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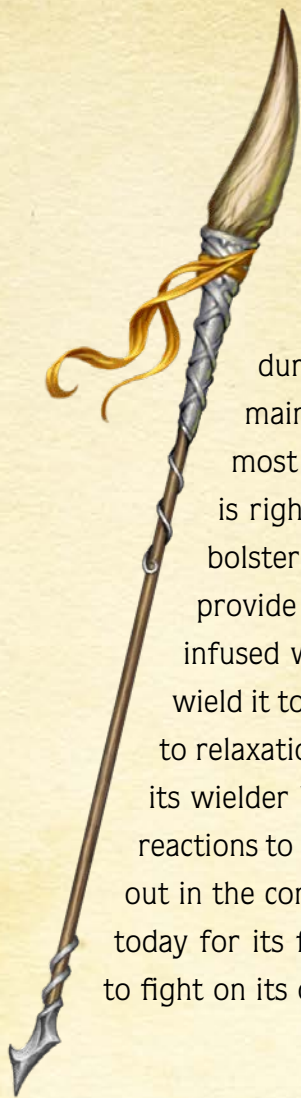
ADVENTURE PATH[™]



RETURN OF THE RUNELORDS

IT CAME FROM
HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

by Mike Shel

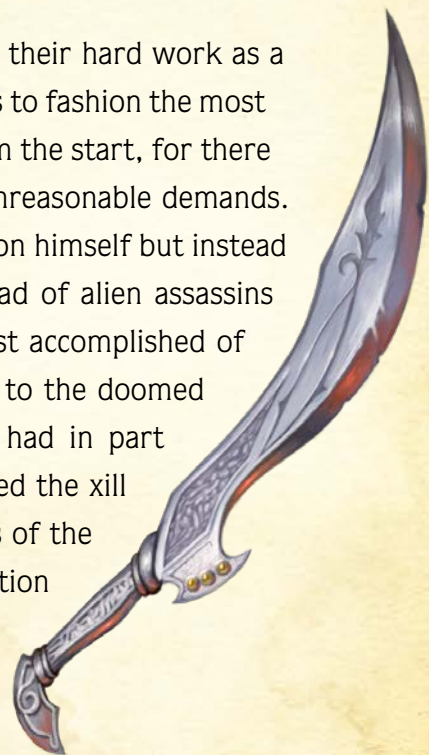


KRUNE'S DRAGONTOOTH SPEAR

Of the seven magical polearms known collectively as the *Alara'quin*, the *dragontooth spear* was perhaps the least powerful, whether as the result of an internal flaw resulting from botched rituals during the spear's creation or a reflection of its wielders' slothful approach to maintaining power. Yet the magic of this relatively plain weapon still humbles most other weapons with its potency. The weapon is meant to embody all that is right and virtuous about inaction, and its primary function is not so much to bolster its wielder's combat prowess or protect the wielder from harm as it is to provide comforts to the one who owns it. In addition, the *dragontooth spear* is infused with faith in and adoration for the goddess Lissala, and it expects all who wield it to share these religious views. Those who do not, or those who prefer action to relaxation, must endure the spear's constant criticisms as it persistently harangues its wielder by pointing out his foibles and critiquing rash actions as foolish knee-jerk reactions to problems better addressed first by meticulous planning—preferably carried out in the comforts of a well-appointed study or another relaxing environment. Known today for its final wielder, Runelord Krune, the *dragontooth spear* can be commanded to fight on its own.

SHIN-TARI, SWORD OF SLOTH

The original creators of the *Sword of Sloth* were executed for their hard work as a reward from Runelord Ilthyrius. His command to his conjurers to fashion the most powerful of the *Alara'hai* (or *Swords of Sin*) was doomed from the start, for there was no way for the sword's creators to meet Runelord Ilthyrius's unreasonable demands. True to form, though, Runelord Ilthyrius didn't carry out the execution himself but instead entrusted the task to a band of xill raiders. The leader of this squad of alien assassins wielded *Shin-Tari* herself, using the blade to gut the eldest and most accomplished of the sword's creators. But as the xill struck a devastating final blow to the doomed conjurer, she discovered the full extent of *Shin-Tari's* powers—it had in part absorbed the minds of its slain creators. Runelord Ilthyrius applauded the xill slayers for their work in bolstering the weapon's power, and images of the sword's dead creators were etched into the blade as a commemoration of its completion. *Shin-Tari* has switched wielders countless times since the fall of Thassilon, but no record of the *Sword of Sloth* has been found since the Age of Enthronement.



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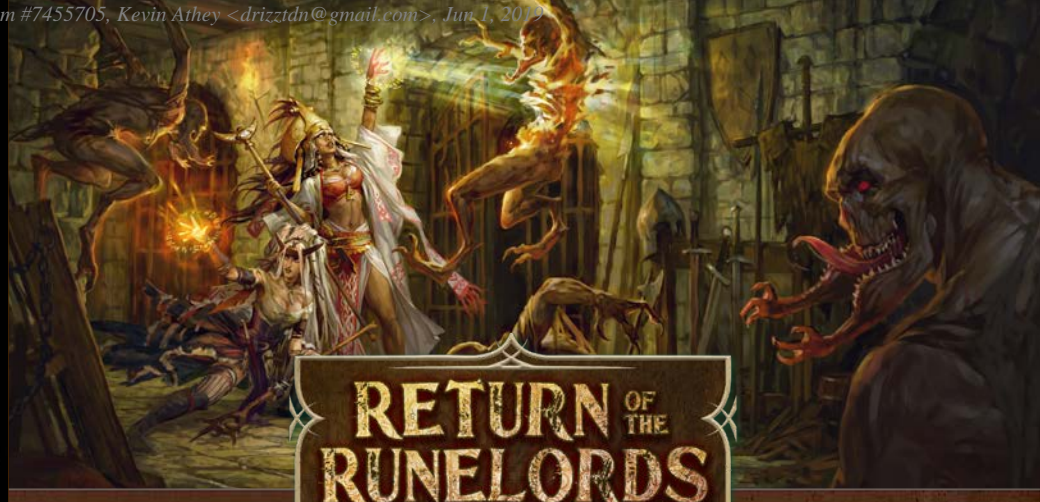
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ON THE COVER



Artist Ekaterina Burmak takes us into the depths of Hollow Mountain, but also reveals Runelord Krune—a conjurer who may now be dead but whose legacy lives on!



RETURN OF THE RUNELORDS

ADVENTURE PATH 2 OF 6

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

It Came from Hollow Mountain

by Mike Shel

2

NPC Gallery

by Mike Shel

62

Ashava, the True Spark

by Jason Keeley

68

Ecology of the Sinspawn

by Patchen Mortimer

74

Bestiary

by Jason Keeley, Mark Moreland, and Mike Shel

80

REFERENCE

This book refers to several other Pathfinder Roleplaying Game products using the following abbreviations, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Pathfinder RPG hardcovers can find the complete rules of these books available online for free at paizo.com/prd.

<i>Advanced Class Guide</i>	ACG	<i>Horror Adventures</i>	HA
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Occult Adventures</i>	OA
<i>Bestiary 2</i>	B2	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>Bestiary 4</i>	B4	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Book of the Damned</i>	BOTD	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM



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IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

PART 1: SAILING THE LOST COAST 4

Heading south to Magnimar with the *Sword of Pride* in hand, the PCs face storms, monsters, and a deceptive cultist of the Peacock Spirit desperate to claim the legendary weapon.

PART 2: THE SIHEDRON COUNCIL..... 14

After arriving in Magnimar, the PCs consult with the Sihedron Council, learn a disturbing truth, and suffer more attention from the cult of the Peacock Spirit.

PART 3: UNDER THE MOUNTAIN'S GAZE 21

The PCs arrive on the shores of Rivenrake Island and must navigate the overgrown ruins on its lower slopes in search of clues before they can enter Hollow Mountain.

PART 4: THE WORLD IS HOLLOW 30

Within one of Varisia's most legendary landmarks and sprawling dungeons, the PCs explore trap-laden chambers and face strange and deadly foes in their search for more clues about the rising runelords.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"It Came From Hollow Mountain" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.



The PCs should begin this adventure well into 5th level.



The PCs should be 6th level before meeting with the Sihedron Council in Magnimar.



The PCs should reach 7th level before they attempt the dangers within the Gauntlet.

The PCs should reach 8th level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The eerie sight of Rivenrake Island has long frightened and intrigued sailors. With an imperious, stern face carved into the southern peak, the remnants of an enormous stone bridge extending from the tor's lower slopes, and the sprawling ruins of an ancient city scattered amid the forested crags and fissures of its roots, the mountain has held a special place in the sea lore and superstition of those who ply the waters of Avistan's western coast. Adventurers spread rumors that the mountain was honeycombed with dungeons and caverns, to an extent that the region's modern name, Hollow Mountain, became widely known.

It wasn't until lore about Thassilon recently resurfaced, after a band of heroes stood against the rise of Runelord Karzoug, that the fears and superstitions concerning Rivenrake Island and Hollow Mountain finally gave way to curiosity. Adventurers began to explore Hollow Mountain's secrets, but the dangers they faced were significant. Many died or went missing before setting foot within Hollow Mountain itself, and of those who did enter, even fewer escaped. But those few who returned were able to confirm emerging theories—the ruined city on the lower slopes of Rivenrake was indeed the remains of Xin-Bakrakhhan, and Hollow Mountain was indeed the fortress of the Runelord of Wrath, Alaznist.

Recently, a pair of competing adventuring parties managed to explore the deeper reaches of Hollow Mountain. Despite their destructive clashes against each other, the two groups managed to finally work together to defeat a furious horned demon called the Castellan, who had been serving as Hollow Mountain's caretaker in Runelord Alaznist's absence. The adventurers left, laden with treasures and tales, but didn't realize that in slaying the Castellan, they had unknowingly provided the *runewell of wrath* the final bit of ambient spiritual energy it craved. Runelord Alaznist emerged from the Eye of Fury within her runewell and set about engineering her new rise to power.

Alaznist had no desire to remain in Hollow Mountain and wait passively for her enemies to come to her. She gathered her best resources and abandoned her fortress, leaving a gap in power that other spirits and denizens throughout Hollow Mountain began to vie for. While these rivalries grew within Hollow Mountain, Alaznist pursued her murderous plan to eliminate Runelord Xanderghul while he still slumbered.

The murder of Runelord Xanderghul at the beginning of this Adventure Path sent a psychic shock wave through several powerful magical items and artifacts associated with Thassilon. This shock wave is what momentarily

caused *Baraket, Sword of Pride*, to flare to life in the week leading up to the start of "Secrets of Roderic's Cove," but it also caused a sudden flare of magical power in the *Sihedron* itself—a powerful magical artifact recovered by heroes for the express purpose of giving modern Varisia an edge against the runelords should they return.

With this warning from the *Sihedron*, its caretakers in Magnimar, the Sihedron Council, called upon Varisia's greatest heroes to take the *Sihedron* and investigate. The council and the so-called Sihedron Heroes kept the mission secret, so as to prevent causing a panic and to limit the enemy's knowledge of their mission. Under this shroud of secrecy, the Sihedron Heroes determined that Alaznist had murdered Xanderghul and was gathering her power in the ruins of his capital city, Xin-Cyrusian. After further learning that Runelord Alaznist also now possessed a powerful artifact, the *Scepter of Ages*, the Sihedron Heroes devised a cunning plan to defeat the runelord. They visited the strange site known as Crystilan, an ancient Thassilonian city trapped within a dome of crystallized time, and used their own potent magic to harvest some of this time-locked energy.

When the heroes confronted Alaznist soon thereafter in an epic battle, they unfortunately underestimated her tenacity. Alaznist realized these heroes presented a legitimate threat and called upon the *Scepter of Ages* to draw upon the time-locked energy the heroes had protected themselves with. The artifact turned the heroes' magic back on itself, whisking the heroes and the *Sihedron* alike back into Crystilan, where they became trapped in crystallized time and locked away from reality. But this gambit cost Alaznist dearly, for the same energies lashed back against her. In order to avoid being time-locked like the heroes, she released the *Scepter of Ages* and allowed it to overload, sending it into an unknown place and time, out of anyone's grasp (at least for the moment).

Unfortunately for the Sihedron Council, the mission had been so effectively cloaked in secrecy that they know only that contact with the heroes has ended and that neither they nor the *Sihedron* can be located via divinatory magic. With the knowledge that at least one runelord has risen, they are desperate to find heroes to fight for the cause—and when a new group arrives in Magnimar bearing the *Sword of Pride*, they realize they've found them!

WHO ARE THE SIHEDRON HEROES?

Return of the Runelords closes out a trilogy of connected Adventure Paths, following both Rise of the Runelords and Shattered Star. As such, any PCs who played through those two campaigns are considered to be a part of Varisia during Return of the Runelords. The names and deeds of these prior heroes should be part of the region's recent history (and indeed, the players should be familiar

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

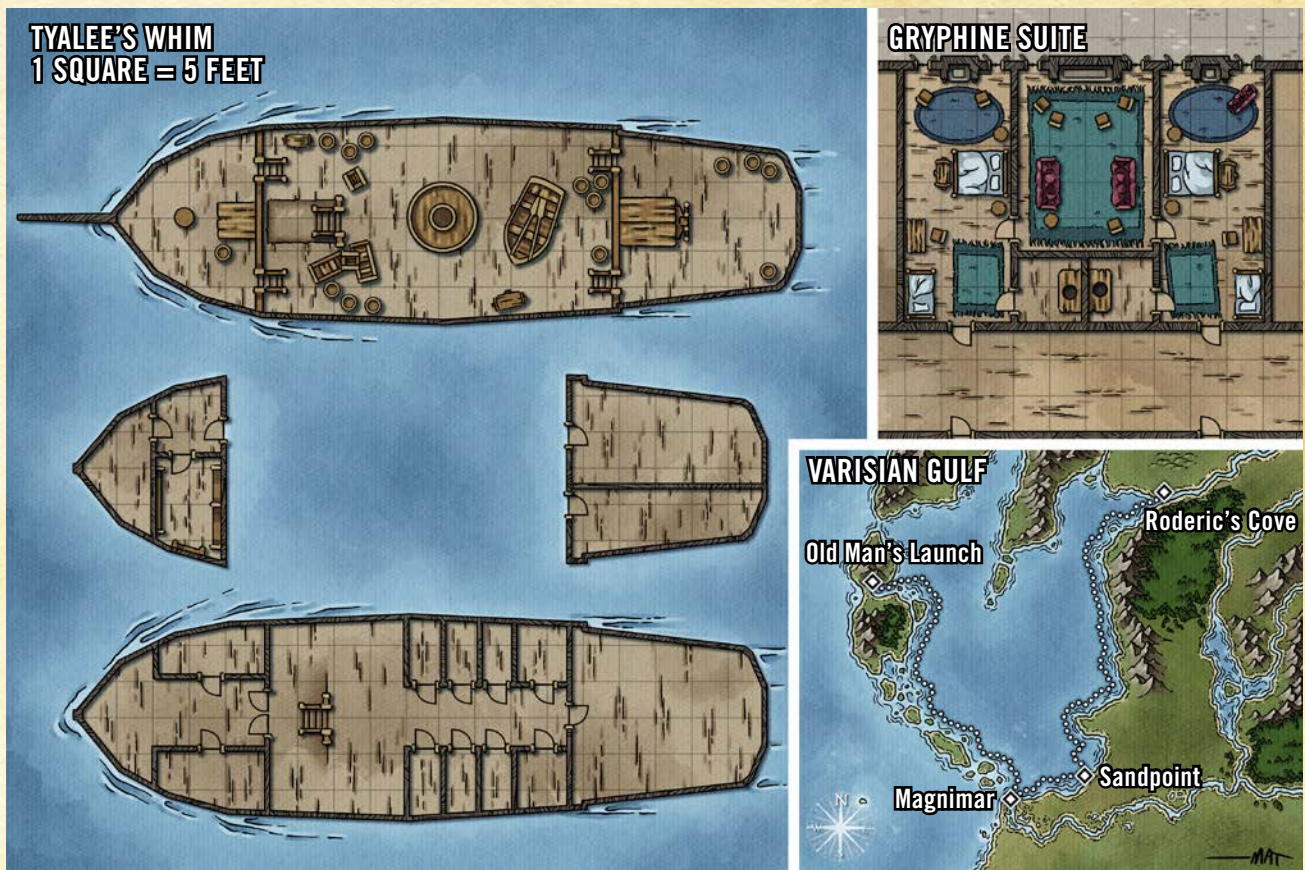
Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary



with them and help determine who they were as part of creating characters, as detailed in the *Return of the Runelords Player's Guide*.

Return of the Runelords assumes that a group of four of these heroes were sent by the Sihedron Council and armed with the *Sihedron* itself to confront Alaznist; this group is referred to in this Adventure Path as the Sihedron Heroes. Any additional heroes who played a part in the prior Adventure Paths are assumed by this campaign to have retired, moved the focus of their adventures on to distant realms or other planes entirely, died, or are otherwise unable to take a part in *Return of the Runelords*. The exact number of Sihedron Heroes should ideally match the number of players in your current group.

If you've run *Rise of the Runelords* or *Shattered Star*, the Sihedron Heroes should consist of prior PCs. Preferably, this will give every player at the table the chance to have one of their previous PCs stand among the Sihedron Heroes.

If you haven't run either of these Adventure Paths, or if you and your players prefer to have other characters step into the role of Sihedron Heroes rather than place their prior PCs in those roles, you should create characters of

your own design to fill the role, or perhaps use some of the Pathfinder RPG's iconic adventurers in the position. This is the route we're taking going forward, since we do not know who your players in previous campaigns are. As presented in this adventure, and in those to come, the Sihedron Heroes are represented by Kyra, Merisiel, Seoni, and Valeros—our iconic cleric, rogue, sorcerer, and fighter (coincidentally, the first four iconic characters we introduced on the first four covers of the Pathfinder Adventure Path line). Consider these four as stand-ins for your campaign's Sihedron Heroes.

PART 1: SAILING THE LOST COAST

As "It Came From Hollow Mountain" begins, the PCs should have put Sir Roderic's ghost to rest and recovered control of *Baraket*, *Sword of Pride*—hopefully along with the *runeward* gauntlets, so that they can handle the dangerous sword safely. In Sir Roderic's last moments, the ghost begged the PCs to take the *Sword of Pride* away from his hometown, so that Roderic's Cove could remain in peace. The elven

gravetender Audrahni concurs and, more importantly, has advice on where to go: Magnimar. If the PCs journey to the city, they can turn the *Sword of Pride* over to the region's most informed collection of scholars on ancient Thassilon: the Sihedron Council. Formed after the island city of Xin rose from the waves and put Magnimar in peril (see the Shattered Star Adventure Path), the Sihedron Council is the group responsible for the keeping of the *Sihedron* itself. The council's interests in protecting Varisia from the runelords and their legacies make them the obvious caretakers of the deadly sword, and they may even pay well for the artifact, should some party members be of a more mercenary bent.

Audrahni reveals to the PCs (if she hadn't already in the course of getting to know them during "Secrets of Roderic's Cove") that she spent much of her youth in Magnimar, and further, a friend named Sursha Antefalle may be able to provide them passage south to the city. Sursha's ship, *Tyalee's Whim*, recently arrived at Roderic's Cove. If the PCs have business to finish in Roderic's cove, feel free to delay *Tyalee's Whim* as needed, but when the PCs are ready to head south, the ship is ready and waiting for them, and Audrahni plans to accompany them.

TYALEE'S WHIM

Tyalee's Whim is a 95-foot two-masted brigantine fitted for sailing the Varisian Gulf. She boasts a crew of 20 (including her captain) along with up to a dozen paying passengers (fewer on cargo-heavy trips). When Audrahni approaches Captain Sursha with a request for a journey south to Magnimar, the captain agrees to give her and the PCs free passage to Magnimar on the condition that the PCs agree to assist in crewing the ship should the need arise. Sursha's first mate is "Elbows" Eddi, an affable (if accident-prone) half-orc who's served on the ship for years. He manages the *Whim's* sailors, few of whom are in the mood to make a return journey to Magnimar so quickly after they've arrived in Roderic's Cove. As a result, all sailors begin the journey with a disposition of indifferent toward the party.

CAPTAIN SURSHA ANTEFALLE CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 49 (see page 64)

"ELBOWS" EDDI CR 2

XP 600



"ELBOWS" EDDI

NG variant journeyman carpenter (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 261)

hp 22

Feats Alertness, Skill Focus (Profession [sailor])

Skills Intimidate +9, Knowledge (geography, local) +8, Perception +8, Profession (sailor) +9, Sense Motive +5, Swim +8

TYALEE'S WHIM SAILORS (8) CR 1/2

XP 200 each

Male and female shipmates (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 294)

hp 11 each

ALL ABOARD!

Tyalee's Whim is due to leave for Magnimar an hour after sunrise. Assuming the PCs arrive at dawn, they may have a chance to watch some or all of the ship's other passengers and cargo arrive. While the ship's sailors and Eddi are busy overseeing the loading of a half dozen nervous cows into the hold, Captain Sursha spares a few moments to welcome the PCs on board and share a quick hug with her old friend Audrahni. She invites the PCs to her table to share dinner at the customary captain's supper later that evening before having a crew member escort them to their quarters below.

Tyalee's Whim has six one-person bunks and a pair of more spacious quarters below deck. If the party consists of more than six (including Audrahni), additional PCs can share the starboard quarters, but the port one has already been claimed by one of the ship's other passengers—Beckwood Roos.

Beckwood is in the process of boarding as the PCs arrive, fussing with a large reinforced crate drawn up to the ship by a straining draft horse. Only once the crate has been lowered into the hold and is secured does he retreat to his quarters, where he remains for much of the voyage, avoiding interactions with the PCs. If confronted about his crate or presence, he indignantly says, "I paid top coin for assurances that I would not be bothered. What's the meaning of this? Where's the captain?" Indeed, Beckwood paid Captain Sursha twice the normal fare for transporting his crate, which he says contains delicate glassware and laboratory equipment. Captain Sursha suspects that Beckwood is smuggling something out of Riddleport, but with no love lost between her and that port's criminals, she's more than happy to play a part, however small, in inconveniencing them.

The crate does contain something dangerous: a hungry flesh that Beckwood hopes to deliver to his laboratory

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron Council

Part 3:
Under the Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World Is Hollow

NPC Gallery

Ashava, the True Spark

Ecology of the Sinspawn

Bestiary

in Nisroch, where he plans on isolating the strange regenerative qualities in the ooze's flesh and then to offer an elixir infused with this property to worshipers of Zon-Kuthon to aid in the shaping of flesh itself. The insufficiently immobilized hungry flesh is destined to awaken midway through the journey to Magnimar, but if the PCs persist and force the crate to be opened before the ship sets sail, the creature rouses itself and attacks (see **Event 3**). In this case, assuming the PCs defeat the monster, Captain Sursha angrily kicks Beckwood off the ship and thanks the PCs for their aid. This won't impact events later in the course of play other than to reduce the number of suspects on board once the PCs start to notice strange things going on.

The final passengers arrive after the cargo has all been loaded. Indeed, they arrive with only minutes to spare, leaving the captain increasingly worried that she'll need to decide between delaying departure or abandoning a wealthy customer. This last-minute arrival is a beautiful, full-figured woman clad in an artfully lacquered lamellar cuirass, attended by a drab halfling woman with an eye patch and a frown on her face. This is actress Viralane Barvisai and her faithful maidservant, Corla. Viralane introduces herself with charming flair, flirting shamelessly with anyone who gives her even a tiny bit of attention. A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Knowledge (local) check recognizes Viralane as an actress of some renown whose operatic performances are known throughout the western and southern coastlines of Avistan, although she hasn't performed much lately (according to rumor, she's been preparing for a huge but still secret role). With a successful DC 17 Knowledge (local) check, a PC also recalls hints of a scandal in Egorian some months back, involving a torrid affair with a Chelaxian aristocrat and a rather vengeful wife.

BECKWOOD ROOS **CR 5**

XP 1,600

Male human alchemist 4/expert 2
(*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 26)

N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2; **Senses** Perception +11



BECKWOOD ROOS

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 40 (6d8+10)

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6; +2 vs. poison

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 dagger +5 (1d4+1/19–20)

Ranged acid bomb +7 touch (2d6+3 acid)

Special Attacks bomb 7/day (2d6+3 fire or acid, DC 15)

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 4th; concentration +7)

2nd—*barkskin*, *cure moderate wounds*

1st—*cure light wounds* (3), *shield*

TACTICS

Before Combat Beckwood drinks his mutagen to enhance his Constitution.

During Combat Beckwood does his best to avoid melee combat, drinking extracts of *barkskin* and *shield* over the first two rounds and then relying on his bombs.

Morale Beckwood drops to his knees and begs for his life if he is reduced to fewer than 10 hit points, offering his magic dagger and his remaining doses of *oozeclot oil* as reward for mercy on the part of the PCs.

Base Statistics Without his mutagen, Beckwood's statistics are **AC** 16, flat-footed 14; **Fort** +5; **Con** 8, **Cha** 12.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 15, **Con** 12, **Int** 16, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

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

Feats Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Craft [alchemy]), Throw Anything
Skills Bluff +9, Craft (alchemy) +15 (+19 to create alchemical items), Heal +11, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (religion) +8, Perception +11, Spellcraft +12, Stealth +11, Use Magic Device +9

Languages Common, Elven, Thassilonian, Varisian

SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +4), discoveries (acid bomb, extend potion), mutagen (+4/–2, +2 natural armor, 40 minutes), poison use, swift alchemy

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of neutralize poison*, *oozeclot unguent* (3 doses, see page 10); **Other Gear** +1 *studded leather*, +1 *dagger*, formula book (contains all prepared extracts plus an additional 2d4 of your choice), 12 pp, 3 gp

CORLA

CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 42 (see page 14)

VIRALANE BARVISAI

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 31 (see page 66)

EVENT 1: DINNER WITH THE CAPTAIN

The first evening aboard *Tyalee's Whim*, the passengers are invited to dinner with the captain. Refusing such a kind invitation would be insulting, and Audrahni is insistent if the PCs express any reluctance to attend.

A long table fills the ship's dining cabin, covered by a white tablecloth and set for all of the dinner's guests. The centerpiece is a wooden replica of *Tyalee's Whim* adorned with fresh flowers. Captain Sursha sits at the head of the table, with Audrahni seated to her left. To her right, in the seat of honor, is Viralane. Though a seat and plate is prepared for her, Corla stands near her mistress, awaiting any instruction she might be given. The chair next to Corla's empty seat is for Beckwood Roos, who arrives just before the dinner begins.

The meal itself is simple but filling and delicious—a first course of bread and caper-stuffed olives, followed by lemon-braised lingcod and fried potatoes. Dessert consists of slices of herbed cheese served with small glasses of sweet blackberry wine.

This event is an opportunity for roleplay and to introduce the main players of this leg of the adventure. Captain Sursha asks her guests to introduce themselves and their histories. Let the PCs alternate their tales with those of the other diners.

Audrahni: The ex-cleric deflects questions about herself as much as possible, politely asking others about themselves. If pressed, Audrahni might share, in brief, the legend of how Sazzleru defeated a powerful three-eyed demon known as the Misbegotten Prince who had subjugated the Varisians of the Lost Coast during the Age of Anguish. With a successful DC 20 Sense Motive check, a PC detects a note of wistfulness and admiration in Audrahni's voice as she speaks of Saint Sazzleru, but she has little more to say of this matter for now.

Corla: The halfling servant has nothing to say for herself other than thanking Sursha for the food, then deflecting things to her mistress, Viralane. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check determines through observation of Corla's body language that it's not humility that drives her—she seems quite self-assured and confident in her posture.

Beckwood Roos: The pale man speaks in a hushed voice, as though imparting secrets reluctantly: "I am a native of Versex, in Ustalav, from a small village whose name you have no reason to have heard. I was a student for a time at the Sincomakti School of Sciences, but I left my studies to travel. I gladly shook the dust of Ustalav from my shoes and will never return."

HANDLE WITH CARE

While Runelord Xanderghul remains physically sheltered and fortified in the Temple of the Peacock Spirit for the duration of this Adventure Path, his regional influence continues to grow. *Baraket* won't completely awaken from dormancy and gain its full powers unless Xanderghul regains his true power (an event that, hopefully, the PCs will prevent from happening during the fourth adventure in this campaign), but the runelord's growing influence does make the *Sword of Pride* increasingly difficult and dangerous for nonmembers of the cult of the Peacock Spirit to handle. Keeping the sword in an extradimensional carrying space, such as a *bag of holding*, prevents this influence, as does ensuring that whoever carries the weapon also wears the *runewarded gauntlets* recovered from Alaznist's vault in the prior adventure.

If a non-worshiper of the Peacock Spirit takes no such precaution before carrying *Baraket*, sensations of frustrated pride infect and overwhelm his thoughts. This causes *Baraket's* bearer to take a -4 penalty on all d20 rolls. This penalty is increased to -8 if the character actually wields the *Sword of Pride* in hand.

Probing into his studies at Sincomakti ("esoteric matters of little interest to the other diners, I assure you"), home village ("no more than a collection of dilapidated hovels; best that it was swallowed up by the earth, if truth be told"), and current activities ("Magnimar has some libraries that pique my interest") elicits little information.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (local) or Linguistics check identifies a faint Nidalese accent to Beckwood's voice. If confronted with this accent, Beckwood grows flustered and florid, angrily sputtering that "I may have grown up in Nisroch, but I've left Nidal behind. Matters of my childhood upbringing are my own business—a business I've worked my whole life to put behind me!" A character can get a hunch that there's more to it than this with a successful DC 20 Sense Motive check, but if pressed, Beckwood angrily storms from the dinner back to his cabin.

Sursha Antefalle: The captain tells her guests that she has sailed *Tyalee's Whim* since she was a little girl. She reveals a fair bit of her history, as detailed on page 64, although she avoids the topic of her lover Tyalee. If anyone asks about the ship's name, there is a silence and Audrahni puts a comforting hand on Sursha's shoulder. "Best we not speak of lost loves," she answers after a moment. "Certainly, more cheerful conversation is proper for our table." Anyone who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check guesses that Audrahni knows more about this relationship, and if the PCs are respectful during the dinner and inquire politely later, Audrahni

IT CAME
FROM HOLLOW
MOUNTAINPart 1:
Sailing the
Lost CoastPart 2:
The Sihedron
CouncilPart 3:
Under the
Mountain's GazePart 4:
The World
Is HollowNPC
GalleryAshava, the
True SparkEcology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

THE TRUTH ABOUT VIRALANE

After she was cursed by a lover's enraged wife, Viralane's star has begun to wane. Desperate for a cure, she fell in with the Cult of the Peacock Spirit in Magnimar, coming under the influence of a priestess named Hira Doss. Hira sent Viralane north to Roderic's Cove with orders to retrieve the *Sword of Pride*, but to do so subtly to avoid arousing suspicion that the cult itself is once again active.

Viralane knows that the PCs carry the *Sword of Pride*, but learning that they're preparing to travel south to Magnimar has sown seeds of doubt in her mind: if Hira's visions are to be trusted, why then didn't they inform her that the people she sought were already destined to come to her? In time, these doubts about the Peacock Spirit may become elements the PCs can use to their own advantage, but for now, Viralane plays the role of a traveling actress, collecting research for an upcoming performance in which she intends to play the part of Runelord Sorshen in an opera of her own creation, called *The Rise and Fall of Thassilon*. This gives her the excuse she and her assistant, Corla, need to watch and study the PCs and plan for the acquisition of *Baraket* just as *Tyalee's Whim* reaches Magnimar.

may fill them in on the basic details of Sursha's lost love, Tyalee (see page 65).

Viralane Barvisai: The actress is more than happy to fill any gaps in the conversation. She regales listeners with tales of her many performances across Avistan but is careful not to overplay her fame as a singer. "Though Chelish opera is all the rage these days, I have no stomach for that discordant caterwauling." She declines to sing at the table, should anyone make the request.

Should anyone bring up the subject of the whispered scandal in Egorian, Viralane's face darkens and she calls the questioner out for being rude. "I would hope that those with whom I dine would have the manners to avoid such unpleasant topics." With a successful DC 20 Sense Motive check, a PC notes a hint of fear in Viralane's expression for a moment before indignation takes over, as if whatever happened during the scandal left her shaken.

An example of one of Viralane's tales follows.

"Before I had really made a name for myself, I was in Oppara, portraying the maidservant girl of Duchess Amalaya in a production of *A Soldier of Zimar*. A Druman kalistocrat was so taken by my performance in this relatively minor role one evening that he promised me my weight in gemstones if I would consent to be his wife. I've never been so delighted to be on the heavier side of the scale. Alas, the man had the most vexing habit of breathing with his mouth open,

and he had the oiliest beard, so I was not tempted in the least by his offer. And of course, there was the matter of his wife. He would first have to have the poor thing murdered, which he seemed perfectly willing to arrange. Told me he'd have one of his footmen strangle her that very night with a scarf I had gifted him from my costume—he said I needed only give him a kiss on his cheek and the deed was done. Of course I let her know of her husband's opinion of her soon thereafter, but can you believe the gall of some men?"

Story Award: If the PCs manage to discern hints about at least two of their fellow travelers' personalities, either via successful skill checks or excellent roleplaying, award the party 1,600 XP. If they discern hints about at least four of the fellow travelers, increase this reward to 2,400 XP.

EVENT 2: VIRALANE'S ARIA

As dessert is wrapping up, Viralane finally allows the captain to persuade her to share a song, though she states that she prefers the "acoustics of the open sea" and suggests the diners adjourn to the main deck. Viralane leads the way, fluttering skirts dutifully attended by Corla, to the ship's main mast. Read or paraphrase the following as she begins her impromptu performance (this song is not impacted by her curse, as she is not performing on an actual stage).

"From the Taldan opera, *Daughter of Orlos*, the final aria of its tragic heroine, Miriam." Viralane closes her eyes briefly, and her enchanting smile is replaced by a face that reflects desperate, heart-wrenching sorrow. She sings, slowly opening her eyes and throwing her left arm out in a graceful motion. "Father! Thy grasping has cost you the most precious of your possessions. Hear me now, for my words are a gift at parting!" Viralane turns to the rigging and climbs as high as the crow's nest thirty feet above, singing a haunting melody as she ascends. When she reaches the top, she sings the words, "Avarice! Thy price is the empty dark!"

At this moment, have the PCs attempt a Knowledge (local) or a Sense Motive check (their choice, but a single player can't attempt both checks). On a successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) check, the character is familiar with *Daughter of Orlos* and knows that in the opera, this is the point where Miriam commits suicide by leaping from a tower window (a set piece often accompanied by gruesome special effects in many productions). A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check realizes Viralane is about to leap from the crow's nest.

Any PC who succeeded at either check can roll for initiative to react; roll for Viralane as well. If not stopped, on her action Viralane throws her arms wide and leaps from the crow's nest to a collective gasp from the

gathering as she plummets. The shock swiftly passes as she completes her character's beautiful aria of sacrificial suicide, "Full Purse, Empty Heart," while descending in slow motion thanks to her *ring of feather falling*. She lands gently on the deck, releasing a large crimson cloth she'd hidden in her complex outfit to symbolize the character's brutal arrival on the ground (certainly indicating Viralane had planned this dramatic performance all along, despite her many protestations about singing during dinner). Beckwood breaks the stunned silence with applause, soon joined by the rest of the audience.

During the performance, Corla is nowhere to be found; in fact, she has retreated below decks to search the PCs' rooms (though if any of the PCs retreated below deck, she aborts this scouting mission entirely). Should any PC ask where the halfling is during the performance, allow the PCs a DC 20 Perception check to notice the maidservant coming up from below as Viralane is mobbed by admiring sailors after her dramatic performance. The halfling has been careful to mask her activities; it requires a successful DC 25 Perception check in the cabins below to determine that someone has been through the PCs' belongings, though nothing can be found missing, including the *Sword of Pride*, if it isn't being kept on a PC's person. If confronted, Corla claims she'd seen Viralane pull this stunt dozens of times before and was taking advantage of the opportunity to go below decks to use a chamber pot.

Story Award: If a PC takes dramatic action to "save" Viralane from falling, she masterfully ad-libs the rescue attempt into the song and rewards her rescuer with a kiss. In this event, or if the PCs note that Corla was missing during the show, award them 1,200 XP.

EVENT 3: BECKWOOD'S CRATE (CR 6)

Sharing the journey to Magnimar with a half dozen cows in the hold generates a certain amount of discomfort, with the unenviable task of cleaning out the manure and feeding the cattle falling to a different sailor each day. The smell of cow fills the lower deck, and those in their bunks are advised to keep their doors closed to combat the odor. Characters must pass by the cows whenever they wish to enter or exit the lower decks, and by the third day of the trip, as *Tyalee's Whim* leaves the Fogscar Mountains behind and begins sailing along coastlines of cliffs and sea stacks, the cadence and tenor of the cows' shared discomfort changes. A PC can pick up on the change with a successful DC 15 Handle Animal, Knowledge (nature), or wild empathy check, realizing that something new is disturbing the cattle.

Creature: What's disturbed the cows is the occupant of the large crate with which the cattle share the hold. The single large crate loaded by Beckwood Roos contains not "glassware and fragile alchemical equipment," but

an insufficiently immobilized hungry flesh. When Beckwood captured the creature with the aid of a dose of *oozeclot unguent*, he didn't realize this particular specimen, despite being smaller than usual, was much healthier than most. As a result, the *oozeclot unguent* won't last the duration of the trip.

If the PCs succeeded at a check to realize the cattle were unhappy and came to investigate, they are on site when the hungry flesh begins breaking out of its crate. Otherwise, the PCs hear the sound of cattle screaming and the crate breaking apart after the ooze fully recovers, at which point it breaks out completely only 1d3 rounds later.

MUTATED HUNGRY FLESH CR 6

XP 2,400

Variant advanced hungry flesh (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4288, 152)

N Medium ooze

Init -1; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., scent; Perception -3

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19 (-1 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 80 (7d8+49); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +9, **Ref** +1, **Will** -1

Defensive Abilities amorphous; **Immune** ooze traits

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee slam +10 (1d4+7 plus grab and disease)

Special Attacks constrict (1d4+7 plus disease)

TACTICS

During Combat Unless the PCs intervene, the ooze kills all of the cattle in the main hold before slithering upstairs onto the main deck, whereupon it kills 2d4 sailors before slithering off the side of the ship into the ocean to swim away. If the PCs confront it, the ooze focuses its attacks on them.

Morale The hungry flesh fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 9, **Con** 24, **Int** —, **Wis** 5, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +10 (+14 grapple); **CMD** 19 (can't be tripped)

Skills Swim +13

SQ compression, monstrous growth, reactive regeneration, slime trail

Development: Beckwood Roos is appalled at this event, in part due to the loss of the specimen he'd spent so much time and resources to gather, but more at the damage to the ship, its crew, and his reputation. He quietly accepts Captain Sursha's judgment to remain in his quarters for the remainder of the journey, under guard and without access to his alchemical equipment or gear. When the ship arrives in Magnimar, she says, he'll be turned over to the city for justice for the crimes of reckless endangerment

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

OOZECLOT UNGUENT

Beckwood Roos faced a complicated problem when he decided to catch and transport a hungry flesh: how does one keep a dangerous ooze calm during the journey? An ooze cannot be tranquilized with poison, after all. Beckwood's solution was the creation of *oozeclot unguent*. Unfortunately, he miscalculated the dosage required to keep this particularly dangerous hungry flesh quiet—mistaking its smaller size as an indication of a lessened metabolism—resulting in the ooze recovering days before schedule.

OOZECLOT UNGUENT		PRICE 900 GP
SLOT none	CL 3rd	WEIGHT —
AURA faint transmutation		

A single dose of *oozeclot unguent* can be applied to a 5-foot-square surface, whereupon it remains potent for 24 hours or until an ooze comes in contact with it. An ooze that crawls onto a surface treated with *oozeclot unguent* must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or become immobile as its amorphous body grows rigid. As long as it is thus affected, the ooze can take no physical actions. Any amount of damage causes the hardened shell surrounding the ooze to crack, allowing the creature to slither out and resume attacks; otherwise it remains immobile for an extended period of time. An ooze of CR 3 or less is immobile for 1 week, while an ooze of CR 4 to CR 6 remains immobile for only 1d6 days. A CR 7 to CR 11 ooze is rendered immobile only for 1d6 rounds, and it can attempt a new saving throw at the end of each round to end the effect early. Oozes of CR 12 or higher are immune to the effects of *oozeclot unguent* entirely.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS	COST 450 GP
Craft Wondrous Item, <i>barkskin</i>	

and transport of dangerous monsters. Beckwood has no further direct role to play in this adventure, but if Viralane or Corla begin to feel the PCs are suspicious of their motives, they might try to use Beckwood as a scapegoat.

Treasure: If the PCs manage to prevent any sailors from being slain by the hungry flesh, Beckwood is shamefully appreciative for their intervention and gives them his remaining doses of *oozeclot unguent* as well as his two potions in thanks for their actions saving the crew.

Story Award: If no sailors are slain, award the PCs an additional 1,200 XP.

EVENT 4: THE BIRDS OF WINDSONG ABBEY

On the afternoon of the fourth day, *Tyalee's Whim* approaches a notable coastal landmark: Windsong Abbey. As the ship passes through a deep channel between the

mainland and a small island, the arches and tall towers of the still-abandoned abbey itself are in full view, sunlight dancing on the stained glass of its windows. The sound of the wind blowing along the cliffs here is eerie and mournful, and Viralane uses this moment to recite verse by the beloved Varisian poet Eulac Kezalli, praising Windsong Abbey's architecture.

The poem and the spectacle of Windsong and its birds offer a potent distraction. Corla uses this opportunity to steal a small item from one of the PCs; the item is not the *Sword of Pride* if a PC carries it with her, but that PC is the target of the larceny—Corla is merely testing out how guarded the party is.

If Corla is caught, Viralane apologizes for her maidservant, spinning a melodramatic tale of having rescued her from the sordid streets of Westcrown. "The poor dear had been cast out by her master to die. She had to steal scraps of food to survive. Forgive her falling to old habits. I will punish her as you see fit." If the theft is not detected, the PC doesn't have an opportunity to notice the item's absence until turning in for the night (Perception DC 15) or if the PC needs the item before this time.

Regardless of how these events play out, if she's come to trust at least one of the PCs, Audrahni makes the decision to reveal some of her past. An hour before sunset, as storm clouds gather to the west, she speaks of her attempt to have a statue of Saint Sazzleru constructed in Magnimar, and of how she uncovered corruption that went all the way up to the city's justices. She explains that the sculptor she'd hired to design and construct the statue, an elven man named Ilsynor, was in truth a member of a cult of murderers called the Brotherhood of Seven. When Audrahni went to the city's justices, she discovered to her horror that the man she'd contacted, Justice Ironbriar, was none other than the cult's secret leader. He stymied her attempts to have the cultists exposed, then sent his assassins to murder the rest of Audrahni's Ashavan allies. Here, Audrahni makes a morose confession: overcome with grief and frustration that Ashava hadn't protected her friends, she took vengeance by engineering the collapse of the scaffolding around the partially built statue of Saint Sazzleru. The collapse killed Ilsynor, consigning him to an unblest grave—a sin, Audrahni notes with sadness, so against the teachings of Ashava that she realized she'd fallen from her goddess's grace entirely. Ever since, she's been plagued with nightmares that Ilsynor's spirit has been caught in the rubble, consigned forever to unlife as some sort of restless undead.

This confession given, Audrahni notes that she's been inspired by the PCs' heroism, particularly by how the PCs helped put Sir Roderic to rest. She humbly asks them if they'd be willing to accompany her to the site of the collapsed statue and Ilsynor's grave to perform a short

ritual to bless the site, and if Ilsynor still haunts the place, to do what they can to release his spirit. If the PCs agree to aid her, proceed with **Event 11** once they're in Magnimar.

In any event, as the PCs head to bed, the captain informs them that it looks like a storm will be hitting them at some point during the night, and that she may need all hands on deck before dawn.

