

as possible—it can be sold as a normal silver dagger (and if it is, it attempts to escape its new owner to return to the PCs as a different object) but doesn't function as one for the purposes of damage reduction.

If the raktavarna is discovered for what it truly is, it reverts to its true form and attacks for 1d3 rounds, at which point Vimanda decides the spirit has outlived its usefulness and severs her link with it, killing it immediately.

## VERIK VANCASKERKIN

CR 3

Male human fighter 3

CN Medium humanoid

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

### DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15

(+5 armor, +2 Dex)



**VERIK  
VANCASKERKIN**

hp 24 (3d10+3)

Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0

### OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee mwk spear +6 (1d8+3/x3)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +7 (1d8+3/19-20)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Verik prefers to fight with his longbow. He switches to his spear only if someone manages to engage him in melee.

**Morale** Verik surrenders if brought below 6 hit points.

### STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +3; Grp +5

**Feats** Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (longbow)

**Skills** Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +7, Ride +10

**Languages** Common

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Other Gear** masterwork chainmail, masterwork spear, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Strength) with 20 +1 arrows

## RAKTAVARNA

CR 3

hp 19 (see page 86)

**Ad Hoc Experience Award:** If the PCs manage to bring Verik back alive, award them experience as if they had defeated a CR 2 creature.

## PART FIVE: THE AMBASSADOR'S SECRET

Once the PCs resolve the situation with Verik Vancaskerkin (with the renegade guard either behind bars and awaiting trial for desertion or in a coffin awaiting burial) and have collected their reward, Field Marshal Cressida Kroft invites them in to her office with another job offer. Only this time, when she meets with the PCs, she's not alone. A handsome man sits in one of the chairs at her desk, and as the PCs enter, he rises and bows. Cressida introduces the man as an old friend—one Vencarlo Orisini. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) check is enough to recognize him as one of Korvosa's most respected and renowned teachers of the honorable arts of fencing and swordplay. Vencarlo is a charming man, and he bows deeply as he's introduced. Cressida explains that, although Vencarlo himself has always been an outspoken critic of Korvosa's government, she has always valued him as a friend and advisor. Particularly in these dark times, his input about the temperament and morale of the citizens of Korvosa is invaluable to the Field Marshal, who's desperate to get the city back under control. Vencarlo is complimentary and polite to the PCs, congratulating them on their successes and noting that, "If Korvosa had more fine folk like you, we'd already be



out of this mess.” He pays particular attention to attractive female PCs, going as far as to kiss the backs of their hands and offering one of them his chair. The man is gregarious, and you should strive to present him as a gentleman and philosopher capable of carrying on intelligent discussion on a variety of topics, but before he can really get to know the PCs, Cressida gently cuts him off.

“As much as I would enjoy continuing the conversation, I fear we just don’t have time. Vencarlo has often come to me with news of important changes on the streets, and this is no different—indeed, what he’s learned could degrade into sanctions, embargos, or even war against Cheliox if we don’t act now. This problem is a man named Darvayne Gios Amprei. You might have heard of him—he’s an ambassador from Cheliox whose disdain for Korvosa is well documented, and yet he’s taken great pleasure in what our city has to offer. Even before this recent unrest, this man was ready to recommend to his government a sanction on trade, or perhaps even an embargo. Vencarlo has learned through his own considerable sources that Ambassador Amprei’s actual goals are to undermine Korvosa’s economy to the point where he can buy up large portions of the city from desperate landholders and establish himself in a position of power here. Whatever the ambassador’s reasons, we can’t let his bias or personal plans hurt Korvosa. Yet neither can we take drastic action—not only would killing him be wrong, but it’d simply martyr him in Cheliox’s eyes.

“Fortunately, Darvayne has his foibles. Again, Vencarlo has learned that Ambassador Amprei has been making fairly regular visits to a place in Old Korvosa called Eel’s End. This den of vice is run by a dangerous man named Devargo Barvasi, better known in Korvosa’s alleys as the King of Spiders. I’d love to put Barvasi out of business, but he pays his vice taxes regularly and never causes any problems—in fact, since he keeps his business constrained entirely within the five ships moored at Eel’s End, he’s actually one of the least of my worries. Truth be told, I can’t decide whether Devargo is a stirge or a kraken. He seems like a bloodsucking pest most days, but sometimes I fear just how far his tentacles have wormed their way into our great city. In this case though, his insidious web stretching across Korvosa’s underworld might prove to our advantage.

“Devargo would never let someone he recognizes as an ally of the Guard into Eel’s End, but your group’s a different case. I’d like you to pay a visit to Eel’s End and secure an audience with Devargo. Find out what he knows about Amprei, get proof of any illicit goings-on the ambassador might be involved with, and bring that proof to me to use to undermine any forthcoming attempts by him to get Cheliox to cut us off. Devargo might not be willing to part with his information easily. I’ll supply you with some gold to bribe him, and whatever’s left over you can keep for yourself. Remember: the man is dangerous, but so are you—if things get violent, I wouldn’t mourn his passing.”

Cressida hands one of the PCs a small pouch filled with 1,000 gp—their funds for bribing Devargo. With a DC 25 Diplomacy check, the PCs can convince Cressida to increase this amount to 1,500 gp. As she prepares to give the PCs the address of Eel’s End, Vencarlo steps in, saying he was heading back up to his academy in Old Korvosa anyway, and that he’d love to escort the PCs as far as Old Korvosa whenever they’re ready.

