE

Melee scimitar +1 (1d6+1/18-20)  
Ranged light crossbow -1 (1d8/19-20)  
Base Atk +0; CMB +1; CMD 10  
Special Abilities channel positive energy 4/day (DC 11, 1d6 [+1 vs. undead]), sun's blessing

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st; conc. +4)  
6/day—rebuke death (1d4+0)

Spells Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +4)  
1st—*command* (DC 14), *divine favor*, *endure elements*<sup>D</sup>  
o (at will)—*create water*, *detect magic*, *light*  
D Domain spell; Domains Healing, Sun

**Gear** chain shirt, heavy wooden shield, scimitar, light crossbow with 20 bolts, backpack, silver holy symbol, rations (6), 12 gp

Kyra was one of the few survivors of a brutal raid on her hometown, and on the smoking ruins of her village she swore her life and sword arm to Sarenrae. Possessed of a fierce will, pride in her faith, and skill with the scimitar, Kyra has traveled far since her trial by fire. She lost her family and home that fateful day, yet where another might be consumed by anger and a thirst for revenge, Kyra has found peace in the Dawnflower, and in the belief that, if she can prevent even one death at evil hands, her own losses will not have been in vain.





## FEMALE ELF

DEITY Calistria  
HOMELAND Varisia

## CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Rogue 1  
ALIGNMENT Chaotic Neutral  
INITIATIVE +3  
SPEED 30 ft.

## ABILITIES

STRENGTH 12  
DEXTERITY 17  
CONSTITUTION 12  
INTELLIGENCE 10  
WISDOM 13  
CHARISMA 10

## DEFENSE

HP 10  
AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)  
Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +1; +2 vs. enchantments  
Senses low-light vision

## OFFENSE

Melee rapier +1 (1d6+1/18–20)  
Ranged dagger +3 (1d4+1/19–20)  
Base Atk +0; CMB +1; CMD 15  
Special Abilities sneak attack +1d6, trapfinding +1

## SKILLS

Acrobatics +7, Bluff +4, Climb +5, Disable Device +7, Perception +7, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7, Swim +5

## FEATS

Dodge

**Combat Gear** acid, alchemist's fire (2), thunderstone; **Other Gear** leather armor, rapier, daggers (12), backpack, grappling hook, hooded lantern, oil (5), rations (3), silk rope, thieves' tools, 25 gp

Merisiel's life experiences have taught her to enjoy things to their fullest as they occur, since it's impossible to tell when the good times might end. Never the sharpest knife in the drawer, Merisiel makes up for this by carrying at least a dozen of them on her person. She hasn't met a problem yet that can't, in one way or another, be solved with things that slice. While she's always on the move and working on her latest batch of plots for easy money, in the end it comes down to being faster than everyone else—either on her feet, or with her beloved blades. She wouldn't have it any other way.



## MALE HUMAN

DEITY Cayden Cailean  
HOMELAND Andoran

## CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Fighter 1  
ALIGNMENT Neutral Good  
INITIATIVE +6  
SPEED 20 ft.

## ABILITIES

STRENGTH 16  
DEXTERITY 15  
CONSTITUTION 12  
INTELLIGENCE 13  
WISDOM 8  
CHARISMA 10

## DEFENSE

HP 12  
AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +2 Dex)  
Fort +3, Ref +2, Will –1

## OFFENSE

Melee longsword +5 (1d8+3/19–20) or  
Dual Wielding longsword +3 (1d8+3/19–20) and  
short sword +2 (1d6+1/19–20)  
Ranged shortbow +3 (1d6/x3)  
Base Atk +1; CMB +4; CMD 16

## SKILLS

Climb +2, Intimidate +4, Perception –1, Survival +3, Swim +2

## FEATS

Improved Initiative, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword)

**Combat Gear** alchemist's fire; **Other Gear** chainmail, longsword, short sword, shortbow with 20 arrows, backpack, rations (2), silk rope, 1 gp

Born a farmer's son in the quiet Andoren countryside, Valeros spent his youth dreaming of adventure and exploring the world. For the past several years, he's been a mercenary with the Band of the Mauler, a guard for the Aspis Consortium, a freelance bounty hunter, and hired muscle for a dozen different employers. Gone is his youthful naivete, replaced by scars and the resolve of a veteran warrior. While noble at heart, Valeros hides this beneath a jaded, sometimes crass demeanor, often claiming that there's no better way to end a day's adventuring than with "an evening of hard drinking and a night of soft company."