EVENT 5: THE STORM (CR 5)

An hour after midnight on the fourth day, Captain Sursha's fears come true as *Tyalee's Whim* is hit by a powerful storm. The sudden ringing of the ship's bell calls for all hands on deck, and as the PCs wake, they realize the ship is being tossed in rough waters.

Topside, Captain Sursha is at the wheel, steering *Tyalee's Whim* as best she can. "Elbows" Eddi directs the crew to tasks, immediately including the PCs in his orders as they appear on deck. The storm's fury is frightening, with the ship listing and climbing dangerously with each white-capped swell, while torrents of rain driven sideways by blasts of wind make visibility a challenge. The ship's heaving, wet deck make movement a challenge, but the amount of rigging and railing help prevent anyone from being washed overboard. As the storm rages, the PCs are called upon to perform the following tasks. In order to aid with a task, a PC must first succeed at a DC 10 Acrobatics check to move into position.

Task 1: Eddi orders the PCs to help deploy the sea anchor to help stabilize the ship. Several sailors already struggle with the anchor. If at least one PC can reach the sailors to help and then succeeds at a DC 15 Strength or Profession (sailor) check, the sea anchor is deployed, and the first sailor who would be lost during the storm is able to remain aboard.

Task 2: Eddi orders PCs to trim the mainsail. Any PC who succeeds at the DC 10 Acrobatics check to move into position must then succeed at either a DC 15 Climb or Profession (sailor) check (to clamber into position where trimming the mainsail is easier) or a DC 15 Disable Device or Escape Artist check (to trim the mainsail from a lower, less advantageous position). If the PCs don't trim the mainsail, a sailor is lost at sea a few minutes later during a powerful gust.

Task 3: A particularly powerful swell crashes over the ship's deck. The PCs must each succeed at a DC 15 Acrobatics check to retain their footing in the harrowing aftermath, and one sailor is washed overboard. PCs who succeed at this check are in position to try to save the sailor. A character can grab onto the tumbling crew member with a successful melee attack against the sailor's touch AC of 12. Failure indicates the sailor is washed overboard, at which point a PC can throw a lifeline to them with a successful ranged attack (at a -2

penalty) against the sailor's touch AC. If a PC dives in to try to save the sailor, they must attempt DC 20 Swim checks to navigate the water—two successes are required to reach the overboard sailor, at which point other crew are able to throw lines to the PC to rescue them both.

Story Award: Award the PCs 1,600 XP if no sailors were lost during the storm.

EVENT 6: ASSESSING THE DAMAGE (CR 6)

Fortunately, the storm is short-lived, and at dawn the sun rises to a clear day. Yet evidence of the storm's swift violence is everywhere, including significant damage to *Tyalee's Whim*. As sailors quickly work to make repairs to the rigging and sails under Eddi's supervision, Sursha stands on the aft deck and calls the PCs over.

Sursha thinks the rudder may have been damaged during the night's storm and asks if one of the PCs would check this out. The waters are calm, but she warns the PCs that she spotted several sharks earlier. They seem to have lost interest in the ship for now, making this a good window of opportunity to dive underwater and inspect the rudder.

Investigating the damage to the rudder requires 4 rounds of inspection during which the PC must succeed at DC 10 Swim checks; at the end of this time, she can assess the damage with a successful DC 12 Disable Device or Profession (sailor) check.

If none of the PCs volunteer, or if none of them can successfully assess the damage, Sursha decides to send one of her sailors. He inspects the damage, and his head pops up long enough to give the grim news that the rudder is in fact damaged, before he's eaten alive by the thing that drove off the sharks.

The damage to the rudder is significant, but temporary repairs can be effected by one of the *Whim's* sailors in half an hour's time once the dunkleosteus either feeds or is driven off. Sursha decides that they must limp toward the closest port, Sandpoint, to make more lasting repairs.

Creature: A mere 1d6 rounds after someone enters the water, the real reason the sharks lost interest becomes apparent: a 25-foot-long predatory fish called a dunkleosteus attacks. The primeval fish fights until reduced to 30 hp or fewer, at which point it thinks better of this particular meal and swims off to find easier prey.

DUNKLEOSTEUS **CR 6**
XP 2,400
hp 75 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6 129*)

Story Award: If no sailors perish in this encounter, award the PCs an additional 800 XP.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

EVENT 7: REPAIRS IN SANDPOINT

Once the rudder's jury-rigged repairs restore a modicum of mobility to *Tyalee's Whim*, she makes for the Lost Coast just visible on the horizon. It takes most of the rest of the day for the crippled ship to reach Sandpoint, after which the crew manages to ease it into dock at the Sandpoint shipyard. Sandpoint's harbormaster, a foul-mouthed but fair Keleshite woman named Jhalevia Stensin (herself relatively new to the role, having been appointed after the previous harbormaster's death during a raid on the town by stone giants during Rise of the Runelords), speaks to the captain, and payment exchanges hands. *Tyalee's Whim* will be seaworthy in less than 12 hours with the captain's payment for overnight repairs.

With this news, Sursha allows all aboard *Tyalee's Whim* overnight shore leave (with the exception of Beckwood Roos and two unlucky sailors chosen to stay on board and make sure the Nidalese man stays in his cabin). Sandpoint itself was the focus of Rise of the Runelords and is detailed in full in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Sandpoint, Light of the Lost Coast*. While the small town and its hinterlands provide a wealth of adventure opportunity on their own, Return of the Runelords does not tarry long here, and this event is mostly to give the PCs a nostalgic glimpse of the small town before moving on to Magnimar.

As the announcement of shore leave is given, Viralane insists that the PCs dine with her that night at her favorite tavern in town, a place called Cracktooth's, located near the city's unusually large theater. She knows its proprietor and promises wonderful entertainment and good food for all.

Cracktooth's large common room is raucous and crowded when the PCs arrive just after sunset. Patrons sit at tables scattered across the place, while a number sit in velvet-upholstered theater seats before a stage in the southwest corner. There is a bar to the northwest, and plush chairs make a cozier setting in the northeast.

With her usual dramatic flair, Viralane brings the PCs to the bar and introduces them as her "honor guard" to the tavern's owner, **Jess "Cracktooth" Berinni** (NG male human expert 3), as he cleans mugs. Cracktooth nods politely to the PCs but greets Viralane expansively, asking if she's planning on gracing his stage tonight. "Oh, not tonight, I'm afraid, darling Cracktooth. My voice is out of sorts." In truth, she fears that her curse will lead to humiliation, but the night is young.

The stage is never vacant for long, as eager performers step up for a chance to win praise or derision from the crowd. Allow the PCs to take the stage if they wish, but Cracktooth's is a tough crowd: a successful DC 16 Perform check is required to win applause, with failure drawing boos and insults. During the night, several patrons beg Viralane to sing a song or perform a scene for them. She

demurs at first, but as she becomes slightly inebriated, she answers with a coy "perhaps later." A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Sense Motive check detects growing concern in ever-present but silent Corla.

Cracktooth takes the stage near midnight and gives a witty talk about the state of reconstruction in Magnimar after the tsunami a few years back caused by the rising of the isle of Xin, suggesting that the Sihedron Council, which has organized the project, is skimming off the top of funds. His talk is greeted with laughs and good-natured jeers. At last, he melodramatically pleads and begs Viralane to close the evening with his favorite song: "A Lucky Spar in Magnimar."

The room cheers in unison, with everyone calling for Viralane to take the stage. By now several drinks into the night, a beaming Viralane stands, just a bit unsteady, and calls out, "Oh, you dear adoring people! If it will make you happy, I will sing." The room erupts in joyful applause.

Corla whispers something to Viralane, who pushes her away. Viralane glides to the stage and offers a hand to Cracktooth, who takes it, bows, then steps down to resume his post at the bar. Viralane holds up her hands for silence, and a hush falls over the tavern's patrons. She takes a deep breath and sings the song's first line, in an alto lovely and clear.

"A lad went up to Magnimar, with heart both true and bold/
To win his fortune, earn his fame/
To learn if luck would hold..."

At this point, the word "hold" warbles out terrifically and terribly out of tune. Viralane's stops, her face flooding red with humiliation. The room is silent for a few seconds, after which a loud chorus of guffaws from a group in the front row hits Viralane like a slap. As someone calls out "Too bad you can't hold your tune!" her humiliation turns to rage. "Stinking peasants and ruffians!" she spits, her face distorted with fury. "Who will defend my honor against this rabble?"

When none of the tavern's patrons respond and the number of guffaws and insults only grows, Viralane becomes increasingly agitated, calling on her "honor guard" to "do your duty and give these yokels a brutal beating!" Corla joins her mistress on the stage, attempting to soothe her and hurry her off the stage to return to *Tyalee's Whim* to sleep off the night's drink and shame.

If the PCs take action to start a fight, Cracktooth swiftly intervenes with a stern look, suggesting instead that the PCs and Viralane call it an early night and head back to their ship. Calming the crows requires a successful DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, or magic such as *enthral*. Alternatively, if a PC takes the stage and begins a distracting performance, a successful DC 20 Perform check is enough to distract the crowd and defuse

the situation. In any event, Viralane and Corla return to the ship.

If a fight breaks out, Corla hustles Viralane out of the tavern during the mayhem. You can play out the brawl if you wish (in which case you can use the stats for brigands on page 266 of *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*), but the PCs' opponents do not fight with weapons. If any PC draws a weapon or casts a spell, the fight ends immediately and the patrons flee.

Story Award: If the PCs resolve the situation without resorting to violence, grant them 1,600 XP.

EVENT 8. TAINTED WATER (CR 7)

Tyalee's Whim sets sail at dawn the next morning, Viralane and her maidservant sequestered in their cabin. Captain Sursha informs the PCs that they should be arriving at Magnimar by dawn the next day.

However, as the ship navigates a strait between two large islands late that afternoon, Corla emerges and asks Captain Sursha to speak to her mistress in private. The Captain agrees and is gone for a few minutes. When she comes back on deck, she orders Eddi to have the barrels containing the ship's water supply emptied over the side and calls for *Tyalee's Whim* to head for the nearer of the small islands. As she does, she gives a brief explanation.

"It's been brought to my attention that our water supplies have become tainted. There's a spring on that island; we'll drop anchor just off shore, but I'll need a shore party to fill our water barrels."

The sailors seem puzzled but comply immediately, while Captain Sursha asks the PCs to accompany her to refill the supplies. Any PC who seems suspicious of the situation can attempt a DC 25 Sense Motive check to determine the truth: Captain Sursha has been enchanted. When the captain went below deck, Viralane cast *suggestion* to make her believe that the ship's water supplies were tainted and that she should detour to the nearby island to refill the barrels with the PCs' aid.

Landing on the island, refilling the water barrels, and returning to *Tyalee's Whim* takes about an hour to complete, during which Viralane and Corla plan to make their move and steal the *Sword of Pride*. This is easy enough if the PCs leave the sword behind while they aid the captain.

If it becomes apparent that the PCs intend to bring *Baraket* with them on the water-refilling mission, Viralane asks the PC who carries the *Sword of Pride* to speak to her privately. If the PC agrees, the actress leads the PC to her cabin, where Corla has brewed tea. Over tea, Viralane begins a lulling conversation about the events of last night, shares her embarrassment at the nature of her

curse and how she gained it, and asks if the PC thinks less of her. She thanks the PC for any kindness, but chooses that moment to cast *charm person* and asks the PC to hand over the blade. If the spell fails, Viralane and her maidservant take more extreme measures to secure the blade, attempting to kill the PC if necessary.

If the PC refuses to speak to Viralane, she scowls and retreats to her cabin to bide her time. As soon as they return from the water-retrieval mission, though, Viralane is waiting on deck for them, Corla in tow. She asks, with affected righteous indignation, to speak with the party as a group, asking that the crew of *Tyalee's Whim* step away. She looks at each member of the party, one by one, her face one of aristocratic disdain. Taking a deep breath, she speaks. "You failed to protect my honor sufficiently last night. I demand to know why and how you will atone for this perfidy!"

At this point, Viralane begins employing her mesmerist abilities to intimidate the PCs and put them off their game. Corla attempts to surreptitiously relieve the PC carrying the *Sword of Pride* of the burden. If successful, she delivers the sword to her mistress as quickly as she can.

It's likely just a matter of time before open hostilities ensue, at which point Corla attacks viciously while Viralane aids her from whatever distance she can muster, trying to play the PCs against one another and attempting to get them to deliver the sword. The crew is confused by the conflict, having fallen in love with their most glamorous passenger, but also holding respect for the party. For the most part they hang back, shocked at the conflict and too worried to intervene.

However this plays out, Viralane employs her viridian escape ability as soon as she gains control of the sword or if she is in mortal danger, abandoning Corla in either case. The halfling surrenders once her mistress vanishes, but will not betray her unless sufficiently intimidated or befriended by the PCs. In such a case, Corla can tell the PCs that Viralane fell in with a strange group of cultists in Magnimar who worshiped something called the Peacock Spirit. She can tell the PCs about Viralane's curse, and that a half-elf woman whose name Corla never learned promised Viralane a cure for the curse. In exchange, Viralane must perform a favor for the cult: securing a magic sword from a group of adventurers up in Roderic's Cove. Corla knows that the cult supplied Viralane with the one-time power to escape via a teleportation ritual. Corla doesn't know much else about this ritual or the cultists, other than that she's disappointed that Viralane didn't honor her promise to take Corla with her when she used the it to flee. She understands the PCs' anger at Viralane (particularly if she made off with *Baraket*), but begs the PCs to grant her mercy should they meet her again, arguing that Viralane isn't a bad person, she's just... self-absorbed.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

CORLA

CR 5

XP 1,600

Female halfling rogue 6

N Small humanoid (halfling)

Init +4; **Senses** Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 size)

hp 42 (6d8+12)

Fort +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +3; +2 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk kukri +11 (1d3+1/18–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +3d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Corla applies a dose of blue whinnis to her kukri.

During Combat Corla focuses her attacks on *Baraket's* carrier, hoping to incapacitate that PC long enough to liberate the sword and hand it over to her mistress. If successful, the first round the halfling claims the weapon, she must attempt a DC 15 Will save to avoid being stunned for 1 round as the sword, sensing a change of ownership to someone who might not have the protection afforded by *runewarded gauntlets*, momentarily lashes out. If Corla fails this save, she drops the sword, giving the PCs a last chance to reclaim it. *Baraket* can lash out in this way only once, the power it has built up over the last few weeks expended.

Morale Corla fights to the death to protect Viralane and carry out her orders, but once the woman abandons her, the halfling immediately surrenders, overcome with grief and despair at the betrayal.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 13, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

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

Feats Dodge, Martial Weapon Proficiency (kukri), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (kukri)

Skills Acrobatics +15 (+11 when jumping), Climb +12, Diplomacy +9, Escape Artist +13, Perception +11, Perform (string instruments) +9, Sleight of Hand +13, Stealth +17, Swim +10

Languages Common, Halfling, Varisian

SQ rogue talents (fast stealth, finesse rogue, surprise attacks), trapfinding +3

Combat Gear *potions of cure*

light wounds (3), blue whinnis (8); **Other Gear** +1 studded leather, mwk kukri, *handy haversack*, 29 pp, 7 gp

VIRALANE BARVISAI

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 31 (see page 66)

Story Award: If the PCs manage to retain possession of *Baraket*, award them 2,400 XP.

**PART 2:
THE SIHEDRON COUNCIL**

The great city of Magnimar is a bustling hive of activity, its waterfront and shoreline having undergone a long restoration process in the wake of the disastrous tsunami that struck the city with the rising of the Isle of Xin (as chronicled at the start of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #66: The Dead Heart of Xin*). This chapter presents several events and encounters set in the city, but if you want to expand upon the intrigue and exploration of Magnimar, check out *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Magnimar, City of Monuments* for more details on the city.

EVENT 9: ARRIVAL IN MAGNIMAR

Tyalee's Whim sails into the city in the early morning, somewhat worse for wear following her scrapes with storms and monsters, but hopefully with most, if not all, of her crew intact. Captain Sursha chooses the district of Ordellia at the westernmost edge of Magnimar to dock, since it's here her contacts have arranged for discounted docking fees.

The number of ships sailing into and out of the sprawling Varisian city of Magnimar is overwhelming. As *Tyalee's Whim* sails past the ancient pilings of the Irespan, the signs of rebuilding are everywhere. As soon as the ship ties up at an open dock and her industrious crew focuses on their tasks, Captain Sursha once more thanks the PCs for their aid during the voyage, and unless there were extenuating circumstances (such as the PCs being arrested in Sandpoint) she invites them to sail with her again in the future when they have the chance—not knowing just how soon the PCs may need her services again.



CORLA

As Audrahni can remind them, the PCs' mission in Magnimar is to deliver the *Sword of Pride* to the Sihedron Council (or, if Viralane succeeded in fleeing with the weapon, at least deliver the news of its recent reappearance). Audrahni (or a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge [local] check) can confirm that the Sihedron Council is based at Heidmarch Manor in the Alabaster District on the far side of town. If she confided in the PCs about her desire to visit the ruins of the statue of Saint Sazzleru, Audrahni suggests they do so that night after they've met with the council, but she won't demur if the PCs want to go there first (this side trip to the haunted site is detailed in **Event 11**).

EVENT 10: VISITING HEIDMARCH MANOR

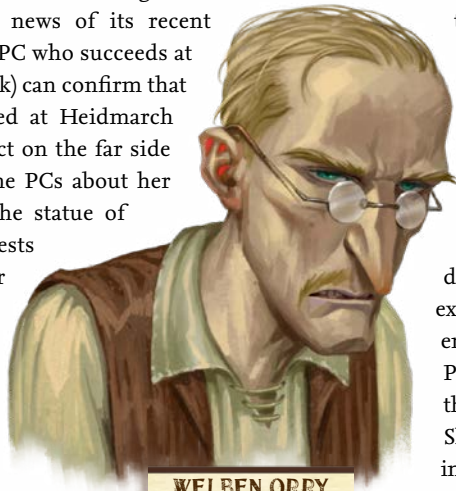
Heidmarch Manor, where the Sihedron Council is based, is located in Magnimar's Alabaster District. Heidmarch Manor itself, which doubles as Magnimar's Pathfinder Lodge, is bustling with activity. Inside, clerks flurry to and fro, arms full of documents, looks of distracted urgency on their faces. At the back of the entrance room, sitting at a makeshift desk, is a pinch-faced little man with thinning blond hair and a wisp of a mustache. He seems engaged in cross-checking lists, making marks in the margins with a ragged-feathered quill, but immediately looks up as the PCs enter.

This man is **Welben Orry** (LN male human expert 6), one of many men and women seeing to the mundane matters of the Sihedron Council, the Pathfinder Society's increased interest in Varisia, and the restoration of Magnimar's waterfront. He is not a patient man and is quick to see interruptions before they manifest, and he swiftly identifies the PCs as adventurers ready to bring just such an interruption. With a heavy sigh, Welben sets aside his notes and approaches the PCs.

"Yes, yes, it's obvious you're here for something very important and expect us all to drop everything to attend you. What is it? I don't have time for long stories, so out with it!"

Welben's attitude doesn't improve if the PCs claim to have news of rising runelords or to have discovered *Baraket*, *Sword of Pride*. If they show the sword to him, Welben's eyes widen a bit before narrowing. Muttering something about "that could just be a clever replica made of paste and glass..." he asks the PCs to wait while he informs Lady Heidmarch. Without showing *Baraket* to the impatient man, the PCs need to either succeed

at a DC 25 Bluff check to convince Welben that they've got an appointment already (or some similar fabrication) or convince the indifferent man to arrange the meeting with a successful DC 22 Diplomacy check. A PC who succeeds at a DC 17 Intimidate check (or employs actual violence) frightens the man badly and sends him scurrying off to find Sheila Heidmarch at once. Otherwise, the best he'll do is arrange for a meeting with the mistress of the manor in 2d4 days. (In this event, give the PCs time to explore the city and feel free to have them encounter a few attempts by the cult of the Peacock Spirit to steal the sword.) Once the PCs manage to secure a meeting with Sheila Heidmarch, be it immediately or in several days, they're escorted by a sour-



WELBEN ORRY

facéd Welben to the manor's reception room: a chamber with a long cherrywood table, several high-backed chairs, and walls decorated with paintings of famous heroes. The PCs likely recognize portraits of the Sihedron Heroes among these decorations.

Sheila Heidmarch sits at the head of the table and rises as the PCs enter. She greets them and offers them refreshments—grapes, cheese, and water served from a sideboard—then asks them to be seated and tell their tale. She listens attentively and politely, treating the PCs with respect from the start, but should the PCs produce *Baraket*, her cool and calm facade shatters, and she rises from her seat with a shocked cry.

The presence of the *Sword of Sin* accelerates things quickly in Sheila's eyes, and she tells the PCs that it's best if the dangerous weapon is turned over to the Sihedron Council for safekeeping. If the PCs recovered the *runewarded gauntlets*, she requests them as well. Even if the PCs don't balk at turning over the weapon, she promises them that they'll be well rewarded for the service, but she doesn't force them to do so (see Development on page 16).

Once the PCs have told their tale and turned over *Baraket* for safekeeping, Sheila thanks the PCs for bringing this matter to the Sihedron Council. She then informs them that she has much more to discuss with them, but that she wants the other three members of the council to be present for that discussion. She invites the PCs to return to Heidmarch Manor the next morning for this meeting and promises to pay for their accommodations overnight at a comfortable but not ostentatious inn named the Gryphine. She charges Welben with arranging those accommodations before she excuses herself and dismisses the PCs, saying she looks forward to speaking with them again on the morrow. Welben is chagrined that the council is to pay for accommodations for the PCs at

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

the Gryphine; allow the party to enjoy the officious clerk's vexation while they wait in the entry hall for a carriage to transport them to the inn.

If the *Sword of Pride* has been stolen, Sheila is disappointed but doesn't blame the PCs. She still arranges for their overnight accommodations and asks them to return the next morning to meet with the council to discuss what happens next.

Development: *Baraket* is indeed safest in the Sihedron Council vault, and if the PCs turn the *Sword of Pride* over to Sheila, the weapon effectively exits the Return of the Runelords story. If the PCs refuse, Sheila nods in understanding and says that she can't force them to turn the weapon over, but that should they ever change their mind, she'll be ready to put *Baraket* into safekeeping. If the PCs do keep the sword, it should only be a matter of time before it wakens fully as Xanderghul regains more power. How this plays out, with the sword trying to exert its dominance over its wielder (assuming it's not suppressed via the *runewarded gauntlets*), is left to you to develop as you see fit.

Story Award: For securing a meeting with the Sihedron Council, award the PCs 1,600 XP. In addition, when they hand the *Sword of Pride* over to the council, whether now or at the end of the adventure, award them an additional 3,200 XP.

EVENT 11: HAUNTED REMNANTS (CR 5)

The site where Audrahni once intended to raise a statue of Saint Sazzleru has been left empty in the years since she engineered the statue's collapse. Today, the lot is empty save for a low mound of rubble at its center. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Diplomacy check to gather information turns up several rumors that the site is haunted (much to Audrahni's dismay), but none of the stories consistently describe how this haunt supposedly manifests. When the PCs visit the site with Audrahni, she seems more morose than normal, timid even. When the time comes, though, she takes a deep breath, steps up to the edge of the rubble, and, a tremor of nervousness in her voice, begins to pray to Ashava for the first time in many years.

Creature: A few moments after Audrahni begins to pray, her words have a startling result. The rubble is indeed haunted, but until her arrival the restless spirit of the ex-Skinsaw Cultist Ilsynor hadn't the focus to manifest directly. The murdered cultist does so now, rising up from the debris in the form of a humanoid shape composed of gusts of dust-laden wind and churning bits of bone. Ilsynor exists now as a deadly, ghostlike monster known as a choking shade (manifesting as a variant version of the monster known as a crushed shade), and he furiously attacks Audrahni.

Unless the PCs intervene, the ghost quickly kills the elf and then goes on to spawn more of its kind as its influence grows.

ILSYNOR

CR 5

XP 1,600

Crushed choking shade (see page 82)

hp 52

Development: Once Ilsynor's choking shade has been destroyed, Audrahni can move on with her ritual. If the PCs don't take part, she's able to finish the prayers after 10 minutes, giving herself a bit of peace of mind and achieving the first step toward regaining her lost faith.

As she prays, a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check recognizes the prayer she's performing as one that, traditionally, is spoken by several mourners to bless the site of a tragic accident. Worshipers of Ashava or Pharamasma gain a +10 bonus on this Knowledge (religion) check. If the PCs join Audrahni in prayer, she's surprised but thankful as she continues praying. If at least one PC succeeds at a second DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check (worshipers of Ashava or Pharamasma gain a +10 bonus on this check), the conviction bolsters Audrahni's faith and resolve, and as the prayer ends, Ashava takes note. A series of glowing motes of light dance up from the rubble, spiral around the field, and then swoop down to bathe Audrahni and the PCs in their soothing light. The PCs feel an overwhelming sensation of thanks and forgiveness as the lights glow bright, then fade away.

In the aftermath of this vision, the ruins become affected by a *hallow* spell with a *remove fear* effect tied to it (CL 20th). Additionally, each PC (as well as Audrahni) receives a blessing from Ashava: the next time the PC fails a saving throw against any spell or effect created by an incorporeal undead creature, the character momentarily glows with silver light and is treated as if she had succeeded at that saving throw instead. In addition, that character gains the benefit of a *sanctuary* spell (CL 20th) against the attacking undead creature. A character that ever willingly takes part in the creation of an undead creature loses Ashava's blessing.

If the PCs successfully aid in the prayer, Audrahni's path to recovering her faith is dramatically quickened, and she should be restored to full clerical strength by the time the PCs return to Magnimar in the next adventure.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully help Audrahni perform her ritual and gain a vision from Ashava, award them 1,600 XP.

EVENT 12: ROOMS AT THE GRYPHINE (CR 6)

The Gryphine, located in the northern reaches of Magnimar's Capital District, is an elegant, two-story

building of fitted limestone blocks, with artfully carved pillars supporting a long portico out front. The PCs have been given accommodations on the second floor consisting of a suite of two bedrooms (each containing one single bed and one larger bed) flanking a cozy parlor. The rooms are magnificent, with fine linens and plump quilts on the mahogany-framed beds, flawless Qadiran rugs, hand-painted floral wallpaper, and portraits of Magnimar notables by gifted artists. Fires already blaze in each of the fireplaces of all the suites' rooms, and the windows look down on dimly lit backstreets of the Capital District. A map of the suite appears on page 4.

A magnificent dinner fit for royalty is served in the parlor by uniformed servants. Once they finish their meal in the parlor, allow the PCs to settle into their fine accommodations, and perhaps appreciate the fawning service they receive from a staff accustomed to catering to the smallest needs of the pampered wealthy. This is an opportunity for the players to take stock of their journey thus far and speculate on what the council may have in store for them in the morning.

Trap: If Viralane escaped and is at large, the PCs have a reminder of her at the Gryphine. At some point before midnight, there is a loud, quick rap on one of the bedroom doors (determine at random). When a PC answers the door, they find the hallway beyond empty save for a pair of small packages sitting on the floor. Both packages are wrapped in red velvet. One is tied with a black bow, the other green. A folded note is attached to the package with the black bow. The note, written in a feminine hand but lacking a signature, reads as follows.

With admiration, a gift of sweet candy and a sweet smoke. Enjoy, new heroes of Varisia.

The package with the black bow contains a box of rare gourmet candied tropical fruits imported from Garund. The second contains what has the aroma of expensive, spice-scented Katapeshi tobacco coming from a long, thin mahogany cigar box. The candies are delicious. While the cigars are real, the container itself is trapped: when it is opened, a cloud of toxic gas is released.

TRAPPED CIGAR CASE **CR 6**

XP 2,400

Type magic; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** none

Effect When opened, the cigar case sprays a cloud of nightmare vapor into a 10-foot-radius spread.

Treasure: The candies are worth 10 gp, and the cigars are worth 150 gp.

Development: If the PCs alert the hotel staff to the incident with the trapped package, the night manager, a woman named **Camila Deseque** (LN female human expert 6), responds quickly. She is appalled by the occurrence and promises to investigate the matter. Interviews with her staff result in a report within the hour of a chambermaid who saw a lovely, red-haired woman carrying the packages through the lobby. If queried further, she describes the woman as wearing a cape with a peacock feather motif. If the PCs insist on speaking with the chambermaid and describe Viralane, the witness confirms that it is the same woman.

EVENT 13: LATE-NIGHT VISITOR (CR 7)

Viralane's visit isn't the only one the PCs are due from the cult of the Peacock Spirit.

As the night wraps up and the PCs head to bed, take note of where every PC retires to, what protective measures they take to guard themselves, and who remains awake and on watch—but try not to telegraph any potential for danger. The previous event should have already let the PCs know that they're not as safe in the Gryphine as they suspect.

Every window in the suite has a latch, but they are currently unlatched. It's up to the PCs to secure them (you can assume that if the players state something like "We're securing the room" that they don't forget the windows). Each window has panes of glass and wood shutters; once latched, a window can be opened from outside with a successful DC 25 Disable Device check. There are no locks on the interior doors, but the external doors to each room have locks that can be picked with a successful DC 30 Disable Device check.

Creature: The ploy with the trapped package was not the primary attempt on the PCs' lives by the Peacock Spirit, but rather a sort of opening salvo. Regardless of who currently has *Baraket*, the cult now views the PCs as a threat and sends an assassin mercenary to alleviate that threat. Of course, if the PCs still have possession of the *Sword of Pride*, the assassin has orders to liberate the blade in addition to murdering the PCs.

This assassin is a sinister, murderous bugbear named Dith-Ka, an unusual killer who trained as a ninja in Kalsgard with a group called the Frozen Shadows before leaving that guild to strike out on his own as a freelance killer. As part of his promise to whisper never a word of those who employ him, Dith-Ka cut out his own tongue. The symbolic act has ensured that those eager for a slaying that can't be traced back to them have kept the bugbear ninja employed throughout western Avistan.

DITH-KA **CR 5**

XP 1,600

Bugbear fighter 1/ninja 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 38, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 13)

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron Council

Part 3:
Under the Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the True Spark

Ecology of the Sinspawn

Bestiary

NE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+2 armor, +4 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 63 (7 HD; 6d8+1d10+31)

Fort +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk wakizashi +10 (1d6+3/18–20 plus bloodroot)

Ranged poisoned sand tube +9 (sassone leaf residue) or shuriken +9 (1d2+3 plus blue whinnis)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6



DITH-KA

TACTICS

Before Combat Dith-ka loads three doses of sassone leaf residue into his poisoned sand tube, applies blue whinnis to his five shuriken and a dose of bloodroot to his wakizashi, then drinks his *potion of spider climb*. He climbs up to a window to enter the suite, using Disable Device if the PCs latched the window (this also requires a Stealth check from the bugbear, opposed by the PCs within the suite, to avoid alerting the PCs to his presence).

During Combat If he gets into the PCs' suite undetected, Dith-ka attempts a coup de grace on a sleeping target, hoping to assassinate as many PCs as possible before they wake. Once the PCs are awake, Dith-ka stays mobile, using his ranged attacks to poison the PCs for several rounds (he saves his sand tube for the best chance to get at least two or more PCs in its area of effect). In melee, he uses his swift poison ability to reapply bloodroot to his wakizashi each round.

Morale Dith-ka fights until reduced to fewer than 20 hp, at which point he attempts to escape. If captured, he attempts to end his life with one of his most potent poisons rather than divulge his employers (in this case, the cult of the Peacock Spirit), but if forced to comply, he can reveal little more than what's contained in his note from Hira.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 18, **Con** 16, **Int** 13, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 22

Feats Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Toughness, Weapon Focus (wakizashi)

Skills Acrobatics +12, Climb +11, Disable Device +14, Disguise +9, Intimidate +4, Perception +7, Sense Motive +7, Stealth +15, Use Magic Device +8

Languages Common, Goblin, Varisian

SQ ki pool (1 point), ninja trick (swift poison^{APG}), no trace +1, poison use, stalker

Combat Gear *potion of spider climb*, bloodroot (3), blue whinnis (5), sassone leaf residue (6); **Other Gear** leather armor, mwk wakizashi^{UE}, poisoned sand tube^{UE}, shuriken (5), mwk thieves' tools, note from Hira Doss, 3 gp

Treasure: The note Dith-ka carries appears to be a list of the PCs' names written in Varisian in elegant handwriting. In fact, this note is from the woman who hired him, Hira Doss, and it has been obfuscated via a *secret page* placed by Hira's wand of the same. The word to reveal the note's actual contents is "Peacock." If revealed, the note is short and to the point, indicating where the PCs can be found in the Gryphine and that they may have been softened up by a "gift of special cigars." The note concludes with a promise for more work "once we return from our duties in the Forsaken Mezzanine."

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Knowledge (geography or local) check knows that the Forsaken Mezzanine is one of the many dungeon levels that lies hidden below Hollow Mountain.

EVENT 14: AUDIENCE WITH THE COUNCIL

A carriage comes to fetch the PCs after they enjoy a gourmet breakfast at The Gryphine, returning them to Heidmarch Manor and their audience with the Sihedron Council. When Sheila Heidmarch learns about the various attacks on the party, she's aghast that the Gryphine wasn't secure, while simultaneously becoming more resolved in her convictions that big events are unfolding and that the PCs are at the center of them. Before the council meeting occurs, Sheila offers to pay for healing for the party, including *raise dead* and *restoration* spells as needed (these spells are provided by the Church of Abadar and paid for by the Sihedron Council, but note that Sheila won't be able to offer this support going forward, as this is largely an apology to the PCs for not providing them with more secure accommodations).

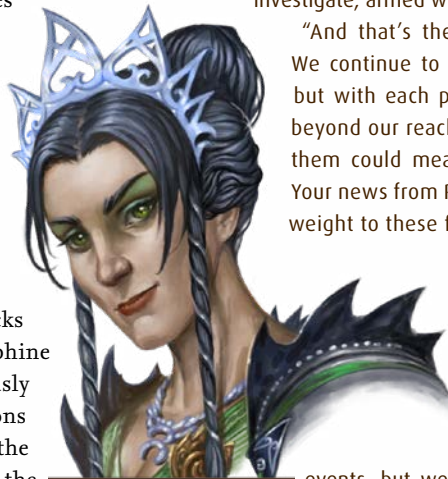
Once everything is sorted, the PCs find themselves once again in Heidmarch Manor's large reception room, but this time they are joined by the full collection of Sihedron Council members: elegant Sheila Heidmarch (the council's leader); Lord Mayor Haldmeer Grobaras, decked out in all his finery (representing Magnimar's government); Sabriyya Kalmeralm, a merchant of considerable influence in Magnimar (representing the city's businesspeople); and Koriah Azmeren, a renowned Pathfinder and adventurer herself (representing Magnimar's citizens). Sheila states that the attacks of the previous night confirm the seriousness of the growing threats to Varisia. Then she informs the PCs that what she's about to reveal to them must remain secret, both in order to prevent the spread of panic and to maintain any advantage the heroes can hold regarding an element of surprise.

"At the time the events you became embroiled with in Roderic's Cove were playing out, similar signs and omens came to our attention. The *Sihedron*, a potent Thassilonian artifact recently recovered and rebuilt by heroes to aid in Varisia's defense against the runelords, flared in power and alerted us that something monumental had taken place. At first we suspected that this was the result of a runelord waking, but there are others who believe the flare was the result of a runelord's death. In either case, we needed to

know more, and so we sent a group of heroes who had stood against the runelords before out under cover of secrecy to investigate, armed with the *Sihedron*.

"And that's the last we've heard from them. We continue to attempt to contact the heroes, but with each passing day I fear that they are beyond our reach, and that whatever fate befell them could mean peril for the rest of Varisia. Your news from Roderic's Cove only gives further weight to these fears.

"All signs point now to Hollow Mountain, and to the very likely development that Runelord Alaznist has awoken. We have other agents in the field throughout Varisia investigating these recent events, but we haven't sent anyone to Hollow Mountain yet. We have a proposition for you: we would like to deputize all of you as agents of the Sihedron Council. If this is not agreeable, you may leave this chamber with your rewards and perhaps offer prayers for our success contending with the great threat coming our way. But I hope you will accept. If you do, your first assignment would be a daunting one: sail to Rivenrake Island, enter Hollow Mountain, and investigate the situation within."



SHEILA HEIDMARCH

Sheila gives the PCs a few moments, letting her words sink in. The look of nervousness on the lord mayor's face and the empathetic grimace on Koriah Azmeren's speaks to Hollow Mountain's dreadful reputation. Assuming the PCs are up to the challenge, Sheila outlines two tasks in particular for the PCs to complete under Hollow Mountain. First, the PCs' description of the malfunctioning portal that Mozamer used to infiltrate Roderic's Cove is disturbing news to Sheila, and tracking down this portal in Hollow Mountain and shutting it down should be the PCs' first and foremost goal in Hollow Mountain. Second, as the PCs explore Hollow Mountain, they should keep an eye out for hints and clues as to Alaznist's plots and plans, and follow up on those clues as they appear.

At some point, if the PCs don't broach the topic themselves, Sabriyya Kalmeralm interrupts the discussion to point out that Hollow Mountain is a massive complex of twisting caverns and dungeons. How exactly, she asks, are the PCs going to find Mozamer's needle of a gateway in the mountain's proverbial haystack, even knowing that it's somewhere called the "Forges of Wrath"? Koriah Azmeren, who has so far been relatively silent during the meeting, speaks up.

"Kelhuud. A ranger named Kelhuud. He was part of a Pathfinder expedition to Hollow Mountain a few years ago.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

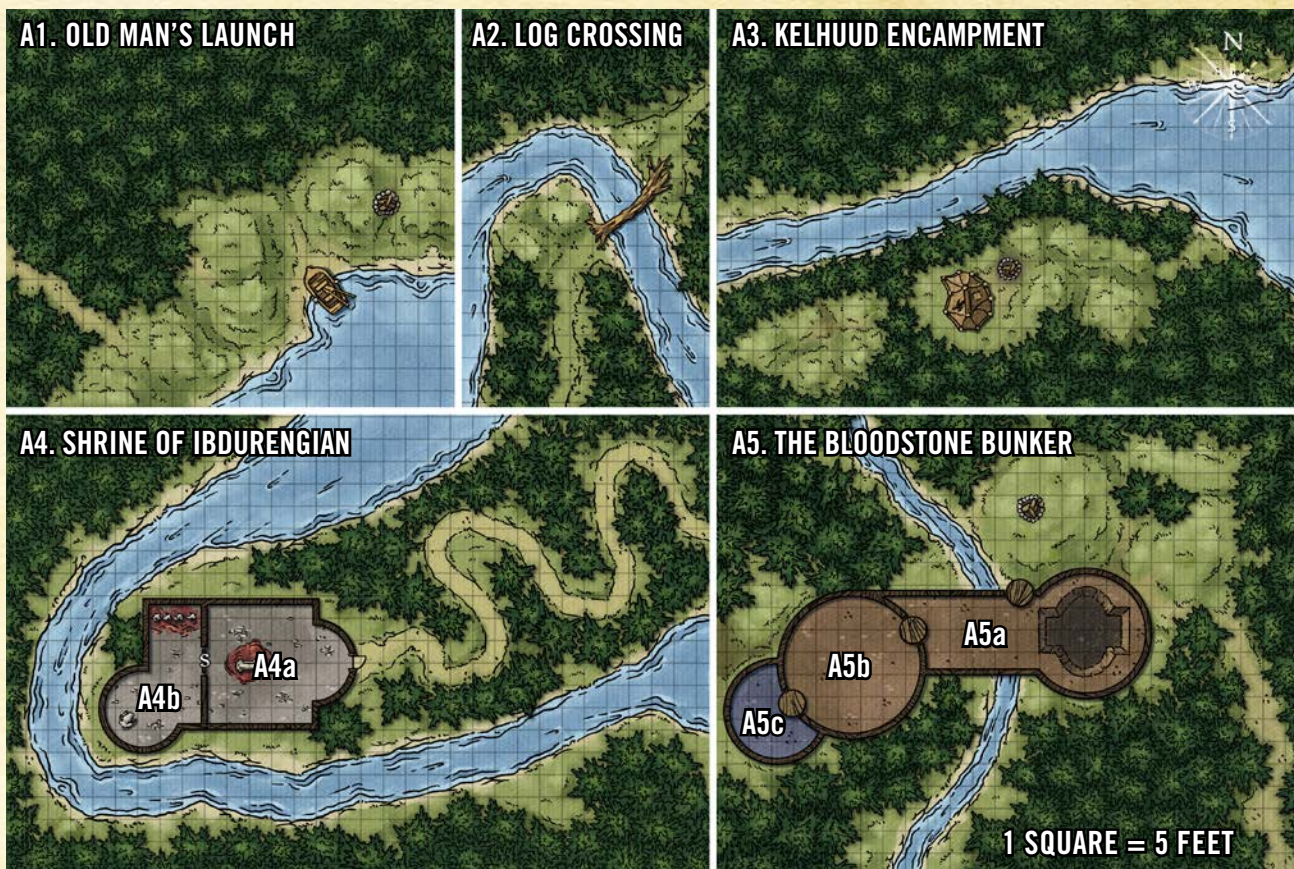
Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary



Half of his party died in the place, but when time came to return home, he refused—said he preferred to stay on the island. His companions thought he had lost his mind, but he couldn't be persuaded to join them in the boat. Since then, he's been seen in the wilderness of Rivenrake by at least half a dozen Pathfinder expeditions, and those who've been able to catch him in a lucid, cooperative mood have learned much about the various entrances to Hollow Mountain. If anyone knows what part of the complex would have been the most likely place for a creature like Mozamer to dwell in, Kelhuud would. Or at the very least, he'd know where to start looking."

Koriah goes on to explain that when a Pathfinder expedition wants to contact Kelhuud, they generally land on Rivenrake Island's southeast shoreline at a beach known as the "Old Man's Launch." The beach is said to be haunted by the titular old man and the fiendish hounds said to have devoured him alive, but Koriah is quick to point out that the Pathfinders have never encountered any truth to the rumors in their dozen or so trips to the beach. In order to contact Kelhuud, once the PCs arrive at the beach, they need only to light a smoky fire on the

beach to signal to the ex-Pathfinder that visitors are on the way. The Pathfinders have kept a trail blazed from the beach to his campsite, and while Koriah warns the PCs that they may well encounter some monstrous wildlife along the way, the trail itself is easy to follow. Once they reach Kelhuud's campsite, they should be respectful and calm, and if they find the man to be in one of his more uncooperative moods, simply retreat for a day and try to contact him on the morrow.

What none of the Pathfinders know is that Kelhuud is not merely suffering from a split personality. His entire physical being has been split, and not one but two of the man now dwell on the lower slopes of Rivenrake Island!

Treasure: Before the meeting adjourns, Sheila thanks the PCs again for delivering the *Sword of Pride*, and notes that such a task should not go unrewarded. She informs the PCs that each may claim an item from the council's significant treasure vaults as their personal reward. In game terms, you should work with each player to determine a magic item reward of approximately 20,000 gp in value. The simplest solution is to just allow your players to pick an item from *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment*, but feel free to truncate that "shopping list"

as best fits your table. If you know your players and their characters well, you can even present each a custom item of approximately 20,000 gp in value, or perhaps generate a short list of appropriate items tailored to the PCs for them to pick and choose from.

PART 3: UNDER THE MOUNTAIN'S GAZE

Transportation to Rivenrake Island is normally difficult for groups who don't captain their own vessel, as few ships are willing to make the journey to the notorious isle, but Lady Heidmarch suggests the PCs broach the subject with Captain Sursha, offering to pay twice the typical rate for the journey from the Sihedron Council's coffers. If Captain Sursha turns them down, Sheila says, other methods can be investigated—but as things play out, Sursha is more than willing to take the Sihedron Council's coin and help out her newest friends.