### To Eel’s End

Vencarlo Orisini is a tall man of advanced years, yet with a twinkle in his eye and a bounce to his step that hints at a vibrancy and inner fire of a man under half his age. He wears his salt-and-pepper hair pulled back tightly into a bravo’s top-knot. His eyes are a cast of deep green like the ocean after a storm. He is of Old Chelish blood, and it shows. Orisini wears black leather gloves to ensure the oils of his skin don’t rust the pommel of his shining steel rapier. This rapier is his pride, and he speaks of it in tones normally reserved for a loved one. A DC 20 Spot check reveals that the two smaller fingers of his right hand never seem to bend—in fact, he’s missing these two fingers, and his gloves help to disguise the fact by holding short lengths of wood inside them. If asked about his fingers, Vencarlo pauses for a moment, then admits that he lost them a while back in an unfortunate duel and that he’d rather speak no more on the subject.

During the walk north, Vencarlo takes the time to thank the PCs for how they handled the situation with Grau (assuming they did so without killing the man and assuming he’s now on the road to recovery in the Citadel). Vencarlo admits that Grau was once one of his most promising students, at which point a PC can attempt a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check to recall hearing something about some scandal involving Grau, Vencarlo, and Sabina. If asked about Sabina, Vencarlo’s eyes grow sad for a moment and then he smiles, saying only, “She found her true calling—I just hope that it’s something that deserves her attentions.” He has little more to say about his ex-students at this time, instead trying to shift the topic of the conversation back to the PCs, using flattery and compliments as his primary weapons.

Take this time to develop Vencarlo into a likable character—the PCs’ fates will bring them back to him several more times over the course of *Curse of the Crimson Throne*. He pays particular attention to attractive female PCs or any PC who reminds him of himself in youth (brash, skilled at swordplay, and humorous). Although his interest might seem little more than gentlemanly politeness, Vencarlo’s true goals are in fact much more.

Since losing both Grau and Sabina as students, Vencarlo has seen little to inspire him among his new pupils, and it doesn’t take long for the PCs to intrigue



him. From Cressida, he knows of the party's exploits to date, and their heroism rekindles something he thought long dead inside his soul. In truth, he has long led a double life as an infamous masked hero to the people of Korvosa, a man known to everyone as Blackjack. Tales of Blackjack's moves against corrupt politicians, cruel nobles, and greedy merchants have been part of Korvosa's culture for two centuries, and although he hasn't made an appearance in the last decade, Blackjack stories remain as popular as ever among the peasants. Because Blackjack has existed for centuries, few believe him to be a single person. The most popular rumor surrounding Blackjack places him as a series of human men, with one training a replacement each generation. This is, in fact, the case, and the current Blackjack is none other than Vencarlo himself.

Things have been pretty good in Korvosa for the last several years—despite what many might have said about King Eodred II, his rule was just and balanced. Now, though, Korvosa is more in need of heroes than ever, and Vencarlo is fresh out of protégés. In the PCs, he sees heroes who he might be able to trust with Blackjack's tradition. With Grau and Sabina, he attempted to groom and shape his successor, but that attempt failed. Vencarlo now suspects the best way to find the next Blackjack is to pick someone already half in the mindset rather than attempt to instill that mindset "by hand." The best nomination among the PCs for the new Blackjack is a chaotic good rogue, but really, anyone who exhibits a love for Korvosa but isn't a "blind slave to the law" works. Vencarlo isn't even as obsessed with the traditional image of Blackjack—any race or gender will do in his eyes, as long as the will to protect the city and her downtrodden is present.

By this point in the adventure, you should have a good grasp on the personalities of your PCs. Vencarlo knows that adventurers lead dangerous lifestyles, so he initially picks any PC who even vaguely meets his requirements as a possible successor. Over the course of the adventures to come, he keeps his eye on these PCs to determine which of them would most fit the demands of

becoming Blackjack. These characters should be non-lawful, non-evil characters initially, and beyond that, characters who prefer the urban life over a rural or wilderness life.

When the PCs finally cross the Narrows and enter Old Korvosa, Vencarlo tells them they can find Eel's End to the east, the first pier after the last bridge over the Narrows. With a swift bow, he spins on a heel and is gone.

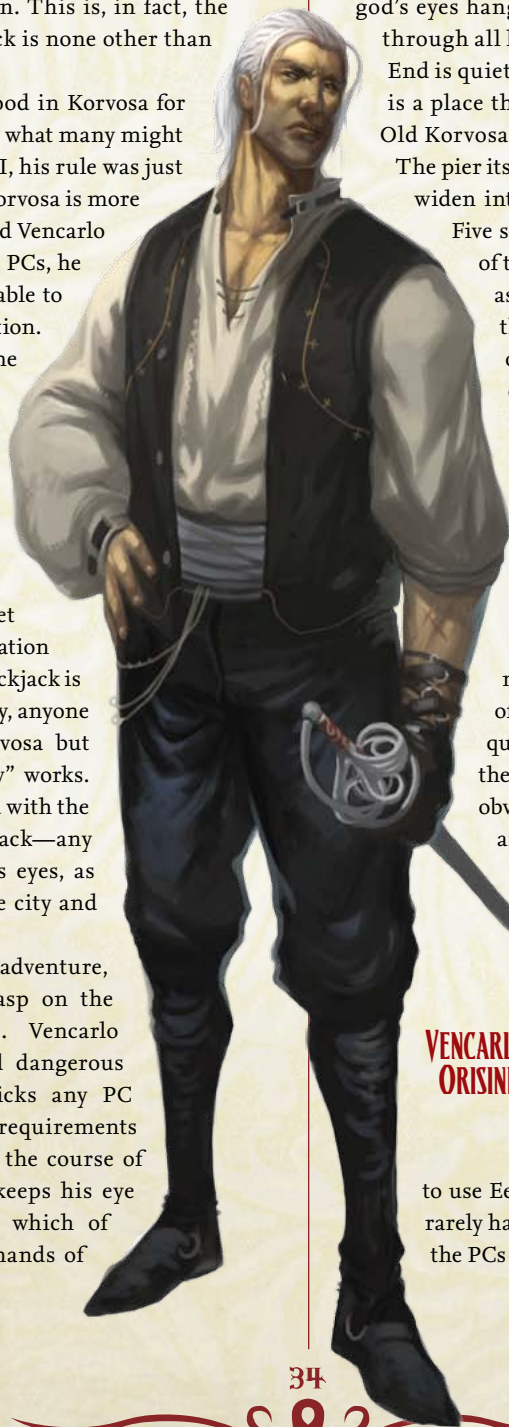
## Eel's End

A sprawl of light and sound marks the first (or last, depending on your orientation) pier of Old Korvosa. Glowing lanterns in the shape of dream spiders and god's eyes hang from pilings or lampposts, flickering through all hours of the night. During the day, Eel's End is quieter, yet the place never truly sleeps. Here is a place that caters to the vices and base needs of Old Korvosa at all hours.