## RACING TO RUIN

by Tim Hitchcock

Bearing with them the secret location of the lost ruin of Saventh-Yhi, the PCs venture forth from the Sargavan capital of Eleder into the heart of one of Golarion's deepest and most fearsome jungles. Yet the secret of Saventh-Yhi is not a well kept one, and agents of the ever-inquisitive Pathfinder Society, the notorious Free Captains of the Shackles, the Red Mantis assassins, and the unscrupulous Aspis Consortium also ready expeditions to claim the hidden city for their own. Can the PCs ally with or outwit their opponents to reach the city first? Or will they become but the latest casualties of the hungry jungle?

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by Tim Hitchcock

Discover Eleder, gateway to the Mwangi Expanse and capital of Sargava. Here the daring wrest fortunes from the depths of the wilds, while greed and envy stalk the streets, as deadly as jungle cats.

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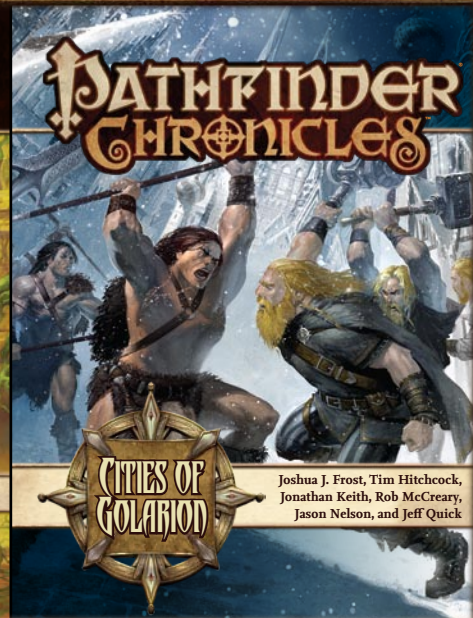
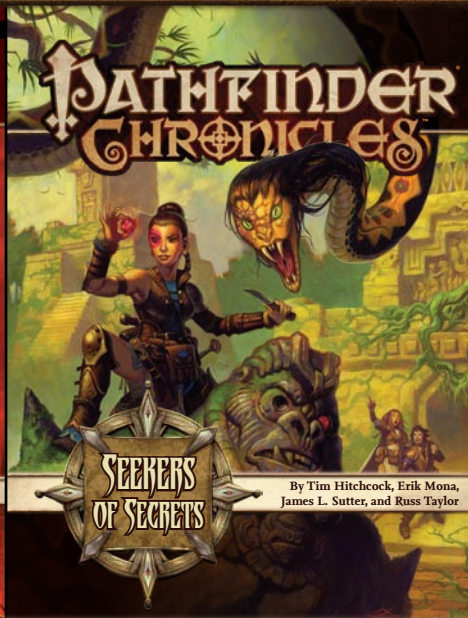
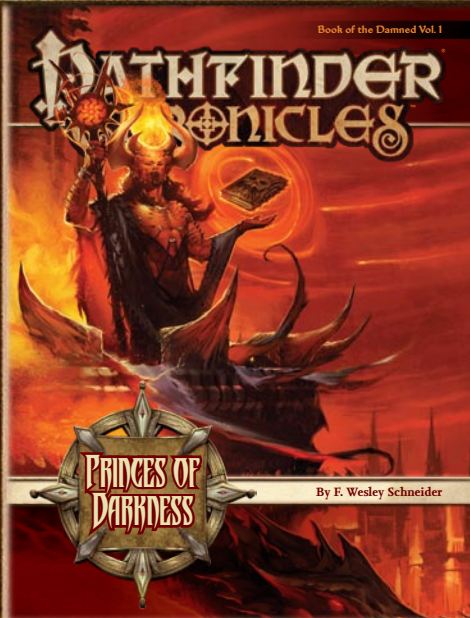
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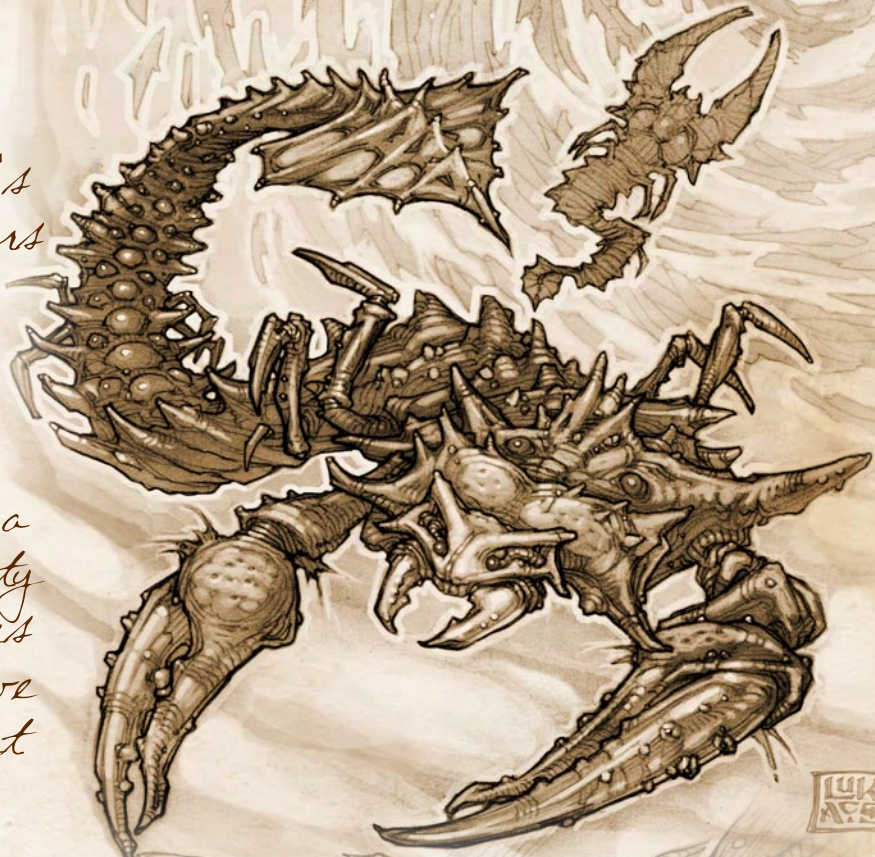
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# Mwangi Fauna