When the PCs ask her, she snickers a bit, saying, "I'm not surprised you want me to sail up there, considering what I've heard from other sailors over the past few days." She goes on to explain how Magnimar's waterfront has been abuzz lately with stories that not one but two ships were chartered by separate groups to travel to Rivenrake in the last several days, and *Tyalee's Whim* will be the third. Sursha can tell the PCs that the first of the other two ships was the *Lordim Racer*, a Magnimarian merchant-transport similar to *Tyalee's Whim*, hired by a group of brutish-looking thugs for passage to the same location the PCs seek: Old Man's Launch. The second was *Frijaya*, hired by a smaller group of "well-dressed fops" who paid well on a larger ship bound for Kalsgard in the Land of the Linnorm Kings to sail close enough to Rivenrake for the trio to disembark on their own magical *folding boat*. Little is known about this second group or their intended landing spot on Rivenrake (and the *Frijaya* is, assumedly, well on her way north to Kalsgard by now), but the *Lordim Racer* returned to Magnimar a day ago with the crew recounting a harrowing tale of having put their six passengers ashore on a longboat only to then watch in horror as the passengers murdered the two sailors who had transported them. The *Lordim Racer's* captain made the decision to abandon the bodies and skiff to Rivenrake after it became apparent her crew

would have mutinied if she'd forced any of them to shore on the notorious island. The *Lordim Racer* didn't remain in Magnimar for long, and it left just this morning on a journey to Korvosa, but it sounds like the group they'd transported were cultists of some sort who had planned the murders all along.

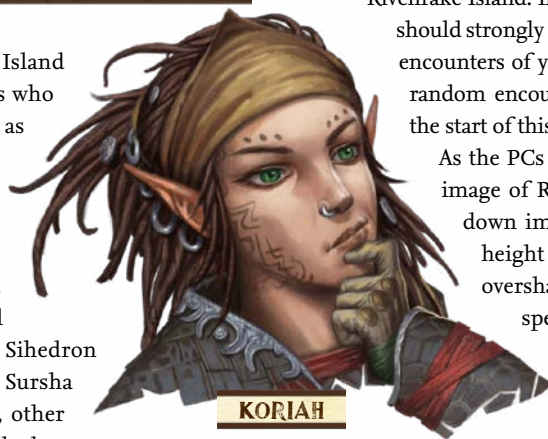
Unlike the journey from Roderic's Cove to Magnimar, there are no scripted events or encounters to vex and endanger *Tyalee's Whim* on its 4-day trip from Magnimar to Rivenrake Island. If the PCs aren't yet 6th level, you should strongly consider adding some additional encounters of your own design, or roll up a few random encounters on the table presented at the start of this volume's bestiary on page 81.

As the PCs approach Rivenrake Island, the image of Runelord Alaznist's face peering down imperiously from the mountain's height is impossible to ignore, overshadowing the otherwise amazing spectacle of the northernmost reaches of the ancient bridge known as the Irespan where it extends from the mountain's middle slope. The mountain's

lower slopes are dotted with woodlands and craggy hills, peppered here and there with ancient ruins of what was once Alaznist's capital city, Xin-Bakrakhan.

The PCs' goal is a point on the southern coast of Rivenrake, a narrow stretch of sandy beach known locally as "Old Man's Launch" after rumors of the site being haunted by an old hermit who decided to make his home on the island, only to be torn apart by a pack of fiendish hounds. *Tyalee's Whim* can't approach more than half a mile from the shore, and Captain Sursha agrees to anchor there and wait for the PCs' return, allowing them free use of the ship's longboat to come and go. If the PCs wish to make multiple trips between Magnimar and Rivenrake between expeditions, Sursha is more than willing to sail back and forth. She makes money on each trip, after all, and at no expense to the PCs.

The dense woodlands of Hollow Mountain's lower slopes are hostile and unwelcoming, crisscrossed by trails and streams. No overland map of Hollow Mountain is provided, as this adventure assumes the PCs have trails or guides to follow from encounter to encounter, but on a tactical scale the difference between traveling the open clearings and undergrowth is significant. All areas of undergrowth are treated as difficult terrain. The nameless river the PCs likely follow inland is a narrow but deep body of water. With steep banks, the average depth of this river is 30 feet, but swimming the relatively calm current requires only a successful DC 10 Swim check.



KORIAH

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

EVENT 15: SOMEONE IS WATCHING

At this point in the campaign, the PCs' actions have attracted the attention of none other than Runelord Sorshen herself. Sorshen has been biding her time quietly, watching, waiting, and learning from the other runelords' mistakes. She wants to emerge, in time, as ruler of New Thassilon, but not as a tyrant—she knows that in order to exist in this new era, she must find a way to cooperate with the “new nations” rather than follow the failures of Karzoug and invite heroes to defeat her.

Sorshen held her post as Runelord of Lust for Thassilon's entirety not because she confronted her enemies, but because she was cautious and used proxies and agents to solve her problems. Her tactics today are no different, and after watching via various divination spells, she has identified the PCs as potential agents.

At some point as the PCs first begin to explore Rivenrake or the dungeons of Hollow Mountain, Sorshen begins to observe them via castings of *greater scrying* (Will DC 32 negates). She has secondhand knowledge of the PCs, so whomever she targets with the spell gains a +5 bonus on the Will save to resist being spied upon. Sorshen prepares three *greater scrying* spells each day while she's spying in this manner; when she casts the spell, don't indicate to the players why they're making Will saves—let them wonder and worry. As always, a character who thinks to look for the source of the feeling of being watched can notice the scrying sensor this spell creates with a successful DC 27 Perception check.

Note that if one of the PCs has the Accidental Clone campaign trait (see the *Return of the Runelords Player's Guide*), Sorshen targets that character for scrying. In this case, the target takes a –10 penalty on the Will save due to the link between her body and Sorshen's.

In time, Sorshen reaches out to contact the PCs directly; see **Event 16** below.

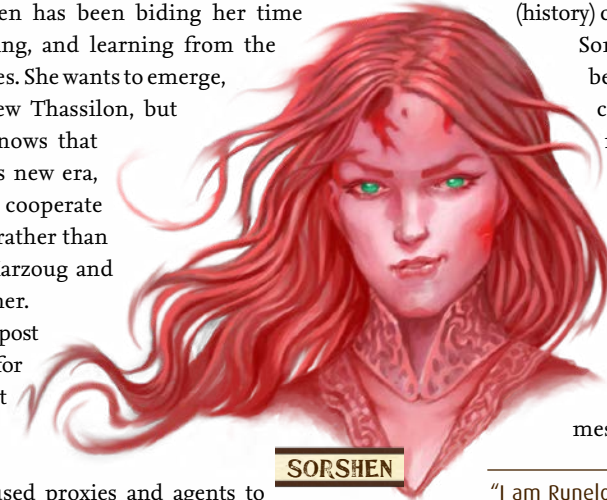
Story Award: If the PCs realize they're being watched and take efforts to defend against scrying, grant them 2,400 XP.

EVENT 16: A DREAM OF SORSHEN

At some point when the PCs sleep, preferably before they've explored much of Hollow Mountain but after Sorshen has managed to spy on them at least once via *greater scrying*, the runelord contacts the party via a *dream council* spell. All of the sleeping PCs experience the same vivid dream, in which they seem to wake from wherever it is they've bedded down

for the night to find a visitor to their campsite: a radiantly beautiful woman who can be recognized as Runelord Sorshen with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (history) check.

Sorshen's use of *dream council* has been augmented such that she can deliver a single 125-word message to the entire group of PCs, along with a single image to help guide them to their final goal in this adventure. She's not interested in replies, and once the message is sent, she ends the contact, confident the PCs will make the right choices based on her message to them.



SORSHEN

“I am Runelord Sorshen, but I am not your foe.

Alaznist has risen, as you fear, and we will both benefit from her defeat. She has left Hollow Mountain to seek power elsewhere, and as she does, you must prepare. I have been watching. You seem heroes who might stand against her, but not without assistance. Seek out old Thybidos, Alaznist's murdered predecessor, in the Forlorn Sepulchers beyond the weeping dragons. With an Abyssal runestone from the Gauntlet of Fury, his unquiet spirit can be compelled to aid you—yet perhaps not without some conflict. But exercise caution, for even humbled as he is today, the serpent still has teeth. When you are done with him, seek me in Korvosa. We have more to discuss!”

Along with this message, each dreaming PC has a vision of a partially collapsed stone archway carved in the shape of two weeping dragons, their necks raised up so their horned heads lock together. The archway is overgrown with foliage, but a cave entrance is visible within. As the PCs wake, each can feel that this archway exists nearby on the lower slopes of Rivenrake Island, and in following this urge implanted by the dream, they can arrive at the location with ease.

A1. OLD MAN'S LAUNCH

The PCs should note well before they land that theirs is not the first longboat to arrive at Old Man's Launch. A skiff is already pulled up on the shore, bearing a slumped pair of week-old, rotting human corpses, their eyes and mouth wide in horror, red gashes across their throats. A large fire pit sits near the high-tide mark a few dozen feet from the skiff. To the west of the skiff, the thick wall of vegetation gives way to a 5-foot-wide footpath that winds up the island's steep slopes into the heavily forested interior.

IT CAME
FROM HOLLOW
MOUNTAINPart 1:
Sailing the
Lost CoastPart 2:
The Sihedron
CouncilPart 3:
Under the
Mountain's GazePart 4:
The World
Is HollowNPC
GalleryAshava, the
True SparkEcology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary



The fire pit is what the Pathfinders have used before to signal Kelhuud of their approach. The PCs can use it to build a smoky fire or they can simply build a fire elsewhere on the beach, as they prefer. If they don't send up this smoke signal (or create a similar effect, via magic, for example), Kelhuud considers them enemies as they approach; see area A3 for more details.

A search of the two bodies reveals that both seem to have been human sailors, and that each corpse has been looted of valuables. These two men once served on the *Lordim Racer*. That ship's captain accepted the task of transporting a group of five ruffians to Rivenrake, led by a shaggy-bearded, black-haired man the others addressed as "Maga." These two sailors drew the short straw and rowed the party ashore, whereupon Maga insisted that they remain on the beach and wait for their return, "in a day or two." When the sailors balked at this, suggesting they return with the longboat to *Lordim Racer* to wait in relative safety there, Maga flew into a rage and attacked. He and his ruffians murdered the two sailors, then headed into the forest interior as the rest of the *Lordim Racer's* crew looked on in horror. Rather than set foot on the island that had already claimed two of her crew, the captain instead abandoned Rivenrake and is now well on the way to Korvosa.

Should the PCs employ *speak with dead* or similar magic, they can learn most of this information. The two sailors were named Harkem Duly and Poca Hullins.

A2. LOG CROSSING (CR 7)

The trail from Old Man's Crossing winds up into the woods of Rivenrake, switching back several times as it climbs a steep slope. After a 10-minute hike, the sound of a river becomes audible, and soon thereafter the PCs emerge into a clearing where a 10-foot-wide river flows through a ravine. The river and ravine are bridged by a fallen tree, and the trail continues deeper into the woods on the opposite side.

The log is firmly in place and provides a safe bridge over the waters below, provided characters don't move faster than one move action per round on the log. Any faster movement (including combat) on the log requires the moving character to attempt a DC 10 Acrobatics check to avoid falling prone. If a PC fails this check by 5 or more, the character falls off the log into the 20-foot-deep ravine and into the river below.

Creatures: A pair of enormous mosquito-like monsters known as blightspawn have taken up residence in this area, clinging tenaciously to the underside of the log.

They attack anyone who attempts to cross the log, waiting until a PC is halfway to the other side before flying up to attack.

BLIGHTSPAWN (2)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

hp 52 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5 43*)

Development: The trail to the south leads back to Old Man's Launch, while to the north it winds deeper into the woods for another half-mile before reaching a T-junction going east and west. Those who follow the trail to the east eventually reach area **A3**, while those who take the western path soon come to area **A4**. If the PCs sent Kelhuud a smoke signal, he's left a trail marker in the form of a set of stones forming an arrow on the path pointing east; otherwise, the PCs need to choose their path.

Characters who opt to follow the river reach either a 30-foot waterfall plummeting into the ocean if they travel downstream to the southwest, or eventually the far side of Kelhuud's camp if they travel upstream to the east.

A3. KELHUUD ENCAMPMENT (CR 9)

If the PCs followed the path east from area **A2**, they come to what at first appears as a dead-end clearing. A successful DC 20 Perception check is enough to note that a section of vegetation along the clearing's northeastern side is in fact a clever blind that can be moved aside to allow access to a second, much larger clearing further to the east. This second clearing is the camp of Kelhuud, a man the PCs may shortly discover is in fact two people.

Creatures: When Kelhuud first came to Rivenrake as a Pathfinder, he encountered a malfunctioning portal deep within Hollow Mountain that, when he attempted to use it, split him into two identical persons. While the two Kelhuuds maintained a mental link, they were different people with different personalities—one friendly and one misanthropic. The friendly one remained on one side of the portal while the other manifested on the far side. While they knew and instantly accepted their new roles, the Kelhuuds also feared that the other Pathfinders wouldn't understand their new dualistic nature.

When it came time to leave Rivenrake, the friendlier Kelhuud opted to remain behind on the island, unwilling to abandon his "brother," who had no desire to return to civilization. The others in his group tried their best to change his mind, but eventually they gave up and left him here to his own devices before arranging a system—if they were to return, they would light a smoky fire on a nearby beach to give Kelhuud time to prepare for visitors.

Since then, the Kelhuuds have dwelt here in the forests of Rivenrake, making occasional forays into various ruins on the mountain's slopes or into the dungeons below.

Neither Kelhuud is the "original." When they speak of the other, both Kelhuuds employ the pronoun "I" without regard to their physical separateness or the general weirdness of their existence. Of the two, the misanthropic Kelhuud employs single-word answers whenever possible (if he speaks at all), preferring gestures, grunts, or other sub-verbal responses. If asked why they stayed on Rivenrake, Kelhuud states simply: "I preferred it here."

If the PCs arrive without signaling, the Kelhuuds' response depends on if they notice the PCs' approach first. If they do, events play out more or less as if the PCs were expected (although in this case, the friendlier Kelhuud starts with an indifferent attitude rather than friendly). If the PCs surprise the Kelhuuds, they are confronted by both. In this case, the Kelhuuds are both ready with their bows and have a starting attitude of unfriendly.

If the PCs have signaled via smoke of their approach, the friendlier of the two Kelhuuds awaits them in the smaller clearing, leaning against a tree trunk near the entrance to the larger camp but with his sword drawn, just in case. His starting attitude is friendly, but he remains wary. As the PCs step into view, he warns them, "I have an arrow nocked and you are in my sights, friends. I ask that you not take one step closer or I'll be forced to place my arrow dangerously close to your heart. What is it you wish from me?"

This may confuse the PCs, as he plainly does not have an arrow ready in his bow, but is on the ground holding a drawn blade. If the PCs make any mention of this, he responds quite simply: "I am watching from above, and I assure you I am an excellent shot." Of course, Kelhuud is referring to his twin, who indeed sits amid the branches on the southeastern side of the clearing, ready to fire if he interprets the PCs as threats.

Assuming the PCs are respectful and calm, Kelhuud nods and allows the PCs to present their case. His counterpart prefers to remain hidden, but if a PC notices him hiding in the trees or demands an explanation, the surly second makes an appearance. The Kelhuuds are no strangers to providing advice to other Pathfinders who've come to Rivenrake over the past few years, and even though the PCs aren't members of the society, the Kelhuuds treat them as such, recognizing the adventurer's mind-set in the PCs.

As long as one of the Kelhuuds is at least friendly, he confirms the PCs' fears that activity on and under Hollow Mountain has increased of late. Likely questions and Kelhuud's answers are given below.

Where is the closest entrance to the Forges of Wrath? Kelhuud thinks for a moment, then mentions that he believes these forges are a sub-level of a region in Hollow Mountain known as the "Baleful Repository," a complex that Alaznist once used to store weapons and armor.

While there are multiple entrances into the Baleful Repository from within the mountain itself, the most direct entrance would be from a long-abandoned armory known as the Bloodstone Bunker, located a 10-mile trek from the Kelhuuds' campsite, up the mountain's northeastern slope. Following these directions brings the PCs to area A5.

Do you know whose bodies are down on Old Man's Launch? The man shakes his head, noting that they were no friends of his. He saw their ship approach a week ago, and watched from a tall tree as they debarked just over a half dozen. They seemed to get in an argument, and then the half dozen slaughtered the two sailors before setting off into the forests. Kelhuud followed them for a time, and he can describe their leader as a "mutated monster with a tentacle for a back—he'll fit right in here on the isle." If the PCs have asked about the Forges of Wrath, Kelhuud notes with concern that this man and his barbaric traveling companions were headed toward the Bloodstone Bunker when he decided it was best not to follow a group of murderers led by a monster so far from the safety of his base camp.

Where is the closest entrance to the Forsaken Mezzanine/The Gauntlet of Fury? Kelhuud has heard about both of these levels of the dungeons but does not know of any entrances to them.

Have there been any other visitors to the region lately? Kelhuud mentions the incident detailed in the question above, but he also noticed a trio of "fancy folk" had recently arrived by means unknown to him. He first noticed smoke from their campfire while he was out hunting a few days ago, and upon investigating saw the three camped not far to the west out in front of an "old shrine to some sort of fish-person monster." He assumes the three were adventurers seeking treasure based on their appearances: a human man with a scimitar and clad in a shiny, bright-blue breastplate, a half-elf woman who carried a lucerne hammer and wore a dress that looked like it was made of peacock feathers, and a human woman with red hair and a fancy leather outfit that looked like it was taken right out of some overwrought opera. If the PCs provide Kelhuud with a description of Viralane Barvisai, he agrees that it was likely her. He hasn't seen them aboveground since then and assumes they entered Hollow Mountain via the shrine, but he has never entered that structure, so he can't be sure. For all he knows, the three adventurers are still inside, or maybe even dead.

Will you accompany us into Hollow Mountain? Kelhuud shakes his head, saying, "I have learned to pick and choose my journeys into the mountain, and now is not a good time for me to do so."

How are there two of you? This question or others like it confuse and frustrate Kelhuud. His answer is likely to

do the same to the PCs: "There is but one of me. That you perceive two of me is none of my concern."

Can we use your campsite as a base of operations? Only if Kelhuud is made helpful will he allow the PCs to share his campsite, but in this case he shares his food and supplies and takes the burden of keeping watch.

KELHUUDS (2) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

Human ranger 8

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2 (+4 forest); **Senses** Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 shield)

hp 80 each (8d10+32)

Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities coexistence

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee +1 *shock longsword* +10/+5 (1d8+3/19–20 plus 1d6 electricity), shield bash +8 (1d3+1)

Ranged longbow +10/+5 (1d8/×3)

Special Attacks combat style (weapon and shield^{APG}), favored enemies (animals +2, evil outsiders +4)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 5th; concentration +7)

2nd—*barkskin*, *cure light wounds*

1st—*entangle* (DC 13), *resist energy*

TACTICS

During Combat Both Kelhuuds cast *barkskin* on the first round of combat. They save *entangle* to cover their retreat and slow pursuit if needed. Otherwise the two focus their attacks on a single foe at a time, one Kelhuud in melee and one at range. If the Kelhuud in melee drops below 40 hit points, they switch positions if possible.

Morale If either Kelhuud drops below 15 hit points, both flee by leaping into the river and swimming for safety on the far shore, hoping to vanish into the forest.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23

Feats Dodge, Endurance, Improved Shield Bash, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Shield Focus, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Climb +8, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (nature) +7, Perception +13 (+4 in forests), Stealth +8 (+4 in forests), Survival +13 (+4 in forests), Swim +8

Languages Common

SQ favored terrains (forest +4, mountains +2), hunter's bond (companions), swift tracker, track +4, wild empathy +7, woodland stride

Gear breastplate, light wooden shield, +1 *shock longsword*, longbow with 20 arrows

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Coexistence (Su) While the two Kelhuuds are physically separate, mentally they are the same person. They can communicate with one another telepathically to a range of 1,000 feet and gain a +3 bonus on saving throws against mind-affecting effects. If one is subjected to a mind-affecting effect, it affects the other automatically. Whenever the two are more than 1,000 feet apart, they both become shaken. As a result, the Kelhuuds do not willingly put this distance between them.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to secure Kelhuud's assistance, award them 3,200 XP. If they manage to make him helpful and earn permission to use his campsite, increase this award to 6,400 XP.

**A4. SHRINE OF IBDURENGIAN**

This location can be reached by following the western path from the T-junction at area **A2** for just over a mile up the mountainside. The PCs could arrive here simply as they explore, or they might investigate this location after they hear about the three visitors to the shrine from Kelhuud. They may even enter the shrine from below after being transported to the underground complex from the Forges of Wrath.

The winding forest path ends in a small clearing before a structure made of pitted, dull yellow stone. A disk of deep-red stone sits beneath an open archway, through which area **A4a** can be observed. The building's facade is weathered and pitted, but images of sea monsters carved into the stone can still be made out, particularly a recurring image of a demonic merfolk with the lower body of a spiny eel. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check identifies this as an obscure demon lord named Ibdurengian who was slain by Aroden in the early years of the Age of Entrenchment.

The remains of a campsite fill the clearing just before the entrance to the yellow stone building. With a successful DC 15 Survival check, a PC confirms that three people were camped here only a few days prior.

A4a. Bloodstained Altar (CR 7)

An oppressive pall hangs over this chamber. Aquatic demons and sea monsters stalk the scenes carved into the stony walls, the fiends eviscerating one another with expressions that can be described only as gleeful. A mosaic depicting a six-headed snake decorates the floor, its coiling tail cut off by the western wall. At the midsection of the serpent's body stands what could only be a sacrificial altar, copious amounts of blood staining it and the floor around it. What appear to be runes are carved atop the altar, but the dried blood obscures their details.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Knowledge (history) check identifies the coiled hydra as the symbol of Runelord Thybidos, ruler of Bakrakan until Alaznist murdered him and claimed the title. The secret door in the west wall can be discovered with a successful DC 30 Perception check from this room, but it is obvious when viewed from area **A4b**.

Trap: The "gore" that coats the altar and stains the floor around it appears to be tacky, partially dried blood, but it is in fact a poisonous excretion known as "scarlet bliss" that is often exuded from altars of the demon lord Ibdurengian. Although Ibdurengian has been dead for many centuries, the poison

excreted from this altar has remained potent through all those years. When a living creature comes into contact with the scarlet bliss, the stuff slithers eerily to life, climbing swiftly up boots or along prodding implements in search of flesh, making a single touch attack against every available target each round until no targets are present or the trap is disabled. A single dose of holy water clears a 5-foot square of scarlet bliss (enough to clear the entire altar) without ill effect. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check recognizes the scarlet bliss for what it is, and knows that holy water can easily clean it away. The excretion is thick and sticky, and without holy water it takes 1d6 rounds of work to wipe or wash a section away. A spell effect capable of creating water or fire, or any other effect that cleans a surface, automatically cleans all scarlet bliss away in the spell's area of effect, but only if the spell is at least 4th level.

SCARLET BLISS**CR 7****XP 3,200**

Type magic; **Perception** DC 15; **Disable Device** DC 28 (or application of holy water)

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** automatic

Effect Atk +10 melee touch (scarlet bliss toxin), multiple targets

Scarlet bliss toxin—contact; *save* Fort DC 18; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1 Charisma damage and confused 1 round; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Development: If the scarlet bliss is cleared from the altar, anyone capable of reading Thassilonian can read the runes carved on the surface: “Those who seek the heart of the Lord of the Scarlet Tide need but to walk the serpent’s path.” (This is a hint as to the location of the secret door to area **A4b**.)

A4b. Forsaken Doorstep (CR 7)

The floor of this room is decorated with a mosaic of a serpentine tail curling to the southwest, as if pointing toward a domed alcove of rough-hewn stone made to appear like a cave. Sitting in the alcove is a repugnant idol of an eel-bodied demonic merfolk. To the north stands a quartet of squat sculptures of bloated sea monsters, all with disturbingly humanoid faces, each adorned with red gemstone eyes. What appear to be gobs of bloody gore cover these smaller idols and spatters the floor below.

When the cultists of the Peacock Spirit passed through these rooms, their fastidiousness inadvertently saved their lives: by avoiding the gore-spattered statues

to the north and focusing on the statue of Ibdurengian to the south, they bypassed this room’s guardian. A character who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notes fresh scrapes in the dust on the floor north of the demonic statue, revealing that the statue itself sits on a counterbalance. If it is pushed north, a flight of stairs leading downward is revealed in the hollow space below. These stairs lead down to area **C1**. Handholds on the underside of the statue allow it to be pushed aside from below without requiring a Perception check.

Creature: As in the previous chamber, the fluid that appears to be blood and gore is in fact the supernatural influence of the long-dead demon lord. In this case, the gore is a semidormant guardian creature known as the breath of Ibdurengian. Originally, this blood-red fiendish roiling oil attacked any creature that didn’t enter with the proper prayers to its master, but over the centuries it has retreated to the north. Today, it only rouses from its torpor if a creature approaches within 5 feet of the northern statues. If roused, the fiendish roiling oil fights to the death, pursuing foes relentlessly.

BREATH OF IBDURENGIAN**CR 7****XP 3,200**

Fiendish roiling oil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 288, 210)

hp 103

Treasure: The gemstones in the four statues are expertly carved orange-red garnets worth 500 gp apiece. They are easily pried from the repugnant idols once the threat from the north is neutralized.

A5. THE BLOODSTONE BUNKER (CR 6)

This location can be reached by following Kelhuud’s directions. The trek to this site is a 10-mile journey that begins from a clearing on the opposite side of the river from the main campsite in area **A3**. As the PCs draw near the large clearing on Hollow Mountain’s northeastern slope, they smell the tang of a burning campfire and see a plume of smoke rising, a warning that the location is already occupied. Allow the PCs to attempt a DC 15 Perception check as they approach to hear the sound of combat and cries of pain and excitement.

In the clearing, a large stone structure stands against the woods, a narrow creek flowing languidly under its center. Streaks of red run through the stone, giving the building the appearance of being partially drenched in blood. Two domes adorn the ends of the complex, connected by a vine-overgrown central structure. The building has no apparent points of entry, although the vines across a strangely dark pillar of stone on the building’s north face have been recently hacked away, leaving the dark stone exposed.

**IT CAME
FROM HOLLOW
MOUNTAIN**

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain’s Gaze

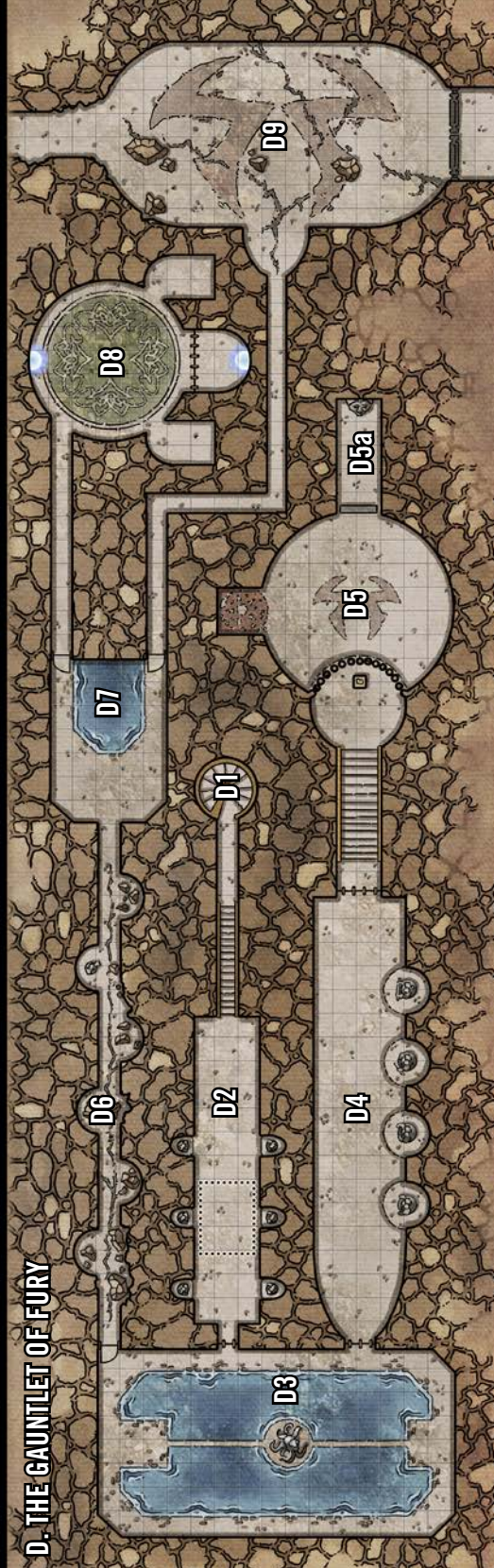
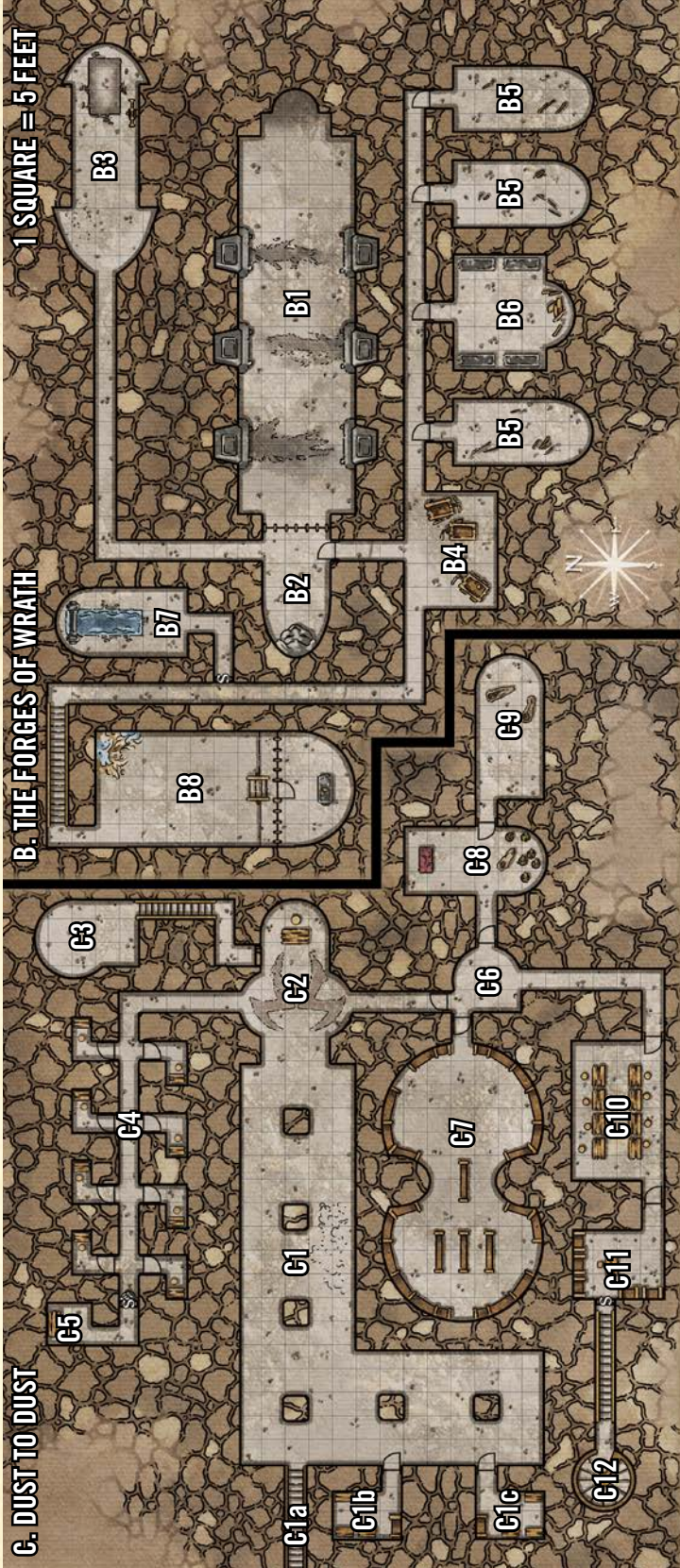
Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary



IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron Council

Part 3:
Under the Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the True Spark

Ecology of the Sinspawn

Bestiary

The creek that flows under the structure is only 5 feet deep, but though it drains through a narrow tunnel below the building's foundation, it provides no entrance into the building.

The surface of the dark brown pillar is gouged and marred—the result of the cultists' reckless clearing of tenacious vines that clung to the stone. The pillar itself is in fact a magical door that can be commanded to open (which sinks into the ground) by placing a hand on the pillar and speaking the following phrase in Thassilonian: "Open for the glory of Alaznist." Alternately, a PC can cause the pillar to lower with a successful DC 25 Use Magic Device check. Once lowered, the pillar remains in that configuration until commanded to rise again and reseal the entrance this time with the phrase "Close for the glory of Alaznist", but it also rises automatically after 10 minutes. A creature or object standing on the pillar when it rises is crushed against the ceiling at the end of the round, taking 6d6 points of bludgeoning damage and becoming pinned there until it escapes with a successful DC 25 Escape Artist or combat maneuver check to break a grapple.

If the PCs fail to use the correct command phrase or a successful Use Magic Device check, enough damage can smash the pillar to rubble (hardness 8, hp 120). There are two identical stone pillar doors within the structure itself, and they operate in the same manner.

Creatures: A small group of Yamasoth cultists has made this area their campsite. The leader of this group is a man twisted both in body and soul named Maga Szuul. Accompanying him to Rivenrake were five barbaric cultists assigned to him as muscle and protection. He took two of them into the Gauntlet of Fury (where he is now trapped after a failed attempt to retrieve an item called an *Abyssal runestone* for his leader; see area **D8**), leaving three here to hold the base camp and prevent anyone from following him into the dungeons below. These three cultists have been spending their time sparring with each other, as fighting never gets old for them. They howl in fury when they spot the PCs and attack at once.



YAMASOTH CULTIST

YAMASOTH CULTISTS (3) CR 3

XP 800 each

Human barbarian 4

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** scent; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (+5 armor, +2 Dex, -2 rage)

hp 51 each (4d12+20)

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities trap sense +1, uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft. (30 ft. in armor)

Melee mwk longsword +11 (1d8+7/19-20)

Special Attacks rage (12 rounds/day), rage powers (knockback, scent)

TACTICS

During Combat The cultists rage at the start of combat (their statistics include adjustments for this), and favor spellcasters as targets. If a cultist is reduced to 20 hit points, he drinks a *potion of cure light wounds*, and they use their *potions of lesser restoration* to counteract fatigue if needed.

Morale The cultists fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 14, **Con** 19, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

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

Feats Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Climb +10, Intimidate +11, Perception +8, Survival +8, Swim +10

Languages Common

SQ fast movement

Combat Gear *potions of cure light wounds* (3), *potions of lesser restoration* (2), alchemist's fire (3);

Other Gear +1 *hide armor*, mwk longsword

Treasure: One of the cultists carries a scrap of paper with the Thassilonian phrase "Open for the glory of Alaznist" written on it. This reminds them of the passcode should they need to open the door to area **A5a**, but since none of the barbarians speak Thassilonian, the phrase is written phonetically in Common.

A5a. Forge Entrance

The ceiling of this chamber is fifteen feet high in the center, rising to a height of thirty feet under a domed roof to the east. The walls are adorned with elaborate frescos depicting a scene of horror: crab-like figures with multiple arms ritually sacrifice dozens of humans in cruelly imaginative ways, all presided over by what appears to be a tentacled sun looking down upon them from above. A dark stone pillar stands in the western wall, while to the east, the floor under the dome yawns open in a wide pit.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Knowledge (planes) check recognizes the crab-like creatures as gongorinan qliphoth and the tentacled sun as a representation of their master, Yamasoth.

The pit to the east once held a stairwell that descended to the Forges of Wrath, but the wooden stairs have mostly collapsed, resulting in a 100-foot-deep shaft, its walls lined with jutting pieces of wood and stone. A set of ropes have been tied to one stone anchor, forming the route that Maga Szuul and his two barbarians used to descend into the Forges of Wrath. Using the ropes to navigate the shaft down to area B1 requires a successful DC 5 Climb check; attempting to do so without the ropes requires a successful DC 20 Climb check.

A5b. Armory (CR 6)

The floor of this circular room is stained dark red in places, while the walls are decorated with collapsed weapon racks and ruined shelves. Nothing valuable remains.

Trap: The weapons once kept here have been looted long ago, but the chamber's trap continues to function, ready to trigger soon after anyone enters the room. Originally, the trap would summon an overwhelming number of grimslakes from the Abyss to attack and feed on intruders, but time has seen the trap degrade so that it only summons a single monster at a time and takes 24 hours to reset.

GRIMSLAKE SUMMONING TRAP CR 6

XP 2,400

Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity; Reset automatic (after 24 hours)

Effect spell effect (a single grimslake is summoned, as if via *summon monster V*; CL 20th)

GRIMSLAKE

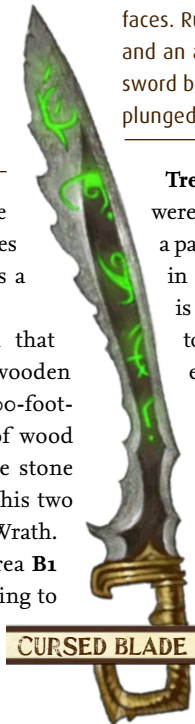
Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5 136

hp 68

A5c. Sacrificial Storage

The polished marble floor of this half-moon chamber is a rich blue hue, though ancient bloodstains discolor much of it. The walls are carved with bas-reliefs depicting naked human figures slitting their own throats, blissful smiles on their faces. Rusty iron manacles hang from chains along the walls and an ancient skeleton lies slumped to the south, a curved sword blade lodged in its ribs as if the long-dead person had plunged the blade into their own chest.

Treasure: Prisoners, slaves, and other unfortunates were once kept here for periodic use as sacrifices when a particularly potent magical weapon was being crafted in the Forges of Wrath below. The ancient skeleton is the remains of one of the forge keepers who took his own life as Earthfall began its destructive end of Thassilon. The bones crumble to dust if disturbed, but the +2 *cruel^{UE} falcata* itself remains fully functional but cursed from its final suicidal use. When a creature attacks with the falcata while he is wounded, he must succeed at a DC 20 Will save to resist using the weapon to attack himself. If he fails the saving throw, he hits automatically but must still roll to determine if the attack is a critical hit. On a successful save, the creature is immune for 24 hours to further suicidal compulsions while wielding the weapon.



PART 4: THE WORLD IS HOLLOW

The remainder of the adventure takes place within the dungeons of Hollow Mountain, an enormous complex that served the runelords of wrath as a stronghold. The complex has at least 20 sprawling levels, but this adventure takes the PCs only to the corners of four of these dungeons. A larger treatment of Hollow Mountain itself is presented in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Dungeons of Golarion*, if you'd like to learn more about this legendary site. (Note that the PCs will be destined to return to the apex of this dungeon, where Alaznist's *runewell of wrath* is hidden, in the final adventure in this campaign!)

Initially, the PCs theoretically have access to two of the four locations presented in this chapter. The entrance to the Forges of Wrath, where the portal to the Underflume of Roderic's Cove is located, lies in area A5a, and the entrance to a portion of the Forsaken Mezzanine, where the cult of the Peacock Spirit has been exploring, can be reached from area A4b. Which complex the PCs visit first is up to them.

B. THE FORGES OF WRATH

This level of Hollow Mountain is located in a small corner of the Baleful Repository, formerly a place for forging and storing weapons for Alaznist's army. No physical connection to the rest of the Baleful Repository presently exists in this sublevel. Once, a portal connected this region to several other points within Hollow Mountain and to several Underflumes (including the one in Roderic's Cove), but today, this portal (located in area **B7**) is malfunctioning.

The Forges of Wrath are unlit unless otherwise noted. Ceiling height averages at 10 feet, and the doors are made of black iron. They can be locked (Disable Device DC 25) but are unlocked when the PCs visit unless otherwise noted in the text.

B1. Grand Hall of Forges (CR 6)

A collection of huge forges now lies dormant in this long chamber, its vaulted ceiling twenty-five feet above. The walls are still stained with the soot of the fiery business that once went on here, and long-dead coals are piled in the cold furnaces. The blast of three of the forges seems to have scorched the floor. To the east, a shaft partially filled with an old, collapsed stairway rises upward, while to the west, an immense iron gate stands slightly ajar before a room beyond. A badly burnt body lies slumped near this gate.

Creatures: Wary adventurers will likely be cautious here, suspicious that the scorch marks indicate traps or haunted forges that spit fire at those passing by. Instead, the danger lies at those forges without signs of fiery exhalation. Passing within 10 feet of one of the forges without scorch marks stirs the long-dormant coals: in a single round, they suddenly come to life, glowing red with heat. On the next round, three combusted crawl out of the burning coals and attack. These former blacksmiths who labored at Alaznist's forges attack the party until destroyed, at which point their spirits return to the cinders. After 24 hours, the three combusted can attack again—this cycle can be broken only if the three forges are subjected to the effects of *hallow* or a similar effect that prevents the manifestation of undead.

COMBUSTED (3)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 32 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 63)

Treasure: The burnt body near the gate is one of Maga Szuul's barbarian cultist bodyguards, who was a victim of the combusted. He still wears his +1 *hide armor* and clutches his masterwork longsword, but his potions have been taken (and subsequently used) by Maga Szuul.

B2. An Angry Visage (CR 6)

An immense and angry countenance glares out of this alcove: a large sculpture of a woman's head protruding from the stone of the wall. Her face is severe, her nostrils flared, her jaw clenched, her eyes angry and penetrating. A hallway leads north from the alcove, while to the south an iron door blocks passage.

Trap: This sculpture is a duplicate in miniature of the colossal visage that stares down from the summit of Hollow Mountain: a portrayal of Runelord Alaznist. A PC who examines the carving and succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notices that the jaw is hinged, though no amount of prying releases it. On a Perception check result of 25 or higher, the searcher also finds a trigger hidden in the sculpture's left ear—a trapped lever which opens the jaw.

BREATH OF WRATH

CR 6

XP 2,400

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset manual

Effect A cloud of caustic vapors issues forth from the sculpture's nostrils, filling area **B2** and extending 5 feet into the northern hall and area **B1**. All creatures in the area take 6d6 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 18 half) from the caustic fumes.

Treasure: When the lever within the sculpture's left ear is released, the jaw falls open and 10,000 gp worth of medium-quality gemstones spills forth from the now-gaping mouth. If a PC carefully examines the interior of the mouth, with a successful DC 20 Perception check the character finds a second (locked) compartment. The locking mechanism can be picked with a successful DC 25 Disable Device check to reveal three fire opals worth 1,000 gp each. These gems were used by artisans to decorate magic weapons in the Exotics Workshop (area **B6**).

B3. Derelict Ore Elevator (CR 6)

A pile of ore and a large wheel of blackened iron are all that occupy this chamber. A shaft in the floor at the east end of the room is also visible, with ancient tangles of chains hanging down into it from a complex mechanism in the ceiling above.

Hazard: The wheel served to raise and lower the ore elevator that is now stuck in the shaft about 30 feet below the chamber floor. With a successful DC 16 Knowledge (engineering) check, a PC discovers the workings of the wheel and determines that whatever load is on the

IT CAME
FROM HOLLOW
MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

elevator is trapped 30 feet down in the shaft. If the PCs decide to raise the elevator into the chamber, someone must unjam the wheel with a successful DC 25 Disable Device check. However, a closer examination of the mechanism and a successful DC 25 Perception check reveal a danger—if the wheel is unjammed or if anyone attempts to manipulate the load of ore hanging below, the entire thing will collapse spectacularly. If this occurs, the destruction sends chains and fragments of ancient metal lashing out, dealing 6d6 points of bludgeoning and slashing damage to all creatures within 10 feet of the shaft (Reflex DC 15 half). Creatures in the shaft itself take a –4 penalty on this saving throw and anyone who fails the save falls the remaining 60 feet to the rubble-filled pit floor below. The mines below have collapsed (although if you wish to expand this complex and include connections to other areas under Hollow Mountain, feel free to have one or more entrances to the mines remain navigable).