The pier itself is 70 feet long, although its last 30 feet widen into a large square platform on the water.

Five ships are moored to the pier—the largest of these is the *Eel's End*, a warship that serves as the stronghold of Devargo Barvasi and the administrative center of his entire operation. Each of the other four barges are owned by various peddlers and captains, and they pay regular rent for the honor of attaching to Eel's End. Those who fail to pay or abide by Devargo's laws find their ship cut loose in the middle of the night, often in flames or infested with deadly spiders.

Eel's End is open and welcoming of nearly everyone—the enforcers and merchants here are naturally suspicious of well-dressed visitors, but their suspicion quickly caves to greed as they try to fleece these hopefully naive patrons of their obvious wealth. Only those who are obviously affiliated with the Korvosan Guard, the Order of the Nail, or the Sable Company aren't welcome on Eel's End. Since Devargo pays his vice taxes and self-polices Eel's End well enough that trouble here never impacts the city at large (including a strict policy of handing over anyone he realizes is trying to use Eel's End to hide from the law), the guards rarely have any cause to visit Eel's End. As a result, the PCs should find little problem entering.



**VENCARLO  
ORISINI**





Ironically, Eel's End is actually one of the safer, more stable locations in Korvosa these days. The riots haven't touched the place, and in fact, the increased need for escapism from the horrors of reality has seen business booming.

## C1. Eel's End Pier

The sound of carousing booms from the elegantly painted ships moored to this long pier. Large signs painted in several languages hang from ropes slung between ships or are nailed to pilings. The closest ship to the east bears a sign that says, "The Twin Tigers—Take the Tiger by the Tail and Try Your Luck!" Opposite that, to the west, a barge's sign says, "Welcome to the Goldenhawk—No Safer Stay in Old Korvosa!" Further to the southeast is "Dragon's Breath Corridor—Dream the Dragon's Dreams at Affordable Prices!", while opposite that is the "House of Clouds—The Caress of Our Lovelies Will Take You Straight to Heaven!" Only the largest ship, to the south, bears no signage at all. Short rope bridges or gangplanks provide access to the decks of these ships from the pier, or from the decks of other ships. Sailors, thugs, drunkards, prostitutes, and what could even be a few well-dressed nobles carouse on the pier and the decks of all five ships, seemingly oblivious to Korvosa's recent troubles. Here and there, large men dressed in chainmail patrol the area, grim faces in a sea of revelry.

Eel's End is a rough place—no one takes notice of armed or armored characters unless they're obviously agents of

the city's military. Apart from being propositioned by whores or accidentally shoved by drunkards, the PCs should have little problem exploring this area unless they attempt to sneak belowdeck on the *Eel's End* herself.

**Creatures:** Among the services Devargo offers to his renters is security. He employs a dozen human enforcers, all of whom started their careers as mercenaries, soldiers, or sailors but lost their jobs due to laziness, theft, or incompetence. Once they come to work for Devargo, though, they learn quickly the value of remaining alert and sober while on the job—those who disappoint the King of Spiders feed his ravenous pets in the hold of the *Eel's End*.

The enforcers bunk in hammocks hung under sails on the aft of the *Eel's End*; during storms, they're allowed to spend their nights in rooms set aside on the *Goldenhawk* (area C3). Once a week, an enforcer gets a day of shore leave, but never more than two guards at a time—at any one time, there are 12 enforcers in Eel's End, ready to respond to an alarm. Of these, six patrol the pier and the decks of the five ships, two stand guard where the pier meets the shore, and four sleep in their hammocks.

### EEL'S END ENFORCERS (12)

CR 1

Male human warrior 2

hp 11 each (see page 29; renegade guard)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Enforcers call out an alarm if a fight starts, and



all twelve arrive as soon as possible. Their primary goal in a fight is to chase trouble onto land or to force the miscreants into the waters below—killing visitors brings too much paperwork and investigation from the Korvosan Guard, so if they drop a foe, an enforcer typically ignores him and might even try to bandage him if he gets the chance.

**Morale** The Eel's End enforcers are afraid of Devargo and his uncanny mastery over spiders almost as much as they value the money he pays them—as a result, they fight until dropped to 2 hit points or less, only then attempting to flee to safety.

## C2. Eel's End Deck

The largest of the five ships tied off to the pier is a warship bearing the name *Eel's End*, its figurehead a coiling eel with a woman's head. Several drunkards, sailors, and revelers dance and drink on the large open main deck here, while the aft deck is relatively clear. A pair of large double doors bearing a complex painting of a spider allows entrance into the stern section of the main deck.

Only the two aft decks are clear of carousers; here, four enforcers sleep in hammocks strung in the rigging above, and there are always 1d3 patrolling enforcers on the lower deck itself. They stop anyone attempting to enter area C7 through the double doors, saying that unless they're expected, the King of Spiders has no interest in visitors. A successful Bluff check is enough to convince the guards that Devargo is expecting the PCs, as is a DC 20 Diplomacy check or a successful Intimidate check (although with the Intimidate route, the guards nervously accompany the PCs into area C7).