## Common Eurypterid

The waters around Smuggler's Shiv are thick with predators like sharks, giant crabs, and hungry eels, but the most pervasive may be the sea scorpions, more properly known as eurypterids. With a poisonous sting and the ability to chase prey out of the waves and onto land, these aggressive vermin should be avoided at all costs.



## Dimorphodon

Known to most as "fangbirds," or to those with a penchant for the dramatic as "vampire lizards," the dimorphodon is in fact neither vampire nor bird, but a pterosaur found in tropical zones. The skies above Smuggler's Shiv are often full of these brightly colored creatures. They can be tamed quite easily, but watch their bites they're venomous!



# Only the Strong Survive

A deadly storm shipwrecks the passengers and crew of the *Jenivere* upon infamous Smuggler's Shiv, an island off the coast of the jungle realm of Sargava. If they're to have any hope of escaping the notorious pirates' graveyard, the survivors will need to band together to outwit the isle's strange beasts and legendary menaces. But can the PCs unite the swift-to-squabble castaways, especially when several seem to have mysterious goals of their own? And does Smuggler's Shiv hide secrets even deadlier than its desperate denizens?

This volume of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* launches the Serpent's Skull Adventure Path and includes:

- ▶ "Souls for Smuggler's Shiv," a Pathfinder RPG adventure for 1st-level characters, by James Jacobs.
- ▶ A detailed look at the personalities marooned on Smuggler's Shiv, by James Jacobs.
- ▶ Revelations into the history, ways, and world-spanning schemes of the serpentfolk, by Clinton Boomer.
- ▶ An introduction to the wisdom and dangers of the jungle in the *Pathfinder's Journal*, by Robin Laws.
- ▶ Five new monsters, by James Jacobs and F. Wesley Schneider.



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