Treasure: The container hanging 30 feet down the 90-foot-deep shaft holds 9,000 gp worth of mithral ore.

Story Award: Should the PCs manage to gain the stash of mithral ore, award them 2,400 XP.

B4. Abandoned Pushcarts

Three large wheeled pushcarts lie in disrepair here, their contents in little better shape.

Examination of the brittle wood and corroded metal on these carts suggests that they once held weapons, mostly ranseurs and other mundane polearms whose shafts have grown brittle due to the passage of millennia. The carts themselves are in only marginally better repair, rickety and ready to fall apart. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notes that someone recently looked through the weapons—more evidence of the cultists' passage.

B5. Weapon Storage

The racks of weapons that once lined this storage room have collapsed under the weight of their loads. The polearms, maces, and swords they bore now lie in heaps on the dusty floor.

None of the ancient weapons in these storage rooms are functional. They have all been destroyed by the ravages of time.

B6. Exotics Workshop (CR 7)

Stone tables stand along the east and west walls in this chamber, ancient tools lying on their dusty surfaces. Collapsed

wooden racks that once held weapons clutter an alcove in the south of the chamber.

Haunt: Once this was a place where Alaznist's artisans toiled to craft beautiful weaponry out of the mundane supplies looted from battlefields. Now the anguished spirits of those artisans, executed in the hours before Earthfall by a desperate overseer, haunt this workshop.

ANGUISHED ARTISANS

CR 7

XP 3,200

CE tenacious^{HA} haunt (area B6)

Caster Level 7th

Notice Perception DC 30 (to notice the distant sound of metal striking metal)

hp 14; **Trigger** touch (touching the magical kukri or mace among the corroded mundane weapons; see Treasure below); **Weakness** triggered by touch; **Reset** 1 day

Effect The spirits of dead artisans, enraged by the corrosion of so much of their labor, release a howl of fury, shrieking things like "Our work! Destroyed and neglected! Woe to our legacy!" accompanied by a cacophonous sound of work hammers striking on metal. The PC who touched the magic item is affected by an *enervation* spell.

Destruction If all of the corroded and ruined weapons are hidden from view, the haunt is destroyed.

Treasure: Most of the weapons here are ruined, but PCs searching the debris find two weapons in mint condition: a *bloodletting kukri*^{UE} and a *boulderhead mace*^{UE}.

B7. The Damaged Portal

Normally, discovering the secret door to this chamber requires a successful DC 20 Perception check, but it has remained open since the last time the sinspawn Mozamer entered the room and used the portal beyond to travel to the Roderic's Cove Underflume.

The walls of this chamber are carved from deep-green marble with a domed ceiling twenty feet above. A ten-foot-long pool filled with crystal-clear water occupies the chamber, with what looks like the bronze frame of a gate set at the head of the waters. A slight shimmer in the air is visible where the gate itself would be, and the frame is etched with lines of script. Now and then, what appear to be brief images of people or monsters flicker within the frame, only to vanish an instant later.

This is the portal Mozamer had used to travel from Hollow Mountain to Roderic's Cove, but as the sinspawn discovered, the portal is malfunctioning and works only in one direction. The images flickering in the portal

are visual echoes left by previous users. If the images are studied, the viewer catches glimpses of fleshdregs, a hydragoon qlipphoth, and the sinspawn Mozamer now and then, mixed in with that of a mutated man (Maga Szuul) and a hulking thug dressed much like the Yamasoth cultists the PCs likely fought in area **A5**. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana or planes) check confirms these images as harmless (if strange) aftereffects of portal travel.

The method of attuning the portal to different locations is complex, requiring many years of study. The last person to even partially understand the portal's use was Maga Szuul, who used directions provided by his cult to focus the portal away from Roderic's Cove's to the Gauntlet of Fury. A character who can read Thassilonian and spends an hour studying the runes understands that the portal can be refocused to several different pre-determined locations, but that without detailed directions, mastering the refocusing would require many months, or perhaps years, of intense study.

Maga Szuul and his followers used this portal to travel into the Gauntlet of Fury, and if the PCs step through, they'll likewise be transported to area **D5a** in the Gauntlet. The portal is one-way only; characters who wish to escape the Gauntlet must find another way out.

The portal can be destroyed in one of two ways. Simply smashing it to pieces will work, but this method is dangerous. The portal frame has hardness 10 and 120 hit points, and each time it takes damage, it releases a bolt of magical energy that makes a single touch attack with a +8 bonus against the creature who dealt the damage. This bolt can strike anyone in area **B7**, dealing 2d4 points of force damage on a hit. A safer method of destroying the portal can be found by studying the portal while using *detect magic*, as if identifying a magic item. In this case, a character that succeeds at a DC 20 Spellcraft check determines that the pool of water serves as a sort of magical capacitor for the portal. Emptying the pool by hand requires tools and 2d4 hours of work, but magic like *control water* can do the job much more quickly. Magical fire is particularly effective, and if the pool of water takes 50 points of fire damage from magical sources, it is emptied.

Were the portal functioning normally, emptying the pool would merely render the gate dormant until reactivated, but now, if the waters are removed, the portal begins humming and flashing dangerously. It implodes with a crack of thunder 3 rounds later. Any creatures remaining in area **B7** at this point are immediately transported to area **D5a** of the Gauntlet. (For ease of play, this effect should transport all of the PCs simultaneously or not at all, unless you're prepared to run separate tables for your players until they can reunite!)

The portal's effects function at CL 20th. A player who successfully casts *dispel magic* or a similar effect that manages to deactivate the portal causes it to self-destruct as if the pool of water had been emptied.

Story Award: Once the portal is destroyed, by whatever method, award the PCs 4,800 XP.

B8. Mozamer's Den (CR 6)

The stairs descend to a low-ceilinged, deep-green marble chamber. What appears to be a nest of rags and furs lies in the northeast corner of the room. To the south, a short flight of steps leads up to a wall of iron bars set with a large gate that blocks access to a platform. A single altar of dark-red marble stands in this alcove, with what appears to be a large brass egg balanced atop it. The altar is decorated with a strange circular rune adorned with eyes.

This room was once the den of the sinspawn Mozamer, and a search of the nest suggests the filthy heap had been his bedding. The sinspawn took most of his gear with him on his final trip to Roderic's Cove through the portal, but he left behind a few fragmentary notes about his studies of the portal itself. A PC who had previously studied the sinspawn's notes on the portal (such as those found in his suite in the Underflume below Roderic's Cove) quickly recognizes the style and contents. The notes are in Thassilonian. With an hour of study, a PC learns the nature of the portal's water in area **B7**, including Mozamer's theory that if the water in the pool were to be emptied, the portal would self-destruct.

The southern portion of the room once served as a shrine to Yamasoth, whom Alaznist required her smiths and crafters to look to for inspiration. This shrine's presence in the Forges of Wrath allowed the artisans who toiled here to visit often to worship, pray, and seek insight from the Polymorph Plague. The iron gate to the shrine isn't locked, but it is stuck and requires a successful DC 15 Strength check to force open.

Creature: The egg sitting atop the altar serves a dual purpose. It functioned as an incense burner, but it's also the lair of a sinister entity from the depths of the Outer Rifts. A living manifestation of the chaos of the Abyss (and thus no more an ally of demons than of qlipphoth or any other form of Abyssal life), half-fiend elementals like this one were often used in Bakrakh as temple guardians. The one bound to this altar is named Boag-Hok, and while it has been charged with protecting the site from usurpers, the loneliness of its existence in post-Earthfall Hollow Mountain was recently granted a reprieve when the sinspawn Mozamer came to dwell here. Boag-Hok enjoyed Mozamer's company and engaged the sinspawn in long philosophical discussions on the nature

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

of flesh and its viability as a medium for life. The half-fiend does not understand the concepts of compassion or friendship, but it does miss the discussions it once had with Mozamer.

When it senses the PCs entering the room, Boag-Hok emerges from the egg-shaped censer atop the altar, manifesting as a roiling demonic face made of oily black and green smoke. It greets the visitors telepathically, asking if they are sacrifices sent by Mozamer to sate its hunger. Boag-Hok enjoys sacrifices, but it is starved for conversation as well, and it can be held back from attacking on a round-by-round basis as long as at least one PC can keep it interested in the discussion with making a

successful DC 15 Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge, or Spellcraft check. The DC of this check increases by 1 each round.

You should use this encounter to confirm to the PCs that this room was indeed once occupied by Mozamer, and perhaps to answer other lingering questions about the sinspawn and how it managed to travel from here all the way to Roderic's Cove, but it shouldn't be long before Boag-Hok grows weary of discussion and attacks.

Boag-Hok is a bit more powerful than the typical Medium-sized half-fiend air elemental. It appears as a coiling plume of smoke when it emerges from its censer lair, and it manifests a mouth filled with fangs of magical force when it attacks.



BOAG-HOK **CR 6**

XP 2,400

Variant half-fiend medium air elemental (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 171, 120)

CE Medium outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar, native)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +12

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 68 (8d10+24)

Fort +9, **Ref** +12, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities air mastery; **DR** 5/magic;

Immune elemental traits; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Speed fly 100 ft. (perfect)

Melee bite +14 (5d6+3 force)

Special Attacks force fangs, smite good, whirlwind (10–30 ft. high, 1d6+4 damage, DC 18)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +10)

3/day—*darkness*, *poison* (DC 16)

1/day—*desecrate*, *unholy blight* (DC 16)

TACTICS

During Combat Boag-Hok begins combat by casting *unholy blight*, then flows out through the gaps in the bars to cast *poison* on its foes and attack with its bite. It casts *darkness* if it's surrounded and reduced to fewer than 30 hit points, using the cover to escape back to a distance, after which it relies upon making bite attacks with Flyby Attack to prevent full attacks against itself.

Morale Boag-Hok fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 23, **Con** 16, **Int** 8, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 29

Feats Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +17, Escape Artist +11, Fly +19, Knowledge (planes) +10, Perception +12, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +17

Languages Abyssal; telepathy (100 ft.)

SQ vaporous body

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Force Fangs (Su) When Boag-Hok attacks with its bite, its fangs are made of magical force. On a hit, it inflicts 5d6 points of force damage, modified by 1-1/2 times its Charisma modifier.

Vaporous Body (Ex) Boag-Hok can pass through small holes, even cracks, without reducing its speed. It cannot enter water or other liquid. It has no Strength score, and it cannot manipulate objects other than to bite them.

C. DUST TO DUST

This level of Hollow Mountain is located on a larger level known as the Forsaken Mezzanine, a place where Alaznist's bureaucrats saw to the running of the runelord's empire, filing reports, cataloging tributes and punishments, storing records, and tracking supplies. The rooms in this complex are lit by glowing runes placed high on walls near the ceilings. Unless noted otherwise, the doors here are made of thick oak, carved rather ornately for a place of such mundane activity, and they have been preserved by ancient magic to keep them sturdy even today.

This complex should be the target of PCs who are tracking the cult of the Peacock Spirit (to try to recover *Baraket*, to bring Viralane to justice, or simply to get revenge) or who are escaping the Gauntlet (which connects to this complex from below).

C1. Grand Hall of Records (CR 7)

The thirty-foot-high ceiling of this impressive, L-shaped chamber is supported by six square columns. Empty bookshelves line these columns and the surrounding walls. A faded mosaic of countless shades of yellow is set in the floor, depicting the rays of the sun. Drifts of dust obscure portions of this mosaic, but the telltale sign of several humanoid tracks leads from a flight of stairs descending from the west to the eastern side of the large hall.

The trail of footprints through the dust was left by the cultists of the Peacock Spirit and leads to area **C2**. The stairs at area **C1a** lead up to area **A4b**.

The books and records once stored in this hall were considered mundane and minor, and as such were not preserved via the same magic that keeps the stacks in area **C7** usable.

Two smaller reading rooms to the southwest contain preserved wooden chairs and tables. Area **C1b** contains no further objects of interest, but area **C1c** holds a grisly tableau—a pair of ancient skeletons with leather cords around their bony necks.

Creatures: When Earthfall ended Thassilon, some of Alaznist's bureaucrats chose suicide rather than the prospect of enduring the end of civilization. The bodies in areas **C1c** are the remains of two such victims who used cords of leather tied in slip knots to strangle themselves. Their restless spirits haunt the grand hall today, manifesting as a pair of strangled choking shades who claw at the coils of ghostly leather tight around their necks before they attack intruders. If destroyed, these spirits manifest again after 24 hours, in much the same manner as a ghost rejuvenates. They do not pursue foes beyond the Grand Hall of Records.

If the leather cords are removed from the remains in area **C1c**, the choking shades no longer rejuvenate after being destroyed.

STRANGLER CHOKING SHADES (2) CR 5

XP 1,600 each

hp 52 each (see page 82)

C2. The Librarian (CR 7)

An immense mosaic of the rune of wrath is inlaid in the floor before a rusted iron desk in a curved alcove to the east. Hallways lead to the north and south, and a relatively recent set of humanoid tracks are visible in the dust leading both north and south.

The secret door to area **C3** is well concealed, requiring a successful DC 25 Perception check to discover. The tracks on the floor were left by Peacock Spirit cultists as they explored area **C4** before moving south to area **C6** (but they didn't find area **C3**).

Creature: Seated behind the desk is a metal humanoid figure, corrosion covering every inch of its orange-tinged form. In days long past, this clockwork was known as the Librarian, and it controlled access to the secret library (area **C3**). The Librarian has been in standby mode for thousands of years, waiting for a visitor to either approach it with a request for a book or attempt illegal entry into the library.

The Librarian has an unusual, wide slot built into its chest, sized perfectly to accept a book-shaped "request key." Visitors to the library would use these keys to withdraw books from the library by inserting the key into the Librarian's chest. The Librarian would then move to the secret library, retrieve the book requested by the key, and hand it over. These keys could be programmed only by high-ranking administrators here in the Forsaken Mezzanine, but one functioning key still exists in area **C5**.

Any visible attempt to open the secret door to area **C3** causes the librarian to immediately animate and attack. Once roused, it fights to the death. The Librarian is nearly wound down, and it can function only for 6 rounds

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

before it goes forever inert (its winding mechanism has corroded beyond repair).

THE LIBRARIAN

CR 7

XP 3,200

Advanced clockwork soldier (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 290, 57)

hp 80 (10d10+20)

Melee mwk handaxe +20/+15 (1d6+9/×3)

Story Award: If the PCs insert the request key from area C5 into the Librarian, the time it requires to enter

the library, retrieve the *blessed book*, emerge, and present the book uses up all of its remaining winding time. Award the PCs full experience points for defeating the clockwork in this way.

C3. Spellcaster's Library

This oddly shaped chamber is lit by a flickering globe of light that hovers at the peak of the domed ceiling twenty feet above. Bookshelves are built into the walls, and several dust-covered tomes rest upon them.

The illumination in the ceiling is merely a globe of glass with a *continual flame* spell cast on it.

Treasure: This room once contained an impressive repository of spellbooks, but most were taken away by frightened administrators in Thassilon's final hours. Of the books that remain, most have not been preserved with magic and crumble to dust when touched. A collection of preserved books detailing the complexities of magical research survive, though. This group of 10 books is worth 2,500 gp as a set, and they grant a +5 bonus on Knowledge (arcana) checks if they are referenced.

Two magic books survive as well: a blank *blessed book* and a *clay golem manual*. If a PC places the request key found in area C5 in the Librarian in area C2, the Librarian will recover the *blessed book* and deliver it to the PCs, but the PCs can retrieve the *clay golem manual* only by entering the room themselves.

C4. Reading Rooms

Eight heavy oak doors line this narrow corridor, four of them shut, four ajar. Light shines from a small globe fixed in the ceiling halfway down the hall, illuminating floating motes of dust. A large carving of a human face looms from the wall at the western end of the hall. The dust on the floor here has been disturbed recently, and splashes of blood mar the floors and walls. Three shattered human skeletons lie on the hall's floor.

The glass orb in the ceiling is the size of an apple and bears a *continual flame* spell. The blood and broken skeletons are a testament to a recent fight between Peacock Spirit cultists and the three skeletal champions who once dwelled in this part of the library.

The face in the west wall depicts a man, his visage adorned with a drooping blindfold covering only one eye, his jaw hanging open in bewilderment. The exposed eye is an empty socket, and the stone around the edges is chipped,



suggesting something was pried out of it. (In fact, the object that once occupied this socket was stolen by Damil Russo and is now in his possession in area C9.) A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check finds that this sculpture is in fact a secret door, but the mechanism for opening it is quite complex, requiring a successful DC 30 Disable Device check. This task was beyond any of the cultists, and so they have not reached area C5.

C5. Secret Reading Room

A desk of lacquered wood sits against the north wall of this cubical chamber. A flame flickers in a lamp on the desk, casting dancing shadows on the wall, while several books and an ancient-looking but still intact leather pouch sit on the desk.

The lamp has *continual flame* cast on it.

Treasure: The ancient-looking pouch is a *handy haversack* that contains 600 gp worth of moonstones and a sheathed *dagger of venom*. The books on the desk crumble to dust if touched, save for one. This book, upon closer examination, is revealed to be not a book at all but rather a sculpture made from iron and ivory. The sides of the book, where pages would be, are a set of complex gears—a successful DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check correctly identifies the “book” as some sort of clockwork key. This is a request key that, if inserted into the Librarian’s chest slot in area C2, compels the clockwork to fetch the *blessed book* from storage in area C3.

C6. Battle Site

There are three wooden doors at this oddly shaped intersection, in addition to a narrow hall headed south. The floor is set with an abstract circular mosaic, some of it fading but most of it still brilliantly colored. The remains of what may have once been a four-armed humanoid built of bronze plates and iron gears lies in pieces on the ground, while splatters of blood decorate the floor nearby.

The Peacock Spirit cultists encountered a clockwork mage in area C7, and the resulting battle spilled out into this room before the cultists managed to defeat the deadly creature. A search of the destroyed construct reveals a swath of fabric clutched in one hand—a brightly colored bit of red material that the PCs should immediately recognize as having been torn from the hem of Viralane Barvisai’s red skirt.

Anyone who examines the tracks in the dust can see that several humanoids have moved through the doors to the west, east, and north, but that no one has traveled south toward area C10 in a long time.

C7. Grand Library

The walls of this great chamber are lined with white marble shot through with streaks of gold. The ceiling above consists of two intersecting domes. Green frescos decorate the floor, the patterns mirroring each other in each half of the room. Niches in the walls may have once held dozens if not hundreds of tomes, but most of these books, loose papers, and scrolls are now recklessly scattered around the chamber.

A character who succeeds at a DC 12 Survival check determines that this place was recently ransacked without any regard for the age of the tomes stored here or their value, academic or otherwise. Unlike the books found elsewhere, though, the tomes and scrolls stored in this library were of greater importance and have all been magically preserved to withstand the passage of time. If PCs take the time to look at the dispersed volumes on the floor, they find treatises on every imaginable subject: astronomy, geography, magic, planar theory, zoology, and more. It would take a historian several years to completely catalogue the ancient information here, but unfortunately, very little of what remains is particularly eye-opening about Thassilon, and much of it is woefully out of date or misinformed.

Treasure: If the library’s contents are gathered up and sorted, the several hundred books and scrolls grant a +4 bonus on any Knowledge check associated with general interest lore about Thassilon. The collection weighs 2,800 pounds in all and is worth 4,000 gp if it can be transported safely to a collector.

C8. Antechamber (CR 6)

Whoever occupied this space tried to decorate it to kindle memories of the forest. Four large pots now bear only long-dead plants, woody remnants surrounded by swaths of dust. A red metal desk is at the north end of the chamber, and a black iron door leads to the east. Lying before the desk is a bedroll next to a small stack of books.

Creature: Of the three cultists of the Peacock Spirit who are in the dungeon, Damil Russo has no predilection for magic and no patience for ritual. He was drawn to the cult purely out of appreciation for its fashion, its sense of style, and because he felt that he had the right stuff to someday lead the cult, despite the fact that his personality is less that of a leader and more that of a bully. As his two companions work on studying their gathered tomes in the next room over, he’s taken to this room to relax and study several interesting books he discovered in the Grand Library.

IT CAME
FROM HOLLOW
MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain’s Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

Unless the PCs were particularly noisy in their approach, Damil is sitting at the desk, reading a military history book and taking notes on ancient Thassilonian fighting styles. As soon as he realizes trouble is afoot, he jumps up from the desk, gives a series of three quick raps on the door to area **C9** to alert the others, and takes up a defensive position here.

Note that if the cultists have secured *Baraket*, Damil wields it instead of his +1 rapier (note that because Damil is a worshipper of the Peacock Spirit, he does not take the penalties on d20 rolls described on page 7). In this case, Hira has placed a *hold person* spell on the *Sword of Pride* for Damil to use.

DAMIL RUSSO **CR 6**
XP 2,400

Male human fighter 7

CE Medium humanoid (human)

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

DEFENSE
AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 71 (7d10+28)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2 (+2 vs. fear)

OFFENSE
Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 mithral rapier +9/+4 (1d6+6/18-20), +1 rapier
 +9/+4 (1d6+6/18-20) or

Baraket +10/+10/+5 (1d6+7/18-20), +1 mithral rapier
 +9/+4 (1d6+6/18-20)

Ranged composite longbow +10/+5 (1d8+2/×3)

Special Attacks weapon training (light blades +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Damil fights loudly and brashly, doing his best to prevent anyone from entering area **C9**. As the battle progresses, he calls out the tactics, strengths, and weaknesses of the PCs as he interprets them, letting the others in area **C9** prepare more appropriately. If he drops below 30 hit points, he takes up a position in front of the door to area **C9** and fights with total defense, drawing the battle out as long as possible so the others have more time to get ready.

Morale Damil may not have the patience for magic his companions have, but he's devoted to defending them and fights to the death to protect their privacy.

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

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 22

Feats Double Slice, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Toughness, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier)

Skills Acrobatics +9, Intimidate +9, Perception +7, Sense Motive +3, Survival +7

Languages Common, Thassilonian

SQ armor training 2

Gear mwk breastplate, +1 mithral rapier, +1 rapier, composite longbow (+2 Str), 10 gp

Treasure: There are seven books in here, all concerning the military history and fighting techniques of Bakrakhan's soldiers. The books grant a +4 bonus if used as a resource for any Knowledge check associated with this topic by someone who can read Thassilonian. The books are worth 1,600 gp as a collection.

C9. Cultist Encampment (CR 8)

An elegant, geometric, mauve fresco decorates the floor of this room. Dust and rubble have been swept aside to make room for a pair of bedrolls and a field camp, while a small stack of a few dozen books stand close at hand.

Creatures: The reason the cultists of the Peacock Spirit have come to the Forsaken Mezzanine depends on whether or not they've managed to obtain the *Sword of Pride*. Regardless of the reason, the trio of cultists have already defeated several of the denizens in this complex, and the PCs will be able to track them if they pay attention. The cultists are currently camped in area **C9**, studying key tomes liberated from the Grand Library (area **C7**).

If the cultists have stolen the *Sword of Pride*, they've raided the Grand Library to research the potential location of the *Sword of Wrath*. Now that they control Xanderghul's weapon, they hope to deprive Alaznist of hers.

If the cultists haven't yet stolen the *Sword of Pride*, they've come to the Forsaken Mezzanine to raid the Grand Library in search of a ritual to conjure a retriever to seek out the PCs, having learned rumors of such a ritual's existence through documents recounting one of many ways Alaznist called up aid from the Abyss despite having conjuration as an opposition school.

If she knows the PCs are on their way and she still has her *potion of eagle's splendor*, Viralane drinks it before the fight begins. She then takes up a position at the far side of the room to confront the PCs as they enter, hoping to distract them while Hira, who is likely invisible, moves into the most advantageous position for the upcoming fight. After greeting the PCs, Viralane speaks.

"How strange that you find me here! We parted on such sour terms, and I have felt dreadful about how I treated you and took advantage of your trust. Can you forgive me, a woman with little recourse but to ply her trade as best she is able? Will you give me a second chance?"

If the PCs agree to speak with Viralane, she goes on to explain how the cult of the Peacock Spirit has promised to help her to overcome a curse. She begs the party to allow the research to be completed, leaving her here to study the tomes she's gathered. If the PCs do so, she and Hira pack things up and leave Rivenrake Island. In this event, they might be encountered later in the campaign as recurring villains. But if it seems apparent that the PCs want to take Viralane with them as a prisoner or if they look like they're about to start a fight, Viralane casts *suggestion* on the group's most vulnerable character (the PC with the lowest Will saving throw) and implores them to leave Rivenrake Island. In the resulting fight, Viralane stays mobile as she casts spells and uses her mesmerist powers to disrupt the PCs' tactics, while her companion Hira enters the fray as detailed in her tactics below. In the unlikely event that Viralane Barvisai was killed or otherwise prevented from rejoining the cult during Part 1 of this adventure, Hira is alone in the room and the PCs face a less dangerous encounter as a result. In this case, Hira simply attacks at once. Unlike Viralane, she has no interest in talking to the PCs.

VIRALANE BARVISAI CR 6

XP 2,400
hp 31 (see page 66)

HIRA DOSS CR 6

Female half-elf cleric of the Peacock Spirit 7
LE Medium humanoid (elf, human)
Init -1; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +1 deflection, -1 Dex)

hp 56 (7d8+21)

Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +9; +2 vs. enchantments

Immune sleep

Defensive Abilities viridian escape

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *lucerne hammer* +8 (1d12+4)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with *lucerne hammer*)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 3/day (DC 13, 4d6)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +11)

7/day—*copycat* (7 rounds), *touch of evil* (3 rounds)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +11)

4th—*air walk*, *confusion*^o (DC 18), *unholy blight* (DC 19)

3rd—*create food and water*, *dispel magic*, *nondetection*^o, *searing light*

2nd—*cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (DC 16), *invisibility*^o, *silence* (DC 16), *status* (DC 16)

1st—*command* (DC 15), *cure light wounds* (3), *protection from good*^o, *sanctuary* (DC 15)

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

D domain spell; **Domains** Evil, Trickery

TACTICS

Before Combat Hira casts *create food and water* every morning to feed herself and her companions. She also casts *status* on Viralane and Damil every morning at 8:00 A.M.; this spell gives her additional advance warning of the PCs' approach if they attack Damil between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. If the PCs get in a fight with Damil, she casts *invisibility*, *air walk*, and *protection from good* on herself, then climbs into the air so she can attack foes



HIRA DOSS

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron Council

Part 3:
Under the Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the True Spark

Ecology of the Sinspawn

Bestiary

below with her +1 *lucerne hammer* but avoid melee attacks against herself.

During Combat Once she's up in the air, Hira uses her ranged and reach attacks on the PCs. If either she or Viralane is reduced to half their hit points, Hira casts *sanctuary* or *invisibility* on herself and moves in to provide healing before returning to battle.

Morale If reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, Hira uses her viridian escape ability to vanish and flee back to Magnimar. She can become a recurring villain in this event, perhaps joining up with a group of Peacock Spirit cultists in an upcoming adventure.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 8, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 17

Feats Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms & Armor, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (evocation), Toughness

Skills Bluff +8, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Perception +13, Spellcraft +14; **Racial**

Modifiers +2 Perception

Languages Common, Elven, Thassilonian

SQ elf blood

Combat Gear *potions of cure light wounds* (3), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *wand of secret page* (8 charges); **Other Gear** +1 *glamered chain shirt*, +1 *lucerne hammer*^{APG}, *ring of protection* +1, holy symbol of the Peacock Spirit, 11 pp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Viridian Escape (Sp) Hira has been subjected to an ancient ritual called the viridian transcendence, granting her the ability to use *word of recall* as a swift action once and once only. When she activates this ability, she vanishes in a puff of bright blue-green smoke and reappears in a Peacock Spirit safe house in Magnimar.

Treasure: The cultists have gathered a large number of books about ancient Thassilonian magical theory and practice from the Great Library. While this collection of books grants a +4 bonus on Knowledge (arcana) and Spellcraft checks when using them as a reference, much to the cultists' growing dismay, the books do not contain any information about the retriever conjuring ritual or the potential location of the *Sword of Wrath* other than maddeningly vague hints. The books are worth 4,000 gp as a collection.

One section of particular note that should be evident to anyone who examines the books is a section that Hira has circled in red ink and left open. This short passage describes how "intrepid souls can run the Gauntlet of Fury to gain the favor of Runelords of Wrath, be they living or dead." Hira has also annotated this with a short note of her own, written in Thassilonian, that reads, "Would this favor allow us to consult with Thybidos? If so, his lingering presence in the Forlorn Sepulchers may aid

immensely in opposing Alaznist." A PC who spends 1d4 hours studying this book extracts additional information: a potential entrance into the Forlorn Sepulchers on the southeast slopes of Rivenrake Island.

Development: If Hira is defeated, or if (as is more likely) she escapes and abandons Viralane, the Viralane immediately drops her weapons and surrenders, throwing herself on the PCs' mercy. If Hira fled via the viridian escape, Viralane wryly comments, "And now I know how poor Corla must have felt when I abandoned her. I do hope she's all right?"

At this point, Viralane is ready to wash her hands of the Peacock Spirit cult. She'll tell the PCs what she knows in hopes of fostering goodwill (and perhaps even, some day, their aid in removing her curse), but there's much she can reveal to the PCs. Hira was her primary point of contact with the cult, and she dismisses Damil (correctly) as nothing more than a lackey who had no deeper role than that of a bodyguard. Viralane can give the PCs directions to the waterfront safe house the three of them used in Magnimar (but should the PCs investigate it later, they'll find the small building has been burned to the ground; the cult is covering its tracks). She can tell the PCs that the method she (and potentially Hira) used to escape is an ancient ritual sacred to the Peacock Spirit known as the viridian transcendence. She doesn't know how to perform the ritual itself, but someone subjected to it gains the ability to teleport back to a specific sanctuary (in this case, the now-defunct Magnimar safe house). She does know that the person who performed the ritual to benefit both her and Hira was a strange but beautiful woman with a vibrant streak of blue in her hair who visited them in Magnimar a few days before Viralane traveled north to Roderic's Cove. She didn't get the woman's name, but Hira referred to her as "Your Eminence," so Viralane suspects the blue-haired woman was the cult's high priestess, or at the very least a high-ranking member. (This was indeed the cult's high priestess, a woman named Zurea Salvus the PCs are destined to meet in the fourth adventure of *Return of the Runelords*.)

As for the Peacock Spirit itself, Viralane has little more to say. According to Hira, who was very closed-mouthed about her faith, the Peacock Spirit is a manifestation of self-confidence and a patron to all spellcasters and those who seek positions of rule, but aside from the cult's excellent sense of style, Viralane has no additional insights into its nature other than to suspect it has powerful supporters somewhere in Varisia. At the very least, though, Viralane can tell the PCs that once they were done studying these tomes here, Hira had planned on running the Gauntlet below to earn the right to commune with the spirit of a prior Runelord of Wrath

named Thybidos. Viralane doesn't know what "running the Gauntlet" entails exactly, but she can confirm that Hira had discovered a potential route into Thybidos's crypt in the Forlorn Sepulchers from an old cave on Rivenrake's southeastern slope.

Viralane has no further scripted role to play in Return of the Runelords, in any event. Her fate is left to the PCs to determine as they see fit.

C10. Ancient Office (CR 7)

Eight desks face one another in this chamber, the wooden chairs all crumbled to the floor with age. Abstract metal artwork is affixed to the walls: half-moons, serrated blades, and ragged triangles, their edges once sharp but now covered with rust. A disordered clutter of papers litters each desk, and doors are on the east and west walls.

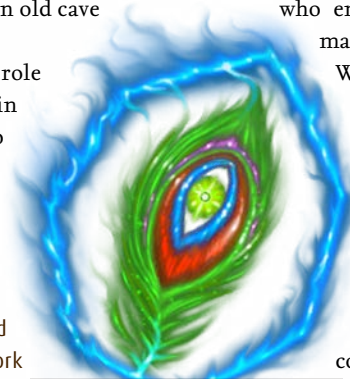
Creatures: A group of four bureaucrats who once shuffled papers in this office under the watchful, tedious eye of Augustus Premm (see area C11) still linger in this place as aggressive, incorporeal undead. As the PCs begin to move past the desks, the malevolent poltergeists begin hurling the potentially lethal works of art on the walls: there are 15 separate items, each weighing 75 pounds (dealing 3d6 points of damage on a hit). The spirits are bound to this place and fight until destroyed.

ADVANCED POLTERGEISTS (4) CR 3
XP 800 each
hp 22 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 211)

C11. The Nightmares of Augustus Premm (CR 7)

This room has an air of punctilious efficiency, with mahogany cabinets against the wall containing carefully filed and regimented scrolls and papers. Additional scrolls and papers lie atop a desk in the center of the room, along with a lit oil lamp and a small plaque bearing a short line of text.

A PC must succeed at a DC 20 Perception check to discover the secret door to area C12, though from the west side, the secret door is obvious. The plaque on the best reads in Thassilonian, "Augustus Premm." The scrolls in this room contain notes on the fates of thousands who braved the Gauntlet of Fury, but the records are maddeningly vague and incomplete. A character who takes the time to study them can determine that an



PEACOCK SPIRIT SYMBOL

entrance to the Gauntlet of Fury lies beyond a secret door in the west wall of this room, but she learns little of what sort of perils await beyond, other than that those who endure are granted some sort of magical mark or rune of favor with the Runelords of Wrath, be they dead or living.

Haunt: A pale, slight man with thinning hair seems to sit behind the desk when the PCs enter this room. This is a haunt formed by the unquiet soul of Augustus Premm, the man once responsible for filing and ordering the records of those who entered the Gauntlet in the level below. He remains oblivious to the PCs and continues an eternal attempt to gather and sort the scattered scrolls and papers on his desk. Each time he does so, he appears to

pick the pages up and moves to file them on the shelves nearby, but anyone who notices the haunt realizes that his hands pass through the pages and that those he seems to file vanish as soon as he releases them into their shelves. The haunt remains harmless as long as no one approaches within 5 feet of the desk, but if someone does, Premm flies into a rage at the interruption.

PREMM'S NIGHTMARE CR 7
XP 3,200

CE haunt

Caster Level 7th

Notice Perception DC 15 (to notice that Augustus Premm cannot physically pick up the papers on his desk)

hp 14; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 minute

Effect The unquiet spirit of this officious bureaucrat vents his fury by attempting to tear up the piles of parchment cluttering the desk if anyone approaches within 5 feet. This doesn't actually damage the papers, but as he appears to rip the leaves up, every creature in area C11 feels as if they're being torn apart as well, taking 7d6 points of slashing damage (Reflex DC 17 half). Once he vents his anger, Premm's shade vanishes for a minute before appearing once more at the desk to begin his endless task anew.

Destruction Filing all of the papers on the desk alphabetically in the shelves puts Premm to rest permanently.

C12. Gauntlet Access

This flight of spiral stairs leads down to area D1 in the Gauntlet of Fury.

D. THE GAUNTLET OF FURY

This level of Hollow Mountain is one of several trap-laden complexes that make up the Gauntlet of Fury, a series of ordeals used as testing grounds for those who

IT CAME
FROM HOLLOW
MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

sought the favor of the Runelord of Wrath. Most of this level has been claimed by spiderlike shriezyxes, but they have not reached this isolated wing, whose traps and challenges continue to function to this day.

The PCs may come to this level of Hollow Mountain by accident after being teleported to area **D5a** from area **B7** (in which case their goal is to escape the Gauntlet alive), or intentionally from the stairs in area **C12** (perhaps after learning of the mysterious reward of runelord favor granted to those who survive the Gauntlet). The PCs aren't required to explore this complex, but those who skip the Gauntlet of Fury may find themselves unprepared for the dangers they'll face in the Forlorn Sepulchers.

D1. Spiral Staircase

A spiral staircase ends in a circular chamber. An archway carved to resemble crossing ransours allows access to a hallway to the west and a stairwell leading further down. A message has been inscribed in the stone above the archway.

The spiral stairs ascend to area **C12**. The message above the archway reads, in Thassilonian: "Those who pass beyond, aspirant or doomed, may endure the Gauntlet to earn Wrath's blessing."

D2. Hall of Worthies (CR 7)

Complex mosaics in strange patterns adorn the floor of this long, vaulted hall. A set of six statues of robed warriors stand within raised niches along the north and south walls. Each statue is made of white marble and brandishes exotic weapons as it looks down with contempt. A bronze gate bars an exit to the west, its face adorned with the rune of wrath.

The bronze gate opens silently at a touch from the east side of the room, but from the west can only be opened with a successful DC 30 Disable Device check or by force (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 25).

Trap: The statues are of exquisite workmanship and radiate a moderate aura of evocation magic. Passing the second set of statues triggers a trap.

SCREAMING FLAMES

CR 7

XP 3,200

Type magic; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECT

Trigger visual (*true seeing*); **Reset** automatic (after 1 hour)

Effect A blast of crimson flames fills a 15-foot-wide section of the hall between the central statues. Each creature in this area takes 6d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 20 half), while anyone within 15 feet to the east or west takes 3d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 20 negates).

D3. Watery Fane of Gholz (CR 7)

A large pool of water fills most of this room, leaving a five-foot-wide walkway around the perimeter. The walls are decorated in mosaics of undersea vistas inhabited by hideous monsters. A ten-foot-wide platform in the middle of the pool supports a hunched-over statue of a twisted creature, its tentacle-infested mouth clutching a large red gemstone. The tops of two narrow walls, each only a foot wide and just submerged under the water's surface, connect to this platform from the north and south. Bronze gates bar entry to rooms to the east and southeast. Although the southeast gate appears to have been forced open, a large iron slab stands in the wall to the northeast, decorated by an image of some sort of monstrous figure.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (planes) check recognizes the idol as a depiction of a human infected by Gholz, a long-dead qliphoth lord associated with unlawful intrusions and magical lures. No depiction of Gholz itself survives to this day, but hints of its shape could be seen in the bodies of those he infected and corrupted. With a successful DC 26 Knowledge (arcana) check, A PC makes the disturbing observation the statue is in fact a victim of *flesh to stone*, petrified as it held a large gemstone in its toothless, deformed jaws. The transformed horror was once a man named Darzuvix, an apprentice of Alaznist who failed her by allowing a spy from Shalast to escape with plans for a number of magical traps. Enraged, Alaznist exposed him to a chaos beast's corporeal instability, then petrified him while he was in the throes of transformation to create an unsettling decoration—one she later used as the centerpiece for a trap here.

The pool of water is 10 feet deep, but the water is tainted. Anyone who is fully immersed in the water is exposed to blinding sickness (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 557). Using one of the narrow walkways to reach the statue in the center is possible with a successful DC 19 Acrobatics check to balance on the top of the slippery, submerged stone wall.

The gate to area **D4** now hangs open, bashed open from that area by Maga Szuul and his single surviving guard as they passed through the room on their way to area **D8**.

The iron slab to area **D6** is a magical door and it has no hinges or handle to open it in a conventional way. The monstrous figure carved on the door is a depiction of Yamasoth, its maw open to reveal an indentation. A PC who recognizes this depiction of Yamasoth with a successful DC 25 Knowledge (planes) check knows that this indentation is where the qliphoth lord's central eye would normally be located. If one of the gemstones from area **D5** is pressed to this indentation, it transforms

into a real eye for a moment before the figure closes its mouth, “blinking.” The gemstone teleports back to the plinth in area **D5**, and the iron door grinds down into the ground, remaining open for 1 hour before closing. From the eastern side in area **D6**, the door opens with a touch. The door can also be forced open (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 18) or tricked into opening with a successful DC 25 Use Magic Device check to activate it blindly.

Trap: The gemstone clutched in the statue’s mouth is the same shape as those in area **D5** and fits perfectly into the iron slab, but as hinted at by Gholz’s role over unlawful intrusions, using this gemstone to try to open the door causes the petrified chaos beast to revert to flesh and attack. Complicating this is the fact that the gemstone exudes a degraded *suggestion* effect that targets nonevil creatures (and thus had no effect on Maga Szuul and his guard when they passed through).

GEMSTONE LURE **CR 7**

XP 3,200

Type magic; **Perception** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (30 feet); **Reset** automatic

Effect spell effect (each nonevil creature must succeed at a DC 14 Will save to resist a mental *suggestion* to come pluck the gemstone from the statue’s mouth and then place it into the indentation on the iron slab to area **D6**; a creature that succeeds at this saving throw is immune to further effects from the statue for 1 minute); if the gemstone is placed in the door, it shatters harmlessly but releases the petrified chaos beast to attack the PCs.

CHAOS BEAST **CR —**

hp 85 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 54*)

Treasure: The gemstone clenched in the statue’s mouth is easily removed. The gemstone is a garnet worth 2,000 gp (unless, of course, it is destroyed by placing it against the carving of Yamasoth).

D4. Wrecked Guardians

A walkway artfully painted with dizzying geometric designs runs down the center of this long, grand hall. The vaulted ceiling rises twenty-five feet overhead, and a quartet of headless iron statues stand vigil in southern alcoves raised fifteen feet off the ground. The statues’ four heads lie in fragments along the ground, along with long, spidery legs that may have once given the strange things locomotion. Two bronze gates once barred passage to the east and west, but they have both been smashed open.

The heads of the statues in this room were once four iron sentinels (see page 90), but when they passed through the room, Maga Szuul and his remaining barbarian followers destroyed them in a brutal fight. An investigation of the remains reveals blood on some of the iron sentinels’ broken claws.

D5. Lo-Kath’s Welcome (CR 8)

Two platforms overlook this domed chamber. To the west, a circular balcony surrounded by metal bars from floor to ceiling rises fifteen feet over the floor. A two-foot-tall crystal plinth stands in the center of this balcony atop which sits a large, round gemstone. To the east, a ten-foot-wide iron slabs blocks an opening ten feet over the floor. Iron ladders descend from both exits to the floor below, but there’s no apparent access from the top of the ladder through the bars to the western balcony. The dome itself rises to a height of thirty feet from the floor, while to the north, at ground level, a ten-foot-wide alcove shimmers with light from a magical, glowing circle on the floor.



IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron Council

Part 3:
Under the Mountain’s Gaze

Part 4:
The World Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the True Spark

Ecology of the Sinspawn

Bestiary

This chamber introduced new aspirants to the Gauntlet, and for PCs who arrive on this level via the portal in area **B7**, it can continue to do so.

The metal bars surrounding the western balcony are 2 inches thick and made of iron (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 25), with a 6-inch gap between each bar. The first time each round a creature attempts to damage the bars, an electrical discharge arcs from them, making a +10 ranged touch attack (up to a distance of 20 feet) and dealing 3d6 points of electricity damage on a hit. The iron bars lower down into the edge of the balcony, allowing access from the room itself, once either the creatures in the room are defeated or once anyone touches the crystal plinth on the balcony.

As soon as the iron slab to area **D5a** or the bars along the western balcony are lowered, a *programmed image* (CL 20th) manifests atop the western balcony, causing an image to appear of a tall and thin Azlanti man clad in white robes, bent with age and leaning on a gnarled cudgel. His expression is amiable, and he squints his eyes as he speaks the following in Thassilonian.

“Greetings, aspirants of her majesty, Runelord Alaznist. I am Lo-Kath, our runelord’s fighting master, and you have earned the honor of attempting to gain her notice. Can you best my ragged reflections? The reward for success is the opportunity to wager your own lives in the Gauntlet of Fury.”

Creatures: The image of Lo-Kath fades as soon as the greeting is delivered, but as it does, the summoning circle in the northern alcove begins to pulse with red light. One round after the speech ends, or immediately should anyone set foot into the central area between the balconies, the circle summons his “ragged reflections,” a pair of skinstiches built to vaguely resemble Lo-Kath himself. These skinstiches step out of the summoning circle one after the other, carry five javelins in addition to a sharpened blade, and have been programmed to hurl the javelins at anyone who doesn’t descend to the ground to face them in melee combat. These foul creatures have been further augmented to split open when killed to release their secret passengers: swarms of flesh-eating cockroaches. The summoned skinstiches and cockroaches, in whatever combination, vanish after 2 minutes.