## C3. Goldenhawk

This single-masted Chelish sailing ship has seen countless crude repairs—it's doubtful it's very seaworthy, but lashed as it is to the pier, it seems stable enough. The nameplate proclaims it to be the *Goldenhawk*.

Here, those whose endurance has been taxed by the wild cavorts of Eel's End's can retreat to sleep it off. The *Goldenhawk's* rates are good, only 4 sp/night, but the beds are lumpy and cramped. Still, with Devargo's presence, nights spent here are relatively safe. A lisping gnome named **Tuggins** (CN male gnome expert 3/rogue 1) presides over the floating inn. Tuggins is a wall-eyed character with a crumpled hat, patchy beard, and extensive collection of keys (most of which he has no idea what they open).

## C4. Twin Tigers

Two hut-like structures sit atop this barge, the raucous sound of laughter and periodic roars of victory sounding from within.

The *Twin Tigers* is a gambling hall. Inside of each of the structures on the main deck, tables are packed with gamblers—dice clatter, cards are dealt, wheels spin, and coins aplenty dance and jangle to the fickle whim of fate. An enforcer is always found patrolling here, for fights break out more often on the *Twin Tigers* than anywhere else in Eel's End—brawlers are typically thrown over the side, and on lucky nights they don't have to worry about jigsaw sharks or reefclaws in the water.

The masters of the *Twin Tigers* are two dark-skinned human brothers wrapped in red veils—these are twin Vudrans named **Anpugit** (N male human expert 4) and **Rajeek** (CN male human expert 2/rogue 1), entrepreneurs always looking for new games to add to their offerings. Of the two, Anpugit is the more garrulous—he does most of the talking while Rajeek quietly hangs back and watches for cheaters or opportunities for him to skew a game in the house's favor.

## C5. House of Clouds

A single long structure sits atop the main deck of this ship—the double doors always hang open to reveal a large room decorated with throw rugs, large pillows, and air thick with incense and lit by red paper lanterns. The scent of anise, rosewater, and cinnamon pour forth from smoking bronze braziers set on silver stands carved in the likenesses of slit-eyed serpents and proud hunting birds here and there, while several scantily-clad men and women loiter about the barge's deck.

The House of Clouds is a brothel run by a madam named **Halvara** (CN female half-elf expert 5). A patron talks to the men and women who work here until he finds one who strikes his fancy. The patron then pays a 5 gp fee and the two retire to one of several private rooms in the ship's lower deck for 15 minutes of low-cost bliss. Halvara herself has been known to personally entertain wealthier customers (she charges 100 gp for her time, though). Rumor holds that she is Devargo's sometimes lover—whether or not this is true, the rumor is enough and few patrons ever even think about causing trouble here.

## C6. Dragon's Breath Corridor

This once proud vessel, the *Dragon's Breath*, has been painted in gaudy red. A sign at the aft entrance reads simply, "Pass Into the Dreams of the Dragon."

Thick, pungent smoke assails the nose belowdecks, the open interior of which is partitioned with silken curtains and filled with large beds and couches. Glossy-eyed patrons loll about and mewl, their minds burning with shiver, pesh, qat, flayleaf, and other exotic drugs. A skinny,



short human named **Bezzeraty** (CN male human expert 3) wanders languidly about the smoky room, wheeling a large hookah to and fro on a cart and muttering “Get smoked!” at anyone who enters the establishment. Many people mistake 3-foot-tall Bezzeraty for a gnome or halfling, an error sure to incite his shrieking anger and bring several enforcers running. Likewise, he starts shrieking if visitors don’t pay him the 5 gp entrance fee to enjoy his wares. Anyone who spends at least a minute in this smoke-filled area must make a DC 14 Fortitude save to avoid taking 1d4 points of Wisdom damage; each hour, a new saving throw is required. When a patron passes out completely, Bezzeraty rifles through the patron’s pockets to find gold to pay for his troubles, and if successful he calls upon an Eel’s End enforcer to drag the unconscious body over to the *Goldenhawk*—otherwise, the patron is quietly stripped of all belongings and dumped in an alley in Old Korvosa.

## C7. Throne of Spiders (EL 6)

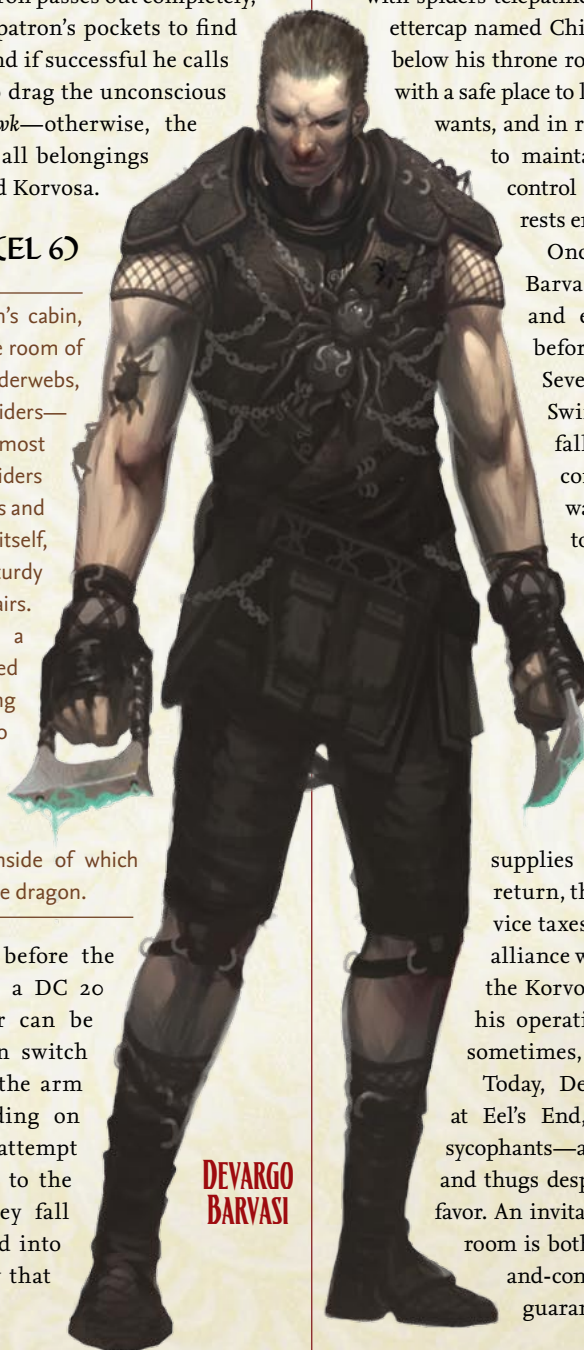
This large room, once a captain’s cabin, has been converted into a throne room of sorts. The walls are thick with spiderwebs, in which scuttle dozens of spiders—some as large as a fist but most considerably smaller. These spiders seem content to stay in their webs and do not venture into the room itself, which is furnished with two sturdy oaken tables surrounded by chairs. Aft, a wooden stage supports a large leather chair, itself covered with cobwebs and scampering spiders. A narrow door stands to port, hanging ajar and revealing a flight of stairs leading below. An iron birdcage hangs from the ceiling like a chandelier, inside of which lingers a tiny, tired-looking purple dragon.

A hidden trap door just before the throne can be spotted with a DC 20 Spot check. This trap door can be opened by flipping a hidden switch (DC 20 Search to locate) in the arm of the throne. Those standing on the door when it opens may attempt a DC 15 Reflex save to cling to the sides of the opening as they fall in, otherwise they’re dumped into area C15 and are attacked by that room’s denizens.

**Creatures:** This is the throne room of Devargo Barvasi, the self-styled King of Spiders. He is a tall man with close-cropped black hair, a warm smile, and blue eyes. He accents his black leather armor with a steel spider-shaped shoulder baldric and a thick chain criss-crossing his chest, linked together in the shape of a spider’s web. His signature weapons—gauntlets fixed with blades over the knuckles (functionally identical to spiked gauntlets, save that they deal slashing damage)—glisten with poison. Now and then, spiders clamber over his skin, but he takes no notice. Whispers say that Devargo has the blood of fiends in him, and that he can communicate with spiders telepathically. In fact, Devargo’s secret is an ettercap named Chittersnap who lives in the chamber below his throne room. Devargo provides Chittersnap with a safe place to live and all the food and treasure he wants, and in return, the ettercap allows Devargo to maintain his charade of being able to control spiders, when in fact that control rests entirely in Chittersnap’s mind.

Once a smuggler from Riddleport, Barvasi crossed the wrong people there and ended up on the run for years before he found a partner in Stanris Sevenfingers (then called Stanris the Swifthead). The two had a murderous falling out shortly after they conceived of Eel’s End, and Stanris was one of the first victims offered to Chittersnap when he objected to Devargo’s decision to take charge. In the years that followed, Devargo earned his moniker well by collecting the secrets of many powerful personages throughout Korvosa and bending them to his influence. Key to his success are the regular shipments of shiver he supplies to Arkona family agents—in return, the Arkonas see to it that Eel’s End’s vice taxes are always paid on time. With an alliance with the Arkonas and no reason for the Korvosan Guard to object too loudly to his operation, Barvasi is living proof that, sometimes, crime does pay.

Today, Devargo spends most of his time at Eel’s End, entertained by lickspittles and sycophants—all of whom are petty scoundrels and thugs desperate to earn the King of Spiders’ favor. An invitation to join Devargo in his throne room is both a blessing and a threat to an up-and-coming thief, since attendance is no guarantee of alliance and often results





in torture, torment, and death. When the PCs first arrive, Devargo is evaluating six thugs and cutpurses for recruitment into his enforcers. These six thugs are seated at the tables, enjoying a sumptuous meal and loud storytelling.

The steel birdcage that hangs from the ceiling is one of Devargo's latest acquisitions, a pseudodragon named Majenko. Gifted to Devargo by one of his most recent recruits into his gang of enforcers, the pseudodragon's caged torment lifts Devargo's warped and twisted spirits—when he's bored, he enjoys watching the dragon fight for his life against dream spiders. Devargo has grown fond of tormenting the dragon, and hears nothing of requests to let it go. He will, however, agree to sell the creature to a PC for the measly cost of 5,000 gp.

## DEVARGO BARVASI

CR 4

Male human rogue 4

LE Medium humanoid

**Init** +3; **Senses** Listen -1, Spot +6

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### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14

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

**hp** 24 (4d6+8)

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

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

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### OFFENSE

**Spd** 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk bladed gauntlet +7 (1d4+1 plus poison) or

mwk bladed gauntlet +5 (1d4+1 plus poison) and

mwk bladed gauntlet +5 (1d4 plus poison)

**Ranged** mwk hand crossbow +7 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)

**Special Attacks** sneak attack +2d6

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### TACTICS

**During Combat** Confident and brave, Devargo begins combat by opening the trap door and dumping anyone standing on it into area C15. Once the trap door is triggered, Devargo leaps into the battle with his gauntlets, a sadistic grin on his face as he fights. His enforcers are used to the sounds of battle and fights in the throne room and they don't respond until Devargo raises the alarm or until the first hopeful thug flees into area C2. Once this occurs, enforcers arrive in this area at the rate of one every round until all 12 on duty in Eel's End have arrived.

**Morale** If reduced to less than 10 hit points, Devargo calls out for help from his enforcers, drinks his *potion of invisibility*, then flees downstairs through the open door. He drinks his *potion of cure moderate wounds* as soon as possible and barricades himself into his quarters in area C14, hoping his enforcers can finish off the fight for him.