SKINSTICHES (2) **CR 5**

XP 1,600 each

hp 52 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4 246*)

COCKROACH SWARMS (2) **CR 2**

XP 600 each

hp 26 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 58*)

Treasure: The aquamarine gemstone sitting on the pedestal radiates a moderate aura of transmutation magic, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Spellcraft check while examining it identifies it as some sort of magical key. The gemstone itself is worth 1,000 gp and can be used to open the iron door to area **D6** (although doing so teleports the gemstone back to this pedestal; should the PCs wish to keep the gem for sale later, they’ll need to return here to collect it again).

D5a. Gauntlet Arrival

One end of this ten-by-twenty foot room is blocked by an iron wall, while the opposite end features a three-foot-tall carving of a stern woman’s face glaring from the wall.

Characters who are transported to the Gauntlet from the portal at area **B7** appear in this room. The carving to the east depicts Alaznist. At one point, the runelord could use this structure to speak to those in this room, either to taunt them or dare them to success in the Gauntlet, but she no longer observes this link. The iron wall to the west slides down into the ground with a grinding moan if it is touched from either side, rising back up an hour after no one is in area **D5** or **D5a**.

D6. Rubble-Strewn Hall

Broken stone and marble is strewn down the length of this five-foot-wide wide hall, and a long crack runs along the floor. The masonry of the walls also shows signs of damage. Shallow alcoves alternate from north to south along the corridor, with an unmoving body slumped near the easternmost one.

Some of the rubble lying on the ground appears to be bricks from the walls, while some has the appearance of fragmented marble sculpture. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check perceives that some of the rubble here came from four caryatid columns that were recently destroyed (further evidence of Maga Szuul’s passage through the dungeon).

Treasure: The dead body is the last of Maga Szuul’s barbarian followers, his body slumped where he perished to the caryatid columns. His longsword is broken, but his +1 *hide armor* is still functional. From this point onward, Maga Szuul was alone in exploring the dungeon, and he remains in area **D8**.

D7. Aspirant’s Choice

A pool of crystal-clear water fills the eastern half of this room, flanked by a pair of five-foot-wide walkways that lead to iron

slabs in the wall. The slab to the north is decorated with a silvery inlay of a wizard casting a burning spell, while the slab to the south is decorated with a silvery inlay of a soldier wielding a ranseur in battle. Short phrases are etched into the stone above each iron slab. Between the slabs, a carving of an archway made of lines of script adorns the wall just above the water's edge.

The previous chambers were intended to weed out the truly inconsequential, while only those who survived to reach this room were allowed the choice of how they would serve Alaznist should they succeed—as a wrathful apprentice in her laboratories, or as a furious soldier in her armies. The writing above each door is similar, both written in Thassilonian. Above the apprentice's door is inscribed, "Scald me with your wrathful magic," while above the soldier's door is inscribed "Scour me with your furious arms."

Both iron slabs are doors similar to the one between area **D3** and **D6**: slabs of iron that can be forced open (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 18) or tricked into opening with a successful DC 25 Use Magic Device check to activate them blindly. The northern door opens automatically if it is subjected to any alchemical or magical effect that deals damage (including alchemist bombs, which is how *Maga Szuul* entered area **D8**), while the southern door opens if any physical attack penetrates its hardness to deal even a single point of damage.

The archway carved in the wall between the doors looks like a two-dimensional version of the portal from area **B7**, and in fact, this archway and the pool of water are a similar type of device. This portal activates only if someone holding an *Abyssal runestone* steps into area **D7**, in which case the stone within the archway shimmers and transforms into gray mist. The portal remains active for as long as that character remains in area **D7** and for an additional minute after the character leaves the room. Originally, the portal's destination point was preselected by Alaznist or one of her minions (such as *Lo-Kath*), but now that Alaznist has left Hollow Mountain, the complex's previous ruler, *Runelord Thybidos*, is able to influence its destination from beyond the grave. Anyone who steps through the portal now is transported to area **E1**—as close to the runelord's tomb as he can manage—in hopes that the PCs will seek him out and aid his escape from imprisonment. Whenever a character steps through this portal and is transported to area **E1**, a rasping whisper echoes in their mind: "Seek me... free me... become my wrathful champions..."

D8. Apprentice's Ordeal (CR 7 or CR 9)

The floor of this large, domed chamber is decorated with an

intricate geometric mosaic. It, the walls, and the ceiling shine softly, all encased in what appears to be a layer of glass. A sphere of blue glass pulsing with an inner light is embedded in the north wall. To the south are three alcoves, the largest blocked off by black metal bars spaced fewer than two inches apart. Set into the wall at the back of this apparent cell pulses a second blue glass sphere.

The glass that encases the walls of this room is magically hardened to the strength of iron. The bars enclosing the central alcove to the south are made of adamantine, three inches in diameter (hardness 20; hp 120, break DC 40). The walls of this place radiate strong evocation and transmutation magic.

The *Runelords of Wrath* wanted students who excelled at evocation magic, of course, and they cared little for skill at abjuration or conjuration magic. Whenever a creature casts an abjuration or conjuration spell in this room, a booming voice echoes through the room, crying out "FORBIDDEN!" in Thassilonian while the entire room is blasted with streams of magically evoked acid for 1 round, dealing 2d4 points of acid damage to all creatures in area **D8** (Reflex DC 15 half).

The two glass spheres are magically linked, and they are the keys to proving one's worth as viable apprentices to the *Runelords of Wrath*. A living creature that touches the northern glass sphere is immediately teleported into the southern alcove, at which point the apprentice's ordeal begins. On the first round after the teleportation, a glowing symbol, the rune of wrath, manifests on the northern wall of the room. The rune glows until someone in the room casts an evocation spell (as symbolized by the rune of wrath). If someone casts an evocation spell, two more runes manifest on the wall to either side of the rune of wrath: the runes of gluttony (necromancy) and pride (illusion). This time, the runes change as soon as someone casts an evocation, illusion, or necromancy spell, at which point the runes change once more to show greed, wrath, and lust. If a character casts a spell from one of these three associated schools (enchantment, evocation, or transmutation), all runes but the rune of wrath vanish, at which point the apprentice's ordeal is completed if someone casts one final evocation spell. These spells (or even spell-like abilities) need not all be cast by the same character, nor do they need to be wizard spells, although (as *Maga Szuul* discovered) alchemist extracts do not count. If at any point an hour passes with no one casting an appropriate spell, the runes vanish and the ordeal resets itself.

A character can recognize the various Thassilonian runes and the schools of magic they each represent with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check, or automatically if she can read Thassilonian.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

Once the ordeal is completed, Lo-Kath's booming voice speaks "WELL DONE. EMERGE, APPRENTICE, AND ACCEPT YOUR REWARD!" in Thassilonian. A single *Abyssal runestone* (a reward for passing the apprentice's ordeal) appears, floating in the air 4 feet off the ground in the middle of the room. If not claimed by a creature within 1 minute, the *Abyssal runestone* vanishes. At this point, a living creature that touches the southern sphere is teleported out of the encaged southern alcove back into the northern portion of the room.

The apprentice's ordeal can be activated as often as the PCs wish (although the magic takes 1 hour to recharge after an ordeal ends), but no additional *Abyssal runestones* are granted. With no active runelord to resupply the ordeal's supply of *runestones*, only one can be dispensed at this time.

Creatures: Originally, prospective apprentices needed only to pass this room's test to appease the Runelord of Wrath, but those who have failed still haunt this chamber as a pair of foul undead guardians known as the Melted: the partially dissolved remnants of those who succumbed to the room's frequent acid baths. These variant undigested swarms appear as tangled masses of slurry and viscera from which extend dozens of arms that twitch and writhe, pantomiming the act of spellcasting in their horrific undeath. They stumble forth on dozens of partially ruined arms, one from each of the smaller

southern alcoves, to attack anyone who enters the room. They do not enter the caged area in the southern alcove unless they're first attacked by creatures there. Once engaged, the Melted both fight to the death.

One other creature awaits the PCs here—the Yamasoth cultist Maga Szuul. After fleeing the Melted by touching the northern glass globe, the hapless alchemist has discovered that his extracts don't qualify as spells for the purposes of the apprentice's ordeal, which was designed first and foremost to test wizards. He's been stuck here for several days. The day before the PCs arrive here, Maga exhausted his food supplies; he has just exhausted his water as well (drinking what he could from his alchemy supplies), and the realization that he's going to starve to death in this prison has settled in.

When he notices the PCs, he staggers to his feet and warns them not to touch the glass ball in the same breath he begs for them to get him out of his cage. If the PCs ask him questions, Maga says that he'll speak only after he's been released from his cage. A PC who succeeds at a Bluff check promising him freedom or a DC 28 Diplomacy check can get him to talk before being released.

Maga, of course, plans on betraying the PCs as soon as he gets the chance, and this justifies him spilling a few cult secrets if that's what it takes to escape, especially since he intends to send those secrets to each PC's grave once he gets the chance. The most important information the PCs should learn from Maga is that he's part of a larger cult based in the Gecko, one of the Irespan pilings in Magnimar, and that the cult intends to unleash a virulent contagion he calls the "polymorph plague." If the PCs release him, he promises to lead them to the cult and to help them stop the plague.

In fact, he betrays the PCs as soon as he's able, especially if he can secure any *Abyssal runestones* they may have gathered.

Magical control is the one way to ensure Maga keeps his word, in which case the cultist can become an invaluable ally (if he survives to the next adventure).

Getting him to repent his evil ways and to voluntarily aid the PCs is a more certain way to get his aid, but convincing him to betray his cult should be a difficult task requiring a silver tongue, some compelling compassion, and a lot of patience.



THE MELTED

THE MELTED (2)
XP 1,600 each

CR 5

Variant undigested swarm (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5 258*)
NE Tiny undead (swarm)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 16, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural, +2 size)

hp 54 each (12d8)

Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities amorphous, swarm traits; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** acid 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee swarm (3d6 plus digest and distraction)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks digest, distraction (DC 16), grasping clutches

STATISTICS

Str 4, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 3, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +9; **CMB** —; **CMD** —

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility

Skills Climb +17, Perception +5, Stealth +17, Swim +14

Languages Common (can't speak)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Digest (Ex) A Melted does not do as much acid damage with its digest attack as a normal undigested swarm. A target that takes swarm damage from it is spattered with acidic slime and must succeed at a DC 16 Reflex save or take 1d6 points of acid damage at the start of its turn for 1d4 rounds. An affected creature can attempt a new save as a full-round action. Washing off the acid grants a +4 bonus to this save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Grasping Clutches (Ex) A creature that takes swarm damage from the Melted is grabbed and held by the swarm's dozens of clutching hands, gaining the entangled condition. In order to move more than 5 feet away from the Melted, a character entangled in this way must succeed at a DC 15 combat maneuver check or Escape Artist check as part of the move action taken to try to escape the swarm's grasping clutches.

MAGA SZUUL

CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 79 (see page 62)

Story Award: The first time the PCs pass one of the two ordeals and earn an *Abyssal runestone*, grant them a reward of 4,800 XP (no XP award is earned if they gain a second *Abyssal runestone*, although having two of them may be particularly helpful in the final dungeon of this adventure). If the PCs manage to redeem Maga Szuul, award them 6,400 XP rather than the 3,200 XP they gain for defeating him in combat to reflect the greater difficulty of the task.

ABYSSAL RUNESTONE

An *Abyssal runestone* is a circular stone etched with the seven-armed sigil of the Abyss. These minor artifacts are infused with the entropic energies of the Abyss itself and were often used by wizards of Bakrakhan to conjure demons. Runelord Thybidos was the original creator of these minor artifacts, but Alaznist stole his technique soon before murdering him (a technique that required the aid of a powerful outsider—Yamasoth, in Alaznist's case), and never revealed the secrets of their creation.

ABYSSAL RUNESTONE

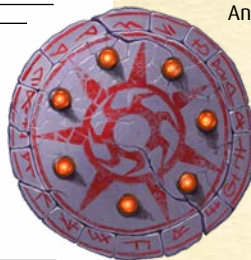
MINOR ARTIFACT

SLOT none

CL 20th

WEIGHT 1 lb.

AURA strong conjuration [chaos and evil]



An *Abyssal runestone* allows a spellcaster to cast *lesser planar binding*, *planar binding*, or *greater planar binding*, provided the spellcaster has prepared a spell of equal or greater level to expend during the casting; the planar binding spell functions at a caster level equal to the spellcaster's, not to the *Abyssal runestone*.

Spontaneous spellcasters cannot use *Abyssal runestones* in this way.

If a chaotic evil outsider eats an *Abyssal runestone*, the *runestone* is destroyed and the outsider permanently gains the advanced creature template. A creature that already has this template, or is above CR 20 in power, gains no benefit from eating an *Abyssal runestone*.

Abyssal runestones may have several other uses as components in rituals and powerful magic, particularly in quickening the effects of afflictions associated with the Abyss—for example, the creation of a fast-acting, highly contagious variant of the polymorph plague (see the next adventure, "Runeplague") requires the expenditure of an *Abyssal runestone*.

DESTRUCTION

An *Abyssal runestone* is destroyed if it is eaten by a chaotic evil outsider or used in one of the rare occult rituals that can be bolstered by its sacrifice.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

D9. Soldier's Ordeal (CR 10)

The walls, floor, and ceiling of this room are riddled with cracks, testaments to countless violent clashes in the chamber along with the shattered bones and broken weapons strewn about the place. The southern wall of the room is made of iron and bears a softly glowing image of a ranseur, while a partially collapsed, rubble-strewn corridor exits from the opposite side of the room.

Although this room appears to be on the verge of collapse, a successful DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) or Perception check is enough for a PC to determine that the apparent damage is little more than decoration intended to give the room a greater sense of a history of violence.

The northern tunnel extends 60 feet further north before ending at a glowing circle in the floor, similar in appearance and function to the circle in area D5.

This room was where the Runelords of Wrath tested subjects who sought service as commanders in the armies of Bakrakhan or as bodyguards to persons of note. The soldier's ordeal begins when a character either touches the southern wall or travels more than 20 feet down the northern corridor. At this point, a block of stone rises up in the western hallway at the point marked with an "X"—this stone remains lowered until the soldier's ordeal is concluded.

Creatures: When the soldier's ordeal is triggered, the eerie sound of raspy howls and claws on stone echo down from the northern corridor. A group of four sinspawn have been summoned, and these creatures are eager to race south to attack the aspiring soldiers.

Once all four sinspawn are slain or after 4 rounds have passed (whichever comes first), a second glowing ranseur appears on the southern iron wall and a new set of eerie sounds echoes from the north. This time, a pair of shriezyxes is conjured. Like the sinspawn before them, they surge south to attack the PCs.

Once both shriezyxes are defeated or an additional 4 rounds pass (whichever comes first), a third glowing ranseur appears on the southern iron wall and an ominous scraping sound comes from beyond, followed by a loud thump as something hammers against the far side. This scraping and thumping persists for 2 additional rounds (giving the PCs a chance to regroup and prepare) before the iron wall vanishes, revealing a 20-foot-square chamber containing a single shriezyx queen who was summoned into this chamber. She attacks at once as soon as she is freed.

The soldier's ordeal ends after all of the monsters are defeated, or 2 minutes after the shriezyx queen appears, at which point all of the summoned monsters vanish. A PC passes the ordeal if she survives, whether or not all of the monsters are slain. At this point, Lo-Kath's booming voice speaks "WELL DONE. EMERGE, SOLDIER, AND ACCEPT YOUR REWARD!" in Thassilonian. A single *Abyssal runestone* (a reward for passing the Soldier's ordeal) appears, floating in the air 4 feet off the ground in the middle of the room. If not claimed by a creature within 1 minute, the *Abyssal runestone* vanishes. After the *runestone* is claimed or vanishes, the block of stone in the western tunnel lowers back down, allowing the PCs to return to area D7.

SINSPAWN (4) CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 19 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 246)

SHRIEZYXES (2) CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 38 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 244)

SHRIEZYX QUEEN CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 104 (see page 88)

E. THE DEGRADATION OF THYBIDOS

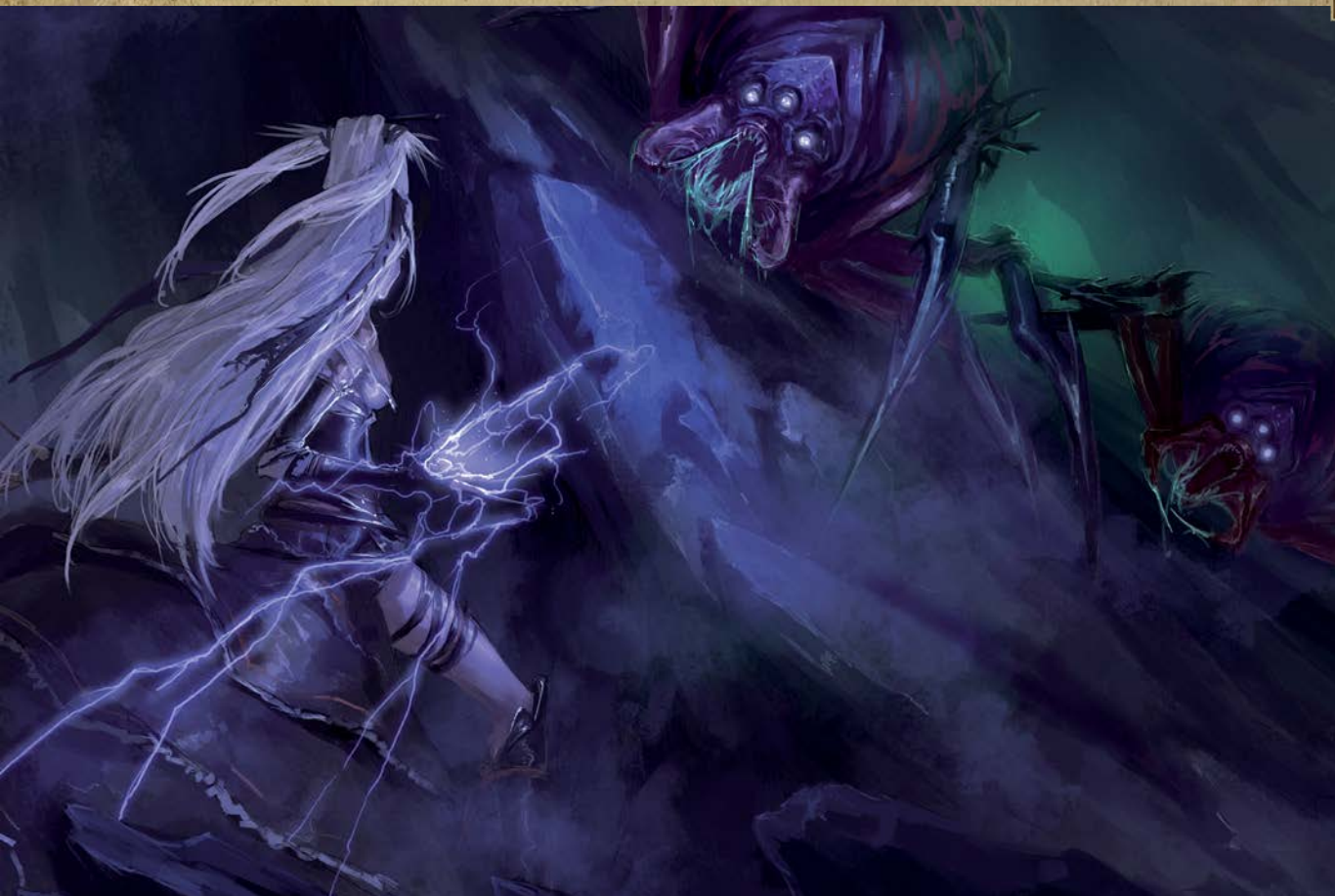
This tomb complex is one of many found on the 14th level of Hollow Mountain, known collectively as the Forlorn Sepulchers. Originally intended to house the honored dead who served Alderpash, the first Runelord of Wrath, the use of these as crypts fell out of favor after Alderpash's defeat. This changed when Alaznist's predecessor, Runelord Thybidos, opened a section of these crypts to entomb *his* predecessor, Runelord Xiren. A man whose rage drove him to humiliate others, Thybidos reigned for just over a century before Alaznist sought to humiliate him by first removing his limbs (while Thybidos was still alive) then entombing him in the same remote corner of the Forlorn Sepulchers where Thybidos had disposed of Xiren. Runelord Alaznist incorporated a complex release condition similar to that of a binding spell into Thybidos's imprisonment, scattering gemstone keys to the locks that keep him bound into the complex and tying his fate to the remains of Runelord Xiren. These conditions have ensured that Thybidos has remained bound for the thousands of years to follow Earthfall.

With Alaznist's emergence from the Eye of Fury and her vacancy from Hollow Mountain, though, Runelord Thybidos has seized on this release condition and has begun to extend his influence outward, hoping to attract the attention of someone who can help him escape his imprisonment. So far, his attempts to influence and manipulate the denizens of Hollow Mountain have been frustratingly difficult, for Thybidos's bound condition limits the reach of his undead mind. The PCs may become his first "recruits" in this manner if they use the portal in area D7, or they could come to this section of the sepulchers via a more traditional route if they follow the directions sent to them by Runelord Sorshen in a dream (see **Event 16**). This letter route links area E1 to a hidden entrance on Rivenrake Island's lower slopes, marked by an overgrown archway depicting two weeping dragons.

The walls of this complex are polished smooth and bear countless inscriptions in Thassilonian that insult Runelord Thybidos in thousands of different ways, so

IT CAME
FROM HOLLOW
MOUNTAINPart 1:
Sailing the
Lost CoastPart 2:
The Sihedron
CouncilPart 3:
Under the
Mountain's GazePart 4:
The World
Is HollowNPC
GalleryAshava, the
True SparkEcology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary



that no matter where his spirit looks, he is faced with his humiliation. The chambers are lit by softly glowing spots of light placed high up on the walls, so that unless otherwise indicated, rooms in this complex have dim lighting (just enough to read an adjacent wall's insults).

E1. Entrance to Thybidos's Humiliation

Drifts of dust and small heaps of rubble clutter this room. A long hallway extends off to the west, while to the east a second hallway ends at a circular pillar that blocks entrance to a large room beyond save for narrow gaps to either side. A blue marble statue of a thin man with a cruel face and long hair fringing a bald pate, his arms outstretched, stands in the middle of the room, still upright despite one-inch-wide gaps that separate the statue into six components—a head, two arms, two legs, and a torso. A plaque at the statue's base bears a single word.

The plaque at the base of the statue bears the name "Thybidos" in Thassilonian. The statue itself is held together by a thin shell of force. If the effect is removed (treat this as a permanent *wall of force*, CL 20th), the statue's arms, head, and torso collapse to the ground.

The pillar to the east is a slab of solid granite (hardness 8, hp 1,800) that leaves a 1-inch gap to the north and south. *Gaseous form* or a similar ability to pass through a small space can allow a PC to move past the pillar into area E2, as does destroying the pillar.

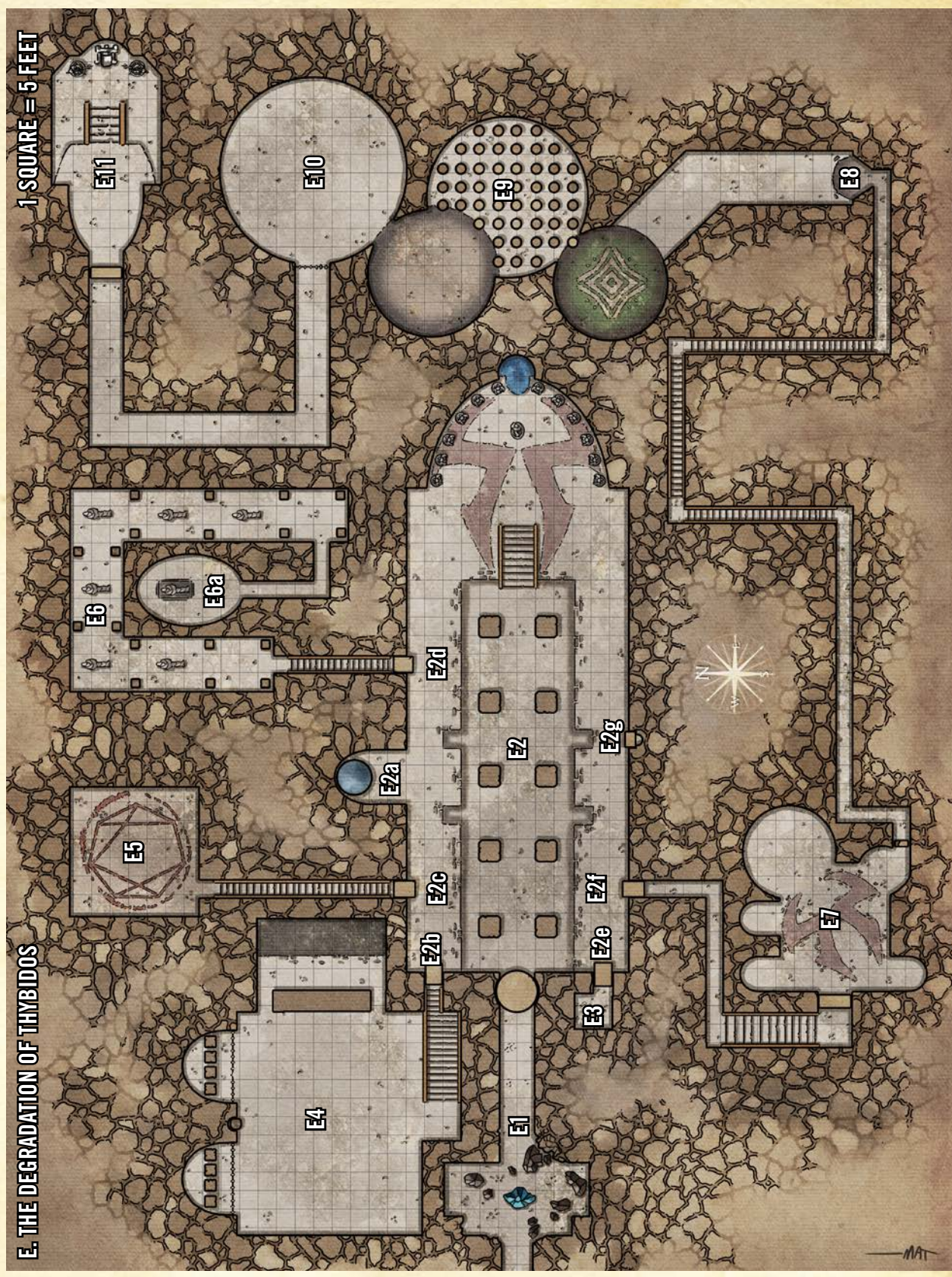
A character who passed one of the ordeals in the Gauntlet and carries an *Abyssal runestone* feels a strange presence in their mind just before experiencing a raspy telepathic whisper from Thybidos's imprisoned spirit: "Speak my name and enter..." A character who says the name "Thybidos" aloud in this room causes the stone pillar to retract permanently into the ground. Alternatively, a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Use Magic Device to blindly activate the pillar's magic also causes it to withdraw.

E2. The Fane of Wrath (CR 9)

The marble floor of this grand chamber is set with a striking design in jade and golden glass. The ceiling rises to a height of sixty feet above the pillar-lined central portion of the room, while a twenty-foot-high raised balcony surrounds this on three sides. A broad set of steps ascends to this overlooking balcony at the east end of the hall.

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

E. THE DEGRADATION OF THYBIDOS



This whole area is a temple to wrath, a place to worship the power of what the complex's creators considered the purest and most potent form of magic. When the PCs ascend the stairs to view the eastern portion of this room, read or paraphrase the following.

The steps arrive at a domed fane with the rune of wrath emblazoned on the marble floor. Twelve ivory statues of the same fierce woman wielding a ranseur line the curving walls, flanking a pool of water and a single, thirteenth statue made of gray stone. This thirteenth statue is of a man cowering on his knees, at half the scale of the women. Fresco scenes of unspeakable violence decorate the walls and ceiling, illustrating this place's dedication to the concept of wrath. Further west, six slabs of stone seem to be set into indentations in the walls, while a wider alcove opens in the center of the vast room's northern wall.

The statues along the walls depict Runelord Alaznist, while the kneeling man is a depiction of Runelord Thybidos in his final moments of life.

There are six stone slabs along the walls of this room (areas **E2b–E2g**). As with the stone block between areas **E1** and **E2**, speaking a specific word anywhere in area **E2** causes the corresponding stone slab to sink into the ground. Alternatively, a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Use Magic Device check can blindly activate a slab, causing it to sink into the ground. Once opened, a slab remains opened. Take care to keep an ear out for the words, “beloved” (area **E2b**), “beast” (area **E2c**), “faithful” (area **E2d**), “Xiren” (area **E2e**), and “betrayed” (area **E2g**)—if any PC speaks these words in area **E2**, the corresponding slab lowers.

The slab at area **E2f** uses a different mechanism to open. See the description of that area for details.

A seventh, larger slab stands in the northern alcove. See area **E2a** on page 53 for details.

E2b: This polished stone slab is decorated with carvings of flowers. The slab lowers into the ground if anyone speaks the word “beloved” in any language.

E2c: This polished stone slab is decorated with carvings of skulls. The slab lowers into the ground if anyone speaks the word “beast” aloud in any aloud language.

E2d: This polished stone slab is decorated with carvings of weapons. The slab lowers into the ground if anyone speaks the word “faithful” aloud in any language.

E2e: The finish on this block of gray marble, flecked with specks of black and white, is marred with a great gouge chiseled out of the center in the same location the other slabs bear carvings of images. The slab lowers if anyone speaks the name “Xiren” in any language. The PCs are unlikely to guess this phrase, but after speaking to

Thybidos in area **E11**, they may learn that the runelord's name is the key to opening this area.

E2f: This block of deep blue marble, flecked with specks of gray and white, bears a carving of a six-headed and six-times-decapitated serpent. The serpent's coils wrap around itself in a diamond shape, surrounding four circular impressions bearing a facet-like pattern.

Speaking the name of the Runelord Thybidos is not enough to make this stone descend into the ground. Four gemstones hidden elsewhere in the crypt-complex (a bloodstone from area **E2g**, a peridot from area **E6**, a carnelian from area **E5**, and a jasper from area **E4**) must be located and affixed to the faceted indentations in any order. When they are placed, the carving of the serpent glows softly with green light. At this point, if the name “Thybidos” is spoken, the door descends into the floor (incidentally trapping the four gems underground).

E2g: This polished stone slab is decorated with carvings of coiled worms. The slab lowers into the ground if anyone speaks the word “betrayed” aloud in any language.

Creature: Unlike the other slabs, which reveal chambers beyond when lowered, the slab at **E2g** reveals only a small alcove in which one of Thybidos's apprentices was imprisoned. This man was Zerrund, and he (foolishly) trusted Alaznist to hold to her promise of a reward if he agreed to provide information that aided her in the overthrow of Thybidos. When Alaznist destroyed his master, she gave Zerrund an entirely different reward—she let him watch as she burnt his spellbook and destroyed his arcane focus, then imprisoned him alive in a tiny stone tomb with slabs of maggot-infested meat harvested from Thybidos's body. Zerrund did not die in his prison, but instead transformed into a worm that walks who yet clings to his old bones (his skeleton is a cosmetic affectation, and as he fights, bits and pieces of his bones fall away until all that remains is his vaguely human-shaped body of worms). Zerrund is not undead, despite his grisly appearance, nor does he remain sensible. The thousands of years of perpetual “life” as a worm that walks trapped in a tiny alcove has destroyed his sense of reason.

Today, Zerrund is a shadow of his former self who serves as little more than a tomb guardian. He can still cast those few spells he recalls as a result of his Spell Mastery feats (including versions enhanced by metamagic), but even then, without his arcane bond, his spellcasting isn't guaranteed to function as he hopes. If Zerrund survives his initial encounter with the PCs, he might eventually regain his faculties enough to recover, but when released from his tomb, he wants little more than to unleash thousands of years of pent-up wrath on those who released him.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

ZERRUND

CR 9

XP 6,400

Male human worm that walks evoker 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 286)

CE Medium vermin

Init +5; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 12 (+5 Dex, +2 insight)

hp 78 (8d6+48); fast healing 10

Fort +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +8



Defensive Abilities worm that walks traits; **DR** 15/—;

Immune critical hits, disease, flanking, paralysis, poison, sleep

Weakness overwhelming wrath

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +5 (1d4+1 plus grab)

Special Attacks grab (Large), intense spells (+4 damage), squirming embrace, tenacious

Evoker Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +12)

At will—elemental wall (8 rounds/day)

7/day—force missile (1d4+4)

Evoker Spells Prepared (CL 8th; concentration +12)

4th—*ice storm* (2), empowered *scorching ray* (3)

3rd—*fly*, *lightning bolt* (3, DC 17), empowered *magic missile* (2)

2nd—enlarged *charm person* (DC 15), enlarged *magic missile* (3), *scorching ray* (2)

1st—*charm person* (DC 15), *magic missile* (4), *shocking grasp* (2)

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *light*, *message*, *ray of frost*

Thassilonian Specialization evocation; **Opposition Schools** conjuration, abjuration

TACTICS

During Combat Without his arcane bond, Zerrund must succeed at a concentration check (DC = 20 + the spell's level) when he casts a spell to avoid losing the spell as he casts it. If he fails to cast a spell in this way, his rage compels him to make a slam attack against a foe on the next round rather than cast a spell. These significant disadvantages aside, on the first round of combat he attempts to cast *fly*, then does his best to maintain distance between himself and the PCs and focuses on using his other spells to blast them to death.

Morale Zerrund fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 20, **Con** 20, **Int** 18, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +5 (+13 grapple); **CMD** 26

Feats Craft Wondrous Item, Diehard, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Eschew Materials, Scribe Scroll, Spell Mastery (taken twice; *charm person*, *fly*, *ice storm*, *lightning bolt*, *magic missile*, *scorching ray*, and *shocking grasp*)

Skills Craft (alchemy) +15, Craft (siege engines) +13, Fly +16, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (planes) +15, Perception +10, Spellcraft +15

Languages Abyssal, Azlanti, Elven, Giant, Thassilonian, Varisian

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Overwhelming Wrath (Ex) Zerrund suffers from an overwhelming sense of wrath that hampers his judgment. He lacks the disincorporate ability and racial skill bonuses most worms that walk have. This, plus

the fact that he's lost his arcane focus and has no gear, reduces his CR by 1.

Treasure: The pool at the easternmost end of area **E2** is magical, a font of pure wrath whose waters are influenced by Alaznist's runewell far above at the peak of Hollow Mountain. A character who drinks from the waters of this pool gains the ability to cast *distracting cacophony*^{UM}, *fireball*, *force punch*^{UM}, or *lightning bolt* as a spell-like ability with a caster level equal to his Hit Dice (maximum CL 10th). Once this ability is used (regardless of which spell is selected), the magic vanishes. A character can benefit from these wrathful waters only once.

A scattering of bones lies in Zerrund's tomb (area **E2g**), which are remnants of Thybidos's maggot-infested entrails. One of the skeletal hands still clutches a circular bloodstone worth 1,000 gp that is one of the keys for the slab blocking access to Thybidos's crypt (**E2f**).

Story Award: Grant the PCs 3,200 XP once they manage to get beyond the blocking stone at area **E2f** and proceed deeper into the dungeon toward area **E7**.

E2a. Epitaph

A ten-foot-wide obelisk of blue-gray stone stands in this alcove, its face carved with the image of a six-headed and six-times-decapitated serpent. A short inscription has been carved below the image, the runes glowing softly with pale blue light that flickers and pulsates.

This obelisk serves as Runelord Thybidos's gravestone and is decorated with a variant of his personal sigil—a six-headed hydra (the decapitation represents Alaznist's mutilation of Thybidos just before she killed and imprisoned him). The phrase below the carving is written in Thassilonian, and it is part of the release conditions Alaznist had to include in her ritual to imprison Thybidos. Note that any PC who reads the phrase aloud will lower slabs elsewhere in the room, and that reading the words in order ensures that the more dangerous slabs are opened first. The trigger words are bold in the following text.

"Within these walls lies a failed patron, **betrayed** by a student, now just a broken **beast, faithful** only to his own failures, **beloved** by none who survived his fall."

If a PC reads these words aloud, have every PC roll for initiative. Any PC whose result exceeds that of the reading PC's can attempt a DC 15 Perception check (modified for distance as appropriate) to hear the slabs grinding down into the ground. A PC who hears a slab can take an action to call out a warning to the reader, perhaps stopping them from reading further.

E3. Xiren's Crypt

This ten-foot-square room is empty save for a pile of bone fragments and dust heaped like so much dirt to be swept up by a custodian. Only a jawless skull resting atop the morbid detritus suggests that these remains were once a person. No ostentation, no artful frescos, and no decorations adorn the walls to give any sign that whoever this was in life was a person of any importance at all.

The remains here are those of Runelord Xiren, the third Runelord of Wrath. Wary players may assume the remains to be a dangerous creature like a demilich, but Xiren's soul has long since been judged in the Boneyard and sent on to the Great Beyond. No supernaturally wrathful danger remains within this crypt as a result.

If the PCs have been sent by Thybidos in area **E11** to gather Xiren's remains, they need only the partial remnant of her skull (although gathering the dust and bone fragments doesn't hurt).

E4. The Loves of Thybidos (CR 8)

At the bottom of a flight of broad steps is a large, elegant chamber, the walls lined with rose-tinged marble. Coiling six-headed serpent symbols grace the marble floor, though they are worn and tarnished. Two semicircular alcoves enclosed by thick metal bars are in the north wall, each containing four short stone pedestals each adorned with a large red gemstone and supporting a tarnished golden urn. Between the two alcoves stands another marble pedestal, a huge orb of rose-colored crystal set deep into it. Archways to the east open into a large side room in which half the floor drops away into a yawning, ten-foot wide pit.

The iron bars on the alcoves are set 3 inches apart, and they likely must be destroyed in order to reach the alcoves beyond (hardness 20, hp 120). The orb of rose-colored crystal between the alcove is cracked, but it once allowed for the bars to be raised or lowered. The urns within the alcoves were once intended to contain the cremated remains of Thybidos's wife and children, but all eight of them are empty. Alaznist instead unceremoniously cast these murdered kin into the pit to the east as Thybidos watched.

Creatures: The pit in the eastern section of this room is 30 feet deep, its floor scattered with the fragmented bones of Thybidos's wife and children. Three of these murdered victims (Thybidos's wife, his eldest daughter, and his eldest son) rose as wraiths soon after Thybidos was sealed away in the crypt, and they immediately rise up from the pit to attack anyone who disturbs the remains or attempts to steal any of the gemstones in the northern alcoves. The wraiths do not pursue PCs out of this chamber.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

WRAITHS (3)**CR 5****XP 1,600 each****hp** 47 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 281)

Treasure: A closer inspection reveals that the urns are only brass and relatively worthless. Each of the eight gemstones on the pedestals is easily pried out if someone can reach them through the bars or bypass the barrier. Of the gems, seven are flawed quartz crystals worth 50 gp apiece. The gem furthest to the east, however, is a red jasper worth 1,000 gp—one of the key gems required to lower the slab at area **E2f**.

E5. Beast Trap (CR 7)

The floor of this empty stone chamber is inlaid with a distorted oval shape made of strange sigils and surrounding a heptagon. A single oval gemstone, bright orange in color, sits in the center of the room, well within the boundaries of the heptagon.

Creature: Thybidos was fond of serpents and other serpentine creatures, and he often used them as guardians and minions. Alaznist used one of his more recent acquisitions to serve in this room as an eternal guardian, binding a fiendish death worm into the chamber as the guardian for one of the gemstone keys. The monster remains in stasis, out of time and space until anything physically passes over the boundaries of the magic circle on the floor, at which point it suddenly appears (gaining a +4 circumstance bonus on its initiative check) and attacks. Methods of entering or exiting the circle that don't involve physical movement across or over the circle (such as a teleportation effect, or moving under the circle via *earth glide*) avoid attracting the fiendish death worm's attention entirely.

FIENDISH DEATH WORM CR 7**XP 3,200****hp** 68 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 292, 76)

Treasure: The gem at the center of the chamber is a carnelian worth

1,000 gp, and it is one of the keys needed to lower the slab at area **E2f**.

E6. Crypt of the Fidaelem (CR 9)

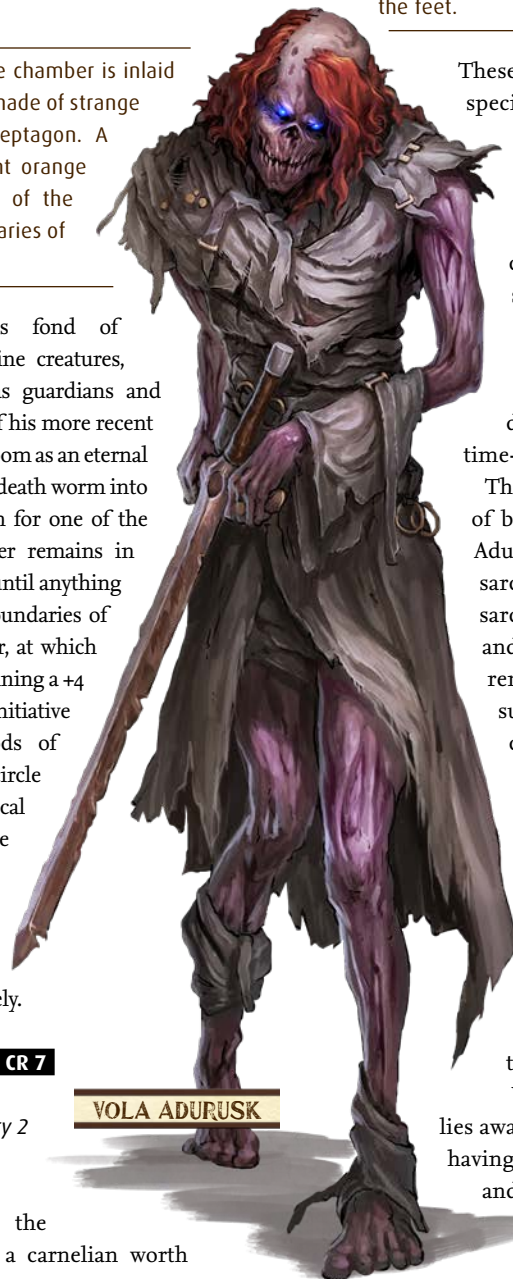
The floor of this long chamber is decorated with an abstract fresco of yellows, oranges, and light browns, giving the room the appearance of having been carved out of artistically rendered mineral ores. Evenly spaced twenty feet apart along the curving hall are sleek stone sarcophagi, their surfaces carved in images of men and women clad in elegant robes and clutching bastard swords to their bodies, hilt over chest and blade pointing downward toward the feet.

These sarcophagi contain the remains of a special caste of bodyguards known as the Fidaelem, who were well known for their faithful devotion to Thybidos. In reward for this faith, Alaznist entombed them alive in these stone coffins. Each sarcophagus has been sealed shut via *stone shape*, but can be smashed open relatively easily (hardness 8, hp 30, break DC 18). They now contain only ancient skeletons draped in brittle robes and clutching time-worn bastard swords.

The one-time leader of this elite sect of bodyguards was a woman named Vola Adurusk. Her remains lie in the central sarcophagus at area **E6a**. Unlike the other sarcophagi, Vola's sarcophagus is open, and her dried but still quite articulated remains are on full display. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check catches a glimpse of a green gemstone (a peridot) between her teeth, clenched within her mouth.

Creatures: All of the bodies entombed here are undead, but they do not animate immediately upon the PCs entering the room. Indeed, if the PCs wish, they can smash the remains of the six Fidaelem in the outer hall without having them animate at all.