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### STATISTICS

**Str** 12, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 13

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

**Feats** Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse



## DEALING WITH EEL'S END

How the PCs get the information they seek from Eel's End is up to them—this adventure makes no assumptions about the methods used. Certainly, the safest route is to please Devargo with bribes and entertainment. A group could also sneak belowdecks to steal the information from Devargo's quarters, or could even fight its way in to claim its prize (although this is a dangerous proposition for PCs who haven't yet reached at least 3rd level).

What's not as important is Devargo's fate. He's certainly a villain and an evil man, and many groups might feel ill at ease allowing him to continue to rule Eel's End. Full details on his floating stronghold are provided, even though you're unlikely to need them at this time if the PCs use diplomacy to get what they need. If the PCs are (rightfully) sickened by Devargo's cruelty, they could well come back to finish him off at a later time, even after this adventure is technically over.

While his mastery at playing the system might frustrate those who feel he should be in jail, Devargo's effective immunity to the law has unwittingly removed a layer of protection. If he's attacked and killed by the PCs, the Korvosan Guard does not press charges (and in fact privately thanks the PCs for handling the embarrassing situation for it). Setting the barges on fire is a riskier proposition, since that not only destroys the evidence the PCs need, but also results in criminal prosecution for arson and perhaps even murder—the city's ambivalence toward Devargo's fate does not extend to the lowlifes who patronize Eel's End.

—James Jacobs

**Skills** Bluff +8, Climb +8, Craft (alchemy) +7, Diplomacy +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (local) +7, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +12, Spot +6

**Languages** Common

**SQ** trapfinding

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of invisibility*, spider venom (5 doses, DC 12, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str); **Other Gear** +1 leather armor, masterwork bladed gauntlets (2), masterwork hand crossbow with 20 bolts, key to area C9, key to footlocker in area C14

## MAJENKO

CR 1

Male pseudodragon

**hp** 15 (MM 210)

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### TACTICS

**During Combat** If a fight breaks out, Majenko realizes that the PCs are his chance for freedom. He telepathically contacts them, begging for them to release him. If they let him loose, he promises to help them in the fight and serve them for a year in gratitude. Opening Majenko's cage is a full-round action that provokes attacks of opportunity and requires a DC 15 Open Lock check, a DC 20 Strength check, or 10 points of damage (the relatively flimsy cage only has hardness 2).



**Morale** Majenko selects the PC who released him as his savior and fights to the death at that character's side. As long as that character doesn't reject the grateful pseudodragon, Majenko makes good on his promise to serve that character for a year in gratitude for his release.

### HOPEFUL THUGS (6)

CR 1

Male human warrior 2

hp 11 each (see page 29; renegade guard)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The thugs compete to impress Devargo, and as a result don't fight together if a brawl breaks out here in the throne room. They might even compromise each other's defenses accidentally by getting in the way of charges or by using each other as cover.

**Morale** Although eager to please Devargo, these thugs are cowards. A thug flees Eel's End as soon as he takes any damage.

**Development:** Devargo spends the majority of his afternoons and the first few hours of each night here, from noon to a few hours after dusk. He sometimes steps out for fresh air or to visit the other establishments or even to Old Korvosa itself to meet with Arkona agents or other contacts, but should the PCs arrive here between noon and midnight, they find him in area C7. After midnight, he retires to his quarters in area C14 to relax, look over the day's business reports (delivered to him nightly on pieces of slate), and eventually sleep—this is the best time to infiltrate *Eel's End*, and if the PCs arrive in this room without raising an alarm, they find the chamber to be empty (the thugs having returned to their homes on land) save for Majenko, who frantically begs the PCs for rescue.

### An Audience with Devargo

Although it's easy to get distracted by Devargo's cruelty and sinister nature, the primary goal of the PCs shouldn't be to kill him—all they really need to do at Eel's End is secure proof of any illicit activities Ambassador Amprei might be involved with. In truth, Devargo possesses a number of racy love letters to the ambassador from the wife of an important Chelish noble, letters that could end the ambassador's career (and perhaps even his life) if the husband were to read them. Devargo has been making a fair amount of money blackmailing the ambassador and is hesitant to give up so lucrative a deal, so before he can be convinced to expose the ambassador, the PCs must give him a good reason.

As long as the PCs aren't overly antagonistic or insulting to Devargo, he's willing to entertain a plea for aid, if only to show to the simpering thugs just how important he is. Allow the PCs to present their case and make their request to the King of Spiders, then have the character with the highest Diplomacy score make a Diplomacy check (Devargo does

### KNIVESIES

The ever-popular Knivesies (*nighve-zees*) is the game of choice among the steeliest pirates, brigands, thieves, and scallywags in Riddleport. It's increasing popularity in Korvosa is in large part due to Devargo's enjoyment of the game.

Knivesies is simple to play. Two contestants stand on opposite ends of a long wooden table. Their right hands are strapped together with a boiled leather strap, belt pouches are fitted to their waists, and a dagger is stuck in the tabletop between them. The game begins after a count of ten, during which time observers can place bets by tossing gold onto the table and standing at the end of the table where their chosen fighter stands. As the game begins, each contestant makes an initiative check.

There are two ways to win Knivesies. You can either force the other contestant to fall off the table, or you can grab for the gold and drop it into your pouch. Snatching a fistful of *1d10* coins off the table is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity. Since each opponent has only one free hand, the first round is typically a mad lunge for the dagger, forcing the slower opponent to make grabs for gold. There aren't any more rules beyond this; most Knivesies games devolve into tabletop brawls, with the first person to drop or touch the ground losing.