Vola Adurusk is not so passive—she lies awake but motionless in her sarcophagus, having had thousands of years to wait patiently and faithfully for someone to come along to restore her master. When she spies the PCs, she contacts them

**VOLA ADURUSK**

telepathically, without moving, asking them, “Are you here to release my master from his chains?” Any answer to the affirmative, be it a simple “Yes” or a more complex one that says the PCs are here to release Thybidos is enough to satisfy Vola (although PCs who don’t honestly intend to release Thybidos must succeed at a Bluff check opposed by Vola’s Sense Motive). Vola also accepts an answer along the lines of, “We seek his aid in defeating Runelord Alaznist.” In this case, she simply opens her mouth and allows the PCs to pluck out the peridot she holds there. As they do, she says, “Then take this gem, one of the four keys to his freedom, speak the master’s name before the entrance to his humiliation, and leave me in peace.”

Any other answer, or any attempt to touch her remains before she opens her mouth, causes her to rise up in a rage, telepathically shouting, “You are fools, but in death you shall become loyal Fidaelem!” She attacks at once, and at the same time, any surviving wights in the outer hall begin to hammer at their sarcophaguses from within, attempting DC 18 Strength checks each round to smash free and come to Vola’s aid.

VOLA ADURUSK CR 4

XP 1,200

Cairn wight (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 276)

LE Medium undead

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

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 38 (4d8+20)

Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7

Immune undead traits

Weaknesses resurrection vulnerability

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk bastard sword +7 (1d10+3/19–20 plus energy drain), slam +1 (1d4+1 plus energy drain)

Special Attacks create spawn, energy drain (1 level, DC 16)

TACTICS

During Combat Vola splits her attacks among different foes, hoping to weaken multiple enemies with her energy drain ability rather than leave any unharmed.

Morale Vola fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 19

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Toughness

Skills Climb +10, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +10, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +18

Languages Abyssal, Thassilonian; telepathy 100 ft.

Gear mwk bastard sword, peridot worth 1,000 gp (this is one of the gemstone keys to area **E2f**)

WIGHTS (UP TO 6) CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 26 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 276)

Story Award: If the PCs secure the peridot clutched in Vola’s mouth without violence, award them 6,000 XP as if they had defeated her and all six wights in combat.

E7. Legacy of Wrath (CR 8)

The iron door (hardness 10, hp 120, break DC 30) blocking entry into this chamber has a large representation of the Rune of Wrath forged in its face and a handle at its center. Turning the handle 360 degrees counterclockwise requires a successful DC 15 Strength check and causes the door to sink into the floor for 24 hours. A similar handle is on the door’s east side.

An immense rune of wrath decorates this room’s floor. Exquisite portraits of imperious figures have been painted into the walls of five alcoves spaced irregularly around the room. Above, the twenty-five-foot-high ceiling is decorated with a fresco that depicts an angry sky ready to unleash a torrent of rain and lightning.

The paintings are lifelike representations of the five Runelords of Wrath, their names, in Thassilonian, inscribed into the base of each. The colors remain vibrant after all this time, preserved via magic. The first four portraits depict the runelord’s final fate and symbolize how they fell from rule, but the last, which depicts Alaznist, merely shows her in full glory as the ruler of an empire. The information presented in italics below is for GM context.

Alderpash: The first Runelord of Wrath is depicted as a scowling, elderly man trapped in an endless maze watched over by a demonic figure (a PC can identify this figure as the demon lord Baphomet with a successful DC 20 Knowledge [religion] check). (*Alderpash’s attempt to sacrifice Sorshen to Baphomet backfired and resulted in his own imprisonment in the demon lord’s realm.*)

Angothane: The second Runelord of Wrath is a handsome man with waist-length blond hair and heterochromatic eyes (one white, one black). He is depicted on his knees, clutching his head as blood runs from his eyes and gaping mouth. Standing over his shoulder is Runelord Xanderghul, ribbons of eldritch magic extending from his fingers to bore into Angothane’s soul. (*Angothane was one of three runelords slain by Xanderghul during a violent schism that nearly tore Thassilon apart and forever thereafter set the runelords at odds against each other.*)

Xiren: The third Runelord of Wrath is a thin woman with haunted eyes and dressed in a flowing gown.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron Council

Part 3:
Under the Mountain’s Gaze

Part 4:
The World Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the True Spark

Ecology of the Sinspawn

Bestiary

She staggers back as her hands rise to her throat, which has just been cut by a curved knife made of glittering force magic wielded by a sinister looking man—Runelord Thybidos. (*Xiren was assassinated by Thybidos when he decided he should be the one to rule Bakrakhan.*)

Thybidos: The fourth Runelord of Wrath is a balding man with wisps of hair flowing to his shoulders, his hawk-like face twisted in agony as whiplike tendrils of fire lash through his shoulders, hips, and neck, severing his body into six parts. The tendrils of fire extend out of this alcove along the walls to the outstretched hand of Runelord Alaznist's portrait in the next alcove. This painting is also a secret door, which a PC can discover with a successful DC 20 Perception check. (*Thybidos was in turn assassinated by Alaznist and imprisoned in this very tomb.*)

Alaznist: The final Runelord of Wrath is shown in full glory, standing atop the Irespan as it juts from

the side of Hollow Mountain while legions of demons, sinspawn, and soldiers clamor for her attention and blessing far below. One hand is outstretched, with lines of fire snaking out to cut apart the nearby portrait of her predecessor, Thybidos.

Creature: The painting of Runelord Xiren, beheaded by her successor Thybidos after he starved her in a cell for weeks and conducted a sham trial, is in fact a cleverly built construct, a variant form of a cephalophore that can assume painting form rather than statue form. As soon as a PC attempts to access the secret passage behind Thybidos's portrait (or as soon as the "painting" of Xiren is damaged), the cephalophore steps out and immediately attacks, fighting until it is destroyed.

EFFIGY OF XIREN

CR 8

XP 4,800

Variant cephalophore (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4 27*)

hp 96

E8. The Jeweled Ascent (CR 8)

A long winding tunnel, half of which consists of a steep flight of stairs leading ever deeper into the ground below Hollow Mountain, eventually comes to an end at an open shaft that rises upward into a 15-foot-wide hall, a full 30 feet up.

This shaft features no traditional method of ascent—no stairs, ropes, or ladders—but the shaft's walls are studded with rough cones of red, yellow, or green glass, protruding here and there from the walls in shapes that could be used as hand- and foot-holds for a climb.

Trap: The glass cones have a rough texture, making them perfectly suited as handholds for climbing. It takes only a successful DC 10 Climb check to scale the walls of this shaft. That said, the shaft itself is a complex magical trap. The only safe way to ascend is to use only red handholds (the yellow and green cones are not placed in a way that allows ascent using only them, a fact that a PC who takes the time to look for patterns in the glass placement can confirm with a successful DC 25 Perception check). If someone ascends or descends the shaft using more than just red handholds, the trap is triggered as soon as the climber reaches the top of the shaft. Note that climbing the shaft without touching any of the cones (requiring a successful DC 30 Climb check, or DC 5 if performed with the aid of a rope) still results in the trap being triggered as the climber reaches the top.

The trap is not triggered if someone descends the shaft rather than ascends it, nor is it triggered



EFFIGY OF XIREN

if flight, teleportation, or other methods of travel that do not involve climbing are used.

JWELED ASCENT CR 8

XP 4,800

Type magic; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** automatic; **Bypass** climb using only red glass handholds

Effect As soon as a climber reaches the top of the shaft, the cones of glass transform into horizontally aligned razor-sharp shards of magically strengthened glass that immediately begin to spin around the shaft's circumference. These shards extend to the center of the shaft and deal 6d6 points of slashing damage (DC 20 Reflex half) to each creature within the shaft (and any ropes hanging down as well), potentially causing additional falling damage. The spinning glass blades churn for 1 round before transforming back into cones, resetting the trap.

E9. The Forest of Pillars (CR 8)

The hall ends abruptly at a precipice, descending twenty feet into a circular room decorated with a vibrant green fresco. The northeastern side of the pit opens into a second chamber whose floor is at the same level as the southern hallway. This second room is filled with pillars set five feet apart. One of those pillars straddles the pit's edge, extending down to the floor below. What appears to be a second circular pit is located on the far side of the pillar-filled room.

The green painting on the floor of the pit is lacquered so that it shines in the presence of a light source as if it were carved from actual jade. The once tightly fitted brick that lines the walls of both pits has chipped and worn over the years, providing footholds for climbing. A successful DC 10 Climb check is required to descend and ascend these walls.

Creatures: Two loathsome qlipphoth, slithering tangles of hatred known as vexenions, guard the pillar-filled chamber. Though they are sizable, their ability to compress allows them to move between the pillars with nauseating ease. The vexenions notice the party negotiating the climb from the jade pit, potentially attacking as soon as the PCs attempt to clamber over the edge. The two qlipphoth pursue foes as far north as area E10 and as far south as area E7.

VEXENION QLIPTHO (2) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 76 each (see page 86)

E10. Hydra's Grave (CR 8)

The ceiling of this large domed chamber rises thirty-five feet, while a wall of iron bars blocks a broad hall heading off to the west. A fresco of a six-headed serpent covers the floor, though parts of it have been worn away by the passage of time, and it appears as if someone has smashed the serpent's six heads with some form of heavy bludgeon, leaving those parts of the fresco cracked and damaged.

The iron bars (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 25) are set deep in floor and ceiling, completely blocking access to the hallway beyond. They can be smashed down or bypassed via magic, but they also fade away into mist if the haunt in this chamber is either inactive or destroyed.

Haunt: The fresco of the six-headed hydra on the ground is more than a design. It duplicates the remains of one of Thybidos's favorite pets, a powerful six-headed pyrohydra—yet another creature slaughtered by Alaznist during Thybidos's agonizing final hours. Alaznist had the slain hydra's body buried in the stonework below this room, but not before she engaged the aid of several enslaved necromancers to use the pet hydra's spiritual energy to force the manifestation of a haunt to serve as a final guardian of Thybidos's crypt. The haunt itself rises up from the hydra's buried bones, manifesting as a ghostly version of its former self before it begins spewing beams of fire at any targets in sight.

HAUNTING HYDRA CR 8

XP 4,800

CE persistent haunt (area E10)

Caster Level 8th

Notice Perception DC 25 (to hear the sound of six serpents hissing and smell the stink of burning flesh)

hp 36; **Weakness** susceptible to cold damage; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 day

Effect The image of the ghostly hydra does not move beyond a fifteen-foot-diameter area in the center of the room, but it instead spews a beam of fire from each of its six heads on its turn each round. It must make a ranged touch attack (with a +8 bonus) to hit a target with a beam, and a beam deals 2d6 points of fire damage on a hit. The haunting hydra cannot target a single foe more than twice in a round with its beams, and usually splits the beams up as evenly as possible between its foes.

Destruction The hydra's remains must be dug up from the 3 feet below the room's stone floor, and then either be destroyed or transported off of Rivenrake Island.

E11. The Torment of Thybidos (CR 9)

The iron door at the end of the hall is 4 inches thick (hardness 10, hp 120, break DC 30), but it won't pose a

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

problem to visitors to Thybidos's crypt, for it rises silently into the ceiling as soon as any creature approaches within 10 feet of it.

The walls of this grand chamber are lined with sheets of deep green marble. An intricate mosaic of a coiling, six-headed serpent decorates the floor, beyond which a short flight of stairs leads up to a raised platform. Atop this ten-foot-high overlook, an ancient throne is flanked by two white marble statues of tall, muscular women holding ranseurs. Each statue has a leering skull for a face, and both aim their ranseurs down toward the throne itself. The throne is made of rusted and pitted iron, and the arms and back are covered in spikes and wrapped in chains.

Creatures: The undead remains of Thybidos are lashed by chains to the spiked throne, his arms, legs, and head severed from his torso, but all held in place on the throne itself by lengths of chain. Thassilonian runes glow on his leathery skin, and his hair and beard flicker as if made of black fire. As the PCs step into the room, the two statues to either side lurch in an automated fashion, jabbing their ranseurs forward to stab into Thybidos's torso. They repeat this action at the start of each round, and have been doing so for thousands of years. Thybidos's undead body always repairs itself before the next strike, only to be torn into again and again. Each time the ranseurs strike, his severed head emits a supernatural and chilling howl of pain.

As the PCs enter the room, the heads of both statues turn to face them, then grind and twist as they detach. These two ivory sentinels surge forward to attack the PCs, while the statues themselves continue their horrific torment round after round. If the PCs manage to destroy both ivory sentinels, the animated statues finally stop moving, and the PCs can converse with Thybidos, as detailed in **Event 17** below.

IVORY SENTINELS (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 75 each (see page 90)

Treasure: The PCs are unlikely to get the chance to investigate the throne until after **Event 17** is resolved. Should they do so later, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check finds a hidden hinge along the left side of the throne that opens a small panel, revealing a hollow space within the throne itself. Inside are several valuable treasures, minor trinkets once owned by Thybidos that were of little interest to Alaznist other than as a further method of humiliating her previous master by placing them so near yet so far from his remains. These treasures include a *lesser burning metamagic rod*^{UE}, three scrolls

wrapped with black ribbon (*cone of cold*, *contagious flame*^{APG}, and *leashed shackles*^{UM}), a *ring of forcefangs*^{UE} (already contains 2 charges), a *wand of force punch*^{UM} (9 charges), a *wand of wall of fire* (4 charges), and a blue silk drawstring pouch containing five *beads of force*.

EVENT 17: AN AUDIENCE WITH A RUNELORD

Once the ivory sentinels are defeated, the statues go still and the room falls silent for a moment. Then Thybidos's tormented remains issue a long, shuddering sigh of relief. Still chained to his throne and barely able to move, the runelord's body looks leathery and ancient, the dry bones of a mummy clad in filthy rags stained dark at the joints by ancient blood where his body was cut apart.

Thybidos is aware and conscious, but until the PCs address him, the ex-runelord remains silent, enjoying the first moment in centuries where he's not being actively tormented. The first time anyone attempts to speak to him, he responds only with a low, rasping whisper: "bring... me... Xiren..." Even this seems to exhaust the ancient runelord, and he slumps his chair.

The first time a character approaches within 10 feet of the runelord's throne, Thybidos's eyes, wet and horribly alive in their dry sockets, dart to that PC's gaze and impart a quick flash of overwhelming pain. That PC must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude save or be stunned for 1 round, but regardless of the results of the save, the character realizes Runelord Thybidos wants only the blessing of death, but Alaznist's curse runs even deeper than expected. Before he can be released from undeath, Thybidos must do something Alaznist believed he could never do—apologize, in person, to Xiren, the runelord he slew to take position as Runelord of Wrath. In this split-second vision, the PC realizes that Runelord Thybidos wants someone to bring Xiren's remains to him so that he may offer just such an apology. (The vision also informs that PC of the method of opening Xiren's tomb at area **Eze**.)

Any attempt to physically destroy Thybidos's remains can cause temporary damage that immediately repairs itself an instant later, for Alaznist's ritualized ruination of the man is one of her greatest works. The six chains binding him to the chair can be destroyed (each has hardness 10, hp 30, and a break DC of 28) or unfastened from their complex locks with a successful DC 30 Disable Device check. If all six chains are removed before Thybidos has a chance to apologize to Xiren, his severed limbs and head reattach, and he rises as a unique undead creature; see **Event 18** below.

If a PC demands answers from Thybidos or mentions that Sorshen sent them to him, the wrecked figure sighs once more and utters a few more words: "first...

Xiren... Bring her... to me..." A character who presents an *Abyssal runestone* earned from one of the ordeals in the Gauntlet of Fury provokes the most dramatic reaction of all. Thybidos's limbs shake and shudder and his eyes roll. He responds: "Alaznist... walks again... while I remain in chains... You have... endured the ordeal... but you do not serve... you must destroy... her... before she... destroys you..." This mouthful uttered, the undead remains slump and remain motionless until either the chains are removed (see **Event 18**) or Xiren's remains are brought before him.

If the PCs bring Xiren's remains (her partial skull from area **E3** suffices) and present them to Thybidos, he sighs one last time, then says, "Xiren... I am... sorry..." An instant later, his remains crumble to dust and his soul is released to face his final judgment in the Boneyard.

The PCs may be eager to interrogate Runelord Thybidos to learn more of Thassilon, of his successor Alaznist, or other topics. Unfortunately for the PCs, the many centuries spent tormented as an undead creature have left Thybidos's once formidable intellect a pale shadow of its former glory. At your option, you can have him gasp out a few cryptic words or short phrases in answer to questions posed by the PCs, but strive to use these more as opportunities to foreshadow events to come rather than to give the PCs definite answers.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to release Thybidos from his torment without transforming him into the unique undead monster detailed in **Event 18**, award them 9,600 XP.

Event 18: A Runelord Rising (CR 10)

If the PCs release Thybidos from his chains, the runelord's body parts fuse together and he rises as a unique undead creature, floating into the air on a plume of black smoke. He speaks in a strong voice as he does so: "Ah, to move again after so long. I must thank you, liberators, for breaking my chains. I am free now. Free to exact revenge, free to work my will again upon the world. Allow me now to reward you, to free you of your own prisons of flesh! Be the first in eons to feel Runelord Thybidos's wrath!"

At this point, the undead runelord attacks the PCs, eager to inflict pain on the living after so long in chains.

If Runelord Thybidos is defeated, he sighs in relief as

his remains crumble to dust. Denied the opportunity to apologize to Xiren, his prospects in the Boneyard are likely to be dire.

RUNELORD THYBIDOS **CR 10**

XP 9,600

Male unique undead

CE Medium undead



IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Shava, the
True Spark

History
Spawns

Bestiary

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +21
Aura runelord's wrath (30 ft., 1d4 rounds, DC 21)

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 20 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural)

hp 133 (14d8+70)

Fort +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 10/—; **Immune** fire, undead traits

Weakness influenced by *Abyssal runestones*

OFFENSE

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

Melee 2 claws +18 (1d8+8 plus 1d6 fire and burn)

Ranged wrathful fire +14 touch (3d6 fire plus burn)

Special Attacks burn (1d6, DC 21), quartering curse

TACTICS

During Combat Runelord Thybidos attacks the nearest PC on the first round of combat, switching targets to any PC who seems particularly effective at harming him as needed. The first time he attacks a PC who carries an *Abyssal runestone*, he hisses and staggers back, that round of attacks wasted as he says, "Aaaahhhh... you carry proof of the ordeal... I shall suffer you to live as my gift to you!" Thereafter, he does not attack a PC who carries an *Abyssal runestone* unless the PC continues to attack him, in which case he focuses his fury on that character while shouting, "Traitor! Betrayer!"

Morale Runelord Thybidos fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 19, **Con** —, **Int** 20, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 33

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Toughness

Skills Fly +25, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (engineering) +19, Knowledge (planes) +19, Knowledge (religion) +22, Perception +21, Sense Motive +21, Spellcraft +22

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Giant, Shoanti, Thassilonian, Varisian

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Influenced by Abyssal Runestones (Ex) A PC who carries an *Abyssal runestone* can attempt a DC 20 Sense Motive check as a free action at the start of each round. On a success, the PC senses that Runelord Thybidos harbors memories of awarding such items to his own favored servants. Forcefully presenting an *Abyssal runestone* is a standard action that forces Runelord Thybidos to attempt a DC 20 Will save; on a failure, the runelord ceases attacking. In this event, he drops to his knees, weeping, and begs the PCs to bring him Xiren's remains once more. Runelord Thybidos remains in this state for 24 hours or until he is attacked again.

Quartered Curse (Su) When he is destroyed, Runelord

Thybidos unleashes a final curse on all creatures within a 30-foot radius. Affected creatures suffer increasingly mind-numbing and soul-crushing pain in the hips, shoulders, and neck. Each creature in the area must succeed at a DC 21 Will save or take 1d6 points of Constitution damage and 1d6 points of Charisma damage. The cursed creature doesn't benefit from effects that remove ability damage. Once cursed, the target must succeed at a Will save every 24 hours (at the same DC) or take the ability damage again. If either ability score is reduced to 0, the cursed creature's arms, legs, and head tear away from the torso in a spectacular display, killing the creature on the spot. A creature slain in this manner rises as a ghost after 24 hours have passed and gains the quartered curse ability as a bonus special ability. A character who took part in either the apprentice's or soldier's ordeal gains a +4 bonus on saving throws against this curse (or a +8 bonus if they took part in both ordeals). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Runelord's Wrath (Su) All creatures within a 30-foot radius that can see Runelord Thybidos must succeed at a DC 21 Will save or be terrified into subservience. A creature that fails its saving throw gains the cowering condition for 1d4 rounds. A creature that successfully saves is not subject to this ability for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting fear effect, and the save DC is Charisma-based.

Wrathful Fire (Su) Runelord Thybidos can shoot a beam of fire from his burning heart as a ranged touch attack with a range of 60 feet (no range increment). On a hit, this fire deals 3d6 points of fire damage. This does not provoke an attack of opportunity. He can use this attack and make both claw attacks in 1 round using a full attack action. On a hit, this fire deals 3d6 points of fire damage.

Development: If the PCs fail to destroy Runelord Thybidos, leaving the undead monster active, after releasing him, they will not find him here should they return. In this case, it's only a matter of time before the runelord regains a fair amount of his former power. You can have the PCs encounter him again later in this Adventure Path with the wizard creature simple template (*Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 249).

**CONCLUDING
THE ADVENTURE**

Having likely taken part in an aspirant's ordeal and released Thybidos's spirit, the PCs have taken a significant step toward their destinies as Varisia's newest heroes. As Runelord Thybidos is released from

IT CAME
FROM HOLLOW
MOUNTAINPart 1:
Sailing the
Lost CoastPart 2:
The Sihedron
CouncilPart 3:
Under the
Mountain's GazePart 4:
The World
Is HollowNPC
GalleryAshava, the
True SparkEcology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary



torment, either after the PCs give him the chance to apologize to Xiren's remains or after they defeat his undead form, the passing of his wrathful soul sends a spiritual ripple of psychic energy through all of Hollow Mountain. All those who dwell within know of the ex-runelord's passing, as does Runelord Alaznist far to the north, where she continues to consolidate her power deep in the ruins of Xin-Cyrusian. As explained in the next adventure, "Runeplague," Runelord Alaznist is unable to easily learn more about the PCs' identities due to the damage she's done to the time stream as well as their participation in the ordeals in the Gauntlet of Fury, but the PCs have no way to know this. For now, they know only that Thybidos' passing was noticed by many and that there is no responding echo from within Hollow Mountain. Each PC knows instinctively at this point that no runelord dwells within Hollow Mountain, and that this means Alaznist is most certainly free and out, somewhere in the world.

Of more immediate concern, the PCs have likely learned that other cults are active in the region. If they haven't learned from Maga Szuul (or at least his notes) of the presence of the cult of Yamasoth in Magnimar, they will soon after returning to that city. They may

even (correctly) worry that they haven't seen the last of the cult of the Peacock Spirit, particularly if Hira managed to escape. Finally, the mysterious invitation from Runelord Sorshen lingers—should the PCs travel to Korvosa to accept her offer of parley?

Note that while the PCs are free to choose where to go from here, the start of the next adventure, "Runeplague," assumes that the PCs return to meet their allies on board *Tyalee's Whim*. They aren't aware of the fact that at the end of this Adventure Path they'll be traveling to the Dimension of Time itself, but in the process they are destined to face additional perils, perhaps of their own accidental design. And while they will soon face these dangers, they will also have the opportunity to gain additional boons and powers associated with the themes of the campaign traits they chose at character creation, assuming they selected campaign traits from the *Return of the Runelords Player's Guide*. Full details on these new powers will appear in the next adventure.

One thing is certain—as the PCs emerge from the depths of Hollow Mountain, they have assumed the role of Varisia's newest heroes. As the runelords and their influence continues to spread, the heroes must travel the length and width of Varisia to oppose them at all costs!

MAGA SZUUL

Maga Szuul's evil and debased character is unmistakable. Foul in nature and cruel in desire, he has embraced the teachings of the qliploth lord Yamasoth and seeks to spread the Polymorph Plague's influence throughout Varisia.

MAGA SZUUL

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male human alchemist 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 26)

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; **Senses** Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (+5 armor, +2 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 79 (8d8+40)

Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5; +6 vs. poison

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee +1 sickle +7/+2 (1d6+1), bite +1 (1d8), claw +1 (1d6), tentacle +1 (1d4 plus grab)

Ranged bomb +9 touch (4d6+4 fire)

Special Attacks bomb 12/day (4d6+4 fire, DC 18)

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 8th; concentration +12)

3rd—*cure serious wounds* (2), *haste*

2nd—*barkskin*, *invisibility*, *resist energy*, spider climb, *vomit swarm*^{APG}

1st—*cure light wounds* (4), *enlarge person* (DC 15)

TACTICS

Before Combat Maga Szuul consumes his mutagen before combat begins, taking on a troll-like appearance.

During Combat Maga Szuul starts combat by drinking an *extract of invisibility*, then follows that in the succeeding rounds by drinking *extracts of barkskin*, *resist energy*, *enlarge person*, and *haste*. He prefers to fight at range with bombs, his *wasp nest of swarming*, or *vomit swarm*, using them as breath weapons when he would otherwise trigger attacks of opportunity. He uses his healing extracts whenever he's reduced below 25 hp, but drinks a second *extract of invisibility* if possible before then so he can heal in relative safety.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 15 hit points, Maga Szuul does his best to flee to safety.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 19, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +8 (+12 grapple); **CMD** 18

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Brew Potion, Extra Discovery^{APG},

Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Throw Anything, Toughness

Skills Craft (alchemy) +15, Fly +6, Heal +8, Knowledge

(arcana, nature) +15, Perception +12, Sleight of Hand +10, Spellcraft +15, Survival +12, Use Magic Device +9

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Thassilonian, Varisian
SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +8), discoveries (breath weapon bomb^{UC}, feral mutagen, precise bombs [4 squares], tentacle^{UM}, wings^{UM}), mutagen (+4/-2, +2 natural armor, 80 minutes), poison use, swift alchemy

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *wasp nest of swarming*^{UE}, mutagen; **Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, +1 sickle, *amulet of natural armor* +1, alchemist formula book (contains all prepared extracts plus 1d4 more extracts of each level of your choosing), alchemist's kit, orders from Leptonia written on a sheet of parchment made from demon hide (indicating the cult's base of operations in the Gecko Irespan piling in Magnimar and its goal to produce a contagion known as the "polymorph plague"), 94 pp, 4 gp

Maga Szuul was born in the Warrens of Kaer Maga, but the details of his parentage have never interested him. As he grew up, he developed a keen fascination with the infamous troll-augurs of his hometown and took to tagging along with the creatures whenever they offered their services (which consisted of opening their bellies and reading their own entrails for coin). The trolls came to call the boy Maga Szuul: "Maga" after the city that spawned him, "Szuul" after the ritual tool the augurs employed to slice themselves open.

Szuul grew to admire the monstrous shape and form of his troll allies. Never a charming lad himself, he sought methods of embracing his inner monster, watching and listening on the streets of Kaer Maga. It wasn't long before he learned of alchemy, and more importantly, of the work of a particular alchemist who specialized in mutilation and depravity. This was an especially unscrupulous and foul woman named Auxaba Dreel, and she was intrigued by Szuul's request to "make him a monster." She took the cruel but intelligent boy on as an apprentice of sorts, and he proved to have no qualms about obtaining the sometimes nauseating or illegal substances she required for her experiments. Indeed, he relished these tasks, no matter what unpleasantness they required. What she

used to punish previous apprentices became rewards to Szuul—transformations that altered his appearance by, for example, giving him a rat's tail or drawing a cowl of scaly flesh across his mouth. Szuul studied with Auxaba Dreel for several years, soaking up her knowledge. But when he finally came of age, Szuul determined that the old woman could teach him no more. While she slept one night, he slit her throat with the sickle he had been gifted long ago by a troll augur, catching the blood in several containers for use in his own experiments.

It was destiny that Szuul would eventually attract the attention of the cult of Yamasoth. Agents of the dreadful qliploth lord had long been active in Kaer Maga's shadows, and Auxaba was one of their primary sources for rare elixirs and unpleasant tinctures. Her death vexed the cult's agents, but they saw promise in her murderer's zeal and talent. The cult's leader, a half-drow named Leptonia, came to Szuul and offered him a choice between joining the cult or death, but no such threats were necessary—Maga Szuul was a perfect fit for the cult and soon became a ruthless and enthusiastic follower of the qliploth lord. Devotion to the cult dovetailed perfectly with his alchemical studies, and he rose quickly within the hierarchy. Before the first anniversary of his murder of Auxaba, he was being sent on missions across Varisia in service of the qliploth lord's will, killing, stealing, and striking terror into the hearts of those who stood in the way of Yamasoth's dark aims.

Maga Szuul followed obediently when Leptonia announced that the cult was moving west—he had little to keep him in the city of his birth, after all. On the journey west to Magnimar, Leptonia regaled her followers with descriptions of dream visions she'd had—of the gift of Yamasoth being spread through the nations of humanity and of the spread of the Kingdom of New Flesh into this world. In Magnimar, the cult settled into a new headquarters within one of the pilings of that city's legendary Irespan, where Maga Szuul discovered that the source of Leptonia's visions was itself a powerful qliploth who needed mortal agents to serve it.

Leptonia didn't hesitate to offer her cult to the qliploth, and Maga Szuul was only too eager to comply. He accepted his first mission with pride—travel to Rivenrake Island and recover something called an “*Abyssal runestone*” from the Gauntlet of Fury, a region within the dungeons of Hollow Mountain. The qliploth, through Leptonia, instructed Maga Szuul how to refocus a portal in Hollow Mountain to provide access into the Gauntlet of Fury, but the task of recovering the runestone would lie squarely on Maga's shoulders once he reached the dungeon.

It is a task he hopes not to fail.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Maga Szuul is the key to the party uncovering the dreadful plots of the Polymorph Plague. Szuul is not as recklessly devoted as his bodyguards, but even if he manages to escape the PCs, it should be only a matter of time before they encounter him again. Hints of his mistress Leptonia and her plans should eventually send the PCs to investigate the Gecko, the Irespan piling in which the cult has made its base in Magnimar, but they won't face the leader of the cult until they travel to Riddleport, as detailed in the next adventure, “*Runeplague*.”



IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

SURSHA ANTEFALLE

Sursha has spent the past several years sailing the waters of the Varisian Gulf, ferrying passengers and besting hungry beasts of the sea, the occasional pirate, and predatory competitors alike with admirable courage and cunning.

SURSHA ANTEFALLE

CR 5
XP 1,600

Female half-elf swashbuckler 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 56)

CG Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 shield)

hp 49 (6d10+12)

Fort +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** +1; +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities charmed life 4/day, nimble +1; **Immune** sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee +1 katana +13/+8 (1d8+12/15-20)

Ranged mwk throwing axe +11 (1d6)

Special Attacks deeds (derring-do, kip-up, menacing swordplay, opportune parry and riposte, precise strike, swashbuckler initiative), panache (2), swashbuckler weapon training +1

TACTICS

During Combat Sursha fights with a smirk, staying mobile in battle as she dances from foe to foe. Rather than remaining in one place for long, she eagerly provokes attacks of opportunity and makes use of her parry and riposte ability to gain additional attacks. Doing so also draws those attacks of opportunity away from allies, who can then move more freely through the battlefield to help set up flanking opportunities.

Morale Sursha is loyal to her crew and fights to the death defending them. If her ship is in peril of sinking, she ensures her crew abandons ship before she does so herself.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 18, **Con** 13, **Int** 12, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 21

Feats Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (katana), Skill Focus (Profession [sailor]), Slashing Grace^{ACG}, Weapon Focus (katana)

Skills Acrobatics +10, Climb +3, Diplomacy +8, Perception +10, Profession (sailor) +11, Sense Motive +5, Swim +3

Languages Common, Elven, Varisian

SQ elf blood, swashbuckler finesse

Combat Gear *potion of aid*, *potions of cure light wounds* (2);

Other Gear +1 studded leather, mwk buckler, +1 katana^{UC}, mwk throwing axe, spyglass, sunrod, 260 gp

Montico Antefalle came from a long line of sailors who called the Varisian Gulf home, but he was the first in his family to achieve the rank of captain and secure his own ship: a two-masted brigantine he named *Surety*, after his half-elven wife. Not a sailor herself, *Surety* nonetheless traveled with her husband and made the ship her home. They named their only daughter Sursha, after *Surety*'s elven great-grandmother.

Sursha grew up aboard the *Surety* as it transported cargo and passengers from one port to another, following a trade route from Roderic's Cove south to Korvosa. On rare occasions, *Surety* sailed further south when exceptional opportunities arose. It was one such opportunity that brought *Surety* to the Rahadoumi port of Azir, transporting a group of adventurers who paid considerable coin for the service. While they waited dockside for the Pathfinders to return, Sursha's mother, unused to the tropical climate, contracted a swift-acting fever. Without a cleric to call upon in that faithless city, she soon succumbed to the illness. Montico and his young daughter Sursha, only 3 years old, were heartbroken. They eventually transported the adventurers back to their base in Magnimar and buried *Surety* at sea, 20 miles west of Windsong Abbey. Montico swore an oath to never leave Varisian waters again.

As Sursha grew up, there was never any doubt that she would follow in her father's footsteps, for she had her father's unshakable connection to the sea. On her twenty-first birthday, her father presented her with a custom-made suit of studded leather armor, stained sea-foam green and embossed with dancing fish. A year later, a Tian merchant took a shine to her. While she gently rebuffed his proposals of marriage, she did accept his gift of a magical katana forged in his distant homeland. Sursha took to training with the exquisite weapon, which

she wore on her back in a leather scabbard matching the armor her father had made for her.

Father and daughter had a happy life together over the next 10 years, with a faithful crew they could depend upon and customers who came to them again and again for their fast and reliable services. But a few years ago, as they were returning from a rare journey north to the elven settlement of Arsmeril, a sudden storm caught *Surety*, and when a rogue wave swamped the ship, her crew was barely able to save their vessel. It was not until they were safe again that the sad truth was revealed: Montico Antefalle had been washed overboard. His body was never found.

Sursha inherited command of her father's ship, and the loyal crew stayed aboard to follow her. For a time, her demeanor was tinged by sadness, as she struggled with the loss of both her mother and her father. Then, a year after her father's death, a beautiful sea druid named Tyalee Spring booked passage on *Surety* without any apparent destination. As *Surety* sailed from port to port, Tyalee communed with the denizens of the deep, performed sacred rituals, and stood on deck during storms, reveling in the glory of the sea. Sursha was smitten.

Their love affair was as stormy as the waters of the Varisian Gulf. Sursha's crew grew increasingly concerned at how she turned down good paying commissions to instead follow one of Tyalee's mysterious caprices—sailing to remote islands, confronting gales head-on, or drifting in the middle of nowhere while the aquatic druid sojourned for days beneath the waves. It was her bosun, a kind-natured half-orc named "Elbows" Eddi, who finally confronted Sursha: they could no longer crew with her if she continued to follow each and every one of Tyalee's dangerous whims. She must choose between serving as captain of a merchant ship or acting as the personal transport for an unpredictable druid. Sursha was angry and resisted the ultimatum, but when Tyalee soon thereafter issued a demand of her own—to sail south to the Shackles and join up with a band of sea druids based in those dangerous isles—her decision was clear. When they reached port in

Magnimar, Sursha and Tyalee parted ways, much to the relief of the crew.

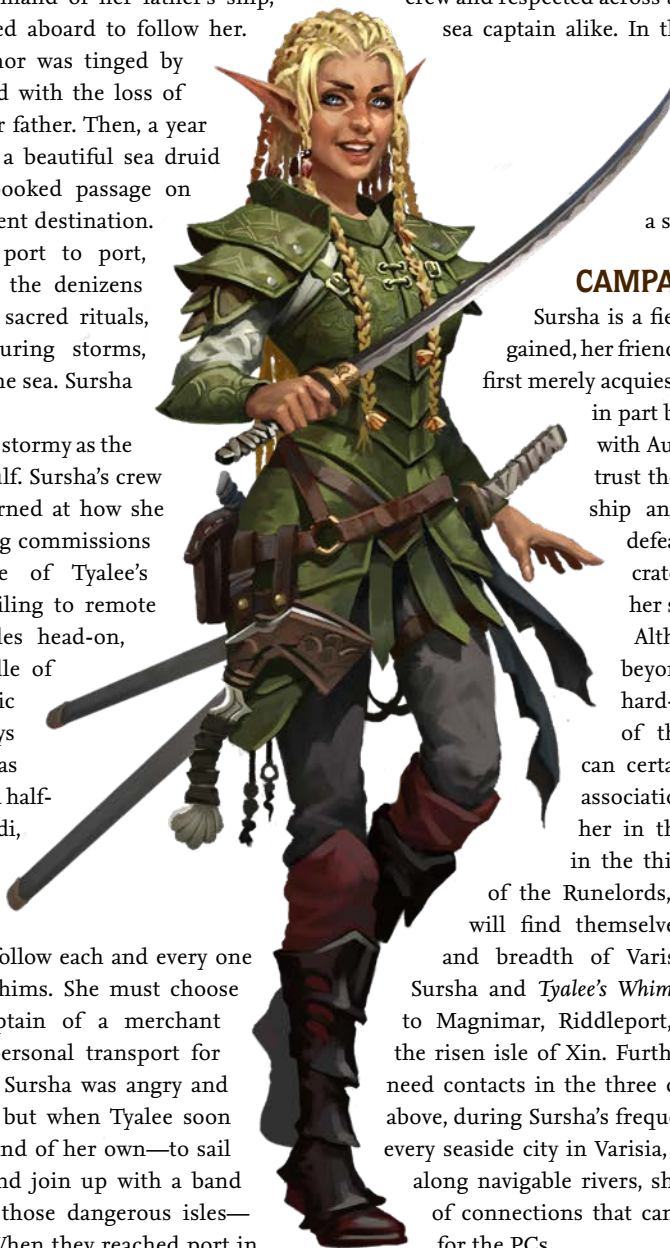
Life aboard *Surety* returned to normal thereafter for the crew, ferrying passengers and hauling shipments around the gulf, but Sursha was increasingly despondent. While the ship was docked in Roderic's Cove, the worried bosun sought out a priest to comfort and counsel Sursha. This was the Ashavan priestess Audrahni, who assuaged Sursha's heartache and brought her to the worship of the empyreal lord Ashava. Years have passed since then, and while Sursha still catches herself scanning the docks of every port they reach for the itinerant druid, she has been restored to her vibrant self, beloved by her crew and respected across the gulf by merchant and sea captain alike. In that time, she's renamed

her ship *Tyalee's Whim*, both in honor of her lost love and to remind herself of the responsibilities of being a ship's captain.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Sursha is a fierce and loyal ally—once gained, her friendship is a certain thing. At first merely acquiescing to the party's needs, in part because of her friendship with Audrahni, Sursha comes to trust the PCs after they save her ship and crew, either through defeating the beast in the crates or helping to secure her ship during the storm.

Although Sursha's role beyond this adventure isn't hard-coded into the text of this campaign, the PCs can certainly benefit from their association and friendship with her in the future. In particular, in the third adventure of *Return of the Runelords*, "Runeplague," the PCs will find themselves traveling the length and breadth of Varisia. In that adventure, Sursha and *Tyalee's Whim* can transport the PCs to Magnimar, Riddleport, Korvosa, and even to the risen isle of Xin. Furthermore, should the PCs need contacts in the three coastal cities mentioned above, during Sursha's frequent visits to the docks of every seaside city in Varisia, as well as those that lie along navigable rivers, she has built up a wealth of connections that can be a valuable resource for the PCs.



IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

VIRALANE BARVISAI

Viralane enjoys being the talk of the town and the toast of the ball, and she's spent most of her life building her reputation as an actress and singer. But recently, she's found a new calling—the Cult of the Peacock Spirit.

VIRALANE BARVISAI

CR 6

XP 2,400

Female human expert 2/mesmerist 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 38)

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; **Senses** Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 31 (7d8)

Fort +1, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

Weaknesses cursed

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +4 (1d4–1/19–20)

Special Attacks bold stare (timidity), hypnotic stare (–2), manifold tricks (2 tricks), mental potency (+1), mesmerist tricks 6/day (mesmeric mirror, psychosomatic surge, shadow splinter [Will DC 17]), painful stare (+2 or +1d6+2)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +9)

Once only—viridian escape

Mesmerist Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +9)

2nd (3/day)—*babble*^{OA} (DC 17), *hold person* (DC 17), *suggestion* (DC 17)

1st (5/day)—*charm person* (DC 16), *command* (DC 16), *disguise self*, *lock gaze*^{UC} (DC 16)

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *light*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 14), *unwitting ally*^{APG} (DC 15)

TACTICS

During Combat Viralane uses her magic to avoid combat if possible. She hides behind her allies and uses her abilities to disrupt spellcasters, ranged attackers, or anyone who seems highly mobile in battle.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 6 hit points, Viralane uses the viridian escape to flee to Magnimar. If she's already used this ability, she throws herself at the PCs' mercy—see area **C9** on page 38 for what the PCs can learn from her in return.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 14, **Con** 10, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15

Feats Combat Casting, Extended Stare^{OA}, Improved Initiative, Intimidating Glance^{OA}, Spell Focus (enchantment)

Skills Bluff +14, Disguise +12, Intimidate +14, Linguistics +6, Perception +9, Perform (act, sing) +14, Sense Motive +10, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +9, Use Magic Device +14

Languages Common, Elven, Halfling, Varisian

SQ consummate liar +2, touch treatment 7/day (minor)

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of eagle's splendor*; **Other Gear** +1 leather lamellar armor^{UC}, mwk dagger, ring of feather falling, 1,500 gp in jewelry and fine clothing, 8 pp, 8 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Viridian Escape (Sp) Viralane has been subjected to an ancient ritual called the *viridian transcendence*, granting her the ability to use *word of recall* once and once only as a swift action. When she activates this ability, she vanishes in a puff of bright blue-green smoke and reappears in a Peacock Spirit safe house in Magnimar.

Cursed (Su) Whenever Viralane takes to a literal stage, such as those found in a theater, her Charisma-based checks are made at a –15 penalty. The curse doesn't apply to informal gatherings, such as singing a song beside a campfire. This curse is particularly difficult to remove—to successfully eliminate the affliction, *remove curse* (DC 25 curse effect) must follow *atonement*; however, Viralane must also truly repent her adultery, taking responsibility for the harm she has caused. That may be the most problematic component of her redemption.

Viralane Barvisai was born the daughter of a cobbler in the Varisian settlement of Whistledown. Viralane took to singing, dancing, and playacting whenever and wherever she had the chance, finding that she loved the attention her antics brought. Soon, shopkeepers were paying her to perform near their businesses to draw in customers. In a short time, Viralane was earning more with her theatrics than her father was repairing shoes. Her father grew to resent his daughter's growing fame, berating and beating the girl even as he was more than happy to pocket the money Viralane made. It took little persuasion from the charming leader of a traveling theater troupe to convince Viralane to join their company and leave Whistledown behind.

The troupe leader, Auliska Bowden, was soon showcasing Viralane at every settlement they visited. It was after a performance at the Kendall Amphitheater in Korvosa that a Chelish impresario named Sirthis Vosi approached Viralane backstage. He convinced her to leave Bowden's troupe so he could introduce her to "the more discerning audiences of Egorian, Absalom, and Oppara." Vosi was true to his word, and within 2 years, she was headlining in cities from Corentyn to Oppara.

As Viralane's fame grew, so did her self-regard. Having forgotten the lessons of her childhood, when jealousy and envy made her life unbearable, she began treating other performers with disdain. Viralane became more difficult and unyielding with directors and conductors, and every booking contract was loaded with increasingly outlandish provisions and demands. She indulged her every whim and desire, went through lovers with reckless abandon, and left broken hearts and homes in her wake. Despite her conduct, her fame continued to pack performance halls where she performed. Her many admirers showered her with gifts, including a halfling slave named Corla, who became her most ardent devotee when Viralane quite theatrically manumitted her before a packed house in Westcrown mere minutes after Corla was "gifted" to her service. But all this changed when she finally performed in Egorian.

Soon thereafter, in the Chelish capital, Viralane headlined a melodrama beloved by the Thrune regime, *Luculla Storms the Gates of Hell*. There, she caught the eye of a man named Regemus Thrune, a minor cousin of the queen, and they entered a torrid love affair. The man's wife, Chara, caught them entwined in bed one night. Chara ran her husband through with a rapier and as the lifeblood pumped from his heart, cursed the actress: should she take to a stage, each performance would draw ridicule and derision, rather than the rapturous accolades she desired.

The curse took hold, and to date each of Viralane's desperate attempts to have it lifted have failed. The wealth she accumulated slipped through her fingers with her profligate spending, and soon she found herself performing in taverns and street corners, modest venues that seemed to bypass the deleterious effects of the curse. It was a year into this inglorious lifestyle that she was contacted by Hira Doss—the leader of the Magnimarian cell of the Cult of the Peacock Spirit and recipient of visions foretelling her deity's

imminent return to the world. Hira saw the wounded pride in Viralane and capitalized on it, recognizing that her talents as a mesmerist would come in handy for the cult. She promised Viralane that if she would devote herself to the Peacock Spirit and help restore the faith, the power of the reborn god would cleanse her of her curse. Clinging to the hope that she can once again be beloved by audiences across Avistan, she has dedicated herself to the cult. Accompanied by her slavishly devoted halfling maidservant and clad always in the costume of her last major role, Viralane has committed herself to serving the Peacock Spirit, even though she doesn't fully realize the full nature of the ancient organization she has joined.



IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary



ASHAVA, THE TRUE SPARK

Millennia-old tales from the wilderness of Elysium speak of numerous whirling lights seen in the plane's marshes and fens. These benevolent motes of light were said to guide lost travelers to safety and to lead wandering spirits to a place of rest. Although no wild place is ever truly safe—even on a plane as dedicated to joy and goodness as Elysium—these guiding lights made the wilderness feel a little less dangerous and provided comfort to many.

On a clear, moonlit night long ago, these marsh lights coalesced into the graceful form of a humanoid woman. As free and as full of motion as the lights that formed her, she wears an elegant gown of sparkling starlight and a circlet of moss upon her head. This is the azata empyreal lord Ashava, who dances in dangerous wildernesses and lonely graveyards alike, leading lost spirits home.

Like all azatas, Ashava is a being of spontaneity and virtue, celebrating each moment of existence with abandon and championing causes of goodness. As an empyreal lord, she has far more power than most other azatas, and she uses her divinity to bring hope and safety to mortals. Ashava's light is the soft light of the moon piercing through the darkness of night and the faintest flickering of light dancing among the trees and grasses in wild places.

As long as mortals have been telling each other stories over campfires, they have shared accounts of strange lights within the world's swamps and marshes. These cautionary tales warn that these lights are false guides, and following them will result only in death. Though the existence of the evil aberrations known as will-o'-wisp lends credence to these stories, not all lights lead wanderers astray. When Ashava turns her attention to the Material Plane, she might choose to bring a traveler out of the wilderness and home again safe, but no one knows how or why she decides whom she will aid.

Ashava despises will-o'-wisps, as they stoke the fears of mortals and reinforce dread of the night and wild places, both of which Ashava loves.

There are many stories of Ashava and her servants facing off against strings of will-o'-wisps to protect common folk, but one tale stands taller than the rest. Long ago, a hunter got lost while chasing down a wounded deer. He cried to the gods for aid but was heard only by two beings: Ashava and Lady Rushlight, a powerful being rumored to be the first will-o'-wisp. Ashava and Lady Rushlight attempted to lead the hunter in opposite directions with their shining forms, but he quickly became flummoxed and sat, defeated, on his deer carcass. Out of despair of ever seeing his home again, the hunter began to sing a tune that he and his wife would hum together while they worked. As Ashava heard the simple but beautiful melody, she began to dance and twirl. In response, Lady Rushlight glowed ever brighter to distract the hunter from his singing. Ashava's whirling movements, in time to the hunter's tune, seemed much friendlier to him than Lady Rushlight's harsh glare. The hunter allowed Ashava to lead him out of the fens. Lady Rushlight had strained her powers so much that she never glowed again, subsequently starving to death. Priests of Ashava use this story to demonstrate the benefits of being true to yourself, rather than attempting to be what others want you to be.



“Let the joy of dance
heal your soul.”

—The Dance Nocturnal

PERSONIFICATION AND REALM

Ashava is usually depicted as a tall human woman, often of Varisian descent, with long dark hair and a perpetual flush in her cheeks as if she had just spent hours dancing outdoors. Her form is usually obscured by shadows except when in direct moonlight, although she always glows faintly from within. She wears a gown

woven of starlight and a circlet of colorful moss on her head. Images of Ashava depict her in poses that evoke graceful movement, such as a spinning twirl or a bounding leap, though on Elysium, Ashava spends most of her time in the form of a ball of glowing moonlight, ready to lead those who are lost to safe places. Her holy symbol is a dancing woman silhouetted by a full moon, and her favored animal is a wolf, due to its association with moonlight and wilderness.

Anyone approaching Elysium's grand peak, known as the Mountain of Lingering Soulsong, hears a melody that lifts his spirit and brings a wistful smile to his face. No two beings hear the same tune, and even the most hard-hearted visitors are moved by the mountain's powerful song. Ashava's realm, the Sparkling

Fens, sits at the base of this mountain, where the soulsong is loud and powerful. Her swamps are bathed in perpetual moonlight, and motes of multicolored light dance among the white cedars. Unlike most marshes on the Material Plane, the Sparkling Fens smell strongly of vanilla and plums. It is impossible to become lost among the swamp's hummocks and shrubs, as floating spheres of moonlight spontaneously appear to guide travelers to their destination—sometimes knowing better than the travelers themselves where they must go.

DOGMA AND WORSHIPERS

Ashava's followers are encouraged to express their feelings through dance, without any restrictions on the form their performance takes. They are also instructed to aid those who are lost, especially those wandering through the lonelier places of the world. While there is no stigma attached to being active during the day, followers of Ashava tend to be night owls, staying up later than most others in their communities. All of Ashava's religious ceremonies—including weddings, funerals, and coming-of-age rites—are performed outside by the light of the moon and are accompanied by dancing.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary



Not surprisingly, many dancers worship the True Spark and seek inspiration for their art in their devotion. Even those dancers who aren't dedicated followers of Ashava might offer a brief prayer to her before an important performance. Those who have recently lost loved ones might beseech Ashava to help shepherd the souls of the departed, particularly for deaths that occurred violently or far from home. Many of Ashava's faithful live solitary lives away from civilization, making it easier for them to intercept lost travelers or simply dance freely in the moonlight. Rumors often paint these remote worshipers as witches whose "unwholesome gyrations" can seduce the unwary. All too often, these tales are spread as petty revenge by those who stumbled upon the dancing worshiper and had their advances rebuffed.

Although most of her worshipers are humans, and often nomadic Varisians, Ashava counts several clans of good-aligned natural lycanthropes among her faithful (primarily werebears and werewolves). These lycanthropes often have silver streaks in their fur, which they believe to be a sign of approval from the True Spark. Other beings associated with the moon, such as lunar dragons (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 66) and lunar nagas (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 197), sometimes embrace the worship of Ashava as well.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

Ashava has no grand temples or massive cathedrals. Since most of her worship occurs outside at night, enclosed structures would be of little use to her followers. Forest clearings, isolated graveyards, and the town squares of rural communities make the perfect impromptu churches for followers of Ashava. In larger cities, small shrines to Ashava can be found in dance academies; these simple altars are usually placed near windows where moonlight can fall on them during the night. Some cemeteries, especially those in remote settlements or near swamps, feature areas where offerings can be left and candles can be lit to appease the True Spark, particularly by those who have recently lost a loved one.

A PRIEST'S ROLE

Priests of Ashava often wear flowing robes and dresses that are similar to Ashava's garb. This clothing is white or silver in color, with dozens of small jewels (either paste jewels or actual gems, as befits the priest's fortunes) that sparkle in the light. If such clothing is impractical or unavailable, her priests instead don other comfortable garments that don't restrict their movement. On special occasions, priests wear wreaths of moss on their heads or around their necks. Relaxed and friendly, their movements tend to be fluid and their smiles come easily. In places where worship of Ashava is widespread enough

to contain a sizeable congregation, priests of Ashava encourage dancing during official services, often by leading it themselves.

Instead of tending to graveyards and mausoleums—as that is a role usually performed by priests of Pharasma—priests of Ashava might strike out from the comforts of civilization to bring the empyreal lord's light and love of dance to the grimmer places of the world. These itinerant priests visit areas beset by restless ghosts or wandering spirits, making them a welcome sight to beleaguered or haunted residents. Once a priest has dispatched a restless soul, she usually encourages a joyous and celebratory dance in the community to offer thanks to Ashava.

Priests of Ashava are usually bards or clerics, though a few are oracles with the heavens mystery or witches with the moon patron. Inquisitors of Ashava are rare, except in areas where undead activity is high. Particularly devout followers might become Ashavic dancers (*Pathfinder Player Companion: Paths of the Righteous* 4), who specialize in rescuing lost spirits with the power of their mesmerizing movements. All priests of Ashava are trained in Perform (dance); most are also trained in other Perform skills, as well as in Diplomacy and Knowledge (religion), to more easily commune with the dead.

HOLIDAYS

While every moonlit night is considered at least a little bit holy to worshipers of Ashava, certain rare celestial events are time for special celebration.

The Terpsichoread: This impromptu festival occurs once every few years when a second full moon occurs in a single month. While the moon seems to glow with a bluish light, followers of Ashava gather outside for an extended session of vigorous dancing that lasts until sunrise. Each dancer invents her own steps, making the affair seem maddeningly chaotic, though occasionally the entire group's motions match up coincidentally for a few measures of music. Participants consider this unexpected synchronization to be a powerful sign of Ashava's favor.

APHORISMS

No matter where they are found in the world, followers of Ashava share the following common sayings.

By the Silver Light: Both an expletive and an oath, this phrase evokes the illumination of the moon. When used as part of a promise to complete a task or perform a favor, the speaker often draws two of his fingers vertically across his eyes, closing them in the process. This indicates to the faithful that the speaker will endeavor to enact the deed outside at night in the hopes of garnering the empyreal lord's blessing in its performance.

The Steps Are Guides, Not Fetters: Regardless of their skill or experience, worshipers of Ashava enjoy dancing.

Many simply let music move them in impromptu steps, but others study more formalized dance steps as a form of liturgy. This aphorism is often directed at members of the religion who start to become set in these formalized routines, to remind them that there is no wrong way to dance. It can also be applied as general advice for life, noting that tradition should not weigh you down but simply show you one possible path.

HOLY TEXT

Ashava's holy text, known as *The Dance Nocturnal*, is a slim volume, with writing in flowing calligraphy with silvery ink and covers of leather the color of night. Often, the front cover is treated with a special magical chemical that is only visible in direct moonlight to show an image of the empyreal lord's holy symbol. The first half of the book contains material typical for a holy work: homilies Ashava's priests can read to their congregants or that worshipers can read to themselves to gain comfort, explanations of important religious ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, and stories of Ashava's origin and noteworthy deeds. The second half of *The Dance Nocturnal* contains sheet music and illustrated descriptions of several dances. This second section varies depending on the region in which the book was scribed or printed, to reflect the most important cultural music and dances of the area. The most common version of *The Dance Nocturnal* features the quick-tempo music and vibrant dances of Varisia, though editions containing slow and stately waltzes, sensual burlesque dances, and chaotic jigs are known to exist. However, despite all these diverse examples, one thing remains constant throughout each version of *The Dance Nocturnal*: the illustrations are all instructive, showing Ashava herself enacting the steps of each dance to teach the reader. Some devotees have claimed to see the drawings move on their own when read outside on a cloudless night.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Worshipers of Ashava rarely clash with the followers of other empyreal lords or other virtuous deities. Ashava's faithful prefer to live their lives unfettered and will sometimes chafe in regimented societies where lawful deities such as Abadar, Erastil, and Torag hold the most sway. Conversely, those devoted to Ashava often find that they have much in common with worshipers of Cayden Cailean, Desna, and Shelyn. Followers of the True Spark find that Caydenites are quick to join in a dance (especially when they've had a few drinks), that Desnans also enjoy studying a clear night sky, and that Shelynites share an appreciation of the musical arts.

Because of Ashava's interest in helping lost spirits find their way to the afterlife, her worshipers also get along well

IT CAME
FROM HOLLOW
MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

with many Pharasmians. Though often their personalities might seem to be a study in contrasts, with followers of Ashava celebrating life through dance and archetypical worshipers of the Lady of Graves somberly studying death, the two groups cooperate with surprising efficiency to put a ghost to rest or banish a spectre. Agents of the two faiths might disagree on the severity of their methods, with some inquisitors of Pharasma seeking only to obliterate errant spirits while members of Ashava's faith look to guide them on their way with gentle words and caring questions.



SPELLCASTING

Clerics of Ashava can cast *dancing lights* as a cantrip, *flare burst*^{APG} as a 1st-level spell, and *wandering star motes*^{APG} as a 4th-level spell. In addition, worshipers of the True Spark have access to the following spells and bardic masterpiece (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 21).

ALLURING LIGHT

School enchantment (compulsion) [light, mind-affecting];

Level bard 1, witch 1

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range 30 ft.

Area 30-ft.-radius emanation centered on you

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw Will negates (see text); **Spell Resistance** yes

You glow with a soft radiance that calls out to all who see it. Each enemy that fails its save is drawn to you and must use its move action to approach you at the beginning of each of its turns for 1 round per caster level. An affected target must move toward you in the most direct path it can, though it can step around obstacles or other creatures. This spell can't force a creature to walk into an area that might obviously harm or kill it (such as into a pit, over a patch of floor studded with caltrops, or through a *wall of fire*). An affected creature that loses sight of you is not compelled to move toward you, although if it later regains vision of you while still affected by this spell, it must again move toward you. Any hostile action against an affected creature (such as an attack of opportunity due to its movement) cancels the spell's effect against that creature. Your initial flash of light also increases the light level within the spell's area by one step, up to normal light (darkness becomes dim light, and dim light becomes normal light) for 1 round per caster level.

MOONRISE ARROW

School evocation [light]; **Level** cleric 3, inquisitor 3, magus 3, occultist 3, paladin 3

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range touch

Target up to 50 pieces of ammunition, all of which must be together at the time of casting

Duration 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw Fortitude negates (harmless, object); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless, object)

You cause ammunition, including shuriken, to glow with faint silvery light. The ammunition counts as magic and silver for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction, in addition to the properties of any other special material the ammunition has. Incorporeal undead and shapechangers take an additional 1d8 points of damage from such ammunition. The targeted ammunition sheds dim light in a 5-foot radius for 1 round after it is fired or thrown.

THE WANING BOLERO (DANCE)

Your deliberate dancing causes your foes' steps to fall in time to your own.

Prerequisite: Perform (dance) 10 ranks.

Cost: Feat or 4th-level bard spell known.

Effect: You enact a series of graceful, measured steps that your enemies cannot help but mimic. When you complete the performance, any foe within 60 feet that can see you is slowed (as per the *slow* spell) for as long as you continue the performance. A Will saving throw negates this effect.

Each round you continue the performance, each slowed creature within 60 feet (whether slowed by this masterpiece or by another effect) must succeed at another Will saving throw or its penalty on attack rolls, AC, and Reflex saves increases by 1 as the slow dance movements overtake it. This increased penalty lasts as long as you continue the performance. A creature that succeeds at this Will saving throw merely avoids increasing the penalty for that round; success does not remove the effect that slowed it.

Use: 1 bardic performance round per round.

Action: 1 full round.

OBEDIENCE

The following describes the daily rite Ashava's followers must perform to take full advantage of the Deific Obedience feat, as well as the boons for the prestige classes found in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Gods*.

OBEDIENCE (ASHAVA)

Dance unobserved in an isolated place under the light of the moon for 1 hour. If no moonlight is available or if you cannot dance unobserved, pray for the spirits of the lonely dead for 1 hour and then leave a lit lantern in a dark area. You gain a +4 sacred bonus on saving throws against spells and effects from undead.

EVANGELIST BOONS

- 1: Celestial Guide (Sp)** *bleed* 3/day, *augury* 2/day, or *guiding star*^{APG} 1/day
- 2: Touch of Freedom (Su)** As a standard action, you can touch an ally to grant it the benefits of the *freedom of movement* spell until the beginning of your next turn. While under this effect, the target gains a +10-foot enhancement bonus to her base speed when taking the withdraw action and can, as an immediate action when she fails a saving throw against a charm or compulsion effect, reroll that saving throw. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.
- 3: Navigator Wisp (Sp)** Once per day, you can cast an extended *find the path* on yourself with a caster level equal to your character level. The effect of the spell manifests as a mote of light that is visible to only you.

CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

Ashava's priests can use *summon monster* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spell.

SUMMON MONSTER IV

Celestial pegasus (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 225, 294)

SUMMON MONSTER V

Lunar naga (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 197)

If the route would take you through dangerous territory (such as a river with a very strong current or a hidden pit of acid), the wisp glows yellow. If the route would take you past hidden creatures, the wisp flashes red, giving you a +10 circumstance bonus on Perception checks to notice them.

EXALTED BOONS

- 1: Moonlight Caller (Sp)** *faerie fire* 3/day, *glitterdust* 2/day, or *daylight* 1/day (visible effect is moonlight)
- 2: Lunar Frenzy (Sp)** Three times per day, you can cast *moonstruck*^{APG} with a caster level equal to your character level. You can choose to have the target affected by *haste* rather than *confusion*; you make this choice each time you use this ability.
- 3: Moon's Blessing (Sp)** Once per day, you can cast *divine vessel*^{APG} with a caster level equal to your character level. You can choose only the celestial aspect, and you take on the form of a large, winged wolf made of glowing moonlight. Instead of 2 slam attacks, you gain a bite attack dealing 2d6 points of damage.

SENTINEL BOONS

- 1: Gravekeeper (Sp)** *hide from undead* 3/day, *calm spirit*^{OA} 2/day, or *searing light* 1/day (the visible effect of the spell is a ray of moonlight)
- 2: Choreography of the Night (Su)** When the night sky is visible to you, you gain +4 sacred bonus on initiative checks, a +2 sacred bonus on Acrobatics and Escape Artist checks, and a +1 dodge bonus to Armor Class and on Reflex saving throws. In addition, you can take 5-foot steps in difficult terrain. Finally, you gain uncanny dodge (as the rogue class feature). If you already have uncanny dodge, you gain improved uncanny dodge instead. If you already have improved uncanny dodge, the minimum rogue level required to flank you increases by 1 instead.
- 3: The Dance in All Things (Sp)** Once per day, you can cast *animate objects* with a caster level equal to your character level. Objects you animate with this ability gain the benefits of a *haste* spell for as long as they are animated, and their natural attacks count as good and silver for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary



ECOLOGY OF THE SINSPAWN

Seeing me overbalanced, the creature rushed forward with a leer of vile anticipation. To my horror, its jaw split once and then again, its lower mandibles spreading to seize me in a toothy embrace. The creature bit hard into my shoulder and pain lanced through me. Pain... and something else. A rage like I had never known coursed through my veins. I would skewer this upstart beast. Then I would mow down my companions for luring me into this noxious cavern, and then butcher everyone who had called them friends, and after that...

When I came to my senses, the thing was dead. Bors and Eddily had killed it while I had spent long minutes screaming in incoherent wrath. This, I would come to learn, is the terrible generosity of the sinspawn: they make their evil a gift you have no choice but to receive.

—Argent Evers, prospector, personal diary

Sinspawn are roughly humanoid creatures shaped by the foul art of fleshwarping, with raw sin magically imbued into their mutated forms. Products of the empire of Thassilon at its most depraved, sinspawn were designed to serve as shock troops in the armies of the ever-squabbling runelords. However, the sudden fall of Thassilon left the sinspawn leaderless. Most sinspawn retreated underground into their master's broken ruins, congregating around the magical pools called *runewells* from which their race had sprung.

Sinspawn superficially resemble ghouls, sharing the same pallid complexion and drum-tight skin over ropey muscles and dark veins. Unlike ghouls, sinspawn are living creatures, although imbued with an animating energy that renders them practically immortal under certain conditions. A closer examination reveals the features that mark sinspawn as aberrations: legs that bend backward, inhumanly long arms ending in wicked talons, and a hairless face with slits for nostrils and beady red eyes. Even more distinctive is a sinspawn's maw. When closed, this mouth appears to be a toothy line above a jutting chin. This chin, however, unhinges into two parts like some nightmarish sea creature, framed by two tiny grasping hands for latching onto prey. Adventurers who face a sinspawn soon come to fear those jaws, and not for their fearsome fangs alone. A sinspawn's bite infects its victim with the supernatural taint of the sin that birthed it. One bite can leave an adventurer hamstrung by lust, constrained by sloth, or sickened with unchecked envy for several minutes.

While sin both animates a sinspawn and envenoms its jaws, it is also the undoing of the sinspawn race. Few individual sinspawn can rise above the dark passions imprinted upon them at their creation. Intelligent, physically powerful, and practically immortal, sinspawn could have expanded to dominate western Avistan. Instead they lurk in forgotten ruins, feuding among themselves and feeding their vile appetites, forever hobbled by their malevolent natures.

GENESIS

Millennia ago, the First King Xin divided ancient Thassilon—now, modern Varisia—into seven domains, each administered by a runelord who embodied one of the traditional virtues of rule. As the years wore on and the runelords fell to depravity, these virtues were perverted into the seven great sins of the soul. Already experts at manipulating the magical runes that were their namesake, the runelords learned to infuse the essence of sin into their enchantments and weapons, as well as reservoirs of magical power known as *runewells*.

But only Alaznist, Runelord of Wrath, could have created sinspawn. While the other runelords paid lip

service to traditional deities such as Lissala or the Peacock Spirit, Alaznist overtly encouraged demon worship and forged an alliance with the qliphoth lord Yamasoth. Yamasoth taught Alaznist much about life-shaping and fleshwarping. Combining this demonic fleshwarping knowledge with her own forbidden alchemy and secrets stolen from the aboleths, Alaznist reshaped humanoid test subjects into inhuman forms. These shapes merged the musculature, feeding apparatuses, and natural weaponry of demons, undersea horrors, and even more alien influences. Instead of using her successful rough drafts as the beginnings of a time- and labor-intensive breeding program, Alaznist treated her fleshwarped test subjects as molds, sacrificing them and capturing their essences in her *runewells*. Aberrant forms of comingled ectoplasm and raw wrath rose from her *runewells* as Golarion's first sinspawn.

Alaznist soon found she could make more of the creatures by offering her *runewells* the lifeblood of humanoids whose souls were stained with wrath—including victims of the sinspawn's own sin-laced bites. Her *runewells* were designed as passive collectors of nearby wrathful energy; when enhanced with fresh blood, these *runewells* could birth sinspawn spontaneously—a major coup that allowed Alaznist to create armies of these sin-tainted aberrations.

But this was not Alaznist's only triumph. In a flash of inspiration, she invested her new monsters with enough free will to encourage them to develop in power and strength—not just to satisfy her needs, but also to please themselves. With free will, Alaznist's children became a true race all their own, neither mere echoes of other souls nor witless automatons. Her creations had cunning, ambition, and—although the runelord herself did not foresee this result—sufficient determination to persist long after Alaznist and the rest of Thassilon had fallen.

After Alaznist unleashed her sinspawn legions in battle against her foe Karzoug, Runelord of Greed, the other runelords set out to replicate her success. Some pieced together how to make Alaznist's creations using evidence of their origin from captured enemies, others stole incomplete notes about the creation process, but most were obligated to pay Alaznist directly—in the form of treasure, lore, or political concessions—in exchange for the secrets of creating sinspawn. One after another, the other runelords developed sinspawn fueled by their signature moral stains. Soon Alaznist's wrathspawn were locked in battle with greedspawn, envyspawn, pridespawn, and the rest. Without the limitations of biology or evolution to constrain their reckless creation, sinspawn armies were prevented from overrunning the lands of the runelords only by the sudden cataclysm of Earthfall and the collapse of the runelord empires. Retreating into their private sanctums, the runelords left their sinspawn

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

creations to survive secretly among the ruins of Thassilon or die. Many sinspawn have remained in hiding ever since—until recently, for the reawakening of certain Thassilonian artifacts has spurred the sinspawn to levels of activity not seen in millennia.

ECOLOGY

While sinspawn are truly a race of monsters, they are still creations of another's design. As such, they exist largely outside the natural order. Sinspawn can be born only from a Thassilonian *runewell*, each of which is attuned to a specific sin. Whenever a creature whose soul is marked by the attuned sin dies within a mile of an active *runewell*, the vessel stores an imprint of the departed soul. The degree to which an individual soul is stained by sin varies, but this stain can be enhanced by powerful Thassilonian magic, a sinspawn's sinful bite, and certain curses or corruptions.

When a *runewell* has stored imprints from multiple sinful souls, it may spontaneously birth a sinspawn. A *runewell* can also be compelled to manifest a sinspawn with the offering of a few drops of blood. In either case, the sinspawn arises from the *runewell* fully formed, approximately 5 feet tall and weighing 100 pounds, even if the *runewell* seemed too small to contain such a creature. From the moment of its creation, a sinspawn can sense its own sin in others, tracking sinful creatures like a hound tracks a scent. Newly birthed sinspawn are free to pursue their own destinies, although most immediately lash out at the nearest creature not marked with their own brand of sin.

While nearly all sinspawn remain in the

vicinity of the *runewell* from which they arose, some follow more powerful creatures (including older sinspawn) to other locations.

Sinspawn enjoy the taste of humanoid flesh, preferring to feast upon still-living prey. Whenever possible, sinspawn capture their victims alive and bring them back to a lair to be devoured in a series of tormenting, rasping bites. Most sinspawn understand instinctively how *runewells* collect imprints from sinful souls, so they use their sinful bites to infect their prey, ensuring the polluted souls of the victims they torment before devouring will fuel the birth of the next sinspawn generation.

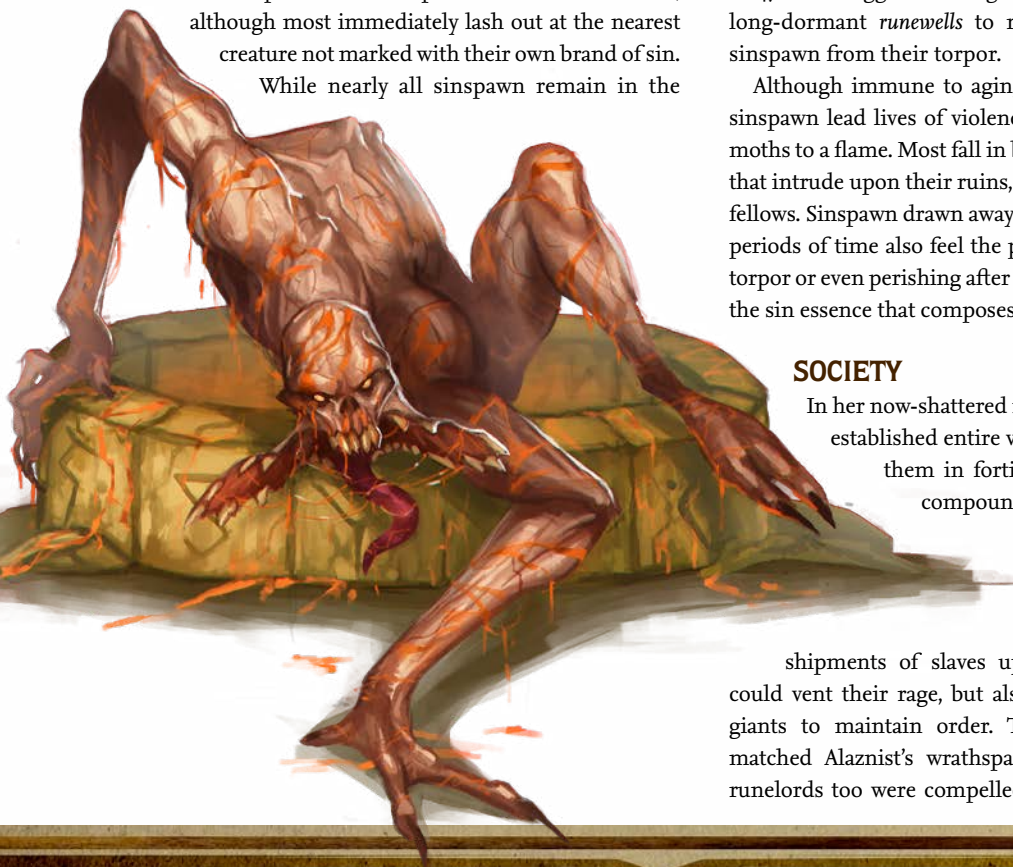
Despite this preference, sinspawn don't need meat to survive. Sinspawn that remain within a mile of a *runewell* are sustained by its magic alone; they need no food or water and don't age, although they must breathe and sleep. Some sinspawn that walked Golarion during the Thassilonian era still survive today, having carved out kingdoms in the ruins around the *runewell* of their birth.

Fortunately, functioning *runewells* are rare. Many *runewells* have grown faulty or gone dormant over the centuries. Most sinspawn associated with dormant *runewells* also went into hibernation, existing in a state of suspended animation. These sinspawn stir only after suffering grievous physical harm, or when their *runewell* absorbs enough latent magical energy to spontaneously stutter back to life. Karzoug's activation of his *runewell* in 4702 AR triggered a magical pulse that caused several long-dormant *runewells* to reactivate, awakening many sinspawn from their torpor.

Although immune to aging while near their *runewells*, sinspawn lead lives of violence and are drawn to sin like moths to a flame. Most fall in battle against other creatures that intrude upon their ruins, or even in clashes with their fellows. Sinspawn drawn away from their *runewells* for long periods of time also feel the pull of mortality, falling into torpor or even perishing after a roughly human life span as the sin essence that composes them dribbles away.

SOCIETY

In her now-shattered realm of Bakrakhan, Alaznist established entire villages of sinspawn, housing them in fortified barracks within walled compounds. The fractious creatures often fought with each other in their unending wrath, forcing Alaznist to not only provide regular shipments of slaves upon whom the aberrations could vent their rage, but also deputize spellcasters and giants to maintain order. The other runelords never matched Alaznist's wrathspawn in numbers, but these runelords too were compelled to appease their creations



with regular offerings of wealth, playthings, food, and other sacrifices according to the appropriate sin. Most runelords trained their sinspawn as elite troops in training compounds near their *runewells*, providing them with armor and weapons (often, the same type of signature weapons wielded by the runelords themselves). Citizens of Thassilon spoke of these fortified compounds with mingled awe and terror; as they were often established in remote areas to keep them hidden from spies, rumors about these decadent, sin-fueled training grounds spread.

No such compounds exist in the modern era. Instead, sinspawn live in isolated groups—called cults—amid the ruins of their masters' fleshvats, laboratories, and estates. Today, *runewells* are the center of sinspawn society. Sinspawn recognize their *runewell* as their source of sustenance, longevity, and procreation, and they arrange their hunting practices to keep the magical reservoirs fueled with echoes of the appropriate sin. Although few sinspawn are truly brave, most will defend a *runewell* to the death. Canny adventurers know that when sinspawn foes begin to show reckless bravery, their *runewell* is near.

At the same time, sinspawn recognize that each new sibling produced by a *runewell* is a future rival. Older sinspawn attempt to acquire weapons and armor as an advantage over their fellows. For this reason, weapons and armor make up the bulk of sinspawn treasure hoards; any other wealth found in a sinspawn lair is typically incidental. Infighting within a sinspawn cult is inevitable; every sinspawn is driven by the same all-consuming sin, and violence is a sinspawn's instinctual means of resolving conflicts. Wrathspawn simmer with hate until they erupt in violence, greedspawn steal and hoard until their avarice brings them to blows, lustspawn engage in sybaritic orgies that devolve into sadistic bloodletting, and so on. For this reason, sinspawn rarely gather in groups larger than seven or eight members—any more simply strains what little fellowship they share to the breaking point. Only a firm leader can command a large group of sinspawn, and then only by providing an outlet for their violent passions.

The seven varieties of sinspawn regard each other with extreme animosity, primarily due to ancient rivalries encoded in their formation. Alaznist's wrathspawn and Karzoug's greedspawn, in particular, are blood enemies, but nearly all sinspawn have a justification to hate other types. Pridespawn infuriate envyspawn with their constant preening, gluttonspawn consume resources slothspawn are too indolent to secure, and lustspawn gloat over the perverse pleasures they alone are equipped to indulge in.

Sinspawn see most humanoids as lesser creatures, suitable only for slave labor, meat, or cruel entertainments. Humans and kobolds are deemed especially useful, though often too clever or troublesome

THE WAGES OF SIN

Roleplaying sinspawn can be challenging: they are as intelligent as humans and functionally immortal, and some have memories stretching back to ancient Thassilon. Yet despite this potential, most sinspawn are bestial savages that are a threat only to novice adventures.

One way to highlight this contradiction is to roleplay sinspawn as constantly on edge, as if the sin inside them might boil over at any minute. A wrathspawn parleying with PCs lashes out at any perceived offense. A greedspawn distractedly fingers its jewelry and can't keep its eyes from the PCs' obvious valuables. A slothspawn might yawn through an entire conversation, then erupt into sudden violence at having its leisure disturbed. A sinspawn with class levels has a greater ability to restrain its impulses, but when provoked or under stress, a sinspawn's true nature always presents itself.

to keep alive for long. Sinspawn usually underestimate humanoid explorers that brave the isolated ruins they inhabit, which causes them trouble with well-prepared adventurers. Giants are the only types of humanoids to compel awe or obedience in sinspawn. In the days of Thassilon, giants often served as sinspawn's jailers, trainers, or masters. Even today, most sinspawn feel an instinctive urge to obey giants—a tendency that is as much a surprise to brutish giants as it is to the sinspawn that don't understand the source of their involuntary loyalty. Sinspawn forge occasional alliances with other monstrous creatures, such as nagas and lamias, although these arrangements usually end in acrimonious squabbles over magical relics.

As sinspawn are literally imprinted with soul energy, religion is of surprising importance to many of their kind. Most sinspawn worship Lamashtu or Rovagug, although some pay homage to demon lords associated with their particular sin, or even revere with animistic fervor the *runewell* that birthed them. A few sinspawn venerate Thassilonian deities, miming the rites they saw their masters perform in the years before Earthfall. Slothspawn, who prefer the ease of ritual to their own physical labors, are often the most stridently religious.

Were sinspawn to rally as a species and pool their memories of ancient Thassilon, they could usher in a new age of sin across Varisia. The tragedy of their race is that on some level they are aware of this, yet they know it will never come to pass. Every sinspawn who has tried to establish a nation of her own kind has found herself too tethered to her *runewell* to raise an army, too distracted by her sin to master its magic, or impaled upon the weapons of her rivals for her troubles.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

LAIRS

Sinspawn prefer to make their lairs in Thassilonian ruins or monuments, preferably around a functioning *runewell* (though a dormant *runewell* will suffice). Many of these ruins seem oversized for sinspawn, as they were originally built to accommodate the runelords' giant slaves and outsized egos. Often these lairs have a military or prison-like quality to them, featuring individual cells designed to segregate the sinspawn from their fellows or house their unfortunate captives. Wrathspawn lairs always have a central area devoted to bloody gladiatorial matches; other sinspawn have similar common spaces according to their needs—pleasure dens for lustspawn, banquet halls for gluttonspawn, law courts for envyspawn, and so forth. As these ruins were constructed for the use of sinspawn, they often contain traps or doors that can be bypassed only by creatures infused with a particular sin. This allows the sinspawn to come and go safely, but it also means that an adventurer who embodies the same sin—or who survives the bite of a sinspawn—can sometimes traverse these areas more easily than expected.

Sinspawn can also be found in caverns and necropolises on the edge of civilization, or in catacombs below the poorer quarters of human cities. Without a *runewell* to sustain them, these sinspawn are more animalistic, hunting prey to survive. These sinspawn often cluster around civic areas that draw their particular sin, such as gambling dens for greedspawn, civic monuments for pridespawn, or slave pens for slothspawn. Sinspawn are also fond of abandoned or evil-aligned temples, although they shy away from sacred spaces associated with absolution, forgiveness, or virtues opposed to their sin.

ADVANCEMENT AND VARIANTS

Each runelord experimented with sinspawn, imbuing the sinspawn with the runelord's signature sin and developing other variants. Particularly cunning sinspawn often practice martial talents, advancing as barbarians, fighters, or rogues. As adaptable as humanoids, sinspawn with the proper training or tutelage (perhaps originating from ancient Thassilonian texts or meditation upon the arcane energies of a *runewell*) might advance in any class, although sinspawn bards, druids, and hunters^{ACG} are practically unheard of. The following list incorporates and expands upon the variant sinspawn found on page 246 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*.

Aerial Sinspawn (+4 Dex, +2 Con, fly 60 ft. [good], CR +1): Xanderghul, Runelord of Pride, believed his mighty sinspawn should soar above the heads of his enemies, though Earthfall cut short his experiments. Aerial pridespawn are therefore rare, lurking in the mountaintop ruins of Cyrusian, but are still far more common than aerial variants of other types of sinspawn.

Aquatic Sinspawn (swim 30 ft., aquatic subtype): Not to be outdone on any battlefield, Runelord Alaznist developed wrathspawn with gills and webbed hands and feet to serve as marines. Belimarius and Sorshen followed suit, breeding aquatic envyspawn and lustspawn respectively to guard their domains' watery borders. Other types of aquatic sinspawn are rare.

Envyspawn (+2 Str, –2 Cha): Short and slight, envyspawn are compelled to hunt and spy upon their enemies. They obsess over comparing their enemies' possessions and prowess to their own. Envyspawn often become rangers or slayers^{ACG}.

Fleshdregs: Products of malfunctioning *runewells*, botched rituals, and the like, fleshdregs (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 100) are squat, half-formed sinspawn, little more than a mouth on legs. Nevertheless, their sinful bites can mangle the bodies and minds of their enemies, and sinspawn treat fleshdregs as guard animals or pets. Faulty *runewells* may even spit out wads of hungry flesh known as fleshdreg swarms (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #61 83).

Gluttonspawn (+2 Con, –2 Dex): Hardy despite their obesity, gluttonspawn often become fighters. A few rare individuals become alchemists^{APG}, gorging themselves on the mutagens they concoct.

Greedspawn (+2 Dex –2 Wis): Standing 7 feet high with glittering, gold-tinted veins, greedspawn usually become rogues, but some focus their avarice into objects they hoard and become occultists^{OA}.

Lustspawn (+4 Cha, –2 Con, –2 Wis): These sinspawn sport perfectly formed male and female bodies that stand in odd contrast to their horrific faces, claws, and legs. Unlike their pallid kin, lustspawn often have brightly colored hides. Capable of intercourse but not procreation, lustspawn indulge themselves at every opportunity. Many lustspawn become sorcerers or mesmerists^{OA}, though sinspawn enchanters and witches^{APG} are not unknown.

Pridespawn (+4 Int, –2 Wis, –2 Cha): The near-skeletal pridespawn are proud of their thick manes of hair, which they alone of any sinspawn can grow. They often become wizards, although pridespawn magi^{UM} and psychics^{OA} are not unknown.

Slothspawn (+2 Wis, –2 Dex): Slothspawn appear weighed down by cloaks of excess skin, yet they scuttle about on shrunken legs with alarming speed. They often become clerics or warpriests^{ACG}, venerating Lamashtu, Rovagug, or whichever locally popular demon lord demands the least effort. Slothspawn conjurers and summoners^{APG} prefer to let their summoned creatures labor on their behalf.

Wrathspawn: The original creations of Alaznist, the bloodthirsty wrathspawn are the most common variety of sinspawn. Many become barbarians, brawlers^{ACG}, or fighters. Exceptional wrathspawn tap into the essence of sin inside them and become bloodragers^{ACG} instead.

SINSPAWN ON GOLARION

Sinspawn can be found in isolated pockets throughout the holdings of ancient Thassilon, in the lands now known as Varisia, Belkzen, and the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. Below are some of the many dark places where sinspawn congregate.

Eastern Kodar Mountains: The King's Table is a flat-bottomed caldera that once served as a parade ground for the armies of Zutha, Runelord of Gluttony. Orcs who seek an edge against their enemies negotiate with the bloated gluttonspawn lairing here, trading herds of aurochs and unwanted slaves for priestly aid and mercenary services.

Ironbound Archipelago: This island chain in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings is all that is left of the Runelord of Envy's domain, Edasseril. Tribes of ettins, ettercaps, and envyspawn dot the islands, fighting with humanoid settlements and congregating in ramshackle communities with odd customs and taboos. Those envyspawn cults lucky enough to control a *runewell* face constant attacks from their grasping peers.

Kaer Maga: The vast Undercity below the City of Strangers hides all manner of horrors. Although Karzoug once claimed the city, many types of sinspawn other than greedspawn have been spotted in the Undercity, including cults of slothspawn and lustspawn.

Magnimar: Established in the shadow of the massive bridge called the Irespan, one of Thassilon's grandest achievements, Magnimar sits at the intersection of three ancient runelord domains. Wrathspawn, greedspawn, lustspawn, and malformed fleshdregs can be found in the caverns beneath the city and in hollowed-out portions of the Giant's Bridge itself.

Mindspin Mountains: South of the Yondabakari River, newly awakened slothspawn have begun to stir in the foothills of the Mindspin Mountains. Their raids are responsible for the deaths of several Shoanti mourners visiting the Kallow Mounds to pay respects to their dead. Uncharacteristically active, the slothspawn seem to have a specific agenda in the area.

Riddleport: The Cyphermites of Riddleport labor to unlock the secrets of the rune-marked Cyphergate that spans the entrance to the city's harbor. The more accomplished Cyphermites can conjure sinspawn to aid them in battle, although even they don't know where the sinspawn they conjure originate—perhaps this is yet another mystery of the enigmatic Cyphergate.

Runeforge: This magical demiplane was shared—albeit uneasily—by servants of all seven runelords for magical research. The sinspawn that lurk in this isolated realm were born from fleshwarped humans, a throwback to Alaznist's earliest experiments.

Sandpoint: This sleepy Varisian town was unknowingly founded above the Catacombs of Wrath, a laboratory housing one of Alaznist's *runewells*. The *runewell's* recent activation has birthed several sinspawn to plague the town above.

Southmoor: The southernmost Linnorm Kingdom was once known as Old Cyrusian—a nod to its Thassilonian past. Pridespawn still occasionally appear in the vaults below the city of Jol and near the mysterious looming Drillstones. Rumors out of the desolate Nolands speak of a Thassilonian palace made of mirrors, where pridespawn lead prisoners to their doom while singing hymns of praise to their own glory.



IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn



BESTIARY

“Yes, I was there when the shriezyx attacked Magnimar, nearly a century ago. It’s not something I’ll ever forget. Careless stonecutters opened a vaulted chamber in the ancient Irespan and the spidery shriezyx scuttled forth by the hundreds—thousands, maybe. The Vanderales rallied everyone to fight back, and I got caught up in the excitement. It’s my city, after all, and I wanted to help. Don’t laugh—I was younger and far more foolish then. We fought our way to the vault opening. There, I caught sight of a much larger shriezyx, pestilential green in color. It was plainly giving orders to the monstrous horde, but it didn’t want to come into the daylight. I looked away; I was foolish, but not so foolish as to meet its gaze. The shriezyx were vanquished, true, but I know their leader still lurks in there.”

—“Six-Coin” Ennevelle, elven merchant from Dockway

The Return of the Runelords Adventure Path continues with a journey from Roderic's Cove to cosmopolitan Magnimar and onward to ancient Hollow Mountain. The new creatures presented in this bestiary include a desperate spirit of suffocation; an Empyrean Lord revered by many Magnimarians; a tumorous, grasping fiend; a spidery aberration; and ancient Thassilonian defenders.