The game ends once a contestant is unconscious, dead, or knocked off the table; as soon as no coins remain on the table; or as soon as any coin is knocked off the table. When the game ends, an unconscious, dead, or de-tabled contestant is automatically the loser. Otherwise, the winner is determined by which person has the most coins in his pouch. At the end of the game, all money is emptied from the pouches back onto the table. Half the total is paid to the winner, while the remainder is split evenly among all of those who stood at the winner's end of the table.

not respond well to Intimidate). Other PCs in the group can aid that PC with their own Diplomacy checks—each DC 10 success grants the primary roller a +2 bonus, while each failed check imposes a –2 penalty (Devargo has little patience for fools). Devargo's compliance with the PCs' request depends on the result of that check, as detailed below.

**DC 4 or less (hostile):** Devargo is insulted and offended by the PCs. He triggers the trap door into area C15 and attacks.

**DC 5 (unfriendly):** Devargo isn't impressed with the PCs, and tells them as much, pointing out that information is a commodity and that his time and resources are valuable. If the PCs don't get the hint and bribe him at this point, he grows even more impatient and orders them to leave *Eel's End*. If they don't (and if they still refuse to bribe him), he attacks. If the PCs do bribe him, increase the result of the Diplomacy check by 1 for each 50 gp worth of bribe they offer to determine Devargo's new attitude. For example, if the PCs get a Diplomacy result of 12 and bribe



him 100 gp, their new score is only a 14 and the King of Spiders indicates that they should keep paying. If they then give him another 600 gold, their new score is 25 and he becomes friendly.

**DC 15 (indifferent):** Devargo is amused by the PCs and admits he may know something of a delicate matter that involves the ambassador, but before he agrees to just hand it over to the PCs, he wants something in return. The implication is a payment of gold (see above for how bribes can adjust his attitude), but he also suggests a bit of entertainment. He calls for a game of Knivesies (see sidebar) between one of the PCs and one of the hopeful thugs in the room. Each time a PC wins a game of Knivesies, increase their effective Diplomacy score by 5. Devargo won't agree to Knivesies games between PCs.

**DC 25 (friendly):** As indifferent, above, but Devargo admits that he does indeed have the information the PCs seek, and that he keeps it below in his quarters. He still requires bribes, diversions, or games of Knivesies to agree to help.

**DC 40 (helpful):** As soon as the PCs reach this point, Devargo claps his hands in delight and thanks the PCs for their generosity and entertainment, calls in four of his enforcers to watch the PCs and asks the characters to wait while he goes below to gather up the information he's promised them.

When he returns in a few minutes, Devargo confides in the PCs that he learned of a scandalous affair Ambassador Amprei was having with the wife of an important noble back in Cheliax. Apparently, the ambassador and this woman had been corresponding while Amprei was stationed here in Korvosa—when Devargo heard these rumors, he paid the man a visit. Devargo attempted to befriend the ambassador, giving him a gift of several vials of shiver and making a proposition to the man to open a line of trade with Cheliax. The ambassador refused and had Devargo escorted from his home, but Devargo pickpocketed the man's housekey as he left, returning later that night to return the key and steal several of the ambassador's letters to his paramour. Devargo has been selling the letters back to the ambassador at the rate of one every few weeks, taking great delight in the man's discomfort whenever he visits Eel's End to purchase one of them. The fact that the ambassador hasn't gone to the guard and is attempting to keep the re-acquisition of the stolen letters as quiet as possible says plenty about how dangerous the contents would be to his career.

Devargo hands the last two letters over to the PCs with a smile and says, "Pleasure doing business with you!" He expects the PCs to leave Eel's End at once.

## C8. Shiver Lab

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Two large fireplaces are built into the curving wall of the ship's hull here, each fitted with an iron bar on which dangle several cauldrons.

Firewood is stacked to the north in a haphazard mound. Dozens of empty glass vials sit atop the mantles of each fireplace.

This room is used to brew shiver, the drug that Devargo supplies to the Arkonas. With Chittersnap's aid and his own skill in alchemy, Devargo needs only spend a few hours a week preparing shipments to the Arkonas. The strange, bitter smell in the room comes from these cauldrons, which are boiling down a mixture of alcohol, water, and dream spider venom into several doses of the drug—a process that takes several hours.

**Treasure:** Among the empty glass vials on the mantles are seven not-so-empty vials. Six of these contain a dose of shiver (worth 25 gp apiece), while the seventh contains a dose of dream spider venom.

## C9. Brig

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This foul-smelling room is empty, save for a mound of filthy straw seething with vermin.

Sometimes Devargo doesn't simply throw prisoners or troublemakers to Chittersnap. In the unusual cases where he needs to keep someone imprisoned, he stashes the person in this brig. Currently, the room is empty. The door is stout, and if locked, can only be opened with, the key, a DC 25 Open Locks check, or a DC 24 Strength check.

## C10. Hatch

This opening drops 7 feet into the bilge (area C16). A slimy knotted rope hanging over the edge provides clammy access to and from the bilge—it's a DC 7 Climb check to ascend or descend the rope.

## C11. Forward Hold

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Crates, barrels, and tables sit in this cramped hold.

The contents of the crates and barrels here are mostly food, water, and firewood. There is little of actual value here.

## C12. Privy

Three narrow privies line the wall here—access into *Eel's End* via the narrow chutes that open into the river is impossible for anything larger than Tiny size (and even Tiny creatures must make a DC 30 Escape Artist check to wriggle through the openings).

## C13. Meeting Room

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A single low desk sits against the wall of this room. A large wooden door marked with a painting of a spider is on the southern wall.





This room is used by Devargo to meet with more important guests—something that doesn't happen often (he's even moved the two chairs from here up to area C7 so he can entertain more guests there).

#### C14. Devargo's Den

This wooden chamber is clean and dry. An ornate bed rests against the far wall, while a single dresser and a round table and chair fill out the rest of the room. A wooden sea chest sits at the foot of the bed.

These are Barvasi's personal quarters—it is to here he flees if things turn bad for him in area C7 above.