TO HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

"It Came From Hollow Mountain" has the PCs traveling by ship from Magnimar to Rivenrake Island, sailing past several islands in the Varisian Gulf. The Varisian Gulf Encounters table presented here features challenges the PCs might face beyond those detailed in the adventure. Each hour the PCs spend sailing in the Varisian Gulf during the day, they have a 20% chance of a random encounter; at night, this chance increases to 25%. If a random encounter occurs, roll d% and run the encounter listed for the result. The PCs should have at most three random encounters in a 24-hour period.

Since this adventure spans a range of character levels, some random encounters might be too trivial or too difficult for the PCs, depending on their current strength. In these cases, roll again on the table or choose a more appropriate encounter.

Lacedon Lure (CR 8): The PCs encounter a rowboat drifting aimlessly, carrying only a single innocuous animal, such as a goat or a pig. The rowboat is a lure used by a group of lacedons, who cling to the underside of the craft and sneak aboard the PCs' vessel if the PCs investigate the animal. The lacedons include a ghoul stalker (*Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 82) and three ghoul creepers (*Monster Codex* 82), each with a swim speed of 30 feet. They don't attack the PCs right away, but they hide in or under the PCs' vessel and wait for an opportune time to strike—ideally, when most of the people aboard the vessel are asleep.

Marooned Mutineers (CR 8): After a failed mutiny, a swift-talking scoundrel (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 191) and two pirate thugs (*Villain Codex* 190) were marooned on a small island in the Varisian Gulf. They've managed to cobble together a crude raft and leave the island, although their chances of reaching civilization are slim. They hail the PCs' ship from aboard their raft, pleading for rescue. The trio admits to having been marooned by their cruel and capricious captain. Although the scoundrel weaves a tale of valuable treasure hidden by their former crew, she awaits an opportunity to kill the PCs and take command of their ship.

Riddleport Pirates (CR 7): A pirate ship called the *Lightning Lasher* attempts to close with the PCs' ship and board it. Operating out of Riddleport, this ship is captained

VARISIAN GULF ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1-3	1 mist drake	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 79
4-7	1d3 gargoyles	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 137
8-10	1d4+1 goblin vulture pilots	6	<i>Monster Codex</i> 109
11-14	2 harpies	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 172
15-18	1d8 skum	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 253
19-23	Slave Ship	6	See below
24-27	1d6 water mephits	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 203
28-31	1d3+1 weresharks	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 190
32-35	1 wyvern	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 282
36-39	1 aboleth	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 8
40-43	1d3 cecaelias	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 49
44-47	1 chimera	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 44
48-51	1 chuul	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 46
52-56	1 elasmosaurus	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 84
57-60	1d3 large water elementals	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 126
61-65	Riddleport Pirates	7	See below
66-70	1 giant octopus	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 219
71-73	1d3 karkinoi	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 173
74-77	Lacedon Lure	8	See below
78-81	Marooned Mutineers	8	See below
82-85	2d4 sahuagin and 1d6 sharks	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 239, 247
86-90	2 saltwater merrows	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 189
91-94	1d6 scraggs	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 268
95-97	1 young dragon turtle	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 295, 112
98-100	1 roc	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 236

by a storm sorcerer (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 163) and crewed with a veteran buccaneer (*NPC Codex* 267) and five old sailors (*NPC Codex* 260). The captain has convinced her highly superstitious crew that ill fortune will strike them if they fail to take the PCs' ship, compelling them to fight with remarkable vigor. In fact, the captain is deep in debt to criminal elements in Riddleport, which she needs a large score to repay.

Slave Ship (CR 6): A ship containing two slavers (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 266) and four shipmates (*GameMastery Guide* 294) approaches the PCs' vessel at a safe distance. The ship has nine slaves (male and female commoners 2) chained out of sight in its sweltering hold. Although the slavers have a potential buyer in Riddleport, they prefer to make a sale on the open sea to avoid any legal entanglements. The slavers don't overtly disclose their cargo, but they try to gauge whether the PCs are interested buyers. During the "negotiations," a slave might give a cry for help, alerting the PCs that something is amiss.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

CHOKING SHADE

A vague humanoid shape composed of whirling dust and shards of bone hovers menacingly in the air.

CHOKING SHADE

CR 5



XP 1,600

NE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12

Aura desperation (30 ft., DC 18)

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 13 (+3 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 52 (7d8+21)

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2, incorporeal;

Immune undead traits

Weaknesses susceptible to wind

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee 2 incorporeal touches +9 touch (2d6 negative energy plus desperation)

Special Attacks create spawn, gravedust

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 19, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 23

Feats Ability Focus (desperation), Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Fly +12, Perception +12, Stealth +14

Languages Common

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or haunting (3–6)

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Create Spawn (Su) A humanoid creature killed by suffocation resulting from a choking shade's gravedust attack rises as a choking spirit in 1d4 rounds.

Desperation (Su) A choking shade exudes an aura of desperation associated with its suffocating death, causing all creatures within 30 feet to become shaken as long as they remain in this area. A creature struck by the shade's incorporeal touch must also save against this effect. Once a creature is affected, it remains shaken as long as it remains within 30 feet of the choking shade. This fear effect does not stack with other fear effects. A successful DC 17 Will save negates the effect. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Gravedust (Su) As a standard action, a choking shade can enter the lungs of an adjacent living creature that is under the influence of a fear effect (such as the effect brought on by its desperation aura), bringing with it the dust of the grave. The victim can resist this attack with a successful DC 16 Fortitude save, and the choking shade is instantly

expelled from a victim's lungs as soon as the victim is no longer under the effect of a fear effect (for example, because the victim has left the radius of the choking shade's aura or succeeded on the Will save). Until that point, the victim is prevented from breathing or speaking while the undead occupies its lungs. A creature can attempt to cough the shade out of its lungs on its turn as a standard action, but it must succeed at a DC 16 Fortitude save to do so. See page 445 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* for rules on how long a victim can hold its breath and the consequences of eventual suffocation.

Susceptible to Wind (Ex) A choking shade is treated as a Tiny corporeal creature for the purposes of determining the effects high wind has upon it.

There is nothing quite like the desperation of a suffocating creature, frantic for one last, sweet breath of air to fill deprived, aching lungs; it is a terrible way to die. There are so many ways to die of suffocation: asphyxiation in a fire, being buried alive, crucifixion, disease, drowning, strangulation—the list seems endless. Sometimes, the terrible imminence filling a person as life ends in so cruel a manner is enough to cause the doomed soul to rise from death as a choking shade.

Choking shades animate into a swirling swarm of ashes, bone shards, dirt, and dust, assuming a facsimile of a humanoid form. They have a brutish intelligence and are drawn with envy to the breath of living creatures, attacking them on sight. In addition to the dust of the grave, these hateful spirits carry with them the overwhelming fear that accompanied them in their suffocating deaths, and this aura infects those who are near them with this same terror. Choking shades can take advantage of those affected by their fearful auras (or those already under the influence of a fear effect): they enter the victim's lungs, carrying their dusty remains with them, threatening unwilling hosts with the same awful deaths that they endured. Anyone slain by the choking essence of these undead creatures rises as one of their number, seeking retribution for all who are still afforded the freedom to breathe, a luxury taken for granted by the living.

Though choking shades have some measure of intelligence and understand the languages they knew in life, their unreasoning hatred of the living makes communication with them impossible: these spirits would much rather make even a futile assault on the lungs of the living than engage in any form of communication.

ECOLOGY

Upon rising from death, a choking shade has a tendency to remain near either its grave or the site of its demise. It is not uncommon for these hateful spirits to manifest

in a lethal, predatory pack, especially if they died together in the same tragic event. Choking shades who drowned and whose bodies remained in the water most often seek out dry land, but they tend to remain near that body of water, haunting the shoreline in search of potential victims.

The threat of choking shades has affected the safety of miners and builders for generations. When miners are killed in a cave-in or laborers crushed by a collapsing structure, wise city managers and foremen seek the aid of the clergy to ensure the bodies are excavated and given proper burials. Clerics are often posted to spend some nights at the place of such an unfortunate event as a precaution against an undead infestation at the work site. Laying to rest these desperate, hatefully aggressive spirits is in the service of all those who still draw breath. The most common ritual for this purpose ends by extinguishing a blessed candle, respectfully putting out a flame that feeds on the oxygen the dead were denied.

VARIANT CHOKING SHADES

While these several variants of choking shades differ primarily by the nature of their suffocating deaths, the intensity of those deaths and the circumstances of their lives when the air was taken from their lungs make some shades even stronger and fiercer. At minimum, all variants have the advanced template as well as alterations to the gravedust special ability, modified by the circumstances of their deaths. Four are noted below.

Crushed Shade: Suffocation following a cave-in or the collapse of a structure creates these shades. When a crushed shade is expelled from a host's lungs, the victim must succeed at a Will save against the gravedust's DC or be cursed by a permanent form of claustrophobia: whenever the victim is about to enter a cramped space, crowded venue, or other place from which escape may be difficult, she becomes shaken. The victim can attempt a DC 14 Will save to negate this condition, but failure makes the condition persistent. Even if the victim endures the claustrophobic circumstances with the shaken, frightened, or panicked condition and the threat passes (the crowded disperses or flees, the obstacle is surmounted or avoided), the condition persists until she succeeds at the appropriate saves. This is a curse effect.

Drowned Shade: Those choking shades whose suffocating deaths occurred in water are even more dreadful. When they are driven from a victim, the muck of

the grave remains within the lungs. Victims are nauseated for 1d4 rounds after a drowned shade exits their lungs.

Smoking Shade: Smoke inhalation within a fire caused the deaths of these choking shades. Each round a smoking shade occupies the lungs of a host, that host also takes 1d4 points of fire damage. After the choking shade is expelled, the victim is staggered from the pain for 1 round.

Strangled Shade: A strangled shade was asphyxiated by a murderer, and when it invades a victim's lungs, hand-shaped bruises arise on the victim's throat. Each round a strangled shade occupies a host, the victim takes 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage, and after the strangled shade is expelled from the lungs, the victim can't speak until an hour passes or receiving any amount of magical healing (whichever comes first).



IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ash
Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

EMPYREAL LORD, ASHAVA

This graceful humanoid woman wears a flowing gown of sparkling starlight and a circlet of moss.

ASHAVA

CR 28



XP 4,915,200

CG Medium outsider (azata, chaotic, extraplanar, good)

Init +34; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., *detect evil*, *detect law*, low-light vision, see in darkness, *true seeing*; Perception +46

Aura primal aura (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 49, touch 41, flat-footed 33 (+15 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 natural, +15 sacred)

hp 676 (33d10+495); regeneration 30 (deific or mythic)

Fort +26, **Ref** +33, **Will** +30

Defensive Abilities *freedom of movement*, *mind blank*, never surprised; **DR** 20/epic and evil; **Immune** ability damage, ability drain, acid, charm effects, compulsion effects, death effects, electricity, energy drain, petrification; **Resist** cold 30, fire 30; **SR** 39

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., fly 150 ft. (perfect)

Melee moonlight javelin +46/+41/+36/+31 (4d6+28/19–20 plus dazzled)

Ranged moonlight javelin +53/+48/+43/+38 (4d6+28/19–20 plus dazzled)

Special Attacks bardic performance (unlimited rounds per day), hypnotize undead

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 28th; concentration +43)

Constant—*detect evil*, *detect law*, *freedom of movement*, *mind blank*, *true seeing*

At will—*break enchantment*, *calm spirit*^{OA} (DC 27), *faerie fire*^M, *find the path*, *flare burst*^{APG} (DC 26), *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport*, *haste*^M, *hide from undead*, *holy word*^M (DC 32), *moonstruck*^{APG} (DC 29)

3/day—*chaos hammer*^M (DC 29), *halt undead* (DC 28), *irresistible dance* (DC 33), *lunar veil*^{MM} (DC 32), *mass cat's grace*, quickened *moonstruck*^{APG} (DC 29)

1/day—*freedom*, *time stop*, *undeath to death* (DC 31)

^M Ashava can use this ability's mythic version in her realm.

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 41, **Con** 40, **Int** 28, **Wis** 31, **Cha** 40

Base Atk +33; **CMB** +48; **CMD** 82

Feats Acrobatic, Agile Maneuvers, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Greater Feint, Improved Critical (javelin), Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Stance, Mobility, Point-Blank Shot, Quickened Spell-Like Ability (*moonstruck*), Sidestep^{APG}, Skill Focus (Perform [dance]), Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +55, Bluff +51, Diplomacy +48, Escape Artist +48, Fly +63, Heal +43, Intimidate +48, Knowledge (arcana, nature, planes, religion) +45, Perception +46, Perform (dance) +54, Sense Motive +46, Stealth +51

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 300 ft.; truespeech

SQ luminescent form, lyrical grace, seed of life

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Elysium)

Organization solitary (unique)

Treasure triple

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bardic Performance (Su) Ashava has the bardic performance ability of a 20th-level bard, granting her access to the distraction, fascinate, inspire courage, inspire competence, *suggestion*, inspire greatness, soothing performance, inspire heroics, *mass suggestion*, and deadly performance aspects of bardic performance. Ashava's fascinate and inspire heroics bardic performances can affect any number of creatures that can see and hear her. There is no limit to the number of rounds Ashava can use her bardic performances each day.

Hypnotize Undead (Su) Ashava can affect undead creatures with her fascinate bardic performance, despite their immunity to enchantment or mind-affecting effects, and she can command any number of undead creatures fascinated in this way as a standard action, per *command undead* (Will DC 41 negates). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Luminescent Form (Su) As a swift action, Ashava can transform herself into pure moonlight, becoming incorporeal. Her fly speed triples in luminescent form, but she can't use any of her spell-like abilities or her moonlight javelin attack. She can return to her corporeal form as a swift action.

Lyrical Grace (Ex) Ashava gains a sacred bonus to her Armor Class and on initiative checks equal to her Charisma modifier. She can ignore any effect that would reduce her speed or prevent her from taking a 5-foot step.

Moonlight Javelin (Su) As a free action, Ashava can conjure a +5 *holy javelin* created out of solid moonlight into her hand. This weapon deals force damage, has a range increment of 100 feet, and dazzles any target it strikes for 1 month or until Ashava chooses to end a target's dazzled condition as a free action. Ashava adds her Charisma modifier to damage rolls with her moonlight javelins. A moonlight javelin vanishes once it leaves Ashava's hand (or, if thrown, it vanishes after striking or missing its target).

Primal Aura (Su) Ashava constantly shines with the light of the moon. No effect can reduce the light level in her primal aura below dim light, unless she allows it or unless the effect is created by a more powerful deity. Weapons wielded in Ashava's primal aura are treated as chaotic-aligned, good-aligned, and silver for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Long ago in the wild and lonely fens of Elysium, a collection of helpful marsh lights coalesced to form Ashava, the True Spark. Ashava is constant motion, spinning and twirling in steps that soothe all who watch her dance. Although she often remains at a distance from those who watch her, she nevertheless leads them out of wild places and back to the safety of civilization. She believes that no being—whether living or dead—should suffer the fear of being lost.

A part of Ashava lives in the hearts of all dancers, and her influence can be felt by those who rise from their seats when moved by a stirring beat or melodious chords. She believes that dance is the soul's truest form of expression, and she looks down on those who would stifle their own or others' creativity in this field. Ashava maintains that there is no wrong way to dance, and that dance not only embodies but transcends culture. She derives as much pleasure from the clumsy steps of eager but novice dancers as she does the practiced movements of professional ballerinas.

Ashava spends much of her time dancing through darkened swamps across many worlds, aiding lost travelers and fighting evil forces that would disorient and waylay them. On Elysium, Ashava's realm is the Sparkling Fens, a swamp eternally bathed in moonlight. It rests at the base of the Mountain of Lingering Soulsong, and the mountain's echoing melodies drift down into the marsh to provide Ashava and the azatas who follow her with accompaniment to their never-ending dances. No one can remain lost for very long within the Sparkling Fens, as floating globes of light—similar to will-o'-wisps in appearance but kindly in temperament—always appear to guide visitors to safety. These lights are both servants of Ashava and part of her, and she can feel and control them no matter where she is in the cosmos as if they were extensions of her own limbs.

ASHAVA'S FAITH

Ashava is the patron of dancers, lonely spirits, and moonlight. Her worshipers include many who strike out from the comfort of their homes to move through dark and unexplored spaces in order to guide others back to safety. She encourages her followers to dance whenever the mood overtakes them, and most of her holy ceremonies center around movement in one form or another. Her most sacred areas are graveyards and forest clearings, especially when those places are drenched in moonlight. Ashava's religion is particularly popular along Varisia's Lost Coast.

Ashava's faith is not just about joyous dancing, however. The recently bereaved also pray to the True Spark in her aspect as a shepherd of lost souls. Psychopomps ensure that the dead make their way along the River of Souls to their appointed rewards in the afterlife, but Ashava (and

many of her followers) aid wandering spirits who have strayed from that path and need help returning to it. Ashavic dancers are followers of Ashava who specialize in this task, using the power of dance and moonlight to create magical effects that can exorcise possessing spirits and even unravel the necromantic energies that empower the undead. This prestige class is detailed on page 4 of *Pathfinder Player Companion: Paths of the Righteous*.

Ashava's holy symbol is a silhouette of a dancing woman against a full moon. Her favored weapon is the bladed scarf (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea World Guide* 291) and her sacred animal is the wolf. She grants access to the domains of Chaos, Darkness, Good, and Repose, and access to the subdomains of Ancestors^{APG}, Azata^{APG}, Moon^{BOTD}, and Revelry^{BOTD}.

More information about Ashava and her faith is presented starting on page 68.



IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Hollow

PC
ery

va, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

QLIPPOTH, VEXENION

This blood-red tumorous mass has a shifting cluster of waving tentacles sprouting from its amorphous form, its body pulsating with a horrid vitality.

VEXENION

CR 6



XP 2,400

CE Large outsider (chaotic, qliploth, evil, extraplanar)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see *invisibility*;

Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+4 Dex, +6 natural, -1 size)

hp 76 (8d10+32)

Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +9

Defensive Abilities all-around vision, amorphous; **DR** 5/cold iron or lawful; **Immune** acid, cold, mind-affecting effects, poison; **Resist** electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee 4 tentacles +11 (1d6+3 plus grab)

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

Special Attacks absorption (2d6 acid damage, AC 13, 7 hp), horrific appearance (DC 17)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +9)

Constant—see *invisibility*

3/day—acid arrow

1/day—slow (DC 16)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 18, **Con** 19, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +12 (+16 grapple); **CMD** 26 (can't be tripped)

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Vital Strike,

Weapon Focus (tentacles)

Skills Acrobatics +15, Climb +22, Perception +12, Sleight of

Hand +15, Stealth +11, Survival +12

Languages Abyssal (cannot speak); telepathy 100 ft.

SQ compression, stony form, tentacular versatility

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Abyss)

Organization solitary, pair, or hunger (3-6)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Absorption (Su) Though a vexenion has no orifice with which to swallow, it can directly absorb a pinned target as a swift action. In most ways, this ability is identical to swallow whole, except no hole is left in the qliploth's body after a creature cuts its way out. A vexenion can absorb no more than one Large or smaller creature at a time and cannot absorb creatures larger than itself. If a creature dies while absorbed by the vexenion, the qliploth immediately expels the corpse, along with its possessions, and is healed of 3d6 points of damage.

Compression (Ex) A vexenion can move through an area

as small as one-quarter its space without squeezing or one-eighth its space when squeezing. However, if it has absorbed a creature, its movement is restricted by the size of the absorbed creature.

Horrific Appearance (Su) A creature that succumbs to a vexenion's horrific appearance becomes sickened for 2d4 rounds. This is a mind-affecting gaze attack.

Stony Form (Su) By concentrating for 1 minute, a vexenion can withdraw its tentacles and eyes and form a stony shell around its body. In this form, it gains a +6 enhancement bonus to its natural armor and gains damage reduction 10/bludgeoning, but it cannot move or take physical actions. It can emerge from this form as a full-round action, but doing so leaves it staggered for 1 round.

Tentacular Versatility (Ex) A vexenion's tentacles are treated as primary attacks. As a swift action at the start of its turn, a vexenion can devote one or more of its four tentacles to movement or defense, reducing the number of tentacle attacks it can make in that round by the same amount. Each tentacle devoted to movement increases the vexenion's base speed and climb speed by 5 feet. Each tentacle devoted to defense grants the vexenion a +1 dodge bonus to its AC for 1 round.

The Abyssal realm of Sekatar-Seraktis is a byword for chaos, contested by 13 different potential rulers split between bickering balor lords, vavakias, and vrolikais, yet all leave the portion of the plane claimed by the qliploth lord Yamasoth alone. The Kingdom of New Flesh is populated by the unholy experiments of the qliploth lord, ravenous monstrosities who feed upon one another and any other beings so foolish or unlucky as to wind up in this accursed place. Some of the most fecund of these experiments are called vexenions, and they have proliferated across the Abyss. These abominations have the appearance of enormous bloated, pulsating tumors, mouthless, armed with muscular tentacles sprouting from their glistening form and gifted with bulging eyes capable of protruding from their bodies and just as quickly disappearing into their shuddering wet flesh.

A vexenion feeds on flesh by physically absorbing creatures into its own amorphous form through its membranous skin. The ingested creature is slowly dissolved by the qliploth's acid. Once the flesh is consumed, the victim's bones and other indigestible parts are expelled, and the vexenion moves on to its next meal, forever hunting, forever hungry.

Vexenions often serve as shock troops in qliploth armies, sent in the vanguard of attacks to break the formations of an advancing force, grappling and absorbing enemy soldiers in their path. While it is believed that Yamasoth employs these sickening things

to gather material for its own endless experiments, the qliploth lord seems to care little where the vexenions travel. For this reason, the creatures proliferate like a plague across the Abyss. Perhaps this is Yamasoth's ultimate intent.

Vexenions are at home in nearly any environment where they can find flesh on which to feast, though they often lair in places where they might easily ambush prey: demonic crossroads, ruins, and blasted forests where they can use the high limbs and trunks of dead trees to ambulate above their unknowing prey. In fact, this is the qliploth's preferred method of stalking potential meals: suspended above, employing their impressive climbing skills to move from tree to tree. Caverns of stalactites or the pillars of ruined demon cities can serve the same purpose for them.

Despite their hideous, almost ooze-like appearance, vexenions are intelligent creatures. They lack the apparatus for speech but delight in telepathically sharing their hungers and the flavors of their food with others around them, impassively inquiring about their victim's favored flavors and meals. The vexenion's unsettling habit of sharing the flavors of a creature it feeds upon with that creature as it digests them is perhaps the qliploth's most sadistic trait.

Temples of Yamasoth and other places where his otherworldly and malign presence has infected the world, such as the deeper levels of Hollow Mountain, are no stranger to the predations of the vexenion. Dungeon complexes are well loved by these qliploth, and despite their prodigious size, their malleable bodies allow them to slither and squirt and force themselves through narrow confines—provided their bodies are not currently engorged upon a still-solid and still-struggling meal.

ECOLOGY

Vexenions reproduce asexually. When one has consumed sufficient quantities of flesh, it finds a hiding place and goes into a kind of senseless larval state, its eyes and tentacles retreating into itself. The exterior flesh of the thing quickly hardens into a stony shell; in this form, they are difficult to discern from surrounding rocks. After 24 hours, two fully grown vexenion burst forth from the shell, each of which retains the memories of

the original. While gestating in this shell, the vexenion stews in a rancid-smelling slurry of amniotic fluid that has strange effects on potions, elixirs, and similar magic items if used as an additional component when creating the magical liquid (merely mixing the fluid with an already created potion or elixir ruins the magic drink). A character can harvest a gestating vexenion's fluids with a successful DC 21 Survival check, after which the fluid must be refined in an alchemical lab over the course of 8 hours with a successful DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check. A single vexenion can supply a single dose of fluid in this manner. Used as an additional resource during potion or elixir creation, the fluid has a 50% chance of causing the resulting potion or elixir to function at a caster level 2 higher than normal, and a 50% chance of instead causing the potion or elixir to function normally but to nauseate the drinker for 1 round after it is imbibed. A single dose of vexenion catalyst, as the prepared fluid is known, is worth 1,000 gp.

Vexenions are often confused with nyogoths (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 224), in whose company they are sometimes found. However, vexenions are more intelligent and better able to set up ambushes and traps for unsuspecting prey. Fortunately for nyogoths, they are among the only creatures in the Great Beyond that vexenions find unpalatable.

IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary



SHRIEZYX QUEEN

This bulbous, green-skinned spider is as large as a horse, its toothy maw smiling beneath three glowing eyes.

SHRIEZYX QUEEN

CR 8

XP 4,800

CE Large aberration

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.;

Perception +19

Aura hive influence (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 17 (+3 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 104 (11d8+55); regeneration 5 (fire)

Fort +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities ferocity; **Immune** mind-affecting effects

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +11 (1d8+3 plus poison), 4 claws +10 (1d6+3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks incendiary webs, poison, web (+10 ranged, DC 19, 11 hp)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +13)

 Constant—*tongues*

 At will—*remove fear*, *rage*

 3/day—*command* (DC 13)

 1/day—*resist energy*

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 17, **Con** 18, **Int** 9, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 25 (37 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Climb +18, Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (history) +5, Perception +19, Sense Motive +9

Languages Aklo; *tongues*

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or hive (1 plus 3–12 shriezyx⁸⁴)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hive Influence (Su) All shriezyx within 30 feet of a shriezyx queen lose their fear of fire weakness while they remain in the area of her aura and for 1 minute after leaving it or until the shriezyx no longer has line of sight to the shriezyx queen, whichever comes first. The shriezyx queen's mind-affecting spell-like abilities function normally against shriezyx within her hive influence aura.

Incendiary Webs (Su) A shriezyx queen's web is coated with a supernatural oil that catches fire with the slightest spark. Any creature struck by a shriezyx queen's web gains vulnerability to fire for 1 minute. If a creature struck by the web is carrying a torch or otherwise using fire, the

creature must succeed at a DC 18 Reflex saving throw or catch on fire. As long as a creature has vulnerability to fire from this effect, each time it casts a spell with the fire descriptor or takes fire damage, it must succeed at a DC 18 Reflex saving throw or catch on fire. This incendiary oil dries out quickly—a web can impart this vulnerability to fire only on the round it is spun. Thereafter, the web remains sticky but does not have this incendiary effect. The save DC is Strength-based.

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 19; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Str; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

When Runelord Alaznist first learned the art of fleshwarping from the qliploth lord Yamasoth, she and her assistants created myriad abominations that have survived into the modern day. Among these wretched creations are the spider-like shriezyx (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 244), which remain a constant threat to explorers venturing into the heart of Hollow Mountain, the ruins of Xin-Bakrakhan at the mountain's base, and the Irespan in the nearby city of Magnimar. While shriezyx made excellent soldiers and guardians, they made poor servants, in part because of their unnatural fear of fire (a particular problem for Alaznist's armies and devotees, who relied heavily on evocation magic). The same immunity to mental control that defended them against enchantments from the rival realm of Eurythnia also made them impossible to magically control by their own general. To solve this problem, Alaznist's skilled fleshwarpers created a superior version of the shriezyx—a queen that could serve as commander to lesser shriezyx and ensure complete loyalty among the verminous minions.

A typical shriezyx queen is roughly 8 feet in length and weighs as much as 1,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Although its name is something of a misnomer due to the shriezyx's method of asexual reproduction, a shriezyx queen nevertheless maintains a position among other shriezyx analogous to that of a bee or ant queen. Rather than existing to grow the hive, a shriezyx queen was instead created to control, command, and—when necessary—overpower lesser shriezyx. A shriezyx queen exudes a strong supernatural pheromone that calms her subjects, especially around fire. A shriezyx queen is also singularly capable of using mind-affecting effects on other shriezyx, to work them into a frenzy before a battle or to ensure their obedience.

A shriezyx queen can use her incendiary webs to turn her fire vulnerability against enemies that may hope to employ flame against a shriezyx hive. Many alchemists and evokers have fallen victim to a shriezyx queen's oily webs when deploying fire attacks.

Shriezyx queens are inveterate schemers, with intellects far superior to those of standard shriezyx. Although shriezyx queens use this intellect to protect their hive, they also work to obscure knowledge of their existence. Only the most learned Thassilonian scholars know that a queen caste exists above the common shriezyx. While dozens of shriezyx hives exist throughout western Varisia—most known to locals for the threat they pose—only the queen of the hive living at the base of Hollow Mountains has ever revealed herself to civilized peoples.

A shriezyx queen refers to her hive as her brood, despite not being the genetic matriarch of the lesser members of her species. A queen replicates herself via asexual reproduction in the same manner a standard shriezyx does—with an unfertilized egg that produces an identical spawn—but she often keeps her dormant egg in a secure place deep in the heart of the hive's lair for centuries before it hatches. Thus, the number of shriezyx queens in existence at any time remains fairly static. Upon a queen's death, her hive generally turns feral or breaks up entirely before her replacement hatches from its well-hidden egg. The newly hatched queen retains some of the memories of her predecessor in the form of racial instincts to cultivate a hive, but she must spend the first dozen or more years of her life reuniting the remnants of her predecessor's brood. When a predecessor's hive has been entirely eradicated—such as in the wake of Earthfall or another cataclysm—the new queen instead seeks out all the dormant eggs she can find to revive the shriezyx from the brink of extinction.

Larger and stronger than the average shriezyx, a queen requires more food and thus often sends her brood to hunt for her. All shriezyx have preternaturally variable metabolisms, which provide them rapid regeneration from wounds and also the ability to go long stretches with very little sustenance. A queen's appetite is as much a function of her role within the hive as it is her physiology, and even the smallest shriezyx queen appears corpulent when compared to her smaller minions.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Despite their influential role within hive society, shriezyx queens live solitary lives, forever unique among their kin. Two shriezyx

queens rarely meet one another, each tasked by their design with managing disparate hives. Shriezyx queens limit contact with underlings, except to issue orders or to orchestrate attacks during times of open conflict with the hive's enemies. A queen spends her solitary hours stewing on her plots for returning her hive—or herself—to a position of prominence in the region, but she invariably produces convoluted, overwrought plans that she never finds the opportunity to act on.

A queen that does interact with members of another species—whether they're allies of fallen Bakrakhan (normally demons, giants, or sinspawn^{B2}) or members of modern societies now living in or near the shriezyx's ruined lair—is likely to be quite verbose. After centuries of loneliness, most queens are overwhelmed by the idea of conversing with an intellectual equal, and they see such opportunities as a rare chance to implement long-delayed plans. Humanoids often find such conversations off-putting, both because the shriezyx are such horrific works of arcane mutation and because few adventurers would ever expect to encounter chatty monstrosities when exploring millennia-old ruins.



IT CAME FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN

Part 1:
Sailing the
Lost Coast

Part 2:
The Sihedron
Council

Part 3:
Under the
Mountain's Gaze

Part 4:
The World
Is Hollow

NPC
Gallery

Ashava, the
True Spark

Ecology of the
Sinspawn

Bestiary

THASSILONIAN SENTINELS




During the height of the Thassilonian Empire, nobles and other wealthy elite favored these constructs as guardians and protectors in their homes, hidden in plain sight among the palace's normal decorations. Able to replace the heads of statues to blend in, these creatures keep alert for intruders and extract themselves from the statues with which they are docked in order to attack. The creatures don't need to remove themselves from their statues to use their special attacks, however, and only separate for added mobility or to have the chance to attack with their claws.

At least a dozen varieties of sentinel pervaded long-vanished Thassilon. All of these varieties were crafted from materials that wouldn't be out of place as a medium for sculpting or casting. Though the practice of creating these constructs largely died out along with the empire at Earthfall, explorers delving into forgotten ruins sometimes encounter sentinels that still function.

Bronze and marble varieties can be found in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #62: Curse of the Lady's Light*.

IRON SENTINEL

An apelike head with demonic features cast in black iron sits on six segmented mechanical legs.

IRON SENTINEL	CR 5			
XP 1,600				
N Small construct				
Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft., <i>detect magic</i> , low-light vision; Perception +5				
DEFENSE				
AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+4 Dex, +4 natural, +1 size)				
hp 54 (8d10+10)				
Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +2				
Immune cold, construct traits, magic				
OFFENSE				
Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.				
Melee 2 claws +16 (1d4+6)				
Ranged icy bolt +13 (1d6 cold plus slow)				
Special Attacks head-butt +16 (1d4+3)				
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 2nd; concentration -1) Constant— <i>detect magic</i>				
STATISTICS				
Str 22, Dex 18, Con —, Int 1, Wis 11, Cha 5				
Base Atk +8; CMB +13; CMD 27 (35 vs. trip)				
Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (claws)				
Skills Acrobatics +6, Climb +16, Perception +5, Stealth +10				
Languages Thassilonian (can't speak)				
SQ alert, freeze				

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or troop (3-7)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Alert (Su) An iron sentinel can take simple orders and identify intruders, and it has the ability to alert its creator or another creature to which it's keyed. When an iron sentinel detects a trespasser, it can choose to alert the creature to which it's keyed in one of two ways. The sentinel can create a loud sound like that of a bell, chime, or gong that can be clearly heard within 500 feet. Alternatively, an iron sentinel can send a mental alert to the creature to which it is keyed as long as that creature is within 1 mile of the sentinel. The mental alert wakes the keyed creature from sleep but doesn't affect normal concentration. An iron sentinel's creator is the first creature it is keyed to, and the creator can pass its link to another creature as part of a 4-hour ritual that uses materials costing 500 gp.

Head-Butt (Ex) Once every 3 rounds, if an iron sentinel hits the same creature with both claw attacks, it can also attempt to head-butt that creature. If this attack is successful, in addition to the damage, the target is staggered for 1 round unless it succeeds at a DC 14 Fortitude save. The save DC is Constitution-based.




Icy Bolt (Su) As a standard action, an iron sentinel can fire a bolt of ice as a ranged touch attack out to a maximum range of 30 feet. This bolt deals 1d6 points of cold damage. The target is also slowed (as per the spell *slow*) for 1d6+1 rounds (a DC 14 Fortitude save negates this slow effect). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Immunity to Magic (Ex) An iron sentinel is immune to spells or spell-like abilities that allow spell resistance, except for spells with the electricity descriptor.

Popular in the more brutish Thassilonian lands of Bakrakhan, Gastash, and Haruka, iron sentinels were commonly employed in large platoons to repel organized, armed assaults. They most often begin combat with an icy bolt intended to slow advancing hostiles, who are then easier targets for the constructs' physical attacks.

IVORY SENTINEL

Sculpted from ivory in the form of a large skull, this construct perches on six segmented legs of whitened bone.

IVORY SENTINEL	CR 7			
XP 3,200				
N Small construct				
Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +5				
DEFENSE				
AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+6 Dex, +4 natural, +1 size)				
hp 75 (10d10+20)				

Fort +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3**Immune** construct traits, electricity, magic**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)**Melee** 2 claws +17 (1d6+5 plus poison), 2 wings +11 (1d3+2)**Special Attacks** disorienting screech**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 2nd; concentration -1)Constant—*detect magic***STATISTICS****Str** 21, **Dex** 23, Con —, Int 1, Wis 11, Cha 5**Base Atk** +10; CMB +14; CMD 30 (38 vs. trip)**Feats** Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness, Weapon Focus (claws)**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Climb +15, Fly +17, Perception +5, Stealth +12**Languages** Thassilonian (can't speak)**SQ** alert, freeze**ECOLOGY****Environment** any**Organization** solitary, pair, or troop (3-7)**Treasure** none**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Alert (Su)** An ivory sentinel can take simple orders and identify intruders. This functions as the iron sentinel's alert ability (see page 90).**Disorienting Screech (Su)** Three times per day, an ivory sentinel can emit a disorienting screech as a standard action. All living creatures within a 30-foot spread must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or become confused (as per the spell *confusion*) for 1d4+1 rounds. A creature that succeeds at this saving throw is immune to further disorienting screeches from that ivory sentinel for 24 hours. This is a sonic, mind-affecting effect. The save is Constitution-based.**Immunity to Magic (Ex)** An ivory sentinel is immune to spells or spell-like abilities that allow spell resistance, except for spells with the sonic descriptor.**Poison (Ex)** Claws—injury; *save* Fort DC 15; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Con damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Ivory sentinels were most often employed by the upper echelons of Thassilonian aristocracy, especially across Bakrakhan and Shalast. These nobles competed with one another in decking out the approaches to their palaces with outlandish and lethal guardians, and the avian ivory sentinels served this purpose well. Often employed to terrorize peasants and foreign dignitaries, most of these constructs were destroyed during Earthfall when those extravagant palaces came tumbling down.

When an ivory sentinel takes flight, delicate wings carved to resemble those of a bird unfurl from the sides of its skull-like head.

CONSTRUCTION

Though the exact process of creating the base form differs depending on the materials involved, the process of animating sentinels is roughly the same, regardless of the specific type of sentinel being created. (The statue atop which the sentinel often perches is not a part of its total cost). Each sentinel must be carved or worked in fine detail before being subjected to spells and magical unguents worth 1,000 gp.

IRON SENTINEL**CL** 14th; **Price** 28,000 gp**CONSTRUCTION****Requirements** Craft Construct, *alarm*, *cone of cold*, *detect magic*, *geas/quest*, *limited wish*; **Skill** Craft (sculpture) DC 22; **Cost** 14,000 gp**IVORY SENTINEL****CL** 16th; **Price** 36,000 gp**CONSTRUCTION****Requirements** Craft Construct, *alarm*, *detect magic*, *geas/quest*, *limited wish*, *poison*, *shout*; **Skill** Craft (sculpture) DC 26; **Cost** 18,000 gpIT CAME
FROM HOLLOW
MOUNTAINPart 1:
Sailing the
Lost CoastPart 2:
The Sihedron
CouncilPart 3:
Under the
Mountain's GazePart 4:
The World
Is HollowNPC
GalleryAsh
The
arky of the
spawn

bestiary

NEXT MONTH

RUNEPLAGUE

By Richard Pett

The Return of the Runelords Adventure Path continues as the heroes travel across Varisia to combat the machinations of cults and agents of ancient Thassilon. In Magnimar, the cult of Yamasoth seeks to unleash a hideous plague upon the city, and if the cult's efforts to resurrect and interrogate Runelord Krune in Riddleport come to fruition, its agents will be able to spread the polymorph plague on the wind. And in Korvosa, a simulacrum of Runelord Sorshen wishes to speak to the PCs—if they can entertain her, she'll warn them of other events unfolding in Kaer Maga that, if left untended, could wake Runelord Zutha from death!

YAMASOTH

By Jason Keeley

The qliphoth lord Yamasoth is the patron of vile experiments and monstrous transfiguration. In his realm, the Kingdom of the New Flesh, the Polymorph Plague enacts far-ranging schemes to strip away mortal souls.

Learn how devotees of Yamasoth experiment with abhorrent transmutations of themselves and their victims, but beware: too much knowledge of the Polymorph Plague spawns hideous changes in body and mind.

MAGIC POOLS

By Eleanor Ferron

A staple of fantasy fiction, magic pools can heal wounds, birth monsters, and grant wishes. Explore some of Golarion's magical pools and wells, from the Golden Oasis in Katapesh to Starbreath Pool in the Crown of the World. Each pool is presented with its appearance, guardians, rumored powers, and true abilities.

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LISSALA

The goddess of runes, duty, and obedience, Lissala was worshiped far and wide across Thassilon, particularly in the realm of Haruka. She was represented in some images as a lavender-skinned woman with no mouth and six wings, and in others as a winged serpent with a woman's torso and the Sihedron rune for a head. In Thassilon's later years, the reigning Runelord of Sloth was often regarded as the leader of her faith, despite the fact that runelords traditionally focus on arcane magic. Her worship all but vanished after Earthfall, and the goddess remained forgotten for thousands of years until her cult resurfaced recently in Varisia and attempted to free Runelord Krune from his self-imposed prison. Lissala remains one of Golarion's most mysterious deities.

DESGARD'S THOUSAND COLUMNS

Located in eastern Varisia, the strange Thassilonian ruin known as Desgard's Thousand Columns is a barren field riddled by cracks and chasms filled with pylons of jagged crystal and further surrounded by looming, truncated towers. Whether or not there were ever truly a thousand of these columns has been lost to time, but hundreds certainly still exist today. The site is largely inactive now, the haunt of giants, orcs, and other monsters, but in Thassilon's time, the crystals were used by the Runelords of Sloth to significantly augment the power of conjuration spells. Records of entire armies being summoned from beyond suggest the power of the columns, but curiously, any indication of who—or what—Desgard might have been seems to have been scrubbed from all texts. Only the name remains.



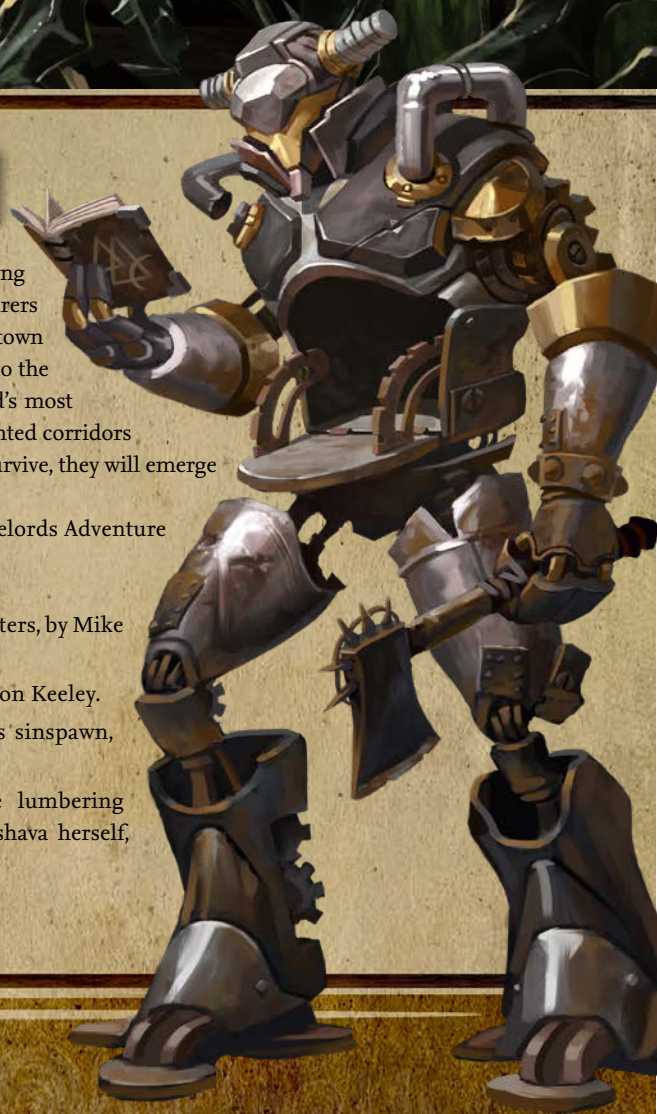


SEND MORE HEROES!

Hollow Mountain has loomed over the horizon of the Varisian Gulf for as long as those waters have been sailed, frightening sailors and tempting adventurers with its promises of treasure and terror alike. Having restored order to the town of Roderic's Cove, the region's newest heroes must deliver a powerful item south to the city of Magnimar, but they soon find that fate is leading them to one of the land's most infamous dungeons. What awaits these heroes in the trap-filled and monster-haunted corridors and chambers below Hollow Mountain will put them to the test, but if they can survive, they will emerge with knowledge vital to standing against the runelords' return!

This volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path continues the Return of the Runelords Adventure Path and includes:

- "It Came from Hollow Mountain," a Pathfinder adventure for 5th-level characters, by Mike Shel.
- Details on the empyreal lord Ashava, patron of dancers and lost souls, by Jason Keeley.
- An exploration of the violent and hideous monsters known collectively as 'sinspawn,' by Patchen Mortimer.
- A bestiary of monsters, including the malevolent choking shade, the lumbering arachnid masterminds known as shriezyx queens, and the demigoddess Ashava herself, by Jason Keeley, Mark Moreland, and Mike Shel.



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