**Treasure:** The sea chest can be opened with the key Devargo carries or with a DC 30 Open Lock check. Devargo keeps his favorite treasures inside—a jasper studded amulet worth 500 gp, a gold necklace fitted with emeralds worth 600 gp, a mother-of-pearl horn worth 50 gp, a *ring of feather fall* that bears a tiny jade dragonfly, a *scroll of blur*, an *elixir of love*, two pouches of *dust of appearance*, and six sacks of 100 gp each.

In addition, the chest contains the last two scandalous letters written to Ambassador Amprei from a woman named Verania Tvastiox, the young wife of one of Amprei's superiors back home in Cheliix. The details in

the letters are quite salacious and exacting, leaving little room for misinterpretation—if they were to be made public, Amprei would be disgraced.

#### C15. The Spider's Web (EL 5)

This dark chamber is riddled with dizzying tunnels and twisting corridors formed by thick cobwebs. The floor is a sticky, lumpy mass of webbing and dozens, if not hundreds, of bones—many of which seem to be from humanoid bodies. Some of the webs seem to shimmer and dance, almost as if reflecting rainbows in their silken forms.

The rainbow-colored strands are in fact dream spider webs, contact with which can poison many creatures (see page 82). Every square in this room contains dream spider webs—it's a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid contacting one of them whenever a character moves or fights in this area.

**Creatures:** Here, Devargo Barvasi keeps his greatest secret—the monster that allows him to control the wild menagerie of spiders he so adores. This is a disgustingly bloated ettercap named Chittersnap (“Chitters” for short). The fleshy abomination lairs here, enjoying the sport Barvasi provides when he dumps meals down into these dark, web-clogged depths. The gibbering monster has come to see Devargo almost like a father and controls



the other spiders on *Eel's End* for him, ensuring they do the King of Spiders' bidding. If the ettercap is slain, the spiders on the floating shipwreck revert to their primal nature and begin hunting—not even Devargo is safe from them in this event.

Yet Chittersnap is not alone here. He shares this den with an enormous ogre spider and a small clutch of dream spiders (the same ones used by Devargo to brew shiver).

## CHITTERSNAP

CR 3

Male ettercap  
hp 27 (MM 106)

## OGRE SPIDER

CR 1

Medium monstrous spider  
hp 11 (MM 288)

## DREAM SPIDERS (4)

CR 1/2

hp 5 each (see page 82)

## C16. Bilge

Murky water floods this filthy bilge, its surface dark and calm.

The bilge leaks terribly, and were it not for the fact that *Eel's End* itself is stoutly supported from below by several pilings (once supports for the pier itself), the ship would have sunk long ago. Water floods the bilge here to a depth of two feet. Devargo hasn't used this area for storage for years.

## C17. Sodden Hold (EL 1)

This old cargo bay is partially collapsed—only a soggy section of hull remains in the center of the room.

The floor in this room floats on the water—anything larger than a Small creature walking on it is enough to cause the rotten wood to collapse. Characters can use this area as a way to stealthily enter *Eel's End* if they discover it, although doing so requires a swim under the pier. There's a 25% chance that a jigsaw shark is nearby at any time the PCs are using this entrance to come and go from *Eel's End*, in which case the aggressive shark immediately attacks.

## JIGSAW SHARK

CR 1

Medium shark (MM 279)  
hp 16

## Delivering the Letters

When the PCs return to Citadel Volshyenek and hand over the scandalous letters to Field Marshal Cressida Kroft, she blushes as she reads them and quickly passes them to a clerk for safe keeping, stating that they should

work perfectly should the need for some leverage against the ambassador ever come up. She thanks the PCs again, rewarding them with a further 500 gp over and above the bribe money she gave them earlier to pay Devargo. If she's recieved word that the King of Spiders is dead, she seems even more pleased but can't, legally, award the PCs any more gold for something she'd rather not admit to knowing they did. Instead, she tells them that, "for going above and beyond in Korvosa's service," she'd like to award each PC the pseudodragon's mark, a medal that symbolizes a character is a champion of Korvosa. These medals are worth 400 gp, but more importantly, they grant a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks made against citizens of Korvosa if worn openly.

Cressida informs the PCs that she has no more work for the PCs at this time—things are starting to return to normal in Korvosa at last, but unrest remains in the air. She makes sure she can contact the PCs if she needs their services again. As fate would have it, this need comes sooner than she expects.

Before proceeding with the next part, give the PCs some time to rest and recover from their recent adventures. They have likely accumulated some treasure they'd like to spend, might wish to catch up with Grau's recovery (he's coming along nicely, and is very thankful to the PCs for saving him from his spiral of depression), or might even wish to pay a visit to Vencarlo's school. The PCs should all be at least 3rd level before you continue with the rest of "Edge of Anarchy." If they aren't, Cressida might send them on a few more minor missions before Part Six begins.

**Ad Hoc Experience Award:** If the PCs deliver proof of the ambassador's secret to Cressida, grant them experience as if they had defeated a CR 3 creature.

## PART SIX: THE QUEEN'S SCAPEGOAT

It has been weeks since Eodred II's death, and things are finally starting to get back to normal in Korvosa. Yet still the streets thrum with unrest and wild rumors. Crime seems to be on the rise, with pickpocketings, robberies, and assaults skyrocketing. Some still hiss "usurper" and "murdering harlot" at the mere utterance of Ileosa's name, and more shockingly, rumors that the king's death was not of natural causes increasing. Make sure the PCs hear these rumors before starting this part—most of the rumors purport that someone poisoned the king, and as this part of the adventure beings, the queen herself has become the primary suspect in these rumor mills.

Of course, in this case, the gossip is right. When Queen Ileosa hears it, she realizes that she needs resolution as swiftly as possible, theorizing that the people of Korvosa don't want to see her hang for regicide as much as they just want *someone* to pin the blame upon. She decides to find a